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Total email message failed count	0
Total file conversion failed count	0

From: Brunner, Margaret <mbrunner@nga.org> on behalf of Brunner, Margaret <MBrunner@NGA.ORG> <mbrunner@nga.org>
To: Powell, Alisha <apowell@nga.org>
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: GHSAC Weekly Update - 6/29/18
Date: Fri Jun 29 2018 16:26:31 CDT
Attachments: image001.jpg
NASCIO Letter to GHSAC June 2018.pdf
New Mexico SB0380.pdf

GHSAC WEEKLY UPDATE – June 29, 2018

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GHSAC NEWS

NASCIO Assistance for FEMA Grants

The National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO) has offered its assistance with developing or revising the Cybersecurity Investment Justification (CIJ) required by FEMA grant guidance. A letter with more information is attached. Please let Maggie Brunner know if you have any feedback or suggestions. NGA Contact: Maggie Brunner, 202-624-5364.

DOJ Releases Two Grants for STOP School Violence Act

The Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance has released competitive grant announcements for two new programs created by the STOP School Violence Act: Threat Assessment and Technology Reporting Program and Prevention and Mental Health Training Program. More information on the grants is in Federal Relations News. NGA is reaching out to its BJA partners for more guidance and will provide that information when available. NGA Contact: Maggie Brunner, 202-624-5364.

NGA Center State School Safety Initiatives Tracker

In an effort to understand current state actions to enhance school safety, NGA would like to create a clearinghouse of promising state practices and resources for HSAs per a request from the Special and Emerging Issues Subcommittee. The NGA Center has been tracking the information submitted by GHSAC members on initiatives to improve school safety in states via an Excel document that is viewable [here](#). If you have information to provide, please complete the brief Request for Information (attached). Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have questions. NGA Contact: Maggie Brunner, 202-624-5364.

ASPR Releases Grant for Regional Disaster Health Response

The Department of Health and Human Services Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response has released a funding opportunity announcement: Partnership for Disaster Health Response. The grant asks applicants develop projects to address healthcare preparedness challenges, establish best practices for improving disaster readiness across the healthcare delivery system, and show the potential effectiveness and viability of a Regional Disaster Health Response System. NGA Contact: Maggie Brunner, 202-624-5364.

Legislation Regarding New Mexico National Guard Activation for Cybersecurity Threats

Attached is the State Statute signed this past year regarding New Mexico National Guard activation of individuals for a cybersecurity threat. Activation by the GAR (Governor's Authorized Representative), the Secretary of Homeland Security and Emergency Management Department is contained in separate, pre-existing Statute. Please feel free to forward any questions regarding this Statute directly to Jay Mitchell and/or the TAG.

NGA Homeland Security & Public Safety is Hiring

The HSPS Division is hiring a policy analyst to support its projects in the Homeland Security Program. The job posting is viewable here. NGA Contact: Alisha Powell, 202-624-5341.

GHSAC Plenary Call

The next GHSAC plenary call is scheduled for July 26 at 3:00 p.m. ET [Dial In: 888-858-6021 | ID: 2026245364]. Please note the new call-in number. The agenda for the call is forthcoming. NGA Contact: Maggie Brunner, 202-624-5364.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

Preparing the Next Class of Governors

During the GHSAC Summer Meeting NGA requested that homeland security advisors consider the following questions for NGA's briefing of the next class of governors during the Seminar for New Governors on November 16-18 :

- * What information did governors need to have that they did not have previously?
- * In what ways did you find NGA helpful in the transition?
- * What more could NGA have done to support you and your governor?
- * What advice would you give to new governors?
- * What advice would you give to new homeland security advisors?

If you would like to share your insights, please contact NGA. NGA Contact: Maggie Brunner, 202-624-5364.

Governors Crisis Manuals Request for Information

The NGA Center received a technical assistance request asking if any states have “crisis manuals” for the governor’s office (potentially including decision trees, contact lists, roles and responsibilities, crisis communications plan, and other relevant information). If your state has such a document, please contact NGA. NGA Contact: Alisha Powell, 202-624-5341.

Business Case for Emergency Management Request for Information

The NGA Center received a technical assistance request asking whether any states have developed a business case for emergency management. If your state has gone through such an undertaking, please contact NGA. NGA Contact: Alisha Powell, 202-624-5341.

NGA UPDATES

NGA Countering Violent Extremism Webinar

The NGA Center for Best Practices is hosting the Preventing Targeted Violence Webinar: Developing Intervention Programs on Monday, July 9 at 2 p.m. ET as part of its series on countering violent extremism. This webinar will include a speaker from the Department of Homeland Security’s Science and Technology Directorate to discuss the science behind indicators and their effectiveness in predicting who may mobilize towards violence. Following that presentation, a speaker from The Center for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence, a Canadian non-profit, will discuss how they developed and deployed their intervention program for individuals mobilizing towards violence. You can register at the link here. This webinar is available for state, local, and nonprofit practitioners. Feel free to share this invitation with other state colleagues who may be interested in participating. Further information is forthcoming. Please direct questions to Michael Garcia (mgarcia@nga.org ; 202-624-5312).

FEDERAL RELATIONS NEWS

House Passes FY19 Defense Appropriations Bill

The House approved 359-49 the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Defense Appropriations bill (H.R. 6157) after considering several amendments. The bill provides \$674.6 billion for defense and intelligence programs and an additional \$68.1 billion for the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) account. Additionally, the Senate Appropriations Committee passed its version of the FY19 Defense Appropriations bill. The Committee summary can be found [here](#) and the NGA appropriations tracker can be found [here](#).

Please contact your Washington representative or state-federal director for additional information.

House Votes Down Second Immigration Bill

The House voted down H.R. 6136, the republican compromise immigration bill at a vote of 121-301. The vote, which was postponed after another GOP measure H.R. 4760 failed, came amid opposition

from all Democrats and dozens of Republicans, who feared backing a bill that would have provided a path to citizenship for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) recipients, even though it also would have funded Trump's border wall and curbed legal immigration.

Please contact your Washington representative or state-federal director for additional information.

Federal Commission on School Safety Holds Listening Session in Kentucky

The Federal Commission on School Safety held a listening session in Lexington, Kentucky. Deputy Secretary of Education Mick Zais presided over the session with representatives from the Departments of Justice, Homeland Security and Health and Human Services. The session consisted of two panel discussions with local and state officials and a two hours during which the Commission heard from the general public. Among the panelists were Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin, Wisconsin First Lady Tonette Walker and Tennessee Commissioner of Education Candice McQueen. Mrs. Walker emphasized the importance of counselors, nurses and psychologists in school and the training of other school personnel to engage students with adverse childhood experiences. Commissioner McQueen spoke about Tennessee's efforts to ensure every school in the state received a baseline needs assessment of its safety, and the state's use of the local needs assessments in awarding grant funding for school safety initiatives. Governor Bevin spoke about Kentucky's working group to address school safety and voiced concerns related to students' increasing reliance on technology, violent content in entertainment and the publicizing of school shootings as issues that may contribute to school violence. More information on past meetings of the Federal Commission on School Safety can be found [here](#).

Please contact your Washington representative or state-federal director for additional information.

Federal Judge Orders Administration to Reunite Migrant Families

A federal judge ordered the federal government to reunite migrant parents with children taken from them under the Trump administration's zero-tolerance immigration policy. U.S. District Court Judge Dana Sabraw, based in San Diego, issued a preliminary injunction requiring that nearly all children younger than 5 be returned to their parents within 14 days and that older children be returned within 30 days.

Please contact your Washington representative or state-federal director for additional information.

Supreme Court Upholds Travel Ban

The Supreme Court ruled 5-4 to uphold the third version of the Trump Administration's "travel ban" issued in September 2017 that restricts entry from seven countries by varying degrees – Iran, North Korea, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, and Venezuela. Challengers to the ban argued that the travel ban exceeded the President's authority under immigration law and the Constitution. Chief Justice Roberts noted in the ruling that, "the Government has set forth a sufficient national security justification to survive rational basis review. We express no view on the soundness of the policy. We simply hold today that plaintiffs have not demonstrated a likelihood of success on the merits of their constitutional claim...The proclamation is squarely within the scope of Presidential authority under the Immigration and Nationality Act."

Please contact your Washington representative or state-federal director for additional information.

Two Military Bases Selected to House Migrants

The Trump Administration announced an Army and Air Force Installations in Texas to house detained migrants as part of the “zero-tolerance” immigration policy. According to Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis, a number of migrants will be sheltered at Fort Bliss and Goodfellow Air Force base. During a Monday press conference, Secretary Mattis stated, “We’ll provide whatever support the Department of Homeland Security needs in order to house the people that they have under their custody.” The number of detained migrants who might be held at Bliss and Goodfellow has not been announced, but the Pentagon had said last week that it had been asked to be prepared to shelter as many as 20,000 unaccompanied children.

Please contact your Washington representative or state-federal director for additional information.

Senate Passes “Minibus” Appropriations Package

The Senate passed the “minibus” appropriations package (H.R. 5895) by a vote of 86-5. The bill contains the Senate’s \$43.8 billion Energy and Water Appropriations bill, \$97.1 billion Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill, and \$4.8 billion Legislative Branch Appropriations bill. The House passed H.R. 5895 with its versions of the three bills on June 8 by a vote of 235-179. A House-Senate conference committee will have to resolve the differences.

Please contact your Washington representative or state-federal director for additional information.

DOJ Releases Announcements of Two Grants Created by the STOP School Violence Act

The Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance has released competitive grant announcements for two new programs created by the STOP School Violence Act. The two grants are authorized to award a combined \$50 million in fiscal year 2018 to states, territories, local governments and federally-recognized tribes. The Threat Assessment and Technology Reporting Program grant will assist jurisdictions in improving efforts to reduce violent crime through the creation of school threat assessment teams and the use of technology for anonymously reporting suspicious activity as it relates to violence in schools, and the Prevention and Mental Health Training Program grant will assist jurisdictions with the creation of school safety training and mental health programs for school personnel and students as they relate to violence in schools. The deadline for states to apply for the grants is July 23, and the full details can be viewed [here](#) and [here](#).

Please contact your Washington representative or state-federal director for additional information.

GHSAC CALENDAR

GHSAC Plenary Conference Call

Date: July 26, 2018

Time: 3:00 p.m. ET

Dial In: 888-858-6021

Passcode: 2026245364

NGA CALENDAR

2018 NGA Summer Meeting

Date: July 19-22, 2018

Location: Santa Fe, NM

2018 Seminar for New Governors

Date: November 16 –18, 2018

Location: Colorado Springs, CO

Maggie Brunner

Senior Policy Analyst | Homeland Security & Public Safety Division

NGA Center for Best Practices

National Governors Association

Phone: 202-624-5364 | Cell: 443-804-4321

Email: mbrunner@nga.org

www.nga.org/cms/center

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NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION

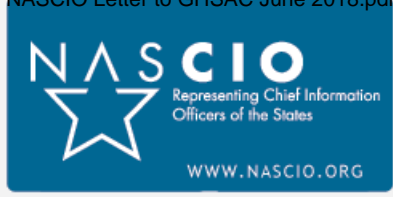
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NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION

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<MBrunner@NGA.ORG> <mbrunner@nga.org>
Filename: NASCIO Letter to GHSAC June 2018.pdf
Last Modified: Fri Jun 29 16:26:31 CDT 2018



June 5, 2018

Governors Homeland Security Advisors Council (GHSAC)
 444 North Capitol St NW #267
 Washington, DC 20001

Dear Commissioner Squires and Director Klein,

On behalf of the National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NAS CIO), we wanted to reach out and offer our assistance to the Governors Homeland Security Advisors Council (GHSAC) and your members on the new grant guidance by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) related to homeland security grants. As you know, FEMA grant guidance now requires a cybersecurity investment justification (CIJ) and requires state CIOs and state CISOs to sit on the Senior Advisory Committee (SAC) and the Urban Area Working Group (UAWG) to better address cybersecurity preparedness.

State CIOs have a long history with state cybersecurity and have consistently ranked it a top priority for state IT. In the [2016 Deloitte-NASCIO Cybersecurity Study](#), we found that the top challenges to addressing cyber within state government were: lack of sufficient funding (80 percent), inadequate availability of cybersecurity professionals (51 percent), increasing sophistication of threats (45 percent), lack of documented processes (45 percent), and lack of visibility and influence within the enterprise (33 percent). We believe that by collaborating with state homeland security and emergency management professionals, we can begin to holistically address some of the aforementioned challenges.

We recognize that redirecting FEMA grant funds to address state cybersecurity may be difficult due to the need to fund existing priorities, required set-asides, and pass through requirements. We also understand that FEMA grants are insufficient to meet all the emergency management and homeland security needs of state and local governments. Acknowledging the challenging financial environment that state and local governments face, we would like to begin engaging in a collaborative discussion with GHSAC members and other homeland security/emergency management professionals in our respective states about how to strategically fund cybersecurity initiatives that would bring the most benefit to our states. Most importantly, we would like to offer our assistance with developing or revising the CIJ document that FEMA requires states to submit.

NASCIO would be happy to connect interested HSAs and state emergency managers to their state's CIO and CISO. Please contact NAS CIO director of government affairs, Yejin Jang (yjang@NAS CIO.org 202.624.8477) for contact information. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Bo Reese, NAS CIO President and Oklahoma CIO

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AN ACT

RELATING TO MILITARY AFFAIRS; AUTHORIZING ACTIVATION OF THE NATIONAL GUARD IN THE CASE OF CYBERSECURITY THREATS; PLACING LIMITS ON THE AUTHORITY EXERCISED PURSUANT TO SUCH ACTIVATIONS; PROHIBITING THE INCURRENCE OF DEBT FOR SUCH ACTIVATIONS; DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

SECTION 1. Section 20-2-3 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1987, Chapter 318, Section 10, as amended) is amended to read:

"20-2-3. GOVERNOR--POWER TO CALL OUT MILITIA.--

A. The governor may, in case of insurrection, invasion, riot or breach of the peace or of imminent danger thereof or in case of other emergency, order into active service of the state the militia or any components or parts thereof that have not been called into federal service. As used in this section, "emergency" includes any man-made or natural disaster causing or threatening widespread physical or economic harm that is beyond local control and requiring the resources of the state.

B. The governor may also order any member of the national guard to active state service for a period not to exceed a cumulative total of four months within a calendar year for any individual member for the following reasons:

- (1) to protect critical infrastructure in

1 the state from a cybersecurity threat or security
2 vulnerability;

3 (2) to protect an information system owned
4 or operated by the state from a cybersecurity threat or
5 security vulnerability;

6 (3) to protect information that is stored
7 on, processed by or transiting on an information system owned
8 or operated by the state from a cybersecurity threat or
9 security vulnerability; or

10 (4) to identify the source of a
11 cybersecurity threat.

12 C. A member of the national guard called to active
13 service pursuant to the provisions of Subsection B of this
14 section shall not have any police powers or arrest authority.
15 "Subsection B of Section 20-2-3 NMSA 1978" shall be cited on
16 all orders, vouchers and payroll documents submitted for
17 reimbursement pursuant to Section 20-1-6 NMSA 1978 in support
18 of all actions authorized by Subsection B of this section.
19 In no case shall an activation ordered pursuant to Subsection
20 B of this section be used to incur a debt under Article 9,
21 Section 7 of the constitution of New Mexico.

22 D. In case of any breach of the peace, tumult,
23 riot or resistance to process of this state or imminent
24 danger thereof, the sheriff of a county may call for aid from
25 the governor as commander-in-chief of the national guard. If

1 it appears to the governor that the power of the county is
2 insufficient to enable the sheriff to preserve the peace and
3 protect the lives and property of the peaceful residents of
4 the county or to overcome the resistance to process of this
5 state, the governor shall, on application of the sheriff,
6 order out such military force as is necessary.

7 E. When any portion of the militia is called out
8 for the purpose of suppressing an unlawful or riotous
9 assembly, the commander of the troops shall cooperate with
10 the civil officers to the fullest extent consistent with the
11 accomplishment of the object for which the troops were
12 called. The civil officials may express to the commander of
13 the troops the general or specific objective that the civil
14 officials desire to accomplish, but the tactical direction of
15 the troops, the kind and extent of force to be used and the
16 particular means to be employed to accomplish the object
17 specified by the civil officers shall be left solely to the
18 commander of the troops present on duty.

19 F. When any portion of the militia is ordered into
20 active service pursuant to this section in case of an
21 emergency, the militia may provide those resources and
22 services necessary to avoid or minimize economic or physical
23 harm until a situation becomes stabilized and again under
24 local self-support and control, including the provision, on a
25 temporary, emergency basis, for lodging, sheltering, health

1 care, food and any transportation or shipping necessary to
2 protect lives or public property; or for any other action
3 necessary to protect the public health, safety and welfare.

4 G. In the event of the exercise by the governor of
5 the powers under this section, the governor shall first
6 utilize the personnel and assets of the national guard and
7 only in their absence or insufficiency utilize the personnel
8 and assets of the state defense force."

9 SECTION 2. EMERGENCY.--It is necessary for the public
10 peace, health and safety that this act take effect
11 immediately. _____

SB 380
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From: Larm, Doug <doug.larm@seattle.gov> on
behalf of Larm, Doug <Doug.Larm@seattle.gov>
<doug.larm@seattle.gov>
To: Larm, Doug <doug.larm@wsfc.wa.gov>
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: 2018_06_25 Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources
(InFOCUS)
Date: Mon Jun 25 2018 07:19:33 CDT
Attachments: 2018_06_25.pdf

InFOCUS

Monday

25 Jun 2018

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Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

MONDAY – 25 JUN 2018



	International	National	Regional and Local
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[DISCLAIMER and FAIR USE Notice](#)**Event Calendar**[Top of page](#)

Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
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Events, Opportunities[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	06/25 Ethiopia: FBI to probe deadly blast
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-send-fbi-experts-investigate-deadly-ethiopia-blast-56136008?
GIST	<p>Ethiopia says the United States will send FBI investigators to look into Saturday's deadly attack on a massive rally for the new prime minister.</p> <p>The state-affiliated Fana Broadcasting Corporate reports that Under Secretary of Commerce Gilbert Kaplan made the remark after meeting with the foreign minister in the capital, Addis Ababa.</p> <p>Witnesses said a man in police uniform tried to hurl a grenade at the stage after Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed addressed a crowd of tens of thousands cheering a wave of reforms in the East African country.</p> <p>Two people have died and more than 150 were hurt. More than 30 people have been arrested.</p> <p>The ruling party, just weeks ago the target of widespread anti-government protests, blamed "desperate anti-peace elements" and vows to continue the reforms.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/25 Romania: daily Russian aggression
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/minister-romania-faces-hybrid-cybernetic-attacks-russia-56136383?
GIST	<p>Romania's defense minister says the country faces challenges from hybrid and cyber attacks and "daily" Russian aggression in the Black Sea.</p> <p>Amid the uncertainty, Mihai Fifor told The Associated Press Monday that the country of 19 million aims to be the region's main security provider, and ensure NATO allies are informed about possible threats.</p> <p>"I don't think there is a single day without a challenge" from Russia in Romania's airspace or territorial waters, he said, adding that his country works "to discourage as much as possible, as efficiently as it can."</p> <p>He said Romania plans to increase spending on defense from 1.81 percent of GDP last year to 2 percent this year, and send more troops to Afghanistan.</p> <p>NATO members agreed in 2014 to spend 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense within a decade.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 Immense rains cause more flash flooding
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/immense-rains-are-causing-more-flash-flooding-and-experts-say-its-getting-worse/2018/06/24/3970a236-765e-11e8-805c-4b67019fcfe4_story.html?utm_term=.9e5ec3715270
GIST	<p>OLD FORT, N.C. — Brian Gentry was certain his 33,000-pound truck would be fine as he headed out into the heavy rains here in the Blue Ridge Mountains. But as he went to clear debris from a two-lane highway after more than a half-foot of rain, rocklike drops pounded the windows, and he heard the earth “crack” around him as the land began to slide.</p> <p>Mud and uprooted trees slammed his vehicle, tossing it across the highway, over a 10-foot embankment and into the raging Catawba River. Gentry and a co-worker with the North Carolina Department of Transportation were rolled, and the truck came to rest in the water, just the passenger-side window peeking out.</p> <p>“I looked around, and I saw everything that was going on, and I thought, ‘I am going to die,’ ” Gentry, 47, recalled. “I thought, ‘My life is about over, so I need to call my wife.’ ”</p> <p>Gentry spent 40 minutes clinging to a rope in the water awaiting rescue, the victim of an alarming phenomenon: Torrential rain events across the United States are becoming more frequent and more intense, leading to record rainfall, rare extreme flooding and perilous infrastructure failures.</p> <p>Experts say the immense rains — some spawned by tropical ocean waters, others by once-routine thunderstorms — are the product of long-rising air temperatures and an increase in the sheer size of the storms. Because warmer air can hold more water, large storms are dropping far more rain at a faster clip.</p> <p>Such rains in recent weeks have deluged the Great Lakes region, the Deep South and the suburbs of major cities along the Atlantic coast. Philadelphia, Charlottesville, and Ocean City, Ellicott City and Frederick in Maryland all have experienced major flooding since mid-May. Several locations in Maryland had their wettest May on record, including Baltimore, which tallied more than eight inches, most of which fell in the second half of the month.</p> <p>“Things are definitely getting more extreme,” said Andreas Prein, an atmospheric scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colo. “You just have to look at the records. All areas of the continental U.S. have seen increases in peak rainfall rates in the past 50 years. . . . And there is a chance that we are underestimating the risk, actually.”</p> <p>On Friday, Richmond experienced its second-wettest day on record — 7.61 inches of rain, more than the city typically gets in the entire month of June, topping the previous record on Aug. 12, 1955, during Hurricane Connie. The torrential rains in the past week flooded Richmond International Airport, which closed its doors for more than two hours Friday.</p> <p>Slow-moving thunderstorms on Wednesday triggered widespread flooding in suburban Pittsburgh, where residents posted online videos showing cars, television sets and dumpsters floating down streets and highways. Rainfall rates reached two to three inches per hour during that storm, according to the National Weather Service in Pittsburgh.</p> <p>Several stalled storms last weekend resulted in catastrophic flooding of homes and businesses on the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, prompting Gov. Rick Snyder (R) to declare a state of disaster in the counties affected. In South Texas, days of heavy rain inundated subdivisions with several feet of water, and the Texas National Guard used helicopters to rescue stranded residents.</p> <p>And in North Carolina, the May 29 flooding in McDowell County resulted in 18 people needing rescue, including the highway workers in Old Fort. As the runoff poured into mountain streams, officials ordered up to 2,000 residents to evacuate amid fears that the Lake Tahoma Dam could fail. There were also more than 40 landslides, which the McDowell County Office of Emergency Management described as unprecedented.</p>

“The storms are worse. The rain is worse. The heat is worse,” said Melissa Smith, an Old Fort resident, after a mountain stream overflowed that night and spilled several feet of mud, rocks and other debris into her yard. “Everything is worse.”

Several atmospheric researchers said in interviews that they agree with that perception. They say it is getting worse.

Since 1880, global temperature has risen just more than 0.13 degrees per decade, for a total of 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit (1 degree Celsius). The amount of water air can hold is based on temperature — put very simply, the warmer the air is, the more water it can hold.

Theoretically, experts say, an additional 1.8 degrees would amount to about 7 percent more water in the air, resulting in a similar increase in extreme rainfall. But what Prein and other researchers have found is much higher across a vast portion of the United States.

According to the 2014 National Climate Assessment, the eastern half of the continental United States has seen the most dramatic change in extreme rainfall. The amount of rain during the most extreme storms in the Northeast has risen 71 percent since 1958; in the Midwest, heavy rain has increased 37 percent; in the Southeast, it’s up 27 percent.

And the area covered by each storm also is getting larger, Prein said, another major factor in the increased precipitation. Prein’s new research suggests thunderstorms will become 80 to 90 percent larger by the end of the century.

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HEADLINE	06/25 Wildfires race thru northern California
SOURCE	http://time.com/5320813/california-wildfires-thousands-flee/
GIST	<p>(CLEARLAKE OAKS, Calif.) — Wind-driven wildfires destroyed buildings and threatened hundreds of others as they raced across dry brush in rural Northern California.</p> <p>The Pawnee Fire, which broke out Saturday near the community of Clearlake Oaks, has destroyed 12 buildings and threatened an additional 600. As of Sunday, there was no containment and it burned across about 12 square miles. Authorities ordered people to evacuate all homes in the Spring Valley area, where about 3,000 people live.</p> <p>“What we’re stressing is that people, when they get the evacuation order, they heed it immediately and get out and stay out until it is safe to return,” state Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Battalion Chief Jonathan Cox said. “This is one of four large fires burning in Northern California. It’s a good reminder that fire season is upon us.”</p> <p>Erratic wind and heat gripping a swath of California from San Jose to the Oregon border drove the flames, which were north of the wine country region where devastating wildfires killed 44 people and destroyed thousands of homes and businesses last October.</p> <p>Farther north, a fire spanning about three-quarters of a mile in Tehama County destroyed “multiple residential and commercial buildings,” Cal Fire said. But firefighters appeared to be making good progress — the Stoll Fire was halfway contained and some evacuees were allowed to return home, authorities said.</p> <p>A second fire in Tehama County consumed 5.5 square miles, but no buildings were reported burned. The so-called Lane Fire threatened 200 structures and some homes had been evacuated, Cox said. It was 10 percent contained.</p> <p>A fire in neighboring Shasta County grew to 1.6 square miles and was 20 percent contained. The so-called</p>

	<p>Creek Fire had damaged no structures but did prompt evacuations.</p> <p>The cause of each blaze was under investigation Sunday. No one was reported hurt.</p> <p>More than 230 firefighters using helicopters, bulldozers and other equipment were battling the Pawnee Fire in a rugged area that made it difficult to get equipment up close.</p> <p>“It’s kind of the worst possible combination,” Cox said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 Seattle Pride: 300,000 crowd parade
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1027150/thousands-to-pack-seattle-streets-for-annual-pride-parade/
GIST	<p>As many as 300,000 people crowded into downtown Seattle for the annual Pride Parade on Sunday. This year’s theme was “The Many Faces of Pride.”</p> <p>The parade started at Fourth Avenue and ended at Second Avenue and Denny Way near Seattle Center, lasting about 2.5 hours.</p> <p>Seattle Center will host the 12th annual PrideFest until 8pm with live music and vendors.</p> <p>Seattle celebrated its first Pride Week from June 24-30 in 1974. Three years later, Mayor Uhlman declared June 25 to July 1 Gay Pride Week in the city of Seattle. The city held its first Gay Pride Week march that same year. Opponents picketed outside City Hall and wrote angry letters to the mayor’s office.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 Record levels of imported seafood
SOURCE	https://finance.yahoo.com/news/us-imported-more-seafood-2017-prior-141246717--finance.html
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Maine (AP) -- The United States imported more seafood last year than at any point in its history, and the nation's trade deficit in the sector is growing, federal data show.</p> <p>The U.S. imported more than 6 billion pounds of seafood valued at more than \$21.5 billion in 2017, according to data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which oversees American fisheries. The country exported more than 3.6 billion pounds valued at about \$6 billion.</p> <p>The widening gap comes at a time when Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, who heads the federal agency that includes NOAA, has identified reducing the deficit as a priority for the government.</p> <p>The U.S. is home to major commercial fisheries for species such as Pacific salmon, New England lobster and Alaska pollock, but it imports more than 90 percent of the seafood the public consumes.</p> <p>Ross and others in U.S. fisheries are looking at new strategies to cut the deficit, including increasing the amount of aquaculture-based farming, said Jennie Lyons, a NOAA spokeswoman.</p> <p>The U.S. trades in seafood with countries all over the world, and the countries it buys the most from include Canada, China and Chile. Major buyers of U.S. seafood include China, Japan and South Korea.</p> <p>While U.S. fishermen would love to grow commercial fisheries, it's important to note that domestic and imported seafood are both important parts of the supply chain and support thousands of American jobs, said Gavin Gibbons, spokesman for the National Fisheries Institute.</p> <p>He added that the trade imbalance isn't caused by a lack of fish to catch in U.S. waters, as NOAA announced this spring the number of overfished fish stocks in the country is at an all-time low.</p>

	<p>"Our stocks are fished to the maximum sustainable yield. In order to feed Americans, and to feed the raw materials into the jobs that are needed, we have to get it from overseas," Gibbons said.</p> <p>Some of the seafood items that American consumers are especially fond of, including tuna, salmon and shrimp, are heavily dependent on foreign imports to make it to U.S. markets and restaurants. Some species, such as lobsters, are caught in the U.S., exported to other countries that have greater processing capacity, and return to the U.S. as imports.</p> <p>In this way, the U.S. and its trade partners depend on each other to satisfy worldwide demand for seafood products, said Geoff Irvine, executive director of the Lobster Council of Canada.</p> <p>"Our relationship is vital, and it is symbiotic," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 CDC: vector-borne diseases tripled
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/24/health/bug-disease-preparedness/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)In many parts of the United States, this weekend marks the start of summer sleepaway camp season, which means swimming, arts and crafts, marshmallow roasts -- and, very often, ticks.</p> <p>Of the more than 1,600 overnight camps that are members of the American Camp Association, more than a third are in New England and the mid-Atlantic states, where Lyme disease is particularly prevalent, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>According to a May CDC report, cases of vector-borne diseases -- those caused by viruses and bacteria carried by ticks, mosquitoes and other bugs -- tripled in the United States from 2004 to 2016.</p> <p>For years, experts have voiced concern that many local public health agencies are unprepared to control such pests and limit the spread of the diseases.</p> <p>"I started to look into it, and the numbers were on the increase and didn't show any signs of stopping," said Lauren Rutkowski, who with her husband, Joel, owns Indian Head Camp for children in Equinunk, Pennsylvania. "As a mom and a camp director, I was concerned."</p> <p>Every summer from 2010 to 2014, seven or eight campers had confirmed or suspected tick bites at Indian Head, and each summer, three or four of those children tested positive for Lyme disease, according to Rutkowski. Lyme disease is a bacterial infection transmitted through bites from infected ticks, and if left untreated, it can spread to joints, the heart and the nervous system.</p> <p>She said it's not known whether the children contracted the disease from the tick bite they got at camp or from a previous tick bite at home.</p> <p>In 2014, her son, Oakley, was bitten by a tick at the family's camp, which hosts 650 children every summer. He did not contract Lyme disease.</p> <p>The next year, Rutkowski hired a new service that helps fight ticks, including spraying the perimeter of the camp with pesticides and offering advice on how to get rid of habitats where ticks breed.</p> <p>Since then, not a single camper is known to have been bitten by a tick, Rutkowski said.</p> <p>Now, 123 camps use the service, Ivy Oaks Analytics, according to Isaiah Ham, who started the company after one of his summer campers contracted Lyme disease from a tick bite.</p> <p>Ham, then a college student working as a counselor, said he wasn't pleased with the camp's response.</p>

	<p>"The camp just kind of shrugged and thought it was just inevitable, like a hurricane; it was just part of being in the outdoors," Ham remembered.</p> <p>It's unknown how many children are bitten by ticks at summer camps or how many camps are using services to mitigate the pests, according to Sam Borek, president of the New York/New Jersey section of the American Camp Association.</p> <p>Camps don't exist in a vacuum, of course, and there are concerns that state public health departments aren't doing enough to fight diseases caused by ticks, mosquitoes and other pests.</p> <p>"Mosquitoes, ticks, fleas can all carry very serious diseases that are life-threatening," said Dr. Irwin Redlener, a professor at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health.</p> <p>A report from the National Association of County and City Health Officials says 84% of programs to control diseases from mosquitoes need improvement. In 18 states, every program is falling short.</p> <p>These programs often aren't well-funded and aren't equipped to do proper surveillance or prevention, Redlener said.</p> <p>"We're, simply put, not ready, and we should be," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 Iraq one step closer to new govt.
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-election-alliance/pm-abadi-sadr-alliance-brings-iraq-government-closer-idUSKBN1JJ0ZS
GIST	<p>Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and cleric Moqtada al-Sadr said on Saturday their political blocs would enter into an alliance, bringing Iraq one step closer to forming a new government after an election marred by low turnout and fraud allegations.</p> <p>The alliance between Abadi's Victory Alliance, which came third in a May parliamentary election, and Sadr's Saeroon list, which won the largest number of seats, increases the chances of forming a government after weeks of political tensions.</p> <p>"We announce a cross-sectarian, cross-ethnic alliance to speed up forming the next government and to agree on common points that guarantee the interests of the Iraqi people," Sadr said at a news conference in the Shi'ite holy city of Najaf.</p> <p>He called for a wider alliance consisting of all components of Iraqi society that would form an inclusive government.</p> <p>Sadr presents himself as a non-sectarian nationalist opposed to both the United States and Iran's influence over his country. Saeroon is an electoral alliance between Sadrist politicians, the Iraqi Communist Party, and other secular candidates.</p> <p>Yet earlier in June Sadr went into an alliance with Hadi al-Amiri, a Shi'ite militia commander with close ties to Iran whose Fatih coalition came second in the election.</p> <p>There was no immediate reaction from al Amiri's camp, but the prime minister said his pact with Sadr would not compromise the cleric's other alliance.</p> <p>"I affirm that this alliance is not in contrast to any other alliances either of the two lists have previously entered into with other blocs, rather, it flows in the same direction and same principles," said Abadi.</p> <p>The top three winning blocs, all Shi'ite-led, have upwards of 140 seats between them. At least 165 seats</p>

	<p>are needed to form a government although traditionally the ruling bloc in parliament tends to be larger so as to include Sunni Arab and Kurdish lawmakers.</p> <p>A coalition between Sadr, Amiri, and Abadi could see internal divisions. Abadi had balanced U.S. and Iranian interests during his term and was backed by the West. Sadr says he opposes both, and Amiri is Iran's biggest Iraqi ally.</p> <p>Despite coming in third, Abadi is hoping to win a second term as a compromise candidate for the premiership. Analysts and diplomats say he would be weakened and beholden to Sadr and Amiri even if he manages to stay on, however.</p> <p>Abadi and Sadr both called on the leaders of other blocs to meet and "agree on the coming steps" in order to speed up the formation of an inclusive Iraqi government.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/22 US, SKorea suspend training exercises
SOURCE	https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/international/asia-pacific/177793-180623-us-suspending-more-training-exercises-with-s-korea-pentagon
GIST	<p>The US and South Korea have agreed to indefinitely suspend two exchange program training exercises, to support diplomatic negotiations with North Korea, the Pentagon said Friday.</p> <p>The move comes after the two countries announced the shelving of the large-scale Ulchi Freedom Guardian exercises slated for August, making good on a pledge by President Donald Trump during his summit with North Korea's leader. Friday's decision followed a high-level meeting between Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Joe Dunford, and National Security Advisor John Bolton.</p> <p>"To support implementing the outcomes of the Singapore Summit, and in coordination with our Republic of Korea ally, Secretary Mattis has indefinitely suspended select exercises," Pentagon spokeswoman Dana White said in a statement. Two Korean Marine Exchange Program training exercises scheduled to occur in the next three months have now been shelved.</p> <p>"In support of upcoming diplomatic negotiations led by Secretary Pompeo, additional decisions will depend upon the DPRK continuing to have productive negotiations in good faith," White continued, using the acronym for the official name of North Korea. Some 17,500 US military personnel were due to take part in the Freedom Guardian drills.</p> <p>Last week, after his historic summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, Trump made the surprise announcement that the US would halt "war games" with its South Korean security ally -- without making clear when the freeze would begin. The US leader raised eyebrows by describing the exercises as "provocative" -- a term used by the North. US and South Korean forces have been training together for years, and routinely rehearse everything from beach landings to an invasion from the North, or even "decapitation" strikes targeting the North Korean regime. Pyongyang typically reacts furiously.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 Hundreds stranded on migrant boats
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/24/europe/maersk-lifeline-migrants-stranded-mediterranean-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Almost 350 migrants are stranded on two boats in the Mediterranean, including a Danish cargo ship, as a standoff between nearby European countries deepened on Sunday.</p> <p>The boats include German rescue ship, Lifeline, which picked up 234 people and 17 crew members off the</p>

coast of Libya on Thursday; and a cargo ship operated by Danish transportation company Maersk, which picked up another 113 migrants off the coast of Libya on Friday morning.

Both boats have been barred from docking at nearby Italy and Malta, as the countries urged other European nations to take in the stranded migrants.

The standoff comes weeks after Italy and Malta refused to accept another rescue ship, the Aquarius, which was carrying over 600 migrants. After two days drifting in the Mediterranean the migrants were accepted by Spain, exposing the tough new policies of Italy's hardline interior minister and leader of the anti-immigration League party, Matteo Salvini.

Similarly, Italy has also refused to allow the Maersk cargo ship, which is carrying over 100 migrants and is located south of Sicily, to dock in its ports. That's despite the Italian Maritime Rescue Coordination Center calling Maersk on Thursday night and asking for it to rescue the migrants, a Maersk spokesman told CNN.

The cargo ship had been traveling between Libya and Malta at the time, the spokesman said, adding that "it is now denied a port of entry and the company is awaiting further instruction from authorities."

Meanwhile, the fiery exchange between Italy and Malta continued over the weekend, with Italian transportation minister Danilo Toninelli calling the Maltese decision not to allow the Lifeline to dock "inhumane" and "absurd" on his Facebook page on Saturday.

Malta's Minister for Home Affairs and National Security, Michael Farrugia, responded with tweets asking Toninelli to get his facts right and accusing Lifeline of breaking "international rules."

Immigration continues to be a controversial issue for EU member states. During the recent federal election campaign that led to Italy's new government -- a coalition between the anti-immigrant League and anti-establishment Five Star Movement -- Salvini promoted his party with an "Italians first" slogan and pledged to deport half a million migrants.

At an informal EU summit on immigration in Brussels on Sunday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel appeared keen to manage expectations that European leaders could reach a broad agreement on migration, telling journalists that countries will need to work on bilateral and trilateral deals with one another instead of waiting for all 28 EU member countries to come to an agreement.

The Mediterranean remains the world's deadliest migration route, despite sharp falls in the number of people trying to reach Europe by boat. That drop is partly ascribed to a deal struck between Italy and Libya last year, in which the southern European country pledged to bolster Libya's coast guard so it could spot departing migrant boats and house migrants attempting to cross.

As of June 6, there had been an estimated 785 deaths on the route this year, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said, with the majority of the 33,400 migrants and refugees arriving through Greece and Italy.

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HEADLINE	06/25 Trade worries hit world stocks
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-global-markets/trade-worries-hit-world-stocks-oil-gives-back-gains-idUSKBN1JL037
GIST	LONDON (Reuters) - World shares fell on Monday, dented by worries over a worsening trade dispute between the United States and other major economies, while oil prices gave up some of the gains made after major exporters agreed a modest production increase. The Wall Street Journal said U.S. President Donald Trump planned to bar many Chinese companies from

	<p>investing in U.S. technology firms and block additional technology exports to China.</p> <p>The report hit Asian stocks overnight and in London the pan-European STOXX 600 index was down over half a percent in morning trade.</p> <p>S&P500 mini futures fell as much as 0.6 percent while MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan fell 0.95 percent to 6-1/2-month lows. Japan's Nikkei lost 0.8 percent.</p> <p>Taking a particular hit on the trade tensions was the European autos sector, falling 1.4 percent and set for its seventh straight day of losses after Trump said on Friday he aimed to hike tariffs on EU car imports by 20 percent.</p> <p>MSCI's All-Country World index, which tracks shares in 47 countries, was down 0.3 in morning trade in Europe.</p> <p>As the threat of a full-blown trade war has grown, the gauge has fallen in five of the last six weeks. Last week it fell one percent - its biggest weekly drop in three months.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 Crews contain wildfire near Vantage
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/wildfires/fire-crews-contain-wildfire-near-vantage/281-566977595
GIST	<p>Fire crews have managed to contain a wildfire burning in central Washington that had threatened about 30 homes.</p> <p>The Spokesman-Review reports that firefighters had fully contained the fire near Vantage and the Columbia River on Saturday. State resources will now withdraw from the area, leaving local crews to address any smaller hotspots.</p> <p>The fire started Wednesday night and quickly began burning through brush and grass in the area. The cause is under investigation.</p> <p>Fire officials say the fire had scorched more than 11 square miles (28 square kilometers).</p>
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HEADLINE	06/25 Algeria expels 13,000 migrants to Sahara
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/walk-die-algeria-abandons-13000-migrants-sahara-56133827?
GIST	<p>Algeria has abandoned more than 13,000 people in the Sahara Desert over the past 14 months, including pregnant women and children, expelling them without food or water and forcing them to walk, sometimes at gunpoint, under a blistering sun. Some never make it out alive.</p> <p>The expelled migrants can be seen coming over the horizon by the hundreds, appearing at first as specks in the distance under temperatures of up to 48 degrees Celsius (118 degrees Fahrenheit).</p> <p>In Niger, where the majority head, the lucky ones limp across a desolate 15-kilometer no-man's-land to the border village of Assamaka. Others wander for days before a U.N. rescue squad can find them. Untold numbers perish; nearly all of the more than two dozen survivors interviewed by The Associated Press told of people in their groups who simply vanished into the Sahara.</p> <p>Algeria's mass expulsions have picked up since October 2017, as the European Union renewed pressure on North African countries to head off migrants going north to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea or the</p>

	<p>barrier fences with Spain.</p> <p>A European Union spokesperson said the EU was aware of what Algeria was doing, but that "sovereign countries" can expel migrants as long as they comply with international law. Unlike Niger, Algeria takes none of the EU money intended to help with the migration crisis, although it did receive \$111.3 million in aid from Europe between 2014 and 2017.</p> <p>Algeria provides no figures for its involuntary expulsions. But the number of people crossing on foot to Niger has been increasing since IOM started counting in May 2017, when 135 people were dropped, to as high as 2,888 in April 2018. In all, according to the IOM, a total of 11,276 men, women and children survived the march.</p> <p>At least another 2,500 were forced on a similar trek into neighboring Mali, with an unknown number succumbing along the way.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/25 Turkey's victorious Erdogan new powers
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/turkeys-victorious-erdogan-set-assume-sweeping-powers-56133721?cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has dominated Turkish politics for the past 15 years, was set on Monday to extend his rule with sweeping new powers after winning landmark presidential and parliamentary elections.</p> <p>Turkey's High Electoral Board declared Erdogan, 64, the winner of Sunday's polls, which usher in a new executive presidential system that was approved in a referendum last year. Under the system, the office of the prime minister is eliminated and executive powers are transferred to the president, who can rule with only limited checks and balances.</p> <p>The Turkish leader, who is accused by critics of adopting increasingly authoritarian tactics but is loved by supporters for bringing prosperity and stability, may be facing rough times ahead, however. Analysts predict an economic downturn amid rising inflation and a struggling currency.</p> <p>President Recep Erdogan cited economic challenges and a growing military campaign in Syria in calling an early election.</p> <p>His win could deepen Turkey's rift with Western allies, who are already concerned by setbacks in democracy and human rights as well as Turkey's closer ties with Russia.</p> <p>Still, Turkey's currency, the lira, rallied on Monday over Erdogan's victory, which allows the country to avoid instability in the short-term.</p> <p>In his victory speech, Erdogan said he would work toward achieving his goal of making Turkey one of the world's top 10 economies by 2023, when the Turkish Republic marks its centenary.</p> <p>He also pledged a more "determined" fight against outlawed Kurdish rebels and alleged members of a movement led by U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen, whom he accuses of orchestrating a 2016 failed coup against his government. Gulen denies involvement.</p> <p>"Turkey made its choice in favor of a more determined fight against the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) and (Gulenists)," Erdogan said. "We will go after terror organizations with stronger determination."</p> <p>Under the new system, Erdogan will appoint ministers, vice presidents and high-level bureaucrats, issue decrees, prepare the budget and decide on security policies.</p>

According to unofficial results that have yet to be confirmed by the electoral board, Erdogan garnered 52.5 percent of the votes, while his ruling Justice and Development Party, or AKP, won 42.5 percent in the parliamentary vote. Erdogan's closest contender, Muharrem Ince of the main opposition Republican People's Party, won 30.7 percent.

Erdogan's AKP fell short of a parliamentary majority but a better-than-expected performance by its nationalist ally should allow the party to control the 600-seat legislature.

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HEADLINE	06/22 Schools offer hope in opioid crisis
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/education/lab/in-opioid-crisis-schools-are-on-the-front-lines-but-slow-to-get-help/
GIST	<p>EVERETT — The front office at Hawthorne Elementary School, built in 1952, was never imagined as a social-service referral hub, drug-counseling center or confessional. But that's the role it has served for Tiffany Smith over the past two years, as she's worked to rid herself of heroin addiction while raising three children.</p> <p>Smith, who lives across the street from the school, regularly stops in to chat with the office staff and update Principal Celia O'Connor-Weaver on her progress in treatment. It wasn't always such a cheery occasion. The first time she ventured inside, Smith, now 31, clutched a sheaf of paperwork from Child Protective Services. She needed to tell the principal that her children — taken into foster care months before — might still get visits from state social workers, even now that the kids were back home.</p> <p>Explaining all of this to O'Connor-Weaver meant describing what had led to the boys' removal, which meant confessing the words Smith hated saying aloud: She had been addicted to heroin for the better part of a decade. She had been living in her car, the kids staying at her grandmother's house, until her grandmother finally called state authorities.</p> <p>"I was afraid of the judgment — or that my children would get shunned," Smith said. "But it wasn't that way at all. They said they have a lot of parents that have gone through this and what can we do to help? It was not what I was expecting."</p> <p>In her six years at the elementary school, Principal O'Connor-Weaver has repeated this conversation more times than she cares to count. Children in Everett, an epicenter of the opioid crisis in Washington, were among the 525 Snohomish County kids removed from addicted parents in 2017 and placed into foster care. In King County, more than 1,000 children were removed.</p> <p>And while public-health workers scramble to stem adult addictions, less visible have been the reverberations downstream — that is, on addicts' children, in school. Across the region, educators and child-welfare workers report increased learning problems and behavioral outbursts from the kids of addicted parents. Research, too, suggests dire life-outcomes for these students. Yet the potential for school-based interventions has been, as yet, underutilized — even as public-health investigators say schools offer the most efficient hope for stemming a looming social crisis.</p> <p>"This fallout has been coming for a few years, but we've seen it get progressively worse," said O'Connor-Weaver, pointing toward increased tardiness, low attendance and "kids not being well taken care of."</p> <p>Evidence shows up during the most mundane moments, like recess, when teachers at Hawthorne watch 7- and 8-year-olds pretend to revive overdosed patients. Or in the principal's office, when a parent freshly home from rehab confesses that they've relapsed.</p> <p>"The focus of school, of course, is learning," O'Connor-Weaver said. "But kids' minds are not focused on that. They're worried about their parents. They're worried about their next meal and who's going to be home to take care of them. When a parent goes into rehab, it puts a huge stress on the family."</p>

Drug users' children flooding to foster care

In Tiffany Smith's case, three years of methadone treatment have helped her regain solid enough footing to secure housing and begin working toward a GED, in hopes of becoming a drug and alcohol counselor. (She'd dropped out of Sedro-Woolley High School at 15.)

But her children are still reeling. Smith's 6-year-old cannot stand to be apart from his mother and struggles with speech, cognitive and learning delays.

"He was talking fine before foster care," Smith said. "But when he came out, he couldn't pronounce some words. They said it was due to the trauma."

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Her older son, now 7, was born prematurely and spent his first two days of life trembling from heroin withdrawal as his mother watched, devastated.

"Seeing my baby shake from detoxing really hurt — I knew it was my fault," she said.

This may be the most pressing, but largely hidden, toll of the opioid crisis in Washington. Though 10,000 high-school seniors said they'd used heroin or gotten high on opioid-derived painkillers in 2016, those numbers were about the same as two years prior. Foster care, however, is surging.

Between 2011 and 2017, the state took children from drug-abusing parents nearly 14,000 times. Last year's rate was the highest for drug-related causes since 2010 — up 16 percent over 2015 — while state hospitals report a steady increase in substance-exposed newborns.

Child-welfare workers hear complaints about increasingly severe problems in school — more physical violence toward peers, or kids who need to be taught separately — from students whose parents are staggering through addiction, said Jenna Kiser, who oversees intake at the state Children's Administration.

"These numbers are very concerning," said Jenny Heddin, a supervisor at the agency. "When children from these homes come into foster care, they can be very difficult to serve. Meanwhile, our foster-family system, too, is very stressed. So this is a bit of a perfect storm."

Heddin and her staff represent one corner of a national wave. More than 37 states report unprecedented numbers of kids entering foster care, many of them for reasons related to a parent's substance abuse, according to the federal Department of Education.

The fallout is evident nearly every day at Hawthorne Elementary.

"I don't care about you!" shouted a child who had been muscled out of his behavior-intervention classroom on a Thursday morning in March, a teacher gripping each arm, bouncer-style. In the hallway outside, the boy covered his face with his hands. His father was no longer living at home, no one had any idea when he'd be back and the child was "a mess," his teachers told Principal O'Connor-Weaver.

Smith has seen or heard of similar disruptions across the district.

"It's pretty much everywhere," she said. "People I'm in recovery with have their children all over Everett Public Schools. One time, I saw a woman nodding out, obviously high while waiting for her kid. She was going to get into her car. I hate to point fingers, but I told the school that's definitely what's going on."

Damaging children's futures

By the time Child Protective Services is knocking on someone's door, the problem is already severe. And so far, efforts to respond might best be described as triage — focused more on addiction treatment than

prevention, both in Washington and across the country.

“People are very early in their planning on how to make an impact on this,” Kiser said. “I’d love to hear that there’s a state doing awesome so we could follow suit, but I haven’t heard of anyone who’s been able to resolve this.”

Earlier this year, Gov. Jay Inslee proposed spending \$20 million on a multipronged effort to combat opioid addiction. The bill never made it to the floor for a full vote, and it contained little funding for prevention. (But \$1.7 million targeted for youth did get funding.)

Yet researchers warn that ignoring that aspect of the crisis virtually guarantees costly problems to come as the children of addicts grow into adulthood. Kevin Haggerty, a professor at the University of Washington who studies risk factors for drug abuse, authored one of the few peer-reviewed studies tracking life outcomes for these young people.

In the early 1990s, he identified 151 elementary and middle-school children in Washington who were growing up with heroin-addicted parents. Fifteen years later, as young adults, 33 percent had dropped out of high school. The vast majority were addicts themselves, and half had criminal records. Only 2 percent had made it through college. (Nationally, 33 percent of all kindergartners in 1992 grew up to earn a college degree.)

“The results are astounding at how poor the outcomes are, having a drug-addicted parent,” said Caleb Banta-Green, principal research scientist at the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute at the University of Washington’s School of Public Health.

A few East Coast states — particularly New Hampshire and Massachusetts — have been forced to confront the school-level effects because the scale of adult addiction in their communities has grown impossible to ignore.

“We’re getting that first big wave of kids who were born addicted — they’re kindergartners right now — and it’s not just medical issues. It’s neurodevelopment and behavioral issues,” said McKenzie Harrington-Bacote, who oversees special programs in the Laconia, New Hampshire, schools. “Their behavior is so off-the-charts and aggressive in ways we’re not accustomed to — it’s just a whole other world. The littlest guys in our building are the ones destroying the building.”

New Hampshire itself is relatively prosperous, with a high median household income and low unemployment. But its rural areas have pockets of severe poverty and, like Washington, the Granite State levies no income tax.

To address the need for kid-level interventions, Laconia has increased funding for school-based mental-health treatment by nearly 20 percent in the last three years. This, in turn, has forced layoffs elsewhere in the district. But the possibility that better trauma care now could head off ballooning special-education costs in the future has won the community’s support, Harrington-Bacote said.

Much like O’Connor-Weaver and her staff at Hawthorne Elementary in Everett, educators in Laconia find themselves pressed into service as ad hoc social workers almost every day.

Sometimes that means helping illiterate parents fill out Medicaid forms, or welfare paperwork, or job applications — nothing that teachers were told to expect in their master’s programs.

“Families literally bring their problems to our door now to help them navigate their lives,” Harrington-Bacote said. “Public schools are doing things that fall way outside of regular academic education. But if they don’t, it’s not going to get addressed at all.”

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HEADLINE	06/22 Seattle mayor: \$13M for 500 shelter beds
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/seattle-mayor-signs-13-million-law-creating-500-shelter-beds
GIST	<p>A new homeless shelter plan signed into law on Friday aims reduce the number of street tents on Seattle streets and help outreach workers find places for people to stay.</p> <p>Mayor Jenny Durkan signed a \$13 million, one-time funding plan to create 500 new shelter beds in the next 90 days. Currently the city contracts non-profits to operate roughly 2,000 shelter beds</p> <p>The bill will increase the number of bridge housing and shelter units by 25 percent, the largest single increase in the city's history according the Mayor's Office.</p> <p>After years on the street, in and out of tent cities, William 'Catfish' Nichols is ready to seek permanent housing and find a job, but recently when he said yes to outreach workers, he was told the shelters were full.</p> <p>"There's nothing, it's filled today," Nichols said the Navigation Team told him, "We only have one bed or we'll give it to you tomorrow, nothing."</p> <p>Durkan hopes the new shelters will provide more options to outreach workers when a homeless person agrees to shelter.</p> <p>"By increasing our shelter capacity, so much in a short period of time, we are really hoping that we are able to have places for people to go," said Durkan.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/22 Protesters gather to send message
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/south-sound-news/demonstrations-against-ice-protesters-gather-to-send-message/775384647
GIST	<p>Protesters in the Puget Sound gathered over the Trump Administration's immigration policy on Friday.</p> <p>Dozens of protesters spoke out at the Northwest Detention Center against the Trump administration's "zero-tolerance" policy that resulted in children being separated from their families at the border.</p> <p>That policy has inspired widespread anger since it was announced.</p> <p>"Those are children," said Andy Ribaud, who has been protesting at the Northwest Detention Center since Thursday around 9 p.m. "They're not criminals. Those are kids."</p> <p>Ribaud said he and others gathered to support the mothers, who are being detained and separated from their kids.</p> <p>"We are here to follow the message of the NWDC [Northwest Detention Center] resistance coalition," said Ribaud. "[Our message is that] you need to get those mom's back to their kids. I have a 2-year-old and it's in the best interest of children to be raised by their parents."</p> <p>Tacoma wasn't the only place where people gathered to protest.</p> <p>Many chanted outside of the Federal Detention Center in Sea-Tac, where they had a vigil set up with shoes representing the children separated from their parents.</p> <p>As for Ribaud, he told KIRO 7 he isn't going anywhere until his message is heard.</p> <p>"There's zero tolerance policy to hurting children," said Ribaud. "And if you're going to continue doing that, then you're going to have to go through me."</p>

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HEADLINE	06/23 Camp Pendleton to house 47K illegals?
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/news/us/report-navy-memo-plans-for-camp-pendleton-to-house-up-to-47-000-migrants-in-temporary-detention-1.534406
GIST	<p>SAN DIEGO (Tribune News Service) — San Diego County could become a destination for tens of thousands of unauthorized immigrants to be housed indefinitely by the U.S. Government, under the zero-tolerance policy implemented by President Donald Trump.</p> <p>According to a report published Friday afternoon by Time magazine, military leaders are drawing up plans to create a tent city at Camp Pendleton to detain as many as 47,000 illegal immigrants from Central America and other locations over the coming months.</p> <p>The facility at Camp Pendleton would be one of multiple temporary detention centers designated to house immigrants making their way into the United States.</p> <p>According to an internal memo obtained by Time magazine, the U.S. Navy has been directed to establish “temporary and austere” encampments on military installations in Alabama, Arizona and California that each could host tens of thousands of detainees.</p> <p>The document, prepared by an assistant secretary for approval by Navy Secretary Richard Spencer, suggests construction could begin at one site within 60 days. The structures would be designed to last for six months to one year, Time magazine reported.</p> <p>The memo has not yet been approved by Spencer or Secretary of Defense James Mattis, the report said.</p> <p>The plans detailed in the internal document match the executive order Trump signed earlier this week in response to growing political pressure to halt the separation of parents and children crossing the southern border illegally.</p> <p>The order does not end the Trump administration zero-tolerance program that aims to prosecute all illegal border crossings. Rather, it calls for families to be housed together in detention facilities instead of separated while parents go through both the criminal court system for illegal entry and then immigration proceedings after that.</p> <p>The order says immigration courts should prioritize detained-family cases, but it will still likely take longer than the 20 days the government is currently allowed to hold children in detention, even if they are held with their families.</p> <p>Officials at Camp Pendleton said they know nothing about a temporary immigrant-housing project.</p> <p>“Camp Pendleton is unaware of any plan to house detainees on our base at this time,” Capt Luke Weaver said in a statement. “Contact DoD Office of the Secretary of Defense public affairs for information on this subject.”</p> <p>The Time magazine report quoted a U.S. Navy spokesman saying it would be inappropriate to discuss internal deliberative planning documents.</p> <p>The detainment plan estimates the Navy would spend more than \$230 million to build and run a single facility serving 25,000 people for a six-month term.</p> <p>According to a Government Accountability Office report published in April, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement office requested \$3.6 billion in 2018 funding to pay for immigrant housing — \$1 billion more than the amount of funds requested the prior year.</p>

	<p>The GAO report recommended several recommendations aimed at improving ICE’s cost estimates and making sure the budget documents are accurate.</p> <p>The ICE budget for 2019 proposes a nearly 33 percent increase in the average daily count for unauthorized immigrants, from about 38,000 in 2017 to more than 51,000 this year.</p> <p>Advocates who work with San Diego immigrant communities were stunned by the Time magazine report.</p> <p>According to the Time report, a similar tent city would be established at the former Naval Weapons Station Concord, east of San Francisco. It too would be constructed to hold as many as 47,000 people.</p> <p>Other facilities that are expected to house 25,000 immigrants would be established at abandoned airfields outside Mobile, Alabama. The memo also proposes studying the Marine Corps Air Station in Yuma, Arizona. as a possible site for an additional immigrant detention center.</p> <p>The arrival and housing of tens of thousands of immigrants at Camp Pendleton would not be a first for the military base that buffers between San Diego and the Greater Los Angeles area.</p> <p>In April 1975, after the fall of Saigon, the first of 50,000 or more refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos began arriving at Camp Pendleton for processing before they were resettled to other parts of Southern California and beyond.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/22 When asylum seekers reach border
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2018/06/22/migrants-seeking-asylum-border-nogales-immigration/727378002/
GIST	<p>NOGALES, Sonora — Word of mouth gets migrants who arrive to this border city, by bus or freight train, to the DeConcini port of entry.</p> <p>"Look for Marla, she'll help you," Magali Nieto Romero told a recently arrived woman and her teenage son who wanted to make contact with U.S. immigration officials.</p> <p>Both women are among the 147 families that have arrived since May at Arizona’s busiest port of entry to seek asylum, according to local community groups.</p> <p>The people — mostly from Guatemala and southern Mexico — are being processed by U.S. immigration officials at a much slower pace than they are arriving, so families seeking asylum at official ports of entry have to wait for several days.</p> <p>More than a dozen asylum-seekers camp out daily next to the port's pedestrian lanes, where travelers with passports and border-crossing cards enter the United States.</p> <p>Blankets and thin foam mattresses, coolers with water bottles and juice, coloring books and crayons, and a black plastic bag filled with stuffed animals form the makeshift camp outside the mesh metal door where U.S. immigration officers call on people to be processed for asylum.</p> <p>That call might happen anytime. On Wednesday, only two men were allowed in. On Thursday, seven unaccompanied boys and two women with their children were called for processing.</p> <p>So far, the wait times stretch about two weeks, said Marla Conrad, the point person for the migrants. She's a coordinator in Mexico for the Kino Border Initiative, which operates shelters for migrants and recent deportees at the border.</p> <p>During the first few weeks after their arrival, close to 100 migrants, many of them children, packed the</p>

border crossing. Nowadays, Mexican immigration authorities only allow up to 10 families to be at the camp. The rest are split among four migrant shelters run by non-profit organizations in Nogales. Local groups and volunteers operate the camp in an attempt to avoid a crisis at the port of entry.

People traveling from Arizona have regularly stopped by the camp and the shelters with donations of toys, food and hygiene products. Others play with the children and talk to the families to help them pass time. Representatives from the Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project also visit them and share guidance on what to expect of the asylum process and how their claims do or don't fit with U.S. asylum policy.

The waitlist

Conrad runs the waitlist for asylum seekers.

She talks to migrants when they arrive, writes their names down, assigns them a shelter and — most importantly — hands them a little handmade card with their assigned number in line.

Areli Aguilar's is 113.

Aguilar, 32, arrived in Nogales from Honduras with her son Esau, 17, the night of June 13. After getting off her bus, she waited under a bridge for about two hours, exhausted from the 12-day-long journey north. They went several days without eating and were robbed in Guatemala by police. Her intent was to arrive in Reynosa — a border city along the Rio Grande near McAllen, Texas — she wasn't sure where the buses she took in Mexico were going and ended up in the Arizona-Sonora border instead.

The single mother left Honduras terrified after two young men on motorcycles told her son he either had to join their criminal gang or they'd kill him. Sobbing in her home's bathroom, Aguilar called her mother, who said three of her cousins were killed by the same group.

"My mom told me, 'Take my savings and see if you can at least try,'" Aguilar said at a Nogales migrant shelter, crying as she recounted the events that pushed her out. "You don't play around with them. I know that if we were in Honduras, we would have the same luck as my mom's cousins."

The night she arrived, a Nogales man paid for her and her son's bus fare, told them where to get off and to go past a place that sold ice cream and shakes — the La Michoacana stand at the entrance of the DeConcini port.

She found the camp and a volunteer welcomed them, fed them and gave them water. The next morning, another volunteer took her and her son to Casa Belen, a provisional shelter run by Kino in an empty municipal building.

There's nothing official about this process, and migrants don't have to respect the waitlist system devised by the community groups. But they do. They wait their turn.

They help sweep and mop floor at the camp. They gather and take out their trash. They help cook the food at the shelters.

The wait ends when U.S. officials call asylum seekers for interviews. But that interview can last many hours, sometimes not concluding until the early morning hours, migrant advocates say.

Once in custody, U.S. Customs and Border Protection provides the families medical care, if needed, and have 72 hours to review and process their claim. The people can then either be deported, held in detention to fight their case or released to a friend or family member in the country.

At the DeConcini port, once families are being processed, the next families move from the shelters to the makeshift camp.

As of Thursday afternoon, there were 56 families, or about 104 people, on Conrad's waitlist.

Nogales migrant shelters strained

Nogales organizations that for years have been giving migrants food, shelter and medical attention are strained for resources because of the constant arrival of new migrants and growing wait times.

"We obviously are asking the U.S. government to process people quicker, lessen the amount of time they are at risk on the border."

Marla Conrad, coordinator in Mexico for the Kino Border Initiative

"Shelters aren't accustomed, either, for people to stay for that amount of time — it's usually three to seven days," Conrad said. "This is different for us."

She added the long waits also put asylum seekers at risk.

"The U.S.-Mexico border is an unsafe place but (it is) especially for migrants because of the organized crime groups that make a business off migrants," Conrad said.

Conrad added that the situation as it exists, is not sustainable.

The volunteers sleep there and are at the port of entry all hours of the day.

She wants municipal leaders to step in and for U.S. authorities to speed up the intake.

"We would need the help from the city government to make sure that this mechanism we've created to help people that are arriving continues," Conrad said. "We obviously are asking the U.S. government to process people quicker, lessen the amount of time they are at risk on the border, and asking the Mexican officials to continue to coordinate with local organizations so their wait time can be as easy as possible."

Magali Nieto Romero, 33, of Guerrero, Mexico, has been waiting for an asylum interview with U.S. immigration officials for nine days. Arizona Republic

Officials: 'Operational constraints' cause delay

U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials in Arizona have not explained why the times to process asylum requests in Nogales have increased over the past few weeks. When the first families began camping out, they limited their responses to saying that it was due to constraints on space and on resources as medical and translation services for migrant families.

"It's a matter of balancing that to make sure we're appropriately addressing all of the requirements that we have. We've talked about the vacancies that we do have and the need for more hiring."

John Wagner, CBP's deputy executive assistant commissioner for the Office of Field Operations

The situation in Nogales is not isolated. Migrants seeking asylum at border crossings along the U.S.-Mexico border have sometimes faced even longer waits. Some families at the Tijuana-San Diego crossing have reportedly been waiting up to three weeks to talk to an immigration officer, according to the USA TODAY Network.

John Wagner is CBP's second-in-command for the Office of Field Operations, the subagency responsible for staffing the ports of entry. He attributed the long lines to customs officers' varied mission along the border, which includes border security, as well as facilitating trade and commerce. He also cited hundreds of critical staff shortages at the ports.

"It's a matter of balancing that to make sure we're appropriately addressing all of the requirements that we have," he said. "We've talked about the vacancies that we do have and the need for more hiring."

Yet despite staffing shortages, CBP has routinely posted customs officers over the past few weeks at the

	<p>entrances to the ports of entry. In places such as Nogales, these officers control the flow of authorized, visa holders into the ports. In some cities along the Texas border, they are reportedly not allowing asylum seekers to even approach the crossings.</p> <p>Wagner declined to answer why some officers were apparently turning away asylum-seekers at the border. But he reiterated that it was a matter of resources, though when pressed, he refused to say whether the agency had requested additional resources to help expedited the process.</p> <p>"It's a matter of how many people we can process at a single time. Part of it is the facility constraints, part of it is operational constraints," he said. "So how do we do this in a humane and safe environment? ... So, it's just a matter of doing it in an orderly fashion."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 State Dept. warns Iran on nuclear arms
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-iran-pompeo/pompeo-warns-iran-on-nuclear-arms-hopes-military-force-will-never-be-needed-idUSKBN1JJ0IN
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Saturday warned Iran not to pursue nuclear weapons, saying it would face the "wrath of the entire world" if it did so, but added that he hoped it would never be necessary for the United States to take military action against the country.</p> <p>In an interview with political columnist Hugh Hewitt conducted on Friday and broadcast the following day on MSNBC, Pompeo said that whatever the fate of the international nuclear deal with Iran, it would not be in Tehran's interest to seek nuclear arms.</p> <p>"I hope they understand that if they begin to ramp up their nuclear program, the wrath of the entire world will fall upon them," he said.</p> <p>"Wholly separate from if they spin a couple of extra centrifuges, if they began to move to a weapons program, this is something the entire world would find unacceptable and we'd end up down a path that I don't think is in the best interests of Iran," Pompeo said.</p> <p>He said, however, he was not talking about a U.S. military response.</p> <p>"When I say wrath, don't confuse that with military action. When I say wrath, I mean the moral opprobrium and economic power that fell upon them. That's what I'm speaking to. I'm not talking to military action here. I truly hope that that's never the case. It's not in anyone's best interests for that."</p> <p>Pressed on whether the United States would do whatever it had to do to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, Pompeo said: "President Trump has been unambiguous in his statements that say Iran will not be able to obtain a nuclear weapon."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 EU: will respond to any US auto tariff
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-trump-autos-eu/eu-to-respond-to-any-u-s-auto-tariff-move-report-idUSKBN1JJ0DL
GIST	<p>PARIS (Reuters) - The European Union will respond to any U.S. move to raise tariffs on cars made in the bloc, a senior European Commission official said, the latest comments in an escalating trade row.</p> <p>U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday threatened to impose a 20 percent tariff on all imports of EU-assembled cars, a month after his administration launched an investigation into whether auto imports posed a national security threat.</p>

	<p>“If they decide to raise their import tariffs, we’ll have no choice, again, but to react,” EU Commission Vice President Jyrki Katainen told French newspaper Le Monde.</p> <p>“We don’t want to fight (over trade) in public via Twitter. We should end the escalation,” he said in the comments published on Saturday.</p> <p>The European Autos Stocks Index fell on Friday after Trump’s tariff threat. Shares U.S. carmakers Ford Motor Co and General Motors Co also dropped.</p> <p>“If these Tariffs and Barriers are not soon broken down and removed, we will be placing a 20% Tariff on all of their cars coming into the U.S. Build them here!” Trump tweeted.</p> <p>The U.S. Commerce Department has a deadline of February 2019 to investigate whether imports of automobiles and auto parts pose a risk to U.S. national security.</p> <p>U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said on Thursday the department aimed to wrap up the probe by late July or August. The Commerce Department plans to hold two days of public comments in July on its investigation of auto imports.</p> <p>Trump has repeatedly singled out German auto imports to the United States for criticism.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 Calif. wildfire threatens homes
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/06/24/california-wildfire-burns-12-buildings-threatens-hundreds.html
GIST	<p>CLEARLAKE OAKS, Calif. – A wind-driven wildfire destroyed a dozen buildings and threatened hundreds of others Sunday as it raced across dry brush in rural Northern California.</p> <p>The Pawnee Fire, which broke out Saturday near the small community of Clearlake Oaks, was one of four wildfires burning in largely rural areas as wind and heat gripped a swath of California from San Jose to the Oregon border.</p> <p>The blaze destroyed 12 buildings and threatened an additional 600 as it burned out of control across about 2.5 square miles (6.5 square kilometers). It is north of the wine country region where devastating wildfires killed 44 people and destroyed thousands of homes and businesses last October.</p> <p>Authorities ordered people to evacuate all homes in the residential area of Spring Valley and surrounding areas. Evacuation centers for residents and animals were being opened. No injuries were reported.</p> <p>"What we're stressing is that people, when they get the evacuation order, they heed it immediately and get out and stay out until it is safe to return," California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Battalion Chief Jonathan Cox said.</p> <p>"This is one of four large fires burning in Northern California. It's a good reminder that fire season is upon us," he said.</p> <p>Another blaze consumed 5.5 square miles in nearby Tehama County but did not burn any buildings. Some homes were threatened and some had been evacuated, Cox said, although he did not have specific numbers. It was partially contained.</p> <p>Another smaller fire, also in Tehama County, was nearly halfway contained after consuming less than a mile of brush. The fourth fire, in neighboring Shasta County, smaller still, was three-fourths contained.</p> <p>The Pawnee Fire was being driven by erratic winds, low humidity and high temperatures. Firefighters</p>

	<p>battled it in a rugged area that made it difficult to get engines and other equipment up close.</p> <p>"It's kind of the worst possible combination," Cox said.</p> <p>Fire officials had no estimate on when it might be contained and didn't yet know what caused it.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 NATO focuses on 'speed' over Russia
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/nato-focuses-speed-baltics-amid-worries-over-russia-n885261
GIST	<p>RUKLA, Lithuania — The U.S. military and its NATO allies have sliced the number of days needed to deploy armored vehicles to a former Cold War foe almost in half in just a year amid concern about potential Russian aggression in Europe.</p> <p>NATO countries are still seeking more support in the wake of Russia's 2014 military intervention and annexation of Crimea from Ukraine. Poland, the former Warsaw Pact member that joined NATO in 1999, reportedly offered the U.S. around \$2 billion recently to establish a permanent military base in the country.</p> <p>Saber Strike, a U.S.-led military exercise featuring about 18,000 soldiers, is conducted annually in Poland and the Baltics. The war games, which finished last week, has become a major part of NATO's deterrence measures against Russia and offers a chance for troops to focus on speed.</p> <p>Capt. William Rand of the U.S. Army's 2nd Cavalry Regiment said his unit had substantially boosted its pace of deployment during this year's drills. The road march of armored personnel carriers from Germany to Poland took about five days, compared to nine in 2017.</p> <p>"There's a dramatic increase," he said. "Speed is always important. The faster you can bring combat power and mass it anywhere in the world enables you to be more successful, to start off on the right foot."</p> <p>As part of Saber Strike, the 2nd Cavalry Regiment's mission was to help secure an abandoned airfield at the Panevsžys military base in central Lithuania.</p> <p>Memories of the occupation during Soviet times are still fresh in Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia.</p> <p>In March, Russian President Vladimir Putin denied that a new Cold War was underway but said "listen to us now" when he unveiled new weapons — including nuclear missile technology.</p> <p>The Trump administration's 2017 National Security Strategy said "Russia's invasions of Georgia and Ukraine ... demonstrated its willingness to violate the sovereignty of states in the region."</p> <p>It added, "Russia continues to intimidate its neighbors with threatening behavior, such as nuclear posturing and the forward deployment of offensive capabilities."</p> <p>Maj. Gen. Vitalijus Vaikšnoras, chief of the Joint Staff of the Lithuanian armed forces, told NBC News that increased cooperation had improved the reaction time of NATO allies in recent years.</p> <p>Asked if other actors in the region should take notice, Vaikšnoras replied, "I hope so."</p> <p>Vaikšnoras watched German and British amphibious vehicles ferry heavy American armored Stryker vehicles across the Neman River.</p> <p>"It's a very strong message that not only Lithuania and Lithuanian armed forces, but as well as our allies are going, if necessary, to come here and defend Lithuania, the Baltic region and the eastern frontier of NATO against any aggressor," he added.</p>

But experts say speedier deployments by the alliance might not be enough in case of a conflict along NATO's eastern front. Military analysts believe Russia's military would likely still have an advantage.

Gustav Gressel, a senior policy fellow with the European Council on Foreign Relations, said Russia has concentrated on speed and built a smaller but more mobile army than during the Soviet era.

"If you simulate conflicts in the Baltic Sea region, you can see a time gap in the near and medium area of about a week," he said. "You have to expect that you will be caught off guard."

Gressel said an additional division, about 10,000 to 15,000 troops, would need to be based in the region to close the one-week advantage Russian troops would have in the event of a large-scale conflict

Following NATO's 2016 summit, the alliance stationed about 1,000 soldiers each in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.

"Things have improved certainly. NATO has taken important steps with the enhanced forward presence initiative," said David Shlapak, a senior defense researcher at the RAND corporation. "There remains an open question whether the forces present in the region would be adequate if deterrence fails and a conflict would occur."

For now, NATO has been focusing on the rapid reinforcement of troops.

During Saber Strike, a U.S. Air Force C-17 transport plane delivered Kentucky National Guard heavy artillery from Poland to a military airfield in Rukla, Lithuania. The site has rarely been used by large aircraft since the Soviets abandoned it and pulled out of Lithuania after the end of the Cold War.

Later that day, three U.S. Army Chinooks delivered howitzer artillery guns and soldiers to operate them to nearby agricultural fields.

"Mobility inside Europe is important to us," Brig. Gen. Richard Coffman of the U.S. Army's 1st Infantry Division said. "We plan accordingly so that we can be ready for any crisis that is presented to us."

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HEADLINE	06/23 Police at Pride? Some LGBTQ say no
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/police-pride-gay-cops-lgbtq-activists-struggle-see-eye-eye-n886031
GIST	<p>Just before members of the Gay Officers Action League (GOAL) marched past the Stonewall Inn, the finish line of last year's New York City Pride March, a small group of activists slipped past the barriers and chained their hands together to prevent the officers from passing, a protest technique called a "lockdown."</p> <p>Dozens of cops working security at the march surrounded the protesters, and, over shouts of "f--k the police" and "racist, sexist, anti-gay, NYPD, KKK," began to break through what appeared to be chains and rubber tubes the protesters had used to lock themselves together. Twelve protesters affiliated with the group No Justice No Pride were arrested, and after a brief delay, the march continued.</p> <p>The irony of the incident was not lost on many in the crowd — cops arresting gay people in front of the Stonewall Inn, the very place where homophobic police brutality sparked the modern LGBTQ rights movement nearly five decades years prior. In fact, New York City's first gay pride march, which was held on June 28, 1970, was organized to commemorate the one-year anniversary of what has become known as the Stonewall Riots — when in 1969 patrons of the now-iconic gay bar finally had enough after yet another police raid.</p> <p>"We have to come out into the open and stop being ashamed, or else people will go on treating us as</p>

freaks. This march,” activist Michael Brown told The New York Times on that day in 1970, “is an affirmation and declaration of our new pride.”

Last year’s clash between the NYPD and anti-police protesters was not an isolated incident. Protesters in several cities across the U.S. and Canada have, over the past two years, tried to prevent, disrupt or minimize the presence of police officers in pride marches — even though the officers impacted are typically members of LGBTQ police groups, like GOAL. Nonetheless, protesters say they’re doing so to take a stand against police brutality and harassment of marginalized groups, namely people of color and the transgender community.

EARLY DAYS OF GOAL

The relationship between the police and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community has long been fraught, but for LGBTQ cops, the right to march in pride is a hard-fought civil rights victory.

In the decade after that first pride march on June 28, 1970, New York’s gay rights movement made so much progress that by 1981 the police force itself was facing LGBTQ activism from within. Gay cops in New York City, for example, led by Officer Charles Cochrane, sought to form their own employee resource group, like the ones that existed for Hispanic, Irish-American and African-American cops.

Edgar Rodriguez, now a retired NYPD sergeant, was still in the New York City Police Academy when Officer Cochrane entered his classroom in 1982.

“We all stood to attention, [the instructor] introduced him in full uniform, and said he had an announcement about a fraternal organization he was starting,” Rodriguez remembered.

Cochrane told the rookies his new group was called the Gay Officers Action League, or GOAL. A few months earlier, Cochrane had become the first NYPD officer to publicly come out when he announced that he was gay at a city council meeting in November 1981.

“Is anybody here interested in joining?” Cochrane asked the class.

“When he said this the room fell silent,” Rodriguez recalled, “and I could hear a faint snicker in the back of the room.”

Rodriguez also said he could hear his “heart thumping in [his] chest.”

“I was deeply closeted, and I thought, ‘This has got to be a setup to see who’s closeted and fire them,’” he recalled. “I never raised my hand.”

Later that day, a woman from Rodriguez’s Police Academy class asked him which room the gay officers’ group was meeting in. “Why do you ask?” Rodriguez responded. “Well, I’m a lesbian,” she replied. Rodriguez said he thought to himself, “What’s a lesbian?”

Rodriguez, who kept his sexuality to himself in his early days as a cop, recalled overhearing on several occasions racist, sexist and homophobic comments from his largely straight, white and male colleagues back then.

When he was posted to New York City’s 6th Precinct, which covers Greenwich Village, he recalled a senior officer asking him, “So you work with all the fags?” Rodriguez corrected him, responding, “You mean lesbians and gays?” Rodriguez said the officer apologized and told him their interaction had been a learning moment. “He kept nudging me in the arm and said, ‘You know kid, you really taught me something.’”

Trying to make change from within was a slow process for Rodriguez, who said homophobia was rampant in the NYPD in the ‘80s. He recalled a particularly daunting incident when a fellow officer who had been patrolling Macombs Dam Park, where the new Yankee Stadium now stands, encountered a well-known

gay cruising area. Later that day in the locker room, Rodriguez overheard him say, “F-----g faggots. If I ever find out that one of us is the f-----g fggot, I’m going to blow his head off ‘by accident.’”

“I remember feeling the fear shoot through my body, and I thought, ‘I’m never going to come out,’” Rodriguez said.

But eventually, he did come out. Rodriguez recalled marching in his first NYC Pride March with GOAL in the late ‘80s. He was still closeted to most of his fellow officers, but when he was off duty, he lived openly in the gay neighborhoods of New York City.

“We didn’t have uniforms,” Rodriguez said of that first march. “I was terrified. I was closeted.” He said he put on a hat and sunglasses and held a banner in front of his face as he began to march.

As the march proceeded, however, Rodriguez said something changed.

“A crowd of spectators let out a roar of acceptance that just charged through my body, and it was one of the most incredible experiences I’ve ever had in my life,” he said. “The energy that came from that crowd of love and support — I threw off my glasses and my hat and marched proudly.”

Then in 1996, 14 years after Rodriguez declined to raise his hand when Officer Cochrane spoke in front of his Police Academy class, Rodriguez became the president of GOAL.

But even in the mid-’90s, Rodriguez said the NYPD had a long way to go in terms of LGBTQ acceptance. That’s why in 1996, the year he took the helm at GOAL, the group sued the NYPD for discrimination. As part of the suit, GOAL wanted to march in the annual NYC Pride March in uniform and with the official police marching band — a request that had been rejected in previous years. By June of that year, GOAL had won concessions from the NYPD and was permitted to march in uniform, to use the marching band and to host an event at NYPD headquarters. The lawsuit worked.

Rodriguez said even though GOAL had been participating in the NYC Pride March for years before the lawsuit, it was different afterwards.

“The roar from the community was 10 times louder than it was when I first marched outside of uniform,” Rodriguez said.

COPS VS. PROTESTERS

From Washington, D.C., to Sacramento, a number of progressive LGBTQ activists, some of them too young to remember the gay police activism of the ‘80s and ‘90s, view cops to be an unwelcome — and even threatening — presence at pride events.

In addition to getting cops out of pride, many of these different activist groups also have an array of social justice demands. Last year at Capital Pride in Washington, D.C., a group called No Justice No Pride (NJNP) blocked the pride parade and forced it to reroute. The group says it exists “to end the LGBT movement’s complicity with systems of oppression that further marginalize queer and trans individuals.”

Part of those systems of oppression are the police, according to Ale Jacinta, a member of No Justice No Pride. She said the point of the organization is to transform Capital Pride from a day when a majority of the community gets sloshed and watches a parade to a day of building community power.”

In 2017, No Justice No Pride delivered a list of demands to Capital Pride’s organizing committee. They demanded transgender people and members of local Native American tribes be named to paid positions on Capital Pride’s planning committee. The group also demanded that the event “stop celebrating the police,” prevent the Metropolitan Police Department from participating in the march and ban all law enforcement agencies from recruiting at the event.

“At the end of the day, NJNP doesn’t want a formal cop presence in the parade,” Jacinta said. “We look at

our history and our present reality and see there is very little accountability for the extrajudicial murder of civilians, especially brown and black folks.”

But Capital Pride held fast, and a diverse group from the Metropolitan Police Department marched in both the 2017 and 2018 parades — guns holstered and in uniform. Unlike in 2017, No Justice No Pride did not block the 2018 Capital Pride march, held earlier this month. Jacinta said the group decided this year to focus on “taking back D.C.’s historically trans sex worker stroll” to protest harassment they and other trans activists say they face from the Metropolitan Police Department.

Other activist groups have had better success in preventing or minimizing the presence of police officers in pride events. In Sacramento, police did not march in this year’s pride event on June 10 due to the community outrage that followed the murder of Stephon Clark, an unarmed black man shot by two cops in March.

In Minneapolis, the city’s police chief told his officers if they want to march in the Twin Cities Pride event on Sunday, they would have to do so out of uniform and unarmed. Like Sacramento, community tensions have been simmering in Minneapolis following a high-profile police shooting.

Last year’s anti-police protest at the NYC Pride March was organized by a number of community groups operating under the No Justice No Pride umbrella. In a Facebook post following the protest, the New York group Hoods4Justice explained why it joined the protest effort.

“We stand against any police presence in Pride, since police have never stood with us. The police serve as the state’s puppets to terrorize Black, Brown, and working class communities. The notion that police serve all people is a myth,” the post stated. “Trans women who survive hate attacks are 6 times more likely to experience violence when dealing with police than cis-gender folks.”

Jay Walker, an organizer with the Reclaim Pride Coalition, a group involved with the No Justice No Pride movement, said the NYPD and Heritage of Pride, the LGBTQ group that organizes the annual NYC Pride March, have made a few concessions this year. The NYPD has agreed not to arrest pride participants for failing to wear required Pride March wristbands, and Heritage of Pride agreed to provide space toward the front of the march for LGBTQ activist groups, like ACT UP! New York and Gays Against Guns.

However, this year members of the Gay Officers Action League will march, as they have every year since 1996, in uniform with their guns holstered.

MOVING FORWARD

Rodriguez said while he knows where the protesters are coming from, he disagrees with their tactics.

“I understand the people of color and the other people who have been abused by officers that are representing the NYPD,” he said. “I know police brutality existed, I know it exists; I observed it when I was a rookie officer, and I saw it happen ... but doing this is counterproductive.”

“They have to remember that it is us, the people of color, marching in uniform, and us, the LGBT people marching out in uniform. We are the people who were on the ground,” he added.

Rodriguez said when he was policing the 6th Precinct, which covers much of Manhattan’s gay neighborhoods, he once saw a transgender woman with blood streaming down her cheek running away from a group of men. He asked her if she was OK, and she just said, “I’m fine.”

“She was too afraid to let me help her, and the pricks who attacked her got away,” he recalled. “She was too afraid to embrace my willingness to protect her.”

NYPD Detective Brian Downey, the current president of the Gay Officers Action League, said imagery of uniformed LGBTQ cops marching proudly “is powerful,” and he hopes it will prevent people in the community, like the trans woman Rodriguez described, from being afraid of cops.

	<p>“I think that imagery needs to be displayed, because people to this day, I don’t know for what reason, people still don’t know we exist. People still don’t know we are a resource for people, and I think it is important that people know that,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 BNSF: derailment spills 230K gal. oil
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iowa-derailment-oil-spill-amount-mystery-5611111?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>An estimated 230,000 gallons (870,619 liters) of crude oil spilled into floodwaters in the northwestern corner of Iowa following a train derailment, a railroad official said Saturday.</p> <p>BNSF spokesman Andy Williams said 14 of 32 oil tanker cars just south of Doon in Lyon County leaked oil into surrounding floodwaters from the swollen Little Rock River. Williams had earlier said 33 oil cars had derailed.</p> <p>Nearly half the spill — an estimated 100,000 gallons (378,530 liters) — had been contained with booms near the derailment site and an additional boom placed approximately 5 miles (8.05 kilometers) downstream, Williams said. Skimmers and vacuum trucks were being used to remove the oil. Crews will then use equipment to separate the oil from the water.</p> <p>Officials still hadn't determined the cause of Friday morning's derailment, but a disaster proclamation issued by Gov. Kim Reynolds for Lyon and three other counties placed the blame on rain-fueled flooding. Reynolds visited the derailment site Saturday afternoon as part of a tour of areas hit by recent flooding.</p> <p>Some officials have speculated that floodwaters eroded soil beneath the train track. The nearby Little Rock River rose rapidly after heavy rain Wednesday and Thursday.</p> <p>The train was carrying tar sands oil from Alberta, Canada, to Stroud, Oklahoma, for ConocoPhillips. ConocoPhillips spokesman Daren Beaudou said each tanker can hold more than 25,000 gallons (20,817 imperial gallons) of oil.</p> <p>Beaudou said Saturday that the derailed oil cars were a model known as DOT117Rs, indicating they were newer or had been retrofitted to be safer and help prevent leaks in the event of an accident.</p> <p>The derailment also caused concern downstream, including as far south as Omaha, Nebraska, about 150 miles (240 kilometers) from the derailment site. The spill reached the Rock River, which joins the Big Sioux River before merging into the Missouri River at Sioux City.</p> <p>Omaha's public water utility — Metropolitan Utilities District — said it was monitoring pumps it uses to pull drinking water from the Missouri River.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 Activists vow Arctic drilling protests
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/government-plans-arctic-refuge-drilling-activists-vow-continue/story?id=56094589&cid=clicksource_81_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>A sweaty volunteer took off the fake fur head of her full-body, polar bear outfit as a friend and fellow protester handed her a drink of water.</p> <p>It was 80 degrees and terribly humid in the nation’s capital last week as a few hundred activists stood and chanted outside a public comment hearing to oppose a new law directing oil exploration in the northern tip of Alaskan wilderness.</p>

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) hearing in Washington, D.C., was the last of a series of meetings the bureau held throughout the spring giving people an opportunity to express thoughts and concerns about the government’s plans to lease part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to oil and gas developers.

With the 60-day public comment period now closed, the bureau will move forward with the rest of its required environmental impact study, which it hopes to have done by the end of the year.

Typically these studies take two to three years at minimum. The fast-pace is a clear sign the government is quickly ticking through its processes in order to fast-track lease sales down the road.

The BLM got serious blowback from environmental activists, Native American leaders and concerned citizens for only holding limited public comments hearing, exclusively in Alaska and Washington, D.C., though proponents of the drilling and the bureau say the process has been robust and there will be more time for public feedback later.

Representatives from groups like Defenders of the Wilderness and the Center for Biological Diversity held signs at the protest last week in the shape of all 50 states. Each sign had a number, most totaling in the thousands, representing the written comments sent into the bureau opposing the drilling plans from each state.

“This is actually not so much of a democratic process as it is, in their mind, an eventuality of development circumventing our human rights,” Dana Tizya-Tramm of the Vuntut- Gwich’in first nation told ABC News in Washington.

The notice from the BLM for the public comment period, also known as the public “scoping” period, said explicitly that when the period wrapped the bureau could move forward with plans to lease at least two 400,000-acre plots in the ANWR’s coveted Coastal Plain, as dictated by the tax law passed by Republicans last year.

Still, members of the Gwich’in tribe in northern Alaska and their partners vow to keep fighting.

“We are the first nations of this area. We have been living and subsisting off of this land and the animals for thousands and thousands of years. This area is sacred to us. It’s not right to sell it out to oil and gas companies for greed,” Bernadette Demientieff, executive director of the Gwich’in Steering Committee, told ABC News outside the BLM hearing in Washington.

The Gwich’in refer to themselves as the caribou people. For thousands of years their survival in the outer stretches of Alaska and the Arctic has been linked to the porcupine caribou herds that traverse, and specifically nurse their young, in the exact location on the water now slated for oil development.

The 1.5 million-acre segment of the larger refuge, which has been designated for oil leasing, lies along the coast. The caribou come there to escape inland mosquitoes and enjoy nutritious ground. Many experts say the caribous will avoid man-made construction, leaving the herds’ and Gwich’in fate unknown should the leasing and development go into effect.

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HEADLINE	06/22 Least prepared entering retirement age
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-generation-of-americans-is-entering-old-age-the-least-prepared-in-decades-1529676033?mod=trending_now_5
GIST	Americans are reaching retirement age in worse financial shape than the prior generation, for the first time since Harry Truman was president.

This cohort should be on the cusp of their golden years. Instead, their median incomes including Social Security and retirement-fund receipts haven't risen in years, after having increased steadily from the 1950s.

They have high average debt, are often paying off children's educations and are dipping into savings to care for aging parents. Their paltry 401(k) retirement funds will bring in a median income of under \$8,000 a year for a household of two.

Change of Plans

The decline of pensions and increase in 401(k) and similar plans is one reason many seniors aren't as ready for retirement as the previous generation.

In total, more than 40% of households headed by people aged 55 through 70 lack sufficient resources to maintain their living standard in retirement, a Wall Street Journal analysis concluded. That is around 15 million American households.

Things are likely to get worse for a broader swath of America. New census data released this week shows the surge of aging boomers is leaving the country with fewer young workers to support the elderly.

Individuals will find themselves staying on the job past 70 or taking menial jobs as senior citizens. They'll have to rely more on children for funding, pressuring younger generations, too.

Companies, while benefiting from older workers' experience, also have to grapple with employees who delay retirement, which means they'll be footing the costs of a less healthy workforce and retraining older workers.

And for the nation, the retirement shortfall portends a drain on public resources, especially if seniors reduce taxable spending and officials decide to cover additional public-assistance costs for older Americans who can't make ends meet.

"This generation was left on their own," said Alicia Munnell, director of the Boston College Center for Retirement Research. The Journal's conclusion about living standards in retirement was based on estimates provided by Ms. Munnell's center and data from the U.S. Census.

As with many baby boomers, 56-year-old Kreg Wittmayer once thought he was doing things right for a solid retirement. In his 20s, he began saving in his 401(k). He cashed it out after a divorce at age 34. He built up the fund again, then cashed out five years later after losing his job, he says. "It was just too easy to get at."

Mr. Wittmayer, of Des Moines, Iowa, says he now has a little over \$100,000 saved for retirement. He owes \$92,000 in parent loans for his daughters' college costs, he says. He doesn't know when, or whether, he will be able to retire, in direct contrast to his parents, a former firefighter and a former teacher who collect guaranteed pensions. "They never had to worry about saving for their retirement."

This prospect is upending decades of progress in financial security among the aging. In the postwar era, for a while, fixed government and company pensions gave millions a guaranteed income on top of Social Security. An improving economy led to increased wages. Many Americans retired in better shape than their parents.

No more. Baby boomers were the first generation of Americans who were encouraged to manage their own retirement savings with 401(k)s and similar vehicles. Many made investing mistakes, didn't sock enough away or waited too long to start.

Consider:

- Median personal income of Americans 55 through 69 leveled off after 2000—for the first time since data

became available in 1950—according to an analysis of census data done for the Journal by the Urban Institute, a nonprofit research organization that has published research advocating for more government funding for long-term care. Median income for people 25 through 54 is below its 2000 peak, but has edged up in recent years, and younger workers have more time to adjust retirement-savings strategies.

- Households with 401(k) investments and at least one worker aged 55 through 64 had a median \$135,000 in tax-advantaged retirement accounts as of 2016, according to the latest calculations from Boston College's center. For a couple aged 62 and 65 who retire today, that would produce about \$600 a month in annuity income for life, the center says.

- The percentage of families with any debt headed by people 55 or older has risen steadily for more than two decades, to 68% in 2016 from 54% in 1992, according to the Employee Benefit Research Institute, a nonpartisan public-policy research nonprofit.

- Americans aged 60 through 69 had about \$2 trillion in debt in 2017, an 11% increase per capita from 2004, according to New York Federal Reserve data adjusted for inflation. They had \$168 billion in outstanding car loans in 2017, 25% more per capita than in 2004. They had more than six times as much student-loan debt in 2017 than they did in 2004, Fed data show.

Shortfall generation

A combination of economic and demographic forces have left older Americans with bigger bills and less money to pay them.

Tempted by a prolonged era of low interest rates, boomers piled on debt to cope with rising home, health-care and college costs. Interest-rate declines hurt their security blankets. Lower earnings on bonds prompted many insurance firms to increase premiums for the universal-life and long-term-care insurance many Americans bought to help pay expenses. Some public-sector workers are living with uncertainty as cash-strapped governments consider pension cuts.

Gains in life expectancy, combined with the soaring price of education, have left people in their 50s and 60s supporting adult children and older relatives. Some are likely to have to rely on professional caregivers, who are in short supply and are more expensive than informal arrangements of the past.

Then there are health-care costs. Since 1999, average worker contributions toward individual health-insurance premiums have risen 281%, to \$1,213, during a period of 47% inflation, according to the nonprofit Kaiser Family Foundation. Nearly half of 1,518 workers surveyed last June by the Employee Benefit Research Institute said their health-care costs increased over the prior year, causing more than a quarter to cut back on retirement savings, and nearly half to reduce other savings.

Only a quarter of large firms offer retiree medical insurance, which typically covers retirees before they become eligible for Medicare, down from 40% in 1999, according to Kaiser. More money is coming out of people's Social Security checks to pay for Medicare premiums and costs that the federal program doesn't cover, Kaiser says. Medical spending accounted for 41% of the average \$1,115 monthly Social Security benefit in 2013, and the percentage has likely risen since, it says.

Pension retreat

For many Americans facing a less secure retirement than their parents, the biggest reason is the shift from pensions to 401(k)-type plans.

A piano and organ maker in the 1880s launched one of the first employer-sponsored pension plans, and railroads, state and local governments, and others followed, according to the Social Security Administration. By the 1930s, about 15% of the labor force had employer pensions.

In 1935, federal officials created Social Security to offer a basic income. Pensions gained steam after World War II, and by the 1980s, 46% of private-sector workers were in a pension plan, according to the Employee Benefit Research Institute.

	<p>A seemingly small congressional action in 1978 set the stage for a pension retreat. Some companies had sought tax-deferred treatment of executives' bonuses and stock options to supplement their pension payouts, and Congress authorized the move. The tax-law change ushered in the 401(k), allowing employees to reduce their taxable income by placing pretax dollars in an account.</p> <p>In the 1980s, union strength was ebbing and a recession pressured employers to reduce pension funding, says Teresa Ghilarducci, an economics professor at the New School. Many employers deployed the 401(k) to displace pensions.</p> <p>Market declines in 2000 and 2008 revealed the perils of do-it-yourself retirements, as many 401(k) participants cut back on contributions, shifted funds out of stocks and never put them back in, or withdrew money to pay bills.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 Thousands cross border seeking asylum
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/thousands-cross-the-u-s-border-seeking-asylum-most-wont-get-it-1529755200
GIST	<p>EL PASO, Texas—When 42-year-old Angelica walked up to a U.S. Customs and Border Protection inspection booth here Wednesday, she started what is likely to be a lengthy, long shot bid to win refuge in the U.S.</p> <p>Angelica and her 3-year-old granddaughter, Ruth Sofia, said they fled their home in Michoacán, along Mexico's Pacific coast, more than a month ago amid increasing violence and threats to their safety.</p> <p>As they waited before making their requests, Ruth, clad in a "Disney Princess" T-shirt, sat quietly on her grandmother's purse. Angelica said that, if they are allowed into the U.S., they plan to reunite with her adult daughter in Modesto, Calif.</p> <p>On Saturday, days after Angelica had asked for asylum, U.S. Rep. Beto O'Rourke (D., Texas) said he met with her at Annunciation House, a migrant shelter and aid group in El Paso. Mr. O'Rourke said Angelica and her granddaughter had been separated by immigration authorities.</p> <p>Their requests for asylum had come shortly before President Donald Trump signed on Wednesday an executive order directing that immigrant families taken into custody at the border be kept together.</p> <p>Angelica and Ruth had been among the thousands of people arriving monthly at legal U.S. border crossings and asking for the U.S. government to protect them. Tens of thousands more people, mostly from Central America, have been arrested trying to cross the border with Mexico illegally. Most of the illegal border crossers, including parents and their children and child immigrants traveling alone, are also seeking asylum.</p> <p>Most won't win, according to U.S. government data on asylum cases. About 6,300 asylum requests were approved between January and March 31, according to the Executive Office for Immigration Review, the Justice Department office that manages the immigration court system where most asylum cases are ultimately decided.</p> <p>During the same period, about 90,000 people were arrested crossing the border illegally and about 32,700 immigrants went to ports of entry. Many of those people have likely asked for asylum.</p> <p>According to EOIR, about 22% of the asylum cases decided this year were approved, while 41% were denied. Other cases were closed without a ruling in favor or against.</p> <p>The approval rate in the court has fluctuated since 2009, the agency's data shows. During that time,</p>

approvals rates hit a high of nearly 33% in 2011 but dropped below 17% in 2016.

Asylum seekers have been in the spotlight after the Trump administration vowed to tighten the rules around asylum and pushed Congress to overhaul immigration laws. Administration officials have referred to asylum and other laws and regulations that govern these cases as loopholes. There are also more than 700,000 cases pending in immigration court, which means cases can take years to be completed.

“Asylum and credible fear claims have skyrocketed across the board in recent years largely because individuals know they can exploit a broken system to enter the U.S., avoid removal, and remain in the country,” said Michael Bars, a spokesman for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Mr. Sessions earlier this month ruled in one asylum case that domestic violence victims and people fleeing generalized violence, including from gangs, won’t necessarily qualify for asylum going forward.

Mr. Bars said his agency “is carefully reviewing proposed changes” with an eye toward protecting the system’s integrity, adding that Mr. Sessions’ decision will be implemented as soon as possible.

Jeremy McKinney, a Greensboro, N.C., immigration attorney, said that ruling may not have an immediate impact on the hundreds of thousands of pending asylum cases in immigration courts.

“The attorney general did not change the test for asylum,” said Mr. McKinney, a member of the executive committee of the American Immigration Lawyers Association. “Actual case law has not changed.”

The U.S. has long recognized the international right of foreigners to apply for asylum, though there is no guarantee that anyone who asks for refuge will be approved. Last year, tens of thousands of immigrants sought asylum in the U.S.

On Saturday, Mr. O’Rourke, who had been touring the Tornillo, Texas, tent shelter that houses as many as 300 child migrants, said Angelica told him she wasn’t told why Ruth was taken from her or why she was released from immigration custody.

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HEADLINE	06/24 EU discord over migrant crisis deepens
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/discord-over-migrant-crisis-deepens-ahead-of-eu-meeting-1529833013
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS—Half of European Union’s leaders meet in Brussels on Sunday to seek a common solution to the bloc’s politically toxic migration issue, a long-unresolved conundrum now threatening to topple the EU’s most powerful leader, Germany’s Angela Merkel.</p> <p>Discord over how to process and find homes for migrants reaching the bloc is once again causing deep strains between EU capitals, three years after a million people, mostly fleeing the war in Syria, came to Europe, partly encouraged by Ms. Merkel’s open-door policy.</p> <p>Now under pressure at home, Ms. Merkel is seeking European backing for turning some migrants away. But that pits Germany against Italy’s new nationalist, anti-immigration government and is renewing tension with some Eastern European countries who refuse to take in refugees.</p> <p>Ahead of Sunday’s emergency summit, EU leaders were once again locked in a war of words, with French and Italian leaders clashing over whether to turn migrants away from Europe’s shores and process refugees with legitimate claims of entry in Africa.</p> <p>Italy’s prime minister threatened to cancel his participation until a draft statement of the meeting, in his view favoring Germany, was withdrawn. The leaders of Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia declared they won’t come to Sunday’s meeting, saying the EU proposals were “unacceptable.”</p>

Sunday's meeting is meant to prepare decisions among all 28 EU leaders on migration next week at the bloc's regular quarterly summit. Expectations are low that after three years of failed efforts to reform the bloc's migration laws, leaders can provide more than a quick fix, at best, to their differences.

Sunday's meeting, which will include 16 out of EU's 28 leaders, was called by Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission. The bloc's executive branch in charge of drafting policies and funding the bloc's border and asylum agencies.

Mr. Juncker was in Berlin earlier this week and offered to host the meeting in an attempt to help Ms. Merkel after she narrowly avoided the collapse of her government. The German chancellor had rejected a plan by her coalition partner to start returning migrants at the German-Austrian border and was given a two-week deadline to find a European solution.

Austria, sandwiched between Germany and Italy, said such a unilateral move would force it to start sending asylum seekers back to Italy.

Officials involved in discussions ahead of the Sunday meeting hoped to convince Italy to take back migrants from Austria and Germany, replicating an existing arrangement it has with France, which routinely turns back migrants to Italy. Ms. Merkel said Friday she hoped to see "if we can reach bilateral, trilateral or even multinational agreements to better solve certain problems."

The European Commission, in an attempt to alleviate Italian concerns about a steady flow of boats from Libya, said it was considering so-called "disembarkation platforms" in North African countries, meaning creating safe areas where migrants rescued at sea could be sent back to. Most migrants who arrived in Europe last year and in the first half of this year crossed the Mediterranean from Libya or were rescued at sea and brought to Italy.

The newly-appointed Italian government in recent weeks refused to grant access to its ports to two ships which had rescued hundreds of migrants at sea. The first ship was eventually accepted by Spain, while the destination of the second one is still being negotiated.

The U.N.'s International Organization for Migration criticized the idea and said they would only cooperate with the commission on setting up migrant camps on EU soil.

"You have an obligation not to send people back until they land somewhere," said Eugenio Ambrosi, director of IOM's regional EU office.

French President Emmanuel Macron also said Saturday Europe should not outsource its asylum process to north Africa, but rather set up closed migrant centers on EU soil with enough experts to quickly assess who has the right to stay.

Italy's Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini, the leader of the anti-immigrant League party, responded that "if French arrogance thinks it can transform Italy into Europe's refugee camp, maybe handing out a few euros as a tip, then they've got it totally wrong."

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HEADLINE	06/24 Tension: Seattle handling homeless crisis
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/string-of-assaults-fuels-criticism-of-seattles-handling-of-homelessness-crisis/
GIST	Tensions over Seattle's handling of the homelessness crisis were roiled again last week, as authorities on Wednesday charged a 26-year-old homeless man in connection with an alleged attack near the Cinerama movie theater downtown. David Ailep Jr., who told authorities he's homeless, now faces three counts of felony assault and theft

after he allegedly accosted a woman passing him on the street, then struck her father in the head when he attempted to intervene.

The incident near the theater is the third high-profile incident involving a homeless suspect to capture the city's attention, further inflaming criticism of City Hall's approach to managing the unauthorized tent encampments that have become a common feature of downtown Seattle and beyond.

Michael Person, 47, was charged earlier this month with misdemeanor assault after he allegedly attacked a tourist from Arizona as the man and his family walked by his tent to the Space Needle. Person later entered a plea of not guilty.

In May, county prosecutors accused Christopher Teel, a 24-year-old former resident of Ballard Nickelsville, one of the city's seven sanctioned homeless encampments, with sexually assaulting a woman in the temporary bathroom of a nearby auto-dealership.

Advocates for the homeless say that while serious, these incidents represent a minute fraction of similar crimes committed in the region, and that homeless people are more likely to be the victims of violent crime than perpetrate it.

But they come after a raucous month of debate about the city's declared state of emergency on homelessness. The Seattle City Council, in a stunning reversal, repealed a tax on large employers to fund homeless services in the face of a business-backed signature campaign to kill it.

Homelessness placed third in a list of issues mentioned most by Seattle residents in a Seattle Police Department survey released last week. Property crime and car prowls were among the top five specific public-safety concerns identified by residents.

Seattle's property-crime rate remains one of the highest in the country, though the numbers have fallen across the city in recent years.

Concerns about the effect street homelessness has had on tourism have also returned, though data suggests visits to the city have not been affected.

According to Visit Seattle, Seattle and King County's tourism marketing organization, about 39.9 million people visited Seattle and King County in 2017 — a 2.6 percent increase from the previous year.

David Blandford, senior vice president of Visit Seattle, said conventioners have expressed serious concern, but none have actually canceled a booking over issues related to homelessness.

Similarly, the number of cruise-ship passengers entering Seattle reached an all-time high of about 500,000 people last year. Port of Seattle spokesman Peter McGraw said the port has not heard of "bad interactions" between passengers and people who are homeless.

But Jordan Royer, vice president of Pacific Merchant Shipping Association, which supported the referendum to repeal the city's short-lived tax on high-grossing businesses, said a lack of enforcement is driving frustration among city residents.

"Right now it feels like we are a place where people can do anything they want, camp anywhere they want and get away with it," he said. "Without a balanced, common-sense approach that puts pressure on people to accept help and leave these destructive lifestyles, you're going to see more of the kind of assaults we've seen recently."

Lisa Daugaard, director of the Public Defender Association, agrees that enforcement is critical to addressing the legitimate concerns about public health and safety tied to people living on the streets.

But to see real reductions in the problems associated with homelessness, enforcement has to be coupled

with robust outreach to connect people to mental-health, drug-treatment and other services, she said.

“It makes sense that people would reach for the enforcement option when they see things aren’t working, but it’s not an either or proposition” Daugaard said.

“It’s true that we’re not flooding jails with people committing low-level, quality-of-life crimes, but I can remember a time when we were and I can say with absolute certainty that it did not work.”

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HEADLINE	06/23 Seattle commission seeks answers
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/seattles-community-police-commission-wants-answers-on-how-finalists-for-police-chief-were-chosen/
GIST	<p>As the three finalists for Seattle police chief spent time this week meeting with community organizations, the city’s Community Police Commission (CPC) asked the City Council to postpone a confirmation hearing for the mayor’s as-yet unnamed nominee until commissioners get a clearer understanding of what kept Interim Police Chief Carmen Best out of the top group.</p> <p>Following a nationwide search, Best – who is African American, has spent her entire policing career in Seattle, and has deep community ties – was the only woman and only candidate from inside the Seattle Police Department to make the top five to be considered for the chief’s job. She became interim chief Jan. 1, after Chief Kathleen O’Toole stepped down late last year.</p> <p>A spokeswoman for Mayor Jenny Durkan did not return a phone call, but emailed a three-page letter that was sent to the CPC on Friday. In it the mayor detailed the history of reform and efforts to confront bias, the organizations and people consulted, and the unfolding process of choosing a new police chief for a rapidly-changing city.</p> <p>Cody Reiter, a legislative aide to Councilmember M. Lorena González, who chairs the council’s public-safety committee, said the council is aware of the ongoing dialogue between the mayor’s office and the CPC but isn’t involved in those conversations. Reiter said a date has not been set for a confirmation hearing for the mayor’s pick.</p> <p>A search committee appointed by Durkan selected the five semifinalists, a group winnowed to three in May. They are former Pittsburgh Police Chief Cameron McLay, who is the only finalist to have served as the chief of a large city department; Ely Reyes, assistant chief in the Austin Police Department in Texas; and Eddie Frizell, an inspector and former deputy chief of patrol in the Minneapolis Police Department.</p> <p>All three spent a few days in Seattle this week, meeting with community groups and filming short interviews with the Seattle Channel. The candidates are to return to Seattle in July for formal interviews with Durkan.</p> <p>McLay, Frizell and Reyes were ranked as the top three by the search committee, two sources familiar with the search process told The Seattle Times last month.</p> <p>Best and Jorge Villegas, an assistant chief in the Los Angeles Police Department, were dropped from contention.</p> <p>At the time, Best, a 26-year veteran of the department, issued a statement thanking Durkan for the opportunity to serve as interim chief and agreed to stay on until a new chief is confirmed.</p> <p>But Best’s absence from the finalists’ group has drawn sharp criticism from some community leaders who say she was treated unfairly after playing a key role as a deputy chief in navigating the department through federally mandated reforms.</p>

Two days after the three finalists were announced, the CPC requested records from the mayor's office, said Isaac Ruiz, one of the CPC's three co-chairs. The requested documents included records relating to the design of the recruitment and selection process, how the candidates were reduced from five to three, and criteria or policy viewpoints that may have shown a preference for an external candidate over an internal one. The CPC also requested the five candidates' responses to written questions but have received only the three finalists' answers, Ruiz said.

Though the CPC has received some records, others remain outstanding, despite assurances from the mayor's office that they would be provided by Friday, according to Ruiz and a letter sent by the CPC to City Council members this week.

"As a co-chair of the CPC, I still don't really understand how it played out," Ruiz said of the selection of the three finalists. "It's concerning because when we're talking about policing and reform in the community, it's important to have as much transparency as possible."

It's unknown when Durkan will present her nominee for chief to the council for a vote. But "what we don't want is the council to act before we have access to the documents," as well as time to review them and offer meaningful feedback, said Ruiz, an attorney with the Seattle law firm Keller Rohrback.

The CPC also has hired an independent expert to assess potential legal issues or issues related to equal employment opportunities in the search process.

"There are members of the CPC who feel very strongly that Interim Chief Best shouldn't have been eliminated and these are commissioners with very deep ties within the community," he said. "The process is moving along, which is why we have this concern that any feedback from the CPC or community will be too late to make any kind of difference."

The CPC was mandated under the settlement agreement between the city and federal Department of Justice to provide community input on needed police reforms. The 2012 agreement include creation of the commission to help guide an independent, court-appointed monitor and ensure community involvement in reforms.

In June 2017, the City Council passed legislation made the CPC permanent. Increased from 15 members to 21, the commissioners appointed to the CPC are meant to represent the city's diversity.

"The CPC is relatively new ... and somewhat unique in this country in providing community oversight in policing," Ruiz said. "There is an expectation the CPC will be independent and ask the tough questions.

"Sometimes that means people in government won't be happy about the hard questions but that's what we signed up to do and it's what we're doing in this case," he said.

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HEADLINE	06/23 'Occupy ICE' protests emerge nationwide
SOURCE	http://thehill.com/business-a-lobbying/393790-occupy-ice-protests-emerge-across-the-country
GIST	<p>Protesters are occupying Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facilities across the country, inspired by a Portland protest that resulted in the indefinite shutdown of an ICE detention center on Wednesday.</p> <p>"Occupy ICE" protesters are blocking the loading dock of ICE headquarters in New York, have set up tents in front of an ICE facility in Los Angeles and are gathered outside of a detention center in Washington state.</p> <p>Though the protests are not led by any one group, the Democratic Socialists of America are involved in most states, alongside groups associated with prison abolition, immigration rights and anarchist</p>

collectives. The protests are calling for an abolition of ICE and an end to what they call human rights abuses by the criminal justice system, alongside other reforms.

The Portland protest began in response to the Trump administration's policy of separating migrant children from their parents at the border, a result of the administration's "zero tolerance" policy toward illegal border crossings.

ICE spokeswoman Carissa Cutrell told The Hill on Wednesday that the agency "fully respects the rights of all people to voice their opinion without interference" and "ICE remains committed to immigration enforcement consistent with federal law and agency policy."

The Hill reached out to ICE and the Department of Homeland Security for further comment.

In New York, dozens of protesters organized by the Metropolitan Anarchist Coordinating Council (MACC) are camping outside of an ICE office building in Manhattan on Saturday. They are blocking the loading dock through which ICE vans bring immigrants in and out of the building, MACC organizer Marisa Holmes said to The Hill.

"For the last year or two, we've seen an escalation of repression, an escalation of criminalization and dehumanization of immigrants as a result of Trump's election," Holmes said. "We've seen more of a consolidation happening of Homeland Security and ICE and unbelievable, indiscriminate capturing of people and detaining without due process."

"I think right now is really a turning point where we have to ask ourselves what kind of society and what kind of world we want to live, what is acceptable to do to other human beings and what is not," Holmes added. "We cannot allow this level of dehumanization and violence to be normalized. It's horrifying."

She said there have been no arrests but protests in front of the loading dock has prevented ICE from bringing people into the building. The protests began on Thursday and are ongoing.

"They're trying to rough people up one-on-one and deter us from being here," Holmes said. "We continue to stay and we're going to bring more people and we're not going to be deterred."

In Los Angeles, protesters are blocking the driveway for ICE vans, according to the Twitter account "LA Against ICE," and have been doing so for at least two days.

There are similar protests happening in Washington state, Utah, Chicago and other locations, according to reports.

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HEADLINE	06/23 Boston schools data shared w/ICE?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2018/06/23/boston-schools-chief-resigning-after-lawsuit-says-district-shared-student-data-with-immigration-officials/?utm_term=.9ec35bce3ed0
GIST	<p>Boston Schools Superintendent Tommy Chang is stepping down two years before the end of his contract after a three-year tenure marked by controversy and a new lawsuit that says the school district has shared student information with federal immigration officials.</p> <p>Chang, who signed a five-year contract to run the 56,000-student district in 2015, said late Friday that he was negotiating a departure, and he left a farewell message on the district's website that cited higher graduation and lower suspension rates among his accomplishments.</p> <p>Boston Mayor Marty Walsh released a statement saying that he and Chang had "mutually agreed" that there should be a change in leadership in the school district and that "significant work" remained to</p>

improve Boston schools. He did not mention the lawsuit, though it may have been the final straw for Chang.

Last year, Walsh blamed Chang in part when the Internal Revenue Service found irregularities in an audit of the city's finances and fined Boston nearly \$1 million. Walsh said Chang knew earlier than he did about the findings and did not tell him. In 2016, Chang was accused of botching a proposal to change start times for schools to allow older students to begin later. And the heralded Boston Latin School was accused by U.S. prosecutors of failing to seriously address allegations that students of color were being harassed.

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice and a coalition of students' rights groups filed a lawsuit this week against Boston Public Schools in an effort to obtain public records about its practice of sharing student information with federal immigration officials, including U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), through the Boston Regional Intelligence Center. According to the committee, the Massachusetts supervisor of records has ordered the district to disclose the records, but district officials have not done so.

Asked about the lawsuit and the practice of sharing student information with immigration officials, a spokesman for the Boston district said officials would look at the suit when they received it and not comment until then.

Matt Cregor, education project director at the lawyers' committee, said in an email that it was impossible to know exactly how many school districts are cooperating with ICE. He said in an email that the Boston Regional Intelligence Center is one of dozens of fusion centers that enable information-sharing between local and federal law enforcement agencies. Here's a state-by-state list of the fusion centers, but it is not clear when and how often school security officials participate, he said.

Students' rights groups, with help from the nonprofit Center for Law and Education, had filed to obtain public records of the case of a student at East Boston High School who had been deported based in part on an incident in school that Boston School Police shared with ICE via the Boston Regional Intelligence Agency. According to the lawyers' committee, the student got caught up in an incident at school in which two students were attempting to start a fight, but it never happened. An "unsubstantiated gang allegation" was used against the student, the committee said.

The Massachusetts supervisor of records agreed that the request for documents should be accepted but that the school district never turned them over, leading to the lawsuit.

"An 'unsuccessful fight' should be referred to a principal's office, not ICE," Cregor said in a statement.

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HEADLINE	06/23 Hope, healing thru Warrior Games
SOURCE	https://www.heraldnet.com/news/veterans-find-hope-and-healing-through-warrior-games/
GIST	<p>AIR FORCE ACADEMY, Colo. — Tim Vaughn thought he was getting a haircut that day in October 2014. But his barber snapped, and Vaughn left the shop in an ambulance with severed muscles in his neck.</p> <p>The incident, Vaughn said, brought up traumatic experiences from his time in the Navy.</p> <p>Vaughn, a Marysville resident, used his participation in the Department of Defense Warrior Games earlier this month at the U.S. Air Force Academy to continue his recovery — his "lifelong" recovery, as his wife, Monica Vaughn, described it.</p> <p>Vaughn competed in track and swimming in his first Warrior Games. His best finish was fifth place in the 800-meter race.</p> <p>The games made him more aware of his need to keep healing, he said.</p>

“It kind of opened my eyes to strive and say, ‘Oh my God, I really have something,’ ” he said.

U.S. Navy Senior Chief Hospital Corpsman Joe Paterniti, a 1983 Bothell High School graduate, also competed at the Games.

The Everett paramedic has been attached to a voluntary Navy training unit for three decades.

He competed in rowing, field, powerlifting and cycling. All but field were new sports for the Games. Paterniti’s best finish was fourth place in a rowing sprint.

The Games are tough, he said.

“It’s training your mind to being really comfortable with being uncomfortable,” he said in a Department of Defense story about the competition.

Throughout Vaughn’s time deployed in 2011 and 2012, he saw children who had been shot and he himself had to avoid gunfire in areas such as Kabul, Afghanistan.

But on Oct. 13, 2014, Vaughn was stopping by for a routine haircut at Vic’s Barbershop in Imperial Beach, California. It was impossible for him to be prepared for what happened next.

As an active-duty Navy petty officer up for promotion, Vaughn was recovering from hernia surgery and yearning to get back to work. The barber, Daniel Flores, asked Vaughn if he wanted a neck shave. Vaughn, thinking nothing of it, agreed, preoccupied with looking at pictures his wife had sent of her parents’ new home.

Flores, whom Vaughn had not met before that day, took out the straight razor and cut his neck. Vaughn shoved him off, but not before Flores stabbed him in the same area.

Bleeding profusely, Vaughn reacted quickly. He stumbled to the back of the shop and laid down with his feet up. He recalled himself yelling, “Call 911! I’m a 32-year-old male, I’m O positive and I’m going to need a blood transfusion.”

Another barber came out of the bathroom and Vaughn directed him to grab some towels and squeeze him in the neck until he “couldn’t talk.”

The first responders were surprised to see that Vaughn’s blood pressure was so low. He might have saved his own life.

Flores received a 10-year prison sentence for attempted murder.

Vaughn spent the next few years doing his best to get better. He noticed himself getting angry often, mostly since people couldn’t seem to comprehend what happened to him.

“I don’t think I’ve gotten the attention I needed, so I was very bitter,” Vaughn said.

That anger was alleviated after Vaughn discovered the Navy Safe Harbor Foundation in November 2017.

Through the organization, Vaughn found the Warrior Games. He qualified for four events.

“It’s just getting up every day, and believe it or not, just having something to look forward to,” Vaughn said.

Competing has changed his outlook. He found camaraderie and learned to depend on others, he said.

	“You’ve got to allow people to help you,” Vaughn said. “Me talking about it is kind of therapeutic. I’m now an open book — here I am, this is who I am.”
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HEADLINE	06/22 Seattle: Lyle’s lawyers ‘grandstanding’
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1027217/seattle-perjury-argument/
GIST	<p>The City of Seattle has responded to allegations that one of its officers committed perjury when testifying about a controversial police shooting. The city has aimed its arguments at opposing attorneys.</p> <p>Attorneys representing the family of Charleena Lyles recently argued that a Seattle police officer committed perjury when he testified about the incident. The officer, Jason Anderson, said that the door to Lyle’s apartment was shut when the pregnant mother was shot to death by police. The African American mother was shot five times by two white police officers on June 18, 2017.</p> <p>The Lyles family has filed a civil wrongful death lawsuit against the City of Seattle.</p> <p>On Friday, city attorneys said the motion filed by the Lyle’s lawyers was grandstanding meant to harass the city and the officer. Lyle’s attorneys asked the judge to refer the perjury allegation to the King County prosecutor. City attorneys also said that expert analysis of video and audio used to make the perjury allegation is faulty, because the recordings had been redacted for public release and were not meant for forensic analysis.</p> <p>In its oral argument, city attorneys called the perjury allegations “baseless” and said that the city’s response has nothing to do with the police officer or Ms. Lyles. Rather, they targeted their statements at opposing attorneys and their conduct, arguing their motion lacks decorum and “flouts the bounds of our Civil Rules and Rules of Professional Conduct.” Seattle argues that the perjury motion is legally unsupported.</p> <p>The next hearing date for the case is scheduled for Tuesday, June 26.</p> <p>Karen Koehler, an attorney for the Lyles family, released this statement following the city’s argument Friday:</p> <p>“The disrespectful tone of the response and bully tactics used are a poor reflection on the City of Seattle. The City’s lawyers believe that by aggressively charging the Estate of Charleena Lyles’ attorneys with misconduct, they can sidestep and minimize the issue of whether Officer Anderson actually committed the alleged perjury.</p> <p>We are confident that the truth will come out in this case. We stand on our motion and the evidence produced to support it.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 Mayor responds to PD chief process
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1027374/durkan-seattle-police-chief-criticism/
GIST	<p>Mayor Jenny Durkan has responded to ongoing criticism over the city’s selection process for the new Seattle police, noting her extensive history in SPD reform efforts.</p> <p>The Seattle Community Police Commission sent a letter to Council President Bruce Harrell on June 20. In it, they requested multiple records related to the police chief selection process. The commission has previously asked the council to halt the police process over its concerns. Durkan’s letter does not indicate interviews will be paused anytime soon.</p>

Concerns largely stemmed from the snubbing of Interim Chief Carmen Best. More than 60 people applied for the Seattle police chief position. Best made the list of the top five finalists as selected by a committee. But as Mayor Durkan explains in her letter to the commission, the interim chief did not make the final list of three. She backs her reasoning for this by citing the city charter and a finalist exam.

Seattle police chief selection process

Mayor Durkan writes that there were a couple phases in the Seattle police chief selection process as ordered by the city's charter. The first phase involved a 25-member committee to come up with a handful of finalists. They produced five — including Best.

“To comply with the City Charter and maximize community input, the search had two initial phases,” Durkan writes to the commission. “The first phase was to conduct deep community engagement and to review all candidates to reduce the list to finalists. The second, as required by the City Charter, was a competitive exam process that was to select three candidates from which I select the final nominee for Chief of Police.”

Durkan further explains the second phase:

“As the Police Chief Search Committee was informed at the beginning by the City Attorney's office and again at the end of their role, the search then proceeded to the second phase, the Competitive Exam. As required by the City Charter, a police chief “shall be selected by the Mayor from among the three highest ranking candidates in a competitive examination to be conducted under the direction of the Mayor.” The Competitive Exam Process then selected the three finalists. The Competitive Exam Process was conducted by: Mike Fong, Senior Deputy Mayor; Shefali Ranganathan, Deputy Mayor, Ron Sims, former King County Executive and previous Co-Chair to the 2014 Police Chief Search; Ian Warner, Legal Counsel to the Mayor and a former member of the Monitoring Team to the Consent Decree; and Barney Melekian, former Director of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services under President Obama.

.... The Competitive Exam Process decided on three finalists to move forward to me, as required by the City Charter. This includes: Eddie Frizell, Cameron McLay, and Ely Reyes as the three finalists for permanent Chief of the Seattle Police Department.”

Durkan's response also details how the process included 50 community stakeholders, 14 neighborhood meetings, and an online survey posted in 15 different languages over the course of two months prior to the comprehensive exam. All that information was used in the exam phase of the selection process.

The mayor also notes her history working on Seattle policing issues, dating back to 1985 when she was appointed to oversight roles by three mayors. She then writes that as U.S. attorney, she was involved in the Department of Justice consent decree which required the Seattle Police Department to reform.

“I worked with community groups—the ACLU, El Centro, One America, Mothers for Police Accountability, Northwest Immigrant Rights Project—to deeply reform the Seattle Police Department and enter into a federal consent decree, which I signed as U.S. Attorney,” Durkan notes.

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HEADLINE	06/23 Brexit marchers demand final vote
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/23/world/brexit-march-final-vote/index.html
GIST	(CNN) — Thousands of people marched Saturday through central London on the second anniversary of the Brexit referendum, demanding that the UK government give people a chance to make the final decision on whether it goes into effect next year. The rally was organized by several pro-European Union campaign groups and dubbed the People's Vote march. Organizers say that if a Brexit deal is rejected by the Parliament, citizens should have a vote on any

	<p>final terms of UK's exit out of the EU.</p> <p>The initiative to leave the EU goes into effect March 29, 2019.</p> <p>The rally started at noon at London's central Pall Mall street, and finished at Parliament Square. Neither the London Metropolitan Police nor Westminster Council -- the borough authority where the march took place -- would comment on the crowd's size. The BBC reported there were tens of thousands of protesters and a smaller pro-Brexit counterprotest.</p> <p>The government remains knotted up on how to manage the economy, continue trading goods with the European Union -- its biggest export market -- and mollify businesses and investors who demand answers about future trade. The economy is now the slowest-growing in Europe.</p> <p>Economic and political turmoil started not long after British voters approved a referendum to leave the EU in June 2016.</p> <p>The country's own economists are making dire predictions. The British Chambers of Commerce last week said the UK's economic growth forecast of 1.3% this year would be the weakest since the financial crisis, a CNN Money report said.</p> <p>Despite the well-attended march, some voters interviewed by CNNMoney last week said they are worn out from the protracted talks.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 Zimbabwe: assassination attempt blast
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/23/africa/zimbabwe-rally-blast/index.html
GIST	<p>Bulawayo, Zimbabwe (CNN) — Zimbabwe's government is calling an explosion Saturday an assassination attempt on President Emmerson Mnangagwa, who was holding a campaign rally at a stadium.</p> <p>The President escaped injuries, but others were injured and hospitalized. The blast occurred at White City Stadium in Bulawayo.</p> <p>"Investigations are underway and more details will be given to the public," presidential spokesman George Charamba said, according to the state-run newspaper The Herald. "There have been multiple attempts on the President's life over the past five years."</p> <p>The country's two vice presidents were among at least eight people injured, The Herald reported. Kembo Mohadi suffered leg injuries, and Constantino Chiwenga had slight facial bruises, state media said.</p> <p>Other injured officials included Oppah Muchinguri-Kashiri, minister of water, environment and climate, and Engelbert Rugeje, party secretary of the ruling ZANU-PF.</p> <p>The Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corp. said three of its crew members were hurt and taken to Mpilo Hospital in Bulawayo</p> <p>The US Embassy in Harare condemned the attack.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 Ethiopia rally explosion; dozens injured
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/23/africa/ethiopia-rally-explosion/index.html
GIST	(CNN) — Dozens were injured, and at least one person killed, in an explosion Saturday at a rally in Addis

	<p>Ababa attended by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, officials said.</p> <p>In footage from state TV, bodyguards rush Ahmed unharmed off the stage where he had been sitting after the blast.</p> <p>Eight people are in critical condition, Health Minister Amir Aman said on Twitter.</p> <p>Six suspects were arrested, according to state broadcaster ETV, which carried a statement from the Federal Police Commission.</p> <p>Nine members of law enforcement, including the deputy police commissioner of Addis Ababa, were arrested for alleged dereliction of duty in connection with the blast, police said.</p> <p>Aman said that 156 people needed medical attention and that 51 of them remain hospitalized.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 Germany: bldg. explosion injures 25
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/apxpolice-25-injured-in-building-explosion-in-germany/
GIST	<p>BERLIN (AP) — Twenty-five people were injured, four of them severely, when an explosion destroyed an apartment building in the western German city of Wuppertal, police said Sunday.</p> <p>Police said the explosion rocked the several-story building shortly before midnight Saturday with a large bang, scaring people in surrounding homes so much they ran out into the street in a panic. The detonation was so severe it destroyed the building's attic and the top three floors, the German news agency dpa reported.</p> <p>Fire then broke out in several different parts of the apartment building and firefighters had trouble dousing the flames because parts of the building kept collapsing. They were able to rescue four severely injured from inside the building and sent them to the hospital. Another 21 people were slightly injured and treated by emergency staff at the scene.</p> <p>Police said they were in the dark about the cause of the explosion, dpa reported.</p> <p>A car nearby was destroyed, buried under window frames that were blown onto it by the explosions' impact. Emergency personnel on Sunday picked up bricks and furniture on the street.</p> <p>Some of the building's roof beams stood black and eerie in the smoke as police scoured accessible parts of the building for further people trapped inside before giving the all-clear.</p> <p>Where the building stood is now a huge gap in a row of apartment buildings in the city's Langerfeld neighborhood.</p> <p>Later Sunday, authorities brought in heavy equipment to tear down the remains of the ruin. They said it was too dangerous for investigators to search for evidence that might reveal the explosion's cause because the destroyed building could collapse at any time.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 Landmark day for Saudi women
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/23/middleeast/saudi-women-driving-ban-lifts-intl/index.html
GIST	Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (CNN) — Saudi women drivers took to the roads legally Sunday for the first time in the kingdom's history, as its decades-old ban on women driving finally lifted.

The end of the controversial ban brings the ultra-conservative Gulf nation into line with the rest of the world. It also represents the culmination of years of campaigning by rights activists who have sometimes been arrested and imprisoned for their efforts.

Mona Al-Fares, a doctor, was in her car before midnight, waiting for the ban to lift before setting off through the streets of Jeddah with her husband and children.

"I feel like I'm surprised -- am I really driving in my own country? I feel happy, relieved. I feel like I'm free," she told CNN.

The step, first announced last September, will liberate many women from the constraints of needing to hire a male driver to travel even small distances, allowing many more to join the workforce, grow their own businesses and explore the kingdom.

Hiring women is a key part of Saudi Arabia's ambitious plan to overhaul its economy, known as Vision 2030. The reform agenda is being spearheaded by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

For some, though, the jubilation at realizing a hard-won freedom Sunday will be tempered by the arrests last month of a number of Saudi rights activists, including some who have played a prominent role in the fight for women's right to drive.

Many other restrictions on women's everyday lives remain in place under the male guardianship system -- including the right to marry, work or travel.

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HEADLINE	06/23 DHS employees warned about safety
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/23/politics/dhs-employees-safety-immigration/index.html
GIST	<p>Washington (CNN) — Amid the furor over the policy that resulted in thousands of families separated at the border, Department of Homeland Security employees have been warned about threats to their personal safety, according to a department-wide email obtained by CNN.</p> <p>In the message from Claire M. Grady, the acting deputy secretary of homeland security, on Saturday afternoon, DHS employees were given information about the security resources available to them and were provided with tips for security, like not wearing their badges in public and being on guard for risks in public and online.</p> <p>"In recent days, DHS has determined there may be a heightened threat against DHS employees in response to U.S. Government actions surrounding immigration," Grady wrote.</p> <p>"This assessment is based on specific and credible threats that have been levied against certain DHS employees and a sharp increase in the overall number of general threats against DHS employees -- although the veracity of each threat varies. In addition, over the last few days, thousands of employees have had their personally identifiable information publically (sic) released on social media."</p> <p>The message went to the entire DHS workforce of more than 200,000, a source familiar with the message told CNN. That includes individuals who work for DHS sub-components like US Customs and Border Protection and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement.</p> <p>Grady's email warning of risks outlined a list of "general security awareness measures that all DHS employees can take to protect themselves while in public."</p> <p>At the end of the email, Grady wrote, "Keep your heads held high and focused on the Department's important missions. You are making a difference to secure our country. And in the meantime, let's continue to be security-conscious and look out for each other."</p>

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HEADLINE	06/23 Central Oregon fire continues to grow
SOURCE	http://www.kptv.com/story/38490622/boxcar-fire-in-central-oregon-grows-to-18000-acres-graham-fire-forces-evacuations
GIST	<p>MAUPIN, OR (KPTV) - The Boxcar Fire south of Maupin grew to 23,000 acres on Friday.</p> <p>That fire is just one that crews are working to contain in the central Oregon area after lightning strikes Wednesday and Thursday led to more than three dozen separate incidents.</p> <p>For most of Friday, the Boxcar Fire moved south and east away from Maupin and the Deschutes River corridor. However, around 3 p.m., firefighters said the fire jumped Bakeoven Canyon, began moving toward Maupin and threatened homes.</p> <p>"It's difficult, the terrains difficult, it's rocky, it's smoky," Chief Don Colfels of Lake Chinook Fire and Rescue said.</p> <p>Dozer lines were put in place to protect recreation areas along the Deschutes River. Central Oregon Fire Info reported the fire was 10 percent contained Friday night.</p> <p>The Graham Fire had burned just over 2,000 acres near Culver, four miles south of the Metolius River arm of Lake Billy Chinook.</p> <p>The Graham Fire led to Level 3 evacuation orders – meaning go now – for the Three Rivers Subdivision. Around 100 structures were threatened, according to Central Oregon Fire Info.</p> <p>Another fire reported Friday morning, the Jack Knife Fire, grew to 2,000 acres in brush and grass five miles northeast of Kent. 10 homes are threatened and the fire has reached the John Day River on the west side of the river, fire authorities said. Large pockets of fuel are within the perimeter of the fire.</p> <p>Gov. Kate Brown invoked the Emergency Conflagration Act on Thursday, sending additional resources from the Portland area to battle the fires.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 Pittsburgh: car drives thru protest crowd
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/23/us/pittsburgh-antwon-rose-protests/index.html
GIST	<p>Pittsburgh (CNN) — Protesters angry over the death of an unarmed teen who was shot by police this week marched Friday for the third straight night down the streets of downtown Pittsburgh.</p> <p>Four people were arrested as hundreds of demonstrators blocked streets, Allegheny County Police Superintendent Coleman McDonough said.</p> <p>Police are looking for a black sedan that drove through the crowd late Friday, said Chris Togneri, the city spokesman. No injuries were reported, he said.</p> <p>Protesters were near PNC Park, where fans were leaving a Pittsburgh Pirates baseball game, when the car drove through, CNN affiliate KDKA reported.</p> <p>Friday marked the third night of protests in Pittsburgh. Several groups since Wednesday have shut down highways and intersections across the city.</p> <p>As it grew dark, police became more visible. Squad cars trailed the crowd, and officers in riot gear formed</p>

	a tight line, holding batons and blocking protesters' way.
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HEADLINE	06/24 Texas detention center bus protest
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/23/us/texas-detention-center-bus-protest/index.html
GIST	<p>McAllen, Texas (CNN) — Chanting protesters briefly blocked a bus leaving a migrant detention center in McAllen, Texas, on Saturday afternoon.</p> <p>Protesters stood in front of the bus and yelled, "Set the children free" and "Shame on you" at Border Patrol officers. The Border Patrol ended up surrounding the bus so it could back up and go out the other end of the street.</p> <p>CNN reporters could see children through the darkened windows, and a protester told CNN she also saw children through the windows. She said some of the children waved at her and she told them, "You are not alone" in Spanish.</p> <p>"It was very difficult to see," said Denise Benavides of Dallas, who said she's a member of the League of United Latin American Citizens.</p> <p>Benavides said she didn't know where the bus was going but "that's something we'll look into -- what's going on and where are they taking these children."</p> <p>Uniformed officers arrived to calm the situation. McAllen police told CNN nobody was arrested.</p> <p>The vehicle's destination was unclear.</p> <p>A US Customs and Border Patrol spokesperson said the bus carried "family groups" being transferred into the custody of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. When asked about the bus's destination, an ICE spokesman recommended contacting Health & Human Services or CBP. HHS said to ask ICE.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 BP checkpoints New England highways
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/23/us/maine-new-hampshire-border-patrol-checkpoints/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN) — Far from ground zero in the Trump administration's crackdown on illegal immigration along the southern border, US Customs and Border Protection checkpoints on highways in Maine and New Hampshire are catching the eye of civil liberties groups.</p> <p>On Interstate 95 near the remote northern Maine town of Lincoln this week, the Border Patrol said it made nine drug seizures and two arrests for immigration violations during an 11-hour checkpoint operation in which agents asked motorists about their place of birth and citizenship status.</p> <p>The federal agency -- one of several at the center of a growing humanitarian crisis involving 2,300 children separated from their parents at the Mexico border -- said in a statement that Wednesday's checkpoint in Maine was "a means of preventing smuggling organizations from exploiting existing transportation systems to travel to the interior of the United States."</p> <p>Customs and Border Protection says the US Supreme Court has affirmed the agency's ability to ask motorists' citizenship status, even if they have no suspicion. Agents use training and questions to make decisions about a traveler's citizenship or residency, it said.</p> <p>"Travelers have the right to remain silent," it said in a statement. "Travelers who cooperate are passed through quickly, unless the agent suspects they are in violation of federal law. Travelers who refuse to</p>

cooperate may be referred to a secondary examination area to allow agents to conduct additional questioning to determine the traveler's citizenship or residency."

Armed with search authority to conduct immigration checks within a "reasonable distance" of 100 air miles from US land borders and coastlines, the Border Patrol also set up a checkpoint last weekend on Interstate 93 near Woodstock, New Hampshire.

The June 15-17 operation resulted in the arrests of five undocumented immigrants from Brazil, China, Ecuador, El Salvador and Mexico as well as the seizure of drugs, according to Customs and Border Protection.

The American Civil Liberties of New Hampshire has said there have been a handful of Border Patrol checkpoints on I-93 in Woodstock -- about 90 miles from the Canadian border -- since last summer, CNN affiliate WMUR reported. There had been no such checkpoints there in more than five years.

"Immigration police in this country are emboldened," Gilles Bissonette, legal director of the ACLU of New Hampshire, said in statement after 17 people were arrested during a Memorial Day weekend operation. "We're seeing it not only nationally, but right here in New Hampshire."

The ACLU in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont filed suit in May against US Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement, seeking records on Border Patrol checkpoints and bus raids, ICE arrests at courthouses and what it said were the targeted arrests of immigrants' rights activists.

"New England residents have a right to know what federal agents are doing in their communities and to demand accountability for their actions," ACLU Vermont staff attorney Lia Ernst said in a statement at the time.

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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	06/25 Biggest digital heist isn't over yet
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2018-06-25/the-biggest-digital-heist-in-history-isn-t-over-yet
GIST	<p>As night fell in Taipei on July 10, 2016, most people in the city were hunkered down to ride out the end of a typhoon. Not Sergey Berezovsky and Vladimir Berkman. The two Russians made their way through the rain to an ATM at First Commercial Bank, one of Taiwan's top lenders. Wearing hats and antipollution masks, they loitered at the machine for a moment. Then, as the astonished couple in line behind them later told the police, the ATM started disgorging cash without either man touching it. The men shoved the bills into a satchel and brushed past them. As the Russians drove off in a black sedan, the couple spotted something on the ground: One of the guys had dropped his bank card.</p> <p>By the time detectives traced Berezovsky and Berkman to the nearby Grand Hyatt the next day, the Russians had already jetted off to Moscow by way of Hong Kong. And they were just two of 15 "money mules" who'd hit 41 ATMs at 22 branches of First Commercial over that stormy weekend, the cops learned, taking 83 million New Taiwan dollars (NT\$), or about \$2.6 million. Hackers, investigators discovered, had forced the machines to spit out cash.</p> <p>The Carbanak gang had struck again.</p> <p>Before WannaCry, before the Sony Pictures hack, and before the breaches that opened up Equifax and Yahoo!, there was a nasty bit of malware known as Carbanak. Unlike those spectacular attacks, this malware wasn't created by people interested in paralyzing institutions for ransom, publishing embarrassing emails, or taking personal data. The Carbanak guys just wanted loot, and lots of it.</p>

Since late 2013, this band of cybercriminals has penetrated the digital inner sanctums of more than 100 banks in 40 nations, including Germany, Russia, Ukraine, and the U.S., and stolen about \$1.2 billion, according to Europol, the European Union's law enforcement agency. The string of thefts, collectively dubbed Carbanak—a mashup of a hacking program and the word “bank”—is believed to be the biggest digital bank heist ever. In a series of exclusive interviews with Bloomberg Businessweek, law enforcement officials and computer-crime experts provided revelations about their three-year pursuit of the gang and the mechanics of a caper that's become the stuff of legend in the digital underworld.

Besides forcing ATMs to cough up money, the thieves inflated account balances and shuttled millions of dollars around the globe. Deploying the same espionage methods used by intelligence agencies, they appropriated the identities of network administrators and executives and plumbed files for sensitive information about security and account management practices. The gang operated through remotely accessed computers and hid their tracks in a sea of internet addresses. “Carbanak is the first time we saw such novel methods used to penetrate big financial institutions and their networks,” says James Chappell, co-founder and chief innovation officer of Digital Shadows Ltd., a London intelligence firm that works with the Bank of England and other lending institutions. “It's the breadth of the attacks, that's what's truly different about this one.”

For years police and banking-industry sleuths doubted they'd ever catch the phantoms behind Carbanak. Then, in March, the Spanish National Police arrested Ukrainian citizen Denis Katana in the Mediterranean port city of Alicante. The authorities have held him since then on suspicion of being the brains of the operation. Katana's lawyer, Jose Esteve Villaescusa, declined to comment, and his client's alleged confederates couldn't be reached for comment. While Katana hasn't been charged with a crime, Spanish detectives say financial information, emails, and other data trails show he was the architect of a conspiracy that spanned three continents. And there are signs that the Carbanak gang is far from finished.

Carbanak first surfaced in Kiev, when executives at a Ukrainian bank realized they were missing a bunch of money. Security cameras showed the lender's ATMs dispensing cash in the predawn hours to people who didn't bother to insert cards or punch in PINs. The bank hired the Russian cybersecurity firm Kaspersky Lab to check it out. Initially, the researchers suspected that hackers had infected the machines with malware from a handheld device. “What we found instead was something else,” says David Emm, Kaspersky's principal security researcher.

Someone had sent emails to the bank's employees with Microsoft Word attachments, purporting to be from suppliers such as ATM manufacturers. It was a classic spear-phishing gambit. When opened, the attachments downloaded a piece of malicious code based on Carberp, a so-called Trojan that unlocked a secret backdoor to the bank's network. The malware siphoned confidential data from bank employees and relayed the information to a server the hackers controlled. Delving deeper, the Kaspersky team found that intruders were taking control of the cameras on hundreds of PCs inside the organization, capturing screenshots and recording keystrokes. Soon, the researchers learned that other banks in Russia and Ukraine had been hacked the same way.

Experts point out that even if Katana was the mastermind, he was just one guy in a crime that surely must have had many authors

The attackers cased their targets for months, says Kaspersky. The Carbanak crew was looking for executives with the authority to direct the flow of money between accounts, to other lenders, and to ATMs. They were also studying when and how the bank moved money around. The thieves didn't want to do anything that would catch the eyes of security. State-backed spies use this type of reconnaissance in what's known as an advanced persistent threat. “In those instances, the attacks are designed to steal data, not get their hands on money,” Emm says. When the time was right, the thieves used the verification codes of bank officers to create legit-looking transactions.

By the fall of 2014, the authorities realized they were dealing with something new. That October, Keith Gross, chair of the cybersecurity group for a European bank lobby, called a crash meeting with experts

from Citigroup, Deutsche Bank, and other major European lenders. In a meeting room at Europol's fortress-like headquarters in The Hague, Kaspersky researchers briefed the bank officials on what they'd found in Ukraine. "I've never seen anything like this before," Troels Oerting, then the head of Europol's Cybercrime Centre, told the group. "It's a well-orchestrated malware attack, it's very sophisticated, and it's global."

So Europol went global, too, enlisting help from law enforcement agencies in Belarus, Moldova, Romania, Spain, Taiwan, the U.S., as well as bank industry representatives. It set up a secure online clearinghouse where investigators could cross-check data and find links between the thefts, says Fernando Ruiz, head of operations in Europol's cybercrime unit. At the heart of its operation was a lab where technicians dissected the two dozen samples of malware identified in the Carbanak thefts. By isolating unique characteristics in the code, detectives could trace where the programs came from and maybe who was using them. The work led them toward Denis Katana's apartment in Alicante, a four-hour drive southeast of Madrid. "This is what the Spanish police used to open their investigation," Ruiz says.

Carlos Yuste, a chief inspector in the National Police's cybercrime center, took it from there. Yuste, a cerebral veteran detective with salt-and-pepper hair, and his chatty younger partner, Javier Sanchez, started taking a closer look at 34-year-old Katana. He used offshore servers for his computing needs—not unlawful, but unusual. More interesting, he was visited by Romanians and Moldovans linked to organized crime. Yuste ordered surveillance, but he and Sanchez labored to build a case for a wiretap or arrest.

From a distance, Katana appeared to be just another immigrant building a new life in the West. A skinny, smallish man, he shared a modest 1,100-square-foot apartment with his Ukrainian wife and young son and didn't seem to have much of a social life. He wasn't trying to learn Spanish, and the cops never once saw him visit San Juan Beach, the long stretch of golden sand just a few blocks away. He appeared to have a much more active life online, often toiling on his laptop until sunrise.

Slowly, Yuste and Sanchez started piecing together how they believed Katana was working on the Carbanak thefts with three other men in Ukraine and Russia. One sent the malicious emails, another was a database expert, and the third cleaned up the gang's digital footprints, the police say. As for Katana, Sanchez says he handled the most critical and complex task: He allegedly conducted the reconnaissance of banking systems and then shuffled money around the network like an air traffic controller. In his hands, it was art as much as science, the police say. "This guy is in another league, he's like Rafa Nadal playing tennis," Yuste says. "There are few people in the world capable of doing what he did."

Just as the police started to make strides, the Carbanak crew opened another front, says Kaspersky's Emm. In the first half of 2016, the thieves sent spear-phishing emails that looked like messages from legitimate financial institutions. When bank employees opened the emails' attachments, they downloaded malware based on a program called Cobalt Strike, which is designed to let security officers hack their own institutions to find vulnerabilities, like in a war game. The Carbanak-Cobalt gang was able to extract \$12 million per heist, says Europol. The thieves' nimbleness was sobering. "Sometimes the investigation looked good," Ruiz says, "and sometimes it looked like we'd reached a dead end."

The Carbanak crew did have one weakness that wasn't easy to finesse: humans. On July 16, 2016, six days after the suspected Russian mules Berezovsky and Berkman allegedly hit ATMs in the wake of Typhoon Nepartak, two other men linked to the thefts landed in Taipei. After clearing customs at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, Mihail Colibaba and Nicolae Pencov took a taxi to the central railway station. There they entered the baggage storage facility and, after receiving access codes by text, took suitcases from three separate lockers, according to police. The bags held NT\$60 million in bundles of crisp blue NT\$1,000 notes. The men then checked into the Grand Victoria Hotel across from the city's mammoth Ferris wheel and holed up in their rooms for the next 24 hours. At about 8 p.m. the next day, they enjoyed a leisurely dinner at the hotel's restaurant. Their job was nearly done. As the pair left the dining room, police confronted them and took them into custody. They'd been under surveillance since they left the railway station the day before.

They have the sloppy tradecraft of their alleged accomplices, Berezovsky and Berkman, to thank for their

capture. After the police got hold of the bank card one of the men had dropped the prior Sunday, Hsin-Yi Tseng, a 28-year-old detective in Taipei's Criminal Investigation Bureau, coordinated a citywide sweep to map out the scope of the ATM heists. She had scores of officers scan security camera footage, and her colleagues managed to track down another mule, whom they followed to the railway station. They watched him stash the three cash-stuffed suitcases in lockers and waited to see who came to collect them. It was Colibaba and Pencov, who are now serving four and a half years in prison. Colibaba's iPhone contained photos of stacks of cash in different currencies about the size of the piles in the suitcases, and, Tseng says, email exchanges with a man who appeared to be in charge of the operation. They traced the man to Alicante.

Yuste and Sanchez say Katana didn't ease up on the bank raids. In early 2017, mules extracted \$4 million from ATMs in Madrid after Katana allegedly took control of accounts inside Russian and Kazakh lenders. That was a mistake, because it enabled Yuste to get judicial approval to wiretap Katana's phones. The funny thing is Katana didn't need the money, Sanchez says. Katana was laundering his money through a Bitcoin warehouse he'd bought in China, had already converted most of his cash into Bitcoin, and was constructing a mansion in Alicante. "It was a kind of game for him," Sanchez says. "To attack a bank wasn't about 'Let's steal a million dollars.' It was, 'Let's crack the security the bank is putting in our way.'"

Earlier this year the detectives learned Katana and his partners were preparing to up their game with the release of a more potent version of Carbanak. On the morning of March 6, a police officer knocked on the door of his apartment. Katana answered with a resigned look. He didn't resist as more than a dozen armed cops entered and bagged his laptop and other evidence. In addition to jewelry and two BMWs in his name, they found 15,000 Bitcoins, then valued at about \$162 million. Law enforcement officials worldwide were jubilant.

Yet experts point out that even if Katana was the mastermind, he was just one guy in a crime that surely must have had many authors. Unlike the bank jobs of yore, digital heists are amoeba-like ventures that divide over and over again as the malware proliferates. "We've already seen the modification of Carbanak and multiple groups using it," says Kimberly Goody, an analyst at security software maker FireEye Inc. "Same case with Cobalt."

In recent weeks, employees at banks in the Russian-speaking world have been receiving emails that appear to be from Kaspersky, the security company that unearthed Carbanak. The messages warn recipients that their PCs have been flagged for possibly violating the law and they should download a complaint letter or face penalties. When they click on the attachment, a version of the Cobalt malware infects their networks. It turns out cyberheists may not die even when their suspected perpetrators are nabbed.

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HEADLINE	06/25 Cryptojacking: alternative to ransomware
SOURCE	https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/cryptojacking-emerging-as-alternative-to-ransomware-quick-heal-118062500378_1.html
GIST	<p>With more than three million hits globally in the first five months of this year, cryptojacking, a form of cyber-attack in which hackers hijack the infected system's processing power to mine cryptocurrency, is fast emerging as an alternative to ransomware, according to IT security firm Quick Heal.</p> <p>The number of mobile cryptojacking malware variants has also grown from eight in 2017 to 25 by May 2018, marking a three-fold increase, Quick Heal said in a statement on Monday.</p> <p>"Cryptojacking is emerging as a more cost-effective and efficient alternative to ransomware. With a ransomware attack, there is no guarantee that hackers will be paid a ransom," said Sanjay Katkar, Joint Managing Director and Chief Technology Officer, Quick Heal Technologies.</p> <p>"Cryptojacking, on the other hand, is empowering hackers to make use of infected endpoints for swifter</p>

	<p>and more assured financial gains," Katkar said.</p> <p>As more cybercriminals leverage cryptojacking as a lucrative channel of generating illicit revenues, Quick Heal Security Labs researchers expect these numbers to grow even further.</p> <p>As opposed to ransomware, cryptojacking attacks remain almost undetected, enabling attackers to use the compromised systems to mine cryptocurrencies for as long as they want.</p> <p>They are also easier to deploy than ransomware attacks. All a hacker needs to do is to drop a cryptomining code on your system without your knowledge through an infected link or file.</p> <p>Another commonly used method is to infect websites and pop-up ads with a JavaScript-based cryptomining script, which is triggered when you click on infected ads or visit compromised websites.</p> <p>In such instances, attackers do not even need to install a code; just opening the infected link is enough to turn your system into a cryptomining machine and generate instant returns on investment for the hacker, Quick Heal said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 Ransomhack: GDPR blackmail scheme
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/ransomhack-gdpr-attack-blackmailing-business-owners/
GIST	<p>Hackers are threatening companies to leak stolen user data online to hurt them through GDPR regulations – In return they are demanding ransom money.</p> <p>On 25 May 2018, the new European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which aims to improve information security on a global scale came into force. At the same time, this provoked the emergence of a new method for blackmailing the market.</p> <p>Business owners are reporting that they are being a subject to cyber attacks related to ransomware where personal data that belongs to users or customers is exposed and the ransom demand is made in return for its retrieval.</p> <p>Experts from Bulgaria based TAD GROUP point out the difference in the ransom methodology. This time cybercriminals aim to disclose private information to the public eye rather than encrypt it so it is unobtainable unless paid for.</p> <p>Hackers threaten to publish the entire content of the database, containing personal data records, on a public server, that according to the regulation, means that the company will be severely fined.</p> <p>This is the warning that Ivan Todorov, the founder of TAD GROUP, is issuing. According to him, the victims are medium and large-scale Bulgarian companies which are requested to pay a ransom in an untraceable cryptocurrency.</p> <p>The ransoms vary from \$ 1,000 to \$ 20,000, while the fines for companies that the new EU regulation envisions account for 4% of the global annual turnover for the previous year or up to 20 million euros. In short, Ivan Todorov calls this type of hacker attacks “ransomhack“.</p> <p>According to TAD GROUP, from credible sources, it has become clear that the attacked companies have taken in GDPR protection measures by creating policies for personal data storage and security in their offices but have not conducted information security tests to verify whether they are actually susceptible to virtual attacks from cybercriminals.</p> <p>In other words, they did what is necessary to achieve compliance with the requirements of the Commission for Personal Data Protection. However, most companies did not consider securing their Internet-facing</p>

	infrastructure.
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HEADLINE	06/22 Afghan-based attack disguised as news
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/afghanbased-attack-disguised-as/
GIST	<p>Researchers have detected a new Afghanistan-based attack disguised as a recent article from a Middle Eastern news network about the next Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit. Attackers used a malicious document that contained an excerpt from a story and titled it “Afghanistan – ‘Shanghai Spirits’ Contributes to Afghan Peace.”</p> <p>In order to read the full story, readers were asked to click “enable content” because the document was protected. Duping the victims into clicking on the malicious document was the first stage in a multi-staged attack involving various servers and artifacts. The attack aims to install a Metasploit backdoor using “an interesting .NET downloader which uses a custom encryption method to obfuscate process memory and evade antivirus detection,” according to research reported by AlienVault.</p> <p>An Afghan user uploaded the malicious file, within which the the macro malware, dubbed "GZipDe," was embedded so that it executed a Visual Basic script upon opening. The script, stored as a hexadecimal stream, then executed the next task from a hidden PowerShell console. Because the server is now offline, the researchers do not have access to the next step in the infection chain; however, they did find the original reverse-tcp payload publicly available (with an additional layer of encryption payload) on GitHub.</p> <p>“The malware allocates a new memory page with execute, read and write privileges. Then it copies the contents of the decrypted payload and launches a new thread to execute it,” researchers wrote.</p> <p>The research team has only seen one sample of the malware but said that it seemed very targeted. “Given the decoy document is in English and uploaded from Afghanistan, it may have been targeting someone in an embassy or similar,” Chris Doman, AlienVault security researcher, wrote in an email.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/22 Med Associates warn of data breach
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/270000-med-associates-records-possibly-compromised-in-data-breach/article/775441/
GIST	<p>Healthcare claims services provider Med Associates is notifying its patients that the facility suffered a data breach in March potentially exposing PII, including medical diagnosis and payment card information.</p> <p>The incident was discovered on March 22 when some unusual activity was noticed on an employee's workstation, the Latham, N.Y.-based Med Associates said in a release. The organization's IT department and an outside forensics firm began an investigation and determined an unauthorized person accessed the computer possibly gaining access to patient information.</p> <p>The Albany Times-Union is reporting about 270,000 people may be impacted by the breach.</p> <p>“While our investigation is ongoing, we have determined that that information that may have been accessible from the workstation would have included patient names, date of birth, address, dates of service, diagnosis codes, procedure codes and insurance information, including insurance ID Number. There was no banking or credit card information contained on or accessible from the workstation,” Med Associates said.</p> <p>At this time Med Associates is unaware of any of the information being abused.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/22 Popular games remove 'spyware'
SOURCE	https://nakedsecurity.sophos.com/2018/06/22/holy-potatoes-popular-games-remove-spyware-after-gamers-revolt/
GIST	<p>The games industry has just been taught an important privacy lesson: don't mess with gamers – especially the ones who play something called Holy Potatoes! We're in Space?!</p> <p>It was on a forum connected to this game on 8 June that one of the biggest gamer insurgencies of recent times finally drew blood.</p> <p>The complaint was that some recent downloads of the game had included a marketing monitoring program – Red Shell – developed by a company called Innervate, that behaved like “spyware”.</p> <p>The controversy originated on other forum threads months ago but by now alarm about Red Shell was spreading like wildfire, not helped by the coincidence – openly acknowledged by its developers – that a 2004 Trojan shared the same name.</p> <p>The game's developer took the path of least resistance and caved, agreeing to de-install Red Shell using a software update.</p> <p>More developers pledged to do the same, including the makers of Elder Scrolls online, Conan Exiles, the Warhammer series, Total War, and a list of others constituting perhaps a third of the total number of games that currently incorporate Red Shell.</p> <p>Whether what Red Shell does is an invasion of privacy or a harmless tool seems to depend on whether you're a developer or a concerned games consumer.</p> <p>To its makers, and what turned out to be its numerous developer customers, it's an analytics plug-in that can be used to see which marketing campaign on sites such as Facebook, Twitter or YouTube led to someone downloading and purchasing their game.</p> <p>This monitoring includes the ability to “fingerprint” if not the gamer then his or her computer or console. As its makers describe:</p> <p><i>Red Shell tracks information about devices. We collect information including operating system, browser version number, IP address (anonymized through one-way hashing), screen resolution, in-game user id, and font profiles.</i></p> <p>As gamers began calling out Red Shell as “spyware” on Steam and Reddit, it quickly became clear that this form of market surveillance was not going down well.</p> <p>The first mistake games developers made when they added Red Shell was not telling anyone about it, or even offering a clear way to opt in or out.</p> <p>The second mistake was to think that some in the games community, perhaps fired up by controversies such as Facebook's ties to Cambridge Analytica, wouldn't object when they found out.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/22 Hackers exploit Drupal flaw for mining
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/hackers-exploit-drupal-flaw-monero-mining
GIST	<p>Network attacks exploiting a recently patched Drupal vulnerability are attempting to drop Monero mining malware onto vulnerable systems, Trend Micro reports.</p> <p>Tracked as CVE-2018-7602 and considered a highly critical issue that could result in remote code</p>

execution, the vulnerability impacts Drupal's versions 7 and 8 and was addressed in April this year.

The flaw is dubbed Drupalgeddon3 and the patch for it only works if the fix for the original Drupalgeddon2 vulnerability (CVE-2018-7600) has been applied.

Last month, hackers were observed targeting both security vulnerabilities to deliver a variety of threats, including cryptocurrency miners, remote administration tools (RATs) and tech support scams.

Trend Micro now says they noticed network attacks exploiting CVE-2018-7602 to turn affected systems into Monero-mining bots. As part of the observed incidents, the exploit fetches a shell script that retrieves an Executable and Linkable Format-based (ELF) downloader.

The malware adds a crontab entry to automatically update itself and also retrieves and installs a Monero-mining application, a modified variant of the open-source XMRig (version 2.6.3). The use of XMRig is a feature common to most attacks attempting to mine for Monero.

The downloader also checks the target machine to determine whether it is worth compromising.

The actors behind this attack hide behind the Tor network, but Trend Micro says they were able to trace the activity to 197[.]231[.]221[.]211, an IP belonging to a virtual private network (VPN) provider. This IP address is a Tor exit node.

Over the past month, the security firm has blocked 810 attacks coming from this IP address, but cannot confirm that they were all related to the Monero-mining payload or performed by the same actor.

Most of the attacks attempt to exploit the Heartbleed vulnerability (CVE-2014-0160), while others target ShellShock (CVE-2014-6271), a flaw in WEB GoAhead (CVE-2017-5674), and an old memory leak in Apache (CVE-2004-0113).

“Trend Micro also blocked File Transfer Protocol (FTP) and Secure Shell (SSH) brute-force logins from this IP address. Note that these attacks exploit even old Linux or Unix-based vulnerabilities, underscoring the importance of defense in depth,” the security researchers warn.

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HEADLINE	06/24 Bitcoin bounces back from 2018 low
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-06-24/bitcoin-slips-to-2018-low-as-rising-scrutiny-fuels-skepticism
GIST	<p>Bitcoin erased its loss after setting a 2018 low earlier on Sunday, with the volatility reflecting increased scrutiny by government regulators on the embryonic digital-currency sector and global central bankers raising questions about its viability.</p> <p>The biggest virtual currency was up less than 1 percent to \$6,181.84 at 5:16 p.m. New York time on Sunday, after earlier falling as much as 5.2 percent to pierce the year's previous low of \$5,920.72 that was set Feb. 6, according to Bitstamp prices. That brought its decline from the record high of almost \$20,000 reached in December to 68 percent.</p> <p>Sunday's volatility occurred as the economic adviser and head of research for the Bank of International Settlements in Switzerland said many cryptocurrencies should be regulated like stocks and bonds. A week earlier, the BIS issued a report concluding that Bitcoin is ill-equipped to ever be a form of legal tender that could store value or handle the volume of transactions that are processed in the current financial system.</p> <p>On Friday, Japan's Financial Services Agency ordered six of the country's biggest crypto-trading venues to improve measures to prevent money laundering. The companies must submit their plans by July 23. New pressure in Japan, one of the most crypto-friendly jurisdictions, demonstrated the market's fragility to</p>

	<p>regulatory moves in the absence of much positive news.</p> <p>Peer-to-peer money also came under fresh pressure in recent weeks after two South Korean exchanges said they were hacked. That raised concerns about the security of investor holdings. India's central bank gave commercial lenders until early July to stop providing services to any company dealing with digital coins, in an order that's reportedly being challenged in courts.</p> <p>Bitstamp is one of the major price sources for cryptocurrencies, which have no unified quotation system and can vary substantially among countries.</p> <p>Bloomberg's composite pricing, which includes Bitstamp and other sources, showed Bitcoin closed on Friday at \$6,070.19.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/22 Hacked federal workers fear identity theft
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/for-millions-of-hacked-federal-employees-new-fears-of-identity-theft-1529700194
GIST	<p>Some current and former federal government employees are taking a look at their credit activity after the Justice Department said this week that data stolen by suspected Chinese hackers in 2014 cyberattacks at the Office of Personnel Management may have been used to commit identity fraud.</p> <p>Federal prosecutors on Monday said a Maryland couple had pleaded guilty to using information stolen in the OPM breach to set up fraudulent car-loan applications with a Langley, Va., credit union.</p> <p>Disclosure of the car-loan scheme, which took place in 2015 and 2016, has prompted new worries of potential identity theft for the more than 21 million current and former federal employees and contractors affected by the breach, which exposed Social Security numbers, addresses and other sensitive information, in addition to 5.6 million fingerprints.</p> <p>The Maryland scheme also confused cybersecurity investigators who, along with the U.S. government, had concluded the Chinese government was behind the breach, motivated by the espionage value of the database and not by financial gain.</p> <p>A spokesman for the U.S. attorney in the Eastern District of Virginia, where the case is being prosecuted, declined to elaborate on how those charged in the case might have obtained the OPM files. In a statement Thursday, the spokesman said numerous victims of the fraud scheme had "self-identified" as OPM breach victims and that the government was still investigating how the crimes were carried out.</p> <p>Public filings in the case didn't address how many people fell victim to the loan-fraud conspiracy.</p> <p>OPM hack victims quickly began assessing the potential ramifications. Carrie Wells, 30, said she immediately checked her credit report after learning of the fraud.</p> <p>"I do have permanent credit-monitoring," said Ms. Wells, who had a part-time job at the Internal Revenue Service more than a decade ago. "But I had been wondering when the shoe is going to drop. When am I going to get this notification that someone is trying to access my credit?"</p> <p>"Federal employees are understandably alarmed to see direct proof that the personal information lost in the OPM data breaches is being used for nefarious purposes," the National Treasury Employees Union said in a statement. The NTEU, which represents more than 150,000 federal employees, is pursuing a lawsuit against the federal government over the breach.</p> <p>Current and former U.S. officials familiar with the OPM breach said it wasn't clear how the hacked files would have ended up in the hands of people in Maryland seeking to commit identity fraud. China has</p>

denied any involvement in the hack.

“This fraud case makes no sense,” said one former federal investigator who worked on the OPM investigation.

OPM itself was caught off guard by the fraud case and has asked the Justice Department for more details, believing it is possible there has been some kind of error in connecting the OPM data to the case, according to a source familiar with discussions between the two agencies.

An OPM spokeswoman declined to comment and referred questions to the Justice Department.

A Justice Department press release said Ms. Cross and Mr. McKnight pleaded guilty to fraud using stolen information of victims of the OPM hack, although the court documents make only one mention of the data breach.

Investigators determined that many of the identity-theft victims also were victims of the OPM hack and resided in Colorado, according to a statement of facts signed by a prosecutor and an attorney for Ms. Cross.

The case has emerged publicly at a time when U.S. counterintelligence officials have grown increasingly concerned about Chinese espionage against U.S. national security assets. About a half-dozen public cases involving the leak of secrets to Beijing have been brought against current or former U.S. intelligence employees or contractors in recent months, and some U.S. officials believe China may be leveraging the hacked OPM files to better target Americans vulnerable to turning against their country.

Last year in Los Angeles, federal authorities arrested a Chinese national, Yu Pingan, with providing the malicious software used in the OPM breach and other hacks. Mr. Pingan, via his lawyer, has denied any involvement.

Curtis Dukes, the former head of cyberdefense at the National Security Agency, said there were several plausible explanations for the connection, including that the data could have been purchased on the dark web.

Such a scenario “has serious implications,” said Mr. Dukes, now an executive vice president at the Center for Internet Security, a nonprofit that works with businesses and governments. “I would hope we are looking for indications of identities from the OPM theft being available for sale.”

To date, the OPM data hasn’t been advertised for sale in dark-web forums, where this kind of information is typically bought and sold by criminals, said Andrei Barysevich, a researcher with the fraud-intelligence firm Recorded Future Inc. It is possible that the data was sold, he said, “however it is very unlikely that it was marketed as government data.”

Some people affected by the OPM hack, who previously alleged they had suffered identity theft due to the breach, said they felt vindicated by news of the credit union fraud scheme after long being told there was no evidence to support their claims.

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HEADLINE	06/24 Hackers hit towns across the US
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/ransom-demands-and-frozen-computers-hackers-hit-towns-across-the-u-s-1529838001?mod=hp_lead_pos2
GIST	Town officials in Rockport, Maine, were closing up shop on Friday, April 13, when they realized they couldn’t open files on their computers. After fielding messages from town workers, local information-technology contractor Gus Natale said he

“went straight to the town office and started yanking plugs.”

An unknown hacker had snuck malicious software onto the network and was demanding a payment of roughly \$1,200 in bitcoin in return for codes to unlock the town’s files.

“My thinking was, let’s just get this paid. It’s a small amount,” said Town Manager Rick Bates. But, he added, Mr. Natale and a helper “did not want the bad guys to beat them.”

The attack on Rockport is one example in a rising tide of similar invasions of municipal systems across the U.S.—from major cities like Atlanta, which got hit in March, to counties, tiny towns and even a library system in St. Louis. Local governments are forced to spend money on frantic efforts to recover data, system upgrades, cybersecurity insurance and, in some cases, to pay their online extortionists if they can’t restore files some other way.

Public-sector attacks appear to be rising faster than those in the private sector, according to the Ponemon Institute, a Traverse City, Mich., research company focused on information security. Ponemon estimates 38% of the public entities it samples will suffer a ransomware attack this year, based on reports through May, up from 31% last year and 13% in 2016. The company samples roughly 300 to 400 public-sector entities each year.

“We’re right at the front end of this,” said Marshall Davies, executive director of the Alexandria, Va.-based Public Risk Management Association. Hackers are “just now coming after the public entities. They’ve been hitting the businesses for years,” he said.

Hackers generally don’t target specific cities, but instead are constantly searching for vulnerabilities wherever they may occur, security experts said. “The trick about ransomware right now is that it’s typically not a targeted, focused attack,” said Christopher Krebs, a senior official at the Department of Homeland Security, at a recent mayors’ conference in Boston. “You’re not special.”

Hackers attacking cities aren’t typically nation states, but rather cybercriminals, Mr. Krebs said. Sometimes the hackers demand ransoms in poorly written English, and they typically demand to be paid in bitcoin, according to officials who have been hacked. The Rockport hacker offered a “customer service” chat window and offered tips on how to acquire cryptocurrency.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation advises against paying, and warns that “some individuals or organizations are never provided with decryption keys after paying a ransom.”

Rockport didn’t pay the hackers. Instead, Mr. Natale and a helper worked through the weekend to recover files from a compromised backup server, and had town systems up and running again by the next week. Still, the hamlet of about 3,400 ultimately paid about \$10,000 to cover the immediate restoration work, plus another \$28,000 to \$30,000 on security improvements, including a cloud-based backup system.

RANSOM REQUESTS

- Atlanta: March 2018. Ransom demanded: \$51,000 (not paid)
- Leeds, Ala.: Feb. 2018. Ransom demanded: \$12,000 (paid \$8,000)
- Montgomery County, Ala.: Sept. 2017. Ransom demanded: \$33,000 (paid in full)
- Rockport, Maine: April 2018. Ransom demanded: \$1,200 (not paid)
- St. Louis Public Library: Jan. 2017. Ransom demanded: \$25,000 (not paid)
- Licking County, Ohio: Early 2017. Ransom demanded: \$50,000 (not paid)
- Spring Hill, Tenn.: Late 2017. Ransom demanded: \$250,000 (not paid)
- Dawson County, Ga.: April 2018. Ransom demanded: \$98,000 (not paid)

Should Cities Pay?

Officials in Leeds, Ala., recently folded when faced with a ransom demand from hackers who froze the Birmingham suburb’s computer system. It wasn’t an easy choice, but everything from email to personnel records was effectively locked down, and the city of about 12,000 felt powerless.

“You just hold your nose and do it,” Mayor David Miller said.

After being paid, the hackers provided a code that helped the city regain access to most of its files, he said. Similarly, Montgomery County, Ala., unable to access backup files that were also encrypted, spent about \$47,000 to acquire nine bitcoins for hackers so they would unlock files last September, said Lou Ialacci, county IT director.

Every victim asks the same question, said Jeffrey Carpenter, director of incident response at SecureWorks Corp. , an Atlanta-based cybersecurity firm: “Should we pay the ransom?”

Compared with private companies, local governments may be less prepared for an attack, according to security experts. Some smaller entities can’t afford to compete for cybersecurity talent, which is in high demand across the country. Information-security analysts’ salaries average \$100,000 a year, and private-sector employers pay more than state and local governments, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Ransoms might be loosely calibrated to what hackers think a city can pay, although numbers can vary widely. Hackers demanded \$250,000 late last year from Spring Hill, Tenn., a city of about 38,000, which is nearly five times the amount hackers tried to pilfer from Atlanta in March. Both cities refused to pay.

In Spring Hill, that has meant a still-unfolding restoration effort that could cost some \$100,000, City Administrator Victor Lay said.

The St. Louis Public Library spent almost \$200,000 on system upgrades after successfully fending off a ransomware demand for about \$25,000 in bitcoin last year, executive director Waller McGuire said.

Licking County, Ohio, also refused payment when hackers demanded \$50,000 in bitcoin after hijacking the county’s computer system last year, apparently by exploiting a firewall gap, said County Commissioner Tim Bubb.

The county of about 170,000 people east of Columbus was lucky: Technicians quickly determined nearly all data were backed up and systems could be restored. Outside consultants also advised against paying, Mr. Bubb said.

“We didn’t want to deal with criminals if we could avoid it,” Mr. Bubb said. “Nobody likes to be blackmailed.”

Cybersecurity Insurance: Cost vs. Benefits

Speaking at the recent mayors’ conference, Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms triggered murmurs in a roomful of mayors when she said her city had purchased cyber insurance just months before getting hit.

She estimated that the city, which decided to rebuild its systems, was facing more than \$20 million in costs, but she hoped insurance would cover much of that. An Atlanta spokesman said the city was still evaluating the overall cost of the attack and the city’s recovery efforts.

Franklin County, Ohio, the state’s most populous with 1.3 million residents, bought a \$10 million policy last year that came with a \$200,000 annual premium. The county hasn’t needed the insurance, but officials said they were motivated after seeing hackers cause disruptions in Ohio and beyond.

Some officials said they preferred to spend money on better system back-ups, since insurance wouldn’t solve the immediate problem of accessing data they need to serve the public.

In Leeds, Ala., February’s breach came just a week before a planned upgrade to better protect backup data, Mr. Miller said.

Insurance covered most of Leeds’s ransom payment—plus, the city managed to bargain the hackers down

	from \$12,000. “We said, how about \$8,000?” Mr. Miller recalled. “They said OK.”
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HEADLINE	06/23 PDQ restaurants warn of data breach
SOURCE	http://www.azfamily.com/story/38490568/pdq-chicken-restaurant-warns-customers-of-a-data-breach
GIST	<p>(3TV/CBS 5) - The restaurant "PDQ" is warning its customers about a widespread data breach.</p> <p>PDQ officials say a hacker got into the company's computer system and accessed personal information of some of its customers.</p> <p>The alleged hacking took place between May 19, 2017, and April 20, 2018. All PDQ locations in operation during some or all of the breach time period were affected. Customers' names, credit card numbers, expiration dates and cardholder verification value were all accessed or acquired, PDQ officials said.</p> <p>PDQ posted the following information on its website:</p> <p>WHAT HAPPENED We have been the target of a cyber-attack. An unauthorized person (hacker) exploited part of our computer related system and accessed and or acquired personal information from some of our customers. We believe the attacker gained entry through an outside technology vendor's remote connection tool. Based on an investigation, the unauthorized access and or acquisition occurred from May 19, 2017 – April 20, 2018 (breach time period). We learned on June 8, 2018, that credit card information and or some names may have been hacked.</p> <p>PDQs AFFECTED All PDQ locations in operation during some or all of the breach time period, May 19, 2017 – April 20, 2018, were affected. However, the following locations were not affected: Tampa International Airport location at 4100 George J Bean Pkwy, Tampa, FL 33607, Amalie Arena location at 401 Channelside Drive, Tampa, FL 33602, and PNC Arena location at 1400 Edwards Mill Road, Raleigh, NC 27607.</p> <p>WHAT INFORMATION WAS INVOLVED The information accessed and or acquired included some or all of the following: names, credit card numbers, expiration dates, and cardholder verification value. However, it should be noted that the cardholder verification value that may have been accessed or acquired is not the same as the security code printed on the back of certain payment cards (e.g., Discover, MasterCard, and Visa) or printed on the front of other payment cards (e.g., American Express). Based on the nature of the breach, it was not possible to determine the identity or exact number of credit card numbers or names that were accessed or acquired during the breach time period. If you used a credit card for your purchase at a PDQ restaurant during the breach period, then your credit card number, expiration date, cardholder verification value and or name may have been accessed or acquired by a hacker.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/22 Can the Emmy's be hacked?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2018/06/22/can-the-emmys-be-hacked-one-contender-tried-to-find-out/?utm_term=.cd73eed10040
GIST	This month, Nathan Fielder, the prankster genius behind Comedy Central's "Nathan for You," popped a 13-minute video onto his YouTube feed titled "Can the Emmys Be Hacked?"

Amid the endless discussion of Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, Fielder had identified another clear and present danger: What if a hacker with an irrational appreciation of Judd Hirsch made this the year of “Superior Donuts?”

Fielder’s piece was surprisingly simple, considering his history. In the clip, Fielder talked briefly of his concern that “Nathan for You” could get robbed of its rightful place on the Emmy stage. The show did earn rave reviews for its fourth and perhaps final season, with Oscar-winning documentarian Errol Morris declaring, in an essay in the New Yorker, that the “Finding Frances” season finale was “my new favorite exploration of love.”

To make his point, Fielder interviewed Carsten Schürmann. The Danish voting security expert demonstrated a potential breach in the Emmy voting process largely through phishing, which tricks people into sharing personal information that can then be used for scams.

With the nomination process closing Monday, the Television Academy, which presents the Emmy Awards, responded to our request for a response.

“The Television Academy has seen Mr. Fielder’s video parody,” an academy spokesman said in a statement. “Phishing scams like the one described by Mr. Fielder’s security expert are a concern for anyone with an online account, no matter the site, from banking to retail to social media. As is common practice for those looking to protect their online accounts, we strongly recommend our members confirm they are on the official Television Academy voting site before entering any of their account information. We are quite confident in the security of our site and are continuously monitoring for any phishing activities like those described.”

Fair enough, but the statement did not address several questions about the voting process. The spokesman also said nobody from the academy would be available for an interview.

Schürmann, who earned a measure of acclaim when he hacked a voting machine at a 2017 conference in Las Vegas, showed Fielder on camera how he could create a phony Web page by purchasing an Internet domain similar to that used by the Television Academy and then duping the organization’s voters into unwittingly authenticating a hacker’s votes.

The weaknesses in the system didn’t surprise Schürmann.

“All attacks are frighteningly easy once you’ve discovered them,” he told Fielder. And in an interview this week with The Washington Post, Schürmann talked of how he hopes Fielder’s clips lead to more awareness of what he considers a more important issue, voter fraud. He’s concerned about the potential for hacking during the upcoming midterms.

“These phishing attacks are successful in 40 percent of cases,” he said. “We trust our computers, and we trust our email. And we let our guards down all the time.”

Philip Stark, the associate dean of the Division of Mathematical and Physical Sciences at the University of California, went a step further when asked by The Post to review Fielder’s piece. Phishing is only one way to try to hack votes, he said. He noted that Schürmann could have also done a port scan for Fielder. That’s how security experts — and hackers — check systems for potential vulnerabilities.

“If he had, I strongly suspect he would have found a vulnerability,” Stark said.

Is the Television Academy taking the threat seriously, or is there real hope for Marvel’s “Iron Fist”? The spokesman would not talk of what measures were in place to monitor the process as its 23,000 members click through.

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HEADLINE	06/22 Power plants: cyber threats, risks
SOURCE	https://breakingenergy.com/2018/06/22/power-plants-cybersecurity-threats-and-risks-part-1/
GIST	<p>Power plant networks are under constant attack from Chinese, Russian and other unknown hackers across the world 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. A hacker’s goal is to breach critical infrastructure, such as a power plant’s external firewalls, to gain access to the internal networks and find a way into the control system environment.</p> <p>Hackers typically use port scanners, password-guessing software and other readily available Internet tools to perform non-stop attacks against a power plant’s external environments. These tools look for and exploit any potential weaknesses that could be used to access internal networks. Once inside, the hacker can continue to run tools against control networks to exploit any weaknesses that might allow them to take control of plant control networks.</p> <p>Social engineering attacks such as ransomware are used to trick a user into clicking an attachment (i.e., phishing schemes) in order to extract and encrypt data files. This enables a hacker to extort money and decrypt information. The more access a user has to a system environment the greater the damage that can be done. Limiting administrative privileges reduces these risks.</p> <p>Control system data, operational data and sensitive financial data can be encrypted and only restored if backups are currently performed. Phishing attacks can also trick users into providing their username and passwords, which can then be used to login remotely to other systems. People tend to use the same passwords across many different sites with little to no variations. This can allow a hacker to gain access to many other systems using the same login credentials and passwords from a compromised account, including control systems, banking information and other applications.</p> <p>Many power plants lack dedicated IT staff that can effectively identify and repel a cyber attack so user diligence is key to identifying problems. Without proper controls, it is only a matter of time before hackers gain access to targeted resources and establish control of the environment.</p> <p>Historically, control systems have been physically separated – or “air gapped”. However, these environments are now connected at various firewalled points as businesses increasingly rely on real-time plant data. Firewalls can provide security needed to prevent access to control networks. However, misconfigurations are common and they are sometimes not tested, thus enabling security weaknesses. Control networks continue to move closer to the Internet and many are now running on Microsoft-operating systems, which can expose them to similar security vulnerabilities.</p> <p>Lack of Updates and Risk Mitigation</p> <p>Complex passwords, two-factor authentication and user awareness are all lines of defense that help mitigate a successful hack. Many power plants do not want passwords that change on a set interval and do not use complex options because they are difficult to remember. Passwords such as “Password”, “2018Texans” or other dictionary words only take a few minutes of hacking to gain access to a network.</p> <p>More power plants are using virtual private network (VPN) connections for remote starting of power plants. VPNs move critical control networks closer to the Internet. which can provide the ability for someone to hack into the plant and start or stop operations. If hackers figure out how to operate plant control systems, damage can be significant.</p> <p>Security updates are critical to mitigating cyber hacking attacks by closing vulnerabilities that could provide access to the system without having to provide login identification and passwords. Recent Cisco AnyConnect VPN software and Cisco Switch vulnerabilities have provided a great opportunity for network breaches or complete network failures if these issues are not patched up in a timely period.</p> <p>Once a critical vulnerability has been identified, it is key that a technical team is deployed to make a fix. Critical patches need to be identified and fixed as soon as possible. Oftentimes, clients do not have an active IT group that updates servers, firewalls and other devices when vulnerabilities arise. Computer</p>

systems require maintenance, backups and regular updates. Without these processes in place, power plants become an easy target for hackers looking for a thrill or a foreign government who may seek visibility by taking control of power plant environments.

Cyber Attack by Chinese Actor – A Case Study

Opportune LLP was engaged by a client to review a power plant on concerns that their site may not be secure from external cyber attacks. During our review, it was found that China had hacked into the control system through a Microsoft Windows machine connected directly to the Internet without firewall protection.

The local IT resource lacked security experience and did not understand the risks of how the computer was at risk. The malicious activity was subsequently traced back to China to hack into the power plant control system. Consequently, the hacked machine was eventually rebuilt, patched and moved behind firewalls to fix the issue. It is not known what China's intent was for hacking the asset. We suspect it could have been using these easy targets to figure out a way how to cause physical damage to a power plant with an intent to disrupt the power grid.

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HEADLINE	06/22 Court: need warrant phone location data
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-supreme-court-rules-police-need-warrant-for-most-cellphone-location-data-1529678019
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—Police must get a search warrant before obtaining data showing the location of cellphone users, the Supreme Court ruled Friday, the third in a string of decisions that limit law enforcement's access to the most intimate details of citizens' digital lives.</p> <p>“When the government tracks the location of a cell phone it achieves near perfect surveillance, as if it had attached an ankle monitor to the phone's user,” Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in the 5-4 opinion.</p> <p>“Unlike the nosy neighbor who keeps an eye on comings and goings,” he wrote, the signal towers and processing centers that track cellphone users “are ever alert, and their memory is nearly infallible,” making analog-era precedents prosecutors cited to justify such warrantless searches all but obsolete.</p> <p>As it had in 2012 and 2014, the court rejected government arguments that police should have the same access to digital data as investigators do, under 20th century precedents, to examine business records held by banks or to conduct shoe-leather surveillance.</p> <p>“There is a world of difference between the limited types of personal information addressed” by 1970s decisions allowing warrantless examination of business records “and the exhaustive chronicle of location information casually collected by wireless carriers today,” the court said.</p> <p>In 2012, the court held that police had conducted a search when they surreptitiously attached a GPS tracker to a suspect's vehicle, triggering Fourth Amendment protections against illegal searches. Two years later, it said authorities generally need a warrant to search the contents of a cellphone found in a suspect's pocket, despite precedents allowing police to examine address books, matchboxes and other items found on an arrestee without demonstrating probable cause.</p> <p>The court's recent consensus collapsed in Friday's case. Conservative justices Anthony Kennedy, Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito and Neil Gorsuch filed four separate dissents, sometimes joining each other.</p> <p>Chief Justice Roberts found support only from the court's liberal wing, relying on justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan for his majority.</p> <p>Friday's decision applied one of the court's best-known yet most enigmatic constitutional doctrines—that</p>

Fourth Amendment protections against police searches hinge on the public's "reasonable expectation of privacy," as Justice John Marshall Harlan put it in a 1967 opinion.

The case focused on defendant Timothy Carpenter, who was convicted of armed robberies in Michigan and Ohio. Prosecutors made their case in part by relying on information provided by MetroPCS and Sprint that showed Mr. Carpenter's whereabouts over several months. The data generated by his phone's signal connection to nearby cell towers placed him near several of the crime scenes at the times the robberies occurred.

Prosecutors didn't seek a warrant for the cell-site data, which would have required a showing of probable cause to believe the records show evidence of a crime. Instead, they sought the data under the Stored Communications Act, which requires only "reasonable grounds" to believe the information is relevant to an investigation.

With the explosion of modern telecommunications technology, courts have been trying to sort out how to apply older court precedents, such as those governing landline phones, to current criminal investigations.

The chief justice has rarely aligned himself with the court's liberal wing in 5-4 cases. Before Friday, the only other major high-court case to produce a similar lineup came in 2012, when the same five justices formed a majority to uphold the Affordable Care Act, President Barack Obama's signature health-care law.

In their dissents, the other conservative justices criticized the majority for drawing a dividing line from decades of high-court precedent that had permitted police to obtain an individual's business records from banks and other companies, on the assumption that the suspect had waived his privacy rights by voluntarily disclosing information to a third party.

Cell-site records "are no different from the many other kinds of business records the government has a lawful right to obtain by compulsory process," Justice Kennedy wrote in a dissent joined by justices Thomas and Alito. He accused the majority of undermining precedents that police have relied on to obtain evidence.

Justice Gorsuch, the court's newest member, took a different tack in his dissent, saying he agreed stronger privacy protections were in order, but not in the way the court provided them.

Lawyers for the American Civil Liberties Union, which represented Mr. Carpenter at the high court, called the decision "a truly historic vindication of privacy rights."

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HEADLINE	06/22 India bookies hack into cricket live feed
SOURCE	https://thewire.in/sport/investigators-stumped-over-how-bookies-are-hacking-into-ipls-live-feed
GIST	<p>New Delhi: Investigation agencies and technology experts in India are banging their heads against the wall trying to figure out how cricket bookies are hacking into the scrambled live feed from the ground during the uplink process.</p> <p>In May 2018, the Indore police unearthed a betting syndicate which was receiving and distributing the live feed of Indian Premier League (IPL) matches.</p> <p>A live feed is roughly 8-10 seconds ahead of the original telecast. Or in other words, what you see on your television is 8-10 seconds behind what's actually happening on the field.</p> <p>This is standard practice as live pictures from the venue get a little delayed as it passes through several intermediate stages, via satellite and cable or DTH or HD platforms, before ending up on a television screen.</p>

“As they were getting live feed before it appeared on TV sets, which was 8-10 seconds ahead of live telecast, it is likely that they were not only manipulating the odds in online betting during the matches but also providing this feed to other persons, who were betting on the matches through apps”, Jitender Singh, superintendent of police, Cyber Crime Branch of Indore Police, told this reporter.

Popular sports betting websites such as Bet365.com and Betfair.com offer odds on various aspects of a cricket game such as the toss, the first over total or an innings total.

According to a senior engineer who works for Star’s cricket broadcast team, the broadcaster uplinks the signal to a satellite in scrambled form. For receiving at the other end, a 12-digit BISS code is needed to unscramble the feed, which automatically keeps changing every 10-15 minutes.

“Still, someone cracked this code and stole the feed. Arrested bookies told us they were getting this live feed from another bookie based in Dubai. This is a very challenging case for us. Our experts and engineers of official broadcaster of the IPL, Star TV, are working together to find how the bookies have been able to steal the BISS (Basic Interoperable Scrambling System Code) code so easily,” said Singh, who is heading the team of investigators in this case.

An Enforcement Directorate (ED) investigation into IPL betting in 2015 revealed that – because online betting in India is illegal and Indian citizen are not allowed to carry out even digital transactions for online betting – people involved with this well-organised business use hawala channels to obtain passwords and carry out transactions on betting websites that are located overseas and outside the purview of Indian law.

As both password and login on the websites are not registered or generated from India but from different countries, it is tough for betting sites to check such accounts that have benefited from the live feed.

Star India didn’t respond to email or WhatsApp messages asking whether it has initiated an internal investigation to check possible involvement of an insider.

Interestingly, the hacking of a live feed is not the first case of its kind.

During the eighth season of the IPL in 2015, the Ahmedabad Branch of the ED allegedly busted a Rs 2,000 crore betting racket.

The chargesheet in the case, still under court proceedings, reads: “They (bookies) used to install their antenna gadgets in a room for receiving live telecast on the ongoing matches. For cricket betting operations they were use special decoders which give them live streaming without any breakup on account of advertisements and they were able to have advantage of around 5 to 10 second. The annual payment for three decoders which were being used by them was Rs 65,000 and provided by one Sanjay of Delhi.”

At that time Sony was the official broadcaster of the IPL, but it strangely never initiated any criminal proceedings against any of the accused.

In the Indore case, the alleged kingpin of the racket is one Amit Majithia, who is based in Adipur in Gujarat’s Kutch. But during the raids, he was operating from Dubai and he is still there.

A look-out notice has been issued against him and two other accused.

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HEADLINE	06/22 Europol busts e-commerce fraud ring
SOURCE	https://teiss.co.uk/news/europol-busts-e-commerce-fraud/
GIST	In a significant setback to the multi-nation cyber crime mafia that has been carrying out financial fraud on a large scale, Europol announced yesterday that it arrested as many as 95 fraudsters earlier this month for

	<p>carrying out fraudulent transactions exceeding EUR 8 million (£7 million).</p> <p>Fraudsters arrested by Europol in a joint operation with police forces and the banking industry in over 28 countries carried out over 20,000 fraudulent transactions using compromised credit cards but were caught after Europol teamed up with merchants, logistics firms, financial institutions and analytical companies to determine their identities.</p> <p>"The main goal was to target online fraud through a coordinated law enforcement action within the European Union (EU) and beyond, followed by an awareness-raising campaign. This action also marks the start of several investigations with more arrests expected in the next few months," said Europol in a press release.</p> <p>"The e-commerce action combats card-not-present fraud, aiming for a safer online environment for customers worldwide by sharing information and developing best practices between law enforcement and the private sector," it added.</p> <p>"The success of these operations shows how through close cooperation with our European partners, retailers and the financial sector, we are cracking down on the criminal gangs targeting consumers online. People should remember when shopping online that if an offer seems too good to be true, it probably is," said Glyn Whittick, head of the UK's Dedicated Card and Payment Crime Unit (DCPCU).</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 Vietnam busts huge online gambling ring
SOURCE	https://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/vietnam-busts-another-multi-million-dollar-online-gambling-ring-3767719.html
GIST	<p>The 12bet portal allegedly drew thousands of Vietnamese players with bets worth over \$26 million. Vietnam's cyber crime police announced on Friday they had busted an online gambling ring through the web portal 12bet.</p> <p>As part of the operation, police in Ho Chi Minh City have arrested and searched houses of Vo Van Nghia, Vo Van Hoa, Do Thi Tu Anh and Phan Thanh Hoang for organizing gambling.</p> <p>Another four suspects have also been summoned and had their houses searched for gambling. Police seized a total of over VND300 million (\$13,000) in cash, multiple computers and phones during the searches.</p> <p>According to the cyber crime police, the online gambling portal 12bet was launched in 2007 by a foreign company. The site has since attracted thousands of players in Vietnam with a variety of gambling games such as sports betting, online casino and online lottery.</p> <p>Players joining the site are required to create accounts and pay the operators real money through online banking in return for virtual currency, which they can spend on the gambling games.</p> <p>Vietnamese police first discovered the ring, which has netted a total of over VND600 billion (\$26.25 million) in transactions between the organizers and players, in early 2017.</p> <p>Police are conducting further investigations.</p> <p>The busting of this online gambling ring comes just three months after police announced the uncovering of another massive operation run by two major Vietnamese tech businessmen. Investigators found the gambling network started operating in April 2015, drawing around 14 million players and bets worth VND9.6 trillion (\$419.7 million), and earning the two masterminds VND3.2 trillion (\$140 million).</p> <p>Police arrested dozens of people, including Phan Van Vinh, former director of the General Police</p>

	Department under the Ministry of Public Security and Nguyen Thanh Hoa, former director of the ministry's cyber crime division, and seized over VND1 trillion (\$43.8 million).
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HEADLINE	06/22 Indonesia cyber-vigilantes on march
SOURCE	https://www.asiasentinel.com/society/indonesia-cyber-vigilantes/
GIST	<p>With nearly 110 million people now online in Indonesia, there is growing concern about the pervasiveness of cyber-vigilantism and the threat to free expression, especially on religious matters.</p> <p>For instance, Zulfikar Akbar, a journalist at the sports newspaper Top Skor Daily, lost his job after using his Twitter account to criticize Ustaz Abdul Somad, a religious figure who was barred entry into Hong Kong, on Dec. 23 last year. Three days later, his workplace had received so many intimidating messages that the publication felt it could no longer keep him employed.</p> <p>Another was Fiera Iovita, a physician who uploaded a Facebook post in May of 2017 questioning the absence of Habib Rizieq, the leader of the fundamentalist Islamic Defenders Front, known by its Indonesian-language initials FPI, who fled the country ahead of charges of extramarital sex and saying if he was innocent, he should return to face charges. The post went viral. Three days later, she was ordered to take it down by the deputy director of the hospital where she worked and ended up being threatened on the street by white-clad figures believed to be connected to the FPI. At about the same time, another physician faced intimidation for a statement criticizing religious leaders.</p> <p>These cases demonstrate the extent to which vigilantism prevails in Indonesia despite the guarantees of free expression in Article 28 F of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia which reads “Everyone has the right to communicate and obtain information to develop their personal and social environment, and has the right to seek, obtain, possess, store, process and convey information by using any available channel types.”</p> <p>Of particular concern is a group calling itself the “Muslim Cyber Army,” 20 of whose members have been arrested for defamation, spreading false reports and racial and religious discrimination. The group, according to Future Directions International, an independent, not-for-profit strategic research institute, was formed two years ago after the government, growing concerned about Islamic terrorism, shut down several websites and social media accounts belonging to the FPI.</p> <p>Future Directions called it a “loose-knit group of tech-savvy conservative Islamic activists” that operate across Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp among others, hacking “enemy” accounts and sending viruses to their communications devices, spreading news to its members and training its members with technology.</p> <p>“Members and followers are not limited to specific pages, however, and are spread across various affiliated groups such as Srikandi Muslim Cyber Army, the United Muslim Cyber Army, the Legend MCA and Muslim Coming.”</p> <p>What is potentially concerning, according to Future Directions, is the group’s public influence and the possibility of links between it and “certain prominent military and political figures.”</p> <p>The FPI itself has long been believed to act in extrajudicial operations for police, shutting down organizations the police deem to be troublesome.</p> <p>There is plenty of vigilantism in society without the need for electronic help. The country’s weak justice system encourages the tendency to take action where the law is ineffective. That particularly extends to social matters. In villages throughout Indonesia, it is hardly rare for cohabiting couples who aren’t married to be set upon by mobs, stripped naked and paraded through the streets. That happened last November to a Sumatra couple who were reportedly caught having sex.</p>

Such attacks have too often turned violent, according to the National Violence Monitoring System, established by the World Bank with support from the Korea Trust Fund for Economic and Peace-Building Transitions, which is seeking to strengthen the capacity of Indonesia's institutions to detect and respond to social conflict through data and analysis. According to its statistics, mob attacks by vigilantes increased by 25 percent in the seven years to 2014. \

The country's LGBT community has borne an outsize share of trouble from such vigilantes, according to Human Rights Watch, which last November called attention to humiliation of women on suspicion of being lesbians.

In an earlier report, Human Rights Watch said the rights of Indonesian sexual and gender minorities "have come under unprecedented attack... While lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) civil society groups had endured sporadic hateful rhetoric and violent attacks over the preceding three decades, they had been able to gain a foothold and increasing recognition as part of Indonesia's pluralistic society. And while no national laws specifically protected them against discrimination, the central government had never criminalized same-sex behavior."

In the growing atmosphere of religious conservatism, such minorities are in danger of their lives. Two gay men were flogged in Aceh in May 2016, Indonesia's first public caning for homosexuality, sparking a complaint by United Nations experts wrote to the Indonesian government expressing concerns about the abusive enforcement of Sharia against LGBT people in Aceh.

"Despite Indonesian leaders' frequent touting of the country's diversity and pluralism, many of Indonesia's minorities remain vulnerable to harassment, intimidation, and violence, a Human Rights Watch spokesman said. "Last weekend's detention of friends attending a birthday party is just the latest example of this. The government should condemn this vigilantism, but will Jakarta speak out?"

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HEADLINE	06/22 Healthcare facing mounting attacks
SOURCE	http://www.modernhealthcare.com/article/20180622/TRANSFORMATION02/180629972
GIST	<p>A year after hackers unleashed the WannaCry and NotPetya ransomware, taking down healthcare organizations and other companies around the world, the healthcare industry still struggles to keep its systems secure.</p> <p>In the first six months of 2018, there were 154 breaches reported to the Office for Civil Rights, up 13% compared to the same period in 2017. There were 50 "hacking/IT" incidents specifically during that period in 2018, just two more than there were during the first six months of 2017.</p> <p>"There's definitely more healthcare-related breaches," said Bob Olsen, Navigant's director of cybersecurity. "The challenge is there are new vulnerabilities being discovered every day. It's a bit of a moving target.</p> <p>But there could be multiple factors behind those increases, cautioned John Riggi, senior adviser for cybersecurity and risk for the American Hospital Association and an FBI veteran. Organizations may simply be reporting breaches they wouldn't have reported in the past, or reporting breaches that happened years ago. That's what happened with LifeBridge Health, which in 2018 reported a breach of half a million patients that happened in 2016.</p> <p>Nevertheless, healthcare organizations are engaged in a constant battle against cybercriminals, Riggi and others said.</p> <p>The struggle peaked in May 2017, when hackers let loose the WannaCry ransomware, which encrypted data and demanded ransom in bitcoin in exchange for the decrypted files. The attack affected about 200,000 computers in 150 countries, including the UK, where the National Health Service's systems went</p>

down.

A little over a month later, hackers sent out another piece of ransomware, NotPetya, which took down Nuance and other companies. Nuance lost \$92 million in revenue due to the attack.

But ransomware attacks don't come from hacker organizations alone. "Nation-states are aggressively targeting healthcare and hospitals in particular," Riggi said.

Health systems have more to fear than their IT infrastructure going down. Breached data can end up on the dark web, where they're bought and sold. As more health data becomes available on those networks, prices have fallen. But the data is still useful to buyers, Finn said. People can aggregate health data and non-healthcare data from multiple sources, connecting people's health data with their financial information.

"They're using data in ways we don't even think of," he said.

Those risks have spurred hospitals and healthcare organizations to be more aggressive in their defenses, Riggi said. But their plight never ends. "With every counter-measure put in place by a hospital, the adversaries come forward with a counter-measure for that," Riggi said.

Part of the trouble is the speed—or lack thereof—with which healthcare organizations can react, Olsen said. "It's sort of like moving a big ocean liner—it just takes time."

Healthcare executives and security teams should prioritize protecting the most sensitive and critical data, including protected health information, Olsen said. That work includes an initial risk assessment and putting in place appropriate training policies, and patches.

Those assessments now need to be in line with HIPAA and the EU's GDPR. "It is a much broader and deeper regulation," said David MacLeod, Welltok's senior vice president, chief information officer, and enterprise CISO.

Healthcare organizations could also benefit by taking the hackers' perspective and conducting white-hat hacking to expose vulnerabilities. Even when health systems think they're well-prepared, they may still be hacked.

"The key is knowing when the breach has occurred, obtaining that knowledge in real time, and then having predefined plans for responding to the incident," MacLeod said.

For healthcare systems to succeed in protecting their data, they need to put someone in charge of information security, Olsen said. Too often, that role falls onto the chief compliance officer or chief privacy officer, who might not have cybersecurity backgrounds or not have time to dedicate to security, he said.

"If you don't have somebody in that role looking across the entire enterprise, it's easy to have a lot of blind spots," Olsen said.

There might be gaps between linked information systems, for instance. "When you connect, security IT really is like the old chain adage: Your security can be only as good as the weakest link in the chain," said David Finn, executive vice president of strategic innovation for IT consulting firm CynergisTek. One straightforward tactic is making sure all software is up to date and sufficiently patched, he said.

"In healthcare, we have a legacy problem with old hardware and software," he said. "That represents a huge risk."

At the core, cybersecurity is about actual people, security consultants said. "The best defense against cyber-adversaries is a culture of cybersecurity within an organization," Riggi said. "Ultimately, the entire staff and leadership of an organization should be considered part of the information security department."

	Everyone in an organization should also take into account the business implications of an attack, Finn said. "They have to understand that every time there's a breach or disruption, it costs them money."
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HEADLINE	06/22 New VEP board head appointed
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/white-house-picks-new-chief-to-overlook-cyber-weapons-group/
GIST	<p>The White House has a new leader of a largely secretive government group that decides whether software and hardware vulnerabilities should be withheld from the public to help the government conduct cyber operations.</p> <p>Grand Schneider, the federal chief information security officer and senior director at the National Security Council, was named head of the Vulnerabilities Equities Process (VEP) board.</p> <p>The group determines if the government should withhold so-called zero day flaws, which are previously undiscovered security bugs that have not yet been patched. The government uses the board to decide which flaws it can use to conduct surveillance -- or to disclose to the public.</p> <p>But, in withholding the flaws for cyber-operations, companies and citizens can be left vulnerable if the vulnerabilities are discovered by others.</p> <p>The personnel shift, first revealed by Cyberscoop, comes after Rob Joyce, who previously oversaw the group, left his position to return to the National Security Agency.</p> <p>His role, the White House cybersecurity coordinator, was subsequently dissolved.</p> <p>It's been long believed that the government has been stockpiling software and hardware vulnerabilities, allowing the nation's intelligence agencies to remotely break into other computers, collect surveillance data, or to conduct espionage. Those suspicions were confirmed in 2016, when a Freedom of Information Request by the Electronic Frontier Foundation revealed the program.</p> <p>But the very existence of the process has been controversial. The Trump administration cast new light on the board's work after a cache of government hacking tools were stolen in 2016.</p> <p>The stolen tools enabled hackers to launch the wide-scale WannaCry ransomware attack. Other tools allowed NSA analysts to break into a range of systems, network equipment, and firewalls, and most recently, Linux servers, as well as a range of Windows operating systems. Companies scrambled to fix the vulnerabilities in the aftermath the WannaCry attack.</p> <p>Schneider has a long career history in government as a defense cybersecurity expert, said one former NSA staffer, but warned the VEP process requires an "offensive" security mindset.</p> <p>"If the default behavior of the VEP is to disclose a discovered vulnerability, I think we need someone at the helm that has offensive cyber experience advocating for the outliers," said Jake Williams, now principal consultant at Rendition Infosec.</p> <p>"The reality is that foreign intelligence shapes national policy -- and in many cases prevents conflicts. We need to use some vulnerabilities discovered to get that intelligence," he said in a tweet. "Offensive cyber experience is hard to come by, particularly at the senior levels."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 Hacks shutting down cities, countries
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SOURCE	https://qrius.com/cyber-attacks-are-shutting-down-countries-cities-and-companies-heres-how-to-stop-them/
GIST	<p>What if a cyber attack took over a government's IT network, bringing an entire nation to its feet? Does this seem like a far-flung scenario? It isn't. In April 2018, the small independent Caribbean nation of Sint Maarten faced a total public shutdown for an entire day. The previous month, the city of Atlanta was crippled by a ransomware attack that lasted two weeks and cost nearly \$3 million.</p> <p>In the US alone, Baltimore, Charlotte, Dallas and San Francisco have been victims of cyber attacks during the past year, following (ironically) a transition to smart city technology. Although the smart city concept has created more connected cities, the lack of cybersecurity preparedness often creates serious security vulnerabilities. So what can organizations seeking to advance to smart infrastructures, cloud networks and IoT environments do in the face of rising cyber threats?</p> <p>The cyber threat landscape is an immense challenge for security practitioners. Today's Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs) must contend with threats on multiple fronts, causing the perimeter to both expand and deepen in size. The jury's still out on whether cyber attacks are a bigger threat to mankind than nuclear war, but networks are certainly more vulnerable than ever. The FBI reports that more than 4,000 ransomware attacks occur daily, while other research sources state that 230,000 new malware samples are produced every day.</p> <p>The notorious attacks of the last few years have finally propelled cyber security to the top of the boardroom agenda, and raised the level of criticality to new heights. As a result, global security expenditure reached \$86.4 billion in 2017, with no sign of abating. On the contrary, Gartner forecasts that industry spend in 2018 will reach \$93 billion, as traditional security measures such as firewalls and anti-virus software prove to be inadequate.</p> <p>The volume and severity of attacks over the past year mean that in 2018, organizations are no longer asking if they can be attacked; rather, they are asking how they will be attacked. Realizing that the perimeter is rapidly diminishing, organizations are waking up to a reality where the security battlefield is playing out inside their network.</p> <p>A fading perimeter, combined with the transition to the cloud and deployment of myriads of IoT devices, mean that the attack surface is expanding. The risks for organizations are increasing greatly, as standards and policies fail to keep up. At this point, even consumers are worrying.</p> <p>The early viruses and worms that targeted networks have evolved into something altogether more powerful and problematic. These new attack vectors prefer to be slow and low, moving laterally within networks and often slipping in and out unnoticed, as though the entire network was fenceless. They are forcing organizations to step up their knowledge of cyberattacks and adopt new Tools, Tactics and Processes (TTPs) for defending their network from within.</p> <p>Advanced Persistent Threats (APTs) pushing the perimeter The most lethal vectors of attack today can often be attributed to APTs. APT refers to a network attack by a third party that gains unauthorized access and remains undetected for a lengthy period. APTs are renowned for their high level of sophistication, use of bespoke software back doors and zero-day vulnerabilities.</p> <p>An ominous trait of APTs is their 'persistence' factor, since advanced hackers seek to remain in the network undetected for a lengthy period, until they pursue their end goals. Today, APTs are particularly dangerous because of the strategic intent behind the bodies planning, funding and running them.</p> <p>These threat actors launch APTs at networks to access sensitive data and systems, creating a reputational and operational risk for their targets. They often take advantage of shadow IT loopholes, poor IT hygiene and human error. Today no network, irrespective of size or type, is immune to these attacks.</p> <p>The cybersecurity skill set crisis</p>

While hackers are gaining expertise and APTs are becoming more sophisticated, existing security controls are not keeping up. A growing shortage of security personnel is making matters worse. By the end of 2018, one to two million cybersecurity jobs could remain unfilled. About six million cyber security analysts will be needed, yet only four to five million will be available to fill these positions.

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HEADLINE	06/22 China escalates hacks against US
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/china-hacks-against-united-states/
GIST	<p>IN 2015, THE United States and China agreed to a digital truce that banned hacking private companies to steal trade secrets. And though the agreement has been touted as a success, it hasn't stopped Chinese state-sponsored hackers from pushing the envelope of acceptable behavior. Moreover, it certainly hasn't slowed types of hacking that fall outside the purview of the accord. Lately, it seems, that means defense intelligence gathering.</p> <p>In recent weeks, Chinese hackers have reportedly breached a US Navy contractor that works for the Naval Undersea Warfare Center, stealing 614 GB of data about submarine and undersea weapons technology. Attacks in the last few months originating from China have also targeted US satellite and geospatial imaging firms, and an array of telecoms. The incidents highlight the clandestine but incessant hacking campaigns that continue reliably between the US and China.</p> <p>"China's actually backed off quite a bit on intellectual property theft, but when it comes to military trade secrets, military preparedness, military readiness, satellite communications, anything that involves the US's ability to keep a cyber or military edge, China has been very heavily focused on those targets," says David Kennedy, CEO of the threat tracking firm Binary Defense Systems, who formerly worked at the NSA and with the Marine Corps' signal intelligence unit. "And the US does the same thing, by the way."</p> <p>The submarine contractor breach, recently reported by the Washington Post, reflects this intense focus on bridging any technological advantage the US may have. It involved attacks in January and February that nabbed important data, albeit from an unclassified network. When taken together, though, the information would have amounted to a valuable snapshot of US cutting edge underwater weapons development, plus details on a number of related digital and mechanical systems.</p> <p>The attack fits into a known pattern of Chinese hacking initiatives. "China will continue to use cyberespionage and bolster cyberattack capabilities to support [its] national security priorities," US director of national intelligence Daniel Coats wrote in a February threat report. "The [Intelligence Community] and private-sector security experts continue to identify ongoing cyberactivity from China...Most detected Chinese cyberoperations against US private industry are focused on cleared defense contractors or IT and communications firms."</p> <p>This week, analysts from Symantec also published research on a series of attacks in the same category from November 2017 to April from a hacking group dubbed Thrip. Though Symantec does not go so far as to identify Thrip as Chinese state-sponsored hackers, it reports "with high confidence" that Thrip attacks trace back to computers inside the country. The group, which Symantec has tracked since 2013, has evolved to hide in plain site by mostly using prefab malware to infiltrate networks and then manipulating administrative controls and other legitimate system tools to bore deeper without setting off alarms. All of these off-the-shelf hacking tools and techniques have made Thrip harder to identify and track—which is likely the idea—but Symantec started to notice patterns in their anomaly detection scanners that ultimately gave these attacks away, and led the researchers to a unique backdoor that implicated Thrip.</p> <p>The researchers found evidence of intrusions at some southeast Asian telecom firms, a US geospatial imagery company, a couple of private satellite companies including one from the US, and a US defense contractor. The breaches were all deliberate and targeted, and in the case of the satellite firms the hackers moved all the way through to reach the control systems of actual orbiting satellites, where they could have impacted a satellite's trajectory or disrupted data flow.</p>

	<p>"It is scary," says Jon DiMaggio, a senior threat intelligence analyst at Symantec who leads the research into Thrip. "We looked at which systems they were interested in, where they spent the most time, and on the satellites it was command and control. And then they were also on the operational side for both the geospatial imagery and the telecom attacks."</p> <p>Though hacking for intelligence-gathering is a priority for all nations and can sometimes be mutually tolerated, Binary Defense Systems' Kennedy points out that it can also serve as a way to make a statement when two countries are at odds. He notes that it's not surprising to detect escalating hacking operations from China against the US given rising geopolitical tensions between the two countries about trade and increased tariffs. "Hacking can be used as a sign of force in a lot of cases to say 'hey, we're not happy and we're going to make you feel some pain,'" Kennedy notes. "They'll use that as a first step instead of having to send fighter jets or something."</p> <p>Though Chinese hacking was brought under control somewhat by the 2015 agreement, analysts say that China's nation state hackers have reorganized and retooled over the last few years to be even more stealthy and effective in their digital espionage operations. And recent attacks indicate that they are optimizing their plans to get the most valuable information they can out of each victim.</p> <p>"All of these pieces fit together," Symantec's DiMaggio says of Thrip. "It's not targets of opportunity; it's definitely a planned operation."</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	06/25 Crowdsourcing terror in Indonesia
SOURCE	https://www.mmtimes.com/news/crowdsourcing-terror-indonesia.html
GIST	<p>In the wake of high-profile terrorist attacks in Indonesia, social media's role in violent extremism is once again under scrutiny. The 36-hour standoff on May 8 between inmates linked to the so-called Islamic State (IS) and prison officers at Mako Brimob (the detention centre of the Indonesian National Police Mobile Brigade on the outskirts of Jakarta) provides some clues on how extremists use social media, especially to 'crowdsource'.</p> <p>The term 'crowdsourced terrorism', whereby IS outsources the conduct of attacks to its followers and attempts to attract them to Syria, first emerged in 2014. Relevant cases include the knife attack in Leytonstone subway station in east London and the shooting in San Bernardino in the United States in December 2015. These events signalled what former US secretary of homeland security Jeh Johnson called an 'entirely new phase in the global terrorist threat'.</p> <p>Crowdsourcing refers to the open call for ideas, innovations and solutions from a large number of people. The driving force behind participation in crowdsourcing is the passion of a person or group of people who seek to contribute to a particular cause. Social media takes crowdsourcing to greater heights by allowing it to reach more people within a shorter amount of time. It also facilitates collaboration between individuals who are geographically distant.</p> <p>The Brimob inmates broadcast the standoff with prison officers through social media platforms. One inmate live-streamed a call for viewers to participate in jihad via Instagram, while showing a compatriot who had apparently died during the riot. Other videos showed the inmates posing with weapons seized from the police guards and pledging allegiance to IS. The IS-affiliated Amaq News Agency also picked up the story, and claimed responsibility while providing updates from the prison.</p> <p>Viewers appear to have heeded the social media posts. On May 10, a counterterror unit arrested four men who were suspected to have come from Tasikmalaya (five hours from Mako Brimob) to join the siege. Another man stabbed a Brimob officer in front of the detention centre soon after the end of the siege. The</p>

police also arrested two women for allegedly trying to stab police with scissors. These individuals claim that they were simply responding to calls on a Telegram channel to bring food to support the inmates.

Enabling sympathisers

The Brimob siege shows the willingness of extremist sympathisers to provide manpower and material support, provided that they are aware of how they can do so. Social media enables extremist supporters to gain information on the location of and updates on a given incident through posts, geolocation technology and search functions.

While conventional crowdsourcing employs public social media platforms, private platforms such as Telegram support the development of close social networks that are united by their investment in a specific cause. Behavioural studies on crowdsourcing show that intrinsic motivations (such as a desire to expand friendship networks and a love of the cause) are more influential than outward motivations (such as financial rewards) in encouraging voluntary participation.

Until the Brimob incident, few extremist sympathisers in Indonesia had responded to crowdsourcing in ways other than ideological agreement. Although some had translated ideological agreement to action, heeding the call to travel to Syria, very few instances of locally-conducted terrorist acts could be directly linked to social media posts. The Brimob siege, however, shows that under certain conditions militants can use social media to crowdsource personnel and material resources on national soil. Crowdsourcing over social media most likely succeeded in the Brimob incident because of the inmates' unexpected triumph in holding the prison officers hostage and taking control of the building.

Proposed solutions to prevent extremists from exploiting social media are struggling to keep up with current events. Encryption has become a point of legal contention between technology companies and security services in several countries, including Indonesia. Intelligence agencies in the United States are demanding that technology companies build backdoors to their encrypted apps that would allow authorities to monitor online communication and obtain chat transcripts. Apple famously rejected the FBI's request for access to the chat histories of the San Bernardino attackers in 2016.

App blocked for role in attacks

Indonesia's communications ministry blocked access to Telegram in July 2017 on the grounds that it was hosting extremist materials and facilitating the planning and coordination of terrorist attacks. After the terrorist attacks in Surabaya in May 2018, the ministry reported that it had removed as many as 3195 terrorist-related pieces of content from social media platforms.

Technology companies have pledged to work harder to remove terrorist-related content from their platforms. Telegram agreed to block extremist-related content and to create a team of Indonesian culture and language specialists to evaluate online material more accurately. Google has promised to step up monitoring of terrorist content on its video-sharing site YouTube.

But the efficacy of such moves is uncertain. The spontaneity of user-generated content means that its removal by social media platforms tends to be too slow. Technology companies typically rely on user reporting to identify extremist content, which is then relayed to human reviewers who decide whether the content violates the platform's policies. This process means that social media platforms can take anywhere between a few hours to weeks to take down problematic content, which may have been reposted on other platforms by then. Although some companies have begun using artificial intelligence to identify and take down extremist content, the technology is far from perfect.

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HEADLINE 06/23 Israel: car-ramming attack injures soldiers

SOURCE <https://www.algemeiner.com/2018/06/23/three-wounded-in-suspected-car-ramming-attack-near->

	jerusalem/
GIST	<p>Three Israeli soldiers were wounded on Saturday in a suspected car-ramming terror attack near Jerusalem.</p> <p>According to Israel Hayom, the incident took place in the area of Gush Etzion, a group of West Bank settlements in close proximity to Jerusalem. The site of the attack is near the Arab village of Kfar Husan, to which the attacking car apparently escaped. The attacker has not been apprehended.</p> <p>The three victims are reported to be conscious and in good to moderate condition, suffering from injuries to their lower bodies.</p> <p>Israel Hayom quoted the Israeli ambulance service Magen David Adom saying, “At 8:56pm a report was received at MDA Center 101 in the Jerusalem area about three young pedestrians injured by a vehicle near Kfar Husan. An IDF medical team is giving medical aid to three people who were lightly wounded.”</p> <p>Car-ramming has been a common tactic used by Palestinian terrorists for well over a decade.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/25 France: extreme far-right group plot
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/french-extreme-group-detained-attack-plot-56134339?
GIST	<p>A group of people linked to France's extreme far-right has been arrested on suspicion of planning an attack.</p> <p>France's Interior Minister, Gerard Collomb, did not specify the target in his tweet late Sunday, but French media said the 10 people detained over the weekend are suspected of targeting Muslims. Le Parisien newspaper said potential targets included radical imams, Islamist prison inmates or veiled women chosen at random.</p> <p>There was a similar wave of arrests in October 2017, in which the suspected targets were believed to be migrants and mosques.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 Claim: no more US support Syria rebels
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/news/middle-east/activists-us-tells-rebels-in-south-syria-not-to-expect-support-1.534550
GIST	<p>BEIRUT — Syrian government forces advanced deeper into the southern province of Daraa on Sunday under the cover of airstrikes, entering new villages amid reports that the U.S. has told rebels not to expect an American intervention to defend them from the army’s offensive.</p> <p>Syrian government forces have been on the offensive in eastern parts of Daraa province for the past five days in an operation that aims to reach a main border crossing point with Jordan. The push comes two months after government forces regained control of eastern rebel-held eastern suburbs of the capital Damascus that freed thousands of government soldiers for the new battle in Daraa province.</p> <p>Opposition activists have been reporting for days that President Bashar Assad’s government has sent some of its elite units to the south, including the Republican Guards and the Tiger force that is commanded by Brig. General Suheil al-Hassan, who is widely known as Nimr, Arabic for tiger.</p> <p>The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and Daraa-based opposition activist Osama Hourani said that the U.S. has informed rebel groups in southern Syria that Washington will not intervene in the operations to defend them against the government offensive that is ongoing under the cover of Russian airstrikes.</p>

There was no immediate comment from Washington but if true, the decision would be a major reversal from earlier pronouncements.

The U.S. warned last month it would take “firm and appropriate measures” to protect a cease-fire in southern Syria if government forces move against rebels there. The region also has been a source of regional tensions between Iran and Israel in recent months.

“It is clear that since yesterday, the Russians and the (Syrian) regime have been given the green light to regain control of Houran,” Hourani said, referring to the region that includes Daraa, the nearby region of Quneitra and parts of Sweida province. “The proof is that after the rebels received the (American) message, Russian warplanes joined the battle.”

The U.S., Russia, and Jordan agreed last year to include Daraa in a “de-escalation zone” and to freeze the lines of conflict there. But the area has been tense following a series of recent Israeli strikes on Syrian and Iranian forces. Iran is a close ally of Assad, and its advisers are embedded with his troops.

Syrian state news agency SANA said Sunday that troops made territorial gains in al-Lujat and other areas including the village of Jadal on the eastern edge of Daraa province.

Russia’s Defense Ministry said some rebels voluntarily have joined forces with Syrian government forces, adding that Syrian troops repelled an attack by al-Qaida-linked fighters in Daraa.

State news agency SANA said that rebels shelled the southern government-held city of Sweida, wounding three people.

The Observatory said government forces reached the rebel-stronghold of Busra al-Harir, where fighting is ongoing inside the town.

In an interview aired Sunday, Assad said Syria has not possessed chemical weapons since it got rid of them five years ago and that allegations of their use are a pretext for invasion by other countries. Assad’s comments came in an interview with Russia’s state-controlled NTV television channel.

“We fully eliminated chemical weapons. We haven’t had them in Syria since 2013,” Assad said in the interview.

Syria has been charged repeatedly with using chemical weapons in its civil war, most recently in April in the town of Douma. The U.S., France and the United Kingdom launched airstrikes in retaliation.

“Americans constantly lie and attack immediately,” Assad said in the interview.

Assad said reconstructing Syria after the devastation wrought by the war could cost \$400 billion, but said “we have enough means to restore our country, we are sure about that” and that funds could be sought from the Syrian diaspora.

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HEADLINE	06/24 Yemen: fighting nears main port city
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security/fighting-moves-closer-to-center-of-yemens-main-port-city-idUSKBN1JK05N
GIST	ADEN (Reuters) - Yemen’s Houthis deployed additional forces in the main port city of Hodeidah on Sunday as a Saudi-led military coalition moved closer to the city center in the largest offensive of the war, raising U.N. fears of a humanitarian catastrophe. The alliance led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates launched its assault on the heavily

defended Red Sea city on June 12 to try to weaken the Iran-aligned Houthi movement by cutting off a key supply line for the group which controls the capital Sanaa and most populated areas.

“There is a heavy deployment of armed Houthis in the city and new check points have been set up in neighborhoods where there are supporters of the Tehama brigades,” said one resident, referring to a Yemeni faction from the Red Sea coastal plain that is fighting with coalition forces.

Fierce clashes broke out after midnight near Hodeidah University, around 3 km (1.9 miles) west of the city center, on the coastal road linking the airport to the port, added the resident, who requested anonymity.

Coalition forces seized the airport on Wednesday and have been consolidating their hold in the area as U.N. efforts continued to reach a political deal that would avert an assault on the port, a lifeline for millions of Yemenis.

The United Nations fears the escalation in fighting could exacerbate what is already the world’s most urgent humanitarian crisis, with 22 million Yemenis dependent on aid and an estimated 8.4 million believed to be on the verge of starvation.

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HEADLINE	06/23 Tax dollars on Afghan road to nowhere
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/afghan-highway-barely-built-after-12-years-millions-u-s-n885731
GIST	<p>Call it the road to nowhere.</p> <p>A highway in Afghanistan, partly funded by U.S. taxpayer dollars, is largely unbuilt after 12 years of construction work according to inspectors who say it might never be completed.</p> <p>The 145-mile section of road, from Qeysar in northern Faryab province to Laman in western Badghis province, was supposed to form part of the country’s orbital freeway — a major economic thoroughfare connecting major cities.</p> <p>But only 15 percent of the expressway is finished, even though one-third of the budget has been spent.</p> <p>Auditors blame the country’s increasingly dire security situation, as well as more conventional problems such as local contractor incompetence.</p> <p>At least 19 workers on the project have been abducted and one of them killed, according to a report published Thursday by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR).</p> <p>Remembering Charles Krauthammer, a man who shaped the views of a generation of conservatives The violence is so bad that Afghan officials are struggling to find any bidders willing to work on the road, SIGAR found.</p> <p>The Taliban controls 14.5 percent of Afghanistan’s districts — the highest level recorded in recent years, and the country is plagued by attacks and bombings by ISIS and the Taliban that have claimed hundreds of lives.</p> <p>The U.S.-led coalition “will continue” to fight militants, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said last month, in a campaign to push the Taliban to the peace table. Indeed, the Taliban announced a brief cease-fire earlier this month to coincide with the end of Ramadan.</p> <p>The U.S. has spent more money reconstructing Afghanistan than it did rebuilding Europe at the end of World War II. It's part of a wider aim among allies to improve regional security and reduce terrorism — but a separate SIGAR report published in May concluded that the 15-year, \$5 billion U.S. effort hasn't</p>

	<p>worked.</p> <p>Washington is the second-biggest contributor to the Asian Development Bank, which allocates reconstruction funds. The bank has authorized \$721 million for the Qeysar to Laman road since 2006, of which \$249 million, had been spent by the end of 2017.</p> <p>The project has been dogged by so many problems that there was no physical progress at all from March 2014 through September 2017, SIGAR found. In fact, the delay “almost certainly eroded much of the limited work that had been completed prior to that period,” it said.</p> <p>One contractor was fired after it failed to construct a single inch of highway over a three-year period but left \$25.5 million in outstanding payments to subcontractors.</p> <p>“While we hope for success, we are left without any indication that the circumstances have improved sufficiently to warrant a high degree of confidence that the project will be completed, that more money will not be wasted, or that more security incidents will not occur,” SIGAR said.</p> <p>Many other taxpayer-funded projects have ended in similar failure, such as the Pentagon’s purchase of \$28 million worth on forest camouflage uniforms for the Afghan army that proved useless in the local desert, and a \$36 million military command facility that has never been used.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 ISIS demands release women prisoners
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/demands-release-iraq-women-prisoners-hostage-video-56108807?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The Islamic State group released a hostage video on Saturday demanding the release of all Sunni women prisoners from Iraqi jails.</p> <p>The group said it was giving the government a deadline of three days before it would execute the six men in the video, who identified themselves as Iraqi policemen and militiamen.</p> <p>The video was published on jihadist social media groups, one week after the Islamic State group announced it had kidnapped 17 policemen and members of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces, which are predominantly Shiite militia groups that fight for the government.</p> <p>A string of kidnappings claimed by IS on the highway connecting Baghdad to the north of the country has raised concerns about lingering threat posed by the group, after Iraqi forces recaptured the city of Mosul last year.</p> <p>Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi has come under pressure in recent weeks to explain the gaps in security outside the capital.</p> <p>A spokesman for the Iraqi military said he was aware of the hostage video and said the armed forces were pursuing the IS sleeper cell it believes is responsible.</p> <p>"We won't be blackmailed by them, and we will pursue them wherever they are," said Brig. Gen. Yahya Rasoul.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 Nigeria: Boko Haram attack kills 4
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/killed-suspected-boko-haram-extremist-attack-nigeria-56107944?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed

GIST	<p>Police say four people have been killed in an attack by suspected Boko Haram extremists in northern Nigeria.</p> <p>A member of a civilian self-defense group, Maina Shettima, tells The Associated Press that the bodies were found Saturday morning in Tungushe village just outside Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State and the birthplace of Boko Haram. He says six people were injured and homes and vehicles were burned.</p> <p>The Borno State police spokesman says gunmen attacked, but resident Umar Ibrahim says a suicide bomber detonated his explosives shortly after midnight near people sleeping outside their homes in the heat.</p> <p>Nigeria more than once has claimed victory over Boko Haram but the group continues to carry out suicide bombings and kidnappings in the region.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 Egypt extends state of emergency 3mo.
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/egypt-extends-state-emergency-months-56123410?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Egypt has extended its state of emergency for another three months.</p> <p>President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi's decision was published in the official gazette on Sunday. It should be approved by parliament within seven days and go into effect on July 14.</p> <p>Egypt has been under a state of emergency, after an Islamic State affiliate bombed two Coptic churches in April last year killing at least 44 people.</p> <p>Egypt has been battling Islamic militants for years, but the insurgency gained strength after the 2013 overthrow of an elected but divisive Islamist president. The militants have mainly targeted security forces and Christians.</p> <p>In February, Egypt launched a massive security operation against militants in Sinai, parts of Egypt's Nile Delta and the Western Desert.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 Russia airstrikes hit southwest Syria
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russian-airstrikes-hit-southwest-syria-breaking-a-ceasefire-deal-1529853026
GIST	<p>The Syrian regime's main military ally, Russia, carried out airstrikes Sunday in the country's southwest, defying a cease-fire pact with the U.S. and Jordan, as forces aligned with President Bashar al-Assad pushed to capture one of the last opposition strongholds.</p> <p>The Russian strikes, which have been accompanied by regime barrel bombs and mortar shells, are the latest signs of the high-stakes military maneuvers unfolding in a volatile corner of southwest Syria. Forces aligned with President Assad have threatened a ground offensive, dropping leaflets that demand the surrender of rebels in the area. At least five civilians have been killed in the bombardment, which also destroyed a hospital and emergency rescue center, according to antigovernment activists.</p> <p>For weeks, the U.S. has warned the Syrian regime not to violate a cease-fire agreement brokered last year with Russia and Jordan that stretches across the Syrian provinces of Daraa and Quneitra.</p> <p>But the U.S. appears intent on not getting dragged into a confrontation between the rebels and Mr. Assad's Russian and Iranian-backed forces. On Saturday night, as Russian airstrikes were beginning, U.S.-allied</p>

rebels were told by the Americans not to expect a military intervention on their behalf, according to several rebel commanders.

“The Russian intervention is a flagrant violation of the de-escalation deal,” said Saber Sifer, the political representative of one of Daraa’s largest rebel groups. “They are aware that the regime is not capable of advancing on its own. The airstrikes are targeting civilians and they are trying to intimidate them,” he added.

A Jordanian government official said his country will take the necessary measures to protect its security and is in contact with the all parties to achieve that.

Syria’s pro-regime media said Sunday that government-aligned forces have already captured several rebel-held towns. More than seven years of war have depleted the Syrian regime’s ranks, forcing President Assad to rely on his foreign allies to help claw back swaths of territory lost to rebels. Russia’s direct intervention in late 2015 on behalf of the regime turned the tide of the conflict and Iranian-backed ground forces have seized on the momentum.

In recent weeks, the Syrian regime has disguised Iranian and Iranian-backed foreign fighters as its own by switching uniforms and having them raise Syrian flags, according to multiple rebel commanders and a person briefed on the matter. The battlefield feint is meant to avoid more Israeli airstrikes against Iranian targets in Syria.

U.S. officials say that it remains unclear whether the airstrikes are a prelude for a major offensive to capture the area and instead could be an attempt by President Assad to pressure the U.S. and Jordan to agree to a new diplomatic arrangement, one that would allow the Syrian regime to re-exert its control over the area without a battle.

One Western diplomat in the region said there is consensus that the regime taking control of the southwest was a foregone conclusion and that it would happen with less violence than previous opposition defeats. Battles for control of Homs, Aleppo and the Damascus suburb Eastern Ghouta were won primarily through regime sieges coupled with intense airstrikes, killing hundreds of people and resulting in humanitarian crises as food and medical supplies dwindled.

The United Nations has also warned of the humanitarian and regional effects of a battle in Syria’s south, and says around 6,000 civilians have already fled their homes near the front lines.

Numerous bilateral meetings have been held recently between nations with vested interests in the events unfolding in Syria’s southwest.

And a summit between President Donald Trump and President Vladimir Putin is likely to happen in the coming weeks. The U.S. has told Moscow that increasing violations of the southwest cease-fire agreement wouldn’t create a positive atmosphere for such a meeting.

Many of Syria’s southern rebel factions once received military and logistical aid from the U.S. and its allies. Those shipments of weapons ceased when President Trump ended the covert CIA program last year.

Rebel groups have said they are still committed to the cease-fire agreement but have vowed to fight against a regime offensive.

In the months leading up to this weekend’s airstrikes, Russia vowed not to carry out airstrikes in support of a military offensive in the south. But those promises appear to have been broken by the strikes, which began Saturday night while an Iranian presence in Syria’s southwest threatens to inflame tensions with Israel.

In recent discussions between Israel and Russia, Israeli leaders including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have sought assurances that Moscow will keep Iran and its proxies away from its border. Yet

Israel is also aware of the Iranian-backed militias disguising themselves as Syrian soldiers, raising the question of whether Israeli forces are willing to attack these positions themselves or wait to see whether the U.S. intervenes before taking military action, according to Amos Yadlin, a former head of Israeli military intelligence and now head of the Tel Aviv-based Institute for National Security Studies.

“The main question,” he said, “is whether Israel will adopt a precision active approach or a passive approach.”

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HEADLINE	06/22 Top Iran official: US created ISIS
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/america-created-isis-top-iranian-official-claims-990634
GIST	<p>A senior aide to Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has claimed that the U.S. was behind the creation of ISIS and other extremist groups in Syria.</p> <p>Speaking to reporters in Tehran, Ali Akbar Velayati also warned that America’s involvement in the country could prove bloody, the official state Fars news agency said.</p> <p>“The Americans themselves have created the ISIL [ISIS] and the al-Nusra in Syria and now they have come onto the scene and occupied Eastern Euphrates,” Velayati said.</p> <p>This is not the first time an Iranian official has levelled the allegation at the U.S. In March, Khamenei himself claimed America had spawned the terror group to distract the world from the actions of Israel.</p> <p>The conspiracy theory is popular in the Middle East. A 2016 poll showed that one third of Iraqis surveyed believed the U.S. supports terrorism in general or ISIS specifically.</p> <p>The group originated from a merger of Sunni Muslim militant groups that had been formed to oppose the American occupation of Iraq. The merger included al-Qaeda in Iraq, which later broke away from the central leadership and morphed into ISIS.</p> <p>Many of ISIS’ eventual leaders met at Camp Bucca, an American military prison in the south of Iraq. Influential jihadi militants and former Ba’athists used their shared confinement to form alliances and create a blueprint for the group that would rampage across Iraq and Syria a decade later.</p> <p>As the group overran Iraqi positions in 2014, ISIS fighters seized huge amounts of American-made weapons and vehicles. Images of ISIS troops attacking Syrian regime positions using Humvees and M-16 rifles seemed to lend weight to the otherwise unfounded suggestions the Pentagon was directly arming the group.</p> <p>As the war in Syria progressed, the U.S. poured money and weapons into Syria to supply more “moderate” rebel groups. As these forces were absorbed or defeated by more extremist groups like ISIS and al-Nusra—a Syrian al-Qaeda offshoot—jihadis found themselves armed with even more American hardware.</p> <p>President Donald Trump has done little to dispel the myth of direct American support for ISIS since he took office. On the campaign trail in 2016, Trump claimed—without providing any evidence—that President Obama and then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton co-founded the group and that ISIS “honors” the former president.</p> <p>Velayati also warned that if U.S. troops remain in Syria, the country will become “another Vietnam.” There are approximately 2,000 American soldiers currently in the country working as advisors to local Kurdish and Syrian militias. It is unclear how long they will remain stationed there for.</p> <p>Iran is currently facing pressure to remove its own forces from Syria. Tehran has become one of President Bashar al-Assad’s most important allies and has built a significant military presence. Iranian troops and</p>

	<p>positions have been targeted several times by Israeli airstrikes as the country attempts to roll back Tehran's growing influence.</p> <p>There were reports on Thursday that Hezbollah—the Lebanese militia backed by Tehran—and Iran had begun drawing their forces back from the Israeli and Jordanian borders at the request of Russia, the most significant international backer of the Assad regime.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 MI5 alert: jihadi leaders set for release
SOURCE	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5878333/MI5-terror-alert-five-jihadi-leaders-linked-London-Bridge-attack-set-let-jail.html
GIST	<p>Police and security chiefs fear the high command of an extremist group that inspired a generation of jihadis will soon be free again to preach hate on Britain's streets.</p> <p>Five senior figures in Al-Muhajiroun, whose former members include London Bridge attacker Khuram Butt and Michael Adebolajo, one of Fusilier Lee Rigby's killers, are expected to be released from prison by the end of the year.</p> <p>Among them is Anjem Choudary, who is due for release in October having served less than half of a five-and-half-year sentence for inviting support for IS.</p> <p>It is understood that Choudary, 51, will be kept under curfew in a taxpayer-funded safe house in North London and prevented from spouting extremist views.</p> <p>But astonishingly, no such restrictions are in place for the others.</p> <p>According to a source, MI5 and the police fear that, buoyed by the 'street cred' of serving prison terms, they will set up recruitment stalls in areas such as London and Luton.</p> <p>Up to 80 of the 193 people convicted of terrorism offences between 2007 and 2016 will be eligible for release this year – a situation described as a 'concern' by Home Office Minister Ben Wallace.</p> <p>Choudary is suspected of inspiring at least 100 British jihadis and is denied access to fellow inmates by being kept in a 'prison within a prison' at HM Frankland in County Durham.</p> <p>Once released, it is understood he will be allowed to visit his family in Ilford, East London, during the day but must return to the safe house at night.</p> <p>He will be under 24-hour surveillance and prevented from preaching in person or on the internet.</p> <p>But Choudary's right-hand man, Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, 34, of Whitechapel, East London, who was also convicted of inviting support for IS and is likely to be released in October, faces fewer restrictions.</p> <p>A source claimed Rahman, whose lectures included the condoning of the beheading of British aid worker Alan Henning by IS in Syria, will be able to meet fellow ALM members and preach in public.</p> <p>It is understood the same freedom will be available to Mohammed Ishtiaq Alamgir, 38, the leader of ALM in Luton who is expected to complete his sentence in December for a terrorism offence, and Rajib Khan, 39, also from Luton, who was released earlier this month after completing a five-year jail term.</p> <p>The other ALM members expected to leave prison before the end of the year are Taha Hussain, 21, of Slough, Berkshire, and Mijanul Haque, 23, of Islington, North London.</p>

	<p>Hussain was a friend of Butt and was filmed beside him in the Channel 4 documentary the Jihadis Next Door in 2016.</p> <p>ALM recruitment drives often involved setting up stalls in areas with large Muslim communities.</p> <p>Once enlisted, recruits were taken to secret meetings where jihad was discussed openly.</p> <p>Scotland Yard said it could not comment on individual cases but ‘police and the intelligence community are working tirelessly and at pace to confront the terrorist threat’.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/22 UK: woman jailed for aiding plot
SOURCE	https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/isis-plot-all-women-terrorism-act-prison-sentence-islamic-state-uk-westminster-london-a8411701.html
GIST	<p>A woman who helped a friend train for a knife attack at her house has been jailed for failing to alert police to the terror plot.</p> <p>Khawla Barghouthi is one of four members of Britain’s first known all-female Isis cell, which planned an atrocity in Westminster before being thwarted by security services.</p> <p>She was sentenced to two years and four months imprisonment by a judge who said she “failed to disclose information about an imminent attack in which a knife would be used to endanger the life of multiple individuals”.</p> <p>After being released, Barghouthi will face being deported to Tunisia, which she left for Britain with her family a decade ago.</p> <p>The Old Bailey heard how the 21-year-old was friends with Rizlaine Boular, who was to carry out the attack, and let her practice stabbing victims at her home in northwest London.</p> <p>Armed police made their move on 27 April last year after listening in on a conversation where the pair laughed and joked about Boular’s fears that she might “flop so badly” and cut her arm by accident.</p> <p>“How are you going to do it? What if they are faster than you?” Barghouthi was recorded saying, before Boular said she hoped “Allah gives me a heart attack” if she got tasered or shot by police.</p> <p>“Don’t worry come here, want to practice on me again?” Barghouthi responded, before the pair started trying different stabbing techniques.</p> <p>Rizlaine Boular, 22, took over her sister’s terror plot after she was arrested and charged (Metropolitan Police)</p> <p>Shortly afterwards, counter-terror police raided her home and arrested her, shooting Boular as she shouted “f*** you”.</p> <p>Boular has been jailed for life and her mother Mina Dich was sentenced to six years and nine months imprisonment for aiding her daughter’s plot, which was referred to as a “tea party” in coded phone calls.</p> <p>They had taken over plans originally started by Boular’s teenage sister, Safaa, who was arrested for trying to join Isis in Syria before she could carry out her own plans to attack the British Museum.</p> <p>Barghouthi, who is married and was studying at the Open University, claimed that she did not believe the plot was serious.</p>

When questioned on her recorded conversations with Boular, she told the Old Bailey: “I did not believe the person I was with was actually going to go through with anything.

“When I read the transcript I was horrified how it sounds. What I can say, at the time it was extravagant talk and very stupid fooling around.”

But Judge Mark Dennis QC said the discussions showed Barghouthi did believe her friend intended to go ahead with the violence and did nothing to put her off, noting that she possessed extremist material herself.

“There was a growing awareness over a number of days of the nature of the attack by Boular,” the judge added.

“There is no reason, in my view, to doubt that Boular intended to carry out her violent action, even at the cost of her own life.”

Barghouthi previously pleaded guilty to having information about acts of terrorism contrary to section 38 of the Terrorism Act.

Deputy Assistant Commissioner Dean Haydon, of the Metropolitan Police, said: “Working with the security services, we tracked their plans and stopped them before they were able to put them into practice.

“All three women [Rizlaine Boular, Safaa Boular and Mina Dich] were filled with hate and toxic ideology and were determined to carry out a terrorist attack. Had they been successful, it could well have resulted in people being killed or seriously injured.

“But thanks to the work of the security services and counter-terrorism police, their plans never came to fruition.”

Safaa, who at 18 is Britain’s youngest known female terror plotter, will be sentenced at a later date for preparing acts of terrorism.

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HEADLINE	06/23 Iraq attacks ISIS leaders meeting Syria
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/23/world/middleeast/iraq-syria-isis.html
GIST	<p>BAGHDAD — The Iraqi military said on Saturday that it had launched an air attack on a gathering of Islamic State leaders in neighboring Syria, killing about 45 members of the militant group.</p> <p>Fighter jets were said to have destroyed three houses on Friday that were connected by a trench in the town of Hajin, just across the border in eastern Syria, where the leaders were apparently meeting.</p> <p>Those killed included high-profile targets such as the Islamic State’s so-called deputy war minister; one of the group’s media gurus; the personal courier of the group’s leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi; and its chief of police, the Iraqi military said in a statement.</p> <p>The Islamic State, also known as ISIS, ISIL or Daesh, which once occupied a third of Iraq’s territory, has largely been defeated in the country, but it still poses a threat along the border with Syria.</p> <p>“Iraqi F-16 jets carried out a successful airstrike that targeted a meeting of Daesh leaders,” the Iraqi Joint Operations Command said, adding, “The operation resulted in the complete destruction of the targets, and the killing of around 45 terrorists.”</p> <p>The Iraqi military has carried out several airstrikes against the Islamic State in Syria since last year, with the approval of the government of President Bashar al-Assad of Syria and of the United States-led coalition fighting the militants.</p>

	Iraq has relatively good relations with Iran and Russia, Mr. Assad's main backers in the Syrian war, and also enjoys strong support from the American-led coalition.
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HEADLINE	06/24 Pakistan Taliban's new leader
SOURCE	https://www.thenational.ae/world/asia/pakistan-taliban-s-new-leader-faces-challenge-to-keep-militants-together-1.743688
GIST	<p>The militant commander and scholar appointed chief of Pakistan's Taliban movement has inherited an organisation that analysts say is in need of a revival having become increasingly fragmented.</p> <p>Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud immediately became Pakistan's most wanted man when the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) announced on Saturday he would succeed Mullah Fazlullah, who was killed by a US drone strike earlier this month.</p> <p>The appointment of the 39-year-old – known for his religious education and his squint – returns control of the movement to the Mehsud tribe of South Waziristan, where their terror campaign started more than a decade ago.</p> <p>Militant sources last night said his leadership would have to overcome competing internal factions, and the likely prospect of defections to the patchwork of other extremist groups straddling the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The cash-strapped TTP is also struggling to mount operations in Pakistan after fleeing across the border from army campaigns against them.</p> <p>The group finally announced the killing of Fazlullah more than a week after the first reports of his assassination in an American drone strike on June 13 in Afghanistan's Kunar province.</p> <p>A group statement said its former emir had been "a person of strong and high determinations and religious beliefs and was headache for the slaves of US in Afghanistan and Pakistan".</p> <p>Fazlullah became the third consecutive head of the TTP to be killed by a US drone strike, but the group said it was proud its leadership "is being martyred by the head of the infidels".</p> <p>While Fazlullah rose to power on the back of fiery radio diatribes in his native Swat Valley, Mehsud rose up through the ranks in South Waziristan after fighting for the Afghan Taliban and studying in seminaries.</p> <p>Considered better educated than his predecessors, as well as acting as a Taliban judge he has also turned to books, last year publishing a 700-page history of Mehsud militants.</p> <p>A biography included in that book disclosed he had spent months fighting with the Afghan Taliban, firstly against the Northern Alliance north of Kabul in 1996 and then again after the September 11 attacks on the US, in 2001.</p> <p>After climbing the ranks of the Mehsud Taliban faction and then the TTP in South Waziristan, he took charge of operations in Pakistan's largest city and port of Karachi where his militants ran a kidnapping campaign to raise funds. His book also marked the first claim by the TTP that it had killed Benazir Bhutto at an election rally in December 2007, weeks before she was widely expected to be elected once again as Pakistan's prime minister.</p> <p>A source in the Pakistan Taliban described Mehsud as "a religious scholar and also the most brave military commander among the TTP leaders".</p> <p>With the Mehsud tribe making up the bulk of TTP footsoldiers, the leadership had returned to the tribe after four-and-a half years with Fazlullah, the source said. Mehsud's job would now be to reconcile tribal</p>

	<p>splinter factions.</p> <p>But a member of one of those factions said an immediate announcement to replace Fazlullah had not been made because the movement was "facing much internal rivalry".</p> <p>The source said: "The TTP is weak and there is fear of more splits due weak central command. Every unit is working independently and not listening to their central leader."</p> <p>The winners of any further disputes are likely to be other militant groups, particularly the regional franchise of ISIS.</p> <p>Saifullah Mahsud, president of the FATA Research Centre in Islamabad, said: "The TTP is a fragmented group. There's no central command as such. The fact is that most of the factions that go to make up the TTP operate independently of each other."</p> <p>"There's been a steady stream of TTP abandoning it and joining ISIS. That's what ISIS is made of largely, former TTP members.</p> <p>"I wouldn't be surprised if some of the people from Fazlullah's group switched to to go to Islamic State, rather than accept the leadership of Noor Wali."</p> <p>Mehsud's years fighting with the Afghan Taliban mean he apparently enjoys good relations with the groups, several sources said. That in itself could pose problems, a member of another militant group with close ties to the TTP predicted.</p> <p>"The TTP will further split into minor groups because the newly nominated emir is close to the Afghan Taliban, while many of the fighters have sympathies with ISIS. The TTP is very weak financially which is another reason for their splits."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/22 Fighting terrorism, money laundering
SOURCE	https://www.nextgov.com/ideas/2018/06/3-ways-use-data-fight-terrorism-and-money-laundering/149043/
GIST	<p>The increased severity of domestic security breaches due to terrorist threats and cyber crime poses a strategic challenge for federal and state security services. The strengthening of human resources, now widely deployed around the world, is not enough to meet the challenge alone. Increasing efficiency and speed, controlling the means of communication used by terrorists, but also, and above all, anticipating the lead-up to such actions, are all challenges that persist.</p> <p>In this mass information age, the ability to handle big data—huge volumes of structured and unstructured data—is absolutely crucial. Being able to analyze and extract key information in the fight against cybercrime as quickly as possible will revolutionize the work of organizations mobilized in this struggle. To increase efficiency, they must expand the data sources examined and optimize the interoperability between their systems.</p> <p>Cognitive search and analytics technologies are all about accessing the right information at the right time—for people with the necessary authorization. These tools process big data in near real time to surface patterns and relationships among disparate silos of information. Intelligent data processing combined with machine learning enables computers to learn as they process information to deliver increasingly relevant information. These tools can further the operational efficiency of intelligence services and have the potential to exponentially increase their predictive analysis capacities.</p> <p>Using these tools to become information-driven can help with the fight against terrorism, money laundering and fraud. Here are a few examples:</p>

Analyzing Text

Cognitive search and analytics tools enable data to be interpreted and similarities in topics and content to be detected, even across disparate vocabularies. They automate and accelerate the creation of networks mapping people, topics, locations, etc., while helping security services identify criminal activity. Even in the case of "lone wolves," it is possible to draw upon the traces inevitably left on the internet or the dark net to detect behavioral patterns, and thus prevent them moving toward taking action.

Cross Referencing Account, Card Numbers and Fund Transfers

Cognitive search and analytics technologies can also play a role in the fight against money laundering, which is one of the main sources of funding for terrorism. Investigators must accurately identify cyber criminals, drawing upon huge amounts of data in an extremely short period of time. Cognitive technology allows data—in particular financial data such as account and card numbers or fund transfers—to be automatically cross-referenced in order to identify fraudulent activity.

Sparse information can be precisely detected and combined for "mapping" purposes, tracing the links between suspects and movements of capital. Cognitive search and analytics draw upon this interaction mapping to detect traces of illegal activity and track them back to the perpetrators.

Social Media Monitoring

Monitoring social networks to track organized crime is fundamental to the work of the intelligence services. They use open source intelligence, which includes all the intelligence obtained from public sources of information.

Recent terrorist attacks have shown that responsiveness is the key to effective surveillance. Monitoring social networks, discussion forums, blogs and other digital communication tools is an essential way of detecting radicalizing profiles and gaining real-time insights into potential threats. It allows for identification of behavior posing a threat to domestic security and anticipation of future attacks.

Using advanced technology that is cognitive, proven, and complete is increasingly vital for a modern intelligence service in its fight against terrorism, fraud and money laundering.

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	06/24 Search for Titanic: Cold War top secret
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jun/24/robert-ballards-titanic-search-a-cold-war-cover-st/
GIST	<p>The mission in 1985 was straightforward: Scour the depths of the Atlantic Ocean to locate the resting place of the Titanic.</p> <p>But even some members of the crew had no idea of the top-secret classification of their search or its true aim: to find and inspect the only two U.S. nuclear submarines lost during the Cold War.</p> <p>“We were able to pull it off under the noses of everybody,” said maritime archaeologist Robert Ballard, a former Navy Reserve officer who is credited with finding the legendary ocean liner that sank in 1912.</p> <p>“Titanic: The Untold Story,” a new exhibit at the National Geographic Museum, tells how the Navy directed Mr. Ballard to find two nuclear-powered attack submarines that had sunk in the 1960s: the USS Scorpion and the USS Thresher.</p>

In the 1980s, Mr. Ballard was working at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, a nonprofit research outfit where he designed and created an unmanned robotic camera system capable of using sonar to scan the ocean floor. He called it the Argo.

The Navy turned down his 1982 request for funding for an Argo-led search for the Titanic. Instead, the naval service agreed to finance a reconnaissance mission for its lost submarines, after which Mr. Ballard could look for the sunken cruise ship. He was placed on temporary active naval duty and in charge of the civilian-manned, highly classified search.

“We had people aboard who were not cleared, and they literally were sitting above the Scorpion not knowing it for over a week while we were working in a room that was sealed off,” said Mr. Ballard, 75.

What happened to the Thresher was clear: All 129 on board died when it sank in 1963 during deep-diving trials. Still a mystery was the case of the Skipjack-class Scorpion. The Navy wanted to find out whether foul play was involved when the Scorpion sank in 1968 and whether the Soviets had been to the site and removed nuclear material from the sunken sub.

“What I discovered when I was mapping the Scorpion was that when it imploded, the current carried away the lighter material,” creating a long trail of debris, Mr. Ballard said. “I gambled that the same thing happened to the Titanic, and I thought, ‘Let’s not look for the Titanic. Let’s look for stuff that would have come off of it.’”

Using the Argo, the Ballard expedition discovered the wreck of the Titanic in 1985, the same year President Reagan and Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev met for the first time in Geneva in the midst of the Cold War.

The following year, Mr. Ballard told the world that he and his team were building technology to go inside the Titanic and descend its grand staircase. That was a cover for another mission to determine whether the nuclear submarines had released radioactive contaminants into the ocean.

“Embedded in my team were naval personnel that many on our team didn’t know were naval personnel, but I was training them,” Mr. Ballard said.

The Cold War mission is not the only untold story in National Geographic’s latest display, which includes tales about the men and women who survived and died during the Titanic’s maiden voyage in April 1912.

There’s the “lucky” coat Marion Wright Woolcott wore when she stepped into a lifeboat. The young Englishwoman was traveling by herself on the White Star Line to be married in the United States. She was married in the coat she wore during her rescue, and she used it to make Bible covers for each of her three sons before they went off to fight in World War II. All three sons survived.

There’s a fragment from the toy pig Edith Russell clung to as the 1,178 lifeboat spaces for the 2,224 people on the sinking ship began to fill up. A sailor grabbed the pig from under Edith’s arm, said, “If you don’t want to be saved, I’ll save your baby,” and tossed the pig into one of the lifeboats. Thinking of her mother, who gave her the toy, Edith jumped down after it.

“It’s very visceral seeing these personal effects,” said Kathryn Keane, director of the National Geographic Museum. “Every time we open the book, we learn something new.”

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HEADLINE	06/24 UK tax agency recorded 5.1M voices
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/government/uk-tax-agency-recorded-the-voices-of-51-million-brits/
GIST	The UK's tax agency —HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs)— has collected the voice records of

over 5.1 million Brits, a UK-based privacy and civil liberties group has discovered.

The HMRC collected these voice records via a new service it launched in January 2017. Called Voice ID, the service allows UK citizens to authenticate when calling HMRC call centers via their voice.

When it launched, the HMRC website claimed users would be able to opt out of using this feature and continue to authenticate and prove their identity via the usual methods.

But an investigation by privacy group Big Brother Watch has discovered that there's no opt-out option when calling the HMRC support line, and all callers were forced to record a voice track to use with the Voice ID service.

The only way to avoid creating a voice track was by saying "no" three times during the voice track creation process, something the privacy group's investigators discovered on their own. The process is detailed in the Big Brother Watch investigation.

Unfortunately, the Voice ID system didn't record this option, and it would pester the caller for a voice sample every time they called back.

Big Brother Watch members argue that the HMRC broke user rights by not providing a simple way of opting out.

Furthermore, after a very lengthy and complicated process, users can only opt out from using voice recognition for the authentication process, but users can't have their voice patterns removed from HMRC's database.

Big Brother Watch says it filed freedom of information (FOIA) requests, but HMRC officials refused to reveal how a user could delete his voice recording from HMRC's database. They also declined to reveal with what other third-parties and government agencies they share the voice records. The only detail HMRC officials disclosed was that Voice ID had over 5.1 million users at March 13, 2018.

The privacy group argues that HMRC is in clear violation of GDPR (an EU user privacy directive that's been enacted in the UK) by not prompting Brits for active consent and by not giving them an easy method of revoking consent and having their personal biometric data removed.

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HEADLINE	06/23 Russian soldiers occupy Transnistria
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/russian-soldiers-occupy-european-country-and-neighbors-are-trying-get-them-out-992855
GIST	<p>The United Nations General Assembly passed a draft resolution Friday urging Russia to remove its troops from Transnistria, a contested piece of land the international community recognizes as part of Moldova.</p> <p>Moldova, a tiny country sandwiched between Ukraine and Romania in Eastern Europe, gained independence from the Soviet Union and was formally recognized by the United Nations in 1992.</p> <p>But the inhabitants of Transnistria, a tiny strip of land with around 500,000 Russian-speaking inhabitants, wanted a country of their own. They started an armed struggle for independence from Moldova that lasted until a ceasefire was called in July of 1992. Russian troops have been in Transnistria ever since.</p> <p>Moscow claims the troops are a peacekeeping force working to ensure that fighting doesn't break out again. And many of Transnistria's residents say they want the Russians to protect them, claiming that their unique identity would be under siege if they were to integrate fully with Moldova.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/25 'Mass hysteria' at e-cigarette plant
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/thermal-circuits-e-cigarette-plant-chlorine-leak-salem-massachusetts-hazmat-sick-workers/
GIST	<p>Fire and hazmat crews were still working late Sunday night to determine what sparked a panic and sickened about 30 people at an e-cigarette manufacturer in Salem, Massachusetts. A spokesperson for the state's fire services said a hazmat team was assisting the Salem Fire Department at the Thermal Circuits plant and that 15 people had been taken to local hospital while about 15 others made their way to hospitals themselves.</p> <p>A hazmat crew had entered the building and was trying to determine what caused so many to suffer breathing problems and nausea. Jennifer Mieth, spokeswoman for Massachusetts fire services, said the crews on the ground "do not believe that this is connected to an earlier chlorine leak in the building as that process was shut down and had not been restarted."</p> <p>Fire crews were initially called to the plant on Sunday afternoon to respond to that leak, but left saying nobody was injured and the leak had been addressed. Less than two hours after officials gave the all-clear, however, at about 8 p.m., they were called back to the facility to help people suffering from the symptoms described above.</p> <p>"There seemed to be a panic in the building" as workers began running out of the building, Salem Deputy Fire Chief Alan Dionne told CBS Boston. Dionne described it as "mass hysteria" as the employees rushed to get out of the building. CBS Boston said some 450 to 500 people were working at the time of the incident, and people started reporting symptoms not long after a shift change.</p> <p>An official at Salem Hospital told CBS Boston early Monday morning that 20 people were being treated for unspecified illness related to the incident.</p> <p>Acting Salem Fire Chief Gerry Giunta told CBS News later Monday that a total of 29 people were treated, including one who had suffered an apparent seizure and had been transported to a Boston hospital. The majority of the patients were treated and released but some, including the individual believed to have had a seizure, remained hospitalized.</p> <p>Firefighters said they did not detect any chlorine in the plant when they came back the second time. An investigation was expected to take place throughout the night and Mieth said more information would be available later Monday morning.</p> <p>When asked if the business would reopen on Monday, Dionne said the Thermal Circuits plant would "absolutely not" be reopening Monday morning.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/25 No NKorea anti-US imperialism rally
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/detente-sign-nkorea-holding-annual-anti-us-rally-56134615?
GIST	<p>North Korea has opted not to hold an "anti-U.S. imperialism" rally marking the anniversary of the start of the Korean War, another sign of detente following the summit between leader Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump.</p> <p>Last year's event was held on Pyongyang's Kim Il Sung Square with a reported 100,000 people attending. The North even issued special anti-U.S. postage stamps.</p> <p>But for the first time in years, no such rally was planned on Monday.</p>

	Fist-pumping, flag-waving and slogan-shouting masses of North Koreans normally join the annual rally that sets off a month of anti-U.S., Korean War-focused events designed to strengthen nationalism and unity. It all culminates on July 27, which the North celebrates as the day of "Victory in the Fatherland Liberation War."
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HEADLINE	06/24 Claim: Saudis intercept ballistic missile
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-saudi/saudi-air-defenses-intercept-missile-above-saudi-capital-state-media-idUSKBN1JK0X7
GIST	<p>DUBAI/RIYADH (Reuters) - Saudi Arabia's air defense forces intercepted a ballistic missile launched by Yemen's Houthi militia over Riyadh on Sunday, state-run al-Ikhbariya television said on Sunday.</p> <p>The Houthis' al-Masira television said later that rockets were aimed at Saudi defense ministry and other targets in the Saudi capital.</p> <p>Reuters could not verify the report independently.</p> <p>At least six loud blasts were heard and bright flashes were seen in the sky over Riyadh, and puffs of smoke were later visible above the city, a Reuters witness said. No casualties were reported immediately.</p> <p>There was no immediate comment from the Saudi authorities or from the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen against the Houthi movement, which has targeted Riyadh with ballistic missiles several times in recent months.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 Jogger strays into detention ordeal
SOURCE	https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-44588643
GIST	<p>A young French woman who went for an evening jog along a Canadian beach spent two weeks in US immigration detention after straying across the border.</p> <p>Cedella Roman, 19, who was visiting her mother in British Columbia, decided to run along the beach that leads to Canada's border with the United States on 21 May.</p> <p>Ms Roman told Canadian media she turned on to a dirt path for a few metres as the tide rose, and stopped to take a picture before retracing her steps.</p> <p>She was then confronted by two US border patrol agents who arrested her for crossing into Blaine, Washington.</p> <p>"He started telling me that I had crossed the border illegally and I told him I really did not do it on purpose," Ms Roman told Radio-Canada (in French).</p> <p>The French national thought that she might be given a warning or, at worst, be fined.</p> <p>"I did not think they would put me in jail," she said.</p> <p>But to jail she did go, as the officers took her more than 220km (136 miles) south to the Tacoma Northwest Detention Center, a privately run immigration prison in Washington state.</p> <p>With no identification on her and just the clothes she was wearing, Ms Roman started to realise the gravity of her situation.</p>

	<p>"They asked me to remove all my personal belongings with my jewellery, they searched me everywhere," Ms Roman told the Canadian broadcaster CBC. "Then I understood it was getting very serious, and I started to cry a bit."</p> <p>She said she was held in a room with about 100 other people.</p> <p>"We were locked up all the time and in the yard there was barbed wire and dogs," she told French news agency AFP.</p> <p>"We tried to help each other, there was a good atmosphere.</p> <p>"Seeing people who had come from Africa and elsewhere locked up for trying to cross the border, it put my experience into perspective."</p> <p>She was allowed to contact her mother, Christiane Ferne, who came to the detention facility with Ms Roman's passport and work permit.</p> <p>But US officials would not let her leave until Canadian immigration authorities first confirmed she was allowed back into the country.</p> <p>Both sides eventually agreed she could return to Canada, but only 15 days after Ms Roman first set off on her jog.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/22 Cruise ship to Alaska hit w/norovirus
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/ship-reported-norovirus-outbreak-stops-alaska-56098016?cid=clicksource_26_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report an outbreak of norovirus on a cruise ship in Alaska.</p> <p>KTOO public media reports 73 people have reported getting sick on the Holland America cruise ship Zaandam.</p> <p>The ship, which is carrying more than 2,000 passengers and crew, was in Juneau on Friday. The ship is expected to make additional stops in Alaska before returning to Seattle on July 2.</p> <p>Norovirus is highly contagious and can cause vomiting and diarrhea usually a day or two after exposure. Most people fully recover within a few days.</p> <p>The U.S. Forest Service monitors reports of outbreaks on cruise ships so it can take steps to bolster sanitation.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 Retailers experiment w/blue lights
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/retailers-experiment-blue-lights-deter-drug-56119839?cid=clicksource_26_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>Colored bulbs cast an eerie blue glow in the restroom of a convenience store where people who inject heroin and other drugs have been seeking the relative privacy of the stalls to shoot up.</p> <p>The blue lights are meant to discourage people from using drugs in store bathrooms by making it more difficult for them to see their veins. It's an idea that's been around for years but is getting a fresh look as a result of the nation's opioid epidemic.</p>

"The hardest-core opiate user still wants to be accurate. They want to make sure the needle goes in the right spot," said Read Hayes, a University of Florida researcher and director of the Loss Prevention Research Council, a retail industry-supported group that is looking at the lights' effectiveness. The purpose of the blue light is to "disrupt that process" and force people to go somewhere else to take drugs, he said.

Turkey Hill Minit Markets, a 260-store chain based in Lancaster, is one of two convenience store chains and a supermarket chain working with the loss prevention group to field-test the blue bulbs. Hayes, whose group devises methods to combat theft and violent crime at stores, said that the study is still in its infancy, but that initial feedback from stores that have been using them has been positive.

Earlier studies have questioned the lights' deterrent effect, with people who use opioids telling researchers they'd shoot up in blue light if it meant avoiding withdrawal symptoms. Many public health experts oppose the practice, saying blue lights make people more likely to hurt themselves and stigmatize those in the grips of addiction.

And, for people accustomed to injecting themselves, there are ways around the lights.

Someone in withdrawal who obtains heroin is "going to want to use as soon as possible, even if the location is not optimal," said Brett Wolfson-Stofko at the National Development & Research Institutes, who has studied injection drug use in public bathrooms.

Store owners say they have to do something.

Last fall, Sheetz, a convenience-store chain with more than 500 stores in six states, installed a new lighting system in the restroom of its New Kensington store, about 20 miles outside Pittsburgh. The blue lights are "designed to help our customers and employees avoid dangerous situations," said company spokesman Nick Ruffner.

Sheetz, he said, has seen "positive steps in the right direction," and has since installed the blue bulbs at a store in Huntington, West Virginia.

Some health experts encourage interventions that don't involve blue lights.

Installation of needle disposal containers can help protect store employees, the public and people who use drugs, while stall doors that swing outward can make it easier to reach someone who has overdosed and is in need of medical help.

Stores can also work with law enforcement, social service agencies and addiction services to tackle the problem — a step that Hayes, at the loss prevention council, said retailers are looking to take.

Retailers aren't the only ones experimenting with blue lights.

The city of Philadelphia began distributing kits to residents that include a blue bulb for the front porch, no-trespassing signs, a tool to pick up used syringes, a needle disposal box and contact information for social services.

The city — where overdose deaths, fueled by the powerful synthetic opioid fentanyl, surged more than 30 percent to 1,200 last year — has given out more than 100 kits since January.

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HEADLINE	06/23 NKorea erasing anti-US propaganda
SOURCE	https://nypost.com/2018/06/23/north-korea-erasing-most-anti-us-propaganda/
GIST	Nix the nuclear warheads, cue the doves.

The North Korean government is erasing much of its anti-U.S. propaganda following dictator Kim Jong-un's forays onto the world stage.

Gone are the posters depicting the U.S. as a "rotten, diseased, pirate nation" and promising "merciless revenge" on American forces for an imagined attack on the totalitarian country.

In their place are cheery messages touting praising the prospects for Korean reunification and the declaration Kim signed in April with South Korean President Moon Jae-in promising "lasting peace," according to reports.

Still the most isolated country in the world, very few North Koreans have access to news and information from the outside world. So state propaganda plays a huge role in shaping their views.

Murals, banners and posters displayed throughout the capital, Pyongyang, have for decades depicted the U.S. as a brutal, imperialist aggressor hell-bent on destroying the North Korean regime. South Korea and Japan were also frequently targeted as willing allies of the U.S.

But things started to take an Orwellian turn in the run-up to Kim's June 12 summit with President Donald Trump, with the old posters vanishing since then.

"All the anti-American posters I usually see around Kim Il-sung Square and at shops, they've all just gone," Rowan Beard, a tour manager at Young Pioneer Tours, told Reuters. "In five years working in North Korea, I've never seen them completely disappear before."

Infamous posters and postcards showing North Korean missiles on their way to Washington are a thing of the past. Also removed are the anti-American trinkets that used to be sold to tourists as souvenirs. In their place are items showing themes of Korean reunification.

The change extends to the country's government-controlled media. News reports that once depicted the U.S. as hostile, and its involvement in places like Syria as proof of imperialism, are no longer critical. The Financial Times said the main newspaper, Rodong Sinmun, hasn't featured a direct attack on Trump since March, when he agreed to meet with Kim.

"This is fascinating," Peter Ward, North Korea expert and writer for NKNews, told the BBC. "Generally speaking, neutral or positive coverage is normally reserved for countries that Pyongyang has friendly relations with."

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HEADLINE	06/24 Dead bodies in Walmart stores nationwide
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jun/24/walmart-dead-bodies-nationwide-phenomenon/
GIST	<p>MELBOURNE, Fla. — Peter Unger traveled the world, first in the Navy at the tail end of the Korean War and then as a free spirit searching the ancient paths of India for life's sacred meaning.</p> <p>Toward the end of his life Unger, sporting a flowing white beard and well-off financially thanks to his handcrafted jewelry business, sought sanctuary in the idea of living simply.</p> <p>But in a twist of fate, the 85-year-old who shunned worldly cares was found dead May 7, alone in a nondescript white Ford van that sat parked undisturbed for days at a Walmart, a retail giant seen by many as America's temple of commerce and materialism.</p> <p>Unger was among the growing number of people around the country who drew their last breaths in Walmart parking lots.</p>

It is not that the parking lots are unsafe. In fact, it is the relative safety of the well-lit and busy lots - combined with a welcoming corporate policy - that has drawn more people like Unger to call the Walmart parking lots home, if only temporarily.

And where people live, they also die.

They include those who are homeless, truckers, immigrants, drug-addled, suicidal or ill - all whose bodies are found nationwide in cars, vans and other vehicles in the parking lots of the retail giant. It is the last stop, one that can go unnoticed amid the daily crush of shoppers searching for deals, sometimes focused on the rattle of carts instead of their crowded surroundings.

In Brevard, police have investigated nearly half a dozen such parking lot deaths since 2015, from the badly decomposed remains of a man found inside a fly-swarmed sedan at a beachside Walmart in the simmering July heat to that of a man who suffered from cancer, found the same year in a sport utility vehicle that sat in a far corner of the Walmart lot in Viera. In both cases, it was the pungent smell that first caught the attention of passers-by or workers.

“It’s unfortunate but these do happen. It’s not uncommon,” said Lt. Cheryl Trainer, spokeswoman for the Melbourne Police Department, an agency that has investigated the bulk of the Walmart parking lot deaths on the Space Coast.

In each case, officers turn up in environmental suits and masks, sorting through the grisly discoveries, from pill bottles to notepads and photos left behind, hoping to piece together the lives of people like Unger who ended up in the parking lots.

The bodies - the shell of their physical humanity faded and decomposed by the elements - are carefully removed and turned over to medical examiners. Family members, if any can be found, are contacted.

Across the nation, the stories bear similar refrains:

- In California, a woman missing for months turned up dead. Investigators in the February 2016 case said the woman’s body remained in the car, parked at the retailer, for up to three months.

- In Illinois, the body of a 49-year-old man who was reported missing for more than a month, was found dead May 18, 2018, in a van at a Bradley, Illinois, Walmart. He was seen going into the store on May 1 and then leaving a short time later. He died of natural causes, according to media reports.

- In Ohio, police said a 59-year-old man found April 17, 2018, in a pickup truck at an Airport Thruway Walmart, died of natural causes. The body was in the truck, parked on the side of the retail store since April 8, authorities report.

- Here in Florida, a Walmart employee walking the parking aisles Feb. 22, 2018, at a Tarpon Springs store reported a strong odor. Officers arrived and found an unidentified body. Police suspected suicide.

Walmart has a longstanding corporate policy that anyone is welcome to stay in their parking lots overnight, depending on local laws. The open-lot policies vary from area to area, depending on the store managers.

“Most of the people we see are actually travelers, people in RVs. There’s like a whole society or culture out there. We do go out and check the lots, get the cars and keep an eye out for trash, but our workers aren’t peeping into people’s cars,” said Casey Staheli, a spokesman for Walmart, whose corporate offices are based in Arkansas.

“Unfortunately, they might smell something and that’s when it’s brought to our attention.”

Other retailers besides Walmart see similar deaths in their parking areas. A West Melbourne McDonald’s

	was the site of another gruesome discovery in April 2017 when a man's body was found inside a van. He had overdosed. But none are as pervasive or as consistent as the ones that happen at Walmart, which has about 4,000 stores nationwide.
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HEADLINE	06/23 NYC traffic about to get worse
SOURCE	https://www.yahoo.com/news/major-york-area-traffic-bottleneck-worse-150112230.html
GIST	<p>NORTH BERGEN, N.J. (AP) — It is the bane of tourists and truckers, theatergoers and weekday 9-to-5ers: the congested, pothole-strewn roadway that bisects the teeming towns overlooking the Hudson River before descending into the Lincoln Tunnel to New York City.</p> <p>In a region known for its soul-crushing gridlock and delay-prone rail system, the 80-year-old Route 495 viaduct connecting the New Jersey Turnpike to the tunnel is where smooth rides come to die daily for more than 150,000 motorists.</p> <p>And, it's going to get worse.</p> <p>An estimated two-and-a-half-year rehabilitation project to shore up the bridge and replace the roadway surface will close one lane in each direction, 24 hours per day for about two years. The New Jersey Department of Transportation is overseeing the \$90 million undertaking, which it says will extend the life of the bridge by 75 years.</p> <p>Motorists should expect "severe congestion," DOT spokesman Steve Schapiro said. Schapiro didn't provide a date for when the closures would begin, other than to say it was scheduled for mid-summer.</p> <p>The increased gridlock could force truckers — who already have seen the bridge and tunnel toll from New Jersey into New York rise to more than \$100 in recent years — to seek alternate ways into the city, though their choices are little better. The Holland Tunnel, to the south, bars large trucks, and the George Washington Bridge, to the north, is the second-worst truck bottleneck in the nation, according to a study of truck GPS data by the American Transportation Research Institute.</p> <p>"We'll try to do off-hour deliveries as much as possible," said Gail Toth, executive director of the New Jersey Motor Truck Association, an industry advocacy group. "That depends on the type of industries, because not all are open late at night. The ones that can't, you just try to find the best route possible."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/22 Lyme disease: an even bigger threat
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/lyme-disease-an-even-bigger-threat-than-you-think-1529672401
GIST	<p>This time of year, the U.S. is crawling with ticks. It's a concern because the rapacious bloodsuckers spread disease when they bite.</p> <p>The most common tick-borne ailment is Lyme disease, but the official case count—which helps public-health authorities formulate prevention strategies and allocate resources—doesn't come close to the actual number.</p> <p>Around 30,000 cases of Lyme disease are documented each year, according to surveillance figures published annually by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>The real number, the agency says, is more like 300,000.</p> <p>"We know Lyme disease is underreported," said Kiersten Kugeler, an epidemiologist with the CDC. "It is the most common vector-borne disease by far."</p>

Several things may contribute to the undercount. The perception that the disease is uncommon may cut down on diagnoses. Because the counting methods used in some high-incidence states don't adhere to official surveillance rules, the numbers are discarded. And a new rule requiring most states to produce laboratory evidence of the disease may reduce participation.

"All reportable diseases are subject to underreporting, although we know this is particularly true for common diseases and for those often treated in an outpatient setting," Dr. Kugeler said.

Lyme is one of more than 70 infectious diseases monitored by the CDC's National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System.

Although the CDC publishes the figures, states collect the data based on rules set by the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists.

Uptick

The actual number of cases of Lyme disease far outstrips the official case count, the U.S. government says.

Fourteen high-incidence states account for 95% of confirmed cases reported to the CDC. Since 2017, low-incidence states can only report cases with laboratory evidence of infection, while high-incidence states are still able to report cases with the classic rash associated with the disease absent laboratory evidence.

Still, to streamline the process, some high-incidence states have taken a different approach. In New York, counties with the largest Lyme burden investigate only 20% of positive laboratory reports and then extrapolate to estimate the full number of cases. But the CDC won't accept estimates. Consequently, in 2016, New York recorded 6,597 Lyme cases, but the CDC listed only 2,623 for the state.

Such disparities, combined with suspected under diagnosis and differing rules for low-incidence states, have advocates worried.

"Doctors look at the CDC numbers and see low numbers for their areas and aren't vigilant about it," said Mary Beth Pfeiffer, author of "Lyme: The First Epidemic of Climate Change." "The numbers should say to doctors, This is a huge problem with hundreds of thousands of cases."

It's difficult to say precisely what effect the latest rules will have on the surveillance numbers. The first report using them won't be released until fall, but there is already evidence that Lyme is more abundant in some low-incidence states than the surveillance suggests.

In 2016, Fair Health, a nonprofit organization that oversees the nation's largest collection of health-care claims data, examined 23 billion records for more than 150 million privately insured individuals and documented 747,101 claims for Lyme disease.

Nine of the CDC's high-incidence states were among those submitting the largest number of claims—but so were several low-incidence states.

North Carolina reported 32 Lyme cases to the CDC in 2016 but in the same year made 88,539 health-care claims for a Lyme diagnosis. California reported 90 cases to the CDC but had 46,820 claims. Texas reported 31 cases to the CDC but had 31,129 claims. All three are considered low-incidence states.

Fair Health warns that its numbers don't represent individuals with the disease but rather the number of encounters those with a Lyme diagnosis had with the health-care system.

Lyme disease can be treated successfully with antibiotics, but if undiagnosed or inadequately treated, the consequences may be severe.

Researchers from Johns Hopkins estimate that Lyme costs the U.S. health-care system between \$712

	million and \$1.3 billion a year.
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HEADLINE	06/23 Protesters target Tacoma tattoo parlor
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/latest-news/article213532784.html
GIST	<p>About three dozen members of Tacoma Against Nazis protested Friday outside a Tacoma tattoo parlor, carrying signs that read, "Tacoma is for lovers not haters" and "I thought we were done with Nazis tattooing people in 1945."</p> <p>Several politicians were part of the protest, including state Rep. Laurie Jenkins, D-Tacoma, and Tacoma City Council members Catherine Ushka and Justin Camarata.</p> <p>"We want to make sure they know they're not welcomed," Jenkins said. "Their beliefs aren't welcomed."</p> <p>On Thursday, one of the co-owners of the shop in the 1100 block of East 72nd Street told The News Tribune he is not a racist.</p> <p>"I'm not a Nazi," the man said.</p> <p>He urged the newspaper to interview people associated with the Black Lives Matter movement instead.</p> <p>"That's OK, right?" he said. "But if you're white and you have any kind of pride it's a big deal."</p> <p>He declined further comment.</p> <p>Tacoma Against Nazis member Chuck Knigge said the group has multiple pieces of evidence and documentation that show the shop's owners and staff are affiliated with hate groups.</p> <p>"What sold me was the plethora of pictures, the tattoos they've done on people," Knigge said.</p> <p>On occasion, flags associated with white supremacy have flown outside the home of a shop employee, members of the group said.</p> <p>The group said they were under no illusion that the protest would shut the business down. Awareness was its No. 1 goal, spokeswoman Amanda Westbrooke said.</p> <p>"It's awareness for the people of Tacoma that a neo-Nazi hate group has opened up a business in the most diverse neighborhood in Tacoma," Westbrooke said.</p> <p>In February, the website for Puget Sound Anarchists posted a story alleging that the owner and associates of the tattoo shop were members of the Northwest Hammerskins.</p> <p>The Southern Poverty Law Center, an organization that tracks hate groups and hate crimes, lists the Hammerskins as a "Racist Skinhead" hate group.</p> <p>"Racist Skinheads form a particularly violent element of the white supremacist movement," the center writes.</p> <p>The anarchists' website has a photo of one of the shop's co-owners and two people wearing T-shirts with "88" and "Crew 38 logos." Crew 38 is a subset of the Hammerskins.</p> <p>The Anti-defamation League lists the 88 symbol as a white supremacist numerical code for "Heil Hitler." It is widely used across the white supremacist movement and not just neo-Nazis, according to the League.</p>

	<p>Last fall, a series of short-lived white nationalist protests took place in Washington, including in Tacoma. A small group hung a "White Lives Matter" banner from the Delin Street overpass over Interstate 5 for a few minutes in November.</p> <p>The anarchists website alleges the shop's co-owner and his associates were responsible for that incident.</p> <p>On Friday, some passersby honked their car horns and gave thumbs-up to the protesters.</p> <p>The protesters were silent during the hour-long picketing — until the end.</p> <p>"We'll be back," they chanted.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 Counterfeiters left police a 'to-do' list
SOURCE	https://www.heraldnet.com/news/lynnwood-police-to-do-list-not-your-every-day-evidence/
GIST	<p>LYNNWOOD — If nothing else, the counterfeiters were fastidious planners.</p> <p>When police seized evidence from a Lynnwood motel room in April, they came across remarkably helpful information for the investigation.</p> <p>One of the handwritten documents included the reminder: "Work on \$100 template" and "research where to legally sell guns."</p> <p>Another memo said "make payroll check" and "create identity that we can make bank acct. with."</p> <p>Investigators often locate ledgers and bank records that may reveal evidence of drug trafficking, money laundering or other financial crimes, but these "to-do" lists were "anything but typical," Lynnwood police Cmdr. Sean Doty said.</p> <p>The lists "paint a picture of how much effort and organization these suspects put forth to advance their criminal activity," he said.</p> <p>Detectives also found stolen checks and credit cards as well as a passport. When they contacted the passport's owner, she reported that it had been stolen along with her birth certificate. She'd become a victim of identity theft.</p> <p>Inside the hotel room were scanners and printers. Also found was a can of Easy-Off oven cleaner, though there was neither an oven nor a stove in the room. The spray can be used to wash checks or other documents for counterfeiting, police wrote in an affidavit for a search warrant.</p> <p>A U.S. Secret Service agent examined the handiwork, inspecting several bills made on washed \$1 bills. Other bogus bills were on printer paper.</p> <p>"It was clear the washed bills were going to be made into fake \$100s," police wrote after conferring with the federal agent.</p> <p>It was the cleaning staff who first noticed the suspicious currency. They'd seen what they thought was real money in a trash can. They soon realized it was counterfeit.</p> <p>Police recovered phony \$20, \$50 and \$100 bills.</p> <p>Officers arrested a man, 41, and woman, 22, after the search.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	06/25 NYPD: mistaken identity machete killing
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/06/25/nypd-ids-1-5-suspects-in-mistaken-identity-machete-killing.html
GIST	<p>The New York Police Department on Monday identified one of five suspects in the brutal killing of a 15-year-old boy who was pulled out of a store and stabbed several times by a group of men with long knives.</p> <p>Surveillance footage published by the Post showed Lesandro "Junior" Guzman-Feliz, who dreamed of being a police officer, being dragged from the store by his attackers, who were seen stabbing the teen repeatedly with a machete.</p> <p>The New York Post, citing police sources, identified one of the suspects as Kevin J. Alvarez, 19. He was charged with second-degree murder, manslaughter, gang assault and assault, the paper reported.</p> <p>Two suspects reportedly were taken into custody in the Bronx, while three more were tracked down to Paterson, New Jersey.</p> <p>The attack stemmed from a case of "mistaken identity," the paper reported.</p> <p>The New York Times reported that social media users believed that the victim may have been mistaken for another teen seen in a sex video with one of the suspect's relatives.</p> <p>Members of the Trinitarios street gangs reportedly apologized to Guzman-Feliz's family and said, "It wasn't supposed to be him."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/25 Mexico: town's police force arrested
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/entire-towns-police-force-arrested-after-murder-mayoral-candidate-993406
GIST	<p>As Mexico prepares for general elections on July 1, a new wave of violence is rocking the country—and politicians are finding themselves in the cross hairs of powerful and brutal drug cartels.</p> <p>The tentacles of Mexican organized crime are long, and even those charged with protecting the country's citizens and leaders can be corrupted and coerced into support for the cartels.</p> <p>This tragic dynamic has been demonstrated once more in Ocampo, in the western state of Michoacan, where the entire town's police force has been detained on suspicion of the murder of a mayoral candidate, the BBC reported.</p> <p>Fernando Angeles Juarez, 64, was shot dead by unknown gunmen on Thursday outside one of his properties. He is the third politician to be killed in Michoacan in just over a week, and one of more than 100 politicians murdered in Mexico since the beginning of the electoral season in September 2017.</p> <p>Ocampo's whole 27-officer police force were arrested by federal police early Sunday morning on suspicion of involvement in the murder. An initial effort to arrest the suspects was thwarted by local public security secretary Oscar Gonzalez, who ordered his officers to stop federal agents from entering the town.</p> <p>The Federales returned on Sunday with reinforcements. They took Gonzalez and his men into custody, transporting the suspects to state capital Morelia for questioning.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 Illicit drone flights US-Mexico border
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/illicit-drone-flights-surge-along-us-mexico-border-as-smugglers-hunt-for-soft-spots/2018/06/24/ea353d2a-70aa-11e8-bd50-b80389a4e569_story.html?utm_term=.4a1ef9ef5c9e
GIST	<p>Smugglers are using video cameras and small drones to spot vulnerabilities along the U.S.-Mexico border, and the Department of Homeland Security is struggling to stop them.</p> <p>Reports of unmanned aircraft flying along the southwestern border have spiked in recent months, with more than three dozen sightings since October, when the fiscal year began. That data point is on a course to quadruple from the previous year, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection, where officials say they are concerned that criminal groups are using the aircraft for surveillance while seeking paths to traffic drugs and other illicit material into the United States.</p> <p>“They’re probably trying to get eyeballs on agents out in the field and see where soft areas are,” said James Thom, acting operations director for CBP’s Air and Marine Operations Center outside Los Angeles. “To date, I don’t know that we’ve successfully been able to detect and track drone activity.”</p> <p>The growing use of off-the-shelf, hard-to-spot drones is a prime example of the relentless cat-and-mouse game between criminals and Border Patrol agents. Smugglers constantly seek to outsmart U.S. law enforcement. And as part of the Trump administration’s pledge to crack down on the influx of drugs and people entering the country illegally, Homeland Security is scrambling to identify technology and techniques that can thwart them.</p> <p>When it comes to drones though, the true number flying along the border could be much higher than what’s been reported. Such aircraft present a tiny radar cross section. They also give off little to no reflection and tend to fly for short periods at very low altitudes, said Jennifer Gabris, a CBP spokeswoman.</p> <p>“These characteristics make them more difficult to detect using conventional sensor systems,” Gabris said.</p> <p>While most drones are believed to be flying surveillance missions, at least one made it across the U.S. border carrying drugs worth tens of thousands of dollars. In January, a 25-year-old man was sentenced to 12 years in prison for flying a drone over a fence near the bustling checkpoint between San Diego and Tijuana, Mexico. The unmanned aircraft was carrying a plastic bag packed with 13 pounds of methamphetamine.</p> <p>Since 2011, traffickers have made at least 562 illicit flights across the U.S. border in ultralight aircraft such as helicopters, single-engine planes or gyrocopters, Gabris said. Those pilots often fly their aircraft just above the tree line in rugged areas, making it difficult for border agents to detect or track them. The aircraft typically carry about 200 pounds worth of drugs, according to a 2017 Government Accountability Office report warning about the flexible smuggling method.</p> <p>Pilots “don’t even have to land on our side of the border — they’ll take off, drop a package that will get picked up and fly back,” said Henry Willis, a senior policy researcher at the Rand Corporation. “As a smuggling tactic and tool, it can be attractive for a lot of reasons . . . and another one of the ways our borders can be penetrated.”</p> <p>As drone flights picked up in recent years, manned ultralight flights have fallen significantly. In 2011, DHS officials tracked 198 ultralight flights into the United States, most of which took place in California, Arizona and New Mexico. In 2017, 17 such flights were recorded.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 Seattle cracks down on loud car noises
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/amendment-to-noise-ordinance-could-make-it-easier-for-police-to-cite-loud-cars/
GIST	<p>Crowds soaking in the sun, kids playing in the sand and the roaring sound of engines. It's a common scene along Alki Beach on a sultry summer evening, but not everyone is happy about the noise.</p> <p>"It's difficult for us. We used to be a garage, so if someone passes by with a loud car or motorcycle, it interrupts our service with the guest," said Billy Lake, general manager of Blue Moon Burgers, one of the many businesses lining Alki Avenue Southwest with outdoor seating.</p> <p>Lake isn't alone. Seattle City Councilmember Lisa Herbold, who represents the area, conducted a public safety and health survey a year ago and found the biggest concern among respondents was the excessive noise coming from cars with modified mufflers.</p> <p>Noise from cars within Seattle city limits can't exceed 95 decibels, according to the existing Municipal Code. That's roughly the sound of a lawn mower.</p> <p>In order to measure the sound from car exhausts, police would have to use noise meters to enforce the noise limit. Assistant Police Chief Steve Wilske told a Seattle City Council committee meeting on June 13 that isn't practical and officers don't carry noise meters anyway.</p> <p>As a result, Herbold sponsored an amendment to the noise ordinance that would make it easier for police officers to cite people with excessively loud exhausts on cars and motorcycles. Under the amendment, officers would only have to hear the car from 75 feet away to issue an infraction. The 75-foot rule is already used to cite noise from sound systems.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 Greece: unruly protest w/Macedonia deal
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/protest-macedonia-deal-unruly-greece-56129272?
GIST	<p>Over 5,000 people demonstrated in Greece's second-largest city against a deal with Macedonia that seeks to end nearly 27 years of disagreement between the two countries over Macedonia's name.</p> <p>The protesters marched toward the Macedonian consulate in Thessaloniki and then the offices of the two partners in Greece's coalition government, Syriza and the Independent Greeks, on Sunday.</p> <p>Outside the party offices, protesters threw bottles and chairs. Police responded with tear gas and stun grenades to beat back the crowd. No injuries were reported and police say there were no arrests.</p> <p>Nationalists in both countries oppose the deal that would rename Greece's neighbor North Macedonia and allow the Greek province of Macedonia to still use that name.</p> <p>In return, Greece would withdraw its objections to the country joining NATO and the European Union.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/25 Nigeria: 'deeply unfortunate killings'
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/nigeria-deeply-unfortunate-killings-86-reported-dead-56134531?
GIST	<p>Scores are dead after vicious weekend clashes in central Nigeria between mostly Muslim herders and Christian farmers, with one report citing police as saying 86 people were killed.</p>

	<p>President Muhammadu Buhari appealed for calm after the "deeply unfortunate killings across a number of communities" in central Plateau State as the military and police tried to end the bloodshed, saying "no efforts will be spared" to find the attackers and prevent reprisal attacks.</p> <p>Nigeria's government has not announced a death toll. The independent Channels Television cited a Plateau State police spokesman, Mathias Tyopev, as saying 86 people had been killed, with at least 50 houses destroyed.</p> <p>Dramatic footage from Jos showed angry people holding machetes and sticks and shouting at passing security forces as they weaved around overturned and burning vehicles. Smoke rose in the distance. Women and children clutching overstuffed bags piled into the back of trucks, seeking a way out.</p> <p>"Please remain calm," said the Plateau State governor, Simon Bako Lalong, as a helicopter whirred overhead. "It is very, very, unfortunate that an incident is happening again like this."</p> <p>Deadly clashes between herders and farmers in central Nigeria are a growing security concern in Africa's most populous country, which is roughly split between Muslims in the north and Christians in the south.</p> <p>The fighting between herders and farmers by some accounts has been deadlier than Nigeria's Boko Haram extremist insurgency, which continues to carry out attacks in the northeast.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 Teen hospitalized in Everett shooting
SOURCE	https://q13fox.com/2018/06/24/teen-hospitalized-after-shooting-in-everett/
GIST	<p>EVERETT, Wash. — A teenager was taken to the hospital early Sunday after he was shot at the Eastmont Park and Ride, according to Everett police.</p> <p>At about 12:45 a.m., officers responded to the 2000 block of El Capitan Way. Officials said shots had been fired after a fight broke out among a group of teenagers.</p> <p>A 17-year-old boy was transported to Providence Regional Medical Center in Everett.</p> <p>No information on the teen's condition has been released, but his injuries are believed to be non-life threatening.</p> <p>Earlier in the night, officers shut down a house party on the 1900 block of 122nd Street Southeast. According to police, roughly 150 people were inside the home at the time.</p> <p>It's believed that the group of people discovered at the park & ride location had attended the house party.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/22 Slow down, move over or pay \$214
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/slow-down-move-over-or-pay-214-troopers-say
GIST	<p>Washington State Patrol says slow down and move over when you see their flashing lights or work zones - or get ready to pay. This weekend, troopers are looking for drivers who don't follow the state's 'Move Over' law.</p> <p>"Get over as soon as you can, don't wait til the last minute and if you can't, that's where that other part comes in. Slow down," said WA State Patrol Trooper Chase Van Cleave.</p> <p>"We don't have eyes in the back of our heads to watch for all of the cars that are passing by us. So we have to trust and hope that the motoring public around us is paying attention and following that law so that we</p>

	<p>don't get hit and hurt on that traffic stop," Van Cleave said.</p> <p>In the last three years, 32 troopers have been hurt and 86 patrol cars have been hit. State Trooper Chase Van Cleave says he's knows what it's like to be hit while trying to do his job.</p> <p>"The driver, for some reason or another, didn't see me, didn't slow down and ran right into the back of my patrol car while I was in it. Fortunately, I wasn't hurt too bad and they weren't hurt too bad."</p> <p>WSP suggests that drivers slow down at least 10 miles per hour when moving past a patrol car, emergency vehicle or a work zone.</p> <p>"We've had cars on the side of the road, with their lights on hit and have people say 'we didn't see the trooper's car.' So, it's really a safety thing," said Trooper Rick Johnson.</p> <p>It'll cost you \$214 if you get a ticket for not slowing down or moving over. And by law, the fine can't be reduced nor can the ticket be dismissed.</p> <p>Over 3,800 drivers were stopped by troopers last year for violating the 'Move Over' law.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 Migrants call for help; 57 get arrested
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2018/06/24/57-migrants-suffering-dehydration-arrested/728968002/
GIST	<p>PHOENIX — A group of 57 migrants struggling through 108-degree weather Friday were arrested, after crossing the border illegally, when one of the migrants called the Mexican police for help.</p> <p>According to a U.S. Customs and Border Protection statement, "Agents were alerted to the group's location" when one of the migrants called Sonora, Mexico's 911 center.</p> <p>"The callers stated they had crossed the border illegally, and requested assistance," the statement said.</p> <p>After an extensive search, agents located the migrants with "some in distress, including a pregnant female, west of Lukeville Friday afternoon."</p> <p>The group included 21 adults and 36 minors, 17 of which were unaccompanied minors. A 1-year-old child was also in the group. They came from Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, according to the report.</p> <p>Agents treated several people who "appeared to be dehydrated." A pregnant woman was taken to a nearby hospital.</p> <p>Migrants were provided food and water as border patrol agents transported them to the Ajo station to be processed.</p> <p>A zero-tolerance border policy remains in effect along the border. President Donald Trump's executive order signed on Wednesday said that parents and children would not be separated unless there is a concern that detaining the child with their parent "would pose a risk to the child's welfare."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 Mali villagers killed in 'cold blood'
SOURCE	https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-44594595
GIST	Traditional hunters have killed 32 civilians in an isolated village in central Mali, a local group says.

	<p>The hunters, known locally as "Dozo", surrounded the village in the Mopti region and separated members of the Fula ethnic group from the other villagers before killing them.</p> <p>Children were among the victims in Saturday's attack, an official said.</p> <p>There has been increasing violence between Fula, who are traditionally herders, and other ethnic groups.</p> <p>A further 10 people were missing from the village, near the town of Djenné, said Abel Aziz Diallo, president of Tabital Pulaaku, a Fulani association.</p> <p>"They surrounded the village, separated the Fula people from the others and killed at least 32 civilians in cold blood," he told AFP news agency.</p> <p>The Fula complain that they are being regularly targeted by traditional hunters in the name of the fight against jihadists. They accuse the Malian military of supporting such incidents.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 Ukraine: Roma camp attack, 1 dead
SOURCE	https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-44593995
GIST	<p>One person has been killed in an attack on a Roma camp in western Ukraine late on Saturday night.</p> <p>A masked group armed with batons and other weapons targeted the camp on the outskirts of the city of Lviv shortly before midnight, according to police.</p> <p>A 24-year-old man died of stab wounds, while four others - including a 10-year-old boy - were injured.</p> <p>It is the latest in a series of attacks on Ukraine's Roma community (also known as gypsies).</p> <p>Seven suspects aged 16 and 17 have been arrested, as well as a 20-year-old accused of planning the attack.</p> <p>Ukraine's national police force and Ministry of Internal Affairs have launched a criminal investigation into the "deliberate murder", which carries a penalty of up to 15 years in prison.</p> <p>Ukraine's Human Rights Commissioner Lyudmyla Denisova has asked the interior minister to personally oversee the investigation and to arrange temporary accommodation for the victims.</p> <p>In April, the far-right group C14 burnt down tents in a Roma camp in the capital Kiev and chased women and children.</p> <p>The last Ukrainian census in 2001 estimated the Roma population to be around 40,000, although rights groups say the figure could be as high as 260,000.</p> <p>The Roma face discrimination in many countries, with the UN describing them as being "among Europe's most excluded groups".</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 Man charged in killings, defends ISIS
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/man-charged-in-nyc-bike-path-killings-invokes-allah-and-defends-isis-in-court/
GIST	NEW YORK -- The man charged with murdering eight people on a New York City bike path and injuring many more spoke out in court Friday over a prosecutor's objection, invoking "Allah" and defending the

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Sayfullo Saipov, 30, raised his hand to speak immediately after U.S. District Judge Vernon S. Broderick set an Oct. 7, 2019 date for the Uzbek immigrant's trial.

Earlier, he had pleaded not guilty through his lawyer to the latest indictment in the Oct. 31 truck attack near the World Trade Center. A prosecutor said the Justice Department will decide by the end of the summer whether to seek the death penalty against Saipov, who lived in Paterson, New Jersey, before the attack.

Speaking through an interpreter for about 10 minutes, Saipov said the decisions of a U.S. court were unimportant to him. He said he cared about "Allah" and the holy war being waged by ISIS.

At the prompting of Assistant U.S. Attorney Amanda Houle, Broderick interrupted Saipov to read him his rights, including that anything he said in court could be used against him.

"I understand you, but I'm not worried about that at all," Saipov said.

"So the Islamic State is not fighting for land, like some say, or like some say, for oil. They have one purpose, and they're fighting to impose Sharia (Islamic law) on earth," he said.

After Saipov spoke more, Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew Beaty interrupted him to object that the judge was letting Saipov make the kind of statement publicly that special restrictions placed on him in prison would otherwise prevent, including discussing "terrorist propaganda."

The judge said he believed Saipov was nearing the end of his remarks and let him finish before warning him that he was unlikely to let him speak out in court again in a similar manner. Saipov, though, would be given a chance to testify if his case proceeds to trial and, if convicted, could speak at sentencing.

Saipov thanked the judge for letting him speak but added at one point: "I don't accept this as my judge."

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HEADLINE	06/23 Violence claims more lives Nicaragua
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/violence-claims-lives-nicaragua-amid-protests-56113563?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>A fresh wave of violence claimed at least seven lives in Nicaragua as international criticism mounted against the government of President Daniel Ortega over its response to protests.</p> <p>The attacks began Friday evening, hours after the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights presented a report signaling the Nicaraguan government as having violated human rights during the protests, which started in mid-April and have been met by a heavy-handed crackdown by security forces and allied civilian groups.</p> <p>Opposition and civic groups called off a march planned for Saturday afternoon to honor those killed in recent protests. The organizers said they wanted to avoid further bloodshed. Saturday is also Father's Day in Nicaragua.</p> <p>Protesters are calling for Ortega's ouster and opposition groups want presidential elections to be moved up by two years, to 2019. Nicaragua has no term limits. Ortega has yet to respond to the demand for early elections.</p> <p>The Roman Catholic Church is mediating talks between opposition groups and the government, and Nicaraguan bishops have called for discussions to resume on Monday.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/24 San Diego: suspect shoots 2 officers
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/suspect-dead-officers-hospitalized-san-diego-shooting/story?id=56118147
GIST	<p>Two San Diego police officers were shot late Saturday and hospitalized responding to an incident they first thought may be an apartment fire.</p> <p>The suspect who allegedly shot the two officers was pronounced dead at the scene. His identity is not yet known.</p> <p>One officer was last reported in stable condition and the other was in serious but stable condition, police said.</p> <p>When police first arrived on scene, they observed and smelled what appeared to be a fire and called the fire department. When authorities tried to open the door to the apartment, they were met with gunfire. One officer shot back.</p> <p>The firefighter attempting to enter the structure along with the police officers ended up in an adjoining apartment, out of the way of the shooter, authorities said. The firefighter was extracted from that apartment by a SWAT team and didn't suffer any significant injuries.</p> <p>Police said they don't know what type of weapon the suspect used or whether he was wearing any type of body armor. Police have not yet entered the apartment and wouldn't confirm whether a robot was used to investigate.</p> <p>Authorities don't have a motive for the suspect at this time.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 Convicted cop-killer freed from jail
SOURCE	http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-met-jackie-wilson-bond-hearing-20180622-story.html
GIST	<p>Jackie Wilson, one of two brothers convicted in one of Chicago's most infamous cop killings, walked out of Cook County Jail on Friday, a free man for the first time in more than 36 years.</p> <p>The sudden freedom for Wilson, 57, came after Cook County Circuit Judge William Hooks ordered his release a few hours earlier. The judge had tossed out his murder conviction last week after finding that notorious ex-Chicago police Cmdr. Jon Burge and detectives under his command had physically coerced his confession.</p> <p>Saying nearly four decades in prison had aged Wilson "far beyond his chronological age," Hooks held Friday that he did not pose a danger to the community or a risk to flee — factors in whether he could be released.</p> <p>The judge also said special prosecutors "utterly failed" in their arguments to keep Wilson in jail, adding that they appeared to want him to view the case "through the lens of a court sitting in 1982 or 1988 without considering the revelations that have come to light over the last three decades."</p> <p>Scores of African-American men have accused Burge, who is white, and his colleagues of torturing or abusing them during the 1970s and 1980s at a South Side police station. The scandal has stained the city's reputation and cost taxpayers at least \$115 million so far in lawsuit settlements, judgments and other compensation to victims.</p> <p>Relatives of slain Officers Richard O'Brien and William Fahey left the Leighton Criminal Court Building without comment after Hooks' ruling. Special prosecutor Michael O'Rourke said they were understandably upset by the decision.</p>

	<p>Kevin Graham, president of the Chicago Fraternal Order of Police, who attended the hearing, called Hooks' ruling "disgraceful."</p> <p>"I'm very disappointed that a man that is responsible, who was at the scene, that has admitted to being there when two honored police officers of the Chicago Police Department were murdered, gunned down, and he walks out," Graham said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 Ex-Vatican diplomat convicted child porn
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/vatican-ex-diplomat-convicted-of-child-pornography-charges-1529766628?mod=hp_major_pos2
GIST	<p>ROME—A former Vatican diplomat to the U.S. was convicted of possessing and distributing child pornography and sentenced to five years' imprisonment, in the first such trial for that crime in Vatican City.</p> <p>The conviction of Msgr. Carlo Alberto Capella came on Saturday, only the second day of his trial, bringing the case to an exceptionally swift end by Vatican standards.</p> <p>The defendant had admitted to the charges in testimony the previous day, while suggesting that a personal crisis at the time of his actions mitigated his guilt.</p> <p>"My errors are clear, and also clear is the fact that they occurred in a period of fragility," Msgr. Capella told the court on Saturday. "I hope that this situation might be considered an incident in the course of my life as a priest, which I love more than ever."</p> <p>The Vatican said Msgr. Capella would be confined in Vatican City for the duration of his imprisonment. Since his arrest in April, he had been held in a cell in the barracks of the Vatican's gendarmerie.</p> <p>The former diplomat was also ordered to pay a fine of €5,000 (about \$5,800). Prosecutors had asked the three-judge panel to sentence him to five years and nine months, and a fine of €10,000.</p> <p>The court noted that the relatively heavy sentence reflected the "considerable quantity" of pornographic material involved. On Friday, an official of the Vatican's gendarmerie testified that he had found or recovered more than 40 child pornography images, including depictions of sexual contact between adults and prepubescent children, on the defendant's mobile phone.</p> <p>It wasn't clear whether the monsignor would appeal his sentence. His lawyer, Roberto Borgogno, didn't immediately reply to a request for comment.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 Belgium's looted antiquities probe
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/belgium-investigates-brothers-in-possible-trafficking-of-looted-antiquities-from-syria-1529755201?mod=hp_major_pos1
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS—Belgian prosecutors say they are investigating whether two brothers trafficked antiquities that had been taken from Syria, escalating Belgium's role in an international probe into the prominent dealers of ancient art.</p> <p>Law enforcement and intelligence officials in the U.S. and elsewhere say antiquities have been looted from war-torn Syria and Iraq on a massive scale. But investigations demand patience, they say, because such artifacts take time to surface and confirming objects' provenance can be difficult.</p>

In January 2016, Belgian customs authorities seized two bas-reliefs sent by Phoenix Ancient Art SA to the Brussels Antiques & Fine Art Fair, or Brafa, according to the fair's spokesman. The investigation begun by customs has since been taken up by Belgian prosecutors.

A spokesman for Belgium's federal prosecution service said recently it was investigating two brothers, identified only as Ali A. and Hicham A. under rules barring prosecutors from releasing suspects' full names unless charges are laid.

"It's an ongoing investigation in close cooperation with Swiss authorities about the export of illegally obtained artifacts from Syria," said the spokesman, Eric Van Der Sypt, adding Belgium's effort was part of a Swiss prosecutors' larger investigation.

A Belgian official familiar with the matter said the probe centers on Ali and Hicham Aboutaam, two pre-eminent antiquities dealers who manage Phoenix Ancient Art, according to the company's website.

Neither man has been charged with wrongdoing in the investigations.

A spokesman at Geneva's public prosecutor, asked to confirm whether Swiss prosecutors were investigating Phoenix Ancient Art, said the office was "conducting a procedure for suspicion of concealment and violations of the Federal Law on the International Transfer of Cultural Property." That law is used in Switzerland to prosecute cases of alleged art trafficking. The spokesman declined to specifically name the subject of the investigation or to answer further questions.

The Wall Street Journal reported in May 2017 that Swiss, French and Belgian authorities were looking into whether the brothers had handled Syrian and Iraqi objects looted under the auspices of the extremist group Islamic State.

Didier Bottge, a lawyer acting for the Geneva arm of Phoenix Ancient Art, said his client hadn't been contacted by Belgian authorities. He also said the Swiss "procedure" concerned the law on the international transfer of cultural property and a probe into value-added tax.

"My client formally denies being involved in 'Syrian art trafficking,'" he said in an email.

Richard Emery, a lawyer acting for Hicham Aboutaam, in March described reports of his client's alleged involvement with looted antiquities as containing "fake facts and implying wrongdoing where none exists" and said no authorities had contacted his client.

"My client remains anxious to cooperate with any investigators who contact him; none has," he said. He also said he couldn't corroborate information provided by the Journal about the Swiss and Belgian investigations. "The 'spokespersons' whom you cite will not confirm to us that they said what you say," he said.

The Belgian investigation is one of the first publicly acknowledged probes into allegations of art trafficking from current war zones. Separately, in an unrelated case, Spanish police in March said they were holding two Spanish citizens suspected of trading in antiquities from Libya looted by groups linked to Islamic State.

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HEADLINE	06/22 Fighting illegal wildlife trafficking w/dog
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/meet-benny-washingtons-newest-weapon-in-the-fight-against-illegal-wildlife-trafficking/
GIST	With his paws perched against towering stacks of furniture, Benny forced his snout between two Saudi Arabian sofas and found a piece of elephant ivory that his handler had hidden as part of a drill.

Smugglers trafficking in elephant ivory — one of the most common illegal animal products shipped to or through Washington — are no match for Benny, the state’s first wildlife detection dog. The sleek Labrador retriever’s strong sense of smell helps wildlife and U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers seize some of the illegally-trafficked animal products that pass through the state’s ports of entry.

The cargo in the warehouse along the Duwamish Waterway has not yet officially entered the United States. It’s stored here until it can be inspected for potential consumer safety threats, intellectual property concerns and wildlife-trafficking violations, according to Customs spokesman Jason Givens.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agriculture Specialists at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport discovered a variety of prohibited ivory products in the luggage of a husband and wife who arrived on a flight from the Philippines on May 11.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Detective Lauren Wendt, Benny’s handler, said a wildlife detection dog makes inspections significantly more efficient — and more fun.

“He’s a bright spot in my days,” she said.

Benny is certified in detecting elephant ivory, bear gallbladder, shark fin, firearms and spent casings, and will soon be certified to detect rhino horn. Wendt said pangolin — the most trafficked mammal in the world — may be the next addition to Benny’s resume.

Illegal wildlife trafficking is the fourth largest transnational organized crime in the world, and the U.S. is a prominent consumer in the black market of wildlife trade, according to the Department of State.

As a major port state, Washington annually sees approximately 5,000 wildlife shipments, both legal and illegal, according to John Goldman, who supervises U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service inspectors in the Pacific Northwest.

Goldman said he has seen a surge in illegally trafficked animal products used in “higher-quality” traditional Asian medicine, including protected species of sea horses, pangolin scales, bear gallbladders and pills and plasters made with leopard.

This rising demand is outgrowing Goldman’s five-person team.

“A growing affluence in Seattle, Vancouver, Canada and Portland has created a demand for wildlife products traded on a scale that our staff is challenged with,” Goldman said.

The federal wildlife inspection program relies on support from Customs and the state Department of Fish and Wildlife — and now, Benny’s well-trained nose.

The two-year-old dog stands tall as he sniffs up a stack of crates, before he dashes off to the next potential treasure site. Following Wendt’s hand, Benny weaves through pallets stacked with goods in a fraction of the time that it would take officers to go through the shipments.

When Benny hits on something, he pauses to give a more thorough sniff — as if to double- and triple-check — before sitting down to indicate a discovery to Wendt.

Sometimes, however, Benny struggles to control his excitement. “He’s a Lab, so he wants to put his mouth on everything,” Wendt said.

Wendt found Benny at a shelter in May 2017, and evaluated him as having a good foundation for a detection dog.

“You look for how willing he’d be to work for his toy or food,” Wendt said, noting that Benny is more motivated by toys than treats.

After finding a gun in a stack of crates, Benny sat facing the item he had been trained to identify.

Sitting still is difficult for the energetic dog, but Benny knows that it will lead to a game of tug-of-war with his handler. “It’s his paycheck, so to speak,” Wendt said.

During Benny’s initial training, Wendt hid a toy and a target wildlife product together and trained Benny to sit once he found both. She would eventually remove the toy, with his favorite orange ball only appearing once Benny sat down in front of the target. Their training games have since evolved and Benny now learns odors more quickly.

Wendt and Benny completed 220 hours of training to receive their detection canine certification in September. That included 80 hours of handler training for Wendt.

“The dogs usually pick it up fast. It’s usually the humans that need more training,” she said.

Washington voters overwhelmingly approved a law to criminalize the sale, purchase, and trade of 10 species — including elephants, lions, and tigers — in November 2015.

This was the first voter-approved wildlife trafficking law in the nation, with legislative and outreach efforts spearheaded by the Woodland Park Zoo, the Seattle Aquarium, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, Northwest Trek and the Humane Society of the United States — and bankrolled by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen’s \$2 million donation.

To enforce this new mandate, Wendt approached her agency with the idea of training the state’s first wildlife detection dog.

When Customs suspects illegal wildlife product in cargo — sometimes based on shipping paperwork or previous trafficking violations from a location — they can call on Benny and Wendt to make their rounds.

The pair mostly searches imported household goods, but they also assist the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with inspecting known shipments of wildlife for illegal products. More than 39,000 African trophy animals — including 15 white rhinoceros and nearly 200 elephants — have been legally shipped through Seattle since 1999.

Benny can also search for firearms and spent ammunition in rural, forested areas, and has helped Seattle and Lakewood police search for firearms used in crimes unrelated to poaching.

Though he is state-owned, Benny serves both the state and federal wildlife agencies.

There are only seven federal wildlife detection dogs, based in major ports like Honolulu and Miami, according to Goldman. Approximately 25 other state agencies have wildlife detection canines, Wendt said.

Starting in 2019, the state Legislature will provide \$300,000 annually to the Department of Fish and Wildlife to hire two new enforcement officers who will focus on the trafficking of exotic and native species and to fund other efforts, such as training more dogs like Benny, according to the agency’s legislative liaison Raquel Crosier.

Washington’s most trafficked wildlife products include geoduck, sea cucumber, sturgeon eggs, bear gallbladders, and elk racks, according to Kerston Swartz, public affairs and advocacy manager at the Woodland Park Zoo.

“We have a lot of native species that it’d be great to have a dog trained in,” Wendt said.

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HEADLINE	06/22 Arrested teen linked to Shoreline killing
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1027061/teen-arrested-by-seattle-police-linked-to-shoreline-killing/
GIST	<p>SHORELINE, Wash. (AP) — Authorities say a teenager arrested by Seattle police last weekend was responsible for a killing in Shoreline nine hours earlier.</p> <p>The King County Sheriff’s Office says the 17-year-old boy was arrested for unlawful gun possession, and that tests determined it to be the same weapon used to kill a 43-year-old man who was found in his vehicle.</p> <p>Investigators also say that phone records indicate the suspect and victim had contacted each other multiple times in the days leading up to the death. The records show that the victim anticipated having a lot of money that day, and surveillance video show a male running from the victim’s car with a large black backpack.</p> <p>The teen has been booked for investigation of first-degree murder, robbery and a weapons charge.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 Arrests: Seattle protesters block streets
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1028089/7-arrested-protest-traffic-seattle/
GIST	<p>Officers with the Seattle Police Department arrested seven protesters, five women and two men, for refusing to leave the intersection at 6th and Pike in downtown Seattle during a protest for the ‘Poor People’s Campaign’ on Saturday.</p> <p>Saturday’s protest in Seattle was in accordance with the Poor People’s Campaign National March in Washington, D.C.</p> <p>According to a statement on the Poor People’s Campaign website, the protests on Saturday were because:</p> <p>“In the face of systemic racism, systemic poverty, ecological devastation, the war economy/militarism, and the distorted moral narrative of religious nationalism — we must engage in mass nonviolent moral direct action. We must declare that we won’t be silent anymore about the war on the poor!”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 India: anti-trafficking activists raped
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/23/asia/india-gang-rape/index.html
GIST	<p>New Delhi (CNN) — Six men have been accused of rape in connection with a gang rape this week of five female anti-trafficking workers in a village in eastern India, police told CNN on Saturday.</p> <p>Two of the six men have been arrested and charged, while police said they are looking for the other four. A man who helps run a school in the village also has been arrested and charged in connection with abetting the attack.</p> <p>Police said the attack took place Tuesday in Kochang village in Khunti district in the state of Jharkhand, the same region where two teens were raped and then set on fire last month.</p> <p>The anti-trafficking activists who were raped have been discharged from a hospital and are being kept in a safe house, police said. The women have been given police protection and trauma counseling.</p> <p>The five women were performing a street play with three men on the issue of human trafficking when armed men on bikes disrupted the performance.</p> <p>The performers were taken to a nearby forest, where the women were raped and men beaten up. They were</p>

	<p>released about three hours later, police said</p> <p>The attack is the latest high-profile rape case in India, which has been grappling with the scourge of sexual violence.</p> <p>Around 100 sexual assaults are reported to police in India every day, according to the National Crime Records Bureau. There were nearly 39,000 alleged attacks in 2016, an increase of 12% from the previous year.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/23 DNA on napkin cracks 32yr-old case
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/22/us/cold-case-killing-1986/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN) — DNA evidence from a discarded restaurant napkin was used to identify a suspect in the slaying of a 12-year-old girl in 1986, police in Tacoma, Washington, said Friday.</p> <p>Gary Hartman, 66, was arrested Wednesday and has been charged with murder in the first degree and rape in the first degree, Tacoma Police Chief Don Ramsdell said at a news conference about the cold case. Hartman will be arraigned on Monday.</p> <p>CNN has not been able to determine whether Hartman has a lawyer. He's being held in the Pierce County Jail after a judge set bail at \$5 million.</p> <p>Police say Michella Welch and her two younger sisters went to Puget Park on March 26, 1986. About 11 a.m. Michella rode a bicycle home to get lunch. While she was gone, the sisters went to a business to use the restroom, Ramsdell said.</p> <p>When they returned, they didn't see Michella and continued to play in a gulch until 2 p.m., when they noticed the bicycle and lunch at the spot where they were supposed to meet for a picnic, the chief said. The girls notified their regular baby sitter, who contacted the girls' mother. Police were called and a search began.</p> <p>"A search dog found Michella's body just before 11 p.m. that night in an isolated area in the gulch, more than a quarter mile away from the play area," Ramsdell said. "Michella had been sexually assaulted and murdered."</p> <p>Police collected evidence but did not make any arrests. In August 1986, Jennifer Bastian, 13, was killed. At first, police thought the two killings were related, said Ramsdell, who was a young Tacoma police officer at the time.</p> <p>"The murders of Michella Welch and Jennifer Bastian stunned our community and were among the main reasons we formed a cold case team," Pierce County Prosecutor Mark Lindquist said, according to CNN affiliate KOMO.</p> <p>Police developed a male DNA profile from crime scene evidence, but found no match in state and national databases. In 2016, police began working with a genetic genealogist.</p> <p>"Genetic genealogy uses a DNA technology to identify subjects by matching the unknown profile to a family member," Ramsdell said. "Traditional genealogy is then used to build a family tree from publicly available websites."</p> <p>Two brothers were identified as possible suspects and surveillance began, Ramsdell said. That included Detective Steve Reopelle following Gary Hartman into a restaurant when he met a co-worker for coffee, Ramsdell said.</p>

	<p>"I observed him using the napkin multiple times," Reopelle said. "He crumpled it up, put it into a bag and then crumpled that bag up and voluntarily abandoned that bag as he left the restaurant."</p> <p>The napkin was collected and sent to the Washington State Patrol Crime Laboratory. On Tuesday, the lab told police the DNA on the napkin matched DNA found at the crime scene, Ramsdell said. On Wednesday, police made a traffic stop and took Hartman into custody.</p> <p>KOMO reported that Hartman worked for the state Department of Social & Health Services as a registered nurse. He has worked at Western State Hospital as a community nurse specialist, KOMO said.</p> <p>The DNA inquiry told police that Jennifer Bastian and Michella Welch were killed by different people. Last May, police used DNA evidence to arrest Robert D. Washburn, 60, and charge him with murder in that case, KOMO reported. He has pleaded not guilty.</p>
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Date: Sun, 24 Jun 2018 15:43:28 +0000
From: promed@promedmail.org
Subject: PRO/EDR> Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (23): Saudi Arabia
To: promed-post@promedmail.org, promed-edr-post@promedmail.org
Message-ID:
<010001643276dd39-eb213898-49c1-425e-bfab-b0693f939d04-000000@email.amazonses.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=UTF-8

CHOLERA, DIARRHEA AND DYSENTERY UPDATE (23): SAUDI ARABIA

A ProMED-mail post
<<http://www.promedmail.org>>
ProMED-mail is a program of the
International Society for Infectious Diseases
<<http://www.isid.org>>

Date: Fri 22 Jun 2018
From: Abdullah Mufareh Assiri <abdullahm.asiri@moh.gov.sa> [edited]

Regarding PRO/EDR> Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (22): Asia (Yemen, Saudi Arabia), archive Number:
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180621.5868961>, we report the following

event:

On 20 Jun 2018, the public health administration of Jizan Health Directorate was informed of cases of diarrhea at an immigration center in the mountains of Bani Malik at the Saudi-Yemeni border. Field investigation revealed a total of 13 immigrants with acute diarrhea. Rapid *V. cholerae* O1/O139 tests were positive in all of them, and the confirmatory cultures are incubating.

The immigrants crossed the border illegally on 17 and 18 Jun 2018. The dates of onset were 19 and 20 Jun 2018. They were all males and ranged from 22-65 years of age. Six of them required IV hydration, while the others were managed onsite with ORS. They stayed in Yemen before crossing the border for at least a month at different locations. Epidemiological investigation and case management are ongoing. No further cases of diarrhea have been detected since 20 Jun 2018.

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Abdullah Mufareh Assiri
Assistant Deputy Minister for Preventive Health
IHR NFP Saudi Arabia
<abdullahm.asiri@moh.gov.sa>

[ProMED thanks Minister Assiri for this information. - Mod.LL

HealthMap/ProMED-mail map:
Saudi Arabia: <<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/131>>]

[See Also:
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (22): Asia (Yemen, Saudi Arabia)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180621.5868961>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (21): Asia (Yemen)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180527.5822167>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (18): Asia (Yemen)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180426.5770331>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (16): Asia (Yemen) WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180407.5732129>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (14): Asia (Yemen) WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180325.5709980>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (09): Asia (Yemen) WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180225.5650229>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (08): Africa, Asia
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180222.5640697>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (07): Asia (Yemen) WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180218.5635589>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (05): Asia (Yemen) WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180129.5590987>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (03): Asia (Yemen), WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180118.5567863>
2017

Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (137): Asia (Yemen)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171227.5523714>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (135): Asia (Yemen)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171216.5505525>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (132): Asia (Yemen)

<http://promedmail.org/post/20171203.5479519>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (130): Asia (Yemen)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171117.5449946>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (129): Asia (Yemen)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171108.5431389>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (127): Asia (Yemen), WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171102.5420642>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (126): Asia (Yemen) abating
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171101.5417970>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (124): Asia (Yemen)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171030.5413552>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (123): Asia (Yemen)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171026.5406304>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (122): Asia (Syria)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171021.5394037>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (119): Asia (Yemen)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171017.5386166>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (117): Asia (Yemen)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171012.5376937>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (115): Asia (Yemen) RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171011.5370355>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (113): Asia (Yemen)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171008.5367259>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (112): Asia (Yemen)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171005.5362174>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (110): Asia (Yemen)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171003.5358048>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (108): Asia (Yemen)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171001.5353253>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (106): Asia (Yemen) new record
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170928.5346529>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (105): Asia (Yemen)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170927.5344436>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (103): Asia (Yemen)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170925.5340052>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (101): Asia (Yemen)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170921.5332159>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (100): Asia (Yemen)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170919.5326212>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (97): Asia (Yemen)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170913.5313668>
Cholera, diarrhea & dysentery update (96): Asia (Saudi Arabia)
expatriates <http://promedmail.org/post/20170912.5312211>
.....ll/msp/mpp

Message: 2
Date: Sun, 24 Jun 2018 15:49:21 +0000
From: promed@promedmail.org
Subject: PRO/AH/EDR> Besnoitiosis, equids - Spain: Besnoitia bennetti,
1stserological evidence
To: promed-post@promedmail.org, promed-edr-post@promedmail.org,
promed-ahead-post@promedmail.org
Message-ID:
<01000164327c4030-cf03fd1d-0a74-4ab4-9421-035d4eec4c28-000000@email.amazonses.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=UTF-8

BESNOITIOSIS, EQUIDS - SPAIN: BESNOITIA BENNETTI, FIRST SEROLOGICAL EVIDENCE

A ProMED-mail post

<<http://www.promedmail.org>>

ProMED-mail is a program of the
International Society for Infectious Diseases

<<http://www.isid.org>>

Date: Fri 22 Jun 2018

Source: The Horse [edited]

<<https://thehorse.com/158874/spanish-equids-test-positive-for-antibodies-against-besnoitia/>>

Spanish researchers have found subclinical (not causing signs of disease) besnoitiosis, a chronic and debilitating illness caused by a protozoan parasite mostly found in the Americas, in a "surprising" number of randomly screened equids in southern Spain. And while the animals aren't yet showing signs of disease, scientists believe clinical cases could soon occur in Europe.

"In the near future, new clinical cases could be expected to be reported (in Europe)," said Gema ?lvarez-Garc?a, PhD, of the Animal Health Department in the Complutense University Faculty of Veterinary Sciences, in Madrid. "Surveillance should be implemented, and harmonized diagnostic procedures and standardized techniques are needed in order to get comparable results and infer reliable conclusions."

?lvarez-Garc?a and her fellow researchers tested blood samples from 553 horses, 85 donkeys, and 83 mules across Andalusia, which is home to more equids than any other region in Spain. They tested the animals for antibodies against *Besnoitia bennetti*, a single-cell protozoan that creates cysts. They also tested for 2 other cyst-generating protozoan species: *Sarcocystis neurona* and *Neospora hughesi*, which are responsible for causing equine protozoal myeloencephalitis (EPM). These protozoa are abundant in North, South, and Central America but have historically been rare [in] other parts of the world.

They found that 7.1 percent of the tested equids were positive for the presence of antibodies against *Besnoitia*. Furthermore, 6.4 percent of the animals were positive for *Neospora* antibodies and 2.8 percent for *Sarcocystis* antibodies, ?lvarez-Garc?a said. Although the animals didn't show clinical signs of disease, the positive results indicate that the animals had been exposed to the pathogens at some point.

"We were surprised concerning the number of seropositive animals detected," she said. "We reported 51 seropositive animals among 721 animals tested. This result contrasts to other previous epidemiological studies carried out in our country in other ungulate species, such as wild ruminant species, where clinical cases are known to occur, and only 2 seropositive animals were found among 4893

animals sampled."

Certain subspecies of *Besnoitia* have been affecting cattle and wild ruminants in Europe for years, she said. But those subspecies are not the kind that usually affect horses, donkeys, mules, and zebras.

In the U.S., besnoitiosis is an emerging equine disease that principally affects donkeys. However, it's important to note that it's not limited to donkeys, *Ivarez-Garc?a* said.

"The disease has been reported in different equid species, such as donkey, horse, mule, and zebra," she said. "However, the clinical disease has been more frequently diagnosed in donkeys."

In their study, they found more positives in the donkey and mule population than in the horse population, she added. But that doesn't mean these equids are more susceptible to the disease. It could be related to how donkeys and mules are managed compared to horses.

The only known case of besnoitiosis in a European equid occurred in a horse in northern France in 1922. However, scientists suspected the disease in a herd of donkeys in more recent years in southern Spain, *Ivarez-Garc?a* said.

Researchers have not yet determined the origin of the protozoa's presence in Europe, but they have theories. "There are 2 feasible explanations," she said. "Animal trade from areas where the disease is endemic or scattered cases from a ruminant species origin (as whether *Besnoitia* species infecting ruminants can also infect equids and vice versa remains to be elucidated)."

The percentages revealed in the study underscore a need for scientists and veterinarians to be more aware of the pathogen and its disease risks in Europe, said *Ivarez-Garc?a*.

"As it happened with bovine besnoitiosis in the past, the disease might be underestimated, taking into account that there is a suspicion of the presence of the disease (at least in our country) and that skin lesions associated with this parasitic disease might be confused with other skin diseases," she said.

"Thus, our recommendation is to carry out surveillance of this parasitic disease by including equine besnoitiosis in the differential diagnosis of skin diseases and conducting serosurveys (blood screenings) at least in those countries where bovine besnoitiosis is present, since it is not known whether this species might infect equids," *Ivarez-Garc?a* said. "Surveillance might help to detect clinical cases that are needed to isolate and genotype the parasite in order to clarify the numerous epidemiological gaps."

The study, "A serosurvey of selected cystogenic coccidia in Spanish equids: first detection of anti-*Besnoitia* spp. specific antibodies in Europe," was published in *BMC Veterinary Research* [see commentary].

[Byline: Christa Lest?-Lasserre]

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Communicated by:
ProMED-mail
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[The paper discussed (Ref 1) was published in BMC Veterinary Research on 10 May 2017 (received 13 Feb 2017, accepted 4 May 2017). The abstract and conclusions follow:

1. Abstract

"Equine besnoitiosis, caused by *Besnoitia bennetti*, and equine protozoal myeloencephalitis (EPM), caused by *Sarcocystis neurona* and *Neospora hughesi* are relevant equine diseases in the Americas that have been scarcely studied in Europe. Thus, a serosurvey of these cystogenic coccidia was carried out in Southern Spain. A cross-sectional study was performed and serum samples from horses (n = 553), donkeys (n = 85) and mules (n = 83) were included. An in-house enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) was employed to identify a *Besnoitia* spp. infection and positive results were confirmed by an a posteriori western blot. For *Neospora* spp. and *Sarcocystis* spp., infections were detected using in-house ELISAs based on the parasite surface antigens *N. hughesi* rNhSAG1 and *S. neurona* rSnSAG2/3/4. Risk factors associated with these protozoan infections were also investigated."

2. Conclusions

"This study was the 1st extensive serosurvey of *Besnoitia* spp. infection in European equids accomplished by 2 complementary tests and gives evidence of the presence of specific antibodies in these populations. However, the origin of the infection is still unclear. Further parasite detection and molecular genotyping are needed to identify the causative *Besnoitia* and *Neospora* species. Finally, cross-reactions with antibodies directed against other species of *Sarcocystis* might explain the positive reactions against the *S. neurona* antigens."

Clinical signs and lesions caused by *B. bennetti* in donkeys in the USA, are described in references 2 and 3.

Two cases of besnoitiosis in European donkeys, of which one showed clinical signs, suspected to be caused by *B. bennetti*, have been described in a short communication published in 2016 by Belgian and French authors (Ref 4). The short communication follows:

"A 2-year-old male donkey was purchased in May 2016 in poor body condition (cachexia, alopecic areas, pruritus, dirty hair) by the present owner in Le Roeulx (Belgium) from a donkey farm aimed at milk production in Frasnés-lez-Buissenaal (Belgium). Shortly after its purchase, the donkey was shorn and showed crusts, and hyperkeratosis with no other clinical signs except anorexia and cachexia. A treatment with phoxim was given without improvement; a cutaneous biopsy of hyperkeratotic skin was performed in July [2016] and showed a perivascular eosinophilic infiltrate with a large thick walled cyst located in the dermis. The cyst was filled with numerous bradyzoites. This was highly suggestive of besnoitiosis. A daily treatment based on sulfamethaxazole and trimethoprim was given orally and some improvement

was noticed. Further clinical examination performed on August [2016] highlighted scleral pin-head sized cysts in right eye and between nares. Haematologic evaluation was unremarkable. Several skin biopsy samples were obtained for qPCR analysis and confirmed the presence of *Besnoitia* spp.'s DNA. Another 10-year-old female donkey purchased in France and sharing the same accommodation showed a good clinical condition. Punch-biopsy and haematology were realized on July [2016] but were unremarkable. A deepest clinical examination on August [2016] in this 2nd animal showed the presence of cysts on the inner face of upper labial mucosa. Further laboratory diagnosis tests are in progress through sera (Western Blot) and rDNA sequencing to confirm *Besnoitia bennetti* aetiology. To the authors' knowledge, this is the 1st detection of *B. bennetti* in donkeys in Europe."

Clinical expression of *B. bennetti* in horses is yet to be demonstrated.

References

1. Gutiérrez-Expósito D, García-Bocanegra I, Howe DK. A serosurvey of selected cystogenic coccidia in Spanish equids: first detection of anti-*Besnoitia* spp. specific antibodies in Europe. *BMC Veterinary Research*, 2017, Volume 13, Number 1, Page 1
2. Ness SL, Schares G, Peters-Kennedy J, Mittel LD, Dubey JP, Bowman DD, Mohammed HO, Divers TJ. Serological diagnosis of *Besnoitia bennetti* infection in donkeys (*Equus asinus*). *J Vet Diagn Investig*. 2014;26:778-82. <<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1040638714550180>>.
3. Dubey JP, Sreekumar C, Donovan T, Rozmanec M, Rosenthal BM, Vianna MC, Davis WP, Belden JS. Redescription of *Besnoitia bennetti* (protozoa: Apicomplexa) from the donkey (*Equus asinus*). *Int J Parasitol*. 2005;35:659-72. <<https://tinyurl.com/y9fadowc>>.
4. Caron Y, Vandenabeele S, Lienard E, Nabuco A, Tosi I, Vanvinckenroye C & Losson B. First detection of *Besnoitia bennetti* (Protozoa: Apicomplexa) in donkey (*Equus asinus*) in Europe. (short communication). *Proceed. 3rd FARAH-Day, Faculty Vet Med University of Liege - Belgium*. 21 Oct 2016. p 30. <https://orbi.uliege.be/bitstream/2268/206122/1/proceedings_farah_day_2016_corrected.pdf>. - Mod.AS

HealthMap/ProMED-mail map:
Spain: <<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/43>>]

[See Also:
2015

Besnoitiosis, bovine - Germany: spread susp, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20150729.3543983>
Besnoitiosis, bovine - Ireland: 1st case
<http://promedmail.org/post/20150722.3529378>
Besnoitiosis, bovine - Namibia: (OW)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20150502.3336953>
2012

Besnoitiosis, bovine - Switzerland: 1st case
<http://promedmail.org/post/20120707.1193311>
2010

Besnoitiosis, bovine - Europe: emerging
<http://promedmail.org/post/20100215.0530>
.....sb/arn/msp/mpp

Message: 3
Date: Sun, 24 Jun 2018 15:55:39 +0000
From: promed@promedmail.org
Subject: PRO/EDR> Measles update (38): Americas, Europe, Pacific
To: promed-post@promedmail.org, promed-edr-post@promedmail.org
Message-ID:
<0100016432820546-afe93a8e-8057-40c2-81ef-2eeb644b1f8f-000000@email.amazonses.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=UTF-8

MEASLES UPDATE (38): AMERICAS, EUROPE, PACIFIC

A ProMED-mail post
<<http://www.promedmail.org>>
ProMED-mail is a program of the
International Society for Infectious Diseases
<<http://www.isid.org>>

In this update:
Americas

- [1] USA (Michigan)
[2] USA (New Jersey)
[3] Venezuela

Europe

- [4] Slovakia
[5] France
[6] England (Croydon)
[7] England: warning

Pacific

- [8] New Zealand
[9] Borneo

[1] USA (Michigan)
Date: 21 Jun 2018
Source: WNEM (CBS) [edited]
<<http://www.wnem.com/story/38478869/measles-case-confirmed-in-mi-travelers-could-have-been-exposed>>

A 2nd case of measles has been confirmed in Michigan for 2018, and if you traveled lately, you may have been exposed.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) said this

case is unrelated to Michigan's 1st, which occurred in March 2018. Both are the result of exposure outside of the country and may have exposed other travelers.

The ill individual arrived on 12 Jun 2018 at around 3:45 p.m. at Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport (DTW) at the international arrivals area of the McNamara Terminal. That person was considered contagious at the time, and health officials are working to contact potentially exposed passengers from the flight.

In addition to the possibility of exposing people at the airport, the ill individual was also at locations listed in the URL above.

This year [2018], several countries in Europe are reporting significant measles outbreaks, including France, Italy, Germany, England, Romania, and Ukraine, among others. Recent outbreaks have also been reported in Venezuela, Colombia, and Brazil.

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Communicated by:
ProMED-mail from HealthMap Alerts
<promed@promedmail.org>

[A HealthMap/ProMED-mail map of the United States can be found at <<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/106>>.]

[2] USA (New Jersey)
Date: Fri 22 Jun 2018
Source: Fox29 [edited]
<<http://www.fox29.com/news/possible-measles-exposure-in-camden-and-burlington-counties-warn-nj-health-officials>>

A Mount Laurel, NJ person infected with measles was on walkabout in various areas. Anyone who visited the locations listed at the URL above may have been exposed to measles.

Virtua is currently contacting individuals who may have been exposed. The New Jersey Department of Health is working with health officials to notify anyone who may have been exposed.

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Communicated by:
ProMED-mail from HealthMap Alerts
<promed@promedmail.org>

[3] Venezuela
Date: Wed 20 Jun 2018
Source: Efecto Cocuyo [machine trans. edited]
<<http://efectococuyo.com/principales/suman-465-casos-de-sarampion-en-el-hospital-elias-toro-en-seis-meses/>>

Measles is being reported in the Dr. Elías Toro Hospital in Caracas.

Since the recurrence of the disease in 2017 until mid-June of this year [2018], pediatric center specialists have confirmed 465 cases in total.

The records were released by the infectious disease specialist Dr. Francisco Valery in the framework of the XIII Congress of Infectology, celebrated this Wed 20 Jun 2018. The specialist pointed out that the death of a child was recorded by the viral infection, and that of the total confirmed cases, 37% had to be hospitalized in the Elías Toro [hospital] after presenting respiratory complications.

Of 465 cases, 170 were hospitalized, and 295 were treated on an outpatient basis," The Galen explained. 144 patients in the hospitalized group had pneumonia, the most common complication of measles in children and the leading cause of death.

Valery added that cases of 9 adolescents with measles were also recorded.

"When vaccination coverage drops, cases of such diseases begin to appear," Valery explained.

Measles, a vaccine-preventable disease, reappeared in Venezuela 15 years after its eradication. In mid-September 2017, the Venezuelan Alliance for Health issued an alert after the confirmation of 8 cases of viral infection in Bolivar state between 22 Aug and 11 Sep 2017.

Since then, measles has expanded to various states in the country. According to the latest epidemiological bulletin published by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) dated 8 Jun 2018, Venezuela confirmed 1427 cases of viral disease, a figure with which it duplicates the number of cases reported throughout the year 2017, with 727 records.

The regional agency also revealed that 35 measles deaths were recorded at the national level, 33 of them in the Delta Amacuro state, where there is low vaccination coverage.

"The outbreak continues with active transmission in 17 states, and the Capital district reported confirmed cases. Since the confirmation of the 1st case of measles in SE 26 of 2017 and until SE 19 of 2018, 2154 cases of measles were confirmed," the alert indicates.

The bulletin indicates that the largest number of suspected cases of measles were reported in Bolivar state, followed by the capital district.

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Communicated by:
ProMED-mail from HealthMap Alerts
<promed@promedmail.org>

[A HealthMap/ProMED-mail map of Venezuela can be found at
<<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/29>.]

[4] Slovakia

Date: 20 Jun 2018

Source: The Slovak Spectator [edited]

<<https://tinyurl.com/yc6ee2t6>>

>>From the original source of infection, the village of Drahnov, the infected, who violated quarantine rules, have spread measles to other places. Six cases also involve medical staffers.

The number of patients sick with measles is still growing in the eastern Slovak area of lower Zemplin. By 14 Jun 2018, there were 38 cases of measles registered in the Michalovce and Sobrance districts, of which 17 are confirmed by laboratories, spokesperson of the Slovak Public Healthcare Office (?VZ) Dasa Rackova told the TASR newswire.

In Drahnov, there are 29 incidences, while in the villages of Falkusovce, Maovske Vojkovce, Trhoviste, Vysoka nad Uhom, Lozin and in the towns of Strazske and Michalovce, there is one case each, as well in the villages of Baskovce in the Sobrance District, and in the city of Kosice.

"A total of 33 patients were hospitalised, all with clinical symptoms but without serious complications," Rackova said, as quoted by TASR.

Of all the cases, 3 are imported, and 6 involve the medical staff of the Michalovce hospital. "All incidences have an epidemiological connection," Rackova added.

Most cases are registered with people aged 15-19 (13 cases), and the same number of patients are between 20 and 54 years of age. Twelve children between one and 14 years of age have been recorded as sick with the disease.

"The increase in measles' cases in eastern Slovakia, despite the ordered anti-epidemic measures, can be ascribed also to those sick coming from poor hygienic living conditions in the Michalovce District," Rackova explained, adding that patients from this community are not responsible enough to continue anti-epidemic measures. She also mentioned previous epidemics earlier recorded in these population groups in eastern Slovakia, the Sme daily wrote.

By the morning of 19 Jun 2018, 6 patients were hospitalised in the infectious diseases' ward of Michalovce hospital under suspicion of measles.

"So far, no serious complication in the course of the sickness has been recorded in patients," Jana Fedakova, of the Svet Zdravia company that operates the hospital, told Sme. She added that since the beginning of June 2018, 3 cases of measles have been confirmed in nurses working in the infectious diseases' ward. "All of them have recuperated from the sickness and returned to work," she mentioned, as cited by the daily. Two other nurses (one from radiology and the other from the paediatric ward) and a doctor of the infectious diseases' ward are awaiting the results of laboratory tests.

Fedakova pointed out that in the Michalovce hospital, strict measures are in effect to protect patients, as well as employees. So far, more than 600 medical staffers of the hospital have been vaccinated against measles, she told Sme.

They must receive mandatory vaccination, the Pravda daily wrote, or else take compulsory days off.

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Communicated by:
ProMED-mail
<promed@promedmail.org>

[A HealthMap/ProMED-mail map of Slovakia can be found at
<<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/114>>.]

[5] France 2018 and 2020
Date: Thu 21 Jun 2018
Source: Eurosurveillance [edited]
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.2807/1560-7917.ES.2018.23.25.1700796>>

G B?raud, S Abrams, P Beutels et al. Resurgence risk for measles, mumps and rubella in France in 2018 and 2020. Eurosurveillance 23, 1700796 (2018)

[Study] Conclusion: we estimated a persistent high resurgence risk for mumps and measles and a relatively lower risk for rubella. This risk varies by department and sex. In addition to young infants, primarily teenagers and young adults would be affected by these outbreaks. As part of the efforts to improve vaccination coverage, the public perception of measles, mumps and rubella as generally harmless diseases should be addressed to prevent future outbreaks of these vaccine-preventable diseases.

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Communicated by:
ProMED-mail
<promed@promedmail.org>

[A HealthMap/ProMED-mail map of France van be found at
<<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/100>>.]

[6] England (Croydon)
Date: Fri 22 Jun 2018
Source: Croydon Advertiser [edited]
<<https://www.croydonadvertiser.co.uk/news/croydon-news/huge-increase-measles-cases-croydon-1701182>>

There have been more than 20 cases of measles reported in Croydon since the start of the year [2018], a huge increase compared to last year.

Young people heading off on holiday to Europe, where there are large outbreaks of measles, are being encouraged to check whether they have had both MMR doses, as many missed out when vaccination rates dropped in the early 2000s due to unfounded fears over the vaccine.

>>From the start of the year 2018 up to 17 Jun 2018, 23 suspected cases of measles were reported to Public Health England (PHE) in Croydon. Cases across England and Wales have now exceeded 1500 in 2018.

The number of reports is 23 times higher than the one case reported in the same 24 weeks in 2017.

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Communicated by:
ProMED-mail from HealthMap Alerts
<promed@promedmail.org>

[A HealthMap/ProMED-mail map of England, United Kingdom can be found at <<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/279>>.]

[7] England warning
Date: Fri 22 Jun 2018
Source: Outbreak News Today [edited]
<<http://outbreaknewstoday.com/england-health-officials-advise-mmr-vaccine-europe-travel-measles-count-continues-rise-58059/>>

Health officials in England continue to report additional measles cases in the country this year [2018]. Between 1 Jan 2018 and 18 Jun 2018, there have been 643 laboratory confirmed measles cases in England.

Cases were reported in most areas, with London (225), the South-East (137), West Midlands (82), South-West (79), and Yorkshire and Humberside (74) reporting the most cases.

Cases of measles also continue to rise across England in unvaccinated young adults.

This and the measles outbreak in Europe has prompted them to encourage young adults to make sure they have had both doses of the MMR vaccine before going on holiday to Europe, where there are large outbreaks of measles.

While vaccine uptake levels in the UK in young children are currently very high, coverage levels dipped to a low of 80% in 2003. This means that there are significant numbers of unprotected teenagers and young adults who could catch measles both in Europe and in England, particularly in environments of close mixing such as summer festivals and when they travel abroad for the summer holidays.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that to prevent outbreaks of disease, 95% of people need to have received the MMR vaccine.

The vaccine is available free to anyone who has not received both doses as a child. It protects against measles, mumps and rubella, all of which can be very serious diseases and are highly infectious.

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Communicated by:
ProMED-mail Rapporteur Mary Marshall

[People in England should not only be sure they are vaccinated fully with the MMR vaccine when they go on holiday in Europe, but England itself is experiencing a rise in cases, so everyone should check their vaccination status whether traveling or not. - Mod.LK]

[8] New Zealand

Date: Wed 20 Jun 2018

Source: Fisher Business News [edited]

<<https://fisherbusinessnews.com/2018/06/20/got-the-measles-phone-your-doctor-stay-home/>>

Health authorities are urging anyone with measles symptoms to phone but not visit their family doctor. That comes as authorities warn that the latest measles outbreak now affects the entire South Island.

Two adults and a 13-month-old baby who were at Queenstown Airport on 22 Mar 2018 were [infected].

Canterbury Medical Officer of Health Ramon Pink said they were recovering well, but 2 new cases had now also been confirmed among men in their late 30s or early 40s in Nelson and Christchurch.

He said those people flew on flights around the South Island.

It's not known who the source was, but Dr Pink said they had identified the strain involved.

"What we do know is that Queenstown is an international airport, and we know that the strain of this particular measles virus has been also identified circulating in Australia. And so it's highly possible that someone who was unaware that they were infectious travelled to New Zealand, and because it is highly infectious, they could have infected people even just walking through and gathering for a period of time in an airport."

None of the 1st 3 was immunised with the MMR [measles, mumps and rubella] vaccine. Of the 2 latest cases, the one in Christchurch believed he was immunised but was unsure, and the Nelson man was partially immunised, with just one of the required 2 jabs. ...

Dr Pink said technology now enabled the strain of the measles to be identified relatively quickly.

Public health authorities were aware, therefore, that the strain involved in the 1st 3 confirmed cases was also identified in late March-early April 2018 in Australia.

"I understand this particular strain may have been introduced into Australia by a traveller from southeast Asia. It's not a new strain; it's a strain that we have seen before, but we certainly haven't seen it for some time." ...

There were more than 21 000 cases of measles in Europe last year [2017], including 35 deaths, according to information published by the World Health Organization.

Good health services in New Zealand limited the spread of such communicable diseases, which made it easy for people to become complacent about the potential impacts, he said.

"It can impact on our health services, and, therefore, it's a cost to everyone, physically, financially and socially."

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Communicated by:
ProMED-mail from HealthMap Alerts
<promed@promedmail.org>

[A HealthMap/ProMED-mail map of New Zealand can be found at
<<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/164>>.]

[9] Malaysia (Borneo)
Date: Sat 23 Jun 2018
Source: The Borneo Post [edited]
<<http://www.theborneopost.com/2018/06/23/health-dept-to-hold-supplementary-immunisation-against-measles/>>

The Health Department will carry out supplementary immunisation activity (SIA) in Bintulu starting on 2 Jul 2018, following a spike in measles cases there.

In a statement yesterday [22 Jun 2018], director Dr Jamilah Hashim said 84 cases tested positive for measles in Bintulu from January 2018 until 16 Jun 2018. In the same period last year [2017], no measles case was recorded.

"There are 11 areas identified as outbreak areas for measles in Bintulu Division, including housing estates, workers' settlements, and kindergartens. Because of this, the Sarawak State Health Department will implement the supplementary immunisation activity (SIA) to prevent occurrences of more measles cases. It will be conducted door to door from 8 am to 10 pm from Mondays to Sundays, including public holidays. The SIA is a preventive measure, which develops herd immunity against the spread of this disease. Children aged 6 months-15 years old in Bintulu will be screened. Parents are advised to give their fullest cooperation by preparing identity documents and health records of their children, including record of immunisation," she said.

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Communicated by:

ProMED-mail from HealthMap Alerts
<promed@promedmail.org>

[A HealthMap/ProMED-mail map of Malaysia (Borneo) can be found at
<<http://healthmap.org/r/1yAq>>.]

[See Also:

Measles update (37): Americas, Europe, Africa, Asia
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180621.5866860>
Measles update (36): Europe, South America, Africa
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180615.5858483>
Measles update (35): Europe, Americas, Asia
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180610.5848499>
Measles update (34): Europe, Asia, Pacific
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Measles update (31): Asia, Africa, Europe, Americas
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Measles update (28): Europe, Asia, Pacific, USA
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Measles update (27): South America, Asia, Europe, Africa, USA
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Measles update (25): Asia, Pacific, Africa, Middle East, Europe, USA
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comment <http://promedmail.org/post/20180409.5734358>
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Measles update (18): USA, Asia, Europe, South America, WHO, PAHO
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Measles update (17): Asia, Pacific, Africa, Europe
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180314.5684766>
Measles update (16): Asia & Pacific, Europe, South America
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Measles update (14): Europe, Asia and Pacific, USA
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180228.5655543>
Measles update (13): Europe (France), USA (TX)

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Measles update (12): Africa, Europe, North America, Pacific
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Measles update (11): Pacific, Europe, USA
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Measles update (10): Europe, Pacific, South America, USA
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Measles update (09): Europe, Caribbean, Central America
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http://promedmail.org/post/20180201.5600423
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End of ProMED Digest, Vol 72, Issue 85

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To: Larm, Doug <doug.larm@wsfc.wa.gov>
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: 2018_06_21 Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources
(InFOCUS)
Date: Thu Jun 21 2018 08:26:18 CDT
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Thursday

21 Jun 2018

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THURSDAY – 21 JUN 2018



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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	06/20 Improving safety King Co. courthouse?
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/could-ping-pong-food-trucks-improve-safety-around-king-county-courthouse/281-566123125
GIST	<p>People who fear for their safety around the King County Courthouse have found a sympathetic ear on the Seattle City Council.</p> <p>For the last year, courthouse staff has been sounding the alarm about assaults and hygiene problems outside the King County Courthouse in downtown Seattle.</p> <p>Seattle City Councilmember Sally Bagshaw has decided to take on the problem, and she believes some simple inexpensive changes are enough to fix it.</p> <p>Ping pong tables, outdoor seating, and food trucks at Westlake Park have made it more inviting. Similar changes led to similar improvements at Occidental Park in Pioneer Square.</p> <p>But near the King County Courthouse, would those same changes work at City Hall Park, better known as Muscatel Meadows?</p> <p>"This could be a place where we bring table and chairs like we did at Westlake and Occidental," Bagshaw said Wednesday.</p> <p>Bagshaw has been meeting with the police chief and the parks department to address the problem.</p> <p>"When there are places to be, and there's food, and they can sit, then [the park] gets activated and there's space for everybody," Bagshaw said.</p> <p>That space is shared with other populations, like the homeless and the mentally ill seeking help at the Downtown Emergency Service Center across the street, and all too often, a criminal element who seeks to take advantage of them.</p> <p>Seattle police responded to a stabbing last week, a shooting the week before, and as recently as Tuesday, three people were attacked. In an internal courthouse memo, a staff member reported she was "punched in the stomach," "a lawyer was also punched," and "an unnamed gentleman was 'body slammed'" by an unknown assailant.</p> <p>Bagshaw, a former prosecutor, has heard it all.</p> <p>"Their concern is around the safety of their employees and the jurors coming down," she said.</p> <p>Seattle police agreed to increase bike patrols and visibility near 3rd Avenue and James Street during peak commute hours.</p> <p>Critics argue so-called improvements could displace those who need the services in the area.</p> <p>"I'm not worried about displacement. What I'm looking at is inclusion," Bagshaw said.</p>

	<p>Bagshaw believes the proposed changes could be worked into the current budget and therefore do not need full council approval.</p> <p>The Seattle Police Department is already implemented its emphasis in the area, and Bagshaw expects more to come in the next month.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/21 Census: US less white, older, more urban
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-06-21/america-is-less-white-getting-older-and-more-urban-census
GIST	<p>The nation's over/under age demarcation line rose to 38.0 years, according to 2017 estimates released today from the U.S. Census Bureau. In 2000, the median age was 37.2 years.</p> <p>"Baby boomers, and millennials alike, are responsible for this trend in increased aging," said Molly Cromwell, a demographer at the U.S. Census Bureau. "Boomers continue to age and are slowly outnumbering children as the birth rate has declined steadily over the last decade."</p> <p>By 2035, Americans age 65 and older are forecast to outnumber kids for the first time.</p> <p>While the majority of counties in the U.S. continued to grow older, about half of the counties getting younger were in the Midwest. "Williams County, N.D., had the largest decrease in median age, declining by 7.1 years," Cromwell said.</p> <p>Increasing, the nation's population is living in metropolitan areas.</p> <p>Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, Arizona gained one spot to move ahead of San Francisco as the 11th largest metro area. In the buckeye state, Columbus moved ahead of Cleveland.</p> <p>New York led all states in domestic migration as over million people have left the state since April 1, 2010. From July, 1 2016 to July 1, 2017, 190,508 people left New York and 138,195 left California. But, California was net positive as 164,867 international migrants moved to the state. Net migration was negative in 14 states plus Puerto Rico last year.</p> <p>The populations in eight states plus Puerto Rico shrank in size last year.</p> <p>Diversity Trends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • America is becoming more diverse by race and ethnicity. Non-Hispanic whites are shrinking in population, while all other race and ethnic groups grew between July 1, 2016, and July 1, 2017. • Non-Hispanic white alone population decreased .02 percent to 197.8 million. • The non-Hispanic white alone population is projected to continue aging and decline in terms of size. • The Hispanic population increased 2.1 percent to 58.9 million, and made up 18.1 percent of the nation's total population in 2017. The gain was primarily due to natural increases (the difference between births and deaths), not net migration. • California had the largest Hispanic population at 15.5 million • More blacks or African-American moved to Clark County, Nevada, the county holding Las Vegas, than to any other county (14,000). • The black or African-American population increased 1.2 percent to 47.4 million. • The Asian population, the fastest-growing racial group in the nation, increased 3.1 percent to 22.2 million. Their increase is primarily due to net migration. • In Hawaii, Asian's represented a majority of the population

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HEADLINE	06/21 Threat of global trade war deepens
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-06-21/china-reiterates-pledge-to-respond-to-a-u-s-escalation-on-trade
GIST	<p>The global trade war deepened Thursday with China reiterating it will hit back if the latest tariff threats from Donald Trump materialize, while India followed the European Union in slapping retaliatory levies on U.S. goods.</p> <p>China is "fully prepared" to respond to any new list of U.S. tariffs, according to a commerce ministry spokesman, who said the nation will use a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures. Trump on Monday evening ordered up identification of \$200 billion in Chinese imports for additional tariffs of 10 percent -- with another \$200 billion after that if Beijing retaliates.</p> <p>India raised tariffs on a slew of items in retaliation for the U.S. imposing higher levies on some products shipped from the South Asian nation, echoing steps taken by China, the European Union and other trading partners. The import duty on chickpeas and bengal gram, or chana, has been increased to 70 percent and will take effect from Aug. 4.</p> <p>The benchmark Chinese stock index sank 1.4 percent on Thursday, falling for fifth day out of the last six, and other emerging markets also declined, while the dollar strengthened.</p> <p>"If protectionism cements its role in one or two big nations, we will see massive reallocation of resources in an inefficient way," said Raymond Yeung, chief greater China economist for Australia & New Zealand Banking Group Ltd. in Hong Kong. "World growth will be affected."</p> <p>The world's most-powerful central bankers this week warned that escalating international trade tensions have started damaging confidence among companies, threatening the global economic expansion.</p> <p>Case in point: Daimler AG late Wednesday slashed its earnings outlook for the year, saying fewer Chinese consumers will buy Mercedes-Benz SUVs because of tariffs Beijing is slapping on autos imported from the U.S.</p> <p>"Changes in trade policy could cause us to have to question the outlook," Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell said during a panel discussion at a European Central Bank conference in Sintra, Portugal. "For the first time, we're hearing about decisions to postpone investment, postpone hiring."</p> <p>The European Union this week triggered the first phase of retaliation against the U.S. over its metal-import tariffs imposed on national-security grounds, making good on more than three months of threats to hit American goods with tit-for-tat levies.</p> <p>Japan has reserved the right to respond too, although it hasn't yet. Canada's retaliatory measures begin on July 1, and Mexico and other nations have also announced they will respond.</p> <p>"The U.S. abuses tariffs to trigger trade wars everywhere around the globe and that will severely damage the world trade order, hurt the interests of trading partners, and also hurt its domestic companies and people," Ministry of Commerce spokesman Gao Feng said at a regular briefing in Beijing on Thursday. The U.S. "always use other nations as scapegoats for their own problems," he said.</p> <p>The Trump administration this week ratcheted up its accusations that China's trade and intellectual property practices are threatening U.S. economic interests. The two nations are locked in a worsening cycle of retaliation on trade, with no public sign that negotiations are still happening. Both sides have promised to impose tariffs early next month on billions of dollars in goods.</p>

	China had negotiated on agriculture and energy in early June and planned to negotiate on manufacturing and services, Gao said, adding that previous negotiations were in a “positive, constructive” manner.
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HEADLINE	06/20 Britain still tied in knots over Brexit
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/two-years-after-brexit-vote-british-leaders-still-tied-in-knots-over-how-to-leave-europe/2018/06/20/53af6192-73ce-11e8-bda1-18e53a448a14_story.html?utm_term=.d6bbe62bbd9c
GIST	<p>LONDON — It was two years ago this week that Britain voted in a historic referendum to leave the European Union. And by now, Brexit was supposed to be pretty far along, with “quick” negotiations starting to yield beautiful trade deals and the glimmer of independence.</p> <p>But this uncoupling is turning out to be far more difficult and acrimonious than promised.</p> <p>Nigel Farage, the politician, radio showman and arch-Brexiteer, tweeted a cartoon this week showing frustrated Britons, some with “Leave” buttons and others with “Remain” buttons, shouting as one, “For heaven’s sake, get on with it!”</p> <p>British leaders — both in the governing Conservative Party and the Labour Party opposition — apparently can’t get on with it, though, because they can’t agree what “it” is.</p> <p>A stubborn three-way divide over Brexit persists nine months before it is supposed to go into effect, between supporters of a hard, clean divorce with the European Union and a soft, fuzzy separation — followed by a third alternative, all those who want a do-over in a repeat referendum (these folks don’t want any Brexit at all).</p> <p>On Wednesday, Prime Minister Theresa May narrowly survived a crunch vote, fending off a second attempt by Westminster’s unelected second chamber, the House of Lords, to push through an amendment that would give Parliament the power — “a meaningful vote” is the term of art — to stop Brexit in the case that May and Brussels fail to ink a deal.</p> <p>May cheered the passage of an “E.U. withdrawal bill,” without the constraining amendment, as “an important step in delivering the Brexit people voted for, a Brexit that gives Britain a brighter future, a Britain in control of its money, laws and borders.”</p> <p>In a statement, she said that the day’s votes “show people in the UK, and to the EU, that the elected representatives in this country are getting on with the job, and delivering on the will of the British people.”</p> <p>Yet May hasn’t been able to get support from her own Cabinet on what a Brexit deal should look like, and she is oceans away from meeting the demands of the E.U.</p> <p>Next week, she is headed back to Brussels for what was previously billed as a make-or-break negotiating session with European leaders but will now be much less. Her team delayed the publication of a blueprint on the future U.K.-E.U. relations until July, or whenever, because her Cabinet cannot agree.</p> <p>European officials now say the Brexit deal is unlikely to be hammered out until October, maybe November — alternatively, before Christmas.</p> <p>Absent an agreement with the E.U. on commerce, defense, immigration, monetary and myriad other arrangements, Britain would be free of Europe, yes, but estranged from its largest trading and security partner.</p> <p>This “cliff-edge” Brexit remains a possibility.</p>

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HEADLINE	06/19 Is suicide preventable?
SOURCE	https://health.usnews.com/health-care/for-better/articles/2018-06-19/is-suicide-preventable
GIST	<p>A CHERISHED YOUNG friend and colleague took his life almost two weeks ago, the same week the world lost Kate Spade and Anthony Bourdain. About 120 lives are lost to suicide in the United States every day, sometimes involving brilliant accomplished people like these who had abundant empathy for others but couldn't find a way forward for themselves.</p> <p>My dear friend's family and friends and I tried our best to console ourselves that there was nothing more we could have done. I suspect most of us, like others who have lost loved ones to suicide, wondered silently if this was accurate. Surely there were countless things we could have done or done differently. We just don't know which one of those things might have made a difference. The question lingers unanswered for me, a practicing psychiatrist, as it does for everyone else.</p> <p>We know a great deal about risk factors for suicide such as mental health conditions; prior suicide attempts; a history of childhood trauma or combat trauma; being an older white male; relationship problems; legal problems; impending life crises such as eviction; and having access to lethal means such as firearms. However, we still know very little about prediction of suicide at the level of the individual precious life. In the search for clues, researchers continue to scour expansive electronic medical record databases, physiological recordings, blood markers, brain scans and tests of unconscious or implicit bias toward living or dying. It is a still a young science in urgent need of maturing.</p> <p>To call suicide an epidemic may be an overstatement, but rates of suicide have continued to rise in alarming ways. A report released earlier this month by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed that suicide rates in the U.S. rose by over 25 percent since 1999. Here and abroad, more people lose their lives to suicide than to homicide or war. In this country, suicide is one of the 10 leading causes of death. On that top 10 list, suicide is only one of three conditions whose rates continue to rise while deaths from other scourges, including cancer, heart disease, diabetes and kidney disease, have fortunately declined. While we wait for scientists and clinicians to develop more accurate ways to identify and help individuals at imminent risk of suicide, there's still a lot we can do.</p> <p>Enhance access to quality mental health services. In 2008, Congress passed the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act to ensure that insurance coverage for mental illness and addiction is comparable to coverage for other health conditions such as hypertension or asthma. Despite the crucial legislation, go try to find a mental health clinician who is in your insurance network, who has availability in their schedule, is affiliated with the center where you receive other care and who has expertise relevant to your problem. It's typically an overwhelming task even for those in good health; it's a potential disaster for those in crisis. We need to go beyond parity of coverage for mental health care to parity of access. Individuals, elected officials and advocacy groups need to press insurance companies to build truly adequate networks of available, quality providers as well as to encourage health systems to support outpatient, inpatient and urgent care services commensurate with the high need for such services. We must also do everything possible to inspire high school, college, graduate and professional students with the mission of devoting their careers to treatment and research related to mental illness and addiction in order to ensure a pipeline of talented and compassionate future leaders in the field of mental health.</p> <p>Promote resilience in schools and workplaces. An increasing range of psychotherapies, from dialectical behavior therapy to mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, offer a rich range of strategies to boost the ability to cope, problem solve and bounce back from adversity. The essential principles and skills at the heart of these approaches are increasingly adaptable to educational and work settings. Although few individuals have access to expert therapists, many individuals – probably most of us – can benefit simply from these basic practical skills and insights that contribute to well-being in a stressful world.</p> <p>Value connection. While isolation is often a consequence of mental illness or addiction, even in the</p>

absence of mental health problems, individuals in the 21st century can lead strikingly solitary lives. When feeling depleted, many of us choose "me time" when "we time" might replenish us more. When concerned about a friend or neighbor, our respect for privacy often overrides our inclination to help. While self-sufficiency has its place, a sturdy sense of community should be considered one of the essential pillars for mental health. We need to check in with one another on a regular basis and reach out to those who are struggling. Social engagement provides the necessary emotional, practical and sometimes spiritual support to get through hard times while introducing diverse perspectives that help broaden the tunnel vision that can accompany despair.

Support research. Death rates from cancer, heart disease and many infectious diseases such as HIV continue to fall, thanks in no small part to advances in biomedical science combined with growing understanding of the social determinants of health. Suicide remains a stubborn public health challenge we still need to get a better handle on. Research on suicide, and on related problems such as mood disorders, problem substance use and trauma, is a crucial part of this battle and needs philanthropic and federal support fully commensurate with the scope and urgency of the problem.

For today. Suicide is not yet fully preventable, but it's far from inevitable. We need to learn more – but we already know enough to begin to wipe suicide off the list of the top 10 leading causes of death. For starters, we can all reach out today to someone we're concerned about. Chances are he or she is not suicidal but will benefit from our caring.

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HEADLINE	06/21 Japan canceling missile evacuation drills
SOURCE	http://time.com/5318188/japan-cancel-north-korea-missile-drills/
GIST	<p>(TOKYO) — Japan plans to suspend the civilian evacuation drills it started last year while North Korea was repeatedly test-firing missiles near and over Japanese islands.</p> <p>Nine drills to prepare residents in Japan for possible missile attacks were to be held later this year.</p> <p>The Cabinet Secretariat in charge of crisis management said Thursday the official announcement of the suspension was underway and that recent diplomatic developments meant the prospect of strikes from North Korean missiles has subsided for now.</p> <p>North Korean leader Kim Jong Un promised at his summit with President Donald Trump to work toward a denuclearized Korean Peninsula.</p> <p>The planned suspension surfaced Thursday after officials in Tochigi prefecture confirmed a drill there next Tuesday had been called off at Tokyo's request.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/21 NKorea returns US soldiers' remains
SOURCE	http://time.com/5318121/president-trump-north-korea-war-soldiers-remains/
GIST	<p>North Korea repatriated the remains of 200 U.S. soldiers missing from the Korean War on Wednesday, according to President Trump, a week after the issue was raised at a landmark summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.</p> <p>"We got back our great fallen heroes, the remains sent back today, already 200 got sent back," Trump told a rally in Duluth, Minnesota Wednesday, according to Reuters.</p> <p>There was no official confirmation of the return from military sources, but anonymous U.S. officials said the previous day that North Korea was returning a "sizable number" of remains, which would be transported to Hawaii's Hickam Air Force Base, Reuters reports.</p>

	<p>In a press conference following a historic U.S.-North Korea summit in Singapore last week, Trump said that Kim agreed to return the remains of deceased American soldiers “quickly.” The recovery of war dead was also included in the agreement signed by the two leaders at the summit’s conclusion.</p> <p>Nearly 7,700 American military service-people are still unaccounted for from the Korean War, according to the Department of Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, of which approximately 5,300 are thought to be in North Korean territory. The war lasted from 1950 to 1953 and ended in an armistice rather than a permanent peace treaty.</p> <p>Between 1990 and 2005, North Korea returned 229 caskets containing the remains of American soldiers, and repatriated another six soldiers in 2007. In 2015, North Korea returned the remains of Robert V. Witt, an American soldier who was taken prisoner and died of malnutrition in Jan. 1951, after his identity was confirmed with DNA tests.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/21 Strain: retirees grow, workforce shrinks
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/retiring-baby-boomers-leave-the-u-s-with-fewer-workers-to-support-the-elderly-1529553660?mod=hp_lead_pos3
GIST	<p>The surge of retiring baby boomers is reshaping the U.S. into a country with fewer workers to support the elderly—a shift that will add to strains on retirement programs such as Social Security and sharpen the national debate on the role of immigration in the workforce.</p> <p>For most of the past few decades, the ratio of retiree-aged adults to those of working age barely budged. In 1980, there were 19 U.S. adults age 65 and over for every 100 Americans between 18 and 64, census figures show. That number—called the old-age dependency ratio—barely edged up over the next 30 years, rising to just 21 retiree-aged Americans for every 100 of working age in 2010.</p> <p>But there has been a rapid shift since then. By 2017, there were 25 Americans 65 and older for every 100 people in their working years, according to new census figures released Thursday that detail age and race for every county. The ratio would climb to 35 retiree-age Americans for every 100 of working age by 2030, according to census projections released earlier this year, and 42 by 2060, though currently unforeseen factors could alter that.</p> <p>“You have this top-heavy age distribution that is basically uncharted waters,” said Paul Taylor, author of “The Next America” who has studied the aging population. “The failure to face what’s evident, right in front of our eyes, is a form of generational theft,” he said, referring to the financial consequences for subsequent generations.</p> <p>The new census figures also show that the number of whites who aren’t Hispanic fell slightly in 2017. Revised estimates for 2016 also showed a small decrease. If it is not revised, the overall decrease of about 41,000, or 0.02%, would be the first on record, according to William Frey, a demographer at the Brookings Institution.</p> <p>The finding showcases the long-term aging of the white population due to lower birth rates and shifts in where immigrants come from. In the majority of states, non-Hispanic whites are dying faster than they are being born, according to a recent study by the Applied Population Lab at the University of Wisconsin.</p> <p>The retiree surge, which has been long expected, began when the first baby boomers—whose birth years span 1946 to 1964—turned 65 in 2011. About 10,000 baby boomers turn 65 each day, Mr. Taylor said. Lower birth rates that began in the 1970s thinned the ranks of the working-age population in the generations that followed them. An immigration boom wasn’t enough to offset that.</p> <p>Even as the U.S. ratio grows, it would remain lower than those of many developed nations. In 2025, when</p>

the U.S. ratio is expected to reach 33 older adults per 100 of working age, Canada's would reach 40, Germany's 44 and Japan's 58, according to census projections. By comparison, India's ratio would reach 13, Mexico's 16 and China's 22.

The figures are the latest sign that the U.S. safety net for seniors will become even more stretched for cash. Earlier this month, the trustees for Social Security said the program is dipping into its trust fund for the first time since 1982 to pay benefits. States also face mounting employee pension costs that have led them to pare spending on programs like education and health care.

State pension funds had \$2.6 trillion in assets to cover liabilities of \$4 trillion in fiscal 2016, according to an April analysis of the most recent publicly available data by the Pew Charitable Trusts. The gap between assets and liabilities is up \$295 billion from the prior year and is due in part to investments falling short of states' assumptions, the report said.

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HEADLINE	06/20 Hungary criminalizes aiding illegal migrants
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/20/world/europe/hungary-stop-soros-law.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fworld&action=click&contentCollection=world&region=rank&module=package&version=highlights&contentPlacement=2&pgtype=sectionfront
GIST	<p>The Hungarian Parliament approved a package of laws on Wednesday that criminalizes the act of helping undocumented migrants and creates a parallel court system that some fear will be used for politically sensitive cases, accelerating efforts by Prime Minister Viktor Orban to transform the country into what he calls an “illiberal democracy.”</p> <p>The government named the legislation the “Stop Soros” bill, after the Hungarian-American financier and philanthropist George Soros, who has helped Hungarian rights organizations. It must be signed into law by President Janos Ader before it can take effect.</p> <p>The laws are the first major measures to be passed since Mr. Orban, who campaigned on a nationalist, anti-immigrant platform, led his far-right party, Fidesz, to an increased parliamentary majority in April, in an election that observers said was free but not fair.</p> <p>Their passage came on World Refugee Day, five days after Mr. Orban spoke by telephone with President Trump, who is coming under intense criticism in the United States for his policy of separating migrant children from their parents, and incarcerating them, after they cross the southern American border.</p> <p>Mr. Orban has been Europe's most prominent critic of open-door migration since the Continent's refugee crisis in 2015, putting him at odds with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, whose government welcomed hundreds of thousands of mainly Syrian and Afghan refugees that year.</p> <p>In 2015, over a million asylum seekers landed by boat on European shores, many of them later passing through Hungary on their way to Germany. To stop their passage, Mr. Orban built a fence along Hungary's southern border, a move that foreshadowed Mr. Trump's plans to extend a wall along the American border with Mexico.</p> <p>Under the terms of a new law, helping migrants legalize their status in Hungary by distributing information about the asylum process or providing them with financial assistance could result in a 12-month jail term.</p> <p>In a separate measure, the government changed the Constitution to make it illegal to “settle foreign populations” in Hungary, a rebuke of attempts by the European Union to encourage Hungary to admit small numbers of refugees who had been living in other European countries.</p>

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HEADLINE	06/20 Gov. allocates \$1.2M for immigrant rights
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1024802/gov-inslee-million-immigration-rights/
GIST	<p>Just hours after President Trump signed an executive order to keep families together at the U.S.-Mexico border, Washington state Governor Jay Inslee called the policy child abuse and announced he will give \$1.2 million to support Northwest Immigrant Rights Project's civil legal aid services.</p> <p>The money will be used to defend immigrant rights and to help families reunite.</p> <p>"We know that this was an intentional infliction of abusive behavior to punish innocent children," Inslee said. "It is a form of child abuse."</p> <p>The governor said that everyone is entitled to a fair and due process, and to be treated with dignity and respect.</p> <p>As for Trump's executive order, Inslee said it's too late. The damage has been done.</p> <p>"We have more than 2,300 children separated from their parents today," Inslee said.</p> <p>The governor said Trump's administration has lied about the separation of children from their parents, why they did what they did to the children, lied about who is responsible, and lied about what it will take to reunite families.</p> <p>Inslee and state Attorney General Bob Ferguson sent a letter to Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Department of Homeland Security head Kirstjen Nielsen for answers about why the policy was enacted and about the location of the children and parents. He said they have not received answers.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 India takes direct control of Kashmir
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/af2b7d4fa4134facb5bc83b4da6785da/India-takes-direct-control-in-Kashmir-after-alliance-ends
GIST	<p>SRINAGAR, India (AP) — India's federal government took direct control of Kashmir state Wednesday after the ruling Hindu nationalist party ended its long-troubled alliance there with a Kashmiri political party.</p> <p>The shift to direct rule in the disputed region was approved after the Bharatiya Janata Party withdrew its support Tuesday for the People's Democratic Party, following years of feuding and a deteriorating security situation. The BJP also heads the central government, and officials say Prime Minister Narendra Modi was involved in the decision to withdraw from the coalition.</p> <p>Political decisions will now be made by the government in New Delhi, though day-to-day life is unlikely to change significantly for the people of Kashmir.</p> <p>State elections are scheduled for 2020, but a vote could be called before then.</p> <p>The coalition government was formed in 2015 after extended and difficult negotiations, since the two parties hold diametrically opposed views on many major issues, including the law that exempts Indian military personnel from criminal prosecution in the violence-wracked Himalayan region. The People's Democratic Party wants the draconian law scrapped. The BJP supports it. The BJP has consistently advocated a tough government approach in Kashmir while the People's Democratic Party favors reconciliation and dialogue.</p>

	<p>The coalition marked the first time that the Hindu nationalist BJP held a leadership position in the Muslim-majority region.</p> <p>Mehbooba Mufti, the president of the People’s Democratic Party and the state’s top official, resigned after the BJP withdrew its support, paving the way for direct rule.</p> <p>She told reporters that the alliance had been cobbled together “although this was against the sentiments of the people.”</p> <p>“Our aim was reconciliation and dialogue,” she said, adding that politicians had hoped the alliance with Modi’s party would “help in bringing out the state from its situation of turmoil.”</p> <p>Other pro-India political parties said the alliance was bound to collapse, given the two parties’ different political ideologies.</p> <p>“And so it has come to pass,” former chief minister and opposition leader Omar Abdullah said in a tweet, blaming both parties for the security situation.</p> <p>Separatists who challenge India’s sovereignty over Kashmir did not immediately comment on the political developments, though in the past their leaders have consistently ridiculed pro-India politicians as collaborators.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Gaza rocket attacks prompt Israel strikes
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/67216b89c0a44f2891e61a2a26bfa673/Israel-strikes-Hamas-after-heavy-rocket-attacks-from-Gaza
GIST	<p>JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli warplanes struck Hamas positions in Gaza after Palestinian militants there fired dozens of rockets and mortars at southern communities early Wednesday, the military said.</p> <p>The Palestinian fire came hours after the Israeli military said it struck Hamas infrastructure in response to “arson balloons” launched from Gaza into Israel.</p> <p>Israel has been battling large fires caused by kites and balloons rigged with incendiary devices or burning rags, launched by Palestinians in Gaza that have destroyed forests, burned crops and killed wildlife and livestock.</p> <p>Fawzi Barhoum, a spokesman for Hamas, praised the rocket attacks calling them “a legitimate right that bombing is met with bombing,” but did not take responsibility for them.</p> <p>The Israeli military said Palestinians fired about 45 rockets and mortars at Israel. Seven projectiles were intercepted by the Iron Dome defense system and at least three fell prematurely, landing inside Gaza, it said. Fighter jets targeted about 25 Hamas targets overnight in response to the heavy Palestinian fire, it said.</p> <p>The exchange early Wednesday was the biggest flare-up between the sides in weeks. However, no casualties were reported in Israel or Gaza.</p> <p>Some Palestinian rockets exploded inside Israel damaging property and peppering homes and cars with shrapnel. One mortar exploded next to an Israeli kindergarten.</p> <p>Israeli police said its bomb disposal unit dealt with a rocket that landed in a populated area.</p> <p>“The Hamas terror organization targeted Israeli civilians throughout the night with a severe rocket attack and is dragging the Gaza Strip and its civilians down a continually deteriorating path,” the military said.</p>

	<p>Military spokesman Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus said many Israelis spent the night in bomb shelters in communities near Gaza.</p> <p>Conricus wouldn't elaborate on open-fire regulations regarding the kite and balloon threats but said those who launch such devices "are engaged in hostile activity." He said so far the army has fired near those launching the devices and at infrastructure but added Israel has warned it "will not tolerate" the current situation of daily airborne attacks on its territory.</p> <p>Tensions are high along the Gaza border after months of weekly mass rallies led by the Islamic militant group that rules the territory turned violent. Over 100 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since they began.</p> <p>Israel says it is defending a sovereign border and nearby communities and accuses Hamas of using the protests as cover for attempts to breach the border fence and carry out attacks.</p> <p>The protests are aimed in part at drawing attention to the decade-long Israeli-Egyptian blockade on the territory imposed after Hamas, a group sworn to Israel's destruction, seized control of Gaza.</p> <p>Barhoum, the Hamas spokesman, said demonstrations will continue and implied that more incendiary devices will be launched at Israel.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Complex mass migration reshapes globe
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/35d829ab5f754d0883f09f6eda613164/No-easy-path:-Complex-mass-migration-reshapes-globe
GIST	<p>PARIS (AP) — Lined up before dawn, dozens of migrants outside a government office in Italy jostled to be one of the handful allowed inside to request asylum Wednesday.</p> <p>The journeys that brought them to Rome and the sleepless nights wondering if they would be allowed to stay was being repeated in cities and countries around the world on World Refugee Day as millions of people sought to flee persecution, violence, war and poverty.</p> <p>The Rohingya Muslims forced out of Myanmar to Bangladesh; teenagers from Mexico and Central America seeking safety in the United States; Syria's war refugees; men from South Sudan and Nigeria crossing the Mediterranean Sea to feed their families — they are among the human wave roiling every continent.</p> <p>"The international community must work with shared and long-term political choices to manage a phenomenon that involves the entire world," Italian President Sergio Mattarella, whose country is on the receiving end of Europe's immigration front line, said in a World Refugee Day message.</p> <p>While migration to the world's 35 richest countries dropped slightly last year for the first time since 2011, asylum claims rose by 26 percent in the United States, according to a new report from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which represents the wealthy nations.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the United Nations refugee agency reported this week that nearly 69 million people were forcibly displaced in 2017, a record for the fifth straight year.</p> <p>OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría insisted that since migration is here to stay, countries need to work to integrate newcomers and to prepare their native-born populations to welcome foreigners instead of resent them. Migration disproportionately affects young men, and he called for support policies, particularly in terms of training and skills development, according to the report.</p>

“The absence of the policy is what’s creating this cacophony,” Gurria said.

In Europe, leaders of European Union member countries are trying anew to come up with continent-wide solutions to a mass migration crisis that has pitted nations and politicians against each other.

The interior minister in Italy’s new populist government, Matteo Salvini, refused a port of entry this month to a rescue boat operated by two nonprofit groups that carried 630 people who were picked up while trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea from Libya.

Italy has been the arriving place of the bulk of migrants who attempt the dangerous sea crossing for a variety of reasons — as seen in the discouraged line outside the Rome immigration office. Salvini is pressing other EU members to share the burden.

Migrants and refugees who were swept off the streets of Paris in recent weeks now occupy a gymnasium, all of them wishing Wednesday to be somewhere else.

Nasir Ahmad, an Afghan living in the Paris gym, spent a year in Germany and has been in France for two years, hoping to get the documents he needs to make France his home.

“I have good energy. I have good energy to do for the work, but nobody used me,” he said. “Nothing changed. Only I changed. I get old.”

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who faces constant criticism and mounting pressure over her decision to open Germany to refugees in recent year, said how to handle the sheer number of people fleeing violence and persecution is “a central global question of our time.”

Some 700,000 Rohingya fled brutal attacks by government forces and mobs last year in Myanmar, pouring across the border into crowded makeshift refugee camps in Bangladesh. Monsoon rains have begun sweeping through the camps, often leaving the refugees to wade through rivers of mud and water.

At the Kutupalong refugee camp outside of Cox’s Bazaar, Bangladesh, more than 100 Rohingya marched Wednesday to highlight their suffering, demanding that international organizations hold the Myanmar government accountable for the attacks that drove them into exile.

Many wore T-shirts and paper hats proclaiming they are “Not Bengali.” In Myanmar, the Rohingya are often derided as illegal migrants from Bangladesh.

Abdu Shukkur, a 44-year-old refugee, denounced the Myanmar government for refusing to recognize the Rohingya as an ethnic minority and for denying them “the right to citizenship and its privileges.”

In Lebanon, Syrian refugees have begun building lives in similar camps intended to be temporary way-stations. Turkey remains the country with the largest number of Syrian refugees, but tiny Lebanon holds the highest concentration per capita of refugees in the world.

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HEADLINE	06/20 States withdraw NG troops from border
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/governors-withdraw-national-guard-troops-over-family-separation-policy/
GIST	The governors of multiple East Coast states have announced that they will not deploy National Guard resources near the U.S.-Mexico border, a largely symbolic but politically significant rejection of the Trump administration's "zero-tolerance" immigration policy that has resulted in children being separated from their families. Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, a Republican, announced Tuesday morning on his Twitter account that he

has ordered four crewmembers and a helicopter to immediately return from where they were stationed in New Mexico.

"Until this policy of separating children from their families has been rescinded, Maryland will not deploy any National Guard resources to the border," Hogan tweeted.

Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker, who like Hogan is a Republican governor in a blue state, on Monday reversed a decision to send a National Guard helicopter to the border, citing the Trump administration's "cruel and inhuman" policy.

On the Democratic side, governors in Connecticut, Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, New York and Virginia have all indicated their refusal to send Guard resources to assist with immigration-related issues.

The resources in question from each state are relatively small, so the governors' actions aren't likely to have a huge practical impact. But they are a strong symbolic political gesture, said Mileah Kromer, the director of the Sarah T. Hughes field Politics Center at Goucher College in Towson, Maryland.

In New York, Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Monday reiterated a decision he first made earlier this year to not send Guard resources to the border to assist with immigration-related duties. He's also asked for a federal investigation of the policy relating to the separation of the children from their families.

Delaware Gov. John Carney, a Democrat, said he turned down a request he received on Tuesday to send National Guard troops to the southwest border, while the Democratic governors of Virginia and North Carolina said they would recall Guard members and equipment they already had sent to the border.

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HEADLINE	06/20 Distraught relatives slam Indonesia govt.
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/indonesia-ferry-sinks-in-lake-toba-leaving-almost-200-missing-feared-dead/
GIST	<p>TIGARAS, Indonesia -- Distraught relatives slammed Indonesia's government for not enforcing basic safety measures on passenger boats and pleaded Wednesday for a bigger search effort for more than 190 people missing since a ferry sank on a picturesque Sumatran lake early this week. The wooden vessel, overcrowded with passengers as well as dozens of motorbikes, didn't have a manifest and disaster officials have several times raised the number of people it was carrying as family members who rushed to Lake Toba in northern Sumatra provided information.</p> <p>The boat was five times over its passenger capacity of 43 and equipped with only 45 life jackets, National Search and Rescue Agency chief Muhammad Syaugi told a news conference. The latest information is that 192 people are missing, he said.</p> <p>Only 18 survivors have been found -- in bad weather within hours of the sinking Monday evening. It's possible many of the victims were still inside the sunken ferry, said North Sumatra province police chief Paulus Waterpau.</p> <p>"Many survivors told authorities that less than half of them had jumped into the water before the boat sank," he told The Associated Press.</p> <p>Suwarni, whose 20-year-old son and his girlfriend were on the ferry, criticized the search and rescue operation as slow and insufficient.</p> <p>"Millions of questions keep me from sleeping," she said between desperate sobs. "Why a boat for just 50 people is allowed to be loaded with almost 200 people plus dozens of motorcycles," said Suwarni, who uses one name.</p>

"What kind of government is this that can't protect their own people from unnecessary accidents? And after the accident they're not able to find the victims," she said. "I beg help to everyone to quickly find my son and his girlfriend, even if their remains, please find my son, return him to me."

Divers were searching at depths of 82 feet and will deploy an underwater drone to 656 feet below the surface, Waterpau said. The 440-square-mile Lake Toba, formed out of an ancient super volcano, is a popular sightseeing destination on the island of Sumatra. It's more than 1,312 feet deep.

The search and rescue effort involving 350 personnel and at least half a dozen boats has turned up items of clothing, bags and traces of oil from the ferry but just several victims.

Survivor Juwita Sumbayak, from Medan, said she had crossed the lake many times on the same boat but on Monday it was terribly overcrowded because of holidays for the end of the Muslim holy month. In an interview with AP, the distraught mother wept uncontrollably and called out the names of her husband and children who she believes drowned inside the boat.

She said that about 20 minutes into the journey, strong high waves caused the ferry to list to the right and take on water, sparking a panic among passengers. Then it was smacked hard by more waves and an empty small wooden boat. The ferry seemed to shake, Sumbayak said, then suddenly capsized.

"Many passengers without a life jacket jumped into the deep lake, but others drowned with the boat," she said. "I jumped, I cried with fear." She saw dozens of people in the water "but nobody can help."

Cellphone video released earlier in the week by the National Disaster Mitigation Agency showed the crew of another ferry attempting to rescue people struggling in the waters shortly after the sinking but being hampered by bad weather and rough waters.

The disaster has cast a tragic pall over the holidays marking the end of Ramadan when tens of millions of Indonesians return to their hometowns.

Ferry tragedies are common in Indonesia, an archipelago of more than 17,000 islands, with weak enforcement of safety regulations often to blame.

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HEADLINE	06/20 Biggest US oil patch nearing capacity
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-06-20/shale-giant-says-permian-oil-faces-shut-ins-on-pipeline-shortage
GIST	<p>The biggest U.S. shale region will have to shut wells within four months because there aren't enough pipelines to get the oil to customers, the head of one of the industry's largest producers said.</p> <p>The worsening bottleneck in the Permian region that straddles west Texas and New Mexico offers an unexpected fillip to OPEC and other oil producers outside the U.S., who've seen rampant production from America's shale producers grab market share.</p> <p>"We will reach capacity in the next 3 to 4 months," Scott Sheffield, the chairman of Pioneer Natural Resources Co. said in an interview at an OPEC conference in Vienna. "Some companies will have to shut in production, some companies will move rigs away, and some companies will be able to continue growing because they have firm transportation."</p> <p>His comments are the strongest indication yet that the growth in the red-hot shale region is about to slow down soon due to a lack of pipeline capacity. The problem has grown so bad that oil companies have been forced to load crude on to trucks and drive it hundreds of miles to pipelines in other parts of the state.</p>

	<p>The Permian is growing at 800,000 barrels a day annually and production currently stands at 3.3 million barrels a day, said Sheffield, who first drilled wells in the region in 1979 and is considered one of the architects of the shale revolution. Total pipeline capacity is 3.6 million barrels, so the region will reach capacity in the next three to four months and the bottleneck isn't likely to ease for at least a year, he added.</p> <p>Permian production could remain flat for the next year because of pipeline restraints, Sheffield told a session of the OPEC conference.</p> <p>"The market has been assuming a straight line production growth from the US but infrastructure constraints mean that's clearly not going to be the case," said Amrita Sen, chief oil analyst at consultant Energy Aspects Ltd. "At a time when outages are rising the US is not going to fill the gap either."</p> <p>The lack of pipeline capacity will continue to cause severe dislocation in U.S. oil markets, Sheffield said. Benchmark West Texas Intermediate crude at Midland in the Permian is likely to trade at a \$25-a-barrel discount to price at the industry's hub in Cushing, Oklahoma, he said.</p> <p>The Permian region is accounting for nearly half of the growth in U.S. oil production. America pumped almost 10.5 million barrels a day in March, up 1.4 million barrels a day from a year, according to government data. The annual growth rate is larger than the production of OPEC nations such as Libya.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 EU retaliatory tariffs on US products
SOURCE	http://money.cnn.com/2018/06/20/news/economy/europe-tariffs-us-goods/index.html
GIST	<p>European Union tariffs on products from the United States will go into effect on Friday.</p> <p>The European Commission announced Wednesday that it had approved initial retaliatory tariffs on US exports worth €2.8 billion (\$3.2 billion).</p> <p>The tariffs will hit American products including motorcycles, orange juice, bourbon, peanut butter, motor boats, cigarettes and denim. They are a response to the Trump administration's tariffs on steel and aluminum exports from Europe.</p> <p>"We did not want to be in this position," said EU trade official Cecilia Malmström. "The unilateral and unjustified decision of the US to impose steel and aluminum tariffs on the EU means that we are left with no other choice."</p> <p>The European Union has also filed a case at the World Trade Organization.</p> <p>If the trade dispute continues or is not resolved by the WTO, the European Union said a second batch of American exports worth around €3.7 billion (\$4.3 billion) a year could eventually be targeted.</p> <p>That list includes roughly 160 products such as US sunbeds, paper towels, corduroy pants and porcelain tableware.</p> <p>The United States imposed tariffs on steel and aluminum from the European Union, Canada and Mexico last month. The Trump administration justified the move on national security grounds.</p> <p>Canada and Mexico have also announced retaliatory tariffs against the United States.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Texas faces flood warnings, watches
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/20/us/houston-flooding-wxc/index.html

GIST	<p>(CNN)Texas residents still wary after Hurricane Harvey again face the risk of flash flooding Wednesday as heavy rain pounds a wide swath of the state's southeastern coast.</p> <p>Flash flood watches are in effect for areas south of Houston to Brownsville, at the Mexican border, with flash flood warnings popping up as storms flare, CNN meteorologists said. The zone includes Victoria, Corpus Christi and McAllen, where hundreds of migrants seeking entry into the United States await processing at a detention center.</p> <p>Tropical moisture could produce 2 to 3 inches of rain over a short period across the watch area, meteorologists said. Showers and thunderstorms are forecast to continue through Thursday, the National Weather Service tweeted.</p> <p>North of Houston, the city of Port Arthur, which along with Beaumont was devastated in August by Harvey's floods, was swamped again Tuesday by the same weather system now pummeling points south. Video from Port Arthur showed streets turned into raging rivers as cars slowly made their way through them.</p> <p>The storms conjured memories of last summer's flooding, said Damion Robertson, of Port Arthur.</p> <p>"It's concerning. A lot of people just lost a lot of houses ... over Harvey," Robertson told CNN affiliate KBTX. "So, a lot of people are probably nervous about losing their stuff again."</p> <p>The Beaumont Port Arthur airport "broke daily rainfall record (Tuesday), where 5.89 inches of rain fell in a 24-hour period, causing flash flooding in the area," CNN meteorologist Michael Guy said Wednesday.</p> <p>"While rainfall totals will not even come close to the amount that Harvey left in its wake, the region could still suffer damage from flash flooding, downed trees and travel disruptions," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Ethics commission clears Sawant
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/politics/sawant-did-no-wrong-in-using-city-copier-for-rally-ethics-commission-finds/281-566018507
GIST	<p>The Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission says Councilmember Kshama Sawant did not commit a violation when she used a city copier to make posters for a rally.</p> <p>The signed report, released Wednesday, says Sawant and her staff made "thousands" of copies of signs and flyers to wave at the May 12 rally to support the employee hours tax or head tax.</p> <p>The EEC letter says there "several complaints" about the action. Councilmember Sally Bagshaw was the first to openly criticize Sawant's action.</p> <p>But Wayne Barnett, executive director of the Commission, wrote that "Councilmember Sawant was, however acting within the scope of her authority when she determined that the rally was a tool she could use to advance her position in support of the EHT."</p> <p>"I conclude only that Councilmember Sawant's use of City time and equipment did not violate the Ethics Code," Barnett added in dismissing the complaint. "I make no judgment as to whether the use was prudent."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Growing wildfire near Vantage; 800 acres
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/growing-wildfire-near-vantage-at-least-800-acres/281-

	566200897
GIST	<p>A growing wildfire burns hundreds of acres Wednesday night near Vantage, Washington.</p> <p>Washington's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) says dry grass conditions have helped fuel the fire. By 9 p.m. DNR estimated the fire grew to at least 800 acres in size.</p> <p>Vantage Highway remains closed while firefighters work on containment.</p> <p>DNR believes this fire was "human caused," the agency tweeted.</p> <p>Several bulldozers, three planes and dozens of crew have been dispatched to the area.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Air ambulances saving lives
SOURCE	http://www.khq.com/story/38472683/air-ambulances-how-they-can-help-save-lives
GIST	<p>SPOKANE COUNTY, Wash. - Every second counts in saving a life. That's where helicopter crews can step in when they are needed to help transport seriously ill or injured patients.</p> <p>"I get to take care of patients in likely the worst day of their life and hopefully make a very positive difference in their clinical care," said Dominic Pomponio, Regional Director for Life Flight Network.</p> <p>It's a job that Pomponio has done with Life Flight Network for 10 years. He's a nurse and has helped provide care in places like Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Oregon. He says having an air ambulance is crucial for the community. "We are the service that can provide you that link to the essential services that you may need," said Pomponio.</p> <p>Whether you are in an ATV accident or a car crash, they can get there quickly. The difference between an ambulance on the ground and one in the air is significant. "We fly in a straight line. For example, a flight from Lewiston to Spokane only takes us about 35 minutes. We are able to go from the hospital to another hospital without going on roads to get there," he said.</p> <p>How much does this all cost? "It's not uncommon to see bills from air ambulances be in the \$20,000 to \$30,000 range. It's exceptionally expensive but to be able to offer this service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and employ the best of the best, it is an expensive service to operate," said Pomponio.</p> <p>He says most insurances cover it. Life Flight Network is the nation's largest not-for-profit air ambulance. "We receive no federal subsidies, no state subsidies," he said.</p> <p>What they do is time sensitive. "Somebody who has a ruptured spleen and they are hemorrhaging into their abdomen and the only way of survival, is getting them to that surgeon, then that is where our service really shines," said Pomponio.</p> <p>It's minutes or seconds that can help save a life.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/21 Nat'l park search, rescue cost millions
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/science/2018/06/21/national-park-searches-rescues-costing-millions-figures-show.html
GIST	<p>Search and rescue operations in America's national parks cost taxpayers more than \$3 million last year, with the Grand Canyon in Arizona and Yosemite in California leading the way for most reported incidents, according to National Park Service statistics.</p>

The Grand Canyon's 290 search and rescue operations (SARs) were a full 10 percent of those conducted nationwide, while Yosemite's 233 operations were 8 percent of the national total, the statistics showed.

Nationwide, such operations involved more than 71,000 work hours for park service employees, and an additional 12,300 work hours for non-employees, such as volunteers, military personnel or other external resources, the park service figures revealed.

Across the national park system 159 fatalities were reported last year, accounting for 5.5 percent of total SAR incidents. Earlier this month, two climbers fell from Yosemite's El Capitan, a 3,000-foot vertical rock face, Fox News reported, citing information from park officials.

In Utah, the 324 SARs in the state's national parks last year represented a rise of nearly 70 percent since 2014, with men in their 20s being the most likely people to require assistance, the Salt Lake Tribune reported.

Zion and Bryce Canyon, “the granddaddies” of Utah’s national parks, were where most visitors run into trouble. Rangers retrieved 114 people in Zion last year, which marked a 42 percent leap from three years ago, the report said.

Smaller Bryce Canyon saw a sharp rise from 19 SARs in 2014 to 86 such operations last year, the newspaper reported.

For those 86 operations, staffers and volunteers reportedly spent nearly 860 hours searching for or rescuing distressed visitors, costing the park service about \$32,000.

The Beehive State's national park units had 12 fatalities in 2017, which was up from eight in 2014, the Tribune reported.

Nationally, a total of 2,890 SARs were reported last year, with 49 percent (1,174) involving men, and 19.3 percent (656) involving people in their 20s, the NPS reported.

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HEADLINE	06/20 Antifa tweets list of ICE employees
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/antifa-shares-names-and-photos-of-1600-ice-employees/ar-AAyVXQ4
GIST	<p>A Twitter account linked to the Nebraska branch of Antifa has tweeted out a list of ICE employees compiled from LinkedIn.</p> <p>The anti-fascist organization shared a link on Tuesday that includes names, photos, job titles, cities and links to ICE employee’s LinkedIn profiles. “Some enterprising hero archived the ICE employees listed on LinkedIn,” said the tweet from Nebraska Antifa, which claims to share news on trap hunting fascists and racists in Nebraska, Iowa and Kansas.</p> <p>The document was originally compiled by Twitter user Sam Lavigne, who claimed to have “scraped LinkedIn for people that work for ICE.” Lavigne’s original post on Medium has since been removed, but the Nebraska Antifa account linked to an archived version of the list for its followers to access.</p> <p>The Verge spoke to Lavigne, who is a New York-based artist, saying that he was “just trying to pose the question” of who is responsible for implementing ICE policies.</p> <p>“I’ve downloaded and made available the profiles of (almost) everyone on LinkedIn who works for ICE, 1,595 people in total. While I don’t have a precise idea of what should be done with this data set, I leave it here with the hope that researchers, journalists, and activists will find it useful,” Lavigne wrote in his original Medium post, according to a cache visible through Google search at the time of writing.</p>

Lavigne’s post came as ICE and its agents face intense national scrutiny in the wake of President Donald Trump’s hardline immigration policies, which have seen escalating deportations of undocumented immigrants as well as thousands of migrant children separated from their parents along the U.S.-Mexico border. On Tuesday, Trump responded to the national backlash, signing an executive order to halt the separation of families.

The post spread quickly on a Reddit subgroup of far-left activists, which encourages supporters to find, share and spread private details and information about individuals they consider to be neo-Nazis or alt-right. Lavigne also tweeted a screenshot of ICE’s chief technology officer, which featured a photo of the man and his son.

Antifa activists rose to prominence after physically attacking white supremacists at rallies in 2017, but to a much less newsworthy degree than far-right groups. In one high-profile incident, alt-right provocateur Richard Spencer was sucker-punched on the street in Washington, D.C., following Trump’s inauguration. Videos and GIFs of the attack went viral and led a national debate whether it is OK to “punch a Nazi.”

The group argues that it falls back on violence only as a last resort to protect marginalized communities from imminent danger. However, the group has been widely demonized in the media, resulting in several surreal conspiracy theories.

For example, Fox News and other outlets in November reported on the fictional threat of an Antifa-led civil war plot. In January, Spike’s Tactical—a gun company—shared an ad to Facebook that appeared to threaten the leftist group, using the tagline: “not today Antifa.”

“We aren’t violent. Violence is [the] last resort in opposing fascism,” “Nestor,” a spokesman for the group’s Nebraska branch told Newsweek in December. “There aren’t Antifa protesters roaming around the streets carrying baseball bats. That’s not happening.”

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HEADLINE	06/20 Tech firms quietly work with ICE
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/tech-companies-quietly-work-ice-border-crisis-continues-n885176
GIST	<p>Several high-profile data and tech companies have made millions of dollars from contracts with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency over the past several months — even as some of them publicly disavow the Trump administration’s recent orders to separate immigrant children from their parents.</p> <p>Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Thomson Reuters, Microsoft, Motorola Solutions and Palantir all have active contracts with the agency, known as ICE, according to a public records search conducted by NBC News.</p> <p>The contracts highlight how technology companies, many of which have developed advanced data analysis and tracking capabilities, are putting their innovations to work with the U.S. government in ways that are often not visible to the public.</p> <p>Attorney General Jeff Sessions issued a “zero tolerance policy” on April 6 and in a speech on May 7 said “if you are smuggling a child, then we will prosecute you and that child will be separated from you as required by law.”</p> <p>President Donald Trump signed an executive order on Wednesday ending the separation practice, after insisting for days that Democrats had created the policy and he could not personally end it.</p> <p>ICE has taken a more aggressive stance against undocumented immigrants as a result of the administration’s vow to crack down on illegal immigration. Even before the administration’s zero-</p>

tolerance policy took effect, deportations of non-criminals rose 17 percent in Trump's first year in office.

Palantir, whose chairman Peter Thiel is on the board of directors of Facebook, took in more than \$4.9 million from ICE on May 30, part of a \$39 million contract that began in 2015. According to a government database search, the contract goes towards "operations and maintenance" of FALCON, Palantir's proprietary intelligence database that tracks immigrants' records and relationships.

Palantir, a secretive data firm that tends to stay out of the press, is now used by law enforcement agencies across the country. Some of its programs have come under scrutiny, including the use of data to predict the likelihood that a person will commit or become a victim of violence.

Executives at Facebook, where Thiel is one of nine members of the board, have been vocal in criticizing the Trump administration's policy to separate children from their parents at the U.S. border.

"We need to stop this policy right now," wrote Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg on Tuesday. Zuckerberg and fellow Facebook board member Sheryl Sandberg pledged to donate to a multimillion-dollar fundraiser on Facebook for immigrant children this week.

Microsoft has a deal with ICE for use of its Azure cloud computing services, which the company wrote in a January blog post allows ICE employees to "utilize deep learning capabilities to accelerate facial recognition and identification" which is being implemented for "homeland security and public safety." On Wednesday, Microsoft distanced itself from the agency.

"As a company, Microsoft is dismayed by the forcible separation of children from their families at the border," Microsoft said in a statement. "Family unification has been a fundamental tenant of American policy and law since the end of World War II."

Thiel, a confidante of Trump, has supported multiple technology efforts relating to the U.S. border that contrast with Facebook's company positions.

Thiel has reportedly considered supporting a company that wants to make a "virtual border wall" using advanced radar, infrared sensors and cameras to look out for people cross into the U.S. illegally. That company, Anduril, is headed up by Oculus VR founder Palmer Luckey, according to The New York Times. Luckey sold Oculus to Facebook for more than \$2 billion in 2014, but left the company six months after it was revealed he supported a super PAC that spread anti-Hillary Clinton memes.

Neither Facebook nor Palantir responded to NBC's requests for comment about Palantir's work with ICE.

Palantir is not the only big data operation making millions off of ICE's more aggressive policies.

Thomson Reuters Special Services, a subsidiary of the mass-media firm and news agency Thomson Reuters, signed a \$6.8 million contract with ICE in March. The company beat out 13 other companies for the bid, including IBM, Booz Allen Hamilton, PricewaterhouseCoopers and LexisNexis.

The contract stipulates that Thomson Reuters will provide support for ICE's Enforcement and Removal Operations unit in its "mission to locate, arrest, and remove criminal aliens that pose a threat to public safety."

Thomson Reuters Special Services CEO Steve Rubley is also on the Board of Directors of the ICE Foundation, a nonprofit which "supports the men and women of ICE."

A Thomson Reuters spokesperson insisted Reuters' newsgathering is "completely independent of any [of] our commercial relationships." The company declined to comment on the Trump administration's child separation policy.

"[Thomson Reuters Special Services] supplies data to ICE in support of its work on active criminal

investigations with the explicit purpose to focus resources on priority cases involving threats to public safety and/or national security,” the company told NBC News in a statement.

Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE), which split off from Hewlett-Packard in November 2015, struck a \$75 million contract with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, which oversees ICE, in September of 2017 for network management of CBP’s network operations center.

HPE has since merged with another company under the name Perspecta, but some operations remain separate. When asked about the \$75 million contract, an HPE spokesperson referred NBC News to Perspecta about the deal.

Perspecta did not respond to a request for comment, but an HPE spokesperson disavowed the administration’s child separation policy.

““HPE provides technology and services across the U.S. government,” the spokesperson said. “However, as a company, we are opposed to any policy that separates children from their families and urge the administration to change its policy to keep families together.”

Motorola Solutions has a continuing a \$13.3 million contract with ICE. The contract, described as a “tactical communications program,” started in late 2017 and is projected to last until late 2019. Motorola Solutions did not respond to a request for comment.

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HEADLINE	06/20 Rocky Mountain rains trigger MT flooding
SOURCE	https://www.apnews.com/adfc489b0b974250a50f918e861f33ce/Heavy-rain-along-Rocky-Mountain-Front-leads-to-flooding
GIST	<p>HELENA, Mont. (AP) — Heavy rain falling along the Rocky Mountain Front over the last several days triggered flooding in the town of Augusta, closed all roads into the town and trapped a horseback party in the Scapegoat Wilderness.</p> <p>The Montana Department of Transportation closed U.S. Highway 287 around Augusta on Tuesday because water from Elk Creek was running over the road both north and south of town.</p> <p>Other local roads were closed, in one case because a bridge washed out, the Department of Transportation said.</p> <p>By 1:30 p.m. all roads to Augusta had been closed, Lewis and Clark County officials said.</p> <p>The Red Cross planned to open a shelter for people affected by the flooding in Choteau, which is 25 miles (40 kilometers) northeast of Augusta.</p> <p>Meanwhile, residents of the Sun River Valley east of Augusta were warned to expect the Sun River to flood, threatening homes near Simms.</p> <p>Officials closed a stretch of Montana Highway 200 over Rogers Pass after a culvert failed and flooded the roadway. The highway was closed east of Lincoln to the intersection with Montana Highway 287, according to state transportation officials.</p> <p>Gibson Reservoir west of Augusta saw 7 ¼ inches (18 centimeters) of rain in the three days ending Tuesday morning. Lewis and Clark County officials said Gibson Dam was full and releasing water, which would cause a rise in the Sun River.</p> <p>Nearly 8.5 inches (21.6 centimeters) of rain fell at Wood Creek in the mountains west of Augusta in the past three days, meteorologist Christian Cassell said. The Dearborn River near Craig was at moderate</p>

	flood stage Tuesday, Cassell said. Local flooding also was reported in the Helena Valley.
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HEADLINE	06/20 Seattle metro area w/4th strongest economy
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/report-seattle-tacoma-bellevue-has-nations-4th-strongest-economy
GIST	<p>A new survey ranks the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue area as having the fourth-strongest economy in the nation.</p> <p>The new report, by <u>Business Insider</u>, ranked the strength of the nation's 40 largest metropolitan areas based on five criteria: unemployment rate, average weekly wage, job growth rate, gross domestic product per capita, and GDP growth rate.</p> <p>The survey then placed those criteria on a common scale and combined them to get a picture of the overall state of each metro area's economy.</p> <p>The study found that some metropolitan areas, such as Seattle, have particularly strong economies. Others, such as Cleveland, Virginia Beach and Providence, are much weaker.</p> <p>According to the report, Seattle's economy has been supercharged by hosting the headquarters of Amazon, even though the online giant has a mixed relationship with the locals of its home city.</p> <p>Seattle's 2016 GDP per capita of \$86,889 was the fourth-highest among the 40 largest metro areas, and its third-quarter 2017 average weekly wage of \$1,445 was the third-highest in the nation.</p> <p>The Portland-Vancouver area was ranked 13th, with an above-average GDP growth rate of 3 percent.</p> <p>The five metro areas with the strongest economies, in addition to Seattle, were (No. 1) San Jose, Calif.; (2) San Francisco, Calif.; (3) Austin, Texas; and (5) Denver, Colo.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Philippines seeks to modernize military
SOURCE	http://www.businessinsider.com/r-philippines-duterte-approves-56-billion-military-upgrade-2018-6
GIST	<p>MANILA (Reuters) - Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has approved a five-year plan to spend 300 billion pesos (\$5.6 billion) to modernize the outdated military, defense officials said on Wednesday.</p> <p>A previous 15-year upgrade plan failed to take off in the mid-1990s, leaving the Philippines with outdated hardware, including warships from World War Two and helicopters used by the United States in the Vietnam War.</p> <p>"We have the go signal now to buy brand-new equipment, like fighters, drones, light tanks, radar, an additional frigate and a submarine to boost our defense capability," said a defense official, who declined to be named because he is not authorized to speak to media.</p> <p>The previous administration of Benigno Aquino spent about \$1.7 billion on the military during its 2010-2016 term in office, mostly on secondhand ships and planes.</p> <p>Duterte approved the \$5.6-billion modernization plan at a meeting with top defense and military officials last month.</p> <p>A senior general said Duterte had approved 33 modernization projects, with a focus on domestic security and protecting the vast maritime borders of the archipelago nation.</p>

	<p>"We're putting a premium on unmanned aerial vehicles, long-range patrol aircraft, offshore patrol ships and an electric-diesel submarine," he told Reuters.</p> <p>The military is bent on preventing another Islamic State-inspired insurgency after rebels seized Marawi, the country's only Islamic city, for five months last year.</p> <p>The Philippines also faces a challenge in South China Sea, a strategic waterway most of which is claimed by China, which has built military outposts there.</p> <p>Besides the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam also have rival claims on the area, through which \$3 trillion worth of sea-borne goods pass every year.</p> <p>Manila had planned to acquire four submarines after 2023, but the plan could be accelerated to boost the navy's regional capabilities, said Arsenio Andolong, a defense department spokesman.</p> <p>"We want to get submarines as soon as possible," he said.</p> <p>Duterte had set aside \$1 billion for new helicopters and light tanks, but no purchases have been made yet.</p> <p>The Philippines has received donated military hardware from Australia, China, Japan, Russia and the United States, mostly to assist in disaster response and fighting militants and pirates.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Protesters blockade Portland ICE building
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/occupy-ice-activists-blockade-portland-building-over-family-separations/ar-AAyVwXI
GIST	<p>After successfully forcing Portland's Ice office to shut down Wednesday, occupying protesters are vowing to stay until so-called "zero tolerance" immigration policies end.</p> <p>The pledge by members of #OccupyICEPDX came as Donald Trump signed an executive order ending his administration's policy of separating migrant children from parents at the border with Mexico. Yet despite the order US official have said there are no immediate plans to reunite children separated from their parents under the "zero tolerance" policy, which has come under heavy criticism from Democrats, Republicans, human rights activists, international leaders and the public.</p> <p>Ice announced this morning that the office would be temporarily closed as a result of "security concerns", and would not reopen until those concerns were addressed.</p> <p>Meanwhile Portland's mayor, Ted Wheeler, announced that the city would not attempt to clear the camps, calling Ice an agency was "on the wrong track".</p> <p>On Wednesday afternoon, in 95F (35C) degree temperatures, a core group of 50 or so protesters kept up their blockade of the federal facility. All expected that, as on the previous two days, the crowds would swell in the evening.</p> <p>Luis Marquez, a local activist, when asked about the shutdown, said: "I think this occupation is a beautiful thing, a wonderful thing. Every single person here is a hero."</p> <p>Like others in the camp he said he would not leave until the "zero tolerance" incarceration of refugees at the border ended.</p> <p>"If I hurt your whole family separately or all together, I am still hurting you."</p> <p>At an evening press conference, the #OccupyICEPDX spokesman Jacob Bureros said that ending the</p>

occupation would depend on satisfying the protesters' four demands: that the Ice facility and Ice operations be removed from the city of Portland, that children separated from their families be returned and receive adequate healthcare, that the US cease incarcerating asylum seekers, and that Ice be totally abolished. "The United States does not need its own gestapo," Bureros said.

By Wednesday the camp consisted of 30 tents and a number of other temporary structures. It had dedicated information and medical stations. Signs called for donations and builders. There were mounds of donated food and water, and makeshift barricades at either end of the camp. In the late afternoon, a local ice cream truck, Fifty Licks, stopped by for a second time to give out free ice cream to protesters.

A range of other cities began occupation camps Wednesday, as the tactic pioneered in Portland appeared to inspire others around the country. Plans for occupations were announced in LA, New York City, and elsewhere.

For the most part, the occupation – promoted on social media with the hashtag #occupyICEPDX – that began on Sunday has been peaceful.

On Tuesday evening, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) vehicles blocked a facing street and moved in on the building's western entrance. About a dozen DHS officers emerged, armed and dressed in riot gear.

Officers parted protesters and entered the building. They re-emerged with more than 20 Ice staff members who had been stuck inside. Officers escorted the staff past protesters on the sidewalk and drove north as a convoy.

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HEADLINE	06/20 Puerto Rico privatizes power grid
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/puerto-rico-crisis/puerto-rico-officially-moves-privatize-power-grid-9-months-after-n885111
GIST	<p>Puerto Rico is officially moving to privatize and upgrade its outdated power grid exactly 9 months after it was flattened by Hurricane Maria.</p> <p>At a press conference on Wednesday, Governor Ricardo Rosselló signed into law the approved legislation that allows parts of the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority – known as PREPA in English and by the acronym AEE in Spanish – to be sold to private entities.</p> <p>"Our objective is simple: provide better service, one that's more efficient and that allows us to jump into new energy models," Rosselló said in Spanish.</p> <p>The power authority has been a monopoly that practically abandoned maintenance of the electrical system's infrastructure over the past decade. Over the last five years, the financially strapped entity was operating with a third of its employees, and these were mostly workers in charge of the grid's maintenance.</p> <p>Customers in Puerto Rico have been paying nearly double compared to those in the U.S. for unreliable service that has resulted in multiple blackouts across the island in the past months, even after post-hurricane repairs. Over 5,000 households in Puerto Rico are living without power since Hurricane Maria.</p> <p>With a \$9 billion debt, PREPA is currently the government agency with the biggest share of Puerto Rico's \$72 billion public debt.</p> <p>During his announcement, Rosselló described Puerto Rico's current power system as an expensive, oil-dependent, polluting grid that's three decades older than an average U.S. electrical utility. He said a combination of these factors have hurt economic development efforts in the island for years, so he hopes</p>

to change the pattern with the newly signed law.

The governor explained that privatization efforts are taking place in two stages: power generation and distribution.

“In terms of generation, we’re going to the market to either privatize it or develop a public-private partnership,” Rosselló said. In terms of the power distribution, he said that ideally “the assets would belong to the state and a consortium of companies would be handling the distribution.”

According to the governor, the law would lower energy costs to customers and push half of the island into renewable energy mechanisms or microgrids.

Several public officials at the conference described the move as a “patriotic effort,” saying that this is the first step towards energy reform in Puerto Rico.

But critics of the energy reform law think that privatization efforts will cause increases in energy costs.

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HEADLINE	06/20 NKorea Kim ends visit to China
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/20/politics/kim-xi-meeting-trump-summit/index.html
GIST	<p>Washington (CNN)North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ended a celebratory visit to China's President Xi Jinping on Wednesday with tea, praise, handshakes -- and a message for the US.</p> <p>Amid lingering questions over Pyongyang's willingness to denuclearize and an escalating trade war between the US and China, Kim's trip reinforced the idea that Beijing remains a key player -- a variable that President Donald Trump needs and yet one that remains outside his control.</p> <p>Administration officials have said that they will maintain sanctions on North Korea even as talks continue, and stand ready to intensify that economic pressure should Pyongyang fail to cooperate. But China, North Korea's biggest trading partner, ultimately has power over whether sanctions on Pyongyang truly bite.</p> <p>With tensions climbing between Beijing and Washington over trade, some analysts point to the warmth on display during Kim's visit to Beijing as a warning from Xi that Trump's moves on trade could undermine the most ambitious goal -- peace with North Korea -- on his foreign policy agenda.</p> <p>"I think China is sending a message to Trump: You want to put trade tariffs on us and have our cooperation with North Korea? You can't have both," Bill Richardson, the former US energy secretary, ambassador and repeat US envoy to North Korea, told CNN.</p> <p>Complex relationships</p> <p>Kim's visit was his third pilgrimage to Beijing in as many months and came just days after the North Korean dictator's high-profile June 12 summit with Trump in Singapore.</p> <p>Publicly, Xi has vowed to maintain a constructive role in facilitating efforts toward denuclearization and supported North Korea's commitment to that goal despite issues with the US over trade.</p> <p>But tensions are rising. On Monday, Trump ordered the US trade representative to prepare new tariffs on \$200 billion in Chinese imports. Trump was reacting angrily to Beijing's decision to match \$50 billion in tariffs he placed on Chinese goods on June 15 to protest China's "unfair trade practices."</p> <p>"Again and again the US has been provoking a trade war," China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said Tuesday. He said China does not wish to fight a trade war, "but is not scared of one."</p> <p>"We advise the US side to return to reason, and stop words and actions that harm itself and others," Geng</p>

said.

On Tuesday, State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert cautioned against conflating disagreements over trade with China's cooperation in talks with North Korea, noting that the US maintains complex relationships with many countries.

"We have areas where we work with China and have -- and we have strong relations, but there are also areas where we're not always in agreement with China, and we will certainly bring those to light," she said, highlighting the "good work that President Xi and the Chinese government have done in helping to bring North Korea to the negotiating table."

"We want to have a constructive relationship with the government of China. In order to do that, we need to repair, make some progress on some issues related to trade," Nauert said.

According to Mintaro Oba, a former Korea desk officer at the State Department under President Barack Obama, it is not yet clear whether trade tensions between the US and China are having an impact on negotiations with North Korea, but he warned that Xi could temper his cooperation if tensions continue to rise.

"The Chinese are still trying to preserve the space to climb down from this," he told CNN. "But if the Trump administration continues to escalate the fight on trade so far that relations sour in a major way, it's possible the Chinese will feel less and less inclined to cooperate on enforcing and generating pressure on the North Korean regime."

China has helped make the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" campaign against North Korea effective, US officials say, but historically Beijing has been slow to apply sanctions against Pyongyang or has looked the other way on Chinese companies doing business with Pyongyang and on North Korean smuggling.

Beijing fears a regime collapse next door that could send desperate refugees flooding across its borders and even worse, the prospect of US troops moving into North Korea as a stabilizing force, bringing them right to Chinese borders.

Looking for leverage

Xi feted Kim during his visit, underscoring the newly warm ties by sending crowds of jubilant children to greet Kim waving Chinese flags and jumping up and down.

The Chinese leader praised Kim for his handling of the US meeting last week in Singapore and conveyed his satisfaction with the results of the summit as well as Pyongyang's goal of economic development, according to Chinese state media CCTV.

As Trump continues to demand credit for his role in making "initial steps toward a deal" with North Korea by establishing a personal rapport with the young dictator, Kim is pulling all the levers available to strengthen his own negotiating position.

His relationship with China is one of them, according to Richardson, who said Xi holds the power to loosen sanctions that are biting the North Korean economy by looking the other way on cross-border smuggling and energy restrictions imposed by the US and United Nations.

"I believe Kim Jong Un is trying to delay denuclearization and do it at his own pace," he said, noting that can be accomplished only with sanctions relief from China -- a step the North Korean leader views as an apt reward for rapprochement with Trump.

"Kim's logic is pretty simple: more options, more leverage," said Oba. "Without engagement with the United States, Kim going to Beijing would make him look desperate and highlight North Korea's

	dependence on China. "And without China clearly backing North Korea, the United States might feel more free to abandon diplomacy and ramp up pressure. Now he gets to look independent and strong while playing both sides to get the best possible situation for North Korea."
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HEADLINE	06/20 Penn. court blocks abuse report release
SOURCE	http://www.philly.com/philly/news/pa-supreme-court-blocks-grand-jury-report-20180620.html
GIST	<p>HARRISBURG — The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has agreed to indefinitely block the release of a grand jury report detailing decades of clergy sex abuse in six of the state’s eight Roman Catholic dioceses.</p> <p>In a two-paragraph order made public Wednesday, the state’s highest court said it granted requests from unnamed individuals or institutions to prevent the public release of the much-anticipated report.</p> <p>“The Honorable Norman A. Krumenacker, III, and the Office of the Attorney General are enjoined from releasing Report No. 1 of the 40th Statewide Investigating Grand Jury pending further order of this Court,” it read, citing the Cambria County judge who has overseen the panel’s work.</p> <p>The order — unsigned and released in the name of the entire court — throws into question the results of a sweeping probe that spanned at least two years and could implicate hundreds of clergy and other officials across the state.</p> <p>The investigation focused on child sex abuse and cover-ups in every Catholic diocese in the state except those in Philadelphia and Altoona-Johnstown — two dioceses that in past years endured similar scrutiny — and was expected to run 800 or more pages long. Some said the report could be unprecedented both by reviewing nearly every diocese in a single state, and by exploring the role that other officials outside the church may have played in enabling or concealing child sex abuse.</p> <p>Attorney General Josh Shapiro, a Democrat whose office spearheaded the probe, has said he had hoped to publicly speak about the grand jury’s investigation by month’s end. “The only thing that could stop these findings from becoming public at that time is if one of the bishops or dioceses would seek to delay or prevent this public accounting,” Shapiro said in a May 21 statement.</p> <p>In response to the Supreme Court order, Shapiro’s office said: “My legal team and I will continue fighting tirelessly to make sure the victims of this abuse are able to tell their stories and the findings of this investigation are made public to the people of Pennsylvania.”</p> <p>Bishops in all six dioceses have stated publicly that they would not block the release of the report. It is not known whether any of the people or groups who petitioned the high court to keep it under wraps are associated with the church.</p> <p>In its order, the Supreme Court did not signal who filed the petition or when, explain its reasoning for granting the request, or say how long it would take to consider the issue.</p> <p>Kimberly Bathgate, a spokesperson for the court, said the justices did not publicly explain their thinking because “all grand jury matters are sealed, including the rationale.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/21 AAA: record 47M travelers 4th of July
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-julyfourth-travel-aaa/record-47-million-expected-to-travel-for-u-s-july-fourth-holiday-aaa-idUSKBN1JH0AG

GIST	<p>NEW YORK (Reuters) - U.S. travelers will hit the roads, rails and airports in record numbers this Fourth of July holiday, despite higher gasoline prices, the nation's largest automotive advocacy group said on Thursday.</p> <p>Some 46.9 million Americans will travel 50 miles (80 km) over the upcoming July Fourth holiday, the fifth consecutive annual increase and highest travel volume since the group began tracking data 18 years ago, according to the AAA, or American Automobile Association.</p> <p>The holiday period is defined this year as July 3 to July 8.</p> <p>Gas prices have fallen a bit since the 2018 high of \$2.97 a gallon set over Memorial Day weekend, the last weekend in May. The national average gas price was \$2.87 on Wednesday, up 59 cents from a year ago.</p> <p>Despite higher prices, automobile travel is expected to increase for the fourth straight year, rising 5.1 percent or nearly 2 million more than in 2017, to 39.7 million travelers, the AAA said.</p> <p>"Confident consumers with additional disposable income will look to spend on travel this holiday, building on an already busy summer travel season," said Bill Sutherland, senior vice president, AAA Travel and Publishing.</p> <p>Air travel volume will increase to 3.76 million passengers, 7.9 percent more than last year. With the holiday falling on a Wednesday, air travel is helped by enabling more flexibility to fly either before or after the holiday, the group said.</p> <p>U.S. gasoline demand, which accounts for roughly 10 percent of global demand, hit record highs last year thanks in part to a strong summer driving season.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Crisis: Central America violence, turmoil
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/immigration-border-crisis/central-america-s-violence-turmoil-keeps-driving-families-u-s-n884956
GIST	<p>AUSTIN, Texas — Patricia de Jesús Flores waited at a homeless shelter on the Mexican side of the U.S. border this week with her 7-year-old son, who she says witnessed a murder on a rooftop — one reason they left their home in Honduras.</p> <p>Flores, 27, was trying to decide whether to seek entry into the U.S., even though she heard parents who crossed the border illegally were being separated from their children.</p> <p>She and other families at the Senda de Vida shelter in Reynosa, Mexico, just across from McAllen, Texas, said their communities in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala are so racked with violence, so terrorized by gangs and so infiltrated by drug cartels, they had no choice but to leave.</p> <p>"If my country would be OK, I would be there happily with my child," Flores told NBC News. "I would not try to cross."</p> <p>While forced family separations — which President Donald Trump on Wednesday announced he would end — was a new way by the administration of dealing with illegal immigration on the southern border, the violence, drug cartels, gangs and poverty ravaging Central America have been driving people to the United States for years. It remains to be seen how far immigration legislation that Congress is negotiating will go to address those root problems.</p> <p>White House Chief of Staff John Kelly noted the violence in a May 2017 speech at a forum sponsored by the Atlantic Council, a Washington-based foreign policy think tank.</p>

"There's corruption there. There's terrible intimidation," Kelly said, adding that the cartels "are horrifically violent and they hold neighborhoods, cities in a grip of fear that includes police in many cases."

The conditions in what is known as the Northern Triangle of Latin America — El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras — came to Americans' attention in full force in 2014, when tens of thousands of children arrived on their own at the U.S. border.

For years, Honduras had the highest homicide rate in the world, peaking at over 91 homicides per 100,000 in 2011, according to a United Nations report. The rate has since declined but remains comparatively high; last year, the rate was 42.8 homicides per 100,000.

Such violence hasn't stopped residents of the Northern Triangle from making the dangerous trek north to an uncertain welcome on the U.S.-Mexican border. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, some 3.4 million people born in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras were living in the United States as of 2015, the latest year for which data is available.

The Northern Triangle is home to transnational gangs, such as MS-13 and the 18th Street Gang, both founded in Los Angeles, as well as drug cartels and criminal organizations with origins in the area's civil wars.

Corruption, weak and unstable government institutions and political turmoil make it difficult for Central American countries to combat the gangs and violence. Early this year in Honduras, protests following the re-election of President Juan Orlando Hernandez turned violent when police and troops used excessive force to quell protests, leaving 32 dead. No police or troops were charged, Amnesty International said in a report, The Associated Press reported.

"Based on our interviews with individuals in immigration detention and at the border about the conditions they are fleeing ... the conditions haven't changed, which is why we are seeing these large numbers of people arriving," said Alison Parker, director of the Human Rights Watch's U.S. Program.

Border Patrol apprehensions on the southern border so far this fiscal year, which began in October, total 252,187. That's an increase of nearly 230,000 over the first eight months of 2017, when apprehensions totaled 224,817, according to Customs and Border Patrol statistics.

The unrelenting turmoil of the region appears to still be driving families to flee with their children.

Piedad De Jesús Mejía, a 31-year-old mother from Honduras, had traveled to Reynosa, Mexico, with her four children. She said Tuesday that she had heard about the family separations going on at the border, but "I had to leave without caring about that."

"I left my country because of the crimes and because we were witnesses when two of my husband's cousins were killed and now they are looking for us, too," she said.

In Matamoros, Mexico, Jennifer Figueroa from Honduras held her 3-year-old son, Angel, as she stood on an international bridge leading into Brownsville, Texas.

She had been in Mexico three days hoping to cross into the United States legally and ask for asylum. She said she had left her country because of death threats from the 18th Street gang and had paid a smuggler about \$125 to get to the U.S.

Told of the separations happening at the border, she insisted she would not let her son go. "I'd rather ask them to deport me," Jennifer said.

To deal with the 2014 surge in Central American families and children arriving at the border, the Obama administration and Congress adopted a broad U.S. strategy to address not only what was happening at the

border, but also the corruption and violence of the region, experts said.

The U.S. upped its investment in the region substantially, although not to the extent or as quickly as Obama had wanted. He had asked for a \$1 billion investment at the time.

“It took 18 months to convince Congress to put \$750 million bucks” toward addressing the problems, said Cecilia Muñoz, who served as Obama’s director of the White House Domestic Policy Council. In 2014, the total was about \$317 million.

The administration also created “in-country” programs for adults and to some degree children to apply for asylum from their countries. It called on other countries in the region to “step up” and accept people applying for asylum.

“All of those were policies that were developing, and, of course, they’ve all been dismantled by this administration,” Muñoz said.

Although the Trump administration continues to work with the Northern Triangle countries — Vice President Mike Pence is to visit victims of recent volcanoes in Guatemala next week and met with the Honduran president Wednesday —the region’s problems are “so deep and so endemic they cannot be fixed in a couple years,” said Jason Marczak, director of the Atlantic Council’s Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center.

“People will come either way because they are trying to survive,” Marczak said.

During the 2014 crisis, Mexico took a more active role, working to clamp down on illegal immigration through its southern border. Last year, Mexico coordinated with the Trump administration to organize a conference in Miami on what could be done to push for systemic change in Central America.

But the family separations have produced images and stories that have shocked other parts of the world and are harming the image of the U.S. The controversy could slow efforts to bring about lasting change in the Northern Triangle.

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HEADLINE	06/21 Military lawyers for immigration cases
SOURCE	https://www.aol.com/article/news/2018/06/21/pentagon-sending-military-lawyers-to-prosecute-immigration-cases/23464449/
GIST	<p>Twenty-one military lawyers are being sent to Arizona, Texas and New Mexico to help prosecute illegal immigration case, the Defense Department told MSNBC on Wednesday night.</p> <p>The lawyers, who are to have "criminal trial experience," will be appointed as full-time special assistant U.S. attorneys for up to 179 days, or around six months, the Defense Department said in confirming the plan, which was first reported by MSNBC's "The Rachel Maddow Show.</p> <p>"The plan is outlined in internal Defense Department emails obtained by MSNBC. According to the emails — which appear to be dated last month and one of which is labeled "An urgent request" — the Justice Department sought applicants for the positions "while we staff up" with permanent assistant U.S. attorneys.</p> <p>According to the documents, the military lawyers will be given basic training in immigration law and federal criminal procedure to assist regular federal prosecutors in Yuma, Arizona; Las Cruces, New Mexico; and El Paso, Del Rio, Laredo and McAllen in Texas.</p> <p>The Washington Post reported earlier Wednesday that the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement ended a grant program last month that paid for some detained migrant children to have lawyers while they are in</p>

	government custody.
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HEADLINE	06/20 UN: US global leader asylum requests
SOURCE	https://www.aol.com/article/news/2018/06/20/the-united-states-is-now-the-global-leader-in-asylum-requests-the-un-says/23464157/
GIST	<p>The United States fielded more new asylum requests than any other country last year, according to the United Nations Refugee Agency, even as the Trump administration has been employing stricter measures to keep people out.</p> <p>The number of new applications for asylum in the U.S. increased by 27 percent from 2016 to 2017, reaching 331,700, according to the “Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017” report. The U.S. surpassed Germany, which fielded 198,300 applications.</p> <p>The U.N. report was published Tuesday before World Refugee Day, which falls on Wednesday.</p> <p>The latest numbers are in line with the steady increase in asylum claims coming from Central America that the U.S. has seen since 2013.</p> <p>“Similar to last year, applicants from the [northern region of Central America] made up 43 percent of all claims, and the number of claims increased by 44 percent, reaching levels not seen since the 1980s,” the study said. The applicants consist mainly of people from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras who are fleeing gang violence.</p> <p>The release of these figures comes amid a public backlash against the Trump administration’s zero tolerance policy. The administration seeks to prosecute anybody who attempts to cross the border illegally — an effort that is driving family separations on a massive scale. More than 2,300 children were separated from their parents between May 5 and June 9.</p> <p>Even once people have put in their asylum requests, the system is so backlogged — there were 311,000 pending cases as of January — that a decision can take years. Only 65,600 asylum decisions were made in the U.S. in 2017, the U.N. report said, making the U.S. home to the largest asylum-seeking population in the world.</p> <p>“This backlog has grown by more than 1,750 percent over the last five years, and the rate of new asylum applications has more than tripled,” U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services said. The agency announced in January that it would be scheduling interviews for more recent applications, prioritizing new entrants over those who have already been waiting years for a decision.</p> <p>“Asylum is a slow process in the U.S. and it’s always been sort of a neglected activity within our judicial system. Never really have adequate resources been allocated to this particular legal component of the work,” said Erol Kekic, executive director of the immigration and refugee program at the Church World Service, a global humanitarian agency.</p> <p>Worldwide, the number of asylum seekers waiting for decisions on their applications spiked about 300,000, to 3.1 million by the end of last year, the U.N. report said.</p> <p>A record 68.5 million people — a jump of almost 3 million in just one year — had also been displaced by the end of 2017. More than 25 million of them fled their countries as refugees. The remainder were internally displaced or seeking asylum.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Plastic piling up w/China recycling ban
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/study-plastic-pile-wake-china-recycling-ban-56036809?
GIST	<p>China's decision to stop accepting plastic waste from other countries is causing plastic to pile up around the globe, and wealthy countries must find a way to slow the accumulation of one of the most ubiquitous materials on the planet, a group of scientists said.</p> <p>The scientists sought to quantify the impact of the Chinese import ban on the worldwide trade in plastic waste, and found that other nations might need to find a home for more than 122 million tons (110 million metric tons) of plastic by 2030. The ban went into effect Dec. 31, 2017, and the stockpiling trend figures to worsen, the scientists said.</p> <p>Wealthy countries such as the United States, Japan and Germany have long sent their plastic recyclables to China, and the country doesn't want to be the world's dumping ground for plastic anymore. The study found China has taken more than 116 million tons (105 million metric tons) of the material since 1992, the equivalent of the weight of more than 300 Empire State Buildings.</p> <p>The change is forcing countries to rethink how they deal with plastic waste. They need to be more selective about what they choose to recycle, and more fastidious about reusing plastics, said Amy Brooks, first author on the study and a doctoral student in engineering at the University of Georgia. In the meantime, Brooks said, more plastic waste is likely to get incinerated or sent to landfills.</p> <p>"This is a wake-up call. Historically, we've been depending on China to take in this recycled waste and now they are saying no," she said. "That waste has to be managed, and we have to manage it properly."</p> <p>The study was published Wednesday in the journal Science Advances. Using United Nations data, it found that China has dwarfed all other plastics importers, accounting for about 45 percent of the world's plastic waste since 1992. The ban is part of a larger crackdown on foreign garbage, which is viewed as a threat to health and environment.</p> <p>Some countries that have seen an increase in plastic waste imports since China's ban — such as Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia — are already looking to enforce bans of their own because they are quickly becoming overburdened, Brooks said.</p> <p>The study illustrates that plastic, which has a wide array of uses and formulations, is more difficult to recycle than other materials, such as glass and aluminum, said Sherri Mason, who was not involved in the study and is the chair of the geology and environmental sciences department at the State University of New York at Fredonia.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/21 International Yoga Day
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Wellness/yoga-moves-desk-international-yoga-day/story?id=56012758
GIST	<p>It's no secret that sitting at a desk for hours each workday is not the best thing for our bodies.</p> <p>"From a posture standpoint, it weakens the legs, can cause tight hips and low back pain, and stiff shoulders and neck," said Michael Gervais, director of group programming for Equinox in New York City. "These are the biggest complaints we see these in our classes, and much of what we do in Western yoga is to counter the effects of this lifestyle."</p> <p>The good news is that doing small movements at your desk, even while seated, can make a difference.</p> <p>"At minimum, you should stand and move around once an hour," Gervais said.</p> <p>Ready for a stretch break? Thursday is International Yoga Day, a reminder to stretch and appreciate what</p>

	<p>our bodies can do.</p> <p>Try these five yoga moves from Gervais to break up your workday.</p> <p>1. Standing cat/cow</p> <p>Use the side of the desk to arch and curl the spine. Inhale arch the spine, exhale round the spine, five to 10 deep breaths.</p> <p>2. Standing twist</p> <p>Use the desk or a wall as leverage and take three big breaths in a twist to each side.</p> <p>3. Crescent lunge variation</p> <p>Put one leg behind you, then reach up with that same arm to stretch the front of the hips. Three breaths each side.</p> <p>4. Chair pose variation</p> <p>With your feet touching, lift your butt a few inches off your chair, so your legs are working.</p> <p>Lift your chest and either keep your hands at your hips, or reach them overhead. Either way, keep opening across the shoulders. Five to 10 breaths.</p> <p>It should feel like work for the legs.</p> <p>5. Standing forward fold variation</p> <p>With the feet hip distance apart, clasp your fingers behind the back and fold forward over the legs.</p> <p>Focus on squeezing your wrists together and opening across the chest. Let your head hang. Five breaths. Come out slowly.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 World Refugee Day 2018
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/world-refugee-day-2018-record-685-million-forcibly/story?
GIST	<p>Record high numbers of men, women and children were driven from their homes across the world last year due to war, violence and persecution, according to a new report by the United Nations' refugee agency.</p> <p>The UNHCR's annual "Global Trends" study found that a staggering 68.5 million people worldwide had been forcibly displaced by the end of 2017.</p> <p>Nearly a quarter of them were uprooted just last year, either for the first time or repeatedly. That's an average of one person displaced every two seconds of the day, the study says.</p> <p>"Now, more than ever, taking care of refugees must be a global -- and shared -- responsibility," Filippo Grandi, the U.N. high commissioner for refugees, said in a statement Wednesday. "It's time to do things differently."</p> <p>"On World Refugee Day, it's time to recognize their humanity in action -- and challenge ourselves, and others, to join them -- in receiving and supporting refugees in our schools, neighborhoods, and workplaces," he continued. "This is where solidarity starts -- with all of us."</p>

The report was published Tuesday ahead of World Refugee Day, amid global outrage over a "zero-tolerance" policy enacted by U.S. President Donald Trump that is forcibly separating immigrant children from their parents at the border with Mexico. Thousands of Central Americans are fleeing violence and poverty in their home countries -- including El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras -- and are risking their lives to reach the United States.

Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, the U.N. high commissioner for human rights, has described the immigration policy as "government-sanctioned child abuse" and urged the U.S. government to end the controversial practice.

"In the past six weeks, nearly two thousand children have been forcibly separated from their parents," al-Hussein said in a statement Monday. "The thought that any State would seek to deter parents by inflicting such abuse on children is unconscionable."

According to the UNHCR report, the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the civil war in South Sudan and the flight of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar into Bangladesh were the leading causes of forcible displacement last year.

The global displacement figure for 2017 includes 25.4 million refugees who fled their countries to escape conflict and persecution, the study says. That's 2.9 million more refugees than the year before -- the steepest increase UNHCR has ever seen in a single year.

The report shows that Turkey hosted the largest number of refugees worldwide for the fourth consecutive year, with 3.5 million people. It was followed by Pakistan, Uganda, Lebanon, Iran, Germany, Bangladesh and Sudan.

"International responsibility-sharing for displaced people has utterly collapsed. Rich countries are building walls against families fleeing war, at the same time as less money is available for aid to people in conflict areas," Jan Egeland, secretary-general of the Norwegian Refugee Council, said in a statement Tuesday.

Halfway through the fiscal year, the Trump administration has admitted less than a quarter of the 45,000 refugees it set as a cap -- already the lowest ceiling in the 43-year history of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program -- with only 10,548 refugees allowed entry into the United States since October 1, 2017.

In a statement marking World Refugee Day, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo emphasized that his government provides aid to crises that uproot people from their homes and that "new actors" must step up to the plate to address the rising number of displaced persons.

"As global displacement has reached record levels, it is vital that new actors -- including governments, international financial institutions, and the private sector -- come to the table to assist in the global response to address it," Pompeo said in his statement Wednesday. "The United States will continue to be a world leader in providing humanitarian assistance and working to forge political solutions to the underlying conflicts that drive displacement."

"The United States provides more humanitarian assistance than any other single country worldwide, including to refugees," he added.

The U.N. 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as someone who is forced to leave their home due to "a well-founded fear of persecution." The persecution must be "because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion," the treaty says.

Other types of forcibly displaced persons include asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, stateless persons and returnees.

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HEADLINE	06/20 Italy, Austria hardline axis on migration
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/italy-austria-signal-hard-line-axis-migration-56036303
GIST	<p>A meeting of Italy's anti-migrant interior minister with like-minded Austrian populist leaders on Wednesday in Rome heralded a new hard-line axis forming in Europe on migration issues with pledges to more firmly protect Europe's southern border.</p> <p>Italy's interior minister, Matteo Salvini, leveraged on his recent refusal to allow landfall in Sicily to a ship carrying some 630 migrants rescued at sea off the Libyan coast. The new Socialist government in Spain agreed to take them in, acknowledging Europe had abandoned Italy, after the tiny island nation of Malta also balked.</p> <p>"It is a historic moment because Europe has never had the possibility to change like in these days. We think it can change for the better on the topics of immigration, security and the fight against terrorism. Finally there is a decision to protect the exterior border," Salvini said.</p> <p>Salvini and his Austrian counterparts — vice chancellor Heinz Christian Strache and interior minister Herbert Kickl — signaled their common approach to reinforcing the exterior border while deferring specifics to Austria's EU presidency, and other forums, including an upcoming EU summit. Salvini said he was briefing Premier Conte and vice premier Luigi Di Maio on his proposals later in the day.</p> <p>But Salvini made clear that he would continue to press neighbors to do more. While welcoming Spain's acceptance of the migrants, he noted that Spain has only taken 235 of an agreed-upon EU quota of 3,265. "They can take the next four boats that arrive," he said. He also slammed France, which has only taken 640 of the 9,800 migrants it has pledged to receive.</p> <p>Salvini said he had trust in the Austrian EU presidency to make a difference in discussions about changing the Dublin accords, noting "the mood has changed," but also hinting that Italy would be willing to play hardball, and hold back payments to the EU, if significant changes were not made.</p> <p>Salvini said he wanted to see EU funds better spent, and said he would travel to Libya, the main departure point for migrants heading to Italy, in the coming days to work on stemming the migrant tide as well as economic development issues.</p> <p>While more than 640,000 migrants have arrived in Italy since 2014, the number of arrivals in Italy this year is down over 80 percent, to over 14,500.</p> <p>Austria's interior minister, Kickl, said the message had to go out "that those who rely on traffickers have given up all chances of asylum in Europe."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 South Sudan's warring leaders meet
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/south-sudans-warring-leaders-set-meet-face-face-56022088?
GIST	<p>South Sudan's warring leaders met face-to-face for the first time in almost two years Wednesday amid efforts to end a five-year civil war, shaking hands but making no public comments.</p> <p>South Sudan President Salva Kiir and opposition leader Riek Machar continued meeting into the night and were expected to continue discussions on Thursday in neighboring Ethiopia, which invited them for talks as pressure grows to end a conflict that has killed tens of thousands of people and created Africa's largest refugee crisis since the 1994 Rwanda genocide.</p>

	<p>A Kiir spokesman, Ateny Wek Ateny, has said "anything that brings peace in South Sudan is wanted."</p> <p>Machar fled South Sudan after new fighting erupted in the capital in July 2016, ending a brief attempt at peace in which he returned to his role as Kiir's deputy. He later was put under house arrest in South Africa, whose presidency on Wednesday welcomed Machar's participation in the talks.</p> <p>The meeting, attended by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, was mediated by the East African regional bloc that has led several rounds of failed peace talks. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development last month called for a meeting of Kiir and Machar ahead of an African Union summit on July 1 in Mauritania, saying it would inform a "final decision" on Machar's participation in the peace process.</p> <p>Both sides in South Sudan's civil war have been accused of widespread abuses such as gang rapes against civilians, including along ethnic lines. A number of South Sudan officials have been accused by human rights groups of profiting from the conflict and blocking the path to peace.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/21 Canada legalizes pot differently than US
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/legal-pot-roll-differently-canada-us-56049565
GIST	<p>Mail-order weed? You betcha!</p> <p>With marijuana legalization across Canada on the horizon, the industry is shaping up to look different from the way it does in nine U.S. states that have legalized adult recreational use of the drug. Age limits, government involvement in distribution and sales, and access to banking are some big discrepancies.</p> <p>And yes, Canadians will be able to order cannabis online and have it delivered through the mail — something that's illegal in the United States.</p> <p>Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced Wednesday that marijuana will be legal nationwide on Oct. 17. In the meantime, Canada's provinces and cities are working out issues concerning how cannabis will be regulated.</p> <p>Here's what to expect:</p> <p>GOVERNMENT-RUN STORES</p> <p>It's up to the provinces and territories to determine how to handle distribution, and they're taking a variety of approaches.</p> <p>Ontario plans to open up to 150 stores run by its Liquor Control Board — a model of public ownership that is unusual in the U.S. The tiny Washington state town of North Bonneville has one city-owned pot shop.</p> <p>British Columbia is planning for a mix of public and privately owned stores, while Newfoundland and Saskatchewan will have only private pot shops. In some remote areas where stand-alone marijuana stores might not be economically feasible, including in the Northwest Territories, cannabis could be sold at existing liquor stores.</p> <p>Just like U.S. states with legal pot, the provinces also differ on home-growing, with many allowing up to four plants and others, including Quebec, barring it.</p> <p>And rather than a minimum age of 21, as U.S. states have set, Canada's federal minimum age to use marijuana will be 18, with most provinces adding an additional year.</p>

The varying approaches make the provinces something of a laboratory for determining the best ways to legalize, said Matt Gray, founder and chief executive of Herb, a Toronto-based news and social media platform for the pot industry.

"It's this amazing case study for countries globally to see the amazing benefits that legalizing cannabis can have on things like the economy, eradicating the black market and getting cannabis out of the hands of minors," he said.

PRICING AND TAXES

Whether run by the government or private entities, the stores will obtain their marijuana from federally licensed growers. Officials also will set a minimum price.

Canada's finance ministers have pegged it at about \$10 per gram, but the Yukon minister in charge of marijuana says the government hopes to displace more of the illegal market by setting the base at \$8.

The government wants to tax legal marijuana at either \$1 per gram or one-tenth of a product's price, whichever is greater, plus federal and provincial sales taxes. It's likely to be less than the taxes imposed in the states.

Washington state's tax rate is 37 percent, plus state and local sales taxes. In California, licensed pot businesses are blaming total tax rates that can approach 50 percent for driving people back into the black market.

The Canadian government agreed to give provinces and territories 75 percent of the tax revenue.

BANKING

Canada's cannabis businesses have a massive advantage over their American counterparts: access to banks.

Because the drug is still illegal under U.S. law, major banks have been loath to do business with the industry, even in legal marijuana states.

U.S. Treasury Department data show a slow increase in the number of banks and credit unions maintaining accounts for marijuana businesses, with 411 reporting such accounts last spring.

But many of those institutions don't provide full-service banking, making it tough for businesses to get loans.

"The major Canadian banks were slow to warm to this," said Chris Barry, a Seattle-based marijuana business attorney who handles industry transactions in both countries for the law firm Dorsey and Whitney.

He said smaller independent banks, investment banks and brokerage firms got the work started.

"That has pretty much dissolved as a problem," Barry said. "The majors are coming around to participate in the market."

THE PRODUCTS

Some consumers are disappointed that store shelves will only stock dried flower, oils and seeds when sales begin — no edibles. The government has said it needs about another year to develop regulations for edibles.

There's also a labeling issue: Health Canada has dictated large warning labels on otherwise plain packages, with strict restrictions on font sizes, styles and colors. The idea is to discourage misuse and to avoid

	<p>appealing to youths, but it also leaves very little room for company logos or branding.</p> <p>"It looks like each bag is housing radioactive waste," said Chris Clay, owner of Warmland Cannabis Centre, a medical marijuana dispensary on Vancouver Island. "It's a tiny logo with this huge warning label. It doesn't leave much room for craft growers that want to differentiate themselves."</p> <p>And that, Clay said, is one of many things that will make it difficult for mom-and-pop growers to thrive. Giant cannabis companies have been entering deals to supply marijuana to the provinces.</p> <p>While micro-producers are allowed, Clay is worried that by the time rules are released, "all the contracts are going to be scooped up."</p> <p>POT BY POST</p> <p>While getting marijuana by mail may be a novel concept in the U.S., it's nothing new in Canada. Its postal service has been shipping medical marijuana to authorized patients since 2013.</p> <p>"Many of our processes are in place today for medicinal cannabis and will continue for any regulated product sent through Canada Post from licensed distributors," Canada Post said in a written statement.</p> <p>The agency requires proof of age upon delivery and won't leave the package in your mailbox or on your doorstep if you're not home.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Charleston apologizes for slavery role
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/charleston-formally-apologizes-role-slavery/story?
GIST	<p>A southern city is formally apologizing for its dark past.</p> <p>Charleston, South Carolina, has approved a resolution that condemns and apologizes for the centuries of human slavery that were supported and promoted by its former lawmakers. The city council's 12 members voted 7-5 to adopt the symbolic resolution Tuesday night, coinciding with "Juneteenth," the celebratory anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the United States.</p> <p>The port city played a major role in the Atlantic slave trade. Nearly half of the people who were abducted from their homes in Africa and shipped to the United States to be sold into slavery took their first steps on American soil in Charleston. Slaves made up almost half of the city's population before the start of the American Civil War, according to the International African American Museum in Charleston.</p> <p>"This is the modern city council which feels the need to make an apology for the institution of slavery in the city of Charleston," Charleston councilman William Dudley Gregorie, who helped author and shepherd the resolution, told ABC News in a telephone interview before Tuesday's vote.</p> <p>Gregorie, who is also a trustee at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, said the resolution is a long time coming and a testament to the power of collaboration. He did "extensive research to reach a draft" that was shared with his fellow council members.</p> <p>The language in the three-page resolution explicitly takes responsibility for the "dehumanizing atrocities" that were condoned for hundreds of years.</p> <p>The resolution goes on to detail how the economic success of colonial and antebellum Charleston (formerly Charles Town) "was slave labor" and it prospered "due to the expertise, ingenuity and hard labor of enslaved Africans who were forced to endure inhumane working conditions that produced wealth for many, but which was denied to them."</p>

The document also admits to how the institution of slavery "sought to suppress, if not destroy, the cultural and social values of Africans by stripping Africans of their ancestral names and customs, humiliating and brutalizing them through sexual exploitation, and selling African relatives apart from one another without regard to the connection of the family."

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HEADLINE	06/20 Opioid prevention in schools trend up
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/trending-concern-schools-opioid-awareness-prevention/story?
GIST	<p>As the school year winds down, opioid prevention in schools are trending up.</p> <p>One in 7 high school students in America reported they'd misused prescription opioids, like hydrocodone, in the past year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>In Ashland, Kentucky a community of just over 21,000 people along the southern bank of the Ohio River, the epidemic has hit a fever pitch.</p> <p>Boyd County, where Ashland is located, saw 39 opioid-related deaths in 2017, which was an increase from 30 deaths in 2016, according to the local paper The Daily Independent.</p> <p>In one year, local elementary schools found a total of 18 needles in their playgrounds.</p> <p>To combat the epidemic, students from Ashland Middle School came up with a device to keep people safe from syringes discarded on the ground.</p> <p>They designed a working prototype to safely pick up and dispose of syringes and created a database to alert the public where the syringes were found.</p> <p>"We really noticed that this was a big problem in our community and our resource officer came to us and asked if we could figure out a solution," Isaac Crawford, an eighth-grader at Ashland Middle School and one of the 19 students who worked on creating the device, told ABC News.</p> <p>On a recent trip to Washington, D.C., the students showcased their device to lawmakers in Congress. Senate Majority leader Mitch McConnell, from their home state of Kentucky, called it "inspirational."</p> <p>The Ashland police chief saw the prototype and wants it in the hands of every officer "as soon as possible," Crawford said.</p> <p>The students won a nationwide contest sponsored on by Samsung - which supplied the 3D printing technology to create the prototype.</p> <p>The database locates where needles were found and then reports them to police and vice versa. The hope is that they can eventually turn it over fully to the police department.</p> <p>The Naloxone Approach in Schools</p> <p>As the opioid crisis hits America hard, states have taken a new approach to keeping students safe: putting naloxone in schools, training counselors on how to approach the opioid crisis, and taking a students first approach to education and understanding of the problem.</p> <p>"We need to get [naloxone] out there, it needs to be available in places," Jon DeLena DEA Associate Special Agent in Charge for New England told ABC News. "The amount of lives it has saved is staggering."</p> <p>Maryland Rhode Island have passed laws requiring schools to carry naloxone.</p>

	<p>“Given the scope of the opioid epidemic in our area right now, it’s not outside the realm of possibility that any high school or middle school could have a student on campus who experiences an overdose,” said Rhode Island state Sen. Gayle Goldin in a news release. "Every second matters."</p> <p>Other states like Ohio and New Hampshire leave it up to the individual districts to decide whether to put naloxone in schools or not.</p> <p>Dublin City Schools in Dublin, Ohio, with 17,000 students and 20 buildings, has had naloxone in all of its schools since 2016 in order to be "proactive and prepared."</p> <p>The thought is to have school nurses be able to administer the antidote similarly to an EpiPen. It is something the National Association of School Nurses support.</p> <p>"There's no downside to having it," Tracey Miller, the deputy superintendent of Dublin City Schools, told ABC News. "Only an upside."</p> <p>DeLena said having naloxone in schools, at first, he was taken aback by it, but realized it was forward thinking.</p> <p>"It isn't so much they are worried about a student overdosing, they're worried about someone else on campus overdosing. Whether that's God forbid a teacher, parent at parent pickup or at a game. It could be anybody," he said. "We know this thing is so wide spread, the more I thought about it, it's forward leaning and the schools are trying to get ahead of it."</p> <p>An early start – focusing on youth.</p> <p>In New Hampshire, a state some consider ground zero for the opioid crisis, the Drug Enforcement Agency and community leaders are working with students to help combat the opioid crisis.</p> <p>"Everything we've been doing in New Hampshire has been youth-focused because of the opioid crisis," DeLena said.</p> <p>DeLena, with the help of the Recovery Centers of America and the Mark Whalberg Youth Foundation, put on the New Hampshire Youth Summit on Opioid Awareness - the first event of its kind. The event drew so much attention that Attorney General Jeff Sessions flew in to speak and a former MLB pitcher spoke about his addiction and recovery.</p> <p>The response from students in attendance was positive.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Airlines speak out on immigration policy
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/airlines-speak-transportation-undocumented-children-separated-family/story?id=56043080
GIST	<p>Before President Donald Trump signed an executive order Wednesday to reverse the administration's family separation policy, the Department of Homeland Security attacked several airlines that said they would not knowingly work with the federal government in cases of transporting children separated from their parents at the border.</p> <p>American Airlines acknowledged an existing contract with the federal government, but the airline said it does not know whom the government flies nor their purpose for traveling.</p> <p>"We have no knowledge that the federal government has used American to transport children who have been separated from their parents due to the recent immigration policy, but we would be extremely</p>

disappointed to learn that is the case," the airline said in a statement. "We have therefore requested the federal government to immediately refrain from using American for the purpose of transporting children who have been separated from their families due to the current immigration policy. We have no desire to be associated with separating families, or worse, to profit from it."

Southwest Airlines and United Airlines released similar statements. The carriers said they were unaware of any previous occurrences but asked the government to no longer use their flights to transport immigrant children.

"We have contacted federal officials to inform them that they should not transport immigrant children on United aircraft who have been separated from their parents," CEO Oscar Munoz said.

Frontier Airlines also said they would not knowingly engage in transporting separated children. Delta Airlines released a statement after the president signed the executive order.

The Atlanta-based airline said "recent reports of families being separated are disheartening and do not align with Delta's core values," but it's pleased with the executive order.

The Association of Flight Attendants expressed concern that tension could pose a "safety and security issue" aboard planes, as passengers and crew react to seeing children board.

"Some are struggling with the question of participating in a process that they feel is deeply immoral," the association said member flight attendants. "We have asked the airlines to communicate with Flight Attendants so that we know what to expect, whether these children could be on our flights, how we will be notified, what special instructions there may be for care of these children if they are on our flights, and how to respond to passengers."

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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	06/20 Hacker group targets US satellites
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/hacker-group-china-may-disrupt-us-satellites-cybersecurity-firm-warns-985501
GIST	<p>A cyber-espionage group operating from computers inside China is currently targeting U.S. satellite communications and defense sectors as part of a "wide-ranging" operation. They may soon seek to disrupt critical systems, according to cybersecurity firm Symantec's Security Response Attack Investigation Team.</p> <p>The hacking collective, codenamed Thrip, has been using powerful malware against targets in the U.S. and Southeast Asia, researchers said in a detailed analysis published on Tuesday. Symantec's experts said the team has been active since at least 2013 and is highly motivated by spying. But they warned its tactics could turn nasty by taking a more "aggressive" approach in the future.</p> <p>Thrip, the report said, relies on a cocktail of custom malware and legitimate network administration tools to compromise computers. The campaign has been tied to three computers in China, but Symantec did not elaborate on who is pulling the strings, or if they could potentially be linked to the government. As Russian cybersecurity chief Eugene Kaspersky noted this week, accurate attribution is now harder than ever.</p> <p>Symantec said the hackers appear to be interested in finding out how to infect computers running software that monitors and controls satellites. Another target in the hacking group's latest operation—which was launched in 2017 according to Symantec—was an organization involved in geospatial imaging and mapping. The hackers also targeted computers running Google Earth Server and Garmin imaging software, researchers said. In addition, they targeted three different telecommunications operators located</p>

	<p>in Southeast Asia.</p> <p>While the culprits still remain a mystery, their tools do not. Researchers found malware designed to steal data, log keystrokes and create backdoors. Some had links to “underground Chinese hackers.”</p> <p>“This is likely espionage,” said Greg Clark, chief executive of Symantec. “The Thrip group has been working since 2013 and their latest campaign uses standard operating system tools, so targeted organizations won’t notice their presence. They operate very quietly, blending in to networks, and are only discovered using artificial intelligence that can identify and flag their movements.”</p> <p>He added: “Alarmingly, the group [is] keenly interested in telecom, satellite operators and defense companies. We stand ready to work with appropriate authorities to address this serious threat.”</p> <p>Cybersecurity companies have long tracked China-based cyber-espionage operations, and it is widely believed that North Korea’s hacking groups rely on computer infrastructure in the country.</p> <p>In March this year, experts from FireEye found a suspected Chinese campaign that was targeting engineering and maritime sectors in the U.S. with ties to the South China Sea territory dispute. Back in 2015, China and U.S. agreed to reduce state-sponsored theft of intellectual property. The loose cyber-truce followed the massive hack of federal records from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) that was blamed on Beijing. While the results did have an effect, cyber-espionage persists.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Cybercrime serious threat at World Cup
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/soccer/worldcup/2018/06/20/world-cup-cyber-crime-very-real-threat-us-fans-experts-say/718308002/
GIST	<p>Cyber crime is the most serious threat for U.S. fans traveling to Russia this summer for the World Cup, security experts say.</p> <p>While headlines before the tournament warned of Russian hooligans possibly causing disruptions and Fox broadcaster Alexi Lalas saying he was confronted by an aggressive and angry fan while on assignment in Moscow, experts say Americans traveling to Russia should be more concerned about using their cell phones and having their personal information confiscated.</p> <p>“Probably the greatest risk is going to be cyber security,” said Larry Pfeiffer, who served as chief of staff to former CIA Director Michael Hayden. “No. 1, Russia is a security state with one of the most advanced intelligence services in the world, and they are going to try to use this event to their advantage.”</p> <p>Russian government agencies with the potential to hack devices are the Federal Security Service (FSB) and the Main Intelligence Administration (GRU), Pfeiffer says.</p> <p>“They’ve got an industrial-sized intelligence community that’s going to have the capability to handle vast amounts of data,” said Pfeiffer, director of the Michael V. Hayden Center for Intelligence, Policy, and International Security at George Mason University. “They will be sweeping up large amounts of data off of telephones being used in the country. Nobody should feel like they’re immune to that.”</p> <p>Julian Sanchez, who studies privacy and national security at the Cato Institute, a Washington think tank, said travelers should bring or purchase a burner phone or other device. But if you can’t afford it, wipe the device before going to Russia.</p> <p>“Back them up, wipe them clean and then bring them in a state with as little information as possible on them,” Sanchez said. “Especially big events like the World Cup, be cautious about what Wi-Fi you are using.”</p>

So far there have been few reports of criminal activity against World Cup visitors. Russian media have reported that police agencies were told not to release details of negative incidents that may affect Russia's reputation during the tournament.

Foreign security services have been known to use phishing, according to the National Counterintelligence and Security Center (NCSC). Phishing is when a person, application or device appears to be trustworthy in order to gain private information. People should not overshare their information with new acquaintances when at the World Cup, according to NCSC.

"Anyone traveling to Russia to attend the World Cup should be clear-eyed about the cyber risks involved," NCSC director William Evanina said in a statement. "If you're planning on taking a mobile phone, laptop, PDA, or other electronic device with you —make no mistake — any data on those devices (especially your personally identifiable information) may be accessed by the Russian government or cyber criminals."

Pfeiffer said U.S. citizens should not trust well-established Wi-Fi networks, such as those in commercial hotels.

"The Russian intel services work closely with hotels and venues like that to be able to monitor communications," Pfeiffer said. "The advice I give is in countries like Russia and China in particular, if you don't have to bring a device, don't bring one."

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HEADLINE	06/20 World's most notorious hacker groups
SOURCE	https://www.computerworlduk.com/security/most-notorious-hacker-groups-3679258/
GIST	<p>Today increasingly sophisticated cyber attacks are crafted, honed, and improved by shady groups of hackers, often using custom tools that are directed at high value people, businesses, or even countries. From daring cyber heists that cause cash machines in the street to give out free money, through to targeting activists, defectors and dissidents, these attacks are often carried out by dedicated groups working in the shadows of states where they are tolerated, encouraged, or even part of the intelligence machinery of countries themselves.</p> <p>Often mysterious, it is only thanks to the dedication of security researchers that we now know a little about how these groups operate, by detecting hints as to who they are, where they're based, how they operate, and why.</p> <p>These groups tend to operate in the domain of advanced persistent threat (APT), a fairly self explanatory term for sophisticated hacking attempts that are continuously ongoing, usually targeting a person, business, or country.</p> <p>APT groups vary in motive: they could be conducting cyber espionage for political or corporate information (usually in sensitive industries or public sector bodies), they could be state-sponsored, they could be directly a function of a state, or they could be simply tolerated within a state. An APT group might be financially motivated, engaging in complex cyber heists. Or they could simply want to spread misinformation and chaos.</p> <p>In any case, they often use customised, proprietary malware tools and have sophisticated means of attack. Often they run their own (sometimes vast) command and control infrastructure, and deliberately make attribution difficult – either by masking the location of the attacks or as a means to plant blame on another potential culprit, in other words, a 'false flag' operation.</p> <p>APT groups are then, by their nature, shady and mysterious – but thanks to the hard work of researchers in the infosec community, we now know details about some of them.</p> <p>Read on for some of the most notorious known hacker groups, from 'Fancy Bear' to 'Reaper'.</p> <p>The Shadow Brokers</p>

It was almost impossible to miss the WannaCry ransomware threat in 2017. WannaCry and what was then a variant of the Petya ransomware, NotPetya, absolutely hobbled infrastructure and businesses the world over.

These attacks were based on an exploit developed internally by America's National Security Agency (NSA), called EternalBlue, which itself exploited Microsoft's Server Message Block protocol (deciding to horde that exploit rather than inform Microsoft).

A group calling itself The Shadow Brokers obtained NSA files back in 2013, believed to have been extracted from an NSA staging server. This included information on all types of exploits that the spying agency had been holding onto.

The group's first published leak was in August 2016, a cache of cyber weapons that it attributed to the 'Equation Group' – an organisation believed to be based in America, possibly behind the infamous Stuxnet code that wrecked Iran's nuclear centrifuges, and that has been suggested to also have ties to the NSA.

Four leaks later and it was 'EternalBlue' – the SMB-based attack that WannaCry and Petya were built on, causing more than 200,000 infections worldwide within the first two weeks of its release. The group claims to have access to more weapons and exploits, and had previously threatened the release of new material every month.

No one knows for sure where the Shadow Brokers group originates, but theories include an insider within the NSA's 'Tailored Access Operations' group.

NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden said that "conventional wisdom indicates Russian responsibility" – adding that he believed the releases were a warning to America.

"This leak looks like somebody sending a message that an escalation in the attribution game could get messy fast," he tweeted.

Lazarus Group

The mysterious Lazarus Group could be behind the \$81 million dollar bank heist from the Central Bank of Bangladesh in 2016. Not much is known about this organisation, who is in it, or where it operates from, but security vendor Kaspersky had its researchers attempt to trace the shady group for over a year.

It found from the 'forensic analysis of artefacts' the group left in attacks on south-east Asian and European banks a 'deep understanding' of the group and how it operates – noting that it attacked financial institutions, casinos, software developers and cryptocurrency businesses around the world.

The typical anatomy of a Lazarus attack, according to Kaspersky, comes in four stages. First is the initial compromise where a single system in a target is breached with remotely accessible code, or through an exploit planted on a website. An employee downloads the malware, allowing the group to place additional malware on the compromised system.

Then, Lazarus hackers would migrate to other bank hosts and place backdoors throughout the organisation. After this, it would undertake a recon mission to learn about and map out the network, flagging valuable internal resources such as backup servers with credentials or authentication information stored in it.

Lastly, the group deploys malware specially designed to bypass the victim's security, and then issued transactions from there.

No one knows for sure where Lazarus operates from. However, by studying a collection of malware samples Kaspersky found a strange connection to a command and control server – lasting just momentarily – from a "very rare" IP address in North Korea.

But as with a lot of attribution that is educated guesswork, with the vendor conceding that it could mean a number of things – that attackers really did connect from North Korea, it was a "carefully planned" false

flag operation, or that someone in North Korea accidentally visited the command and control URL.

The group is still on the move. Read more of Kaspersky's research [here](#).

Equation Group

Credited by Kaspersky with the dubious honour of 'crown creator of cyber espionage', Equation Group refers to the shadowy Tailored Access Operations unit within America's NSA.

The group was most famously associated with Stuxnet, a highly sophisticated attack (especially for its time) that successfully wrecked Iran's nuclear centrifuges, although it's suspected that the unit informed the attack rather than perpetrated it.

Kaspersky has a brief expose of what's known about the group [here](#). It is, the vendor says, "unique almost in every aspect of their activities" – using tools that are extremely complicated and expensive to develop, as well as exfiltrating data and hiding their work in an "outstandingly professional way".

As mentioned in the Shadow Brokers entry – some of the most damaging cyber attacks the world has ever seen originated from a single NSA exploit. The group has an extensive library of trojans that are known and probably many more that aren't.

And it appears to use more traditional spying methods to worm its way onto the systems of victims too, in one instance intercepting a CD-ROM that was being mailed out to the attendees of a science conference in Houston, and replacing it with a copy that was infected with the group's DoubleFantasy worm.

The group maintains a large command and control server infrastructure located in more than 100 servers and 300 domains, including hosts in countries like the US, the UK, Panama, Costa Rica, Colombia, Germany and the Netherlands.

Its victims [appear](#) to be highly targeted, including (but not limited to) government and diplomatic institutions, telecoms, aerospace, energy, nuclear research, oil and gas, military, nanotechnology, Islamic activists and scholars, the media, transport, finance, and businesses working on encryption.

Carbanak/Fin7

A group codenamed Carbanak had been wanted by international policing agencies for at least five years due to its successfully stealing as much as \$1 billion from a series of cyber heists and hacked ATM networks.

Europol in March 2018 believed it had fingered the ringleader for the notorious gang, still unnamed, arresting the figure in Alicante, Spain, after a joint international investigation.

Carbanak (also nicknamed Fin7) sent out highly targeted phishing campaigns – in other words, spear phishing – to trick bank employees into downloading malware. Since late 2013, the gang had used its own type of malware, Anunak and Carbanak, then later utilising a modified version of security testing software called Cobalt Strike, reports *Fortune*.

The first targets were mostly in Russia, but it then moved on to the USA, Germany, China, and Ukraine.

They targeted banks in more than 40 countries, affectively accounting for a one-gang cyber-heist crimewave. The modified Cobalt attack allowed Carbanak to steal as much as €10 million per heist.

Its ingenious ATM hacks allowed the group to instruct cash machines to dispense currency without even interacting with the terminal. This would then be picked up by mules who transferred it to the SWIFT financial network, and then from there into the attackers' accounts.

[FireEye](#) noted that the group pointed its phishing campaign at the US Securities and Exchange Commission.

APT37/Reaper

According to extensive research from American security vendor FireEye, a cyber espionage unit based in North Korea (Advanced Persistent Threat 37 – nicknamed Reaper) upped its operations in early 2018 and continues to engage in recon missions targeting nation states and state-adjacent organisations.

In 2017, the group targeted a Middle Eastern business that was working with North Korea on a joint project to increase telco services in the country. It also honed in on a Vietnamese trading company, and even individuals working in Olympic organisations.

FireEye states that in addition to nation state-based espionage operations, it also targets defectors from the DPRK, suggesting that it is closely affiliated with the country.

‘Reaper’ attackers made use of vulnerabilities in the Hangul Word Processor, which is widely used in the RoK – South Korea. In addition, it had a cache of zero-days and used them in spear phishing and ‘web compromise operations’, according to FireEye.

The command and control infrastructure made use of compromised servers as well as cloud service providers to muddy attribution and avoid detection, and it also placed malware payloads on compromised but legitimate websites. Email accounts used to leverage attacks evolved from domains associated with South Korea to other providers like Gmail, and Russian services such as Yandex.

FireEye – whose report you can read [here](#) (PDF) – says it has assessed with “high confidence” that the group acts “in support of the North Korean government and is primarily based in North Korea”. The researchers came to this conclusion for a number of different reasons, from who the group was targeting through to “probably links to a North Korean individual believed to be the developer of several of APT37’s proprietary malware families”.

Iron Tiger APT

Possibly emerging from a series of sophisticated and highly targeted attacks in the Asia Pacific region, focusing on politicians and government agencies in China, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Tibet, the group nicknamed ‘Iron Tiger’ was said to have pivoted towards targets in America, including US government contractors in aerospace, energy, intelligence, telecoms and nuclear.

A Trend Micro [report](#) suggested that the attacks originated from China because VPN servers used to launch the attacks were mostly based in the region, the file names and passwords used were Chinese, text resources and language ID in malware binaries were set to simplified Chinese, and Whois data pointed to domains registered to physical addresses in China. The vendor also pointed the finger at a person called Guo Fei, a Shanghai resident, who it believed was instrumental to the group’s success.

BitDefender in February 2018 discovered variants of the Gh0st RAT trojan used in the Iron Tiger operation for new attacks first flagged in July 2017 – a customised piece of malware called PZChao, suggesting a potential return of the group that had been quiet for several years. A forensic analysis of that new variant is detailed in a [whitepaper](#) from the vendor, available for download [here](#).

Fancy Bear/APT28

No list of advanced persistent threat groups would be complete without ‘Fancy Bear’, which was alleged to have played a major part in the hacking of the US Democratic National Committee in the run up to America’s elections (although this was disputed by ‘Guccifer 2.0’, who took credit).

The group, says [CrowdStrike](#), has been on the scene since 2008 and has targeted all the usual sensitive sectors – defence, energy, government, and media – as well as dissidents. It’s widely believed to be at the very least state sponsored, with vendors observing the most likely culprit is Russia.

It is able to run simultaneous operations concurrently and has created its own implant tools, as well as

	<p>droppers, which are cross-operating systems and can be pointed at mobile devices too.</p> <p>Fancy Bear was linked with attacks on the German parliament, as well as campaigns to hijack traffic inbound to a Nigerian government website. The group had also developed malware to target Apple devices, which was capable of reading text messages and secretly recording audio – a useful espionage tool in any nation’s arsenal.</p> <p>For the long list of prominent attacks and campaigns head over to the Wikipedia page here, where you can read about the attack on the Bundestag, and even an attempt to cripple Ukraine’s artillery.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 FIFA World Cup tech security challenges
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/world-cup-2018-the-tech-security-challenges-behind-the-big-event/
GIST	<p>One of the biggest sporting events in the world has arrived in the form of the 2018 FIFA World Cup taking place in Russia, with 32 nations competing over the next month in a tournament which is expected to be watched by billions of viewers around the globe, on television, mobile and online.</p> <p>While events like the World Cup are viewed by many as an opportunity to enjoy sporting drama, there are some who see high-profile events such as this as an opportunity to conduct espionage and hacking campaigns.</p> <p>For example, one high-profile sports event to already attract the interest of hackers this year was the Winter Olympics in South Korea. A cyber attack against the opening ceremony caused IP televisions in the main press centre to malfunction.</p> <p>Dubbed Olympic Destroyer, the malware was designed to be destructive, but it was also designed to confuse, with a trail left implicating North Korean hackers. And while some have blamed Russia for the attack it's still not clear who was really behind it.</p> <p>Major sporting and cultural events like this are tempting targets for groups looking to create high-profile cyber incidents.</p> <p>"Certainly, with high-profile events, if a threat actor has a desire to cause disruption, we know by looking at the actions of malware such as Olympic Destroyer that they have the capability," Martin Lee, technical lead at Cisco Talos told ZDNet. "Often it's not clear who is behind particular attacks or what their objectives are and now that analysis is becoming more difficult by threat actors attempting to actively muddy the waters".</p> <p>But while attributing cyber attacks remains a difficult task, many in the cyber security sector are under no illusion that the high-profile nature of the World Cup means it is going to attract attention from attackers of all varieties, ranging from low-level scammers to nation-state backed threat actors.</p> <p>"There's always a cyber element to all these big events, whether it's the World Cup or the Olympics. Just with so many countries involved and the political ramifications, there's always an information gathering element to it," George Kurtz, CEO of CrowdStrike told ZDNet.</p> <p>"They're going to gather information in person, they're going to gather information through traditional methods and they're going to gather information through a cyber component. There's going to be a lot of countries involved in gathering information, not just one."</p> <p>Still, that the World Cup is taking place in Russia creates something of an unusual dynamic when it comes to potential nation-state hacking.</p> <p>Western governments have been quick to point to the Kremlin-backed hacking groups as a threat, but</p>

with the event taking place in Russia itself, it is perhaps more likely that visitors rather than the infrastructure of the event will be the target.

Last week a US intelligence official warned travellers to the World Cup that their smartphones or laptops could be targeted by Russian hackers or cyber criminals.

"Corporate and government officials are most at risk, but don't assume you're too insignificant to be targeted," William Evanina, an FBI agent and the director of the U.S. National Counterintelligence and Security Center told Reuters.

"Some of those groups we attribute to nations like Russia may be restructuring their target list because they now have strategic targets that are in the country rather than having them abroad in different countries and government buildings," Jens Monrad, principal intelligence analyst at security company FireEye told ZDNet.

Andrea Little Limbago, chief social scientist at security firm Endgame told ZDNet that one group that might be targeted while in Russia would be the foreign media. However, she added that the deception element could come into play here, with other nations attempting to make attacks trying to shift the blame.

"That doesn't mean that other folks won't, or that other groups won't masquerade as Russia. That's one of the trends we're seeing, the masquerading and deception that's going on and that's only going to advance".

But while nation-states may end up using Russia as an arena for playing the grand game of international geopolitics, they're not going to be the only players looking to flex their muscles -- some cyber criminal groups could look to cash in, too.

"But we do in fact also see countries like Russia being heavily impacted by organised crime which has historically targeted them. There could also be an escalation in these groups which are motivated because they have a global audience," said Monrad.

"Maybe visitors are bringing devices or computer equipment that's easier to compromise because they're at an event and they're lowering their defensive bars," Monrad said.

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HEADLINE	06/21 Claim: 50,000 ships vulnerable to attack
SOURCE	http://delano.lu/d/detail/news/why-50000-ships-are-so-vulnerable-cyberattacks/182756
GIST	<p>The 50,000 ships sailing the sea at any one time have joined an ever-expanding list of objects that can be hacked. Cybersecurity experts recently displayed how easy it was to break into a ship's navigational equipment. This comes only a few years after researchers showed that they could fool the GPS of a superyacht into altering course.</p> <p>Once upon a time objects such as cars, toasters and tugboats only did what they were originally designed to do. Today the problem is that they all also talk to the internet.</p> <p>The story so far</p> <p>Stories about maritime cybersecurity are only going to proliferate. The maritime industry has been slow to realise that ships, just like everything else, are now part of cyberspace. The International Maritime Organisation (IMO), the UN body charged with regulating maritime space, has been late and somewhat slow in considering appropriate regulation when it comes to cybersecurity.</p> <p>In 2014, the IMO consulted their membership on what maritime cybersecurity guidelines should look like. Two years later they issued their interim cybersecurity risk management guidelines, which are broad and not particularly maritime specific. And now, unsurprisingly, ships are being hacked.</p>

Complexity of the maritime industry

There are several core issues that make cybersecurity for the maritime industry particularly challenging to address.

First, there are many different classes of vessel, all of which operate in very different environments. These vessels tend to have different computer systems built into them. Significantly, many of these systems are built to last over 30 years. In other words, many ships run outdated and unsupported operating systems, which are often the ones most prone to cyber-attacks.

Second, the users of these maritime computer systems are constantly in flux. Ship crews are highly dynamic, often changing at short notice. As a result, crew members are often using systems they are unfamiliar with, increasing the potential for cybersecurity incidents relating to human error. Further, the maintenance of onboard systems, including navigational ones, is often contracted to a variety of third parties. It is perfectly possible that a ship's crew have little understanding of how onboard systems interact with each other.

A third complexity is the linkage between onboard and terrestrial systems. Many maritime companies stay in constant communication with their vessels. The cybersecurity of the ship is also dependent, then, on the cybersecurity of the land-based infrastructure that makes this possible. The implications of such dependencies was made clear in 2017 when a cyber-attack on the systems of A.P. Moller-Maersk resulted in cargo delays across their entire fleet. This is particularly challenging for the IMO who can govern the likes of port regulations, but have very little control over the wider systems and processes of maritime operators.

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HEADLINE	06/20 Germany: Russia in energy firms hack
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-cyber-russia/german-intelligence-sees-russia-behind-hack-of-energy-firms-media-report-idUSKBN1JG2X2
GIST	<p>BERLIN (Reuters) - Russia was probably behind a widespread cyber attack on German energy providers disclosed last week, the head of Germany's BfV domestic intelligence agency told the RND newspaper chain.</p> <p>Hans-Georg Maassen told the newspaper group there were several reasons to believe Russia was involved, including the way the cyber attack was executed.</p> <p>"The modus operandi is in fact one of multiple indications that point to Russian control of the attack campaign," the group quoted Maassen as saying.</p> <p>Russia has repeatedly denied trying to hack into other countries' infrastructure. Asked to comment on Maassen's accusations, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: "We don't know what he was talking about."</p> <p>"They should give facts," said Maria Zakharova, spokesman for the Russian foreign ministry.</p> <p>Germany's BSI federal cyber protection agency disclosed the cyber attack dubbed "Berserk Bear" on June 13, citing efforts by hackers to penetrate the computer networks of many German energy and electricity providers.</p> <p>The agency, which first warned about such possible attacks a year ago, said the attack had managed to breach only the office networks of a few companies.</p> <p>Maassen did not identify how many companies were targeted in the attack, which BSI has said is now under control.</p>

	<p>The United States in March also blamed Russia for a campaign of cyber attacks on the U.S. power grid that Washington said began in March 2016 or possibly earlier.</p> <p>Foreign Minister Heiko Maas in April also said Germany had to assume that Russia was behind a cyber attack on the foreign ministry that was discovered in December.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/21 Algeria shuts internet access nationwide
SOURCE	http://time.com/5318096/algeria-internet-cheating-exams/
GIST	<p>Algeria is resorting to a drastic measure in an effort to rein in rampant cheating on national exams: it is shutting off internet access across the country during certain times this week.</p> <p>Both mobile and wired internet connections will go dark for an hour after the beginning of national high school graduation exams, the BBC reports. The outages will continue throughout the exam season, which began Wednesday and lasts until June 25.</p> <p>Facebook will also be blocked throughout Algeria for the entire duration of the exam period, Education Minister Nouria Benghabrit told Annahar newspaper, according to the BBC. Benghabrit added that, while the measure was not optimal, “We should not passively stand in front of such a possible leak”.</p> <p>Surveillance cameras and devices to jam mobile phones have also been installed at printing presses that publish the exam, Benghabrit said, in an effort to keep the test under wraps until it hits students’ desks.</p> <p>Over 700,000 Algerian students will sit for their high school diploma exams over the next week, with results expected the following month. The clampdown this year follows reports of widespread cheating in 2016, when test questions were published online, forcing more than half a million students to retake the exam a week later. Subsequent efforts to restrict social media access through internet service providers proved insufficient, according to the BBC.</p> <p>Algeria isn’t the only country to turn off the digital taps in an effort to curb cheating. Ethiopia undertook a similar measure last year after activists published the university entrance exam online in 2016, according to the Guardian, while Iraq shut off internet access for a few hours in 2015 and 2016 to coincide with sixth-grade national exams.</p> <p>Uzbekistan also blocked mobile internet and SMS services in 2016 during university entrance exams. “We have run out of mini-phones, use your head to take your exam,” said ads posted in an electronics market in the Uzbek capital Tashkent at the time, according to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/21 Traffic sign near ICE HQ hacked
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/traffic-sign-near-ice-headquarters-hacked-with-abolish-ice-message/
GIST	<p>For the last few years, hacking a traffic sign or an electronic billboard has become a trend. Some hack it for fun and some do it to display their political affiliation and in some cases, these signs are hacked to register protest against police brutality.</p> <p>However, now, to express their anger at ICE someone hacked a traffic sign in Southwest Portland and defaced it with “Abolish ICE” message. Although it is unclear exactly when the defacement was carried out the snapshot of the defaced traffic sign was shared by Marilyn Deutsch, a Portland-based TV news reporter at KPTV – FOX 12.</p> <p>“Someone hacked the reader board near ICE headquarters in SW Portland,” tweeted Deutsch.</p>

	<p>If you are not aware of what ICE is then it stands for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. ICE is a law enforcement agency working under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) however under Trump's administration, the agency has been making headlines for all the wrong reasons especially after planning to deport individuals who entered the United States Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program – According to MIC, the movement to abolish ICE is growing.</p> <p>As for hacking a traffic sign, it is easy since invariably the control panel is protected by a default password and instructions on how to power-on the console, power-off the sign display, activate quick message and create custom messages are available to view.</p> <p>That is the reason why there is a sudden surge in hacking incidents involving billboards and traffic signs. For example, last year street signs in Texas were hacked with pro-Bernie Sanders slogan and anti-Clinton and Trump messages. In another incident, a billboard in Indonesia was hacked and defaced with live Japanese porn.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Attackers spy, steal from financial firms
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/attackers-spy-and-steal-from/
GIST	<p>In an attempt to steal sensitive data, cyber-criminals have been targeting financial firms by building hidden tunnels in order to break into networks. According to a report released today by Vectra, these attack behaviors are the same as those that led to the 2017 Equifax breach.</p> <p>According to a new report, 2018 Spotlight Report on Financial Services, attackers are able to gain remote access through the use of command-and-control (C&C). In the data analyzed, attackers had established nearly 30 web shells accessible from approximately 35 different public IP addresses, which allowed them to exfiltrate data while going undetected.</p> <p>Attackers often leverage hidden tunnels to infiltrate networks with strong access controls because legitimate applications also use hidden tunnels to bypass security controls that can sometimes compromise full functionality. That's why it's a successful attack method.</p> <p>"Every industry has a profile of network and user behaviors that relate to specific business models, applications and users," said Chris Morales, head of security analytics at Vectra. "Attackers will mimic and blend in with these behaviors, making them difficult to expose."</p> <p>In this latest discovery, Vectra detected more hidden C&C tunnels and more than twice as many hidden data-exfiltration tunnels per 10,000 devices in financial services than all other industries combined.</p> <p>To evade firewalls, attackers use special tunneling tools to move laterally, stockpiling data from database after database as they go. They were able to amass so much data that it then needed to be divided into smaller stockpiles so that no alarm bells went off during exfiltration.</p> <p>"All this points to one painful fact: The largest enterprise organizations in the world remain lucrative targets for sophisticated cyber-attackers. Security breaches across multiple industries forge ahead in an upward trajectory, and the financial services industry is no exception," the report said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Tesla saboteur spotlights insider threats
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/tesla-saboteur-trains-spotlight-on-insider-threats/article/774976/
GIST	Tesla's recent revelation that an employee turned saboteur messed with code and exfiltrated data underscores the continuing challenge and complexity of insider threats and the difficulty ferreting them

out before they can do harm.

"Taking things at face value, this is basically a smorgasbord of cybercrime, and it could have affected any company anywhere," said Raytheon CTO of Cybersecurity Michael Daly. "You have an insider threat. You have altered data affecting the factory operating system. You have leaked proprietary data. You have credential theft. And you have it all, apparently, at the hands of a disgruntled employee."

Disgruntled employees, like Tesla's Martin Tripp, who the company sued on Wednesday, will always be of concern at companies, said Saryu Nayyar, CEO of Gurukul. "Even progressive companies that can afford the best cybersecurity protection can be taken down by one malicious insider."

But insiders often get short shrift in organizations, which are inundated with threats from multiple attack vectors.

Andy Smith, vice president of product marketing at Centrify to the 2017 Insider Threat Report by Crowd Research Partners, which found that "74 percent of companies feel that they are vulnerable to insider threats, with seven percent reporting an extreme vulnerability."

Likewise, a recent Raytheon-commissioned survey of IT security professionals found that "insider threats ranked low on the CISOs' priority lists. Only 36 percent said they consider malicious or criminal insiders to be a high risk," said Daly. "It's time to change that stat and make insider threat a top priority."

That's particularly important when companies give their employees access – deliberately or inadvertently – to sensitive data. "In a recent report, we found that 41 percent of companies had at least 1,000 sensitive files open to all employees," said Ken Spinner, vice president of global engineering at Varonis, referring to the situation as the rule rather than the exception.

"Companies are doing and creating, but they're not locking down their data. Think about it is way: If you had a meeting with top executives to discuss a brand-new game-changing product, you wouldn't hold it in the middle of lunchroom, would you?" he said. "The same thing goes for your data: You have to protect it from curious and malicious employees."

Businesses can take [steps] to prevent unwarranted access to control systems by exercising access control," agreed Tim Roddy, vice president of cybersecurity product strategy, Fidelis Cybersecurity. "By changing logs and setting up approvals for any code changes you can add an additional layer of security to protect critical code." said Tim Roddy, vice president of cybersecurity product strategy, Fidelis Cybersecurity.

Noting that Gartner pegged privileged access as the top project for organizations in 2018, Joseph Carson, chief security scientist at Thycotic, said, "organizations continue to fail at the most important aspect on restricting privileged access which is proactively discovering privileged accounts in the environment."

It appears, he said, "that Telsa has failed to do that most important step in least privilege: discovering and detecting unapproved privileged access." Telsa likely has learned a major lesson from the incident, though Carson said he hoped the sabotage "is not related to the recent accidents with their vehicles which I am sure the regulators will be looking into if they are related."

Centrify's Smith favors a zero trust model, which "assumes that the bad actors are already on the inside, so no one is to be trusted, even if they've proven to be trustworthy in the past," he said. "By staying vigilant and requiring employees to verify who they are, validate their device, and then limiting their access and privilege, organizations can reduce exposure from internal and external security threats."

The Tesla employee "was able to make 'direct code changes to the Tesla Manufacturing Operating System under false usernames, potentially damaging several aspects of the business operations simply by having too much access and privilege," Smith said, something that a zero trust approach wouldn't have allowed.

"Tesla employees would have been verified through multiple factors of authentication, granted only the

minimal amount of access necessary to do their job, and their access and activity would have been captured and reviewed. That's the essence of Zero Trust Security.”

To protect against exfiltration of highly sensitive data, Roddy said, “Data Loss Prevention on endpoints and primary network services is not enough. Organizations need to analyze all ports and protocols to prevent any blind spots.”

Putting a greater emphasis on analyzing behavior can help organizations thwart insider threats, but that “challenge is compounded by the dynamics of our IT environments where everyday users change behaviors for innocuous reasons,” said Seth Goldhammer, senior director of product marketing at LogRhythm.

While tracking each network or user behavior anomaly is both impractical and costly, it can and mask those anomalies that bear scrutiny. “To remain efficient, organizations are challenged to discover anomalies that also include security relevancy,” said Goldhammer. “Once a relevant security anomaly is discovered, organizations need to follow procedural steps to vet, qualify, and eventually mitigate the discovered threat.”

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HEADLINE	06/20 'Kardon Loader' new malware strain
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hacking-forum-ad-peddles-new-kardon-loader-malware/
GIST	<p>Security researchers have spotted a new commercial malware product that's been put up for sale on hacking forums for the lowly price of only \$50, paid in Bitcoin.</p> <p>Named Kardon Loader, this is a new malware strain, currently still under development, in a "beta" stage according to its author.</p> <p>Based on its advertised features Kardon is a "malware loader," also known as a "malware downloader" or "dropper," which is a type of malware strain that cyber-criminals usually deploy as the first stage of their operations.</p> <p>A malware loader's main role is to infect victims, gain persistence on a user's computer, and then report back to a command and control (C&C) server.</p> <p>Each victim of a malware loader is called a "bot," as the malware assembles all infected computers in a giant botnet.</p> <p>The inevitable future of every bot is that at one point or another, the "loader" will download a second-stage payload, usually a more potent malware, such as a banking trojan, a password-dumper, a backdoor trojan, or ransomware.</p> <p>Cybercriminals normally use malware loaders in two ways. They either incorporate them in their own custom multi-stage malware infection chains, for their own benefits, or they sell "bot space" to other crooks, who then infect users with the second-stage malware of their choice.</p> <p>In the past two decades, we've seen malware downloaders such as Andromeda, Nemucod, Quant Loader, or Smoke Loader, being very active on the market.</p> <p>Crooks have made good money selling these types of tools to other crooks, and especially "bot space." It is this bot-space-selling niche that a relatively new malware author is trying to break into.</p> <p>According to an Arbor ASERT report published yesterday, a malware author named Yattaze started selling a new malware downloader named Kardon Loader last April.</p>

"Kardon is a lot smaller of an operation than some of the well-known loaders out there like Smoke and Quant," TJ Nelson, Security Research Analyst for Arbor, told Bleeping Computer via email.

"However, where its predecessors started adding mining and credential stealing features, Kardon Loader has limited those 'extras' and added control panel features [so buyers can] start their own botshop," Nelson told us.

The researcher is referring to a somewhat unique Kardon Loader feature promoted in its advertisement.

Usually, malware loaders come with a backend panel that lets buyers interact with their bots and send a second-stage malware. On top of this standard C&C panel, Kardon also includes a fully-fledged botshop, a much rarer feature, which allows buyers of the original Kardon Loader to open an online store where they can sell access to the bots they collect.

But for now, the malware is not a threat, as it still a newcomer on the market, and has fewer buyers. Arbor says it didn't find any active Kardon samples deployed in the wild.

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HEADLINE	06/20 New phishing scam reels in Netflix users
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/new-phishing-scam-reels-in-netflix-users-to-tls-certified-sites/132976/
GIST	<p>Researchers are warning of a new Netflix phishing scam that leads victims to sites with valid Transport Layer Security (TLS) certificates.</p> <p>Johannes Ullrich, dean of research at the SANS Technology Institute, said Wednesday that there's been an uptick in Netflix phishing mails using TLS-certified sites.</p> <p>The bad actors behind the attacks will take advantage of unpatched installs or plugins, or weak passwords, to compromise usual-suspect CMS software, like WordPress or Drupal, said Ullrich. From there, they can create phishing sites that could be mistaken for real Netflix domains. In some cases, they're using wildcard DNS records.</p> <p>"With a wildcard DNS record, *anything.domain.com will point to the same IP address," the researcher said in a post. "The attacker will just use a subdomain/hostname to launch the attack. But I have also seen them use specific domain names registered for the phish."</p> <p>The attacker can then obtain a TLS certificate for a host name that is Netflix-related, such as netflix.domain.com or netflix.login.domain.com; this helps the site evade being flagged by safe-browser software.</p> <p>The initial spoofed emails are the weak part of the campaign, and are easy to spot, said Ullrich.</p> <p>"The email was marked as spam, and the email is not worded that well," he said. "In this case, the link went to hxxps://www.safenetflax.com, a domain registered just to impersonate Netflix. This domain no longer resolves."</p> <p>After clicking on the link, Ullrich found that the websites appear believable and look very much like the real Netflix: "The only modification I can spot is that the alternative login methods like Facebook are missing," he said.</p> <p>While Netflix accounts aren't particularly valuable (Ullrich said he has seen them offered from \$0.20-0.50 per account), the attack may be enticing to cyber-criminals as it can be easily automated – and hard for victims to spot, he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Bitcoin exchanges keep getting hacked
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-switch/wp/2018/06/20/why-bitcoin-exchanges-keep-getting-hacked-and-how-to-protect-yourself/?utm_term=.000108738529
GIST	<p>The price of bitcoin took a tumble early Wednesday after a major South Korea-based cryptocurrency exchange, Bithumb, admitted that hackers made off with more than \$31 million worth of virtual currency. The incident is the latest in a long string of thefts at the online portals where investors trade cash for digital coins such as bitcoin and ether. Bithumb has not said how the attack occurred.</p> <p>But what makes exchanges vulnerable to these sorts of attacks in the first place?</p> <p>For starters, cryptocurrency experts blame lax security at the hacked exchanges, as well as the booming popularity of digital currencies more generally.</p> <p>"Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies have risen dramatically in popularity and value over the past few years," said John Sedunov, an assistant professor of finance at Villanova University. "This fast run-up may have caught some exchanges off-guard, and they may not have had the capital on hand, time, or even the technical ability to ramp up security features fast enough to ward off potential attackers."</p> <p>In other words, hackers love going after exchanges because they're a rewarding and often easy targets. In this respect, exchanges are little different from health care providers with lucrative medical data, or credit reporting bureaus who hold Social Security numbers.</p> <p>But unlike those types of institutions, cryptocurrency exchanges are purpose-built to move actual assets from one person to another. And that can raise additional risks.</p> <p>"It's frustrating to see people lose money to this consistent mistake," wrote user PM_ME_YOUR_NANO on a recent thread. "No one should be losing even 10% of their available coins because an exchange is bad. Cryptocurrency is about being trustless. Exchanges are trusted systems without great regulation."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 How phone companies share your data
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-phone-companies-share-your-data-1529500086?mod=hp_lista_pos3
GIST	<p>Three big U.S. wireless carriers said Tuesday they would stop sharing customers' locations with two data middlemen after discovering the information had been mishandled. Carriers like Verizon Communications Inc. and AT&T Inc. get requests for their customers' whereabouts from all sorts of places. How they handle them depends on who is asking:</p> <p>INVESTIGATORS: Law-enforcement officers can request a customer's current or past location from a cellphone provider through a subpoena, warrant or other official request. Each carrier has a dedicated legal team that evaluates the requests.</p> <p>911 CALLS: Emergency calls are routed to public-safety answering points, which can obtain the caller's location without affirmative consent. This is so that first responders can quickly find people who are unable to describe their location.</p> <p>COMPANIES: Middlemen like LocationSmart and Zumigo can access information on cellphone users' whereabouts in situations where the company seeking the information might not know which carrier to ask. Trucking companies, e-commerce websites, jail wardens and online lotteries all pull the data though these aggregators but are supposed to seek the device user's consent before doing so.</p>

	<p>MARKETERS: Carriers also sell bulk data on groups of cellphone users to marketers. This allows a fast-food chain to send ads to a user who has driven past a restaurant several times, for instance. Carriers usually opt their customers into these programs by default.</p> <p>APPS: Software companies like Google and Uber Technologies keep tabs on their users another way. Instead of asking carriers for data gleaned from cell-tower interactions, they get users to share their location through cellphone software that uses GPS and Wi-Fi signals to more accurately pinpoint customers. Carriers aren't involved in this data sharing.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Hidden exfiltration tunnels to pilfer data
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/cyberattackers-use-hidden-tunnels-to-pilfer-data-from-financial-services-firm/article/774734/
GIST	<p>Sophisticated cyberattackers are using hidden tunnels to spy on financial firms and pilfer sensitive data and personally-identifiable information (PII) – and they're doing it at a higher rate than in other industries.</p> <p>Researchers at Vectra discovered 23 hidden exfiltration tunnels disguised as encrypted web traffic for every 10,000 devices in the financial services sector compared to 11 tunnels per 10,000 in other industries overall, according to the company's 2018 Spotlight Report on financial services, which is based on analysis anonymized metadata from Vectra customers who agreed to share detection metrics.</p> <p>Between August 2017 and January 2018, the Vectra detected an uptick in the number of hidden exfiltration tunnels posing as unencrypted web traffic in financial services from seven per 10,000 devices to 16.</p> <p>“Attackers mimic and blend in with” behaviors related to users, applications and business models identified and profiled by different industries, said Chris Morales, Vectra's head of security analytics.</p> <p>“It's not the behavior that surprises me” since financial services will always be a high-value target to attackers “but it's the frequency of that behavior,” said Morales.</p> <p>Even heavy investments in security and “really restricted networks,” don't make the financial industry immune to hidden tunnel attacks, that they simply may not be aware of.</p> <p>“They have a hard time answering if they even know tunnels exist,” said Morales, who commended financial companies for the work they've done so far and suggested they take a lifecycle approach to tracking behavior and attacks.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/19 Websites, apps under constant barrage
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/most-websites-and-web-apps-no-match-for-attack-barrage/d/d-id/1332092
GIST	<p>No matter how large or small, websites and web applications are under a constant barrage of attacks. Two new studies out today put a finer point on the numbers, showing just how frequently attacks hit the average website and how this constant pressure is yielding a huge number of compromised websites and web apps.</p> <p>According to the Sitelock Website Security Insider Q1 2018 report, the average website today is attacked 50 times per day, with the vast majority of attacks coming through automated means. The study shows that 88% of traffic filtered by firewalls is from bad bots seeking to compromise sites.</p> <p>By casting a very wide and automated net, attackers who hit their marks even a slim percentage of the time stand to compromise a huge volume of sites. The study shows that about 1% of sampled sites studied by</p>

analysts are infected with malware. That means at any given moment, 18.7 million sites around the world are infected by some form of malware.

"Based on the numbers we've seen, it has become clear that no website is too small to hack," says Jessica Ortega, a web security research analyst at SiteLock. "As cybercriminals become more sophisticated and continue to hone their craft, small businesses will need to keep up by taking a proactive, holistic approach to website security."

In addition to studying websites, the SiteLock study surveyed small business owners about their attitudes with regard to website security and found that they may not understand the severity of the danger. Approximately 42% of the respondents said their biggest website security fear is defacement — but most security veterans know this kind of attack is the least of a website's worries. The study shows that only about 18% of site infections have anything to do with that. More common are backdoor files being placed on the site — 44% of the time — or filehacker files designed to modify or create additional malicious files, at 49% of the time.

And, of course, the 1% incidence rate of infection is only an average. Plenty of risk factors can greatly increase infection rates. For example, WordPress sites are two times more likely to be infected than non-CMS sites, according to SiteLock.

In a separate study released today by Positive Technologies, 96% of all web applications were found to have some form of vulnerability that could be turned against their users — with one in two apps vulnerable to unauthorized access. In addition, approximately 44% of web apps today place users' personal data at risk of theft, with 70% vulnerable to leaks of information critical to the business.

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HEADLINE	06/20 Mylobot malware brings new sophistication
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/vulnerabilities---threats/mylobot-malware-brings-new-sophistication-to-botnets/d/d-id/1332100
GIST	<p>Cybercriminals looking to maximize their investments are using evermore sophisticated software techniques and increasingly aggressive steps against their fellow malware authors. Those are among the conclusions by researchers at Deep Instinct about a new strain of malware found within the last two months.</p> <p>The new malware, dubbed Mylobot, pulls together a variety of techniques to gain a foothold and remain undiscovered. Among the strategies employed are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Anti-VM techniques •Anti-sandbox techniques •Anti-debugging techniques •Wrapping internal parts with an encrypted resource file •Code injection •Process hollowing (a technique where an attacker creates a new process in a suspended state and replaces its image with the one that is to be hidden) •Reflective EXE (executing EXE files directly from memory, without having them on disk) •A 14-day delay before accessing its C&C servers. <p>"On a daily basis we come across dozens of highly sophisticated samples, but this one is a unique collection of highly advanced techniques," says Arik Solomon, vice president of R&D at Deep Instinct. "Each of the techniques is known and used by a few malicious samples, but the combination is unique."</p> <p>Solomon noted that Mylobot — named for a researcher's dog — is a downloader: It can be purposed to download and install any type of payload, from spambot or DDoS engine to keylogger or banking Trojan. "I think that what we see here is the productization or even industrialization of malware techniques," says Tom Nipravsky, security researcher at Deep Instinct.</p>

That industrialization aspect fits with what Solomon sees as the driving force behind this new malware. "It always comes down to money," he says. And that's especially true given one of Mylobot's behaviors: It seeks out and shuts down competing botnet software.

"We see the capability to make sure you have no competition," Solomon says, noting that in the highly unregulated world of malware, having more infected systems at your disposal than the competition can offer might be a matter of millions of dollars.

Mylobot leverages several techniques to make sure no other botnet is active on a machine it infects. "Usually we see this behavior when malware tries to shut down defensive software," Solomon notes. "In this case, it's fighting against its competition."

Though the researchers have been looking at Mylobot for several weeks, they aren't yet ready to say who the author is. There are some clues, though, including the fact that Mylobot scans for keyboard layout of an infected machine and doesn't execute if it finds an Asian character set and layout in use. Niprasky says this could have to do with encryption algorithms, but it might well speak to the geographical nexus of the malware.

The researchers say it's important to note that Mylobot was found in the wild, at a Tier 1 data communication and telecommunication equipment manufacturer, not in a proof-of-concept demonstration.

"It's a relatively good representative of what we see on the Dark Web where people are selling platforms for others to use," Solomon says. Customers of the botnet can rent time to download and run their own payloads, making this a very efficient use of malware technology.

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HEADLINE	06/20 Syria girls exploit WhatsApp to learn
SOURCE	https://nakedsecurity.sophos.com/2018/06/20/the-girls-who-used-whatsapp-to-learn-under-the-noses-of-is/
GIST	<p>It's a constant drumbeat, and it goes like this: "Give us a backdoor to slip past encryption. We won't break anything. It will be secure. Access will only be granted with probable cause and warrants."</p> <p>We've heard it from FBI chiefs Christopher Wray and James Comey, Assistant Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, from recently departed UK Home Secretary Amber Rudd, and former prime minister David Cameron, who floated the idea of banning encrypted messaging apps in 2015... to name a few.</p> <p>In March 2017, following a media report that Khalid Masood had sent a WhatsApp message two minutes before launching his terror attack in London on March 22, Rudd singled out WhatsApp and other encrypted messaging apps, insisting that police have access to messages in order to thwart terrorism.</p> <p>Of course, this is an old story: politicians have had a burning desire to punch a hole through Apple's encryption ever since Apple made it a default on the iPhone in September 2014.</p> <p>As far as apps go, many, if not most, governments bare their fangs when it comes to WhatsApp, the messaging app with end-to-end encryption. That's encryption that stops police from intercepting messages exchanged by the terrorists and drug dealers who sit on one end of a privacy-seeking spectrum that also includes political dissidents, journalists, victims of domestic abuse and... schoolgirls.</p> <p>Syrian schoolgirls, to be precise. Which brings us the most recent example of all the people whose safety – in this case, their very lives – are protected by encryption.</p> <p>On Tuesday, the BBC published the story of a group of girls whose "basic right to learn," in the words of one of them, was taken away when the Islamic State took over their hometown in Syria.</p>

They weren't just banned from attending school. They were beaten if they were found to be carrying books or paper, even if it was nothing but blank sheets. One of the girls from the BBC's video:

They even used to break pens and rulers.

The group of friends came up with a plan: they would pretend to go shopping in a nearby town, Yalda, but would instead attend school. Once there, they relied on their mobile phones and on WhatsApp to smuggle out knowledge. Namely, the teens would take photos of what the teacher wrote on the board. They would also hide notes in their headscarves and in their boots – “anywhere that [IS] wouldn't find it.”

If they did find the materials, IS soldiers would tear them up, they said. A friend of one of the girls was beaten when she was found carrying blank writing paper.

One of the teens:

We couldn't all go together, so whoever reached the town would take photos on her mobile and share with the others via WhatsApp so we could study.

The Syrian government was trying to take the area back. With bombs falling, the BBC reports, the mobile coverage was patchy, to say the least. But regardless of the bombs, the girls would climb from the ground floor on up to the fifth floor, to get a better connection. Once they'd downloaded the material, they'd bring it down to study.

They had no choice, they said. Without books, all they had was what they could get with their mobile phones:

Education is everything, and it's our weapon.

It didn't work out all the time, one of them told the BBC, but they kept going. Since rebels were defeated in southern Damascus, Syrian forces have been rejoicing, and the schoolgirls have also won a battle in the struggle to get the education that IS tried to steal from them. With the help of the United Nations, the teenagers were able to take their exams: the equivalent of the UK's General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSEs).

They're now nervously awaiting exam results.

As far as we're concerned, we now have poster girls for unbreakable encryption. They wear niqabs.

We don't know if the girls are aware that they were protected by end-to-end encryption when they used WhatsApp. Maybe they would have still done what they did with less secure tools, if that's all they had. Perhaps they used WhatsApp simply because they already had the app, which can be used to take and send photos for free.

But the fact remains that they were protected by end-to-end encryption, and that it shielded them from anyone discovering what they were up to by intercepting their internet traffic.

Weakening that encryption so it's easier to catch terrorists also means weakening it so that it's easier to catch little girls who dare to get an education.

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HEADLINE	06/20 New app helps EMS save lives
SOURCE	http://www.khq.com/story/38472732/new-app-helps-medical-personnel-save-lives
GIST	SPOKANE COUNTY, Wash. - A new app is helping save lives with the touch of a button. The app allows

	<p>hospitals and first responders to call for a lifesaving air ambulance transport. Prompt medical attention can mean the difference between life and death.</p> <p>The app is specifically designed for medical personnel, with just one touch of a button on their cell phone, it then sends vital information to flight crews. The app sends information like the GPS location of where the emergency is happening and then dispatches Life Flight Network crews.</p> <p>Once a flight call has been made using the app, users can view a real-time progress tracker that shows the aircraft's location while en route and when it's expected to arrive. The app is called LFN Respond and has only been around for about a month and it's already proving to be helpful.</p> <p>"We've had a few activations since we've rolled it out. It's a huge difference. If you are a very rural EMS provider and you have a sick patient in front of you and you are trying to care for them, it allows them to just take one quick pause, activate and then go right back to caring for the patient. There's not a number of phone calls or radio calls that have to be made. It's just very seamless," said Dominic Pomponio, Regional Director for Life Flight Network.</p> <p>Hospitals, first responders, fire departments, ski patrols and other qualified agencies use the app. The focus of the technology is to help everyone work together better and more efficiently to get people the emergency care they need as quickly as possible.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Russia likely hacked election systems
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/06/20/obama-cyber-czar-russia-likely-scanned-all-50-state-election-systems/717652002/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Russian hackers likely scanned the election systems of all 50 states for vulnerabilities in 2016 — not just the 21 states confirmed as targets by homeland security officials last year, the cybersecurity czar for former President Barack Obama told a Senate panel Wednesday.</p> <p>"I think it is highly likely," Michael Daniel replied in answer to a question from Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, about whether Russian cyber actors at least scanned the election systems of every state. "It is more likely that we hadn't detected it than that it didn't occur."</p> <p>States have been scrambling to improve their cyber security after Homeland Security officials revealed last year that Russian hackers tried to breach election systems in at least 21 states in 2016. Although no actual votes were changed, hackers broke into Illinois' voter registration database.</p> <p>Not all states had the technical ability to detect that Russian hackers scanned their election systems — which include vote tabulation systems as well as voter registration databases.</p> <p>Daniel told the Senate Intelligence Committee that the federal government should invest more money in cybersecurity for state election systems. Congress recently took a first step by approving \$380 million in state grants for election security.</p> <p>"Maintaining state and local control of elections is very important, but it's not realistic to expect them on their own to go up against nation-state actors," he testified.</p> <p>Daniel, who served as Obama's cybersecurity coordinator from 2012 to 2017, said that "understanding what happened in 2016 is really critical to protecting ourselves in future elections," including the congressional elections this November.</p> <p>He said Russia is not the only threat, and that the U.S. must protect its elections from potential meddling by China, Iran, terrorists and hacktivists.</p>

"All of them are discovering that cyberspace is a great place to try to advance their agenda," Daniel said.

Daniel testified along with Victoria Nuland, who served as assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian Affairs during the Obama administration. The committee is seeking to learn what the administration did — and could have done better — to respond to Russian interference in the 2016 election.

The panel is investigating Russian meddling and possible collusion between the Trump campaign and the Kremlin in 2016. The senators are expected to issue a final report on their investigation later this year. It will include a section on the Obama administration's response to Russia's cyber attacks and the Kremlin's other efforts to influence the U.S. election.

Nuland and Daniel said the Russians appeared to change course after Obama confronted Russian President Vladimir Putin at a G-20 Leaders' Summit in China in September 2016. Obama warned Putin to stop meddling in the U.S. presidential race. Still, the Kremlin's efforts picked back up again in October.

"I think it may have led them (the Russians) to shift focus to social media rather than to continue going after election systems," Daniel said.

The Russians — in an effort not fully understood until Congress began investigating last year — exploited social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to create false groups and sow discord among U.S. voters on such divisive issues as race, gay rights, and gun control.

Nuland said the U.S. needs to work more closely with social media companies to expose false information that Russians and other foreign adversaries are putting out over social media.

She said France, using knowledge learned from the 2016 U.S. election, was able to quickly inform French voters about fake polls and other misinformation that the Russians were putting out to try to influence the 2017 French presidential race.

"The French were able to blunt the Russians' weapon," she said. "We've got to be in the same position."

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HEADLINE	06/20 Pentagon: can't win global cyberwar
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/joint-chiefs-cyberspace-internet-national-security/2018/06/20/id/867362/
GIST	<p>The Joint Chiefs of Staff admitted in a new report the United States cannot gain superiority in cyberspace because of the complex and vast nature of the platform.</p> <p>The lengthy report released earlier this month drew conclusions to the global battle to gain the upper hand in the virtual world.</p> <p>"Permanent global cyberspace superiority is not possible due to the complexity of cyberspace," the report reads. "Even local superiority may be impractical due to the way IT is implemented; the fact U.S. and other national governments do not directly control large, privately owned portions of cyberspace; the broad array of state and non-state actors; the low cost of entry; and the rapid and unpredictable proliferation of technology."</p> <p>The Washington Free Beacon reported on the findings.</p> <p>One challenge the Pentagon recognized is identifying who is behind cyberattacks. That, the report found, can often determine the response to the attack or threat.</p> <p>"The ability to hide the sponsor and/or the threat behind a particular malicious effect in cyberspace makes</p>

	<p>it difficult to determine how, when, and where to respond," the report reads. "The design of the Internet lends itself to anonymity and, combined with applications intended to hide the identity of users, attribution will continue to be a challenge for the foreseeable future."</p> <p>The military dedicates significant manpower and resources to cybersecurity through the Army Cyber Command. Last fall, the National Guard debuted a cyber brigade that has nearly 1,000 members.</p> <p>Russia, North Korea, and China are among the countries U.S. authorities have accused of conducting some level of cyberwarfare.</p>
Return to Top	<p>Click on link to download PDF entitled 'Cyberspace Operations': https://fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp3_12.pdf</p>

HEADLINE	06/20 Instagram unveils new video service
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/instagram-unveils-video-service-challenge-youtube-56035261
GIST	<p>Facebook's Instagram service is loosening its restraints on video in an attempt to lure younger viewers away from YouTube when they're looking for something to watch on their smartphones.</p> <p>The expansion announced Wednesday, dubbed IGTV, will increase Instagram's video time limit from one minute to 10 minutes for most users. Accounts with large audiences will be able to go as long as an hour.</p> <p>Video will be available through Instagram or a new app called IGTV. The video will eventually give Facebook more opportunities to sell advertising.</p> <p>It's the latest instance in which Instagram has ripped a page from a rival's playbook in an effort to preserve its status as a cool place for young people to share and view content. In this case, Instagram is mimicking Google's YouTube. Before, Facebook and Instagram have copied Snapchat — another magnet for teens and young adults.</p> <p>Instagram, now nearly 8 years old, is moving further from its roots as a photo-sharing service as it dives headlong into longer-form video.</p> <p>Instagram CEO Kevin Systrom told The Associated Press that he hopes IGTV will emerge as a hub of creativity for relative unknowns who turn into internet sensations with fervent followings among teens and young adults.</p> <p>That is what's already happening on YouTube, which has become the world's most popular video outlet since Google bought it for \$1.76 billion nearly 12 years ago. YouTube now boasts 1.8 billion users.</p> <p>Instagram, which Facebook bought for \$1 billion six years ago, now has 1 billion users, up from 800 million nine months ago.</p> <p>More importantly, 72 percent of U.S. kids ranging from 13 to 17 years old use Instagram, second to YouTube at 85 percent, according to the Pew Research Center. Only 51 percent of people in that group now use Facebook, down from 71 percent from a similar Pew survey in 2014-15.</p> <p>That trend appears to be one of the reasons that Facebook is "hedging its bets" by opening Instagram to the longer-form videos typically found on YouTube, said analyst Paul Verna of the research firm eMarketer.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	06/20 Times Sq. plotter: mentally ill or terrorist?
SOURCE	https://globalnews.ca/news/4274935/canadian-isis-plot-new-york/
GIST	<p>To Khdiga Metwally, the medical records spread across her kitchen table are more than a chronicle of her son’s history of addiction and mental illness; they are proof he is not a terrorist.</p> <p>Abdulrahman El Bahnasawy, a 20-year-old Canadian, faces a possible life sentence when he appears in a New York courtroom as early as next month for plotting a 2016 bombing at Times Square for the so-called Islamic State.</p> <p>But his mother insists the case is not what it seems.</p> <p>“Actually, it’s not a terrorist case, it’s a mental illness problem,” Metwally said in an interview at her home in an Oakville, Ont. suburb.</p> <p>“We have all the reports that confirm that my son was sick.”</p> <p>Those reports describe brain damage, bipolar disorder, obsessiveness and drug use beginning at age 14 that led to “huffing” — inhaling air fresheners, bug spray and anything else he could get his hands on.</p> <p>In many ways, El Bahnasawy’s story is familiar: a youth radicalizes online and decides to kill in the name of ISIS. But medical records from four countries obtained by Global News make it more complicated.</p> <p>The documents are an unprecedented and intimate look at the psyche of a young man who plotted mass killings in the West under the guidance of ISIS.</p> <p>And they raise complicated questions.</p> <p>To what extent does mental health explain the actions of some terrorists? Should terrorists with a history of mental illness be treated differently? Is a person with a mental illness, who engages in terrorism, still a terrorist?</p> <p>THE TEEN ADDICT</p> <p>“Abdulrahman has an extensive history of mental health problems and poor function, dating back to childhood,” according to a report by New York psychologist Katherine Porterfield, who reviewed El Bahnasawy’s medical files, met his family and spent 50 hours with him over nine months in 2017.</p> <p>The medical records date back to the day he was born. In the delivery room in Kuwait City, his mother had a severe uterine rupture. The baby was delivered “swiftly,” according to the hospital report, but the traumatic birth may have deprived the infant of oxygen, possibly causing brain damage.</p> <p>El Bahnasawy did not speak until he was four, according to Porterfield’s report for the U.S. legal defence team. He was an average student, “described as an anxious, hyperactive, and inattentive child.”</p> <p>“His most consistent trait was his tendency to fixate or obsess about certain topics or interests,” Porterfield wrote. The solar system, soccer, computers and atheism all monopolized his attention during stages of his childhood. And once he tried marijuana, it became the latest of his all-encompassing obsessions.</p> <p>He began “incessantly” talking about it. He researched how to grow it and droned on about how much he loved it. He argued with his parents about its benefits. “He essentially showed no interest in any other activities,” the psychologist wrote.</p> <p>To get him away from what they saw as Canada’s “permissive society,” and hoping he would benefit from being closer to relatives, his parents returned the family to Kuwait. But even in the conservative Gulf state, El Bahnasawy had no trouble finding drugs.</p> <p>He became addicted to chemical inhalants. When using them, he would hear a man’s voice that he thought</p>

came to him over radio waves. “He became one of my only friends and every time I wanted to talk to him I would get high and he was always there,” El Bahnasawy wrote in a letter to the judge hearing his case.

His parents got him into a Kuwait City hospital, where he was diagnosed with substance addiction and depression. To discourage him from relapsing, his father Osama El Bahnasawy videotaped him shaking from withdrawal.

He stayed for 40 days.

But as soon as he got out, he went right back to drugs.

The family returned to Toronto and, after El Bahnasawy disclosed multiple suicide attempts and thoughts of throwing himself off the apartment balcony, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) admitted him.

CAMH records list the substances he had used: heroin, cannabis, LSD, mescaline, amphetamines, crack and ecstasy, among others. His files indicate he “did well” at the facility. But when he was discharged, he returned to drugs.

The family next tried a private addiction clinic in Alexandria, Egypt. The Alriyada Hospital thought the underlying problem was bipolar disorder, along with “fits of obsession together with psychotic symptoms,” records show. After seven months, he came out in June 2015, finally off drugs.

El Bahnasawy was 17 when he returned to Toronto and he knew nobody. The medication he was taking seemed to work but it made him gain weight and he stopped taking it. His mother tried slipping it into meals but he found out.

Although he hadn’t previously identified as a Muslim, El Bahnasawy rediscovered the faith after his parents forced him to attend a Mississauga Islamic school, which they felt would not tolerate drug use.

But like everything else, he took it to the extreme. He dropped out of school and did nothing but sit in his room exploring violent jihadist Internet content and chatting online with ISIS supporters.

“Much as he had done with drugs, Abdulrahman put all of his energy and focus into this activity online, even speaking compulsively to his parents and sister about his new beliefs,” Porterfield wrote.

THE PLOT

In the fall of 2015, ISIS members in Syria were desperately trying to launch attacks in Western countries. Abu Saad al-Sudani was one of them. U.S. prosecutors called him a “high-level ISIS recruiter and attack planner” active in plotting terrorism in the U.S., Canada and Britain.

Alone in his bedroom in suburban Ontario, El Bahnasawy, began to correspond with al-Sudani. He told al-Sudani he wanted to join ISIS. Al-Sudani said El Bahnasawy would need to prove himself first, so he bought cellphones and collected \$500, which he sent to a list of names and addresses al-Sudani had provided.

Having passed his initiation, El-Bahnasawy was encouraged by al-Sudani to help ISIS achieve its ultimate fantasy: an attack on U.S. soil. The target was to be New York City, and the killings were to take place in June or July 2016, to coincide with the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

A U.S. citizen living in Pakistan named Talha Haroon joined the attack plot and they agreed the operation would involve bombings and mass shootings at a concert venue or the subway, prosecutors alleged. Then a third plotter joined in, a U.S.-based member of the ISIS online network.

The conspirators “repeatedly declared their allegiance to ISIS” and said they wanted their attack to be like those in Paris and Brussels, prosecutors said. El Bahnasawy said he wanted to carry out the next 9/11.

“These Americans need an attack,” he wrote.

To prepare for the big day, El Bahnasawy bought bomb-making materials and components in Ontario, including 40 pounds of hydrogen peroxide, and shipped them to his U.S. contact.

On May 1, 2016, he sent the U.S.-based conspirator images and maps of the New York subway system that showed the routes the attackers would take and the subway lines they would strike, the prosecutors said.

Needing more money to see the operation through, El Bahnasawy consulted al-Sudani, who put him in touch with “The Doctor,” a Philippine citizen named Russell Salic, who allegedly wired \$423 on May 11, 2016.

In the final weeks, El Bahnasawy made plans to travel to New York, using his parents as decoys. He told his U.S. contact he would be arriving “under the guise” of a family vacation. “I will be masked behind my parents back,” he wrote.

The day before the road trip, Haroon wrote that Times Square would be the perfect target. “We have to make an ocean out of their blood,” he wrote, “scar them for life knowing the soldiers of Allah are everywhere.”

The attack was to be a suicide mission, which Porterfield thought was telling. In her report, the psychologist said the hopelessness El Bahnasawy felt about beating addiction had led him to contemplate suicide. And the messaging of the extremist community offered him a path to that end.

“It is my clinical opinion that, below the surface of his submission to Islam and embrace of enslavement to the law of Allah there lurked a self-destructiveness,” she wrote.

“Essentially, Abdulrahman was engaged in a fantasy, the ultimate ending of which was his own destruction. As frightening as his ideas were, they can best be understood as psychological in nature — the terribly misguided thinking of a depressed young person who could not beat addiction.”

THE ROAD TRIP

The holiday in New York was planned for the Victoria Day long weekend. Osama said he felt it would be good for the family and there was reason to celebrate.

After months of being turned away by psychiatrists who either did not treat bipolar disorder or weren’t taking new patients, they had finally found a doctor for their son. The appointment was set for the Tuesday after the long weekend. El Bahnasawy had also agreed to go back to school.

They had no trouble crossing the border and saw nothing out of the ordinary on the drive. They got to the hotel in Cranford, New Jersey at about 10 p.m. and pulled into the parking lot.

That was when three cars surrounded them.

“We thought they were gangs. We didn’t know what was going on,” Osama said. “They said, ‘No, no, no, we are the FBI,’ and they showed us their cards.”

They searched the car and took the 18-year-old away.

THE PRISONER

The family was in the courtroom the next day when El Bahnasawy was indicted. Metwally said they were all crying so much she had trouble hearing the seven counts of terrorism being read into the court record.

Like many before him, El Bahnasawy had been brought down by an undercover counter-terrorism

operation. The U.S.-based co-conspirator was actually an FBI informant. All their conversations had been monitored.

That October, El Bahnasawy phoned home to say he was on his way to court to plead guilty. Metwally said she begged him not to do it. “I was like screaming, crying, and he was like, ‘Mom, calm down.’”

Although records show a U.S. Bureau of Prisons doctor had assessed El Bahnasawy as having “unspecified schizophrenia and other psychotic disorder,” the judge found him “competent and capable” of pleading guilty.

“In the spring of 2016, I agreed with others to carry out an attack in Times Square, to support ISIL,” he said in his plea. “Specifically, we agreed to try to set off a bomb in Times Square. I used the Internet and sent materials through the mail in furtherance of the conspiracy, and I also travelled from Canada to the United States.”

“Was one of the targets of your activities, intended targets, the New York City subway system?” the judge asked.

“Yes,” El Bahnasawy said.

His mother doesn’t think he was aware of the consequences of his guilty plea. She believes he only did it because he was scared, not taking his medication and wanted to get out of solitary confinement, where he had been sent for drug use and writing pro-ISIS graffiti on his cell wall.

Metwally doesn’t believe he would have gone through with an attack. She believes he needed mental health treatment, not an undercover investigation and prosecution.

She blames the FBI for what she sees as the entrapment of a sick youth. She blames the RCMP, which cooperated with the investigation, for not intervening before her son left Canada.

“I think my son is a victim,” Osama added. “By ISIS, this guy Sudani, by the FBI agent and by the RCMP.”

The RCMP declined to comment on the case.

In court filings, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Geoffrey Berman, dismissed the notion the undercover agent lured El Bahnasawy, saying the plot was already well underway when it was infiltrated by the FBI.

Nor was El Bahnasawy the “weak-willed and vulnerable victim” the defence made him out to be, Berman said, rejecting a reduced sentence on mental health grounds and noting that El Bahnasawy was not using drugs during the time of the plot.

He said that during the investigation, the FBI was unaware of El Bahnasawy’s medical history, but said mental illness and addiction did not explain or justify what he did.

“Indeed, it is likely that such potential mental instabilities only heightened the threat that El Bahnasawy posed to this country,” Berman wrote.

“El Bahnasawy may be polite, soft-spoken, and articulate, but make no mistake — behind that veil is a dangerous and calculating man who displayed a knowing, willing, and steadfast desire to kill.”

His parents intend to be at the courthouse for the sentencing. Originally scheduled for June 27, it was adjourned last Friday until July or September. Depending on how it goes, El Bahnasawy may never leave prison. They don’t believe the life sentence sought by U.S. prosecutors is appropriate.

	<p>“Of course not,” Metwally said.</p> <p>“Whatever intention, whatever happened, my son is sick and he was manipulated in a very cruel, unfair way.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Ohio man jailed 16yrs for ISIS support
SOURCE	http://www.cleveland19.com/story/38471160/sheffield-lake-man-turned-isis-supporter-sentenced-to-16-years-on-terrorism-related-charges
GIST	<p>SHEFFIELD LAKE, OH (WOIO) - Amir Said Rahman Al-Ghazi, 41, aka Robert C. McCollum, of Sheffield Lake, was sentenced to 16 years in prison for one count of providing material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), as well as two counts of being a felon in possession of firearms.</p> <p>“The National Security Division is committed to identifying and prosecuting those who seek to provide material support to terrorist groups like ISIS.” said Assistant Attorney General Demers in a prepared statement. “I want to thank the prosecutors and our partners in law enforcement—including the FBI and its Joint Terrorism Task Force—who ensured that this defendant was held accountable for his crimes.”</p> <p>Al-Ghazi, who changed his name from Robert McCollum last year, pledged his support to ISIS and Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi via social media in 2014.</p> <p>From July 2014 to June 2015, Al-Ghazi made multiple statements trying to persuade others to join ISIS.</p> <p>He also expressed a desire to perpetrate an attack on the United States and had attempted to purchase an AK-47 assault rifle.</p> <p>Al-Ghazi has communicated with individuals he believed to be members of ISIS in the Middle East and took steps to create propaganda videos for ISIS, according to court documents.</p> <p>“This case demonstrates law enforcement’s number one priority – to keep our communities and our nation safe,” said Special Agent in Charge Anthony in a prepared statement. “It is clear that no area is immune from the influence of ISIS and its supporters. We hope this case will serve as a strong message to others who may consider providing support to terrorists. The FBI and our Joint Terrorism Task Force partners are committed to identifying and stopping these individuals.”</p> <p>The case was investigated by the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Alabama man jailed 15yrs for ISIS
SOURCE	http://www.alabamaneews.net/2018/06/20/alabama-man-sentenced-to-15-years-for-isis-involvement/
GIST	<p>Aziz Ihab Sayyed, 23, of Huntsville, was sentenced today to 15 years in prison followed by lifetime supervised release for attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), a designated foreign terrorist organization.</p> <p>Assistant Attorney General for National Security John C. Demers, U.S. Attorney Jay E. Town for the Northern District of Alabama, and Special Agent in Charge Johnnie Sharp Jr. of the FBI’s Birmingham field office, made the announcement after sentencing by U.S. District Judge Abdul K. Kallon.</p> <p>“We will not tolerate threats to our national security from terrorist groups like ISIS, which continues to radicalize and encourage terrorists through the internet,” said Assistant Attorney General Demers. “The defendant, a citizen of this country, plotted to carry out attacks on his fellow Americans in our country, but was thwarted by the close cooperation of our partners in law enforcement. This successful outcome</p>

should send a clear message to any other would-be terrorists that the National Security Division will find them and bring them to justice.”

“Aziz Sayyed was inspired by ISIS to kill or harm Americans and he has earned every bit of his prison term,” said U.S. Attorney Town. “This case, and this investigation, serves as the gold standard for what is possible when federal, state and local law enforcement agencies work together. The FBI did an outstanding job ensuring this investigation was successful by cultivating those layers of law enforcement necessary in cases like this.”

“The FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force is dedicated to identifying and bringing to justice those individuals who attempt to provide material support to foreign terrorist organizations, promote violent extremism, and threaten our national security,” said Special Agent in Charge Sharp. “Today’s sentence is a culmination of the tireless efforts of our JTTF, and the invaluable partnership we have with the Huntsville Police Department.”

Sayyed pleaded guilty in March to the terrorism charge. According to Sayyed’s plea agreement with the government, he attempted to provide services and personnel, namely himself, to ISIS. He acknowledged that he bought bomb-building ingredients in 2017, that he stated his aspirations to conduct ISIS-inspired attacks on police stations and Redstone Arsenal in Alabama, and that he attempted to form a cell to conduct violent acts within the United States.

Between January and June of 2017 in Madison County, Sayyed, a U.S. citizen, obtained and viewed ISIS propaganda videos depicting ISIS forces committing bombings, executions by gunshot and beheading, and other violent acts. Sayyed shared the videos and expressed his support for ISIS and for ISIS terrorist attacks around the world, according to his plea agreement.

Sayyed researched and learned how to make triacetone triperoxide (TATP), a highly volatile and extremely dangerous explosive material. He then purchased the necessary ingredients for the explosive, and professed his aspiration to use TATP in an explosive belt or a car bomb.

On June 13, 2017, Sayyed met with an individual he understood to be an ISIS member. In fact, the person was an undercover employee of the FBI. Sayyed and the undercover employee discussed the danger of TATP, ISIS’s preference for the use of certain explosives, and Sayyed’s desire to assist ISIS, according to the plea agreement. In that meeting, Sayyed offered to personally carry out attacks on behalf of ISIS.

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HEADLINE	06/20 Europol: 205 terror attacks in Europe
SOURCE	https://www.standard.co.uk/news/world/revealed-europe-faced-205-terror-attacks-last-year-and-more-than-half-were-reported-in-the-uk-a3867996.html
GIST	<p>More than 200 terrorist attacks took place, were foiled or failed in Europe last year, an official report has found.</p> <p>Over half of the cases were recorded in the UK, according to figures compiled by Europol.</p> <p>Nine member states reported a total of 205 terrorist attacks that were either stopped, failed or completed, the EU’s law enforcement agency said - up from 142 in 2016.</p> <p>The UK experienced the highest number with 107, which includes 88 security-related incidents in Northern Ireland, the EU terrorism situation and trend report said.</p> <p>It comes after Londoners fell silent yesterday to honour the victims of the Finsbury Park terror attack one year after Darren Osborne ploughed a van into a crowd of Muslims as they left a mosque during Ramadan.</p> <p>France recorded the second largest number, with 54, followed by Spain (16), Italy (14), and Greece (8).</p>

Researchers said attacks in EU countries killed 68 victims and left 844 injured last year, with nearly all the reported fatalities and casualties resulting from jihadist atrocities.

The number of jihadist terrorist attacks increased from 13 in 2016 to 33 in 2017, while ethno-nationalist and separatist attacks accounted for the largest proportion of the incidents, with 137.

The report said the violent right-wing extremist spectrum is expanding, "partly fuelled by fears of a perceived Islamisation of society and anxiety over migration".

The failed, foiled and completed attacks on the EU in 2017

United Kingdom - 107

France - 54

Spain - 16

Italy - 14

Greece - 8

Belgium - 2

Germany - 2

Sweden - 1

Finland - 1

Five foiled, failed or completed attacks attributed to right-wing extremism were reported - all of them by the UK.

On Islamic State, the assessment said the degradation of the group's organisational structures may reduce its attractiveness. But it warned that this may not affect the threat of jihadist terrorism, noting that disaffected IS members and sympathisers could be drawn to other groups such as al Qaida.

By 2017 more than 150 social media platforms were identified as being abused by terrorists for propaganda dissemination, according to the paper.

It said: "Online propaganda continues to be an essential part of jihadist terrorist attempts to reach out to EU audiences for recruitment, radicalisation and fundraising."

While the outflow of individuals travelling from the EU to fight with terrorist groups has slowed, Europol underlined that IS, al Qaida and other jihadist groups continue to pose a major threat.

British European commissioner for security Sir Julian King said the report shows Europe continues to be a target for terrorism.

He said: "We need to keep our collective eye on the ball, and strengthen our efforts at EU level to deny terrorists the means they need to carry out attacks including arms, explosives and funding; work on evolving areas such as CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear) threats; and continue to tackle radicalisation and all types of violent extremism."

Europol executive director Catherine De Bolle said: "The numbers in this report are not just statistics. We must never forget that behind every number, there is an innocent victim."

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HEADLINE	06/20 Iraq fighters threaten attacks US, Israel
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/iraqi-fighters-threaten-attacks-against-us-israel-after-deadly-syria-strikes-987186
GIST	Iraqi paramilitary groups have threatened to launch attacks against the U.S. and Israel after yet unclaimed airstrikes reportedly killed a number of Iraqi militiamen battling the Islamic State militant group (ISIS) on

the Syrian side of the Iraqi border.

Kataib Hezbollah and Asaib Ahl al-Haq, two powerful Shiite Muslim factions within the larger Iran-backed Popular Mobilization Forces of Iraq, issued warnings Tuesday saying they were ready to retaliate against Monday's deadly attacks that have been blamed on both the U.S. and Israel. The U.S.-led coalition battling ISIS in both countries has denied responsibility for the strikes, which reportedly killed dozens near the border town of Al-Bukamal, while Israel has declined to comment.

"This terrible crime will reopen the confrontation with the Zionist entity and the American project, and we in the Kataib Hezbollah, we will not hesitate to go towards this confrontation," the group's statement read, calling President Donald Trump an "idiot" and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a "moron" for their military incursions in the region.

"The mujahideen are the elite of men, and their blood is dearest of all. We will not let the crime of targeting them pass unnoticed, and we will know in the coming days the criminals who extended their sinful hands to commit aggression on our Iraqi border and then take a position commensurate with the size of this crime," the group, considered a terrorist organization by the U.S., added.

Asaib Ahl al-Haq, which also deeply opposes the continued U.S. military presence in Iraq after the country declared victory over ISIS last year, released its own statement Tuesday condemning "the treacherous act of cowardice" committed by aircraft "whose identity is limited to America and Israel."

The group called on Iraq to take a tougher stance against the U.S., who has been active in the country since invading and overthrowing the previous government led by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in 2003. The ensuing chaos gave rise to a Sunni Muslim insurgency that helped spawn ISIS, which ultimately took advantage of a West-backed 2011 uprising in Syria to spread there in 2013.

The U.S. and its foe, Iran, both supported Iraq as it fought off the jihadis that took half the country by 2014. With ISIS defeated, however, voices calling for a U.S. withdrawal have risen within Iraq and May's election gave a surprise victory to a political bloc led by Shiite Muslim cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. Sadr helped organize Shiite Muslim militias to resist the post-2003 U.S. occupation, but he has yet to officially ask the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS to leave.

Syria, however, has proven a different theater entirely. When the U.S. began bombing ISIS there in 2014, it did so without the authorization of the Syrian government, who the CIA had been funding rebels to fight since at least 2012. Russia and Iran have helped Syrian President Bashar al-Assad overcome both jihadis and insurgents in campaign separate from that of the U.S.-led coalition offensive against ISIS.

Monday's strikes were the latest example of violence targeting forces fighting on behalf of Assad, who the U.S. and Israel charge with war crimes and with allowing Iranian influence to spread through the country.

The official Syrian Arab News Agency quickly condemned Monday's attack in which it cited an official military source as saying there "were several martyrs and others were wounded." The U.S.-led coalition denied responsibility, but CNN and the Agence France-Presse cited unnamed U.S. officials claiming Israel was the true culprit. Israel routinely neither confirms nor denies responsibility for attacks in Syria, but has admitted to targeting Iran and pro-Iran forces, albeit often near Syria's western and southwest regions.

Iraq, who considers itself an ally of both the U.S.-led coalition and the Russia-Iran-Syria axis, expressed "its rejection and condemnation" of the attacks in a foreign ministry statement Tuesday that warned such actions were tantamount to "support for ISIS." The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a pro-opposition monitor based in the U.K., reported Tuesday that up to 55 pro-Syrian government fighters were killed and the warplanes involved flew in "the same airspace used by the International Coalition warplanes, and the death toll is expected to rise because there are some people in critical situation."

When pressed for answers, U.S.-led coalition spokesman Army Colonel Sean Ryan again said that the multinational force was not behind the strikes and claimed to not have any knowledge of any parties

	<p>involved. He confirmed only that Iraq was not behind the attack and, when asked about Israel's potential involvement, he said: "As far as I know, we don't discuss any military operations with the Israelis at all.</p> <p>"We have ISR [intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance] in that area, but we can't determine, you know, who fired it, nor is that our military goal," he added. "That's an intelligence question, and I can't divulge that information, even if I had it, which I don't."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Germany: ricin plot bigger than suspected
SOURCE	http://www.dw.com/en/cologne-ricin-plot-bigger-than-initially-suspected/a-44319328
GIST	<p>German authorities said on Wednesday that they had averted a major biological attack by arresting a Tunisian in Cologne a week ago, with the scale of the plot greater than initially thought.</p> <p>The 29-year-old man, identified only as Sief Allah H. in accordance with German privacy laws, had manufactured ricin, a poison found in castor beans, for the suspected attack, the president of the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), Holger Münch, told German broadcaster RBB-Inforadio.</p> <p>"There were very concrete preparations for such an act using what you might call a biological bomb," Münch said, describing it as an "unprecedented" threat.</p> <p>According to federal prosecutors, about 3,150 castor bean seeds — more than three times the number initially suspected — and 84.3 milligrams of ricin were found in the suspect's apartment.</p> <p>Ricin is 6,000 times more potent than cyanide and is lethal in minute doses if swallowed, inhaled or injected. It has no known antidote.</p> <p>Münch said that objects that could be used to make a bomb were also found in the searches.</p> <p>The target of the suspected attack was not clear, he added.</p> <p>Islamist connection</p> <p>Federal prosecutors said the man had been in contact with "persons from the radical Islamist spectrum," and that they were still probing the content of the communications.</p> <p>"There are as yet no leads indicating that the accused was a member of a terrorist group," the federal prosecutors' office in in the southwestern city of Karlsruhe said.</p> <p>But they said the man, who is married to a German woman, had twice tried to travel to Syria last year.</p> <p>Prosecutors say the suspect bought the seeds online, and used instructions posted online by the "Islamic State" (IS) militant group to make ricin.</p> <p>Phone-in tip</p> <p>Germany's domestic intelligence agency chief Hans-Georg Maassen said it was very likely that a terrorist attack had been thwarted.</p> <p>Maassen said a phone-in tip helped authorities confirm their suspicions about the Tunisian and foil the extremist's plan.</p> <p>German security agencies first were warned about the man by foreign intelligence agencies, but the information provided wasn't conclusive enough to act upon, authorities said.</p>

	Maassen, who heads the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), added that the alleged plot showed that the danger of an attack in Germany remains high.
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HEADLINE	06/20 Guilty plea trying to support ISIS
SOURCE	https://journaltimes.com/news/national/man-pleads-guilty-to-trying-to-support-islamic-state-group/article_fb1d1216-a585-5dec-8e86-664912f70ade.html
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (AP) — A New York City man has pleaded guilty to attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State group.</p> <p>Parveg Ahmed entered the plea in federal court in Brooklyn on Wednesday. The 22-year-old Queens resident faces up to 20 years in prison.</p> <p>According to a criminal complaint, Ahmed sent messages on social media about his support of the Islamic State group. It says he traveled to Saudi Arabia with others in a failed attempt to join the militant group.</p> <p>U.S. officials say he was detained in an unnamed country bordering Syria and sent back to New York City last August.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/21 Africa: rise in Islamist militant attacks
SOURCE	https://www.herald.co.zw/sharp-rise-in-number-of-islamist-militant-attacks-in-africa-report/
GIST	<p>ABUJA. – Sub-Saharan Africa suffers under a sharp rise in the number of Islamist militant attacks. In its report “Changing Patterns in Terrorism and the Threat to Business, Control Risks”, the specialist global risk consultancy, finds that the number of incidents rose from 317 in 2013 to 1,549 for the period April 2017 to April 2018.</p> <p>While some of the attacks are inspired by the so-called Islamic State (IS) that is losing its grip in its Middle Eastern heartland, the drivers behind this rise in sub-Saharan Africa are more complex.</p> <p>Jean Devlin, Partner and Head of African Analysis at Control Risks, explains: “Many factors lie behind this, including the local dynamics of long-standing conflicts and insurgencies. In East and West Africa, the increase in attacks has several drivers.</p> <p>“Although security forces in affected countries have for the most part been able to reduce the capability of militant groups to hold onto and control territory, this has pushed them to engage in asymmetric warfare against civilian ‘soft targets’. Security forces are struggling to comprehensively degrade the capability of these groups, and as a result the threat is proving resilient despite gains made.”</p> <p>Somalia, which witnessed 879 incidents over the period, accounted for over half of the Islamist militant incidents recorded across sub-Saharan Africa; the only other East African country affected during the period was Kenya, with 79 incidents.</p> <p>In West Africa, where 36 percent of the incidents were reported, Nigeria suffered most (220 incidents), followed by Mali (194) and Cameroon (96).</p> <p>Although the total number of Islamist militant attacks in Southern Africa was relatively low – 56 incidents in total; 43 in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 12 in Mozambique, 1 in South Africa – the rise in attacks particularly in Mozambique, where the first attack was recorded on 5 October 2017, is concerning.</p> <p>Looking at all types of terrorist activity, government, military and security forces, and their installations typically top target lists across the world.</p>

	<p>Retail and road top the list of civilian sectors affected by Islamist militancy globally – something that is mirrored in sub-Saharan Africa where vehicles and road infrastructure such as bridges are most targeted, particularly in Nigeria, Mali, Kenya and Somalia.</p> <p>The hospitality sector comes in second (with most incidents in Somalia and Mali), followed by retail. Targeting these areas allows Islamist militants to hit civilians and government/ security forces alike, as the latter congregate in the respective facilities or use the infrastructure for movements.</p> <p>The many shades of political and ideological violence and militancy in play across the globe are part of a complex picture of risk and opportunity facing businesses and organisations. Combined with other threats such as cyber security, kidnap and general criminality, these create a complex security environment for international business.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 TSA scrutinizes powder in carry-on bags
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/tsa-steps-up-scrutiny-of-powders-in-carry-on-bags/
GIST	<p>Air travelers will face a new level of attention at airport checkpoints starting Wednesday. The TSA will now inspect passengers' carry-on bags for powdered material.</p> <p>TSA officers will start asking passengers in the standard security lines to remove containers holding at least 350 milliliters of powder – roughly the size of a soda can – from their carry-on bags for additional screening. The rules are similar to those already in place for liquids and gels.</p> <p>The TSA is checking a range of items like powder cosmetics, baby powders and drink mixes. Passengers will be encouraged but not required to pack those larger containers in their checked luggage. Similar to food items, officers may recommend smaller containers of powder also be removed from carry-on bags for separate screening.</p> <p>The new regulations are meant to reduce the chances that explosive material or a debilitating agent like pepper spray are smuggled on board an airplane. Powder can look like explosive material on an X-ray machine and lead to extended bag searches.</p> <p>What passengers are going to hear from the TSA now is they would prefer large containers of powder to be checked. If not, passengers will need to take them out of their carry-on at the checkpoint.</p> <p>This new policy will not apply to flyers in the TSA Pre program.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Europol: few ISIS fighters return home
SOURCE	http://www.businessinsider.com/r-few-islamic-state-fighters-return-but-home-grown-attacks-rise-europol-says-2018-6
GIST	<p>THE HAGUE (Reuters) - Europeans who went off to fight on behalf of Islamic State have not flooded back in large numbers since losing strongholds in Syria and Iraq, Europe's police agency said on Wednesday, but they have inspired a growing number of home-grown attacks.</p> <p>Tracking battle-hardened fighters is still the main concern of Western counter-terrorism officials, though a big influx did not materialize, Manuel Navarrete, head of Europol's Counter Terrorism Centre, told reporters at its Hague headquarters.</p> <p>"The main threat is coming from foreign terrorist fighters even though the numbers ... that are returning are quite low," he said, referring to outsiders who traveled to Syria and Iraq to fight alongside militants</p>

there.

There has been a spike in recent years in IS-inspired attacks by "lone wolves" using little more weaponry than a knife or car. Most have been less deadly than strikes by former fighters, but they are harder for police to stop, he said.

The number of attacks and foiled plots in Europe more than doubled last year to 205, killing 62 people, Europol's annual report showed.

"Even though we suffer more attacks, they were less sophisticated," Navarrete said.

Of more than 5,000 Europeans - most from Britain, France, Germany and Belgium - who joined the ranks of fighters in Syria and Iraq, some 1,500 have returned and 1,000 were killed, according to the EU intelligence-sharing body. There is only limited intelligence available about the fate of the rest.

Many fighters have been detained. Some traveled to Malaysia, the Philippines and Libya. Others are thought to be laying low or in third countries like Turkey, he said.

Tougher border controls, surveillance and prosecution in Europe have also dissuaded some from returning, with EU nations making more than 700 arrests linked to jihadi activity in 2017, he said.

The suicide bomber who killed 22 people at an Ariana Grande concert in the English city of Manchester in May 2017 had just returned from Libya. But most recent attacks have been carried out by home-grown jihadists who never went to conflict zones.

As the Islamic State was routed last year from Mosul in Iraq and Raqqa in Syria, it urged followers to carry out attacks at home, rather than travel to its self-declared caliphate.

"Now the message of the Islamic State has changed ... to being more negative and asking for retaliation," Navarrete said.

While lone actors often use tactics that result in fewer victims, they pose a threat that is difficult to prevent. In 2016, a man killed 86 people by driving a truck into a crowd in the Mediterranean city of Nice, France.

"You have to be very, very close to a person in order to take action on the police level to prevent this," Navarrete said. "And the closest you can be to a person right now is not going to the front door, it is going to Facebook, to Twitter."

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HEADLINE	06/20 Military: al-Shabab not getting any stronger
SOURCE	https://www.voanews.com/a/al-shabab-militant-group-getting-lucky-not-stronger-in-somalia-/4446627.html
GIST	<p>Somalia's most dangerous terror group is likely not getting any stronger despite a series of deadly attacks, including one that claimed the life of a U.S. special operations soldier earlier this month.</p> <p>The assessment, by U.S. military and counterintelligence officials, runs contrary to the conclusions of some analysts and comes as al-Shabab has been flexing its military might in recent weeks, highlighting attacks on both Somali and African Union forces.</p> <p>One of the most publicized of these was a brazen June 8 attack on an outpost under construction two kilometers north of the town of Sanguni, in the Lower Jubba region of Somalia.</p> <p>The al-Qaida-linked militants skirmished with a force of 800 Somali and Kenyan forces accompanied by</p>

U.S. special operations soldiers, one of whom was killed by mortar fire.

U.S. officials are still trying to determine the size of the al-Shabab force at the time of the attack but say there is no indication of any increased capability.

“It was a lucky shot,” a U.S. military official told VOA on condition of anonymity. “I wouldn’t consider this a well-executed attack.”

Another military official said, in many ways, the deadly attack was typical of al-Shabab operations.

“Historically, al-Shabab has been willing to engage large forces, often using surprise and asymmetric tactics to improve their chances for success,” said Lt. Cmdr. Desiree Frame, a spokesperson for U.S. Africa Command. “We expect to see more conflict in southern Somalia as Somali Government Forces, AMISOM, and their partners make in-roads into al-Shabab-held territory.”

Still, accounts from Somalia indicate the al-Shabab forces were not deterred by the presence of U.S. special operations forces using armored vehicles and armed drones, as the June 8 deadly mortar strike was part of a three-day long assault on the outpost that included a failed attack using a vehicle-borne bomb.

“They know our movements,” an official with the Somali forces in Sanguni told VOA Somali. “It’s an open secret.”

Another Somali commander said al-Shabab also took advantage of the terrain, striking after recent flooding forced the Somali, Kenyan and U.S. forces to build the outpost in the open.

U.S. counterterrorism and military officials say there is no doubt the group remains the biggest threat to security in Somalia. But they have resisted attributing the increased pace of al-Shabab attacks to anything more than their annual Ramadan campaign.

“We do not assess that al-Shabab has recently increased their capabilities or their willingness to engage their enemies,” according to Africa Command’s Frame.

A senior U.S. counterterrorism official described al-Shabab’s activity as routine, noting its public statement “promote the virtue of waging jihad during Ramadan.”

Still, some analysts warn it is wrong to downplay the strides al-Shabab has made since being kicked out of its last urban stronghold, the port city of Kismayo, in 2012.

“It’s clear that we’re not just seeing a spike in attacks related to the Ramadan campaign,” said Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, a senior analyst at the Washington-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies. “It’s clear that the organization has gotten stronger.”

And while Gartenstein-Ross thinks it is unlikely al-Shabab is strong enough to consistently challenge U.S. forces in the region, it has shown it can be potent against both Somalia and African Union forces in the area.

“They’ve been able to kill very high numbers and you didn’t see that five years ago. They’ve been able to actually overrun bases at times,” he said. “The danger is as African Union forces draw down, they may retake major urban areas. I think there’s a good chance of that.”

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HEADLINE 06/20 Feds: ISIS supporter dangerous crook

SOURCE <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2018/06/20/terror-suspect-lied-bomb-stole-airport-worker-id-feds-allege/71742800/>

GIST

Federal prosecutors are troubled that an Ypsilanti man amassed an arsenal of weapons and bomb components and stole a U.S. Department of Homeland Security employee's all-access pass at an airport, according to court records.

The details were revealed in a federal court filing Tuesday by prosecutors who portray Yousef Ramadan, 29, as a violent, dangerous crook obsessed with weapons and the Islamic State. The portrait clashes with defense claims that Ramadan is a law-abiding citizen merely curious about violence in the Middle East.

Prosecutors want Ramadan to remain in jail pending trial in the latest counter-terrorism case involving a Metro Detroiter accused of supporting the Islamic State. U.S. District Judge Marianne Battani will consider releasing Ramadan on bond July 10, along with defense requests to suppress evidence and statements made to investigators.

The filing raises questions about whether Ramadan was planning a domestic terror attack before federal agents yanked him off a flight last year at Detroit Metropolitan Airport, searched his luggage and found pepper spray, knives, a stun gun, black masks, two-way radios, a gas mask, a tactical vest and photos of a homemade pipe bomb.

"Ramadan is also a danger given his activities associated with bomb-making," Assistant U.S. Attorney Ronald Waterstreet wrote. "Pipe bombs have no peaceful purpose. No socially acceptable use. They are tools used to indiscriminately wound, destroy, and kill."

The case against Ramadan, a naturalized U.S. citizen born in the Palestinian territories, dates to August 2017. That's when he was removed from a Royal Jordanian Airlines flight at Detroit Metropolitan Airport before flying to Amman, Jordan, with the ultimate destination of Israel. Before the plane could depart, investigators searched his checked baggage and found the items.

Ramadan said he was a photojournalist and needed the items for personal safety.

A secondary inspection uncovered numerous electronic devices, including laptops, iPhones and storage devices.

Investigators found videos of Ramadan shooting pistols and rifles, including a sniper rifle.

Ramadan had multiple YouTube channels. One, named "WB.88Guns," contained seven videos posted between November 2016 and February 2017.

Investigators also found photos and videos of pipe bombs and propaganda videos and photos related to the Islamic State, including videos of fighters wearing black masks similar to those found in Ramadan's luggage, according to FBI Special Agent Ryan Schanberger.

FBI agents showed Ramadan a photo obtained from one of his electronic devices. The photo showed what appeared to be a homemade, improvised explosive device, or pipe bomb, according to the filing.

"Ramadan said the bomb was like a large firework that would make a loud bang when detonated, and that these items were sometimes used to throw at soldiers overseas," Waterstreet wrote.

Ramadan told investigators he downloaded the bomb photo from the Internet, according to court records. But investigators analyzed metadata from the image that showed where the bomb was photographed.

"Ramadan's home in Bethlehem, Israel," the prosecutor wrote.

Prosecutors claim Ramadan stole a federal law enforcement employee's identification.

Ramadan took pictures of a U.S. Customs and Border Protection employee's uniform and patch, government identification card, and security identification card, prosecutors allege.

"The San Diego Airport security identification card grants the holder full access to the airfield, commuter and freight aircrafts, the terminals and all ramps," Waterstreet wrote.

Ramadan also was questioned about the Islamic State propaganda videos and photos found on his electronic devices.

"Ramadan stated that he likes and watches all aspects of combat footage," the agent wrote. "He claimed that he does support ISIS' goal of establishing ... an Islamic State, but that he does not support their methods of violence to achieve that goal, instead preferring a peaceful approach to converting non-believers into the Muslim religion and/or forming an Islamic State."

Investigators told Ramadan that watching violent ISIS videos could prompt him to commit a violent act.

"Ramadan responded by saying that if he ever wanted to commit an attack he certainly would not have to travel overseas to do it," the agent wrote. "Ramadan stated that he would do it in the United States as it would be much easier to accomplish than overseas."

Days after questioning Ramadan at the airport and preventing him from flying overseas, the FBI's counter-terrorism unit sought a search warrant for Ramadan's storage unit in Ann Arbor.

Agents searched the storage unit Aug. 23 and found two rifles, a handgun, components of an AR-15 rifle and two semi-automatic handguns.

"Additionally, the FBI found various components that could be used to construct a bomb: black powder fireworks, wires, an electric wire tester, cell phones (used as remote electric igniters), and items that can be used as shrapnel," Waterstreet wrote.

Ramadan later was indicted on two counts of knowingly possessing a firearm with an obliterated serial number, a five-year felony.

Ramadan should be released from jail pending trial, his lawyer Andrew Densemio said.

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HEADLINE	06/21 Afghan official: Taliban kill 8 police
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/afghan-official-taliban-kill-police-56049448?
GIST	<p>The Taliban killed eight police in two separate attacks in Afghanistan on Thursday, officials said.</p> <p>Arif Noori, a spokesman for the governor of the southern Ghazni province, says six police were killed and four were wounded in an attack on security posts early Thursday. He says at least seven insurgents were killed in the hours-long gunbattle.</p> <p>In the northern Baghlan province, the Taliban killed two police and wounded another three, according to police spokesman Zabiullah Shuja.</p> <p>No one immediately claimed either attack.</p> <p>The Taliban have seized several districts across the country in recent years, and carry out near-daily attacks, mainly targeting security forces. They resumed their attacks after a three-day cease-fire last weekend coinciding with the Muslim Eid al-Fitr holiday.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	06/20 Mystery: 3 died during late night swim
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2018/06/20/3-people-died-during-a-late-night-swim-at-a-closed-pool-and-police-cant-figure-out-why/?utm_term=.edde23753959
GIST	<p>The trio probably hopped the fence around the pool late at night, sliding into the water as most of the people at the Chapel Tower apartment complex were sleeping.</p> <p>Neighbors found their bodies floating in the water around 3:30 a.m., long after CPR could do any good.</p> <p>But authorities in Durham, N.C., are still trying to find answers to the biggest mystery surrounding their sudden deaths: What would render the three swimmers unable to save themselves or each other?</p> <p>Police identified the victims as Abril Yuliana Flores-Ojeda, 15; Brian Manuel Benites, 16; and Luis Enrique Delgado-Romero, 21, all of Durham. They did not live at the apartment complex.</p> <p>They were all pronounced dead shortly after being pulled from the pool Tuesday morning by police and three men who live at the complex.</p> <p>Durham police spokeswoman Kammie Michael said in a news release that it doesn't appear that the victims were electrocuted, though the investigation is continuing.</p> <p>The pool, which remained closed Wednesday, is a summertime focus for the complex. One resident called it the "life of the place." Now, residents are voicing concerns.</p> <p>"The kids always want to get in the water and have fun," Sandra Henderson, who lives at Chapel Tower in Durham, told Raleigh, N.C., NBC-affiliate WRAL. "I just hate that this happened. I really do. I hope and pray that living in a community, everybody will be watchful."</p> <p>Investigators told the news station that a total of four people slipped into the pool early Tuesday. Police were interviewing the survivor to determine what happened, but have not disclosed what the person told them.</p> <p>Chapel Tower is a short distance from Duke University and markets heavily to people connected to the school — even offering student discounts and furnished apartments. It's on the Duke transit loop, including a program that gives people safe rides from the university late at night.</p> <p>But a key amenity is the complex's pool, which is eight feet at its deepest. The surrounding area also has free WiFi.</p> <p>The swimming spot, however, is not just popular with the people who live at Chapel Tower. Teenagers routinely climb the fence and go for late-night dips, residents told WRAL.</p> <p>The pool also has 24-hour security, but no one reported seeing anyone climb the fence or get into the water overnight.</p> <p>A maintenance worker told the Raleigh News & Observer that the pool is closed Mondays and the gate had been locked since at least that morning.</p> <p>Hours later, a resident said, someone was running from apartment to apartment, banging on doors and screaming. The neighbor, who did not disclose his name to the newspaper, said he called 911, then looked outside. There, he said, a man and a police officer were pulling a body from the water.</p> <p>The neighbor hopped the pool fence, pulled a person who appeared to be a teenager out of the water and attempted CPR, but the teen was not responsive, the News & Observer reported.</p>

	<p>Investigators said the cause of death was drowning, but were conducting autopsies to determine what may have happened to the victims just before.</p> <p>Images from local news broadcasts showed police and crime scene investigators scouring the pool area with flashlights and searching behind blue lawn chairs. At one point, an investigator removed what appeared to be clothing and placed it into a brown evidence bag. They also found beer cans.</p> <p>Less than two weeks ago, John Williams with the Durham County Health Department had inspected the apartment complex's pool, WRAL said, and found that it was "in very good condition."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 NKorea missile site not dismantled?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jun/20/north-korea-missile-site-shows-no-signs-being-dism/
GIST	<p>President Trump's national security team is closely monitoring North Korea's Sohae Satellite Launching Ground, which North Korea leader Kim Jong-un promised to dismantle during the Singapore summit, a White House official said Wednesday.</p> <p>Satellite images of the missile test site have shown no activity suggesting it was being dismantled. But National Security Council officials were not yet raising alarms over the inaction just a week after Mr. Kim made the promise to Mr. Trump in Singapore.</p> <p>"As the president said at the Singapore summit, Chairman Kim promised that North Korea will destroy a missile engine test stand soon," said an NSC official.</p> <p>The official confirmed for the first time that the site identified by Mr. Kim was the Sohae Satellite Launching Ground, a facility in Ch'olsan County, North Pyongan province.</p> <p>"North Korea has used this site to test liquid propellant engines for its long range ballistic missiles. The United States will continue to monitor this site closely as we move forward in our negotiations," said the official.</p> <p>The focus on the missile site coincided with growing impatience from Washington to Seoul for some tangible progress on the denuclearization deal.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Claim: UN report left out key details
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/20/world/middleeast/un-syria-eastern-ghouta.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=first-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news
GIST	<p>At least twice this year, the Syrian military fired Iranian-made artillery shells filled with a chlorine-like substance that oozed poison slowly, giving victims just a few minutes to escape.</p> <p>In another attack, Syrian forces dropped a chemical bomb on the top-floor balcony of an apartment building, killing 49 people, including 11 children. Their skin turned blue.</p> <p>These details and others blaming Syria for atrocities in eastern Ghouta, a suburb of Damascus, were uncovered by a United Nations commission investigating and documenting possible war crimes in the seven-year-old conflict. But when the commission issued a report on Wednesday, the details were omitted.</p> <p>Seven pages that had been in an earlier draft, provided to The New York Times, were summarized in two</p>

paragraphs in the final document.

The commission's report examined how the government of President Bashar al-Assad recaptured eastern Ghouta, the rebel stronghold near the capital, in the first four months of 2018. Mr. Assad's forces laid siege to the area, using bombardments, mass starvation and chemical weapons.

The materials in the leaked draft paint a far more frightening picture of chemical weapons use in eastern Ghouta than had been previously reported. And they assert without qualification that Syrian forces and their allies were responsible, rebutting repeated denials by Mr. Assad's government and his backers in Russia and Iran.

A member of the commission explained the omissions, saying that many of the details in the early draft needed additional corroboration or clarification and might be included in another report, perhaps by September. There was no outside pressure to withhold the information, said the member, Hanny Megally, an Egyptian human rights lawyer.

"We thought we need to do some more work on this, it's an ongoing investigation," Mr. Megally said. "So we thought, let's keep it short."

But the conclusions in the omitted information seemed unambiguous.

The leaked draft stated:

"In one of the most grim patterns of attack documented during the period under review, Government forces and/or affiliated militias continued to use chemical weapons in densely populated civilian areas throughout eastern Ghouta."

In meticulous detail, the draft enumerated six chemical weapons assaults on civilians from January through April 7, the date of the deadliest assault. In what appeared to be a first, it implicated Iranian-supplied weaponry.

In attacks on Jan. 13, Jan. 22 and Feb. 1, the draft said, government forces fired chemical agents, "most probably chlorine," into a residential part of eastern Ghouta's Douma neighborhood, near a sports stadium, roughly 800 yards from the front lines, between 5 a.m. and 6:30 a.m.

Some witnesses described a "slow-acting agent" that smelled like chlorine, the draft said, and they had sufficient time "to rouse the victims, obtain wet cloths to serve as makeshift face masks, and evacuate the affected areas."

In the Jan. 22 and Feb. 1 attacks, the draft said, the commission had evidence identifying the bomb delivery devices as surface-to-surface industrially produced Iranian artillery rockets, "only known to have been used by Government forces and, rarely, affiliated militias."

"In relation to the munitions used on 22 January and 1 February, the Commission obtained and assessed material evidence including metadata analysis, and identified a surface-to-surface craft-produced rocket (IRAM). While IRAMs have been employed by a range of actors across Syria, the particular design of observed during these two attacks is only known to have been used by Government forces and rarely, affiliated militias. Specifically, IRAMs documented were built around industrially-produced Iranian artillery rockets known to have been supplied to Syrian Government forces."

The draft said that the eastern Ghouta attacks had followed "a pattern previously documented by the Commission concerning the use of chemical weapons by Government forces," and that none of them had suggested "the involvement of armed groups."

Thirty-one people, including 11 children, were sickened in the first three attacks, but none died. Two other episodes of possible chlorine use, on Feb. 25 and March 7, caused more extensive casualties, killing two

children, including an infant, and injuring 18 civilians.

The worst was yet to come, following the collapse of negotiations between Russian military officials and an insurgent group, Jaish al-Islam, to evacuate the Douma neighborhood and end the siege. On April 7, the draft said, an improvised explosive delivered from the air hit a multistory residential building roughly 200 yards from the Rif Damascus Hospital, the last functioning hospital in Douma.

The draft described the explosive as a “single industrial gas cylinder” with fins that struck the top-floor balcony and appeared to have “rapidly released large amounts of a substance into the interior space of the residential apartment building.”

“Positions and physical symptoms displayed by victims of the attack support witness claims that the agent acted rapidly,” the draft stated, “and likely indicate that a high concentration of the chemical sank downwards.”

Based on witness statements and “material evidence received and analyzed by the Commission,” the draft stated, the dead showed “an array of symptoms consistent with exposure to a choking agent, including signs of foaming at the mouth and nose, blue skin indicating impaired blood circulation, meiosis (constriction of the pupils), as well as some cases of dilated (wide open) pupils.”

“Statements and material evidence received and analysed by the Commission in relation to the deceased within the apartment building revealed an array of symptoms consistent with exposure to a choking agent, including signs of foaming at the mouth and nose, blue skin indicating impaired blood circulation, meiosis (constriction of the pupils), as well as some cases of dilated (wide open) pupils. Numerous victims unable to flee the building collapsed shortly after exposure.”

Mr. Megally declined to go into detail over why such information was withheld from the report published on Wednesday. But he said that with the April 7 attack in particular, more information was needed, including precisely what killed the 49 people.

“If we’re not sure what the cause of death was, we may be looking in the wrong place,” he said. “It’s better we finish the investigation, rather than release it in dribs and drabs.”

The official version of the report was far more cautious about the chemical weapons incidents in question. In two attacks, for example, the report said the commission was “unable to obtain sufficient material evidence to conclusively identify the weapons delivery systems.”

While the circumstances in the April 7 attack were “largely consistent with the use of chlorine,” it said, the symptoms were more consistent with the use of “another chemical agent, most likely a nerve gas.”

The official version also condemned rebel forces for indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas.

The commission, which has been compiling evidence of atrocities in the Syria conflict since shortly after the war began in 2011, has developed an extensive array of ways to gather information, even though Mr. Assad has not allowed its investigators into the country. Led by Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, a Brazilian diplomat and rights activist, the commission has even compiled a confidential list of Syrian officials and others who may be held accountable in a court some day.

The earlier draft of its report on eastern Ghouta was shared by a person close to the commission, who had been consulted on the report and who declined to be identified.

The leak suggested some internal dissension in the commission about the strength of its evidence concerning the Syrian government’s use of chemical weapons in eastern Ghouta. It was also possible that the commission wanted to exercise caution ahead of an expected report on the April 7 attack in Douma by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which sent investigators to the site.

Chemical weapons are banned by an international treaty that Mr. Assad signed under pressure in 2013, when his government was first accused of having used chemical weapons in the conflict — also in eastern Ghouta.

The April 7 attack in Douma caused widespread international fury, particularly because many victims appeared to have been children shown gagging and choking, based on videos disseminated by witnesses and activists. The attack drew retaliatory missile attacks and airstrikes by Britain, France and the United States.

Mr. Assad’s government, backed by Russia and Iran, sought to cast doubt about the Douma attack, suggesting it had been faked or carried out by insurgents.

The Syrian government and its allies took control of eastern Ghouta two months ago after imposing what the commission’s report described as “the longest siege in modern history,” displacing more than 140,000 people from their homes and unleashing bombardments that destroyed hospitals, markets and schools, and forced residents to live in cellars and basements.

Those bombardments — mainly airstrikes by Syrian and Russian planes — killed 1,100 civilians and injured 4,000 others in a period of less than a month from Feb. 18, the commission said in its report, which is to be delivered to the United Nations Human Rights Council next week.

Tens of thousands of those who fled are still being held unlawfully by the government, which pursued a policy of blanket internment that the panel called “reprehensible.”

Sieges are permitted under international humanitarian law. But, in a departure from established practice, the panel said it considered the way pro-government forces had conducted the siege of eastern Ghouta unlawful.

“Certain acts perpetrated by pro-government forces during the siege laid to eastern Ghouta, including the deliberate starvation of the civilian population as a method of warfare, amount to the crime against humanity of inhumane acts, causing serious mental and physical suffering,” the panel concluded.

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HEADLINE	06/20 Who cut out a horse’s tongue?
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article213550394.html#storylink=latest_side
GIST	<p>The Thurston County Sheriff’s Office is asking for the public’s help after the tongue of an adult female horse was cut out in Yelm on Tuesday.</p> <p>A deputy found the completely severed tongue in a pasture in the 9500 block of Bridge Road Southeast.</p> <p>The 28-year-old horse named Annie can no longer swallow food, so it will be euthanized to minimize the animal’s suffering, according to the sheriff’s office.</p> <p>The incident is thought to have happened between 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. Tuesday.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Reports: I-5 shooter near Mount Vernon
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1024540/shooter-i-5-mount-vernon/
GIST	<p>Drivers in Mount Vernon reported that someone was shooting from an overpass on I-5 on Wednesday morning.</p> <p>One driver thought his car had been hit around 9:30 a.m., but the Washington State Patrol says there was</p>

	<p>no damage done to his vehicle. A trooper responding to an unrelated, disabled vehicle nearby heard three shots fired.</p> <p>No injuries were reported.</p> <p>The shooter is only described as a man in dark clothing “with a rifle shooting down on I-5 from the Blackburn overpass,” said trooper Heather Axtman.</p> <p>Troopers don’t believe he is in the area. Troopers aren’t ruling out the possibility this is related to a shooting on SR 509 in Sea-Tac last week. That shooter is still on the loose.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 NKorea side of DMZ: change in the air
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/5dff5cf8d8a40659419701350b3d6de/On-North-Korean-side-of-DMZ,-it's-change-in-the-air
GIST	<p>PANMUNJOM, North Korea (AP) — Lt. Col. Hwang Myong Jin has been a guide on the northern side of the Demilitarized Zone that divides the two Koreas for five years. He says that since the summits between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and the presidents of South Korea and the United States, things have quieted down noticeably in perhaps the last place on Earth where the Cold War still burns hot.</p> <p>“A lot of things have changed. Listen to how quiet it is,” he said as he stood on the balcony of a large building overlooking the blue and white barracks and concrete demarcation line that mark the boundary between North and South.</p> <p>“The South used to blast psychological warfare propaganda at us,” he said. “But since the summits, they have stopped. Now there is a peaceful atmosphere here.”</p> <p>Indeed, all is quiet — deceptively so — in the DMZ these days.</p> <p>On Wednesday, as Kim Jong Un was in Beijing for his third summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping, the northern part of the zone was buzzing with busloads of Chinese tourists taking selfies and eating ice cream cones outside the surprisingly well-stocked souvenir shop near the DMZ entrance.</p> <p>A group of ethnic Korean high school students from Japan filed out of their tour bus as North Korean People’s Army soldiers watched disinterestedly with automatic rifles slung over their shoulders. Inside the souvenir shop, still more tourists, from Europe, looked over hand-painted propaganda posters. American tourists are still banned from visiting North Korea under an order issued last year by President Donald Trump that restricts all non-essential travel.</p> <p>Though the DMZ has taken on something of a tourist trap atmosphere over the years — the South side is also a popular tourist destination and also has its share of kitschy souvenirs — Lt. Col. Hwang stressed that it remains first and foremost a military site.</p> <p>“It’s not that we want tourists to come, but people want to see,” he said. “There are dangers.”</p> <p>The dangers are, in fact, all around the DMZ, though they are invisible to the throngs of day-tripping tourists.</p> <p>While world attention tends to focus on the North’s development of nuclear weapons, North Korea has for decades stationed most of its conventional fire near its border with the South. South Korea’s capital, Seoul, is only about 80 kilometers (50 miles) away from the DMZ and would be vulnerable to a heavy artillery attack, potentially augmented by chemical shells, that could cause hundreds of thousands of casualties.</p>

Getting North Korea to agree to move at least some of its big guns away from the border will likely be a key topic of negotiations in the months ahead, particularly now that the U.S. and South Korea have agreed to halt their next set of annual war games, which never fail to outrage the North and heighten tensions on the peninsula.

Hwang generally follows a strongly patriotic and unapologetic script as he shows visitors around the usual spots — the building where the armistice that ended the 1950-53 Korean War was signed, a giant stone engraved with North Korean founder Kim Il Sung’s last words, various other spots where talks took place. He still stays strongly on message — his job is to get the North’s position across to the tourists, even if they aren’t especially interested in listening.

But he also pointed out a tree planted by Kim Jong Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in when they held their first summit here in April, and the pavilion where Kim hosted Moon when he came to the North’s side last month. And when speaking to an American journalist, Hwang also seemed a tad less belligerent — or perhaps just a bit more relaxed — on Wednesday.

“War only brings disaster to our people. Nobody wants a war,” he said. “We held military talks with the South here, too. The talks are moving in the direction of what humanity wants. That’s peace. That’s a positive thing.”

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HEADLINE	06/20 Fake opioid pills flooding illicit market
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1024128/fake-opioid-pills-flooding-illicit-market-laced-with-fentanyl/
GIST	<p>People in the grip of opioid addiction don’t just turn to heroin, but to pills like oxycodone.</p> <p>They can be easily crushed then snorted or smoked. But pills bought illegally are not always what they seem.</p> <p>At the Washington State Patrol Crime Lab, forensic scientist Mark Strongman works to figure out what’s really in pills seized by police.</p> <p>He showed us the testing process that is increasingly discovering dangerous ingredients in pills that are stamped to look like pharmaceuticals.</p> <p>“You just really can’t tell from the look. You think you can and then you’re surprised,” Strongman said.</p> <p>“We’re starting to see an increase in mimic pharmaceuticals so they’ll be stamped and look like a pharmaceutical grade oxycodone, but when it’s actually tested, it’s coming out as fentanyl or heroin,” said Mary Kellar of the State Patrol.</p> <p>“Counterfeit opioids are of major concern to the DEA, especially fentanyl,” said Keith Weis, the special agent in charge of the DEA’s Seattle division.</p> <p>Weis said fentanyl often comes from China to clandestine laboratories in Mexico, where pills are pressed and then smuggled into the U.S. to be sold cheaply.</p> <p>“Anytime we encounter it on the street, it’s a major concern,” Weis said.</p> <p>In April, investigators in Centralia intercepted a truck hauling a load of Starbucks products.</p> <p>Stuffed in the sleeper cab, agents say they found meth, heroin and several thousand oxycodone pills.</p> <p>Agents also raided a home in Kennewick last week as part of an investigation of fentanyl-laced drugs.</p>

	<p>The DEA estimates the illicit drug market in Washington State is worth \$2 billion dollars.</p> <p>Because fentanyl is a synthetic opioid up to 50 times more powerful than heroin, more people are dying of overdoses.</p> <p>Public Health Seattle and King County reports 23 fentanyl-related deaths in 2016, 33 in 2017, and 17 just in the first three months of 2018.</p> <p>“We probably lose three or more people in the state every day from overdoses,” Weis said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 What airlines know about passengers
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/what-the-airline-knows-about-the-guy-in-seat-14c-1529499085
GIST	<p>Your flight attendant wishes you happy birthday. Is that cute or creepy?</p> <p>Airlines know a lot about you, from date of birth and home address to travel patterns, vacation preferences, beverage purchases and whether your last flight was good or bad. Now the latest generation of hand-held devices used by flight crews has an overhead bin full of information about each passenger.</p> <p>Carriers are using it in an effort to improve customer service. They can congratulate customers on reaching 3 million lifetime miles or toast a couple’s wedding anniversary. At some airlines, they can tell if you really paid extra for that extra-legroom seat or are traveling on a restricted basic economy ticket. Someday soon it may be, “Having the usual vodka tonic tonight, Scott?”</p> <p>Right now, airlines are trying to figure out when personalized interactions could be considered invasive, amid growing concerns about how companies like Facebook and others are using personal data. While many travelers are pleased to see their loyalty acknowledged, they’d all rather have upgrades. And plenty of others prefer a bit of anonymity once they get on an airplane and leave town.</p> <p>United rolled out a new app to its flight attendants earlier this year with so much information about people, the airline has been reluctant to turn on all the functionality. The tool can show flight attendants information on each frequent flier’s five previous flights—green if it was a good flight, yellow or red if something went wrong, like a delay. But United is worried some customers might consider that stalking.</p> <p>“There’s a point where you don’t want to make people feel like, ‘Gee they know everything about me and they’re tracking everything I do,’ ” says John Slater, United’s senior vice president of inflight services.</p> <p>Personal milestones like birthdays are left to the judgment of flight attendants. They can decide whether they think a customer would appreciate the recognition or recoil, he says.</p> <p>The information is added to phones and tablets used to charge customers for food and beverage purchases. The devices can give flight attendants real-time information on tight flight connections for passengers, confirm whether a wheelchair has been ordered for a customer and help keep track of unaccompanied minors.</p> <p>Many now allow flight attendants to offer instant compensation for maladies like spilled coffee or broken entertainment screens.</p> <p>Better service onboard in coach will go to those with higher status. Top-tier frequent fliers, as well as those with special needs, will get more personalized attention, airlines say.</p> <p>Carriers say they don’t flag “problem” passengers—perhaps frequent complainers or people involved in confrontations in the past. Airlines do ban people from their flights for altercations or abuses, and the</p>

Transportation Security Administration flags problem travelers.

But airlines are making it easier for flight crews to report problems with passengers. Instead of paperwork completed after a trip, American Airlines' third-generation handhelds can submit all kinds of reports, from catering goofs to onboard incidents, says Jill Surdek, vice president for flight service.

Alaska Airlines says that earlier this month it gave its flight attendants an app on their hand-held devices specifically to report sexual harassment, making it quicker and easier to alert the company to problem passengers. Alaska has had several high-profile issues involving passengers accused of harassing flight attendants, as well as a case of a passenger accused of harassing another passenger.

The airline investigates every situation, says Andy Schneider, Alaska's vice president of people, and decides whether to take action, including banning someone from flights either temporarily or permanently.

United's new system has a color-coded seat map showing status—a black seat is a Global Services frequent flier, United's top tier. The seat map has icons for wheelchairs and lap children. A seat with a dog face means the customer has a pet onboard. Million-mileage levels are also depicted—seat 7C has “3M” on it for 3 million miles.

Connecting flight information can be shown. Green seats have good connections, yellow seats have connections that could be in jeopardy and red is reserved for very tight connections.

Letting flight attendants know something about each passenger “allows them to engage with customers in a meaningful way,” United's Mr. Slater says.

JetBlue uses tablets mounted on the top of beverage-service carts so flight attendants get a hands-free visual picture of who's who. “The ability for crew members to view a customer's name is huge, especially in coach,” says Chris McCloskey, JetBlue's director of inflight experience.

The seat map will show a birthday cake in a celebrant's seat. Flight attendants can offer a complimentary buy-onboard product or a card signed by the crew.

More personalization is coming. One goal: tracking onboard purchases. If a customer orders the same drink repeatedly, offer the usual.

“There is definitely an opportunity for us to leverage the data that we have on customers a little bit more,” Mr. McCloskey says. At the same time, the airline is analyzing how far it can go.

Airlines acknowledge the devices have made the job more complex for flight attendants. Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants union, says the devices can reduce situational awareness. If flight attendants have to study the screen to correctly recognize each customer, they may not be spending as much time staying alert to what's going on in the cabin.

She says flight attendants generally like these new tools because they let them do their jobs more effectively.

Still, Ms. Nelson says, “I'm a little shocked there hasn't been more backlash. I think the public has generally decided they like the personalized service, they like to be able to resolve their issues faster, not have to tell people as much. And they've sort of sacrificed their privacy for those conveniences.”

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HEADLINE 06/20 Yellowstone geyser keeps erupting

SOURCE <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/yellowstones-steamboat-geyser-keeps-erupting-scientists-want-to-know-why/>

GIST	<p>YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK -- Steamboat Geyser, the world's tallest and far more powerful than Old Faithful, is roaring back to life.</p> <p>Often dormant for decades, it has now erupted nine times in the past few months. It can do what Kilauea has done on Hawaii's Big Island, only much bigger.</p> <p>Because the geyser field at Yellowstone National Park lies on top of an active volcano, with multiple chambers of magma from deep beneath the earth, the same energy that causes geysers to blow could spew an ash cloud as far as Chicago and Los Angeles.</p> <p>"It's amazing to think of the scale of these eruptions," said Mike Poland, the scientist in charge of the Yellowstone Volcano Observatory.</p> <p>The eruption that created the park was 70,000 years ago, and there are no signs of that happening anytime soon. But scientists do want to know what's behind the most recent activity.</p> <p>"We see gas emissions. We see all kinds of thermal activity. That's what Yellowstone does. That's what it's supposed to do. It's one of the most dynamic places on earth," Poland said.</p> <p>The least predictable geyser in the park is Steamboat. It could erupt in five minutes, five years -- even 50 years from now. Yet no one visiting Yellowstone wants to turn away from the sight.</p> <p>"That would be the chance of a lifetime," one visitor said. "I would be amazed."</p> <p>Timing is everything, and only a lucky few get to see it. Poland's team of volcanologists are using thermal-imaging equipment to track the temperature of the 50-mile-wide magma field. They also monitor 28 seismographs since a super volcano would include major earthquake activity.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Report: industrial chemicals more toxic
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/report-finds-industrial-chemicals-toxic-thought-56042986?
GIST	<p>A family of industrial chemicals turning up in public water supplies around the country is even more toxic than previously thought, threatening human health at concentrations seven to 10 times lower than once realized, according to a government report released Wednesday.</p> <p>The chemicals are called perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl. They were used in such goods as fire-suppressing foam, nonstick pans, fast-food wrappers, and stain-resistant fabric and carpet, but are no longer used in U.S. manufacturing. Water sampling has found contamination in water around military bases, factories and other sites.</p> <p>Exposure at high levels is linked to liver damage, developmental problems and some forms of cancer, among other risks.</p> <p>A draft of the report, by the Department of Health and Human Services' toxicology office, had set off alarms within the Trump administration earlier this year. A January email from a White House official, released under the Freedom of Information Act, referred to the findings as a "potential public relations nightmare."</p> <p>The draft went under months of government review before Wednesday's publication, but the key finding — that the chemicals are dangerous at specific levels much lower than previously stated — was not changed.</p> <p>The EPA, which scheduled a series of hearings on the chemicals, said last month that it would move</p>

	<p>toward formally declaring the two most common forms of PFAS as hazardous substances and make recommendations for groundwater cleanup, among other steps.</p> <p>U.S. manufacturers agreed in 2006 to an EPA-crafted deal to stop using one of the most common forms of the chemical in consumer products.</p> <p>The findings will likely lead state and local water systems with the contaminant to boost filtering.</p> <p>"The more we test, the more we find," Olga Naidenko, a science adviser to the Environmental Working Group nonprofit, said Wednesday.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 World Cup fans drinking Moscow dry
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/world-cup-fans-drinking-moscow-dry-straining-bars/story?
GIST	<p>Fans partying at the World Cup in Moscow are downing so much beer that they are nearly drinking parts of the city dry, with some bars saying they get close to running out each night.</p> <p>For almost a week, tens of thousands of foreign and local fans have been turning the heart of Moscow into a street party each night, gathering in the area around the Kremlin in a huge tide of chanting, dancing and drinking, which doesn't recede until the very early hours of the morning.</p> <p>"They drink half a tonne of beer each night!" said Evgeny Gorbanov, a bouncer at Let's Rock Bar, whose establishment has been overflowing with fans every night since the month-long tournament began.</p> <p>Half a dozen bars said they had almost ran out of beer in the first few days of the competition and had had to quickly increase orders to keep up with the demand.</p> <p>"We hadn't counted on it," said Nikolai Vladik, manager at Ketch-Up, a burger bar. "On the first day, it got pretty tough. But we've prepared now," he said.</p> <p>Like many residents in Moscow, the bar staff said they had been caught off guard by the avalanche of fans and the scale of the partying. At Kamchatka, an all-night bar that sells beers in plastic cups, staff said they had sharply increased their beer orders. At the restaurant Dante, manager Nadia Desyatelik said fans were drinking 200 liters a night, compared to the 30 they normally sell.</p> <p>Some bar staff said they were nervous that beer suppliers might miss vital deliveries.</p> <p>But Baltika, the Russian unit of Carlsberg told Reuters that while there was increased risk of supply disruption during the World Cup, their business was so far able to handle demand. Heineken also told Reuters sales were strong and the brewer did not yet see any challenges to its supply.</p> <p>The party has surprised Muscovites all the more because few can remember anything like it in the city. Drinking on the street is illegal in Russia, carrying a fine of between \$7 - \$23.</p> <p>A growing emphasis from the Kremlin on public discipline, combined with an official suspicion towards street gatherings, has made wild public displays unwise.</p> <p>But those rules seem to have been suspended for the World Cup. Russian police have stood by and watched as fans have clambered up lamp posts and hung flags from buildings. On Nikolskaya Street, Argentinian fans have covered a monastery with team banners. Riot police, usually dour, have been addressing people with rare politeness at security points.</p> <p>Russians are marveling at the new light-touch approach. Many are also delighted by the party atmosphere on the streets. The revelry has so far been good-natured - with few reports of trouble.</p>

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HEADLINE	06/20 Probe: paramedics thought alive teen dead
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/paramedics-investigated-covering-teenager-sheet-mistakenly-believing-dead/story?
GIST	<p>The Chicago Fire Department is investigating why paramedics mistakenly thought a teenager who was shot in the head was dead and left his body lying in the street covered in a sheet until bystanders saw his arms and legs twitching.</p> <p>Paramedics left Erin Carey, 17, unattended next to a gutter as they treated other victims in the shooting early Monday in the University Village area of Chicago. Once the paramedics were told the teenager was still breathing, they began cardiopulmonary resuscitation and rushed him to a local hospital, officials said.</p> <p>He died at 1:19 a.m. Tuesday, about 20 hours after he was shot twice in the head, officials said.</p> <p>"I do understand that paramedics looked at him, believed him to be deceased, covered him with that sheet and moved on to another individual who was nearby who was also shot. They saw motion, movement underneath the sheet. Officers who were present notified paramedics, this man is still alive," Chicago Police First Deputy Anthony Riccio said at a press conference.</p> <p>Officials did not release the names of the paramedics or say how many were at the scene.</p> <p>It was not immediately clear how long Carey was lying in the street before paramedics realized he was still alive. The Chicago Tribune reported he was in the street under a sheet for an hour before bystanders saw his arms and legs, which were exposed, twitching.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Seattle police dog sniffs out child porn
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1024817/the-seattle-police-dog-who-has-famously-sniffed-out-child-porn/?
GIST	<p>If there is such thing as a celebrity police dog, Seattle Police Department's black lab mix, Bear, may be it. The five year old electronic storage detection (ESD) dog led police to devices containing child porn inside the home of former Subway spokesman Jared Fogle. He also found incriminating electronic devices in the home of Olympics gymnastics coach Marvin Sharp, who was later charged with child pornography charges.</p> <p>Those cases were in 2015, and Bear was living in Indiana with the firefighter who trained him. But shortly after, he was purchased by the Seattle Police department, plucked up by his new partner, Detective Ian Polhemus.</p> <p>Both Detective Polhemus and Bear work with the Internet Crimes Against Children Task force to find hidden evidence in a suspect's home.</p> <p>"Actually, he does not track down child porn," said Detective Polhemus. "He simply tracks down electronic devices. He doesn't care what's on the devices, he only cares about finding them. Then it's up to the investigators and the forensic examiners to conduct the analysis and figure out whether or not there's anything of evidentiary value on those devices that he finds."</p> <p>So how does Bear find thumb drives and hard drives and phones and laptops? Detective Polhemus says forensic scientists did a chemical analysis, and isolated the only non-toxic chemical that these devices have in common.</p>

“That odor was isolated and that’s the one odor that has been introduced to Bear as being an odor that we want him to be able to detect. Because Bear is a food reward dog, he’s highly motivated. So what that means is the only time he eats is when he’s working.”

Therefore, Bear loves to work. Detective Polhemus feeds him three cups of food throughout the day, whether he’s out on a real case or doing his daily trainings.

“I’ve got the three training boxes here and only one of them has a device in it that he should indicate on. So as I work him through the boxes, ideally he’s going to skip the two boxes that don’t have anything in it. When he gets to the box that has the device in it, Bear is a passive indicator which means he’ll sit. I’ll give him a supplemental command and then he’ll shove his nose in the hole and his tail will wag and he’ll sit there and hold his nose in the hole until I reward him with the food.”

Bear was only the third dog in the country to be trained in electronic storage detection, and he’s one of 25 ESD dogs in the country. Thumb drives and SD cards are tiny and often very well hidden, so Bear is brought in to search for what humans couldn’t find. Detective Polhemus describes a case they worked on in Olympia.

“After the investigators got done with the search, Bear and I went into the area to do a secondary sweep. In a matter of about three or four minutes, Bear came up with five devices that had been missed. It’s my understanding that at least two or three of those devices contained child exploitation material.

Detective Polhemus takes Bear home every night, and I wondered how he keeps him from constantly retrieving electronic devices from around the house.”

“Bear, like any true veteran police officer, only works when he knows he’s getting paid. So in Bear’s case, payment is food. He has learned through training and repetition that if he were to, for instance, indicate on the cell phones I have on the table right now, he would receive no reward for doing so. Therefore he just ignores it. In order for him to actually indicate on those cell phones, he has to go through a series of verbal and visual cues that I have to give him.”

Bear is a super excitable, hyper, sweet and shiny lab, which is why he’s perfect for the job. ESD dogs require a lot of energy, and are often snatched up by police when they fail out of guide dog school.

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HEADLINE	06/20 Border policies help organized crime?
SOURCE	https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/trumps-border-policies-strengthen-organized-crime-heres/
GIST	<p>The Trump administration’s stated purpose of “zero tolerance” of illegal immigration on US borders is to lower crime rates, but research shows that the net effect may be the opposite.</p> <p>The policy is to prosecute all those who cross the border illegally and the Trump administration has taken the unprecedented step of separating children from their parents in order to deter families from making the journey. (Soon after this story was published, President Trump signed an Executive Order taking steps to keep families together while in detention. “It is...the policy of this Administration to maintain family unity, including by detaining alien families together where appropriate and consistent with law and available resources,” the order read.)</p> <p>The so-called zero tolerance approach is supposed to act as a deterrent. Administration officials have also doubled-down on the strategy by shutting off individual’s access to request asylum (at least until after they have been prosecuted for crossing into the country illegally), and by blaming parents for putting their children in danger by taking the risky journey through places like Mexico where they are routinely victimized by criminal organizations and officials alike.</p>

The Trump administration's policy, however, is shortsighted, in part because research shows that it may, in the long run, strengthen criminal groups.

Here are five ways that happens:

1. It Pushes People Into the Illegal Market

As the United States and other countries around the world have worked to stiffen border enforcement, organized crime groups that thrive from it have gotten stronger. Human smuggling — once the purview of small-time, mostly family run organizations — has become one of the most lucrative businesses in the underworld at an estimated \$35 billion per year in earnings. Its criminal derivative, human trafficking, is also hugely lucrative, with a market value of \$32 billion, according to the United Nations.

In Mexico, large, sophisticated criminal groups like the Zetas and the Gulf Cartel have made it a core revenue stream. It can also move in the other direction: several prominent Central American drug trafficking groups had their origins in human smuggling and then transitioned into trafficking other illicit goods because they already had the infrastructure, contacts and control over the routes. More powerful criminal groups means more corruption, more instability and, contrary to the Trump administration's wishes, more migration.

Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera, a professor at George Washington and the author of a recent book on the Zetas, says stricter borders "help" groups like the Zetas. "It's just going to magnify what we have already seen," she told InSight Crime, referring to the steady growth of these criminal groups.

This criminal activity is not limited to places south of the US border. In the United States, people are also victimized by criminal groups who have a clear understanding that going to the authorities is not an option. From the street venter who is extorted by gangs in Long Island to the California day laborer who thought he was going to do some landscaping only to find himself offloading marijuana on the coast, criminal groups take advantage of enforced anonymity.

2. It Raises the Price for Criminal Services

Part of the reason these criminal groups move into markets like human smuggling is that zero tolerance doesn't just raise the number of clients organized crime groups have, it raises the prices for their criminal services. More enforcement equals more risk, as well as more sophistication and resources needed to succeed in any criminal venture.

Estimates along the Mexico border illustrate this tendency. In a study published by the US Department of Homeland Security in 2010, researchers using four different data sources found that prices for human smuggling rose as enforcement increased.

3. It Sets the Table for Future Criminal Activity

Numerous academic and news responses to the Trump administration's policy of separating children from parents at the border stated that it leads to trauma, as well as physical and cognitive effects. Researchers in other parts of the world have shown that it could also lead to criminal activity.

Gang researchers on this side of the ocean, such as James Vigil, who wrote the seminal book on Latino gangs in Los Angeles, have also surmised that this is one of a number of factors that often leads to criminal activity. Vigil calls his theory multiple marginality, and it includes other factors inherent in the Trump administration's policies approach towards migrant communities.

This is something we also noticed while doing our three-year study on the Mara Salvatrucha (MS13) in the region. We talked to dozen of past and current gang members. Family upheaval was always part of a gang member's personal story.

What’s more, deportations along the border also push many into the criminal ranks, says Angelica Durán-Martínez, a professor at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell, and the author of a recent book on the politics of drug violence in Colombia and Mexico.

“While not all deportees end up engaging in criminal activities, a portion of them do, given that they are often released into border areas where OC (organized crime) has a strong presence, and where they have little social networks or possibilities for legal employment,” she told InSight Crime in an email exchange.

4. It Destroys Trust Between Authorities and Migrant Communities Where Organized Crime and Gangs are Prevalent

There are two ways to measure this. The first is anecdotal. In this case, police chiefs in the United States working on the front lines to lower gang violence and crime rates say that vilifying migrant communities cuts off important channels of intelligence, as well as lowers chances that witnesses and potential collaborators will assist investigations.

The second is via proxy data. For example, there has been a drop in complaints about domestic abuse coming from Latino communities since President Donald Trump came into office. Domestic abuse complaints are relatively static.

5. It Reduces Remittances, Which Could Increase Crime Rates

Trump’s overall strategy — which includes ending measures such as Temporary Protected Status for Hondurans and El Salvador — could greatly reduce the number of undocumented migrants in the United States. These migrants send money back to their countries. Reduce their numbers, and you reduce these remittances.

Remittances are, as this World Bank study notes, a mixed bag. They can help to reduce poverty and inequality, but they can deplete the local labor supply and “income-generating capacity” of the migrant households.

But a recent Inter-American Bank study also concluded that remittances “reduce homicide rates.” This, the authors argue, is partly the result of reducing poverty, increasing family investment in education, and creating jobs.

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HEADLINE	06/20 Arrest in 1986 killing of 12yr-old girl
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1024961/suspect-arrested-in-1986-killing-of-12-year-old-tacoma-girl/
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. (AP) — Tacoma police have arrested a man suspected of killing a 12-year-old girl more than three decades ago.</p> <p>The News Tribune reports 66-year-old Gary Hartman was booked into Pierce County Jail Wednesday afternoon on suspicion of first-degree murder in the death of Michella Welch.</p> <p>Prosecutors are expected to charge him Thursday.</p> <p>Police declined to talk about the arrest or how they linked Hartman to Welch’s death. A news conference is set for Friday.</p> <p>Welch was abducted March 26, 1986, from a Tacoma park and found dead later that day.</p> <p>It wasn’t immediately known if Hartman has an attorney.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Guilty plea: defrauding Costco \$290,000
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1025224/puyallup-woman-pleads-guilty-to-defrauding-290k-from-costco/
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. (AP) — A Washington state woman has pleaded guilty to stealing nearly \$290,000 from a Costco warehouse over five years.</p> <p>The News Tribune reports 54-year-old Robin Cline pleaded guilty Wednesday in federal court in Tacoma to charges of wire fraud.</p> <p>Cline of Puyallup worked at Costco in Fife from 1996 to 2016 as an accounts receivable clerk. She was responsible for processing payments and refunds for customers of the warehouse club operator.</p> <p>According to authorities, she put money into bank accounts belonging to her and her son by creating false entries to customers' accounts.</p> <p>Cline made 290 false entries in more than 100 customers' accounts since 2011.</p> <p>Cline is scheduled to be sentenced in September. She has agreed to repay the money taken.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Audit faults detention facility mgmt.
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1025228/audit-faults-detention-facility-management-on-overtime-use/
GIST	<p>VANCOUVER, Wash. (AP) — An audit has found that staff overtime and operating costs have increased at a juvenile detention facility in southwest Washington while the number of detainees has decreased.</p> <p>The Columbian reports the performance audit conducted by the Clark County Auditor's Office found that management of the county facility didn't consistently collect and use data to determine staffing between 2013 and 2015.</p> <p>According to the audit presented to a county committee Tuesday, the annual use of overtime hours increased from about 3,000 in 2007 to about 10,000 in 2015. The average number of detainees decreased from 58 to 21 during the same period.</p> <p>Juvenile Court Administrator Chris Simonsmeier says management has taken steps to improve overtime use, noting that the facility was under budget this year and last.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 FBI: pre-attack behaviors active shooters
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2018/06/20/active-shooters-usually-get-their-guns-legally-and-then-target-specific-victims-fbi-says/?utm_term=.9bd57d7247d8
GIST	<p>The terror of an armed gunman opening fire in public places has become an all-too-common occurrence, affecting American schools, churches, offices, holiday parties, government facilities and movie theaters.</p> <p>While the attacks differ in location, level of carnage and the community affected, an FBI study released Wednesday found that a common element of the attacks lies with the shooters, who are frequently motivated by grievances in their lives, wielding guns they obtained legally and targeting specific victims when they open fire.</p> <p>The study, which examined dozens of active shooters between 2000 and 2013, found that contrary to</p>

the public perception of the episodes as being fueled by mental health issues — an assertion frequently given voice by politicians, including President Trump — law enforcement officials were only able to verify that about 25 percent of the attackers had diagnosed mental health issues.

The attackers, who almost always were men or boys, typically attacked places that were familiar to them. They had acted in ways that concerned the people around them ahead of the attacks, with many expressing a desire to carry out violent acts. And most used guns they acquired legally, oftentimes buying the weapons specifically for their attacks, the study concluded.

“Offenders don’t snap,” Andre Simons, supervisory special agent of the FBI’s Behavioral Analysis Unit and a co-author of the study, said in a telephone interview. “They don’t wake up one morning and suddenly decide to attack.”

Rather, the decision is part of “a long process,” Simons said. The study found that 77 percent of attackers spent a week or longer planning their violence, which “does take some forethought and design on the part of the offender,” he said.

The new study, a copy of which was provided to The Washington Post before it was published, examined 63 cases, focusing on the shooters and the actions that led up to their attacks. It is a sequel of sorts to a 2014 report the FBI released examining active shootings during the same time frame. That report identified 160 incidents fitting the definition of “an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area” — and it found that such attacks had become more frequent during that 13-year period.

Since then, the bureau has continued studying shooting rampages, and its findings have been grim. In 2017, the massacres at a concert in Las Vegas and inside a church in Sutherland Springs, Tex., were among 30 active shootings the FBI found nationwide, the most it has tracked in a single year.

After attacks like those or the rampages at high schools this year in Parkland, Fla., and Santa Fe, Tex., attention often turns to what could have prevented the bloodshed and what red flags might have been missed. Other research has found that most attacks came after people close to the shooters noticed worrisome behavior.

“Some of these concerning behaviors do presage violence,” said James Silver, a criminal justice professor at Worcester State University, one of the FBI study’s three authors.

The FBI study found that on average, each active shooter it examined “displayed four to five concerning behaviors over time.” About 1 in 3 shooters had made threats or confronted people they later targeted. More than half of them revealed their intentions to do something violent, a phenomenon called “leakage.”

Some of these attackers did not share their intentions with their eventual victims, but instead expressed a broader desire to hurt others. One shooter spoke to a gas station clerk about killing “a family,” the study found; another cited a desire to be a sniper. Others had shown concerning behavior or had multiple stresses in their lives, including one shooter who the study said was being abused at home, had conflicts with his peers and was facing discipline for abusing a teacher.

The study’s authors write that there was “no single warning sign, checklist, or algorithm for assessing behaviors that” suggest a potential rampage shooter. But they say the study is meant in part to help members of the public keep an eye out for warning signs.

“One of the biggest findings for me is that there was one person in every active shooter’s life who noticed some sort of concerning behavior,” said Sarah Craun of the FBI’s Behavioral Analysis Unit, the study’s third author. “Most of them had multiple concerning behaviors, between four and five. These were people who were already known to be struggling a little bit. There are actually some signs out there that people can see.”

The warning signs included threats and physical aggression, and the study found that most of the shooters “had a history of acting in an abusive, harassing, or oppressive way.” Others had abused their intimate partners or stalked people, highlighting again the recurrence of domestic violence in the lives of shooters before their violent attacks in public places.

The study’s authors say their work is unique among studies of rampage shooters because it relies “almost exclusively” on law enforcement files, rather than court records and media accounts. It examines a smaller pool of attacks than the 2014 study because it focused on the incidents where the FBI could obtain files with evidence including interviews with people who knew the shooters, personal writings or school and work records.

The files counter claims that rampage shooters must be mentally ill. Trump has been among those giving voice to this belief after shootings, calling the alleged Parkland shooter “mentally disturbed” and the Sutherland Springs attacker a “mental health problem.” The study found confirmed diagnoses of mental illnesses in 25 percent of the attackers, with some others exhibiting depression, anxiety and paranoia. But the authors noted that many Americans experience such symptoms, and say more thought should be given before concluding that a shooting has its roots in mental illness.

“Mental health does not automatically equate to violence, so we need to be very careful when we approach the motivations or the causes behind any active shootings,” Simons said. “Simply saying that all [shooters] must be mentally ill because it’s such a horrific and incomprehensible act is probably not accurate or helpful.”

Other research has similarly found tenuous links connecting shooting rampages and mental illness. In a 2015 study, Michael Stone, a clinical psychiatry professor at Columbia University, examined 235 people who carried out or attempted to carry out mass killings, and he concluded that about 22 percent could be considered mentally ill. An article published the same year in the academic journal *Annals of Epidemiology* found that “the large majority of people with mental disorders do not engage in violence against others, and that most violent behavior is due to factors other than mental illness.”

Experts have said that what mass killers often share is a sense of victimization and believe they are being persecuted or treated unfairly. The new FBI study reported similar findings. Most of the shooters examined were fueled by a grievance that “may not have been reasonable or even grounded in reality, but it appeared to serve as the rationale for the eventual attack, giving a sense of purpose to the shooter.”

In some cases, this grievance could stem from something like losing a job or being romantically rejected. Silver, the criminal justice professor, said most people would be upset in those situations, but their strongest feelings eventually dissipate.

“It’s the people for whom it doesn’t dissipate, and the people for whom that action, which may seem reasonable to everyone else in the world, becomes for the active shooter a cause, in that they have been unfairly, unjustly wronged,” Silver said. “It’s not the action itself, it’s their reaction to it that turns it into a grievance.”

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Click on link to download PDF: https://www.scribd.com/document/382190001/A-Study-of-the-Pre-Attack-Behaviors-of-Active-Shooters-in-the-United-States-Between-2000-and-2013#from_embed

HEADLINE	06/19 Austin Texas vows to curtail arrests
SOURCE	http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-austin-freedom-city-2018-story.html
GIST	Ever since the Texas legislature last year passed one of the country’s most aggressive “anti-sanctuary city” laws, some enclaves have fought officials over the extent to which police can ignore federal immigration law.

The state regulation known as Senate Bill 4 has been described by opponents as the “show your papers” law for allowing officers to ask about the immigration status of anybody arrested or detained.

Amid the controversy over sanctuary cities, Austin this month took its fight against strict immigration law enforcement a step further by declaring itself to be the first “freedom city” in Texas. City Council members unanimously passed two resolutions last week that will restrict police attempts to question immigrants about their status and curtail arrests for nonviolent crimes.

One of the new city resolutions requires officers who question immigrants about status to also say that their questions about immigration need not be answered. The other resolution directs police to avoid arrests for misdemeanors, including those for smoking marijuana, having drug paraphernalia, and taking part in petty theft — crimes that city data shows frequently end in arrests of black and Latino residents.

While Austin is among the country’s first so-called freedom cities, it’s part of a wider movement around decriminalizing low-level offenses and decreasing arrests. According to Local Progress, a national network of progressive city officials, some council members in El Paso and Dallas are also considering “freedom city” proposals.

“Poor people of color in our city are over-punished and over-incarcerated,” said Greg Casar, an Austin City Councilman who pushed for the resolutions. “If people are being arrested less, we can also prevent people from being put in the deportation pipeline.”

“We found that black and Latino residents comprised 75% of discretionary arrests for driving with licenses invalid in the city even though they are 45% of the population of the city,” Casar said. “Black residents are seven times more likely to be arrested for low-level marijuana violations despite having comparable rates of usage of marijuana to white residents.”

Casar said the new rules could prevent up to 1,000 low-level arrests each year. Austin police arrest around 30,000 people a year.

Austin’s new rules passed Friday after more than 100 residents spoke about them at a City Council meeting. While support was wide, groups differed on the need for the “freedom city” title, and what effect it will have.

Ken Casady, the Austin Police Assn. president, said that although the police union supported reducing arrests, misleading data were cited to garner support for the resolutions.

“We do arrest more blacks and Hispanics but the problem we have is that people do not want to look at the reasons why,” said Casady.

He said he thought marijuana usage in public was higher among among black and Latino residents. That, he believed, leads to disproportionate arrests even if overall usage by white residents was comparable.

“We will not tolerate being called racists,” Casady said. He added that officers do not regularly ask for immigration information when making arrests or writing tickets. “To us, this is a symbolic move,” he said of the freedom city vote.

Nelson Linder, president of the Austin chapter of the National Assn. for the Advancement of Colored People, said the new moniker largely amounted to city branding.

“We appreciate the gesture and the idea,” said Linder. “This city has a history of symbolic overtures, but has been inconsistent in providing the kind of leadership that will implement its own resolutions.”

“While the vote has been applauded, the Austin NAACP will continue to work toward more meaningful and substantial changes,” he said.

	<p>The group has focused on combating segregation and gentrification in the city, as well as boosting education and employment for African Americans in the city and Travis County. The region is still also recovering from a series of mail bombings this year that seemed to target black families. In March, a suspect in the bombings blew himself up as he was being chased by police.</p> <p>Many city activists celebrated the council’s decision.</p> <p>“These policies will protect the constitutional rights of immigrants and make sure that Austin is a safe place to live for everyone regardless of race or immigration status,” José Garza, director of the local nonprofit Workers Defense Project, said in a statement.</p> <p>Grassroots Leadership, an Austin nonprofit that pushed the initiative, said in a statement that the council’s move was an “important first step.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Spokane man jailed 21yrs for child porn
SOURCE	http://www.khq.com/story/38473251/spokane-man-sentenced-to-21-years-for-production-of-child-pornography
GIST	<p>SPOKANE COUNTY, Wash. - 22-year-old Freedom Woody of Spokane was sentenced Wednesday after having pleaded guilty to production of child pornography.</p> <p>According to information disclosed during court proceedings, investigators found Woody and a 13-year old girl from Oregon in a homeless camp near the Spokane River after the girl’s grandmother reported her missing. When interviewed by officers, Woody admitted having sex with her. A search of Woody’s phone revealed child pornography images of seven additional minor aged victims. Woody enticed the minors to engage in sexual activity with him, produced child pornography, and distributed several of the images.</p> <p>According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Woody was sentenced to a 21-year term of imprisonment, followed by a 30-year term of court supervision after he is released from federal prison. Upon release from prison, Woody will be required to register as a sex offender for the rest of his life.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 KCSO: motel shooting suspect arrested
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/06/20/man-suspected-of-killing-clerk-at-seatac-motel-arrested-in-ohio-sheriffs-office-says/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — A 26-year-old man suspected of killing a clerk at a SeaTac motel during a robbery last Friday night was arrested Wednesday in Ohio, the King County Sheriff’s Office said.</p> <p>Sheriff’s detectives will be flying to Dayton, Ohio, where the suspect was arrested, to continue the investigation, the sheriff’s office said.</p> <p>“The suspect will eventually be extradited back to WA to face charges,” the sheriff’s office said in a news release.</p> <p>At about 11 p.m. last Friday, deputies were called to America’s Best Value Inn in the 20600 block of International Boulevard South after an airport shuttle driver returned to the motel to find the clerk lying on the ground.</p> <p>The victim, a 40-year-old man, was transported to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, where he later died of gunshot wounds, according to officials.</p> <p>The sheriff’s office said detectives had “a lot of help” in solving the crime “from all of the nearby hotels</p>

	and motels in SeaTac.”
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HEADLINE	06/20 Child immigrants Va. center allege abuse
SOURCE	https://www.apnews.com/afc80e51b562462c89907b49ae624e79/Young-immigrants-detained-in-Virginia-center-allege-abuse
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — Immigrant children as young as 14 housed at a juvenile detention center in Virginia say they were beaten while handcuffed and locked up for long periods in solitary confinement, left nude and shivering in concrete cells.</p> <p>The abuse claims against the Shenandoah Valley Juvenile Center near Staunton, Virginia, are detailed in federal court filings that include a half-dozen sworn statements from Latino teens jailed there for months or years. Multiple detainees say the guards stripped them of their clothes and strapped them to chairs with bags placed over their heads.</p> <p>“Whenever they used to restrain me and put me in the chair, they would handcuff me,” said a Honduran immigrant who was sent to the facility when he was 15 years old. “Strapped me down all the way, from your feet all the way to your chest, you couldn’t really move. ... They have total control over you. They also put a bag over your head. It has little holes; you can see through it. But you feel suffocated with the bag on.”</p> <p>In addition to the children’s first-hand, translated accounts in court filings, a former child-development specialist who worked inside the facility independently told The Associated Press this week that she saw kids there with bruises and broken bones they blamed on guards. She spoke on condition of anonymity because she was not authorized to publicly discuss the children’s cases.</p> <p>In court filings, lawyers for the detention facility have denied all allegations of physical abuse.</p> <p>Many of the children were sent there after U.S. immigration authorities accused them of belonging to violent gangs, including MS-13. President Donald Trump has repeatedly cited gang activity as justification for his crackdown on illegal immigration.</p> <p>Trump said Wednesday that “our Border Patrol agents and our ICE agents have done one great job” cracking down on MS-13 gang members. “We’re throwing them out by the thousands,” he said.</p> <p>But a top manager at the Shenandoah center said during a recent congressional hearing that the children did not appear to be gang members and were suffering from mental health issues resulting from trauma that happened in their home countries — problems the detention facility is ill-equipped to treat.</p> <p>“The youth were being screened as gang-involved individuals. And then when they came into our care, and they were assessed by our clinical and case management staff ... they weren’t necessarily identified as gang-involved individuals,” said Kelsey Wong, a program director at the facility. She testified April 26 before a Senate subcommittee reviewing the treatment of immigrant children apprehended by the Homeland Security Department.</p> <p>Most children held in the Shenandoah facility who were the focus of the abuse lawsuit were caught crossing the border illegally alone. They were not the children who have been separated from their families under the Trump administration’s recent policy and are now in the government’s care. But the facility there operates under the same program run by the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement. It was not immediately clear whether any separated children have been sent to Shenandoah Valley since the Trump administration in April announced its “zero tolerance” policy toward immigrant families, after the lawsuit was filed.</p> <p>The Shenandoah lockup is one of only three juvenile detention facilities in the United States with federal</p>

contracts to provide “secure placement” for children who had problems at less-restrictive housing. The Yolo County Juvenile Detention Facility in California has faced litigation over immigrant children mischaracterized as gang members. In Alexandria, Virginia, a board overseeing the Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Center voted this week to end its contract to house federal immigration detainees, bowing to public pressure.

The Shenandoah detention center was built by a coalition of seven nearby towns and counties to lock up local kids charged with serious crimes. Since 2007, about half the 58 beds are occupied by both male and female immigrants between the ages of 12 and 17 facing deportation proceedings or awaiting rulings on asylum claims. Though incarcerated in a facility similar to a prison, the children detained on administrative immigration charges have not yet been convicted of any crime.

Virginia ranks among the worst states in the nation for wait times in federal immigration courts, with an average of 806 days before a ruling. Nationally, only about half of juveniles facing deportation are represented by a lawyer, according to Justice Department data.

On average, 92 immigrant children each year cycle through Shenandoah, most of them from Mexico and Central America.

Wong said many of the 30 or so children housed there on any given day have mental health needs that would be better served in a residential treatment unit. But such facilities are often unwilling to accept children with significant behavioral issues, she said.

Wong and other managers at the Shenandoah center, including Executive Director Timothy J. Smith, did not respond to phone and email messages seeking comment this week. A city manager on the local commission that oversees the facility referred questions to an official at the Refugee Resettlement agency, who did not respond to a phone message.

Financial statements reviewed by AP shows the local government commission that operates the center received nearly \$4.2 million in federal funds last year to house the immigrant children — enough to cover about two-thirds of the total operating expenses.

The lawsuit filed against Shenandoah alleges that young Latino immigrants held there “are subjected to unconstitutional conditions that shock the conscience, including violence by staff, abusive and excessive use of seclusion and restraints, and the denial of necessary mental health care.”

The complaint filed by the nonprofit Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs recounts the story of an unnamed 17-year-old Mexican citizen apprehended at the southern border. The teen fled an abusive father and violence fueled by drug cartels to seek asylum in the United States in 2015.

After stops at facilities in Texas and New York, he was transferred to Shenandoah in April 2016 and diagnosed during an initial screening by a psychologist with three mental disorders, including depression. Besides weekly sessions speaking with a counselor, the lawsuit alleges the teen has received no further mental health treatment, such as medications that might help regulate his moods and behavior.

The lawsuit recounts multiple alleged violent incidents between Latino children and staff at the Shenandoah center. It describes the guards as mostly white, non-Spanish speakers who are undertrained in dealing with individuals with mental illness. The suit alleges staff members routinely taunt the Latino youths with racially charged epithets, including “wetback,” “onion head” and “pendejo,” which roughly translates to dumbass in Spanish.

A 16-year-old who said he had lived in Texas with his mother since he was an infant ended up at Shenandoah in September after a police officer pulled over a car he was riding in and asked for ID, which he couldn’t provide. As one of the few Latino kids who is fluent in English, the teen would translate for other detainees the taunts and names the staff members were calling them. He said that angered the guards, resulting in his losing such modest privileges as attending art classes.

“If you are behaving bad, resisting the staff when they try to remove you from the program, they will take everything in your room away — your mattress, blanket, everything,” he said. “They will also take your clothes. Then they will leave you locked in there for a while. This has happened to me, and I know it has happened to other kids, too.”

The immigrant detainees said they were largely segregated from the mostly white juveniles being held on criminal charges, but they could see that the other housing units had amenities that included plush chairs and video gaming consoles not available in the Spartan pods housing the Latinos.

In their sworn statements, the teens reported spending the bulk of their days locked alone in their cells, with a few hours set aside for classroom instruction, recreation and meals. Some said they had never been allowed outdoors, while the U.S.-born children were afforded a spacious recreation yard.

The Latino children reported being fed sparse and often cold meals that left them hungry, though meals of American fast food were occasionally provided. Records show Shenandoah receives nearly \$82,000 a year from the Agriculture Department to feed the immigration detainees.

The lawsuit said the poor conditions, frequent physical searches and verbal abuse by staff often escalated into confrontations, as the frustrated children acted out. The staff regularly responded “by physically assaulting the youth, applying an excessive amount of force that goes far beyond what is needed to establish or regain control.”

In the case of the Mexican 17-year-old, the lawsuit said a staff member who suspected him of possessing contraband threw him to the ground and forcibly tore off his clothes for an impromptu strip search. Though no forbidden items were found, the teenager was transferred to “Alpha Pod,” described in the lawsuit as a unit within the facility designated for children who engage in bad behavior.

The lawsuit said Latino children were frequently punished by being restrained for hours in chairs, with handcuffs and cloth shackles on their legs. Often, the lawsuit alleged, the children were beaten by staff while bound.

As a result of such “malicious and sadistic applications of force,” the immigrant youths have “sustained significant injuries, both physical and psychological,” the lawsuit said.

After an altercation during which the lawsuit alleged the Mexican teenager bit a staff member during a beating, he was restrained in handcuffs and shackles for 10 days, resulting in bruises and cuts. Other teens interviewed as part of the court case also reported being punished for minor infractions with stints in solitary confinement, during which some of the children said they were left nude and shivering in cold concrete cells.

Academic studies of prison inmates kept in solitary confinement have found they often experience high anxiety that can cause panic attacks, paranoia and disordered thinking that may trigger angry outbursts. For those with mental health issues, the effects can be exacerbated, often worsening the very behaviors the staff is attempting to discourage.

A Guatemalan youth sent to the center when he was 14 years old said he was often locked in his tiny cell for up to 23 hours a day. After resisting the guards, he said he was also restrained for long periods.

“When they couldn’t get one of the kids to calm down, the guards would put us in a chair — a safety chair, I don’t know what they call it — but they would just put us in there all day,” the teen said in a sworn statement. “This happened to me, and I saw it happen to others, too. It was excessive.”

A 15-year-old from Mexico held at Shenandoah for nine months also recounted being restrained with a bag over his head.

“They handcuffed me and put a white bag of some kind over my head,” he said, according to his sworn statement. “They took off all of my clothes and put me into a restraint chair, where they attached my hands and feet to the chair. They also put a strap across my chest. They left me naked and attached to that chair for two and a half days, including at night.”

After being subjected to such treatment, the 17-year-old Mexican youth said he tried to kill himself in August, only to be punished with further isolation. On other occasions, he said, he has responded to feelings of desperation and hopelessness by cutting his wrists with a piece of glass and banging his head against the wall or floor.

“One time I cut myself after I had gotten into a fight with staff,” the teen recounted. “I filled the room with blood. This happened on a Friday, but it wasn’t until Monday that they gave me a bandage or medicine for the pain.”

The lawsuit alleges other immigrant youths held at Shenandoah have also engaged in cutting and other self-harming behaviors, including ingesting shampoo and attempting to choke themselves.

A hearing in the case is set for July 3 before a federal judge in the Western District of Virginia.

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HEADLINE	06/20 Uganda unveils crime fighting measures
SOURCE	http://www.businessinsider.com/r-ugandan-president-unveils-measures-to-curb-crime-wave-criticizes-police-2018-6
GIST	<p>KAMPALA (Reuters) - Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni accused some members of the security forces of conniving with criminals on Wednesday as he announced measures including the collection of DNA from all Ugandans to help curb surging crime.</p> <p>A flurry of unsolved murders and kidnappings for ransom has eroded Ugandans' trust in law enforcement bodies. The failure of police to issue an annual crime report since 2013 has fueled suspicions they are trying to conceal the scale of the problem.</p> <p>"Negligence and even collusion with the criminals by some elements in the security forces has been part of the problem," Museveni said during a special address to parliament on the state of national security.</p> <p>Museveni, in power since 1986, also said the police needed to show greater vigilance.</p> <p>"If you analyze recent murders there are always clues that sometimes are not followed," he said.</p> <p>Museveni said his government would organize the collection of DNA samples from the whole population to facilitate the identification of suspects. It would also require motor vehicles and motorcycles to buy electronic license plates.</p> <p>"This will enable us to know which vehicles or motorcycles were in which area if a crime is committed in different areas," he said, adding that the police would also be provided with drones to help track down criminals.</p> <p>Among recent crimes, unidentified men riding on motorcycles shot and killed a ruling party lawmaker with his bodyguard on June 8 near his home in a suburb of the capital Kampala.</p> <p>The assassination followed last year's killings of a senior police officer and at least 20 women whose bodies were dumped on road sides in Kampala. Several Muslim leaders have also been assassinated in recent years in different parts of the country.</p> <p>Last week an army general, Kale Kayihura, who was sacked as head of the police in March this year, was</p>

	arrested and the state media said his detention was in connection with the murder of a police official last year. He is yet to be charged.
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HEADLINE	06/21 Europe court rejects Breivik appeal
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-norway-breivik/european-human-rights-court-rejects-appeal-by-norwegian-mass-killer-idUSKBN1JH0UB
GIST	<p>OSLO (Reuters) - The European Court of Human Rights rejected on Thursday an appeal by Norwegian mass killer Anders Behring Breivik who says his near-isolation in prison amounts to inhuman and degrading treatment.</p> <p>Breivik, who has legally changed his name to Fjotolf Hansen, killed 77 people in a car bombing in central Oslo and shooting spree on Utoeya island in 2011, the worst act of violence in the Nordic country since World War Two.</p> <p>The Strasbourg-based court “rejected the application as inadmissible for being manifestly ill-founded”, according to a ruling by a committee of three judges.</p> <p>“The decision is final,” it said.</p> <p>Breivik, an anti-Muslim right-wing fanatic, says his near-isolation in a three-room cell violates a ban on inhuman or degrading treatment and a right to privacy and family life under the European Convention on Human Rights.</p> <p>Oslo district court agreed with him in a 2016 ruling, but it was overturned by an appeals court in March 2017. Norway’s Supreme Court declined to hear his appeal in the case.</p> <p>Norway says that draconian measures, including hundreds of strip searches and no contact with other inmates, are justified for an unrepentant 39-year-old far-right extremist who could be attacked by other prisoners.</p> <p>Breivik is serving Norway’s longest sentence — 21 years with the possibility of an extension. His only contacts are lawyers and professionals such as guards and health workers.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/20 Pa. cop kills teen fleeing traffic stop
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/pennsylvania-police-kill-17-year-fleeing-traffic-stop/story?id=56023716&cid=clicksource_81_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>Police shot and killed an unarmed 17-year-old boy who fled from them near Pittsburgh Tuesday after he was pulled over in a car believed to have been connected to an earlier shooting that night, authorities said.</p> <p>The initial shooting was reported in North Braddock at 8:27 p.m., the Allegheny County Police Department said Wednesday.</p> <p>Responding officers found a 22-year-old man wounded, struck in the abdomen, police said.</p> <p>The shooter had fired nine rounds at the man from a passing car, police said. The victim also returned fire at the passing car, police said.</p> <p>The man was taken to a hospital and later released, police said.</p> <p>"Witnesses described the vehicle involved in the shooting, and the description was broadcast" to officers in</p>

the area, the Allegheny County police said in a news release Wednesday.

An East Pittsburgh police officer spotted a car matching the description -- a silver Chevy Cruze -- and pulled the car over at 8:40 p.m., police said.

The driver, 20, was ordered out of the car and directed to the ground, police said.

But two other people who were in that car fled on foot, police said.

The officer shot three times at one of the fleeing people -- the 17-year-old -- and struck him three times, police said.

The 17-year-old, Antwon Rose, was taken to a hospital where he died, the medical examiner's office said.

Rose did not have a weapon on him and none of the three suspects fired at officers, police said, adding that "two firearms were later recovered from the suspect vehicle."

The driver was detained and later released, police said.

But the other person who fled the silver Chevy Cruze remains at large, police said. That person's identity is unknown.

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MONDAY – 18 JUN 2018



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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	06/17 State moves toward REAL ID compliance
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/changes-coming-to-washington-drivers-license-to-comply-with-feds/
GIST	<p>In little more than two weeks, Washington residents renewing their driver's licenses will notice a small but important change.</p> <p>The state will begin marking standard driver's licenses, as well as identification cards, as not meeting federal standards.</p> <p>In the upper right side of a driver's license the words "Federal limits apply" will appear starting July 1. And those words could disrupt your travel plans starting Oct. 1, 2020. That's because the standard license or I.D. won't be accepted as identification if you want to board a commercial airliner.</p> <p>To fly, gain entry to military bases and enter certain other federal facilities, you'll need an enhanced license.</p> <p>It's a step toward meeting the Real ID Act passed by Congress in 2005, which heightened requirements for accepting documents at the federal level.</p> <p>While enhanced driver's licenses and I.D. cards have been available for years, most people have opted for the standard license or I.D. card, which will still be available. The state Department of Licensing has planned a public education program to explain the differences, but here are a few of the basics:</p> <p>What's the difference between a standard driver's license/I.D. card and an enhanced one?</p> <p>The standard driver's license will still provide identification and allow the operation of a motor vehicle but won't be accepted at airports by the Transportation Security Authority (TSA) after Sept. 30, 2020.</p> <p>The enhanced driver's license provides identification and allows the operation of a motor vehicle access to military bases and other federal facilities and will be accepted at airports for domestic travel. It also allows for re-entry into the U.S. at land and sea borders between the U.S., Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean.</p> <p>The same provisions apply to identification cards and enhanced I.D. cards, the difference being they don't allow driving.</p> <p>You can tell the two kinds of cards apart because language in the top right corner will state either "Federal limits apply" or be labeled "Enhanced" for the expanded privileges.</p> <p>A standard driver's license or I.D. card costs \$54. An enhanced driver's license or I.D. card will cost \$78. All are valid for six years.</p> <p>In order to obtain an enhanced document, you'll need documents providing your citizenship, identity, residence and a Social Security number. All documents must be originals or government-certified copies.</p> <p>Proof of citizenship can be a passport or passport card, a certificate of naturalization or citizenship, or a birth certificate. For identity, a U.S. passport, driver's license, state-issued I.D. card, U.S. military I.D. or</p>

	<p>government employee I.D. will work.</p> <p>To verify your Social Security number, you can bring a Social Security card or a pay stub or W-2 form with your Social Security number visible.</p> <p>You need two documents to prove residence in Washington state. Those can be a Washington school transcript or report card from a previous or current school year, a bill dated within two months, a Washington voter card, a pay check or stub within two months or several other documents. The full list can be found at www.dol.wa.gov.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Midwest flash flooding, heat wave
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/81072ccf03df48cda62bfc910a4db266/Midwestern-states-endure-flash-flooding,-heat-wave
GIST	<p>SUPERIOR, Wis. (AP) — Lines of thunderstorms crawled across northern Minnesota and northern Wisconsin on Sunday after overnight flash flooding washed out roads and highways, as a heat wave sent temperatures into the high 90s elsewhere in the Midwest.</p> <p>The National Weather Service issued flood warnings from east-central Minnesota across northwestern Wisconsin because of the potential for rainfall rates exceeding 2 inches per hour in some places.</p> <p>U.S. Highway 2, a major thoroughfare across northwestern Wisconsin, washed out early Sunday about 10 miles west of Ashland, the Bayfield County Sheriff’s Office reported. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation said a lengthy detour was in place. KBJR-TV reported that the waters surrounded an animal shelter along the highway in Ashland, forcing the owners to evacuate 15 dogs and four cats to a nearby farm.</p> <p>Storm runoff moving down the Nemadji River after two days of heavy rain and thunderstorms also raised concerns in Superior, Wisconsin. Mayor Jim Paine said officials expected the river to continue rising and flood U.S. Highway 2 on the east side of the city, which would require a “very lengthy detour” that he said may be impractical for most people, Minnesota Public Radio reported.</p> <p>“Residents of the Allouez and Itasca areas should prepare immediately as your way in and out of the rest of Superior may be cut off soon,” Paine said on Facebook late Sunday morning.</p> <p>Parts of Wisconsin Highway 35 were closed south of Superior in Douglas County due to flooding. And U.S. Highway 63 was shut down by flooding in the Drummond, Wisconsin, area, where the National Weather Service says more than 11 inches of rain fell overnight.</p> <p>In Minnesota, State Highway 23 was closed for repairs where it washed out at the Nemidji River bridge in Carlton County, about 14 miles southwest of Duluth, the Carlton County Sheriff’s Office said. The sheriff’s office said highway crews were also working Sunday on several other washouts and flooded roads.</p> <p>Temperatures reached the high 90s Sunday in Chicago, approaching if not surpassing the hottest June 17 on record — 96 degrees in 1957. Much of the region that wasn’t enduring storms was experiencing a similar heat wave.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 FBI vows bias training for employees
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jun/14/fbi-orders-bias-training-employees-after-latest-em/

GIST

The FBI will make its employees undergo bias training, Director Christopher A. Wray promised Thursday, after a devastating report found the bureau made bad decisions, has a culture of leaking sensitive information, and may have skewed campaign-season decisions because of bias.

New text messages released by the Justice Department inspector general showing conversations between Deputy Assistant Director Peter Strzok and paramour FBI lawyer Lisa Page suggest a deep anti-Trump sentiment.

In one exchange, Ms. Page wanted reassurance that then-candidate Donald Trump couldn't win the election. Mr. Strzok replied: "No. No he's not. We'll stop it."

The inspector general also said the FBI was rife with people leaking to the press, or holding other cozy relationships that should worry the bureau. Some employees accepted sports tickets, went on golf outings, or had their dinners paid for by reporters.

That was in addition to the leaks themselves.

Only four FBI employees at headquarters are approved to speak directly to the press without specific authorization, but investigators said that was "widely ignored." They even drew up charts showing specific unnamed reporters' contacts with the press.

One reporter had more than 110 contacts with 18 different bureau employees, including special agents in charge, deputy assistant directors, lawyers and analysts, according to the chart.

"These leaks highlight the need to change what appears to be a cultural attitude among many in the organization," the audit concludes.

The FBI has been under fire for its operations during the 2016 campaign, when it was conducting several investigations into matters surrounding Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton, and also began a probe into Republican candidate Mr. Trump.

Mr. Trump fired FBI Director James B. Comey for his handling of the probe, and others have also been disciplined.

The new report said that while bias didn't appear to affect the big decisions in the handling of the initial investigation into Mrs. Clinton's email practices, they couldn't rule out a role for bias in pushing the FBI to focus on the Russia probe in October 2016, rather than go back to review a new set of emails found on the laptop of Anthony Weiner, who was married to Mrs. Clinton's top personal aide, Huma Abedin.

Mr. Wray said he's ordered a review of FBI procedures and how agents mix their political duties with personal opinions.

That, he said in his official reply to the report, "will further include political bias training."

At a press conference later, Mr. Wray said while the report exposed problems, it shouldn't be seen as a black mark on the FBI more broadly.

"Nothing — nothing in this report — impugns the integrity of our workforce as a whole, or the FBI as an institution," he said.

He added: "We're going to learn from this report and we're going to be better and stronger as a result."

Mr. Wray said the bureau has taken steps to try to get a handle on problems. Some people have been reassigned and cases have been referred to the FBI's internal personnel department for review.

He wouldn't say who was referred, saying it "would not be appropriate." But the inspector general's report

	<p>signaled</p> <p>“Once that process is complete we will not hesitate to hold people accountable,” Mr. Wray said.</p> <p>He also said the bureau has a new media policy to clamp down on leaks, and said he’s asked the personnel office to look at whether they need to increase penalties on those who do leak.</p> <p>He vowed “intensive training” for everyone to make it “painfully” clear what the standards and rules are.</p> <p>“We accept the findings of the report and the recommendations,” Mr. Wray said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 US Navy seeks end BMD patrols
SOURCE	https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2018/06/16/the-us-navy-is-fed-up-with-ballistic-missile-defense-patrols/
GIST	<p>The U.S. Navy’s top officer wants to end standing ballistic missile defense patrols and transfer the mission to shore-based assets.</p> <p>Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson said in no uncertain terms on June 12 that he wants the Navy off the tether of ballistic missile defense patrols, a mission that has put a growing strain on the Navy’s hard-worn surface combatants, and the duty shifted towards more shore-based infrastructure.</p> <p>“Right now, as we speak, I have six multi-mission, very sophisticated, dynamic cruisers and destroyers — six of them are on ballistic missile defense duty at sea,” Richardson said during his address at the U.S. Naval War College’s Current Strategy Forum. “And if you know a little bit about this business you know that geometry is a tyrant.</p> <p>“You have to be in a tiny little box to have a chance at intercepting that incoming missile. So, we have six ships that could go anywhere in the world, at flank speed, in a tiny little box, defending land.”</p> <p>Richardson continued, saying the Navy could be used in emergencies but that in the long term the problem demands a different solution.</p> <p>“It’s a pretty good capability and if there is an emergent need to provide ballistic missile defense, we’re there,” he said. “But 10 years down the road, it’s time to build something on land to defend the land. Whether that’s AEGIS ashore or whatever, I want to get out of the long-term missile defense business and move to dynamic missile defense.”</p> <p>The unusually direct comments from the CNO come amid growing frustration among the surface warfare community that the mission, which requires ships to stay in a steaming box doing figure-eights for weeks on end, is eating up assets and operational availability that could be better used confronting growing high-end threats from China and Russia.</p> <p>The BMD mission was also a factor in degraded readiness in the surface fleet. Amid the nuclear threat from North Korea, the BMD mission began eating more and more of the readiness generated in the Japan-based U.S. 7th Fleet, which created a pressurized situation that caused leaders in the Pacific to cut corners and sacrifice training time for their crews, an environment described in the Navy’s comprehensive review into the two collisions that claimed the lives of 17 sailors in the disastrous summer of 2017.</p> <p>Richardson said that as potential enemies double down on anti-access technologies designed to keep the U.S. Navy at bay, the Navy needed to focus on missile defense for its own assets.</p> <p>“We’re going to need missile defense at sea as we kind of fight our way now into the battle spaces we need to get into,” he said. “And so restoring dynamic maneuver has something to do with missile defense.</p>

The Navy has had some success with land-based BMD with its AEGIS Ashore system in Romania, which uses what looks like a cruiser superstructure with SPY arrays and missiles to create a missile defense shield. Another AEGIS Ashore is planned for Poland in 2020 and last year Japan announced plans to buy the system, which could relieve some of the pressure on 7th Fleet ships once operational.

AEGIS Ashore installations are run around the clock by three shifts of 11 personnel each.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis has been outspoken about the need for the Navy to become less predictable and more agile to respond to an evolving security environment. Mattis thinks the kind of predictable rotational deployments that dispatch carriers to predictable locations such as the Persian Gulf are not appropriate with near-peer competitors making moves globally.

Instead, Mattis wants the Navy to pursue a concept called “dynamic force employment,” having the Navy deploy at odd times and show up in unexpected places, all the while spending less time underway to preserve surge readiness for a major conflict.

But BMD missions work against that kind of unpredictability and consume an out-sized portion of readiness the Navy generates through its deployment model.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis has made clear as the military’s top civilian that he has a very different vision for how the military will be used in the future. Recent comments have hinted at big changes on the horizon for the Navy and how it deploys.

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HEADLINE	06/16 China warns airlines over territories
SOURCE	http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-travel-briefcase-china-airlines-20180616-story.html
GIST	<p>A demand by China that all air carriers worldwide refer to Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau on online maps and drop-down menus as Chinese territories — not as independent regions — is being ignored by the U.S.’s biggest airlines.</p> <p>At least for now.</p> <p>The order from Beijing came in May, and dozens of foreign-based carriers have already fallen in line.</p> <p>Earlier this week, the Associated Press confirmed that 20 carriers, including Air Canada, British Airways and Lufthansa, were referring to Taiwan as a part of China on their global websites. China claims democratic Taiwan as part of its territory, but the two have been ruled separately since the Chinese civil war of the 1940s.</p> <p>In a statement, China’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said: “Foreign enterprises operating in China should respect China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, abide by China’s law and respect the national sentiment of the Chinese people.”</p> <p>The White House, however, blasted the order, calling it “Orwellian nonsense.”</p> <p>Among those carriers that continue to include the name “Taiwan” on their maps or list of destinations are American, Delta, United and Hawaiian Airlines.</p> <p>American Airlines requested a 60-day extension — until July 25 — from the Chinese order. An American Airlines spokesman declined to discuss the matter except to say: “We are consulting with the U.S. government on the matter.”</p> <p>In a statement, Delta said: “We are reviewing the Civil Aviation Administration of China’s request and</p>

	<p>will remain in close consultation with the U.S. Government throughout this process.”</p> <p>China has yet to say what punishment it may impose on airlines that defy its order. But a financial penalty or other punishment could create complications for China because the biggest U.S. airlines that fly to Taiwan and other Chinese destinations often do so through partnerships with China-based carriers such as Shanghai Airlines, China Airlines and China Eastern Airlines.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Seattle clears unsanctioned I-90 camp
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1021137/seattle-clears-homeless-camp/
GIST	<p>Seattle police officers with the Navigation Team spent Friday clearing about a dozen people from an unsanctioned homeless camp near I-90 and Rainier Avenue.</p> <p>The city acknowledges more than 400 unsanctioned homeless camps.</p> <p>KIRO 7 was on the scene and asked why this camp, why now, and what happens to the people being cleared out.</p> <p>“We have to remove the encampments that pose the most significant public health and safety impacts,” Navigation Team spokesperson Will Lemke told KIRO 7 anchor John Knicely, who then asked what makes this camp fit the criteria. “For this one it’s obstructing public right of way, it is exposed to vehicular traffic, there is trash accumulation especially to the south here.”</p> <p>Lemke also says people living in the camp routinely crossed an I-90 on-ramp to access it.</p> <p>The vast majority of the unsanctioned homeless camps meet the city’s criteria to be removed, but the Navigation Team says the lack of available shelter is stopping it.</p> <p>“We can’t remove an encampment unless we have space in our shelter system,” Lemke said. “So, depending on the capacity, dictates how many encampments we can close down.”</p> <p>The city identified 20 open spots in area shelters on Friday. That’s enough for everyone living there, including eight spots at First Presbyterian.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 USDA: Calif. virulent Newcastle disease
SOURCE	http://www.dvm360.com/virulent-newcastle-disease-found-backyard-chickens-california
GIST	<p>In mid-May, the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) confirmed virulent Newcastle disease in a small flock of backyard exhibition chickens in Los Angeles County, according to an agency release. Since that time, the disease has also been found in flocks in San Bernardino County.</p> <p>These are the first cases of virulent Newcastle disease, formerly called exotic Newcastle disease, in the United States since 2003, the release states.</p> <p>Virulent Newcastle disease is a contagious and fatal viral disease that affects the respiratory, nervous and digestive systems of birds and poultry, the release states. It is so virulent that many birds and poultry die without showing clinical signs, and a death rate of almost 100 percent can occur in unvaccinated flocks. It can even infect and kill vaccinated poultry.</p> <p>Besides sudden death, clinical signs of the disease include sneezing; gasping for air; nasal discharge; coughing; greenish, watery diarrhea; decreased activity; tremors; drooping wings; twisting of the head and neck; circling; complete stiffness; and swelling around the eyes and neck, the release states. Images</p>

	<p>of some of these signs are available here.</p> <p>APHIS notes that no human cases of the disease have ever occurred from eating poultry products and that properly cooked poultry products are safe to eat. In very rare cases, people working directly with sick birds can become infected, though symptoms are usually mild and limited to conjunctivitis or influenza-like symptoms. The use of personal protective equipment can easily prevent infection in humans, the release says.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Greece: stage set for historic accord
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/greek-prime-minister-survives-no-confidence-vote-parliament-n883946
GIST	<p>ATHENS — Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras survived a no-confidence motion in parliament on Saturday, setting the stage for the signing of a historic accord with neighboring Macedonia to settle a long dispute over the latter's name.</p> <p>The motion brought by the opposition New Democracy party was rejected by 153 MPs, with 127 in favor. Political opponents had accused Tsipras of making too many concessions over the deal, due to be signed on Sunday.</p> <p>Thousands of Greeks protested outside parliament against the accord with Macedonia, calling for Tsipras to resign. Police used stun grenades and tear gas to prevent them from entering the building.</p> <p>"This is a deal I believe that every Greek prime minister would want," Tsipras told the chamber earlier.</p> <p>Had he lost, the leftist elected in 2015 would have had to relinquish his mandate to the country's president, signaling early elections. He is already trailing center-right New Democracy in opinion polls.</p> <p>Greece had been in dispute with Macedonia since 1991 over the former Yugoslav republic's name, arguing it could imply territorial claims over the Greek province of Macedonia and an appropriation of ancient Greek culture and civilization.</p> <p>The subject is a deeply emotional one for many Greeks. On Saturday, protesters outside the parliament building shouted "traitor, traitor!" as lawmakers debated inside.</p> <p>"I'm just furious," said Theologos Ambotis, 69, a monk. "Conceding on the name is conceding on territory. Macedonia and Alexander the Great is Greek history and culture, and they are just giving it away to Skopje."</p> <p>Under the terms of the accord, the country will be known as "Republic of North Macedonia" and Greece will lift its objections to the renamed nation joining the European Union and the NATO military alliance.</p> <p>Greek foreign minister Nikos Kotzias and his Macedonian counterpart Nikola Dimitrov will sign the pact in the border lake region of Prespes on Sunday morning. Tsipras and Macedonian premier Zoran Zaev will also be present.</p> <p>It will require ratification by both national parliaments and approval in a Macedonian referendum, which is not assured.</p> <p>The president of Macedonia has said he will not endorse the pact, while in Greece, Tsipras's right-wing coalition partners have said their lawmakers will reject it when it is brought for ratification. That is expected to occur by the end of the year.</p> <p>Protests were scheduled on both sides of the border on Sunday.</p>

	<p>One lawmaker with the right-wing Independent Greeks, Tsipras's coalition partner, sided with New Democracy on the motion, bringing applause from opposition politicians. He was promptly expelled by the party's leader.</p> <p>The expulsion brings Tsipras's majority in parliament to 153 MPs out of a total in the chamber of 300. New Democracy leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis called the accord an affront, and the Tsipras government a 'nightmare'.</p> <p>"This government should go before it does more damage, this time national damage," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 FEMA rejects 60% Puerto Rico requests
SOURCE	https://slate.com/technology/2018/06/hurricane-maria-aftermath-fema-rejects-60-percent-of-assistance-requests.html
GIST	<p>Many Puerto Ricans have a jaundiced view of the federal response to Hurricane Maria: Federal aid was slow to materialize compared with aid to Texas, and President Trump appeared at times glib and dismissive of the island's plight. High on the ledger of residents' catalog of grievances is the hefty number of people who have been rebuffed for repair grants from FEMA: In March, lawyers and community groups said that the agency had denied about 60 percent of household applications in Puerto Rico, often because families could not prove ownership of their homes.</p> <p>FEMA's denial rate for individual assistance is always high— about 30 percent of Texans were rejected for Harvey-related requests by January. But as of March, FEMA grant denials in Puerto Rico after Maria nearly double that number. In a series of interviews, lawyers and residents told me that FEMA presided over a poorly managed process that failed to account for the island's unique customs.</p> <p>In the early days of the disaster response, FEMA's appraisal efforts were flanked by errors. Contract inspectors assessing property damage on the island had limited Spanish-speaking ability and struggled in an unfamiliar terrain. Puerto Ricans living in remote mountainous regions waited months for FEMA assessors to arrive. The application process itself was taxing for residents—without working cellphones and internet access, merely asking for help was a hurdle.</p> <p>Veronica Gonzalez, a lawyer who assisted residents claiming aid, characterized the initial response as poorly tailored to the island: "Inspectors would arrive unannounced and unidentified," she says. Because of Spanish-language limitations, they "sometimes couldn't explain to people why they were there."</p> <p>But even as those problems eased, another issue persisted: residents' inability to produce deeds showing home ownership. In the aftermath of a hurricane, when people lose their homes, they also tend to lose bank documents and housing deeds that were stored in those homes. As a condition of approval for individual assistance, lawyers told me that FEMA often insisted on formal proof of title that was unworkable.</p> <p>In the aftermath of a hurricane, when people lose their homes, they also tend to lose bank documents and housing deeds that were stored in their homes.</p> <p>FEMA's demand for proof of ownership was also an insurmountable barrier for thousands of Puerto Ricans who live in informal settlements: sprawling cliques of houses clustered in rural areas outside San Juan and in coastal stretches bordering the capital city. And Puerto Rico maintains property traditions that are distinct from the mainland—homes and land are often inherited without a formal transfer of title or deed.</p> <p>Accordingly, only about 65 percent of properties on the island are officially registered with the</p>

government in the first place. And many unregistered homes were seriously damaged or destroyed in Maria's wake.

As concerns mounted, FEMA took steps to lessen documentation requirements, including considering sworn affidavits from people without deeds. But several lawyers who spoke to me say that the change occurred late in the game, and that some applications bolstered by affidavits are still getting denied. Natasha Bannan, an attorney with LatinoJustice, an organization that helped to coordinate a behemoth effort to provide legal assistance to Puerto Ricans seeking aid after Maria, offered a frank assessment of FEMA's performance: "It was wholly inadequate," she said. "It's been a really piecemeal approach to systemic issues."

Locals I spoke with argue that the next time a disaster hits Puerto Rico, FEMA should ease documentation requirements from the start, hire locals more quickly, and train staff so that information is accessible and standards are applied consistently.

Several lawyers on the island told me that declarative statements signed under penalty of perjury should count toward meeting FEMA's standards to show occupancy in addition to notarized affidavits. And my conversations with residents yielded a common refrain: FEMA should offer a way to apply for aid unshackled from internet or phone access in a sustained power outage. Spanish-speaking staff must fan out through the island early, helping people to fill out applications and assisting with inspections.

Still, residents say that the size of the federal grants FEMA typically gives out in many cases isn't sufficient to address their pleas for succor. FEMA's average award in Puerto Rico is just a few thousand dollars, a fraction of the agency's upper limit for grants under the program.

The last day for Puerto Ricans affected by Maria to register to apply for individual disaster assistance from FEMA is Monday, June 18.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Australia FM: no Jerusalem embassy
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/16/australia-rules-out-moving-its-israel-embassy-to-jerusalem
GIST	<p>Australia will not be following Donald Trump's lead and moving its embassy to Jerusalem, Julie Bishop has said, despite strong support from the party's base.</p> <p>The Liberal party's youth arm had called on the government to relocate its embassy from Tel Aviv to Israel's legislative capital, and to suspend all aid to Palestine "until it terminates its 'Martyr's fund'".</p> <p>The motion, which is non-binding, was carried in a vote 43 to 31, but the foreign minister said there was no chance the government would adopt it as policy. There are 110 council delegates who have voting rights at the national council.</p> <p>"While I understand the sentiment behind this resolution, the Australian government will not be moving our embassy to Jerusalem," Bishop said.</p> <p>"Jerusalem is a final status issue and we have maintained that position for decades and we are doing all we can do to ensure that any support we give to the Palestinian Authority is only used for purposes that we determine."</p> <p>Bishop said she had recently written to her Palestinian counterpart to ensure Australian aid, about \$43m in the next financial year, was being spent on health, education and governance.</p> <p>"Our funding to the Palestinian Authority is subject to a memorandum of understanding, defining precisely how it is used and subject to very close audit to ensure that no funds are diverted to the so-called Martyr's</p>

	<p>fund,” she said.</p> <p>But Australia did side with the United States to vote against a UN human rights council motion for an independent investigation into last month’s “March of Return” protest deaths.</p> <p>In explaining why Australia was the only other nation, other than America, to vote against sending in investigators, Australian officials said they were concerned the investigation “was not independent or impartial.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Nicaragua no closer to ending violence
SOURCE	https://www.npr.org/2018/06/15/620467411/after-nationwide-strike-nicaragua-looks-no-closer-to-bloodsheds-end
GIST	<p>On Thursday, after nearly two months of violence and upheaval, some residents who ventured into Nicaragua's city streets Thursday discovered something that had become something of a rarity: quiet.</p> <p>A 24-hour nationwide strike left thoroughfares deserted and storefronts empty — and though even the massive walkout couldn't prevent several deadly clashes, the day at least tempered some of the violence between security forces and the demonstrators protesting President Daniel Ortega.</p> <p>Then, it ended.</p> <p>Friday brought fresh clashes between riot police and protesters, adding more sorrow to a ledger that has been mounting since mid-April, when Ortega's government introduced — then quickly retracted — a group of widely unpopular pension reforms. Despite their hasty reversal, the attempted reforms prompted a largely student-led protest movement that is calling for expedited elections, in hopes of ousting the longtime president.</p> <p>What began as a series of peaceful protests was met with a brutal state response, and soon deteriorated into outright bloodshed.</p> <p>Local human rights groups say the number of people killed in the unrest since April 18 could range as high as at least 165. That toll includes a 15-year-old altar boy shot dead Thursday in the city of Leon by pro-Ortega paramilitary fighters, according to local journalists.</p> <p>The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights called for the dismantling of such armed paramilitary gangs, sometimes called "Sandinista mobs," which have been attacking protesters with the tacit approval of government forces.</p> <p>"The Nicaraguan State must take urgent measures to immediately end arbitrary attacks on the lives and personal integrity of all Nicaraguans, with no distinctions whatsoever, including their political views," Antonia Urrejola, the commission's rapporteur for Nicaragua, said in a statement Thursday.</p> <p>"The State has an obligation to seek a peaceful solution for the country's situation," he added, " and to investigate and punish the people responsible for all acts of violence."</p> <p>Students with homemade mortars stand guard behind makeshift shields and barricades Tuesday at the National University in Managua, which has been occupied by protesters for more than a month.</p> <p>For those seeking such a peaceful resolution, Friday brought a small measure of hope.</p> <p>Powerful Catholic clergy gathered Friday for mediation talks — resuming them after the conference of Catholic bishops called the dialogue off late last month in response to a particularly bloody crackdown on a massive march. Late Friday night, the group called for the government to consider acceding to the</p>

	<p>protesters' demand for an early general election, Reuters reported.</p> <p>Still, progress was halting. Government officials demanded that protesters tear down their barricades, while opposition groups expressed reservations at making any concessions while the violence was ongoing.</p> <p>"Every bullet that kills a young person on the street also strikes this discussion," said one activist, according to AFP, "and ends the dialogue."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Fear of unfolding trade war
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/16/business/tariffs-trade-war.html
GIST	<p>LONDON — Only a few months ago, the global economy appeared to be humming, with all major nations growing in unison. Now, the world's fortunes are imperiled by an unfolding trade war.</p> <p>As the Trump administration imposes tariffs on allies and rivals alike, provoking broad retaliation, global commerce is suffering disruption, flashing signs of strains that could hamper economic growth. The latest escalation came on Friday, when President Trump announced fresh tariffs on \$50 billion in Chinese goods, prompting swift retribution from Beijing.</p> <p>As the conflict broadens, shipments are slowing at ports and airfreight terminals around the world. Prices for crucial raw materials are rising. At factories from Germany to Mexico, orders are being cut and investments delayed. American farmers are losing sales as trading partners hit back with duties of their own.</p> <p>Workers in a Canadian steel mill scrambled to recall rail cars headed to the United States border after Mr. Trump this month slapped tariffs on imported metals. A Seattle customer soon canceled an order.</p> <p>"The impact was felt immediately," said Jon Hobbs president of AltaSteel in Edmonton. "The penny is really dropping now as to what this means to people's businesses."</p> <p>The Trump administration portrays its confrontational stance as a means of forcing multinational companies to bring factory production back to American shores. Mr. Trump has described trade wars as "easy to win" while vowing to rebalance the United States' trade deficits with major economies like China and Germany.</p> <p>"Just talking about protectionism is causing trouble," said Marie Owens Thomsen, global chief economist at Indosuez Wealth Management in Geneva. "It's an existential risk to the world economy."</p> <p>After two years of expansion, airfreight traffic was flat over the first three months of the year, according to the International Air Transport Association. Dips have been especially pronounced in Europe and Asia.</p> <p>Container ships, the workhorses of global commerce, have seen no growth in freight since last fall in seasonally adjusted terms, according to a key index.</p> <p>A gauge of world trade tracked by Oxford Economics, a research firm in London, recently registered its weakest showing since early 2017.</p> <p>"Let us not understate the macroeconomic impact," the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, Christine Lagarde, warned this past week about trade conflicts. "It would be serious, not only if the United States took action, but especially if other countries were to retaliate, notably those who would be most affected, such as Canada, Europe and Germany."</p>

Threats to trade are emerging just as the global economy contends with other substantial challenges.

The Trump administration's decision to reinstate sanctions on Iran has lifted oil prices, adding pressure to importers worldwide. Europe's economy is weakening, with Germany — the continent's largest economy — especially vulnerable. Central banks in the United States and Europe are withdrawing the cheap money they sent coursing through the global financial system after the crisis of 2008, lifting borrowing costs.

The Trump administration has embroiled the United States in increasingly acrimonious conflicts with huge trading partners.

The United States last year imported more than \$600 billion in goods and services from Canada and Mexico, the two other nations in the North American Free Trade Agreement — a deal Mr. Trump has threatened to blow up. Americans bought more than \$500 billion in wares from China, and another \$450 billion from the European Union. Collectively, that amounts to nearly two-thirds of all American imports.

“If you seriously disrupt any of these three, you're going to feel the effects,” said Adam Slater, lead economist at Oxford Economics. “If you disrupt all three at once, you're going to feel it quite severely.”

In Houston, still recovering from the devastation inflicted by Hurricane Harvey, the steel tariffs loom like another storm on the horizon.

The Greater Port of Houston, a network of nearly 200 terminals lining 25 miles of channel, is one of the busiest seaborne cargo hubs on the planet. It is also a major local employer, and the largest importer of steel in North America. Steel imports have been surging, especially pipes used by the energy industry.

Sixteen years ago, when President George W. Bush put tariffs on steel, imports fell substantially. Such memories now stoke modern-day fears.

“We're kind of in a wait-and-see mode,” said Roger Guenther, executive director for the Port of Houston Authority.

For companies that make steel and aluminum, the American tariffs have presented a direct and menacing challenge to their businesses.

At Alta, the steel mill in Edmonton, the metals tariffs delivered an immediate crisis. Roughly one-fifth of the company's business involves shipping steel to American customers.

Suddenly, the border separating Canada from the United States was effectively enshrouded in fog. The company redirected rail cars destined for customers in the United States, incurring extra freight charges reaching 100,000 Canadian dollars (about \$76,000).

Lawyers for some of Alta's customers have suggested that certain products might be classified to avoid tripping the American tariffs, which apply only to specific types of steel. Yet for now, the company is waiting for rulings from overwhelmed American customs officials.

“We do not know when we will get an answer out of the U.S. government,” Mr. Hobbs said. “Nobody, including the U.S. border protection agency, knows what to do.”

Across Europe, steel makers fret about an indirect consequence of Mr. Trump's tariffs — cheap Chinese steel previously destined for the United States, now redirected to their continent.

“We have seen increases,” said Mathias Ternell, international affairs director at Jernkontoret, a Swedish steel industry association in Stockholm. “This is what Swedish companies and European companies worry about the most.”

Mr. Trump portrays trade hostilities as a necessary corrective to the United States' trade deficits with other nations. But economists and business leaders note that many imports are components that are used to manufacture goods at American factories.

For buyers of steel and aluminum inside the United States, the tariffs have increased prices, discouraging investment.

Electrolux, the Swedish manufacturer of household appliances, recently postponed plans to upgrade a stove factory in Tennessee, citing uncertainties created by the tariffs.

In the suburbs of Austin, Tex., Matt Bush, vice president of a small company that makes structures used in office buildings and retail spaces, said steel tariffs would force his company to pay as much as \$50,000 a month extra for metal.

"You have to imagine all the people who are purchasing raw steel and aluminum for input into their business are in the same predicament," he said. "And it's probably staggering how far that reaches."

Spain has emerged from a depression to become one of the fastest growing economies in Europe. Trade conflict is directly challenging that trajectory.

In the Spanish city of Toledo, Extol, a company that makes parts for the automobile and railroad industries, has recently seen customers demand supply contracts lasting no more than three months, rather than the usual one-year duration. With the price of aluminum rising, buyers are reluctant to commit, said the company's chief executive, Fernando Busto.

"We are watching events with enormous worry," Mr. Busto said. "The political decisions of Donald Trump are resulting in turbulence and volatility."

Far beyond the realm of metal, the impact of trade skirmishes are rippling out, hitting small businesses and consumers.

In Mexico, anxiety about trade has persisted ever since Mr. Trump took office, given his threats to tear up the North American Free Trade Agreement, and his designs on constructing a wall along the border. Ordinary Mexicans have absorbed the hit as the peso has plunged in value, raising the cost of everyday goods from the United States.

"That president is driving us to bankruptcy," said Gustavo Ferreyra Olivares, a fruit seller who has operated a stall at a covered market in Mexico City for 35 years. "Trump is the one who has raised the prices."

Most of the fresh fruit at his stall was grown in Mexico. But Granny Smith apples nestled in molded cardboard bore the USA label. So did a pile of glistening Gala apples, and neat lines of Red Delicious.

Under Nafta, Mexico has grown into the world's largest importer of American apples. But sales are down because the price has gone up by nearly one-fifth in the past week alone.

The Mexican government recently imposed 20 percent tariffs on American apples in response to Mr. Trump's duties on steel. That will make it harder for Mr. Ferreyra to sell his American produce. He envisions farmers hurting on the other side of the border, too.

"Mexico is a big importer of apples," he said. "If we decide to boycott them, they will all have to stay up there."

Global commodities markets are wrestling with the impacts of trade conflict, especially as China seeks alternatives to American suppliers.

	<p>In recent years, as the ranks of China's middle class have grown, so has the national appetite for pork. Raising growing numbers of pigs has forced China to import increasing volumes of American soybeans.</p> <p>But China has taken direct aim at American farms in retaliation for Mr. Trump's metals tariffs, threatening duties on soybeans from the United States. Chinese pork producers have turned their sights to Brazil and Argentina, the only countries that now produce enough soybeans to offer a potential alternative to the American supply.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/18 US details \$38B tariffs; Beijing retaliates
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/us-details-tariffs-to-hit-34b-of-chinese-goods-beijing-retaliates/
GIST	<p>China and the United States have kicked off a tit-for-tat exchange of trade tariffs, with the US introducing a 25 percent tariff on \$38 billion worth of Chinese goods to take effect from July 6.</p> <p>Over the weekend, Beijing hit back with tariffs on the same dollar amount of American goods.</p> <p>In April, the Trump administration outlined around 1,300 products worth \$50 billion that would be hit with the proposed tariff. On Friday, that list had been reduced to 1,102 items of the same value, with 818 items worth \$34 billion set to be hit with tariffs from July, and the \$16 billion remainder to undergo further review and a public hearing on July 24 before a final determination is made.</p> <p>"We must take strong defensive actions to protect America's leadership in technology and innovation against the unprecedented threat posed by China's theft of our intellectual property, the forced transfer of American technology, and its cyber attacks on our computer networks," said United States Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer.</p> <p>"China's government is aggressively working to undermine America's high-tech industries and our economic leadership through unfair trade practices and industrial policies like 'Made in China 2025'. Technology and innovation are America's greatest economic assets, and President Trump rightfully recognises that if we want our country to have a prosperous future, we must take a stand now to uphold fair trade and protect American competitiveness."</p> <p>For its part, China said it "doesn't want a trade war" but has to "fight back strongly", a Commerce Ministry statement said on Saturday.</p> <p>In a statement on Friday, US President Donald Trump promised further action if Beijing hit back.</p> <p>"The United States will pursue additional tariffs if China engages in retaliatory measures, such as imposing new tariffs on United States goods, services, or agricultural products; raising non-tariff barriers; or taking punitive actions against American exporters or American companies operating in China," Trump said.</p> <p>Australian Trade Minister Steve Ciobo said the trade war between China and the United States will hurt global growth and job creation.</p> <p>"None of this is good for global trade. These moves will provide a further drag on global growth, and that's a net negative," Ciobo told reporters in Sydney on Saturday.</p> <p>Ciobo said it is too early to say how the tariffs would affect Australia.</p> <p>"As we see these tariffs go up on both sides -- China-USA , Canada-USA, Mexico-USA, Europe-USA -- these are drags on global growth, they're drags on opportunities to create employment," he said.</p>

	<p>The trade minister said a third of Australia's GDP growth had come from new export markets opened up in China, Japan, Korea, and Singapore thanks to free trade deals.</p> <p>Washington began the process of installing tariffs on certain Chinese imports in March.</p> <p>"We have a trade deficit, depending on the way you calculate, of \$504 billion, now some people would say it is really \$375 billion," Trump said at the time. "Many different ways of looking at it, but any way you look at it, it is the largest deficit of any country in the history of our world -- it's out of control.</p> <p>"We are doing things for this country that should have been done for many, many years -- we've had this abuse by many other countries and groups of countries that were put together in order to take advantage of the United States, and we don't want that to happen, we're not going to let that happen."</p> <p>After Washington slapped a seven-year ban on Chinese telecommunications equipment giant ZTE in May, Trump reversed course and the US has now reached a deal with ZTE that will see it pay a \$1 billion fine and change its board.</p> <p>White House trade adviser Peter Navarro said last week the deal was a personal favour to the Chinese president, and said if the company fell foul of the US one more time, it would be shut down.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/18 US port infrastructure limits oil sector
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Energy-News/2018/06/18/US-oil-sector-limited-by-port-infrastructure/5821529317457/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_eng&utm_medium=22
GIST	<p>June 18 (UPI) -- Without improvements to port facilities, the U.S. crude oil market could find itself increasingly landlocked, a market analyst said.</p> <p>The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries in their monthly market report, published last week, said non-OPEC supply in the second half of the year is expected to increase by 2 million barrels per day over last year. Of that, the United States is the main contributor to growth, with an estimated 1.4 million barrels per day.</p> <p>The United States is now an oil exporter, though infrastructure necessary to move the oil to the market can't keep up with production trends. A report from consultant group IHS Markit found it was the lack of infrastructure, not the lack of spending on exploration and production, that presented a growth challenge for the U.S. energy sector.</p> <p>Last week, officials at the Port of Corpus Christi said they secured nearly \$23 million from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to help deepen and widen the waterway. More funding is expected for a project slated for completion by the early part of the next decade.</p> <p>Sandy Fielden, the director for oil and products research at Morningstar, told UPI that new pipelines from inland shale basins will increase the flow of crude oil to the port by more than 1.5 million bpd by the second half of next year.</p> <p>"Without the channel improvements the Port of Corpus Christi seeks, the next congestion point will invariably be export docks at Corpus," he said during the weekend.</p> <p>A report from the U.S. Energy Information Administration found export levels are increasing even though terminals on the southern U.S. coast can't load the largest types of carriers. Those vessels, dubbed Very Large Crude Carriers, are the most economic for crude oil transportation.</p> <p>"The inability to fully load larger and more cost-effective vessels has pricing implications for U.S. crude oil exports," the EIA's report read. "Using a number of smaller ships requires a wider price spread between</p>

	<p>U.S. crude oil and international crude oil prices to compensate for the lower economies of scale."</p> <p>The spread is the difference in price between West Texas Intermediate, the U.S. benchmark, and Brent, the global benchmark. The spread as of Monday morning was \$9.48 per barrel with the premium for Brent.</p> <p>Most ports on the Gulf of Mexico can only accommodate vessels with a capacity of 500,000 barrels. Larger classes can carry twice that amount.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/18 EU extends sanctions on Russia
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/06/18/eu-extends-sanctions-against-russia-for-year-over-crimea.html
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS – The European Union has extended sanctions against Russia for a year over its annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014.</p> <p>The EU said in a statement on Monday that it "remains firmly committed to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity" and said that it continued to "condemn this violation of international law."</p> <p>The sanctions are now set to run until June 23, 2019, and apply to EU citizens and companies. They ban the import of products from Crimea and Sevastopol, halt any European investment or real estate purchases there and stop cruise ships from stopping there.</p> <p>The measures also ban the export of some goods and technologies that could be used for transport, telecommunications or in the energy sector — particularly oil, gas or mineral exploration.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/18 Japan protests SKorea military drills
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/18/asia/south-korean-military-drills-disputed-islands-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)South Korea has angered Japan by staging military drills near a contested island chain, even as it discusses scaling back joint "war games" with the US to de-escalate tensions with North Korea.</p> <p>The South Korean military dispatched six warships, including the 3,200-ton destroyer Yangmanchun, and aircraft including F-15K fighter jets and Black Hawk helicopters to practice the defense of what South Korea calls the Dokdo Islands in waters east of the Korean Peninsula.</p> <p>The islands are also claimed by Japan, where they are known as the Takeshima.</p> <p>The South Korean drills, which it usually conducts twice a year, are expected to last two days.</p> <p>Japan's Foreign Ministry on Sunday called on South Korea to stop the exercises.</p> <p>"From Japan's position on territorial right of Takeshima, we can't accept this case at all and it is extremely regrettable," a ministry statement said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Texas BP facility houses children
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/inside-united-states-border-patrol-facility-mcallen-texas-tour-today-2018-06-17/
GIST	<p>McALLEN, Texas -- Inside an old warehouse in South Texas, hundreds of children wait in a series of cages created by metal fencing. One cage had 20 children inside. Scattered about are bottles of water, bags</p>

of chips and large foil sheets intended to serve as blankets.

One teenager told an advocate who visited that she was helping care for a young child she didn't know because the child's aunt was somewhere else in the facility. She said she had to show others in her cell how to change the girl's diaper.

The U.S. Border Patrol on Sunday allowed reporters, including CBS News correspondent David Begnaud, to briefly visit the 55,000-square foot facility.

Begnaud said the facility "felt very sterile" and there were "chain-link fences from the floor to the ceiling with netting at the very top." He said that detentions in the facility lasted between 12 to 36 hours.

The facility holds families arrested at the southern U.S. border, sparking new criticism and protests over the Trump administration's "zero tolerance" policy and resulting separation of families.

More than 1,100 people were inside the large, dark facility that's divided into separate wings for unaccompanied children, adults on their own, and mothers and fathers with children. The cages in each wing open out into common areas to use portable restrooms. The overhead lighting in the warehouse stays on around the clock.

The Border Patrol said close to 200 people inside the facility were minors unaccompanied by a parent. Another 500 were "family units," parents and children. Many adults who crossed the border without legal permission could be charged with illegal entry and placed in jail, away from their children.

Reporters were not allowed by agents to interview any of the detainees or take photos. Begnaud pointed out that there were people in the facility wrapped in foil blankets.

Begnaud took copious notes during the tour of the facility and said that he didn't see anyone crying or yelling and there were little bits of entertainment available (including a couple TV screens). He noted that there were people with snacks.

Nearly 2,000 children have been taken from their parents since Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced the policy, which directs Homeland Security officials to refer all cases of illegal entry into the United States for prosecution. Church groups and human rights advocates have sharply criticized the policy, calling it inhumane.

Stories have spread of children being torn from their parents' arms, and parents not being able to find where their kids have gone. A group of congressional lawmakers visited the same facility Sunday and were set to visit a longer-term shelter holding around 1,500 children -- many of whom were separated from their parents.

"Those kids inside who have been separated from their parents are already being traumatized," said Democratic Sen. Jeff Merkley of Oregon, who was denied entry earlier this month to children's shelter. "It doesn't matter whether the floor is swept and the bedsheets tucked in tight."

In Texas' Rio Grande Valley, the busiest corridor for people trying to enter the U.S., Border Patrol officials argue that they have to crack down on migrants and separate adults from children as a deterrent to others.

"When you exempt a group of people from the law ... that creates a draw," said Manuel Padilla, the Border Patrol's chief agent here. "That creates the trends right here."

Agents running the holding facility -- generally known as "Ursula" for the name of the street it's on -- said everyone detained is given adequate food, access to showers and laundered clothes, and medical care. People are supposed to move through the facility quickly. Under U.S. law, children are required to be turned over within three days to shelters funded by the Department of Health and Human Services.

Padilla said agents in the Rio Grande Valley have allowed families with children under the age of 5 to stay together in most cases.

An advocate who spent several hours in the facility Friday said she was deeply troubled by what she found.

Michelle Brane, director of migrant rights at the Women's Refugee Commission, met with a 16-year-old girl who had been taking care of a young girl for three days. The teen and others in their cage thought the girl was 2 years old.

"She had to teach other kids in the cell to change her diaper," Brane said.

Brane said that after an attorney started to ask questions, agents found the girl's aunt and reunited the two. It turned out that the girl was actually 4 years old. Part of the problem was that she didn't speak Spanish, but K'iche, a language indigenous to Guatemala.

"She was so traumatized that she wasn't talking," Brane said. "She was just curled up in a little ball."

Brane said she also saw officials at the facility scold a group of 5-year-olds for playing around in their cage, telling them to settle down. There are no toys or books.

Dr. Colleen Kraft, the head of the American Academy of Pediatrics, said that she visited a small shelter in Texas recently, which she declined to identify. A toddler inside the 60-bed facility caught her eye -- she was crying uncontrollably and pounding her little fists on mat.

Staff members tried to console the child, who looked to be about 2 years old, Kraft said. She had been taken from her mother the night before and brought to the shelter.

The staff gave her books and toys -- but they weren't allowed to pick her up, to hold her or hug her to try to calm her. As a rule, staff aren't allowed to touch the children there, she said.

"The stress is overwhelming," she said. "The focus needs to be on the welfare of these children, absent of politics."

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HEADLINE	06/17 China's Pacific push worries US
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2018-06-17/china-s-pacific-islands-push-has-the-u-s-worried
GIST	<p>In the gritty, steamy streets of Papua New Guinea's capital Port Moresby, signs of China's push into the Pacific island nation are inescapable.</p> <p>A Chinese worker stencils a logo for China Railway Group outside the new national courthouse it's building; China Harbor Engineering Group laborers tar roads under the searing midday sun.</p> <p>"Little by little they are taking slices of our businesses," said Martyn Namorong, who campaigns to protect local jobs and communities as China ramps up infrastructure spending in the resource-rich nation, often bringing its own workforce. "My people feel we can't compete."</p> <p>The nation of 8 million people is the latest frontier in Beijing's bid for global influence that's included building artificial reefs in the South China Sea, a military base in Africa and an ambitious trade-and-infrastructure plan spanning three continents.</p> <p>China's thrust into the Pacific islands region, a collection of more than a dozen tiny nations including Fiji, Niue and Timor Leste scattered across thousands of miles of ocean, has the U.S. and its close ally</p>

Australia worried. The region played a key role in World War II and remains strategically important as Western powers seek to maintain open sea lines and stability. For Beijing, it offers raw materials, from gas to timber, and a clutch of countries who could voice support for its territorial claims.

“We’ve seen a huge surge in China’s state-directed economic investment and mobilization of an enormous amount of capital in the Pacific which clearly has a strategic intent,” said Eric B. Brown, a senior fellow in Asian affairs at Washington-based think tank the Hudson Institute.

“The sovereignty of these nations could be compromised by these predatory economic methods. And that could create a military threat to countries such as Australia and effect the ability of the U.S. Navy and its allies to maintain freedom and order in the Pacific.”

Debt Trap

China’s lending practices related to the Belt and Road Initiative have raised concerns among the International Monetary Fund and the Trump administration that poorer countries wouldn’t be able to repay heavy debts. Sri Lanka is considered an example of what could go wrong for developing nations: China received a 99-year lease for a strategic port after the government in Colombo couldn’t repay loans.

Indeed China has overtaken Japan as Papua New Guinea’s largest bilateral creditor and by the end of the year PNG will owe it about \$1.9 billion in concessional loans — almost a quarter of its total debt burden. Standard & Poor’s in April lowered the nation’s sovereign credit rating to B from B+, citing rising costs of servicing debt that’s climbed above 30 percent of gross domestic product and is expected to reach about 40 percent by 2021.

The IMF warns that other recipients of Chinese money in the region — tiny nations such as Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu — have moderate to high risks of debt distress.

While the largess flowing into the Pacific from Beijing is a fraction of the \$350 billion of Chinese aid distributed globally since 2000, it’s still big money for the nations, most with populations under 1 million. In April, the French Polynesian government approved construction of a \$320 million Chinese fish farm.

Military Presence

Hugh White, a professor of strategic studies at the Australian National University in Canberra, says “there’s no doubt” China could seek to establish a military presence in the Pacific in the future, cashing in its influence with “one of these small, vulnerable states.”

“It intends to become the primary power in east Asia and the western Pacific,” White said.

Governments in the region have sought to strike a balance between accepting China’s cash and resisting moves that would raise concern among Western military powers. Vanuatu in April denied media reports that China had approached it to build a permanent military base in one of its harbors.

The office of PNG’s Prime Minister Peter O’Neill, who’s due to meet President Xi Jinping in China later this week, didn’t reply to repeated requests for comment. When O’Neill visited Beijing in 2016, he pledged support for China’s military build up in the South China Sea. In December, a month after China promised to construct \$3.5 billion of roads, O’Neill said PNG will continue to be a “staunch partner.”

Beijing’s push into the Pacific islands risks further straining ties with key trading partner Australia — which views the region as its own diplomatic backyard and has been increasingly critical of China’s economic and military muscle-flexing.

During a visit to the region this month, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said “we want to continue to be the partner of choice for nations in the Pacific.” Her government on June 13 signed an agreement to build a new undersea telecommunications cable to the Solomon Islands, squeezing out a bid by China’s Huawei Technologies Ltd.

Papua New Guinea has traditionally looked to Australia — from which it won independence in 1975 — for a helping hand. Outside of the capital, the nation’s woeful roads network has helped push prices of food staples beyond what many can afford. It’s also struggling with an illiteracy rate of 35 percent, poor tax collection and endemic corruption.

Australia is still its largest donor, contributing more than three-quarters of total aid and loans compared to China’s 14 percent. Yet the majority is directed to improving corporate governance, while Beijing has focused on infrastructure and major works.

‘Red Carpet’

Nursing a cool drink at a sports club in Port Moresby, British-born business adviser Paul Barker said China was stepping into a vacuum left by the west.

“The government in Beijing has rolled out the red carpet and our leaders seem to be a bit intoxicated by the experience,” said Barker, who’s lived in his adopted nation for more than four decades.

Australia’s assistant trade minister Mark Coulton acknowledged the merits of China’s investment as he sat in one of Port Moresby’s few five-star hotels near the Beijing-gifted convention center where APEC leaders will meet in November.

“You can’t deny your neighbor if someone is looking to build something they really need,” he said. “Our role is to give the PNG government and people the ability” to “handle influxes of foreign aid like those that are now occurring.”

China’s foreign ministry, which didn’t respond to a request for comment, in April said Pacific island nations weren’t in the “sphere of influence of any country” and called on Australia not to interfere.

Wang Dong, an international relations professor at Peking University, dismissed concerns that large concessional loans leave nations vulnerable to “debt-trap diplomacy” and said China’s expanded role in the Pacific is a natural consequence of its growing economic clout.

“It’s scaremongering to think this will lead to any military design or ambition in the Pacific,” Wang said in a phone interview from Beijing. “We will see China increase its presence there and it will keep helping these countries build their infrastructure.”

China is in the region to stay, said Jonathan Pryke of the Lowy Institute, a Sydney-based think tank.

“China has entered the Pacific in a significant way,” said Pryke. “It’s upended the status quo and caused anxiety, because no-one knows what its end-game is.”

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HEADLINE	06/18 Age of climate change begins
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/ap-age-climate-change-begins-55969022
GIST	<p>On June 23, 1988, a top NASA scientist told Congress and the world that global warming had arrived. NASA scientist James Hansen predicted that 1988 would be the world's hottest year on record, thanks to the burning of fossil fuels that released heat-trapping gases.</p> <p>The Associated Press is republishing a version of its report on the testimony to mark the 30th anniversary.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>WASHINGTON (AP) — The "greenhouse effect" global warming of the earth is here, but the current drought and heat wave over much of the United States can't be blamed on it, a scientist told a Senate panel Thursday.</p>

However, similar heat waves and droughts can be expected much more often as a result of future warming, said James E. Hansen, a climatologist at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York City.

Hansen told the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee there is only a 1 percent chance that he is wrong in blaming rising temperatures around the world on the buildup of manmade gases in the atmosphere.

For unknown reasons, the earth has been getting warmer for more than a century, though with cooler intervals. The four warmest years on record have been recorded in the 1980s — and without what Hansen called an improbable cooling for the rest of the year, 1988 will break all records.

Though there has been much speculation by scientists around the world that the warming resulted from the greenhouse effect, Hansen's statement is the most definite yet.

Syukuro Manabe, soil specialist at the Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, said it was more likely that the current drought was the result of natural fluctuations than the greenhouse warming.

"It is an example of the kind of drought that will occur more frequently as the global warming become larger," he said.

Many studies have said global warming could bring drastic changes in weather, including more rainfall at low and high latitudes and more drought in between, with drastic shifts in possible crop patterns.

A major report from the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Program earlier this month concluded that without a major effort to fight warming, global temperatures could increase by 0.54 degrees Fahrenheit per decade until the middle of the next century, and sea levels could rise by a foot.

Tropical temperatures wouldn't change much at all, but in Canada the change could be two or three times as large as the average.

Extreme temperatures would occur more often. Hansen earlier calculated that instead of the typical one day a year with temperatures above 100 degrees Fahrenheit in Washington — it reached 101 on Wednesday — the year 2030 could see 12 days. Dallas would see 78 such days instead of 19.

Gases emitted by modern civilization — notably carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels but also methane, nitrous oxide and the chlorofluorocarbon gases that major nations agreed last year to reduce — trap heat from the earth's surface that normally would be radiated out to space just as the glass over a greenhouse traps the sun's heat inside.

Carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere are 10 percent above 1958 levels and 25 percent above concentrations believed to prevail in 1790, when the industrial revolution brought the first widespread burning of coal in industry to fire the new steam engines.

"If we could magically reduce (annual) emissions (of carbon) by about 3 billion tons, we could stabilize the content of the atmosphere," said George M. Woodwell, director of the Woods Hole Research Center in Massachusetts. "It is well within reach, no question about that."

"The problem ... has the potential for turning the world into a form of chaos not greatly different from that produced by global war," he said.

Sen. Wendell Ford, D-Ky., concerned about his state's coal industry, asked physical chemist William R. Moomaw of the World Resources Institute, a Washington-based policy research organization, if

	<p>technology could not reduce the harmful emissions.</p> <p>"I'm trying to find a way to use a resource we have," Ford said.</p> <p>Moomaw replied, "I would argue the resource we have in most abundance is the potential for using fossil fuels more efficiently at much lower cost than building any form of power generation."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Salmonella outbreak strikes 31 states
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/salmonella-outbreak-31-states-suspected-link-kelloggs-honey/story?id=55918330
GIST	<p>An outbreak of salmonella that has infected 73 people in 31 states has led investigators to a suspected culprit: Certain batches of Kellogg's Honey Smacks cereal.</p> <p>The Kellogg Co. has recalled packages of the cereal that are either 15.3 ounces and 23 ounces in size and have a "best if used by" date -- printed on the top of the box -- between June 14, 2018, to June 14, 2019.</p> <p>The CDC is urging people to throw away or return Honey Smacks cereals that fall under the recall.</p> <p>"Even if some of the cereal was eaten and no one got sick, throw the rest of it away or return it for a refund," the CDC said. "If you store cereal in a container without the packaging and don't remember the brand or type, throw it away."</p> <p>"This is based on preliminary evidence linking the cereal to an outbreak of illnesses across the country, said Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Scott Gottlieb in an agency brief. "The FDA has already initiated an inspection of the facility that we believe is linked to the salmonella contamination. And we've worked with the company to immediately initiate a recall of this product."</p> <p>"The main message is the consumer health risk, that this cereal may be infected with salmonella," Gottlieb said.</p> <p>Of the 73 people known to have been infected in this salmonella outbreak, at least 24 have been hospitalized, said the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). No deaths have been reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Libya: attack damaged key ports
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/libyas-noc-oil-storage-damaged-attack-key-ports-55959671?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Libya's National Oil Corporation says an armed group opposed to Libya's self-styled national army has attacked key oil port terminals "significantly" damaging at least one storage tank.</p> <p>Saturday's statement by the company called on the group commanded by Ibrahim Jadhran to withdraw to prevent an "environmental disaster" and further damage to infrastructure.</p> <p>NOC says the oil ports of Ras Lanuf and Es Sidr have been under attack since Thursday forcing it to announce a "force majeure" on crude oil loadings and evacuate its employees from the areas.</p> <p>Jadhran's group had previously controlled the ports at Libya's oil crescent and blockaded them, costing oil-rich Libya billions of dollars, before losing them to national army forces in 2016.</p> <p>Libya has descended into chaos following a 2011 uprising that toppled a longtime ruler.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Sea convoy reaches Spain amid turmoil
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/1st-boat-aquarius-convoy-630-migrants-docks-spain-55952736?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>An aid group's ship and two Italian military vessels docked Sunday at the Spanish port of Valencia, ending a weeklong ordeal for hundreds of people who were rescued from the Mediterranean Sea only to become pawns in a European political fight.</p> <p>The Italian coast guard vessel Dattilo was the first of the boats in the convoy bearing 630 migrants to touch land, pulling in just before 7 a.m. The 274 rescued people on board disembarked after medical staff made a preliminary inspection.</p> <p>The rescue ship Aquarius came in four hours later carrying another 106 migrants. Aid workers awaiting their arrival clapped and cheered as the first passengers walked down the gangway. An Italian navy ship, the Orione, came in shortly after 1 p.m. with the remaining 250.</p> <p>The Aquarius, operated by the aid groups SOS Mediterranean Sea and Doctors Without Borders, was stuck off the coast of Sicily on June 9 when Italy's new populist government refused it permission to dock and demanded that Malta do so. Malta also refused.</p> <p>After days of bickering and food and water running low on the ship, Spain stepped in and granted the rescue boat entry with a plan called "Operation Mediterranean Hope." The 1,500-kilometer (930-mile) journey across the Mediterranean from Sicily to Valencia took nearly a week.</p> <p>After Spain invited the Aquarius to land, Italy sent the Dattilo and Orione to help transport the migrants.</p> <p>David Noguera, the head of Doctors Without Borders in Spain, said he was glad Spain welcomed the ship's passengers, who were picked up off the coast of Libya. He said he is worried that more European nations will close their ports to migrants who are rescued at sea.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/18 Israel strikes burning kite launchers
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/israel-strikes-hamas-targets-bid-deter-burning-kites-55967918?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The Israeli military says it struck nine Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip in a bid to deter Palestinians from launching incendiary kites and balloons into Israel.</p> <p>The army says the Monday's airstrikes were a response "to arson and explosive kites and balloons" launched into Israel in recent weeks. During the bombings, Palestinian militants fired three rockets into southern Israel. No injuries were reported on either side.</p> <p>Gazans began flying kites with burning rags attached to them during mass protests against the Israeli and Egyptian blockade of the territory. Israeli troops have fired on the protesters, killing more than 120 Palestinians since the weekly demonstrations began on March 30.</p> <p>The incendiary kites and balloons have devastated large swaths of farmland and nature reserves in southern Israel.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/18 Strong quake near Osaka, Japan kills 3
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SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/strong-earthquake-hits-osaka-western-japan-55965693?cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>A strong earthquake knocked over walls and set off scattered fires around metropolitan Osaka in western Japan on Monday, killing at least three people and injuring more than 210.</p> <p>A 9-year-old girl was killed by a falling concrete wall at her school, and the two other fatalities were men in their 80s.</p> <p>The Fire and Disaster Management Agency said 214 people were treated for injuries at hospitals. Most of the injured were in Osaka — Japan's No. 2 city bustling with businesses. Osaka officials did not give details, but the injuries reported in Kyoto and three other neighboring prefectures were all minor.</p> <p>The Osaka prefectural government's disaster management department confirmed the girl's death and the death of an older man. The third victim died in the nearby city of Ibaraki.</p> <p>A falling concrete wall knocked down Rina Miyake as she walked by at her elementary school in Takatsuki. NHK public television aired footage showing the collapsed upper half of the high wall, which was cheerfully painted with trees, flowers and blue sky and surrounded the school swimming pool.</p> <p>Takatsuki Mayor Takeshi Hamada apologized over her death because of the wall's collapse. The structure was old and made of concrete blocks — a known risk in earthquakes.</p> <p>A man in his 80s died in the collapse of a concrete wall in Osaka city. An 84-year-old man in nearby Ibaraki died after a bookshelf fell on top of him at home, according to city officials. Many homes and buildings, including a major hospital, were temporarily without power, though electricity was restored at most places by midafternoon.</p> <p>The magnitude 6.1 earthquake struck shortly after 8 a.m. north of Osaka at a depth of about 13 kilometers (8 miles), the Japan Meteorological Agency said. The strongest shaking was north of Osaka, but the quake rattled large parts of western Japan, including Kyoto, the agency said.</p> <p>The quake knocked over walls, broke windows and set off scattered building fires. It toppled book shelves in homes and scattered goods on shop floors. It also cracked roads and broke water pipes, leaving homes without water.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/18 Train derailment prompts evacuations
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/train-derailment-explosion-prompts-evacuations/story?id=55967198
GIST	<p>A freight train derailment in Indiana on Sunday caused a loud explosion and calls for mandatory evacuations in the area.</p> <p>The Gibson County Sheriff's Office and emergency service personnel issued a mandatory resident evacuation within a one mile radius in Princeton, Indiana, on Sunday evening following the train derailment and explosion.</p> <p>According to the Gibson County Sheriff, at approximately 7:19 p.m. local time Gibson County Central Dispatch received numerous 911 calls regarding a train derailment and explosion in the area of Old US 41 and Caniff Trailer Court.</p> <p>No one was injured in the derailment, but a large fire sent thick, black smoke high into the sky.</p> <p>Emergency responders conducted door-to-door evacuation announcements.</p> <p>CSX Corporation, which operated the train, said the train had two locomotives, 89 loaded railcars and nine</p>

	<p>empty railcars. The loaded cars were carrying propane, CSX said.</p> <p>"CSX is working closely with local firefighters and other first responders to assess the situation, and the safety of the community and everyone on site is our top priority as we develop a recovery plan," CSX said in a statement.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Seattle official sponsor Special Olympics
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/city-of-seattle-now-an-official-sponsor-of-2018-special-olympics/771750243
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - The City of Seattle is now an official sponsor of the 2018 Special Olympics coming to town in July. The event will flood the city with tens of thousands of people over six days.</p> <p>Initially, the council planned to pass an ordinance Monday that would have waived all the fees associated with the event, as long as the Special Olympics meets its permit requirements. It would have saved the event some money, but the council tweaked its approach at the last minute. Instead, Councilmember Rob Johnson offered a resolution, which passed unanimously. Seattle is giving the Special Olympics \$30,000 as an official sponsor of the event.</p> <p>It's a decent investment given that the estimated economic impact to Seattle is \$50 million.</p> <p>A total of \$15,000 will come from the council and another \$15,000 will come from the mayor's office. The money is being pulled from the legislative departments consulting and agenda budget. The resolution also directs city departments to submit reports to the council by Aug. 10, 2018, detailing fees and costs, staff time, and any waived fees.</p> <p>The organization is the largest in the world dedicated to sporting events for people with intellectual disabilities. The 2018 Special Olympics USA Games will come to Seattle July 1-6, and will bring about 3,500 athletes with it. Not to mention support, family, audiences, and others associated with the games.</p> <p>The Special Olympics organization says that this will add up to "1,000 coaches, 10,000 family members, 10,000 volunteers and an estimated 50,000 spectators" taking part in the "premier national sports competition, showcasing the power and joy of sports at the highest levels."</p> <p>The city will host 16 Olympic-type individual and team sports. There are also special events planned.</p> <p>The opening ceremony will be at Husky Stadium and boasts Grammy nominated singer Charlie Puth, DJ Marshmello, and actor Taye Diggs. Also attending are Seattle hip-hop artists Massive Monkees, Heart's Ann Wilson, and singer-songwriter Allen Stone. Governor Jay Inslee and Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella will make an appearance. And Microsoft President Brad Smith will be the Honorary Chairman of the event.</p> <p>The games are expected to take over venues at the University of Washington, Seattle University, Seattle Pacific University, Seattle Center, Westlake Park, Safeco Field, and Lake Union Park.</p> <p>The organization says that the 2018 event will be the most "significant sporting event to come to Seattle since the 1990 Goodwill Games."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Seattle 'families belong together' rally
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/families-belong-together-rally-held-in-seattle/281-565123329

GIST	<p>Rallies were held across the country Sunday to protest the border separation of children from their parents. A group called "Families Belong Together" held a rally in Seattle's Westlake Park on Father's Day.</p> <p>"Congress has the power to stop tearing families apart because all families belong together," says the group.</p> <p>The Department of Homeland Security reported this week that 1,995 children have been separated from their parents in the last six weeks as the department enforces its zero-tolerance immigration policy.</p> <p>The Department of Homeland Security reported this week that 1,995 children have been separated from their parents in the last six weeks, in what the department has called a zero-tolerance immigration policy.</p> <p>The rally's main speaker railing against the policy was Rep. Pramila Jayapal.</p> <p>"On Father's Day, we all want to be with our families. Parents should be with their children," she said. "This is an administrative policy that can be immediately reversed. No legislation necessary. Americans across this country need to let the president know that this is wrong, this is not us, and we won't accept it."</p> <p>Seattle's rally started at noon Sunday. It was organized by the NW Immigrants Right Project, CAIR Washington, ACLU Washington and the group behind Womxn's March Seattle.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Seattle could hit 90's during week?
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/weather/blog/seattle-could-soar-into-the-90s-this-week/281-563306518
GIST	<p>A large area of high pressure pushed highs up into the upper 70s and low 80s on Father's Day – the warmest it has been since May 23. But this may only be the start.</p> <p>The long-range models keep a large, warm ridge of high pressure over the west coast through most of this week. This should push us well into the 80s and may give us some 90s on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, which is the official start of summer. This will depend on offshore flow, etc. As always, the devil is in the details!</p> <p>If there is cooling later in the week, it will be gradual, according the meteorologist Rich Marriott. It should stay warm though the following weekend.</p> <p>The record for most 90-degree days in a summer is 12 days, which was set in 2015. Ten of those days happened in July.</p> <p>The warm weather is in line with NOAA's Climate Prediction Center that calls for a June with above normal temperatures and below normal rainfall for Washington state. In the Pacific Northwest, average summer temperatures trend around 70 degrees for June, 75 degrees for July, and 76 degrees for August. Average rainfall for June is 1.57 inches, July is 0.77 inches, and August is 0.88 inches.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	06/18 Trust in social media falls
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/trust-in-social-media-fallsraising-concerns-for-marketers-1529312580?mod=hp_lista_pos4
GIST	Russia's alleged interference in the U.S. elections, the spread of fake news on social media and the recent

Facebook data scandal are all contributing to the distrust that people world-wide have developed for social media, according to a new study being released Monday.

Edelman, the world's largest independent public-relations firm, was prompted to field new research to figure out why people's trust in social-media platforms was declining.

The firm's annual Trust Barometer study in November had found only 41% of the people around the world trusted social media as a source for general news and information, down from 47% in 2015. The fallout in the U.S. was more pronounced with only 30% trusting the platforms, down from 35% in 2015.

Almost 70% of the study participants pointed to identity scams, cyberbullying, hate speech and fake news among the reasons for their low confidence in social-media sites.

The new study, which polled 9,000 people in nine countries, also found that 60% of people don't trust social-media platforms to manage the information they collect about consumers responsibly—a fallout likely attributable to the Cambridge Analytica scandal. The U.K.-based data firm allegedly obtained data improperly on tens of millions of Facebook users.

In recent years, advertisers have come to rely heavily on social-media sites such as Facebook to help them reach their customers to sell their goods and services. Privacy concerns and the lack of trust could have implications for brands if consumers' trust falls so low that people pull back on sharing or using social-media sites.

So far, the crises haven't dented Facebook's ability to attract new users or ad dollars. Its first-quarter revenue rose nearly 50% from a year earlier to \$11.97 billion. Moreover, advertisers are expected to increase their spending on social-media ads in the U.S. by 17% this year to \$25.24 billion, according to eMarketer.

Still, consumers want the issues fixed. "People want the platforms to change," and it is in the best interest of "brands to demand that change," says Richard Edelman, chief executive of Edelman.

Many of the people polled said brands—the companies that support social-media platforms with their ad dollars—should use their influence and pocketbooks to force change, the research says.

About 70% said brands should pressure social networks to do more to combat fake news, while 71% agreed brands should also play that role in ensuring personal data is protected and used ethically.

People "are looking to brands to incentivize and compel social-media companies to change," Mr. Edelman says. He points to how the video giant YouTube made changes to its service after major brands such as Procter & Gamble Co. , PepsiCo Inc. and HP Inc. boycotted the site after ads appeared adjacent to inappropriate content. YouTube is part of Alphabet GOOGL -0.07% -owned Google.

In February, Unilever PLC, one of the world's largest advertisers, threatened to pull back on advertising on YouTube and Facebook if the companies didn't do more to combat the spread of fake news and divisive content.

With regard to government intervention, 62% of those polled agreed that governments should do more to regulate social media. People in the U.K., China and India were among the most supportive. Some 73% of Indians agreed government should do more, compared with 71% of Chinese and 68% of Britons. In the U.S., 48% of respondents agreed.

The Cambridge Analytica scandal has only added to growing scrutiny of technology companies by regulators around the world. Many regulators are looking to Europe for direction on how to pressure firms over their privacy policies, market power and other issues. In Europe, sweeping new privacy laws known as the General Data Protection Regulation came into effect in late May.

The issues currently facing social-media platforms—in particular, consumers' growing concern with the

use of their data—pose a worrisome trend for digital marketers and for the platforms themselves. Digital marketing rests largely on marketers’ ability to harness consumer data to better target and craft relevant ads. Marketers, tech companies and ad agencies have long touted that consumers are willing to surrender some of their personal information so they can be served more personalized ads.

However, the Edelman study suggests that consumers may no longer be amenable to such a trade-off. The problems “are now calling into question the things marketers have taken for granted,” Mr. Edelman says. “In a sense we are going backwards because of the perceived violation of people’s rights.”

Almost half of those polled said they were not willing to sacrifice some of their data privacy in return for a more personalized shopping experience, though younger people were less opposed: About 41% of people 18 to 34 years of age were willing to fork over some data for more personalized pitches.

Some people also expressed concern with some of the marketing practices that have become a standard part of the digital-ad ecosystem. For example, 47% said it wasn’t OK for companies to use cookies, the tiny pieces of code that marketers deploy on web browsers to track people’s online movements, to remember them and what they like. More than half of the people polled weren’t OK with companies learning their interests by tracking websites they visit. And more than half also weren’t eager to have companies use location information from a person’s mobile phone to offer discounts at businesses nearby.

With consumers now questioning how their personal information is being used, brands must be “more transparent with what data they are collecting and how it’s being used,” says Mr. Edelman. “People don’t want some little box on the bottom of their screen that gives away their rights on data privacy.”

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HEADLINE	06/15 DHS: Typeframe new NKorea malware
SOURCE	https://www.engadget.com/2018/06/15/dhs-north-korea-malware-typeframe/
GIST	<p>Even though Donald Trump is on good terms with North Korea, the Department of Homeland Security is still following that country's ongoing cyberattack campaign (which it's dubbed "Hidden Cobra"). Now CNN reports there's a new variant of North Korean malware to look out for: Typeframe.</p> <p>In a report released yesterday, the DHS says it's able to download and install additional malware, proxies and trojans; modify firewalls; and connect to servers for additional instructions. These are attacks we've seen in plenty of malware variants, Typeframe is just the latest addition.</p> <p>Since last May, the DHS has issued a slew of alerts and reports about North Korea's malicious cyber activity. The department also pointed out that North Korea has been hacking countries around the world since 2009. And of course, don't forget that the US also labeled that country as the source of Wannacry cyberattack, which notably held data from the UK's National Health Service hostage, and wreaked havoc across Russia and Ukraine.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 China cyberattacks on Taiwan rising
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-china-cybersecurity/chinese-cyber-attacks-on-taiwan-government-becoming-harder-to-detect-source-idUSKBN1JB17L
GIST	<p>TAIPEI (Reuters) - Cyber attacks from China on Taiwan’s government computers are becoming more difficult to detect, a source close to government discussions said, as hackers increasingly use online platforms such as search engines to break into systems.</p> <p>While the frequency of attacks by China’s cyber army has declined, the success rate of such incursions is rising, the source said.</p>

“Taiwan’s official departments suffer from hundreds of successful internet attacks each year, more than half of which come from assaults by China’s cyber army,” the person, who is not authorized to speak to the media and declined to be identified, told Reuters.

China has strongly denied accusations of engaging in cyber warfare or hacking, and has said it is itself one of the world’s biggest victims of such incidents.

Both China’s Taiwan Affairs Office and the Cyberspace Administration of China did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The alleged cyber attacks come as Beijing increases diplomatic and economic pressure on the self-ruled island, which China claims as its own and considers a wayward province.

The source said hackers are adopting new techniques to conceal their activities.

“They frequently go through online platforms like Google and blogs, to hide themselves and give investigators the impression it is a normal platform or tool, and thus to ignore its background actions,” the person said.

Taiwan’s governmental departments face “frequent cyber attacks and scanning of their vulnerabilities, with the attack volume reaching 10 million a month,” the source said.

The majority of attacks targeted non-core service systems, were low-level in nature, and included activities such as changing websites and tampering with information. However, there have also been more serious attacks on core systems.

The source also said the Taiwan government had evidence that some of the attacks had targeted departments and their websites by intruding into servers and stealing account passwords.

Taiwan’s foreign offices abroad have also been targeted through methods such as taking screen snapshots, keylogging, and unpacking related information, the source said.

Many of the attacks were now routed through other countries, making it increasingly difficult to trace.

Since Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen of the left-leaning Democratic Progressive Party took office in 2016, China’s hostility to the island has increased.

China fears Tsai wants to push for formal independence, although she says she wants to maintain the status quo and is committed to peace.

Analysts expect the cyber attacks will continue to form a headache for the Taiwan government.

“Taiwan has very good cyber defense and investigation skills and capacity. However, under such a huge amount of attacks and the special relationship across the Strait, it is really hard to prevent 100 percent,” said Lennon Chang, a senior lecturer in criminology at Monash University in Melbourne.

Taiwan is expected to release its information security and national security strategy later this year.

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HEADLINE	06/16 UK: watchdog oversees intel warrants
SOURCE	http://www.itv.com/news/2018-06-16/seismic-shift-as-new-watchdog-starts-overseeing-intelligence-warrants/
GIST	Britain’s spy agencies will need a judge to sign off requests to hack into suspects’ electronic devices or listen to their phone calls under a strengthened authorization regime that will take effect within days.

The head of a watchdog set up to scrutinize the activities of MI5, MI6, GCHQ and law enforcement agencies told the Press Association the new approach represents a “seismic change”.

In his first interview since being appointed Investigatory Powers Commissioner last year, Lord Justice Sir Adrian Fulford confirmed that his office would begin receiving warrants relating to the work of the intelligence services this month.

Under the “double lock” system introduced by the Investigatory Powers Act, requests to use the most intrusive techniques require approval from a judicial commissioner as well as a senior Government minister before they can take effect.

The process is being phased in, starting with warrants relating to equipment interference and targeted interception.

Equipment interference is the official term for operations where authorities interfere with electronic devices such as smartphones and PCs to obtain data as part of serious crime or national security investigations.

Agencies seek targeted interception warrants where they wish to access the content of a communication, such as listening to a phone call or reading an email or text message.

Requests to sweep up data in bulk will fall under the new regime from next month.

By the end of this year it is expected that the majority of investigatory powers and the hundreds of public bodies that use them will be subject to the Commissioner’s oversight.

Sir Adrian highlighted the range of activity that now needs judicial approval and the creation of a single oversight body – there were previously three separate watchdogs – as key changes in the IP Act.

“That is a seismic change really in the way this country goes about this kind of work,” he said.

Fifteen senior judges will weigh up warrants, with reserve commissioners on standby in case there is a sudden spike in requests.

Sir Adrian said: “The first warrants will start to come through under the Act this month and we are starting to increase the number of commissioners on duty at any one time to ensure we have got sufficient capacity to turn round the applications extremely quickly.”

The Commissioner’s office has “unfettered” access to agencies’ records to ensure the powers are being used properly.

Sir Adrian said: “All of the indications I’ve had so far are that the security agencies and law enforcement take their responsibilities extremely seriously in this field.”

The commissioner acknowledged that the new approach represents a “very considerable change” for the intelligence services.

“They are undoubtedly very keenly aware that there are going to be some skeptical and probing judges looking at all of the aspects of their work which relate to investigatory powers,” he said.

“I think that has brought about not a change of culture, but it has made them focus in much greater detail than perhaps was the case before as to the justification that could be provided for everything that they do. “We will be going in some real detail into the files and records of all of the bodies that have got investigatory powers to make sure they are not inappropriately hoovering up information.”

	<p>No targets will be set for approvals or rejections of warrants.</p> <p>“It doesn’t matter whether there have been a lot of terrorist outrages or none, the commissioners will look at each application on its own merits, completely unaffected by what may or may not be a period of national emergency”, Sir Adrian said.</p> <p>“There isn’t going to be any tendency either to grant or refuse.”</p> <p>He noted that by the time they reach commissioners’ desks, warrants will have gone through many stages already.</p> <p>“So if there’s a high percentage of warrants being granted, I will not see that in any way as being an indicator that my office is not providing the kind of scrutiny that’s required,” he said.</p> <p>Sir Adrian expressed confidence that provision to sanction the use of powers without prior judicial approval in emergency cases would not be misused, pointing out that warrants could still be revoked later.</p> <p>“In addition, if I thought the provisions were being improperly used, it would not take me very long to raise this at the highest level with the head of whichever agency was responsible and if necessary with the Prime Minister,” he said.</p> <p>“I don’t anticipate that this is going to happen.”</p> <p>Passed in November 2016, the IP Act was drawn up following controversy sparked by Edward Snowden’s revelations about intelligence techniques.</p> <p>Sir Adrian said: “We are now as a country I think in a much better place in terms of there being really full understanding of the extent of and the limits of the opportunities which the security services have to go into areas of our lives which ordinarily we would consider to be private and sacrosanct.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 WHO: gaming addiction is a disorder
SOURCE	https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/06/15/video-game-addicts-can-seek-treatment-nhs-condition-classified/
GIST	<p>Children hooked on addictive video games like Fortnite will be able to seek treatment on the NHS after video gaming is classified as a medical disorder by the World Health Organisation (WHO) next week.</p> <p>The WHO will on Monday notify governments around the world that they will be expected to incorporate “gaming disorder” into their health systems.</p> <p>The move comes amid increasing evidence of young players suffering psychological distress and family breakdown as a result of their addiction.</p> <p><u>This week The Daily Telegraph</u> revealed one 15-year-old gaming addict in London had been hospitalized for eight weeks and off school for a year after losing the confidence to go outside.</p> <p>The disorder will be added to the WHO’s International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11), which means that those diagnosed will be entitled to be treated by the NHS.</p> <p>The guidelines state that for a diagnosis a victim’s behavior must be “of sufficient severity to result in significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning.” They would also normally be expected to have suffered it for at least a year.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/18 PageUp admits some data compromised
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/pageup-confirms-some-data-compromised-in-breach/
GIST	<p>PageUp has confirmed that some data held on its clients may be at risk, after revealing earlier this month it had fallen victim to a malware attack.</p> <p>"Forensic investigations have confirmed that an unauthorised person gained access to PageUp systems," the company wrote at the weekend. "Although the incident has been contained and PageUp is safe to use, we sincerely regret some data may be at risk."</p> <p>The HR firm said that some personal data for employees who currently or previously had access to the client's PageUp instance may be affected.</p> <p>The potentially accessed information includes employee contact details, such as name, email address, street address, and telephone number, as well as employment information, such as employment status, company, and job title.</p> <p>In addition, failed login attempt data from 2007 and before contained a very small amount of password data in clear text, PageUp said, advising employees who have not changed password information since 2007 to do so with urgency.</p> <p>Similarly, data on job applicants may also be at risk.</p> <p>Contact details including name, email address, physical address, and telephone number; biographical details including gender, date of birth, middle name, nationality, and whether the applicant was a local resident at the time of the application; and employment details at the time of the application, including employment status, company, and title, comprise the information potentially breached.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 LuckyMouse hit Asian govt. data center
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/chinese-cyber-espionage-group-hacked-government-data-center/
GIST	<p>A Chinese-linked cyber-espionage unit has hacked a data center belonging to a Central Asian country and has embedded malicious code on government sites.</p> <p>The hack of the data center happened sometime in mid-November 2017, according to a report published by Kaspersky Lab earlier this week.</p> <p>Experts assigned the codename of LuckyMouse to the group behind this hack, but they later realized the attackers were an older Chinese threat actor known under various names in the reports of other cyber-security firms, such as Emissary Panda, APT27, Threat Group 3390, Bronze Union, ZipToken, and Iron Tiger [1, 2, 3, 4, 5].</p> <p>Hackers redirected visitors of government sites to malware</p> <p>Kaspersky researchers say LuckyMouse used access to the data center to add JavaScript code to government sites, which redirected users to malicious sites hosting exploitation tools such as ScanBox and BEeF (Browser Exploitation Framework).</p> <p>On these sites, these tools would attempt to infect users with HyperBro, a remote access trojan that operated via an "in-memory" state, leaving minimal traces on disk that could be identified by antivirus solutions.</p> <p>Researchers say they found evidence of this end-user infection campaign taking place from December</p>

	2017 to January 2018.
	Kaspersky didn't name the Central Asian country, but they did say LuckyMouse targeted it before in previous campaigns.
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HEADLINE	06/15 Hacker breaches Syscoin Github account
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hacker-breaches-syscoin-github-account-and-poisons-official-client/
GIST	<p>A hacker gained access to the GitHub account of the Syscoin cryptocurrency and replaced the official Windows client with a version containing malware.</p> <p>The poisoned Syscoin Windows client contained Arkei Stealer, a malware strain specialized in dumping and stealing passwords and wallet private keys. This malware is also detected as Trojan:Win32/Feury.B!cl.</p> <p>Syscoin developers are now warning Syscoin users who downloaded version 3.0.4.1 of the Syscoin client between June 09th, 2018 10:14 PM UTC and June 13th, 2018 10:23 PM UTC that their systems might be infected with malware.</p> <p>The affected files are (version number included in the file name is 3.0.4, but they install version 3.0.4.1):</p> <p>syscoincore-3.0.4-win32-setup.exe syscoincore-3.0.4-win64-setup.exe</p> <p>Only Syscoin Windows client affected</p> <p>Hackers only tampered with the Windows client and no other files available in the v3.0.4.1 release, which also included Mac and Linux clients, along with the adjacent source code.</p> <p>The Syscoin clients are installed on an operating system and allow users to run a Syscoin node, which they can use to mine new Syscoin cryptocurrency or manage Syscoin funds.</p> <p>The incident came to light yesterday when the Syscoin team received a warning from users that Windows Defender SmartScreen was marking downloads of the Syscoin Windows client as malicious.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Europol busts notorious hacker group
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/europol-dismantles-one-of-the-internets-oldest-hacker-groups/
GIST	<p>Europol, French, UK, and Thai police arrested eight people they suspect to have been involved or to have been part of a notorious hacker group known as Rex Mundi (Latin for "King of the World").</p> <p>The group has been active since at least 2012. Its modus operandi revolved around hacking into companies' networks, stealing private information, and later contacting the victims to request the payment of a ransom fee.</p> <p>Hackers demanded fees for not disclosing the hacks, but sometimes also asked for higher sums of money for revealing the security flaw they used to enter the victim's network.</p> <p>While the date the group formed is unknown, the earliest reports of Rex Mundi hacks go back to the summer of 2012.</p>

In the early 2010s, when hacker groups like Anonymous or LulzSec were a bit more brash about their hacks, Rex Mundi often bragged about their recent victims, announcing hacks on Twitter, and often dumping data when companies didn't pay.

According to a trail of hacks documented on Softpedia's Security News section, past victims included—in chronological order— AmeriCash Advance, Webassur, Drake International, Buy Way, Hoststar, Websolutions.it, Numericable, Habeas, AlfaNet, Domino's Pizza, and Banque Cantonale de Geneve (BCGE).

But as law enforcement started arresting hackers and hacktivists left and right, the group changed its modus operandi and eventually went underground. Rex Mundi abandoned its flashy mode of operation and continued to work in the shadows, without announcing their hacks online, to reporters, or leaking data when companies failed to pay.

The group continued to operate until last year, according to Europol. The hack that undone them was of a British-based firm, whose network they'd breached, stole data from, and later attempted to extort.

Days after this hack, Rex Mundi contacted the company via telephone and requested their usual ransom. According to Europol, a French-speaking person demanded payments in Bitcoin equivalent to €580,000 (\$675,000) for not disclosing the hack and €825,000 (\$960,000) for also revealing how they broke in. For each day the company failed to respond, Rex Mundi would add another €210,000 (\$245,000) on top of the ransom fee.

These sums are far from the initial ransom demands of \$5,000 - \$10,000 the group used to make in the early 2010s.

The British company declined to pay, and instead contacted authorities. Information gathered by UK police led to the arrest of five French nationals a month later, in June 2017.

One of these persons, the leader, admitted his role in the extortion scheme, while also revealing they didn't do any of the hacking but hired hackers on the Dark Web to do this instead.

French police arrested two of these hackers in October 2017, and Thai police arrested a third in May 2018, effectively putting an end to one of the longer lasting hacking groups of this decade.

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HEADLINE	06/16 Expert: trick fooling users w/crapware
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/mobile/android-app-devs-find-clever-trick-for-fooling-users-into-installing-their-crapware/
GIST	<p>An expert in Android security is warning users that some developers of crappy Android apps have come up with a new trick for fooling users into installing their apps.</p> <p>The trick relies on app devs registering Google Play Store developer accounts that mimic install counts, instead of their real name, such as "1 million installs," "Installs 1,000,000," "100,000,000 Downloads," "5,000,000+," "1,000,000,000" and other similar formats.</p> <p>The idea is that the official Google Play Store lists an app entry by displaying the app's icon, name, developer name, and a star rating.</p> <p>By replacing the developer name with a faux install count, some developers are trying to fool users into thinking the app is extremely popular, and hence, somewhat safe to use.</p> <p>But in reality, they are not. According to ESET malware researcher Lukas Stefanko, most of the apps</p>

using this trick that he analyzed were mostly adware. The majority were just empty shells, with little to no functionality except for showing ads on top of other apps or the user's screen.

Furthermore, Stefanko also noticed another similar trick employed by some malicious app developers.

While they didn't use developer accounts with misleading names that contained install counts, some app devs put the fake install counts in the app's icon that shows up in Play Store search results.

This misleading image is intended to work the same way as the fake install counts inserted in the dev's account name and give users a false sense of confidence for apps that are clearly ill-intended.

"The tricks are simple, yet potentially effective, ways to mislead users, particularly those who choose apps based on popularity," Stefanko explains. "While none of these apps were outright malicious, these techniques could easily be misused by malware authors in the future. Fortunately, the tricks are also simple to spot, if you know what to focus on."

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HEADLINE	06/17 Gaming companies remove analytics app
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/gaming/gaming-companies-remove-analytics-app-after-massive-user-outcry/
GIST	<p>Several gaming companies have announced plans to remove support for an analytics app they have bundled with their games.</p> <p>The decision to remove the app came after several Reddit and Steam users noticed that many game publishers have recently embedded a controversial analytics SDK (software development kit) part of recent updates to their games.</p> <p>The program bundled with all these games, and at the heart of all the recent controversy is RedShell, an analytics package provided by Innervate, Inc., to game publishers.</p> <p>Game makers are supposed to embed this SDK within their games and run social marketing programs with specific affiliate IDs. If a new user buys and installs a game via one of these campaigns, the RedShell SDK embedded in the game pings back the publishers about the source of the new install.</p> <p>But in several recent online discussions, users are complaining that besides logging the source of a new game install, the app also creates fingerprints for each gamer, with information about their online personas and gaming rigs.</p> <p>Furthermore, many game studios have not told users that this SDK is now part of their games, or if they did, they made it an opt-out package instead of opt-in, as most privacy laws across the globe dictate.</p> <p>Angry gamers file complaints with game makers</p> <p>For the past two weeks, gamers have been spending their time digging through their games' files looking for the presence of RedShell files and processes, and then filing official complaints with the game publishers via online forums, Reddit, Steam, or official websites.</p> <p>Following this concentrated effort from the online gaming community, many gaming studios have responded to criticism and have removed or pledged to remove RedShell from their products.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Surge port 8000 traffic: Satori botnet
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SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/all-that-port-8000-traffic-this-week-yeah-thats-satori-looking-for-new-bots/
GIST	<p>The mystery of the recent surge in port 8000 scan activity has been solved today by security researchers from Qihoo 360 Netlab, who tracked this week's mystery traffic to an old foe —the Satori IoT botnet.</p> <p>According to researchers, the publication of proof-of-concept (PoC) code on June 8 for a popular web server software package drew the attention of the Satori crew, who integrated that particular exploit into their botnet's attack routine.</p> <p>The PoC code was for a buffer overflow vulnerability (CVE-2018-10088) in XionMai uc-httpd 1.0.0, a lightweight web server package often found embedded inside the firmware of routers and IoT equipment sold by some Chinese vendors.</p> <p>The exploit allows an attacker to send a malformed package via ports 80 or 8000 and execute code on the device, effectively taking it over.</p> <p>Scans for devices that had port 8000 exposed via their WAN interface started a day after the PoC's publication but picked up yesterday, June 14. The sudden surge in port 8000 activity turned the heads of multiple security experts specialized in botnet tracking, as it came out of nowhere and at an incredible scale.</p> <p>According to honeypot data from Qihoo 360 Netlab and SANS ISC, port 8000 scans started to die down today. Unfortunately, it wasn't because Satori was failing to infect devices, but because the botnet's authors added support for a second exploit.</p> <p>This second exploit is also based on PoC code published online, but last month. The PoC is for a vulnerability affecting D-Link DSL-2750B routers, which can be exploited via ports 80 and 8080.</p> <p>Naturally, scan activity targeting these two ports also grew similarly to the one seen on port 8000, and the Satori crew is trying to corral as many routers as it can before other botnets join the fold.</p> <p>After previously targeting GPON routers, and with the addition of these two new exploits, Satori continues to grow with every day. The botnet has already survived a takedown attempt last December, and its authors seem intent on continuing on their current path.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Bitcoin price market manipulation?
SOURCE	https://nakedsecurity.sophos.com/2018/06/15/shock-horror-surprise-bitcoin-pricepllosion-may-have-been-market-manipulation/
GIST	<p>Last year's meteoric rise in the value of Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies might well have been artificially inflated, according to a paper released on Wednesday by University of Texas finance professor John Griffin and graduate student Amin Shams.</p> <p>The suspected culprit: people using Tether, one of the most-traded cryptocurrencies, to buy bitcoin when the price dips:</p> <p><i>Tether seems to be used both to stabilize and manipulate Bitcoin prices.</i></p> <p>Bitcoin hit a 16 December 2017 peak of \$19,343 before it bumped and thumped on down to USD \$6,591.94 (the current price as of writing).</p> <p>That's a massive deflation, but it's looking like the inflation itself might have been based on little besides hot air and market manipulation. According to Griffin, the drive up to nearly \$20,000 was likely manipulated by coordinated purchases of bitcoin when they were selling low at exchanges. And according</p>

to the New York Times, Griffin knows what he's talking about: he has a history of spotting financial fraud.

The paper, which attempts to causally determine if price manipulation is taking place, suggests that a concentrated campaign may account for half of last year's spiked cryptocurrencies prices.

Griffin came to this conclusion after studying the flow of digital tokens in and out of Bitfinex, once the world's largest bitcoin-dollar exchange. He identified several distinct patterns that suggest that someone, or someones, at Bitfinex managed to push up prices when they sagged at other exchanges. They did it by buying up other cryptocurrencies with Tether: a virtual currency created and sold by Bitfinex's owners.

...entities associated with the Bitfinex exchange use Tether to purchase Bitcoin when prices are falling. Such price supporting activities are successful, as Bitcoin prices rise following the periods of intervention. These effects are present only after negative returns and periods following the printing of Tether. ... The buying of Bitcoin with Tether also occurs more aggressively right below salient round-number price thresholds where the price support might be most effective.

For months, virtual currency investors have been worried that prices have been artificially jacked up by Bitfinex, which has a history of problems.

The exchange was robbed in 2016 of nearly 120,000 bitcoins – worth up to \$72 million at the time.

Beyond the bitcoin loss, Bitfinex has a history of trouble with regulators: in December, it was reportedly subpoenaed by the US regulatory agency Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) along with Tether. Tether is the exchange's so-called “stablecoin,” with a value pegged to traditional money – specifically, the US dollar. One Tether token is worth USD \$1.

According to Coindesk, online critics have long alleged that Tether has been issuing more tokens than it has dollars in the bank in order to drive up the price of bitcoin.

Weiss Ratings – an established investment research firm that recently began evaluating cryptocurrencies – claims that Tether poses a risk to the entire cryptocurrency ecosystem. While many exchanges use Tether as an equivalent to the USD, it has reportedly never been audited. The people behind Tether claim that the tokens are backed 100% by actual dollars.

Tether's trading volume “regularly exceeds that of its market cap.” That's not good, according to the research firm:

This means the entire Tether supply changes hands regularly, sometimes more than once a day... This is important to know because it tells us that Tether is used for trading A LOT. It's one of the main sources of liquidity in the cryptomarkets.

Has this liquid virtual currency been used to artificially pump up cryptocurrency prices?

Griffin thinks his research points to “You betcha.” The Times quotes him:

There were obviously tremendous price increases last year, and this paper indicates that manipulation played a large part in those price increases.

Bitfinex has denied such allegations in the past. Griffin and Shams, meanwhile, have no smoking gun: no incriminating emails or documents to show that Bitfinex knew about or brought about price manipulation.

All they have are the public ledgers of virtual currency transactions – in particular, that of Tether – and the patterns that have emerged. What they found: half of the 2017 increase in Bitcoin's price can be traced to the hours immediately after Tether flowed to a handful of other exchanges, generally when its price was falling.

	<p>The value of other virtual currencies that can be purchased with Tether – including Ether and Zcash – rose even faster than that of Bitcoin during those periods. The authors also found that prices rose much more quickly on exchanges that accepted Tether than on those that didn't. When Bitfinex stopped issuing new Tether this year, the authors found that the pattern halted.</p> <p>The Times spoke with multiple experts who said that Griffin's work seems credible.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 New banking trojan targets Androids
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/new-banking-trojan-can-launch-overlay-attacks-on-latest-android-versions/132858/
GIST	<p>Researchers have discovered a new Android banking trojan that holds striking similarities to the infamous Lokibot – but packed with new tricky features, most notably its ability to implement an overlay attack on Android 7 and 8.</p> <p>Researchers at ThreatFabric, who discovered the trojan, said MysteryBot was running on the same C&C server as the LokiBot Android banker discovered in 2017, suggesting that it's either an update to the earlier malware or was developed by the same actor. The new trojan is still under development and is not widely spread, they said.</p> <p>The bot comes with generic Android banking trojan functionalities – once a device is infected, for instance, the bad actor can use MysteryBot modules to make phone calls, scrape contact list info, copy keystrokes and encrypt files on external storage devices.</p> <p>However, researchers said there's much more to the story: “This bot has most generic Android banking trojan functionalities, but seems to be willing to surpass the average. The overlay, key-logging and ransomware functionalities are novel,” they said in a post. “Looking at the bot commands, we first thought that LokiBot had been improved. However, we quickly realized that there is more going on: the name of the bot and the name of the panel changed to ‘MysteryBot,’ [and] even the network communication changed.”</p> <p>A ThreatFabric spokesperson told Threatpost that at the moment the trojan is spread via phishing while side-loading the payload. “The commonly fake Flash Player social-engineering trick is used in the distribution campaign,” said the spokesperson.</p> <p>ThreatFabric discovered MysteryBot two weeks ago, and while researchers can't say that it has been very active (less than 200 infections), they told us they believe that it will be properly spread once it is fully functional.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 FBI charges Wannacry kill switch hero
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/wannacry-kill-switch-hero-faces-new-charges-but-code-evals-say-little/132863/
GIST	<p>A fresh FBI charge against Marcus Hutchins has led to the Kronos banking trojan and the UPAS Kit backdoor being linked in the news over the past week.</p> <p>However, a fresh analysis this week shows that, at least on a code level, the similarities (and differences) between the two are far from conclusive.</p> <p>Hutchins (a.k.a. “MalwareTech”) came to public attention in May of last year after discovering a hardcoded “kill switch” for the WannaCry ransomware that stopped the infamous campaign in its tracks.</p>

	<p>He was hailed a hero by the security community, given that WannaCry was at the time wreaking havoc in more than 150 countries, impacting large and small companies alike and causing millions in damages worldwide.</p> <p>The accolades didn't last long: The FBI in August 2017 hit the kill switch hero with cybercrime charges, for contributing to the development of the Kronos malware. Kronos has been around since June 2014, according to Malwarebytes, and began life as a banking trojan with ties to the leaked Zeus source code, as its name suggests. More recently, according to an analysis from Proofpoint, criminals have been seen using it as a downloader for follow-on malware, like point-of-sale skimmers.</p> <p>Hutchins, who is living in California on bail while he awaits his court date, was then handed fresh charges last week; the FBI is now alleging that he conspired with the same person who first advertised Kronos on the Dark Web – one Russian-speaking “Vinnyk,” according to Malwarebytes and the indictment – to distribute the UPAS Kit malware, which is a backdoor spy-bot that is mainly used in the wild to download other malicious components.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/18 States tighten election security
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2018/06/18/Dozens-of-states-tighten-election-security-by-going-back-to-paper/5601528861198/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=1
GIST	<p>June 18 (UPI) -- As key midterm elections approach, contests that could set off an enormous shift in Washington, D.C., U.S. authorities are taking measures to make sure they are secure and free of foreign influence.</p> <p>For years, a number of polling places have gone more high tech with electronic voting machines. Fears about vulnerabilities in the systems in an increasingly interconnected world, however, is now turning eyes to a strikingly original idea -- paper ballots.</p> <p>The United States largely moved away from paper ballots after the 2004 Help America Vote Act replaced lever and punch-card voting machines with Direct Recording Electronic, or DRE, systems. The reform was a direct result of the notoriously contested 2000 presidential election, which triggered weeks of recounts and multiple complaints about the paper ballots in Florida.</p> <p>With Russia's purported interference in the 2016 vote, though, many election officials now believe the old way of doing things don't look quite so bad anymore.</p> <p>In May, the Senate intelligence committee issued a report that concluded Russian cyber actors surveilled about 20 state election systems with the intent of undermining confidence in the U.S. voting process two years ago.</p> <p>The committee said many of the electronic voting systems are now outdated, and recommended all states go back to paper ballots -- or, at the very least, mandate that electronic machines produce a paper hard copy that can be audited.</p> <p>Why Go Back to Paper?</p> <p>Nearly two dozen states and the District of Columbia have already said they will use only paper ballots in November, according to Verified Voting, and several more are considering the switch.</p> <p>While DRE voting machines were once viewed as a substantial upgrade over paper that avoids the potential pitfalls of lever and punch-card machines, it's becoming clear the newer machines may have been a bit short-sighted in their design. Advances in computer technology and greater global Internet accessibility have made those devices susceptible to hacking.</p>

"If an electronic voting system is connected to the Internet or has wireless connectivity capability, then it's easy to understand how and why the voting equipment is vulnerable to hacking," Liz Howard, counsel for the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law, told UPI. "Even machines not connected to the Internet are hackable through compromised memory cards used to set up the voting machine before each specific election or remote access software."

Howard said all states using DRE machines should switch back to paper-based systems. Further, she said all states already using paper also ought to implement robust post-election audits.

"One benefit of transition to paper-based voting systems is that the paper trail can be accessed and audited if any concerns -- ranging from hacking, software bugs to programming errors -- are raised," Howard said. "Further, the adoption of periodic routine post-election audits increases public confidence in election outcomes and acts as a deterrent to would-be bad actors."

Since the 2016 election, Virginia is the only state to decertify and replace all of its paperless systems.

This fall, 41 states will use voting systems at least a decade old and officials in 33 of those states said they must replace their machines by 2020, according to a report by the Brennan Center.

"Some voting machines are using outdated software that is no longer supported, which means that vendors may no longer issue security patches for the software, which may result in significant vulnerabilities," said Howard. "We have voting systems in use that are hackable and do not create an auditable paper trail, which is a big concern."

Fourteen states, though, still use electronic machines that don't print a paper receipt as their primary mode of voting. Five of those states -- Delaware, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey, South Carolina -- use the paperless machines statewide.

Six states -- Pennsylvania, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee and Texas -- use both paper ballots and paperless DRE machines.

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HEADLINE	06/17 'Domain jacker' jailed 20yrs for heist
SOURCE	https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/06/17/internet-domain-jacker-jailed-20-years-armed-website-heist/
GIST	<p>A man has been jailed for 20 years over the first known instance of armed "domain hijacking" in which he sought to gain control of a website at gunpoint.</p> <p>Sherman Hopkins Jr, 43, broke into the apartment of an internet entrepreneur in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, wearing pantyhose on his head, dark sunglasses, and brandishing a stolen handgun.</p> <p>He demanded that Ethan Deyo, 26, get on his computer and transfer ownership of the internet domain name DoItForState.com from one account to another.</p> <p>After being pistol-whipped and repeatedly targeted with a Taser, Deyo gained control of the handgun during which he was shot in the leg.</p> <p>He then shot Hopkins several times in the chest and called police.</p> <p>Hopkins, who survived the incident in on June 21 last year, pleaded guilty to one count of "interference and attempted interference with commerce by threats and violence".</p> <p>The sentence was the result of a plea deal with prosecutors as he had previously been charged with more serious offences including kidnapping and use of a firearm during a violent crime.</p>

DoItForState.com had already been inactive for a month before the attempted "domain jacking".

The website had emerged from the University of Iowa as a forum for college students to post images of parties and wild antics.

Before it was taken down the website described itself as showing "College stories, College Life, College Snaps."

A local police spokesman said the domain name was "valuable" and Hopkins had wanted it "transferred back" to a third party. It was not clear who the third party was.

When Hopkins broke into his home Deyo, who previously worked for a company that hosts domain names, locked himself in a bedroom but the the home invader broke down the door.

A criminal complaint from the US Attorney's Office in Iowa said: "Hopkins pulled out a piece of paper from his pocket, which contained a series of directions on how to change an internet domain name from one account to another account.

"Hopkins put the firearm against the victim's head and ordered him to follow the directions on the piece of paper. Hopkins also took the victim's cell phone and threw it so that he could not call for help."

When Deyo asked for a postal address and phone number, because they were required to transfer ownership of the domain name, Hopkins pistol-whipped him, then pulled out the Taser and used it several times.

The complaint said: "Hopkins then cocked the gun. Fearing for his life, the victim quickly turned to move the gun away from his head. The victim then managed to gain control of the gun, but during the struggle he was shot in the leg.

"The victim shot Hopkins multiple times in his chest. He then contacted law enforcement."

So-called "domain hijacking" is when someone gets control over a website illegally and it has happened many times, but the Iowa incident was thought to be the first time it has been done by an armed assailant.

Sentencing Hopkins in Iowa, US District Senior Judge Linde Reade said his actions had been "brutal and senseless".

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HEADLINE	06/17 Group: Bitcoin could break internet
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-06-17/bitcoin-could-break-the-internet-central-banks-overseer-says
GIST	<p>The Bank for International Settlements just told the cryptocurrency world it's not ready for prime time -- and as far as mainstream financial services go, may never be.</p> <p>In a withering 24-page article released Sunday as part of its annual economic report, the BIS said Bitcoin and its ilk suffered from "a range of shortcomings" that would prevent cryptocurrencies from ever fulfilling the lofty expectations that prompted an explosion of interest -- and investment -- in the would-be asset class.</p> <p>The BIS, an 88-year-old institution in Basel, Switzerland, that serves as a central bank for other central banks, said cryptocurrencies are too unstable, consume too much electricity, and are subject to too much manipulation and fraud to ever serve as bona fide mediums of exchange in the global economy. It cited the decentralized nature of cryptocurrencies -- Bitcoin and its imitators are created, transacted, and accounted</p>

for on a distributed network of computers -- as a fundamental flaw rather than a key strength.

In one of its most poignant findings, the BIS analyzed what it would take for the blockchain software underpinning Bitcoin to process the digital retail transactions currently handled by national payment systems. As the size of so many ledgers swell, the researchers found, it would eventually overwhelm everything from individual smartphones to servers.

“The associated communication volumes could bring the Internet to a halt,” the report said.

Researchers also said that the race by so-called Bitcoin miners to be the first to process transactions eats about the same amount of electricity as Switzerland does. “Put in the simplest terms, the quest for decentralized trust has quickly become an environmental disaster,” they said.

The BIS is weighing in at pivotal moment in the cryptocurrency story. Even as Goldman Sachs Group Inc., the New York Stock Exchange, and other institutions take steps to offer clients access to the new marketplace, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission is cracking down on the offerings of new digital tokens, which it has found are rife with ripoffs. At the same time, cyber-attackers are hitting crypto exchanges regularly -- just last week, Bitcoin nosedived after a South Korean exchange reported it was hacked. It fell 0.9 percent to \$6,438 as of 10:40 a.m. in Sydney on Monday.

The value of the cryptocurrency market has plunged 53 percent this year to \$280 billion, according to CoinMarketCap.

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HEADLINE	06/17 US Cyber Command on the offensive
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/us-cyber-command-cyberattacks-pentagon-hacking/2018/06/17/id/866673/
GIST	<p>The United States Cyber Command has quietly taken a significantly more aggressive approach to defending against cyberattacks, a shift in strategy by the Pentagon that could heighten the risk of conflict with adversaries that sponsor menacing hacking groups, The New York Times reported on Sunday.</p> <p>The change from a largely defensive posture came in the spring, as the Pentagon ordered nearly daily raids on foreign networks in an attempt to disable cyberweapons before they can be used against the U.S., according to strategy documents, as well as military and intelligence officials.</p> <p>The change in approach came as a result of both the greater authority given to military commanders overall by President Donald Trump and the recognition that the U.S. has not been defending itself adequately against the increasing number of attacks.</p> <p>This is especially so since U.S. intelligence agencies have for several years identified cyberthreats as the No. 1 risk facing the country, greater even than terrorism.</p> <p>However, it is unclear how carefully the administration has taken into consideration the various risks involved if the plan is acted on in classified operations, particularly how to avoid an unforeseen escalation against nuclear-armed nations as it wields its growing cyberarsenal.</p> <p>The risks of escalation, which could lead to retaliatory strikes against American banks, dams, financial markets or communications networks, are considerable, according to officials.</p> <p>Another factor that has to be taken into consideration is that such aggressive actions against an adversary often requires secretly operating in the networks of an ally, which frequently made the Obama administration think carefully about doing so.</p> <p>But under the Trump administration, the traditional structure of White House oversight of cyberactivities</p>

is being taken apart, as new national security adviser John Bolton eliminated the position of White House cybercoordinator, who had overseen the complex mix of cyberactivities run by the government.

This new aggressive approach comes as a special authority is helping Cyber Command to streamline and expedite its recruitment and hiring processes in order to add the necessary personnel, according to the Department of Defense.

The objective of the overall strategy, according to the new "vision statement" quietly issued by the command, is to "contest dangerous adversary activity before it impairs our national power," the Times reported.

Pushing American defenses "as close as possible to the origin of adversary activity extends our reach to expose adversaries' weaknesses, learn their intentions and capabilities, and counter attacks close to their origins," the document says. "Continuous engagement imposes tactical friction and strategic costs on our adversaries, compelling them to shift resources to defense and reduce attacks."

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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	06/15 Germany: suspected biological terror plot
SOURCE	https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-44494010
GIST	<p>German police are searching flats in a Cologne tower block where a Tunisian man is suspected of having kept highly toxic ricin.</p> <p>The 29-year-old man, named in German media only as Sief Allah H, is being questioned by police.</p> <p>Police stormed his flat on Tuesday and found a chemical which turned out to be ricin. He is suspected of planning a biological terror attack.</p> <p>Ricin is a poison found naturally in castor beans.</p> <p>German security sources quoted by RP news, which is based in the Cologne region, said the quantity of ricin found was enough for up to 1,000 toxic doses.</p> <p>Police have sealed off the apartment block in Cologne-Chorweiler district. They are searching two flats rented by the suspect, as well as six other empty flats and some public areas in the building.</p> <p>The authorities say there is no immediate danger to the other residents.</p> <p>Experts from the Robert Koch Institute - a prestigious scientific research centre - are with police at the scene.</p> <p>Germany's top constitutional protection official, Hans-Georg Maassen, said it was "very probable that a terror attack was foiled here".</p> <p>Ricin made headlines internationally when it was found to have killed a Bulgarian dissident, Georgi Markov, in an infamous umbrella stabbing in London during the Cold War.</p> <p>The exiled writer and BBC journalist, an opponent of Bulgaria's then-Communist government, was stabbed in the thigh in 1978. Later a tiny 1.7mm platinum pellet with a ricin-filled cavity was found in his body.</p> <p>There is no antidote to ricin poisoning. Because of its high toxicity it is listed among biological weapons.</p>

	Tiny doses can be fatal if administered by injection or inhaled as a powder.
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HEADLINE	06/15 Finland: first terrorism crime sentencing
SOURCE	https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/finlands_first_terror_attack_life_sentence_for_turku_stabber/10257371
GIST	<p>The District Court of South-West Finland has found a Moroccan man guilty on two counts of murder with terrorist intent and eight counts of attempted murder with terrorist intent, and sentenced him to life in prison. This marks the first time that a crime in Finland has been legally classified as terrorism.</p> <p>The court declared that the attacks were carried out in a premeditated and exceptionally cruel manner.</p> <p>The court in Turku, where Abderrahman Bouanane carried out the assault last summer, handed down its ruling on Friday afternoon. The defence may appeal the decision.</p> <p>The 23-year-old admitted to killing two women and injuring eight other people on and near Turku's main square in August. His trial proceedings began in April.</p> <p>Psychological testing determined that he was sane at the time of the stabbings.</p> <p>The main question during the five weeks of hearings and deliberations centred on whether his acts were motivated by terrorism, making it the first case of its kind in Finland.</p> <p>The prosecutors argued – successfully – that the attacks constituted murder with terrorist intent and attempted murder with terrorist intent. The defence claimed that they fit the standard definition of manslaughter and attempted manslaughter – despite the fact that their client himself described the attacks as terrorism.</p> <p>Bouanane released a video before the stabbing spree, claiming it in the name of ISIS. The terror group has not claimed responsibility for the attack.</p> <p>The man arrived in Finland in 2016 as an asylum seeker, but his application was rejected later that year. He has been in prison in Turku since the attack.</p> <p>The average length of a 'life sentence' in Finland is just over 14 years. A convict may be eligible for release after 12 years, while the longest prison term ever lasted 22 years.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Wisconsin woman jailed for terrorism
SOURCE	https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/crime/2018/06/15/cudahy-mom-charged-promoting-isis-attacks-held-without-bail/702851002/
GIST	<p>A Cudahy woman charged with promoting the terrorist group ISIS and giving specific instructions on how to carry out attacks was ordered held without bail in federal court in Milwaukee Friday.</p> <p>Waheba Issa Dais, a 45-year-old homemaker and mother of seven, was arrested this week by the FBI on a charge of attempting to provide material support or resources to a foreign terrorist organization.</p> <p>The criminal complaint says that in recent months Dais had hacked other people's social media accounts and used them to give instructions on how to carry out attacks in the name of the Islamic State, also known as ISIS.</p> <p>Dais, who pledged her allegiance to ISIS, suggested attacking churches, street festivals and "celebrations</p>

in summer" where there was a likelihood of many civilian deaths. She also suggested attacking "a government post" and public water sources with the highly toxic compound ricin, the complaint said.

When an undercover FBI employee posing as a supporter of ISIS wrote to Dais that he had no experience in making bombs, Dais responded, "No problem. Making bombs is easy, and you can also start with poisons. I have a (social media) Channel you may benefit from ... I advise you start with poison," the complaint said.

Dais came to this country from Jerusalem in 1992 and is a lawful permanent resident. Five of her seven children were living with her in what was described by the prosecutor as deplorable conditions in a home in Cudahy.

In arguing for detention, Assistant U.S. Attorney Greg Haanstad said Dais created a virtual online library with instructions on how to make poison, explosive vests and bombs, and encouraged attacks.

"She has shown a disregard for human life," Haanstad said, adding she offered to assist "in mass killing."

Haanstad also said the father of Dais' younger children told FBI agents that Dais showed her 5-year-old son beheading videos. That father is no longer living with the family and was described as estranged from Dais.

The children have been placed by protective services and Dais has been assigned an attorney for proceedings in Milwaukee County Children's Court related to placement.

Dais has been diagnosed as having depression and is bipolar, but is not taking prescribed medication, Haanstad said. She talked to the FBI for three hours after her arrest. A son told the FBI that he knew what his mother was doing and told her to stop, Haanstad said.

Defense attorney John Champion, a federal public defender, said Dais should be released to care for her children and because she has no criminal record. He said Dais cooks for her family every day, denying that there was no food in the house. He said she is strapped for money and does not work outside the home, counting on help from family.

"This is a person who is very likely to be cooperative," he said.

Champion said if Dais was such a risk, the government would have arrested her immediately after she posted suggestions about the attack. Haanstad countered that such investigations take time.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Nancy Joseph said she ordered detention because of the seriousness of the charges, which carry a maximum penalty of up to 20 years in prison, the fact that Dais went so far as to hack accounts and that she posted repeatedly.

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HEADLINE	06/15 NATO: women's role in terror groups
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2018/jun/15/nato-terrorist-groups-women-food-water
GIST	<p>Terrorist groups are using gender dynamics more effectively to get women involved in violent action than those trying to battle extremism, according to Nato.</p> <p>Clare Hutchinson, the Nato secretary general's special representative for women, peace and security since January, told a conference of female politicians in Vilnius that global terrorism is a transnational threat that requires a transnational approach, while avoiding simplistic assumptions about the role of women.</p>

“We have to dismantle the assumption that women are always good and never bad,” she said, citing a long history of women being involved in terrorism since 1878, when Russian revolutionary Vera Zasulich shot the governor of St Petersburg and became the first person to be tried for terrorism.

Many of today’s terrorist groups, said Hutchison, are building direct connections with women, who are often drawn into groups because they are in dire need. When there is no other support left for basics like water or food, and women can get that support only from a terror group, they take it and get drawn in, she said, adding that counter-terrorism projects are in danger of failing to see this, and that women’s involvement in terror is not always political. “Sometimes, it’s the simple fact that they need to feed their children,” she said.

Hutchinson said many groups exploit gender dynamics, especially online, using the tendency of women to communicate and connect. “They are building a direct connection with women,” she said.

Fauziya Abdi Ali, founder and president of Women in International Security in Kenya, agreed that violent extremists in countries were increasingly harnessing support from women and girls, often because in return they were helped.

It can also be difficult for women and girls who had been captured by extremists to return to their normal way of life. “In Nigeria, women may undergo a rehabilitation programme, but can end up returning to groups like Boko Haram, because they are going back to the same economic situation they left,” she said.

A 2017 study concluded that women are playing an increasingly significant role in terrorism, and Islamic State has been using increasing numbers of women to spearhead attacks. In early June, teenager Safaa Boular was found guilty of terrorist offences. Boular, who had plotted an attack on the British Museum in London, was part of the first all-female terrorist cell linked to Isis in the UK. Detectives involved in the case said it showed that young women within radicalised networks were no longer simply passengers or victims, but determined perpetrators of violence in their own right.

Cheryl Frank, head of the transnational threats and international crime division at the Institute for Security Studies, said women needed to play a larger role in policy-making to prevent terrorism. “Women continue to be relegated to the role of community-based actors,” she said. “We need to bring women’s voices into policy and public spaces. That is not happening at the moment.”

Frank also warned that millions of pounds are being poured into counter-terrorism preventive programmes, but more needs to be done to share information and learning around the world on the most effective ways to tackle terrorism.

Mara Marinaki, principal gender adviser at the EU external action service, said it was important not just to focus on the role of women, but to reconfigure traditional notions of violence and masculinity, that they were somehow entwined in being a “real” man.

She said there was an opportunity to reframe the rights and role of women and girls. “Countering violent extremism is a feminist agenda.”

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HEADLINE	06/16 London: mother, daughter jailed for terror
SOURCE	http://ewn.co.za/2018/06/15/mother-and-daughter-jailed-in-uk-after-admitting-terrorism-charges
GIST	LONDON - A mother and daughter “filled with hate and toxic ideology” were jailed on Friday for planning terrorist attacks in London, including a likely knife rampage. Rizlaine Boular, 22, and her mother Mina Dich, 44, had earlier admitted preparing terrorist acts after having been tracked by police as they drove around carrying out reconnaissance of potential targets in

	<p>central London in April last year.</p> <p>The following day, the pair went to a supermarket in Wandsworth, southwest London where they bought a pack of three kitchen knives, police said.</p> <p>After their arrest, detectives recovered electronic devices from both Rizlaine's and Mina's address, on which they found Islamist extremist content.</p> <p>"(They) were filled with hate and toxic ideology and were determined to carry out a terrorist attack," said Deputy Assistant Commissioner of London police Dean Haydon.</p> <p>"Had they been successful, it could well have resulted in people being killed or seriously injured," he added in a statement.</p> <p>Boular was sentenced at the Old Bailey court to life imprisonment with a minimum term of 16 years. Dich received an extended sentence of 11 years and nine months.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Eiffel Tower fence nears completion
SOURCE	https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-44502949
GIST	<p>Paris is to unveil its newly built perimeter defences around the Eiffel Tower to protect against terror threats.</p> <p>Temporary barriers were placed around the tower in June 2016, and are now being replaced with more permanent measures.</p> <p>Set to be completed in mid-July, the fences cost nearly €35 million (\$40.1m; £30.1m). More than 240 people have died in terror attacks in France since 2015.</p> <p>Bernard Gaudillère, president of the Société d'Exploitation de la Tour Eiffel (SETE) which runs the iconic monument, said the new walls were "rock-solid for absolute security".</p> <p>Glass walls measuring 6.5cm (2.5in) thick will form two sides of the square, with the other two blocked off by 3.24m (10.6ft) high metal barriers, exactly one-hundredth the height of the tower.</p> <p>To prevent vehicle attacks, 420 blocks will be placed in front of the glass walls as an added protection. The forecourt under the Eiffel tower has been closed to the public since June 2016, with anti-terror troops regularly patrolling the site.</p> <p>Mr Gaudillère said the temporary walls would be replaced with something "infinitely nicer and more romantic", as part of a €300m renovation of the tower ahead of the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris.</p> <p>Up to seven million tourists are expected to visit the tower in 2018 alone. Yet residents are not happy about the added security features.</p> <p>A group called Les Amis du Champ de Mars posted a statement online in May last year complaining about the lack of consultation with residents, the "exorbitant cost" of the fences, and the difficulty of access for buses and people with disabilities.</p> <p>They also allege the city used special measures afforded it by the state of emergency to push through the security changes without assessing their impact or the public interest.</p> <p>The country introduced tough anti-terror laws in October 2017 after almost two years of the national state of emergency imposed by then-President Francois Hollande in the wake of the Paris attacks.</p>

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HEADLINE	06/15 France: 2 terror bombing plots thwarted
SOURCE	http://www.france24.com/en/20180615-france-police-thwart-terror-plots-swingers-club-gays?ref=tw_i
GIST	<p>French police have thwarted two terror attacks, including one at a swingers' club, sources close to the investigations said Thursday.</p> <p>The prevented plots come weeks after a knifeman killed a man in Paris and as the country remains on high alert following a string of jihadist assaults since 2015 that have claimed more than 240 lives.</p> <p>One suspect, a 38-year-old "radicalised convert" to Islam, was arrested in the Indre region in the centre of the country.</p> <p>"An improvised explosive device was found at his home and the man admitted that he wanted to use it to target a swingers' club," the source told AFP.</p> <p>The man, originally from the Loiret region, was charged and taken into custody on May 17 for "associating with terrorist criminals" and "preparing an act of terrorism", a judicial source said.</p> <p>Hours earlier police sources said two other men had been charged on suspicion of planning an attack in the name of the Islamic State group which may have targeted gay people.</p> <p>Sources close to the probe said the men, described as friends aged 21 and 22, were arrested Saturday in the Seine-et-Marne region east of Paris.</p> <p>Searches found two knives, a detonation system and IS propaganda material in their possession, a source said.</p> <p>"Their plan was still ill-defined at this stage, but there were elements to suggest they planned to attack homosexuals," one source added.</p> <p>The two men, said to be unknown to security services, were charged on Tuesday by an anti-terrorism judge and detained.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 DPS iWatchTexas: see, say something
SOURCE	https://www.sanmarcosrecord.com/news/new-app-helping-texans-report-suspicious-activity
GIST	<p>AUSTIN — The Department of Public Safety is making it easier for Texans who see something to say something.</p> <p>The DPS recently launched iWatchTexas, a mobile application (app) the public can use to report suspicious activities or behaviors that may indicate ongoing or future criminal or terrorist activity.</p> <p>The iWatch Texas program was created as a partnership between communities and law enforcement, and utilizes public tips related to criminal activity. DPS developed the new iWatchTexas mobile app at the direction of Governor Greg Abbott to make it easier for the public to report suspicious activity in Texas, including criminal, terroristic or school safety-related threats.</p> <p>"The new iWatchTexas mobile app is one of several solutions that Texas is implementing immediately to identify and report those who may pose a threat to our schools and to our communities," Abbott said. "Our law enforcement officers often rely on vigilant Texans to help keep communities safe, and this</p>

	<p>new tool will give everyone the ability to quickly and easily communicate with authorities and help prevent future tragedies.”</p> <p>The app is now available for iPhone users on the Apple App Store (iWatchTexas) and for Android users on Google Play (iWatchTexas).</p> <p>“Amid the growing threats to public safety by malicious actors, we want to remind the public that they can be law enforcement’s greatest resource to combat those intent on harming others, including innocent schoolchildren and administrators,” DPS Director Steven McCraw said. “By launching this new mobile app at the direction of Gov. Abbott, we are providing an additional and easy way for the public to report any illegal or suspicious behavior, which may ultimately help save lives.”</p> <p>The public can report suspicious behaviors through the iWatch Texas program via the new mobile app, online or by calling 1-844-643-2251. A report usually takes fewer than five minutes to complete, and once submitted, each report is reviewed by law enforcement analysts. All reports are confidential (providing contact information, which is optional, will allow for follow-up questions).</p> <p>Preparations for crime, terrorist attacks and threats to school safety may often be seen but not reported. When in doubt, speak up.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Drone strike kills Pakistan Taliban chief
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/06/16/pakistan-killing-pakistan-taliban-chief-significant.html
GIST	<p>ISLAMABAD – Pakistani caretaker Prime Minister Nasir-ul-Mulk has described the killing of Pakistani Taliban chief Mullah Fazlullah in a U.S. drone strike in Afghanistan as a "significant development in the fight against terrorism."</p> <p>Mulk made the comment in a telephone conversation with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and thanked him for sharing information about Fazlullah's killing. The call was initiated by Ghani.</p> <p>A government statement says an "action had finally been taken against an enemy of the people and state of Pakistan."</p> <p>Mulk told Ghani the news about Fazlullah's death would be received throughout Pakistan with relief as Pakistanis had borne the brunt of terrorist attacks by the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, which Fazlullah headed.</p> <p>Fazlullah, who was killed in Afghanistan's northeastern Kunar province, had ordered the assassination of Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Ethiopia pardons hundreds for 'terrorism'
SOURCE	https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/06/ethiopia-pardons-hundreds-sentenced-terrorism-charges-180615162548089.html
GIST	<p>The government of Ethiopia has said it will release more than 304 prisoners, including 289 convicted on "terrorism" charges, according to state media.</p> <p>The move is part of a raft of reforms pledged by authorities after violent unrest broke out three years ago, sparked by an urban development plan for the capital, Addis Ababa, that critics said would trigger land seizures in the surrounding Oromia region.</p> <p>The demonstrations quickly spread to other parts of the country, with protesters demanding wider political</p>

freedom and equality, as well as an end to human rights abuses.

Those pardoned on Friday include three Kenyans, who were released following an agreement between the two countries to strengthen bilateral relations, according to a statement sent to state-affiliated Fana by Ethiopia's attorney general.

More than 1,000 prisoners have been released or slated for release since Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power in April.

Abiy took office after his predecessor, Hailemariam Desalegn, abruptly resigned amid widespread anti-government protests that claimed the lives of several hundred people, mainly in the restive Oromia and Amhara regions.

Among those freed in recent months are several senior opposition leaders accused of charges such as "terrorism" or incitement to topple the government.

One of them is Andargachew Tsige who was found guilty of "terrorism" and sentenced to death in absentia in 2009 over his role in the opposition group Ginbot 7.

The father of three was arrested during a stopover at a Yemen airport in June 2014 and taken to Ethiopia. Last month, Ethiopia lifted its state of emergency and Abiy has been making numerous changes in a country considered highly repressive by rights groups

The East African state has also made moves towards repairing relations with rival and neighbour, Eritrea.

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HEADLINE	06/15 State Dept. World Cup travel advisory
SOURCE	http://thehill.com/policy/national-security/392587-us-warns-americans-of-terrorist-threat-at-world-cup
GIST	<p>The State Department is warning Americans traveling to Russia for the World Cup that terrorists could target the games or related venues during the monthlong tournament, though it has not mentioned any specific threats.</p> <p>The department <u>issued a travel advisory on Friday</u> urging Americans to "reconsider travel to Russia due to terrorism and harassment."</p> <p>"Although security for the World Cup will be extensive, terrorists may seek to attack event locations such as stadiums and Fan Fest viewing areas, tourist sites, transportation hubs, and other public venues," it states.</p> <p>The State Department's advisory also notes that assistance to U.S. citizens from American consulate services could be "unreasonably" delayed by Russian authorities.</p> <p>"Due to the Russian government-imposed reduction on U.S. diplomatic personnel in Russia, the U.S. government has reduced ability to provide services to U.S. citizens," the department wrote.</p> <p>Russia faces unrest in the North Ossetia and Chechnya regions, among others, according to the advisory.</p> <p>The travel advisory was issued two days after it was <u>announced</u> that the U.S., Canada and Mexico had won a joint bid to host the 2026 World Cup.</p> <p><u>President Trump</u> had lobbied for the bid on his Twitter account and during a press conference with Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari in April.</p>

	<p>"The U.S., together with Mexico and Canada, just got the World Cup," Trump tweeted on Wednesday. "Congratulations - a great deal of hard work!"</p> <p>This year's World Cup in Russia kicked off Thursday and is slated to go until July 15.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Explosions rock Nigeria mosque; 20 dead
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/17/africa/nigeria-damboa-mosque-attack/index.html
GIST	<p>Lagos, Nigeria (CNN)Twin bomb blasts at a mosque in northeastern Nigeria killed at least 20 people and wounded scores more, local police told CNN.</p> <p>The explosions rocked the remote town of Damboa in Borno State late Saturday as worshippers who had gathered to celebrate Eid al-Fitr returned home, police said.</p> <p>Borno State Commissioner of Police Damian Chukwu said the number of casualties may rise as many of the wounded were in critical condition and may not survive.</p> <p>There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, but police suspect the terror group Boko Haram, whose militants mainly inhabit areas in northern Nigeria and routinely carry out bombings and kidnappings.</p> <p>"The blasts were massive as 20 people died instantly," said Chukwu. "Over 48 people were injured and taken to health facilities even outside the town, and not many will survive. We are still collating the figures."</p> <p>Police said the bombings appeared coordinated and aimed at the greater Damboa community.</p> <p>"It was a planned attack from what we are seeing on ground. The insurgents detonated other explosives they had planted around the market and houses around the area to capture those that may not enter the mosque," Chukwu said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/18 Saudi-led coalition hit Yemen main port
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security/arab-aircraft-hammer-houthis-around-airport-of-major-yemen-port-hodeidah-idUSKBN1JE0P4
GIST	<p>ADEN (Reuters) - Saudi-led coalition aircraft bombarded Houthi fighters holed up at the airport of Yemen's main port Hodeidah on Monday as a senior alliance official said he hoped U.N. diplomacy could coax the Iran-aligned movement to relinquish the city.</p> <p>There are fears that a prolonged battle for the city, where the Houthis are dug in to protect critical supply lines from the Red Sea to their bastion in the capital Sanaa, could aggravate what is already the world's most urgent humanitarian crisis.</p> <p>The Western-backed Arab alliance launched an onslaught on Hodeidah six days ago in order to turn the tables in a long stalemated, proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran that has compounded instability across the Middle East.</p> <p>The United Arab Emirates, a key component of the coalition, is spearheading the Hodeidah offensive, now focused on the airport of the Red Sea city.</p> <p>On Monday Apache helicopter gunships fired at Houthi snipers and other fighters positioned on the rooftops of schools and homes in the Manzar neighborhood abutting the airport compound, according to</p>

	<p>local residents.</p> <p>The upsurge in fighting has wounded dozens of civilians and prevented aid organizations from reaching parts of Hodeidah.</p> <p>U.N. human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein voiced concern that the onslaught could endanger millions of civilians.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 US-backed fighters capture key area
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-backed-syrian-fighters-capture-key-village-55958296?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>A U.S.-backed Syrian force says it has captured an important village near the Iraqi border from the Islamic State group.</p> <p>The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces said on Sunday that its fighters captured Dashishah in the northeastern province of Hassakeh, a major crossing point between Iraq and Syria when IS ran its self-styled caliphate.</p> <p>The group, which has been among the most effective in fighting IS in Syria, added that SDF fighters also entered the town of Naserah and are about 3 kilometers (2 miles) from the Iraqi border.</p> <p>The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitor, said the SDF captured 22 villages and farms in the area during two weeks of fighting. It added that 49 extremists have been killed since the SDF's offensive on Hassakeh's IS-held area.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Suicide bomber targets Taliban fighters
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/death-toll-suicide-bombing-afghanistan-climbs-36-55953865?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>A suicide bomber struck in Afghanistan's eastern city of Jalalabad on Sunday, killing at least 19 people in the second attack in as many days targeting Taliban fighters, security forces and civilians celebrating a holiday cease-fire. The Taliban later rejected an extension of the cease-fire.</p> <p>Najibullah Kamawal, director of the provincial health department, said another 60 people were wounded in the attack, which struck a crowd of people as they left the governor's compound.</p> <p>Saturday's attack, which also took place in Jalalabad, killed at least 36 people and wounded 65, according to Kamawal, director of the provincial health department.</p> <p>No one has claimed the attacks, but they appeared to be the work of the Islamic State group, which is not included in the cease-fire and has clashed with the Taliban in the past. The local IS affiliate has a strong presence in the province.</p> <p>The bomber on Saturday targeted a gathering of Taliban fighters who were celebrating a three-day truce coinciding with the Eid al-Fitr holiday.</p> <p>After the attack, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani announced a nine-day extension of the cease-fire.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Afghan Taliban reject ceasefire extension
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-suicide-bombing-afghanistan-kills-10-55955666?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Afghanistan's Taliban has rejected an extension to a three-day cease-fire coinciding with the Eid al-Fitr holiday.</p> <p>Afghan President Ashraf Ghani announced a nine-day extension of the cease-fire after a suicide bombing killed 36 people on Saturday, in hopes that the Taliban would respond in kind.</p> <p>But on Sunday the Taliban announced that their cease-fire had ended and that they have no intention of extending it. "The cease-fire was announced by the Taliban for just the three days of the Eid holidays which have come to an end this Sunday evening," said Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid in a statement. "All Mujahidin (Taliban) should continue their operations against foreign invaders and their puppets,"</p> <p>The Taliban's statement added that their cease-fire for their fighters to celebrate the holiday peacefully and not in response to the government's cease-fire announcement.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/18 Syria: US-led strike hits govt. troops
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syria-us-led-strike-hits-troops-east-us-55968188?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Syrian state media reported Monday that an airstrike against pro-government forces in the far east of the country caused casualties, while Iraqi officials said 20 Shiite paramilitaries were killed just across the border.</p> <p>The Syrian state TV report said the airstrike occurred around midnight in the village of al-Hari, to the southeast of the border town of Boukamal, and was carried out by the U.S.-led coalition battling the Islamic State group. But a coalition spokesman said it had not carried out any strikes in the area.</p> <p>The state TV report, quoting an unnamed military official, gave no breakdown of the casualties other than saying there "were several martyrs and others were wounded."</p> <p>In Baghdad, Iraqi officials said Popular Mobilization Forces — the mostly Shiite state-sanctioned paramilitaries — came under attack south of the town of Qaim, just across the border from Boukamal. They said 20 fighters were killed and dozens were wounded, adding that the cause of the attack was not immediately clear. The Iraqi officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.</p> <p>U.S. military spokesman Col. Sean Ryan said the coalition was looking into the reports.</p> <p>"We are aware of the strike near Boukamal, however there have been no strikes by U.S. or coalition forces in that area," he said. "We're looking into who that could possibly be but it wasn't the U.S. or the coalition."</p> <p>Syrian and Iraqi forces have driven IS from virtually all the territory it once held in both countries, but the militants still control some remote areas along the border.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/18 Philippines target ISIS-linked militants
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/philippine-airstrikes-target-linked-militants-

	marawi-55969024?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>A Philippine military official says airstrikes and ground assaults have targeted a group of Islamic State group-linked militants, including their leader, who helped lead a five-month siege in southern Marawi city last year.</p> <p>Army Col. Romeo Brawner says the military received reports that at least five militants were killed in Sunday's offensive but the deaths haven't been confirmed. The offensive sparked gunbattles between troops and the extremists in mountainous areas of Lanao del Sur province. Hundreds of villagers fled from nearby towns as the offensive got underway.</p> <p>Brawner said Monday the offensive targeted about 40 militants led by Owayda Benito Marohombsar, who uses the nom de guerre Abu Dar. He was among those who led the attack on Marawi, but managed to escape before troops quelled the uprising in October.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	06/17 Bangladesh deadly drug crackdown
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/bangladesh-launches-deadly-drug-crackdown-as-rohingya-crisis-fuels-smuggling-1529236803?mod=hp_major_pos1
GIST	<p>DHAKA, Bangladesh—Hundreds of police officers toting carbines swarmed a gritty Dhaka slum recently, overturning beds in homes, riffling through the wallets and bags of cafe patrons and eventually shoving 50 suspected drug users into the back of police vans.</p> <p>It was a regular night in a new crackdown on drugs in Bangladesh, marked by an aggressive campaign since mid-May in which police have arrested some 13,000 people and killed more than 100 in raids, according to the government.</p> <p>Odhikar, a Bangladeshi human rights group, accused the security forces of carrying out 149 extrajudicial killings in May, most of them in connection with the drug crackdown, compared with an average of less than 20 a month in the first four months of the year, according to its statistics.</p> <p>Hasanul Haq Inu, Bangladesh's minister of information, said that the expanded campaign was necessary to disrupt drug distribution networks, and that the killings involved situations where armed drug criminals shot at police.</p> <p>The antidrug campaign stems from an influx of a cheap methamphetamine concoction known as yaba finding its way into Bangladesh, fed in large part by the turmoil since some 700,000 Rohingya were driven from their homes in Myanmar by the military last August into Bangladesh, according to Bangladeshi police.</p> <p>Yaba is mainly produced in lawless regions of northern Myanmar, where rebel militias that rely on drug revenue have long held sway and fed markets in Thailand and Cambodia. But the security breakdown in western Myanmar since the Rohingya, a persecuted Muslim minority in the Buddhist-majority country, were expelled last year is giving the traffickers an expanded opportunity, Bangladeshi police say.</p> <p>"Only Myanmar is pushing yaba," said Jamil Hasan, deputy commissioner of the detective branch of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, observing as police pushed suspected yaba users into vans during a roundup. Though the United Nations antinarcotics agency has said that Myanmar and Bangladesh could foil trafficking networks if their border police worked together, Hasanul Haq Inu, Bangladesh's minister of information, said the Rohingya crisis had created tensions that made coordinating the forces difficult.</p> <p>"Cooperation in stopping the yaba trade is a little bit cumbersome and slow," Mr. Inu said. His</p>

government has repeatedly asked Myanmar's authorities to shut down yaba labs.

Police Col. Aung Myat Moe, head of the Myanmar police force in Rakhine State, where the Rohingya lived, said police have established more than 80 land and sea checkpoints to intercept drug traffickers but said they didn't know who was behind the yaba trade.

Jeremy Douglas, regional representative of the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime for Southeast Asia, said that skilled chemists working for rebel groups in northern Myanmar have scaled up yaba production in recent years, even as demand has peaked in traditional markets.

"They have extra supply and they're dumping it into Bangladesh at a low price point," Mr. Douglas said. The gangs prefer making and distributing yaba over opium, used in the region's older heroin trade, because it cuts out poppy farmers and concentrates profits in their hands.

Bangladeshi police say drug traffickers are using young Rohingya men in the camps, who lack employment opportunities, as drug runners. Rohingya have been arrested by Bangladeshi authorities as part of the antidrug campaign, including a recent case where a 12-year old boy was compelled to ingest a load of yaba capsules and bring them into Dhaka, the capital, before members of the ring that recruited him were arrested.

The violent antidrug campaign is drawing comparisons by human-rights groups with similar crackdowns in the region, where the Philippines war on drugs launched by President Rodrigo Duterte has led to thousands of deaths.

"Bangladesh deserves to be commended for its tremendous support for Rohingya refugees, setting an example for the world," U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said, in a statement condemning the drug killings. "I urge the government to build on this respect for human rights in other areas, including in its fight against drug-related crimes."

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HEADLINE	06/15 Panhandlers pose as Buddhists monks
SOURCE	https://www.kgw.com/article/news/local/seattle-buddhists-concerned-by-panhandlers-dressed-as-monks/283-564683063
GIST	<p>Members of the Seattle Buddhist community are concerned by a years-long issue - fake monks reportedly panhandling downtown.</p> <p>"This is happening all over the world, in major U.S. cities," said Steve Wilhelm, editor of NW Dharma News.</p> <p>Wilhelm has been practicing Buddhism for more than 30 years and has met plenty of monks.</p> <p>"None of them would be doing this, none of them would be out in the street," he said. "They're not out in the street asking for anyone to do anything."</p> <p>The purported monks often approach people in heavily trafficked areas. Wilhelm said it's common for them to slip a beaded bracelet on someone's wrist or hand them a gold card reading, "Word Smoothly, Lifetime Peace." Then they ask for payment.</p> <p>One monk was observed removing the bracelet from someone's wrist when she appeared to politely refuse.</p> <p>Miriam Martinez often sees men in robes outside the store she manages on 1st Avenue, Simply Seattle.</p> <p>"It does make me uncomfortable because I don't know how much money they ask for," she said. "People</p>

do fall for it every single time. I see people give them money every single day.”

“I honor the fact that anyone feels generous enough that they want to donate to such a purported effort,” Wilhelm said. “That’s to people’s credit. But they should just know monastics would not be out in the street asking for money. Monks don’t do that. So if someone does that, they’re not a monk.”

That’s why he recommends asking basic questions about where the money goes. Wilhelm approached one man in robes panhandling near the Pike Place Market to do just that. When approached by the Wilhelm and a KING 5 camera, the man walked away.

“What monastery are you from?” Wilhelm asked. The man did not respond. Another person in similar robes began to walk away across the street.

“He’s just a guy conning people,” Wilhelm said.

That behavior did not inspire confidence in Martinez.

“That does say a lot,” she said. “If you were actually raising money for a cause or congregation, you would stop and explain yourself, but if you’re hiding something, obviously you want to run away and get out of the situation. That doesn’t speak well of them at all.”

A spokesperson for Seattle police said the department receives several complaints about the monks every year and has been aware of it for some time. However, he said they don’t believe the act itself is illegal – though officers could issue an aggressive panhandling ticket if a situation escalated or potentially arrest someone for pedestrian interference.

KING 5 did not observe any men in monk’s robes become aggressive, but Wilhelm said he’s seen confrontations escalate before when they’re questioned.

He said the situation still frustrates him and wishes there would be more enforcement.

“Well, it’s sad,” he said. “They’re misrepresenting themselves, scamming people. It’s sad. Begging on the street, that’s OK, but they shouldn’t make believe that they’re someone else, and they shouldn’t prevent the tradition of the Dharma.”

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HEADLINE	06/15 PCSO: man loses \$5,400 to scam artists
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/06/15/pierce-county-man-loses-5400-to-scam-artists/
GIST	<p>PIERCE COUNTY, Wash. – A 25-year-old Spanaway man is out \$5,400 and his mother nearly coughed up another \$3,000 as part of a well-oiled and somewhat complicated scam, the Pierce County sheriff’s department said.</p> <p>Before we get to the nuts and bolts, a piece of advice: If somebody on the other end of the phone has bad news and is demanding gift cards to make it go away, it’s extremely likely you’re talking to a scammer.</p> <p>In this case, the scammers used phone-number-spoofing technology and two separate cons to try to pry money out of the mother and son.</p> <p>In the mother’s case, they told her that they’d kidnapped her son. They spoofed his number when they called her, demanding that she buy \$3,000 worth of gift cards and give them the codes over the phone.</p> <p>Fortunately, alert employees at the Albertsons on Canyon Road pieced together what was happening and called 911 before she could buy the cards.</p>

	<p>In the son's case, they scammers spoofed the phone number for the sheriff's department, told the man there was an arrest warrant for him because he'd missed jury duty, and said he needed to buy more than \$5,000 in gift cards to get out of it. Unfortunately for him, he bought the cards.</p> <p>Here's where this scam gets scary.</p> <p>While talking to the woman, she asked them to prove they had her son and demanded to talk to him. So, the scammers got the man on the phone as part of his scam, conferenced him in with his mom, and convinced her it was legit.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Report: Minn. officers directed ketamine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/16/us/ketamine-minneapolis-police.html
GIST	<p>Minneapolis police officers asked emergency medical workers dozens of times over three years to inject suspects and others with the powerful anesthetic ketamine, including some who were already restrained, The Star Tribune reported on Friday.</p> <p>In some cases, the drug caused heart or breathing failure and required those injected to be revived or intubated, according to the newspaper.</p> <p>The Star Tribune said it had obtained a draft report of an investigation by the <u>Office of Police Conduct Review</u>, a division of the city's Department of Civil Rights.</p> <p>Ketamine has for decades been used as an anesthetic for humans and animals as well as abused as a recreational hallucinogenic drug known as Special K. Researchers have also explored its therapeutic uses in treating depression.</p> <p>The Star Tribune, citing the draft report, said the number of documented injections of ketamine during police calls increased to 62 last year from three in 2012, including four times on the same person.</p> <p>In one case, officers and emergency medical workers responded to a call about a man who appeared to be in a mental health crisis.</p> <p>Four officers and two medical responders arrived and decided to sedate the man, according to the report authors, who reviewed body camera footage, The Star Tribune reported.</p> <p>Upon seeing the needle, the man said he did not want the shot. "Whoa, whoa, that's not cool!" he pleaded, according to the newspaper. "I don't need that!"</p> <p>He was injected with the drug twice and secured to a chair. "Shortly after, he became nonverbal and unintelligible, prompting one officer to remark, 'He just hit the K-hole,' a slang term for the intense delirium brought on by ketamine," the newspaper reported.</p> <p>Until last month, the police had no policy for using the drug, which the department manual classified as a "date rape drug" because it is a powerful sedative that can erase or alter memory.</p> <p>Side effects of the drug can include changes in blood pressure and heart rate, delirium, agitation, confusion and hallucinations, said Dr. Scott Krakower, assistant unit chief of psychiatry at Zucker Hillside Hospital in Glen Oaks, N.Y. If it is not administered properly, it could lead to cardiac and respiratory problems and potentially worsen agitation, he added.</p> <p><u>John B. Gordon</u>, the executive director of the A.C.L.U. of Minnesota, said on Friday he first learned of the injections from The Star Tribune report.</p>

	<p>If officers directed medical responders to administer the drug, it amounted to a “horrible abuse of power,” he said.</p> <p>Members of <u>Hennepin Healthcare</u>, the main emergency medical service provider in Minneapolis, are authorized to use ketamine when a patient is “profoundly agitated,” unable to be restrained and a danger to themselves or others, according to its policy, The Star Tribune said, adding that the draft report found cases in which emergency medical workers used it on people who did not appear to fit those criteria.</p> <p>Around the time the draft report was completed last month, Police Cmdr. Todd Sauvageau issued an order that officers “shall never suggest or demand” that emergency medical personnel sedate a person. “This is a decision that needs to be clearly made by EMS personnel, not MPD officers,” the order said.</p> <p>In a statement on Friday, Police Chief Medaria Arradondo emphasized that the draft report was incomplete “and devoid of any input from medical personnel,” and that releasing its contents “before its completion was irresponsible.”</p> <p>The report has not been made public and remained a “work in progress,” a spokesman for the Police Department, John Elder, said on Friday.</p> <p>Hennepin Healthcare said in a statement on Friday that it heard in early April that officers were asking that ketamine be used and relayed its concerns to the police on May 3.</p> <p>“While a police request for ketamine may occur, the final decision is always made by professional medical personnel,” the agency said. “Last year, ketamine sedations were used on 0.095 percent of our 81,500 EMS calls for service.”</p> <p>Hennepin Healthcare said that the drug had been used by its emergency medical services since 2008, and that it had asked an independent agency to review eight specific cases cited in the report.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Arizona: weapons in vehicle near dam
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/06/16/weapons-found-in-vehicle-used-to-block-hoover-dam-bridge.html
GIST	<p>Authorities in Arizona say two weapons were found inside the armor vehicle used to block a high span bridge on the Arizona-Nevada border.</p> <p>The Arizona Department of Public Safety says a rifle and handgun were found in the vehicle that Matthew P. Wright is accused of using to stop traffic Friday on the major highway linking Phoenix and Las Vegas. Authorities say the 30-year-old Henderson, Nevada, man initially stood outside the vehicle near the Hoover Dam holding a sign that read "release the OIG report."</p> <p>Wright was arrested after barricading himself for 90 minutes and then driving over tire spikes.</p> <p>Wright is currently being held at the Mohave County Jail on charges that include terrorist acts. Jail records didn't list an attorney who could comment on his behalf.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 India faces worsening water crisis
SOURCE	https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-44492994
GIST	<p>The <u>Niti Aayog report</u>, which draws on data from 24 of India's 29 states, says the crisis is "only going to get worse" in the years ahead.</p>

It also warns that 21 cities are likely to run out of groundwater by 2020 despite increasing demand. This would also threaten food security as 80% of water is used in agriculture.

Indian cities and towns regularly run out water in the summer because they lack the infrastructure to deliver piped water to every home.

Rural areas are also badly affected by a lack of access to clean water. They cannot rely on groundwater due to erratic rains and the fact that the groundwater is increasingly used for farming when monsoon rains are delayed or insufficient.

Around 200,000 Indians die every year because they have no access to clean water, according to the report.

Many end up relying on private water suppliers or tankers paid for the by the government. Winding queues of people waiting to collect water from tankers or public taps is a common sight in Indian slums.

As cities and towns grow, the pressure on urban water resources is expected to increase - the report estimates that demand will be twice as much as available supply by 2030. Water scarcity would also account for a 6% loss in India's gross domestic product (GDP).

Some Indian states, however, are doing a better job than others in managing their water. Gujarat in the west topped the report's rankings. It was closely followed by Madhya Pradesh in central India and Andhra Pradesh in the south.

Fifteen of the 24 states scored better than they did the previous year, leading to one of the report's conclusions that "water management is improving across-the-board".

But what remains alarming is that the states that are ranked the lowest - such as Uttar Pradesh and Haryana in the north or Bihar and Jharkhand in the east - are also home to nearly half of India's population as well the bulk of its agricultural produce.

But, the report said, policymakers face a difficult situation because there is not enough data available on how households and industries use and manage water.

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HEADLINE	06/18 IRS private debt collectors program
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/irs-most-serious-problem-private-debt-collectors/
GIST	<p>Last year the IRS reactivated a program using private debt collectors to collect unpaid taxes from individuals with delinquent tax debts. According to the National Taxpayer Advocate, the IRS' Private Debt Collection (PDC) program is a "most serious problem."</p> <p>A troubling finding of a recent report was that taxpayers, whose tax debts were assigned to private collection agencies, entered into installment agreements that they are unable to afford, with approximately 43 percent earning income below their allowable living expenses.</p> <p>To make matters worse, the program costs the U.S. Treasury more than the money it brings in. Part of the reason may be that the private collection agencies can keep up to 25 percent of what they collect.</p> <p>The taxpayers most likely to be contacted by the program's private debt collectors are those identified by the IRS to have an inactive tax receivable. A tax debt is deemed to be "inactive" when the IRS removes it from their active case list for lack of resources or inability to locate the individual, or if more than a year has passed since the taxpayer had any interaction with the IRS for the collection of the over-due tax.</p> <p>Private collection agencies will first request full payment of the debt. If the taxpayer can't immediately</p>

	<p>pay, the agency will then offer an installment agreement.</p> <p>Beware of phone scams There have been many reports of phone scams by individuals who claim to represent the IRS and demand payment for tax debts, so it's important to know the difference between these scams and a legitimate IRS collection program.</p> <p>Taxpayers should know that the legitimate collection agencies will not call you. Instead, the IRS will send a letter on official IRS letterhead, called a Notice CP40. This will explain that your tax debt has been assigned to one of the private debt collection firms. A separate letter from the private collection agency will confirm the tax case has been assigned to them.</p> <p>The four private debt collection agencies selected by the IRS to operate the program are the only firms that should be legitimately contacting taxpayers. They are: CBE Group in Cedar Falls, IA; Conserve in Fairport, NY; Performant in Livermore, CA; and Pioneer in Horseheads, NY.</p> <p>Finally, the IRS cannot assign a tax debt to private collections in cases involving a deceased tax payer, an individual under age 18, or military in a designated combat zone. Also exempt are folks who are a victim of tax-related identity theft, classified as an innocent spouse, and currently involved in an exam, installment agreement, or offer in compromise.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Soccer goal caused minor quake?
SOURCE	https://soccer.nbcsports.com/2018/06/17/el-tri-may-have-caused-small-earthquake-back-in-mexico-city/?cid=eref:nbcnews:text
GIST	<p>It was impossible to ignore the magnitude of Mexico's 1-0 win over Germany on Sunday, and it apparently caused waves all over the world.</p> <p>Although a large contingent of El Tri fans were present in Moscow, Russia for the team's win over the defending World Cup champions, it wasn't comparable to the scenes back home.</p> <p>Supporters were reportedly so enthused by the match that it's quite possible they started a minor earthquake in Mexico City.</p> <p>The earthquake reading came at 11:32 am ET, right around the time when Hirving Lozano gave El Tri the lead over their Group F opponent.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Report: Lyme disease on rise
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/health/lyme-disease-on-rise-misdiagnose-imitates/2018/06/16/id/866576/
GIST	<p>The federal government reports that cases of Lyme disease are on the rise, but many patients and researchers are finding that physicians are skeptical in diagnosing the deer tick-borne disease.</p> <p>"It's very serious," Marina Makous, a family medicine doctor in Exton, Pennsylvania, told NBC News. She is a former fellow at the Neuroinflammatory Diseases Center at Columbia University's Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases Research Center.</p> <p>"There is an underappreciation of the seriousness of this illness, especially when [physicians] don't treat patients with Lyme disease on a daily basis," she said.</p> <p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued an updated warning last month that insect-borne diseases, especially those spread by ticks, are on the rise, having more than doubled from 2004 to 2016.</p>

	<p>Warmer weather is an important cause of the increased cases reported to the agency, according to The New York Times.</p> <p>"You can think of ticks as dirty needles," Makous told NBC. "They carry multiple pathogens and can transmit other things that make it more difficult for the immune system to fight off Lyme disease."</p> <p>Lyme disease is caused by a spiral-shaped bacteria called <i>Borelia burgdorferi</i>. It is found in the saliva of the blacklegged tick, more commonly known as a deer tick.</p> <p>The bacteria spreads rapidly and has complex survival mechanisms, according to the NBC report.</p> <p>Though most physicians believe it can be eradicated with antibiotics, the bacteria has been shown to return after treatment in the blood and tissue of animals and humans.</p> <p>Numerous patients say they live with chronic, persistent symptoms — and have had difficulty being diagnosed by their doctors.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Study: states w/most psychopaths
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/psychopaths-northeast-dc-higher/2018/06/17/id/866648/
GIST	<p>A new study ranking U.S. states in order of psychopathy found the "northeast of the US is the most psychopathic region," namely a number of blue states earning the "dubious" distinction of the most psychopathic, according to a Quartz report.</p> <p>A Southern Methodist University study by Ryan Murphy found Connecticut to be the most psychopathic state, followed by California, New Jersey, and New York (tied for fourth with Wyoming).</p> <p>Added in the study was Washington, D.C., which "had a psychopathy level far higher" than any state, according to the report – albeit because it is a small, entirely urban area and not as geographically diverse as a state.</p> <p>"The presence of psychopaths in District of Columbia is consistent with the conjecture found in Murphy [2016] that psychopaths are likely to be effective in the political sphere," Murphy concluded in his study.</p> <p>Using the established definition of psychopathy as composed of disinhibition, boldness, and meanness, per the report, Murphy measured "levels of big five personality traits (extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience) in each state."</p> <p>"Boldness corresponds to low neuroticism and high extraversion, meanness corresponds to low agreeableness, and disinhibition corresponds to low conscientiousness," Murphy wrote.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Kent: woman found dead near trail
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/06/17/kent-police-investigate-death-of-woman-found-near-trail/
GIST	<p>KENT, Wash. — Police say they're investigating after a woman was found fatally injured along a wooded trail in Kent.</p> <p>The woman was unresponsive and having trouble breathing when officers arrived about 7:42 p.m. Saturday. Authorities say they tried to save her but she was pronounced dead at the scene.</p> <p>The trail was in the area of 24600 26th Pl S.</p>

	Police did not immediately disclose the nature of her injuries. They said detectives were questioning witnesses and collecting evidence and that they considered the circumstances suspicious.
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	06/16 London: knife, violent attacks soaring
SOURCE	https://www.news-mail.com.au/news/welcome-to-lawless-london-home-of-zombie-knives-mo/3443310/
GIST	<p>ZOMBIE knives, bloodstained streets, young people wearing stab proof vests, and a rising death toll.</p> <p>This is the grim reality of life in London where everything from "machine gun" murders to moped crime gangs are part of a crime wave that has seen the city overtake New York's murder rate.</p> <p>Knife and violent attacks are soaring, and city and government leaders are struggling to come up with a solution to end the carnage. Stabbings are occurring almost daily and there have been 70 murders this year, the most recent a 35-year-old who was stabbed to death at the weekend over a suspected drug debt.</p> <p>On Monday, three others - including a teenager - survived knife attacks in broad daylight. Of the London murders, 46 were the results of stabbings.</p> <p>Many blame the attacks on years of austerity that has seen police numbers reduced and welfare budgets cut. London Mayor Sadiq Khan this week met with Home Secretary Sajid Javid to discuss the crisis as public concern grows.</p> <p>"It's not rocket science. You can't cut thousands of police officers and close services without it having an impact on crime ... this is now a national emergency," Mr Khan said.</p> <p>In a tweet before the meeting, the Mayor said families and communities were "gripped by anger and despair" from the "devastating" crime.</p> <p>Mr Javid, who is in charge of Britain's internal security, promised action to stop the "senseless" violence. He denied shrinking police numbers were solely to blame, and promised a range of measures including a further clampdown on weapons, increasing the fight against drug gangs and early intervention to prevent vulnerable young people turning to crime.</p> <p>The statistics tell a frightening story and show why the British capital has been dubbed Lawless London. Latest figures show 19,385 moped crimes in the past nine months alone - that's 60 every single day.</p> <p>The speed and ease of mopeds in Londons's traffic chocked streets are thought to be behind the rise of the gangs. They have been fuelled by the easy access to drugs like cocaine and acid, and when combined with simmering gang tensions, have resulted in the staggering increase in attacks.</p> <p>Met Police officers have taken to going undercover as takeaway delivery drivers to try and catch moped gangs. Part of the problem for officers has been confusion over the law around pursuits, with many worried about being blamed if a moped rider died during the chase.</p> <p>New police powers are already being discussed - and it can't come soon enough.</p> <p>A former moped gang member boasted to The Sun cops were powerless. "Because you're on a moped, it's not going to work, you'll kill us so you're just gonna have to leave us to drive - try and get the helicopter out or something."</p>

A graphic illustration of how bad things are in London came earlier this month when the city was rocked by a "machine gun" shooting, barely 20 minutes after another man was knifed in a bloody attack.

Witnesses to the shooting said the victim was sitting in his car when he was shot a number of times - terrifyingly it sounded like rapid machine gun fire.

Knives are increasingly the weapon of choice by assailants, and the ones they are arming themselves with are truly disturbing. Dubbed 'zombie knives' because the long blades are frequently seen in zombie movies. They can be purchased online for less than \$20.

The knives almost seem comical - but they are no laughing matter. They usually come in bright colours with the words "slayer" and "zombie killer" and are marketed so the buyer can survive the "Zombie apocalypse".

This month, footage emerged of a road rage incident involving a zombie knife. A cyclist used the knife to try and stab a motorist through a car window. The horrified motorist was then forced to run for his life while the attacker battered the car with the giant blade.

As well as the knives, giant machetes and swords have been confiscated by police during random searches.

In February 250 knives and swords were seized across London in just one week.

The fear of being stabbed is fueling paranoia in some British youth, particularly London males. Some are now wearing stab proof vests on the streets to protect themselves from the violence.

Trauma experts at city hospitals are seeing first-hand the tragic results.

Dr Duncan Bew, of Kings College Hospital, said there had been a 75 per cent increase in knife crime injuries over the past 18 months.

This has seen another worrying trend emerge. Young people are reportedly not going to hospital to be treated for their wounds out of fear of being linked with gang life. Some say they are simply carrying for protection - others have more sinister motives.

Dr Bew confirmed the trend to The Times after teens told him they were scared of being branded gang members. "We need to reassure people that if they come to hospital they will not be labelled," he said.

Superintendent Nick Davies, the borough commander of London's Camden and Islington police, told news.com.au he did not believe the "backstreet clinics" patching up knife victims was widespread.

"It would be stupid thing to not go to hospital and be treated," he said.

Supt Davies said a lot of work was being done to protect the community, including returning to a stop and search strategy [that allows police to search someone if they have 'reasonable grounds' to suspect a weapon is being carried].

"We make no apologies for that ... These tactics will continue," he said.

Met Police statistics showed a 5 per cent rise in violent crime in the past year. The figures show 35 youth homicides in the last 12 months - up 25 per cent, a 30 per cent surge in the rate of muggings and an 18 per cent rise in knife crime offences.

A leaked Home Office report linked the crime wave with a huge supply of cocaine and crack cocaine caused by a bumper harvest in Colombia.

The purity of crack cocaine had also risen dramatically, from 30 to 70 per cent, according to the report

which stated that "crack seems to have a particular link to serious violence". Tests on arrested people have shown a 42 per cent increase in cocaine use.

"First, the psychoactive effects are more associated with violence than [other] drugs ... Second, crack has a shorter high, which makes transactions more frequent, sparking more violence," the report stated.

Violent crime isn't just restricted to London. Statistics show knife attacks up 22 per cent and robberies up 33 per cent across the United Kingdom.

In Ipswich, a town in Suffolk, in southeast England which is 131km from London, a 16-year-old was left fighting for life after being stabbed at a McDonald's. It was the fourth knife attack there in the past two weeks, including the fatal stabbing of a 17-year-old on June 2.

Supt Davies told news.com.au a particular focus for police was the "wraparound" support for young offenders and their families. That meant zeroing in on the social and health services in a bid to break intergenerational gang involvement.

"We're getting good results. There are some hardened gang members you can't save," he said.

But others could be - and seeing their mates being attacked, or narrowly surviving themselves, was sometimes the catalyst to push them away from crime.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Charge: homeless man attacked tourist
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/man-accused-of-unprovoked-attack-on-a-tourist-near-space-needle/
GIST	<p>A 47-year-old man has been charged with misdemeanor assault, accused of attacking a tourist from Arizona earlier this month as the man and his family were headed to the Space Needle, according to the Seattle City Attorney's Office.</p> <p>Michael Lee Person, who told police he was homeless and moved to Seattle from Colorado nine months ago, has remained jailed in lieu of \$10,000 bail since his arrest June 2, jail and court records show.</p> <p>According to a Seattle police report, the 20-year-old victim was with his girlfriend, brother, mother and mother's boyfriend when they parked next to Person's tent near Denny Way and Third Avenue around 2:30 p.m. They saw Person peek out at them, became uncomfortable with their vehicle's proximity to a cluster of tents and moved the car into a bank parking lot, the report says.</p> <p>As the family got out of the vehicle, Person came up behind the 20-year-old and his girlfriend, who tried to walk away because Person's "demeanor was threatening and scared them," says the police report. Person punched the man from behind and used a rope in an apparent attempt to strangle him, the report says.</p> <p>A police officer would later note the victim had a six-inch long rope burn from his Adam's apple to his right shoulder.</p> <p>The 20-year-old and his girlfriend got away and caught up with the rest of the family. They saw Person run back to his tent and "thought they were safe," according to the police report. As the family was about to cross the street, Person ran north on Third Avenue, turned the corner onto Denny Way and again attacked the 20-year-old, repeatedly punching him in the head and face, says the report.</p> <p>Officers arrived and stopped the attack.</p> <p>It was the family's last day in Seattle but the 20-year-old told police he is willing to return for trial, according to the report.</p>

	The intake form filled out by jail staff says Person has a history of assault convictions, is unemployed, receives food stamps and usually stays in a tent in the Kent area, court records show. He moved to Seattle nine months ago from Colorado, where he lived for two years, to be closer to a son or grandson, the records say.
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HEADLINE	06/16 Arrest for Disney mass shooting threat
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/florida-man-arrested-for-threatening-to-commit-mass-shooting-at-disney-world/ar-AAyJ4tU?ocid=spartanntp
GIST	<p>A Florida man was arrested this week after he allegedly threatened to carry out a mass shooting at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Fla., ABC News reported.</p> <p>The man, Derek Eitel, reportedly posted his intent on a Facebook group.</p> <p>He was arrested on Tuesday on a charge of making written threats to kill or do bodily harm and is being held at Brevard County Jail on a \$100,000 bond, according to ABC News.</p> <p>Eitel stated "5 likes and I'll go shoot up Disney and hang myself" on the Facebook group, according to an arrest report.</p> <p>The group has 850 members who were able to see the post, the Brevard County Sheriff's Office told ABC News. The post was reported by two members of the group.</p> <p>Eitel later told officers that he made the post from his phone when he was at work, ABC News reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 India: prominent journalist killed
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2018-06-15/police-in-indias-kashmir-arrest-suspect-after-editor-shot-dead
GIST	<p>SRINAGAR, India (Reuters) - Police in India's Kashmir investigating the killing of a prominent journalist and two of his security guards arrested a suspect on Friday, an official said.</p> <p>Syed Shujaat Bukhari, editor of the Rising Kashmir newspaper, was leaving his office in Srinagar, the summer capital of India's Jammu and Kashmir state, when he was shot at close range on Thursday by gunmen on motorbikes.</p> <p>The suspect, named as Zubair Qadri, was seen in a video stealing the pistol of one of the guards shot dead with Bukhari, Inspector General of Kashmir S.P. Pani told reporters.</p> <p>"The pistol has since been recovered and he is being questioned about his presence at the scene of the crime. So far, he has not been able to give any convincing answers," Pani said.</p> <p>Pani, who described the killing of the journalist as a terror attack, said the identities of the three other gunmen were still being ascertained.</p> <p>Militant groups Lashkar-e-Taiba and United Jihad Council also condemned the killing and denied involvement. Instead, they blamed "Indian agencies".</p> <p>Bukhari had been a strong advocate of peace in disputed Kashmir, at the heart of decades of hostility between India and Pakistan, both of which claim the Muslim majority region.</p>

	<p>More than 130 people have been killed this year in militant violence in Kashmir.</p> <p>India has long accused Pakistan of training and arming militants and helping them infiltrate across the Line of Control that separates the two sides in the region, a charge Islamabad denies.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Coast Guard seizes \$206M in cocaine
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/15/us/us-coast-guard-seizes-cocaine/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A recent deployment in the Pacific Ocean proved very successful for a US Coast Guard crew: During their 80-day patrol they seized nearly 12,000 pounds of cocaine worth around \$206 million.</p> <p>The Coast Guard cutter Campbell returned to its homeport in Kittery, Maine, on Friday after the counter-narcotic patrol in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific.</p> <p>The Campbell intercepted suspected smuggling vessels six times, according to a statement from the Coast Guard.</p> <p>The Campbell's commanding officer, Cmdr. Mark McDonnell, said he's "incredibly proud" of his team. The 29-year-old ship has a crew of 100.</p> <p>The Campbell and another cutter, Active, seized the drugs off the coasts of Mexico, Central and South America, the Coast Guard said. The crew offloaded the drugs last week in Florida.</p> <p>McDonnell said the presence of the Coast Guard and other law enforcement agencies is "essential to dismantling the crime networks that threaten the US with their illicit activities."</p> <p>The crew detained 24 suspected smugglers during the patrol.</p> <p>The Campbell's crew was assisted with MH-65 Dolphin helicopters from the Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron unit, based in Jacksonville, Florida.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Venezuela nightclub disaster: 17 dead
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/16/americas/venezuela-brawl-nightclub/index.html
GIST	<p>At least 17 people, including eight minors, were killed Saturday after a partygoer detonated a tear-gas canister setting off a stampede inside a nightclub in Caracas, Venezuela, authorities said.</p> <p>At least 11 victims died of asphyxiation, according to an initial report by the National Police obtained by CNN.</p> <p>Five others were injured, including two who were underage, authorities said.</p> <p>Some 500 students were packed into the club for a "pre-graduation" party, according to Venezuelan Interior and Justice Minister Nestor Reverol.</p> <p>Speaking to Venezuela's state-run TV, Reverol said a brawl broke out early Saturday, and "one of the people involved detonated a tear-gas canister that caused the stampede."</p> <p>Reverol said seven people, including two minors, have been detained. According to Reverol, eyewitnesses said one of those minors was responsible for setting off the tear-gas canister.</p> <p>Officials are investigating and have ordered the club to shut down. They also arrested the club owner over</p>

	failure to have measures to ensure no weapons or ammunition entered the club, as required by law.
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HEADLINE	06/15 Concerns: police use of pre-crime tech
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/government/police-use-of-minority-report-style-pre-crime-tech-raises-inaccuracy-concerns/
GIST	<p>Pre-crime, is a vast potpourri of information, on everyday activities, used to try to predict and prevent future behavior. In “predictive” policing, computer algorithms identify signs of pre-crime in a realm in which we are all potential suspects. Similar to the state of affairs depicted in the 2002 movie, “Minority Report,” psychic “precogs” discern which “criminals” to pursue before they commit a crime.</p> <p>Hartford, CT is now using what some say looks an awful lot like pre-crime technology. "Like cities across the country, we've been grappling with ways to use this technology to make our residents safer and our communities stronger," Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin said in an interview with Vice News. "At the same time we're being very sensitive to concerns about civil liberties."</p> <p>BriefCam, An Israeli-American cyber business, provides video search technology that is now being utilized in Hartford. BriefCam's video analysis software compresses hours of video into more compact presentations, referred to as "events." In cities comparable to Hartford, with at least 700 surveillance cameras accessible to police, this software reduces to minutes results that would normally take days to process.</p> <p>Law enforcement's foray into utilizing this type of technology is not without its critics. Local residents and state chapters of the ACLU are uneasy with police departments' use of technology for which they say the endgame seems disturbingly clear.</p> <p>Currently being employed in Fresno, CA, one example of the use of pre-crime technology is described by the Washington Post:</p> <p><i>"...officers raced to a recent 911 call about a man threatening his ex-girlfriend, a police operator in headquarters consulted software that scored the suspect's potential for violence the way a bank might run a credit report.</i></p> <p><i>The program scoured billions of data points, including arrest reports, property records, commercial databases, deep Web searches and the man's social-media postings. It calculated his threat level as the highest of three color-coded scores: a bright red warning.</i></p> <p><i>The man had a firearm conviction and gang associations, so out of caution police called a negotiator. The suspect surrendered, and police said the intelligence helped them make the right call — it turned out he had a gun."</i></p> <p>In Chicago, the police have been applying machine learning and predictive analytics to police data sets, including crime incidents, arrests, and weather data. When data such as previous arrest records is combined with real-time IoT data, (i.e. sensor-influenced cameras that detect gunshots) it becomes easier to ascertain problem locations. Known as the ‘pre-crime’ initiative, it was implemented through collaboration between the Chicago Police Department and Chicago University Urban Labs.</p> <p>The software used is HunchLab, a geographic prediction tool that employs data modeling to predict risk in specific areas across the city. At-risk regions are highlighted on-screen, while recommendations for action are displayed alongside the at-risk region information. The information is then collated into a ‘decision support system’ and made accessible to individual police officers on the beat.</p> <p>Adoption of pre-crime tech is beginning to trend in the US. PredPol, one of the leading systems on the market, is already being used by law enforcement in California, Florida, Maryland and other states.</p>

Aside from civil liberties concerns, however, a flaw found in the design of the type of software used indicates that predictive algorithms are to blame for a whole new set of problems.

For example, when researchers in the US examined how PredPol predicts crime, they found something disturbing. The software apparently sets off a “feedback loop” that leads to law enforcement being dispatched repeatedly to certain neighborhoods--regardless of the actual crime rates in those neighborhoods.

According to New Scientist's article on the research:

"The problem stems from the logic that PredPol uses to decide where officers should be sent. If an officer is sent to a neighbourhood and then makes an arrest, the software takes this as indicating a good chance of more crimes in that area in future.

What this means, says Matt Kusner at the Alan Turing Institute in London, is that the PredPol system seems to be learning from reports recorded by the police – which may be higher in areas where there are more police – rather than from underlying crime rates."

“That’s how dangerous feedback loops are,” Joshua Loftus, Assistant Professor of Information, Operations and Management Sciences, said. These loops are only part of how PredPol makes its predictions, he said, but they may explain why predictive policing algorithms have sometimes appeared to recreate exactly the type of biases the software developers say they overcome.

So, the crime rate in one neighborhood is overestimated, without taking into account the possibility that more crime is observed there due to the fact that more officers have been sent there. It's essentially a computerized version of confirmation bias.

It may be possible to terminate the feedback loop, though. New Scientist noted that, "the authors also modeled a different system, in which the algorithm only sent more officers to a neighborhood if the area’s crime rate was higher than expected. This led it to distribute officers in a way that much more closely matched the true crime rate."

Loftus also indicated there are several other issues that need to be resolved before policing algorithms can truly be considered unbiased. “Human decisions affect every aspect of the design of the system,” he cautioned.

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HEADLINE	06/17 UK police: under 5% burglaries solved
SOURCE	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5853179/Less-one-20-street-robberies-burglaries-solved-police-new-figures-reveal.html
GIST	<p>Less than one in 20 street robberies and burglaries are being solved in the UK, shocking new figures have revealed.</p> <p>Official police data shows that just four per cent of robberies and three per cent of burglaries were solved in England and Wales in 2017.</p> <p>The figures will fuel concerns that there is a crisis in the nation's policing, with one MP describing London as 'the Wild West'.</p> <p>In more than 1,000 neighbourhoods with at least 30 crimes, the police failed to catch and punish any of the suspects, The Sunday Times report.</p> <p>Rushcliffe in Nottinghamshire, south Buckinghamshire, south Cambridgeshire, Blackpool and Preston had</p>

	<p>the lowest rates of solved crime, according to figures.</p> <p>Meanwhile the most crimes, 26 per cent, were solved in Uttlesford in Essex last year, followed by Boston, Merthyr Tydfil, Darlington and County Durham.</p> <p>The figures also reveal that only nine per cent of suspects in all crimes are caught and punished - a reduction of more than 50 per cent in the past five years.</p> <p>The worrying statistics will add to concerns about the surge of violent crime in the UK, particularly in London.</p> <p>Scores of violent attacks and muggings have been reported in the capital, with many incidents involving mopeds and knives.</p> <p>Police data shows that the percentage of all crimes solved by police has plummeted from 19 per cent in 2013 to just nine per cent in 2017.</p> <p>Perpetrators in violent and sexual offences were brought to justice only in eight per cent of cases last year - a mere third of those in 2013.</p> <p>Meanwhile, solved burglary cases halved from six per cent in 2013 to three per cent in 2017, and robbery cases from nine per cent to four per cent in the same period.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/18 Concern: police use of facial recognition
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/police-use-of-drivers-license-databases-to-nab-crooks-spurs-privacy-concerns-1529233200
GIST	<p>Police in the small Maryland city of Hagerstown used a cutting edge, facial recognition program last week to track down a robbery suspect, marking one of the first such instances of the tactic to be made public.</p> <p>In the process of identifying a possible suspect, investigators said they fed an Instagram photo into the state's vast facial recognition system, which quickly spit out the driver's license photo of an individual who was then arrested.</p> <p>This digital-age crime-solving technique is at the center of a debate between privacy advocates and law-enforcement officials: Should police be able to use facial recognition software to search troves of driver's license photos, many of which are images of people who have never been convicted of a crime?</p> <p>An increasing number of police departments across the country are running images through driver's license databases in their investigations. But the Hagerstown case is one of the few resulting in an arrest that has become public, experts in the field say.</p> <p>Thirty-one states now allow police to access driver's license photos in facial-recognition searches in addition to mug shots, according to the Center on Privacy and Technology at the Georgetown University Law Center. Roughly one in every two American adults—117 million people—are in the facial-recognition networks used by law enforcement, according to a 2016 report by the center.</p> <p>Civil liberties advocates say that giving police unfettered access to photos of people who have committed no crimes infringes on those civilians' privacy.</p> <p>"People provide their photo for a driver's license database so they can drive," said Jennifer Lynch, an attorney with the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a nonprofit privacy organization. "They should not become suspects in a criminal investigation."</p>

Law-enforcement officials who advocate for using facial recognition searches of driver's license photos argue that it is a valuable tool for finding potential suspects who have no criminal past.

"This is no different than if I laid out all those photos in front of me...and said 'No, that doesn't look like him, that doesn't look like him, here we go, that's him,' " said Sheriff Bob Gualtieri of Pinellas County, Fla. "The only thing is I am doing it in a different way, a more automated way, a more efficient way."

Sheriff Gualtieri, who launched a facial recognition system in 2001 that is now used by police around Florida, said that it isn't uncommon for investigators to get a match on a driver's license photo in his state.

In New York City, police say they want to get access to driver's license photos in their facial-recognition searches, which are currently limited to mug shots, but have faced opposition from privacy advocates.

In Maryland, police use what they call the Maryland Image Repository System to compare images with more than 7 million driver's license photos and more than 3 million mug shots.

In a December report, Stephen Moyer, Maryland Secretary of Public Safety and Correctional Services, assured state lawmakers that people's privacy was being protected.

With the technique now being more widely used across the U.S., Ms. Lynch, of the EFF, said there should be more checks and balances because of the risk of mis-identifying suspects using facial recognition software, which is less accurate with darker faces, according to a recent MIT Media Lab study.

In the Hagerstown case, Raven Dennis reported that a former co-worker came to her apartment and allegedly stole her iPhone 8 and \$650, according to the police department's probable cause statement. When she chased after him, the man threatened her with a handgun, she said.

Ms. Dennis told police that she only knew the man's first name, Aamir, but the two had been in touch on social media, so she sent two Instagram photos to investigators. When a detective ran a screenshot through the state's facial recognition system, the first image that came back was a Motor Vehicle Administration photo of Aamir Watson-Jones, according to the probable cause statement.

Mr. Watson-Jones was arrested and charged with armed robbery, robbery, theft, and a handgun violation. He has yet to enter a plea.

An attorney for Mr. Watson-Jones and the Hagerstown detective on the case didn't return calls seeking comment.

Joseph Michael, deputy state's attorney in Washington County, Md., where the case unfolded, said facial recognition is useful for police, but it can't be the sole source of identifying a suspect. "You still need a positive identification, as happened in this case," he said.

Mr. Michael said he understands the privacy concerns, but noted that "the expectation of privacy ends when you sit down and smile at the government desk."

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HEADLINE	06/18 Van kills 1 at Dutch music festival
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-netherlands-concert-bus/van-kills-one-at-dutch-music-festival-suspect-arrested-idUSKBN1JE0B9
GIST	AMSTERDAM (Reuters) - A van struck four people at the Netherlands' largest music festival in the early hours of Monday, killing one of them and injuring the others before driving off, police said. Officers said it was not clear whether the van driver had hit the group at the Pinkpop event intentionally or by accident. Later in the morning, officers said they had found the vehicle and arrested a suspect.

	<p>The white van struck around 4 a.m. (0200 GMT), police said, four hours after the headline act, R&B artist Bruno Mars, had performed in front of 70,000 people.</p> <p>“This investigation is still underway and we cannot say whether this was something intentional or an accident,” said police spokesman Hub Haenen.</p> <p>Militants have driven vehicles into crowds of people in attacks in London, Berlin, Barcelona and other European cities in recent years.</p> <p>Pinkpop is held in Landgraaf, a small town near the German and Belgian borders, 220 km (140 miles) southeast of Amsterdam. A sold-out crowd came to see Pearl Jam, the Foo Fighters and others. Mars closed the three-day-festival shortly before midnight.</p> <p>A police statement said the street where the incident took place, one of two exits from the concert grounds, had been closed for forensic investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/12 Dark underside Dubai’s golden sands
SOURCE	https://www.occrp.org/en/goldensands/dubais-golden-sands
GIST	<p>The emirate of Dubai — one of seven entities that make up the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — was once among the world’s most barren, inhospitable lands.</p> <p>In more recent years, it has transformed itself into an extravagant metropolis where the police drive Lamborghinis and edible gold ice cream costs US \$800 a scoop.</p> <p>It’s a success story that’s inextricably linked with the globalization of organized crime and corruption.</p> <p>Whether it’s smuggling conflict gold out of Africa, facilitating funding for Al Qaeda and ISIS, or helping organized crime groups like India’s Dawood gang, Dubai’s secretive offshore financial system seems to play a role in almost every international corruption scandal.</p> <p>“Dubai basically would not be as developed as it is right now if it didn’t allow all the illicit money to end up there,” says Sayed Ikram Afzali, executive director of Integrity Watch Afghanistan, an organization that has helped document Afghanistan’s massive capital outflows to the emirate.</p> <p>The Tax Justice Network labels Dubai as the ninth most secretive jurisdiction in the world, and its location halfway between London and Singapore, with more than 1.5 billion people just a three-hour flight away, makes it an ideal business hub.</p> <p>So it’s no surprise that the emirate has a large and mostly legitimate business sector.</p> <p>But its lack of transparency, light regulations, and seeming disinterest in the origins of the money that lands there have made Dubai a haven for organized crime groups, terrorists, despots, and many others who have profited from crime and corruption around the world — as long as they have cash and don’t embarrass the government.</p> <p>As a result, it functions as a one-stop shop where the world’s wealthy can avoid taxes, dodge sanctions, launder money, or hide their assets from police or taxpayers back home.</p> <p>The city’s crown jewel is its booming real estate market, which has drawn wealthy investors from around the world to enjoy not the opportunity to invest in luxury properties, but to do so in the secrecy Dubai has always afforded.</p>

Until now.

A leaked database of property and residency data compiled by assorted real estate professionals, obtained by the non-profit group C4ADS, and provided to the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) pierces the veil to reveal the names of many who have sought the emirate's secrecy.

The database contains about 54,000 addresses with 129,000 owners from 181 countries.

Many of these people are not accused of any wrongdoing, though the investments of politicians and other wealthy people on the list bear scrutiny.

The database also contains large numbers of sanctioned individuals, organized crime figures, fugitives from the law, and others whose inclusion demonstrates the extent to which Dubai has become a haven for shady characters.

A Free-wheeling Tradition

The Al Maktoum royal family, which rules Dubai, has complete control over the economy and the policies that govern it. The family's interests are not always understood, but it does have a huge stake in maintaining the status quo.

And these policies aren't new.

Dubai was the region's first "free port," with a history of deliberate laissez-faire policies that stretch back to the nineteenth century, says Christopher Davidson, a professor in Middle East politics at Durham University in the United Kingdom.

"Aiming to create a low-cost and low-tax environment for the re-exporting of goods from Asia to Europe, its business-savvy rulers have always understood the need to provide the right conditions including, when necessary, a no-questions-asked approach," Davidson said.

The plan transformed the emirate into one of the most robust and diversified economies in the oil-dependent Middle East. This is what has attracted so much wealth.

The UAE has joined the US, Canada and Australia as one of the strongest magnets for the world's rich, according to a study by New World Wealth, a South Africa-based research center that has been tracking millionaire migrations since 2013.

In large part due to Dubai, the UAE in 2017 had a total inflow of 5,000 millionaires, which increased the size of its millionaire population by almost 6 percent.

Some of the services available for these wealthy people include:

- Money laundering through Dubai's notoriously secretive banking system;
- High-end real estate for anyone who needs to park large amounts of cash with few questions, if any, asked about its origin;
- Gem and gold trading that obscures the questionable provenance of stolen or blood-drenched minerals;
- Cash-based remittance systems such as hawala that allow traders to move money around the world without regulatory scrutiny;
- Loosely regulated free-trade zones that allow cigarette and other smugglers to avoid customs and tariffs; and
- A government that favors few regulations and enacts little oversight.

Experts say the international community lacks the political will to pressure the monarchy to address these issues.

	Ultimately, it is the combination of these services all in one opaque location that makes Dubai so good to the bad.
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HEADLINE	06/17 Texas: BP high-speed chase ends in crash
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/immigration-border-crisis/five-undocumented-immigrants-killed-after-high-speed-chase-texas-n884096
GIST	<p>Five undocumented immigrants were killed Sunday after a high-speed chase with authorities in Texas, authorities said.</p> <p>The driver of the vehicle — an unidentified suspected smuggler and United States citizen — survived the crash, Dimmit County Sheriff Marion Boyd told reporters.</p> <p>Fourteen people were in the Chevrolet Suburban when a Border Patrol agent began pursuing it, he said.</p> <p>In a statement, Customs and Border Patrol said the agent saw what appeared to be three vehicles involved a smuggling operation on a rural highway at 11 a.m. local time.</p> <p>Agents stopped two of the vehicles and made multiple arrests, the statement said, but the Suburban drove away.</p> <p>At speeds topping 100 mph, Boyd said, the SUV careened off the road near the town of Big Wells, southwest of San Antonio, about 40 or 50 miles from the U.S.-Mexico border.</p> <p>The Suburban "caught gravel and tried to recorrect," he said. "That caused the vehicle to turn over several times."</p> <p>Twelve undocumented immigrants were ejected on impact, Boyd said. Four were pronounced dead at the scene. A fifth person died at a hospital in San Antonio.</p> <p>An unidentified passenger and U.S. citizen whose condition wasn't immediately clear was also in the SUV.</p> <p>Boyd said the sheriff's office had "handled" the driver during an encounter last week when he appeared to be scouting for a smuggling operation.</p> <p>The sheriff added that chases involving smugglers are routine occurrences in Dimmit County.</p> <p>"Every day, my deputies are getting into pursuits," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 France: woman injures 2 w/box cutter
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/woman-injures-southern-france-box-cutter-55955805?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>A woman crying "Allahu akbar" — "God is great" in Arabic — injured two people with a box cutter Sunday at a supermarket in southern France before she was detained.</p> <p>A customer in the store in the maritime town of La Seyne-sur-Mer was injured in the chest and hospitalized. A woman working the cash register was hurt less seriously, French radio station Europe 1 quoted the prosecutor in nearby Toulon as saying.</p> <p>Prosecutor Bernard Marchal said the suspect may have mental health problems. She has not been identified. Police were searching her home.</p>

	<p>"It's apparently an isolated case involving a person with psychiatric issues," the prosecutor told Le Monde newspaper quoted the prosecutor as saying. However, that does not exclude the possibility that the suspect was radicalized, Marchal added.</p> <p>"There is a presumption of attempted murder and ... of a crime with terrorist implications," Marchal was quoted as saying.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Moscow: taxi driver hits pedestrians
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/taxi-driver-questioned-injuring-red-square-55954670?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The suspect in a taxi crash near Red Square that injured two Mexican soccer fans and six other pedestrians as Russia hosts the World Cup told interrogators he fell asleep at the wheel, Moscow city police said Sunday.</p> <p>The police released a video of an interrogation session with a man the Moscow force identified as the taxi driver. In the recording, he says he briefly dozed off and accidentally hit the gas. It was unclear whether the man spoke under duress.</p> <p>The man in the video says he hadn't slept in 20 hours and wasn't drunk, and ran away after the accident because he was afraid that angry bystanders would kill him. He was later detained.</p> <p>The Moscow city traffic authority identified the driver as 28-year-old Chyngyz Anarbek, who is from Kyrgyzstan.</p> <p>Speaking to The Associated Press from the town of Muras Ordo in Kyrgyzstan, Anarbek's older brother said only had been working as a taxi driver for a month. He said his sibling was in "stress, shock, horror" after what happened.</p> <p>"Let people say what they want, but my brother is clean, not guilty. He was never and could never be a terrorist," Almazbek Anarbek said.</p> <p>The younger Anarbek won a bronze medal last year in the world championship of Pankration, an ancient sport combining skills of boxing and wrestling</p> <p>Videos circulating on Russian social media and some news websites after the incident showed the taxi veering onto the sidewalk Saturday and striking pedestrians. The accident took place on Ilinka Street, about 200 meters (650 feet) from Red Square and Moscow's famous GUM shopping arcade, an area popular with tourists.</p> <p>Moscow police would not comment on whether the crash would affect security measures for soccer's World Cup, which is being held in 11 Russian cities over the next month. Among the security concerns has been the possible use of vehicles as weapons.</p> <p>Russia has also been working with law enforcement from other countries to secure the tournament.</p> <p>"The sense we are getting is that (the taxi crash) is not football-related," Mark Roberts, head of U.K. soccer policing, told the AP. "At the moment, everything we are being told is that it was just a run-of-the-mill event."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Kansas: inmate overpowers, kills deputies
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/deputy-shot-dead-critically-injured-inmate-overpowered-courthouse/story?id=55925544
GIST	<p>Two sheriff's deputies were fatally shot when an inmate overpowered them near a Kansas courthouse on Friday, officials said.</p> <p>The deadly altercation took place about 11:30 a.m. when the two Wyandotte County sheriff's deputies in Kansas City pulled into the parking lot and were readying to transport inmates to court, said Kelli Bailiff of the sheriff's office.</p> <p>It's very possible the deputies were attacked with their own guns, Bailiff said.</p> <p>Deputy Patrick Rohrer, 35, was taken to a hospital where he later died, Kansas City police said.</p> <p>Deputy Theresa King, 44, was rushed to University of Kansas Medical Center in critical condition. She was pronounced dead about 12 hours later, just after midnight on Saturday.</p> <p>A suspect was also shot and taken to a hospital in unknown condition, Kansas City police officer Zac Blair said.</p> <p>Authorities aren't looking for any other suspects, Blair added.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 New Jersey art festival erupts in gunfire
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/injured-shooting-night-trenton-art-show/story?id=55955575
GIST	<p>One man was killed and 22 people were injured when gunfire erupted early Sunday between rival neighborhood gangs at what was supposed to be a family-oriented all-night art festival in New Jersey that was created in part to stop violence in the city, officials said.</p> <p>Police responding to a gunfight involving multiple suspects about 2:45 a.m. at the Art All Night event in Trenton shot and killed one of the alleged gunmen, Mercer County Prosecutor Angelo Onofri told ABC News. Another suspected gunman was in critical condition, he said.</p> <p>Of the 22 people injured, 17 were struck by gunfire, including a 13-year-old boy, Onofri said.</p> <p>He said the gunfire erupted inside the old Roebling Wireworks building, where the art festival was being held.</p> <p>"Prior to the shooting there were numerous physical altercations that took place inside and outside of the venue," Onofri said.</p> <p>Due to the fighting, the Trenton Police Department had ordered organizers to shut down the event.</p> <p>"Police began dispersing individuals. Those individuals, however, continued to loiter and additional fights broke out, and then the shooting occurred," Onofri said at a news conference Sunday afternoon that was attended by New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy.</p> <p>Onofri identified Tahij Wells, 33, as the alleged gunman who was killed by police. He said Wells had been released from prison in February after serving a sentence on homicide-related charges.</p> <p>He also identified Amir Armstrong, 23, as another suspect involved in the shootout. Armstrong was wounded and in critical condition Sunday evening, Wells said.</p> <p>He said police believe at least three men, possibly more, opened fire inside the venue where hundreds of</p>

	<p>people were attending the art festival. He said that when the shooting broke out, people ran in all directions seeking cover.</p> <p>"We believe it was multiple suspects shooting at each other," Onofri said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Police arrest prolific Walmart fraudster
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/man-charged-making-13-million-fraudulent-returns-walmart/story?id=55953882&cid=clicksource_81_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>Police in Arizona thought they were busting an ordinary case of a fraudulent return this week until some digging discovered the same 23-year-old man has perpetrated the scheme at thousands of Walmart stores across the country.</p> <p>Police in Yuma, Arizona, said they responded to a case of a fraudulent return on Wednesday afternoon in which a person bringing a computer back to Walmart had allegedly removed parts of the computer before putting it back in the box and taking it back to the store.</p> <p>Upon investigation, the Yuma Police Department found out the same man had pulled the same scheme at a different Walmart earlier in the day.</p> <p>Thomas Frudaker, 23, was arrested and booked into Yuma County Adult Detention Facility.</p> <p>Yuma police say Frudaker pulled similar schemes at more than 1,000 Walmart stores across the country over the past 18 months and caused a monetary loss of "approximately" \$1.3 million to Walmart.</p> <p>Frudaker was charged with six felonies, including two counts of theft, two counts of fraudulent schemes and artifices and two counts of criminal damage.</p> <p>He is due in court on Monday.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Spokane: woman injured in stabbing
SOURCE	http://www.khq.com/story/38444401/woman-hospitalized-in-north-spokane-stabbing
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. - On Sunday, just after 7 pm, Spokane Police responded to a stabbing call in the 600 block of E Providence Ave in Northeast Spokane. Officers arrived on scene in about two minutes, and located an adult female victim who was suffering from a stab wound. Officers immediately began providing first aid to the victim until SFD and AMR paramedics could take over care. The victim was transported to an area hospital with non-life threatening injuries.</p> <p>The suspect was located a few blocks away, as well as a knife believed to have been used in the attack. 23-year-old Ariel Ricco was booked into Spokane County Jail for assault 2nd degree. The incident does not appear to be random; early information indicates the assault stemmed from a dispute regarding living arrangements at a residence in the area. SPD is not currently looking for anyone else involved, and there is no on-going threat to the public.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 SeaTac: motel clerk shot, killed
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/06/16/motel-clerk-shot-killed-near-sea-tac-airport/
GIST	SEATAC, Wash. — King County sheriff's deputies are searching for whoever shot and killed a clerk at a motel south of Sea-Tac Airport.

	<p>Deputies responded to America's Best Value Inn on the 20600 block of International Boulevard South at about 11 p.m. Friday after an airport shuttle driver returned to the motel to find the clerk lying on the ground.</p> <p>The victim, a 40-year-old man, was transported to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle where he later died, according to officials.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Man sentenced 18yrs for rape
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/06/16/man-gets-18-years-in-rape-of-woman-he-met-on-craigslist/
GIST	<p>PORT ANGELES, Wash. (AP) — A 30-year-old man has been sentenced to over 18 years in prison for raping and assaulting a woman he met on Craigslist.</p> <p>The Peninsula Daily News reports 30-year-old Nikolas Clark was sentenced this week in Clallam County Superior Court.</p> <p>Port Angeles police say Clark repeatedly beat and raped a 24-year-old woman late last year after the woman refused to commit to an exclusive dating relationship with him.</p> <p>Clark entered an Alford plea May 3 to rape with forcible compulsion, rape, assault with strangulation, assault and assault in violation of a no-contact order. All five charges carried domestic violence enhancements.</p> <p>Clark apologized for his actions in court.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Redondo Beach: teens attack boater
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/06/16/teens-attack-boater-at-redondo-beach/
GIST	<p>A boater leaving Redondo Beach was attacked by a group of teens Saturday afternoon.</p> <p>Officers were called to the boat launch at Redondo Beach around 5:00 P.M. after a group of teens attacked a man retrieving his boat.</p> <p>The man, along with his wife were done boating for the day when they asked a group of teens to move their vehicles.</p> <p>The couple asked several times, but members from the group didn't comply and began attacking the man.</p> <p>Police say the victim was punched repeatedly, and at one point the man was threatened with a gun.</p> <p>Witnesses captured the incident on video, however the group noticed the recording and tried to damage the phone.</p> <p>The man's injuries didn't require medical aide. The group of about six to eight people left before police arrived.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/16 Man injured Seattle downtown stabbing
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/06/16/man-seriously-injured-in-downtown-seattle-stabbing/

GIST	<p>SEATTLE — A man was taken to the hospital, after being stabbed in downtown Seattle.</p> <p>The stabbing happened on 3rd Avenue and James Street, around 6:30 p.m. Saturday.</p> <p>Police say the victim, a 40-year-old man, suffered life-threatening injuries after being stabbed several times.</p> <p>Officers searched the area but didn't locate a suspect. Witnesses told police that a man was seen leaving the area after the attack.</p> <p>Police believe the suspect and victim are known to each other. The incident is still under investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Seattle: Belltown shooting leaves 1 injured
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/06/17/belltown-seattle-shooting-leaves-1-with-life-threatening-injuries/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Detectives hope to learn more information on a shooting Sunday in the Belltown neighborhood that sent one person to the hospital with life-threatening injuries.</p> <p>At about 2:20 a.m., Seattle police responded to a disturbance call on the 2200 block of 1st Avenue.</p> <p>According to reports, a number of shots were fired, and one person was struck several times, police said.</p> <p>A number of parked cars were struck by gunfire, as well as a nearby building.</p> <p>No suspect description has been released, and an investigation is ongoing.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Shoreline: man found dead in vehicle
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/06/17/man-found-dead-in-a-vehicle-with-gunshot-wounds/
GIST	<p>SHORELINE, Wash. -- A man was found dead inside a vehicle after he was shot Saturday night, according to the King County Sheriff's Office.</p> <p>Deputies found the 40-year-old on the 1500 block of Northeast 146th Street sometime before 10 p.m.</p> <p>A motive for the shooting was not immediately known. Also, no suspect description has been released.</p> <p>Detectives were on scene for most of the night contacting witnesses and following up on leads.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Redmond police shoot, kill suspect
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/06/14/redmond-police-shoot-and-kill-suspect-in-kirkland-safeway-parking-lot/
GIST	<p>KIRKLAND, Wash. - Redmond police detectives shot and killed a 39-year-old man in a Safeway parking lot Thursday night.</p> <p>Police said the detectives were searching in Kirkland for somebody they believed to be armed and dangerous, and shots were fired just before 5 p.m. at the Kingsgate Safeway when they encountered the possible suspect.</p> <p>The suspect -- an adult white man -- was hit and given aid, but ultimately died. Redmond police say they</p>

	<p>were investigating the man for alleged involvement in felony crimes in King County.</p> <p>No one else was injured.</p> <p>Police said it's unclear what, exactly, led to shots being fired. Police did say he was "not compliant" when investigators attempted to take him into custody.</p> <p>A handgun was found on the man.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/17 Tumwater: civilian shoots, kills gunman
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/06/17/shooting-at-walmart-in-tumwater/
GIST	<p>TUMWATER, Wash. -- A shooting outside a Walmart Supercenter in Tumwater Sunday evening was the end result of a crime spree from the now deceased gunman, police said. That gunman was killed by an armed civilian in the Walmart parking lot.</p> <p>Tumwater Police spokeswoman Laura Wohl said it all happened just after 5:30 p.m. when officers responded to an erratic driver. When officers were en route to that location they received reports of shots fired near Tumwater High School.</p> <p>Upon arriving, officers found a 16-year-old girl suffering from minor injuries. It also appeared that her car had been stolen.</p> <p>"As we were speaking to witnesses at that scene, we get another call of shots fired here at Walmart," Wohl said.</p> <p>Tumwater Police said the suspect tried to carjack two cars in the Walmart parking lot at 5900 Littlerock Rd SW.</p> <p>One driver was shot when he refused to give up his car, Wohl said. He was airlifted to Harborview Medical Center. His condition is unknown at this time.</p> <p>As the suspect tried to take a second car a "bystander here in the parking lot shot the suspect," Wohl said.</p> <p>According to a police release, two armed civilians initially approached the suspect.</p> <p>Police believe the gunman is the suspect in all three incidents. He has not been identified. There are no other suspects in the carjacking incidents or reported shootings.</p> <p>Police said there is no danger to the public.</p> <p>Before attempting the carjackings, Tumwater Police said the suspect went into the Walmart and fired at a display case. No customers or employees were injured.</p>
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<promed-bounces@promedmail.org> on behalf of
promed-request@promedmail.org <promed-request@promedmail.org>
To: promed@promedmail.org
<promed@promedmail.org>
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: ProMED Digest, Vol 72, Issue 60
Date: Sat Jun 16 2018 17:34:58 CDT
Attachments:

Today's Topics:

1. PRO/EDR> Poliomyelitis update (21): global (Pakistan, Venezuela)PAHO update (promed@promedmail.org)
2. PRO/AH/EDR> E. coli EHEC - USA (19): (UT, AZ) O157, 2017 (promed@promedmail.org)

Message: 1
Date: Sat, 16 Jun 2018 15:27:19 +0000
From: promed@promedmail.org
Subject: PRO/EDR> Poliomyelitis update (21): global (Pakistan, Venezuela)PAHO update
To: promed-post@promedmail.org, promed-edr-post@promedmail.org
Message-ID:
<01000164093533ab-4b1437a1-2b64-441f-b4b4-f213275fb6a0-000000@email.amazonses.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=UTF-8

POLIOMYELITIS UPDATE (21): GLOBAL (PAKISTAN, VENEZUELA) PAHO UPDATE

A ProMED-mail post
<<http://www.promedmail.org>>
ProMED-mail is a program of the
International Society for Infectious Diseases
<<http://www.isid.org>>

In this update:

- [1] Venezuela: PAHO epidemiological update
- [2] Global update (Pakistan, Venezuela), GPEI
- [3] Venezuela: GPEI update late Fri 15 Jun 2018

[1] Venezuela: PAHO epidemiological update
Date: Fri 15 Jun 2018
Source: Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Epidemiological Update

Poliomyelitis (see link at URL below) [edited]
<https://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_topics&view=article&id=257&Itemid=40900&lang=en>

Epidemiological update detection of Sabin type 3 vaccine poliovirus in a case of acute flaccid paralysis [15 Jun 2018]

Situation summary

The following is an updated information on the case of acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) with detection of Sabin type 3 vaccine poliovirus, previously reported in the PAHO/WHO Epidemiological Update of [8 Jun 2018] (*).

The case is a 34-month-old male, unvaccinated, resident of an indigenous community in Delta Amacuro [Orinoco Delta], Venezuela, with paralysis onset on [29 Apr 2018]. The clinical-epidemiological investigation carried out indicated that the flaccid paralysis of a lower limb persisted as of [11 Jun 2018]. Other children from the same community were vaccinated in April [2018] with a bivalent oral polio vaccine, so the case may have contracted the infection through the fecal-oral route.

The laboratory tests (genetic sequencing) recently performed in the regional reference laboratory confirmed the detection of Sabin type 3 poliovirus vaccine in the viral isolate obtained from this patient's sample collected on [30 Apr 2018]. The results of the isolated poliovirus sequencing showed that the virus did not present genetic variation with respect to the prototype vaccine strain (Sabin type 3), thus ruling out a vaccine derived poliovirus (VDPV).

The final classification of the case of AFP (to define whether or not it is associated with the vaccine) will be based on clinical and virological criteria; for this reason the evaluation of the residual neurological deficit is expected 60 days after the onset of the paralysis [28 Jun 2018].

Preliminary results of the field investigation carried out in the community where the case occurred had identified an 8-year-old girl with a vaccine history of at least 1 dose of tOPV (trivalent oral polio vaccine), suspected as AFP. The clinical evaluation subsequently carried out by health professionals has ruled out that this is a case of AFP.

No additional AFP cases have been identified to date through active search for AFP cases carried out in the community.

* PAHO/WHO. Detection of Sabin type 3 vaccine poliovirus in a case of Acute Flaccid Paralysis. 8 Jun 2018, Washington, DC: PAHO/WHO; 2018; available at <<https://bit.ly/2JBfJod>>

Advice to national authorities

The Pan American Health Organization / World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) reiterates to Member States the importance of reaching and maintaining polio vaccination coverage of more than 95 percent in each

district or municipality, maintaining high quality of epidemiological surveillance, and updating the national poliovirus outbreak response plans.

References

1. PAHO/WHO. Final report of the 3rd Ad-Hoc Meeting of the TAG. Ad-hoc Virtual Meeting, 19 March 2018; available at <<https://bit.ly/2Jt8lrH>>.
2. PAHO/WHO. Polio Weekly Bulletin, 2018; available at <<https://bit.ly/2JmhVR2>>
3. PAHO/WHO. Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV) Introduction; Frequently Asked Questions. 2014; available at <<https://www.paho.org/hq/dmdocuments/2014/IPV-IntroductionFAQ-e.pdf>>
4. WHO. Polio vaccines: WHO position paper - March 2016. Weekly Epidemiological Record. 2016; 12(91): 145168; available at: <<http://www.who.int/wer/2016/wer9112.pdf>>

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[This timely PAHO update rules out the possibility of more than one case of AFP in the community where this OPV3 associated AFP case resides, as well as reinforces the background information of recent introduction of bOPV (bivalent OPV including OPV1 and OPV3 viruses) into this community, preceding the onset of paralysis of this child.

We await further information as it becomes available.

A map showing the Orinoco Delta region of Venezuela, where the involved community is located, can be found at <https://geographic.org/geographic_names/name.php?uni=-1405762&fid=6621&c=venezuela>.

HealthMap/ProMED map of Delta Amacuro, Venezuela:
<<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/54707>>. - Mod.MPP]

[2] Global update (Pakistan, Venezuela), GPEI
Date: Thu 14 Jun 2018
Source: Global Polio Eradication Initiative/WHO [edited]
<<http://polioeradication.org/polio-today/polio-now/this-week/>>

Poliovirus weekly update, 13 Jun 2018, World Health Organization
New wild poliovirus cases reported this week: 1
New cVDPV cases reported this week: 0

Headlines

- In response to media reports about a polio case in Venezuela which emerged last week [week of 4 Jun 2018], the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) wishes to clarify that these reports cannot be confirmed at this time. An acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) case, a symptom which is caused by a number of different diseases (polio being just one of them), is currently being investigated. The child is 34

months old, and had onset of paralysis on [29 Apr 2018], from an under-immunized community in Orinoco delta, Delta Amacuro state. A Sabin type 3 poliovirus was isolated from stool samples of the AFP case, and is being further analyzed, including to determine if the paralysis was caused by the isolated strain. Final laboratory results are expected next week. Isolation of Sabin 3 poliovirus is not unusual, and can be expected in children and communities immunized with bivalent oral polio vaccine, which contains both attenuated type 1 and type 3 Sabin strains. As part of global polio surveillance efforts, every year more than 100 000 AFP cases are detected and investigated worldwide. WHO's Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the GPEI continue to support local public health authorities in conducting an epidemiological and field investigation into this event.

Summary of newly-reported viruses this week

Pakistan: 1 new wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) case reported

Afghanistan

- No new cases of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) have been reported this week. The total number of WPV1 cases in 2018 remains 8.
- The most recent case (by date of onset) occurred in Kandahar province, with onset of paralysis on [27 Apr 2018].
- During the May [2018] immunization campaign, vaccinators worked to reach over 9.6 million children with bivalent oral polio vaccine.

Pakistan

- 1 new case of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) was reported this week, bringing the total number of officially reported WPV1 cases in Pakistan in 2018 to 3. This latest case had onset of paralysis on 18 May [2018], from Duki, Balochistan.
- During the May [2018] immunization campaign, vaccinators worked to reach over 20 million children with bivalent oral polio vaccine.

Nigeria

- No new cases of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) were reported in the past week.
- The total number of WPV1 cases for 2016 is 4 and no cases have been reported in 2017 or 2018. The most recent WPV1 case (by date of onset) was reported in Monguno local government area, Borno state, with onset on [21 Aug 2016].
- Circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) is confirmed in Jigawa state. cVDPV2 has been isolated from environmental samples and 1 AFP case with onset of paralysis on [15 Apr 2018].
- Since confirmation of cVDPV2 in Nigeria, the country has conducted additional acute flaccid paralysis surveillance strengthening activities including enhanced active surveillance visits, and community sampling. The programme has also carried out extensive search for type 2 containing vaccines (tOPV/mOPV2) in the areas surrounding where the virus was detected.
- The GPEI is working with Regional and country counterparts and partners to supporting the local public health authorities to conduct outbreak response. This includes the implementation of 2 rounds of mOPV2 vaccination in May and June [2018] covering part of Jigawa, Gombe, Bauchi, and Sokoto.

Lake Chad Basin

- The detection of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) and circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) in Nigeria continue to pose a risk to the neighbouring countries of the Lake Chad basin.
- Emergency outbreak response efforts continue across the Lake Chad basin, together with activities to fill subnational surveillance gaps across the region.
- These activities include efforts to vaccinate children at markets, in internally displaced persons and refugee camps, and at international borders.
- In May [2018], 2 polio vaccination campaigns with bOPV took place, targeting vulnerable island populations in Lake Chad. These special vaccination activities concerned 8 health districts in Chad: Bagasola, Bol, Isseirom, Karal, Kouloudia, Liwa, Mani, and Ngouri.

Central Africa

- No new cases of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) were reported in the past week in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).
- The total number of officially reported cVDPV2 cases in the DRC in 2018 remains 4.
- The most recent case (by date of onset) was reported in Kikula district, Haut Katanga province, with onset on [19 Feb 2018].
- The Ministry of Health, supported by WHO and partners of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, remains fully committed to outbreak response in the affected provinces, including use of monovalent oral polio vaccine type 2 (mOPV2) across the country, in line with internationally-agreed outbreak response protocols.
- Surveillance and immunization activities are being strengthened in neighbouring countries.

Horn of Africa

- Since the beginning of this outbreak response, there has been no isolation of either cVDPV3 or cVDPV2 from acute flaccid paralysis cases or their contacts in either Somalia or Kenya. Virus has been isolated from environmental samples only.
- Outbreak response to both strains is currently being implemented, in line with internationally-agreed guidelines. Large-scale supplementary immunization activities (SIAs) have been implemented in Banadir, Lower Shabelle and Middle Shabelle regions, Somalia, with additional SIAs planned in the affected zones of the Horn of Africa. Special surveillance activities are being undertaken to determine the origin of the viral circulation.
- WHO and partners continue to support local public health authorities across the Horn of Africa in conducting field investigations and risk assessments.

Middle East

- No new cases of circulating vaccine derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) were reported in the past week in Syria.
- The total number of officially reported cVDPV2 cases in Syria in 2017 remains 74. There are no cases reported in 2018.
- The most recent case (by date of onset) was reported in Boukamal district, with onset on [21 Sep 2017].
- IPV vaccination continued in Raqqa governorate in April [2018] as part of the outbreak response. A total of 9257 children aged 2-23

months who were not covered during the February [2018] round were vaccinated in Tell Abyad district.

- In addition, Raqqa city was accessed for the 1st time with IPV. A total of 7215 children aged 2-23 months were vaccinated, representing 95 percent of the total target.

Officially reported wild poliovirus cases as of 12 Jun 2018

Total global cases in 2018: 11 (compared with 6 for the same period in 2017)

- Total in endemic countries in 2018: 11 (compared with 6 for the same period in 2017)

- Total in non-endemic countries in 2018: 0 (compared with 0 for the same period in 2017)

- Afghanistan: 8 cases in 2018 (compared with 4 for the same period in 2017), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 27 Apr 2018

- Pakistan: 3 cases in 2018 (compared with 2 for the same period in 2017), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 18 May 2018

- Nigeria: 0 case in 2018 (compared with 0 for the same period in 2017), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 21 Aug 2016

Total global cases in 2017: 22

- Total in endemic countries: 22

- Total in non-endemic countries: 0

Officially reported cVDPV cases as of 12 Jun 2018

Total global cases in 2018: 5 (compared with 6 for the same period in 2017)

- Syrian Arab Republic: 0 case in 2018 (compared with 2 for the same period in 2017), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 21 Sep 2017

- Democratic Republic of the Congo: 4 cases in 2018 (compared with 4 for the same period in 2017), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 19 Feb 2018

- Nigeria: 1 case in 2018 (compared with 0 for the same period in 2017), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 15 Apr 2018

Total global cases in 2017: 96

- Total in endemic countries: 0

- Total in non-endemic countries: 96

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[The report above officially confirms the earlier media report of an additional WPV1 case in Dukki district of Balochistan, Pakistan (also confirmed by the EpiCore Global Surveillance Project), now bringing the total number of WPV1 associated cases of polio during 2018 to 11, almost double that reported as of this date in 2017. Is this a true increase in cases? Or is this due to enhanced surveillance activities capturing closer to the true occurrence of cases? It is notable there is no mention of positive environmental samples during the past week. If this is not due to delayed surveillance reports, this may be a positive sign of interruption of WPV1 circulation in areas where

environmental sampling is being done. It also does not mention newly identified positive environmental samples involving cVDPVs....time will tell.

As for the situation in Venezuela, see the PAHO update in section [1] above. It is notable that there is no mention of the additional AFP cases mentioned in the media report...and that the focus of the investigation involves the solitary case with a reported OPV3 virus isolated from specimens taken from the case. In the original PAHO update (see Poliomyelitis update (19): Venezuela, vaccine virus found, VAPP susp <http://promedmail.org/post/20180609.5848416>), there was mention of a recent vaccination campaign held in the community, during April 2018, preceding the onset of paralysis in the suspected case mentioned above. It appears that reporting of the situation has been somewhat complicated by the local political situation, with incentives and disincentives for reporting among the different factions in the country.

HealthMap/ProMED map of Duki, Balochistan, Pakistan:
<<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/64226>>. - Mod.MPP]

[3] Venezuela: GPEI update late Fri 15 Jun 2018

Date: 15 Jun 2018

Source: Global Polio Eradication Initiative

<<http://polioeradication.org/news-post/update-on-suspected-polio-case-in-venezuela/>>

Following unconfirmed reports on [8 Jun 2018] of suspected polio re-emergence in Venezuela, final laboratory testing has confirmed the cause of the paralysis is not wild poliovirus or vaccine-derived poliovirus.

A 34-month old child had presented with symptoms of acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) on [29 Apr 2018], from a community with low vaccination coverage in Orinoco delta, Delta Amacuro state.

A Sabin type 3 poliovirus was isolated from stool samples of the child. Isolation of Sabin type 3 poliovirus can be expected in children and communities immunized with bivalent oral polio vaccine, which contains attenuated (weakened) type 1 and type 3 Sabin strains. Final laboratory analysis received today has confirmed that the AFP symptoms are not associated with wild or vaccine-derived poliovirus.

A number of conditions or infections can lead to AFP, poliovirus being just one of them. As part of global polio surveillance efforts, every year more than 100 000 AFP cases are detected and investigated worldwide. Clinical evaluation of the child is underway to determine the cause of the paralysis. The most important point is that the child should be provided with appropriate care and support.

While wild and vaccine-derived polio have both been ruled out as the cause of this child's symptoms, this area of Venezuela is experiencing vaccination coverage gaps. It is critical that countries maintain high immunity to polio in all communities, and strong disease surveillance, to minimize the risk and consequences of any eventual poliovirus

re-introduction or re-emergence.

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[The above "late breaking" information from the GPEI just came to my attention, hours after this post was prepared by me. To read between the lines, an interpretation of this report is consistent with the PAHO report in section [1] above, stating that the OPV3 virus isolated from this AFP case was a "pure" OPV3 virus, without genetic changes that might be consistent with a VDPV that had reverted in neurovirulence and its ability to continued transmission among a susceptible population. The confusion I have, is whether this is a definitive ruling out of this AFP case being classified as a VAPP (vaccine associated paralytic polio) case in a contact? Again, we await further information and clarification. - Mod.MPP]

[See Also:

Poliomyelitis update (20): (Pakistan) WPV1 conf
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180610.5849085>
Poliomyelitis update (19): Venezuela, vaccine virus found, VAPP susp
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180609.5848416>
Poliomyelitis update (18): Pakistan (BA) RFI:
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180609.5848153>
Poliomyelitis update (17): Venezuela, cases conf. global (Pakistan),
RFI <http://promedmail.org/post/20180607.5845259>
Poliomyelitis update (16): Global (Afghanistan), Pakistan
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180531.5831364>
Poliomyelitis update (15): Pakistan (BA) RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180529.5825949>
Poliomyelitis update (14): global, cVDPV Horn of Africa, PV2 post
erad. stocks <http://promedmail.org/post/20180526.5819775>
Poliomyelitis update (13): positive environmental samples
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180511.5791991>
Poliomyelitis update (12): global (Afghanistan, Pakistan)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180405.5728514>
Poliomyelitis update (11): global (Afghanistan, DR Congo)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180324.5706145>
Poliomyelitis update (10): Congo DR, cVDPV
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180316.5692109>
Poliomyelitis update (09): Afghanistan (WPV), Congo DR (cVDPV)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180315.5689842>
Poliomyelitis update (08): Somalia, cVDPV environmental samples
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180313.5684227>
Poliomyelitis update (07): (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Congo DR)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180208.5615989>
Poliomyelitis update (06): Global (Afghanistan)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180202.5603446>
Poliomyelitis update (05): Afghanistan, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180131.5597699>
Poliomyelitis update (04): global (Afghanistan, Pakistan), Nigeria
rumors <http://promedmail.org/post/20180125.5584166>
Poliomyelitis update (03): global (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Congo DR),

violence <http://promedmail.org/post/20180118.5569033>
Poliomyelitis update (02): (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Congo DR)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180113.5558200>
Poliomyelitis update (01): global (Afghanistan)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180105.5539242>
2017

Poliomyelitis update (47): Pakistan, global (Congo DR)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171229.5526565>
Poliomyelitis update (46): global (Pakistan, Afghanistan), Lake Chad Region
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171221.5518292>
Poliomyelitis update (45): Pakistan, Afghanistan, Gabon
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171214.5504166>
Poliomyelitis update (44): (Australia), pos. environmental sample, iVDPV2 iden.
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171215.5506586>
Poliomyelitis update (43): (Australia), positive environmental sample, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171215.5506172>
Poliomyelitis update (42): global (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171214.5504166>
Poliomyelitis update (41): Syria
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171213.5500907>
Poliomyelitis update (40): global (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171207.5489424>
Poliomyelitis update (30): global (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171012.5377178>
Poliomyelitis update (20): global (Syria, Afghanistan)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170720.5193070>
Poliomyelitis update (10): Syria (DY), Congo DR, cVDPV, WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170613.5103235>
Poliomyelitis (01): Pakistan (GB), global, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170314.4898724>
2016

Poliomyelitis update (21): IPV shortage, global
<http://promedmail.org/post/20161231.4733243>
Poliomyelitis update (01): India, VDPV, wild type-free
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160115.3939297>
.....mpp/mj/mpp/jh

Message: 2
Date: Sat, 16 Jun 2018 22:34:38 +0000
From: promed@promedmail.org
Subject: PRO/AH/EDR> E. coli EHEC - USA (19): (UT, AZ) O157, 2017
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<010001640abc6e21-cea2c720-c301-4bfe-b90c-e53c46b98e20-000000@email.amazonses.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=UTF-8

E. COLI EHEC - USA (19): (UTAH, ARIZONA) O157, 2017

A ProMED-mail post

<<http://www.promedmail.org>>
ProMED-mail is a program of the
International Society for Infectious Diseases
<<http://www.isid.org>>

Date: Thu 14 Jun 2018
Source: MMWR [edited]
<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6723a2.htm?s_cid=mm6723a2_w>

E. coli O157:H7 Infections Associated with Exposure to Animal Manure
in a Rural Community -- Arizona and Utah, June-July 2017

On 26 Jun 2017, a hospital in southern Utah notified the Utah Department of Health of Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli (STEC) [also referred to as enterohemorrhagic E. coli - EHEC - Mod.LL] O157:H7 infections in 2 children from a small community on the Arizona-Utah border. Both children developed hemolytic uremic syndrome, characterized by hemolytic anemia, acute kidney failure, and thrombocytopenia and died within a few days of illness onset. Over the next few days, several more EHEC-associated illnesses were reported in residents of the community. A joint investigation by local and state health agencies from Arizona and Utah and CDC was initiated to identify the outbreak source and prevent additional cases; a total of 12 cases were identified, including the 2 children who died. Investigators initially explored multiple potential sources of illness; epidemiologic and environmental information revealed cow manure contact as the likely initial cause of the outbreak, which was followed by subsequent person-to-person transmission. One of the outbreak strains was isolated from bull and horse manure collected from a yard near a community household with 2 ill children. Local health agencies made recommendations to the public related to both animal contact and hand hygiene to reduce the risk for EHEC transmission. Animal or animal manure contact should be considered a potential source of EHEC O157:H7 during outbreaks in communities where ruminants are kept near the home.

Epidemiologic Investigation

A case of EHEC O157:H7 infection was defined as an illness in a resident of the Centennial Park/Colorado City/Hildale community with onset of diarrhea after 1 Jun 2017, with 1) culture-confirmed EHEC O157:H7 with one of three novel pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) pattern combinations or 2) physician-diagnosed postdiarrheal hemolytic uremic syndrome. Cases were classified as secondary if contact with another case occurred 3 or more days before illness onset. Local health care facilities identified potential cases via syndromic surveillance and reported them to the Southwest Utah Public Health Department and the Mohave County (Arizona) Health Department. The Southwest Utah Public Health Department created several social media posts advising community residents with diarrhea to see a doctor because local health officials were concerned that adults in this community would not seek health care for themselves.

12 cases were identified, including 5 classified as secondary, from 8 separate households. Illness onset dates for the 12 patients ranged

from 10 Jun 2018 to 9 Jul 2017 (Figure 1 [for figures and table, see original URL - Mod.LL]). The median age of patients was 3 years (range equal to 1-28 years), and 11 were aged 6 years or older. Five cases occurred in females; 9 patients were hospitalized, 4 had hemolytic uremic syndrome, and 2 died.

All patients or their guardians were interviewed using a hypothesis-generating questionnaire containing questions about foods eaten, food source locations, travel, recreational water exposure, sources of drinking water, and animal contact during the week before illness onset. All 12 patients or their guardians reported shopping at grocery store A, and guardians of 6 of 7 patients with primary cases reported purchasing ground beef. The prevalence of ground beef consumption was significantly higher than that reported in the Foodborne Diseases Active Surveillance Network Population Survey (FoodNet; <<https://www.cdc.gov/foodnet/index.html>>) (86 percent versus 40 percent; p equal to 0.04) (1); however, local health officials suspected a higher typical ground beef consumption rate in this community than in the nation overall. Thus, other potential hypotheses were explored in a focus group discussion with 5 guardians of 4 ill children. Beef and watermelon consumption, contact with domestic and companion animals, and multiple exposures to recreational water emerged as common exposures.

A 1:3 matched case-control study was designed based on information from the focus group discussion. Guardians of 16 healthy children were recruited through an online survey posted to a closed Facebook group of current and past community residents. The voluntary survey included screening questions to determine their children's eligibility for participation. Community health workers used a focused questionnaire containing questions about consumption of ground beef and fresh produce, as well as all animal contact during the exposure period to interview the guardians of 6 of 7 patients with primary cases and guardians of 16 healthy age-matched controls. 3 of 6 ill children and three of 16 controls reported playing in an area that had animal manure (matched odds ratio equal to 7.7; 95 percent confidence interval equal to 0.8-71.3) (Table).

Contact tracing identified friendships, working relationships, or familial relationships between persons in all 8 households. Illness onset dates were consistent with hypothesized person-to-person contact (Figure 2). The 3 patients with the earliest illness onset dates (patients A, B, and C), including the 2 patients who died, lived in the same multifamily household with approximately 40 persons. After the 2nd patient died, the house was voluntarily vacated, and many persons moved within the community. Contact with animal manure was the hypothesized source of the initial illnesses, with further spread via secondary person-to-person transmission.

Laboratory Investigation

Officials from the Utah Department of Health and the Mohave County (Arizona) Health Department collected food, water, animal feed and manure, and environmental samples from various locations in the community. The Utah Public Health Laboratory and Arizona State Public Health Laboratory tested 143 samples for EHEC.

A total of 35 samples from grocery store A included ground beef and environmental samples from the meat grinder, meat preparation areas, and meat storage areas. Officials also collected samples of frozen ground beef from households and samples of animal manure from cattle (23), goats (5), horses (17), dogs (11), and other animals (6) in the Centennial Park/Colorado City/Hildale community. Drinking and recreational water samples (12) were collected from surrounding farms and creeks. Stool specimens were obtained from 11 patients.

EHEC was not isolated from any of the food or environmental samples from grocery store A. However, EHEC was isolated from the 11 patient specimens and 3 animal manure samples (2 horses and 1 bull). All isolates were further characterized by whole genome sequencing. Bioinformatic analysis (2) performed at the Utah Public Health Laboratory indicated the 11 clinical isolates, 1 bull manure isolate, and 2 horse manure isolates formed a single monophyletic clade with short branch lengths and high statistical support based on bootstrap statistical analysis of 1000 replicates. This finding indicated that all the isolates were highly related genetically and shared a common molecular evolutionary history. High-quality single-nucleotide polymorphism (hqSNP) analysis performed at CDC (3) indicated that the 11 clinical isolates, 1 bull manure isolate, and 2 horse manure isolates differed by 0-4 hqSNPs, suggesting that they were highly related genetically. EHEC O157:H7 was not isolated from samples from the source farms or animal feed.

Public Health Response

This multijurisdictional investigation involved daily collaboration among national, state, and local agencies facilitated by an incident command structure. Public communication and educational materials were developed by the Southwest Utah Public Health Department and disseminated by investigation partners, including a public health nurse who was a member of the community. Educational information focused on hygiene related to livestock, safe cooking, increased vigilance for gastrointestinal symptoms, and prevention of secondary transmission. No additional EHEC cases with the outbreak strain have been reported from this community since the conclusion of the investigation.

Discussion

In this outbreak, playing in an area with animal manure was associated with illness. The 5 ill children with the earliest illness onset dates lived in close proximity to one another and the culture-positive animal manure. EHEC can be shed intermittently by colonized animals, so additional animals might have carried the outbreak strain despite the lack of isolation from manure. Unlike ruminants, horses are not considered reservoirs for EHEC O157:H7 (4,5). The hypothesis is that the 2 horses were infected with the outbreak strain while living in proximity to the bull.

This investigation highlights the use of multiple epidemiologic methods, including hypothesis-generating questionnaires, focus group interviewing, a case-control study, and contact tracing in concert

with environmental and clinical testing in identifying the source of an outbreak. These methods were used to generate and test hypotheses regarding four modes of disease transmission: person-to-person, food, drinking and recreational water, and animal contact.

This investigation also highlights the importance of communication and outreach efforts to successful, sensitive public health investigations. The inclusion of a local public health nurse in the investigation team enhanced communication and facilitated both the focus group and contact tracing efforts within a community that had been wary of government officials during previous public health interventions.

The findings in this report are subject to at least three limitations. 1st, this outbreak spread through secondary person-to-person transmission, limiting the number of primary cases available for assessment of exposure frequencies for hypothesis generation. 2nd, for all methods used to investigate hypotheses, ill children or their guardians were contacted 1-6 weeks after the illness began, which could have resulted in inaccurate recall of food and animal contact. Finally, low health care utilization among members of the adult population might have resulted in unidentified cases. These limitations might have decreased the likelihood of statistically significant epidemiologic findings despite positive identification of the outbreak strain in animal manure.

Based on the epidemiologic and environmental data, it is likely that the initial source of this outbreak was contact with animals or their environments. Certain behaviors in the patients with primary cases might have contributed to initiation of the outbreak, such as lack of awareness of the risk for disease, inadequate hand washing, and hand-to-mouth behaviors. Subsequent person-to-person transmission resulted in a large, severe outbreak that included challenges in identifying the source. Strong multijurisdictional partnerships and a combination of epidemiologic methods were necessary to identify an outbreak source. Promoting adequate sanitation and hand washing practices around animal and manure exposure is critical to prevent future outbreaks.

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FEMS Microbiol Lett 2008;287:168-173.

[Authors: Luna S, Krishnasamy V, Saw L, et al]

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Communicated by:

ProMED-mail

<promed@promedmail.org>

[ProMED posted on this outbreak of EHEC disease in the southwestern USA. The report highlights the need for strict attention to the primary cases to assess the vehicle for transmission. As noted in the posting, horses are rarely linked to human EHEC cases. - Mod.LL

HealthMap/ProMED-mail maps:

Utah, United States: <<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/246>>

Arizona, United States: <<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/207>>]

[See Also:

E. coli EHEC - USA (18): (TN) raw milk, more cases

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180614.5856110>

E. coli EHEC - USA (17): (OR) O111, daycare center

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180613.5854733>

E. coli EHEC - USA (16): (TN) raw milk

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180607.5844304>

E. coli EHEC - USA (15): O157, romaine lettuce, more cases, fatal

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180604.5837662>

E. coli EHEC - USA (14): (WA) sandwich shops

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180527.5820803>

E. coli EHEC - USA (13): O157, romaine lettuce, increasing cases, fatality

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180517.5799620>

E. coli EHEC - USA (12): O157, romaine lettuce, increasing cases, fatality

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180510.5791677>

E. coli EHEC - USA (11): (OK) day care center

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180502.5780250>

E. coli EHEC - USA (10): O157, romaine lettuce, fatality

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180502.5780249>

E. coli EHEC - USA (09): O157, romaine lettuce

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180427.5771229>

E. coli EHEC - USA (08): (CA) military outbreak, undercooked beef,

2017 <http://promedmail.org/post/20180425.5769489>

E. coli EHEC - USA (07): O157, romaine lettuce

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180425.5769488>

E. coli EHEC - USA (06): O157, romaine lettuce

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180421.5761217>

E. coli EHEC - USA (05): O157, romaine lettuce

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180418.5756056>

E. coli EHEC - USA (04): O157, romaine lettuce

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180413.5745944>

E. coli EHEC - USA (03): O157, expansion of NJ outbreak

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180411.5738813>

E. coli EHEC - USA (02): (NJ) poss. restaurant chain link, RFI

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180405.5728398>

E. coli EHEC - USA: O157, leafy greens

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180110.5550773>

2017

E. coli EHEC - USA (39): relatedness to Canada isolates
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171229.5527271>
E. coli EHEC - Canada (14): O157, lettuce, fatal
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171222.5518867>
E. coli EHEC - Canada (13): O157, lettuce, fatal
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171215.5506384>
E. coli EHEC - Canada (12) : O157, lettuce
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171212.5497097>
E. coli EHEC - USA (38): (CA)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171212.5498214>
E. coli EHEC - USA (37): raw dough, FDA alert
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171202.5479176>
E. coli EHEC - USA (36): (CA) military outbreak, O157
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171111.5436982>
E. coli EHEC - USA (35): (CA) military outbreak, O157
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171104.5424631>
E. coli EHEC - USA (34): (CA) military outbreak, O157
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171103.5422415>
E. coli EHEC - USA (33): (CA) military outbreak, O157
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171102.5421203>
E. coli EHEC - USA (32): (CA) military outbreak, revised case numbers
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171102.5420166>
E. coli EHEC - USA (31): (CA) military outbreak
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171101.5417972>
E. coli EHEC - USA (30): (CA) military outbreak, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171031.5416569>
E. coli EHEC - USA (29): (MI) farm animal exposures, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171030.5410350>
E. coli EHEC - USA (28): (VT) O157, ground beef, alert, recall
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171014.5381117>
E. coli EHEC - USA (27): (WI) O157, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170921.5330484>
E. coli EHEC - USA (26): (MI) O157, antimicrobial resistance
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170824.5272308>
E. coli EHEC - USA (25): (CA) O157, recreational water
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170818.5258783>
E. coli EHEC - USA (24): (CO) county fair, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170811.5243577>
E. coli EHEC - USA (23): (CA) recreational water
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170810.5240983>
E. coli EHEC - USA (22): (CA) recreational water
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170804.5227891>
E. coli EHEC - USA (21): (CA) recreational water
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170802.5220799>
E. coli EHEC - USA (20): (CA) recreational water, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170731.5217061>
E. coli EHEC - USA (19): (UT, AZ) O157, fatalities, susp. livestock
exposure <http://promedmail.org/post/20170730.5215421>
E. coli EHEC - USA (18): (UT, AZ) O157, fatalities
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170727.5206988>
E. coli EHEC - USA (17): (OH) summer camp, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170724.5198725>
E. coli EHEC - USA (16) : (MN) fatality
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170721.5195217>
E. coli EHEC - USA (15): (UT) O157, fatalities

http://promedmail.org/post/20170711.5167176
E. coli EHEC - USA (14): (UT) O157, fatalities
http://promedmail.org/post/20170705.5152059
E. coli, EHEC - USA (13): (UT) fatalities, susp EHEC, RFI
http://promedmail.org/post/20170703.5147181
E. coli EHEC - USA (12): (TX)
http://promedmail.org/post/20170621.5121066
E. coli EHEC - USA (11): O157, deer droppings, water exposure, 2016
http://promedmail.org/post/20170511.5028649
E. coli EHEC - USA (10): O157, soynut butter
http://promedmail.org/post/20170505.5014128
E. coli EHEC - USA (09): (AR) fatality, unrelated cases
http://promedmail.org/post/20170422.4988037
E. coli EHEC - USA (08): (AR) fatality, RFI
http://promedmail.org/post/20170421.4984124
E. coli EHEC - USA (07): (MA) O157, restaurant chain, RFI
http://promedmail.org/post/20170414.4970974
E. coli EHEC - USA (06): O157, soynut butter
http://promedmail.org/post/20170405.4949992
E. coli EHEC - USA (05): O157, soynut butter, CDC update
http://promedmail.org/post/20170401.4941247
E. coli EHEC - USA (04): (OR) O157, soynut butter, preschool
http://promedmail.org/post/20170315.4902827
E. coli EHEC - USA (03): O157, soynut butter, more cases, recall
http://promedmail.org/post/20170308.4887992
E. coli EHEC - USA (02): O157, soynut butter
http://promedmail.org/post/20170307.4883675
E. coli EHEC - USA http://promedmail.org/post/20170302.4875298]
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Subject: ProMED Digest, Vol 72, Issue 33
Date: Sat Jun 09 2018 16:21:10 CDT
Attachments:

Today's Topics:

1. PRO/EDR> Poliomyelitis update (18): Pakistan (BA) RFI
(promed@promedmail.org)
2. PRO/AH/EDR> Rift Valley fever - Kenya (03): (WJ) camel,
human, OIE (promed@promedmail.org)
3. PRO/EDR> Poliomyelitis update (19): Venezuela, vaccine virus
found,VAPP susp (promed@promedmail.org)

Message: 1
Date: Sat, 9 Jun 2018 17:00:58 +0000
From: promed@promedmail.org
Subject: PRO/EDR> Poliomyelitis update (18): Pakistan (BA) RFI
To: promed-post@promedmail.org, promed-edr-post@promedmail.org
Message-ID:
<01000163e57e6f39-7bdb09e4-690e-46a7-8a51-214321dd6f2d-000000@email.amazonses.com>

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POLIOMYELITIS UPDATE (18): PAKISTAN (BALOCHISTAN) REQUEST FOR
INFORMATION

A ProMED-mail post
<<http://www.promedmail.org>>
ProMED-mail is a program of the
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Date: Fri 8 Jun 2018 2:45 PM PKT
Source: Urdu Point [edited]
<<https://www.urdupoint.com/en/health/third-case-of-polio-in-2018-surfaces-from-bal-366733.html>>

3rd case of polio in 2018 surfaces from Balochistan

A fresh case of polio has surfaced from Duki district of Balochistan. According to sources in the provincial health department, an 18 month old boy from Killi Babran of Duki fell victim to the virus that was diagnosed in him on Friday [8 Jun 2018] morning.

Sources in the health department said [the boy] was administered the anti-polio vaccine only once during the last 6 months. He was not found present at home 5 times during the polio drive.

This is the 3rd case of polio virus from Balochistan and all over Pakistan in 2018.

Prior to [this boy], 2 other children were diagnosed with polio from the same district, Duki, in March and May [2018]. In 2017, 3 cases of polio surfaced from Balochistan, while 2 were reported in 2016.

In 2015, 7 cases of polio virus surfaced from the province, while in 2014 the count was 25. The year 2013 saw no cases of the virus from Balochistan, while 4 were reported in 2012 and 73 in 2011. This makes the total number of cases from Balochistan 117 during the last 8 years.

[byline: Rukhshan Mir]

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<promed@promedmail.org>

[As stated in the media report above, this is now the 3rd case of polio reported from Duki district, Balochistan during 2018 (see prior ProMED-mail postings referenced below in the see also section for further details]. While the virus type involved in this case is not mentioned, given the preceding 2 cases with WPV1 isolated, it is highly likely this case will be due to a WPV1 infection. Once official confirmation is received, this will represent the 3rd case of polio confirmed in Pakistan during 2018, and the 11th case this year (2018).

Duki district in Balochistan borders with Afghanistan and is known to be an area with ongoing tribal conflicts. Female literacy is reported to be less than 10 per cent, with male literacy around 30 per cent. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duki_District,_Pakistan>).

More information on the poliovirus isolated would be greatly appreciated. - Mod.MPP

HealthMap/ProMED map of Duki, Balochist?n, Pakistan:
<<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/64226>>.]

[See Also:

Poliomyelitis update (17): Venezuela, cases conf. global (Pakistan), RFI <http://promedmail.org/post/20180607.5845259>

Poliomyelitis update (16): Global (Afghanistan), Pakistan <http://promedmail.org/post/20180531.5831364>

Poliomyelitis update (15): Pakistan (BA) RFI

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180529.5825949>
Poliomyelitis update (14): global, cVDPV Horn of Africa, PV2 post
erad. stocks <http://promedmail.org/post/20180526.5819775>
Poliomyelitis update (13): positive environmental samples
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180511.5791991>
Poliomyelitis update (12): global (Afghanistan, Pakistan)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180405.5728514>
Poliomyelitis update (11): global (Afghanistan, DR Congo)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180324.5706145>
Poliomyelitis update (10): Congo DR, cVDPV
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180316.5692109>
Poliomyelitis update (09): Afghanistan (WPV), Congo DR (cVDPV)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180315.5689842>
Poliomyelitis update (08): Somalia, cVDPV environmental samples
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180313.5684227>
Poliomyelitis update (07): (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Congo DR)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180208.5615989>
Poliomyelitis update (06): Global (Afghanistan)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180202.5603446>
Poliomyelitis update (05): Afghanistan, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180131.5597699>
Poliomyelitis update (04): global (Afghanistan, Pakistan), Nigeria
rumors <http://promedmail.org/post/20180125.5584166>
Poliomyelitis update (03): global (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Congo DR),
violence <http://promedmail.org/post/20180118.5569033>
Poliomyelitis update (02): (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Congo DR)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180113.5558200>
Poliomyelitis update (01): global (Afghanistan)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180105.5539242>
2017

Poliomyelitis update (47): Pakistan, global (Congo DR)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171229.5526565>
Poliomyelitis update (46): global (Pakistan, Afghanistan), Lake Chad
Region <http://promedmail.org/post/20171221.5518292>
Poliomyelitis update (45): Pakistan, Afghanistan, Gabon
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171214.5504166>
Poliomyelitis update (44): (Australia), pos. environmental sample,
iVDPV2 iden. <http://promedmail.org/post/20171215.5506586>
Poliomyelitis update (43): (Australia), positive environmental sample,
RFI <http://promedmail.org/post/20171215.5506172>
Poliomyelitis update (42): global (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171214.5504166>
Poliomyelitis update (41): Syria
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171213.5500907>
Poliomyelitis update (40): global (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171207.5489424>
Poliomyelitis update (30): global (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171012.5377178>
Poliomyelitis update (20): global (Syria, Afghanistan)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170720.5193070>
Poliomyelitis update (10): Syria (DY), Congo DR, cVDPV, WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170613.5103235>
Poliomyelitis (01): Pakistan (GB), global, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170314.4898724>
2016

Poliomyelitis update (21): IPV shortage, global
<http://promedmail.org/post/20161231.4733243>
Poliomyelitis update (01): India, VDPV, wild type-free
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160115.3939297>
.....sb/mpp/mj/sh

Message: 2
Date: Sat, 9 Jun 2018 17:12:32 +0000
From: promed@promedmail.org
Subject: PRO/AH/EDR> Rift Valley fever - Kenya (03): (WJ) camel,
human, OIE
To: promed-post@promedmail.org, promed-edr-post@promedmail.org,
promed-ahead-post@promedmail.org
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RIFT VALLEY FEVER - KENYA (03): (WAJIR) CAMEL, HUMAN, OIE

A ProMED-mail post
<<http://www.promedmail.org>>
ProMED-mail is a program of the
International Society for Infectious Diseases
<<http://www.isid.org>>

Date: Fri 8 Jun 2018
Source: OIE, WAHID (World Animal Health Information Database), weekly
disease information 2018; 31(24) [edited]
<http://www.oie.int/wahis_2/public/wahid.php/Reviewreport/Review?page_refer=MapFullEventReport&reportid=26827>

Rift Valley fever, Kenya

Information received on [and dated] 8 Jun 2018 from Dr Obadiah Nyaga
Njagi, director of veterinary services, Directorate of Veterinary
Services, State Department of Livestock, Ministry of Agriculture,
Livestock and Fisheries, Nairobi, Kenya

Summary
Report type: immediate notification
Date of start of the event: 3 Jun 2018
Date of confirmation of the event: 6 Jun 2018
Report date: 8 Jun 2018
Date submitted to OIE: 8 Jun 2018
Reason for notification: recurrence of a listed disease
Date of previous occurrence: 18 Nov 2017
Manifestation of disease: clinical disease
Causal agent: Rift Valley fever virus
Nature of diagnosis: suspicion
This event pertains to a defined zone within the country

New outbreaks (1)

Summary of outbreaks

Total outbreaks: 1

Outbreak 1: Basir, Wajir

Date of start of the outbreak: 3 Jun 2018

Outbreak status: continuing (or date resolved not provided)

Epidemiological unit: farm

Total animals affected

Species / Susceptible / Cases / Deaths / Killed and disposed of / Slaughtered

Camelidae / 250 / 25 / 17 / 0 / 0

Affected population: the suspected cases were reported in a pastoral area which was experiencing floods due to heavy rainfall.

Outbreak statistics [rates apparent, in percentages]

Species / Morbidity rate / Mortality rate / Case fatality rate /

Proportion susceptible animals lost*

Camelidae / 10 / 6.8 / 68 / 6.8

*Removed from the susceptible population through death, destruction, and/or slaughter

Epidemiology

Source of the outbreak(s) or origin of infection: vectors

Epidemiological comments

The area has experienced rainfall above normal and increased mosquito population. Human cases have been reported in the region. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Livestock have started a joint investigation. Further news will be reported in follow-up reports.

Control measures

Measures applied: movement control inside the country, surveillance within containment and/or protection zone, quarantine, vector surveillance, ante- and postmortem inspections, vaccination permitted (if a vaccine exists), no treatment of affected animals

Measures to be applied: no other measures

Diagnostic test results

Central veterinary investigation laboratory (national laboratory)

Species / Test / Test date / Result

Camelidae enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) / 6 Jun 2018 / Inconclusive

Future reporting

The event is continuing. Weekly follow-up reports will be submitted.

[The location of the outbreak can be seen on the interactive map at the source URL above.]

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[Although the laboratory results from animals were inconclusive, human cases in that same area have been reported and confirmed. Based on the

epidemiological comments, "the area has experienced rainfall above normal and increased mosquito population. Human cases have been reported in the region."

Simultaneously with the reporting of RVF in animals in Wajir (located in Kenya's former North Eastern Province, inhabited mainly by Somalis), the zoonotic virus has, according to the media, caused clinical disease in humans with 4 reported mortalities so far (<http://promedmail.org/post/20180609.5847216>). Those should not surprise: an alert was issued by the Kenyan Government on 21 May 2018, "for a possible outbreak of the deadly Rift Valley fever in the wake of prolonged rainfall." The joint statement from the Ministries of Health and Agriculture identified 17 flood prone counties, among them Mombasa, Baringo, and Nairobi, to be at higher risk. According to the published alert, at that point in time no case of the zoonotic disease was yet identified in livestock or humans (see <http://promedmail.org/post/20180531.5830703> and <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/health/article/2001281213/state-issues-alert-on-rift-valley-fever-outbreak>).

According to OIE's Terrestrial Manual, "Camels have been regularly involved in the RVF epidemics in East Africa, Egypt, and more recently Mauritania. Clinical disease is usually not seen in adult camels, but sudden deaths, abortion and some early post-natal deaths have been observed."

After the initial identification of RVF virus as the cause of a significant disease in humans and sheep, in Kenya (1931), the disease was considered, during more than 30 following years, to affect, among domestic animals, 3 species: sheep (most susceptible), cattle and (least susceptible) goats.

In 1963, camels were added to the list, when infection was reported in them for the 1st time, during an RVF event in north eastern Kenya in 1962 (ref 1). The report said: "Early in 1962 abortions in camels were reported. The camels were 6-8 months pregnant and there were no other signs of illness." Serological investigations in 60 sera samples from 2 affected locations, Wajir (the site of the current event) and Marsabit (30 camels sampled in each), revealed that 27 camels (45 per cent) had neutralising antibodies for RVF. The incidence in camels from Wajir was 43 per cent. and in those from Marsabit 47 per cent. The authors stated: "Virtually the whole of the 1962 crop of camel foals was lost, but whether the abortions were caused by RVF virus can never be known. Nevertheless, the similarities in the incidences in the various age groups suggest that a recent widespread epidemic had occurred in the Northern Frontier Province of Kenya and that the disease was not endemic."

Later, several events of RVF involving dromedary camels (East Africa, Mauritania) and alpacas (South Africa) confirmed clinical RVF in camelidae.

For a paper describing morbidity and mortality due to RVF in dromedary camels in Mauritania, with pictures presenting the observed clinical signs, see ref 2.

Outbreaks of RVF are closely associated with periods of heavy rains and prolonged flooding, as those driven by the warm phase of the El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) phenomenon, increasing habitat suitability for vector populations. In East Africa, RVF epidemics take place periodically every 10-15 years; the last major outbreak occurred in 2006-2007. RVF is more likely to affect small ruminants and cattle.

References

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1. Scott GR, Coackley W, Roach RW, Cowdy NR. Rift Valley fever in camels. *J Path Bact.* 1963; 86 (1): 229-31.
 2. El Mamy ABO, Baba MO, Barry Y, et al. Unexpected Rift Valley fever outbreak, Northern Mauritania. *Emerg Infect Dis.* 2011; 17(10): 1894-6. doi: 10.3201/eid1710.110397.
- Mods.AS/CRD

HealthMap/ProMED-mail map of Wajir, Kenya:
<<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/597>>.]

[See Also:

- Rift Valley fever - Kenya (02): (WJ) susp
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180609.5847216>
Rift valley fever - Kenya: alert, prevention
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180531.5830703>
Rift Valley fever - South Sudan (09): (EL) human, animal, WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180410.5735975>
Rift Valley fever - South Sudan (08): (EL) animal, human, WHO, FAO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180313.5683274>
Rift Valley fever - South Sudan (07): (EL)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180312.5682186>
Rift Valley fever - South Sudan (06): (EL) livestock, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180310.5678018>
Rift Valley fever - South Sudan (05): (EL) bovine, OIE
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180309.5675819>
Rift Valley fever - South Sudan (04): (EL)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180309.5675244>
Rift Valley fever - South Sudan (03): (EL)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180206.5611318>
Rift Valley fever - South Sudan (02): (EL)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180130.5595636>
Rift Valley fever - South Sudan: (EB) WHO, susp, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180119.5568536>
Undiagnosed hemorrhagic illness - South Sudan: (EL) fatal
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180109.5545676>
Rift Valley fever - Gambia: (BJ) WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180124.5582524>
Rift Valley fever - Uganda
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180124.5582417>
2017

Rift Valley fever - Europe: vector competence
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170811.5243601>
Rift Valley fever - Nigeria: livestock, serology, OIE
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170727.5209912>
Rift Valley fever - Mali (02): (KK)

<http://promedmail.org/post/20170721.5195838>
Rift Valley fever - Mauritania: RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170605.5085590>
Rift Valley fever - Niger: livestock, human, risk assessment, FAO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170404.4947846>
Rift Valley fever - Mali: (GO) ovine, caprine, OIE
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170128.4799130>
2016

Rift Valley fever - Niger (05): (TH)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20161121.4643103>
Rift Valley fever - Niger (04): (TH)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20161014.4560906>
Rift Valley fever - Niger (03): (TH) livestock, human
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160929.4525684>
Rift Valley fever - Niger (02): (TH), livestock, human,
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160922.4506785>
Rift Valley fever - Niger: (TH) livestock, OIE
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160920.4501514>
Undiagnosed deaths, camels - Kenya: (MB) RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160128.3973561>
2013

Rift Valley Fever, Sheep, goat and Camelidae - Mauritania, Senegal:
OIE <http://promedmail.org/post/20131018.2008030>
2011

Rift Valley fever - South Africa (05): ovine, vaccine policy
<http://promedmail.org/post/20110201.0377>
Rift Valley fever - South Africa (04): camelidae
<http://promedmail.org/post/20110201.0374>
Rift Valley fever - South Africa (03): livestock, OIE, vaccination,
<http://promedmail.org/post/20110129.0350>
Rift Valley fever - South Africa (02): ovine, vaccination, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20110125.0304>
Rift Valley fever - South Africa: (WC) ovine OIE
<http://promedmail.org/post/20110119.0224>
Undiagnosed disease, camel - Kenya: RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20110222.0586>
2010

Rift Valley fever, animal - South Africa (02): control strategy
<http://promedmail.org/post/20100606.1886>
Rift Valley fever - Kenya: alert, prevention
<http://promedmail.org/post/20100520.1675>
2008

Rift Valley fever - Kenya (02): (NE), alert, prevention
<http://promedmail.org/post/20081114.3586>
Rift Valley fever - Kenya: multiple virus lineages
<http://promedmail.org/post/20080915.2881>
.....crd/arn/mj/sh

Message: 3

Date: Sat, 9 Jun 2018 21:20:59 +0000
From: promed@promedmail.org
Subject: PRO/EDR> Poliomyelitis update (19): Venezuela, vaccine virus found,VAPP susp
To: promed-post@promedmail.org, promed-edr-post@promedmail.org
Message-ID:
<01000163e66c7b27-2f71f928-7452-43cf-9948-bca4c409b202-000000@email.amazonses.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=UTF-8

POLIOMYELITIS UPDATE (19): VENEZUELA, VACCINE VIRUS FOUND,
VACCINE-ASSOCIATED PARALYTIC POLIO SUSPECTED

A ProMED-mail post
<<http://www.promedmail.org>>
ProMED-mail is a program of the
International Society for Infectious Diseases
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In this update:
[1] PAHO Epidemiological update
[2] Comment

[1] PAHO Epidemiological update
Date: Fri 8 Jun 2018
Source: Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Epidemiological Update
Poliomyelitis [edited] [[link to PDF](#)]
<https://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_topics&view=article&id=257&Itemid=40900&lang=en>

Detection of Sabin type 3 vaccine poliovirus in a case of acute
flaccid paralysis

Situation summary

On [7 Jun 2018], the World Health Organization (WHO) International Health Regulations (IHR) Regional Contact Point received an unofficial report on the detection of Sabin type 3 vaccine poliovirus in a sample of a Venezuelan patient with acute flaccid paralysis (AFP). The same day [7 Jun 2018], a request for verification was sent to the Venezuela IHR National Focal Point (NFP).

On [8 Jun 2018], PAHO/WHO received updated information. The case is child aged 2 years and 10 months, with no history of vaccination, resident of an under-immunized indigenous community in Delta Amacuro, Venezuela; with paralysis onset on [29 Apr 2018]. As of [31 May 2018], the flaccid paralysis persisted in a lower limb. A Sabin type 3 vaccine poliovirus was isolated and typified by the national reference laboratory, the National Institute of Hygiene "Rafael Rangel" (INHRR), in the sample of this patient obtained on [30 Apr 2018]. The sample will be sent to a regional reference laboratory for confirmatory testing. Other children from the same community were vaccinated in April 2018 with oral bivalent polio vaccine.

The ongoing field investigation identified an 8 year old girl, resident of the same community with a vaccine history of at least 1 dose of tOPV, who presented flaccidity in a lower limb. No additional AFP cases have been identified to date through active search for AFP cases carried out in the community.

Advice to national authorities

PAHO/WHO reiterates to member states the importance of reaching and maintaining polio vaccination coverage of more than 95 per cent in each district or municipality, maintaining high quality of epidemiological surveillance, and updating the national poliovirus outbreak response plans.

References

1. PAHO/WHO. Final report of the 3rd Ad-Hoc Meeting of the TAG. Ad-hoc Virtual Meeting, 19 March 2018. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2Jt8lrH>>
2. PAHO/WHO. Polio Weekly Bulletin, 2018. Available at: <<https://bit.ly/2JmhVR2>>

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[2] Comment

Date: Thu 7 Jun 2018

From: T Jacob John, <tjacobjohn@yahoo.co.in>

The polio could be VAPP following infection with Sabin 3 in OPV. This is to supplement your comment that it could be WPV3 or cVDPV-3.

Sabin 3 is the commonest cause of VAPP in OPV-given children. It is usually sporadic, since PV-3 is a very inefficient spreader. Hope we will have a clear picture very soon.

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T Jacob John
Retired Prof and Head of Department of Clinical Virology
Christian Medical College, Vellore
India
<tjacobjohn@yahoo.co.in>

[The above information provides more detailed technical description on the reported case of acute flaccid paralysis in Venezuela. From the information provided it appears as though this child's illness would be classified as a case of VAPP -- vaccine-associated paralytic poliomyelitis -- in a contact of a recently vaccinated individual. VAPPs can occur in recipients of the OPV (oral poliovirus vaccine) or in close contacts of recently vaccinated individuals. The incidence of VAPP cited by WHO is approximately 1 per 2.7 million doses. Cases of VAPP are distinctly different from those associated with cVDPV where the virus has undergone significant changes in neurovirulence and have

not been reported to cause outbreaks.

When I was involved with polio surveillance as an Epidemic Intelligence Service [EIS] officer at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (many moons ago), in the era when the USA was using OPV as the primary vaccine for polio prevention, the overwhelming majority of polio cases confirmed in the USA were cases of VAPP in both recipients as well as contacts (usually parents of recently vaccinated children). As always, Professor T Jacob John was right on target with his excellent reminder comment in response to my original post. Unfortunately in my haste to post on the media report, I got as far as the VDPV discussion but neglected to mention the possibility of this being a VAPP, which Prof T Jacob John rightfully reminded me and to whom I am very grateful.

The disconcerting information in the above report (and in the media report we posted on 7 Jun 2018) is the mention of a possible 2nd case of AFP in this community. The other disconcerting information from the original media report was the noticeable absence of mention of a vaccination campaign in the affected community preceding the onset of illness, but rather a comment that there had been no vaccination in the community since 2016. An apparent manipulation of the facts.

We await further information on confirmatory testing by the reference laboratory as well as additional information on this 2nd AFP case.

A map showing the Orinoco Delta region of Venezuela, where the involved community is located, can be found at
<https://geographic.org/geographic_names/name.php?uni=-1405762&fid=6621&c=venezuela>.

The HealthMap/ProMED map of Venezuela can be found at
<<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/29>>. - Mod.MPP]

[See Also:

Poliomyelitis update (18): Pakistan (BA) RFI:

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180609.5848153>

Poliomyelitis update (17): Venezuela, cases conf. global (Pakistan),

RFI <http://promedmail.org/post/20180607.5845259>

Poliomyelitis update (16): Global (Afghanistan), Pakistan

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180531.5831364>

Poliomyelitis update (15): Pakistan (BA) RFI

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180529.5825949>

Poliomyelitis update (14): global, cVDPV Horn of Africa, PV2 post

erad. stocks <http://promedmail.org/post/20180526.5819775>

Poliomyelitis update (13): positive environmental samples

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180511.5791991>

Poliomyelitis update (12): global (Afghanistan, Pakistan)

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180405.5728514>

Poliomyelitis update (11): global (Afghanistan, DR Congo)

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180324.5706145>

Poliomyelitis update (10): Congo DR, cVDPV

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180316.5692109>

Poliomyelitis update (09): Afghanistan (WPV), Congo DR (cVDPV)

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180315.5689842>

Poliomyelitis update (08): Somalia, cVDPV environmental samples

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180313.5684227>

Poliomyelitis update (07): (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Congo DR)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180208.5615989>
Poliomyelitis update (06): Global (Afghanistan)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180202.5603446>
Poliomyelitis update (05): Afghanistan, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180131.5597699>
Poliomyelitis update (04): global (Afghanistan, Pakistan), Nigeria
rumors <http://promedmail.org/post/20180125.5584166>
Poliomyelitis update (03): global (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Congo DR),
violence <http://promedmail.org/post/20180118.5569033>
Poliomyelitis update (02): (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Congo DR)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180113.5558200>
Poliomyelitis update (01): global (Afghanistan)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180105.5539242>
2017

Poliomyelitis update (47): Pakistan, global (Congo DR)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171229.5526565>
Poliomyelitis update (46): global (Pakistan, Afghanistan), Lake Chad
Region <http://promedmail.org/post/20171221.5518292>
Poliomyelitis update (45): Pakistan, Afghanistan, Gabon
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171214.5504166>
Poliomyelitis update (44): (Australia), pos. environmental sample,
iVDPV2 iden. <http://promedmail.org/post/20171215.5506586>
Poliomyelitis update (43): (Australia), positive environmental sample,
RFI <http://promedmail.org/post/20171215.5506172>
Poliomyelitis update (42): global (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171214.5504166>
Poliomyelitis update (41): Syria
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171213.5500907>
Poliomyelitis update (40): global (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171207.5489424>
Poliomyelitis update (30): global (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171012.5377178>
Poliomyelitis update (20): global (Syria, Afghanistan)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170720.5193070>
Poliomyelitis update (10): Syria (DY), Congo DR, cVDPV, WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170613.5103235>
Poliomyelitis (01): Pakistan (GB), global, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170314.4898724>
2016

Poliomyelitis update (21): IPV shortage, global
<http://promedmail.org/post/20161231.4733243>
Poliomyelitis update (01): India, VDPV, wild type-free
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160115.3939297>
.....mpp/ao/sh

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End of ProMED Digest, Vol 72, Issue 33

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promed-request@promedmail.org <promed-request@promedmail.org>
To: promed@promedmail.org
<promed@promedmail.org>
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: ProMED Digest, Vol 72, Issue 25
Date: Thu Jun 07 2018 22:35:22 CDT
Attachments:

Today's Topics:

1. PRO/AH> Newcastle disease, poultry - USA (04): (CA) more cases (promed@promedmail.org)
2. PRO/EDR> Poliomyelitis update (17): Venezuela, cases conf. global(Pakistan), RFI (promed@promedmail.org)

Message: 1
Date: Thu, 7 Jun 2018 20:29:31 +0000
From: promed@promedmail.org
Subject: PRO/AH> Newcastle disease, poultry - USA (04): (CA) more cases
To: promed-post@promedmail.org, promed-ahead-post@promedmail.org
Message-ID:
<01000163dbf0a44a-e260e2fb-169b-43f0-86b2-1f361b967d2a-000000@email.amazonses.com>

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NEWCASTLE DISEASE, POULTRY - USA (04): (CALIFORNIA) MORE CASES

A ProMED-mail post
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<<http://www.isid.org>>

Date: Wed 6 Jun 2018
Source: US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) [edited]
<<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDAAPHIS/bulletins/1f56b1f>>

USDA confirms additional cases of virulent Newcastle disease in backyard birds in California

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant

Health Inspection Service confirmed 3 additional cases of virulent Newcastle disease in backyard birds in San Bernardino County, California.

A complete list of confirmed cases is available on our website at <www.aphis.usda.gov/animalhealth/vnd>.

Virulent Newcastle disease has not been found in commercial poultry in the United States since 2003.

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[The count today is as follows for the 13 outbreaks to date:
17 May 2018, first case confirmed in Los Angeles county;
24 May 2018, first outbreak confirmed in San Bernadino county;
26 May 2018, 4 outbreaks confirmed in San Bernadino county;
30 May 2018, 3 outbreaks confirmed in San Bernadino county;
1 Jun 2018, 1 case confirmed in San Bernadino county;
4 Jun 2018, 2 outbreaks confirmed in San Bernadino county;
5 Jun 2018, 1 outbreak confirmed in San Bernadino county.
The chronological distribution of cases reflects more a pattern of discovery more than of onset. - Mod.MHJ

HealthMap/ProMED-mail map of California, United States:
<<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/204>>
]

[See Also:
Newcastle disease, poultry - USA (03): (CA) more cases
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180604.5838532>
Newcastle disease, poultry - USA (02): (CA) more cases
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180601.5832993>
Newcastle disease, poultry - USA: (CA) virulent strain
<http://promedmail.org/post/20180518.5804931>
2003

Newcastle disease, game fowl, plty - USA (CA) (10)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20030227.0494>
Newcastle disease, game fowl, plty. - USA (west)(02)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20030211.0372>
Newcastle disease, game fowl, plty. - USA (west)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20030206.0318>
Newcastle disease, game fowl, plty - USA(CA)(09): corr
<http://promedmail.org/post/20030221.0454>
Newcastle disease, game fowl, plty - USA (CA) (09)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20030219.0434>
Newcastle disease, game fowl, plty. - USA (CA) (08)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20030211.0373>
Newcastle disease, game fowl, plty. - USA (CA) (07)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20030210.0361>
Newcastle disease, game birds, poultry - USA (CA) (06)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20030209.0353>
Newcastle disease, game birds, poultry - USA (CA) (05)

<http://promedmail.org/post/20030117.0145>
Newcastle disease, game birds, poultry - USA (CA)(04)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20030116.0129>
Newcastle disease, game birds, poultry - USA (CA)(03)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20030108.0060>
Newcastle disease, game birds, poultry - USA (CA) (02)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20030104.0021>
Newcastle disease, game birds, poultry - USA (CA)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20030103.0014>
Newcastle disease, game fowl, plty. - USA (CA,NV) (02)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20030204.0304>
Newcastle disease, game fowl, poultry - USA (CA, NV)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20030127.0246>
2002

Newcastle disease, game birds, poultry - USA (CA)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20021228.6147>
Newcastle disease, game birds - USA (CA) (11)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20021221.6104>
Newcastle disease, game birds - USA (CA) (10)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20021216.6077>
Newcastle disease, game birds - USA (CA) (09)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20021208.6014>
Newcastle disease, game birds - USA (CA) (08)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20021203.5958>
Newcastle disease, game birds - USA (CA) (07)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20021125.5893>
Newcastle disease, game birds - USA (CA) (06)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20021112.5780>
Newcastle disease, game birds - USA (CA) (05)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20021101.5689>
Newcastle disease, game birds - USA (CA) (04)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20021026.5646>
Newcastle disease, game birds - USA (CA) (03)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20021019.5603>
Newcastle disease, game birds - USA (CA) (02)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20021012.5533>
Newcastle disease, game birds - USA (CA): OIE
<http://promedmail.org/post/20021004.5468>
.....mhj/ao/sh

Message: 2
Date: Fri, 8 Jun 2018 03:35:20 +0000
From: promed@promedmail.org
Subject: PRO/EDR> Poliomyelitis update (17): Venezuela, cases conf.
global(Pakistan), RFI
To: promed-post@promedmail.org, promed-edr-post@promedmail.org
Message-ID:
<01000163dd767d01-cdab5158-e1c4-4a68-9b60-f874da6513b2-000000@email.amazonses.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=UTF-8

POLIOMYELITIS UPDATE (17): VENEZUELA, CASES CONFIRMED, GLOBAL

(PAKISTAN) REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

A ProMED-mail post
<<http://www.promedmail.org>>
ProMED-mail is a program of the
International Society for Infectious Diseases
<<http://www.isid.org>>

In this update:
[1] Venezuela, 1 case PV3, RFI - media report
[2] Global, Pakistan 1 new case - GPEI

[1] Venezuela, 1 case PV3 RFI - media report
Date: Thu 7 Jun 2018 11:11 am
Source: El Pitazo [in Spanish, trans. Mod.MPP, edited]
<<https://elpitazo.com/ultimas-noticias/confirman-un-caso-de-poliomielitis-en-delta-amacuro/>>

[The information below comes from the media report, with the elimination of political overtones and interpretations as our primary concern at ProMED-mail is to communicate technical information. - Mod.MPP]

Confirmed polio case in Delta Amacuro
The Regional Health Directorate of the Delta Amacuro area detected 2 more children with the symptoms of the disease, of which 1 had the incomplete vaccination scheme.

A new epidemic is beginning to resurface in the country due to the [lower] vaccination coverages in the population. The Venezuelan Society of Public Health and National Epidemiology Network Defenders reported that at least 4 cases were diagnosed with acute paralysis (poliomyelitis) in La Playita del Volcan, a community in the Delta Amacuro state. [note that only 3 cases are described in this article. -Mod.MPP] The affected individuals belong to the indigenous ethnic Warao group.

The virus that causes this condition [polio] resurfaced 3 weeks ago. According to the information that was provided unofficially, the 1st case corresponding to a 5-year-old boy with no history of having received polio vaccine, who during the month of April [2018] presented with a flu-like picture. "He was evaluated for inability to walk, and lower back pain without a history of trauma; previously he had been admitted to an emergency department with the impression of lumbar trauma, hip arthritis, and was evaluated by a pediatrician during 3 days, who identified that the child was unable to sit up and had flaccid [paralysis] of both lower extremities, and the diagnosis was changed to acute flaccid paralysis, having ruled out [the diagnosis of] Guillain-Barre syndrome, "according to the communication from the organizations".

They specified that the Regional Epidemiology Department of the Ministry of Health was notified of the case and the specimens were sent for diagnosis. The patient was treated with immunoglobulin and steroids. The specimens were processed by the Rafael Rangel National

Hygiene Institute and confirmed that the child was infected with a type 3 polio virus [no mention if virus is WPV3 or a cVDPV3 - see Moderator comment below. - Mod.MPP]. It was known that the patient is clinically stable and is receiving physiotherapy.

When the Regional Epidemiology team went to Playita del Volcan, it identified 2 more children with acute flaccid paralysis in a house near where the child under 5 years of age who was diagnosed with [polio] lives. The specialists of the medical organizations indicated that it was known that one of the other [identified suspected] cases had a history of having an incomplete vaccination scheme, while the other was taken to another community in the state.

The cases of poliomyelitis begin to resurface in Delta Amacuro, [a state that was suffering from a measles epidemic] which has claimed the lives of more than 100 patients, mostly children. This state also reported suspected and confirmed cases of diphtheria a disease that returned to the country in 2016, 24 years after it had been eliminated [in the country].

The country [Venezuela] has not reported cases of polio since 1989.

The community where the cases were detected have registered low immunization coverages through the National Expanded Program of Immunizations [EPI] of the Ministry of Health. "It is very likely that the affected population and the entire state of Delta Amacuro also has low vaccination coverages," the doctors of the organizations highlighted in their statement, which also emphasized that the population of the community has not received any polio vaccine. since January 2016. For that year [2016], the national vaccination coverage with polio vaccine reached only 67 percent, well below the universal coverage of 95 percent recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). [there is mention that estimates based on the less than 1-year-old vaccination coverages, between 2008 and 2017, the number of children now susceptible to poliomyelitis is 2 600 000.

[Byline: Armando Altuve]

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[While the media report mentions a poliovirus type 3 has been isolated from the 5-year-old boy, there is no mention as to whether the virus is a wild poliovirus (WPV) or a circulating vaccine derived poliovirus (cVDPV), or a vaccine derived poliovirus (VDPV). The last officially documented polio case due to WPV3 infection in Asia had a date of onset 18 Apr 2012 in Pakistan and in Africa had a date of onset on 10 Nov 2012 in Nigeria (see Kew OM, Cochi SL, Jafari HS, et al. Possible Eradication of Wild Poliovirus Type 3 - Worldwide, 2012. MMWR, November 14, 2014 / 63(45);1031-1033 available at: <<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6345a4.htm#Fig1>>). The most recent environmental samples positive for WPV3 were on 7 Oct 2010 in Pakistan and 11 Nov 2012 in Nigeria. Since November 2012, no WPV3 has been isolated anywhere in the world.

With respect to WPV3 circulation in the Americas, the most recent isolation of WPV3 in the Americas was in 1993 and involved isolation from asymptomatic individuals (21 (47 percent) of 45 individuals tested) in Alberta Canada belonging to a religious group that did not accept vaccinations, with ties to a similar religious group in the Netherlands experiencing an ongoing outbreak of polio at that time. (see CDC. Isolation of Wild Poliovirus Type 3 Among Members of a Religious Community Objecting to Vaccination -- Alberta, Canada, 1993. MMWR May 07, 1993 / 42(17);337-339. available at <<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00020490.htm>>.) Prior to 1993, there was WPV3 identified in Mexico in 1990, and in South America (Brazil) in 1988. (see Kew OM et al referenced above).

Given the apparent interruption of WPV3 transmission, with no isolations of the virus from either individuals or environmental samples since 2012, one hopes that this current poliovirus type 3 isolated in Venezuela is a vaccine derived poliovirus, and not a reappearance of a WPV3 having circuated undetected for the past 5.5 years. We await further information on the genetic typing of the poliovirus type 3 isolated.

The Warao are an indigenious ethnic group found in the northeast of Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Suriname. The total estimated population of this group in 20100 was 36 000. The name Warao means "the boat people". The majority of the Warao population live in the Venezuelan Orinoco Delta region. They live in wall-less thatched-roof huts built on stilts (to protect against floods), and sleep on hammocks. Canoes are their main form of transportation. They use 2 types of canoes. Bongos, which can carry up to 5 people, or another smaller one that seats 3 people and is used to find food sources on a daily basis. The Bongo is made from a large tree that is identified by the male leaders of each household, the tree is identified and killed at the beginning of the dry season. It is cut down and hollowed out and flattened with stone tools or local shell tools and fire. While they live in relatively inaccessible regions, HIV was introduced into the community, where male to male sex is practiced prior to marriage. In some communities the prevalence of HIV has reached 33 percent (see <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/07/world/americas/aids-venezuela-indigenous-people-threatened.html>>). (Information on the Warao community can be found at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warao_people#Dwellings>).

A map showing the Orinoco Delta region of Venezuela can be found at: <https://geographic.org/geographic_names/name.php?uni=-1405762&fid=6621&c=venezuela>.

The HealthMap/ProMED map of Venezuela can be found at: <<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/29>>. - Mod.MPP]

[2] Global, (Pakistan) - GPEI
Date: Thu 7 Jun 2018
Source: Global Polio Eradication Initiative / WHO [edited]
<<http://polioeradication.org/polio-today/polio-now/this-week/>>

Poliovirus Weekly Update as of 6 Jun 2018, WHO

New wild poliovirus cases reported this week: 1

New cVDPV cases reported this week: 0

Type of Virus: 2017 / 2018 (to date) / new this week

WPV: 22 / 10 / 1

cVDPV: 96 / 5 / 0

Summary of newly-reported viruses this week:

Pakistan: 1 new wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) case

Afghanistan: 1 new WPV1-positive environmental sample

Afghanistan

- No new cases of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) have been reported this week. The total number of WPV1 cases in 2018 remains 8.
- 1 new WPV1-positive environmental sample was reported in the past week, from Kunar province, collected on [Tue 24 Apr 2018].
- During the May [2018] immunization campaign, vaccinators worked to reach over 9.6 million children with bivalent oral polio vaccine.

Pakistan

- 1 new case of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) was reported this week, bringing the total of officially reported WPV1 cases in Pakistan in 2018 to 2. This latest case had onset of paralysis on [Sun 15 Apr 2018], from Dukki, Balochistan.
- No new WPV1-positive environmental samples were reported in the past week.
- During the May [2018] immunization campaign, vaccinators worked to reach over 20 million children with bivalent oral polio vaccine.

Nigeria

- No new cases of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) were reported in the past week.
 - The total number of WPV1 cases for 2016 is 4 and no cases have been reported in 2017 or 2018. The most recent WPV1 case (by date of onset) was reported in Monguno Local Government Area, Borno State, with onset on [21 Aug 2016].
 - Circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) is confirmed in Jigawa state. Circulating VDPV2 has been isolated from environmental samples and one AFP case with onset of paralysis on [Sun 15 Apr 2018].
 - Following notification of the initial cVDPV2 isolates from January and February [2018], the programme conducted enhanced vaccination activities using IPV in 13 high-risk wards (target population approximately 55 000 children).
 - Since confirmation of cVDPV2 in Nigeria, the country has conducted additional acute flaccid paralysis surveillance strengthening activities including enhanced active surveillance visits, and community sampling. The programme has also carried out extensive search for type 2 containing vaccines (tOPV/mOPV2) in the areas surrounding where the virus was detected.
 - The GPEI is working with Regional and country counterparts and partners to supporting the local public health authorities to conduct a field investigation and thorough risk assessment, and to discuss
-

needs for immunization response.

Lake Chad Basin

- The detection of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) and circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) in Nigeria continue to pose a risk to the neighbouring countries of the Lake Chad basin.
- Emergency outbreak response efforts continue across the Lake Chad basin, together with activities to fill subnational surveillance gaps across the region.
- These activities include efforts to vaccinate children at markets, in internally displaced persons camps, and at international borders.

Central Africa

- No new cases of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) were reported in the past week in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).
- The total number of officially reported cVDPV2 cases in the DRC in 2018 remains 4.
- The most recent case (by date of onset) was reported in Kikula district, Haut Katanga province, with onset on [Mon 19 Feb 2018].
- The Ministry of Health, supported by WHO and partners of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, remains fully committed to outbreak response in the affected provinces, including use of monovalent oral polio vaccine type 2 (mOPV2) across the country, in line with internationally-agreed outbreak response protocols.
- Surveillance and immunization activities are being strengthened in neighbouring countries.

Horn of Africa

- No circulating vaccine derived poliovirus were reported in the past week.
- There has been no isolation of either cVDPV3 or cVDPV2 from acute flaccid paralysis cases or their contacts in either Somalia or Kenya. Virus has been isolated from environmental samples only.
- Outbreak response to both strains is currently being implemented, in line with internationally-agreed guidelines. Three large-scale supplementary immunization activities (SIAs) have been implemented in Banadir, Lower Shabelle and Middle Shabelle regions, Somalia, with additional SIAs planned in the affected zones of the Horn of Africa. Special surveillance activities are being undertaken to determine the origin of the viral circulation.
- WHO and partners continue to support local public health authorities across the Horn of Africa in conducting field investigations and risk assessments.

Middle East

- No new cases of circulating vaccine derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) were reported in the past week in Syria.
- The total number of officially reported cVDPV2 cases in Syria in 2017 remains 74. There are no cases reported in 2018.
- The most recent case (by date of onset) was reported in Boukamal district, with onset on [21 Sep 2017].

Officially reported wild poliovirus cases as of 5 Jun 2018

Total global cases in 2018: 10 (compared with 5 for the same period in 2017)

- Total in endemic countries in 2018: 10 (compared with 5 for the same period in 2017)
- Total in non-endemic countries in 2018: 0 (compared with 0 for the same period in 2017)

- Afghanistan: 8 cases in 2018 (compared with 3 for the same period in 2017), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 27-Apr-18
- Pakistan: 2 cases in 2018 (compared with 2 for the same period in 2017), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 15-Apr-18
- Nigeria: 0 case in 2018 (compared with 0 for the same period in 2017), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 21-Aug-16

Total global cases in 2017: 22

- Total in endemic countries: 22
- Total in non-endemic countries: 0

Officially reported cVDPV cases as of 5 Jun 2018

Total global cases in 2018: 5 (compared with 6 for the same period in 2017)

- Syrian Arab Republic: 0 case in 2018 (compared with 2 for the same period in 2017), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 21-Sep-17
- Democratic Republic of the Congo: 4 cases in 2018 (compared with 4 for the same period in 2017), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 19-Feb-18
- Nigeria: 1 case in 2018 (compared with 0 for the same period in 2017), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 15-Apr-18

Total global cases in 2017: 96

- Total in endemic countries: 0
- Total in non-endemic countries: 96

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[The newly confirmed case in Pakistan was reported in a media report in late May 2018 (see Poliomyelitis update (15): Pakistan (BA) RFI <http://promedmail.org/post/20180529.5825949> from 29 May 2018). The media coverage of polio cases in Pakistan is a sign of the heightened awareness of the country on polio in general and in Pakistan in specific. The identification of a WPV1 in Kunar province Afghanistan is a bit of concern, as cases have not been reported from that province recently.

One thought that came to mind while reviewing the weekly report was the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The most recent reported case of polio associated with the cVDPV was reported in late March/Early April 2018, approximately one month preceding the identification of ebolavirus disease (EBV) in Equateur Province. One can't help but wonder what impact the ongoing EBV outbreak is having on the surveillance activities associated with the cVDPV2 outbreaks in Haut Lomami, Haut Katanga and Tanganyika provinces.

A map showing the locations of WPV1 and cVDPV(2) cases can be found at <<http://polioeradication.org/polio-today/polio-now/>>.

HealthMap/ProMED maps

Democratic Republic of Congo: <<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/194>>

Nigeria: <<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/2594>>

Pakistan: <<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/140>>

Afghanistan: <<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/137>>. - Mod.MPP]

[See Also:

Poliomyelitis update (16): Global (Afghanistan), Pakistan

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180531.5831364>

Poliomyelitis update (15): Pakistan (BA) RFI

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180529.5825949>

Poliomyelitis update (14): global, cVDPV Horn of Africa, PV2 post

erad. stocks <http://promedmail.org/post/20180526.5819775>

Poliomyelitis update (13): positive environmental samples

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180511.5791991>

Poliomyelitis update (12): global (Afghanistan, Pakistan)

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180405.5728514>

Poliomyelitis update (11): global (Afghanistan, DR Congo)

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180324.5706145>

Poliomyelitis update (10): Congo DR, cVDPV

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180316.5692109>

Poliomyelitis update (09): Afghanistan (WPV), Congo DR (cVDPV)

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180315.5689842>

Poliomyelitis update (08): Somalia, cVDPV environmental samples

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180313.5684227>

Poliomyelitis update (07): (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Congo DR)

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180208.5615989>

Poliomyelitis update (06): Global (Afghanistan)

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180202.5603446>

Poliomyelitis update (05): Afghanistan, RFI

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180131.5597699>

Poliomyelitis update (04): global (Afghanistan, Pakistan), Nigeria

rumors <http://promedmail.org/post/20180125.5584166>

Poliomyelitis update (03): global (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Congo DR),

violence <http://promedmail.org/post/20180118.5569033>

Poliomyelitis update (02): (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Congo DR)

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180113.5558200>

Poliomyelitis update (01): global (Afghanistan)

<http://promedmail.org/post/20180105.5539242>

2017

Poliomyelitis update (47): Pakistan, global (Congo DR)

<http://promedmail.org/post/20171229.5526565>

Poliomyelitis update (46): global (Pakistan, Afghanistan), Lake Chad

Region <http://promedmail.org/post/20171221.5518292>

Poliomyelitis update (45): Pakistan, Afghanistan, Gabon

<http://promedmail.org/post/20171214.5504166>

Poliomyelitis update (44): (Australia), pos. environmental sample,

iVDPV2 iden. <http://promedmail.org/post/20171215.5506586>

Poliomyelitis update (43): (Australia), positive environmental sample,

RFI <http://promedmail.org/post/20171215.5506172>

Poliomyelitis update (42): global (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria)

<http://promedmail.org/post/20171214.5504166>

Poliomyelitis update (41): Syria

<http://promedmail.org/post/20171213.5500907>

Poliomyelitis update (40): global (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171207.5489424>
Poliomyelitis update (30): global (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171012.5377178>
Poliomyelitis update (20): global (Syria, Afghanistan)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170720.5193070>
Poliomyelitis update (10): Syria (DY), Congo DR, cVDPV, WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170613.5103235>
Poliomyelitis (01): Pakistan (GB), global, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170314.4898724>
2016

Poliomyelitis update (21): IPV shortage, global
<http://promedmail.org/post/20161231.4733243>
Poliomyelitis update (01): India, VDPV, wild type-free
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160115.3939297>
.....mpp/ec/mpp

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End of ProMED Digest, Vol 72, Issue 25

From: Larm, Doug <doug.larm@seattle.gov> on
behalf of Larm, Doug <Doug.Larm@seattle.gov>
<doug.larm@seattle.gov>
To: Larm, Doug <doug.larm@wsfc.wa.gov>
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: 2018_06_06 Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources
(InFOCUS)
Date: Wed Jun 06 2018 08:26:20 CDT
Attachments: 2018_06_06.pdf

InFOCUS

Wednesday

6 Jun 2018

Editor's Note: InFOCUS will be on an extended publishing hiatus starting tomorrow, Thursday, 7 June through Friday, 15 June; will return to publication on Monday, 18 June 2018

Document ID: 0.7.1175.5354-000001

Owner: Larm, Doug <doug.larm@seattle.gov> on behalf of Larm, Doug <Doug.Larm@seattle.gov> <doug.larm@seattle.gov>
Filename: 2018_06_06.pdf
Last Modified: Wed Jun 06 08:26:20 CDT 2018

 Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS WEDNESDAY – 6 JUN 2018 			
	International	National	Regional and Local
Events, Opportunities Go to articles	06/06 Marking 74yrs since D-Day landings 06/06 Myanmar, UN sign Rohingya pact 06/06 India's water taps are running dry 06/06 South America economies sputtering 06/06 Singapore to host US, NKorea summit 06/06 China removed missiles from island? 06/06 US bombers fly near contested islands 06/06 Guatemala volcano death toll rises to 75 06/06 New evacuations near Guatemala volcano 06/05 Iran launches plan to boost enrichment 06/05 Ethiopia accepts peace deal w/Eritrea 06/05 EU nations split over refugee asylum 06/05 Nicaragua descends into violence	06/06 Report: Medicare finances worsening 06/06 Post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD 06/05 Suicide warning signs 06/05 Hawaii: 12,000 quakes 30 days 06/05 Nasdaq closes at a record high 06/05 More open jobs than job seekers 06/05 Mexico details list retaliatory tariffs 06/05 Delaware cashes-in on sports betting 06/05 Court: Puerto Rico release death data 06/05 Milwaukee council investigates police 06/05 Hawaii: hundreds of homes destroyed 06/05 Top fashion designer apparent suicide 06/05 Separated migrant kids stuck at border 06/05 UN tells US to stop separating families 06/05 US warns against financial deals w/Iran 06/05 No charges NJ officers for beach beating 06/05 Fire department warns: hoses in summer 06/05 Social Security running deficit; insolvency 06/05 Recall: Naloxone injection	06/05 Mexico slaps 20% tariff US apples 06/05 Kitsap Co. deputy saves 7 from fire 06/05 More severe western Wash. wildfires 06/05 Wildfire burns thru Hanford complex 06/05 Seattle-area home prices record highs 06/05 Seattle PD changes tactics w/protesters 06/05 Seattle has 22% nation's bikeshare bikes 06/05 Groups decry beating by Oregon deputy 06/04 Seattle breaks up homeless camp clusters
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Event Calendar

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Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	06/05 Iran launches plan to boost enrichment
SOURCE	http://time.com/5302600/iran-centrifuge-enrichment-plant-natanz/
GIST	<p>Iran announced it was building a new centrifuge production plant at its Natanz nuclear facility, indicating a possible future restart to enrichment activity following the U.S.'s withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear agreement.</p> <p>Iran has vowed to limit enrichment of nuclear material to sub-weapons grade levels under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), but the new plant suggests that the country could be bolstering its ability to ramp up nuclear activity should the agreement collapse further, according to the New York Times.</p> <p>President Donald Trump confirmed that the U.S. would abandon the deal last month, calling it “defective at its core” and reimposing sanctions on Iran’s central bank chief. Trump also warned Iran against restarting its nuclear program, threatening “very severe consequences.” Other signatories, including Germany, France, and the U.K., are now trying to salvage the deal.</p> <p>Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, told Iranian state television that the new centrifuge facility remained “in line with our safeguard commitments” under the deal, according to the Times. In a speech Monday, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran’s supreme leader, called on the country’s atomic agency to begin preparations to increase uranium enrichment capacity, reports the Tehran Times. Though he reiterated that the country would abide by the accord’s constraints, which limits uranium enrichment to 3.67%.</p> <p>Iran’s nuclear facilities are regularly monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) under the 2015 agreement.</p> <p>It remains unclear if or when the facility will begin making new centrifuges. An IAEA spokesperson said Tuesday that they received a letter from Iran declaring a “tentative schedule” to start production of uranium hexafluoride, the raw material for the centrifuges, the BBC reports.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/06 India’s water taps running dry
SOURCE	http://time.com/5302661/water-crisis-drinking-india-drought-dry/
GIST	<p>Towards the end of May, one of India’s most popular summer retreats nearly ran out of water.</p> <p>Shimla, a historic hill town in the northern state of Himachal Pradesh, is the latest addition to a list of Indian towns and cities that are starved for water. Earlier this year Bangalore, home to the country’s information technology sector, made it to a list of world cities most likely to run out of drinking water. It joins other parched metropolises like Cape Town, Jakarta and Sao Paulo.</p> <p>Residents of Shimla had to wait nearly four days to get water, with many lining up with buckets to collect water from tankers. The situation worsened over the following week, pushing authorities to close state</p>

schools for five days and to ask tourists to stay away.

India is reeling under a sustained water crisis that shows no signs of abating. Excessive demand coupled with mismanaged water resources, erratic weather patterns and climate change have led to a sad state of affairs.

Water disputes abound within the country and among its neighbors. Six Indian states are involved in battles over the river waters of the Yamuna in the north, the Narmada in the midwest and the Cauvery in the south. Meanwhile, India is also dealing with Pakistan and Bangladesh over water usage.

There is not a single Indian city that can provide potable water from its taps. In fact, a 2018 report from global advocacy group WaterAid put India at the top of its list of countries with the worst access to clean water close to homes—163 million Indians live this way.

The country's dependence on agriculture, which forms a significant part of its economy and employs about 800 million people, cripples water management even further—especially given the unpredictable monsoons.

With the rainy season just beginning in India, here's a look at the water crisis in the world's second most populous country.

How bad is it?

According to government data, the average annual per capita water availability fell 15% between 2001-2011. It's predicted to fall another 13% by 2025 and 15% again by 2050, which means that in another 30 years each Indian household will have about 1.1 million liters of water per year, down from 1.8 million liters in 2011. (A country is considered to be suffering from water scarcity when availability is less than 1 million liters per capita per year.)

The news doesn't get better when you consider that India's burgeoning population could grow to 1.8 billion, if current fertility rates continue, and that agriculture is a major part of the Indian economy.

Already farmer suicides are a common occurrence. Farmers usually take heavy loans to purchase seed for sowing and many take their lives when they are unable to pay their debtors if their crops fail. A common cause of this is drought and lack of access to irrigation facilities. A 2017 study found that nearly 60,000 farmers had committed suicide in the past three decades due to climate change. The study found that even a 1cm increase in rainfall led to a 7% drop in suicides.

Drastic measures are being taken to deal with the crisis. In the past, armed guards have been stationed at reservoirs to prevent water theft and trains have been used to transport water to suffering areas. In March this year, the state of Gujarat stopped the supply of irrigation water from a major dam to ensure there was enough for drinking purposes.

Unfortunately, unchecked pollution has turned thousands of water sources into bodies of filth and disease. The Ganges, one of India's most famous and important rivers, is in such a terrible state that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set up a special task force to clean it up. In the south, Bangalore's Bellandur Lake is so toxic that methane fires are often seen on its surface.

Why is it so bad?

To put it simply, there's too much demand and not enough supply. India's burgeoning population woes aside, climate change is seen as a major factor in the country's water crisis. Scorching summers and shortened winters have resulted in reduced snow cover and retreating glaciers in the Himalayas—the ice melt from these areas is what feeds the country's northern rivers. Add to that fickle monsoons that threaten to disrupt long-established crop patterns and you have a recipe for disaster in many parts of the country.

Then there's agriculture, which, by some estimates, accounts for 90% of India's water consumption. Farmers are sometimes slow to change what they sow and continue to grow thirsty crops like rice and

sugarcane in parched regions. They meet these irrigation demands by indiscriminately extracting groundwater, which some say accounts for a quarter of the world's groundwater usage.

This has led to a substantial drop in the levels of India's water table, which is a major concern. There has been a 61% decline in the country's water levels from 2007 to 2017. Rajendra Singh, a well-known water conservationist nicknamed "India's waterman," has said that over 70% of the country's groundwater is in "overdraft", implying that more water is consumed than is replenished.

Water pollution and poor resource management have also contributed to limited availability. A study of Delhi's piped water systems a few years ago found that 40% of the city's water is lost due to pipe leaks and thefts via unauthorized connections.

What's the solution?

For starters, India can look to Israel and Singapore.

Israel is a poster child for sustainable water consumption in the world. The largely arid country has implemented a centralized water management system, set up desalination plants, encouraged the use of treated waste water for farming and propagated the idea of drip irrigation, which involves dripping water onto the roots of crops rather than flooding entire fields.

Similarly, Singapore has been very smart about meeting its water needs efficiently. In addition to desalination and the use of recycled waste water, the city-state gives priority to building reservoirs and catchments to collect as much natural water as possible. According to the government, water catchment areas now cover two-thirds of Singapore's surface area, up from half in 2011.

It might also be time to reconsider what is grown and investigate if there are better ways to cultivate those crops. Many of India's important agricultural products, such as rice, wheat, sugarcane and cotton, are incredibly water-intensive, but their propensity for a high yield makes them more popular than other environmentally friendly options.

Steps are being taken to alleviate water problems. Last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced an \$87 billion plan to link 60 rivers across India in an attempt to provide better irrigation sources and reduce flooding, though its efficacy remains to be seen. Some Indian states, like Maharashtra—the home state of Mumbai—have chosen to implement Israel's drip irrigation method for entire crops like sugarcane. In the same state, cultivators have dug "farm pools" to harvest rainwater for sustained irrigation purposes in small areas.

There is some cause for optimism. WaterAid, the NGO that ranked India among the worst country for household drinking water access, has also ranked it one of the most-improved nations in terms of the numbers of people able to access clean water as a result of initiatives made since 2000. But major changes need to be made to save the world's second most populous nation from running dry.

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HEADLINE	06/05 Recall: Naloxone injection
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jun/5/fda-issues-recall-naloxone-injection-hospitals/
GIST	<p>A recall for naloxone was issued by the Food and Drug Administration over fear that products from the company Hospira Inc. contain potentially dangerous loose particles.</p> <p>The company said in a statement that the threat of harm from ingesting the particles is low, as directions for use require checking syringe solution before being administered, but adverse effects can include irritation, allergic reaction, toxicity, among others.</p> <p>The product, a syringe injection, was distributed to hospitals and institutions across the U.S., Puerto Rico and Guam between February 2017 to February 2018.</p>

	<p>The recall comes at a time where naloxone stocking is of the utmost importance in the battle against deaths from opioid overdoses. A few states have made it mandatory that first responders carry the overdose reversal medication, as deaths climbed over 64,000 in 2016 with many from opioids and illicit drugs.</p> <p>Police officers, firemen, school teachers and everyday citizens are also being urged to carry the overdose reversal medication. Narcan, a naloxone nasal spray, is developed by the pharmaceutical company ADAPT Pharma and was not involved in the recall.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Social Security running deficit; insolvency
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jun/5/social-security-now-running-deficit/
GIST	<p>Social Security will spend more than it collects this year, the program’s trustees said Tuesday, marking the first time in more than 35 years that it will run an annual deficit as it slides toward insolvency by 2034.</p> <p>Medicare’s main trust fund is in even worse shape, scheduled to hit insolvency in 2026 — three years earlier than last year’s estimate, the trustees said.</p> <p>The twin warnings add even more pressure to a budget already strained by last year’s tax cuts and this year’s deal to boost spending on defense and basic domestic needs, leaving few bright spots in the federal fiscal picture.</p> <p>The news also produced the usual finger-pointing among Democrats and Republicans, but budget watchdogs said the news was so grim that it should cut through the bipartisan bickering.</p> <p>“It would be a nice change if this year Congress and the president actually took these warnings seriously enough to do something,” said Robert L. Bixby, executive director of the Concord Coalition.</p> <p>Social Security has been struggling for years and turned cash-negative this decade, meaning the government paid out more in benefits each year than it collected from the payroll tax.</p> <p>But some analysts had said it was still running a surplus because of interest on the money credited to the trust fund. Now, even that crutch is gone, as even with interest revenue included the program will pay out more this year than it collects.</p> <p>It’s the first time since 1982 that the program has shown an overall annual deficit.</p> <p>The program is slated to take in \$828.2 billion this year, with most of that coming from payroll taxes. It will pay out \$853.6 billion in benefits and administrative costs. That will cut the cumulative trust fund from \$2.820 trillion to \$2.795 trillion — a small but symbolic slide.</p> <p>The Old-Age and Survivors Insurance program, the main part of the trust fund, will have its assets depleted in 2034, at which point benefits will have to be cut by more than 20 percent, the trustees said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Mexico details list of retaliatory tariffs
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/mexico-details-its-list-of-retaliatory-tariffs-against-u-s-adds-bourbon-1528217507
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY—The Mexican government published Tuesday its detailed list of U.S. goods that will face import tariffs in retaliation for the U.S. decision to place duties on Mexican steel and aluminum, including American staples such as cranberries, apples and bourbon.</p>

The Economy Ministry said the tariffs will remain in effect as long as the U.S. continues to charge duties on Mexican steel and aluminum, and that Mexico could at any time modify the list of products targeted. The ministry estimates the value of the tariffs at about \$3 billion, representing close to 1.5% of annual trade between the two countries.

The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump last week ended the exemptions to the steel tariffs for Mexico, Canada and the European Union, prompting them to threaten tit-for-tat measures while challenging the U.S. tariffs at the World Trade Organization.

The U.S. tariffs went into effect after negotiations with Mexico and Canada to redraw the North American Free Trade Agreement hit snags over content rules for the auto industry, and over controversial U.S. demands to eliminate dispute settlement mechanisms in the pact and introduce a so-called sunset clause under which Nafta would expire in five years unless explicitly renewed by its members.

Mexico on Tuesday slapped a 25% import tariff on a wide range of steel products from the U.S., matching the U.S. steel duty. The retaliatory measures also include 20% on pork products, 20% and 25% duties on cheeses, and a 25% duty on bourbon. Cranberries made the list, as did U.S. apples, with a 20% duty.

Economy Minister Ildefonso Guajardo said last week in a televised interview that some targeted goods come from U.S. districts that have key lawmakers who have been pointing out to the Trump administration the need to be careful in handling such trade decisions.

“Somehow it’s sending a clear message that this sort of thing benefits no one, and affects all of us,” he said.

Fearing an influx of steel into Mexico from world suppliers affected by the U.S. tariffs, Mexico also raised duties it had imposed between 2015 and 2017 on steel imports from countries with which it doesn’t have free trade agreements.

Those tariffs, which aimed to counter damage suffered by the Mexican steel industry from cheap Asian imports, were also seen discouraging triangulation of steel through Mexico into the U.S. under Nafta. The tariffs led to greater steel imports from countries with which Mexico has free trade agreements, and less from countries with which it doesn’t, the government said.

Mexico ran up a \$3.6 billion steel trade deficit with the U.S. in the past two years, according to the local steel industry chamber.

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HEADLINE	06/05 Nicaragua descends into violence
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/nicaraguas-political-crisis-descends-into-dark-days-1528235963
GIST	<p>MANAGUA, Nicaragua—A surge of violence has snuffed out economic activity and dimmed prospects to peacefully resolve a political crisis here that began as a protest against tax increases and turned into a revolt against Nicaragua’s longtime leader Daniel Ortega.</p> <p>Since mid-April, more than 100 people have been killed in confrontations with police during mass protests and what human-rights groups say are paramilitary gangs aligned with Mr. Ortega’s government.</p> <p>Among them were 15 people killed at a peaceful Mother’s Day protest march last month in Managua and 11 people by paramilitary groups and police in the predominantly indigenous city of Masaya this past weekend, including a 15-year-old protester who witnesses say was executed by a policewoman.</p> <p>On Tuesday, violence flared in the quaint colonial city of Granada, home to hundreds of American retirees.</p>

“We are going through very dark days,” said Humberto Belli, a former education minister. “The people are out in the street demanding that Ortega leave, but he has shown an unexpected ability to kill. We see more blood every day—three, four, five people killed on a daily basis. This has no end.”

The Organization of American States on Tuesday approved a mildly worded resolution calling for an immediate end of the violence and asking all parties to participate in peaceful dialogue. The resolution, co-sponsored by the U.S. and Nicaragua, was much weaker than declarations made Monday by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who accused Nicaraguan police and armed pro-government groups of killing dozens of protesters.

“It was a wishy-washy resolution, Nicaragua demands more urgent attention from the OAS than it’s gotten,” said Michael Shifter, president of the Inter-American Dialogue, a Washington-based think tank.

The U.S. ambassador to the OAS, Carlos Trujillo, said the OAS declaration marks the beginning of the organization’s engagement with “the grave situation” in Nicaragua. He blasted the government, saying it “has committed grave crimes” against peaceful protesters.

Nicaragua’s government denies links to paramilitary groups and says the unrest is the result of an opposition plot to overthrow it. Police haven’t addressed the alleged police shooting of the teen.

Nicaragua “is committed to stability amidst this wave of criminal violence generated by certain groups of the opposition which conspire from the darkness...to terrorize families,” Luis Alvarado, Nicaragua’s representative to the OAS, said Monday.

Mr. Ortega, a former guerrilla leader who played a central role in the overthrow of the Somoza family dictatorship in 1979, was re-elected by a landslide in 2016 after 16 years out of power. He ran largely unopposed after maneuvering to ban any real contenders.

Until the recent spate of violence, Nicaragua had enjoyed far lower levels of violent crime than its Central American neighbors El Salvador and Honduras. Mr. Ortega also had been able to deliver high economic growth and apparent political stability. Most Nicaraguans appeared content or resigned to the quid pro quo—until now.

But many Nicaraguans say they are fed up with Mr. Ortega and his wife, the unpopular Vice President Rosario Murillo, who they say have usurped democratic institutions and snuffed out political opposition. Government plans to confiscate large tracts of land to build a commercial waterway to rival the Panama Canal have cost the Ortegas rural support.

The country’s capital of Managua, a sprawling city of modest malls, street vendors and office towers mixed with open pastures, is now largely deserted. Shops are closed and vandalized. Few people venture out at night. Walls are covered with graffiti calling Mr. Ortega a murderer. A group of police officers stand guard by a monument to the late Venezuelan leader Hugo Chávez, erected by Mr. Ortega, after protesters tried to knock it down during recent demonstrations.

Throughout Nicaragua, barricades have sprung up, blocking roads and snarling traffic, and making the key Pan American highway that links many of the country’s cities impassable. Tourism has been hit hard, hotel managers say, with occupancies at major hotels plunging and some international airlines paring back flights.

Analysts say the surge in violence has set back any hope of a peaceful resolution. A dialogue between Mr. Ortega’s government and the opposition, sponsored by the influential Catholic Church, has been shelved. Nicaragua’s business class, which until recently worked closely with Mr. Ortega, is demanding new elections.

“My sense is that the situation will continue to deteriorate and the government will continue its repression,” said Eric Farnsworth, who heads the Washington office of think tank Council of the

	Americas.
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HEADLINE	06/05 Delaware cashes-in on sports betting
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/delaware-cashes-in-on-sports-betting-1528243389
GIST	<p>WILMINGTON, Del.—Shortly after 1:30 p.m. Tuesday, professional sports handicapper Tom Barton slapped down \$1,000 at the Casino at Delaware Park here, making him among the first people in the state to take advantage of a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing sports betting.</p> <p>“One thousand dollars on the New York Yankees to win the World Series,” Mr. Barton shouted, drawing whoops from a casino teller wearing a striped referee jersey.</p> <p>Delaware became the first state outside Nevada to allow bets on individual sports games, as its three casinos simultaneously launched full-scale sports gambling.</p> <p>Several other states are expected to follow, hoping to tap new gambling revenue in a saturated casino market. The rush to cash in on sports wagering comes after the high court ruled last month in favor of New Jersey, which had challenged a 1992 federal law that had prohibited wagers on individual sports games in all states except Nevada.</p> <p>The betting offered Tuesday in Delaware included single-game and championship wagering on professional baseball, football, basketball and soccer. Delaware Park drew dozens of bettors, many clutching paper betting sheets and scrutinizing the odds board that fills a wall next to a snack bar.</p> <p>Several people said they had previously taken part in Delaware’s limited sports betting, which was restricted to wagers on three or more NFL games at a time.</p> <p>Mr. Barton, managing director at the firm Sports Garten, said it was a welcome change. Before, he said, “anyone that’s a serious sports bettor had to fly to Vegas, or risk your nose with Tony down the street, or do offshore sports betting, which is not the most reputable.”</p> <p>Despite the hype, casino operators say expectations are modest. William Fasy, president of Delaware Park, said sports betting wasn’t likely to be a big moneymaker. Still, he said he was “super excited” because of the potential to entice more people to the casino and horse track.</p> <p>The World Cup should attract a younger, more ethnically diverse crowd, he said. “And college football? It’s going to be nuts on a Saturday” in the fall, he said, adding that he hopes those visitors will also play slots and bet on horse races.</p> <p>The casino industry could use a boost. Delaware, like other East Coast states that were early to adopt casino gambling, has been hit hard by more recent competition from other states such as Pennsylvania and Maryland. Mr. Fasy said Delaware Park’s slots revenue was 40% of what it was in 2006.</p> <p>Baye Larsen, vice president-senior credit officer for Moody’s Investors Service, said revenue would depend on whether states were able to lure people away from underground gambling, which is estimated to be a \$150 billion market. The major factors will be how expensive it is for people to place legal bets, which will depend on the tax rates states set, as well as how easy it is for gamblers to place wagers, she said.</p> <p>In New Jersey, lawmakers are set to hold final votes Thursday on legislation to regulate sports wagers. In-person betting could start immediately after the bill is signed into law, and online betting within 30 days, said Assemblyman John Burzichelli, a Democrat. New Jersey Treasurer Elizabeth Muoio told lawmakers that sports betting would likely generate \$13 million in additional revenue for the state next fiscal year.</p>

	<p>Other states, including Mississippi and West Virginia, passed sports-betting legislation ahead of the Supreme Court decision, and officials in those states said they were working now to get regulations in place so operators could begin accepting wagers in time for football season.</p> <p>West Virginia will allow people located within the state to wager online and via smartphone apps in addition to in-person at its five casinos. State lawmaker Gary Howell said he expected an influx of gamblers to cross the border to place bets. “I think it’s going to bring a lot of revenue into the state, especially until other states come online,” he said.</p> <p>Danielle Boyd, managing general counsel for the West Virginia Lottery Commission, said conservative estimates projected \$5 million in revenue for state in the first year.</p> <p>In Mississippi, sports betting could begin in late July or early August, according to Allen Godfrey, executive director of the Mississippi Gaming Commission.</p> <p>Lawmakers in other states are beginning discussions on legalizing sports betting. In Connecticut, Gov. Dannel Malloy has been negotiating with the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan tribes to allow sports betting at their casinos without violating a slot-revenue sharing agreement between the tribes and the state. State lawmakers would then have to pass legislation permitting sports betting.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Wildfire burns through Hanford complex
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1009707/wildfire-burns-through-hanford-nuclear-complex/
GIST	<p>RICHLAND, Wash. (AP) — A wildfire burned about 4.4 square miles (11.4 square kilometers) of the decommissioned Hanford nuclear production complex in Washington.</p> <p>The Tri-City Herald reports Rae Moss, spokeswoman for Mission Support Alliance, the Hanford contractor in charge of the Hanford Fire Department, says no radiologically contaminated areas or buildings were burned.</p> <p>Officials say the fire was spotted around 6:45 p.m. Sunday. It apparently was caused by a lightning strike.</p> <p>The fire burned between Route 4 South and Route 2 South, which come together to form a “V” near the secure entrance. Officials say the roads helped keep the fire from spreading farther.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Mexico slaps 20% tariff US apples
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1009709/mexico-slaps-20-percent-tariff-on-us-apples/
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — The Washington Apple Commission says Mexico will immediately slap a 20 percent tariff on apples from the United States in response to the Trump administration’s tariffs on aluminum and steel.</p> <p>The commission said Tuesday that Washington state is the nation’s leading apple producer and Mexico is their biggest export market.</p> <p>The state’s 1,300 growers are the source for almost all the U.S. apples sent to Mexico.</p> <p>Last year, Washington growers shipped 13.7 million 40-pound cartons valued at more than \$215 million to Mexico.</p> <p>During the current season, shipments have been 13 percent ahead of last year and were on track to exceed 15 million bushels.</p>

	The Apple Commission says the new tariff puts that goal in doubt.
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HEADLINE	06/05 More severe western Wash. wildfires
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1010019/western-washington-wildfire/
GIST	<p>Eastern Washington traditionally receives the bulk of attention during wildfire season. But state officials are focusing more on the wildfire season in Western Washington this summer, as the region's fires are expected to dramatically increase.</p> <p>Following one of the driest Mays on record, the state is shifting the way it prepares for Western Washington wildfire season. Aaron Schmidt with the Department of Natural Resources explains as much in a Facebook video with Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz. He says DNR is staging three helicopters west of the Cascades — a move that has never been needed before.</p> <p>“Historically, Western Washington has had really benign fire activity. In the last five years, that’s been a categorical shift,” Schmidt said. “So much so that we are staging three helicopters in Western Washington this year.”</p> <p>Schmidt says there are a number of things contributing to the rise in wildfire activity in Western Washington.</p> <p>“Western Washington is seeing drier fuel conditions, we are seeing different onshore flows, our marine moisture layer is not there like it usually has been,” Schmidt said. “We are seeing multiple 100-acre fires in southwest Washington, and northwest Washington, which is very atypical. It lends itself to a changing fire environment.”</p> <p>Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz said that wildfires in Washington are evolving and becoming more severe.</p> <p>“Washington state, like many of our states across the United States, is seeing more significant wildfires,” Franz said. “We’ve seen on our landscape, especially starting from 2014 through 2016, a longer and larger fire season than historically.”</p> <p>In 2014-16, Washington burned more than 1 million acres which cost the state more than half a billion dollars, Franz said. There was progress last year with officials keeping most fires below 10 acres. But Franz notes that Washington has about 2.7 million acres of forests in “poor health” and the fires are getting worse.</p> <p>“The fires we see today are nothing like we had 20 years ago, and we know that 20 years from now we’re likely to see even more significant fire landscapes,” Franz said. “We’re not only seeing fire on our landscape in the eastern and central part of our state, which has been more traditional, we are seeing it more significantly on our west side.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 UN tells US: stop separating families
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/un-calls-on-u-s-to-stop-separating-migrant-families/
GIST	<p>The U.N. human rights office is calling on the Trump administration to "immediately halt" its policy of separating children from their parents after crossing U.S. border with Mexico.</p> <p>Rights office spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani scolded the U.S. for its "zero tolerance" policy in which some families have been separated after migration across the border.</p>

	<p>The rights office said in a statement that "children should never be detained for reasons related to their own or their parents' migration status. Detention is never in the best interests of the child and always constitutes a child rights violation."</p> <p>Shamdasani told a U.N. briefing Tuesday that the practice of separating families amounted to an "arbitrary and unlawful" interference in family life, calling it a "serious violation" of the rights of children.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Court: Puerto Rico release death data
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/court-orders-puerto-rico-release-storm-related-death-55659313?
GIST	<p>A court in Puerto Rico has ordered the government to release all death certificates issued after Hurricane Maria and other information it compiled after the Category 4 storm hit the island.</p> <p>The court decision released Tuesday says the information should be made public within a week and that the government doesn't have any pressing interest to deny access to it. Gov. Ricardo Rossello and other government officials have withheld certain information, saying they need to protect people's privacy.</p> <p>It is unclear whether the government will appeal. A spokeswoman for the island's Justice Department did not immediately return a message for comment.</p> <p>The ruling responds to a lawsuit filed by CNN and Puerto Rico's Center for Investigative Journalism.</p> <p>Critics maintain that the official death toll of 64 is severely undercounted.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 EU nations split over asylum
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/germany-arrests-syrians-suspected-human-trafficking-55652902?
GIST	<p>European Union countries remained deeply divided Tuesday over how to reform EU rules for managing the influx of refugees and migrants, as U.N. agencies reported that an estimated 112 people died over the weekend when a smuggler's boat sank as it tried to reach Europe.</p> <p>The estimated toll made the shipwreck off Tunisia the deadliest this year in the dangerous route from North Africa across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe.</p> <p>EU migration ministers, meeting in Luxembourg, were pessimistic that new proposals to update the bloc's asylum system would be accepted by many of the 28 member states.</p> <p>Well over 1 million people, mostly Syrians fleeing war at home, entered Europe in 2015, overwhelming Greece and Italy and surprising Germany, which took in hundreds of thousands of refugees. Their arrival strained relations among EU neighbors and fueled anti-migrant sentiment, especially in central and eastern Europe.</p> <p>EU leaders have insisted that the deadlock over how to handle migrants and refugees must be broken this month.</p> <p>In his first policy address, Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte declared Europe's immigration policy a "failure" and demanded that it be renegotiated. Italy has been the primary entry point for thousands of migrants to Europe via the Mediterranean this year.</p>

	<p>Conte insisted the rest of the EU must take on a greater burden of accepting refugees, as well as negotiating with migrants' home countries to return those who don't qualify for asylum.</p> <p>Germany's deputy interior minister, Stephan Mayer, said "there are still considerable deficits" in the proposals to overhaul EU immigration, while Dutch Migration Minister Mark Harbers said there are "a lot of member states that still have points of discussion."</p> <p>"First we have to fix the front door, fix the back door," Belgian Migration Minister Theo Francken told reporters. "Then we can find a compromise on who's doing what. When we don't have a solution for the massive influx of illegal aliens in our Europe, Europe will end, and we will never get out of this crisis."</p> <p>Denmark's prime minister, however, predicted that a new European asylum system could be in place as soon as next year and said asylum-seekers whose applications have been rejected could be sent to a country "that is not on the migrant's wish list."</p> <p>Prime Minister Lars Loekke Rasmussen gave no further details Tuesday besides that fact that several European countries have discussed the plan.</p> <p>Most of the disagreements focus on who should look after the migrants when they arrive and for how long. Under current rules, people must register for asylum in the European country they first arrive in. This has meant that Greece and Italy have carried most of the burden. But some nations — Hungary and Poland notably — have refused to honor any migrant quotas shared among European nations.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Fire dept. warns: hoses in summer
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/06/05/fire-department-warns-of-hoses-in-summer-posts-photo-of-baby-scalded-by-water/
GIST	<p>LAS VEGAS – Las Vegas Fire Rescue posted pictures of a burned baby Monday, warning residents of the hazards of using garden hoses during hot weather.</p> <p>“Here in Las Vegas, a garden hose exposed to direct sunlight during summer can heat the water inside the hose (not flowing) to 130-140 degrees,” fire rescue wrote, “which can cause burns, especially to children & animals. Let the water flow a few minutes to cool before spraying on people or animals.”</p> <p>The department posted a picture of an infant with burns from a garden hose... The photo was apparently shared in the past by a mother living in a different city who wanted to warn others.</p> <p>“It’s a file photo, we use it every year to show just how serious a burn can occur to a toddler,” Las Vegas Fire Rescue Public Information Officer Tim Szymanski said. “We got a ton of tweets back from people (saying) ‘I never thought about that,’ and that’s why we do it.”</p> <p>Fire and Rescue sent out the tweet during an excessive heat warning in Las Vegas, when temperatures were expected to rise above 106 degrees.</p> <p>“Sometimes the people don’t realize that for the length of the hose all that water is going to be hot water,” Szymanski said.</p> <p>He warned that it takes just seconds to cause a bad burn on a child or animal, and people should take care to let the water run cold during the summer.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Seattle-area home prices record highs
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SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/seattle-area-home-prices-reach-record-highs-but-increasing-inventory-offers-a-ray-of-hope/
GIST	<p>Single-family home prices continue to reach new highs despite increasing inventory in May, according to monthly home-sales data released Tuesday by the Northwest Multiple Listing Service.</p> <p>The median price of a single-family home in King County was \$726,275 in May, surpassing the record high of \$725,000 set in April and up 15 percent compared to the previous year.</p> <p>Seattle’s median home price of \$830,000 is up 14 percent from a year ago and sets a new record after holding steady at the previous high of \$819,000 in March and April.</p> <p>Another record was established on the Eastside with a median home price of \$960,000, eclipsing the previous high of \$950,000 reached in February and up 10 percent year-over-year.</p> <p>The news isn’t all bad for home buyers, however, as total active listings in King County went up for the second month in a row after years of declining inventory, increasing 36 percent in May compared to the previous year. The Northwest Multiple Listing Service said the increase in listings marks only the third time since October 2016, and the first time since last September, that King County has more than a month’s supply of homes (meaning the number of listings is greater than the number sold in a month).</p> <p>While the increase in inventory may provide some minor relief, it isn’t enough to substantially ease competition among buyers and is still well below the five months of inventory needed for a balanced market, said Mike Grady, president of Coldwell Banker Bain.</p> <p>“The job market in Seattle continues to push higher demand for homes than what we have in inventory being formed,” Grady said. “There’s a little relief, meaning buyers don’t have to write an offer within the first hour.</p> <p>“Now they have maybe a day.”</p> <p>Grady said he doesn’t see inventory even coming close to meeting demand in the next two years.</p> <p>The story is the same in other areas, with both Pierce and Kitsap counties reaching new record highs in May. The median home price of \$355,000 in Pierce County surpassed its previous high of \$350,000 set in March and was up 15 percent over the previous year. And Kitsap County surpassed its previous high of \$341,000 set in March with a median home price of \$360,000, up 16 percent from a year ago.</p> <p>Snohomish County came in slightly below its record high of \$506,000 in April, but the median home price of \$500,000 in May still represents an 11 percent year-over-year increase.</p> <p>The ever-increasing home prices continue to complicate the buying process with a high rate of bidding wars and a median down payment that has surpassed \$100,000 in King County.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/06 Marking 74yrs since D-Day landings
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/06/06/veterans-families-mark-74-years-since-allied-d-day-landings.html
GIST	<p>COLLEVILLE-SUR-MER, France – U.S. and other allied troops have joined veterans of the D-Day invasion and families of fallen soldiers to mark 74 years since the massive military operation that change the course of World War II.</p> <p>Amid fog and wind, ceremonies were held Wednesday at the American military cemetery at Colleville-sur-Mer and along the Normandy beaches and cliffs where Allied forces landed in Nazi-occupied France.</p>

	<p>Thousands of U.S., British, Canadian and French troops launched a combined naval, air and land assault as dawn was breaking on June 6, 1944. The invasion weakened the Nazis' hold on Western Europe after they suffered a punishing defeat in Stalingrad in the east.</p> <p>Wednesday's ceremonies were relatively low-key, while bigger events are planned for the 75th anniversary next year.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/06 South America economies sputtering
SOURCE	https://www.bloombergquint.com/global-economics/2018/06/05/south-american-economies-dive-south-as-growth-outlook-dims
GIST	<p>(Bloomberg) -- Pro-business leaders in South America's largest economies are struggling to spark growth as their policies run head-on into domestic crises and emerging market turbulence.</p> <p>Brazil and Argentina have seen their 2018 growth estimates cut from around 3 percent earlier this year to 2.2 percent and 1.3 percent, respectively, according to economists surveyed by their central banks. More downside revisions are on tap, with JPMorgan Chase & Co. recently lowering its Brazil call to a mere 1.2 percent this year. Some analysts say Argentina may even fall into a brief recession.</p> <p>Brazil and Argentina were expected to regain momentum this year after emerging from recession in 2017 under the market-friendly policies of presidents Michel Temer and Mauricio Macri. But their fortunes were reversed when global market volatility exacerbated their domestic problems. An unsustainable budget deficit forced Argentina to seek help from the IMF while political uncertainty is on the rise in Brazil ahead of its election in October.</p> <p>On top of that, a severe drought made things worse for Argentina, while a massive trucker strike paralyzed the Brazilian economy. The Argentine peso has slid more than 20 percent so far this year, even after the central bank raised rates to 40 percent, while the Brazilian real has accumulated losses of more than 10 percent.</p> <p>"We expect the Argentine economy to continue to decelerate markedly in the coming months," Itau economists Juan Carlos Barboza and Diego Ciongo wrote in a note to clients, citing the impact of the drought, tighter macro policies and lower real wages. "The international environment, including Brazil's growth and financial conditions, is also less supportive."</p> <p>Other South American economies are faring better so far. Chile grew at its fastest pace in more than five years in April, buoyed by the return of market-friendly President Sebastian Pinera. The Colombian economy is also seen accelerating toward a 3 percent growth rate in 2019.</p> <p>Still, that may not be enough to overcome the drag from the region's largest economies.</p> <p>"The impact on the region is significant as Brazil and Argentina account for more than half of South America's economy," said Pedro Tuesta, senior economist with 4Cast Ltd consultancy in Washington.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Kitsap Co. deputy saves 7 from fire
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/quick-acting-deputy-saves-7-lives-from-kitsap-co-house-fire
GIST	<p>PORT ORCHARD, Wash. - A Kitsap County sheriff's deputy on routine patrol jumped into action and saved the lives of seven people early Tuesday after he spotted a home on fire.</p> <p>The drama unfolded at about 5:10 a.m. as Deputy B. Harrin was patrolling in the 1600 block of SE Holman Road in south Kitsap County.</p>

	<p>He saw flames and smoke billowing from the home and immediately ran there, waking up the residents and helping them to escape the fire.</p> <p>In all, seven residents were rescued from the home, including one person with disabilities.</p> <p>Crews from the South Kitsap Fire District arrived on scene and extinguished the blaze, but the damage was extensive and the home was declared a total loss.</p> <p>The cause of the fire is under investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/04 Seattle breaks up homeless camp clusters
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/42000-pounds-of-garbage-seattle-quietly-cleaning-up-clearing-out-hot-spots-for-people-living-in-vehicles/
GIST	<p>The city of Seattle has launched a new effort to clean up, and potentially break up, clusters of homeless vehicle campers with trash bags and, if necessary, tow trucks.</p> <p>The program, which quietly started in mid-May, has resulted in the collection of almost 42,000 pounds of garbage and waste from cleanups around RVs and other vehicles parked in Sodo, Georgetown, Ballard and the Central District.</p> <p>But in the meantime, residents of these vans and RVs continue to play a cat-and-mouse game with the city to avoid getting towed. At a cleanup in Sodo last week, several RV and camper residents simply moved a few blocks away from where they had originally parked.</p> <p>The new initiative comes as King County’s annual homeless Point in Time count found, once again, that homeless vehicle camping outpaced homeless people sleeping in tents. The snapshot count found more than 3,300 people sleeping in vehicles in the county, a 46 percent increase from the previous year.</p> <p>The cleanup program started on a smaller scale in Sodo in November but has been expanded citywide, in an effort to address serious public-health hazards around vehicles doubling as people’s homes.</p> <p>Until this program, that was largely done on a case-by-case basis, said Stephanie Formas, communications director for Mayor Jenny Durkan.</p> <p>City officials reiterated they aren’t trying to force people out of their vehicles or make them move out of a neighborhood. The concern is trying to address the vehicles that are generating large amounts of waste and other public-health hazards.</p> <p>In eight cleanups planned since May 11, Seattle has towed seven vehicles, while 101 others left voluntarily. In fact, the city canceled two of those cleanups because all the vehicles had pre-emptively moved and left behind no trash, Formas said.</p> <p>One person living in a towed vehicle moved into a tiny-house village, the city said.</p> <p>Seattle has struggled for years to address the needs of people living in vehicles — caught between businesses and neighborhood leaders who want the city to consistently enforce parking laws, and advocates for homeless people who say those vehicles are a last resort in a city with increasingly high rents and home prices.</p> <p>Currently, Seattle has just one lot where the city allows a handful of vehicles to park long-term without fear of being ticketed or towed.</p> <p>Formas, with the mayor’s office, emphasized the new cleanup program is separate from the city’s strategy</p>

to deal with vehicle residency. Durkan said last week she's studying safe-parking programs in other cities, including a program in San Diego featured in a recent Seattle Times story.

The tension over vehicle residency was highlighted in a King County Superior Court ruling in March, when a judge said that, because a vehicle can be defined as someone's home, imposing high towing fees and attaching a lien to the vehicle violated the U.S. Constitution and the state homestead act. Seattle is appealing.

By 9 a.m. last Wednesday morning, police officers, public-utilities workers and cleanup crews had gathered near the intersection of Sixth Avenue South and South Snoqualmie Street, a spot where vehicle campers had been living for months.

Five days earlier, the city had posted a notice there announcing an area cleanup. Vehicles that had been parked on the block for more than 72 hours, in violation of a city parking rule, were tagged with orange stickers, warning them to move by the day of the cleanup. Otherwise, they'd be towed.

The pilot program, a city blog post said, is designed to "engage RV occupants to voluntarily move their RVs," allowing city crews to remove trash and "immobile vehicles left behind." The post, however, does not explicitly say that vehicles could be towed as part of the program.

"The goal is to encourage cleanup around the vehicles," Formas said. "This is also to make sure people's belongings aren't improperly cleaned up," and they have time to move their possessions. Anything left behind, she said, is assumed to be garbage.

Sites are selected based on the number of vehicles clustered in the location, and "safety" and "health" conditions, including fire-damaged RVs, documented criminal activity in the area, needles, rats or the presence of human or chemical waste.

These are similar to rules set by Seattle to justify cleaning up unsanctioned tent encampments. Unlike residents of tent camps, there is no requirement that vehicle residents be offered shelter.

And also, unlike tent camps, the city's Navigation Team — a collection of outreach workers and police officers who connect campers to shelter — isn't involved in the vehicle cleanups unless there are tents nearby, the city said. Instead, Seattle police officers will do outreach at the sites.

At Wednesday's cleanup, most vehicles parked along Sixth Avenue were gone when city workers from an alphabet soup of departments — utilities, parks, police, transportation and administrative services — showed up.

For the few campers that remained, it was a race to get their RVs running before tow trucks arrived.

One man with a beat-up green minivan helped tow away two of his friends' RVs. Another couple got help from a friend who hitched up their blue and white camper to his pickup. Down the block, two men used jumper cables to help another man get his RV started.

"If people would keep their area clean, we probably wouldn't have as bad a problem as we have," said a woman who asked to be referred to only by Sheila, whose RV was towed out by the man in the green minivan.

"We all move in the same area. We all stay together. We all help each other out," Sheila said.

Many of the vehicles simply relocated farther north along Sixth Avenue, finding another curb along which to park.

Just before 11 a.m., the first Lincoln Towing truck arrived.

Calvin Hawk had been living in a Chevrolet Astro minivan along Sixth for the last two months. But the battery was dead and the van had a steering-wheel problem. He was out of luck.

Getting it back was unlikely. His sister gifted him the van. He didn't have the title.

Vehicles that are towed can be retrieved after the owner pays impound and storage fees, but that requires proof of ownership. Often people living in the vehicles don't actually hold the titles, buying them in under-the-table deals.

"I knew they were coming today," Hawk said of the cleanup. "I didn't know exactly when. I didn't know if someone was going to help me move it. So I didn't have all my stuff prepared."

A worker with Seattle Public Utilities stood beside him, trying to help him find shelter and decide what items he wanted to keep or discard. He shrugged. Maybe he'd just abandon all of it, he said.

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HEADLINE	06/05 Seattle PD change tactics w/protesters
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/slaying-the-sleeping-dragon-seattle-police-change-tactics-to-counter-traffic-blocking-protesters/
GIST	<p>In March, opponents of King County's new juvenile detention center were able to bring Friday traffic to a grinding halt for about six hours and shed light on their cause by <u>simply lying down</u> in the middle of a downtown Seattle intersection.</p> <p>They resisted easy arrest by employing a tactic called the "sleeping dragon," in which participants form a human chain, hand to hand, with arms linked while inside a piece of PVC tubing.</p> <p>Sometimes protesters in sleeping dragons are handcuffed to one another inside the tubing, which can be encased in concrete — or wrapped in chicken wire and duct tape, as was the case on Tuesday morning <u>when people opposing immigration policies employed the technique while lying in the street at Second Avenue and Madison Street.</u></p> <p>Simply cutting off the tubing runs the risk of injuring protesters, slowing the removal.</p> <p>"Removing these devices is slow, deliberate work." Seattle police tweeted during Tuesday's protest. "The safety of all involved is paramount."</p> <p>But members of the department's new Apparatus Removal Team (ART) were able to separate the nine protesters and take them into custody in about an hour and a half.</p> <p>Seattle police spokesman Sgt. Sean Whitcomb said creation of the team was in direct response to the earlier protest. "The March demonstration was new to us," he said Tuesday. "So we provided traffic management and supported the event as it unfolded, planning for it to end by the evening commute.</p> <p>"We learned from that experience and have adapted accordingly," he added. "As they change their tactics, our training, tactics and equipment change, too."</p> <p>Seattle police typically handle about 300 demonstrations a year. Most are non-disruptive and peaceful, but in the past couple of months, Whitcomb said protesters have employed sleeping dragons to slow their dispersal and disrupt the rush-hour commute.</p> <p>He said members of ART are specially trained officers who have the knowledge, experience and equipment to cut through plastic and metal without hurting protesters. Because sleeping dragons vary in composition, the team relies on different tools, he said.</p>

Whitcomb was cautious about revealing too many details about the tools and tactics used by officers on the ART.

On Tuesday, a lieutenant first gave the immigration protesters with the Northwest Detention Center Resistance and activist group Mijente a two-minute warning to disperse and clear the road or face arrest. When the six men and three women ignored the order, members of the team then used large pliers and a Dremel rotary tool to cut into the sleeping dragon.

Police say once they cut into the tubing they slip a brightly colored piece of plastic inside so it rests against the protesters' skin. When they continue to cut or drill into the tubing the plastic shavings alert officers when they are getting close to skin.

Once the officers had the protesters separated into one- or two-person sections, they were carried off the street and onto the sidewalk. There, officers worked more slowly and carefully to disconnect each individual as street traffic resumed.

The nine were booked into the King County Jail for investigation of pedestrian interference. They selected the site because the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement and immigration court is housed at 1000 Second Ave.

“Although Seattle and King County claim to be “sanctuaries” for immigrants, the Seattle Police Department and the King County Sheriff actively collaborate on joint task forces with this branch of ICE leading to prosecutions and deportations. These collaborations must end,” Mijente said in a news release. Organizers of the No New Youth Jail Coalition, which staged the March protest, have acknowledged that their strategy includes disrupting traffic to bring attention to their cause.

“We have won so much today,” coalition organizer Julianna Alson said in March. “We shut down the streets, we shut down business as usual, we shut down rush hour, we shut down the status quo.”

Whitcomb said the ART officers will be busy as long as the sleeping dragon is used in protests.

“This is fundamentally civil disobedience. They recognize they may be arrested but they didn't sign up to be injured,” he said of protesters. “We want to get them out of the road, but we have to be a very careful and methodical dismantling these devices.”

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HEADLINE	06/05 No charges NJ officers beach beating
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2018/06/05/beach-punch-video-new-jersey-officers-wont-face-charges/675851002/
GIST	<p>Three police officers who were videotaped arresting a Philadelphia woman at a New Jersey beach, one of whom was filmed punching her in the back of the head, <u>will not face criminal charges</u>, prosecutors announced Tuesday.</p> <p>A video of the May 26 arrest, which only captured part of the encounter and included a Wildwood officer apparently punching 20-year-old Emily Weinman, went viral shortly after the arrest. Body camera footage that city police later released appeared to show Weinman backing away from an officer who tried to handcuff her, then shove him in the torso.</p> <p>The Cape May County Prosecutor's Office determined the officers had not broken any state laws governing use of force and referred the investigation back to the city police department's internal affairs office, prosecutor Jeffrey H. Sutherland wrote in a prepared statement. The prosecutor's office's Professional Standards Unit will monitor the city investigation.</p> <p>Police officers had originally questioned Weinman about alcohol when they approached her on the beach.</p>

They administered a breath test and one officer can be heard saying in part of the body camera footage that they would have Weinman or her group pour out alcohol at the scene. The officers changed their minds at some point and decided to take Weinman into custody.

In a prepared statement at the time police released their footage, Wildwood Police Chief Robert N. Regalbuto said that Weinman "forcibly struck" an officer trying to arrest her, turning off his body camera, but that the camera reactivated as a struggle ensued. The three officers involved in the arrest — Thomas Cannon, John Hillman and Robert Jordan — were put on administrative duty pending the outcome of the internal affairs investigation, police announced the day after the incident.

"As county prosecutor, I recognize that the video footage has raised a lot of questions regarding the officers' actions. A decision such as this is not based on emotion; it is based upon applying the proper laws, policies and directives that govern law enforcement," Sutherland wrote in his statement. "Members of the public should understand that no matter what your opinion is regarding the subject event, it is not based on a full review of the evidence."

Weinman's attorney, Stephen P. Dicht, took a different view.

"My only comment is, of all the participants in that scuffle, OK, the only one that was charged was the one who was beaten on the head," Dicht told the Asbury Park Press in a phone interview.

Police charged Weinman with two counts of aggravated assault on a police officer, aggravated assault by spitting bodily fluids at or on a police officer, disorderly conduct, resisting arrest, obstruction and underage possession of alcohol, they announced May 27. Her attorney said she intended to fight the charges in court.

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HEADLINE	06/05 Groups decry beating by Oregon deputy
SOURCE	http://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2018/06/05/oregon-deputy-suspect-beating-caught-camera/
GIST	<p>Civil rights groups in Oregon are calling for an investigation after a video showed police punching a prone man in the head at least 16 times.</p> <p>The video shows four officers converging on a man standing on a street, then pulling him to the ground, with three officers holding his limbs and one straddling his back. As one officer appears to struggle to force one of the man's arms behind his back, another begins punching him in the head.</p> <p>Through the punches, the man, identified as 28-year-old Kevin Straw, repeatedly shouts "I am not resisting." The video was shot by Portland, Oregon, TV station KGW.</p> <p>The American Civil Liberties Union and the state chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations both called for investigations.</p> <p>The Marion County Sheriff's Office said the arrest happened Monday after Straw repeatedly shouted at officers involved in the search for two missing fishermen in the Detroit, Oregon, area. The sheriff's office said it's reviewing the officers' use of force, and that an outside agency would perform an additional review.</p> <p>The release also said Straw had been contacted earlier by crisis intervention specialists after reports he had been yelling at passers-by in the area.</p> <p>In the video, an officer forces Straw's right arm behind his back, and another grabs his left arm. But as the officers together lower the man toward the ground, face down, Straw extends his left arm in front of himself. As Straw is punched, an officer can be heard saying, "get your hand behind your back."</p>

After the punches are delivered, a fifth officer jogs to the scene and puts his knee on Straw's head. Aside from extending his arm, Straw does not appear to struggle in the video, and is eventually handcuffed.

In a later release, the sheriff's office identified the five deputies involved in the arrest and said one, Jake Thompson, had been reassigned to non-patrol duties pending the outcome of the review.

David Rogers, head of the American Civil Liberties Union in Oregon, said it wasn't clear why officers used force on the prone man.

"It looked like they were in pretty complete control, and yet a deputy proceeded to punch this man in the face 14 or 15 times," Rogers said. "It was incredibly disturbing."

Amy Queen, a spokeswoman for the Marion County district attorney said the office is consulting with the sheriff's office, but is not independently investigating the incident.

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HEADLINE	06/06 Guatemala volcano death toll rises
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/06/americas/guatemala-fuego-volcano-eruption/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Explosions are intensifying at Guatemala's Fuego volcano as emergency crews continue the search Wednesday for nearly 200 people reported missing.</p> <p>More pyroclastic flow -- a nasty mix of ash, rock and volcanic gases that can be much more dangerous than lava -- is streaming down the volcano once again threatening villages southeast of the volcano, Guatemala's National Institute of Seismology, Vulcanology, Meteorology and Hydrology (Insivumeh) said in a statement.</p> <p>"The conditions are extremely critical at this moment," the agency's director Eddy Sanchez said in a televised press conference on Tuesday.</p> <p>Search and rescue operations were temporarily suspended Tuesday when rescuers, police officers and volunteers were forced to evacuate as strong explosions in the volcano began.</p> <p>Some explosions sent ash plume 16,405 feet into the sky, according to Insivumeh.</p> <p>The volcano is about 25 miles southwest of the capital, Guatemala City, and near the colonial city of Antigua.</p> <p>Three days after the Fuego volcano exploded, several towns remain covered in thick ash and rescuers scramble navigating the steaming debris.</p> <p>At least 192 people remain missing and at least 75 have died, according to Sergio Cabañas, the executive secretary of Guatemala's National Coordination for Disaster Reduction.</p> <p>Only 23 victims have been identified, including two girls ages 3 and 6, Guatemala's National Institute of Forensic Sciences (INACIF) said in a statement.</p> <p>It's unclear whether some of the people missing are among the unidentified bodies, Cabañas said.</p> <p>"We are not only talking about what has been described as the volcano's biggest eruption since 1974. We are talking about a tragedy, a national mourning," Guatemala President Jimmy Morales said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/06 China removed missiles disputed island?
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/06/asia/south-china-sea-missiles-satellite-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Hong Kong (CNN)Beijing may have removed missile systems from a disputed island in the South China Sea even as it accused the US of sending "attacking weapons" to the region.</p> <p>The deployment of a number of missile systems to the Spratly and Paracel Islands in May sparked an angry rebuke from Washington about Beijing's "militarization" of the sea, almost all of which is claimed by China.</p> <p>It was followed by a B-52 bomber flyover of the Spratlys this week, which the US said was part of a "routine training mission."</p> <p>New analysis from Israeli intelligence firm ImageSat International (ISI) suggests the Chinese missile systems may have been removed or relocated.</p> <p>On Wednesday, Beijing said it was the US, not China, which was militarizing the region.</p> <p>"I hope the US can explain to everyone: Isn't it militarization when you send attacking weapons like the B-52 bombers to the South China Sea? Were the B-52s there for freedom of navigation and overflight? If someone frequently flexes his muscles or snoops around near your house, shouldn't you raise your alertness and improve your defense capabilities?" Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said at a regular press conference.</p> <p>"China will not be intimidated by any planes or ships. We will only be firmer in our resolve to take all necessary measures to safeguard our sovereignty and security as well as maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea."</p> <p>Previous satellite imagery showed a number of missile launchers and a radar system on the shore of the disputed Woody Island in the Paracel chain, covered by camouflage netting.</p> <p>Those have now disappeared, in what ISI said could indicate a decision by Beijing to remove them, or redeploy them to other parts of the South China Sea.</p> <p>"On the other hand, it may be a regular practice," the firm said. "If so, within the next few days we may observe a redeployment in the same area."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/06 US bombers fly near contested islands
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/04/politics/us-b52-spratly-flyover/index.html
GIST	<p>Washington (CNN)Two US B-52 bombers flew within the vicinity of the contested Spratly Islands in the South China Sea on Tuesday, according to a statement from US Pacific Air Forces, which oversees air operations in the region.</p> <p>The flyover came days after Secretary of Defense James Mattis called Beijing out over its militarization of the islands, accusing China of "intimidation and coercion" in the Indo-Pacific, making clear the US has no plans to leave the region and prompting a furious Chinese response.</p> <p>Beijing claims the Spratly Islands, but those claims aren't recognized by the US or by China's neighbors -- Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Taiwan -- which also say the islands are theirs. China has used geographic features in the Spratlys to build man-made islands, some of which it has equipped with military facilities, including anti-ship and anti-aircraft missiles.</p> <p>A US defense official who has knowledge of the mission's original flight plan said it called for the nuclear capable B-52 bombers to fly about 20 miles from the islands.</p>

	<p>A spokesman for the Pentagon said the mission involved the Guam-based bombers conducting "a routine training mission," flying from Andersen Air Force Base in the US territory of Guam "to the Navy Support Facility" in the United Kingdom's Indian Ocean territory of Diego Garcia.</p> <p>On Tuesday, the bombers flew from Diego Garcia and conducted "training" in the vicinity of the South China Sea, returning back to Diego Garcia the same day, according to the statement from US Pacific Air Forces.</p> <p>CNN initially reported that the flyover took place Monday, based on information from the US defense official who later clarified that the flyover took place Tuesday and not during the initial leg of the aircraft's journey Monday from Andersen to Diego Garcia.</p> <p>Both flight operations were part of US Pacific Command's "Continuous Bomber Presence" missions, which the military says are intended to maintain the readiness of US forces.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Hawaii: 12,000 quakes in 30 days
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/05/us/hawaii-volcano-by-the-numbers/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)From earthquakes to seeping lava, Hawaii's Big Island has seen plenty from nature since the first eruptions of Kilauea volcano. And the lava keeps spewing, swallowing homes and igniting fears of more destruction to come.</p> <p>Here's what the disaster looks like, by the numbers:</p> <p>12,000 earthquakes Since May 4, there have been more than 12,000 earthquakes, according to US Geological Survey geologist Janet Babb. The quakes can be felt right near the Kilauea summit, Babb said. The Big Island usually gets its fair share of quakes. But activity in the last 30 days has far outpaced its historical monthly average of 1,000. The biggest was a 6.9-magnitude temblor on May 4.</p> <p>30,000 feet The tallest ash plume at the summit of Kilauea volcano reached 30,000 feet above sea level, the USGS says.</p> <p>'Hundreds' of homes At least 117 homes had earlier been reported destroyed in the four weeks since lava began flowing, according to Hawaii Civil Defense Administrator Talmadge Magno. Overnight Monday, "hundreds" more were destroyed in Kapoho Beach Lots and Vacationland, said Janet Snyder, a Hawaii Civil Defense Service spokeswoman. The number is sure to grow because assessments aren't finished, Magno said.</p> <p>7.7 square miles About 7.7 square miles are covered by lava, which is about 0.2% of Hawaii Island, according to the USGS.</p> <p>250 feet The highest lava fountain measured so far has reached 250 feet. That's a lot of lava, but flow volumes can be extraordinarily difficult to measure, the USGS said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 More open jobs than job seekers
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-u-s-now-has-more-open-jobs-than-job-seekers/

GIST

WASHINGTON - For the first time on record, the number of job openings in the U.S. exceeds the number of unemployed Americans -- a trend that may soon give workers more leverage to demand pay raises.

With employers struggling to fill openings, the number of available jobs in April rose 1 percent to 6.7 million from 6.6 million in March, the Labor Department said Tuesday. That's the most since records began in December 2000.

The figures underscore the consistent strength of the nation's job market. The unemployment rate has reached an 18-year low of 3.8 percent. Employers have added jobs for a record 92 straight months. And the abundance of openings suggests that hiring will continue and the unemployment rate will fall even further. Not since December 1969, when the rate was 3.5 percent, has unemployment been lower than it is now.

Employers appear confident about the economic outlook and growth. Analysts expect faster consumer spending to help accelerate growth to roughly a 3.5 percent annual rate in the April-June quarter, after growth had lagged slightly in the first three months of the year.

In July 2009, just as the Great Recession was officially ending, there were on average 6.7 unemployed people for each job. Now, that figure has fallen to just 0.95 jobless people per opening.

The sharpest increase in openings in April was in a category called professional and business services, which includes a range of occupations such as accountants, architects and engineers. Increased openings were also especially evident among manufacturers and at hotels and restaurants.

Regionally, the largest increases in available jobs in April were in the Midwest and West. Open jobs in the Northeast and South barely changed.

Yet it's not clear that employers are trying very hard to fill all their open jobs. Online job boards and software that makes it easier to scan resumes for keywords also make it easier for employers to post openings and initially screen applications, even if they're not actually prepared to hire.

The surest sign that employers were scrambling for workers would be steady pay gains, as businesses bid higher for the workers they need. Yet wage increases remain sluggish, compared with previous periods when the unemployment rate was this low.

Hourly pay rose 2.8 percent in May on average for all workers, excluding managers, compared with a year earlier. In April 2000, the last time the unemployment rate was as low as it is now, hourly pay jumped nearly 4 percent from the previous year.

That may indicate that employers aren't as desperate to hire as the robust number of job openings would suggest. For example, data from the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta show that workers who switch jobs are starting to enjoy healthier pay gains. That's a sign companies are willing to pay more to lure workers from other companies.

But by historical standards, pay increases are relatively low -- even for job-switchers. In April, wages for job-switchers rose 4 percent, on average. But in December 2000, near the peak of the late 1990s boom, they were receiving raises of 6.5 percent.

Martha Gimbel, director of economic research at job-listing site Indeed, points out that pay increases for Americans who remain in their jobs are actually falling. Wages for job-stayers were up just 2.9 percent in April, compared with 3.7 percent six months earlier.

Separate research from the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, released last month, shows that 14.5 percent of people who remained in their jobs in early 2018 received no pay increase from a year earlier. That figure was just 11 percent before the Great Recession began in late 2007.

	"That is really astonishing to me at this point in the recovery," Gimbel said. "That just signals that employers are not worried about their employees being poached."
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HEADLINE	06/05 Separated migrant kids stuck at border
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/hundreds-migrant-kids-separated-parents-are-stuck-border-stations-n878696
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Border agents and child welfare workers are running out of space to shelter children who have been separated from their parents at the U.S. border as part of the Trump administration's new "zero tolerance" policy, according to two U.S. officials and a document obtained by NBC News.</p> <p>As of Sunday, nearly 300 of the 550 children currently in custody at U.S. border stations had spent more than 72 hours there, the time limit for immigrants of any age to be held in the government's temporary facilities. Almost half of those 300 children are younger than 12, according to the document, meaning they are classified by the Department of Homeland Security as "tender age children."</p> <p>The stations, run by the Border Patrol and meant only as the first stop for children detained at the border, often lack adequate bedding or separate sleeping rooms for children.</p> <p>"It would be highly inappropriate and even unsafe to hold children for extended periods in these short-term border facilities because they often lack the adequate medical and nutritional resources for these young people," said Greg Chen, director of government relations for the American Immigration Lawyers Association. "It would place these children at risk of harm if they are housed with adults without the proper privacy that children should have."</p> <p>A spokesman for DHS did not respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>The overstays at border stations are a result of a backlog at U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS), the agency responsible for sheltering migrant children longer term and matching them with relatives or foster parents in the U.S. The agency's Administration for Children and Families has 11,200 unaccompanied children in its care and takes 45 days on average to place a child with a sponsor, according to a spokesperson.</p> <p>HHS officials will soon tour military installations near the border in Texas as they search for more space to house children while they wait for placement. The officials will tour Dyess Air Force Base, Goodfellow Air Force Base, and Fort Bliss, the spokesperson said.</p> <p>"HHS will make the determination if they will use any of the three sites for UAC (unaccompanied alien children) operations," the spokesperson said.</p> <p>A Defense Department spokesperson said HHS was the lead agency and referred NBC News to HHS.</p> <p>Military bases have been used to house migrant children in the past, but only as a last resort, according to an Obama administration official.</p> <p>In May, the Trump administration began enforcing a "zero tolerance" policy on the southern border, prosecuting any adult who entered the country illegally in order to crack down on the surge in the number of immigrants crossing the border.</p> <p>Parents traveling with children are separated from their kids while they face legal proceedings. Two U.S. officials said HHS was not given proper warning of the new policy and was caught unprepared at the influx of children.</p> <p>"What's happening now is a broad indication of a total lack of planning or forethought for the policy they</p>

	<p>enacted," said Peter Boogaard, a former DHS and White House official in the Obama administration who is now a spokesman for the immigration reform group FWD.us. "They didn't think this through at all — what it would mean for kids, for their parents and for the operational challenges."</p> <p>"Instead of having Border Patrol agents at the border, you have them taking care of kids at border stations."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 US warns against financial deals w/Iran
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/u-s-warns-allies-against-financial-dealings-iran-n880311
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The United States warned governments and the private sector on Tuesday to crack down on what it described as Iranian efforts to exploit them to fund its support for terrorism, destabilizing actions in the region and rights abuses at home.</p> <p>The appeal, in a speech by the senior U.S. Treasury official for terrorism and financial intelligence, follows U.S. President Donald Trump's May 8 decision to abandon the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and to reimpose U.S. sanctions on the Islamic Republic.</p> <p>"You must harden your financial networks, require your companies to do extra due diligence to keep them from being caught in Iran's deceptive web, and make clear the very significant risks of doing business with companies and persons there," Under Secretary of the Treasury Sigal Mandelker said.</p> <p>"Companies doing business in Iran face substantial risks, and those risks are even greater as we reimpose nuclear-related sanctions," she added. "We will hold those doing prohibited business in Iran to account."</p> <p>The U.S. decision to leave the pact, under which Iran agreed to limit its nuclear program in return for relief from economic sanctions, has antagonized its other parties: Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia.</p> <p>With U.S. sanctions returning between now and Nov. 4, it is not clear how enthusiastic U.S. allies or other nations such as China may be to comply with those sanctions, particularly those requiring foreign firms to reduce their imports of Iranian oil.</p> <p>The weight of the U.S. financial system and the reality of companies having to choose between selling to Iran or to the vast U.S. market, is likely to force many private firms to comply.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Seattle 22% nation's bikeshare bikes
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle-has-22-percent-of-the-countrys-bikeshare-bikes-l-geekwire/281-561579312
GIST	<p>There were 10,000 dockless bike share bikes scattered across Seattle at the end of 2017, nearly a quarter of all units nationwide.</p> <p>That was one of the findings in a new study of Seattle's bike sharing program released Monday by the Seattle Department of Transportation. It comes as the city is determining long-term regulations for dockless bike sharing companies. The study found that the 10,000 bikes from Spin, LimeBike, and Ofo were ridden 468,000 times from July 2017 to the end of the year.</p> <p>The study underscores the rapid growth of bike sharing in Seattle and the city's status of a nationwide proving ground for the concept. The program only kicked off last summer, when the city granted permits to Spin and LimeBike starting with 500 bikes a piece, a threshold that was increased later in the year. In August, Chinese bike share company Ofo jumped into the fray.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Suicide warning signs
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2018/06/05/suicide-warning-signs-prevention-help/675748002/
GIST	<p>The apparent suicide of fashion icon Kate Spade is raising awareness about prevention.</p> <p>About 39,500 people died of suicide in 2011. That's more deaths than from murder, prostate cancer or car accidents, according to the American Association of Suicidology.</p> <p>Some of the most frequently cited risk factors for suicide include mental disorders, depression, a prior suicide attempt, family history and exposure to other people's suicidal behavior, according to the National Institutes of Health.</p> <p>So how do you know when a loved one needs help?</p> <p>Warning signs According to the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention, some of the warning signs of suicide are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking about wanting to die. About 50%-75% of people who attempt suicide tell someone about it first. • Finding ways to kill themselves, like hoarding medicine or buying a gun. • Insomnia • Losing interest in things and becoming withdrawn from family and friends. <p>What to do If you know someone who is thinking about suicide, you should not leave them by themselves. Also, remove anything that might be harmful to the person, such as guns, according to NIH.</p> <p>"Try to get your loved one to seek immediate help from his or her doctor or the nearest hospital emergency room, or call 911," NIH says on its website.</p> <p>You can also call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Nasdaq closes at record high
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/finance/markets/nasdaq-stocks-market-dow/2018/06/05/id/864317/
GIST	<p>The Nasdaq closed at a record high for the second day in a row with help from the technology and consumer discretionary sectors, while the S&P 500 edged higher as investors eyed solid U.S. economic data.</p> <p>However, bank stocks declined along with U.S. Treasury yields, and investors appeared to favor bonds over defensive equity sectors such as utilities and consumer staples.</p> <p>The U.S. services sector activity accelerated in May, pointing to robust economic growth in the second quarter, although trade tariffs and a shortage of workers posed a threat to the outlook.</p> <p>"The economy continues to be a very strong foundation for the stock market. What seems to be concerning markets today is the possibility for a slowdown outside of the United States," said Tracie McMillion, head of global asset allocation strategy for Wells Fargo Investment Institute, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.</p> <p>The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 13.71 points, or 0.06 percent, to 24,799.98, the S&P 500 gained 1.93 points, or 0.07 percent, to 2,748.8 and the Nasdaq Composite added 31.40 points, or 0.41 percent, to 7,637.86.</p>

The Nasdaq's biggest boost was from Amazon.com, which rose 1.9 percent, also leading gains in the S&P consumer discretionary index. Apple rose 0.8 percent, contributing the biggest point gains to the technology index and the second biggest for the Nasdaq.

The Cboe Volatility Index, the most widely followed barometer of expected near-term volatility for the S&P 500, closed down 0.34 point at 12.4, its lowest close since Jan. 26. The financial sector was the S&P's biggest drag with a 0.4 percent decline. Bank of America and Citibank fell around 0.9 percent. Banks often trade in line with Treasury yields as higher rates can boost their profits.

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HEADLINE	06/06 Report: Medicare finances worsening
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/trustees-report-warns-medicare-finances-worsening-55676730?
GIST	<p>Medicare will run out of money sooner than expected, and Social Security's financial problems can't be ignored either, the government said Tuesday in a sobering checkup on programs vital to the middle class.</p> <p>The report from program trustees says Medicare will become insolvent in 2026 — three years earlier than previously forecast. Its giant trust fund for inpatient care won't be able to fully cover projected medical bills starting at that point.</p> <p>The report says Social Security will become insolvent in 2034 — no change from the projection last year.</p> <p>The warning serves as a reminder of major issues still languishing while Washington plunges deeper into partisan strife. Because of the deterioration in Medicare's finances, officials said the Trump administration will be required by law to send Congress a plan next year to address the problems, after the president's budget is submitted.</p> <p>Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in a statement that there's time to fix the problems. "The programs remain secure," Mnuchin said. Medicare "is on track to meet its obligations to beneficiaries well into the next decade."</p> <p>"However, certain long-term issues persist," the statement added. "Lack-luster economic growth in previous years, coupled with an aging population, has contributed to the projected shortages for both Social Security and Medicare."</p> <p>Social Security recipients are likely to see a cost of living increase of about 2.4 percent next year, said government number-crunchers who produced the report. That works out to about \$31 a month.</p> <p>At the same time, the monthly Medicare "Part B" premium for outpatient care paid by most beneficiaries is projected to rise by about \$1.50, to \$135.50.</p> <p>Both the cost-of-living increase and the Medicare outpatient premium are not officially determined until later in the year, and the initial projections can change.</p> <p>More than 62 million retirees, disabled workers, spouses and surviving children receive Social Security benefits. The average monthly payment is \$1,294 for all beneficiaries. Medicare provides health insurance for about 60 million people, most of whom are age 65 or older.</p> <p>Together the two programs have been credited with dramatically reducing poverty among older people and extending life expectancy for Americans. Financed with payroll taxes collected from workers and employers, Social Security and Medicare account for about 40 percent of government spending, excluding interest on the federal debt.</p> <p>But demands on both programs are increasing as America ages.</p>

Unless lawmakers act, both programs face the prospect of being unable to cover the full cost of promised benefits. With Social Security that could mean sharply reduced payments for retirees, many of whom are already on tight budgets. The report said the total annual cost of Social Security is projected to exceed total annual income in 2018 for the first time since the Reagan era, meaning the program will have to tap into reserves.

For Medicare, insolvency would mean that hospitals, nursing homes and other providers of medical care would be paid only part of their agreed-upon fees.

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HEADLINE	06/06 Post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/story?
GIST	<p>For people suffering distress after experiencing a serious trauma, it can be hard to find any relief. Post-traumatic stress disorder has been reported to feel like being trapped in a room without any exits and can cause trouble with everyday activities like sleeping or functioning at work.</p> <p>Even the singer Ariana Grande said she suffers from the troubling disorder known as PTSD after the Manchester Arena bombing during her concert on May 22, 2017 killed 22 people.</p> <p>She said she doesn't think she'll ever be able to talk about the bombing without crying.</p> <p>"It's hard to talk about because so many people have suffered such severe, tremendous loss," Grande said. "But, yeah, it's a real thing."</p> <p>What is PTSD?</p> <p>Post-traumatic stress disorder is a form of anxiety that can happen after experiencing or witnessing actual or near death, serious injury like car accidents or natural disasters, war-related violence, terrorism or sexual violence, according to the American Psychiatric Association.</p> <p>While most people typically connect this disorder to military veterans or refugees, it can happen to anyone.</p> <p>PTSD is not a sign of weakness and people can be affected by PTSD, even when they were not directly part of the traumatic event.</p> <p>The exposure can happen to witnesses of a traumatic event in person, like for Ariana Grande, and to people who learn that the traumatic event happened to a loved one. Repeated or extreme exposure to details of a traumatic event, such as pictures or movies, can also cause PTSD.</p> <p>What are the symptoms?</p> <p>PTSD symptoms usually start after the traumatic event, but they may not appear until months or years later, according to the National Center for PTSD. They also may come and go over many years. Symptoms may last longer than one month, cause great distress, or interfere with a person's work or home life.</p> <p>Most people have four types of symptoms after the event and may not be the same for all: reliving the event, avoiding people or places, having more negative feelings and being in a state of hyper-arousal.</p> <p>PTSD sufferers often relive the traumatic event over and over through bad memories, nightmares or flashbacks.</p> <p>They may avoid people, places or things that are reminders of the traumatic event.</p>

Over time, PTSD can also affect the way sufferers think about themselves and others. They often report having more negative beliefs and feelings. This can include feeling guilt or shame, losing interest in previously enjoyed activities, losing trust in others or even finding it hard to be happy.

Some PTSD sufferers enter a state of hypervigilance or hyperarousal, during which they are easily startled, overly alert and "on edge." They can sometimes be more aggressive or irritable and engage in reckless, self-destructive behavior. These states can also cause difficulty with concentration and sleeping.

How common is the disorder?

About 8 percent of people in the United States and Europe are affected by PTSD, according to the National Center for PTSD. There are some things that make it more likely to be affected by the disorder such as having a long-lasting trauma, getting hurt, or having a strong reaction to the event.

PTSD is more than twice as common in women, according to the National Center for PTSD, possibly because women are more likely to experience sexual violence, and at least half of Americans have had a traumatic event in their lives.

How is PTSD treated?

PTSD treatment can be life-changing even if people have been struggling for years. Treatments are targeted at reducing the symptoms and "disturbances." There are two main types of treatment: psychotherapy, either counseling or "talk" therapy or medication.

Psychotherapy involves meeting with a therapist and sometimes a group. There are several approaches including trauma-focused therapy, prolonged exposure therapy and others, including group therapy. Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) involves focusing on hand movements and sounds while recalling past trauma and can help the brain work through traumatic memories.

Medications such as antidepressants are a first-line treatment that can reduce the symptoms, but may take six to eight weeks to begin working.

Activities such as mindfulness, deep breathing exercises, stretching and yoga can sometimes ease symptoms.

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HEADLINE	06/05 Ethiopia accepts peace deal w/Eritrea
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ethiopia-accepts-peace-deal-longtime-rival-eritrea-55670514?
GIST	<p>Ethiopia has announced it will fully accept the terms of a peace agreement with neighboring Eritrea in a major step toward calming deadly tensions with its decades-long rival, as dramatic reforms under a new prime minister continue.</p> <p>The development Tuesday night came as the ruling party also announced that the East African nation, one of Africa's fastest-growing economies, will open up parts of state-owned enterprises in sectors such as energy, aviation and telecoms to private investment and others, such as railways and hotels, to full privatization.</p> <p>The news came just hours after Ethiopia lifted a state of emergency in what had been the biggest reform yet under new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who has promised change after more than two years of deadly anti-government protests demanding greater freedoms in Africa's second most populous country.</p> <p>But it is the prospect of peace with reclusive Eritrea that comes as the latest, and largest, surprise.</p>

The peace agreement signed in 2000 ended a two-year border war that claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people, but a no-peace-no-war situation continued, with the two countries skirmishing from time to time. Ethiopia had refused to accept the deal's handing of key locations, including Badme, to Eritrea and continues to control that town.

Ethiopia's ruling party now accepts that agreement without conditions and calls on Eritrea's government to do the same, the state-affiliated Fana Broadcasting Corporate reported.

Tiny Eritrea is one of the world's most closed-off nations, ruled by President Isaias Afwerki since gaining independence from Ethiopia in 1993 after years of rebel warfare. Eritrea has become a major source of migrants fleeing toward Europe, Israel and African nations in recent years as human rights groups criticize its harsh military conscription laws.

When the 42-year-old Abiy was installed as Ethiopia's prime minister in April his inaugural speech mentioned the need for reconciliation with bitter rival Eritrea, raising hopes of peace.

"We are fully committed to reconcile with our Eritrean brothers and sisters and extend an invitation to the Eritrean government to start dialogue and establish rapport," he said in his address to Parliament.

Since Abiy took power his government has released several thousand prisoners and tensions in restive areas have dramatically declined. Foreign-based opposition parties have been invited to return home in an effort to create a national consensus in the country of nearly 110 million people.

But Ethiopia's economy had suffered as companies, including foreign ones, found themselves targeted in the anti-government protests. Tuesday's announcement on easing state-owned monopolies is "an effort to boost and modernize," the chief of staff said.

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HEADLINE	06/06 Singapore to host US, NKorea summit
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/singapore-gears-host-trump-kim-summit/story?
GIST	<p>The on-again, off-again and now on-again summit between President Donald Trump and North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un is set for next week on a secluded island off the coast of Singapore, in southeast Asia.</p> <p>Both delegations have been in the small city-state nation since the end of May preparing for the historic June 12 meeting, which the White House said Tuesday would take place at the Capella Hotel, a five-star luxury resort on Sentosa Island.</p> <p>Luxury and seclusion</p> <p>The American team has already set up shop at the Capella Hotel, a short drive away from the main business center of the country. Joe Hagin, the White House deputy chief of staff, has reportedly met the leader of the North Korean delegation, Kim Chang Son, at the Capella to discuss the details of the summit. The two are finalizing the security, protocol and logistical details.</p> <p>The luxurious main reception area and guest villas were designed by Sir Norman Foster, a famous British architect who restored the former colonial buildings that once were used to house the British military during Imperial rule.</p> <p>The Capella has already stopped accepting bookings for the summit period, according to an executive in the hospitality industry, an early indication the hotel would be either where Trump would stay or the site of the summit.</p> <p>The Capella, which sits on 30 acres of lawn and rainforest, has banned journalists from entering the</p>

property since the U.S. delegation arrived. A Washington Post reporter was expelled from the grounds after trying to speak to the diplomats.

Kim Jong Un's hotel

The North Korean delegation has been seen coming and going from the Fullerton Hotel, an old colonial building that was once the main post office.

The hotel has a stunning position on the marina surrounded by modern skyscrapers that have sprung up on reclaimed land in the past decade.

Who's paying?

Singapore is picking up the costs of the massive security that will be required to host the event.

Local media reports helicopters and planes will patrol the air and hundreds of police will monitor the various venues. Singaporean Defense Minister Ng Eng Hen told reporters over the weekend, "It's a cost we're willing to bear to play a small part."

The Washington Post reported last week that the summit discussion has included how the North Korean delegation will cover the costs of their accommodations and security. The international sanctions against North Korea make access to hard currency difficult and legally challenging.

The State Department has denied that the American government will help pay the costs of the delegation from North Korea.

"We are not paying for the DPRK delegation and we are not asking others to do so," State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert told ABC News Sunday, using the acronym for North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Where will the media go?

Five thousand members of the media have requested access to cover the summit, though the site of possible media briefings is still unknown.

The Formula One pit stop area or the country's Convention Center are both large enough to accommodate, but nothing has yet been confirmed by the government of Singapore.

Many have guessed the summit would be held at the Shangri-La Hotel, and there's still a chance it could play a role in some way, as thousands of people descend on Singapore for the historic event.

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HEADLINE	06/06 New evacuations near Guatemala volcano
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/evacuations-guatemala-volcano-set-off-panic-55680314?
GIST	<p>Frightened people living near the Volcano of Fire fled with their children and few possessions when fresh flows of super-heated debris were announced, taking no chances after authorities gave them little time to evacuate before a deadly eruption over the weekend.</p> <p>Traffic came to a standstill on choked roads Tuesday and those without vehicles walked, even in central Escuintla, which was not under an evacuation order. Businesses shuttered as owners fled, memories still fresh of Sunday's blast, which left at least 75 people dead and 192 missing, and reduced a once verdant area to a moonscape of ash.</p>

	<p>A column of smoke rose from the mountain Tuesday afternoon and hot volcanic material began descending its south side, prompting new evacuation orders for a half dozen communities and the closure of a national highway. The country's seismology and vulcanology institute said the smoke billowing from the volcano's top could produce a "curtain" of ash that could reach 20,000 feet (6,000 meters) above sea level, posing a danger to air traffic.</p> <p>Rescuers, police and journalists hurried to leave the area as a siren wailed and loudspeakers blared, "Evacuate!"</p> <p>When the panic set off by the new evacuations became clear, disaster officials called for calm.</p> <p>In the community of Magnolia, which was under the new evacuation order, residents fled carrying bundles, bags of clothing and even small dogs in their arms.</p> <p>Many walked along the side of the highway because vehicular traffic had stalled on the only road out.</p> <p>By Tuesday the images of Sunday's destruction were familiar to everyone. What was once a collection of green canyons, hillsides and farms was reduced to grey devastation by fast-moving avalanches of super-heated muck that roared into the tightly knit villages on the mountain's flanks.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/06 Myanmar, UN sign Rohingya pact
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/myanmar-sign-pact-initial-steps-rohingya-return-55682219?
GIST	<p>Myanmar and U.N. agencies signed an agreement Wednesday that could lead to the return of some of the 700,000 Rohingya Muslims who fled brutal persecution by the country's security forces and are now crowded into makeshift camps in Bangladesh.</p> <p>The memorandum of understanding promises to establish a "framework of cooperation" that aims to create conditions for "voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable" repatriation of Rohingya refugees.</p> <p>Myanmar's security forces have been accused of rape, killing, torture and the burning of Rohingya homes in western Rakhine state, where most Rohingya lived. The U.N. and U.S. have described the army crackdown that began in August last year as "ethnic cleansing."</p> <p>Myanmar and Bangladesh agreed in November to begin repatriating Rohingya. But refugees feared their lives would be at risk in Myanmar without international monitoring while Myanmar insisted they have identity documents, which most Rohingya have been denied.</p> <p>Knut Ostby, U.N. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Myanmar, said the agreement is an important first step toward resolving the crisis.</p> <p>"There is a lot of work to be done. This task should not be underestimated," Ostby said. "We are talking about approximately 700,000 people who don't only have to return, but the conditions have to be right for them to return ... in terms of their identity in society, in terms of their safety and also in terms of services, livelihoods, a place to live, infrastructure."</p> <p>The U.N. has said the agreement provides for its refugee and development agencies to be given access to Rakhine state.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Hawaii: hundreds of homes destroyed
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SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/hundreds-homes-destroyed-hawaii-volcanos-latest-explosion-officials/story?
GIST	<p>Hundreds of homes on Hawaii's Big Island have been destroyed from lava oozing from the Kilauea volcano after an early morning explosion on Tuesday, according to officials.</p> <p>About 500 homes in Kapoho Beach Lots and Vacationland were in the direct path of the lava, officials from the County of Hawaii Civil Defense told ABC News.</p> <p>The United States Geological Survey tweeted an aerial photo of the affected neighborhoods, which appears to be mostly burned. Thousands of people have been evacuated from the area.</p> <p>There is a possibility that some residents could have died in the disaster, officials said. Up to a dozen people decided to stay even after the area was evacuated.</p> <p>The area contains a mix of vacation rental properties and year-round residences, The Associated Press reported. Lava has completely filled the nearby Kapoho Bay and inundated much of Vacationland, according to the AP.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Milwaukee council investigates police dept.
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/milwaukee-common-council-investigating-police-withheld-sterling-brown/story?
GIST	<p>The Milwaukee Common Council has launched an investigation after the police department apparently withheld different body-camera footage of Sterling Brown's January arrest that top city officials didn't see until it aired on television.</p> <p>According to Council President Ashanti Hamilton, the council and Mayor Tom Barrett didn't see the newly released videos of the arrest, obtained by ABC affiliate WISN.</p> <p>"I think it's clear that the videos didn't show the police department in the best light," Hamilton told ABC News. "I don't know if there were any rule violations or procedural violations in it."</p> <p>Barrett told WISN he wants to know why police didn't show him all the footage.</p> <p>"They need to be better trained and they need to change the way they operate," Barrett told WISN. "They have to learn that this is going to be something that's going to be released to the public and they should do it all at once."</p> <p>Last month, the Milwaukee Police Department released one version of the body-camera video depicting the night of the arrest.</p> <p>Brown walked out of a Milwaukee Walgreens around 2 a.m. on Jan. 26 toward the parking lot and was confronted by officers who asked him why he parked horizontally across two handicapped spots.</p> <p>The officers repeatedly tell Brown to back up and one of them says, "I will do what I want all right? I own this right here."</p> <p>Other officers arrived on the scene and can be seen talking to Brown near his vehicle when one of the officers shouts for Brown to take his hands out of his pockets.</p> <p>A scuffle breaks out and an officer yells, "Taser! Taser! Taser!" Brown can be heard moaning on the ground.</p> <p>After Brown was brought to the ground and hit with one of the officer's stun guns, they continued to stand</p>

	<p>around him even though he was handcuffed.</p> <p>In new video of the incident, officers can be heard expressing concern among themselves about a potential backlash from the arrest.</p> <p>"The bureau is coming out for this? ... We're trying to protect ourselves because he plays for the Bucks, and if he makes a complaint, it's going to be a [expletive] and then any little [expletive] thing that goes wrong is going to be, 'Ooh, the Milwaukee Police Department is all racist,'" the officer said sarcastically.</p> <p>In another one of the videos, officers can be heard asking Brown -- who is lying prone on the ground after being hit with the stun gun -- if he plays for the Bucks, and Brown responds that he must look familiar to them.</p> <p>In the end, Brown was not charged with anything and was issued a parking violation.</p> <p>Brown's representatives said he plans to file a civil lawsuit against the Milwaukee Police Department.</p> <p>Milwaukee Police Chief Alfonso Morales said at a news conference May 23 that the officers involved "acted inappropriately" and they all received suspensions.</p> <p>Hamilton said that the decision to investigate came after meeting with the police department yesterday. They'll be looking at all activity from the night of the arrest and decide if what, if any, "remedies" can be implemented in the future.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Top fashion designer apparent suicide
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/fashion-designer-kate-spade-found-dead-apparent-suicide/story?id=55664239&cid=clicksource_81_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>Fashion designer Kate Spade -- who started her namesake company in 1993 and grew it into a massive empire including clothes, jewelry, perfume and furniture -- was found dead in her New York City apartment Tuesday morning after apparently taking her own life, police sources said.</p> <p>The 55-year-old's body was found around 10 a.m. at her Park Avenue apartment on the Upper East Side of Manhattan by a housekeeper, the sources said. She apparently hanged herself on her bedroom doorknob using a scarf.</p> <p>A suicide note was left at the scene, but police officials declined to disclose its contents.</p> <p>"The contents of that note, as well as the physical state of the apartment and the comments of the witness, lend to the credibility that it is an apparent suicide," said Dermot Shea, chief of detectives for the New York City Police Department.</p> <p>Spade's former company issued a statement saying her death was "incredibly sad news."</p> <p>"Although Kate has not been affiliated with the brand for more than a decade, she and her husband and creative partner, Andy, were the founders of our beloved brand," the company's statement reads. "Kate will be dearly missed. Our thoughts are with Andy and the entire Spade family at this time."</p> <p>Spade and her husband, the brother of actor and comedian David Spade, have a 13-year-old daughter.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Unlicensed software cybersecurity threat
SOURCE	http://www.dw.com/en/unlicensed-software-a-huge-cybersecurity-threat/a-44086311
GIST	<p>Businesses should assess the software on their networks and eliminate unlicensed copies to reduce the risk of cyberattacks, researchers from the US-based The Software Alliance (BSA) said in a study on Tuesday.</p> <p>The advocate for the global software industry noted in its 2018 Global Software Survey that too often, companies' efforts to improve their businesses were "hampered by the widespread use of unlicensed software and the often-crippling security threats" that accompanied it.</p> <p>The survey quantified the volume and value of unlicensed software installed on personal computers in more than 110 nations and regions and included nearly 23,000 responses from consumers, employees and chief information officers (CIOs).</p> <p>Slow progress</p> <p>"Organizations around the world are missing out on the economic and security benefits that well-managed software provides," the BSA survey said.</p> <p>"Businesses should establish software asset management (SAM) programs to evaluate the software on their network, which in turn reduces the risk of debilitating cyberattacks and helps grow their revenues."</p> <p>The study showed that the use of unlicensed software was only down slightly in 2017 (-2 percent), still accounting for 37 percent of software installed on PCs.</p> <p>Firms incur huge costs</p> <p>The survey showed that unlicensed software was spread most widely in a number of emerging economies. In Libya, an estimated 90 percent of all software installed on PCs in 2017 was pirated (Venezuela: 89 percent; Nicaragua: 81 percent).</p> <p>The study calculated that malware from pirated software cost companies worldwide some \$359 billion (€307 billion).</p> <p>BSA researchers concluded that companies "can take meaningful steps today to improve software management and to achieve as much as 30 percent savings in annual software costs by implementing a robust SAM and software license optimization program."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Lewis Co. IT official: not getting easier
SOURCE	http://www.govtech.com/security/Lewis-County-Wash-IT-Official-Cybersecurity-Is-Not-Going-to-Get-Any-Easier.html
GIST	<p>(TNS) — Lewis County, Wash., is putting extra focus on preventing cyberbreaches, following a dramatic uptick in threats, Information Technology Services Director Steve Wohld told area leaders Friday.</p> <p>"There's an over 300 percent increase in endpoint user attacks [on agencies in Washington state]" Wohld said. "The attacks on Lewis County are significant and much higher than they ever were."</p> <p>Wohld spoke to leaders from throughout the county at Friday's Mayors' Meeting, a monthly event hosted by the Board of Lewis County Commissioners, urging them to make sure their cities and agencies are using safe cybersecurity practices.</p> <p>Since last year, Lewis County's IT Services department has moved from spending 10 to 15 percent of its time on cybersecurity to devoting 40 percent of its time to the issue. Part of the concern is that hackers are</p>

increasingly not just going after networks, but targeting county employees to try to infiltrate the system.

“The point is getting this out in front and letting our users know that the target has changed,” Wohld said. “The primary target now is the endpoint user.”

In other words, county employees who use unsafe passwords, click on dubious email links or plug in untrusted USB devices could be exposing the entire network to risk. One risk that has become more common is ransomware, in which a hacker takes over a system and demands payment to regain access or data.

The city of Atlanta recently failed to pay a \$50,000 ransom and ended up paying \$2.6 million in efforts to recover compromised systems. That case is an extreme version of a problem that has also hit Washington state.

“Agencies across the state are paying out serious money recently, and we’re trying to avoid that,” Wohld said.

Recently, Lewis County Treasurer Arny Davis received a suspicious email from a treasurer in another county whose account had been hacked. He notified IT Services instead of opening the link in the email.

“If Arny would have clicked on it, his account would have been compromised,” Wohld said.

That was among many stories mentioned by Wohld and others about the importance of being vigilant. Commissioner Edna Fund said she had recently received an email on a work account from a personal friend whose email had been hacked. She also received notice of false charges on her account, only to be led to a site that tried to obtain her Social Security number. She logged onto Facebook, only to find another account claiming to be her.

“I’m becoming very vigilant,” she said. “From all different vantage points, I was getting hit.”

Even as he warns county employees to be more careful, Wohld conceded that the increased threats will likely cause the county issues, although it hasn’t lost any data yet.

“We’ve had some close calls,” he said. “I really think it’s a matter of time. We will have a loss; we will have a failure.”

IT Services is preparing for such a compromise, storing physical backups of data in a vault. And it’s working to “educate [county employees] on how to think differently about their computer and the power it has over the rest of us.”

Long-term, the department is implementing the Center for Internet Security’s 20-step series of Critical Security Controls. This year’s priorities include creating an inventory and control of hardware and software assets, establishing continuous vulnerability management and controlling use of administrative privileges.

Wohld said it will take three to five years to implement the full list of controls. He told the assembled local leaders to bring cybersecurity awareness back to their employees, and to communicate if they believe they’ve been compromised, which can prevent the problem from infiltrating more agencies.

“We really need people to be honest and come forward,” he said. “It’s not about shaming anybody, it’s about responding.”

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HEADLINE 06/05 Big bank blunder from Down Under

SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/big-bank-blunder-from-down-under/
GIST	<p>Despite the awareness that they are dutybound to protect the sensitive information of their customers, banks continue to suffer data breaches as the result of human error, as was the case for the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA). The Sydney Morning Herald reported that CBA breached the privacy of 10,000 customers by sending their data to the wrong email addresses.</p> <p>After conducting an information security investigation, the bank learned that 651 internal emails were incorrectly sent to email addresses at the wrong domain from 2016 to 2017. The sender inadvertently omitted the ".au" on the end of the intended domain, cba.com.au.</p> <p>In order to prevent these human errors, CBA purchased the domain name in April 2017; however, the investigation looked into events that would have occurred prior to the takeover when the domain was used by a US cybersecurity firm.</p> <p>CBA revealed that the 651 emails were indeed sent during that time frame and contained the data of 10,000 customers. "An extensive and detailed investigation by CBA confirmed the contents of all 651 internal emails were automatically deleted by the cba.com domain owner's system, which only collected information on CBA sender and recipient email addresses and the subject of the email," the bank wrote in a 1 June 2018 statement.</p> <p>The bank's investigation confirmed that no customer data was compromised as a result of the mistake, but it accepted responsibility and acknowledged that customers want to be informed about data security and privacy issues. To that end, the bank has started to notify affected customers.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/06 Mirai variants continue to spawn
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/mirai-variants-continue-spawn-vulnerable-iot-ecosystem
GIST	<p>Mirai is the archetypal IoT botnet, first achieving infamy with a 665 Gbps DDoS attack against the KrebsOnSecurity website in September 2016. Within days, a second Mirai attack targeted the French hosting firm, OVH, with an attack that peaked at nearly 1 Tbps. These were, at the time, the largest DDoS attacks ever recorded.</p> <p>But within a few more days, before the end of September 2016, the Mirai developer released the source code. It can now be found on GitHub. The developer closed his 'readme' file with a criticism of MalwareMustDie and the comment, "Just as I forever be free, you will be doomed to mediocracy forever."</p> <p>He didn't remain free for very long. In January 2017, Brian Krebs identified Paras Jha as authoring Mirai; and in December 2017 the DoJ unsealed a plea-bargained guilty plea by Paras Jha for the development and use of Mirai. But it was too late to stop Mirai, because the code was in the public domain -- and it has ever since been used as the basic building block for other criminals to develop Mirai variants for their own use.</p> <p>IoT ExploitsNetwork performance firm Netscout Arbor has taken a close look at four of the current Mirai variants: Satori, JenX, OMG and Wicked. Its Arbor Security Engineering & Response Team (ASERT) published in a recent blog post, describing how each of these botnets start from the basic building blocks of Mirai and add to and sometimes remove from the original Mirai functionality -- adding, says, ASERT, "their own flair."</p> <p>Mirai itself spread by scanning for other internet-connected IoT devices (IP cameras and home routers) and 'brute-forcing' access via a list of default vendor passwords. Since so few consumers ever change the password that comes with the device, the process is remarkably successful. Paras Jha claimed that he had 380,000 bots in Mirai at the time of the Krebs attack.</p> <p>Satori (or at least the 3rd variant of Satori) uses the same configuration table and the same string obfuscation technique as Mirai. However, says ASERT, "We see the author expanding on Mirai source</p>

code to include different exploits such as the Huawei Home Gateway exploit." The exploit was CVE-2017-17215. In December 2017, Check Point reported that hundreds of thousands of attempts to exploit this vulnerability had been made on Huawei HG532 home routers attempting to download and execute the Satori botnet.

The underlying code for JenX also comes from Mirai, again including the same configuration table and the same string obfuscation technique. However, JenX hard codes the C2 IP address while Mirai stores it in the configuration table. JenX has also removed the scanning and exploitation functions of Mirai, with this being handled by a separate system.

"Currently," writes ASERT, "it appears JenX only focuses on DDoS attacks against players of the video game Grand Theft Auto San Andreas, which has been noted by other researchers."

OMG is described by ASERT as one of the most interesting of Mirai variants. While it includes all Mirai's functionality, "the author expanded the Mirai code to include a proxy server." This allows it to enable a SOCKS and HTTP proxy server on the infected IoT device. "With these two features, the bot author can proxy any traffic of its choosing through the infected IoT device, including additional scans for new vulnerabilities, launching additional attacks, or pivot from the infected IoT device to other networks which are connected to the device."

Fortinet discussed OMG in February 2018. "This is the first time we have seen a modified Mirai capable of DDOS attacks as well as setting up proxy servers on vulnerable IoT devices. With this development, we believe that more and more Mirai-based bots are going to emerge with new ways of monetization," it concluded.

Wicked is the latest Mirai variant. "Similar to Satori variant 3," writes ASERT, "Wicked trades in Mirai's credential scanning function for its own RCE scanner. Wicked's RCE scanner targets Netgear routers and CCTV-DVR devices." When vulnerable devices are found, "a copy of the Owari bot is downloaded and executed."

However, an analysis of the same bot by Fortinet in May 2018 comes to a slightly different conclusion. The string 'SoraLOADER' suggests a purpose to distribute the Sora botnet. Further analysis showed that in practice it attempted to download the Owari botnet, but actually downloaded the Omni botnet. "We can essentially confirm that the author of the botnets Wicked, Sora, Owari, and Omni are one and the same. This also leads us to the conclusion that while the WICKED bot was originally meant to deliver the Sora botnet, it was later repurposed to serve the author's succeeding projects," says Fortinet.

The Mirai developer may have been apprehended, but in making his source code public, Mirai and Mirai variants continue to grow. The IoT ecosphere that Mirai and its variants target and exploit is still in its infancy. There were nearly 17 billion connected devices in 2017; but this is expected to rise to around 125 billion by 2030 according to a new analysis from IHS Markit. Vendors continue to rush their products in order to get early market share, but often at the cost of built in security.

"Malware authors will continue to leverage IoT based malware in automated fashion, quickly increasing the botnet size through worm-like spreading, network proxy functionality, and automated exploitation of vulnerabilities in internet facing devices. It is important for organizations to apply proper patching, updates, and DDoS mitigation strategies to defend their organizations," warns ASERT.

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HEADLINE	06/05 Cybercriminals phish Booking.com users
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/cybercriminals-phish-bookingcom-customers-after-possibly-breaching-partner-hotels/article/771091/
GIST	Cybercriminals recently launched a phishing campaign targeting Booking.com customers whose information was illegally obtained, possibly by breaching certain partner hotels, according to multiple

	<p>reports.</p> <p>According to a June 3 report from The Sun, users have received WhatsApp and text messages warning them to change their passwords following a supposed security breach. By clicking on the accompanying malicious link, victims are unknowingly giving the adversaries access to their bookings.</p> <p>Users are then reportedly sent an additional message demanding that they send an advance payment for their booked vacations to a bank account belonging to the cybercriminals. These messages look like the real deal because they include stolen personal information such as names, addresses, phone numbers, dates, booking prices, and reference numbers.</p> <p>Booking.com reportedly told the Sun that the information was likely obtained by breaching certain hotels that it works with via a portal website separate from the travel company's main systems.</p> <p>"In this case, there has been no compromise on Booking.com systems," a Booking.com spokesperson told the Independent. "A small number of properties have been targeted by phishing emails sent by cybercriminals and by clicking on those emails, the properties compromised their accounts. All potentially impacted guests have been notified and because we value our customers at Booking.com, we are supporting impacted guests to compensate for any losses incurred, and reclaim these from the property."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 List: Florida worst cyber hygiene
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/florida-leads-list-of-states-with-worst-cyber-hygiene-new-hampshire-the-safest/article/771129/
GIST	<p>When it comes to cyber hygiene people who live in the Northeast are marginally more likely to have good habits, while those with poor habits are scattered liberally across the country, according to a new Webroot report.</p> <p>Working in conjunction with the Ponemon Institute, Webroot analyzed the cyber behavior of people in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and ranked them according to their cyber hygiene score. The states receiving a classification of "safest" were New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Utah, Rhode Island, Minnesota and Nebraska. Florida, Wyoming, Montana, New Mexico, Illinois and California were on the other end of the spectrum being considered the "riskiest" states.</p> <p>Looking at the survey results it was very easy to understand why those states in the riskiest category, ignoring even basic safety measures like having antivirus software installed on their device, said Tyler Moffitt, Webroot's senior threat research analyst.</p> <p>The survey asked respondents a series of questions related to infection incidents, identity theft, password habits, computer sharing, software update habits, antivirus/internet security usage, backup habits and an understanding of phishing.</p> <p>Breaking down the five riskiest states Webroot found many people did not learn from their past mistakes. Even after suffering an identity theft most people refused to change their basic online usage habits in order to make themselves safer. In addition, 45 and 50 percent of those residing in these states do not bother installing security software; 47 percent never back up their data and 72 percent said they share their passwords. All of this helps explain why these states suffer the higher per person rate, 28 percent, of having experienced 10 or more malware infections in the last year.</p> <p>Not surprisingly residents in states deemed safest basically do the exact opposite of the folks in Florida. When having their identity stolen 80 percent alter their online habits and 60 percent change their passwords, most people report running a paid for internet security program as opposed to running freeware or not using any at all. About 43 percent automatically update their operating system and 35 percent back up their data on a daily or continuous basis. Finally, 88 percent of those surveyed said they did not share</p>

	<p>their passwords with others.</p> <p>Looking at the country as a whole the study shows many Americans still do not take their cybersecurity very seriously. Fifty-four percent do not use any type of credit monitoring service, 50 percent said they use some type of antivirus software with 46 percent of these respondents opting for freeware and 20 percent do not bother to update their security software on a regular basis.</p> <p>While the safest states do utilize proper password hygiene, nationwide the story is much different. Only 36 percent said they never shared their password, while 45 percent said they did so, but rarely, and the remaining 19 percent they shared this information frequently. When it comes to password diversity 36 percent use between one and five passwords for their various accounts. Another 28 percent use six to 15 and 36 percent use 16 or more passwords. Password managers are also not playing much of a role with 75 percent of the respondents saying they do not use one.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 MyHeritage alerts users to data breach
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/myheritage-alerts-users-to-data-breach/d/d-id/1331966
GIST	<p>MyHeritage, a platform designed to investigate family history, learned of a data breach on June 4, 2018. It reports the incident affected email addresses and hashed passwords of nearly 92.3 million users who signed up for the site before and including Oct. 26, 2017, the date of the incident.</p> <p>A security researcher discovered a file named "myheritage" containing email addresses and passwords on a private server outside the site. Further analysis found the file was legitimate, with the data originating from Myheritage. No other data was detected on the server, and there was no evidence of account compromise. MyHeritage handles billing through third parties and stores sensitive data such as DNA and family trees on segregated servers with added security.</p> <p>The site notes it doesn't store user passwords but instead uses a one-way hash of each password, meaning the hash key is different for each user. Anyone who stole or accessed the hashed passwords did not have the actual passwords.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Dark web marketplaces dissolve
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/dark-web-marketplaces-dissolve-post-alphabay-hansa-takedown/d/d-id/1331971
GIST	<p>One year after Operation Bayonet took down AlphaBay in 2017, the marketplace model of cybercrime continues to decline -- but it's not a sign for security teams to sit back and relax. The risk to businesses and consumers is alive and well. It's simply taking a different form.</p> <p>The operation that shuttered AlphaBay and Hansa led to multiple subsequent arrests, says Rafael Amado, strategy and research analyst at Digital Shadows. For a period of time after the takedown, many people didn't understand what was going on. When they did, they panicked.</p> <p>"They thought it was an exit scam, or technical difficulties," he says. "There were all these different rumors flying about ... it started to sow the seeds of mistrust, suspicion, cynicism."</p> <p>AlphaBay's seizure meant thousands of vendors and buyers in the English-speaking cybercrime community had to look elsewhere to conduct their illicit business. The marketplace consisted of more than 40,000 vendors and generated more than \$1 billion in trade, Digital Shadows reports in "Seize and Desist?," a new report examining cybercrime marketplaces post-AlphaBay.</p> <p>"It cemented the issue of mistrust in the cybercriminal community ... it made people really, really</p>

suspicious of established marketplaces, and new ones as well," he continues.

AlphaBay's demise left a gap, though it wasn't as large as experts expected -- the marketplace was just one player among many on the underground. However, other markets like Dream and Olympus failed to capitalize on the gap. Instead, cybercriminals found new and stealthier means of continuing their businesses while evading the watchful eye of law enforcement.

Find Me on the Forums

Cybercriminals, increasingly suspicious of marketplaces, began to retreat into older and specialized platforms to buy and sell. Peer-to-peer networks and chat channels have grown more popular, a trend that predates Operation Bayonet but has evolved in its wake.

Over the past six months, Digital Shadows researchers have observed more than 5,000 Telegram links shared across criminal forums and Dark Web sites. Of these, 1,667 were invitation links to join new groups. Discord, another private messaging app, is seeing greater adoption but to a lesser extent, with 743 invites shared within the same timeframe.

The centralized marketplace has dissolved into a decentralized model as wary threat actors err on the side of caution, opting for subtle transactions over markets that require plentiful resources to operate. New tech, processes, and peer-to-peer (P2P) communication give cybercriminals greater anonymity and make them even harder to pin down.

"Your account information and payment card details, along with counterfeit documents, ID scans, banking Trojans ... those things are still being traded," Amado explains. "They're not being sold on marketplaces, they're being sold on forums."

Specialized forums cater to buyers and sellers in the market for specific purposes: credit card numbers, malware, hacking tools. Buyers post what they're looking for; sellers post what they have. They share Telegram, Discord, or Jabber info and slip into private messages. People generally want to directly communicate with the actors they're buying from, he adds. Forums serve as a complete log of conversation and are easier targets for law enforcement.

The future of Telegram as hackers' preferred tool is uncertain, Amado points out. It recently came to light that Apple has blocked updates since April, when Russia blocked Telegram and demanded its removal from the Apple App Store because it refused to provide decryption keys for users' communication with Russian security agencies.

"We'll see if Telegram will be forced to comply and if they are, you'll see people move away from Telegram as a communication method of choice," he expects.

Hackers Buckle Down on Forum Security

Forum administrators have been integrating processes to facilitate trust among their users. Blockchain DNS, user vetting, site access restrictions, and domain concealment supplement the use of P2P networks to build a sense of security.

Tralfamadore is an example of a decentralized market that uses blockchain to store databases and code to support front-end user interfaces. Transactions are done in cryptocurrency and are permanently recorded; this way, if one user attempts to scam another, it can be identified.

Cybercriminals using forums are wary of law enforcement posing as users. Some forums regulate activity with "forum lifecycles," which limit new users' access and set posting restrictions until they reach a certain level of activity. New users might require positive feedback from other members until these limitations are lifted.

	Some forums require members to pay for premium subscriptions or have multiple referral invitations from established participants. Others create a hierarchy: the longer you're a member and more you prove your legitimacy, the more you're allowed to post.
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HEADLINE	06/05 Financial sector sophisticated threats
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/financial-services-organizations-face-more-sophisticated-threats-than-others/d/d-id/1331974
GIST	<p>The better than average defenses that financial companies have been able to mount against modern cyber threats has become a bit of a double-edged sword for organizations in the sector.</p> <p>While financial companies are able to detect and block a lot more malware than others, they face considerably more sophisticated threats as a result as well.</p> <p>A new report this week from Lastline based on an extensive malware analysis shows that threat actors typically elevate their attacks when going after financial companies.</p> <p>For the report, Lastline analyzed 30 days worth of threat data targeted specifically at financial service companies and finance departments at enterprises. Lastline then compared those results with data on more generalized threats that the security vendor had reported on previously.</p> <p>The exercise showed that the proportion of malware displaying advanced behavior was 20% higher in the financial sector than elsewhere. For the report, Lastline defined malware as displaying advanced behavior if it is packed to avoid detection by static signature-based tools, evade dynamic analysis, steal credentials, and remain stealthy.</p> <p>One in 10 of the financial sector malware that Lastline analyzed integrated all four behaviors, compared to the 1 in 12 global average for advanced threats in other industry verticals. Overall, the percentage of total files that Lastline found to be malicious was 47% higher than the global data.</p> <p>One reason could be that the financial sector's more effective security measures require a more sophisticated effort on the part of malware writers, says Andy Norton, author of the report and Lastline's director of threat intelligence.</p> <p>"The finance industry is facing a more sophisticated threat than is encountered by a wider audience," Norton says. "They need to understand that more stringent security doesn't make the threat go away; it only changes the nature of the threat."</p> <p>To remain ahead of emergent threats financial organizations and finance groups at enterprise need to incorporate controls for inspecting the behavior of objects entering the internal environment rather than relying simply on existing controls and user awareness, he says.</p> <p>The Lastline report comes just weeks after an Accenture study showing that cybersecurity has become a major issue for financial services organizations. The Accenture study, done in collaboration with the Ponemon Institute, found that the average number of breaches at financial services companies has more than tripled, from 40 in 2012 to 125 breaches in 2017.</p> <p>The average annual costs of cybercrime for financial services companies has also increased sharply, rising from \$12.97 million per firm in 2014 to \$18.28 million last year, compared to an average of \$11.7 million for organizations across other industries. Between 2016 and 2017 alone, spending on security breaches increased 10% among financial organizations.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Feds: gift cards hacked; \$800,000 stolen
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1009978/feds-5-hacked-target-gift-cards-stole-nearly-800000/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — Authorities say five people have been indicted on charges they hacked Target Corp. gift cards to the tune of nearly \$800,000.</p> <p>The U.S. Attorney's Office in Seattle says the group devised an algorithm that could identify a gift card's bar code, then used the company's automated customer service telephone system to find cards with balances. According to investigators, the suspects loaded those balances onto electronic wallet or mobile phone apps, redeemed them at Target stores, and sold the items they purchased for bitcoin.</p> <p>Prosecutors say the thefts took place at stores in Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada and Colorado. Target changed its gift card system last December in response.</p> <p>Two defendants pleaded not guilty Tuesday, and one is in state custody on other charges. Authorities say they are searching for two other defendants, 22-year-old Kennady Weston and 26-year-old Derrick Quintana, both of Everett, Washington.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/06 Malware hits Australia HR firm PageUp
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/malware-hits-hr-software-firm-pageup-with-possible-data-compromise/
GIST	<p>Australia-based human resources firm PageUp has confirmed it found "unusual" activity on its IT infrastructure last month, which has resulted in the potential compromise of client data.</p> <p>On May 23, the SaaS provider said it immediately launched a forensic investigation after malware was spotted on its system. Five days later PageUp said its suspicions were confirmed, with investigations revealing "some indicators" that client data may have been compromised.</p> <p>"If any personal data has been affected it could include information such as name and contact details. It could also include identification and authentication data e.g. usernames and passwords which are encrypted (hashed and salted)," the company said in a statement.</p> <p>"There is no evidence that there is still an active threat, and the jobs website can continue to be used. All client user and candidate passwords in our database are hashed using bcrypt and salted; however, out of an abundance of caution, we suggest users change their password."</p> <p>The company said that signed employment contracts and resumes are stored on different infrastructure to that which was affected; it said there is no evidence that the document storage infrastructure has been compromised.</p> <p>The statement, penned by CEO and co-founder Karen Cariss, said PageUp has been working with international law enforcement, government authorities, and independent security experts to "fully investigate" the matter.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/06 Qantas suffers website outage
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/qantas-suffers-website-outage/
GIST	<p>Qantas is currently experiencing network issues affecting some services on its website.</p> <p>The airline confirmed the issue via Twitter, replying to customers unable to use the Qantas website.</p> <p>"There is currently a network issue that isn't isolated to Qantas," Qantas wrote. "We're doing our best to</p>

	<p>have everything up and fully running again asap."</p> <p>In another reply, Qantas confirmed it was experiencing "technical difficulties" with its website and that it had teams currently working on it.</p> <p>"We'll have the site up and running as soon as possible," the airline continued.</p> <p>Qantas added the outage was not isolated to its systems.</p> <p>Sydney Airport was brought to a standstill in March after "technical issues" affected two of its terminals.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Zip Slip vulnerability impacts archived files
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/zip-slip-vulnerability-affects-thousands-of-projects-across-multiple-ecosystems/
GIST	<p>Security researchers have disclosed today details about a critical vulnerability impacting open source coding libraries that handle archived files.</p> <p>Discovered by the researchers from Synk, the "Zip Slip" vulnerability is an issue in the way coders, plugins, and libraries have implemented the process of decompressing an archived file.</p> <p>Numerous archive formats, including tar, jar, war, cpio, apk, rar, and 7z, are affected, meaning this is more of a theoretical issue, rather than a specific coding bug.</p> <p>Vulnerability leads to files being unzipped in the wrong places</p> <p>According to researchers, Zip Slip is a combination between an "arbitrary file overwrite" and "directory traversal" issues that can lead to situations where an attacker can unzip files outside the normal unzip path and overwrite sensitive files, such as critical OS libraries or server configuration files.</p> <p>"The two parts required to exploit this vulnerability is a malicious archive and extraction code that does not perform validation checking," the Synk team said today in a security advisory.</p> <p>Researchers said they found this flaw in April, and they have been working with the maintainers of several open-source libraries that were vulnerable to this attack.</p> <p>Multiple open-source libraries affected</p> <p>The Synk team has published a list of libraries affected by Zip Slip on GitHub.</p> <p>While libraries written in several programming languages are known to be affected —such as JavaScript, Python, Ruby, .NET, Go, and Groovy—, the issue mainly affects the Java ecosystem because there's no official library recommended for handling archived files.</p> <p>Instead, developers have created and used an assortment of libraries for this purpose, most of which are vulnerable to Zip Slip. Furthermore, the issue is so widespread that even some of the code shared on StackOverflow was found to be vulnerable to Zip Slip, meaning that many desktop, mobile, or web apps written in Java may be vulnerable to Zip Slip without developers even knowing.</p> <p>To help developers understand the Zip Slip attack and aid them in detecting if their apps are vulnerable, the Synk team has published a technical paper detailing the Zip Slip bug in much more depth.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Google 'weird' 1975 text message bug
SOURCE	https://nakedsecurity.sophos.com/2018/06/05/google-says-fix-for-weird-1975-text-message-bug-is-on-the-way/
GIST	<p>If you want to see your recent text messages on an Android device in the normal world, you just type “show me my texts” in the Google search bar...</p> <p>But why be normal? If you want to get weird – as Redditor Krizastro discovered last week – you can also see your Android texts by typing in “the1975..com”.</p> <p>Krizastro: <i>It's like just about the weirdest glitch I have come by.</i></p> <p>Krizastro was curious: Were others experiencing the glitch?</p> <p>They certainly were. At the time of writing, Androids were still glitching out, given that the promised fix hadn't been rolled out yet. But it gets even weirder...</p> <p>Others confirmed that the “the1975..com” string – it needs those two periods to work if you give it a try – was indeed serving up their recent texts, as were these strings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •“Vizela viagens” (a travel agency in somebody's hometown; this string didn't produce text messages for everybody who tried it out, though) •“Vizel viagens” •“Izela viagens” •“Zela viagens” <p>Those search terms were still glitching as of Monday:</p> <p>Users reported experiencing the issue with the default Google Pixel launcher, as well as with Android devices made by Moto, OnePlus, Samsung, LG and Huawei.</p> <p>Google sent out a statement explaining that the inappropriately triggered texts show-and-tell is due to a “language detection bug” in the Google Search app for Android that “erroneously interpreted certain phrases as a request to view recent text messages.”</p> <p>The company said the app could only display text messages if it had been given permission to do so.</p> <p>A company spokesperson said that as of Friday, a fix for the bug had been implemented and would roll out “over the next few days.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Bizarre Chrome, Firefox flaw
SOURCE	https://nakedsecurity.sophos.com/2018/06/05/bizarre-chrome-and-firefox-flaw-exposed-facebook-details/
GIST	<p>Researchers have discovered a weakness in the way Chrome and Firefox interact with Cascading Style Sheets 3 (CSS3) that could have caused them to leak usernames, profile pictures and likes from sites such as Facebook.</p> <p>The chance discovery was made by researcher Ruslan Habalov when he visited Pinterest and noticed it was “displaying my Facebook name and picture inside an iFramed Facebook button.”</p> <p>Probing deeper, they discovered that the problem was CSS3's mix-blend-modes, introduced in 2016 and fully supported by Chrome desktop/mobile version 49 from March 2016 onwards, and Firefox desktop/mobile version 59 in March this year.</p> <p>By rights, browser same-origin policy security should have disallowed access to cross-origin iframe</p>

content. However, the proof-of-concept (PoC) they developed to exploit the weakness in – mix-blend-modes – shorted this.

Mix-blend-modes don't sound like a promising target through which to leak data, but as Weißer explained:

We cannot access the iframe's content directly. However, we can put overlays over the iframe that do some kind of graphical interaction with the underlying pixels. Since these overlays are controlled by the attacker's site, it is possible to measure how long these graphical interactions take.

This is extremely involved – the mix-blend-mode is being used to infer the content of 1×1 pixels in the iFrame to reveal the presence and colour of that pixel on the user's screen. Do this for the whole iFrame and (as long as the user is logged in of course) it becomes possible to reconstruct some of its content.

That does make inferring different types of content potentially time consuming, with a user name becoming clear in around 20 seconds but five minutes being needed to generate that user's much larger profile picture.

The outcome of an attacker exploiting this using a malicious website would have been to deanonymize logged-in visitors not just on Facebook but on any site embedding itself on third parties, on the condition that users can be kept on the site for long enough.

Other use cases include leaking private images, API responses and text files of other sites as these often require to be logged-in but don't come with an enabled iframe protection.

The researchers describe the bug as a side-channel weakness. All this means is that they found a way to capture data not from a software flaw but as a side effect of a system working as it was designed to.

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HEADLINE	06/05 Pentagon's AI missile detection research
SOURCE	http://news.trust.org/item/20180605100040-29saq
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON, June 5 (Reuters) - The U.S. military is increasing spending on a secret research effort to use artificial intelligence to help anticipate the launch of a nuclear-capable missile, as well as track and target mobile launchers in North Korea and elsewhere.</p> <p>The effort has gone largely unreported, and the few publicly available details about it are buried under a layer of near impenetrable jargon in the latest Pentagon budget. But U.S. officials familiar with the research told Reuters there are multiple classified programs now under way to explore how to develop AI-driven systems to better protect the United States against a potential nuclear missile strike.</p> <p>If the research is successful, such computer systems would be able to think for themselves, scouring huge amounts of data, including satellite imagery, with a speed and accuracy beyond the capability of humans, to look for signs of preparations for a missile launch, according to more than half a dozen sources. The sources included U.S. officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the research is classified.</p> <p>Forewarned, the U.S. government would be able to pursue diplomatic options or, in the case of an imminent attack, the military would have more time to try to destroy the missiles before they were launched, or try to intercept them.</p> <p>"We should be doing everything in our power to find that missile before they launch it and make it increasingly harder to get it off (the ground)," one of the officials said.</p> <p>The Trump administration has proposed more than tripling funding in next year's budget to \$83 million for just one of the AI-driven missile programs, according to several U.S. officials and budget documents. The boost in funding has not been previously reported.</p>

While the amount is still relatively small, it is one indicator of the growing importance of the research on AI-powered anti-missile systems at a time when the United States faces a more militarily assertive Russia and a significant nuclear weapons threat from long-time foe North Korea.

"What AI and machine learning allows you to do is find the needle in the haystack," said Bob Work, a champion of AI technology who was deputy defense secretary until last July, without referring to any individual projects.

One person familiar with the programs said it includes a pilot project focused on North Korea. Washington is increasingly concerned about Pyongyang's development of mobile missiles that can be hidden in tunnels, forests and caves. The existence of a North Korea-focused project has not been previously reported.

While that project has been kept secret, the military has been clear about its interest in AI. The Pentagon, for example, has disclosed it is using AI to identify objects from video gathered in its drone program, as part of a publicly touted effort launched last year called "Project Maven."

Still, some U.S. officials say AI spending overall on military programs remains woefully inadequate.

AI ARMS RACE

The Pentagon is in a race against China and Russia to infuse more AI into its war machine, to create more sophisticated autonomous systems that are able to learn by themselves to carry out specific tasks. The Pentagon research on using AI to identify potential missile threats and track mobile launchers is in its infancy and is just one part of that overall effort.

There are scant details on the AI missile research, but one U.S. official told Reuters that an early prototype of a system to track mobile missile launchers was already being tested within the U.S. military.

This project involves military and private researchers in the Washington D.C. area. It is pivoting off technological advances developed by commercial firms financed by In-Q-Tel, the intelligence community's venture capital fund, officials said.

In order to carry out the research, the project is tapping into the intelligence community's commercial cloud service, searching for patterns and anomalies in data, including from sophisticated radar that can see through storms and penetrate foliage.

Budget documents reviewed by Reuters noted plans to expand the focus of the mobile missile launcher program to "the remainder of the (Pentagon) 4+1 problem sets." The Pentagon typically uses the 4+1 terminology to refer to China, Russia, Iran, North Korea and terrorist groups.

TURNING TURTLES INTO RIFLES

Both supporters and critics of using AI to hunt missiles agree that it carries major risks. It could accelerate decision-making in a nuclear crisis. It could increase the chances of computer-generated errors. It might also provoke an AI arms race with Russia and China that could upset the global nuclear balance.

U.S. Air Force General John Hyten, the top commander of U.S. nuclear forces, said once AI-driven systems become fully operational, the Pentagon will need to think about creating safeguards to ensure humans - not machines - control the pace of nuclear decision-making, the "escalation ladder" in Pentagon speak.

"(Artificial intelligence) could force you onto that ladder if you don't put the safeguards in," Hyten, head of the U.S. Strategic Command, said in an interview. "Once you're on it, then everything starts moving."

Experts at the Rand Corporation, a public policy research body, and elsewhere say there is a high probability that countries like China and Russia could try to trick an AI missile-hunting system, learning to hide their missiles from identification.

There is some evidence to suggest they could be successful.

An experiment <http://www.labsix.org/physical-objects-that-fool-neural-nets> by M.I.T. students showed how easy it was to dupe an advanced Google image classifier, in which a computer identifies objects. In that case, students fooled the system into concluding a plastic turtle was actually a rifle.

Dr. Steven Walker, director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), a pioneer in AI that initially funded what became the Internet, said the Pentagon still needs humans to review AI systems' conclusions.

"Because these systems can be fooled," Walker said in an interview.

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HEADLINE	06/05 Transamerica reveals data breach
SOURCE	https://www.theregister.co.uk/2018/06/05/transamerica_retirement_plan_hack/
GIST	<p>Updated Financial house Transamerica has admitted hackers swiped some of its customers' sensitive personal information, including social security numbers.</p> <p>In a formal notice sent to the California Attorney General's office this month, the US insurance and investment giant said an "unauthorized" person was able to get into its systems sometime between March 2017 and January 2018, and siphon off the names, addresses, social security numbers, dates of birth, financial account information, and employment details of people holding Transamerica Retirement Solutions accounts.</p> <p>Transamerica boasts of having "more than four million retirement plan participants."</p> <p>"Please note that most individual accounts were accessed only once or at limited points in time during this time frame," Transamerica is telling the affected customers.</p> <p>"We found no evidence of a compromise of Transamerica's network and systems, but unauthorized parties used compromised third-party user credentials to log into Transamerica systems and access your account information."</p> <p><i>The Register</i> asked Transamerica exactly how many of its customers were whacked by the hack, and we have yet to hear back. The biz has not said if it has any reports of the stolen information being used for fraud.</p> <p>"We began an investigation as soon as we learned of the incident, engaged a leading cybersecurity forensics firm, and contacted appropriate law enforcement," customers were told in a memo from Transamerica.</p> <p>"We continue to work diligently to minimize the impact of this event and may take additional steps to enhance the security of your account based on our investigation."</p> <p>To remedy the situation, Transamerica says it is flagging up, and monitoring any accounts that were accessed by the miscreants. The biz is also offering its customers one year of identity monitoring services, a fairly standard measure taken by companies in the wake of a major data breach. Customers will have until August 30 to enroll in the monitoring service.</p> <p>In addition to credit monitoring, Transamerica is asking customers to change their passwords with new,</p>

	complex logins.
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HEADLINE	06/05 AI technology identifies, counts wildlife
SOURCE	https://venturebeat.com/2018/06/05/researchers-develop-ai-that-identifies-and-counts-wildlife-with-96-6-accuracy/
GIST	<p>There's more to artificial intelligence than voice assistants and self-driving cars. Researchers at Auburn University, Harvard, Oxford, the University of Minnesota, and the University of Wyoming have developed a machine learning algorithm that can identify, describe, and count wildlife with 96.6 percent accuracy.</p> <p>The paper, which was written in November 2017, was accepted in the <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)</i> this week.</p> <p>“This technology lets us accurately, unobtrusively and inexpensively collect wildlife data, which could help catalyze the transformation of many fields of ecology, wildlife biology, zoology, conservation biology and animal behavior into ‘big data’ sciences,” Jeff Clune — associate professor at the University of Wyoming, senior research manager at Uber’s Artificial Intelligence Labs, and senior author of the paper — said in a statement. “This will dramatically improve our ability to both study and conserve wildlife and precious ecosystems.”</p> <p>The researchers trained the computer vision algorithm on 3.2 million images from Snapshot Serengeti, a citizen science project on Zooniverse.org that recruits volunteers to collect images of elephants, giraffes, gazelles, lions, cheetahs, and other animals in their natural habitats. More than 50,000 people with 225 camera traps contributed to the project’s corpus.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Unlicensed software in Canada problematic
SOURCE	https://www.itworldcanada.com/article/large-amount-of-desktop-software-in-canada-is-unlicensed-and-a-major-threat-industry-study/405941
GIST	<p>The amount of unlicensed and unsupported software in the desktop computers of Canadians continues to slowly drop but still poses a great risk to users, says an industry survey released Tuesday.</p> <p>The survey by BSA The Software Alliance —which includes giants like Adobe, Microsoft, IBM, Oracle and Symantec — 22 per cent of software installed on PCs in this country in 2017, worth an estimated \$819 million, was not licensed. That continues a steady drop from the first global survey in 2011, when 27 per cent of Canadian computers were estimated to have unlicensed software.</p> <p>By comparison, 15 per cent of PCs in the U.S. had unlicensed software last year. Globally the number was 37 per cent, which the report called “alarming.”</p> <p>The software industry loses a lot of money from unlicensed applications, but the hammer it uses is that this unsupported software is a security risk by allowing malware to exploit unpatched vulnerabilities. So the report urges CIOs to thoroughly inventory the software on their machines “so they can reduce the risk of harmful cyber attacks and boost the bottom line.”</p> <p>“Organizations now face a one-in-three chance of encountering malware when they obtain or install an unlicensed software package or buy a computer with unlicensed software on it,” the report estimates.</p> <p>“Each malware attack can cost a company US\$2.4 million on average and can take up to 50 days to resolve. To the extent that the infection leads to company downtime, or lost business data, it can also seriously affect the company’s brand and reputation. The cost for dealing with malware that is associated with unlicensed software is growing too. It can now cost a company more than \$10,000 per</p>

infected computer, and cost companies worldwide nearly US\$359 billion a year. Avoiding the security threats from malware is now the number one reason CIOs cite for ensuring the software on their network is fully licensed.”

The report also quotes market research firm IDC — which did much of the research for this report — estimating that when companies take pragmatic steps to improve their software management, they can boost their bottom line by as much as 11 per cent.

Among the countries with high rates of unlicensed software are China (66 per cent) and Russia (62 per cent).

The report is based on calculations of software sold around the world, a global survey of more than 22,500 home and enterprise PC users, and a survey of 2,300 IT managers in 23 countries.

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HEADLINE	06/05 Civil groups: FBI misled on encryption
SOURCE	https://www.nextgov.com/cybersecurity/2018/06/civil-liberties-groups-urge-ig-investigation-faulty-fbi-encryption-stats/148736/
GIST	<p>The Justice Department’s internal watchdog should investigate how the FBI ended up using inaccurate figures to bolster its case that warrant-proof encryption was making Americans unsafe, according to a Monday letter from 20 civil society groups.</p> <p>The FBI acknowledged last month that it could not support the claim made by top officials, including Attorney General Jeff Sessions, that encryption blocked law enforcement from retrieving evidence from 7,775 devices during the 2017 fiscal year.</p> <p>Associate Deputy Director Paul Abbate insisted, however, that end-to-end encryption systems remain a major barrier to investigations and could result in the bureau failing to stop a terrorist attack before it happens or find an abducted child.</p> <p>Officials blamed the erroneous figure on a flawed methodology the bureau used to count encrypted devices. The FBI has not yet determined the correct figure, Abbate said.</p> <p>The erroneous figure was the second major blow this year to the FBI’s four-year-old battle against end-to-end encryption systems, which top officials say allow terrorists and criminals to “go dark” online. The bureau did not explore all possible options before asking a judge to legally compel Apple to help it crack into an encrypted iPhone used by San Bernardino shooter Syed Farook in 2015.</p> <p>Apple fought that effort and the FBI eventually withdrew the request after an unnamed third-party offered its own technical fix.</p> <p>Investigating the FBI’s erroneous claims about inaccessible devices would be a useful and necessary follow up to that earlier report, according to Monday’s letter from groups including the New America think tank, the American Civil Liberties Union and the Center for Democracy and Technology.</p> <p>The dispute centers on end-to-end encryption systems, which shield the contents of communication from anyone—including the service provider—except the sender and recipient. In other encryption implementations, the communications provider has an encryption key and can share decrypted communications in response to a warrant.</p> <p>The problem, according to tech companies and most security experts, is that any technical solution that allows government access to end-to-end encryption systems could also be exploited by criminal hackers. That would make all technology users less secure, they say.</p>

	<p>“Given the severe negative effects of an encryption backdoor mandate, the FBI’s miscalculation is particularly concerning,” the civil liberties groups write.</p> <p>The inspector general should investigate both how the FBI came to rely on the faulty figures and why top officials continued to cite the figures during the first weeks after the FBI learned they were erroneous.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Charges: hacking Minn. govt. databases
SOURCE	https://www.sfgate.com/news/crime/article/Man-allegedly-angry-over-Castile-case-is-charged-12970157.php
GIST	<p>MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A man who allegedly hacked into Minnesota government databases last year because he was angry over the acquittal of the officer who shot and killed Philando Castile was charged in an indictment unsealed Tuesday.</p> <p>According to an indictment, Cameron Thomas Crowley, who goes by "Vigilance," faces multiple charges, including three counts of intentional access to a protected computer, one count of intentional damage to a protected computer, and one count of aggravated identity theft.</p> <p>After the breeches, a person tweeting as Vigilance taunted authorities by writing, "Where am I? Clock is ticking." The person tweeted that the Minnesota databases were targeted in retaliation for the acquittal of former St. Anthony police officer Jeronimo Yanez, who was found not guilty of manslaughter and other charges in the 2016 shooting of Castile, a black motorist.</p> <p>Crowley, 19, of Lino Lakes, was ordered held Tuesday during an initial appearance in U.S. District Court. He was appointed a federal defender and is scheduled for an arraignment Friday.</p> <p>According to the indictment, Crowley accessed the state's databases in June 2017 and intentionally transmitted programs, codes and commands to state computer servers, causing damages and a loss to the state of more than \$5,000. Crowley is also charged with accessing databases at two unnamed universities and an unnamed school district.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Amazon yanks 'smart toy' off shelves
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/amazon-will-stop-selling-connected-toy-filled-with-security-issues/
GIST	<p>That soft teddy bear seems harmless -- until hackers can use it to spy on your kids.</p> <p>Amazon said it has pulled CloudPets, a smart toy that researchers said was riddled with security flaws, from its online store. Last week, Walmart and Target stopped selling the toy. Amazon began removing CloudPets on Tuesday morning.</p> <p>The decision comes a day after Mozilla contacted Amazon with research showing new vulnerabilities on CloudPets.</p> <p>"In a world where data leaks are becoming more routine and products like CloudPets still sit on store shelves, I'm increasingly worried about my kids' privacy and security," Ashley Boyd, Mozilla's vice president of advocacy, said in a statement.</p> <p>Walmart and Target did not respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>This isn't the first time that Amazon has stopped selling products over privacy concerns. Last July, the online retailer giant suspended Blu phones -- its top selling phone at the time -- because researchers found spyware on the popular devices.</p>

Connected devices tend to be open to attacks for a multitude of reasons, whether it's default passwords, developers who never send security updates or owners who never install them. The US Consumer Product Safety Commission opened an investigation into the dangers of connected gadgets, also known as the Internet of Things, in March, while lawmakers introduced a bill to regulate smart devices.

That's a particular problem when it comes to selling connected toys to children, since it opens up a new field of privacy concerns for parents. After advocates pointed out that the toy "My Friend Cayla" violated privacy rules by recording conversations without parental consent, Germany banned the doll and asked any parents who still owned it to destroy it.

CloudPets, made by Spiral Toys, is a talking toy that's connected online, uses voice recordings and an online app through Bluetooth.

But in 2017, hackers were able to access CloudPets' database, containing email addresses, passwords and voice recordings from children, which cybercriminals held for ransom at least twice. The breach affected more than 800,000 people.

Mozilla worked with cybersecurity research firm Cure53 to see what vulnerabilities CloudPets still has after the original breach in 2017. They found that CloudPets' Bluetooth vulnerabilities first demonstrated more than a year ago are still open.

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HEADLINE	06/05 Facebook gave access to China firms
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/facebook-reportedly-gave-data-access-chinese-company-huawei-officials-call-security-risk/
GIST	<p>Facebook has given access to user data to four Chinese manufacturers, including one that U.S. intelligence officials consider a security threat, according to The New York Times. The Times the social media giant has had an agreement with telecommunications company Huawei since at least 2010.</p> <p>Facebook said it plans to wind down its deal with Huawei by the end of the week, the Times reports. The three other partnerships with Chinese device makers include Lenovo, Oppo and TCL. The Times reports the deals helped Facebook solidify its position in the mobile market before Facebook apps worked well on mobile phones.</p> <p>Facebook told the Times that the data shared with Huawei stayed on its phones, rather than the company's servers.</p> <p>Late Tuesday, Facebook's vice president of mobile partnerships Francisco Varela, told CBS News in a statement that the social media company's integrations with the Chinese manufacturers "were controlled from the get go -- and we approved the Facebook experiences these companies built."</p> <p>"Huawei is the third largest mobile manufacturer globally and its devices are used by people all around the world, including in the United States. Facebook along with many other U.S. tech companies have worked with them and other Chinese manufacturers to integrate their services onto these phones," Varela said in an email. "Facebook's integrations with Huawei, Lenovo, OPPO and TCL were controlled from the get go -- and we approved the Facebook experiences these companies built. Given the interest from Congress, we wanted to make clear that all the information from these integrations with Huawei was stored on the device, not on Huawei's servers."</p> <p>Sen. Mark Warner, D-Virginia, told the Times that he looks forward to "learning more about how Facebook ensured that information about their users was not sent to Chinese servers."</p> <p>In February, senior U.S. intelligence officials advised consumers to avoid purchasing phones</p>

	<p>manufactured by Huawei.</p> <p>FBI Director Christopher Wray cited the security risks of Huawei during a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing that month. Wray said the U.S. government is "deeply concerned" about the risks of allowing companies that are " beholden to foreign governments that don't share our values" to gain "positions of power" inside the U.S. telecommunications network.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Bitfinex resumes operations after DDoS
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-06-05/crypto-exchange-bitfinex-suspects-it-s-being-attacked-again
GIST	<p>Bitfinex, one of the largest cryptocurrency exchanges, said it has resumed normal operations after suffering a so-called denial-of-service attack earlier.</p> <p>“The Bitfinex exchange was the target of a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack this morning,” Kasper Rasmussen, head of marketing, said in an e-mailed statement. “The exchange was offline for an hour following the DDoS attack; however, the exchange is back online now. The attack only impacted trading operations, and user accounts and their associated funds/account balances were not at risk at any point during the attack.”</p> <p>Bitcoin touched a low for the day, dropping as much as 2.2 percent to \$7,360, as the attack prevented users from accessing the exchange. The largest cryptocurrency reversed losses and is now gaining less than 1 percent.</p> <p>The exchange suffered multiple DDoS attacks late last year. In August 2016, the exchange said it was hacked for a loss of \$68 million. The British Virgin Islands-based company had been down as it went through “unplanned maintenance” earlier.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	06/06 Jihadi networks in Switzerland
SOURCE	https://isnblog.ethz.ch/security/jihadi-networks-in-switzerland-regional-clusters-and-their-transnational-links
GIST	<p>On 25 May 2018, the Center for Security Studies at ETH Zurich, together with the Austrian Institute for International Affairs (oiip) and the University of Lucerne, hosted a conference on “Jihadi Networks in Switzerland: Regional Clusters and Transnational Links”. Experts from academia and politics discussed the similarities, differences and connections of jihadist networks in Switzerland, Austria, Germany, France, Belgium, Italy and the Balkans.</p> <p>Four years after the proclamation of the caliphate in Syria and Iraq, the “Islamic state” (IS) is largely defeated militarily. The pace of its terrorist operations as well as its media activities have decreased significantly. Experts’ fears that IS would retreat into a “virtual caliphate” have not yet materialized.</p> <p>Yet, even though the jihadist dream of an extremist utopia seems to have burst for the time being and IS has lost some of its appeal, radicalized individuals and small groups still pose a considerable threat. Accordingly, Switzerland’s third TETRA report (2017) assumes that attacks carried out by individuals or small groups with minimal logistical effort represent the greatest challenge for Switzerland.</p> <p>Along similar lines, Switzerland’s Federal Intelligence Service (FSI) notes in its current report (2018) that in addition to the consumption of jihadist content on the Internet, personal networks and contacts play a</p>

central role when it comes to radicalization. These contacts are increasingly formed outside the confines of institutions such as mosques. Further, the core of these cross-border networks is often comprised of a few charismatic, radicalized individuals who aim to recruit others from within their own social circles.

The topic of jihadist extremism has occupied CSS researchers for quite some time. As early as 2013, the CSS published a comprehensive study on “Jihadist Radicalization in Switzerland.” Further analyses on jihadist foreign fighters and Swiss security (CSS Analysis No. 199, Bulletin 2014), the difficulties of dealing with jihadist returnees (CSS Analysis No. 210) and the engagement of Muslim organizations in Switzerland against violent extremism (Bulletin 2017) followed. Adding to this body of knowledge, the aim of the May 2018 conference was to take stock of the current research on jihadist networks in Switzerland and their transnational links.

Insights from the Conference

Radicals with North-African and Middle-Eastern backgrounds have long dominated domestic networks in Switzerland. However, jihadis with Balkan backgrounds – especially Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo – currently represent more than one-third of all jihadi foreign fighters from Switzerland. The influence of radical preachers from the Balkans is also on the increase.

The emergence of local clusters, which are often characterized by pre-existing social ties, facilitates jihadi networking in Switzerland. The disproportionately high number of foreign fighters from cities like Winterthur or Lausanne indicates the existence of several such jihadi recruitment grounds within the country. While these clusters serve as epicenters for networks within the French, German and Italian-speaking regions in Switzerland, they do not maintain close national ties.

However, this does not mean these clusters constitute isolated islands within the center of Europe. Switzerland’s regional jihadi clusters are often linked to broader transnational networks in neighboring countries such as Germany, Austria, France, Belgium, and Italy. Furthermore, diasporic ties to radical communities in the homeland – as observed in the cases of Bosnia- Herzegovina or Kosovo – present ample evidence for the internationalization of the “Swiss Jihad.”

In order to take this internationalization of the Swiss jihadist problem into account, the conference brought together experts from Switzerland, Austria, Germany, France, Belgium, Italy and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Over the course of four panel discussions, participants looked at the various linguistic-ethnic networks and their respective international contacts. While the causes and motives for radicalization and violence continue to be heterogeneous and complex, there was a general consensus among most participants that personal networks and their transnational connections pose a threat that should not be underestimated.

With its recently adopted Counter Terrorism Strategy (2015), Switzerland is now relatively well prepared to combat jihadist-motivated terrorism. Nonetheless, the conference indicated that certain domestic networks continue to pose a significant threat. In order to better understand better how these networks operate, closer cooperation between national authorities in Europe is essential.

What the Future Holds

Unlike other countries, Switzerland does not appear to be a focal point for jihadist terrorism. Yet, no one knows which organizations and networks will emerge from the ties and contacts jihadists have formed in Syria and Iraq. The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks have already shown that decades may pass between the initial formation of networks during a conflict and an actual attack. As a result, the threat posed by jihadist networks and returnees will almost certainly remain at the top of Switzerland’s security agenda.

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SOURCE	https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/indonesias-anti-terror-sweep-nets-96-suspects
GIST	<p>AKARTA/PEKANBARU • Indonesian police revealed yesterday that 96 people allegedly involved in terror activities have been captured or killed as part of a crackdown on terrorist networks in the country.</p> <p>National Police chief General Tito Karnavian said they were striving to uncover terrorist networks in Indonesia following a riot at the police's Mobile Brigade headquarters detention centre in Depok, West Java, which took the lives of five police officers last month.</p> <p>"Fourteen of (those 96 people) were gunned down by the police force for attempting to resist arrest," Gen Tito said during a joint coordination meeting at National Police headquarters.</p> <p>He said terrorist networks existed in most Indonesian provinces. Some of them were sleeper cells now, but others were active.</p> <p>Learning from the Surabaya bombings, Gen Tito said, sleeper cells were more prone to committing terrorist acts than active ones. But it was also important to keep an eye on the active terrorist cells.</p> <p>In the latest arrests, counter-terrorism squad Densus 88 on Sunday captured three alleged terrorists in Pringsewu regency of Lampung, Sumatra. The suspects were identified only as US, 43, IN, 37, and IM, 42. They stand accused of being involved with the Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) terrorist group, which pledges allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.</p> <p>Meanwhile, universities across Indonesia are tightening supervision of student activities following the arrest of suspected terrorists at a state university.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 DHS tests Vehicle Face System
SOURCE	https://www.engadget.com/2018/06/05/dhs-facial-recognition-scan-travelers-at-border/
GIST	<p>Last year, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) put out a notice, saying it was looking for a facial recognition system that could work with images taken of people inside their cars. The idea was that such a system could be used to scan people entering and leaving the country through the US/Mexico border and match them to government documents like passports and visas. Now, The Verge reports that DHS will be launching a test of a system aiming to do just that.</p> <p>The Vehicle Face System, as it's called, is scheduled for an initial deployment in August and it will be installed at the Anzalduas border crossing. The test will take place over one year and will aim to take images of passengers in every car that enters or leaves the US through the crossing. Those images will be matched to government documents and travelers will be verified before they get to the border checkpoint, in theory.</p> <p>While car windshield reflections have typically prohibited facial recognition systems from being effective with images taken through windshields, those behind these tests are hoping to get around that problem. They're using sensors that can capture images at multiple focal lengths, which might allow the system to differentiate people from reflections.</p> <p>The work is part of a larger biometric data project that currently includes ongoing facial recognition pilots in eight airports including the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, Washington Dulles International Airport, JFK International Airport and Chicago O'Hare International Airport.</p> <p>There are, of course, concerns over how this technology will be implemented. "This is a way for the federal government to track people -- monitoring who goes where and what they do there," ACLU attorney Mitra Ebadolahi told The Verge. "In a free society, we should all be able to safely live our lives without being watched and targeted by the federal government."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/06 Iran role in backing, advising Taliban?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/days-after-taliban-assault-in-western-afghanistan-allegations-of-an-iranian-role/2018/06/05/a65ec934-605d-11e8-b656-236c6214ef01_story.html?utm_term=.8c211128a915
GIST	<p>FARAH, Afghanistan — No one here believes the fight is over.</p> <p>Two weeks after hundreds of Taliban insurgents invaded this provincial capital in western Afghanistan, the sidewalk bazaars are back in business, piled with sandals and blankets and soap, but a Humvee or armored vehicle stands guard every two blocks. Afghan troops have delivered voter registration forms for parliamentary elections in October, but few people are showing up to apply.</p> <p>Afghan and U.S. officials declared a decisive victory after driving out the insurgents with airstrikes and troop reinforcements, but residents and officials say the city remains vulnerable to attack. Security forces are stretched thin across Farah province, a huge, rugged and sparsely inhabited region where Taliban fighters still move freely in many districts and enjoy support from some fellow ethnic Pashtuns.</p> <p>Even as Afghan officials last week put on an impressive display of weapons confiscated during the 36-hour street battle, some complained that arms are being sold back to the insurgents, that political feuds are weakening the government's side, and that Iran — which shares a lengthy border with the province — is backing and advising the Taliban.</p> <p>The war for this remote but strategic region, some say, has become captive to domestic and foreign self-interests.</p> <p>“The biggest challenge we have is that people here won’t help us,” said Gen. Noorullah Qaderi, the regional army commander. “They hide the Taliban in their homes and then we can’t go after them. They have relations with them from a long time back.” Other security officials said these ties include trading and smuggling of drugs and weapons between Afghanistan and Iran.</p> <p>Qaderi said he is “100 percent certain” that Iran is supporting the Taliban directly and indirectly, largely as a foil to the Islamic State. The extremist Sunni group, known here as Daesh, has been attacking Afghan Shiite communities for several years. The attacks have included suicide bombings in Kabul and Herat, a major Shiite center near the Iran border.</p> <p>“They want to use the Taliban in the border areas against Daesh,” Qaderi said.</p> <p>An intelligence officer, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to discuss the matter publicly, described the Farah attack as a meticulously planned operation involving more than 2,800 fighters who traveled from as far as Helmand province and Pakistan. He declined to discuss the possible role of Iran but said that many local police officers had fled their posts and that if U.S. Special Operations forces did not remain in the area, the insurgents would strike again.</p> <p>Several other officials, including Farah’s governor, Abdul Basir Salangi, also were cautious in their comments, saying they did not have “documented proof” that Iran is aiding the insurgents. A powerful neighbor and major economic partner of Afghanistan, Iran has denied interfering in the country’s conflict and has demanded solid evidence to back up the allegations.</p> <p>U.S. officials have said they would not rule out the possibility that Iran was behind the Farah attack, the most ambitious by the Taliban in months. Dana White, a Pentagon spokeswoman, said afterwards that “Iran remains the most destabilizing factor in the Middle East. . . I don’t think you can ever rule out their mischief.”</p> <p>U.S. relations with Iran’s Shiite regime have plummeted since early last month, when President Trump</p>

renounced the 2015 nuclear deal that the Obama administration and five other world powers had painstakingly negotiated with Tehran.

Some residents of Farah city said they had little doubt that Iranian hands were involved in the relentless insurgent push to take over Farah province, a potential gateway north to the large border city of Herat and east toward the rest of Afghanistan.

In the main market, jittery merchants pointed out fresh bullet holes and char marks on storefronts, and they described seeing bodies of Taliban fighters strewn on the streets. In the local agronomy school, the halls were lined with colorful posters illustrating tree grafting and bee pollination, but several classrooms were burned black.

“If the situation stays the same, the Taliban will be back,” said a day laborer named Rashid, 28. “It’s a complicated fight. Around here, one brother is with the Taliban and another one is with the government. But the weapons are definitely coming from Iran.”

In some parts of Farah province, political and personal feuds among local officials have also strengthened the insurgents’ hands. Porchaman, a district once considered relatively safe, was initially reported Sunday to have fallen to the Taliban. By Monday officials said it was under government control, but local leaders described an ongoing rivalry between current and former district officials, one of whom threatening to join the Taliban fight.

Elsewhere, residents and officials said the construction of dams had created a second motive for Iranian interference. Iran depends heavily on water from Afghan rivers, and the two countries have been negotiating over water rights for months. Meanwhile, though, Afghanistan has completed a large dam in Herat province and is building a second in Farah.

“No matter how many soldiers they bring here to defend us, everyone agrees that Iran has the power to do this,” said one official in Anar Dara, a remote and drought-stricken district that Taliban fighters overran last month, shooting the police chief dead in his office. “They want to fight Daesh, and they want to stop the dams.”

Last week, Afghan army officials invited several journalists to visit Anar Dara, where they landed in a helicopter and were escorted to the town center by a convoy of war-battered Humvees. Local police officers lined up along the deserted highway, where the officials praised their bravery and handed each an envelope with a cash bonus worth about \$12.

Later, in a meeting with local leaders, Qaderi tried hard to persuade local ex-soldiers and police officers to enlist in a new regional security force, which the central government is trying to build so national troops will not have to rush from one flare-up to the next.

“You can enlist from any village, on any mountaintop,” Qaderi said, addressing a group of elders and urging them to send their sons back into battle. “You will have the same benefits as regular forces. You will get your pay from the bank.”

The general thanked the local forces for not requesting any more weapons, saying he had none to send. Then he raised his hands in prayer and added solemnly, “I pray that God will save you and your families from violence and misfortune.”

The elders were polite but skeptical. One complained that the local schools were 70 percent short on books and that the only clinic ran out of medications far too quickly, in part because they were being sold illegally. Another said most wealthy residents had already moved to Herat for safety.

“If we don’t get better security here, everyone will leave,” he said.

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HEADLINE	06/04 US-style military uniforms for sale
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/news/us-style-military-uniforms-like-those-used-in-kabul-attack-are-freely-sold-in-afghan-markets-1.530983
GIST	<p>KABUL, Afghanistan — Outfits that look the same as the U.S. Army-style combat uniform worn by a gunman in an attack last week on Afghanistan’s Interior Ministry can easily be found for sale in the capital.</p> <p>At the Kabul market known as “Bush Bazaar,” shops sell military goods of suspect origins — everything from what U.S. troops wear on their backs to what they put in their bellies, and more. The mall, which brings together hundreds of vendors, is named for the former U.S. president who ordered the 2001 invasion, which brought in thousands of troops and the supplies to support them.</p> <p>Most of a convincing counterfeit Army uniform can be had there for about \$60 or less. Some of the uniforms and accessories seem genuine or are very good knockoffs.</p> <p>Not long ago it was common for attackers to don friendly military disguises, but Wednesday’s attack marked the first such assault in more than a year, said Gen. John Nicholson, commander of U.S. and allied forces in the country.</p> <p>After a run of such attacks in 2012, including a deadly September assault on Helmand province’s Camp Bastion that left two Marines dead and eight fighter jets damaged or destroyed, Kabul police began cracking down on the unauthorized sale of military and police uniforms.</p> <p>As far as the police were concerned last week, those efforts had been effective.</p> <p>“Selling uniforms is not allowed,” police spokesman Hashmat Stanekzai told Stars and Stripes. “If someone is caught with selling those items, he gets jailed and the shop is shuttered.”</p> <p>They might be sold in secret, he said, but not openly, as it’s “strictly banned.”</p> <p>Yet shopkeepers displayed plenty of military-style clothing for sale, and on a recent visit boasted that some items were the same as those worn by the country’s commandos, the elite troops who work closely with American special operations forces and often conduct night raids against insurgents and terrorist groups.</p> <p>Some Afghan forces and other coalition troops wear uniforms based on or difficult to distinguish from current or past U.S. uniforms.</p> <p>When asked, some merchants claimed they sold uniforms only to military or security personnel, though they showed no reservations about offering military clothing to civilians before the question was raised.</p> <p>Even if not worn to military standards, garb that passably disguises the enemy as friendly forces could cause confusion in an attack or create a few moments of hesitation, allowing a suicide bomber to get closer to military bases or patrols and inflict heavier damage.</p> <p>During Wednesday’s assault, the tactic proved largely unsuccessful. The gunmen wore outdated U.S. digital camouflage uniforms, known as the Universal Camouflage Pattern, which raised the gate guards’ suspicions and led them to confront the attackers, Nicholson told Pentagon reporters last week.</p> <p>That pattern of uniform was harder to find at the bazaar and cost about one-third more than what appeared to be brand-new military outfits resembling those currently worn by the Army and recently adopted by the Air Force.</p> <p>Priced at about \$30 and found in several shops, not all those in the newer print known as Operational Camouflage Pattern seemed authentic. But without a close inspection, it was sometimes hard to tell.</p>

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HEADLINE	06/05 Va. man seeking jihad sentenced 5yrs
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/virginia-man-sentenced-lying-attempt-join-military-55653263?
GIST	<p>A Virginia man who told an FBI undercover employee he wanted to commit jihad has been sentenced to five years in prison for passport fraud and making false statements in his application to join the U.S. military.</p> <p>A U.S. attorney's office news release says 28-year-old Shivam Patel, of Williamsburg, was sentenced Monday.</p> <p>The Virginian-Pilot reports that Patel, who was raised Hindu before converting to Islam, left his job teaching English in China to fly to Jordan, where he talked about joining the Islamic State group. Prosecutors say Jordan moved to deport him.</p> <p>He was met by the FBI informant, who said Patel expressed admiration for an Army officer who had killed 13 soldiers at Fort Hood, Texas. Patel didn't disclose his overseas trips in his application.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 US: Manbij to be governed by 'locals'
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-russians-withdraw-syria-lebanon-border-55654595?
GIST	<p>The United States says the Syrian town of Manbij will be governed by "locals" who are "mutually agreeable" to the U.S. and Turkey following the withdrawal of U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish forces from the city.</p> <p>Senior U.S. officials say that a U.S.-Turkey deal for Kurdish-led troops to withdraw from the strategic city includes "estimated timelines" but no hard-and-fast deadlines for steps to be taken. They say implementation will be timed based on events on the ground.</p> <p>The officials say that the Syrian Kurdish militia known as the People's Protection Units or YPG will move to the east of the Euphrates River. They say eventually, joint U.S-Turkish patrols will be dispatched along a line of demarcation.</p> <p>The officials weren't authorized to be identified by name and requested anonymity.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>4 p.m.</p> <p>Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu says Syrian Kurdish fighters will have to give up their weapons when they retreat from the key northern Syrian town of Manbij, as part of a deal reached with the United States.</p> <p>Speaking to reporters on Tuesday, Cavusoglu also said that Turkish and U.S. officials would begin working on a plan within the next 10 days and the Syrian Kurdish militia's withdrawal would be complete within six months.</p> <p>There was no immediate comment from the Syrian Kurdish fighters on having to surrender arms when leaving Manbij.</p>

	A Turkish official says the withdrawal will be according to a U.S. plan, to be completed next week, then Turkey will review the withdrawal before a new council to administer the town is set up. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to reporters.
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HEADLINE	06/04 Somalia: US airstrike kills 27 militants
SOURCE	https://www.voanews.com/a/us-airstrike-somalia-kills-al-shabab-extremists/4424060.html
GIST	<p>A U.S. airstrike in northern Somalia Saturday killed 27 al-Shabab militants, the U.S. Africa Command said.</p> <p>It posted a Twitter message Monday saying the strike near Bosaso, in semi-autonomous Puntland state, was carried out in coordination with the Somali government.</p> <p>U.S. commanders said no civilians were killed.</p> <p>“U.S. forces will continue to use all authorized and appropriate measures to protect U.S. citizens and to disable terrorist threats,” the command said.</p> <p>Targets will include terror training camps and safe havens throughout Somalia and the region. Another U.S. airstrike killed 12 al-Shabab militants Thursday south of Mogadishu.</p> <p>Saturday’s airstrike came after al-Shabab extremists attacked a military base in Puntland, claiming to have killed five soldiers, wounding seven and destroying Somali military equipment.</p> <p>Al-Qaida-affiliated al-Shabab is fighting to topple Somalia’s Western-backed government. It is blamed for countless terrorist attacks, including an October truck bombing in Mogadishu that killed more than 500 people.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Libya military strongman: victory is near
SOURCE	https://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/north-africa/2018/06/05/Libya-strongman-Haftar-says-victory-near-against-Derna-extremists.html
GIST	<p>Libyan military strongman Khalifa Haftar said Monday that victory was near for his forces in Derna, the eastern city held by ISIS since the 2011 armed uprising.</p> <p>Haftar’s self-styled Libyan National Army launched an offensive on May 7 to “liberate” the coastal city, home to about 150,000 people and held by extremists since the uprising that ousted dictator Moamer Kadhafi.</p> <p>“Victory is near,” Haftar said in a video published on YouTube, adding that his forces had “cleaned up” suburbs of the city.</p> <p>LNA forces have laid siege to Derna for nearly two years, making it difficult for residents to access humanitarian aid.</p> <p>The city is the only part of eastern Libya out of the LNA’s control. It is held by a ragtag coalition of ISIS militants, including groups close to Al-Qaeda.</p> <p>Haftar said that after its “liberation” his forces would deploy across the city to take control of all areas and infrastructure. But he called on them to ensure the safety of residents and to put up defense barriers for additional security.</p>

	<p>The strongman whose forces are backed by the United Arab Emirates and Egypt also prohibited his troops from taking “revenge”, in particular against “terrorists” who surrender and give up their arms.</p> <p>“It is necessary to respect legal procedures concerning prisoners and to deliver them to the competent organs,” Haftar said.</p> <p>Some members of Haftar’s forces have been implicated in war crimes, including Mahmud al-Werfalli, a commander of the Al-Saiqa brigade based in Libya’s second city of Benghazi.</p> <p>On the humanitarian front, the situation in Derna is critical, according to the International Organization for Migration. Since fighting began in Derna more than three weeks ago, “continued shelling and clashes” have forced at least 425 families -- about 2,125 people -- to flee the city, the IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix said on Monday.</p> <p>On Friday, the UN mission in Libya said at least 17 civilians, including two children, have been killed and 22 others, including seven children, have been wounded in the fighting since May 16.</p> <p>It said the escalation in the fighting reached “unprecedented levels” last week and was getting increasingly close to densely populated areas.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Niger: bombers kill 10 in mosque attack
SOURCE	http://www.africanews.com/2018/06/05/niger-female-suicide-bombers-kill-10-in-mosque-attack/
GIST	<p>Three suicide bombers killed 10 people at a mosque in Niger’s southeastern city of Diffa who had gathered after breaking the Ramadan fast, an army spokesman said on Tuesday.</p> <p>The area around Diffa, close to Lake Chad and the borders with Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon, is a stronghold for two factions of militant group Boko Haram, which have been fighting to establish an Islamic state in the region.</p> <p>“It was last night that these three people exploded their charges during a religious service,” the spokesman said. He later said the three bombers were female.</p> <p>It was last night that these three people exploded their charges during a religious service.</p> <p>Southeast Niger has seen sporadic attacks by militants loosely linked to Boko Haram. The Islamist group has gradually split into two factions, one of which has pledged allegiance to Syria-based Islamic State. Troops from Niger and the United States killed 11 Islamist militants from that Islamic State affiliate in a firefight last December.</p> <p>Boko Haram sometimes use female suicide bombers in their campaigns against security forces and civilians, in part because they attract less suspicion.</p> <p>More than 15,000 people have been killed and millions displaced by the conflict in the Lake Chad region. After a deadly assault on the Nigerien town of Bosso in June 2016 killed 32 soldiers, Chad sent 2,000 troops to help Niger, but they were withdrawn in October last year.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 UK: holiday destinations terror risk
SOURCE	https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/your-holiday-destination-safe-government-12648338
GIST	The holiday season is in full flow and summer getaways are on most people's agendas in the coming months.

But tourists have been warned to avoid certain areas unless it's essential, with the threat of terror attacks in several places in Europe and beyond.

Where is safe to go and where should you avoid travelling to? What precautions should you take while travelling?

Here we take a look at the UK Government's travel advice for destinations across the globe.

Turkey: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advises against all travel to within 10 km of the border with Syria and to the city of Diyarbakir. The FCO said: "Fighting in Syria continues in areas close to the Turkish border and there remains a heightened risk of terrorism in the region." They warned that presidential and parliamentary elections will take place on 24 June 2018 which "may result in rallies and demonstrations around the country".

"You should avoid large gatherings and follow the advice of the local authorities," the advice added. Added security measures may apply to flights from Turkey to the UK.

Egypt: Terrorists are "very likely" to try to carry out attacks in Egypt, the FCO says. People have been told they should always be vigilant and follow advice of Egyptian authorities and travel companies. Threats to western nationals, institutions and businesses have been posted on websites and social media. The FCO has advised against travel - unless it's essential- to the Governorate of South Sinai with the exception of the area within the Sharm el Sheikh perimeter barrier, which includes the airport and the areas of Sharm el Maya, Hadaba, Naama Bay, Sharks Bay and Nabq. But people have been advised against all but essential travel by air to or from Sharm el Sheikh.

Places to avoid also include the area west of the Nile Valley and Nile Delta regions, excluding the coastal areas between the Nile Delta and Marsa Matruh.

Spain: Barcelona and other areas in the region of Catalonia have seen large gatherings because of the political developments in the region. And the Government has warned more demonstrations could take place. "They may occur with little or no warning and even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can escalate and turn confrontational," the FCO says. "You should exercise caution if you're in the vicinity. "Demonstrations may also cause some disruption and delays to transport services."

The FCO have also urged people to not take unnecessary risks, especially when under the influence of alcohol after several deaths as a result from people falling from balconies. They also warned people to be aware of the existence of street crime as thieves tend to target money and passports.

Greece: Terrorist attacks in Greece can't be ruled out, the FCO says. Brits have been told to apply for a free European Health Insurance Card and to carry their passport or photo ID showing British nationality at all times. Some medical costs are not covered by the European Health Insurance Card so people have been told to get comprehensive medical and travel insurance before going to Greece.

The FCO says: "Greek police won't accept rowdy or indecent behaviour, especially where excessive drinking is involved. "Greek courts impose heavy fines or prison sentences on people who behave indecently. "Your travel insurance may not cover you after drinking."

France: It is "very likely" that terrorists carry out attacks in France, according to the Government. The country has had ongoing threats by Islamist terrorist groups. The French government has advised the public to be vigilant and has reinforced its security measures. People should also be aware that a number of strikes are being planned on SNCF trains until June 28 and should check travel advice.

USA: Terror attacks in the USA are "very likely" and could be indiscriminate, the Government has warned. People should be vigilant and check reports in the press. The US Department of Homeland Security is to start implementing separate enhanced security screening procedures for all commercial

	<p>flights to the US.</p> <p>Tunisia: A state of emergency is in place in Tunisia. This was put into effect after a suicide attack on a police bus on November 24, 2015. It's been extended several times, most recently on March 12, 2018 by seven months. The FCO has advised against all travel to the Chaambi Mountains National Park and the designated military operations zones of Mount Salloum, Mount Sammamma and Mount Mghila.</p> <p>They have also advised against travel to the militarised zone south of El Borma and Dhehiba, anywhere within 20km of the rest of the Libya border area north of Dhehiba and Ben Guerdane and its immediate surrounding area.</p> <p>Advise against all but essential travel has been advised for places south of, and including, the towns of Nefta, Douz, Médenine, Zarzis.</p> <p>Also, within 30km of the border with Algeria south of and including the town of Jendouba. People should also not go to Kasserine, including the town of Sbeitla, unless it's absolutely necessary.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Singer's PTSD after Manchester bombing
SOURCE	https://www.today.com/health/what-ptsd-ariana-grande-reveals-struggle-disorder-t130305
GIST	<p>Singer Ariana Grande revealed this week she's struggling with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder more than a year after a suicide bomber targeted one of her concerts.</p> <p>The aftermath was gruesome: 22 people, including children, were killed in the attack at Britain's Manchester Arena on May 22, 2017; dozens were wounded.</p> <p>The pop star recently called the anniversary a "challenging day"...</p> <p>"It's hard to talk about because so many people have suffered such severe, tremendous loss. But, yeah, it's a real thing," Grande told British Vogue.</p> <p>"I know those families and my fans, and everyone there experienced a tremendous amount of it as well. Time is the biggest thing. I feel like I shouldn't even be talking about my own experience — like I shouldn't even say anything. I don't think I'll ever know how to talk about it and not cry."</p> <p>WHAT IS PTSD?</p> <p>PTSD can strike people who have experienced a shocking, frightening or dangerous event, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. That may include going through or witnessing combat, a natural disaster, a car accident or an assault. The unexpected death of a loved one can also trigger the disorder.</p> <p>It's normal to have upsetting memories or feel jittery after a traumatic event, but most people start to recover after a few weeks or months, the National Center for PTSD noted. For some, the trauma lingers: They may feel stressed or frightened even when they are not in danger.</p> <p>If the symptoms continue for more than a month and interfere with a person's ability to function, he or she may have PTSD. About 7-8 percent of the U.S. population will experience the disorder at some point in their lives, with women more likely to develop it than men.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/06 Afghan official: Taliban attack army post
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/attack-army-post-afghanistan-kills-soldiers-55683789?

GIST	<p>An Afghan official says the Taliban have attacked an army post in the western Badghis province, killing six soldiers and wounding seven.</p> <p>Abdul Aziz Beg, head of the provincial council, said the attack late Tuesday set off a two-hour gunbattle, with the insurgents stealing ammunition and two army vehicles. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.</p> <p>In the northern Baghlan province, police say a roadside bomb killed a civilian and wounded three others.</p> <p>Afghan security forces have struggled in recent years to combat the Taliban and a local Islamic State affiliate, both of which carry out near-daily attacks across the country.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	06/05 Bellevue police warn of phone scam
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/eastside-news/bellevue-police-warn-of-phone-scam/763763144
GIST	<p>The Bellevue Police Department is warning people about a phone scam that's taking thousands of dollars from people.</p> <p>Police said scammers are pretending to be the Chinese Consulate, and claiming the person who answers the call needs to pay money to clear their name from a money laundering incident.</p> <p>One Bellevue resident paid \$219,000.</p> <p>Bellevue police said they've received reports of nine victims receiving the calls.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/06 Tunisia: 10 security officials fired
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/06/06/tunisian-security-chiefs-fired-after-mass-migrant-drowning.html
GIST	<p>TUNIS, Tunisia – Tunisia's interior minister has fired 10 security officials amid an investigation into the sinking of a boat carrying migrants trying to reach Europe that left an estimated 112 dead or missing.</p> <p>It was the deadliest shipwreck this year on the dangerous route from North Africa across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe.</p> <p>Tunisian Interior Minister Lotfi Brahmi announced late Tuesday the dismissal of 10 people including local police and security chiefs in the coastal city of Sfax and the Kerkennah island, based on preliminary investigations into Sunday's sinking.</p> <p>The Tunisian government has been widely criticized for not grasping the extent of the tragedy. The prime minister visited the island Tuesday to oversee the search operations.</p> <p>The International Organization for Migration has counted 60 confirmed deaths, 52 people still missing and 68 survivors.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Lynnwood police herd 50 runaway goats
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/seattlenews/article/goats-loose-Lynnwood-police-12969544.php

GIST	<p>Some hired help knocked off on the job Sunday evening near Seattle, prompting police to corral about 50 goats on the lam who were supposed to be trimming some landscape at a park and ride.</p> <p>The goats were employed to munch on the vegetation at the Lynnwood Transit Center, about 16 miles north of Seattle at 20110 46th Avenue West, Lynnwood police say.</p> <p>The goats had freed themselves and roamed the parking lot and officers took about 45 minutes to herd and account for all of them.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Texas prison guards planted evidence?
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/06/05/texas-prison-guards-fired-amid-planted-evidence-allegations.html
GIST	<p>A Texas prison supervisor has resigned and four guards have been fired amid allegations they orchestrated the planting of two screwdrivers in an inmate's cell.</p> <p>Texas Department of Criminal Justice spokesman Jeremy Desel told the Houston Chronicle that the planted evidence "appears to be an isolated incident" at the W.F. Ramsey Unit in Brazoria County. Desel said the scheme began with one supervisor but that all parties involved didn't show integrity.</p> <p>The newspaper obtained copies last month of an email from Capt. Reginald Gilbert that ordered a quota for officers to write inmate disciplinary reports. Gilbert said any sergeants who missed their quota would face disciplinary consequences.</p> <p>The email said the new policy was effective March 10, 2018, but prison officials abandoned the quota system weeks later. The department launched an investigation after the newspaper's reports.</p> <p>Desel said Monday that the evidence-planting investigation is unrelated to the quota system.</p> <p>An inmate's mother sent a letter to the department's Office of the Inspector General on May 25, alleging that her son had been set up by guards at the Ramsey Unit. The agency began investigating and determined the mother was likely correct, Desel said.</p> <p>Major Juan Jackson resigned under investigation. Gilbert, who wrote the email ordering a disciplinary report quota, was later demoted, Desel said.</p> <p>Jennifer Erschabek of Texas Inmate Families Association said the departures confirm their suspicions. "We've been claiming in the past that family members are being set up with these cases, but it's been so hard to prove — and we finally have the proof," she said.</p> <p>The Office of the Inspector General's investigation into the matter is ongoing. The state's criminal justice agency is also conducting an internal investigation into the Ramsey Unit and its prison culture.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 UN: 60+ nations ban single-use plastic
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/over-60-countries-introduced-bans-fees-single-use-plastic-waste/
GIST	<p>Increasingly aware of the scope of plastic pollution, governments in more than 60 countries have introduced levies and bans to combat single-use plastic waste, according to <u>U.N. Environment</u>, an agency of the United Nations.</p> <p>"A growing number of governments are taking action and demonstrating that all nations, whether rich or poor, can become global environmental leaders," Erik Solheim, the agency's head, said in a <u>report released</u></p>

Tuesday about sustainable solutions to single-use plastics.

With its release timed for U.N. World Environment Day, the report noted that rules limiting the use of plastic bags had decreased their use in places such as Morocco, Rwanda and parts of China, sometimes significantly.

"Rwanda, a pioneer in banning single-use plastic bags, is now one of the cleanest nations on earth," Solheim said in the report.

But elsewhere, things haven't gone so well. Poor follow-through has left many such bans ineffective. In New Delhi, for instance, a ban on disposable plastics has had only limited impact "because of poor enforcement," the report said. The city has tried repeatedly over the past decade to ban the use of thin plastic bags, most recently announcing a heavy fine for rule-breakers. But the bags remain ubiquitous across the city, blowing in the wind, piled in ditches and readily offered in hundreds of thousands of shops.

Elsewhere in India, including the states of Sikkim and Himachal Pradesh, there have been better results. Solheim praised India, which is hosting this year's Environment Day, for its growing focus on environmental protection. But he also noted that while traveling in the country he'd seen "some of the most beautiful scenic places, but destroyed by plastic pollution."

In its report, the U.N. made a series of recommendations to make plastics bans more effective, from encouraging more cooperation from businesses to improving waste management practices to offering incentives. Governments must finance more development and research of alternative materials, as well as raise awareness among consumers, among other actions, the report said.

By some estimates, as many as 5 trillion plastic bags are used worldwide every year, the report noted. "To meet the rising tide of plastics, we urgently need strong government leadership and intervention," it added.

Solheim said, however, that plastic -- which has saved "countless lives" in the health sector and revolutionized safe food storage -- isn't the problem.

"It's what we do with it," he said. "And that means the onus is on us to be far smarter in how we use this miracle material."

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HEADLINE	06/05 Bar to FBI shooting victim: forever drinks
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2018/06/05/man-shot-dancing-fbi-agent-offered-free-drinks-nightclub/672519002/
GIST	<p>DENVER — The Denver nightclub where an off-duty FBI agent accidentally shot a man while dancing has offered the shooting victim free drinks forever.</p> <p>In a news release Monday, Mile High Spirits in Denver said the victim is "welcome at Mile High Spirits to enjoy complimentary drinks forever."</p> <p>The victim, whose name has not been released, was shot around 1 a.m. on Saturday at the club and bar.</p> <p>A video submitted by a witness shows the off-duty FBI agent dancing, then doing a backflip moments before his gun falls from his waistband holster.</p> <p>When the agent reached down to pick it up, the gun fires — striking a man in the leg. The agent then casually puts his hands up and walks away from the crowd.</p> <p>June 3: Off-duty FBI agent accidentally shoots man while dancing at bar in Denver</p>

	<p>A news release from the Denver Police Department on Saturday said the victim is expected to fully recover.</p> <p>On Monday, Mile High Spirits, which described itself as a craft distillery and lounge, sounded off — saying it was upsetting that Saturday's incident (the only shooting to "ever occur at our establishment") happened "as a result of an FBI agent entering our distillery tasting room carrying a loaded firearm without our knowledge, in violation of our rules."</p> <p>The agent was questioned at Denver Police Headquarters before being released to an FBI supervisor. The agent's name has not been released.</p> <p>Denver police say they're awaiting lab results to help determine whether the agent could face charges. Police want to see whether alcohol was a factor.</p> <p>Prosecutors in the Denver District Attorney's Office will determine whether the agent will face any charges.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Task force for diplomats mystery ailments
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/diplomacy-cuba-china-health/2018/06/05/id/864360/
GIST	<p>The United States has set up a task force to oversee the response to mystery ailments among its diplomats in Cuba and China, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Tuesday.</p> <p>The State Department has previously said brain injuries suffered by 24 US officials and family members posted in Havana could have been the result of a "health attack," perhaps from an unidentified secret weapon.</p> <p>Washington has said in the past that Cuban authorities must take responsibility for the safety of US diplomats on their soil, but the Havana government denies any knowledge of an attack.</p> <p>Last month, another American employee fell ill with similar symptoms in China, reviving fears that a US rival has developed some kind of invisible acoustic or microwave device.</p> <p>Announcing the task force, however, Pompeo said: "The precise nature of the injuries suffered by the affected personnel, and whether a common cause exists for all cases, has not yet been established."</p> <p>According to the State Department, the "Health Incidents Response Task Force" will coordinate both the investigation and the treatment of the victims and work with several government and military agencies.</p> <p>The statement makes no reference to the possibility of a deliberate attack.</p> <p>But it warns that US diplomats should alert their mission's medical staff "if they note new onset of symptoms that may have begun in association with experiencing unidentified auditory sensations."</p> <p>"Reported symptoms have included dizziness, headaches, tinnitus, fatigue, cognitive issues, visual problems, ear complaints and hearing loss, and difficulty sleeping," it adds.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Claim: Rodman to Singapore for summit
SOURCE	https://nypost.com/2018/06/05/dennis-rodman-will-be-in-singapore-for-trump-kim-summit/?utm_source=maropost&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=news_alert&utm_content=

	20180605&mpweb=755-7028481-711678871
GIST	<p>NBA star turned Kim Jong Un soulmate Dennis Rodman will be in Singapore during President Trump's summit with the North Korean dictator next week, The Post has learned.</p> <p>"The Worm" will arrive in the country a day before the June 12 sitdown — and sources said he could even play some sort of role in the negotiations.</p> <p>"No matter what you might think about his presence. One thing's for sure the ratings will be huge," a source said. "A lot of times in situations that involve complex diplomacy countries like to identify ambassadors of goodwill and whether you agree with it or not Dennis Rodman fits the bill."</p> <p>The zany, 6-foot-7 ex-baller — who has struck up an unlikely bromance with the pint-sized, 5-foot-7 Kim, and has visited the rogue regime five times in the past — took some of the credit for getting the two leaders together.</p> <p>In an April interview with TMZ, Rodman said that Kim didn't understand the president until he gave the North Korean strongman a copy of Trump's ghost-written book, "The Art of the Deal," for his birthday in 2017.</p> <p>"I think [Kim] didn't realize who Donald Trump was at that time, I guess, until he started to read the book and started to get to understand him. Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un are pretty much the same," Rodman told the website.</p> <p>"I don't want to take all the credit. I don't want to sit there and say, 'I did this, I did that.' That's not my intention," Rodman told the website.</p> <p>"My intention was to go over and be a sports ambassador to North Korea so people understand how the people are in North Korea. I think that has resonated to this whole point now."</p> <p>Darren Prince, Rodman's rep, said no trip to Singapore had been confirmed but that The Worm would be willing to go if his expertise were needed.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Va. police pursue stolen armored vehicle
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/virginia-state-police-chase-stolen-military-vehicle-95/story?
GIST	<p>Virginia State Police were involved in an unusual police chase Tuesday evening as a stolen military vehicle sped down Interstate 95 at 40 mph.</p> <p>Police received word of the stolen vehicle Tuesday evening around 8 p.m. local time, and began pursuing the armored personnel vehicle down a highway, according to Corinne N. Geller, public relations director for the Virginia State Police.</p> <p>The vehicle was stolen by a soldier and driven off Fort Pickett, according to Virginia State Police Sgt. Keeli Hill said in a press conference. The vehicle is the property of the Virginia National Guard, and was not equipped with any weaponry.</p> <p>Virginia State Police pursued the vehicle from Nottoway County, where Fort Pickett is located, to the city of Richmond, where the suspect stopped on his own accord and surrendered at roughly 9:40 p.m. local time.</p> <p>Police blocked exit ramps during the chase for the safety of the public, Hill said. There were no injuries or accidents related to the pursuit.</p> <p>The suspect is now in state custody with charges pending. The incident is under investigation.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	06/05 Deputy in standoff charged w/assault
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/deputy-in-standoff-charged-with-assault-after-seattle-police-exposed-to-pepper-spray/
GIST	<p>The King County sheriff's deputy who prompted a 13-hour standoff with Seattle police last week has been charged with three counts of third-degree assault, accused of using pepper spray to temporarily force responding officers to back off, according to prosecutors.</p> <p>Deputy Berdon Parsons, 30, was arrested May 30 after a SWAT team breached the doors into his Capitol Hill apartment and found Parsons in the bathroom, a police spokesman said at the time. Parsons remains jailed in lieu of \$15,000 bail, jail records show.</p> <p>Just before 2 a.m. on May 30, Parsons' boyfriend went to the Seattle Police Department's East Precinct and reported that Parsons had gripped his arms and attempted to keep him from leaving their apartment after an argument, charging papers say. The boyfriend told police Parsons was a law-enforcement officer with tactical training, likely had access to guns and was possibly in crisis, the charges say.</p> <p>When a police sergeant reached Parsons by phone, "Parsons told officers he had a shotgun and he refused to come out and speak with officers voluntarily," charging papers say. Several officers stood in the hall outside Parsons' unit as they awaited a warrant to arrest Parsons on investigation of domestic-violence assault, the charges say.</p> <p>Parsons sprayed an orange liquid identified in the charges as pepper spray or OC (oleoresin capsicum) spray through the seams of his apartment door, and it dispersed in the hallway where officers were standing, the charges say.</p> <p>"Officers reported coughing, sneezing, watery eyes, running noses, and burning sensations in their throats, all consistent symptoms of exposure to OC spray," the charges say.</p> <p>Officers later found a can of pepper spray in Parsons' apartment, along with a firearm and ammunition, the charges say.</p> <p>It does not appear that Parsons has been charged with assault in connection with the incident involving his boyfriend. The three counts of third-degree assault involve the three police officers who were exposed to pepper spray.</p> <p>Parsons has been on paid administrative leave since March, pending an evaluation of his fitness for duty, Sheriff's Office spokesman Ryan Abbott said this past week.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Colorado officials become crime victims
SOURCE	https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/06/05/public-officials-became-crime-victims-antigovernment-terrorism
GIST	<p>Public officials in Colorado — including prosecutors, judges and sheriffs — found themselves in the unique position of being crime victims during a barrage of criminal activity by a group of antigovernment sovereign citizens.</p> <p>Details how the elected officials, who usually enforce the law, reacted as crime victims surfaced at the recent sentencing of Bruce Allen Doucette.</p>

He was identified as the ringleader of a Colorado-based sovereign citizen, common-law court gang, giving himself the exalted title of “Superior Court Judge of the Continental uNited States of America”

The 57-year-old former computer repair shop owner from Littleton, Colorado, and eight other sovereign citizens formed their own common law court system, something they called the “People’s Grand Jury of Colorado” that operated between 2014 and 2017.

The criminal enterprise, likened to organized crime, targeted at least 37 public officials in five Colorado counties – Denver, Boulder, Gilpin, Jefferson and Pueblo, court filings indicate.

Doucette also traveled to other states, helping fellow sovereign citizens set up their own systems of filing bogus paperwork and liens against public officials.

In Colorado, members of the group made “true threats” against the public officials, sometimes even violating protective orders intended to prevent contact. Judges, prosecutors and law officers who became involved with the group subsequently were inundated with a plethora of bogus paperwork from the sovereign gang.

The government officials, most of them elected by the citizens they serve, reacted variously — some in actual fear for their lives, but almost all concerned about the potential personal financial impact they faced.

The case was investigated as domestic terrorism by the FBI. The investigative results were forwarded to the Colorado State Attorney General’s Office which obtained a 40-count grand jury indictment citing violations of state law, in 2017.

The case revealed Doucette’s “People’s Grand Jury” acted generally after a member of common-law enterprise was named in an actual state, municipal or federal court case — even something as minor as a traffic ticket. In an attempt to derail or jam-up the government or judicial process, the bogus “grand jury” or its “court administrator” would file fictitious legal documents against the public officials involved.

If those filings didn’t get attention and influence the public officials, the Doucette “grand jury” would then attempt to extort them with financial threats and retaliation. The group had its own “marshals” with authentic-looking badges and were looking for a sympathetic county sheriff to assist in making actual arrests.

“What made this enterprise so concerning was its widespread net of threats it was casting,” First Assistant Attorney General Robert Shapiro said in a Denver courtroom last month when Doucette was sentenced to 38 years in prison.

Doucette’s group filed “criminal complaints” and “consensual commercial liens” against many of the public officials and, when those were ignored, served them with a “collections demand” threatening them with a “negative credit report” if the bogus judgements weren’t paid.

The actions “clearly put many of these public servants — some of whom are armed law enforcement officers — in fear of their economic livelihood being impacted and, at times, their physical safety,” Shapiro said in court.

Before the four-year investigation was concluded, even Shapiro himself was personally targeted in a lawsuit filed against him in U.S. District Court. It was eventually dismissed as frivolous, but only after Shapiro and attorneys representing him went through the trouble, time and cost of seeking dismissal.

At the receiving end of Doucette’s operation were more than three dozen public officials holding various county-level offices in Colorado.

Many of those public official-victims either testified during Doucette's two-week criminal trial in March or completed "victim-impact" statements forwarded to District Court Judge Michael Spear, the trial jurists from Colorado's 18 Judicial District.

"I believe the defendant threatened my life and my freedom, based upon my oath to uphold the United States and Colorado constitutions," Boulder County Judge Karolyn Moore said in her victim statement read in court at Doucette's sentencing on May 22 in Denver.

Because of the defendant's actions, the judge said, "I continue to be fearful for my safety, the safety of my family, and of my community. I continue to be hypervigilant regarding my surroundings, and I continue to utilize precautions to keep my family and I safe."

Doucette was convicted of two crimes against the judge – attempting to influence a public servant and retaliation against the judge.

She called him "a threat to me, to the citizens of Colorado, and to the rule of law. He is a domestic terrorist."

Another of Doucette's victims, Gilpin County Sheriff Bruce Hartman is used to dealing with hard-core criminals and was caught somewhat off-guard when he was targeted by the common-law court gang, the sentencing judge was told.

"I can't really quantify what we went through," Hartman said in a statement read into the public record by Shapiro, the assistant attorney general.

Because the jury unanimously convicted Doucette beyond a reasonable doubt on all counts, the sheriff said he viewed that as a "strong statement" deserving of a correspondingly harsh prison sentence.

Another Gilpin County public official, treasurer Alynn Huffman, also was a victim of criminal extortion by Doucette's gang. She was impacted, she told the court, "mainly [by] the stress of thinking I had done something wrong."

"The fear of one of these men coming to the Treasurer's Office and threatening my staff" also affected her, Huffman told the court. "I took steps to protect my office" because she felt like she was a "sitting duck."

Shapiro told the court that Doucette and his followers seem to "take joy and glee in causing" the type of stress the county treasurer experienced, hoping their "ideology would dictate and be of influence, extortive and retaliatory against these public officials."

Doucette was convicted of both criminal extortion and attempting to influence a public servant related to acts taken by him and the gang against Boulder County Sheriff Joseph K. Pelle.

Instead of personal worry, the sheriff asked the court to fashion a tough prison term for Doucette as a deterrent to others.

"In terms of sentencing considerations, these people are intentionally target officials for simply doing our jobs," the sheriff told the court in his statement read by Shapiro. "Sentencing must consider deterring this behavior in the future by others."

Doucette was given consecutive sentences on five counts: participating in a racketeering enterprise, 20 years; retaliation against a judge, four years; retaliation against a judge, five years; attempting to influence a public servant, five years; and retaliation against a judge, four years, for a total of 38 years. Sentences for 29 other counts were imposed concurrently with the 38-year term.

In handing out those sentences, Judge Spear made frequent references to the victims' testimony or

impact statements.

On one count, the sentencing judge made note that the victim was fellow Colorado Judge Kim Karn.

“I can well remember the dismay and problems that the actions of the [Doucette] organization caused Judge Karn,” Spear said in court, facing the shackled defendant.

Judge Karn, facing retaliation by the sovereign gang, “had to take unusual steps, not only concerned about her child but also concerned about her elderly parents living close by,” the sentencing judge said.

Karn “was very concerned that this organization had her [home] address, knew where she lived and that fact that she’s not home for most of the day with a teenage daughter in the house and elderly parents in a nearby house.”

“This resonated with the court, and frankly, not just because she’s a judge but because she’s having to deal with this grave concern that she had for others,” Spear said from the bench.

But other public officials, like Gilpin County Attorney James Petrock expressed dismay at being targeted by the sovereign group but told the court that he “has a fairly thick skin ... and didn’t seem to be too distressed.”

In contrast, Deputy District Attorney Catherine Kirk, who has previously prosecuted sovereign citizens, “truly was amazed” when she saw members of Doucette’s group being disruptive in a courtroom outburst as they attempted to influence Judge Alfred Harrell.

The deputy prosecutor “reacted much like [others did] and took extra steps to keep herself safe and really became more a ware of her surrounding to a degree that usually you only consider in situations where there is a constant threat,” Spear said, adding that he was very concerned that public officials should be so fearful of merely doing their jobs.

Denver County Sheriff Patrick Firman, like other law enforcement officers who were targeted, “has developed a very thick skin over the course of his career” and “wasn’t too dismayed” when he was targeted by the Doucette gang.

“He was more dismayed about the extra protection that he had to provide to the various public officials in the courthouse,” Spear said of the sheriff, recalling that he “was somewhat dumbfounded that anybody would think of doing this stuff.”

In Pueblo County, Judge Deborah Eyler was targeted by Doucette and five other members of the group who were charged with attempting to influence a public servant.

Instead of being fearful, Eyler testified during that trial that she wasn’t highly concerned.

“I was struck by the fact,” Spear said at the sentencing hearing, “that many public officials, if anything, made jokes about the fact that they are receiving such serious threats to their personal safety and the safety of others around them.”

“Certainly, Judge Eyler was a classic example of somebody who made light of the whole situation,” the sentencing judge said. “I can remember her mentioning the fact, in a very comical way during trial, that this gave her husband an opportunity to purchase another gun.”

At his sentencing, Doucette made a “Yahweh” reference sometimes used by white separatists but had very little to say and expressed no remorse for his antigovernment crime wave.

“Everything that I did was done in honor and integrity to lawfully and peaceably remove the corruption from this government and from these courts,” the gray-haired Doucette told the judge. “May Yahweh

	have mercy on your souls when he judges you.”
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HEADLINE	06/06 Italy official: mafia spreading abroad
SOURCE	https://www.thelocal.it/20180606/italian-mafia-is-spreading-abroad-investigator-warns
GIST	<p>Italy's anti-mafia chief warned Tuesday that the mafia is not just an Italian problem but a "globalizing" phenomenon whose influence is seeping into several European countries.</p> <p>"Organized crime is moving abroad, globalizing," said Giuseppe Governale, the head of Italy's anti-mafia investigative unit DIA during a meeting with the foreign press in Rome.</p> <p>Governale said that although the notorious Sicilian Cosa Nostra has "always been present in the United States, Canada and Australia", the influence of the Calabrian mob, known as the 'Ndrangheta, was "underestimated".</p> <p>"The 'Ndrangheta ... is an extraordinarily powerful organization," warned Governale. He said criminal organizations have contacts all over the world in countries where they operate, but insisted 'Ndrangheta "tends to replicate abroad the structures it has established in Calabria".</p> <p>In Brussels, for example, "they don't buy just buildings but entire neighbourhoods".</p> <p>Governale added that Cosa Nostra, a notoriously ruthless criminal organization responsible for perpetrating deadly attacks in the past, was today "in great organizational difficulty after suffering substantial blows".</p> <p>Most of the mob's upper ranks have been arrested, with the exception of kingpin Matteo Messina Denaro. Fugitive Denaro has been on the run since 1993, with police closing in on his closest aides, but Governale said he was no longer considered the mob's supreme leader.</p> <p>He warned, however, that the death in prison in November 2017 of Cosa Nostra's former kingpin, Totò Riina, could prompt the organization to name a new head.</p> <p>Governale said Cosa Nostra has been weakened, but "unfortunately, the conditions linked to its environment and that allow its development still exist".</p> <p>"The mafia will be defeated by an army of schoolteachers," he said, referencing a line from the Italian poet and writer Gesualdo Bufalino, who died in 1996.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 UK police chiefs: public safety at risk
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jun/05/police-chiefs-say-cuts-are-putting-safety-of-public-at-risk-in-england-and-wales
GIST	<p>The three most senior police officers in England and Wales have expressed concerns that funding cuts and pressure on resources are hampering their ability to tackle serious crime.</p> <p>Appearing before the home affairs select committee, Cressida Dick, the Metropolitan police commissioner; Lynne Owens, the director general of the National Crime Agency; and Sara Thornton, the National Police Chiefs' Council chairwoman, gave examples of how cash shortages were posing a risk to public safety.</p> <p>Dick said it would be "naive" to suggest reductions in police officers was having no impact on rising crime. She added: "It is having a massive strain on our people and it cannot go on. We are in the middle of the largest change programme the Met has ever been through. It cannot go on without hard choices – either</p>

more money, smaller mission, greater risk of attack.”

Owens said: “The whole system needs a different approach to funding to make sure we are as good as we all want us to be.”

Thornton added: “There is undoubtedly a capacity issue in neighbourhood policing ... it does need some extra investment.”

Asked to state their biggest concern, all three highlighted the challenge posed by the rise in digital data and cybercrime.

The amount of data that Met officers have to deal with doubles every 18 months, Dick said. She admitted that officers were struggling with the extra workload.

She said it was not unusual for 18 officers to work 200 hours over a weekend to trawl through Facebook accounts to ensure that a trial was fair with regard to disclosure.

Thornton said the reduction in the number of sexual offence cases reaching court in the last two years suggested resources were being overstretched.

She said: “There is cause for concern. It is resource-intensive. We are shifting people. I am concerned about how many cases might be caught in the system.”

She added: “We are 17% down on the number of detectives we’d like in an ideal world, so we are trying to push resources into an area where we are already short.”

The chair of the committee, Yvette Cooper, asked Dick to give a single message to the home secretary, Sajid Javid. Dick said: “Support my people. They need to be well-led, they need to be well-equipped, they do need to be well-resourced and they need to have a public who feel confident. They need to be given the benefit of the doubt when things go wrong and not have point finger of blame.”

She also urged the Home Office to show greater trust in police officers. She said: “It sometimes feels like there is not much central push, it’s kind of ‘get on with it, good luck’, but at the same time it has felt a bit parent-child. We are in this together for our public and we would love to work ever more closely with the Home Office so that they feel even more confident in us and they can project that to others.”

Dick, Owens and Thornton also claimed the way English and Welsh policing was organised into 43 separate forces was hampering coordination on national crime issues.

Thornton said: “If you did a poll of chief constables, most would say for operational reasons it would make sense to have a fewer number of larger forces. But the issue is political. We are constantly trying get people to collaborate to cooperate in the public interest. We are making progress. Sometimes the progress is glacial.”

Owens said she was concerned forces were “going to be get left behind” on national issues such as cybercrime, fraud and child sexual abuse, because of the current division of forces.

Labour seized on the officers’ concerns over resourcing. Louise Haigh, the shadow policing minister, said: “The most senior police officers in the land have called out the dangerous Tory delusion on police cuts.

“In the face of overwhelming evidence from senior officers and their own officials, it appears that the only people in the country who now believe the loss of 21,000 officers hasn’t made the blindest bit of difference to community safety is Theresa May’s government.”

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HEADLINE	06/05 Police: deemed paranoid; he kills 6 later
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2018/06/05/he-was-deemed-paranoid-and-psychotic-years-later-he-killed-six-in-arizona-police-say/?utm_term=.322969aaf67c
GIST	<p>By 2009, Dwight Lamon Jones's 21-year marriage was cascading into violent chaos.</p> <p>He and his wife had been fighting a lot, court records say, and at one point, he fractured her rib cage. On May 6, 2009, Jones threatened to kill his wife in front of their 12-year-old son, screaming expletives and telling the boy his mother didn't care about him.</p> <p>"I'll take you out to the ... pool and drown you," Jones told his wife, according to court records.</p> <p>Connie Jones called police that day. Less than a week later, she filed for divorce.</p> <p>Her husband was arrested and taken to two psychiatric hospitals, where he stayed for several days. He was discharged, even though doctors found that his mental state was deteriorating. Dwight Jones "will continue to unravel ... he will become increasingly paranoid, likely psychotic, and pose an even greater risk of perpetrating violence," according to an assessment by Steven Pitt, a prominent forensic psychiatrist who had consulted in several high-profile criminal cases.</p> <p>And unravel Jones did.</p> <p>He spent the past several years living in hotel rooms, embittered by his divorce and consumed with long-held grudges, police say.</p> <p>In hours-long, rambling videos posted in a YouTube channel called "exposing lowlifes," Jones railed against his perceived enemies — judges, psychiatrists, lawyers, counselors, and his ex-wife — whom he accused of conspiring to paint him as an abusive and troubled man, to deprive him of his son. He claimed that his former spouse was the abuser, and she had concocted a dubious tale of a battered wife.</p> <p>His anger boiled over last week, in a violent rampage that sent police on a days-long manhunt and rattled Scottsdale, Ariz., a Phoenix suburb known for its golf courses, resorts and nightlife. Police say Jones swiftly targeted people who had been involved in his divorce proceedings, including the forensic psychiatrist who had examined him. The killing spree would end in Jones's death, police say, after the 56-year-old wanted for killing six people shot himself inside a hotel room.</p> <p>Connie Jones, 52, described her ex-husband as a "very emotionally disturbed person."</p> <p>"As a medical professional and a citizen I am deeply saddened by the tragedy caused by my ex-husband ... Personally, I have feared for my safety for the past nine years," Jones, who is a doctor, said in a brief statement. "I cannot express the emotions I feel for the innocent families touched by this senseless violence."</p> <p>Jones's rampage began Thursday, when police say he shot and killed Pitt. The 59-year-old psychiatrist was killed in broad daylight outside his office on the outskirts of Scottsdale.</p> <p>Less than 24 hours later, Jones went to the law firm his wife had retained during the divorce. There, police say, he shot Veleria Sharp, 48, and Laura Anderson, 49, two paralegals who worked for the firm in downtown Scottsdale. With a gunshot wound to her head, Sharp made her way out of the office and flagged a bus driver for help before she died. Police followed her blood trail back to the office and found Anderson.</p> <p>The next victim was psychologist Marshall Levine, 72, who was not tied to Jones's divorce case but happened to share an office space with someone who was: another psychologist Jones's son was required to see as part of the divorce proceedings. Levine's girlfriend found his body just after midnight Saturday, police said.</p>

By midnight Monday, police found two more bodies. Mary Simmons, 70, and Bryon Thomas, 72, were shot to death in their home in Fountain Hills, a town outside Phoenix. Investigators believe Jones went to that home Sunday afternoon and killed the two, though they have not said why.

Jones killed himself inside an Extended Stay hotel room, where he had been living, as tactical team members closed in Monday morning. Police have not said what kind of weapon Jones used in the killings, or how he got it.

For days, the attacks placed many in the legal and mental-health communities on edge and raised speculations that Pitt, the most well-known of the victims, may have been killed because of his profession, which required him to study the minds of criminals. Some feared that the attacker was indiscriminately killing people involved in the criminal justice and court system.

Police said they received more than a hundred tips about the attacks. One came from Connie Jones and her husband, a retired detective who recognized some of the victims' connections to the divorce case, Connie Jones said in her statement.

Little is known about Dwight Jones. He had a GED but no college degree. He and his ex-wife were married in 1988 in Fayetteville, N.C. Their son was born nine years later, in 1997. For much of their marriage, Dwight Jones stayed at home and took care of their son, while Connie Jones worked. Her substantial salary as a radiologist afforded them a house in Scottsdale, two Mercedes-Benz cars and a Toyota.

By 2009, Dwight Jones had descended into troubling behavior. In January of that year, his son's school in Scottsdale sought harassment orders against him after he assaulted administrators, the Arizona Republic reported. The boy was transferred to another school. In April of that year, he attacked his wife in front of their son because she asked the boy to turn down the TV. Jones pinned his wife down on the couch, with his knee pressed against her chest. If she disrespected him, Jones said, "she would be found at the bottom of the pool," according to court records cited by the Republic.

The abuse led to a police standoff on May 6, 2009, when Connie Jones secretly called 911. After police arrived, Dwight Jones refused to come out of the house, and the boy was inside with him, court records say. He told his son that his mother was a whore.

"She's got these cops out there ready to kill me ... your mom wants me to die ... she wants you to die," Jones told his son, according to court records.

Jones was charged and later pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct, a misdemeanor, public records show.

Pitt, the psychiatrist, testified during the divorce proceedings that Jones had anxiety and mood disorders, that he was antisocial, narcissistic and paranoid. He lacked remorse and frequently suspected his ex-wife of infidelity, even without justification. He had no friends or confidants, but had a "grandiose sense of self importance" and required "excessive admiration," court records say.

He had made egregious claims that Connie Jones sexually abused their son. He also was often armed. According to a psychologist's report, Dwight Jones "always had a weapon because of a disagreement he had with the landscape company."

Jones, though, loved his son "very deeply," court records say. And at one point after his parents separated, the boy was missing his father. The divorce left the child traumatized, staring into space or falling asleep during sessions with counselors.

The marriage was dissolved in 2010, and Connie Jones was given sole custody of the son. A judge allowed supervised visits every week, despite Jones's abusive behavior and experts' assessments that he was mentally unstable.

	<p>Before the attacks, he is believed to have created several “narrated” YouTube videos, said Sgt. Ben Hoster, spokesman for the Scottsdale Police Department. Some were posted as recently as a week ago. None of the videos showed his face; some just showed a white mask as a man’s voice can be heard talking about a corrupt court system he claimed had been rigged against him, according to the Arizona Republic’s description of the videos.</p> <p>YouTube has since suspended the channel, and the videos have been replaced with a message in a red banner: “This account has been terminated due to multiple or severe violations of YouTube’s policy against spam, deceptive practices, and misleading content or other Terms of Service violations.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Federal Way pot raid; 10 arrests
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article212621739.html
GIST	<p>Federal Way police arrested 10 people and seized thousands of marijuana plants Tuesday morning after raids at six residences, a department spokesman said.</p> <p>The raids happened at 9 a.m. and netted several thousand plants in various stages of growth, cash and growing equipment, police spokesman Kurt Schwan said.</p> <p>According to Schwan, the homes were in the following locations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31900 block of Second Lane Southwest • 700 block of Southwest 327th Street • 31600 block of 37th Avenue Southwest • 31400 block of 36th Avenue Southwest • Two in the 31200 block of 36th Avenue Southwest <p>Ages and hometowns of the 10 people arrested were not immediately available. Nobody was injured during the arrests, Schwan said.</p> <p>About 80 law enforcement officers from around the region were involved in the investigation.</p> <p>Charges for the illegal manufacture of marijuana with intent to sell will be filed by the King County Prosecutor's Office, Schwan said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Arrest in University Place shooting deaths
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1009784/authorities-arrest-man-suspected-in-university-place-deaths/
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. (AP) — Authorities say a man suspected in the shooting of two men inside a car in University Place last month has been arrested.</p> <p>The News Tribune reports the man, who has not been identified, is expected to be charged Tuesday in the deaths of 19-year-old Adrian Valencia and 22-year-old Wilberth Acala.</p> <p>Detectives with the Pierce County Sheriff’s Department have been searching for two suspects since mid-May when the two men were found dead in a Dodge Charger. Both had been shot in the head.</p> <p>Authorities say that investigators believe the shooting was drug related and involved two shooters. Video surveillance showed two men walking away from the shooting scene in the early morning of May 14.</p> <p>The second suspect has not been apprehended.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Seattle immigration protest: 9 arrests
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1009960/9-arrested-in-seattle-immigration-protests/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — Authorities say nine people were arrested at a protest of U.S. immigration policy that blocked a downtown Seattle street and disrupted traffic for nearly two hours.</p> <p>KOMO reports that the protesters, with the Northwest Detention Center Resistance, said they are opposed to the deportation of undocumented immigrants. Nine of the activists blocked the street at about 7:30 a.m. Tuesday and locked themselves together with handcuffs wrapped inside PVC pipe, chicken wire and duct tape – and sat in the middle of the pavement.</p> <p>The six men and three women arrested were later booked into the King County Jail for investigation of pedestrian interference.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 SPD removes, arrests protesters faster
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1009413/protesters-block-traffic-in-seattle-using-sleeping-dragon-technique/
GIST	<p>In March, protesters using the “sleeping dragon” method blocked Seattle traffic for hours, causing backups that extended onto the freeway.</p> <p>On Tuesday, June 5, activists with the Northwest Detention Center Resistance calling for the abolition of ICE used the same technique on Second Avenue. But the Seattle Police Department removed the protesters much faster.</p> <p>Tuesday’s protest lasted for less than two hours.</p> <p>After giving the handful of protesters time to disperse on their own, Seattle police began making arrests around 9 a.m. The work can be slow due to the “sleeping dragon” method, which involves locking arms via tubing and other materials.</p> <p>“Removing these devices is slow, deliberate work,” SPD tweeted. “The safety of all involved is paramount.”</p> <p>Tuesday’s protest was likely not permitted.</p> <p>In March, people protesting King County’s new juvenile detention facility did not have a permit either, however, they were allowed to stay on the street until police warned them to leave prior to the afternoon commute.</p> <p>Interim Police Chief Carmen Best explained why:</p> <p>“I know I’m taking a lot of heat and criticism,” Best said at a community meeting Wednesday, March 7. “But as far as I’m concerned, at the end of the day ... yes, people were inconvenienced, but nobody was arrested; nobody got hurt. We cleared everybody off of 5th Avenue. We made it known that if they’re not gone by three o’clock, you’re going to jail because, in fact, we can’t block off 5th Avenue in Friday rush hour.”</p> <p>She added that the department assists people in their personal right to free speech.</p> <p>“We swore to do that, actually ... And nowhere in there does it say, ‘First Amendment right to free speech, except if it’s inconvenient ... except if there’s a permit.’ That is just not the way it works.”</p>

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HEADLINE	06/05 Australia charges 3 banks w/cartel crimes
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/australia-charges-banks-staff-cartel-crimes-55656494?
GIST	<p>Australia on Tuesday laid cartel charges against banking companies Citigroup, Deutsche Bank and ANZ plus six bank executives over the sale of 2.5 billion Australian dollars (\$1.9 billion) in ANZ shares to institutional investors three years ago.</p> <p>The charges involve alleged cartel arrangements relating to trading in ANZ shares held by Deutsche Bank and Citigroup. ANZ and officials from all three banks are alleged to have been knowingly concerned in conduct, the regulator Australian Competition and Consumer Commission said in a statement.</p> <p>The three banks deny the allegations and say they will defend their current and former employees. The first hearing in a Sydney court will be July 3.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Missing teens vulnerable sex trafficking
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/many-washington-teens-are-missing-vulnerable-to-sex-trafficking/763759488
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - For weeks, media outlets reported on a Bonney Lake teenager who disappeared on May 9 and is safe tonight. But many more teens are still missing, including these three girls whose cases did not receive the same level of attention. All three disappeared around the same time, late April and early May. And they are still missing.</p> <p>Kyra Doubek was 15 when she ran away. She does not talk easily about her years as a runaway on the streets of Washington state. It is an experience, she says, that can leave a lifetime of shame, much of it hidden.</p> <p>"Kids go missing all the time," she says, "and very rarely do they make it actually like into the spotlight, on the news."</p> <p>She says most teenagers believe they are running towards something better, some place safer. She was asked if they find greater safety when they leave home.</p> <p>"Very rarely, very, very rarely do youth who run away find a safer place to be," she said. "I didn't that's for sure."</p> <p>What did she find?</p> <p>"I found substances," she said. "I found older men who were willing to provide me with a place to stay but there was this unspoken agreement in exchange for a sex act."</p> <p>Seattle police say on any day, they have 50 to 60 active missing persons cases; about half involve children.</p> <p>According to the advocacy group REST or Real Escape from the Sex Trade, one in three runaways is recruited by a pimp within 48 hours of leaving home. The average age of these runaways? Just 15 years old.</p> <p>And most often, says Doubek, they are found by predators trolling the internet even before they leave home.</p>

"They look for these people posting sad posts," she says. "It's not that they're bad kids. As my colleague says they're sad kids, they're not bad kids."

The Washington State patrol posts pictures and information about children missing in this state.

Sixteen-year-old Shianna Victoria Elkins ran away from Mount Vernon on April 19. Elkins is described as a "chronic runaway." Seven days later, Ximena Delgado ran away from her Spokane home. Police believe the 16-year-old is with her boyfriend. Seventeen-year-old Hannah Turkington from Vancouver, Washington, ran away two days after the Bonney Lake teen. Police describe her, too, as a "chronic runaway."

All of it, says Pierce County prosecutor Mark Lindquist, is sobering.

"It isn't just runaways and vulnerable girls who are lured into this world," Lindquist said. "Sometimes these pimps are going after middle class girls as well."

Kyra Doubek finally made it off the streets when she was 26.

"We do get better," she said.

Now she is devoting her life to helping those who have been there, too.

"My whole goal with everything is to hopefully get people to dream again," she said, smiling, "and then help them smash those dreams out of the park."

She wants law enforcement to target men who buy sex from children. Moreover society needs to make the stigma so great they will stop.

And parents, she says, need to give their undivided attention to their children, know the people their children are meeting in person and online.

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HEADLINE	06/06 Multi-state drug trafficking bust
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/federal-pages/dhs/ice/11-indicted-multi-state-drug-trafficking-case-ice-hsi-investigation/
GIST	<p>Eleven individuals are facing federal drug charges in multiple indictments unsealed May 30 targeting a large, multi-state drug trafficking organization based in Mississippi, following a joint investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics.</p> <p>According to court documents, the indictments resulted from an extensive Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation dubbed Operation Highlife. The Mississippi-based drug trafficking organization is charged with distributing more than 40 kilograms of methamphetamine, more than 3 kilograms of cocaine and over 100 pounds of marijuana illegally smuggled into the U.S. from Mexico across numerous states to include Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Texas, Tennessee and California.</p> <p>"Methamphetamine has devastated countless communities due to the dramatic health and public safety consequences that typically accompany its introduction into an area," said Special Agent in Charge Jere T. Miles of Homeland Security Investigations in New Orleans. "Today's arrests mark the culmination of an extensive joint effort by HSI, the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics, and the Drug Enforcement Administration to dismantle a drug trafficking organization that decimated parts of Mississippi and Alabama with illegal drugs smuggled into the U.S. from Mexico. This operation is a testament to the</p>

	seamless partnership between federal, state and local law enforcement, which HSI sincerely appreciates in the combined effort to improve the lives of law-abiding residents throughout Mississippi and Alabama.” Miles oversees a five-state area of operations to include Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Tennessee.
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HEADLINE	06/06 South Sudan civil war atrocities
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/06/06/south-sudans-latest-civil-war-atrocities-kept-out-sight.html
GIST	<p>KINSHASA, Congo – The accounts are horrific. A young girl strangled and gang-raped. Children burned alive as government soldiers blocked the door of their hut and set it aflame.</p> <p>These are some of the atrocities revealed in 14 reports, seen by The Associated Press, that have not yet been released by the independent body charged with monitoring a failed cease-fire imposed in December in South Sudan, where civil war is now well into its fifth year.</p> <p>The reports should have been released last month at a meeting led by the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission but South Sudan's government did not attend, preventing the accounts of abuses from being made public because there was not a quorum.</p> <p>"The reports contain evidence that soldiers continue to kill, rape and destroy property. The decision to keep these ongoing atrocity crimes secret sends the wrong message," Jehanne Henry, senior Africa researcher for Human Rights Watch, told the AP. Only five such reports have been released this year.</p> <p>The African Union and the East African regional bloc that mediates South Sudan's peace talks should take action, said Edmund Yakani, executive director for the local advocacy group Community Empowerment for Progress Organization.</p> <p>"Silence on the violations only encourages further violations," he said.</p> <p>While people attending the meeting said copies of the reports on atrocities were distributed to diplomats from the United States, the United Nations, Britain and elsewhere, none have released them publicly or made public the reports of abuses.</p> <p>South Sudan's government didn't respond to multiple requests for comment on why it didn't attend last month's meeting.</p> <p>The unpublished reports describe violations by both government and opposition forces but most of the accounts blame government troops for instigating attacks and deliberately targeting civilians.</p> <p>During an attack in February on a school in the town of Modit, children fled into a hut to hide. Government soldiers blocked the door and set it on fire, burning the children to death, said one report.</p> <p>A young girl fetching water from a river in the town of Yei was strangled before she and her mother were gang-raped by government soldiers, another report said. More than 30 cases of sexual assault were recorded in Yei and surrounding areas in the three months following December's cease-fire agreement.</p> <p>And in the nearby town of Morobo, a woman was raped and beaten so badly that she lost sight in one eye. A disabled woman, unable to flee the fighting, was thrown into a burning house by government soldiers, the report said.</p> <p>The group that compiled the reports, the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism, told the AP its mandate doesn't require it to publish reports and that releasing them had been the task of its parent body, the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission. The commission reports to</p>

	<p>the East African regional bloc, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. Neither responded to several AP requests for comment.</p> <p>The concealing of the atrocities comes as the international community loses patience with South Sudan's civil war, which has killed tens of thousands and created Africa's largest refugee crisis since the Rwandan genocide in 1994. The U.S., South Sudan's largest aid donor, has increased pressure on the Juba government amid widespread allegations that its officials are profiting from the conflict instead of working to end it.</p> <p>Last week the U.N. Security Council adopted a U.S.-sponsored resolution that warns of an arms embargo and sanctions against six high-ranking officials if the fighting doesn't stop.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Jury: death sentence BP agent death
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/06/05/texas-jury-returns-death-sentence-in-border-agents-death.html
GIST	<p>BROWNSVILLE, Texas – A South Texas jury has sentenced a 34-year-old Mexican national to death for the fatal 2014 shooting of an off-duty Border Patrol agent.</p> <p>The Cameron County jury deliberated about two hours Tuesday before sentencing Gustavo Tijerina-Sandoval in the capital murder of Agent Javier Vega Jr. It also sentenced him to life imprisonment for attempted capital murder in the shooting of Vega's father.</p> <p>According to testimony, Vega and his family were spending the day fishing when Tijerina tried to rob them. Tijerina's attorney argued that his client was acting in self-defense.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Ohio immigration sting: 100+ arrests
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-06-05/urgent-immigration-agents-arrest-114-in-landscaper-sting
GIST	<p>Sandusky, Ohio (AP) -- More than 100 workers at an Ohio gardening and landscaping company were arrested Tuesday when about 200 federal officers descended on the business and carried out one of the largest workplace immigration raids in recent years.</p> <p>The operation was part of the White House's increasing focus on businesses that hire people in the country illegally amid a broad range of immigration crackdowns under President Donald Trump that include stepped-up deportations, targeting of sanctuary cities and zero-tolerance border policies.</p> <p>The 114 arrests occurred at two locations of Corso's Flower & Garden Center, one in Sandusky, a resort city on Lake Erie, and another in nearby Castalia. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement said it expected criminal charges including identity theft and tax evasion.</p> <p>No criminal charges were filed against the company, but the employer is under investigation, authorities said. Two locations were searched, and Khaalid Walls, an agency spokesman, said "a large volume of business documents" were seized.</p> <p>The operation drew criticism over its heavy show of force that involved aircraft surveillance and a large contingent of federal agents to round up workers at a family business. It also highlights a tightrope President Donald Trump's administration is walking as it seeks to please immigration hawks but risks alienating business-friendly Republicans struggling to find enough workers in a tight job market.</p> <p>In April, agents made about 100 worker arrests at a meatpacking plant in rural Tennessee, another high-</p>

profile show of force reminiscent of President George W. Bush's administration. No criminal charges have been filed against the employer.

Tuesday's operation was carried out with quiet efficiency. At the Castalia facility — covered with trees, flowers and greenhouse tarps — no workers were seen running as about 100 law enforcement officials established a perimeter. A voice on a radio called attention to specific employees who might try to flee, but none did.

The investigation into Corso's began in October 2017 when the U.S. Border Patrol arrested a woman who gave stolen identity documents to job applicants in the country illegally, said Steve Francis, head of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations unit in Detroit.

The document vendor led investigators to the landscaping company, where they examined documents in its files for irregularities, Francis said. Some Social Security numbers belonged to dead people.

Of the 313 employees whose records were examined, 123 were found suspicious and targeted for arrest and criminal charges of identity theft and, in nearly all cases, tax evasion. Francis said the identity theft targeted U.S. citizens who had no idea their information was being used at the Ohio business.

"We verified that a lot of U.S. persons were obviously unaware of this. It's caused them a lot of hardship," Francis said.

Immigration officials have sharply increased audits of companies to verify their employees are authorized to work in the country. There were 2,282 employer audits opened between Oct. 1 and May 4, nearly a 60 percent jump from the 1,360 audits opened between October 2016 and September 2017. Many of those reviews were launched after audits began at 100 7-Eleven franchises in 17 states in January.

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HEADLINE	06/05 Federal Way: arrest in SUV explosion
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/police-investigating-reported-explosion-in-federal-way-neighborhood
GIST	<p>A man was arrested after an SUV explosion rocked a Federal Way neighborhood Tuesday night, according to police. It happened around 6:00 p.m. along 4th Ave. SW, between SW 297th and SW 299th Streets, just off Dash Point Road.</p> <p>"It was louder than a shotgun, it was good and loud," said neighbor Tony Wilson.</p> <p>He said he was inside his garage when he heard a loud blast. "I thought a piece of my roof had blown off," he said. "I just thought it was the wind to begin with, you know a big gust of wind blow something, a few little pieces of my roof."</p> <p>Wilson said he went outside to find his sidewalk littered with pieces of the SUV and part of his yard were on fire. "The pickup (truck) over there was pretty well destroyed, with pieces all over," said Wilson. "I quickly whipped out my camera. Then my neighbors were more active than me and came and got my hose to put out my yard fire."</p> <p>The neighbors also helped dose a small fire that had started on Wilson's roof.</p> <p>He said he found pieces of the SUV on his roof and another smoldering in his backyard.</p> <p>"I've never had a car blow up like that. I've seen some burned," said Wilson. According to South King Fire and Rescue, there are no reports of injuries.</p> <p>Police said the man was arrested for, "malicious explosion of a substance in the 2nd degree" due to the</p>

	obvious explosion of the vehicle. Detectives are still trying to figure out how it all happened. Agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) have now joined the investigation.
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HEADLINE	06/05 Kentucky: hatchet attack suspect caught
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2018/06/05/hatchet-attack-suspect-tennessee/675897002/
GIST	<p>The search ended Tuesday night for a man suspected of using a hatchet to kill a gym owner, police said.</p> <p>Domenic Micheli <u>was arrested by Kentucky State Police</u> on Interstate 65 near Bowling Green, according to the Metro Nashville Police Department. Bowling Green is roughly 80 miles northeast of Nashville. Nashville police detectives were en route to Kentucky Tuesday night, police said.</p> <p>Micheli was found driving a Toyota Prius, the vehicle he was seen driving before Monday's attack at a Belle Meade strip mall.</p> <p>Police have been searching for Micheli since Monday after the slaying of Joel Paavola, who owned the Balance Training location in Belle Meade, southwest of Nashville.</p> <p>Authorities said that Micheli formerly worked for Paavola, who fired Micheli from the gym 14 months ago.</p> <p>Police said that Paavola was brutally killed with a hatchet and another "cutting instrument."</p> <p>"Just a senseless, brutal, violent attack this morning on Mr. Paavola as he was there in the business," Metro Nashville Police Department spokesman Don Aaron said Monday.</p> <p>Before his capture, the 36-year-old suspect was last seen at an urgent care facility in Gallatin, Tenn., on Monday morning. Gallatin police said Micheli asked the urgent care workers for a suture kit but was not willing to wait or provide any personal information.</p> <p>Micheli left without receiving any treatment or medical supplies, police said.</p> <p>Micheli was arrested outside of the White House in April by the U.S. Secret Service after driving his car up to a checkpoint and refusing to move it.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 White House contractor arrested
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jun/5/martese-maurice-edwards-nsc-contractor-arrested-wh/
GIST	<p>A man with a White House pass was arrested outside the presidential home on a charge of attempted murder — reportedly weeks after the warrant was issued.</p> <p>Martese Maurice Edwards, 29, had been working as a contractor for the National Security Council in the Old Executive Office Building. According to NBC News, he had a White House pass.</p> <p>According to a Secret Service statement, the Suitland, Maryland, man was arrested when he reported for work Tuesday, one day after the Service learned of the warrant.</p> <p>“On June 5, 2018, Edwards was promptly arrested by Secret Service Uniformed Division Officers at a</p>

checkpoint outside of the White House complex when he was reporting to work as a contractor. Edwards was transported to MPD Second District for processing,” a Secret Service spokesperson told The Washington Times.

Mr. Edwards is accused of first-degree attempted murder.

While details on that charge were not made public by the White House, there was no immediate indication that Mr. Edwards is suspected of trying to kill someone at the White House, or that the charge is directly related to politics or his job.

But according to NBC News reporter Geoff Bennett, there was a several-week lag between the warrant for Mr. Edwards’ arrest and the Secret Service learning about it.

“Secret Service says it learned of the arrest warrant when it was entered into the national Criminal Justice Information System on June 4. But 2 law enforcement officials say warrant was issued in mid-May, raising questions about why Maryland authorities didn’t enter it earlier,” he wrote on Twitter.

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HEADLINE	06/05 Killing spree suspect ranting on YouTube
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/dwight-lamon-jones-arizona-killing-spree-suspect-ranted-about-divorce-in-youtube-videos/
GIST	<p>SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. -- The man who police say killed six people in the Phoenix area spent hours online griping about his ex-wife and the family court system that sided with her in a contentious divorce years ago. Dwight Lamon Jones spoke in a series of YouTube videos posted in May about the judge, counselor and prominent forensic psychiatrist in the case.</p> <p>The psychiatrist, Steven Pitt, who also assisted in the JonBenét Ramsey mystery in Colorado, was called a "scumbag" by Jones in one of the videos. He was killed Thursday.</p> <p>Jones was divorced in 2010 and his ex-wife was awarded custody of their son. Pitt had evaluated Jones and testified that year that he had anxiety and mood disorders and symptoms of a paranoid personality.</p> <p>A hunch from a retired detective helped lead police to Jones and link the victims, some of whom were connected to the divorce case, authorities said after the assailant killed himself inside a Scottsdale hotel Monday with officers closing in.</p> <p>In an unexpected twist, the suspect's ex-wife, Connie Jones, said her current husband, a retired police detective, made the connection between her divorce and the crime scenes and notified police of his suspicion Saturday night.</p> <p>The victims included Pitt, two paralegals who worked for the law office that represented Jones' wife, and a marriage-and-divorce counselor who was apparently targeted in a case of mistaken identity.</p> <p>Authorities have since named two other victims found shot dead early Monday in their Fountain Hills home as 70-year-old Mary Simmons and 72-year-old Bryon Thomas. Police said they had probable cause to link all six killings to the dead suspect, but they have not disclosed a connection between Jones and the victims in Fountain Hills.</p> <p>CBS affiliate KPHO reports that Jones was already on investigators' radar Monday when they saw him dumping a bag that contained a gun that had been stolen from the Fountain Hills home.</p> <p>Connie Jones said in a statement that her ex-husband was a "very emotionally disturbed person."</p> <p>In the YouTube videos, Jones appeared to be resentful about the divorce and accused his ex-wife and her</p>

	attorney of spreading lies. Jones posted a total of 18 videos, some of them nearly an hour long, KPHO reports. They've since been removed.
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HEADLINE	06/05 Local law enforcement in ICE crackdown
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/eye-on-america-feds-enlist-local-law-enforcement-in-ices-immigration-crackdown/
GIST	<p>Six counties in Georgia have joined a federal program known as 287(g) that deputizes local law enforcement to effectively act as U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents. CBS News went to the Gwinnett County Jail to see how the program is working.</p> <p>"Under the Trump administration, right now we're going by all law, immigration laws," one deputy said. "So you come in for jaywalking, we find out that you're illegal, we hand you over to ICE. We work for ICE. We do not deport anybody."</p> <p>Just north of Atlanta, Gwinnett County accounted for 20 percent of all 287(g) encounters last year, by far the most nationally.</p> <p>Nationwide, 78 local law enforcement agencies in 20 states participate in the 287(g) program, through which ICE deported close to 6,000 illegal immigrants last year -- 653 from Gwinnett County alone.</p> <p>"If you're in a country illegally, the least you can do is obey that country's laws," said Butch Conway, Gwinnett County sheriff.</p> <p>But some people are questioning the impact of the program.</p> <p>"We are one of the worst states to be an undocumented individual," said Aisha Yaqoob, the policy director for Asian Americans Advancing Justice. "Our communities are targeted based on what they look like. Police officers pulling people over for something as simple as a broken tail light or driving without a license."</p> <p>Is it profiling, or is that them just doing their job?</p> <p>"So just the thought of dealing with someone who is an undocumented person gives them a little bit extra push to maybe take them to the jail and see what they can do," Yaqoob said.</p> <p>We asked Conway what he says to the critics who argue the county is arresting nonviolent offenders and sending them over to ICE.</p> <p>"Well, they're wrong," Conway said. "I've known illegal aliens personally for many years. They work in the community, they live in the community, they're great people. If they're going to be here illegally, you drive, you're taking a chance."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/06 EU warns on multi-million euro scam
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-trade-greece-hungary/eu-warns-uk-centered-china-import-scam-may-shift-to-europes-silk-road-idUSKCN1J20U3
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS (Reuters) - European Union anti-fraud investigators suspect Greece and Hungary may have become the main EU centers of a multi-million-euro scam involving imports of Chinese clothing and footwear that uses the infrastructure of China's new "Silk Road".</p> <p>The large-scale fraud, which consists in underdeclaring the value of imported goods to pay lower duties</p>

	<p>and sales taxes, was first uncovered in Britain, where it had gone on for years, prompting the European Commission this year to demand that London pay 2.7 billion euros (\$3.1 billion) worth of lost customs duties to the EU budget.</p> <p>Officials at the EU anti-fraud agency OLAF said they now suspected the scam could have shifted to Hungary and to the port of Piraeus in Athens, which has been majority-owned by China's state-owned COSCO Shipping (601919.SS) since 2016.</p> <p>Hungarian and Greek customs data show a surge of undervalued clothing and footwear imports from China over the past two years, OLAF officials told Reuters. They stressed that this trend had coincided with a drop in undervalued Chinese imports into Britain.</p> <p>Customs duties in EU countries are a direct revenue for the bloc's budget. They are collected by national authorities before being sent to Brussels.</p> <p>OLAF officials said the trend was "worrying" and that monitoring of import flows would be enhanced.</p> <p>Reuters exclusively reported in April that Italian authorities were investigating suspected import fraud by Chinese criminal gangs at Piraeus port, the largest in Greece.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/05 Mexico police: 7 killed in shootout
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/police-kill-shootout-mexicos-jalisco-state-55677635?
GIST	<p>Authorities in the western Mexico state of Jalisco say seven people have been killed in a clash with state police.</p> <p>The Jalisco state prosecutor's office says officers were patrolling a dirt road in Encarnacion de Diaz when they came under fire from two vehicles early Tuesday. It says seven men were killed in the ensuing gunbattle, while two escaped.</p> <p>The prosecutor's statement says police vehicles were hit by gunfire, but no officers were wounded.</p> <p>Encarnacion de Diaz is about 110 miles (180 kilometers) northeast of Guadalajara.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/06 Albania: arrests in fake travel documents
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/albania-police-arrest-alleged-counterfeit-documents-55683860?
GIST	<p>Albanian police say they have arrested two people accused of supplying fake documents to help people enter Britain, Germany and other Western European countries illegally.</p> <p>A statement Wednesday said authorities found at their raided homes 16 counterfeit passports and many documents in Albanian and German.</p> <p>The two detained Albanians, residents of the capital, Tirana, and the port city of Durres, were paid 10,000 to 16,000 euros (\$11,700-18,700) for the fake documents.</p> <p>Police did not say how many people are believed to have profited from the fake documents.</p> <p>Albanian citizens are allowed to travel to EU member countries without visas, but they cannot break the limit of a 90-day stay in six months and must also offer financial guarantees for their stay.</p>
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FRIDAY – 1 JUN 2018

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HEADLINE	05/31 Tariffs could be blow to national security
SOURCE	https://www.cnbc.com/2018/05/31/trumps-tariffs-a-blow-to-key-us-allies-and-us-national-security.html
GIST	<p>The U.S. military could be caught in the crosshairs following President Donald Trump's move to slap tariffs on some of the nation's closest allies.</p> <p>The Trump administration imposed new duties on steel and aluminum imports from the European Union, Canada and Mexico on Thursday citing national security concerns. The tariffs of 25 percent on steel imports and 10 percent on aluminum imports are slated to take effect at midnight Thursday despite Secretary of Defense James Mattis' recommendation of targeted tariffs.</p> <p>Stephen Biddle, adjunct senior fellow for defense policy at the Council on Foreign Relations, argues that the fresh round of tariffs will undermine America's ability to leverage allies to support U.S. interests.</p> <p>"The U.S. grand strategy for multiple generations has been premised on the idea that we are going to collaborate with rich and powerful allies that our enemy doesn't have and that this will advance American national security in a variety of ways," Biddle said. "The allies in question are precisely the ones that we are now engaged in these trade disputes with."</p> <p>In a Department of Defense memo related to the proposed tariffs, Mattis said that while the Pentagon "concur[s] with the Department of Commerce's conclusion that imports of foreign steel and aluminum based on unfair trading practices impair the national security," the U.S. military requirements for steel and aluminum each only represent about 3 percent of U.S. production. Mattis cited concerns about the "negative impact on our key allies" and said that therefore "targeted tariffs are more preferable than a global quota or global tariff."</p> <p>Speaking from the Pentagon on Thursday, chief spokeswoman Dana White said the department has yet to evaluate the policy. "As that just came out, we just need some time to take a look at it," White said. Meanwhile, the European Union, Canada and Mexico have announced plans to target a variety of U.S. products with equivalent measures.</p> <p>What's more, the Trump administration will also place quotas on other countries, such as South Korea, Argentina, Australia and Brazil, instead of tariffs. "This is clearly bad for our allies and partners," said Andrew Hunter, director of the Defense-Industrial Initiatives Group at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.</p> <p>"It's kind of a perverse dynamic that we end up targeting our partners and allies who aren't actually driving the overcapacity that is hurting the U.S. industry, but they are the ones that are going to pay these tariffs," Hunter said.</p> <p>Biddle, who is also a professor of international and public affairs at Columbia University, noted that America's allies will "re-evaluate how trustworthy the United States is as a partner on all sorts of things."</p> <p>"If the United States is willing to exploit a loophole in a trade negotiation," Biddle said, "what's to say the United States wouldn't find some legalistic excuse for not acting in some other way our allies need us to act on?"</p> <p>Similarly, Remy Nathan, vice president for international affairs at the Aerospace Industries Association, told CNBC in a prior interview that "oftentimes trade is political and security cooperation is political and the two intertwine."</p>

	"When we are enjoying good trade relations with other countries we have positive foreign relations, positive security cooperation, and they are oftentimes more interested in purchasing U.S. defense equipment and working with our military," Nathan said. "The opposite is also true."
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HEADLINE	05/31 NKorea official to deliver 'personal letter'
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2018/05/31/pompeo-says-north-korean-official-to-deliver-personal-letter-from-kim-jong-un-to-white-house.html
GIST	<p>Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Thursday that North Korean official Kim Yong Chol will travel to Washington to deliver a "personal letter" from the rogue regime's leader Kim Jong Un, while saying talks for a potential summit are moving in the "right direction."</p> <p>Pompeo, after holding meetings with the visiting senior official in New York City, said the North Korean envoy will hand off the letter on Friday in D.C. It is presumably the formal response to President Trump's letter last week canceling the summit.</p> <p>But since then, planning discussions have resumed, including Pompeo's high-level meetings these past two days in New York. Pompeo told reporters a summit in Singapore is "expected."</p> <p>"I am confident we are moving in the right direction," Pompeo said, noting that both nations had teams in Singapore to prepare for a summit between Trump and Kim, which was initially slated for June 12. Trump had called it off last week in response to threatening rhetoric from the DPRK.</p> <p>Pompeo said it was unclear whether the meeting would actually take place on June 12, but said that "real progress" has been made in meetings with North Korean officials this week.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 New north police HQ bldg. still on hold
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/homeless-camp-off-table-but-new-police-precinct-still-on-hold-in-north-seattle
GIST	<p>SEATTLE – People living in the Haller Lake neighborhood cheered during a community meeting Thursday night over the announcement that siting another homeless camp off Aurora Avenue is off the table for now. Still, many are concerned that plans for a new police precinct remain in limbo.</p> <p>The city owns an empty lot at N 128th Street and Stone Avenue where police headquarters were supposed to go. More recently, the property has been discussed as a possible location for a tiny house village.</p> <p>"Thirty-six percent of the crime in this city happens in north Seattle and yet our police station was put on hold," said Cathy Moray, one of 150 neighbors who came out to hear the panel discussion.</p> <p>Like many of the people who live in the area, Moray said police need a new building to provide effective public safety throughout the north end.</p> <p>The plan the city had for a new north precinct got scrapped when the price tag soared to \$160 million. In the past several weeks, talk of siting a tent encampment or tiny house village gained steam.</p> <p>City leaders heard the concerns and assured people at the meeting that the land won't house homeless people - at least in the immediate future.</p> <p>"Having said that, I also want to be really clear, I'm not willing to say never, only in part because I'm not clear where we're going to be a year from now on homelessness," said Seattle Deputy Mayor Michael</p>

	Fong. As for a new police headquarters, that's on hold until a new chief is hired, which should happen by July. However, there are further discussions on whether the north precinct is too big and should be divided in two, thereby requiring two separate headquarters.
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HEADLINE	05/31 Hamas facing crisis in Gaza
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/as-hamas-faces-a-crisis-it-tries-to-turn-up-pressure-on-israel/2018/05/31/ff0553e2-5e9f-11e8-b656-236c6214ef01_story.html?utm_term=.b6d761723095
GIST	<p>GAZA CITY — The Islamist Hamas movement, which rules the Gaza Strip, is facing its worst crisis in years as it confronts a severe cash shortage, a loss of regional allies and no obvious way to ease a blockade that is crippling local living conditions and stoking popular discontent.</p> <p>As it wrestles with this predicament, Hamas is trying to turn up the pressure on Israel — most notably by encouraging weekly mass protests along the Gaza border fence — without provoking an all-out military response that analysts say the group might be too weak to withstand. The immediate aim, analysts say, is to loosen the years-old blockade imposed on Gaza by Israel, Egypt and the rival Palestinian Authority, which controls the West Bank.</p> <p>Some Hamas leaders have also seen the protests as a chance for Gazans to vent and direct their anger at Israel. But as the Palestinian death toll in the protests has mounted with each passing week, so has public dismay with the militant group.</p> <p>Hamas, which the United States considers a terrorist organization, is also trying to strike an awkward balance between its traditional strategy of armed resistance against Israel and the imperative to preserve enough calm in Gaza so the group can govern it.</p> <p>On Tuesday, another militant Palestinian group, Islamic Jihad, fired scores of mortar shell and rockets from Gaza into southern Israel, a dramatic escalation that analysts say could not have happened without Hamas's knowledge and perhaps support. Israel responded with airstrikes.</p> <p>Hamas's armed wing asserted joint responsibility for the shelling, and its compounds were struck by Israeli jets overnight. But the group's political leadership swiftly announced a cease-fire after talks with Egyptian mediators — widely seen as a sign that Hamas has no interest in going to war.</p> <p>At the same time, the group's leadership is considering concessions to Israel and the Palestinian Authority, according to the Israeli media, Arab press reports and analysts. The aim would be to win an easing of restrictions on Gaza that could improve conditions for its 2 million inhabitants.</p> <p>Unemployment in the territory is running at more than 40 percent, and the infrastructure is collapsing, with residents getting only four hours of electricity a day and hospitals reporting shortages of medicine and other crucial supplies. According to the United Nations, the territory will be “unlivable” by 2020.</p> <p>“Hamas is really under pressure. They have very limited options. They are ready to commit to any security arrangements,” said Ibrahim al-Madhoun, a columnist at the Hamas-affiliated journal al-Risala. To alleviate suffering in Gaza and retain power, he said, Hamas would be willing even to halt attacks on Israel.</p> <p>Madhoun said the current protests are a “last resort” for Hamas. “They didn't have a choice,” he said. “It was the only way for them to try to get out of this deep crisis in Gaza.”</p> <p>Violent confrontation would only deepen Gaza's misery, and Hamas, which could have trouble replenishing its weapons stocks, might not survive another war with Israel, analysts say.</p>

	<p>Hamas's leader in Gaza, Yehiya Sinwar, said the group "will continue in the path of popular resistance and will do everything possible to prevent the demonstrations from spilling into armed conflict." Speaking in a May interview with Al Jazeera news channel however, he suggested that Hamas would escalate its actions if more Palestinians were killed. "It will demand a response from us," Sinwar said.</p> <p>The decision to support the demonstrations was a major shift for an organization otherwise known for deadly suicide bombings and rocket attacks on Israeli towns.</p> <p>The protests on the border fence started as a grass-roots initiative among students and local activists unaffiliated with Hamas. But the group soon signed on, providing transportation and other logistical support, and Hamas members were among the protesters.</p> <p>Since late March, mostly unarmed protesters have thronged to the border fence every Friday. More than 100 Palestinians have been fatally shot by Israeli soldiers, Gaza health officials report.</p> <p>Some Gazans have complained bitterly that the Hamas-backed protests have produced so many deaths and that living conditions ultimately have not improved.</p> <p>"The situation is already hard enough, and the demonstrations made it harder," said Fares al-Alami, 30, a shop owner in Gaza City's market district. "It wasn't the right time for such protests. But I don't think this government [in Gaza] has any solutions for us."</p> <p>The decline of Hamas's power has marked a stunning turn of fortunes for a movement once seen as an irresistible force in Gaza, where it fought three wars with Israel and has ruled for more than a decade.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 Spain PM ousted from office
SOURCE	http://time.com/5298301/sanchez-rajoy-spain-prime-minister-vote/
GIST	<p>(MADRID) — Opposition Socialist leader Pedro Sanchez has won a vote to replace Mariano Rajoy as prime minister, in the first ouster of a serving Spanish leader by parliament in four decades of democracy.</p> <p>Sanchez won the no-confidence vote with 180 votes, a slim majority in the 350-seat lower house. There were 169 no votes and one lawmaker abstained.</p> <p>Rajoy, one of Europe's longest-serving heads of government, lost the vote following corruption convictions last week involving former members of his conservative Popular Party.</p> <p>The 46 year-old Sanchez is now the prime minister in waiting. Spain's King Felipe VI still has to swear him in.</p> <p>Following the vote, Rajoy went over to Sanchez in the chamber and shook the incoming leader's hand.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 India economic expansion outpaces China
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/indias-economic-expansion-outpaces-rival-china-1527779172
GIST	<p>NEW DELHI—India's economic expansion accelerated to the fastest pace in nearly two years, pulling further ahead of rival China in the race to be the world's fastest-growing economy, as the effects fade from the government's crackdown on cash and adoption of a new tax.</p> <p>Gross domestic product in Asia's third-largest economy grew 7.7% in the three months through March compared with a year earlier, according to government data issued Thursday. That was better than</p>

economists' prediction of 7.4% and stronger than the 7% expansion in the preceding quarter.

India has now held the position as the world's fastest-growing big economy for the second quarter in a row, a title that China had wrested from it about a year ago. China's economy grew 6.8% in the past two quarters.

During the full fiscal year, India's economy grew 6.7%, which was slower than the previous year's 7.1% expansion.

India's economy had been disrupted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's sudden move to ban India's high-value currency notes—known as demonetization—and the bumpy rollout of a new nationwide value-added tax.

"It's a healthy number and confirms that the economy is in a recovery mode," said Anubhuti Sahay, head of South Asia economic research at Standard Chartered Bank. "Growth should move up to 7.2% this fiscal year, bringing us back to the pre-demonetization levels."

The data in India showed broad-based strengthening. The growth rate in construction nearly doubled to 11.5%. Output of public administration and defense services also rose 13.3%, while manufacturing grew 9.1%.

Although the headline figures look impressive, much of the burden of driving the economy forward has been shouldered by demand. Private investments, essential to create new jobs, are lagging. Exports remain sluggish, and demand in the country's rural areas hasn't fully recovered amid heavy indebtedness of farmers.

As next year's general elections near, pressure is growing on Mr. Modi to get the economy firing on all cylinders. Criticism is mounting that not enough jobs are being generated for the more than 10 million Indians joining the workforce each year.

"While growth has accelerated, many voters, particularly in the rural community, aren't feeling the benefits," said Shailesh Kumar, director for Asia at Eurasia Group. But he added that Mr. Modi's policies have helped bring down inflation, ensuring "support for him remains intact."

GDP growth dipped to a three-year low early last year after Mr. Modi's high-value currency ban, aimed at reining in corruption, hurt demand. A quick implementation of a national tax on goods and services in July left businesses struggling to understand its complicated rules.

While these moves initially caused pain, the outlook has brightened as businesses gradually get accustomed to the new system.

However, threats to the South Asian economy have also grown lately with global oil prices rising sharply.

Mr. Modi benefited during much of his first four years in office from low oil prices, which allowed him to raise taxes. But with oil near 3.5-year highs, prices at retail fuel outlets have surged, stoking public anger and pressure on the government to slash taxes.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Starbucks racial bias training
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/starbucks-racial-bias-training-uncomfortable-and-enlightening-employees-react-1527807677
GIST	Some Starbucks employees said they found this week's company training on racial bias eye-opening. But others said they felt uncomfortable and were left unsure how to apply the lessons to their daily jobs, suggesting the coffee chain has a difficult task ahead.

“By the end of it I was very exhausted. These are conversations I don’t ever have at work,” said Jaime Prater, a biracial shift supervisor at a Starbucks in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., who participated in the four hours of exercises and discussions. “I don’t think Starbucks realized how uncomfortable it would be for people of color to have to watch these videos and talk about this. But sometimes we need to be uncomfortable.”

Krystie Ward, a barista in Patchogue, N.Y., said Tuesday’s training was enlightening, particularly a short documentary produced for Starbucks by filmmaker Stanley Nelson Jr. that detailed the history of access to public spaces for African-Americans. It featured a black man describing how he is often followed around stores by employees who suspect he is going to steal something. He said he has to be aware of the way he acts every time he leaves his house, like making sure to keep his hands visible in certain places.

“That was really powerful to me, because I couldn’t imagine living my life like that,” said Ms. Ward, who is white.

At the more-than-8,000 company-owned cafes that closed for business Tuesday afternoon, employees divided into groups and huddled around iPads to watch a series of videos featuring diversity experts, Starbucks executives and the hip-hop artist Common talking about the nature of bias and why it is important to create a welcoming environment for all guests at Starbucks.

They also listened to a series of audio recordings of Starbucks employees describing interactions they have had with customers in which their own biases became apparent.

In one, an employee recalled seeing a scruffy-looking man approach a woman in line and hold out his hand to her, after which the woman got money out of her purse. The employee said she went up to the man and told him panhandling isn’t allowed in the store. The woman informed her the man was her husband.

After listening to each clip, the employees discussed how they would have reacted.

The Wall Street Journal reached out to dozens of baristas across the country and was connected to some employees by the company.

Cordell Lewis, manager of the Ferguson, Mo., Starbucks, was among the employees who said the training seemed to make some African-Americans uncomfortable. He said he could see employees’ shoulders tighten as they leaned forward in their chairs. Mr. Lewis, who is biracial, also said the emphasis on relations between black and white people left some employees feeling excluded, something he raised with company leaders. “I have trans partners and Philippine partners, and they were like, ‘What about me?’”

Still, Mr. Lewis, introduced to the Journal by Starbucks, said the training was the “most dynamic and diverse” he has received in over 15 years in retail management.

Carla Ruffin, Starbucks’ regional-operations director for the New York metro area, also introduced to the Journal by the coffee chain, said employees shouldn’t feel burdened. “There is no price to being gracious and having a smile and wanting to improve someone’s day. It doesn’t take sweat.”

Ms. Ruffin, who is African-American, said that when members of her exercise group were asked to discuss the first time they remembered experiencing bias, everyone said middle school. She said that was an example of how people are more alike than different—and that it showed how little she knew about her colleagues.

Starbucks decided to hold the training sessions after a store manager in Philadelphia called the police in April about two black men who hadn’t bought anything and allegedly didn’t leave the store when asked. Starbucks said the police never should have been called and has since issued a policy saying its company-operated stores in the U.S. are open to all visitors, whether or not they make a purchase.

Some employees said they felt Tuesday’s training wasn’t substantive enough.

“It’s just to save face. It doesn’t really mean anything,” said an African-American Starbucks barista in Connecticut. He said he has never encountered a racist incident in any of the stores at which he has worked in Connecticut or Maryland.

A barista in Ohio who is white said he found the training “wishy-washy.” He added: “I went in with an open mind. I was hoping we’d go through scenarios of how customers might feel in certain scenarios and how to make them not feel that way.”

Starbucks says there will be continuing education around diversity and bias, but the company hasn’t shared details of what that will entail.

Mr. Prater, the supervisor in Rancho Cucamonga, said it is admirable of Starbucks to start a dialogue about race relations but that asking overworked, hourly employees to consider their biases every time they interact with customers is a tall order.

“The baristas are already doing five or 10 things, including taking out the garbage and cleaning the bathrooms,” he said. “We’re already struggling to provide the bare minimum of customer service, so when you throw in this, how do we even do this? This is a lot.”

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HEADLINE	05/31 US tariffs prompt anger from trade allies
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-slaps-steel-aluminum-tariffs-on-canada-mexico-european-union-1527774283
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—The Trump administration raised the prospect of a global trade war by imposing tariffs on imports from the closest U.S. neighbors and allies, who swiftly pledged to retaliate with duties of their own.</p> <p>President Donald Trump is pursuing an aggressive strategy to win economic concessions from neighbors and allies in an effort to cut the U.S. deficit in merchandise trade.</p> <p>The new tariffs—on steel and aluminum imports from Canada, Mexico and the European Union—come as the U.S. is studying global levies on autos and auto parts. The administration also plans tariffs on industrial supplies from China. Beijing has promised to retaliate with its own duties.</p> <p>Financial markets fell early on Thursday before partly recovering later, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average closing down 1% to 24415.84.</p> <p>The move follows months of U.S. threats to impose tariffs, part of a push to negotiate new trade terms. The Trump administration is negotiating with virtually all of its major trading partners around the globe, including with Mexico and Canada over the North American Free Trade Agreement.</p> <p>Those initiatives have generally failed to bring the large, quick victories Mr. Trump has promised.</p> <p>Administration officials said they were still open to deals to drop the metals tariffs. “We continue to be quite willing and indeed eager to have further discussions with all of those parties,” Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross told reporters Thursday.</p> <p>The reaction from allies was swift and severe. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said his government would impose a 25% tariff on steel imports from the U.S. and a 10% tariff on aluminum and a wide range of other U.S. goods, including some food and agricultural products. Ottawa said it would hold consultations for two weeks before imposing the tariffs on July 1.</p> <p>Mexico’s Economy Ministry said it would target a number of U.S. goods, including some steel and pipe</p>

products, lamps, berries, grapes, apples, cold cuts, pork chops and various cheese products “up to an amount comparable to the level of damage” linked to the U.S. tariffs.

The EU has said it is also planning to hit back with its own duties on U.S. exports worth €6.4 billion (\$7.5 billion), including on steel, motorcycles and some agricultural products. Up to €2.8 billion of that could go into effect starting June 20. The EU said it would also launch a case against U.S. measures at the World Trade Organization on Friday.

Trade pressure on farmers has helped fuel the latest talks between U.S. and China aimed at lifting tariffs on soybeans, hogs and more. Here, an American farmer and a steelworker explain how tariffs are impacting their livelihoods.

How Will Allies Respond to Trump’s Tariffs?

Will President Donald Trump's decision to impose tariffs on steel and aluminum for the EU and others cause U.S. allies to retaliate? The Wall Street Journal's Gerald F. Seib explains. Photo: Getty
 “This is protectionism, pure and simple,” the EU’s top executive, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, said Thursday. “We will defend the Union’s interests, in full compliance with international trade law.”

Some participants in the U.S. steel industry, which Mr. Trump has vowed to protect, applauded the move. “The president’s trade actions have already begun putting steelworkers back to work in Ohio and Illinois,” said Tom Gibson, president of the American Iron and Steel Institute.

However, the United Steelworkers union, which includes Canadian members, broke with the Trump administration, criticizing the tariffs.

Mr. Trump’s “America first” economic message continues to appeal to a wide swath of voters, especially in the industrial Midwest, which he credits for his victory in the 2016 presidential election.

“I’ve supported steel tariffs from the beginning, because China’s cheating has cost too many Ohio steelworkers their jobs,” said Sen. Sherrod Brown (D., Ohio). “I’m open to carving out allies who are not part of the problem, but steel overcapacity is a global problem that needs a global response.”

Washington announced unilateral, global steel and aluminum tariffs in March, but Canada, Mexico and the European Union, which includes the U.K., had been offered temporary exemptions to the duties. All three economies received an extension a month ago. On Thursday, Mr. Ross told reporters the exemptions won’t be renewed, subjecting their metals exports to the tariffs.

The move capped a week of intensifying pressure on trading partners. On Tuesday, the White House revived a plan it had previously suspended to place tariffs on \$50 billion in industrial imports from China, and it is studying whether tariffs should be imposed on imported cars and auto parts.

The Trump administration is citing national security to justify the tariffs, arguing that America’s allies and rivals are employing unfair trade policies to undermine the viability of critical U.S. industries, starting with steel and aluminum. The administration says the national security justification comports with U.S. law and a special security exception at the WTO.

On Thursday, the White House said the “steel and aluminum tariffs have already had major, positive effects on steel and aluminum workers and jobs.”

The policy risks higher prices on imports, painful retaliation against U.S. exports and longer-term strife with allies if the Trump administration alienates politicians in allied democracies.

Republican lawmakers were quick to voice their disapproval. “This is dumb,” said Sen. Ben Sasse, a Nebraska Republican. “Europe, Canada, and Mexico are not China, and you don’t treat allies the same

	<p>way you treat opponents.”</p> <p>Rep. Kevin Brady, the Republican chairman of the House committee that oversees trade, said the Trump administration “will need to come to Capitol Hill to provide answers about the indiscriminate harm these tariffs are causing our local businesses.”</p> <p>Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, said: “Tariffs on steel and aluminum imports are a tax hike on Americans and will have damaging consequences for consumers, manufacturers and workers. I will continue to push the administration to change course.”</p> <p>The countries hit by tariffs include some of the biggest suppliers of metals.</p> <p>Canada accounts for about half of the raw aluminum imported by the U.S. and about 21% of the finished steel imports by the U.S. It is a major provider of steel plate and hot-rolled coil steel used widely in manufacturing.</p> <p>Mexico supplies 9% of finished steel imports and 11% of semifinished steel. These are generally big slabs of steel that U.S. mills buy to make finished products like sheet steel and pipe.</p> <p>EU countries provide 17% of the steel imported by the U.S. The EU is a major supplier of stainless steel, high-value steel used by the automotive industry.</p> <p>Canada Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland said Ottawa was considering its strongest retaliatory action since World War II, due to “a very bad U.S. decision.”</p> <p>Canadian officials made a last-ditch effort this week to get the exemption extended. Ms. Freeland visited U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer to plead Ottawa’s case, and Canada’s government issued a new policy late Wednesday to prevent the dumping of cheap foreign steel into North America.</p> <p>Mr. Ross, who is leading the reviews of steel, aluminum and auto-industry imports, said countries aren’t being singled out as national-security threats but instead evaluated through a broader economic lens.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Growing: homeless living in vehicles
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/2018/05/number-homeless-living-vehicles-could-fill-mccaw-hall
GIST	<p>The number of people struggling with homelessness in King County has increased, again. It’s a pattern that’s continued since 2012, spurring the declaration of a State of Emergency in 2015 that’s in place today.</p> <p>There may be some comfort in the fact that this year’s increase was smaller than in past years. The new numbers, collected from a volunteer-driven count on Jan. 26, as well as subsequent surveys of shelters and youth and young adults, show a 4 percent increase, from 11,643 last year, to 12,112 people in shelters or on the streets this year.</p> <p>The methodology for the count changed last year, so comparing numbers pre-2017 is difficult. But a 4 percent jump is less than the double digit increases of years’ past.</p> <p>The count also shows a slight decrease in homelessness among families with children. Veteran homelessness is down by a solid 31 percent.</p> <p>Still, no one was celebrating. "These numbers are always sobering," said Kyra Zylstra, director of King County's All Home.</p> <p>The proportion of people living on the streets relative to those in shelters increased from last year: For the first time, those living outside outnumbered those inside.</p>

That spike is largely driven by people living in cars and RVs — up 46 percent from last year to 3,372. That's enough to fill McCaw Hall in Seattle, home of Seattle Opera and the Pacific Northwest Ballet, and leave 400 people waiting outside. Seattle and King County have struggled to create a comprehensive approach to people in vehicles. A parking lot, outfitted with water and electricity, was closed due to exorbitant costs. A proposal from Seattle Councilmember Mike O'Brien to offer more leniency on parking fines and to do more outreach to people in vehicles has languished.

Also contributing to the increased number of people on the streets are the city's sanctioned tent encampments. While the report found unsanctioned tent encampments decreased, the number of nonprofit-run encampments more than doubled in the last year, with the operations now hosting nearly 400 people.

The survey also shows a 28 percent jump in the number of people considered "chronically homeless" — defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as people with a disabling condition — mental issues, chronic health problems, drug dependency or other barriers to holding down a job — who've been homeless for a year or more or have had four or more incidents of homelessness.

This year's survey confirms what the City of Seattle already concluded last year: Most of the homeless population lost its stable housing while living in Seattle. That's not to say everyone is from the region originally, but it challenges the pervasive belief that people are moving to Seattle and King County specifically for homeless services.

Respondents reported losing a job to be the No. 1 reason for falling into homelessness. That's followed by alcohol and drug use, evictions and mental illness.

As has been long the case, significant disparities still exist between races, with Black, Latino and multi-racial people making up a disproportionate number of those struggling with homelessness. LGBTQ youth and young adults are also overrepresented. The number of Native people experiencing homelessness declined from last year, from 6 percent of the total to 3 percent. Nevertheless, that number is high compared to the countywide population of just 1 percent.

The numbers released Thursday reflect the number of people struggling with homelessness on a given night. But the actual population is more fluid. Zylstra said Thursday they estimate about 30,000 people were homeless at some point over 2017. Compared to 2013, said Zylstra, service providers moved twice the number of people into housing. According to the Seattle Human Services Department, Seattle has housed 3,030 people in the first quarter, either by providing housing or preventing them from become homeless.

But the need is growing faster.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Wash. gets blame: blocking fuel exports
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1005239/washington-state-blamed-for-holding-up-fossil-fuel-exports/
GIST	<p>BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Republican lawmakers from Western states and industry executives on Thursday accused Washington state officials of unfairly blocking fossil fuel projects and dictating winners and losers among U.S. companies seeking to export products to Asia.</p> <p>Republican U.S. Sen. Steve Daines of Montana and others singled out Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, a Democrat, for blocking increased coal exports from Wyoming and Montana, the nation's top coal-producing region.</p> <p>U.S. coal mining contracted sharply over the past decade as natural gas and renewables captured a larger share of the electricity-generation market. Companies seeking to pivot to customers in Asia have been frustrated by the cancellation and blockage of proposed coal export terminals on the West Coast.</p>

Under Inslee, Washington state regulators have blocked a coal export terminal in Longview that could export up to 44 million tons annually and an oil-by-rail facility that would transfer oil from the Northern Plains to barges for shipment to West Coast refineries.

“The state of Washington is a barrier in the way of getting Montana resources exported around the world, including to Asia,” Daines said during an energy conference in Billings he helped organize.

U.S. Sen. John Barrasso predicted during the conference that Washington’s attempt to “weaponize the regulatory process” by blocking permits for fossil fuel projects would have consequences in upcoming elections.

Inslee spokeswoman Tara Lee declined to respond directly to the lawmakers’ comments. She said Washington officials were confident the state will prevail in pending lawsuits over the Longview terminal.

“Any proposal for a project like this goes through a rigorous but objective environmental review process,” Lee said. “We feel confident that our lead agency is making sound decisions based on the science, as they should. Some projects meet the requirements, some don’t.”

In denying permits for the Longview terminal, the Washington Department of Ecology said there were too many major harmful impacts including air pollution, rail safety and vehicle traffic.

BNSF Railway Chairman Matt Rose and mining company president Everett King with Lighthouse Resources, which is sponsoring the Longview coal terminal, also criticized obstruction from Washington state. They said the targeting of fossil fuel exports would undermine attempts under the administration of President Donald Trump to achieve U.S. energy dominance on the global stage.

U.S. coal exports to Asia more than doubled in 2017, to about 33 million short tons, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. However, most of that coal was funneled through two cities on the East Coast, Norfolk, Virginia, and Baltimore, Maryland, with high transportation costs a barrier to further growth in exports.

West Coast ports provide a potentially shorter route for the fuel.

Attorneys general from six states including Montana and Wyoming have argued in one of the lawsuits involving the stalled port that the case could impact a range of commodities, including grains and other fuels.

In a ruling Wednesday, U.S. District Judge Robert J. Bryan rejected a bid by Washington state to dismiss the case.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Port Olympia executive director is out
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1005529/port-of-olympia-executive-director-on-leave-officially-out/
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — The longtime executive director of the Port of Olympia who was placed on administrative leave is officially out.</p> <p>The Olympian reports the port commission unanimously approved an agreement with Ed Galligan that had him resign Thursday.</p> <p>Under the agreement, Commission President E.J. Zita says Galligan will be available to serve as a consultant as necessary.</p> <p>Other terms of the agreement were not released.</p>

	<p>When Galligan was placed on leave in April, commissioners said they wanted a change in leadership. Commissioner Joe Downing told The Olympian it wasn't because of some error by Galligan.</p> <p>Galligan's time at the port since late 2005 was marked by building projects on the Port Peninsula but also controversy over the shipment of fracking sand and military cargo.</p> <p>The port's airport director Rudy Rudolph will continue to oversee the port while a search is done for a new director.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 New Dept. of Licensing head appointed
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1005664/gov-inslee-appoints-new-head-of-department-of-licensing/
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — Gov. Jay Inslee has appointed Teresa Berntsen as head of the Washington Department of Licensing.</p> <p>Berntsen's appointment was announced Thursday. She replaces Pat Kohler, who is stepping down at the end of June. Some Latino and community groups had been calling for Kohler's removal following revelations in January that the agency was routinely sharing residents' personal information with immigration-enforcement authorities. But in an April 27 resignation letter, Kohler said the loss of her brother has caused her to reevaluate her priorities.</p> <p>Berntsen is currently the director of the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises. Previously, she served as deputy director of the Department of Licensing for more than four years. She also served as a policy adviser to former Gov. Chris Gregoire on statewide transportation issues.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 King Co. homeless population rises
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1005210/king-countys-homeless-population-continues-to-increase/
GIST	<p>The homeless population in King County increased again over the past year, and more than half are unsheltered.</p> <p>The latest point-in-time count from All Home on Jan. 26 found 469 more homeless people living in the county than in 2017. An estimated total of 12,112 people were homeless earlier this year.</p> <p>All Home is the county's homelessness coordinating agency.</p> <p>Additionally, there were more people living unsheltered during the homeless count this year than last year. People are considered living unsheltered even if they are in sanctioned camps, or vehicles.</p> <p>All Home notes there are more unsheltered people living in vehicles than previous years. On Jan. 26, there were an estimated 3,372 people living in vehicles; well over the 2,314 estimated in 2017.</p> <p>There were nearly as many people sleeping in vehicles as there were people sleeping in emergency shelters during the count, according to the report from All Home.</p> <p>The unsheltered population not living in vehicles, meanwhile, decreased.</p> <p>Of the 6,320 unsheltered population, 4,488 were living in Seattle at the time.</p> <p>Interim Director of All Home Kyra Zylstra told KIRO 7 that, compared to previous years, a 4 percent increase is progress.</p>

“It’s not the kind of progress we all want to see,” Zylstra told KIRO 7. “But our performance data shows that the resources that we are investing in are housing people faster.”

And some segments of the homeless population decreased significantly. The number of veterans experiencing homelessness decreased by 31 percent. And the number of homeless families with children decreased by 7 percent.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Seattle boasts housing homeless success
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1005629/2018-success-seattle-homeless/
GIST	<p>The City of Seattle is reporting a considerable increase in the number of people it has moved off the street and under a roof in one year. But not all the numbers are an improvement.</p> <p>“We’re encouraged by the increases in placing people in housing and in the investments to enhance shelters with more services,” said Human Services Department Interim Director Jason Johnson.</p> <p>The city is boasting new numbers comparing the first quarter of 2017 with the first quarter of 2018. A total of 3,030 households moved into permanent housing or maintained their housing in the first quarter of 2018. This is much higher than in 2017 — an increase of 1,241 households.</p> <p>The city also increased the rate at which it places people into permanent housing between the first quarters of 2017 and 2018.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seattle’s diversion program (primarily helps people avoid emergency shelters) placed 19 percent more people into permanent housing in early 2018 than in 2017. • The rapid rehousing program got 10 percent more people into permanent housing; it also had a success rate of 83 percent. Funding for this program went from \$4.3 million in 2017 to \$7.2 million in 2018. • Permanent supportive housing is mostly for chronically homeless people. It has had a success rate of 99 percent, helping people maintain housing or leave supportive housing. In the first quarter of 2017, it was 98 percent. Funding for this program went from \$9.3 million in 2017 to \$13.2 million in 2018. • Seattle also found out that enhanced shelters helped five times more people move into permanent housing than basic shelters. Enhanced shelters have extended hours with case management from social workers. Basic shelters placed people into housing at a rate of 3.8 percent in the first quarter of 2018. Enhanced shelters had a success rate of 20.5 percent during that same time. These enhanced shelters increased their rate of placement into permanent housing by 3.7 percent between 2017 and 2018. <p>Other Seattle homeless numbers</p> <p>Data from the first quarter of 2018 wasn’t all good news. Seattle’s seven tiny house villages provide spaces for more than 300 people every night. They are at capacity. The city was able to place 17 percent of households into permanent housing through the villages in the first quarter of 2018. This is a 1 percent decrease from the same quarter in 2017. Officials expect this rate to be on the rise with new investments in case management at the villages.</p> <p>Prevention programs also saw a decrease in exits to permanent housing. That rate went from 94 percent in the first quarter of 2017 to 89 percent in 2018. The city notes that this program takes 90 days to offer support services, so some data may be missing from the first quarter numbers.</p>

Seattle is slated to spend \$71 million toward homelessness in 2018. That money will go toward 155 contracts across 39 agencies to provide services to people experiencing homelessness.

“We are working with agencies every day to oversee the city’s public investments to help people experiencing homelessness,” Johnson said. “We compile quarterly data to help us understand how our investments are performing as part of a system of support for people.”

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HEADLINE	06/01 Today is National Donut Day
SOURCE	http://time.com/money/5295680/national-donut-day-2018-free-doughnuts/
GIST	<p>When is National Donut Day 2018? You’re in luck—it’s today, Friday, June 1. And as we’ve all come to expect, National Donut Day—first created by the Salvation Army before World War II—is loaded with free doughnut deals from coast to coast.</p> <p>Dunkin Donuts, Krispy Kreme Doughnuts, LaMar’s Donuts, Duck Donuts, and many other shops and convenience stores are giving away free doughnuts on June 1 to celebrate National Donut Day 2018—or National Doughnut Day 2018, if you prefer the original spelling of “doughnut.”</p> <p>Even Papa John’s is jumping on the National Donut Day free donut bandwagon, giving away orders of its brand new doughnut holes for free on Friday. Walmart has free doughnuts for all customers too.</p> <p>Here are all the places with free doughnuts on National Donut Day 2018, along with the details on how to get free doughnuts.</p> <p>Dunkin Donuts To take advantage of the National Donut Day 2018 deal at Dunkin Donuts, just purchase any beverage and you’ll get a free donut of your choice, all day long.</p> <p>Krispy Kreme Doughnuts Krispy Kreme is celebrating National Doughnut Day 2018 by giving every guest a free doughnut, no purchase necessary.</p> <p>Walmart Every Walmart location in the U.S. is giving out free doughnuts to customers on Friday for National Donut Day. Walmart says it expects to give away 1.2 million whole glazed doughnuts.</p> <p>LaMar’s Donuts At LaMar’s Donuts, everyone gets a free doughnut, no purchase required, on National Donut Day 2018.</p> <p>Duck Donuts Duck Donuts is giving away one free classic donut to every customer on Friday, June 1.</p> <p>Fractured Prune Doughnuts Customers at participating Fractured Prune Doughnuts locations get a free OC Sand Doughnut—honey-glazed, covered in cinnamon and sugar—on National Doughnut Day 2018.</p> <p>Honey Dew Donuts Purchase any beverage (medium size or larger) at Honey Dew Donuts on National Donut Day, and you’ll get a free S’More Donut.</p> <p>Papa John’s Yes, pizza seller Papa John’s is getting in on the action for National Donut Day 2018. Starting June 1, Papa John’s is adding doughnut holes to its menu. They are coated in cinnamon and sugar and caramel crème, and will normally cost \$4.99 for a 10-piece order—but on National Donut Day on Friday,</p>

	<p>customers get a free order of doughnut holes with any online pizza purchase.</p> <p>Cumberland Farms From 5 a.m. to 10 a.m. on Friday, June 1, customers at Cumberland Farms’ renovated convenience stores throughout the Northeast and Florida get a free doughnut with the purchase of any dispensed beverage—such as coffee or a fountain drink.</p> <p>Sugar Shack Donuts If you make any purchase on National Donut Day at the Washington, D.C.-area locations of Sugar Shack Donuts (in Arlington and Alexandria, Va., and the Shaw neighborhood in D.C.), you’ll get a special Donuts4Good promo card. It’s good for a free donut, and Sugar Shack encourages you to give it someone who has done a good deed and deserves a treat. Anyone wearing Sugar Shack gear on Friday, June 1, gets a free house donut as well.</p> <p>Factory Donuts The Philadelphia doughnut shop Factory Donuts is giving each customer not one but two free doughnuts on Friday, June 1.</p> <p>Edible Arrangements At 1,200 Edible stores worldwide, customers can get one of the chain’s fruit “donuts”—actually a cored Granny Smith apple covered in chocolate and other toppings—for free on National Donut Day 2018.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 Hawaii: heed evacuation or face arrest
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/science/2018/06/01/hawaii-volcano-prompts-new-warning-heed-evacuation-order-or-face-arrest.html
GIST	<p>As molten lava continued spewing from Hawaii’s Kilauea volcano Thursday, Hawaii County ordered all residents of a designated portion of the hard-hit Leilani Estates development to evacuate by Friday morning or face possible arrest.</p> <p>Big Island Mayor Harry Kim declared a roughly 17-block swath of the estates “off limits indefinitely” and gave residents 24 hours to get out by 12:06 p.m. local time Friday, Reuters reported.</p> <p>Those remaining in the mandatory evacuation area beyond the deadline “do so at their own risk, with the knowledge that emergency responders may not respond,” the Hawaii County Civil Defense Agency said in a statement.</p> <p>The mandatory evacuation zone lies within a slightly larger area that was already under a voluntary evacuation order and curfew, Reuters reported.</p> <p>The county agency also said anyone in violation of the order will be liable for any costs associated with rescue operations.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Leilani Estates residents west of the mandatory zone were “strongly encouraged to evacuate,” the county said.</p> <p>“You are at risk of being isolated due to possible lava inundation,” the civil defense agency warned earlier this week.</p> <p>The mandatory evacuation order “gives the county greater enforcement authority” and relieves first responders of risk during rescues, a spokesman for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), who is assisting the county, told Fox News, echoing what the Hawaii county agency said.</p> <p>“There are no plans to go into the restricted area after 12:06 p.m. Friday and search for anyone who might</p>

	<p>still be there,” he said. “But anyone found in the area after that time could be subject to arrest.”</p> <p>“Refusing to evacuate may put you, your family and first responders in danger,” the county agency added. “Heed warnings from Civil Defense officials and stay alert.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 EU, China vow to uphold Iran nuke deal
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/06/01/eu-china-vow-to-uphold-iran-nuclear-deal.html
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS – The European Union and China say they will do their utmost to keep afloat an international agreement to stop Iran developing nuclear weapons despite the U.S. abandoning the pact.</p> <p>Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Friday that "we will be unswerving in upholding it."</p> <p>Speaking alongside EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini, he said the agreement has been endorsed by the UN and that "every party has the duty to implement it."</p> <p>Mogherini, who helps oversee the implementation of the 2015 nuclear deal, praised China and said Beijing, the EU and other partners are working "in full coordination" to save the pact.</p> <p>President Donald Trump last month reneged on the agreement, saying it fails to stop Iran developing ballistic missiles or playing a damaging role in the Middle East.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 Hurricane season starts w/severe storms
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/06/01/severe-storms-flooding-heat-and-hurricane-season-starts-today.html
GIST	<p>The risk of strong to severe storms will fire up across the Northern and Central Plains moving into the Mid Mississippi Valley on Saturday. Large hail, damaging winds and isolated tornadoes will be possible.</p> <p>Wet weather will be in the forecast for quite a bit of the eastern third of the country. Flash flooding remains a concern over the Midatlantic where the ground is saturated and river levels are high.</p> <p>Meanwhile, dry hot, breezy weather will enhance the fire concerns over the southern Rockies and high plains. Temperatures could set records in many cities east of the Rockies.</p> <p>Hurricane Season officially begins today. NOAA is expecting an average to above average season.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Report: US oil output jumps to record
SOURCE	https://www.oilandgasinvestor.com/report-us-oil-output-jumps-record-high-march-1704031
GIST	<p>U.S. crude oil production jumped 215,000 barrels per day (bbl/d) to 10.47 million bbl/d in March, the highest on record, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) said in a monthly report on May 31.</p> <p>Production in Texas rose by 4% to almost 4.2 million bbl/d, a record high based on the data going back to 2005. The Permian Basin, which stretches across West Texas and eastern New Mexico, is the largest U.S. oil field.</p> <p>Output from North Dakota held around 1.2 million bbl/d, while output in the federal Gulf of Mexico declined 1.1% to 1.7 million bbl/d.</p>

	<p>The agency also revised February oil production down by 5,000 bbl/d to 10.26 million bbl/d.</p> <p>U.S. natural gas production in the Lower 48 states rose to an all-time high of 88.8 billion cubic feet per day (Bcf/d) in March, up from the prior record of 87.7 Bcf/d in February, according to EIA's 914 production report.</p> <p>Output in Texas, the nation's largest gas producer, increased 1.3% in March to 22.7 Bcf/d, the most since April 2016.</p> <p>In Pennsylvania, the second biggest gas producing state, production dipped to 16.4 Bcf/d in March, down 0.6% from February's record high of 16.5 Bcf/d. That compares with output of 14.8 Bcf/d in March 2017.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Ecuador: Assange can stay in embassy
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/media/2018/may/31/julian-assange-ecuador-president-lenin-moreno
GIST	<p>Lenín Moreno, the president of Ecuador, has said Julian Assange's asylum status in the country's London embassy is not under threat – provided he complies with the conditions of his stay and avoids voicing his political opinions on Twitter.</p> <p>However, in an interview with Deutsche Welle on Wednesday, Moreno said his government would “take a decision” if Assange didn't comply with the restrictions.</p> <p>“Let's not forget the conditions of his asylum prevent him from speaking about politics or intervening in the politics of other countries. That's why we cut his communication,” he said. Ecuador suspended Assange's communication's system in March.</p> <p>Moreno's statements come two weeks after an investigation by the Guardian and Focus Ecuador revealed the country had bankrolled a multimillion-dollar spy operation to protect and support Assange, employing an international security company and undercover agents to monitor his visitors, embassy staff and even the British police.</p> <p>Over more than five years, Ecuador put at least \$5m (£3.7m) into a secret intelligence budget that protected him while he had visits from Nigel Farage, members of European nationalist groups and individuals linked to the Kremlin.</p> <p>Earlier this month, Moreno withdrew additional security assigned to the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where the WikiLeaks founder has remained for almost six years.</p> <p>Moreno has previously described Assange's situation as “a stone in his shoe” and repeatedly hinted that he wants to remove the Australian from the country's London embassy.</p> <p>Assange had tweeted in support of the Catalan independence movement and challenged the UK's accusation that Russia was responsible for the poisoning of a Russian former double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter.</p> <p>“Liberty must be used with a lot of responsibility,” Moreno said, without confirming whether or not Assange's access to the internet would be restored.</p> <p>Rafael Correa, Moreno's predecessor who approved of the operation, defended the security measures as “routine and modest”.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 US ratchets up rhetoric South China Sea
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SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/31/politics/us-warning-south-china-sea/index.html
GIST	<p>Washington (CNN)The Pentagon on Thursday ratcheted up rhetoric about China's militarization of islands in the South China Sea, even as the Trump administration presses China for cooperation on North Korea.</p> <p>When asked by a reporter about the ability of the US to "blow apart" one of China's controversial man-made islands, Lt. Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, director of the Joint Staff, told reporters, "I would just tell you that the United States military has had a lot of experience in the Western Pacific taking down small islands."</p> <p>His comments come amid growing tension in the hotly contested region, as the US ramps up freedom of navigation operations in response to China's steady militarization of its artificial islands.</p> <p>The US Navy sailed two warships within 12 nautical miles of the disputed Parcel Islands in the past week, the first time it has used more than one vessel in the operations, which are meant to demonstrate the right of free passage in international waters.</p> <p>On Wednesday, Adm. Harry Harris, outgoing head of the US Indo-Pacific Command, said China was the US's "biggest long-term challenge" in the region. "Without focused involvement and engagement by the United States and our allies and partners China will realize its dream of hegemony in Asia," he said.</p> <p>The Chinese government has reacted furiously to the recent US statements. At her regular press conference on Thursday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said the US accusing China of militarizing the region was "like a thief crying, 'Stop thief!'."</p> <p>"Why does the US choose to sail every now and then close to Chinese South China Sea islands and reefs? What is the US trying to do?" she said.</p> <p>As one of the most senior officers in the Pentagon, McKenzie's words carry particular weight.</p> <p>He serves as a top official for Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and frequently is in meetings with both Dunford and US Defense Secretary James Mattis. On Thursday, McKenzie made clear the US military is "prepared" to "protect US and allied interests in the region."</p> <p>McKenzie said the United States had a lot of experience "taking down small islands that are isolated," referencing US military operations during World War II where thousands of US troops died as they fought their way across several islands in the Pacific.</p> <p>"So that's a core competency of the US military that we've done before; shouldn't read anything more into that than a simple statement of historical fact," he said.</p> <p>The United States regularly conducts freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea. During the latest operation, the US said a Chinese ship operated in an unprofessional manner close to the US Navy ships.</p> <p>McKenzie indicated the US would not back off, saying that "we will continue to conduct freedom of navigation operations as is allowed by international law. And we're going to continue to do the things that we're doing."</p> <p>Mattis said earlier this week that China had not lived up to its claim that it wasn't militarizing the area. "They have done exactly that, moving weaponry in that was never there before."</p> <p>US surveillance has shown the movement of Chinese anti-ship and anti-aircraft missiles onto their artificial islands during recent drills. And earlier this month, Chinese state media announced that a nuclear-capable Chinese bomber had landed on an island for the first time.</p> <p>Mattis also said the "steady drumbeat" of naval operations in the region would continue.</p>

	"We are also going to confront what we believe is out of step with international law, out of step with international tribunals that have spoken on the issue, and part of this is we maintain a very transparent military activity out in the Pacific," he said.
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HEADLINE	06/01 Lessons learned 2017 hurricane season
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/01/us/hurricane-season-5-things-learned-wxc/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Today marks the official beginning of the 2018 Atlantic hurricane season, which got off to an early start with Subtropical Storm Alberto making landfall in Florida on Monday.</p> <p>While we anxiously await what's in store in the 2018 season, which experts believe could be above normal, take a look back at five lessons from the record 2017 hurricane season in the Atlantic.</p> <p>Inland flooding is often the worst impact from a landfalling storm. Though top wind speeds get the headlines and determine the hurricane's "intensity" via the Saffir-Simpson hurricane scale, it is often flooding that causes the most death and destruction.</p> <p>According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, inland flooding accounts for more than 50% of hurricane-related deaths each year.</p> <p>The impacts often surprise residents because they can occur far from where a storm makes landfall and well after it has weakened.</p> <p>Hurricane Harvey became the most extreme example of the threat that inland flooding presents when it dumped unprecedented amounts of rain (up to 60 inches) in and around the Houston area after making landfall along the Texas coast in late August.</p> <p>Harvey's damage exceeded \$125 billion, according to NOAA, ranking second only to Hurricane Katrina; it displaced more than 30,000 residents and damaged or destroyed over 200,000 homes and businesses.</p> <p>Unfortunately, only about one-third of those losses were insured, according to Monica Ningen, head of property underwriting for the United States and Canada with the reinsurance company Swiss Re.</p> <p>"Many people were likely surprised by the fact that a lot of the damage came from flooding rather than wind damage," Ningen said. "This lack of awareness may be one of the reasons why 85% of American homeowners don't currently have flood insurance."</p> <p>Don't focus on the center of the cone. Hurricane Irma provided a valuable reminder of often-repeated advice from the National Hurricane Center: "Don't focus on the skinny black line" at the center of the the agency's forecast hurricane track.</p> <p>"The NHC forecast cone provides some information about where the center of the storm is likely to move based on our track forecast errors over the past five years," according to Michael Brennan, senior hurricane specialist at the National Hurricane Center.</p> <p>"The cone doesn't provide any information about impacts from storm surge, wind, rain or other hazards, which often occur well outside the area included in the cone," Brennan said.</p> <p>But many still focus on the center of the cone and the black line that connects the projected positions, basing their preparations and evacuations on only that information.</p> <p>When powerful Category 5 Hurricane Irma was approaching Florida in early September, the forecast path from three or four days out showed the center of a major hurricane tracking up the eastern coast of the</p>

state.

Initial evacuations included Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties on the eastern coast -- and a number of residents in those counties evacuated to the northern and western parts of the state.

But as the forecast evolved, the track shifted west, and it became evident Irma's center would track more up the western flank of Florida, prompting evacuation orders for Naples, Fort Myers and Tampa.

"During Irma, too much attention was paid to small changes in the official track forecast of the center as it shifted from the east coast to the west coast of Florida," Brennan recalled.

"Even 48 hours out, average track forecast errors are about 80 miles, and the southern Florida peninsula is only 50 or 60 miles wide, so everyone in southern Florida and the Florida Keys was at risk of seeing direct impacts from the core of a major hurricane."

Many on the west coast of Florida were surprised by the shifted track and were not prepared to evacuate. Evacuations were further complicated by the added traffic from those who had evacuated southeastern portions of the state and found themselves still in the path of the dangerous storm.

"That's why everyone under a hurricane or storm surge watch/warning needs to prepare and follow the advice of their local government officials, even if the exact track forecast doesn't go right over their area," Brennan advised.

Underdeveloped areas are far more vulnerable to a hurricane's impacts.

Hurricane Maria, which moved through the southern Caribbean and made a direct hit on Puerto Rico, "was comparable to Irma in its maximum wind damage, but also similar to Harvey in the feet of rain it dumped across Puerto Rico," according to NOAA.

But the widespread devastation it left in its wake and the long-lasting toll it took on the island's infrastructure were unparalleled elsewhere in the United States during the 2017 season.

"Maria essentially crippled the entire infrastructure system in Puerto Rico, including the island's power grid, its water, transportation and communications networks and its energy facilities," Ningen said.

"The poor suffer disproportionately when a disaster strikes," writes Marcelo Guigale, director of financial advisory and banking for the World Bank. "They are more exposed, more vulnerable, and less able to recover."

Even before the hurricane, Puerto Rico was mired in economic despair, having filed the largest municipal bankruptcy just months before the hurricane ravaged the island.

The socioeconomic hardships endured by Puerto Ricans meant they were unprepared for a disaster like Maria.

Ningen says the focus needs to be on avoiding damage (securing roofs and protecting and maintaining infrastructure) as well as mitigating the impact (having insurance and financial reserves to cover post-storm efforts).

Though power returned to most customers in Florida a couple of days after Irma, it took months for Puerto Rico after Maria. In fact, six months after Maria hit, there were still over 100,000 Puerto Ricans in the dark.

Just because you get hit by one storm doesn't mean you won't get hit again.

If there was one theme to the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season, it might be "Oh, no, not again!"

Starting with Harvey in late August and lasting through Nate in October, hurricanes affected land

seemingly nonstop. And several places in the Caribbean and US Gulf Coast had to deal with more than one.

The US and British Virgin Islands endured back-to-back Category 5 hurricanes in Irma and Maria within two weeks of each other.

The tiny Caribbean island of Barbuda, part of the nation of Antigua and Barbuda, was devastated by Hurricane Irma when it was at peak intensity of 185 miles per hour and then had to be completely evacuated only four days later as Hurricane Jose approached.

It was the first time the island had been without people in over 300 years, said the country's US ambassador, Ronald Sanders.

Building codes matter.

Floridians who lived through Hurricane Andrew in 1992 have horrible memories of surviving one of the strongest storms ever to hit South Florida, which left parts of the state devastated. There are now stricter building codes, such as prohibiting particle board and requiring fasteners on roofs.

"For the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons, we found that homes built to code in Florida experienced up to 70% lower wind losses compared to homes not built to code," said James Done, a project scientist with the National Center for Atmospheric Research's Mesoscale & Microscale Meteorology Laboratory.

Florida has some of the strictest building codes in the state, costing home builders an extra 45%, but the peace of mind may be worth it.

Take Irma: The category 4 storm was one of the most powerful Atlantic hurricanes on record. It blew across the Florida Keys with 126-mph sustained winds before slamming into Marco Island with 111-mph sustained winds. "We had flood experts and underwriters on the ground after the events, and it was striking to see images of how much better the newer buildings, built with stricter codes, fared," Ningen said.

Certain homes were total losses, while others a block away look untouched, roofs perfectly intact.

"Strong and well-enforced building codes are even more important, and maybe even more cost-effective, in this new era of stronger hurricanes," Done said.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Deadly storms Mid-Atlantic region
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/deadly-storm-north-carolina-virginia-flash-flooding-severe-weather-latest-forecast-today-2018-05-31/
GIST	<p>CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. -- At least three people are dead as remnants of Subtropical Storm Alberto, the first named storm of the season, pounds the mid-Atlantic Thursday night with flash floods possible. Two people were killed Wednesday by a mudslide in North Carolina while another died in a flood in central Virginia.</p> <p>Search and rescue teams from across Virginia spent the day combing an area outside of Charlottesville looking for a couple who were swept away during Wednesday night's violent storm.</p> <p>"There is one vehicle still unaccounted for and they haven't found it down the creek anywhere yet," said Captain Allen Carwile of the Lynchburg Fire Department.</p> <p>Search-and-rescue teams think that the car that's missing would have been swept off of a road into Ivy Creek. Crews are going step by step with sticks checking piles of debris. They are looking for any signs of the two people that were believed to be inside the missing car.</p>

	<p>CBS News has learned that 6 to 10 inches of rain came down very fast and created a flash flood and a lot of water inundated the road. The debris is waist high and well above the creek bed. It was a torrent of water that would have come on in a flash.</p> <p>Authorities have declared a local emergency after powerful flood waters washed out large portions of county roads.</p> <p>Police in Boone, North Carolina, say heavy rains caused a hillside to give way causing a massive mudslide which led to a gas explosion leaving one house in splinters. Two people were killed.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 Italy forms populist gov; first for Europe
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/italy-gets-western-europe-s-1st-populist-government-n879111
GIST	<p>MILAN — Italy's anti-establishment 5-Star Movement and the right-wing League succeeded Thursday in forming western Europe's first populist government, which will be headed by a political novice.</p> <p>League leader Matteo Salvini and 5-Star leader Luigi Di Maio agreed to shuffle the proposed roster of government ministers amid a financial market scare. They moved Paolo Savona, the 81-year-old euroskeptic economist vetoed by Italy's president from overseeing the economy ministry, to a European affairs Cabinet post. Savona had said previously that Italy should have a contingency plan to abandon the euro.</p> <p>After the fits, starts and financial turbulence of recent days, the realization of a 5-Star-League coalition government put its populist posture on full display in Salvini's first public remarks. He returned from Rome to address a crowd of supporters in his northern home region of Lombardy.</p> <p>"I want to make Italy a protagonist in Europe again. With good manners and without creating confusion. But I am fed up of governments with the hat in their hand," Salvini said to cheers. "We are second to no one."</p> <p>Just a short time earlier, President Sergio Mattarella's office announced that the new premier, University of Florence law professor Giuseppe Conte, and his ministers would be sworn in Friday afternoon.</p> <p>It was a stunning comeback from Sunday evening, when Conte — the premier-designate at the time — left a meeting with Mattarella empty-handed and returned to his teaching job.</p> <p>Emerging from a similar meeting with a different ending Thursday night, Conte read off his Cabinet list and pledged that "we will work with determination to improve the quality of life of all Italians."</p> <p>The Cabinet includes Di Maio— architect of the government's proposed basic income for struggling Italians — as welfare minister and Salvini — who has pledged to expel hundreds of thousands of migrants — as interior minister.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 Vegas casino workers prepare for strike
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/possible-las-vegas-casino-workers-strike-looms-contracts-set-expire-n879086
GIST	<p>The labor contracts of 50,000 workers at Las Vegas' Strip and downtown casinos expired at midnight Thursday, raising the prospect of a strike.</p> <p>They include bartenders, food and cocktail servers, porters and cooks at 34 casino resorts who are members of the Culinary Union. By 4:30 a.m. ET on Friday, the union had not called for an actual</p>

walkout.

Last week, 25,000 unionized workers voted 99 percent in favor of authorizing a strike should their contracts expire.

Caesars Entertainment Corporation and MGM Resorts International — as well as other properties including Caesars Palace, the Bellagio, the MGM Grand, Excalibur and Luxor — are all potentially affected.

If a large-scale strike is called, it would be the first in more than three decades.

The Culinary Union said in a statement early Friday that hospitality workers were now "preparing for a citywide strike" and planned to begin making "thousands of strike picket signs."

The union added that negotiations were ongoing with Caesars Entertainment regarding a new contract.

On Thursday, union spokeswoman Bethany Khan said no more meetings had been scheduled with MGM.

MGM Resorts International said in a statement Thursday that "we are confident that we can resolve the outstanding contract issues and come to an agreement that works for all sides."

Caesars Entertainment issued a similar statement saying that it "continues to meet with the Culinary Union to finalize a new 5-year contract," and "we are confident that we will achieve a tentative agreement without a work stoppage."

The union has failed to come to terms with management over a new contract, citing grievances like wages, training, sexual harassment by guests, and the fear of various positions being replaced by robots or automation.

They've asked MGM and Caesars for annual raises of about 4 percent for the next five years while the casinos have countered with 2.7 to 2.8 percent, documents released by the union say.

Around 24,000 workers are affected under the MGM contract and 12,000 are under the Caesars contract, the union said.

The average hourly wage of Las Vegas Strip workers is \$23, including benefits such as premium-free health care, a pension and a 401(k) retirement savings plan, and \$20,000 down-payment assistance for first-time homebuyers.

Downtown casino and resort properties could be affected as well. The union says the expiring contracts affect workers at the Golden Nugget, the D, Binion's and El Cortez, among others.

The last time there was a city-wide strike involving casino workers was in 1984. That strike spanned 67 days. During that time, union members lost an estimated \$75 million in wages and benefits, while the city lost a similar amount in tourism revenue, the Associated Press reported. Millions more were lost in gambling income.

The Culinary Union released an analysis from UNITE HERE Gaming Research on Wednesday that estimated a one-month strike could cost MGM Resorts International and Caesars Entertainment Corporation over \$300 million in operating profits.

Gambling is big business in Las Vegas. Around 42 million people are estimated to have visited the city in 2017, according to the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority. The authority says spending sourced to those 42 million visitors was estimated at \$34.8 billion that same year.

In Clark County, where Las Vegas is located, gaming revenue was around \$9.5 billion in fiscal year 2017,

	<p>with more than \$6 billion of that coming from the Las Vegas Strip, according to a Nevada Gaming Control Board report released in January (those numbers are before expenses are taken into account).</p> <p>And the Las Vegas Golden Knights hockey team, which are in the Stanley Cup playoffs in their first year, have home games scheduled in Las Vegas against the Washington Capitals beginning June 7, adding to the potential loss in tourist and casino revenue.</p> <p>The union has called on visitors to not patronize hotels and casinos if a strike is called, and are urging people not to cross picket lines if there is a labor action.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Hawaii workers bulldoze escape path
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/05/31/hawaii-volcano-bulldozing-emergency-evacuation-route-lava/659222002/
GIST	<p>Contractors on Hawaii's Big Island have begun bulldozing an emergency evacuation route through an old lava flow over fears the ongoing eruption could trap thousands of people by destroying existing roads.</p> <p>Highlighting the urgency, authorities on Thursday morning called for new evacuations of the Vacationland coastal area as lava approached, warning of possible inundation.</p> <p>To create the new evacuation route, workers are removing cold, hardened lava from a section of Chain of Craters road, which runs from the coast up the flank of the volcano Kilauea through Volcanoes National Park. The road – initially built in 1965 – has been repeatedly covered by lava flows, including the ones that destroyed the town of Kalapana in 1990.</p> <p>Re-opening the road would give residents in the town of Pahoa, the Leilani Estates and coastal areas a new escape route if the current flow continues to block and threaten roads. The primary escape routes are to the northeast. The new road would provide a southwestern evacuation route.</p> <p>The Hawaii Department of Transportation and Volcanoes National Park said in a joint statement that rough grading and other reconstruction efforts to make the road passable are expected to take two weeks or less.</p> <p>"The route is for evacuation purposes only, and will not be an alternate route for travel to and from the Kalapana area," the statement said.</p> <p>The kind of hardened lava left by Kilauea's flows is relatively easy to remove with heavy equipment, and officials say contractors started work on Wednesday. This section of road is already mostly passable except for a short section blocked by lava flows in 2015 and 2016.</p> <p>The current lava flows east of Pahoa have forced the evacuation of thousands of residents and destroyed close to 100 structures, including at least 41 homes. Residents say they expect the toll to be far higher when authorities can properly inspect the area.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Claim: Parkland cops stymied paramedics
SOURCE	http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/broward/article212296004.html
GIST	<p>During the chaos of the Parkland school shooting, paramedics from Coral Springs-Parkland Fire Department were desperate to go inside the building where students were wounded and dying.</p> <p>Michael McNally, deputy chief for Coral Springs fire-rescue, asked six times for permission to send in specialized teams of police officers and paramedics, according to an incident report he filed after the Feb.</p>

14 Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting that left 17 people dead.

But every time McNally asked to deploy the two Rescue Task Force teams — each made up of three paramedics and three to four law enforcement officers — the Broward Sheriff's Office captain in charge of the scene, Jan Jordan, said no.

"The [BSO] incident commander advised me, 'She would have to check,' " McNally wrote in the report released Thursday by Coral Springs. "After several minutes, I requested once again the need to deploy RTF elements into the scene to ... initiate treatment as soon as possible. Once again, the incident commander expressed that she 'would have to check before approving this request.' "

Even after the shooter had been arrested, the answer remained the same.

It's not known whether paramedics, who arrived at Stoneman Douglas within minutes of the shooting, could have saved lives. Thirty-four people had been shot inside the school's freshman building. Gunshot wound victims can bleed out quickly, meaning fast action is necessary. The special RTF teams allow paramedics to treat victims under the protection of police officers in situations where a shooter has been pinned down or fled but has not necessarily been captured.

SWAT medics went in instead, although it's not clear exactly how many or when.

The RTFs were denied entry, a command decision first reported by Fox News, because authorities weren't sure where shooter Nikolas Cruz was and didn't want to put the paramedics in danger. At one point, commanders were relying on school security footage that showed Cruz still in the freshman building. But the footage was — unknown to them — running on a 20-minute delay. Cruz had actually fled roughly six minutes after opening fire at 2:21 p.m.

"I'm not saying the [RTFs] would have made a difference and I'm not saying they wouldn't have made a difference, but it would have been more medics and more hands helping out," Coral Springs Fire Chief Frank Babinec said in an interview Thursday.

Veda Coleman-Wright, a spokeswoman for BSO, said in an email Thursday evening that medics are only sent in "after it has been confirmed the threat is mitigated."

The video confusion was one of many mistakes that hampered law enforcement's response to the worst school shooting in Florida history.

Instead of having extra paramedics in the building, law enforcement officers brought injured victims — sometimes on golf carts — to a medical staging area hastily assembled nearby. Then they were sent to hospitals. Fifteen of the 17 mortally wounded victims died at the school. Another 17 people survived their injuries.

In his report, McNally, who had been ordered to act as a liaison between Coral Springs fire command and BSO, also claimed BSO's command post was severely dysfunctional. Communication was difficult, McNally said, because he often could not locate Jordan, BSO's district commander for Parkland.

"The command post was inundated with too many people and made it impossible to establish and function," McNally wrote, echoing criticisms of the disorganization and lack of a unified command structure that plagued BSO's response to a deadly shooting at the Fort-Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport last year.

At least three additional fire-rescue incident reports released Thursday by Coral Springs confirmed that BSO had denied requests to send in the rescue teams. Coral Springs provides fire service in the city of Parkland. BSO provides law enforcement.

In his report, McNally acknowledged that RTF teams may not have helped in the end — but he said

Jordan couldn't have realized that when she repeatedly denied his requests.

"Later, it was determined that the RTF element may not have aided in any additional care to patients," McNally wrote. "However, this information was not known at the time of the requests."

BSO Sheriff Scott Israel has faced criticism for his leadership since the shooting. He handpicked Jordan, a former colleague from the Fort Lauderdale Police Department, to head the relatively trouble-free Parkland district.

As criticism of the response to the Parkland massacre has intensified, Coral Springs and BSO have pointed fingers at each other. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement is investigating the overall law enforcement performance.

The decision by Jordan to keep the paramedics sidelined is not the only criticism of her that day. At least four BSO deputies were on campus as Cruz was still firing, but they said they were unable to figure out where the shooting was happening, even as an unarmed school security guard and Coral Springs police officers rushed toward the building. When Jordan arrived on scene, her only recorded command was for deputies to form a perimeter around the school, although BSO says that's because her radio failed as the county's communications system overloaded.

Medical air rescue was also denied because Cruz, who would be arrested off campus more than an hour after the shooting began, had not yet been captured.

After Cruz's arrest off campus at 3:40 p.m. — when it would have been safe for RTFs to operate — McNally said he again asked Jordan to deploy the special teams. Again, she refused.

Babinec, the Coral Springs chief, said by that time all patients had been treated so there would have been nothing for the teams to do.

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HEADLINE	06/01 Indonesia Merapi volcano erupts
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/indonesias-merapi-volcano-ejects-towering-column-ash-55577736?
GIST	<p>Indonesia's Mount Merapi shot a towering plume of ash about 6 kilometers (4 miles) high Friday in an eruption authorities said lasted two minutes.</p> <p>The National Disaster Mitigation Agency said the volcano's alert status, raised last month from the lowest level, is unchanged and a 3-kilometer (1.8-mile) no-go zone around the crater remains in force.</p> <p>It said the eruption at 8.20 a.m. caused no panic and nearby Adi Sucipto Yogyakarta International Airport is still open to flights.</p> <p>The mountain is about 30 kilometers (18 miles) from center of Yogyakarta city on the densely populated island of Java.</p> <p>About a quarter million people live within a 10-kilometer (6-mile) radius of the volcano.</p> <p>Merapi's last major eruption in 2010 killed 347 people.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Oregon officials extend water alert
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/oregon-officials-extend-water-alert-capital-city-55571379

GIST	<p>The National Guard will hand out free water to residents who can't drink tap water contaminated by an algae bloom in the Salem, Oregon, area, and state law enforcement authorities are looking into claims of price gouging after officials extended an emergency drinking water advisory.</p> <p>Gov. Kate Brown's office said Thursday the water will be distributed to people at 10 locations in the state's capital and Stayton because of toxins created by a bloom at Detroit Lake, a municipal reservoir.</p> <p>Officials had earlier warned young children and people with compromised immune systems against drinking tap water in the area. At a press conference Thursday, Salem water quality supervisor Lacey Goeres-Priest said a best-case scenario would see the advisory lifted no earlier than after collecting safe water samples both Friday and Saturday.</p> <p>"This is a living thing," Powers said, referring to the algae that creates the toxins. "We're not going to speculate as to whether it's going to get better or get worse."</p> <p>State law enforcement authorities are also looking into claims of price gouging on bottled water in the area, said Kristina Edmunson, a spokeswoman for the Oregon Department of Justice. Officials have received more than a dozen complaints so far and expect more as consumers become aware they can report the incidents.</p> <p>Alan Torga, of Salem, was one person who complained after he said employees at a supermarket asked his mother for \$25 for a case of 36 bottles of water.</p> <p>"She picked up on it and called me," Torga said, adding that he told his mother not to pay the price. Later, at another supermarket, she saw employees selling gallons of water for about \$13, he added. "It's really unfortunate that people are getting gouged like this."</p> <p>Brown declared a localized state of emergency in part to empower the attorney general to look into the complaints, said Bryan Hockaday, a spokesman for the governor.</p> <p>The developments follow earlier confusion generated when officials used a wireless alert system to blast a cryptic warning Tuesday to "Prepare for Action" onto cellphones around the city, referring only to a "Civil Emergency." Officials blamed the truncated message on a computer glitch that cut off crucial information: The alert was only for a limited water advisory.</p> <p>An update was issued about 30 minutes after the first alert, but shelves at many local grocery stores were stripped bare of bottled water within hours, and residents relayed stories of anxiously waiting to determine exactly what kind of civil emergency they faced.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Puerto Rico: up to 2mo. to restore power
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/official-months-restore-power-puerto-rico-55565003?
GIST	<p>It could take up to another two months to fully restore power in Puerto Rico as crews across the U.S. territory prepare to strengthen its electrical grid amid a new hurricane season, the power company director told The Associated Press on Thursday.</p> <p>Walter Higgins, the new CEO of Puerto Rico's Electric Power Authority, said the company just awarded a \$500 million contract to Florida-based MasTec to help with power restoration efforts and plans to build a better, more efficient grid. Another \$900 million contract was recently awarded to Cobra Energy, and a third contract is still being finalized, he said.</p> <p>"We all wish we were further along," he said of efforts to restore power to the more than 11,000 customers who remain in the dark more than eight months after Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico as a Category 4</p>

	<p>storm.</p> <p>Higgins estimated it could take \$5 billion to \$8 billion to strengthen the grid and said the islands of Vieques and Culebra would be first places where the grid would be built to modern standards, starting within four months. This would include installing new poles, wires and transformers as well as smart meters and renewable power sources for an estimated \$150 million to \$160 million.</p> <p>He said it will take years to modernize and strengthen Puerto Rico's electrical grid, and that it's too early to say what will happen if and when the power company or its operations are privatized. The island's Senate approved a bill late Wednesday that would allow for the privatization of assets of the Electric Power Authority, which carries \$9 billion in public debt and relies on infrastructure nearly three times older the industry average. The bill has not yet been signed by the governor.</p> <p>"The Senate is starting to modernize Puerto Rico's electrical system, a process that should have started years ago," said opposition Sen. Eduardo Bhatia.</p> <p>Higgins said he feels it would be best to privatize the generation of energy and then award one concession for transmission and distribution. If a company were to simply buy the Electric Power Authority, the federal government has the right to demand it be repaid for the more than \$3.8 billion it has invested so far in reconstruction efforts, he said, adding that the U.S. government has agreed to pay for all emergency power restoration efforts for another three months.</p> <p>In addition, private utilities cannot get federal aid in the wake of a natural disaster, and if a company were unable to deal with storm-related losses, it could claim bankruptcy, Higgins warned.</p> <p>"Puerto Rico was lucky that with this disaster, it was able to get the aid," he said. "This is working out both opportunistically and financially. ... If you're going to have to have this crisis, this is probably the way it should happen. I hate to say that."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Israel to invest in neglected neighborhoods
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/israel-invest-neglected-palestinian-areas-jerusalem-55566263?
GIST	<p>The Israeli government on Thursday unveiled what it billed as a groundbreaking program to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in long-neglected Palestinian neighborhoods of east Jerusalem.</p> <p>The "Leading Change" program aims to reduce the huge social gaps between the Palestinian neighborhoods and the overwhelmingly Jewish western part of the city. Palestinian neighborhoods suffer from poor infrastructure, neglect and subpar public services, and nearly 80 percent of the city's Palestinian families live in poverty.</p> <p>The program will invest 2 billion shekels, or \$560 million, in three core areas: education, infrastructure and helping Palestinian women enter the work force. The money will be spent on a variety of programs, including nine pilot projects, in the coming five years, with the aim of attracting further government and private investment down the road.</p> <p>Various government ministries, along with the city of Jerusalem, will carry out the program, which was launched at a ceremony at President Reuven Rivlin's official residence on Thursday.</p> <p>Rivlin, a proponent of coexistence, praised what he called "the most comprehensive attempt by the government to date to narrow the gaps and to develop the economy" of east Jerusalem.</p> <p>He said east Jerusalem has experienced "lost generations" over the decades. "I very much hope that the near future will ensure hope for change, and ensure that we not give up on future generations."</p>

	Israel captured east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war and annexed the area in a move that is not internationally recognized. Israel considers east Jerusalem an inseparable part of its capital, while the Palestinians seek the area as the capital of a future state.
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HEADLINE	05/31 NKorea complains of 'US hegemonism'
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russia-foreign-minister-arrives-talks-north-korea-55552209?
GIST	<p>North Korean leader Kim Jong Un complained of "U.S. hegemonism" to Russia's visiting foreign minister on Thursday, as one of his top lieutenants was in New York trying to pave the way for a summit with President Donald Trump.</p> <p>Kim told Sergey Lavrov that he hopes to boost cooperation with Russia, which has remained largely on the sidelines in recent months as Kim has reached out diplomatically to the United States as well as to South Korea and China.</p> <p>"As we move to adjust to the political situation in the face of U.S. hegemonism, I am willing to exchange detailed and in-depth opinions with your leadership and hope to do so moving forward," Kim told Lavrov.</p> <p>Kim has previously made harsher comments and even threatened to launch nuclear attacks on the United States numerous times. But his comments Thursday come at a sensitive moment, when a senior North Korean official was in New York for talks with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on the planned summit.</p> <p>After his meeting with North Korean senior envoy Kim Yong Chol, Pompeo said "real progress" has been made in the last three days toward setting the conditions needed for Trump and Kim Jong Un to have a successful summit in Singapore. Still, Pompeo said he doesn't yet know whether the meeting will proceed on the announced date of June 12 and that he believes North Korea's leaders are contemplating a different path forward that would allow their nation to more fully integrate into the international community.</p> <p>Kim Yong Chol, the highest-level North Korean official to visit the United States in 18 years, plans to travel to Washington to convey a personal letter by Kim Jong Un to Trump.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 UN, Myanmar reach agreement 'next step'
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/agencies-agree-return-rohingya-myanmar-55560864?
GIST	<p>Myanmar and the United Nations agreed to take steps to create conditions for the safe return of about 700,000 Rohingya Muslims who have fled military-led violence into Bangladesh.</p> <p>The agreement announced by the government and two U.N. agencies on Thursday calls for a framework of cooperation that will lead to the "voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable" repatriation of Rohingya refugees "to their places of origin or of their choosing."</p> <p>The U.N. refugee agency said that the conditions for voluntary return are not conducive yet. The memorandum of understanding — which is expected to be signed next week — "is the first and necessary step to support the government's efforts to change that situation and is also intended to support recovery and resilience-based development for the benefit of all communities living in Rakhine state," UNHCR said in a statement.</p> <p>Myanmar and Bangladesh agreed in November to begin repatriating the Rohingya, but the refugees</p>

expressed concern that they would be forced to return and would face unsafe conditions in Myanmar if the process is not monitored by international aid groups.

The government said in a statement that it initialed the agreement with the U.N. Development Program and UNHCR for their assistance so that verified displaced people "can return voluntarily in safety and dignity."

The U.N. said the agreement also provides for the two agencies to be given access to western Rakhine state, where most of the violence against the Rohingya has occurred since August.

It said that will allow the refugee agency to assess the situation, carry out protection activities, and provide information to refugees about conditions in their home areas so that they can better decide whether they want to return.

Myanmar's security forces have been accused of rape, killing, torture and the burning of Rohingya homes. The United Nations and the United States have described the army crackdown as "ethnic cleansing." The government has denied the accusations, instead blaming the violence on Rohingya insurgents who attacked security posts that triggered the reprisals and the latest exodus of the population that has long been denied citizenship and other basic rights.

The government of predominantly-Buddhist Myanmar says Rohingya are illegal migrants from Bangladesh, even though some have lived in the country for generations.

Myanmar has said so far it will only allow refugees with identity documents — which most Rohingya lack — to return.

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HEADLINE	06/01 South Sudan faces UN arms embargo
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/vote-sanctions-south-sudan-55562836?
GIST	<p>The U.N. Security Council adopted a U.S.-sponsored resolution Thursday that threatens an arms embargo on South Sudan and sanctions against six people including the country's defense chief if fighting doesn't stop and a political agreement reached.</p> <p>The resolution received just the minimum 9 "yes" votes, with six countries abstaining: Russia, China, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Equatorial Guinea and Ethiopia.</p> <p>The resolution asks Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to report by June 30 on whether fighting is taking place and "a viable political agreement" has been reached.</p> <p>If he reports fighting or lack of an agreement, it says the Security Council will consider imposing an arms embargo or sanctions against the six officials — or both measures within five days.</p> <p>There were high hopes that South Sudan would have peace and stability after its independence from neighboring Sudan in 2011. But the country plunged into ethnic violence in December 2013 when forces loyal to President Salva Kiir, a Dinka, started battling those loyal to Riek Machar, his former vice president who is a Nuer.</p> <p>A peace deal signed in August 2015 didn't stop the fighting, and a cessation of hostilities agreement this past Dec. 24 was broken within hours.</p> <p>The African Union's eight-nation Intergovernmental Authority for Development, which is holding a summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, has been trying to revive the failed peace agreement.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 Rival Koreas resume peace talks
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/rival-koreas-resuming-high-level-peace-talks-55575817?
GIST	<p>North and South Korea on Friday resumed senior-level peace talks Seoul sees as an important step in building trust with Pyongyang amid a U.S.-led diplomatic push to persuade the North to give up its nuclear weapons.</p> <p>The meeting at the inter-Korean border village of Panmunjom follows a meeting in New York between U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and senior North Korean envoy Kim Yong Chol where they discussed a potential summit between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. American delegations are also meeting with North Koreans in Panmunjom and Singapore as part of efforts to confirm the summit that may take place on June 12 in Singapore.</p> <p>South Korea's Unification Ministry said the Korean senior officials during the morning session of their meeting exchanged views on setting up a liaison office in the North Korean border town of Kaesong and arranging a joint event to commemorate the "June 15 Declaration" for peace adopted after the first inter-Korean summit in 2000. The North said agreed that the liaison office should be established as quickly as possible and proposed the event celebrating the June 15 Declaration to be held in the South, the ministry said.</p> <p>South Korea also proposed military talks on reducing tensions across their heavily armed border and Red Cross talks to resume reunions of families separated by the 1950-53 Korean War, the ministry said. There could also be discussions about fielding combined teams in some sports at the Asian Games in August.</p> <p>South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who met with Kim Jong Un twice in the past two months, has said progress in inter-Korean reconciliation will be a crucial part of international efforts to resolve the nuclear standoff with North Korea because Pyongyang wouldn't give up its nuclear program unless it feels its security is assured.</p> <p>Ri Son Gwon, chairman of the North's agency that deals with inter-Korean affairs, told Cho at the start of the meeting that the rivals should work on building "trust and consideration for each other" to carry out the agreements of the recent inter-Korean summits.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Female truckers sue long-haul company
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/sexual-harassment-lawsuit-long-haul-trucking-company-age/story?id=55542493
GIST	<p>"Jane" thought driving a truck would be her ticket into the middle class. She had been working two full-time jobs – one at the local McDonald's, the other as a housekeeper in a hotel – but money was still tight.</p> <p>"I got so tired of it," she said. "I was always going. I'd get maybe an hour's sleep on the bus and be at the next job."</p> <p>She decided she was ready for a change, so she took a job as a driver at CRST, Expedited Inc., one of the largest team trucking companies in the country with more than 3,500 drivers and average revenues of \$1.5 billion per year, where she would receive a bigger salary, full benefits and paid vacations.</p> <p>But Jane is a minority within the male-dominated trucking industry. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, only 6 percent of the nation's 3.5 million truck drivers are women, and CRST drivers work in teams, meaning there are two drivers in each cab with bunk beds to sleep in. Teams can cover more ground in a shorter period of time -- 1,100 miles in 24 hours – because the drivers take turns driving the truck, reducing the number of stops and breaks.</p>

In June 2017, Jane said she had to fend off unwanted sexual advances from another driver who entered her truck while she was parked at the CRST terminal in Riverside, Calif. “He went and closed the curtain and started grabbing on me, trying to kiss on me,” said Jane, whose name has been changed to protect her identity. “Pulled off my clothes. Like, a constant battle of no, no, get off me, no.”

She filed a report with CRST human resources and received a follow-up letter from an employee relations representative. According to the letter, CRST “conducted an investigation” and took “appropriate action.” Jane said she does not know if the other driver was disciplined.

“Somebody I went to school with as well, they said, yeah, they see him on the roads,” Jane told ABC News. “It’s always a worry of mine that I will run into him.”

Jane soon learned that she wasn’t alone. CRST has faced allegations of widespread sexual harassment for years. In addition to a case brought by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 2007 which was dismissed, three women filed a lawsuit in October 2015, alleging systemic gender discrimination, including “hostile work environment harassment based on sex; and retaliation for complaining about harassment in the workplace.”

On March 30, 2017, the judge in the case ruled that the case could move forward as a class action lawsuit.

According to Joshua Friedman, lead attorney in the case, between 2015 and 2017, nearly 300 women employed or formerly employed by CRST also filed complaints with the company, alleging a range of offenses, from propositions for sex, to allegations of assault and rape. At CRST, new drivers are required to pair with a trainer, also known as a lead driver, and go out on the road for 28 days of driving instruction. The trainer’s recommendation and documentation influence whether or not a trainee passes and becomes a CRST driver. Critics say this creates a vulnerability for female trainees, as male trainers have enormous power in determining if they are able to start careers in trucking. Trainers can also damage the women’s financial stability, as trainees who do not pass and enter an eight month employment contract often have to refund the company the cost of training.

“One of the most common complaints is from women trainees, who make up the overwhelming majority of the class, who were made to understand that their passage--that is being able to move on to be drivers and receive actual pay--was dependent on providing sexual favors. That could be either explicit or implicit,” said Friedman. “Another common form of sexual harassment was using very vulgar sexual speech...occasionally going so far as to say this is what I’d like to do to you or this is what I am going to do you.”

The company, in its answer in the lawsuit, denies wrongdoing. In a letter to ABC News, David Rusch, CEO of CRST, refutes Friedman’s claims that the company refused to believe accusers unless there was a witness to the alleged misconduct.

“It is not and has never been CRST’s policy to require a witness or an admission in order to corroborate an allegation of sexual harassment,” Rusch defended his company’s handling of sexual harassment complaints. Rusch claimed that even when a complaint is not corroborated, the alleged harasser is addressed, retrained on the company’s sexual harassment policy, and barred from driving with women.

Rusch detailed new policies to help women who have felt threatened. According to him, since the lawsuit has been filed, CRST has added personnel to its investigative staff and sought feedback from drivers and industry experts. Addressing concerns that women who leave their truck due to harassment face financial ramifications, Rusch wrote, “CRST implemented a new category of paid leave especially for employees who complain of sexual harassment.”

Friedman said these actions are not enough. He encouraged CRST’s clients, some of the largest retailers in the country, to hold the company accountable.

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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	05/31 How states respond to cyber threats
SOURCE	https://gcn.com/articles/2018/05/31/state-cybersecurity-approaches.aspx
GIST	<p>What: "Cybersecurity for the States: Lessons from Across America," a report from New America</p> <p>Why: With their responsibility to protect databases full of citizens' personal information, secure critical infrastructure, support local government and train the next generation of workers, states must be "laser focused" on information technology and cybersecurity.</p> <p>Findings: States are responding to the cybersecurity threat in a number of ways. The report highlights three mature, scalable state programs that demonstrate different approaches toward cybersecurity.</p> <p>Arizona is using a community approach. It has partnered with the Arizona Cyber Threat Response Alliance to facilitate cyber threat information sharing. The partnership with ACTRA acts as a buffer between the state and the private sector that encourages participation and "engenders faith in the anonymity and effective dissemination of information," the authors said.</p> <p>New Jersey has applied a bureaucratic superstructure approach. Its New Jersey Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Cell is a central operations center that coordinates cybersecurity monitoring and incident response services with internal and external stakeholders. The shared services model has increased the breadth and quality of monitoring services, expanded information sharing and offered state and external partners a single point of contact for cyber concerns.</p> <p>Washington uses a multidisciplinary model that extends cybersecurity responsibility beyond the IT offices to state-based emergency management and military departments. The state's use of the National Guard to improve the defensive posture of critical infrastructure has also contributed to broader avenues for information sharing prior to incidents.</p>
Return to Top	<i>Read the full report here.</i>

HEADLINE	05/31 Atlanta denies FOIA access to hack files
SOURCE	http://www.cbs46.com/story/38319989/atlanta-officials-deny-requests-for-records-amid-cyber-attack
GIST	<p>ATLANTA (CBS46) - It has been more than two months since the City of Atlanta was crippled by a massive cyber attack. While some city services have recovered, other departments have not. The city continues to pay millions of dollars to outside contractors to help with the response.</p> <p>When the CBS46 Bulldog went digging for answers, the city refused to hand over critical information about the attack.</p> <p>The list of questions for city officials is long.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long will the cyber attack last? • What exactly has been lost? • What attempts have been made to resolve it? • How much money have taxpayers spent on the response? • How have departments and leaders responded in private? <p>The city hasn't provided answers for any of those questions, and there is no sense of when anyone will get those answers. That's because Freedom of Information Act requests related to the cyber attack are being denied.</p>

A spokesman for the city told CBS46 in a statement:

Due to ongoing security concerns, and still-active investigations, and on the recommendation of our counsel, security vendors, and federal partners, we cannot provide any responsive documents at this time.

The Freedom of Information Act does allow for exemptions during open investigations, but with such a blanket denial, the city has taken it upon itself to potentially exploit those exemptions at its discretion.

Richard Griffiths, an expert on the First Amendment, says:

There are going to be some things always that have to be private and in process, but the results should always come out, should always be made public.

In the meantime, the city's 8,000 employees and thousands of residents don't really know a thing about the attack, and they may not for a while.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Recent NKorea hacks w/ActiveX zero-day
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/activex-zero-day-discovered-in-recent-north-korean-hacks/
GIST	<p>A North Korean cyber-espionage group has exploited an ActiveX zero-day to infect South Korean targets with malware or steal data from compromised systems, local media and security researchers have reported.</p> <p>The perpetrators of these attacks are known as the Andariel Group. According to a report authored by South Korean cyber-security firm AhnLab, the Andariel Group is a smaller unit of the larger and more well-known Lazarus Group —North Korea's cyber-espionage apparatus, believed to be a unit of its military.</p> <p>The recent wave of attacks has started last month. Local media reports that Andariel hackers deployed at least nine separate ActiveX vulnerabilities for their attacks, including a new zero-day.</p> <p>The preferred method of action is via watering-hole attacks —hacking legitimate sites, hosting exploit code, and infecting all incoming site visitors until a high-value target is compromised.</p> <p>Andariel attackers usually deploy a backdoor trojan on infected hosts, which they use to search and gather information.</p> <p>"The zero-day vulnerability has been found in these attacks," a government official from the Korea Internet & Security Agency (KISA) told local media [translated quote].</p> <p>North Korean hackers, and particularly the Andariel Group, have a history of using ActiveX vulnerabilities, according to both local media and Simon Choi, a South Korean security researcher and founder of the Cyber Warfare Intelligence Center.</p> <p>A South Korean security researcher who did not want his name revealed told Bleeping Computer the ActiveX zero-day is connected to attacks on Samsung SDS Acube installations.</p> <p>Acube is a desktop-based groupware application developed by Samsung's enterprise division. The application is popular with South Korean enterprises, and also supports ActiveX controls.</p> <p>ActiveX is a software framework created by Microsoft. It was developed to support a wide range of interactive features and has been embedded across time in popular apps such as Internet Explorer, Office, and others.</p>

	<p>But until more details emerge about this mysterious ActiveX zero-day, the main point to take from these reports is that cyber-attacks carried out by North Korean hackers have continued unabated in spite of the ongoing peace talks between North and South Korean officials.</p> <p>Security experts expected a slowdown of North Korea's cyber-espionage activity in South Korea, similar to the slowdown of Chinese hacking ops after the US and China signed a diplomatic cybersecurity agreement in late 2015.</p> <p>But it has not been so. Five cyber-security vendors —Dell SecureWorks, McAfee, Symantec, FireEye, and Recorded Future— have recently shared their observations of North Korea's recent cyber-activity in a Cyberscoop report, highlighting that the North's cyber-espionage campaigns have either remained at the same level, or grown in recent weeks.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Shodan: search for everything on internet
SOURCE	https://www.csoonline.com/article/3276660/security/what-is-shodan-the-search-engine-for-everything-on-the-internet.html
GIST	<p>Shodan is the search engine for everything on the internet. While Google and other search engines index only the web, Shodan indexes pretty much everything else — web cams, water treatment facilities, yachts, medical devices, traffic lights, wind turbines, license plate readers, smart TVs, refrigerators, anything and everything you could possibly imagine that's plugged into the internet (and often shouldn't be).</p> <p>The best way to understand what Shodan does is to read founder John Matherly's book on the subject. The basic algorithm is short and sweet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Generate a random IPv4 address 2. Generate a random port to test from the list of ports that Shodan understands 3. Check the random IPv4 address on the random port and grab a banner 4. Goto 1 <p>That's it. Find all the things, index all the things, make searchable all the things. It's a thing, and it's called Shodan.</p> <p>How Shodan works</p> <p>Services running on open ports announce themselves, of course, with banners. A banner publicly declares to the entire internet what service it offers and how to interact with it. While Shodan does not index web content, it does query ports 80 and 443.</p> <p>Other services on other ports offer service-specific information. That's not a guarantee that the published banner is true or genuine. In most cases, it is, and in any event publishing a deliberately misleading banner is security by obscurity.</p> <p>Some enterprises block Shodan from crawling their network, and Shodan honors such requests. However, attackers don't need Shodan to find vulnerable devices connected to your network. Blocking Shodan might save you from momentary embarrassment, but it is unlikely to improve your security posture.</p> <p>Shodan freaks people out</p> <p>Let's address the elephant in the room: Shodan totally freaks people out.</p> <p>Shodan terrifies non-technical people who don't understand how the internet works. CNN called it the "scariest search engine on the internet" in 2013. How can you let hackers know where all the power plants</p>

are so they can blow them up? This is awful!

This is, of course, hyperbole caused by ignorance. Attackers intent on causing harm don't need Shodan to find targets. That's what botnets running zmap are for. The real value of Shodan lies in helping defenders gain greater visibility into their own networks.

You can't play defense if you don't know what you must defend, and this is true equally at both the enterprise level and society as a whole. Shodan gives us greater visibility into the insecure, interconnected cyberphysical world in which we all now live.

Playing defense with Shodan

The modern enterprise typically exposes more to the internet than they would like. Employees plug things into the network to get their job done, and voila! Multiply that across all of shadow IT, and you've got a growing attack surface to manage.

Shodan makes it easy to search a subnet or domain for connected devices, open ports, default credentials, even known vulnerabilities. Attackers can see the same thing, so batten down the hatches before they decide to attack.

Many devices publicly announce their default passwords in their banner. Many Cisco devices, for example, advertise a default username/password combo of "cisco/cisco." Finding devices like this on your network before attackers do seems like it would be a good idea.

Shodan also lets you search for devices vulnerable to specific exploits, such as Heartbleed. In addition to helping defenders identify their own devices to secure, this aids penetration testers during the information gathering phase; using Shodan is faster and stealthier than noisily nmap'ing your client's entire subnet.

Paid members have access to the API, and can even create alerts when new devices pop up on the subnet(s) they want to monitor — a cheap and effective way to keep an eye on what your folks are plugging into the internet.

Stop putting sh*t on the internet

The most remarkable aspect of Shodan, however, might be the public awareness it brings to the vast quantity of insecure, critical cyberphysical infrastructure that has somehow gotten plugged into the internet. Shodan's internet cartography helps quantify the systemic security issues the internet faces, and enables journalists to write about, and policymakers to wrangle with, solutions to problems at this scale. (Full disclosure: This reporter has a paid Shodan membership and finds it a mighty useful tool for investigative journalism.)

Take things like ICS/SCADA, for example. Industrial control systems predate the internet and were designed on purpose with no security in mind. They were never intended to be plugged into a global internet, after all, and physical security controls were considered more than sufficient to prevent a malicious attacker from, say, dumping raw sewage into your fresh water supply.

That's changed, and critical infrastructure that was never intended to be on the internet is now a few hops away from every attacker on the planet. Shodan makes it easy to find these systems and raise the alarm. Should water treatment facilities, dams, crematoriums, yachts — you name it — should these things ever be connected to the internet under any circumstances? Probably not, and Shodan makes raising awareness of the issue much easier.

Likewise, a flood of insecure IoT devices is drowning the market, everything from connected coffeemakers to sex toys to refrigerators to, again, you name it. The market has clearly failed to select for strong cybersecurity for these devices, and regulators have, with some notable exceptions, failed to step in to demand stronger cybersecurity controls. Worse, IoT manufacturers go out of business or simply

	<p>abandon support of the devices they manufacture, leaving consumers stranded with insecure — and unsecurable — devices that then get slaved into botnet armies. The systemic risk this poses to the entire internet cannot be understated.</p> <p>The initial gasp of "omg" from non-technical folks on discovering Shodan is best targeted at the market and regulatory forces that enable this situation to flourish.</p> <p>Nuts and bolts</p> <p>Shodan is free to explore, but the number of results is capped with a free account. Advanced filters require a paid membership (USD \$49/lifetime). Developers and enterprise users needing a real-time data stream of the whole shebang can get that too.</p> <p>Defending your organization from embarrassment may have public relations value, but no security value. Shodan gives organizations visibility into their external security posture, and those of other organizations.</p> <p>The internet continues to incur greater and greater security debt. Shodan lets us see the problem clearly, no matter how uncomfortable that may make some non-technical people.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Officials: suspect Vevo hackers arrested
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/paris-police-arrests-alleged-vevo-hackers/
GIST	<p>According to French officials, two hackers identified as “Nassim B.” and “Gabriel K.A.B.,” also known by their respective online handles of “Prosox” and “Kuroi’ish.” According to Variety, both hackers were charged with six and five criminal counts respectively, one of which related to fraudulent data modification “in an automated data processing system.”</p> <p>The hackers are accused of gaining access to the YouTube account maintained by Vevo, an American multinational video hosting service that is headquartered in Manhattan. Nassim B. and Gabriel K.A.B. defaced multiple music videos, including “Despacito” by Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee, and other videos by Selena Gomez, Taylor Swift, Katy Perry, Chris Brown, and Shakira.</p> <p>Vevo has since removed all changes the hackers made on its YouTube videos. Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr., praised the international cooperation between his office and French authorities.</p> <p>“Since 2010, my Office has honed its expertise and invested in the resources needed to take on complex cyber investigations,” said District Attorney Vance. “Moreover, our secondment program with the Paris Prosecutor’s Office enables embedded prosecutors to provide on-the-ground support when it comes to malicious cyber activity that affects individuals and organizations in New York and Paris alike.</p> <p>“I thank our international partners for their collaboration and extraordinary work on this case, and look forward to more and more investigations benefitting from this type of seamless, cross-border coordination.”</p> <p>This is not the first time that hackers hit the YouTube. In April 2014 hackers from OurMine hacking team hacked accounts displaying posts with titles that begin “#OurMine” and feature the description “Hey, it’s OurMine, don’t worry we are just testing your security, please contact us for more information”.</p> <p>As for one of the accused hackers Kuroi’ish, he has a long history of targeting high-profile websites. Some of his successful hacks from the past include defacing of South Korea’s Asiana Airlines website, defacement of Google Brazil and Google Morocco domains and defacing of the United States based Uniformed Services University in which he leaked thousands of login credentials online.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Warning: 'Relieve Stress Paint' Trojan
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/stress-relief-app-turns-stressful/
GIST	<p>Despite having downloaded an application intended to help them relax through painting, unsuspecting Facebook users have been exploited by a malicious application that instead collects sensitive information.</p> <p>According to a 30 May post on Cylance's Threat Vector written by Kim Crawley, "'Relieve Stress Paint' isn't an app that's embedded in Facebook though. Rather, cyberattack targets received links to download the malicious application through Facebook messages or email. The cyber attackers exploited the perceived legitimacy and integrity of Facebook and AOL's brands to transmit their Trojan."</p> <p>While the targeted victims do indeed receive an application that can be used for painting, lurking in the background is a malicious payload that is grabbing sensitive Facebook session cookies, login credentials and similar data.</p> <p>Cylance found that the attackers' preferred targets are Facebook users who have their own Pages with lots of followers and payment data that is linked to their accounts.</p> <p>"While 'Relieve Stress Paint' is installed on a Windows machine, 'DX.exe' remains persistent on the system, and 'uplink.dll' is likely the malicious dynamic link library which grabs the target's sensitive Facebook data," Crawley wrote.</p> <p>Researchers have found that at least 35,000 users around the globe – including Vietnam, Russia, Pakistan, Indonesia, Ukraine, Italy, Romania, Kazakhstan, Egypt, Estonia and France – have been affected. Almost 3,000 victims in Vietnam alone have fallen victim to this targeted campaign dubbed the Relieve Stress Paint Trojan.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Open Redis servers infected w/malware
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/open-redis-servers-infected-with/
GIST	<p>After scanning 72,000 publicly available Redis (REmote DIctionary Server) servers with attack keys garnered through honeypot traffic, Imperva today reported that 75% of the publicly available Redis servers were hosting the attacks registered in the honeypot.</p> <p>Three-quarters of the servers contained malicious values, which Imperva said is an indication of infection, and more than two-thirds of the open Redis servers contained malicious keys. The honeypot data also revealed that those infected servers with "backup" keys were attacked from a medium-sized botnet (610 IPs) with 86% of the IPs located in China.</p> <p>Security research team leader at Imperva, Nadav Avital wrote in a blog post today that the high percentage of infections was most likely because they are being directly exposed to the internet. "However, this is highly unrecommended and creates huge security risks."</p> <p>Earlier this year, Imperva reported on the RedisWannaMine attack, which propagates through open Redi and Windows servers. Since then, the researchers have learned of additional attacks.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 NKorea linked group stops targeting US
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/north-korea-linked-group-stops-targeting-us
GIST	A threat actor linked to North Korea's Lazarus Group has stopped targeting organizations in the United

States, but remains active in Europe and East Asia.

The group, tracked by industrial cybersecurity firm Dragos as Covellite, has been known to target civilian electric energy organizations in an effort to collect intellectual property and information on industrial operations.

Unlike some of the other actors whose activities have been monitored by Dragos, Covellite does not currently have the capability to disrupt industrial control systems (ICS). However, the security firm does see it as a primary threat to the ICS industry.

Covellite's campaigns have been aimed at organizations in Europe, East Asia and North America. One of the operations, conducted in September 2017, targeted U.S. electric companies and involved phishing emails and malicious Word documents designed to deliver a piece of malware.

FireEye analyzed those attacks and linked them to an actor affiliated with the North Korean government. The security firm published a report in October 2017 and noted that the actor appeared to lack the ability to disrupt power supply.

A blog post published by Dragos on Thursday does not mention North Korea, but researchers pointed out that Covellite's infrastructure and malware are similar to ones associated with the group known as Lazarus and Hidden Cobra.

"Technical analysis of COVELLITE malware indicates an evolution from known LAZARUS toolkits. However, aside from technical overlap, it is not known how the capabilities and operations between COVELLITE and LAZARUS are related," explained Sergio Caltagirone, director of threat intelligence at Dragos.

According to Dragos, Covellite has been around since 2017 and is still active, but it has recently stopped targeting organizations in North America, while continuing to attack entities in Europe and East Asia.

While Covellite may no longer be targeting organizations in the United States, that does not mean all North Korea-linked groups have done the same. Several cybersecurity firms told CyberScoop this week that North Korea has still launched attacks on businesses in the U.S.

Dragos has published brief reports on several of the groups that pose a threat to ICS, including Iran-linked Chrysene, Russia-linked Allanite, and Xenotime, the group believed to be behind the Triton/Trisis attacks.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Court: spy agency monitor internet hubs
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/german-spy-agency-can-keep-tabs-internet-hubs-court
GIST	<p>Germany's spy agency can monitor major internet hubs if Berlin deems it necessary for strategic security interests, a federal court has ruled.</p> <p>In a ruling late on Wednesday, the Federal Administrative Court threw out a challenge by the world's largest internet hub, the De-Cix exchange, against the tapping of its data flows by the BND foreign intelligence service.</p> <p>The operator had argued the agency was breaking the law by capturing German domestic communications along with international data.</p> <p>However, the court in the eastern city of Leipzig ruled that internet hubs "can be required by the federal interior ministry to assist with strategic communications surveillance by the BND".</p> <p>De-Cix says its Frankfurt hub is the world's biggest internet exchange, bundling data flows from as far as</p>

	<p>China, Russia, the Middle East and Africa, which handles more than six terabytes per second at peak traffic.</p> <p>De-Cix Management GmbH, which is owned by eco Association, the European internet industry body, had filed suit against the interior ministry, which oversees the BND and its strategic signals intelligence.</p> <p>It said the BND, a partner of the US National Security Agency (NSA), has placed so-called Y-piece prisms into its data-carrying fibre optic cables that give it an unfiltered and complete copy of the data flow.</p> <p>The surveillance sifts through digital communications such as emails using certain search terms, which are then reviewed based on relevance.</p> <p>De-Cix said in a statement Thursday that it believed the ruling shielded it from criminal liability for violations of the law protecting German domestic communications against tapping by stating that the German government bore responsibility.</p> <p>However it said it would review whether it would take its complaint to the Federal Constitutional Court.</p> <p>Given the mass of daily phone calls, emails, chats, internet searches, streamed videos and other online communications, an effective fire-walling of purely German communications is unrealistic, activists argue.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Federal report: guidance beating botnets
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/analytics/new-federal-report-gives-guidance-on-beating-botnets/d/d-id/1331940
GIST	<p>In May 2017, the Trump administration issued Executive Order 13800, "Strengthening the Cybersecurity of Federal Networks and Critical Infrastructure." Yesterday, one response to that order was made public as the secretaries of Commerce and Homeland Security jointly released "A Report to the President on Enhancing the Resilience of the Internet and Communications Ecosystem Against Botnets and Other Automated, Distributed Threats."</p> <p>The report, at 51 pages, is a relatively concise look at the state of defense against botnets and similar threats. Reports such as these "are important in terms of being able to assess what the current state of cybersecurity is, what we're able to do, and what we need to be able to do about it," says Chris Pierson, CEO of Binary Sun Cyber Risk Advisors.</p> <p>More than the specifics of the assessment, the level of the report is important, says Chris Wysopal, founder and CTO of CA Veracode. "This looks at the whole system development life cycle, from planning through end of life," he says. He argues that the level of conversation is critical because consumers buy products with gaping security holes — and will continue to do that until vendors make safe products an economic priority.</p> <p>Five Goals</p> <p>The report is based on five goals for improving security. The five broad goals are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Goal 1: Identify a clear pathway toward an adaptable, sustainable, and secure technology marketplace. •Goal 2: Promote innovation in the infrastructure for dynamic adaptation to evolving threats. •Goal 3: Promote innovation at the edge of the network to prevent, detect, and mitigate automated, distributed attacks. •Goal 4: Promote and support coalitions between the security, infrastructure, and operational technology communities, domestically and around the world. •Goal 5: Increase awareness and education across the ecosystem. <p>The goals are important because they give guidance to a variety of stakeholders on which steps they should be taking to secure their systems and networks. The real question is whether any of those</p>

stakeholders will take meaningful action.

A History of Reports

"Look up the '2004 NIAC Hardening the Internet Report and Recommendations.' About 80% of that report is reflected in this report," says Andy Ellis, CSO of Akamai. That isn't entirely a reflection on the skills or dedication of IT security professionals, though. "It's because a lot of the problems are really hard," explains Ellis.

"The issues are, 'what are the action items, who owns the action items, and what dollars are being put behind fixing them?" says Pierson. Now, he says, it's time to move forward. "Given 10 years of describing the risk, what are the low-hanging fruits, what are we going to do about it, and who's going to pay for it?"

At the federal level those questions are critical, given the just-released "OBM Federal Cybersecurity Risk Determination Report and Action Plan," in which 71 of 96 federal agencies were shown to be at risk or at high risk for cybercrime issues. "We're talking about the bad things that are happening, but when are we going to take about solving them? How do we solve them, when do we solve them, who solves them?" asks Pierson.

Steps Ahead

There's at least one step that would be direct, if not necessarily easy to implement. "The government could just change their procurement to follow the recommendations. That would incent vendors to change their practices if they wanted government business," says Wysopal.

"Everyone who's in the industry should read through the list and see what they can work on," says Ellis. As an example, he mentions the recommendation that education for every engineering and technical discipline have a cybersecurity component, instead of waiting until young professionals are in the field to begin their training on the subject.

Ultimately, though, Ellis sees real value in the process. "I think that the important thing is that this represents the work of a lot of groups that have come together. It's not a final product but part of a process to make things better," he says.

Pierson acknowledges the value of the process but has a stark assessment of the progress made so far. "It's 10 years later and we're still at the same place."

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Click on link to download PDF of report:

https://www.commerce.gov/sites/commerce.gov/files/media/files/2018/eo_13800_botnet_report_-_finalv2.pdf

HEADLINE	05/31 UW bomb prank livestreamed online
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1005772/arab-andy-livestream-bomb-prank-uw/
GIST	<p>A livestreamer who goes by the name "Arab Andy" filmed an alleged bomb prank at the University of Washington that sent students fleeing from their classroom. The entire incident was captured live on YouTube.</p> <p>As a result, Savery Hall at UW was evacuated at around 5:30 p.m. The Quad at UW was briefly blocked off as police and firefighters investigated to determine there was no bomb. The Quad was reopened at 6:22 p.m.</p> <p>The online streamer goes by the handle "Arab Andy." He accepts financial donations while he streams his activities. In return, donators can play audio on speakers as he walks around. Or their text messages are translated into audio on the speakers. Previous videos show him walking around "trolling Seattle," playing bomb sounds. He is frequently asked to leave markets, and other public places.</p> <p>On Thursday, Arab Andy allegedly walked around the University of Washington campus disrupting classrooms, acting like he was late to class or just lost — all on live video that lasted nearly an hour and 16</p>

minutes. The livestream shows him walking into the back of a classroom where his speakers play the sound effect of a bomb being activated. This caused students to run from the room and police to respond. He continued to stream until police found him. [The Daily reports](#) that university police made the arrest.

“You’re going to arrest me for nothing bro,” Arab Andy can be heard on the live video as police detain him. “Come on stop, bro. That’s not fair bro. Bro? Bro stop. Listen bro. I’m sorry, listen bro. This is, like, assault, bro. This is a YouTube livestream bro. It was a donation. It was a donation to media. Somebody donated two bucks and it played some ****.”

The live video shows “Arab Andy” walking around the University of Washington campus the evening of Thursday, May 31, 2018. The video features him talking with people who are watching and commenting on his livestream. It shows him walking into classes as audio clips with racial epithets are played over his speakers. One teacher tosses the livestreamer out of his class.

Eventually, at about 39 minutes into the live video, he walks into a sociology classroom and sits down in the back.

“Hi guys, sorry I’m late,” he whispers to the people in the room.

“Is this where you are supposed to be?” a person off camera asks him.

“I think so,” he responds.

His speakers then play an audio clip that the entire room hears: *“Attention. C4 has been successfully activated. Bomb detonation countdown successfully started.”*

A series of beeps can then be heard on the video as students flee the room. More donations to his stream are noted in the video.

“Oh my God,” he giggles after the room is cleared. “We got to go guys Dude, you cannot get a better reaction than that ... That was not on purpose. Not playing guys ... I just made a whole crowd run for their lives.”

He then walks out of the building where he sees people in the quad talking about the incident. He giggles and acts oblivious as people discuss what just happened in the building. He then walks off campus.

“Yo Arab Andy ... Sorry bro. Stay safe LOL,” a donator’s comments are announced on the speakers. Police and fire trucks begin to arrive. Arab Andy films it all.

“Holy **** dude. It’s not even a bomb guys,” he can be heard saying on the stream. “Prank gone wrong guys. It wasn’t even a prank dude.”

The video shows police officers finding him at University Avenue and 42nd Street.

“Hey! Get on the ground right now! Don’t make any sudden movements,” an officer yells.

“What’s going on? I’m recording bro, if you are going to shoot me,” Arab Andy says. “What are you doing, bro? Put the gun down. What are you doing, bro?”

“That’s fine ... record all you want. That’s totally fine,” an officer says. “You are being contacted for a bomb threat ... on the ground. Lay on the ground.”

“That was DTS, that was a donation,” Arab Andy says.

“On the ground,” the officer continues to say and instructs him to put his hands behind his back.

	<p>“Come on bro, I didn’t do anything,” Andy says on the video. “Bro? Look at the video bro, I recorded it.”</p> <p>“Good,” the officer says.</p> <p>“This is F***** bro. You’re going to arrest me for nothing bro. Come on, stop bro. That’s not fair bro. Bro? Bro stop. Listen bro. I’m sorry, listen bro. This is like assault bro. This is a YouTube livestream bro. It was a donation. It was a donation to media. Somebody donated two bucks and it played some *****.”</p> <p>The video goes blank as officers take his camera. Audio can still be heard as Andy is told that he is being detained and that someone followed him out of the building and reported him to police.</p> <p>As Andy is being detained, viewers in the livestream begin commenting that cops are racists and that Arab Andy did nothing. They play anti-cop music. Other commenters play “Bomb countdown started” audio clips. Other audio clips continue, telling the cops to kill themselves and that they are pigs.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	<p>Watch the livestream here on YouTube. <i>Warning: Offensive language is frequently used.</i></p> <p>Livestreaming a bomb threat</p>

HEADLINE	05/31 Target: Australia real estate agents
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/australian-real-estate-agents-a-trending-target-for-cybercrime/
GIST	<p>Cybercriminals are inserting themselves into real estate transactions and making off with the money. They've been targeting Australia since late 2017, the problem is growing, and you'll soon be heading a lot more about it, according to Alex Tilley, a senior security researcher with Dell SecureWorks' Counter Threat Unit Research Team.</p> <p>These attacks are yet another example of an organisation's staff or individuals being manipulated into sending money to cybercriminals. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) calls them "CEO impersonation" or "senior executive impersonation" attacks, and the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) calls them "business email compromise" (BEC).</p> <p>The AFP has been warning that these attacks have been getting smarter, more subtle, and better organised for at least two years now. They continue to rise in both frequency and severity, and corporate victims are now losing millions of dollars in single transactions.</p> <p>Targeting residential property transactions means that the money is often coming from individuals rather than large organisations. Individual consumers are unlikely to detect the fraudulent emails. Even if the criminals fail to mimic the real estate agent's communication style, the documents are often based on standard invoice templates, or even just ordinary email. For many potential victims, it might even be the first such transaction they've executed.</p> <p>There's "a lot of implicit trust" in the real estate sales process, Tilley told ZDNet, and "that's the way the system's always worked". No one is ever told to cross-check the account details, even when they do come from the correct email address.</p> <p>"Since late last year I'm hearing about more and more of it, and I'm sure the banks hear more and more of it as well. The ones that I'm hearing about have been successful, which means that they'll be coming back," he said.</p> <p>The cybercriminals could potentially capture smaller, regular transactions, such as rental payments, or rental bond returns, but the cases Tilley is familiar with have been at the higher end. Individuals stand to lose their deposit when buying a home -- or perhaps in the case of buying a property outright, their life savings.</p> <p>"When it does start to become more publicly known it's going to be heartbreaking."</p>

	<p>The cybercriminals will usually start by breaking into a real estate agent's Outlook Web Access (OWA) account, Tilley told the AusCERT Cyber Security Conference on Australia's Gold Coast on Thursday. They'll send a single test email to confirm that they're in, and to see if they're detected. If not, they'll wait 30 days -- the default log rotation period -- for the evidence of their hack to be erased.</p> <p>They'll then log back in, check for scheduled sales settlements, begin emailing both parties, and eventually send the altered account details for the funds transfer.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Ticketfly shuts down; investigates hack
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/ticketfly-temporarily-shuts-down-to-investigate-hack/
GIST	<p>Eventbrite-owned ticket distribution service Ticketfly has taken its website offline today after a hacker defaced its frontpage and stole a part of its customer database.</p> <p>The hack has taken place late yesterday night (US timezones), on May 30. At that time, users trying to purchase tickets reported that the Ticketfly website was showing a defacement message with the now infamous "V for Vendetta" character, the symbol of the Anonymous hacker collective.</p> <p>"Ticketfly HacKeD By IsHaKdZ," read the website, and "Your Security Down im Not Sorry."</p> <p>Ticketfly admins did eventually discover the hack, but before they took down the defacement message and put the site in maintenance mode, a user also noticed that many CSV files containing user data were also freely accessible via one of the site's URLs.</p> <p>Since then, that URL has been taken down, and the data is not accessible anymore. Furthermore, Ticketfly replaced the original maintenance message with one admitting to the hack (image above).</p> <p>"Following a series of recent issues with Ticketfly properties, we've determined that Ticketfly has been the target of a cyber incident," the message now available on Ticketfly's homepage reads.</p> <p>"Out of an abundance of caution, we have taken all Ticketfly systems temporarily offline as we continue to look into the issue. We are working to bring our systems back online as soon as possible. Please check back later."</p> <p>The site's abrupt downtime caused issues with bars and event organizers selling tickets through the Ticketfly service. Users can't buy tickets either, as all Ticketfly servers are now down.</p> <p>The hacker behind the Ticketfly defacement and database theft is named IsHaKdZ. Zone-H, a website that archives site defacements includes entries attributed to this nickname going back as far as 2010, albeit it is unclear if it's the same hacker or someone who is misusing an older pseudonym.</p> <p>IsHaKdZ also left an email address on the defaced website, but the hacker did not respond to a request for comment on the hack before this article's publication.</p> <p>But the hacker did reply to a CNET reporter, revealing that he asked Ticketfly to pay a 1 Bitcoin ransom to not release the site's data online. Ticketfly did not confirm the ransom demand.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Claim: EC planning not to comply GDPR
SOURCE	https://nakedsecurity.sophos.com/2018/05/31/european-commission-doesnt-plan-to-comply-with-gdpr-well-sort-of/

GIST	<p>Yet another email containing the letters GDPR dropped into our mailbox today.</p> <p>This one was a bit different – it wasn't a company explaining how it wanted us to help it comply, nor a company slapping itself on the back for having done what it was expected to do anyway.</p> <p>This wasn't even an article about non-compliance that named and shamed someone who hadn't bothered to get ready in time.</p> <p>It was about a statutory body that, unlike the rest of us, apparently doesn't have to comply: the European Commission (EC) itself.</p> <p>In the curious and orotund way that newspapers sometimes have with words, today's GDPR email told us that:</p> <p><i>The Telegraph can reveal today that Brussels bureaucrats, who pushed for the stricter rules around how companies and governments use data, don't plan to comply with their own laws.</i></p> <p>That seems weird, but you can imagine that there may be all sorts of legal absurdities that might arise by directly applying GDPR to a pan-European executive arm of government.</p> <p>Which country's regulator would apply, and how, for example?</p> <p>Apparently, the EC is planning to subject itself to a regulation that will work like GDPR, even though it hasn't yet done so.</p> <p>That makes the Telegraph sound a bit OTT when it remarks that "Brussels bureaucrats [...] don't plan to comply with their own laws," if indeed their intention is to comply with a regulation that is substantially similar.</p> <p>As many companies have found, GDPR is more of a digital lifestyle guide, admittedly with teeth in the form of fines, although the EU's various regulators seem determined not to use GDPR as a revenue mill.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Nocturnal Stealer budget malware
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/nocturnal-stealer-lets-low-skilled-cybercrooks-harvest-sensitive-info/132422/
GIST	<p>The Nocturnal Stealer malware has crept into the Dark Web like a thief in the night, offering criminals a lucrative payday for a small price — and little effort.</p> <p>It's a commodity malware, debuting on an underground forum in March for the low price of \$25. It steals things, including 28 different kinds of cryptocurrency wallets, saved FTP passwords within FileZilla, and Chrome and Firefox browser information (such as login credentials, cookies, web data, autofill data and stored credit cards). It also zips up system data, including IP address and language, machine ID, date/time, installation location, operating system, architecture, username, processor type, video card info and a list of all running processes, to send to the C2 server.</p> <p>According to Proofpoint researchers, Nocturnal Stealer's detection evasion techniques set it apart from other budget-ware.</p> <p>"[It] uses several anti-[virtual machine] and anti-analysis techniques, which include but are not limited to: environment fingerprinting, checking for debuggers and analyzers, searching for known virtual machine registry keys and checking for emulation software," they explained in an analysis published Wednesday. "We commonly observe this step in some mainstream crimeware, but it is unusual for [this class of malware]."</p>

In the wild, Nocturnal Stealer was seen copying stolen information into plaintext files with the obvious names “information” and “passwords”. The system data goes into the former, and the browser, cryptocurrency and FTP data goes into the latter. After that, it cranks up the communication with the C2 server, sending the stolen info in a multi-part HTTP POST form.

“It [also] utilizes an HTTP POST method for the initial check-in to report the infected machine information to the C&C server,” the researchers said. “This POST uses the User-Agent ‘Nocturnal/1.0’ which contains the name and the version of the stealer. This may indicate that this is the first major version of this Nocturnal Stealer to be observed in the wild.”

When its nefarious work is done, it runs a simple command to end its processes and delete itself off the victim machine – it is, in other words, a “one-shot” code, and the victim may be completely unaware that his or her information has been lifted.

Proofpoint researchers noted that while Nocturnal Stealer is a fairly simple weapon, it “provides a glimpse into the evolving criminal markets that continue to produce new variations on the crimeware we see every day.” Specifically, it gives wings to the trend of entry-level cybercriminals gaining the ability to carry out advanced attacks, in this case to harvest and exfiltrate sensitive data. The Dark Web ad hawks Nocturnal Stealer’s anonymity, and offers server setup services (incidentally a savvy technique that gives the malware authors access to all stolen data lifted by their clients).

“Nocturnal Stealer and other malware like it provide a would-be cybercriminal with the means to cause damage and harm to people and companies easily and cheaply,” the researchers said, something that should be a real concern for defenders.

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HEADLINE	05/31 ICANN launches GDPR lawsuit
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/icann-launches-gdpr-lawsuit-to-clarify-the-future-of-whois/132427/
GIST	<p>The WHOIS internet domain directory is at the center of a GDPR-related lawsuit that should clarify at least one of the many unknowns when it comes to achieving compliance with the data-privacy regulation.</p> <p>The suit was filed last week by ICANN, the nonprofit body responsible for administering the assignment of a large portion of domain names on the internet. ICANN is also the keeper of WHOIS, which serves a phonebook-like purpose of making contact information available for those who have registered domains. ICANN contractually requires the collection of three sets of contact data by over 2,500 registrars and registries: administrative and technical contacts as well the registrant’s personal details, including name, email and telephone number.</p> <p>Given the “data minimization” tenet of the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which went into effect last Friday, the WHOIS data governance practices are one of the gray areas that exist when it comes to implementing the law. The GDPR requires that organizations collect only as much data as it needs for a specific business purpose, no more; as such, collecting three sets of potentially overlapping data may violate the law.</p> <p>Thanks to the uncertainty, some European DNS registrars have decided to no longer collect WHOIS information, for fear of drawing a hefty fine from regulators in an enforcement action. One of those is, EPAG, a Germany-based, ICANN-accredited registrar that is part of the Tucows Group; it said that ICANN’s contract “not only required us to collect and share information we didn’t need, it also required us to collect and share people’s information where we may not have a legal basis to do so. What’s more, it required us to process personal information belonging to people with whom we may not even have a direct relationship, namely the admin and tech contacts.”</p> <p>It argued that in most cases, the admin and tech details are the same as the registrant’s, making the extra data collection “meaningless.”</p>

In response, and with a stated goal of gaining clarity around the law, ICANN filed injunction proceedings against EPAG, seeking a court ruling to ensure the continued collection of all three sets of WHOIS data.

“EPAG recently informed ICANN that when it sells new domain name registrations it would no longer collect administrative and technical contact information, as it believes collection of that data would violate the GDPR rules,” ICANN said in a statement. “ICANN requires that information to be collected, via its contract with EPAG which authorizes it to sell generic top-level domain name registrations.”

Modernizing WHOIS?

WHOIS data, which has been collected for decades, has been a boon to law enforcement during cyber-threat investigations and is often a crucial tool when it comes to protecting intellectual property rights. But that public good isn’t outweighed by the privacy concerns, the EU told ICANN back in April, when it rejected an interim WHOIS refurb. Regulators also took issue with a lack of specificity in ICANN’s proposal.

“Providing ‘legitimate access’ to ‘accurate, reliable and uniform registration data,’ for example, does not amount to a specified purpose within the meaning of article 5(1)b GDPR, as it does not allow to determine what kind of processing is or is not included, nor does it enable a subsequent assessment of compliance or compatibility in case access is provided,” regulators said in a letter.

Removing most WHOIS information from public view is one idea, they added: “The WP29 welcomes the proposal to significantly reduce the types of personal data that shall be made publicly available, as well as its proposal introduce alternative methods to contact registrants or administrative and technical contacts, without public disclosure of registrants’ personal email addresses (referred to as ‘anonymized email, web form, or other technical means’).”

Trying to satisfy the requirements, ICANN released a new Temporary Specification last Friday regarding how WHOIS data should be collected and which parts may be published, which ICANN “believes is consistent with the GDPR.”

It still requires registry operators and registrars to collect all registration data, but a public query will return only “thin” data in return, which includes “technical data sufficient to identify the sponsoring registrar, status of the registration, and creation and expiration dates for each registration, but not personal data.” Those submitting queries will also get anonymized email address or a web form to facilitate email communication with the relevant contact for that registration.

Third parties – such as law enforcement – has a legitimate interest in gaining access to the non-public data, they can “can look up the sponsoring registrar and contact them, and they are obligated to respond to you in a reasonable time.”

However, this can be problematic.

“To the casual observer, it makes sense to remove WHOIS from the public, or at the very least, hide data deemed personal,” said Brandon Dixon, vice president at RiskIQ. “In doing so, these changes make it difficult for cyber-threat analysts to differentiate between legitimate, compromised and malicious domains. Additionally, without point-of-contact information for a domain owner, it’s even more difficult to communicate when a website may be compromised or infringing on a company’s trademarks or brand.”

One proposal to minimize WHOIS disruption, while still respecting privacy concerns, would be requiring individual email addresses to be hashed using the same encrypted hash algorithm across databases, he added.

“The idea being that the registrant email would be hashed uniformly allowing for analysts to pivot off it, while still obscuring the personal email address itself,” Dixon said, but added, “There is no consensus that

	<p>providing this pivoting mechanism in a public WHOIS directory would be GDPR-compliant, as it may allow connections to be drawn that would identify a person not otherwise identifiable.”</p> <p>The lawsuit should clarify many of the discussions around WHOIS, and could result in WHOIS effectively being killed in Europe. In any event, ICANN has asked the court for guidance.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 WhatsApp hoaxes deadly in India
SOURCE	https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2018/05/31/fake-news-on-whatsapp-are-getting-people-killed-in-india.html
GIST	<p>MUMBAI, INDIA—Police officers in a district of southern India had an unusual assignment. They travelled from village to village early this month to tell people that some messages that had gone viral on the WhatsApp service were fake.</p> <p>The messages claimed that a gang from northern India had arrived to kidnap children. One showed two photographs of a man being taken away by police with the text: “Please take care of your children. Don’t send them alone.”</p> <p>S.P. Pakalavan, police superintendent in the Vellore district of Tamil Nadu state, ordered officers at the 57 stations under his jurisdiction to dispel the rumour. Travelling by motorbike and auto rickshaw, some with speakers mounted on top, they covered nearly 700 villages over four days, Pakalavan said.</p> <p>“That was the only way to pacify the panic-stricken residents,” he said.</p> <p>Other parts of Tamil Nadu were not so fortunate. Two people were killed in the state on May 9 by mobs that believed they were child traffickers. A man was beaten and hanged from a bridge, and separately a 63-year-old woman was lynched when she and her relatives, while travelling to a temple, reportedly stopped to hand candies to children.</p> <p>Police say there was no truth to the rumours and that WhatsApp has become a vehicle for mayhem and fake news in India, its biggest market with 200 million active users. Law enforcement officials say they are struggling to combat the spread of false information on the popular platform, especially messages that preach communal hatred or encourage violence.</p> <p>Shirish Inamdar, a former deputy police commissioner in the western state of Maharashtra, said in an interview that the messaging service has become “a monster” as uneducated users lack the awareness to verify rumours and educated users use the platform to spread hate.</p> <p>Officials with the Menlo Park-based company, which is owned by Facebook, say that policing false information is challenging because unlike Facebook, WhatsApp messages are private and encrypted and the company does not read content unless a user reports it for being offensive. The company says it is trying to educate users to be more vigilant about potentially harmful messages.</p> <p>“WhatsApp has made communications easier and more reliable for millions of Indians, including community organizations and local police. Though sadly, some people also use WhatsApp to spread harmful misinformation,” the company said in a statement to The Times.</p> <p>“We’re stepping up our education efforts so that people know about our safety features and how to spot fake news and hoaxes.”</p> <p>According to police, at least five people were killed in southern India over the past two weeks in connection with rumours on WhatsApp of child kidnapping gangs, including some that “smash skulls and devour brains.” Another 10 people were beaten in related cases, police said.</p>

In Karnataka state, the messages involved violence, including videos of mobs dragging a bloodied man through the street and roughing up two unidentified men before handing them over to police.

An accompanying message claimed that 400 child traffickers had arrived in Bangalore, the state capital, and said in English: “Be on high alert. 3 kids were kidnapped from my friend’s area this morning. There were 10 guys giving biscuits and people from that area have caught all 10, and five more based on their information.”

Another message accused transgender people of being involved in child trafficking. Over the weekend, in the southern city of Hyderabad, a mob attacked a group of transgender women, killing one and seriously injuring two.

When police arrived, onlookers reportedly attacked their vehicle, accusing them of protecting kidnapers. Some officers were injured. More than 20 suspected attackers were arrested, and police said they were placing members of the transgender community, homeless people and others at risk of beatings into shelters, or asking them to leave the city temporarily.

Hyderabad police launched a campaign to urge people not to believe the social media content “which is creating unnecessary panic.”

They were not the first instances of violence related to WhatsApp messages, authorities said. In May 2017 in the northern state of Jharkhand, police said seven innocent men were killed after messages spread about a kidnapping gang from other parts of India. Two men were arrested in the killings.

In September 2015, Hindu extremists in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh spread word that a Muslim man had killed a cow—which is sacred to orthodox Hindus—and kept it in his refrigerator. A mob subsequently barged into his house and lynched him. Police filed charges in the killing against nearly 20 people, most of whom are out on bail.

Indian political parties have used WhatsApp to rally followers, and radical groups are using it to promote communal hatred in a country increasingly divided between majority Hindus and members of minority communities, including Muslims.

In a recent state election in Karnataka, party workers were among those blamed for circulating fake polls, hoaxes about the killings of Hindu activists and false claims that a Muslim lawmaker had promised “unending bloodshed of Hindus” if voted into power.

Amid the growing outcry, and with national elections due next year, WhatsApp said this month that it had instituted new features for its group messaging option—one of the most common ways that hoaxes spread rapidly—giving administrators greater control over membership in the group. The company is also expected to introduce a feature that will make it more obvious when a new message has been forwarded by another user, in a bid to encourage the reader to think twice about its content.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Teens get rich playing FIFA e-sport
SOURCE	http://bleacherreport.com/articles/2778556-meet-the-teenagers-who-are-getting-rich-playing-fifa?utm_source=cnn.com&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=editorial
GIST	<p>Head ducked, his face almost completely hidden by his flat-peak cap, the 16-year-old cut a timid shape in a far-from-roomy hotel elevator as we descended for breakfast.</p> <p>It was January in Barcelona. The hotel was swarming, playing host to more than 100 FIFA players who had flown in for a tournament. "Are you a FIFA player?" he squeaked at me. "No. Are you?" He didn't carry himself the way the other professional gamers do—imbued with confidence, at times accompanied by entourages, patrolling around in expensive trainers—and he looked so young he could have been</p>

mistaken for 12 or 13.

His name? Donovan Hunt. Or "DhTekkz." This was his first-ever major tournament, first-ever LAN event on FIFA, a relative stranger to the scene. Within days, he would be known to everyone in the esports community.

Hunt went on to wipe the floor with almost every opponent at the tournament, including Nicolas99fc—regarded by several pros as the world's best FIFA player—by six goals in the final. He did so thanks in part to a trick now known as the "driven drop-goal kick," where the goalkeeper backs toward his own goal line, ball in hands, then sprints to the edge of the box and lets loose, the ball taking a trajectory that delivers it to a winger in acres of space.

"It was literally something no one had ever seen before," says Colin Johnson, the manager of AS Roma's FIFA team. "He scored about 10 or 12 goals with it throughout the event. He was scoring against the best [in the world]."

"I don't think I remember seeing someone come to an event and introduce something that changes the meta of a tournament in the way that his driven goal kick did."

It changed Hunt's life, too. He earned \$22,000 for the tournament, promising his mother they'd use it for the holiday they'd long been wishing for. His Twitter following exploded from 300 to more than 40,000, and he indulged the media for hours and stopped for selfies with all comers.

Within a month, he found himself at the center of a bidding war between major gaming organizations and top-tier professional football clubs, all vying to sign him as their official FIFA player. The likes of Ajax, UNILAD and Roma were in the running. F2Freestylers won out. The money on offer was serious. Team management sources in the industry confirm Hunt accepted an annual salary that would put him among the top five earners in the sport—the most high-profile of whom pull in six figures.

And he's only one of the several who have jumped on this money train.

While Hunt's \$22,000 January prize pot may seem gaudy, it pales in comparison to the sort of money (and perks) others have already pulled in. Hunt is a shooting star, but he's shooting toward guys who have already won gargantuan amounts in one sitting.

In May 2017, Paris Saint-Germain's Rocky scooped up \$160,000 for winning a tournament in Berlin. The runner-up, UNILAD Shellzz, pocketed \$80,000—a nice consolation prize considering he lost the final due to an agonising 89th-minute goal that could quite easily have been avoided.

Four months later, FaZe Gorilla pulled in \$200,000 for winning the eWorld Cup final in London. He did it in front of a two-storey crowd, a watching cast of footballers including Alvaro Morata, and was handed tickets to The Best FIFA Football Awards. There, he met Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi, Neymar, Dani Alves and more.

Those are the big ones, but there are events most weekends players can travel to. Scandinavia offers a plethora of tournaments to play in, as does central Europe and the United Kingdom. Examples include the Gfinity Elite Series, which gave teams a weekly battle ground to fight on and a chance to win close to \$35,000; V4 Festival, which offered a prize pool of more than \$115,000; and the GSA Cup, worth nearly \$100,000 to the winner.

If you're an incredible FIFA player, the chance to win thousands arises almost every week—and it can land you some serious silverware too. FUTWIZ Dubzje triumphed at ESWC in Paris in March and was handed a trophy so big, he had to count it as his hand luggage and check his bag.

And tournaments aren't the only way people are making money playing FIFA. There are around 50 full-time professional players in the world—a number that grows with every passing month—and they earn a

standard living wage at least.

"In France, Germany, the UK, you wouldn't be surprised to see a player make what a teacher makes. A livable wage," Johnson says. "They don't have to rely on prize pools. And they can subsidize their income."

The options to subsidize are fairly broad. Most players create content on YouTube or stream on Twitch, monetizing their free time in the process. Some are becoming extremely popular figureheads—a fact evidenced not only by their social media followings, but also by their channel donations and subscriber numbers.

Reigning world champion FaZe Gorilla has more than 500,000 YouTube subscribers, Hashtag Harry around 370,000, FaZe Tass almost 250,000. German players Expert Mo_Aubameyang and Fokus Stylo are Twitch stream masters, at times holding between 4,000 to 5,000 concurrent viewers on their games at once, many of whom are donating cash in real time. For reference, most FIFA pros hold a few hundred at a time.

For many, watching personalities on Twitch or YouTube has essentially replaced television—and they compensate directly to their heroes. What these views and subscriptions amount to differs in every case.

FUTWIZ Zelonius offers paid coaching sessions that are streamed on Twitch. He charges members of the public £20 per hour or three games for £50, speaks to them on the phone throughout and then wraps up with a to-do list to improve their skills. It's two birds with one stone; he generally batters them, enhancing his reputation and building a followership, and then collects money via two avenues in the process.

Personal endorsement and branding deals are becoming more common, too. Red Bull is one of several major companies to enter the scene and handpick players to represent it at tournaments, with more than 10 players donning their colors, badge or merchandise.

August Rosenmeier (Hashtag Agge) was signed first back in November 2015, and teammate Ryan Pessoa (Hashtag Ryan) followed suit this February, having engaged in close to three months of talks to make it happen. Pessoa is a professional gamer, a Hashtag representative and a Red Bull athlete, and he juggles all of this while studying for a degree at the University of Surrey.

"It's very difficult trying to balance everything," Pessoa says. "Generally, I tend to prioritize FIFA during qualification months or when there are events; however, if there are exams for me to sit, I prioritize studying for those. If FIFA and exams clash, I have to ask the university if I can sit them at a later date."

He takes branding seriously, showing up to lunch with B/R with his Red Bull cap on. His responsibilities include repping such merchandise, being the face of major events...and drinking Red Bull. "I do that anyway," he assures.

It's on a far smaller scale, but Pessoa's affiliation with Red Bull is directly comparable with Lionel Messi's Adidas sponsorship or Cristiano Ronaldo's Nike deal. They all represent a brand, wear their merchandise and represent the practical "face" of the company—and they all get paid to do it.

Things don't always align for Pessoa, though. In the last week of May, the biggest FIFA tournament of the season so far rolled around—everything he's been working toward since September—and it clashed with his end-of-second-year exams. He was told he could not delay them, that he'd have to choose.

He chose the play-offs.

It's a surely a dilemma few—if any—other students face. Correspondingly, few—if any—other students are making as much money as Pessoa is. It won't surprise you to learn his chosen degree is business management.

It might only be a matter of years before FIFA players start earning at the rate that, say, poker players do—i.e. millions per year. Prize pools for the game still lag far behind those in other esports—esport management sources confirmed there are Danish Counter-Strike players who pull in more than \$20,000 per month—but it's progressing fast, and this is a game sponsors will fall over themselves to be associated with, given its close affiliation to the world's most popular sport.

"There's going to be a wage explosion," one manager in charge of a club's esports team tells B/R. "It's scary, really. It's bonkers. We already have ridiculous numbers thrown at us in negotiations."

Negotiations for players are already becoming difficult. Not only do individual affiliations such as those with Red Bull actually disrupt or scupper deals between players and clubs, but agents and middle men cloud things too, offering out professional players' services for ludicrous amounts.

The same source says: "There's one guy, he offered me two players last summer. One for €12,000 (\$14,000) per month, one for €100,000 a year (\$120,000). I said, 'You're crazy, mate.'"

He might be spurning these offers, but others aren't. Kids are hitting the jackpot, earning tonnes to represent football clubs or gaming organisations.

As the players' personalities, reputations and social channels grow, so will their bank balances. A number will earn more money than they'll know what to do with; a select few already have.

I saw Hunt again in April, this time in Manchester for another tournament, another \$22,000 on the line. There was no mistaking him this time. Clad in a custom gray tracksuit emblazoned with "F2 Tekkz," flanked by two freestylers who together have clocked up 7.5 million YouTube subscribers thanks to their penchant for flicks, tricks and skills, he strode more confidently, no longer hiding beneath his cap.

In a matter of three months, he'd gone from an everyday school kid to a superstar, posing for photos with people he'd never met and rubbing shoulders with professional footballers. It wasn't the stride of arrogance—more the stride of a kid whose life had been transformed for the better.

He was the player everyone was watching in Manchester—the name fans looked out for, the point of intrigue hooking many into competitive FIFA. One player who drew Hunt in the group stage reacted by saying, "Tekkz? Oh s--t! That's the one game I didn't want!" He lost heavily.

"His rise has been very, very fast," Johnson says. "He was a fairly reserved guy. He, like a lot of kids, was quite shy, didn't want to speak that much. But the second they're feeling comfortable, they come out of their shell. I think you've seen him come out of his shell a lot more since stepping onto the world stage."

"There's clearly something about him. A buzz. An aura," another team manager says.

It will only grow from here.

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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	05/31 Canadian thief faces US extradition
SOURCE	https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2018/05/31/alberta-judge-orders-edmonton-man-extradited-to-the-us-to-face-terrorism-charges.html
GIST	EDMONTON—An alleged Edmonton jewelry store thief who is accused of trying to pawn stolen loot to fund his friends and cousins to fight with Daesh is one step closer to extradition to the United States. On Thursday, Justice John Little ordered that Abdullahi Ahmed Abdullahi, 33, be committed for extradition, meaning he will be held in custody until the federal justice minister makes a final decision.

“You know damn well I don’t support ISIS,” Abdullahi shouted, along with a series of expletives, after Little delivered his decision in court in Edmonton.

Abdullahi was ordered to be committed for extradition to the U.S. to face charges of providing and conspiring to provide material support for terrorists, which would most closely correspond to a charge of facilitating terrorist activity under the Canadian Criminal Code.

While an extradition hearing is not a trial and the arguments presented have not been proven, court heard how the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) obtained email drafts from an account allegedly shared by Abdullahi and his alleged co-conspirators — cousins and friends who either had travelled to Syria to fight with Daesh or expressed interest in doing so — where the accused described robbing a jewelry store in Edmonton to fund their efforts.

A witness named only as “John Doe” in court files, who is said to be a cousin of Abdullahi’s and who pledged allegiance to Daesh in 2014 with other Somali youth in Minneapolis, Minn., is said to have identified Abdullahi from surveillance images showing three suspects robbing Vj Jewellers near 92 Street and 34 Avenue with a gun on Jan. 9, 2014.

The email drafts supposedly written by Abdullahi using the nickname “Phish” reportedly describe how Abdullahi robbed the store so he could help pay for Hanad Mohallim, Douglas McCain and Hamsa Kariye — who have since all died — to travel to Syria to fight with Daesh, but was having trouble pawning the loot.

He had done so after being encouraged by a co-conspirator to rob the “kuffar,” a word for non-Muslims, to fund their efforts.

Other messages allegedly described Abdullahi sending \$2,800 to Kariye using Kariye’s credit card after Kariye had left to join Daesh, and how he sent \$3,000 to McCain to pay for McCain and Mohallim to fly to Turkey before crossing the border into Syria, among other transactions.

The FBI has allegedly obtained 50 such messages, some reported to describe killing enemies, heated battles and their skill at using firearms.

These emails were also said to be verified by McCain’s widow.

American investigators also plan to present records from Western Union that are said to show wire transfers between Abdullahi and his alleged co-conspirators, and records from Turkish Airlines that allegedly include flight itineraries for some of his supposed associates.

Akram Attia argued on behalf of Abdullahi that the evidence was unreliable as “John Doe” faced “extreme jeopardy” as an alleged co-conspirator caught up in the FBI’s investigation and that a statement from McCain’s widow amounted to something “worse” than hearsay and would be inadmissible under Canadian law.

However, Justice Little said in his decision that for the purposes of an extradition hearing, the threshold is simply whether there is enough evidence on which a jury could convict, not whether or not a jury should convict based on the evidence.

“Even if the evidence of ‘John Doe’ and Mrs. McCain alone could and should be rejected, I find the evidence as a whole, including the Western Union money transfer records, could be used by a properly instructed jury to conclude that the mental element of the offence had been proven,” said Little, adding he believes prosecution would be justified.

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HEADLINE	05/31 ISIS supporter: kill Prince George
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/isis-supporter-admits-urging-jihadis-kill-prince-george-terror-attack-his-950732
GIST	<p>A supporter of the Islamic State militant group (ISIS) has admitted encouraging jihadis to target Prince George in a terror attack at the young royal's school.</p> <p>Husnain Rashid, 32, from Lancashire in the U.K., changed his plea two weeks into a trial for multiple terrorism offences, after originally denying all the allegations against him.</p> <p>He has now pleaded guilty at London's Woolwich Crown Court to three counts of engaging in conduct in preparation of terrorist acts and one count of encouraging terrorism.</p> <p>Rashid was accused sharing an image of the eldest son of Prince William and Kate Middleton, along with the address of his school in Battersea, London, to fellow extremists via the encrypted messaging service Telegram.</p> <p>One of the pictures he shared of the young royal, who is third in line to the throne, was a superimposed image of the 4-year-old next to a silhouette of two jihadi fighters along with the caption: "Even the royal family will not be left alone."</p> <p>During the trial, it was heard that Rashid posted more than 300,000 messages on Telegram urging a lone wolf attack. Prosecutors said Rashid ran a "prolific" Telegram channel called Lone Mujahid, in which he provided an "e-toolkit for terrorism."</p> <p>Police said Rashid shared a list of popular British sports stadiums, suggested injecting poison into supermarket ice creams and urged Jewish areas of the UK to be targeted in a terror attack.</p> <p>Rashid also allegedly posted a map of New York's Sixth Avenue along with the caption: "New York Halloween Parade. Have you made your preparations? The Countdown begins," as well as popular tourist destinations and train stations across Europe.</p> <p>Sky News reports the 32-year-old urged jihadis to "fight and spill the blood to the apes in your land" adding: "Start planning, start scouting targets, start monitoring entry/exit routes, start preparing tools and weapons/explosive."</p> <p>Following Rashid's change of plea, Judge Andrew Lees told the defendant: "For the past week I have listened to the most disturbing allegations," reports the BBC.</p> <p>"You have admitted these allegations of encouraging others to commit terrorist activities and publishing statements to encourage the killing of others.</p> <p>"It is inevitable that you will receive a very lengthy prison sentence and there will be a consideration of a life prison sentence."</p> <p>He added: "The question of your future dangerousness and the protection of the public is a matter that I will have to give very careful consideration."</p> <p>Rashid will be sentenced for terrorism offenses at the same court on June 28.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 What is terrorism?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/31/world/americas/what-is-terrorism.html
GIST	Two masked bombers walked into a crowded restaurant near Toronto and detonated a homemade explosive that wounded at least 15 people. In Belgium, a temporarily freed prisoner went on a deadly

rampage, stabbing and shooting people and taking hostages before the police killed him.

In both attacks, each carried out in recent days, civilians were the victims. But it was only the Belgium attack — in which the assailant screamed “Allahu akbar!” (God is great!) — that the police quickly described as a possible act of terrorism.

The comparison cuts to the core of a protracted debate over what constitutes terrorism, who is a terrorist and what such designations actually mean. An attack viewed as terrorism in one part of the world may be seen as a common crime elsewhere. The debate has grown more complex and intense in the years since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, but it dates back many years.

“You’re never going to win on this,” said Charles Kurzman, a professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina and a co-director of the Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations. “There’s a legal definition which differs by country. Common definitions are going to vary.”

Here is a look at some of the issues that make the term terrorism so nebulous and tricky.

How did the term originate?

It is derived from the Latin “terrorem,” which translates as “panic,” “alarm” and “great fear.” The term’s use widened with the 1793-94 period of the French Revolution known as the “Reign of Terror,” when the revolutionary government conducted mass executions to intimidate suspected opponents.

How does the dictionary define terrorism?

The Oxford Dictionary calls terrorism “the unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims.” Merriam-Webster calls it the systematic and coercive use of terror, defined as “violent or destructive acts (such as bombing) committed by groups in order to intimidate a population or government into granting their demands.”

Such definitions are not universally accepted and can be interpreted in different ways. Under the dictionary criteria, some experts would argue, the revolutionary colonist soldiers who slaughtered Native Americans allied with the British were terrorists, as were John Brown’s abolitionists who indiscriminately killed civilians in pro-slavery states before the Civil War. Palestinians regarded as terrorists by Israel are seen by their supporters as resistance fighters opposed to an occupation.

Still, some scholars say the word terrorism can still be used objectively.

“I think it can be defined with a fair degree of precision, which doesn’t necessarily entail judging or taking a position,” said Todd Gitlin, a professor at the Columbia Journalism School. “My definition of terrorism, which I don’t think is unusual, is a violent act in order to strike terror in the hearts of a population toward a political end.”

Has terrorism taken on a new meaning?

Acts of violence have become so ubiquitous that sometimes the terrorism label is applied — as in the Belgium case — even without an obvious ideological purpose. But sometimes the label is not applied — as in the Canada example — and that is where the confusion comes in.

Why are the restaurant bombers not considered terrorists by Canada?

Part of the reason may lie in simple geography and recent history. Unlike Europe, Canada has not suffered the repeated attacks attributed to extremist groups like the Islamic State, and the police may be less likely to assume such a possibility without more facts.

Although the targeted restaurant was Indian, suggesting a possibly ethnic-based bias attack, experts cautioned that the identities of the assailants and their motives remained unclear.

“Until you know who did it, it’s problematic to be categorized as a terrorist attack,” said Victor Asal, a political-science professor at the University at Albany-SUNY and a researcher at the National Consortium

for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism.

“If it’s going to be terrorism it’s got to be politically or ideologically motivated,” he said. “If I’m killing you because you sleep with my wife, that’s not terrorism.”

Why was the Belgium attack almost immediately assumed to be terrorism?

While few details were immediately available about the masked bombers in the Canada attack, much was known about the assailant in Belgium, a 35-year-old Belgian prisoner with a history of assault, drug and theft offenses who had been granted a 48-hour leave. Officials in Belgium said Wednesday that he might have been converted by Islamist extremist cellmates. And the Islamic State militant group belatedly exalted him as a martyred disciple.

Nonetheless, terrorism experts were not all convinced. Some theorized that the assailant was a career criminal who might have used the guise of adherence to Islamist extremism to justify the attack.

“It looks like an act of terrorism, but here’s where things get a bit murky,” said Brian M. Jenkins, a senior adviser at the RAND Corporation. “He may or may not have been radicalized in prison. People are complicated — invariably there is a variety of motivations.”

Mr. Jenkins pointed to the case of Esteban Santiago, an Iraq war veteran who had been hearing voices and behaving erratically in the year before he killed five people at the Fort Lauderdale airport in January 2017 — an attack that was initially thought to have been terrorism.

“There was a lot of evidence of mental illness,” Mr. Jenkins said. “Do I have a terrorist here, or do I have evidence of a mental disorder?”

If the Canada bombers had yelled ‘Allahu akbar,’ would they have been seen as terrorists?

Against the backdrop of what rights groups have described as rising anti-Muslim bigotry in the West, the answer is almost certainly yes.

“The perception is that terrorism isn’t really terrorism unless a Muslim is somehow involved,” said Ibrahim Hooper, a spokesman for the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the nation’s leading Muslim advocacy organization. “We’ve seen that time and time again.”

He pointed to a study published by the Journal of Communication that showed that American television viewers see far more images of Muslims as domestic terrorists than what is reflected in actual law enforcement statistics. The study found that among those described as domestic terrorists in 146 news reports between 2008 and 2012, 81 percent were identifiable as Muslims, but that F.B.I. reports from those years showed that only 6 percent of domestic terrorism suspects were Muslim.

Why aren’t mass shootings like the Las Vegas massacre considered acts of terrorism?

Many supporters of gun control in the United States argue that they should be. The Las Vegas casino gunman, Stephen Paddock, who killed 58 people and wounded hundreds before taking his own life, had prepared meticulously for the attack last October and appeared to know exactly what he was doing.

But the glaring hole in the police investigation is an understanding of why he did it. Other than what appeared to have been a preoccupation with guns and possible anger over gambling losses, Mr. Paddock’s reasons died with him.

“Insofar as we know, there’s no political content, no evidence of a political motive — it’s not as though he was trying to compel the government to do something,” Mr. Jenkins said. “This was a shooter.”

Why even distinguish between acts of terrorism and other violent crimes?

The difference between terrorism and other acts of violence matters because terrorism — regardless of how it’s defined around the world — is considered far more serious as a threat to national security and will provoke a more aggressive government response.

	<p>It is also a term often used to influence public opinion.</p> <p>“If Americans and others are more afraid of terrorism, they’re going to vote in a certain way,” Mr. Kurzman said. “There’s going to be a sense of insecurity that other acts of violence don’t often generate.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 US, Russia forces nearly come to blows
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/us-russia-military-came-close-fighting-each-other-syria-assad-says-951675
GIST	<p>Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said the U.S. and Russia have nearly come to blows over their separate military campaigns in his country, where Moscow supports the government and Washington works outside of it.</p> <p>The U.S. has struck Syrian government targets in defiance of Russian warnings and killed Russian volunteer fighters, but the seven-year conflict has yet to see any direct confrontations between the U.S. and Russia. In an exclusive interview aired Thursday by Russia's state-owned RT news channel, Assad credited Russia with defusing what could have been a clash between the world's leading military powers as the Islamic State militant group (ISIS) was defeated and both local and international rivalries deepened.</p> <p>"In reality, we were close to have direct conflict between the Russian forces and the American forces, and fortunately, it has been avoided, not by the wisdom of the American leadership but by the wisdom of the Russian leadership, because it is not in the interest of anyone, anyone in this world, and first of all the Syrians, to have this conflict," Assad told RT.</p> <p>"We need the Russian support, but we need at the same time to avoid the American foolishness in order to be able to stabilize our country," he added.</p> <p>The U.S. was an early supporter of efforts to overthrow Assad as he faced a 2011 uprising also backed by Sunni Muslim monarchies and Turkey. As the Syrian opposition became increasingly jihadi in nature and ISIS emerged from a post-U.S. invasion insurgency in Iraq, the U.S. formed a coalition to battle the militants as they spread across the two Arab countries in 2014. Iran, an ally of both the Iraqi and Syrian governments, helped fight the jihadis by mobilizing Shiite Muslim militias and, in 2015, Russia entered the fight in support of Assad.</p> <p>Russian and Iranian support has helped the Syrian leader reclaim most major cities and provinces seized by rebels and jihadis, save for the territories now in the hands of the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, a mostly Kurdish alliance that includes Arabs and ethnic minorities as well. Both factions have succeeded in nearly wiping out ISIS altogether, and Kurdish fighters have worked both alongside and against pro-Syrian government forces at times, but Assad warned Thursday he would not hesitate to use force to retake what they control if they refused to negotiate.</p> <p>In response to Assad's remarks, chief Pentagon spokeswoman Dana W. White told a press briefing Thursday that the U.S. mission "remains to defeat ISIS in Syria, our desire is not to get involved in the Syrian civil war." Assad rejected the term "civil war" in the RT interview, describing the conflict "as mercenaries, Syrians, and foreigners being paid by the West in order to topple the government"</p> <p>Marine Corps Lieutenant General Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr. also weighed in on the potential of a conflict between U.S.-led coalition and the Syrian military during Thursday's briefing, saying "any interested party in Syria should understand that attacking U.S. forces or our coalition partners would be a bad policy."</p> <p>The first confirmed incident between Syrian and U.S. forces took place in Deir Ezzor in September 2016, when U.S. airstrikes killed dozens of Syrian soldiers besieged by ISIS in what the Pentagon said was an accident. As President Donald Trump came to office, he called for the U.S. to focus on battling ISIS and</p>

quit funding anti-Assad rebels. This changed in April 2017, however, when he ordered a series of cruise missile strikes on a Syrian military airport in response to allegations of a chemical attack in Idlib.

That summer saw a number of clashes between pro-Syrian government fighters, consisting of various militias, and the Syrian Democratic Forces. The U.S. unilaterally declared the southern border crossing of Al-Tanf to be a deconfliction zone and launched several aerial assaults on forces fighting on behalf of Assad, including the downing of a Syrian Su-22 that the Syrian Democratic Forces accused of bombing their positions. Following this June 19 incident, Russia warned it would treat U.S. aircraft flying in its designated area of operations as "targets."

The most serious battle took place in February. Hundreds of pro-Syrian government fighters, including Russian citizens, were reportedly killed after the U.S.-led coalition claimed they launched a massive assault on Syrian Democratic Forces positions in Deir Ezzor. Russia said its nationals were not fighting on behalf of the armed forces, but Syria called for the United Nations to condemn the U.S.

The U.S. struck a second time days later when it hit a Russian-built T-72 tank that reportedly approached Syrian Democratic Forces positions. Defense Secretary James Mattis said in March that a third incident was avoided through the use of a deconfliction line maintained between the U.S. and Russian militaries.

Two months later and shortly after he suggested he would soon withdraw U.S. troops from Syria, Trump again ordered military action against the Syrian government in response to an alleged toxic gas attack last month. Russia denied Assad's culpability and some officials had even threatened to shoot down U.S. missiles along with the ships and aircraft firing them if Russians lives were put at risk.

The April 13 attack saw the U.S., France and the U.K. blast three Syrian state-run research centers suspected of developing chemical weapons. During his RT interview, Assad said that he had information suggesting Trump had planned "a comprehensive attack all over Syria," but that Russia's threat "pushed the West to make it on a much smaller scale."

Despite the occasional hostilities, the U.S. and Russia have maintained regular contact in Syria, and U.S.-led coalition spokesman Colonel Ryan Dillon said last month that the coalition even provides Russia with information on potential ISIS positions on the western side of the Euphrates River that divides the two campaigns. The U.S. has called for Assad's other ally, Iran, to withdraw.

The U.S., Israel and Saudi Arabia are opposed to Iran's growing influence in Iraq and Syria, where Iran-backed militias have grown increasingly powerful after working alongside government troops. Israel has launched airstrikes against Iranian and pro-Iran positions in Syria and has threatened to escalate its offensive. Iran has refused even Russian calls to withdraw, and Syria has said it continues to welcome both Russian and Iranian support in the conflict, while calling for the U.S. and Turkey to withdraw immediately.

As the resurgent Syrian military prepares for a new offensive in the south, near the Israeli and Jordanian borders, international powers have scrambled to prevent an all-out war. The U.S., Russia and Jordan are reportedly attempting to broker a deal between Iran, Israel and Syria that would see all Syrian and non-Syrian militias withdraw from the southern border region and allow for the Syrian military to regain control. Such a deal may also reportedly include the dismantling of the U.S. base at Al-Tanf, where Syria, Russia and Iran accuse the U.S. of supporting jihadi groups.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Pentagon warns Syria of hitting US troops
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/may/31/bashar-assad-warned-against-hitting-us-troops-in-s/
GIST	The Pentagon is warning the Syrian regime to refrain from attacking U.S.-backed forces in the country, shortly after Syrian President Bashar Assad demanded U.S. forces depart and threatened to launch attacks

on territory held by American-backed Kurdish paramilitary units in northeast Syria.

The threats come amid a scramble among several nations and factions in the Syrian civil war, as the Assad government consolidates control of the major cities but faces pressure over the postwar balance of power.

“Any interested party in Syria should understand that attacking U.S. forces or our coalition partners will be a bad policy,” Joint Staff Director Lt. Gen. Kenneth McKenzie told reporters Thursday.

Gen. McKenzie spoke shortly after Mr. Assad told the Russian RT news channel in an interview that the estimated 2,000 U.S. special forces believed to be posted in Syria to combat Islamic State and back up U.S.-allied forces cannot stay in Syria.

“Somehow, they are going to leave,” Mr. Assad said Thursday.

American military advisers and their counterparts in the Syrian Democratic Forces — a coalition of Arab and Kurdish militias battling the Islamic State — have operated from the Syrian city of Deir-ez-Zour and the surrounding Euphrates River Valley for most of the war against the terror group.

A deconfliction zone, recognized by Moscow and Washington, has thus far protected American forces and their allies from Mr. Assad’s push to bring the entire country back under his control.

“We would view very gravely any actions that tended to change that,” Gen. McKenzie told reporters during a Pentagon briefing.

Tensions between Washington and Damascus boiled over in April, when U.S. and allied warplanes launched a series of airstrikes against suspected chemical weapons facilities in Syria. The strikes were in retaliation for the Assad regime’s use of the weapons against anti-government forces near the rebel stronghold of Aleppo.

Syrian forces, backed by Russian air power and Iranian-backed militias, will “liberate by force” rebel- and Islamic State-held territory, Mr. Assad said. Those comments have raised concerns that U.S.-supported forces could end up in the Syrian government’s crosshairs in the near future.

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HEADLINE	05/31 US designates ‘HTS’ terrorist organization
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-issues-terror-designation-for-rising-syrian-militant-group-1527797992
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—The State Department has formally designated the Syrian militant group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham as part of a foreign terrorist organization, a response to its growing sway in northwestern Syria.</p> <p>Hayat Tahrir al-Sham is an offshoot of the Nusra Front, which the U.S. considers an affiliate of al Qaeda. Its success comes as a fresh test for President Donald Trump, who wants a quick U.S. exit from Syria.</p> <p>In recent months, HTS has fiercely battled Western-backed forces and other rivals in the northwest to extend its control across Idlib province and establish itself as the most potent militant group in the country.</p> <p>The coordinator for counterterrorism at the State Department, U.S. Ambassador Nathan Sales, said the designation would help the U.S. deny the group access to the U.S. financial system and other resources.</p> <p>“Today’s designation serves notice that the United States is not fooled by this al Qaeda affiliate’s attempt to rebrand itself,” he said.</p> <p>In recent months, HTS has sought to build on battlefield gains in the northwest, fighting Syrian government troops in Homs, Hama and Aleppo. Officials have said that its success is partly due to a</p>

	<p>vacuum of power in the area, as the U.S. shifts its forces and aid elsewhere.</p> <p>The State Department is still deciding whether to unfreeze a package of \$200 million in assistance funds previously earmarked for support of stabilization efforts in Syria and for preventing the return of the Islamic State extremist group.</p> <p>The Trump administration ordered the State Department to hold off on spending the money, which includes funding for aid groups in northwestern Syria, pending an assessment several months ago.</p> <p>In areas under its control, HTS espouses an extreme interpretation of Islam. The group's leader, Abu Mohammad al-Julani, has vowed to conquer Damascus and impose Islamic rule across Syria.</p> <p>Residents say the group has set up a religious police force similar to that run by Islamic State, which enforces bans on smoking, the use of makeup in beauty salons and other rules. It also has jailed men and women who socialize without being related, residents say, and closed a university in the town of al-Dana late last year because it held mixed-gender classes.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 Military killed 70+ Taliban leaders in month
SOURCE	https://www.circa.com/story/2018/06/01/world/us-forces-killed-off-more-than-70-taliban-leaders-in-the-last-month
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (Circa) -- Taliban leadership has suffered some serious casualties in the last week and a half due to a series of raids and strikes across Afghanistan, which have led to the deaths of more than 70 of the group's commanders.</p> <p>The most deadly of these strikes came last Thursday, when a U.S. rocket strike destroyed a Taliban command post, killing at least 50 Taliban commanders inside.</p> <p>"We are still assessing the specific names and positions, but what it looks like it was is a group of commanders meeting in part to discuss the operation in Farah many of them had just participated in," said Army Gen. John Nicholson, the commander of the U.S. Forces in Afghanistan, while briefing reporters on Wednesday.</p> <p>Farah, a city in Western Afghanistan, was temporarily overrun by Taliban forces earlier this month. Afghan special forces eventually cleared the Taliban out, but not before they killed 30 people.</p> <p>While Nicholson noted the strike would likely not have a significant strategic impact, he did note that U.S. forces believe one high value target was among the dead.</p> <p>"The senior Taliban leader who was there was the deputy shadow governor of Helmand," said Nicholson, adding that "a number of other leaders beneath him" were also killed.</p> <p>The Taliban operates a shadow government across Afghanistan as part of its attempt to de-legitimize and degrade the internationally-backed government in the capital of Kabul. Governors and other leaders are appointed to most Afghan provinces, where they act similarly to a real government; collecting taxes, conscripting fighters, and even installing Sharia courts to administer justice, according to a 2009 report on Afghanistan by retired Army Gen. Stanley McChrystal.</p> <p>A separate strike the same day killed the Taliban "Red Unit" commander for Helmand province, according to the Afghanistan Times. Also known as the Red Group or Danger Group, the Red Unit is the Taliban's elite force of 300 commandos responsible for special operations, including night raids, cutting off roads, and supply lines. Unlike many Taliban forces, they are highly trained and employ advanced technology like night vision.</p>

	<p>More than 70 Taliban leaders have been killed in the series of strikes thus far, with last Thursday's attack being responsible for the largest portion.</p> <p>Despite the strikes, the Trump administration's goal in Afghanistan is still, ostensibly, to reach a political settlement. Nicholson has confirmed that there have been some "off stage" discussions between the Afghan government and some Taliban leaders.</p> <p>"A number of channels of dialogue have opened up between the various stakeholders in the peace process," said Nicholson.</p> <p>He added that the recent strikes should not get in the way of reaching the ultimate goal.</p> <p>"I call this talking and fighting," said Nicholson. He invoked Secretary of Defense James Mattis noting "violence and progress can coexist, and that's what we're seeing."</p> <p>But not everyone agrees that there has been much progress in Afghanistan. The Taliban controls or influences 59, or 14.5 percent, of Afghanistan's districts, according to the Long War Journal, citing data from the Special Investigator General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR). Another 29.2 percent of districts are contested between the Taliban and government forces. But LWJ claims that SIGAR's data is dated, and that their numbers show that the Taliban controls or contests 239 districts, or 59 percent.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 Al Qaeda warns Saudi prince on 'sin'
SOURCE	https://www.yahoo.com/news/al-qaeda-warns-saudi-crown-prince-over-sin-085338498.html
GIST	<p>Dubai (AFP) - Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has warned Saudi Arabia's reformist Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman over his "sinful projects", in a bulletin released Friday.</p> <p>Prince Mohammed has spearheaded a string of policy changes in ultraconservative Saudi Arabia, including reinstating cinemas and allowing women to drive.</p> <p>"The new era of Bin Salman replaced mosques with movie theatres," the Yemen-based jihadist group said in its Madad news bulletin, picked up by the SITE Intelligence Group.</p> <p>He "substituted books that belonged to the imams... with absurdities of the atheists and secularists from the east and the west and opened the door wide for corruption and moral degradation," it said.</p> <p>The Sunni jihadist group AQAP has flourished amid a complex war in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia heads a military alliance battling Shiite Huthi rebels.</p> <p>In its statement, AQAP slammed April's WWE Royal Rumble event in the Saudi coastal city of Jeddah, near the Islam's most holy sites in Mecca.</p> <p>"(Foreign) disbelieving wrestlers exposed their privates and on most of them was the sign of the cross, in front of a mixed gathering of young Muslim men and women," it said.</p> <p>"The corruptors did not stop at that, for every night musical concerts are being announced, as well as movies and circus shows," SITE quoted it as saying.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Court: Romania, Lithuania secret CIA jails
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/european-court-romania-lithuania-hosted-cia-secret-jails-55554320

GIST

The European Court of Human Rights ruled Thursday that Romania and Lithuania allowed the detention and abuse of a Saudi and a Palestinian at secret U.S. prisons.

The Strasbourg, France-based court said Thursday that Abd al-Rahim Al Nashiri, a Saudi national later sent to Guantanamo Bay, was detained and abused in Romania between Sept. 2003 and Oct. 2005, and urged Romania to investigate and punish perpetrators.

The court concluded that Al-Nashiri was blindfolded, hooded, shackled, kept in solitary confinement, and subjected to loud noise and bright light during his detention at the CIA prison in Romania.

Romania denies hosting such CIA facilities. There was no immediate reaction from the government.

The court said Al Nashiri and Zubaydah were both considered "high-value detainees" taken by the CIA at the start of the U.S.-led "war on terror."

Al Nashiri's lawyer, Amrit Singh, called the ruling "a sharp rebuke to Romania's shameful attempts" to conceal its hosting of a secret CIA prison. She was the lead lawyer on the case with the New York-based Open Society Justice Initiative.

Singh also noted the court's decision in light of the appointment of new CIA Director Gina Haspel, who supervised a covert detention site in Thailand where terror suspects, including al-Nashiri, were waterboarded, an interrogation technique that simulates drowning.

"The European court's ruling is critical for upholding standards of international law — that torture is absolutely prohibited and those involved in torture must be held to account," said Singh. "It stands in stark contrast to the United States' decision to promote Gina Haspel to CIA Director despite her role in my client's torture."

The court also said that Lithuania hosted a secret CIA detention facility from February 2005 to March 2006 where Abu Zubaydah, a Palestinian suspected of being a planner for the Sept. 11 attacks, was detained.

It ruled that Lithuania allowed him to be moved to another CIA detention site in Afghanistan, "exposing him to further ill-treatment." He is currently detained at Guantanamo Bay and has not been charged.

Lithuanian authorities said they would consider appealing the court's decision and may also investigate the claims again.

Justice Minister Elvinas Jankevicius told reporters that "we will take a decision after carefully examining," the ruling. Vytautas Bakas, the chairman of the parliamentary committee for national security and defense, said he would propose opening a new probe.

Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė, however, contradicted the justice minister and said in a statement that the small Baltic country's "reputation damage is done," adding that Lithuania "thus will have to execute a court judgment" and pay Zubaydah 130,000 euros (\$152,000). She has regularly clashed with the Lithuanian government and forced a minister to resign after expressing her distrust.

Amnesty International called the rulings "a key milestone in holding European governments accountable for their involvement in illegal CIA activities in the aftermath" of the 9/11 attacks.

Roisin Pillay, director of the International Council of Jurists' Europe and Central Asia Program claimed that "many other European governments colluded with the U.S. to illegally transfer, 'disappear' and torture people during rendition operations and must also be held accountable."

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HEADLINE	06/01 Malaysia: 15 suspected militants detained
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/student-housewife-15-terror-suspects-held-malaysia-55577205?
GIST	<p>Malaysian police said Friday they have detained another 15 suspected militants, including several foreigners, for smuggling firearms and plotting attacks on places of worship.</p> <p>National police chief Mohamad Fuzi Harun said six Malaysians, six Filipinos, a Bangladeshi restaurant owner and a couple from a north African country were detained between March and May.</p> <p>Among the Malaysians was a 17-year-old student who made six Molotov cocktails he planned to use against entertainment outlets, churches and Hindu temples in Kuala Lumpur, Fuzi said. The student, a suspected Islamic State member, tested one of his devices in an open area and was detained in April, an hour after he produced a video on social media warning of the attacks, he said.</p> <p>The police chief said a 51-year-old Malaysian woman was held on May 9 during general elections for planning to ram a car into non-Muslims at a voting center. "In addition, the suspect also planned to drive into non-Muslim worship places using a car filled with gas cylinders as explosives," he said.</p> <p>Fuzi's statement said a 33-year-old Malaysian was detained after he was deported by Turkey for trying to slip into Syria to join the Islamic State. Two other Malaysians had planned to kidnap and kill police officers and also attack places of worship, it said.</p> <p>Fuzi said the African couple, both in their early 20s and suspected of having IS ties, were detained in April and since have been deported. Their specific home country wasn't disclosed.</p> <p>The 41-year-old Bangladeshi was believed to be involved in smuggling weapons for terrorists.</p> <p>Another Malaysian and six Filipinos, aged between 22 and 49, were held in April in Sabah state on Borneo island for being part of a militant cell collecting firearms to wage "jihad" in Marawi city in the Philippines, he said. Marawi was the scene of a six-month militant siege last year.</p> <p>Hundreds of people suspected of having ties to the Islamic State have been detained in Malaysia in the past few years.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 Taliban deny 'off stage' contacts w/US
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/taliban-reject-us-commanders-statement-peace-talks-55579104?
GIST	<p>The Taliban say they "categorically reject" a statement made this week by the U.S. commander of coalition forces in Afghanistan about "off stage" contacts and dialogue taking place between the Kabul government and the insurgents.</p> <p>Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid says in a statement distributed to the media on Friday that Gen. John Nicholson's remarks, made to reporters at the Pentagon from his Kabul office, were a "baseless claim."</p> <p>Nicholson said Wednesday that "mid-level, senior-level Taliban leaders" are "engaging with Afghans," adding that unspecified international organizations, foreign governments and other interested parties also are involved.</p> <p>Mujahid says that "American General Nicholson is making such fabricated statements to divert attention from his failures and keep the Washington media busy with false claims instead of exposing the failed Trump (administration's) strategy" in Afghanistan.</p>

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	05/31 UN: Mexico security forces complicit
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/u-n-says-mexican-security-forces-are-likely-behind-disappearances-n878941
GIST	<p>The U.N. human rights office has “strong indications” that Mexican federal security forces are behind a series of disappearances around Nuevo Laredo, a city on the U.S.-Mexico border, officials said on Wednesday.</p> <p>In a statement, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein urged the Mexican government to “take urgent measures to stop the wave of forced disappearances in Nuevo Laredo and surrounding areas,” amid allegations that federal security forces in Mexico are behind such disappearances.</p> <p>The U.N. Human Rights Office in Mexico documented the disappearance of 21 men and two women in Nuevo Laredo from February until May 16, but local human rights organizations said there have been at least 40 disappearances in this period. “Many of these people are reported to have been arbitrarily detained and disappeared while going about their daily lives,” Zeid said.</p> <p>A series of testimonies received at the the U.N. human rights office suggest that people currently missing were reportedly detained by uniformed personnel as they walked or drove along public roads, and several burnt out and bullet-ridden vehicles were found by the roadside, the statement said.</p> <p>“It is particularly horrific that at least five of the victims are minors, with three of them as young as 14. These crimes, perpetrated over four months in a single municipality, are outrageous,” said Zeid.</p> <p>The U.N. report is the latest finding by international groups highlighting alleged abuses by the government in its decadelong battle against criminal gangs. More than 35,000 people have gone missing since President Felipe Calderón sent military forces to battle drug gangs in late 2006.</p> <p>There have been more than 200,000 murders since then, with a record number last year fueling widespread anger with President Enrique Peña Nieto’s ruling party ahead of a July 1 presidential election. Mexican authorities had ample information and evidence about the Nuevo Laredo disappearances but had made little progress in investigating — leaving the burden of the search to the family and friends of some of the people missing, the U.N. noted. “Families have undertaken their own searches, without any protection, and relatives have to date found the bodies of at least six victims. Several witnesses have been subjected to threats, and one was disappeared for two days,” the statement read.</p> <p>Mexico’s National Human Rights Commission, better known by their Spanish acronym CNDH, released a statement on Wednesday saying they initiated an investigation looking into the disappearances and described efforts such as asking the Navy and other officials to protect the population of Tamaulipas, the Mexican state where Nuevo Laredo is, though at least three disappearances had happened since then.</p> <p>While CNDH’s statement detailed steps the government was taking, it didn’t include any findings or potential leads that could possibly give families of the victims some closure.</p> <p>“It is vital the Mexican authorities carry out an effective search for those whose whereabouts are still unknown and to conduct a diligent, independent and complete investigation to find out what happened, identify those responsible and ensure they are brought to justice,” Zeid said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/01 Study: cellphone spying near White House
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-switch/wp/2018/06/01/signs-of-sophisticated-cell-phone-spying-found-near-white-house-say-u-s-officials/?utm_term=.fafbed33074a
GIST	<p>A federal study found signs that surveillance devices for intercepting cellphone calls and texts were operating near the White House and other sensitive locations in the Washington area last year.</p> <p>A Department of Homeland Security program discovered evidence of the surveillance devices, called IMSI catchers, as part of federal testing last year, according to a letter from DHS to Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) on May 22. The letter didn't specify what entity operated the devices and left open the possibility that there could be alternative explanations for the suspicious cellular signals collected by the federal testing program last year.</p> <p>The discovery bolsters years of independent research suggesting that foreign intelligence agencies use sophisticated interception technology to spy on officials working within the hub of federal power in the nation's capital. Experts in surveillance technology say that IMSI catchers - sometimes known by one popular brand name, Stingrays - are a standard part of the toolkit for many foreign intelligence services, including for such geopolitical rivals as Russia and China.</p> <p>A DHS spokesman confirmed the contents of the letter to Wyden but declined further comment.</p> <p>"This admission from DHS bolsters my concern about stingrays and other spying devices being used to spy on Americans' phones," Wyden said in a statement on Thursday. "Given the reports of rogue spying devices being identified near the White House and other government facilities, I fear that foreign intelligence services could target the president and other senior officials."</p> <p>The DHS letter came in response to a meeting last month in which Wyden pushed for more aggressive federal response to cellular system insecurity. IMSI catchers are widely used by local, state and federal police, as well as foreign intelligence agencies.</p> <p>The devices work by simulating cell towers to trick nearby phones into connecting, allowing the IMSI catchers to collect calls, texts and data streams. Unlike some other forms of cell-phone interception, IMSI catchers must be near targeted devices in order to work.</p> <p>When they are in range, IMSI catchers also can deliver malicious software to targeted devices for the purpose of stealing information stored on them or conducting longer-term monitoring of communications.</p> <p>The same May 22 letter revealed that DHS was aware of reports that a global cellular network messaging, called SS7, was being used to spy on Americans through their cell phones. Such surveillance, which can intercept calls and locate cell phones from anywhere in the world, are sometimes used in conjunction with IMSI catchers.</p> <p>ESD America, a defense and law enforcement technology contractor based in Las Vegas, has reported detecting IMSI catchers throughout the Washington area while conducting testing for private clients.</p> <p>The company, which said it has federal contracts, declined to comment on work it has done for the U.S. government but said in a statement, "ESD America has several corporate and foreign government clients whom we have assisted in the detection of potential IMSI Catcher operation across many cities including Washington, D.C."</p> <p>In the DHS tests, which took place over the past three years, the company said it had detected signs of IMSI catchers near the White House, the FBI headquarters, the Senate, the Pentagon, the Russian Embassy and along the collection of other foreign embassies in an area known as Embassy Row in Northwest Washington.</p> <p>The Washington area's dense collection of U.S. officials and sensitive facilities makes it prime real estate</p>

for cellular interception, experts say.

“For any large intelligence agency, the United States, especially now, is a high-value target,” said Thomas Rid, a political science professor at the John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. “They get paid to go after high-value targets. It’s their job... It’s a complete no-brainer.”

The letter said DHS officials, during a pilot program last year, “did observe anomalous activity that appeared consistent with IMSI catcher technology” within the Washington area, including near the White House. It cautioned that DHS “has neither validated nor attributed such activity to specific entities, devices or purposes” and said that some of the suspicious signals may have been “emanating from legitimate cell towers.”

Experts on cellular interception say that various IMSI catchers have distinctive designs, making it clear from the resulting cellular signals and behavior whether they were made by American companies or by manufacturers in other countries.

Civil liberties groups have long warned that IMSI catchers are used with few limits by U.S. authorities, who collect calls, texts and other data from innocent bystanders as they conduct surveillance on criminal suspects or other legitimate targets. Increasingly, though, critics have sought to portray the technology as posing threats to national security because foreign intelligence services use them on Americans, both while in the United States and abroad.

"This is a huge concern from a national security perspective," said Laura Moy, deputy director of Georgetown Law's Center on Privacy & Technology. "People have been warning for years... that these devices were used by foreign agents operating on American soil."

The surveillance devices are hard to counteract, though encrypted calling and messaging apps -- such as Signal, WhatsApp or Apple's FaceTime -- provide protection against IMSI catchers. Some experts advocate wider deployment of such encrypted communication tools within the U.S. government, along with a move away from traditional cellular calling and texting.

Wyden and others also have called on the Federal Communications Commission, which along with DHS oversees the security of American cellular networks, to institute stronger protections against IMSI catchers, including possible technical fixes that cellular carriers or device makers could implement to resist surveillance.

The FCC said in response to questions about the discovery of IMSI catchers in Washington, "We continue to monitor reports of the use of IMSI devices and to coordinate closely with our counterparts at DHS, DOJ, and the FBI. The FCC strenuously enforces its rules against the unauthorized use of licensed radio spectrum and harmful interference with licensed users of the airwaves."

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HEADLINE	05/31 FAA reopens Paine Field assessment
SOURCE	https://www.heraldnet.com/business/flights-delayed-faa-revisits-air-passenger-service-impact/
GIST	<p>EVERETT — The much-anticipated start of commercial air service at Paine Field, which was expected to begin this fall with completion of a passenger terminal, could be delayed by renewed Federal Aviation Administration scrutiny.</p> <p>In a surprise move, the agency has begun what it calls a supplemental environmental assessment of the effect of up to 24 flights per day by three airlines. A 2012 assessment, which approved of passenger service at Everett’s county-owned airport, involved different airlines and only up to 12 flights per day.</p> <p>Airline interest in Everett has intensified since. The more ambitious scope of passenger operations at Paine Field necessitated another look, an FAA spokesman said Thursday.</p>

The agency could not say how extensive the study might be, but supplemental environmental assessments typically take six to 18 months, the agency said. That time frame includes a public comment period.

Paine Field spokesman Scott North said commercial passenger operations “will begin when the FAA completes its regulatory process. If the FAA approves it, we expect operations to begin late in 2018.”

Everett-based Propeller Airports, under contract with Snohomish County, has invested some \$40 million in developing the two-gate terminal, which is now under construction.

Propeller CEO Brett Smith said the unique circumstances of launching passenger service in Everett mean all of the involved parties are in somewhat uncharted territory — including the federal government.

“There is some ambiguity around this because this hasn’t been done in a while,” Smith said. “Commercial airline service doesn’t get added to general aviation airports very often. So the FAA, the airlines and Propeller Airports all want this done correctly.”

Alaska Airlines, United Airlines and Southwest Airlines have proposed a combined 24 flights per day to cities throughout the West.

Because the three airlines weren’t involved in the original proposal of a dozen daily flights, they can’t simply elect to fly 12 or fewer flights, the FAA said. The agency only reviews the proposals as they are submitted.

When passenger service at Paine Field was first proposed, there was vocal opposition. An organization called Save Our Communities and the city of Mukilteo were involved in a series of unsuccessful court battles to stop the terminal. Last summer, the state Supreme Court declined to hear their case, bringing the lawsuit against Propeller and airport owner Snohomish County to an end.

Propeller points out the currently planned service mostly involves smaller, quieter jets than those in the 2012 proposal.

Southwest Airlines eagerly awaits the completion of the terminal and the FAA environmental authorization, the company told The Herald. Alaska Airlines and United Airlines did not respond to requests for comment.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Starbucks windows NOT shatterproof
SOURCE	https://nakedsecurity.sophos.com/2018/05/31/hoax-alert-starbucks-is-not-inviting-you-to-test-its-shatterproof-windows/
GIST	<p>Anarchists, you might need a lot of caffeine to stoke your mayhem, but Starbucks is not going to give it to you as a reward for smashing their windows.</p> <p>According to a hoax post that’s been making the rounds on Facebook and anarchist forums such as Nerdica.net, Starbucks is installing new shatterproof windows that scientists have been working on for the past three years.</p> <p>Just try to break the windows with a brick or rock, the hoaxsters are urging people. If you succeed, Starbucks will reward you with a free year of coffee!!!!</p> <p>...Or not. Snopes debunked the beverage fantasy after Starbucks confirmed via email that the meme is pushing fabricated news.</p> <p>The image started circulating last week. As Snopes notes, Starbucks has in the past taken precautions</p>

against vandalism at its flagship roastery in Philadelphia, having boarded up its Capitol Hill store and closed multiple stores early in anticipation of annual May Day labor protests.

According to the Associated Press, in early May, vandals broke windows and spray-painted walls in nine Starbucks stores in the company's home city of Seattle. This year marked the anniversary of riotous World Trade Organization protests in 2017.

At any rate, if you want an ample supply of arguably decent coffee, jail probably isn't the place to get it. Starbucks most certainly isn't the place to get it for free, either, so don't expect them to give up the goods in exchange for smashing up their stores.

Don't fall for the hoax. Leave the brick on the ground, leave the coffee company's windows unmolested, and stay out of jail!

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HEADLINE	05/31 Renton PD: traffic cams not a deterrence
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/renton-police-say-traffic-cameras-not-deterring-red-light-runners
GIST	<p>RENTON, Wash. - It's a problem that surprised Renton police: drivers speeding through red lights even though new cameras are watching.</p> <p>The cameras were setup at three intersections on May 1, after police received several complaints at South Puget Drive and Talbot Road - which is known for crashes, Park Avenue North and Logan Avenue North, and Talbot Road South and South Grady Way.</p> <p>When police started looking at those videos they said the number of red-light runners was far worse than expected.</p> <p>"Once we started reviewing the warning videos we were really surprised by the number of motorists running the lights. It was far worse than we expected," said Renton Police Commander Karlewicz. "In the first three weeks of monitoring the warning violations there were two and a half times more violations at those three intersections as there was in the rest of the city in an entire month."</p> <p>Driver, Sheri Hines said she sees the benefit of cameras.</p> <p>"It's a great idea, it's not perfect," said Hines.</p> <p>But ironically, she got a warning for running a red light while turning at one of the problem intersections last week.</p> <p>"If I was allowed to turn but I did a California stop, then yeah, I deserve it, it was my fault," said Hines.</p> <p>Driver Jocelyn Alexander-Shaw also got a warning violation.</p> <p>"Out here it I think that's kind of unfair if there's no signage posted it does come off like a, 'gotcha,'" said Alexander-Shaw.</p> <p>They both agree with police giving drivers more time to adjust to the intersections and understand the dangers.</p> <p>But, others argue with so many red light runners, now is the time to ticket them.</p> <p>"The warning that I got, it actually would have been a ticket if they didn't extend it, but I didn't even know that they were there," said Hines.</p>

	<p>Usually drivers get a 30-day grace period after the cameras are installed, but they're getting an extra two weeks so the grace period ends June 13.</p> <p>“I just know that people get up in arms if they’re not notified about something beforehand,” said driver Jessica Lowery. “I agree a red light is a red light and people shouldn’t be running it to begin with so.”</p> <p>After June 13th police said the fine for running a red light is up to \$250.</p> <p>Police said by state law, the red light camera ticket violations aren’t part of a driver’s driving record.</p> <p>However, if a driver doesn’t pay for the ticket or respond to a hearing, the violation will be reported to the Department of Licensing.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 PCSO: 35 tons of waste at homeless camp
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/05/31/pierce-county-cleans-up-35-tons-of-waste-at-homeless-encampment-sheriffs-department-says/
GIST	<p>PUYALLUP, Wash. — Some business owners in Puyallup are thanking the county after a homeless encampment thought to contribute to a theft problem was removed earlier this month.</p> <p>Pierce County sheriff’s deputies said multiple agencies worked to clean up the encampment in the area of Canyon Road and State Route 512. The encampment was a source of crime and waste, deputies said.</p> <p>“This week we are hoping you will also notice a decrease in criminal activity and solid waste in the same area,” deputies said in a Facebook post.</p> <p>Cleanup of the area took about 300 man hours and 35 tons of solid waste was removed, deputies said. Deputies said the particular encampment was targeted due to a “high volume of calls and complaints” from businesses.</p> <p>“In 2017 our deputies responded to 90 calls for service at just one of the stores for crimes including shoplifting, vehicle prowls, loitering/panhandling, littering, trespassing, people sleeping in cars, dumped vehicles, and people urinating on sidewalks,” deputies said.</p> <p>Business owners in the area praised the cleanup, saying theft in the area had long been a problem spot.</p> <p>“The theft has been an issue,” said Michael Mecklemberg of McLendon Hardware in Puyallup. “They’ll steal axes, machetes, camping gear, a lot of camping gear.”</p> <p>The encampment was there for well over a year, Mecklemberg said, but it really started to become troublesome about six months ago.</p> <p>“It would catch on fire,” Mecklemberg said of the encampment.</p> <p>Business have seen less theft in the area since the cleanup, Mecklemberg said.</p> <p>“In our eyes we’re thrilled with it,” he said. “It’s not like they’re just kicking them out. They’re asking them if they want help, they’re asking if they want jobs.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Lawsuit: CBP took \$58K from Ohio man
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/ohio-man-sues-after-customs-takes-life-savings-from-

GIST	<p><u>his-carry-on/</u></p> <p>A 64-year-old Cleveland, Ohio, man is suing U.S. Customs and Border Protection after agents strip-searched him at an airport in October and took more than \$58,000 in cash from him without charging him with any crime, according to a federal lawsuit filed this week in Ohio.</p> <p>Customs agents seized the money through a process known as civil asset forfeiture, a law enforcement technique that allows authorities to take cash and property from people who are never convicted or even charged with a crime. The practice is widespread at the federal level. In 2017 federal authorities seized more than \$2 billion in assets from people, a net loss similar in size to annual losses from residential burglaries in the United States.</p> <p>Customs says it suspects that the petitioner in the case, Rustem Kazazi, was involved in smuggling, drug trafficking or money laundering. Kazazi strongly denies those allegations and says that the agency is violating federal law by keeping his money without filing any formal complaint against him.</p> <p>Kazazi is a retired officer with the Albanian police who relocated with his family to the United States in 2005 after receiving visas through the State Department’s lottery program. They became U.S. citizens in 2011. After more than a decade away, Kazazi planned a trip to Albania last fall to visit relatives, make repairs on a family property and potentially purchase a vacation home.</p> <p>He took \$58,100 in U.S. currency with him, the product of 12 years of savings by Kazazi, his wife, Lejla, and his son Erald, who is finishing a chemical engineering degree at Cleveland State University, according to the lawsuit. The family lives in Parma Heights, a suburb of Cleveland.</p> <p>In an interview translated by his son, Rustem Kazazi said safety concerns prompted him to take cash on his trip, rather than wire the funds to a local bank.</p> <p>“The crime [in Albania] is much worse than it is here,” he said. “Other people that have made large withdrawals [from Albanian banks] have had people intercept them and take their money. The exchange rates and fees are [also] excessive.”</p> <p>Albanian contractors often prefer dollars and euros over the local currency, Kazazi said. For those reasons, he said, many expatriates who return to visit Albania bring large amounts of cash with them.</p> <p>On Oct. 24, Kazazi arrived at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport to begin the first leg of his journey, which would take him to Newark to connect with an international flight. He carried the cash in three counted and labeled bundles in his carry-on bag, he said, along with receipts from recent bank withdrawals and documentation pertaining to his family’s property in Tirana, the Albanian capital.</p> <p>According to a translated declaration that Kazazi provided to the court as part of the lawsuit, TSA employees discovered the cash in his bag during a routine security check and alerted Customs and Border Protection.</p> <p>“They asked me some questions, which I could not understand as they spoke too quickly,” according to Kazazi’s declaration. “I asked them for an interpreter and asked to call my family, but they denied my request.”</p> <p>The CBP agents led Kazazi to a small windowless room and conducted multiple searches of him and his belongings, he said. According to Kazazi’s declaration, the agents asked him to remove all of his clothing and gave him a blanket to cover the lower portion of his body. Kazazi said that a man wearing rubber gloves then “started searching different areas of my body.”</p> <p>Kazazi characterized the search as a “strip search” in an interview translated by his son. “I felt my rights violated,” he said.</p> <p>The searches turned up nothing – no drugs, no contraband, no evidence of any illegal activity, according to</p>
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the lawsuit. But the agents took Kazazi's money. Even more alarming to Kazazi was that the receipt the agents handed to him did not list the dollar value of his cash.

"I began to worry that they were trying to steal the money for themselves," he said in his court declaration.

After being released, Kazazi called his wife and explained what had happened. None of it made sense to either of them, but Lejla Kazazi told her husband that it had to be some sort of misunderstanding and that he should continue on his trip and let her and Erald sort it out at home.

Seven months later, Customs still has the money.

The Kazazis have been caught up in a broader struggle over civil asset forfeiture, a law enforcement practice that allows police to seize and permanently keep cash and other property on the suspicion of wrongdoing. Defenders of the practice, such as Attorney General Jeff Sessions, say it's a valuable tool for fighting drug cartels and other criminal enterprises in cases where a criminal conviction is difficult to obtain. But media outlets such as The Washington Post and civil liberties groups such as the ACLU have found that the process is ripe for abuse.

"The government can just take everything from you," said Wesley Hottot, the Kazazi family's lawyer. Hottot is with the Institute for Justice, a civil liberties law firm working to overturn civil forfeiture. People wishing to challenge a civil forfeiture must essentially demonstrate their innocence in court, Hottot said, turning the dictum of "innocent until proven guilty" on its head.

"You have to affirmatively show you're not a criminal to get your own money back," Hottot said. "You have to effectively prove a negative."

Federal authorities haul in billions in cash and property from forfeiture every year, a tally that doesn't include additional billions seized in state and local forfeiture actions.

The Kazazi family didn't hear anything about their cash or why it was taken until more than a month after it was seized, when Customs finally sent a seizure notice to their home.

"This is to notify you that Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) seized the property described below at Cleveland, OH on October 24, 2017: \$57,330 in U.S. Currency," the notice states. "Enforcement activity indicates that the currency was involved in a smuggling/drug trafficking/money laundering operation."

The first thing the Kazazis noticed was that the dollar amount listed was \$770 less than the amount that Kazazi said he took with him. The family said that the cash was all in \$100 bills, making it impossible for it to add up to \$57,330.

Hottot said these types of "errors" are common in forfeiture cases, and that it's "always in the same direction": government receipts coming up a few hundred or a few thousand dollars short of what defendants say they had.

The Kazazis said they were also flabbergasted by the allegation of "smuggling/drug trafficking/money laundering." There was no indication of how the officers arrived at that conclusion. "This was the most offensive thing I've ever seen," Erald Kazazi said. "They provide no evidence. They list three different things without even saying which one it is."

In a statement, a CBP spokesman said that "pursuant to an administrative search of Mr. Kazazi and his bags, TSA agents discovered artfully concealed U.S. currency. Mr. Kazazi provided inconsistent statements regarding the currency, had no verifiable source of income and possessed evidence of structuring activity," that is, making cash withdrawals of less than \$10,000 to avoid reporting requirements.

Hottot denies that Rustem Kazazi was trying to conceal the cash – he had wrapped it in paper, labeled it

and sent it through the scanner in his carry-on bag. The “inconsistent statements” were a result of Kazazi’s poor English language comprehension, Hottot said.

Hottot also noted that the structuring allegation was not included in the seizure notice. “They’ve never mentioned structuring before,” he said. “I think what were really seeing here is some creative Monday morning quarterbacking by CBP, trying to justify the unjustified.”

The CBP spokesman also noted that there are disclosure requirements for traveling internationally with sums of cash greater than \$10,000. “Failure to declare monetary instruments in amounts more than \$10,000 can result in fines or forfeiture and could result in civil and or criminal penalties,” he said.

Hottot said Kazazi was well aware of those requirements and planned file his disclosure form during his four-hour layover in Newark. The form instructs travelers to file the paperwork “at the time of departure from the United States with the Customs officer in charge at any Customs port of entry or departure.”

“If he’s gonna follow the law on this he’s gonna have to do it in Newark on the way out of the country,” Hottot said.

The CBP seizure notice gave the Kazazis a number of options for proceeding with the case. They could abandon the cash completely, or they could make an “offer in compromise” – letting CBP keep a certain percentage of the seized cash if they returned the rest. There were also options for challenging the seizure administratively through internal CBP channels or letting the case proceed in federal court. The Kazazis opted for federal court.

Under federal forfeiture law, the government was required to initiate a forfeiture case within 90 days after the Kazazis responded to the seizure notice. If they failed to initiate a forfeiture case within that window, they would be required to promptly return the money to the claimants.

That deadline passed over a month ago, on April 17. CBP has not filed a forfeiture complaint; nor has it returned the money. Erald Kazazi said he has called CBP several times was told that the case was now with the U.S. attorney’s office in Ohio and that they had no additional information on it. So this week the Kazazis filed their own lawsuit, demanding the immediate return of their property.

The U.S. attorney’s office for the Northern District of Ohio declined to comment on the record.

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HEADLINE	05/31 More drivers killed under influence of drugs
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/health-care-news/articles/2018-05-31/more-drivers-killed-under-the-influence-of-drugs-than-alcohol
GIST	<p>SOME 22.3 PERCENT OF fatally injured motorists who were tested for drugs tested positive for marijuana in 2016, a figure that researchers say has "increased substantially" in recent years as states have legalized the drug for recreational or medicinal use, according to a new report.</p> <p>The finding, in a study released Thursday by the Governors Highway Safety Association, was one of several regarding the growing prevalence of drugs in vehicle fatalities. The report also found that 44 percent of drivers killed in automobile accidents in 2016 who were tested for drugs tested positive for one or more substances – a number that was up 28 percent from 10 years prior. That figure eclipsed the 37.9 percent who were known to have been tested for alcohol and tested positive – a figure that actually fell in the last decade, from 41 percent in 2006.</p> <p>The report was intended to draw attention to the need to incorporate a drug message into programs that encourage motorists not to drive while impaired. It noted that marijuana was the most commonly found drug. Jim Hedlund, author of the study, says "marijuana use has become more normalized" as states across the country decriminalize the drug.</p>

	<p>"If use is up, use by drivers is up," Hedlund says.</p> <p>Hedlund attributes the decline in alcohol-related deaths to the "broad societal consensus" that drunk driving is wrong. There's a "strong societal consensus. It's [drunk driving] is bad," he says. "Everyone knows it's bad." However, this way of thinking hasn't caught up to drug-impaired driving yet. That's where education comes in.</p> <p>"That's the next step. Precisely to provide that education," Hedlund says.</p> <p>The report suggests that some of the strategies used to decrease drunk driving can be applied to prevent people from driving while on drugs. However, several challenges come with that. A driver can consume a vast number of drugs that would be difficult to test for. Additionally, no nationally accepted method exists for testing drug-impaired drivers, and different drugs have different effects on different people.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Counting buildings in South China Sea
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-backstory-southchinasea/backstory-using-satellites-to-count-buildings-in-south-china-sea-idUSKCN1IW351
GIST	<p>HONG KONG - Shrouded in Chinese military secrecy and hidden from the eyes of journalists, Beijing's build-up of man-made islands on reefs deep in the maritime heart of Southeast Asia is a vexing story to report.</p> <p>Reuters deputy head of graphics Simon Scarr, based in Singapore, had previously dealt with private sector satellite imagery providers but always felt more could be done within the highly competitive field.</p> <p>Late last year in a conversation with Earthrise Media, an independent group helping journalists obtain and analyze satellite data, Scarr wondered if it would be possible to count buildings on China's seven man-made islands in the Spratly archipelago of the hotly contested South China Sea.</p> <p>During a six-week period, Earthrise digitally scrutinized hundreds of images dating back to 2014 when China started rapidly building up those islands. Reuters journalists checked the data with a range of military and academic contacts.</p> <p>On a spread sheet of figures confirming extensive construction across the South China Sea, one number stood out – Subi reef was home to nearly 400 buildings, more than expected and nearly double the number on similar islands.</p> <p>"It was great data to have, and it really helped us build-up the webpage, with imagery and information from other sources, too," Scarr said.</p> <p>The Subi information helped journalists in Hong Kong, Beijing and Sydney research the story that would anchor the package on the islands.</p> <p>It also provided insight into possible Chinese intentions for military bases on islands that Beijing once described as mostly civilian. The buildings on Subi, along with extensive facilities on Fiery Cross and Mischief reefs, appeared to match military bases inside China and could house up to 2,400 personnel.</p> <p>Subi is the largest of China's seven man-made outposts in the Spratlys. The so-called "Big Three" of Subi, Mischief and Fiery Cross reefs all share similar infrastructure – including emplacements for missiles, 3km runways, extensive storage facilities and a range of installations that can track satellites, foreign military activity and communications.</p> <p>Determined to use the package to test their innovations, a Reuters RTV team headed to the Hong Kong</p>

	coast to shoot footage that would be overlaid with animation to illustrate the development. “This was one of the most elaborate things we’ve done,” said senior producer Ryan Brooks.
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HEADLINE	05/31 Jury: \$4 verdict police shooting death
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/my-heart-just-dropped-4-verdict-shocks-family-man-killed-n879026
GIST	<p>Four dollars.</p> <p>When Monique Davis heard that was the amount a jury believed her fiancée's mother and three children deserved for his death in a police shooting, she didn't bother to listen to the rest of the verdict. She walked out of the courtroom, shaken.</p> <p>"My heart just dropped," Davis recalled. "It was like, are y'all serious?"</p> <p>Four years earlier, her fiancée, Gregory Vaughn Hill Jr., who was black, had been shot behind his closing garage door by Christopher Newman, a white Florida sheriff's deputy responding with a partner to a complaint of loud music. A grand jury declined to indict Newman, who said Hill had pulled a gun. Hill's mother then filed a wrongful death lawsuit against Newman and his boss, St. Lucie County Sheriff Ken Mascara. The case went to trial this month, and on May 24 a jury cleared Newman, assigned a small bit of blame to Mascara and said Hill was almost entirely at fault because he was drunk.</p> <p>The jury tallied up the damages: \$1 for funeral expenses to Hill's mother, and \$1 each to Hill's three children, aged 7, 10 and 13.</p> <p>The decision astonished the family's lawyer, John Phillips.</p> <p>"I'd have rather seen a zero than have to tell the children that their pain and suffering for losing their father is only a dollar," he said Thursday.</p> <p>Which is what the family will probably get in the end.</p> <p>Because the jury assigned just 1 percent of negligence to Mascara, that \$4 in damages was automatically reduced to 4 cents, Phillips said. But even that was made irrelevant by the jury's finding that Hill's intoxication made him 99 percent negligent. In doing so, the jury effectively erased any damages, Phillips said.</p> <p>That convoluted verdict left Phillips wondering whether the jury, after about 10 hours of deliberations, understood what it was doing — and if so, whether the jurors saw the damage amount as some sort of punishment.</p> <p>"Either it was punitive or they viewed these children's pain as virtually worthless," Phillips said.</p> <p>Answers to those questions may never come. None of the jurors has spoken publicly, and they are not required to justify their verdict.</p> <p>Newman and his partner, Deputy Edward Lopez, responded to Hill's Fort Pierce home on Jan. 14, 2014 after someone from a school across the street called to complain of loud music, police have said. The deputies knocked, and Hill, 30, on disability leave from a Coca-Cola warehouse, pulled open the garage door. Seeing the officers, he started to close the door — and pulled out a gun, police said. Newman opened fire, his bullets piercing the door. Hill was found dead inside with an unloaded gun in his back pocket.</p> <p>Phillips disputed that Hill raised the gun toward the officers, questioning how the weapon ended up in his</p>

back pocket before he died.

Phillips is preparing file a motion for a new trial, based on what he says were inconsistencies in the way Hill's gun was used as evidence during the trial, and prosecutors' revealing that Hill had been on probation at the time of the shooting for a drug charge.

After the verdict, Mascara released a statement saying his office was "pleased to see this difficult and tragic incident come to a conclusion." Newman, he added, "was placed in a very difficult situation, and like so many law enforcement officers must do every day, he made the best decision he could given the circumstances he faced."

Lawyers who represented Newman and Mascara did not respond to a request for comment.

Davis, 35, has been raising Hill's three children — the two oldest of whom she had with him — with her boyfriend.

After last week's verdict, she went home, and for two days could hardly get out of bed, wondering how she was going to explain it to the kids. She finally tried, and she said the children were struggling with it in their own ways.

Davis wants the police to admit they did something wrong, that they reacted too quickly, and she wants them to change the way they handle such situations.

"I won't give up until proper justice is served," she said.

How that might happen, she isn't sure.

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HEADLINE	05/31 Calif. distributing fentanyl test strips
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/california-experiments-distributing-fentanyl-tests-55568841?
GIST	<p>California health officials are experimenting with distribution of test strips that allow people to check their drugs for the presence of the powerful opioid fentanyl, which is causing numerous overdoses and deaths nationwide.</p> <p>The state health department has been paying about half of California's 45 needle exchanges to distribute the strips and has spent about \$57,000 on the program so far, the Los Angeles Times reported Thursday.</p> <p>Fentanyl can be mixed into other drugs such as heroin and cocaine without the user knowing.</p> <p>The tests are conducted by mixing a bit of a drug with water and then dipping a strip into the fluid for a few seconds. The strip shows a single line for a positive result and two lines if it is negative.</p> <p>New York state and several overdose prevention programs across the country also are using the test strips, the Times said. The strips developed by the biotechnology company BTNX based in Toronto, Canada, are only sold to governments and harm reduction programs. CEO and founder Iqbal Sunderani said the state of California is his biggest customer.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Russian reporter describes fake slaying
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ukraine-reporters-fake-murder-involved-swine-blood-morgue-55560274?

GIST

To mimic gore, they used makeup and pig's blood. They shot bullet holes in one of his sweatshirts. And to top off Arkady Babchenko's staged murder, they even took him to the morgue.

The journalist revealed Thursday how Ukrainian security services faked his murder to thwart a contract hit allegedly arranged by Babchenko's native Russia.

Police said Tuesday night that Babchenko had been shot and killed in his apartment building. The next day, he showed up alive in front of journalists and authorities revealed that it all had been a ruse and said that the organizer of the planned assassination had been arrested.

At a news conference, Babchenko himself wasn't clear on why the security services thought the elaborate deception was necessary.

"They probably had their reasons. Maybe they wanted to collect proof that would be 100 percent solid," he told reporters.

One of Russia's best-known war reporters and a vehement Kremlin critic, the 41-year-old Babchenko fled the country in February 2017 because of what he described as death threats. He said Ukrainian agents came to him about a month ago and said that Russian security services had put out an order for his slaying.

"I said: 'Great. Why have you been waiting for a month?'" he recounted.

To make the staged murder look genuine, Babchenko said, security officers took his sweatshirt and shot holes in it. Babchenko said he put on the shirt and got smeared with pig's blood.

"I took a mouthful of it and spit it out," he said. One of the officers also told him how to fall down to appear to have been genuinely shot.

His wife called an ambulance and he was taken to a hospital intensive care unit, where a forensic expert "documented" his death. After that, he ended up in a morgue that he said was "freezing as hell."

Once inside the morgue, Babchenko said he was "resurrected," taking off the blood-stained clothes. "I just sat there watching the news about what a great guy I was," he added.

Babchenko said Thursday he had told his "closest relatives" about the sting operation in advance, although on Wednesday, he said he had apologized to his wife "for the hell she had to go through in the past two days."

The Russian Foreign Ministry denounced the Ukrainian government, saying it was "fanning anti-Russian hysteria." Relations between the two countries have been strained since 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea and separatists backed by Moscow in eastern Ukraine have fought government troops in a conflict that has killed more than 10,000 people.

Babchenko's faked death caused real shock in Ukraine, where other journalists have been killed in recent years. It also brought widespread criticism from press freedom groups.

Sergei Tomilenko, head of the Ukrainian Journalists Union, complained that authorities had presented no evidence that an assassination plot actually existed or that Russia was involved. Without such evidence, he said, the deception could be considered politically motivated, "which discredits not only journalists, but the image of Ukraine."

Added Pauline Ades-Mevel of the group Reporters Without Borders: "We condemn the use of these means to protect journalists."

But Interior Minister Arsen Avakov lashed out at the criticism.

	<p>"What would you want? That Babchenko had been killed?" he said.</p> <p>Babchenko said he is staying in a secure location for the time being and his immediate plans are to try to overcome the stress he's endured.</p> <p>"I'm planning to have a good sleep, get drunk and fall asleep while drunk and think about nothing for the next two or three days," he said.</p> <p>On Wednesday, when Babchenko's stunning appearance in front of journalists brought whoops and applause, Ukrainian Security Service chief Vasyl Gritsak said a Ukrainian citizen who allegedly was paid \$40,000 by the Russian security service to organize and carry out the hit had been arrested. The man in turn allegedly hired an acquaintance to be the gunman.</p> <p>The alleged organizer, Boris German, was arraigned Thursday night and ordered held in custody for two months. German told the court he had been working with Ukrainian counter-intelligence because a friend living in Russia who planned to cause disorder in Ukraine had approached him.</p> <p>Prosecutor-General Yuriy Lutsenko said the man contacted by German to kill Babchenko informed authorities of the plot. At a subsequent meeting of German and the proposed triggerman, German said he had orders for about 30 other killings, including that of a former officer of Russia's Federal Security Service, Lutsenko said on Ukraine's Inter TV channel.</p> <p>News reports said German's lawyer has identified him as the executive director of a joint venture in Ukraine with German arms-maker Schmeisser.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Seattle robbers halted in rush hour traffic
SOURCE	https://patch.com/washington/seattle/seattle-guitar-center-robbers-halted-rush-hour-traffic
GIST	<p>SEATTLE, WA - The heavy traffic along the Mercer Street "Mercer mess" in South Lake Union is known for thwarting the commutes of thousands of drivers daily. Now it's known for maybe thwarting a robbery.</p> <p>For whatever reason, three people on Wednesday decided to rob the South Lake Union Guitar Center at the peak of rush hour. And they chose to escape in two different vehicles, and they chose to escape down clogged Mercer Street.</p> <p>They only made it to the intersection of Dexter Avenue, about three block east of the Guitar Center. Seattle police reported that the robbers began chasing each other in their cars until they crashed, backing up traffic even worse on Mercer.</p> <p>That's not all: after crashing, one of the robbers pulled out a machete and threatened his co-conspirator. Then that robber pulled a gun on the robber holding the machete. That's when Seattle police arrived and arrested the two robbers. The third, a woman, was also arrested.</p> <p>The robbers snatched a guitar from the Guitar Center worth an estimated \$1,600. Police returned the instrument to the store.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 More police patrol Alki ahead of summer
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/more-officers-patrolling-alki-to-crackdown-on-crime-as-summer-gets-closer

GIST	<p>SEATTLE - For 21 years, Nancy Adams has watched the cars racing, the motorcyclists popping wheelies, drivers revving their engines and the occasional traffic collision from her balcony.</p> <p>Adams said Alki has always been a chaotic scene as the warm weather kicks in.</p> <p>“It’s turned in to an all-afternoon fracas of noise, loud motorcycles, Harleys, the small foreign cars they soup up,” Adams said Thursday.</p> <p>Although she has complained to Seattle police in the past, she said that she finally has hope something will change.</p> <p>Seattle police Capt. Pierre Davis, who heads the Southwest Precinct, said police try every year to address the chaos at Alki, but they haven’t found a permanent solution. He said that after talking with residents and business owners they have come up with a new strategy.</p> <p>“They will see a number of foot beat officers who are walking the beach lines, checking out the businesses and two to four officers that are solely in patrol cars that are conducting traffic stops,” Davis said.</p> <p>Police started rolling out a light version of this emphasis a few weeks ago. The number of officers and hours they’re on Alki will expand as the warm weather kicks in, Davis said.</p> <p>Davis said police will not only have officers from the Southwest Precinct on the emphasis patrol, but officers from across the city. Some, Davis said, working overtime.</p> <p>Adams said she has already seen a difference.</p> <p>“I’ve seen, parked over here, a cruiser he was just sitting there and as traffic was coming around the corner everyone was driving by him nice as pie,” she said, motioning outside.</p> <p>Cindy Reynolds, whose condo is on the same floor as Adams’, said she hopes the strategy will help. She said that during the summer she closes her windows and doors, cranks her television all the way up and can still hear the traffic noise on the fifth floor.</p> <p>“I just want to scream at them ‘people live here’,” Reynolds said, exasperated.</p> <p>Davis said that while people will see more officers, it shouldn’t keep them from coming to the beach.</p> <p>“They can come and partake all they want if they behave themselves accordingly, but if they don’t they’re going to be dealing with my officers there,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Mexico City: violence surges; worst 20yrs
SOURCE	https://mexiconewsdaily.com/news/violence-surges-in-mexico-city-worst-in-20-years/
GIST	<p>Mexico City has recorded its most violent first four-month period of any year of the past two decades with 382 intentional homicides between January 1 and the end of April.</p> <p>The figure is 14% higher than the 335 recorded in the same period last year and 24% higher than the murder rate registered in the first four months of 1998, when there were 309 homicides.</p> <p>There have not been more than 300 murders in Mexico City in the January-April period of any other year in the past 20.</p> <p>Based on National Public Security System (SNSP) statistics, the average daily homicide rate in the capital to April 30 was 3.1.</p>

The SNSP data, which compiles statistics provided by the Mexico City Attorney General's office (PGJ), shows that the number of murders has increased in the first four months of every year since 2015.

Compared to 2014 — when homicides fell to 241 in the first four-month period from 256 the previous year — the crime has increased by 58%.

In the past 20 years, the lowest number of homicides recorded in a first four-month period was in 2006, with 207.

According to Mexico City authorities, most of the murders committed this year were not linked to organized crime and are not indicative of an outbreak of violence on the streets of the capital.

PGJ statistics reveal that eight out of every 10 homicides were the result of personal fights or attacks in revenge, in which alcohol consumption and/or firearms were involved.

However, a report published today in the newspaper Milenio said that homicides have increased since authorities began security operations against criminal organizations dedicated to narcomenudeo, or retail drug dealing.

Milenio cited the Tláhuac Cartel in the southern borough of the same name, Los Rodolfos in Xochimilco and La Unión de Tepito and La Fuerza Anti-Unión in the central borough of Cuauhtémoc among the organizations authorities have targeted.

The marines, backed up by police, carried out an operation in July last year that resulted in the death of the boss of the Tláhuac Cartel, known by the alias "El Ojos."

Narco-blockades made an unprecedented appearance in Mexico City following the death of the gang leader and seven of his sicarios, or hitmen.

Mexico City Mayor José Ramón Amieva admitted yesterday that criminal gangs with "links all over the country" use locations in the capital to store and sell drugs but rejected any suggestion that drugs are grown or processed the city.

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HEADLINE	06/01 Japan introduces plea bargaining
SOURCE	https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20180601_10/
GIST	<p>Japan is introducing plea bargaining on Friday. It is considered to be a "landmark" change in the criminal justice system.</p> <p>Prosecutors may now forgo indictments or file lesser charges if suspects or defendants cooperate in investigations of accomplices and other people.</p> <p>The practice is widely used in the United States and other countries.</p> <p>The system is expected to find use as a new tool in probes into sophisticated organized crime or corporate crime. Prosecutors can offer lesser charges to suspects in such economic crimes as tax evasion, bid-rigging, and bribery. It can also be used for crimes involving drugs and firearms.</p> <p>Some observers warn of the risk of lies by suspects or defendants seeking a lighter penalty.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Inauguration Day rioting charges dropped
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SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/prosecutors-withdraw-inauguration-day-rioting-charges-against-7-people/2018/05/31/2dbb824c-6404-11e8-99d2-0d678ec08c2f_story.html?utm_term=.ec1c0fd4e677
GIST	<p>Federal prosecutors Thursday dropped their cases against seven people charged with rioting during President Trump’s inauguration after a D.C. judge determined that the government intentionally misrepresented information and withheld evidence from the defense.</p> <p>Assistant U.S. Attorney Jennifer Kerkhoff had repeatedly told the court and defense attorneys that her office possessed a single video of a protest-planning meeting, secretly recorded by a conservative group that had infiltrated the meeting. But on Wednesday, the U.S. Attorney’s Office acknowledged in an email to defense attorneys that 69 such undercover videos or audio recordings existed. Prosecutors wrote that they had turned over evidence they deemed relevant to the cases.</p> <p>During a hearing Thursday in D.C. Superior Court, Judge Robert E. Morin pressed prosecutors about the omission.</p> <p>“It was intentional. Your office represented there was only one video,” Morin said. “The government has not offered any explanation as to why they did not inform the court of these additional videos.”</p> <p>A week before the case was to go to trial, Assistant U.S. Attorney Ahmed Baset said prosecutors would withdraw charges, with the option of reinstating them. He did not offer an explanation. Over Baset’s objection, Morin dismissed the cases with prejudice, meaning the charges cannot be reinstated.</p> <p>The dismissals marked the latest turmoil in criminal cases stemming from the mass arrests on Jan. 20, 2017. More than 200 people were accused of smashing windows and rioting for some 16 city blocks in downtown Washington.</p> <p>Authorities say the group used “black bloc” tactics — wearing dark clothing and hiding their faces by wearing masks and goggles.</p> <p>Defense attorneys have strenuously pushed back, saying that most people who joined protests that day were demonstrating legally and that only a small group peeled off to vandalize.</p> <p>Defense attorneys on Thursday praised Morin for holding the government accountable for the discrepancy in evidence. They said that their clients had been deprived of the opportunity to examine all the video evidence and that it would have been unfair to proceed to trial.</p> <p>“In making his decision, Chief Judge Morin had to figure out how to rebalance the scales of justice, which, for our trial group, he succeeded in doing,” said attorney Andrew O. Clarke. “We have been fighting for the First Amendment rights to protest for more than a year with these cases.”</p> <p>Clarke’s client Dylan Petrohilos, 29, who had been charged with rioting, said he and others had faced unfair prosecution.</p> <p>“This happens often in this city to poor people and people of color. But we were able to expose it,” Petrohilos said.</p> <p>Kerkhoff was not present for the hearing before Morin because she was in a separate trial in the rioting case. Her colleague Baset told the judge that the government meant it had only one video from that particular planning meeting, but Morin responded that that was not what Kerkhoff told the court. Baset then said he could not speak on her behalf.</p> <p>Jessie K. Liu, the U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, declined to comment on the issue.</p> <p>Legally, prosecutors must provide their evidence to the defense at the earliest possible time, even if that evidence weakens their case. Failure to do so can be considered misconduct and a violation of a 1963 rule</p>

based on the U.S. Supreme Court case Brady v. Maryland.

Careful prosecutors will often turn over as much material as possible to the defense because they recognize that their cases could be jeopardized later if they fail to turn over some information.

An inherent problem with the system, according to former federal prosecutor Barak Cohen, is that it asks “the fox to guard the henhouse.”

“Even a well-intentioned prosecutor is less likely to think creatively and aggressively about what might be exculpatory than a defense lawyer fighting to protect a client,” said Cohen, now a white-collar defense lawyer with Perkins Coie.

Concerning the scale of the material withheld, Cohen said that “even a small violation of Brady is problematic, but the bigger the misconduct, the more it calls into question the prosecution’s tactics.”

In all, 234 people were charged in connection with the Inauguration Day disturbances. Twenty of those people have pleaded guilty, and prosecutors dropped cases against 20 in early reviews.

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HEADLINE	06/01 Mexican Mafia iron grip on Calif. jails
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-mexican-mafias-iron-grip-on-californias-jails?ref=home
GIST	<p>To the jailers of California, the Mexican Mafia is known as the gang of gangs.</p> <p>Any member of a Latino street gang sent to prison or jail in California likely has to abide by the rules and dictates of the gang while in prison.</p> <p>Even to the point of making peace with their long-time hated rivals.</p> <p>“They have the ability to turn gangs that are historically sworn enemies that fight on the streets into allies when they come inside our jail system,” said Commander Joseph Dempsey of the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department.</p> <p>Author and former Los Angeles Times reporter Sam Quinones has chronicled the Mexican Mafia and associated Latino street gangs of California for two decades. Quinones says the gang’s power extended as its 30-year reputation for viciousness in the jail system won the allegiance of Latino street gangs throughout Southern California.</p> <p>“The Mexican Mafia’s influence and importance to Southern California goes far far beyond the prisons now,” Quinones told The Daily Beast. “I came to understand the Mexican Mafia was as important to many towns and communities as the mayor. They had an enormous effect in certain areas of Southern California, particularly the Latino barrios—an effect on the crime rate, the murder rate, and how drugs were sold.”</p> <p>Two federal indictments unsealed May 23 in Los Angeles vividly affirm the immense power wielded by the gang of gangs in the jails and prisons of California.</p> <p>The court documents allege members of the Mexican Mafia divided up control of the drug trade in nearly every jail and prison in the state, imposing “taxes” and meting out violent discipline to inmates who didn’t follow the gang’s rules.</p> <p>One of the indictments goes as far as to characterize the gang’s activity as “an illegal government” inside what is the largest jail system in the country.</p> <p>What’s more, the indictments assert what cops and crooks in Los Angeles have been saying for years, that the gang’s system of discipline and “taxation” extended far beyond the walls of the state’s prisons and into</p>

nearly every community in the Los Angeles area where Latino street gangs were active.

“Members of such gangs are expected to, and are proud to, carry out the orders of the Mexican Mafia member in control of their neighborhood or custody facility, because doing work for the Mexican Mafia increases the gang member’s status and reputation,” reads one of the unsealed indictments.

The two indictments, part of a three-year investigation, charge a total of 83 people as part of a criminal conspiracy that involved murder, kidnapping, robbery, extortion, drug trafficking, witness tampering, money laundering, and identity theft.

“The Mexican Mafia appears to be the most powerful prison gang in California,” Thom Mrozek, spokesperson for the U.S. attorney’s office, told The Daily Beast. “It wields considerable influence over many Hispanic street gangs in Southern California.”

The Mexican Mafia is often referred to as La Eme, Spanish for the letter M, which is the 13th letter of the alphabet. Mrozek said that the Mexican Mafia’s scope and power are reflected in the fact that a number of gangs demonstrate allegiance to the group by adding a “13” to their names, including MS-13.

Altogether, the court filings in the case lay out an elaborate system in which gang members rely on trusted associates to carry out orders and manage the criminal enterprise.

Full members of the Mexican Mafia, known as *carnales* or “brothers,” are relatively few; the indictment estimates there are only about 140, most of whom are incarcerated in prisons or jails in California. To become a Mexican Mafia member requires establishing a reputation for “putting in work” for the gang, which, according to the indictment, means a demonstrated willingness to murder or assault gang enemies, provide financial assistance to gang members, and follow gang rules inside and outside of prison.

To exercise their power in prisons, they rely on subordinates, including trusted lieutenants known as *shot-callers*, and *messengers*, *enforcers*, *smugglers*, and *money launderers*.

The first indictment unsealed in Los Angeles alleges that a select few incarcerated members of the Mexican Mafia, led by 55-year-old Jose Landa-Rodriguez, divided up control of nearly every jail and prison in California, and functioned as “an illegal government” inside the L.A. County jail system, which houses around 15,000 inmates on a daily basis.

Landa-Rodriguez is accused of carrying out a host of criminal activities including authorizing murders, assaults, and the kidnapping and planned murder of the relative of a gang member who had defied him.

A second Mexican Mafia member, Luis Vega, 33, is charged with having ordered a murder and directed assaults against gang associates who showed disrespect or failed to follow Mexican Mafia rules. According to the indictment, Vega used secret handwritten messages, known as “*kites*,” to order that a gang associate be stabbed 13 times as discipline for supposedly disrespecting Vega.

These are but a few of the hundreds of crimes alleged in the government’s case.

A second indictment targets Michael “Pomona Mike” Lerma, an alleged gang member accused of running criminal rackets with an iron fist in the city of Pomona.

The indictments go into details seemingly made for a TV prison drama. They explain how gang members during the period of the investigation allegedly used wives and girlfriends and other influential women, referred to as “*secretaries*,” as *go-betweens* to transmit orders regarding discipline and other sensitive information. One defendant named in the indictment is a lawyer accused of using his attorney-client privilege to convey messages and orders related to the gang’s criminal activity.

The jail indictment lists numerous instances in which trusted gang associates allegedly smuggled cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin by the ounce into jails and prisons. It also explains other systems of

“taxation” behind bars, including one alleged extortion scheme in which “all Latino inmates were required to contribute a percentage of their commissary spending on food and hygiene items into a ‘kitty’ that generated additional income for the Mexican Mafia member when the kitty was sold to an inmate.”

The court filings say that in the gang’s prison hierarchy, Latino inmates are divided into three categories: Sureños, a term for Latino gang members loyal to the Mexican Mafia; Paisas, Mexican nationals who have no gang affiliation; and Residents, who are of Latin American descent and, like Paisas, have no prior gang affiliation.

The name of the federal investigation, Operation “Dirty Thirds,” was taken from an alleged practice of the Mexican Mafia to collect a “thirds” tax on all drugs smuggled in L.A. County jails. According to the indictment, it meant that one-third of all illegal drugs smuggled into jails or prisons had to be “broken off” and given to the senior Mexican Mafia member or shot-caller in charge. Such was the extent of the gang’s power that if the Mexican Mafia member in charge decided to sell the “thirds-tax” portion of the drugs, other inmates were barred from selling drugs of their own until the member’s drugs were completely sold.

Quinones has interviewed dozens of Sureños. He even met “Pomona Mike” Lerma on a reporting trip to Pelican Bay State Prison. “He was cooking cocoa on his little hot plate in the cell,” Quinones recalled. “Seemed nice enough. He was about 5’4” and wan, almost pale. They get very little sun.”

Quinones says the Mexican Mafia began somewhat modifying the way it operated about 10 years ago, ordering associates to keep a lower profile in the L.A. area—less violence, lower visibility—and focus instead on growing the lucrative income from drug-trafficking and identity theft.

“These gangs have become business entities more than what they were for years, which was defenders of turf, which terrified and blighted a whole region and was a huge problem for decades,” Quinones said.

He says a federal crackdown like the one announced last week shows that despite the gang’s lower profile on the streets, La Eme remains a powerful force, especially in Southern California.

“On the one hand, they don’t exist because you go around these neighborhoods and you don’t see them anymore. It doesn’t mean they aren’t still active.”

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HEADLINE	05/31 Pirates of Caribbean, Africa and Asia
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2018-05-31/piracy-at-sea-in-2017-increased-off-africa-across-latin-america
GIST	<p>The men who work aboard the ships in the global commercial maritime industry are a reticent group. Moving cargo by sea is hard work that offers long hours and few thanks, shaping the deckhands into people who avoid complaining while focusing on the job to be done.</p> <p>Still, the Rev. Stephen Miller has witnessed a lot of trauma from ship crews over the years, and he is succinct about what raises the anxiety levels of the seafarers he meets across Asia.</p> <p>"If they are leaving to go toward Africa or East Africa, they are worried because of the hostage situation," says Miller, the Hong Kong-based East Asia regional director for The Mission to Seafarers, an international Christian charity serving merchant crews.</p> <p>Those worries are borne out in a recently released report, which provides a stark reminder about how deadly large swathes of the high seas remain in the second decade of the 21st century. While the number of incidents involving pirates around the world declined in 2017 compared with the previous year, the number increased off the coasts of Africa, South America and in the Caribbean, according to the annual "State of Maritime Piracy" report released by One Earth Future, a nonprofit organization that studies piracy. The NGO's Oceans Beyond Piracy (OBP) program released the report.</p>

"Pirate activity in 2017 clearly demonstrates that pirate groups retain their ability to organize and implement attacks against ships transiting the region," says Maisie Pigeon, the report's lead author. OBP defines incidents as including attacks, hijackings and kidnappings.

Of particular concern: The number of incidents in the Horn of Africa between ships and pirates sharply increased in 2017 compared with the previous year, according to both the OBP report and the International Maritime Bureau's annual report on piracy. Piracy incidents in the Horn doubled in 2017, particularly off the coast of Somalia, a focus of international headlines on piracy as recently as 2012. Incidents also were recorded off the coast of Yemen, a country torn since 2011 by a political crisis that has led to a protracted civil war and an impotent government.

"Pirates never went away," says Pigeon, noting that in recent years many seagoing criminals increasingly moved ashore to focus on illicit activity with drugs, arms and wildlife.

Elsewhere, piracy remains a problem on the other side of Africa, according to the OBP report. Threats remain in the Gulf of Guinea despite countermeasures implemented by coastal states such as Nigeria and maritime security companies.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, pirate incidents increased by 160 percent in 2017 compared with the previous year, according to OBP. The report singles out Venezuela and Suriname as countries that experienced upticks in piracy.

The surges in pirate incidents off Africa and in the Western Hemisphere come after years of good news about improved safety on the open waters for the shipping industry, which by one estimate generates more than \$500 billion annually in revenue. Attacks on commercial ships by pirates have been on the decline overall, thanks to better tracking, more responsive navies and increased readiness by the crews aboard cargo ships.

The news is especially upbeat across Asia, where pirates have long bedeviled the commercial maritime industry. The region still accounts for the greatest number of pirate incidents in the world, but it saw an overall drop in reported incidents of 23 percent in 2017 from 2016 and a 51 percent decrease from 2015, according to the OBP report. Kidnap-for-ransom incidents, for example, decreased by 80 percent, according to the report.

Cooperation between countries in the region has been key to fighting pirates, says Pigeon, who points to the agreement between Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines to launch joint patrols in waters known to harbor pirates as key to lowering the overall number of attacks.

Type of maritime vessel also affects whether a ship may come under attack, Miller says.

"The seafarers we see in Hong Kong are not going to be affected a lot by this because they are on big container ships," he says. "Most of this is happening on small tankers where they are coming out, they're robbing the ships, the ships are slow-moving ships, the guys will come on board, they'll stick a gun in the face of the crew and they'll say, 'Give us what you got onboard.'"

What is the lesson from 2017? Increased vigilance and communication, Pigeon says. A perception of increased safety may have lulled some governments into false security, she says. NATO wrapping up its naval missions in the Indian Ocean also may have encouraged pirates, she adds.

Piracy is "a crime of opportunity," she says. "Criminals are increasingly adaptive and that needs to be factored in."

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SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/may/31/eric-conn-case-feds-offer-27-year-plea-deal-billio/
GIST	<p>Prosecutors have offered a plea deal to the man who ran the largest disability scam in U.S. history, agreeing to a total of 27 years in prison to account for the fraud, plotting retaliation against a whistleblower, and for jumping bail to flee the country ahead of his sentencing.</p> <p>Eric C. Conn would serve out the 12-year sentence for the Social Security disability scheme, then get another 15 years tacked on for various conspiracy charges stemming from the retaliation and escape, according to outlines of the deal the government shared with one of the victims in the case, whistleblower Sarah Carver.</p> <p>For Ms. Carver and others whose lives were upended by the scam, which already tops \$1 billion in potential fraud, and by what they describe as a bungling government response, the sentence isn't nearly enough.</p> <p>"I am so furious," Ms. Carver told The Washington Times. "The DOJ has failed me as a victim in many ways. There is such a thing as victim's rights and they have violated almost all of them."</p> <p>Ned Pillersdorf, a lawyer for hundreds of people who were snared in the scam, also said Conn should get more time.</p> <p>"While I philosophically dislike long sentences for nonviolent white collar criminals, the exceptions are the Bernard Madoff class of con artists who do incalculable damage to unsuspecting individuals on a mass scale," Mr. Pillersdorf said. "Conn and Madoff are in the same class and ought to share a cell and have the same release date."</p> <p>Mr. Madoff is serving a 150-year sentence after pleading guilty to running a multi-billion dollar Ponzi scheme that sapped investments and savings from thousands of clients.</p> <p>Conn pleaded guilty last year to his part in a fraud ring that saw him recruit clients, then pay off doctors to fabricate medical or psychological evaluations signaling a disability. Conn then submitted those applications to Social Security judges who he also was plying with cash or gifts, and who rubber-stamped potentially thousands of bogus disability cases.</p> <p>After pleading guilty, Conn was slated to testify against a psychologist who was part of the scam, then was to be sentenced himself.</p> <p>He'd been out on bond during his own case, and even after he pleaded guilty — and despite him having repeatedly said he would flee the country — the judge and the government didn't revoke his bond. Just before he was to testify last June against the psychologist, Conn cut off his ankle bracelet and ran for the U.S.-Mexico border, escaping to Central America.</p> <p>He was recaptured in December at a Pizza Hut in Honduras.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Task force w/Native Tribes target drugs
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/may/31/ryan-zinke-interior-has-formed-task-force-with-nat/
GIST	<p>Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said Thursday that his agency has been working with Native American tribes suffering under an influx of opioids and other hard drugs.</p> <p>"The reservations, a lot of them, are land-based," Mr. Zinke said on Fox News. "A lot of them are millions of acres. It's hard to patrol."</p>

He said his agency formed a task force of 4,000 officers with tribal leaders and police. The most current operation targeted drug dealers in Arizona, but they've already performed sting operations in Minnesota, North Carolina and Washington.

Mr. Zinke said that since these tribal nations are sovereign, the agency works very closely with them to coordinate these operations. The goal is to target the source of the drugs and find where they are hidden.

"As the president has said, this is a war on opioids. It's destroying communities," he said.

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HEADLINE	05/30 Struggling to stop mail-order opioids
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/30/us/politics/drug-smuggling-mail-order-opioids.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Federal agents are struggling to stop opioid smugglers who are reaping vast profits, according to interviews and documents, as the number of Americans dying from drug overdoses continues to rise.</p> <p>Officials at the Department of Homeland Security say the drugs are shipped in such minute amounts that detecting them among cargo in a tractor-trailer is close to impossible. That the drugs increasingly are bought online and shipped directly to buyers — either through the Postal Service or commercial couriers like FedEx and UPS — makes inspections all the more difficult.</p> <p>"The sheer logistical nature of trying to pick out which packages contain opioids makes it much more challenging," said Robert E. Perez, an acting executive assistant commissioner at United States Customs and Border Protection, an arm of the department.</p> <p>China is the largest source of illegal fentanyl for American buyers, officials said, and buyers are increasingly paying with digital currencies for drugs that are shipped through other countries — often Mexico or Canada — to reduce the risk of the opioids being tracked and seized by customs officials.</p> <p>"When you're dealing with very small, minute quantities, it's kind of like death by a thousand cuts," said Patrick J. Lechleitner, the special agent in charge of the Washington office of Homeland Security Investigations, a division of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.</p> <p>"You used to have the tractor-trailer running up the interstate, with its contraband, that had to be met by someone and distributed," Mr. Lechleitner said. "Now, you have an individual sitting somewhere in middle America ordering this thing, and it arrives as a parcel at their house."</p> <p>A few years ago, officials said they rarely, if ever, encountered smuggled fentanyl or other opioids. Last year, Customs and Border Protection officers and Border Patrol agents found more than 1,485 pounds of fentanyl at American ports of entries. Already this year, customs officers and border agents so far have seized 1,060 pounds of fentanyl.</p> <p>The drugs are potent in small doses. Fentanyl is 50 times more potent than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine. It is often mixed with heroin or cocaine and used by consumers who are unaware they are taking fentanyl. Though far more opioids are smuggled across the southwest border, officials said, those that are shipped by mail tend to be far more potent.</p> <p>According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, opioids were linked to 42,249 deaths in the United States in 2016, the latest data available show. More than half were attributed to fentanyl and fentanyl analogues, and the numbers continue to rise, the data show.</p> <p>It is unclear how many deaths were attributed to prescriptions by doctors and how many were from synthetic opioids smuggled into the country, officials said. The going market wholesale price for a kilogram of cut fentanyl is about \$80,000, and can be turned around and sold for a profit of about \$1.6</p>

million, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration. That is about 20 times more profitable than heroin.

“This is what makes the opioid crisis so unique and dangerous,” said Peter Vincent, who led ICE’s international operations during the Obama administration. “Traditionally, law enforcement has focused on large quantities of drugs like marijuana and cocaine. But very small amounts of opioids can bring tremendous profits.”

Officials at Customs and Border Protection and Homeland Security Investigations said they have made significant gains in locating illegal opioids at land borders and at international mail facilities. They are increasingly relying on hand-held sensors that can peek inside packages and detect potent, but tiny, shipments of opioids. The customs agency has also trained a number of dogs to detect fentanyl and other opioids.

Each day, dozens of officers at the National Targeting Center comb through passenger lists for all flights arriving in the United States and cargo manifests of ships. Matching them to law enforcement and intelligence databases, the officers identify people and cargo that should be stopped or examined at the borders.

Homeland Security Investigations agents and analysts scour the dark web for sites that sell opioids. Agents also use software to analyze digital currency transactions to search for the identities of those behind them.

Additionally, undercover operations infiltrate suspected networks of opioid smugglers, officials said. Homeland Security Investigations is providing dark web investigations and digital currency training to state and local law enforcement agencies.

Homeland security officials said these efforts have led to the opening of hundreds of investigations of suspected opioid smugglers. In April, the authorities accused 45 people of participating in a drug trafficking ring that attempted to sell more than 30 kilograms of fentanyl in New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Maine.

In March, two men and a woman were arrested in Ohio after the authorities seized a package of fentanyl destined for Texas. During the same time, two Chicago-area men were charged with importing fentanyl from China; officials said the drugs were shipped through the mail to 19 addresses.

In January, President Trump approved spending \$9 million on screening devices and other drug detection tools for Customs and Border Protection officers at land-based ports of entry, airports and international mail facilities.

Congress provided the agency with an additional \$284 million in April for port and drug inspection technologies — \$71 million of which was specifically for opioid detection.

Officials at border agencies said they are working with law enforcement officials abroad to stem the flow of opioids into the United States, including a case against a smuggler in China who was suspected of shipping opioids overseas, Mr. Perez said.

Customs and Border Protection is ramping up coordination with China’s customs organizations to share more shipping data, said Kevin McAleenan, the agency’s commissioner. He said data sharing on shipment tracking has brought a 65 percent increase over the past year in the number of intercepted packages of fentanyl.

Still, tracking and arresting smugglers remains a challenge. A staffing shortage at the southwest border, where Mr. Trump is cracking down on illegal immigration, has pulled Customs and Border Protection officers from airports.

The agency is understaffed at ports of entry by an estimated 4,000 officers, according to a May report by

the Democratic staff of the Senate Homeland Security Committee. Ports in San Diego and Tucson, which account for 57 percent of all of the opioids seized by customs officers between 2016 and 2017, have assigned temporary staff to fulfill personnel needs.

The Trump administration's proposed 2019 budget calls for drastically increasing Border Patrol and ICE staff, but does not add additional officers at ports of entry. Officials at Customs and Border Protection said they have increased staffing at the six main international mail facilities by 20 percent over the past six months.

Officials at Homeland Security Investigations also are squeezed by the opioid crisis. Steve Francis, the special agent in charge in Detroit, said he has shifted some agents from Michigan to Ohio, which has been particularly hard hit by the epidemic.

Unintentional drug-related overdoses involving fentanyl caused the deaths of 2,357 Ohio residents in 2016, state records show. Senator Rob Portman, Republican of Ohio, credits agencies like Homeland Security Investigations for stepping up investigations to combat the problem.

But, he added, "There's no doubt that more funding is an important component if we're going to make real progress."

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HEADLINE	05/31 More arrests Everett motel shooting
SOURCE	https://www.heraldnet.com/news/police-arrest-2-more-suspects-in-everett-motel-shooting/
GIST	<p>EVERETT — A woman recruited two men to help her break into a motel room to steal drugs and money, leading to a shooting earlier this month that left a man with 24 entry and exit wounds from gunshots, according to police reports released Thursday.</p> <p>Misty Marie Krum, aka Misty Eggen, was arrested in Seattle this week, according to Everett police. She's accused of plotting the robbery that nearly killed a man, 39, on May 16 at the Farwest Motel on Evergreen Way.</p> <p>An alleged accomplice, Devon Skye Evans, 23, was arrested near downtown Everett. Last week police released photos of Evans and Krum and asked the public for tips about their whereabouts. Both were booked into the Snohomish County Jail on Wednesday.</p> <p>The suspected shooter, 24, of Marysville, was arrested within hours of the attack. He remains behind bars. As of Wednesday, charges had not been filed in Snohomish County Superior Court.</p> <p>Krum, 28, reportedly told the others that a guest at the motel had her car. She told them he had a lot of money and about 2 kilograms of drugs in his motel room and said they'd get some of the loot, according to court papers.</p> <p>Around 10:30 a.m., the trio intercepted the motel guest as he walked into his room. The gunman ordered him to get on the floor and told a 20-year-old woman in the room to put her face in a pillow.</p> <p>"I told you not to (expletive) with me!" Krum shouted, according to court papers. "This is what you get!"</p> <p>The robbers demanded all of the stuff from the victims. Court papers say Evans searched the room and went through their clothing. The armed man repeatedly pistol-whipped the motel guest. Then he ordered him to go to the bathroom to clean up, but the man wouldn't go, fearing he'd be shot. Instead, he charged at the gunman, who opened fire, police said.</p> <p>The man suffered a gunshot to the head, two to the chest, one to the lower abdomen, at least one to the back, a shattered femur and gunshots to his hips and arms. He tried to crawl or roll away, but the shooter</p>

“just kept shooting,” according to a report from the woman he was with.

An ambulance rushed the man to Providence Regional Medical Center Everett. Once he could talk, he told police Krum was one of the robbers. Security footage showed a woman who looked like Krum leaving the room, with numerous bags that she didn’t have when she arrived.

The suspected shooter later told police he’d hidden in a yard until the resident found him and called 911. A police officer caught him trying to run across a field, with a cast on his leg, around 3 p.m. at Madison Elementary School. The gun had been disassembled and tossed in a bush behind Value Village.

Krum and Evans, meanwhile, were gone. Tips from the public led police to them this week. Everett officer Aaron Snell said that was good detective work.

Bail was set Thursday at \$250,000 for Krum and Evans.

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HEADLINE	06/01 ‘Delta 5’ trespassing convictions upheld
SOURCE	https://www.heraldnet.com/news/court-affirms-trespassing-convictions-of-everetts-delta-5/
GIST	<p>EVERETT — State Court of Appeals judges have upheld trespassing misdemeanors for activists who blocked freight trains four years ago in an effort to draw attention to climate change.</p> <p>A three-judge panel ruled Tuesday that Snohomish County District Court handled the case correctly. The arrests received national attention in progressive media outlets, who dubbed the defendants the “Delta 5” — for the Delta train yard in Everett where their act of civil disobedience took place.</p> <p>“I don’t think anybody has any regrets or concerns about what we did,” Jackie Minchew, a retired teacher from Everett, said earlier this week. “We feel good about the whole action.”</p> <p>Minchew was among the four activists who pursued the appeal. They included fellow Everett resident Michael Lapointe, as well as Abigail Brockway and Patrick Mazza, both of Seattle. A fifth woman who was convicted in the case dropped out of the appeal.</p> <p>The remaining appellants are considering whether to pursue the case — and a disputed defense strategy at the center of it — to the state Supreme Court, Minchew said.</p> <p>On Sept. 2, 2014, more than two dozen activists entered the Delta yard of BNSF Railway in north Everett without permission. They set up a tripod over an at-grade crossing, idling a long train of oil tank cars.</p> <p>Police arrested five people — the future “Delta 5” — who were on the tripod or attached to it. Prosecutors charged them with obstructing or delaying a train and second-degree trespassing, both misdemeanors.</p> <p>The case went to trial in early 2016. Dozens of spectators packed the small courtroom daily in Snohomish County District Court in Lynnwood. TV cameras recorded the proceedings. Bloggers, national reporters and two documentary film crews chronicled the events.</p> <p>The accused had hoped to use a so-called necessity defense, arguing that civil disobedience was their only option for addressing the harm that fossil fuels are causing the planet. They also sought to highlight dangers to railroad workers.</p> <p>District Court Judge Anthony Howard allowed testimony to support the use of a necessity defense. Witnesses included a retired chemistry and oceanography professor, a physician who works as a public health officer and a director from the Seattle-based Sightline Institute.</p> <p>In the end, Howard refused to allow the jury to consider a necessity defense. The judge ruled that the</p>

	<p>defendants failed to demonstrate they had no reasonable alternative to breaking the law.</p> <p>A jury acquitted the defendants of obstructing a train but found them guilty of trespassing. They were sentenced to probation and ordered to pay restitution. Four of them later lost an appeal in Snohomish County Superior Court.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Missing teen girl: police arrest 3rd person
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article212303444.html
GIST	<p>Bonney Lake police arrested a third person late Wednesday in connection with the disappearance of a 15-year-old girl who went missing earlier in May, Pierce County Jail records indicate.</p> <p>The 34-year-old Tacoma man was booked into jail just before midnight on suspicion of one count of third-degree child rape, records show. He is being held without bail, pending a hearing Monday, according to prosecutors.</p> <p>Two people were charged Tuesday in Pierce County Superior Court with crimes related to the disappearance of Lileana "Lily" Christopherson.</p> <p>Christopher Fitzpatrick, 39, and Maria Ann Counts, 29, are accused of first-degree kidnapping, promoting commercial sex abuse of a minor, providing drugs to a minor, possession of child pornography and two counts of third-degree child rape. Fitzpatrick, of Federal Way, faces a \$2 million bail, while Counts, of Tenino, faces a \$500,000 bail.</p> <p>Christopherson was last seen in her room about 1 a.m. May 9, and when her mother checked in her room at 8 a.m., she was gone, court records show. Her shared email and Facebook passwords were changed. She was last seen by a friend at the Federal Way Transit Center that day.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Utah Highway Patrol: larger drug busts
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1005141/neighbor-ing-states-legal-pot-means-bigger-busts-in-utah/
GIST	<p>SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — The Utah Highway Patrol is seizing more marijuana on state highways and interstates since the drug has been legalized in a number of Western states.</p> <p>John Huber, the U.S. Attorney for Utah, says drug busts within the state's borders historically yielded only a few pounds per stop.</p> <p>But he tells the Deseret News it is no longer unusual to intercept up to 100 pounds at a time as loads of marijuana make their way across the state from places like California and Oregon.</p> <p>Huber says Utah law enforcement officers focus 90 percent of their anti-drug efforts on heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine. But he says the boost in marijuana trafficking is "a disturbing trend."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Loopholes in deadly arsonist early release
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/1005470/martin-pang-early-release-laws/
GIST	<p>It seems unjust that a man responsible for the deaths of four firefighters and the destruction of part of Seattle's International District gets to be released early from prison. But that's the situation with Martin Pang.</p>

Many in Seattle are asking how and why this is possible. Martin Pang committed arson in 1995. He set his family's building on fire in the International District with the goal of collecting insurance money. Four firefighters died responding to that fire.

Pang fled to Brazil before authorities brought him back to face charges. And that one point — Brazil — is why Martin Pang has been playing by different rules and laws ever since. And it is why he faces possible early release from prison in September.

"If you commit arson in Brazil and someone dies, you are not going to be charged with murder," former Washington state Attorney General Rob McKenna told KIRO Radio's Dave Ross. "They refused to extradite Mr. Pang. So prosecutors from King County had to fly down there and negotiate for his extradition. Finally, they successfully negotiated to have him returned to the United States, but only to face manslaughter charges and not felony murder charges."

"A similar situation comes up with murders who escape to Canada," he said. "Canada will not extradite murderers to Washington state where they might be charged with capital murder, in other words, face the death penalty Canadian law doesn't recognize the death penalty, Brazil doesn't recognize the felony murder rule."

Pang fled to Brazil. The only way to get him back to face his crime was to downgrade the charges. It is that lesser conviction that Pang has been subject to ever since. His sentencing has therefore been less than what many would expect.

Martin Pang sentencing

State courts used to have a wider range of options when it came to sentencing. They could take circumstances of the crime into consideration. Under that system, Martin Pang would have the four firefighters' deaths factored into his sentence. But in an effort to be more objective, that discretion was taken away from the courts.

"He's getting out early because we having something called the sentencing guidelines system in this state that are designed to ensure that offenders who commit similar crimes and have similar criminal histories receive similar sentences," McKenna said.

"And manslaughter is not treated as seriously under the sentencing guidelines as murder," he said. "He was convicted of manslaughter 1, which the standard is recklessness. He was not convicted of felony murder, which would have resulted in much longer sentences and even possibly life without parole."

"Under the guidelines it doesn't matter who the victims were, even though they were trying to save property and possibly save people's lives," he added. "It doesn't matter. They just follow this formula."

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HEADLINE	05/31 YouTube shooter had address of Google
SOURCE	https://www.aol.com/article/news/2018/05/31/police-say-youtube-shooter-also-had-handwritten-address-of-google/23448250/
GIST	<p>Police say the woman who opened fire and wounded three people at YouTube's Mountain View, California, headquarters before killing herself back on April 3rd scoped out the company's campus a day prior to the attack.</p> <p>The Associated Press reports that the San Bruno Police Commander Geoff Caldwell said the shooter Nasim Aghdam had the handwritten address of Google in her car at the time of the shooting. Google owns YouTube.</p> <p>KNTV notes that when Aghdam visited YouTube's headquarters she "inquired about employment." New</p>

	<p>details from police say she was at the office for approximately 10 minutes.</p> <p>Yahoo News reports that police say it seems Aghdam committed the April 3 attack because she was unsatisfied with YouTube's business practices. A website she was reportedly affiliated with noted that the company was trying to "suppress" content creators, according to KNTV.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Coded text for help saves kidnapped girl
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2018/05/31/coded-text-message-kidnapped-girl/662276002/
GIST	<p>PENSACOLA, Fla. — A Florida girl who was allegedly kidnapped by a man she had been messaging on Facebook and was rescued after sending a coded text message for help, according to authorities.</p> <p>The girl's name, age and relationship to a woman who reported her missing are redacted from the Escambia County Sheriff's Office report on the incident. The woman gave police information on the girl's phone and the man who had been allegedly "stalking" her.</p> <p>A convicted sex offender, Alaric Balfour Brown, 32, of Milton was arrested and charged with simple assault and kidnapping in connection with the case.</p> <p>Sexual battery charges were also referred to the Milton Police Department's jurisdiction, according to Brown's arrest report.</p> <p>The woman reported the girl missing on May 26, saying she came home to find a note saying the girl was sorry and she "did this because she loved her."</p> <p>The woman said the girl had been talking to someone known to her as "Twist Brown" for several months and the man had been texting the girl and showing up to her cheerleading games.</p> <p>The woman showed deputies text messages between the man and the girl about meeting in person someday, according to the report.</p> <p>Further, the woman said she and the girl agreed to use a code word if the girl was in trouble. The woman said she received a text message earlier that day with the code word — "blueberry pie" — along with a message telling her to call police.</p> <p>Deputies began working to locate the girl's phone. The girl then sent text messages saying "Twist" had taken her in a car that broke down on the side of the road, according to the report.</p> <p>Authorities found the girl and Brown on Interstate 10, the report states.</p> <p>The girl told police Brown came to her house, ordered her to leave and said if she didn't, she would get hurt. She told authorities he took her to Milton, raped her and threatened her afterward as they drove back toward Pensacola before the car broke down.</p> <p>The girl said that after the car broke down, she was able to retrieve her phone and secretly send the text message.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Nicaragua violence leaves 15 dead
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/attacks-mothers-day-march-nicaragua-leave-13-dead-55565000

GIST	<p>More than a dozen people died in shootings that erupted around Mothers' Day protests in Nicaragua, but the government and human rights groups differed Thursday on who was to blame.</p> <p>The Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights, which said it had members participating in Wednesday's march, said at least 11 people died when peaceful marches were attacked "by the repressive police and shock forces" loyal to President Daniel Ortega, the latter a reference to pro-government youth groups.</p> <p>Francisco Diaz, the second in command of the national police, said there were 15 deaths nationwide, which he blamed on "criminal gangs." Foreign Minister Denis Moncada said the violence was generated by opposition political groups and said, "The government rejects any responsibility in that violence."</p> <p>The Mother's Day marches were led by mothers of the victims of earlier protests. But some ended with gunmen firing into crowds sending thousands of demonstrators running for cover.</p> <p>An Associated Press photographer at Wednesday's march in Managua saw one person with a wound to the head carried off in a stretcher with a sheet covering his upper body, apparently dead.</p> <p>The gunfire appeared to come from government supporters near the end of the march, but demonstrators armed with improvised bottle-rocket launchers also opened fire in the skirmish.</p> <p>Nicaragua's Roman Catholic church hierarchy said in a statement Thursday that the violence showed that it couldn't yet resume a dialogue between protesters and President Daniel Ortega's government.</p> <p>The U.S. State Department condemned the Mothers' Day violence and said it supports peaceful talks to resolve the crisis, despite their suspension.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/31 Denmark bans burqa, niqab
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/denmark-joins-european-nations-banning-burqa-niqab-55554043?cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>Denmark joined some other European countries in deciding Thursday to ban garments that cover the face, including Islamic veils such as the niqab or burqa.</p> <p>In a 75-30 vote with 74 absentees, Danish lawmakers approved the law presented by the center-right governing coalition. The government says that it is not aimed at any religions and does not ban headscarves, turbans or the traditional Jewish skull cap.</p> <p>However, the law is popularly known as the "Burqa Ban" and is mostly seen as being directed at the dress worn by some conservative Muslim women. Few Muslim women in Denmark wear full-face veils.</p> <p>Justice Minister Soeren Pape Poulsen said that it will be up to police officers to use their "common sense" when they see people violating the law that enters into force Aug. 1.</p> <p>The law allows people to cover their face when there is a "recognizable purpose" like cold weather or complying with other legal requirements, such as using motorcycle helmets under Danish traffic rules.</p> <p>First-time offenders risk a fine of 1,000 kroner (\$156). Repeat offenses could trigger fines of up to 10,000 kroner or a jail sentence of up to six months.</p> <p>Anyone forcing a person to wear garments covering the face by using force or threats can be fined or face up to two years in prison.</p> <p>Austria, France and Belgium have similar laws.</p>
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Cyber Security News

Hackers deface Airport screens in Iran with anti-government messages

From Hack Read (05.26.2018)

On Thursday 24th May, the airport screens at Mashhad city in northeast Iran were hacked and defaced by an unknown group of hackers with messages against the Iranian government. The hackers left images on the arrival and departure monitor screens at the airport displaying statements against the Iranian government and military's activities and presence in the Middle East. According to Radio Farda, the messages were left in the Persian language which when translated into English accused the Iranian government of wasting Iranian lives and resources in Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza. "Wasting Iranians lives and financial resources in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC)," said the deface message. Moreover, hackers hacked into the official email account of Mohsen Eidizadeh, the head of Mashhad airport civil aviation and used it to spread the word about their hack. Additionally, the group urged Iranians to take snapshots of deface screens and use social media platforms to spread the word using the hashtag "Protests_alloverthecountry." [Link](#)

[Hackread\[.\]com/hackers-deface-airport-screens-in-iran/](http://Hackread[.]com/hackers-deface-airport-screens-in-iran/)

Cobalt Hacking Group Still Active Despite Leader's Arrest

From Bleeping Computer (05.28.2018) Catalin Cimpanu

Despite its leader's arrest in Spain two months ago, the Cobalt hacker group that's specialized in stealing money from banks and financial institutions has remained active, even launching a new campaign. "Cobalt is still active: its members continue attacks on financial organizations and other companies worldwide," said Dmitry Volkov, the Chief Technical Officer of Group-IB, the company who detected this new Cobalt operation. This new campaign was set in motion last week, May 23, when the company's security experts discovered one of Cobalt's phishing emails, aimed at banks in Russia and other former Soviet states. According to a report that Group-IB plans to release tomorrow but shared with Bleeping Computer, this spear-phishing email was designed to look like a security alert sent out by fellow Russian cyber-security firm Kaspersky Lab. Victims were urged to access a link to read and answer to a complaint that Kaspersky received about an alleged criminal act supposedly committed by the victim. The spear-phishing email was an obvious ruse to lure users on a malicious site where they'd be infected with the CobInt trojan, Group-IB says. CobInt is a malware strain that was historically used only by the Cobalt group, a clear indicator that the rest of the Cobalt members weren't deterred or phased by their leader's arrests, and appear to have no plan of stopping from hacking banks any time soon. The group, in spite of its leader's arrest, still remains a force to be reckoned with, and one of the most successful hacker groups known to date. [Link](#)

[Bleepingcomputer\[.\]com/news/security/cobalt-hacking-group-still-active-despite-leaders-arrest/](https://bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/cobalt-hacking-group-still-active-despite-leaders-arrest/)

Two Canadian Banks Announce Hacks Over the Weekend

From Bleeping Computer (05.29.2018) Catalin Cimpanu

Two Canadian banks put out statements on Monday announcing separate cyber-incidents affecting their customers. The two are Simplii Financial, a subsidiary of CIBC, and the Bank of Montreal —two of Canada's biggest banks. Simplii Financial said it discovered over the weekend that "fraudsters may have electronically accessed certain personal and account information for approximately 40,000 of Simplii's clients." The bank is currently investigating if the claim is true, but in the meantime, it says it deployed "enhanced online fraud monitoring and online banking security measures" to prevent abuse of customers' data. Simplii also said there's no evidence that customers of CIBC —its parent company— were affected, and the incident seems to be contained in its branch only. An hour after Simplii put out its statement, Bank of Montreal put out a similar announcement. The bank said it was contacted on Sunday by the hackers themselves, claiming to be in possession of customer data. Bank of Montreal did not reveal how many customers might have had their data compromised but said it believes to have closed the hackers' point of entry into its systems. Bank officials also added that they believe the hack originated from outside the country, albeit they did not elaborate on this claim with any other information. [Link](#)

[Bleepingcomputer\[.\]com/news/security/two-canadian-banks-announce-hacks-over-the-weekend/](https://bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/two-canadian-banks-announce-hacks-over-the-weekend/)

*Flaws in IBM QRadar Allow Remote Command Execution

From Security Week (05.29.2018) Eduard Kovacs

Three vulnerabilities discovered by a researcher in IBM's QRadar product can be chained for an exploit that allows a remote and unauthenticated attacker to bypass authentication and execute arbitrary commands with root privileges. IBM QRadar is an enterprise security information and event management (SIEM) product designed to help security analysts identify sophisticated threats on their network and improve incident remediation. Independent researcher Pedro Ribeiro discovered that IBM QRadar is affected by three potentially serious vulnerabilities, which he reported to the tech giant through Beyond Security's SecuriTeam Secure Disclosure program. According to IBM, the security holes impact QRadar SIEM 7.3.0 to 7.3.1 Patch 2, and QRadar SIEM 7.2.0 to 7.2.8 Patch 11. Patches are included in versions 7.3.1 Patch 3 and 7.2.8 Patch 12. IBM has assigned a CVSS score of only 5.6 to the vulnerabilities, which it collectively tracks as CVE-2018-1418. However, the issues seem serious and an advisory in NIST's National Vulnerability Database (NVD) shows a score of 9.8, which indicates a "critical" severity rating. According to Beyond Security, QRadar has a built-in application for performing forensic analysis on files. While the application is disabled in the Community Edition, the code is there and part of it still works. The application has two components: a Java servlet and the main component, which uses PHP. The first component is affected by a vulnerability that can be exploited to bypass authentication, while the second has a flaw that can be leveraged to download and execute a shell. [Link](#)

[Securityweek\[.\]com/flaws-ibm-gradar-allow-remote-command-execution](https://www.securityweek.com/flaws-ibm-gradar-allow-remote-command-execution)

Researchers Develop Attack to Bypass AMD's Virtual Machine Encryption

From Security Week (05.29.2018) Ionut Arghire

A group of German researchers has devised a new attack method capable of bypassing AMD's Secure Encrypted Virtualization (SEV). Used by AMD data-center processors, SEV is a hardware feature that provides secure encryption of virtual machines (VMs) to protect VM memory from physical attacks and cross-VM and hypervisor-based attacks. Fraunhofer AISEC researchers present an attack carried out from a malicious hypervisor and capable of "extracting the full contents of main memory in plaintext from SEV-encrypted virtual machines." Named SEVered, the attack requires a remote communication service running in the VM. The researchers say their attack can be used to extract all memory contents, even if the targeted VM is under high load. SEVered's effectiveness was tested on a recent AMD SEV-enabled server platform running various services, in encrypted virtual machines. SEV can transparently encrypt individual VMs using a Secure Processor (SP), where an individual key is used to encrypt the memory of each protected VM within the SP. The implementation in hardware is meant to protect the system against memory attacks, while also preventing hypervisors (HVs) from accessing sensitive VM data. The researchers claim SEVered is feasible in practice and could allow an attacker to extract the entire memory from a SEV-protected VM within reasonable time. They also say that the attack manages critical aspects such as noise during the identification and the resource stickiness well, but note that there is room for improvements. [Link](#)

[Securityweek\[.\]com/attack-bypasses-amds-virtual-machine-encryption](https://www.securityweek.com/attack-bypasses-amds-virtual-machine-encryption)

*Critical RCE Flaw Discovered in Blockchain-based EOS Smart Contract System

From The Hacker News (05.28.2018) Swati Khandelwal

Security researchers have discovered a series of new vulnerabilities in EOS blockchain platform, one of which could allow remote hackers to take complete control over the node servers running the critical blockchain-based applications.

EOS is an open source smart contract platform, known as 'Blockchain 3.0,' that allows developers to build decentralized applications over blockchain infrastructure. Discovered by Chinese security researchers at Qihoo 360—Yuki Chen of Vulcan team and Zhiniang Peng of Core security team—the vulnerability is a buffer out-of-bounds write issue which resides in the function used by nodes server to parse contracts. To achieve remote code execution on a targeted node, all an attacker needs to do is upload a maliciously crafted WASM file (a smart contract) written in WebAssembly to the server. As soon as the vulnerable process parser reads the WASM file, the malicious payload gets executed on the node, which could then also be used to take control over the supernode in EOS network—servers that collect transaction information and pack it into blocks. The researchers believe the new type of vulnerabilities affect not only EOS alone but also other types of Blockchain platforms and virtual currency applications. [Link](#)

Thehackernews[.]com/2018/05/eos-blockchain-smart-contract[.]html

ICAO Rallies Support for Cybersecurity Coalition at Bucharest Summit

From Aviation Today (05.21.2018) Nick Zazulia

Cybersecurity is a prominent issue in aviation. That's why the ICAO hosted a summit to unite civil aviation stakeholders from Europe, the Middle East and Africa in trying to solve it. "In an industry as interconnected as air transport, we cannot lose sight of the fact that a single cyber incident will likely impact multiple companies and stakeholders," said ICAO Secretary General Fang Liu, while kicking off the event. Highlighting that recent insurance sector assessments have identified the combined threats from cyber-crime, IT failure and database breaches as their No. 3 global business risk for 2017, Liu noted that ICAO is hard at work on a policy to address cybersecurity in civil aviation and that the organization's new global aviation security plan will greatly facilitate the global coordination and information sharing so fundamental to successfully addressing these threats. She added that several updates to ICAO's guidance materials had already been completed and that it was ICAO's view "that the secure and resilient exchange of information required to cope with the needs of evolving aviation activities can be enabled through a trust framework." "This would consist of coordinated standards, procedures, methods and agreements for the digital exchange of information between ground-ground, air-ground and air-air systems, as well as to regulate an identity system," Liu added. "These provisions, in turn, will support the ongoing implementation of performance-based navigation (PBN), aeronautical information management (AIM), air traffic flow management (ATFM) or any other current or projected air transport capability requiring the digital exchange of information between systems in a secure environment." The Bucharest event featured a series of tabletop exercises on airport cybersecurity, jointly organized by Airports Council International (ACI) in conjunction with ICAO and the governments of Romania and Finland. [Link](#)

Aviationtoday[.]com/2018/05/21/icao-rallies-support-cybersecurity-coalition-bucharest-summit/

Aviation Tech

Advanced Connectivity and Upgraded Cyber Security Module Added to SD Pro Platform

From Aviation Pros (05.29.2018)

Satcom Direct, the business aviation connectivity, software and hardware provider, is showcasing enhancements to its digital flight operations platform SD Pro. Two new modules further supporting on-board connectivity management and giving even greater control of cyber security threat management. SD's new Advanced Connectivity module enables users to generate a predictive connectivity map for the flight. The illustrative graphic highlights network coverage, and any associated issues along the route enabling users to adjust travel-plans accordingly. The feature aims to prevent loss of connectivity as it highlights dead zones and regional areas where data may be at threat from intrusion. With cyber-threats to aircraft at all altitudes on the increase, SD has also enhanced the SD Pro Threat Monitoring module. In addition to the existing services, the latest upgrade gives flight departments more visibility into the types of threats identified as well as the ability to view and sort threats by category. Analyzing

the type of threat in real time allows customers to apply sorting and filtering features to distinguish between the variety of threats e.g malware, active intrusion, phishing, etc. With this data, flight departments can make better informed connectivity decisions about user behaviors and security policies, and stay ahead of any potential vulnerabilities. When combined with SD hardware, SD Pro also gives users more insight and control over their onboard connectivity and how it is functioning. [Link](#)

Aviationpros.com/press_release/12414447/advanced-connectivity-and-upgraded-cyber-security-module-added-to-sd-pro-platform

Ultrasonic Sound Waves Are the New Paper Boarding Pass?

From Flyer Talk (05.29.2018) Jeff Edwards

An Ohio-based tech firm believes that sound waves could hold the solution to nearly all of the current pitfalls associated with using a smartphone instead of a paper boarding pass at the airport. When everything works exactly like it is supposed to, using a mobile device at the airport rather than printing a boarding pass is considerably more convenient and much less stressful than trying to keep track of a paper ticket, but when technological glitches occur, it can make even the most tech-savvy air traveler long for the thick card stock airline tickets of yesteryear. Lisnr, a Cincinnati-based startup, believes it has solved nearly every single issue associated with paperless travel. The tech firm uses a proprietary sound wave technology to securely transmit data (including boarding passes, concert tickets and other credentials) between devices using only speakers and microphones those devices are in most cases already equipped with. The company says, the near-ultrasonic sound waves employed by the technology are in nearly most cases inaudible to the human ear. According to Lisnr, the sound wave tickets use less battery than any of the current methods of paperless ticketing. Company officials say that because airlines rely on QR codes – even for paper boarding passes – a sound wave boarding pass is actually more secure than even a traditional printed airline ticket. The company says that the technology performed flawlessly during live trials conducted in partnership with Ticketmaster. The use of the Lisnr system reportedly reduced ticket fraud to an unheard of “zero percent” in a recent case study. [Link](#)

Flyertalk.com/articles/ultrasonic-sound-waves-are-the-new-paper-boarding-pass.html

Legislation & Regulation News

Several airlines defy Chinese government orders and hold off listing Taiwan as part of China

From The Daily Mail (05.29.2018) Ted Thornhill

Several international airlines still listed Taiwan as a separate country on their websites on Friday despite a deadline set by Beijing for carriers to refer to the self-governed island as a Chinese territory. The Chinese Civil Aviation Administration sent a notice to 36 foreign airlines last month, asking them to comply with Beijing's standards of referring to Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau as Chinese territories, in a move described by the White House as 'Orwellian nonsense.' According to a copy of the letter

circulating on Chinese social media, it was dated April 25 and gave carriers 30 days to comply, indicating a deadline of May 25. But AFP found at least eight foreign airlines were still listing Taiwan as a country on their websites as of Friday, including United, American Airlines, Cathay Pacific, All Nippon Airways and Qantas. A spokesperson for Qantas told AFP that Chinese authorities have given the Australian carrier 'additional time to further clarify how we refer to Chinese territories'. Around a dozen other airlines including Air Canada, Air France, British Airways and Germany's Lufthansa list Taiwan as a Chinese territory, though it is unclear when they started referring to the island that way. China's Civil Aviation administration declined to comment on when the deadline was or how many airlines have complied with their request. The letter did not clarify the punishment for non-compliance, only saying it would be deemed as 'serious discreditable conduct'. [Link](#)

Dailymail.co.uk/travel/travel_news/article-5771167/Several-airlines-hold-listing-Taiwan-China.html

Industry meets to review European flight time and fatigue rules

From Air Transport World (05.28.2018) Helen Massy-Beresford

Some 180 aviation industry representatives participated in a workshop on flight time limitation (FTL) rules and fatigue risk management (FRM), giving their views on European rules which have been in force for more than two years. The event, held May 24, was organized by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and was the third to be held. European crew members, airlines and authorities gave feedback and insights on the implementation of the rules and into how authorities oversee the region's airlines' FTL schemes. EASA flight standards director Jesper Rasmussen said, "In the past, flight time rules have often created tension, between employers and employees and between airlines and authorities. EASA said it would continue to support implementation of FTL rules and had established a dedicated FTL/FRM expert group of national authority inspectors that will further share good practices and promote a common understanding of the European FTL/FRM framework. In addition, EASA will continue to focus on FTL related issues during its standardization activities of EU Member States, the agency said. The workshop touched on issues including ensuring safe and efficient crew planning, individual FTL schemes and how they work in practice, the process involved in approving a deviation from the FTL scheme as well as fatigue risk management schemes and best practices regarding fatigue training for air crew and airlines. [Link](#)

Atwonline.com/safety/industry-meets-review-european-flight-time-and-fatigue-rules

Physical Security News

Saudi Arabia destroys Houthi drone near Abha Airport

From Gulf Business (05.27.2018) Robert Anderson

Saudi air defenses destroyed a Houthi drone headed to Abha International Airport, the Saudi coalition said on Saturday. The unmanned aerial vehicle was spotted at 1:45pm by the unit assigned to the airport, which "dealt with the threat and destroyed it", according to a statement to Saudi Press Agency.

Coalition spokesperson colonel Turki al-Malki said an inspection of the wreckage found that it was an Iranian Ababil drone that was attempting to attack the airport. He added that there was minimal damage caused by the drone's destruction and no injuries. "The Joint Forces Command of the Coalition, through continuous thorough monitoring and surveillance, targeted the unit responsible of assembly and rigging the UAVs following their exit of one of their workshops in Sa'dah governorate," al-Malki said. Al-Maliki clarified that inspections carried out by specialists in the coalition's joint forces revealed that the wreckage belonged to the Houthi militias' unmanned aerial vehicle with specifications of Iranian UAV "Ababil." A number of other drone attacks have been detected previously, including one last month that targeted a facility belonging to Saudi Aramco in Jizan. [Link](#)

[Gulfbusiness\[.\]com/saudi-destroys-houthi-uav-near-airport/](http://Gulfbusiness[.]com/saudi-destroys-houthi-uav-near-airport/)

Japan's airports face security staff shortage ahead of 2020 Olympics

From The Japan Times (05.29.2018) Junko Horiuchi

Major airports in Japan are struggling to retain luggage inspectors due to low wages and long hours, leaving authorities concerned about anti-terrorism efforts ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. With the number of foreign visitors to Japan expected to continue its trend of record annual rises, in line with government policy and the expansion of low-cost carriers, Japanese airports have been planning further physical expansions. Besides the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020, Japan will also host the 2019 Rugby World Cup. But the country's aviation workforce, which plays a crucial role in preventing attacks, is not immune to the labor shortages caused by the declining working population. "We are facing a serious issue, where 20 to 30 percent of safety officers who are working on the front line of airport security are leaving," said Makoto Natsume, president and chief executive officer of Narita International Airport Corp. Of around 940 staff who worked as safety inspectors at Narita International Airport, Japan's main gateway to the world, as of April 2016, more than a quarter — or some 240 — have left the job, according to Narita International Airport Corp. Data from the transport ministry also show that while airport users rose by around 40 percent to 184 million in the five years through 2016, the number of airport workers has not risen, staying at around 40,000. [Link](#)

[Japantimes\[.\]co\[.\]jp/news/2018/05/29/national/japans-airports-face-security-staff-crunch-ahead-2020-olympics/#\[.\]Ww1gEyAh3IU](http://Japantimes[.]co[.]jp/news/2018/05/29/national/japans-airports-face-security-staff-crunch-ahead-2020-olympics/#[.]Ww1gEyAh3IU)

Miscellaneous News

Lightning Strike Causes Flight Delays at London Stansted Airport

From Fortune (05.27.2018)

A lightning strike temporarily knocked out the fueling system Sunday morning at London Stansted airport, the biggest base for Ryanair Holdings Plc, causing flight delays and cancellations. Engineers restored the system, though flights may still be delayed, diverted or canceled at the airport about 40 miles (64 kilometers) north of central London, according to a statement on Stansted's Twitter account.

Stansted is the third-busiest airport in London and a key hub for the discount airline Ryanair. The Irish carrier canceled a number of flights and is advising customers of their options, including a full refund or a free transfer to the next available flight, it said in an emailed statement. "We apologize to all customers affected by these disruptions, which are entirely beyond our control," Ryanair said in the statement, declining to quantify the cancellations. [Link](#)

[Fortune.com/2018/05/27/lightning-strike-delays-london-stansted-airport/](https://fortune.com/2018/05/27/lightning-strike-delays-london-stansted-airport/)

Chinese Gaining Influence over Foreign Airports

From Aviation International News (05.29.2018) Jennifer Meszaros

China's economic weight and influence continue to effect change in the air transport industry as a growing number of Chinese firms look beyond its borders for investment opportunities in foreign airports. The most recent wave of outbound investment appears some 30 miles outside Cambodia's tourist town of Siem Reap, where contractors have begun preparing a 1,700-acre site for a new international airport. Under an exclusive 55-year build, operate and transfer (BOT) concession, the greenfield project—spearheaded by China's state-run Yunnan Investment Holdings—will materialize in three phases. During the first and second phase, the company plans to invest \$500 million to build a 4E class airport, which will allow for short- to medium-haul aircraft. It plans to allocate another \$300 million for the third phase, with the possibility of expanding to 4F compliance, meaning the airport could accommodate long-haul aircraft. The new Siem Reap airport accounts for one of three major airport projects in planning stages. Earlier this year, the Cambodian government approved plans for a \$1.5 billion, 6,500-acre airport, some 18 miles south of the capital Phnom Penh. A joint venture between Cambodia's State Secretariat of Aviation (SSCA) and local conglomerate Overseas Cambodia Investment Corporation (OCIC), the project has drawn a reported \$1.1 billion commitment from the state-run China Development Bank. China has become a critical source of policy bank finance and sovereign wealth funds for the development and maintenance of a number of airports in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Across Europe, Chinese firms are more likely to partially or wholly own global hubs and second-tier airports. [Link](#)

[Ainonline.com/aviation-news/air-transport/2018-05-29/chinese-gaining-influence-over-foreign-airports](https://ainonline.com/aviation-news/air-transport/2018-05-29/chinese-gaining-influence-over-foreign-airports)

U.S. Department of Transportation Crisis Management Center Daily Report

Commercial In-Flight Incidents

*American 2738, B738

- o May 28, 2018 at 8:42 PM EDT
- o Enroute from Miami, FL (Miami International Airport) to Philadelphia, PA (Philadelphia International Airport)
- o Fuel problem

- o Returned to Miami, FL; landed without incident at 8:54 PM EDT

*Southwest 1028, B737

- o May 28, 2018 at 7:36 PM EDT

- o Enroute from Cancún, Mexico (Cancún International Airport) to Denver, CO (Denver International Airport)

- o Fuel problem

- o Diverted to Albuquerque, NM (Albuquerque International Sunport); landed without incident

*Delta 2169, B752

- o May 28, 2018 at 2:16 PM EDT

- o Enroute from Las Vegas, NV (McCarran International Airport) to Atlanta, GA (Hartsfield–Jackson Atlanta International Airport)

- o Throttle problem

- o Diverted to Dallas, TX (Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport); landed without incident at 2:34 PM EDT

*American 991, B763

- o May 28, 2018 at 9:44 AM EDT

- o Enroute from Miami, FL (Miami International Airport) to Belo Horizonte, Brazil (Tancredo Neves International Airport)

- o Cracked windshield

- o Returned to Miami, FL; landed without incident at 10:52 AM EDT

*American 70, B772

- o May 27, 2018 at 9:05 PM EDT

- o Enroute from Dallas, TX (Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport) to Frankfurt, Germany (Frankfurt Airport)

- o Passenger medical incident

- o Diverted to New York, NY (John F. Kennedy International Airport); landed without incident at 9:10 PM EDT

*United 1728, B753

- o May 27, 2018 at 8:24 PM EDT

- o Enroute from Kahului, HI (Kahului Airport) to San Francisco, CA (San Francisco International Airport)

- o Generator problem

- o Diverted to Honolulu, HI (Honolulu International Airport); landed without incident at 9:23 PM EDT

Ground Incidents

*Mobile, AL, Mobile Regional Airport

- o May 27, 2018 at 8:39 AM EDT
- o Jet blast from Jetstream International 5228, CRJ9, blew baggage cart into Delta 1355, MD88 scheduled to Atlanta, GA (Hartsfield–Jackson Atlanta International Airport)
- o Aircraft dented and angle-of-attack wind vane damaged
- o 0 fatalities; 1 injury (ground worker)

The Daily Aviation Memo is a daily update of foreign and domestic commercial aviation news compiled from open sources and commercially-available information. Information contained in this report is provided for situational awareness only and does not represent the views of the Aviation ISAC. Please send comments or distribution requests to [a-isac.advisory@a-isac\[.\]com](mailto:a-isac.advisory@a-isac[.]com).

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AVIATION ISAC Fifth Summit

The Future of Aviation Cybersecurity: Navigating the Threat Landscape



aisac-summit.com | [@AviationISAC](https://twitter.com/AviationISAC) | September 19-21, 2018 | Kissimmee, FL

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توجه توجه

ایمان

ما گروه «تهدیدگان» در یک انعام اعتراض آمیز در این لحظات بر مانیورهای فرودگاه مسلط شده ایم.

خواهران و برادران، پنج ماه گذشته و سیاه پاسداران همچنان جان و بیت المال مردم ایران را در غزه، لبنان و سوریه به تباهی میدهند.

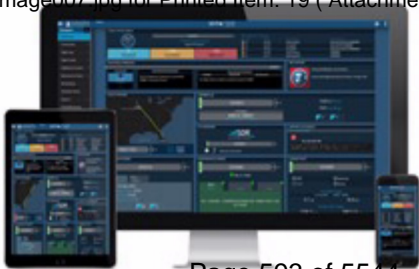
تا کی؟!؟

دیگر صدایمان را در گلو خفه نخواهند کرد! ما به مردم شریف کازرون می پیوندیم. این فقط آغاز اقدامات ماست! اگر با ما همراهید، عکس بگیرید و به اشتراک بگذارید.

اعتراضات_سراسری

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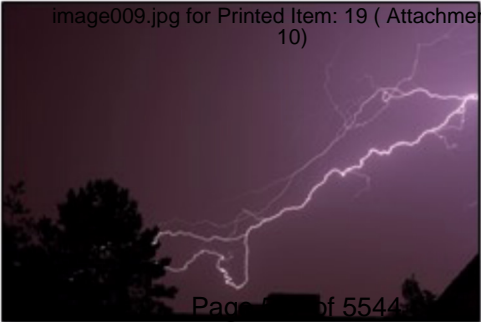
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<doug.larm@seattle.gov>
To: Larm, Doug <doug.larm@wsfc.wa.gov>
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: 2018_05_22 Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources
(InFOCUS)
Date: Tue May 22 2018 08:14:21 CDT
Attachments: 2018_05_22.pdf

Editor's Note: InFOCUS will not be published from Thursday, 24 May thru Monday, 28 May in observance of Memorial Day weekend; will return to publication Tuesday, 29 May 2018

InFOCUS

Tuesday

22 May 2018

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Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

TUESDAY – 22 MAY 2018



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Event Calendar

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Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
Return to Top	**i indicates new event/new information added during reporting week		

Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	05/21 Iran rejects Russia call; will stay in Syria
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/iran-goes-against-russia-says-its-staying-syria-us-military-threatens-new-937522
GIST	<p>Iran has rejected its ally Russia's call for all foreign troops to leave Syria, saying it is the U.S. and Turkey who are deployed there illegally and should withdraw their forces.</p> <p>In the wake of a 2011 uprising backed by the West, Turkey and Gulf Arab states, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad appealed to Russia and Iran to support his embattled armed forces against rebels and jihadi groups, which have mostly been defeated. Russian President Vladimir Putin congratulated Assad on his victories during a meeting Friday in Sochi and said that all foreign forces should eventually leave Syria, a remark that has opened a rare public rift between Moscow and Tehran.</p> <p>"No one can force Iran to do anything, Iran is an independent country that determines its own policies," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qasemi told reporters at a daily press conference Monday.</p> <p>"The presence of Iran is at the invitation of the Syrian government to fight against terrorism and defend the territorial integrity of Syria, and will last as long as the Syrian government wants Iran to help it," he added. "Those who have entered the country without the consent of the Syrian government must leave Syria."</p> <p>Damascus and Tehran have enjoyed close relations since the 1979 Islamic Revolution that overthrew the pro-West monarchy in Iran, and the Islamic Republic's Shiite Muslim leadership offered support to Assad against an uprising that increasingly featured prominent jihadist groups. The U.S., which had been covertly backing Syrian rebels since at least 2012, gathered a multinational coalition to enter the country two years later to battle the Islamic State militant group (ISIS). Russia entered in 2015, supporting Syrian troops and Iran-backed militias with heavy airpower as they fought insurgents and ISIS.</p> <p>With help from Russia and Iran, the Syrian government has reclaimed nearly every major city in the country and forced anti-government fighters to either reconcile or be displaced to shrinking pockets of control elsewhere in the country. These gains have increased the foothold of groups such as Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard Corps and Iran-backed Lebanese Shiite Muslim Hezbollah movement in Syria. Both groups have antagonistic relationships with Israel.</p> <p>Suspected Israeli airstrikes have long struck positions held by Iran and its supporters in Syria, but a recent rocket salvo targeting Israeli forces in the occupied Golan Heights was met with the largest Israeli attack on Syria since the two countries went to war in 1973. The U.S. quickly sided with Israel after the aerial assault, while Russia urged both sides to show restraint in an attempt to maintain relations with the two longtime foes and avoid a wider regional war.</p> <p>As Syrian, Iranian and various allied militias are increasingly targeted by Israeli and Western airstrikes, the Syrian and Iranian governments have called for the U.S. and Turkey to immediately withdraw their troops. President Donald Trump has also expressed support for leaving Syria, but he and his administration have also indicated a tougher, potentially explosive approach to taking on Iran.</p>

The flare-up between Israel and its Iranian and Syrian foes earlier this month took place shortly after Trump withdrew the U.S. from a 2015 nuclear deal that was still supported by Iran as well as fellow signatories China, France, Germany, Russia and the U.K. In his first major policy speech, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo justified Trump's decision by saying the agreement did not go far enough to curb Iran's support for militias across the Middle East, and vowed Monday to impose "the strongest sanctions in history" against Tehran.

The Pentagon has warned it may even go further. Pentagon spokesman Colonel Robert Manning told reporters Monday that it is "going to take all necessary steps to confront and address Iran's malign influence in the region," according to Reuters.

"We are assessing if we are going to double down on current actions or implement new actions," he added.

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HEADLINE	05/21 DHS funds FY2018 preparedness grants
SOURCE	https://americansecuritytoday.com/dhs-unveils-funding-ops-fy2018-preparedness-grants-multi-video/
GIST	<p>Secretary of Homeland Security Kirstjen Nielsen has announced the release of Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Notices of Funding Opportunity for eight Department of Homeland Security (DHS) preparedness grant programs totaling more than \$1.6 billion.</p> <p>The grant programs provide funding to state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, as well as transportation authorities, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector, to improve the nation's readiness in preventing, protecting against, responding to, recovering from and mitigating terrorist attacks, major disasters and other emergencies.</p> <p>The grants reflect the Department's focus on funding for programs that address our nation's immediate security needs and ensure public safety in our communities.</p> <p>"The administration remains committed to strengthening the security and resilience of our state and local communities," said Secretary Nielsen.</p> <p>The FY 2018 grant guidance will continue to focus on the nation's highest risk areas, including urban areas that face the most significant threats.</p> <p>For FY 2018, the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) will enhance regional preparedness and capabilities by funding 32 high-threat, high-density urban areas.</p> <p>This represents Congressional intent to limit FY 2018 UASI funding to those Urban Areas that represent up to 85 percent of the nationwide risk, as stated in the Explanatory Statement accompanying the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2018 (Pub. L. No. 115-141).</p> <p>Consistent with previous grant guidance, dedicated funding is provided for law enforcement and terrorism prevention throughout the country to prepare for, prevent and respond to pre-operational activity and other crimes that are precursors or indicators of terrorist activity.</p> <p>Grant recipients are encouraged to use grant funding to maintain and sustain current critical core capabilities through investments in training and exercises, updates to current planning and procedures, and lifecycle replacement of equipment.</p> <p>New capabilities that are built using homeland security grant funding must be deployable if needed to support regional and national efforts.</p> <p>All capabilities being built or sustained must have a clear linkage to the core capabilities articulated in the</p>

National Preparedness Goal.

Preparedness Grant Program Allocations for Fiscal Year 2018:

Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG)—provides more than \$350 million to assist state, local, tribal, territorial governments in enhancing and sustaining all-hazards emergency management capabilities.

Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP)—provides more than \$1 billion for states and urban areas to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism and other threats.

State Homeland Security Program (SHSP)

Provides \$402 million to support the implementation of risk-driven, capabilities-based State Homeland Security Strategies to address capability targets. States are required to dedicate 25 percent of SHSP funds to law enforcement terrorism prevention activities.

Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI)

Provides \$580 million to enhance regional preparedness and capabilities in 32 high-threat, high-density areas. States and Urban Areas are required to dedicate 25 percent of UASI funds to law enforcement terrorism prevention activities.

Operation Stonegarden (OPSG)

Provides \$85 million to enhance cooperation and coordination among local, tribal, territorial, state and federal law enforcement agencies to jointly enhance security along the United States land and water borders.

Since the enactment of the 9/11 Act, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has required states to ensure that at least 25 percent of the total funds awarded to them under SHSP and UASI are dedicated toward law enforcement terrorism prevention activities (LETPA).

The total LETPA allocation can be satisfied from SHSP, UASI or both.

Additionally, states must obligate at least 80 percent of the funds awarded under SHSP and UASI to local or tribal units of government within 45 days of receipt of the funds.

Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program (THSGP)—provides \$10 million to eligible tribal nations to implement preparedness initiatives to help strengthen the nation against risk associated with potential terrorist attacks and other hazards.

Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP)

Provides \$60 million to support target hardening and other physical security enhancements for nonprofit organizations that are at high risk of a terrorist attack. This year, \$50 million is provided to nonprofits in UASI-designated urban areas, and \$10 million is provided to nonprofits located in any state or territory.

Intercity Passenger Rail – Amtrak (IPR) Program

Provides \$10 million to protect critical surface transportation infrastructure and the traveling public from acts of terrorism and increase the resilience of the Amtrak rail system.

Port Security Grant Program (PSGP)

Provides \$100 million to help protect critical port infrastructure from terrorism, enhance maritime domain awareness, improve port-wide maritime security risk management, and maintain or reestablish maritime security mitigation protocols that support port recovery and resiliency capabilities.

Transit Security Grant Program (TSGP)

Provides \$88 million to owners and operators of transit systems to protect critical surface transportation and the traveling public from acts of terrorism and to increase the resilience of transit infrastructure.

	<p>Intercity Bus Security Grant Program (IBSGP) Provides \$2 million to owners and operators of intercity bus systems to protect critical surface transportation infrastructure and the traveling public from acts of terrorism and to increase the resilience of transit infrastructure.</p> <p>All preparedness Notices of Funding Opportunities can be found at www.grants.gov.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/22 Fires, medical crisis, human trafficking
SOURCE	https://www.heraldnet.com/news/fires-medical-crises-and-now-human-trafficking/
GIST	<p>MUKILTEO — Firefighters are often called upon to treat cardiac arrests, strokes and other medical emergencies in Mukilteo. Now, they’re learning how they could save lives in another way.</p> <p>This month the fire department required its crews to undergo training to identify signs of human trafficking.</p> <p>“We wanted our people to have a basic knowledge of what to look for, when people are detained against their will,” medical services officer Larry Hadland said.</p> <p>Hadland found out about the training through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. An online session takes a matter of minutes: a 25-question test, a study session and the same test again, to see how much the students have learned.</p> <p>In a decades-long career in the fire service, Hadland has been on calls where he didn’t recognize the telltale signs until later. Sometimes it’s a furtive man or woman who won’t leave a patient’s side. Or it’s someone acting defensive or evasive with paramedics. Or it’s many young women crammed into a small house or apartment. Or it’s a mix of signals that don’t seem right.</p> <p>If they see signs of abuse, firefighters are encouraged to call police.</p> <p>Mukilteo’s city limits stop just short of Highway 99, a corridor to Aurora Avenue that has generated headlines like, “Why Is There So Much Prostitution On Aurora Avenue In Seattle?”</p> <p>First responders are in a unique position to uncover human trafficking: They enter homes and private, personal spaces in emergencies. Sometimes it’s impossible to avoid calling for help.</p> <p>“If they’re sick, or their house is on fire, we’re going to show up,” Hadland said.</p> <p>This month, Providence Regional Medical Center Everett hosted forums on human trafficking for local government, police and health care workers.</p> <p>The Polaris Project estimates in the U.S., victims of sex trafficking and forced labor number in the hundreds of thousands, though there’s no official estimate.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/22 NKorea media returns to angry tone
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/bf7425a138aa47c5be4b17ee5f2029db/As-summit-looms,-North-Korean-media-return-to-angry-tone
GIST	<p>TOKYO (AP) — North Korean media stepped up their rhetorical attacks on South Korea and joint military exercises with the United States, warning Tuesday that a budding detente could be in danger.</p>

State media unleashed three strongly worded commentaries slamming Seoul and Washington for the maneuvers and demanding Seoul take action against defectors it claimed were sending anti-North Korea propaganda leaflets across the border.

The official media had until recently taken a relatively subdued tone amid the North's diplomatic overtures to its neighbors, including a summit with South Korea's president last month and plans for leader Kim Jong Un to meet U.S. President Donald Trump in Singapore on June 12.

That first changed last week, when it lashed out against the maneuvers, cut high-level contacts with Seoul and threatened to "reconsider" the Trump summit.

One of the reports on Tuesday, which came as North Korea allowed an airplane full of foreign journalists into the country to cover the dismantling of its nuclear test site this week, accused Seoul of teaming up with Washington for military drills intended as a show of force and as a "war drill" against it.

It's not unusual for North Korea's official media to turn to hyperbole to make a point and the rhetorical barrage coincides with a visit to Washington by South Korean President Moon Jae-in. Strongly worded messages don't necessarily mean it is backing away from diplomatic negotiations.

But the North's abrupt sharpening of its words has raised concerns the Trump summit may prove to be a bumpy one — or that it could even be in jeopardy. Trump has suggested he is willing to walk away if Kim isn't willing to have a fruitful meeting and it appears both sides have agendas that remain far apart from each other.

There has been no indication that North Korea will cancel plans to dismantle the test site, an important gesture of goodwill. The North has also not suggested it will go back on its promise to halt underground testing and launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles.

But it did ban South Korean journalists from the trip to the nuclear site. And the language Tuesday offered a veiled threat that talks could be harmed.

"Dialogue and saber-rattling can never go together," said the commentary published in Minju Josen, one of the country's four main daily newspapers.

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HEADLINE	05/22 France: public service workers strike
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/business/articles/2018-05-22/french-public-service-workers-strike-again-over-job-cuts
GIST	<p>PARIS (AP) — FRENCH public services workers have gone on strike as part of their protest a government plan to cut 120,000 jobs by 2022.</p> <p>In a joint call, nine unions are also seeking higher wages and are denouncing the increasing use of short-term contracts in public services.</p> <p>This is the third nationwide strike of public workers since French president Emmanuel Macron came into power last May. In his campaign for the presidency, Macron promised to reduce public spending and overhaul the country's labor laws.</p> <p>Hundreds of flights to and from France have also been cancelled as French air traffic controllers have joined the movement.</p> <p>The government is in discussions with unions about the plans and has said it intends to legislate on its labor reforms next year.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/22 Deadly heatwave grips Karachi region
SOURCE	http://time.com/5286646/pakistan-karachi-heat-wave-deaths/
GIST	<p>(KARACHI, Pakistan) — A Pakistani welfare organization says the heatwave gripping the region amid widespread power cuts has killed 65 people in Karachi.</p> <p>Anwar Kazmi, a spokesman for the private group Edhi, which is also the country’s largest ambulance service, said on Tuesday that their morgue received 65 bodies over the past four days, including of people who died after losing consciousness on the streets.</p> <p>He says these people died before they could be taken to hospital.</p> <p>The government hasn’t confirmed the death toll.</p> <p>According to Pakistan’s state-run Meteorological Department, temperatures in Karachi could reach 44 degrees Celsius — about 111 degrees Fahrenheit — later in the day.</p> <p>Climate change in recent years has caused heatwaves in Karachi, the capital of Sindh province, where 1,233 people died from the heat in 2015.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 US, China agree to suspend tariffs
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/treasury-secretary-says-u-s-china-have-suspended-tariffs-1526908176
GIST	<p>The U.S. suspended its threat to put tariffs on \$150 billion in imports of Chinese goods while negotiations with China continue, but President Donald Trump could still impose the tariffs if a deal between the two countries doesn’t progress, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said.</p> <p>“Both parties have agreed to suspend the tariffs,” Mr. Mnuchin said Monday in an interview on CNBC, echoing remarks he gave over the weekend.</p> <p>If the negotiations aren’t successful, however, “the president can always put tariffs back on,” he said.</p> <p>Liu He, the Chinese vice premier who led Beijing’s delegation to Washington last week, has also said China is holding off on tariffs for now. “Both sides agreed to avert a trade war and to stop imposing tariffs on each other,” Mr. Liu said, according to the official Xinhua News Agency over the weekend.</p> <p>The U.S. negotiations were focused on proposed tariffs on \$150 billion of imported Chinese goods that followed an investigation from the U.S. Trade Representative on China’s trade practices. These tariffs, which have now been placed on hold, never formally went into effect. Other U.S. tariffs that are in effect, such as those on steel and aluminum, would need to be reversed through a formal process.</p> <p>Similarly, China had a prospective list of tariffs on \$50 billion in U.S. goods that hadn’t been formally imposed, but China also has existing tariffs on a number of U.S. exports that are formally in place.</p> <p>There is no specific timetable for the next steps in the negotiations, Lawrence Kudlow, the director of the National Economic Council, said on Monday.</p> <p>“Tariffs are suspended right now, that’s a good thing,” Mr. Kudlow said, also speaking on CNBC. “But you cannot remove tariffs as a negotiating tool or an enforcement tool from this process.”</p> <p>Trade officials say that any surge in U.S. agriculture exports to China depends on settling the trade dispute and on China substantially easing tariffs and other trade barriers on U.S. exports of pork and corn, among</p>

	<p>other products. Farm groups now are dealing with Chinese tariffs on sorghum and other products imposed after the U.S. levied tariffs on Chinese steel and aluminum.</p> <p>Mr. Ross of the Commerce Department will travel soon to China to discuss Beijing’s commitment to buy more agriculture and energy exports from the U.S.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Starbucks clarifies guest policy
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/starbucks-says-drug-use-sleeping-unacceptable-as-it-clarifies-guest-policy-1526918854
GIST	<p>Starbucks Corp. tried to dig itself out of controversy Monday by attempting to clarify a policy toward nonpaying guests that generated an onslaught of weekend criticism.</p> <p>The Seattle-based retailer on Saturday had said it would allow all guests in its U.S. company-owned stores to use its cafes, including its restrooms, whether or not they make a purchase. That announcement, which attracted some support, also drew complaints that cafes wouldn’t have enough seats for paying customers and would turn into homeless shelters and drug havens.</p> <p>On Monday, Starbucks revealed more about the policy, telling The Wall Street Journal that employees now have detailed instructions on what to do if someone is behaving in a disruptive manner, such as smoking, using drugs or alcohol, using restrooms improperly or sleeping.</p> <p>At issue, in essence, is whether Starbucks views itself as a business that caters to customers, or a quasi-public place generally welcome to all. The uproar, which follows the arrest last month of two black men who wanted to use a Starbucks bathroom in Philadelphia, demonstrates the unusual spot that the nation’s biggest coffee chain holds in American culture.</p> <p>While many other restaurants and retailers also must manage the issue of lingering customers and nonpaying guests who come in to use restrooms, Starbucks has promoted itself as providing a “third place” between home and work where people can freely exchange ideas. It essentially pioneered the idea that is now generating controversy.</p> <p>Other restaurants and cafes have followed suit in recent years. McDonald’s Corp. and Panera Bread now offer free Wi-Fi and encourage customers to linger. Panera didn’t respond to a request for comment, and McDonald’s—which is almost entirely franchised—said it lets its franchisees determine how to best serve their customers.</p> <p>“The whole Starbucks situation has opened up a can of worms. In most cases restaurants leave it up to the discretion of the individual restaurant and most are too busy to enforce a policy,” said Joe Pawlak, managing principal at restaurant consulting firm Technomic Inc.</p> <p>Starbucks’s piecemeal messaging on the issue and the outpouring of commentary that ensued shows the challenges firms can face in an era when every corporate move can be immediately telegraphed and then dissected by the public at large.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 UNESCO: Seattle ‘City of Literature’
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/2018/05/seattle-city-literature-so-now-what
GIST	<p>Come mid-June, people walking through the streets of Kraków will chance upon something never before seen in the Polish city — a poem by a Seattle writer, projected onto the side of a building. “The sand travels / through the hour glass / & Oya tells me prepare for change,” it begins.</p>

Penned by Seattle Civic Poet Anastacia-Renee, its appearance is part of the cultural festivities surrounding the annual meeting of UNESCO's Creative Cities Network, an erudite worldwide alliance (sort of like the "Avengers," but for arts and culture) that Seattle has recently joined. Writ large, some 5,300 miles from home, the projected poem serves as an apt metaphor for the global connections Seattle hopes to forge with its new status as a City of Literature.

Since 2004, UNESCO has designated 180 Cities of Literature, Music, Film, Crafts and Folk Arts, Design, Gastronomy and Media Arts — which in total, constitute the Creative Cities Network. These cities are expected to cooperate across borders toward a common goal: making sure cultural industries and creativity are prioritized in civic development plans.

There are 28 Cities of Literature, including Dublin, Reykjavik, Barcelona, Prague and, as of late last fall, Seattle. (Iowa City is the only other City of Literature in the U.S.) On May 22, at the Seattle Central Library downtown, the public is invited to celebrate the prestigious designation.

It's been a long time coming.

The Seattle City of Literature story began in 2013 when author Ryan Boudinot formed a nonprofit to begin the arduous application process. No one could have predicted the plot twists that ensued. Boudinot went down in a viral literary fracas, his entire board resigned and the bid submitted in 2015 failed.

Regrouping happened.

A second bid was submitted. President Trump announced his intention to pull out of UNESCO membership (a chapter that is to be continued...). On Oct. 31, 2017, Seattle earned UNESCO's blessing. But the designation required mayoral sign-off, and at that moment — surprise! — Seattle's mayor was merely interim, serving a 71-day term.

"Yeah. It took a while to make it official," says Stesha Brandon, current Board President of Seattle City of Literature. (The nonprofit is entirely volunteer-run; Brandon's day job is Literature & Humanities Program Manager at Seattle Public Library.)

But now that our status is finally, firmly secured, inquiring minds want to know: What should a City of Literature look like?

Tree Swenson, who as director of Richard Hugo House writing center was heavily involved in the UNESCO bid process, has a vision. "If this plays out right, people will be coming from all over," she says. "They'll be looking for readings, visiting bookstores, making pilgrimages to our downtown library — they'll know about all the things we have to offer. Once that positive reinforcement loop gets going, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy." Looking farther out, she posits, "It could be that 20 years from now, Seattle will be known worldwide as a place for tech and literature."

Creating such a city will take a lot of work. But that's where the global superhero alliance comes in. Last month, Brandon attended the Cities of Literature conference in Iowa City, where her international colleagues shared plans and best practices.

She says some of the most exciting exchanges were about creative ways cities are giving literature a civic spotlight. "Many of the cities are working on engaging people with literature out in the community — on the sidewalks, at markets, on buildings — rather than expecting them to go to a reading or a bookstore," Brandon says. In Edinburgh, excerpts from a short story were projected on a downtown building every day for a month. In Ljubljana, Slovenia, a writer-in-the-park residency was accompanied by a series of free outdoor events. "These cities had such great ways to activate people's imaginations and show how story is essential to our lives."

But it's not all about inventing fun literary happenings. UNESCO has 17 Sustainable Development Goals

— such as quality education, reduced inequalities, peace and justice — which Cities of Literature are charged with working toward. At the Kraków conference, which Brandon will attend in June, part of the discussion will be about urban development and how to maintain sustainable housing for artists. “This is an issue that is definitely relevant to Seattle,” Brandon says. “How do we make sure the city is affordable for the writers who live here, and who help the city thrive?”

In addition to collaborating with global partners to answer this question, Brandon will be seeking local advice, reconvening Seattle literary organizations that helped with the bid to determine priorities and next steps. We know how strong our literary community already is, she says, but we want to know: “Is there something missing?”

Paul Constant, writer and co-founder of the Seattle Review of Books, thinks so. “We have such a huge literary scene here, and nobody within it knows what the other people are doing,” he says. Despite the wealth of local writers across sci-fi, comics, literary fiction, translation, YA and poetry, Constant says, “There’s no intermixing.” He hopes that eventually the City of Literature will have a person (“or half a person, depending on how fundraising goes”) whose job is to build community across genres. “Then writers could learn about each other’s disciplines, share ideas and get new ideas. That is really exciting to me.”

Some Seattle City of Literature initiatives are already underway. The nonprofit worked with the city to establish the Seattle Civic Poet position in 2015. Claudia Castro Luna was first to hold the position, from 2015-2017 (she’s now Washington State Poet Laureate). “We are a world city ourselves,” she says, reflecting on the global implications of UNESCO status. “There are so many languages spoken here — and readings in those languages — we have this richness and interest in literature from across the world.”

Looking outward, Luna nods to experiences like the Seattle City of Literature cultural exchange wherein her poems were published in New Zealand literary journal Catalyst. “It was unbelievable to have my words and concerns have a stage elsewhere!” she says. “It made me feel like a world citizen.”

That global-citizen feeling is precisely what UNESCO hopes to engender with the Cities of Literature — to spin a web around the world that strengthens cross-cultural connections. Brandon says the Seattle organization’s next steps include diversifying the board, fundraising and setting priorities with guidance from the literary community.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Pierce Co. eyes workers credit tax
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/995408/pierce-county-seattle-employee-credit/
GIST	<p>Just a week after the Seattle City Council passed a head tax, charging big businesses \$275 per employee, Pierce County is doing the opposite.</p> <p>County officials will announce on Tuesday a plan to create new, family-wage jobs with a \$275 employee tax credit. How the credit will actually work has yet to be decided. Each city will determine its application of the credit.</p> <p>The idea comes on the heels of other outreach from Pierce County organizations pointing out that the region does not have a head tax. They even made a video about it.</p> <p>Among county officials on hand for the Tuesday afternoon announcement will be Bruce Dammeier, Pierce County executive; Victoria Woodards, City of Tacoma mayor; Mark Martinez, Pierce County Building & Construction Trades Council executive secretary; Bruce Kendall, Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County president & CEO; and Mike Courts, City of Dupont mayor.</p> <p>Former Tacoma Mayor and current Seattle Chamber of Commerce CEO Marilyn Strickland voiced her opposition to Seattle’s head tax before and after the vote.</p>

Meanwhile, several Seattle businesses, including Amazon, are preparing an initiative that would repeal the head tax. They would need just under 22,000 signatures to qualify for the ballot.

Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan signed the law in effect on May 16; it'll go into effect on Jan. 1, 2019.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Pilot-hungry airlines raid flight schools
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2018/05/21/pilot-hungry-airlines-are-raiding-flight-schools-creating-a-shortage-of-instructors-to-train-the-next-generation/?utm_term=.f473dbf3a977
GIST	<p>Airlines' insatiable demand for pilots threatens to sabotage flight schools' ability to train new ones. Carriers are raising wages and hoarding every available pilot — including the instructors schools rely on to teach incoming students.</p> <p>The very pilot pipeline that is supposed to meet decades of projected labor shortfalls is being squeezed. According to a report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO), some schools have been forced to scale back operations or turn down qualified students because they do not have enough instructors.</p> <p>Michael Farley has been teaching at Bridgewater State University in Massachusetts for 18 years. Applications for his program are up, but the aviation department chair is so short on instructors that he has had to cap the number of students in his program.</p> <p>“In my tenure, this is unprecedented,” Farley said, reflecting on the speed with which airlines were hiring recent graduates.</p> <p>The problem is rooted in how collegiate aviation is structured. Classroom courses such as meteorology and aviation law are taught by academic faculty, but flight instructors are usually experienced students or graduates looking to gain flight hours before heading off to the commercial big leagues.</p> <p>Details vary between vocational, two-year and four-year schools, but an aspiring pilot at a typical accredited institution needs about 250 to 300 hours to become a certified instructor. Those 250 hours used to be all you needed to join an airline as a co-pilot. In some countries, it still is.</p> <p>Since 2013, most students have had to fly between 1,000 and 1,500 hours to qualify for work at a passenger airline. Even before that, the GAO report found, airlines expected as much as 2,000 hours of experience from entry-level employees, depending on the job market.</p> <p>So, where do young pilots get the other 1,000 hours or so? Some do aerial photography or fly banners, but the overwhelming majority work at their aviation college or an affiliated institution as a flight instructor. It is built into their career path.</p> <p>In an ideal world, a pilot works first as an instructor at her flight school, then as a co-pilot and pilot at a regional airline (such as Cape Air or SkyWest Airlines) and finally as a co-pilot and pilot at a major airline (such as Southwest Airlines or United Airlines).</p> <p>Demand for pilots swings hard. In 2009, as American families and businesses slashed their air-travel budgets amid the Great Recession and furloughs swept the industry, major airlines hired just 30 pilots, according to pilot-advisory service FAPA.aero. That number soared to 5,000 in 2017. In 2018, it will be even higher.</p> <p>When the market was slow, students stuck around, and instructors were cheap and abundant. But when hiring took off, they vanished into jobs flying passenger or cargo jets.</p> <p>When employees complain about worker shortages, the obvious reply is employees would not be so hard</p>

to find if businesses just offered more money.

The aviation job market is complicated by strict federal regulations and what FAPA’s president, Louis Smith, called the “poach chain.”

Flight-school instructors are almost all flight-school students, which means they came into aviation because they wanted to sit in the cockpit of a mammoth Boeing or Airbus with "Delta" or "American" stamped on the side, not babysit their peers in a single-engine Cessna.

From Day 1, they are focused on getting to a major airline and building seniority, the all-important number that rules everything from route assignments and pay scales to standby tickets. Those major airlines poach from the regional airlines, and regional airlines poach from flight schools.

Life is hard at the bottom of the poach chain, where flight schools compete for instructors. U.S. Aviation Academy, a large training outfit that partners with Tarrant County College in Texas, offers new instructors a \$2,500 bonus and between \$27 and \$35 an hour — a wage it has been forced to raise about 15 percent in recent months.

Their pay is competitive with regional airlines, where new pilots earn an estimated \$50,000 to \$60,000 a year. But when a 21-year-old instructor gets poached, the schools are not competing with the regional carrier. They are competing with the promise of a 44-year career in a high-profile, lionized position that can pay north of \$200,000 a year and offers excellent benefits.

As flight schools pay instructors more, they are raising their prices to compensate. It is a fraught decision in an industry that worried it is charging too much to attract the quantity and diversity of students that airlines need.

Federal student aid, while available at many aviation schools, typically does not stretch to cover flight-school costs, which are boosted by investments in aircraft, fuel and facilities — not to mention the instructors. The GAO found that most pilot programs charge more than \$50,000 for flight training alone.

Not all students have access to the wealth or credit needed to fill the gap between student aid and the flight-school bill, even if they can be reasonably sure — in this job market, at least — they will earn it back. Schools told the GAO that, after instructor attrition, their biggest obstacle to training enough pilots was their own high price tag.

Glass’s first choice of flight school — Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, where he went to aviation camp and learned the ropes from student instructors — costs \$48,000 a year. That does not include the cumulative \$40,000 to \$60,000 the school expects students to spend on flight training while they are there.

“If you don’t have the financial backing, it’s difficult,” Glass said.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Russia floating nuke power plant in Arctic
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-nuclear-greens/russias-first-sea-borne-nuclear-power-plant-arrives-in-arctic-idUSKCN1M1A9
GIST	<p>MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia’s first-floating nuclear power plant arrived in the Arctic port of Murmansk over the weekend in preparation for its maiden mission, providing electricity to an isolated Russian town across the Bering Strait from Alaska.</p> <p>The state company behind the plant, called the “Akademik Lomonosov”, says it could pioneer a new power source for remote regions of the planet, but green campaigners have expressed concern about the risk of nuclear accidents. Greenpeace has called it the “nuclear Titanic”.</p>

Russian state nuclear company Rosatom, which developed the floating power plant, said that it docked the unit in Murmansk on Saturday where it was towed from St Petersburg, the city where it was built.

In Murmansk it will take on board a supply of nuclear fuel. It will then will be towed to the town of Pevek in the Far Eastern region of Chukotka, separated from the U.S. state of Alaska by the 86-km (53 miles) wide Bering Strait. It will start operations there next year.

The plant will replace a coal-fired power plant and an aging nuclear power plant supplying more than 50,000 people with electricity in Chukotka, Rosatom said.

Rosatom has long planned to launch the sea-borne power units, which, with their mobile, small capacity plants, are best suited to remote regions. It says they can help the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions blamed for global warming.

The small plants were designed to make it possible to supply electricity to hard-to-reach areas of Russia. They can operate non-stop without the need for refueling for 3-5 years.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Where Americans are going hungry
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/where-americans-are-going-hungry/
GIST	<p>Food insecurity -- or not having enough food because of a lack of money or other resources -- is a way of life for almost 1 in 8 Americans. And that rate remains higher than before the recession, when the numbers were slightly more than 1 in 10, according to data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.</p> <p>Hunger has never truly left America since President Lyndon Johnson's "war on poverty" in the 1960s, which led to the development of government programs such as food stamps. While the kind of abject hunger that was shockingly captured 50 years ago by the CBS Reports documentary "Hunger in America" may be largely a thing of the past, food insecurity remains widespread today, touching every county of every state in the nation, according to the nonprofit Feeding America.</p> <p>Residents of some counties are suffering more than others, according to Feeding America's research. Rural counties are among the worst-hit, comprising 79 percent of the counties with the highest food insecurity rates, even though they make up only 63 percent of all U.S. counties.</p> <p>The economy might be improving, but the benefits aren't always reaching these Americans, said Erin McDonald, vice president of Feeding America's Center for Applied Research in Action.</p> <p>"The overall numbers for unemployment are lower and there are jobs ... but people are making choices around paying for utilities, rent and other costs," McDonald said. "Food is a basic need where maybe they are going without or cutting back."</p> <p>Food insecurity is defined as not having enough food because of a lack of money or other resources. It's a way of life today for almost 1 in 8 Americans, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture data, up from more than 1 in 10 before the recession.</p> <p>Their report comes as lawmakers in Congress consider a farm bill that would add work requirements to the federal food stamp program. If adults who are able-bodied and don't have dependents aren't working at least 20 hours a week, they wouldn't be able to receive food stamps. (A GOP faction's revolt during a House floor vote May 18 defeated the farm bill by a count of 198 for and 213 against, but the legislation is widely expected to be reconsidered before a September government funding deadline.)</p> <p>Anti-hunger activists warn that adding the more stringent requirements may worsen hunger in America. And already, according to Feeding America, many of those food insecure households don't qualify for food stamps.</p>

The issue might not be how to cut back the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the formal name for food stamps, but how to expand it, said Craig Gundersen, lead researcher on the report and a professor at the University of Illinois.

"SNAP is this amazingly successful program, so instead of trying to find ways to cut SNAP or change the way it's structured, it would be great if we could talk about how to expand who is eligible" and how to boost benefits, he said.

He added, "Central to this is we know the households who are suffering from food insecurity have higher health care costs."

In other words, helping families avoid food insecurity and hunger could lower long-term health problems, a relatively inexpensive way to stem chronic health conditions that are linked with a lack of food. Food insecure households spend about 45 percent more on medical care a year than people in food-secure homes, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a left-leaning think tank.

Because the food stamp program has income and asset thresholds, some families that are struggling to put food on the table don't qualify for the program. Almost half of those 41 million Americans who are food insecure don't qualify for food stamps, Feeding America found.

"Food insecurity is often times invisible," Gundersen said. "If you want to talk to one group that sees it, it's teachers at the elementary school level. They see children coming in without having breakfast -- one group on the front lines that just goes without food."

Food insecurity doesn't only impact health, but children's ability to learn and thrive in school, McDonald said. And food insecurity is more commonplace with children than in adults, with one in six children suffering from lack of reliable food.

A 2017 study in the journal *Child Development* found that children who suffered from food insecurity were predicted to have lower cognitive and social-emotional skills in kindergarten. The researchers recommended boosting the availability of food to children under 2 years old to give poor children a better chance at succeeding in school.

Some of those families rely on food pantries to help stock their shelves, but the network of local and state charities can't provide enough meals to feed all the food insecure people in the U.S., said McDonald.

"SNAP provides 12 meals for every one meal we serve," said McDonald. "While every food bank and agency will step up, there are finite resources they have to meet that gap."

Even so, food stamps aren't designed to pay for a household's entire grocery budget. In the program's early days, food stamps were limited to one-third of a household's grocery spending. Today, a majority of recipients tap their own bank account as well as their food stamp benefits to buy groceries.

Food stamp benefits may not be as generous as some believe. The average benefit is about \$1.40 per person per meal, according to the CBPP.

"If people lose their food benefits or if they are reduced, it's clear that food insecurity would go up," said Stacy Dean, "That's why so many of us are concerned about the proposal" to introduce work requirements.

Below are the 10 states where food insecurity is the highest, according to data from Feeding America. The percentages of residents who are classified as food insecure are in parentheses.

1. Mississippi (20.1%)
2. Arkansas (17.2%)
3. Louisiana (16.7%)

	<p>4. Alabama (16.5%) 5. Oklahoma (16.2%) 6. New Mexico (15.8%) 7. Kentucky (15.5%) 8. North Carolina (15.4%) 9. Texas (15.4%) 10. Georgia (15.1%)</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 New Zealand's homelessness crisis
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-newzealand-economy-budget/left-behind-why-boomtown-new-zealand-has-a-homelessness-crisis-idUSKCN1I0UG
GIST	<p>WELLINGTON (Reuters) - New Zealand's dairy-fuelled economy has for several years been the envy of the rich world, yet despite the rise in prosperity tens of thousands of residents are sleeping in cars, shop entrances and alleyways.</p> <p>The emerging crisis has created a milestone that New Zealanders won't be proud of: the highest homelessness rate among the 35 high-income OECD countries.</p> <p>It's a curious problem afflicting boom towns where some residents get pushed onto the streets as they can no longer afford the rocketing rents in a flourishing economy - let alone purchase a house as the price of property has soared.</p> <p>"I have no assets at the moment," said 64-year-old Victor Young, who spoke to Reuters at a soup kitchen in New Zealand's capital, Wellington.</p> <p>"It's not a kind country, it's not an easy country. I slept in my car 20 days last year. I worked 30 hours a week."</p> <p>That sentiment is something the country's popular Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern would like to reverse. Last Thursday, across town from the Sisters of Compassion Soup Kitchen, her Labour-led government unveiled its first budget with an ambitious plan to build social infrastructure.</p> <p>The government has allocated NZ\$3.8 billion (\$2.62 billion) of new capital spending over a five-year period. This includes an extra NZ\$634 million for housing, on top of the NZ\$2.1 billion previously announced to fund Kiwibuild, a government building program to increase affordable housing supply.</p> <p>Much is expected of the charismatic 37-year-old prime minister, after her party put fixing the housing crisis at the heart of its successful election campaign in September. Arden's challenge is to not allow her spending plan blow a hole in the strong finances her government inherited.</p> <p>But experts say the government's first budget underwhelms on the radical reforms the wider public wanted.</p> <p>"They're a long way down a hole that was created by somebody else and they haven't really got a great or easy solution," said John Tookey, professor of construction management at Auckland University of Technology.</p> <p>He said the government's much-vaunted Kiwibuild could come unstuck because there weren't enough skilled workers to deliver on its ambitious target to build 100,000 homes in the next decade.</p> <p>Even the budget's extra social housing spend was unlikely to alleviate the signs of families living in cars, caravans and garages that Salvation Army policy analyst Alan Johnson sees around his South Auckland neighborhood.</p>

“The Minister of Finance suggested it was transformational and I think it’s a long way short of that,” Johnson said.

New Zealand is on a six-year economic winning streak, underpinned by a strong dairy sector, booming tourism and migration.

That golden run is expected to continue, with Treasury expecting economic growth to hit a peak of 3.8 percent in 2019 - well above the 2 percent growth the International Monetary Fund forecasts developed economies to achieve.

But infrastructure in New Zealand has not kept pace.

A housing crunch, traffic jams, and hospital staff shortages led to an abrupt shift in public sentiment away from the seemingly unbeatable center-right National Party at the 2017 election.

Some, of course, enjoyed the fruits of the boom, particularly in the past decade. Others were squeezed.

Maoris, the indigenous people of New Zealand, account for a third of the homeless though they make up only 15 percent of the population.

A Yale study of OECD data found that New Zealand had the highest rate of homelessness among member nations, with almost 1 percent of its population living without a permanent shelter in 2015.

The situation has likely deteriorated since the study, analysts said, with the number of people eligible for government housing support doubling since 2015. And wage growth has significantly lagged house price growth of over 60 percent in the past decade, highlighting how even those with a roof over their heads are getting squeezed.

Homelessness is at its worst in New Zealand’s most populated city, Auckland, which has also experienced the most severe housing crunch, with prices jumping 90 percent in the past decade, according to property researcher Quotable Value.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Paraguay opens embassy in Jerusalem
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/guatemala-opens-embassy-jerusalem-us-guatemala-55320007?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Paraguay opened its new embassy in Jerusalem on Monday, following in the footsteps of the United States and Guatemala.</p> <p>President Horacio Cartes dedicated the embassy, making Paraguay the third country to transfer its diplomatic mission in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.</p> <p>Romania, the Czech Republic and Honduras have said they are also considering doing the same.</p> <p>President Donald Trump's announcement on Jerusalem in December was welcomed by the Israeli government. But it infuriated the Palestinians, who claim Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem as their future capital.</p> <p>The U.S. Embassy move added fuel to the weekly Palestinian protests in Gaza demanding the right of return to Israel and the lifting of a decade-old naval blockade. The protests culminated last Monday, when Israeli forces killed nearly 60 Palestinians in clashes along the border.</p> <p>But the U.S. Embassy move has also sparked others to rally in support of Israel.</p>

	<p>The entrance to Jerusalem was lined with the flags of Paraguay on Wednesday and Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said at the ceremony that he was there to "salute" a great friend.</p> <p>The opening of the embassy was "a great day for Israel, a great day for Paraguay, a great day for our friendship," Netanyahu said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 New Catalan leader defiant to Spain
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/defiant-catalan-leader-jailed-separatists-govt-55320639?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Catalonia's newly elected president is showing no sign of backing down from the region's political standoff with Spanish authorities, insisting he wants jailed former lawmakers to join his pro-independence Catalan government.</p> <p>Quim Torra says Jordi Turull and Josep Rull, prominent secessionists who are in pre-trial detention, are keen to become government ministers and have asked a judge to release them. Torra visited them at their jails near Madrid on Monday.</p> <p>But Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy says he won't grant Catalonia independence and won't allow anyone under criminal investigation to take office there.</p> <p>Torra also wants Antoni Comin and Lluís Puig, separatists who fled to Belgium, in his Cabinet.</p> <p>Torra's four picks were members of a Catalonia government dismissed by Rajoy following October's illegal declaration of independence by regional lawmakers.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Latin America decries Venezuela election
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-latam-bloc-decries-venezuela-vote-urges-action-55322238?
GIST	<p>A grouping of 14 countries from throughout the Americas is refusing to recognize the result of Venezuela's disputed presidential election and urged diplomatic and financial action in response.</p> <p>The Lima Group of nations decried the vote as failing to meet "international standards of a democratic, free, just and transparent process."</p> <p>The nations including Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Colombia vowed Monday to "reduce their level of diplomatic relations" with Venezuela in response.</p> <p>The bloc called on authorities in each of their countries to notify the financial sector about the risks of engaging in business with the Venezuelan government. It also promised to push international and regional entities not issue Venezuela new credit.</p> <p>The statement by the Lima Group adds to mounting international outcry over Sunday's election. Official results gave President Nicolas Maduro a new six-year term.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Mid-Atlantic: record rainfall totals
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/record-rainfall-totals-set-mid-atlantic-storms-

	continue/story?id=55320208&cid=clicksource_4380645_1_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>Up to a foot of rain fell in the last 10 days in the mid-Atlantic, and more is on the way for the hard-hit region.</p> <p>Asheville, North Carolina, set a record for the wettest May on record with 9.67 inches -- and there are still 10 days to go. Almost 10 inches of rain has been reported in southern Florida in the past eight days as well.</p> <p>A flood watch continues for southern Florida as more tropical moisture is on the way. A subtropical high will sit in the western Atlantic and keep bringing moisture from the tropics into the Southeast over the next several days.</p> <p>Unfortunately, hard-hit areas from the Carolinas to Florida will see more heavy rain this week. Most areas will see 2 to 3 inches, but over 4 inches is possible locally in southeastern Florida, southern Alabama and parts of Florida's western Panhandle.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Foster care crisis in opioid epidemic
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/opioid-epidemic-is-causing-foster-care-crisis/754188461
GIST	<p>Being a foster parent to any child takes dedication, patience, and time, but children coming out of homes where there is substance abuse often have a whole other set of challenges, including behavioral issues.</p> <p>There aren't enough foster parents in general and certainly not enough for kids who need specialized care.</p> <p>Cheryl Butler has raised four daughters who now have sons and daughters of their own. So she decided to raise a few more, and a few more has become half a dozen.</p> <p>"They've just become part of the family, they are the family, everybody is treated the same," Butler said.</p> <p>Butler has opened her home to high risk teen girls as a foster parent for four years.</p> <p>"You have to deal with that anger when they come, but they're still just kids," she said.</p> <p>Butler said they're kids who have often left behind lives they'd rather not return to.</p> <p>"I don't know of a case that does not involve drugs, I can't think of one. They're all some drugs in the cases and that just leads to neglect, very severe neglect," Butler said.</p> <p>Butler's experience is not the exception, it's the standard.</p> <p>"We are experiencing a crisis in the foster care system right now. We have too few homes for the number of children who need care. Part of that is attributed to the opioid epidemic," explained Terry Pottmeyer, the CEO of Friends of Youth.</p> <p>The non-profit provides transitional housing, youth shelters, drop-in centers and foster homes.</p> <p>"Our capacity is 30 to 35 children in any given year however we are seeing nationally that there's an increase in the number of children in need of care," Pottmeyer said.</p> <p>Since 2012 Friends of Youth has seen a 20 percent increase in the number of kids coming into their care.</p> <p>According to the Washington state Department of Social and Health Services, since 2012 there's been a 26 percent jump in the number of kids who are removed from home due to parental drug abuse.</p>

	<p>The number of foster homes is up slightly year over year from 4,656 in 2015 to 5,032 in 2018 but that increase is nominal compared to the need.</p> <p>“Increasingly when there isn’t a foster care placement that is right for them the state is struggling to find what things to do. I know that children have unfortunately been staying in hotel rooms with social workers from the state. Increasingly we have more children being placed outside the state of Washington,” said Pottmeyer.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Seattle searches for transportation director
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/seattle-begins-search-for-new-transportation-director/
GIST	<p>The city of Seattle has launched a national search to find a permanent director for the Seattle Department of Transportation, Mayor Jenny Durkan announced Monday.</p> <p>Goran Sparrman, who has been running SDOT on an interim basis, will continue in his role through the end of August, Durkan said.</p> <p>Sparrman took over from former SDOT Director Scott Kubly, who left in December in a “mutual decision,” soon after Durkan took office. Sparrman had also been interim director in 2014 and was deputy director of the agency before that.</p> <p>Durkan’s office set up a public survey to gather input on what people would like to see in the agency’s next director. The city will hire a national search firm next month and then launch a committee to review applicants and recommend finalists, Durkan’s office said.</p> <p>Sparrman also announced a reshuffling of the agency’s internal structure, with new roles for several senior leaders.</p> <p>“The interim director believes the former structure placed SDOT executives in leadership roles that weren’t complementary to their skills and talents,” spokeswoman Mafara Hobson said, “while the new structure better aligns senior leadership to more appropriate functions and organizational teams.”</p> <p>The mayor praised Sparrman for working “with the utmost accountability and transparency.”</p> <p>Since Sparrman took over, the agency has been trying to keep up with ambitious projects and overly optimistic promises from the previous administration. Durkan halted work on the First Avenue streetcar project after The Seattle Times reported that SDOT may have undersold the costs of running the new system by as much as 50 percent. Durkan will likely make a decision on the project’s future next month.</p> <p>And the 2015 Move Seattle transportation levy, the largest in the city’s history, won’t be able to deliver all the projects that were promised, SDOT recently said, as project costs are more than anticipated.</p> <p>“With a number of significant projects in the pipeline our next SDOT leader must be ready to deliver on investments and protect taxpayer dollars,” Durkan said in a prepared statement. “Our residents and businesses expect our officials to make progress and deliver results, and this administration will continue to be accountable to the people we serve.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Zimbabwe seeks to rejoin Commonwealth
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/21/africa/zimbabwe-commonwealth-countries/index.html
GIST	Lagos, Nigeria (CNN)Zimbabwe has applied to re-join the Commonwealth after the country withdrew its

	<p>membership 15 years ago under former President Robert Mugabe.</p> <p>Commonwealth Secretary-General, Patricia Scotland, said Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa submitted a application on May 15 for the country to return to the 53-member group of mostly British former colonies.</p> <p>"Zimbabwe's eventual return to the Commonwealth, following a successful membership application, would be a momentous occasion, given our shared rich history," Scotland said in a statement.</p> <p>Zimbabwe was first suspended from the Commonwealth in 2002 on the grounds that Mugabe, who had ruled the country since independence in 1980, rigged his re-election in 2002 and persecuted his opponents.</p> <p>The former dictator withdrew Zimbabwe's membership out of the group after the country's suspension was renewed in 2003.</p> <p>Mugabe was ousted last November following a military takeover and impending impeachment ending his 37-year rule over the country.</p> <p>The Commonwealth secretariat will send observers to monitor the country's elections in July, following an invitation from the Zimbabwean government, the statement said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/22 Iran scorns US sanctions threat
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-guards/commander-says-irans-people-will-punch-u-s-secretary-of-state-in-the-mouth-idUSKCN1IN0K8
GIST	<p>BEIRUT (Reuters) - A senior Iranian military commander poured scorn on U.S. threats to tighten sanctions on Tuesday, saying the Islamic Republic's people would respond by punching U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in the mouth.</p> <p>Pompeo said on Monday Washington would impose new penalties if Tehran did not make sweeping changes, including dropping its nuclear program and pulling out of the Syrian civil war.</p> <p>Two weeks after President Donald Trump pulled out of an international nuclear deal with Iran, his administration has threatened to impose "the strongest sanctions in history," setting Washington and Tehran further on a course of confrontation.</p> <p>"The people of Iran should stand united in the face of this and they will deliver a strong punch to the mouth of the American Secretary of State and anyone who backs them," Ismail Kowsari, the deputy commander of the Sarollah Revolutionary Guards base in Tehran said, according to the Iranian Labour News Agency.</p> <p>Limiting Iran's missile capabilities was one of Pompeo's main demands.</p> <p>"Who are you and America to tell us to limit the range of ballistic missiles?" Kowsari said, according to ILNA. "History has shown that with the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, America is the top criminal with regard to missiles," he added.</p> <p>Qassem Soleimani, the head of the branch of the Revolutionary Guards that carries out operations outside Iran's borders, was singled out by Pompeo as a top troublemaker in the Middle East.</p> <p>Kowsari said that the Iranian people back Soleimani.</p> <p>"Soleimani is not a single person. The great people of Iran support him," Kowsari said.</p>

	<p>Separately, Iran’s government spokesman said that the plan outlined by Pompeo would exacerbate the public’s hostility to the United States.</p> <p>“Do the Americans think that the silk glove that they’ve taken out and the iron hand that they’ve extended to the people, a hand that’s backed by Israel and the [Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization], will make Iranian people think that America wants democracy?” Mohammad Baqer Nobakht said on Tuesday, according to state media.</p> <p>The Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO) is an exiled Iranian armed opposition group which has called for the overthrow of the Iranian government for decades.</p> <p>John Bolton, the U.S. national security advisor, has been a supporter of the MKO, which the Iranian government sees as a terrorist group.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/22 Foreign media arrive in NKorea
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles-china-journalists/foreign-media-arrive-in-north-korea-suggesting-nuclear-shutdown-on-track-idUSKCN1IN08F
GIST	<p>BEIJING (Reuters) - About two dozen journalists from Western and Chinese news organizations arrived in North Korea on Tuesday to witness the closure of its nuclear test site, an indication that the shutdown will go ahead amid renewed diplomatic uncertainty.</p> <p>North Korea invited a handful of media to witness the dismantling of the Punggye-ri site this week but not technical experts, even though the United States has called for “a permanent and irreversible closure that can be inspected and fully accounted for”.</p> <p>Isolated North Korea’s offer to scrap the test site was seen as a key concession in months of easing tension between Pyongyang and its long-time bitter rivals, South Korea and the United States.</p> <p>However, the improving diplomatic environment has hit a rocky patch, with North Korea threatening last week to pull out of a planned June 12 summit in Singapore between leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump.</p> <p>South Korean president Moon Jae-in was scheduled to meet Trump in Washington later on Tuesday, as U.S. officials try to figure out whether North Korea, which has pursued nuclear and missile programs in defiance of U.N. sanctions, is serious about negotiating a deal on denuclearisation.</p> <p>Journalists from the Associated Press, CNN, CBS, Russia Today and Chinese state media outlets were among those seen checking in at Beijing Capital International Airport to catch the Air Koryo flight to North Korea.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/22 Hawaii: lava nears geothermal power plant
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hawaii-volcano/deadly-acid-cloud-rises-over-hawaii-as-lava-streams-into-ocean-idUSKCN1IM26P
GIST	<p>PAHOA, Hawaii (Reuters) - Molten lava from the erupting Kilauea Volcano on Hawaii’s Big Island crept onto a geothermal power plant site on Monday, as workers rushed to shut down the facility to prevent the uncontrollable release of toxic gases.</p> <p>Crews worked into the night to cap the 11th and final well at the Puna Geothermal Venture (PGV) plant, which provides about 25 percent of the Big Island’s power, as lava from an active fissure flowed 200 to 300 yards from the nearest well pad, county and federal officials said.</p>

	<p>“County, state, and federal partners have been collaborating closely to monitor the situation and work with PGV to ensure the safety of the surrounding communities,” the county said.</p> <p>The race at the site marked the latest challenge facing authorities as they cope with what geologists rank as one of the biggest upheavals in a century from one of the world’s most active volcanoes.</p> <p>The plant has been closed since shortly after lava began erupting on May 3 through newly opened fissures in the ground running through neighborhoods and roads on the far eastern flank of Kilauea.</p> <p>Within a week, some 60,000 gallons (227,124 liters) of the highly flammable chemical pentane, which was stored at the plant, were moved from harm’s way. The state said last week it was pumping cold water into the wells and would cap them with iron plugs.</p> <p>The plant’s wells run 6,000 to 8,000 feet (1,829-2,438 meters) underground to tap into extremely hot water and steam used to run turbines and produce electricity.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 US threatens ‘strongest’ sanctions on Iran
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-usa/pompeo-says-u-s-to-impose-tough-sanctions-on-iran-idUSKCN1IM1DE
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON/ANKARA (Reuters) - The United States on Monday demanded Iran make sweeping changes — from dropping its nuclear program to pulling out of the Syrian civil war — or face severe economic sanctions as the Trump administration hardened its approach to Tehran.</p> <p>Iran dismissed Washington’s ultimatum and one senior Iranian official said it showed the United States is seeking “regime change” in Iran.</p> <p>Weeks after President Donald Trump pulled out of an international nuclear deal with Iran, his administration threatened to impose “the strongest sanctions in history,” and vowed to “crush” Iranian operatives abroad, setting Washington and Tehran further on a course of confrontation.</p> <p>U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo demanded sweeping changes that would force Iran effectively to reverse the recent spread of its military and political influence through the Middle East to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.</p> <p>The speech added to the tension between the two countries, which grew notably when Trump this month withdrew from the 2015 international agreement aimed at preventing Tehran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.</p> <p>If Washington sees tangible shifts in Iran’s policies, it is prepared to lift sanctions, Pompeo said.</p> <p>“These will be the strongest sanctions in history by the time we are done,” he added.</p> <p>The European Union largely dismissed Pompeo’s speech and said it remained committed to the full implementation of the nuclear deal.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 US reinforces East Asia missile defense
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles-milius-japan/u-s-reinforces-east-asia-ballistic-missile-defense-as-trump-kim-summit-nears-idUSKCN1IN009
GIST	YOKOSUKA, Japan (Reuters) - The USS Milius, one of the U.S. Navy’s most advanced guided missile

destroyers, arrived in Japan on Tuesday to reinforce defenses against any ballistic missile attacks by North Korea, or anyone else in East Asia.

The warship's arrival at Yokosuka Naval Base comes three weeks before an unprecedented meeting is supposed to take place in Singapore between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

The show of force is a reminder of the military pressure that can be brought to bear on North Korea as the United States seeks to press it to abandon its nuclear weapons and its ballistic missile program.

The Milius will "support security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region by bringing enhanced missile defense capabilities as a ballistic missile defense platform", the U.S. Navy said in a statement.

The Milius's dockside welcome in Yokosuka, which is the headquarters of the U.S. Seventh Fleet, comes after doubts emerged last week over whether the Trump-Kim meeting will go ahead.

The deployment of the Milius to Japan was delayed by almost a year so it could undergo upgrades to its Aegis air defense system to enhance its ability to detect and target missiles.

Armed with missiles designed to shoot down warheads in space, the Milius will be part of a naval destroyer force that would be the first U.S. line of defense against any long-range ballistic missiles fired at it by North Korea.

It joins two other ships in the Seventh Fleet with similar upgrades and brings the fleet's destroyer unit back to full strength after two other U.S. warships in the region were crippled in collisions with commercial ships last year.

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HEADLINE	05/22 Austria tilt toward Russia 'worrisome'
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/austria-s-tilt-toward-russia-worries-intelligence-experts-n870711
GIST	<p>VIENNA — In a 19th-century kaffeehaus here, a handful of political activists nod their heads while sharing opinions many would consider racist, homophobic and awash with conspiracy theories.</p> <p>One topic is never far from their lips: These men believe that historically neutral Austria should turn its back on the West and embrace Russian President Vladimir Putin.</p> <p>"It's our aim to somehow counter this negative image of Russia propagated in Western media," Alexander Markovics, 26, says between sips of fizzy apple juice.</p> <p>"We have to take the side of Russia," the stocky and bearded Markovics adds. "Russia is a country that gets oppressed and is actually the victim of Western imperialism."</p> <p>Here in Austria, pro-Kremlin views aren't just confined to fringe political meetings.</p> <p>The country's government appears to be drifting closer to Putin. With Vienna widely regarded as the spying capital of the world, that has serious implications for Washington and its allies.</p> <p>One factor is at the heart of these concerns: the far-right Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) — which is openly supportive of Russia.</p> <p>"Austria is economically and politically integrated in the West, but the FPÖ is trying to play the card of being part of the East," says Gustav Gressel, a former desk officer at the Austrian Ministry of Defense. "If you have an East-West confrontation, you basically have parts of your enemy behind your own lines."</p>

Founded by former Nazis in the 1950s, the FPÖ has been a junior member of the country's coalition government since December. As part of that deal, it was given responsibility for Austria's defense and interior ministries, and with them the domestic and military intelligence services.

The FPÖ won 26 percent of the vote in last year's legislative elections by deploying anti-establishment, anti-immigrant populist rhetoric that was condemned by opponents as racist, Islamophobic and anti-Semitic.

The party and its leading figures are also unashamedly fans of Putin. The idea of a pro-Russia party controlling intelligence services has led to fears that Western secrets aren't safe any more if shared with Vienna.

"Austria is part of the European Union defense policy, and whatever is agreed and discussed there will be leaked to Moscow," predicts Gressel, who is now a senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations in Berlin.

"The issue is trust and mistrust," says Siegfried Beer, a leading espionage expert at the Austrian Center for Intelligence, Propaganda and Security Studies, who added that in terms of security and dealing with partners, giving the FPÖ control of the intelligence services "was not the best solution."

Austria's tradition as a playground for espionage dates back to the 19th century and was immortalized in the 1949 film, "The Third Man." Spying is legal here unless it's against the Austrian state itself. It was therefore no coincidence that Vienna was the venue for a high-profile spy swap between the U.S. and Russia in 2010 involving renowned Russian agent Anna Chapman.

The country's neutral status — neither part of NATO nor allied to Russia — means it's home to a large number of nongovernmental and international organizations. Experts say many diplomats working in the city are actually spies, with Beer and others estimating the number at around 7,000.

In 2016, party leader Heinz-Christian Strache signed a formal "cooperation pact" with Putin's United Russia party — unprecedented for a mainstream political group in Western Europe.

It was not just symbolic. After the deal, the parties agreed to "reinforce the links between our parties and countries, including in the field of international security," according to United Russia politician Sergei Zheleznyak.

"There's a cause for concern," says William Eacho, who served as U.S. ambassador to Austria from 2009 to 2013. "It's certainly going to give other nations pause when it comes to sharing intelligence with the Austrians."

Both Eacho and Beer say there is no concrete evidence that the FPÖ has so far used its position in government to help Russia.

But the point, they say, is that Russian links alone would be enough to prompt concern among Western powers.

"In the Austrian Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior, which are controlled by the FPÖ, you have people collaborating with the power you are preparing yourself to go to war against. That's not very reassuring," says Gressel, the former defense official.

Others allege that the FPÖ's fondness for Russia has already had a measurable effect. Austria was one of the few European Union countries that refused to follow the U.K. and others in expelling Russian diplomats after the poisoning of ex-spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter on British soil in March.

The FPÖ's senior coalition partner is the conservative People's Party (ÖVP), led by Prime Minister

Sebastian Kurz. Kurz, 31, explained that he wouldn't expel diplomats because he wanted Austria to be a "builder of bridges between East and West" and "to keep the channels of communication to Russia open."

The FPÖ has also called for an end to anti-Russia sanctions and backed a referendum on leaving the European Union — an institution Putin has long sought to destabilize.

In February, the country's domestic intelligence service was raided, a move the FPÖ-controlled Interior Ministry said was to investigate alleged misuse of data by officials.

But Austria's president and others demanded an explanation after it emerged the police team that carried out the operation was a street crime unit not used to dealing with such cases, and was headed by an FPÖ member.

The scandal dominated the Austria's news cycle for weeks, and according to media reports some of the material seized related to "extremist" far-right groups with FPÖ links.

"The whole thing is outrageous," the leader of the liberal NEOS party, Matthias Strolz, told state broadcaster ORF. "It stinks to high heaven."

A REBALANCING ACT

Austria's warmth for Russia is neither new nor confined to the far-right, however.

The Allies and Soviets withdrew from the country in 1955 on the condition it wouldn't take sides in the Cold War. It entered the E.U. in 1995, but never joined NATO.

Many Austrian citizens appear to have a fondness for Russia, too. More than one-third said they favored softer sanctions after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, according to a poll by the Austrian market research company OGM.

Back in the kaffeehaus, Markovics and his friends say that "heavy" Western "propaganda" over Crimea spurred them into creating their activist group, called the Suworow Institute after a Russian military leader from the 1700s.

The institute employs seven people and has around 100 members, according to its founder, 31-year-old Patrick Poppel.

"We try to present a different perspective especially on Russian foreign policy," Poppel says, peering through his small, wire-rimmed glasses.

Poppel and Markovics were both members of the FPÖ, but quit because they feel the party hadn't gone far enough in supporting Moscow while in government. They also say the FPÖ has been too soft on what they call the "Islamization" of Europe by refugees.

They deny any links to the Russian state, and say they are not racist or fascist.

However, Poppel talks of defending "Christian civilization" by closing Austria's borders to immigrants and Muslims. He also wants to repatriate all those deemed non-indigenous — even though his wife is from Armenia — and speaks out against liberals who advocate "extreme homosexuality and feminism."

Ultimately, Markovics says, the group believes that "elites" in the U.S. and its allies are dominating Europe, and "making profit out of actions that could lead us directly into nuclear apocalypse."

They see greater ties with Russia as a way to rebalance that.

'DEFINITELY NOT A THREAT'

The FPÖ insists its links to Moscow are not problematic.

Johannes Hübner is a lawyer, former FPÖ lawmaker and member of the Austrian-Russian Friendship Society. He withdrew his candidacy in last year's legislative elections after giving a speech some claimed had anti-Semitic overtones — something he denies.

Speaking to NBC News over eggs and avocado on the veranda of his spacious Vienna apartment, Hübner recounted his time in Parliament.

"As a politician, I used a lot of my energy to lobby for more understanding for Russia and to lobby against cutting ties with Russia again," he says.

Unlike the fringe Suworow Institute, the Austrian-Russian Friendship Society boasts high-profile politicians, businessmen and academics in Vienna and Moscow among its members.

Its board includes prominent FPÖ lawmaker Johann Gudenus, 41, a square-jawed speaker who studied in Moscow. He is often cited as the prime example of his party's deep ties with Russia. When contacted by NBC News, Gudenus' spokesman said he was not available.

Does Hübner see any problem or malice in fostering ties to a country often criticized by Western watchdogs as undemocratic and a human rights abuser?

"It is definitely not a threat," he says, smiling gently. "I was in politics for almost nine years here and I would have realized if [Russia] tried to influence policy ... or if they bribed people for a dark network. It doesn't exist."

Like many in the FPÖ, he says building bridges to Russia is important to counterbalance the "overwhelming American influence," which is too often presented as the "white knight" of global affairs.

"The Moscow influence in Europe is zero," Hübner adds. "It would be good if we had more influence from Russia. Not 50 percent, but maybe 10 percent or 15 percent. Now it is maybe 1 percent."

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HEADLINE	05/22 China blames Australia amid tensions
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-22/china-blames-australia-for-strained-relations-as-trade-suffers
GIST	<p>China has issued a fresh rebuke to Australia as tensions between the two nations continued to simmer, with Foreign Minister Wang Yi blaming its trading partner for the spat and saying it was up to Australia to get their relationship back on track.</p> <p>“Due to the Australian side’s reasons, the relationship between China and Australia has encountered some difficulties,” Wang said in a statement on Tuesday. “If Australia is genuinely hopeful for getting the bilateral relationship back on the right track, Australia should discard its traditional thinking and take off its tinted glasses to take a proactive approach towards China’s development.”</p> <p>The comments, coming directly after a meeting between Wang and his Australian counterpart Julie Bishop in Buenos Aires on Monday, show how far relations have soured since December, when Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said reports of Chinese meddling with media, universities and lawmakers were a catalyst for tougher anti-foreign interference laws.</p> <p>The legislation, yet to pass parliament, will ban foreign political donations and require people or organizations acting in the interests of overseas powers to register and disclose their ties.</p> <p>The U.S., Japan and countries in Southeast Asia that haven’t aligned themselves with China will be watching this closely, said Malcolm Davis, a senior analyst at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute and</p>

	<p>a former adviser to the government on defense policy.</p> <p>"Australia shouldn't back down and I don't think the Chinese will, so this cooling off in the relationship could well continue," Davis said by phone. "Australia needs to set an example that nations can maintain a strong resolve against Chinese pressure and not allow China to dictate their foreign and defense policies."</p> <p>Business Hurting Meanwhile, the business community is concerned the spat is hurting trade, with a planned increase in beef exports stalled by China and Treasury Wine Estates Co. saying last week Chinese customs officers have delayed shipments due to new requirements that "seemingly only apply to Australian Country of Origin wines."</p> <p>Bishop used a Sky News interview on Tuesday to downplay the spat and said she intends to visit China "very soon," with Turnbull to follow later this year. Still, Wang said on Tuesday that exchanges and cooperation between the two countries have been affected by the disagreements.</p> <p>"China attaches importance to the China-Australia relationship and we would like to communicate with Australia on how to take concrete measures to improve the bilateral relationship," Wang said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Court upholds arbitration agreements
SOURCE	https://www.aol.com/article/news/2018/05/21/companies-win-big-at-us-top-court-on-worker-class-action-curbs/23440230/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON, May 21 (Reuters) - The U.S. Supreme Court delivered a blow to the rights of workers on Monday by allowing companies to require them to sign away their ability to bring class-action claims against management, agreements already in place for about 25 million employees.</p> <p>The justices, in a 5-4 ruling with the court's conservatives in the majority, endorsed the legality of the growing practice by companies to compel workers to sign arbitration agreements waiving their right to bring class-action claims on various disputes, primarily over wages and hours.</p> <p>The ruling could apply more broadly to discrimination claims like those raised by women as part of the #MeToo movement raising awareness of sexual harassment in the workplace but the court did not explicitly address that issue.</p> <p>Craig Becker, a former member of the U.S. National Labor Relations Board and now general counsel of the AFL-CIO union federation, said the decision will have a "chilling effect" on employees coming forward to complain of mistreatment.</p> <p>"It will cripple enforcement of all the major employment laws," Becker added.</p> <p>Growing numbers of employers, alarmed by a rise in class-action claims brought by workers on wage issues, have demanded that their workers sign waivers. Class-action litigation can result in large damages awards by juries and is harder for businesses to fight than cases brought by individual plaintiffs.</p> <p>The ruling is the latest in a series of pro-business decisions by the conservative-majority Supreme Court in recent years curbing class-action claims of various types and endorsing arbitration to resolve contractual disputes. Companies have said arbitration is quicker and cheaper than litigation in court.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Kremlin: UK pushing hatred of Russia
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/kremlin-russia-spy-uk/2018/05/21/id/861585/

GIST	<p>The Russian government says the United Kingdom is using the mysterious poisoning a former Russian spy and his daughter in England last March to promote the hatred of Russia.</p> <p>"We are witnessing Great Britain's rather unprecedented Russia-hating mania, which manifests itself in various ways," Russian Presidential Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, according to Tass, the Kremlin's official news agency.</p> <p>"You can see for yourself that the tidal wave of hate against Russia does not stem from any events regarding Great Britain and its citizens, but it was triggered by a provocation staged by the UK - I mean the so-called Skripal case."</p> <p>Pescov's comments about the March attack on Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia, came as the British House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee released a scathing report entitled: "Moscow's Gold: Russian Corruption in the UK."</p> <p>It charges Russia with using London as a "laundromat" for its dirty money and calls for the Britain "to sanction more Kremlin-connected individuals."</p> <p>There is no excuse for the UK to turn a blind eye as President [Vladimir] Putin's kleptocrats and human rights abusers use money laundered through London to corrupt our friends, weaken our alliances, and erode faith in our institutions," the committee said.</p> <p>It added: "The UK must get serious about confronting the full spectrum of President Putin's offensive measures. The robust rhetoric from the Prime Minister following the attempted murder of Sergei Skripal and his daughter has been undermined by the 'business as usual' sign hanging on the UK's front door ...</p> <p>"We can no longer allow 'business as usual'. The UK must be clear that the corruption stemming from the Kremlin is no longer welcome in our markets and we will act."</p> <p>On March 4, Skripal -- convicted in Russia of spying for Great Britain and later swapped for Russian intelligence officers -- and his daughter, were found unconscious on a park bench in Salisbury, a cathedral city in Wiltshire, some 78 miles southwest of London.</p> <p>It was determined they were the victims of a highly toxic nerve gas developed in Russia. Both were admitted to a hospital in critical condition, but survived the attack and have since been discharged.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Protesters shut down Mexico-Texas bridge
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/protesters-shut-commercial-bridge-linking-mexico-texas-55339245?
GIST	<p>At least 200 demonstrators blocked a major commercial bridge between Mexico and Texas on Monday to protest the disappearance of dozens of people in the border city of Nuevo Laredo, snarling traffic in both directions into the night.</p> <p>The protest began around 9:30 a.m. at the bridge, which is used exclusively by cargo trucks traveling between Tamaulipas state and Laredo, Texas, and was still going late Monday.</p> <p>Thousands of trucks make the crossing each day, and long lines of tractor-trailers backed up along the highway.</p> <p>Demonstrators were protesting what they consider a weak response by authorities to 43 complaints filed with prosecutors over disappearances in Nuevo Laredo.</p> <p>"We are demanding justice," said Estela Gonzalez, who lodged a complaint about a missing nephew-in-</p>

	<p>law. "Alive or dead or however they may be, we want to know what happened to them."</p> <p>Nuevo Laredo's acting mayor, Rafael Pedraza Dominguez, went to the bridge in the afternoon to try to persuade the protesters to leave, promising to engage in talks with them.</p> <p>But they ignored his pleas and vowed to maintain the roadblock.</p> <p>Nuevo Laredo is a key smuggling corridor for rival drug gangs, and the city has been experiencing a wave of violence.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Park Service: flooding from sea level rise
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/national-parks-face-flooding-sea-level-rise-storm/story?
GIST	<p>The National Park Service has released its first-ever report on how the impact of sea level rise and flooding from storms could impact national parks around the country.</p> <p>More than a quarter of the property managed by the park system is on a coast, according to the report, and many face increasing threats from rising sea levels connected to global warming and increased threats of flooding from storms in the coming decades.</p> <p>The report had been edited to remove references to the human impact on climate change, causing Democrats to call for an investigation into whether the report was edited to remove references to the human impact on climate change, after a report from a nonprofit journalism organization reported that references to the human impact on climate change were removed from a draft of the report earlier this year.</p> <p>The authors wrote that the National Park Service should be aware of the possible impacts of combined sea level rise and storm surge and that the report will help the National Park Service plan how to adapt.</p> <p>"Sea level change and storm surge pose considerable risks to infrastructure, archaeological sites, lighthouses, forts, and other historic structures in coastal units of the national park system," the authors explained.</p> <p>National parks already face more than \$11 billion in backlog for maintenance. Flooding or hurricanes can cause even more expensive damages. Repairs to national parks after Hurricane Sandy cost more than \$370 million, according to the report.</p> <p>The new report released Friday found that parks in Washington, D.C., face the highest sea level rise by 2100 but that the parks are not directly on a coast and that parks in the Capitol region are very close together so each park would be affected differently.</p> <p>National parks in the Southeast, especially the Everglades National Park, face threats from storm surge that are exacerbated by sea level rise, the report found. By the year 2100, the Wright Brothers National Memorial could be completely flooded if hit by a hurricane category 2 or higher, according to the report.</p> <p>Research shows that global sea levels are changing because rising global temperatures from greenhouse gas emissions cause ice to melt, especially in places like Greenland and Antarctica. The report published by the National Park Service uses models from the United Nations' climate change panel, National Oceanic, and Atmospheric Administration, and research from the University of Colorado Boulder to estimate how national parks could be affected by sea level rise if greenhouse gas emissions continue at current levels.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 DOH to test for PFAS in water systems
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/state-to-test-drinking-water-sites-for-pfas-contamination-linked-to-firefighting-foam/
GIST	<p>The Washington Department of Health plans to test several hundred water systems in the state for trace contamination of more than a dozen chemicals found in some firefighting foams.</p> <p>The chemicals are called per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances or PFAS. They already have been found in five Washington drinking-water systems at levels over the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines, as well as dozens of private drinking-water wells near firefighting training areas where the foams were used.</p> <p>Department officials will use the test results to help assess the scope of the problem as they work with the Washington State Board of Health to develop possible state standards for some of the chemicals.</p> <p><i>What are they?</i></p> <p><i>Polyfluoroalkyl and perfluoroalkyl substances are man-made compounds, manufactured since the mid-20th century, and resistant to heat, water and oil. Uses of PFAS have largely been phased out in the United States.</i></p> <p><i>What are they used for?</i></p> <p><i>They are in fire retardants, such as firefighting foam at airfields. Also used in paint, carpets, the manufacture of nonstick cookware, food- takeout containers, clothing resistant to soil, stains and water.</i></p> <p><i>What are the health concerns?</i></p> <p><i>There is debate about health effects, but some studies link the substances to an increased risk of cancer, higher cholesterol, suppressed immune systems and problems in fetal development.</i></p> <p><i>Where are they found?</i></p> <p><i>The highest levels have been detected in watersheds near military bases, industrial sites and wastewater-treatment plants, where these chemicals were commonly used. Humans' most common exposure is through food and dust, with only about 20 percent coming through drinking water.</i></p> <p><i>How prevalent are PFAS?</i></p> <p><i>A survey indicates PFAS are in the blood of 98 percent of the U.S. population.</i></p> <p><i>Sources: Harvard School of Public Health, Washington State Department of Health, EPA</i></p> <p>Washington drinking-water contamination is part of a much larger PFAS pollution problem at sites across the country. These chemicals are now undergoing a federal toxicology review that has drawn scrutiny from the White House, where an unidentified aide — in a January email released under the federal Freedom of Information Act — warned of a “potential public relations nightmare.”</p> <p>The federal review was conducted by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, a federal public-health agency, and recommends “minimal risk levels” for four PFAS chemicals in drinking water. This level, for at least one of these chemicals, is considerably more stringent than the EPA guideline, according to the January email.</p> <p>Now, more than three months after the email was circulated, the draft report has not been made public. This has raised bipartisan concerns in Congress that the Trump administration is trying to delay publication or alter the findings.</p>

In a statement released to The Seattle Times, a spokesperson for the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry said no date has been set to release the draft study for public comment.

The statement said the document has been through a “normal review process” that has led to “a number of revisions. It also said the agency is working with other federal partners to provide “consistent and proper interpretation” of the minimum-risk levels, which are intended to assist state and federal agencies in setting regulatory standards.

In Washington state, the federal review is of keen interest to state officials, and they want to find out what it has to say.

“Absolutely, I would like to see what a federal agency would think after a thorough assessment,” said Barbara Morrissey, a Washington health-department toxicologist who will head to D.C. this week to attend a two-day “National Leadership” summit the EPA is hosting on chemicals.

The state PFAS testing is financed by a \$150,000 EPA grant, and it is expected to get underway in the months ahead. The Department of Health initially proposed 312 water systems considered to have a potential for contamination, such as those near sites where firefighting foams have been deployed.

The testing can be a sensitive issue, stoking concern when the results are released. So far 18 operators of water systems have turned down the state request to conduct tests, according to Liz Coleman, of the state Department of Health.

The per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances began to be produced in the mid-20th century, and there are more than 3,000 different compounds. In addition to firefighting foams, they are used in many other products such as food wrappers and carpets, and can be detected in the blood of 98 percent of the U.S. population.

Some studies have found they can increase the risks of cancer, higher cholesterol, suppressed immune systems and problems in fetal development. But scientists and policymakers are grappling with what constitutes safe levels for these chemicals when they show up in drinking water.

The email, obtained by the Union of Concerned Scientists, and first reported by Politico, indicates that the unpublished study recommends a level as low as 12 parts per trillion for at least one PFAS chemical. That is far more restrictive than the current EPA guideline level of 70 parts per trillion set for two of the PFAS chemicals.

This email was part of a chain of messages released to the Union of Concerned Scientists. The correspondence indicates the draft report also drew the attention of the Defense Department, which has found more than 120 sites where firefighting foam used around military airstrips appears to have contaminated sources of drinking water.

The Defense Department has paid for alternate sources of water and other assistance when the contamination levels reach or exceed the EPA 70 parts per trillion guidelines. So a much-lower threshold could increase the number of water systems and private wells that would need assistance from the military.

The unpublished study also was scrutinized by EPA staffers, some questioning some of the methodology used by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. Another EPA official suggested an interagency review of the study.

The most blunt language was used by an unidentified White House staffer, whose email was cut and pasted into a second email written by James Herz of the Office of Management and Budget and forwarded to EPA officials.

The staffer declared that the “public, media and Congressional reaction to these new numbers is going to be huge. The impact to the EPA and DOD is going to be extremely painful.”

	<p>Bipartisan response The emails became public May 14 when Politico published reporter Annie Snider’s story.</p> <p>They drew a quick response in Congress. Sen Patty Murray, D-Washington, and 10 other senators sent a letter to Trump administration officials requesting the study be released, and Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Spokane, joined 12 other House members in making the same demand of EPA administrator Scott Pruitt.</p> <p>The letter signed by McMorris Rodgers warned that any attempt to withhold the study would be a “clear violation of the public trust. ... Too many communities across the nation are plagued by ongoing, serious questions regarding the threat the contamination may pose to their health and that of their loved ones ... Many of us represent these communities.”</p> <p>In McMorris Rodgers’ district, the Defense Department conducted tests last year around Fairchild Air Force Base. The results indicated that 81 private wells have PFAS contamination above the EPA guidelines, as does the water system for Airway Heights, a community of more than 6,600 that, since the contamination was detected, has secured water from Spokane.</p> <p>The PFAS drinking-water contamination found in Washington in July prompted a coalition of groups led by Toxic-Free Future to petition the state health department to develop a drinking-water standard. The groups requested that standard be set lower than the EPA guideline.</p> <p>State health officials say the process to develop a Washington PFAS plan will extend until 2019. Still uncertain — just how many chemicals will be covered by the plan.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Deadly acid cloud rises over Hawaii
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hawaii-volcano/deadly-acid-cloud-rises-over-hawaii-as-lava-streams-into-ocean-idUSKCN1IM26P
GIST	<p>PAHOA, Hawaii (Reuters) - Deadly white clouds of acid and fine shards of glass boiled into the sky over Hawaii on Monday as lava from the Kilauea volcano flowed into the ocean, creating a new hazard from a more than two-week eruption.</p> <p>Hawaii’s Civil Defense agency warned motorists, boaters and beachgoers to beware of toxic clouds of so-called “laze” — a combination of “lava” and “haze” — which formed as two streams of hot lava poured into sea water.</p> <p>The caustic plume, which can be fatal if inhaled, was the latest danger in an eruption that shows no signs of stopping, since it started on May 3. It has already produced around two dozen lava-spewing cracks, the same number as a previous 88-day event in 1955.</p> <p>Two thousand people have been ordered from their homes due to lava flows and toxic sulfur dioxide gas, levels of which have tripled in the last two days, according to the County of Hawaii Civil Defense. Hawaii National Guard has warned of more mandatory evacuations if further highways are blocked.</p> <p>Flows of molten rock are traveling at around 400 yards (meters) per hour, twice as fast as earlier streams, Peacheta said. Lava is expected to begin sending fountains of lava up to 600 feet (183 meters) into the air, three times as high as before, she added.</p> <p>The new laze threat, which killed two people when a lava flow reached the coast in 2000, is a mix of hydrochloric acid fumes, steam and fine volcanic glass specks created when erupting lava, which can reach 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit (1,093 degrees Celsius), reacts with sea water.</p> <p>The cloud could extend as far as 15 miles (24 km), mostly along the coast and offshore, geologists said on</p>

	<p>Sunday. Even a wisp can cause eye and respiratory irritation, and it causes acid rain that has corrosive properties equivalent to diluted battery acid, the U.S. Geological Survey said.</p> <p>An air quality index for Kona, about 40 miles (64 km) northwest of the eruption site, was at “orange,” meaning older individuals and those with lung problems could be affected.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Hawaii: lava wall blocks crucial exit route
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/05/21/hawaii-volcanos-two-story-lava-wall-blocks-crucial-escape-route-residents-urged-to-steer-clear-toxic-cloud.html
GIST	<p>Lava gushing out of cracks caused by Hawaii’s Kilauea volcano over the weekend formed a two-story wall blocking parts of a highway crucial for residents to escape, as authorities warn them to steer clear of the plumes of acid and extremely fine shards of glass billowing into the sky.</p> <p>A "small explosion" was reported just before 1 a.m. at the volcano's summit that sent an ash plume 7,000 feet into the air. The wind carried the ash southwest, USGS Volcanoes reported.</p> <p>"If you are at home, stay indoors with the windows closed. Turn on your radio and listen for updates from authorities," officials said.</p> <p>The active flows from some of the 22 fissures that have opened up on the Big Island since volcanic activity began more than two weeks created a 20-foot wall of lava on Highway 137. Scientists said the new lava is hotter and moves faster to cover a wider area.</p> <p>By Saturday night, the lava flow crossed over the highway, cutting off the route for thousands of residents in the Lower Puna communities, officials said.</p> <p>"[Look at] how huge this thing is," Herman Andaya with Maui Emergency Management, told Hawaii News Now. "The magnitude in the flow, and everything."</p> <p>He added, “I’m speechless.”</p> <p>Hawaii County Civil Defense Agency announced parts of Highway 137 was closed between Kamaili and Pohoiki roads. Highway 130 was open to residents, but cracks that began forming on the road also threatened to shut down that route. Authorities attempted to stiffen the cracks last week with metal plates.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 School shootings are a stark reality
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/21/us/school-shooting-us-versus-world-trnd/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)School shootings are a reality in America, an average of one a week just this year alone. But how does the US compare with other countries in the world?</p> <p>That's difficult to ascertain because very little research exists to quantify that.</p> <p>For the purposes of this analysis, we followed the criteria below –</p> <p>The scope: First, we looked at the G7 countries -- the countries with the largest advanced economies in the world. The countries are Canada, the US, Japan, Germany, Italy, France, the UK.</p> <p>The time period: From January 1, 2009 to May 21, 2018.</p> <p>The definition: The parameters we followed in this count are -</p>

- Shooting must involve at least one person being shot (not including the shooter)
- Shooting must occur on school grounds
- We included gang violence, fights and domestic violence (but our count is NOT limited to those categories)
- We included grades K through college/university level as well as vocational schools
- We included accidental discharge of a firearm as long as the first two parameters are met

The analysis: For US stats, CNN reviewed media reports and a variety of databases including those from the Gun Violence Archive and Northwestern Institute on Complex Systems. For international stats, we looked at local and national media reports.

The caveat: Reporting on non-fatal school shootings is not always available. There may be additional school shootings with injuries that did not make it into the newspaper or digital publications, and therefore aren't counted in databases that rely on media reports. This is true for shootings in the US and overseas.

What we found:

There have been **at least 288 school shootings** in the United States since January 1, 2009.

That's **57 times** as many shootings as **the other six G7 countries** combined.

Broadening out the list

Next, we wanted to broaden our list out to include some countries that were mentioned in a few of the viral posts that were going around this weekend.

In some of the incidents, the casualty count is very high ([the Peshawar siege](#); [the Kenya attack](#)). But when it comes to **the frequency of attacks**, the **US still leads** by a wide margin.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Clashes escalate eastern Ukraine
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/clashes-escalate-eastern-ukraine-55332313?
GIST	<p>Clashes between Ukrainian forces and separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine have escalated, the worst outbreak of fighting so far this year, officials said Monday.</p> <p>The headquarters for the Ukrainian operations in the east said two soldiers were killed and another four were wounded in fighting near the village of Yuzhnoye early Monday.</p> <p>The separatists in the Donetsk region accused Ukraine of using heavy artillery and tanks to shell residential areas. They said four civilians were killed and another four were wounded in Ukrainian shelling last week.</p> <p>Alexander Hug, a deputy chief of the monitoring mission of the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe, said it has confirmed that two civilians were killed and another three were injured last week, adding that "we have many more cases pending."</p> <p>"Last week was in many ways the worst we have seen so far this year," Hug said at a briefing in Kiev. "In total, we recorded 7,700 cease-fire violations."</p> <p>The conflict in the east erupted after Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and has killed more than 10,000 since April 2014. A 2015 peace agreement signed in Minsk has helped reduce hostilities, but clashes continue.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	05/22 Study: most cyber insecure cities
SOURCE	https://www.helpnetsecurity.com/2018/05/22/cyber-insecure-cities/
GIST	<p>Coronet researchers identified Las Vegas, Memphis and Charlotte as America's most cyber insecure cities.</p> <p>"While big companies may have the budgets, personnel and resources to protect their assets reasonably well, mid-market and small businesses are mostly left to fend for themselves. This is both unfortunate and a recipe for disaster," said Guy Moskowitz, CEO, Coronet.</p> <p>America's most insecure metros</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Tampa – St. Petersburg 9. Orlando – Daytona Beach 8. West Palm Beach – Ft. Pierce 7. Jacksonville 6. Birmingham 5. Providence 4. Houston 3. Charlotte 2. Memphis 1. Las Vegas. <p>America's least vulnerable metros</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. St. Louis 4. Seattle – Tacoma 3. Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News 2. Greensboro – Winston Salem 1. Richmond
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HEADLINE	05/21 Cybersecurity and the distributed grid
SOURCE	https://www.utilitydive.com/news/cybersecurity-and-the-distributed-grid-a-double-edged-sword/523285/
GIST	<p>Two evolutions are taking place around the power sector today, which could make it more difficult to defend from a growing cyber threat.</p> <p>Hackers are becoming increasingly sophisticated in their attempts to disrupt electric grids. Attacks are more targeted, including spear phishing efforts aimed at individuals, and are shifting from corporate networks to include industrial control systems.</p> <p>At the same time, the grid is becoming increasingly distributed and connected. Older power plants have been spared cyber attacks because they were not connected to the internet (which may not have existed when they were built). New resources are connected — though they are also being constructed with security in mind. And in this growing Internet of Things world, just about every device imaginable can create a potential vulnerability.</p> <p>This creates something of a double-edged sword, say security experts. On the one hand, it distributes risk and the consequences of a successful breach. But it also creates a broader "attack surface" with more vulnerabilities and opportunities for attackers to gain access.</p> <p>"Modern grid technologies expose existing security vulnerabilities in new ways, as well as introduce new benefits," Advanced Energy Economy Institute concluded in an assessment of cybersecurity challenges on a distributed grid, published earlier this year.</p>

The report also found the energy industry is "learning important lessons from the high profile, and high impact, attacks that have affected a large number of users in the United States during the past two years." AEEI noted that several attacks have used internet-connected devices "such as baby monitors, webcams, and other smart home devices."

No major disruptions yet

Thus far, the utility sector in this country has dodged any major disruptions due to cyberattacks. There have been minor intrusions, malware infections and false alarms, but so far, hackers have not been able to turn off the lights. Increasingly, however, security experts concede a successful attack is likely to happen eventually.

"In theory, a grid with more distributed resources can increase the potential attack surface for adversaries because the capacity of distributed generation, including renewables, has grown exponentially over the last decade," Bill Lawrence, director of NERC's Electricity Information Sharing and Analysis Center, told Utility Dive in an email.

Some of the success in deflecting attacks so far, said Lawrence, is because many of the new distributed resources are including cybersecurity concerns and plans from the start of a project, and up-to-date security solutions are coming to market. Some of those security products, he said, have been developed through the Department of Energy's Cybersecurity for Energy Delivery Systems research and development program.

DOE's Office of Electricity developed the R&D program, aiming to help energy sector asset owners. The Office of Electricity's website neatly presents some of the difficulties presented by distributed resources.

While the electric grid is undoubtedly becoming more distributed, Lawrence said that so far there has not been an increased risk to the security and reliability of the bulk system. There are two reasons for that, and the first one could be changing.

"First, distributed resources still provide a small percentage of the overall electricity consumed in North America each year," Lawrence said. "Second, the intermittency of distributed resources already requires grid operators to call on baseload generation to maintain the reliability of the bulk power system by offsetting the frequent reductions in output from solar, wind and other distributed generation."

Lawrence said NERC expects those baseload resources to also be available "in the unlikely scenario that one or more distributed resources became unavailable due to a cyber or physical attack on those facilities."

A turning point in Ukraine

It has happened before: In December 2015, cyberattacks caused widespread blackouts in Ukraine, and since then, the incident has heightened fears and awareness in the United States. Two years later, Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., confirmed Russia has the capability to shut down American power plants through hacking efforts. And cybersecurity firm Dragos determined the malware used in the Ukraine attack could be modified by its Russian developers to target the United States.

The cyberattack in Ukraine may represent a turning point in the security battle.

The malware used in the attack, named "CrashOverride," was only the second industrial control system-tailored malware to target physical industrial processes, according to Dragos. The first was Stuxnet, designed by the United States and Israel to disrupt Iran's nuclear program and identified less than a decade ago.

Since Ukraine, however, there have been other reports of cyberattacks on industrial control system equipment. Hackers last year were able to penetrate the safety systems of a petrochemical plant in Saudi

Arabia, in part by taking advantage of an older device made by Schneider.

Eddie Habibi, founder and CEO of cybersecurity firm PAS Global, says there is a risk of underestimating the threat, which is dangerous and widespread.

"We have an entire industry — not just industry, but the entire industrial sector — that we believe is at risk," he said. "These systems were never designed with security in mind. They are vulnerable, and control the critical infrastructure of every nation."

Up to \$1 trillion in damages

Lloyd's of London issued a report three years ago estimating the potential impacts of a widespread attack on the U.S. power grid. The firm concluded the total economic loss could range from \$243 billion up to \$1 trillion in the most damaging scenarios.

Given such potential impacts, cybersecurity is of paramount importance in the utility sector, and efforts to harden defenses are ramping up quickly.

Several surveys of executives in the energy space, including Utility Dive's own, have shown many think a successful attack is likely in the next few years. Last year, a report from consulting firm Accenture found 76% of utility executives expect it to happen within the next five years.

The threat has caught the attention of the federal government. This month, DOE published a five-year plan to diminish the risk of energy disruptions due to cyberattacks, focused on strengthening preparedness, coordinating responses, and developing the next generation of resilient energy systems. And in February, the Trump administration announced it would develop The Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response, which will focus on energy infrastructure security and be funded through \$96 million in the White House's Fiscal 2019 budget request.

Regarding other federal activities related to grid cybersecurity, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in April approved a revised Critical Infrastructure Protection reliability standard directing NERC to make changes to standards to "further mitigate the risk of malicious code" from devices like laptops and thumbdrives.

Looking at the distributed grid, AEEI's report on cyber threats recommended creation of "guidelines for implementing reliable and secure DER systems," along with "coordination and unification of DER cybersecurity efforts." Ultimately, the report finds the distributed grid to be a net-positive for resilience and security.

"The adoption of [distributed energy resource management systems] by utilities and other grid operators may create an additional opportunity to further harden the cybersecurity of intelligent grids," the report concluded.

"The outlook on grid edge security should be positive."

Despite all the focus on defense, Habibi says the most important thing for utilities may be to have a response plan.

"You can never avoid cyber incidents," he said. "Cyber is inevitable. It will happen to some companies. So as one plans their cyber strategy, they also have to plan a response."

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HEADLINE 05/21 Spotlight: cybersecurity rail industry

SOURCE <https://www.smartrailworld.com/breaches-in-the-usa-and-denmark-cast-a-further-spotlight-on-rail->

	<p>cyber-security</p>
GIST	<p>Cyber security (or lack of...) has been one of the most consistent themes running through business news stories these recent years. Elements of rail and metro have been slow to wake up to the threat, but two events from last week, have reiterated the importance of a robust and updated cyber-security for both operational and passenger focused systems.</p> <p>Firstly, it was revealed that Americans who booked European train tickets through Rail Europe North America (RENA) may be victims of a near-three month data breach of their e-commerce system. Whilst Danske Statsbaner (DSB) the largest Danish train operating company was struck by a significant Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) cyber attack. The company has confirmed that this attack was the cause of passengers being unable to buy tickets on the 13th May via the company's app, ticket machines, website and in shops.</p> <p>RENA, the leading worldwide distributor of European rail products, from rail passes to train tickets and reservations, they provide access to over 50 European train companies including SNCF, Eurostar, Thalys and many more. On April 30th, they issued a breach notification with the California Attorney General's Office stating that "On February 16, 2018, as a result of a query from one of our banks, we discovered that beginning on November 29, 2017, through February 16, 2018, unauthorized persons gained unauthorized access to our e-commerce websites' IT platform."</p> <p>The personal information that may have been involved is: name, gender, delivery address, invoicing address, telephone number, email address, credit/debit card number, expiration date and CVV of customers, and, in some cases, username and password of registered users who created personal accounts on a RENA website.</p> <p>The breach notification detailed the response to this, RENA replaced and rebuilt all compromised systems from known safe code, any potentially untrusted components were removed, passwords were changed on all systems and applications, certificates were renewed, and security controls were hardened.</p> <p>Paul Bischoff, Privacy Advocate at Comparitech.com told us; "The breach at Rail Europe is disconcerting not only because of what information was accessed by hackers, but how that information was accessed. Data breaches typically occur when a hacker gains unauthorized access to a database. In this case, however, the hackers were able to affect the front end of the Rail Europe website with "skimming" malware, meaning customers gave payment and other information directly to the hackers through the website. While the details haven't been fully disclosed, the fact that this went on for three months shows a clear lack of security by Rail Europe."</p> <p>Ryan Wilk, vice president at NuData Security, a Mastercard company, stated "This is exactly why so many eCommerce entities, merchants, and financial institutions are turning to multi-layered solutions that incorporate passive biometrics and behavioural analytics. With these technologies, even when consumer information is stolen, the breached credentials cannot be used to log into someone else's account to or to make a fraudulent transaction. With these multi-layered solutions, verification is derived from hundreds of indicators based on the user's online behaviour – not relying on a password or challenge questions. These behaviours cannot be mimicked by hackers, protecting customers and businesses from post-breach damage. Today's news is a call to action for every entity handling customer payment data and other personally identifiable information."</p> <p>Whilst in further news for the rail industry, in Denmark, DSB confirmed that this attack was the cause of passengers being unable to buy tickets yesterday (13th May) via the company's app, ticket machines, website and in shops. This issue was resolved within a day DSB confirmed. Passengers with travel cards were able to use them, while others purchased tickets from ticket inspectors on board trains.</p> <p>"Our technicians and IT contractors have analysed this closely during the night and have concluded this is an outside attack in which someone has attempted to bring our system down," DSB vice-director Aske Wieth-Knudsen told journalists.</p>

	<p>A Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack is an attempt to make an online service unavailable by overwhelming it with traffic from multiple sources.</p> <p>Reported in The Local, the attack also hit DSB Internal mail and telephone, rendering the company able to communicate via social media or provide staff or customers with further information. A similar issue earlier this year was caused by an electronic failure rather than a cyber attack.</p> <p>“They type of attack we saw yesterday is a new way of doing things that we [DSB, ed.] haven’t seen before. So a little more close analysis is required for us to see what exactly happened so we can prevent a re-occurrence,” Wieth-Knudsen told DR.</p> <p>In October 2017, DDoS attacks hit Sweden's transportation network causing delays to operations. They crashed the IT system that monitors trains' locations as well as taking down email systems, websites, and road traffic maps. Customers during this time were unable to make reservations or receive updates on the delays, BleepingComputer reported citing local Swedish news reports.</p> <p>Network Rail, last month also issued a statement reiterating the importance of this area to them; with Wayne Watson, head of security governance stating; “Cyber security is an important element of maintaining a safe and reliable railway. All Network Rail staff are responsible for protecting our rail cyber systems and networks so that they are available, keeping people safe and delivering the service our customers expect.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/22 Claim: Pentagon ‘left of launch’ hacking
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/revealed-pentagon-push-to-hack-nuke-missiles-before-they-launch?ref=home
GIST	<p>The Pentagon has embraced a controversial policy of destroying enemy nuclear missiles before they launch, an internal policy document from May 2017 shows. It’s an effort that appears to include executing cyberattacks against missile control systems or components.</p> <p>The Pentagon document does not name adversaries. But experts who reviewed it for The Daily Beast considered it aimed at North Korea—and may represent a fallback option for the Trump administration should its June 12 summit with Kim Jong Un fail to result in the denuclearization President Trump desires.</p> <p>Former State Department nonproliferation official Alexandra Bell called the Pentagon plan an “exercise to legally justify a potential attack on a North Korean missile on the launchpad.”</p> <p>Kingston Reif of the Arms Control Association added, “Like the overall U.S. missile defense effort, the intended role and purpose is North Korea, and possibly Iran, too.”</p> <p>For about four years, senior U.S. military officers have feared that the financial costs of developing interceptors to destroy incoming ballistic missiles could jeopardize a domestic missile shield. They’ve sought what’s called “left of launch” options to disable adversary missiles before they leave the launchpad. And they’ve intimated that a more cost-effective approach is to develop digital weapons to corrupt or disable launch controls, guidance systems or aspects of the missile supply chain.</p> <p>The unclassified document from May 2017, acquired by The Daily Beast, asserts that “pre-conflict left of launch operations” would be legal against an “imminent missile attack,” without defining “imminent.” It explicitly cites “non-kinetic options” for destroying missiles that would fall short of a “use of force” under the United Nations charter.</p> <p>Missile experts who reviewed the document understood it as representing what appears to be the first official confirmation that the U.S. reserves the right to infect adversary missile networks with disabling malware. It appears to confirm a March 2017 New York Times report that the Pentagon was looking to</p>

add digital-network assaults to its antiballistic missile arsenal.

"This looks to me like a very elaborate legal justification for left-of-launch cyberattacks," said Bell, now with the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation.

"This would certainly include cyberattacks on command-and-control or guidance of the missile," agreed Vipin Narang, a nuclear strategy expert at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, as well as corresponding physical or digital efforts to preemptively corrupt an adversary's missile supply chain.

The Pentagon document, titled "Declaratory Policy, Concept of Operations and Employment Guidelines for Left-of-Launch Capability," was acquired by the Protect Democracy Project, a group comprised mostly of Obama administration attorneys, through to a transparency lawsuit seeking internal material relevant to military planning about North Korea. The group provided it to The Daily Beast.

That report, which Congress mandated during the final year of the Obama administration that the Pentagon issue, refers to cyberattacks euphemistically, rather than explicitly, in its unclassified form. A classified annex to the policy document is almost entirely redacted, but includes a brief reference to a "Special Program for Missile Defeat," without elaboration.

"Although left-of-launch actions that would constitute a use of force likely would require the President's approval as an exercise of the inherent right of national or collective self-defense, certain actions would not necessarily constitute a use of force under the U.N. Charter, such as gathering intelligence or developing capabilities that could be used in response to an imminent attack," the document reads.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Vulnerabilities in financial web apps
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/majority-of-financial-apps-able-to/
GIST	<p>Gone are the days when criminals masked their identities and busted into a bank declaring, "This is a stick up!" According to Bank Attacks 2018, published today by Positive Technologies, cybercriminals are reaping big financial gains with relatively low risk by going online to rob banks.</p> <p>Analysis of information systems performed by the company for banks over the past three years found that attackers can obtain unauthorized access to financial applications at 58% of banks.</p> <p>While banks are well armed against external attacks with strong perimeter protections, they remain susceptible to insider threats, according to the report. "Whether by puncturing the perimeter with social engineering, vulnerabilities in web applications, or the help of insiders, as soon as attackers access the internal network, they find friendly terrain that is secured no better than companies in other industries," Positive Technologies wrote in a press release.</p> <p>Using techniques similar to those of the Cobalt gang, known for its attacks on financial institutions, penetration testers compromised the workstations used for ATM management at one-quarter (25%) of the banks tested.</p> <p>The report also noted that during the reconnaissance stage of collecting information about the target, many criminals search for malicious insider on web forums. These unscrupulous insiders are willing to share company information for a fee. Using stolen credentials and phishing campaigns are the most common and effective techniques criminals use to access banks because "it is both difficult and risky to organize attacks on servers or web applications, since the attackers are very likely to get caught," the report said.</p> <p>Vulnerabilities in web applications leaves many banks at risk. Still, remote access is another dangerous feature that often leaves the door open to access by external users. "The most common types are the SSH and Telnet protocols, which are present on the network perimeter of over half of banks, as well as protocols for file server access, found at 42 percent of banks," the report said.</p>

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HEADLINE	05/21 Attackers target DrayTek routers
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/attackers-change-dns-settings-draytek-routers
GIST	<p>Attackers have been targeting a zero-day vulnerability in routers made by DrayTek to change their DNS settings and likely abuse them in future attacks.</p> <p>The Taiwan-based manufacturer of broadband Customer Premises Equipment (CPE) has already acknowledged the problem and has issued a firmware update to address it.</p> <p>According to the company, the security vulnerability impacts the web administration feature, allowing for an attacker “to intercept or create an administration session and change settings on your router.”</p> <p>Checking whether a device has been hit is quite easy, as it would show a different DNS server than the one set by the user (or the default blank). The attackers are changing the DNS settings to at least one rogue server, 38[.]134[.]121[.]95, an IP located on the network of China Telecom.</p> <p>The altering of DNS settings on routers is likely the initial phase of a larger attack, where users would be redirected to rogue DNS servers and fake websites. Thus, cybercriminals can harvest usernames and passwords, steal sensitive information such as banking credentials, or serve malicious applications to unsuspecting users.</p> <p>“Shodan shows there are nearly 800,000 Draytek routers worldwide, so the vulnerability provides a big opportunity for malicious redirections which could result in people and businesses losing credentials, data and ultimately money,” Sion Lloyd, Researcher at Nominet, told SecurityWeek in an emailed comment.</p> <p>“Given DNS is basically the underlying protocol that directs traffic around the internet, it often enjoys certain privileges on the corporate firewall. Attackers know this, which is why it is often seen as a weak spot and hijacked and abused,” Lloyd continued.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Speech recognition software firm breach
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/speech-recognition-software-firm-breach-exposes-thousands-of-patient-records/article/767531/
GIST	<p>Burlington, Mass.-based speech recognition software firm Nuance announced the breach of thousands of patient records after a third party gained unauthorized access</p> <p>A former Nuance employee breached Nuance's servers and accessed the personal information of 45,000 individuals from several contracted clients between November 20 and December 9 of 2017 and was first announced during a May 10 SEC filing.</p> <p>Names, dates of birth, medical record numbers, patient numbers, and information dictated by the provider such as patient condition, assessment, diagnosis, treatment, care plan and date of service, and the information of approximately 900 San Francisco Department of Public Health patients were affected, according to a May 11 press release.</p> <p>“The San Francisco Department of Public Health is committed to maintain the privacy of our patients and takes its responsibility to address privacy incidents seriously,” San Francisco Health Network Director Roland Pickens said in the release. “We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience or concern that this situation may cause. All of our vendors are required to attest to the protection of patient privacy, as part of their contract, and we continue to audit and improve upon that process.”</p>

	The company discovered the breach in December 2017 however, patient notification was delayed at the request of the FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice, pending their criminal investigation into the incident.
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HEADLINE	05/21 DHS: new BIND vulnerabilities
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/new-bind-vulnerabilities-threaten-dns-availability/d/d-id/1331855
GIST	<p>One of the most common pieces of software for implementing a Domain Name System (DNS) server — BIND — has just become the subject of security advisories from the Internet Systems Consortium and a related notice from DHS.</p> <p>The advisories cite two new vulnerabilities in BIND. Both describe a scenario in which one of the components of BIND, rbtodb.c, can be driven to a failure state and effective denial-of-service for name resolution. In one vulnerability, rapidly changing zones can lead to a miscount of the zones with a resulting failure of the component.</p> <p>In the other vulnerability, a poor implementation of a feature known as serve-stale can lead to a similar failure, with identical results — no access to domain name resolution.</p> <p>Neither of the vulnerabilities have been exploited in the wild and only specific versions of BIND are susceptible. All organizations running BIND are urged to read the CVEs to determine whether they are at risk and should begin remediation.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/22 Spectre chip security vulnerability
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/spectre-chip-security-vulnerability-strikes-again-patches-incoming/
GIST	<p>After the first-wave of Spectre and Meltdown attacks were conquered, people relaxed. That was a mistake.</p> <p>Since the CPU vulnerabilities Spectre and Meltdown showed an entirely new way to attack systems, security experts knew it was only a matter of time until new assault methods would be found.</p> <p>They've been found.</p> <p>Jann Horn, a Google Project Zero security researcher, discovered this not long after the first Spectre holes were patched. Horn found a new way to attack microprocessors, which use Spectre-like speculative execution and speculative execution of memory reads before the addresses of all prior memory writes are known. With this, and armed with the right code, a local user can pull data from a system using a side-channel analysis.</p> <p>This is far more than an Intel problem. It also affects x86 (Intel and AMD chipsets), POWER 8, POWER 9, System z, and a few ARM processors. In short, it could allow unauthorized read access to memory on almost any 21st century processor.</p> <p>The Common Vulnerability and Exposures (CVE) number for this security problem is CVE-2018-3639.</p> <p>Intel calls this a Speculative Store Bypass (SSB), also known as Spectre Variant 4. Unlike the bug discovered by Yuriy Bulygin, the former head of Intel's advanced threat team, who showed that the older Spectre CPU flaws could be used to break into the Intel x86 systems' System Management Mode (SMM), SBB is a new method.</p> <p>Another new but less dangerous Spectre-style security hole is CVE-2018-3640, aka Rogue System</p>

	<p>Register Read (RSRE), or Spectre Variant 3a. This one can impact systems with microprocessors utilizing speculative execution that perform speculative reads of system registers.</p> <p>With this, local users may be able to get unauthorized disclosure of system parameters via a side-channel analysis.</p> <p>External attacks, via a web browser processing a malicious payload, are less likely with both these problems according to Intel. That's because, Intel states, "Most leading browser providers have recently deployed mitigations in their Managed Runtimes -- mitigations that substantially increase the difficulty of exploiting side channels in a modern web browser. These techniques would likewise increase the difficulty of exploiting a side channel in a browser based on SSB."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Comcast website leaks Xfinity users' info
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/comcast-bug-leaks-xfinity-home-addresses-wireless-passwords/
GIST	<p>A bug in Comcast's website used to activate Xfinity routers can return sensitive information on the company's customers.</p> <p>The website, used by customers to set up their home internet and cable service, can be tricked into displaying the home address where the router is located, as well as the Wi-Fi name and password.</p> <p>Two security researchers, Karan Saini and Ryan Stevenson, discovered the bug.</p> <p>Saini, who previously discovered an Uber two-factor bypass bug and a flaw in India's national biometric database, told ZDNet about the bug.</p> <p>Only a customer account ID and that customer's house or apartment number is needed -- even though the web form asks for a full address. That information could be grabbed from a discarded bill or obtained from an email. In any case, a determined attacker could simply guess the house or apartment number.</p> <p>ZDNet obtained permission from two Xfinity customers to check their information. We were able to obtain their full address and zip code -- which both customers confirmed.</p> <p>The site returned the Wi-Fi name and password -- in plaintext -- used to connect to the network for one of the customers who uses an Xfinity router. The other customer was using his own router -- and the site didn't return the Wi-Fi network name or password.</p> <p>The bug returns data even if the Xfinity Wi-Fi is already switched on.</p> <p>Even when the Wi-Fi password changes, running the details again will return the new Wi-Fi password. There appears to be no way for customers to opt out when using Xfinity hardware.</p> <p>It's also possible to rename Wi-Fi network names and passwords, temporarily locking users out.</p> <p>Saini said that it would be nearly impossible to enumerate account numbers.</p> <p>Although it's not believed the sensitive data can be used to access the router's settings, an attacker could use the information to access the Wi-Fi network within its range. On the network, an attacker could read unencrypted traffic from other users on the network.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 GPON home routers hit by zero-day
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SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/gpon-routers-attacked-with-new-zero-day/
GIST	<p>Attacks on Dasan GPON routers are continuing to happen using two vulnerabilities disclosed last month, but today, researchers from Qihoo 360 Netlab have revealed that one botnet operator appears to have deployed a new zero-day affecting the same router types.</p> <p>The security firm has refused to release further details on this flaw to prevent more attacks but said it was able to reproduce its effects.</p> <p>"We tested this payload on two different versions of [Dasan] GPON home router," the Netlab team said, "all work."</p> <p>The botnet exploiting this new GPON router zero-day is called TheMoon, a very old threat that was first spotted in 2014 infecting Linux servers but has started switching to home routers IoT in recent years.</p> <p>TheMoon is only the latest botnet to add support for exploiting Dasan GPON routers. Five botnets — Hajime, Mettle, Mirai, Muhstik, and Satori— have been exploiting two older exploits for almost a week.</p> <p>The two exploits these five botnets were targeting are CVE-2018-10561 and CVE-2018-10562.</p> <p>These two vulnerabilities allow attackers to take over affected devices —GPON routers made by South Korean vendor Dasan. GPON stands for Gigabit Passive Optical Network and is a type of telecommunications technology for supporting internet connections via fiber optics lines.</p> <p>Despite a botnet party, only 2% of GPON routers were hacked</p> <p>Initially, it was believed the number of exposed devices was over one million, but the device maker later officially stated that the number of devices vulnerable to CVE-2018-10561 and CVE-2018-10562 was only 240,000.</p> <p>The good news is that in spite of the large number of vulnerable devices, all five botnets trying to take advantage of these routers last week failed to do so. The reason was that the exploit packages they were trying to use failed to infect devices properly.</p> <p>Netlab says that these five botnets managed to infect only around 2% of the entire pool of vulnerable GPON routers.</p> <p>This might change in the upcoming days thanks to the new zero-day deployed by TheMoon botnet, but also because botnet operators have been working on improving their exploit payloads in the past days.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Roaming Mantis spawns phishing, mining
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/roaming-mantis-swarms-globally-spawning-ios-phishing-cryptomining/132149/
GIST	<p>The Roaming Mantis mobile banking trojan is roaming further afield than it ever has before. Recent analysis shows that the malware has rapidly evolved just in the past month. It's now targeting Europe and the Middle East in addition to Asian countries. According to researchers, it's following the cyber-zeitgeist by expanding its capabilities to include cryptomining (and iOS phishing).</p> <p>Roaming Mantis is a mostly-mobile malware which this year has been spreading via DNS hijacking. Potential victims are typically redirected to a malicious webpage that distributes a trojanized application that pretends to be either Facebook or Chrome. Once installed manually by users, a trojan banker will execute.</p> <p>Its sights have become much wider, however.</p>

“Roaming Mantis has evolved quickly,” said Kaspersky Lab researcher Suguru Ishimaru, in an analysis posted on Friday. “The actors behind it have been quite active in improving their tools. The rapid growth of the campaign implies that those behind it have a strong financial motivation and are probably well-funded.”

On the multilingual front, Roaming Mantis (a.k.a. MoqHao or XLoader) was seen this month to have significantly tweaked its landing pages and malicious APK files to support 27 languages – a serious expansion from the four languages it used in campaigns just a month ago.

In campaigns observed in April, its activity was located mostly in Bangladesh, Japan and South Korea, according to Ishimaru. Kaspersky Lab has now confirmed that several more languages have been hardcoded in the HTML source of the landing page.

These include; Arabic, Armenian, Bulgarian, Bengali, both traditional and simplified Chinese, Czech, English, Georgian, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Malay, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian and Vietnamese.

The expansion is succeeding in terms of garnering more victims: “We believe the attacker made use of an easy method to potentially infect more users, by translating their initial set of languages with an automatic translator,” Ishimaru said. “It’s clear from [our data] that South Korea, Bangladesh and Japan are no longer the worst affected countries; instead, Russia, Ukraine and India [bear] the brunt.”

In addition to broadening its target range, an analysis of the Roaming Mantis code reveals the criminals behind the malware have added a phishing option that targets iOS device users and a cryptomining option targeting PCs. This is a departure from the group’s primary focus on the Android platform, researchers said.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Phishing email lists scammers to avoid
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/phishing-email-ironically-provides-a-list-of-scammers-you-should-avoid/
GIST	<p>I was looking through my spam folder today and found a phishing email with the subject line "and has a subject line of "FW: Contact Bank of England: Stop Contacting Scammers.." that took me by surprise. This email pretends to be from the United States Department of Treasury and states that \$6.5 million USD is being held for you at the Bank of England and that you should contact them in order to transfer the money to your bank account.</p> <p>As I was reading it, though, a section caught my eye that I have personally not seen in a phishing email before. This section of the email contains a list of names that are associated with other phishing scams that the recipient should avoid. So basically, the sender of this phishing email is making sure not to share you with any other scammers!</p> <p>There really is no honor among thieves.</p> <p>As always, never respond to any email stating that they have money for you in a bank account and need you to contact them in order to transfer it. If you are expecting an email regarding a bank transfer, be sure to call the bank directly instead of contacting them via email.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Crackdown on cryptocurrency schemes
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-switch/wp/2018/05/21/state-regulators-unveil-

	nationwide-crackdown-on-suspicious-cryptocurrency-investment-schemes/?utm_term=.0cecd6746b7c
GIST	<p>Securities regulators across the United States and Canada announced dozens of investigations Monday into potentially deceitful cryptocurrency investment products, the largest coordinated crackdown to date by state and provincial officials on bitcoin scams.</p> <p>As many as 70 investigations have been opened in the sweep, with more expected in the coming weeks, said the North American Securities Administrators Association, which helped coordinate the probes. As many as 35 cases are pending or already completed, with some resulting in cease-and-desist letters warning the alleged schemes that their unregistered activity violates state securities law.</p> <p>The enforcement actions, which have not been previously reported, take aim at efforts by groups in more than 40 jurisdictions to attract money from unsuspecting investors. They target unregistered securities offerings that promise lucrative returns without adequately informing investors of the risks, according to state regulators. The state agencies are also pursuing suspicious cases of initial coin offerings, or ICOs, a fundraising technique used by both legitimate and illegitimate cryptocurrency projects in ways that resemble initial public offerings of stock.</p> <p>"We're putting ourselves in the shoes of investors. We're seeing what's being promoted to investors. And then we're taking the next step and then we're finding out whether they're complying with securities laws," said Joseph Borg, president of NASAA and the director of the Alabama Securities Commission.</p> <p>Not every ICO or cryptocurrency investment product is fraudulent, Borg added. But consumers face higher risks of being misled at a time when the intense demand for bitcoin has prompted many retail investors to take extreme steps to gain exposure to the currency, such as taking out a bigger mortgage.</p> <p>Posing as members of the public, investigators discovered roughly 30,000 cryptocurrency-related domain names in recent weeks, most of which were registered in the past year as the price of bitcoin soared past \$19,000. Many of the alleged scams use fake addresses, slick marketing materials and promises of over 4 percent daily interest, regulators said. A few have even used unauthorized photos of high-profile individuals, such as Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, to portray themselves as aboveboard.</p> <p>Other sites have used images of Prince Charles and actor Jennifer Aniston, but identified them under different names, to provide testimonials, the regulators said.</p> <p>"It's royal wedding fever that's a part of this operation," said Joseph Rotunda, director of enforcement at the Texas State Securities Board.</p> <p>After receiving the cease-and-desist letters warning of illegal activity, the targets of the investigations typically have up to a month to file a response, depending on the jurisdiction, Borg said. Some states allow for a hearing before the state securities commission, and an appeal to a court or administrative law judge. Regulators could also take the schemes to court. But regulators expect many sites to shut down voluntarily or amend their practices to comply with securities laws.</p> <p>In one recent case, regulators sent a warning letter this month to a U.K.-based cryptocurrency scheme known as BTCrush alleging that it was violating state laws by selling securities to Texas residents without registration and by using misleading marketing. BTCrush claimed to run three bitcoin mining farms — one hidden away in a World War II-era bunker — and served up videos on its site to support the claim. But regulators found that the shots of the mining farms turned out to be publicly available stock footage.</p> <p>BTCrush was also allegedly recruiting Texas investors as sales agents, promising them even more money if they promoted the company. As a result, Rotunda said, any Texas resident who agreed to participate was at risk of violating state securities laws themselves.</p> <p>Confronted with the allegations of deception and illegal activity, BTCrush quickly responded, claiming they had no knowledge of its site being used by U.S.-based investors. BTCrush, in a statement Sunday,</p>

	<p>said it “has complied and will continue to comply” with its cease-and-desist.</p> <p>"We sincerely regret that such precedents could have taken place. And we would like to inform you that if such precedents could have taken place, then we were not aware of such facts until today," the operators of BTCrush wrote in a letter to authorities.</p> <p>Borg said he expects many more consumers to come forward to report suspicious bitcoin schemes as a result of the sweep, which will allow regulators to begin to identify real-world cases of harm to consumers and, in some instances, to demand refunds for investors.</p> <p>"A lot of times you don't know who the victims are unless they call you up," Borg said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Experts: state election systems vulnerable
SOURCE	<p>https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/paloma/the-cybersecurity-202/2018/05/21/the-cybersecurity-202-we-surveyed-100-security-experts-almost-all-said-state-election-systems-were-vulnerable/5b0189b030fb0425887995e2/?utm_term=.d3023dc4bd14</p>
GIST	<p>We brought together a panel of more than 100 cybersecurity leaders from across government, the private sector, academia and the research community for a new feature called The Network — an ongoing, informal survey in which experts will weigh in on some of the most pressing issues of the field. (You can see the full list of experts here.) Our first survey revealed deep concerns that states aren't prepared to defend themselves against the types of cyberattacks that disrupted the 2016 presidential election, when Russian hackers targeted election systems in 21 states.</p> <p>“We are going to need more money and more guidance on how to effectively defend against the sophisticated adversaries we are facing to get our risk down to acceptable levels,” said one of the experts, Rep. Jim Langevin (D-R.I.), who co-chairs the Congressional Cybersecurity Caucus.</p> <p>Congress in March approved \$380 million for all 50 states and five territories to secure their election systems, but Langevin says he wants more. He introduced legislation with Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) that would provide election security funding to states if they adhere to new federal guidelines for identifying weaknesses in their systems and auditing election results. “I hope Congress continues to work to address this vital national security issue,” Langevin said.</p> <p>Each state is responsible for running its own elections, and many state officials view attempts by the federal government to intervene with skepticism — if not outright opposition. But some experts said the magnitude of the threats from state-sponsored adversaries is too great for states to deal with alone.</p> <p>“Given the gravity of the nation-state threats we face, much more needs to be done at every level — including a strong declarative policy that this activity is unacceptable and will trigger a strong response,” said Chris Painter, who served as the State Department’s top cyber diplomat during the Obama and Trump administrations.</p> <p>Dave Aitel, chief executive of Immunity Inc. and a former National Security Agency security scientist, went further: “Protecting systems from cyberthreats from nation-states can really only be done on a national level. It's insane we have state-level control of these systems.”</p> <p>Experts generally agreed that most states are more secure than they were in 2016. Officials have undertaken a variety of measures to improve security — including conducting vulnerability tests of computer networks and voting machines and hiring new IT staff.</p> <p>But securing this kind of technology isn't easy. “ ‘Election systems’ are massive, distributed IT systems with thousands of endpoints and back-end systems that hold and process large volumes of highly sensitive data,” said Jeff Greene, senior director of global government affairs and policy at Symantec. “Protecting</p>

such systems is no small feat, and election systems are no different. While [the Department of Homeland Security] and the state and local governments have in recent years dialed up their efforts, there are no easy fixes.”

Several experts said that state voter registration databases are particularly vulnerable — and make an appealing target for attackers who want to sow confusion and undermine confidence in the voting process.

“The voting machines themselves are only part of the story,” said Matt Blaze, a cryptographer and computer science professor at the University of Pennsylvania. “The ‘back end’ systems, used by states and counties for voter registration and counting ballots, are equally critical to election security, and these systems are often connected, directly or indirectly, to the Internet.”

There’s no evidence that Russian hackers actually changed any votes in 2016, but they did probe online voter rolls and even breached the statewide voter database in Illinois. “Few if any state and local IT departments are equipped to protect this infrastructure against the full force of a hostile intelligence service, and these systems are very attractive targets for disruption,” Blaze said.

“The level of expertise is quite uneven” across the states, added Daniel Weitzner, founding director of the MIT Internet Policy Research Initiative who was U.S. deputy chief technology officer for Internet policy during the Obama administration. “Of particular concern is the voter registration systems. Imagine how much fear, uncertainty and doubt [that] Russia or any other malicious actor could sow if they raise questions about the accuracy of the voting rolls. That’s every bit as bad as actually changing votes, and much easier to do.”

Jay Kaplan, co-founder of the cybersecurity firm Synack, notes a bright spot: The Election Assistance Commission has a national voting system certification program to independently verify that a voting system meets security requirements.

“However, testing for this certification is completely optional,” said Kaplan, who held previous roles in the Defense Department and at the National Security Agency. “States can set their own standards for voting systems.... As such, some states are significantly more buttoned up than others. The reality is states are understaffed, underfunded, and are too heavily reliant on election-system vendors securing their own systems.”

On top of that, millions of Americans will vote this year on old, hack-prone digital machines that produce no paper trail. Without a paper record, it’s nearly impossible to audit the final vote tally. Federal officials and experts recommend scrapping such machines in favor of paper ballots.

Too many states “have taken a less than strategic approach and once again waited too long to start addressing vulnerabilities within their processes and technology,” said Mark Weatherford, a former deputy undersecretary for cybersecurity at the Department of Homeland Security in the Obama administration and chief information security officer in both California and Colorado.

“Additionally, because of significant investments in electronic voting technology, it’s difficult for non-technologists to acknowledge economic sunk costs and re-prioritize current funding to address these ... problems,” said Weatherford, a senior vice president and chief cybersecurity strategist at vArmour.

Nico Sell, co-founder of the software maker Wickr, put the problem into perspective: “We will teach the kids how to hack the election system this summer at r00tz at Def Con,” she said. (r00tz is an ethical hacking program for children between 8 and 16 years old held in Las Vegas alongside the Def Con security conference.)

Many experts are worried that states lack the resources to build their defenses in time for the midterms, even with more federal assistance. “What isn’t clear is where our defenses and resiliency have improved if at all,” said Jessie Irwin, head of security at Tendermint. “This is a difficult problem to solve, and it takes something we don’t have enough of to get 50 states and a few territories flying in formation: time.”

Less than five percent of experts who responded to the survey said they were confident that state election systems were well protected.

Cris Thomas, who goes by the name Space Rogue and works for IBM X-Force Red, said that while registration databases, websites and other systems may still be vulnerable, “the election systems themselves are sufficiently protected.”

And the patchwork nature of U.S. elections is actually a bonus when it comes to deterring would-be attackers, said one expert who took the survey and spoke on the condition of anonymity. The Cybersecurity 202 allows experts in The Network to answer on the record or anonymously so they can speak more freely.

“State balloting systems are diverse and decentralized. They’re administered by some 3,000 counties, making it difficult for malicious actors to uniformly attack voting infrastructure on a vast scale,” the expert said.

That expert was satisfied with the efforts by state and federal officials to secure the vote. “Public and private authorities are taking steps to defend against nation-state attacks. The recent omnibus spending bill provides monies to states for election security; threat data are being shared between states and federal agencies (albeit probably slowly and tentatively); and election officials are utilizing best practices, such as conducting post-election audits and not connecting voting machines to the Internet,” the expert said.

“But bolstering our cyberdefenses, however fundamental, will only take us so far,” the expert added. “The White House needs to authorize agencies to disrupt cyberattacks and information operations at their sources and up the ante for prospective attackers as part of America’s broader deterrence posture.”

As another expert who participated in the survey put it: “The high level of interest has led to more eyes on the process, which itself helps deter would-be hackers.”

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HEADLINE	05/21 What is cryptocurrency?
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/05/21/Cryptocurrency-What-it-is-how-it-works-and-will-the-bubble-burst/9041526522167/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=1
GIST	<p>May 21 (UPI) -- In an increasingly digital world, cryptocurrencies like bitcoin have been rising in popularity -- a tool for decentralizing money on a global scale without an intermediary.</p> <p>"It relies on a mixture of clever computer science, cryptography and other economic incentives," Massachusetts Institute of Technology assistant Professor Christian Catalini told UPI.</p> <p>Most cryptocurrency transactions are focused on investment, speculation and trading, especially in portions of the world where people have lost faith in government currency.</p> <p>Transactions rely on "miners" who use computers to validate and add timestamp transactions to a "blockchain" -- a continually growing digital ledger secured with cryptography.</p> <p>Only a limited number of cryptocurrencies are produced, unlike government-backed notes, to ensure sufficient values.</p> <p>A few months ago, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro launched the cryptocurrency "petro," backed by the nation's oil reserves and other natural resources. It's an attempt to cope with a failing Venezuelan economy and circumvent U.S. sanctions imposed in December.</p> <p>Cryptocurrency has been widely adopted by younger people, particularly South Korean millennials.</p>

Twenty-three percent of South Koreans in their 20s said they've purchased virtual currencies, according to Korea Financial Investors Protection Foundation.

In March, the word "cryptocurrency" was added to the Merriam-Webster dictionary.

What cryptocurrencies exist?

The world's two most valuable cryptocurrencies -- bitcoin and ethereum -- belong to the same family, but have some key differences.

Bitcoin software was made available to the public nearly a decade ago and was valued for the first time in 2010. It was intended to act as a form of money usable on the Internet, designed to be simple and exclusively allow transactions in value.

"It is extremely limited in terms of additional functionality, which is a design choice to make it extremely robust and secure," Catalini said. "It's not very customizable in terms of what else you can do with it."

By contrast, ethereum was launched through a crowdfunding campaign in 2014 out of a desire to create a cryptocurrency that's more expandable and programmable than bitcoin.

"Ethereum was designed from the ground up to be more of a platform for software application," Catalini said.

Ethereum is fueled by its own form of currency called "ether," which incentivizes developers to write quality applications.

"It has a programming language on top of it, which allows it to build much more complex instruments and contracts and small programs that use the cryptocurrency in the background but then can do other things like a sophisticated lending contract, or mortgage contract or prediction market," Catalini said.

Throughout the years, bitcoin has also become more decentralized than ethereum through the process of mining, in which new cryptocurrencies are created and transactions are recorded and verified.

Catalini likened the process of mining to a lottery, in which computers work to solve cryptographic puzzles and the new currency is awarded to whoever is able to solve it.

"It's a tool for allowing the network to operate and be secure, without knowing the identity of who is participating," he said.

There are hundreds of various cryptocurrencies in addition to bitcoin and ethereum -- ripple, EOS, litecoin, tron, IOTA, Qrum and aeternity -- all of which are listed on exchanges and carry a market cap.

They are all available in limited number. There are about 17 million bitcoins, 100 million ethereum and nearly 40 billion ripple. Their values differ, too. As of Monday, each bitcoin carried a value of \$8,481. A far less popular cryptocurrency called 42-coin listed a value of over \$30,000 -- one of only a few valued higher than bitcoin -- but has just 42 in circulation.

Regulation

Due to the differences between various forms of cryptocurrencies, regulators in the United States and other countries have struggled to find ways to regulate them.

MIT senior adviser and former chairman of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission Gary Gensler said he believes "well over a thousand" cryptocurrencies are operating outside of U.S. law and will need to come under regulatory compliance.

Due to years of mining, bitcoin has become one of the most decentralized forms of cryptocurrency and is now perceived as a commodity.

Earlier this month The Wall Street Journal reported government regulators are working to determine whether ethereum and other cryptocurrencies are securities, which would make them subject to regulation by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

"There's been a lot of intracoin offerings and those are not decentralized offerings and don't look a lot like bitcoin and ethereum because the team has a lot of control over them," Catalini said. "That's why you're seeing all this debate by the SEC about how to regulate these things that look like unregulated securities at the moment."

Ethereum is believed to exist in a "gray zone" between a commodity and security. Its creation through a crowdfunding campaign is considered an illegal securities sale by some regulators, but ethereum has grown and decentralized over time and begun to resemble bitcoin.

"Both of them are probably commodity-like instruments," Catalini said. "There's still some debate if ethereum is a commodity yet or if it looks more like a security because the team still has a lot of influence over it."

In 2014, the Internal Revenue Service ordered that bitcoin be subject to capital gains taxes, as a property, in the United States.

Pros and cons of cryptocurrency

Investing in cryptocurrency can yield great financial returns, but investors also face a potentially volatile market, as well as potential scams or theft.

Bitcoin prices reached record levels last fall, climbing as high as \$11,000 for a single bitcoin. At the start of 2017, its value was about \$1,000.

Catalini said investing in cryptocurrency presents a big upside, but says potential backers shouldn't invest a single dollar they can't afford to lose immediately.

"This is a very experimental space and so there's still a lot of uncertainty," he said. "Even more established cryptocurrencies like bitcoin are still far from successful and the verdict is still out on which cryptocurrency will become the leading one in the market."

As bitcoin's value soared and would-be investors became more interested in cryptocurrencies last year, bad actors emerged and began presenting misleading initial coin offerings and other scams.

To combat these harmful practices Facebook and Google began implementing plans to block cryptocurrency advertisements.

"It's important for people to do due diligence and make sure that the teams they're looking at are serious teams and this isn't just the promise of a quick return," Catalini said.

Like other forms of property, cryptocurrencies are also subject to theft. In December, nearly \$70 billion worth of bitcoins were stolen from a cryptocurrency mining service called NiceHash.

Catalini said most cryptocurrency thefts occur during the process of attempting to convert them to U.S. dollars or store them in a wallet.

"If that piece of software isn't secure, then it's really easy to lose your bitcoin or to be hacked and have someone steal them," he said.

	<p>Catalini also warned anyone hosting cryptocurrency that losing their private key -- a password made up of 51 alphanumeric characters that allows a person to send and receive coins -- could result in permanent loss of their funds.</p> <p>Argentine entrepreneur Wences Casares launched a startup known as Xapo, which is designed to protect his clients' private keys in encrypted computer servers. As of this month Xapo protects about \$10 billion worth of bitcoin, Bloomberg reported.</p> <p>Catalini speculated that as cryptocurrency ownership becomes more commonplace, new forms of security will emerge to help people protect their funds.</p> <p>"The same way when banking evolved and moved online we developed services around that to make it secure to bank online, we're going to see more services emerge over time to help people manage their bitcoin and other crypto assets," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/22 Claim: Google identifies rape victims
SOURCE	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5755667/Google-identifies-rape-victims-searches-prominent-cases.html
GIST	<p>Google has been accused of letting users look up the identity of rape victims.</p> <p>Searching online for details about attackers in prominent cases can return the names of their victims or accusers.</p> <p>The identities of vulnerable defendants who have been granted anonymity by a court may also be revealed.</p> <p>The problem is caused by Google's 'related search' and 'autocomplete' function. It will suggest the names of victims because it has logged popular searches for information around those names.</p> <p>Maria Miller, who is chairman of the Commons women and equalities commission, told The Times: 'Google has to operate within the law of the UK – if that means they have to change how their search engine operates, then so be it.'</p> <p>Labour MP Jess Phillips said the technology was turning rape and abuse victims into 'click-bait' and a rape charity said that fear of exposure could stop victims coming forward. Fay Maxted of the Survivors Trust said it was 'beyond shocking that Google is facilitating access to the names of victims'.</p> <p>Police and the courts have been urged to inform the technology giant in cases where a victim's anonymity is breached.</p> <p>Lifelong anonymity is granted to complainants and victims of sexual offences, even if the accused is acquitted.</p> <p>A Google spokesman said: 'We don't allow these kinds of autocomplete predictions or related searches that violate laws or our own policies and we have removed the examples we've been made aware of in this case.'</p> <p>'We recently expanded our removals policy to cover predictions which disparage victims of violence and atrocities, and we encourage people to send us feedback about any sensitive or bad prediction.'</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Cyber Command, banks sharing info
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SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/project-indigo-fs-isac-cyber-command-information-sharing-dhs/
GIST	<p>A confidential information-sharing agreement between the Financial Services Information Sharing and Analysis Center (FS-ISAC) and U.S. Cyber Command reveals the blurring line between the country's public and private sectors as the U.S. government becomes increasingly receptive to launching offensive hacking operations.</p> <p>The pilot program, codenamed "Project Indigo," recently established an information-sharing channel for a subunit of FS-ISAC known as the Financial Systemic Analysis & Resilience Center (FSARC). That subunit shares "scrubbed" cyberthreat data, including malware indicators, with the Fort Mead-based Cyber Command, according to current and former U.S. officials.</p> <p>The broad purpose of Project Indigo is to help inform U.S. Cyber Command about nation-state hacking aimed at banks. In practice, this intelligence is independently evaluated and, if appropriate, Cyber Command responds under its own unique authorities.</p> <p>It's possible that a bank could tip off the military about a cyberattack against the financial industry, prompting Cyber Command to react and take action. That could include providing unique insight back to FSARC or even taking offensive measures to disrupt the attacker — such as retaliatory hacking — if it's appropriate and the Pentagon approves it, according to current and former U.S. officials.</p> <p>The program is currently organized in a fairly informal manner, but participants have been discussing a more formal arrangement. Eight financial institutions are involved in FSARC: Bank of America, BNY Mellon, Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase, Morgan Stanley, State Street and Wells Fargo. Project Indigo also provides data to the Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Treasury. However, those agencies were already getting data from the banks that is narrowly leveraged for defensive measures.</p> <p>In an emailed statement, a Cyber Command spokesperson acknowledged Project Indigo's existence.</p> <p>"The pilot began in 2017 with USCYBERCOM personnel receiving sector-specific exposure to risks facing critical financial payment systems, and observing exercises related to risk mitigation and recovery around realistic scenarios," said Cyber Command spokesperson Col. Daniel King. "Later, two samples of anonymized cyber threat information were shared with USCYBERCOM to allow the government and its critical infrastructure partners the ability to jointly assess and address emerging threats."</p> <p>"No Personally identifiable Information (PII) was shared with USCYBERCOM as part of this effort," King added.</p> <p>The financial institutions that participate in the arrangement gave consent to FSARC to share the data with the U.S. government, a person familiar with the effort told CyberScoop. Sources spoke on the condition of anonymity due to the sensitive nature of the program.</p> <p>In one recent case, FSARC gave Cyber Command a "combo of open-source derived IOCs [indicators of compromise] associated with DPRK [North Korea] and some observed," one source said. "Open source" in this case means from outside a financial institution, while "observed" refers to internal data.</p> <p>Under the agreement, financial institutions share data "considered not exclusive" to any one financial firm, a former U.S. official said. Another source familiar with the program said that it was challenged by the simple fact that the banks weren't yet "interested in sharing at a level which would be truly useful [for Cyber Command]."</p> <p>An October 2016 press release originally announcing FSARC explained that its mission is to "proactively identify, analyze, assess and coordinate activities to mitigate systemic risk to the U.S. financial system from current and emerging cyber security threats through focused operations and enhanced collaboration between participating firms, industry partners, and the U.S. government."</p> <p>That announcement specifically described "government partners" as Treasury, DHS and the Federal</p>

Bureau of Investigation, but it did not mention U.S. Cyber Command or the National Security Agency.

Wells Fargo, Bank of America and JPMorgan Chase did not respond to multiple requests for comment. The Office of the Director of National Intelligence and NSA deferred to Cyber Command for comment.

It's widely known that large financial institutions face a bevy of sophisticated cyberattacks from both nation states and well-equipped criminal groups. Organized as a private non-profit organization, the FS-ISAC sits at the center of this activity, collecting and sharing information between companies so they can be collectively informed about active cyberthreats.

The collected data can often be extremely sensitive. Not only does it contain malware indicators, but sometimes other sensitive information tied to the targeted institutions. As a result, the intelligence is usually both highly valuable for defenders and potentially dangerous if it's ever made public.

In an emailed statement, an FS-ISAC spokesperson said: “[Project Indigo] focuses on sharing cyberthreat intelligence related to key threats facing systemically important critical infrastructure operators, with the intention of protecting our financial institutions, their networks and their clients. No customer information has been shared with the U.S. Government under Project Indigo.”

While it's common for businesses to voluntarily provide federal agencies with information about incidents in cyberspace, the 2013 Edward Snowden leaks chilled these types of relationships, especially between private companies and intelligence agencies. Cyber Command is not an intelligence unit, but it maintains a close relationship with the NSA, including sharing the same leader and building.

Jason Healey, a former intelligence officer and current senior research scholar at Columbia University's School for International and Public Affairs, told CyberScoop he believed Project Indigo represented a pragmatic step forward.

“We need to be prepared for there to be a role, especially in time critical incidents, for Cyber Command to contribute so long as they are also coordinating with Treasury and [DHS],” said Healey.

Blurring government boundaries

Project Indigo raises questions about the existing hierarchy in government and whether decision-makers see a need for the military to be more integrated with the private sector on cybersecurity.

Over the last eight years, the Defense Department's role in working with private companies on cybersecurity has fluctuated significantly.

During the Obama administration, the government took steps to make DHS the lead on public-private partnerships. This push was boosted in 2015, when Congress passed the Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act (CISA). The law gave certain liability protections to private companies whenever they shared cyberthreat data with the government through a portal managed by DHS.

The decision to embolden DHS with CISA came after there was a public outcry over privacy concerns. Just two years after the Snowden leaks, critics worried that the Defense Department would mishandle CISA.

A current U.S. official described Project Indigo as “classic mission creep,” a term used to describe when one agency oversteps its boundaries in regards to another agency's program.

But experts contend that Cyber Command's role will need to evolve if it's to reach its full potential. Additionally, the military is already involved in other information sharing initiatives with the private sector.

In December, a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report called on the Defense Department, including Cyber Command, to clarify and further define how it interacts with companies and civilian

	<p>agencies.</p> <p>“DOD was supposed to develop [a] comprehensive plan for CYBERCOM to support civil authorities in responding to cyberattacks. DOD has rigorous requirements for what plans should look like, and this didn’t match,” Joseph Kirschbaum, director of GAO’s Defense Capabilities and Management office, previously told CyberScoop.</p> <p>Congress is currently weighing what role Cyber Command should play in protecting private companies from hackers. In the past, members of the Senate Armed Service Committee have advocated for the military to be more involved.</p> <p>Last summer, Lt. General Vincent Stewart, the current deputy commander of Cyber Command, said he would like the military to be able to reverse-engineer malware samples in order to create new hacking tools.</p> <p>“Once we’ve isolated malware, I want to reengineer it and prep to use it against the same adversary who sought to use it against us,” Stewart described. The practice is already well known inside NSA, based on leaked classified documents.</p> <p>Generally speaking, the military’s relationship with the banks is still evolving.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	05/21 Vegas \$5M federal grant to fight terror
SOURCE	https://www.reviewjournal.com/news/politics-and-government/las-vegas-secures-5-million-federal-grant-to-prevent-terror-attacks/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Las Vegas will receive a \$5 million grant from the Department of Homeland Security to help guard against terrorist attacks, funding that the state’s congressional delegation pressed for following the Oct. 1 mass shooting.</p> <p>The grant announced Monday is an increase over the \$2.8 million the city received last year through the Urban Areas Security Initiative program, which provides financial assistance to urban areas to build infrastructure and train personnel to prevent and respond to acts of terrorism.</p> <p>A change in the funding formula increased the amount that Las Vegas will receive, said Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., who lobbied the Trump administration for more funding.</p> <p>The Nevada congressional delegation first sought the formula change and an increase in funds in June. They again pressed the administration for more funds for local law enforcement after the Oct. 1 shooting on the Strip that left 58 dead and more than 500 wounded.</p> <p>The formula now takes into account the tens of millions of tourists that visit Las Vegas annually — nearly 43 million last year — not just the resident population.</p> <p>“It is our responsibility to keep everyone safe,” said Heller, who asked DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen to reconfigure the program.</p> <p>The Trump administration proposed a 25 percent cut to the \$555 million program in its budget for fiscal year 2018, but Congress increased spending by \$25 million instead.</p> <p>Rep. Dina Titus, D-Nev., said she was pleased with the increase in funding for Las Vegas but noted that additional changes to the program’s disbursement formula need to be made to recognize the unique threats that Las Vegas faces as a world-class tourism destination.</p>

	<p>“I’ll continue to push DHS Secretary Nielsen and this administration on the necessary changes to this important security program,” Titus said.</p> <p>While not considered an act of terrorism, the attack in Las Vegas was the worst mass shooting in modern U.S. history. Stephen Paddock, 64, of Mesquite carried out the shooting and died of a self-inflicted gunshot.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 ISIS recruiting strikes close to home
SOURCE	https://www.wkyc.com/article/news/investigations/the-investigator-terrorism-isis-recruiting-strikes-close-to-home/95-556748169
GIST	<p>Erick Jamal Hendricks swore his allegiance to ISIS and recruited others to do the same.</p> <p>But his trail ended inside an Akron courtroom, where he was recently convicted of lending support to the terrorist group.</p> <p>“He was a very real threat,” said Justin Herdman, the U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio. “This was a person who was basically solely committed to identifying people who were in a position to assist ISIS.”</p> <p>His recruiting efforts played out in the courtroom of federal Judge John R. Adams in Akron, where a jury convicted him following a highly-secured trial.</p> <p>Jurors heard Hendricks, 37, speaking to who he thought was a potential ally. In fact, the man was an FBI informant who secretly recorded the conversation.</p> <p>“Preparation is the ability to shoot,” Hendricks says in the recording obtained by Channel 3 News. “That’s our honor. They take away our weapons, our honor is taken away.</p> <p>“As long as you know it’s right and pleasing to Allah, be persistent and be sincere.”</p> <p>Hendricks’ goal was to build cells of ISIS support in the U.S. by recruiting loyalists to the terrorism network.</p> <p>A North Carolina resident, Hendricks was convicted on charges of conspiring and attempting to provide support to ISIS. He faces up to 30 years in prison when he’s sentenced later this year. He remains in federal custody.</p> <p>FBI agents tied him to a Sheffield Lake man, Amir Al-Ghazi, who pleaded guilty to purchasing an AK 47 in support of ISIS and testified against Hendricks.</p> <p>Hendricks was also tied to one of two men who died in a shootout with law enforcement in Garland, Texas in 2015. Those men intended to attack an art exhibit deemed offensive to Muslims.</p> <p>“Somebody could make a movie out of what happened to me,” Hendricks is heard on a recorded phone call from jail prior to trial.</p> <p>He is one of eight men convicted in recent years in Ohio for charges relating to ISIS support.</p> <p>“Those people are in our midst. That’s just the reality,” Herdman said.</p> <p>Hendricks, like many ISIS sympathizers, relied on social media to do most of his recruiting. In his meeting with the undercover informant, which took place in Baltimore, he urges his would-be follower to use</p>

	<p>covert methods to avoid detection while posting to sites such as Twitter.</p> <p>“It’s entirely possible that all he was ever going to do was recruit, but the fact that he was involved with two people that actually did something [in Garland, Texas] is a concern,” said Terry O’Sullivan, a University of Akron professor and director of the Center for Emergency Management and Homeland Security Policy research.</p> <p>The FBI says a top priority is to protect Americans from terrorist attacks. To that end, they say they have about 1,000 active ISIS-related investigations ongoing across the country.</p> <p>Hendricks’ case is one of only four --resulting in a conviction or indictment so far this year. Experts estimate ISIS sympathizers, using thousands of online social media profiles, have successfully recruited at least 250 Americans to their cause.</p> <p>For the FBI and Homeland Security agents, it’s a full-time effort.</p> <p>"Every day," said Steve Oluic, a retired Army officer and counter terrorism expert who runs his own consulting agency, SVE in Chardon. "It's scanned 24 hours, seven days a week and their capabilities are growing.</p> <p>“The dilemma with the terrorists, when they act, that one act can kill many or can kill a few. But it really doesn’t matter how many they kill because it does cause terror and panic among the populist.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Claim: ISIS police chief arrested
SOURCE	https://www.iraqinews.com/features/islamic-states-police-chief-arrested-west-of-anbar-source/
GIST	<p>Anbar (IraqiNews.com) Iraqi security troops have arrested Islamic State’s police chief in an ambush, west of Anbar, a security source from the province was quoted saying on Monday.</p> <p>Speaking to Almaalomah website, the source said “security troops set up an ambush after information located the prominent leader Abu Fatma al-Muhajir, who was in charge of the Islamic police within the group in Hit town.”</p> <p>The troops, according to the source, “set up the ambush for Muhajir, who was trying to escape toward Qaim town, on borders with Syria. He was then arrested.”</p> <p>The militant “was hiding at desert regions and valleys,” he added. “He was transferred under tight measures to a security cell for investigation.”</p> <p>On Sunday, the Security Media Cell announced arresting a member of Islamic State’s police in an operation as he was infiltrating via the Iraqi borders coming from Syria.</p> <p>Islamic State continues to launch sporadic attacks across Iraq against troops. Security reports indicate that the militant group still poses threat against stability in the country.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Ukraine convicts man of 2016 terror plot
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/e3456f28e27144c29ee533b70354d616/Ukraine-convicts-Frenchman-for-plotting-Euro-2016-attacks
GIST	MOSCOW (AP) — A Ukrainian court has convicted a Frenchman on charges of preparing a terror attack during the 2016 European Championship and buying illegal weapons.

	<p>Gregoire Moutaux was also sentenced Monday to six years in prison at the Liuboml District Court in the northwestern Volyn region, according to Ukrainian Prosecutor General's office spokesman, Andriy Lysenko.</p> <p>Moutaux was arrested in May 2016 as he tried to leave Ukraine with an arsenal of weapons weeks before the start of the tournament hosted by France. Ukrainian security services had followed the man and allowed him to buy weapons and explosives in a sting operation.</p> <p>Ukrainian officials said the man wanted to protest his government's immigration policies and the spread of Islam by launching attacks on bridges, railways, a mosque and a synagogue.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Afghans reject Kabul narrative of war
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/you-didn-t-take-action-afghans-reject-official-narrative-of-war-against-taliban-1526933958
GIST	<p>FARAH, Afghanistan—The weekend visit by a high-level delegation from Kabul to this now calm provincial capital in western Afghanistan promised to be a victory lap of sorts, after the Taliban were driven from the city following two days of fierce fighting last week.</p> <p>But if President Ashraf Ghani's cabinet members and a U.S. commander thought they would bask in the laurels of a hard-earned military victory, local officials and residents quickly, and often scathingly, disabused them of that idea during a Saturday meeting in the heavily-guarded office of the provincial governor.</p> <p>The local meeting participants challenged every element of the government's account of the fighting in Farah and accused the war's administrators of corruption, cowardice and perhaps worst of all, indifference.</p> <p>"I don't want to thank the guests who came from Kabul. As high-ranking officials, they need to do their jobs better," said Nematullah Barakzai, a self-described civil-society activist, addressing the Afghan ministers of defense and interior, the director of the country's intelligence agency and U.S. Army Gen. John Nicholson, who commands international forces in Afghanistan.</p> <p>The outpouring of anger and frustration directed at such an unusual gathering outside Kabul of the most powerful figures in Afghanistan's security establishment comes as the resurgent Taliban, the country's largest Islamist militant group, presses government forces across the country.</p> <p>After calling for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan during the presidential campaign in 2016, President Donald Trump last August announced the U.S. would step up the military campaign here in a bid to force the Taliban to the negotiating table and end America's longest war.</p> <p>But in a sign of how formidable the Taliban have become despite the expansion of American air war and the addition of thousands of U.S. forces to train government security forces and fight alongside them, the Defense Ministry in a rare admission said last week that seven of the country's 34 provincial capitals, including Farah, were "under pressure." The defense minister, Lt. Gen. Tariq Shah Brahimi, said on Saturday that heavy fighting was under way in 15 Afghan provinces.</p> <p>Emerging as another major factor in the war is the role of neighboring Iran. Tensions resulting from Mr. Trump's decision to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal have spilled over the border, increasing concerns here of increasing Iranian aid to the Taliban aimed at destabilizing the U.S.-backed government.</p> <p>The upbraiding at Saturday's meeting occurred after the province's governor, Abdul Basir Salangi, a Ghani appointee, described how a timely, well-coordinated operation shepherded by top officials in Kabul and carried out by forces from the army, the police and intelligence agency fought gallantly to repel the Taliban assault and prevent Farah, located some 420 miles west of the Afghan capital, from falling into the</p>

hands of the Taliban.

The truth, local residents and officials maintained, was far more complicated and disturbing. The government—in particular, the National Directorate of Security, or NDS, the country’s intelligence agency—had ignored warnings from local officials of a large-scale attack, these people said.

“The people of Farah have been shouting and warning of Farah’s collapse for a year but you were silent. You didn’t take action,” said Homayun Shahid Zada, a university lecturer.

Soon after the Taliban attack on Farah began early last Tuesday, army and police abandoned security checkpoints and fled their posts in droves as the fighting worsened, local officials and residents said at the meeting.

Even as the Defense Ministry and the headquarters of American-led international forces in the country in Kabul issued statements saying that the situation in Farah was “under control,” the city was on the verge of falling to the Taliban, they said. Those who stayed to fight were poorly armed.

Mr. Barakzai described how a handful of surviving soldiers fought for more than 10 hours to defend the NDS’s provincial headquarters, resorting to knives after they ran out of ammunition. Mr. Barakzai said his brother, a soldier in the battle, “was killed because he didn’t have a flak jacket.”

While American air support and the deployment of 500 elite government forces from nearby provinces were needed to force the Taliban from Farah, neither arrived in the city for at least 15 hours to help the “several hundred” Afghan security forces that the U.S. military says were in the city immediately before the assault began. Farah officials said 25 soldiers and five civilians were killed in the fight.

“Their only achievement is getting the money out of the bank and putting it in a safe place,” Mr. Barakzai said, referring to the provincial governor’s boast that deposits in the local branch of the state-owned Kabul Bank had been moved for fear it would be overrun by the Taliban and the funds stolen.

While acknowledging that the reinforcements must mobilize more quickly, Gen. Nicholson and Gen. Brahimi, the defense minister, said that the duration of last week’s delay, as compared with the government’s response in earlier crises, represented progress.

“If such an attack had occurred two years ago, we wouldn’t have been able to manage it,” said the defense chief, who along with Gen. Nicholson and other ministers promised to heed the lessons of Farah, including rewarding those who fought and punishing those who didn’t.

Mr. Salangi, the provincial governor, acknowledged that some security forces disappeared, but he insisted that he and the army had acquitted themselves well.

“Don’t think that the army didn’t fight,” he said. “I swear that bullets were coming from all sides of the NDS. I sent them ammunition — this is called ‘management.’ I’m not selling out this country. I’m not a coward.”

Participants at the meeting also repeatedly suggested that Taliban sympathizers had allowed the militants to escape and that Iran had a role in helping the Taliban in Farah and elsewhere in western Afghanistan near Iran’s border.

No attendee offered direct evidence of Iranian involvement in last week’s attack on Farah or similar proof of direct assistance from Tehran to Taliban forces in the province. Yet none was in doubt about such aid.

“We don’t have a factory in Farah that manufactures ammunition or laser-equipped weapons,” said Abdul Sattar Hussaini, referring to the Taliban’s armory. “We aren’t fighting with the Taliban; we’re fighting with Iran.”

	The Afghan government echoes that sentiment. The Taliban denies any Iranian involvement. Iran says Afghanistan's problems aren't caused by Iran.
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HEADLINE	05/21 Syria military declares victory in capital
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-syrian-military-declares-victory-capital-55322932?
GIST	<p>Syria's military says it has retaken the last neighborhoods in southern Damascus held by the Islamic State group and is declaring the capital and its surroundings "completely safe" and free of any militant presence.</p> <p>In an army statement broadcast on Syrian TV Monday, Gen. Ali Mayhoub says the army captured the former IS strongholds in the Palestinian Yarmouk camp and Hajar al-Aswad after a monthlong campaign.</p> <p>The gains by President Bashar Assad's troops bring greater Damascus — including its far-flung suburbs — fully under government control for the first time since the war began in 2011.</p> <p>Mayhoub says "Damascus and its surroundings are completely secure."</p> <p>The fighting in southern Damascus has left scores of dead on both sides and caused massive destruction in the Yarmouk camp, which was a built-up residential area, and its surroundings.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Son of police captain pleads guilty in plot
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/05/21/son-boston-bombing-1st-responder-pleads-guilty-to-terrorist-bomb-plot.html
GIST	<p>The son of a police captain who was one of the first responders at the scene of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing pleaded guilty Monday to plotting an ISIS-style attack.</p> <p>Alexander Ciccolo faces 20 years in prison for plotting to use guns and homemade bombs to attack a college campus to support the Islamic State group. Sentencing has been scheduled for September.</p> <p>Ciccolo was arrested in July 2015 after he received four guns he ordered from a person who was cooperating with the FBI, as Fox News previously reported. Boston police Capt. Robert Ciccolo tipped off authorities after his son said he wanted to join the Islamic State group.</p> <p>Ciccolo, 25, initially was charged only with being a felon in possession of a firearm and stabbing a nurse in the head with a pen after he was brought to jail. But he later was indicted on attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization and attempting to use weapons of mass destruction.</p> <p>Ciccolo, who went by the name Ali Al Amriki, pleaded guilty to all charges. His plea came a month before he was set to go on trial.</p> <p>His lawyer did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.</p> <p>Prosecutors said Ciccolo told the person cooperating with authorities that he planned to commit acts of terrorism to support ISIS, including attacking an unidentified university using assault rifles and homemade bombs similar to the pressure cooker bombs used in the deadly 2013 Boston Marathon attack. The bombing at the marathon finish line killed three people and wounded more than 260 others.</p> <p>Ciccolo was seen buying a pressure cooker shortly before his arrest, prosecutors said.</p> <p>Prosecutors say agents found partially made Molotov cocktails in Ciccolo's apartment after he was</p>

	<p>arrested. Investigators said posts on Ciccolo's Facebook page included a photo of a dead American soldier that said "Thank you Islamic State!"</p> <p>Federal authorities said Ciccolo's case is a reminder that 'homegrown' radicalization remains a threat and that citizens must speak up when they become aware of a potential threat.</p> <p>"Any material support of a terrorist organization threatens our national security, and had Mr. Ciccolo's efforts to advance his agenda not been thwarted by the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force, countless lives could have been lost in a lethal terrorist attack," Harold Shaw, special agent in charge of the FBI's Boston field office, said in a statement.</p> <p>Ciccolo's mother, Shelley MacInnes, told New England Public Radio last year that her son was "very compassionate" and "would not hurt a fly." He converted to Islam a few years ago, MacInnes said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/22 Manchester bombing: 1yr observance
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/22/europe/manchester-bombing-anniversary-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Ariana Grande paid tribute to the city of Manchester on Tuesday to mark the one-year anniversary of the terror attack that killed 22 people attending her concert.</p> <p>Suicide bomber Salman Abedi carried out the attack as thousands of people streamed out of the Manchester Arena on May 22, 2017.</p> <p>The American singer Grande, who visited the injured in hospital in the wake of the bombing and returned just two weeks later to host a fund-raising concert, wrote on Twitter: "Thinking of you all today and every day I love you with all of me and am sending you all of the light and warmth I have to offer on this challenging day."</p> <p>Manchester will mark the day with a series of events including a memorial service at the city's cathedral and a musical tribute which will take place in the evening.</p> <p>UK Prime Minister Theresa May and Prince William, the Duke of Cambridge, will attend the cathedral service, along with families of the victims, the injured, emergency services and local and national leaders. There will also be a minute's silence held at 2.30pm.</p> <p>Writing in the Manchester Evening News Tuesday, May paid tribute to the city's courage and spirit in the aftermath of the attack.</p> <p>"Today my thoughts and prayers are with those who were lost on that terrible night, their loved ones who have so bravely battled to rebuild their lives; those who have courageously fought to overcome physical injury or mental scars; our first responders and emergency services and those volunteers and professionals who are continuing to help this community heal," May wrote.</p> <p>"All of you -- and many more in this great city - are the very best of what this country stands for."</p> <p>The cathedral service will be shown on a big screen in the city as well as in other cities across Britain, including York, Liverpool and Glasgow.</p> <p>Later Tuesday, more than 3,000 singers from local choirs will come together to mark the anniversary in Albert Square.</p> <p>One of the groups performing are the Manchester Survivors Choir, a group made up of those who were there on the night of the attack, and a local school choir which performed on stage with Grande at the One Love concert.</p>

	Bells will ring out across the city center at 10:31 p.m. to mark the exact moment of the explosion last year.
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HEADLINE	05/22 Afghan official: Taliban kill 14 police
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/14-police-killed-taliban-attacks-eastern-afghanistan-55343891?
GIST	<p>The Taliban launched a wave of attacks in Afghanistan's eastern province of Ghazni, killing at least 14 police officers, including a district police chief and a reserve unit's commander, Afghan officials said Tuesday.</p> <p>Provincial council member Hassan Reza Yusoufi said seven of the officers were killed in the district of Dih Yak, including Faizullah Toofan, the police chief, and reserve commander Haji Baraket. Another seven were killed in Jaghatu district.</p> <p>The attacks started on Monday night and continued on Tuesday in Dih Yak, Jaghatu, Ajristan and Qarabagh districts, according to Arif Noori, spokesman for the provincial governor.</p> <p>Noori said at least 12 other members of the security forces were wounded in the attacks in Dih Yak and Jaghatu districts.</p> <p>Taliban fighters stormed several checkpoints in Dih Yak and Jaghatu, setting off intense battles there, said Latifa Akbari, the head of the provincial council in Ghazni.</p> <p>Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed responsibility for the attacks in a statement to the media. He claimed the Jaghatu district headquarters was captured as well as several police checkpoints in Dih Yak.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Military shifts focus back to Afghanistan
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/05/21/as-isis-targets-disappear-in-iraq-and-syria-us-military-shifts-focus-back-to-afghanistan.html
GIST	<p>As the war against the Islamic State terror group winds down in Iraq and Syria, the U.S. military is increasingly turning its attention to Afghanistan.</p> <p>In April 2017, American and allied jets dropped over 3,000 bombs on ISIS in Iraq and Syria.</p> <p>But a year later, aircrafts dropped just 254 bombs, a sign of how much the war against ISIS has changed, according to a new strike report released over the weekend from the U.S. Air Force.</p> <p>Throughout April, the U.S. military dropped the second-highest amount of bombs in Afghanistan in six-and-a-half years, the Air Force report said. The 562 bombs dropped in Afghanistan last month were more than the combined March and April totals in Iraq and Syria.</p> <p>As of early May, ISIS holds only two small pockets of territory in eastern Syria, and none in Iraq.</p> <p>U.S.-backed fighters from the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have since returned to eastern Syria following Turkey's incursion into northwest Syria, drawing Kurdish fighters from the fight against ISIS. The SDF recently announced it is once again fully committed to defeating ISIS.</p> <p>Air Force A-10 jets and drones were recently called to thwart a battle against the Taliban in western Afghanistan, when the city of Farah was threatened.</p>

	<p>U.S. Forces Afghanistan released a video showing 28 Taliban fighters getting mowed down by American drones in Farah Province, which borders Iran.</p> <p>The Pentagon wouldn't rule out Tehran's influence.</p> <p>"I don't think you can ever rule out how much Iran interferes throughout this region. Iran remains the most destabilizing factor in the Middle East. So no, I don't think you can ever rule out their mischief," Pentagon spokesperson Dana W. White said at a press conference at the Pentagon Thursday.</p> <p>White didn't offer any specific details about the battle last week.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	05/21 World's looming dry water taps
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2018-05-21/lack-of-clean-water-fuels-growing-global-health-crises-un-warns
GIST	<p>LIMA, Peru — "We are the poorest of the poor. Why do we have to pay the most?" asks Diana Ureta as she washes a bucket of potatoes using turbid water fetched in a jug from a discolored plastic barrel beside her front door.</p> <p>Two chickens peck at the uneven dirt floor while her 4-year-old daughter, dressed in a baggy, stained T-shirt, watches her mother ferrying yet another quart from the barrel back to the kitchen.</p> <p>Like most of her neighbors here in the Lomo de Corvina neighborhood of Villa El Salvador, a gritty suburb sprawling on the dusty Andean foothills southeast of Lima, the Peruvian capital, Ureta has neither running water nor sewerage.</p> <p>Cooking and cleaning up afterward are one of many daily ordeals. The family, which includes her 38-year-old mototaxi driver husband Nico Catunta, three children, two nephews, and Catunta's 78-year-old father, all share a single "dry" toilet, essentially a hole in the ground. Bathing is in a cement lined tub set in the ground, with cold water given that the family has no electricity and cannot afford gas.</p> <p>Ureta and Catunta are among an estimated 1.2 million residents in this city of 10 million who depend on an unregulated fleet of privately owned tanker trucks for their water needs. The water supply challenge is compounded by Lima's geography: it is the world's second most-populous city, after Cairo, located in a desert.</p> <p>The trucks pass daily through the neighborhood, selling water at around 20 sols (just over \$6) per cubic meter – compared to the 1.3 sols per cubic meter that SEDAPAL, the Lima water utility, charges more-affluent consumers for potable tap water.</p> <p>The trucks' water is often untreated, sucked up from any available source, including streams and even ditches. Some owners conscientiously keep the insides of the tankers clean. Others do not. "We have to boil the water we use for cooking or to drink," says Ureta, 30. "That is another cost. We use firewood and it takes up so much time every day."</p> <p>Ureta and her family's story is typical of some 40 percent of the world's population, roughly 3 billion people, who suffer water scarcity in some form, according to the United Nations Development Programme. It's Sustainable Development Goals aim to ensure "universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water" for all by 2030.</p> <p>The number of people without reliable access to clean water is expected to rise further before it eventually</p>

falls. Meanwhile, 2.4 billion people lack access to toilets or other basic sanitation. No wonder then that 1.8 billion rely on water sources that are contaminated with fecal matter, according to the multilateral agency.

The result is a global public health crisis, with high levels of malnutrition, anemia, diarrhea and other diseases directly attributable to communities' enforced reliance on unclean water sources.

'Day Zero' Approaching for Many Countries

Climate change, a global population boom and rapid urban growth have created an unholy cocktail of challenges that makes the UNDP objective "very ambitious," says Leo Heller, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Water and Sanitation. "We will have to see in a few years' time if we are on track."

Yet despite that, Heller insists, the problem is not insufficient water supplies but rather inadequate public policy with municipal and national governments frequently failing to prepare for the hydrologically stressed present, never mind the future.

The most obvious current example is Cape Town, which is now forecast to hit "Day Zero" – when the South African city runs completely dry – sometime next year.

However, numerous regions around the world, particularly in the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa and various parts of Latin America from Mexico to Bolivia, are all facing similar problems. So, too, is a broad swath of the Southwestern United States, particularly Arizona, California, and New Mexico.

In each area, the challenge is distinct and Day Zero may yet be a long way off – but it will eventually arrive unless authorities, business and citizens manage water use in new and more strategic ways.

"What happened in Cape Town?" asks Heller. "Governments cannot say that climate change is a surprise. We have known this was coming for a long time. This is a question of planning. Good infrastructure and systems are essential."

"We know that the quantity of surface water and groundwater fluctuates over the seasons. That is only going to get worse going forward. We need to have the flexibility and adaptability to cope with that."

Peru's Challenge: Melting Glaciers, Growing Urban Populations

Few places may be as hydrologically complex as Peru. As the source of the Amazon River, the country is unusually blessed with water resources. However, roughly two-thirds of its 31 million people live on the other side of the Andes, on the arid coast, where there is less than one inch of average annual rainfall.

Indeed, the Incas and other large pre-Columbian population centers were located in the mountains, where there is no shortage of precipitation. It was only thanks to the conquering Spaniards, with their limited environmental awareness and need for a Pacific port to transport gold and silver back to Europe, that Lima was founded in the dust beside the Pacific.

That problematic historical legacy has been compounded in recent decades with massive migration from Peru's mountains and jungles to the capital. Many of the impoverished new arrivals end up, like Ureta and Catunta, squatting on unoccupied and marginal land on the urban outskirts.

That has created a nightmare for SEDAPAL, which is now scrambling to catch up with the shantytowns springing up on often steep terrain around Lima. "Putting a pipe up to the top of a hill is difficult and costly," says Yolanda Andia, the utility's head of production and distribution.

"It's not just the pipe. You need a series of pumps as well. Water doesn't run uphill. If it were up to SEDAPAL, we would have people settling in a more ordered fashion."

Currently, Lima's people require 27 cubic meters of water per second, yet the cities' three seasonal rivers

	<p>have an average flow of just 23 cubic meters per second. Although rainfall patterns in the watersheds that supply Lima, high up in the mountains, are declining and glaciers vanishing, SEDAPAL is investing nearly \$7 billion in the next four years to bridge that gap.</p> <p>New infrastructure will include a desalination plant on the coast just south of the capital, and more high-altitude reservoirs to store precipitation from the rainy season that approximately coincides with the northern winter.</p> <p>Yet for many of Lima's poorest residents desperate for potable tap water, bureaucracy is actually a bigger hurdle than climactic limitations.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/22 Sweden issues war survival manual
SOURCE	http://time.com/5286505/sweden-war-preparation-pamphlet/
GIST	<p>Sweden has not gone to war with another country for over two centuries, but that hasn't stopped the government from reissuing an emergency manual from World War II that advises citizens on how best to cope with hypothetical hostilities.</p> <p>The newly updated 20-page pamphlet, entitled Om krisen eller kriget kommer ('If crisis or war comes'), offers strategies for handling everything from cyber attacks and terrorism to climate change, food shortages and fake news.</p> <p>"What would you do if your everyday life was turned upside down?" the English language version of the manual begins.</p> <p>Since supplies could run low during a crisis, the leaflet provides checklists of what to stock up on, including mineral water, wet wipes and tinned hummus. It also offers tips on where to find bomb shelters, what to do without access to ATMs, cellphones or the internet, and how to spot propaganda.</p> <p>"Although Sweden is safer than many other countries, there are still threats to our security and independence," the brochure says. "If you are prepared, you are contributing to improving the ability of the country as a whole to cope with a major strain."</p> <p>The illustrated instructions went online Monday and are being sent to all 4.8 million households in the country in the first such public awareness campaign since 1961. The handbook was last updated for government officials' use during the Cold War, according to the Guardian.</p> <p>The newly minted pamphlets do not specify an attacker, but their release comes amid escalating security concerns following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. Sweden has accused Moscow of repeatedly infringing on its airspace and territorial waters — claims the Kremlin dismisses as "Russiaphobia."</p> <p>Sweden began increasing its military spending in 2016, reversing years of cuts. It also reinstated the military draft last year, citing Russian assertiveness as one of the justifications, and is considering joining NATO.</p> <p>In the event of a "heightened state of alert," the pamphlet emphasizes the expectation that everyone can be marshaled for Sweden's "total defense."</p> <p>"If Sweden is attacked by another country, we will never give up," the publication reads. "All information to the effect that resistance is to cease is false."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 China kicks boats out South China Sea
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SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/05/21/Report-China-drives-boats-out-of-South-China-Sea/8721526908566/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_tn_int&utm_medium=5
GIST	<p>May 21 (UPI) -- China chased out 10 vessels of foreign origin after searching more than 40 fishing boats in the South China Sea, an international body of water China has claimed as its own.</p> <p>Hong Kong newspaper Ming Pao reported Monday a convoy of Chinese naval ships expelled the 10 boats during a "special patrol mission" near the Paracel Islands on May 4.</p> <p>China is believed to have constructed military facilities on the islands that are also claimed by Vietnam.</p> <p>According to the head of the Chinese convoy that includes patrol boats, the boats that were chased out were interfering with Chinese fishing privileges.</p> <p>"The foreign fishing boats were violating our countrymen's fishing rights and engaging in fishing activities. Our navy is to respond immediately in response to the law," the convoy chief's office said, adding, "We effectively defended our maritime sovereignty through the patrol activity."</p> <p>The South China Sea is home to a wide array of natural resources, including oil and gas, and \$3.4 trillion in trade is reportedly transported through the waters annually.</p> <p>The report of Chinese expulsion of foreign boats comes at a time when Beijing is promoting its military presence on reclaimed islands.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Chehalis waitress receives \$3,000 tip
SOURCE	http://www.khq.com/story/38243530/stranger-leaves-washington-waitress-a-3000-tip
GIST	<p>CHEHALIS, Wash. - People tend to leave a couple of extra dollars for good service while dining out. However, one waitress from Lewis County, Washington, got more than just a couple of extra dollars.</p> <p>Waitress Michelle Bozemen got a \$3,000 tip on a \$44 bill at the Rib Eye restaurant in Chehalis, Washington, Sunday.</p> <p>"I was shocked, and I looked at it and I thought no, that can't be right, and then I showed my manager, then we flipped it over and read the note and went, 'oh,'" Bozemen said.</p> <p>On the back of the tab, the big tipper wrote an explanation saying, "Thanks for smiling. You work hard and the country is in a bad place." Bozemen's smile seemed to be just what the costumer needed. He told her to enjoy the money and requested she do something good for someone else.</p> <p>Bozemen has been a waitress for more than 20 years to support her three kids as a single mom. Her regulars say no one is more deserving.</p> <p>"I just really want to thank them and say what a wonderful thing that was for them to do for a stranger," Bozemen said.</p> <p>She shared some of the tip with her coworkers and plans on doing work around the house and spoiling her seven grandchildren.</p> <p>But Bozemen is using the rest of the tip to pay for a trip to Ireland she's always dreamed about.</p> <p>"I'll have a beer, I'll have a Guinness for them."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/22 NKorea dismantling or destroying evidence?
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/22/asia/north-korea-destroy-nuclear-site-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Cheryl Rofer is a chemist who spent 35 years working on environmental cleanups everywhere from Estonia to Kazakhstan, disassembling and decommissioning nuclear weapons, and overseeing the destruction of chemical weapons.</p> <p>But unlike international journalists, she is not on the list of people invited this week to witness the destruction of North Korea's Punggye-ri nuclear test site.</p> <p>"I was hoping you were going and I could talk you into bringing me along," she said to CNN.</p> <p>The small contingent of international journalists invited into North Korea departed Beijing Tuesday for Wonsan, a city on the country's east coast.</p> <p>No weapons inspectors or individuals with any kind of expertise were expected to attend the event, which North Korea has said would "ensure transparency of discontinuance of the nuclear test."</p> <p>When it made the announcement on April 20, the Workers' Party of Korea's Seventh Central Committee declared that the country had "realized nuclear weaponization," and to ensure the end of all nuclear testing it would "discard" the test site in the north.</p> <p>Journalists from the US, China, Russia and the UK have all been invited to witness the event. They're expected to view the activity from a distance, without any real opportunity to get a sense of what might have happened inside Punggye-ri's tunnels.</p> <p>Like trampling on a crime scene</p> <p>Bruce Bechtol says evidence that might have been collected will now be lost to the world.</p> <p>"It's kind of like a murder scene where they let people like you and me trample around in it, it's the same concept," said Bechtol, a professor of political science at Angelo State University who has authored several books on North Korea.</p> <p>"The North Koreans have conducted all these tests here, every single weapons test, so if they let experts in to look at these tunnels before they let anyone else in that would be potentially for us an intelligence boon," he said.</p> <p>Some observers have said that the site had become partially unusable anyway due to the damage incurred after six nuclear tests since 2006, while others say the site was still in operation only months ago.</p> <p>Regardless of its operating status, there is still much to be gained from allowing experts in to look around and collect various residue, says Rofer.</p> <p>"If I were going I would want to bring some capability of taking samples, and I would also want to bring a geologist with me. I'd want to have a radiation counter, I would want to go into the tunnel to see if parts of it have caved in in the back, and I would want to take radiation measurements."</p> <p>All those samples and tests could yield information on the kinds of weapons that were being tested, she said.</p> <p>"Isotope measurements could tell you about the design of the device, it would tell you what kind of bombs they're making, what they're making them out of, how much uranium and plutonium is in the bombs. We might be able to infer what they're planning and the shape of their progress," she said.</p> <p>All of that information, experts say, could then be fed back to negotiators to give them a stronger hand in dealing with the Kim regime, including giving them the ability to know whether they are truly extracting</p>

concessions, or just cosmetic changes.

A feeling of déjà vu

The prospect of such a public demolition gives Melissa Hanham, a senior research associate at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, a sense of déjà vu.

"A lot of this reminds me of the theater of when they destroyed the cooling tower under the Bush administration, and the media was invited to observe the tower exploding and gave a good visual which the Bush administration and the Kim family promoted," she said.

"It's not irreversible, they eventually found a different way to cool the reactor."

In 2008, North Korea destroyed a water cooling tower at a facility state officials admitted to using to extract plutonium to build nuclear weapons. The massive explosion at the Yongbyon facility was meant to symbolize the end of Pyongyang's nuclear program.

During that time, under pressure from restrictive sanctions and international isolation, the North Koreans were more forthcoming about the extent of their program. Along with the journalists invited to watch the event were US State Department officials and observers from the International Atomic Energy Agency, CNN reported.

Among the disclosures North Korea made at the time about its nuclear program was the revelation that it had produced roughly 40 kilograms of enriched plutonium, something the US State Department said was enough for about seven nuclear bombs.

In response, then-US President George W. Bush said he would lift some US sanctions against North Korea and remove it from the administration's list of state sponsors of terrorism.

It later emerged that the North Koreans had been building a separate facility to continue producing fissile material without disclosing it to international authorities.

Last November, President Donald Trump returned North Korea to the state sponsors of terrorism list.

Critical to understanding North Korea's nuclear history

The world is missing an opportunity in allowing North Korea to unilaterally dismantle the site without having a chance to inspect it first, says Cheon Seong Whun a visiting research fellow at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies.

"It's very critical evidence that helps us understand the history of North Korea's nuclear program, and if North Korea is sincere about giving up its nuclear weapons," he said.

"What they have to do is provide all necessary information and documents to the international community and then invite UN inspections, North Korea doesn't have to dismantle this on its own, this isn't something that should be done in haste."

Cheon, a former South Korean government official who worked in the defense and unification departments, argues rather, that North Korea might be destroying the site now to avoid providing access to it down the road, possibly as part of a concession from a summit with Trump that is planned for June 12 but currently looking uncertain.

"North Korea's arbitrary action to dismantle this facility on its own, this is not something that we can believe is part of North Korea's declared aim of denuclearization. It's nothing more than destroying evidence."

	<p>For longtime North Korea observers, another indicator of Kim Jong Un's motives lie in the timing of the scheduled demolition -- it's happening at the same time South Korean leader Moon Jae-in is visiting President Trump at the White House.</p> <p>"Look at the timing," said Cheon. "This is the time Moon is meeting Trump in Washington, this isn't just a coincidence, he wants to take advantage of this event with political propaganda."</p> <p>Rofer believes even if parts of the tunnels are blown up, they can always be unearthed later should the North Koreans want to reuse the site.</p> <p>"It is absolutely correct that we [the international community] seem to be making all the concessions," she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 BP detained women speaking Spanish
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/border-patrol-agent-detains-women-speaking-spanish-montana-gas-station-n876096
GIST	<p>Video taken by a Montana woman as she and her friend were questioned and detained by a U.S. Border Patrol agent after he overheard them speaking Spanish at a gas station has caught the attention of border patrol officials and civil liberties groups.</p> <p>Ana Suda and Mimi Hernandez — both U.S. citizens — were chatting in Spanish as they went to buy eggs and milk around midnight Wednesday in Havre, a small town about 35 miles from the Canadian border. Suda said that's when a border patrol agent overheard them.</p> <p>"He asked us where we were born, so I looked at him and I said, 'Are you serious?'" Suda told NBC News on Monday. "He said, 'I'm very serious.'"</p> <p>The agent then asked Suda and Hernandez for their identification, she added.</p> <p>They went outside to the parking lot, and Suda began to record on her cellphone.</p> <p>In the video, Suda asked the agent why he was asking for their IDs.</p> <p>"Ma'am, the reason I asked you for your ID is because I came in here, and I saw that you guys are speaking Spanish, which is very unheard of up here," the agent, who identified himself as Agent O'Neill, said in the video.</p> <p>When Suda, 37, asked if she and her friend were being racially profiled, the agent responded no.</p> <p>"It has nothing to do with that," he said. "It's the fact that it has to do with you guys speaking Spanish in the store, in a state where it's predominantly English-speaking."</p> <p>Suda said she began recording because she was uncomfortable and afraid.</p> <p>"I picked up my phone and started recording him because I wasn't doing anything wrong," she said, adding, "That is the only way you can defend yourself."</p> <p>She said the agent took their IDs and kept them in the parking lot for about 35 to 40 minutes.</p> <p>"He didn't say anything when he gave me back the documentation. He said something like 'Thank you, you are free to go,'" Suda said.</p> <p>The incident in Montana is the latest encounter over speaking Spanish to go viral after a New York City</p>

	<p>lawyer's racist rant at a lunch spot last Tuesday showed him threatening to call immigration agents on workers.</p> <p>Suda said she still believes she and Hernandez were being racially profiled. Both are Mexican-American and speak fluent Spanish. She said she was born in El Paso, Texas, and raised across the border in Mexico, but has spent the last 14 years in the U.S. with her husband and 7-year-old daughter.</p> <p>Hernandez was born in central California, she said.</p> <p>A U.S. Customs and Border Protection spokesperson said in a statement that the incident was being reviewed to make sure appropriate policies were followed. Agents have broader authority when operating within 100 miles of a U.S. border, such as putting up checkpoints and questioning people in their vehicles about their citizenship — but CBP policy also says agents cannot stop or detain someone solely on their race or ethnicity.</p> <p>Agents have the "authority to question individuals, make arrests, and take and consider evidence," the spokesperson added. "Decisions to question individuals are based on a variety of factors for which Border Patrol agents are well-trained."</p> <p>The ACLU did not immediately respond to a request for comment, but said in a tweet: "Speaking Spanish is not a valid reason for Border Patrol to question or detain you."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 US Postal Service: scratch-sniff stamps
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/scratch-sniff-stamps-coming-post-office/story?id=55330195
GIST	<p>Scratch-and-sniff stamps are coming to a post office near you, the United States Postal Service announced on Monday.</p> <p>With the warm summer weather moving in, Americans love to cool off with a refreshing ice pop on a hot day, bringing inspiration to the latest Forever stamp from the USPS. The colorful stamps feature different designs, shapes and flavors of ice cream pops.</p> <p>The watercolor illustrations of the treats are the work of Margaret Berg of Santa Monica, California, while art director Antonio Alcala designed the stamps with Leslie Badani, both of Alexandria, Virginia. Each stamp is designed with two different ice cream pops on it, with 10 different designs in the booklet.</p> <p>The Frozen Treats Forever stamps will be introduced in Austin, Texas, at the Thinkery Children's Museum on June 20 at 6 p.m. CDT in a special dedication ceremony.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Child exposures to ADHD drugs on rise
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2018/05/21/Study-Calls-to-poison-centers-in-child-ADHD-drug-cases-up-64-percent/3991526914975/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_hn&utm_medium=13
GIST	<p>May 21 (UPI) -- Child exposure to ADHD drugs is increasing in the United States -- marked by a jump of more than 60 percent over a 14-year period, a new study showed Monday.</p> <p>The study in the journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics looked at calls to U.S. poison control centers to see if ADHD exposures were on the rise. The answer was yes.</p> <p>The study found more than 156,000 calls for unintentional and intentional exposures of the drugs to U.S. children and adolescents between 2000 and 2014 -- an increase of 64 percent.</p>

	<p>The report said exposures increased 71 percent from 2000 to 2011, and decreased 6 percent from 2011 to 2014. More than three quarters involved children under 12.</p> <p>"[ADHD] is the most commonly diagnosed neurobehaviorial disorder in children," said Dr. Gary Smith of the Nationwide Children's Hospital. "Almost 70 percent of children with ADHD are taking medication and the number of children taking ADHD medications is increasing in this country."</p> <p>The study found the most common reason for exposure was therapeutic error, at about 42 percent. Intentional exposures, including suicide and drug abuse, accounted for half for those aged 13-19.</p> <p>The majority, 60 percent, did not seek treatment. Six percent were hospitalized and three died.</p> <p>"Exposures associated with suspected suicide or medication abuse and misuse among adolescents are of particular concern," the study said.</p> <p>"Unintentional and intentional pediatric exposures to ADHD medications are an increasing problem in the United States, affecting children of all ages."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Russia shoots down drone in Syria
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-russia/russia-shoots-down-unidentified-drone-near-air-base-in-syria-ria-idUSKCN1IM29C
GIST	<p>MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia's military said on Monday it had shot down an unidentified drone that came close to its Syrian air base at Hmeimim, RIA news agency said, citing the Russian Defence Ministry.</p> <p>"There are neither casualties nor physical damage. Russia's Hmeimim air base is operating as normal," it said.</p> <p>The British-based war monitoring group Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said explosions had been heard near the base and appeared to have come from Russian air defenses confronting an attack.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Judge: teen must repay \$36M for wildfire
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/teen-who-started-eagle-creek-fire-oregon-ordered-to-pay-36-million-2018-05-21/
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. -- The teen who plead guilty to starting last year's destructive Eagle Creek Fire has been ordered to pay roughly \$36.6 million to cover damages caused by the blaze, CBS affiliate KOIN-TV reports. The boy, who was 15 at the time, said he started the fire by throwing a lit firecracker into the woods in September.</p> <p>District Judge John Olson issued his decision Monday after a lawyer for the teen argued that the cost of restitution was "absurd." Olson said his judgment does not violate the constitution and is "clearly proportionate to the offense" because "it does not exceed the financial damages caused by the youth."</p> <p>The fire burned more than 48,000 acres of forest land. Eleven requests for restitution totaling \$36,618,330.24 were submitted to the court, covering the costs of firefighting, repair and restoration to the gorge and damage to homes.</p> <p>The restitution is solely the responsibility of the teen, not his parents, who came to the U.S. from Ukraine in 2000.</p> <p>The court acknowledged that the teen would not be able to pay the full judgement and will allow him to</p>

	<p>establish a payment plan. After 10 years, the court may grant a full or partial halt of the restitution if the teen completes probation and doesn't commit any additional offenses.</p> <p>In February, the teen pleaded guilty to eight counts of reckless burning of public and private property, two counts of depositing burning materials on forest land, and one count each of second-degree criminal mischief and reckless endangerment of others -- all misdemeanors.</p> <p>Olson sentenced him to more than two and a half months of community service and five years of probation, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported at the time.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	05/21 Feds: \$16M counterfeit items seized
SOURCE	https://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/texas/article/Feds-say-counterfeit-items-worth-16-million-12932599.php
GIST	<p>Federal authorities on Monday announced that they had seized nearly 79,000 counterfeit items valued at more than \$16 million that included apparel and consumer electronics from luxury and sporting trademark designers such as Hermes, Louis Vuitton, Adidas Nike, Apple, Samsung and Sony.</p> <p>A press release said the items were seized last Thursday as a result of an investigation in Laredo by special agents with U.S. Immigration and Custom's Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations.</p> <p>"Trafficking counterfeit goods poses a triple threat," stated Tim Tubbs, deputy special agent in charge of HSI Laredo, in the press release from ICE. "Counterfeit merchandise wreaks havoc on local economies, threatens the health and safety of the American public, and funds criminal organizations engaged in other illegal activities."</p> <p>On May 17, HSI special agents conducted surveillance of a public storage facility in Laredo and observed several individuals transferring boxes from a leased storage unit to pickup trucks and vans with Mexican license plates, according to the ICE press release.</p> <p>While agents observed the storage facility, a large air courier box truck arrived to unload suspected trademark infringed merchandise to waiting pickup trucks and vans. HSI then detained and seized 275 boxes containing 78,908 items of suspected trademark-infringed merchandise from this location.</p> <p>No one was arrested in connection to this seizure. This is an ongoing investigation</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Seattle coin shop busted w/stolen goods
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/police-n-seattle-coin-shop-was-buying-selling-stolen-goods
GIST	<p>SEATTLE -- Police say a 10-month investigation into a North Seattle coin shop has resulted in the arrest of three men and the recovery of allegedly stolen goods.</p> <p>Police investigated Seattle Rare Coins in the 8600 block of Aurora Avenue North. Police allege that employees were buying stolen goods and reselling them on eBay and Offerup.com</p> <p>Investigators were able to sell purportedly stolen items on a dozen different occasions and later found some for sale online, police said.</p> <p>Investigators served a search warrant on Friday. Among the suspected stolen items recovered were electronics, power tools, knives, boating gear, clothing and health and beauty supplies. police said.</p>

	Police believe stolen items were bought for about 10 percent of their retail value. Police believe thieves then would use to the proceeds to buy drugs.
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HEADLINE	05/21 Florida airport shooter in plea deal
SOURCE	http://www.wdtn.com/news/national/us-files-plea-deal-in-deadly-florida-airport-shooting/1191322630
GIST	<p>FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) - Federal prosecutors filed court documents Monday in which an Alaska man agreed to plead guilty to a Florida airport shooting rampage that killed five people in exchange for a life prison sentence.</p> <p>The agreement says that Esteban Santiago, 28, will plead guilty to 11 of the 22 counts against him in the attack that also left six wounded. Prosecutors reached a deal with Santiago's defense lawyers not to seek the death penalty in exchange for the guilty plea. Instead, Santiago would serve a life prison sentence plus 120 years, according to the documents, and will waive his right to appeal the sentence.</p> <p>The deal is expected to be finalized Wednesday in Miami federal court before U.S. District Judge Beth Bloom.</p> <p>The mentally troubled Santiago, of Anchorage, Alaska, acknowledged in the document that he flew on a one-way ticket from Alaska to Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport with a 9mm handgun in a checked weapons box in on Jan. 6, 2017. Santiago loaded the gun in a bathroom and came out firing, emptying two ammunition clips before lying on the floor and surrendering to police. Fifteen bullet casings were recovered.</p> <p>"He recounted how he entered a stall, removed the gun from the box, loaded it, and put it in his waistband," prosecutors wrote of Santiago's confession to investigators. "He confessed that, after he left the men's restroom, he shot the first people he encountered."</p> <p>Santiago, an Iraq war veteran who has been diagnosed as schizophrenic, initially told the FBI he was acting under some form of government mind control. Then, he changed his story to claim that he shot his victims in support of the Islamic State extremist group, but no ties to terrorist groups have been found.</p> <p>Since his arrest, Santiago has been treated for his mental illness and his attorneys have repeatedly said he is competent to understand the legal proceedings. Prior to the shooting, he was briefly treated at an Anchorage mental institution after showing up at the local FBI office claiming to be hearing voices, then released with no restrictions on owning a gun, authorities have said.</p> <p>The statement of facts filed Monday - signed by Santiago and his attorneys - lays out in detail the actions Santiago took that day, as well as a few new pieces of evidence. For instance, the document states that Santiago researched the layout of the Los Angeles International Airport three days before flying to Florida, but does not indicate why he did that or why he ultimately chose Florida.</p> <p>It also describes the injuries suffered by the six wounded people along with the multiple surgeries and medical procedures they have had to endure.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Interpol database inquiries jump 200%
SOURCE	https://homelandprepnews.com/stories/28528-interpol-information-database-inquiries-jump-200-percent/
GIST	Use of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) global databases has been on the rise

in recent years amid growing threats of terrorist attacks in Europe, with inquiries to stolen and lost travel documents data increasing by more than 200 percent since 2014.

Delegates recently met at the 48th INTERPOL European Regional Conference in Dublin. Drug trafficking, online child sexual abuse, organized crime, and cybercrime were all addressed the three-day event that drew 130 senior law enforcement officers from 52 countries.

INTERPOL Secretary-General Jürgen Stock noted during the event that law enforcement agencies must adapt and evolve, particularly in the realm of data protection and information sharing.

“Data needed by national police increasingly resides outside of law enforcement. It is in open sources, in battlefields and owned by private industry,” Stock said. “To ensure officers have access to the information they need to successfully investigate cases requires data quality, reliability, and security. INTERPOL is ideally and uniquely placed to meet these needs.”

Charles Flanagan, Ireland’s Minister for Justice and Equality, said INTERPOL’s work over the last 100 years or so “epitomizes the value of police services across the world working together.”

“Thanks to the excellent cooperation fostered by INTERPOL, police officers here in Ireland and across the world are provided with invaluable support in their efforts to protect citizens from terrorism and crime in all its many forms,” Flanagan said. “The global network of INTERPOL National Bureaus that operate around the clock handling enquiries plays a vital role in this, and I’d like to pay tribute to the Irish INTERPOL National Central Bureau based in Garda Headquarters for its contribution to this network, and also to the members of An Garda Síochána who have served in INTERPOL’s General Secretariat Headquarters in Lyon over the years.”

Meanwhile, INTERPOL President Meng Hongwei said police agencies across Europe have made significant contributions toward global security.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Honduran drug lord gets life sentence
SOURCE	http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/article211591874.html
GIST	<p>A Honduran drug lord convicted by a Miami federal jury was sentenced Monday to life in prison for supplying alleged Mexican kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman and other traffickers with huge loads of cocaine that were smuggled into the United States.</p> <p>Sergio Neftali Mejia-Duarte, 41, used go-fast boats, helicopters and airplanes to ship an estimated 20,000 kilos of cocaine from Colombia through Central America to Mexico and then the United States, U.S. authorities said.</p> <p>At trial in January, testimony by convicted associates and pictures from a 2,000-kilo drug seizure bolstered the Justice Department's case that Mejia-Duarte was guilty of conspiring to supply cocaine to Mexico's notorious Sinaloa Cartel for distribution in the United States over the past decade.</p> <p>Mejia-Duarte, aka "El Doctor," was portrayed by federal prosecutors as a violent boss who carried guns, employed bodyguards and deployed assassins in a bloody war with a rival.</p> <p>"The life sentence imposed upon Mejia-Duarte ends the reign of a ruthless drug trafficker," U.S. Attorney Benjamin Greenberg said in a statement.</p> <p>Mejia-Duarte was given the maximum sentence for his drug conspiracy conviction by U.S. District Judge K. Michael Moore.</p> <p>Mejia-Duarte's case, investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration, opened a window into the vast</p>

	<p>international narcotics network operated by Guzman and other Sinaloa cartel bosses.</p> <p>Last year, Guzman was extradited from Mexico to the United States to face a sweeping indictment that includes numerous drug trafficking charges bundled together from cases in New York, Miami and other U.S. cities.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/22 Mass school shootings: small towns
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/8660507c56b04dd0b580b248d39d2a2c/Mass-school-shootings-mostly-happening-in-small-town-America
GIST	<p>ATLANTA (AP) — If you want to know where mass school shootings are most likely to occur, look no farther than small-town and suburban America.</p> <p>The massacre that killed 10 people at a high school in Texas last week was just the latest to happen in a small or suburban city. Of the 10 deadliest school shootings in the U.S., all but one took place in a town with fewer than 75,000 residents and the vast majority of them were in cities with fewer than 50,000 people.</p> <p>These are seemingly idyllic places to grow up: low crime rates, good schools and a sense of community where everyone seems to know your name. And it's exactly those attributes, experts say, that are why small rural and suburban towns are a breeding ground for the next school shooter.</p> <p>“Ironically it's people in small towns and suburbia who think it can't happen here. And that is exactly the type of place where it does happen,” said Peter Langman, a psychologist who has been studying school shootings for years and operates a database of school gun violence in the U.S. and abroad. “People tend to think of violence associated with cities, not violence associated with small-town America, but this type of violence is the one associated with small-town America.”</p> <p>Experts say the phenomenon is due to a variety of factors that include easy access to guns and the copycat effect of disturbed suburban and small-town teenagers emulating each other. It's also blamed on the pressures of living in small towns that make it harder for disgruntled teenagers to adjust.</p> <p>“In small-town America, it's said everybody knows everybody, and that's well and good except when you don't want everybody to know what's going on with you,” said James Alan Fox, a professor at Northeastern University who has been studying mass shootings for decades. “If things are going downhill for you, you did something wrong or someone did something wrong to you and some girl dumps you, everybody knows. So it's much harder to get away from it.</p> <p>“Whereas in the big city, where no one knows your name, that can be a good thing,” he added. “You don't have this feeling that everybody knows what you're going through. Being in a small town has its advantages in terms of a network and a sense of community but sometimes that can be a double-edged sword.”</p> <p>Parkland, Florida, where authorities say a former student in February gunned down 17 people, had just recently been voted the safest town in Florida. Newtown, Connecticut, where a shooting in 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School took the lives of 20 children and six adults, is a classic New England town, seemingly a world away from the crime and problems of nearby Bridgeport, one of that state's largest cities.</p> <p>The site of the Columbine High School tragedy was a Denver suburb, the Virginia Tech massacre happened in a college town of about 40,000 people. The shooting last week took place in a town of 13,000 people about 40 minutes southeast of Houston.</p> <p>The prevalence of the mass shootings in smaller cities stands in contrast to the situation in big cities like</p>

New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. They have strict gun laws and their own problems with street gun violence, but it's rare that a mass shooting has been carried out in one of their schools.

In the 1980s and 1990s, urban districts sought to make schools safer from drug- and gang-related violence, taking such steps as installing metal detectors at entrances. That is exactly what pro-gun Republicans and the National Rifle Association have been proposing in the wake of recent massacres.

Some school security and psychology experts, as well as those who have been studying mass shootings for decades, say school designs and talk of arming teachers is a simplistic approach that doesn't get at the heart of preventing it from happening. While students often have a sense that a classmate might be planning an attack or know that someone is troubled, they might be more hesitant in smaller towns to tell anyone about it, said Langman, director of SchoolShooters.info. They know each other well, visit each other's homes and families can be business associates.

"The best prevention is to catch them early before they show up with a gun rather than trying to make it hard for them once they're already at the building with a gun," he said.

Fox also said it's hard to overlook the issue of copycats — and how much that can determine the types of locations where school shootings occur.

"They're all white, male, teenagers in small towns or rural areas because they identify the other white, male teenagers in small towns or rural areas. Whereas a black kid in the Bronx or the streets of Chicago, that's not his world. He's got totally different issues he's dealing with," Fox said.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Teens charged in mall drive-by shooting
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article211587824.html
GIST	<p>Two brothers opened fire in the Tacoma Mall parking lot, striking three cars and sending witnesses ducking behind cars, records show.</p> <p>The drive-by happened about 5:45 p.m. on May 15.</p> <p>Witnesses saw two men walking away from a parked Honda Civic.</p> <p>"The Civic suddenly went into reverse quickly, and the witness heard multiple gunshots," according to court documents.</p> <p>The men being shot at ducked behind vehicles and ran from the parking lot. Witnesses took cover and called 911.</p> <p>Police pulled over the Honda Civic four minutes later.</p> <p>Inside the car, a handgun was tucked under the passenger seat and officers allegedly found methamphetamine, marijuana, pills and a drug scale.</p> <p>Fifteen casings were found in two locations of the mall parking lot. One was found inside the Honda.</p> <p>No one was injured, but three cars were damaged by the shots.</p> <p>The brothers, ages 16 and 19, were arrested. The younger brother is believed to be the shooter. The older brother was driving the car.</p> <p>On Friday, both brothers were charged with first-degree assault, drive-by shooting and unlawful possession of a controlled substance. The younger brother is also charged with second-degree unlawful</p>

	<p>possession of a firearm.</p> <p>The older brother pleaded not guilty and was ordered held on \$150,000 bail.</p> <p>Pierce County Superior Court Commissioner Meagan Foley ordered the brothers not to have contact until the case is resolved.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Major pot crime ring w/China ties busted
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/investigators-raid-17-illegal-grow-houses-bust-major-marijuana-crime-ring-with-china-ties
GIST	<p>BURIEN, Wash. - An investigation into a major marijuana crime ring with ties to China has turned up thousands of illegal plants at nearly two dozen homes in greater Seattle area. Several people are now behind bars.</p> <p>Authorities said at a quiet home in Burien on SW 137th Street, the electricity bill was sky high—totaling \$37,000 during a three-month period.</p> <p>Prosecutors said the people there paid the bill in cash to avoid tipping off authorities. But, that didn't stop investigators.</p> <p>Last week, officers seized more than 3,000 illegally-grown marijuana plants from 17 homes in the Seattle-Tacoma area. That includes more than 430 marijuana plants at homes in South Seattle, 400 plants at a home in Kent, and 400 plants in Tacoma.</p> <p>Officers also recovered grow lights, ballasts, ducting and other equipment.</p> <p>Prosecutors said the marijuana was grown illegally and then shipped to New York's black market.</p> <p>In a statement, the U.S. Attorney Annette L. Hayes explained how far-reaching the crime is: "The defendants are charged with growing thousands of pounds of marijuana in Western Washington and then shipping it to the East Coast to take advantage of black market prices...hundreds of thousands of dollars have flowed in from China to pay for grow houses and the massive electric bills associated with them. In the mean time, the communities where these grow houses are located are dealing with a host of negative impacts including distortion of real estate markets with criminals making all cash payments at inflated prices."</p> <p>Qifeng Li went before a judge in federal court Monday. His wife Xiamin Huang was arrested and answered to charges last week. Authorities are still looking for Li's brother Qiwei Li.</p> <p>Prosecutors are now charging all three with conspiracy to manufacture and distribute marijuana.</p> <p>According to the prosecutor's office, if convicted, the defendants could get 10 years up to life in prison and be fined as much as \$10 million.</p> <p>Prosecutors said the investigation continues and more people could be arrested.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/22 Parkland 'swatting' large police response
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/south-sound-news/they-were-playing-a-game-the-17-officers-who-responded-to-help-a-teen-in-trouble-werent/754114294
GIST	A 21-year-old man accused of calling sheriff's deputies in a so-called "swatting" call is defending himself

against the allegations. Pierce County deputies say the report of a kidnapping last night at a Parkland apartment complex was a prank and they are labeling it "swatting."

The 21-year-old who was arrested spoke to KIRO 7 News. We are not naming him since he has not been charged, but he contends that he's a victim in this incident. The Pierce County Sheriff's Department says a 21-year-old man and 15-year-old girl were arrested after 911 calls drew police to an apartment complex in the 12700 block of C Street South in Parkland around 7 p.m. Sunday looking for children supposedly being held hostage -- a story deputies say wasn't true.

The Pierce County Sheriff's Department posted details on its Facebook page and under a lead statement which read, "If you called 911 on Sunday night in Pierce County and had significant delays or no response from law enforcement, it was due to a very poor choice by a teenage girl and an adult male. A 'swatting' prank took a large amount resources away from REAL emergencies and REAL victims."

The PCSD says it was around 6:44 p.m. Sunday when a woman called 911 to report that she had been on the phone with her son and said her son had told her his 16-year-old friend was in danger. The initial emergency had a scenario where that friend and two younger siblings were being threatened by their father, who was reportedly armed with a firearm in an unknown apartment.

The woman eventually gave dispatchers her son's phone number and they were able to get hold of him. He reported that the incident was playing out at the Heather Court apartments. He also contended that the situation was ongoing and that he was headed to the area and would meet deputies so they could speak to the victim.

He met deputies at a nearby business and was with them when authorities got on the phone with the supposed victim who couldn't give them an apartment number where the incident was taking place.

PCSD spokesperson Ed Troyer says the call drew a heavy response to the apartments late Sunday. "We were pretty much armed and took over a neighborhood because that's what we do when we hear someone's armed and going to kill somebody."

Troyer says dozens of officers raced to the complex after calls said children were being held at gunpoint by their father.

The call was so severe -- deputies abandoned real emergency calls -- but it ended up being a fake cry for help. "This is dangerous for everybody when our guys are armed and they think somebody's being held hostage by somebody in a house. Somebody in that house could have gotten hurt."

Deputies searched the apartments and checked with staff but nobody matched the description that were part of the 911 call. They also traced the 911 call back to the home a 15-year-old girl who deputies say admitted she pretended to be the victim. Deputies also arrested a 21-year-old man who they say played a role.

KIRO 7's crew met the 21-year-old man at his home and he said he feels like he was a victim. "I thought it was real ... I had no idea until after the incident was over and the cop just came over and said you were under arrest and it hit me like a brick."

He said he was frustrated the girl may have targeted him and others. "I hope I come up clean from it...and them (the culprits) paying for it, because this was just wrong." He confirmed he met police and that he had been arrested and had been in the Pierce County jail until he was released Monday. He says his court date will be July 3.

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HEADLINE 05/21 WSP: 19 arrests Poor People's Campaign

SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/05/21/19-poor-peoples-campaign-demonstrators-arrested-for-refusing-orders-to-leave-capitol-rotunda/
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. — Nineteen demonstrators from the Poor People’s Campaign were arrested for trespassing Monday night inside the Capitol Rotunda when they refused to obey orders to leave, the Washington State Patrol said.</p> <p>They were arrested without incident and were processed for second-degree trespassing, the State Patrol said.</p> <p>The organization said poor people, clergy and advocates are conducting a six-week period of nonviolent action by marching on the statehouse to “demand elected officials take immediate steps to confront systemic racism.”</p> <p>The organization said the demonstrations will be held in 35 states and at the Capitol in Washington, D.C.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/22 Mayor tells NYPD to stop pot arrests
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2018/05/22/NYC-Mayor-Bill-de-Blasio-tells-NYPD-to-stop-marijuana-arrests/8731526967895/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_tn_us&utm_medium=1
GIST	<p>May 22 (UPI) -- New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio this week told the NYPD not to arrest people for smoking marijuana in public and instead give them a summons.</p> <p>The policy will be part of a 30-day review of the racial disparity in marijuana arrests, the New York Daily News reported.</p> <p>It is also part of a process to better understand how to deal with marijuana legalization from a law enforcement perspective. Although de Blasio has not come out in support of marijuana legalization for recreational use, he believes it will eventually be a law-abiding way to imbibe.</p> <p>"With marijuana legalization likely to occur in our state in the near future, it is critical our city plans for the public safety, health and financial consequences involved," de Blasio said in a statement. "While I still have real concerns we must work through, it isn't difficult to see where this is headed, and any responsible policymaker must prepare for that eventuality. My focus now will be helping to craft the critical regulatory framework that must come before legalization is realized."</p> <p>NYPD Deputy Commissioner of Public Information Phil Walzak told CNN that the department is reviewing the mayor's request and could begin the policy towards the end of summer.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/22 UN: meth trafficking Southeast Asia
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/21/asia/methamphetamine-mekong-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The production and trafficking of methamphetamine in the Mekong Delta region of Southeast Asia is rising at "alarming levels," the United Nations has warned.</p> <p>The area has long been notorious for opium and heroin, especially the so-called "Golden Triangle" of Laos, Myanmar and Thailand.</p> <p>But experts say organized criminal groups have invested in methamphetamine as a response to market forces and because it's easy to hide and move the laboratories where the drug is made.</p> <p>The warnings about the escalating drug trade came during a meeting of drug and law enforcement officials in Myanmar's capital of Naypyidaw.</p>

Myanmar Deputy Home Minister Major General Aung Soe said a regional approach was needed to squeeze the supply of materials into the region.

"A top priority for us (Myanmar) is a regional precursor strategy that will slow the supply of chemicals and pharmaceutical products into drug producing areas of the Golden Triangle," he was quoted as saying by the UNODC.

The regional drug market for both heroin and methamphetamine is estimated to be worth around \$40 billion, according to the UN's Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

While opium and heroin production in the Mekong is on the decline, some countries have already performed more seizures of methamphetamine than all of 2017 combined, the UNODC said.

Methamphetamine from the region has been found and seized in large quantities across the Asia-Pacific, including in Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Record-breaking drug busts have also been made in Myanmar and Thailand this year, while authorities in Australia seized a record 1.2 metric tonne shipment of methamphetamine in December, though that was believed to have originated from China.

"Significant changes have been underway in the regional drug market for a number of years now," said Jeremy Douglas, the UNODC representative for Southeast Asia.

"Responding to the situation requires acknowledging some difficult realities, and agreeing to new approaches at a strategic regional level."

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HEADLINE	05/21 School shooter's father: son was bullied
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/santa-fe-high-school-shooting-suspect-dimitrios-pagourtzis-victims-latest-2018-05-21/
GIST	<p>SANTA FE, Texas -- New details have emerged about the heroic effort to confront a young man who opened fire at a school Friday, which prevented a larger tragedy.</p> <p>Ten people were killed and at least 13 others were hurt, including a school resource officer. Authorities say they don't have a motive, though the suspect's father gave his own explanation.</p> <p>Suspect Dimitrios Pagourtzis, 17, sits in a county jail under suicide watch.</p> <p>The tight-knit community of Santa Fe is still reeling from a tragedy that many thought would never happen in their small town.</p> <p>Antonios Pagourtzis, the father of the shooter, told the Wall Street Journal his son was "a good boy" and had been "mistreated at school." He said his son was bullied and said, "I believe that's what was behind the shooting."</p> <p>"It's hard to answer what he realizes at this point. Our conversations have been very stuck in the immediacy of the moment," Nicholas Poehly, one of Pagourtzis' attorneys, said. "We're not able to say right now what he comprehends."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/22 Judge: Fiji 4 not guilty of sedition
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SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/fiji-found-guilty-sedition-media-freedom-case-55344094?
GIST	<p>A judge in Fiji found an opinion writer and three newspaper executives not guilty of sedition on Tuesday in a ruling that many consider a victory for press freedom in the South Pacific nation.</p> <p>Judge Thushara Rajasinghe ruled that prosecutors failed to prove an opinion piece had promoted feelings of ill will and hostility between Muslims and non-Muslims in Fiji. The piece ran in a small indigenous-language newspaper published by The Fiji Times.</p> <p>The men were each facing up to seven years in prison if found guilty. The judge also found Fiji Times Limited not guilty.</p> <p>Many people consider The Fiji Times to be the last independent media voice in a country where many news outlets kowtow to the government.</p> <p>The newspaper's publisher, Hank Arts, who was among those charged, said he was relieved by the ruling.</p> <p>"Winning this gives us all the courage to keep going," he said. "It's an election year and it's very important that we keep doing what we're doing, and do it well."</p> <p>The case centered on an opinion piece written by Josaia Waqabaca, a former taxi driver and political activist. In his column, which ran in the Nai Lalakai newspaper, Waqabaca accused Muslims of historic crimes, including invading foreign lands, rape and murder.</p> <p>Two months after the column appeared, a senior government official complained to the police.</p> <p>Five years ago, The Fiji Times was fined \$170,000 and its editor-in-chief, Fred Wesley, was given a suspended jail sentence after the newspaper reprinted a story in which a soccer official questioned Fiji's judicial system. Wesley was also charged in the latest case and said he was "very pleased" with the ruling.</p> <p>"It actually ends two years of stress," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Maryland: officer killed in confrontation
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/baltimore-area-officer-gunned-responding-suspicious-vehicle-report/story?
GIST	<p>A manhunt was underway Monday evening in Baltimore County, Maryland, for four suspects involved in the killing of a police officer, who confronted them after responding to a report of a burglary, authorities said.</p> <p>The suspects, considered armed and dangerous, were still at large Monday evening and police were combing the Baltimore suburb of Perry Hall, where three elementary schools were under lockdown, said Baltimore County Police Chief Terrence Sheridan.</p> <p>Earlier Monday, Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan said on Twitter that the officer had been shot and killed in the line of duty. But Sheridan said detectives "won't know until the medical examiner does the autopsy and gives us a manner and cause of death."</p> <p>He said that just before 2 p.m., the police department's 911 center received a call from a citizen about a possible burglary involving four suspects.</p> <p>"Our patrol officer responded, was confronted and from that point, she was injured and we are investigating this as a homicide," Sheridan said.</p>

	The officer was not immediately identified. She was rushed to Franklin Square Hospital in Baltimore, where she died at 2:50 p.m., officials said.
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HEADLINE	05/21 Guilty plea theft of officers' guns
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/houston-baggage-handler-pleads-guilty-to-stealing-guns-from-three-bellevue-police-officers/
GIST	<p>HOUSTON — Federal prosecutors say a 22-year-old man working as a contract baggage handler at Houston's Bush Intercontinental Airport has pleaded guilty to stealing guns last year from the luggage of three Bellevue, Washington, police officers.</p> <p>Mack Stewart faces up to 10 years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine at his sentencing hearing set for Sept. 11. Stewart entered his guilty plea Monday before U.S. Magistrate Judge Christina Bryan. He remains free on bond pending sentencing.</p> <p>U.S. Attorney Ryan Patrick says the three officers had returned home to Washington Oct. 4 on a United Airlines flight from Houston to Seattle when they discovered their service weapons missing. About a month later, Stewart was found with one of the guns when he was pulled over for a traffic stop.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 France: gunmen try to corner police
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/media-men-shoot-youth-french-city-injury-reported-55332701?
GIST	<p>Police officials say a group of people, some armed with guns, shot into the air in the French city of Marseille and tried to corner officers who responded to the sound of gunfire.</p> <p>Christophe Reynaud of the Marseille police said one resident was hit in the head with a butt of a gun and slightly injured during the incident in the Busserine district on early Monday evening.</p> <p>Reynaud ruled out terrorism as a motive and said the shooting probably was drug-related.</p> <p>He says the group drove away and has not been apprehended.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Texas: more school threats, gun incidents
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/guns-found-schools-santa-fe-1st-day-back/story?
GIST	<p>On the first day back in class after a gunman killed 10 people inside Santa Fe High School in Texas, two students at nearby schools allegedly came to campus with guns, officials said, while school threats were allegedly reported at three other nearby schools.</p> <p>Just 60 miles from Santa Fe High School, a student at Hargrave High School was found to have a gun in his backpack, the Huffman Independent School District said in a statement on Facebook.</p> <p>The student "was intending to harm himself," the district said, and the student and backpack were taken into custody.</p> <p>The school was placed on lockdown as a precaution, the district said.</p> <p>Meanwhile, just 14 miles from Santa Fe High School, a male student at the League City Intermediate School was found with an unloaded gun, authorities told ABC station KTRK in Houston.</p>

	<p>School administrators took the gun and the student was taken into the custody of the Galveston County Sheriff's Office, KTRK reported.</p> <p>At a third nearby school, a student was arrested for allegedly making a threat today, though no gun was found.</p> <p>A student at La Marque High School, just 9 miles from Santa Fe High School, allegedly texted someone to bring him a gun.</p> <p>"We appreciate the quick action of students for reporting what they knew of and saw so that we can keep the campus safe," the district said.</p> <p>At a fourth school, YES Prep West in Houston, a person allegedly phoned in a threat to shoot up the school, Houston police said, according to KTRK.</p> <p>And at a fifth school, Crosby High School in Crosby, a threat was written on a bathroom wall alleging a shooting would take place May 30, the Crosby Independent School District said.</p> <p>"Administrators and our school resource officers are investigating the threat to determine its source," the district said.</p>
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InFOCUS

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Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

MONDAY – 21 MAY 2018

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HEADLINE	05/20 Western State patients face release delays
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/western-state-patient-releases-can-be-delayed-years-for-lack-of-outside-beds/
GIST	<p>JEFFERSON COUNTY — It took more than half a year for Brian’s daughter to get a bed at Western State Hospital after she put a bread knife into an electrical outlet at his Tacoma apartment.</p> <p>A court ruled she needed involuntary psychiatric treatment at the 857-bed facility in Lakewood, but because the waitlist can stretch to more than 100 patients, his daughter instead bounced around Pierce County inpatient treatment centers that provide less-intensive care.</p> <p>“She was just kind of surviving,” Brian said of his 30-year-old daughter, who he said has a history of mental-health disorders. She is also an artist and a passionate traveler who studied science at a top college.</p> <p>Last month, Brian said he was notified his daughter was stable enough to leave Western State. He also was told it might take a while to find a suitable place for her to live, a situation that helps illustrate a complex bottleneck at the root of the hospital’s admission waitlist for civil, or noncriminal, patients.</p> <p>Most patients exiting Western State can’t live independently or with family, and Washington officials are struggling to find appropriate beds in adult family homes and other types of care facilities to discharge them to. That lag time has left scores of Western State patients stuck in limbo, and holds up beds at the facility that other people in crisis need.</p> <p>“They don’t have the places, the physical places and the staff, to treat as many people as there are that need help,” Brian told The News Tribune, The Olympian and public radio’s Northwest News Network at his new home near Port Townsend. Brian asked that his last name not be published and that his daughter not be named, saying he fears employers and others may discriminate against her in the future.</p> <p>Data released by the hospital shows just how big the problem is.</p> <p>About 40 percent of the hospital’s roughly 580 civil patients were on the discharge list earlier this month. The median time currently spent on the discharge list is 104 days. Some people have waited years, even decades to be released after the hospital deemed them ready to go, according to hospital officials.</p> <p>As a result, the average wait for patients to get into Western State is about 62 days for younger adults and 48 days for older adults in the hospital’s civil wards. Marylouise Jones, interim CEO at Western State, said that if the hospital could discharge everyone ready to leave, they “may not have a waiting list” for civil</p>

admissions.

Civil patients at Western State have been involuntarily committed by a judge but aren't in treatment as part of the criminal-justice system. The state-run hospital also serves roughly 270 patients in its forensic wards, which house people who have been charged with or convicted of a crime and need mental health evaluations or treatment.

Brian said his daughter was put on the waitlist to get into the hospital last summer but didn't get a bed until March. Western State would not confirm that time line, citing patient privacy concerns.

Now she's having a hard time getting out.

Brian said it's his understanding that his daughter interviewed with one possible treatment facility for her to discharge to, but that it wasn't the right fit. Brian said he can't safely care for his daughter at home because she is, in his words, "treatment-resistant."

Her discharge efforts hit another snag last week, Brian said, when she refused to take medication and sign paperwork that would ensure she has Social Security and medical benefits in the community.

Diagnosing the backlog

When patients are discharged from Western State, about 75 percent are released to treatment facilities around Washington that contract with state government.

While patients might be stable enough to leave the hospital, they often need ongoing help managing their condition and the daily aspects of their lives, such as taking medication, eating and bathing. Many of them are older.

Most commonly, patients from Western State are discharged to adult family homes or group homes, which are typically located in residential neighborhoods and also can serve people not in the mental-health system. Some discharged patients head to nursing homes or other more-secure treatment centers.

There are a host of reasons why the state has trouble discharging so many Western State patients to these settings.

For one, staff at licensed care facilities need specific training to host patients with complex psychiatric disorders, which not all providers have, said Bea Rector, who runs a division at the Department of Social and Health Services that oversees the process of finding a step-down home for patients who need mental-health care.

It also can be more costly and time-consuming to serve the many needs of Western State patients, said John Ficker, executive director of the Adult Family Home Council, which can be a disincentive for providers on thin budgets.

There are other roadblocks, such as when a patient rejects a proper step-down facility because it's located in a city too far away from family, Rector said.

Jones, Western State's acting CEO, said a home might not take a Western State patient because of the stigma associated with people who have received mental-health treatment at the large institution.

Another reason treatment facilities turn away patients is criminal history. While civil patients generally aren't at Western State due to a criminal charge, some might have charges in their past. Rector said they might have a history of sexually inappropriate behavior, assault or arson.

In some cases it's "really difficult to get a provider to feel like they can accept that resident and still meet the health and safety needs of the people around them," Rector said.

Jones called it a “huge issue” over the last two decades.

“We know the patient is safe, does not present a public safety risk,” Jones said. “Nevertheless it’s still, based on their history, very difficult to find places in the community that can support them.”

Recently, tensions flared over an extreme example of this debate when Western State tried to discharge Lawrence David Butterfield, a man charged with murder, to an adult family home near an elementary school in Lakewood. Local elected officials pushed back and Butterfield stayed at the hospital.

In that case, Butterfield entered Western State as a forensic patient but later flipped to the civil side of the hospital after he was found incompetent to stand trial. A small group of civil patients at the hospital follow that path.

Lakewood is now trying to restrict adult family homes and other facilities in a way that could have implications for more traditional civil patients hoping to discharge in the area.

The city is considering a moratorium on the approval of new licenses for adult family homes, group homes and other treatment centers in residential areas. It also recently passed an ordinance signifying they believe adult family homes should not house people with violent or sexually violent histories and is debating a lawsuit against the state to make that wish reality.

The state Attorney General’s Office has said such a restriction might break anti-discrimination laws. The Adult Family Home Council, which lobbies on behalf of adult family home providers, opposed the idea.

(Some states require treatment centers such as adult family homes to take patients from state hospitals. Some states even run step-down facilities.)

State Sen. Steve O’Ban, a Tacoma Republican whose legislative district includes Western State and parts of Lakewood, said the state should work to develop more of a secure, intensive type of treatment center for patients with violent histories, known as an enhanced services facility.

The enhanced facilities have round-the-clock nursing staff, a behavior specialist on site and more, according to Rector. Washington has three such facilities — one in Vancouver, two in Spokane — holding between eight and 16 beds each. A fourth is to open in Everett in September, Rector said.

Seeking solutions

There is no easy answer to Western State’s civil-discharge list.

Rector said the state is encouraging enhanced services facilities by offering construction money to those who want to build them. The state has been providing training to some community providers so they can more easily serve hard-to-discharge patients, she said.

State officials also booked money in 2017 for building up bed capacity for hard-to-place patients and have been in talks with providers to develop other ways to increase beds.

Discharging patients has a financial incentive. The average bed rate at Western State is \$790 a day, while enhanced service facilities cost \$425 per day and adult family homes just \$95, according to the governor’s office.

Ficker, of the Adult Family Home Council, said his providers would like to see a bigger boost in state money to pay for costly, hard-to-serve patients.

In the future, Washington lawmakers hope to stop treating most civil patients at Western State altogether

and instead treat them at other smaller, intensive-care facilities around the state. Legislators say patients are better off treated closer to home rather than at a centralized location.

The shift also would free up bed space for the lengthy list of forensic patients waiting to get into Western State. The state has been fined millions by a federal court for its inability to provide timely services to criminal defendants who have mental illnesses.

Gov. Jay Inslee this month set a 2023 deadline for Western State and Eastern State hospitals to stop admitting new civil patients. Lawmakers from both sides of the aisle generally agree with the strategy, and in the last year they have been taking steps to phase out civil patients at the hospitals.

For now, the waitlist remains.

In the interview at his home, Brian said his daughter first had a mental “break” about eight years ago. Since then, he said, she has been hospitalized several times and occasionally been close to homelessness.

Brian said he knows there isn’t a quick fix for his daughter’s challenges with mental health. Once she’s discharged, he’s hopeful she can find a safe place to live where she can “be monitored and get treatment at the same time.”

“It’s really, really sad when something like that first happens,” Brian said of his daughter’s hospitalizations. “Eventually you just have to accept it, and try to do the best you can, and try to be an advocate for them and maybe for other people who have these problems.”

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HEADLINE	05/20 Spokane: little appetite for head tax
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/spokane-leaders-dont-want-head-tax-for-homeless-services/
GIST	<p>Don’t expect a levy on businesses in Spokane to pay for homeless services, like the head tax approved last week in Seattle.</p> <p>Elected officials in Spokane said last week there was little appetite for such a move, citing previous investments in shelter services and the work of nonprofits to push affordable housing in the downtown core.</p> <p>Some criticized the move as standoffish with the business community, as evidenced by mega-retailer Amazon and coffee giant Starbucks condemning the unanimous vote of the Seattle City Council last week to impose the tax.</p> <p>“I’ve never been the type of person that wants to link a tax to a specific type of issue,” said Mayor David Condon, calling the move “counterproductive” to creating livable-wage jobs that he said are needed to address homelessness.</p> <p>Spokane has faced a growing number of people living on the streets in recent years, and both the mayor and Spokane City Council have poured money into keeping a shelter system open around the clock. City Council President Ben Stuckart, who has pushed workplace requirements on employers, including mandatory paid sick leave, said he didn’t agree with the way Seattle approved the tax without a vote of the people.</p> <p>“I have plenty of liberal friends over in Seattle, and none of them supported the way the City Council went about supporting the head tax,” Stuckart said.</p> <p>“I can’t believe it passed. That’s shocking,” he added.</p>

Stuckart pointed to Spokane's investments in homeless shelters, totaling \$850,000 last year, and its work on revising zoning codes to promote infill development and the agreement between Condon and the council to use \$2 million in real-estate excise taxes over the next two years to promote affordable housing construction as evidence Spokane is working to address the issue without raising taxes on businesses.

"We're not going to let ourselves get in that position," Stuckart said.

The affordability of real estate in downtown Spokane, compared to other West Coast cities such as Seattle and Portland, also puts charitable organizations in a better position to address the problem here than in other big cities, said Grant Forsyth, chief economist with Avista Corp.

"We still live in a community where land values, prices and availability are such that nonprofits can make a big impact on this homelessness issue," Forsyth said.

A majority of Stuckart's colleagues on the City Council said they agreed that taxing businesses of a certain size wouldn't make sense to address the problems facing the city's homeless population. The Seattle tax calls for a \$275 payment per employee for firms grossing more than \$20 million annually.

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HEADLINE	05/20 Schools spending on high-tech security
SOURCE	http://www.wavy.com/news/national/schools-are-spending-billions-on-high-tech-security-but-are-students-any-safer-/1189909092
GIST	<p>(NBC) -- With each new school shooting — the latest left 10 dead Friday in Santa Fe, Texas — the routine of death and grief grows numbingly familiar, and so does the inescapable question: Is there any way for schools to stop them?</p> <p>School districts trying to avoid becoming next on the list are urgently chasing answers, with an increasing number staking their hopes on high-tech security systems originally developed for the military, police and private industry.</p> <p>These modern tools range from instant background checks for visitors and social-media monitoring software to gunshot-detection sensors and ID cards equipped with panic buttons. They're driving a rapidly growing school security market, which has ballooned to a multibillion-dollar industry — despite little proof that the new methods prevent violence.</p> <p>"If all you're doing is buying something and slapping it on and going about your business, you have wasted your money and you're no safer than you were before," said Amy Klinger, director of the Educator's School Safety Network, an Ohio-based nonprofit.</p> <p>Many states and districts are pursuing low-tech routes as well, welcoming more armed guards, allowing teachers to carry guns, and even handing out rocks or baseball bats. But districts of all sizes are opening up their budgets or chasing government grants to pay for state-of-the-art technology, often acting on the theory that, when it comes to layers of security, more is always better.</p> <p>"How do you know if something is going to happen or not happen?" Jim Scully, superintendent of the 7,300-student school district in Haverhill, Massachusetts, said in an interview last month.</p> <p>While overseeing the recent construction of a middle school, Scully persuaded district officials to install a network that identifies the sound of gunfire and alerts police and administrators. Made by Shooter Detection Systems using technology developed for the military, the network cost \$70,000, covered by state and federal grants.</p> <p>The system has not been deployed since its initial practice run.</p>

“But given what’s going on in the world, who knows?” Scully said. “My feeling was when we had the opportunity to take advantage of the funding, we did, and put that system in.”

MILITARY TOOLS FIND A NEW USE

After 17 students and staff members were killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on Feb. 14, the school district in Santa Fe, Texas, sent out a reminder of its security procedures. Superintendent Leigh Wall said in a letter to parents and staff that the measures included security cameras, “visitor tracking systems” and a “district-wide connected emergency warning and announcement system.” She also stressed that the district had its own police department, with 12 officers trained to handle active-shooter situations.

One of the district’s police officers was wounded in Friday’s attack, when a 17-year-old student with no criminal record entered Santa Fe High School just before the start of classes armed with a shotgun and handgun owned by his father, and opened fire, authorities said. Eight students and two teachers were killed, and 13 people were wounded.

The uncertainty over what can be done at a local level to prevent school shootings — and the horrifying consequences of failing to do so — has created a business opportunity. Companies seek to convince schools that the technology deployed by police in the U.S. and by the military overseas can also save lives in the classroom, and that their products have already been proven effective.

Alexander S. Carney, a former special operations officer in the Marines, is now a vice president for Critical Response Group, which makes digital and shareable school floor plans based on formats used in counter-terrorism raids. “As we speak, the technique we’re talking about is being used in multiple countries, in multiple places in those countries,” he said.

Dozens of school districts in New Jersey, where the company is based, have adopted the plans. The company saw a spike in inquiries after Parkland, and again after the Santa Fe shooting.

These digitized graphics, along with tools like shot-detection systems, are likely to shorten emergency response times or reduce the number of victims of a mass shooting. The graphics, which start at \$1,880 per school, place building layouts on map-like grids, allowing police to quickly familiarize themselves with the scene, identify where a shooting is happening and plan their response. But whether high-tech products can keep such attacks from happening remains an open question, researchers and safety consultants say.

That was among the concerns raised in a 2015 RAND study on the growing use of school-safety technology. Researchers surveyed a variety of school districts and encountered officials “in desperate need of more evidence on what works.” Some of the products — visitor management systems, anonymous tip lines — were relatively simple, inexpensive and sensible, the researchers said. But they also found scant evidence of most high-tech tools’ effectiveness, and some of the technology might make students feel as if they were under siege, the researchers said.

“I walked away thinking that what districts needed was an independent third party to wade through the marketing from the different companies,” RAND policy researcher Heather Schwartz said. “But my impression was that was not going to happen soon.”

After the December 2012 massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, the National Institute of Justice made school safety research a priority, doling out tens of millions of dollars each year to projects that sought to understand school violence and how to stop it. Much of that work has not yet been completed.

And now the funding source appears to be drying up. A federal spending bill passed in March eliminated the NIJ grant programs. Instead, after the Feb. 14 massacre in Parkland Congress passed the STOP School Violence Act. It redirected federal funding toward anti-violence training, installation of metal detectors, anonymous tip lines and better mental-health services, rather than research into technology-based

solutions.

A RAPIDLY GROWING MARKET

The lack of research hasn't stopped districts from investing in high-tech promises. School administrators said they want to be smart about what they buy, but they are also guided by parents' desire for added security — even if those systems are never used.

Scott Laliberte, superintendent of schools in Londonderry, New Hampshire, took advantage of a state grant offering contracts with COPSync, which allows teachers to hit a panic button on their classroom computers and communicate with authorities via text message. The system has not been put to use yet. But in a couple of accidental activations, Laliberte said, he saw that it gets officers to the scene quickly.

“Tools like this come out, and they are certainly useful, but it's important to keep in proper perspective that they are part of larger solution we're trying to create,” Laliberte said.

A post-Parkland analysis by IHS Markit noted that the school security market had surged to about \$2.7 billion a year. The next wave of products available to school districts could include facial-recognition cameras and impenetrable classroom doors, the firm said.

The recent buying spree has troubled some school-safety experts, who stress that no cutting-edge measures compare to old-fashioned student care: communicating with them, listening to what they say, and offering help when they need it.

“Most school shootings around the country, they had cameras and that didn't prevent it,” said Curtis Lavarello, executive director of the School Safety Advocacy Council, which helps districts develop security plans. “Where you're stopping it from occurring is by talking to kids and being active in your hallways, reaching out to students.”

The school district in Toms River, New Jersey, which has more than 15,000 students in 19 schools, takes a “holistic” approach to safety that doesn't just rely on technology, said Superintendent David Healy. That includes programs that identify troubled students and get them help.

Still, the district recently used a grant to enroll in Critical Response Group's system that digitizes the layouts of buildings and makes them shareable with law enforcement. Paired with a network of internet-accessible surveillance cameras, the system allows police to get to the source of a problem quickly, officials say.

“It's all about expediency. The sooner the police get there, the sooner the carnage ends,” Healy said.

In Overland Park, Kansas, John Douglass says he has all the proof he needs that high-tech security is worthwhile.

The former police commander is executive director of emergency services for the Shawnee Mission School District, which issued \$20 million in bonds to pay for security upgrades at five high schools. They included a network of internet-based surveillance cameras and door alarms that can alert and track intrusions remotely, monitored by control centers in each school.

Just after they were installed, nearly four years ago, the system was used to track and arrest a boy who was threatening two students via text message. Officers saw him on camera trying to get in a back door to a school, and when they stopped him, he was on his way home, where police found guns stacked in his bedroom, according to police. He was charged with aggravated criminal threat.

The system has also helped interrupt two less serious intrusions since then, Douglass said.

“That tells us the system is working,” he said.

'THE CADILLAC' OF SCHOOL SECURITY PLANS

The ultimate manifestation of the rush to high-tech school security may be 40 miles south of Parkland, in Miami-Dade County.

It is home to the nation's fourth-largest school district, with 345,000 students, 40,000 employees, nearly 400 schools and thousands of reported crimes each year. The district's police department has less than 200 officers. Better technology seemed the only way to try to keep up with potential threats, said Edwin Lopez, the district's police chief.

"We've had to alter our response from traditional law enforcement techniques to a more technological response," Lopez said.

After the Newtown shooting, the Miami-Dade Schools Police Department pitched the National Institute of Justice on a project it called Campus Shield. The police envisioned a system that collected massive amounts of data — social media feeds, attendance records, school incident reports, nearby crimes, citizens' tips — and funneled it through software to identify patterns or signs of trouble. This "fusion center" would be linked to the district's network of surveillance cameras, its school-visitor system, its gunshot-detection system and team of mental-health specialists. If it worked, the massive security package could be copied elsewhere.

The district won a \$4.3 million grant, and the project is now being piloted at 18 schools. An independent research company is comparing crime and student performance with schools that are not part of the project; its results are expected in the fall.

Lopez said that the project has led officers to students expressing suicidal thoughts and uncovered white-collar crimes such as credit card fraud.

Campus Shield was featured in the 2015 RAND report as an example of a district that is "putting it all together." Schwartz, one of the report's authors, called it "the Cadillac" of school security plans — but cautioned that it may only be applicable to the nation's biggest, and big-budgeted, districts.

As Santa Fe mourns the students and teachers killed in Friday's shooting, there is urgency in finding solutions that will work for all school districts, big and small.

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HEADLINE	05/20 Canada: asylum seekers put to work
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/asylum-seekers-have-flooded-into-canada-the-government-is-putting-them-to-work/2018/05/20/5cd4e218-593b-11e8-858f-12becb4d6067_story.html?utm_term=.1f443eb5d383
GIST	<p>MONTREAL — In a darkened room at a suburban community center last month, a representative from a Canadian meatpacking company showed a huge map on the screen. More than 30 Haitians who had recently walked across the border to file refugee claims in Canada were in the audience.</p> <p>"This is Canada," the woman said. "Here's Quebec." She was trying to recruit workers for her company's pig farm, but first she needed to describe where it was.</p> <p>She zoomed in: "This is Temiscamingue," she said, explaining that it's an eight-hour drive northwest of Montreal. Two men stood up and walked out.</p> <p>Pay starts at \$13.25 an hour and shifts start at 7 a.m., she said, and workers get housing and full benefits. People started to raise their hands.</p>

By the end of the job fair, Olymel managers said they were thrilled: With 10 jobs to fill, at least a dozen people had stayed behind to ask questions.

Tens of thousands of people have surged across the border into Canada from the United States to claim asylum in the past year as the Trump administration's policies on migrants caused worry among asylum seekers and anti-migrant sentiment rose. The flood of migrants has put pressure on Canada's asylum system, accustomed to smaller numbers, and has driven up costs.

The deluge of "irregular" border-crossers into Quebec has been a boon for companies such as Olymel during a time of low unemployment. Olymel, for instance, has hired 250 asylum seekers at other sites.

"There was a big need, an urgent need, for employees," said company spokesman Richard Vigneault. "They're very much willing to work. We train them; they're very fast. . . . We're very satisfied."

Many asylum seekers have also placed their hopes in work. With warnings that their claims will probably be rejected, many say they believe a good employment record will ultimately help them to stay.

"That's why we're here in Canada — so we have a job and a future," said Jean Brize, 38, who attended the job fair. Originally from Haiti, he moved to Canada from New York City last year with his wife and daughters. "The government is also focused on people who work."

Many of the migrants crossing into Canada know little about the distinctions between the Canadian and American asylum systems.

Those differences are stark, especially now. South of the border, claimants wait at least six months before they can legally work, and in recent months a "significant portion" have been kept in detention, according to Eleanor Acer, of the nonprofit organization Human Rights First.

In Canada, and particularly Quebec, asylum seekers get shelter, food, legal aid, basic health care, language classes and help finding an apartment, and they begin to receive welfare payments at the same rate as Canadian citizens. But they're also given work permits and asked to support themselves as soon as possible, paying taxes at normal rates.

That approach has become a crucial safety valve for Canada as the number of refugee claimants has doubled over the past year. In one report, Canadian authorities estimated that resettling Syrian refugees cost \$2,650 per person per year over six years. Other research has shown that spending is much higher in the first year. Asylum seekers in Canada wait an average of 19 months for a hearing, further driving up costs.

The federal response has partly been to try to put people to work. In the fall, the government decreased the wait time for work permits from three months to three weeks, quickly issuing 12,000 permits in Quebec. This spring, it created a "triage" system, busing people from the border to regions other than Montreal, including rural parts of Quebec, with dire labor needs.

The system will attempt to send some asylum seekers "to the regions of Quebec, including issuing work permits more quickly to meet manpower demands," said Chantal Bouchard, a spokeswoman from Quebec's Immigration Department.

Asylum seekers are doing fairly well in finding work. Of 13,072 adult asylum seekers who began receiving Quebec social assistance for the first time last year, 7,132, or about 55 percent, quit the program by the end of 2017, said a spokesman from the provincial labor ministry.

Some of those people probably quit for reasons other than finding a job, such as moving to another province. And that number doesn't include anyone who began receiving welfare in the last months of 2017 — a big group, after the summertime deluge over the border — and who succeeded in finding work early this year.

Those who work with them say their employment rates are high.

“It’s not a difficult period for people to find a job,” said Francine Dupuis, who runs Montreal’s major governmental hub for refugee claimants.

Among the Haitian arrivals, “almost all” are now working, said Marjorie Villefranche, director of the Haitian community center that hosted Olymel’s job fair. Other meatpacking companies also have hired heavily, as well as a canoe and kayak manufacturer and a producer of herbs, spices and teas.

Asylum seekers say that finding work isn’t just a question of earning a good living.

“The government has already spent a lot of money” on refugee claimants, said Éligene Perame, 52, a Haitian migrant who was also considering going to work at the rural pig farm. “But I have to make efforts to find work to help myself, mostly.”

Refugee acceptance rates have been falling swiftly, and this month federal ministers said they expect that 90 percent of the “irregular” border crossers won’t meet refugee criteria.

With those odds, seeking work isn’t a bad strategy. Job status shouldn’t be relevant when people argue their claims, but submitting letters from employers “doesn’t hurt,” said Montreal refugee lawyer Mitchell Goldberg.

It will also be crucial later for the minority of people who manage to appeal their rejections. Then they must show that their families are thriving in Canada and should stay on humanitarian grounds, Goldberg said — and employment is “very, very important.”

Given the current stress, some are even asking the government to take things a step further. Villefranche, whose community center helped resettle thousands of Haitian arrivals last year, has pitched the idea of allowing them to simply switch status to temporary migrant workers, an existing Canadian program, and then to apply for a permanent visa with the help of their employers.

“That would be much faster for them and less expensive for everyone,” she said. “And there is hope at the end.”

The Quebec government said that proposal would fall under the federal government’s jurisdiction; the federal government has said it is up to the province.

“The government would most likely be concerned that it would be a pull factor drawing more people to cross the border,” Goldberg said.

Brize, after filling out forms for the Temiscamingue job, said any option is a good option if it means staying in Canada.

“If the government gives us asylum status, that’s good,” he said. “If the government [says] it will welcome us by sending us to another position, to work, we have no problem. It’s residence status we’re looking for, because we do not want to live in our country.”

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HEADLINE	05/20 Average price of gas jumps to \$3/gal.
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/15b0cdfd856c461f849c181ff20bbb64/Average-price-of-US-gas-jumps-10-cents,-to-\$3-a-gallon
GIST	CAMARILLO, Calif. (AP) — The average price of regular-grade gasoline in the U.S. jumped 10 cents a gallon over the past two weeks to \$3.00.

	<p>Industry analyst Trilby Lundberg of the Lundberg Survey said Sunday that the price has spiked 41 cents over the past three months.</p> <p>Lundberg says the increase is largely driven by higher crude oil costs and the phasing-in of summer-grade gasoline, which is used to prevent smog.</p> <p>The highest average price in the contiguous 48 states was \$3.79 in the San Francisco Bay Area. The lowest was \$2.54 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.</p> <p>The average price for diesel fuel rose 9 cents, to \$3.23.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Police response Texas shooting unclear
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/4749a4f22fff40b0ab598e401151f83c/Police-response-to-Texas-school-shooting-remains-unclear
GIST	<p>AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Santa Fe High School had conducted active shooter drills, armed police officers patrolled the hallways and students went through a scare in February after a false report of a campus gunman.</p> <p>But in the aftermath of the deadliest public school shooting in Texas history, early witness accounts and recordings from emergency dispatch describe a 30-minute nightmare as the real thing unfolded last week, even as authorities continued to keep details close Sunday.</p> <p>Among the biggest unknowns is when the confrontation began at the high school outside Houston between police and 17-year-old Dimitrios Pagourtzis, who authorities say opened fire on an art lab with a shotgun and .38 caliber handgun shortly after the first bell Friday morning. Pagourtzis wasn't hit in the attack even though officials have described him engaging in a drawn-out firefight with police.</p> <p>Ten people were killed, most of them students. Galveston County District Attorney Jack Roady declined to answer questions about the shootout and investigation Sunday, including whether police may have hit any students in a gunfight with the shooter.</p> <p>He also said autopsy reports won't be released while the case is pending.</p> <p>The length of the attack appeared to go on longer than most mass shootings that last around eight minutes, said Ben Tisa, a former FBI agent. He said that could make the Santa Fe shooting unusual.</p> <p>"It would be unless they couldn't find the guy and they had to hunt him," said Tisa, who now does tactical training in California.</p> <p>Although officials have praised a swift response, it remains unclear just how quickly police got to the art lab on the 1,400-student campus. Galveston County Judge Mark Henry, the county's top administrator, has said police exchanged rounds with Pagourtzis "for quite a while" before he surrendered a half-hour after the first reports of a shooter on campus.</p> <p>"They said there was a lot of firepower and a lot of rounds exchanged," Henry said.</p> <p>Officials have not yet released 911 tapes but on emergency dispatch recordings from Galveston County, captured by Broadcastify.com, a female voice is heard saying "more shots fired" about 10 minutes after authorities first received reports of gunfire. Five minutes later, a male voice says the suspect is "possibly going to be barricaded" with additional reports of shooting a few minutes after that.</p> <p>"He's actively shooting. He's in the art room. We've got, we've got shots fired right now. We need you all</p>

up here,” a male voice says at what appears to be about 15 minutes after the shooting began.

Henry said investigators were still working on the timeline and Tisa cautioned that emergency dispatch traffic doesn’t always reflect real time. One Santa Fe school police officer who responded to the attack was shot and remained in critical condition Sunday, according to the University of Texas Medical Branch.

Zach Wofford, an 18-year-old senior, was across the hallway when the shooting began and said he heard gunfire that lasted 10 to 15 minutes from the art classroom. That’s where Breanna Quintanilla, a 17-year-old junior, was when the attack began. She said Pagourtzis had aimed at her and missed but that it ricocheted into her right leg.

She recalled the voice she heard after the first sound of gunfire in the class: “If you all move, I’m going to shoot you all.”

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HEADLINE	05/20 Seattle mayor eyes backyard cottages
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/993119/durkan-order-backyard-cottages/
GIST	<p>After years of studies and discussion, Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan is streamlining the process to build backyard cottages. The mayor’s office hopes it will incentivize homeowners to build the units while creating more affordable housing in the city.</p> <p>“Seattle faces an affordability and housing crisis, and we are taking urgent action to increase the supply of rental housing options as quickly as possible,” Durkan said. “Too many people are being pushed out of this city or can’t find a place to live. We need to use every tool in our toolbox to boost the supply of housing.”</p> <p>A backyard cottage is essentially what it sounds like — a living space akin to a mother-in-law unit built in a backyard. They have been promoted as one method to address Seattle’s severe lack of affordable housing.</p> <p>But progress toward building the backyard cottages has been stalled at Seattle City Hall for years. Durkan aims to end that bottleneck. She has ordered the Department of Construction and Design to “fast track” pre-approved designs for detached accessory dwelling units (ADAU) aka backyard cottages.</p> <p>“Fast-tracked designs for backyard cottages will allow us to get more housing online faster,” Durkan said. “We will continue to work on all fronts – from adding more shelter beds to innovative permanent housing options – to build a more affordable future for Seattle.”</p> <p>Seattle will pay architects to develop a handful of standard cottage designs that homeowners can choose from. These designs will be permitted more quickly and cheaper. Durkan’s office says this will cut down permitting time by half. The office doesn’t say exactly how much cheaper the process will be, but does note that current costs can range between \$10,000 and \$30,000 just to design the structure. And up to \$300,000 to build it.</p> <p>The Seattle City Council started looking at options for building the units in 2016 — following years of pilot programs testing the idea. Progress was stalled in 2017, when one Seattleite called the issue a “war” between neighbors. Some residents want the ability to rent to people in their own backyard. Others want to slow growth and density in their single-family neighborhoods.</p> <p>This month, the council finally began considering even more options to bring backyard cottages to Seattle. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement will evaluate code changes. This will further remove barriers to building the units. Councilmember Mike O’Brien has been involved in the process much of this time.</p> <p>“For the last few years, we have been working toward increasing opportunities to create more backyard</p>

	<p>cottages and in-law apartments across the city,” O’Brien said. “I am excited to be taking another step in that direction with the release and public comment period for the draft Accessory Dwelling Units EIS, which looks at removing code barriers.</p> <p>“In the next year, I will continue to work towards increasing housing choice in single family neighborhoods, and ensuring the benefits of backyard cottages and in-law apartments can be shared across our diverse Seattle communities,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/20 US State Dept. blasts Venezuela elections
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-pope-francis-prays-venezuelans-55305346?
GIST	<p>The Latest on Sunday's presidential election in Venezuela (all times local):</p> <p>10:43 a.m.</p> <p>The U.S. Department of State spokeswoman has called Venezuelan elections illegitimate.</p> <p>In a Twitter post Heather Nauert also said that the U.S. supports "free and fair elections."</p> <p>"Venezuela's so-called elections today are not legitimate. The United States stands with democratic nations around the world in support of the Venezuelan people and their sovereign right to elect their representatives through free and fair elections," she wrote.</p> <p>Sunday's election has drawn broad criticism since some of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's most-popular rivals were barred from running, and several more were forced into exile.</p> <p>Echoing the views of Venezuela's tattered opposition movement, the U.S., European Union and many Latin American countries have already said they won't recognize the results.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/20 Small crowd for open-carry rally Seattle
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/crowd-gathers-for-open-carry-march-in-seattle
GIST	<p>SEATTLE -- A crowd came together Sunday evening in downtown Seattle to support open-carry gun laws.</p> <p>The rally was in McGraw Square, just north of Westlake Park and was organized by the group Patriot Prayer.</p> <p>The group's organizer says last week's school shooting in Texas shows the need for action on gun rights.</p> <p>He wants lawmakers to allow school staff to carry guns to protect themselves and their students.</p> <p>Since the Texas shooting, a state lawmaker is calling for a special session to consider tougher gun legislation.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/20 Activists protest pipeline expansion
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/05/20/activists-protest-kinder-morgan-pipeline-expansion-in-seattle/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE -- Hundreds of activists took to land and sea in protest of Kinder Morgan and its involvement in the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project Sunday in Seattle.</p>

	<p>Protesters from Washington, Oregon and Canada came together in an effort to protect the Salish Sea from the pipeline expansion.</p> <p>On the water, dozens of kayactivists and canoes surrounded the Kinder Morgan marine terminal. Others rallied on land near Occidental Park before marching to the Seattle waterfront.</p> <p>Groups like Greenpeace USA stood in solidarity amongst indigenous peoples, with a common goal to protect marine life, the water, and community.</p> <p>"It would make climate change worse, it would trample Indigenous rights, it would run over our clean water here, and it would decimate the final 76 remaining orcas, the Southern Resident killer whale in our waters," said Ben Smith with, Greenpeace USA.</p> <p>Facing waves of protest, Kinder Morgan halted the \$5.8 billion pipeline expansion last month, until May 31.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/20 Hawaii faces new threat from volcano
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hawaii-volcano/hawaii-faces-new-threat-from-volcano-gassy-glassy-laze-idUSKCN1IL0U2
GIST	<p>PAHOA, Hawaii (Reuters) - Hawaii residents coping with Kilauea's volcanic eruption faced a potentially deadly new hazard on Sunday as authorities warned that lava flows reaching the Pacific Ocean could produce noxious clouds of acid fumes, steam and tiny, glass-like particles.</p> <p>The civil defense notices cautioned motorists, boaters and beachgoers to beware of caustic plumes of "laze" formed from two streams of hot lava pouring into the sea after cutting across Highway 137 on the south coast of Hawaii's Big Island late on Saturday and early Sunday.</p> <p>The bulletins also warned that reports of toxic sulfur dioxide gas being vented from various points around the volcano had tripled, urging residents to "take action necessary to limit further exposure."</p> <p>Laze - a term combining the words "lava" and haze" - is a mix of hydrochloric acid fumes, steam and fine volcanic glass specks created when erupting lava, which can reach 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit (1,093 degrees Celsius), reacts with sea water, Hawaii County Civil Defense said in a statement.</p> <p>"Be aware of the laze hazard and stay away from any ocean plume," the agency said, warning that potential hazards include lung damage, as well as eye and skin irritation.</p> <p>Under Sunday's conditions, with strong winds and copious amounts of lava hitting the ocean, the laze plumes could extend as far as 15 miles (24 km), mostly along the coast and offshore, though the hazard would diminish the farther out to sea it blows, according to USGS geologist Janet Babb.</p> <p>Authorities cautioned, however, that wind patterns can change abruptly. The U.S. Coast Guard was "actively monitoring" the area to keep away all vessel traffic except permitted tour boats, the civil defense office said.</p> <p>Laze killed two people when a lava flow reached the coast in 2000, and even a wisp can cause eye and respiratory irritation, the U.S. Geological Survey said. Acid rain from laze has corrosive properties equivalent to diluted battery acid, the agency said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/20 Pakistan confronts 'Me Too' movement
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/05/20/pakistan-me-too-movement/620273002/
GIST	<p>LAHORE, Pakistan — This is Pakistan’s Me Too moment.</p> <p>A handful of Pakistani women recently went public to accuse famous actor and musician Ali Zafar of sexually harassing and abusing them. Their announcement grabbed headlines, prompted outrage and sparked the Me Too movement in conservative Pakistan.</p> <p>The women’s remarkable statements — followed by similar claims in politics and business sectors — are a sea change in this highly traditional Islamic country where female honor killings, child brides and polygamy are commonplace. In Pakistan, women receive only a portion of an inheritance that males get.</p> <p>"I think in any society it is difficult for women to come forward," said Nighat Dad, director of the Digital Rights Foundation and an activist for women's rights. "The Me Too movement has organically come with women coming forward against powerful men, be it Ali Zafar or a CEO of a tech start-up, to finally hold men accountable for their behavior."</p> <p>Victims of sexual abuse and harassment have long suffered in silence in Pakistan, where shame is placed on the woman and not the perpetrator. Most women never report the incidents, but those who do come forward often face shame or questions about their morality.</p> <p>Pakistani pop singer Meesha Shafi, who accused Zafar of sexually harassing her on multiple occasions, is challenging that tradition.</p> <p>"Today I am breaking this culture of silence and I hope that by doing that I am setting an example for young women in my country to do the same," Shafi wrote on Twitter last month. "We only have our voices and the time has come to use them."</p> <p>Zafar denied the claims and demanded that Shafi delete the allegation online and issue an apology, or he would file a \$9 million defamation suit against her.</p> <p>"I am deeply aware and in support of the global Me Too movement and what it stands for," Zafar said in a statement. "I am the father of a young girl and a young boy, a husband to a wife and a son to a mother. I have nothing to hide. Silence is absolutely not an option."</p> <p>Shafi has refused to take down her tweets. Her attorney denied she defamed Zafar.</p> <p>Days after the public dispute erupted, more women came forward against Zafar, who has been compared to Hollywood producer and accused abuser Harvey Weinstein in the Pakistani press.</p> <p>Leena Ghani, a makeup artist based in London, said Zafar had repeatedly "crossed boundaries" with her.</p> <p>"His behavior displays a clear lack of respect for women," Ghani said on Twitter. "Inappropriate contact, groping, sexual comments should not fall in the gray area between humor and indecency."</p> <p>Humna Raza, a blogger from Lahore, accused Zafar of groping her when she asked to take a selfie with him. Another woman, Noor Sehar, a Karachi marketing executive, accused Zafar of sexual misconduct at a party.</p> <p>Such allegations are not isolated. Khalid Bajwa, chief executive of local music streaming company Patari, stepped down from his post last month following sexual harassment allegations.</p> <p>While many have supported the Pakistani singer for bravely speaking out, others questioned her accusations.</p> <p>"I just don't see any truth in these allegations," said film actress Resham, who uses a single name for her</p>

career. "Ali cannot do such a thing. How can he harass a woman and she doesn't slap him back, hit him with a shoe, push him away or complain to his wife?"

Shafi also has been shamed on social media after she went public. "The backlash that Meesha has faced, the misogynistic attitudes that she has had to confront also sends women a message that there is still a cost to coming forward," Dad said.

Others defended her.

"Meesha is a superstar who is really successful and earns as much as the male stars in this country," said actor and model Iffat Omar in an Instagram post. "So why would she do this if she was not hurt? Many people are claiming that she is doing this for fame or money. She already has more than enough of both."

Still, many women are afraid to come forward because of possible repercussions.

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HEADLINE	05/20 Preserve: arrest records Rosa Parks, MLK
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/rosa-parks-mlk-records/2018/05/20/id/861434/
GIST	<p>Yellowing court records from the arrests of Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr. and others at the dawn of the modern civil rights era are being preserved and digitized after being discovered, folded and wrapped in rubber bands in a courthouse box.</p> <p>Archivists at historically black Alabama State University are cataloguing and flattening dozens of documents found at the Montgomery County Courthouse, and Circuit Clerk Tiffany McCord hopes electronic versions will be available for viewing as early as late June.</p> <p>Once the records are added to Alabama's online court system, historians and others will be able to read the original pleadings filed by Parks' attorneys following her refusal to give her seat to a white man on a Montgomery city bus on Dec. 1, 1955.</p> <p>Parks' arrest led to the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which launched a young King to prominence as a civil rights leader while the Atlanta-born pastor was working at his first church in downtown Montgomery.</p> <p>The records being preserved include a bail document signed in black ink by King, who was arrested in March 1956 with Parks and more than 100 others on charges of boycotting the city bus system in protest of Parks' treatment.</p> <p>"I think the public ought to be able to see that," said McCord. "It's exciting that it's happening."</p> <p>Alabama State archivist Howard Robinson said the records are important because they provide texture and depth to the story of the early days of the movement.</p> <p>Rather than just containing the familiar names of Parks and King, Robinson said, the records include the names of lesser-known people like witnesses who saw Parks' arrest; bus boycott participants; attorneys; and those who put up bond to free people from jail.</p> <p>"These papers allow us to understand who those folks were," said Robinson.</p> <p>Parks was convicted of violating the city's segregation laws; a federal court deciding another case outlawed segregation on public buses while her case was being appealed. That same ruling effectively ended King's appeal after he was convicted with others of violating an anti-boycott law.</p> <p>McCord said she found documents from the cases, which include records from trial and appeals courts, after taking office in 2013.</p>

	<p>"They were in an envelope box. They were all bent and folded with rubber bands on them probably dating back to the 1950s. The bands were sort of disintegrating into them," she said.</p> <p>After looking at options, including feeding the papers through a scanner that sometimes jams, McCord said she decided to provide them on a 10-year loan for scanning and research by Alabama State, where fliers announcing the boycott were made more than 60 years ago.</p> <p>Some records and photos relating to Parks' arrest already are on display at Montgomery City Hall, and school officials sounded skeptical when first contacted about the boxful of court records, McCord said.</p> <p>"When they came over and saw what it was their mouths dropped open," she said.</p> <p>Robinson said he hopes to locate some of the people mentioned in the documents.</p> <p>"In order to understand the past and all the events that have occurred, particularly as part of the modern civil rights movement, we reduce the bus boycott to Rosa Parks refusing to relinquish her seat and Martin Luther King leading the bus boycott," he said. "But these records sort of indicate that it was much more ... than that, that there were far more people involved and that the city of Montgomery and the state of Alabama mounted a pitched battle to maintain segregation."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/20 Ohio police database: people w/disabilities
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/database-give-police-info-people-disabilities-55309165?
GIST	<p>A new database will alert Ohio law enforcement officers about motorists and passengers with communication disabilities who could be mistaken for someone impaired or a threat.</p> <p>The Blade reports the Legislature approved creating the database at the urging of Jenny Hughes, of Walbridge, in northwestern Ohio.</p> <p>Hughes' oldest son is 24, has autism, but is high functioning and recently started driving. Her 23-year-old son is severely autistic and doesn't drive, but could become agitated if he's in a vehicle that's pulled over.</p> <p>The database goes online in early August. It would include personal information about people tied to specific vehicles and linked with the database used by law enforcement officers to check license plates.</p> <p>Forms to voluntarily put names in the database will be available on Ohio's disabilities agency website.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Indonesia's most volatile volcano erupts
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/indonesias-volatile-volcano-erupts-55319297?
GIST	<p>Indonesia's most volatile volcano spewed smoke and ash early Monday in the latest of several eruptions in less than two weeks.</p> <p>Mount Merapi on the main island of Java erupted twice, sending a column of volcanic material up to 1,200 meters (3,930 feet) into the air and making ash fall in several villages, said Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, the disaster mitigation agency spokesman.</p> <p>He said the alert level of the volcano was not raised, which is at a normal level with no eruption expected in the foreseeable future.</p>

An eruption of Merapi on May 11 sent nearby residents fleeing to safer areas. There have been no reports of casualties, and operations at Adi Sucipto airport in Yogyakarta was not disturbed by Monday's eruptions.

The 2,968-meter (9,737-foot) mountain between Yogyakarta and Central Java provinces is the most active of 500 Indonesian volcanoes. Its last major eruption in 2010 killed 347 people and caused the evacuation of 20,000 villagers.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Venezuela president wins re-election
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/maduro-wins-venezuela-election-challengers-call-illegitimate-55319195?cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>Embattled socialist incumbent Nicolas Maduro won Venezuela's presidential election by a landslide in a disputed vote marred by irregularities and mass absenteeism that led his main rivals to call for a re-run to prevent a national social crisis from exploding.</p> <p>The National Election Council announced that with more than 92 percent of polling stations reporting, Maduro won nearly 68 percent of the votes Sunday, beating his nearest challenger Henri Falcon by more than 40 points.</p> <p>As the results were being announced, residents of downtown Caracas just a few blocks from where Maduro supporters were celebrating banged on pots and pans in protest. Falcon accused the government of buying votes and dirty tricks to boost turnout among poor voters most hurt by widespread food shortages and hyperinflation in what was once Latin America's wealthiest nation.</p> <p>The election "without any doubt lacks legitimacy and we categorically refuse to recognize this process," Falcon told supporters minutes before the results were announced, vowing to fight on instead of joining a growing list of beleaguered anti-government politicians who've fled into exile of late.</p> <p>The disputed victory is likely to heighten international pressure on Maduro. Even as voting was taking place Sunday, a senior U.S. official said the Trump administration might press ahead on threats of imposing crippling oil sanctions and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo warned "sham elections change nothing."</p> <p>Falcon was joined in his demand for a new election by third-place finisher Javier Bertucci, who won around 11 percent of the vote. Bertucci, a TV evangelist who handed out soup at his campaign rallies, stopped short of challenging the results, partly blaming what he called a mistaken opposition boycott that led to a turnout of around 46 percent — the lowest in a presidential race in two decades of revolution.</p> <p>But he said he nonetheless favors a new election soon and urged Maduro to do the courageous thing and desist from running. If Maduro presses forward, he warned, Venezuela will explode before his new six-year term is scheduled to begin in January.</p> <p>A social crisis years in the making has worsened as Venezuela's oil production — the source of almost all of its foreign income — has collapsed to the lowest level in decades and financial sanctions by the Trump administration has made it impossible for the government to renegotiate its debts. More than 1 million people have fled the country in the past two years and 14,000 percent inflation has crushed the minimum wage to less than \$2 a month.</p> <p>Maduro, 55, immediately called for dialogue with his opponents and put the best face forward on what analysts said were nonetheless disappointing results underscoring how vulnerable his hold on power remains. Despite energetic campaigning his overall vote haul slipped by 1.6 million from 2013, when he was first elected after Hugo Chavez's death from cancer.</p>

	But he showed no sign of replaying Sunday's vote.
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HEADLINE	05/19 N.C. emergency mgrs. deploy to Hawaii
SOURCE	http://www.witn.com/content/news/Ten-NC-emergency-managers-report-to-Hawaii-to-help-with-volcano-response-483123431.html
GIST	<p>RALEIGH, N.C. (WITN) - Ten emergency managers and fire service officials from our state departed Saturday for Hawaii, to serve on an incident management team as Hawaii continues to respond to the erupting Kilauea volcano.</p> <p>The team will work from an emergency operations center in Hilo, on the big island of Hawaii, supporting the Hawaii County Civil Defense agency. The team consists of one state emergency manager and nine county and local emergency managers and fire officials.</p> <p>Team members come from emergency management agencies across the state, including Onslow County, and from NC Emergency Management.</p> <p>The team will arrive in Hawaii Saturday evening and will serve for two weeks before returning home.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/19 Starbucks' restrooms open for all
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/starbucks-creates-policy-on-nonpaying-guests-1526745600
GIST	<p>Starbucks Corp. said Saturday it is creating an official policy that allows all guests to use its cafes, including its restrooms, whether or not they make a purchase.</p> <p>The policy comes a month after a Philadelphia manager called the police in April about two black men who asked to use the bathroom without purchasing anything and then allegedly refused to leave the cafe when asked.</p> <p>Starbucks baristas and store managers have long found the coffee company's guidelines on how to treat lingering nonpaying guests vague at best. One company executive told the Journal the guidance on nonpaying guests had long been a gray area, which the Philadelphia incident brought to the forefront.</p> <p>The company said at the time that it had different guidelines for its 28,000 stores globally, depending on the market. The new policy will apply to its more than 8,000 U.S. company-operated cafes.</p> <p>On Saturday, the company told its employees in a letter that "any person who enters our spaces, including patios, cafes and restrooms, regardless of whether they make a purchase, is considered a customer."</p> <p>Under the new policy, when a customer is "behaving in a disruptive manner," employees should follow the company's procedure on handling disruptive guests, which will contain some new guidance, a spokesman said. Starbucks didn't say what that procedure entails or define what constitutes disruptive behavior. If a situation presents an immediate danger or threat to employee or customer safety, Starbucks employees should call 911, the company said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/19 Detained Saudi feminists face 'traitor' label
SOURCE	http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/human-rights-groups-slam-saudi-arabia-chilling-smear-campaign-against-activists-786866070
GIST	Human rights groups questioned Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's reform agenda on Saturday

after prominent women's rights activists who campaigned for the right to drive were arrested and branded "traitors" by government-aligned media outlets.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch called on the authorities to release the detainees, identifying six of them as Eman al-Nafjan, Lujain al-Hathloul, Aziz al-Yousef, Aisha al-Manea, Ibrahim Modeimigh and Mohammed al-Rabea.

The activists, both women and men, have campaigned for a woman's right to drive, which the conservative kingdom is set to grant from next month after banning it for decades.

The decision hailed as proof of a new progressive trend under Mohammed bin Salman, who has presented himself as a reformist but has been accompanied by a crackdown on dissent.

"Saudi Arabia cannot continue to publicly proclaim support for women's rights and other reforms while targeting women human rights defenders and activists for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly," said Samah Hadid, Amnesty's Middle East Director of Campaigns.

A government statement said seven people had been arrested for suspicious contacts with foreign entities and offering financial support to enemies overseas, without elaborating.

A state security spokesman did not identify the detainees, but online news site Sabq, seen as close to the authorities, linked them to the arrests of the women's rights activists.

Authorities said that they were still identifying others allegedly involved in activities that "encroach on religious and national constants," and fellow activists said others were arrested but the total number was not immediately clear.

Amnesty described it as a "chilling smear campaign" designed to intimidate and discredit the human rights activists, whose faces have appeared online and on a newspaper front page labelling them as traitors.

"Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's 'reform campaign' has been a frenzy of fear for genuine Saudi reformers who dare to advocate publicly for human rights or women's empowerment," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch.

"The message is clear that anyone expressing skepticism about the crown prince's rights agenda faces time in jail."

Women will be allowed to drive starting in Saudi Arabia on 24 June. Activists and analysts say, however, that the government is keen to avoid rewarding activism, forbidden in the absolute monarchy. The authorities also may aim to avoid antagonising the sensitivities of religious conservatives opposed to modernisation.

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HEADLINE	05/20 Philippines: won't oppose China on sea
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-20/duterte-says-philippines-won-t-oppose-china-on-sea-activity
GIST	<p>Philippine's President Rodrigo Duterte reiterated that he would not provoke China into a war following reports that the Chinese military landed long-range bombers on an airport in the South China Sea.</p> <p>"You know they have the planes, not stationed in Spratly but near the provinces facing -- Chinese provinces facing the Spratly and the China Sea. And with their hypersonic, they can reach Manila within seven to 10 minutes," Duterte said in a speech on Saturday in Cebu, according to transcript emailed by his office Sunday.</p>

	<p>Facing criticism over his apparent inaction on China's increasing military activity in the South China Sea, Duterte questioned where his country would end up should war erupt in the region. "What will we arm ourselves with if there's a war? Will we resort to slapping each other? I couldn't even buy myself a rifle. It was given to me. So how will we even fight with the Chinese?"</p> <p>Duterte said there was no assurance that the U.S. would remain on the side of the southeast Asian nation if war broke out. A more feasible solution would be to forge a joint exploration pact with China to harness the disputed sea's potential, he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/20 China pledges to buy more US goods
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-19/china-to-significantly-boost-buying-of-u-s-goods-white-house
GIST	<p>China will "significantly increase purchases" of U.S. goods, the White House said as Beijing's special envoy at talks in Washington declared a trade war has been averted between the world's two largest economies.</p> <p>A joint statement released by the White House following the talks didn't place a dollar figure on the increased purchases by China, or address a comment by President Donald Trump's top economic adviser suggesting Beijing had agreed to slash its annual trade surplus with the U.S. by \$200 billion.</p> <p>Vice Premier Liu He, a special envoy of China's President Xi Jinping, told reporters in Washington that talks with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer ended with a pledge not to engage in a trade war, according to a Xinhua news agency report.</p> <p>Liu said both sides agreed to stop "slapping tariffs" on each other and called his visit "positive, pragmatic, constructive and productive," Xinhua reported. Cooperation will be enhanced in such areas as energy, agriculture, health care, high-tech products and finance, a "win-win" choice for both nations. The statement said China agreed to "meaningful increases in U.S. agriculture and energy exports" with details to be worked out later.</p> <p>While there's still a long way to go in terms of specifics, the announcement that that a trade war will be averted should boost global stocks Monday, according to Shane Oliver, head of investment strategy at AMP Capital Investors Ltd. in Sydney.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/19 NKorea demands return waitress defectors
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/nkorea-skorea-diplomacy-defectors/2018/05/19/id/861361/
GIST	<p>North Korea has demanded Seoul repatriate a dozen waitresses who fled to the South two years ago, just days after abruptly calling off a planned inter-Korean meeting following weeks of tentative rapprochement.</p> <p>The issue has long been controversial, with Pyongyang claiming the women were kidnapped from a North Korean state-run restaurant in China while Seoul insists they defected of their own free will.</p> <p>But the restaurant's manager said in a recent interview he had lied to the women and blackmailed them into following him under the orders of the South's spy agency.</p> <p>The fate of the women could jeopardise relations between the two countries, said a statement from the North's Red Cross carried by the official KCNA news agency late Saturday.</p>

	<p>"The South Korean authorities should... send our women citizens to their families without delay and thus show the will to improve North-South ties," the statement said.</p> <p>At a landmark summit last month in the Demilitarised Zone that divides the peninsula, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and the South's President Moon Jae-in pledged to pursue denuclearisation and a peace treaty.</p> <p>A rapid thaw in tensions earlier this year saw Pyongyang release three US detainees and invite foreign media to witness the closing of its nuclear test site ahead of a planned summit between Kim and President Donald Trump in Singapore next month.</p> <p>But Pyongyang "indefinitely" postponed a high-level meeting with the South last week in protest of joint military exercises between Seoul and Washington and also has threatened to cancel the Singapore summit.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/20 Taiwan president pledges more security
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/taiwan-president-pressed-beijing-pledges-security-55303125
GIST	<p>Taiwan's president said Sunday her government will step up security measures to respond to military threats from China.</p> <p>President Tsai Ing-wen gave no details in comments posted online but her government has encouraged development of a domestic arms industry in response to pressure from Beijing, which claims the island as its own territory and has sent fighter planes near its coast.</p> <p>"We will strengthen our work for the whole society's security," Tsai wrote in response to questions from the public. She said her government will "especially look out for these factors from China."</p> <p>Taiwan and the communist mainland, separated since a civil war in 1949, have extensive trade and investment ties but no official relations.</p> <p>Tsai, elected in 2016, rejects Beijing's contention they are "one China" and must unite.</p> <p>The mainland government of President Xi Jinping has responded with shows of force and diplomatic efforts to persuade the few countries that recognize Taiwan as an independent country to switch ties to Beijing.</p> <p>The Communist Party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army, has sent fighter planes near Taiwan's coast a dozen times since Tsai's election and an aircraft carrier sailing through the 110-mile-wide (170-kilometer-wide) strait that separates them.</p> <p>Beijing has threatened to attack if Taiwan declares formal independence or delays talks on unification. Government surveys in Taiwan show most of the island's 23 million people prefer to maintain their autonomy.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/20 Increasing lava flow prompts evacuations
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/volcanic-activity-hawaii-prompts-evacuations-man-injured-lava/story?
GIST	<p>New evacuations were underway in Hawaii as active lava flows Saturday evening caused brush fires to spread in Puna, the easternmost district on the Big Island.</p> <p>As of 6:30 p.m. local time (12:30 a.m. Sunday Eastern time), officials were unsure how many homes in the</p>

	<p>region the new evacuation orders would affect, but they were going door to door to check on residents.</p> <p>Many of the people in the area had already voluntarily evacuated, a spokesperson for the mayor's office told ABC News.</p> <p>The mayor's office also confirmed the first injury since Kilauea erupted May 3. The spokesperson said a homeowner on Noni Farms Road in the hard-hit town of Pahoa was sitting on his balcony when he was hit with lava splatter. The man was hit on the leg and shattered everything from the shin down to his foot, the spokesperson said. The man was rushed to the hospital for treatment.</p> <p>The lava erupting from Kilauea can be as hot as 2,000 degrees, according to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), though it cools by hundreds of degrees once it hits the open air.</p> <p>Officials were also concerned about two fissures which had merged near MacKenzie State Park and was approaching the ocean, forming what is called laze.</p> <p>"Laze is formed when hot lava hits the ocean sending hydrochloric acid and steam with fine glass particles into the air," the Civil Defense Agency warned in a statement Saturday evening. "Health hazards of laze include lung, eye and skin irritation. Be aware that the laze plume travels with the wind and can change direction without warning."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Bike activists protest downtown Seattle
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/bike-activists-block-lane-of-traffic-in-downtown-seattle/751989208
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Cyclists converged on Seattle City Hall Friday morning as a part of Bike Everywhere Day.</p> <p>One resounding message was a call for the city to create a network of protected bike lanes throughout the city. At one point, about two dozen protesters blocked off a lane to traffic next of the bike lane on 4th Ave between James and Cherry streets.</p> <p>The protesters used cones they brought to block traffic, forcing vehicles to merge. They cheered as cyclists rode past them.</p> <p>KIRO 7 spoke to one driver who was frustrated and said the delay was making him late for work. Another driver said he applauded their effort and thinks a protected bike lane there is a good idea.</p> <p>The protesters removed the cones after about 20 minutes and opened the lane to vehicles.</p> <p>Seattle's new administration pumped the brakes on a planned protected 4th Avenue bike lane through downtown. The delay on the project is slated until 2021.</p> <p>Interim Transportation Director Goran Sparrman said a bike lane would make 4th Avenue slow to a crawl during rush hour.</p> <p>To compensate for the delay, Sparrman promised to accelerate work on an extension of the 2nd Avenue cycling lane from Pioneer Square into Sodo.</p> <p>On Friday, proponents for more bike lanes urged city leaders to take more steps now.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Recall: pepperoni sticks
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SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/ferndale-company-recalls-pepperoni-sticks-over-misbranding-undeclared-allergen/752350459
GIST	<p>A Ferndale company, Hempler Foods Group, is recalling more than 8,500 pounds of pepperoni sticks over labeling errors.</p> <p>The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Safety and Inspection Service said the products contain milk, a known allergen, which is not declared on the product label.</p> <p>The ready-to-eat pepperoni was made from April 20 to May 2.</p> <p>Here's a list of the following products under the recall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 count/case of 2.25-lbs. of “HEMPLER’S FAMILY CLASSIC PEPPERONI, NATURAL SMOKE FLAVORING ADDED” with “PACKED ON” date 04/21/18 and “LOT # 8106.” • 4 count/case of 2.25-lbs. of “HEMPLER’S FAMILY CLASSIC PEPPERONI, NATURAL SMOKE FLAVORING ADDED” with “PACKED ON” date 04/26/18 and “LOT # 8113.” • 4 count/case of 2.25-lbs. of “HEMPLER’S FAMILY CLASSIC PEPPERONI, NATURAL SMOKE FLAVORING ADDED” with “PACKED ON” date 05/01/18 and “LOT # 8117B.” • 4 count/case of 2.25-lbs. of “HEMPLER’S FAMILY CLASSIC PEPPERONI, NATURAL SMOKE FLAVORING ADDED” with “PACKED ON” date 05/02/18 and “LOT # 8117B.” • 10 count/case of 9-oz. of “HEMPLER’S FAMILY CLASSIC PEPPERONI, NATURAL SMOKE FLAVORING ADDED” with “USE OR FREEZE BY” date 01/15/19 and “LOT # 8106.” • 10 count/case of 9-oz. of “HEMPLER’S FAMILY CLASSIC PEPPERONI, NATURAL SMOKE FLAVORING ADDED” with “USE OR FREEZE BY” date 01/16/19 and “LOT # 8106.” • 10 count/case of 9-oz. of “HEMPLER’S FAMILY CLASSIC PEPPERONI, NATURAL SMOKE FLAVORING ADDED” with “USE OR FREEZE BY” date 01/22/19 and “LOT # 8113.” <p>The products were shipped to distribution centers in California, Oregon, Utah and Washington.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Seattle: \$10M on homeless sweeps 2017
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/homeless/seattle-spent-10-million-on-homeless-sweeps-in-2017/281-554503199
GIST	<p>Seattle spent more than \$10 million in 2017 cleaning up and relocating people who live in unauthorized encampments.</p> <p>That’s the number that jumps out of a 50-page memo authored by the Department of Finance and Administrative Services and sent to Councilmember Kshama Sawant earlier this month.</p> <p>The memo, obtained recently by KING 5, will likely be part of a larger debate about how the City spends new revenue from the just-approved \$45 million a year employee head tax.</p> <p>It says the Navigation Team, created in 2017 and spread across resources for six city departments, takes into account labor, outreach, and police costs, as well as garbage cleanup. The FAS estimate says the city spent \$1,289,710 in garbage cleanup alone in the 2017 calendar year. It also details just how many people accepted help and the racial disparity found in unauthorized camps.</p> <p>Between February 20 and December 31 the memo reads, the “Navigation Team made 7,342 total contacts to 1,829 unique individuals living unsheltered in Seattle. Of the 1,829 people the team has engaged, 675 accepted offers of safer shelter (37% acceptance rate), 1,179 accepted some form of service (64%) and 599 declined all offers of service and shelter (32%).”</p> <p>It also noted that a vast majority of the referrals were to newly opened sites including Compass First-</p>

Presbyterian, Navigation Center, Licton Springs Village, Georgetown Sanctioned Encampments, Camp Second Chance, and traditional emergency shelters. The 2017 One Night Count, taken just before the installation of the Navigation Team, showed 5,485 living unsheltered.

The memo concludes, “The data trend has shown enhanced shelters and tiny house villages have and continue to be an attractive option for people the team contacts living in unsanctioned encampments when compared to more traditional forms of emergency shelter.”

The Navigation Team also picked up 6.5 million pounds of garbage, debris and other materials during the same time period.

The document also reports that there is a significant racial disparity among African Americans and American Indians “when compared to the general population of Seattle and King County. The Navigation Team data shows African Americans and American Indians are 4.6 times and three times more likely to be represented in the homeless population than in the general population.”

Sawant has been a vocal opponent of “sweeps,” and the document was addressed to her. It’s not clear what she has done with the information.

Mayor Jenny Durkan wrote the Council this week that she is returning the Council’s spending plan for the head tax revenues “without my signature or concurrence.” She has requested more money for Navigation Teams and immediate shelter, whereas the Council has proposed using two-thirds of the funding to build new affordable housing.

A Fremont group announced Friday afternoon it plans to raise signatures to try and appeal the new law. If nothing changes, the head tax spending plan won’t likely be finalized until the budget cycle this fall.

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HEADLINE	05/19 Iran: enrichment resumes if EU fails deal
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear/iran-can-resume-20-percent-enrichment-if-eu-fails-to-retain-nuclear-deal-idUSKCN1IK08B
GIST	TEHRAN (Reuters) - Iran could resume its 20 percent uranium enrichment if the European signatories of the 2015 nuclear deal failed to keep it alive following Washington’s withdrawal, the head of Iran’s Atomic Energy Organisation said on Saturday. “If the other side keeps itself committed to its promises we also will be keeping ourselves to our promises... Our policy is wait and see now ... for just the few weeks time ... There are all kind of possibilities, we can ... start the 20 enrichment,” Ali Akbar Salehi told reporters.
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HEADLINE	05/18 ‘Do something’ Parkland survivors urge
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-texas-shooting-parkland/do-something-parkland-survivors-urge-action-after-texas-school-shooting-idUSKCN1IJ2LU
GIST	PARKLAND, Fla. (Reuters) - Survivors of the high school massacre in Parkland, Florida, vowed support on Friday for Texas students caught up in the latest deadly school shooting, saying tighter gun laws were needed to stop further bloodshed. Students at Santa Fe High School, about 30 miles (48 km) outside Houston, were among the thousands across the country who staged a walkout in April to protest congressional inaction after 17 students and staff members were killed by a former student on Feb. 14 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida.

On Friday, the Texas high school came under attack, with at least 10 people killed by a student gunman, police said.

“You deserve more than Thoughts and Prayers, and after supporting us by walking out we will be there to support you by raising up your voices,” Emma Gonzalez, one of the leaders of the Parkland student movement, wrote on Twitter.

There was a heavy police presence outside Marjory Stoneman Douglas High on Friday, as has been typical since the massacre. Friday’s shooting came on what was the last day of school for many Stoneman Douglas seniors, turning a moment of celebration into another somber reminder of the February attack.

“I should be celebrating my last day of high school, but instead my heart is broken to hear of the tragedy at Santa Fe,” student Delaney Tarr said on Twitter. “We cannot let this continue to be the norm. We cannot.”

As school ended for the day hundreds of students, many still wearing controversial clear backpacks ordered for use after the February shooting, streamed onto nearby sidewalks.

“It’s crazy how often this is happening,” said sophomore Michael Gregory, 16. “It’s difficult to see this happen in other places because you know what they’re going through, and it shouldn’t be happening.”

Many of the Parkland students have become outspoken proponents of gun control, pressuring companies to sever ties with the National Rifle Association and calling on legislators to pass gun safety laws as part of the #NeverAgain movement.

They helped lead hundreds of thousands of protesters who participated in the March for Our Lives demonstrations around the country this spring.

Student organizers at the school said each tragedy since theirs served as a reminder of the importance - and difficulty - of their efforts.

“In a way, we’ve been asleep,” said Daniel Tabares, a freshman who was in the middle of an advanced placement geography exam when the Texas shooting occurred. “We’ve been busy with our lives. This will re-energize us. It has to.”

Some Parkland survivors directed frustration at politicians for not doing more.

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HEADLINE	05/19 Europe reassures Iran on nuke deal
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-eu/europe-reassures-iran-of-commitment-to-nuclear-deal-without-u-s-idUSKCN1IK063
GIST	<p>TEHRAN (Reuters) - The European Union’s energy chief sought to reassure Iran on Saturday that the bloc remained committed to salvaging a nuclear deal with Tehran despite U.S. President Donald Trump’s decision to exit the accord and reimpose sanctions.</p> <p>Miguel Arias Canete delivered the message on a visit to Tehran and also said the 28-nation EU, once the biggest importer of Iranian oil, hoped to strengthen trade with Iran.</p> <p>“We have sent a message to our Iranian friends that as long as they are sticking to the (nuclear) agreement the Europeans will... fulfill their commitment. And they said the same thing on the other side,” Arias Canete, European Commissioner for energy and climate, told reporters after talks with Iran’s nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi.</p> <p>Salehi said it would be disastrous if EU efforts fail to preserve the 2015 deal, in which Tehran agreed to curb its nuclear work in return for the lifting of most Western sanctions. “The ball is in their (EU leaders)</p>

	<p>court,” Salehi said. “We hope their efforts materialize.”</p> <p>Since Trump’s announcement of the U.S. exit on May 8, EU leaders have pledged to try to keep Iran’s oil trade and investment flowing but admitted that will not be easy to do so.</p> <p>Britain, France and Germany back the deal as the best way of stopping Tehran getting nuclear weapons but have called on Iran to limit its regional influence and curb the missile program.</p> <p>“The EU’s adopted mechanisms ... should be enforced by August 8, when U.S. sanctions begin to take effect,” Iranian TV quoted Behrouz Kamalvandi, spokesman for Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization, as saying.</p> <p>A collapse of the accord could tip the balance of power in Iran’s faction-ridden political establishment in favor of President Hassan Rouhani’s hardline rivals, who have fiercely criticized the president’s failure to deliver greater economic prosperity.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/19 Sri Lanka commemorates end civil war
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/05/19/sri-lanka-marks-end-to-civil-war-as-divided-nation.html
GIST	<p>COLOMBO, Sri Lanka – Sri Lanka has commemorated the ninth anniversary of the end of its civil war as a divided nation, with minority Tamils calling for an international investigation into alleged wartime atrocities and the government defending soldiers from war crime allegations.</p> <p>President Maithripala Sirisena presided over a war memorial ceremony Saturday in the capital, Colombo.</p> <p>Sirisena said even though some accuse the military of war crimes, such allegations haven't been formally levied by world bodies such as the U.N. Human Rights Council.</p> <p>The government pledged in 2015 to carry out an impartial investigation into alleged war crimes, but has so far not taken action.</p> <p>At another ceremony, C.V. Wigneswaran, chief minister of Tamil-dominated Northern Province, called for an international investigation into civilian deaths during the war.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Tacoma takes dig at Seattle head tax
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/tacoma/no-head-tax-here-tacoma-digs-at-seattle-head-tax-in-new-video/281-554403456
GIST	<p>Tacoma city leaders are seizing an opportunity on the heels Seattle's new controversial head tax.</p> <p>The Pierce County Chamber of Commerce posted a video on YouTube this week, touting its tax-free business climate, lower cost of living and higher quality of life.</p> <p>"No head tax here," says the video. "The South Sound is the place for jobs."</p> <p>The Seattle City Council unanimously passed a compromise proposal Monday on the hotly-debated employee head tax that aims to help the city's affordable housing and homeless crisis. Under the new terms, big businesses will be taxed \$275 per full time employee per year.</p> <p>The tax is expected to raise between \$45 million and \$49 million a year for affordable housing and homeless services, with a sunset clause January 1, 2024. It would only impact businesses with over \$20 million a year in gross revenue, and will begin on January 1, 2019.</p>

	Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan signed the head tax into law Wednesday. The Seattle head tax is the largest in U.S. history.
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HEADLINE	05/19 Active volcanoes in US; likely to erupt?
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/u-s-has-over-160-active-volcanoes-how-likely-are-n875171
GIST	<p>Mount Rainier. Mount St. Helens. Yellowstone. From the outside, they're majestic summits, picturesque peaks that are among America's most recognizable landmarks.</p> <p>But inside, these sleeping giants are volcanoes that could, in theory, blow at any time — though early-warning systems would likely prevent casualties.</p> <p>There are more than 160 active volcanoes in the United States, according to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Whether any will erupt soon, like Kilauea did in Hawaii on Thursday, is hard to tell until a few days or weeks in advance.</p> <p>"It's really difficult to predict, because those volcanoes are relatively quiet until they start to activate an eruption," said Ben Edwards, a volcanologist and professor of earth sciences at Dickinson College in Pennsylvania.</p> <p>Experts know that certain volcanoes, such as ones in Alaska, erupt often: sometimes multiple times per year. Since they're in remote areas, they don't usually don't pose a threat to the public, though they can cause disruptions to the aviation routes above them.</p> <p>Volcanoes in more populous areas — like the ones in the Cascade Mountains that weave through northern California, Oregon and Washington — pose much less of a threat.</p> <p>"The time scale of eruptions is long compared to most humans' experience," said Chuck Connor, a volcanologist at the University of South Florida.</p> <p>In some cases, that means centuries, or even thousands of years, between eruptions. Mount Rainier in Washington, for example, last erupted about 1,100 years ago, according to the USGS.</p> <p>Hawaii's Kilauea, on the other hand, is considered one of the most active volcanoes on the planet. It's been erupting nearly constantly since 1983.</p> <p>Scientists are able to predict volcanic activity anywhere from several days to several weeks before it happens — if they have the right tools in place.</p> <p>The USGS currently considers 169 volcanoes in the U.S. to be active, and has in-ground measuring tools to monitor even the slightest change in activity in about half of them — those considered the highest-risk volcanoes, said Charles Mandeville, program coordinator for the USGS volcano hazards program. Mandeville added that in the coming months, the USGS plans to revise the number of active volcanoes in the U.S. down to 161.</p> <p>The 88 currently being monitored the most closely show little activity this week, other than at Kilauea, and the Cleveland volcano in Alaska's remote Aleutian islands, which is under advisory, he said.</p> <p>These instruments were not available before the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens in Washington. That eruption killed 57 people and blew ash across a dozen states.</p> <p>Since then, there have been small eruptions at Mount St. Helens. But nothing, scientists added, that should scare anyone away from the area.</p>

	<p>"I don't think there's going to be a major eruption like what happened in 1980 anytime soon. But these [volcanoes] are all considered active. They will erupt in the future, we just don't know when," said David Williams, associate research professor in the school of earth and space exploration at Arizona State University.</p> <p>Volcanoes pose a significant threat, not only from eruptions, but also from other activity, like landslides. While there's not usually any definitive pattern to volcanic activity, scientists have learned a lot since the deadly 1980 Mount St. Helens eruption — and their tools have become a lot more sophisticated since then, meaning anyone who might be affected should be notified in plenty of time to get to safety.</p> <p>"We're actually getting pretty good at forecasting the volcanic eruptions," Connor said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Phone spying devices found D.C. area
SOURCE	https://www.nbcwashington.com/investigations/Potential-Spy-Devices-Which-Track-Cellphones-Intercept-Calls-Found-All-Over-DC-Md-Va-482970231.html
GIST	<p>The technology can be as small as a suitcase, placed anywhere at any time, and it's used to track cell phones and intercept calls.</p> <p>The News4 I-Team found dozens of potential spy devices while driving around Washington, D.C., Maryland and Northern Virginia.</p> <p>"While you might not be a target yourself, you may live next to someone who is. You could still get caught up," said Aaron Turner, a leading mobile security expert.</p> <p>The device, sometimes referred to by the brand name StingRay, is designed to mimic a cell tower and can trick your phone into connecting to it instead.</p> <p>The News4 I-Team asked Turner to ride around the capital region with special software loaded onto three cell phones, with three different carriers, to detect the devices operating in various locations.</p> <p>"So when you see these red bars, those are very high-suspicion events," said Turner.</p> <p>If you live in or near the District, your phone has probably been tracked at some point, he said.</p> <p>A recent report by the Department of Homeland Security called the spy devices a real and growing risk.</p> <p>And the I-Team found them in high-profile areas like outside the Trump International Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue and while driving across the 14th Street bridge into Crystal City. The I-Team got picked up twice while driving along K Street — the corridor popular with lobbyists.</p> <p>"It looks like they don't consider us to be interesting, so they've dropped us," Turner remarked looking down at one of his phones.</p> <p>Every cellphone has a unique identifying number. The phone catcher technology can harness thousands of them at a time.</p> <p>DHS has warned rogue devices could prevent connected phones from making 911 calls, saying, "If this type of attack occurs during an emergency, it could prevent victims from receiving assistance."</p> <p>"Absolutely. That's a worry," said D.C. Councilwoman Mary Cheh, adding that the spy technology should be a concern for all who live and work in the District.</p>

The I-Team's test phones detected 40 potential locations where the spy devices could be operating, while driving around for just a few hours.

"I suppose if you spent more time you'd find even more," said Cheh. "I have bad news for the public: Our privacy isn't what it once was."

Especially in her ward, where many of the streets are lined with embassies.

"They're doing the interrogation, or [checking] who we are, and then the white bar represents when they release us," Turner said as he demonstrated his technology.

The phones appeared to remain connected to a fake tower the longest, right near the Russian Embassy.

The I-Team got picked up twice off of International Drive, right near the Chinese and Israeli embassies, then got another two hits along Massachusetts Avenue near Romania and Turkey.

The spy technology poses a risk to national and economic security, but there's little our government can do to stop devices located on foreign soil.

"A law that we had could not tell these embassies what they can and cannot do," said Cheh.

The phone catchers can also be combined with other technology to listen-in or grab data from phones that are connected, Turner said.

"Most people don't know about it," said Alan Butler, senior counsel for the Electronic Privacy Information Center.

"There's a lot to be concerned about," he said.

Particularly since DHS hasn't disclosed how many devices it found or where. The agency also said it did not determine who was operating them, which Butler finds unacceptable.

"I think they should be taking the time and investing the resources to identify them and to flag them to the carriers and find ways to either have them taken down or have them blocked," he said.

Turner said cell carriers can't completely secure our phones because they have to allow for law enforcement access. Plus, even the oldest phones must be able to reach 911, so low-tech vulnerabilities can't be closed.

"I don't think there's a magic fix here," said Turner. "I don't think Congress can mandate anything to say, Hey, carriers do this right now."

The good news is about half the devices the I-Team found were likely law enforcement investigating crimes or our government using the devices defensively to identify certain cellphone numbers as they approach important locations, Turner said.

The I-Team test detected devices in operation near Langley, the Pentagon and Fort Myer, but also found them in residential areas like Bethesda's Kenwood neighborhood, near Palisades in DC and along Old Dominion Drive in McLean, which Turner said raised questions.

"Maybe someone is involved in high-level negotiations on a business deal, or maybe it's a government employee involved in a regulatory ruling," he said, adding that he's heard of the devices being used in a corporate espionage situation, which is illegal under United States law.

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HEADLINE	05/19 Congo: Ebola confirmed in urban area
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/congo-ebola-cases-confirmed-large-city-55280948?cid=clicksource_26_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>Three new cases of the often lethal Ebola virus have been confirmed in a city of more than 1 million people, Congo's health minister announced, as the spread of the hemorrhagic fever in an urban area raised alarm.</p> <p>The statement late Friday said the confirmed cases are in Mbandaka city, where a single case was confirmed earlier in the week.</p> <p>There are now 17 confirmed Ebola cases in this outbreak, including one death, plus 21 probable cases and five suspected ones. It was not immediately clear what link the new cases might have to others.</p> <p>The World Health Organization on Friday decided not to declare the outbreak a global health emergency, but it called the risk of spread within Congo "very high" and warned nine neighboring countries that the risk to them was high. WHO said there should be no international travel or trade restrictions.</p> <p>The outbreak is a test of a new experimental Ebola vaccine that proved effective in the West Africa outbreak a few years ago. Vaccinations are expected to start early in the week, with more than 4,000 doses already in Congo and more on the way.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Muslim nations condemn Israel, US
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/turkey-urges-muslim-nations-stand-palestine-55256766?
GIST	<p>Muslim nations on Friday condemned Israel and the inauguration of the American embassy in contested Jerusalem as a "provocation and hostility against" the Islamic world, while Turkey's president called for action, including a peacekeeping force.</p> <p>A final communique from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation summit in Istanbul "reaffirmed the centrality of the Palestinian cause" after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the rotating term president of the OIC, called an extraordinary summit.</p> <p>The call came on the heels of a week that has seen Turkey take a leading role in condemning Israeli actions in Gaza — Monday's killing of 59 Palestinians and wounding of hundreds of others was the deadliest day of cross-border violence in Gaza since a 2014 war between Israel and Hamas. As part of its efforts, the Turkish government organized a massive rally and the OIC summit, in a show of solidarity.</p> <p>The OIC threatened other countries considering following suit, including Guatemala, which has already made the move to Jerusalem, with "political, economic and other measures."</p> <p>Iranian President Hasan Rouhani spoke earlier as participants broke their fast for Ramadan, calling the Trump administration a "dangerous threat" to global peace and security. Rouhani said Muslim nations should consider "revising" political and economic ties with the U.S., and called on the international community to "cut ties" with Israel and boycott it through trade.</p> <p>"If Israel faces a united front of Islamic nations, it will never be able to continue its crimes," the Iranian president said. He cited the example of the "new and young generation of Palestine who is aware of their rights and has no intention to withdraw or compromise."</p> <p>Erdogan also urged member states and others to prevent Israeli products produced in "illegal Israeli settlements" from entering their markets.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/19 Cuba: plane crash kills 110 onboard
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-cuba-survivors-critical-plane-crash-55297408
GIST	<p>Cuba's transportation minister says 110 people were killed in Friday's plane crash near Havana.</p> <p>The plane, a Boeing 737 rented by Cubana airlines, had just left José Martí International Airport outside Havana, Cuban state TV reported.</p> <p>Adel Yzquierdo Rodriguez says 113 people were on board including 102 Cubans, three tourists, two foreign residents and six crew members who were from Mexico.</p> <p>Three Cuban women survived but are in critical condition at a hospital.</p> <p>Yzquierdo also said five children were among the dead.</p> <p>He initially gave a death toll of 113 in a Saturday news conference but later corrected his statement.</p> <p>Official website Cubadebate reported that a flight recorder from the plane had been located, citing Yzquierdo.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>2:52 p.m.</p> <p>The Cuban Council of Churches says 20 priests from an evangelical church are among the dead in the Havana plane crash.</p> <p>"On that plane were 10 couples of pastors. 20 people. All of the Nazarene Church in the eastern region," confirmed Maite Quesada, a member of the council.</p> <p>The group spent several days at a meeting in the capital and were returning to their homes and places of worship in the province of Holguin.</p> <p>The plane crash Friday killed 107 people.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>2:30 p.m.</p> <p>The only three survivors of Cuba's worst aviation disaster in three decades are clinging to life a day after their passenger jet carrying 110 people crashed in a fireball in Havana's rural outskirts.</p> <p>Carlos Alberto Martinez is director of the Calixto Garcia Hospital in the Cuban capital, where the three Cuban women are being treated. He says doctors are always hopeful that their patients will recover, but acknowledges that the women are in extremely grave condition.</p> <p>Martinez says the women "present severe injuries" and their state is "critical."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/19 China lands bomber in disputed islands
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/china-lands-bomber-south-china-sea-island-time-55279144?cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed

GIST	<p>The Chinese air force has landed long-range bombers for the first time at an airport in the South China Sea, a state newspaper said Saturday, in a move likely to further fuel concerns about Beijing's expansive claims over the disputed region.</p> <p>The China Daily newspaper reported that the People's Liberation Army Air Force conducted takeoff and landing training with the H-6K bomber in the South China Sea.</p> <p>China is pitted against smaller neighbors in multiple disputes in the South China Sea over islands, coral reefs and lagoons in waters crucial for global commerce and rich in fish and potential oil and gas reserves.</p> <p>A statement from the Defense Ministry late Friday said the exercise was conducted on an island reef, but it did not specify when or where, saying only that it took place recently at a "southern sea area." It involved several H-6Ks taking off from an air base and making a simulated strike against sea targets before landing, the ministry said.</p> <p>Wang Mingliang, a military expert, was quoted in the statement as saying that the takeoff and landing exercises will help the air force improve its "real combat ability against all kinds of marine security threats."</p> <p>The U.S. criticized the move.</p> <p>"The United States remains committed to a free and open Indo-Pacific," a Pentagon spokesman, Marine Lt. Col. Christopher Logan, said in an email. "We have seen these same reports and China's continued militarization of disputed features in the South China Sea only serves to raise tensions and destabilize the region."</p> <p>The Washington-based Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, using Chinese social media posts, identified the location of the exercise as Woody Island, China's largest base in the Paracel Islands.</p> <p>With a combat radius of nearly 1,900 nautical miles (3,520 kilometers), the H-6K bomber would put all of Southeast Asia in its range from Woody Island, AMTI said.</p> <p>Farther south in the Spratly group of islands, China has constructed seven man-made islands and equipped them with runways, hangars, radar and missile stations, further cementing its vast territorial claims in the busy waterway.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	05/20 Banks 'fusion centers' fight cybercrime
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/20/business/banks-cyber-security-military.html
GIST	<p>O'FALLON, Mo. — In a windowless bunker here, a wall of monitors tracked incoming attacks — 267,322 in the last 24 hours, according to one hovering dial, or about three every second — as a dozen analysts stared at screens filled with snippets of computer code.</p> <p>Pacing around, overseeing the stream of warnings, was a former Delta Force soldier who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan before shifting to a new enemy: cyberthieves.</p> <p>"This is not that different from terrorists and drug cartels," Matt Nyman, the command center's creator, said as he surveyed his squadron of Mastercard employees. "Fundamentally, threat networks operate in similar ways."</p> <p>Cybercrime is one of the world's fastest-growing and most lucrative industries. At least \$445 billion was lost last year, up around 30 percent from just three years earlier, a global economic study found, and the</p>

Treasury Department recently designated cyberattacks as one of the greatest risks to the American financial sector. For banks and payment companies, the fight feels like a war — and they're responding with an increasingly militarized approach.

Former government cyberspies, soldiers and counterintelligence officials now dominate the top ranks of banks' security teams. They've brought to their new jobs the tools and techniques used for national defense: combat exercises, intelligence hubs modeled on those used in counterterrorism work and threat analysts who monitor the internet's shadowy corners.

At Mastercard, Mr. Nyman oversees the company's new fusion center, a term borrowed from the Department of Homeland Security. After the attacks of Sept. 11, the agency set up scores of fusion centers to coordinate federal, state and local intelligence-gathering. The approach spread throughout the government, with the centers used to fight disease outbreaks, wildfires and sex trafficking.

Then banks grabbed the playbook. At least a dozen of them, from giants like Citigroup and Wells Fargo to regional players such as Bank of the West, have opened fusion centers in recent years, and more are in the works. Fifth Third Bank is building one in its Cincinnati headquarters, and Visa, which created its first two years ago in Virginia, is developing two more, in Britain and Singapore. Having their own intelligence hives, the banks hope, will help them better detect patterns in all the data they amass.

The centers also have a symbolic purpose. Having a literal war room reinforces the new reality. Fending off thieves has always been a priority — it's why banks build vaults — but the arms race has escalated rapidly.

Alfred F. Kelly Jr., Visa's chief executive, is "completely paranoid" about the subject, he told investors at a conference in March. Bank of America's Brian T. Moynihan said his cybersecurity team is "the only place in the company that doesn't have a budget constraint." (The bank's chief operations and technology officer said it is spending about \$600 million this year.)

The military sharpens soldiers' skills with large-scale combat drills like Jade Helm and Foal Eagle, which send troops into the field to test their tactics and weaponry. The financial sector created its own version: Quantum Dawn, a biennial simulation of a catastrophic cyberstrike.

In the latest exercise last November, 900 participants from 50 banks, regulators and law enforcement agencies role-played their response to an industrywide infestation of malicious malware that first corrupted, and then entirely blocked, all outgoing payments from the banks. Throughout the two-day test, the organizers lobbed in new threats every few hours, like denial-of-service attacks that knocked the banks' websites offline.

The first Quantum Dawn, back in 2011, was a lower-key gathering. Participants huddled in a conference room to talk through a mock attack that shut down stock trading. Now, it's a live-fire drill. Each bank spends months in advance re-creating its internal technology on an isolated test network, a so-called cyber range, so that its employees can fight with their actual tools and software. The company that runs their virtual battlefield, SimSpace, is a Defense Department contractor.

Sometimes, the tests expose important gaps.

A series of smaller cyber drills coordinated by the Treasury Department, called the Hamilton Series, raised an alarm three years ago. An attack on Sony, attributed to North Korea, had recently exposed sensitive company emails and data, and, in its wake, demolished huge swaths of Sony's internet network.

If something similar happened at a bank, especially a smaller one, regulators asked, would it be able to recover? Those in the room for the drill came away uneasy.

"There was a recognition that we needed to add an additional layer of resilience," said John Carlson, the chief of staff for the Financial Services Information Sharing and Analysis Center, the industry's main

cybersecurity coordination group.

Soon after, the group began building a new fail-safe, called Sheltered Harbor, which went into operation last year. If one member of the network has its data compromised or destroyed, others can step in, retrieve its archived records and restore basic customer account access within a day or two. It has not yet been needed, but nearly 70 percent of America's deposit accounts are now covered by it.

The largest banks run dozens of their own, internal attack simulations each year, to smoke out their vulnerabilities and keep their first responders sharp.

"It's the idea of muscle memory," said Thomas J. Harrington, Citigroup's chief information security officer, who spent 28 years with the F.B.I.

Growing interest among its corporate customers in cybersecurity war games inspired IBM to build a digital range in Cambridge, Mass., where it stages data breaches for customers and prospects to practice on.

One recent morning, a fictional bank called Bane & Ox was under attack on IBM's range, and two dozen real-life executives from a variety of financial companies gathered to defend it. In the training scenario, an unidentified attacker had dumped six million customer records on Pastebin, a site often used by hackers to publish stolen data caches.

As the hours ticked by, the assault grew worse. The lost data included financial records and personally identifying details. One of the customers was Colin Powell, the former secretary of state. Phones in the room kept ringing with calls from reporters, irate executives and, eventually, regulators, wanting details about what had occurred.

When the group figured out what computer system had been used in the leak, a heated argument broke out: Should they cut off its network access immediately? Or set up surveillance and monitor any further transmissions?

At the urging of a Navy veteran who runs the cyberattack response group at a large New York bank, the group left the system connected.

"Those are the decisions you don't want to be making for the first time during a real attack," said Bob Stasio, IBM's cyber range operations manager and a former operations chief for the National Security Agency's cyber center. One financial company's executive team did such a poor job of talking to its technical team during a past IBM training drill, Mr. Stasio said, that he went home and canceled his credit card with them.

Like many cybersecurity bunkers, IBM's foxhole has deliberately theatrical touches. Whiteboards and giant monitors fill nearly every wall, with graphics that can be manipulated by touch.

"You can't have a fusion center unless you have really cool TVs," quipped Lawrence Zelvin, a former Homeland Security official who is now Citigroup's global cybersecurity head, at a recent cybercrime conference. "It's even better if they do something when you touch them. It doesn't matter what they do. Just something."

Security pros mockingly refer to such eye candy as "pew pew" maps, an onomatopoeia for the noise of laser guns in 1980s movies and video arcades. They are especially useful, executives concede, to put on display when V.I.P.s or board members stop by for a tour. Two popular "pew pew" maps are from FireEye and the defunct security vendor Norse, whose video game-like maps show laser beams zapping across the globe. Norse went out of business two years ago, and no one is sure what data the map is based on, but everyone agrees that it looks cool.

Jason Witty, the chief information security officer at U.S. Bank, admits that the blinking map he breaks

out for customer briefings is mostly for show. But it serves a serious purpose, he said: making the command center's high-stakes work more tangible.

"If you show customers the scripts you're actually running, it's just digits on a screen," Mr. Witty said. A big, colorful map is easier to grasp.

What everyone in the finance industry is afraid of is a repeat — on an even larger scale — of the data breach that hit Equifax last year.

Hackers stole personal information, including Social Security numbers, of more than 146 million people. The attack cost the company's chief executive and four other top managers their jobs. Who stole the data, and what they did with it, is still not publicly known. The credit bureau has spent \$243 million so far cleaning up the mess.

It is Mr. Nyman's job to make sure that doesn't happen at Mastercard. Walking around the company's fusion center, he describes the team's work using military slang. Its focus is "left of boom," he said — referring to the moments before a bomb explodes. By detecting vulnerabilities and attempted hacks, the analysts aim to head off an Equifax-like explosion.

But the attacks keep coming. As he spoke, the dial displayed over his shoulder registered another few assaults on Mastercard's systems. The total so far this year exceeds 20 million.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Cybercriminals turn to supply chain
SOURCE	http://www.ciol.com/cyber-criminals-turning-attention-supply-chain/
GIST	<p>On one hand, ransomware-related outsourced incident response engagements against financial institutions declined from 22% in 2016 to 5% last year, but on the other hand, the business and professional services supply chain has clearly become a prime target for trade secrets and intellectual property theft, potentially exposing customer and business partner data.</p> <p>As per a Dimension Data report, 2017 saw a worrying increase in ransomware and other cyberattacks targeting the supply chain, with the business and professional services sector receiving a significant increase of attacks, particularly in the EMEA region, which saw 20% of all attacks targeting this sector.</p> <p>In 2017, there was a massive 350% rise in ransomware, representing 7% of all global malware attacks (up from 1% in 2016), and is set to continue due to the popularity of cyber adversary campaigns.</p> <p>The businesses and professional services sector received 10% of global ransomware attacks, the third most targeted industry (up from sixth position in 2016), behind finance and technology. It also ranked third in the Americas (9%) and was the most vulnerable sector in EMEA, receiving 20% of all attacks.</p> <p>Despite the drop in outsourced incident response engagements, the finance sector remains the number one target for cyber criminals who carry out regular reconnaissance to spot potential infrastructure and application vulnerabilities.</p> <p>Technology was the second most cyber-attacked industry in 2017, with a 19% attack volume, with business and professional services moving to third place. Interestingly, attacks on the government sector last year dropped to 5% from 9% in 2016.</p> <p>Attacks against education doubled from 9% in 2016 to 18% in 2017.</p> <p>Geography-wise, the technology and finance sectors account for 70% of all attacks in the Americas. The US is a world leader in technology innovation while the finance sector collects and stores a vast amount of personal data which cyber criminals can monetise.</p>

	<p>Education was the most attacked sector in Australia (26%). With an open network model and collaborative environments that enable connectivity and research between students, campuses, colleges, and universities, this is a valuable target.</p> <p>Attacks on the APAC manufacturing sector have dropped to a mere 7% (32% in 2016), because of the adoption of enhanced security governance and proactivity in raising cyber defenses. Attacks against the finance sector decreased from 46% in 2016 to 26% in 2017, but it remained the most attacked sector in APAC. This was caused by service-specific attacks.</p> <p>China was the top attack source for manufacturing cyber-incidents, accounting for 67% of hostile activities targeting the sector in EMEA.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Calif. live congressional debate hacked
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/someone-hacked-live-congressional-debate-with-gay-porn/
GIST	<p>An online forum designated for California’s First Congressional District debate was hacked by unknown hackers (or call them pranksters) right after opening statements from its participants Lewis Elbinger of Green Party and Lewis Elbinger of the Democratic Party.</p> <p>The debate was hosted by Independent Like the North State group on Thursday night which was being broadcast online via live streaming. However, hackers were quick to take over the live stream to broadcast gay pornography.</p> <p>According to KRCR’s report, the debate was also being broadcast on KFOI station. Once the debate’s moderator Chris Verrill began to ask questions from candidates the debate’s online feed was replaced with two men indulging themselves in sexual acts.</p> <p>The porn clip remained online for several seconds and then taken offline by moderators but Verrill according to KRCR was heard saying “Looks like we got hacked again, we’ll try to fix this.” At the time of defacement, 12 people were watching the debate online.</p> <p>“We had some pranksters decide to go on and not respect ‘Independent Like the North State,’ the two candidates that were there or the democratic process or our community and that’s disappointing. But the North State’s a great community and we’re not going to let a couple bad apples spoil the whole barrel,” Verrill told KRCR.</p> <p>Verrill said he has no idea who the hackers are and what were their motives. However, in a conversation with Motherboard, he said that this was the first time the forum got hacked since this was the first time ever that they hosted a forum like this.</p> <p>This is not the first time when hackers have pulled such a stunt in California. In September 2017, unknown hackers took over TV transmission across the Orange County and disrupted scheduled programs with strange, mysterious warning messages informing viewers about the upcoming invasion of extra-terrestrials and the onset of Armageddon.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Hacked Drupal sites: miners, RATs, scams
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/hacked-drupal-sites-deliver-miners-rats-scams
GIST	<p>The Drupal websites hacked by cybercriminals using the vulnerabilities known as Drupalgeddon2 and Drupalgeddon3 deliver cryptocurrency miners, remote administration tools (RATs) and tech support scams.</p>

Two highly critical flaws were patched in recent months in the Drupal content management system (CMS). The security holes are tracked as CVE-2018-7600 and CVE-2018-7602, and they both allow remote code execution.

Malicious actors started exploiting CVE-2018-7600, dubbed Drupalgeddon2, roughly two weeks after a patch was released and shortly after a proof-of-concept (PoC) exploit was made public.

CVE-2018-7602, dubbed Drupalgeddon 3, was discovered during an analysis of CVE-2018-7600 by the Drupal Security Team and developer Jasper Mattsson, who also reported the original vulnerability. Hackers started exploiting CVE-2018-7602 immediately after the release of a patch.

Cybercriminals have exploited the vulnerabilities to hijack servers and abuse them for cryptocurrency mining. Some websites have been targeted by botnets known to also be involved in distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks.

Researchers at security firm Malwarebytes recently conducted an analysis of client-side attacks involving Drupalgeddon2 and Drupalgeddon3, i.e. the threats pushed by the compromised sites to their visitors.

Experts noticed that nearly half of the hacked Drupal sites had been running version 7.5.x of the CMS, while roughly 30 percent had been running version 7.3.x, which was last updated in August 2015.

Unsurprisingly, more than 80 percent of the hacked sites had been serving cryptocurrency miners, mostly through Coinhive injections.

Just over 12 percent of the attacks observed by Malwarebytes delivered RATs or password stealers disguised as web browser updates.

Tech support scams accounted for nearly 7 percent of the client-side attacks spotted by the security firm. In these attacks, website visitors are typically redirected to a page that locks their browser and instructs them to call a "tech support" number.

Malwarebytes says it has notified the organizations whose websites have been compromised

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HEADLINE	05/21 Australia telco suffers massive outage
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/telstra-hit-by-monday-morning-mobile-outage/
GIST	<p>Telstra has said its services are improving, following a nationwide outage on Monday morning.</p> <p>"Our 4G voice and data traffic volume is improving nationally after we bypassed hardware that had been preventing some customers from accessing the 4G mobile network. 3G voice and data volumes are also improving," the telco said.</p> <p>"We're very sorry for the interruption to services."</p> <p>According to complaints on Monday morning made to Telstra's Twitter account, users from all over Australia had fallen victim to the outage.</p> <p>"The issue is impacting some 4G mobile voice and data services nationally, which is also causing congestion for 3G services. We're working to resolve the issue and are investigating the root cause," Telstra said on Twitter.</p> <p>NSW Police warned the outage may hit Triple Zero services, and advised that people use another carrier while the outage exists. Telstra however said calls to 000 will connect over other carriers.</p>

	In May alone, the dominant Australian telco has suffered a pair of outages.
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HEADLINE	05/20 Roundup: some current phishing trends
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/phishing-roundup-caracal-stealth-mango-tangelo-apple-dhl-efax-and-more/
GIST	<p>Phishing takes place when a fraudster tricks an individual into sharing sensitive information (account numbers, Social Security numbers, login credentials, etc.) by way of fraudulent emails, texts, or counterfeit websites. Phishing can also enable a scammer to gain access to a computer or network so that they can install malware, such as ransomware, on a victim's computer. Phishers are able to achieve this by spoofing the familiar, trusted logos of established, legitimate companies. Or, they may pose as a friend or family member and are often successful in completely deluding their targets.</p> <p>Some Current Phishing Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In carrying out attacks, Dark Caracal uses trojanized WhatsApp and Facebook apps to try to lure users into clicking malicious links and downloading Android malware, called Pallas, which can collect vast amounts of data. Dark Caracal targets include governments, military organizations, utilities, financial institutions, manufacturing companies and defense contractors. • Stealth Mango (Android) and Tangelo (iOS), discovered by Lookout Security Intelligence, are surveillanceware tools that target government officials, diplomats, activists and military personnel, specifically in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, India and the UAE. According to Lookout Security, “data from U.S., Australian, and German officials and military have been swept up in the campaign we believe is being run by members in the Pakistani military.” • Fake eFax email deceives email recipients by telling them they have received ‘a new eFax’ and that they need to click on a link button in the email to retrieve the document. The link goes to a phishing page. This is not a new attack, but has recently been spotted in emails again. • Email filtering company, Mailguard, has picked up a fake E-Toll notification containing an infected .doc file. According to Mailguard, the file contains a malicious macro that will download malware to the victim’s computer. The notification also includes the logos of Microsoft Office and Mailguard in order to appear authentic. It even goes as far as to claim that, “this document is protected by MailGuard”. • DHL branding was mimicked and fake shipping notifications were sent out, asking recipients to download an attached file that contained highly destructive trojan malware. • “MEWKit” is a phishing attack that directly steals Ethereum from users of MyEtherWallet. Using MyEtherWallet as bait, it attempts to trick Ethereum investors into logging in to the bogus, cloned version of the website in order to steal their credentials. • The Twitter verification phishing site is still live. Late last year through early 2018, some Twitter accounts launched a promoted tweet campaign, which had been approved by Twitter. But, it was in actuality a phishing attempt. The phishing site, linked to the promoted tweets, claimed that, “to prevent identity confusion, Twitter is now offering the ‘verification form.’ We’re working the establish authenticity with people who deal with impersonation or identity confusion on a regular basis. Accounts with a [blue checkmark] are the official accounts.” It then asks users to fill out information about how many followers they have, their phone numbers and their account passwords. • Gmail’s new Confidential Mode may invite link-baiting phishing attacks. According to analysis by <i>ComputerWorld</i>, “Confidential Mode works by storing your email in a secure space on Google servers in the cloud. When both sender and recipient use Gmail, the email appears normal. But recipients who do not use Gmail get a link for viewing the email in a browser. The messages you send or receive via Confidential Mode are not actually email. The link is an email, but the message is an email-looking page on the internet that’s password-protected. Emails containing the link can, in fact, be forwarded, but only the intended recipient can successfully open the link. When someone gets one of these forwarded mails, they’re prompted for their Google login username and

password to determine whether or not they're the intended recipient. This is problematic, because it invites link-baiting phishing attacks, which could con people into revealing their login information."

- [A phishing campaign targeting Apple users](#) seeks to dupe victims into updating their profiles in preparation for the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) policies, which go into effect on May 25. This is just one of many scams exploiting the coming implementation of GDPR policies.
- On May 8, a *Bleeping Computer* article covered [a zero-day vulnerability known as baseStriker](#). It "allows miscreants to send malicious emails that bypass security systems on Office 365 accounts. Discovered on May 1, 2018, by security researchers from Avanan, baseStriker is a flaw in how Office 365 servers scan incoming emails. But baseStriker isn't just a random vulnerability that researchers found after weeks of pen-testing. Avanan says it discovered baseStriker as part of real-world attacks. 'So far we have only seen hackers using this vulnerability to send phishing attacks, but but it is also capable of distributing ransomware, malware and other malicious content,' Avanan's Yoav Nathaniel wrote in a [report](#) published today."
- ["Rules of Conduct" Office 365 phishing email scam](#), written about by *Bleeping Computer* at the end of April, "pretends to be from a company's human resources (HR) department and requests that the recipient read and acknowledge an attached 'Rules of Conduct' document. This document, though, prompts you to login at a fake Office 365 login prompt, which is used to steal your credentials."
- [Phishing via "voice squatting" attacks](#) is a new way of targeting Amazon Alexa and Google Home Assistants. The idea is to lure the user into opening a malicious app by using voice triggers comparable to those in authentic apps, and then use the malicious apps to either phish users for sensitive data or eavesdrop on their surroundings.
- [High school student receives 14 felony counts after launching a phishing campaign](#) directed at teachers, so he could pilfer their passwords and modify grades.

According to [Verizon's 2018 Data Breach Investigations Report](#), 90% of cyberattacks begin with phishing. And, the rate at which mobile enterprise users get tricked into becoming victims of phishing attacks has increased 85% every year since 2011, according to Lookout Security. Add to that the fact that mobile devices are becoming popular phishing targets and it becomes clear that phishing attacks aren't going away anytime soon.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Report: botnet malware infections
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/58-percent-of-botnet-malware-infections-last-under-a-day/
GIST	<p>The vast majority of botnet malware infections last under a day, according to a Fortinet report released last week —the Q1 2018 Threat Landscape Report.</p> <p>The Fortinet data includes information from all types of botnets, targeting desktop, mobile, server, IoT, and networking devices alike.</p> <p>According to the report, the vast majority of botnet infections —58%— last under a day; 17.6% of botnets persist for two days in a row; 7.3% last three days; and so on — while only 5% persist for more than a week.</p> <p>The botnet that has the longer persistence rate per bot is Mirai, a botnet that infects IoT devices, which it mainly uses for DDoS and traffic proxy services.</p> <p>The average lifetime of a Mirai bot is 5.5 days. Mirai is followed by other botnets, such as Sality (spam & proxy), Ramnit (banking trojan), H-worm (downloader), Necurs (spam), and others...</p> <p>Persistence per botnet</p>

But according to Fortinet, despite its increased persistence, Mirai is not the most prevalent botnet. For the first quarter of 2018, that distinction goes to the botnet created by infected victims of the Gh0st malware, a relatively new "malware downloader" that infects victims and then rents out infected PCs to other crooks.

In Q1 2018, Gh0st was by far the most widespread botnet malware version around, being ranked #1 across all continents, followed by the Pushdo spam botnet, and the Andromeda botnet, which despite being the target of a law enforcement takedown, has come back to life.

The reason is that the Andromeda source code had been leaked online a few years back, and while the original botnet has been taken down, other crooks installed and got running new Andromeda botnets within days.

Overall, botnets have been on a declining trajectory in the first quarter of 2018, most of them losing bots, shutting down, or having less activity than the previous quarter...

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HEADLINE	05/20 Leak: teen phone monitoring app
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/teen-phone-monitoring-app-leaked-thousands-of-user-passwords/
GIST	<p>At least one server used by an app for parents to monitor their teenagers' phone activity has leaked tens of thousands of accounts of both parents and children.</p> <p>The mobile app, TeenSafe, bills itself as a "secure" monitoring app for iOS and Android, which lets parents view their child's text messages and location, monitor who they're calling and when, access their web browsing history and find out which apps they have installed.</p> <p>Although teen monitoring apps are controversial and privacy-invasive, the company says it doesn't require parents to obtain the consent of their children.</p> <p>But the Los Angeles, California-based company left its servers, hosted on Amazon's cloud, unprotected and accessible by anyone without a password.</p> <p>Robert Wiggins, a U.K.-based security researcher who searches for public and exposed data, found two leaky servers.</p> <p>Both of the servers were pulled offline after ZDNet alerted the company, including another that contains what appears to be only test data.</p> <p>"We have taken action to close one of our servers to the public and begun alerting customers that could potentially be impacted," a TeenSafe spokesperson told ZDNet on Sunday.</p> <p>The database stores the parent's email address associated with TeenSafe, as well as their corresponding child's Apple ID email address. It also includes the child's device name -- which is often just their name -- and their device's unique identifier. The data contains the plaintext passwords for the child's Apple ID. Because the app requires that two-factor authentication is turned off, a malicious actor viewing this data only needs to use the credentials to break into the child's account to access their personal content data.</p> <p>None of the records contained content data, such as photos or messages, or the locations of either parents or children.</p> <p>TeenSafe claims to have over a million parents using the service.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/20 Invisible messages w/subtle font tweaks
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/fontcode-invisible-messages-steganography/
GIST	<p>IF YOU'RE GRASPING for the deeper meaning of an essay or article, consider the possibility that it may not be in the words themselves, but hidden in the shape of the letters. It really could be the case, now that researchers from Columbia University have developed a method called FontCode, which plants data in text through tiny changes in how the letters are shaped.</p> <p>The method is a steganographic technique, meaning it hides secret information in plain sight such that only its intended recipient knows where to look for it and how to extract it. FontCode can be applied to hundreds of common fonts, like Helvetica or Times New Roman, and works in word processors like Microsoft Word. Data encoded with FontCode can also endure across any image-preserving digital format, like PDF or PNG. The secret data won't persist after, say, copy and pasting FontCode text between text editors.</p> <p>The most significant format conversion FontCode messages can transcend, though, is digital to physical and back.</p> <p>"Many modern steganographic techniques are always in digital files, but you can argue that the world is much larger than just digital formats," says Changxi Zheng, a computer scientist at Columbia University who worked on the FontCode research. "So the question was how can we design a common physical object to convey digital information without compromising its existing functionality. I call it a hyperlink between a physical object and digital information."</p> <p>Invisible Ink</p> <p>The text perturbations FontCode uses to embed a message involve slightly changing curvatures, widths, and heights—but crucially it's all imperceptible to the naked eye. You can intuit that some letters, like capital "I"s or "J"s, don't have a lot of complexity in which to hide subtle variations. But lowercase "a"s and "g"s, for example, have lots of edges and curves that can be elongated or shortened and bulked up or paired down.</p> <p>The only easy way to extract the hidden information in all those tiny tweaks is with the research teams' decoding algorithm. A recipient of a FontCode message could use their smartphone to take a picture of text manipulated with FontCode, then run the photo through a dedicated mobile app that decrypts the code to pull out the hidden message. It would also be possible to set up decoding schemes that use a webcam, a scanner, or any other image digitization method.</p> <p>Though FontCode is just begging to be used in spy movies or by White House staffers, the researchers also imagine that it could be used in place of everyone's least-favorite hyperlink method, QR codes, or as a watermarking feature. FontCode messages could convey information about trademarks, patents, or other intellectual property protections in a document, or could even act as an anti-tampering feature to ensure that a document hasn't been manipulated.</p> <p>One difficulty for the FontCode team was maximizing the amount of information they could hide in text while still making the method flexible enough that complete information can still be extracted if physical limitations erode fidelity—for example, if a shadow distorts some letters, or someone drips coffee on a printout that contains a FontCode message.</p> <p>"The main challenge we were facing was how to encode as much information as possible—because if it only works with a tiny bit of information it's useless—while making it robust enough so if you have bad lighting or ink stains on the text it will still work," Zheng says.</p> <p>Ch-Ch-Changes</p> <p>Steganographic techniques have been around for millennia, but in recent years cybersecurity researchers have noticed hackers adopting them in malicious attacks, and developing new variations to make their hacks more successful. These types of attacks are difficult for network defenders to detect, since they often hide malicious data in things like image files that don't have any set standard to check them against.</p>

	<p>FontCode could be more difficult to weaponize, since anyone could potentially use machine learning algorithms—like those that generate FontCode tweaks—to check text documents against font standards.</p> <p>“This technique is likely easily detected by machine learning, so it is not suitable for sending secret messages where there are people on the lookout for secret messages being sent,” says Owen Campbell-Moore, a security researcher who created the Chrome extension Secretbook to hide messages in Facebook photos. “This is in contrast to other steganography techniques such as JPEG steganography, in which decades of research has been done in order to make it undetectable even when there are people actively scanning for it.”</p> <p>But FontCode does have the advantage of moving between digital and physical mediums, which could have specific applications in high-stakes espionage. And the researchers note that FontCode messages can be additionally encrypted if the sender and receiver agree on a key for reordering whatever data is embedded in a given text. Plus, the technique’s more mainstream uses wouldn’t be impacted by the potential that a scanner could discover the presence of the data—since it wouldn’t be a secret in the first place that more information was stored there.</p> <p>“It’s exciting to see new techniques for steganography being invented,” Campbell-Moore says. “I think this technique has a lot of appeal.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/20 Kaspersky huge discounts UK forces
SOURCE	https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/alarm-at-kaspersky-software-discounts-for-british-forces-tvpc0kd8q
GIST	<p>A Russian cyber-security firm at the centre of spying fears has targeted more than 140,000 British military personnel and police officers with big discounts on computer software.</p> <p>Members of the UK armed forces, police and other emergency services are being offered 50% off Kaspersky Lab antivirus software in exclusive rewards schemes.</p> <p>The revelation has alarmed security officials who fear the firm’s products could be used by the Kremlin to spy on the British military and police.</p> <p>Last September the US Department of Homeland Security ordered government departments in America to stop using Kaspersky software over concerns it could aid Russian espionage.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Chrome’s red ‘not secure’ warning
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/chrome-issue-red-not-secure-warning-http
GIST	<p>Google is putting yet another nail in the HTTP coffin: starting with Chrome 70, pages that are not served over a secure connection will be marked with a red warning.</p> <p>The search giant has been pushing for an encrypted web for many years, and suggested in 2014 that all HTTP sites be marked as insecure.</p> <p>Google proposed that Chrome would initially mark HTTP pages serving password fields or credit card interactions as “Not Secure,” and only then move to marking all of them in a similar manner.</p> <p>Now, Google believes that the Chrome security indicators should evolve in line with a wider adoption of HTTPS across the Internet.</p> <p>At the beginning of May 2018, over 93% of the traffic across Google resources was being served over an</p>

	<p>encrypted connection, a major improvement since early 2014, when only 50% of the traffic was encrypted.</p> <p>Similar advancements were observed across the web as well, where around three quarters of the pages loaded via Chrome at the end of last week were served over HTTPS. Three years ago, only around 40% of the loaded pages were using HTTPS.</p> <p>Given the wider adoption of HTTPS, Google is now ready to make another push towards eliminating unencrypted connections by marking HTTP pages with a red “Not Secure” warning.</p> <p>“Previously, HTTP usage was too high to mark all HTTP pages with a strong red warning, but in October 2018 (Chrome 70), we’ll start showing the red “not secure” warning when users enter data on HTTP pages,” Emily Schechter, Product Manager, Chrome Security, notes in a blog post.</p> <p>“Users should expect that the web is safe by default, and they’ll be warned when there’s an issue. Since we’ll soon start marking all HTTP pages as ‘not secure’, we’ll step towards removing Chrome’s positive security indicators so that the default unmarked state is secure,” Schechter notes.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Hacking group targets NKorea defectors
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/sun-teams-reddawn-campaign-targets-north-korean-defectors-and-journalist/article/767126/
GIST	<p>The second campaign from the “Sun Team” hacking group managed to sneak its way into the Google Play Store to targeted North Korean defectors.</p> <p>The malware looks to copy sensitive information including personal photos, contacts, and SMS messages and sends them to the threat actors,” according to a May 17 blog post.</p> <p>The malware became active in 2017 with the sole purpose of extracting information from devices.</p> <p>Researchers identified the malwares at an early stage and subsequently alerted Google and as a result, the number of infections was only about 100 infections, quit low compared with previous campaigns from Google Play. Threat actors also used Facebook to distribute malicious links to which linked to that apps.</p> <p>The malware was hidden in three apps named AppLockFree (Unreleased), Fast AppLock (Unreleased), and Food Ingredients Info which offers information about food, all of which have since been removed after staying online for roughly two months.</p> <p>Sun Team also used awkward Korean writing in the descriptions which followed a pattern of using names of celebrities, such as Jack Black, who appeared on Korean TV suggesting the threat actors aren’t native South Koreans but are familiar with the culture and language, researchers said.</p> <p>Researchers believe the apps are multi-staged and use several components with one of the apps being part of a reconnaissance stage which sets the foundation for the next stage for the other two apps. The malware also attempts to spread to a victims friends and asks them the install the other malicious apps and offer feedback via a Facebook account with a fake profile promoted.</p> <p>Researchers also found Sun Team used devices manufactured in several countries and carry installed Korean apps to test the exploits they tried to use.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Spectre attack reveals firmware secrets
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/ex-intel-security-expert-this-new-spectre-attack-can-even-reveal-

	firmware-secrets/
GIST	<p>Yuriy Bulygin, the former head of Intel's advanced threat team, has published research showing that the Spectre CPU flaws can be used to break into the highly privileged CPU mode on Intel x86 systems known as System Management Mode (SMM).</p> <p>Spectre and Meltdown vulnerabilities enable software attacks using CPU design flaws common to Intel, AMD, and Arm chips to access secrets stored in memory.</p> <p>Bulygin, who has launched security firm Eclypsium, has modified Spectre variant 1 with kernel privileges to attack a host system's firmware and expose code in SMM, a secure portion of BIOS or UEFI firmware.</p> <p>SMM resides in SMRAM, a protected region of physical memory that should only be accessible by BIOS firmware and not the operating system kernel, hypervisors or security software.</p> <p>SMM handles especially disruptive interrupts and is accessible through the SMM runtime of the firmware, known as System Management Interrupt (SMI) handlers.</p> <p>As a former Intel researcher explained in a 2013 paper, when an SMI event occurs, say, due to thermal throttling or system health checks, all the CPU's cores enter SMM or system management mode.</p> <p>"Because SMM generally has privileged access to physical memory, including memory isolated from operating systems, our research demonstrates that Spectre-based attacks can reveal other secrets in memory (eg, hypervisor, operating system, or application)," Bulygin explains.</p> <p>To expose code in SMM, Bulygin modified a publicly available proof-of-concept Spectre 1 exploit running with kernel-level privileges to bypass Intel's System Management Range Register (SMRR), a set of range registers that protect SMM memory.</p> <p>"These enhanced Spectre attacks allow an unprivileged attacker to read the contents of memory, including memory that should be protected by the range registers, such as SMM memory," he notes.</p> <p>"This can expose SMM code and data that was intended to be confidential, revealing other SMM vulnerabilities as well as secrets stored in SMM. Additionally, since we demonstrate that the speculative memory access occurs from the context of SMM, this could be used to reveal other secrets in memory as well."</p> <p>Bulygin said he's been working with Intel since March and that Intel believes its guidance to mitigate Spectre variant 1 and Spectre variant 2 should also be applied to SMM.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/20 Japan: 200M users info on hacking forum
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/data-of-over-200-million-japanese-sold-on-underground-hacking-forum/
GIST	<p>A hacker suspected to be operating out of China has been seen peddling the data of around 200 million Japanese users on an underground cybercrime forum, according to a FireEye iSIGHT Intelligence report shared with Bleeping Computer.</p> <p>The data appears to have been assembled by hacking up to 50 smaller Japanese sites and put up for sale as one big giant archive in December 2017.</p> <p>After analyzing a sample of the data, researchers say they've identified the hacked targets as small Japanese websites activate in the retail, food and beverage, financial, entertainment, and transportation sectors.</p>

FireEye believes the data is authentic and not forged because it contains data on users whose personal info had been leaked in other breaches, but also data for new users.

The mixture between new and old data is also confirmed by other clues suggesting some data comes from hacks taking place in June 2016, but others go as far as May 2013.

The user leaked data varies depending on the website from where it's been stolen, but usually includes real names, email addresses, dates of birth, phone numbers, and home addresses.

Data dump currently sold for only \$150

The price for the entire archive is ¥1,000 CNY (\$150.96 USD). Several actors commenting on the forum thread where the suspected Chinese hacker was selling his data commented that they've bought the PII cache but did not receive their files. It is unclear if these comments are true, or if these were made by other data sellers trying to sabotage their competition.

FireEye says it tracked the hacker's online persona to a QQ social network ID that is also linked to another hacker's online persona. This second hacker persona received bad reviews and had a bad reputation as well.

"This QQ address is connected to an individual living in China's Zhejiang province," researchers said about the hacker's real location.

This same persona seems to have been active online since 2013, the year of the oldest data included in the Japanese files. FireEye says the hacker has been linked to selling data on multiple Chinese hacking forums—data belonging to companies in many other countries such as China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, European countries, Australia, New Zealand, and North American countries.

While the data sold in this most recent dump does not contain very sensitive information, the stolen information can still facilitate identity theft, spam, malware propagation, and fraud.

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HEADLINE	05/19 Students hack school to change grades
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/students-hack-high-school-to-change-grades-get-lunch-refunds/
GIST	<p>Two students from Bloomfield Hills High School are the main suspects of a recent hack discovered at the school this week.</p> <p>The two broke into the school's MISTAR Student Information System portal where they changed grades, attendance records, and attempted to refund lunch purchases.</p> <p>The hack came to light after a school employee logged into his account a noticed an error. School officials investigated the issue and discovered the hack.</p> <p>The two students are said to have used a vulnerability in the school portal to carry out their hack. They tried to disguise their identity by modifying the records for 20 students.</p> <p>Dire repercussions announced in a YouTube video</p> <p>But according to a YouTube video posted by Bloomfield Hills High School superintendent Robert Glass, school employees with the help of forensic data experts managed to track down the two culprits.</p> <p>"As a father myself, my heart aches for the parents of the students who will be learning a very hard lesson," Glass said in the YouTube video.</p>

	"The consequences for these young individuals is likely to be severe. Cyber hacking is a federal crime and we're working with the proper authorities to determine the appropriate discipline and legal ramifications," Glass said. "Due to student privacy laws, we're not able to disclose more information but we can assure you that we're working within the full extent of the Student Code of Conduct and the full extent of the law."
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HEADLINE	05/19 Vigilant hacker hits cyberespionage group
SOURCE	https://koddos.net/blog/vigilante-hacker-steals-and-publishes-cyberespionage-groups-data/
GIST	<p>A vigilante hacker recently stole data belonging to a hacking group called ZooPark. The group is allegedly connected to the Iranian government. Upon receiving \$1,000 payment, the hacker decided to publish the data online.</p> <p>According to recent reports, an unknown hacker has managed to infiltrate systems belonging to the cyberespionage group which is supposedly linked to the government. Researchers claim that the stolen data included phone calls, texts, as well as GPS locations which the group took from their alleged victims. Upon obtaining the data in question, the vigilante hacker decided to publish it publically.</p> <p>It would seem that even the hackers working for the government itself are not untouchable, and will have to face consequences for their actions. Especially when those actions are publically displayed for everyone to download and see.</p> <p>The hacker who stole the data has announced on Monday that they will publish the data on a public domain within 48 hours. The hacker requested that someone pays \$1,000 worth of Bitcoin (BTC) in order to publish the data, and they apparently got their wish. The released files are seemingly legitimate, as they are in line with previously obtained information.</p> <p>According to researchers, the published files came from a server owned by the ZooPark group. This is a hacking unit revealed earlier this month by researchers from Kaspersky. The link to ZooPark was confirmed after comparing the stolen materials with Kaspersky researchers' reports.</p> <p>The report claims that the hacking group has targeted victims in various countries, including Morocco, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, and Lebanon. These results are confirmed by the GPS locations of the victims that came from the stolen files.</p> <p>According to the vigilante, ZooPark might be a group based in Iran, which is something that researchers managed to conclude on their own as well. Unfortunately, Kaspersky did not manage to connect ZooPark to any other known hacking group so far.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/19 ISIS message continues to thrive online
SOURCE	https://www.thenational.ae/uae/isis-message-thrives-online-after-crushing-defeat-on-battlefield-europe-s-globsec-security-forum-hears-1.731884
GIST	<p>Terror groups such as Isis are reaching ever wider audiences online after their crushing defeat on the battlefield, raising the question of how to defeat an enemy adept at tapping into anger among young people and recruiting them to their ranks.</p> <p>The issue took centre stage at the Globsec forum in Bratislava on Saturday against a backdrop of terror attacks across European cities that have claimed the lives of hundreds in recent years.</p> <p>"They send their messages, they decide on the platform and we're always on the defence, trying to catch up, what they're trying to do and how they recruit," said Maqsood Kruse, executive director of Hedayah,</p>

the Abu Dhabi anti-extremism centre.

Mr Kruse said terrorists today are transcending borders and have been remarkably successful online.

"Their existence in the digital world, in cybercrime, their ability to connect and reconnect and establish different associations..." he said.

He told an audience of European security officials and government ministers there is a need to create an effective counter narrative, an alternative for people susceptible to radicalisation.

"When they join these groups they actually tap into a world of excitement, action, endangerment, but most important they feel they're having a noble cause, they're making a difference in the world, they're part of a group. If you take all of this away from them, the question remains, what is the alternative?"

Mr Kruse said whether it was right-wing, left-wing or religious extremism, there are common themes seen in recruits across the board.

"Perceived grievance, issues of identity - the notion that they need to have a certain purpose and mission and direction in their lives" he said.

Among the other UAE speakers at Globsec in the Slovakian capital was Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Dr Anwar Gargash, who on Friday called for an end to Iranian and Turkish interference in the region.

Nicholas Rasmussen, former director of the National Counterterrorism Centre in the United States, said Isis' ability to bring foreign fighters to a conflict zone "had as much to do with adventure, had as much to do with violence and had as much to do with excitement, changing your life," as it did any religious element.

"It may just be about personal fulfilment in a way. Unfortunately that meant that the pool of potential recruits was much much wider than anything we'd seen during the Al Qaeda years," he said.

"I hesitate to think of the Al Qaeda years as the good old days of dealing with counter terrorism, but it was a small pool of potential actors."

The debate focused on how several key themes: how perpetrators often have a background in low level crime; how recruiters tap into disaffection with targets' lives and how organised crime in Europe has funded terror networks on the continent and in the Middle East.

Magnus Ranstorp, research director of the Centre for Asymmetric Threat Studies at the Swedish National Defence College, said terrorist groups have long been linked to organised criminal activity, from the IRA smuggling fuel and demanding extortion money to Isis smuggling refugees.

"If you look at the microfinancing of foreign terrorist fighters, one thing they're not lacking is money. And the money is generated from a whole array of different activities, everything from welfare benefit fraud to VAT fraud."

He cited one example of a group of shell companies in Denmark that imported cheese and meat from German and the Netherlands.

"They were connected to an Isis cell in Spain, and the extremists in Denmark gave the banking key facilitation devices so they could lift money [from the companies] to fund people going from Melilla to Syria." The cell was exposed last year by Spanish uncover police.

"I came yesterday from Copenhagen, where a huge ring of criminals and extremists were arrested. What they were doing was actually smuggling people into Europe - these were Syrians - and of course the money they got from that was then smuggled back into Syria, to fund the Al Nusra Front."

	<p>All three experts said local communities have a greater role to play in identifying those at risk of radicalisation.</p> <p>"We need to also remind ourselves that only relying on security, policing, intelligence, military approaches alone is no longer enough or efficient," said Mr Kruse, from Hedayah.</p> <p>"If we are truly sincere in countering this phenomenon, we are all part of the solution."</p> <p>Mr Rasmussen added: "In easily 80 per cent of the cases we've looked at over the last decade in the United States, somebody in the aftermath of that case lifted their hand and said 'oh I actually saw something and I didn't really act on it' in a timely way. That person may have been a teacher or a relative or a peer or a coach or a colleague, and those are the individuals that are most likely to spot the signs of radicalisation.</p> <p>"As director [James] Comey of the FBI used to say: 'If I'm involved, if the FBI is involved, it's usually way too late already'."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Man gets 15yrs for hacker sabotage
SOURCE	https://www.news8000.com/news/crime/man-sentenced-to-15-years-in-prison-for-hacker-sabotage-1/743650001
GIST	<p>MINNEAPOLIS (AP) - A New Mexico man accused of paying hackers to sabotage websites affiliated with his former employers and state agencies has been sentenced in Minnesota to 15 years in prison.</p> <p>John Kelsey Gammell earlier pleaded guilty to federal hacking conspiracy charges. The FBI says the case represents a growing form of cybercrime in which professional hackers are paid to inflict damage on individuals, businesses and others who rely on digital devices.</p> <p>Gammell admitted in federal court in St. Paul to engaging in a campaign of cyberattacks against at least three dozen websites between 2015 and 2017, including those of former employers, banks, Hennepin County in Minnesota and the Minnesota Judicial Branch.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Atlanta's network almost recovered
SOURCE	https://www.ajc.com/news/local/atlanta-network-almost-recovered-from-cyber-attack-cost-still-unkown/k6srGim85Q8dKwUFPbcDhN/
GIST	<p>The City of Atlanta's computer network has nearly recovered from a ransomware cyber attack suffered nearly two months ago, said Chief Operating Officer Richard Cox in an Friday interview with The Atlanta Journal-Constitution and Channel 2 Action News.</p> <p>Cox said the municipal court is the only department whose computers haven't been brought back online.</p> <p>"We are in testing right now," Cox said, adding that he expects them to be operational in about 10 days.</p> <p>Cox said the total cost of the attack has yet to be calculated. But emergency contracts posted on the city's procurement website have a combined not-to-exceed amount of about \$5 million.</p> <p>"If you dig into those numbers a lot of those expenses are inevitably things we were going to have to invest in regardless," Cox said.</p> <p>On March 22, city employees were ordered to turn off their computers to stop a virus from spreading through the network and encrypting data. A cyber criminal group demanded that the city pay it about</p>

\$51,000 in bitcoins — a crypto currency that allows for anonymous transactions online.

The city refused to pay the ransom on the advice of federal agents.

“We were advised, at some point during the attack, this particular threat actor had hit places after the ransom was paid,” Cox said.

Following the attack, the city hired Secureworks, a Dell subsidiary, who has emerged as an early authority on the cyber-criminal group, “Gold Lowell.” That group is being blamed for a rash of cyber attacks involving a variant of SamSam, the type of ransomware that struck Atlanta.

In early 2018, about a month before the Atlanta cyber attack, Secureworks published a report titled “SamSam Ransomware Campaigns,” which noted that the recent attacks involving SamSam have been opportunistic, lucrative and impacted a wide range of organizations.

Cox said on Friday it was too soon to say if any data or other records had been permanently lost.

“We are still in the process of going through files to understand the status,” he said. “That process will continue to take quite a while.”

The city provided a copy of its cyber attack insurance policy to the AJC this week in response to a public records request, but redacted the coverage limits, citing security concerns.

Cyber attack insurance policies are an uncharted area of the market, and security experts have warned that the risks associated with them are difficult to calculate. The policies contain a number of exclusions and require meeting basic security standards.

Asked if he expected an insurance payout, Cox said: “We are having ongoing conversations with our cyber insurance vendor ... Our expectation is that we will be able to partner with them in a very fair manner.”

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HEADLINE	05/19 Shooting suspect social media footprint
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/crime-courts/shooting-suspect-dimitrios-pagourtzis-posted-born-kill-t-shirt-n875571
GIST	<p>Three weeks before he allegedly killed 10 people at a Texas high school, Dimitrios Pagourtzis posted a photo to what appears to have been his Instagram account with a picture of a knife and a handgun atop a mattress and a profane caption.</p> <p>A source at Facebook confirmed the company deleted the Instagram account after Friday's shooting at Santa Fe High School, along with his apparent Facebook account. (Update: Facebook initially said it had "removed the shooter's accounts" from its platforms. Facebook now says it is not certain of the shooter's ties to the Instagram account.)</p> <p>Another Instagram post was a picture of the arcade game Silent Scope — which allows players to pretend they are a sniper using a controller shaped like a rifle — captioned with a smile emoji. A third photo: the underside of a frog.</p> <p>He followed only 13 other Instagram accounts, and eight of them were fan pages for firearms. The others include the official accounts for the White House, President Donald Trump, Ivanka Trump and Melania Trump's official @FLOTUS account.</p> <p>On his Facebook page, Pagourtzis posted a photo on April 30 that seems chilling in retrospect: a T-shirt spread out on a bed with the slogan "Born to Kill."</p>

The same day the 17-year-old put up a photo of a trenchcoat — like the one classmates say he wore to school most days — covered with pins, including the Iron Cross, a German military medal sometimes associated with Nazis, and a symbol of a goat head that is connected to the Church of Satan.

The caption below the photo appeared to be an explanation of the meaning of some of the other pins: He captioned the photo: "Hammer and Sickle = Rebellion," "Rising Sun = Kamikaze Tactics," "Iron Cross = Bravery," "Baphomet = Evil," "Cthulhu = Power."

While posts could provide clues to Pagourtzis' interests and state of mind before he allegedly barged into a classroom and started shooting, not all of them were so darkly themed.

In one selfie from May 2, Pagourtzis wore a backwards baseball cap adorned with a pink and purple striped pin that is associated with bisexual pride, according to dozens of online retailers. In his profile photo, he wore a black hat with a white peace sign on the front.

A few details of Pagourtzis' life began to emerge in the hours after the shooting. A newspaper story showed he was on the honor roll at Santa Fe when he was a freshman. He had played on the Santa Fe junior varsity football team but was not listed on the current roster.

One student, who was 200 feet away from the shooter when she was told someone had a gun, said she was shocked when she learned Pagourtzis was the alleged gunman.

"He seemed like a nice kid, but I didn't know him personally so there could be something going on that nobody knew about," sophomore Bailee Sobnosky said.

His family attended a Greek Orthodox church, and he participated in traditional Greek dance. One person who knew him from church said he was stunned to hear he might be involved in a horrific crime.

"He's quiet but he's harmless. He's just a regular kid, nothing unusual about him at all," he said.

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HEADLINE	05/18 Mugshots.com owners arrested
SOURCE	https://lawandcrime.com/high-profile/here-are-the-mugshots-of-the-guys-who-allegedly-run-mugshots-com-and-why-they-were-booked/
GIST	<p>The alleged owners of Mugshots.com have been charged and arrested. These four men—Sahar Sarid, Kishore Vidya Bhavnanie, Thomas Keese, and David Usdan—only removed a person’s mugshot from the site if this individual paid a “de-publishing” fee, according to the California Attorney General on Wednesday. That’s apparently considered extortion. On top of that, they also face charges for money laundering, and identity theft.</p> <p>If you read a lot of articles about crime, then you’re probably already familiar with the site (which is still up as of Friday afternoon). They take mugshots, slap the url multiple times on the image, and post it on the site alongside an excerpt from a news outlet that covered the person’s arrest.</p> <p>According to the AG’s office, the owners would only remove the mugshots if the person paid a fee, even if the charges were dismissed or if the suspect was only arrested because of “mistaken identity or law enforcement error.”</p> <p>“This pay-for-removal scheme attempts to profit off of someone else’s humiliation,” said Attorney General Xavier Becerra. “Those who can’t afford to pay into this scheme to have their information removed pay the price when they look for a job, housing, or try to build relationships with others. This is exploitation, plain and simple.”</p> <p>The AG’s statement claims that Mugshots.com owners got \$64,000 from about 175 people with billing</p>

	addressed in the state. That's over a three-year period. Of course, that falls way, way short of how much they raked nationwide: The four got over \$2 million in "de-publishing" fees from 5,703 people.
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	05/21 Taliban warns Kabul of more attacks
SOURCE	https://www.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-taliban-warns-kabul-residents-of-more-attacks/29240009.html
GIST	<p>The Taliban has warned Kabul residents to stay away from "military centers" as they vowed more attacks in the Afghan capital.</p> <p>In a statement published online on May 21, the militants said the coming attacks on "the enemy's military and intelligence centers" were part of an annual spring offensive.</p> <p>"Therefore, to avoid civilian casualties and only cause damage to enemy military, we are asking Kabul residents to keep away.... We don't want even a single innocent civilian to be killed," the statement said.</p> <p>It did not elaborate on what was meant by "military and intelligence centers."</p> <p>The Taliban is stepping up attacks in an apparent rejection of calls for the militants to accept the Afghan government's February offer of peace talks.</p> <p>The Taliban and an affiliate of the Islamic State (IS) extremist group have carried out a series of massive attacks in Kabul in recent months.</p> <p>At least 25 people were killed on April 30 in twin suicide bombings claimed by IS militants, including nine journalists who had rushed to the scene of the first attack. Among the dead were two RFE/RL journalists and an RFE/RL trainee.</p> <p>On May 21 in the southern province of Kandahar, officials said gunmen killed five members of a demining team that was clearing a segment for a planned gas pipeline. A sixth worker was missing following the attack in Maiwand district.</p> <p>The deminers were working for the TAPI project intended to transport natural gas along an 1,800-kilometer route from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan and India, the officials said.</p> <p>Zia Durrani, spokesman for the provincial police chief, said Taliban militants were behind the attack.</p> <p>A Taliban spokesman said the incident was being investigated and that the victims were not wearing the usual uniform worn by TAPI workers.</p> <p>The main Taliban organization in Afghanistan has declared its support for TAPI, calling it an "important project" for the country.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Group: second ISIS group leaves Damascus
SOURCE	https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/second-group-of-isis-fighters-leaves-damascus-district-monitor-says-1.732415
GIST	<p>A second group of ISIS fighters left their last stronghold in Damascus overnight, a UK-based war monitor said on Monday, while the government has yet to confirm any evacuation deal with the extremist group.</p> <p>However, a military source was quoted by the official Sana news agency as saying that a temporary</p>

	<p>ceasefire was in place to allow women, children and elderly to leave the area of Al Hajar Al Aswad.</p> <p>Pro-Syrian regime forces have launched an intensive operation to recover ISIS's south Damascus pocket in Al Hajar Al Aswad and the Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp since driving rebels from Eastern Ghouta in April.</p> <p>Yarmouk is the last Damascus district beyond government control and its full evacuation would bring the entire capital and its surroundings under regime control for the first time since 2012.</p> <p>"A second batch of elements from the ISIS organisation left after midnight," the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.</p> <p>"They are heading to a pocket in the desert still under the control of the extremist organisation."</p> <p>The first group of ISIS fighters was transferred by bus out of southern Damascus on Sunday, the monitor said.</p> <p>The military source quoted by Sana said a ceasefire that began on Sunday would remain in place until 12noon (1pm UAE time) on Monday to allow women and children to leave the area.</p> <p>It said the government would subsequently resume its operations.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Regional approach fighting extremism
SOURCE	http://www.afr.com/news/world/asia/terrorism-on-our-doorstep-takes-a-region-to-counter-extremism-20180517-h1067z
GIST	<p>They are every security force's nightmare.</p> <p>Small, mobile terrorist cells that are fiercely loyal and can communicate off the grid, making them almost impossible to detect.</p> <p>Only these have one additional and horrifying characteristic. They are also families.</p> <p>When Dita Oepriarto and his wife Puji Kuswati strapped suicide vests onto themselves and their four children, aged between 8 and 18, and bombed three churches in the busy East Javanese city of Surabaya last Sunday, they exposed a disturbing new frontier for extremist groups.</p> <p>The family unit, previously off-limits for suicide missions, was also mobilised in the bombing of a police station on Monday, while yet another couple and two of their children died on Sunday when a bomb exploded prematurely at their apartment.</p> <p>Indonesia has had its share of terrorism-related violence but the latest attacks, which claimed at least 25 lives and injured dozens more, have left a devastating mark.</p> <p>While women and children have long been an integral part of terrorist organisations, they typically provide spiritual and logistical support. Rarely in Indonesia have they been used as combatants.</p> <p>Analysts are hopeful families willing to put themselves forward for these types of suicide missions will be few, if any, and this is not the start of a new trend.</p> <p>However, it is consistent with the shock tactics of Islamic State (IS), which inspired the Surabaya attacks. It is also distressingly effective as the involvement of children confounds security guards, charged with keeping areas and communities safe, and also attracts worldwide attention.</p>

"We are dealing with IS not al-Qaeda," says Greg Barton, a counter-terrorism expert from Deakin University.

'There is no grey zone'

Al-Qaeda, which was founded by Osama bin Laden and responsible for the September 11, 2001 attacks in the US and the 2002 Bali bombings, "is a ruthless, terrorist organisation which justifies the worst kind of violence but it is also sensitive to image maintenance and avoids provoking outrage in the community to the point that it loses support," says Barton.

"IS is more black and white. There is no grey zone. It sees being provocative as an effective tool for recruitment and building solidarity. It is quite comfortable sending women and children off to their deaths."

Sidney Jones, director of the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict in Jakarta, says IS, also known as ISIS, has always been a family affair, with whole families being encouraged to migrate to Syria and women providing key support functions.

"Only by having normal families living normal lives could ISIS hope to make a claim to functioning like a normal state," she wrote in an article for the Lowy Institute's *The Interpreter* this week.

"The problem was that many of the women were not satisfied with the very traditional role ISIS assigned them. Some, as we know from observing social media, wanted more action and admired women suicide bombers in Palestine, Iraq and Chechnya."

The latest attacks are a setback for Indonesia in its fight against terrorism, which has been remarkably successful since the Bali bombings 16 years ago.

As a response to the Bali tragedy, which killed more than 200 people, including 88 Australians, Jakarta set up the Special Forces counter-terrorism squad known as Detachment 88.

Australia and the US provided funding and training for the squad which includes investigators, explosive experts and a tactical response unit. While it has attracted controversy over deaths in custody and claims of heavy-handed treatment of terror suspects, it is widely credited with thwarting dozens of attacks.

Barton says the squad is "Australia's single biggest success in our engagement with Indonesia in decades."

The improvement in Indonesia's counter-terrorism capabilities and response tactics is to a level where Australia is now learning from the Indonesians. Barton says Canberra should now focus its efforts on preventing attacks from happening by countering violent extremism. This involves community work and on-the-ground engagement.

Awkwardly, the recent attacks are a reminder to Australia of the importance of its development assistance programs at a time when the federal government is cutting aid to Indonesia.

A 10 per cent reduction of direct funding to Indonesia was announced in the recent budget, as spending was redirected to the Pacific, where Australia is building a high-speed internet cable to the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea.

The government has argued Indonesia is a fast-growing economy and as such, its relationship with Australia is changing.

Changing relationships

Canberra is now focused on signing a new trade and investment agreement with Jakarta to support economic growth and improve living conditions. However, analysts are concerned the inevitable cuts to

existing programs on the ground – the exact details of which are yet to be finalised – will be detrimental to regional security.

"This is not the time to be cutting foreign aid," says Joshua Roose, director of the Institute for Religion, Politics and Society at the Australian Catholic University.

"You can pump as much money into security as you like but you are treating a symptom," he adds.

Barton says the aid budget is not just about helping people overseas but it also works in Australia's favour by improving the security environment and is an effective use of taxpayers' money.

The cut to development assistance in Indonesia is "a relatively small amount of money in the national budget and I think it represents misguided thinking", he says.

"We haven't seen the deliberation process yet over which programs will be funded and which won't but there is no question – even with careful deliberation – there will be an erosion of what we want to do [on the ground.]"

Australia's response to the Surabaya bombings so far has been focused on security.

Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton ordered "an urgent review of known and active terrorist organisations in the region to consider what further action we should take".

In a statement to AFR Weekend, he said "Australia is committed to working with our partners in the region against the threat from terrorist organisations and foreign fighters returning to the region."

Foreign fighters returning to south-east Asia are of high concern for Canberra. Indonesian police claim that there are more than 500 returnees from Syria or Iraq to the country, a relatively small number given the overall population of about 260 million.

However, Barton says the Surabaya church attacks – the family was initially said to have returned from Syria but police later retracted the claim – show the impact of returnees is not just limited to those people who have been overseas.

"It's not simply the returnees who are a problem but those who are in their orbit or come under their influence," he says.

That can quickly turn 500 people of interest into several thousand.

The heightened security threat in the region comes at a time of increased co-operation on counter-terrorism.

Australia and the 10 countries from the Association of South-East Asian Nations signed a wide-ranging co-operation agreement in March, under which Canberra has pledged to provide "technical assistance" on preparing anti-terror laws, help countries crackdown on terrorism financing, work on detecting foreign fighters as they return home, and bolster countries' capacity to collect and share evidence.

Last year, Australia sent two Orion surveillance aircraft and troops to the Philippines to assist and train its forces as they fought off IS loyalists in Marawi, a predominantly Muslim city on the island of Mindanao.

In a further sign that the unpredictable and often hostile leadership of President Rodrigo Duterte has not torpedoed military and defence ties, Australia took part in the Balikatan military exercises with the US and the Philippines, which concluded this week.

And after the surprise Malaysian election result of last week, ending the six-decades-long grip on power of the former ruling party, which had been isolated by a global corruption scandal, Kuala Lumpur is expected

to be more open to regional co-operation.

The real challenge for Indonesia, which has prided itself on being a model of moderate Islam, will be to combat radicalisation of communities.

The country's largest Islamic organisations, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, emphatically condemned the Surabaya bombings this week.

"The involvement of families leaving or returning from ISIS has several implications," writes Jones in her article.

"It means deradicalisation has to happen as a family – it can't only be aimed at the men. And deradicalisation programs cannot just be aimed at inculcating nationalism or exposing extremists to other interpretations of Qur'anic texts.

"They have to address how families as a whole, often indoctrinated into believing that anyone outside ISIS is the enemy, can be persuaded to change their objectives as individuals and as a family unit."

A 2015 Pew Research study found that 4 per cent of Indonesians have a favourable opinion of IS, which may seem small, but given Indonesia's large population, adds up to more than 10 million people if extrapolated out.

Roose points out a further 18 per cent are undecided, according to that study.

"Even if they turn 20 per cent of that 18 per cent, they have just doubled their number of supporters," he warns.

For now Indonesia and the region are on high alert as Muslims have just begun the holy month of Ramadan. This has become a time of year when jihadists try to step up their attacks because they are told they gain more rewards in the after world.

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HEADLINE	05/20 Threat from returning ISIS to Balkans
SOURCE	http://moderntokyotimes.com/returning-is-fighters-in-the-balkans-beyond-the-immediate-security-threat/
GIST	<p>Over the years, the nations of the Western Balkans have seen about 1,000 of their citizens join al-Qaeda's Syria wing, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (formerly known as Jabhat al-Nusra), and move on to join so-called Islamic State (IS). [1] They have hailed from majority-Muslim communities in Bosnia, Albania, Kosovo, as well as minority Muslim populations in Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia.</p> <p>Regional governments have responded by criminalizing participation in foreign conflicts and taking measures against recruiters, radical preachers and jihadist propaganda networks. [2] The threat of attack is real but limited, while years since the alarm bells first went off, it remains unclear what effect returning foreign fighters will have in the longer term.</p> <p>While the Western Balkans is not immune to terrorist attacks, as sporadic attempted attacks and some lone actor shootings have demonstrated, there is little consensus on the true threat returning foreign fighters pose for the region. Indeed, the general perception is that the region holds little propaganda value as a target for jihadists, raising the question of whether they intend to move further into Europe and in what way the phenomenon will manifest itself in the region's security landscape.</p> <p>The Returnees</p> <p>Between 250–300 Balkan fighters who quit IS and returned home between 2014-2015 seem to have done</p>

so having become disillusioned by the war and disheartened by the infighting between jihadist groups (Gazeta Tema, October 8, 2017). The authorities appear to believe that few of these returnees pose an immediate security risk. In Albania, for instance, media reports have claimed that only 15 of some of the 40 returnees may pose a threat (Reporter.al, March 23, 2016).

Others seem unable or unwilling to return, instead remaining in Syria and Iraq with their families and children. [4] Security agencies in Kosovo claim that there are still 91 children (37 of whom were born in Syria and Iraq) and 41 women in areas under IS control. Only seven women and three children have so far returned home (BalkanWeb, April 5).

Vlado Azinovic, professor of political science at the University of Sarajevo, commented that there were only “a few groups of women and children desperate to return” to the Balkans. “I don’t think that the men will attempt to come back, short of being faced with the choice of imminent death in Syria and Iraq, or criminal prosecution back home,” he said. [5]

Despite the security implications of leaving a generation of potential jihadist fighters to grow up under the influence of remaining IS leaders, governments across Europe, including those of the Western Balkans, seem hesitant to repatriate those left in Syria and Iraq.

Meanwhile, in Bosnia, there are an undetermined number of children born in territories formerly held by IS as a result of “marriages” between Bosnian men and women of other nationalities, Azinovic claims. There are also orphans, adopted by Bosnians, whose nationalities are unknown.

Countering the Threat

The possibility of a large-scale act of terrorism in the Balkans became apparent in November 2016, when security forces in Albania and Kosovo thwarted an attempted attack targeting the Israeli national soccer team during a World Cup qualifying match in Shkodër, northern Albania’s second largest city (Gazeta Express, November 9, 2016).

Warning of the planned attack came from Israeli intelligence, which had reportedly intercepted online conversations between Lavdrim Muhaxheri, a Kosovar Albanian militant reportedly killed by coalition airstrikes against IS in Syria in the summer of 2017, and a number of his followers, including recent returnees from Syria (Insajderi, June 8, 2017; Opinion.al, November 14, 2016).

A total of 19 people, including the planned attack’s supposed mastermind, were arrested across Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia. In Albania alone, more than 170 people were detained and questioned in connection with the plot, including 30 recent returnees from Syria (Panorama, November 10, 2016). The operation was an example of strong collaboration between regional intelligence agencies and international partners, but it also highlighted significant security vulnerabilities.

Since then, the IS influence on populations across the Balkans has been much reduced. Key propaganda and operational mouthpieces—such as Muhaxheri from Kosovo, Almir Daci from Albania, and Ines Midzic from Bosnia and Herzegovina—have reportedly been killed. That has left a significant leadership vacuum for IS supporters in the region, which in turn has left the group’s objectives for its Balkan followers unclear (Insajderi, June 8, 2017; Dnevni List, March 13).

As regional media investigations have shown, there remains a wealth of propaganda material translated by IS into local languages available on social media (Balkan Insight, February 2, 2017). New and updated material, however, is more difficult to find. Most IS-supporting channels have moved onto the “dark web” or material is shared on encrypted applications that are hard for the authorities to trace. The remaining videos and propaganda pages found online date back to the height of IS’ media presence, when it first declared the creation of its so-called caliphate. [3]

Despite this good news for regional actors and counter-extremism strategies adopted across the region, radicalization continues in the Western Balkans, albeit that the ideology is evolving, taking different and

possibly non-violent forms. Radical preachers no longer issue calls to action over war-torn territories, but instead hate speech and the incitement of polarization seems to be increasing and intensifying.

Crossing Borders

It is common for weapons originating in the Balkans to appear in war-torn areas across the Middle East, and to have been used in recent terror attacks in the West (see Terrorism Monitor, December 2, 2015). Indeed, this is not unexpected considering the thriving black market and availability of weapons (Balkan Insight, July 27, 2016). Less understood are reports of key Balkan members of IS repeatedly returning to their countries of origin undetected by the security services. Italian media once claimed that Muhaxheri had returned to Kosovo with his closest aides via the Macedonian border, although Kosovo's authorities quickly denied the reports through an official statement (L'esspresso, December 26, 2016).

Bosnian media has similarly raised alarm bells regarding Midzic returning home several times before his reported death in Syria (Dnevni List, March 13). Both cases, although unconfirmed, raised questions over border controls and the Balkan migrant route toward Western Europe.

Additionally, organized criminal networks can affect transfers and there have been instances where criminal activities have been carried out by adherents of IS ideology. There is still only limited research into the nexus between IS terrorism and organized cross-border criminal networks, and the links between IS terrorists and organized crime have been widely debated. However, high levels of corruption and the already established organized criminal networks in the Balkans could enable this aspect to flourish and facilitate cross-border movement.

Nevertheless, fears of the movement of jihadists from the Balkans into Western Europe should not be overblown, and the situation is at any rate not a one-way trade. There are indications Balkan diaspora communities in the West have already been affected by Islamist ideologies, such as Albanian communities in Italy, and Bosnian communities in Austria (Balkan Insight, January 9). Although these links are yet to be fully explored by the research community, past investigations and terrorism-related trials have helped to shed light on the radicalization processes of some Balkan nationals, dating back to time they spent in the West and links to radical Islamists living in Europe (Balkan Insight, January 9).

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HEADLINE	05/21 Kabul violence makes Afghans fearful
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/worse-than-the-civil-war-kabul-violence-makes-afghans-fearful-of-unseen-enemies--and-each-other/2018/05/19/46ba7ad4-547b-11e8-a6d4-ca1d035642ce_story.html?utm_term=.46c83ed6f387
GIST	<p>KABUL — A pall of fear is settling over this shellshocked capital, where too many bombings, too many funerals, and too many moments of panic and dread in recent months are beginning to take a cumulative toll on people's state of mind.</p> <p>The effects are both subconscious and deliberate. A shopkeeper ducks behind a counter when an unknown customer enters. A man whose son died in a mosque bombing now prays at home. A policeman shouts at journalists to stay away from a crime scene, fearing they will draw new violence. A student with a knapsack arouses instant suspicion.</p> <p>"People are so afraid now that when a tire blows, they run," said Jamshid, a grocery manager in his 30s who uses one name. He was at work May 8 when he heard an explosion across the city. Coming out to the doorway, he said he saw young man take off a backpack and shoot it, blowing himself up.</p> <p>The two bombs, both aimed at police stations, killed six people. The one next to Jamshid's shop blew out hundreds of windows in a cellphone company headquarters across the street. Jamshid was unharmed, but the blast shattered his store windows too — and his nerves.</p>

“This is worse than the civil war,” he said, describing childhood memories of rival militias rocketing the capital. “At least then you knew where they were shooting from, and most rockets didn’t kill people. Now you never know where the next bomb will go off, and they are much deadlier. It affects you mentally.”

Insurgent attacks on Kabul have been occurring periodically for over a decade, but in the past year the pace of bombings and shootings has accelerated sharply. The turning point came last May, when a massive truck bomb shook downtown Kabul during morning rush hour. More than 150 people died and hundreds were wounded.

Since then, both the Taliban and Islamic State militias have claimed several dozen attacks, some of them on the same day. And since Jan. 1, the two groups have struck hotels and mosques, military and police facilities, voter ID centers and commercial markets, and diplomatic and official enclaves, leaving hundreds dead and injured and affecting thousands of families.

With city residents increasingly angry at the government for failing to protect them, security officials have been taking extra measures, such as adding guards and barriers around the main diplomatic zone and putting administrative police officers on street patrols.

But police officials said they are stretched thin, covering a wide urban area full of potential targets — now including 375 voter registration centers for parliamentary elections in October. They also said it is frustrating to try to identify potential suicide attackers who look like everyone else. In a pair of back-to-back bombings April 30, the bomber pretended to be a journalist who was covering a previous blast at the same spot.

“We are supposed to be enforcing the law, catching criminals and stopping terrorists too. Now we have an added focus on the elections,” said Gen. Daoud Amin, Kabul’s police chief, who complained that his roster of 14,700 men is still inadequate. Spotting suicide bombers, he said, is hard without the technical equipment wealthier countries have. “All we can do is watch closely and rely on our instincts.”

On the surface, the capital is still bustling, with weddings halls and shopping malls lit up until late evening, mosques filled on Fridays and high-rise apartments under construction. But in recent interviews, residents said they are now fearful of carrying out their regular activities or have changed their habits — avoiding attack-prone locations such as police stations, praying before they leave home, and keeping in constant cellphone touch with loved ones.

Many people said they had lost a relative, co-worker, friend or neighbor to terrorist attacks in recent months, and some said they had agonized over whether to abandon jobs or worship practices that exposed them to danger. In Dasht-i-Barchi, a Shiite-majority district, produce seller Abdullah Haidari, 69, said his son was killed in a recent mosque bombing and his family had since begged him repeatedly to switch to a different one.

“God knows how much I miss him,” Haidari said, pointing to a spot in the mosque where his son died. “I feel sad every second of my life, but I am not alone. Many people have been going through this. All we hear about these days is suicide, martyrs and death. My wife tells me not to come here, but I can’t abandon this mosque.”

Like others, Haidari blames the government, as much as the insurgents, for his loss. “A hen protects her baby chicks,” he said, but President Ashraf Ghani, “with all the resources he controls, cannot protect us.”

The dilemma is acute for journalists, especially TV crews who are expected to rush to every terrorist attack scene. After the April 30 bombing, which killed nine Kabul-based Afghan journalists, local TV and radio stations went through a period of grief and soul-searching. But almost all of the crews decided to remain on the job, citing both economic need and professional commitment.

Inside the bunkerlike offices of TOLO TV this week, a portrait of Yar Mohammad Tokhi, a cameraman who died in the blast, hung in a tiny room piled with equipment. Another cameraman, Hasib Sadat, was

	<p>badly burned and partly blinded two years ago, when Taliban insurgents bombed a TOLO staff bus. Now he is back on the job, though he acknowledged he tends to cover softer stories.</p> <p>“This is my profession. It is the only way I know to support my family,” Sadat said. Yet he said it was hard on his family, especially his 4-year-old son. “He remembers seeing photos of me in the hospital, and he always tells me not to go to the office,” Sadat said.</p> <p>Another crew member, Ramez Ahmadi, said he has covered so many funerals and violent attacks that he often dreams of gruesome street scenes and panics at sharp sounds. “If someone throws a stone, we get scared,” he said.</p> <p>Rumors also spread panic these days. Last week, when a downtown bank manager heard reports that security forces were looking for a group of insurgent gunmen in the city, he ordered the nervous staff to stay inside for the rest of the day and send customers to another branch. The rumors turned out to be untrue.</p> <p>For bystanders who witness actual attacks, the resulting jittery nerves can trigger overreactions. Ever since Jamshid saw the boy detonate the bomb in front of his shop, the mere sight of a backpack terrifies him. Every time a customer comes in, he said, “I pray he won’t be carrying a bundle or a bag on his shoulder that might explode.”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/20 Iraq al-Sadr: next govt. will be ‘inclusive’
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iraqs-al-sadr-government-inclusive-55305272?
GIST	<p>Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, whose coalition won the largest number of seats in Iraq's parliamentary elections, has sought to reassure Iraqis about their next government, saying it will be "inclusive" and mindful of their needs.</p> <p>No single bloc won a majority in the May 12 vote, raising the prospect of weeks or even months of negotiations to agree on a government. Major political players began talks soon after the election's partial results were announced last week. The latest round was held late Saturday night between al-Sadr and Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, whose bloc made a surprisingly poor showing in the election.</p> <p>Speaking after the talks, al-Sadr said the first postelection meeting between the two "sends a clear and comforting message to the Iraqi people: Your government will take care of you and will be inclusive, we will not exclude anyone. We will work toward reform and prosperity."</p> <p>He did not elaborate, or provide details about what he and al-Abadi discussed.</p> <p>Al-Sadr, whose followers fought U.S. forces in Iraq after the 2003 invasion, won 54 of the chamber's 329 seats. Al-Abadi's "Victory" bloc took 42 and a coalition of government and Iranian-backed paramilitary forces came in second.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Taliban kill workers clearing land mines
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/05/21/afghan-official-taliban-kill-5-workers-clearing-land-mines.html
GIST	<p>KABUL, Afghanistan – An Afghan official says the Taliban killed at least five members of a demining team in southern Kandahar province.</p> <p>Zia Durrani, spokesman for the provincial police chief, says a sixth worker is missing and his fate is unknown following the attack on Monday morning in the district of Maiwand.</p>

Durrani says the de-miners were working for the TAPI national project, clearing a segment for a planned gas pipeline from central Asia that's headed to Pakistan and India through Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, Karim Yuresh, police spokesman in northern Faryab province, says the Taliban attacked a district headquarters on Sunday night, burning down about 50 shops in Khuaja Sabz Posh district. He says reinforcements repelled the attackers. Six insurgents were killed and 10 were wounded.

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HEADLINE	05/19 Psychoanalyzing link terrorism, upbringing
SOURCE	https://www.rferl.org/a/mothers-terrorism-linksshame-honor--psychoanalyst-kobrin/29237351.html
GIST	<p>When 20-year-old Khamzat Azimov went on a deadly stabbing spree in Paris this month, a May 12 attack claimed by the Islamic State (IS) extremist group, details about his upbringing caught the attention of psychoanalyst and counterterrorism expert Nancy Hartevelt Kobrin.</p> <p>Considering Azimov's infancy in war-torn Chechnya, and the fact that he continued to live with his mother in a one-room Paris apartment until he was shot dead by police in the midst of his attack, Kobrin saw a pattern reflected in other Islamist terrorists she has studied and written about.</p> <p>They include Chechen Islamist separatist leader Shamil Basayev, Jordanian-born Al-Qaeda militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and the Boston Marathon bombers Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev, also of Chechen descent.</p> <p>In a nutshell, Kobrin said all appear to have had relationship issues with their mothers that stemmed from being infants in what anthropologists describe as "shame-honor cultures."</p> <p>"My analysis strips the aberrant violent antisocial behavior down to its naked truth -- a problem buried in their souls but arising early in childhood development run amok," Kobrin tells RFE/RL.</p> <p>Reservoir Of Rage</p> <p>"The problem is that these terrorists are coming from shame-honor cultures, which are dysfunctional by definition," Kobrin explains.</p> <p>"Their reservoir of rage arises from problems nested in early maternal attachment in shame-honor cultures -- the early mother-infant bonding attachment, the first relationship in life," Kobrin says.</p> <p>A shame-honor culture is one where the pursuit of what is considered "honor" can lead to a quest for achieving a sense of "justice" through violence and revenge, anthropologists say.</p> <p>In shame-honor cultures -- as you would find in Chechnya, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Arab Middle East -- shame is used to discipline infants and children, Kobrin explains.</p> <p>Infants in shame-honor cultures, she says, are also often treated like objects and learn to repress their feelings to the point that internal rage can boil within.</p> <p>Making matters worse, Kobrin says, women in shame-honor cultures are also often devalued, objectified, or even physically abused.</p> <p>"Women who are abused also become full of rage," Kobrin says, noting that subconscious reactions of young mothers to abuse seriously impact a child's early development.</p> <p>The first four years of a child's life is a crucial time when most infants develop empathy for other human beings, she says, adding that the lack of empathy and concern for the pain that terrorists cause to others is</p>

"almost worse than the terrorist attacks themselves."

Kobrin says psychoanalysts should take care not to "diagnose" an entire group of people.

But she makes an exception in the case of Al-Qaeda and Islamic State extremists "because their behavior is so out of bounds" with "destruction, cruelty, sadism, and revenge leading to heinous crimes against humanity."

Kobrin also says a better understanding of maternal attachment in shame-honor cultures would help in understanding the roots of terrorist violence.

She explains that terrorists from shame-honor cultures are torn between an unconscious rage against their mothers and the cultural expectation that they are not permitted to separate from their mothers.

On one hand, the mother is idealized as a powerful object. But her power is also perceived as something toxic that must be destroyed, she says.

"Maternal attachment and shame play a significantly traumatizing role since children are shamed into behaving, which causes rage," she said. "When these children grow up, they treat others as objects" and the cycle perpetuates itself.

Room For More Research

But while much has been written about the political, economic, and religious motivations of terrorists, Kobrin says little has been done to "decode the meaning of the terrorists' aberrant behavior from the perspective of early childhood development and trauma."

Ann Masten, a child development professor at the University of Minnesota, agrees.

Masten's research focuses on the impact of risk, adversity, and trauma upon child development.

In a report for the Society for Research in Child Development, Masten said critical gaps in the understanding of child development in relation to terror include "limited evidence on neurobiological processes, cultural influences, strategic preparedness, peace-building interventions, and the roles of social media in mitigating or enhancing risk for trauma or engagement in terror activities."

"Developmental scientists, even as they carry out additional and better research, have an important body of knowledge to share with parents, educators, policymakers, first responders, and all those charged with ensuring the safety and resilience of children," Masten concluded.

James Garbarino, a child psychologist and founding director of the Center for the Human Rights of Children at Loyola University in Chicago, says a core principle of existing research is that the impact of trauma on "the concrete basics of day-do-day life" matter most in the development of children.

Garbarino says research suggests risk factors that combine to create "a generation of maladjusted children" include "exceedingly high rates of family violence, divorce, coronary disease, incidence of depression and tension, exposure to trauma, and a high pressure socio-political climate."

"Generally, it is the accumulation of risk factors in the absence of developmental assets that does the damage to children in the long run much more so than the presence or absence of any one risk factor," Garbarino says.

Kobrin agrees there are "other intervening factors that can tip the scale" in radicalizing a person to the point that they would kill others.

But she maintains that a "key factor" behind the lack of empathy displayed by IS militants is the use of

	<p>"shaming" by their parents in early child rearing practices.</p> <p>"It's finally starting to come to the table," says Kobrin, whose books include <i>The Banality of Suicide Terrorism</i>, <i>The Maternal Drama Of The Chechen Jihadi</i>, and <i>The Jihadi Dictionary</i>.</p> <p>"We should not be afraid, due to our notions of political correctness, to expose the unconscious behavior of terrorists who come out of shame-honor cultures," she maintains.</p> <p>"To say that a kid radicalizes at age 17 out of the clear blue sky is to really do that kid and his family and the public a disservice," Kobrin concludes. "There are early indicators that a child is in trouble, and we can use these indicators to identify such cases sooner and do an earlier intervention."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/19 New clues: ISIS leader alive, busy
SOURCE	<p>https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/new-clues-bolster-belief-that-isis-leader-is-still-alive--and-busy-with-a-chilling-new-mission/2018/05/19/83c2a62e-5ad2-11e8-858f-12becb4d6067_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.1de3d92f6801</p>
GIST	<p>His self-declared caliphate was in ruins when Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi summoned some of his top aides to a meeting in eastern Syria last year. The Islamic State's capital in Iraq had already fallen, and its Syrian headquarters was under siege.</p> <p>Yet the terrorist leader had something else on his mind: schoolchildren.</p> <p>The gathering near the city of Deir al-Zour was called by Baghdadi personally to discuss rewriting the terrorist group's educational curriculum, according to an Islamic State official who was arrested in a joint operation by Turkish and Iraqi officials earlier this year. Despite the group's dire circumstances, Baghdadi wanted to examine a subject that had less to do with immediate survival than with preserving the organization's ideological core.</p> <p>"Several top leaders were present, as well as the curricula committee, which I headed," the captured officer, known as Abu Zaid al-Iraqi, said in a videotaped statement aired on Iraqi television.</p> <p>The meeting, said to have occurred in mid-2017, was the third convening of a committee that had been a pet project of the man at the top, having been "established by caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi," the officer said.</p> <p>The incident provides a rare glimpse into the secluded life of the Islamic State's leader, a man who has allowed himself to be photographed only once, in July 2014, and has spoken publicly only a handful of times since then. His prolonged absences have given wings to countless false reports portraying Baghdadi as either dead, or gravely wounded and incapacitated.</p> <p>Despite such rumors, U.S. counterterrorism officials are convinced that Baghdadi is alive and is helping direct long-term strategy for the dwindling numbers of Islamic State fighters defending the group's remaining strongholds in eastern Syria. The U.S. view is supported by intelligence intercepts and detainee interrogations, as well as writings and statements by operatives within the terrorist group's network.</p> <p>The evidence, while spotty and difficult to confirm, depicts a leader who has opted to make himself invisible, even within his organization — a decision that has drawn complaints from followers and arguably undercuts his ability to rally his beleaguered forces, terrorism experts say.</p> <p>But the intercepts and reports also suggest that Baghdadi has shifted his attention in recent months to crafting an ideological framework that will survive the physical destruction of the caliphate in Iraq and Syria. In addition to his effort to revamp the group's school curriculum, Baghdadi appears to have been behind a series of missives in recent months that sought to settle ideological disputes between factions of</p>

Islamic State fighters.

Viewed together, such actions convey the impression of a disciplined retreat, with Baghdadi helping manage preparations for a shift from caliphate to underground insurgency and international terrorist movement, current and former U.S. officials said.

“Even as they were losing Mosul and Raqqa, we were seeing indications that they were planning to operate anew, as a clandestine organization,” said Nicholas Rasmussen, who served as director of the National Counterterrorism Center before stepping down in December. “As they were being driven out of these places, they were leaving behind a kind of cell structure.”

The essential strategy also was confirmed by a self-proclaimed Islamic State operative contacted by The Washington Post through an encrypted messaging service. The operative said Baghdadi — a university professor before becoming a terrorist — and other top leaders decided early on to prioritize the indoctrination of children and recruits, both inside Iraq and Syria and also abroad, through the Internet. The effort gained additional urgency as it became clear that the group’s Islamist enclave would not survive, he said.

“The leadership is convinced that, even if the State has disappeared, as long as they can influence the next generation through education, the idea of the caliphate will endure,” said the operative, who agreed to an interview on the condition that his name not be revealed.

Under Baghdadi’s direction, “the values of the caliphate would be seeded in the Umma [Islamic community], and not disappear,” the operative said, “even if the caliphate would.”

'By all indications, he's alive'

The meeting last year in Deir al-Zour was one of a handful of reported appearances by a terrorist leader who has been remarkably successful in staying out of sight. Since July 4, 2014, when Baghdadi entered a Mosul mosque to declare the establishment of the Islamic State, there have been more false reports about his death than confirmed sightings or public pronouncements.

In media accounts, Baghdadi has been killed or gravely injured at least a half-dozen times since 2014. He was said to have died in three different aerial bombings, carried out by Russian or U.S. warplanes. Other reports claimed variously that he had been arrested by Syrian troops, mortally wounded in an artillery strike, and poisoned by assassins.

Last June, after a Russian official claimed that Moscow was nearly “100 percent certain” of Baghdadi’s death, the Pentagon demurred, citing a lack of confirming evidence. More recently, U.S. officials have expressed confidence that Baghdadi survived his group’s defeat in Mosul and Raqqa and remains active, though his exact whereabouts are uncertain.

“By all indications, he’s alive,” said a U.S. counterterrorism official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence assessments. “We think he’s still coordinating, still helping to run the organization.”

In late 2016, the raising of the bounty for Baghdadi’s capture — from \$10 million to \$25 million — triggered a flurry of reported sightings, none of which panned out. Since then, there have been few credible reports about his specific movements and activities, the official acknowledged. “Our best guess is that he is still in Syria, in one of the remaining parts of the country still controlled by ISIS,” the official said. ISIS is a common acronym for the Islamic State.

In recent weeks, Baghdadi’s presumed final sanctuary has looked slightly less precarious. A Kurdish-led offensive to liberate terrorist-held villages in eastern Syria ground to a halt earlier this spring after the Kurds were forced to defend themselves against Turkish attacks elsewhere in the country. The resulting lull allowed Baghdadi’s men to refortify their positions and bring in supplies and reinforcements, U.S. and

Middle Eastern intelligence officials said. With fewer U.S. warplanes in the skies to pick them off, small convoys of fighters departed the Damascus suburbs for Islamic State bastions in southern and eastern Syria, safely crossing large expanses of desert under deals struck with the Syrian government, the official said. Intensive airstrikes have since resumed.

“They [Islamic State forces] have definitely regrouped,” the U.S. counterterrorism official said. “The pause gave them an opportunity to do that.”

Still, the lull has only delayed what by all indications is an inevitable defeat. The Islamic State has suffered a nearly unbroken string of military defeats since late 2015. Yet, throughout this time, its leader has been remarkably silent, never appearing in public to rally his forces and only occasionally releasing an audiotaped message encouraging his troops to fight on. The last of these surfaced on Sept. 28, 2017, about two weeks before the fall of Raqqa.

Preparing for the future

Some observers see Baghdadi’s absence as part of a deliberate strategy within an organization that in recent years has chosen to de-emphasize the importance of individual leaders in advancing the group’s ideals.

“A lot of ISIS supporters say that Baghdadi doesn’t want to make ISIS all about him,” said Cole Bunzel, a Middle East scholar at Princeton University and editor of Jihadica, a scholarly blog about the global jihadist movement. “There has been an effort, in fact, not to elevate any one personality above the organization.”

Yet Baghdadi’s virtual invisibility during a crucial struggle for the group’s survival has stirred controversy within the Islamic State itself. In recent weeks, members of an Islamic State offshoot in Deir al-Zour have posted messages on social media complaining that Baghdadi has removed himself from the field of battle.

“This clearly affects the morale of ISIS and its supporters,” said Steven Stalinsky, executive director of the Middle East Media Research Institute, a Washington nonprofit that monitors jihadists’ websites. Other supporters have responded to the criticism by renewing their oaths of allegiance to Baghdadi, in what Stalinsky described as a possible “indication that he is, or was, facing challenges to his authority from within.”

Baghdadi, who is about 46 and a native of the Iraqi city of Samarra, appears to be willing and able to communicate when he needs to, at least to his scattered lieutenants and senior aides. The captured Islamic State official who led Baghdadi’s curriculum committee described being repeatedly summoned by the caliphate leader for group discussions about education, propaganda and other matters. The captured officer is one of five senior aides arrested since February in operations conducted by Iraqis with U.S. and Turkish assistance.

Rasmussen, the former National Counterterrorism Center director, said the slow-but-steady military campaign against the Islamic State has given Baghdadi ample opportunities to develop secure lines of communication and to prepare for the future. Those preparations probably include plotting future terrorist operations and honing a system for persevering and disseminating the group’s core ideas after the Islamic State ceases to exist as a caliphate.

“They knew this was happening — it wasn’t as though they had a theory of victory where they were going to hold Mosul and Raqqa forever,” Rasmussen said. “But the narrative that has underpinned the Sunni extremist project — whether it’s al-Qaeda or ISIS — is that the mantle is going to be picked up and advanced by some other set of actors. The project may not be tied to the Syria conflict, but it’s not going to go away just because ISIS is defeated on the battlefield.”

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HEADLINE	05/20 Reports: ISIS leaving Syria's capital
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/reports-islamic-state-surrendering-syrias-capital-55304745?
GIST	<p>A Syrian war monitoring group says a cease-fire between government forces and Islamic State militants in the southern neighborhoods of Damascus has held for 24 hours, and that some of the fighters have been allowed to leave.</p> <p>The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Sunday that buses carrying IS fighters left the Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmouk and the adjacent al-Tadamon neighborhood overnight. Damascus residents said the situation was calm.</p> <p>The government has denied reaching an agreement with the militants. Al-Watan, a pro-government newspaper, said the militants are believed to have surrendered.</p> <p>President Bashar Assad's forces launched an offensive against the militants a month ago. The capture of the southern neighborhoods would bring the entire capital under government control for the first time since the war began in 2011.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Kosovo: 8 jailed for planned attacks
SOURCE	http://www.espn.in/football/world-cup-qualifying-uefa/story/3502989/eight-men-sentenced-to-jail-for-planned-attacks-on-israel-at-world-cup-qualifier
GIST	<p>A Kosovo court sentenced nine Albanians, eight to jail, on Friday for planning an attack against Israel's football team during a World Cup qualifier in Albania in 2016.</p> <p>Pristina court judge Hamdi Ibrahim said the leader of the group, Visar Ibishi, to 10 years in jail, and seven others received between 18 months and six years in prison. The ninth was given a €2,500 fine.</p> <p>"There is no place for extremism on this land," Ibrahim said. "Such defendants' acts have aimed to create both in Kosovo and Albania a climate of uncertainty, let the extremist elements get in and destabilize the country with terror acts."</p> <p>The attack, planned for Israel's game against Albania on Nov. 12, 2016, was foiled after Kosovo police received a tip regarding the plot. Albanian authorities responded by moving the game from the Loro Boriçi Stadium in Shkoder, near the border with Kosovo, to the Elbasan Arena, nearly 150 kilometres south.</p> <p>Two Albanians fighting with the Islamic State in Syria are said to have coordinated the attack. Kosovo authorities say about 180 citizens are still active within extremist groups in Syria and Iraq.</p> <p>Both Kosovo and Albanian authorities claim that no more of their citizens have joined the rebel groups in Syria and Iraq in recent years.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Al-Shabaab faces leadership battle
SOURCE	https://jamestown.org/program/al-shabaab-faces-leadership-battle-as-speculation-over-emirs-health-mounts/
GIST	<p>The secretive head of al-Shabaab is reportedly critically ill, giving rise to speculation that the Somali Islamist group is re-organizing itself ahead of his possible demise. Ahmed Umar has been emir of the al-Qaeda affiliate in East Africa for nearly four years, but now reportedly bedridden for more than six months, the installation of a new leader could be imminent (Daily Nation, April 20; Tuko, April 23).</p>

Splits Within the Shura

Details of Umar's ailment are scarce. While it is possible he was badly injured in an attack, a Mogadishu-based source familiar with the militant group's activities told the Terrorism Monitor that Umar is suffering from a serious kidney problem that affected first one and now both kidneys, and has left him fighting for his life.

Umar's current location is unclear, but some reports say he is in the town of Jilib, in southern Somalia, where al-Shabaab maintains a stronghold. Others indicate the ailing leader may have fled to an undisclosed hideout in Gedo region, near the Kenyan border, following intensified bombardment by international forces (Daily Nation, December 14, 2017; Mareeg, December 7, 2017).

Since the advent of Umar's illness, the group has acted to save its leader's life, paying doctors and providing costly treatments that are depleting the group's financial resources. A consequence of this has been a failure to release funds to pay its fighters at battlefronts in parts of southern Somalia (Tuko, April 23).

Umar's condition is allegedly causing concern among the group's top leadership, at a time when al-Shabaab is pinned down by troops with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Sources say the situation is so critical that Umar's deputies in the Shura, al-Shabaab's executive council, have been meeting to discuss his possible succession. That has led to heated exchanges, splitting the council into different factions (Tuko, April 23).

At the moment, the Shura, which has a mandate to make important decisions regarding targets, finances and the group's ideological direction, is composed of eight members, among them Umar's deputies Mahan Karate, who heads the Amniyat, al-Shabaab's intelligence wing, Maalim Osman, the infantry commander, and Ali Dheere, the group's spokesman. It is believed the three do not see eye to eye on the matter of succession.

The deputies are concerned that a leadership vacuum would result in reduced operational capacity and the further loss of territory. Under Umar, the group has lost key areas and strategic towns in southern Somalia, which are crucial to revenue collection, recruitment and arms replenishment. It has also faced a split, with key leaders defecting to the government (The Star, July 1, 2017).

Controversial Rise to Power

A ruthless hardliner, Umar—who is also known as Abu Ubaidah or Ahmed Diriye—took over as al-Shabaab's leader on September 6, 2014, replacing the former supreme leader Ahmed Abdi Godane, who was killed in a U.S. airstrike on September 1, 2014 (Daily Nation, September 5, 2014).

Prior to this, Umar was a little-known cleric, an alleged member of the Amniyat, the secret intelligence group Godane formed to expose and eliminate dissident within the group. He was allegedly a close confidant of the late leader, who attempted to shape al-Shabaab into a regional jihadist group, and is believed to have participated in the bloody purge of dissenters ordered by Godane.

Umar is believed to be in his mid-40s and was known to be a hardliner within the movement (WardheerNews, September 10, 2014). He was born in the Kalafe area of the Ogaden region before moving to southern Somalia, where he helped establish Islamic schools. He also served as al-Shabaab's governor for the Bay and Bakool regions (Somali Current, September 6).

His ascendancy to al-Shabaab leadership was controversial. The Shura's decision to appoint him following Godane's death had not been unanimous, and it was clear that some Shura members disliked him and considered him uneducated (Intelligence Brief, June 20, 2016).

While analysts expected Umar to instigate a fresh wave of violence, an uncomfortable silence followed the weeks and months after his appointment. This sparked speculation that the poorly educated cleric lacked

the leadership skills to re-energize al-Shabaab (Sabahi, October 31, 2014).

However, after nearly four years at the helm, his death would leave the militant group in a precarious situation with no obvious successor. Possible candidates include Mahad Karate, who the Shura by-passed when they picked Umar in 2014, Ali Mohammud Rage, alias Ali Dheere, and Hussein Ali Fiidow.

Possible Successors

Karate (a.k.a. Abdirahman Warsame) is al-Shabaab's deputy leader and continues to play a key role within the Amniyat. Like Umar, he is believed to be in his 40s. He hails from the Eyr sub-clan of the Habar Girir, an influential clan that was the backbone of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), from which al-Shabaab splintered.

The U.S government designated Karate a terrorist in 2015 and put a \$5 million bounty on his head. He allegedly played a key role in the 2015 Garissa University attack, in which 148 students were killed (The Standard, November 11, 2015). In 2016, Karate, whose name is spelled variously as Mahad Mohammed Karatey or Mahat Karetey, was erroneously reported to have been killed in a strike by the Kenyan military (New Vision, February 18, 2016).

Sources describe Karate as battle-hardened and a religious hardliner, factors that boost his chances. He also worked as a deputy to Godane and now Umar, and both leaders came to trust him.

The other significant militant in the race is Rage, who is from the Hawiye Mursande clan and, like Karate, is a deputy emir for al-Shabaab. There was speculation that he too had been killed in a Kenyan-Somali commando operation in 2014 (Terror free Somalia, March 6, 2014). Months later, the rumors were disproved.

Hussein Ali Fiidow, a deputy who oversees al-Shabaab's governorates, is another possible successor. Fiidow is thought to be in charge of the group's finance and administration. He is influential and a rival to Umar. With the high number of recent defections to the government, some al-Shabaab members suspect that Fiidow is plotting a coup against Umar (Daily Nation December 14, 2017). He is thought to have recently attempted to eliminate the leader, forcing Umar to flee with his supporters (Mareeg, December 7, 2017).

An Opportunity to Strike

With Umar potentially incapacitated, it appears a leadership change within al-Shabaab is likely. While the group faces significant challenges that constrain its operations, the loss of strategic territory, the death of its commanders through airstrikes, defections and reduced revenue sources, a change of leadership could revitalize what remains one of Africa's deadliest militant groups.

That may mean increased attacks in Somalia as any new leader seeks to prove himself, with attacks potentially spreading to other East African nations—a growing al-Shabaab presence already exists in Kenya's Boni forest.

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HEADLINE	05/18 US ends aid for northwest Syria
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-administration-ends-aid-for-northwestern-syria/
GIST	<p>The Trump administration has withdrawn all assistance from Northwest Syria, according to administration officials. This is the newest demonstration of the administration's intent to briskly exit the country once ISIS is fully defeated.</p> <p>The decision, made through an inter-agency process over the last few weeks, will mean that tens of millions of dollars will be cut off from previous U.S.-backed efforts to strengthen and stabilize the local</p>

society. Projects included countering violent extremism, supporting independent society and independent media, strengthening education, and advocating for community policing. The region will become the first area of the country where, other than humanitarian aid, the U.S. is officially disengaging.

After President Trump's request to review all U.S. assistance to Syria, administration officials were tasked with looking at where the U.S. could save money and, in short, get more bang for their buck in the country. The U.S. assistance in the northwestern region is viewed as not having a great impact on Syria in the long-term. Some of the money that has been cut from the northwest is being reprogrammed, those decisions are ongoing.

The administration intends to narrow its focus onto the fight against ISIS and has recently halted funding to groups like the White Helmets, a famed rescue and civilian assistance operation in Syria. ISIS has been cleared from 95 percent of the territory it once occupied, but is clinging on to its last strongholds. Last month, when Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis was asked about withdrawing from Syria, he said there would be a "re-energized" fight in the Middle Euphrates River Valley against ISIS. Mattis did not say what would happen after that fight had concluded.

A State Department official told CBS News, "\$200 million of stabilization assistance for Syria is currently under review at the request of the President. Distinct from that amount, U.S. assistance for programs in northwest Syria are being freed up to provide potential increased support for priorities in northeast Syria, as will be determined by the outcome of the ongoing assistance review, including the D-ISIS campaign and stabilization efforts."

The northwest, where the U.S. is now completely withdrawing, has been cleared of ISIS. The region includes Idlib, which is the largest area of Syria that is still under rebel control in that country's civil war. Idlib also has close to 3 million displaced Syrians that need both humanitarian and stabilization assistance. The region also includes Afrin where, earlier this year, Turkish forces battled the U.S.-backed Kurdish YPG militia, exacerbating tensions between Washington and Ankara.

The rest of the region is largely under control of the Assad regime. Yet there are also pockets of territory controlled by terrorist groups in the area, including al-Qaeda and al-Nusra.

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HEADLINE	05/18 Putin to Assad: foreign forces to leave
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/18/middleeast/assad-putin-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Russian President Vladimir Putin told Syrian President Bashar al-Assad Thursday that "foreign armed forces" would leave Syria, according to Syria's state-run news agency, SANA.</p> <p>Assad was on a surprise visit to Russia. He and his counterpart hailed the beginning of the "political process" in Syria amid an ongoing "fight against terrorism."</p> <p>"We presume that, in connection with the significant victories and success of the Syrian army in the fight against terrorism, with the onset of a more active part, with the onset of the political process in its more active phase, foreign armed forces will be withdrawn from the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic," Putin said after Thursday's meeting.</p> <p>The US, Iran, Turkey, Russia and some other countries have troops in Syria. Russia emerged as Assad's most powerful backer, helping to put down a rebellion against the Syrian President when it intervened on his behalf in 2015.</p> <p>Iran is another important Assad ally. Along with Hezbollah and other Iran-backed armed groups, Iran has helped to prop up the embattled President.</p> <p>Assad's visit comes just over a week after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's trip to Moscow.</p>

	<p>After meeting with Putin, Netanyahu said Russia was unlikely to interfere in Israel's actions in Syria, despite Russia's condemnation of Israel's latest airstrikes on May 9.</p> <p>"Given what is happening in Syria at this very moment, there is a need to ensure the continuation of military coordination between the Russian military and the Israel Defence Forces," Netanyahu told reporters.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/19 Anti-US cleric bloc wins Iraq election
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/militant-turned-populist-cleric-sadr-wins-iraqi-election-55275344?
GIST	<p>Influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's political coalition has won the most seats in Iraq's national parliamentary elections, according to complete results released by Iraq's electoral commission early Saturday.</p> <p>The announcement came nearly a week after Iraqis cast their votes on May 12 and put Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi in third place, according to seat allocations. An alliance of candidates with close ties to mostly Iranian-backed paramilitary forces came in second.</p> <p>"Your vote is an honor for us," al-Sadr said in a statement released on Twitter just moments after the official announcement.</p> <p>"We will not disappoint you," he continued, adding "the blame, all the blame is on those who failed Iraq."</p> <p>The election win marks the most significant victory of al-Sadr's political career.</p> <p>Partial results were announced earlier in the week, but allegations of irregularities and fraud delayed the complete count.</p> <p>The vote was marked by record low turnout that benefited al-Sadr who maintains loyal supporters who made it out to the polls when apathy kept many millions away.</p> <p>No one alliance won an outright majority and negotiations over forming the government are expected to drag on for months as parties try to form a bloc large enough to gain a majority in parliament.</p> <p>While al-Sadr's coalition won the largest number of seats, it is yet unclear if the next prime minister will come from his camp. Prolonged negotiations could result in a compromise candidate from a rival coalition.</p> <p>Following the 2003 U.S.-led overthrow of Saddam Hussein, Al-Sadr burst onto the scene as a renegade champion of poorer Shiites, leading militant fighters who carried out deadly attacks on American forces and were notorious for sectarian killings of Sunni Muslims.</p> <p>In recent years, al-Sadr has gained popularity as a nationalist voice, opposing Iranian influence and waging a public campaign against corruption. For this election, he ran a non-sectarian campaign focused on issues of social justice, allying with secularists and Iraq's communist party, and broadening support beyond his traditional base.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/19 Afghanistan: cricket match bombs kill 8
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/killed-blasts-cricket-match-eastern-afghanistan-55279074?
GIST	Several bombs exploded nearly simultaneously at a cricket match in Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar

	<p>province, killing at least eight people, a provincial official said Saturday.</p> <p>Attahullah Khogyani, spokesman for the provincial governor, said about 45 others were wounded at the sports stadium late Friday night in the provincial capital Jalalabad.</p> <p>The attack happened as hundreds of spectators gathered for a night-time tournament during the holy month of Ramadan. Khogyani said the deputy provincial mayor of neighboring Laghman province and the main organizer of the tournament were among those killed.</p> <p>In a statement, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani strongly condemned the attack, saying that carrying out such an attack during the holy month proved once again that terrorists are not true believers of any religion or faith and "are enemies of humanity."</p> <p>The three bombs exploded nearly at the same time, Khogyani said.</p> <p>No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack but both Taliban insurgents and the Islamic State group are active in eastern Afghanistan, especially in Nangarhar province.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	05/21 Europe: 25% migrants infected w/AMR
SOURCE	http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20180521-a-quarter-of-migrants-to-europe-infected-with-drugresistant-bacteria
GIST	<p>A new review of research on migrant populations in Europe has found that more than a quarter are infected or colonized with antibiotic-resistant bacteria, with evidence suggesting that the pathogens are being acquired along the migration route or in host countries.</p> <p>The findings are from a review and meta-analysis of observational studies on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in migrants conducted by researchers from Imperial College London and published yesterday in the <i>The Lancet Infectious Diseases</i>. The researchers also found that the prevalence of AMR carriage or infection was even higher among refugees and asylum seekers and in high-migrant community settings. But they did not find high rates of AMR transmission from migrants to host populations.</p> <p>CIDRAP notes that the findings come amid a recent wave of immigration that has brought more than two million migrants to Europe since 2015, an influx that's been driven in part by conflicts and instability in the Middle East and Africa. The authors of the study suggest that the poor conditions that many migrants are exposed to in transit and in host countries—including crowded refugee camps and detention centers with poor sanitation and little access to healthcare—may promote the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. The role of these settings in the spread of infectious diseases has been highlighted in previous studies.</p> <p>“Poor social conditions in these settings, such as inadequate sanitation, overcrowding, and restricted access to health services (including antibiotics or vaccinations), favor the spread of antibiotic-resistant infections,” the authors write.</p> <p>In their review of papers published from January 2000 through January 2017, the researchers identified 23 studies reporting on antibiotic resistance in 2,319 migrants. Countries of origin included Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea and other countries in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Of these migrants, 77 percent were refugees or asylum seekers.</p> <p>Nineteen of the studies reported on methicillin-resistant <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> (MRSA), and 12 of the studies reported on AMR in gram-negative bacteria. When they were reported, the clinical manifestations were mainly skin and other soft-tissue infections and diarrhea.</p>

Overall, the pooled prevalence of any detected AMR infection or carriage among migrants was 25.4 percent, with MRSA accounting for 7.8 percent and drug-resistant gram-negative bacteria accounting for 27.2 percent. The pooled prevalence of infection was 3 percent, and the pooled prevalence of carriage was 23 percent.

Among refugees and asylum seekers, pooled prevalence of AMR infection or carriage was 33 percent, compared with 6 percent in other migrants. In high-migrant community settings, the prevalence was 33.1 percent.

None of the articles showed evidence of high rates of onward transmission of AMR pathogens to host populations, a finding the authors say could be linked to high-migrant communities being segregated from local communities.

While many of the countries and regions that the migrants came from are known to have high rates of AMR, the authors say they found evidence in the included studies that suggests the antibiotic-resistant organisms were acquired either during migration or in the host countries, which included Spain, Italy, Greece, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland.

Three of the countries where the studies were conducted—Greece, Italy, and Spain—are the main points of entry for migrants to Europe. They have also been found to have a high prevalence of MRSA (39.2 percent, 34.1 percent, and 25.3 percent, respectively), which raises the possibility that migrants could have acquired the pathogen from people in those countries.

But it's the poor conditions in the places where refugees are housed while they await resettlement that may be the most important factor in spreading AMR bacteria among migrants, the authors argue.

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HEADLINE	05/20 Mystery: Maria death toll Puerto Rico
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/months-hurricane-maria-death-toll-puerto-rico-remains/story?
GIST	<p>In the days after Hurricane Maria blasted through Puerto Rico, President Donald Trump told officials that, considering the seemingly low death rate, the Caribbean island should be "proud."</p> <p>"If you look at the real catastrophe like Katrina and you look at the tremendous hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people that died," he said, referring to the hurricane that ripped through New Orleans and killed more than 1,800 people, "16 people versus in the thousands, you can be very proud of all of your people."</p> <p>But in the eight months since the president attempted to rally Puerto Ricans with those words, one of the most perplexing challenges remains the mystery of how many of the island's 3.4 million residents actually died as a result of the Category 4 storm.</p> <p>The current death toll, according to the Puerto Rican government, is 64.</p> <p>Skepticism has lingered, however, with some Puerto Ricans and its officials believing the number is much higher.</p> <p>Carmen Yulín Cruz, the mayor of San Juan who was critical of the Trump administration's recovery response, early on questioned whether the death count was way off.</p> <p>There was a spike in the mortality rate in the months after Hurricane Maria. According to Alexis Santos, director of graduate studies in applied demography at Pennsylvania State University who has studied the daily mortality data from the Puerto Rico government, says there were approximately 1,000 more deaths on the island in the month after Maria.</p>

In February, Governor Ricardo Rossello announced that George Washington University would lead efforts to review the death count associated with the storm. The Milken Institute School of Public Health at the George Washington University is heading an independent effort in partnership with institutions on the island.

Dr. Lynn Goldman, dean of that school, told ABC News the task of counting the deaths is an exhausting one. The team will be working with data coming in from various sources.

The George Washington University team will be looking at deaths starting with Maria's landfall on September 20 through February.

A government official told ABC News that the group will be presenting two reports: a preliminary range of the number of deceased followed by a more extensive report about a year later.

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HEADLINE	05/18 NKorea's secret army abroad
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/north-koreas-secret-army-how-operatives-abroad-aid-the-regime-1526652387
GIST	<p>KUALA LUMPUR— Ri Jong Chol, a slight man in his mid-40s, led what appeared the routine life of a businessman. He lived in an apartment complex with a pool and gym, a family man who took his wife and two children bowling.</p> <p>Mr. Ri's computers and phones, seized last year by Malaysia authorities, reveal much more. He was a North Korean operative, one of hundreds living abroad who U.S. and United Nations investigators say help the regime skirt sanctions by generating cash and sourcing goods.</p> <p>Material from Mr. Ri's three laptops, four phones and a tablet computer, viewed by The Wall Street Journal, revealed evidence of his secret life. He helped export hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of palm oil and soap to a military controlled trading company in Pyongyang under U.N. and U.S. sanctions. He arranged to procure 50,000 bottles of Italian wine, valued at \$250,000, despite U.N. curbs on luxury goods bound for North Korea's elite. And he is suspected of providing the getaway car for a high-profile killing.</p> <p>North Korea has for decades built trade ties with friendly countries and sent its operatives abroad. These operatives, usually attached to the regime's embassies, are suspected by U.S. and U.N. authorities of illegal alcohol sales in Pakistan, weapons sales in Africa and gold smuggling into Bangladesh. The various schemes yielded hundreds of millions of dollars a year in cash and goods, according to estimates by U.N. investigators.</p> <p>This is the model North Korea used to try to evade a blanket of international sanctions. If a June 12 summit with the U.S. succeeds in resolving the future of the regime's nuclear program, and starts to integrate the country into the global economy, these networks will likely recede in importance.</p> <p>If diplomacy fails, and heated rhetoric from Pyongyang has raised that possibility, then North Korea will have a ready-made system to mitigate international pressure.</p> <p>"Ri is not an anomaly. North Korea has an army of these people," said Daniel Russel, a former diplomat for Asia at the State Department and now a vice president at the Asia Society Policy Institute in New York City.</p> <p>Mr. Ri's earnings for North Korea from Malaysia were small, but he had broad ambitions. He corresponded with hackers in China about plans to steal and resell U.S. medical-imaging software. And he shopped for secondhand Japanese construction cranes, the kind North Korea has used in its missile</p>

program.

Mr. Ri was allowed to travel and live with family abroad, a special status afforded by the regime. His work in Malaysia ended with the killing last year of Kim Jong Nam, the estranged half brother of Kim Jong Un. Mr. Kim was attacked in a passenger check-in area at Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

Malaysian investigators allege Mr. Ri may have arranged to buy a car used by suspects in the Feb. 13, 2017, killing. Among the thousands of Mr. Ri's emails, text messages, documents and photographs viewed by the Journal is an image from one of his phones of a Malaysia-brand car—Naza Ria—with the seller's contact information on the dashboard.

The same model, registered to Mr. Ri, ferried North Korean agents away from the airport after the killing, according to Malaysian investigators. He was deported but not charged with any crime and denied any wrongdoing.

Malaysian prosecutors say the masterminds were North Korean operatives, who worked through North Korea's Embassy in Malaysia and escaped.

Two women who smeared the lethal agent on Mr. Kim's face are on trial for murder and have pleaded not guilty, saying they were told it was just a prank.

Malaysia expelled several North Korean diplomats and revoked visa-free travel for North Koreans. A foreign ministry spokesman said the country was vigilant in preventing North Korean front companies and businessmen from operating illicit businesses in Malaysia.

Calls to the North Korea Embassy in Malaysia rang unanswered.

Mr. Ri had seemingly landed in Malaysia by chance. In 1997, Malaysian businessman Chong Ah Kow had traveled to Pyongyang, where he met Mr. Ri's uncle, a well-known scientist in North Korea. Mr. Chong, who runs a traditional medicine company, said he was interested in cancer remedies, and Mr. Ri's uncle had developed a mushroom extract to treat tumors.

In late 2013, Mr. Ri offered to help export the extract to Malaysia. Mr. Chong, as a favor, sponsored him and his family for a work visa, describing Mr. Ri as "a very humble man." Mr. Chong said he and Mr. Ri explored several business deals, but none got off the ground.

Mr. Ri settled his family in a middle-class section of Kuala Lumpur, where neighbors said they largely stayed out of sight.

Mr. Ri wasn't fluent in English, the language of business in Malaysia, so he turned to his teenage daughter, Yu Gyong. She studied at Help University, a private college that in 2013 awarded Kim Jong Un an honorary doctorate in economics.

In text messages reviewed by the Journal, she chats about amusement park trips and lunch plans with friends—and, on her father's behalf, talks about completing deals with Mr. Ri's Malaysian business partners.

In one text from September 2016, Mr. Ri's daughter talks with him about her efforts to arrange a meeting with a business contact, where she would act as a translator. After some back and forth, Mr. Ri wrote: "Take your time and finish your studies. You can call him after your class."

She is listed in Mr. Ri's contacts as "my darling daughter," and he mixed business with such fatherly concerns as making sure she didn't get sunburned while waiting for him to pick her up from school.

Mr. Ri started out in Malaysian business buying wholesale palm oil, soap and other commodities for export to North Korea. By 2015, his main supplier was Octo Plus Resources, registered at the home of

owner Gan Chee Lim, near Port Klang, west of Kuala Lumpur, documents show.

With the help of Mr. Gan and a network of ethnic Koreans in China, Mr. Ri and his daughter arranged to ship the goods from Malaysia via Dalian in China to the North Korean port of Nampo, according to invoices, messages and documents viewed by the Journal.

The products weren't prohibited under sanctions, but one company Mr. Ri represented was Singwang Economics & Trading General Corp. The U.S. sanctioned Singwang in March 2016, calling it a subsidiary of the North Korea military. The U.N. also imposed sanctions on the company that year. Ms. Ri told Mr. Gan, the Malaysian supplier, that the soap buyer in North Korea was Singwang, according to a May 2016 phone message exchange.

The U.S. designation made it illegal for funds going to or from Singwang to be cleared through the U.S., as typically happens in dollar transfers. In phone message traffic during July 2016, Mr. Gan told Ms. Ri not to send payments of more than \$10,000 at a time, presumably to avoid bank scrutiny. He also raised concerns that Malaysia's central bank would be monitoring foreign-currency transactions, text messages show.

One \$25,000 transaction, in August 2016, was a "bit dangerous because (the) amount is quite big," Mr. Gan said.

In November 2016, Mr. Gan asked for a payment, but advised Ms. Ri to say on the wire documents that the money was for the "purchase of souvenir, necklace, pendant," according to their text message exchange.

"I haven't put anything," she said. "But since it's small amount isn't it ok?"

"Shud be ok...only worry the bank will hold the payment and query," he replied. Mr. Gan declined requests for comment.

Mr. Ri's work appeared to earn profits for Pyongyang and support a comfortable life for his family. A ledger in the computer files shows he shipped around \$250,000 worth of commodities to North Korea over the nine months through January 2017.

Mr. Ri, who didn't appear to have a bank account in Malaysia, relied on North Korean controlled entities in Hong Kong and Malaysia to finance transactions, documents show. Sometimes, Mr. Gan stepped in to help.

Communications with Mr. Gan were often tense. He complained about Mr. Ri's erratic orders and slow payments. "Sometimes we have money," Ms. Ri wrote him, "sometimes we don't."

Mr. Ri appeared to use an insurance company in the Malaysian offshore financial center of Labuan to pay for goods, according to messages and copies of checks on his phone. The company, Golden Sunrise Finance Broking, was controlled by North Koreans, but owned by a Malaysian shareholder to avoid scrutiny of its financial flows, according to a person familiar with the matter.

No one answered the insurance company's listed phone number.

Invoices on Mr. Ri's computers show two North Korean banks, Kumgang Bank and North East Asia Bank, were also used to funnel payments to buy commodities. The banks were blacklisted under U.S. sanctions in 2016.

As business expanded, so did Mr. Ri's horizons. He and his daughter made plans to import North Korean coal to Malaysia via Russia, which would earn them a broker fee. They also talked about buying warehouses in Port Klang.

With a new Malaysian business contact, they discussed farming rice in the country's northwest. A letter explained how the venture would team with a North Korean company controlled by the regime's agriculture ministry. "This is a big project and also big money. Your profit will be big if our deal is made. pls try best to make a deal ASAP," Ms. Ri wrote in November 2016.

Mr. Ri pursued another venture with a team of ethnic Korean computer programmers in Shenyang, China, to market medical-imaging software used in CT scans.

A business partner of Mr. Ri's in Malaysia lined up potential buyers, even though they had no software to sell. Messages on Mr. Ri's devices suggest the plan was to make pirated versions after hacking firms that made them.

In October 2016, Mr. Ri sent one of the China-based programmers the website of Able Software Corp., a Lexington, Mass., company, according to text messages. Ted Wu, Able's founder, said the Federal Bureau of Investigation had previously investigated hackers who stole Able's software and sold it online in the late 2000s.

The Ris also shopped for industrial cranes. In January 2017, Mr. Ri requested a price quote for two used cranes from TL Mobile Crane Services Sdn. Bhd. in Malaysia. The firm said no deal involving North Korea was made.

In May 2017, North Korean state television showed a Kato-brand Japanese crane used in the launch of an intermediate range missile. A photo on Ms. Ri's phone showed a similar Kato crane. The U.N. later expanded a ban on heavy machinery exports to North Korea to include all cranes.

The day Kim Jong Nam was killed at the airport, Ms. Ri met with Mr. Gan to discuss a new soap-importing plan. But there would be no more deals.

Four days later, Mr. Ri was taken into custody. Mr. Gan sent Ms. Ri a message: "Are you affected by the recent news...?" He got no reply.

The Ri family was allowed to leave Malaysia, part of a deal giving Malaysians held in North Korea permission to return home. Malaysian police said they lacked evidence to charge Mr. Ri in the killing.

Around 90 North Koreans remain in Malaysia, according to Asian and Western diplomats. Some have set up new front companies to avoid detection, according to a person who has worked with them in past business deals.

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HEADLINE	05/20 Cougar kills biker; injures fellow rider
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/cougar-kills-mountain-biker-injures-fellow-rider-washington/story?
GIST	<p>Two mountain bikers in rural Washington state were attacked by a cougar on Saturday with one man being killed and another seriously injured.</p> <p>The bikers were on a remote road north of North Bend, Washington, when the cougar attacked one of the riders, according to the King County Sheriff's Office. The cougar then attacked the second rider.</p> <p>The first rider managed to get back on his bike and ride to an area where he received cellphone service and call authorities, according to Seattle ABC affiliate KOMO.</p> <p>The 31-year-old who managed to escape was taken to Harborview Hospital, according to the facility, where he was in satisfactory condition. The rider told authorities he was bitten on the head by the animal, according to KOMO.</p>

	<p>The sheriff's office said the second biker was found dead with the cougar standing over it when they arrived.</p> <p>The King County Sheriff's Office tweeted at about 4 p.m. local time that officials had tracked the cougar and it had been killed.</p> <p>"Fish and Wildlife has euthanized the cougar that is believed to be responsible for killing one man and attacking another earlier today," the sheriff's office tweeted.</p> <p>The attack, let alone a death, was exceedingly rare.</p> <p>The Department of Fish and Wildlife said in a press conference this is only the second cougar attack death in Washington state in the last 100 years. There have been 15 nonfatal attacks over that period.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Federal prisons chief abruptly resigns
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/05/18/mark-inch-chief-federal-bureau-prisons-resigns-abruptly/623252002/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Mark Inch, the director of the embattled federal Bureau of Prisons, abruptly announced his resignation Friday, the Justice Department announced Friday.</p> <p>There was no immediate reason provided for the departure of Inch, who had just assumed leadership of the country's largest detention system in September.</p> <p>In a brief statement, Attorney General Jeff Sessions thanked Inch for his service wished him "luck in his future endeavors."</p> <p>The attorney general did not elaborate.</p> <p>As director, Inch oversaw 122 detention facilities, 39,000 staffers and 186,000 inmates.</p> <p>Inch's resignation also comes as the White House was staging a summit Friday on prison reform. There, White House senior adviser and President Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner commended Inch for his work on the Federal Inter-agency Reentry Council, though it was not clear whether he was aware of Inch's resignation.</p> <p>"We're working on the reentry commission, where the new director of the Bureau of Prisons, General Inch, has been working with Attorney General Sessions to look at all the different changes they can make in the prisons," he said.</p> <p>Hugh J. Hurwitz, assistant director of the BOP's Reentry Services Division, will serve as acting director, Sessions said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/19 Malaysia drama deepens w/former-PM
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-malaysia-politics/malaysian-drama-deepens-with-talk-of-reopening-mongolian-model-murder-case-idUSKCN1K090
GIST	<p>KUALA LUMPUR (Reuters) - The potential reopening of a probe into the murder 12 years ago of a Mongolian model could spell more trouble for former Malaysian premier Najib Razak, as the new government pressed ahead with investigations into alleged corruption.</p> <p>On Saturday, Mongolia's president requested Malaysia's new leaders to find justice for the dead woman,</p>

	<p>Altantuya Shaariibu, while a fugitive policeman convicted of the crime said he would cooperate with any new probe if he was given a full pardon.</p> <p>Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has already barred Najib from leaving Malaysia after surprisingly defeating his one-time protege in an election on May 9.</p> <p>The new government is seeking answers to how billions of dollars disappeared from a state fund that Najib founded, and its anti-graft agency has asked the ex-premier, who has consistently denied any wrongdoing, to make a statement at its headquarters on Tuesday.</p> <p>In the case of the murdered Mongolian model, two policemen from Najib's security detail were convicted, and have death sentences hanging over them, but the question of who ordered them to kill 28-year-old Altantuya has never been answered.</p> <p>While released on bail during an appeal one of those officers fled to Australia.</p> <p>Speaking from an immigration detention centre, where he has been held since 2015 for overstaying his visa, Sirul Azhar Umar told news portal Malaysiakini that he would help any move by the government to resurrect the case so long as he walked free.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/19 Bishop's American flair to royal wedding
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/05/19/fiery-us-bishop-brings-american-flair-to-royal-wedding.html
GIST	<p>WINDSOR, England – Nothing captured the trans-Atlantic nature of Saturday's royal wedding as much as the guest preacher whose sermon brought American fire and flair to a very English church service.</p> <p>The Most Rev. Michael Bruce Curry, the first black leader of the Episcopal Church in the United States, was hand-picked by Prince Harry and Meghan Markle to address their 600 wedding guests.</p> <p>The bishop's passionate sermon on the theme of love, studded with quotes from the bible, Martin Luther King Jr and African-American spirituals, was a contrast to the more solemn and muted Anglican style the royal family is used to.</p> <p>Many observers were surprised and delighted. BBC broadcaster Jeremy Vine tweeted: "The preacher is doing 50 in a 30 zone and it's brilliant."</p> <p>Supermodel Naomi Campbell hit Caps Lock and tweeted: "BISHOP MICHAEL CURRY GIVING ME LIFE."</p> <p>Quoting civil rights King on the "redemptive power of love," Curry told the bride and groom "it's not just for, and about, a young couple who we rejoice with, it's more than that."</p> <p>Curry, who like Markle's mother has African ancestors who were slaves in the U.S., said that even during their time of bondage, love helped those in captivity persevere.</p> <p>"When love is the way, we actually treat each other, well, like we are actual family," he said in a sermon that touched on poverty, inequality and the healing power of love.</p> <p>"When love is the way, we know that God is the source of us all and we are brothers and sisters, children of God and brothers and sisters," he said. "That's a new heaven, a new earth a new world, a new human family."</p> <p>Harry and Markle exchanged a quick glance at one another at one point as Curry drifted from his prepared</p>

	<p>remarks and ad libbed while the queen looked on stoically. Camilla and Kate — the Duchess of Cornwall and the Duchess of Cambridge — traded sidelong glances.</p> <p>Queen Elizabeth II, who as monarch holds the title of Supreme Governor of the Church of England, did not show any sign of discomfort and looked as stoic as she had through the entire ceremony.</p> <p>There may have been a touch of royal relief when Curry wrapped up with "We gotta get y'all married now."</p> <p>The crowds waiting outside for a glimpse of the royal couple loved it. Cheers greeted Curry as he walked uphill from the chapel along the procession route after the service. One man shouted "well done" — prompting a smile and "God bless you" from the bishop.</p> <p>Former Labour Party leader Ed Miliband, an atheist, tweeted: "Rev Michael Curry could almost make me a believer."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Nuclear plant shuts down unexpectedly
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/nuclear-plant-shuts-unexpectedly-washington-state-55268856?
GIST	<p>A nuclear power plant in southeastern Washington shut down unexpectedly Friday.</p> <p>The Tri-City Herald reports the Columbia Generating Station's systems detected a problem having to do with electrical distribution and automatically shut the plant down at 6:51 a.m.</p> <p>Authorities said there is no risk to the public.</p> <p>The 1,207-megawatt plant is the only commercially operated nuclear power plant in the Pacific Northwest and produces enough electricity to power a city the size of Seattle.</p> <p>Plant officials are investigating the issue, which involved the main transformer and the electricity distribution system, John Dobken said, spokesman for Energy Northwest.</p> <p>The exact cause was not known.</p> <p>"The plant responded as designed" and is stable, Dobken said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Woman w/baby jumps off hotel roof
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/woman-jumps-off-manhattan-hotel-boy-believed-son/story?
GIST	<p>A former Playboy Playmate and model jumped to her death from a Manhattan hotel with her 7-year-old son, according to police sources.</p> <p>The bodies of Stephanie Adams, 47, and the unidentified boy were found on the second floor of the rear part of The Gotham Hotel on East 46th Street in Midtown, sources said.</p> <p>Adams had a history of domestic violence with her estranged husband, sources told ABC News. The boy was present during disputes between the parents, a law enforcement official said.</p> <p>The Administration for Children's Services has an active case with the family that has been open for at least seven months, the law enforcement source said.</p>

	Adams and her son checked into the hotel Thursday at 6 p.m. and were assigned to the 25th floor suite, according to NYPD Chief William Aubry.
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HEADLINE	05/19 Students prank fake school shooting
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/students-maryland-high-school-stormed-building-water-guns/story?
GIST	<p>Officials at a high school in Maryland are apologizing to parents after seniors pulled an apparent senior prank involving students storming the school in masks with water guns and lighting fireworks.</p> <p>Robynne Prince, the principal at Bowie High School in Bowie, Maryland, sent a letter to parents on Tuesday after the alleged incident.</p> <p>"Around 10:45 a.m., a small group of students participated in an inappropriate 'senior prank' that resulted in a school evacuation," Prince wrote in the letter, which was acquired by Washington, D.C. ABC affiliate WJLA. "The prank involved spraying students and staff with squirt guns and setting off fireworks in the hallway."</p> <p>WJLA reported the students were dressed in black and wearing masks.</p> <p>One student was injured in the incident, according to WJLA.</p> <p>"School administration is taking this incident very seriously and coordinating with local police; the students involved will be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law and disciplined according to the PGCPs Student Code of Conduct," the letter continued.</p> <p>WJLA reported the school is debating whether to allow those who took part in the prank to attend graduation.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	05/21 Organized crime illegal wood trafficking
SOURCE	https://www.eurasiareview.com/21052018-illegal-logging-an-organized-crime-that-is-destroying-latin-american-forests/
GIST	<p>Illegal wood trafficking is the most profitable crime against natural resources and the world's third most important crime, according to a report titled "Transnational crime and the developing world," published in March 2017 by Global Financial Integrity, a US-based organization that investigates illicit financial flows.</p> <p>The report estimates that, globally, this transnational crime generates US\$52 billion to US\$157 billion a year. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) estimates that 30 percent of the wood sold in the world has been illegally obtained.</p> <p>According to Insight Crime, a research center on organized crime, most illegal timber logging occurs in the Amazon rainforest. Illegal timber logging, illegal mining and drug trafficking are the most investigated crimes in Latin America.</p> <p>Latin American forests are the second most vulnerable in the world to illegal timber logging, after Asian forests, says UNEP. In 2014 alone, illegal timber exports from South America — for both raw wood and sawn timber — totaled an average of US\$387 million, according to the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO).</p> <p>Rolando Navarro, a researcher at the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), who has closely</p>

studied the illegal timber trade in South America, told Latinamerica Press that “over 75 percent of the wood sold in South America both domestically and for export, is illegally obtained.”

A massive amount of wood is illegally traded in Latin America. In late 2012, INTERPOL confiscated over 50,000 m³ of illegally obtained timber with an estimated value of US\$8 million as a result of an operation named Project LEAF (Law Enforcement Assistance for Forests), in which law enforcement agencies from 12 Latin American countries worked together to crack down on illegal timber logging.

Illegal wood trafficking is a complex type of organized crime and it leads to a long spiral of inter-related crimes like a tree’s annual growth rings.

Alicia Abanto, Peruvian Human Rights Ombudsman’s Office representative for the Environment, Public Services and Indigenous People, told Latinamerica Press that wood trafficking is linked to a series of crimes such as deforestation, labor exploitation, land invasions, tax evasion, document forgery, state corruption and even the murder of community leaders who are fighting to preserve forests.

“These crimes also occur in other Latin American countries and the Caribbean. However, they are more common in the Amazon rainforest, because it’s a much larger rainforest,” says Abanto. “The illegal timber trade often begins with indigenous or peasant communities that are hired by a timber logging company. Very often they are unaware of the fact that what they’re doing is illegal and companies take advantage of that.”

A report titled “A spatio-temporal analysis of forest loss related to cocaine trafficking in Central America,” published in May 2017 by scientific journal IOPscience, refers about the impact of cocaine trafficking on deforestation in Central America. According to the report, as a result of the cocaine trade, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua have lost annually between 15 percent and 30 percent of their forestland over the past decade. Forests in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Jamaica, Panama and the Dominican Republic are also under threat from the cocaine trade.

The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), a US-based organization that monitors the illegal timber trade, shared information with Latinamerica Press about the scale of the illegal timber trade in Latin America.

According to Julia Urrunaga, director of the EIA’s Peru Programs, Mexico is one of the countries that purchase the greatest volume of wood “that has a high risk of being illegally obtained as part of the value chain.” Almost all of the wood imported by Mexico comes from Brazil and Peru.

Figures published by the IUFRO based on World Bank data for 2006, show that percentage of wood sold in each Latin American country is illegally obtained: Bolivia (80 percent), the Brazilian Amazon rainforest (20 percent-47 percent), Colombia (42 percent), and Ecuador (70 percent).

Navarro points out that the 80 percent figure for Peru has increased since 2006. “I would dare to say that more than 90 percent of the timber sold in Peru has been illegally obtained,” said the CIEL researcher.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Earnings of human smuggling cartels?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2018/05/21/are-human-smuggling-cartels-at-the-u-s-border-earning-500-million-a-year/?utm_term=.0f526bd514ef
GIST	<p><i>“To be clear — human smuggling operations are lining the pockets of transnational criminals. They are not humanitarian endeavors. Smugglers prioritize profit over people. And when aliens pay them to get here, they are contributing \$500 million a year — or more — to groups that are fueling greater violence and instability in America and the region.”</i></p> <p>— Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen, in testimony before the Senate Homeland Security and</p>

Governmental Affairs Committee, May 15, 2018

Nielsen's claim that smuggling cartels make \$500 million a year bringing people across the U.S. border caught our eye after the Washington Times made it the main story of its print edition. Regular readers know that we've often warned about accepting at face value numbers concerning illicit activities, such as human trafficking or smuggling, so we were curious to learn how this figure was developed.

The Facts

The math is pretty simple. A Homeland Security official explained that the agency assumed that transnational criminal organizations receive an average of \$5,000 per person smuggled, a number based on interviews with undocumented immigrants who are caught. DHS apprehends about 300,000 people a year who try to illegally cross the border each year, so the agency took one third of that number — 100,000 — and multiplied it times \$5,000, yielding a figure of \$500 million.

"We think the number of people paying smugglers is actually much higher but wanted to provide a conservative estimate," the official said. "This, of course, also does not include those who pay to be smuggled across our borders and are not caught."

Some might say it's conservative. Others might say it's arbitrary. There's really no rhyme or reason for why one-third of the people caught are being counted, especially since presumably people who are not caught also might rely on smugglers.

Gabriella Sanchez is the author of "Human Smuggling and Border Crossings," a 2016 book based on interviews with smugglers. She researches migrant smuggling at the Migration Policy Center in Florence. When it comes to smuggling estimates, she said, "the numbers are almost always made up."

Sanchez said one problem with Nielsen's figure is that it assumes a \$5,000 smuggling fee. That's a reasonable figure for getting across the border between the United States and Mexico, which she said is between \$4,500 and \$5,500, though in March smugglers were offering a 20 percent discount because they were not getting enough clients.

But Sanchez said Mexicans are no longer migrating to the United States — over the past 10 years, migration from Mexico has statistically vanished, according to the Pew Research Center — so the fees paid by the Central Americans fleeing Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador are likely to be higher.

But there's another wrinkle: Many people will never finish paying off their fees. "The facilitators are flexible because if not, they know a client can go to someone else, so they cut prices to get clients and then clients vanish," she said.

Moreover, she said, the money paid to smugglers stays along the trail, as smugglers need to pay rent, too, contrary to the image conjured up by Nielsen of "transnational criminals." Smugglers are often just low-level independent operators, loosely connected to others, trying to make a buck. She said the biggest cost in the smuggler operation was corruption — the fees paid to police and border agents.

One smuggler told Sanchez his profit margin was just 25 to 30 percent. The Pulitzer Prize-winning report by the Arizona Republic on the impact of President Trump's proposed border wall quoted a smuggler, "Alexis," as saying he kept about \$2,500 of the \$5,000 to \$6,000 fee, with the rest going to pay off helpers and police.

Interestingly, Nielsen's figure appears to be a lowball estimate. It is much lower than a previous estimate from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), from 2003, that global profits from human smuggling amount to \$9.5 billion. ICE never explained how that figure was calculated, and it later morphed into the incorrect claim that child sex trafficking in the United States yielded profits of \$9.5 billion, but that's another story.

More recently, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime estimated in a 2010 report that human

smuggling into the United States earned revenue of \$6.6 billion in 2008. But those numbers were based on previous high rates of migration by Mexicans — 661,000 apprehensions a year, with a probability of being apprehended at 20 percent — and the report noted that the Mexican market had been in sharp decline since 2005. But it also assumed smugglers charged \$2,000 per person.

The Mexican Migration Project, the source of the United Nations' 20 percent apprehension rate for Mexicans, says the rate is now about 12 percent. But researchers warn that's based on a very small number and so it is unreliable.

“Undocumented migration from Mexico has been negative for 10 years: More people are going back to Mexico than are entering the U.S.,” said Douglas Massey, of Princeton University, co-director of MMP. “In fact, the number of apprehensions reported by the DHS is very small — the lowest number of since 1971 — and in that year there were only 1,500 Border Patrol Officers, whereas today there are 19,000 officers. The number of apprehensions per officer are at their lowest point since 1942. In 2016, less than half of all apprehensions were Mexicans. Illegal migration from Mexico is effectively over.”

The U.N. report estimates that without Mexican migration, revenue earned by smugglers might be about \$1 billion, assuming costs as high as \$10,000 for a trip from the southeastern coast of Mexico.

The Pinocchio Test

Nielsen's \$500 million estimate is not wildly off base but it appears derived from arbitrary metrics. It is based on smuggling costs at the border, even though many illegal immigrants these days have a longer route to travel. She's only counting one-third of those apprehended, even though many people who use smugglers are not caught. So the overall figure of smuggler revenue could be higher.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Drugs land more women behind bars
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/b46bbe14e0e945888ac9ccc55aeb9504/Revolving-door-of-despair:-Drugs-land-more-women-behind-bars
GIST	<p>Women in jail are the fastest-growing correctional population in America. Their numbers rose from 13,258 in 1980 to 102,300 in 2016, with the biggest jump in smaller counties, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Similarly, the female prison population skyrocketed from 5,600 in 1970 to more than 110,000 in 2016. Between 1980 and 2009, the arrest rate for drug possession or use tripled for women, while it doubled for men.</p> <p>Opioid abuse has exacerbated the problem.</p> <p>In Montgomery County, Ohio, more than 3,600 women have been jailed for addiction-related crimes in the last two years, twice the number since 2014. In Henrico County, Virginia, the female jail population has grown from about 60 daily in 2000 to nearly 300; a survey of inmates found more than 4 in 10 women had their kids removed from them while on drugs. The jail has responded with an opiate treatment program.</p> <p>Rural America, in particular, lacks resources and readily accessible treatment to help curb the problem, says Jessica Hulsey Nickel, president of the Addiction Policy Forum, a patient advocacy group. If someone in recovery has to drive several hours to visit a specialist or receive regular doses of methadone, she says, “It’s going to make staying on that path nearly impossible.”</p> <p>Mary-Linden Salter, director of the Tennessee Association of Alcohol, Drug & Other Addiction Services, says her state doesn’t have enough psychiatrists, social workers, counselors and nurses in rural areas. Residential drug treatment, a key part of recovery, also is scarce in those communities — and Campbell County has none, she says, adding: “It’s unrealistic for people to travel 700 miles for treatment because that’s where there’s an open bed.”</p> <p>Salter also notes there are twice as many residential programs in the state for men as there are for women.</p>

That's partly because women have costlier, more complicated treatment; many have experienced trauma and abuse as children or adults. Generally, women also are slower to seek help because of societal pressures to maintain a family. Many are single mothers who fear losing their children.

"Women are the caregivers of their families," Salter says. "They get blamed and shamed for not taking care of their children. But they get blamed and shamed for not being in recovery. It's a horrible choice."

Many of these women say jail should help prepare them for life outside, maybe with a Narcotics Anonymous group, counseling or education programs such as those offered in state prisons. They'd also like to work and be exposed to people who don't use drugs. (Some male inmates have jobs.)

Lt. Mallory Campbell, assistant jail administrator, is sympathetic. It took a year, she says, to start a high school equivalency diploma program, partly because a teacher had to be found who then had to be trained to work in the jail.

She'd like to offer college courses or vocational training, she says, because "if they don't leave here with a skill, they're going to go back to what they know." But there isn't money for programs or staff.

Medical costs for both male and female inmates also are an enormous burden, nearly doubling since 2015 to top \$1 million last year, according to county officials. Hepatitis, infections or dental problems are not unusual.

And drugs remain a powerful lure. The women speak candidly about what they had to do to feed their habits — shoplift, rob, trade sex for drugs. While some welcome the fresh start, the cravings persist.

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HEADLINE	05/21 N. Ireland: cold case murder arrests
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/05/21/n-ireland-2-arrested-30-years-after-murder-german-teen.html
GIST	<p>LONDON – Police in Northern Ireland have arrested two men in the death of a German backpacker 30 years ago, after much-publicized appeals on the anniversary of the teenager's death yielded a break in one of the region's most notorious unsolved murders.</p> <p>The men, aged 58 and 61, were arrested in connection with the death of 18-year-old Inga Maria Hauser, whose body was found in 1988 in a remote part of Ballypatrick Forest in County Antrim two weeks after she was last seen alive on a ferry from Scotland.</p> <p>Police have the genetic profile of a man linked to the case, but previous DNA screenings failed to produce a definitive match.</p> <p>Detective Chief Superintendent Raymond Murray renewed his appeal for information on Monday, saying "it's time to tell us what you know."</p>
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HEADLINE	05/20 Cameroon holiday hit by violence
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/cameroon-holiday-hit-violence-english-speaking-areas-55311861?
GIST	<p>Cameroon's national day Sunday was marked by violence in its troubled English-speaking region, with two policemen killed, soldiers wounded and a mayor kidnapped by suspected armed separatists.</p> <p>In the capital, Yaounde, in central Cameroon, President Paul Biya, who has ruled since 1982, presided over a public show of the country's military might.</p>

But in the English-speaking town of Bangem in southwest Cameroon, the mayor, Ekuh Simon, was kidnapped. In a video shared by suspected armed separatists Simon said he and his deputy were kidnapped by separatists for planning independence celebrations. He said he is being held hostage by the Ambazonia Restoration Forces that had said the national day should not be celebrated. Ambazonia is the name separatists have given to the English-speaking area they want to become independent from French-speaking Cameroon.

Fighting was also reported in the English-speaking towns of Konye, Batibo, Ekona and several villages of Kupe Muanenguba, an administrative area in southwestern Cameroon.

At least two policemen and several people were killed, according to the governor of the south west region Bernard Okalia Bilai. In the towns that were attacked, many escaped to the bushes and safer neighboring towns.

In the northwestern city of Bamenda, there was a strong show of force to prevent any violence, but only a few residents turned up for the celebrations, saying that they feared retaliation from the separatists. Some students at the University of Bamenda showed up for the parade, saying they were forced by officials to come under the penalty of expulsion. Government officials also said they were also forced to come.

The Cameroon government had asked the population to come out in numbers and celebrate the national day as a sign of national unity adding that the military will protect the people from armed separatists who had vowed the day will not be celebrated in the English-speaking regions.

Cameron again imposed a curfew on its English-speaking regions. In spite of the curfew and heavy presence of the military, the armed separatists were able to chase out some public officials and close some schools.

Both the government and separatists have committed abuses, according to the U.S. ambassador. Ambassador Peter Henry Barlerin last week met with Biya and urged the president to initiate dialogue to lead the way out of violence.

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HEADLINE	05/21 Multiple bombings southern Thailand
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/injured-flurry-bombings-thailands-south-55318000?
GIST	<p>Thai authorities say suspected Muslim insurgents set off small bombs at about two dozen locations in the country's deep south, wounding two women.</p> <p>A spokesman for the military and police's joint security command in the troubled south said the bombings occurred Sunday evening across four provinces.</p> <p>Peerawat Sangthong said Monday that the explosives were placed near ATMs, electricity poles and buildings.</p> <p>More than 6,500 people have been killed since a Muslim separatist insurgency flared in Thailand's three southernmost provinces of Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat in 2004.</p> <p>Sunday night's violence also affected Songkhla province.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 S.C. jail escape: 2 inmates still at large
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SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/inmates-charged-murder-loose-escaping-south-carolina-jail/story?
GIST	<p>One escaped inmate was caught Sunday, but two inmates -- both charged with murder -- are still on the loose after breaking out of a South Carolina prison late Saturday.</p> <p>The three inmates escaped from Orangeburg County Detention Center in Orangeburg, South Carolina, just before 10 p.m. Saturday after overpowering a correctional officer, according to the Orangeburg County Sheriff's Office. The sheriff's office said it was still investigating whether the trio had help.</p> <p>Christopher Boltin, who had been jailed on charges of carjacking and possession of stolen vehicle, was caught Sunday evening, according to officials.</p> <p>Boltin, 27, was arrested in Lexington County, South Carolina, about an hour north of the prison after being alerted by Orangeburg County Sheriff's that he "had contacts in that jurisdiction.</p> <p>"Christopher Boltin was taken into custody in Lexington County by sheriff's deputies in that jurisdiction," Orangeburg County Sheriff Leroy Ravenell said. "He will be returned to Orangeburg and put back in jail to await his court hearing. We will now focus on the remaining two at large."</p> <p>The two men at large, Tyshon Demontrea Johnson, 27, and Curtis Ray Green, 20, were both charged with murder in separate incidents, according to the sheriff's office.</p> <p>"We know that these individuals are dangerous, we hope they're not armed at this time, but we just advise people to be vigilant," said Ravenell.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/21 Man intentionally crashes into restaurant
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/father-intentionally-crashes-restaurant-killing-police/story?id=55319445
GIST	<p>A father allegedly sat his family near the front door of a restaurant in North Carolina on Sunday, then promptly left, got in his car and plowed full speed into them on purpose, according to police and eyewitnesses. Two people were killed in the crash, police said.</p> <p>Roger Self, 62, has been charged with two counts of murder over the alleged incident in which his daughter, Katelyn, and another person sitting at the table were killed, the Gaston County Sheriff's Office said.</p> <p>Katelyn Self was a deputy with the Gaston County Sheriff's Office. She was off-duty at the time of the crash.</p> <p>Charlotte ABC affiliate WSOC identified the other person killed in the crash as Roger Self's daughter-in-law, Amanda Self.</p> <p>Several other people, including those not related to the family at neighboring tables, were injured, according to police.</p> <p>None of the other injuries are considered life-threatening, police said.</p> <p>According to Caleb Martin, who was busing tables at the Surf and Turf Lodge restaurant in Bessemer City, the driver plowed through the front of the restaurant at full speed.</p> <p>The family's pastor, Austin Rammell, told WSOC that Roger had been dealing with mental health problems recently and "this was not a conscious act by their father and they know that."</p> <p>Rammell said he was set to officiate Katelyn's wedding to her fiance in September.</p>

	<p>Police said a Gaston County police officer and a Gastonia police officer were also injured in the crash. Their conditions are unknown.</p> <p>Roger Self is being held in Gaston County Jail without bond. He is expected to appear in court on Monday.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/20 Claim: Texas teen studied mass shootings
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/santa-fe-high-school-shooter-studied-previous-mass/story?id=55311862&cid=clicksource_4380645_1_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>The teenager who allegedly opened fire in a Texas high school and killed 10 people studied previous mass shootings before carrying out the attack, sources told ABC News.</p> <p>Dimitrios Pagourtzis, 17, researched tactics used by other mass shooters, the sources said.</p> <p>“He studied previous mass shootings and used aspects of those [attacks] in his own shooting,” a source told ABC News.</p> <p>Pagourtzis fatally shot 10 students and educators and injured 13 others early Friday in the classrooms and hallways of Santa Fe High School, according to authorities.</p> <p>Investigators have also determined that they don't expect to charge anyone else besides the alleged shooter, sources said.</p> <p>The sources told ABC News that they have questioned two "persons of interest" in the aftermath of the bloodshed but so far no other charges have been brought.</p> <p>Pagourtzis remains in custody after he was charged with capital murder.</p> <p>Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, who called the rampage "one of the most heinous attacks we've ever seen in the history of Texas schools," said Pagourtzis allegedly telegraphed his desires to carry out the shooting and then commit suicide in a series of journal entries.</p> <p>Instead, the suspect surrendered to authorities, police said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/20 School shooter confesses; no clear motive
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/cb5e0dca766e4845acf02b6bff8b62c7/In-deadly-school-shooting,-a-confession-but-no-clear-motive
GIST	<p>SANTA FE, Texas (AP) — The mother of one of the 10 people killed at a Texas high school said her daughter recently rejected the romantic advances of the 17-year-old charged in the shootings, a possible motive for the violent tragedy.</p> <p>Sadie Rodriguez said her daughter, Shana Fisher, had made clear that she was not interested in Dimitrios Pagourtzis.</p> <p>“He continued to get more aggressive,” Rodriguez told The Associated Press in an interview conducted Saturday via Facebook. “She finally stood up to him and embarrassed him.”</p> <p>The incident took place one week before the shooting, Rodriguez said. Police have not yet said what might have motivated the attack.</p>

Asked about Rodriguez's allegation, a lawyer for the Pagourtzis's family said he hadn't heard about any such interaction between Pagourtzis and any of the victims and therefore couldn't comment.

"That's news to me," said lawyer Nicholas Poehl, though he cautioned that he'd spent much of the day disputing false rumors about the teen's personal life. Earlier Saturday, Poehl issued a statement from the family saying that they were "as shocked and confused as anyone else by these events that occurred" and asked for privacy.

"While we remain mostly in the dark about the specifics of yesterday's tragedy, what we have learned from media reports seems incompatible with the boy we love," the family's statement said.

Representatives of the school district did not immediately respond to questions about Rodriguez's comments.

A junior at Santa Fe High, Pagourtzis hid a shotgun and a handgun under his trenchcoat before opening fire in a first-period art class on Friday, according to an affidavit filed by police. The FBI announced Saturday that it had taken the lead in the joint investigation, at the request of local authorities.

"He gave a statement admitting to shooting multiple people inside the Santa Fe High School with the intent on killing people," the police affidavit said. "Dimitrios advised he did not shoot students he did like so he could have his story told." The attack ended when Pagourtzis walked out of a classroom and surrendered to police.

Authorities say Pagourtzis planned the killings, carried out with weapons owned by his father. Though Pagourtzis allegedly wrote about his intention to carry out the attack, authorities have not indicated a motive for the violence.

Gov. Greg Abbott said Pagourtzis had planned to kill himself after the shooting, but that Pagourtzis told police "that he didn't have the courage to commit the suicide."

Some Santa Fe High students indicated that Pagourtzis may have had one or more targets, though details were not clear. Breanna Quintanilla, 17, a junior, said she was in her art classroom Friday morning in what she described as a "perfectly normal day" when she heard gun shots.

Quintanilla said when Pagourtzis first walked in, he pointed at one person and said, "I'm going to kill you." Quintanilla, who was wounded escaping the classroom, did not identify that student.

At a news conference, Abbott said Pagourtzis had not previously been in trouble. "The red-flag warnings were either nonexistent or very imperceptible," he said.

In the absence of a clear motive, attention turned to a hodge-podge of incendiary posts by Pagourtzis on social media, which were quickly removed when his identity first emerged. One Facebook post was a picture of a T-shirt reading "Born to Kill." Another showed a trench coat adorned with various pins associated with conflicting ideologies and Cthulhu, a mythical creature drawn from the work of horror fiction writer H.P. Lovecraft.

In the wake of the shooting, various reports that Pagourtzis was bullied have surfaced from his classmates. However, two Santa Fe High students who said they knew Pagourtzis said they had no reason to suspect that he was planning Friday's attack.

Student Michael Farina said he had known the alleged gunman since fifth grade and considered him a friend. He recalled Pagourtzis talked about buying a gun "when I grow up," but never discussed his dad's guns or anything about his family.

Farina said he and Pagourtzis also talked a lot about video games they liked, including so-called first-person shooter games. They'd talked about one, "Escape from Tarkov," as recently as lunch on the day

	<p>before the shooting, he said.</p> <p>Farina did not recall Pagourtzis ever being notably angry.</p> <p>“He seemed relatively happy for the most part,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/19 Heroes emerge in Texas school shooting
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/05/19/texas-school-shooting-officer-john-barnes-others-called-heroes/625847002/
GIST	<p>Hours after a massacre in Texas left 10 people dead and 13 injured when a gunman opened fire at Santa Fe high school, stories of heroes began to emerge. School police officer John Barnes entered the art complex and was the first one to confront the shooter. Elsewhere in the complex another teacher ran out and pulled the fire alarm to let others know something was wrong.</p> <p>Here are some stories of bravery in the face of tragedy:</p> <p>School resource officers</p> <p>Steven McCraw, the director of the Texas Department of Public Safety, said Friday that two “brave officers” from the school district “stepped up to the plate” and engaged the shooter.</p> <p>One of the officers, identified as John Barnes, was the first person to engage 17-year-old suspect Dimitrios Pagourtzis. Barnes was shot in the process and is in critical condition. Another officer, the district chief, got Barnes to safety, according to McCraw. McCraw said a state trooper also engaged the shooter.</p> <p>“Once again we want to thank the heroes of law enforcement who stepped forward to respond to and confront the shooter. Their action probably ensured that more lives were not lost,” Texas Gov. Greg Abbot said.</p> <p>Barnes spent more than 20 years as an officer with the Houston Police Department before retiring in January. Houston Police Department Chief Art Acevedo tweeted that Barnes was known for “for his tireless work in Houston Metro Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task force.”</p> <p>Teachers</p> <p>Zach Lawford, a student who was in a classroom a few doors down from the shooting, told KHOU that his teacher ran out of the classroom and “pulled the fire alarm while we were barricading the door.”</p> <p>“To get everyone out of the school obviously, to get the rest of the school out,” Lawford said.</p> <p>Steve Rose, a teacher at Santa Fe high school, ordered all the students to hide under their desks and crouched next to the door, waiting to jump on the shooter if he came in, student Kaylee Haaga said. Haaga said Rose told the students: “It’s my life before y’alls.”</p> <p>Other teachers also helped get students out of the building as bullets rained through the halls, authorities said. Two teachers, Ann Perkins and Cynthia Tisdale, died in the shooting.</p> <p>“We thank the incredible heroes that we saw today, those of law enforcement that rushed into harm’s way. Teachers, students ... we know that we are going to hear the bravery that manifested in the face of evil. Bravery that we know was done at least in some instances at great cost and great sacrifice,” Cruz said during a press conference Friday.</p> <p>Students</p> <p>Student Chris Stone, was one of the 10 people killed in Friday’s massacre, according to the Associated Press. Stone's classmate Abel San Miguel told the AP that Stone was one of multiple students trying to</p>

	block a classroom door, but that the gunman fired through the door and hit Stone in the chest.
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HEADLINE	05/20 Dozens hospitalized; reaction to fake pot
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2018/05/19/hospitalized-nyc-due-synthetic-marijuana-k-2/626797002/
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (AP) — More than 25 people have been hospitalized in New York City due to bad reactions to the synthetic marijuana known as K2.</p> <p>WABC-TV reports that police responded to an intersection in Brooklyn’s Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood Saturday.</p> <p>Police say 33 people overdosed from K2 at the same location in 2016.</p> <p>No arrests have been made in Saturday’s overdoses but police say they are looking for the person who distributed the K2.</p> <p>K2 is a name for a synthetic compound that mimics the effect of THC, the most psychoactive ingredient in marijuana. The drug can be many times as potent as the THC in marijuana.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/19 Timeline Texas school shooting: 30min.
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/05/19/texas-school-shooting-timeline-how-30-minute-attack-unfolded/625913002/
GIST	<p>SANTA FE, Texas — Students were just starting their day. It was first-period art class.</p> <p>Then it became a war zone.</p> <p>For 30 minutes, authorities say Santa Fe High School was under siege by a teenager armed with a shotgun and .38 caliber revolver. In the end, 10 were killed and another 13 were injured.</p> <p>Dimitrios Pagourtzis carried out Friday’s deadly rampage entirely within the art complex at the high school, barricading himself inside from the fusillade of police officers’ bullets that followed him there, Galveston County Judge Mark Henry said.</p> <p>Law enforcement received the first calls at 7:32 a.m. CT, according to an affidavit filed in Galveston County court Friday evening. It wasn’t until 30 minutes later that Pagourtzis would surrender and admit to targeting students he didn’t like inside the school, authorities said.</p> <p>The art complex is made up of four rooms, each connected via interior hallways. Pagourtzis walked into the area Friday morning and began shooting students and teachers, said Henry, the county’s top administrator.</p> <p>All of the injuries and deaths occurred within the art complex. Henry said he didn’t know how many students were in that part of the school when the shooting began.</p> <p>“It’s tragic,” Henry said. “I don’t know how you make any sense of this.”</p> <p>Zachary Muehe, a sophomore at the school of roughly 1,400 students, was in one of the rooms in the art complex when he heard three loud booms.</p> <p>Muehe told The New York Times that he recognized Pagourtzis from the school’s football team — then he</p>

realized the teen was holding a shotgun.

"It was crazy watching him shoot and then pump. I remember seeing the shrapnel from the tables, whatever he hit. I remember seeing the shrapnel go past my face," he told the Times.

As he ran from the classroom, he told the newspaper he looked back and saw students lying on the ground.

"There was a girl on the ground, and he shot her in the head one or two times," he said.

The first one to confront Pagourtzis was one of the school's police officers, John Barnes, who tried entering the art complex looking for the shooter, Henry said.

But Pagourtzis appeared to be ready for Barnes and fired at him, hitting him in the upper arm, Henry said. As of Saturday afternoon, Barnes was in stable but critical condition at University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston.

"He was going to try to neutralize the shooter and the shooter was waiting for him," Henry said.

Ten people were killed and ten others were injured in a shooting at Santa Fe High School outside Houston. USA TODAY

As the shooting unfolded in the art complex, students and teachers in other parts of the school braced for the shooter or fled the scene.

Kaylee Haaga, 17, was just settling into Steve Rose's first-period economics class when a person in the hall outside told Rose that someone had a shotgun in the school.

The teacher immediately closed the door, ordered all the students to hide under their desks and crouched next to the door, waiting to jump on the shooter if he came in, Haaga said.

"It's my life before y'all," he told the class.

Haaga hid under Rose's desk and pulled a chair over the opening. She texted her mom and dad and frantically tried to reach her little sister, Shelby, 15, a freshman at Santa Fe High.

After a while, she put her phone away.

"I already told the people I love that I loved them," she said.

After what seemed like an hour, police officers entered her class and told the students to move out. The halls were filled with officers in tactical gear armed with long guns, searching classrooms and closets.

One of the officers instructed Haaga and her classmates to go out to the front of the school, rather than the back, she said.

"He told me if you hear any shots, run as fast as you can," Haaga said. "Soon as you get out those doors, take your shoes off, run to the other side and don't look back."

She did just that.

Inside the art complex, Pagourtzis roamed from room to room, taunting students and shooting at them as they scrambled behind desks or hid in closets. When a group of students hid in a supply closet, the shooter yelled "Surprise!" followed by an expletive, and opened fire, killing two of the eight students hiding in there, according to a Facebook post by Deedra Van Ness, whose daughter, Isabelle, survived the ordeal.

"She and her friends had been in the same room with the gunman the ENTIRE TIME," Van Ness wrote.

More law-enforcement officers — from Santa Fe Police, Texas Department of Public Safety and other agencies — poured into campus and zeroed in on the art complex. They had an exchange of gunfire with the suspect, Henry said.

"There were a lot of spent rounds on the ground," he said.

Not until 8:02 a.m. — 30 minutes after the shooting started — did Pagourtzis exit one of the art classrooms and surrender, authorities wrote in a court filing.

"Our officers went in there and did what they could," Walter Braun, Santa Fe school district police chief, said Saturday. "They did what they're trained for and went in immediately."

Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas and head of the U.S. House Homeland Security Committee, said the teen suspect "sort of fell to the ground and surrendered" in an apparent hope of avoiding a police confrontation.

It's unclear how long Pagourtzis was actively shooting and whether the teen was holed up with injured students, potentially slowing first responders from treating them.

Authorities recovered a couple of explosive devices at the school and "several" in Pagourtzis' vehicle and home, McCaul said, and they've been sent for testing to the FBI laboratory in Quantico, Va.

It's still unclear whether any of the devices were used in the shooting.

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HEADLINE	05/18 Guilty plea: ricin used in retirement home
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/woman-admits-deadly-toxin-ricin-retirement-home-55270361
GIST	<p>A 70-year-old woman accused of manufacturing the deadly toxin ricin and testing it on fellow residents at a retirement community has pleaded guilty to possessing it.</p> <p>Betty Miller, who has an extensive mental health history, was arrested last November after telling investigators she made ricin at her home at the Wake Robin community in Shelburne because she wanted to injure herself, the FBI said.</p> <p>A federal complaint said Miller told investigators she tested the ricin's effectiveness by putting it in residents' food or drinks. No one became seriously ill from consuming the ricin, which is found naturally in castor beans and can cause nausea, vomiting, abdominal pains and kidney and liver problems.</p> <p>Miller said she harvested 30 to 40 castor beans from plants growing on Wake Robin's property and made two or three tablespoons of ricin twice in her kitchen and exposed residents to the ricin on at least three occasions, the federal complaint said.</p> <p>Miller entered her plea on Friday. The plea agreement calls for a sentence of time served with a recommendation for three years of supervised release to include placement at a secure mental health treatment facility. A judge must approve the deal.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/20 India: Maoist rebels bombing; 6 dead
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/maoist-rebels-detonate-bomb-east-india-police-killed-55304740?
GIST	At least six police officials were killed and another was critically injured on Sunday when Maoist rebels

	<p>targeted their vehicle with a bomb in eastern India, police said.</p> <p>The rebels detonated a land mine as the police vehicle ran over it in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh state, said D.M. Awasthi, the chief of counterinsurgency operations in the state. The explosion extensively damaged the vehicle.</p> <p>Awasthi said the police were escorting a truck carrying material to a road construction site in a forested area when the rebels triggered the blast.</p> <p>Five police officials died at the scene of the blast. Two others were critically injured and sent to a hospital, where one of them later died, police said.</p> <p>Reinforcements of police and paramilitary soldiers rushed to the scene and launched a hunt to track down the attackers.</p> <p>The Maoist rebels, inspired by Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong, have been fighting the Indian government for more than four decades, demanding land and jobs for tenant farmers, the poor and indigenous communities.</p> <p>The government has called the rebels India's biggest internal security threat. With thousands of fighters, the rebels control vast swaths of area in the country.</p> <p>The rebels, also known as Naxalites, have ambushed police, destroyed government offices and abducted government officials for more than four decades. The insurgency began in 1967 as a network of left-wing ideologues and young recruits in the village of Naxalbari outside Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal state.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/19 Police arrest suspects robbery, shooting
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/g00/local/crime/article/Police-arrest-two-suspects-accused-in-robbery-12927704.php?i10c.encReferrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8%3D&i10c.ua=1&i10c.dv=14
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Police have arrested two suspects accused in a shooting in Downtown Seattle earlier this week.</p> <p>Detectives said 17-year-old, who as an alleged accomplice in the robbery was taken into custody on Thursday night. The primary adult suspect was arrested Friday afternoon near Pike Place Market.</p> <p>Investigators also recovered the gun they said was used in the shooting.</p> <p>The robbery and shooting happened just before 4:00 a.m. Wednesday in an alley near 2nd Ave. and Pine Street. One man was injured and was taken to the hospital.</p> <p>Detectives are still investigating.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Feds: money from China funded pot grow
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/feds-money-from-china-helped-fund-huge-pot-grow-here
GIST	<p>SEATTLE -- Money from China helped to pay for a massive marijuana-growing operation in the Seattle area that sent pot to the New York City area, federal prosecutors say.</p> <p>In the last several days, investigators have executed search warrants at 17 locations in the Puget Sound area and one commercial property in New Jersey.</p>

	<p>Properties in Seattle, Burien, Kent, Tacoma and Renton were searched, and more than 3,000 marijuana plants were seized.</p> <p>Some of the houses were bought with wire transfers from China, prosecutors say. Money from China also helped to pay for the huge electrical bills at the grow houses, prosecutors said.</p> <p>The high electrical bills attracted law enforcement attention. One house on South 124th Street in Burien had electrical bills of as much as \$2,500 over two months. Another property paid cash for more than \$37,000 for just three months of electricity, prosecutors say.</p> <p>Prosecutors contend that thousands of pounds of marijuana were sent to he New York City area.</p> <p>One person Xaimin Huang, 37, is in custody. Her husband and brother are being sought. Al three face a charge of conspiracy to manufacture and distribute marijuana. Huang has been ordered detained pending trial.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/19 Officials: few red flags school shooter
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/05/19/few-red-flags-showed-up-for-texas-school-shooting-suspect-officials-say.html
GIST	<p>The nation experienced another tragic school shooting Friday in Santa Fe, Texas, but unlike the previous ones, there were very few red flags, according to authorities.</p> <p>Dimitrios Pagourtzis, the 17-year-old suspect, is being held without bond in the Galveston County jail on charges of capital murder. He used his father’s Remington 870 shotgun and .38 caliber pistol in the attack that left 10 dead and 10 wounded at Santa Fe High School, according to a probable cause affidavit and complaint charged against him.</p> <p>"Unlike Parkland, unlike Sutherland Springs, there were not those types of warning signs," Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said at a news conference Friday night. "The red-flag warnings were either nonexistent or very imperceptible."</p> <p>Abbott was referring to the Feb. 14 Parkland, Florida, school shooting that killed 17 people, where law enforcement – from FBI to the Broward County Sheriff’s Office – was accused of ignoring several tips and warning signs surrounding shooting suspect Nikolas Cruz, as well as the shooting that killed 26 people in November inside a church in a town near San Antonio.</p> <p>Pagourtzis had recently posted a picture of a T-shirt reading “Born to Kill” on his Facebook page and he followed a number of accounts on Instagram like “sickguns” and “gunspictures,” Abbott said, but classmates described Pagourtzis as a quiet, avid video game player who routinely wore a black trench coat and black boots to class. He quit playing football on the school’s junior varsity squad last fall and danced as part of a church group.</p> <p>According to the affidavit, Pagourtzis told investigators “he did not shoot students he did like so he could have his story told,” and authorities found journals on his phone and computer saying he was planning to commit suicide after carrying out the shooting.</p> <p>Those who know him expressed shock that he might be involved in the massacre.</p> <p>Michael Farina, 17, grew up with Pagourtzis and said he would play video games with him. He recalled Pagourtzis knew a lot about guns and remembered him asking which gun he should get when he was older.</p> <p>"I'm kind of dumbfounded," Farina said. "We didn't get any warning."</p>

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HEADLINE	05/18 Average: 1 school shooting a week
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/02/us/school-shootings-2018-list-trnd/index.html
GIST	<p>We're only 20 weeks into 2018, and there have already been 22 school shootings where someone was hurt or killed. That averages out to more than 1 shooting a week.</p> <p>The parameters CNN followed in this count are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A shooting that involved at least one person being shot (not including the shooter) • A shooting that occurred on school grounds • We included grades K through college/university level • We included gang violence, fights and domestic violence • We included accidental discharge of a firearm as long as the first two parameters are met <p>May 18: Santa Fe, Texas At least eight people -- and as many as 10 -- were killed in a shooting at Santa Fe High School.</p> <p>May 11: Palmdale, California A 14-year-old boy went to Highland High, his former school, and began shooting a semiautomatic rifle shortly before classes were scheduled to begin, officials said. A 15-year-old boy was struck in the shoulder.</p> <p>April 20: Ocala, Florida A 17-year-old student at Forest High School was shot in the ankle shortly before students were to walk out as part of a national protest against gun violence.. The suspect was a 19-year-old former student.</p> <p>April 12: Raytown, Missouri A man was shot in the stomach in the parking lot of Raytown South Middle School during a track meet.</p> <p>April 9: Gloversville, New York A student shot another student with a BB gun in Gloversville Middle School.</p> <p>March 20: Lexington Park, Maryland An armed student shot two others at Great Mills High School before a school resource officer fired a round at the shooter. The shooter was killed. One of the students, 16-year-old girl Jaelynn Willey, was taken off life support two days later.</p> <p>March 13: Seaside, California A teacher accidentally discharged a gun during a public safety class at Seaside High School, injuring a student.</p> <p>March 8: Mobile, Alabama One person was hospitalized after a shooting at an apartment building on the campus of the University of South Alabama.</p> <p>March 7: Birmingham, Alabama One student was killed and another critically wounded after an accidental shooting during dismissal time at Huffman High School. Police wouldn't elaborate further.</p> <p>March 7: Jackson, Mississippi A student was shot inside a dormitory at Jackson State University. His injuries were not life-threatening.</p> <p>March 2: Mount Pleasant, Michigan Two people were shot to death at a dormitory on the campus of Central Michigan University. The victims</p>

were not students and police think the incident stemmed from a domestic situation.

February 27: Norfolk, Virginia

A student at Norfolk State University was shot from an adjacent dorm room while he was doing homework. He was not seriously injured.

February 27: Itta Bena, Mississippi

A person was shot in a rec center at Mississippi Valley State University. Police said the person was not a student and the injury was not life-threatening.

February 24: Savannah, Georgia

A person was shot on the campus of Savannah State University and taken to a nearby hospital where he later died. Neither the victim nor the shooter were university students, the college said.

February 14: Parkland, Florida

A 19-year-old man gunned down students and staff with a rifle at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, slaughtering at least 17 unsuspecting students and adults. The shooter, Nikolas Cruz, had been expelled from the high school over disciplinary problems, officials said.

February 9: Nashville

A high school student was shot five times in the parking lot of Pearl-Cohn High School.

February 5: Oxon Hill, Maryland

A high school student was shot in the parking lot of Oxon Hill High. The victim was treated and later released. Police arrested two teens and said they are acquaintances of the victim.

February 1: Los Angeles

A 15-year-old boy was shot in the head and a 15-year-old girl shot in the wrist at Sal Castro Middle School in Los Angeles, officials said. Two other students were grazed by bullets. A 12-year-old girl was booked for negligent discharge of a firearm in that shooting, which was considered "unintentional," Los Angeles police said.

January 31: Philadelphia

A fight led to a shooting in the parking lot of Lincoln High School, fatally wounding a 32-year-old man.

January 23: Benton, Kentucky

A 15-year-old student shot 16 people -- killing two other 15-year-olds -- at Marshall County High School, authorities said. The student faces two charges of murder and 12 counts of first degree assault.

January 22: Italy, Texas

A 15-year-old student was wounded in a shooting at a high school in Italy, Texas, authorities said. The suspect, also 15, was quickly apprehended.

January 20: Winston Salem, North Carolina

A Winston-Salem State University football player, Najee Ali Baker, was shot to death at a party on the campus of Wake Forest University.

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HEADLINE	05/19 School shooter spared people he liked
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/19/us/texas-school-shooting/index.html
GIST	(CNN)The teen who allegedly used a shotgun and a revolver to kill 10 people at his high school in Texas spared the people he liked during the deadly rampage, a probable cause affidavit says. Suspect Dimitrios Pagourtzis, 17, has cooperated with police, Galveston County Magistrate Mark Henry

said. Pagourtzis told an investigator he acted alone and spared people he liked because he wanted his story told, the probable cause affidavit says.

He was held without bail and is accused of capital murder of multiple people and aggravated assault on a public servant. Nine students and one teacher were killed, a law enforcement official told CNN. At least 10 people were injured.

Pagourtzis said little during a video court appearance Friday, answering, "Yes, sir," when asked whether he wanted a court-appointed attorney. He was not asked to enter a plea, and bond was denied.

The gunfire at Santa Fe High School, not far from Houston in southeastern Texas, started Friday morning. The alleged shooter used a shotgun and a .38 revolver legally owned by his father, Gov. Greg Abbott told reporters.

Gunfire erupted at the school not long after classes began around 7:30 a.m. local time, officials said. Two school resource officers were on the campus and confronted the shooter, Abbott said.

Authorities later found explosive devices -- including pipe bombs and pressure cookers -- in and near the school, a law enforcement official said.

Henry told reporters that the suspect had devices but none were functional. One was a pressure cooker with an alarm clock and nails, but no explosive material. Authorities also found an unlit Molotov cocktail, he said.

Investigators on Friday searched a trailer where they believe the devices were assembled, a law enforcement source said.

Investigators believe Pagourtzis acted alone, a law enforcement official told CNN on Saturday.

Earlier, Abbott and other officials indicated that two other people were being interviewed to see whether they were involved. But authorities now believe those two were not connected to the crime, the official said.

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HEADLINE	05/18 Shootout in Venezuela prison kills 11
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/advocate-shootout-venezuelan-prison-kills-11-55275041?
GIST	<p>Human rights advocates say 11 people died in a prison riot sparked by inmates who wrestled a gun from jailers, prompting an exchange of gunfire.</p> <p>A Window on Liberty prisoner rights group reported Friday that two guards and nine inmates died Thursday in the city of Barquisimeto; 28 people were injured.</p> <p>A Window to Freedom's director Carlos Nieto says jailers took back control of Fenix Penitentiary.</p> <p>It's Venezuela's second such incident of unrest in two days.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 New DNA technology leads to arrest
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/man-arrested-1987-killing-couple-washington-state-55274500
GIST	New DNA technology has led to the arrest of a 55-year-old man in the killing of a young Canadian couple

in Washington state more than three decades ago, police said.

William Earl Talbott II of SeaTac, Washington, was arrested Thursday for investigation of first-degree murder as he left his job at a trucking company in Seattle, The Daily Herald reported.

Authorities announced his arrest at a news conference Friday in Everett where they said Talbott is believed to be responsible for the 1987 killing of 18-year-old Tanya Van Cuylenborg. Detectives said they also are trying to connect him to the death of her boyfriend, 20-year-old Jay Cook.

"He was never on any list law enforcement had, there was never a tip providing his name," Snohomish County sheriff's Detective Jim Scharf said of Talbott. "If it hadn't been for genetic genealogy, we wouldn't be standing here today."

Talbott was identified as a suspect through genetic genealogy, the same technique used to arrest Joseph James DeAngelo, who police said was the Golden State Killer in California.

It wasn't immediately clear if Talbott has an attorney.

"Yesterday, the killer had his last sleep in his own bed, his last coffee break, his last day of freedom," Cook's sister Laura Baanstra said. "It's hard to put into words the relief, joy, and great sorrow this arrest brings."

Van Cuylenborg and Cook left their Saanich, British Columbia, homes on Nov. 18, 1987, for an overnight trip to Seattle. They were driving a brown 1977 Ford van to buy furnace parts for Cook's family business.

When the couple failed to return home, their families filed a missing persons report.

On Nov. 24, a man walking on an isolated road south of Bellingham, Washington, discovered Van Cuylenborg's body. She had been sexually assaulted, bound with plastic ties and shot in the head.

Cook's battered body was found the next day about two miles (3.2 kilometers) south of Monroe, Washington. The two locations where the bodies were found are about 75 miles (120 kilometers) apart.

Police were able to obtain DNA from the van.

In April, investigators from Snohomish and Skagit counties said they had sent DNA belonging to Van Cuylenborg's killer to a lab that provided scientific approximations of what the killer might look like based on traits embedded in his genetic code.

From there, DNA genotype data was uploaded to a public genetic-genealogy website that found likely matches for two of Talbott's relatives and further work by the genealogist led to Talbott, the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office said.

Police acquired a DNA sample from a cup Talbott had used and discarded. The sample was found to match DNA from crime-scene evidence, the sheriff's office said.

Detectives are still seeking tips about Talbott's activities in 1987 and 1988.

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HEADLINE	05/19 Chechnya: police kill church attackers
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/police-kill-gunmen-raided-orthodox-church-chechnya-55292572?
GIST	Chechnya's leader says four gunmen who attacked a Russian Orthodox church in the mostly Muslim province have been killed by security forces and one policeman has died.

	<p>Ramzan Kadyrov says the gunmen attempted to take people hostages inside the Archangel Michael Church on Saturday. He says in remarks carried by Russian news agencies that he personally oversaw a special operation in which the assailants were killed.</p> <p>Kadyrov says a police officer was fatally wounded in the confrontation and a churchgoer was wounded.</p> <p>Past attacks in Chechnya have involved radical Islamist rebels.</p> <p>The Kremlin has relied on Kadyrov to stabilize Chechnya after two separatist wars. He has used generous federal subsidies and his feared security forces to crush the Islamist rebellion, but violent clashes still happen occasionally in the region.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Genetic genealogy match catches killer
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/investigators-genetic-genealogy-arrest-suspect-cold-case-1987/story?
GIST	<p>Investigators in Washington state have used the same genetic genealogy methods to catch a suspect in a 1987 double murder cold case that was used to catch the "Golden State Killer."</p> <p>William Earl Talbott II, 55, was arrested in Seattle Thursday and charged with first-degree murder in connection with the death of 18-year-old Tanya Van Cuylenborg.</p> <p>Van Cuylenborg and her boyfriend, 20-year-old Jay Cook, were found dead in two separate locations in western Washington in November 1987 after they left their home in Victoria, British Columbia, for an overnight trip to Seattle, the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office said in a press release.</p> <p>The purpose of the trip was to buy furnace parts for Cook's family business, and the two planned to sleep in their 1977 bronze Ford van in Seattle's SoDo district overnight, ABC Seattle affiliate KOMO reported.</p> <p>They were last seen alive after taking a ferry to Seattle, authorities said. Their families filed a missing persons report two days later when they did not return home, KOMO reported.</p> <p>Talbott, who would have been 24 at the time of the murders, was identified through the use of genetic genealogy, which uses DNA testing in combination with traditional genealogical methods to establish the relationship between an individual and their ancestors, according to the sheriff's office.</p> <p>A successful identification for Talbott was established with the assistance of Virginia-based DNA technology company Parabon NanoLabs, authorities said. A digital file containing DNA data derived from the crime scene was uploaded to public genealogy website GEDMatch, and "promising matches were found for two of the suspect's relatives," according to the sheriff's office.</p> <p>Genealogists then deduced Talbott's identity, and police acquired a DNA sample from a cup he had used, authorities said.</p> <p>"We never gave up hope that we would find Jay and Tanya's killer," said Snohomish County Sheriff Ty Trenary. "Yesterday's arrest shows how powerful it can be to combine new DNA technology with the relentless determination of detectives."</p> <p>This is the first time a murder suspect has been arrested using Parabon's genetic genealogy service, which just became available less than two weeks ago, authorities said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Deadly shooting Georgia high school
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SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/dead-injured-friday-night-shooting-high-school/story?id=55276689
GIST	<p>One woman was killed and another wounded Friday night in a shooting near a Georgia high school, Atlanta ABC affiliate WSB reported.</p> <p>The station reported the shooting victims were not students at the school.</p> <p>The shooting occurred at about 9:30 p.m. following graduation ceremonies in a parking lot outside Mount Zion High School in Jonesboro, about 20 miles south of Atlanta, Clayton County fire officials told WSB.</p> <p>One woman was shot several times in the chest and later died. Another woman was shot in the leg, according to the station.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Deadly school shooting; explosives found
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/active-shooter-incident-santa-fe-high-school-texas/story?id=55258606&cid=clicksource_81_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>At least 10 people are dead after a 17-year-old student allegedly opened fire at Santa Fe High School in Texas this morning, sending students fleeing for their lives, the governor said.</p> <p>Ten others were wounded, including a police officer who is in critical condition, officials said.</p> <p>A teacher is among the dead, according to law enforcement officials.</p> <p>Gov. Greg Abbott called the shooting "one of the most heinous attacks that we've ever seen in the history of Texas schools."</p> <p>The suspect, 17-year-old Dimitrios Pagourtzis, is in custody and has been charged with capital murder, officials said. The suspect allegedly wrote in journals that he wanted to carry out the shooting and then commit suicide, but he gave himself up to authorities, according to Abbott.</p> <p>At the Santa Fe Police Department, Pagourtzis gave a statement admitting to shooting multiple people inside the school with the intent of killing people, according to an probable cause affidavit.</p> <p>Pagourtzis also allegedly stated during the interview that he did not shoot students he liked "so he could have his story told," the affidavit states.</p> <p>There were no warning signs and the suspect doesn't have a criminal history, officials said.</p> <p>A second individual, a person of interest, has been detained, officials said.</p> <p>Two weapons were used in the massacre -- a shotgun and a .38 revolver -- both of which appear to be legally owned by the suspect's father, the governor said.</p> <p>"I have no information if the father was aware the son had taken these weapons from the father," Abbott added.</p> <p>Explosive devices were also found at the school, and devices including a Molotov cocktail were found in a car and a home, authorities said.</p>
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FRIDAY — 18 MAY 2018



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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	05/18 Army turning to robot soldiers
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-18/the-u-s-army-is-turning-to-robot-soldiers
GIST	<p>From the spears hurled by Romans to the missiles launched by fighter pilots, the weapons humans use to kill each other have always been subject to improvement. Militaries seek to make each one ever-more lethal and, in doing so, better protect the soldier who wields it. But in the next evolution of combat, the U.S. Army is heading down a path that may lead humans off the battlefield entirely.</p> <p>Over the next few years, the Pentagon is poised to spend almost \$1 billion for a range of robots designed to complement combat troops. Beyond scouting and explosives disposal, these new machines will sniff out hazardous chemicals or other agents, perform complex reconnaissance and even carry a soldier's gear.</p> <p>"Within five years, I have no doubt there will be robots in every Army formation," said Bryan McVeigh, the Army's project manager for force protection. He touted a record 800 robots fielded over the past 18 months. "We're going from talking about robots to actually building and fielding programs," he said. "This is an exciting time to be working on robots with the Army."</p> <p>But that's just the beginning.</p> <p>The Pentagon has split its robot platforms into light, medium and heavy categories. In April, the Army awarded a \$429.1 million contract to two Massachusetts companies, Endeavor Robotics of Chelmsford and Waltham-based QinetiQ North America, for small bots weighing fewer than 25 pounds. This spring, Endeavor also landed two contracts worth \$34 million from the Marine Corps for small and midsized robots.</p> <p>In October, the Army awarded Endeavor \$158.5 million for a class of more than 1,200 medium robots, called the Man-Transportable Robotic System, Increment II, weighing less than 165 pounds. The MTRS robot, designed to detect explosives as well as chemical, biological, radioactive and nuclear threats, is scheduled to enter service by late summer 2019. The Army plans to determine its needs for a larger, heavier class of robot later this year.</p> <p>"It's a recognition that ground robots can do a lot more, and there's a lot of capabilities that can and should be exploited," said Sean Bielat, Endeavor's chief executive officer. Specifically, he points to "the dull, the dirty and the dangerous" infantry tasks as those best suited to robotics.</p> <p>During combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Defense Department amassed an inventory of more than 7,000 robots, with much of the hardware designed to neutralize improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Military brass were trying to quickly solve a vexing problem that was killing troops, but the acquisition strategy led to a motley assortment of devices that trade journal Defense News last year called "a petting zoo of various ground robots."</p> <p>This approach also meant that each "pet" was essentially a one-off device used for a single task. The Army's current approach is to field more inter-operable robots with a common chassis, allowing different sensors and payloads to be attached, along with standardized controllers for various platforms, said McVeigh, a retired Army colonel.</p> <p>This strategy is also geared toward affordability. "If we want to change payloads, then we can spend our money on changing the payloads and not having to change the whole system," he said. While it ramps up to use its newer robots, the Army will retain about 2,500 of the medium and small robots from the older</p>

fleet.

Amid their many capacities, none of the current or planned U.S. infantry robots is armed—yet. Armed robots are hardly new, of course, with South Korea deploying sentry gun-bots in the demilitarized zone fronting North Korea and various countries flying drones equipped with a variety of weapons.

“Just strapping a conventional weapon onto a robot doesn’t necessarily give you that much” for ground troops, said Bielat, the Endeavor Robotics CEO. “There is occasional interest in weaponizing robots, but it’s not particularly strong interest. What is envisioned in these discussions is always man-in-the-loop, definitely not autonomous use of weapons.”

Yet, depending on one’s perspective, machines that kill autonomously are either a harbinger of a “Terminator”-style dystopia or a logical evolution of warfare. This new generation of weaponry would be armed and able to “see” and assess a battle zone faster and more thoroughly than a human—and react far more quickly. What happens next is where the topic veers into a moral, perhaps existential, morass.

“It seems inevitable that technology is taking us to a point where countries will face the question of whether to delegate lethal decision-making to machines,” said Paul Scharre, a senior fellow and director of the technology and national security program at the Center for a New American Security.

Last year, 116 founders of robotics and artificial intelligence, including Elon Musk, the billionaire founder of Tesla Inc. and SpaceX, sent a letter to the United Nations urging a ban on lethal autonomous weapons.

“Once developed, they will permit armed conflict to be fought at a scale greater than ever, and at timescales faster than humans can comprehend,” the letter stated, warning of a “Pandora’s box” being opened with such systems.

To date, 26 countries have joined calls for a ban on fully autonomous weapons, including 14 nations in Latin America, according to the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. Notably absent from this list are nations with robust defense industries that research AI and robotics—countries such as the U.S., Russia, Israel, France, Germany, South Korea and the United Kingdom.

The campaign was launched five years ago by activists alarmed at the prospect of machines wielding “the power to decide who lives or dies on the battlefield.”

“If you buy into the notion that it’s a moral and humanitarian issue—that you have machines making life-and-death decisions on the battlefield—then it’s a very simple issue,” said Steve Goose, director of Human Rights Watch’s arms division and a co-founder of the campaign. “People have a sense of revulsion over this.”

Not long ago, such futuristic software seemed, if not quite impossible, at least 30 years away. Given the pace of research, however, that’s no longer the case—a fact that has given the effort by Musk, Goose and others new urgency.

“It seems that each year, that estimate has come down,” Goose said. Autonomous weapons systems are “years, not decades” hence, he said in an interview last month from Geneva, where a UN group convened its fifth annual conference on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems.

Much of the recent discussion has focused on defining the terms of debate and where human control for lethal decisions should lie. There are also questions as to how quickly such machines will proliferate and how to deal with such technology in the hands of rogue, non-state actors.

Over time, Goose said, the campaign will “convince these governments that every nation is going to be better off if no nation has these weapons.” But Scharre said there’s no chance the UN will agree to a legally binding treaty to ban autonomous weapons. He predicts that “a critical mass” of nations supporting some type of ban could pursue an agreement outside the UN.

While proponents may argue that autonomous robot soldiers will shield soldiers from harm, they will also remove the bloody consequences of armed conflict, a knowledge that “puts a valuable brake on the horrors of war,” said Scharre, a former Army Ranger.

“There’s a value of someone being able to appreciate the human consequences of war,” he said. “A world without that could be potentially more harmful. If we went to war and no one slept uneasy at night, what does that say about us?”

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HEADLINE	05/17 ‘Realistic’ military exercises in Seattle
SOURCE	http://www.seattlemag.com/news-and-features/bomb-scare-nearly-shut-down-seattle-central-library-turned-out-be-army-training
GIST	<p>On Saturday, April 14, staffers at the downtown Seattle library discovered two alarming objects on its third-floor shelves: Two books, including <i>South of Broad</i>, a family drama by Pat Conroy, that had been hollowed out and filled with what appeared to library staffers to be two primitive homemade bombs, according to an internal library email about the incident.</p> <p>Each of the books contained batteries, wires, and computer chips. According to the police report, obtained through a public disclosure request, staffers considered the objects to be "potential explosive device[s]."</p> <p>The staffers on duty that Saturday morning, according to multiple accounts of the incident, then called 911, stationed security guards on several floors, and prepared to evacuate the entire 363,000-square-foot building and its approximately 3,500 occupants in response to the apparent potential bomb—a complicated process in any building, made more so by the fact that the downtown library, with its meandering "book spiral" and hard-to-find emergency stairs, is not designed for easy evacuation.</p> <p>As security staffers prepared to pull the fire alarm, a Seattle Police Department officer arrived on the scene. Although accounts differ on the precise details of what happened next, library staffers were quickly told to call off the evacuation, and the responding police officer, along with a man in street clothes (identified after the fact, according to the police report, as U.S. Army Sgt. Maj. Mike Merzke) and two other plainclothes officers left the building, carrying the mysterious devices with them.</p> <p>Merzke, who works at the U.S. Army's Special Operations Command (SOCOM) in Fort Bragg, NC, did not return a call to his direct line seeking comment. According to SOCOM public affairs director Matthew Bockholt, the exercise was part of a larger series of "realistic military training" exercises that took place in locations across the city between April 8 and April 22. "Seattle, like other cities, provide an excellent training area for the challenges of an urban environment and afford our Soldiers the opportunity to refine our techniques needed for overseas operational missions," Lt. Col. Bockholt said in an email. "The Seattle Police Department approved and coordinated with USASOC from October of 2017 through April of 2018, including two in-person meetings in Seattle prior to training commencement."</p> <p>According to Bockholt, "The training and evaluation device[s]"—the books—"included an embedded recorder [and] allowed military training staff the ability to evaluate the students['] training." Bockholt did not provide additional information about the other training exercises it conducted in Seattle in April.</p> <p>Library spokeswoman Andra Addison says the library was not informed in advance about the exercise.</p> <p>In an email to library staffers a week after the near-evacuation, city librarian Marcellus Turner wrote that he had talked to SPD at length about "why we aren't a good place to hold" military exercises, and that "Chief [Carmen] Best and her staff at the police department ...apologized immediately" for the incident and assured him that "[t]he Seattle Public Library (and our neighborhood libraries) will not be an exercise site again."</p>

"I have been assured that the exercise itself never placed the library or any of our staff or public in danger or harm of any sort and the devices that were found had no ability to harm or physically disrupt our space or use of the building," Turner continued. "The exercise was a constitutionally-protected and non-criminal exercise meaning having a conversation in a public space and possessing no weapons in the course of the exercise was legal. The exercise itself was described as a meeting between several people in a public space and the device that was found was a recorder which was being used to record the discussion between these people. In truth, an exercise of the agency / agents, not the Library."

The Seattle Police Department declined to comment on its role in the incident. Bockholt said that the Army's policy "with regards to informing local governments when conducting these kind of exercises in public buildings is to coordinate and follow local law enforcement guidance. In this case, Seattle Police Department evaluated the training and determined their supervision of the training was sufficient."

Library spokeswoman Addison says library staffers "did a great job of responding calmly and appropriately" when they found the devices.

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HEADLINE	05/18 UN: Israel's 'disproportionate response'
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-44167900
GIST	<p>The UN human rights chief says Israel used "wholly disproportionate" force against Palestinian border protests which have left over 100 people dead.</p> <p>Zeid Raad Al Hussein told a meeting in Geneva that Gazans were effectively "caged in a toxic slum" and Gaza's occupation by Israel had to end.</p> <p>Israel's ambassador said Gaza's militant Islamist rulers had deliberately put people in harm's way.</p> <p>The UN meeting is considering calling for an independent investigation.</p> <p>Some 60 Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces on Monday on the seventh consecutive week of border protests, largely orchestrated by Hamas, which politically controls the Gaza Strip.</p> <p>It was the deadliest day in Gaza since a 2014 war between Israel and militants there.</p> <p>The protests had been dubbed the Great March of Return, in support of the right of Palestinian refugees to return to land they or their ancestors fled from or were forced to leave in the war which followed Israel's founding in 1948.</p> <p>The Israeli government, which has long ruled out a mass return of Palestinians, said terrorists wanted to use the protests as cover to cross into its territory and carry out attacks.</p> <p>Mr Zeid told the emergency session on Gaza that the "stark contrast in casualties on both sides is... suggestive of a wholly disproportionate response" by Israel.</p> <p>An Israeli soldier was "reportedly wounded, slightly, by a stone" on Monday, he said, while 43 Palestinians were killed at the site of the protests. Seventeen more Palestinians were killed away from what he called the "hot spots".</p> <p>He said there had been "little evidence of any [Israeli] attempt to minimise casualties". Israel's actions might, he said, "constitute 'wilful killings' - a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention", an international law designed to protect civilians under occupation.</p> <p>Mr Zeid said he supported a call for an "international, independent and impartial" investigation into the violence in Gaza, adding that "those responsible for violations must in the end be held accountable".</p>

	Israel's Ambassador Aviva Raz Shechter rejected the blame, saying Israel had done everything possible to avoid harming civilians.
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HEADLINE	05/17 State honors Lummi Nation w/award
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/news/state-honors-lummi-nation-for-its-emergency-response-to-escaped-atlantic-salmon/
GIST	<p>State officials awarded the Lummi Nation tribe this week for its emergency response to the escape of thousands of Atlantic salmon from a net pen at Cypress Island.</p> <p>The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) recognized the tribe with its Director's Award.</p> <p>In August, the failure of Cooke Aquaculture's net pen at Cypress Island sent more than 150,000 Atlantic salmon into the Salish Sea.</p> <p>The fish, at 10 pounds, infiltrated Puget Sound rivers. As both Cooke Aquaculture, the owner of the pen, and the WDFW struggled to manage the spill, the Lummi Nation launched an emergency response.</p> <p>Tribal fishermen dropped their work to launch a 24-hour fishery on the Atlantics, declaring a state of emergency to provide a rapid response. Tribal fishers captured 43,522 of the invasive species — 90 percent of all the fish recovered.</p> <p>Joe Stohr, acting director of the WDFW, this week said the department “was proud and happy,” to give the award to Lummi Nation “for all the oversight and quick response to the Atlantic salmon escape.” It is believed to be the first time the award has been made to a tribe.</p> <p>An investigation of the incident by three state agencies found Cooke Aquaculture was responsible for the escape because it had not properly maintained and cleaned its nets, leading to a build up of mussels and other sea life that caused the nets to collapse.</p> <p>The fish escaped as native Pacific salmon were returning to their spawning grounds.</p> <p>“Lummi Nation's work to protect our treaty-fishing areas from invasive Atlantic salmon is just part of our commitment to preserving our schelangen, our way of life, for all generations,” said Jay Julius, chairman of the Lummi Nation. “We only survive if our salmon survive, so it wasn't a question whether we would respond quickly to clean up our waters.”</p> <p>The tribe was also at the forefront of efforts urging the Legislature to pass a bill in February to end net-pen aquaculture of Atlantic salmon in Washington state.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Egypt opens Gaza border crossing
SOURCE	http://time.com/5281994/egypt-rafah-crossing-gaza-open-ramadan/
GIST	<p>(CAIRO) — Egypt's President Abdel-Fatah el-Sissi says he has ordered the opening of the Rafah border crossing with Gaza for the entire Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the longest length of time since 2013.</p> <p>El-Sissi wrote on his official Twitter account late Thursday that the opening would “alleviate the burdens of the brothers in the Gaza Strip.”</p> <p>The announcement late Thursday comes days after Israeli fire killed nearly 60 Palestinians during a protest</p>

	<p>along the Gaza border.</p> <p>The Rafah crossing is Gaza's main gate to the outside world. Egypt has kept Rafah largely sealed off since 2013, after the ouster of Egypt's elected Islamist President Mohammed Morsi.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 Lithium: hot new acquisition target
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/why-lithium-and-cobalt-producers-are-the-hot-new-acquisition-target-1526558400
GIST	<p>Tesla Inc. and a large Chinese firm each struck deals with lithium producers, the latest sign that big users are rushing to secure supplies of the material used in electric-car and cellphone batteries.</p> <p>Both lithium and cobalt, which is also used in these batteries, face potential shortages in the years ahead as electric-vehicle use increases.</p> <p>That concern is driving a number of companies like technology firms and car makers reliant on lithium and cobalt to strike deals now, even if it means joining with suppliers that haven't started producing yet.</p> <p>Tesla reached a three-year supply agreement with lithium firm Kidman Resources Ltd. , which begins when the Australian company begins producing battery-grade material, Kidman said Thursday. The firm isn't expected to begin producing lithium compounds before 2021.</p> <p>Chinese firm Tianqi Lithium Corp. also said Thursday that it has agreed to buy a 24% stake in Chilean lithium company Sociedad Quimica y Minera de Chile SA from Canadian fertilizer firm Nutrien Ltd. for about \$4.1 billion.</p> <p>In addition to the sector's dominant players such as Glencore PLC and Albemarle Corp. , analysts estimate there are more than 100 smaller lithium miners and about 25 cobalt firms. Many are publicly traded in Canada and Australia, and some have already clinched deals with big users. "It just looks like we're on the precipice of this wave," said Chris Berry, founder of House Mountain Partners LLC, a New York-based adviser to battery-metals companies and investors. "You're going to need a lot of investment in a hurry to meet demand."</p> <p>Japan's SoftBank Group Corp. last month paid nearly \$80 million for a roughly 10% stake in Nemaska Lithium Inc., a Quebec-based producer. It marked SoftBank's first investment in a lithium company. Nemaska has produced just small samples of lithium compounds at this point, and its mine and plant are expected to be fully operational in the second half of 2019.</p> <p>The trading arm of Toyota Group, the parent company of Toyota Motor Corp. , also said in January that it was taking a 15% stake in Australian lithium firm Orocobre Ltd. for roughly \$225 million.</p> <p>Chemical company FMC Corp. is expected to spin off its lithium business this year, and multiple Chinese lithium companies are also expected to go public, analysts said. Apple Inc., BMW AG and Volkswagen AG have been working to secure future cobalt supplies.</p> <p>But the rush to lock in deals could turn out to be a speculative bust. Prices of lithium and cobalt more than doubled from 2016 through last year, but the rally has cooled off recently amid worries about oversupply. Some investors also think manufacturers will replace pricey materials like lithium and cobalt using different types of batteries with a higher concentration of cheaper metals such as nickel.</p> <p>Shares of lithium and cobalt producers have slipped, too, following recent declines in the commodities. Nemaska's stock price has fallen 3.1% on the Toronto Stock Exchange over the past month.</p> <p>The number of companies producing lithium and cobalt has also soared from early 2014, when Tesla CEO</p>

	<p>Elon Musk announced plans for a big electric-car battery plant. Back then, there were about 16 lithium exploration firms and a handful of cobalt ones, Mr. Berry said.</p> <p>Because most investors looking for exposure to cobalt and lithium take positions in mining companies, analysts said the recent share-price declines reflect uncertainty about which ones will end up on top and the risk still involved in the fledgling market.</p> <p>Analysts expect demand for the materials used to power electric vehicles and smartphones to more than double by 2025, pushing transportation and technology companies into exploring unconventional deals to meet that pressing need.</p> <p>Many lithium and cobalt mines are located in regions that have historically been unstable: Congo in the case of cobalt, and South America for lithium, adding to worries about a supply shortage.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 Trump 'new doubts' on NKorea summit
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-says-north-koreas-kim-would-remain-in-power-if-nuclear-deal-is-reached-1526586515
GIST	<p>President Donald Trump acknowledged new doubts about the fate of his coming meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, expressing surprise over the uptick in harsh language from Pyongyang while shifting blame to China for the latest uncertainty.</p> <p>Still, the president sought to entice Mr. Kim to the negotiating table by pairing an offer of political safeguards with a fresh round of threats.</p> <p>Mr. Trump, speaking in the Oval Office on Thursday, said Mr. Kim could remain in power if the two sides reach a deal to rid the North of nuclear weapons. Otherwise, the country should expect “total decimation,” the president said in his first direct threat to the North since the two sides agreed to talks.</p> <p>“If we make a deal, I think Kim Jong Un is going to be very, very happy,” Mr. Trump said, referring to the North Korean leader.</p> <p>The new sense of uncertainty about the summit came after North Korea spent a second straight day harshly criticizing the U.S. and South Korea, dousing the sense of North-South warmth that had been on display since before the Winter Olympics in February and calling into question the prospect of a U.S.-North Korean meeting.</p> <p>Administration officials and international experts were unable to say whether the series of ominous and insulting statements by high-ranking North Korean officials merely represented a hardball approach to the coming talks or were a re-evaluation by Pyongyang on the utility of the summit.</p> <p>Mr. Trump posited that the tough talk stemmed from Mr. Kim’s meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping last week. The two leaders met for the second time in as many months on May 8, two days before Secretary of State Mike Pompeo arrived in North Korea and left with the three U.S. citizens who had been imprisoned there.</p> <p>“There has been a big difference since they had the second meeting,” Mr. Trump said, adding that “President Xi could be influencing Kim Jong Un.”</p> <p>Mr. Trump offered no other details to bolster his theory, but argued that no other U.S. president has put similar trade pressures on China. Coincidentally, Chinese officials were in Washington on Thursday on a planned trip to discuss the trade dispute.</p> <p>China has generally backed North Korea’s preference for a step-by-step denuclearization approach, while</p>

the Trump administration has insisted on speedy denuclearization.

Others saw North Korea's repeated denunciations of U.S.-South Korean air drills as an attempt by Pyongyang to persuade South Korea that its military alliance with the U.S. is an obstacle to peace.

"They are laying the foundation for the argument that South Korea's alliance with a nuclear superpower is an obstacle to denuclearization and that both sides will need to take reciprocal steps to disarm," said Daniel Russel, a former State Department official and now vice president of the Asia Society Policy Institute. "And they are also warning the South Koreans that the alliance is an obstacle to the inter-Korean rapprochement that President Moon is pursuing."

North Korea earlier in the day said it would shelve inter-Korean talks indefinitely unless Seoul made concessions on military exercises and dialed back its public criticism of the North's attempts at dialogue. Ri Son Gwon, a senior North Korean official, slammed South Korea's liberal Moon Jae-in administration as "an ignorant and incompetent group devoid of the elementary sense of the present situation."

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HEADLINE	05/17 Gina Haspel: CIA's first female director
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/senate-confirms-gina-haspel-as-cia-director-1526587318
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—The Senate confirmed Gina Haspel to be the next director of the Central Intelligence Agency, making her the first woman to lead the nation's premier spy organization.</p> <p>Ms. Haspel, 61 years old, is only the second person to lead the agency after spending almost an entire career undercover. She rose through CIA ranks from junior case officer to hold senior jobs in counterterrorism and covert operations.</p> <p>Her confirmation battle to be President Donald Trump's second CIA chief wasn't without drama. Several prominent Republicans, including Sen. John McCain of Arizona, urged that she be rejected over a number of episodes in her three-decade career with the agency. Six Democrats supported her, while two Republicans voted against her nomination. Mr. McCain didn't vote as he is home in Arizona recuperating from brain-cancer treatment.</p> <p>Mr. McCain, who was tortured as a prisoner of war in Vietnam, said her involvement in a program of interrogations run by the agency after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks disqualified her. Other senators said her authorship of a memo that led to the destruction of 92 videotapes of those interrogations raised concerns.</p> <p>In a 54-45 vote Thursday, the Senate confirmed Ms. Haspel to the top job at the agency.</p> <p>During her confirmation, many Democratic lawmakers voiced frustration over the limited amount of information available about her past and long CIA career, a restriction the agency said was necessary to protect intelligence sources and methods. The only other CIA director to have spent an entire career undercover was Richard Helms, who served as the fifth director of Central Intelligence, from 1966 to 1973.</p> <p>Ms. Haspel takes over as director from Mike Pompeo, a former congressman whom Mr. Trump tapped as secretary of state when he fired Rex Tillerson two months ago. Ms. Haspel has been the agency's deputy director and acting director.</p> <p>She inherits an agency that Mr. Trump himself has criticized as part of his wider condemnation of the U.S. intelligence community's finding that Russia attempted to boost him over his Democratic rival in the 2016 election. The CIA signed onto that assessment.</p> <p>The major opposition to Ms. Haspel's nomination stemmed from her involvement in an interrogation</p>

program many critics say amounted to torture. At the time of the program in the early 2000s, she held several senior positions in the CIA's counterterrorism operations.

The Democratic-run Senate Intelligence Committee in 2014 detailed the treatment of detainees in CIA custody under that program, describing them as being imprisoned in boxes, chained to walls and waterboarded, which simulates drowning, to the point of unconsciousness.

Ms. Haspel initially resisted disavowing the program, saying in her public confirmation hearing only that the agency was ill-prepared and vowing never to restart such a program. In a letter this week, she expanded upon her views, saying that the agency shouldn't have undertaken the program.

Ms Haspel is a native of Ashland, Ky., the eldest of five children, and the daughter of an airman who raised her all around the world as he served at various bases. She graduated from high school in the U.K., the agency said, without naming which city.

Ms. Haspel wanted to attend the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, but her father told her girls weren't welcome at the time, according to the agency. Instead, she graduated with honors from the University of Louisville with a degree in languages and journalism, according to the agency biography.

She worked as a case officer in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Africa and Europe. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ms. Haspel became an intelligence-operations officer and then rose up the ranks in the agency's Russia operations. Already partially fluent in Spanish and French, Ms. Haspel also learned Turkish and Russian while serving at the agency.

Over the course of her career, Ms. Haspel four times served as chief of station—the top CIA official in a country responsible for all the agency's operations there. In recent years, Ms. Haspel served in several top roles in the division of the CIA responsible for covert operations.

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HEADLINE	05/17 New homeowner law erases racist past
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/991628/2514-washington-racism-housing-deed/
GIST	<p>There is a street in Tacoma that determines the fate of many. And it serves as a historical marker reminding the city of a shameful past which still affects modern residents.</p> <p>“We have a street called 6th Avenue, where there is literally a \$100,000 difference in sales price for homes based on which side of that street you are on,” said Anders Ibsen, deputy mayor for the City of Tacoma. “In certain neighborhoods in Pierce County there are 20-year differences in life expectancy between some of the richer neighborhoods and the poorer zip codes. All that is a direct reflection of historical and current racism.”</p> <p>Ibsen, along with State Rep. Christine Kilduff, recently chipped away at one little-known corner of the region's racist past – language hidden in covenants. These are the ownership documents passed down between homeowners, which can include requirements for the properties — bigoted requirements. The language can also be found in some home owner association agreements (HOA) and was used to segregate communities — known as housing segregation or redlining. Just as 6th Avenue historically divided Tacoma.</p> <p>“In West Tacoma in particular, there are a lot of homes that have really ugly language written into their covenants,” Ibsen said. “Even my mom's house has some of this stuff written, saying things like, ‘The house shall not be conveyed to members of the Hebrew or oriental race.’ Nasty stuff like that.”</p> <p>Tacoma is not alone. Seattle, for example, has struggled with the same issue, where many homes north of the ship canal have deeds with sentences like: “No property in said plat shall at any time be directly or indirectly sold conveyed or leased in whole or in part to any person or persons not of the White race.”</p>

Of course, this language has been unenforceable for decades under Washington’s discrimination laws. But that’s not the point, according to Ibsen.

“This language is hideous, it’s hurtful and the impacts of racism are still very real for many people,” he said. “...if you are a Jewish homeowner or an Asian American homeowner, and that language is in your deed, that is something that makes you feel inherently different and set apart.”

Washington’s new law

Tacoma residents have been pointing out the racist deed language more and more recently, and the very inconvenient process to change it. So Ibsen and Kilduff spearheaded an effort to pass HB 2514. It passed the state Legislature last session and it will go into effect this summer.

The new law makes it far easier for homeowners to remove racist language in legal documents without having to go through a costly process of getting a court order.

“It’s just a simple form you apply to your county auditor,” Ibsen said.

It could come in handy as Tacoma experiences a real estate surge. Seattle’s economic boom has radiated out as far as Tacoma, where people are buying up homes at increasing rates.

“The more we can make it convenient for people disavow this language ... these hurtful words, the more we can promote reconciliation and move forward to a better society,” Ibsen said. “Redlining was prevalent everywhere throughout the country. We never had Jim Crow in the Northwest, but we certainly had our share of racism as evidenced by this HOA language and covenant language.”

Ibsen argues that this is one corner of the racism issue modern leaders face, from the school-to-prison pipeline to law enforcement and community relations.

“All these things are connected and the more we can be aware of that, the more we can make better decisions and make better policy,” he said.

“This came at the instigation of our constituents and frankly it’s disgraceful we’ve waited this long,” Ibsen said. “You say ‘why?’ I say, why not? Why not 50 years ago? Better late than never.”

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HEADLINE	05/17 Paraguay to open Jerusalem embassy
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/05/17/paraguay-to-open-jerusalem-embassy-next-week.html
GIST	<p>ASUNCION, Paraguay – Paraguay’s government says President Horacio Cartes will open the country’s new embassy to Israel in Jerusalem on Tuesday, following similar steps by the United States and Guatemala.</p> <p>Government spokesman Mariano Mercado says Cartes will leave for the trip on Saturday.</p> <p>The decision to move the embassy to Jerusalem has been controversial in Paraguay. It comes less than two months before Mario Abdo Benitez replaces Cartes, and the president-elect has said he wasn’t consulted.</p> <p>Israel claims the entire city as its eternal capital. Palestinians want east Jerusalem as their future capital and were infuriated by the embassy moves.</p> <p>Most countries maintain embassies in Tel Aviv and have balked at moving them until the international legal status of the city has been resolved.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 More police encrypting communications
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/want-to-listen-to-police-scanners-cops-say-no-more-1526558400
GIST	<p>A report of a suspicious person crackled from John Messner’s RadioShack police scanner, one of two he keeps at his home in Knoxville, Tenn.</p> <p>When an officer was heard yelling “Shots fired!” minutes later, Mr. Messner knew it was time to go. The 52-year-old construction worker and photographer grabbed his two cameras, his portable scanner, jumped in his 1999 Plymouth Voyager minivan, and raced to the scene 3 miles away, where a suspected burglar was shot by police.</p> <p>“When I got there, the guy was still on the ground, they hadn’t put him in the ambulance yet,” said Mr. Messner of the November incident. “It didn’t look like he was dead, but he was definitely hit.”</p> <p>Mr. Messner snapped pictures and posted them on his Knoxville Crime Facebook group, which has 94,000 members in a city of 186,000. They come to see photos, read Mr. Messner’s live updates on police chases and burglaries that he gets from the police scanner, and discuss neighborhood crime issues.</p> <p>Social-media groups like Knoxville Crime are one reason that Knoxville police officials say they will begin encrypting police radio communications beginning in August, making it impossible for the public—and Mr. Messner—to listen in live. The move comes as more police departments around the country are seeking to shield their live radio communications, now easily accessible via smartphone apps. Police say the effort will keep officers safe and bad guys from finding out what they’re doing.</p> <p>“When you’re putting out information that only a suspect and a victim and an officer knows, then all of the sudden you have someone put that on social media, that takes your advantage away,” said Darrell DeBusk, a Knoxville police spokesman.</p> <p>Earlier this year, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department encrypted its radio traffic, alleging that bad guys “monitor police radio frequencies in order to better facilitate their crimes and gather intelligence about the whereabouts of police officers.” Pueblo, Colo., police blocked their scanner traffic recently, citing suspects using scanner apps to avoid officers.</p> <p>Local media still has access to the live radio transmissions in Las Vegas—police allow them to purchase their own radios. In Knoxville, the radio traffic will be posted after a one-hour delay, said Mr. DeBusk.</p> <p>These moves have rankled scanner enthusiasts who range from people curious about police activity in their neighborhood to modern-day Weegees, the New York City freelance photographer known for his raw crime-scene photos. Many scanner buffs are police supporters who want to help solve crimes, making the decision to go dark a difficult one, police officials say.</p> <p>“It’s a tough choice because many of the pro-police people out in the community who support their local police get that way because they listen to their police on these scanners or phone apps,” said Richard Myers, executive director of the Major Cities Chiefs Association.</p> <p>Some police departments have found a solution by using encrypted channels for more sensitive work, such as a SWAT team readying for a raid, while keeping the more mundane police patrol work on the publicly available channel, he said.</p> <p>In Colorado, a push to encrypt police radio traffic inspired a bill backed by scanner enthusiasts earlier this year that would have banned encryption, except for sensitive situations. The bill failed with strong opposition from law enforcement.</p> <p>“These are government agents working for the taxpayers and I think citizens have the right to know what they’re doing,” said Robert Wareham, an attorney who helped draft the bill.</p>

Mr. Wareham, a former police officer, said he uses his scanner to find out about police activity in his neighborhood or on the roads. “There are six or seven times a year where I avoid a dangerous situations where I know what’s going on,” he said.

In Knoxville, Mr. DeBusk, the police spokesman, said the prevalence of smartphone apps that broadcast police communications, such as Broadcastify, has made it easier for criminals to listen in.

“You’ve always had people that had scanners, but it was not as common as the smartphone apps,” said Mr. DeBusk. “We actually have arrested people, they’ve had the smartphone on them and we could hear our own dispatchers, the sound coming from their smartphone.”

Lindsay Blanton, the CEO of Broadcastify’s parent company RadioReference.com, called this an “overdone complaint.” The approximately 200,000 daily unique listeners tuning in to Broadcastify’s 6,600 feeds typically hear police communications on a 45 second to three minute delay and the company bans sensitive content, he said.

“It’s providing more an entertainment type perspective than the ability to gain an advantage over law enforcement,” said Mr. Blanton said.

People can listen to public safety, aircraft, rail and marine audio streams from across the country on Broadcastify. The company relies on volunteers who send local feeds from their scanners and in some cases police departments who do the same because “there are a lot of agencies that value the general public being more involved,” said Mr. Blanton.

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HEADLINE	05/17 Copper River salmon arrives Friday
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/05/17/first-catch-of-the-tasty-and-pricey-copper-river-salmon-hits-seattle-friday/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — In what’s become an annual event, the first catch of tasty Copper River salmon will be flown from Cordova, Alaska, into Sea-Tac Airport Friday morning.</p> <p>The first shipment of thousands of pounds of salmon is scheduled to arrive at 6:30 a.m., according to Alaska Airlines.</p> <p>After the arrival of the fish, three Seattle executive chefs will compete for the best salmon recipe in the annual “Copper Chef Cook-off.”</p> <p>Every year from May through September, king, sockeye, and coho return to the Copper River to make the arduous 300-mile journey up the glacial fed waters to spawn in their birthplace. This is no easy task and they need to pack on sufficient fat reserves to fuel their journey—resulting in salmon rich in omega-3 fatty acids and flavorful oils.</p> <p>This year’s run was forecast to be 48,000 kings and 1.8 million sockeye.</p> <p>Because their stocks have been declining, and the high demand for Copper River salmon, prices are expected to be high. Last year, the first catch was selling in Seattle for nearly \$50 a pound.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 Rape case intensifies homeless debate
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/seattle-homeless-camp-did-not-check-for-warrants-on-a-resident-before-ballard-rape/

GIST

The impassioned debate over Seattle's homelessness crisis, already intense following the passage of a new tax to address the problem, took another emotional turn this week after a homeless man was charged with sexually assaulting a woman in an auto dealership restroom.

The man arrested in Monday's sexual assault had recently lived in Ballard Nickelsville, one of the city's six sanctioned encampments. He was wanted on a 2017 warrant at the time of the attack, raising concerns among many community members about who is living in the camps.

However, people associated with the camp and who work in the homeless-service system argue the man's housing status is irrelevant, a cipher for people's broader frustrations about homelessness in the city.

Christopher Teel, 24, has been charged with first-degree rape and unlawful imprisonment with sexual motivation after he was arrested Monday in connection with the rape of a woman in a temporary restroom of the Carter Motors in Ballard.

That same day, the Seattle City Council adopted a tax that will collect \$275 per employee, per year starting in 2017 on Seattle for-profit companies that gross at least \$20 million a year. The tax is expected to generate an average of \$47.5 million a year to fund affordable housing and homelessness.

The events capped off weeks of burgeoning frustration over how to address the rising number of people living on Seattle's streets. To Sara Rankin, a Seattle University law professor who studies homelessness, the reaction to the sexual assault, coming the same day as the council vote, points to a city at a point of reckoning about homelessness.

"The reason why I think this (assault) has been such a hot issue in the last 24 hours is because it's occurring at the same time that we are really navigating some thorny discussions about how we should approach homelessness and poverty, and its making a lot of people very uncomfortable," said Rankin.

Teel moved to Seattle in summer 2016, according to King County prosecutors. He had been living in Nickelsville since at least November, when his photograph appeared in a Seattle Times story about the tent camp moving to Wallingford.

Nickelsville, like many other shelters and sanctioned camps, does not check for warrants on their residents, so they were not aware that Teel was wanted on a misdemeanor warrant for failing to appear in court, according to statement issued by Scott Morrow, a founder of Nickelsville.

The bench warrant was issued in March 2017 after Teel failed to appear at a Seattle Municipal Court hearing on a gross misdemeanor charge of first-degree criminal trespass.

The Seattle Police Department's Fugitive Unit tracks down violent offenders wanted on felony warrants, but Teel's bench warrant wouldn't have risen to their attention, said police spokesman Sgt. Sean Whitcomb.

An officer would have run Teel's name and checked for warrants had he been contacted by police before his arrest Monday — provided they had reasonable suspicion to do so, said Whitcomb.

"When we stop people — for a motor vehicle violation, a pedestrian violation, suspicious circumstances or we have probable cause to arrest them — we're going to check their ID" and see if there are any warrants, protection orders or missing persons reports associated with them, he said.

But police don't have the authority to randomly check rosters of encampment residents to fish for people who may have outstanding warrants, Whitcomb explained.

"Our authority is tempered by people's guaranteed, constitutional rights" — including the right to privacy and protection against unlawful searches and seizures, he said.

When Teel moved into Ballard Nickelsville, he was required to present valid identification. His name was also run against King County's sex-offender list because sex offenders are not allowed on site. His name was not on it, according to Morrow.

Officials with the city's Human Services Department said five of the six sanctioned camps, and many shelters, do sex offender checks upon intake.

Some shelters and homeless service providers also do "a range of background and warrant checks" and can elect to remove a person. But not all shelters do these checks, the department said.

For example, the Downtown Emergency Service Center (DESC) does not do background checks.

"The point of shelter is to bring people inside for safety and when you put up various kinds of barriers then you will not reach the people you're trying to help," said DESC Executive Director Daniel Malone.

And, if a background check is used to determine someone is somehow not worthy of shelter, that person is likely to live outdoors and not receive any assistance and no one will know where they are, Malone said.

At Nickelsville, residents can be temporarily or permanently barred for breaking camp rules, including engaging in "violent, aggressive behavior, intoxication, inappropriate language ... on site or (in the) surrounding neighborhood," according to the camp Code of Conduct.

Teel had not signed into the camp or been there since May 9, according to Morrow. The Code of Conduct requires all residents to sign in to the camp every day. Failure to do so for three days qualifies as "a voluntary move."

When camp residents met for a regular meeting on Monday night, they were not aware Teel had been arrested in connection with the rape.

Other residents were concerned for his safety because he recently "seemed to be decompensating," with worsening symptoms of mental illness, and they planned to check hospitals and jails, or file a missing-person report.

Nickelsville staff learned Wednesday that Teel was charged, and notified the Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI), a Seattle nonprofit agency that provides case management at the camp.

"We are shocked to learn of a violent act like this, by someone who had recently left Nickelsville," Morrow said in the statement.

He said in nine years of operations "there has never before been a confirmed criminal act of such terrible significance by either someone living in Nickelsville, or who had recently left." Morrow's statement said.

LIHI executive director Sharon Lee said her organization is the site's fiscal sponsor and does its case management, and they are not responsible for criminal background checks. LIHI only gets the names of camp residents who are engaged in case management, which is not a requirement of living at Nickelsville.

Ballard Nickelsville, which was Seattle's first authorized camp, opened in 2015. The camp recently moved to Wallingford, near Fourth Avenue Northeast and Northeast Northlake Way.

Like all of Seattle's sanctioned homeless camps, Nickelsville sits on public property. Each camp is managed by a separate organization. Nickelsville is its own nonprofit, and runs the Wallingford site, in addition to two other sanctioned camps in South Seattle.

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SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/05/18/preliminary-ruling-finds-fiji-4-not-guilty-sedition.html
GIST	<p>WELLINGTON, New Zealand – An opinion writer and three newspaper executives in Fiji have been found not guilty of sedition in a preliminary ruling, although a judge has yet to make a final decision in the case.</p> <p>Three assessors on Friday also ruled the Fiji Times company was not guilty. Under the Fiji judicial system, the judge can chose to either follow or ignore the findings of the assessors. The judge adjourned the court on Friday, saying he planned to issue his verdict Tuesday.</p> <p>The case has major implications for press freedom in the South Pacific nation. It centers on an opinion piece which accused Muslims of historic crimes.</p> <p>The column ran in the Nai Lalakai, a small, weekly indigenous-language newspaper published by the Fiji Times.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 France sanctions Syrian arms makers
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/05/18/new-french-sanctions-target-suspected-syrian-arms-makers.html
GIST	<p>PARIS – France's government is imposing new sanctions on people and companies suspected of helping Syria's chemical weapons program.</p> <p>The Finance Ministry and Foreign Ministry announced Friday a freeze on assets of three individuals and nine companies involved in research or purchasing for the Syrian Scientific Research Center. The Syrian lab is accused of producing chemical weapons for President Bashar Assad's government.</p> <p>France says companies from multiple countries have been furnishing materials for the manufacture of chemical weapons, including sarin gas.</p> <p>France is hosting leading diplomats Friday from 32 countries for a meeting of a new body aimed at better identifying and punishing those who use chemical weapons.</p> <p>France, the U.S. and Britain bombed Syrian government sites last month in response to a suspected chemical weapons attack.</p> <p>Assad's forces have denied accusations they repeatedly used chemical weapons in Syria's 7-year-old civil war. Rebels also have been accused of using poison gas.</p> <p>In the latest report of poison gas being unleashed, the international chemical weapons watchdog said Wednesday that chlorine was likely used as a weapon in the rebel-held northern Syrian town of Saraqeb in early February. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons released details of a report into the chlorine use, but did not say which side in the fighting used it. The OPCW is not mandated to apportion blame for the attack.</p> <p>The group meeting in Paris on Friday plans to publish information about chemical attacks to name and shame perpetrators and eventually sanction them.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 UK: poisoned ex-Russian spy out hospital
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/05/18/ex-russian-spy-sergei-skripal-discharged-from-uk-hospital-after-being-poisoned-with-nerve-agent.html
GIST	Sergei Skripal, the former Russian spy who was poisoned with a nerve agent in the U.K. more than two

months ago, was released from the hospital Friday, health officials said.

Skripal, 66, and his daughter Yulia were found unconscious on a public bench in the city of Salisbury on March 4, and spent weeks in critical condition. Officials suspect the father and daughter were poisoned with novichok, a Soviet-engineered nerve agent.

What to know about Novichok, the lethal Russian nerve agent reportedly used in Great Britain
Video Nerve agent Novichok: What to know about Russia's spy poison
Yulia, 33, recovered more quickly than her father and was discharged last month.

Salisbury District Hospital said Friday that all three people hospitalized in the attack -- the Skripals and a police officer who came to their assistance -- have now been released. The Skripals have been taken to an undisclosed location for their safety.

"We have been able to discharge Sergei Skripal," said Lorna Wilkinson, director of nursing at the hospital. "This is an important stage in his recovery, which will now take place away from the hospital."

Sergei Skripal served with Russia's military intelligence agency, often known by its Russian-language acronym GRU, and retired in 1999. He then worked at the Foreign Ministry until 2003, and later became involved in business.

Skripal was arrested in 2004 in Moscow and later confessed to having been recruited by British intelligence in 1995. He also said at the time that he provided information about GRU agents in Europe, receiving over \$100,000 in return.

In 2006, Skripal was convicted on charges of spying for Britain and sentenced to 13 years. However, he later was pardoned and released from custody in July 2010 as part of a U.S.-Russian spy swap, which followed the exposure of a ring of Russian sleeper agents in the U.S.

He had been living quietly in the cathedral city of Salisbury, 90 miles southwest of London, when he was struck down.

Britain blamed Russia for the attack while Moscow denied all allegations. In response, more than two dozen Western allies, including the U.S., ordered out over 150 Russian diplomats in a show of solidarity. In response, Russia ordered out 60 U.S. diplomats and closed the consulate in St. Petersburg in a tit-for-tat response.

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HEADLINE	05/17 Power grid change could impact clocks
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/clocks-cuckoo-power-grid-change-55237088
GIST	<p>Running late for work or just miss that bus? You could have a good excuse: Your electric clock might be running a bit cuckoo.</p> <p>Because of a change in federal energy regulations, some scientists say your trusty, older plug-in clock may be losing or gaining a few ticks over time.</p> <p>Electric clocks keep time based on the usually stable and precise pulses of the electric current that powers them. In the U.S., that's 60 hertz (cycles per second). In the past, regulators required power companies to immediately correct the rate if it slipped off the mark. But that precision is expensive to maintain, so last year, the correction part was quietly eliminated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.</p> <p>Energy officials insist other standards will keep the time in check, and so far the problem has not amounted to more than a few seconds here and there. But some scientists looked at what could happen without the time correction rule and concluded clocks could gradually go off-kilter if the grid's power was</p>

delivered consistently at higher or lower rates than 60 hertz. That can happen when power demand surges or slows because of weather and the grid can't adjust right away.

This would affect clocks that get their power from a wall socket, such as alarm clocks and those on microwaves and coffeemakers. Cellphones, newer clocks with GPS, those connected to cable TV and modern ones that don't rely on the grid to keep time aren't affected, experts said.

The changes could be just matters of seconds and all but unnoticeable, but the time could drift by as much as seven and a half minutes between time changes in March and November, when people reset their clocks, according to a study conducted by researchers at the National Institute of Standards and Technology and the U.S. Naval Observatory.

In some extreme cases, Americans might miss their bus, parts of television shows and even be slightly late or, shudder, early for work, said Demetrios Matsakis, co-author of the study and chief time scientist at the Naval Observatory.

"They'll think something is wrong with their clock but they won't know what," said Matsakis, co-author of the study.

The request to retire the long-standing time correction rule came from the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), which coordinates the grid. NERC standards director Howard Gugel says newer standards prevent veering from 60 hertz so the rule isn't needed. NERC has guidelines for what to do if time corrections are necessary, he said in an email.

Earlier this year, in the eastern half of the country, a time error of 10 seconds too fast went uncorrected for a week or more. It was during a bitter cold snap and utilities didn't think it was wise to tinker with power levels, said Bill Henson of the system operator for New England. Generally, time errors are fixed every three to five days in the eastern U.S., he said.

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HEADLINE	05/18 India, Pakistan trade fire Kashmir border
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/india-pakistans-shelling-kills-couple-soldier-kashmir-55253100?
GIST	<p>Six civilians, including a husband and wife and a soldier, were killed after Indian and Pakistani soldiers targeted border posts and villages along the highly militarized frontier in disputed Kashmir, officials said Friday.</p> <p>The cross-border firing and shelling began overnight and spread to dozens of posts in the Jammu region of the Himalayan territory, said Indian police officer S.D. Singh.</p> <p>Indian paramilitary officials said their soldiers responded to Pakistani gunfire and shelling, describing it as "unprovoked and indiscriminate." The officials said the paramilitary soldier was killed by a Pakistani sniper Thursday night, leading to cross-border firing and shelling at several forward posts.</p> <p>The husband and wife were killed on the Indian side. At least seven civilians were also wounded and were being treated in hospitals.</p> <p>In Pakistan, the military accused Indian troops of initiating "unprovoked" violation of the 2003 cease-fire accord between the two countries along the frontier near Kashmir and targeting the civilian population including four villagers who died Friday morning.</p> <p>In a statement, the military said that Indian fire also wounded 10 people, including three children, in the border village near the city of Sialkot, bordering Kashmir.</p>

	<p>It said Pakistani troops "effectively" responded and targeted the Indian posts from where the fire came.</p> <p>The military said the artillery exchange was continuing.</p> <p>As was the case in the past, each country has accused the other of initiating border skirmishes leading to casualties on both sides.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 FDA: 'too many kids' vaping
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fda-too-many-kids-experimenting-with-e-cigarettes-vaping/
GIST	<p>The popularity of e-cigarettes among younger Americans is drawing mounting scrutiny from federal regulators.</p> <p>Citing a wish "to better understand the youth appeal of these products," the Food and Drug Administration said Thursday that four manufacturers of e-cigarettes have until July 12 to hand over documents related to their marketing strategies and product designs.</p> <p>"Too many kids continue to experiment with e-cigarette and vaping products, putting them at risk for developing a lifelong nicotine addiction," Scott Gottlieb, a physician and FDA commissioner, said in a statement. "We'll explore all of our regulatory options, including enforcement actions, based on what we learn from the information these manufacturers are required to provide."</p> <p>Introduced as a means of helping smokers kick the habit, or at least switch to a nicotine-delivery vehicle containing less deadly tar and chemicals, e-cigarettes have instead become the most commonly used tobacco product among U.S. youth, who are more likely than adults to use e-cigarettes.</p> <p>Made to look like regular cigarettes, pens or USB sticks, most e-cigarettes have a battery that heats a liquid usually containing nicotine. Using them is referred to as "vaping."</p> <p>A 2017 study found about 50 percent more high schoolers and middle schoolers vape than smoke cigarettes. Earlier research by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found in 2016 that more than 2 million middle and high school students had used e-cigarettes, including 4.3 percent of middle school students and 11.3 percent of high school students.</p> <p>The FDA's action follows a warning sent by the agency in May to 13 companies selling e-cigarette liquid in child-appealing packaging resembling juice boxes or candy.</p> <p>The FDA, which did not regulate e-cigarettes as tobacco products until 2016, earlier this year also requested internal documents from Juul, the biggest player in the American vaporizer market, as part of a government crackdown on the sale of e-cigarettes to minors.</p> <p>The agency in April sent warning letters to 40 retailers that sell e-cigarettes, including 7-Elevens, Circle Ks and vape shops.</p> <p>The companies contacted by the FDA in its latest action include: J Well, of Paris, France; YGT Investment and 7 Daze of Baldwin Park, California; Liquid Filling Solutions of King of Prussia, Pennsylvania; and SVR of Las Vegas.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 TSA: '95 list' of unruly passengers
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/tsa-reveals-keeping-a-list-unruly-passengers/
GIST	Following an "alarming spike" in assaults on transportation security officers at airport checkpoints, the

Transportation Security Administration began what's referred to as a "95 List" of unruly passengers.

The list so far is a short one. For now, it has less than 50 people, the Transportation Safety Administration says. In fiscal year 2017, TSA notes, there were over 34 assaults transportation security officers.

"In most cases this is someone where there was assaultive behavior or someone tried to circumvent security screening," Executive Assistant Administrator for Security Operations Darby LaJoye told CBS News Transportation Correspondent Kris Van Cleave in a phone interview Thursday.

The matter would be significant enough that police would be called and prompt a report to headquarters. Since its creation in February, LaJoye says two to three dozen people have been added to the list, which is shared with airports as a "law enforcement awareness measure."

LaJoye was asked about the list by members of a House Homeland Security Subcommittee during a hearing Thursday. It was the first time the list had been discussed publicly.

"I am concerned about the civil liberty implications of such a list," Rep. Watson Coleman, D-N.J., said during the hearing.

Being placed on the 95 list does not, on its own, result in a flyer being denied the ability to board a plane or additional secondary screening.

"This is simply an awareness that somebody is going through the checkpoint that has demonstrated concerning assaulting behavior in the past to our officers," LaJoye told members of the Transportation and Protective Services Subcommittee.

The existence of the 95 list was first reported by the New York Times, but the agency says it posted a Privacy Impact Statement on DHS.gov in July, asking for public comments. TSA says it received no comments.

The agency disputes the assertions in the Times that loitering by a checkpoint or simply swatting the hand of a screener during a pat down or being rude or arguing with a screener could land a flyer on this list.

Names aren't added to the list frequently -- putting new names on the list is not a daily occurrence, but over time the size of the list could grow. According to LaJoye there is a monthly and quarterly review process during which someone could be removed from the list.

TSA acknowledged flyers may not know they've been added to this list which drew criticism from Rep Bill Keating, D-Mass., during the hearing.

"If you're going to, you know, affect behavior, it would be great that they knew they were on the list, and it would be great if they're on the list that they have a way to appeal that," Keating said to LaJoye.

Sources familiar with the matter confirm the list is described in a 5-page directive that prohibits the use of profiling based on race, religion or gender as the sole reason for being on the list, although these could be considered as factors when relevant or coinciding with specific intelligence.

Federal security directors, top T.S.A. security officials at airports and top Air Marshals supervisors can request a person be added to the 95 list. Only the T.S.A. administrator, his deputy and the top two officials at the agency's Office of Intelligence and Analysis may add or remove people from the database.

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HEADLINE 05/17 Latin America's 'Ni Una Menos' spotlight

SOURCE <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/while-u-s-has-metoo-latin-america-s-ni-una-n875091>

GIST

LIMA, Perú — Three weeks and six surgeries after being doused with gasoline and set alight by a former coworker unable to accept her rejection of his advances, Eyvi Agreda remains in intensive care in Lima's Almenara Hospital, strips of pigskin covering the second and third degree burns on 60 percent of her body.

Having moved from her native Andean region of Cajamarca, the sociable 22-year-old had been working hard here in the Peruvian capital, studying international business while also paying her bills by doing shifts in a call center.

All that came to a juddering halt on April 24 when Carlos Javier Hualpa, a 37-year-old restaurant worker, launched his horrific attack on an unsuspecting Agreda on a bus in the upmarket neighborhood of Miraflores.

The incident has shocked Peru and shone a light on the issue of misogynistic violence and femicide — the act of killing a woman simply because she is a woman — that plagues both this Andean nation and, more generally, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Reliable statistics for sexual assault, domestic battery and other forms of violence against women are in short supply, experts say, in part because of official disinterest and victims' fear of coming forward. But the few numbers that do exist point to an epidemic of gender-based physical attacks on women and girls in the region. According to the Geneva-based Small Arms Survey, 10 of the 25 nations with the highest recorded rates of femicides are in Latin America with another four in the Caribbean.

That is partly attributable to the region's high overall levels of violence including its well documented status as being, statistically, the world's most homicidal. But many also blame it on a deeply ingrained culture of "machismo", which has generated what activists call a continuum of patriarchal behavior that runs from mundane everyday acts of condescension, disdain and exclusion towards women and girls, through to its most extreme expressions, rape and femicide.

Indeed, it is only 20 years since the concept of femicide even became an issue in Latin America, following the notorious wave of unresolved killings of women in Ciudad Juárez, the Mexican city on the U.S. border, in the 1990s.

While the United States is having its "me too" moment regarding harassment principally in the workplace, Latin America lags several steps behind, with femicides from Mexico to Argentina periodically triggering protests from the "ni una más" ("not one more") and the more recent "ni una menos" movement in Perú.

Arrested just the day after his unspeakable attack on Agreda, Hualpa, seeking to play down his culpability, told prosecutors: "I wanted her face to be scarred, but not her body. It all went out of control."

María Ysabel Cedano García, head of Demus, a Lima-based women's rights nonprofit, says: "Those who commit femicides, or attempted femicides, claim they are being disrespected or cheated on. They are not able to accept being rejected because they believe they have a right, a right over women's bodies. Femicides typically involve cruelty. There is a level of viciousness and planning. The objective is to punish."

Responding to the attack on Agreda, psychoanalyst Eduardo Gastelumendi, meanwhile, has warned that machismo harms the well-being of men as well as women.

"Boys raised in macho homes end up being adults who are really like big children: emotionally infantile, dependent, spoilt, violent, demanding and impulsive," he wrote in the Peruvian newspaper El Comercio.

"Girls who grow up in these homes are treated in a more demanding way and tend to be devalued for being women, which leads them to struggle with feelings of guilt and an absurd and socially cruel handicapping."

For activists like Cedano García, extreme attacks such as that on Agreda need to be seen in the context of a

full spectrum of violations of women's rights, from teenage pregnancies and rape to murder, while frequent disinterest from law enforcement feeds a climate of impunity.

She says the National Police of Peru (PNP) open four new rape investigations every hour. "But those are just the ones that are reported. What is the real figure? Sexual violence and harassment don't seem to worry the police. They just don't see it as part of public safety, part of their job."

That view of the disinterest in — and even downright hostility to — victims of misogynistic violence has been crystallized in Peru by the high-profile case of Arlette Contreras, a young lawyer beaten up by her boyfriend, Adriano Pozo, in a hotel in the mountain city of Ayacucho in 2016.

Part of the attack, including a naked and enraged Pozo dragging Contreras by the hair, was caught on the hotel's closed circuit television. Yet a local court absolved him, supposedly for lack of evidence, and is now threatening Contreras with a year behind bars, allegedly for including false information in a CV.

The refusal to take femicide seriously— and women's rights more generally — also comes straight from some of the most powerful players in Peruvian society.

Last year, Maritza García, a member of the hard-right Fujimorista party, was forced to step down as president of the Congressional committee on women's rights after suggesting that "sometimes, without thinking, women give the opportunity to men" to kill them.

Meanwhile, Lima's ultra-conservative Archbishop Juan Luis Cipriani has dismissed the notion that minors who become pregnant might be victims of sexual abuse. "The statistics tell us that girls have abortions, but it is not because they have abused these girls, but because, often, the woman puts herself [on display] like in a shop window, provoking" the men, he said in 2016.

Peru's last two governments have attempted to address the ingrained cultural sexism by including issues of equality in the national curriculum. However, the education ministry has been forced to back down after a sustained series of protests, led in part by Cipriani, against what conservative activists have attacked as "gender ideology."

No wonder, perhaps, that Peru also has one of Latin America's highest rates of domestic violence. One report found that 39.5 percent of Peruvian women had experienced physical or sexual violence from their partner, including 14.9 percent in the past 12 months, levels second only to Colombia and Bolivia.

Other Latin American countries have been more successful, however, at addressing the problem within their education systems. In 2015, Colombia passed a law that now sees schoolchildren studying how gender impacts society.

Several other nations in the region have also seen new legislation, sometimes involving novel solutions, aimed at prevention. That includes a project in Uruguay in which women deemed at high risk are given electronic beepers that send a signal to the police should their abusers, who wear electronic bands, draw too close to them.

Yet much remains to be done, starting with better quantifying the problem to allow policy solutions to more effectively target it.

Kathleen Taylor, an expert on violence against women with the Latin American and Caribbean office of UN Women, the United Nations agency that addresses women's rights, adds: "We just don't know the full impact [of misogynistic violence] because of the underreporting and misreporting."

"Many murders are not classified as femicides even though they are. For example, if a woman disappears, it is not categorized as femicide. Mexico has some very high levels of women going missing and a lot of them could be femicides. But we just don't know."

	<p>As for Agreda, she has at least now been able to wake from an induced coma, reportedly crying and asking her family to take her home to Cajamarca, an impossible wish for her right now.</p> <p>She faces an agonizing rehabilitation expected to take another six months, including several more surgeries to allow doctors to place strips of her own skin taken from her back and grown in the lab, on her extensive burns.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 UN: peacekeeper killed in CAR
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/peacekeeper-killed-ambush-central-african-republic-55237681?
GIST	<p>The United Nations says a peacekeeper from Mauritania has been killed in Central African Republic.</p> <p>A statement says the peacekeeper was killed in an ambush south of Alindao town in the impoverished country that since 2013 has faced deadly sectarian violence.</p> <p>Eight other Mauritanian peacekeepers were wounded Thursday morning in the attack by suspected anti-Balaka fighters. Five of the peacekeepers are in grave condition.</p> <p>The statement says the attack occurred as the peacekeepers were escorting a convoy with the mission.</p> <p>The U.N. mission in Central African Republic is one of the deadliest current peacekeeping missions, with 63 peacekeepers killed as of the end of April. Three have been killed this year, with more than 40 wounded.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 Russia high-tempo military modernization
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/putin-russia-press-ahead-military-modernization-55234329?
GIST	<p>President Vladimir Putin says Russia will maintain a high tempo of modernizing its military arsenals this year.</p> <p>Speaking Thursday at a meeting with the top military brass in the southern Russian city of Sochi, Putin said the Russian air forces would receive 160 new aircraft this year and the army is to get 500 new armored vehicles and artillery systems.</p> <p>He added the navy would commission 10 warships.</p> <p>Putin warned military industry leaders that they bear personal responsibility for meeting the new weapons procurement targets. Thursday's meeting was the latest in a series of conferences on military issues Putin chaired this week at his Black Sea retreat.</p> <p>The Kremlin has conducted a sweeping military modernization program amid tensions with the West over the fighting in Ukraine, Syria and other disputes.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 ACE ending Puerto Rico recovery work
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/corps-leaving-puerto-rico-hurricane-recovery-unfinished-55252133
GIST	The Army Corps of Engineers is ending its work to rebuild Puerto Rico's electric grid, despite residents'

fears that the island's government won't be able to restore power on its own to more than 16,000 people who remain blacked out eight months after Hurricane Maria.

The federal agency will keep operating more than 700 generators on the island, including three "mega generators" supplementing Puerto Rico's aging and storm-damaged power plants. But on Friday the restoration of thousands of miles of downed power lines will be handed back to the U.S. territory's bankrupt public utility, the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, or PREPA.

The Corps took over power restoration efforts in Puerto Rico on Sept. 30 after PREPA failed to call in mainland utility companies under a disaster response plan known as mutual aid, in which power companies from around the U.S. send staff to help stricken areas.

Puerto Rican officials said 98.86 percent of PREPA's customers had electricity Thursday, but 16,723 remained without power as the longest blackout in U.S. history continued.

Trump administration officials say a big federal presence is no longer needed to hook up the relatively few remaining connections in the often-remote areas where people are still without power. But many people on and off the island are dissatisfied by the decision to pull out the Corps without Puerto Rico's power fully restored.

"It's not in our culture to walk away from a mission when it hasn't been fully accomplished, but we follow orders," Charles Alexander, the Corps' director for contingency operations, told the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee at a May 8 hearing.

The Corps has operated under the orders of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which says it has deferred to Gov. Ricardo Rossello's requests on the extent and duration of federal assistance to Puerto Rico. FEMA on Thursday indefinitely extended the Corps' power generation mission but did not extend the grid repair work because Rossello did not request that.

Most of those still without power live in the town of Yabucoa, which was the first place in Puerto Rico struck by Hurricane Maria on Sept. 20.

The Corps of Engineers has received more than \$2 billion to restore power to Puerto Rico, overseeing more than 1,200 personnel on the ground and more than 1,000 contractors, with more than 650 of them working directly on distribution and transmission lines. Contractors included Fluor Corp., an Irving, Texas company that obtained two contracts worth a total of \$1.3 billion.

The Corps helped energize some 80 percent of transmission lines and nearly 90 percent of distribution lines across Puerto Rico, erecting more than 52,000 power poles and stringing more than 5,700 miles of wire.

Corps contractors planned to work in the northern cities of Arecibo, Bayamon and Caguas and the southern city of Ponce through the end of Friday. A group of Corps officials plans to remain in Puerto Rico for several weeks to demobilize contractors and hand logistic operations back to FEMA and PREPA.

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HEADLINE	05/18 Venezuela soldiers desert in droves
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/empty-stomachs-drive-venezuela-soldiers-desert-droves-55252136?
GIST	Not even Venezuela's once-proud military is immune to the oil-rich country's deepening economic crisis of food shortages and skyrocketing prices, and while top commanders deny there is any discontent, analysts say thousands of soldiers are asking for honorable discharges or deserting their posts by simply walking away.

Since taking office after the death of Hugo Chavez, his mentor who installed Venezuela's socialist administration, President Nicolas Maduro has sought to lock in support from the armed forces by pampering troops with outsized bonuses and awarding loyal officers with top government posts.

He is counting on the backing of the military to ride out any turbulent reaction if he is declared the winner of Sunday's presidential election, which has been condemned by much of the international community for barring some of his leading critics from running.

But as Venezuela quickly goes broke and hyperinflation pulverizes the paychecks of civilians and soldiers alike, discontent is penetrating the barracks, raising doubts whether the troops will remain trustworthy as their stomachs growl.

On the Caribbean island of Margarita, soldiers in olive green uniforms and rifles slung over their shoulders openly wander the market each morning begging merchants for fruits and vegetables.

Even the rations served in military mess halls have dramatically diminished in size and quality. To compensate, soldiers are often given leave several hours during the day to hunt for meals off base, several told the AP.

Soldiers once made up a privileged class at the height of Venezuela's oil boom under Chavez, who himself was a former tank commander. They had access to quality housing, cars and home appliances at subsidized prices.

But the largesse has dried up under Maduro, who has tried to compensate by giving top-ranking officers an even bigger slice of power. They head nearly half of Venezuela's ministries, including control of the primary food-supply program.

Most notably, six months ago Maduro named Maj. Gen. Manuel Quevedo to revive the state-run oil company, PDVSA, and its plummeting production though he had no previous experience in the industry.

The 150,000 men and women serving in Venezuela's military are now the lowest paid in Latin America, with monthly salaries worth only to \$2 to \$12, said Rocio San Miguel, a Caracas-based military analyst. Base pay for troops in Colombia begins at \$75, while soldiers in Mexico earn \$300 to start.

Nobody knows exactly how many soldiers have deserted. But San Miguel and other experts say they number several thousand.

In addition to the economic strains, many soldiers fear being deployed again to hold back masses of angry protesters calling for a new government. Experts say desertions surged in 2017 as the National Guard clashed with anti-Maduro protesters almost daily for four months, leaving more than 140 people dead and hundreds more injured and arrested.

There has been a spike in court martials. A handful of soldiers and officers were jailed in 2017 on suspicion of various crimes, yet 90 have already been arrested so far this year, experts say.

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HEADLINE	05/17 Congo: Ebola outbreak 'very concerning'
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/ebola-outbreak-democratic-republic-congo-spreads-large-city/story?id=55229613&cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	The current Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo has spread from rural areas to a city of nearly 1.2 million people, the country's health ministry said Wednesday. Situated along the Congo River, Mbandaka is a densely populated transit hub at the crossroads of Equateur province, the health ministry said, raising fears that the Ebola virus will be easily passed on. Ebola spreads

through direct contact with bodily fluids of infected people.

Downstream from Mbandaka is the country's capital, Kinshasa, which is home to roughly 10 million people.

"The arrival of Ebola in an urban area is very concerning and WHO and partners are working together to rapidly scale up the search for all contacts of the confirmed case in the Mbandaka area," said Matshidiso Moeti, the World Health Organization's regional director for Africa.

A new suspected case of Ebola was recorded this week in Wangata, one of the three health zones of Mbandaka, the capital of the northwestern Equateur province. Laboratory tests on two samples from Wangata confirmed one specimen as positive for Ebola, while the other was negative.

It's the first time in the region's ongoing outbreak that a case has been detected in an urban health zone, with all other cases reported in remote, rural areas of Equateur province. And until now, all the confirmed cases of Ebola were in Bikoro health zone, some 90 miles south of Mbandaka.

"We are entering a new phase of the Ebola outbreak that is now affecting three health zones, including an urban health zone," the Democratic Republic of Congo's Minister of Health Oly Ilunga Kalenga said in a statement in French late Wednesday. "Since the announcement of the alert in Mbandaka, our epidemiologists are working in the field with community relays to identify people who have been in contact with suspected cases."

As of Thursday, a total of 45 cases of hemorrhagic fever had been recorded in the Democratic Republic of Congo since the outbreak was announced on May 8. That number includes 14 confirmed cases of Ebola, 21 probable cases and 10 suspected cases. Health care workers have been among those infected, according to the country's health ministry.

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HEADLINE	05/17 Hawaii: new eruption massive ash cloud
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/eruption-kilauea-evacuation-dangerous-ash-plume/story?id=55201949&cid=clicksource_81_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>A powerful but short-lived explosion occurred at the summit of the Kilauea volcano on Hawaii's Big Island, producing a massive volcanic cloud, officials said.</p> <p>The cloud reached 30,000 feet above sea level -- higher than Mount Everest, officials said at a news conference.</p> <p>Staff from the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park were evacuated and officials warned residents in the path of the ash plume to shelter in place. Officials later said the ash fall was mostly localized.</p> <p>Activity may become more explosive at any time, the U.S. Geological Survey said today, "increasing the intensity of ash production and producing ballistic projectiles near the vent" within Halemaumau Crater at the volcano's summit.</p> <p>The newest eruption follows a damaging earthquake, dangerous volcanic smog and large lava flows that are all threatening Hawaii's Big Island.</p> <p>Kilauea erupted May 3, and since then, fissures have been steadily cracking open near residential areas. Nearly 40 structures have been destroyed, officials said.</p> <p>Volcanic smog -- known as "vog" -- is now being emitted by the fissures, traveling toward populated areas and threatening residents with dangerous sulfur dioxide.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	05/17 Claim: LA County 211 hotline data exposed
SOURCE	https://www.upguard.com/breaches/la-county-211-hotline
GIST	<p>The UpGuard Cyber Risk Team can now disclose that sensitive data from the Los Angeles County 211 service, a nonprofit assistance organization described on their website as “the central source for providing information and referrals for all health and human services in LA County,” was publicly exposed online.</p> <p>The contents of the downloadable files include access credentials for those operating the 211 system, email addresses for contacts and registered resources of LA County 211, and most troubling, detailed call notes. These notes describe the reason for the calls, including personally identifying information for people reporting the problem, persons in need, and, where applicable, their reported abusers. Included in the more than 3 million rows of call logs are 200,000 rows of detailed notes, including graphic descriptions of elder abuse, child abuse, and suicidal distress, raising serious, large-scale privacy concerns. In many of these cases, full names, phone numbers, addresses, and even 33,000 instances of full Social Security numbers are revealed among the data.</p> <p>This information was stored in an Amazon AWS S3 bucket configured to be publicly and anonymously accessible. Though some of the files in the bucket were not publicly downloadable, those that were included Postgres database backups and CSV exports of that data, with hundreds of thousands of rows of sensitive personal information. Despite 211’s dedication to preserving the confidentiality of reports, a technical misconfiguration - in this case, an inadvertently public cloud storage instance - exposed not only email addresses and weakly hashed passwords for LA County 211 employees, but six years of highly sensitive call logs regarding some of the most vulnerable people in LA County.</p> <p>The Discovery On March 14th, 2018, the UpGuard Cyber Risk team discovered an Amazon Web Services S3 cloud storage bucket located at the subdomain “lacounty.” After initial analysis revealed the sensitive nature of the information inside, the team began notification efforts immediately, calling LA County 211 and emailing the recommended contact. Ultimately the team's notification efforts culminated in reaching a member of information security on April 24, 2018. Our contact at LA County 211 assured us the problem would be taken care of, and in less than 24 hours, UpGuard confirmed the bucket itself was no longer publicly accessible.</p> <p>Amazon S3 access rules can be set for both the bucket as a whole and for the files within it. In the case of the “lacounty” bucket, permission settings allowed anyone to list the contents; some of the files inside, however, had additional rules preventing public users from downloading them. Other files did not and were publicly downloadable, including the Postgres database backup and CSV exports containing the call records. Such combinations of permissions levels can get convoluted quickly, explaining why misconfigurations, like those due to complex security rules, are the leading cause of breaches and outages for users of cloud services.</p> <p>The Contents</p> <p>Several CSV files found within the bucket contain personal information critical to the operation of the LA County 211 service. In “users.csv”, the names, email addresses, and hashed passwords for 384 users were exposed, with 153 marked as active. Almost all of the email addresses were at the @211LA.org domain. The passwords, while hashed, were done so using the MD5 algorithm— an algorithm that is considered weak relative to modern computing power and security standards, and one where many hashes have already been broken, compromising the encryption entirely. In the event the encryption was defeated, these passwords would not only make 211LA.org accounts vulnerable, but open individuals up to attacks on other platforms if they have reused their passwords, as many people do. The other contents of the bucket indicate that LA County 211 uses remote desktop applications to administer their resources,</p>

meaning that users and passwords compromised from this public file could potentially be used to remotely access other systems and gain further data.

However, the bulk of the find is contained in a 1.3GB CSV file titled “t_contact.” This file, exported from a Postgres table of the same name, contains a massive amount of PII, including the call notes themselves, for over 200,000 calls logged between 2010 and 2016.

Relevant home addresses, phone numbers, and birth dates were included in many reports, as well as what relationship the person reporting the incident had to the person in need.

The Significance

LA County 211 is frequently cited as a leader in delivering badly needed services to people in need with few alternatives, effectively organizing and providing assistance to the citizens it serves. According to their website, they “provide over 500,000 people every year with information and referrals to the services that best meet their needs.” LA County 211 is a top of the funnel operation, triaging reports to the appropriate areas, and assisting people with the sometimes confusing bureaucracy of getting the right help. This top of the funnel position means that they cast a wide net when it comes to the data they gather. Reports of all types are centralized into a single database. From a functional perspective, this makes sense: centralized and standardized technology makes administration and collaboration faster and easier, and reduces the overhead of multiple systems.

But from a cyber risk perspective, it means that you are creating a crown jewel— a single asset with nearly the value of your entire operation. If this dataset is not carefully handled, the magnitude of exposure is far greater than if it occurred at any of the more specialized links down the triage chain. Furthermore, the specific work done by 211 adds another layer of sensitivity on top of the normal things digital businesses have to worry about, such as user credentials being exploited, or systems being compromised. Those could damage the business. But it should be self-evident how the detailed and not-anonymized call records of an emergency, crisis, and abuse hotline could be used to hurt any number of individuals involved. There are few situations that call for greater confidentiality.

When critical social infrastructure like LA County 211 is placed on top of technological infrastructure, it takes on the risks of that technology. For example, the LA County 211 website has a cyber risk score of 608 out of 950, according to the UpGuard Cloud Scanner, meaning that while some data protection is in place, improvements could be made to further harden systems. The public dispersal of the information contained in the LA County 211 files could be extremely damaging to those involved, and measures taken to protect such information should be equal to those repercussions. The obvious and necessary advantages to using centralized databases, cloud hosting, and online storage must be seen alongside the threats they pose to the business being conducted with them; not so that such innovations can be avoided, but so that the risks can be accounted for upfront and controlled as best as possible.

Any loss of trust in a crisis and abuse reporting system will deter people from using it, removing one of the few mechanisms available to people in need. This problem isn’t unique to 211 or to their sector, but a problem facing all organizations using cloud technology and internet applications to store and process their data. This incident highlights the importance of building a resilient digital ecosystem that can provide privacy and reliability as effectively as it does speed and power.

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HEADLINE	05/17 Jihadi content on Facebook, Google+
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/jihadi-content-still-on-facebook-google/
GIST	Facebook announced this week that algorithms catch 99.5 percent of the terrorism-related content it deletes before a single user reports it. Thanks to steadily advancing AI tools, that’s an improvement from last year, when that figure hovered around 97 percent. But promising as those developments may be, a new report by the internet safety nonprofit Digital Citizens Alliance demonstrates how easy it still is to find grisly images of dead bodies, calls to jihad, and ISIS and Al Qaeda imagery on both Facebook and

Instagram.

The report contains dozens of screenshots of beheadings and terrorist recruitment content linked to accounts that, as of this week, remained live on both platforms. It also includes links to even more graphic content that lives on Google+, a platform that has largely gone undiscussed amid its parent company Alphabet's overtures about eliminating radical content on both YouTube and Google Search.

"It seems based on everything we know the platforms are stuck in a loop. There's criticism, promises to fix, and it doesn't go away," says Tom Galvin, executive director of the Digital Citizens Alliance, which has conducted research on topics like the sale of counterfeit goods and illicit drugs online.

Working with researchers at the Global Intellectual Property Enforcement Center, or GIPEC, the Digital Citizens Alliance amassed a trove of evidence documenting terrorist activity on these online platforms. The researchers used a combination of machine learning and human vetting to search for suspicious keywords and hashtags, then scoured the networks connected to those posts to find more. On Instagram and Facebook, they found users sharing copious images of ISIS soldiers posing with the black flag. One Instagram account reviewed by WIRED on Tuesday posted a photo of two men being beheaded by soldiers in black face masks. By Wednesday, that particular photo had disappeared, but the account, which has posted a slew of equally disturbing images including executions and dead bodies strewn on the sidewalk, remained live. It's not clear whether the post was deleted by the user or by Instagram.

In many cases, the most hideous photos contained captions with innocuous hashtags in Arabic, including #Dads, #Girls, and #Cooking. Below are some of the researchers' more tame discoveries.

On Facebook, the researchers spotted public posts inciting people to violence. One, written in Bangla, urges followers to "kill the unbelievers," complete with tips on how to do it, including by motorbike. It was posted in November 2016, and remained online this week.

In a statement, a Facebook spokesperson told WIRED, "There is no place for terrorists or content that promotes terrorism on Facebook or Instagram, and we remove it as soon as we become aware of it. We take this seriously and are committed to making the environment of our platforms safe. We know we can do more, and we've been making major investments to add more technology and human expertise, as well as deepen partnerships to combat this global issue."

Screenshots taken by WIRED from accounts flagged by the Digital Citizens Alliance. **FACEBOOK**
The fact that in some cases individual posts were taken down but the accounts remained up suggests to Eric Feinberg, GIPEC's founder, that while Facebook and Instagram may proactively spot millions of terrorism-related posts, they're not adequately dealing with the networks connected to those posts. Chasing down hashtags has become central to Feinberg's work. A hashtag like #Islamic_country, in Arabic, will lead Instagram users down a gruesome and disturbing rabbit hole full of violent imagery. As a result, Feinberg says, "We're finding stuff they're not."

Facebook does try to automatically detect clusters of terrorist accounts and Pages by analyzing a given account's friend networks. But, the spokesperson acknowledged, this automation effort is only about a year-and-a-half old, and still has "a long way to go."

While Facebook is a much larger platform, the researchers found ample evidence of similar jihadi content on Google+, as well, a long-forgotten property that's being abused by terrorists. One especially graphic series of images included in the report shows a bearded man in orange staring into a camera in what appear to be the last moments of his life. In the next shot, his bloodied, detached head is resting on his own dead body.

'We're not seeing inter-platform collaboration, the way the casinos might catch a card cheat.'

In Alphabet's ongoing fight against terrorist groups on its platforms, it rarely mentions Google+. Like Facebook, YouTube has developed technology that automatically deletes terrorist content before users flag

it. Today, 98 percent of the content YouTube takes down related to terrorism has been identified by algorithms. The company has even been accused of overcorrecting in its quest, removing videos that were used for academic and research purposes. YouTube's CEO Susan Wojcicki said the company would scale up to 10,000 human moderators by the end of this year. And yet, it seems far less attention has been paid to cleaning up Google+. Google did not respond to WIRED's request for comment.

"Google+ feels like an abandoned warehouse that ISIS felt was a great place to work," Galvin says.

These disturbing discoveries couldn't come as a surprise to either tech giant. Congress called both Facebook and YouTube to testify about this very topic in January. Facebook has also said it will employ 20,000 safety and security moderators by the end of the year. Meanwhile, the two companies joined with Microsoft and Twitter in 2016 to form the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism, a joint effort aimed at blocking terrorist content across platforms. The companies submit images and videos along with a unique identifying signature that can help other companies identify that same content on their platforms. So far, 80,000 images and 8,000 videos have been marked.

Still, a Facebook spokesperson notes that this system only works if the content posted to another platform is an exact match. The companies don't currently share any information about who's behind those initial posts, either. Galvin views that as a problem. "We're not seeing inter-platform collaboration, the way the casinos might catch a card cheat," he says. Another notable blind spot: While YouTube is part of the forum, the broader Google family is not.

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HEADLINE	05/17 Iran's hacker hierarchy exposed
SOURCE	https://www.informationsecuritybuzz.com/study-research/irans-hacker-hierarchy-exposed/
GIST	<p>Executive Summary</p> <p>Since at least 2009, the Islamic Republic of Iran has regularly responded to sanctions or perceived provocations by conducting offensive cyber campaigns. The Islamic Republic has historically preferred to use proxies or front organizations both in physical conflict — Hezbollah against Israel and Yemen rebels against Saudi Arabia — and cyberattacks to achieve its policy goals.</p> <p>Currently, Iran faces the prospect of negative economic impact via renewed sanctions. On May 8, 2018 President Trump announced that the United States would not renew the waivers on sanctions against Iran.</p> <p>The U.S. will instead impose additional economic penalties, the combination of which amounts to a de facto U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) (commonly referred to as the “Iran nuclear deal”).</p> <p>We assess, based on Iran's previous reactions to economic pressure, that with President Trump's exit from the JCPOA, Iran is likely to respond by launching cyberattacks on Western businesses within months, if not faster. Judging from historical patterns, the businesses likely to be at greatest risk are in many of the same sectors that were victimized by Iranian cyberattacks between 2012 and 2014 and include banks and financial services, government departments, critical infrastructure providers, and oil and energy.</p> <p>Key Judgments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Islamic Republic has abandoned its typically deliberate and methodical approach to cyber operations on only two known occasions, in 2012 and in 2014, when a quick reactionary response was required. We assess that when Iranian cyber operators respond to the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA that the operations will be staffed and executed by capable, but less trusted contractors. • Further, we assess that staffing these operations with less trusted contractors could result in a scenario where the Islamic Republic has difficulty controlling the scope and scale of the destructive cyberattacks once they have begun. • Iranian cyber operations are administered via a tiered approach, where an ideologically and

politically trusted group of middle managers translate intelligence priorities into segmented cyber tasks which are then bid out to multiple contractors. This creates a quasi-capitalistic system that pits contractors against each other for influence with the Iranian government.

- The Islamic Republic operates with embedded paranoia, where ultimately, no one can be trusted. The situation creates unique trade-offs in Iran's government-sanctioned offensive cyber campaigns; individuals with demonstrated adherence to the government's ideology and individuals with the greatest offensive cyber skills are almost always mutually exclusive.
- Based on our source's conversations with other hackers in Iran, there are over 50 estimated contractors vying for Iranian government-sponsored offensive cyber projects. Only the best individuals or teams succeed, are paid, and remain in business.
- Insikt Group analyzed internet traffic relating to various institutes affiliated with the Iranian cyber ecosystem from March 1, 2018 to April 30, 2018. As this is the first profiling of Iranian internet activity for these institutes, we cannot determine whether the suspicious activity we analyzed was in preparation of the U.S. announcement.
- According to Insikt Group's source, to find and retain the best offensive cyber talent, Iranian government contractors are forced to mine closed-trust communities. The links between the forums and contractors may illustrate that the trust communities begin with the Iranian security forums.

The History of Iranian Geopolitical Response and the Nuclear Agreement Decision

Editor's Note: Where applicable, information in this section was provided by a former Iranian hacker with direct access to the information provided. Based on additional corroboration, we assess high confidence in this information. We refer to this individual as "Insikt Group's source" in other sections where their information is cited.

Since [1979](#), Iran's reactions to perceived Middle Eastern adversaries' foreign policy has been a study in the use of proxies. Specifically, [Israel](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), [United States](#), and [Iraq](#) have been frequent targets of Iranian-funded military actions, most recently through [Houthi rebels in Yemen](#), and [Hezbollah](#) everywhere else.

Since 2009, Iran has developed proxies in the cyber domain to partially obfuscate government fingerprints from foreign attacks. Subsequent to starting a cyber operations program in 2009, the Iranian government had an immediate need to use the program in the fall of 2012 after U.S. President Obama imposed severe financial sanctions on Iran, including [removing Iran from the SWIFT money transfer system](#).

According to Insikt Group's source, the Iranian government authorized denial-of-service attacks on America's largest financial services companies as an immediate response to the sanctions in a campaign dubbed [Operation Ababil](#). A quick response was top priority, so time and planning were forgone luxuries for the Iranian government. Instead, the Iranian government opted for speed and the most capable actors, regardless of demonstrated ideology.

Similarly, a year later in the fall of 2013, Sheldon Adelson (the CEO of Sands Corporation) publicly suggested that the [United States should attack Iran with an atomic weapon](#). In February 2014, [Iran launched a destructive attack on the Sands Las Vegas Corporation](#) that caused significant network damage. This was the second public Iranian attack campaign on an American business, where the response called for speed over time and preparation.

The Iranian attacks in 2012 and 2014 were in contrast to the relatively slow and methodical work of APT 33 ([Intel Card](#)), APT 34 ([Intel Card](#)), and APT 35 ([Intel Card](#)), developing custom malware, targeting data exfiltration from strategic intelligence targets such as U.S. military contractors, Middle East energy companies, and [university research networks](#).

Building a National Capability — History and Relationships Between Proxies

The Iranian Revolution replaced the Persian monarchy and transitioned the Shah's power to the Islamic Republic, led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Loyalty to the resulting theocracy was defined by

alignment to the [Supreme Leader's moral precepts](#).

The new leaders of Iran also established an intelligence and security organization, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps ([IRGC](#)), “charged with defending the Islamic Republic against internal and external threats.” Currently, the IRGC is Iran’s premier security organization and possesses an army, navy, and air force, and manages “Iran’s ballistic missile arsenal and irregular warfare operations through its elite Quds Force and proxies such as Hezbollah.”

The IRGC has a vast [domestic information security](#) and monitoring mandate, as well as [broad foreign mission](#), and has been linked to cyberattacks against Western institutions since at least 2011.

According to Insikt Group’s source, during the 2009 Green Revolution, Gerdab.ir emerged as the IRGC’s domestic hacking group tasked with targeting opposition news websites and individuals considered immoral by the regime. Iranian hackers targeting Iranian government resources (one example was defacing Khamaneh.ir) were identified by Gerdab and imprisoned. Gerdab continues to act as the Iranian government’s internal censor.

Following the Green Revolution, the Iranian government considered adding a formal offensive cyber component to its existing intelligence apparatus, and was forced to address a personnel problem. Iran needed a talented, but politically and religiously reliable workforce. [Stuxnet](#) and [scientist assassinations](#) reminded Iran of the efficacy of Mossad and CIA programs, and according to Insikt Group’s source, fervent religious ideology was the only way to demonstrate loyalty and build trust. The emergence of the [Iranian Cyber Army \(ICA\)](#) as an extension of the IRGC was an initial attempt by the Islamic Republic at conducting internationally focused operations. These operations were a departure from Gerdab’s focus on maintaining domestic moral values and defending government rhetoric. In 2011, the IRGC’s ICA formed the foundation of the Khaybar Center for Information Technology. According to a [former IRGC cyber commander](#), the Khaybar Center was established in 2011 and has been linked to a number of attacks against the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey.

Even today, the balance between ideology and cyber skills remains problematic. One example of the conflict between ideology and skill was Mohammad Hussein Tajik, a [former cyber commander](#) within the IRGC. According to Insikt Group’s source, Tajik’s father maintained a strong religious background and was a veteran of Iran’s ministry of intelligence. Yet Tajik was [arrested and killed](#) because the Iranian government feared that Tajik was not ideologically aligned and posed a betrayal and flight risk.

Following the [Green Revolution](#), Iran’s government needed to [quickly](#) improve its cyber capabilities, but according to Insikt Group’s source, the talent was primarily young and focused on financial benefits. This motivation bred government mistrust, as the Islamic Republic feared that the financially motivated could be bought by foreign intelligence services. Additionally, many of the original Iranian hackers responsible for mass defacements hated authority and lacked the discipline necessary for government work.

According to Insikt Group’s source, the government answer was a tiered approach, with a network of people unofficially associated with the IRGC and Iranian government — a type of ideologically aligned middle management — that were loyal to the regime and demonstrated sufficient religious commitment.

This middle tier translated intelligence priorities into segmented cyber tasks which were then bid out to multiple contractors. Sometimes the contractors would compete with each other, sometimes they would work together, but payment was only made once the objective was completed. The result was (and presently remains) a quasi-capitalistic system that pitted contractors against each other for influence with the Iranian government.

In the Islamic Republic, influence can lead to security and wealth, but it can also lead to a false sense of security (no one is above being imprisoned and questioned at any given time). Thus, contractors must learn to play the game — enough surface-level adherence to the regime’s ideology — to gain temporary reprieves from suspicion long enough to be given contracted work. To the Iranian government, ideology is more important than skills. Deep belief in the Ayatollah’s precepts and the government’s goals helps to

avoid defections and traitors.

Today, based on ongoing contact between Insikt Group's source and Iranian hackers, it is estimated that there are over 50 organizations vying for government-sponsored offensive cyber projects. Only the best teams succeed, are paid, and remain in business. The government does its best to compartmentalize — one job might be creating a remote code exploit (RCE) for a popular software application, while another job might be using the RCE and establishing persistent unauthorized access. Two different contractors (or more) are typically required to complete the government-defined objective.

Public knowledge has also established that Iranian academic institutions play a contractor-like role. Specific examples include [Shahid Beheshti University \(SBU\)](#) and the [Imam Hossein University \(IHU\)](#), which have comprehensive science and technology departments attracting some of the best academic talent in Iran. In fact, the [SBU](#) has a specific [cyberspace research institute](#) dedicated to such matters. The [IHU](#) has strong ties to the Iranian government; it was [founded by the IRGC](#) and was extensively reported as being responsible for conducting [attacks in 2014 and 2015](#).

As the Mabna Institute [indictments](#) highlight, despite the lifting of sanctions and an appetite to re-engage with the international community, Iran has continued a subversive and aggressive global cyber operations campaign. This ongoing campaign, which targets universities for scientific and technological intellectual property theft, demonstrates a fundamental lack of trust in the international agreements, including the [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action \(JCPOA\)](#).

Relationship Between the Iranian Government, Contractors, and Security Forums

[Clearsky](#), [FireEye](#), [Symantec](#), and [PhishLabs](#) have all performed significant research on Iranian nation-state-sponsored campaigns that provide historical insight into technical capabilities and relationships between the Iranian government and contractors.

The work of the aforementioned security companies and recent [U.S. Department of Justice indictments](#) provides consistent evidence that Iranian government-sponsored offensive campaigns are executed by contractors.

[FireEye](#) disclosed that the Nasr Institute was an APT 33 contractor in an operation that used publicly available backdoors and remote access trojans. The handle "[xman_1365_x](#)" (self-identified on security forums as Mahdi Honarvar) was found by FireEye in malware artifacts, which [open sources](#) linked to the Nasr Institute. Previously, Nasr Institute had been [associated](#) with Operation Ababil's distributed denial-of-service attacks against American banks, an organization which a U.S. Department of Justice [indictment](#) confirms had been hired to build attack infrastructure by the Iranian government.

The actor [xman_1365_x](#) was then [linked](#) to a security company called Kavosh Security via OSINT by Iran Cyber News Agency. The actor was linked to a destructive operation, which used [NewsBeef](#) and [StoneDrill](#) malware families. According to [Kaspersky](#), the latter data wiping operation targeted sectors across Saudi Arabia and Europe.

Command and control (C2) domains used by StoneDrill and NewsBeef in Kaspersky's findings were found to share an SSL certificate, which surfaced an additional three domains in [research](#) by the Iran Cyber News Agency. WHOIS information was then connected via open sources to Imam Hossein University (IHU). IHU was named in sanctions [by the U.S. Treasury](#) "for providing, or attempting to provide technological, or other support for and services in support of the IRGC."

Additional publicly known Iranian contractors include [ITSecTeam \(ITSEC\)](#) and [Mersad Company](#), also linked to Operation Ababil.

The links between the Iranian government and contractors are well documented; however, the identity of specific groups and individuals within the Iranian government and IRGC responsible for offensive cyber campaigns is murky, as is the relationship between contractors and security forums.

Yet, our research and analysis suggest that Iranian security forums may play a role in staffing and knowledge sharing for Iranian contractors. First, FireEye referenced the publicly available ALFA TEaM Shell in [APT33 spear phishing email campaigns](#). The ALFA Shell is discussed in multiple web locations, including Ashiyane and Iranian Dark Coders Team Forum.

Second, xman_1365_x created an [Ashiyane profile](#) on August 8, 2010, allegedly not long after Ashiyane temporarily became the primary security forum in Iran, following Behrooz Kamalian's ([Intel Card](#)) visit to prominent cleric, Ayatollah Naser Makarem Shirazi.

Finally, according to Insikt Group's source, Iranian contractor ITSEC specifically employed hackers from the respective online forums Simorgh and Delta Security. Further, [Hossein Asgari, a self-proclaimed Iranian hacker](#), managed the Simorgh forum and worked with his father, who was employed by the IRGC.

According to Insikt Group's source, to find and retain the best offensive cyber talent, Iranian government contractors are forced to mine closed-trust communities. The links between the forums and contractors may illustrate that the trust communities begin with the Iranian security forums.

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HEADLINE	05/18 Cyberattacks on supply chains rising
SOURCE	https://www.supplychaindigital.com/scm/cyber-attacks-supply-chains-significantly-2017
GIST	<p>2017 saw a worrying increase in ransomware and other cyberattacks targeting the supply chain, with the business and professional services sector receiving a significant increase of attacks, particularly in the EMEA region, which saw 20% of all attacks targeting this sector.</p> <p>This is according to Dimension Data that today published its Executive Guide to the NTT Security 2018 Global Threat Intelligence Report.</p> <p>The businesses and professional services sector received 10% of global ransomware attacks, the third most targeted industry (up from sixth position in 2016), behind finance and technology. It also ranked third in the Americas (9%) and was the most vulnerable sector in EMEA, receiving 20% of all attacks.</p> <p>As ransomware-related outsourced incident response engagements against financial institutions declined (a drop from 22% in 2016 to 5% last year), the business and professional services supply chain has clearly become a prime target for trade secrets and intellectual property theft, potentially exposing customer and business partner data.</p> <p>Despite the drop in outsourced incident response engagements, the finance sector remains the number one target for cyber criminals who carry out regular reconnaissance to spot potential infrastructure and application vulnerabilities.</p> <p>Mark Thomas, Dimension Data's Group CTO for Cybersecurity said, "There are numerous moving parts to supply chains and outsourcing companies, which often run on disparate and out-dated network infrastructures, making them easy prey to cyber threat actors.</p> <p>"Service providers and outsourcers are also a prime target, due to their trade secrets and intellectual property. Businesses need to wise-up to the very real threats against them and ensure all aspects of their operations are robustly and securely protected."</p> <p>Technology was the second most cyber-attacked industry in 2017, with a 19% attack volume, with business and professional services moving to third place. Interestingly, attacks on the government sector last year dropped to 5% from 9% in 2016.</p> <p>In 2017, there was a massive 350% rise in ransomware, representing 7% of all global malware attacks (up from 1% in 2016), and is set to continue due to the popularity of cyber adversary campaigns.</p>

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HEADLINE	05/18 Railway systems as next big target?
SOURCE	http://www.businessinsider.com/cyber-attacks-targeting-railway-systems-next-2018-5?r=UK&IR=T
GIST	<p>In early May of last year, the world was rocked by the WannaCry cyber attack, which affected more than 200,000 victims and spread to over 150 countries. Computers had essentially been taken hostage by ransomware, and users were asked to pay up in the form of bitcoin.</p> <p>Law enforcement agencies, health services, telecommunication networks, universities, businesses, and railway systems were all affected by the attack. Estimates of the total damage ranged from hundreds of millions to billions of dollars.</p> <p>While a fluke in the coding allowed the attack to be stopped in a matter of days, the ordeal was a prescient reminder that cyber attacks don't merely stay in the virtual world — they can have real, and potentially devastating consequences in the physical world.</p> <p>Particularly when hackers begin targeting vital systems.</p> <p>"The next kind of attacks we will see will target critical infrastructure in the form of electrical networks, water companies, and other transportation systems," Amir Levintal, former director of the Israel Defense Forces' cyber research and development unit and CEO of cybersecurity firm Cylus, told Business Insider.</p> <p>But railway networks are particularly at risk because rail companies often operate with modern technological components but archaic physical components. That disconnect, Levintal said, leaves their systems vulnerable to hacking.</p> <p>Modern command centers use wireless connections to control activities, like monitoring train speeds or regulating traffic signals. It's these types of wireless signals can expose a network's vulnerabilities and leave the infrastructure wide open for attack.</p> <p>"Some train networks use Wi-Fi connections to control critical components of the train, like brakes and doors. Attackers can find ways to access the wireless network to send commands to those components and change the behavior of the train," Levintal said.</p> <p>"Once attackers succeed in breaching a network to gather information, they can attack the physical elements of the network," he said.</p> <p>Hackers, Levintal said, "might change the controls on the train or could even access commands in order to derail the train. These kinds of attacks are probable, and once a system is breached it's just a matter of deciding what commands a malicious actor wants to send."</p> <p>The scenario isn't that far-fetched. In the WannaCry attacks, Germany's rail network, Deutsche Bahn, was incapacitated by its ticketing and information systems going down.</p> <p>Yet hackers don't need to rely on obvious flaws within a major railway system.</p> <p>"Attackers can find one company that is not secure, access its tools and software, and find similarities in other components in other countries and companies, allowing them to attack more 'secure' companies," Levintal said.</p> <p>The key to preventing future attacks, Levintal said, is protecting the physical components.</p> <p>"We must converge old and new technologies and close a complicated security gap," Levintal said.</p>

	"We can no longer think that attacks like these won't happen in the future. Rail networks are huge, complex and connected. It's easier than ever to find ways to get into the systems."
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HEADLINE	05/17 Election attack smokescreen for hack
SOURCE	https://www.knoxnews.com/story/news/local/2018/05/17/knox-county-election-cyberattack-smokescreen-another-attack/620921002/
GIST	<p>Knox County IT director Dick Moran and county IT staff were ready for Election Day and the higher amounts of traffic that would undoubtedly come to the county election commission website with former WWE wrestler, Glenn Jacobs, on the Republican ballot.</p> <p>At 7:50 p.m. Moran instructed the website be checked to make sure the early voting results could be posted when the polls closed 10 minutes later. Everything checked out. Everything was working.</p> <p>Seven minutes after his request, Knox County's election commission website was attacked and the results, although not impacted by the attack, wouldn't be displayed until nearly 9 p.m., sowing more chaos into an already energetic and unpredictable night.</p> <p>All of the disruption, it has been determined since, was an effort to distract the county while another, simultaneous attack was happening behind the scenes accessing county information, according to Moran and Deputy IT Director David Ball.</p> <p>A smokescreen The original and much less hidden cyberattack, a distributed-denial-of-service attack, was an attempt to overload the county server's capacity with high internet traffic. It worked.</p> <p>The internet protocol addresses - unique numbers that identify individual web portals - tied to the cyberattack spanned every continent but Antarctica, 65 countries in all.</p> <p>The attack worked by tying up space in the server. A request came to the server, the server accepted it and sent a message back to the requester. By this time, the request had ended and another request had been made from a different IP address, but the server was still waiting on a response from the original request.</p> <p>"That's one way these DDOS attacks work," Ball said. "You tie up all of the available connections within the web server with something that will make it time out ... we were seeing them in the thousands and thousands.</p> <p>"The (hackers) don't want everything knocked down to where they can't get in," he said. "They just want to have something that ties you up."</p> <p>All of this was enough to shut down the site.</p> <p>Screens in the Knox County Republican Party's suite at the downtown Crowne Plaza hotel showed nothing but the message, "Service Unavailable."</p> <p>Elections results, however, were not affected.</p> <p>Election officials gather data at each polling station and hand-carry the memory cards from voting machines to the election commission to be totaled on computers that can't access the Internet.</p> <p>Elaborate hack By Wednesday, Sword & Shield Enterprise Security, a Knox County-based IT security firm, was busy dissecting the attack. The firm charges \$250 an hour and within a day had a good grasp on what had happened.</p>

It wasn't until the following Monday, May 7, six days after the attack, that Sword and Shield became aware of the other attack, Ball said.

"It took (Sword & Shield) until Monday to find this because you only had four or five malicious things going on between millions of kinds of errors."

The attackers had hacked into a county server and looked around. No personal or confidential information was in the server, only publicly available information like court dockets, Moran said.

"It was not an attempt to actually change any data or put anything onto our servers; it was an attempt to take things off of our servers, to read what was there ... they were looking to get things, not give things," Ball said.

Ball said the original DDOS attack wasn't overly impressive, the county has had DDOS attacks before. The background attack, however, was more sophisticated, he said.

Once Sword and Shield found the other attack, they performed, with the county's permission, a similar attack to see if they could replicate it. They, too, were successful.

"They (did it) and brought us right to our knees (even) with all of the resources we had," Moran said.

With that, Sword and Shield knew what happened and how it happened and the two worked to patch up the county's system to prevent another breach.

Moran said the hole has been plugged.

What's next?

Law enforcement officials from the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI, both the Knoxville regional office and the headquarters in Washington, D.C., are investigating the attack.

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HEADLINE	05/17 Cutting thru Privacy Policy gibberish
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/privacy-policies-flooding-your-inbox-how-to-cut-through-the-gibberish-1526565342
GIST	<p><i>This policy applies to all operations of the Service. Our lawyers said so. We may refer to the Company as "we," "us," or "our"... because companies have feelings, too. Thereto whilst we hope you are discouraged from reading this legalese, henceforth you expressly consent to the collection, use, and disclosure of all your personal information, defined as that which defines you.</i></p> <p>If you've ever read a privacy policy (you probably haven't), it has required a law degree and the focus of an anesthesiologist. But that's changing—well, sort of.</p> <p>On May 25, the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) goes into effect. As a result, companies are updating their data security and privacy rules—often even outside of Europe. Hence the emails you've been getting from every app, service or operating system you've ever used.</p> <p>In addition to requiring that companies provide greater data controls and transparency, GDPR requires those privacy policies be "concise, easily accessible and easy to understand." They also need to be written in "clear and plain language." (Ironically, that's found on page 11 of the 88-page official document.)</p> <p>I rounded up 35 privacy policies for the services, apps and operating systems I use on a fairly regular basis. The ones revised to meet the GDPR requirements are, in fact, written in a language humans can understand. But they're longer. Much longer.</p>

Take Twitter . The old version was around 3,800 words. It's now around 8,890. (By comparison, this column is typically around 1,000 words.)

So... Many... Words...

Companies that sell targeted ads are rewriting privacy policies to be clearer—but not shorter.

Why longer? GDPR requires companies to detail more about where your data is going. If a service is ad-supported, your data is going lots o' places. Turns out, explaining these often-shady practices isn't easy.

Are you really going to read policies that stretch the length of a football field? (Seriously, 35 printed policies can score a touchdown—just watch the video.) No, but you can't continue to be blind to what these companies are doing and keep clicking "accept," either.

So here's the trade: Read my next 500-or-so words now on how to quickly dissect a privacy policy, and save yourself from reading millions of words in the future. I'll even show you how to get out of some unnecessarily intrusive stuff without quitting the service altogether.

Learn the outline

Privacy policies tend to have a formula:

Part 1: Company tells you what data is collected. This tends to be info you give them, info they collect when you use the service and info from third parties. Facebook even collects "mouse movements."

Part 2: Company tells you why it needs that data and which other companies may get to access it. Snapchat, for instance, says it will "provide you with an amazing set of products and services that we relentlessly improve." (Apparently, GDPR doesn't require humility.)

Part 3: Company tells you what controls—if any—are in place to limit abuse of the data. As LinkedIn helpfully reminds us, "we offer you choices regarding personalized ads, but you cannot opt-out of seeing other ads."

It has become so boilerplate that robots can read it for you. A tool called Polisis, from data scientists at Switzerland's Federal Institute of Technology and others, uses machine learning to read the policy and organize what it says into a graphic flow chart, all in under a minute. Hover over different areas to see the original text from the policy in context. I urge you to try it, at least for the big ones like Facebook and Google.

You should also open the policies themselves and skim the headlines. Many of the revised policies have bold summaries—some even have videos. Welcome to 2010!

Search the terms

The stuff you'll really want to know is hiding in the crowds of sentences and is just a Ctrl + F away from possibly freaking you out. Experts suggest searching the mass of text for the following keywords:

"Third parties." How is your data shared with outside developers and marketers? What data is acquired by third parties? About 900 words in, Facebook reveals that it receives "information about your online and offline actions and purchases from third-party data providers."

"Retain" or "store." How long is your data retained or stored by the company, and why? Turns out Google keeps most of your stuff for a very long time. But don't worry, there's a cheery video explaining how and why—and that section also tells you how to delete a lot of it.

"Children." Most policies confirm that 13 is the age when children can set up their own accounts, but some policies, often from games, make exceptions and give parents more controls.

	<p>“Delete.” Can you delete your data and/or take it with you? GDPR’s “the right to be forgotten” regulation requires this to be an option to those in the EU.</p> <p>Adjust the settings Maybe you like so-called interest-based ads—search for nail salon, nail-clipper ad pops up—but maybe you’d change your mind if you realized how much of your information is required to power them.</p> <p>Either way, it’s important to have control over what the company gets to use, so do yourself a favor and search “settings” or “opt-out.”</p> <p>I was quickly able to activate a bunch of new advertising controls LinkedIn has put in place. A number of apps that use Google’s advertising platform, including Sonos and Runkeeper, provide links to opt out of the search giant’s massive web-tracking program. Facebook and Instagram vaguely refer to their settings, but don’t tell you how to locate specific controls. It’s like simply directing someone to a cockpit to fly a plane.</p> <p>The real utility of these policies should be to allow us to pull the levers on the data we do or don’t want to share.</p> <p>As we await more and better controls, here’s the TL;DR (too long; didn’t read) version: Read the headlines and search the keywords.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 Bitcoin wannabes w/hallmarks of fraud
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/buyer-beware-hundreds-of-bitcoin-wannabes-show-hallmarks-of-fraud-1526573115
GIST	<p>Hundreds of technology firms raising money in the fevered market for cryptocurrencies are using deceptive or even fraudulent tactics to lure investors.</p> <p>In a review of documents produced for 1,450 digital coin offerings, The Wall Street Journal has found 271 with red flags that include plagiarized investor documents, promises of guaranteed returns and missing or fake executive teams.</p> <p>“Jeremy Boker” is listed as a co-founder of Denaro, an online-payment project. In investor documents for a public offering in March, which claimed to have raised \$8.3 million, Mr. Boker boasted of his cryptocurrency startup’s “powerhouse” team. In his biography, he noted a “respectable history of happy clients” in consulting before he launched Denaro.</p> <p>In fact, Mr. Boker’s bio image was a stock photo, there is no evidence he exists and the rest of his team appears to be fictional, except for two freelancers who said they were paid by people unknown to them to market the project, the Journal found.</p> <p>The principals behind Denaro couldn’t be identified and attempts to reach the company went unanswered. The real person whose image was repurposed as Mr. Boker’s turns out to be Jenish Mirani, a banker in Poland. Mr. Mirani, who had posted the photo on his personal website, said “it was really shocking” to find out about its afterlife.</p> <p>Investors have poured more than \$1 billion into the 271 coin offerings where the Journal identified red flags, according to a review of company statements and online transaction records—nearly one in five of those reviewed. Some of the firms are still raising funds, while others have shut down. Investors have so far claimed losses of up to \$273 million in these projects, according to lawsuits and regulatory actions.</p> <p>Companies use coin offerings to raise funds by selling their own digital currency. Led by the bitcoin fever,</p>

the 1,450 projects analyzed by the Journal—a number believed to encompass most of those aimed at an English-speaking audience since 2014—say they have raised at least \$5 billion. Since 2017, cryptocurrency offerings have generated more than \$9 billion in proceeds globally, according to research and data firm Satis Group.

Recently, the Securities and Exchange Commission issued warnings to investors that many deals in the booming private market for cryptocurrencies could be violating securities laws, and on Wednesday launched a website touting a fake coin offering as an example of what to avoid.

Since December the agency has filed civil charges against companies and individuals in four separate cases involving initial coin offerings, known as ICOs. At least a dozen companies put their offerings on hold after the agency raised questions, an SEC official said in February.

At the heart of most coin offerings is a company's "white paper," a document that typically details mission statements, team biographies and the technical specifics of a project.

Of the 1,450 white papers downloaded from three popular websites that track coin offerings, the Journal found 111 that repeated entire sections word-for-word from other white papers. The copied language included descriptions of marketing plans, security issues and even distinct technical features such as how other programmers can interact with their database.

At least 121 of the projects didn't disclose the name of a single employee and several of them listed team members who either didn't appear to exist, as with Denaro, or were real people who said their identities were being used without their knowledge.

The Journal also identified more than two dozen companies that promised investors financial rewards without any risk—something the SEC prohibits. These white papers went as far as pledging weekly payouts or doubled returns. The SEC has recently taken action against ICOs making such guarantees, including PlexCorps, which raised as much as \$15 million by promising a 1,354% profit in less than a month. In December, the agency obtained a court order freezing the company's assets.

PlexCorps didn't respond to emails seeking comment. On April 23, somebody posted a statement on the company's Facebook page saying that "the PlexCoin project is not dead, it is simply on hold because some court orders prevent us from continuing the development of the project for the moment."

Interest in bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies exploded as a frenzied rally pushed coin prices to all-time highs late last year. Now reality has set in for many in the industry as regulators step up their scrutiny and issue warnings to investors about fraud in the lightly policed market.

Unlike public offerings, ICOs generally happen outside the strict framework of regulation and don't require filing much official paperwork, if any. That leaves it to investors to do a lot of the detective work about what's real and what's not.

Copied language, the absence of named employees and promised high returns are "warning signs for investors," said Bradley Bennett, a former enforcement chief at the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority.

"There are going to be some legitimate players that emerge from this but it's going to be a handful—a lot of it looks like penny-stock fraud with lower barriers to entry," Mr. Bennett, now a partner at law firm Baker Botts LLP, said of the broader coin market.

To feed the growing market, ranks of freelancers have sprouted up to write white papers for as little as \$100.

At least five projects filled out their white papers or websites with executive images pulled directly from online stock photography or other sites, the Journal found.

Among the most extreme was investment startup Premium Trade. The images for its five-member executive team were simultaneously being used on nearly 500 unrelated websites: Premium's co-founder Andrew Ravitsky was also "Dr. John Watsan," in an online cardiology course.

Premium Trade didn't respond to several requests for comment and Messrs. Ravitsky and Watsan weren't reachable, if in fact they exist.

LoopX, which began soliciting money last year, vowed to build "the most advanced" trading platform in the cryptocurrency market. The company didn't name any team members or detail how the platform would be built. Its white paper featured several key entries identical to another coin project's.

"Along this journey, we found great partners and mentors who were strongly committed and excited to work with the ever-progressing vision of LoopX," the company wrote in one of several passages identical to those in an earlier online payment startup called UTrust.

After claiming to raise \$4.5 million, LoopX disappeared from the internet in early February. Its website is now down and its Twitter account features a single message linking to a news article alleging the founder or founders ran off with the money. LoopX couldn't be reached for comment.

When contacted by the Journal, Swiss-based UTrust's CEO, Nuno Correia, said he was aware his white paper had been plagiarized but didn't think there was anything to be done about it.

"We get a lot copies of our white paper," Mr. Correia said. "My picture, my description, my team, even our website was copied."

Seven other coin offerings also featured passages that appeared earlier in UTrust's white paper.

Along with Mr. Correia's biography, the Journal found lawyers in California, an escrow agent based in Ukraine and the co-owner of a media company whose identities had been hijacked in order to lend credibility to a range of cryptocurrency projects involving education, e-commerce and crypto mining.

"I'm a little creeped out by the whole thing," said Amanda Gavin, co-owner of a media production company in San Francisco, whose image and name were taken from her LinkedIn page and used for a coin offering she had never heard of called Pixiu.

Pixiu didn't respond to several requests for comment via email and social media.

At least four coin promoters have been sued by investors seeking to start class-action cases. During its 2017 offering, Paragon Coin raised more than \$70 million, according to a lawsuit filed in a California federal court alleging the business was an "overly ambitious, vague, and impractical" venture to raise funds to purchase real estate.

Paragon, founded by a Russian internet entrepreneur named Egor Lavrov and his wife, Jessica VerSteeg, promises to "connect the cannabis industry through the blockchain," according to the company's white paper. This July, the company plans to open a co-working space in Los Angeles paid for "exclusively in cryptocurrency," according to the company's website.

"Paragon is dedicated to staying compliant with all applicable laws, and endeavored to do so throughout the entire ICO process," said Ms. VerSteeg, who was the 2014 Miss Iowa United States and is currently Paragon's chief executive, in a statement provided by the company. "Paragon holds itself to a high standard of compliance with our token holders and will continue to do so as it moves forward." Mr. Lavrov couldn't be reached.

After the coin offering for Denaro closed in March, the entity's website went dark and investors are now alleging on social media that the founders ran off with millions.

Daniel Armstrong, who said he worked for Denaro as a freelancer through February, proofreading company literature, now believes the startup was run by Lithuanians, based on evidence he saw from payment details, documents he edited and a message posted to Slack by one of the founders written in another language.

"I did some marketing text for them," Mr. Armstrong said. "When they sent it to me it was terrible and written by a non-native writer."

Denaro didn't die entirely. An offering for a new payment system recently emerged called Pluto Coin with a similar website and an identical white paper. Half of the Denaro team members had also been recycled for Pluto Coin, including an image of Mr. Boker, which appears in coding for the website but isn't visible to casual viewers. He has been renamed "Ivan Denver."

So far, Pluto Coin claims on its website to have collected at least \$10 million from investors. It couldn't be reached for comment.

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HEADLINE	05/17 Experts: US lacks policy deter cybercrime
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/us-lacks-policy-to-deter-cyber/
GIST	<p>Key stakeholders in government and private industry experts gathered today in Washington D.C. to talk with Bloomberg News investigative reporter, Michael Riley about The Future of Cybersecurity: Risk and Resilience Across Critical Infrastructure.</p> <p>The discussion was also streamed live and included a panel of four cybersecurity experts who weighed in on the government's role in protecting private industry from cyber-attacks. Alarmingly, most of the discussion confirmed a high level of distrust for the government. Members of the private sector don't feel the government would protect them if they were attacked.</p> <p>Scott Goodhart, VP and CISO, AES Corporation said that much can be done to improve information sharing, particularly since most of the intelligence that is collected is information that people wouldn't understand. "I need indicators of compromise in order to take action," Goodhart said.</p> <p>"In our sector, we are strong with sharing information with each other. There's a level of trust there," Goodhart said. However, in a regulated industry, sharing is less frequent because people don't want regulators on their backs.</p> <p>The problem, said renowned cybersecurity expert, Niloofar Razi Howe, is that there is an authority and capability mismatch. "The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has the authority, but the Department of Defense (DOD) and the National Security Agency (NSA) have the capability. That creates issues with communicating in real time."</p> <p>Lack of a coordinator, clarity, policy and strategy contribute to this fissure between the public and private sectors, especially when it comes to things that only a government can do.</p> <p>"Deterrence policy is unique to the government," said Razi Howe. Short of policies that deter any type of cyber malfeasance, organizations can't protect themselves. Not only is the US without deterrence policies, but panel members agreed there is no real comprehensive conversation about what the current administration is doing in its cybersecurity strategy.</p> <p>Daniel Ennis, head of threat intelligence, BlueVoyant, though, does have trust that the government is doing something. "There is a great deal of planning and activity that occurs that is not transparent to people in the public. I don't want folks to think that the government is not trying to deter," Ennis said.</p>

	Still, there is confusion about who is in charge, and the elimination of the cybersecurity coordinator position did little to clarify that confusion. Ennis did say that the "divisiveness downtown is not helping. Now we have to come together and collaborate. We need to enjoin to form a centralized management and engage the public in a way that they understand the threat."
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HEADLINE	05/17 UK: reported data security incidents spike
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/data-security-incidents-spike/
GIST	<p>The number of data security incidents reported to the UK's Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) jumped 17% between the final three months of 2017 and the first quarter of 2018, according to new figures.</p> <p>In its last update before the EU GDPR takes effect, the privacy watchdog revealed a rise in incident reports from 815 to 957. Although cybersecurity-related incidents increased by 31% from the previous quarter, the first month-on-month increase since Q4 2016-17, human error dominated.</p> <p>In fact, over the 2017-18 financial year, 3325 reports were filed with the ICO, with the number one breach type "data emailed to incorrect recipient," (13%) followed closely behind by "data faxed to wrong recipient" (13%). Also high was "loss or theft of paperwork" (13%).</p> <p>The healthcare sector accounted for by far the largest volume of reports (37%), although this figure is likely to be a result of mandatory reporting rules. After health came "general business" (11%), education (11%) and local government (10%).</p> <p>Nominet CTO, Simon McCalla, argued that the rise in reported incidents may be the result of companies becoming more cautious ahead of the GDPR</p> <p>"Interestingly, there are far more incidents caused by human error than there are external cyber-threats, suggesting that a lot more work needs to be done on training employees," he added.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 DNS attack costs soar 105% in UK
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/dns-attack-costs-soar-105-in-uk/
GIST	<p>UK businesses suffered the highest increase globally in costs associated with DNS attacks, with a fifth suffering the loss of sensitive data, according to the latest figures from EfficientIP.</p> <p>The DNS security firms polled 1000 senior technology and security decision makers around the globe from January to April 2018 to compile its 2018 Global DNS Threat Report.</p> <p>It revealed that 77% of organizations were hit by a DNS attack in 2018, with the average firm suffering seven attacks.</p> <p>DNS attacks come in various flavors, but usually involve denial of service, infecting DNS infrastructure with malware designed to take the user to malicious sites, or exfiltrating data via DNS tunneling techniques.</p> <p>EfficientIP found DNS-based malware and phishing (36%) were the most popular attacks, followed by DDoS (20%) and similar lock-up domain attacks (20%), and DNS tunneling (20%).</p> <p>The report clearly shows the potentially major impact DNS attacks can have on organizations: 40% of respondents claimed they suffered cloud outages, one-third (33%) were victims of data theft and 22% suffered lost business.</p>

	<p>In the UK, 20% lost sensitive data, 15% had IP stolen, and 21% lost customers, according to EfficientIP.</p> <p>The global average cost per DNS attack increased by 57% year-on-year, but in the UK the figure soared 105%, with firms paying nearly \$4m annually.</p> <p>An EfficientIP spokesman told Infosecurity that London's position as a financial center may have led to the surge in attack costs.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 Dept. Energy unveils cybersecurity plan
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/us-energy-department-unveils-multiyear-cybersecurity-plan
GIST	<p>The U.S. Department of Energy this week announced its strategy to reduce cyber risks in the energy sector and outlined its goals, objectives and activities for the next five years.</p> <p>With the energy sector increasingly targeted by threat actors, the Energy Department is concerned that attackers may be able to cause a large and prolonged energy disruption. In an effort to improve the cybersecurity and resilience of energy services, the agency has created the DOE Multiyear Plan for Energy Sector Cybersecurity, which is meant to provide a foundation for the recently launched Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response (CESER). US Energy Department announces multiyear plan for cybersecurity in the energy sector</p> <p>The plan focuses on three main goals: strengthening cybersecurity preparedness, coordinating incident response and recovery, and accelerating research, development and demonstration (RD&D) for resilient energy delivery systems (EDS).</p> <p>When it comes to strengthening preparedness, the DOE's objectives include enhancing information sharing and situational awareness capabilities, strengthening risk management capabilities, reducing supply chain vulnerabilities, and developing and improving information sharing tools. This last objective includes the development of a virtual crowdsourced malware forensic analysis platform.</p> <p>As for incident response and recovery, the Energy Department wants to establish a coordinated national incident response capability, conduct training for emergency responders and improve the incident reporting process, and conduct exercises.</p> <p>The DOE's third goal is to accelerate "game-changing RD&D" of resilient EDS, including for detecting, preventing and mitigating cyber incidents. The organization also wants tools and technologies that can anticipate future attack scenarios, and the development of systems and components that are cybersecurity-aware and capable of automatically handling cyberattacks.</p> <p>"The DOE will be updating the Cybersecurity Capability Maturity Model (C2M2). The market has changed since it was published in February 2014," commented Michael Magrath, director of global regulations & standards at VASCO Data Security. "We anticipate DOE will incorporate NIST's Digital Identity Guidelines (SP 800-63-3), refreshed in 2017 and advance risk-based, biometric adaptive authentication technologies to protect the nation's energy sector."</p>
Return to Top	<p>Click on link to download PDF: DOE Multiyear Plan for Energy Sector Cybersecurity</p> <p>https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2018/05/f51/DOE%20Multiyear%20Plan%20for%20Energy%20Sector%20Cybersecurity%20_0.pdf</p>

HEADLINE	05/17 'Wicked' variant Mirai botnet emerges
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/wicked-variant-mirai-botnet-emerges
GIST	A new variant of the Mirai Internet of Things (IoT) botnet has emerged, which features new exploits in its arsenal and distributing a new bot, Fortinet researchers warn.

Called Wicked, based on strings found in the code, the malware has added three new exploits compared to Mirai and appears to be the work of the same developer behind other Mirai variants.

The Mirai botnet was first spotted in the third quarter of 2016, when it fueled some of the largest distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks at the time. The malware's source code was leaked online in October 2016, and numerous variants have been observed ever since: Masuta, Satori, Okiru, and others.

Similar to other botnets based on Mirai, the newly discovered Wicked iteration contains three main modules: Attack, Killer, and Scanner. Unlike Mirai, however, which used brute force to gain access to vulnerable IoT devices, Wicked uses known and available exploits, many of which are already old, the security researchers discovered.

Wicked would scan ports 8080, 8443, 80, and 81 by initiating a raw socket SYN connection to the target device. Upon establishing a connection, the malware attempts to exploit the device and upload a payload to it by writing the exploit strings to the socket.

The used exploit depends on the specific port that the connection was established to. On port 8080, the malware uses Netgear DGN1000 and DGN2200 v1 router exploits (also used by Reaper botnet), on port 81 it uses a CCTV-DVR Remote Code Execution exploit, on port 8443 a Netgear R7000 and R6400 Command Injection (CVE-2016-6277), and on port 80 an invoker shell in compromised web servers.

Wicked contains the string SoraLOADER, which initially suggested it might attempt to distribute the Sora botnet. Instead, the researchers discovered that the malware would actually connect to a malicious domain to download the Owari bot, a different Mirai variant.

Although the website was confirmed to have distributed Owari, the security researchers couldn't retrieve bot samples from the website directory. Furthermore, they discovered that the samples had been replaced by another malware family, the Omni bot.

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HEADLINE	05/17 Google: free DDoS protection services
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/google-offers-free-ddos-protection-services-in-the-name-of-free-democracy/article/766778/
GIST	<p>Google has rolled out a free DDoS protection platform called Project Shield to protect news sites and free expression to defend the democratic process.</p> <p>The program is accepting applications from news organizations, election monitoring organizations, and individual journalists and some political organizations</p> <p>The service protects users from attackers using technology called a reverse proxy allows websites to route both legitimate and attack traffic through Google's infrastructure to ultimately filters harmful traffic by absorbing it through caching.</p> <p>Impact on individual site traffic can vary as website performance depends on several factors but Google said the service can be turned on or off as quickly as any other DNS change.</p> <p>“Some Project Shield users see better website performance because of Project Shield's caching features,” the company said in a blog describing the new service. Other users see slightly slower performance as traffic passes through Project Shield. ”</p> <p>The service may also affect how some videos display on a user's site however those served through YouTube won't be affected.</p>

Those concerned with privacy should know the program collects and stores user configuration settings and logs for traffic that is proxied through Project Shield but Google says said it only uses the site reader's IP address and other information to evaluate whether traffic is an attack and only retains aggregated metrics and details about specific attacks.

If a user deletes their site from the Project Shield dashboard, their information will also be deleted from Project Shield site configuration information and the project will no longer collect traffic data from the site.

User needs a google account to access the service and may not be notified in some attacks however will be alerted to larger-scale attack which any require active mitigation.

"Google's Project Shield should provide good protection," Andrew Lloyd, President, Corero Network Security told SC Media. "What we tend to find is that shared cloud services are excellent for scrubbing the larger, prolonged DDoS attacks.

He added that irrespective of motivation, DDoS attacks are frequently the tool of choice for the cybercriminals looking to compromise a specific website and that the "DDoS for hire" market has made this criminal activity relatively straightforward, inexpensive and anonymous

Lloyd said it remains to be seen if Project Shield's protection can successfully detect and swiftly mitigate smaller attacks and that potential users should know that Google Shield is a "best efforts" free service without a service level agreement.

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HEADLINE	05/17 Get ready for 'WannaCry 2.0'
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/get-ready-for-wannacry-20-/d/d-id/1331834
GIST	<p>They're still out there, pinging away for vulnerable Sever Message Block (SMB) services in order to find a way in. One year after the historic and massive WannaCry ransomware attack unleashed by nation-state hackers from North Korea, an unknown number of WannaCry-infected Windows machines in their zombie state around the globe continue to attack other devices.</p> <p>WannaCry marked the biggest ransomware attack ever, but it wasn't the first widespread worm infection, and experts say it won't be the last. Symantec blocked some 5.4 billion WannaCry attack attempts last year overall.</p> <p>Security experts say another worm-spreading mass attack akin to WannaCry is inevitable. It may not be a ransomware attack, but it likely will be another SMB-type worm that exploits the fact that so many organizations leave Windows machines unattended and with open ports to the Internet — and unpatched for the newest flaws.</p> <p>"It's just a matter of time," says Dan Wiley, head of incident response at Check Point, of the next WannaCry. "It will happen again, no question in my mind."</p> <p>A "WannaCry 2.0"-type attack could be more of a data-wiping campaign akin to NotPetya, which posed as a ransomware attack but in reality was destroying the data it locked down rather than locking it up for ransom. Or it could be a widespread cryptojacking campaign that could more easily net attackers more profit and a lower-profile, less-noticeable attack method than ransomware.</p> <p>Worms tend to wreak havoc quickly and loudly, so it depends on the attacker's intent. "If you want to be destructive," a worm is a quick way to spread pain, like the data-wiping NotPetya worm did, notes Chris Wysopal, CTO and co-founder of Veracode. He doesn't believe WannaCry was meant to spread as widely as it did because its high visibility led to its demise as a not-so-profitable ransomware attack.</p>

"If you don't go wormable, you're not going to get noticed for months," Wysopal says.

The thing about worms, though, is that they never really die. Security firms and researchers today still see remnants of the epic 2003 SQLSlammer worm attack, and even the mysterious Conficker worm from early 2009. "Any time you have one of these worms [out], they are never going to go away," says Craig Williams, senior threat researcher and global outreach manager for Cisco Talos.

Keeping the worm alive are older and forgotten machines that don't get the security patch. "You're always going to have some number of machines connected to the network that are going to be patched and they ping packets around for all time," Williams says.

WannaCry's abuse of the EternalBlue exploit basically let the cat out of the bag, and other worms continue to employ it, Williams says. The good news, though, is that WannaCry itself is at least declining in infections. "We're confident that it's decreasing, but we don't see it going away."

Large organizations for the most part have updated their Windows machines and revisited their SMB policies, but smaller and midsized companies in healthcare, education, and other industries most likely remain at risk. Check Point's incident response team sees four to five cases of ransomware attacks per week, mostly in the networks of small- to midsized organizations.

The next big worm attack is not likely to resemble a mass ransomware attack like WannaCry. While WannaCry was a relative financial failure for North Korea, it did wreak havoc and chaos. "I think it was a colossal fail," says Cisco's Williams. "I'm not sure if test code got out or somebody's science project for a future attack. It was poorly built and it didn't work very well," he says, pointing to WannaCry's gap in tracking ransom payments as well as cracks in the exploit.

Ransomware in the wake of WannaCry has become more targeted, while cryptojacking attacks have surged practically overnight. "It's more low-risk" and profitable for attackers, Williams says. "And we're absolutely going to continue to see that" trend, he says.

WannaCry 2.0 could be a stealthy cryptojacking campaign that only mines during off-hours when businesses are closed, for example.

Larry Cashdollar, senior engineer for Akamai's security response team, says he expects a worm attack to spread cryptojacking malware. "That's probably going to be the next phase of attacks. And there are other not-yet-disclosed vulnerabilities our nation or other nation-states know about" that could be exploited for them, he says.

But nation-states could opt for a NotPetya-like worm attack that destroys data altogether in a targeted attack meant to wreak chaos and confusion, experts say. "NotPetya was the type of worm we lose sleep over," Williams says. "It was written by a well-funded, organized attacker that absolutely understands everything about compromising machines."

The good news, according to Symantec director of security response Kevin Haley, is that the industry in general has better defenses for worms than it did a decade ago. "We were in a much better place to block this than we were 10 years ago," Haley says. "A patch was available and security vendors had protections, so there's reason for optimism" if something similar hits again.

"Hopefully, while we will see more of these [worm attacks], we will be better at this" on the defense side, he says.

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HEADLINE 05/17 Cellphone tracking firm exposed millions

SOURCE <https://www.zdnet.com/article/cell-phone-tracking-firm-exposed-millions-of-americans-real-time->

	locations/
GIST	<p>A company that collects the real-time location data on millions of cell phone customers across North America had a bug in its website that allowed anyone to see where a person is located -- without obtaining their consent.</p> <p>The company embroiled in a privacy row has "direct connections" to all major US wireless carriers, including AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile, and Sprint -- and Canadian cell networks, too.</p> <p>Earlier this week, we reported that four of the largest cell giants in the US are selling your real-time location data to a company that you've probably never heard about before.</p> <p>The company, LocationSmart, is a data aggregator and claims to have "direct connections" to cell carriers to obtain locations from nearby cell towers. The site had its own "try-before-you-buy" page that lets you test the accuracy of its data. The page required explicit consent from the user before their location data can be used by sending a one-time text message to the user. When we tried with a colleague, we tracked his phone to a city block of his actual location.</p> <p>But that website had a bug that allowed anyone to track someone's location silently without their permission.</p> <p>"Due to a very elementary bug in the website, you can just skip that consent part and go straight to the location," said Robert Xiao, a PhD student at the Human-Computer Interaction Institute at Carnegie Mellon University, in a phone call.</p> <p>"The implication of this is that LocationSmart never required consent in the first place," he said. "There seems to be no security oversight here."</p> <p>The "try" website was pulled offline after Xiao privately disclosed the bug to the company, with help from CERT, a public vulnerability database, also at Carnegie Mellon.</p> <p>Xiao said the bug may have exposed nearly every cell phone customer in the US and Canada, some 200 million customers.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Botnet scans for Ethereum mining rigs
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/the-satori-botnet-is-mass-scanning-for-exposed-ethereum-mining-rigs/
GIST	<p>The operators of the Satori botnet are mass-scanning the Internet for exposed Ethereum mining rigs, according to three sources in the infosec community who've observed the malicious behavior —SANS ISC, Qihoo 360 Netlab, and GreyNoise Intelligence.</p> <p>More precisely, crooks are scanning for devices with port 3333 exposed online, a port often used for remote management features by a large number of cryptocurrency-mining equipment.</p> <p>The scans started on May 11, according to researchers from Netlab, the first to observe them, and the ones who tied their activity to the Satori botnet.</p> <p>More details emerged a day later when GreyNoise analysts managed to demystify the scans and analyze the behavior on a compromised device.</p> <p>GreyNoise says crooks were actively looking for equipment running the Claymore mining software.</p> <p>"Once the attacker identifies a server running the Claymore software they push instructions to reconfigure the device to join the 'dwarfpool' mining pool and use the attacker's ETH wallet," GreyNoise says.</p>

	<p>GreyNoise also tied the scans to a group of IP addresses located in Mexico, on the networks two ISPs that just a few days earlier had thousands of GPON routers compromised and attacked by five different botnets.</p> <p>Based on the current evidence, Satori, one of the five botnets, was using the GPON routers to scan for Claymore miners, deploy an exploit, and hijack the devices to mine Ethereum and Decred cryptocurrencies for the Satori operators.</p> <p>Yesterday, Netlab researchers published a blog post confirming GreyNoise's initial discovery.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 WinstarNssmMiner strikes 500,000 3 days
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/winstarnssmminer-coinminer-campaign-makes-500-000-victims-in-three-days/
GIST	<p>Security researchers from Qihoo 360 Total Security have detected a massive malware campaign spreading a new coinminer, and which appears to have made roughly 500,000 victims in three days alone.</p> <p>At the heart of this campaign is a new malware strain named WinstarNssmMiner, targeting Windows computers.</p> <p>Under the hood, WinstarNssmMiner is your typical cryptocurrency-mining malware these days, based on the open-source and legitimate Monero mining utility named XMRig.</p> <p>Qihoo 360 researchers did not say how WinstarNssmMiner spreads, but they said this coinminer is unique to other cryptocurrency-mining threats active on the market today.</p> <p>But WinstarNssmMiner also has another surprise in store for infected victims. If a user ever detects the hidden mining operations and tries to shut down the svchost.exe process associated with XMRig, the malware crashes the user's PC, which would then require a restart.</p> <p>The crash occurs because the malware sets the property of the svchost.exe process to a setting of "CriticalProcess," hence Windows shuts down the PC when the malicious process is terminated.</p> <p>According to Qihoo 360 researchers, the group behind this operation has managed to make 133 Monero with WinstarNssmMiner, which is around \$28,000.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 SEA hackers in pro-Assad scheme indicted
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/syrian-nationals-indicted-pro-assad-hacking-scheme-55244317?
GIST	<p>Two Syrian nationals were indicted Thursday in a computer hacking scheme that targeted the White House, Harvard University, U.S. Marine Corps and news media outlets, including The Associated Press.</p> <p>A federal grand jury returned an 11-count indictment charging Ahmad 'Umar Agha and Firas Dardar with conspiracy and aggravated identity theft.</p> <p>The indictment says the men were members of the Syrian Electronic Army, which hacked computers to spread propaganda supporting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.</p> <p>In 2013, Syrian Electronic Army hackers allegedly sent a tweet from The Associated Press' Twitter account falsely claiming a bomb had exploded at the White House and injured President Barack Obama.</p>

	<p>The message caused the stock market to plummet briefly before it was determined to be a hoax.</p> <p>Both men were originally charged by criminal complaint in 2014 and are still at large and believed to be in Syria. A third man pleaded guilty in 2016 to having a limited role.</p> <p>The indictment comes as the five-year statute of limitations for some of their crimes is about to expire.</p> <p>According to the indictment, the men and their co-conspirators would send a phishing email purporting to be from a trusted source that contained a link to a website controlled by the hackers.</p> <p>Users who clicked on the link were asked for their usernames and passwords. If at least one person provided those, the hackers would then access the computer systems or accounts of the target's computer system. They could then redirect legitimate traffic, alter text or send messages using compromised social media and email accounts.</p> <p>The indictment says the hackers were able to alter the Harvard University website home page by adding an image of al-Assad. They also accessed a computer server used by The Washington Post and created a false post on its website. Other targets included Reuters, Human Rights Watch, National Public Radio and The Onion.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Europe's new data privacy rules May 25th
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/changing-data-privacy-rules-55254384
GIST	<p>Europe's new data and privacy rules take effect a week from Friday, clarifying individual rights to the personal data collected by companies around the world for targeted advertising and other purposes.</p> <p>Years in the making, the rules are prompting companies to rewrite their privacy policies and in some cases, apply the European Union's tougher standards even in the U.S. and other regions where privacy laws are weak. Although they take effect as Facebook faces an enormous privacy crisis, that timing is largely coincidental.</p> <p>Not much will change for you, at least right away; companies will keep on collecting and analyzing personal data from your phone, the apps you use and the sites you visit. The big difference is that now, the companies will have to justify why they're collecting and using that information.</p> <p>So now companies are flooding their users with notices that aim to better explain their practices and the privacy choices they offer. European Union regulators have new powers to go after companies that get too grabby or that don't tell you clearly what they're doing with your data.</p> <p>Here's a look at what the rules say and what they mean for consumers in the EU and elsewhere.</p> <hr/> <p>THE BIG DEAL WITH MAY 25</p> <p>That's when the EU's General Data Protection Regulation takes effect. Instead of separate rules in separate nations across Europe, there's now a single set for the entire EU.</p> <p>The new rules apply to all users in the 28-nation EU, regardless of where the companies collecting, analyzing and using their data are located. So the rules will affect giants such as Facebook and Google and small U.S. businesses with just one European client alike.</p> <hr/>

WHAT DO THE NEW RULES SAY?

Companies have to use plain language to explain how they collect and use data. While companies generally aren't changing what they're doing, they are revising privacy policies to eliminate legalese. Google is embedding video (from its YouTube service, of course) to further explain the concepts.

GDPR spells out six specific ways that companies can justify the "processing," or use, of personal data. Some are obvious, such as to fulfill contractual obligations — for instance, when an insurer pays out a claim. For other uses, such as ad targeting, companies can seek your consent. Those that aren't sure they got consent properly are now going back to users.

There's also a somewhat vague category called "legitimate interests." It's a catch-all justification that companies can fall back on to keep using data, though the company must show that its needs outweigh potential impact on users' privacy, said David Martin, senior legal officer for the European consumer group BEUC.

Companies are also required to give EU users the ability to access and delete data and to object to data use under one of the claimed reasons. Firms have to clarify how long they retain data.

And the rules force companies that suffer data breaches to disclose them within 72 hours. By contrast, it took Yahoo more than two years to reveal a breach that ultimately involved three billion users .

FOR COMPANIES OUTSIDE EUROPE

Facebook, Google and their ilk may be headquartered in Silicon Valley, but they have millions of users in Europe — and so have to comply with the new rules. Violators face fines of up to 20 million euros (\$24 million) or 4 percent of annual global revenue — whichever is greater. That's an incentive for companies to take these rules seriously.

WHAT ABOUT USERS OUTSIDE THE EU?

Companies based in the EU have to offer these privacy protections to all their users, not just EU residents. Beyond that, the EU rules merely say they apply to "data subjects who are in the Union."

But it's an open question how the rules will affect visitors to Europe. Ailidh Callander of the London-based group Privacy International says many questions will be tested in courts and further rulemaking.

What's clear is that companies won't have to be as aggressive getting consent for data collection outside of Europe. (Absent regulation, companies typically assume consent unless a user says otherwise.) They can hold off seeking affirmative consent until you visit the EU, at which point you might confront a pop-up notice.

A GLOBAL DOUBLE STANDARD

Some companies are extending at least some EU-style protections to all users. But they won't face legal repercussions or fines if they fail to follow through with users outside the EU.

So unless the U.S. and other countries adopt privacy rules similar to those in the EU— something that's not likely any time soon — many companies are likely to maintain double privacy standards.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, for instance, promised "global settings and controls" for users during his U.S. congressional testimony in April, but was otherwise vague on the subject. When asked if U.S. users would have the same rights Europeans have to object to the use of data, Zuckerberg said, "I'm not sure how we're going to implement that yet."

But segmenting EU customers from the rest of the world isn't easy, especially for smaller companies without Facebook's or Google's technical prowess. "It might seem like a smart move, but in some cases, it's more work," said Larry Ponemon, founder of the privacy research firm Ponemon Institute.

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HEADLINE	05/17 Debate: bitcoin energy consumption
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/study-claims-bitcoin-uses-much-energy-ireland-not-so-fast-n875211
GIST	<p>In the late 1990s, some experts were concerned that by 2010, half of the U.S. electrical grid would be dedicated to powering the internet, a claim that nearly caused a panic.</p> <p>That proved to be more than a little overblown, as researcher Jonathan Koomey and his team at the Berkeley Lab showed at the time. They then proved themselves correct again in an August 2011 study that concluded that data centers consumed less than 2 percent of the country's electricity.</p> <p>Koomey, a lecturer at Stanford, is now concerned that the same false alarm is ringing once again. This time, the shiny object is Bitcoin and the energy used to "mine" the digital currency.</p> <p>The latest spotlight on the conversation came from a study published Wednesday that was produced by Dutch researcher Alex de Vries, who concluded that the Bitcoin network consumes nearly as much electricity as the nation of Ireland.</p> <p>Koomey finds that assertion more than a little problematic.</p> <p>"For two decades, people have been eager to overestimate electricity use by computing," Koomey said. "My concern is that we simply don't have adequate data to come to the strong conclusions that he's coming to."</p> <p>De Vries estimates that the Bitcoin network consumes "at least 2.55 gigawatts of electricity currently, and potentially 7.67 gigawatts in the future."</p> <p>"Economic models tell us that Bitcoin's electricity consumption will gravitate toward the latter number," comparable with Austria, which consumes 8.2 gigawatts, de Vries writes. "A look at Bitcoin miner production estimates suggests that this number could already be reached in 2018."</p> <p>De Vries is not alone in warning about Bitcoin's appetite for gigawatts. The rise in popularity of Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies has been met with growing concern about the energy usage required by the thousands of computing systems that power these virtual currencies.</p> <p>Producing each Bitcoin is called "mining," and it requires a fair amount of computer processing power to verify the transactions that create the coin as well as add them to the public ledger.</p> <p>Various studies have attempted to quantify the energy used in bitcoin mining with relatively different results. If there's two things all parties agree on, it's that Bitcoin mining is energy intensive, and that it's only expected to increase.</p> <p>But there are a few problems with de Vries' underlying assumptions, according to Koomey and other experts. They point to how de Vries calculates the value of the energy used in Bitcoin mining and the price paid for that energy.</p>

“The worry is that those are two numbers that are picked out of the air,” Koomey said. “There may be some basis for them, but it’s a very unreliable way to do these kinds of calculations, and nobody who does this for a living would do it like that. It’s odd that someone would.”

The other problem is that much of that mining doesn’t happen out in the open — in fact, cryptocurrency miners tend to value their privacy — which means that the energy consumption data necessary to come to any firm conclusions is far from readily available.

De Vries could not be reached for comment for this article, but he said in a news release that his work does require some less-than-rigorous math and stressed the need for more research.

“We’ve seen a lot of back-of-the-envelope calculations, but we need more scientific discussion on where this network is headed,” said de Vries, who works at the Experience Center of PricewaterhouseCoopers in Amsterdam and founded the blog Digiconomist. “Right now, the information available is pretty poor quality overall, so I’m hoping that people will use this paper as a foundation for more research.”

Christian Catalini, an assistant professor at MIT’s Sloan School of Management who researches cryptocurrencies and block chain technology, also said researchers need data directly from Bitcoin miners.

“The only people with good data on this are the miners, so you do need that data to understand the electricity consumption,” Catalini said. “The main challenge is that this gear is scattered across the globe and faces different prices.”

And it’s not as though the servers that the miners use are particularly easy to keep track of, either.

“The equipment they’re using is customized to their use,” Koomey noted. “This is not the standard servers that are being sold. These are machines that are assembled using other components. That makes it more difficult. It’s a custom design and those kind of servers are not tracked as well.”

Some experts are also troubled that the de Vries model concludes that the annual energy consumption of Bitcoin miners would exceed that of major data companies like Facebook and Amazon.

“This debate keeps popping up, but it would be great if someone did some data sharing with the miners and got some good estimates,” Catalini said.

To Koomey, Bitcoin enthusiasts and detractors need to be a little more patient and wait for better research to come out — particularly a study based on conclusive data.

“We should try to get the numbers right, but these things don’t happen super fast,” Koomey said with a laugh. “It takes money to do research and a lot of time.”

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HEADLINE	05/17 Crypto wealth plummets \$52B in week
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-18/crypto-wealth-sinks-52-billion-in-week-of-lambos-yachts-snoop
GIST	<p>So much for the Blockchain Week bounce.</p> <p>With thousands of cryptocurrency diehards swarming into Manhattan for this week’s Consensus 2018 conference, the prediction from Bitcoin bulls like Tom Lee of Fundstrat Global Advisors was that the hype-filled gathering would trigger a market rally.</p> <p>Alas, not even a trio of (rented) Lamborghinis, a 1,000-person yacht party and a performance by 46-year-old rapper Snoop Dogg could prevent the value of virtual currencies tracked by Coinmarketcap.com from</p>

sinking by \$52 billion since May 11. Bitcoin, the most popular of the bunch, dropped 5.2 percent this week to \$8,003.60 even as Arthur Hayes -- the crypto exchange executive who's firm rented the Lamborghinis -- predicted a surge to \$50,000 by year-end.

This week's slump is far from extreme by crypto standards, but the market's resistance to Blockchain Week's ballyhoo highlights one of the arguments often cited by virtual currency pessimists: that most potential buyers have already piled in after last year's epic surge.

While bulls point to a vast pool of pent-up demand from professional money managers, it's far from clear that regulations in the U.S. and elsewhere will evolve in ways that attract institutional investors. Many Wall Street pros have dismissed the market as a speculative bubble, while Warren Buffett likened Bitcoin to "rat poison squared."

For Sunny Lu, the chief executive officer of blockchain-based logistics company VeChain Tech and one of the conference speakers, this week's losses may have been the result of unmet expectations surrounding Consensus 2018.

"The quality of projects and speakers were not really as good as expected," Lu said. "I guess people just got disappointed."

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HEADLINE	05/17 UK: 'Prize Papers' to be posted online
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/thousands-undelivered-letters-heart-wrenching-stories-posted-online/story?id=55214973
GIST	<p>Thousands of letters from all over the world were never delivered between 1650 and 1815. Now hundreds of years later, the world will be able to read those undelivered letters.</p> <p>Britain was involved in a series of wars during that period, and when they captured enemy ships, they seized about 160,000 letters in mailbags that never made it to their intended recipients.</p> <p>The National Archives of the United Kingdom has partnered with the University of Oldenburg in Germany in a massive 20-year project to digitize the so-called Prize Papers and make them freely available.</p> <p>The project, funded by Gottingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities, launched this month. Archivists are preparing the records for digitization with plans to write brief descriptions about the letters and take multiple pictures for a free online research database.</p> <p>Dr. Amanda Bevan, head of Legal Records at the National Archives of the U.K., has been involved with the Prize Papers since 2013. She told ABC News' "Start Here" podcast that reading the letters is like "eavesdropping on people from the past," since people were writing to those they loved and missed back at home.</p> <p>"It's touching, you feel as though you actually are in touch with the people who wrote them at the time," she said.</p> <p>Because many of the letters were sent during wartime, she said archivists are uncovering "heart-wrenching" stories.</p> <p>"Especially the ones which say, 'I've written three letters, I haven't heard from you. Are you still alive?'" she said on "Start Here."</p> <p>One of the letters she mentioned was from a young Irishman who was writing to a cousin in Waterford about his adventures: "He's been settled on the island of Tenerife in the East Atlantic, and he's been trying to make his fortune, and everything has gone wrong."</p>

And it's not just paper in the mail.

"If you're incredibly lucky, like I was, you will pop some gold rings, [and] a thin gold necklace," Bevan said.

One letter from a slave trader to a girlfriend in Holland included a bracelet strung with glass beads, which were used as currency in African slave trade, from the coast of West Africa. It also had grains of sand from the Guinea coast that were used to blot ink.

"This is the sand that the person used to dry the ink and there it is spilling out on a bit of paper in London," Bevan said.

Americans eager to learn about letters from the American Revolution will have to wait. The project is still in its early days and about a quarter of the estimated 160,000 total letters are unorganized from poor storage over the years. Bevan said the period between the 1770s and early 1780s has one of the worst collections of random papers.

"You get letters from the 1770s mixed up with letters from the 1780s. You'll get French ones stored with Spanish ones ... it's clear that they're messed up. Now we just need the time and resources to sort them out."

Bevan believes the entire world could benefit from the information the Prize Papers provide "for the history of slavery, for the history of the development of the colonies, [and] for the history of consumerism."

"This is unmediated material, it's from the heart," she said. "And I think that's really unusual because these kinds of letters, had they been delivered, probably wouldn't survive any longer because they're written by just ordinary people."

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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	05/17 Indonesia is ISIS new frontline
SOURCE	http://www.atimes.com/article/indonesia-is-islamic-states-new-frontline/
GIST	<p>For a long period during last week's 36-hour stand-off at Indonesia's paramilitary Police Mobile Brigade (Brimob) headquarters, scores of rioting militants were in charge of a massive cache of automatic weapons and thousands of rounds of ammunition.</p> <p>According to sources familiar with what transpired, the only reason the siege didn't turn into a pitched gun-battle with police was that the leaders of the uprising lost contact with three coordinators outside the prison, known only as Deden, Ronggo and Ilham.</p> <p>Who they were and what was planned remains unclear, but they were almost certainly members of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), the Islamic State (ISIS) affiliate which engineered the uprising and was responsible for a subsequent wave of bombings in the port city of Surabaya that left 13 bombers and 12 civilians dead.</p> <p>National police chief Tito Karnavian said there was little doubt the events were connected, signaling the emergence of a cell-based organization that may be more dangerous than the Al Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiyah network that terrorized the country in the early 2000s.</p> <p>In the days since, Indonesian police lost one of their own in killing four sword-wielding men who attacked the Riau, Sumatra, provincial police headquarters in Pekanbaru on May 16, adding to two others shot</p>

earlier in one of a mounting series of raids across the country.

If any doubts were left after the last year's five-month siege of the southern Philippine city of Marawi, the recent events in Indonesia have demonstrated that while the ISIS caliphate may have been effectively destroyed, its reach and influence in Southeast Asia has not.

Instigated by Wawan Kurniawan, 42, a prominent JAD militant from Sumatra, the May 9-10 prison riot led to the savage murder of five Detachment 88 counterterrorism officers and seizure of the arms cache in an unsecured room adjoining the temporary detention center.

According to a police accounting seen by Asia Times, the cache included 59 automatic rifles, 29 pistols, 11,000 rounds of 7.62 mm and 10,000 rounds of 5.52 mm ammunition, and boxes of bullets for everything from .22 to .45 caliber pistols.

The militants were initially able to connect to social media, with the first news of the riot appearing on ISIS's Amaaq news agency and video from inside the jail later being uploaded to Instagram.

It took time for police to activate a signal scrambler, which explains the militants' subsequent breakdown in communications with the outside.

Like Kurniawan, only 40-50 of the 156 prisoners were considered hard-core extremists; many of the inmates on trial or awaiting trial in the three cell blocks were possible candidates for de-radicalization, but little effort had been made to screen them all.

JAD founder Aman Abdurrahman, who was being held in a more secure part of the same prison, is currently on trial for directing an attack in central Jakarta in early 2016 from the high-security Nusakambangan island prison off Java's south coast.

The stand-off finally ended after Abdurrahman was reportedly persuaded to record a surrender plea and police overwhelmed Kurniawan and nine other hold-outs in a hail of gunfire after cutting off power, food and water.

As violence and arrests continued in West and East Java and Sumatra, President Joko Widodo pledged to issue a presidential regulation if Parliament fails to pass an early revision to the 2003 Anti-Terrorism Law to give police greater powers of arrest and detention.

Police chief Karnavian has said he wants military intelligence to help in investigating JAD "down to its roots," as Widodo put it, but there is likely to be strong opposition to legislating an additional role for the armed forces in the counterterrorism effort.

Instead of Afghanistan war veterans who made up the core of Jemaah Islamiyah, JAD is a collection of home-grown jihadi groups, among them dependents who are clearly as dedicated to the ISIS cause as the militants themselves.

Proof of that is in the three families, including mothers and children, who carried out the suicide attacks on three Surabaya Christian churches and the city's police headquarters, and triggered the blasts that rocked a low-cost apartment block in the city's southern suburb of Sidoarjo.

Police reports that the six family members behind the church attacks were recent returnees from Syria turned out to be false. But there are still serious concerns whether enough is being done to monitor or rehabilitate the 500 Indonesians known to have come back so far.

Another 600 are still unaccounted for, but scores of fighters may have died in the final desperate days before the collapse of ISIS' caliphate and their dependents could still be in detention camps along the Turkish border.

	<p>JAD is expected to see the Surabaya attacks as a model for future operations against security forces, still their main target, and to continue its campaign of terror against Christian congregations and other ethnic and religious minorities.</p> <p>Instead of the bulkier pressure cooker device favored so far, the Surabaya attackers assembled scores of pipe-bombs, easier to conceal but packed with high-explosive TATP, or acetone peroxide, made from readily available retail products.</p> <p>The sustained level of violence has put police on edge with the Ramadan fasting period beginning today and ISIS well known for perversely convincing its followers that carrying out attacks during the Islamic holy month brings extra merit.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Afghan officials: Taliban attacks kill 16
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/05/18/afghan-officials-say-taliban-attacks-kill-16-security-forces.html
GIST	<p>KABUL, Afghanistan – Afghan officials say Taliban fighters have attacked several security posts in three provinces, killing 16 security forces.</p> <p>Ramadan Ali Mooseni, deputy provincial police chief, said Friday the Taliban launched an attack the previous night in Ghazni province's remote Ajristan district, killing nine security forces and wounding seven others. The gun battle also left 25 Taliban fighters dead, he said.</p> <p>Elsewhere, Taliban insurgents attacked police security posts in the Maruf district of Kandahar province, killing five police and wounding six. Also, 12 Taliban were killed and 18 wounded, said Zia Durani, spokesman for the chief of police.</p> <p>Similar attacks Thursday night in southern Uruzgan province left two police dead, officials said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 ISIS threatens World Cup attack
SOURCE	https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/961127/world-cup-2018-ISIS-terror-threat-lionel-messi-Cristiano-ronaldo
GIST	<p>The extremists are distributing warped propaganda containing pledges to attack fans and players with guns, knives and vehicles.</p> <p>Argentina's Messi and Portugal's Ronaldo have become the latest targets in an image circulated by ISIS.</p> <p>The players are pictured being pinned to the ground with their heads being hacked off in a packed football stadium by masked jihadi fighters.</p> <p>Captioned "Your blood will fill the ground", the poster shows two terrorists in balaclavas and grey jumpsuits crouched over Messi and Ronaldo.</p> <p>Other propaganda posters show ISIS threatening "we will be there" in front of a picture of the World Cup logo.</p> <p>And instructions have been revealed encouraging wannabe jihadis to strike using trucks and cars</p> <p>Guns, knives and bombs are also urged to be used by ISIS fighters.</p> <p>And the poster even includes a guide to the "deadly points in the human body" for "targeting the infidels</p>

in or out of stadiums”.

Posters include ISIS urging terrorists “kill them all” and promising to make it an “explosive cup”.

ISIS often produces propaganda in run-up to major events in means to incite violence and scare people.

The latest shocking threats were revealed by cyber intelligence firm Sixgill which monitors ISIS chatter and probes the so-called Dark Web.

Sixgill revealed chat had intensified up over the past week with a series of direct threats to the World Cup.

The tournament kicks off on June 14 and Russian authorities have been working non-stop smashing terrorist rings ahead of the global showpiece.

Back in March, Russia busted an ISIS “sleeper cell” while in April secret services found ISIS fighters armed with AK-47s and bombs.

The FSB has identified terrorism as the biggest threat to the World Cup but insists security has been stepped up thwart any potential attacks.

Chris Hawkins, a senior analyst at Jane’s Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, said: “There are numerous terrorism threats affecting the World Cup.

The main one, as with the rest of Russia, comes from lone operators with low capabilities.

Tactics will likely include knives and vehicle attacks targeting fans visiting games or the surrounding areas.

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HEADLINE	05/18 Indonesia nabs dozens terror suspects
SOURCE	https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/indonesia-nabs-dozens-of-terror-suspects
GIST	<p>JAKARTA/SURABAYA • Indonesia's counter-terrorism squad Densus 88 has arrested terror suspects in East Java as well as Sumatra, including Medan and Riau, in the wake of deadly attacks this week.</p> <p>North Sumatra police chief Paulus Waterpauw confirmed on Wednesday the arrests, including one in Tanjung Balai city on Tuesday, during which one suspect was shot dead and another injured while resisting arrest, the Jakarta Post reported.</p> <p>Densus 88 personnel also arrested at least two other suspects in the provincial capital of Medan, the report said. They were identified as 28-year-old ojek or motorcycle taxi driver MYR, and 38-year-old milk seller SL. A suspect identified only as W reportedly fled.</p> <p>Meanwhile national police chief Tito Karnavian said yesterday a total of eight alleged militants in Riau province had been nabbed by the anti-terror squad, reported Xinhua news agency. Police seized a flag of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) as well scores of weapons during the arrest.</p> <p>In East Java, a total of 23 alleged militants were captured, according to police officers cited by Xinhua.</p> <p>"We order the other alleged terrorists to surrender instead of being persistently hunted," said East Java's police chief, Inspector General Machfud Arifin. He added that four alleged terrorists were shot dead during the arrests.</p> <p>Entire families of suicide bombers carried out attacks on three churches and at least two police headquarters earlier this week.</p>

	<p>Around 30 people have been killed since Sunday in the attacks, including 13 of the suspected suicide bombers.</p> <p>Police suspect the attacks were carried out by a cell of the ISIS-inspired Jemaah Ansharut Daulah, an umbrella organisation on a US State Department terrorist list that is reckoned to have drawn hundreds of Indonesian ISIS sympathisers.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 Federal Air Marshal Service program
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/05/17/tsa-air-marshall-training-terrorism-planes/601236002/
GIST	<p>ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — The scenario: As a flight attendant asks passengers what they'd like to drink, a man sitting beside a window attempts to light an explosive in his shoe.</p> <p>When the flight attendant challenges him, another man sitting on the aisle leaps to his feet, yelling “get back” and threatening other passengers with a knife.</p> <p>A federal air marshal draws his pistol and shoots both men. Threat over.</p> <p>The training exercise illustrates the protection that air marshals — who fly armed and undercover — could provide in thwarting terrorists in the skies.</p> <p>“We are the last line of defense on board an aircraft,” Mike LaFrance, assistant supervisory air marshal in charge of the program’s training center near the Atlantic City airport, told USA TODAY. “If everything else fails, the air marshal is there to take down anything that may happen.”</p> <p>But now some lawmakers and critics in watchdog agencies are asking: Is the program that peaked at nearly \$1 billion a year — a program that has never caught a single terrorist on board a plane — really needed?</p> <p>The program has existed under a variety of names and agencies for 57 years, and it expanded significantly after the 9/11 hijackings. But air marshals can't be on every plane, and during those decades, they haven't faced a real terror threat during an actual flight.</p> <p>TSA Administrator David Pekoske called the program “a terrific organization” that performs a stressful job under difficult circumstances. The service is an important layer of security, he said, that begins when a passenger buys a ticket, a database search against no-fly lists and checkpoint screening at airports. And the prospect that an air marshal could be on a specific flight is a deterrent to would-be attackers by itself.</p> <p>"I think they do a very good job," Pekoske told USA TODAY. “Quite frankly, I’m very much comforted by the fact that they are on some flights — not all, based on the size — to provide that additional layer of security should the need arise.”</p> <p>Learning how — and when — to shoot Gary Decker, an air-marshall firearms instructor, sits in a replica airline seat waiting for action.</p> <p>The seats are arranged on the concrete floor of a TSA firing range as if aboard an airliner. Two aisles mimic a wide-body plane. Decker sits on the left side of the left aisle, allowing him to pursue a target — if necessary.</p> <p>A paper target swivels several rows ahead in first class, revealing a man in a gray jacket with a band of explosives at his waist. Decker quickly pulls a Sig Sauer P229 pistol from his holster and shoots a couple of rounds, hitting the target in the head. Spent shells spring from the gun.</p>

A pause. Another target turns to reveal a woman in a leather jacket holding a pistol. Decker briskly fires several more shots into her body. More shells rattle on the floor.

Then a new target breezes past the others. A man in a red T-shirt with a pistol moves from right to left. Pow, pow, pow.

“At 37,000 feet, we can’t call for backup,” Decker told USA TODAY after the exercise. “We’re in such a confined space, we can’t make mistakes.”

Air marshals score an average 284 points out of a 300-point test with 60 shots fired, which they say is the highest average in law enforcement.

But instructors said decisions about to shoot are just as important as aiming. Air marshals train to decide in fractions of a second whether the target is a threat. And then whether to aim for the head of a bomber or the body of a gunman.

“I’m gauging the threat and I’m gauging the environment — what’s going on around me before I get out of that seat,” Decker said. “Because there may be somebody behind me. There may be somebody to the right. I’m waiting to see what else might be happening.”

Time to end the program?

What is now called the Federal Air Marshal Service has transformed and grown significantly since it was created under President Kennedy after a string of hijackings in 1961. The first 18 Federal Aviation Administration safety inspectors who were deputized to thwart hijackers graduated in 1962.

In 1985, after the 17-day hijacking of TWA Flight 847, Congress increased the number of air marshals by the hundreds and expanded the program to international flights.

But in the ebb and flow of funding, the service had only 33 marshals on duty Sept. 11, 2001, when hijackers flew four planes into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and field in Pennsylvania. The ranks were quickly expanded to an undisclosed number in the thousands.

Critics of the program highlight the costs, the lack of terrorist incidents — and argue that more air marshals are arrested than terrorists.

Rep. John Duncan, R-Tenn., would like to abolish the program that he said had about 4,000 air marshals in 2009 and averaged a total 4.2 arrests per year during the first seven years. He continues to slam the program as “the most needless, useless agency.”

Air marshals themselves were arrested 148 times from November 2002 to February 2012, according to a report by ProPublica based on TSA documents. Air marshals were also charged with more than 5,000 cases of misconduct during that period, including 1,200 cases of lost equipment and 950 missed flights, the report said.

Pekoske said he is confident there aren’t systemic problems with discipline.

“I think those problems are in the past for TSA,” Pekoske said. “It’s something that I’ve placed a good amount of emphasis on myself, to make sure that we have handled the problems that have occurred in the past and have a good path forward.”

The Department of Homeland Security’s inspector general released an unclassified summary of a report in October 2017 that called the air marshals’ contribution to aviation security “questionable.”

“We also identified a part of FAMS operations where, if discontinued, funds could be put to better use,” the summary said.

The service peaked with a \$966 million budget in 2012, according to the Government Accountability Office, and got \$779 million in the latest spending bill approved in March.

As a former vice commandant of the Coast Guard, Pecoske said he understood the difficulty putting a value on prevention. But he said changes in security before and during flights have reduced the need for air marshals, so spending has shifted.

Airlines hardened cockpit doors after the 9/11 attacks to prevent terrorists from getting to pilots. Some pilots volunteer to be trained to carry guns during flights under the Federal Flight Deck Officer program.

“From my perspective, I think we’ve done a good job in increasing our security profile overall in flight,” Pecoske said. “I do think that the air marshals provide an important layer of security.”

'No safe direction'

Air marshals make split-second decisions.

In December 2005, air marshals shot and killed Rigoberto Alpizar, 44, on a jet bridge at the Miami airport as he ran off an American Airlines flight. Flight attendants and security officials said Alpizar claimed to have a bomb and demonstrated bizarre behavior, but no explosives were found on him or in his bag. Air marshals had warned him repeatedly to "stop" and "get down" but were ignored.

Alpizar hadn't taken his entire Lithium prescription for bipolar disorder, according to a prosecutor's investigation of the incident. The 46-page report on the investigation ruled the shooting "legally justified" and said air marshals "demonstrated remarkable restraint."

Typical confrontations are more mundane. Air marshals, who try to avoid breaking cover, must decide when an unruly passenger becomes a big enough disturbance to warrant action. A sample of recent cases include:

- Sarah Beach was charged with assault after an air marshal restrained her on a Delta Air Lines flight April 19 from London to Salt Lake City, where she allegedly threw coffee on passengers, overturned a drink cart and ran up and down the plane’s aisles. Her case is pending.
- Alex Croft pleaded guilty to assault after an air marshal restrained him for attempting three times to open the emergency exit during a United Airlines flight Sept. 30 from Paris to Washington Dulles.
- Joanne Snow was found not guilty by reason of insanity after an air marshal charged her as a flight attendant with assault for allegedly slapping another flight attendant, shoving the air marshal, speaking irrationally and kicking the air marshal during a pair of American Airlines flights Nov. 23 and 25, 2015, between Charlotte and Frankfurt.

To prepare for the worst, air marshals receive 16 weeks of training divided between Artesia, N.M., and Atlantic City, N.J., and 20 days a year of recurrent training. Besides firing 5,000 shots during the initial training, courses include hand-to-hand combat, legal investigative techniques and professional ethics.

Training in the tight confines of an airline cabin illustrated one of the worst scenarios possible. One man flicks a lighter, trying to ignite an explosive. Another man wields a knife, threatening passengers while protecting the bomber. Shouting and smoke erupt between attackers and passengers.

In order to prevent an explosion, air marshals shoot the attackers accurately enough to avoid hitting passengers or flight attendants.

“There is no safe direction on board an aircraft. Windows, innocent people, partners, crew,” LaFrance said. “We feel that we are the tip of the spear when it comes to marksmanship and firearms training in the law enforcement world.”

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HEADLINE	05/17 Brazil: 11 charged in ISIS cell plot
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/17/brazil-islamic-state-cell-charged-jihadists-syria
GIST	<p>Brazilian federal prosecutors have charged 11 people with planning to establish an Islamic State cell in Brazil and trying to recruit jihadists to send to Syria, according to a court filing.</p> <p>Police tracked the alleged Isis militants through their social media messages after Spain's Guardia Civil provided telephone numbers found on a Brazilian arrested in Spain for belonging to a jihadist group there.</p> <p>In one WhatsApp chat group, some of the Brazilian suspects discussed plans to copy last year's London Bridge attack during Carnival in Rio de Janeiro or Salvador to kill as many people as possible, the document said.</p> <p>Two of the Brazilians are being held in a maximum-security prison and five others, arrested since October, were freed pending trial, said a spokesman for the prosecutors office for the state of Goiás in central Brazil that filed the charges.</p> <p>Police found homemade weapons in the house of one of the suspects, who identified himself in social media messages as a supporter of the militant Islamic movement al-Qaida.</p> <p>It was the second copycat group dismantled by Brazil in two years.</p> <p>Before the 2016 Rio Olympics, police arrested 10 people suspected of belonging to a poorly organized group supporting IsisI who discussed terrorist acts during the games.</p> <p>The Brazilian government described the group as "absolutely amateur" and said its members were in contact via messaging apps but did not know each other personally.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 Denmark to pull special forces out Iraq
SOURCE	https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2018/5/17/denmark-to-pull-special-forces-out-of-iraq
GIST	<p>Denmark said on Thursday it will start withdrawing its special forces from Iraq, as it winds up its role in a US-led international coalition fight back against the Islamic State group.</p> <p>"We have now reached a point where we can begin withdrawing our special forces because (IS) no longer has control over large areas in Iraq," Danish Foreign Minister Anders Samuelsen said in a statement.</p> <p>Up to 60 Danish special forces were sent to Iraq in 2016 to train and advise Iraqi soldiers after a vote by Denmark's parliament.</p> <p>The forces also took part in operations on the Iraqi-Syrian border, providing intelligence and ad-hoc air support.</p> <p>"Their Iraqi partners are now ready to stand on their own two feet," Danish Defence Minister Claus Hjort Frederiksen said in the statement.</p> <p>"(IS) have been forced away from virtually all the areas which the terrorist organisation occupied in Iraq," he added.</p> <p>The Scandinavian nation currently has around 180 troops stationed at al-Asad air base near Baghdad, where they have been training Iraqi soldiers and Kurdish security forces.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 US reacts to wanted terrorist in Pakistan
SOURCE	https://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/us-reacts-says-concerned-about-hafiz-saeed-roaming-freely-in-pakistan/1172420/
GIST	<p>The United States has again expressed its concern on the free movement of wanted terrorist Hafiz Saeed in Pakistan.</p> <p>“We are concerned about the mastermind behind the 2008 Mumbai attacks. And he’s a Lashkar-e-Taiba guy who was being held in Pakistan, and he was eventually let out on house arrest, and we have a reward out for. I believe it’s for his arrest, not information leading to his arrest, but his arrest. I don’t recall off the top of my head the award amount, but that person out in the open is a tremendous concern to the United States,” Heather Nauert, spokesperson of US State Department said.</p> <p>She was responding to a question on the recent remarks made by former Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Pakistan’s role in the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Nawaz Sharif had said that militant organizations are active in the country. “Militant organizations are active. Call them non-state actors, should we allow them to cross the border and kill 150 people in Mumbai? Explain it to me. Why can’t we complete the trail?” he said.</p> <p>Hafiz Saeed was released from a 10-month-long house arrest by a Pakistani court in November 2017.</p> <p>While underlining the growing ties between India and the US, the State Department spokesperson also said that the US has a very strong relationship with Prime Minister Modi’s government. “We have strong people-to-people ties.”</p> <p>US has already declared Saeed’s political front, Milli Muslim League, and JUD as Foreign terrorist organizations.</p> <p>The 2008 Mumbai attacks were carried out by Pakistan based terrorist group, Lashkar-e-taiba. The attacks lasted for four days across Mumbai, India’s financial capital. Many foreign nationals were among those dead.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Pakistan military: major attack foiled
SOURCE	https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/pakistani-military-says-it-foiled-major-terror-attack-in-quetta/29234853.html
GIST	<p>Pakistani security forces said on May 17 that they foiled a major terror attack in the southwestern city of Quetta, killing five suicide bombers.</p> <p>The target of the attack was a local office of the paramilitary Frontier Corps (FC), the military said in a statement.</p> <p>"An explosive-laden vehicle carrying five suicide bombers tried to enter the FC help center. Vigilant FC soldiers fired at [the] terrorists and killed them," it said.</p> <p>Four soldiers were injured in the firefight with the attackers, it said.</p> <p>The failed attack came just hours after a suicide bomber struck a paramilitary convoy in the northwestern city of Nowshera, wounding 10 people.</p> <p>The two attacks on the FC came a day after Pakistani forces said they killed Salman Badeni, an Islamist militant leader wanted for the murder of more than 100 Pakistani Shi'ite Muslims, on the outskirts of</p>

	<p>Quetta, the capital of restive Balochistan Province.</p> <p>No militant group immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks on May 17. But the military said the attempted suicide in Quetta was a "response" to the killing of Badeni on May 16.</p> <p>Badeni was the provincial commander of the Islamist extremist group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), widely considered one of the most violent militant outfits in Pakistan. Sunni extremists like the LeJ consider Shi'a to be heretics.</p> <p>LeJ is blamed for the deaths of hundreds of Shi'a in numerous attacks across Pakistan, especially in Balochistan.</p> <p>A number of Islamist militant groups are active in the province, including the Taliban and local Islamic State affiliates.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 US ratchets up pressure on Hezbollah
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-treasury-sanctions-a-top-hezbollah-financier-and-representative-to-iran-1526582699
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—The U.S. Treasury Department on Thursday ratcheted up the pressure on Iran-backed Hezbollah, imposing sanctions on one of the Lebanese militia's top financiers and its representative to Tehran, while also accusing the group's leader of being complicit in its world-wide illicit operations.</p> <p>The designation of Mohammad Ibrahim Bazzi as one of Hezbollah's top financiers and Abdallah Safi-Al-Din as the group's key financial representative to Tehran is part of a broader U.S. campaign to isolate Iran and sideline its regional proxies threatening U.S. interests and allies in the Middle East.</p> <p>Specifically, the U.S. Treasury tied the two men and associated companies to a drug-trafficking ring and ill-gotten oil-sale contracts to Gambia as part of multimillion-dollar funding channels for Hezbollah, a group designated by the U.S. as a terror organization.</p> <p>U.S. officials link the activities of the two directly to the head of Hezbollah, Hasan Nasrallah, who was blacklisted by the U.S. and several Gulf nations on Wednesday for his role as the supreme commander of the group's military and security operations around the world. The U.S. intelligence community's latest assessment of world-wide threats reported that Hezbollah has increased its global terror activity in recent years to a level not seen since the 1990s.</p> <p>Washington has been particularly concerned lately about the group's role in the Syrian civil war supporting President Bashar al-Assad alongside Russia and Iran and as a proxy for Tehran's Quds Force, the elite wing of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps sanctioned by the U.S., Europe and others.</p> <p>By targeting Mr. Nasrallah and other members of the group's governing body, the Shura Council, the U.S. and the Gulf countries "rejected the false distinction between a so-called 'Political Wing' and Hezbollah's global terrorist plotting," Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said.</p> <p>The U.S. is in part trying to discredit the group as a political organization not only in its home country and the Middle East, but also in Europe, where some governments recognize its political activities as a separate, legitimate institution. The U.S. is urging European and other governments to designate all of Hezbollah a terrorist organization, not just its militia. U.S. sanctions levied over the last week that tied Iran's central bank to funneling cash to Hezbollah through the Quds Force are meant to erode Hezbollah's financial credibility.</p> <p>The U.S. contends Hezbollah's chief is aware of all of its financing operations, including those run by Mr. Safi-Al-Din, who is Mr. Nasrallah's cousin, and Mr. Bazzi, an associate of the group's leader. Mr. Safi-Al-</p>

	Din, Treasury said, has served as Hezbollah's key interlocutor to Iran on financial issues, including working to bolster political and economic ties between Gambia and Tehran and playing a role in an alleged money-laundering operation through the Lebanese Canadian Bank.
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HEADLINE	05/17 Remote ISIS branches grow; caliphate fades
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/faraway-isis-branches-grow-as-caliphate-fades-in-syria-and-iraq-1526558401
GIST	<p>ISTANBUL—In its former heartland of Syria and Iraq, the once mighty Islamic State has turned, at least for now, into little more than a nuisance.</p> <p>But that's not the case for the self-declared caliphate's far-flung "provinces," from West Africa to Afghanistan to Southeast Asia.</p> <p>There, local insurgencies that adopted Islamic State's brand and ideology in its heyday in 2014-2015 keep up the fight, gaining new ground and perpetrating new massacres. Some are also attracting a new influx of foreign fighters.</p> <p>"For now, it is really in the peripheries that everything happens," said Prof. Mathieu Guidere, an expert on Islamic extremism at the University of Paris VIII. "The peripheral branches of Islamic State have become much more important and much more active than its original central organization."</p> <p>Last year, U.S.-backed campaigns by the Iraqi government and by predominantly Kurdish fighters managed to seize Islamic State's two main cities of Mosul and Raqqa, liberating a territory that once spanned a landmass the size of Great Britain.</p> <p>The only remaining areas controlled by Islamic State there are in the vicinity of al-Bukamal on Syria's border with Iraq and a handful of other small isolated pockets in Syria.</p> <p>While many of the thousands of foreign fighters who flocked to Syria and Iraq died on the battlefield or were captured, significant numbers have managed to return to their home countries—or, in some cases, moved to other battlefields.</p> <p>"ISIS has been defeated, or quasi-defeated, insofar as its characteristic of a quasi-state. What has not been defeated is its insurgency capacity or its capacity to inspire others to engage in terrorist attacks elsewhere," said Robert Malley, president of the International Crisis Group think tank, who served as President Barack Obama's coordinator of the campaign against Islamic State. "It's the hydra of different movements. They have shown a capacity to adapt and to change."</p> <p>Indeed, while Islamic State's ability to produce slick propaganda has been degraded by the loss of a physical "state," the extremist group still retains a robust online presence and successfully encourages so-called lone-wolf attacks.</p> <p>In one of these, a stabbing spree in central Paris, a young Frenchman of Chechen origin Saturday killed a passerby and injured four others after recording a cellphone video pledging allegiance to Islamic State. A series of much bloodier suicide attacks on Sunday, also claimed by Islamic State, targeted churches in Surabaya, Indonesia.</p> <p>"Although Islamic State's ideology has suffered, it still has a huge potential," said Rohan Gunaratna, head of the International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research at the Nanyang University in Singapore. "Islamic State has entered a phase of global expansion, very much the same way al Qaeda extended globally in late 2001."</p> <p>In Afghanistan, where a brutal Taliban insurgency has been trying to topple the Western-backed</p>

government in Kabul since the 2001 U.S. invasion, the rise of Islamic State brought a new level of carnage to the conflict.

The movement's regional affiliate, Islamic State-Khorasan, or ISIS-K, has unleashed particularly deadly attacks, deliberately targeting civilians and particularly seeking to massacre Shiites.

(While past Taliban attacks have also caused large civilian casualties, the Taliban—who portray themselves as Afghanistan's legitimate government and who want to be seen as such by the country's neighbors—insist that they only seek to target government and foreign-related targets. They usually shy away from taking responsibility when their bombings produce unexpectedly high numbers of civilian casualties.)

“Afghan traditions are against some tactics that ISIS used in Syria and Iraq. There is some genuine enmity between the Taliban and ISIS-K in some areas,” said Rahmatullah Nabil, who served until late 2015 as the head of Afghanistan's intelligence service, the National Directorate of Security.

Most Islamic State fighters in eastern Afghanistan are former Pakistani Taliban who had been pushed out of that country's tribal areas along the border, he said, while Islamic State units in northern Afghanistan include fighters from Uzbekistan and China's Xinjiang province.

Despite their enmity, the presence of Islamic State in the country also serves a useful purpose to the Afghan Taliban, Mr. Nabil added. “Sometimes the creation of a tense situation between the Taliban and ISIS-K along Afghanistan's northern border is more tactical,” he said. “The Taliban and their allies seek to persuade the central Asian countries, Iran or even Russia to provide support to the Taliban and to consider them as a force that will counter ISIS-K, which is a false scenario.”

In West Africa, meanwhile, a new area of operations for Islamic State has emerged in the Sahara, along the borders of Niger and Mali. There, a new affiliate, the “Islamic State in the Greater Sahara,” has absorbed members of several militant groups that operated there for years, including some that had been associated with al Qaeda.

The affiliate claimed, among others, the attack that killed four U.S. service members in Niger last October. The pace of attacks has become so high that France and its regional allies are creating a new military force, G5 Sahel, to counter the group. “It is the newest and the most active area for Islamic State,” said Prof. Guidere.

In Syria and Iraq, too, conditions are gathering for an Islamic State attempt to spring back, in a different form. In both nations, the forces that once fought against it have since turned on each other, with the campaign against the extremist group losing steam.

“One chapter of ISIS has finished and another is beginning,” said Hassan Hassan, a specialist on Islamic State at the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy in Washington. “Their resurgence is coming sooner than expected.”

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HEADLINE	05/17 Questions over possible fraud in Iraq vote
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/questions-mount-about-possible-fraud-in-iraq-vote-1526582313
GIST	<p>BAGHDAD—The United Nations and Iraqi political leaders on Thursday called for investigating electoral-fraud complaints and sought manual recounts in some districts, as questions intensified about the legitimacy of the country's recent parliamentary vote.</p> <p>Overall, the recounts being sought aren't expected to affect the surprising election results from Saturday, when Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's coalition won the most seats. But the fraud claims have delayed the official tally of the vote and deepened Iraqis mistrust in the electoral process, which saw turnout fall to its</p>

lowest level since the country became a democracy fifteen years ago.

Less than 45% of voters participated in the election, a low number considered a factor in Mr. Sadr's victory because his largely poor, dedicated followers showed up when other politicians' bases stayed home. Mr. Sadr's militias had fought against the U.S. following the 2003 invasion and were accused of sectarian atrocities but he has forged a more mainstream path in recent years.

Lawmakers on Thursday called an emergency session of parliament on Saturday to discuss the allegations of fraud after parties from across the political spectrum raised doubts.

At the center of the controversy are electronic voting machines that were introduced for the first time this election in a bid to reduce fraud.

Iraq's election commission chief, Riyadh al-Badran, said late Wednesday that technical issues were partly to blame for the delay in announcing the results because some workers at polling stations didn't know how to use them properly.

But some political parties have accused their rivals of tampering with the devices.

Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi on Tuesday said the country's electoral commission should look into fraud complaints. On Thursday, his office said members of the electoral commission would be investigated for failing to contract with a company to inspect the electronic voting machines. The commission couldn't be reached for comment. MIRU Systems, a South Korea-based firm that made the machines, didn't immediately respond to a request for comment, but in a statement last year said it wouldn't comment on the machines because it had signed a non-disclosure agreement.

How the machines could have been tampered with isn't clear, but several candidates said results showed they received zero votes in the same polling stations where they had cast ballots for themselves. There were also accusations that votes cast by Iraqis abroad had been tampered with.

The issue is particularly sensitive in the ethnically mixed oil-rich northern city of Kirkuk, where Arab and Turkmen voters have accused Kurds of rigging the result. The Kurdish party that won the most votes denies the accusation.

The U.N. urged the Iraqi election commission to investigate all complaints, and called for a partial manual recount in selected locations, notably Kirkuk. "It is important that these are undertaken in full transparency, witnessed by stakeholders, to strengthen the confidence in the process," said Jan Kubis, special representative of the U.N. secretary-general for Iraq.

The election commission had said the results of the vote would be announced within 48 hours of the polls closing at 6 p.m. local time on Saturday, but official results still haven't been announced. The announcement of the official tally begins a weeklong countdown to the first session of parliament at which the largest bloc of seats is entitled to nominate the premier.

Having won the most seats, Mr. Sadr has an advantage in forming the largest bloc and has already spoken to multiple parties about forming an alliance including Mr. Abadi, who worked closely with the U.S. to defeat Islamic State and is trusted in Washington. Meanwhile, Iran's closest allies in Iraq are seeking to build an alternative bloc excluding Mr. Sadr, who has indicated he isn't willing to partner with them.

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HEADLINE	05/17 Anti-American cleric power grows in Iraq
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/17/world/middleeast/pentagon-future-iraq-election-sadr.html
GIST	WASHINGTON — Over the past four years, American military planning in Iraq has counted on working with Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, a moderate Shiite Muslim who has managed to rebuild the country's

army, restore sovereignty and partner with both the United States and Iran to defeat the Islamic State.

But the results of the weekend's national elections in Iraq have torn the American assumptions asunder.

Huge gains in Parliament were made by a party led by the anti-American cleric Moktada al-Sadr, whose implacable opposition to the presence of United States troops in Iraq was a top reason Washington withdrew its combat forces in 2011.

Now, President Trump and the Pentagon must decide whether the United States can move ahead with plans to leave a residual force of about 4,500 American troops in Iraq after the war against the Islamic State.

The group, also known as ISIS, is largely gone from the areas of Iraq that it occupied as recently as last year. But military planners are all too aware of what happened after the American troops left in 2011, opening space for the Islamic State's rise as it was fueled by minority Sunnis who were alienated by the ruling Shiite government of Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, then the prime minister.

In 2014, the Islamic State rolled across Iraq, easily defeating the country's army and controlling much of its northern and western regions. Ensuring that history is not repeated is a top American priority, senior State Department and Pentagon officials said.

For the Trump administration, that means trying to find a way to a working relationship with Mr. Sadr. Administration officials sought this week to focus on positive aspects of the election.

"Not that long ago, ISIS had controlled large swaths of that country," said Heather Nauert, the State Department's spokeswoman. "And the fact that they were able to pull off elections that were relatively free of violence is certainly a pretty amazing feat and a testament to the Iraqi people."

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis told reporters that Trump administration officials "stand with the Iraqi people's decisions."

"It's a democratic process at a time when people, many people, doubted that Iraqis could take charge of themselves," Mr. Mattis said on Tuesday.

As a young man, Mr. Sadr led a Shiite militia that targeted American troops in Iraq. He fled to Iran to study in Qom, a revered Shiite religious center, before returning to Iraq in 2011 as a cleric and strident Iraqi nationalist. Mr. Sadr is not expected to hold elected office in Iraq; rather, his power comes from his pulpit.

Given Iran's outsize and yearslong influence in internal Iraqi politics, foreign policy experts said the Trump administration might have already made things more complicated for itself in Baghdad.

Mr. Trump's decision last week to withdraw from the Iranian nuclear accord has frozen relations between Washington and Tehran after a thaw that, among other issues, had helped facilitate an indirect partnering against the Islamic State in Iraq.

Iran now "has no motivation for a leader in Iraq who would be positive toward the United States," said Vali Nasr, the dean of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

But Pentagon officials are betting that Iran also does not want to see a return of the Islamic State.

There is widespread agreement among Shiite political blocs, with whom Mr. Sadr would have to ally to form a government, to continue a program backed by international troops to train and equip Iraqi security forces. Trainers include American, Italian and Spanish advisers, with equipment paid for by the United States. And having NATO serve as the public representative for the American-led mission in Iraq could serve as a workaround for Mr. Sadr's sensitivities, officials say.

	<p>Should the Trump administration and a government loyal to Mr. Sadr align, it would not be the first time American troops have had to develop a working relationship with Iraqis who were once considered the enemy. The partnering of United States forces with Sunni insurgents known as Sahwa, or the Awakening, against Al Qaeda in Iraq was a defining turning point in the war more than a decade ago.</p> <p>But the Pentagon will have its own balancing act to perform back in Washington. Mr. Trump has already expressed his desire to bring American troops home soon from Syria; officials said the president has given the Defense Department six months to wrap up its mission there. Military officials had hoped that an American troop presence in Iraq could keep in contact with allied forces across the border in Syria.</p> <p>And what would Mr. Trump do if Mr. Sadr again demands an American troop withdrawal from Iraq?</p> <p>“The Pentagon is already on the clock to get out of Syria,” said Derek Chollet, a former senior Defense Department official in the Obama administration. “Who’s to say what happens in Iraq after?”</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 France: ricin, explosives attack plot foiled
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/french-government-foiled-attack-brothers-held-55254467?
GIST	<p>French authorities have thwarted a possible attack using ricin or explosives and arrested two brothers, the interior minister said Friday.</p> <p>Gerard Collomb told BFM television that authorities were tracking extremist activity on social networks and identified two young men "preparing to commit an attack with explosives or ricin."</p> <p>He said the young men were of Egyptian origin but didn't indicate their nationality or provide other details about where or when they were arrested. He said the men notably had tutorials on how to make poison using ricin.</p> <p>Collomb said the brothers had been communicating on encrypted messaging app Telegram.</p> <p>The anti-terrorism prosecutor's office and Collomb's office didn't immediately provide further details. His announcement comes as President Emmanuel Macron's government is under criticism for not preventing attacks like the one on Saturday, when an Islamic extremist stabbed five people in central Paris, killing one of them, and as France is still on edge after a string of other deadly attacks in recent years.</p> <p>The assailant in Saturday's attack, a 20-year-old Frenchman of Chechen origin, had been on a watch list for radicals, like several others who have attacked France in recent years.</p> <p>The assailant was killed by police, and a close friend of his was arrested and given preliminary terrorism charges Thursday night.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Man in ISIS-inspired shooting gets 17yrs
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/sydney-man-sentenced-17-years-inspired-shooting-55253514?
GIST	<p>A man who provided a revolver used to kill a state police employee in an Islamic State group-inspired attack in Sydney in 2015 was sentenced on Friday to 17 years in prison.</p> <p>Farhad Jabar, 15, was shot dead by police moments after he killed Curtis Cheng with a 0.38 Smith & Wesson as the accountant walked from the New South Wales state police headquarters in central Sydney</p>

	<p>after work.</p> <p>Talal Alameddine, 25, refused to stand for Justice Peter Johnson who sentenced him in the New South Wales Supreme Court to serve a minimum 13.5 years behind bars.</p> <p>New South Wales, Australia's most populous state, has criminalized refusing to stand for a judge after several Muslim defendants remained seated in court on religious grounds.</p> <p>Alameddine had pleaded guilty to recklessly possessing an object connected with a terrorist act and supplying a pistol. The maximum penalty for each offense is 30 years in prison.</p> <p>Alameddine provided the gun to Raban Alou, 20, who passed it on Jabar. The court could not determine whether Alameddine had sold the gun or gave it away. Alou was sentenced in March to 44 years in prison for his role.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 Friend of Paris knife attacker charged
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/french-official-friend-attacker-faces-accomplice-charge-55236229?
GIST	<p>A close friend of the young man who carried out a deadly knife attack in Paris before being killed by police last weekend was handed preliminary charges Thursday as a leading suspect in the rampage.</p> <p>The Paris prosecutor's office said the friend, identified as Abdul Hakim A., is accused of association with terrorist criminals with plans to attack people. He was put in provisional detention pending further investigation.</p> <p>France's anti-terrorism prosecutor Francois Molins said in his first news conference since the Saturday night attack that two female friends of the men were arrested earlier in the day in the Paris region. He did not elaborate.</p> <p>Khamzat Azimov, who was born in the Russian republic of Chechnya, killed one person and wounded five others with a knife in the rampage through streets near the Paris Garnier Opera house. He was killed by police as he advanced on them, saying "Shoot! Shoot! Shoot!"</p> <p>Molins said Azimov's parents, who were detained shortly after the stabbing spree, recognized their son in a video declaring allegiance to the Islamic State group that was released a day later.</p> <p>In the posthumous video, released by Islamic State group's Amaq news agency, Azimov called on Muslims in Europe to "take action in the land of disbelievers" if they can't travel to the crumbling caliphate in Iraq and Syria, which has been pounded by coalition forces. He said French citizens should pressure their government "if you want it (attacks) to end."</p> <p>Azimov had French and Russian citizenship, Molins said. His friend Abdul Hakim A. also was from Chechnya.</p> <p>Azimov and Abdul Hakim A. - both 20 - were on a watch list for potential radicalization, Molins said. Abdul Hakim A. was placed on a second alert list in October for prevention of radicalization with a terrorist character.</p> <p>Azimov was placed on the list containing thousands of names because of his links to a young woman that Abdul Hakim A. married before she tried to go to Syria.</p> <p>The prosecutor said Abdul Hakim A., arrested a day after the attack in Strasbourg where Azimov had previously lived, denied contacting or seeing his friend for several months. The Azimov family had moved</p>

	<p>to the northern 18th district of Paris last July.</p> <p>Investigators detained Abdul Hakim A. because of his marriage to the young woman headed to Syria, Molins said.</p> <p>"Abdul Hakim A. came to Paris from Jan. 8-12, 2017, accompanied by Khamzat Azimov, in order to get a religious wedding with this young woman, the eve of her departure for Syria," the prosecutor said.</p> <p>Studying Abdul Hakim A.'s communications, Molins said investigators noted much activity on encrypted networks, including in the night after Azimov's rampage.</p> <p>IS sympathizers have killed more than 200 people in France in recent years - 130 of them in an coordinated attack on Paris revelers in 2015.</p> <p>The latest attack Saturday occurred less than two months after a murderous extremist rampage in the southern town of Carcassonne, a haunt for tourists. There, a Frenchman of Moroccan origin - also on a watch list - killed three people with a gun, two in a supermarket, including an officer who exchanged himself for a hostage.</p> <p>Azimov had been studying to become a nurse after failing to gain entrance to medical school, Molins said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Germany to re-examine 18K asylum cases
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/05/18/latest-germany-to-re-examine-18000-asylum-cases.html
GIST	<p>Germany's asylum authority says it will re-examine some 18,000 cases handled by one of its regional offices amid a scandal over the improper granting of asylum requests.</p> <p>Jutta Cordt, the head of Germany's Federal Office for Migration, said Friday that the office will review all cases since 2000 in which people were granted asylum by its branch in Bremen, the country's smallest state.</p> <p>In April, prosecutors said at least 1,200 asylum requests, mostly by members of Syria's Yazidi minority, may have been wrongly approved between 2013 and 2016. The former head of the Bremen branch office is being investigated on suspicion of corruption.</p> <p>Cordt says her authority so far has reviewed some 4,400 decisions by various branches and found that cases handled by Bremen were by far the most problematic.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 Study: high uranium levels in water wells
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/991231/federal-study-finds-high-uranium-concentration-in-some-wells/
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — The federal government says some water wells in northeastern Washington have high uranium concentrations, sometimes as much as 40 times the level considered safe for drinking water.</p> <p>That's according to a new study from the U.S. Geological Survey, which sampled water from 13 wells and looked at historical data on uranium concentrations.</p> <p>The Spokesman-Review reports that half the wells sampled had levels of uranium above 30 micrograms per liter, the Environmental Protection Agency's standard for drinking water.</p>

	<p>The study found 60 percent of wells in the historical data had uranium concentrations above safe drinking water guidelines.</p> <p>The study looked at portions of Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties, most of Spokane County, and parts of Okanogan, Douglas, Grant, and Lincoln counties. About 125,000 there get their water from private wells.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 Sawant subject of 4 ethics complaints
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/sawant-subject-of-at-least-4-ethics-complaints
GIST	<p>SEATTLE -- Earlier this week the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission received the first of at least four complaints from the public about Seattle City Councilwoman Kshama Sawant's alleged use of taxpayer-funded resources to promote a political agenda.</p> <p>Some of those complaints cite an exchange between Sawant and Councilmember Sally Bagshaw during a council briefing on May 14.</p> <p>"On multiple occasions, I've seen your staff using our copiers to print your signs," Bagshaw said during the briefing. "I just don't think it is right for us to be using city resources or the copy machines to promote something that not all of us agree to."</p> <p>But at that same briefing, Sawant defended her actions, saying "you can choose not to use your office for really fighting for the interests of working people and to build movements. I strongly believe that council resources should absolutely be used to build social movements and not for furthering the interests of the Chamber of Commerce."</p> <p>Sawant has not responded to a request to comment about the ethics complaints.</p> <p>But Wayne Barnett, chairman of the SEEC, says Sawant is not under investigation. He tells KOMO the complaints are so new that he hasn't even had a chance to conduct a preliminary review.</p> <p>In an email, Barnett says if a preliminary review finds reasonable cause to believe that a violation has occurred, the ethics commission then move on to what he calls "enforcement mode."</p> <p>Complicating the matter is that the SEEC staffer who would investigate the complaints is out of town until next Wednesday, potentially delaying any investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 Publisher claims D.B. Cooper identified
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/05/17/db-cooper-identified-publisher-says-mystery-hijacker-was-ex-paratrooper-from-michigan.html
GIST	<p>More than 45 years after a mysterious plane hijacker made off with \$200,000 in ransom money, disappearing into the night sky, a publishing company believes it has finally identified the man who eluded authorities for so long.</p> <p>At a news conference on Thursday, Michigan publisher Principia Media said the hijacker, known as D.B. Cooper, was former military paratrooper and intelligence operative Walter R. Recca. The company said it worked with Recca's best friend, Carl Laurin, in compiling the evidence.</p> <p>While the publisher did not disclose whether Recca was still alive, an obituary online lists a man with the identical name who lived in Oscada, Mich., as having died in 2014 at the age of 80.</p>

"Evidence, including almost-daily discussions over a 14-year period and 3+ hours of audio recordings featuring the skyjacker, was compiled by Reca's best friend. It was then analyzed by a Certified Fraud Examiner and forensic linguist," the publisher said in a news release. "The audio recordings, created in 2008, include Reca discussing skyjacking details that were not known to the public prior to the FBI's information release in 2015."

The publishing company worked with Laurin for the memoir "D.B. Cooper & Me: A Criminal, A Spy, My Best Friend."

Vern Jones, CEO of Principia, talked about recordings that Laurin claimed were actual recordings of Reca speaking about the heist. Jones, a self-proclaimed skeptic at the start of the investigation, said that the evidence was "overwhelming."

"D.B. Cooper & Me: A Criminal, A Spy, My Best Friend", which claims Cooper was actually Walter "Walt" Reca from Michigan.

"We listened in Walter's own words. We heard him talk about his motivations for the hijacking. (He) talked about the jump itself, what happened in the plane. Where he landed. How he got home -- and most importantly, why he wasn't caught."

Jones played one of the audio clips that described how Reca supposedly snuck the ransom note on the plane.

"Now where did you carry your note?" Laurin can be heard asking. "The inside pockets of the suit," Reca replied. Laurin then asks what the note was about, to which Reca abruptly replies "I can't remember right there, this is a hijack and I've got explosives."

The rest of the audio clip describes the moments inside the plane when Reca was preparing to jump.

In addition to the tapes, Jones said they reviewed letters, official documents, photos and even a typed confession, all of which seem to corroborate Laurin's theory that "Walter Reca is the real D.B. Cooper."

Jones also seemed to hint that the discrepancies between Principia's investigation and the FBI's investigation might not have been accidental. "The hijacking," he said "was just the beginning of the story."

He detailed a supposed meeting between Reca and "two men in hard hats" two months after the heist where he was asked by these two unknown men if he was prepared to go to "prison." Reca was reportedly hired by them, though it is unclear if the two men Jones talked about were FBI agents.

Laurin himself spoke at the press conference and described Reca as a daredevil "who always wanted to be in the CIA."

"I always got the feeling that when he jumped with our team, the Michigan parachute team, it was a means of survival, not really for the thrill," Laurin said. "He was looking for something far beyond that."

After the skyjacking, Reca later became a high-level covert intelligence operative, according to the publishing company.

Reca possessed skills to survive jumping out of the plane because he was on the Michigan Parachute Team, according to the publisher. He attended the team reunion in 2000 and was pictured in a photo released by the publisher.

Despite the claims of the publishing company, the FBI has never ruled out the possibility that the hijacker was killed in the jump -- which took place during a rainstorm at night, over rough, wooded terrain. The

	<p>hijacker's clothing and footwear were also unsuitable for a rough landing.</p> <p>Many investigators have come forward with their theories for who the infamous hijacker may be. Earlier this year, the leader of the private investigative team who has spent years trying to crack the D.B. Cooper hijacking case claimed he believes the mysterious criminal was a CIA operative whose identity has been covered up by federal agents.</p> <p>Thomas Colbert, a documentary filmmaker who helped put together the 40-member team, said in January his team made the connection from work a code breaker uncovered in each of five letters allegedly sent by Cooper.</p> <p>Since last January, the FBI has released more than 3,000 documents to Colbert's team investigating the hijacking. The FBI said in court papers that it has more than 71,000 documents that may be responsive to Colbert's lawsuit.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Air Force base: missing machine gun
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/05/18/air-force-base-searches-for-missing-machine-gun-shortly-after-losing-grenades.html
GIST	<p>Authorities at a North Dakota on Friday are searching for an M-240 machine gun that has been unaccounted for since Wednesday, officials said.</p> <p>The 7.62mm caliber weapon was missing from the Minot Air Force Base, The Minot Daily News reported.</p> <p>The Air Force Global Strike Command directed an immediate inventory search of weapons in the 5th Bomb Wing and 91st Missile Wing, the report said.</p> <p>Earlier this month, a container of grenades fell off a Humvee on a Native American reservation.</p> <p>The Air Force sent 100 airmen to walk the entire six-mile route where the military explosives were likely lost, The Washington Post reported, citing a statement from the local Mountrail County sheriff.</p> <p>The military has offered a \$5,000 reward for information leading to the recovery of the container with the ammunition, The Minot Daily News reported.</p> <p>Kenneth Halvorson, the Mountrail County sheriff, said in a statement to The Post that the missing ammunition is a belt of linked grenades for the MK 19 automatic grenade launcher.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 Ozone-destroying emissions on rise
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/16/world/ozone-emissions-cfc-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Banned chemicals which can cause holes in the ozone layer are on the rise, according to a new report, and no one knows who the culprit is.</p> <p>The hunt is now on to find and stop the mysterious source of the emissions, which scientists believe are emanating from somewhere inside of east Asia.</p> <p>Chlorofluorocarbons, or CFCs, used to be common in refrigerators, aerosol cans and dry cleaning chemicals. But they were banned under the Montreal Protocol of 1987, after it was discovered they contributed to the creation of a giant hole in the ozone layer which forms over Antarctica each September.</p> <p>The ozone layer, a fragile shield of gas, protects animal and plant life on Earth from powerful UV rays.</p>

When the ozone layer is weakened, more UV rays can get through and affect humans, making them prone to skin cancer, cataracts and other diseases. There also may be consequences for plant life, including lower crop yields and disruptions in the ocean's food chain.

After concerted global action, the hole in the ozone layer was gradually beginning to mend, but scientists at the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) have discovered a sharp rise in CFCs from an unknown source.

"We're raising a flag to the global community to say, 'This is what's going on, and it is taking us away from timely recovery of the ozone layer,'" NOAA scientist Stephen Montzka, the study's lead author, said in a statement.

"Further work is needed to figure out exactly why emissions of CFC-11 are increasing, and if something can be done about it soon," added Montzka.

The team said the emissions were most likely due to new, unreported production from an unidentified source in East Asia. It is the first time levels of one of the three most abundant, long-lived CFCs has increased for a sustained period since the late 1980s.

"In the end, we concluded that it's most likely that someone may be producing the CFC-11 that's escaping to the atmosphere," he said.

"We don't know why they might be doing that and if it is being made for some specific purpose, or inadvertently as a side product of some other chemical process."

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HEADLINE	05/17 NASA: Earth in major hydrologic change
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/nasa-reveals-major-changes-in-water-availability-worldwide/
GIST	<p>Earth has experienced significant shifts in freshwater distribution across the globe thanks to climate change, water management and natural cycles, among other factors, according to a NASA study.</p> <p>"What we are witnessing is major hydrologic change," said Jay Famiglietti of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California. "We see a distinctive pattern of the wetland areas of the world getting wetter -- those are the high latitudes and the tropics -- and the dry areas in between getting dryer. Embedded within the dry areas we see multiple hotspots resulting from groundwater depletion."</p> <p>Researchers tracked global freshwater trends in nearly three dozen regions worldwide using 14 years of data and imagery from the Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment (GRACE) mission, which consists of two spacecrafts orbiting Earth. They analyzed the information alongside irrigation maps, precipitation data from the Global Precipitation Climatology Project, Landsat imagery from the NASA/U.S. Geological Survey and published reports of human activity related to agriculture, mining and reservoir operations, according to a news release.</p> <p>The findings of the first-of-its-kind study were published Wednesday in Nature, a scientific journal.</p> <p>"This is the first time that we've used observations from multiple satellites in a thorough assessment of how freshwater availability is changing, everywhere on Earth," Matt Rodell of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, said in the news release.</p> <p>"A key goal was to distinguish shifts in terrestrial water storage caused by natural variability -- wet periods and dry periods associated with El Niño and La Niña, for example -- from trends related to climate change or human impacts, like pumping groundwater out of an aquifer faster than it is replenished," he said.</p> <p>In some regions, like those with melting alpine glaciers and ice sheets, climate change is a clear driver of</p>

	<p>water loss, according to Famiglietti.</p> <p>Agricultural practices also have a big impact. Pumping groundwater for agriculture significantly contributed to freshwater depletion around the world during the period studied, which could explain a decline in freshwater that was observed in Saudi Arabia, for example.</p> <p>Levels of groundwater are also impacted by drought cycles and persistent rain, according to NASA.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 Rare US-France joint naval exercises
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-french-joint-naval-exercises-uss-george-hw-bush/
GIST	<p>The U.S. Navy is nearing the end of a first-of-its-kind training mission.</p> <p>For more than a week, about 300 French Navy members have been living and training on an American aircraft carrier, the USS George H.W. Bush, off the East Coast. It marks the first time U.S. and French pilots, mechanics and sailors all lived side-by-side on a carrier, and CBS News correspondent Jan Crawford and her team were there to see how the mission all came together.</p> <p>We reached the USS George H.W. Bush like the Navy does – from the sky, going from 150 mph to a dead stop in less than two seconds on another busy day of flight operations.</p> <p>The mission? Joint training exercises with a key ally, France.</p> <p>Holding upwards of 5,000 people, the carrier has everything you'd need – cafeterias, a store, gyms, a post office and a chapel.</p> <p>Rear Adm. Stephen Evans commands the Bush and all the ship personnel in its carrier strike group.</p> <p>"Every day I'm in awe of this. I mean, you think about what goes into this. This is a city... a city with an airfield on top of it," Evans said. "The life blood that runs through it are these young men and women."</p> <p>For the French visitors, it's a chance to sharpen their skills with the best, while working on a runway moving through the ocean at more than 30 mph.</p> <p>"This experience is awesome, right?" French commander Stephane said. "It's a kind of brotherhood. ... We do the same job. We did many operations together."</p> <p>Everyone is performing key roles in the ships tower, with the air officer – or air boss – controlling the airspace. On the flight deck, the landing signal officers communicate with pilots as they come in for landing, touching down at the right moment, so a hook on the tail of the plane snags a wire across the flight deck.</p> <p>The engineering marvel is programmed below deck where the ship's hydraulic system slows the plane down. With takeoffs and landings happening at the same time day and night, it feels like organized chaos and keeping it all organized is the aircraft handling officer, Lt. Cmdr. Winston Cotterell. He used what he called a "ouiji board" to depict what is going on the flight deck.</p> <p>"There are computers that do this too," Crawford said.</p> <p>"This one doesn't freeze up. That one will freeze up from time to time, and sometime the electronic will go down and shut off, and I don't have time to mess with that," Cotterell said.</p> <p>Overseeing all these operations is the ship's Capt. Sean Bailey.</p>

"It's important from the perspective of demonstrating support for our allies. At the same time, it sends a signal to the world that we're strong partners, hand-in-hand," Bailey said.

The U.S. has 11 carriers more than any other nation. The French have only one, the Charles de Gaulle. That ship is undergoing extensive maintenance. While that's taking place, training exercises like this one help our allies stay prepared for anything in an increasingly chaotic world.

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HEADLINE	05/17 Pee in the pool? That's not all
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/hard-kill-germs-may-be-lurking-your-hotel-pool-cdc-n875101
GIST	<p>A hard-to-kill germ called Cryptosporidium can resist the chlorine disinfectant in swimming pools and is a leading cause of outbreaks linked to pools, federal health officials said Thursday.</p> <p>Hotel swimming pools and hot tubs can be a major source of these outbreaks, the Centers for Disease control and Prevention said.</p> <p>A third of the disease outbreaks traced to pools between 2000 and 2014 started in hotel pools and hot tubs, CDC said.</p> <p>And many of those cases were caused by Cryptosporidium, a parasite that causes diarrhea, as well as the bacteria that cause Legionnaire's disease and a second bacteria called Pseudomonas.</p> <p>Cryptosporidium, or crypto for short, caused 58 percent of outbreaks in which a germ could be identified, and 89 percent of the illnesses, the CDC said.</p> <p>"Most germs are killed within minutes by the amount of chlorine that CDC recommends and that is required by state and local governments," said Michele Hlavsa, chief of the CDC's Healthy Swimming Program.</p> <p>"Crypto can survive for seven or more days. It takes a lot of chlorine, for a lot of time, to kill crypto."</p> <p>And even though crypto is spread by a diarrheal incident — and yes, that's what you think it is — it can be hard to see that happen in a pool full of kids.</p> <p>"Diarrhea caused by crypto can be pretty watery so it can be pretty stealthy," Hlavsa said.</p> <p>Parents shouldn't let kids go into pools if they've had diarrhea recently, and babies need even closer watching. If there is a diarrheal incident, the pool operator is supposed to clear the pool and flush it with extremely high levels of chlorine or bromine to kill the parasite.</p> <p>That evidently does not always happen.</p> <p>Hlavsa's team at CDC went through reports about 493 outbreaks of disease that could be linked to swimming pools between 2000 and 2014.</p> <p>They made a lot of people sick: more than 27,000 illnesses. Eight people died.</p> <p>More than half of the cases were caused by crypto, which infects people when they swallow contaminated pool water. Another 16 percent were caused by Legionella bacteria, which are usually inhaled in water spray.</p> <p>Pseudomonas caused 13 percent of illnesses, and also causes folliculitis or "hot tub rash" and otitis externa or "swimmers' ear".</p>

“Hotels were the leading setting, associated with 157 (32 percent) of the 493 outbreaks,” the CDC team reported.

Chlorine is very effective at killing germs if it’s kept at the right levels, and if the pH of the pool is kept at the proper level for the disinfectant to work.

In 2013, for example, the CDC said 20 percent of inspections of public hot tubs and spas showed they did not have enough disinfectant.

And bacteria can grow into mats called biofilms, which then resist the effects of chlorine and other disinfectants. These slimy biofilms typically have to be scrubbed off.

Hotel pools are probably not much different from any other public pool, Hlavsa said.

“We underestimate what it takes to properly operate a pool, whether it is a hotel pool or a water park pool,” she said.

A properly trained operator has to be on hand to make sure chlorine or bromine concentrations and pH levels are where they should be, and should be on the lookout for poop incidents — even the hard-to-see kind — so they can immediately clear and disinfect the pool.

WHY SHOWERING IS SO IMPORTANT

It also helps to enforce the rules about showering.

Proper showering can not only remove residual fecal matter that could get into a pool, but it takes away the oil, sweat and dirt that react with chlorine and make it less effective.

“It uses up the chlorine that would actually kill germs,” Hlavsa said.

“The problem with peeing in the pool and the problem with not showering before you go into the pool is that urine and sweat and dirt combine with chlorine in the water.”

Urine is not sterile, contrary to popular belief. “Pee can interact with chlorine, Hlavsa said.

In fact, that’s what makes people’s eyes sting after swimming. It’s not the chlorine. It’s urine.

“It’s really, really, really important to shower and not to pee in the pool,” Hlavsa said.

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HEADLINE	05/17 Hot streak: 400 warmer than avg. months
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/05/17/global-warming-april-400th-consecutive-warm-month/618484002/
GIST	<p>It was December 1984, and President Reagan had just been elected to his second term, Dynasty was the top show on TV and Madonna's Like a Virgin topped the musical charts.</p> <p>It was also the last time the Earth had a cooler-than-average month.</p> <p>Last month marked the planet's 400th consecutive month with above-average temperatures, federal scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced Thursday.</p> <p>The cause for the streak? Unquestionably, it's climate change, caused by humanity's burning of fossil fuels.</p>

"We live in and share a world that is unequivocally, appreciably and consequentially warmer than just a few decades ago, and our world continues to warm," said NOAA climate scientist Deke Arndt. "Speeding by a '400' sign only underscores that, but it does not prove anything new."

Climate scientists use the 20th-century average as a benchmark for global temperature measurements. That's because it's fixed in time, allowing for consistent "goal posts" when reviewing climate data. It's also a sufficiently long period to include several cycles of climate variability.

"The thing that really matters is that, by whatever metric, we've spent every month for several decades on the warm side of any reasonable baseline," Arndt said.

NOAA's analysis found last month was the 3rd-warmest April on record globally. The unusual heat was most noteworthy in Europe, which had its warmest April on record, and Australia, which had its second-warmest.

Portions of Asia also experienced some extreme heat: In southern Pakistan, the town of Nawabshah soared to a scalding 122.4 degrees on April 30, which may have been the warmest April temperature on record for the globe, according to Meteo France.

Argentina also had its warmest April since national records began there in 1961.

North America was the one part of the world that didn't get in on the heat parade. Last month, the average U.S. temperature was 48.9 degrees, 2.2 degrees below average, "making it the 13th-coldest April on record and the coldest since 1997," NOAA said.

For the year-to-date, the Earth is seeing its 5th-warmest start to the year.

A separate analysis of global temperature data from NASA also found last month was the third-warmest April on record.

Another milestone was reached in April, also related to the number "400": Carbon dioxide — the gas scientists say is most responsible for global warming — reached its highest level in recorded history at 410 parts per million.

This amount is highest in at least the past 800,000 years, according to the Scripps Institute of Oceanography.

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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	05/17 Vancouver BC bust violent contract gang
SOURCE	https://globalnews.ca/news/4215924/violent-lower-mainland-contract-gang-take-down/
GIST	<p>A “violent crime group” whose leader was 21 years old has been taken down by the Vancouver Police Department and the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit of B.C. (CFSEU-BC).</p> <p>Vancouver police say the gang, known as the Gill Group, was hired for “contract work.” Officials say they mostly targeted other gang members but were also hired by bigger gangs to commit crime.</p> <p>The investigation led to the seizure of four guns, seven arrests and the recommendation of 20 criminal charges. Some of the charges include conspiracy to commit murder, possession of a loaded restricted firearm, and extortion.</p> <p>Two of the people charged were 17 years old at the time of offences.</p>

“This violent crime group was comprised of several individuals including its leader, Taqdir Gill,” said Supt. Mike Porteous with the VPD. “We are committed to aggressively targeting people who pose the most risk to our communities, and we will continue to work relentlessly with other partner agencies, like CFSEU-BC.”

The gang is said to have been connected to serious crime and shootings across Metro Vancouver since last summer.

Seven arrests have been made and the following charges have been approved by Crown Counsel:

1. Taqdir Gill, 21 years old, has been charged with conspiracy to commit murder, conspiracy to commit arson, conspiracy to discharge a firearm, possession of a loaded restricted firearm, occupy a vehicle knowing a firearm is present, and extortion.
2. Hitkaran Johal, 19 years old, has been charged with conspiracy to commit murder and conspiracy to commit arson.
3. Simrat Lally, 20 years old, has been charged with conspiracy to discharge a firearm, conspiracy to commit arson, occupying a vehicle knowing a firearm is present, and two counts of possessing a firearm without a license/registration.
4. Walta Abay, 23 years old, has been charged with conspiracy to commit murder, possession of a loaded restricted firearm, and occupying a vehicle knowing a firearm is present.
5. Pawandeep Chopra, 20 years old, has been charged with possession of a loaded restricted firearm.
6. A youth, 17 years old at the time of offence, has been charged with conspiracy to discharge a firearm, possess a firearm without a license/registration, and occupy a vehicle knowing a firearm is present.
7. A youth, 17 years old at the time of offence, has been charged with conspiracy to commit arson.

Arrests were made last October. Only some of the members remain behind bars, including the group’s leader.

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HEADLINE	05/17 US: \$5M reward for El Chapo associate
SOURCE	https://mexiconewsdaily.com/news/us-offers-us-5-million-reward-for-chapo-associate/
GIST	<p>The United States has posted a US \$5-million reward for any information regarding the whereabouts of Adelmo Niebla Gómez, formerly a close collaborator of ex-Sinaloa Cartel boss Joaquín Guzmán Loera.</p> <p>According to U.S. investigators, Niebla, also known as El G3, is the leader of a faction within the Sinaloa Cartel and responsible for smuggling hundreds of thousands of kilograms of marijuana and thousands of kilograms of methamphetamine, cocaine and heroin into the country.</p> <p>Niebla’s operations are believed to run both ways across the border. U.S. authorities suspect him of transporting hundreds of millions of dollars in drug proceeds in the form of cash and the exportation of weapons from the United States into Mexico.</p> <p>“This \$5-million reward offer demonstrates the seriousness of U.S. intentions to track down this fugitive,” said the Department of State.</p> <p>Niebla was arrested in Mexico in 2012 but in early 2014 he and two accomplices drew on the cartel’s playbook and escaped from a prison in Culiacán, Sinaloa, through a 400-meter tunnel 10 meters underground.</p> <p>Investigations found that the tunnel led directly to the maximum security area inside the penitentiary.</p> <p>In Mexico, Niebla is accused of masterminding drug trafficking in an area that encompasses the northern states of Sonora, Baja California, Durango and Sinaloa.</p>

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HEADLINE	05/18 Malaysia: 72 suitcases w/cash seized
SOURCE	http://time.com/5281927/malaysia-corruption-probe-najib-razak-cash/
GIST	<p>(KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia) — Malaysian police on Friday confiscated 284 designer handbags and 72 suitcases containing cash, jewelry and other valuables as part of a corruption and money-laundering investigation into former Prime Minister Najib Razak.</p> <p>Commercial crime chief Amar Singh said the valuables were seized in a search that began late Thursday at apartments linked to Najib at an upscale condominium in Kuala Lumpur.</p> <p>Singh said the seizure was part of investigations into a corruption scandal at the 1MDB state fund, which is also being probed by the U.S. and other countries.</p> <p>U.S. investigators say Najib’s associates stole and laundered \$4.5 billion from the fund, some of which landed in Najib’s bank account, and that \$23 million was used to buy a pink diamond necklace for his wife. Najib, whose coalition was ousted in a stunning election defeat last week, denies any wrongdoing.</p> <p>Television stations showed footage of police carting away orange boxes containing handbags as well as luggage of various sizes from the condominium.</p> <p>Singh said the seizure included Birkin Hermes bags, cash in various currencies, watches and a “big amount” of jewelry. Najib’s wife, Rosmah Mansor, is known in Malaysia for her love for Birkin bags, which luxury publications say cost from \$12,000 to more than \$200,000.</p> <p>Singh declined to say who the apartments belonged to but that the “search was conducted in relevance to our 1MDB investigations.”</p> <p>He said police also conducted simultaneous raids at several other locations including Najib’s family house, his former office as prime minister and an official residence. Documents related to 1MDB were seized from the office and police are still trying to crack open a safe in Najib’s house, he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 Massive backlog of rape kits
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/990407/rape-kits-washington-backlog/
GIST	<p>Thousands of rape kits have gone untested in Washington state for years. While there has been some progress speeding up the tests, it’s still slow going.</p> <p>When someone reports a rape, they often end up at a hospital where a rape kit is used to collect evidence, including potential DNA of the attacker. Leah Griffin had to go through it after she was raped in Seattle in 2014.</p> <p>“That was a six-hour procedure and it’s six hours of invasion and embarrassment, and to then find out that my kit was not even tested as part of the investigation was infuriating,” she said. “To know that I had sat through something so incredibly probing and invasive and humiliating ... for nothing.”</p> <p>Backlog of rape kits</p> <p>Griffen is part of the legislative sexual assault task force formed by state Representative’s Gina McCabe and Tina Orwall. Orwall says they realized there was a problem with rape kits not being tested.</p> <p>“I had been touring evidence rooms and had seen these white boxes stacked to the ceiling and asked what</p>

they were and found out they were sexual assault kits and many were not tested. And we started passing legislation to address the issues,” Orwall said.

Orwall says that included 2015 legislation, making it mandatory for all police agencies to submit every rape kit for testing.

But just how many had gone untested wasn't clear. Captain Monica Alexander with the Washington State Patrol Crime Lab said they reached out to police agencies across the state to get an idea of how many kits were headed to the labs, and ended up with an estimate of about 6,000. That was a few years ago. But Alexander says that number didn't hold.

“As time went on there were other agencies that hadn't notified us that they had kits that said hey we also have kits,” Alexander said. “At this time we know it's more than 6,000 but we don't know how much more. We're estimating somewhere between 8000 and 10,000.”

A clearer picture is expected in about six months when a Sexual Assault Initiative Team out of the state attorney general's office completes a statewide inventory of backlogged rape kits.

Sexual Assault Initiative Team

The team was formed a few weeks ago with money from a \$3 million Justice Department grant — the attorney general's office awarded it last year.

Orwall says half of that money will be used for testing the backlog of rape kits, some of which are decades old.

“And, of course, each of those kits represents a survivor whose voice wasn't heard and didn't get justice of what happened, and potentially some very dangerous offenders still on the street,” Orwall said. “I bet they assumed they were tested and we let them down as a state.”

Legislative bills out of the sexual assault task force did not pass last session. They aimed to help pay for testing the backlogged rape kits. At the time, there was money in the budget for seven new scientists at the state crime lab to focus on the backlog.

But Captain Alexander at the lab says hiring new scientists — and keeping them — is also a challenge.

“The hard part is actually trying to get them in and keeping them because as we hire them, and we have some of the best training in the United States bar none ... but we don't have some of the best pay,” Alexander said. “You get them trained and everybody goes ‘Wow, what great people I can save money on. I just hire them, they're already trained, they know how to do DNA testing.’”

Three to five years

The state lab processes all the new rape kits and sends the old ones to one private lab. Alexander says that only shaves some of the processing time off, which she says is currently about six months for a priority case.

“When we outsource them we still have work to do, so when they come back our scientists basically have to verify the work from the lab,” Alexander said. “It might take a little less time but it's still work.”

Right now, Alexander estimates it could take 3-5 years to get through the backlog of test kits and new rape kits are taking around six months on priority rush, which still isn't always soon enough.

Tumwater Police arrested a man on suspicion of rape in January only to find out he was accused in another rape in July of last year. The results of the first rape kit were rushed and took about six months. The results came in one day before the man was accused of raping the second woman.

	<p>Orwall says hopes to improve on that turnaround time in the upcoming legislative session.</p> <p>“One of the things we’re looking at with our state lab is there’s a thing called a ‘high throughput lab’ which Ohio does,” Orwall said. “Which allows them to process about five times as many kits as you’re doing right now and we want to look at maybe proposing that next session.”</p> <p>Ohio had a backlog of 14,000 rape kits, but state leaders announced in February they had cleared the backlog with turnaround times averaging a couple of weeks rather than months, and in some rush cases as short as eight hours.</p> <p>Step in the right direction</p> <p>Griffen, who works with Orwall and McCabe on the legislative sexual assault task force, says clearing the backlog has to be a top priority for the Legislature.</p> <p>“Because of every year we don’t pass a bill and every year we don’t fund the testing of these backlogged rape kits is a year where we run up against more statutes of limitation,” Griffen said. “So, we could get to a point where we have not gotten these kits tested, you test them, find out there’s a serial rapist but now we can’t convict him because the statute of limitations has run up.”</p> <p>Captain Alexander at the state lab says they’ve been able to upload 247 cases into CODIS — the federal criminal DNA database – and of those, 71 have come back with hits.</p> <p>One important step in the right direction is a new statewide tracking system for rape kits. Washington will be the first state in the country to have the system when it is fully implemented, allowing hospitals and law enforcement and rape survivors to track their rape kits. A pilot is already up and running in around a dozen counties, it is expected to be implemented statewide in October.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 Everett police launch anti-gang efforts
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/05/17/everett-gang-related-offenses-down-60-as-city-puts-together-a-gang-unit/
GIST	<p>EVERETT, Wash. – It’s no secret our area has a growing gang problem. We’re seeing it from Snohomish to King to Pierce counties. To stop the violent crimes, the Everett Police Department is working on putting together a gang unit.</p> <p>When you compare the first five months of this year compared to last year, gang-related offenses are down 60%, shootings city-wide are down 37%, and drive-by shootings are down 85%.</p> <p>But Everett’s Police Chief Dan Templeman says he’s bracing for the summer months when shootings and other crimes tend to spike. That's why the city needs a gang unit, he says.</p> <p>“His ability to look at a graffiti tag and quickly identify what gang that’s affiliated with and who might’ve done that takes quite a bit of time,” Templeman said of one dedicated gang detective in Everett.</p> <p>Now, the city is looking to get a full unit with five officers and one sergeant.</p> <p>“My focus is on public safety and gang violence. We’re seeing a real uptick and it's frightening, the age of the kids we’re seeing,” Everett Mayor Cassie Franklin said in January.</p> <p>The mayor’s directive in January kicked the police department’s anti-gang efforts into high gear.</p> <p>“Just because we don’t have a stand-alone gang unit doesn’t mean we haven’t been working on this issue,”</p>

	<p>Templeman said.</p> <p>For the past eight months, the department has been doing emphasis patrols on West Casino Road, which is an area plagued by gang violence.</p> <p>Deadly gang-related shootings allegedly committed by young teenagers against other teens. While the number of gang members seems to be growing, the number of police officers is flatlining due to retirements. And staffing concerns make it hard to have enough officers to put together a gang unit.</p> <p>“Staffing is an issue you have to look at. You have to look at equipment and outfitting. You have to look at budget and how that impacts the budget,” said Templeman.</p> <p>Once you get the right detectives, understanding gangs is a science in itself.</p> <p>“We would send them off to training on gangs, identification of gangs, graffiti, surveillance-type training,” said Templeman.</p> <p>By early August, the police chief plans to have at least a partial unit in place.</p> <p>“Maybe we start with two officers and a sergeant,” said Templeman.</p> <p>The chief says drive-by shootings and murders are just the symptoms.</p> <p>“Without treating the disease or the cause, this unit is just going to continue to respond and make arrests and respond and make arrests,” said Templeman.</p> <p>That’s why he says at least one member of the gang unit will solely focus on education and prevention.</p> <p>A gang unit isn’t the only priority of the Everett Police Department. They’re also putting extra resources toward the city’s opioid epidemic and homeless problems.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Gunman arrested at Fla. Trump resort
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/05/18/gunman-arrested-at-trump-resort-in-florida-after-opening-fire-yelling-about-president.html
GIST	<p>A man who police say was “yelling and spewing some information about President Trump” was arrested early Friday after exchanging gunfire with officers in the lobby of a hotel at a sprawling golf resort that the president owns near Miami.</p> <p>Yellow caution tape was seen stretched across the main gate of the Trump National Doral Golf Club Friday morning following the overnight rampage, in which the shooter reportedly burst into the property for unknown reasons and draped an American flag over a lobby counter while spraying bullets.</p> <p>"He was yelling and spewing some information about President Trump and that's what we know so far," Miami-Dade Police Director Juan Perez said. "And he had an American flag that he did drape over the counter."</p> <p>The gunman – who has not yet been identified – eventually was “neutralized” in a shootout with police.</p> <p>The condition of the male suspect, who was taken into a local hospital after being brought into custody, is unknown. Perez also said a Doral officer received an unspecified injury.</p> <p>The Secret Service says it is on scene and helping in the investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/18 Vegas: suspect in mall incident arrested
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/17/us/las-vegas-mall-incident/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Las Vegas police arrested a suspect after reports of a masked person carrying a gun prompted an evacuation Thursday night at the Boulevard shopping mall, a law enforcement official said.</p> <p>Deputy Chief Chris Jones said they obtained a video showing an armed person and evacuated the mall. No shots were fired and no one was injured, he said.</p> <p>Boulevard mall manager Timo Kuusela said the incident started after reports that a man possibly carrying an assault weapon was spotted in the mall.</p> <p>Multiple police cars and ambulances surrounded the mall as authorities conducted several searches.</p> <p>"Police received a call and responded to the mall and evacuated the premises," Kuusela said.</p> <p>At the time of the search, police said no person was located with a gun.</p> <p>"Officers are clearing the mall as a precaution but at this point it all appears unfounded," the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department said.</p> <p>A few hours later, a law enforcement official familiar with the investigation told CNN a suspect had been arrested, but did not provide additional details.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 Bandidos leaders convicted in shootout
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/17/us/texas-biker-gang-shootout-convictions/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Three years after the deadly biker gang shootout in the parking lot of a Twin Peaks restaurant in Waco, Texas, the top two leaders of the Bandidos motorcycle club were found guilty on 13 federal charges.</p> <p>Bandidos National President Jeffrey Pike, 62, and Vice President Xavier Portillo, 58, were convicted Thursday by a jury in San Antonio after a nearly three-month trial.</p> <p>Jurors convicted the leaders of the motorcycle organization of racketeering, drug trafficking, conspiracy to commit murder and extortion charges. The men face up to life in prison and will be sentenced later this year.</p> <p>Prosecutors have dismissed dozens of criminal cases against other bikers who were at the deadly Twin Peaks shootout in May 2015.</p> <p>McLennan District Attorney Abel Reyna decided hours after the shootout to round up all the bikers and charge them with the same criminal count of engaging in organized criminal activity. But that strategy now seems to be unraveling.</p> <p>Since February, the district attorney has dismissed criminal charges against 124 bikers. On May 9, a McLennan grand jury re-indicted 25 bikers who were at the shootout.</p> <p>Among the new indictments were three murder charges against Bandidos bikers, as well as charges of tampering with evidence and engaging in first- and second-degree riot.</p> <p>The federal investigation into the Bandidos leadership was not part of the Waco shootout investigation.</p>

	<p>The Federal Bureau of Investigation was already working with the Drug Enforcement Agency, building its case against the outlaw motorcycle gang.</p> <p>The Twin Peaks shootout was the violent ending to a boiling feud between the Bandidos and the Cossacks biker clubs. Cossacks bikers have told CNN that they came to the Twin Peaks to make peace. The Bandidos say the Cossacks showed up in massive numbers that morning to ambush them.</p> <p>Nine people were killed and dozens more injured and wounded on that Sunday morning. Investigators carried out an unprecedented roundup and charged 177 bikers.</p> <p>The handling of the Waco shootout cases has been highly controversial and described as "embarrassing" and a "frontal assault" on the biker's rights.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 DOJ ends 'administrative closure' cases
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration/u-s-ends-practice-that-gave-some-immigrants-reprieves-from-deportation-idUSKCN1IJ00N
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (Reuters) - U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions on Thursday barred immigration judges from a once-common practice of shelving deportation cases involving some immigrants with deep ties to the United States.</p> <p>The practice known as administrative closure allowed judges to clear low-priority cases off their dockets, effectively letting some immigrants remain indefinitely in the United States despite their lack of legal status.</p> <p>Under President Barack Obama there had been an effort to administratively close certain cases as a way of allowing judges to focus on higher-priority matters and reduce the immigration court backlog. More than 200,000 cases were closed during the last six years of his presidency.</p> <p>The closures were routinely used for people without criminal backgrounds who had lived for many years in the United States, often with U.S. citizen children or spouses. In many cases, the immigrants became eligible for work permits.</p> <p>The administration of President Donald Trump has taken a sharply different tack on immigration, declaring that all those in the country illegally, whether or not they pose a threat to public safety, are subject to deportation.</p> <p>Since immigration courts fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice, the attorney general can issue opinions in immigration cases to establish legal precedent for judges across the country and the Board of Immigration Appeals.</p> <p>On Thursday, Sessions issued such an order in a case in which a judge had granted administrative closure for an unaccompanied minor from Guatemala.</p> <p>Before Sessions' ruling, the government or an immigrant could ask a judge to close a case. The attorney general ruled that judges "do not have the general authority to suspend indefinitely immigration proceedings by administrative closure." He said exceptions could be made in some cases, including when an immigrant has certain forms of legal status pending.</p> <p>Sessions had already quietly been instituting the policy even before this announcement. Reuters reported last June that government prosecutors were moving to put cases that had been previously closed back on the court calendar.</p> <p>Sessions acknowledged in the order, however, that recalendaring all cases that had been closed "would</p>

	likely overwhelm the immigration courts.” Immigration attorneys and advocates quickly criticized Sessions’ decision. The ruling was intended “to reduce immigration judges to deportation machines,” said Chuck Roth of the National Immigrant Justice Center.
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HEADLINE	05/17 Brazil: 251 arrests in child porn raids
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/police-seize-child-porn-widespread-brazil-raids-55236025?
GIST	<p>Brazilian police arrested more than 250 people Thursday as they executed hundreds of search and seizure warrants for child pornography in the largest operation of its kind in the Latin American country.</p> <p>Thousands of police fanned out in 24 states and the federal district to serve more than 500 warrants, the Ministry of Public Security said. During the searches, police detained people they said were in possession of or were sharing child pornography. By evening, 251 people had been taken into custody.</p> <p>Public Security Minister Raul Jungmann said the operation was the largest involving civil police in Brazil's history.</p> <p>"This is without a doubt one of the most reprehensible, one of the most intolerable crimes against our children and adolescents," he said at a news conference. "Because of this, within the law, we will be unrelenting in combatting it. We will not stop here."</p> <p>Investigators analyzed more than 1 million files in order to identify the targets of Thursday's operation, Jungmann said. Last year, American authorities shared with Brazilian investigators tools and methods for identifying such files online, according to Carlos Afonso Goncalves, the director of intelligence at the National Secretariat of Public Security.</p> <p>The targets of the investigation all had "considerable quantities" of electronic files containing images of child pornography in their possession, said Alessandro Barreto, coordinator of the cybercrimes lab at the secretariat. The smallest number of downloaded files was 150.</p>
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HEADLINE	05/17 Arrest in Calif. office bldg. explosion
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/man-arrested-allegedly-unregistered-destructive-device-amid-investigation/story?id=55230119
GIST	<p>A Southern California man has been arrested on suspicion of having an unregistered destructive device amid the investigation into the explosion that killed his ex-girlfriend at the day spa she owned, according to the FBI and a criminal complaint.</p> <p>But Stephen Beal, 59, has not been charged in connection with the Tuesday explosion that killed his ex, 48-year-old Ildiko Krajnyak, who was also his business partner, and injured three people, federal authorities cautioned.</p> <p>Inside the Aliso Viejo, California, crime scene, agents said they found items consistent with an explosive device: a 9-volt battery, a cellphone, loose wires melted material that appeared to be duct tape, according to the criminal complaint against Beal.</p> <p>Injured victims saw Krajnyak pick up a box in a pile of mail and open it, after which it exploded, according to the complaint.</p>

During the investigation into the explosion, officials served a search warrant at Beal's Long Beach, California, home. Multiple explosive materials were found in Beal's home, including at least three containers of black powder, a 7-foot-tall rocket, rocket-making equipment, two containers of potassium perchlorate -- used as a precursor -- and two containers of red gum, which is used as fuel and binder in fireworks, according to the complaint.

Altogether, 130 pounds of explosives/precursor material were found in his home, more of which was discovered in the garage, the complaint states. Beal admitted to owning the items, claiming to be a model rocket hobbyist. But, he has allegedly not pursued that hobby since 2004, according to the court document.

Beal appeared to have rented space in the building with Krajnyak, according to the criminal complaint. The pair met in 2016 through an online dating service, according to the complaint. They began dating and then opened the spa together, the complaint states.

While Beal and Krajnyak only dated for a year and a half, they remained business partners, according to the complaint. Beal paid the rent -- \$1,500 per month -- and half of the spa's operating costs, the complaint states. Some months, Beal would have to loan Krajnyak money to cover all of the costs, and sometimes she would make enough to cover the costs, according to the complaint.

The spa was originally located in a different building and relocated to its current building a few months ago, the complaint states.

Their relationship allegedly became strained due to financial issues and disputes over the exclusivity of the relationship, the complaint states.

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	04/26 Seattle's Fire Station 5 reopens
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/seattles-biggest-fireboat-is-back-at-its-dock-as-fire-station-5-reopens/
GIST	<p>You may have caught a glimpse of Seattle's largest fireboat, the 108-foot Leschi, when it shoots its water cannons during spring and summer drills on Elliott Bay. Or you may have seen it during public events such as Opening Day of boating season, which is coming up May 5.</p> <p>To see it up close while it's docked, you can now find the Leschi at Fire Station 5 on the west end of Madison Street, right between Colman Dock and the legendary Ivar's Fish and Chips Restaurant — look for the outdoor walkway where people are having lunch and feeding the seagulls. The historic waterfront fire station closed for the seawall construction and seismic upgrades in 2014 and just reopened this week.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Tourism still strong Mexico resort areas
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/27/travel/mexico-tourism-violence.html
GIST	<p>Travel operators bill Cancún and the adjoining Riviera Maya on Mexico's Caribbean coast as carefree beach escapes with something for everyone from spring break partyers to families. But a wave of violence, linked to rival drug gangs, threatens travel in the region like a storm hovering on the horizon.</p> <p>The local news site Noticaribe reported 14 murders in Cancún over a 36-hour period in early April, continuing a pattern of violence reported last summer. Gun deaths have also occurred in Playa del Carmen, the biggest town on the Riviera Maya, about 40 miles south of Cancún.</p> <p>Travelers have not been targeted in these crimes, but a bomb that detonated in February on a ferry linking Playa del Carmen with the island of Cozumel, a popular cruise port, injured more than two dozen passengers, including tourists. It prompted the Department of State to issue a travel ban on the ferry route for government employees. Reuters later reported the bomb was a homemade device believed to be unrelated to terrorists or organized crime.</p> <p>Since then, Mexican authorities have strengthened security around the ferry as well as the ferries that run between Cancún and Isla Mujeres, including adding metal detectors and bomb-sniffing dogs. The American government subsequently dropped its ban on ferry travel.</p> <p>The State Department's advisory level remains at the second of four cautionary categories, indicating travelers should "exercise increased caution." It is the same threat level of Antarctica, Denmark, Italy and Britain. Its report, updated on March 16, on the state of Quintana Roo, home to Cancún and the Riviera Maya, notes the uptick in homicides but does not restrict travel for U.S. government employees.</p> <p>"While most of these homicides appeared to be targeted, criminal organization assassinations, turf battles between criminal groups have resulted in violent crime in areas frequented by U.S. citizens. Shooting incidents injuring or killing bystanders have occurred," the advisory stated.</p> <p>Tourism authorities have responded by stepping up security. The Mexican navy patrols the beaches, federal police monitor the highways and the army is in charge of entry points into the region's cities. Dario Flota Ocampo, the director of the Quintana Roo Tourism Board, said that 3,000 new surveillance cameras are being installed in the Cancún and Playa del Carmen areas.</p> <p>"Tourism is the main industry for the state of Quintana Roo, which is why our main concern is to provide</p>

	<p>security and ensure travelers have great experience because we want them to come back,” Mr. Flota Ocampo said.</p> <p>Some 16.9 million visitors came to the state in 2017, an increase of 5.3 percent over the year prior, according to the state tourism board. Over 52 percent of those arrivals were repeat visitors.</p> <p>Told to exercise caution, Americans have continued to travel to the Yucatán.</p> <p>Whether it was the very cold winter endured in the northern United States, or the number of deals coming from the rapidly growing destination (some 14,000 hotel rooms are currently in development), tourism has shown resiliency.</p> <p>In the first quarter of 2018, hotel occupancy in Cancún stayed level with 2017 figures at a healthy 77 percent, even though the room inventory grew this year by 3 percent this year, according to STR, Inc., a travel research company that tracks hotel data.</p> <p>Travel agencies report strong interest in the region. AAA Travel predicted that Cancún would be its most popular international destination for family travelers this year.</p> <p>The deal site Travelzoo currently has packages at a luxury resort in Playa del Carmen at \$529 for three nights for two people, just over half off. The site’s senior editor, Gabe Saglie, said hotel promotions have “created some amazing value south of the border, enough to get many travelers, while cognizant of security concerns and undoubtedly traveling with heightened self-awareness and vigilance, to pounce.”</p> <p>Bookings are up 12 percent to Mexico over this time last year at the luxury-focused travel agency Ovation Vacations in New York, even though advisers are fielding more inquiries regarding safety.</p> <p>“There’s a lot of hesitancy, but there’s resiliency,” said Jack Ezon, the owner of the agency.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Seattle disaster drill ‘Power Out, No Bars’
SOURCE	http://westseattleblog.com/2018/04/saturday-citywide-disaster-drill-including-three-west-seattle-hubs-and-you-can-help/
GIST	<p>From Pigeon Point to High Point to Fauntleroy, three local Emergency Communication Hubs will be participating in a drill this Saturday morning, 8:30-noon – to prepare for something everyone hopes will never happen. And you can help! We’ve mentioned it a few times before, and here’s the official announcement:</p> <p>Imagine there is a major power blackout covering Seattle and the metro area. There is no cellular phone service. No one knows the cause of the outage or knows when power and cell service may be restored. Emergency generators at hospitals and other essential service providers can only last as long as there is fuel. How would the region communicate?</p> <p>This is the scenario behind the “Power Out, No Bars” exercise that Seattle ham radio operators and designated emergency Hub volunteers throughout the City will be testing. The Seattle Auxiliary Communications Service (ACS), a volunteer organization operating under the auspices of the Seattle Office of Emergency Management, and the Seattle Emergency Communication Hubs, a grass-roots, neighborhood network of community members, will jointly conduct the citywide communications exercise.</p> <p>The drill simulates the day after an unexplained failure of grid power and cellular service, with no updates on when either would be restored. Because the Hubs are the major residential and business resources for neighborhoods, situational awareness, resource coordination, and communications between the Hubs, ACS, and the city’s Emergency Operations Center (EOC) are critical.</p>

The key goals of the exercise are:

*Activate several neighborhood Communication Hubs and Seattle ACS, emphasizing reliable, efficient, accurate message management and documentation. Exercise participants will use voice as well as data communications via radio, throughout the city.

*Demonstrate, practice, and assess the ability to communicate up and down the various levels of the response structure, based on the Incident Command System (ICS), which spells out a hierarchical, yet flexible, means of managing emergency situations.

*Build strong working relationships among Emergency Communication Hub members and ACS members, through team problem solving and practice.

Exercise Scenario

In an event such as the one this exercise portrays, the neighborhood Hubs would mobilize to assist with the immediate needs of residents, especially those who may need emergency services. The ACS would also have activated shortly after the scope of the outage was known, with sector sites around the city providing situation reports and helping coordinate emergency and logistical responses.

“In a citywide or regional event, people will need to go to neighborhood gathering places to find access to information and start matching resources and skills to what is needed” said Cindi Barker of West Seattle, one of Seattle’s Hub Captains.

“Power Out, No Bars is the latest in a series of emergency exercises that have helped our membership continually hone their skills and upgrade, deploy, and test their equipment,” said Mark Sheppard, founder and director of ACS. “This is critical to improving our ability to be more effective and be better prepared to face a real emergency or natural disaster.

Here are the West Seattle hubs participating:

*Pigeon Point Hub, 20th Ave SW & SW Genesee St

*High Point Hub at Neighborhood House, 6400 Sylvan Way SW

*Fauntleroy United Church of Christ Hub, 9140 California Ave SW

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HEADLINE	04/26 DHS ends protected status for Nepal
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/789fb21af4554eebb78613df17c9e1f5/US-to-end-special-protections-for-9,000-Nepalese-immigrants
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration will end special protections for an estimated 9,000 Nepalese immigrants living in the United States, giving them until June 24, 2019, to leave or find another way to stay in the country, the Department of Homeland Security said Thursday.</p> <p>They were granted that status during the Obama administration after an April 2015 earthquake killed more than 8,000 people in Nepal, and it was extended for 18 months in October 2016.</p> <p>But DHS said that after a review of conditions in the country, Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen concluded the protections were no longer warranted.</p> <p>The “disruption of living conditions in Nepal from the April 2015 earthquake and subsequent aftershocks that served as the basis for its TPS designation have decreased to a degree that they should no longer be regarded as substantial,” DHS said.</p>

	<p>The U.S. created Temporary Protected Status in 1990 to provide a safe haven for citizens of countries affected by war and natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods and hurricanes. The status currently shields several hundred thousand people from 10 countries. It generally includes authorization to work.</p> <p>The decision on Nepal probably will be felt most acutely in New York and the Dallas-Fort Worth area, which had the largest Nepalese immigrant communities in the United States in 2015 with 9,000 each, according to the Pew Research Center. Washington, San Francisco, Baltimore, Pittsburgh and Columbus, Ohio, also have large communities.</p> <p>The decision on Nepal was met with anger from immigration activist, including Amanda Baran of the Immigrant Legal Resource Center.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/27 Feds: lost track of immigrant children
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/a92409ad458742ad952fede5596c36a3/Federal-agency-says-it-lost-track-of-1,475-migrant-children
GIST	<p>Federal officials lost track of nearly 1,500 migrant children last year after a government agency placed the minors in the homes of adult sponsors in communities across the country, according to testimony before a Senate subcommittee Thursday.</p> <p>The Health and Human Services Department has a limited budget to track the welfare of vulnerable unaccompanied minors, and realized that 1,475 children could not be found after making follow-up calls to check on their safety, an agency official said.</p> <p>Federal officials came under fire two years ago after rolling back child protection policies meant for minors fleeing violence in Central America. In a follow-up hearing on Thursday, senators said that the agencies had failed to take full responsibility for their care and had delayed crucial reforms needed to keep them from falling into the hands of human traffickers.</p> <p>“You are the worst foster parents in the world. You don’t even know where they are,” said Democratic Sen. Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota. “We are failing. I don’t think there is any doubt about it. And when we fail kids that makes me angry.”</p> <p>Since the dramatic surge of border crossings in 2013, the federal government has placed more than 180,000 unaccompanied minors with parents or other adult sponsors who are expected to care for the children and help them attend school while they seek legal status in immigration court.</p> <p>An AP investigation found in 2016 that more than two dozen unaccompanied children had been sent to homes where they were sexually assaulted, starved or forced to work for little or no pay. At the time, many adult sponsors didn’t undergo thorough background checks, government officials rarely visited homes and in some cases had no idea that sponsors had taken in several unrelated children, a possible sign of human trafficking.</p> <p>Since then, the Health and Human Services Department has boosted outreach to at-risk children deemed to need extra protection, and last year offered post-placement services to about one-third of unaccompanied minors, according to the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.</p> <p>But advocates say it is hard to know how many minors may be in dangerous conditions, in part because some disappear before social workers can follow up with them and never show up in court.</p> <p>From October to December 2017, HHS called 7,635 children the agency had placed with sponsors, and found 6,075 of the children were still living with their sponsors, 28 had run away, five had been deported and 52 were living with someone else. The rest were missing, said Steven Wagner, acting assistant secretary at HHS.</p>

	<p>Republican Sen. Rob Portman gave HHS and the Department of Homeland Security until Monday to deliver a time frame for improving monitoring.</p> <p>“These kids, regardless of their immigration status, deserve to be treated properly, not abused or trafficked,” said Portman, who chairs the subcommittee. “This is all about accountability.”</p> <p>Portman began investigating after a case in his home state of Ohio, where eight Guatemalan teens were placed with human traffickers and forced to work on egg farms under threats of death. Six people have been convicted and sentenced to federal prison for their participation in the trafficking scheme that began in 2013.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/27 Authorities: Wisconsin refinery fire out
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/e1b82b2411c0400da4d3091ffd71ac63/Authorities:-Wisconsin-refinery-fire-out,-evacuation-remains
GIST	<p>Authorities have not allowed residents back in their homes after crews extinguished a smoky blaze at a northwestern Wisconsin refinery where an explosion injured at least 11 people and forced most of the city of Superior to evacuate.</p> <p>Douglas County officials said Thursday evening the fire at the Husky Energy oil refinery was out and that residents could return home but wait at least two hours before doing so. But late Thursday, Superior police gave another update, saying the evacuation order would remain and be re-evaluated throughout the night.</p> <p>Authorities said a tank of crude oil or asphalt exploded about 10 a.m. Thursday at the refinery in Superior, a city of about 27,000 that shares a Lake Superior shipping port with nearby Duluth, Minnesota. That prompted them to order the evacuation of a 3-mile (5-kilometer) radius around the refinery, as well as a 10-mile (16-kilometer) corridor south of it where the smoke was heading.</p> <p>It was unclear how many people evacuated, but Mayor Jim Paine said most of the city was being evacuated. The refinery is in an industrial area, but there’s a residential neighborhood within a mile to the northeast. The corridor downwind to the south of the refinery is sparsely populated. Schools in Superior and nearby Maple, Wisconsin, canceled classes Friday as a precaution.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/27 Arizona, Colorado teachers 2nd day rally
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/fc6c9b239ba341c8905bce5ed71b16b1/Arizona,-Colorado-teachers-rally,-schools-close-for-2nd-day
GIST	<p>PHOENIX (AP) — Arizona and Colorado teachers plan to don red shirts and descend upon their respective Capitols for a second day in a growing educator uprising.</p> <p>Educators in both states want more classroom resources and have received offers either for increased school funding or pay, but they say the money isn’t guaranteed and the efforts don’t go far enough. The walkouts are the latest in demonstrations that spread from West Virginia, Oklahoma and Kentucky.</p> <p>On the first day of the historic statewide walkout, around 50,000 educators and their supporters marched Thursday through downtown Phoenix in nearly 100-degree (38-Celsius) heat and swarmed the Capitol grounds.</p> <p>In much cooler Colorado, several thousand educators rallied around the Capitol, with many using personal time to attend two days of protests expected to draw as many as 10,000 demonstrators.</p>

	<p>Lawmakers in Colorado have agreed to give schools their largest budget increase since the Great Recession. But teachers say Colorado has a long way to go to recover lost ground because of strict tax and spending limits.</p> <p>Arizona's Republican governor, Doug Ducey, has proposed 20 percent raises by 2020 and said he has no plans to meet with striking teachers or address other demands.</p> <p>More than 840,000 students were out of school as a result of Thursday's walkouts, according to figures from The Arizona Republic.</p> <p>Most of Arizona's public schools will be closed the rest of the week, and about half of all Colorado students will see their schools shuttered over the two days as teachers take up the Arizona movement's #RedforEd mantle. In Oklahoma and West Virginia, teacher strikes stretched beyond the one-week mark.</p> <p>Organizers say they haven't decided how long their walkout will last.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Across Europe, Jewish safety fears grow
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2018-04-26/safety-concerns-grow-for-jews-across-europe
GIST	<p>Late in March, Mireille Knoll, an 85-year-old Jewish grandmother and Holocaust survivor, was found dead – stabbed to death with her body partially burned – in her Paris apartment. Two men in their 20s were placed under formal investigation on charges of murder motivated by anti-Semitism. French interior minister Gérard Collomb told Parliament that one of the alleged killers told the other, "She's a Jew. She must have money."</p> <p>French authorities are still investigating the circumstances of the case, but Jewish advocacy groups across the world have situated the murder in the broader context of rising anti-Semitism in France, and across Europe.</p> <p>For Dr. Moshe Kantor, president of the European Jewish Congress, the slaying is "a sad symbol of what we are returning to." In January, in a speech at the European Parliament, Kantor warned that Europe is no longer safe against anti-Semitism because the last generation of Holocaust survivors and witnesses is dwindling. Knoll's death, he said, is another sign.</p> <p>"There have been far too many of these murders and attempted murders of Jews in France to call them sporadic," Kantor wrote in an email. "This murder should not just appall us, it should serve as a final wake-up call that more must be done not just to protect Jewish communities and institutions, but also all individuals at risk."</p> <p>Lethal violence against Jewish people is certainly not an everyday occurrence, but the brutal murder of a woman who had already experienced the horrors of mass genocide has been particularly painful to the international Jewish community. It follows other shocking anti-Semitic incidents in France, such as the 2012 killing of three Jewish children and a teacher at a Jewish school in Toulouse by an Islamic fundamentalist, and the 2015 murder of four people at a Jewish supermarket, linked to the Charlie Hebdo killings.</p> <p>More recently, a Syrian man turned himself in to German police last week after admitting to using a belt to beat an Israeli man wearing a yarmulke in Berlin. The incident sparked protests this week and – in a nation sensitive to its relations with its Jewish community – has drawn the condemnation of Chancellor Angela Merkel.</p> <p>Knoll's death resonates deeply across France because the country is home to the largest population of Jews in Europe and to the fourth largest such population in the world by country, according to 2015 data from</p>

the independent Pew Research Center. It also is part of a broader trend of growing anti-Semitism and Islamophobia that a European Union report noted more than two years ago.

There is rising concern about the safety of Jewish people and communities in Europe, as the number of violent attacks aimed at Jews in many countries has risen in recent years. Jewish leaders are speculating on the reasons why this may be occurring now. Some, such as Kantor, argue that 73 years after the end of World War II, Europe is no longer inoculated against anti-Semitism. Others blame the rise of populist, nationalist political parties, while still others point to radicalized Muslims, who, according to recent data from the University of Oslo, are most often the perpetrators.

Knoll's murder follows another attack in April 2017, when Sarah Halimi, a 65-year old Orthodox Jewish physician and kindergarten teacher in Paris, was beaten in her apartment and then thrown out a window. Both women had lived alone and had previously complained of anti-Semitic threats, according to Noémie Halioua, a French journalist with the Jewish weekly newspaper *Actualité Juive* and the author of a new book on the Halimi case.

While racially motivated hate crimes have decreased in France overall, there has been an uptick in anti-Semitic violence in the past year, from 77 incidents in 2016 to 97 in 2017, according to a report released by the Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry at Tel Aviv University in early April. The authors of the study cautioned that the information could not be verified by their criteria.

Is Anti-Semitism Waning in Europe?

The report also found that physical violence against Jewish people around the world dropped by 9 percent from 2016 to 2017, but anti-Semitic sentiment, hate-speech, threats and cyberattacks have become mainstream throughout Europe, they asserted, leading to a "corrosion of Jewish life."

Kantor says anti-Semitic violence has become "an almost daily occurrence in parts of Europe and apparently, Jews no longer feel that they can rely on the preventive actions of the law enforcement authorities to protect them even in their own homes."

The report concludes that the rise of anti-Semitism can be attributed to "the constant rise of the extreme right, a heated anti-Zionist discourse in the left, accompanied by harsh anti-Semitic expressions, and radical Islamism."

The Anti-Defamation League, an American Jewish nongovernmental organization, counts Knoll's death as the 11th anti-Semitic murder in France in the past 12 years. The group estimates that assaults on Jews that take place twice a week on average in France, creating a sense of insecurity for the entire Jewish community.

Sharon Nazarian, its senior vice president of International Affairs, has spent the past several months traveling to European capitals such as Paris, Berlin, Stockholm, Brussels, Budapest and Rome, speaking with Jewish community leaders and government officials.

"What I'm hearing from them is a real nervousness, a feeling insecurity, a lack of safety, both physically and also for their Jewish way of life," said Nazarian in a telephone interview. "It's really unprecedented going back to World War II. A lot of warning bells are going off and red flags are going up and we're very, very concerned."

She says "a loss of a sense of shame that did exist for decades after the war" about anti-Semitic attitudes has contributed to the shift, along with the rise of nativist right-wing politicians, anti-Zionist left wing activists, and scapegoating of Jews for other global problems.

Violent incidents, the Kantor Center report finds, have decreased because of better security and intelligence in protecting Jewish communities. But the report stresses that "it is overshadowed by the many verbal and visual expressions, some on the verge of violence, such as direct threats, harassments, insults, calls to attack Jews and even kill them en masse."

Alvin Rosenfeld, director of the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism at Indiana University and an author of many books on the Holocaust and the perspectives of it, argues that anti-Semitism has never truly left Europe.

"The view that knowledge of the Holocaust would somehow be prophylactic, and it would guard against the return of anti-Semitism, seems now to be naive, and I admit that I myself subscribed to that view," he says. "It just isn't the case that Holocaust memory guards against the repeat of Jew hatred."

He agrees that the rise of anti-Semitic sentiment stems from a multiplicity of forces. "We're living at a time in which neo-nationalism, neo-nativism, populism, autocracy and theocratic extremisms are all coming to the fore, in some cases with a great rush," he said. "Anti-Semitism, together with hatred against other types of people, flourishes in such a climate."

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HEADLINE	04/26 Officials: MS-13 'gaming' immigration
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/26/ms-13-gang-members-claim-theyre-underage-gain-acce/
GIST	<p>MS-13 is paying smugglers to coach gang members on how to game the U.S. immigration system, teaching underage members to claim UAC status — and telling those over 18 to lie and claim they are underage — to try to gain quick, easy access to the U.S., government officials said Thursday.</p> <p>Rep. Peter T. King, a New York Republican, said his district is such a hotbed of MS-13 activity that authorities are “right now digging for bodies within a mile of my house.” He said some families are forced to facilitate gang members’ arrivals and are pressured by gangs to become sponsors and claim the children when they arrive.</p> <p>Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen confirmed the pipeline.</p> <p>“They recruit young children, they train them how to be smuggled across our border, how to then join up with gang members in the United States,” she told Congress.</p> <p>The government this week detailed such a case from this month in Arizona, where Border Patrol agents nabbed an 18-year-old from El Salvador. He first claimed to be underage to try to claim UAC status. Under questioning, he acknowledged he was an adult and was part of MS-13 — though he insisted he was trying to leave the gang.</p> <p>Unaccompanied alien children — those who arrive at the U.S. border without their parents — are among the trickiest populations of illegal immigrants.</p> <p>They began to surge toward the U.S. in 2012 and crested in 2014, overwhelming an Obama administration that was ill-equipped to handle them. In addition to gangs, some UAC were turned over to criminals, who forced them into labor or otherwise abused them.</p> <p>More than five years into the crisis, the UAC numbers are once again rising — and the administration is still struggling to get a grip on matters, as officials made clear in hearings Thursday on both sides of the Capitol.</p> <p>While Ms. Nielsen begged House lawmakers to close the loopholes that she said invite UAC and others to test U.S. immigration policy, Homeland Security and Health and Human Services officials were being grilled by senators about why the government is unable to keep track of the children once they are in the U.S.</p> <p>Steven Wagner, an acting assistant secretary at HHS, said of 7,635 UAC that the department tried to check</p>

in with last year after their first 30 days with their sponsors, they found 28 had run away and 52 had ditched their sponsors to move in with others.

More striking, though, were the 1,475 UAC whom the department “was unable to determine with certainty the whereabouts of” just 30 days after they had been placed in those homes.

“You are the worst foster parents in the world. You don’t even know where they are,” said Sen. Heidi Heitkamp, North Dakota Democrat.

Losing track of UAC matters, both for the children’s well-being and for the ability of the government to push them through the immigration system, getting them a hearing and deciding if they should be deported or granted permanent status.

Nearly 60 percent of all UAC don’t show up for their hearings. Children who don’t show up for their hearings are essentially free and clear. Neither HHS nor Homeland Security said they pursue UAC who skip out on their hearings.

Indeed, the latest numbers show that just 3.5 percent of UAC who came to the U.S. during the surge are deported, Ms. Nielsen said.

Government officials pointed fingers at each other, and lawmakers said they were getting fed up after Homeland Security and Health and Human Services couldn’t tell the Senate’s chief investigative panel when they will complete a months-overdue joint cooperation plan.

Part of the problem is that the legal framework for UAC is disjointed at best.

Children from Mexico can be deported quickly, but those from noncontiguous countries must be processed by Homeland Security and then turned over to HHS, which holds them in government-run dorms until sponsors can be found.

Sen. Rob Portman, an Ohio Republican and chairman of the Senate investigative panel, said HHS has a signed agreement with each UAC sponsor, who agrees to make sure the children show up for their hearings.

But he said HHS doesn’t even know when they skip the hearings.

“We have no mechanism for enforcing the agreement if they fail to show up,” Mr. Wagner confirmed.

“Obviously a red flag when a child fails to show up for a hearing. I think we’ve identified this morning so many parts of the system that simply aren’t working for the children or for our immigration system,” Mr. Portman said.

The amount of information the government didn’t know at the Senate hearing was stunning.

Mr. Wagner couldn’t say how often his department alerts local police about potential dangers they should be aware of in some homes, nor could he say how often fraudulent documents are used.

He couldn’t detail the criteria that foster parents are required to meet to accept children and couldn’t even say how many of the sponsors the UAC are being delivered to aren’t U.S. citizens.

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HEADLINE	04/26 Norovirus closes Tacoma restaurant
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/entertainment/restaurants/tnt-diner/article209939349.html
GIST	Another suspected norovirus outbreak has sickened diners in Tacoma. The outbreak is connected to

	<p>Foley's on the Green, the restaurant and sports bar at the Meadow Park Golf Course in Tacoma at 7108 Lakewood Drive W.</p> <p>Eight reports have been made for suspected norovirus.</p> <p>The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department closed Foley's on Thursday for at least 24 hours or until the restaurant is thoroughly cleaned and sanitized.</p> <p>Jason Follen, owner of the restaurant, said he and his employees were at work Thursday doing just that. They're also searching for a potential cause for the outbreak.</p> <p>He said he's called some of the food-service companies that supply his restaurant to see if outside contamination is possibly to blame.</p> <p>"I have good employees, and I'm confident that this is just an isolated bad luck incident and we're just shocked," said Follen.</p> <p>The health department also is investigating what might have caused the outbreak.</p> <p>"We're in the middle of the investigation now," said Health Department spokeswoman Edie Jeffers. She said reports came in April 23, 24, and 26.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/27 Koreas leaders in diplomatic dance
SOURCE	<p>https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/27/world/asia/north-korea-south-border.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=b-lede-package-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news</p>
GIST	<p>HONG KONG — A carefully choreographed diplomatic dance at the Korean border added a surprise extra step on Friday, instantly turning a moment destined for the history books into a viral meme for the social-media era.</p> <p>The surprise moment in which Kim Jong-un, the North Korean leader, encouraged President Moon Jae-in of South Korea to step over the border to the North's side became one of several images that displayed both countries' understanding of the propaganda value of political theater.</p> <p>After a year in which tensions between the two countries reached an acrimonious pitch not seen in decades, the two leaders were careful to publicly signal a new era of rapprochement.</p> <p>Smiling broadly at each other, the men took their time shaking hands as Mr. Kim stepped gingerly over the concrete slab that marks the border between the two countries, becoming the first North Korean leader to set foot in the South.</p> <p>Knowing that photos and video of their meeting would be broadcast around the world, even their clothing — veritable costumes — was chosen to project a message. For Mr. Moon, a dark business suit was paired with a light blue tie that echoed the hue used in the Korean Unification Flag, which the countries use when competing together as single team at international sporting events.</p> <p>Mr. Kim wore an austere black Mao-style suit, a message to his citizens that despite being in enemy territory he was still committed to the ideals — and dress — of his grandfather Kim Il-sung, North Korea's founder, who ordered the 1950 invasion of the South that started the Korean War.</p> <p>Once on the South side of the Demilitarized Zone, the stretch of land that makes up the border and in which the summit meeting took place, Mr. Kim inspected a military honor guard. Though the DMZ is heavily fortified and security was tightened for the visit, the honor guard's soldiers carried spears and</p>

swords, instead of rifles. They were dressed in 19th-century costumes, worn at a time when Korea was a unified empire.

Even the décor inside Peace House, the building in which the meeting took place, was chosen for its political optics. In the run-up to the talks, workers hung paintings of Mount Kumgang, which straddles the border and is an important symbol to Koreans in both countries.

The table and chairs inside the meeting room were also carefully designed with a pattern evoking two bridges coming together.

At the table was Mr. Kim's sister, Kim Yo-jong, the only woman in the delegation. Ms. Kim's stature has risen since she represented the North's government at this year's Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea. That visit was widely seen as an opening gambit toward a détente, and Ms. Kim was widely credited with softening her country's image.

At Peace House, Mr. Kim signed a guest book, leaving a message guaranteed to be photographed, tweeted and deconstructed by political analysts.

"A new history starts now," he wrote. "An age of peace, from the starting point of history."

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HEADLINE	04/26 'Breathtaking potential implications' lawsuit
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/967315/washington-native-american-tribes-salmon-case/
GIST	<p>Former Washington state Attorney General Rob McKenna says it's the most important case Washingtonians have never heard about, yet its results could dramatically change how government works in the Pacific Northwest.</p> <p>"It really is breathtaking in its potential implications," McKenna told KIRO Radio's Dave Ross.</p> <p>The issue surrounds the influence Native American tribes have on local and state governments. While the case itself centers on culverts that affect salmon runs, McKenna argues there is legal engineering going on that could place the tribes in a position to co-govern much of the state.</p> <p>"It's not because most tribal members depend on fish to make their living; some do, but most don't," he said. "It's because it's a way to restore sovereign control over lands they used to own. I appreciate that objective. I understand why they are pursuing it. But it's not what the treaties were about. And it's not something that the State of Washington or its local governments can accept."</p> <p>The right to salmon</p> <p>The legal relationship between Washington state, the United States government, and the Northwest's Native American tribes dates back to the mid-1800s when a series of treaties were signed. Those treaties essentially detailed who had a right to what — which lands were exchanged and where tribes could fish. In short, tribes were granted the right to always fish where they traditionally had. That notion was upheld in the 1970s Boldt decision.</p> <p>But a lingering treaty issue has led to the United States Supreme Court.</p> <p>"The treaties grant the tribes a right, in perpetuity, to access their traditional fishing grounds," McKenna said. "The two questions that have been litigated over the last 40-plus years have to do with how much of the fish they are entitled to. In the Boldt decision, it was decided they are entitled to half. Then, in this case, that went to the Supreme Court, the question is what happens when there are fewer fish to catch because of something the state has done. In this case, building culverts under state highways, and on park land, and lands owned by the State of Washington."</p>

Such culverts can choke off streams that salmon use to spawn, threatening the number of fish that the tribes historically relied upon.

When McKenna was attorney general, he repeatedly offered to settle the culvert case issue. Many culverts under natural resources and state parks have already been replaced. And the Washington State Department of Transportation has been systematically replacing them. McKenna said he offered a fixed schedule to replace all remaining culverts. But those offers were consistently turned down. McKenna says this is because there is a larger plan in the works.

Native American tribes and treaties

McKenna says that Washington state tribes want to establish that their treaty rights to fish give them a role and a right to any decision that affects the fish population. Such authority could touch many governing decisions from water rights and permits, to land use policy, etc.

“It was very telling when the tribes filed their brief through the United States government in the Supreme Court that they shifted from the traditional standard in this case – what would be the right amount of fish to ensure the tribes a ‘moderate living’ – which are the words that have been used for decades,” McKenna said. “They’ve shifted to this idea of a ‘substantial degradation of the fish supply,’ which is a new standard that we haven’t seen before.”

“And it really goes to what I’m saying; they want to go to a guaranteed supply of fish, and therefore, a say in anything that affects the number of fish,” he said. “There is a lot of agreement that culverts should be replaced. There is not an agreement that tribes are co-sovereign with state and local government over any decision that can affect the number of fish.”

McKenna argues that, on one hand, it’s true that the tribes were not signing up for treaties under which the state could block every salmon-bearing stream with a road or a highway. But at the same time, the government of the day was not agreeing to give tribes a co-sovereign role in the management of lands and waters.

“No one thought there would ever be a question about the amount of fish (back then),” McKenna said. “There was so many salmon and natural resources, people thought they were inexhaustible. Of course, they were proved to be wrong.”

Other leaders in the region have argued that the Supreme Court should side with the tribes, such as King County Executive Dow Constantine.

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HEADLINE	04/26 UN: 10 aid workers missing South Sudan
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/10-aid-workers-missing-war-torn-south-sudan-54743716?
GIST	<p>Ten aid workers have gone missing in civil war-torn South Sudan just days after another group of humanitarians was abducted by gunmen, the United Nations said Thursday.</p> <p>The statement said three U.N. staffers and seven aid workers, all of them South Sudanese, went missing early Wednesday when their convoy driving from Yei town to Tore in Central Equatoria disappeared.</p> <p>The aid workers are with South Sudanese Development Organization, ACROSS, Plan International and Action Africa Help.</p> <p>The U.N. humanitarian coordinator for South Sudan, Alain Noudehou, condemned the latest attack against colleagues. This is the third time aid workers have been held by armed groups in the last six months alone,</p>

	<p>the statement said.</p> <p>Seven local aid workers seized by opposition forces earlier this month in the same area were later freed. Two other local aid workers were killed in a separate incident this month in Unity state.</p> <p>"We are deeply concerned about the whereabouts of these humanitarian workers and are urgently seeking information about their well-being," Noudehou said.</p> <p>South Sudan is one of the world's most dangerous places for humanitarians. At least 98 have been killed since the civil war began in December 2013, most of them local workers.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Israel denies killing scientist in Malaysia
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-israel-denies-killing-palestinian-malaysia-54746892?
GIST	<p>Israel's defense minister is denying that his country killed a Hamas-affiliated scientist who was gunned down last week in Malaysia.</p> <p>Avigdor Lieberman told the Arabic news site Elaph that "we did not assassinate him."</p> <p>When asked in the interview on Thursday who killed Palestinian engineer Fadi al-Batsh, the minister said: "Ask James Bond ... maybe James Bond killed him like in the movies."</p> <p>Al-Batsh, an electrical engineering lecturer at a Malaysian university, was gunned down by two men on a motorcycle as he was on his way to a mosque on Saturday.</p> <p>In Gaza, Hamas leaders and relatives are waiting at the Egyptian border for his body.</p> <p>Hamas, the militant Islamic group that rules Gaza, accuses Israel of assassinating al-Batsh. He is to be buried Friday at a ceremony led by Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas' top leader.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Israel warns will strike back if attacked
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/israel-strike-tehran-attacks-tel-aviv-minister-54745743?
GIST	<p>Israel's defense minister said in an interview carried by an Arabic news site Thursday that his country will strike back if attacked by archenemy Iran.</p> <p>"We hear many (Iranian) threats ... but if they attack Tel Aviv, we will strike Tehran," Avigdor Lieberman told Elaph.</p> <p>The interview was published Thursday while Lieberman was in the United States for talks with defense officials.</p> <p>There has been a spike in hostile rhetoric between the bitter rivals since an airstrike on a military base in Syria that Iran and Russia blamed on Israel earlier this month. Seven Iranians were killed in the strike on Syria's T4 air base.</p> <p>Israel has neither confirmed nor denied carrying out the strike. Iran has threatened to respond.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Toronto hospital 'calm, in organized chaos'
SOURCE	http://www.cbc.ca/news/health/sunnybrook-hospital-trauma-nurses-doctors-1.4635124
GIST	<p>Miranda Lamb's day was already busy; the trauma nurse at Toronto's Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre was dealing with a unit that was overcapacity, all of its beds full.</p> <p>But when a colleague with emergency medical services approached her with news that "something big had happened on the street," Lamb knew what had to be done.</p> <p>The hospital, which is Canada's largest trauma centre, was in "Code Orange" — an emergency code that notifies staff of a mass casualty event.</p> <p>"We try to keep it very calm," Lamb said. "It's a calm, organized chaos. Everybody just goes into their role; everybody steps up."</p> <p>By mid-afternoon Monday, Sunnybrook had received 10 victims from Toronto's deadly van attack, which had played out in minutes along a two-kilometre stretch of nearby Yonge Street, less than 10 kilometres away from the hospital's main campus.</p> <p>Two people were pronounced dead on arrival, five remain in critical condition, and three are listed in serious condition.</p> <p>The tragedy marked the country's second big catastrophe this month, leaving 10 dead and another 14 injured. Two weeks earlier, a bus taking the Humboldt Broncos junior hockey team to a playoff game in Saskatchewan collided with a transport truck, killing 16.</p> <p>As Canadians increasingly worry about an overburdened health-care system, with crowded hospitals and overstretched staff, hospitals of all sizes are showing they still have a remarkable ability to respond to unexpected disasters with impressive efficiency.</p> <p>"What we do is transform chaos into calm," said Dr. Alan Drummond, with the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians.</p> <p>He said that the way first responders, nurses and doctors were able to leap into action in both a large urban centre, like Toronto, and a rural setting, like in Saskatchewan, speaks highly of the level of professionalism in the pan-Canadian emergency experience.</p> <p>"This is what they're trained to do, this is what they live to do," said Drummond, who is also an ER doctor at the Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospital in eastern Ontario.</p> <p>Training for such mass casualty events is always ongoing at Sunnybrook, says the hospital's surgeon-in-chief Dr. Avery Nathens.</p> <p>"Every drill that we have has made us a little bit better at responding. There's always opportunity for improvement, [but] what we've learned from the past year through the drills was helpful for what came across to Sunnybrook."</p> <p>The hospital has been running mock Code Oranges for "several months" to prepare for events such as this, Lamb said.</p> <p>"How to manage them, how to go in action. But in addition to that, the trauma teams here are trained in taking care of critically ill patients in the initial stages of trauma — in what we call the critical hour," she said.</p> <p>Sunnybrook nursing staff learn how to deal with trauma patients through a mandatory trauma nursing course. And all staff go through something called a "tabletop exercise," meant to bring together teams from across the hospital to run through a mass casualty scenario.</p>

Unlike a mock Code Orange, this exercise doesn't involve simulated patients; rather it's discussion-based, with teams talking through in detail how they'd respond.

After tragedies of Monday's magnitude, staff are debriefed — an exercise that encourages everyone to openly assess their teams and the hospital's performance to see what, if any, lessons can be learned.

Trauma nurse Cristina Choy called the experience, including the number of victims and the extent of their injuries, "unimaginable."

"I think it is very important to debrief after any situation, especially what happened [Monday]," she said. "I think debriefing helps us [with] what went well, what didn't — but also to get things off our chest as nurses.

"A lot of the times we just bottle things up and that's not good."

Nathens said he knows that staff will be affected by a tragedy like this. "And there will be a lot of debriefing to understand how we can better support our own staff and how we can do this next time, should it ever happen again."

After a pause, he adds: "And it likely will."

As for Drummond, he said he has nothing but praise for Canada's health-care workers, especially those who responded to the tragedies in Saskatchewan and Toronto.

"Both of these experiences have shown that Canadians should have confidence in their emergency-care system and should be proud of the people that work there."

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HEADLINE	04/25 Active shooter scare at Fort Bragg
SOURCE	http://myfox8.com/2018/04/25/poorly-coordinated-exercise-prompts-active-shooter-scare-at-fort-bragg/
GIST	<p>FORT BRAGG, N.C. — A “poorly-coordinated exercise” resulted in an active shooter scare at Fort Bragg Wednesday afternoon, according to Fort Bragg Public Affairs Officer Tom McCollum.</p> <p>The Soldier Support Center was evacuated after Fort Bragg emergency services got several calls about an active shooter.</p> <p>Personnel were advised to evacuate or barricade themselves in their offices.</p> <p>First responders learned the active shooter situation was a drill that had not been coordinated with Fort Bragg officials.</p> <p>The drill took place on the third floor of the Soldier Support Center, where several agencies are located, according to the Fayetteville Observer.</p> <p>It is unclear what agency was conducting the drill.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/24 Lessons learned Vegas shooting
SOURCE	https://www.phe.gov/ASPRBlog/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?List=f59454e5-a08d-4a13-9abe-0d31ef99f1af&ID=308&Web=e1195e40-c916-4c28-aa5a-de2eda4302e4

GIST

On October 1, 2017, during the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival on the Las Vegas Strip, a gunman opened fired from the 32nd floor of a nearby hotel on the crowd of concertgoers. He fired more than 1,100 rounds leaving 59 dead and 527 injured.

Recently, ASPR staff spoke with responding agencies from the Las Vegas shooting to help identify lessons learned that can help other communities, specifically members of the nation's 476 [health care coalitions](#), prepare for, respond to, and recover from these traumatic, no-notice incidents. Here are some of those lessons:

Lesson One: Prepare for Non-triaged Patients. EMS transported fewer than 20% of the victims from the Las Vegas shooting; most were self-transported or transported to healthcare facilities. Healthcare facilities must be ready to provide triage services at or outside the hospital to quickly identify where patients should be treated, and they should collaborate with EMS and other healthcare facilities throughout the region, as part of a health care coalition, to transfer patients based on acuity and available resources. This is especially important for trauma centers that may receive many “walking wounded” patients and hospitals that do not provide trauma services that may initially receive critically injured patients. EMS and other community partners should consider developing a re-distribution plan to move casualties between hospitals.

Lesson Two: Identify and Conduct Drills Using Personnel Notification Tools. Immediately after hearing about the shooting, many healthcare providers arrived at their respective hospitals to help. Make sure your facility has a plan and a tool or messaging solution in place to rapidly notify staff who should come to the hospital and when, based on the needs of the injured and the need for providing round-the-clock care, potentially for days to come. Be aware that no-notice incidents often overwhelm landline and cellular networks.

Lesson Three: Anticipate Challenges in Intake and Throughput. Immediately following the shooting, one hospital received more than 215 patients. Treating that number of patients with limited staff and resources presents inherent challenges. A disaster plan should address which areas of your facility are appropriate for use as expanded emergency department space; how best to group arriving patients, such as by the type and severity of injuries; moving non-incident patients to other areas of the hospital; modifying surgery schedules; and discharging or transferring non-emergent patients.

Lesson Four: Expand Traditional Healthcare Roles to Address Patient Surge. Healthcare facilities should consider having specialty providers and other personnel assume non-traditional roles to help address patient surge. For example, consider using anesthesiologists to manage secondary triage and using pediatric providers to care for ambulatory victims. Take advantage of EMS providers who may be at your facility and willing to assist. Also, consider dedicating certain personnel—respiratory therapist, pharmacist, hospitalists, and intensivist—to only manage the patients coming in from the incident.

Lesson Five: Coordinate Communications with Area Hospitals. Be Ready to Shelter Patients in Place. Community triage systems may be challenged in the immediate aftermath of a no-notice incident. All healthcare facilities in the area should prepare to treat what you can, coordinate patient transfers with other healthcare facilities, and shelter patients in place. Trauma centers may need to prioritize transfers due to the lack of EMS or trauma center resources. Traffic restrictions and misinformation resulting from the event may delay or prevent the timely transfer of patients.

Lesson Six: Review Your Existing Mass Fatality Plan. Determine if your existing mass fatality plan is adequate for a mortuary surge. Consider other areas of your facility where you can expand your mortuary space. Since the coroner or medical examiner may need to visit multiple hospitals after a mass casualty event, prepare for delays in the identification and notification processes. Remember: A no-notice incident resulting from an active shooting situation is also a crime. Collect evidentiary materials from patients and their clothing as per local standards.

Lesson Seven. Incorporate Family Notification in Planning Efforts. Expect loved ones to show up looking for patients, even if those patients are not being cared for by your facility. Designate a location

away from treatment spaces where loved ones can wait and establish a process to provide regular updates even if there is no new information to give. Provide patient status information on a case-by-case basis in a room separate from the waiting location. Ensure social workers, clergy, and case managers are available to provide mental health support.

Lesson Eight. Plan for Intense Media Interest. The media will want access to your hospital, your staff, and patients and their families. Pre-identify a media staging area, away from where patients are entering/exiting the hospital. Have public affairs staff available to help coordinate media interviews utilizing hospital spokespersons. Provide regular updates even if there is nothing new to report. Know the story you want to tell, coordinate with other hospitals and responding organizations, and be consistent in messaging.

“Mass casualty emergencies require a coordinated response involving the entire healthcare community,” said Melissa Harvey, director of ASPR’s Division of National Healthcare Preparedness Programs. Ms. Harvey oversees ASPR’s [Hospital Preparedness Program](#) (HPP), the only source of federal funding for health care system readiness.

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HEADLINE	04/26 Homebuyers looking outside Seattle
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/buyers-look-north-and-south-of-seattle-as-average-home-price-soars-to-nearly-800000
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - For Melissa Anderson cruising real estate web sites has become an obsession.</p> <p>Newly married and a native of the Pacific Northwest, the 28-year-old who works in medical sales said she and her husband are ready to grow their family, or at least add another dog, and they need more space.</p> <p>“Owning a house is a dream for me,” Anderson said.</p> <p>But on Thursday, Zillow released the latest round of bad news for Seattle’s already tough housing market – inventory is down and prices are up.</p> <p>Zillow said more than 41 percent of homes for sale in Seattle are priced higher than \$870,000. Inventory of homes for sale is down and the median home values rose 14.8 percent, according to Zillow.</p> <p>“For Seattle you’re seeing the higher end of the market and the lower end of the market are appreciating right around 15 percent annually, which that in itself is crazy,” said Svenja Gudell, Zillow Chief Economist.</p> <p>Seattle, according to Zillow, is the third fastest appreciating housing market and third fastest appreciating rental market in the country.</p> <p>West Seattle Realtor Natalie English isn’t surprised by the statistics.</p> <p>“I would say an average of over 20 percent over list price is kind of what I’m seeing. If a house is listed, say, 925 it’s probably going to go for at least a million,” said English, who is a broker for Windermere.</p> <p>Standing in the living room of a sunny home in West Seattle’s North Admiral neighborhood Thursday, English said she was surprised she hadn’t made a sale on it yet. English said the home, listed for just under \$1.2 million, has sat on the market six days - she expects it will sell soon.</p> <p>“I would say six says is my average days on the market before we get multiple offers,” English said.</p> <p>While Zillow said inventory is down 16.1 percent over the past year, English said she’s having her busiest year in her 16 years working in real estate. She said there are plenty of luxury home buyers and they move</p>

	<p>fast.</p> <p>But for people who can't afford a home over a million dollars, English said she has seen lots of growth in home sales in Sammamish, Duvall and further outside the city limits.</p> <p>"They're having to stretch out a little bit," English said. "You're either going north of Seattle or south of Seattle where the prices are somewhat affordable."</p> <p>After seeing house prices skyrocket in her beloved Queen Anne neighborhood, Anderson said she has expanded her search as far out as Kitsap County.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 DOL: 100+ salons w/violations
SOURCE	http://www.khq.com/story/38051899/100-salons-in-washington-have-license-sanitation-or-safety-violations
GIST	<p>KHQ.COM - More than 100 salons in Washington state either failed safety or sanitation inspections, or had license violations in the last year from the Washington State Department of Licensing. If you think these salons are required to post these violations publicly, think again.</p> <p>Unlike restaurants, there's no letter grade at the door that can tell you if the services inside have been deemed safe or violation free. Violators receive a fine from the state and then continue running the business as usual. To find out if your salon, or any other business place has received a violation you can visit the Washington State DOL website.</p> <p>The DOL posts all violations on their website under the "professions" section for numerous professions. Salon violations can be found under the "cosmetologists" section.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	<p><i>Click on link to view DOL listing of salons with violations:</i></p> <p>http://www.dol.wa.gov/business/disciplinary/disciplinarycosme.html</p>

HEADLINE	04/26 Homeless camp Green Lake to move
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/26/unsanctioned-encampment-accused-of-terrorizing-green-lake-residents-is-moving-out-looking-to-settle-elsewhere/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE -- Several neighbors who say a homeless encampment has taken over their Green Lake neighborhood met for the first time on Thursday.</p> <p>"When I am home alone, I don't feel that safe," Betsy Peto said.</p> <p>Residents say when the tents moved in overnight a stone's throw away, they didn't know what to think. Now they are just mad.</p> <p>Neighbors have vented on social media and with each other, but many stayed silent, fearing retaliation. Now many are fed up and willing to talk about it.</p> <p>"Bowel movement on her driveway last week and then a needle on her driveway the other day," Phil Cochran said of a neighbor's home.</p> <p>Residents along 5th and 58th say they are dealing with theft, needles, defecation and now aggressive behavior from some of the campers.</p> <p>"Verbally abusing, walking past calling my wife human trash and garbage for no reason whatsoever," Mike Liddell said.</p> <p>That is just the beginning, residents say. A couple of times they've seen people at the camp throwing</p>

	<p>things over the wall next to the encampment, they say. Over that wall is I-5 and dozens of what appears to be stolen bicycles now left abandoned in a wooded area next to I-5.</p> <p>“They basically have a bicycle store house going; yes, it’s shocking. I had no idea and that they operate so openly,” Liddell said.</p> <p>Liddell and his neighbors say they have repeatedly reached out to Seattle city leaders for nearly two months.</p> <p>“We haven’t had any useful info from them so far, all we understand is that council has told the police to back off,” Liddell said.</p> <p>“I am not trying to criminalize the homeless; I am against people breaking the law,” Peto said.</p> <p>Shortly after interviews with neighbors, Q13 News saw city crews posting eviction notices around the encampment site.</p> <p>The Neighborhood Action Coalition, the group that helped move the campers to Green Lake, is against the eviction.</p> <p>But Matt Lang, a member of the group, acknowledged to Q13 News that things have gotten unruly.</p> <p>“It’s caused a lot of tension in that neighborhood, not best for anyone for that camp to remain,” Lang said.</p> <p>Lang says he will help move the camp somewhere else this Sunday but a location has yet to be determined.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/27 Experts: US unprepared for biothreats
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/pandemic-biohazard/country-a-lot-more-ragile-than-we-realize/
GIST	<p>The nation is critically underprepared to confront transnational biological threats ranging from DIY bioterror agents to natural pathogens that outpace current pharmaceuticals and overwhelm medical facilities, the Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense heard at a Wednesday event at the Hudson Institute.</p> <p>James Lawler, a retired Navy commander whose experience includes serving as director for medical preparedness policy on the National Security Council and director for biodefense policy on the White House’s Homeland Security Council, warned that the country is “woefully unprepared for these biological threats” in an increasingly interdependent world.</p> <p>“Events halfway around the world have rapid effects,” he said, and the nation suffers from a “lack of threat awareness and poor situational awareness as it comes to biological threats.”</p> <p>Problems include “excruciatingly slow and moribund” programs that rely too much on “backwards engineering” of the last big threat along with insufficient staffing and not enough human intelligence on biological programs, as well as a “lack of situational awareness in day-to-day health activities.”</p> <p>Lawler stressed that there are “still significant problems connecting the clinical world with the public health world,” while the ability “to be able to understand those events in real time is critical to being able to defend ourselves in rapidly evolving events.”</p> <p>As genetic engineering continues to evolve, he warned, the threat will “exponentially” increase with “significant potential for malevolent use.”</p>

“Innovation is going to be the key to moving us ahead,” he said, with a need “to think beyond the linear approach we’re using now.”

“If you’re the kind of person who lies awake at night thinking about problems, this is one of the problems you should be thinking about... we’re now in the era of the iPhone 10 and we’re still using a flip phone.”

Kenneth Luongo, president and founder of the Partnership for Global Security, echoed that the U.S. “remains woefully underprepared” for a biological attack or a “new intensity level” of pathogens. He cited Rhode Island hospitals being overwhelmed by flu patients this past winter to the point of having to transfer overflow patients, “and this is an infectious disease that we prepare for every year.”

Better modeling is needed to map the potential spread of disease, he said. Synthetic biology presents new challenges from a risk perspective as new biological systems can be used for malicious purposes, he warned.

Because of the natural lack of transparency about biological programs from authoritarian regimes, it “falls to the intelligence community to determine what’s happening” in research programs with “serious questions” like Russia — where Luongo has “no doubt” there’s an active biological program with weapons potential.

Even though the lack of a biological attack has lowered the priority of addressing biological threats, Luongo warned “that’s a mistake.”

Ridge’s co-chairman on the Blue Ribbon Study Panel, former Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.), said later in the conference that while he’s worried about a bioterror attack the impact of an infectious disease pandemic could be worse as “the potential for devastation is great.”

Former USAID Director Andrew Natsios, director of the Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs, told the panel that the country is “a lot more fragile than we realize” when it comes to emergency response, and the ebola crisis demonstrated the need for several central points at which decisions can be made rapidly. “Time is of the essence — the longer the delay, the more people could die,” he said.

Natsios warned of the consequences of a lack of U.S. leadership in the international system. “We are sort of like Jimmy Stewart — we are going to see what the world looks like without that honorable man in the movie,” he said, referencing “It’s a Wonderful Life.”

With deficits in drug development, he suggested expanding upon the Gavi Vaccine Alliance model in which pharmaceutical companies are promised that if they mass produce, the products will be marketed through NGOs and the UN.

“Do not reinvent the federal organization wheel,” he suggested, while emphasizing the need for coordination. “Do not try, in cases of international aid programs, try to transplant what works well in a Western country to a developing country.”

And, Natsios recommended, “do not confuse emergency response with other biomanagement issues” — coordinating before the emergency and, once the event takes place, decentralizing to the lowest levels “or we won’t get there in time.”

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HEADLINE	04/24 Banner year for Seattle, King Co. tourism
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/economy/a-banner-year-for-tourism-in-seattle-and-king-county/
GIST	Cruise season began last week with the arrival of Norwegian Cruise Line’s Norwegian Sun.

The Port of Seattle projects more than 1.1 million cruise passengers this year, ahead of last year's record. Alaska is the largest destination for cruise ships. Seattle will be the largest cruise port on the West Coast for the second year in a row.

Cruise passengers make up an important part of the tourism economy here, spending money in town before and after their voyages. But they're far from the only drivers.

Nearly 40 million visitors came to the city and county last year, according to a recent report from Visit Seattle, the 1,000-member nonprofit tourism marketing organization. That's up 2.6 percent from the previous year and marks the eighth straight year setting a record. Overnight visitors grew by 3.9 percent to nearly 21 million.

Tourism Economics and Longwoods International estimate that visitors pumped \$7.4 billion into the regional economy. Travel and tourism jobs were up 27 percent to more than 76,000 (about 5.6 percent of all employment in King County).

Tom Norwalk, president of Visit Seattle, told me the region also "had incredible growth from international business. And this is despite being underserved by international (air) carriers. We've been adding (flights) but there is more we can be doing."

International visitors tend to spend more and stay longer than their domestic counterparts. To encourage growth in tourism from overseas, Visit Seattle has marketing reps in Asia, Europe and Australia.

The organization benchmarks the tourism sector here against 14 other U.S. cities, getting weekly updates.

With long summer days, numerous attractions and the gateway to the Northwest's scenic beauty, Seattle is a natural destination for tourists. Leisure demand was once seasonal, but now we're attracting visitors year-round.

Business travel is an important element, too, both corporate and conventions.

Norwalk is hoping a deal can be completed for expansion of the Washington State Convention Center.

"We're outperforming other destinations for how we utilize the convention center" he said. "But we need the second building... There's incredible demand for Seattle as a meeting destination. Groups sign contracts for years out."

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HEADLINE	04/27 US, Israel heat up rhetoric on Iran
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/27/politics/us-israel-iran-dangers/index.html
GIST	<p>Washington (CNN)US and Israeli officials issued tough warnings about Iran's activities in Syria and beyond on Thursday, in the lead-up to President Donald Trump's May 12 decision on whether to stay in the Iran nuclear deal.</p> <p>The steady drumbeat appeared to reinforce signals Trump has been sending about his intent to leave the deal. And in the absence of any clear sign the White House has a "day after" plan, there are deepening concerns in some quarters that White House policy toward Tehran may be shifting from denuclearization to regime change.</p> <p>"I think we are not moving toward a new agreement," said Clement Therme, a Bahrain-based research fellow for Iran at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. "I think we are moving toward a regime change policy in the US."</p> <p>US and Israeli officials laid out a litany of examples of malign Iranian behavior on Thursday. Some laid</p>

the ground for potential Israeli action against Iran within Syria. Others warned the conflict could spread from there.

Speaking to lawmakers, Defense Secretary James Mattis said that Iran is bringing in increased amounts of weaponry to Syria, and suggested that Iran intends to attack Israel. Mattis said Iran's proxy activities in Syria are driving a significant risk of escalated conflict that could engulf the region.

Privately, US military officials are warning of the potential for more direct confrontation between Iran and Israel that could spiral out of control.

"The potential for escalation has grown," one defense official told CNN's Barbara Starr. The Pentagon is publicly trying to emphasize that any military moves by Iran "would take us where we don't want to go," the official said. "There is serious concern this could escalate."

In New York, Nikki Haley, the US ambassador to the UN, told the Security Council that Iran is the patron and protector of groups that use human shields, "part of Iran's overarching efforts to destabilize the region."

Danny Danon, Israel's ambassador to the UN, reminded the Security Council that the threats posed by Hezbollah, Hamas and Syria's Assad regime have one common source. "The Iranian regime is the dangerous thread that ties these threats together," he said, before he went on to denounce the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as the nuclear deal is formally known.

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HEADLINE	04/27 Koreas agree: end war, denuclearize
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-27/two-koreas-agree-to-end-war-this-year-pursue-denuclearization
GIST	<p>North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in agreed Friday to finally end a seven-decade war this year, and pursue the "complete denuclearization" of the Korean Peninsula.</p> <p>The two leaders embraced after signing the deal during a historic meeting on their shared border, the first time a North Korean leader has set foot on the southern side. They announced plans to formally declare a resolution to the war and replace 1953 armistice that ended open hostilities into a peace treaty by year's end.</p> <p>"We have agreed to share a firm determination to open a new era in which all Korean people enjoy prosperity and happiness on a peaceful land without wars," Kim said, in his first remarks in front of the global press since taking power in 2011.</p> <p>The two sides "confirmed the common goal of realizing, through complete denuclearization, a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula."</p> <p>"South and North Korea agreed to actively seek the support and cooperation of the international community for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," according to the statement. It didn't elaborate on what that would entail.</p> <p>"The commitment to 'complete denuclearization' is ambiguous, and subject to different interpretations," said Youngshik Bong, a researcher at Yonsei University's Institute for North Korean Studies in Seoul. "It can be interpreted as North Korea getting rid of all warheads, or North Korean demands on the U.S. military in South Korea."</p> <p>The agreement follows a rapid thaw of tensions on the peninsula after a flurry of North Korean missile tests and a hydrogen bomb detonation last year. Kim plans to meet U.S. President Donald Trump soon, which would be the first summit between a North Korean leader and a sitting American president.</p>

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HEADLINE	04/26 Army accepts recruits w/behavior issues
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/04/26/army-issues-waivers-1-000-recruits-history-bipolar-depression-self-mutilation/554917002/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Army issued waivers over 13 months to more than 1,000 recruits who had been diagnosed and treated for mood disorders and 95 more for self-mutilation, according to data obtained by USA TODAY.</p> <p>The acceptance of new soldiers with a history of serious behavioral health issues, some of which can be lifelong challenges, came as the Army struggled to meet its recruiting goals. The time period ran from Oct. 1, 2016, through Oct. 31, 2017.</p> <p>Last week, Army Secretary Mark Esper indicated that the Army issues waivers only for mental health issues that have been resolved or upon further review were misdiagnosed. There were no waivers issued for a history of drug overdoses or suicide attempts.</p> <p>“As the stigma of seeking therapy or counseling becomes less of an issue than when I grew up, you’ll see probably more cause for waivers,” Esper said. “But again, the waiver is only for an historical condition that we look at and assess. We do not allow anybody in who is undergoing therapy, who is a cutter or was a cutter, identified clearly as a cutter or is using drugs. They are not allowed into the service. And I will not accept them. Quality trumps quantity every single day of the week.”</p> <p>Mood disorders include conditions such as bipolar disorder and severe depression. Self-mutilation can indicate deep psychological problems.</p> <p>“Bipolar in most cases is a lifelong challenge,” said Elspeth Cameron Ritchie, a psychiatrist who retired from the Army as a colonel in 2010 and is an expert on waivers for military service. “It is more of a challenge when you’re younger and is not something you can simply be clear of. You’re often on medication for life.”</p> <p>A history of severe depression raises the risk of suicide, a problem the military sought to minimize in part by eliminating waivers for many behavioral health issues in 2009, Ritchie said.</p> <p>Last fall, USA TODAY reported on Army documents that showed the service tried to ease the waiver process for recruits with a history of self-mutilation, bipolar disorder and depression. The Army encountered challenging recruiting goals, including adding more than 76,000 soldiers this year. In 2017, it accepted more recruits who had fared poorly on aptitude tests, and it increased the number of waivers for marijuana use.</p> <p>Sen. John McCain criticized the service for accepting recruits who mutilated themselves.</p> <p>Figures obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request show that from Oct. 1, 2016, through Oct. 31, 2017, the active-duty Army issued waivers to 738 recruits with a history of mood disorders and 49 more with a history of self-mutilation. The Army Reserve and National Guard accepted the rest of the recruits with behavioral health issues.</p> <p>Soldiers with bipolar disorder often require medication such as lithium, Ritchie said. That medication must be monitored carefully, a task that may be impossible in austere combat environments far from laboratories.</p> <p>Manic episodes of bipolar disorder can be triggered by sleep deprivation, a common occurrence in the military, she said. She recalled treating an Army major who scrawled graffiti on walls during a “classic bipolar episode” while deployed to South Korea.</p>

	<p>“When you’re manic, your judgment isn’t good,” Ritchie said. “You shouldn’t be driving a tank when you’re manic. You shouldn’t have a rifle if you’re manic.”</p> <p>Accepting recruits with a history of behavioral health issues is risky — for the Army and the soldier, Ritchie said.</p> <p>“It is concerning,” she said. “It can be very problematic. And we may be setting them up to fail.”</p> <p>The Army is about 1,000 recruits behind its goal of recruits for this year.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 More children being diagnosed autism
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Health/children-diagnosed-autism-spectrum-disorder-recent-years/story?id=54762329&cid=clicksource_26_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>More children are being diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, according to new data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Their new numbers now show that autism affects one in 59 children, an increase from previously reported one in 68 children.</p> <p>Dr. Walter Zahorodny, a pediatrician and autism researcher, is “stunned by the speed of increase.”</p> <p>This data was collected in 2014 through the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network, an organization described by the study's authors as “an active surveillance system that provides estimates of the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) among children aged 8 years.”</p> <p>In this study, the ADDM Network first identified over 10,000 children with symptoms of ASD in 11 states. A team of researchers and experts in the field then reviewed their medical and school records since birth, confirming an autism diagnosis in 5,473 children. This extremely thorough approach limited confusion and ensured accurate and consistent diagnoses and results. Part of the difficulty in autism research is that there isn’t a medical “test” that determines if a child falls on the autism disorder spectrum - it’s an evaluation based on observation, so reliable numbers have been historically difficult to guarantee.</p> <p>The overall prevalence of autism was 16.8 per 1,000 children, or 1.68 percent, according to the study. This number varied between different states. The state with the lowest rate was Arkansas at 13.1 per 1,000 children. The state with highest rate was New Jersey at 29.3 in 1,000 children. There’s no reason given for regional variation.</p> <p>Zahorodny, the lead researcher at the New Jersey site, states “3 percent is a real landmark, given that we started at 1 percent autism prevalence 14 years ago.”</p> <p>These rates of autism are significantly higher than those in the last study from ADDM, which looked at a similar number of young children in 2012. This new study looked at exactly the same six locations that participated in 2012, and in these sites, the 2014 autism rates were 20 percent higher than they were in 2012.</p> <p>Historically, the rate of autism in white children is 20-30 percent greater than black children and 50-70 percent greater than Hispanic children. In agreement with that previous data, autism was more common in white children, although there was a significant increase in the diagnosis in black and Hispanic children, with the prevalence in white children only 7 percent greater than in black children and 22 percent greater than in Hispanic children. In agreement with past studies, autism was about four times more common in boys.</p> <p>One outlier: There was virtually no difference in autism rates between white, black, and Hispanic children in New Jersey. The authors argue that perhaps New Jersey’s overall higher autism prevalence is related to</p>

the more inclusive diagnosis of minority children, and therefore might be the most accurate rate in the study.

This study is not intended to be representative of the entire country. There are clear limitations, primarily because the data originated from only 11 collection sites. In addition, there were discrepancies in the amount and type of medical and educational data that was recorded from state to state. The data in this study is only as accurate as the information that was documented by physicians, counselors, and schools.

Why are more children than ever diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder?

The short answer: We don't know.

The cause of autism is still unknown. There are associations between autism and prematurity, advanced parental age, and genetics -- however no evidence of causation, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). There's also a lot of discussion about potential environmental causes, yet again, there's no science to support these claims (the claim that vaccines cause autism has been disproven by the AAP time and time again).

To be diagnosed on the spectrum, a child must have three key characteristics: delayed language development, abnormal, repetitive behaviors, and difficulty socializing. Children with autism can have stereotypical behaviors such as rocking, spinning, hand-flapping, and toe-walking. They can also have difficulty making eye contact or playing with other children.

It's important to know that there are many children that are NOT on the spectrum who may display these behaviors. The diagnosis of autism is made by looking at a child's development, language, and behavior as a whole. If you have concerns about your child, you should speak with a pediatrician.

As the name implies, there's a wide range in severity. While many children are able to do well in school and make friends with minimal assistance, others may need significant speech and behavioral therapy to function.

Which brings us to the treatment of autism: Therapy, therapy, and more therapy.

There's no cure for autism, but certain types of therapies have been proven to improve a child's ability to function in the real world.

One of the most alarming findings in this new study is the widespread delayed diagnosis of autism. The median age of diagnosis was 52 months, just over 4 years. Children with autism should be diagnosed by 3 years old and receive appropriate therapies by 4 years old, according to Department of Health and Human Services Healthy People 2020 goals.

We are diagnosing most children too late, according to these numbers.

"We need to have strong concerted efforts toward universal autism screening," Zahorodny said in response to this data. The AAP states that all children should be screened for autism by their primary care provider at 18 months and again at 24 months.

Is autism really becoming more common?

It's unclear if this rise in autism is due to an increase in diagnosis or an increase in the actual prevalence of autism. Some scientists argue that physicians are doing a better job at diagnosing autism, particularly in minority populations, and that's why the autism numbers are up.

Thomas Frazier, the chief science officer at Autism Speaks, feels "there is a meaningful increase."

Both Frazier and Zahorodny agree that while the increase in diagnosis is contributing to the prevalence, it

	cannot be the only cause. It seems the increase in autism is significant enough that many psychologists and pediatricians worry we're missing a piece of this puzzle.
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HEADLINE	04/27 China, India leaders meet amid tensions
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/china-india-leaders-meet-amid-border-tensions-54771127?
GIST	<p>The leaders of India and China met at a lakeside resort in central China on Friday amid tensions along their contested border and a rivalry for influence among their smaller neighbors that could determine dominance in Asia.</p> <p>Chinese President Xi Jinping greeted Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday at the provincial museum in the city of Wuhan at the start of two days of talks between the heads of the world's two most populous nations.</p> <p>Indian media outlets, quoting unidentified top officials, reported the leaders would begin their interactions with one-on-one talks, followed by further discussions and a dinner lakeside at the resort that had been a favorite of former Chinese leader Mao Zedong.</p> <p>They will continue talks on Saturday with a lakeside walk, boat ride and lunch together.</p> <p>The countries fought a border war in 1962 and last year engaged in a 10-week standoff in the neighboring state of Bhutan. New Delhi has also been alarmed by China's moves to build strategic and economic ties with Indian Ocean nations including Sri Lanka, the Maldives and India's longtime rival Pakistan.</p> <p>China for its part resents India's hosting of exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, and its control of territory Beijing says belongs to it.</p> <p>China claims some 90,000 square kilometers (35,000 square miles) of territory in India's northeast, while India says China occupies 38,000 square kilometers (15,000 square miles) of its territory on the Aksai Chin Plateau in the western Himalayas. Officials have met at least 20 times to discuss the competing border claims without making significant progress.</p> <p>Following the most protracted standoff in years, India last year agreed to pull back troops from the disputed Doklam Plateau high in the Himalayas, where Chinese troops had started constructing a road.</p> <p>Despite such differences, Modi hopes China can help drive Indian economic growth ahead of national elections next year. However, his administration has been reluctant to engage with Beijing's "Belt and Road" initiative linking its economies to those of Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe through massive loans and investments.</p> <p>Modi will be traveling to China again in June for a summit of the eight-member Shanghai Cooperation Organization dominated by Beijing and Moscow.</p> <p>Along with China, Russia and India, that group includes the Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan as well as Pakistan.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/27 India security operation targets Maoists
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/indian-security-forces-kill-maoist-rebels-54773854?
GIST	Indian police say at least seven Maoist rebels have been killed in the second major operation by security forces against their strongholds in a week.

	<p>Police officer Mohit Garg says security forces attacked the rebels on Friday after learning they were meeting in a forest hide-out in Bijapur district in Chhattisgarh state.</p> <p>He said seven rebels were killed in an exchange of gunfire. There were no immediate reports of casualties among the security forces.</p> <p>Last week, at least 37 Maoist rebels were killed in gunbattles between government forces and insurgents in Gadchiroli in western Maharashtra state.</p> <p>The Maoist rebels, who claim inspiration from Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong, have been fighting India's government for more than four decades, demanding land and jobs for tenant farmers and the poor.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Parkland deputies 'no confidence' w/sheriff
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/florida-deputies-confidence-sheriff-presided-parkland-shooting-union/story?
GIST	<p>More than 500 deputies in Florida have voted that they no longer have confidence in the sheriff who presided over the Valentine's Day shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School that killed 17 students and staff.</p> <p>Jeff Bell, president of the Broward Sheriff's Office Deputies Association, said Thursday that out of 628 votes, 534 Broward County deputies cast a ballot to say they "no longer have confidence" in Sheriff Scott Israel. Ninety-four people voted for Israel, Bell said.</p> <p>The union called for the vote over sheriff's office's response to the Parkland shooting as well as Israel's response to the criticism of him in the wake of the shooting, ABC Fort Lauderdale affiliate WLPG reported.</p> <p>"These members have displayed great courage to come forward and vote under the threat of retaliation," Bell said.</p> <p>The association represents about 1,300 deputies and sergeants who "put their lives on the line every day," according to its president.</p> <p>Bell said it is now time for the sheriff to start listening to both members of his office as well as the leaders of Broward County.</p> <p>The association president took issue over Israel's leadership, policies and his handling of the budget. He also accused Israel of "taking care" of his family and friends by hiring them as "command staff at top levels" and attempting to "skirt the laws that are in place within the state of Florida."</p> <p>"He fails to listen to the people," Bell said.</p> <p>After the results of the vote were announced, Israel released a statement saying that he "will not be distracted" by the union vote.</p> <p>"I am accountable to the citizens of Broward County," Israel said. "My job is to continue to do the job I was elected to do, which is to ensure the safety of Broward County's 1.9 million residents."</p> <p>In his statement, Israel repeated a sentiment he expressed while to reporters shortly before the results of the vote were announced, which is that the vote was "designed to extort a 6.5 percent pay raise from this agency."</p>

	<p>Bell responded to Israel's comments by calling the sheriff a "complete liar."</p> <p>"This has never been about a contract," Bell said. "This has been about his longstanding policies."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 NKorea Kim crosses DMZ line
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/north-koreas-kim-jong-crosses-dmz-historic-meeting/story?id=54759591&cid=clicksource_4380645_1_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has crossed the line dividing the demilitarized zone to meet with South Korean President Moon Jae-in in what's being described as a historic summit.</p> <p>Kim made that first step, a great leap for the Korean Peninsula. The two posed for photos facing the North, then facing the South. Just about when Moon ushered Kim to walk toward the red carpet, Kim made a gesture offering Moon to take a step back across the demarcation line, to his side of the border. Whether pre-planned or not, the two smiled and took that step holding hands.</p> <p>Escorted by traditional music, Moon and Kim walked together to the "Peace House," a three-story building where the official summit will take place.</p> <p>Inside the "Peace House," Kim signed the guest book, writing in it for more than a minute. The two leaders then went into a reception room for a private conversation.</p> <p>It's the first time since 2007 leaders of the two countries have met and is part of a recent thawing of relations as South Korea and the United States have focused on diplomacy in their efforts to dismantle North Korea's nuclear program.</p> <p>The summit has been in the works for some time, with the stage being set by two previous meetings between high-level officials from the North and South, as well as the North's participation in the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea, earlier this year. The two nations marched under one flag.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	04/26 Mass. school district pays ransomware
SOURCE	http://www.telegram.com/news/20180426/leominster-pays-10k-in-bitcoin-ransom-to-undo-cyberattack-on-schools
GIST	<p>LEOMINSTER – The city paid \$10,000 in bitcoin last week to cyber extortionists who infiltrated the school district's computer systems over the April school break, according to city officials, affecting every school in the district.</p> <p>Mayor Dean J. Mazzarella called those who carried out the cyberattack "smart" and said they knew what they were doing when they gained control of the school district's computer network.</p> <p>Mr. Mazzarella said he was called by the district's superintendent, Paula Deacon, the Saturday of school vacation within 24 hours of the attack to notify him.</p> <p>The Federal Bureau of Investigation was notified, he said.</p> <p>"They (the FBI) are tracking it from here," Mr. Mazzarella said Thursday evening.</p> <p>Ms. Deacon did not immediately respond to a request for a comment.</p>

	<p>“They were on top of their game,” Mr. Mazzarella said. “They are using the best and highest technology. They were just looking for an opening and the system was hacked somehow or another.”</p> <p>He said the \$10,000 for the digital currency will come out of the city’s general fund and he does not believe the incident is covered under the city’s insurance.</p> <p>Interim Police Chief Michael Goldman said with ransomware attacks, hackers encrypt data and the only way to unlock it is with a password or by starting with a clean backup.</p> <p>“There is nothing the police department can do,” Mr. Goldman said. “It is highly sophisticated, mostly coming from out of the country, usually Europe, and almost impossible to trace.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/27 State-sponsored hacks on Australia rise
SOURCE	https://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/national-security/statesponsored-cyber-attacks-on-the-rise-against-australia/news-story/1d34cc1921d15cd4f0563f7267f087b3
GIST	<p>State-sponsored cyber attacks targeting Australia have increased, with recent efforts allegedly carried out by Russia, Iran and North Korea making headlines either intentionally or due to poor execution, a leading cyber security expert says.</p> <p>Fergus Hanson, head of the International Cyber Policy Centre at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, said those three countries, along with China, were the most common “threat actors” conducting cyber attacks around the world.</p> <p>“Each one has very specific motives, so if you take NotPetya (ransomware that locks a computer until a ransom is paid) ... the Russians targeted that through a Ukrainian accounting firm and it was probably meant to go after Ukrainian companies,” Mr Hanson said. “But because it was so poorly executed it ended up spreading from the accounting company, globally.”</p> <p>But he said the “WannaCry” attack, that infected more than 300,000 computers and for which North Korea has been blamed, was more about demonstrating the hackers’ abilities rather than purely raising money.</p> <p>“That was notionally a ransomware attack, but probably not specifically designed to be a money-making scheme. It was probably another capability that they were demonstrating,” he said.</p> <p>On Wednesday computer security company McAfee released a report alleging North Korea’s hacking unit had “implanted” malware into the systems of unnamed organisations in Australia and elsewhere as part of an ongoing data-theft campaign.</p> <p>That operation, dubbed “GhostSecret” began last month, originating in the Turkish financial sector before spreading to targets largely in the Asia-Pacific region.</p> <p>The federal government yesterday declined to comment on the McAfee report.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Facebook criticized for ‘love jihad’ posts
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/a-muslim-and-a-hindu-thought-they-could-be-a-couple-then-came-the-love-jihad-hit-list/2018/04/26/257010be-2d1b-11e8-8dc9-3b51e028b845_story.html?utm_term=.f4ae12622e42
GIST	KOLKATA, India — The 21-year-old Hindu college student was having a quiet breakfast with her mother when her phone pinged with a terrifying message. Her name was on a hit list.

She and her Muslim boyfriend had been targeted publicly on Facebook along with about 100 interfaith couples — each of them Muslim men and their Hindu girlfriends. She immediately called her boyfriend to warn him.

The Facebook post included instructions: “This is a list of girls who have become victims of love jihad. We urge all Hindu lions to find and hunt down all the men mentioned here.” At least two followers heeded the call.

The phrase “love jihad” is meant to inflame dark fears that Muslim men who woo Hindu women might be trying to convert them to Islam — a prejudice that the Hindu right has tried to stoke for nearly a decade.

But use of the term has spread on social media with the rise of the Hindu nationalist party of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at a time when religious hatred is growing on Facebook in India, its largest market.

Facebook is facing rampant criticism that hate speech spread on the platform has fueled ethnic and religious violence in Asia, in places such as Burma and Sri Lanka.

During his appearances before Congress April 10-11, Facebook chief executive Mark Zuckerberg said the company was “working” on a way to remove hate speech within 24 hours of its appearance and adding dozens of new Burmese-language content monitors.

“It’s clear now we didn’t do enough” to prevent the platform from being “used for harm,” Zuckerberg said in his statement.

But the company has said little about its prevention efforts in India, its largest market of more than 240 million users.

The list of Hindu-Muslim couples was posted by Satish Mylavarapu, a mild-looking sales and marketing manager in Bangalore who propagates militant Hinduism to thousands of followers in Facebook groups and elsewhere.

“It’s a matter of Muslims taking over our blood and taking over our wombs — the wombs that would give Hindu children,” he said.

Highly motivated Hindu extremist “volunteers” across India assembled the list by meticulously plotting the locations of mosques and girls schools and colleges around the country and combing young women’s profiles for photos or posts that would link them with Muslim men.

Meanwhile, conservative Hindu groups supporting Modi’s powerful Bharatiya Janata Party began pushing into areas in India’s east and south traditionally dominated by other languages and regional parties, including the couple’s home state of West Bengal.

In recent weeks, West Bengal has been roiled by riots between Hindus and Muslims that followed sword-waving devotees marching in honor of Lord Ram — a Hindu deity who is not normally worshiped in the region. At least four people died.

Civil society groups have charged that Facebook has not acted quickly enough in such instances to curb the hate speech that inflamed tensions throughout Asia, including Muslim-Buddhist riots in Sri Lanka and Burma’s exodus of more than 850,000 Rohingya Muslims into Bangladesh. Facebook was dubbed the “beast” in that crisis by a United Nations monitor.

In India, a March study by the Observer Research Foundation, a think tank based in New Delhi, showed that religion is increasingly used as a basis of hate speech on Facebook, a jump of 19 to 30 percent between 2016 and 2017.

“I don’t think Facebook has a clue how to monitor hate speech,” said Maya Mirchandani, a senior fellow who co-wrote the study. She said that more proactive text monitoring systems are not in place, including among its rapidly growing non-English speaking audiences.

“Maintaining a safe community for people to connect and share on Facebook is absolutely critical to us,” a Facebook spokesman said in a statement. “We have policies that prohibit hate speech and credible threats of harm, and we will remove this content when we’re made aware of it.”

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HEADLINE	04/27 Chrome VPN extensions leaking data
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/chrome-vpn-extensions-leaking-your-dns-data/
GIST	<p>Last month, HackRead reported how tons of popular VPN (Virtual Private Network) software were leaking real IP addresses of users through WebRTC leak along with a list of VPN vendors saving users’ Internet logs despite claiming otherwise.</p> <p>Now, a new study has been conducted according to which some popular Chrome VPN extensions are leaking DNS related data of their users – Here, it must be noted that the DNS leak is not related to the WebRTC issue but DNS prefetching in Chrome browser activated by default.</p> <p>The study was conducted by John Mason of TheBestVPN alongside with an ethical hacker from Cure53 who goes by the Twitter handle of File Descriptor. It may shock many that 7 out of 17 VPN extensions on Chrome are leaking DNS data.</p> <p>Chrome VPN Extensions that are leaking DNS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1: Hola VPN 2: Touch VPN 3: Betternet 4: DotVPN 5: HoxxVPN 6: Ivacy VPN 7: Opera VPN <p>The aforementioned VPN extensions are used by millions of users around the world, for instance, Hola VPN has over 8.7 million users, Touch VPN has 2 million users, Betternet is used by 1.4 million users while DotVPN has 900,000 users. This means DNS related data of millions of users is currently at risk.</p> <p>Chrome VPN Extensions that are NOT leaking DNS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1: NordVPN 2: PureVPN 3: WindScribe 4: CyberGhost 5: TunnelBear 6: ZenmateVPN 7: HotSpot Shield 8: VPN Unlimited 9: Avira Phantom VPN 10: Private Internet Access
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HEADLINE	04/26 Sounds of DDoS in NetFlow logs
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SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/cadence-in-chaos-sounds-of-ddos-in/
GIST	<p>For those who appreciate the healing power of music, new research could prove to be a magical security tool. By correlating traffic types from NetFlow logs with sounds of instruments, researchers at Imperva were able to translate changes in network traffic into song.</p> <p>Inspired by a TED Talk called "Can We Create New Senses for Humans?" presented by Dr. David Eagleman, adjunct professor in the Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University, Imperva's team wondered whether tapping into the sense of sound could change the way they interpret network traffic.</p> <p>"Auditory perception, we learned, has a lot of advantages oversight, especially in terms of processing spatial, temporal and volumetric information. The ability to register the most delicate differences in frequency resolution and amplitude opens up a Pandora's Box worth of possibilities in data perception," Imperva wrote in a blog post.</p> <p>Turns out that sonification is an effective monitoring tool, so they set to work to figure out how to make the internet sing. In order to collect NetFlow data, they created a Python 3 script, then processed the data into Open Source Control messages which were then converted into sound using a Ruby-based algorithmic synthesizer.</p> <p>Assigning different instrumental sounds to the varied traffic types created a melody that revealed the ebb and flow of the traffic levels and also revealed shifts in pitch and volume.</p> <p>A significant shift in traffic would be the harbinger of a DDoS attack. So as not to rely solely on shifts in volume as an alert, the team decided to add an additional mechanism that would really sound an alarm bell and activate a mitigation service. Their choice? The sound of a tomato being squeezed.</p>
Return to Top	<p><i>Click on source link to hear sonorous sounds of data</i></p>

HEADLINE	04/26 For sale: next-generation phishing kit
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/simple-but-not-cheap-phishing-kit-found-for-sale-on-dark-web/article/761520/
GIST	<p>Cybercriminals are nothing if not attuned to finding new customers for their wares, as Check Point and CyberInt found when they came across a next-generation phishing kit for sale on the Dark Web geared toward the neophyte, but discerning, hacker.</p> <p>A joint investigative venture by Check Point and CyberInt found [A]pache Next Generation Advanced Phishing Kit on the Dark Web, which the companies described as a fifth-generation level kit. The kit is not necessarily inexpensive retailing for between \$100 and \$300, compared to the \$20 or \$50 most kits sell for, but for the price [A]pache delivers what the researchers called one of the most advanced phishing kits yet spotted.</p> <p>“With [A]pache's next-generation phishing kit, however, threat actors are provided with a full suite of tools to carry out their attack. These include an entire back-office interface with which they can create convincing fake retail product pages and manage their campaign,” the report stated. This includes having their own versions of sites including, Walmart, Americanas, Ponto Frio, Casas Bahia, Submarino, Shoptime and Extra.</p> <p>At this point, the product is developed primarily for use in the Brazilian market, but the fact that some American brands are also included means it could be used in the U.S. too.</p> <p>The kits then lay out the step by step process the users need to follow to get their phishing scam up and running.</p> <p>After choosing a retailer to emulate the customer are shown how to register a domain name to be used, a</p>

payment option for the victims is picked. Next the malicious actor inserts legitimate product URLs from the site being replicated to help make the fake site appear real. This includes setting prices for the products and the kit sellers suggest making the prices competitive with what is available in the real world to add an extra layer of authenticity.

“Care needs to be taken here though as reducing prices too low though would raise suspicions with captivated ‘customers’. Finally, the kit owner has to learn how to view the victim’s stolen information,” the report states.

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HEADLINE	04/26 Hackers love healthcare
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/endpoint/why-hackers-love-healthcare/a/d-id/1331537
GIST	<p>Much like the rest of the world, healthcare organizations are shifting work to cloud services in order to improve accessibility and patient care. However, the migration of these workloads and moving valuable information such as PHI (personal health information) and PII (personally identifiable information) to the cloud has also led to cybercriminals taking a particular interest in the industry.</p> <p>The number of ransomware and other malware attacks is rising incredibly fast in the healthcare industry, putting human lives as well as critical data at risk. From 2011 through 2014, the sector — including hospitals, labs, pharmacies, drug companies and outpatient clinics — experienced the highest number of data breaches of all industries. What makes these organizations such a popular target?</p> <p>1. Highly Valuable Data</p> <p>One of the key aspects making healthcare organizations a top target is the value of their data. Commonly, a single stolen credit card number yields an average \$2,000 profit and quickly becomes worthless. Healthcare data, however, such as PHI or PII, is extremely valuable on the black market.</p> <p>A single PHI file, for example, can yield a profit of up to \$20,000. This is mainly because it can take weeks or months for a healthcare data breach to be discovered, enabling cybercriminals to extract much more valuable data. Moreover, because healthcare data can contain dates of birth and Social Security numbers, it is much more difficult or even impossible to change, so thieves can take advantage of it for a longer period of time.</p> <p>2. Lack of IT Investment and Training</p> <p>Another reason the healthcare industry is popular among cybercriminals is its systematic underinvestment in IT security. Most healthcare organizations spend just 3% of their IT budgets on security, while the SANS Institute — the largest provider of cybersecurity training and certifications — recommends spending at least 10%.</p> <p>For most healthcare organizations, security is often an afterthought. They don't provide regular cybersecurity training for their employees, which could help reduce insider threats. For example, 18% of healthcare employees say they're willing to sell their login credentials for between \$500 and \$1,000. And about one-quarter of healthcare employees know someone in their organization who has engaged in this practice.</p> <p>To address employee-related cyber vulnerabilities, it's important to note that while training is essential, it won't magically protect patients' digital data. Although some hospitals struggle to deploy the most basic IT security measures, such as intrusion detection and the ability to wipe lost or stolen devices, it is imperative that basic cyber hygiene practices are coupled with ongoing training to both protect well-intended employees and mitigate future data loss from those seeking to profit.</p> <p>3. Highly Connected Systems</p> <p>Having shifted workloads to the cloud, healthcare organizations have highly connected systems that run the risk of being deeply affected even if the attack takes place on smaller, partial systems. In other words,</p>

	<p>a cyberattack in one place could bring down the entire system. In May 2017, the WannaCry ransomware attack forced multiple hospitals across the United Kingdom to turn away ambulances transporting patients and cancel surgeries that were within minutes of starting. Even basic processes like admitting patients and printing wrist bands were compromised.</p> <p>The impact of WannaCry illustrates how important it is for healthcare organizations to be able to function and provide patient care during a cyberattack. After all, lives are at risk, meaning there's a general urgency to get back to business as soon as possible. For attackers, this urgency makes it extra tempting to target healthcare organizations, because they assume it will make them more likely to pay the ransom to reverse the infection.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 New phishing attack uses online quiz
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/vulnerabilities---threats/new-phishing-attack-targets-550m-email-users-worldwide/d/d-id/1331654
GIST	<p>A new phishing campaign was discovered sending more than 550 million emails within the first quarter of 2018, according to data from Vade Secure. The threat was discovered in early January and has primarily hit users in the US, UK, France, Germany, and the Netherlands.</p> <p>Victims receive emails disguised to come from popular brands and services in their home country. Attackers try to steal their banking information by offering coupons or discounts in exchange for their participation in an online quiz or contest.</p> <p>Experts believe a serious criminal organization is behind this campaign, which doesn't use pirated websites as many phishing attacks do. This one appears to use leased and legitimate IP addresses, servers, and domain names, which would drive infrastructure costs up to tens of thousands of dollars. They also use tools to shorten URLs and conceal the ultimate destination.</p> <p>These sophisticated techniques caused the threat to bypass many existing email security tools, researchers report.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Phishing campaign delivers new malware
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/ransomware-warning-this-phishing-campaign-delivers-new-malware-variants/
GIST	<p>A new spam campaign designed to infect victims with GandCrab ransomware has surged over the past few days, as the criminals behind the scheme look to infect as many victims as possible.</p> <p>GandCrab first emerged in January and those behind it have regularly updated the ransomware and altered their attack techniques in order to maximise profit from the file-encrypting malware.</p> <p>Analysis by researchers at security company Fortinet found that three new samples of GandCrab 2.1 are being distributed as the payload in a single mass spam campaign.</p> <p>"This means that newly created samples are being pushed simultaneously, possibly with different configurations, or simply in an attempt to evade specific file signatures," said researchers.</p> <p>Phishing emails feature common subjects about about payments, tickets, invoices and orders and contain a Javascript attachment which when executed, downloads GandCrab from a malicious URL.</p> <p>Tens of thousands of GandCrab spam emails are being distributed each day, with mail servers hosted in the US by far the most common target, accounting for three quarters of deliveries. When it comes to</p>

	<p>successful infections, the US currently accounts for the fourth largest percentage of victims, behind Peru, Chile and India.</p> <p>Those infected with GandCrab are directed to a site which can only be accessed by the Tor browser, where they can "purchase" a private key to decrypt the files.</p> <p>A ransom note demands a payment of \$400 - which previous GandCrab attacks have demanded be paid in Dash cryptocurrency, which is faster to process and more difficult for the authorities to track than Bitcoin. The figure is doubled if the victim doesn't pay within a certain amount of time.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Dutch police shutter Anon-IB
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/police-shut-down-anon-ib-an-infamous-revenge-porn-forum/
GIST	<p>Dutch police announced today that they had seized the servers of Anon-IB, a notorious online portal where users would share pictures of revenge porn and child pornography.</p> <p>The website became famous after it hosted pictures from the Celebgate (Fapping) scandal, nude photos of US female marines, photos of underage girls from US high-schools, and was the go-to place where angry boyfriends or girlfriends would go to upload nude photos of their ex-partners — a practice known as revenge porn.</p> <p>Anon-IB is also famous for its "collectors" — users who keep private nude photo collections, which they trade with each other like baseball or Pokemon cards.</p> <p>Anon-IB servers were located in the Netherlands</p> <p>Besides shutting down the site, Dutch police also announced the arrest of three suspects — a 28-year-old from the city of Heerlen, a 31-year-old from Culemborg, and a 35-year-old from Groningen. They are also currently investigating two other suspects, a 19-year-old from Terneuzen, and a 26-year-old from Geleen.</p> <p>These five are regular users who uploaded pictures on the site, not Anon-IB administrators. Police arrested the three after seizing Anon-IB servers located in the Netherlands. They tracked down the five because the suspects failed to hide their IP addresses.</p> <p>Police told Dutch TV station RTL Nieuws that some of the suspects they are investigating would meet women on the street, get their names, and then try to guess their passwords by for their online accounts, hoping to discover nude images or videos. The suspects said they combined names, birthdays, and other common strings when trying to guess a victim's account password.</p> <p>Besides storing nude photos, the forum also hosted tutorials on hacking online accounts. Entire threads would teach readers how to obtain publicly leaked data, extract the passwords from public breaches, and use the passwords to hack into people's online accounts to search for nude photos.</p> <p>RTL Nieuws journalists also found topics where Anon-IB users would talk about extorting hacked victims, either for cryptocurrency or for more nude photos to add to their collections.</p> <p>Dutch police to notify all affected victims</p> <p>Dutch police say they already notified some of the women who had their data leaked on the site and plan to contact further victims if they manage to identify more persons in the coming months.</p> <p>Police said that many of the women's whose data was uploaded on the site were unaware they'd been hacked.</p>

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HEADLINE	04/26 New 'interesting' C# ransomware emerges
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-c-ransomware-compiles-itself-at-runtime/
GIST	<p>A new in-development ransomware was discovered that has an interesting characteristic. Instead of the distributed executable performing the ransomware functionality, the executables compiles an embedded encrypted C# program at runtime and launches it directly into memory.</p> <p>Discovered by MalwareHunterTeam, this ransomware contains an encrypted string that is embedded into the dropper... This string is then decrypted using an included decryption key. Now that the source code for the ransomware executable has been decrypted, the decrypted code is sent to another function that compiles it using the CSharpCodeProvider class and launches it directly into memory.</p> <p>This method is probably being used to prevent the dropper from being detected by security software as any malicious behavior is hidden inside the encrypted string.</p> <p>As for the ransomware itself, other than it saving the decryption key and IV to a file on the desktop, it is fully functional. Therefore, it wouldn't be surprising to see the ransomware being distributed at some point.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 MongoDB server exposes Bezop users
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/exposed-mongodb-server-exposes-details-of-cryptocurrency-users/
GIST	<p>Security researchers have stumbled across a MongoDB database containing the personal details of over 25,000 users who invested in or received Bezop (BEZ) cryptocurrency.</p> <p>According to cybersecurity firm Kromtech, the database contained information such as full names, home addresses, email addresses, encrypted passwords, wallet information, and scanned passports, driver's licenses, or IDs.</p> <p>The database stored information related to a "bounty programme" that the Bezop team ran at the start of the year, during which it handed out Bezop tokens to users who promoted the currency on their social media accounts.</p> <p>A Bezop spokesperson admitted to the breach, claiming the database was inadvertently exposed online while the dev team dealt with a DDoS attack on January 8.</p> <p>A spokesperson told Bleeping Computer today that no user funds were stolen following this exposure.</p> <p>Database is now secured</p> <p>The Bezop spokesperson said the database contained details on around 6,500 ICO investors, while the rest was for users who participated in the public bounty program and received Bezop tokens in return.</p> <p>The data appears to have remained exposed online until March 30, when Kromtech researchers spotted the MongoDB database on a Google Cloud server. The database was without an authentication system in place, allowing anyone connecting to it access to the stored information.</p> <p>Kromtech researcher Bob Diachenko told Bleeping Computer today that the database was taken down within hours after he tweeted the Bezop team.</p>

	<p>"That database has since been closed and secured," the Bezop team said this week, also claiming it notified users of the incident already. "Investor identity cards were also not stored on the database rather a URL link to them. This is also offline now."</p> <p>Diachenko confirmed that an authentication system now protects the database he found at the end of March, albeit there is no way of telling if anyone except the Kromtech team discovered the same database.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 NKorea elites ditching Facebook
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/technology/north-koreas-elites-are-ditching-facebook-for-chinese-social-networks/
GIST	<p>Following the publication of a report in July 2017, North Korea's elites, some of the country's few citizens allowed on the Internet, have greatly altered their online behavior, and are now obfuscating their browsing activity, and have ditched US websites like Facebook or Instagram for alternative Chinese social networks.</p> <p>The company at the base of these findings is US threat intelligence firm Recorded Future. The company's engineers have been passively tracking and analyzing Internet traffic from North Koreans inside and outside the country's borders since April 2017.</p> <p>They published an initial report last summer, highlighting how the very few North Koreans that were allowed to surf the world wide web were no different than any other user.</p> <p>The report showed that North Koreans liked to spend most of their time streaming videos, playing games, interacting on social networks, or watching porn.</p> <p>North Koreans are now Tor and VPN fans</p> <p>But the report appears to have made it into the North Korean government's hands as well, because, between December 2017 and March 2018, the same researchers spotted a major shift in online behavior.</p> <p>The biggest change was that the amount of obfuscated traffic has grown from 1 percent in July 2017 to nearly 13 percent in March this year. Obfuscated traffic is web activity hidden behind encrypted HTTPS connections, under Tor clients, or VPN, VPS, or other tunneling protocols (known as PPTPs).</p> <p>Popular web obfuscation protocols in North Korea</p> <p>There was a clear indication that those very few North Koreans allowed to surf the Internet were clearly told to hide their activity whenever possible.</p> <p>North Koreans ditch Facebook</p> <p>Furthermore, authorities appear to have also instructed users to stop hanging around on US social networks. Nowadays, North Koreans are avid users of Alibaba, Tencent, and Baidu.</p> <p>"In July, our data demonstrated that North Korean leadership heavily consumed Western social media, especially Facebook, Google, and Instagram," says Recorded Future analyst Priscilla Moriuchi. "In fact, Facebook was by far the most popular service, with more than double the daily actual usage than any of its Chinese-language counterparts."</p> <p>Nowadays, things have dramatically changed, so much so that Facebook and Instagram activity had diminished so much, it wasn't even visible on a Recorded Future chart.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/27 World largest spam botnet gets update
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/worlds-largest-spam-botnet-finds-a-new-way-to-avoid-detection-for-now/
GIST	<p>Necurs, the world's largest spam botnet, with millions of infected computers under its control, has updated its arsenal and is currently utilizing a new technique to infect victims.</p> <p>This new technique consists of sending an email to a potential victim containing an archive file, which unzips to a file with the extension of .URL. This is a typical Windows shortcut file that opens a web page directly into a browser, instead of a location on disk.</p> <p>The final destination of this link is a remote script file that downloads and automatically executes a final payload.</p> <p>Necurs dropping Quant Loader via .URL shortcut files</p> <p>For this particular spam run, Necurs had been infecting victims with Quant Loader, a run-of-the-mill and nothing-special malware family that is intended only to gain boot persistence and download another strain of more potent malware down the road.</p> <p>While this technique is most likely not new entirely, as crooks have abused .URL files in the past, it is new for Necurs. What makes this technique stand out is the simplified infection chain, which now relies only on delivering a zipped .URL shortcut file.</p> <p>For the past six years, since Necurs has been around, the botnet's operators have rarely used such a simple spam technique and have always relied on complicated infection chains.</p> <p>We've seen stuff like one-time or double-zipped archives delivering WSF files, JS files, Visual Basic scripts, and all sorts of Office file formats, either boobytrapped with macros or leveraging exploits to infect victims.</p> <p>New technique evades email malware scanners</p> <p>The purpose of this much simpler routine is to avoid malware scanners that analyze emails, looking for malicious links or boobytrapped attachments. Such solutions work on preset rules, many of which have been set up by security researchers based on previously observed malicious patterns.</p> <p>The deployment of a simple .URL file is not a game-breaker, as security researchers only need to update existing detection rules with a new one, but this will give the Necurs botnet time to breathe and infect victims easier in the following weeks, as email malware scanners will receive updated detection rules.</p> <p>At that point, just like we've seen Necurs in the past years, botnet operators will just make a small tweak to the infection chain —like putting the .URL file inside a double-zipped file instead of a one-time zipped file— and this whole cat and mouse game will start anew.</p> <p>How users can protect themselves</p> <p>What users need to know —or remember, if they're old enough to have seen this trick before— is that .URL files work like typical Windows shortcut file, such as .LNK, and hence, can use custom icons.</p> <p>Trend Micro, the cyber-security firm who spotted this recent Necurs .URL-based malspam campaign, warns that crooks are using the standard folder icon to hide .URL files.</p> <p>This makes it somewhat easy to trick users into thinking the email file attachment they just unzipped has created a folder that they need to enter and view the actual file. Unfortunately, this is what crooks want because trying to access this faux folder will launch the infection chain.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Crypto crime wave is here
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-crypto-crime-wave-is-here-1524753366
GIST	<p>On a Saturday afternoon in November, Louis Meza made plans to meet a friend and fellow cryptocurrency enthusiast for drinks at Ruby Tuesday in New York City’s Times Square. “We’re going to have a great time,” Meza said in a text. “And by the way, I’m putting you in an Uber car at the end of the night.”</p> <p>A former salesman at the food-delivery service Grubhub, Meza is described by friends as gregarious and courteous—a 35-year-old poker buff with an entrepreneurial streak and an appetite for risk. The two men had known each other for about 15 years. They met for drinks and, around 7:40 p.m., Meza’s friend said he was heading to the subway. Meza insisted on an Uber and ushered his friend—listed in court documents as “the victim”—into a gray minivan waiting outside.</p> <p>According to the Manhattan district attorney’s office, a gunman hiding in the back seat of the van popped up and demanded the victim’s wallet, keys, cellphone and a USB drive, which contained ether, a type of cryptocurrency. The victim handed over everything but the drive, which wasn’t on his person; the gunman pulled a hood over the victim’s head. “Where is your 24-word passphrase?” he demanded again and again.</p> <p>After two hours, the victim managed to escape. He found himself in Harlem, where, according to prosecutors, he called 911 from a deli. The victim had made a “very small investment” in cryptocurrency as early as 2010 that had since mushroomed to \$1.8 million. He kept the ether on a USB drive in his apartment, along with a piece of paper containing the passphrase required to access it. By the time he got home, both the drive and the passphrase were gone.</p> <p>An indictment unsealed in December accuses Meza of robbery, kidnapping and other crimes. Meza pleaded not guilty. But according to prosecutors, security-camera video shows Meza unlocking the victim’s apartment with keys and emerging about a minute later with a small white box, which, according to the victim, held his ether. The day after the theft, Meza transferred \$1.8 million in ether to an online account in his own name. “We see the \$1.8 million get deposited into that account on the morning of November 5, and then we see it being moved all over the place,” Assistant District Attorney James Vinocur told the judge in the case.</p> <p>Vinocur told the judge that prosecutors had been able to seize only about \$600,000 of the money. “\$1.2 million is still outstanding, and we don’t know where it is,” he said. “That is the nature of cryptocurrency, that we can see the address it was sent to. It doesn’t mean much to us. It’s just a string of numbers and letters.”</p> <p>And what seemed like an open-and-shut robbery case is proving much more complicated.</p> <p>The Meza case is part of a recent spike in cryptocurrency crime, prompted by the soaring values of digital currencies like bitcoin. Chainalysis Inc., a firm that analyzes cryptocurrency transactions, says reported thefts of bitcoin worldwide increased from \$3 million in 2013 to \$89 million last year.</p> <p>For many criminals, cryptocurrency is less cumbersome than cash. Hackers hold computer systems hostage and demand instant, anonymous payment in bitcoin. Drug dealers sell in dark corners of the internet, obscuring their names and locations. Narcotics traffickers move and launder their profits with clicks of a mouse. “The cases have exploded,” says Gabriel Bewley, a special agent in the virtual-currency initiative at the Drug Enforcement Administration.</p> <p>Blockchain Intelligence Group Inc., which makes software that tracks cryptocurrency use, estimates illegal activity accounts for about 20% of the transactions of five major cryptocurrencies—bitcoin, Monero, Zcash, ether and litecoin—or about \$600 million each day. Researchers working at the University of Sydney used artificial intelligence to identify cryptocurrency transactions consistent with criminal behavior and estimated \$72 billion of illegal activity last year using bitcoin alone.</p>

What exactly is cryptocurrency?

In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, bitcoin's anonymous creator published a white paper under the pseudonym Satoshi Nakamoto. "Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic Cash System" described the major impetus behind the digital currency: Eliminate the need for third-party financial institutions like banks and brokerages. "A purely peer-to-peer version of electronic cash," Nakamoto wrote, "would allow online payments to be sent directly from one party to another."

Every bitcoin transaction would be recorded on an encrypted public ledger now known as the blockchain, preventing someone from spending the same bitcoin twice or counterfeiting the currency. And because the blockchain is stored on a decentralized network of computers, the records of these transactions would be theoretically impossible for hackers to corrupt. But removing banks from the equation poses a problem for law enforcement, which relies on financial institutions to provide records needed to secure convictions.

Bitcoin is one of about 1,500 cryptocurrencies, all of which exist in a legal and regulatory gray area. The Internal Revenue Service treats cryptocurrency like property—not like a currency or a security but like an asset. The Securities and Exchange Commission, meanwhile, has said that initial coin offerings, or sales of new cryptocurrencies, should be subject to securities laws to protect investors from fraud. In the court system, the definition is similarly ambiguous.

A federal judge in Brooklyn is expected to rule on one issue in the coming months. The case involves a Brooklyn businessman named Maksim Zaslavskiy who, in July and September, launched initial coin offerings for two new cryptocurrencies: REcoin, purportedly backed by real estate, and Diamond Reserve Coin, supposedly backed by diamonds. Federal prosecutors charged Zaslavskiy with fraud, arguing that he sold unregistered securities. Zaslavskiy's lawyers have asked the judge to dismiss the charges, arguing that cryptocurrencies aren't securities and therefore aren't subject to securities laws. "Virtual currencies such as the ones at issue here present regulatory challenges for securities laws that were written in the 1930s—decades before the invention of the computer," the lawyers, Mildred Whalen and Len Kamdang, wrote in February. Zaslavskiy's case is pending.

In 2014, Florida state prosecutors charged website designer Michell Espinoza with money laundering after he sold bitcoin to an undercover detective who said he would use the currency to buy stolen credit-card numbers. Espinoza, prosecutors argued, was acting as an unlicensed money-services business and facilitating illegal activity. The judge disagreed. "This Court isn't an expert in economics," she wrote. "However, it is very clear, even to someone with limited knowledge in the area, that bitcoin has a long way to go before it is the equivalent of money." Prosecutors have appealed the ruling.

This legal uncertainty, combined with cryptocurrencies' volatility, is complicating the prosecution of Louis Meza. The Manhattan district attorney's office asked to sell the seized ether because prosecutors feared its value would decrease, says Moshe Horn, Meza's lawyer.

"They wanted to turn it into cash so they couldn't be blamed," Horn says. "Then the question becomes, do they have a right to?"

The district attorney's office ultimately decided not to sell it. The answer to his lawyer's question is still unclear.

Digital currency's criminal history

Criminal activity has plagued digital currency since its inception. "Remember E-gold?" says Serrin Turner, a cybersecurity lawyer in New York. E-gold was the name of both a digital-currency service and a currency that was purportedly backed by actual gold. Its founder designed it as a payment system that would allow for the easy, anonymous transfer of funds. This made it popular with criminals, according to federal prosecutors, who claimed E-gold facilitated child exploitation, investment scams and other criminal activities. In 2008, E-gold's directors pleaded guilty to money-laundering charges. The service subsequently closed, but similar payment systems quickly took its place.

"This notion has been around for a long time," Turner says. "Digital currency has greased the wheels of

the cybercriminal ecosystem.”

Before joining the firm Latham & Watkins, Turner was a prosecutor in the U.S. attorney’s office in Manhattan, where he prosecuted E-gold successor Liberty Reserve, a Costa Rica-based digital-currency business that enabled anonymous payments. In 2016, Liberty Reserve founder Arthur Budovsky admitted to laundering more than \$250 million in criminal proceeds and was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Crime involving digital currencies has skyrocketed in lockstep with their valuations. From bitcoin stickups to global money laundering, tech-savvy criminals are becoming increasingly anonymous. And law enforcement is scrambling to keep up.

Turner’s best-known case, the one that put bitcoin on the map, was the prosecution of the founder of Silk Road, the first large-scale “darknet” market to use cryptocurrency. Darknet markets exist on the so-called Dark Web, a section of the internet accessible only with software designed to make users anonymous. Silk Road was an online marketplace that accepted only bitcoin as payment, allowing its vendors and customers to conceal their locations and identities. From 2011 to 2013, more than 100,000 Silk Road users bought and sold over \$200 million in drugs and illegal goods, ranging from weapons to forged driver’s licenses, according to prosecutors.

Authorities closed Silk Road in October 2013. Silk Road 2.0 appeared the next month and remained active for about a year before authorities shut it down. Other illicit marketplaces emerged to take its place. The July 2017 takedown of the darknet market AlphaBay involved the cooperation of law-enforcement agencies in more than seven countries. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the site had twice as many users as Silk Road, and from 2015 to 2017, transactions totaled more than \$1 billion in bitcoin and other digital currencies.

Headline-grabbing arrests and seizures have done little to slow the flow of money to darknet markets. Last year, \$660 million in bitcoin was sent to darknet marketplaces, up from \$57 million in 2012, according to Chainalysis.

“It’s kind of like Whac-A-Mole,” says Greg Cipolaro, the chief executive of Digital Asset Research, a cryptocurrency-analysis firm. “Every time they close one down, another one opens.”

One of the largest darknet marketplaces operating today is Dream Market, where, on a recent afternoon, Turkish heroin was advertised as “topquality!” and “Vanilla Kush weed” as “100% organic.” There were weapons for sale—tasers, butterfly knives, a “wallet ninja multi-tool”—along with Nike tracksuits and “lifetime” porn-account subscriptions. A vendor named Bizzey advertised “5x XTC 220mg Donald Trump,” for 0.004038 bitcoin, or \$31.68. A photo showed orange tablets resembling children’s multivitamins in the shape of Donald Trump’s head. Bizzey had 4.94 stars and 36 reviews. “Amazing speed and stealth,” read a five-star review. “Even got a freebie. would recommend!”

In December, officers led Louis Meza into a Manhattan courtroom, where a clerk informed him that he had been charged with grand larceny, kidnapping, robbery and other crimes. The clerk asked Meza how he would like to plead.

“Not guilty,” Meza said.

During the hearing, Vinocur, the assistant district attorney, said the prosecution’s case was strong, citing the security-camera video and statements Meza made to police.

According to Meza’s lawyer, the case will be uncommonly difficult for the prosecutors. “The burden of proof is on the prosecution to show where the cryptocurrency is, how did it get there and who put it there,” Horn says. “It’s not like walking into a bank vault and saying, ‘There’s the cash.’ ”

The missing ether underscores a larger issue facing law enforcement: the difficulty—and occasionally the impossibility—of investigating and prosecuting crimes involving cryptocurrency. “Prosecutors are always

about following the money,” says Scott Christie, a white-collar criminal-defense lawyer at McCarter & English, who previously headed the computer-hacking division at the U.S. attorney’s office in New Jersey. “If you can’t follow the money, you can’t prove your case.”

A number of firms have developed software designed to follow the flow of cryptocurrency transactions. In a financial-technology co-working space in Manhattan, Kim Grauer, a senior economist at Chainalysis, opens a software program called Reactor. “When you go into Reactor, you’re going into the world of bitcoin,” Grauer says. Reactor and other so-called blockchain-analysis programs visually depict the trail of cryptocurrency transactions, allowing law enforcement to see the movement of funds in a way that would be impossible with cash. But these programs have their limits. Many transactions are associated only with anonymous addresses, represented by the “string of numbers and letters” that confounded prosecutors in the Meza case.

To identify an individual associated with one of these addresses, Grauer says, an investigator would look for an “off ramp,” the point where cryptocurrency is converted into fiat, or government-backed, currency. This is typically done through exchanges, websites that let users trade cryptocurrencies and convert them to traditional currency.

Exchanges are the part of the cryptocurrency ecosystem most accessible to law enforcement. If a criminal uses an exchange that collects its customers’ personal information, prosecutors can attach a name to a transaction—provided the exchange cooperates with authorities. But tech-savvy criminals are increasingly opening accounts with fake names at overseas exchanges that don’t comply with U.S. laws.

In June, Kathryn Rodriguez, a former assistant U.S. attorney at the Justice Department in Washington, testified about cryptocurrency in front of a U.S. House of Representatives committee. Rodriguez said subpoenas are ineffective when exchanges don’t require names or identifying documents to open an account. “Even though investigators can follow the funds by analyzing the blockchain, they may not be able to connect those funds to a culprit in the real world,” she said. “We have received ‘Mickey Mouse’ who resides at ‘123 Main Street’ in subpoena returns.”

Noncompliant exchanges are just one of the tools criminals use to evade authorities. “What we’re seeing crooks do now is use a mixer or a tumbler,” says Tom Flattery, a deputy district attorney in the high-tech unit of Santa Clara County’s district attorney’s office. “It’s a service that will mix transactions with several others, moving through multiple accounts and multiple countries. There’s no way for law enforcement to track it.”

One cryptocurrency mixer, Bitcoin Blender, claims to make transactions “100% anonymous.” According to the company’s website, “Bitcoin Blender completely removes any connection you have with the coins you buy or sell, meaning nobody can use Blockchain Analysis to track you down.” Unsurprisingly, Bitcoin Blender could not be reached for comment.

Criminals seeking additional protection have abandoned bitcoin in favor of currencies that offer additional privacy protections. Monero, a currency its website calls “secure” and “untraceable,” uses technology that hides the sender, receiver and amount of transactions. Although recent research has pointed to possible security flaws, a Monero spokesman has said developers have made improvements designed to increase privacy.

Mixers and identity-shielding currencies point to a future where criminals’ financial transactions could be impossible to trace. Large narcotics traffickers and money launderers are hiring increasingly sophisticated technicians to move cryptocurrencies as discreetly as possible, says Jean Walsh, chief of the investigations division at the Bronx district attorney’s office, a trend she expects to continue until cryptocurrency is adequately regulated. “The amount of effort to evade being traced and tracked, both on computers and on electronic transactions—it’s something they spend 24 hours a day concentrating on,” Walsh says. “Once the criminals continue to improve their technology, our fear is that they will be anonymous.”

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HEADLINE	04/26 Study: non-malware attacks on the rise
SOURCE	http://www.infosecisland.com/blogview/25059-Non-Malware-Attacks-What-They-Are-and-How-to-Protect-Against-Them.html
GIST	<p>Non-malware attacks are on the rise. According to a study by the Ponemon Institute, 29 percent of the attacks organizations faced in 2017 were fileless. And in 2018, this number may increase up to 35 percent. So, what are non-malware attacks, how do they differ from traditional threats, why are they so dangerous, and what can you do to prevent them?</p> <p>Non-malware attacks: what are they? Non-malware or fileless attack is a type of cyber attack in which the malicious code has no body in the file system. In contrast to the attacks carried out with the help of traditional malicious software, non-malware attacks don't require installing any software on a victim's machine. Basically, hackers have found a way to turn Windows against itself and carry out fileless attacks using built-in Windows tools.</p> <p>The idea behind non-malware attacks is pretty simple: instead of dropping custom tools that could be flagged as malware, hackers use the tools that already exist on a device, take over a legitimate system process and run the malicious code in its memory space. This approach is also called "living off the land."</p> <p>This is how a non-malware attack usually happens:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A user opens an infected email or visits an infected website • An exploit kit scans the computer for vulnerabilities and uses them for inserting malicious code into one of Windows system administration tools • Fileless malware runs its payload in an available DLL and starts the attack in the memory, hiding within a legitimate Windows process <p>Fileless malware can be downloaded from an infected website or email, introduced as malicious code from an infected application, or even distributed within a zero-day vulnerability.</p> <p>Why are non-malware attacks so dangerous? One of the main challenges posed by fileless malware is that it doesn't use a traditional malware and, therefore, doesn't have any signatures that an anti-malware software could use to detect it. Thus, detecting fileless attacks is extremely challenging.</p> <p>To understand better why they pose so much danger, let's take a look at some of the most recent examples of fileless attacks.</p> <p>One of the first examples of fileless malware were Terminate-Stay-Resident (TSR) viruses. TSR viruses had a body from which they started, but once the malicious code was loaded to the memory, the executable file could be deleted.</p> <p>Malware that uses vulnerabilities in such scripts as JavaScript or PowerShell is also considered to be fileless. Even the much-talked-of ransomware attacks WannaCry and NotPetya used fileless techniques as a part of their kill chains.</p> <p>Another example of a non-malware attack is the UIWIX threat. Just like WannaCry and Petya, UIWIX uses the EternalBlue exploit. It doesn't drop any files on the disk but instead enables the installation of the DoublePulsar backdoor that lives in the kernel's memory.</p> <p>How do non-malware attacks work? Since non-malware attacks use default Windows tools, they manage to hide their malicious activity behind the legitimate Windows processes. As a result, they become nearly undetectable for most anti-malware products.</p> <p>Main non-malware attack targets The hackers need to obtain as many resources as possible while keeping their malicious activity</p>

undetected. This is why the majority of fileless attacks focuses on one of the two targets:

- Windows Management Instrumentation (WMI)
- PowerShell

Depending on their targets, fileless attacks may either run in RAM or exploit vulnerabilities in software scripts.

The attackers chose WMI and PowerShell for several reasons. First, both these tools are built into every modern version of Windows OS, making it easier for the hackers to spread their malicious code. Secondly, turning off any of these tools is not a good idea, since it'll significantly limit what network administrators can do. Some experts, however, suggest disabling WMI and PowerShell anyway as a preventive measure against fileless attacks.

4 common types of non-malware attacks

There are many types and variations of fileless malware. Below, we listed the four most common ones:

Fileless persistence methods — the malicious code continues to run even after the system reboot. For instance, malicious scripts may be stored in the Windows Registry and re-start the infection after a reboot.

Memory-only threats — the attack executes its payload in the memory by exploiting vulnerabilities in Windows services. After a reboot, the infection disappears.

Dual-use tools — the existing Windows system tools are used for malicious purposes.

Non-Portable Executable (PE) file attacks — a type of dual-use tool attack that uses legitimate Windows tools and applications as well as such scripts as PowerShell, CScript or WScript.

Non-malware attack techniques

In order to perform a non-malware attack, hackers use different techniques. Here are the four most frequently used ones:

WMI persistence — WMI repository is used for storing malicious scripts that can be periodically invoked via WMI bindings.

Script-based techniques — hackers may use script files for embedding encoded shellcodes or binaries without creating any files on the disk. These scripts can be decrypted on the fly and executed via .NET objects.

Memory exploits — fileless malware may be run remotely using memory exploits on a victim's machine.

Reflective DLL injection — malicious DLLs are loaded into a process's memory manually, without the need to save these DLLs on the disk. The malicious DLL can be either embedded in infected macros or scripts, or hosted on a remote machine and delivered through a staged network channel.

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HEADLINE	04/26 Malware of mass destruction next WMD?
SOURCE	https://www.welivesecurity.com/2018/04/26/malware-mass-disruption-rsa2018/
GIST	<p>One might wonder why one of the final mainstage presentations at RSA 2018 had “Weapons of Mass Destruction” (WMDs) in its title? When ESET Global Security Evangelist Tony Anscombe finished with his presentation, however, no one was asking that question; instead what emerged was a better understanding of how the evolution of malware has led us to the digital weaponry of today and tomorrow.</p> <p>The central question of Anscombe's presentation was: Can malware be used as a weapon of mass destruction? He contends that it can and notes that we are at a tipping point where malware evolution has led us to the latest development in cyberweapons; this is what Anscombe coins “Malware of Mass Disruption.” He defines this as the following:</p>

- Any malware that targets infrastructure and thus could damage or disable services and could potentially cause death or serious bodily injury
- Any malware designed to inhibit first responders or emergency response from providing lifesaving treatment
- Any malware that targets health care or medical devices and could potentially cause death or serious bodily injury
- Any software that is intended to damage or disable medical systems or devices

Malware of Mass Disruption

Over the years, we have had some close calls that give a glimpse into the effect digital weapons can have. In 2017, the United Kingdom’s National Health Service (NHS) was a major victim of the WannaCryptor (aka WannaCry, WCrypt) attack [ESET detects this as Win32/Filecoder.WannaCryptor.C, or less formally as “WannaCryptor.C” — Ed.].

According to a government report, at least 6,912 NHS appointments were canceled, with estimates that the total may be as high as 19,000. These numbers only reflect NHS hospital appointments – the impact on local physician visits is unknown. Within this number are 139 urgent referrals of patients who potentially have cancer.

It would not be unreasonable to consider a malware attack a ‘weapon’ when it does in fact affect the urgent health care of patients. If the WMD definition and title were adjusted to become Malware of Mass Disruption, then the WannaCryptor attacks would certainly be categorized this way.

Perhaps one of the most notorious attacks to cause disruption to society on a large scale was the 2015 malware known as BlackEnergy, which caused power outages in Ukraine, impacting 225,000 customers for up to six hours. The malicious actors responsible attacked three regional electric power distribution companies with synchronized and coordinated attacks within 30 minutes of each other and impacted multiple central and regional facilities.

And that was only the beginning. In 2016, a new attack, later attributed to malware dubbed Industroyer, deprived the capital city of Ukraine, Kiev, of power for approximately one hour. This attack differed significantly from BlackEnergy as it targeted Industrial Control Systems (ICS). By exploiting weaknesses in the software of the ICS devices, the attackers were able to control electricity substation switches and circuit breakers directly, ultimately controlling the delivery of power.

The critical infrastructure of a city might just be the crown jewel to a nation-state actor. Attacking the power infrastructure of a city, country or even a building has the potential to cause huge disruption, and, depending on the circumstances, endanger life. Imagine if an intensive care unit of a hospital lost power; the outcome could be fatal. While this is a hypothetical scenario, it may not be far from reality – if a cybercriminal can switch off the power to a city, they probably have the ability to switch off the supply to a building and, with the right resources, change the way any backup systems may operate.

“Using the word ‘weapon’ in association with malware may be a step too far for some people,” noted Anscombe. But he points out an important malware history lesson, bringing attention to the first major attack against infrastructure, dubbed Stuxnet. “This showed, really for the first time, that a nation state could actually attack the infrastructure of another nation state by using malware as the tool or weapon,” he said.

Since prominent infrastructure attacks like Stuxnet, various examples point to a conclusion that malware has the potential to “be a weapon in the arsenal of any government or organization that wants to inflict damage or disruption on another person, organization or country – or the world as a whole,” he pointed out.

From notorious attacks like WannaCryptor, to aggressive blackouts caused by BlackEnergy and Industroyer, to attacks that potentially affect election outcomes, the reality exists that the bad actors

	creating and utilizing malware are disrupting our sense of safety, security and democracy. “I will leave you to decide whether to call these weapons,” he concluded.
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HEADLINE	04/26 Report: China seizes 600 bitcoin miners
SOURCE	https://www.theregister.co.uk/2018/04/26/china_600_computers_seized/
GIST	<p>Chinese media is reporting the seizure of 600 Bitcoin miners in the northern municipality of Tianjin, on the grounds of electricity theft.</p> <p>Coin mining is a popular activity in China, but like so many places, those operating big mining rigs find the rivers of gold dammed by high electricity prices. The Digiconomist Bitcoin Energy Consumption Index currently tags Bitcoin's total draw at nearly 63 Terawatt-hours, and reckons each transaction as costing 908 kWh.</p> <p>What better way to cut costs than to bypass billing entirely? That's what Xinhua and other agencies say happened in Tianjin: six people have been arrested because they allegedly bypassed the power meter in a junction box to get free power for their miners.</p> <p>The Xinhua report said the electricity company noticed a 28 per cent increase in line loss (implying an increased load current) on a circuit, and notified authorities.</p> <p>The report claimed the power thieves were trying to evade monthly bills of “hundreds of thousands of yuan” per month (100,000 yuan is currently around US\$15,800).</p> <p>Meanwhile, prosecutors in Wuhan City's Hanyang District Procuratorate are about to commence a prosecution against two miners who used the same trick to steal electricity, before their arrest in 2017.</p> <p>China's prosecutor says the two, identified as Chen and Li, set up their rig in a house slated for demolition in March 2017, and used 49,100 yuan worth of power before they were cuffed</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Insider breach costs over \$8.7M
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/insider-breach-costs-rise-to-87m/
GIST	<p>The cost of an insider-related breach has escalated to over \$8.7m, according to the latest research from the Ponemon Institute.</p> <p>The analyst was commissioned by ObserveIT to poll 700 IT and security practitioners around the world in order to compile the 2018 Cost of Insider Threats study.</p> <p>While the cost of an insider security incident stood at nearly \$8.8m, the average global cost of a regular breach according to IBM is \$3.6m, less than half.</p> <p>The average insider threat also takes on average more than two months to contain, according to the report.</p> <p>Most respondents (64%) said negligent employees accounted for the majority of incidents, followed by malicious insiders (23%).</p> <p>All types of insider threat activity are increasing. Since 2016, the average number of incidents involving malicious insiders has soared by 53%, while employee/contractor negligence has increased by 26%. The average number of credential theft incidents has more than doubled over the past two years, increasing by 170%.</p>

	<p>That's fuelling an increase in imposter attacks – the most expensive type of insider incident at an average of \$648,846. This is followed by malicious insider incidents (\$607,745) and contractor negligence (\$283,281).</p> <p>“Insider threats continue to threaten organizations across the globe, ultimately resulting in loss of mission critical data, downtime and lost productivity, and even reputational damage,” said ObserveIT CEO, Mike McKee.</p> <p>“Understanding the growing costs and time associated with preventing and managing insider threats, organizations need to invest in a holistic cybersecurity solution to assist with real-time detection, deterrence, education and prevention.”</p> <p>The latest Verizon DBIR found that insiders were to blame for a quarter (28%) of all breaches analyzed and that user error was a factor in 17% of breaches.</p> <p>A separate report from Gemalto released recently also highlighted the dangers of negligent insiders.</p> <p>Although accidental loss was the cause of just 18% of data breaches, it accounted for 76% of the total 2.6bn records compromised over the previous year, the security vendor claimed.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/25 Majority online banking systems w/flaws
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazineuk.com/two-thirds-of-online-banking-systems-in-2017-contained-high-risk-vulnerabilities/article/760956/
GIST	<p>Over the years, governments and cyber security experts have repeatedly urged businesses and critical industries to strengthen their cyber-defences to keep up with emerging threats and to ensure the security of enterprise and customer data.</p> <p>While cyber-criminals have spared no industry in their quest for financial gain or to destabilise economies, online banking systems were, and still are, prime targets for such entities as any security flaw can be exploited to impact hundreds of thousands of people and to gain access to millions, if not billions, of pounds.</p> <p>In 2015, a time when banks were swiftly adopting new digital technologies, introducing online banking services and shutting down brick-and-mortar branches with a vengeance, little heed was paid to how weak those newly-introduced online systems were vis-a-vis the capabilities of motivated cyber-criminals.</p> <p>According to Positive Technologies, 90 percent of online banking systems were found to contain high-risk critical vulnerabilities in 2015. This number had, in fact, increased remarkably from 78 percent of such systems in 2013-14, implying that the adoption of digital tools also made banks more vulnerable to threats such as SQL injections, unauthorised access to arbitrary user operations, and rounding attacks.</p> <p>At the same time, online banking apps, which customers were asked to download to seamlessly access banking services and products, were equally vulnerable to online threats. In 2015, 75 percent of banking apps on Android contained high-risk vulnerabilities compared to 33 percent of iOS apps.</p> <p>Positive Technologies' report indicates that UK banks have taken measures to plug security holes in their online banking systems and apps and as a result, such systems are not as vulnerable to external threats as they were a couple of years ago.</p> <p>For instance, compared to 90 percent in 2015, 56 percent of banking systems were found to contain high-risk vulnerabilities in 2017 and on an average, each web application contained 1.3 high-severity vulnerabilities compared to 4.2 in 2015. Despite such improvements, each e-banking system analysed in 2017 contained, on average, seven vulnerabilities, up from six in 2016, implying that banks focussed more</p>

in plugging the critical ones before shifting their focus to medium or low-risk flaws.

The report revealed that not a single banking system could demonstrate the absence of low-risk, medium-risk or high-risk vulnerabilities, that almost half (45 percent) of such systems contained medium-risk vulnerabilities and only a third of online banking systems were free of critical vulnerabilities in 2017.

A break-up of vulnerabilities impacting the security of online banking systems revealed that 75 percent of these systems contained cross-site scripting flaws, 69 percent had insufficient protection from data interception, 63 percent had insufficient authorisation (high-risk), 50 percent were vulnerable to sensitive data disclosure, and 31 percent were vulnerable to software version disclosure. Other vulnerabilities included insufficient protection from brute-force attacks and insufficient process validation.

Considering only high-severity vulnerabilities in 2017, 63 percent of banking systems suffered from insufficient authorisation compared to 57 percent in 2016, 25 percent had two-factor authentication flaws compared to 71 percent in 2016, 19 percent had insufficient process validation compared to 14 percent in 2016, and 13 percent were vulnerable to arbitrary code execution compared to 14 percent in 2016.

A look at the security of web applications run by UK banks revealed a worrisome picture. 94 percent of them were vulnerable to unauthorised access to client personal information and confidential banking data, 75 percent were vulnerable to access to sensitive information and configuration data, 50 percent were vulnerable to fraudulent transactions and theft of funds, and 31 percent were vulnerable to DDoS attacks on user accounts.

The overall security of mobile banking apps wasn't much different to that of online systems, with 29 percent of all vulnerabilities being critical ones, 56 percent medium-risk and the rest of them being low-risk ones. In all, almost half (48 percent) of mobile banking apps had at least one critical vulnerability.

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HEADLINE	04/25 Thailand seizes 'Hidden Cobra' servers
SOURCE	https://www.bankinfosecurity.com/thailand-seizes-hidden-cobra-command-and-control-servers-a-10903
GIST	<p>The Thai government says it has seized servers used by a group that's been tied to cyber espionage attacks, while preserving the servers for review by law enforcement agencies.</p> <p>Thailand's Computer Emergency Response Team, ThaiCERT, announced the takedown on Wednesday, saying it's working with law enforcement authorities as well as information security firm McAfee as part of an investigation into what the security firm has dubbed Operation GhostSecret.</p> <p>McAfee says the operation, which remains active, gives attackers advanced tools for conducting network reconnaissance, stealing information as well as deleting data.</p> <p>"The campaign is extremely complicated, leveraging a number of implants to steal information from infected systems and is intricately designed to evade detection and deceive forensic investigators," Raj Samani, McAfee's chief scientist, says in a blog post. "The implants vary considerably and although they share some functionality and code, they are categorized as different families."</p> <p>Malware families that have been used by the group of attackers include a new type of attack code called Proxysvc. Researchers have also found variants of Destover, which was used in the Sony Pictures Entertainment attack in 2014, as well as Bankshot, which was recently used to target the Turkish financial sector as well as financial services firms in other countries.</p> <p>McAfee says with "high confidence" that based on all the available clues, the APT group known as Hidden Cobra is behind the GhostSecret campaign.</p>

	Attackers also expanded from targeting the financial sector to infecting organizations in additional sectors, including critical infrastructure, enterprise and healthcare.
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HEADLINE	04/26 Report: tech supply chain vulnerable
SOURCE	http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20180426-federal-it-communications-technology-supply-chain-vulnerable-to-chinese-sabotage-espionage
GIST	<p>The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission released a report entitled Supply Chain Vulnerabilities from China in U.S. Federal Information and Communications Technology, prepared for the Commission by Interos Solutions, Inc. The report examines vulnerabilities in the U.S. government information and communications technology (ICT) supply chains posed by China, and makes recommendations for supply chain risk management.</p> <p>The report issues a warning about the extent to which China has penetrated the technology supply chain, and calls on the U.S. government and industry to develop a comprehensive strategy for securing their technology and products from foreign sabotage and espionage.</p> <p>“China did not emerge as a key node on the global ICT supply chain by chance,” the report says. “The Chinese government considers the ICT sector a ‘strategic sector’ in which it has invested significant state capital and influence on behalf of state-owned ICT enterprises.”</p> <p>At the same time, Beijing has moved to prevent other countries from using similar strategies to crack the Chinese market, accelerating indigenous production of IT and communications parts and requiring outside businesses to turn over their source code store data on Chinese servers and allow the government to conduct security audits on their products before gaining access to the Chinese market.</p> <p>Furthermore, the report argues that the U.S. government lacks an overall strategy to anticipate future developments in supply chain, identify potential threats and mitigate threats. The overall push for IT modernization means the government will increasingly rely on a web of complex supply chain operations that eventually originate with commercial suppliers in China. Laws like the Federal IT Acquisition Management Act and the Modernizing Government Technology Act put pressure on agencies to modernize through commercial-off-the-shelf products that are more likely to originate from China.</p> <p>Key findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective supply chain risk management is the ability to anticipate future developments in supply chains, identify potential threats to supply chains, develop threat profiles, and mitigate or address future threats to the supply chain. Federal government laws and policies do not currently address supply chain risk management comprehensively. • Chinese government’s policies prioritize domestic production, extract intellectual property and technology from multinational companies in exchange for market access, use Chinese companies to further state goals, and target U.S. federal networks and the networks of federal contractors. These policies have heightened risks to the U.S. ICT supply chain, and to U.S. national and economic security. • Cyberattacks on supply chains will become easier—and more prevalent—as developing technologies such as fifth generation (5G) mobile network technology and the Internet of Things (IoT) exponentially increase avenues for attack. • ICT products have increasingly complex, globalized, and dynamic supply chains, many of which include commercial suppliers that source from China at multiple points within a single supply chain. For example, an average of 51 percent of shipments to seven leading federal ICT providers originate in China (see Exhibit 1).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is unlikely that political or economic shifts will push global ICT manufacturers to dramatically reduce their operations in China or their partnerships with Chinese firms. A national strategy is needed for supply chain risk management of U.S. ICT, and it must include supporting policies so that U.S. security posture is forward-leaning, rather than reactive and based on incident response. • To minimize risks, the federal government should: centralize the leadership of federal ICT supply chain risk management efforts, link federal funding to supply chain risk management, promote supply chain transparency, and craft forward-looking policies.
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HEADLINE	04/27 Bitcoin frenzy settles down
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-crypto-currencies/bitcoin-frenzy-settles-down-as-big-players-muscle-into-market-idUSKBN1HY0W7
GIST	<p>LONDON/NEW YORK/SINGAPORE (Reuters) - After bouncing up, falling down and keeping investors on the edges of their seats, bitcoin may be maturing into a period of relatively boring stability, experts say.</p> <p>A worldwide wave of regulation has led to a collapse in trading volumes. Cryptocurrency advertisements are disappearing from top internet pages, and bitcoin no longer dominates Google searches.</p> <p>As investors try to figure out what bitcoin wants to be when it grows up, the best-known cryptocurrency is going through somewhat of an existential crisis.</p> <p>“It needs a new narrative,” said Nicholas Colas, New York-based founder of investment research firm DataTrek. “There is every chance that if there is some sort of institutional involvement, there could be a move higher.”</p> <p>Bitcoin rallied 25 percent in April after crashing 70 percent from a high near \$20,000 late last year.</p> <p>The cryptocurrency landscape has indeed changed. Mom-and-pop investors who drove bitcoin’s skyrocket rise in 2017 have been pushed aside by government bans on trading, and replaced by cryptocurrency funds, wealthy individuals and established financial firms.</p> <p>The bigger players can make bigger moves, but their trades are often obscured by screens on over-the-counter (OTC) brokerages and matching platforms.</p> <p>They are also less likely to chase sudden swings in bitcoin’s value, being more interested in the potential of unproven but promising blockchain technology.</p> <p>Average daily traded volumes across cryptocurrency exchanges fell to \$9.1 billion in March and to \$7.4 billion in the first half of April, compared with almost \$17 billion in December, according to data compiled by crypto analysis website CryptoCompare.</p> <p>Several exchanges saw their daily trading volumes drop by more than half between December and March, including Bitfinex, Poloniex, Coinbase and Bitstamp, the data shows.</p> <p>Cryptocurrencies’ biggest-ever trading day was Dec. 22, when volumes topped \$30 billion, according to CryptoCompare.</p> <p>On April 8, volume sagged to \$4.6 billion, the weakest day since last October, according to the data.</p> <p>The theory that bigger institutions will make bitcoin markets less volatile and more liquid has grown as new OTC exchanges spring up, carrying names such as Circle, Octagon Strategy, Cumberland and Kraken.</p>

	<p>Digital exchange Gemini's new block trading product allows high-volume trades that will be invisible to other traders until the orders are filled.</p> <p>Cumberland, one of the biggest block traders, has counterparties in more than 35 countries and quotes two-way prices in about 35 crypto assets.</p> <p>Gatecoin, a Hong Kong-based crypto exchange, saw retail volumes plunge from peaks of \$100 million a day last September, said Aurelien Menant, its founder and chief executive.</p> <p>But, he said, as institutional players enter the market, OTC trades hidden from view have pushed up overall volumes in a way that doesn't show up in data. Gatecoin also operates an OTC platform.</p> <p>Few institutions have gone public about their plans to trade cryptocurrencies, and many asset managers say they still aren't sure the digital currency is more than a fad.</p> <p>But a Thomson Reuters survey this week found one in five financial institutions is considering trading cryptocurrencies in the next 12 months. Of those, 70 percent said they planned to start trading in the next three to six months.</p> <p>In the meantime, the price of bitcoin may be stabilizing, at least on paper. The futures market BTCc1 shows bitcoin staying nearly flat - between \$8,900 and \$9,050 - until September.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	04/26 Italy detains asylum seeker in terror plot
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/asylum-seeker-instructed-drive-vehicle-crowd-italians/story?id=54746665
GIST	<p>Italian security forces have detained an asylum seeker from Gambia and accused him of planning a terror attack with a vehicle.</p> <p>Alagie Touray, 21, was arrested outside the Licola mosque in southern Italy last Friday. He is a member of ISIS, Italian authorities said.</p> <p>Touray was picked up at the request of the Naples public prosecutor after a joint investigation by the Carabinieri and State Police who had received a tip from Spanish intelligence. Touray's arrest was announced today at a news conference in Naples.</p> <p>During questioning, authorities said, the Gambian admitted to having received a request via the messaging app Telegram where he was told to "crash a vehicle into a crowd," Naples prosecutor Giovanni Melillo, said at the news conference.</p> <p>Touray admitted having received instructions to commit a terror attack but, according to Prosecutor Melillo, the Gambian said he had no intention of carrying out the attack.</p> <p>The examination of his Telegram uncovered other alarming messages, including those where he asked people "to pray for him" and that "he was on a mission," authorities said.</p> <p>Touray also recorded a pledge of allegiance to the leader of the Islamic State (ISIS), police said, provided a transcript and image from the message where Touray said, "I swear allegiance to the Caliph of Muslims Abu Bakr Al Quaraishi Al Baghdadi, and to listen to him and obey him in difficult and easy times, on this 2nd day of Rajab and Allah is witness to what I say,"</p> <p>The Gambian arrived in Sicily by boat with 800 other migrants in March 2017 before requesting political</p>

	asylum, which was still under review, authorities said.
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HEADLINE	04/27 Confronting terrorism online
SOURCE	https://lawfareblog.com/whose-responsibility-it-confront-terrorism-online
GIST	<p>This week, Facebook and YouTube announced new data on removal of terrorist content on their platforms. Facebook also released its internal document clarifying what content stays online and what is deleted. YouTube, under Google’s broader efforts, also stated that it is getting “faster” at takedowns with an increased number of human reviewers vetting questionable content. Some of those in counterterrorism policy circles and Capitol Hill are fervent advocates of technology behemoths stepping up enforcement of their terms of service and will likely praise these new releases. Ultimately, however, the responses detailed by Facebook and YouTube are another iteration of a decade-long strategy, as the government continues to delegate online counter-terrorism responsibilities to private industry.</p> <p>As a former congressional staffer, a member of the intelligence policy community, and now an academic researcher, my career has traced the growth of terrorist use of the internet. During my time as a staffer, I wrote letters on behalf of the chairman of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs calling for technology companies to remove terrorist videos from their servers, and I examined how terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab have adeptly used social media to radicalize and recruit Americans to their cause. As a researcher, I’ve studied the online environment as well—but I’ve become concerned that this singular focus on the internet ignores the importance of peer-to-peer terrorist recruitment.</p> <p>Over the past decade, foreign terrorists command and capability in the digital sphere has drastically evolved. But our responses to this have not adapted with the same efficiency.</p> <p>The government's ability to adapt to this changing environment is sharply limited by its outsourcing of the responsibility to prevent and confront terrorists’ use of the internet to private companies. To figure out how best to respond to evolving threats, it is useful to reflect on how the relationship between governments and private tech companies evolved and how this process of delegation came to be.</p> <p>Historical Overview</p> <p>In 2007, a bipartisan group of senators and members of the House became increasingly concerned with terrorist use of online platforms. At the time, the most striking example was a series of YouTube videos depicting the so-called “Baghdad Sniper.” These videos, usually set to music and spliced into quick clips, showed an Iraqi insurgent attacking U.S. soldiers in Iraq. The videos raised questions for congressional staffers—chiefly, “Is an American company comfortable with grotesque videos of U.S. military officers being killed on its platform?” The answer, after an influx of public letters, was a resounding “no.” As a result, YouTube announced updates to its community standards to address videos with violent imagery. Shortly thereafter, YouTube also implemented a “terrorist flag” feature which allowed users to identify extremist content for review and ultimately removal. This was one of the first instances in which private companies took initiative to police their own sites after being subject to public pressure.</p> <p>At the same time, debates surrounding the efficacy of content removal continued within counterterrorism communities. One side posited that companies should remove terrorist propaganda from mainstream websites due to the material’s perceived ability to radicalize its viewers. The other side argued that the risk of radicalization from accessing content was low and that allowing it to remain online would aid law enforcement and intelligence agencies. To a large extent, these arguments remain defining characteristics of contemporary debates within the government regarding the nexus of technology and terrorism.</p> <p>In the midst of this schism, one side of the debate tried to tip the scales in their favor. A surreal and entirely off-the-books meeting between a high-ranking intelligence official and a congressional colleague of mine occurred at a D.C. park. The colleague, who had been advocating for content removal, was facing</p>

pressure from his executive branch counterparts on the operational side. While sitting on a park bench, the intelligence official made clear that parts of law enforcement and intelligence communities preferred such material to stay online. In their view, it acted as a useful honey trap to track terrorists—and taking down online content could endanger both operations and lives.

While the meeting may have caused a temporary pause, it ultimately did not guide Capitol Hill's view on confronting terrorist content online. As terrorism receded into the background noise of larger news stories and public pressure ebbed, efforts by both Congress and technology companies came almost to a standstill. Government approaches were essentially limited to awareness training, which focused on demonstrating to primarily Muslim-American communities around the country how groups like al-Qaeda use the internet to target young people, so that parents could protect their children. The awareness trainings, while important, were too sporadic to be the silver bullet.

With the rise of the Islamic State, the issue of terrorists' use of the internet quickly forced its way back onto the political agenda. For policymakers, advocating content removal is a relatively easy ask with little blowback; it allows them to look tough on terrorism while requiring little concrete follow-through on the government's part. In January 2016, high-ranking intelligence officials traveled to Silicon Valley to encourage the major technology companies to do more to police problematic content on their platforms. The White House later brought together advertising marketers from Madison Avenue, technology experts from Silicon Valley, and producers from Hollywood to tackle the question of how to respond to onslaught of Islamic State propaganda. Like many things developed within the cocoon of the National Security Council at that time, there was little interagency buy-in, and this initiative eventually failed to produce tangible results from a lack of sustained coordination.

In the U.S. and abroad, pressure on the technology companies mounted as the Islamic State remained a critical threat in the eyes of many Western countries and their constituents. Out of a mixture of a sense of responsibility and public pressure, likely combined with a desire to prevent hasty regulation by Capitol Hill, some technology companies responded with show of force. The companies colloquially known as the "Big Four"—Microsoft, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook—announced the formation of the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism. In partnership, these companies developed a "hashing" database to share information to flag and moderate extremist materials. YouTube and Facebook greatly increased the number of human reviewers for terrorist content, while Twitter, the platform of choice amongst jihadists in 2015, also took concerted steps to make its platform less hospitable to violent extremists. With the precedent set by Twitter's biannual transparency reports, major tech providers, including Facebook and YouTube, now provide regular updates on their progress and methods of combating violent extremism in regular press releases.

Going Forward

Responses driven by industry, largely at the behest of the U.S. government, have certainly demonstrated some significant successes. Major social media providers continue to remove terrorist content from their websites at a much faster rate than before. However, this approach may not be nimble enough to respond to current developments in how terrorists utilize the internet.

While the Islamic State still uses mainstream sites like Twitter to push its propaganda, it has largely shifted to niche platforms in response to content removal. Many of these platforms, such as justpaste.it, lack the personnel and budget to remove extremist content. Some have no interest whatsoever in addressing terrorist use of their platforms: As many of these companies are based outside of the United States, the Damocles sword of possible regulation does not hang over their head.

Public pressure also has less power when free expression at all costs is embedded in the culture of these companies. Currently, the most active platform for distributing Islamic State propaganda is the messaging application Telegram, whose CEO, Pavel Durov, has been ardent in his company's founding principles: "I think that privacy, ultimately, and our right for privacy is more important than our fear of bad things happening, like terrorism." As demonstrated by the Russian government's recent, botched attempt to ban the use of Telegram, Telegram's resistance to calls for censorship only builds their reputation among their

users.

There are persistent questions that come with allowing industry to set their own standards. For years, Americans have faced the question of whether they are comfortable with the standards that large technology companies and social media providers use for content removal. But with the online terrorism environment rapidly changing, the question is now whether those standards can transfer to newer and smaller companies, or companies with different political interests and outlooks.

What's more, newer companies will likely not have the same level of sophistication in understanding the threat as do larger companies such as Facebook, which employ hundreds of counterterrorism analysts. How will these companies handle content that walks the fine line between advocating violence and providing the mood-music of extremism? At the moment, a Salafist imam from Michigan, Musa Jibril, is the second-most-cited radical preacher by Islamic State followers online. He trails only Anwar al-Awlaki in his prominence—but Jibril's online sermons never cross the line of calling for overt violence. Should his material stay online? Should that assessment change if he is discovered to have influenced, even if indirectly, attacks in the West—and if it does, will that mean that are our content standards are being set by of the news of the day?

These are critically important questions to answer if the U.S. government continues to address the future online dynamics of terrorism through ad-hoc delegation of counterterrorism responsibilities to tech giants. As a result of this approach, companies like Twitter, Facebook, and Google have ample leeway to determine their standards for content removal. But the U.S. government should not assume that other social media providers with different interests will earnestly adopt these standards, especially if they lack the wherewithal or interest to do so. As terrorist groups adapt to the changing landscape of the online space, it is worth asking whether U.S. government policies that depend on overwhelming initiative from the tech sector will be able to adequately respond—and whether the government's ceding responsibility to the private sector is the right way forward.

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HEADLINE	04/27 ISIS propaganda websites targeted
SOURCE	https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/islamic-state-europol-amaq-shutdown_uk_5ae2e84ee4b04aa23f21f616
GIST	<p>Some of the Islamic State's most prominent propaganda websites have been hit by a coordinated cyber strike by European countries, in an attempt to curb the terror group's online influence.</p> <p>The "simultaneous multinational takedown" of Isis-branded media outlets on Wednesday and Thursday targeted the Amaq News Agency, al-Bayan radio, Halumu and Nashir news.</p> <p>Rob Wainwright, executive director of Europol, the EU's law enforcement agency, said the "groundbreaking" operation had involved the UK, US and France along with five other countries.</p> <p>"We have punched a big hole in the capability of Isis to spread propaganda online and radicalise young people in Europe," he said.</p> <p>The attack aimed to disrupt the technical resilience of the terrorist online infrastructure, Wainwright added. The seized data is expected to help authorities identify the administrators behind Isis media outlets and "potentially radicalised individuals on European soil and beyond".</p> <p>Since 2015, Europol said the site had launched its own software and developed "highly resilient online infrastructure hosting".</p> <p>As of December 2017, the entire range of Isis propaganda was available in at least nine different languages, as well as on a wide range of online services, such as mailed newsletters and add-on extensions for the most common browsers, Europol said.</p>

	<p>The crackdown began in 2015 after Europol informed all EU Member States about the rise of the Amaq News Agency and its capabilities.</p> <p>In August 2016, EU Member States and non-EU countries took down Amaq’s mobile application and web infrastructure, but this led the “propagandists to build a more complex and secure infrastructure to prevent further disruption from law enforcement”.</p> <p>In June 2017, a second strike, targeted part of the news agency’s web assets and infrastructure. Servers seized during that operation, Europol said, led to the identification of radicalised individuals in more than 100 countries worldwide.</p> <p>Europol Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos said the latest operation showed “our global strength and our unwavering resolve to fight against terrorist content online”.</p> <p>He added that IS was now “no longer just losing territory on the ground – but also online. We will not stop until their propaganda is entirely eradicated from the Internet.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 World Cup 2018 terror warning
SOURCE	https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/951657/world-cup-2018-terror-warning-isis-volgograd-england-opener
GIST	<p>With almost thousands of England fans descending on Volgograd for the game, the attacks are likely to be mounted against fans using vans and knives or bombs blasts on buses and trains, with Moscow and St Petersburg also at risk.</p> <p>ISIS would be targeting Volgograd because of its proximity to the North Caucasus region, which was the largest source for foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq counting almost 3,500 soldiers.</p> <p>More than 400 hardliners are now back in the soviet region and security experts believe ISIS is planning a terrorist attack at the opening game to revenge the airstrikes in Syria launched by President Vladimir Putin.</p> <p>Chris Hawkins, a senior analyst at Jane’s Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, said: “There are numerous terrorism threats affecting the World Cup.</p> <p>“The main one, as with the rest of Russia, comes from lone actors with low capabilities. Tactics will likely include knives and vehicle attacks targeting fans visiting games or the surrounding areas.</p> <p>“Aspirational targets will include match days, particularly in Moscow and St Petersburg – the two cities that will have the largest concentration of foreign visitors, with Moscow hosting the key fixtures of the World Cup, including the final and the opening fixture.</p> <p>“Sochi and Volgograd are two other cities at heightened risk due to their proximity to the North Caucasus region meaning they are logistically viable cities for militants to stage attacks.”</p> <p>The terror expert added that returning ISIS fighters pose as a serious threat due to weapons and bomb-making experience: “These fighters have had combat experience and have had training in operating military-grade firearms as well as manufacturing IEDS.”</p> <p>England World Cup opening match against Tunisia is on June 18 at Volgograd Arena, but many fans are expected to stay in St Petersburg or Moscow.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Arrested woman had USB w/police info
SOURCE	https://www.buzzfeed.com/mitchprothero/french-police-fear-isis-militants-have-their-names-and?utm_term=.tp4R0A2Ow#.myoAzqOMB
GIST	<p>French police investigating a woman for suspected ties to ISIS have made a chilling discovery, according to French police officials and prosecutors: The arrested woman had a USB drive that contained the personal details of thousands of French police officials.</p> <p>That's raised fears that a similar data breach may have helped an ISIS militant carry out the notorious June 2016 murder of a French police commander and his domestic partner, a civilian police employee.</p> <p>The USB was discovered last October during raids on apartments and properties linked to the 25-year-old woman, who's been identified publicly only as Mina B. She now stands accused of being in direct contact with an ISIS-directed group in the Belgian city of Verviers that was raided in January 2015. Two extremists were killed in that raid.</p> <p>Phone intercepts linked Mina B. to the Verviers group, and police launched an investigation that culminated April 9 with charges that Mina B. had helped a friend leave France to join ISIS in Syria and Iraq. At that time, police also announced that they had discovered the USB drive in her apartment.</p> <p>The USB drive, according to French investigators, had been partially erased. Reconstruction of some of the drive's contents, however, recovered at least one personnel database, from 2008, that included a raft of details about police officers, including home addresses and vehicle information. Specialists are still trying to reconstruct the USB's full contents.</p> <p>"This is a disaster," said one French police officer who works undercover on counterterrorism operations and cannot be identified.</p> <p>The officer pointed out that while the restored database dates to 2008, "that's only 10 years and many of the officers are still in service."</p> <p>He added, "The information contains all the information one needs to stalk and murder hundreds of police officers in their homes, which as you know has already happened."</p> <p>The officer was referring to the June 13, 2016, double murder of Jean-Baptiste Salvaing, a police commander in the Paris suburb of Les Mureaux, and his girlfriend, Jessica Schneider, 36, who was an administrative assistant in the police station at Mantes-la-Jolie, another Paris suburb. The accused killer was Larossi Abballa, who stabbed Salvaing several times outside the victims' home, before slitting Schneider's throat inside the home. He then streamed a statement supporting ISIS before French police shot him dead.</p> <p>Details for Salvaing and Schneider were not part of the recovered data, according to prosecutors, but Mina B. has been indicted with six others in the Salvaing case as investigators try to determine if Abballa received any assistance or information from her.</p> <p>Investigators also have determined that a major in the French police, Maryline Bereaud, was at least partially responsible for the data breach. They say that Mina B. was friends with Bereaud's daughter and that Mina B. had been a guest in Bereaud's home for several months in 2016. Bereaud, who was the chief of police in Yvelines, another Paris suburb, has been arrested and charged in relation to the leak.</p> <p>French news reports have quoted a police union official anonymously as saying that Bereaud had allowed Mina B. to stay in her home as a favor to her daughter.</p> <p>"It was a young girl who had been thrown out by her family, she sheltered her for a while at the request of her daughter. But she never saw signs of radicalization at home," said the union spokesperson.</p>

	<p>Investigators have determined that Bereaud and her daughter had no previous contact with Abballa but that Mina B. was part of his radicalized circle.</p> <p>“The coincidence that the suspect with the USB drive knew Abballa is a difficult one for police to accept,” said the French police officer. “To have a list of police officers' home addresses and be in contact with a terrorist who murdered two police at their home, and we haven't been able to determine how he found their address? It's a big thing to tell me this isn't related.”</p> <p>French police and internal security services face massive security concerns from terrorism with thousands of potential militants flagged for surveillance as part of the nation's “S List,” which collects internal threats to the French state.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 US stepping up operations against ISIS
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/26/james-mattis-sees-re-energized-syria-mission-again/
GIST	<p>The U.S. is stepping up military operations against Islamic State remnants in Syria, along with other extremist organizations fighting to fill the vacuum in the wake of Islamic State's defeat in the country, Pentagon chief James Mattis told Congress Thursday.</p> <p>The escalation, outlined in testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee Thursday, comes after a raging internal debate in the U.S. government after President Trump expressed a desire to withdraw U.S. forces from Syria with the Islamic State terror group in his words nearly defeated.</p> <p>But Mr. Mattis and U.S. military commanders pushed back, warning a U.S. withdrawal could allow Islamic State to regroup, while leaving the Syrian government and its Russian and Iranian allies a free hand to re-establish control of the country.</p> <p>“Right now ... we are not withdrawing” from Syria, Mr. Mattis told lawmakers. “... You will see a re-energized effort against the Middle Euphrates River Valley in the days ahead” against Islamic State, as well as other remaining pockets of territory still held by the terror group.</p> <p>France has agreed to send a contingent of special forces to reinforce the mission against Islamic State in Iraq, said Mr. Mattis. The deployment comes on the heels of French President Emmanuel Macron's first official visit to Washington earlier this week.</p> <p>Asked if local allies working with U.S. forces against Islamic State could handle the mission, “I am confident that we would probably regret it.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Study: more 9/11 cancer burden cases
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/26/cancer-burden-among-911-firefighters-and-first-res/
GIST	<p>More cancer cases than previously thought are expected among firefighters and rescue workers who responded in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, according to research published Thursday in the Journal of the American Medical Association.</p> <p>The latest study, conducted by the World Trade Center Health Program, accompanied research on improving early detection of multiple myeloma, a blood cancer and one of the top 15 certified cancers found among those exposed to the toxic atmosphere at ground zero in lower Manhattan.</p> <p>“In 2011 we, meaning our research team here, were the first to show that the cancer rates might be</p>

elevated in the WTC exposed population,” FDNY World Trade Center Health Program researcher Dr. Rachel Zeig-Owens told The Washington Times.

The WTCHP was established that year with the passage of the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, named in honor of the New York City police officer who died of an aggressive respiratory disease that was later confirmed to have developed from breathing the air at ground zero in the aftermath of the terror attacks.

The program provides complete medical coverage for first responders and survivors for conditions developed as a result of being exposed to toxic elements from the terror attacks in New York City, Pennsylvania and the Pentagon.

Today, 69,612 responders and 14,308 survivors are registered with the program.

As of December, there are 6,866 responders and 1,433 survivors who are diagnosed with cancer. At least 304 responders and 30 survivors have died from cancer, according to WTCHP statistics.

The latest research by Dr. Zeig-Owens and colleagues estimates that new cancer diagnosis will increase at a higher rate than previously thought, with 2,960 new cancer cases between 2012 and 2031. Medical costs are expected to be over \$235 million for first-year treatment.

Previous estimates had 246 less cases.

“We project that the FDNY-WTCHP cohort will experience a greater cancer burden than would be expected from a demographically similar population,” the authors wrote. “This underscores the importance of cancer prevention efforts and routine screening in WTC-exposed rescue and recovery workers.”

The three cancers expected to increase among this population include prostate, thyroid and melanoma cancers and few lung, colorectal and kidney cancers, the study read.

“What it really does is show the continued need for cancer screening and that the risk may be elevated for years to come due to these exposures,” Dr. Zeig-Owens said. “What also is helpful for the WTC health program is to know that it needs to plan and anticipate for the elevated costs of treatment as the years go on.”

The program is working on multiple studies examining various cancers, their risk and early detection. The latest, also published Thursday in JAMA, focuses on multiple myeloma, a cancer of the blood, specifically affecting plasma cells, integral to the functioning of the immune system.

Dr. C. Ola Landgren, chief of the myeloma service at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, said he and others were motivated to study this same population after years of seeing several newly diagnosed patients at younger ages and with more aggressive forms of the disease than normal.

“That prompted us to reach out to the FDNY to make a collaborative study,” Dr. Landgren told The Times, “to address these observations. That’s really what prompted us from the clinical side to reach out.”

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HEADLINE	04/26 Challenge: tracking terror financing
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-financial-transaction-methods-pose-challenge-in-terror-fight-officials-say-1524740047
GIST	PARIS—President Emmanuel Macron called ministers from over 70 countries to Paris on Thursday in an effort to coordinate a crackdown on new terror-financing methods that French officials say pose a growing threat to global security.

Justice and finance ministers gathered at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris to look for ways to gather and share intelligence on how terrorist organizations like Islamic State and al Qaeda collect, move and store the finances that sustain them.

“It is the lifeblood of the war. It is essential to look at this very seriously and pre-empt the changes taking place,” Paris prosecutor François Molins, who handles terror investigations in France, said on French radio Thursday.

Governments face an increasingly complex challenge tracking terror finance because of the changing technology of transactions. France will push delegates at the conference to look for ways to better identify users of prepaid cards and electronic wallets and strengthen regulation of crowdfunding websites that are increasingly used by terror groups.

There are also “high risks” associated with the transfers by mobile telephone because it is hard to identify recipients of funds, French officials said.

France says the large sums of money in circulation could spark a resurgence of terrorist organizations despite the military collapse of Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. Islamic State is estimated to have had revenues of around €1 billion a year between 2014 and 2017, and is now seeking ways to amass small international donations, French officials say.

“The successes in Syria and Iraq might make us think we are confronted with a declining threat, but the reality is very different,” an advisor to Mr. Macron said.

“It feels like we are in a sprint because there is a sophistication of instruments,” the advisor said.

The closed-door conference, dubbed “No Money for Terror,” began Wednesday with talks between some 450 terror finance experts and intelligence officials, and will conclude later Thursday with a public speech from Mr. Macron.

Mr. Macron, who returned earlier from a three-day U.S. state visit, is pushing for a more multilateral approach. French officials hope delegates will sign up to a joint declaration that could be submitted to international organizations including the United Nations.

“I am optimistic that the discussions over the coming days will mobilize new efforts in the fight against terrorism,” said U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, who is attending the event.

International Monetary Fund chief Christine Lagarde and head of the World Bank President Jim Yong Kim are also attending.

Delegates will also examine how tracking transactions can be used to gather intelligence and anticipate possible attacks. Paris prosecutors working with financial investigators to track transactions in recent years have identified 416 donors on French soil and 320 recipients in Turkey and Libya, helping them identify jihadists who traveled to Iraq and Syria or those who are now looking to return to France.

Most middle eastern countries are represented at the conference, with the notable exception of Iran. Iran is on the blacklist of the Financial Action Task Force, an intergovernmental group of 37 that combats money laundering and terror financing. French organizers also refused to invite Iran amid tensions between Tehran and Arab states.

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HEADLINE

04/26 Afghan official: Taliban killed 7 soldiers

SOURCE

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/afghan-official-deputy-governor-killed-taliban-54744467?>

GIST	<p>A Taliban attack on an Afghan army security post in the country's northern Kunduz province has killed at least seven soldiers, a defense spokesman said Thursday.</p> <p>Mohammad Radmanish, the deputy spokesman for the Ministry of Defense, said the attack took place on Wednesday night in the remote Dashti Archi district in Kunduz.</p> <p>A gunbattle lasted several hours and along with the seven killed, one soldier was wounded, Radmanish said. He added that 15 Taliban fighters were also killed and 13 were wounded.</p> <p>However, a local hospital chief, Rahimbakesh Danish Karimi, gave a higher casualty toll for the military, saying bodies of 13 soldiers and nine wounded in the attack were brought to his hospital in Thakhar province, which is the closest medical facility to the attack site.</p> <p>The conflicting casualty reports could not immediately be reconciled as is common in the aftermath of such attacks. No militant group has claimed responsibility for the attack but the officials blamed the Taliban.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/27 Military judge rules in landmark decision
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/04/27/us-already-fighting-al-qaeda-before-911-military-judge-rules-in-landmark-decision.html
GIST	<p>The U.S. was already at war with Al Qaeda before hijacked planes hit the Twin Towers and Pentagon and crashed in Pennsylvania, a U.S. military judge presiding at the pretrial of alleged 9/11 attack plotter Khalid Sheik Mohammed and others ruled this week.</p> <p>The landmark decision will pave the way for a trial of the accused 9/11 mastermind and four alleged abettors by military commissions at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, the Miami Herald reported.</p> <p>Lawyers for the alleged conspirators tried to convince the military commission that since the U.S. entered the war against Al Qaeda only after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, the defendants can face trial only in federal, civilian courts -- not before military commissions.</p> <p>A lawyer for Mustafa al Hawsawi -- a Saudi man accused of supporting at least seven of the 19 hijackers - - argued that his client allegedly helped some of the hijackers with funds and travel to the U.S. before the American government was at war with Al Qaeda.</p> <p>Attorneys for another alleged conspirator, Ammar al Baluchi, claimed the war began when the U.S. invaded Afghanistan on Oct. 7, 2001.</p> <p>Prosecutors argued the war between the U.S. and the terror group began with Osama bin Laden's 1996 "Declaration of Jihad Against the Americans," according to the newspaper.</p> <p>The president signed an executive order giving his defense secretary 90 days to recommend whether those captured in the battlefield should be sent to Gitmo; Jennifer Griffin reports for 'Special Report.'</p> <p>But the judge, Army Col. James L. Pohl, wrote in a 20-page ruling that it's "unnecessary to decide a date certain for commencement of hostilities," asserting that the U.S. was at war with Al Qaeda prior to 9/11, as two presidents have said in the past.</p> <p>According to the ruling, President George W. Bush formed the military commissions to prosecute the culprits of the attacks, while President Barack Obama signed the Military Commissions Act of 2009 that "contemplates prosecution for offenses occurring 'on, before or after Sept. 11, 2001.'"</p> <p>"The overall armed conflict against al-Qaida — a transnational terrorist organization operating primarily</p>

	<p>outside the United States — might itself be viewed as an anomaly under pre-Sept. 11, 2001, law of war standards," Pohl wrote.</p> <p>"However, the law of war is not static, and its precise contours may shift to recognize the changing realities of warfare. Military commissions by their nature are intended to have sufficient flexibility to address the needs presented by the armed conflict they address."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/27 Turkey detains 4 senior ISIS militants
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/reports-turkey-detains-senior-islamic-state-militants-54773618?
GIST	<p>Turkey's state-run news agency says Turkish authorities have detained four suspected senior Islamic State extremists in an operation in the Aegean coastal city of Izmir.</p> <p>Anadolu Agency said Friday the suspects include the group's so-called "emir," or ruler, of Deir el-Zour, a major city in eastern Syria, and its environs. It described the other three suspects as senior operatives within the extremist group.</p> <p>Hurriyet newspaper said the four were captured as part of a joint operation by Turkey's intelligence agency and police anti-terrorism units.</p> <p>The suspects were hiding among a group of Syrian refugees planning to cross into Europe, the newspaper reported.</p> <p>The four are being questioned by anti-terrorism police in Izmir.</p> <p>Police in Izmir confirmed the operation but could not immediately provide details.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	04/26 New US 24-hr precipitation record set?
SOURCE	https://www.wunderground.com/cat6/new-us-24-hour-precipitation-record-4969-kauai-hi-april-15
GIST	<p>The National Weather Service in Hawaii reported on Wednesday that preliminary data from a rain gauge on the north shore of Kauai at Waipa, one mile west of Hanalei, received 49.69" of rainfall over the 24-hour period ending at 12:45 pm April 15. If verified, this would break the all-time U.S. 24-hour rainfall record of 43.00" in Alvin, Texas set on July 25 – 26, 1979, during Tropical Storm Claudette. The record-setting rains on Kauai were due to an upper-level low located to its west on April 14 - 15, combined with a surge of rich low-level moisture. This set-up brought radar-estimated rainfall rates of 2 – 4" per hour to the north shore of the island.</p> <p>The National Weather Service office in Honolulu noted that the rain gauge where this new data was downloaded from "is operated by the Waipa Foundation which is a non-profit organization. Data from the gauge are not telemetered for real-time display and are used for watershed modeling and monitoring studies." In the coming months, data from this gauge will be reviewed by the National Climatic Extremes Committee to determine whether this instrument is reliable enough to accept as a new U.S. record.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/27 Cars in Europe calling police accidentally
SOURCE	https://www.forbes.com/sites/davekeating/2018/04/27/cars-in-europe-are-accidentally-calling-the-

	police/#60a763c74baf
GIST	<p>It's been less than a month since European Union legislation took effect requiring all new cars to have the eCall system, which automatically calls emergency services in the event of an accident. But already, emergency operators are identifying teething problems.</p> <p>The eCall system automatically calls 112, the European equivalent of America's 911, after a collision. That number is automatically redirected to local emergency services across the EU.</p> <p>It's a complicated endeavour, particularly because it requires coordination and standardisation between the EU's 28 member states. This week emergency service professionals from across the continent gathered in Ljubljana, Slovenia for the annual conference of the European Emergency Number Association to discuss how the implementation is going so far. One consistent theme emerged: operators are getting too many false e-calls, which is proving a distraction from their work.</p> <p>Though the system has only been required for a month, it's been around for some time. It was first developed in 2001 as part of a German youth science competition. The EU chose it from several competing technologies to be the basis of the legislation, first put forward in 2013. Some European countries have rolled out eCall early. Slovenia introduced it in December 2015, and Italy deployed a pilot program in selected regions in May 2017. Sweden adopted eCall in October last year.</p> <p>Spain has also been an early adopter. Iratxe Gomez Susaeta, an emergency management expert who has been consulting with operators during the roll-out, said at the conference that false calls have been a problem so far.</p> <p>"There have been false eCalls during repairs or checkups, or people unintentionally pressing the SOS button – particularly children," she said.</p> <p>The system is meant to kick in only in the event of a serious accident, calling 112 and wirelessly deploying airbags and impact sensor information. It then uses Galileo, the EU's equivalent of America's GPS satellite system, to send information about the vehicle's location to emergency services. A microphone and speaker in the car enables to occupant to communicate with dispatchers.</p> <p>But the alert can be triggered while the car is being repaired or dismantled. If the mechanic doesn't hear the emergency service personnel trying to contact the car, first responders may be deployed to the location, wasting precious resources and time.</p> <p>Gomez Susaeta said so far these false calls and tests of the system have represented most of its use in some places. "We're off to a very slow start. Some haven't even received any real eCalls yet. It's been less than a month, and some have only received test calls or false eCalls. They're also getting lots of test calls in a live environment, which is creating a lot of confusion"</p> <p>Luca Bergonzi, a sales executive with the Beta 80 group in Italy, which is advising emergency services on the roll-out, agreed that false calls have been a problem so far.</p> <p>"End-of-life or vehicle inspection can trigger false eCalls, or automatic alarms used for security services," he said. "Companies are looking at a workaround. Public safety answering points should develop procedures to screen false calls."</p> <p>The idea that eCall could make it harder, not easier, for emergency dispatchers to do their work has been raised as a concern for some time. But Bergonzi stressed that these teething problems are manageable.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/27 Iconic pen made by blind for military
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/d170f66d783c47689296b1eb5201043f/Iconic-pen-used-by-military,-made-by-

	blind-people-turns-50
GIST	<p>GREENSBORO, N.C. (AP) — Clifford Alexander scoops a handful of black ballpoint pens, drops them into a small box and shakes it with a blackjack dealer’s nonchalance. He slides in the next handful to make an exact dozen, and sends the box down the assembly line.</p> <p>Alexander, who is blind, performs the quick act again, box after box.</p> <p>Anyone who’s served in the military, worked for the federal government or addressed a package at the post office is familiar with the handiwork. But they might not have realized that all the ubiquitous SKILCRAFT U.S. Government pens were made by the visually impaired. The pens turn 50 this month.</p> <p>The pen’s history traces back to April 20, 1968, when it was introduced to government buyers, said the National Industries for the Blind. The nonprofit organization was tapped to supply pens after another manufacturer made 13 million defective ballpoints in 1967.</p> <p>The pens have stringent requirements — 16 pages worth. The pens must be able to write a continuous line 1 mile (1.6 kilometers) long and keep the ink flowing despite extreme temperatures — from 40 degrees below zero to 160 degrees (4 to 71 degrees Celsius).</p> <p>For five decades, the task of making those pens has been entrusted to blind workers.</p> <p>“It may take us longer to learn it, but once we learn those jobs we do those jobs very well,” said Alexander, who supervises about 30 Greensboro pen workers. “And we turn out a top quality garment or writing instrument.”</p> <p>The pen is well-known among military and government families after finding its way into purses and backpacks for years. It’s also been used by the military as improvised devices to plug holes in pipes on boats or perform emergency medical procedures.</p> <p>The pens are sold to the federal government through a program started in 1938 to create jobs for people with disabilities. In 2016, the AbilityOne program sold \$3.3 billion in goods and services, with more than half coming from military orders.</p> <p>Alexander said his 47 years at the North Carolina plant has helped him to buy a home and educate his children. The plant employs about 140 visually impaired people to make products ranging from Army combat jackets to clipboards.</p> <p>In the pen’s heyday, the government bought about 70 million per year. Now the Greensboro plant and a second in Milwaukee combine to produce about 8 million of the flagship retractable ballpoints annually, with parts supplied by a third site in Missouri. All three employ visually impaired workers.</p> <p>Lynn Larsen, who’s worked at Greensboro Industries of the Blind for 40 years, said the job helped her support her family after her father died. More recently, it was a source of pride when her nephew deployed to Afghanistan with the Army.</p> <p>“He would tell the other soldiers that his aunt Lynn made that pen, and they thought it was real cool,” she said.</p> <p>The Greensboro workers earn well above minimum wage and can reach around \$24 per hour, said Richard Oliver, the site’s director of community outreach and government relations.</p> <p>The benefits go beyond the pay, said Oliver, who is legally blind himself: “We didn’t get the opportunity to serve in the military ... so this is our way to serve.”</p> <p>“It gives our people a really big sense of pride,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Seattle ties high-record temp for day
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/968070/record-temperatures-possible/
GIST	<p>Seattle tied its record high temperature of 82 degrees for April 26 Thursday and Bellingham hit a new record.</p> <p>Bellingham reached 75 degrees at 4:16 p.m. The previous record high for Bellingham — 74 degrees — was set in 1987.</p> <p>In the past 73 years at Sea-Tac, there have been only 17 days in the month of April where temperatures have reached 80 degrees or higher (including Thursday), according to the National Weather Service.</p> <p>The record high for April 26 in Seattle is 82 degrees, initially set back in 1947.</p> <p>At 1:30 p.m., it was 76 in Everett and 79 in Tacoma. Olympia reached 80 degrees.</p> <p>But brace yourself. A dramatic drop in temperature is expected Friday as winds shift and come in off the ocean.</p> <p>“That’s going to end up dropping temperatures in Seattle almost 15 degrees cooler than what we’re expecting for [Thursday],” Reedy said.</p> <p>Showers return Friday evening and stick around off and on throughout the weekend.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Russia chided for ‘obscene masquerade’
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/russia-syria-opcw-staged-videos-witnesses-chemical-weapons-douma-france-uk/
GIST	<p>THE HAGUE, Netherlands -- Britain and France denounced on Thursday as a stunt and an "obscene masquerade" a move by Russia to produce Syrian witnesses who Moscow says were filmed in "staged videos" in the aftermath of a reported chemical weapons attack. Russian officials brought the purported witnesses for a briefing Thursday at The Hague headquarters of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.</p> <p>The development is seen as an effort by Russia to discredit widespread reports of an April 7 suspected chemical weapon attack in the town of Douma near the Syrian capital, Damascus, which killed more than 40 people. The West has blamed the attack on President Bashar Assad's government. Syria and Russia deny the claims.</p> <p>"This obscene masquerade does not come as a surprise from the Syrian government, which has massacred and gassed its own people for the last seven years," said France's ambassador to the Netherlands, Philippe Lalliot.</p> <p>Britain's ambassador, Peter Wilson, said he and other Western allies would not attend the briefing.</p> <p>On Wednesday, OPCW inspectors made a second visit to the town of Douma, collecting samples from a new location that will be sent to designated labs for analysis. The suspected poison gas attack has sparked an ongoing clash of narratives between the West and the governments of Syria and its key ally, Russia. Damascus and Moscow insist there was no chemical weapons attack.</p> <p>Opposition activists and first responders who witnessed the attack in Douma, which was under rebel control at the time, say it was carried out by government forces. Many of the victims suffocated in an underground shelter where they were hiding from government airstrikes, the activists said.</p>

	Following the suspected chemical attack, the United States, France and Britain launched joint punitive airstrikes targeting suspected Syrian chemical weapons facilities on April 14.
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HEADLINE	04/26 Rwanda official: mass graves discovered
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/04/26/mass-graves-believed-to-contain-more-than-2000-bodies-discovered-in-rwanda.html
GIST	<p>KIGALI, Rwanda – Mass graves that authorities say could contain more than 2,000 bodies have been discovered in Rwanda nearly a quarter-century after the country's genocide, and further graves are being sought nearby.</p> <p>The new discovery is being called the most significant in a long time in this East African nation that is still recovering from the 1994 killings of more than 800,000 people.</p> <p>Some Rwandans are shocked and dismayed that residents of the community outside the capital, Kigali, where the mass graves were found kept quiet about them for so many years.</p> <p>"Those who participated in the killing of our relatives don't want to tell us where they buried them. How can you reconcile with such people?" asked a tearful France Mukantagazwa. She told The Associated Press she lost her father and other relatives in the genocide and believes their bodies are in the newly found graves.</p> <p>The discovery of the graves in Gasabo district came just days after Rwanda marked 24 years since the mass killings of ethnic Tutsi and moderate ethnic Hutus.</p> <p>"It is very disturbing that every now and then mass graves are discovered of which the now-free perpetrators never bothered to reveal to bereaved families so that they can get closure," the daily newspaper The New Times said in an editorial this week.</p> <p>"Definitely some very cruel people still live in our midst," it added.</p> <p>Between 2,000 and 3,000 people are thought to be buried in the graves based on the number of area residents who went missing during the genocide, Rashid Rwigamba, an official with the genocide survivors' organization Ibuka, told AP.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/27 Surging ranks of super-commuters
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-surging-ranks-of-super-commuters/
GIST	<p>Coast to coast, Americans commute to work. But one group of commuters stands out from the rest -- and it's getting a larger: super-commuters. These are the people who spend 90 minutes or longer traveling to work, whose numbers surged nearly 30 percent between 2005 to 2016, to 4 million, according to an analysis of U.S. Census data released this week by online rental marketplace Apartment List.</p> <p>Apartment List found the share of super-commuters among the total commuter population rose in 39 states and three-quarters of the largest U.S. metropolitan areas. Eight of the 10 metropolitan areas with the largest share of super-commuters are in the regions surrounding San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York, which have among the country's the highest costs of living</p> <p>"I wasn't surprised that it was high in the San Francisco Bay area or New York or in L.A. because you do hear those stories a lot. But I was surprised it was so common in so many places, especially in places that aren't that large and don't have that bad of traffic like Las Vegas or Cleveland," said Sydney Bennett, senior research associate at Apartment List. "It's a commentary both on the lack of affordable housing and</p>

the fact that many cities have very little public transportation."

Commutes are getting longer for workers overall. According to Apartment List, the share of commuters traveling 24 minutes or less to work daily fell to 55 percent in 2016 from 59 percent in 2005. The share of commuters traveling 25 minutes or more climbed from 41 percent to 45 percent during that same time.

Many super-commuters get to work through a combination of driving and public transportation. Often, they take one or more buses or trains. According to Bennett, super-commuters in regions with robust public transportation systems such as New York, San Francisco and Boston depend more on those networks than those with shorter commutes.

The mean age for a super-commuter is 43.4 years old, well above 38.4 average age for regular commuters, according to Apartment List.

"The reason super-commuters likely skew a bit older is that those looking for more space (for example, a single-family home versus an apartment with three roommates) while on a tight budget may need to live further from downtown job centers," Bennett said.

The super-commuter problem is being exacerbated, she added, because much of the new housing being built is on the periphery of cities that lack robust public transit as opposed to closer suburbs. Many units in downtown areas are geared toward the luxury market, squeezing out low-income residents.

"For these displaced residents, improved transit provides easier access to job centers and offers improved social mobility," the report says.

In the time since the Census data was released, Bennett argues that the circumstances affecting super-commuters haven't changed much. "Anecdotally," she said, "we're hearing that it's either the same or worse in the last year-and-a-half."

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HEADLINE	04/25 Arctic ice record amount of plastic
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/04/25/arctic-ice-choked-record-amount-microplastic-cigarette-butts-packing-material/549115002/
GIST	<p>If you are wondering what happens to all those cigarette butts flicked on sidewalks and plastic packing peanuts blowing down the street, researchers have found an alarming amount of particles from them deep in the ice of the Arctic Ocean.</p> <p>The record amount of microplastic appears to be courtesy of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch and increased fishing and shipping in the Arctic, researchers at the Alfred Wegener Institute of the Helmholtz Center for Polar and Marine Research report.</p> <p>The study raises concerns about the impact on human and sea life.</p> <p>Ice samples from five regions across the Arctic Ocean contained up to 12,000 of the tiny particles per liter of sea ice, researchers say. More than half the particles trapped in the ice were less than 1/500th of an inch wide — less than one-tenth the thickness of a credit card.</p> <p>"They could easily be ingested by arctic microorganisms," said biologist and report author Ilka Peeken. "No one can say for certain how harmful these tiny plastic particles are for marine life, or ultimately also for human beings."</p> <p>Microplastic refers to plastic particles, fibers, pellets and other fragments with a length, width or diameter ranging from microscopic to two-tenths of an inch.</p>

The types of plastic showed a "unique footprint" in the ice allowing the researchers to trace them back to possible sources. Some can be traced to the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, a collection of plastic, floating trash halfway between Hawaii and California, that has grown to more than 600,000 square miles, the report says.

Researchers determined that ice floes contain particularly high concentrations of polyethylene, used primarily in packaging material.

"We assume that these fragments represent remains of the so-called Great Pacific Garbage Patch and are pushed along the Bering Strait and into the Arctic Ocean by the Pacific inflow," the study says.

A high percentage of paint and nylon particles pointed to the intensified shipping and fishing activities in some parts of the Arctic, the study says.

The researcher team gathered the ice samples during three expeditions in 2014 and 2015. The study was released in the journal Nature Communications.

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HEADLINE	04/26 JFK documents: Oswald's KGB handler
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/lee-harvey-oswald-kgb-handler-jfk-assassination/2018/04/26/id/856981/
GIST	<p>One of the 19,045 CIA and FBI documents on President John F. Kennedy's Nov. 22, 1963, assassination released Thursday revealed the "KGB handler" of gunman Lee Harvey Oswald.</p> <p>According to McClatchy, the documents fill in some blanks about a Soviet Embassy official in Mexico City who met with Oswald weeks before the assassination.</p> <p>Over the decades, Oswald's meetings in Mexico City with the Cuban and Soviet embassies, purportedly to get a visa to Cuba in hopes of returning to the Soviet Union, have gradually been revealed, McClatchy reported.</p> <p>But the Thursday release revealed one of the Soviets he had contact with was Valeriy Vladimirovich Kostikov.</p> <p>McClatchy reported the CIA confirmed to the original assassination investigators that Kostikov was likely part of the Department 13 assassination unit of the Soviet spy agency, the KGB.</p> <p>It is now known Oswald had phone conversations while in Mexico with Kostikov — and among the further-released documents Thursday were references to Kostikov being "Oswald's KGB handler."</p> <p>It is found in a May 1982 memo from what appears to be an unidentified foreign intelligence agency or U.S. asset in the Middle East asking longtime CIA Soviet Division leader David Blee about Kostikov.</p> <p>The questioner notes the Soviets were behind increased harassment of foreign embassies in Beirut – less than a year before a truck bomb leveled the U.S. embassy there, killing 241 U.S. marines and military personnel.</p> <p>"The reason for our interest in KOSTIKOV will be obvious," writes the official to Blee.</p> <p>That document was one of more than 15,000 that Thursday were left with some form of partial redaction.</p> <p>Another document released Thursday revealed a memo dated Sept. 30, 1963, revealing FBI field agent James Hosty Jr. had sent word back to headquarters on the activities of Oswald.</p>

The document makes clear Hosty did tell FBI bosses Oswald was violent and had been living and working as a maintenance man in New Orleans before moving to Dallas in the spring of 1963. And it confirms Oswald was under surveillance at the time of the assassination.

The agencies have until Oct. 26, 2021, to fully lift the veil of secrecy on the documents about the assassination – almost 58 years after the events in Dallas.

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HEADLINE	04/26 Dark chocolate gives brain a boost?
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Wellness/dark-chocolate-give-brain-boost-studies-suggest/story?
GIST	<p>Here's a reason not to feel so guilty about indulging in your afternoon chocolate fix.</p> <p>Dark chocolate may be giving your brain, immune system and eyes a real boost. This week, researchers brought out three new studies singing the praises of this delectable treat.</p> <p>Scientists in one study allowed lucky volunteers to eat one dark chocolate bar, about 1.5 ounces, and then studied their brain waves with a machine called an E.E.G. Researchers found an increase in gamma waves 30 minutes after eating the chocolate.</p> <p>"Gamma frequency is associated with neurosynchronization, in other words neuroplasticity.... It is the highest level of cognitive processing," Dr. Lee Burk, the principal investigator of this study, explained. Neuroplasticity describes the brain's ability to efficiently connect thoughts and ideas.</p> <p>Scientists believe that gamma waves are a sign that your nerve cells are firing on all cylinders. They are able to talk to each other in a manner that leads to optimum learning and memory formation.</p> <p>Immunity booster</p> <p>In another study, Burk looked at how dark chocolate affects the immune system. Again, participants ate a dark chocolate bar, and scientists studied their blood work for the following week. They found an increase in anti-inflammatory markers as well as an increase in T cells, infection-fighting cells. These findings are overall "great for immunity," according to Burk.</p> <p>It's important to know that both of these studies were very small, with only 10 blessed participants. Not to mention, these results were presented at a scientific meeting, not published in a journal, which means they were not highly scrutinized, or "peer-reviewed," before they were revealed.</p> <p>A dark chocolate vision boost</p> <p>But another study was published in JAMA Ophthalmology, a journal produced by the American Medical Association. In two different tests, they gave 30 participants two chocolate bars, both dark and milk chocolate, and conducted vision tests about two hours later. After eating dark chocolate, the participants had small improvements in their vision.</p> <p>The most significant: improvement in contrast sensitivity, meaning your ability to tell the difference between objects in a low light or high-glare setting. In real life, contrast sensitivity comes into play when driving at night, for example.</p> <p>It is unclear why dark chocolate affects vision; however, the authors think it has to do with the blood vessels in the eye. Cacao, the main ingredient in dark chocolate, has been shown to positively affect blood pressure and blood vessel function. This new research suggests that dark chocolate allows for more blood flow to back of the eye, therefore improving vision.</p> <p>But make sure it's really dark -- 70 percent cacao</p>

	<p>Before you gorge yourself on brownies and hot fudge sundaes in the name of science, all of these studies are very specific to dark chocolate.</p> <p>Researchers used dark chocolate with 70 percent cacao, a recipe reserved for the darkest of dark chocolate. This usually means the chocolate tastes more bitter than sweet because only 30 percent of the candy bar is sugar and milk.</p> <p>"It's really not a candy," Burk said of the chocolate used in his study. "It's the sugar that's a candy, not the cacao."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Police: explosive device Texas Starbucks
SOURCE	http://www.12newsnow.com/article/news/crime/police-legitimate-explosive-device-inside-suspicious-package-found-at-beaumont-starbucks/502-545979304
GIST	<p>Beaumont Police now say they believe a "legitimate explosive device" was found early Thursday morning at the Dowlen Road Starbucks location.</p> <p>The suspicious package which contained the device was "rendered safe" by bomb technicians from the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives according to a release from the Beaumont Police Department.</p> <p>The Port Arthur Fire Department EOC K-9 assisted according to the release.</p> <p>The package was discovered at the Starbucks in the 3900 block of Dowlen Road near the Kroger grocery store.</p> <p>A spokesperson for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives told 12News that the "device could have caused harm if detonated properly."</p> <p>Police confirmed in the release that a note was found in the package but did not disclose what it said.</p> <p>A Starbucks employee who asked to remain anonymous told 12News that a note found inside the package read "Die U.S.A."</p> <p>The package, which was initially found outside the Starbucks, was brought inside by an employee according to the release.</p> <p>The employee noticed the note when they attempted to open the package and then put it back outside and called police.</p> <p>Police were called at about 4:45 a.m. and closed Dowlen Road near Folsom for almost three hours.</p> <p>Employees told police the package had been at the store for a few days.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Virginia top court curtails police ALPR use
SOURCE	http://www.nbc29.com/story/38054562/va-supreme-court-delivers-blow-to-police-use-of-license-plate-reader-technology
GIST	RICHMOND, Va. — The Virginia Supreme Court has delivered a blow to the police's use of Automated

License Plate Readers (ALPRs) to surveil citizens and track drivers' movements. The Rutherford Institute filed an amicus brief in *Neal v. Fairfax County Police Department* challenging the police practice of collecting and storing ALPR data as a violation of Virginia law that prohibits the government from amassing personal information about individuals, including their driving habits and location.

In reversing a lower court ruling that allowed state law enforcement agencies to extend the government's web of surveillance on Americans by tracking them as they drive their cars, the Court held that the use of ALPRs involves the collection of personal information prohibited by Virginia's Government Data Collection and Dissemination Practices Act.

Mounted next to traffic lights or on police cars, ALPRs, which photograph up to 3,600 license tag numbers per minute, take a picture of every passing license tag number and store the tag number and the date, time, and location of the picture in a searchable database. The data is then shared with law enforcement, fusion centers and private companies and used to track the movements of persons in their cars.

The Virginia Supreme Court's opinion in *Neal v. Fairfax County* is available at www.rutherford.org.

"We're on the losing end of a technological revolution that has already taken hostage our computers, our phones, our finances, our entertainment, our shopping, our appliances, and now, it's focused its sights on our cars," said constitutional attorney John W. Whitehead, president of The Rutherford Institute and author of *Battlefield America: The War on the American People*. "By subjecting Americans to surveillance without their knowledge or compliance and then storing the data for later use, the government has erected the ultimate suspect society. In such an environment, there is no such thing as 'innocent until proven guilty.'"

Since 2010, the Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) has used ALPRs to record the time, place, and driving direction of thousands of drivers who use Fairfax County roads daily. License plate readers capture up to 3,600 images of license tag numbers per minute and convert the images to a computer format that can be searched by tag number. This information, stored in a police database for a year, allows the police to determine the driving habits of persons as well as where they have been.

In 2014, Fairfax County resident Harrison Neal filed a complaint against FCPD asserting its collection and storage of license plate data violates Virginia's Government Data Collection and Dissemination Practices Act (Data Act), a law enacted because of the fear that advanced technologies would be used by the government to collect and analyze massive amounts of personal information about citizens, thereby invading their privacy and liberty.

The lawsuit cited a 2013 opinion by Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli that ALPR data is "personal information" that the Data Act forbids the government from collecting and storing except in connection with an active criminal investigation. Despite this opinion, FCPD continued its practice of collecting and storing ALPR data in order to track the movements of vehicles and drivers.

In November 2016, a Fairfax County Circuit Court judge ruled that license plate reader data was not "personal information" under the Data Act because license tag numbers identify a car and not a person. The Virginia Supreme Court reversed that decision, ruling the data was personal information, and remanded the case for a determination of whether the ALPR record-keeping process allows a link to be made between the license plate number and the vehicle owner.

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HEADLINE	04/27 Privacy fears over 'genetic informants'
SOURCE	https://www.apnews.com/de2a1166d5664125858cb7b5eed209a5/Use-of-DNA-in-serial-killer-probe-sparks-privacy-concerns
GIST	SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Investigators who used a genealogical website to find the ex-policeman they believe is a shadowy serial killer and rapist who terrified California decades ago call the technique

ground-breaking.

But others say it raises troubling legal and privacy concerns for the millions of people who submit their DNA to such sites to discover their heritage.

There aren't strong privacy laws to keep police from trolling ancestry site databases, said Steve Mercer, the chief attorney for the forensic division of the Maryland Office of the Public Defender.

"People who submit DNA for ancestors testing are unwittingly becoming genetic informants on their innocent family," Mercer said, adding that they "have fewer privacy protections than convicted offenders whose DNA is contained in regulated databanks."

Joseph James DeAngelo, 72, was arrested Tuesday after investigators matched crime-scene DNA with genetic material stored by a distant relative on an online site. From there, they narrowed it down to the Sacramento-area grandfather using DNA obtained from material he'd discarded, Sacramento County District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert said.

Authorities declined to name the online site. However, two of the largest, Ancestry.com and 23andMe, said Thursday that they weren't involved in the case.

DNA potentially may have played an earlier role in the case. It was just coming into use as a criminal investigative tool in 1986 when the predator variously known as the East Area Rapist and the Golden State Killer apparently ended his decade-long wave of attacks.

DeAngelo, a former police officer, probably would have known about the new method, experts said.

"He knew police techniques," said John Jay College of Criminal Justice professor Louis Schlesinger. "He was smart."

No one who knew DeAngelo over the decades connected him with the string of at least a dozen murders, 50 rapes and dozens of burglaries from 1976 to 1986 throughout the state.

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HEADLINE	04/26 Texas church shooter promised judge
SOURCE	http://time.com/5256917/sunderland-springs-texas-shooter-devin-kelley/
GIST	<p>(AUSTIN, Texas) — The gunman in a mass shooting at a Texas church last year told a military judge in 2012 he "would never allow myself to hurt someone" again while admitting to abusing his stepson and a long struggle with anger, according to Air Force records obtained by The Associated Press on Thursday.</p> <p>The documents and transcripts offer a rare look at Devin Patrick Kelley speaking at length and in his own words, as few examples have previously surfaced in the six months since he opened fire during a Sunday service in tiny Sutherland Springs, Texas.</p> <p>Kelley killed more than two dozen people in November 2017 in the worst mass shooting in Texas history. He died of an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound after he was shot and chased by two men who heard the gunfire at the church.</p> <p>"I don't think adults change. I don't think people change," Kelley said during his court-martial at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico, according to a transcript. He was convicted of assaulting family members and ultimately given a bad conduct discharge.</p> <p>"I believe in miracles. I believe in angels and I believe in demons, but I think for most people, they're going to be who they are and live their lives out, but based on the choices they make, if they're a wife beater, they're gonna probably beat their next wife. If they're a child beater, they'll probably beat their</p>

own child.”

The AP obtained hundreds of pages surrounding Kelley’s court martial through a Freedom of Information Act request.

Kelley admitted to pushing his stepson while the toddler crawled on the floor and slapping him across the face when he wouldn’t stop crying. He cracked the child’s skull and broke his clavicle. His ex-wife wrote an affidavit that described in graphic detail how Kelley repeatedly hit her, choked her and twice pointed a gun at her.

She wrote that when she suggested they get a divorce during a drive, Kelley lost control of their car while grabbing her hair, causing them to strike a guard rail.

“Sir, this is the worst thing I’ve done in my life and I will never allow myself to hurt someone like this again,” Kelley said.

Five years later, Kelley went aisle to aisle at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs looking for victims. Witnesses said he shot crying babies at point-blank range and the dead ranged in age from 18 months to 77 years old. Authorities put the official death toll at 26 because one of the 25 people killed was pregnant.

Investigators have said the attack appeared to stem from a domestic dispute Kelley was having with his mother-in-law, a member of the church who wasn’t present that day.

Air Force prosecutors had pushed for a stiffer sentence than the 12 months confinement and bad conduct discharge that Kelley received from the military jury. They wanted four years of prison time so that he might get his anger under control, according to the trial transcript.

“Who’s next?” said Capt. Brett Johnson, the assistant trial counsel. “What are we going to do to ensure that this does not happen again? That the next time he lashes out in anger to strike a child, to choke a woman, let him think back to the four (years) he sat in confinement, then maybe he will think again.”

The records show Kelley struggled to comply with the exacting standards of military service. A May 2012 evaluation rated his performance as an airman first class “average” and noted that he’d received letters of reprimand for insubordination to a superior enlisted service member and an assault on a family member. Kelley did not meet the requirements for conduct, character and military bearing, according to the evaluation.

After a confrontation with a civilian colleague over work duties, Kelley described being “scared and holding back tears” when the person yelled and tried to intimidate him, according to his summary of the incident, which is among the documents released. The civilian wanted to settle the dispute immediately in front of a staff sergeant, but Kelley said he needed time to get control of his emotions.

During the court-martial, Kelley submitted pictures of him in Boy Scouts, handling pets on his family ranch and rock-climbing with his family. He described being bullied on the football team in high school, hiding “behind alcohol and self-denial” and considering suicide before reconnecting with God.

“It will take a lifetime of living up to the promises I’ve made to myself, God and here to prove I have changed,” Kelley wrote in an affidavit. “I know I can be better, I just need a chance to prove it.”

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HEADLINE	04/26 Everett mayor, PD chief eye gang violence
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/968301/everett-mayor-police-chief-tackling-gang-violence-head-on/
GIST	Everett’s new mayor announced a new plan to tackle youth gang violence after a significant increase last

year.

Police Chief Dan Templeman says they've noticed a steady increase in gang and gun violence for a couple of years, everything from graffiti and tagging to drive-by shootings.

But it got really bad in 2017 with an increase in shootings overall and a 75 percent jump in gang-related crimes in the first 10 months of the year, most committed by people under 21.

In October 2017, 14-year-old Mariner High School Freshman David Sandoval was shot and killed by a 13-year-old boy over the color of his shoes.

"Anytime you have 13-year-olds that are armed with weapons and guns and they're using them to commit crimes, I mean that's as a police chief, it's completely unacceptable," said Chief Templeman. "In my mind, we needed to do something."

Templeman met with Sandoval's dad, and others living in the area as well as community groups around the Casino Road area and south Everett where many of the shootings and gang issues were happening.

"And it really brought to light the situation out there and the conditions and some of the fear that the community was feeling last year," said Templeman. "And so it allowed me to really take a look at our organization and how we were deploying our resources and make some adjustments in how we were deploying our police officer resources."

He was hearing from people in these communities who were afraid to let their kids walk to school, play outside of their homes, or go to the store.

Late last year, Templeman started directing extra patrols in the areas where guns, gangs, and youth violence had been a problem. And in recent months, the chief dedicated a sergeant and four officers to work with gangs and engaging with communities.

In January, newly-elected Mayor Cassie Franklin made addressing the issue of gun and gang violence involving young people a priority, issuing a directive for a more wide-ranging plan that includes several initiatives.

"They really represent a holistic approach to this and it's not just focusing on enforcement and it's not just focusing on prevention and intervention or public education," said Templeman. "It really looked at this issue from a big picture perspective ... not treating the symptoms of the problem, but really trying to treat the disease and get at that."

He says it's a similar approach to efforts being used to fight the opioid crisis.

Among the new initiatives is the creation of a Gang Response Community Advisory Group. The group was formed earlier this year and has met several times. Among the members, Sandoval's dad, police, community groups and community members, including students who have had to deal with gangs.

Templeman says in the weeks ahead they'll be taking more steps on the prevention front.

"Enforcement is important and we are right still examining and evaluating organizationally the feasibility and the likelihood of standing up our own Gang Response Unit in the city of Everett that would be dedicated — a group of officers," said Templeman. "It would also include a prevention and education component as well so not just enforcement, but a team of enforcement officers that can go out and work in the communities in the areas that are being hit."

Templeman says those prevention and intervention tools are an essential tool, especially when many kids getting involved in gangs have parents or siblings who are already involved or have little parental supervision.

The Firearms Safety Program will offer free gun locks and partner with local gun shops to provide information about the dangers of not safely storing guns when they sell a gun.

“We see firearms stolen a lot in the city of Everett,” said Templeman. “We see firearms stolen out of vehicles. They’re beneath the driver seat, they are in a backpacks, they’re under a blanket in the back seat. We see firearms stolen in burglaries at people’s homes where the firearm is sitting on the night stand. Our big concern about that is that those firearms end up in the hands of the wrong people. They end up in the hands of criminals. They end up in the hands of children.”

Templeman says the goal is to have the Gang Response Unit and Firearms Safety program up and running sometime in June 2018.

In the meantime, things are looking up for the first part of this year with gang crimes down 59 percent in the first three months of 2018 compared to the same time in 2017.

Templeman said, “Our shootings are down 37 percent in the city of Everett, our drive-by shootings are down 87 percent in the first quarter compared to last year. So trending in the right direction.”

The chief is cautiously optimistic, but warns gang activity usually increases in the summer months.

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HEADLINE	04/26 Violent rivals rush into FARC void
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/colombia-peace/
GIST	<p>Despite government efforts to bring order to Colombia, police and military forces are now struggling against various armed groups vying for land and illegal activities once controlled by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC.</p> <p>Still a powerful criminal enterprise when it agreed to demobilize, the FARC left behind lucrative dealings in the drug trade, extortion and illegal mining. Stepping in to supplant them are splinter FARC factions, enterprising new gangs and veteran rebel rivals like the National Liberation Army, or ELN. Reuters accompanied soldiers, police, guerrillas and townspeople to understand the difficulties still confronting Colombia.</p> <p>When President Juan Manuel Santos and leaders of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia shook hands to end a half-century war, residents of towns like Tumaco were supposed to be relieved.</p> <p>Nineteen months later, people in this gritty port on the Pacific are anything but.</p> <p>True, most FARC militants, as foreseen by the peace accord, demobilized here and across Colombia, a country the size of France and Spain combined. For decades, rugged terrain and an oft-absent government had enabled the rebels to become the de-facto authority in many areas.</p> <p>But Santos, saddled with a sluggish economy at the end of his second term, has struggled to ensure order of the sort the rebels, albeit murderous, once imposed across parts of the Andean nation.</p> <p>Despite widespread acclaim for the agreement, including a Nobel Prize for Santos, peace remains elusive in this country of 50 million people, still the world’s largest producer of cocaine.</p> <p>With the FARC disarmed, other militants, criminal gangs and paramilitary groups are jostling into the breach. They are hoisting flags, enlisting members and exacting levies and loyalty in former FARC strongholds. They are also seizing the FARC’s most lucrative rackets – from the drug trade, to extortion, to illegal mining.</p>

“It’s like a devil’s cauldron where all manner of criminal ingredients are being boiled,” said Juan Camilo Restrepo, until recently the government’s chief negotiator in ongoing peace talks with the National Liberation Army, or ELN, now Colombia’s biggest guerrilla group. “They all want their hands on the business and territorial spoils left by the FARC.”

Over the past nine months, Reuters traveled to Tumaco and six other sites in Colombia to understand the advance of armed and criminal groups. Disrupters include splinter FARC factions, enterprising new gangs and veteran rebel rivals, like the ELN, who have used the agreement to reposition.

Among the most violent corners of Colombia is Tumaco, in the southwest, where a network of rivers provides a crucial Pacific outlet for sprawling coca plantations nearby.

Here, new guerrilla corps vie with criminal gangs for the routes. Earlier this month, a small force of former FARC fighters killed an Ecuadorian journalist, photographer and their driver because the neighboring country spurned the guerrillas’ demands that it release imprisoned comrades who had ventured across the border.

East of Tumaco, ELN rebels seized turf where the FARC relinquished an illegal gold mine. In the northwestern state of Chocó, the ELN is recruiting and expanding control of jungle there.

To win support for the deal, Santos promised to flood areas of FARC control with troops and investment.

As much as \$3 billion of annual government spending over the next 15 years is supposed to improve health, education, infrastructure and agriculture in war-torn regions. A cornerstone of the plan is a crop substitution effort for farmers who rely on income from coca.

But a weakened economy makes financing difficult.

Along with tighter budgets, red tape delays the start of roads, aqueducts, schools, power lines and clinics promised to millions living without infrastructure. The crop substitution program in 2017 reached just 30 percent of its goal and is angering farmers who say the government is leaving their fields bare. The anger boiled over near Tumaco in October, when seven farmers died in a firefight with police and soldiers who pulled up their coca bushes.

The ascendant threats are dividing Colombians just before they vote on a Santos successor in May. Instead of an asset, the faltering peace is disconcerting an electorate also frustrated by tepid growth, weak public services and still-gaping inequality.

The government said it is doing all it can.

It already deployed 80,000 police and soldiers. In January, it launched its biggest deployment in two decades, sending 9,000 troops to Nariño, the troubled state home to Tumaco and other flashpoints along the Pacific coast and Ecuadorian border.

It isn’t enough.

Groups such as the new and little-known United Guerillas of the Pacific are establishing strongholds. “This is happening all across Colombia,” said Joan, the leader of an eight-person squad of heavily-armed guerrillas on patrol late last year in jungle south of Tumaco.

Led by former FARC fighters who rejected the peace, the group is already coercing local families for support. It is not associated with the rebels who killed the Ecuadorians earlier this month, according to government officials.

Luis Carlos Villegas, Colombia’s defense minister, told Reuters the problems with other gangs, guerrillas and criminals aren’t new or worsening. Rather, he argued, they stand out in the void left by the FARC.

“Are there micro-trafficking problems? Are there organized crime problems? Are there problems of gangs that are trying to move into FARC territories?” Villegas asked. “Yes.”

“But are they growing?” he continued. “No, they are more visible because there is no longer a conflict.”

As many as 70 armed and criminal groups operate across Colombia, according to Ariel Ávila, a researcher at Fundación Paz y Reconciliación, a security think tank in Bogotá, the capital. That amounts to about 5,000 guerrillas, gang members, paramilitary fighters and other criminals, including FARC dissidents who renounced the peace.

In a briefing in late March, General Alberto José Mejía, Colombia’s top military commander, said as many as 1200 FARC dissidents are still active, one fifth the rebel force when peace was agreed. While a far cry from the 17,000 rebels at the FARC’s peak in the late 1990s, the figure is four times the number the government had previously recognized.

Some dissidents have set up splinter factions, like the Pacific guerrillas, who are already “taxing” local traffickers and extorting grocery stores and other small businesses. Police believe extortion fuels as much as 20 percent of the income for some groups.

Other dissidents joined gangs with little ideology beyond crime.

The FARC originated in the 1960s, a leftist insurgency against the government and an entrenched elite who even today control most of Colombia’s resources. Initially inspired by communism, the FARC diversified into kidnapping, extortion, the drug trade and other crimes as Cold War credos faded.

For those who now seek to supplant them, there are many opportunities for ill-gotten gains. The resulting turf wars and violence perpetuates one problem, the displacement of noncombatants from homes and entire communities, that totalled more than 67,000 people last year, according to Colombia’s government.

Around Tumaco, where wood and tin shacks rise on stilts above meandering estuaries, the scramble for control spawned bloodshed. Many of its 200,000 residents, most of African and indigenous descent, miss the days before the agreement.

Back then, the FARC controlled local drug routes. Despite frequent clashes with government troops, the rebels ensured that most poor residents and non-combatants were left alone. Today anyone is vulnerable.

Nationwide, murders have declined in recent years. In Tumaco, and other former FARC bastions, homicides are soaring.

At least 211 people were killed in Tumaco last year, according to police, compared with 147 in 2016. That gives Tumaco a homicide rate of about 102 murders per 100,000 people – roughly four times the national rate.

For townspeople in Tumaco, poverty can make life outside the law attractive. City hall calculates unemployment at 70 percent. Few legitimate jobs exist beyond seasonal work on shrimp boats, other fishing and farming of cacao, rice and palm.

The easiest money, then, is cocaine – be it coca cultivation or any of the chemical or logistical activities to export it. Across Colombia, such activities generate about \$13 billion annually, according to government estimates, equal to more than 4 percent of the country’s legitimate economy.

In Tumaco’s muddy slums, youth idle on street corners, drinking beer and listening to reggaeton music. Some are awaiting recruitment by local gangs for one lucrative activity – running cocaine in high-speed boats to Central America.

Gangs own or rent the boats, with outboard motors powerful enough to carry as much as three tons to dropoff points in Panama, Costa Rica or beyond. For each voyage, they pay roughly 100 million pesos, or about \$35,000, to each runner in a crew of three or four.

Sometimes, the voyages are multi-party enterprises, with small businesses and others investing. Even those meant to thwart the trade, including sailors at checkpoints, sometimes get a cut in exchange for turning a blind eye, locals and police said.

Bribes are a constant challenge, particularly because drug profits allow criminals to pay more than the state.

“They use their abundant capital to corrupt institutions,” said Orlando Romero, the admiral in charge of operations on the Pacific. The Navy, he added, arrested 12 sailors over the past three years for collaborating with drug runners.

The voyages from Tumaco are hardly new. But the rush to participate has accelerated.

“They come to church for blessing before they go,” said Daniel Zarantonello, an Italian priest in Tumaco. “It’s out of control.”

Farmers are also growing more coca.

The region around Tumaco is now Colombia’s biggest source of the leaf.

Some 23,000 hectares, over three times the area of Manhattan, are planted there, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. Cultivation nationwide reached 188,000 hectares in 2016, over twice the area three years earlier.

The increase has various causes, including Colombia’s 2015 decision, for health and environmental reasons, to stop aerial dusting of pesticide on coca plantations. The FARC also sought to maximize cocaine revenues before demobilizing.

The result: Cocaine production capacity reached 910 metric tons in 2016, the highest in over a decade, according to DEA figures.

In Peña de los Santos, a hamlet four hours south of Tumaco by boat on the Rosario River, farmers grow coca and make it into paste. For a spell after the peace agreement, buyers no longer came. Many in the Afro-Colombian community had to scrounge for fruit and fish.

For many farmers, little incentive exists to grow crops the government hopes can blossom through substitution.

A hectare of coca, a fast-growing plant that can be harvested in three months, can reap 44 million pesos a year, about \$15,000, according to national police in the area. A hectare of cacao, the slow-growing source of chocolate, generates a tenth as much.

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HEADLINE	04/26 Inmate bought mail bomb off dark web
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2018/04/26/SC-inmate-bought-mail-bomb-off-dark-web-to-kill-ex-wife/9091524711151/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=lh&utm_medium=5
GIST	April 25 (UPI) -- A South Carolina prisoner was convicted this week of using the dark web to sell drugs and obtain a mail bomb to be sent to his ex-wife. Michael Young Jr., 32, was already serving a 50-year sentence for attempting to kill his ex-wife and

murdering her father back in 2007 when he got a hold of a contraband cell phone he used to access the dark web and carry out his crimes.

Prosecutors said he used the phone to purchase marijuana via a supplier in California that was sent to a residence in South Carolina, where Young's co-conspirator, Vance Volious Jr., would pick it up and re-distribute it. Several other people have also been implicated in the drug conspiracy, including 14 South Carolina Corrections Department officers who were indicted Wednesday.

But Young didn't stop with the drug dealing. He also wanted to finish kill the woman he attempted to kill more than a decade earlier.

"Let me ask you this...could u possibly booby trap a box? So that as soon its opened...boom? Just curious," Young wrote to a seller on the dark web's Alpha Bay Market.

The seller said it could be done and Young sent cryptocurrency to pay for the "box."

"Young used Bitcoin to pay for the mail bomb to be sent to a conspirator's residence," prosecutors said. "He also had re-shipment labels addressed to his ex-wife to be sent to Volious' house in Columbia. Co-conspirator Tyrell Fears -- who previously pleaded guilty -- obtained the labels from Volious, armed the mail bomb and delivered the inert explosives package to the Post Office in [Irmo, S.C.] on June 6, 2017."

The mail bomb might have been delivered if a U.S. Postal Inspector didn't intercept the package. The next day, Young, Volious and Fears were indicted.

Young and Volious were both convicted of conspiracy, transport of an explosive with the intent to kill, mailing a non-mailable explosive with the intent to kill, and carrying an explosive during the commission of another felony.

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HEADLINE	04/26 German nurse faces 98 murder charges
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/german-nurse-faces-murder-charge-total-rises-98-54746606?cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>German prosecutors have attributed one more murder to a former nurse accused of killing dozens of patients at two hospitals, bringing to 98 the number of slayings he is expected to face trial for later this year.</p> <p>Niels Hoegel is already serving a life sentence for two murders. He was charged earlier this year with killing 97 more patients over several years at the hospitals in northwestern Germany. His trial is scheduled to open Oct. 30 in Oldenburg.</p> <p>News agency dpa reported that prosecutors said Thursday they are accusing Hoegel of one more killing after medical experts found traces of a cardiac drug in samples from one patient but erroneously told investigators the result was negative.</p> <p>The state court will decide whether to add the case to the indictment.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/25 Vehicle rental agencies safety concerns
SOURCE	https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-vehicle-rental-agencies-struggle-with-screenings-as-security-concerns/
GIST	Monday's deadly rental van rampage in Toronto shows how quickly a vehicle can be turned into a weapon, but rental agencies are finding few clear options to prevent their property from involvement in such violent acts.

The urgency to find solutions is increasing, however.

The attack in Toronto that left at least 10 people dead and several injured is only the latest of a spate of vehicle attacks — including one in Edmonton last September — that have security experts grappling with solutions.

Efforts are further along in Europe, which has seen a rash of vehicle attacks across the continent. In the U.K., vehicle rental companies were asked to conduct tougher background checks following two separate van attacks in London last June.

But rental agencies are still limited in how well they can screen customers, said Toby Poston, director of communications at the British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association.

“Members aren’t experts at profiling customers,” said Poston.

“People don’t come into rental branches wearing camo gear and stab vests and with that sort of glint in their eye. Quite often, these people just present themselves like any normal person.”

The British association is, however, looking to better co-ordinate with law and security officials to make it easier to share data. Poston said rental agencies wouldn’t have access to terror watchlists or the like, but could potentially feed information to authorities for better monitoring.

Member companies are also looking to potentially institute other record searches like credit and criminal background checks, but even then there is no clear way to determine that a vehicle shouldn’t be rented, said Poston.

“You have to remember that a criminal record is not always reason enough to not rent someone a vehicle. And you have to be careful from a discrimination point of view.”

The accused in the Toronto van attack, Alek Minassian, did not even raise any red flags during a brief stint in the Canadian Armed Forces last year, a military source told The Canadian Press.

Toronto police said he rented the van from a Ryder rental location north of the city. The company said Tuesday it was fully co-operating with authorities, but declined to comment on its current security policies.

The Associated Canadian Car Rental Operators said government officials have yet to reach out to try to co-ordinate data sharing.

But any such efforts would be complicated, said vice president of government relations Craig Hirota.

“It’s challenging, how do you use that information so that it doesn’t infringe on existing rights of the individual and rights to privacy?”

The RCMP’s National Critical Infrastructure Team has been in contact with industry and sends out relevant information, Hirota added.

“We are in the loop with local and federal law enforcement when there are bulletins.”

He said the rental industry has long been concerned with fraudulent and criminal activity with rentals, but there are limited options for screenings.

“Vehicle rental agencies have been concerned with people doing bad things with rental cars since the inception of the industry. Obviously if there was a way to tell a renter was going to do something prohibited with your vehicle, we’d love to have that.”

The U.K. rental association is looking to security models elsewhere, including the New York Police Department’s Operation Nexus program that facilitates reporting of suspicious business encounters.

It is also considering the establishment of a national accreditation scheme that could include training and formalizing policies such as no cash rentals. Companies also generally require business accounts for customers wanting to rent larger trucks, said Poston.

Elsewhere in Europe, Italy has implemented a real-time notification scheme with rental operators and a similar one is being developed in Belgium. Sweden is looking to introduce geofence technology that could connect with a vehicle’s on-board computer and limit its speed to a safe level.

The ease of carrying out such attacks, and the difficulties in detecting them are part of the reason for their rise, said Jeremy Littlewood, an assistant professor at Carleton University’s Norman Paterson School of International Affairs.

“It’s easy to replicate if someone gets that into their head,” said Littlewood.

Littlewood also questioned the effectiveness of background checks. He pointed out that Alek Minassian, now charged with 10 counts of first-degree murder for Monday’s attack, was not known to police.

“So far, police authorities are saying this person was not known to us. And so even if we had a database, our individual in this case is not going to show up from the police side.”

Even when perpetrators are known it is still difficult to stop an attack, said Littlewood, noting that Martin Couture-Rouleau was reported to be under RCMP surveillance when in 2014 he used a vehicle in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Que., to hit two members of the Canadian Armed Forces, leaving one dead.

Prevention has instead focused on more cement barriers, and heavy trucks at intersections for major events, but there’s no way to fully prevent this sort of attack entirely, said Littlewood.

“We have to recognize the limits of what can be done here, and the reality is we have to accept there are going to be some risks, and we can never entirely make ourselves into a zero-risk world.”

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HEADLINE	04/26 Ferry terminals: cut in line, get a fine
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/cut-in-line-get-a-fine-at-state-ferry-terminals
GIST	<p>EDMONDS, Wash. - Ferry riders beware - as new warnings are out about the crackdown on cutting in line to board a boat.</p> <p>It takes an eagle-eye to catch all the line cutters, and whether it is by accident or on purpose, people keep finding ways to bypass the toll booths and other drivers.</p> <p>“When you deal with the public you're going to find all these people who try to find loopholes in the system,” said Rory Rodriguez, a terminal attendant in Edmonds for the Washington State Ferries.</p> <p>Peer pressure keeps most passengers honest. However, even drivers who sneak in a shortcut don't always do it intentionally.</p> <p>“People are guided by GPS, and GPS doesn't always pick up where the back is at and where a queue or a line for the ferry starts or ends,” said Washington State Patrol Trooper Kevin Fortino.</p> <p>The number of line cutting reports have seen a spike. In 2017, a total of 2,866 complaints came in. That’s well above the 1,600 from 2016.</p>

	<p>And it could get worse now that it's near the peak season.</p> <p>“As we get into the summer months, that's kind of the Super Bowl for line cutting,” said Ian Sterling, spokesperson for the Washington State Ferries.</p> <p>Line cutting can bring a \$136 fine, but whether that’s issued is up to the trooper’s discretion.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/27 Hit-run crashes rise locally
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/hit-and-run-crashes-on-the-rise-nationally-and-locally
GIST	<p>MARYSVILLE, Wash. - More than one hit and run crash happens every minute in the U.S. according to a new nationwide study from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.</p> <p>The study said pedestrians and bicyclists are most at risk.</p> <p>Here in the Puget Sound region, we've seen those same staggering numbers.</p> <p>According to the Washington State Patrol, already this year, there have been more than 700 hit and run crashes in our state.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •249 in King County •157 in Snohomish County •116 in Pierce and Thurston Counties <p>Trooper said in 63 percent of those crashes, investigators have not been able to track down the responsible driver.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 FBI campaign: sex assault on planes
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/fbi-launches-campaign-about-sexual-assault-on-aircraft/739308620
GIST	<p>SEATAC, Wash. - The FBI on Thursday launched a new campaign about sexual assault on aircraft, reminding passengers it is a federal crime and urging victims to come forward.</p> <p>Special Agent Bruce Reynolds said even, if an assault happened years ago, FBI agents want to hear from passengers.</p> <p>"I believe it's an underreported crime. A lot of times people are reluctant to come forward," Reynolds said.</p> <p>The FBI said the number of reports of sexual assaults on airplanes has risen from 38 in fiscal year 2014 to 63 in the fiscal year that ended in 2017.</p> <p>The FBI's new public message urges passengers to take precautions, such as booking children traveling alone in aisle seats so flight attendants can easily see if they're safe, keeping armrests down and asking to be reseated if your gut tells you someone's behavior is suspicious.</p> <p>Reynolds also suggests passengers "not be in a situation where you consume too much alcohol, or maybe on long flights, overnight flights, where you take sleeping pills."</p> <p>Delta Air Lines declined comment on Dvaladze's lawsuit but said in a statement that Delta crews are "trained to respond to a number of onboard passenger disruptions."</p>

	<p>Alaska Airlines also recently started new training for its crews.</p> <p>Sen. Patty Murray, D-Washington, sponsored a bill requiring that onboard sexual misconduct be reported to a law enforcement agency.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Renton child luring suspect arrested
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2017/12/20/tips-help-renton-police-id-suspect-accused-of-groping-exposing-himself-to-young-girls/
GIST	<p>FUGITIVE CAPTURED IN VERMONT — April 25, 2018</p> <p>After four months on the run, Border Patrol agents in Vermont spotted Remy Amon walking down a road on Wednesday.</p> <p>He was taken into custody and turned over to the Vermont State Patrol.</p> <p>The 41-year-old is being held on \$500,000 bail in the Northwest State Correctional Facility in Swanton, Vermont.</p> <p>Amon will now face extradition back to Washington state.</p> <p>Official press release from U.S. Customs and Border Protection: <i>Alburgh, Vt. – U.S. Border Patrol agents apprehended Remy Amon, 41, an Ivory Coast national with an extraditable felony warrant for molestation of a child.</i></p> <p><i>At approximately 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Border Patrol agents in Alburgh, VT encountered Amon walking in the rain on Rt. 2 wearing a large coat and carrying a backpack. This area is in close proximity to the international border and agents routinely encounter subjects who have illegally entered the U.S. in this area.</i></p> <p><i>During questioning, the agent attempted to identify Amon, however, he stated his identification documents had been stolen. Agents transported him to the Swanton Station where biometric record checks revealed that he had initially provided a false name to agents and not only had no status or documentation to allow him to legally enter or be present in the United States, has an extensive criminal history including a warrant for arrest.</i></p> <p>“This arrest is a great example of why the work of our Border Patrol agents along the northern border is so important,” said Swanton Station Patrol Agent in Charge Matthew Sherman. “The agents’ diligence in identifying this individual means we were able to remove a dangerous criminal from our community.”</p> <p>Border Patrol contacted the King County Sheriff’s Office in Washington State who will extradite Amon based on the warrant for molestation of a minor.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 State working thru rape kit backlog
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/26/washington-working-through-rape-kit-backlog-but-has-several-thousand-to-go/
GIST	<p>FEDERAL WAY, Wash. -- Authorities say DNA evidence led to the arrest of the so-called Golden State Killer this week, who is believed to have raped 51 women over several years.</p> <p>But what about DNA that is in the hands of investigators right now, just waiting to be processed? The state of Washington has a huge backlog of untested rape kits that hold evidence that could point to the attackers.</p>

It's something law enforcement is working to solve. Q13 News reporter Simone Del Rosario questioned Capt. Monica Alexander of Washington State Patrol about the process.

Q: How did this backlog happen in the first place?

A: People were not submitting kits once upon a time, if they didn't have a suspect, there were different reasons why kits were not submitted. And then when the law was passed that every kit had to be tested, that's when we realized there's a lot of kits out there and there's a lot more kits than there are people to process those kits.

Q: What are we looking at backlog wise? How many kits do we think are out there?

A: We're looking at anywhere between 7,000 and maybe as high as 10,000 kits now.

Q: What's been the result of testing some of these kits? What have we found out?

A: We've had 121 matches since they've been uploaded into CODIS and we've had 345 uploaded into CODIS. What that tells us is that's good information we can pass back to law enforcement agencies that submit those kits and now they can start trying to put that together with the case work that they're doing.

Q: So what's going to take priority: Is it the new rape test kit that comes in or some of the backlog?

A: You can state that there's a rush and we have to evaluate that on a case-by-case basis, so that's the responsibility of laboratory managers to prioritize those cases depending on what the law enforcement agency shares with us.

Q: When would we be able to erase this backlog and address just the kits coming in?

A: With what we have right now it would take probably two and a half to five years to clear out all the backlog. When you put the new cases on top of that, I really don't have an answer for that because we never know day by day how many cases we're going to get in.

Q: For a victim, what does this do for peace of mind?

A: When the police go out and arrest them and they're prosecuted for their crime, it changes people's lives. It absolutely changes these people's lives. And I think we keep that in our mind and it's frustrating when we have this DNA but we just don't have enough people to process it or a large enough lab to process it, but I believe very strongly with the way that technology is moving so quickly forward, this isn't going to be a problem for long.

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HEADLINE	04/27 Bosnia detains 12; suspicion war crimes
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/04/27/senior-wartime-bosnian-officer-detained-for-war-crimes.html
GIST	<p>SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina – Authorities in Bosnia say police have detained a former Bosnian army commander and 11 others on suspicion of war crimes against Serb and Bosnian civilians and prisoners during the 1992-95 war.</p> <p>The prosecutor's office says Atif Dudakovic and other commanders and members of the wartime Bosnian army's 5th Corps were detained in early-morning raids Friday in several towns.</p> <p>Dudakovic was in charge of the northwestern Bihac area which was under Serb siege during most of the conflict. The 64-year-old former general became the Bosnian army commander after the war.</p>

	<p>The prosecutor's office says Dudakovic and others are suspected of atrocities against hundreds of Serbs and Bosniaks. It says the case against the group is based on hundreds of testimonies, video footage and other evidence.</p> <p>The probe opened in 2005.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Latin America amidst murder crisis
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/26/latin-america-murder-crisis-violence-homicide-report
GIST	<p>Latin America has suffered more than 2.5m murders since the start of this century and is facing an acute public security crisis that demands urgent and innovative solutions, a new report warns.</p> <p>“The sheer dimensions of homicidal violence are breathtaking,” says the report by the Igarapé Institute, a Brazil-based thinktank focused on security and development issues.</p> <p>The publication, released on Thursday, paints a bleak portrait of what it calls the world’s most homicidal continent.</p> <p>Latin America suffers 33% of the world’s homicides despite having only 8% of its population. One-quarter of all global homicides are concentrated in four countries – Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela – all of which are gearing up for presidential elections in which security is a dominant theme.</p> <p>“The overall trend right now in Latin America is one of increasing homicides and deteriorating security,” said Robert Muggah, one of the report’s authors.</p> <p>“Latin America is a large area and there are lots of variations. But as a region – including Mexico down to Central America and South America – the rate of homicide is set to continue increasing up until 2030. The only other places we are seeing similar kinds of increases are in parts of southern and central Africa and some war zones.”</p> <p>The report lays bare how young Latin Americans are disproportionately affected, with nearly half of all homicide victims aged 15–29. It also denounces the “astonishingly” large role of guns.</p> <p>Muggah said: “In addition to having these exceedingly high, epidemic levels of homicide, the vast majority of these homicides are committed with firearms. Over 75% of homicides are gun-related.” The global average is about 40%.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Charges dropped: teen ‘planned’ shooting
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/charges-dropped-against-jack-sawyer-teen-accused-of-threatening-school-shooting-in-vermont/
GIST	<p>The thin line between planning a school massacre and attempting it has a teenage suspect on the verge of walking free in Vermont. Now, the community is on edge.</p> <p>At Fair Haven Union High School, attendance has been down as much as 25 percent in the last two months.</p> <p>"He threatened to kill a lot of people in our school," said one student at the school.</p> <p>Jack Sawyer, a former student, carefully detailed his plan to shoot up the school in a journal entitled "The</p>

journal of an active shooter." It listed who he wanted to kill, like the school resource officer, saying, "I'm intending to just blow his (expletive) head off before he can even draw his gun or think about what's happening."

The plot was foiled when Angela McDevitt, a 17-year-old acquaintance of Sawyer's from upstate New York, was texting with him on the day of the Parkland, Florida, shooting. McDevitt thought a mutual friend of theirs might have been a student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

"I went to Jack, and I was like, 'Hey, this girl who we both know, school just got shot up,'" she said.

In response, she said he told her, "That's fantastic. I 100 percent support it. What school was it?"

McDevitt told the police officer at her school, who quickly called the Vermont State Police. Prosecutors charged Sawyer with attempted murder and aggravated assault. But they weren't expecting a 112-year-old law to get in the way.

In Vermont, "planning" isn't "attempting." So last week, hard as it may be to believe, prosecutors were forced to drop the felony charges against Sawyer, after the Supreme Court ruled there was "no attempt," since the act had not been committed.

"When you look at it, telling the detectives you're just delaying by law enforcement interactions," said Bill Humphries, the Fair Haven police chief. "I understand their ruling, I don't agree with it, but I mean those are the kind of laws we have to live with right now."

If Sawyer can make the reduced bail, he must seek mental health help, but he will get out of jail. That leaves principal Jason Rasco dealing with panicked students and anxious faculty.

No school in America lives without fear these days, but the threat at Fair Haven Union High seems a little more real.

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HEADLINE	04/26 Rape kit backlog blamed in assault
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/rape-kit-backlog-blamed-in-second-assault-in-tumwater/281-546341443
GIST	<p>A sexual assault case in Tumwater provides a glaring example of how Washington state's rape kit backlog is still having serious and devastating consequences.</p> <p>Tumwater police have linked suspect Logan Humphrey, 35, to two violent sexual assaults that occurred within six months of each other, but it took police months to obtain DNA evidence that could have potentially put the suspect behind bars before the second crime occurred.</p> <p>Detectives first opened the case in July 2017 when a woman was threatened at knife-point and raped in a wooded area near Tyee Drive, according to the police report.</p> <p>Tumwater police Lt. Jen Kolb said, "it caused us great concern that he had the capability of doing it again."</p> <p>A sexual assault kit containing critical DNA evidence was taken immediately after the crime, but Tumwater police say they didn't receive the results until January 23, 2018, around six months later, finally allowing them to arrest the suspect on January 25.</p> <p>However, DNA evidence links that same suspect to another Tumwater sexual assault that occurred on January 22, the day before the first case's DNA results were relayed to police.</p>

“You hear something this horrific and it worries me how many sexual assault offenders have we left on the streets?” said Washington state Representative Tina Orwall, D-Des Moines, one of the lead lawmakers fighting to fix the state’s rape kit backlog.

While progress has been made since she began working on the issue several years ago, she says this case highlights the problem is far from being solved.

“It's heart-wrenching to think somebody suffered when maybe we could have gotten this dangerous person off the streets so they couldn't have harmed anyone else, and I worry every day when I think about the 10,000 kits we haven't finished testing, or the new ones in the lab,” said Orwall. “It speaks to needing to have urgency to have every kit tested.”

In a statement Thursday night, a spokesman with Washington State Patrol said the department believes it’s vital to test every sexual assault kit sent to the state crime lab but noted that due to the large volume of DNA cases, scientists have to prioritize cases.

The July rape in Tumwater was granted priority status, according to WSP. Lab techs required additional evidence to process the case resulting in it being assigned to a scientist a month later on August 30, 2017, according to a spokesman. However, it still took several months to complete the case and receive a “Combined DNA Index System” or CODIS hit. WSP confirms the forensic scientist on the case called Tumwater PD on January 23; a final report was issued January 30.

“There are a multitude of factors which play a role in the amount of time it takes to complete a DNA case. These factors include the complexity of the case, whether or not the DNA has a CODIS hit and the technical review required of each case,” said spokesman Kyle Moore.

In addition to sexual assault cases, the State Crime Lab also processes homicides and other violent crimes. In 2017, the median DNA case took around 198 days, or more than six months to complete, according to Moore.

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HEADLINE	04/26 DNA from genealogy site aided capture
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/accused-serial-rapist-killer-undetected-working-cop-54741076?cid=clicksource_81_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>More than three decades after his trail went cold, one of California's most prolific and elusive serial killers was caught when investigators matched crime-scene DNA with genetic material stored by a relative on an online genealogical site, prosecutors said Thursday.</p> <p>Authorities have said the DNA tied former police officer Joseph James DeAngelo, 72, to most of the 12 killings he is accused of committing between 1976 and 1986 as part of the Golden State Killer case.</p> <p>Investigators also allege DeAngelo raped more than 50 women during that period.</p> <p>Authorities declined to name the DNA site used to track the DNA.</p> <p>Companies such as Ancestry.com and 23andMe charge customers to use their DNA to produce genetic profiles that determine ethnicity and can identify long-lost relatives, among other services. Both companies said Thursday they weren't involved in the case against DeAngelo.</p> <p>Sacramento County District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert said investigators surreptitiously obtained his DNA last week from discarded material that ended up matching DNA at crime scenes.</p> <p>Police received thousands of tips over the years, but DeAngelo's name had not been on the radar of law enforcement before last week, Schubert said.</p>

In other developments Thursday, police in Visalia said DeAngelo is a suspect in the 1975 killing of community college teacher Claude Snelling in the farming community about 40 miles (64 kilometers) south of Fresno.

If the link is confirmed, it would boost the number of victims to 13 in the serial killing case.

DeAngelo worked as a police officer in nearby Exeter from 1973 to 1976, and police in the region believe he also is the Visalia Ransacker, responsible for the death of Snelling, who was fatally shot while stopping someone from kidnapping his 16-year-old daughter, and about 100 burglaries.

Visalia police Chief Jason Salazar said Snelling's death and the region's burglaries weren't part of the tally of crimes authorities released Wednesday in the serial killing case because investigators lacked DNA evidence on those crimes.

Salazar said fingerprints and shoe tracks will be eyed for matches to DeAngelo. Detectives are also looking to see if any items taken during the Visalia burglaries are uncovered during the investigation.

In addition, DeAngelo matches the description of Snelling's killer, Salazar said, and the attacker used sophisticated pry tools to gain entrance to locked homes, just as authorities say DeAngelo did in other crimes.

The culprit also wore a ski mask and eluded capture because of an apparent deep-knowledge of police work.

"He always had a good escape route," Salazar said.

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HEADLINE	04/27 Pakistan first conviction for child porn
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/pakistan-sentences-man-conviction-child-porn-54773855?
GIST	<p>A Pakistani court in the eastern city of Sargodha has sentenced a man to seven years in prison for working for a child pornography network, the first such conviction in this Islamic nation.</p> <p>District police chief Suhail Chaudhry says the court's ruling against Sadat Amin was announced on Thursday.</p> <p>He says Amin was arrested earlier this month by the Federal Investigation Agency — Pakistan's version of the FBI — following a complaint from the Norwegian government. The police chief says the investigation proved Amin produced and sold porn videos of children to a Norway-based network.</p> <p>During the trial, prosecutors said Amin confessed to luring children to produce porn videos.</p> <p>Pakistan recently introduced laws giving authorities power to crack down on the porn industry.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/26 Suspected serial killer 'shocked by arrest'
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/suspected-golden-state-killer-shocked-arrest-told-police/story?id=54746113
GIST	The suspected "Golden State Killer" who was arrested this week for killing and raping dozens of California residents decades ago, seemed shocked to find police outside his home, according to Sacramento County Sheriff's Department official Paul Belli.

Joseph James DeAngelo, a 72-year-old former police officer, was taken into custody on Tuesday at his home in Citrus Heights in Sacramento County, the same county where his alleged crime spree began in 1976. The crimes continued across the state until 1986.

DeAngelo lived at the home with family but was home alone when he was arrested, Belli told ABC News.

DeAngelo told police he had a roast in the oven, and officers said they could take care of it, Belli said.

He was placed under arrest without incident.

DeAngelo is believed to have committed 12 murders, at least 50 rapes and multiple home burglaries in the 1970s and 1980s.

His alleged "reign of terror" spanned from the Sacramento area in Northern California down to Orange County in Southern California, Orange County District Attorney Tony Rackauckas said Wednesday.

DeAngelo served in the Navy in the 1960s. An Auburn Journal article from 1967 said DeAngelo was a sailor aboard the USS Canberra.

DeAngelo was a police officer in Exeter, California, from 1973 to 1976, officials said.

In 1976 he served as a police officer in the city of Auburn until he was fired in 1979 for allegedly stealing a hammer and a can of dog repellent, The Associated Press reported, citing Auburn Journal articles from the time.

DeAngelo then spent 27 years working for Save Mart Supermarkets at a distribution center in Roseville, near Sacramento, said Victoria Castro, a public affairs manager for Save Mart. He retired last year.

"None of his actions in the workplace would have lead us to suspect any connection to crimes being attributed to him," Castro said in a statement. "We are working with the Sacramento County District Attorney's Office on their investigation."

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HEADLINE	04/26 Bill Cosby found guilty on all charges
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/bill-cosby-found-guilty-charges/story?id=54746891&cid=clicksource_81_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>It was a long, uphill battle, years in the making, but prosecutors in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, finally won the conviction on felony sexual assault charges of the man once revered as "America's Dad."</p> <p>At the age of 80, Bill Cosby was convicted today on three felony counts of aggravated indecent assault stemming from drugging and molesting a woman in his suburban Philadelphia home 14 years ago.</p> <p>As the verdict was read just before 2 p.m. in the Montgomery County Courthouse in Norristown, Pennsylvania, Cosby leaned his head down, took a deep breath and appeared to close his eyes.</p> <p>Cosby's main accuser, Andrea Constand, and two other women who say Cosby also drugged and sexually assaulted them were in the courtroom and burst into tears as the verdict was announced.</p> <p>"I feel like my faith in humanity has been restored," one of the women, Lili Bernard, said after hearing the verdict. "I stand here in the spirit of Martin Luther King, who said that the arc of the moral universe is long but today it has bent towards justice.</p> <p>"Today, this jury has shown what the #MeTo movement is saying, that women are worthy of being</p>

	<p>believed," she said. "And I thank the jury, I thank the prosecution."</p> <p>The conviction came about 11 months after a mistrial was declared in Cosby's first trial when a jury failed to reach a verdict.</p> <p>The jury of seven men and five women began deliberating Wednesday and spent a little over 12 hours going over evidence presented to them over the last two weeks before rendering their unanimous decision.</p> <p>Judge O'Neill ordered Cosby to surrender his passport but ruled he can remain free on \$1 million bail until his sentencing sometime in the next 60 to 90 days. He faces up to 30 years in prison.</p>
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MONDAY – 23 APR 2018

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HEADLINE	04/20 Tampa Bay opens regional fusion center
SOURCE	http://www.fox13news.com/news/local-news/florida-law-enforcers-open-information-sharing-center-in-tampa
GIST	<p>AMPA (FOX 13) - Law enforcement agencies in the Bay Area are taking information-sharing to a new level.</p> <p>The region's first Fusion Center has opened its doors inside the Hillsborough County Sheriff's District 2 Office, off North Falkenburg Road in Tampa.</p> <p>It's being called the Tampa Bay Regional Intelligence Center (TBRIC).</p> <p>Through the center, nearly 50 agencies share federal and local intelligence on crime trends and examine terrorism cases with possible links nearby.</p> <p>Fusion centers were created in the wake of the September 11 attacks. Federal authorities began to realize much of the information that could have prevented the attacks was available to those who could have stopped them, but the information wasn't being properly dispersed.</p> <p>The solution was to create centers across the country where multiple law enforcement agencies work collaboratively under one roof.</p> <p>"The Tampa Bay Regional Intelligence Center allows us to identify those organized crime trends that don't really stop at those borders. They extend north up to Sumter County, south to Hillsborough, west to Pinellas and east of Polk," said Sgt. Joe Maurer, Director of the TBRIC.</p> <p>The center currently has 24 analysts who monitor bulletins and reports from each local agency.</p> <p>Hillsborough County Sheriff Chad Chronister announced the center's first success on Monday when two men were charged with running Florida's biggest stolen cigarette ring.</p> <p>Operation Up in Smoke stretched across 15 counties and 10 judicial circuits, according to Chronister.</p> <p>The center is where authorities first noticed a trend in robberies and burglaries of large quantities of cigarettes across their cities and counties. They began to compare surveillance images and tips in order to catch the culprits.</p>

	<p>The Department of Homeland Security operates in a secure room at the center, allowing local agencies to have access to classified information.</p> <p>Maurer said working in close quarters allows them to quickly find a Florida connection to any national crimes, or terrorism-related acts, such as the attack in New York City last November on Halloween.</p> <p>Accused terrorist and former Tampa resident, Sayfullo Saipov, 29, drove a rental truck down a bike path in Manhattan. The attack claimed eight lives.</p> <p>"That had a nexus here to Tampa," explained Maurer. "We would have known about that a lot sooner than we normally would have, and we would have been able to assist the [Joint Terrorism Task Force], the FBI and the Bureau."</p> <p>The Fusion Center opened its doors four months ago. It will also be used to assess threats at major events, like the Florida State Fair, where hundreds of thousands of people are in one place at a time.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/22 Russians give up on American vacations
SOURCE	<p>https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/frustrated-at-visa-holdup-russians-turn-their-backs-on-america/2018/04/22/067f8bc2-4633-11e8-8082-105a446d19b8_story.html?utm_term=.e173720c28de</p>
GIST	<p>MOSCOW — Russians wanting a glimpse of the American Dream now have to wait. Or not go at all.</p> <p>Escalating tensions between Moscow and Washington are putting a damper on Russians' vacation plans, catching ordinary people in a diplomatic crossfire that has distinct Cold War overtones. A year ago, obtaining a U.S. tourist visa could take less than a week. Now, it comes with an eight-month delay.</p> <p>"I am waiting for a miracle to happen. Maybe tomorrow Russia and the United States will decide they are friends, all staff will come back to the embassy, and I'll get my visa," said Mohamed Torky, executive chef at a Holiday Inn in northern Moscow.</p> <p>Torky had planned a July vacation to the United States, to see fabled Las Vegas and eat steaks in Texas. He even thought of fulfilling his childhood dream of driving a Ford Mustang on American highways. But instead, he'll be vacationing in nearby Georgia, or Egypt. The 32-year-old is furious. "Putin doesn't suffer, Trump doesn't suffer, but people like me suffer," he said, referring to the Russian and American presidents.</p> <p>Since last month's expulsion of 60 U.S. diplomats, and the closure of the U.S. consulate in St. Petersburg, part of the latest tit-for-tat in the standoff between Moscow and the West, the next available visa appointment at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow is in 250 days' time. The diplomats were kicked out after Britain and its allies expelled a total of more than 150 Russians from embassies for the poisoning of former double agent Sergei Skripal, which Moscow denies. Last week, Russia's foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, described relations with the West as worse than during the days of the Cold War.</p> <p>The visa debacle led Moscow and Washington to trade fresh barbs last week. The Kremlin accused the United States of denying visa appointments to crew members of Aeroflot, Russia's flagship carrier and the only airline with direct flights to the United States. A State Department official dismissed the claims as "unhelpful and simply false."</p> <p>Two dancers from Moscow's famed Bolshoi Theater, including a prima ballerina, had their visas rejected at the last minute, before a scheduled performance in New York. The Russian Foreign Ministry put the blame squarely on the United States on Saturday, for "trying to put up a visa wall," making "our citizens' visits to the U.S. virtually impossible. . . . Such things did not happen even during the Cold War."</p>

	<p>U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services, which oversees performer visas, said it does not comment on specific cases, citing privacy concerns.</p> <p>Avoiding the daunting 250-day wait, hundreds of Russians have been flooding neighboring former Soviet countries such as Latvia in recent weeks, hoping to take advantage of U.S. embassies in countries not sparring with Washington. A cottage industry of “wine and visa” tours has sprung up in the Caucasus, where visa-seekers can wait out the processing time by sipping their way through Georgian vineyards.</p> <p>But not all Russians have the time, or can afford, an additional holiday in a nearby country in their quest to get an American visa, and the actual numbers of Russians visiting the United States have plummeted.</p> <p>“Now the outflow of tourists is much lower. It’s practically none,” said Maya Lomidze, spokeswoman for Russia’s Association of Tour Operators. For Torky and others who have applied for a visa but given up on the wait, the \$160 processing fee will not be refunded.</p> <p>Foreign travel, which was off-limits during the Soviet era, is relished by ordinary Russians, after decades of pent-up desire. Millions visit the beaches of Thailand and Mediterranean Europe each year. But the number of Russian tourists to the United States has never been high. According to official figures, the vast majority of the 240,000 Russians who visited last year were on business or study trips. For many, the United States feels elusive, and the thought of visiting the country conjures up Hollywood-inspired fantasies.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/22 G7 concerns: Russia, Iran at forefront
SOURCE	<p>https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/russia-iran-at-forefront-of-concerns-as-diplomats-from-leading-democracies-meet/2018/04/22/48828aa1-473b-4246-9696-1a8f9fc996fb_story.html?utm_term=.35ec90768396</p>
GIST	<p>TORONTO — Diplomats from the world’s seven leading democracies met here Sunday to discuss ways to counter Russia in Syria and Ukraine and Iran in the Middle East.</p> <p>At the forefront of the two-day meeting of foreign ministers from the Group of Seven, or G-7, are mutual concerns over Russia. In a sign of the steep deterioration of relations between the United States and Russia, U.S. officials spoke about the Kremlin’s behavior in terms often used for a U.S. arch adversary, Iran.</p> <p>“There was a G-7 unity on opposing Russia’s malign behavior,” said a senior State Department official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to describe the private talks. The official said there would still be dialogue with Russia “while we hold them accountable for their malign activities and their efforts to destabilize nations.”</p> <p>A few years ago, Russia was the group’s eighth member. It was suspended from the exclusive club after it annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014. The G-7 now comprises Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States.</p> <p>Russia’s activities in Ukraine and elsewhere since then have served as a reminder of the G-7’s original purpose. The group was formed in 1975 to stand up for the values of open democracies and liberty. Now, with the West and Russia in their most confrontational period since the end of the Cold War, the G-7 has united to push back against its former member.</p> <p>The G-7 condemned the use of what it suspects was a Russian nerve agent against a former Russian spy and his daughter in Britain. And it issued a strong statement of support for the allied airstrikes in Syria, where Russian support has turned the tide of civil war in favor of President Bashar al-Assad.</p> <p>Toronto marks the first high-level talks between the United States, France and Britain since the three</p>

nations conducted airstrikes on Syria on April 13 to retaliate for the suspected use of chemical weapons by the Syrian military.

French President Emmanuel Macron, who will arrive in Washington Monday on a state visit, said Sunday that the United States and its allies have a continuing role to play in Syria for some time. “The day we will finish this war against ISIS, if we leave, definitely and totally, even from a political point of view, we will leave the floor to the Iranian regime, Bashar al-Assad and his guys, and they will prepare the new war,” he said on Fox News. “They will fuel the new terrorists.”

The diplomats met under the cloud of crises and intransigent problems around the world. The menu of hotspots was so full that they ended up postponing a meeting that acting secretary of state John Sullivan was to have with his counterparts from France, Britain and Germany to discuss European efforts to craft a supplemental agreement to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). President Trump has threatened to walk away from the accord on May 12 if his objections are not addressed, including “sunset” clauses in the deal that phase out restrictions on Iran over time.

With three weeks to go, it was unclear whether enough progress can be made to win his approval.

“It’s too early to tell,” the State Department official said.

Before Sullivan and British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson held a closed-door meeting, Johnson was overheard saying, “One of the things we are concerned about now is the JCPOA and where that is headed.”

The diplomats also devoted time to discussing the expected summit between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. North Korea has told South Korea that it is willing to discuss ending its nuclear weapons program, but the United States remains skeptical.

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HEADLINE	04/22 Cars still on road w/'ticking time bomb'
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/why-are-tens-of-thousands-of-americans-still-driving-around-with-explosive-devices-in-their-cars/2018/04/22/78b844d8-343e-11e8-8abc-22a366b72f2d_story.html?utm_term=.1d25a8c17243
GIST	<p>Alexander Brangman finds comfort in remembering how long his daughter lived — 26 years, 11 months, 9 hours and 15 minutes — rather than the horrible and needless way she died.</p> <p>Jewel Brangman, an academic all-American in high school, about to pursue a PhD at Stanford, had no need to know much about the rental car she drove north toward Los Angeles on a sunny September Sunday almost four years ago.</p> <p>Then came a relatively minor crash — she rear-ended a minivan — and her air bag exploded with a spray of razor-sharp metal shards that severed her carotid artery.</p> <p>Ten years after the biggest safety recall in U.S. history began, Honda says there are more than 60,000 vehicles on the nation’s roads equipped with what experts have called a “ticking time bomb” — defective air bags like the one that killed Brangman. The air bags, which sit about a foot from a driver’s chest, have a 50-50 chance of exploding in a fender bender.</p> <p>They are the most deadly air bags remaining in the recall involving more than 37 million vehicles built by 19 automakers. At least 22 people worldwide have been killed and hundreds more permanently disfigured when the air bags that deployed to protect them instead exploded and sprayed shrapnel.</p> <p>The worst among the bad bags are known as Alphas, driver-side air bags installed in Hondas that have up</p>

to a 50 percent chance they will explode on impact. The 62,307 people still driving with them, many in older-model cars that may have changed hands several times, either have ignored the recall warnings or never received them, Honda said.

With the number of deaths and disfigurements continuing to climb — the last fatality was in January — automakers and federal regulators have rewritten the rule book in their outreach efforts, including deploying teams to knock on doors of Honda owners who have not responded to recall notices.

“We’re good at repairing vehicles,” said Rick Schostek, executive vice president of Honda North America, “but finding and convincing customers of older model vehicles to complete recalls, now that has proved a difficult challenge.”

The massive recall of air bag inflaters made by Takata — which allegedly suppressed tests revealing the flaw and where three key executives are under federal indictment — is well known to Congress and millions of Americans who have been touched by it. But tens of thousands of drivers most at risk remain oblivious to the efforts of automakers and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

“Our last hearing on the ongoing Takata fiasco is just further evidence that NHTSA is just rudderless,” said Sen. Bill Nelson (Fla.), ranking Democrat on the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. “The latest data the committee has received from the automakers shows that individual automaker recall completion rates are all over the place — and millions are still waiting for replacement air bags.”

NHTSA has been without an administrator in the 15 months since Donald Trump entered the White House. The president recently proposed elevating acting director Heidi King to lead the agency. King, whose nomination will require Senate confirmation, told the Commerce Committee last month that car companies have “made progress” on the Takata recall.

“But the progress is uneven,” she said. “Overall completion rates are not where we want them to be.”

Takata air-bag inflaters degrade over time as they are exposed to humidity and repeated wide fluctuation in the daily temperature. That a car may change hands three or four times during a 10-year period has made the recall more difficult, with notices from the car dealer or automaker discarded by people who sold the vehicle years earlier.

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HEADLINE 04/22 Last survivor of 19th century dies

SOURCE <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/04/21/worlds-oldest-person-dies-southern-japan-117-years-old/539747002/>

GIST The century of Lincoln, Darwin and Van Gogh has quietly passed into history with the death of the world's oldest known person and last survivor of the 19th century.

Nabi Tajima, 117, died in a hospital Saturday in Kikai, Kagoshima Prefecture, Japan's Kyodo News reported. Tajima had been mostly bedridden at a nursing home in recent years. She was hospitalized about a month ago, family members told the news service.

"She passed away as if falling asleep. As she had been a hard worker, I want to tell her 'rest well,' " Tajima's 65-year-old grandson Hiroyuki said.

Tajima was born Aug. 4, 1900. The new oldest person is another Japanese woman, Chiyo Miyako, according to the U.S.-based Gerontology Research Group. Miyako, 116, was born on May 2, 1901.

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HEADLINE	04/19 Watered-down care in Washington state
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/articles/2018-04-19/in-washington-island-county-residents-lack-access-to-health-care
GIST	<p>SEATTLE – MARCIA STATZ, a school nurse on an island that sits in a portal to the Pacific Ocean, has seen firsthand how geographic challenges and a lack of provider options can affect families' access to medical help.</p> <p>Due to state-mandated screening and vaccination requirements, Statz can spend much of her day tracking down students on Washington state's Whidbey Island who haven't had shots or need hearing and vision exams to stay enrolled. But the work often leads to frustration for both her and the students' families, she says, since clinics on the island only accept limited types of insurance and wait times for new-patient appointments are long.</p> <p>"Access to care comes up as a huge barrier," Statz says one morning, in between paperwork and helping students in the South Whidbey School District. "The people may have insurance, but they may have to go to (Seattle's) King County to get their care, which isn't going to work because they probably don't have the gas money to get there."</p> <p>Though each student's problems vary case by case, they reflect a larger issue at hand: The health care needs of Whidbey Island residents and those of nearby island communities can often surpass the options for medical help near their homes or work. Island County, of which Whidbey is a part, is among Washington's worst when it comes to its ratio of people to primary care physicians, data analyses by both U.S. News and the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps project show.</p> <p>In fact, while Island County ranked among the top 500 Healthiest Communities in the country and first among communities similar to it in the U.S. News analysis – a project that scored thousands of communities across the U.S. in areas tied to residents' health and quality of life, such as housing, public safety and local economy – it fared relatively poorly in the category of health care access due to its limited availability of doctors and hospital beds. The county came in below the state and national medians on both metrics.</p> <p>The majority of Island County's estimated 83,000 residents – up from some 78,500 in 2010 – live across two primary islands, Whidbey and Camano, which lie north of Seattle and Puget Sound in the Salish Sea. The county includes smaller islands as well, and Whidbey – the largest and most populated – is most easily accessible via a ferry ride from Seattle's metro area.</p> <p>However, a full trip via car and ferry from Whidbey Island to the city of Seattle, which is home to two of the nation's top-ranked hospitals for specialty care – Harborview Medical Center and the University of Washington Medical Center – takes at least an hour.</p> <p>The geographic and transportation barriers can be particularly troublesome "for people who are identified as the vulnerable population," says Kellie Tormey, a member of the Island County Community Health Advisory Board who is helping push for changes to the county's health care system to improve residents' access. "In urgent situations, there may not be a lot of options for them to get to a health care provider or a health care site."</p> <p>One apparent symptom of that shortfall: A number of patients with Medicaid have relied on the county's one emergency room at the WhidbeyHealth Medical Center for non-urgent matters, at a rate higher than in other parts of Washington, Tormey says.</p> <p>Those ER visits are "not only an expensive way to get that type of care, but (it) creates a gap in the patient's ability to get a continuity of health care," Tormey says.</p> <p>Shifts in Island County's population are also playing a role in the access issue, as aging members of Generation X and baby boomers – along with their accompanying health problems – are taking up more of</p>

the pie. People over the age of 55 are projected to account for 44 percent of the county's total population by 2040, says Cheryn Weiser, executive director of Island Senior Resources, a nonprofit serving seniors and adults with disabilities in the county.

"Access to Medicaid and Medicare and coordinated care between different providers is very important," Weiser says. "I don't think we're fully there in Island County."

In a survey completed in 2016, county residents reported they often faced barriers to getting help for behavioral, mental or physical health problems, Tormey says. Nearly one-third of residents with lower incomes said finding health care was one of their biggest daily challenges.

Armed with that survey data, Tormey is co-leading a team of professionals from a variety of backgrounds, including paramedicine and public health, in pushing a [plan](#) to improve residents' knowledge about health care and expand health services on the islands over the next several years. The work involves studying models elsewhere and seeking opportunities for outside money.

Among their first steps for improving access, the group wants to establish a centralized place – physically and online – where residents can find information on services and providers in the county.

Leaders of that project right now are figuring out funding and staffing, with hopes of having such tools fully in place by 2020, Tormey says.

"Does an individual on Island County know what resources are available to them? Do they know how to access them? Is the information readily available?" says Laura Luginbill, the assessment and healthy communities director for Island County's public health department. "We've heard loud and clear, 'No, it's not.'"

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HEADLINE	04/23 Scrambling to find school bus drivers
SOURCE	http://www.heraldnet.com/news/scrambling-to-put-school-bus-drivers-behind-the-wheel/
GIST	<p>EDMONDS — Even in hard times, many school districts go looking for bus drivers.</p> <p>It can become that much harder when the economy is humming.</p> <p>Consider some numbers from the Edmonds School District, which transports 7,000 students a day along 140 routes, which typically include a collection of runs for high school, middle school and elementary school students.</p> <p>At last count, the district had 156 regular and substitute drivers. A dozen are out on long-term leave. That leaves 144 drivers for 140 routes with little wiggle room if anyone calls in sick or has family emergencies.</p> <p>That often means drivers must combine routes to pick up the slack and sometimes run late.</p> <p>“Drivers are under a lot of pressure,” said Ben Mount, the district’s transportation director. “As we add more to their routes, it’s harder to do what we have scheduled.”</p> <p>Late arrivals can have ripple effects, both in terms of the instructional day and for families.</p> <p>The bottom line is Edmonds could use 20 more drivers for a job Mount describes as challenging as it is rewarding.</p> <p>What’s happening in the Edmonds district is commonplace across the county.</p> <p>Large signs seeking more drivers are posted prominently at schools in Marysville and other districts.</p>

“This shortage appears to be getting more impactful with each school year,” said Kristin Foley, a Snohomish School District spokeswoman.

“We are just surviving covering daily routes and a few field trips in house every day,” said Lisa Youngblood Hall, a spokeswoman for the Northshore School District. “Some field trips are outsourced to charter companies.”

In the Mukilteo School District, finding enough bus drivers is a constant challenge.

“We have been fortunate in being able to maintain a good substitute pool, but we now do training almost constantly and on demand when we have qualified candidates rather than waiting to conduct training classes two or three times a year, as we used to do in the past,” district spokesman Andy Muntz said.

Edmonds, too, offers more frequent training to get drivers on the road sooner than before.

Federal law also has changed over the years, adding the need for more school bus drivers. A prong of the McKinney Vento Act provides homeless students with transportation to school even if they move outside the school district. The goal is to counteract the educational disruption caused by mobility.

The result is more students are being driven longer distances to get to school. About one in every 25 students attending Washington public schools is homeless or is living in a hotel, in a car, or with friends, according to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. In 2016-17, a total of 40,934 Washington students were counted as homeless.

“We have four drivers and buses that are dedicated strictly to transporting McKinney Vento students to schools out of district or transporting them from out-of-district schools to our district,” said Gary Sabol, a spokesman for the Arlington School District.

In the Edmonds district, the out-of-district routes take drivers as far away as Burien, Highline and Granite Falls. The numbers of long-distance commuters has increased by about 20 percent over the past year to around 600.

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HEADLINE	04/22 Sudan secret police stifles migration
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/22/world/africa/migration-european-union-sudan.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=second-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news
GIST	<p>ABU JAMAL, Sudan — At Sudan’s eastern border, Lt. Samih Omar led two patrol cars slowly over the rutted desert, past a cow’s carcass, before halting on the unmarked 2,000-mile route that thousands of East Africans follow each year in trying to reach the Mediterranean, and then onward to Europe.</p> <p>His patrols along this border with Eritrea are helping Sudan crack down on one of the busiest passages on the European migration trail. Yet Lieutenant Omar is no simple border agent. He works for Sudan’s feared secret police, whose leaders are accused of war crimes — and, more recently, whose officers have been accused of torturing migrants.</p> <p>Indirectly, he is also working for the interests of the European Union.</p> <p>“Sometimes,” Lieutenant Omar said, “I feel this is Europe’s southern border.”</p> <p>Three years ago, when a historic tide of migrants poured into Europe, many leaders there reacted with open arms and high-minded idealism. But with the migration crisis having fueled angry populism and political upheaval across the Continent, the European Union is quietly getting its hands dirty, stanching the</p>

human flow, in part, by outsourcing border management to countries with dubious human rights records.

In practical terms, the approach is working: The number of migrants arriving in Europe has more than halved since 2016. But many migration advocates say the moral cost is high.

To shut off the sea route to Greece, the European Union is paying billions of euros to a Turkish government that is dismantling its democracy. In Libya, Italy is accused of bribing some of the same militiamen who have long profited from the European smuggling trade — many of whom are also accused of war crimes.

In Sudan, crossed by migrants trying to reach Libya, the relationship is more opaque but rooted in mutual need: The Europeans want closed borders and the Sudanese want to end years of isolation from the West. Europe continues to enforce an arms embargo against Sudan, and many Sudanese leaders are international pariahs, accused of committing war crimes during a civil war in Darfur, a region in western Sudan.

But the relationship is unmistakably deepening. A recent dialogue, named the Khartoum Process (in honor of Sudan's capital) has become a platform for at least 20 international migration conferences between European Union officials and their counterparts from several African countries, including Sudan. The European Union has also agreed that Khartoum will act as a nerve center for countersmuggling collaboration.

While no European money has been given directly to any Sudanese government body, the bloc has funneled 106 million euros — or about \$131 million — into the country through independent charities and aid agencies, mainly for food, health and sanitation programs for migrants, and for training programs for local officials.

“While we engage on some areas for the sake of the Sudanese people, we still have a sanction regime in place,” said Catherine Ray, a spokeswoman for the European Union, referring to an embargo on arms and related material.

“We are not encouraging Sudan to curb migration, but to manage migration in a safe and dignified way,” Ms. Ray added.

Ahmed Salim, the director of one of the nongovernmental groups that receives European funding, said the bloc was motivated by both self-interest and a desire to improve the situation in Sudan.

“They don't want migrants to cross the Mediterranean to Europe,” said Mr. Salim, who heads the European and African Center for Research, Training and Development.

But, he said, the money his organization receives means better services for asylum seekers in Sudan. “You have to admit that the European countries want to do something to protect migrants here,” he said.

Critics argue the evolving relationship means that European leaders are implicitly reliant on — and complicit in the reputational rehabilitation of — a Sudanese security apparatus whose leaders have been accused by the United Nations of committing war crimes in Darfur.

“There is no direct money exchanging hands,” said Suliman Baldo, the author of a research paper about Europe's migration partnership with Sudan. “But the E.U. basically legitimizes an abusive force.”

On the border near Abu Jamal, Lieutenant Omar and several members of his patrol are from the wing of the Sudanese security forces headed by Salah Abdallah Gosh, one of several Sudanese officials accused of orchestrating attacks on civilians in Darfur.

Elsewhere, the border is protected by the Rapid Support Forces, a division of the Sudanese military that was formed from the janjaweed militias who led attacks on civilians in the Darfur conflict. The focus of the group, known as R.S.F., is not counter-smuggling — but roughly a quarter of the people-smugglers

caught in January and February this year on the Eritrean border were apprehended by the R.S.F., Lieutenant Omar said.

European officials have direct contact only with the Sudanese immigration police, and not with the R.S.F., or the security forces that Lieutenant Omar works for, known as N.I.S.S. But their operations are not that far removed.

The planned countertrafficking coordination center in Khartoum — staffed jointly by police officers from Sudan and several European countries, including Britain, France and Italy — will partly rely on information sourced by N.I.S.S., according to the head of the immigration police department, Gen. Awad Elneil Dhia. The regular police also get occasional support from the R.S.F. on countertrafficking operations in border areas, General Dhia said.

“They have their presence there and they can help,” General Dhia said. “The police is not everywhere, and we cannot cover everywhere.”

Yet the Sudanese police are operating in one unexpected place: Europe.

In a bid to deter future migrants, at least three European countries — Belgium, France and Italy — have allowed in Sudanese police officers to hasten the deportation of Sudanese asylum seekers, General Dhia said.

Nominally, their official role is simply to identify their citizens. But the officers have been allowed to interrogate some deportation candidates without being monitored by European officials with the language skills to understand what was being said.

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HEADLINE	04/22 China left out in NKorea-US talks
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/22/world/asia/china-north-korea-nuclear-talks.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=first-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news
GIST	<p>BEIJING — As the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, prepares for his meetings with the presidents of South Korea and the United States, China has found itself in an unaccustomed place: watching from the sidelines.</p> <p>Worse, many Chinese analysts say, North Korea could pursue a grand bargain designed not only to bring the isolated nation closer to its two former Korean War foes, but also diminish its reliance on China for trade and security.</p> <p>Such an outcome — a reversal of 70 years of history — remains a long shot, amid doubts about whether the North would agree to relinquish its arsenal of nuclear weapons. Still, China finds itself removed from the center of the rapidly unfolding diplomacy, and unusually wary about Mr. Kim’s objectives in reaching out to his nation’s two bitterest enemies.</p> <p>Mr. Kim’s meeting with the South Korean president, Moon Jae-in, is set for Friday, and a meeting with President Trump — the first ever between leaders of the two nations — is expected to follow in May or early June. In a sign of just how much is suddenly on the table, South Korea recently confirmed that it was in talks with the North and with the United States about signing a treaty to end the Korean War, which halted in 1953, but never formally ended.</p> <p>With events moving so quickly, and Beijing finding itself largely left on the outside, analysts said China and its leader, Xi Jinping, must at least consider what they called worst-case contingencies.</p> <p>“The loss of prestige is a big problem for China and Xi, who wants everyone else to view China as an</p>

essential actor of international relations, especially in the Northeast Asian context,” said Zhang Baohui, a professor of international relations at Lingnan University in Hong Kong. “Now, suddenly, China is no longer relevant.”

Since the 1950-53 Korean War, when China fought on the side of the North against the United States and its ally in the South, the alliances have been immovable. The North has provided a convenient buffer for China against having American troops on its border; the South serves as a base in the region for the American military.

In negotiations over the denuclearization of the North, Beijing has to worry whether all that could suddenly be in play, Chinese analysts said.

“If a grand deal can be struck between Kim and Trump, in the form of denuclearization in exchange for normalization of bilateral relations, then Northeast Asia may see a major realignment,” Mr. Zhang said. “China does not run Kim’s foreign policy and they know that.”

The possible new alignment on the Korean Peninsula that most concerns Beijing is a loose unification between North and South Korea with American troops remaining in the South.

As part of its conciliatory moves before the meetings, the North has dropped its demand for the departure of the 28,000 United States troops stationed in the South as a condition for denuclearization.

“A unified, democratic Korea aligned with the U.S. will be dangerous to the Communist regime in China, though not necessarily the Chinese nation,” said Xia Yafeng, a North Korea expert at Long Island University.

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HEADLINE	04/22 Erosion of public sector employment
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/22/business/economy/public-employees.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=first-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news
GIST	<p>OKLAHOMA CITY — The anxiety and seething anger that followed the disappearance of middle-income jobs in factory towns has helped reshape the American political map and topple longstanding policies on tariffs and immigration.</p> <p>But globalization and automation aren’t the only forces responsible for the loss of those reliable paychecks. So is the steady erosion of the public sector.</p> <p>For generations of Americans, working for a state or local government — as a teacher, firefighter, bus driver or nurse — provided a comfortable nook in the middle class. No less than automobile assembly lines and steel plants, the public sector ensured that even workers without a college education could afford a home, a minivan, movie nights and a family vacation.</p> <p>In recent years, though, the ranks of state and local employees have languished even as the populations they serve have grown. They now account for the smallest share of the American civilian work force since 1967.</p> <p>The 19.5 million workers who remain are finding themselves financially downgraded. Teachers who have been protesting low wages and sparse resources in Oklahoma, West Virginia and Kentucky — and those in Arizona who say they plan to walk out on Thursday — are just one thread in that larger skein.</p> <p>“I was surprised to realize along the way I was no longer middle class,” said Teresa Moore, who has spent 30 years investigating complaints of abused or neglected children, veterans and seniors in Oklahoma.</p>

She raised two daughters in Alex, a rural dot southwest of the capital, on her salary. But when she applied for a mortgage nine years ago, the loan officer casually described her as “low income.”

At 57, Ms. Moore now earns just over \$43,000, which she supplements with a part-time job as a computer technician.

The private sector has been more welcoming. During 97 consecutive months of job growth, it created 18.6 million positions, a 17 percent increase.

But that impressive streak comes with an asterisk. Many of the jobs created — most in service industries — lack stability and security. They pay little more than the minimum wage and lack predictable hours, insurance, sick days or parental leave.

The result is that the foundation of the middle class continues to be gnawed away even as help-wanted ads multiply.

Reducing state and local payrolls, of course, is a goal that has champions and detractors. Anti-tax crusaders, concerned about cost and overreach, have longed for a smaller government that delivers only the most limited services. Public-sector defenders worry that shortages of restaurant inspectors, rat exterminators, mental health counselors and the like will hurt neighborhoods. Pothole-studded roads and unreliable garbage pickup don't entice businesses, either.

Yet whether one views a diminished public sector as vital to economic growth or a threat to health and safety, it is undeniable that it has led to a significant decline in middle-class employment opportunities.

“It's a tough time to be working in government,” said Neil Reichenberg, executive director of the International Public Management Association for Human Resources. Once there were several attractions to public employment in addition to the mission of making a difference in your community, he added, but incentives like good health insurance and retirement benefits have disappeared. “There's been a lot of cutbacks that have made government a less competitive employer,” he said.

From the late 1950s through 1980, the United States added 350,000 new state and local workers a year. The rate slowed in the mid-1980s through the early 2000s, but payrolls still grew annually by 300,000 workers.

Government hiring failed to bounce back after the recession in both Republican- and Democratic-led states, and states continued to shed workers through 2013. The recovery's slow pace held down revenues at the same time as baby boomers began retiring and generous pension and benefit commitments made in fatter years came due.

“They couldn't pay their obligations,” said Edwin Benton, a political scientist at the University of South Florida and the managing editor of an academic journal, *State and Local Government Review*. “The epidemic has grown to almost every city and state.”

“We're in uncharted waters,” he added.

In the past 12 months, local and state payrolls grew by 31,000, a fraction of the historical rate. There are now fewer such workers per capita than there were three decades ago.

Nonetheless, those combined payrolls dwarf those of the federal government, which employs about 2.8 million civilians, including postal workers. That number has shrunk slightly in recent years.

Short of money, many states have also privatized services like managing public water systems, road repair, emergency services or prisons, transferring jobs from the public sector to private companies that have reduced salaries and benefits to increase their profits.

The government employment pinch especially hurts in small and rural counties, where President Trump and other Republicans are popular. These areas tend to lack the number and diversity of private employers found in larger cities, and are therefore more dependent on government jobs.

In Houston, pinched by a property tax cap, the police chief has said his department is short 1,500 to 2,000 officers. In North Carolina, a federal report blamed a 25 percent job vacancy rate at a state prison in Elizabeth City for four deaths that occurred during a breakout attempt.

Back in Oklahoma, state prisons are at 153 percent capacity, while the corrections department has lost a tenth of its staff since 2009. “Our folks are only armed with their self-defense training, a can of pepper spray, and a wing and a prayer that someone will come and help them if they get in trouble,” Joe Allbaugh, the director of the corrections department, has said publicly.

Since 2009, staffing at the state mental health department in Oklahoma is down more than 20 percent, and at the Office of Juvenile Affairs by nearly a quarter. The state Office of Fire Marshal once employed 30 workers, but now has 18.

A report on 2017 state compensation in Oklahoma found that average salaries were 27 percent lower than for comparable jobs in the private sector.

Many government workers take a second job to make ends meet.

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HEADLINE	04/20 America’s nuclear headache: old plutonium
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-nukes-plutonium-specialreport/americas-nuclear-headache-old-plutonium-with-nowhere-to-go-idUSKBN1HR1KC
GIST	<p>AMARILLO, Texas (Reuters) - In a sprawling plant near Amarillo, Texas, rows of workers perform by hand one of the most dangerous jobs in American industry. Contract workers at the U.S. Department of Energy’s Pantex facility gingerly remove the plutonium cores from retired nuclear warheads.</p> <p>Although many safety rules are in place, a slip of the hand could mean disaster.</p> <p>In Energy Department facilities around the country, there are 54 metric tons of surplus plutonium. Pantex, the plant near Amarillo, holds so much plutonium that it has exceeded the 20,000 cores, called “pits,” regulations allow it to hold in its temporary storage facility. There are enough cores there to cause thousands of megatons of nuclear explosions. More are added each day.</p> <p>The delicate, potentially deadly dismantling of nuclear warheads at Pantex, while little noticed, has grown increasingly urgent to keep the United States from exceeding a limit of 1,550 warheads permitted under a 2010 treaty with Russia. The United States wants to dismantle older warheads so that it can substitute some of them with newer, more lethal weapons. Russia, too, is building new, dangerous weapons.</p> <p>The United States has a vast amount of deadly plutonium, which terrorists would love to get their hands on. Under another agreement, Washington and Moscow each are required to render unusable for weapons 34 metric tons of plutonium. The purpose is twofold: keep the material out of the hands of bad guys, and eliminate the possibility of the two countries themselves using it again for weapons. An Energy Department website says the two countries combined have 68 metric tons designated for destruction - enough to make 17,000 nuclear weapons. But the United States has no permanent plan for what to do with its share.</p> <p>Plutonium must be made permanently inaccessible because it has a radioactive half-life of 24,000 years.</p> <p>“A MUCH MORE DANGEROUS SITUATION”</p> <p>Edwin Lyman, a physicist at the Union of Concerned Scientists, a science advocacy group based in</p>

Washington, says solving the problem of plutonium storage is urgent. In an increasingly unstable world, with terrorism, heightened international tensions and non-nuclear countries coveting the bomb, he says, the risk is that this metal of mass annihilation will be used again. William Potter, director of the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, told Reuters: “We are in a much more dangerous situation today than we were in the Cold War.”

Washington has not even begun to take the steps needed to acquire additional space for burying plutonium more than 2,000 feet below ground - the depth considered safe. Much of America’s plutonium currently is stored in a building at the Savannah River Site in South Carolina - like Pantex, an Energy Department site. Savannah River used to house a reactor. Local opponents of the storage, such as Tom Clements, director of SRS Watch, contend the facility was never built for holding plutonium and say there is a risk of leakage and accidents in which large amounts of radioactivity are released.

The Energy Department has a small experimental storage site underground in New Mexico. The department controls the radioactive materials - plutonium, uranium and tritium - used in America’s nuclear weapons and in the reactors of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and submarines. In a Senate hearing in June 2017, Energy Secretary Rick Perry said the Energy Department has been in talks with New Mexico officials to enlarge the site. Environmental groups there have strongly opposed expansion.

Under an agreement with Russia, the United States was to convert 34 metric tons of plutonium into fuel for civilian reactors that generate electricity. The fuel is known as MOX, for “mixed oxide fuel.” Plutonium and uranium are converted into chemical compounds called oxides, and mixed together in fuel rods for civilian nuclear power plants. The two metals are converted into oxides because these can’t cause nuclear explosions. But the U.S. effort has run into severe delays and cost overruns.

The alternative method is known as dilute-and-dispose. It involves blending plutonium with an inert material and storing it in casks. The casks, however, are projected to last only 50 years before beginning to leak, and so would need to be buried permanently deep underground.

THE MOX MESS

President Donald Trump has sided with the Energy Department in wanting to kill the MOX project because of the extreme cost overruns and delays. The Energy Department, beginning in the Obama administration, favored closing down the MOX project for the same reason, but Congress overruled it. The federal budget adopted in February, however, specifies a means for ending the project, if a study shows that dilute-and-dispose would be at least 50 percent cheaper than making MOX.

The National Nuclear Security Administration, the part of the Energy Department that oversees the nuclear sites and materials, favors switching to the dilute-and-dispose method. In recent testimony before a House of Representatives subcommittee, Lisa Gordon-Hagerty, the new NNSA administrator, said that method would “cost billions less” than completing the MOX plant.

Plutonium is a versatile nuclear bomb material. Terrorists would need only 11 kilograms or less to make a bomb, Lyman says.

Its ordinarily limited radioactivity makes plutonium safe for terrorists or other thieves to transport with little risk of radiation injury. It goes undetected by most sensors. It radiates alpha particles, relatively large on an atomic scale, which means the thin glass of a test tube, the leather of a briefcase, or even air or skin stop them. The danger from handling small amounts is inhaling plutonium dust. In that case, the dust spreads from the lungs throughout the body, causing multiple kinds of cancer.

The federal government now has no solution in sight to dispose of the plutonium permanently. Its one effort to make it unusable for bombs has turned into what the White House and Energy Department say is a costly failure. The MOX project, at the Energy Department’s Savannah River Site in South Carolina, has been kept on life support by Congress thanks to the influence of South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham and other lawmakers. The MOX plant employs about 2,000 people in Graham’s state.

Graham and other Congressional backers say MOX is the best way to keep plutonium out of the hands of terrorists. They note too that the pact with Russia requires the United States to use MOX as the method for disposal.

A spokeswoman for Graham declined to comment on his behalf but sent a link to a YouTube video of a Senate hearing in March. In the hearing, Graham, referring to steps already taken to limit work on the MOX plant, said: “What I think we’ve done is ended the biggest non-proliferation program in the world, and I’m going to try and fix that.”

Today’s plutonium glut mainly is a legacy of the Cold War. The quantities now seem surreal. By 1967 the U.S. nuclear arsenal reached its apex, with 37,000 warheads. The Soviet Union’s peak came in the 1970s, with approximately 45,000. These were enough to destroy life on Earth thousands of times over.

A RADIOACTIVE PEACE DIVIDEND

Amid the terror and aggressiveness then of government and military leaders on both sides, little or no thought was given what to do with the warheads should the risk of mass annihilation ebb.

Daniel Ellsberg, best known for leaking in 1971 the Pentagon Papers about the Vietnam war, in the early 1960s was an adviser to the Air Force and White House on nuclear policy. He recently published a book detailing and criticizing the nuclear policy debates and decisions of that era. In a phone interview, he said disposal of weapons was never considered at the time.

“I don’t think one person gave one moment of thought to that,” Ellsberg said. “No one thought that the Cold War would end.”

Treaties that dramatically reduced U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals were signed soon after the Soviet Union fell. It was then that the magnitude of the problem – disposing of the surplus plutonium – dawned on the two countries.

Scientists proffered ideas, nearly all involving making the plutonium forbiddingly dangerous for malefactors to transport and burying it deep underground.

Instead, under a 2000 treaty, the United States agreed to transform the 34 metric tons of plutonium into MOX, unusable for bombs. Russia agreed to destroy the same quantity using a special type of reactor. But the United States had never before built a MOX plant. No U.S. civilian reactor had ever used MOX as fuel.

This misplaced optimism led to one of the costliest snafus ever in U.S. government construction. Work began in 2007 to build a MOX plant that was to be operational by November 2016. The Energy Department now estimates that, if allowed to proceed, it will not be finished until 2048. In 2007 the Energy Department said the total cost would be \$4.8 billion. Now it estimates the cost at more than \$17 billion.

Building of the plant began when detailed designs were between 20 percent and 40 percent complete. But once initial construction finished, the contractor, under instructions from the Energy Department, breezed ahead without architectural plans.

Reports from the Union of Concerned Scientists said rooms were built for laboratories and offices where none were needed. Ventilation ducts and electrical wiring were in the wrong places. Plumbing was a maze of misplaced pipes. The contractor later had to rip out much of its work and start over.

The contractor is a consortium of companies, CB&I Areva MOX Services. It includes CB&I (formerly Chicago Bridge and Iron), based in the Netherlands, and Areva, which specializes in nuclear-related and alternative power projects, majority owned by the French government.

GIVING IT AWAY

	<p>In an e-mailed statement to Reuters, the consortium said it expects to finish the facility. It said “the project is over 70 percent physically complete.”</p> <p>But Gordon-Hagerty, the National Nuclear Security Administration’s new chief, testified in March before a House Appropriations Subcommittee that it is “nowhere near” 50% complete. Government Accountability Office reports (here and here) criticized the Energy Department for awarding a “cost plus” contract, which guarantees a profit regardless of how much work is done.</p> <p>In an emailed response to questions for this article, Lindsey Geisler, a spokesperson for the NNSA, said that in 2011, after the contract had been awarded, “NNSA recognized the need to institute project management reforms.” She said the NNSA established a new office to better oversee contracting and acquisition, and that practices have improved significantly.</p> <p>Echoing other critics, Frank von Hippel, a Princeton University professor who researches nuclear arms control and policymaking, said weak oversight continues. “The problem at DOE is that the quality of managers, with some exceptions, is quite low,” he said. “Contractors just milk them for money.”</p> <p>An Energy Department panel reported in 2016 that there is no US market for MOX. To use MOX fuel rods, civilian power plants would have to modify their reactors, requiring lengthy relicensing by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The report said the best the Energy Department could hope for was to give the stuff away.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 North, South Korea leaders hotline
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/04/20/historic-hotline-links-south-north-korean-leaders-ahead-rare-summit.html
GIST	<p>North and South Korea opened the first-ever telephone hotline between their leaders Friday ahead of a rare summit next week focusing on de-escalating the nuclear standoff.</p> <p>South Korea’s presidential office said the first test call on the hotline went to Pyongyang’s State Affairs Commission, the country’s supreme decision-making institution chaired by Kim Jong Un. The call was successful.</p> <p>“The historic direct telephone line between the leaders of the South and North was connected a short while ago,” South Korean presidential official Youn Kun Young said in a news briefing.</p> <p>“The test call went on for 4 minutes and 19 seconds starting at 3:41 p.m. with (officials from) both sides speaking to each other ... The connection was smooth and the voice quality was very good. It was like calling next door,” he said.</p> <p>Meeting between two Koreas slated for April ahead of Trump-Kim summit. Greg Palkot has the latest developments.</p> <p>Officials say the hotline, reminiscent of the Moscow-Washington hotline during the Cold War, will help to facilitate dialogue and reduce misunderstanding during times of escalation.</p> <p>The direct line between the two leaders came months after a border hotline was opened in January, nearly two years after radio silence from the communist regime.</p> <p>The leaders of both Koreas are expected to have a first-ever phone conversation sometime before their meeting next Friday at the border truce village of Panmunjom.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 Hundreds school walkouts for gun reform
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SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/hundreds-school-walkouts-planned-friday-n867726
GIST	<p>Students from hundreds of schools across the country began a wave of walkouts Friday morning in a unified voice for tougher gun laws.</p> <p>The protests come on the 19th anniversary of the shooting at Columbine High School, which left 13 people dead in Littleton, Colorado, energized the gun-control debate and became a haunting symbol of gun violence in schools.</p> <p>The students — many not even born when Columbine occurred — represent more than 2,600 schools that were holding moments of silence in honor of the victims as well as the 17 people killed during the Feb. 14 shooting at a high school in Parkland, Florida. The deaths prompted national protests demanding change.</p> <p>On Capitol Hill, students from the Washington area marched while chanting, "Congress do your job!" and "Not one more!" to put pressure on lawmakers who have stalled in enacting gun-safety measures.</p> <p>In Atlanta, students from the area were marching to the state Capitol. "I'm angry," said Ann Philip, a high school sophomore, "but I'm motivated."</p> <p>Fred Guttenberg, whose 14-year-old daughter, Jaime, died during the Parkland massacre, praised the students for walking out, and said all they want is common-sense gun reform that includes background checks and a ban on assault weapons.</p> <p>"The reason they're rising up is they want to be able to go out in public and not live in fear," Guttenberg told MSNBC.</p> <p>The grieving father gained attention in the days after the Parkland shooting by telling Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., that his and President Donald Trump's words following the massacre were "pathetically weak."</p> <p>Yet even as students on Friday headed to rallies at their statehouses or planned to stay at their schools to discuss gun violence, other communities weren't immune from the scourge: Police in Ocala, Florida, reported that one student shot another in the ankle at a local high school. Forest High School was put on lockdown and the injured student was taken to the hospital for treatment.</p> <p>Police said the suspected shooter was also a student at the school.</p> <p>"We have to stop this," Parkland shooting survivor and activist David Hogg said in a video post on Twitter after learning about the shooting in Ocala. "We're not going to be able to stop this unless we make our voice heard ... not as Democrats or Republicans, but as Americans."</p> <p>Citywide protests were expected to attract thousands in New York City and Austin, Texas. Police in Richmond, Virginia, say at least 10,000 could gather at the state Capitol.</p> <p>Former Democratic Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, who was injured by a gunman in a mass shooting in Tucson, Arizona, in 2011, tweeted her support for the walkouts and rebuked politicians for claiming "never again" after Columbine but "after nearly two decades of inaction, it's clear they've failed in their basic duty to keep our kids safe."</p> <p>Last month, tens of thousands of students left class to protest gun violence in what historians called the largest youth protest movement since at least the Vietnam War. Days later, hundreds of thousands of teens and their backers rallied across the U.S. calling for tougher laws on guns and ammunition.</p> <p>Plans for Friday's walkout began only hours after the Parkland shooting, when a Connecticut teen started an online petition calling for protests on the anniversary of Columbine. Sophomore Lane Murdock then gathered a few other students at Ridgefield High School to orchestrate the national protest.</p> <p>They also have received help from Indivisible, a left-leaning nonprofit based in Washington that helps</p>

boost grassroots activism. The group says it was formed after the 2016 election to oppose the policies promoted by Trump.

"We're walking out to remember every single young person who has been killed by American gun violence," Murdock said in a statement Thursday. "We're walking out to talk about the real problems our country is facing, and the solutions that our leaders are too scared to dream up."

Administrators at many schools tacitly allowed the walkouts in March, opting not to punish participants. But some now say the leniency has expired.

Even so, students at many New York schools were rallying at the city's Washington Square Park.

And some schools in Houston and elsewhere will give students time to share their views but have warned them not to leave campus or return to class late. Some others are holding alternative events after school. Many have simply said students are expected to stay in class throughout the day.

Students in the Washington area are planning to march from the White House to the Capitol, where they will rally and deliver letters to Congress calling for greater gun control.

In Littleton, some survivors of the Columbine shooting planned to join with Parkland survivors for a vigil and rally Thursday evening. But there will be no walkout at Columbine, which has long canceled classes on the anniversary of the shooting. Instead, students will be called to participate in a day of service.

Principal Scott Christy said in a letter to other schools in his district that April "has long been a time to respectfully remember our loss, and also support efforts to make our communities a better place."

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HEADLINE	04/20 CDC warns: don't eat romaine lettuce
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/don-t-eat-romaine-lettuce-cdc-now-warns-n867941
GIST	<p>No one should eat romaine lettuce — or any lettuce at all — unless they can be sure it's not from Arizona, federal health officials said Friday.</p> <p>More than 50 people have become sick in an outbreak of E. coli food poisoning linked to romaine lettuce and now several people in Alaska have also gotten ill, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a new warning.</p> <p>"Based on new information from Alaska, CDC is expanding its warning to cover all types of romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona growing region," the CDC said in its update.</p> <p>"This warning now includes whole heads and hearts of romaine lettuce, in addition to chopped romaine and salads and salad mixes containing romaine."</p> <p>The CDC said it did not have the number of sick people in Alaska yet, and it cannot say for sure where the contaminated lettuce came from precisely.</p> <p>"No common grower, supplier, distributor, or brand has been identified at this time," the CDC said.</p> <p>So people had better be safe than sorry.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/21 OPCW team visits Douma
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-envoy-encouraged-russia-backs-geneva-

	process-54630085?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The Latest on developments in Syria (all times local):</p> <p>6:15 p.m.</p> <p>The global chemical weapons watchdog says a team of inspectors has visited the Syrian town of Douma to collect samples for an investigation into an alleged chemical weapons attack there two weeks ago.</p> <p>The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons issued a statement Saturday saying the team "visited one of the sites in Douma, Syrian Arab Republic today to collect samples for analysis" in their investigation.</p> <p>It added that, "The OPCW will evaluate the situation and consider future steps including another possible visit to Douma."</p> <p>The OPCW fact-finding team was delayed for several days in its attempts to reach the town.</p> <p>The organization says the samples it has collected will be analyzed at OPCW-designated laboratories and the team will draft a report based on the findings, "as well other information and materials collected by the team."</p> <p>The OPCW mission aims to establish whether chemical weapons were used, but is not mandated to apportion blame for the attack.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>4 p.m.</p> <p>Russia's Foreign Ministry says a team of international chemical weapons inspectors has departed for the Syrian town of Douma, site of an alleged chemical weapons attack that prompted a retaliatory missile strike by the U.S., U.K. and France.</p> <p>The team from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons was delayed for several days in its attempts to reach Douma.</p> <p>In a statement Saturday, ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said the team had left for the town and decried the delay as "unacceptable."</p> <p>Russia, whose forces in Syria back President Bashar Assad's army, has denied claims that Syrian forces carried out the alleged April 7 attack.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 German neo-Nazis mass for Hitler festival
SOURCE	https://www.yahoo.com/news/german-neo-nazis-mass-festival-hitlers-birthday-092322294.html
GIST	<p>Ostritz (Germany) (AFP) - Hundreds of neo-Nazis were massing Friday on Adolf Hitler's birthday for a two-day festival in a remote eastern German town where citizens and anti-fascist groups staged spirited counter-protests.</p> <p>Many of the mostly male right-wing extremists wore T-shirts with slogans such as "Keepers of the Race", "White is my favourite colour" and "Adolf was the best" while the event was guarded by a group called "Aryan Brotherhood".</p> <p>Hundreds of armoured police ringed the site of the "Schild und Schwert" (Shield and Sword, or SS) festival near the Polish and Czech borders that was expected to also attract eastern European extremists.</p>

Police were backed by water cannon and armoured vehicles, mounted patrols and boats patrolling the Neisse border river, on the western banks of which the shaven-headed and often heavily tattooed attendees were pitching their tents or parking camper-vans.

Organisers argue that the "Reconquista Europa" festival -- featuring far-right music, speeches, martial arts, a tattoo convention and merchandise stalls -- is a political event, granting it legal protection under the German constitution.

They said they expected about 1,000 participants.

The event comes as Germany, after a mass influx of asylum seekers since 2015, is witnessing a revival of far-right and ultra-nationalist groups and has seen the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD) enter parliament.

Hundreds of people also flocked to two counter-demonstrations held well away from the far-right festival in separate parts of Ostritz, a town of 2,300 people, in a remote region of the ex-communist eastern state of Saxony.

Saxony state premier Michael Kretschmer said he was proud that citizens, churches, parties and unions organised opposition. He spoke at a "Peace Festival" with choir music, food stalls, an Arabic cafe and signs praising diversity and multiculturalism.

"The fight against right-wing extremism must come from the middle of society," he said.

"I'm very happy that local authorities and police have found ways to make things difficult for the concert, so hopefully they won't come back here again.

"We don't want these people here."

While neo-Nazis have long staged underground concerts for recruiting and fund-raising, a major two-day music festival with a tent city and tickets selling at up to 45 euros (\$55) is seen as an escalation of an emboldened far-right movement.

The Shield and Sword lineup features bands linked to the far-right and hooligan scene as well as a "fight night" event Saturday called "Kampf der Nibelungen", a reference from Germanic and Norse mythology, featuring boxing, kickboxing and mixed martial arts.

"To live is to fight," declares the event website. "At all times it was fighters who defended their clan, their tribe, their homeland."

Visitors were prohibited from bringing glass bottles, flag staffs and certain breeds of dogs.

A 75-year-old pensioner living near the festival site, who asked not to be named for fear of reprisals, told AFP: "It is a shame that the government cannot ban this, given all the pain that Hitler brought to Germany."

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HEADLINE	04/21 Claim: best suburbs for retirement
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/personalfinance/retirement/2018/04/21/retirement-destinations-best-us-suburbs/527955002/
GIST	You may not want to retire in a large city with a big population. And the good news is there are some quality suburbs from which to choose.

Digital marketing company ConsumerTrack recently ranked the top suburbs for retirees based on cost of living, median home prices and property tax rates, among other criteria.

Many of the towns that landed on the top 10 are based in Southern states across the country.

"They offer both cheap costs of living and social conditions that are conducive to retirees," said Andrew DePietro, content strategist, research and data analyst at ConsumerTrack.

Here's where you may want to settle down in your golden years.

10. Olympia Fields, Illinois

Mean household income: \$116,779
Median home listing price: \$185,000
Property tax (based on median home price): \$4,249

9. Bermuda Run, North Carolina

Mean household income: \$108,558
Median home listing price: \$167,450
Property tax: \$1,666

8. Dennis, Massachusetts

Mean household income: \$97,988
Median home listing price: \$362,400
Property tax: \$2,634

7. Plantation, Florida

Mean household income: \$79,797
Median home listing price: \$329,250
Property tax: \$4,122

6. Pecan Plantation, Texas

Mean household income: \$97,902
Median home listing price: \$279,900
Property tax: \$2,733

5. Sun City, Arizona

Mean household income: \$46,040
Median home listing price: \$169,900
Property tax: \$1,356

4. Fairfield Harbour, North Carolina

Mean household income: \$65,903
Median home listing price: \$189,900
Property tax: \$1,343

3. Sunset Beach, North Carolina

Mean household income: \$70,992
Median home listing price: \$324,900
Property tax: \$1,348

2. Green Valley, Arizona

Mean household income: \$59,317
Median home listing price: \$198,990
Property tax: \$1,800

1. Timber Pines, Florida

	Mean household income: \$56,974 Median home listing price: \$159,900 Property tax: \$1,590
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HEADLINE	04/20 Supervolcano under Yellowstone Park
SOURCE	https://www.mercurynews.com/2018/04/20/the-supervolcano-under-yellowstone-should-make-you-worried/
GIST	<p>Yellowstone National Park sits squarely over a giant, active volcano. This requires attention.</p> <p>Yellowstone has been a national park since 1872, but it was only in the 1960s that scientists realized the scale of the volcano – it’s 44 miles across – and not until the 1980s did they grasp that this thing is fully alive and still threatens to erupt catastrophically. Yellowstone is capable of eruptions thousands of times more violent than the Mount St. Helens eruption of 1980. The northern Rockies would be buried in multiple feet of ash. Ash would rain on almost everyone in the United States. It’d be a bad day. Thus geologists are eager to understand what, exactly, is happening below all those volcano-fueled hot springs and geysers.</p> <p>Obviously they’d like to know if and when Yellowstone will blow again, and with what level of explosiveness. A major eruption would be a low-probability, high-consequence event, a proverbial Black Swan, something that could have societal and planetary effects. The problem for scientists is that these big “supervolcano” eruptions rarely happen, and the most important action is out of sight, many miles below the surface, involving chaotic forces, complex chemistry and enigmatic geological features.</p> <p>One new study has offered insight on Yellowstone’s hidden architecture. It modeled the way magma rises from deep in the Earth’s interior and creates two large chambers of partially melted rock beneath the surface of the national park.</p> <p>These two magma chambers are stacked, and separated by a layer (called a “sill,” like a window sill) of non-melted rock. The magma rising from the Earth’s mantle flows easily and doesn’t hold much gas. It cools and solidifies as it collides with relatively cold crust, forming the sill, the top of which is about 6 miles below the surface.</p> <p>On top of the sill is the upper magma chamber, with thick, sticky magma that holds a great deal of gas – which makes the magma in the upper chamber explosive. It’s like an unopened can of soda pop that’s been shaken. Open the can at your peril.</p> <p>The new study, published in Geophysical Research Letters, explains how this two-tiered, geochemically diverse architecture might have come about over the course of time.</p> <p>“Someday we might have a model snapshot saying this is what the system looks like when there’s enough melt for there to be a large eruption,” lead author Dylan Colón, an Earth Sciences doctoral candidate at the University of Oregon, told The Washington Post.</p> <p>The study won praise from Michael Poland, scientist-in-charge at the U.S. Geological Survey’s Yellowstone Volcano Observatory: “What’s neat about their model is they can go back in time with it and see how it might have influenced eruption rates many millions of years ago.”</p> <p>The new study bolsters earlier research on the dual magma chambers. It used sensors arrayed around Yellowstone to record the speed at which seismic waves from small earthquakes pass through the subsurface rock. Such waves move more slowly through hot and/or partially melted rock formations. That data gave scientists the equivalent of an MRI showing the two magma chambers.</p> <p>“Supervolcano,” we should note, is not a technical term. The experts refer to Yellowstone as a “caldera” or</p>

a “caldera-forming volcano.” Some volcanoes form conical mountains. A caldera is a volcano that creates a vast crater. These are mountain-swallowing events. Visitors to Yellowstone are given a map showing the outline of the most recent caldera, and if they go to the right vantage point it’s possible to see that the heart of the park is remarkably free of mountains. They were either blown away or fell into the big hole.

The Yellowstone region has seen three big eruptions, the first one 2.1 million years ago, the most recent 630,000 years ago. Contrary to Internet rumor-mongering, as well as conspiracy theories about government coverups, there’s no sign that a fourth cataclysmic event is about to happen.

It’s possible, in fact, that Yellowstone is getting a bit old and tired. It may be ready for a long nap rather than a major eruption.

Ilya Bindeman, a University of Oregon geochemist and co-author of the new paper, said that Yellowstone may be “approaching the end of its evolution” because so much of the material in the upper magma chamber is recycled and remelted after previous eruptions.

As Poland said: “How many times do you want to reheat your leftovers? At some point you’re going to say I’m not going to reheat his. You’ve microwaved it six times and it’s no longer food.”

Intellectual humility is called for here: No one can say with great confidence how much magma it takes to trigger a caldera-forming eruption. Moreover, relatively small eruptions creating lava flows can happen within the Yellowstone system. The most recent was 70,000 years ago. The experts say one of these smaller eruptions is much more likely than a giant explosion. Speculation that Yellowstone is “due” to erupt catastrophically implies that the volcano behaves predictably, like a machine. Geologists know otherwise.

Yellowstone, it should be noted, isn’t the only caldera in the United States. One of the others that’s worth keeping an eye on – and the U.S. Geological Survey does just that – is the Long Valley caldera in California, near the popular ski resort of Mammoth Mountain, just east of Yosemite National Park. It erupted 700,000 years ago. A major eruption is extremely unlikely, but it could produce smaller eruptions that would be highly disruptive and dangerous, said Margaret Mangan, scientist-in-charge at the USGS California Volcano Observatory.

Mangan said there are seven volcanic regions in California with zones of molten rock beneath the surface. A volcanic eruption in California is roughly as likely as a magnitude 6 or greater earthquake on the San Andreas Fault, she said.

But Californians don’t worry about volcanoes. They worry about earthquakes, tsunamis and wildfires, she said. She has tried to raise public awareness of volcano hazards but says that it is hard to get much attention.

“The awareness level and preparedness level is quite low in this state,” she said. “We prepare for those large earthquake events, and we need to prepare for volcanic eruptions.”

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HEADLINE	04/21 Iran warns US on leaving nuclear deal
SOURCE	https://www.yahoo.com/news/iran-expected-unexpected-reactions-u-leaves-deal-rouhani-062752094.html
GIST	DUBAI (Reuters) - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Saturday Iran's atomic agency was ready with "expected and unexpected" reactions if the United States pulls out of a multinational nuclear deal, as U.S. President Donald Trump has threatened to do. "Our atomic energy organization is fully prepared ... for actions that they expect and actions they do not expect," Rouhani said, without elaborating in a speech carried by state television, referring to a possible

	<p>decision by Trump to leave the accord next month.</p> <p>The deal reached between Iran, the United States and five other world powers put curbs on Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.</p> <p>Trump has called the agreement one of the worst deals ever negotiated. In January he sent an ultimatum to Britain, France and Germany, saying they must agree to fix what the United States sees as the deal's flaws or he would refuse to extend the critical U.S. sanctions relief that it entails.</p> <p>U.S. disarmament ambassador Robert Wood said on Thursday Washington had been having "intense" discussions with European allies ahead of the May 12 deadline, when U.S. sanctions against Iran will resume unless Trump issues new waivers to suspend them.</p> <p>Iran has said it will stick to the accord as long as the other parties respect it, but will "shred" the deal if Washington pulls out.</p> <p>"Iran has several options if the United States leaves the nuclear deal. Tehran's reaction to America's withdrawal of the deal will be unpleasant," Iranian state TV quoted Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif as saying in New York.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 China challenged Australian warships
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/20/asia/australia-china-south-china-sea-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull asserted the right of the Australian navy to travel the South China Sea, after local media reported three Australian warships were challenged by the Chinese navy earlier this month.</p> <p>As the three vessels traversed the hotly contested waters on their way to Vietnam, they were confronted by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) navy, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation reported on Friday. The ABC said that one Australian defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity, "insists the exchanges with the Chinese were polite, but 'robust'."</p> <p>Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, in London for a meeting of the heads of Commonwealth nations, refused to confirm or deny the report.</p> <p>"All I can say to you is that Australia asserts and practices its right to freedom of navigation throughout the world's ocean, including the South China Sea," he told reporters.</p> <p>China's Defense Ministry confirmed the incident took place in a statement Friday but denied the version of events reported in the Australian media.</p> <p>"On April 15, Chinese naval ships encountered Australian warships in the South China Sea," the statement said. "When communicating with the Australian ships, the Chinese ships used professional language, and their operations were professional and safe in accordance with law and regulations."</p> <p>In a statement to CNN, the Australian Defense Department acknowledged the three vessels were in the South China Sea in recent weeks but wouldn't comment on "operational details" on the ships.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 China trash ban global wakeup call
SOURCE	http://money.cnn.com/2018/04/20/news/china-trash-recycling-environment/index.html
GIST	China's trash import ban is giving the global recycling industry an enormous headache. The flip side: the world has finally been forced to rethink its approach to waste.

Beijing has last year banned the imports of 24 varieties of solid waste, including types of plastic and unsorted paper. On Friday, it extended the ban to dozens more types of recyclable materials, including steel waste, used auto parts and old ships.

The ban has terrible consequences for some places. A town in Australia has been sending recyclable waste to a landfill because it can no longer afford to recycle it.

In the UK, hoards of low-grade plastic have been hanging around in storage, eventually heading for incineration.

The US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries warned the ban is disrupting global supply chains and may lead manufacturers to use new materials rather than recycled ones.

But experts say the ban has been a massive wake-up call for countries like the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, Japan and others who relied on China to buy and handle their trash from them.

The Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries said 31% of America's scrap commodity exports was sent to China in 2017. In the UK, almost all of recycled plastic used to be sent to China and Hong Kong for processing.

With China shutting its door on foreign garbage, several countries, including the UK have started talking about imposing taxes on some plastic items to make people use fewer materials.

Others, like Australia, have invested tens of millions of dollars to help local councils with the waste crisis.

Simon Ellin, the chief executive of the Recycling Association in the United Kingdom, said the ban is prompting more investment into recycling technologies.

That's because China and other countries, including European countries, will still buy high-quality scrap material that can be recycled into new items. It's just the low-grade, more polluting stuff China doesn't want.

Other countries, including India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Germany and the Netherlands, have stepped in to buy some of UK's trash, although at lower prices -- and not all of it.

"Some low-grade materials, plastic especially, that are collected at curbside in the UK have proved more difficult to move, because there isn't a market to move all of this material," he said, adding these materials are currently stuck in storage facilities, while some might be burned, rather than recycled.

He said that knowing the country would no longer be able to ship poor-quality recycling materials to China, its biggest buyer, meant the UK recycling industry had to start changing. Others will follow.

"It is inevitable that in the future, other countries will follow China, looking into bringing similar quality standards, so the quality of our material has to be better," he said.

"Slowing the [recycling] process down allows us to produce better-quality materials. Companies are adopting higher standards and much more stringent processes. There is more investment in technology," he added.

In Ellin's mind, the ban is a good thing, that will eventually force the entire supply chain to change, from the initial design of the product, to local waste collection authorities, to the companies that sort and recycle trash.

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HEADLINE	04/21 Swaziland is now Kingdom of eSwatini
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/20/africa/swaziland-eswatini-africa-monarchy-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The king of Swaziland, Africa's last absolute monarch, has changed the name of his country to the "Kingdom of eSwatini" to mark the 50th anniversary of independence -- and to avoid confusion with Switzerland.</p> <p>King Mswati III announced the move during a golden jubilee ceremony celebrating freedom from British colonial rule. He said the country's new name was used by Swaziland before it was colonized.</p> <p>Speaking to a large crowd in a stadium in the city of Manzini, 40 km (25 miles) from the capital Mbabane, the king said: "African countries on getting independence reverted to their ancient names before they were colonized. So from now on the country will be officially be known as the Kingdom of eSwatini," the AFP news agency reported.</p> <p>The name "Swaziland", the King said, had caused confusion. "Whenever we go abroad, people refer to us as Switzerland," he added.</p> <p>In recent years, the ruler has referred several times to the "Kingdom of eSwatini", which means "land of the Swazis" in the local language.</p> <p>He used it an address to the UN General Assembly in 2017 and at the state opening of the country's parliament this year.</p> <p>The name change was greeted with mixed emotions, with some saying the country had more pressing issues, such as poverty and health care.</p> <p>The southern African nation, a Commonwealth member, suffers from severe poverty and has the world's highest HIV/AIDS rate. Most of the king's 1.4 million subjects work as agricultural laborers.</p> <p>"When read a particular way, it does sound a bit like a start up," tweeted Usman Ali, who said he was born in Swaziland. "I'm all for going back to pre-colonial names though. Where it lies on the priority list is the issue."</p> <p>"Swaziland or Eswatini, we're still hungry," tweeted Notsile Nkambule.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/21 Hamas member killed in Malaysia
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/hamas-member-killed-in-malaysia?ref=home
GIST	<p>Hamas on Saturday said one of its members was assassinated in Malaysia, just a day after an Israeli official warned of using targeted killings against the militant group.</p> <p>Fadi al-Batash, described by Hamas as a researcher in "the field of energy," was said to have been killed while on his way to a Kuala Lumpur mosque. Kuala Lumpur police confirmed the killing of a 35-year-old Palestinian man but did not identify him as a member of Hamas.</p> <p>On Friday, Israel's intelligence minister, Yisrael Katz, reportedly warned Hamas rulers that any threats against Israeli commanders would be met with targeted killings. Israeli authorities have blamed the militant group for weeks of unrest at the Gaza border, with Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman on Saturday accusing the group of using demonstrators as human shields.</p> <p>Four Palestinians were killed by Israeli troops on Friday, including a 15-year-old boy. The death toll of Palestinians now stands at 32 in less than a month, though Lieberman said the "only culprits" in the latest killings are Hamas members.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 Immigrant children separation at border
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/20/us/immigrant-children-separation-ice.html
GIST	<p>For months, members of Congress have been demanding answers about how many families are being separated as they are processed at stations along the southwest border, in part because the Trump administration has in the past said it was considering taking children from their parents as a way to deter migrants from coming here.</p> <p>Officials have repeatedly declined to provide data on how many families have been separated, but suggested that the number was relatively low.</p> <p>But new data reviewed by The New York Times shows that more than 700 children have been taken from adults claiming to be their parents since October, including more than 100 children under the age of 4.</p> <p>The data was prepared by the Office of Refugee Resettlement, a division of the Department of Health and Human Services that takes custody of children who have been removed from migrant parents. Senior officials at the Department of Homeland Security, which processes migrants at the border, initially denied that the numbers were so high. But after they were confirmed to The Times by three federal officials who work closely with these cases, a spokesman for the health and human services department on Friday acknowledged in a statement that there were “approximately 700.”</p> <p>Homeland security officials said the agency does not separate families at the border for deterrence purposes. “As required by law, D.H.S. must protect the best interests of minor children crossing our borders, and occasionally this results in separating children from an adult they are traveling with if we cannot ascertain the parental relationship, or if we think the child is otherwise in danger,” a spokesman for the agency said in a statement.</p> <p>But Trump administration officials have suggested publicly in the past that they were, indeed, considering a deterrence policy. Last year, John F. Kelly, President Trump’s chief of staff, floated the idea while he was serving as homeland security secretary.</p> <p>If approved, the plan would have closed detention facilities that are designed to house families and replaced them with separate shelters for adults and children. The White House supported the move and convened a group of officials from several federal agencies to consider its merits. But the Department of Homeland Security has said the policy was never adopted.</p> <p>Children removed from their families are taken to shelters run by nongovernmental organizations. There, workers seek to identify a relative or guardian in the United States who can take over the child’s care. But if no such adult is available, the children can languish in custody indefinitely. Operators of these facilities say they are often unable to locate the parents of separated children because the children arrive without proper records.</p> <p>Once a child has entered the shelter system, there is no firm process to determine whether they have been separated from someone who was legitimately their parent, or for reuniting parents and children who had been mistakenly separated, said a Border Patrol official, who was not authorized to discuss the agency’s policies publicly.</p> <p>“The idea of punishing parents who are trying to save their children’s lives, and punishing children for being brought to safety by their parents by separating them, is fundamentally cruel and un-American,” said Michelle Brané, director of the Migrant Rights and Justice program at the Women’s Refugee Commission, an advocacy group that conducts interviews and monitoring at immigration detention centers, including those that house children. “It really to me is just a horrific ‘Sophie’s Choice’ for a mom.”</p> <p>Protecting children at the border is complicated because there have, indeed, been instances of fraud. Tens of thousands of migrants arrive there every year, and those with children in tow are often released into the</p>

United States more quickly than adults who come alone, because of restrictions on the amount of time that minors can be held in custody. Some migrants have admitted they brought their children not only to remove them from danger in such places as Central America and Africa, but because they believed it would cause the authorities to release them from custody sooner.

Others have admitted to posing falsely with children who are not their own, and Border Patrol officials say that such instances of fraud are increasing.

As the debate carries on, pressure from the White House to enact a separation policy has continued. In conversations this month with Kirstjen Nielsen, the homeland security secretary, Mr. Trump has repeatedly expressed frustration that the agency has not been aggressive enough in policing the border, according to a person at the White House who is familiar with the discussions.

Officials presented Mr. Trump with a list of proposals, including the plan to routinely separate immigrant adults from their children. The president urged Ms. Nielsen to move forward with the policies, the person said.

But even groups that support stricter immigration policies have stopped short of endorsing a family separation policy. Jessica M. Vaughan, the director of policy studies for the Center for Immigration Studies, one such group, said that family separation should only be used as a “last resort.”

However, she said that some migrants were using children as “human shields” in order to get out of immigration custody faster.

“It makes no sense at all for the government to just accept these attempts at fraud,” Ms. Vaughan said. “If it appears that the child is being used in this way, it is in the best interest of the child to be kept separately from the parent, for the parent to be prosecuted, because it’s a crime and it’s one that has to be deterred and prosecuted.”

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HEADLINE	04/19 Darfur violence stirs new alarm
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2018-04-19/darfur-violence-stirs-alarm-as-us-seeks-improved-rights-record-in-sudan
GIST	<p>International attempts to end the brutal violence in Sudan appear less likely more than a year after the U.S. lifted sanctions on the East African nation, following new reports of government violence against the general public that has triggered alarm from the top levels of the United Nations and human rights organizations.</p> <p>Despite these concerns, engagement is proceeding to normalize American relations with Sudan, which remains on the U.S. list of countries supporting terrorism.</p> <p>Earlier this week, the U.N. secretary-general said that while security has improved in Darfur – a region in western Sudan the size of France – sexual assaults and other acts of violence remain common.</p> <p>"While the rate of [newly displaced people] was lower in 2017 than in previous years, and humanitarian access had improved, sexual violence remained prevalent, owing to a volatile security environment awash with small arms and light weapons, criminality and sporadic clashes," António Guterres told the U.N. Security Council on Monday.</p> <p>The U.S. and other Western governments increasingly are working with Sudan's government led by President Omar al-Bashir, who is sought by the International Criminal Court, or ICC, for alleged acts of genocide and war crimes committed in Darfur.</p> <p>The U.S. has since the 1990s imposed economic sanctions on Sudan for its support of terrorists. But over</p>

time U.S. thinking of the sanctions' effectiveness has changed. Meanwhile, Western governments have increasingly eased into seeking al-Bashir's help to battle extremism in East Africa and to help reverse the flow of refugees streaming northward with the hope of reaching Europe.

U.S. negotiators will next focus on improving human rights and religious freedom in the East African country, according to the Sudan Tribune.

Sudan's current government came to power by an Islamist-backed military coup in 1989, waging a jihadi war on South Sudan, which became its own country in 2011. The ICC has issued an arrest warrant for al-Bashir, whom it accuses of being "criminally responsible, as an indirect co-perpetrator" for alleged acts of genocide and war crimes committed in Darfur. An insurgency erupted in Darfur in 2003 against Sudan's government in Khartoum for political and economic marginalization.

International rights observers say the social climate in Sudan remains oppressive.

"There has been no fundamental change. The government still stands at the ready to fight rebels or suspected rebels and civilians they believe support them, often purely on the basis of their location and ethnicity," says Jehanne Henry of the African team at Human Rights Watch. "We continue to see very high levels of sexual violence especially against displaced women and girls, often by security forces who operate with total impunity. Darfur continues to be a lawless, violent place where government forces can do what they want."

The five tracks the U.S. monitored included counter-terrorism cooperation; addressing the threat of the Lord's Resistance Army – a rebel group and Christian cult operating in northern Uganda, South Sudan, Congo and Central Africa Republic; ending interference in South Sudan; improving humanitarian access; and ending hostilities in two areas, including Darfur.

Last October, President Donald Trump ended all U.S. economic sanctions. Sudan remains on the U.S. list of countries supporting terrorism, a designation that imposes sanctions. Other countries on the list include Iran, North Korea and Syria.

Human rights organizations, however, say they still track incidents of sexual assault and other violence in Darfur, and say the Sudanese government attacked civilians in March and April. Those attacks killed 23 people and displaced 15,000. Twelve villages were set on fire in the Jebel Marra area in Darfur, according to a report from the African Center for Justice and Peace Studies.

"For many months we saw a reduction of government attacks on civilians, but as recent clashes and attacks on civilians in Jebel Mara shows, that's only temporary and only at the whim of the government," Henry of Human Rights Watch says.

Negotiations to restore normal relations between the U.S. and Sudan should have been started in January this year – a year after Obama partially lifted sanctions in the first phase. Those talks were set to consider removing Sudan from the U.S. government's list of states supporting terrorism.

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HEADLINE	04/21 NKorea suspends nuke tests, launches
SOURCE	http://time.com/5249087/north-korea-suspend-missile-testing-close-nuclear-site/
GIST	(SEOUL, South Korea) — North Korea announced that it will suspend nuclear tests and intercontinental ballistic missile launches ahead of its summits with Seoul and Washington, but stopped short of suggesting it has any intention of giving up its hard-won nuclear arsenal. The announcement, which sets the table for further negotiations when the summits begin, was made by leader Kim Jong Un at a meeting of the North Korean ruling party's Central Committee on Friday. It was reported by the North's state-run media early Saturday.

Kim justified the suspension to his party by saying the situation around North Korea has been rapidly changing “in favor of the Korean revolution” since he announced last year that his country had completed its nuclear forces.

He said North Korea has reached the level where it no longer needs underground testing or test-launching of ICBMs, and added that it would close its nuclear testing facility at Punggye-ri, which was already believed to have been rendered unusable due to tunnel collapses after the North’s test of its most powerful bomb to date last year.

The announcement is Kim’s opening gambit to set the tone for summit talks with South Korean President Moon Jae-in, set for next Friday, and U.S. President Donald Trump, expected in late May or early June.

Trump almost immediately responded with a tweet, saying, “This is very good news for North Korea and the World” and “big progress!” He added that he’s looking forward to his summit with Kim.

South Korea’s presidential office also welcomed North Korea’s announcement as “meaningful progress” toward the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Presidential official Yoon Young-chan said in a statement that the North’s decision brightens the prospects for successful talks between Seoul, Pyongyang and Washington.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe offered a more guarded reaction.

“What is crucial here ... is how this development is going to lead to the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of nuclear arms, weapons of mass destruction and missiles,” he said. “And I will keep a close eye on that.”

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HEADLINE	04/20 State Dept. annual human rights review
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/20/trump-admin-hits-russia-china-iran-north-korea-ann/
GIST	<p>The State Department hit “China, Russia, Iran and North Korea” for violating the rights of their own citizens “on a daily basis” Friday, as U.S. diplomats released their annual worldwide human rights review, chronicling political executions, media oppression and other tyrannical activities in a range of nations.</p> <p>While the review, known as the “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices,” also cited abuses in several countries considered to be close economic and military partners of Washington, it stressed that the United States seeks “to lead other nations by example” in promoting the rule of law and the fair treatment of people everywhere.</p> <p>“States that restrict freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly; that allow and commit violence against members of religious, ethnic, and other minority groups; or that undermine the fundamental dignity of persons are morally reprehensible and undermine our interests,” acting Secretary of State John J. Sullivan wrote in an introductions to this year’s review.</p> <p>“Our foreign policy reflects who we are and promotes freedom as a matter of principle,” wrote Mr. Sullivan, who’s headed the State Department since early April following President Trump’s firing of former Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson.</p> <p>“The United States,” Mr. Sullivan wrote, “will continue to support those around the world struggling for human dignity and liberty.”</p> <p>Friday’s review was the 42nd produced by the State Department. The document, posted on the department’s website, is a country-by-country assessment of nearly every nation of the world — the U.S.</p>

itself being a notable exception.

This year's assessments hit the usual suspects.

It cited a long list of "significant" human rights abuses by the Chinese government, from "arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life and executions without due process" to "forced disappearances" of citizens by Beijing and the use by authorities of "unofficial holding facilities known as 'black jails.'"

Similar activities were described in Iran, where authorities were also criticized for maintaining "severe restrictions on freedom of expression," including the "suppression of virtually all expression deemed critical of the regime."

While examples were cited in a host others nations — from North Korea to Venezuela, Zimbabwe and beyond — the review also documented abuses in several nations considered to be U.S. allies, such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

It lamented the Saudi government's use of "torture" on prisoners and "execution for other than the most serious offenses and without requisite due process." It also noted Riyadh's detention in late 2017 of some 200 government officials, businesspersons and royal family members.

While the detentions were ostensibly tied to a major government corruption probe, the review cited media reports that "members of the security forces coerced with relative impunity at least some of the detainees to the point of requiring medical care."

In Turkey, the review criticized the "torture of detainees in official custody" and cited other abuses, including Ankara's use of state of emergency powers to engage in the "arbitrary arrest and detention" of "tens of thousands, including members of parliament and two Turkish-national employees of the U.S. Mission to Turkey, for alleged ties to terrorist groups or peaceful legitimate speech."

While the review provided an exhaustive accounting of religious and political persecution in several other nations, it also went beneath the surface to explore unusual and specific areas of human rights strain in some nations, particularly Russia.

Beatings by 'close relatives'

It noted Russian President Putin's recent signing of legislation to make "beatings by 'close relatives' an administrative rather than criminal offense for first-time offenders" in Russia, "provided the beating does not cause serious harm requiring hospital treatment."

The report suggested the law may increase instances in which no one gets held accountable for violence against women in Russia, where "approximately 12,000 women [are killed] annually from domestic violence."

While the review cannot force the U.S. government to cut ties or military aid to rights abusers or to impose sanctions upon them, it is generally regarded as a prime source for tracking human rights abuses by governments around the world and often sparks harsh responses from its named targets.

This year's document, meanwhile, was published against a backdrop in which the Trump administration itself has faced sharp criticism from some independent human rights organizations.

The New York-based group Human Rights Watch asserted in January that President Trump's first year in office was "marked by a sharp regression in government efforts to protect and promote a range of human rights."

"The Trump administration made policy changes that have harmed refugees and immigrants, undermined police accountability for abuse, and rolled back women's rights, including access to important health

services,” Human Rights Watch said.

The State Department’s annual review does not assess the human-rights situation inside the United States. But on releasing the review Friday, U.S. officials acknowledged the sticky politics that may face the Trump administration when it comes to maintaining, and even growing, ties with other nations cited for abuses.

“Does [it] mean the president should never speak to these people?” said Ambassador Michael Kozak, the senior official in the State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

“Usually part of your policy is engaging with the people your trying to change at some level,” Mr. Kozak told reporters at State Department headquarters.

He also spoke frankly on abusive practices in several specific nations.

When asked about references in this year’s review to political and media oppression in Nicaragua, for instance, Mr. Kozak said outright that “Nicaragua is going the wrong direction on many fronts” and asserted that recent elections in the Central American nation “were a sham.”

When asked about Saudi Arabia’s announcement last year that it will begin allowing women the right to drive automobiles, Mr. Kozak described the development as “a baby step in the right direction.”

With regard to positive human rights examples in general, he added that he’s “always encouraged when you see things break out of a static holding pattern.”

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HEADLINE	04/20 Judge: deadly force measure on ballot
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/960321/judge-rejects-lawmakers-change-to-deadly-force-measure/
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — A Thurston County judge has rejected the way Washington lawmakers voted to make it easier to prosecute police for negligent shootings.</p> <p>Lawmakers in March approved the measure, which was intended to end years of wrangling over a previous state law that made it nearly impossible to hold officers criminally liable.</p> <p>But the way lawmakers changed the law was dubious. They were faced with an initiative signed by nearly 360,000 voters. Under the state Constitution, the Legislature must pass such initiatives as written or send them to the ballot.</p> <p>In this case, lawmakers passed the initiative — Initiative 940 — as well as a law to amend it with changes that were supported by both police groups and activists.</p> <p>The maneuver prompted a lawsuit by frequent initiative sponsor Tim Eyman. The Seattle Times reports that Superior Court Judge Christine Schaller agreed Friday the Legislature’s actions were unconstitutional. She ordered I-940 be put on the November ballot.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 National Teacher of the Year
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/960100/teacher-of-the-year-mandy-manning/
GIST	<p>When you speak with Spokane teacher Mandy Manning, her enthusiasm is contagious, and one really does get the sense that she finds teaching to be its own reward. But the awards are official too, as she’s been named the 2018 National Teacher of the Year for her work at Ferris High School.</p> <p>“Every family has value, because every parent loves their kids, so there’s going to be something beautiful</p>

in every family,” Manning told Morning News with Dave Ross last September, shortly after being named Washington’s Teacher of the Year. “I think it’s my responsibility as the classroom teacher to find the beauty in every single family.”

She’s far more than a teacher with a cool name. An educator for 17 years, Manning has taught English and math at the Ferris Newcomer Center since 2011, where immigrant and refugee students often enter their first American classroom. Her students come from all over the world, and there are usually 12 to 14 different languages in class at a time. Despite the challenges, her impact reverberates throughout the students’ lives.

“I think when I came to her class I only knew how to say, ‘Hi,’” one student told CBS This Morning. “I always wanted to be a doctor,” said another, “and she inspired me. She convinced me to do it.”

Though she has almost as many awards as students, Manning never imagined becoming a teacher. Her journey toward it began in Armenia as a Peace Corps volunteer. Over the years she went to Texas, New York, and Japan. She moved to Spokane’s Newcomer Center in 2011.

Teacher of the year Mandy Manning

For Manning, developing a relationship with parents and understanding where her students are coming from is essential.

“Even as teachers we get nervous to talk to parents, because we’re unsure of what that relationship is going to look like,” she said. “Then we do it and it’s this magical moment where we realize that we’re in it together.”

In addition to helping immigrants and refugees adapt to the American education system, Manning took a lead role in improving her school’s discipline plan. Since its activation, tardiness, unexcused absences, and suspensions were significantly reduced. Her discipline models are currently in use by other schools across the district.

As National Teacher of the Year, Manning will serve as an advocate for more than three million teachers and 50 million public school students, going to over 150 speaking events in the U.S. and internationally. It will enable her to spread her ongoing message for students of kindness and fearlessness.

“It took me years to get to this approach,” Manning said. “You love your child because they are a part of you, and I love your child because, just like you, I want the very, very best for them.”

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HEADLINE	04/20 Seattle eyes business tax on large firms
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/960039/progressive-business-tax-seattle/
GIST	<p>After months of deliberation and committee meetings, Seattle officials have developed legislation to impose a progressive business tax on the city’s largest companies.</p> <p>“The answer to our homelessness crisis is not as simple as being austere and shuffling existing budget priorities,” said Councilmember Lorena González. “There is no question that additional resources are needed to fund housing and services that are working. This new revenue is targeted towards building deeply affordable housing and funding services that allow a person to become healthy, stable and independent.”</p> <p>The council’s progressive business tax legislation exempts non-profits and aims to avoid taxing small and medium businesses. The legislation will be introduced on April 23, then go through council committees. It could be voted on as early as May 14. Along with the legislation, the council will submit a resolution that guides spending for the tax.</p>

“Seattle’s small businesses, about 97 percent of all businesses in the city, will not be taxed by this proposal,” said Seattle Councilmember Mike O’Brien. “Just the opposite, this proposal does much of what many small businesses want to see in responding to the crisis – create more safe and appropriate places for people to go.”

O’Brien argues that the progressive tax will “jumpstart” the region’s approach to solving the homeless crisis, which the city has failed to keep pace with.

Seattle’s progressive business tax

If passed the head tax could be implemented as soon as 2019. The proposal is really two separate taxes, implemented one after the other. The council proposes to shift to a payroll tax on Jan. 1, 2021 after three years of collecting the head tax. The payroll tax was preferred by business representatives at an April 18 council committee meeting.

- About 500 businesses will be subject to the tax, which is about 3 percent of the city’s companies. It will apply to companies making more than \$20 million annually in gross receipts.
- Businesses will be taxed \$0.26042 per hour, per employee working in Seattle, or \$500 per employee / year.
- When the city shifts to a payroll tax in 2021, it will charge 0.7 percent of all payroll related to work performed in Seattle by those same large companies. The proposal argues that this will tax higher salaries more than smaller ones.
- Both taxes are aimed to raise \$75 million annually.

What will it fund?

According to the city council, 29,000 households in Seattle earn less than 50 percent of the area’s median income and are paying more than 50 percent of their income on rent. The area needs more than 140,000 affordable units, with only about 15,000 offered or are currently being built.

“In 2017, our city-funded programs exited 3,400 people from homelessness into permanent housing,” González said. “Yet, we continue to see people living and sleeping in public spaces. The causes for homelessness are varied but the result is the same: unsheltered people are unable to find their way into affordable housing because it does not exist at the needed scale.”

Of the \$75 million in annual revenue from the progressive business tax:

- 75 percent (about \$57 million) will fund the construction of 1,780 “deeply affordable housing units” over the next five years.
- Affordable housing will be targeted at residents earning 30 percent of the area’s median income.
- 20 percent will fund emergency shelter and other services such as building tiny homes, expanding hygiene services, expanding criminal justice diversion programs, services for people living in cars, and adding 362 shelter beds.

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HEADLINE	04/20 Protests, arrests at Seattle youth jail site
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/960252/seattle-police-arrest-clergy/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE – Clergy members and others who chained themselves to steel beams at the construction site for a new youth jail in Seattle were arrested Friday morning.</p> <p>The protesters gathered at the site near 14th and Alder at about 8 a.m.</p> <p>They’re demanding that King County Executive Dow Constantine halt construction.</p>

	<p>Supporters of the movement gathered on the sidewalk where an altar, banners, and candles were placed.</p> <p>“Those of us here today share a moral vision for the county to shift away from building infrastructure that creates misery and trauma, and toward spending on basic human needs like housing and healthcare,” stated Dean Spade, member of the No New Youth Jail Coalition.</p> <p>KIRO 7 Reporter Rob Munoz was at the scene as protesters encouraged each other to call Constantine’s office to complain that having workers at the site while protesters were there constituted Occupational Safety Hazard Administration violations for unsafe workplace practices.</p> <p>When officials came to the site to investigate, they determined the protesters were creating a dangerous work site environment. That led to Seattle police officers ordering the group to disperse. When the group refused to leave, arrests were made.</p> <p>Last month, supporters of the campaign closed an intersection Fourth Avenue and James Street in front Constantine’s office. Five of them were locked together, with their arms inside metal tubes.</p> <p>They then marched through downtown Seattle. Traffic officials were forced to close streets, which clogged I-5 and I-90.</p> <p>The county says a new youth jail is desperately needed because the current facility is deteriorating.</p> <p>But activists say the current jail is only 25 years old and that a county analysis of the facility said it was “generally in good condition.”</p> <p>They say the construction is an “unnecessary, harmful, and undeniably racist jail building project,” reasoning that youth jails disproportionately affect black children.</p> <p>The group offers no alternative to a youth detention center. It only says it wants to “change the conversation about youth imprisonment” and wants the county to adopt a goal of zero detention young people.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/23 Puget Sound spring finally sprung
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/groovy-70-temps-for-puget-sound-this-week/281-543591205
GIST	<p>Spring has finally sprung!</p> <p>Temperatures will start to warm near or above normal in the coming days, and the sun will make a return. In fact, we are about to see the driest stretch of the month yet and the warmest temps since September!</p> <p>We've already seen improvements since Saturday, but the weather will just keep getting better. And by "better," I mean ample sunshine and temps in the 70s! Keep in mind, 60 degrees is where we should be this time of year.</p> <p>We'll be close to 70 degrees on Monday, and those temps will linger. Looks like the ridge stays over us well into the work week and allows for us to dry out and warm up quite a bit. We could even see some areas in the mid-to-upper 70s midweek!</p>
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HEADLINE	04/22 State economy ranked highest in nation
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/washingtons-economy-ranked-highest-in-nation-geekwire/281-544503452

GIST	<p>Washington state's technology industry isn't always considered in the same league as California's. But a 2017 study getting renewed attention this week suggests that Washington is actually punching well above its weight.</p> <p>Credit reporting site WalletHub compared all 50 states and the District of Columbia across 27 metrics for economic health and opportunity in the report. The study resurfaced this week when Visual Capitalist, a digital media brand, compiled the data in the infographic below.</p> <p>Washington ranked No. 1, driven by factors like strong gross domestic product growth, exports per capita, and percentage of high-tech jobs.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/23 Security risk phones sold at US bases
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/news/chinese-smartphones-cited-by-intelligence-as-security-risk-sold-on-us-bases-1.523519
GIST	<p>KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Chinese-made smartphones that the heads of U.S. intelligence have urged Americans not to buy are being sold to servicemembers across Germany at on-base exchange facilities, despite concerns of data theft and espionage.</p> <p>The Huawei phones, which are being sold by TKS, an Army and Air Force Exchange Service concessionary and subsidiary of Vodaphone, could be used to gather sensitive information, according to U.S. intelligence agencies. They are banned for official government use in most cases.</p> <p>The Defense Department asked whether Huawei mobile phones were being sold at exchange facilities but has not offered any other direction, said AAFES senior spokesman Chris Ward.</p> <p>“We responded ‘yes’ and have had no other inquiries,” Ward said in an email response. “Should there be an official determination made by law enforcement officials that these phones present a security risk, the Exchange will instruct its vendors to remove impacted products from their assortment.”</p> <p>Officials at Ramstein Air Base, where Europe's largest exchange and a TKS concessionary operate, said they are aware that the phones are being sold on base.</p> <p>Although officials did not address Huawei specifically, they said that servicemembers should adhere to operational security standards when they post anything online, take pictures or configure their location settings.</p> <p>“Servicemembers need to pay attention,” said Lt Col. Joel Harper, 86th Airlift Wing spokesman. “Regardless of where the device is purchased, on base or off base, servicemembers should practice good (operational security).”</p> <p>In February, the director of national intelligence, along with the heads of the CIA, FBI, National Security Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency testified before a Senate committee that Americans should not use Huawei products because of the security risks they pose.</p> <p>The concern about Huawei first focused on routers, switches and other high-bandwidth commercial products but later expanded to consumer mobile phones.</p> <p>FBI Director Christopher Wray testified that Huawei products provide the Chinese government with the ability to maliciously modify or steal information and to conduct undetected espionage.</p> <p>“We're deeply concerned about the risks of allowing any company or entity that is beholden to foreign governments that don't share our values to gain positions of power inside our telecommunications networks,” Wray said.</p>

	Huawei is a private company started by a former People's Liberation Army officer.
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HEADLINE	04/22 Oil is fast approaching \$70
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/oil-is-fast-approaching-70-is-the-economy-ready-for-it-1524394800
GIST	<p>Oil prices are headed toward \$70 a barrel, a weight on the U.S. economy that is bearable for now but could pose trouble if prices keep climbing.</p> <p>The last time U.S. oil prices were at \$70, in 2014, they were in the middle of a steep collapse. Many investors believed then that prices would soon stabilize, or even recover. Instead, they continued to plunge, eventually hitting a bottom in 2016 at \$26. That tumble caused acute pain for oil producers, whose troubles rippled out into stocks, bonds and the broader economy.</p> <p>This year's rally is a sign of how much has changed in a few years. Global growth has picked up, while U.S. unemployment has fallen. A gambit by the world's largest oil producers to cut production has been succeeding in eliminating a massive glut, with help from soaring demand.</p> <p>Oil prices have climbed more than 60% since last summer's lows, and U.S. producers are exporting more crude than ever.</p> <p>For now, some investors say oil prices are lodged in a range that could benefit the U.S. economy by bolstering the recovering energy industry without curtailing demand.</p> <p>Yet even with the economy chugging along, rising oil prices dredge up fresh concerns. If crude continues to move higher, it could begin to stifle economic growth. Higher consumer prices for gasoline and other energy products act like a tax, while pushing inflation higher and increasing pressure on the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates more aggressively.</p> <p>That, in turn, could slow growth and weigh on the stock market, which has already been knocked around by trade tensions, rising bond yields and recent bouts of volatility. Inflation concerns pushed the yield on the 10-year Treasury note to the highest since 2014 on Friday, while major U.S. stock indexes closed lower, wiping out much of the recent gains after a string of upbeat earnings.</p> <p>"Nothing can suck cash flow out of the economy faster than rising oil prices," said Joseph LaVorgna, chief economist for the Americas at Natixis .</p> <p>When oil prices fell below \$40 a barrel, financial distress from the energy sector started to spread, said Jason Thomas, director of research at the Carlyle Group .</p> <p>But if oil prices continue rising, they could boost inflation expectations, which would raise bond yields and the cost of financing.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/22 Canada moving oil a truck at a time
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-canada-crude-trucks-insight/facing-shipping-constraints-canada-moving-oil-one-truckload-at-a-time-idUSKBN1HU0F4
GIST	<p>WINNIPEG, Manitoba/VANCOUVER (Reuters) - At an Alberta oil loading terminal, a convoy of big rigs are gearing up to haul Canadian crude oil hundreds of miles through bone dry fields across the U.S. border into Montana, where the oil will be transferred to pipelines and rail cars headed south and west.</p> <p>Trucks loaded with crude are an increasingly common sight at the border. Production has risen in the</p>

world's fifth largest producer but full pipelines and a rail car shortage have made it difficult for drillers to ship oil out of Canada.

Some oil producers are feeling the pressure from customers. Alberta-based Gear Energy Ltd (GXE.TO) pumps about 7,500 barrels of oil equivalent per day, and recently had an Asian customer walk away from an agreement to buy crude after failing to secure a way to ship oil to the West Coast.

"We've never had more inbound calls looking for heavy oil," said Gear Chief Executive Officer Ingram Gillmore. "And we have never had more challenges actually getting it to them. It is very frustrating."

Production in Canada rose 8 percent in the last year to a record 4.2 million barrels per day (bpd) and is forecast to keep rising. Over the next five years, OPEC production is expected to only grow modestly, leaving the bulk of forecasted global supply increases to the United States and Canada.

But Canada's oil industry faces significant challenges, not the least of which are high production costs, remote oil fields and, perhaps most pressing, the shipping bottlenecks. So significant are the problems that a number of oil majors have withdrawn from Canada.

No easy solution is on the horizon. Plans for new export pipelines are running into opposition from environmentalists, Aboriginal groups and rival provinces. Most recently, Kinder Morgan Canada (KML.TO) hit the brakes on its Trans Mountain expansion, and TransCanada Corp (TRP.TO) has not yet fully committed to its Keystone XL project.

Frustrated and fearful of missing out on the rebound in prices, drillers are increasingly relying on trucks to move oil to the market. Crude exports from Canada by road nearly tripled from 2015 to 2017, and continued to rise in the first two months of 2018, according to StatsCan data provided to Reuters.

However, a truck can only carry 200 barrels of oil, compared with 60,000 barrels in one unit train, or nearly 600,000 per day on the Keystone Pipeline - the equivalent of 3,000 trucks. Each one of those trucks needs a driver and enough fuel to carry crude over long distances. Moving crude by truck is at least 10 times more expensive on a mile-for-mile basis compared with rail or pipeline.

"We have demand for 50,000 bpd and we can move about a fifth of that," said Jarrett Zielinski, chief executive of Torq Energy Logistics, an Alberta company that owns rail loading facilities and 275 trucks.

TRUCKIN'

Rising opposition to pipelines is hitting Alberta, the landlocked province where most Canadian oil is produced.

The fight over the Trans Mountain expansion, which would nearly triple the capacity of the 1,150-kilometre (715 mile) line from Alberta to a British Columbia port, has engulfed two provinces and the government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

British Columbia is opposed to the project, which prompted Kinder Morgan to suspend work on the line. Alberta's premier threatened to cut fuel deliveries to its neighboring province in retaliation.

As for trains, during certain months, rail operators face political pressure to prioritize movement of agricultural products. Rail operators want long-term deals from shippers, but oil companies prefer to have the flexibility to shift to pipelines if space becomes available.

Exports by road rose from just over 17,000 barrels per month in 2015 to more than 51,000 in 2017, according to data Statistics Canada provided to Reuters. In the first two months of 2018, road exports surged to an average of 180,000 a month.

By contrast, rail exports averaged 4 million barrels a month in 2017.

	<p>Using trucks allows producers to reach northern U.S. rail loading sites, where there is more capacity and rates are cheaper, Zielinski said.</p> <p>Monthly demand fluctuates based on the discount for western Canadian crude versus the U.S. benchmark. When the discount is above \$20, oil producers will pay to haul crude up to five hours, more than twice as far as usually makes economic sense, Zielinski said.</p> <p>However, the trucking industry's capacity to move more crude is limited by a severe driver shortage in Western Canada, said Andrew Barnes, director of compliance and regulatory affairs at Alberta Motor Transportation Association.</p> <p>This is not unique to Canada. Booming production in west Texas has strained pipeline capacity, increasing reliance on trucks to deliver to injection points. But ongoing pipeline construction in Texas should alleviate the glut in the next year, while Canada's future is less clear.</p> <p>The uptick in truck transport also raises safety questions. There were 205 road accidents involving crude tanker trucks in Canada from 2010 through 2016, which killed 10 people, according to Transport Canada data. There were nine accidents involving crude trains, though one was the Lac Megantic, Quebec disaster in 2013, where a train hauling 72-crude cars derailed and exploded, killing 47.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/22 Fighting pollution: say 'no' to straws
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/better/science/fighting-pollution-avoiding-plastic-straws-ncna856296
GIST	<p>Environmental groups have targeted disposable drinking straws — that are not recyclable or compostable — for extinction. The ultimate goal: Prevent non-degradable plastic straws from polluting our beaches, waterways and oceans.</p> <p>With so many other pollution problems, why straws?</p> <p>“Straws are an easy thing for everybody to get started on when approaching the enormous issue of plastic pollution,” said Diana Lofflin, founder of StrawFree.org, an environmental group based in southern California.</p> <p>Lofflin said she realized something had to be done after seeing the video of a Costa Rican team removing a straw from a turtle's nose.</p> <p>“We're seeing more plastic in our waterways and one of the most common items we find is straws,” she said. “In fact, it's one of the top 10 items that are picked up at beach cleanups. It's estimated that by the year 2050, there will be more plastic in the oceans than fish.”</p> <p>A GROWING MOVEMENT</p> <p>Lawmakers in Los Angeles, Davis, Malibu and San Luis Obispo, Calif.; Miami Beach and Fort Myers Beach, Fla.; and Seattle, have passed ordinances that limit or prohibit restaurants from using plastic straws.</p> <p>A ban on plastic straws for commercial use took effect in Fort Myers Beach in February. The town's environmental specialists, who patrol the beaches, report seeing fewer straws in the sand, and most of the ones they do find are biodegradable, Town Manager Roger Hernstadt told NBC News BETTER.</p> <p>The ordinance does create penalties: \$100 for a first offense, \$500 for three or more citations within a year, but Hernstadt hopes education and warnings will be all that's needed.</p> <p>“I think all the folks here understand that an attractive beach is important for them being able to draw customers, and this effort is part of making it desirable for people to come here,” he said.</p>

Malibu already bans the commercial use of plastic shopping bags and polystyrene food containers. A new city ordinance takes effect in June that adds plastic straws, stirrers and cutlery to the list.

“I think this was driven by the fact that these plastic items don't biodegrade,” said Malibu Mayor Rick Mullen. “They may break down in size, but the actual plastic stays in the ecosystem and people are getting conscious about that all over the world.”

Most restaurant owners support the ban, Mayor Mullen said, although some worry it will drive up their cost of doing business.

“Most people here in Malibu are not fanatical environmentalists by any stretch of the imagination,” but it’s part of the city’s mission to “preserve the natural beauty and take care of the environment as much as possible,” Mullen said. “We realize that the little things we do have a big effect on the natural world.”

The plastics industry acknowledges that waste management and marine debris are serious issues that require a real and lasting solution. But it would like to see the focus be on proper disposal and greater recycling, rather than banning certain products.

“People should have the option to use products that fit their lifestyle, but it’s everyone’s responsibility to make sure these items are disposed of in a way that maximizes their value and ensures that they don’t end up where they shouldn’t,” said Ashley Stoney, director of communications for the Plastics Industry Association, in an email.

This summer, Seattle will ban the commercial use of plastic straws, plastic stir sticks and plastic utensils. Starting July 1, any business that serves food or beverages will need to provide compostable alternatives.

“It's great to have things diverted from garbage into the compost stream, which is what we're pushing with this,” said Becca Fong with Seattle Public Utilities. “It’s also a really good way to raise consumer awareness, to get people to think about prevention: Do they really need that straw or all of those utensils if they’re getting food to go and taking it home to eat?”

Single use plastics are pervasive in our everyday life — it's everywhere and very little of it is recyclable. We have this unnecessary waste product becoming fish food.

Single use plastics are pervasive in our everyday life — it's everywhere and very little of it is recyclable. We have this unnecessary waste product becoming fish food.

Several hundred retailers made the switch in November as part of the “Strawless in Seattle” campaign, organized by Dune Ives, executive director of The Lonely Whale Foundation.

“Single use plastics are pervasive in our everyday life — it's everywhere and very little of it is recyclable. We have this unnecessary waste product becoming fish food,” Ives said. “We wanted to wake people up and make them feel really powerful, that something they did would make a difference.”

As part of its commitment to sustainable products, Seattle’s Safeco Field, home of the Mariners, does not use plastic straws, stir sticks or utensils. The ballpark won Major League Baseball’s the 2017 “Green Glove Award” for its recycling efforts. Only four percent of the waste generated there goes to the landfill, the rest is recycled or composted.

“It was a fairly invisible kind of a change for us and it didn't affect us operationally,” said Rebecca Hale, director of public information for the Mariners. “I don't think that a lot of people even realize that the straws and the knives and the forks and all of that are going into the compost stream.”

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HEADLINE 04/22 Nicaragua cancels social security change

SOURCE <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/dozens-killed-nicaragua-after-unrest-over-social-security->

	reform-n868216
GIST	<p>MANAGUA, Nicaragua — Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega repealed changes to the country's social security system Sunday night that triggered riots that led to the deaths of at least 26 people since Wednesday.</p> <p>The overhaul had sought to shore up Nicaragua's troubled social security system with a combination of reduced benefits and increased taxes. Human rights groups say at least 26 people have been killed in several days of clashes. Dozens of shops in Managua, the capital, have been looted.</p> <p>"The incidents of violence that have happened are regrettable," Ortega said in a televised message Sunday night, adding: "We cannot allow chaos, crime and looting. We cannot allow this."</p> <p>The Roman Catholic Conference of Bishops in Nicaragua condemned repression against protesters and urged the government to listen to them and drop the social security changes. "A unilateral decision always brings with it social instability. Rectifying decisions is a sign of humanity, listening is the path of reason, seeking peace at all cost is wisdom," the conference said in a statement.</p> <p>Heather Nauert, a spokeswoman for the U.S. State Department, said: "The United States government regrets the loss of life and injuries suffered in Nicaragua during protests by its citizens. We condemn the violence and the excessive force used by police and others against civilians who are exercising their constitutional right to freedom of expression and assembly."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/19 Behind Palantir's search for everything
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2018-palantir-peter-thiel/
GIST	<p>High above the Hudson River in downtown Jersey City, a former U.S. Secret Service agent named Peter Cavicchia III ran special ops for JPMorgan Chase & Co. His insider threat group—most large financial institutions have one—used computer algorithms to monitor the bank's employees, ostensibly to protect against perfidious traders and other miscreants.</p> <p>Aided by as many as 120 "forward-deployed engineers" from the data mining company Palantir Technologies Inc., which JPMorgan engaged in 2009, Cavicchia's group vacuumed up emails and browser histories, GPS locations from company-issued smartphones, printer and download activity, and transcripts of digitally recorded phone conversations. Palantir's software aggregated, searched, sorted, and analyzed these records, surfacing keywords and patterns of behavior that Cavicchia's team had flagged for potential abuse of corporate assets. Palantir's algorithm, for example, alerted the insider threat team when an employee started badging into work later than usual, a sign of potential disgruntlement. That would trigger further scrutiny and possibly physical surveillance after hours by bank security personnel.</p> <p>Over time, however, Cavicchia himself went rogue. Former JPMorgan colleagues describe the environment as Wall Street meets Apocalypse Now, with Cavicchia as Colonel Kurtz, ensconced upriver in his office suite eight floors above the rest of the bank's security team. People in the department were shocked that no one from the bank or Palantir set any real limits. They darkly joked that Cavicchia was listening to their calls, reading their emails, watching them come and go. Some planted fake information in their communications to see if Cavicchia would mention it at meetings, which he did.</p> <p>It all ended when the bank's senior executives learned that they, too, were being watched, and what began as a promising marriage of masters of big data and global finance descended into a spying scandal. The misadventure, which has never been reported, also marked an ominous turn for Palantir, one of the most richly valued startups in Silicon Valley. An intelligence platform designed for the global War on Terror was weaponized against ordinary Americans at home.</p> <p>Founded in 2004 by Peter Thiel and some fellow PayPal alumni, Palantir cut its teeth working for the Pentagon and the CIA in Afghanistan and Iraq. The company's engineers and products don't do any</p>

spying themselves; they're more like a spy's brain, collecting and analyzing information that's fed in from the hands, eyes, nose, and ears. The software combs through disparate data sources—financial documents, airline reservations, cellphone records, social media postings—and searches for connections that human analysts might miss. It then presents the linkages in colorful, easy-to-interpret graphics that look like spider webs. U.S. spies and special forces loved it immediately; they deployed Palantir to synthesize and sort the blizzard of battlefield intelligence. It helped planners avoid roadside bombs, track insurgents for assassination, even hunt down Osama bin Laden. The military success led to federal contracts on the civilian side. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services uses Palantir to detect Medicare fraud. The FBI uses it in criminal probes. The Department of Homeland Security deploys it to screen air travelers and keep tabs on immigrants.

Police and sheriff's departments in New York, New Orleans, Chicago, and Los Angeles have also used it, frequently ensnaring in the digital dragnet people who aren't suspected of committing any crime. People and objects pop up on the Palantir screen inside boxes connected to other boxes by radiating lines labeled with the relationship: "Colleague of," "Lives with," "Operator of [cell number]," "Owner of [vehicle]," "Sibling of," even "Lover of." If the authorities have a picture, the rest is easy. Tapping databases of driver's license and ID photos, law enforcement agencies can now identify more than half the population of U.S. adults.

JPMorgan was effectively Palantir's R&D lab and test bed for a foray into the financial sector, via a product called Metropolis. The two companies made an odd couple. Palantir's software engineers showed up at the bank on skateboards. Neckties and haircuts were too much to ask, but JPMorgan drew the line at T-shirts. The programmers had to agree to wear shirts with collars, tucked in when possible.

As Metropolis was installed and refined, JPMorgan made an equity investment in Palantir and inducted the company into its Hall of Innovation, while its executives raved about Palantir in the press. The software turned "data landfills into gold mines," Guy Chiarello, who was then JPMorgan's chief information officer, told Bloomberg Businessweek in 2011.

Cavicchia was in charge of forensic investigations at the bank. Through Palantir, he gained administrative access to a full range of corporate security databases that had previously required separate authorizations and a specific business justification to use. He had unprecedented access to everything, all at once, all the time, on one analytic platform. He was a one-man National Security Agency, surrounded by the Palantir engineers, each one costing the bank as much as \$3,000 a day.

Senior investigators stumbled onto the full extent of the spying by accident. In May 2013 the bank's leadership ordered an internal probe into who had leaked a document to the New York Times about a federal investigation of JPMorgan for possibly manipulating U.S. electricity markets. Evidence indicated the leaker could have been Frank Bisignano, who'd recently resigned as JPMorgan's co-chief operating officer to become CEO of First Data Corp., the big payments processor. Cavicchia had used Metropolis to gain access to emails about the leak investigation—some written by top executives—and the bank believed he shared the contents of those emails and other communications with Bisignano after Bisignano had left the bank. (Inside JPMorgan, Bisignano was considered Cavicchia's patron—a senior executive who protected and promoted him.)

JPMorgan officials debated whether to file a suspicious activity report with federal regulators about the internal security breach, as required by law whenever banks suspect regulatory violations. They decided not to—a controversial decision internally, according to multiple sources with the bank. Cavicchia negotiated a severance agreement and was forced to resign. He joined Bisignano at First Data, where he's now a senior vice president. Chiarello also went to First Data, as president. After their departures, JPMorgan drastically curtailed its Palantir use, in part because "it never lived up to its promised potential," says one JPMorgan executive who insisted on anonymity to discuss the decision.

The bank, First Data, and Bisignano, Chiarello, and Cavicchia didn't respond to separately emailed questions for this article. Palantir, in a statement responding to questions about how JPMorgan and others have used its software, declined to answer specific questions. "We are aware that powerful technology can

be abused and we spend a lot of time and energy making sure our products are used for the forces of good,” the statement said.

Much depends on how the company chooses to define good. In March a former computer engineer for Cambridge Analytica, the political consulting firm that worked for Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign, testified in the British Parliament that a Palantir employee had helped Cambridge Analytica use the personal data of up to 87 million Facebook users to develop psychographic profiles of individual voters. Palantir said it has a strict policy against working on political issues, including campaigns, and showed Bloomberg emails in which it turned down Cambridge’s request to work with Palantir on multiple occasions. The employee, Palantir said, worked with Cambridge Analytica on his own time. Still, there was no mistaking the implications of the incident: All human relations are a matter of record, ready to be revealed by a clever algorithm. Everyone is a spidergram now.

Thiel, who turned 50 in October, long reveled as the libertarian black sheep in left-leaning Silicon Valley. He contributed \$1.25 million to Trump’s presidential victory, spoke at the Republican convention, and has dined with Trump at the White House. But Thiel has told friends he’s had enough of the Bay Area’s “monocultural” liberalism. He’s ditching his longtime base in San Francisco and moving his personal investment firms this year to Los Angeles, where he plans to establish his next project, a conservative media empire.

As Thiel’s wealth has grown, he’s gotten more strident. In a 2009 essay for the Cato Institute, he railed against taxes, government, women, poor people, and society’s acquiescence to the inevitability of death. (Thiel doesn’t accept death as inexorable.) He wrote that he’d reached some radical conclusions: “Most importantly, I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible.” The 1920s was the last time one could feel “genuinely optimistic” about American democracy, he said; since then, “the vast increase in welfare beneficiaries and the extension of the franchise to women—two constituencies that are notoriously tough for libertarians—have rendered the notion of ‘capitalist democracy’ into an oxymoron.”

Thiel went into tech after missing a prized Supreme Court clerkship following his graduation from Stanford Law School. He co-founded PayPal and then parlayed his winnings from its 2002 sale to eBay Inc. into a career in venture investing. He made an early bet on Facebook Inc. (where he’s still on the board), which accounts for most of his \$3.3 billion fortune, as estimated by Bloomberg, and launched his career as a backer of big ideas—things like private space travel (through an investment in SpaceX), hotel alternatives (Airbnb), and floating island nations (the Seasteading Institute).

He started Palantir—named after the omniscient crystal balls in J.R.R. Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings trilogy—three years after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The CIA’s investment arm, In-Q-Tel, was a seed investor. For the role of chief executive officer, he chose an old law school friend and self-described neo-Marxist, Alex Karp. Thiel told Bloomberg in 2011 that civil libertarians ought to embrace Palantir, because data mining is less repressive than the “crazy abuses and draconian policies” proposed after Sept. 11. The best way to prevent another catastrophic attack without becoming a police state, he argued, was to give the government the best surveillance tools possible, while building in safeguards against their abuse.

Legend has it that Stephen Cohen, one of Thiel’s co-founders, programmed the initial prototype for Palantir’s software in two weeks. It took years, however, to coax customers away from the longtime leader in the intelligence analytics market, a software company called I2 Inc.

In one adventure missing from the glowing accounts of Palantir’s early rise, I2 accused Palantir of misappropriating its intellectual property through a Florida shell company registered to the family of a Palantir executive. A company claiming to be a private eye firm had been licensing I2 software and development tools and spiriting them to Palantir for more than four years. I2 said the cutout was registered to the family of Shyam Sankar, Palantir’s director of business development.

I2 sued Palantir in federal court, alleging fraud, conspiracy, and copyright infringement. In its legal response, Palantir argued it had the right to appropriate I2’s code for the greater good. “What’s at stake here is the ability of critical national security, defense and intelligence agencies to access their own data

and use it interoperably in whichever platform they choose in order to most effectively protect the citizenry,” Palantir said in its motion to dismiss I2’s suit.

The motion was denied. Palantir agreed to pay I2 about \$10 million to settle the suit. I2 was sold to IBM in 2011.

Sankar, Palantir employee No. 13 and now one of the company’s top executives, also showed up in another Palantir scandal: the company’s 2010 proposal for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to run a secret sabotage campaign against the group’s liberal opponents. Hacked emails released by the group Anonymous indicated that Palantir and two other defense contractors pitched outside lawyers for the organization on a plan to snoop on the families of progressive activists, create fake identities to infiltrate left-leaning groups, scrape social media with bots, and plant false information with liberal groups to subsequently discredit them.

After the emails emerged in the press, Palantir offered an explanation similar to the one it provided in March for its U.K.-based employee’s assistance to Cambridge Analytica: It was the work of a single rogue employee. The company never explained Sankar’s involvement. Karp issued a public apology and said he and Palantir were deeply committed to progressive causes. Palantir set up an advisory panel on privacy and civil liberties, headed by a former CIA attorney, and beefed up an engineering group it calls the Privacy and Civil Liberties Team. The company now has about 10 PCL engineers on call to help vet clients’ requests for access to data troves and pitch in with pertinent thoughts about law, morality, and machines.

During its 14 years in startup mode, Palantir has cultivated a mystique as a haven for brilliant engineers who want to solve big problems such as terrorism and human trafficking, unfettered by pedestrian concerns such as making money. Palantir executives boast of not employing a single salesperson, relying instead on word-of-mouth referrals.

The company’s early data mining dazzled venture investors, who valued it at \$20 billion in 2015. But Palantir has never reported a profit. It operates less like a conventional software company than like a consultancy, deploying roughly half its 2,000 engineers to client sites. That works at well-funded government spy agencies seeking specialized applications but has produced mixed results with corporate clients. Palantir’s high installation and maintenance costs repelled customers such as Hershey Co., which trumpeted a Palantir partnership in 2015 only to walk away two years later. Coca-Cola, Nasdaq, American Express, and Home Depot have also dumped Palantir.

Karp recognized the high-touch model was problematic early in the company’s push into the corporate market, but solutions have been elusive. “We didn’t want to be a services company. We wanted to do something that was cost-efficient,” he confessed at a European conference in 2010, in one of several unguarded comments captured in videos posted online. “Of course, what we didn’t recognize was that this would be much, much harder than we realized.”

Palantir’s newest product, Foundry, aims to finally break through the profitability barrier with more automation and less need for on-site engineers. Airbus SE, the big European plane maker, uses Foundry to crunch airline data about specific onboard components to track usage and maintenance and anticipate repair problems. Merck KGaA, the pharmaceutical giant, has a long-term Palantir contract to use Foundry in drug development and supply chain management.

Deeper adoption of Foundry in the commercial market is crucial to Palantir’s hopes of a big payday. Some investors are weary and have already written down their Palantir stakes. Morgan Stanley now values the company at \$6 billion. Fred Alger Management Inc., which has owned stock since at least 2006, revalued Palantir in December at about \$10 billion, according to Bloomberg Holdings. One frustrated investor, Marc Abramowitz, recently won a court order for Palantir to show him its books, as part of a lawsuit he filed alleging the company sabotaged his attempt to find a buyer for the Palantir shares he has owned for more than a decade.

As shown in the privacy breaches at Facebook and Cambridge Analytica—with Thiel and Palantir linked to both sides of the equation—the pressure to monetize data at tech companies is ceaseless. Facebook didn't grow from a website connecting college kids into a purveyor of user profiles and predilections worth \$478 billion by walling off personal data. Palantir says its Privacy and Civil Liberties Team watches out for inappropriate data demands, but it consists of just 10 people in a company of 2,000 engineers. No one said no to JPMorgan, or to whomever at Palantir volunteered to help Cambridge Analytica—or to another organization keenly interested in state-of-the-art data science, the Los Angeles Police Department.

Palantir began work with the LAPD in 2009. The impetus was federal funding. After several Sept. 11 postmortems called for more intelligence sharing at all levels of law enforcement, money started flowing to Palantir to help build data integration systems for so-called fusion centers, starting in L.A. There are now more than 1,300 trained Palantir users at more than a half-dozen law enforcement agencies in Southern California, including local police and sheriff's departments and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

The LAPD uses Palantir's Gotham product for Operation Laser, a program to identify and deter people likely to commit crimes. Information from rap sheets, parole reports, police interviews, and other sources is fed into the system to generate a list of people the department defines as chronic offenders, says Craig Uchida, whose consulting firm, Justice & Security Strategies Inc., designed the Laser system. The list is distributed to patrolmen, with orders to monitor and stop the pre-crime suspects as often as possible, using excuses such as jaywalking or fix-it tickets. At each contact, officers fill out a field interview card with names, addresses, vehicles, physical descriptions, any neighborhood intelligence the person offers, and the officer's own observations on the subject.

The cards are digitized in the Palantir system, adding to a constantly expanding surveillance database that's fully accessible without a warrant. Tomorrow's data points are automatically linked to today's, with the goal of generating investigative leads. Say a chronic offender is tagged as a passenger in a car that's pulled over for a broken taillight. Two years later, that same car is spotted by an automatic license plate reader near a crime scene 200 miles across the state. As soon as the plate hits the system, Palantir alerts the officer who made the original stop that a car once linked to the chronic offender was spotted near a crime scene.

The platform is supplemented with what sociologist Sarah Brayne calls the secondary surveillance network: the web of who is related to, friends with, or sleeping with whom. One woman in the system, for example, who wasn't suspected of committing any crime, was identified as having multiple boyfriends within the same network of associates, says Brayne, who spent two and a half years embedded with the LAPD while researching her dissertation on big-data policing at Princeton University and who's now an associate professor at the University of Texas at Austin. "Anybody who logs into the system can see all these intimate ties," she says. To widen the scope of possible connections, she adds, the LAPD has also explored purchasing private data, including social media, foreclosure, and toll road information, camera feeds from hospitals, parking lots, and universities, and delivery information from Papa John's International Inc. and Pizza Hut LLC.

The LAPD declined to comment for this story. Palantir sent Bloomberg a statement about its work with law enforcement: "Our [forward-deployed engineers] and [privacy and civil liberties] engineers work with the law enforcement customers (including LAPD) to ensure that the implementation of our software and integration of their source systems with the software is consistent with the Department's legal and policy obligations, as well as privacy and civil liberties considerations that may not currently be legislated but are on the horizon. We as a company determine the types of engagements and general applications of our software with respect to those overarching considerations. Police Agencies have internal responsibility for ensuring that their information systems are used in a manner consistent with their policies and procedures."

Operation Laser has made L.A. cops more surgical—and, according to community activists, unrelenting. Once targets are enmeshed in a spidergram, they're stuck.

Manuel Rios, 22, lives in the back of his grandmother's house at the top of a hill in East L.A., in the heart of the city's gang area. Tall with a fair complexion and light hair, he struggled in high school with depression and a learning disability and dropped out to work at a supermarket.

He grew up surrounded by friends who joined Eastside 18, the local affiliate of the 18th Street gang, one of the largest criminal syndicates in Southern California. Rios says he was never "jumped in"—initiated into 18. He spent years addicted to crystal meth and was once arrested for possession of a handgun and sentenced to probation. But except for a stint in county jail for a burglary arrest inside a city rec center, he's avoided further trouble and says he kicked his meth habit last year.

In 2016, Rios was sitting in a parked car with an Eastside 18 friend when a police car pulled up. His buddy ran, pursued by the cops, but Rios stayed put. "Why should I run? I'm not a gang member," he says over steak and eggs at the IHOP near his home. The police returned and handcuffed him. One of them took his picture with a cellphone. "Welcome to the gang database!" the officer said.

Since then he's been stopped more than a dozen times, he says, and told that if he doesn't like it he should move. He has nowhere to go. His girlfriend just had a baby girl, and he wants to be around for them. "They say you're in the system, you can't lie to us," he says. "I tell them, 'How can I be in the hood if I haven't got jumped in? Can't you guys tell people who bang and who don't?' They go by their facts, not the real facts."

The police, on autopilot with Palantir, are driving Rios toward his gang friends, not away from them, worries Mariella Saba, a neighbor and community organizer who helped him get off meth. When whole communities like East L.A. are algorithmically scraped for pre-crime suspects, data is destiny, says Saba. "These are systemic processes. When people are constantly harassed in a gang context, it pushes them to join. They internalize being told they're bad."

In Chicago, at least two immigrants have been detained for deportation by Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers based on erroneous information in gang databases, according to a pair of federal lawsuits. Chicago is a sanctuary city, so it isn't clear how ICE found out about the purported gang affiliations. But Palantir is a likely link. The company provided an "intelligence management solution" for the Cook County Sheriff's Office to integrate information from at least 14 different databases, including gang lists compiled by state and local police departments, according to county records. Palantir also has a \$41 million data mining contract with ICE to build the agency's "investigative case management" system.

One of the detained men, Wilmer Catalan-Ramirez, a 31-year-old body shop mechanic, was seriously injured when six ICE agents burst into his family's home last March without a warrant. He'd been listed in the local gang database twice—in rival gangs. Catalan-Ramirez spent the next nine months in federal detention, until the city of Chicago admitted both listings were wrong and agreed to petition the feds to let him stay in the U.S. ICE released him in January, pending a new visa application. "These cases are perfect examples of how databases filled with unverified information that is often false can destroy people's lives," says his attorney, Vanessa del Valle of Northwestern University's MacArthur Justice Center.

For all of Palantir's professed concern for individuals' privacy, the single most important safeguard against abuse is the one it's trying desperately to reduce through automation: human judgment.

As Palantir tries to court corporate customers as a more conventional software company, fewer forward-deployed engineers will mean fewer human decisions. Sensitive questions, such as how deeply to pry into people's lives, will be answered increasingly by artificial intelligence and machine-learning algorithms. The small team of Privacy and Civil Liberties engineers could find themselves even less influential, as the urge for omnipotence among clients overwhelms any self-imposed restraints.

Computers don't ask moral questions; people do, says John Grant, one of Palantir's top PCL engineers and a forceful advocate for mandatory ethics education for engineers. "At a company like ours with millions of lines of code, every tiny decision could have huge implications," Grant told a privacy conference in Berkeley last year.

	JPMorgan's experience remains instructive. "The world changed when it became clear everyone could be targeted using Palantir," says a former JPMorgan cyber expert who worked with Cavicchia at one point on the insider threat team. "Nefarious ideas became trivial to implement; everyone's a suspect, so we monitored everything. It was a pretty terrible feeling."
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HEADLINE	04/22 Saudis claim intercept of Yemen missile
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/saudi-conflict-yemen-missile/2018/04/22/id/855938/
GIST	<p>Saudi air defences on Sunday intercepted a ballistic missile fired by Yemeni rebels at the kingdom's southern border city of Najran, which set a farm ablaze, state media said.</p> <p>"Saudi forces were able to intercept (the missile)," the Saudi Press Agency said, citing the Saudi-led coalition fighting Iran-backed Huthi rebels.</p> <p>"But the shrapnel scattered over residential areas and caused a fire at a farm belonging to a citizen, without causing any injuries."</p> <p>The missile was launched from Saada, the Huthi stronghold in northern Yemen, the coalition was cited as saying.</p> <p>The coalition said another missile crashed in a Saudi desert on Sunday, without specifying a location, adding it caused no damage.</p> <p>Sunday's strikes are the latest in a series of rebel bombardments on Saudi territory.</p> <p>Saudi forces said they intercepted a rebel ballistic missile targeting kingdom's southern coastal city of Jizan on Friday, the second such strike in the area in over a week.</p> <p>Earlier this month, Saudi forces said they intercepted rebel ballistic missiles fired at Riyadh and the south of the kingdom, where two drones were also shot down.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/22 Denuclearization successes around world
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/denuclearization-successes-world-54653956?
GIST	<p>Will North Korea give up the bomb?</p> <p>The answer may start becoming clear when South Korean President Moon Jae-in meets North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Friday.</p> <p>While North Korea declared this past weekend it would stop nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile tests and shut down its nuclear test site, it did not indicate it will give up its nuclear arsenal or halt its production of missiles. Moon and later President Donald Trump are still likely to find it very difficult to persuade Kim to dismantle his entire arsenal, which includes purported thermonuclear weapons and developmental ICBMs.</p> <p>But other countries that developed or tried to develop nuclear weapons have agreed to abandon them in exchange for sanctions relief and compensation. None of these cases are directly applicable to North Korea, which advanced further and with greater zeal than any of the others.</p> <p>A look at the past cases as Washington and its allies map out a denuclearization strategy for Pyongyang and the challenges North Korea poses:</p>

LIBYA

Shortly before he became Trump's national security adviser, John Bolton told Radio Free Asia that nuclear negotiations with North Korea should be similar to past discussions with Libya, which dismantled its rudimentary nuclear program in the 2000s.

Western nations lifted punitive measures and removed Libya's name from the U.S. state sponsors of terrorism after former Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi fulfilled his promise to turn over his nuclear materials, weapon components and bomb designs obtained from the black market.

"We should insist that if this meeting is going to take place, it will be similar to discussions we had with Libya 13 or 14 years ago — how to pack up their nuclear weapons program and take it to Oak Ridge, Tennessee, which is where the Libyan nuclear program (is)," Bolton said. "If it's anything other than a conversation about how to do that, then I think it shows it's just camouflage for North Korea to continue working toward its long-sought objective of deliverable nuclear weapons."

But some analysts say bringing up Libya would risk derailing any progress in negotiations with the North. Kim Jong Un took power weeks after Gadhafi's gruesome death at the hands of rebel forces amid a popular uprising in October 2011. The North has frequently used Gadhafi's death to justify its own nuclear development in the face of perceived U.S. threats.

"The Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq and the Gadhafi regime in Libya could not escape the fate of destruction after being deprived of their foundations for nuclear development and giving up nuclear programs of their own accord, yielding to the pressure of the U.S. and the West keen on their regime changes," the North's Korean Central News Agency said after the country's fourth nuclear test in January 2016.

IRAN

Some experts see Iran's case as the best available scenario for denuclearizing North Korea. Under a 2015 deal struck with six foreign powers — the United States, Britain, Russia, France, Germany and China — Iran agreed to curb its nuclear program, long suspected of being aimed at developing weapons, in return for billions of dollars in sanctions relief.

Accepting a 10-year restriction on uranium enrichment, Iran shut down thousands of centrifuges and exported almost its entire stockpile of bomb-making material. It disabled a heavy water plant seen as potentially capable of producing plutonium usable in weapons. The country also approved a stringent monitoring regime that allows International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors to access any site suspected of nuclear weapons-related activities, including military facilities.

Aside from economic benefits, the deal allowed Teheran to save face by granting it the right to continue its atomic program for peaceful purposes, which some see as a potential selling point for Pyongyang.

Skeptics say North Korea's weapons program is too advanced to realistically expect a similar cut to near zero. While it was obvious that oil-rich Iran would gain significantly from the removal of sanctions alone, Kim, who guides a broken economy that lacks real industry, may demand bigger rewards for restraining his nuclear program.

UKRAINE AND OTHERS

	<p>Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus inherited thousands of nuclear weapons after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, but were persuaded by the United States to transfer the devices to Russia in return for economic support and security guarantees.</p> <p>Analysts say the countries didn't have clear security reasons to keep the weapons and that memories of the Chernobyl disaster also influenced Ukraine's decision to abandon the nukes.</p> <p>South Africa, which has large uranium reserves, had built about a half-dozen nuclear warheads but voluntarily gave them up and dismantled its weapons program after the end of apartheid starting in 1991.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/23 Yemen officials: airstrike hits wedding; 15 killed
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/yemen-officials-saudi-led-airstrike-hit-wedding-killing-54656927?
GIST	<p>Yemeni health officials say an airstrike by the Saudi-led coalition in the country's north hit a wedding party, killing at least 15 people the previous day.</p> <p>Khaled al-Nadhri, the top health official in the northern province of Hajja, told The Associated Press on Monday that most of the dead were women and children who were gathered in one of the tents set up for the wedding party in the district of Bani Qayis.</p> <p>He says the bride was also among the dead.</p> <p>Hospital chief Mohammed al-Sawmali says the groom and 45 of the wounded were brought to the local al-Jomhuri hospital.</p> <p>The Saudi-led coalition has been waging a war on Yemen's Shiite rebels known as Houthis, who control much of the north, to restore the internationally recognized government to power.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/23 SKorea halts propaganda broadcasts
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/skorea-halts-propaganda-broadcasts-summit-north-54653856?cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>South Korea halted anti-Pyongyang propaganda broadcasts across the rivals' tense border on Monday days before their leaders are to sit down for talks expected to focus on the North's nuclear program, Seoul officials said.</p> <p>Seoul had blasted propaganda messages and K-pop songs from border loudspeakers since the North's fourth nuclear test in early 2016. Pyongyang quickly matched Seoul's campaign with its own border broadcasts and launches of balloons carrying anti-South leaflets across the border.</p> <p>South Korea, however, turned off its broadcasts to try to ease military tensions and establish an environment for peaceful talks, Seoul's Defense Ministry said in a statement.</p> <p>It said Seoul hopes its action would lead to both sides stopping mutual slander and propaganda activities. Yonhap news agency reported unspecified North Korean broadcasts were sporadically heard in the South on Monday morning. South Korean defense officials said they couldn't immediately confirm the status of the North's broadcasts.</p> <p>The move came amid a recent thaw of animosities, with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un trying to reach out to Seoul and Washington in recent months after conducting his country's sixth and most powerful nuclear test and three long-range missile test-launches last year.</p>

	Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in are to meet at a border village on Friday in the rivals' third- ever summit talks. Kim is to hold separate summit talks with President Donald Trump in May or early June in what would be the first North Korea-U.S. summit talks.
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HEADLINE	04/20 Seattle: no electric scooters yet
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/local/transportation/article/Report-No-electric-scooters-coming-to-Seattle-12852661.php
GIST	<p>Seattle isn't quite ready for shareable electric scooters, at least that's the official line from the city.</p> <p>While a saga seems to be ongoing in San Francisco, the city of Seattle has told the various companies launching shareable electric scooters that they can't hit the mean streets of the Emerald City just yet — they'll need to come up with a permit plan first, according to a Seattle Times report.</p> <p>Seattle's Department of Transportation is already busy trying to come up with a permanent program for the dock-less bike shares scattered around the city, and the department plans to get that in place before it starts considering a permit program for electric scooters, SDOT spokeswoman Karen Westing told the Times.</p> <p>LimeBike and Spin, which both operate bike-shares in Seattle, and a third company called Bird, recently launched the dock-less scooters in San Francisco. They started running the scooters in the city before any permit program was established, triggering hefty backlash from city officials (police have been confiscating them and ordering riders off city sidewalks in what's becoming a pitched battle there).</p> <p>The biggest issues in San Francisco are that the two-wheelers are being operated on the sidewalks and without permission from the city. Apparently, Seattle is aiming to avoid a similar scenario.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/21 Private airport terminal in Everett?
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/north-sound-news/everett-getting-rare-private-us-airport-terminal/736071539
GIST	<p>EVERETT, Wash. - It's not uncommon to see brand new commercial jets flying in and out of Paine Field, just north of Seattle, defying rain and low visibility that define the region. That's because the airport with two runways has for decades served as home to Boeing assembly lines, rolling out models such as the 777 for test flights over the Pacific Ocean.</p> <p>Now an entrepreneur is getting a chance to build the airport's first passenger terminal, betting travelers in Seattle's rapidly-expanding suburbs will use it for short-haul trips instead of fighting traffic and long lines at SeaTac International, one of the country's busiest hubs.</p> <p>Brett Smith's company is investing about \$40 million to build the terminal. In the process, he wants to increase U.S. acceptance of a global trend: Putting commercial airport terminals in the hands of private companies instead of the government.</p> <p>Smith is the founder and chief executive officer of Propeller Investments LLC., which secured a 50-year agreement with Snohomish County three years ago through a local subsidiary to build and operate the terminal in Everett, Washington. Operations are due to start in the fall, with announcements already made from Alaska Airlines, Southwest Airlines and United Airlines for up to 24 flights per day.</p> <p>The deal stands out for U.S. airports because it's structured as a public-private partnership, a model that divides the responsibilities of owning and operating public assets between governments and the private sector. It's also notable because Propeller has no experience in building or operating airport terminals.</p>

The project contrasts with about 500 commercial airports across the U.S., where local governments own and operate most of the facilities. Those airports have relied on decades of federal funding and passenger fees to help finance infrastructure improvements. But traditional funding sources have remained flat since the turn of the century, failing to keep up with increased air travel demand.

Airport privatization proponents point to efficiencies and variety of passenger amenities like stores and restaurants found in major European hubs such as London's Heathrow and Frankfurt Airport, both of which are run by companies and rated among the 10 best airports in 2018 by Skytrax, an independent agency that ranks airports and airlines based on traveler reviews. No U.S. airports made the list this year.

"Public-private partnerships in the airport realm were almost unheard of 18 months ago. Now barely a day goes by where I don't get a call asking about them," said Peter Kirsch, a Denver-based partner at Kaplan Kirsch Rockwell, the law firm that represented Snohomish County during its negotiations with Propeller. The firm also represented Propeller during its talks with the airlines. "It's the future of airport development."

Only a handful of U.S. airports have adopted any form of privatization. Southwest Airlines financed and built a five-gate terminal at Houston's Hobby Airport that opened in 2015. Denver signed an agreement last year to allow a group of companies led by Madrid-based Ferrovial, the company that built and operates two terminals at Heathrow, to renovate Jeppesen Terminal at Denver International Airport and operate concessions.

Almost half of airports in the European Union are either "fully" or "partially" private, according to a study by Airports Council International, an advocacy group made up of airport operators. It estimates U.S. airports will need to implement \$100 billion of infrastructure works by 2021 to accommodate passenger and cargo volume growth.

"There's an old adage that says 'necessity is the mother of invention,'" said Patti Clark, who used to manage Valdosta Regional Airport in Valdosta, Georgia, and now teaches airport sustainability and environmental management at Embry Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Fla. "What we have is an aging infrastructure of airports in the U.S. Partnerships with the private sector help improve facilities and competitiveness."

But those projects carry the risks of being dependent on the airlines, which are already grappling with thin profit margins. Airlines reducing or cancelling their operations in a particular terminal can leave "gaping holes" in operator revenues, she said.

Paine Field handles about 300 flights per day. In 2015, the Snohomish County Council voted to lease 10.5 acres (4.2 hectares), or less than 1 percent of the airport's total area, to Propeller for 30 years and give the company two additional 10-year extension options.

It marks the first test for Smith, who tried to secure deals to establish commercial operations in Georgia's Gwinnett and Paulding Counties. He was unsuccessful due to opposition from the communities and Delta Airlines, which dominates traffic at nearby Hartsfield-Jackson Airport in Atlanta.

"To me this is an honor, so it has to go well," said Smith, who relocated to Seattle from New York to oversee construction. "We have to be able to show that with privatization you get a really good product."

Propeller sold \$50 million of bonds in February to finance the project, paying investors about double the interest rate they would earn on similar U.S. Treasuries, according to data compiled by The Associated Press. The company doesn't have a credit rating.

"We're trying to really grow the job base here in Snohomish County, and having that direct access for businesses, I think it'll be a boon," County Executive Dave Somers said.

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HEADLINE	04/21 Olympia pro-gun rally draws hundreds
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/pro-gun-rally-draws-hundreds-to-olympia/281-544156233
GIST	<p>Around 1,000 supporters attended a pro-gun rally at the Capitol in Olympia Saturday afternoon.</p> <p>The "March for Our Rights" rally began at noon and ran through 2:30 p.m.</p> <p>"I just thought it's good that citizens show up and say, yeah, I think its important the Second Amendment says the government shall not infringe on the right of the people to keep and bear arms and I'm one of the people," said one participant. " And I think that's a great right and it protects my ability to protect my family and I think that's a good thing."</p> <p>The rally comes one month after the nationwide "March for Our Lives" rallies demanding tighter gun control.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/21 Iran threatens to 'annihilate' Israel
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/04/21/Iranian-general-threatens-to-annihilate-Israel/807152433946/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts tn int&utm_medium=6
GIST	<p>April 21 (UPI) -- Iran's military head said Saturday that forces are preparing to "annihilate" Israel's Zionist regime within 25 years after recent threats between the foes.</p> <p>The threat from Commander of Iran's Army Maj. Gen. Abdolrahim Mousavi comes while tension has escalated with an Israeli strike on an Iranian base in Syria earlier this month.</p> <p>At a ceremony in Tehran on Saturday, Mousavi spoke about unifying the Army and Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps to annihilate the Zionist regime in the 25-year time frame.</p> <p>"When the arrogant powers create a sanctuary for the Zionist regime to continue survival, we shouldn't allow one day to be added to the ominous and illegitimate life of this regime," Mousavi said in a Fars News Agency report. "The Army will move hand in hand with the IRGC so that the arrogant system will collapse and the Zionist regime will be annihilated," he said.</p> <p>A day earlier, Iranian Brigadier General Hossein Salami also threatened that the Zionist regime in Israel could be totally destroyed if recent heightened tensions escalate to war.</p> <p>"If any war happens, it will definitely be followed by your annihilation," Salami warned Israel on Friday.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/21 Gov. proclaims 'we got best weed'
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/weve-got-the-best-weed-says-washingtons-gov-inslee/281-544132740
GIST	<p>Washington's governor has pride in the state's legal marijuana.</p> <p>"I can honestly say, we've got the best weed in the United States of America," Gov. Jay Inslee said Friday night. "It's a growing industry, and well-regulated."</p> <p>Inslee appeared on Bill Maher's HBO show, Real Time, reports Marijuana Moment.</p> <p>But it sounds like Washington may have a bit of competition. Democratic Congressman Ted Lieu of California has been tweeting how "amazing" his state's cannabis is.</p>

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HEADLINE	04/20 California pot market off to slow start
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/business/business-news/growing-weed-california-marijuana-market-slow-start-n867871
GIST	<p>So far, it's been quite a year for weed: California's foray into legal recreational use began in January, former House speaker John Boehner said his views on the drug had "evolved" and joined the board of cannabis company Acreage Holdings, and New York Senator Chuck Schumer announced on Friday (yes, on 4/20, for those keeping track of these details) a plan to try and decriminalize marijuana at the federal level.</p> <p>But like the crop itself, cultivating a mature market takes an investment of time and resources. California's legalization of recreational marijuana hasn't been without growing pains, with industry experts saying a clunky rollout, local resistance and burdensome tax and regulatory requirements are keeping the industry from hitting its stride.</p> <p>"The launch of the California market has been a total mess, and not entirely unexpected," said Troy Dayton, CEO and co-founder of cannabis market research firm Arcview Group. "This is the most complex, onerous and far-reaching regulatory scheme that's ever been tried. Every time you add a level of complexity, you add a level of uncertainty," he said.</p> <p>According to research firm BDS Analytics, 2018 sales at dispensaries licensed to sell for recreational use in California were \$339 million through February, a figure below the state's expectations. Greg Shoenfeld, vice president of operations at BDS Analytics, said initial projections could have been overly optimistic. "Whenever there's a proposal to move to a legalized market, the best case scenarios are laid out in terms of revenue expectation, but typically, implementation moves a bit slower," he said.</p> <p>Experts suggest that much of the industry is still operating underground. "We estimate that 85 to 90 percent of the industry that existed last year is not licensed," said Chris Beals, president and general counsel for Weedmaps.</p> <p>Although some faulted the state for its pace of issuing licenses, Beals said the bottleneck was happening at the municipal level. "The biggest problem has been that there's been a complete failure of local governments to issue licenses," he said, adding that 85 percent of cities and counties in the state have bans on recreational marijuana retailers.</p> <p>The thinking goes that, without legal storefronts from which to purchase their cannabis products, people will continue to rely on the black market.</p> <p>"If you take the location of adult-use licenses and do mapping over it, you get this incredibly small part of the state that has geographic coverage," Beals said. "In a nutshell, I think that's the problem in California."</p> <p>Even if they live near a dispensary licensed to sell to recreational users, regular marijuana users who are brand-loyal to a specific grower or strain might not find their product of choice in stock.</p> <p>Taxes are also a hurdle in that they raise prices all along the supply chain, making it tough for retailers to turn a profit and end up giving customers an incentive to seek out cheaper, illegal alternatives.</p> <p>"What the official estimates failed to address is local governments are layering taxes onto each level of the local supply chains," Beals said. On top of state sales tax, excise tax and other levies, some dispensaries could be facing effective tax rates of nearly 80 percent, he said. "I think it's really bordering on the crisis level."</p> <p>Chris Walsh, vice president of editorial and strategic development at Marijuana Business Daily, also</p>

pointed to Colorado as an example both of early stumbles and an ultimately successful transition. "It took the recreational market a while to mature and it took people a while to get used to the concept of it," he said. "It took a while to take root and for people to understand how everything was going to work."

Rosalie Liccardo Pacula, director of the BING Center for Health Economics and co-director of the Drug Policy Research Center at RAND Corporation, argued that four months into the opening of the recreational market was too soon to draw conclusions about its long-term viability.

"This is very much a dynamic situation, and it is just far too early to make decisive comments on performance," she said. "Much of the relevant data on which to evaluate this is not even in."

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HEADLINE 04/21 Iran: open to prisoner swap, if--

SOURCE <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/iran-open-to-prisoner-swap-if-us-has-change-of-attitude-says-foreign-minister/>

GIST In an interview with "Face the Nation" moderator Margaret Brennan, Iran's top diplomat denounced American attempts to secure the release of U.S. citizens being held in Tehran. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iranian Foreign Minister, said American "demands" are hampering "genuine dialogue."

"The United States needs to approach this from a position of dealing with another sovereign government," said Zarif, "And if that approach led to change, then the United States would see a difference."

Five Americans are known to have been detained by Iranian authorities, including the controversial arrest of Baquer Namazi, who is suspected to be in failing health. Some argue the regime's detention of American-Iranian dual nationals is little more than an attempt by hard-liners to create leverage.

Asked about the conditions of the imprisoned Americans, Zarif insisted that their health requirements were being "taken care of."

"Our judiciary is an independent organ," Zarif told Brennan, "just what you would say about your courts, and we cannot have an impact on the decisions of our judiciary. But we have been trying to use our influence from a humanitarian perspective. First of all, in order to make sure their health requirements are taken care of as well as to see whether a humanitarian agreement can be reached."

Some family members of the detained have pleaded for the Trump administration to engage the Iranian government directly in securing their release. In 2016, Iran released four Americans in a swap for seven Iranians held in the United States. At the time, many Republicans condemned the exchange negotiated by the Obama administration.

After a fiery speech by President Trump at the United Nations, where he condemned Iran as a "murderous regime" that needed to free Americans "unjustly detained," the Iranians declined an offered conversation between the president and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

"You do not engage in negotiations by exercising disrespect for a country, for its people, for its government, by openly making claims including this illusion about regime change. Then you do not leave much room for a genuine dialogue," said Zarif.

Pressed by Brennan on whether the Iranians were open to an exchange, like the Obama-era swap, Zarif offered an opening.

"It is a possibility, certainly from a humanitarian perspective, but it requires a change in attitude," said Zarif.

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HEADLINE	04/22 Israel raid nabs 15 Hamas operatives
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/israel-15-hamas-operatives-arrested-west-bank-raid-54642130?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The Israeli military says it has arrested 15 Hamas operatives in an overnight West Bank raid.</p> <p>The military says Sunday those captured are suspected of collaborating with a well-known Hamas operative from Gaza to spread its activities to the West Bank, which is governed by the rival Fatah movement. The raid comes after Hamas accused Israel of assassinating one of its men in Malaysia and amid a wave of mass protests along the Gaza border that have turned violent.</p> <p>In three weeks of protests, Israeli troops have killed 32 Palestinians and wounded some 1,600. Hamas says the protests are against a decade-long blockade of the isolated strip. Israel says it is defending its sovereign border and only targeting instigators. It says Hamas uses the protests as cover for attacks.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	04/23 'Orangeworm' cyberspies target healthcare
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/orangeworm-cyberspies-target-healthcare-sector-us-europe-asia
GIST	<p>A threat group tracked by Symantec as Orangeworm has been targeting healthcare organizations in the United States, Europe and Asia, but the attacks do not appear to be the work of a nation state.</p> <p>A report published on Monday by the security firm revealed that Orangeworm was first identified in January 2015. The group has focused on organizations in the healthcare sector, which accounts for nearly 40% of targets, but it has also launched attacks on other industries that are somehow related to healthcare, including IT (15%), manufacturing (15%), logistics (8%), and agriculture (8%).</p> <p>Specifically, victims in other sectors include medical device manufacturers, IT firms that provide services to clinics, and logistics companies that deliver healthcare products. Researchers say companies outside the healthcare industry have been targeted in supply chain attacks with the ultimate goal of gaining access to the systems of the intended entity.</p> <p>The highest percentage of victims has been spotted in the United States (17%), but Orangeworm has also targeted organizations in Saudi Arabia, India, Philippines, Hungary, United Kingdom, Turkey, Germany, Poland, Hong Kong, Sweden, Canada, France, and several other countries around the world.</p> <p>“While Orangeworm has impacted only a small set of victims in 2016 and 2017 according to Symantec telemetry, we have seen infections in multiple countries due to the nature of the victims operating large international corporations,” Symantec said in its report.</p> <p>Once they gain access to the targeted organization’s systems, the hackers deploy a custom backdoor tracked by Symantec as Trojan.Kwampirs. The malware allows attackers to remotely access the compromised machine.</p> <p>The malware first collects information about the computer to determine if it may be of interest or if it’s a device belonging to a researcher. If the victim is of interest, the backdoor is “aggressively” copied to other systems with open network shares.</p> <p>Symantec points out that Kwampirs has been found on machines hosting software used for high-tech imaging devices, such as MRI and X-Ray machines. The malware was also spotted on devices used to assist patients in completing consent forms. However, experts say the exact motives of Orangeworm are unclear.</p>

The list of commands sent by the attackers to the malware include instructions for collecting system and network data, and obtaining information on running processes, system services, network shares, account policies, and local and domain admin accounts.

Symantec says it does not have any information that could help determine the threat group's origins, but the company believes Orangeworm is likely conducting corporate espionage and there is no evidence that the operation is backed by a nation state.

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HEADLINE	04/23 Chinese hackers targeted Japan
SOURCE	http://fortune.com/2018/04/23/china-japan-north-korea-cyberspies-secrets/
GIST	<p>Chinese hackers have targeted Japanese defense companies, possibly to get information on Tokyo's policy toward resolving the North Korean nuclear impasse, according to cybersecurity firm FireEye Inc.</p> <p>The attacks are suspected to come from a group known as APT10, a China-based espionage group that FireEye has been tracking since 2009. One of the lures used in a "spear-phishing" email attack was a defense lecture given by former head of UNESCO, Koichiro Matsuura. Two attacks took place between September and October 2017.</p> <p>"Lure content related to the defense industry suggests that a possible motive behind the intrusion attempt is gaining insider information on policy prescription to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue," said Bryce Boland, chief technology officer for the Asia-Pacific region at FireEye.</p> <p>China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs didn't respond to a faxed request for comment Friday. After a similar FireEye report involving U.S. targets last month, ministry spokesman Lu Kang said that China opposed all kinds of cyber attacks.</p> <p>The suspected attacks coincided with a dramatic escalation in tensions over North Korea's nuclear weapons program as Kim Jong Un tested a hydrogen bomb and U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to "totally destroy" the country. The U.S. and Japan have been coordinating their diplomatic and military pressure campaigns against the country, and neighboring China is anxious to avoid a clash on its border.</p> <p>Tensions have eased since the two Koreas started talking ahead of the Winter Olympics and Winter Olympics and Trump granted an unprecedented meeting with the North Korean leader. Earlier this month, the foreign ministers of China and Japan agreed to work closely to push the regime to surrender its nuclear weapons program, although Japanese officials continue to express skepticism about Kim's willingness to make a deal.</p> <p>The latest cyberattacks mirror other recent hacks with geopolitical overtones investigated by FireEye. Among the most recent, a wave of incursions on mainly U.S. engineering and defense companies linked to the South China Sea, where China's claims for more than 80% of the water clash with five other nations. In 2016, the website of Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party was attacked months after the party won elections, securing its leader Tsai Ing-wen the presidency.</p> <p>"We believe APT10 is primarily tasked with collecting critical information in response to shifts in regional geopolitics and frequently targets organizations with long research and development cycles," Boland said, citing firms in construction and engineering, aerospace and military, telecommunications and high-tech industries.</p> <p>In an unusual development, the hackers inserted lines of text in the malware associated with the Japanese attacks mocking the security researchers. Such gems included, "I'm here waiting for u," "POWERED BY APT632185,NORTH KOREA," and "According to the analysis report, Some Japanese analysts have always been portrayed as a bit of joke."</p>

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HEADLINE	04/23 Most dangerous attack techniques
SOURCE	https://www.helpnetsecurity.com/2018/04/23/dangerous-attack-techniques/
GIST	<p>Experts from SANS presented the five most dangerous new cyber attack techniques in their annual RSA Conference 2018 keynote session in San Francisco, and shared their views on how they work, how they can be stopped or at least slowed, and how businesses and consumers can prepare.</p> <p>The five threats outlined are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Repositories and cloud storage data leakage 2. Big Data analytics, de-anonymization, and correlation 3. Attackers monetize compromised systems using crypto coin miners 4. Recognition of hardware flaws 5. More malware and attacks disrupting ICS and utilities instead of seeking profit. <p>Repositories and cloud storage data leakage Ed Skoudis, lead for the SANS Penetration Testing Curriculum, talked about the data leakage threats facing us from the increased use of repositories and cloud storage: “Software today is built in a very different way than it was 10 or even 5 years ago, with vast online code repositories for collaboration and cloud data storage hosting mission-critical applications. However, attackers are increasingly targeting these kinds of repositories and cloud storage infrastructures, looking for passwords, crypto keys, access tokens, and terabytes of sensitive data.”</p> <p>He continued: “Defenders need to focus on data inventories, appointing a data curator for their organization and educating system architects and developers about how to secure data assets in the cloud. Additionally, the big cloud companies have each launched an AI service to help classify and defend data in their infrastructures. And finally, a variety of free tools are available that can help prevent and detect leakage of secrets through code repositories.”</p> <p>Big Data analytics, de-anonymization, and correlation Skoudis went on to talk about the threat of Big Data Analytics and how attackers are using data from several sources to de-anonymise users: “In the past, we battled attackers who were trying to get access to our machines to steal data for criminal use. Now the battle is shifting from hacking machines to hacking data — gathering data from disparate sources and fusing it together to de-anonymise users, find business weaknesses and opportunities, or otherwise undermine an organisation’s mission. We still need to prevent attackers from gaining shell on targets to steal data. However, defenders also need to start analysing risks associated with how their seemingly innocuous data can be combined with data from other sources to introduce business risk, all while carefully considering the privacy implications of their data and its potential to tarnish a brand or invite regulatory scrutiny.”</p> <p>Attackers monetize compromised systems using crypto coin miners Johannes Ullrich, is Dean of Research, SANS Institute and Director of SANS Internet Storm Center. He has been looking at the increasing use of crypto coin miners by cyber criminals: “Last year, we talked about how ransomware was used to sell data back to its owner and crypto-currencies were the tool of choice to pay the ransom. More recently, we have found that attackers are no longer bothering with data. Due to the flood of stolen data offered for sale, the value of most commonly stolen data like credit card numbers of PII has dropped significantly. Attackers are instead installing crypto coin miners. These attacks are more stealthy and less likely to be discovered and attackers can earn tens of thousands of dollars a month from crypto coin miners. Defenders therefore need to learn to detect these coin miners and to identify the vulnerabilities that have been exploited in order to install them.”</p> <p>Recognition of hardware flaws Ullrich then went on to say that software developers often assume that hardware is flawless and that this is a dangerous assumption. He explains why and what needs to be done:</p>

“Hardware is no less complex than software and mistakes have been made in developing hardware just as they are made by software developers. Patching hardware is a lot more difficult and often not possible without replacing entire systems or suffering significant performance penalties. Developers therefore need to learn to create software without relying on hardware to mitigate any security issues. Similar to the way in which software uses encryption on untrusted networks, software needs to authenticate and encrypt data within the system. Some emerging homomorphic encryption algorithms may allow developers to operate on encrypted data without having to decrypt it first.”

More malware and attacks disrupting ICS and utilities instead of seeking profit

Finally, Head of R&D, SANS Institute, James Lyne, discussed the growing trend in malware and attacks that aren't profit centred as we have largely seen in the past, but instead are focused on disrupting Industrial Control Systems (ICS) and utilities:

“Day to day the grand majority of malicious code has undeniably been focused on fraud and profit. Yet, with the relentless deployment of technology in our societies, the opportunity for political or even military influence only grows. And rare publicly visible attacks like Triton/TriSYS show the capability and intent of those who seek to compromise some of the highest risk components of industrial environments, i.e. the safety systems which have historically prevented critical security and safety meltdowns.”

He continued: “ICS systems are relatively immature and easy to exploit in comparison to the mainstream computing world. Many ICS systems lack the mitigations of modern operating systems and applications. The reliance on obscurity or isolation (both increasingly untrue) do not position them well to withstand a heightened focus on them, and we need to address this as an industry. More worrying is that attackers have demonstrated they have the inclination and resources to diversify their attacks, targeting the sensors that are used to provide data to the industrial controllers themselves. The next few years are likely to see some painful lessons being learned as this attack domain grows, since the mitigations are inconsistent and quite embryonic.”

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HEADLINE	04/22 Anonymous Asia Twitter accounts surge
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/surge-anonymous-asia-twitter-accounts-sparks-bot-fears
GIST	<p>Hong Kong - It has been jokingly referred to as "Botmageddon". But a surge in new, anonymous Twitter accounts across swathes of Southeast and East Asia has deepened fears the region is in the throes of US-style mass social media manipulation.</p> <p>Maya Gilliss-Chapman, a Cambodian tech entrepreneur currently working in Silicon Valley, noticed something odd was happening in early April.</p> <p>Her Twitter account @MayaGC was being swamped by a daily deluge of follows from new users.</p> <p>"I acquired well over 1,000 new followers since the beginning of March. So, that's approximately a 227 percent increase in just a month," she told AFP.</p> <p>While many might delight in such a popularity spike, Gilliss-Chapman, who has previously worked for tech companies to root out spam, was immediately suspicious.</p> <p>The vast majority of these new accounts contained no identifying photograph and had barely tweeted since their creation.</p> <p>But they all seemed to be following prominent Twitter users in Cambodia including journalists, business figures, academics and celebrities.</p> <p>She did some digging and published her findings online, detailing how the vast majority of accounts were recently created in batches by unknown operators who worked hard to hide their real identities.</p>

She wasn't alone.

Soon prominent Twitter users in Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Sri Lanka noticed the same phenomenon -- a surge in follows from anonymous, recently created accounts, adopting local sounding names but barely engaging on the platform, as if lying in wait for someone's command.

With elections due in Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia in the next two years, many hit by the Twitter follow surge in Asia are asking whether the Silicon Valley tech giants are doing enough to stop fake accounts before they are given their marching orders.

So far Twitter has found nothing untoward.

A spokesperson for the company said engineers were "looking into the accounts in question and will take action against any account found to be in violation of the Twitter Rules".

A source with knowledge of the probe said they believe the accounts are "new, organic users" who were likely being suggested prominent Twitter users across Asia to follow when they sign up. "It's something we're keeping an eye on, but for now, it looks like a pretty standard sign-up/onboarding issue," the source told AFP.

But many experts have been left unconvinced by such explanations.

"Are there really this many new, genuine users joining Twitter, all with the same crude hallmarks of fake accounts?" Raymond Serrato, an expert at Democracy Reporting International who has been monitoring the suspicious accounts, told AFP.

The issue of fake users is hugely sensitive for Twitter because a crackdown could severely dent its roughly 330 million audience -- the company's main selling point.

In a 2014 report to the US Securities and Exchange Commission, Twitter estimated some 5-8.5 percent of users were bots.

But Emilio Ferrara, a research professor at the University of Southern California, published research last year suggesting it could be double that: 9-15 percent.

Last week Pew Research Center released a report analysing 1.2 million English language tweets which contained links to popular websites. Two-thirds of the tweets came from suspected bot accounts.

Twitter Audit Report, a third party company that scans people's followers using software to estimate how many are fake, suggests as many as 16 million of Donald Trump's 51 million followers are not real people.

Jennifer Grygiel, an expert on social media at Syracuse University, New York, said the US presidential election has provided a blueprint for others to copy.

"Bad actors around the world have really followed the potential of social media to influence the political process," she told AFP.

Twitter, she said, is a minnow compared to Facebook's more than two billion users. But it can still be influential because many prominent opinion formers such as journalists, politicians and academics have a major presence on the platform.

"If you can get information within this population, then you've scored," she said.

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HEADLINE	04/23 Google discloses Windows zero-day
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/google-discloses-windows-lockdown-policy-zero-day
GIST	<p>A Windows 10 vulnerability that could bypass Windows Lockdown Policy and result in arbitrary code execution remains unpatched 90 days after Microsoft has been informed on the bug's existence.</p> <p>On systems with User Mode Code Integrity (UMCI) enabled, a .NET bug can be exploited to bypass the Windows Lockdown Policy check for COM Class instantiation, security researcher James Forshaw of Google's Project Zero team.</p> <p>The issue was reproduced on Windows 10S, but is said to impact all Windows 10 versions with UMCI enabled.</p> <p>The vulnerability, the security researcher explains, resides in the manner in which the WLDP COM Class lockdown policy behaves when a .NET COM object is instantiated.</p> <p>The policy contains a hardcoded list of 8 to 50 COM objects which enlightened scripting engines can instantiate. Thus, even if one would be able to register an existing DLL under one of the allowed COM CLSIDs, a good implementation should check the CLSID passed to DllGetObject against said internal list, and prevent attacks.</p> <p>What the security researcher discovered was that, when a .NET COM object is instantiated, the CLSID passed to DllGetClassObject is only used to look up the registration information in HKCR, the CLSID is thrown away, and the .NET object created.</p> <p>Because of that, an attacker can add registry keys, including to HKCU, to load an arbitrary COM visible class under one of the allowed CLSIDs.</p> <p>"This has a direct impact on the class policy as it allows an attacker to add registry keys (including to HKCU) that would load an arbitrary COM visible class under one of the allowed CLSIDs. As .NET then doesn't care about whether the .NET Type has that specific GUID you can use this to bootstrap arbitrary code execution," the researcher notes.</p> <p>The flaw was reported to Microsoft on January 19, when the company acknowledged the flaw. As per Project Zero's policy, vendors are given 90 days to patch flaws before they are made public, and Microsoft didn't meet the deadline for this issue.</p> <p>The bug, however, isn't critical, this being one of the main reasons details on it were publicly released.</p> <p>"This issue was not fixed in April patch Tuesday therefore it's going over deadline. This issue only affects systems with Device Guard enabled (such as Windows 10S) and only serves as a way of getting persistent code execution on such a machine. It's not an issue which can be exploited remotely, nor is it a privilege escalation," the security researcher explains.</p> <p>To abuse the flaw, an attacker would require foothold on the impacted machine to install the needed registry entries. A remote code execution flaw in the operating system could be abused for that.</p> <p>Considering that there are known Device Guard bypasses in the .NET framework that haven't been fixed and continue to be usable, the security vulnerability is less serious than it would have been if all known avenues for bypass were fixed, Forshaw concludes.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/23 Australia breach reports not complete
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/reported-breaches-not-painting-complete-picture-of-australian-security-landscape/

GIST

The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) reported earlier this month it had received 63 notifications since Australia's Notifiable Data Breaches (NDB) scheme came into effect on February 22, 2018.

While 63 breach notifications may appear quite high for the period spanning just shy of six weeks, Charles Carmakal, vice president at FireEye's Mandiant, said the number is likely to be even higher.

"In general, any time a data breach disclosure law comes into effect, there are a lot of organisations that actually do experience a breach, but they're still trying to figure out if the law applies to them and whether or not they're dealing with a reportable incident," he told ZDNet.

From a vendor perspective, Carmakal said individuals seek clarity around what the threshold is when it comes to believing data was taken from an environment.

"In other countries around the world, there's sometimes this perception that unless you can actually prove definitively that data actually left the environment, people may not disclose that there was a breach," Carmakal continued. "Those organisations just simply don't have the monitoring and the logging tools in place to definitively prove that something left the environment, despite all the other indicators saying it probably did leave."

Although speaking with ZDNet while visiting Australia for the Australian Cyber Security Centre conference in Canberra, Carmakal previously headed up the local security consulting business of PwC, and considers himself well-placed to discuss the state of Australia's cybersecurity.

"When I lived here, most Aussies perceived cyber to be more of a US problem; they felt they were relatively protected. Part of that belief was quite frankly the lack of awareness of data breaches that actually occurred in the country ... when people don't hear about breaches every single day, there's this belief that it's more of a US problem," Carmakal said.

"When you think about the value of the data Australians have, if you think about the amount of money that's in this country, there's no reason why organisations here wouldn't be a ripe target."

While the scale might be smaller in Australia than it is in the US, the country's natural resources, financial institutions, and healthcare providers have always been a prime target for both offline and online crime.

The majority of reported breaches to the OAIC stemmed from the health sector, with health service providers accounting for 15 breaches. The health and medical sector also bore the brunt of the WannaCry and Petya ransomware campaigns of 2017.

"In general, what I find is healthcare organisations -- providers, insurance firms, life sciences, pharmaceutical companies -- depending on which sector of healthcare you're looking at, I think you'll find a different level of security in general," Carmakal said.

"In general, I find that healthcare providers tend to have some of, when compared to other sectors, they tend to have relatively weaker security controls in place than other industries, for example financial services or defence. And the reason for that is that it's a unique environment where physicians -- most physicians don't want passwords to begin with."

He said when thinking about all of the security controls required to fully secure an organisation, it can be a nuisance to a number of people in the healthcare sector.

"I find that healthcare providers have struggled with implementing strong security controls that other industries have become accustomed to," he added. "I think the controls are looser with healthcare providers and I think also the data is incredibly interesting too."

According to Carmakal, greater understanding of the data breach disclosure laws and better understanding

	<p>what an organisation's obligations are will result in more breaches being reported. However, the threat landscape is expected to become more destructive in parallel.</p> <p>"We've seen some incredibly sophisticated and incredibly destructive attacks in the past year that we've never seen before, and unfortunately we do believe that's probably going to continue," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/21 WiFi names legally protected?
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/legal/are-wifi-network-names-protected-by-the-first-amendment/
GIST	<p>Michigan police were called at a Planet Fitness gym earlier this month to investigate a bomb threat that ended up being only a prank after a naughty user named his WiFi network "Remote Detonator."</p> <p>The gym patron spotted the suspicious WiFi network name and called the police, following the gym's normal procedures. The gym re-opened the same day, three hours later, after bomb-sniffing dogs swept the building without finding any explosive devices.</p> <p>"Everything is perfectly legal from a police standpoint," Saginaw Township Police Chief Donald Pussehl told a local paper.</p> <p>"There was no crime or threat. No call saying there was a bomb," the chief said, revealing there would be no legal repercussions on the prankster, as the WiFi name falls under what is considered "protected speech" under the First Amendment.</p> <p>WiFi network names and the First Amendment</p> <p>But we at Bleeping Computer wanted to confirm the Saginaw Township Police Chief's statement and discover if WiFi network names do really fall under the First Amendment. So we asked one of the leading law firms specialized in free speech cases, the Walters Law Group, the firm behind the FirstAmendment.com website.</p> <p>"All speech that is intended to convey a message is presumed to be protected by the First Amendment," a spokesperson for the Walters Law Group told Bleeping Computer earlier this week via email.</p> <p>"This can get complicated with identifiers like telephone numbers, addresses, or domain names, which typically do not enjoy First Amendment protection," the spokesperson said. "But there are exceptions."</p> <p>"A domain name could be both convey a message and identify a location at the same time. The same goes for a WiFi network name," he said. "While typically used to identify a network, the chosen name could be used to convey a message of humor, politics, or even danger."</p> <p>There are limitations to WiFi network names</p> <p>"While I am aware of no case that specifically addresses WiFi network names, I believe that each situation would turn on the facts, to determine whether the First Amendment applied," the spokesperson told us regarding cases where pranksters take WiFi network naming a little bit too far.</p> <p>Situations like these happened in the past. For example, in 2016, a passenger on a Qantas flight had named his WiFi hotspot "Mobile Detonation Device," which grounded a flight for hours before it was cleared to take off.</p> <p>In 2017, a Turkish Airlines airplane made an emergency landing at a Sudan airport after a passenger discovered a WiFi network created by another passenger named "Bomb on board."</p>

	<p>Individuals can create personal WiFi networks on devices such as laptops and mobile phones, and name them what they want. Authorities weren't able to identify any of the pranksters behind the 2016 and 2017 incidents.</p> <p>But pranks like these, in places like airplanes and airports, can lead to legal consequences, despite being just jokes.</p> <p>"Even if constitutional protection was afforded, there are limits imposed on speech which constitutes a true threat, or incites imminent lawless action," the Walters Law Group spokesperson said. "But the simple naming of a WiFi network would not likely rise to the level of a threat or incitement."</p> <p>So, all in all, the First Amendment does apply to WiFi network names. You can use them to convey a message, as long as you don't use them for threats.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 FTC audit cleared Facebook
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/tech/audit-clears-facebook-despite-cambridge-analytica-leaks
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (AP) — An audit of Facebook's privacy practices for the Federal Trade Commission found no problems even though the company knew at the time that a data-mining firm improperly obtained private data from millions of users — raising questions about the usefulness of such audits.</p> <p>Facebook agreed to outside audits every two years as part of a 2011 settlement with the FTC over its privacy practices. It is not clear from the report whether the company informed PricewaterhouseCoopers, which performed the audit, of the Cambridge Analytica data grab that would put Facebook in the crosshairs of Congress.</p> <p>The heavily redacted audit by PricewaterhouseCoopers is available on the FTC's website. It covers February 12, 2015 to February 11, 2017.</p> <p>PwC declined to comment, but Facebook said Friday that keeping data secure is a priority.</p> <p>"We remain strongly committed to protecting people's information, said Rob Sherman, Facebook's deputy chief privacy officer, in a statement. "We appreciate the opportunity to answer questions the FTC may have."</p> <p>The fact that PwC found no issues raised red flags for privacy advocates.</p> <p>"The FTC failed to protect the public," said Jeffrey Chester, executive director of the nonprofit digital rights group Center for Digital Democracy. "Instead of conducting its own review to enforce one of its most important decisions—the consent decree—it looked the other way, which allowed Facebook to engage in serious misconduct."</p> <p>Chester said the audit shows that the "FTC cannot be relied on to really protect consumers."</p> <p>The 2011 consent decree bound Facebook to a 20-year privacy commitment. Any violations of that pact could cost the company a ton of money. In his congressional testimony last week, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg appeared uninformed about key details of the agreement, saying he did not remember if it carried a financial penalty.</p> <p>Any violations of the 2011 agreement could subject Facebook to fines of \$41,484 per violation per user per day. To put that in context, Facebook could theoretically owe \$8 billion for one single day violation affecting all of its American users, or about half of the profit that the company booked for all of last year.</p> <p>The agreement requires that Facebook users give "affirmative express consent" any time that data they</p>

haven't made public is shared with a third party. Cambridge Analytica accessed information from so many users (the firm puts the number at 30 million, although Facebook has said 87 million) because it was able to access the data of people's friends, and not just people who explicitly permitted access when they took a personality quiz. While Facebook did have controls in place that allowed people to restrict such access, they are found buried in the site's settings and are difficult to find.

Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, a Democrat from Nevada, said during last week's hearing that in her view, "these requirements were not met," because user consent shouldn't have been buried in privacy settings.

PwC disagreed.

"In our opinion, Facebook's privacy controls were operating with sufficient effectiveness to provide reasonable assurance to protect the privacy of covered information and that the controls have so operated throughout the Reporting Period, in all material respects for the two years ended February 11, 2017," the report states.

Facebook is also under a separate investigation by the FTC because of the Cambridge Analytica scandal. The agency is looking at whether Facebook has engaged in "unfair acts" that cause "substantial injury" to consumers.

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HEADLINE	04/20 Hackers exploit human vulnerabilities
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/why-human-vulnerabilities-are-more-dangerous-than-software-flaws/
GIST	<p>Cybersecurity firms and analysts have been sounding the alarm on vulnerabilities in most web-based systems, pointing to loopholes and lapses in security. But a recent report from Proofpoint, a cybersecurity firm, said most cyberattacks are designed to take advantage of human error instead of flaws in hardware or software.</p> <p>In their 2018 Human Factor Report, Proofpoint analyzed cyberattacks throughout 2017, looking into attempted attacks on nearly 6,000 organizations across the world. They found that almost every industry suffered from a growth in the number of attacks, ranging from phishing to ransomware and cloud application breaches.</p> <p>"Email remains the top attack vector...Attackers are adept at exploiting our natural curiosity, desire to be helpful, love of a good bargain, and even our time constraints to persuade us to click," the report said.</p> <p>Some 50 percent of all clicks on malicious emails occurred within an hour of it showing up in the victim's inbox. And 30 percent happened within 10 minutes of receiving the email. Hackers, either working on their own, with a group, or with a state-sponsored entity, attempted to take advantage of human trust in most cases. Nearly 55 percent of social media attacks that impersonated customer-support accounts were aimed at financial institutions.</p> <p>"Many of these attacks rely on social engineering," the report noted. "Others simply take advantage of inclinations for immediate gratification, improved status, or even the reward of 'getting something for nothing.'"</p> <p>The report continued: "But as the old adage goes, there is no such thing as a free lunch. The hidden costs of a bargain in social media channels can often be credential loss to phishing, coin mining through browser hijacking, and malware infections."</p> <p>Surprisingly, phishing emails purporting to be from Dropbox were far and away the most common lure hackers used, followed by fake DocuSign emails, which had a higher rate of success, the report said. Of all malicious emails searched in the survey, ransomware and banking Trojans accounted for more than 82</p>

percent.

The study had a number of interesting observations and tidbits concerning when and how hackers attempt to infiltrate our lives. Europe and Japan had higher-than-usual proportions of banking Trojans, at 36 percent and 37 percent respectively, while the rest of the world suffered mostly from ransomware.

Proofpoint said education, consulting, and entertainment firms suffered from the largest number of email fraud attacks, with each organization averaging about 250 attacks.

Crimeware was specifically used when attacking the tech and [healthcare industries](#), and the manufacturing industry was repeatedly hit with phishing attempts along with the construction industry.

"As the threat landscape continues to evolve, new tools and approaches are emerging regularly. But one thing remains constant: the human factor," the report said. "More than ever, cyber criminals rely on people to download and install malware or send funds and information on their behalf."

Last year, there were massive spikes in hacking attempts related to cryptocurrency, with instances of "cryptojacking" rising and falling with the price of [Bitcoin](#). Cloud computing also could not keep users safe, with every major tech companies' cloud service suffering from an attack, the report said.

"Attackers are opportunistic and adaptable. They take advantage of new options, vectors, and tools to increase their chances of success," the report noted. "These opportunistic attacks extend to social media channels and cloud-based tools as well. Fraudsters and other attackers capitalize on major events and trends and leverage legitimate services to trick defenders and victims."

Proofpoint also named multiple groups that experts know are behind many of the attacks that were done last year, including the North Korea-backed Lazarus Group, Fin7, and the Cobalt Group. Many of those organized into groups were going after government, defense contractors, and financial institutions, but some had begun to attack individuals as well.

Kevin Epstein, vice president of Threat Operations for Proofpoint, [told Computing Magazine](#) that organizations had to focus on stopping attacks before they could even reach people's' inboxes or networks. "Reducing initial exposure minimizes the chances that an organisation will experience a confidential data breach, business disruption, or direct financial loss," Epstein said said.

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HEADLINE	04/20 DOJ probes 4 major wireless carriers
SOURCE	https://www.cnbc.com/2018/04/20/justice-department-wants-info-from-att-verizon-t-mobile-and-sprint.html
GIST	<p>The Justice Department has reached out to all four major U.S. wireless carriers as part of an antitrust investigation, a person close to the situation told CNBC.</p> <p>The source said that the department sent letters to AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile and Sprint in February requesting information.</p> <p>The person also said the Justice Department previously examined this matter in 2016, but ended up dropping the investigation. A source said that Apple filed a complaint, which was one factor behind the 2016 probe.</p> <p>The antitrust division is looking into whether or not carriers colluded in stifling technology that allows customers to switch providers without having to change out their SIM card.</p> <p>Earlier, The New York Times reported that AT&T and Verizon were being investigated. The newspaper also reported that the Justice Department has demanded information from GSMA, a mobile</p>

	<p>communications industry group.</p> <p>Sources told the Times that the investigation was opened five months ago following complaints from one device maker and one wireless carrier.</p> <p>GSMA, AT&T, Sprint and the Justice Department's antitrust division declined to comment to CNBC. T-Mobile did not immediately respond to CNBC's request for comment.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 Russian Twitter trolls spring into action
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/russian-twitter-trolls-action/
GIST	<p>Russian Twitter trolls have been sent into action again, this time looking to spread disinformation following the Salisbury nerve agent attack, according to government sources.</p> <p>A Whitehall analysis purports to have measured a 4000% increase in tweets from Russia-based accounts, many of them automated bots, since the attack over six weeks ago.</p> <p>One identified bot account, @partisangirl, is said to have reached 61 million users with 2300 posts over a 12-day period from April 7.</p> <p>The research reportedly reveals that many of these accounts also commented on the alleged Syrian chemical attack by President Bashar, which some are disputing despite government claims to the contrary.</p> <p>Another account, @ian5678, was banned by Twitter before being unblocked recently. Reports suggest it sent 100 posts a day reaching 23 million users. A prolific account with 33,000 followers, it contains largely pro-Kremlin conspiracy theory and anti-West rhetoric masquerading but purports to be that of a truth-seeking stock market trader.</p> <p>Prime Minister, Theresa May, is said to have briefed Five Eyes partners and Commonwealth leaders Malcolm Turnbull, Jacinda Ardern and Justin Trudeau on the Russian campaign earlier this week.</p> <p>“Russia is using cyber as part of a wider effort to undermine the international system,” she said in a reported statement. “This disinformation campaign is not just aimed at social media and the UK — it is intended to undermine the actual institutions and processes of the rules-based system, such as the Organisation for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons. We must do all we can at every turn to challenge this.”</p> <p>Back in February 2017, Russian defence minister, Sergey Shoigu, admitted for the first time the importance to the Kremlin of state propaganda efforts, claiming a specialized unit had been established in the military.</p> <p>“The information operations forces have been established, that are expected to be a far more effective tool than all we used before for counter-propaganda purposes,” he’s reported to have told the lower house. “Propaganda should be smart, competent and effective.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 FDA: new medical device security plan
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/fda-reveals-new-plans-medical-device-security
GIST	<p>The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) this week announced its medical device safety action plan, which includes seeking additional funding and authorities that would help it improve cybersecurity in the healthcare industry.</p> <p>The FDA’s plan focuses on five key areas and medical device cybersecurity is one of them. As part of its efforts to keep up with emerging threats and vulnerabilities, the agency wants the authority to require</p>

medical device manufacturers to include updating and patching capabilities into the design of their products.

The organization also wants vendors to create a “Software Bill of Materials,” which should help medical device customers and users determine which systems may be impacted by vulnerabilities.

“The additional authorities we seek are to further strengthen medical device security by directly addressing challenges healthcare delivery organizations and providers have encountered as a result of cyber campaigns and attacks such as WannaCry,” an FDA spokesperson told *SecurityWeek*.

The agency would require that “new devices entering the market have a demonstrated capability of patchability and updatability built into the design architecture of the device, and that a patch management process and plan is provided by the manufacturer for premarket review,” the spokesperson said.

As for the [Software Bill of Materials](#), the measure is inspired by one of the recommendations made recently by the Health Care Industry Cybersecurity Task Force. A bill of materials would be issued for each piece of medical technology to describe its components and the risks associated with those components, which can help users understand the impact of certain threats and vulnerabilities.

The FDA also plans on updating its premarket [guidance for medical device cybersecurity](#) to better protect against moderate risks, which it has described as ransomware and other attacks that could disrupt clinical operations and delay patient care, and major risks, such as the remote exploitation of a vulnerability that can be used in a “multi-patient, catastrophic attack.”

The agency’s plans also include requiring companies to adopt policies and procedures for coordinated disclosure of vulnerabilities.

Finally, the FDA says it’s exploring the development of a CyberMed Safety (Expert) Analysis Board (CYMSAB), which it has described as a “public-private partnership that would complement existing device vulnerability coordination and response mechanisms and serve as a resource for device makers and FDA.”

The CYMSAB’s tasks would include assessing vulnerabilities and assisting with coordinated disclosure, evaluating risks and proposed mitigations, and adjudicating disputes. One interesting role of this entity would be to send experts to investigate compromised devices at the request of a manufacturer or the FDA.

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HEADLINE	04/20 ‘SquirtDanger’ Swiss Army Knife malware
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/the-malwares-suspected-author-is-a-well-known-russian-cybercriminal-who-has-been-active-on-global-underground-marketplaces-for-years/article/760188/
GIST	<p>Palo Alto's Unit 42 researchers identified a new botnet malware family described as “Swiss Army Knife Malware” that was designed by a veteran threat actor and is capable of taking screenshots and draining cryptocurrency wallets.</p> <p>Dubbed “SquirtDanger,” the malware family likely was created by a Russian hacker using the handle “TheBottle” and delivered via illicit software downloads also known as “WareZ,” according to an April 17 blog post.</p> <p>The malware is also capable of stealing passwords, deleting malware, sending files, clearing browser cookies, listing processes, kill processes, getting directory information, downloading files, as well as uploading, deleting and executing files.</p> <p>“Once run on the system, it will persist via a scheduled task that is set to run every minute,” researchers said in the post. “SquirtDanger uses raw TCP connections to a remote command and control (C2) server</p>

	for network communications” The malware's suspected author is a well-known Russian cybercriminal who has been active on global underground marketplaces for years. So far, researchers have spotted 1,277 unique SquirtDanger samples used across multiple campaigns.
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HEADLINE	04/20 New spyware targeted Palestinians
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/new-desert-scorpion-spyware-found-in-malicious-chat-app-aimed-at-palestinians/article/760198/
GIST	<p>A malicious chat app that was advertised on Facebook and sold in the Google Play store was discovered to execute a previously undiscovered spyware program linked to APT-C-23, an advanced persistent threat group allegedly with ties to Hamas.</p> <p>Michael Flossman, head of threat intelligence at mobile security company Lookout, stated in remarks at the RSA 2018 conference on Friday that the mobile attack specifically targeted Palestinian individuals of interest.</p> <p>According to a blog post from Lookout published a few days earlier, the app was advertised on Facebook as a free Android messaging service called Dardesh, but in reality acted in essence as a downloader for the final payload, a fresh-faced surveillance program named Desert Scorpion.</p> <p>The spyware carries a host of capabilities, including file and data exfiltration (even for docs found in external storage); sending and retrieving SMS messages; tracking the device location; recording video and audio; uninstalling apps; placing calls; retrieving contacts, uninstalling apps, determining if a device is rooted, and more. If running on a Huawei device it will also attempt to add itself to the protected list of apps able to run with the screen turned off, reports Lookout further reported.</p> <p>Google reportedly removed the offending app from its online store promptly after Lookout's private disclosure.</p> <p>Lookout researchers theorize that APT-C-23, aka Two-Tailed Scorpion, is behind Desert Scorpion because the Facebook profile it used to promote the malicious Dardesh app (and link to Google Play) was previously used to post Google Drive links leading to FrozenCell, another spyware family attributed to the same threat group. Moreover, the command-and-control infrastructure used by both malware reside in similar IP blocks, the blog post notes.</p> <p>Earlier this month, ClearSky Cyber Security also acknowledged the Dardesh campaign via Twitter.</p> <p>Despite referencing the Desert Scorpion campaign, Flossman also spent most of his RSA presentation profiling a different threat group -- Dark Caracal, which researchers strongly believe is affiliated the Lebanese General Directorate of General Security (GDGS).</p> <p>However, the threat groups in behave similarly in certain respects, in that they both heavily rely on mobile phishing campaigns to infected their intended victims. "Same sort of attack vectors, same sort of capabilities, and a lack of [use of] exploits as well," said Flossman, who co-presented with Eva Galperin, director of cybersecurity at the Electronic Frontier Foundation.</p> <p>Flossman noted that mobile phishing operations are an alluring strategy for threat groups like these because they don't require much sophistication and offer numerous vectors for malicious communications outside of email, including via text and apps.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 Teen hacked CIA chief; gets 2yrs
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2018/04/hacker-kane-gamble.html
GIST	<p>The British teenager who managed to hack into the online accounts of several high-profile US government employees sentenced to two years in prison on Friday.</p> <p>Kane Gamble, now 18, hacked into email accounts of former CIA director John Brennan, former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, former FBI Deputy Director Mark Giuliano, and other senior FBI officials—all from his parent's home in Leicestershire.</p> <p>Gamble, who went by the online alias Cracka, was just 15 at the time of carrying out those attacks and was the alleged founder of a hacking group calling themselves Crackas With Attitude (CWA).</p> <p>The notorious pro-Palestinian hacking group carried out a series of embarrassing attacks against U.S. intelligence officials and leaked personal details of 20,000 FBI agents, 9,000 officers from Department of Homeland Security, and some number of DoJ staffers in 2015.</p> <p>The teenager was arrested in February 2016 at his home in Coalville and pleaded guilty to 8 charges last October of "performing a function with intent to secure unauthorised access" and 2 charges of "unauthorised modification of computer material."</p> <p>On Friday afternoon in the Old Bailey central criminal court in London, Gamble was finally sentenced after his first sentencing hearing in January was postponed, and the judge ruled that he'll have to serve 2 years at a youth detention center, BBC reported.</p> <p>While Gamble's defence said he was "naive" and never meant to "harm" any individuals during the court hearing, the judge said he carried out "an extremely nasty campaign of politically-motivated cyber terrorism."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/21 Flaw in LinkedIn autofill plugin
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2018/04/linkedin-account-hack.html
GIST	<p>Not just Facebook, a new vulnerability discovered in LinkedIn's popular AutoFill functionality found leaking its users' sensitive information to third party websites without the user even knowing about it.</p> <p>LinkedIn provides an AutoFill plugin for a long time that other websites can use to let LinkedIn users quickly fill in profile data, including their full name, phone number, email address, ZIP code, company and job title, with a single click.</p> <p>In general, the AutoFill button only works on specifically "whitelisted websites," but 18-year-old security researcher Jack Cable of Lightning Security said it is not just the case.</p> <p>Cable discovered that the feature was plagued with a simple yet important security vulnerability that potentially enabled any website (scrapers) secretly harvest user profile data and the user would not even realize of the event.</p> <p>A legitimate website would likely place a AutoFill button near the fields the button can fill, but according to Cable, an attacker could secretly use the AutoFill feature on his website by changing its properties to spread the button across the entire web page and then make it invisible.</p> <p>Since the AutoFill button is invisible, users clicking anywhere on the website would trigger AutoFill, eventually sending all of their public as well as private data requested to the malicious website, Cable explains.</p> <p>Cable discovered the vulnerability on April 9th and immediately disclosed it to LinkedIn. The company</p>

	issued a temporary fix the next day without informing the public of the issue.
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HEADLINE	04/20 Ex-bank employee behind data breach
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/suntrust-ex-employee-may-have-stolen-data-on-15-million-bank-clients/d/d-id/1331610
GIST	<p>SunTrust Bank said a former employee may have stolen names, addresses, phone numbers, and account balances of some 1.5 million of its clients.</p> <p>The employee tried to download the client contact information six- to eight weeks ago in an attempt to provide the data to a criminal from outside the organization, Reuters reports.</p> <p>SunTrust CEO William Rogers in an earnings call said there was no indication of fraudulent activity using the client information, and it appears the data had not been sent outside the bank.</p> <p>The bank is now offering free identity protection services to all of its customers for the "potential data threat," according to a press announcement from SunTrust.</p> <p>"The company became aware of potential theft by a former employee of information from some of its contact lists. Although the investigation is ongoing, SunTrust is proactively notifying approximately 1.5 million clients that certain information, such as name, address, phone number and certain account balances may have been exposed," the bank said in a press statement. "The contact lists did not include personally identifying information, such as social security number, account number, PIN, User ID, password, or driver's license information. SunTrust is also working with outside experts and coordinating with law enforcement."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 Cybercrime economy \$1.5 trillion a year
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/vulnerabilities---threats/cybercrime-economy-generates-\$15-trillion-a-year/d/d-id/1331613
GIST	<p>RSA CONFERENCE 2018 – San Francisco – If cybercrime was a country, it would have the 13th highest GDP in the world. Attackers generate \$1.5 trillion in annual profit, which is about equal to the GDP of Russia, according to a new study on the interconnected economy of cybercrime.</p> <p>"Into the Web of Profit," among the first studies to explore the intricacies of revenue and profit in the world of cybercrime, was conducted by Dr. Michael McGuire, senior lecturer in Criminology at England's University of Surrey. Over nine months of study, he learned how the "economy" of cybercrime sustains itself and overlaps with the legitimate economy.</p> <p>This wasn't the original intent behind the Bromium-sponsored study, which began with the idea of learning where cybercriminals spend their money. "It turned into a huge piece of research, which looks at the whole of how money flows around the cybercrime system," says McGuire. The report pieces together conversations with global organizations, security workers who have infiltrated the Dark Web, international police forces, and of course, the criminals themselves.</p> <p>His study indicates a rise in "platform criminality" similar to the platform capitalism model in which data is the commodity, used by organizations including Amazon and Facebook. This platform turns malware into a product, simplifies purchase of illicit tools and services, and enables broader criminal activities including drug production, human trafficking, and terrorism.</p> <p>More than 620 new synthetic drug types have appeared on the market since 2005, McGuire says. Many are created in China or India, purchased online, and sent to Europe in bulk. Evidence shows groups earning</p>

revenue from cybercrime are also involved in drug production, he found. The takedown of Dark Web online market Alphabay led to the discovery of listings for illegal drugs, toxic chemicals, malware, and stolen and fraudulent data.

The \$1.5 trillion that cybercriminals generate each year includes \$860 billion in illicit online markets, \$500B in theft of trade secrets and intellectual property, \$160B in data trading, \$1.6B in crimeware-as-a-service, and \$1B in ransomware. Evidence indicates cybercrime often generates more revenue than legitimate companies: large multi-national operations can earn more than \$1B; smaller ones typically make between \$30k-\$50K.

It's time to move behind the idea that cybercrime is like a business. "It's much, much more than that," he says. "It's like an economy which mirrors the legitimate economy. Increasingly, what we're seeing is the legitimate economy feeding off the cybercrime economy."

Blurring the Legal Lines

The interdependence between the legitimate and illegitimate economies is driving the "web of profit" fueling cybercrime, McGuire says. Criminal organizations take data and competitive advantages from real companies and use them to accomplish their goals. Part of the problem is, many of these legitimate organizations don't know their role in furthering cybercrime.

Companies like Facebook and Uber are rich with data, making them a prime target for attackers seeking user information and intellectual property. They give hackers a platform to sell illicit goods and services, and set up fake shops to launder money or connect buyers and sellers. This makes massive companies facilitators in a criminally driven economy.

The owners of cybercrime platforms are the biggest earners, McGuire found. Each hacker might only make \$30K per year; however, managers can earn up to \$2M per job with as few as 50 stolen credit cards. They aren't committing crime but they are selling it, and their criminal platforms have evolved to offer services, descriptions, and technical support for their buyers.

McGuire shares some of the numbers behind these earnings. A zero-day Adobe exploit, for example, can sell for up to \$30K while a zero-day iOS exploit costs \$250K. Malware exploit kits cost about \$200-600 per exploit; a blackhole exploit kit costs \$700 to lease for a month or \$1,500 for a full year. Custom spyware costs \$200, an SMS-spoofing service runs \$20 per month, and a "hacker for hire" will charge about \$200 for a minor hack.

Much of the money is reinvested in new criminal ventures. Criminals put about 20% of their revenues into additional crime, indicating up to \$300B is used to drive illegal activity.

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HEADLINE	04/20 APT group exploits IE browser zero-day
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/internet-explorer-zero-day-exploited-in-the-wild-by-apt-group/
GIST	<p>An advanced persistent threat (APT), a term sometimes used to describe nation-state-backed cyber-espionage units, is using a zero-day vulnerability in the Internet Explorer kernel code to infect victims with malware.</p> <p>Security researchers from Chinese antivirus maker Qihoo 360 Core have reported the issue to Microsoft this week, Bleeping Computer has learned from a member of the Qihoo 360 team.</p> <p>The zero-day has been deployed in live attacks, as part of Office documents sent to selected targets.</p> <p>The Qihoo 360 Core team said the zero-day uses a so-called "double kill" vulnerability that affects the</p>

	<p>latest versions of Internet Explorer and any other applications that use the IE kernel.</p> <p>"After the target opens the document, all exploit code and malicious payloads are loaded from a remote server," researchers wrote today in a blog post on the Weibo micro-blogging platform.</p> <p>Researchers said the attack involves the use of a public UAC bypass, reflective DLL loading, fileless execution, and steganography.</p> <p>The Qihoo 360 Core team has not revealed the exact exploitation chain, apart from an image shared on Weibo.</p> <p>In typical Microsoft fashion, the company has not confirmed or denied Qihoo 360 Core's findings. The company has sent over the following canned statement.</p> <p><i>Windows has a customer commitment to investigate reported security issues, and proactively update impacted devices as soon as possible. We recommend customers use Windows 10 and the Microsoft Edge browser for the best protection. Our standard policy is to provide remediation via our current Update Tuesday schedule.</i></p> <p>The Qihoo 360 Core team has not answered a request for comment for more details on the APT group prior to this article's publication.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 Twitter bans Kaspersky from advertising
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/business/twitter-bans-kaspersky-from-advertising-on-the-platform-citing-dhs-ban/
GIST	<p>Twitter has banned Kaspersky Lab from advertising on its platform citing the company's alleged ties with Russian intelligence agencies.</p> <p>The ban was enforced in January, this year, according to an open letter published by Kaspersky today. Twitter has confirmed the ban in a statement to Bleeping Computer earlier today.</p> <p>"Twitter made the policy decision to off-board advertising from all accounts owned by Kaspersky Lab," a Twitter spokesperson said in a statement identical to the one received by Kaspersky Lab in January.</p> <p>"This decision is based on our determination that Kaspersky Lab operates using a business model that inherently conflicts with acceptable Twitter Ads business practices. Kaspersky Lab may remain an organic user on our platform, in accordance with the Twitter Rules," the spokesperson said.</p> <p>When asked what this actually meant, the spokesperson directed this reporter to a Department of Homeland Security directive published last year, which the DHS issued to ban the use of any Kaspersky products on the Department of Defense computers.</p> <p>Twitter pointed us to a particular paragraph that lays out allegations of secret ties between the Russian antivirus vendor and Russian intelligence agencies.</p> <p>The Department is concerned about the ties between certain Kaspersky officials and Russian intelligence and other government agencies, and requirements under Russian law that allow Russian intelligence agencies to request or compel assistance from Kaspersky and to intercept communications transiting Russian networks. The risk that the Russian government, whether acting on its own or in collaboration with Kaspersky, could capitalize on access provided by Kaspersky products to compromise federal information and information systems directly implicates U.S. national security.</p> <p>Kaspersky Lab and its CEO have vehemently denied the accusations, and have filed a lawsuit in December 2017 to dismiss the DHS ban.</p>

	But the lawsuit, even if successful, may be just too late. The accusations of working with Russian intelligence have done a lot of harm to the company's reputation, in the US and abroad.
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HEADLINE	04/21 Court blocks 'revenge porn' law
SOURCE	https://www.dallasnews.com/news/texas/2018/04/21/appeals-court-strikes-texas-revenge-porn-law
GIST	<p>Is distributing intimate photos of current or previous sexual partners without their consent protected by the First Amendment? A state appeals court says yes.</p> <p>Now it will be up to the state attorney general's office to defend the state's "revenge porn" law, which was passed in 2015 and punishes those who post intimate images from previous or current relationships online.</p> <p>The Tyler-based 12th Court of Appeals said the law is unconstitutional because it's too broad and infringes on free speech, The Texas Tribune reported.</p> <p>In his findings in the case, Chief Justice James Worthen said the First Amendment usually prohibits "content-based" restrictions.</p> <p>The court also said that the law was vague and infringed on the rights of third parties who might unwittingly share intimate images, according to the Associated Press.</p> <p>In its ruling, the court ordered charges to be dropped against Jordan Bartlett Jones, who challenged the law as unconstitutional while awaiting trial for sharing a naked photograph of a woman without her consent.</p> <p>The ruling applies only to about a dozen northeast Texas counties that fall under the jurisdiction of the 12th Court of Appeals, but other courts would likely consider its reasoning, the Tribune reported.</p> <p>The law originated from complaints from women who said they felt violated and abused when their exes posted naked or sexual images online without their consent. One woman, Hollie Toups of Nederland, found dozens of photos of herself online and organized a class action suit against the website where they appeared.</p> <p>The state law as currently written labels revenge porn a misdemeanor that carries possible jail time of as much as a year as well as a \$4,000 fine.</p> <p>If the state appeals, the case could wind up in front of the state Supreme Court.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/23 Iran officially bans cryptocurrencies
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/report-iran-officially-bans-cryptocurrencies-54656122?
GIST	<p>An Iranian newspaper says the country's Central Bank has officially banned the use of cryptocurrencies in financial transactions in order to "prevent crimes such as money laundering and terrorism."</p> <p>The move is seen as part of Tehran's efforts to control the currency market after the rial hit an all-time low earlier this month.</p> <p>Monday's report by the Donya-e Eqtesad daily says the ban applies to "all monetary and financial centers of the country," including banks, financial institutes and currency exchange offices.</p> <p>Though cryptocurrencies, such as bitcoin, have never been authorized in Iran, they were available in</p>

	parallel markets.
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	04/19 New terror group pops up in Syria
SOURCE	http://www.businessinsider.com/syria-terrorist-group-hayat-tahrir-al-sham-2018-4
GIST	<p>With up to 90% of its territory lost, ISIS appears effectively defeated as a conventional foe. But while the black flag of ISIS is being lowered, another may soon take its place — the white flag of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham.</p> <p>A new report in the Wall Street Journal details HTS' rise as it consolidates power in northwest Syria. Led by a former Al-Qaeda militant, HTS is mostly based in Syria's Idlib Governorate and has taken advantage of the US-led coalition's focus on ISIS in the East, as well as the Syrian government and Russia's focus on other parts of the country.</p> <p>HTS came into existence roughly a year ago, when Jabhat Fath al Sham, previously known as the Al Nusrah Front and Al-Qaeda's branch in Syria until its re-branding in July of 2016, announced a merger with four other islamist groups operating in Syria.</p> <p>Combined with the other groups, HTS — or the Assembly for Liberation of the Levant — was created.</p> <p>The reason for its existence, according to its propaganda, is "to unite our banners and to preserve the fruits and the jihad" of the revolution against Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, so that it can "be the seed of unifying the capacities and strength of this revolution."</p> <p>The group's leader, Abu Mohammad al-Julani, has said that he wants his followers to engage in "a war of ideas, a war of minds, a war of wills, a war of perseverance," according to the Wall Street Journal, and that he will conquer Damascus — Syria's capital — and implement Sharia law.</p> <p>The group announced in February that it had defeated the remnants of ISIS militants in Idlib, and a month later said that they had taken control of up to 25 villages in Aleppo and Idlib provinces.</p> <p>It has created a religious police force in its territory, similar to ISIS' Hisbah. They enforce Sharia law, control services like electricity and water, and collect taxes from citizens.</p> <p>The group has also been fighting forces from the Syrian government in Homs, Hama, and Aleppo. But while the terror group continues to grow and solidify its control, the Syrian government and US-led coalition have their attention elsewhere.</p> <p>"The area seems to be out of focus for Western powers," Hassan Hassan, an analyst with the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, told the Wall Street Journal. "The jihadis are having a honeymoon there."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/23 Developing complex coord. attack plans
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/terrorism-study/practical-tool-developing-complex-coordinated-attack-plans/
GIST	<p>A key challenge for Complex Coordinated Terrorist Attack preparedness is that CCTAs are difficult to understand. Some CCTAs include bombings, sieges, or manhunts, while others include firearms, vehicles-as-weapons, or hostage situations. Even defining "CCTA" has been a huge challenge — my last article identified a robust, consensus definition of CCTA that is highly useful as an analytical foundation for designing CCTA plans, training and exercises, but is also complicated and highly technical.</p>

This article proposes a new CCTA Component Checklist (CC) as a more practical, “quick and dirty” framework for public safety professionals to use as a complement to the technical definition. When filled in, the CCTA CC simplifies the chaotic nature of individual CCTAs by breaking them down into key elements with which public safety professionals are already familiar.

Public safety professionals can use the CCTA CC’s straightforward framework as a starting point in identifying CCTA capability gaps and developing CCTA plans to address those gaps. In particular, the CCTA CC:

1. Facilitates comparisons of lessons learned between CCTAs with similar components

Breaking down CCTAs into their component parts allows for easy follow-up comparisons between different events that have key elements in common. For example, by comparing Boston’s CCTA CC with Paris’s CCTA CC, it’s easy to observe that the attacks both involved firearms, explosives, a manhunt, 3 or more locations, 16 or more injuries, and sequential timing.

With six distinct consistencies, Boston and Paris clearly faced many similar challenges in managing their attacks. Did one or both identify a best practice or lesson learned that other jurisdictions could include in their plans to manage a similar scenario? By asking comparable questions, emergency planners can collect key information about potential capability gaps and apply their findings while developing CCTA plans.

2. Aids forward-thinking CCTA preparedness

Public safety professionals can adopt a proactive approach to CCTA preparedness simply by examining the CCTA CC and considering whether any high-value gaps – such as chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) concerns – exist. Before the vehicle-as-weapon attack in Nice (2016), only a uniquely forward-thinking analyst would have included “vehicle-as-weapon” in the CCTA CC. The success of the attack in Nice, as well as similar attacks in Germany and the United Kingdom, demonstrate that CCTA tactics are evolving. Our ways of understanding CCTAs must evolve accordingly.

3. Helps decision-makers to prioritize

Resource management is a key challenge during a CCTA. Comprehensive CCTA plans must reflect that decision-makers may be forced to make difficult choices about how to deploy limited resources to save lives and property as effectively as possible. Since the CCTA CC clearly lays out the different key challenges that decision-makers may need to balance during a CCTA, leaders can use the CCTA CC as a basis to reflect in a calm environment and develop prioritization plans that they can refer to during a chaotic CCTA.

4. Helps identify public safety partners that should be involved in CCTA planning

The CCTA CC is, at its core, simply a list of elements that a CCTA could include. It follows that a comprehensive CCTA plan must consider how to effectively respond to and recover from each component in the checklist. By considering how to manage a CCTA that includes any element from the CCTA CC, emergency planners will be sure to engage all key partners in the planning process.

The CCTA is a valuable, customizable tool for simplifying CCTAs, but it is not perfect. It can reasonably be accused of not accounting for key differences in bombings, sieges, car chases, and other elements in the CCTA CC. Moreover, the lines between different options can sometimes be unclear, particularly in the “Location” and “Timing” columns, and the checklist is not particularly useful for distinguishing between what is a CCTA and what is not. Though legitimate criticisms, the built-in ambiguity is also an asset, allowing public safety professionals the flexibility to interpret and apply the CCTA CC as they see fit, and customize it if they wish. Overall, the CCTA’s value far exceeds its drawbacks, and is a highly useful tool for identifying CCTA capability gaps and developing CCTA plans.

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HEADLINE 04/21 Armenia: terror attack thwarted

SOURCE	https://news.am/eng/news/447554.html
GIST	<p>YEREVAN. – The National Security Service of Armen reported about preventing a terrorist attack.</p> <p>The National Security Service of Armenia has recently received information about the destabilizing activity of special services of foreign states and other organizations, unlawful activities of individuals, and the spread of radical opinions, the statement posted by the intelligence service reads.</p> <p>The Service was alerted about a criminal gang set up by A.B. and Sh. M. who earlier had contacts to Jirayr Sefilyan and Sasna Tsrer group. The gang planned to install explosive devices in public places, including at Liberty Square and Dalma Mall, under bridges, 100-150 meters far from residential buildings, in order to cause death or bodily injuries of law enforcers and other officials. Their actions were aimed at creating an atmosphere of fear and inserting pressure on the public administration bodies to make them fulfill their demands, the statement says.</p> <p>According to the National Security Service, A.B and Sh. M. manufactured and tested an explosive device, and tried to recruit other persons, promising them and their families a shelter in case of threat as well as financial assistance.</p> <p>A group of investigators conducted 19 searches in the apartments and vehicles and discovered powder filters, detonators, materials for improvised explosive devices. A.B. and Sh.M and other four suspects were detained.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/22 How strong is ISIS in Afghanistan?
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2018-04-22/q-a-how-strong-is-the-islamic-state-group-in-afghanistan
GIST	<p>ISLAMABAD (AP) — An upstart Islamic State affiliate that first appeared in Afghanistan in 2014 is becoming increasingly deadly and their attacks on the country's minority Shiites have grown bolder. In Sunday's devastating bombing, a suicide bomber walked up to a crowd outside a voter registration office and blew himself up killing 57 people.</p> <p>Most of the dead were ethnic Hazaras, who are Shiites Muslims. Another 119 people were wounded, many of them seriously.</p> <p>It was the latest in a series of attacks by IS against the country's minority Shiites. Following last year's attack on the Iraq Embassy in Kabul, the extremist group issued a warning to Shiites that they were coming for them. Since then, they have carried out a number of horrific assaults targeting their places of worship in Kabul and Herat in western Afghanistan.</p> <p>Like their counterparts in Syria and Iraq, insurgents belonging to Afghanistan's Islamic State group are radical Sunni Muslims who revile Shiites as apostates and believe that the entire Muslim world should be ruled by a single caliphate. In Afghanistan, it is known as the Islamic State in Khorazan province, the ancient name of an area that included parts of Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia.</p> <p>HOW STRONG IS THE ISLAMIC STATE IN AFGHANISTAN, AND WHO IS ACTIVE IN IT?</p> <p>When the Islamic State group first appeared in Afghanistan its ranks were mostly culled from among the most ferocious of Pakistani Taliban from Pakistan's Bajaur tribal region, driven out by a military offensive, as well as from among disgruntled Taliban, who were frustrated with a leadership reigning in its violence and considering negotiations to end fighting.</p> <p>At its outset, the Islamic State was mostly confined to eastern Afghanistan's Nangarhar province, but in recent years it has gained ground in the north and northeast of Afghanistan. Their ranks quickly swelled with Uzbek fighters, mostly from Central Asia's Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, many of whom were</p>

driven out of Pakistan's South Waziristan tribal region by a military offensive. Analysts say the movement brutality's was unmatched and, as outsiders to Afghanistan, the Uzbek fighters show no compunction about carrying out mass killings. IS, with the aid of Uzbeks, has made inroads into northern Afghanistan where Afghan Uzbeks mostly live. There have been several reports of open recruitment by IMU members. The size of IS in Afghanistan is unknown, but estimates generally run between 3,000 and 5,000 fighters.

WHAT DO THEY WANT?

The IS in Khorazan province shares the Syrian and Iraqi IS goal of establishing a caliphate that governs the entire Muslim world. Their only stated goal for Afghanistan, however, is to rid it of Shiite Muslims, who make up roughly 15 per cent of the country's 35 million people. The overwhelming majority are Sunni Muslims, who historically have lived in peace with their Shiite brethren. Shiites have stepped up security around their places of worship but Afghanistan's security forces seem confounded on how to prevent the relentless attacks.

DO THEY HAVE SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT IN THE POPULATION?

There is little support among Afghans for a movement whose sole goal is killing Shiite Muslims. While Afghanistan is a conservative Muslim country that has been alternately ruled by radical religious groups __ first anti-Soviet mujahedeen groups and later the Taliban __ there is practically no support for rule by caliphate. Afghanistan's rulers, even the radical religious ones, have been nationalists, ready to go to war to protect their sovereignty.

WHAT IS THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE TALIBAN?

IS and Taliban are battlefield adversaries which has prompted countries like Russia to confer with the Taliban, who they see as a bulwark against a formidable IS on its southern border. While loosely constructed, the Taliban since the death of its supreme leader Mullah Mohammed Omar several years ago are mostly comprised of ethnic Pashtuns and Arab-speaking nationals with ties to al-Qaida. They have condemned IS and the two groups have fought each other in eastern Nangarhar province where both seek full control, and where U.S. and Afghan security forces have been carrying out offensives against IS hideouts.

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HEADLINE	04/23 US builds drone base in Niger
SOURCE	http://www.starherald.com/news/nation_world/us-builds-drone-base-in-niger-crossroads-of-extremism-fight/article_ab65768f-88d5-5ff1-8634-152c9bd9ba3d.html
GIST	<p>AGADEZ, Niger (AP) — On the scorching edge of the Sahara Desert, the U.S. Air Force is building a base for armed drones, the newest front in America's battle against the growing extremist threat in Africa's vast Sahel region.</p> <p>Three hangars and the first layers of a runway command a sandy, barren field. Niger Air Base 201 is expected to be functional early next year. The base, a few miles outside Agadez and built at the request of Niger's government, will eventually house fighter jets and MQ-9 drones transferred from the capital Niamey. The drones, with surveillance and added striking capabilities, will have a range enabling them to reach a number of West and North African countries.</p> <p>Few knew of the American military's presence in this desperately poor, remote West African country until October, when an ambush by Islamic State group-linked extremists killed four U.S. soldiers and five Nigeriens.</p> <p>The \$110 million project is the largest troop labor construction project in U.S. history, according to Air Force officials. It will cost \$15 million annually to operate.</p>

Citing security reasons, no official will say how many drones will be housed at the base or whether more U.S. personnel will be brought to the region. Already the U.S. military presence here is the second largest in Africa behind the sole permanent U.S. base on the continent, in the tiny Horn of Africa nation of Djibouti.

The drones at the base are expected to target several different al-Qaida and Islamic State group-affiliated fighters in countries throughout the Sahel, a sprawling region just south of the Sahara, including the area around Lake Chad, where the Nigeria's Boko Haram insurgency has spread.

As the U.S. puts drones at the forefront of the fight against extremists, some worry that civilians will be mistaken for fighters.

"We are afraid of falling back into the same situation as in Afghanistan, with many mistakes made by American soldiers who did not always know the difference between a wedding ceremony and a training of terrorist groups," said Amadou Roufai, a Nigerien administration official.

Civic leader Nouhou Mahamadou also expressed concerns.

"The presence of foreign bases in general and American in particular is a serious surrender of our sovereignty and a serious attack on the morale of the Nigerien military," he said.

The number of U.S. military personnel in Niger has risen over the past few years from 100 to 800, the second largest concentration in Africa after the 4,000 in Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti. About 500 personnel are working on the new air and drone base and the base camp is marked with an American and Nigerien flag.

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HEADLINE	04/21 Afghan official: Taliban kill 6 police
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/afghan-official-taliban-kill-police-checkpoint-54630291?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>An Afghan official says that at least six local police were killed when a group of Taliban fighters attacked and overran their checkpoint in northern Sari Pul province.</p> <p>Zabi Amani, spokesman for the provincial governor, said Saturday two other policemen were wounded in the late Friday night attack.</p> <p>Amani said reinforcements arrived and a sporadic gun battle is still underway in Sayad district. He added that three Taliban fighters were killed and two others were wounded in the battle.</p> <p>Zabihullah Mujahid, Taliban spokesman, claimed responsibility for the attack.</p> <p>Taliban have increased their attacks in the province of late. Last week, Taliban killed 11 Afghan paramilitary forces in Sari Pul.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/23 AQ uses Google maps for planning
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/tech/2018/04/23/al-qaeda-uses-google-maps-to-plan-attacks-new-video-reportedly-shows.html
GIST	<p>A new Al Qaeda video reportedly shows the terror group planning attacks across Middle East using Google Maps and features a former Gitmo detainee who returned fighting for the group after his release.</p> <p>The propaganda video was released Friday by Al-Malahem, an Al Qaeda media-affiliate in the Arabian</p>

	<p>Peninsula. The content of the footage was first reported by The Washington Free Beacon.</p> <p>It shows an Al Qaeda commander using a tablet computer and Google Maps to plan the terror attacks, according to report from the Middle East Media Monitoring Institute (MEMRI).</p> <p>The terror group's recent video "documents the training, planning, and execution of a series of operations targeting security forces, checkpoints, and military bases in multiple locations using different tactics including martyrdom operations, commando raids, shelling, shootings, and assassinations," the report said.</p> <p>Former CIA officer Buck Sexton on whether technology companies are doing enough to regulate terror-related content online.</p> <p>Former Guantanamo Bay prisoner Ibrahim Al-Qusi, who once served as a cook, chauffeur and bookkeeper for Osama Bin Laden, also appears in the video. He was released to Sudan in 2012 after spending over 10 years in the military prison, but has since returned to the battlefield.</p> <p>He is seen fighting alongside the group and calls for new terror attacks, according the report. "Today, the U.S. is trying to use a new card and a new [pair of] shoes from its [collection]: the government of the [United Arab Emirates] and its treasonous army," Al-Qusi reportedly said.</p> <p>The terror group pays tribute to their "martyred" members and congratulates local jihadists in Yemen for "implementing sharia laws, promoting virtue, preventing vice, and securing the city."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/23 Paris attacks suspect sentenced 20yrs
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-attacks-trial-sentence/paris-attacks-suspect-gets-20-year-sentence-in-brussels-trial-idUSKBN1HU0YP
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS (Reuters) - A Belgian judge on Monday sentenced Salah Abdeslam, the prime surviving suspect in the 2015 Islamic State attacks on Paris, to 20 years in prison over a shootout with police in Brussels in 2016.</p> <p>Abdeslam's co-defendant Sofien Ayari also received a 20-year term for attempted terrorist murder.</p> <p>While his lawyer argued Abdeslam, 28, should be acquitted because of a procedural error, prosecutors had charged him with attempted murder over the Brussels shootout in March 2016, days before his arrest, and called for a jail term of 20 years.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/22 Syria military pummels Damascus suburbs
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syrian-military-pummels-held-districts-damascus-54642580?
GIST	<p>Syrian government forces used warplanes, helicopters and artillery on Sunday to pound districts of the capital held by the Islamic State group, in a bid to enforce an evacuation deal reached with the militants earlier in the week.</p> <p>Two Palestinian refugees, a father and a son, were killed during the fighting at the Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus, according to the United Nation's Palestinian refugee agency, which added that thousands of homes have been destroyed in four days of fighting.</p> <p>Hundreds of IS militants hold parts of the Yarmouk camp and nearby area of Hajar al-Aswad in southern Damascus. They agreed to give up their last pocket there on Friday but have yet to begin surrendering to government forces and relocating to IS-held areas elsewhere in the country.</p>

State-run al-Ikhbariya TV showed thick gray smoke billowing from the Hajar al-Aswad neighborhood on Sunday, and government warplanes streaking overhead amid heavy bombardment of the area.

Residents of Damascus reported hearing loud booms throughout the night and Sunday morning.

UNRWA spokesman Chris Gunnes said that since the start of fighting four days ago, most of the six thousand civilians in Yarmouk camp have been forcibly displaced to the neighboring area of Yalda.

Gunnes said added that the camp's last functioning hospital, Palestine Hospital, is now completely unable to operate and called on all sides to allow for the safe evacuation of civilians wishing to leave the area.

President Bashar Assad has escalated his military campaign to retake all remaining enclaves in the capital and surrounding areas. The IS-held areas in southern Damascus are the last holdouts, after rebels evacuated the eastern Ghouta suburbs following a fierce government offensive and an alleged poison gas attack in the town of Douma.

Meanwhile, rebels have begun evacuating three towns in the eastern Qalamoun region in the Damascus countryside.

Al-Ikhbariya TV said that 35 buses left the towns of Ruhaiba, Jayroud, and al-Nasriya on Saturday carrying hundreds of rebels and their families to opposition-held territory in northern Syria.

The station said the evacuations would continue for three days.

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HEADLINE	04/22 ISIS suicide bomber kills 57 in Kabul
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/suicide-bomber-strikes-afghan-capital-killed-54642129?
GIST	<p>An Islamic State suicide bomber attacked a voter registration center in Afghanistan's capital on Sunday, killing 57 people and wounding more than 100 others, officials said.</p> <p>Public Health Ministry spokesman Wahid Majro said that among 57 people killed, 22 were women and eight were children. He said 119 people were wounded, among them 17 children and 52 women, and "the tolls could still rise."</p> <p>The bomber targeted civilians who were registering for national identification cards, Kabul police chief Gen. Daud Amin said.</p> <p>The large explosion echoed across the city, shattering windows miles from the attack site and damaging nearby vehicles. Police blocked all roads to the blast site, with only ambulances allowed in. TV stations broadcast live footage of hundreds of distraught locals gathered at hospitals seeking word about loved ones.</p> <p>The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement carried by its Aamaq news agency, saying it had targeted Shiite "apostates."</p> <p>The attack comes almost a month after an IS suicide bomber carried out an attack near a Shiite shrine in Kabul that targeted attendees celebrating the Persian new year. That attack killed 31 people and wounded 65 others.</p> <p>In a statement issued by the president's office condemned Sunday's attack and quoted President Ashraf Ghani as saying such "terrorist attacks" won't prevent people from participating in upcoming parliamentary elections.</p>

	Afghanistan will hold parliamentary elections in October and voter registration started a week ago.
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HEADLINE	04/23 Afghan officials: Taliban attack kills 14
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/afghan-officials-taliban-attacks-kill-14-troops-policemen-54656436?
GIST	<p>Taliban attacks in western Afghanistan killed 14 soldiers and policemen on Monday as Kabul residents prepared to bury their loved ones slain in a horrific bombing by the Islamic State group that targeted a voter registration center the day before, killing 57.</p> <p>The near-simultaneous attacks in western Badghis province, where a large number of insurgents attacked army units in the district of Ab Kamari, killing nine soldiers, said Ghulam Sarwar Haidari, the deputy provincial police chief.</p> <p>At the same time, another group of insurgents struck police in Qadis district, killing five policemen. Sharafuddin Majidi, spokesman for the provincial governor, confirmed the casualty tolls.</p> <p>Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed the attacks in Badghis in a statement to the media.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/21 Russia conducts anti-ISIS raids
SOURCE	https://www.rt.com/news/424772-isis-terrorist-killed-russia/
GIST	<p>Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) has killed an ISIS terrorist who plotted an attack on its local HQ and an administrative building in Stavropol. Agents recovered a firearm, IED components, and an ISIS flag from the scene.</p> <p>The FSB operatives attempted to arrest the suspected terrorist in the southern Russian region of Stavropol on Saturday. The perpetrator, however, resisted and engaged in a firefight with law enforcement, receiving a fatal wound, the FSB press service said.</p> <p>The terrorist plotted an attack on a local office of the FSB and a Stavropol government building, "using firearms and improvised explosive devices (IEDs)."</p> <p>The agents recovered a sawed-off 16-gauge shotgun, a large knife, IED components, and an Islamic State flag (IS, formerly ISIS). A written pledge of allegiance to IS and plans regarding the government and FSB HQ buildings were also found at the scene.</p> <p>The FSB did not provide any details on the terrorist's identity, stating only that an investigation was underway.</p> <p>In a separate development, a large-scale counter-terrorism operation was staged in the town of Derbent, in the Russian republic of Dagestan. A group of militants was reportedly blocked by FSB and police operatives in a residential building, while other reports suggested that another militant group was intercepted while travelling across Derbent in a car. Nine militants were killed during the operation, Russia's Anti-terrorism committee confirmed. One special operative was slightly wounded during the gun battle as well.</p> <p>The counter-terrorism operations came only a few days after another major terrorist cell was busted by the FSB in Rostov Region. Three IS-linked terrorists, who plotted gun and bomb attacks, were captured. The leader of the cell, however, blew himself up with a homemade bomb when law enforcement tried to detain him.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/22 Afghan officials: suicide bomber kills 4
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/suicide-bomber-strikes-afghan-capital-killed-54642129?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Afghan officials say a suicide bomber has attacked a voter registration center in the capital, killing at least four people.</p> <p>Public Health Ministry spokesman Wahid Majro says another 15 people were wounded in Sunday's attack. Kabul police spokesman Akmal Ahmadzai confirmed the location of the attack.</p> <p>No one immediately claimed responsibility. The Taliban and a local Islamic State affiliate both view Afghanistan's government and democratic elections as illegitimate.</p> <p>Afghanistan will hold parliamentary elections in October.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	04/23 US needs more paramedics
SOURCE	https://www.weeklystandard.com/mark-hemingway/the-us-needs-more-paramedics-israel-might-have-the-answer
GIST	<p>The police response to the Parkland, Fla., school shooting has been much criticized for being cowardly and negligent. But one aspect of the poor response deserves more attention, because it points the way toward saving lives in the future: Police didn't just fail to enter the building quickly and engage the shooter, they also prevented paramedics from going in and retrieving the wounded.</p> <p>"Everything I was trained on mass casualty events says they did the wrong thing," a paramedic on the scene told Brian Entin, a reporter for Miami's WSVN. "You don't wait for the scene to be cleared. You go in immediately armed. Retrieve the victims. You can't leave the victims laying there." Paramedics on the scene were willing to risk their lives to go in, but "the response every time was law enforcement did not clear the scene and would not allow medical personnel in."</p> <p>The paramedic, who remained anonymous for fear of reprisal, is correct about the importance of quick treatment of the wounded. And this may be one area where improvement is readily achievable and uncontroversial. Ensuring that many more people, particularly those working at large institutions such as schools, receive comprehensive emergency medical training has much to recommend it. Sometimes first responders either can't come in or don't get there in time.</p> <p>For Gavriel Friedson, the importance of more emergency medical training in schools is not a theoretical concern. He first received emergency medical training and began volunteering as a teenager. And his training quickly proved useful: "When I was 15 years old, I delivered my math teacher's baby," he tells The Weekly Standard. "One of the best things that ever happened in my life was being able to start volunteering at such a young age. It's life changing, and you get an amazing satisfaction from what it's like to really help."</p> <p>Friedson grew up in Israel, where responding to emergencies is a more urgent matter of public safety than in the United States. (Amid the grief and horror over terror attacks and mass shootings, it's worth noting that violent crime has declined by almost 50 percent since it's apex in 1991.) Accordingly, Israel has an emergency response system that is in many ways a model to aspire to. And a significant part of that system depends on volunteers and private organizations.</p> <p>Friedson began by volunteering with United Hatzalah—hatzalah means rescue in Hebrew—which</p>

provides medical training and supplies to over 4,000 volunteers across Israel. When emergencies are reported to the authorities, United Hatzalah is also made aware of the location and notifies nearby volunteers through its own communication network, often by text message. Volunteers are not obligated to respond but almost always do. United Hatzalah claims an impressive average response time of under three minutes; in some cities, the average response time is under 90 seconds.

The organization has made some pioneering innovations. The fast response times are often attributed to the “ambucycles” it supplies to volunteers. They are essentially motor scooters packed with a complete trauma kit and advanced medical devices such as defibrillators, blood sugar monitors, and oxygen tanks. The scooters can bypass traffic jams, go around debris, ride on sidewalks, and otherwise avoid impediments that would stop an ambulance.

Friedson, a former IDF medic who is now the deputy director of international operations for United Hatzalah, stresses that becoming a volunteer requires no special prerequisites and that training can be given to almost anyone physically capable. He recalls one incident where he was playing basketball and got a call that a 7-year-old girl had been hit by a bus. He hopped on his ambucycle and was the third volunteer on the scene.

The first was “a real estate lawyer and he literally was about to sign some sort of housing closure, and he hopped on the back of his motorcycle to respond to this emergency,” Friedson recalls. “He was coming in a suit and tie from his law firm.” The second was a butcher, and “he was coming in his apron and his boots and he stunk like fish. It doesn’t matter what you’re doing. You could be a lawyer, you can be working at the market, it could be a student ... that’s the whole point of it. It’s grassroots community.”

While Friedson’s evangelism for United Hatzalah is based on his life experiences, it’s also his job. He now lives in the United States, where United Hatzalah was on the ground with volunteer medics in Florida and Houston after last year’s hurricanes. The experience was eye-opening about the need for improvement in America’s response to major emergencies.

“None of us were sure what we were going to do in a country like America, but especially in Florida, in the Keys, we ended up doing a lot,” says Friedson. “We found several missing persons before FEMA and the Red Cross even arrived, which was a huge awakening to the reality that even the best of the best needs a little bit more of a support system.”

The data also support the notion America’s emergency response systems are becoming more strained. In the decade between 2014 and 2024, job growth for EMTs in the United States is projected to be 24 percent. And it remains an exceptionally difficult job, where the median salary is around \$32,000 a year.

Obviously, one way to alleviate the strain on professional first responders is to give emergency medical training to thousands of volunteers in all walks of American life. United Hatzalah has an American affiliate, United Rescue, that is in its infancy and currently working to import United Hatzalah’s model of training and deploying volunteers in a pilot program in Jersey City.

However, there’s a very long way to go before United Rescue would make the same impact here as United Hatzalah in Israel. In terms of relative population, 4,000 volunteer responders in Israel would be the equivalent of adding 160,000 volunteers in America. Not helping matters, Friedson says, is quite a bit of union opposition from professional first responders to the idea of an army of volunteers.

Still, it’s hard to imagine Americans objecting to the thought of 100,000 new ambucycles patrolling the streets. And unlike, say, the debate over gun rights, emergency medical training is hardly controversial: Voluntarism speaks to America’s Tocquevillean traditions, and such programs can even start in schools.

In fact, there already appears to be a broad consensus that training teenagers for emergency response is a good idea. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has a initiative called Teen CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) that’s aimed at teaching basic first aid, along with procedures for responding to specific disasters, e.g. how to turn off gas lines after an earthquake. And there are numerous state and

local programs across the country aimed at EMT training for high schoolers, some of which are quite impressive. Notably, the commonwealth of Virginia has a detailed curriculum for High School Based Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Educational Programs, and the small ambulance service in the hedge-fund hamlet of Darien, Connecticut is actually run entirely by local teenagers and was the subject of a recent documentary, High School 911. But so far, this is a largely patchwork effort--several calls to federal agencies and national emergency medical organizations reveals no one has a good handle on how many kids are getting EMT or emergency training and to what end. There's a strong case to be made that training staff and students needs to be a foundational part of American education.

“When I was in college, I got there and I asked the dean of the school about the medical staff at the university and he said, ‘what medical staff? There is none,’” Friedson says. “I told him, ‘I have an ambucycle, I’m a first responder.’ The dean of the school gave me his parking spot, and I started taking my cycle to school every single day and created the first response team on campus. And then two years later the dean was so inspired, he went off and did the [emergency medical] course and now he’s a first responder.”

For Friedson, the Parkland shooting is both a call to improve procedures for security and safety at American schools and a reminder that, while ordinary citizens ranging from football coaches to JROTC students proved heroic that tragic day at Stoneman Douglas High School, we can give people the tools to do even more when they need to rise to the occasion. “If you can have medical personnel on staff, that would be great. But that’s expensive,” he says. “But you can also train seniors in high school. Get them to do an EMT course, and have a few EMTs on campus.”

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HEADLINE	04/21 WSP bomb-sniffing dog recovering
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/960813/washington-state-patrol-bomb-sniffing-dog-recovering/
GIST	<p>EVERETT, Wash. (AP) — A Washington State Patrol bomb-sniffing dog is recovering after inhaling something that caused an internal infection that required an operation.</p> <p>KING-TV reports in a story on Friday that Sonyi will possibly be ready to return to work in early May.</p> <p>Trooper Scott Legler says Sonyi in January inhaled something that made him sick while working at the ferry docks in Snohomish County.</p> <p>Legler says that caused an internal abscess, an infection and fluid in 5-year-old Sonyi’s lungs that needed to be drained.</p> <p>Sonyi had another operation earlier this month for another infection.</p> <p>But Legler says Sonyi is recovering.</p> <p>He says Sonyi appears to want to get back to work, but first he has to wait for stitches to heal and the infection to pass.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 World longest bong takes shape in Seattle
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/20/24-foot-bongzilla-the-worlds-largest-bong-takes-shape-in-seattle/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE -- Dozens of artists from around the West Coast gathered Friday in a rented studio. They huddled around scorching hot ovens of glass.</p> <p>Joints were passed; Pink Floyd rattled the speakers. There was one collective goal:</p> <p>To build the world's biggest bong.</p>

	<p>And they say Seattle has lost its roots.</p> <p>"Essentially this is the Freedom Bong," head glass blower Charles Lowrie told Q13 News. "This is the time of life we arriving to collective consciousness."</p> <p>Friday was the first of a three-day event led by Jerome Baker Designs. It's the culmination of a collaborative effort to build a 24-foot bong, nicknamed #Bongzilla. The glass bong will weigh thousands of pounds, and will be on display at Cannabition, a cannabis museum planned for Las Vegas.</p> <p>But before it's put together, the glass must be blown. No small feat for the artists, even with their decades of experience in blowing bongs.</p> <p>"We're dipping up a good 45 to 50 pounds of hot glass out of this furnace," Lowrie says. "The furnace holds about a thousand pounds."</p> <p>Anything this big in glass needs to be done in stages. Each day through Sunday, artists will be dipping and molding, all toward the final construction. The bong is expected to be finished in a month or two.</p> <p>"This thing will be over two stories high," Lowrie said. "(Each blow) is just one of the components to that masterpiece."</p> <p>The bong was dreamed up as a way to "create works of art that bring relevance to the functional art glass world," a spokesperson for Jerome Baker Designs said. They chose Seattle as the place to construct the bong because of Washington's marijuana laws. Of course, the informal marijuana holiday of April 20 played a roll.</p> <p>"We feel the timing is perfect" a spokesperson said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/19 San Juan Co. tale of sex, deception
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/the-professor-the-cop-and-the-student-a-tale-of-sex-and-deception-in-san-juan-county/
GIST	<p>FRIDAY HARBOR — A tall man with an imposing head of wavy blond hair, a wide smile and a French accent, Gerald Grellet-Tinner was a sort of rock star among paleontologists.</p> <p>A one-time scuba trainer for the French Foreign Legion, Grellet-Tinner was a published post-Ph.D.-level researcher credited with discovering how a species of dinosaur incubated eggs in volcanic vents, and a gem expert who had worked with the Department of Homeland Security on terrorist money-laundering issues in the wake of 9/11. He conducted research for the University of Chicago and taught at UCLA before moving to Orcas Island in 2014.</p> <p>That was before the then-60-year-old decided to teach science at Orcas Island High School in 2015 while caring for his ailing son. And before he met his student lab assistant, 19-year-old Antonia (not her real name), and before his life was taken apart when he was accused of having sex with her. It is a crime in Washington state for a teacher to have sex with any student younger than 21.</p> <p>Grellet-Tinner was arrested, jailed, convicted by a jury of two felonies and almost sent to prison as a sex offender before a judge threw the case out, citing a miscarriage of justice.</p> <p>The reason? While Grellet-Tinner sat in jail, facing possible prison, the San Juan County sheriff's detective who was trying to put him there was sexually involved with Antonia himself, according to investigators.</p>

The ordeal of sex and deception — which includes allegations of witness tampering, bribery and threats — has doused any spark of justice for anyone involved: Grellet-Tinner, Antonia or the community. Nobody involved was left unscathed, including the detective.

Grellet-Tinner's life has been left in tatters. He lost custody of his son — whose fragile health was the reason he moved to Orcas Island — and his reputation was sullied, maybe ruined. He was fired from his teaching job and is, he says, unemployable and on food stamps.

Grellet-Tinner denies he ever touched the young woman. He has filed a \$10 million claim against San Juan County, its prosecutor and the Sheriff's Office alleging a variety of civil-rights violations, including wrongful arrest and wrongful prosecution.

"This all fell like a ton of bricks on my head," Grellet-Tinner said in an interview.

No criminal charges were filed against the detective, Stephen Parker, although investigators believe he committed perjury and probably witness tampering. The San Juan County Sheriff's Office found he had committed significant misconduct following two investigations, and has sought to have his law-enforcement credentials revoked.

Parker, who has denied wrongdoing, resigned from the San Juan County Sheriff's Office and moved about as far away from Friday Harbor as possible in the continental United States — Fort Myers, Florida.

He also denies having sex with Antonia and says he's talking to a lawyer about suing the county sheriff and prosecutor for slander.

A multiagency investigation overseen by Skagit County concluded Parker, a 46-year-old veteran lawman from Montana, and Antonia, a single mother and undocumented immigrant, had carried on a secret relationship for months. The investigation concluded they met for sex at least five times while Grellet-Tinner sat in the San Juan County Jail.

Attempts to contact Antonia were not successful. The Seattle Times generally does not identify alleged victims of abuse.

Nick Power, Grellet-Tinner's civil-rights attorney, believes Antonia traded sex with the detective in exchange for obtaining a crime victim's visa so she and her family could stay in the U.S. legally. Prosecutors confirmed they had sought a so-called "U Visa" for Antonia.

Antonia was 19 years old when Grellet-Tinner allegedly had two consensual sexual encounters with her at his house on Orcas Island, according to the charges.

Based on Parker's investigation, which included DNA evidence provided by the student and her tearful testimony, Grellet-Tinner was convicted after a three-week trial in June 2016. He was facing 17 months in prison when Antonia told a victim advocate in the San Juan County Prosecutor's Office that she'd been secretly seeing the detective, Parker, for months.

When Parker found out, he approached the victim advocate, Christine Miller, two days later outside her office. Parker denied the relationship and said Antonia was upset because he had stopped paying attention to her after the trial.

"You know," an angry Parker told Miller, "she seduces people and she set (Grellet-Tinner) up." Parker called Antonia "hypersexual," Miller would later recount in an interview with detectives.

The student recanted that story within days — under pressure from the detective, according to her later statements — and an initial investigation by a Skagit County sheriff's deputy concluded the allegations were "not sustained" since both the student and Parker denied anything had happened between them. Parker went so far as to sign a denial under threat of perjury.

However, the Skagit County sheriff's deputy, Lori Sigman, had doubts. Her report to the San Juan County prosecutor's and sheriff's offices concluded with a section titled "Curious Things," including the fact that Parker and Antonia seemed to be particularly aware of the other's activities. Sigman found it "astonishing" that Parker and the student had exchanged 69 emails.

San Juan County Sheriff Ron Krebs now says he wishes he'd opened a wider investigation at that point.

Later, Sigman would join a more thorough investigation conducted by a multiagency team of Skagit County detectives, which would find that Parker and the student "used aliases and alternative means of communications" to stay in touch. Moreover, they exchanged more than 137 telephone calls on Parker's county-issued phone.

Sigman completed her initial investigation — the one with the "Curious Things" section — on Aug. 23, 2016, just two days before Grellet-Tinner's initial sentencing date, according to records.

However, San Juan County Prosecutor Randall Gaylord didn't provide the report to the court and Grellet-Tinner's criminal defense attorney, Robert Butler, until Sept. 14, two days before the revised sentencing date.

"The state is clinging to an unfair conviction, based almost entirely on a witness they know is a liar," said Butler, referring to the student.

San Juan County Superior Court Judge Donald Eaton agreed, and granted Grellet-Tinner a new trial based on Parker's statement that Antonia "seduces people" and "set Tinner up." In the interim, Grellet-Tinner was released from jail.

Three days after the judge ordered a new trial, the state appealed.

The following day, Gaylord, Sigman and another prosecutor met with Antonia, who changed her story again. Over the next four hours, she detailed a relationship with the detective that began days after Grellet-Tinner's arrest and involved at least five sexual encounters, including trysts at the Sheriff's Office, at an Orcas Island resort and in the back seat of Parker's patrol car.

She had recanted the first time, she told them, because Parker had found out about her conversation with the victim advocate through his boss, Sheriff Krebs.

Investigative documents showed Parker called the student a dozen times that day. She told the investigators that Parker told her she had to "fix it," and offered money to help with bills, but she took the offer to be attempts to pay her hush money.

San Juan County Undersheriff Brent Johnson told Sheriff Krebs he thought those calls "looked like a crime," according to an interview he gave to detectives.

Parker was placed on administrative leave with pay on Sept. 26, 2016, and would never return to work.

However, the prosecution of Grellet-Tinner — now minus its investigator and with a tainted key witness — would drag out seven more months — a delay Grellet-Tinner's attorneys said was nothing more than punishment for a crime prosecutors could not prove.

In March, the judge concluded the violations to Grellet-Tinner's rights were insurmountable and he dismissed the case as a "miscarriage of justice."

Gaylord, the San Juan County prosecutor, asked his counterpart in Skagit County, Richard Weyrich, to look at possible charges against Parker.

“We considered a few criminal charges,” Weyrich wrote in a letter dated Dec. 23, 2017. “We first looked at a sex crime” based on evidence “that a few portions of the sexual encounters were not completely consensual ... We also looked at witness tampering.”

The investigation raised disturbing questions about whether all of their sexual encounters were consensual, considering Parker’s status and position of authority.

But Weyrich concluded none of the charges could be proved beyond a reasonable doubt. He said his office did not look at perhaps the easiest charge to prove: perjury, since Parker signed a sworn statement saying he had not had a relationship with the student. Weyrich said Gaylord, the San Juan County prosecutor, should have at least reviewed that charge and believes it should have been filed.

Gaylord said his office had a conflict — the reason Weyrich was called in the first place — and could not review any of the case against Parker. Gaylord said several people in his office, including himself, were interviewed during the investigation and were potential witnesses, precluding him from being involved.

“This is disappointing news,” Gaylord said earlier this month of the decision not to charge Parker with perjury. “If there was a crime Parker could have been charged with, he should have been charged with it.”

Parker, reached by phone in the Gulf of Mexico where he is working on an oil rig, said he was targeted by Gaylord and the sheriff.

“I did not have sex with (the student),” he said in an interview. “Did I get too close to their family? There were six people in a one-bedroom apartment. I tried to help.”

He reiterated his claim that he believes Antonia “trapped” Grellet-Tinner and then retaliated against Parker after he stopped paying attention to her after the trial.

Power, Grellet-Tinner’s civil-rights attorney, also believes his client was trapped by Antonia — with Parker’s help.

He says that during Grellet-Tinner’s prosecution, Parker and Gaylord, the prosecutor, were helping Antonia obtain a special “U Visa” from the Department of Homeland Security. The visa is intended to allow undocumented crime victims and their immediate families to stay in the country legally if they’re willing to assist in the investigation or prosecution of a crime.

“Basically [Antonia] slept with Parker in exchange for a U Visa,” Power said. “And the two of them manufactured these allegations against Grellet-Tinner so she was eligible.”

Parker denied that was what happened.

Gaylord said he signed the paperwork for the visa but does not know if it ever was issued.

“I don’t think anybody feels good about any part of what happened here,” Gaylord said.

Grellet-Tinner, meantime, continues to live on Orcas Island in the home he bought in 2012 near Eastsound. People whisper, he said. One woman called him a pedophile while he was waiting in line at the store. He’s involved in a custody battle over his son, attempting to undo the damage done.

“But that’s the problem,” he said. “You can’t.”

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HEADLINE	04/20 Japan volcano erupts first time 250yrs
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/04/20/Japanese-volcano-erupts-for-first-time-

	in-250-years/4421524244966/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=lh&utm_medium=7
GIST	<p>April 20 (UPI) -- Japan's Mount Io has erupted for the first time in 250 years, prompting the country's meteorologists to warn residents and passing aircraft to stay farther away from the volcano than normal.</p> <p>The volcano spewed ash and rock about 980 feet into the sky Thursday, sending debris more than 1 1/2 miles outward from the crater, the Japanese Meteorological Agency. There were no reports of damage or injuries.</p> <p>The last time Mount Io erupted was in 1768.</p> <p>The eruption subsided Friday, but Meteorological Agency official Makoto Saito told The Japan Times "there is a possibility the volcano will become more active."</p> <p>The Meteorological Agency expanded the no-go zone from the volcano's crater to the entire mountain after Thursday's eruption. Officials also raised the warning level for Mount Io from 2 to 3 on a 5-point scale.</p> <p>Mount Io is 4,258 feet high and is situated on the island of Kyushu, part of the Mount Kirishima group of volcanos in Miyazaki and Kagoshima prefectures.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/21 Hidden horrors of India's elephants
SOURCE	https://www.independent.co.uk/news/long-reads/indian-temple-captive-elephants-kerala-chained-beaten-whipped-died-modi-a8313696.html
GIST	<p>When Audrey Gaffney first read about Raju, an elephant kept in chains with spikes embedded in his ankles, she couldn't stop the tears pouring down her face. "In fact, I cried again and again: I found over the next few days I just couldn't get this story out of my head, I couldn't stop thinking about Raju," she recalls.</p> <p>"I couldn't believe the cruelty of my race."</p> <p>The young elephant had been snatched from his family, she explains – his mother either would have been killed or spent weeks searching and crying for him – and he was beaten into submission. Raju then spent the next 50 years forced by his handler to beg in the street, starved, frightened and suffering infected wounds to his flesh. By the time of his rescue, he had resorted to eating plastic and paper.</p> <p>Going on to discover that Raju was just one of thousands of elephants treated this way in India, Ms Gaffney, a single mother from Liverpool, was spurred into becoming an activist for the first time. In the four years since, she says, her life has changed beyond recognition as she dropped her wariness of social media and teamed up with other volunteers working to raise awareness of the horrors to which the temple elephants of India are subjected.</p> <p>Taken from their families in the wild, shackled, beaten, whipped and exploited like slaves, these elephants – ironically India's icons – are painted and dressed in colourful decorations, to be paraded in regular festivals and processions organised by religious temples.</p> <p>They are the world's forgotten elephant victims of mankind. While the world has focused on the threat of extinction to Africa's elephants caused by the ivory poaching crisis and the cruelty of tourist elephant rides in Thailand and Cambodia, the plight of their captive counterparts in India has remained largely hidden from public gaze.</p> <p>Photographs and videos posted online have shown how, away from the glitz of the festivals, these sensitive, intelligent and naturally sociable creatures are tied to the spot by ropes or chains that eat into their skin and inflict agonising injuries to their legs; they are hit with metal rods or bullhooks – sharp tools</p>

– and “trained” with punishments to hold their heads high.

When the six-month festival season begins in December, they are forced to walk for miles in searing heat on hot, stinging tar roads and ridden into processions noisy with crowds and fireworks – terrifying for a creature whose home is the forest. While still shackled in chains they are made to run races or carry people, and are subjected to “painful and unnatural” “head-lifting” competitions.

Some elephants are carted from one festival to another – in some cases hundreds of miles – and despite suffering sometimes infected wounds from the chains, are ridden in searing temperatures by people who apparently see no harm in what they do.

The southern coastal state of Kerala has the highest number of festival elephants, about 500 out of 3,500-4,000 across the country. Action for Elephants UK (AfE) brands Kerala “ground zero for elephant torture”, and has called their illegal treatment “the worst case of animal cruelty in the world”. The plight of the 150 captive elephants in neighbouring Tamil Nadu is feared to be just as bad.

Malnourished and deprived of medical care, captive individuals of the endangered species rarely survive this “unrelenting neglect and torture” for a natural lifespan. The mortality rate in Kerala is shocking: 58 have died in 27 months, and already in 2018, 12 have succumbed, according to KSE. In seven years, the death toll is 350. “There could be no more damning proof of the hellish conditions and treatment meted out to these elephants,” says Maria Mossman, founder of AfE.

For all the abuse, injuries and mental torment, it’s not the pain or infections that usually kills them early, it’s “intestinal impactions”: a blocked colon caused by being fed the wrong diet and insufficient quantities of water. The condition means they die “a miserable and painful” early death.

Campaigners have had enough. Gathering outside the Indian High Commission in London, they staged a protest to draw the attention of the New Delhi government and the world at large to the animals’ plight. Wearing large elephant masks and waving placards, they came from a variety of backgrounds; some had travelled hundreds of miles to be there.

What unites these women – and yes, the campaigners are nearly all women – is a shared abhorrence of the “abuse and torture”. They adamantly deny attempting to interfere with religious culture.

“Temple elephants are not part of any tradition,” explains Ms Mossman.

“Their use in temples and festivals is not part of Indian culture, nor do Hindu scriptures anywhere say that elephants should be used in temple rituals. On the contrary, the barbaric treatment of these elephants goes completely against the core beliefs of Hinduism”

In fact, the cruelty behind Kerala’s rituals is thought to have begun about a century ago as India’s nouveaux riches started to buy elephants to flaunt their wealth. Denise Dresner, a co-organiser of AfE, recalls the heart-wrenching moment that opened her eyes to the scale of the problem: “In 2013 I saw a video by Peta of Sunder the temple elephant being beaten. This was something I’d never witnessed before.

“An elephant was on its side on the ground, struggling to get up. His feet were shackled and he was being beaten violently by several men, over and over again. He kept struggling, unable to get away from the blows raining down on him. I learned later he had been kept in a dark shed and beaten incessantly for seven years.

“That moment of seeing him being beaten and tortured was seared into my brain and heart. It’s an image that will never leave me, one that shows the extremes of human violence and brutality towards other living beings. The unspeakable cruelty perpetrated on these majestic, sentient and highly intelligent creatures must end.”

Seeing the photos and hearing the accounts is harrowing. But Ms Mossman says it’s vital if their welfare is

to improve. “The world needs to know how handlers use banned weapons and restrain them with heavy shackles, often tightened so severely that they cut through the flesh, causing raw bleeding wounds that are seldom treated. “They are often forced to stand in the same position 24/7, in their own urine and excrement, suffering from foot rot. They are beaten and tortured time and again.”

Some mahouts think nothing of whipping an elephant to make it bend to his will, such as climbing into a truck. But the abuse doesn't end there.

Most of Kerala's captive elephants are bulls. When they enter their annual musth – mating season – their testosterone levels and energy surge, so the mahouts tighten their shackles further until the creatures are unable to move. In addition, food and water are restricted to weaken them.

But then comes the cruellest torture yet. Several men, often drunken, beat the chained elephant for up to 72 hours relentlessly. The practice is based on a superstitious belief that the elephants may have forgotten their commands during their musth, and is designed to break the elephant's spirit, “reminding him that his masters are in control”.

All bull elephants in Kerala undergo this horror every year.

These practices are banned by the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960 and the Wildlife Protection Act 1972, but campaigners point out that the laws are routinely ignored.

Elephants are paraded with no ownership papers or parade certificates, or with fake fitness certificates, breaking the Wildlife Protection Act 1972, which says they cannot be exploited for profit, AfE says. Recent laws banning the use of disabled, sick or pregnant elephants in festivals are also ignored.

“India has very good laws but they are ignored daily and the abusers go unpunished,” says Ms Mossman. “Not only are elephants intelligent and sentient beings, they are an endangered species. It is the duty not only of India to enforce the laws to protect them, but of the world to hear their cries of suffering and respond to end the brutality against them.”

She and KSE agree that making profits and keeping the status quo are at the root of the problem. “These sentient animals are seen only as commodities, earning huge sums of money for their owners and the temples,” says Ms Mossman. “Exploited under the veneer of culture and religion, they are big business. Everyone, from the chief minister downwards, has a stake.”

The 3,000 temples that rent out elephants to festival organisers are run by four devaswom (socio-religious trusts), appointed by the state government, and each temple earns many millions of rupees from festivals.

Any elephant that makes it beyond 60 is purposely neglected and abused – treated as a disposable item – so the owners can make hefty insurance claims, according to AfE.

Sangita Iyer, who was born and raised in Kerala and made an award-winning 2016 film, *Gods in Shackles*, revealing what goes on behind the scenes at the festivals, is convinced greed is to blame.

“Elephants are allowed to die so the owners can receive the payouts. There's a whole insurance industry surrounding this, in which the owners and brokers make the most profit.”

According to India's Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre, which in 2014 petitioned the Supreme Court of India to order better conditions for the animals, another factor is young men showing off.

“Today's mahouts are in it for the glamour and the thrill. Unlike the mahouts of the old, who learnt the ways of handling the elephants over time, these guys know only oppression and violence,” one rescuer says.

Nor does Ms Iyer particularly blame festival-goers. “Most people are unaware of the crushing burden these elephants carry, in the literal sense, on their backs, and in their hearts and souls. Most people don't

realise the brutality that these sentient beings undergo to entertain them. They are so hypnotised by the majestic, ornate elephants and lost in their own selfish world that they don't even look at the raw bleeding ankles."

However bad the suffering of the individuals, the abuse has wider repercussions. KSE warns it could even lead to the extinction of Indian elephants.

Taking young elephants from the wild has a serious impact on wild elephant populations in India and elsewhere, activists fear. People's lives, too, are being put at risk. Some elephants, driven frantic by their suffering, break free and run amok. Behind media reports of people being killed by a rampaging elephant there almost always lies a story of a brutalised animal.

There have also been 300 incidents of elephants running amok in the first three months of this year. Earlier this month there were unconfirmed reports of elephants running amok at festivals in Ernakulam and Kollam districts. Unofficial counts puts it at 20 incidents in one week.

Action for Elephants is warning prime minister Narendra Modi these rituals are not just harming the country's most iconic wildlife, but also India's multi-million-pound tourism industry and reputation. "We hope tourists and visitors to India will make ethical choices and will shun all forms of elephant tourism that use elephants in any unnatural way, whether in festivals or for trekking or rides or any other purpose," a statement by the group says.

The London demonstration coincided with a visit to London by Mr Modi for the Heads of Commonwealth meeting, who received a letter from activists, pleading for him to enforce its widely flouted anti-cruelty laws. It says: "While we urge you to consider immediate measures to enforce the laws and stop the cruel abuse of these elephants, the end goal is to see the use of elephants in temples phased out altogether.

"In this day and age, when we have gained so much knowledge about the intelligence, emotional capacity, and social bonds of these majestic creatures, and when we know how endangered they are, we believe that all countries have a duty to protect them, treat them humanely, and give them sanctuary."

India is positioned to take a global lead in ethical wildlife tourism, the letter says. Signatories include primatologist Jane Goodall, TV star Michael Palin, author Jilly Cooper, TV presenter Anneka Svenska and radio presenter Nicky Campbell, as well as MP Zac Goldsmith.

Filmmaker Ms Iyer believes educating the public is the only way to achieve change. "Ignorance and arrogance make for a bad potion, and unless and until we are able to create attitude shifts in the public eye, there's little hope for these sentient beings.

"There is no point in fighting the owners or brokers. Enlightening the people is the only way to stop the audience from participating in festivals that use live elephants, and reduce demand for such cultural festivals. When the demand dies down, the elephants will be ultimately phased out."

The Indian High Commission in London did not respond to a request by The Independent to comment and refused to send anybody to open the door when visited in person.

There are some glimmers of hope, however. Occasionally, news of progress made by welfare workers on the ground emerges, and an elephant rescue can become a stand-out memory for followers. The film that startled Ms Gaffney was called Raju the Elephant Cried on the Day he was Released from Chains. His rescue made headlines.

Ms Dresner says she followed each step in a protracted legal case to free Sunder with her heart in her throat. "Finally, when he was freed, the joy was overwhelming. Like so many others, I then followed his progress in his new home at Bannerghatta Biological Park, crying (happily) with every bit of good news: his healing leg, his first swim in the pond, his making new friends, his putting weight on his skeletal frame."

Fellow demonstrator Joanne Smith agrees. “The terrible delays with the court case were so hard to take but the day Sunder was given his freedom was thrilling,” she recalls. “It proved to me that we can make a difference with hard work and determination.”

In the past two years, three temples have done away with renting elephants for festivals. One used mechanical stand-in; another used an 8ft dummy made of plaster of Paris and bamboo. Organisers say they may even offer the model to neighbouring temples for their own festivals, allowing the idea to catch on.

The London protest and letter also have the support of Absolutely Fabulous star Joanna Lumley, whose message was: “One of the most influential Indians of all time, Mahatma Gandhi, said: ‘The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.’

“India! Listen to his words and implement them. The world supports your laws against cruelties to temple elephants, but only you can ensure that they are enforced.”

And that, say campaigners, really would be worth a celebration.

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HEADLINE	04/20 Chemical weapons coverup suspected
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/chemical-weapons-coverup-suspected-in-syria-as-inspectors-remain-blocked/2018/04/20/1ca0f164-440a-11e8-b2dc-b0a403e4720a_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.66664b1e5b8f
GIST	<p>BEIRUT — In the two weeks since the Syrian city of Douma was struck by a suspected chemical weapons attack, the area has had many visitors.</p> <p>First, it was Russian military police, fanning out across the area after five years of rebel control. Next came the Syrian army, and then journalists traipsed through, examining the alleged blast sites and interviewing survivors.</p> <p>But one thing was missing: the weapons inspectors who arrived in Syria last week to establish what really happened in Douma.</p> <p>Six days later, they are still demanding full and secure access to the site, a delay that has sharpened suspicions among local residents and Western governments that Syrian and Russian authorities are using each day that passes for a coverup.</p> <p>People present in Douma said Syrian and Russian military officials have blocked off and repeatedly entered the sites and medical facilities that the international Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is expected to comb for evidence.</p> <p>On Thursday, the United States said it had credible information to suggest that Syria and Russia were working to delay the OPCW mission to Douma as their forces removed evidence that a chemical attack had taken place.</p> <p>“Russian officials have worked with the Syrian regime, we believe, to sanitize the locations of the suspected attacks and remove incriminating evidence of chemical weapons use,” said Heather Nauert, spokeswoman for the State Department.</p> <p>The United States joined France and Britain in launching military action last week against sites linked to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s chemical weapons program, following the deaths of at least 43 people in the Douma attack.</p> <p>Witnesses described a smell of chlorine in the air, and video footage from the site of the deadliest strike</p>

showed men, women and children who appeared to have died foaming at the mouth, a symptom that could indicate exposure to a nerve agent.

Assad's government denies using chemical weapons, and Russia has offered competing explanations for the chaotic scenes of April 7, first denying that an attack took place, then saying it had been staged by rebels.

"In these international investigations, you find a whole bunch of stakeholders who have significant power but might not want the truth to come out, or they may want their version of the truth to come out," said Jerry Smith, a risk consultant who participated in earlier OPCW missions to Syria.

As inspectors continue to demand access to Douma, the likelihood that they will be able to detect chemical traces is diminishing by the day, according to experts.

Alastair W.M. Hay, a toxicologist and professor at the University of Leeds, said that chlorine was likely to have vanished from the site and that any traces found in the biomedical samples of victims were likely to be inconclusive because chlorine appears naturally in the body.

Remnants of a nerve agent also would be increasingly difficult to find, he said, although they could be detectable in the samples of living victims or exhumed bodies.

"It could also still be stuck in the walls or on nearby rocks, as long as there was no attempt to try and remove them," he said.

Residents say they worry that Syrian authorities and their Russian allies are whitewashing the history of April 7.

"They asked us not to talk about anything. There was a direct warning," said a man who said his sister died in the attack and who spoke on the condition of anonymity out of fear for his safety. "Evidence has been erased. There is no evidence."

Days after the Syrian government reestablished its hold on the area, doctors appeared on state media outlets denying the attack had taken place.

In interviews with The Washington Post, residents confirmed that the doctors were present in medical facilities on the night of the alleged chemical attacks. The residents noted that these doctors were later questioned by security officials, and several people, who indicated that those exchanges were described to them, said the doctors were pressured into publicly denying that an attack occurred.

Several residents said the doctors initially were treated well, even being offered a meal with a Syrian security official before they were told to deny the attack on camera.

Then the pressure increased. Ghanem Tayara, director of the Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations, a group that operated in the area, said the doctors were interrogated one by one and efforts were made to ensure they had not hidden any biomedical samples.

"Their houses have been raided by police and regime forces who have checked carefully to make sure no one has hidden any samples. Their phones have been checked for any messages suggesting that there was a chemical attack, and even their families have been interrogated," he said.

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HEADLINE	04/20 Inmate promised to kill self; did so in jail
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/2018/04/suicide-jail-did-photographer-michael-clinard-have-die
GIST	It was clear that Michael Clinard was in a bad way long before that fatal day last July in the King County

Jail. It was clear even before a Bothell municipal court judge remanded him into custody for repeatedly violating a domestic violence protection order and he made a grim vow.

“I won’t live that long,” Clinard shouted at the judge, according to a prosecutor’s court filing. “I don’t intend to live past another two weeks. You just signed my death warrant, bitch!” He then head-butted the guard who tried to escort him out of the courtroom and tried to grab the guard’s taser, adding an assault charge to his rap sheet.

Clinard, a photographer who was once a rising star on the local and national magazine scenes, made good on his threat in all but one particular. Three, not two, weeks later, fellow inmates told the deck officer overseeing the county jail’s eighth floor that Clinard was lying motionless on the floor of his unlocked cell. According to a Seattle Police Department investigation of the incident, the officer initially thought the inmates “were joking with him” and did not check on Clinard for six minutes. (However, that officer’s written statement and the King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Corrections’ own investigation stated that the officer responded in just one minute.)

Officers, medical staff and EMTs scrambled to save Clinard. They found a strip of cloth torn from a bedsheet around his neck; his face was swollen and purple, and blood pooled around him, apparently as a result of striking his head as he fell. They cut the cloth away, inserted an air tube, performed extended CPR, applied a defibrillator and gave him two epinephrine shots before finally giving up. Investigators declared his death a suicide.

Suicide is an occasional — good statistics on frequency are lacking — tragedy at the jail; psychological distress is an everyday fact of life. The King County Jail has long been described as the state’s “second-largest mental hospital” after Western State Hospital in Lakewood — except that the jail is hardly staffed or equipped to operate as a hospital. Its psychiatric unit, which serves both the Regional Justice Center in Kent and the downtown jail, has just 141 beds. King County Corrections recently identified 269 inmates (out of a total of 1,945 at the two facilities) suffering from serious mental illness. A county study several years ago found that a much larger share, about a quarter to a third, were receiving psychiatric care such as supervised medication.

This burden reflects a chronic shortfall in state resources for the mentally ill, even the resources to conduct something as basic as evaluations to determine whether arrested suspects are competent to stand trial. “More and more people with mental illness are in jail because of lack of community services,” says Kim Molsof, an attorney with the watchdog organization Disability Rights Washington.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, people experience mental-health crises “are more likely to encounter police than get medical help,” and two million are booked into jails each year. Here in Washington, as in other states, jails wind up coping with government and society’s failures to meet the needs of the mentally ill: the failure to fund community health services after patients were cleared out of state hospitals in the 1960s and ’70s; the failure to provide housing for the needy; even Washington state’s failure to provide timely competency assessments to determine whether defendants are competent to stand trial and provide the treatment needed to stabilize them and restore competency.

A 2012 state law set a target of seven days (later increased to 14) for the state — in practice, Western State Hospital — to perform competency evaluations and take in inmates needing treatment. But a persistent backlog of these “psychiatric boarders” languishes in jailhouse limbo, sometimes waiting longer, the deputy director of the Public Defender Association told the Seattle Times, than they would spend in jail if they had been tried and sentenced. In 2014, the public defenders sued the state Department of Social and Health Services, charging that this psychiatric boarding violated detainees’ rights to due process and exacerbated their mental problems. In 2015 a federal judge agreed and began fining the state for failing to comply, racking up total penalties of \$50 million. Disability Rights Washington has taken over the suit, now established as a class action and commonly known as the Trueblood case. It has become the mental-health equivalent of the McCleary decision on state education funding.

This year, Disability Rights Washington and partner groups worked out a plan to help counties establish

diversion programs to bypass that logjam and provide mentally ill inmates other treatment. Thirteen programs are due to start up around the state this summer. Meanwhile, the logjam continues. Last month, at Crosscut's request, King County crunched the numbers and found that 34 inmate patients had been waiting up to 186 days at the King County Jail for beds to open at Western State so they could receive restorative treatment.

Inmate suicide is something the county works strenuously to prevent. Starting at intake, Jail Health Services, a division of the King County Department of Health that provides mental health services and other health care in the jail, maintains a multi-tiered series of screenings, evaluations and assignment protocols intended to sift out inmates at risk and funnel them to the right care and oversight. Corrections and medical staff alike are supposed to be trained in suicide prevention. Somehow, Michael Clinard slipped through the screens.

The process, spelled out in a suite of Jail Health Services policies, procedures and forms, starts even before inmates are booked into the jail. When police deliver a new inmate, corrections officers perform a brief "deferral screening." If they find any of 26 listed physical conditions — from bleeding and shakes to diabetes and pregnancy — or observe "severely agitated/irrational behavior," they are directed to call in a registered nurse, who will decide whether to "defer" the inmate to a hospital. They also ask whether the inmate is "suicidal now" or has attempted suicide in the past 12 months, and whether the transport officers heard any suicide talk on the way down.

The deferral screening form filled out for Clinard shows that when Bothell police officers delivered him to the downtown jail on June 12, they passed along word of his outburst to the judge just an hour or so earlier. An intake officer noted this with minimizing detachment — "Suicidal statements were made in court today" — but also noted that Clinard was not suicidal now and had not tried to kill himself in the past year.

Even that minimal note should have raised a red flag, say experts familiar with jail mental-health screening and treatment procedures. Any indication of suicidal intent is supposed to be enough to send inmates to a psychiatric unit, where they will be monitored every 15 minutes or less — constantly, if they're deemed at acute risk — and receive close evaluation and treatment. Often merely unburdening themselves in that evaluation lifts the cloud and dissipates suicidal intentions, says one expert who asked not to be named.

"The protocol is that anyone who says they are suicidal or engages in self-harm behavior will be placed on suicide watch," says Nancy Whitney, mental health director at the South Correctional Entity (SCORE), a privately operated 600-bed jail near Seatac that serves several local municipalities. The exception, says Whitney, is inmates who are "detoxing and just miserable" and moan that they wish they were dead; they get detox treatment instead. Even when medical staff suspect inmates are faking suicidal intent to get meds, they put them on suicide watch, she adds. "You don't want them to escalate by harming themselves. You don't want them to take a dive off the stairs to get opiates."

Likewise at the King County Jail, says Disability Rights Washington attorney Molsof: "I think the jail errs on the side of caution. Even when an inmate makes a comment and then says, 'I take it back,' they tend to put them on close watch." Still, she notes, "no system is perfect."

Following booking, Clinard would have undergone a more extensive screening by an intake nurse, who would have reviewed his deferral screening and medical records and checked for other risk factors, such as suicidal ideation and recent psychiatric treatment. That screening's exact findings are shielded by health-privacy law, pending consent to their release by next of kin. But it clearly did not identify him as a suicide risk.

King County Health officials say they cannot comment on Clinard's case because of that law. But their spokesman James Apa did provide this general statement: "Our jail health care providers and support staff are saddened anytime someone loses their life while in our care. We constantly work to provide a high standard of care for people in the jail facing a wide variety of physical and behavioral health needs, including those suffering from mental distress.

	<p>“We have strong protocols for suicide prevention and continually train to them, both for Jail Health and Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention staff.”</p> <p>Despite those protocols, Clinard’s violent, vehement vow to take his own life fell off the radar. He was placed in the jail’s general population rather than in its seventh-floor psych unit.</p> <p>And so he brooded and bided his time. And then he did just what he said he was going to do.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 Worker gets 50yrs for fajita theft
SOURCE	http://www.brownsvilleherald.com/news/local/former-county-employee-sentenced-to-years-for-fajita-theft/article_f5502fd0-4512-11e8-82b2-1b06c0be097c.html
GIST	<p>A former Cameron County juvenile detention center employee said he started out stealing small amounts of fajitas bought with county funds, but his scheme soon ballooned, spinning out of control.</p> <p>“I feel horrible. I wish I could take this back. It was selfish,” 53-year-old Gilberto Escamilla said during his sentencing hearing Friday morning. “It started small and got bigger and out of control. It got to a point where I couldn’t control it anymore.”</p> <p>Escamilla pleaded guilty Friday to theft by a public servant in front of visiting State District Judge J. Manuel Bañales, who sentenced the man to 50 years in prison. The judge dismissed an additional theft charge after the sentencing.</p> <p>Members of the Cameron County District Attorney’s Office Special Investigations Unit arrested Escamilla last year after a driver from Labatt Food Service in Harlingen called the detention center’s kitchen to let employees know their 800-pound delivery of fajitas arrived. Minor inmates at the DarrelB.HesterJuvenileDetentionCenter are not served fajitas.</p> <p>The total value of the fajitas, which were stolen during a nine-year period, was \$1,251,578. That figure does not include the brisket, pork chops, sausage and various types of chicken Escamilla also admitted to stealing, court testimony revealed.</p> <p>Cameron County Assistant District Attorney Peter Gilman asked Bañales to sentence Escamilla to five decades in prison because of the amount of county money stolen, because Escamilla was a public servant and to send a message, while Escamilla’s attorneys asked Bañales to consider probation or at most five years in prison, adding that the man should be given a chance to repay the stolen taxpayer funds.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/22 Report: woman fined for Delta apple
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/04/22/woman-fined-delta-apple/540655002/
GIST	<p>A woman who saved the in-flight apple she got on a Delta Air Lines flight says she was fined \$500 after passing through U.S. Customs and Border Patrol with the fruit in her bag.</p> <p>Crystal Tadlock was traveling from Paris back to the U.S. when toward the end of her flight, a Delta flight attendant passed out apples, she told KDVR, a local FOX affiliate in Colorado. She said she wasn't hungry and decided to save the snack for the last leg of her trip back to Denver.</p> <p>She was randomly stopped going through Customs, she said, and an agent found the piece of fruit, which was inside a plastic bag with Delta's logo on it.</p> <p>"He had asked me if my trip to France was expensive and I said, 'yeah.' I didn't really get why he was</p>

asking that question, and then he said 'It's about to get a lot more expensive after I charge you \$500,'" Tadlock told KDVR.

The KDVR report didn't specify where the Customs search occurred or what date it happened.

She asked if she could just throw the apple out or eat it but said the agent handed her a \$500 fine. Tadlock said she's frustrated about the ticket and that Delta did not warn passengers about not taking the food off the plane.

"It's really unfortunate someone has to go through that and be treated like a criminal over a piece of fruit," she told KDVR.

When contacted by USA TODAY, a Delta spokesperson would not comment specifically on the incident but said the company encourage its customers "to adhere to Customs and Border Protection policies and requirements."

U.S. Customs said in a statement that the agency does not discuss details of specific inspections but "all agriculture items must be declared" and penalties can be as high as \$1,000.

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HEADLINE	04/21 Canada hid warnings of ISIS returnees
SOURCE	http://dailycaller.com/2018/04/21/trudeau-government-hid-warnings-isis/
GIST	<p>The Trudeau government removed all references to ISIS fighters returning to Canada and posing a potential chemical weapons threat from a government report, despite warnings from its own public safety department.</p> <p>According to documents obtained by Global News through an Access to Information request, the Liberal government redacted the final version of a Public Safety Canada report on the potential domestic terrorism threats of returning ISIS members.</p> <p>The sanitized result was the 2017 "Public Report on the Terrorist Threat to Canada."</p> <p>Instead, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has insisted the ISIS fighters can be rehabilitated and returned to Canadian society. At one town hall meeting, he compared them to the post-Second World War immigrants arriving from Italy.</p> <p>But Public Safety Canada was less sanguine, stating that ISIS was known for its use of chlorine and mustard gas in Syria</p> <p>"While the threat of a chemical attack in Canada is considered remote, there continues to be a potential risk of extremist travelers returning to Canada, having gained knowledge of the use of crude chemical weapons," Public Safety Canada wrote.</p> <p>The original public safety report is replete with margin notations from the Privy Council Office — a tightly-knit group of government insiders — that seek to minimize the danger that returning ISIS members pose to Canadian society</p> <p>One note suggests the information on chemical weapons is "speculative" and says ISIS was "more proficient" in high explosives.</p> <p>The federal government has admitted that 100 Islamic extremists departed Canada to fight for ISIS directly. Another 60 are said to have joined related Islamic extremist terrorist groups.</p> <p>Although the public safety document acknowledges that "robust domestic controls" alleviate concerns</p>

	<p>over a chemical weapons attack in Canada, it also suggests that ISIS has demonstrated a profound ability to improvise when planning terrorist actions.</p> <p>“...Daesh’s [ISIS] known use of commercially available toxic industrial chemicals in attacks is indicative of the group’s ability to use any means available,” the documents read.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/21 Tacoma PD patrol cars shot at
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/tacoma-police-investigate-after-someone-shot-at-their-patrol-cars
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. -- Tacoma police are investigating after someone shot at their patrol cars Saturday morning.</p> <p>The incident happened at 7400 Pacific Avenue at the Fred Meyer in Tacoma.</p> <p>Thankfully, no officers were hit by the bullets and the patrol cars were not damaged.</p> <p>Police say they looked for the suspect but couldn't find anyone.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/21 Alarm: Great Barrier Reef dying
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/scope-great-barrier-reef-s-massive-coral-bleaching-alarms-scientists-n867521
GIST	<p>Australia's Great Barrier Reef is heralded for its biodiversity: The colorful clusters of coral and wisps of islands stretch 1,400 miles, home to white and orange clown fish, the blacktip shark, humpback whales and hundreds of other species.</p> <p>But those clear blue-green waters are also changing faster than previously thought, according to a new study in the journal Nature, worrying scientists who say the survival of the Great Barrier Reef and other ecosystems like it is crucial for the planet.</p> <p>"There's huge trouble in paradise," said Craig Downs, a biologist who studies dying coral in Hawaii.</p> <p>At the Great Barrier Reef — considered one of the Earth's largest living structures — about half of the coral died in 2016 and 2017 because of record extreme heat, a result of climate change driven by greenhouse gas emissions, the researchers found.</p> <p>Historically, coral deaths were at a smaller 5 percent to 10 percent.</p> <p>Other research has estimated that 90 percent of the world's corals could be dead as soon as 2050.</p> <p>Australia's weather bureau said 2017 was the country's third-hottest year on record, and the scorching temperatures came despite the lack of an El Niño system that normally brings warmer weather.</p> <p>Scientists are concerned that the colonies of coral that make up the Great Barrier Reef have been damaged to a point where they won't bounce back. If corals remain in too-warm water they turn white — a process known as bleaching — and can potentially die.</p> <p>"It's quite challenging to witness the severity of this bleaching — it's the worst we've ever seen," Terry Hughes, director of a government-funded center for coral reef studies at James Cook University in Australia and the lead author of the study, told Nature.</p> <p>He said that while some types of coral died, others survived — indicating the make up of the reef is</p>

	<p>undergoing a remarkable transformation.</p> <p>"Losing a lot of corals has a broader ecological impact: species that eat the corals lose their food source; fish that would hide in the corals become more susceptible to predation from sharks," Hughes added.</p> <p>There's more at stake for humans as well when reefs — whether they're in Australia, Hawaii, the Caribbean or another tropical destination — are on the brink of being wiped out.</p> <p>Loss of coral reef ecosystems should be a major concern to people, even if they live a long way from them, said Nick Graham, a marine ecologist at Lancaster University in England.</p> <p>"Coral reefs house over a quarter of all marine biodiversity, so anyone who cares about biodiversity and extinction needs to worry about the future of coral reefs," he said. "They also provide food and livelihoods to hundreds of millions of people, so anyone who cares about food security and migration needs to care about the future of coral reefs."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/21 Saudis down 'toy drone' near palaces
SOURCE	https://www.yahoo.com/news/saudi-forces-shoot-down-toy-drone-over-riyadh-214154640.html
GIST	<p>Riyadh (AFP) - Saudi forces on Saturday shot down an unidentified toy drone that hovered over a Riyadh neighbourhood home to royal palaces, state media said, prompting a security alarm in the capital.</p> <p>"At 1950 (1650 GMT) a security checkpoint in Khuzama neighbourhood of Riyadh spotted a recreational remote-controlled drone," the Saudi Press Agency reported.</p> <p>"Security personnel at the checkpoint dealt with it according to their orders and instructions in this regard," SPA added, implying that the drone had been shot down.</p> <p>The statement followed unconfirmed videos on social media that appeared to show heavy volleys of gunfire in that neighbourhood, triggering speculation of a possible coup attempt.</p> <p>But the government ruled out any major security breach, adding that an investigation had been launched into the incident.</p> <p>Government officials did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the whereabouts of the Saudi king and crown prince during the incident.</p> <p>Security around the palaces appears to have tightened in recent months as powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman oversees landmark social and economic reforms to prepare for a post-oil era, despite the risk of riling religious hardliners.</p> <p>The 32-year-old prince has also overseen a major military shake-up and a royal purge as he consolidates power to a degree well beyond that wielded by previous rulers.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/21 San Diego could face driest year ever
SOURCE	http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/weather/sd-me-dry-year-20180410-story.html
GIST	<p>San Diego has been exceptionally dry this year. Storm after storm has avoided or barely brushed the region.</p> <p>Will this go down as the driest year in city history?</p> <p>It's a real possibility, although a bit of a longshot. The city has been this dry so late in the season only one</p>

other time since 1850, when rainfall records began in town.

The odds of breaking the dryness record are long, because there are still more than five months left in the season. But stranger things have happened.

Given the current rain-robbing, storm-deflecting weather pattern that stretches back 10 months and the city's rainfall history, this could be the year when the longshot comes in.

The vast majority of the years, by this time, San Diego has already blown way past 3.33 inches of rain, the total in 2001-02, the record dry year. Average rainfall through April 30 is 9.95 inches; average for the entire rainfall year, which ends Sept. 30, is 10.34 inches.

This year, the season total after Thursday's brief morning shower is just 3.19 inches. Only 2001-02, with 3.02 inches at the end of April, was drier.

To break the dryness record, the city would have to get no more than 0.13 of an inch of rain between now and the end of September.

Could it happen? There's precedent. Seven times the rainfall total during that stretch was that low or even lower.

Three times the city has gone at least 164 days, starting in April and continuing the entire summer, without any rain at all. The city's longest dry spell, 182 days, began on April 17, 2004, and it didn't end until Oct. 16 that year.

The forecast

The Climate Prediction Center, which makes long-range forecasts, sees no tilt toward either dry nor wet for Southern California as the summer approaches. But San Diego's averages during the summer months are virtually zero, said Mike Halpert, the center's deputy director.

Under El Niño conditions, when the waters in the equatorial Pacific turn abnormally warm, the chances of San Diego getting summer rain from the remnants of a tropical storm off the west coast of Mexico increase. But the prediction center doesn't expect El Niño to emerge over the summer, Halpert said.

For the shorter term, through the next 10 days or so, no storms are on the horizon.

Annual dry run

San Diego is on the cusp of its annual, long dry stretch, which often starts in late spring and lasts until early fall. April is the transition month. Storms from the north usually still arrive, but they are generally less frequent and weaker.

Until last Thursday, San Diego had recorded no rain at all in April. Thursday's total was just 0.01 of an inch.

The dry pattern emerged last year. San Diego had its driest June-through-December period on record. January and early March brought some rain, but both were drier than normal.

In late March, it went back to extremely dry, at least locally.

San Diego was initially forecast to be on the southern fringe of strong storm systems hitting California, but eventually the city missed out on even the fringe. A couple of "atmospheric rivers," long plumes of moisture a couple of hundred miles wide and more than a thousand miles long, drenched areas to the north but left San Diego alone.

“With the last couple of atmospheric rivers, the long-range forecasts looked promising,” National Weather Service forecaster Mark Moede said. “But with each succeeding forecast model run, the rivers shifted farther north.

“We had been hyping it (the last atmospheric river) days in advance, and it ended up being a non-event.”

What caused those plumes of moisture to stay far from San Diego is the question.

In the normal weather pattern, a ridge of high pressure in the eastern Pacific, roughly west of the southern tip of Baja California, waxes and wanes as storms drop down from the north Pacific and move east across the continent.

This year, it appears that subtropical high amplified, Moede said, and that could have helped repel the storms from Southern California.

The last two weeks, a series of storms, weaker than the ones that soaked California in March, continued to deliver more rain and mountain snow in Northern California. Again, San Diego remained on the outside looking in.

Making it through April with very little rain is key to breaking the record. After April, which averages 0.78 of an inch in San Diego, the monthly rainfall averages drop way off. And those small averages are inflated by the rare, wet month.

About a third of the years, May has recorded 0.04 of an inch or less. In June, about three-fourths of years had 0.04 or less. Most of the city’s Julys, Augusts and Septembers have recorded no rain at all.

September can catch early winter storms, but only one September in the last 13 years recorded more than a tenth of inch of rain.

The Climate Prediction Center’s Halpert said it’s not too hard to break daily records for temperature or rainfall, but topping a record for an entire year is difficult. Even with the current dry trends and past long dry stretches, the odds are long that San Diego’s will break the dryness record this year.

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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	04/22 Deadly shooting Seattle neighborhood
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/963088/officers-investigating-deadly-seattle-neighborhood-shooting/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — Seattle police say they are investigating a shooting that left one man dead.</p> <p>According to law enforcement officials, police officers responded early Sunday morning to a report of a shooting in the Ballard neighborhood.</p> <p>Officers say they found a 29-year-old man with a gunshot wound to the chest. Officers performed CPR, but the man — whose name has not been released — died on the way to the hospital.</p> <p>Officials are investigating the incident.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 WSP sex sting rescues 5 victims
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/wsp-sex-sting-rescues-5-trafficking-survivors/281-543338767

GIST	<p>The Washington State Patrol continue their ongoing busts targeting human trafficking along I-5.</p> <p>Investigators set up shop Tuesday afternoon at the Love’s Truck Stop in Lewis County. An undercover detective went online posing as someone who wanted to meet a woman for sex.</p> <p>Five women, each escorted by a man, showed up at the truck stop over the course of six hours. All ten were arrested, but investigators released the women after determining they were victims of sex traffickers.</p> <p>Jeri Moomaw runs an advocacy organization for trafficking survivors in Olympia and says most woman, and some men, get forced into work when they’re teens.</p> <p>“If they don’t have a stable support system to surround them, they’re so much more vulnerable. I hear it over and over and over again,” said Moomaw.</p> <p>Moomaw is grateful the state patrol is increasing its undercover efforts, but she says the industry will only truly suffer when the culture changes, “This is not the oldest profession... it’s the oldest oppression.”</p> <p>WSP says advocates from the FBI were on hand Tuesday to provide victims with food, water, and support services.</p> <p>Tuesday was WSP’s second operation in 2018.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 Lakewood gang prostitution ring
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article209499509.html
GIST	<p>A 19-year-old Pierce County man became the 10th person charged in connection to a Lakewood gang’s prostitution ring Thursday, according to court records.</p> <p>Adam Thomas Simmons Jr. pleaded not guilty at arraignment Friday to conspiracy to commit first-degree human trafficking and second-degree promoting prostitution.</p> <p>Court Commissioner Meagan Foley set bail at \$500,000.</p> <p>Charging papers give this account:</p> <p>Simmons allegedly paid for motel rooms, set up advertisements, and collected money as part of the operation, along with the others involved.</p> <p>Facebook messages between Simmons and the others indicated his involvement.</p> <p>Prosecutors started charging suspects last year, after a Lakewood police investigator listened to jail phone calls of the gang’s self-proclaimed leader, Matthew Holt.</p> <p>Some victims the gang trafficked for sex were underage, include one who was 13.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 Florida deputies shot, killed in restaurant
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/deputies-shot-through-restaurant-window-sheriff-blames-hate-n867746
GIST	<p>The official story about how two Florida sheriff’s deputies were gunned down in a Chinese restaurant shifted slightly Friday when a deputy standing in for Gilchrist County Sheriff Bobby Schultz announced that they were shot inside the eatery — not through the window as officials had first reported.</p>

"We know now that the assailant went inside the building and assaulted and killed them," said Lt. Scott Tummond, who works for the Levy County Sheriff's Office.

Tummond, who said he had a "work history" with one of the slain men, Sgt. Noel Ramirez of the Gilchrist County Sheriff's Office, also confirmed that the suspected shooter, 59-year-old John Hubert Highnote, killed himself after fatally shooting the deputies.

"We have no information right now that our officers were able to return fire," Tummond said. "No officers engaged with the assailant."

The Levy and Gilchrist departments patrol two neighboring counties just west of Gainesville, Florida. Tummond addressed reporters in front of the Ace China restaurant in the town of Trenton, where Ramirez and Deputy Taylor Lindsey were killed Thursday afternoon.

The front windows of the restaurant did not appear to be blown out.

When asked why he was presiding over the news conference, an emotional Tummond said Schultz was grieving with his family. He said they still don't have a motive.

"Gilchrist has no idea what drove this man to this cowardly act," Tummond said. "I don't believe the Gilchrist County Sheriff's Office has any history with this gentleman."

Other than being cited for making an improper turn in 2012, Highnote has nothing on his record in Gilchrist County.

But Highnote was arrested back in 1978 by police in Pinellas County, Florida, on a charge of carrying a concealed weapon, a case that was eventually dismissed, records show. He was also arrested for domestic violence in 1993 and for criminal mischief in 1994.

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HEADLINE	04/21 India: death penalty for child rapists
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/04/21/india-approves-death-penalty-child-rapists/538932002/
GIST	<p>The Indian government approved a new measure on Saturday that will prescribe capital punishment for anyone convicted of raping children under the age of 12. The move came after Prime Minister Narendra Modi called an emergency Cabinet meeting in the wake of a series of cases that sparked outrage and protest across the country.</p> <p>The recent rape and murder of and an 8-year-old girl in Jammu-Kashmir state brought the matter of sexual violence against minors back into the national spotlight as locals accused the ruling Hindu nationalist party of siding with the perpetrator, as the victim was Muslim.</p> <p>A similar incident occurred around the same time, when a girl was allegedly raped by a ruling party lawmaker in Uttar Pradesh state.</p> <p>Nine suspects, including a politician and four police officials have been arrested in connection with the two cases.</p> <p>Modi has been accused of failing to act quickly enough after the girls were attacked.</p> <p>Strict new laws New Delhi is trying once again to crack down on rampant violence against girls and women, having already passed strict new laws in 2013. At that time, lawmakers were responding to the gang rape and</p>

	<p>murder of a young woman on a bus in the capital that led to a global outcry.</p> <p>The new laws included doubling the prison sentence for rape to 2 years and criminalizing voyeurism and stalking.</p> <p>Lawyer Abha Singh welcomed Saturday's measure, and said it would probably help deter men from attacking girls or women. However, she urged the government to do something about the notoriously backed-up Indian justice system, which currently has 30 million pending cases.</p> <p>"The conviction rate in rape cases in India was only 28%, implying that 72 out of 100 suspects are going unpunished," she was quoted by the Associated Press as saying.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 Gunmen shoot up Cancun tourist zone
SOURCE	https://nypost.com/2018/04/20/water-scooter-gunmen-shoot-up-beach-in-cancuns-tourist-zone/
GIST	<p>CANCUN, Mexico — Gunmen on water scooters shot at a roving vendor on a beach in Cancun's glittering hotel zone Thursday, an incident believed to be unprecedented for the Caribbean city. Nobody was wounded.</p> <p>According to a police report, the afternoon shooting happened in front of a hotel in the heart of Cancun's resort-studded strip.</p> <p>The vendor ran for safety inside a restaurant and was not hurt. Tourist police cordoned off the area and recovered four bullets but were not able to locate the intended target.</p> <p>Cancun — especially its tourist areas — has largely been spared the worst of the cartel-fueled violence afflicting many other parts of Mexico.</p> <p>But there have been a number of eye-catching incidents of late as gangs fight for control of local drug dealing, and the city has registered 130 murders so far this year.</p> <p>Also Thursday, police reported that three people were slain outside a bar located away from the hotel zone.</p> <p>Cancun police have no record of any prior attack involving personal watercraft in the city, though assailants have been known to use the vehicles in Acapulco, on the other side of the country. In 2016, a gunman killed a sarong vendor on the beach there and then fled on a water scooter.</p> <p>Earlier this week, a man was killed on Acapulco's Caletilla beach in a shooting that authorities attributed to a dispute over local drug sales, just the latest in a string of violent incidents in the city's coastal tourist zones.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 Bothell: driver purposely hit 2; misses 3
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/driver-intentionally-hit-2-pedestrians-bothell-police-say/281-543832715
GIST	<p>Bothell police are trying to figure out why a man intentionally drove into two pedestrians and tried to hit three others Friday evening.</p> <p>Police say the man drove straight toward a couple walking across a sidewalk on 101st Avenue NE. The suspect hit one person and continued driving.</p> <p>The driver turned onto Main Street and hit another woman before turning onto State Route 527, attempting</p>

	<p>to hit several more people that were able to jump out of the way.</p> <p>The first woman struck is in serious condition and the second is expected to be OK.</p> <p>Police say two witnesses saw the suspect driving on the wrong side of the road and began following in their vehicle, honking to get attention. Bothell officers were nearby responding to a separate traffic incident and quickly intervened.</p> <p>Capt. Mike Johnson says the driver admitted to hitting the pedestrians, telling police he did so on purpose.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 Ex-Mexico governor extradited to US
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mexico-governor-extradited-us-face-drug-charges-54621689?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The former governor of the Mexican border state of Tamaulipas has been extradited from Italy to the United States to face charges of racketeering, drug smuggling, money laundering and bank fraud, federal officials announced Friday.</p> <p>Italy extradited Tomas Yarrington Ruvalcaba after detaining him on April 8 on the warrant from the United States.</p> <p>From 1999 to February 2005, Ruvalcaba was governor of Tamaulipas, which is one of Mexico's most violent states and borders Texas to the north and the Gulf of Mexico to the east.</p> <p>Prosecutors say Yarrington, 61, received millions of dollars in bribes since 1998 from the Gulf Cartel and in return allowed traffickers to bring large amounts of cocaine into the U.S. The payments started when he was a candidate for governor of Tamaulipas and continued after the end of his tenure in December 2004, according to the indictment.</p> <p>The indictment also alleges that from 2007 to 2009, Yarrington became involved in drug trafficking.</p> <p>Prosecutors also allege that Yarrington collected bribes from commercial operations and was involved in the acquisition of valuable assets in the U.S., such as bank accounts and residences. The indictment says that toward the end of his stint as governor, Yarrington acquired stolen public funds that were later used to buy a private jet.</p> <p>Another man who was indicted with Yarrington — Fernando Cano Martinez, also 61, who remains a fugitive — is accused of paying bribes to Yarrington in exchange for public works contracts for his construction firm. One way he would pay bribes is by purchasing real estate for Yarrington using front names.</p> <p>U.S. authorities have won civil forfeiture claims on a fully furnished beachfront apartment in South Padre Island, Texas, as well as a private plane, a \$2 million house in McAllen and cash in a Bermuda account. Proceeds from seizures routinely go to law enforcement agencies involved in the cases.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/21 Armenia: 70 arrests in massive protests
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/armenia-protests-70-arrested-including-suspected-bombers-54630894
GIST	<p>Armenian authorities say more than 70 people have been arrested, including two people suspected of building bombs, as large protests against the new government enter their second week in the capital.</p>

	<p>Thousands of demonstrators on Saturday closed off streets in Yerevan during a march pressing demands for the prime minister to resign. Former President Serzh Sargsyan was named premier this week as Armenia transitioned to a new system of government that reduces the presidency's power and bolsters the prime minister role. Opponents say the shift effectively makes Sargsyan Armenia's leader for life.</p> <p>The national security service said two people with opposition connections were arrested for preparing bombings in public places. Police, meanwhile, said at least 70 demonstrators were detained.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/21 Arrest in Fla. high school shooting
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/injured-florida-high-school-shooting-suspect-custody-officials/story?id=54608040
GIST	<p>A suspect was taken into custody Friday following a shooting at a high school in central Florida, authorities said.</p> <p>Gunshots broke out Friday morning at Forest High School in Ocala, some 38 miles south of Gainesville.</p> <p>Within minutes, a school resource officer on campus found a 17-year-old student who had sustained non-life-threatening injuries. The officer also located the suspected shooter, identified as a 19-year-old male who is not a student at the school, according to Marion County Sheriff Billy Woods.</p> <p>The suspect was taken into custody without incident, and the wounded student was transported to a local hospital for treatment, the sheriff told reporters at a news conference Friday afternoon.</p> <p>Woods said the shooting appeared to be intentional, but it's unclear whether the suspect was targeting anyone in particular.</p> <p>Sky Bouche, the suspected shooter, is being cooperative and talking with investigations, the Marion County Woods said in a later press conference Friday afternoon.</p> <p>Bouche faces eight charges, including terrorism, aggravated assault with a firearm, culpable negligence, carrying a concealed firearm, possession of a firearm on school property, possession of short-barreled shotgun, interference in a school function and armed trespassing on school property.</p> <p>The arrest affidavit shows Bouche was allegedly using a 17.5-inch barreled shotgun and the report indicates police suspect he was under the influence of drugs, but not alcohol. Bouche is listed as a resident of Crystal River, Florida, which is about 40 miles southwest of Ocala.</p> <p>Bouche arrived on campus with the shotgun hidden in a guitar case and put on a tactical vest and gloves in a bathroom before the shooting, according to the Marion County Sheriff's Office. He also allegedly told police after his arrest that he had originally planned on carrying out some type of shooting on April 13 -- Friday the 13th -- but "chose to target a school because he thought it would gather more media attention."</p> <p>As Bouche was escorted out of the Marion County Sheriff's Office Operations Center, he was hounded by questions from reporters.</p> <p>When one reporter asked if Bouche was "trying to shoot someone," he shook his head.</p> <p>"I shot through the door," he said. "I didn't see anyone."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/20 Global plant smuggling scheme bust
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SOURCE	https://www.mercurynews.com/2018/04/20/busting-plant-smugglers-along-californias-coast/
GIST	<p>California’s wildlife detectives have cracked an international plant heist, sleuthing from the most curious clues — spilled dirt from mailed packages, stuffed backpacks left on ocean bluffs, a suspicious van filled with big boxes, and holes in the sand.</p> <p>It’s the Golden State’s first-ever undercover plant investigation — and a tale of amazing obsession, where vigilant authorities, passionate plant lovers and an irked postal customer discovered that foreign thieves are slipping into California’s wild landscapes, fueling a budding black market in the lucrative exotic plant industry.</p> <p>The suspects, Korean and Chinese nationals, face criminal charges.</p> <p>And the kidnapped plants — small, squat and cherished succulents called <i>Dudleya farinosa</i> — once again are back in American soil. This week, volunteers returned more than 2,000 plants to their wild and windswept Northern California coastal cliffs. Hundreds more will stay in pots, tended by other volunteers, until autumn replanting.</p> <p>“These plants belong to California. They’re ours,” said an undercover agent with the state’s Department of Fish and Wildlife, the lead agency in a team that also includes the U.S. Postal Service, federal, state and East Bay parks services, California Native Plant Society, UC Santa Cruz, and local citizens.</p> <p>“But it’s overwhelming,” worried the agent, who asked to remain anonymous. “How many more are we missing?”</p> <p>The state’s wardens have nabbed suspects in three separate thefts along the Humboldt and Mendocino coast. There’s been one conviction; the other two cases are still pending.</p> <p>But they fear that many more plants have vanished, still unnoticed. A thriving black market in Asia means the California native plant is vulnerable wherever it grows, they say, from Oregon to the Mexican border. One variety, found in Santa Clara County, is endangered; local naturalists won’t disclose its locations, to protect it.</p> <p>Investigators suspect that organized smuggling rings, based in Asia, where the stolen plants fetch up to \$50 a pop, are behind the crimes. An ascending Chinese middle class, whose millions can now afford decorative plant arrangements, is fueling demand.</p> <p>At first glance, the plants — also called “bluff lettuce” or “powdery liveforever” — seem hardly worth the effort.</p> <p>These blue-green blobs, with rosettes of fleshy leaves tipped in vermilion, have an oddly alien appearance. They lack the easy glamour of California’s other commonly poached species, such as abalone, sturgeon, salmon, crab, bear, antelope and elk.</p> <p>But they burst into beauty when they bloom, erecting a tall stem and a candelabra-like cluster of yellow flowers.</p> <p>With legions of devotees and even their own Facebook page, <i>Dudleya</i> have long been admired for their tenacity. Named after William Russell Dudley — the first head of Stanford’s botany department — the plant is adapted for California’s most foggy, windy and forsaken spots. It is slow growing and long-lived.</p> <p>“People call them ‘charismatic,’ ” said <i>Dudleya</i> expert Stephen McCabe, emeritus director of research at UC Santa Cruz Arboretum who helped identify the purloined plants for state wildlife law enforcement officials.</p> <p>“Sometimes you’ll see one hanging on by a little piece of root in a crack in the rock, and you think: ‘The next wind will take it,’ ” he said. “Then they’re still there the next year.”</p>

The Dudleya community first became alarmed in 2017 when news broke of a 55-foot-long tractor-trailer rig in Baja California stuffed with 4,746 specimens of a particularly rare species, stripped from the only island where they're found.

Then clandestine poachers came to California.

The investigation was launched after an anonymous phone call in December to Patrick Freeling, a CDFW game warden known for his diligence.

The caller, frustrated at being stuck in a long line while trying to mail a package last December in Mendocino's tiny post office, was suspicious.

A man in line ahead of her was shipping 60 packages to China. "What are you shipping?" she asked, as the line grew, snaking out the door. "The man put his finger up to his lip and said, 'Shhhh, something very valuable,' " said Freeling. "Where did you get them?" she asked. The man pointed toward the ocean.

Alerted by Freeling, U.S. Customs and Border Protection X-rayed the packages — and discovered Dudleya.

The second tip also came in by phone. Rushing to the cliffs near Point Arena, Freeling recognized the suspect from the post office's video surveillance. The man carried 50 Dudleya in his backpack.

Uh oh, thought Freeling. "This is going to be the new thing," he warned other coastal wardens.

The next tip was a suspicious minivan parked on Highway 1 along the Mendocino coast, loaded with boxes. Suspecting its driver was an abalone poacher, Freeling crawled through the dense underbrush toward two large backpacks, left on the bluffs. Poking them, he felt something else: Dudleya.

The suspects spoke no English and carried Korean passports. Back at their van — rented at San Francisco International Airport and headed to Los Angeles — Freeling found 850 more plants and 1,450 smaller "rosettes."

"It is my belief that they were picking plants, filling boxes, filling the van and shipping them as they moved south down the coast," said Freeling. "They had numerous contacts for succulent dealers in California and abroad."

Savvy U.S. Customs and U.S. Postal Service workers were behind the most recent bust on April 4. One opened a box from Humboldt County — labeled "spokes" — and reported the plants to CDFW. Another noticed dirt falling out of boxes. Yet another, passionate about succulents since childhood, found and shared the sender's address. Surveillance began.

Wildlife officers pulled over the suspects' van, rented at the Las Vegas airport, then made arrests and seized 1,334 plants — all on their way to being shipped overseas.

Then, armed with a search warrant, they raided the suspects' cabin among the redwoods at the cheap and threadbare Ocean Grove Lodge in Trinidad. Authorities found another 1,000 Dudleya there.

"I walked into the room and saw a tarp on the ground, with tons of plants on it," said the CDFW undercover investigator. "There's this anxious feeling. You're thinking, 'How bad is this?'"

Three men — Taehun Kim, 52, and Taeyun Kim, 46, both of Korea, and Liu Fengxia, 37, of China — were booked into Humboldt County Jail. They'll be arraigned on May 16.

The theft and illegal trade of individual plants is a longstanding problem: Bay Area homeowners sometimes wake to find divots where there once were succulents, and the federal government

	<p>electronically tags thousands of cacti in Saguaro National Park. But the audacity of the recent thefts is unprecedented.</p> <p>The investigations will continue, as new tips arrive, said Patrick Foy of CDFW.</p> <p>“Once it hit our radar screen, and we looked more for it, we discovered that it’s bigger than we thought,” he said.</p> <p>Eventually, the thieves will be sent back to Asia. But — this time — the Dudleya are staying in California.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/19 Sex-offender registries under scrutiny
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/19/sex-offender-registry-attacked-violating-constitut/
GIST	<p>Colorado’s sex offender registry still hangs in limbo seven months after a judge said it violated the constitutional rights of former offenders, subjecting them to an extended punishment and public shaming.</p> <p>U.S. District Judge Richard P. Matsch’s ruling is the latest to reject states that are reaching for more stringent controls on sex offenders even after they have served their sentences.</p> <p>Criminal justice reformers say it’s about time the courts strike back. The lifelong punishments that sexual offenders face beyond the courtroom and prison conflict with the country’s tradition of rehabilitation and second chances, they say.</p> <p>But with federal appeals courts now involved in scrutinizing laws in Colorado, Alabama and Michigan, state attorneys general say they are worried that their legislatures’ work to keep communities safe may be undermined.</p> <p>“For the national database to work, the states and federal data need to be knitted together, and for one state to be exempted from the registry puts citizens of all states in danger,” Michael Hunter, Oklahoma’s attorney general, told The Washington Times.</p> <p>He filed a brief defending Colorado’s sex offender registry at the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Kansas, Utah, New Mexico and Wyoming, which are also part of the 10th Circuit, signed on with Oklahoma.</p> <p>Mr. Hunter said one 8-year-old girl wouldn’t be alive today if it weren’t for his state’s requirements for sex offenders.</p> <p>Oklahoma requires a sex offender’s driver’s license to be designated with a mark. In 2014, that mark led to the apprehension of a sex offender who had kidnapped and raped the girl.</p> <p>The offender was caught because a store clerk noticed his driver’s license designation when he went to purchase crayons and coloring books. She noted that an Amber Alert had been issued, ultimately leading to his arrest.</p> <p>“This little girl in Oklahoma wouldn’t be alive right now if it weren’t for the fact that we have driver’s license designation in the state,” Mr. Hunter said.</p> <p>In their legal brief, the states argue that the sex offender registries are needed because convicted sex offenders are more likely to commit sex crimes than any other group of people. They say sex offenders’ recidivism rates are 40 percent to 52 percent.</p> <p>Catherine Carpenter, a professor at Southwestern Law School and an advocate for former offenders,</p>

disputes the numbers.

“This myth starts to develop that they [relapse] at a very high rate. ... It gave state legislatures this green light,” she said.

Ms. Carpenter said state legislatures have been piling on requirements for former sex offenders since 2003, when the Supreme Court upheld Alaska’s online sex offender registry.

The requirements went from registering with state officials to restrictive housing and curfews on nights like Halloween, when children are out trick-or-treating.

Colorado’s law specifically deems that sexual offenders don’t have the same privacy rights as other released convicts. The state posts lengthy descriptions and photographs of those on its registry.

David Millard, the man challenging Colorado’s law after a 1999 guilty plea for sexual assault on a minor, said in the court case that his job at a supermarket is in constant jeopardy because the company, which he had to tell about his past, has said he can continue working as long as his conviction doesn’t become known.

He was transferred from one store to another after a customer discovered his record. He also struggled to find housing. He was ousted from one apartment after a local news report on sex offenders identified him.

He eventually bought a home and is subject to periodic visits by police. When he is not home at the time of the check-in, police post brightly colored “registered sex offender” tags on his door, Judge Matsch wrote. His neighbors, who used to be friendly, have started avoiding him and making pointed remarks, the judge said.

He ruled that the state’s registry law amounted to ongoing punishment for behavior beyond the normal prison sentences prescribed by law, with no consideration for an offender’s risk.

He cataloged other abuses, such as a teacher who was in danger of losing her job at a Catholic school after a parent saw her husband’s name on the registry. In that case, the archdiocese questioned whether she was wrong to remain married to her husband, the judge said.

One of the other plaintiffs in the Colorado case, Eugene Knight, convicted of attempted sexual assault on a child when he was 18, is barred from bringing his children into their school and must turn them over to a school employee on the sidewalk outside.

States’ differing rules can snare some convicts.

Michael McGuire served time in Colorado for raping his girlfriend in 1985. He went on to have a career as a hairstylist and jazz musician in the District of Columbia. In 2010, he and his wife moved to Alabama to care for his elderly mother.

When he arrived in Montgomery, Alabama, he was required to register as a sex offender under what a judge called the “most comprehensive, debilitating sex-offender scheme in the land.”

His wife lives in a house she rents from a family member, but sex offenders are prohibited in the area. One expert said during the case that 80 percent of Montgomery is out of bounds for those on the registry.

Unable to find a place, Mr. McGuire ended up homeless. He listed his residence in the sex offender registry as under a bridge. He has to check in personally each week with the Montgomery police and sheriff’s departments and must get approval from both departments before traveling outside the jurisdiction.

Judge W. Keith Watkins upheld most of Alabama’s law, saying the legislature had valid reasons for its

restrictions. But he struck down the duplication for weekly check-ins and travel permits, saying it was overkill.

The case was sent to the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

The 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals recently dealt a blow to Michigan's sex offender registry.

The court ruled last year that Michigan couldn't apply its sex offender registration law to those convicted before the state created its registry requirement.

The appeals court ruled that even people convicted of nonsexual offenses were ending up on the registry, forced into "years, if not a lifetime, of existence on the margins, not only of society but often, as the record in this case makes painfully evident, from their own families."

The U.S. Supreme Court in October declined to take the case, and reform advocates said the state would have to rewrite its law. The state legislature is considering the matter, but no legislation has been introduced.

"We have begun to see positive incremental change in the last few years," said Ms. Carpenter. "I think this last year has been a leap because of these federal court cases."

Derek Logue, a former offender living in Ohio who runs the website OnceFallen.com, said the court victories have been slow in coming for those who are affected by the laws every day.

"We are living under laws that nobody else in America has to live under — not a murderer, not a terrorist, not an illegal immigrant, nobody else society hates or fears, just us," he said.

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HEADLINE	04/22 Auburn: bikini barista held at gunpoint
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/22/bikini-barista-held-at-gunpoint-in-auburn/
GIST	<p>AUBURN, Wash. -- A bikini barista was held at gunpoint in Auburn, police said Sunday.</p> <p>Auburn police said a 43-year-old suspect robbed the espresso stand on Auburn Way North just after 7 a.m., before driving off.</p> <p>A concerned customer called authorities and then followed the suspect.</p> <p>A brief chase with Renton police ended in West Seattle near the 9050 block of Delridge Way SW where the suspect was arrested.</p> <p>Police said he was also driving a stolen car.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/22 Yakima home invasion turns deadly
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/two-dead-3-injured-during-yakima-home-invasion/
GIST	<p>YAKIMA, Wash. (AP) — Two people who reportedly forced their way into a Yakima home early Sunday were dead of stab wounds following a fight that left three family members injured, Yakima police reported.</p> <p>Police responded to a report of a home invasion robbery in the 1900 block of South 64th Avenue at about 3:50 a.m., according to a news release.</p> <p>Two suspects forced their way inside, authorities said. Once inside, a fight ensued between the family</p>

	<p>members and the two suspects.</p> <p>Three family members were stabbed, as were both suspects. The family members were all transported to an area hospital for treatment, police said. Their conditions were not immediately known.</p> <p>Police said both suspects died at the scene.</p> <p>The investigation is ongoing. Jack Hawkins, the Yakima County coroner, said police were waiting on a search warrant before he could retrieve the bodies.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/22 Ex-Liberian warlord sentenced 30yrs
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2018/04/22/Ex-Liberian-warlord-living-in-Pa-sentenced-to-30-years-for-immigration-fraud/579152442285/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts tn us&utm_medium=2
GIST	<p>April 22 (UPI) -- A former Liberian warlord who had been living in Pennsylvania for two decades was sentenced to 30 years in prison for lying to immigration officials about his brutal past.</p> <p>Mohammed Jabbateh, 51, had been running a international shipping business while living in a Philadelphia suburb since the 1990s. But before he claimed refugee asylum in the United States in December 1998, Jabbateh was known in Liberia as "Jungle Jabbah," a commander of armed groups during that country's first civil war between 1989 and 1996.</p> <p>During that time, Jabbateh ordered civilians to be murdered, raped, tortured and enslaved. During his trial last year, victims told their stories, including a woman who was forced into sex slavery at 13. Another woman said Jabbateh and his men murdered her husband and then forced her to cook her dead spouse's heart and serve it to them.</p> <p>"This defendant committed acts of such violence and depravity that they are almost beyond belief," said U.S. Attorney William M. McSwain in a statement. "This man is responsible for atrocities that will ripple for generations in Liberia. He thought he could hide here but thanks to the determination and creativity of our prosecutors and investigators, he couldn't. This prosecution was our only option under the law and his sentence achieves at least some measure of justice for his victims."</p> <p>Jabbateh was convicted in October on two counts of fraud in immigration documents and two counts of perjury, for which federal sentencing guidelines recommend 15 to 21 months. But U.S. District Judge Paul S. Diamond said such a sentence would be "unreasonable but outrageously offensive" for Jabbateh, who he said made a mockery of the United States' asylum system.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/23 New Orleans: man shot 5 in crime spree
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/04/23/police-man-shot-5-including-officer-during-crime-spree.html
GIST	<p>NEW ORLEANS – The New Orleans police chief says a man shot and injured five people, including an officer.</p> <p>Police Superintendent Michael Harrison tells news outlets 25-year-old Charles Williams' "crime spree" Sunday stemmed from a domestic dispute.</p> <p>Police say one person was shot in the face and had been in surgery and three others shot were hospitalized in stable condition. The spree began when the three were shot at a home connected to the dispute.</p> <p>The officer was shot after Williams stole a vehicle at gunpoint, returned to the home and fired at officers</p>

	<p>processing the scene. Williams then led officers on a chase and crashed. He was arrested and booked on several charges.</p> <p>Harrison says Williams may have also been involved in a man's shooting death Sunday.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/22 Mexico murder rate soars
SOURCE	https://www.yahoo.com/news/mexico-murder-rate-soars-7-667-killed-3-195114486.html
GIST	<p>Mexico City (AFP) - Some 7,667 people were killed in Mexico in the first quarter of 2018, up 20 percent on the same period last year, making it the most violent year in two decades, government figures showed Sunday.</p> <p>In 2017, the figure stood at 6,406 violent deaths, according to the Mexican security services.</p> <p>The worst month was March, when 2,729 people were killed, most of them shot dead. January's figure stood at 2,549 murders, with another 2,389 in February.</p> <p>The bloodshed follows a proliferation of gangs involved in drug trafficking, as well as stealing fuel, kidnappings, extortion and other criminal activities.</p> <p>In 2017, a total of 25,339 people were killed in Mexico, the highest number since monitoring began 10 years earlier.</p> <p>The violence comes as Mexico gears up for a July 1 ballot that will include presidential elections as well as a vote for the two branches of Congress and a number of local seats.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/22 USA Gymnastics sex abuse scandal
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/silent-no-more-inside-usa-gymnastics-sex-abuse-scandal-n868221
GIST	<p>USA Gymnastics tried to silence top athletes after they reported being molested by team doctor Larry Nassar and as they pushed to meet with law enforcement officials, the gymnasts and their family members told NBC News.</p> <p>Claims that the sports federation stressed discretion above all else are bolstered by text messages, emails and other materials reviewed by NBC News during a months-long investigation for a special edition of Dateline that aired Sunday.</p> <p>In July 2015, after Olympian Aly Raisman met with a consultant USA Gymnastics hired to interview possible victims, she said she reached out to Steve Penny, the chief executive of the sports federation, because she wanted another meeting to share more information about Nassar's abuse.</p> <p>"There are very few people in the loop on this. Very, very few," Penny texted Raisman, explaining that he was planning on speaking with the consultant the next day. "Most important is to address the issue with privacy and confidentiality in mind. I will be working through next steps as soon as I get the game plan in order."</p> <p>Raisman said that when she heard from the consultant, Fran Sepler, it didn't seem like she was interested in hearing more details.</p> <p>"I appreciate your interest and concern in this matter," Sepler texted her. "I and the Association are taking the proper steps, but please remember that there are risks in sharing information at this point. There is a</p>

process in place and staying clear of the process will protect you and others."

To Raisman and others, the message was clear: USA Gymnastics and Penny wanted to control the situation and keep gymnasts quiet about Nassar, who had been relieved of his team duties but was still seeing patients at Michigan State University.

"We kept following up with Steve Penny," Raisman said. "And he would just say, you know, 'I'm handling it. ... Please be quiet. Remember, the most important thing is to keep this quiet.'"

A representative for Penny — who resigned from USA Gymnastics under fire last year — told NBC News in a statement that he "did not intend to discourage any athlete from speaking with any law enforcement agency."

"Any comment regarding confidentiality or not speaking about the matter in the general public was intended to protect the privacy of those involved, particularly the athletes, and protect the integrity of the FBI investigation," the statement said.

"There was no attempted cover-up," it added. "The FBI was contacted twice."

Sepler, who has experience dealing with children who have been sexually abused, told NBC News that USA Gymnastics never informed her that Raisman wanted to meet with her again. She said she was told Raisman wanted to contact other gymnasts about the matter on her own.

"Had I been made aware of Aly's phone call or apprised in any other way that Aly wanted to share more information, I would have jumped on a plane immediately to re-interview her," Sepler said. "But that never happened because I wasn't aware that Aly had more she wanted to say."

The revelation that USA Gymnastics, which sparked outrage for including a non-disclosure clause in a settlement with Maroney, also wanted Raisman to promise confidentiality as part of any agreement, according to Raisman and her family.

Nassar is serving up to 175 years in prison after pleading guilty to abusing 10 of the more than 265 former patients who say they were molested. But questions continue to swirl about how he could have preyed on so many.

In a statement, USA Gymnastics said it "supports and is fully cooperating with the various investigations that may shine light on how abuse of the proportion attributed to Nassar would have gone undetected for so long."

Some gymnasts say part of the answer lies at the Karolyi ranch, which Bela and Martha purchased in 1983 after they defected from Romania and imported their rigorous and highly successful training system to the United States.

Nestled in a forest an hour from Houston, the ranch began hosting national training camps for elite gymnasts nearly two decades ago. Every four to six weeks, Olympic hopefuls spent several grueling days at the compound without their parents.

Some former Olympians told NBC News that the high-pressure atmosphere is what helped them to succeed, but others said it took an emotional toll.

"Me and the girls used to call it torture camp," Maroney said.

In recent months, gymnasts have come forward with complaints about the ranch and the Karolyis: the accommodations were substandard; the food was terrible; they were berated and body-shamed.

Maroney said Martha Karolyi screamed at her — "She just said horrible things to me" — when she was

late to a meeting.

Because Martha Karolyi, as USA Gymnastics' training coordinator, had a major role in deciding which athletes would get on the national team, some girls said they worried that complaining about conditions would affect their standing.

Nassar took advantage of the stressful climate, befriending the girls with gifts, food and words of encouragement — classic grooming techniques, experts say. The gymnasts say he relied on their fears and dreams to ensure they didn't tell anyone how he was penetrating them with ungloved fingers.

"You have to find out who are the best ones, who are the ones who are able to stand the pressure," Martha said. "I don't see any other way ... to prepare gymnasts who are successful."

The couple, both 75, denied allegations made by gymnasts in lawsuits and interviews that they cursed at gymnasts, restricted their food intake and made them train or compete while injured.

Two lawsuits include references to physical abuse, and accusations about mistreatment of gymnasts when the Karolyis were in Romania decades ago have surfaced in recent months.

Martha said she has never hit a gymnast. Bela told NBC News that while he may have slapped or spanked a gymnast in Romania, he never raised a hand to an American — and in dozens of interviews, no one said they ever saw the Karolyis harm a U.S. athlete.

"I never touched anybody. I never pushed anybody," Bela said. "And if anybody comes up with that one, that's a dirty lie."

The Karolyis also said that while they owned the ranch, USA Gymnastics leased the property and operated the training camps. They noted that USA Gymnastics officials attended the national team camps and that elite gymnasts were required to bring a personal coach.

Bela said he didn't like Nassar from the moment he met him, likening him to "a snake." But he and Martha insisted they had no idea the doctor was molesting girls.

Nassar reported to USA Gymnastics, not the Karolyis, and they said it wasn't their job to ensure he avoided being alone with minors.

"I don't feel responsible," Martha said. "But I feel extremely hurt that this thing happened and it happened everywhere, but it happened here, also."

And it happened over and over and over again.

Maroney, part of the gold-medal Fierce Five squad, says Nassar molested her hundreds of times during ranch visits and at competitions around the world.

She didn't process it as abuse until a particularly vicious incident in a Tokyo hotel room before the 2011 world championships.

The next day, in a car on the way back to the hotel from training, she said, she loudly blurted out what had happened in earshot of USA Gymnastics coach John Geddert, who didn't react.

"I just said, 'Last night, it was like Larry was fingering me,'" she said. Geddert didn't respond to requests for comment, and USA Gymnastics said it never heard about the incident.

The 2011 episode is important to unraveling the question of when Nassar could have been stopped, because it happened four years before USA Gymnastics said it first learned of accusations against Nassar.

That was mid-June 2015, when national team member Maggie Nichols' personal coach overheard Nichols and Raisman talking about Nassar and alerted Nichols' mother and a USA Gymnastics executive.

USA Gymnastics said in a statement that the information it got from the coach "did not allege abuse." But Nichols' mom, Gina, a nurse, said that when Steve Penny called her soon after, it was clear they were discussing molestation.

Penny, she said, told her: "We'll have to look into this, but this is very private. This is very personal. And you cannot tell anybody."

"I said, 'This is a child, and we need to call the police and child protection service,'" Nichols said. Penny's response? "USA Gymnastics will take care of that," he said, according to Nichols.

But Penny didn't call the police. Instead, he said, on the advice of legal counsel, he hired Sepler, who met with Nichols, Raisman and Maroney over the course of two weeks in the summer of 2015.

"She came to my house, and I met with her alone," Raisman said.

"I said: 'You know, he does touch me. And I know he touches some of my teammates inappropriately. But he tells us that it will heal certain parts of our body, so that we think that it's OK.'

"And I said: 'Also, you know, he does give us gifts. And he's really nice to us. So we don't think that he does it on purpose.'"

After speaking to Sepler and talking to her mother, Raisman said, something clicked. She realized what Nassar had been doing was "really bad" and that she wasn't the only victim. That's when she asked USA Gymnastics to put her back in touch with Sepler.

Sepler said she wasn't hired by USA Gymnastics to conduct a full, independent investigation, but to determine whether there was reason to believe sexual abuse had occurred.

"I did not intend to silence Aly or anyone else, and I was never told to do so," she said.

Sepler's involvement ended after she interviewed Maroney in July 2015 and immediately recommended that USA Gymnastics bring in law enforcement. Penny called the FBI's office in Indianapolis, where the sports federation is headquartered.

That, the gymnasts say, is when things got really frustrating.

Maroney's, Raisman's and Nichols' families say that they were eager to meet with FBI agents and that they expected that Nassar, who was no longer attending USA Gymnastics events, would be swiftly arrested.

Instead, they said, they were met with months of delays and warnings from Penny.

"He said ... he was told by all the law enforcement and FBI and the investigation that this is the way the investigation works, that we have to keep it quiet so we don't ruin the investigation," Gina Nichols said.

Maroney said Penny also told her to "be careful" not to disrupt the FBI's work. "Me and my mom are both terrified to say anything because we didn't want to ruin the case," she said.

The Karolyis say Penny told them the same thing.

"He was saying, we're not talking about this, you're not talking with nobody about this. We're taking care of it," Martha Karolyi told NBC News.

Maroney, who lives in California, was asked to go to Indianapolis for a formal interview. But, she said,

she was too sick to travel, suffering from panic attacks and depression. She spoke to the FBI by phone in the late summer.

Penny tried to arrange a meeting between Raisman and the FBI in Indianapolis during the busy August weekend of national championships. It didn't happen, and later that month Raisman's mother was still pressing Penny to have the FBI call her.

In September, Raisman said, Penny told her family that USA Gymnastics had turned everything over to the FBI and wasn't getting updates from the bureau.

But there was news from Nassar: He announced on Facebook that he had retired from USA Gymnastics so he could concentrate on his work at Michigan State University, where he went on treating girls in the sports medicine clinic.

USA Gymnastics said it didn't alert MSU about the allegations because the FBI asked it not to do anything that could interfere with the investigation. "USA Gymnastics denies any allegation that it had wide-ranging knowledge of abuse by Nassar or that it concealed or ignored his abuse," it said.

The statement from Penny's lawyer said he and others at USA Gymnastics "provided the FBI with whatever information it requested."

"Mr. Penny's intent was to allow the law enforcement investigation to proceed and to cooperate fully with them, which he did," it said.

Citing an internal review, the FBI declined to answer a single question from NBC News about what it did or did not do, including what exactly agents told USA Gymnastics.

Penny told NBC News that the Indianapolis FBI office transferred the case to the Detroit office. After that, "there was little to no contact with USA Gymnastics," he said. After he contacted the FBI's Los Angeles bureau in the spring of 2016, the wheels began to move again, he said.

It wasn't until June 2016 that Gina Nichols got a call from an agent in Los Angeles who asked to visit Maggie. She was stunned when he told her she could talk to anyone about Nassar, that it was "no secret."

"Really?" Nichols said, her lips quivering with anger. "I have been told for a whole year by Steve Penny and USA Gymnastics that we couldn't talk about this and had to keep it quiet."

The agent flew to Minnesota to interview Maggie, who is now the top college gymnast in the country, right after the 2016 Olympic trials.

The FBI contacted Raisman after the Rio games.

Aly Raisman speaks at the sentencing hearing for Larry Nassar on Jan. 19. Brendan McDermid / Reuters
"I said, 'Why did you wait so long?' and they said, 'Oh, we wanted to wait until the Olympics were over,'" she said.

She met the FBI at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado in September 2016. She said she felt intimidated when she saw Penny, who flew in that morning, at the center. Penny said that his presence was coincidental and that he didn't know the timing of Raisman's meeting.

Even after the FBI had completed the gymnast interviews — more than a year after the first report — Nassar still hadn't been arrested.

But by then, FBI agents weren't the only ones looking into Nassar. After The Indianapolis Star published its investigation of sexual abuse in the gymnastics world, a former patient of Nassar's contacted the newspaper and reported her experience to Michigan State police.

MSU police launched their own probe and began taking more and more complaints. Nassar was suspended by the college and then arrested on sexual abuse and child pornography charges. In the year since Maroney, Raisman and Nichols spoke to Sepler, he had molested at least 46 more patients, the athletes' lawyer said.

"It eats at me every single day," Gina Nichols said.

Maroney's eyes filled with tears when she spoke about victims who came after her.

"That's what hurts me the most," she said.

And even after Nassar was exposed as one of the nation's most prolific child predators, USA Gymnastics sought to stop gymnasts from talking about him.

In December 2016, the organization reached a settlement with Maroney that included a non-disclosure clause, which USA Gymnastics has since said it won't enforce. Raisman said last year USA Gymnastics offered her the same.

"Obviously, I said no," she said. "From the very beginning, I knew that I wanted to talk about this."

In recent months, Raisman has become one of the loudest voices calling for institutions to be held accountable. She was part of the "army of women" who testified at a sentencing hearing for Nassar, who is serving up to 175 years after pleading guilty in three courtrooms.

And now the Karolyis have spoken out, too. At the ranch filled with mementos of their moments of glory — no longer an Olympic training site — they reflected on the damage done to the athletes and to their legacy.

"I feel angry, very angry," Martha said.

Her husband grew emotional as he assessed the damage caused by Nassar.

"This miserable man," he said, "destroyed everything."

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HEADLINE 04/22 Fla. man sentenced 330yrs for child porn

SOURCE <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/man-sex-trips-330-years-child-porn-54647622?>

GIST A Florida man has been sentenced to 330 years in prison on child pornography charges after authorities say he took sex tourism trips to the Philippines and made and posted videos of sexual encounters he had with young children.

Authorities say David Lynch's victims were as young as 6 years old and that he posted videos online dating back to 2005.

The Venice man was arrested in 2016 attempting to board a flight to the Philippines.

Prosecutors say at least one of the trips was arranged by the mother of one of the young victims. They say Lynch also has two young children living in the Philippines.

Lynch was convicted late last year and sentenced this week. The Fort Myers News-Press reports that besides the lengthy sentence, the judge ordered Lynch to forfeit his bayfront home.

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HEADLINE	04/23 France: arrest in abbey threat incident
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/man-arrested-mont-saint-michel-incident-54656928?
GIST	<p>France's national police say a 36-year-old man has been arrested on suspicion of threatening to attack security services at one of the country's most-visited tourist sites.</p> <p>Police said the unnamed man was arrested Sunday night in the city of Caen, around 100 kilometers (60 miles) from the Mont-Saint-Michel abbey that was closed earlier that day after death threats were made against security services.</p> <p>French authorities evacuated tourists after the incident that triggered a regional manhunt, according to the national gendarme service.</p> <p>The exceptional evacuation of one of France's most-visited tourist sites came after a string of sporadic attacks around France in recent years targeting police, some of them fatal.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/22 Man wrestled gun from mass shooter
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/News/man-wrestled-gun-shooter-die-work/story?id=54650267
GIST	<p>After being praised as a hero by the mayor of Nashville, James Shaw Jr. said he was just trying to save his own life when he wrestled an assault rifle from a gunman who fatally shot four people at a Waffle House in Tennessee.</p> <p>"On my Instagram and Facebook, everybody's calling me a hero, but I want people to know that I did that completely out of a selfish act," Shaw said during a news conference today. "I was completely doing it just to save myself. Me doing that ... I did save other people, but I don't want people to think that I was the Terminator or Superman or anybody like that. I figured if I was going to die, he was gonna have to work for it."</p> <p>The 29-year-old Shaw, the father of a 4-year-old girl, was grazed by a bullet in the rampage at the Waffle House near Nashville, a restaurant he went to with a friend early Sunday after going to a club in the area. He also burned his right after grabbing the scalding hot barrel of the assault rifle.</p> <p>Shaw, an AT&T worker who grew up in Nashville, said the shooting erupted at 3:23 a.m. shortly after he and a friend took a seat. At first, he thought the gunshots were plates breaking in the kitchen.</p> <p>"Then the second one happened, then the third one happened. I think that's when the glass busted and broke through," Shaw said.</p> <p>Police said the suspected gunman, Travis Reinking, 29, arrived at the Waffle House in a pickup truck. He was only wearing a green jacket and nothing else when he opened fire outside the restaurant with an AR-15 assault rifle.</p> <p>The gunman killed two people outside the restaurant, including a Waffle House cook who had gone out for a cigarette break. The gunman then fired through the window before entering the restaurant to continue his massacre.</p> <p>"I saw the Waffle House employees scatter. And then I looked back and I saw a person lying on the ground right at the entrance of the door," Shaw said.</p> <p>He said he went to an area near the restroom and hid behind a swivel door that had no lock.</p> <p>He said a shot came through the door and grazed his elbow.</p>

	<p>"It was at that time I kind of made up my mind ... that if it was gonna come down to it, he was going to have to work to kill me," Shaw said.</p> <p>"So at the time that he was either reloading, or the gun jammed or whatever happened, is when I ran through the swivel door," he said. "I hit him with the swivel door and then the gun was kind of jammed up and it was pushed down. So we were scuffling and I managed to get one hand on the gun and then I grabbed it from him and I threw it over the countertop."</p> <p>He said the gunman was standing at the entrance to the restaurant.</p> <p>"I was trying to get out the door and I think he was pretty much in the entrance way," he said. "So I just took him out with me, out of the entrance and all the way outside."</p> <p>He said the man then fled.</p> <p>"I knew I had it in me," said Shaw, who went to church after being released from the hospital. "But I haven't had any specific combat training."</p> <p>Asked how he got the courage to confront the gunman, Shaw said, "If I didn't put my life at risk, I'm probably not here."</p> <p>Nashville Mayor David Briley called Shaw "Nashville's newest hero."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/22 Nashville mass shooting suspect
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/waffle-house-mass-shooting-suspect/story?id=54649864&cid=clicksource_81_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>He tried to meet the president by hopping a barrier at the White House and was convinced that Taylor Swift was stalking him.</p> <p>Both incidents landed Travis Reinking on the radar of authorities ranging from local Illinois cops to Secret Service agents.</p> <p>The latter helped authorities strip Reinking of his guns last year.</p> <p>Yet, a half-naked Reinking -- armed with one of the seized rifles -- allegedly targeted a Waffle House near Nashville during the pre-dawn hours on Sunday and shot four people to death. Four others were wounded by either bullets or shattered glass.</p> <p>Authorities believe he would have killed or wounded more had a 29-year-old patron at the restaurant not tackled him and stopped the attack. While Reinking was attempting to reload, James Shaw, Jr., standing by the bathroom area of the restaurant, confronted him and wrested control of Reinking's gun and "tossed it over the counter," according to police.</p> <p>Reinking, 29, a construction worker from Morton, Illinois, allegedly committed the bloodshed and then apparently ran home for some pants. He remained on the lam as of Sunday evening, as Metropolitan Nashville Police officers and dogs hunt him down.</p> <p>Police said Reinking drove up to the Waffle House in a gold Chevrolet Silverado pickup about 3:30 a.m.</p> <p>He lingered inside the cab for "three to four minutes" before he allegedly exited, clad in only a green jacket without pants or a shirt, armed with an AR-15 rifle.</p> <p>According to police, Reinking shot up the Waffle House and killed Waffle House employee Taurean</p>

Sanderlin, 29, and customer Joe Perez, 20, while they were standing outside.

Then, police said, Reinking entered the eatery and "continued shooting."

Akilah Sasilva, 23, and a 21-year-old unidentified woman were both shot inside the Waffle House. Sasilva died after she was taken to a local hospital.

Two others managed to survive gunshot wounds, police said.

After Shaw stopped the attack, Reinking, now unarmed, fled on foot, shedding the jacket as well.

Police confirmed more ammo was found inside the jacket.

Police believe the now completely naked suspect stopped by an apartment complex nearby to retrieve a pair of black trousers but remains shirtless, witnesses alerted police.

As authorities attempt to reel Reinking into custody, a profile of Reinking began to form.

According to police, Reinking worked in construction locally in Nashville. He was fired from his job three weeks ago but was hired by a new employer Monday. He failed to show up for work the following day, however, police said.

Before Sunday, trouble had been brewing for Reinking for years.

On the evening of May 27, 2016, Tazewell County Sheriff's deputies and emergency personnel descended on a CVS Pharmacy parking lot where Reinking was allegedly suicidal and convinced that pop singer Taylor Swift was stalking and harassing him. He also believed the cops and his parents were in on it.

In the incident report, Reinking claimed Swift "hacked his Netflix account and told him to meet her at the Dairy Queen in Morton."

While at the Dairy Queen, Reinking told deputies Swift "was across the street yelling at him before she took off running," according to the report.

Reinking gave chase up the side of a building, the report states, "in an attempt to get her to stop harassing him."

Reinking's relatives were on hand to talk the young man from doing harm to himself and he ultimately was taken to a hospital to be mentally evaluated.

On June 16, 2017, Reinking was accused of driving up to a local pool in Tremont Park where police state in a report that he flashed an AR-15 rifle, but then quickly stored it in his car trunk.

But, the report notes, Reinking allegedly took off a "pink woman's dress" to barge into a pool uninvited. When he was ordered out by lifeguards, he allegedly yelled at them and "showed his genitals saying he was a man," the report revealed.

Nobody from the pool decided to press criminal trespassing charges, authorities said.

But the incident compelled Tazewell deputies to inquire about the weapon in the car trunk. When they did, they discovered he had a firearm's license, police said.

When the deputies spoke with Reinking's father, he admitted he "took three rifles and a handgun away and locked them up when [Reinking] was having problems," according to the incident report made after the pool incident.

Reinking had left the state for nine months, his father told deputies, according to the report.

The weapons were allegedly stored by Reinking's sister "for safekeeping," the report states.

The report adds that deputies warned Reinking's father that when his son returns home "he might want to lock the guns back up until he gets mental help, which [his father] stated he would."

A month later on July 7, 2017, Reinking was arrested by the United States Secret Service for attempting to breach a barrier at the White House in a desperate hope to get a meeting with President Trump.

Reinking allegedly demanded to "get into the White House and speak with POTUS," according to a report on the incident, which doesn't include his name.

He was informed on ways to take an official tour but refused and repeated his demands, according to the report. He then took off his tie, balled it into his fist and attempted to walk past security barriers, the report said.

"Do what you need to do," he allegedly told the agents, according to the report. "Arrest me if you have to."

Agents quickly took Reinking into custody and charged him with "unlawful entry," the report adds.

In a statement by the Secret Service, Reinking was "charged with unlawful entry after crossing an exterior security barrier near the White House Complex."

Last August, Reinking was concerned that up to 30 people were "tapping into his computer and phone," according to a Tazewell County Sheriff's report, all following his attempts to send letters to Swift.

Weeks later on Aug. 24, 2017, Tazewell deputies retrieved Reinking's guns, including one Kimber 9mm pistol, a Bushmaster AR-15, CZ USA .22 caliber rifle, and a Remington 710 with miscellaneous ammunition, according to a report filed.

Reinking's firearms license was also revoked, according to the report.

The weapons landed back in Reinking's father's possession.

The father admitted to authorities Sunday that he gave the guns back to his son, according to the police statement.

One of the weapons, an AR-15, was allegedly used in the Waffle House slayings, police said.

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HEADLINE	04/22 Waffle House shooting Nashville: 4 killed
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/dead-injured-shooting-waffle-house-nashville/story?
GIST	<p>Four people were killed and two others critically injured when a man naked from the waist down and wielding an AR-15 assault-style rifle opened fire at a Waffle House in Tennessee early Sunday, police said.</p> <p>The suspected gunman was identified as Travis Reinking, 29, from Morton, Illinois. He was arrested in July for allegedly breaching a barrier at the White House and demanding a meeting with President Donald Trump, officials said.</p> <p>Reinking had also threatened to commit suicide in May 2016 in a parking lot in Illinois and at the time his family told authorities he was having "delusions" involving Taylor Swift. He believed the singer was stalking him and harassing him, according to police records obtained by ABC News.</p>

	<p>Early Sunday, Reinking ran from the scene after a patron at the restaurant wrestled the rifle away from him, police said. Police on Sunday evening were using dogs and a helicopter to search a wooded area near the restaurant where the gunman was last seen.</p> <p>"He's murdered four times with no apparent reason, no apparent motive. So we're very concerned," said Chief Steve Anderson of the Metropolitan Nashville Police.</p> <p>Anderson said a pistol belonging to Reinking had not be recovered and he should be considered armed and dangerous.</p>
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InFOCUS

Monday

16 April 2018

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Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

MONDAY — 16 APR 2018



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HEADLINE	04/16 US envoy fears: chem. site tampered
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-chemicalweapons/russia-may-have-tampered-with-chemical-attack-site-u-s-envoy-says-idUSKBN1HN126?il=0
GIST	<p>THE HAGUE (Reuters) - Russia may have tampered with the site of an alleged chemical weapons attack in Syria's Douma, the U.S. envoy to the global watchdog said on Monday, urging the body to condemn the continuing use of banned chemical weapons.</p> <p>The comments came during a closed-door meeting at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, convened after an April 7 attack in the town of Douma, outside the Syrian capital, in which dozens of people were allegedly killed with poison gas.</p> <p>"It is long overdue that this council condemns the Syrian government for its reign of chemical terror and demands international accountability for those responsible for these heinous acts," U.S. Ambassador Kenneth Ward said in comments obtained by Reuters.</p> <p>"It is our understanding the Russians may have visited the attack site. It is our concern that they may have tampered with it with the intent of thwarting the efforts of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission to conduct an effective investigation."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 End of credit card receipt signatures
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/14/business/credit-card-signature.html?action=click&module=In%20Other%20News&pgtype=Homepage&action=click&module=Latest&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>The next time you sign a credit card receipt, savor it.</p> <p>While it may take time for the news to filter down to retailers, Visa, American Express, Discover and Mastercard have said that as of this month, they will no longer require customers to sign their names when paying with a credit card.</p> <p>The signature has had a good run. It's not dead, but it is dying.</p> <p>American culture has preferred credit to debit, and so signing has stuck around longer. But new credit cards have converted to chip cards that are harder to counterfeit.</p>

	<p>“Signatures are becoming more irrelevant,” said Harshita Rawat, an analyst at Bernstein Research. “The final nail in the coffin was the chip card.”</p> <p>If you want to pay with your phone, many use fingerprint scanners to authorize transactions, and Apple’s got facial recognition on its iPhone X while Samsung uses iris scanning on the Galaxy S8. Visa has also rolled out prototype rings, pins and even sunglasses that you can scan instead of using a card.</p> <p>Several of the largest retailers, including Walmart and Target, have moved to drop the signature requirement. Home Depot had already waived the requirement for purchases under \$50, and plans to do the same for larger purchasers, but hasn’t set a date yet. Stephanie Cunha, a spokeswoman for CVS, said “We are evaluating our options but have no specific changes to announce at this time.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 US plans new sanctions on Russia
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/15/us/politics/trump-russia-sanctions-syria.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Trump administration plans to impose new sanctions against Russia on Monday to punish it for enabling the Syrian government’s use of chemical weapons in its civil war, the latest in a series of actions by both sides underscoring the deterioration in relations between Moscow and the West.</p> <p>The sanctions, coming shortly after American-led airstrikes against facilities linked to Syria’s chemical weapons, are meant to signal that the United States holds responsible not just the government of President Bashar al-Assad but also his patrons in Russia and Iran. President Trump has vowed that Syria’s allies will pay a “big price” for facilitating the suspected use of poison gas.</p> <p>But it remained unclear how far Mr. Trump would go in trying to shape events in Syria, which has been racked by civil war for seven years. President Emmanuel Macron of France, who along with Prime Minister Theresa May of Britain joined in the strike on Syrian targets, said on Sunday night that he had persuaded Mr. Trump to keep a small American ground force in Syria despite the president’s public declaration that he wanted to get out.</p> <p>“We convinced him it was necessary to stay,” Mr. Macron said in a televised interview with French journalists. “I assure you, we have convinced him that it is necessary to stay for the long term.”</p> <p>American officials, however, disputed that, saying that Mr. Macron misinterpreted the conversation. About 2,000 American troops are in Syria to fight the Islamic State, or ISIS, not to play a role in the civil war. In public comments before the chemical attack that prompted him to launch airstrikes, Mr. Trump said he wanted to pull them out right away. Advisers urged him to hold off, and he gave them five to six months to complete a withdrawal.</p> <p>“The U.S. mission has not changed — the president has been clear that he wants U.S. forces to come home as quickly as possible,” Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House press secretary, said in a statement Sunday night. “We are determined to completely crush ISIS and create the conditions that will prevent its return. In addition, we expect our regional allies and partners to take greater responsibility both militarily and financially for securing the region.”</p> <p>The new American sanctions were announced on Sunday by Nikki R. Haley, the ambassador to the United Nations and the administration’s leading public voice excoriating Russia in recent days. “They will go directly to any sort of companies that were dealing with equipment related to Assad and chemical weapons use,” she said on “Face the Nation” on CBS. “And so I think everyone is going to feel it at this point. I think everyone knows that we sent a strong message, and our hope is that they listen to it.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Minor quake near Salem Oregon
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/954831/3-1-magnitude-earthquake-hits-near-oregon-state-capital-city/
GIST	<p>SILVERTON, Ore. (AP) — No injuries or property damage have been reported following a 3.1 magnitude earthquake near the Oregon state capital.</p> <p>The U.S. Geological Survey confirmed the earthquake hit about 4 miles (6.4 kilometers) southwest of Silverton at 8:45 p.m. Saturday.</p> <p>Some nearby residents said they felt the earthquake, which also struck near the state capital city of Salem.</p> <p>In nearby Mollala, northeast of this site, a magnitude 4.0 quake also hit last December.</p> <p>Experts have said for years that Oregon and the Pacific Northwest are due for a catastrophic earthquake with a magnitude of 8.0 or higher.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Oregon gov. declares drought emergency
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/15/oregon-governor-declares-drought-emergency-in-second-county/
GIST	<p>SALEM, Ore. — Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has declared a drought emergency in the second county in a month.</p> <p>Brown on Friday announced a drought emergency in Grant County due to low snowpack, lack of precipitation, low streamflows and warming temperatures.</p> <p>The declaration comes after Brown announced a drought emergency in Klamath County on March 13.</p> <p>They're the first state drought declarations since 2015.</p> <p>The governor's drought declarations allow increased flexibility in how water is managed to ensure that limited supplies are used as efficiently as possible.</p> <p>The drought declarations also position farmers and ranchers in the county for federal aid as Oregon braces for the upcoming wildfire season.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Summer fire rules in effect
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/15/summer-fire-rules-kick-off-today-in-washington/
GIST	<p>It may not feel warm outside yet, but Washington's "summer fire rules" are now in effect.</p> <p>"Whether fire season is delayed or not, Washington's forests always face the threat of wildfire," said Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz. "We're preparing now to be ready for fire season before the weather heats up, and I encourage all our neighbors to do the same."</p> <p>The state's summer fire rules are in effect until October 15. The rules apply to the 13 million acres of private and state forestlands protected by the Washington Department of Natural Resources.</p> <p>These regulations affect loggers, firewood cutters, land clearers, road builders, heavy equipment operators, off-road motorcyclists, and others. During fire season, people using motorized equipment in the woods must have approved spark arresters and follow fire safety precautions. In addition, those working in the woods must have fire prevention and extinguishing equipment in good working order at the job site and workers trained in proper use.</p>

	<p>The rules are intended to prevent forest fires and to extinguish small fires before they spread to the forested lands. These rules restrict cigarette smoking in forested areas to roads, gravel pits, or other clearings and prohibit lighting fireworks on forestland.</p> <p>According to experts, Washington's forests always face the threat of wildfire. So even though we have above average snowpack, the risk of wildfire can change quickly during the springtime.</p> <p>"As soon as the weather conditions warm up and the humidity begins to drop, the ground conditions become much more of a tinderbox very very quickly and certainly as the summer goes on," Kyle Ohashi of Puget Sound Regional Fire told Q13 News.</p> <p>Property owners can reduce fire risk to their homes and lands by keeping dead vegetation off roofs and away from buildings. The Firewise program explains how to use these techniques and offers incentives to communities who follow Firewise principles.</p> <p>Last year, more than 32,800 acres of DNR-protected lands were consumed by 815 wildfires. Out of 815 wildfires, 90 percent were human-caused.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Koreas to finalize working-level talks
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/04/15/South-and-North-Korea-to-finalize-working-level-talks-on-inter-Korean-summit/9871523843348/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=2
GIST	<p>SEOUL, April 15 (UPI) -- With less than a fortnight until the South and North Korea hold their first summit in more than a decade, officials from both sides are expected to wrap up the final details this week.</p> <p>Yonhap reported Sunday that an additional working-level meeting will be held Wednesday at the Tongilgak, a North Korean building at the Panmunjom truce village on the inter-Korean border.</p> <p>After the protocol, security, media coverage and other technical details of the summit are finalized during the talks, a high-level meeting is expected to be held between South Korea's Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon and Ri Son-gwon, chairman of the North's agency for inter-Korean affairs, for Wednesday.</p> <p>The presidential official said the high-level meeting will likely be held within the week.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Seoul has announced, "Peace, a New Beginning," will be the slogan for the inter-Korean talks.</p> <p>Presidential spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom told reporters Sunday that the slogan indicates the start of world peace through the first inter-Korean meeting in eleven years, followed by the first-ever summit between the United States and North Korea.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/16 Russia reinforcements head to Syria
SOURCE	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5618609/Russian-ships-laden-tanks-seen-Bosphorus-en-route-Tartus-Syria-led-air-strikes.html
GIST	<p>Two Russian warships laden with military vehicles have been spotted en route to Syria after Friday's US-led airstrikes obliterated three suspected chemical weapons sites.</p> <p>An Alligator-landing ship was pictured cruising down The Bosphorus on Sunday as the world awaits Vladimir Putin's response to this week's co-ordinated military action against Syria.</p>

The vessel was spotted on its way to the Russian naval base at Tartus on the north Syrian coast.

On its fourth deployment of Russian military equipment to the war-torn country the ship was seen laden with tanks, trucks, ambulances and an IED radar.

A yellow RoRo Alexandr Tkachenko was also pictured heading for Tartus carrying high-speed patrol boats, a temporary bridge structure and several trucks. The images were posted on social media by Bosphorus-based naval observer Yörük Işık.

They come in wake of Friday's US-led campaign against Bashar al-Assad's regime and a chemical weapons attack that brutally murdered 75 civilians.

The blue Project 117 LST Orsk 148 ship was carrying Soviet BTR-80 tanks, Ramaz trucks and a Pelena-1 bomb radar, used to detect IEDs.

A second yellow cargo vessel was equipped with a BMK-T boat used for building temporary bridges and an array of other military hardware.

The Russian warships approaching Syria come after the United States outlined new economic sanctions in response to Moscow's continued support of Assad's regime in Syria.

Nikki Haley, US Ambassador to the United Nations, said measures to be imposed on Monday will send a message to Russia after it blocked six UN attempts to investigate its use of chemical weapons.

Meanwhile French President Emmanuel Macron today insisted the allied forces had not 'declared war' on Syria.

He told a French TV station: 'We have not declared war on the regime of Bashar al-Assad.' During the two-hour interview he also claimed he had 'convinced' Trump to maintain a military presence in Syria after the US leader threatened to pull out of the country entirely.

It emerged that Trump called Mr Macron twice before he shared his intention to strike Syria in a Twitter post. But he failed to call UK Prime Minister Theresa May in the early stages of the operation, giving the French leader the opportunity to claim France is America's leading ally in Europe.

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HEADLINE	04/16 Oklahoma wildfires force evacuations
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/13/us/oklahoma-wildfires/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Wildfires have killed one person and forced the evacuation of four towns in Oklahoma, authorities said.</p> <p>The state chief medical examiner's office reported a 61-year-old man died Thursday in Roger Mills County as a result of injuries sustained in a fire that began southeast of Leedey, the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management said.</p> <p>A 54-year-old hunter reported missing in the large Dewey County fire was found alive, Oklahoma Forestry Services Fire Chief Scott Huff said. The man was flown to an area hospital Friday, but his condition was unknown.</p> <p>Officials said the man was one of three hunters who got caught in the wildfire. The two others were found Thursday.</p> <p>About 1,000 people evacuated Vici, more than 100 miles northwest of Oklahoma City, Dewey County Sheriff Clay Sander said.</p>

Evacuations were also ordered in the Dewey County towns of Seiling, Taloga and Putnam, said Michelle Finch-Walker, spokeswoman for Oklahoma Forestry Services.

The Rhea Fire in Dewey County has burned an estimated 138,000 acres and is 0% contained, she said.

Around midday Friday, the National Weather Service issued an advisory saying that fire was approaching the Iochem iodine plant east of Vici. Sander told CNN about 30 residents were asked to evacuate immediately as the wildfire closed in on the chemical plant.

Some 450 people were evacuated in adjacent Woodward County. The estimated size of that fire was changed from 115,000 to 59,000 acres because of more accurate mapping, Finch-Walker said. There are two other major fires in the state.

The blazes have consumed 200,000 acres, Gov. Mary Fallin said in announcing a state of emergency for 52 counties because of wildfire and drought conditions.

"I'm asking all Oklahomans to be vigilant and careful, and to do their part to prevent fires," Fallin said in a statement. "Anything that can be done to minimize fires will help to keep both our firefighters and the public safe."

'The fire is rapidly spreading'

State officials said dry conditions and strong winds have combined to create potential fire dangers.

"These fires are going to continue to be quite explosive under these conditions, with that kind of wind pushing it, and all the dry fuels that are available," Finch-Walker told CNN. "The fire is rapidly spreading and growing and we will continue to see extreme fire behavior until we can get through this event."

"We've got historic conditions as far as fire. We haven't seen these kinds of conditions in a decade," said Matt Lehenbauer, emergency management director for Woodward County.

"We've had half an inch of rain in six months," Lehenbauer said.

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HEADLINE	04/16 US, Russia enter new era of animosity
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-16/syria-strikes-lock-u-s-and-russia-into-a-new-era-of-animosity
GIST	<p>A few weeks ago, Donald Trump invited Vladimir Putin to meet -- maybe even at the White House. After U.S.-led missile strikes in Syria, the two nations' officials can't get into the same room without insulting each other.</p> <p>Speaking at an emergency session of the United Nations Security Council Saturday, hours after the U.S., France and the U.K. launched missiles intended to take out Syria's chemical weapons capability, American Ambassador Nikki Haley called on Russia -- the main backer of the Syrian regime -- "to take a hard look at the company it keeps." Her Russian counterpart Vassily Nebenzia retorted that the U.S. and its allies were engaged in the "diplomacy of myth-making."</p> <p>The strikes against the regime of Russia's ally Bashar al-Assad put an exclamation point on how swiftly ties between the former Cold War foes have deteriorated in recent weeks, with President Trump even overcoming his past unwillingness to criticize President Putin by name.</p> <p>Now, the U.S.-Russia relationship, already under severe strain over issues from Russian meddling in the 2016 American presidential campaign to its role in Syria and Ukraine, may be irretrievably broken for the</p>

foreseeable future. There may be too much bad blood, too much suspicion and too much anger on both sides to turn the animosity around.

“I don’t see things getting better,” said Boris Zilberman, deputy director of congressional relations at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and a Russia expert. “We’re at a very low point and clearly the administration’s position on Russia has hardened.”

The result has been an unprecedented wave of retaliations and tit-for-tat actions. After the U.K. blamed Russia for the poisoning of a former spy in Britain, more than 150 Russian diplomats were expelled by the U.K. and allies including the U.S. The Trump administration followed with new sanctions on Russian oligarchs including billionaire aluminum magnate Oleg Deripaska. His company lost half its value in a day after the sanctions were announced.

Haley raised the prospect of still more sanctions on Russia, saying Sunday on CBS’s “Face the Nation” that a fresh round of penalties would “go directly to any sorts of companies that were dealing with equipment” related to Assad and his chemical weapons.

While for now no significant new U.S. sanctions seem likely --limiting Russian market losses after last week’s sharp declines -- in Moscow, lawmakers are starting Monday to discuss a draft law with counter-measures against the U.S..

“What kind of cooperation can there be? Where?” asked Fyodor Lukyanov, head of Russia’s Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, who advises the Kremlin. Russia gets “new sanctions and threats every week,” he said. “Americans believe that you can humiliate and put pressure everywhere and at the same time offer cooperation where they need it. This does not happen.”

The two countries routinely accuse each other of fabricating events, as they did during the Cold War.

The U.S. says Russia is blocking investigators from the scene of the chemical attack that prompted the latest airstrikes. Russia has argued both that the attack in the Syrian city of Douma never happened or that it was orchestrated by the U.S. and its allies to provoke a military response.

“Americans need to understand that the wars of the future will look more like this: Russia is investing significant resources to create propaganda and disinformation,” said Senator Ben Sasse, a Nebraska Republican, after Russia claimed that almost all the missiles fired into Syria were shot down -- an assertion the U.S. denied. “Our enemies will work to create confusion and distrust among Americans here at home.”

What limited cooperation there was between the two countries has ground to a halt. A November agreement between the two sides to press all parties in Syria toward negotiations known as the Geneva process has stalled and they have abandoned plans for more “de-escalation zones” to ease the violence. Instead, Russia is attempting to create such zones with Turkey and Iran.

From the White House, there is still hope that Russia will change its posture, and Trump’s informal invitation for an eventual meeting with Putin hasn’t been rescinded.

“After his last call with President Putin on March 20, the president confirmed that the two had discussed a bilateral meeting at a number of potential venues, including the White House,” Robert Palladino, a spokesman for the National Security Council, said in a statement Sunday night. “The desire for a meeting still stands, as the president believes a better relationship with Russia is in our mutual interest. That said, the president has been consistent and tough on Russia.”

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HEADLINE 04/15 Russia: chaos if West strikes Syria again

SOURCE <https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/putin-syria-global-chaos/2018/04/15/id/854589/>

GIST

Russian President Vladimir Putin warned on Sunday that further Western attacks on Syria would bring chaos to world affairs, while signs emerged that Moscow and Washington want to pull back from the worst crisis in their relations for years.

Putin made his remarks in a telephone conversation with Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani after the United States, France and Britain launched missile strikes on Syria on Saturday over a suspected poison gas attack.

A Kremlin statement said Putin and Rouhani agreed that the Western strikes had damaged the chances of achieving a political resolution in the multi-sided, seven-year conflict that has killed at least half a million people.

"Vladimir Putin, in particular, stressed that if such actions committed in violation of the U.N. Charter continue, then it will inevitably lead to chaos in international relations," a Kremlin statement said.

The attacks struck at the heart of Syria's chemical weapons programme, Washington said, in retaliation for a suspected poison gas attack a week ago. All three participants insisted the strikes were not aimed at toppling President Bashar al-Assad or intervening in the conflict.

The bombings, hailed by U.S. President Donald Trump as a success but denounced by Damascus and its allies as an act of aggression, marked the biggest intervention by Western countries against Assad and ally Russia, whose foreign minister Sergei Lavrov called them "unacceptable and lawless".

Putin's comments were published shortly after Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov struck a more conciliatory note by saying Moscow would make every effort to improve political relations with the West.

When asked whether Russia was prepared to work with the proposals of Western countries at the United Nations, Ryabkov told TASS news agency: "Now the political situation is extremely tense, the atmosphere is extremely electrified, so I will not make any predictions.

"We will work calmly, methodically and professionally, using all opportunities to remove the situation from its current extremely dangerous political peak."

Russian Foreign Ministry official Vladimir Ermakov said Washington would want to maintain a dialogue with Moscow about strategic stability after the raids, Russian media reported.

In an indication that the West, too, would prefer to lower tensions, the United States and Britain both reiterated that their military action on Saturday was not aimed at Assad, Putin's ally, only at his use of chemical weapons.

Speaking to the BBC, Britain's Foreign Secretary (Minister) Boris Johnson said that Western powers had no plans for further missile strikes, though they would assess their options if Damascus used chemical weapons again.

"This is not about regime change ... This is not about trying to turn the tide of the conflict in Syria," he told the BBC, adding that Russia was the only country able to pressure Assad to negotiate an end to the conflict.

Asked about U.S.-Russia relations, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said ties were "very strained" but that the United States still hoped for a better relationship.

Haley said that the United States would not pull its troops out of Syria until its goals were accomplished. Speaking on Fox News Sunday, Haley listed three aims for the United States: ensuring that chemical weapons are not used in any way that poses a risk to U.S. interests, that Islamic State is defeated and that there is a good vantage point to watch what Iran is doing.

	<p>Trump has made clear he wants to withdraw the roughly 2,000 U.S. troops involved in the anti-Islamic State campaign in Syria. But he appeared to contradict that message when he said on Saturday that Western allies were prepared to "sustain" the military response if Assad does not stop using prohibited chemical weapons.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Opposition to sanctuary spreads in Calif.
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/us-california-sanctuary-backlash/2018/04/15/id/854625/
GIST	<p>More local governments in California are resisting the state's efforts to resist the Trump administration's immigration crackdown, and political experts see politics at play as Republicans try to fire up voters in a state where the GOP has grown weak.</p> <p>Since the Jeff Sessions-led Department of Justice sued California last month over its so-called "sanctuary state" law limiting police collaboration with immigration agents, at least a dozen local governments have voted to either join or support the lawsuit or for resolutions opposing the state's position. Those include the Board of Supervisors in Orange County, which has more than three million people.</p> <p>More action is coming this week, with leaders in the Orange County city of Los Alamitos scheduled to vote Monday on a proposal for a local law to exempt the community of 12,000 from the state law. On Tuesday, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors is meeting to consider joining the Trump administration lawsuit.</p> <p>Immigration has been a hot topic across the country since President Donald Trump campaigned in 2016 on promises of tougher enforcement and a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border. It has been a lightning rod issue in California far longer.</p> <p>The state passed a measure backed by Republican Gov. Pete Wilson in the 1990s to deny public healthcare and education to immigrants in the country illegally. It was later overturned but left a lingering resentment among the state's growing Hispanic population.</p> <p>In recent years, California Republicans have taken a less strident approach to immigration in a state where one in four people are foreign-born. But the Trump administration lawsuit has energized many in a party that has been rendered nearly irrelevant at the state level, where Democrats control every key office.</p> <p>"When the attorney general of the United States decides to take a firm position against it, I think that gave a signal to a lot of us that, 'Hey, California is on the wrong side of this thing,'" said Fred Whitaker, chairman of the Republican Party in Orange County. He also is a councilman in the city of Orange who proposed a local resolution on the issue that passed last week.</p> <p>Raphael Sonenshein, executive director of the Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs at California State University, Los Angeles, said it's not surprising Republicans are galvanizing over immigration.</p> <p>"Politics is very much about emotions, especially in midterms," he said. "I think it was only a matter of time when people went back to the issue that actually hits the nerve in the Republican base these days more than any other."</p> <p>Under Democratic leadership, California has enacted a series of laws in recent years aimed at helping immigrants, including issuing driver's licenses regardless of legal status and assisting with tuition at state universities. After Trump was elected, lawmakers passed the measure to limit police collaboration with federal immigration agents.</p> <p>Immigrant and civil rights advocates applauded the measure, known as SB54, as a way to encourage immigrants to report crime to police without fearing deportation. Critics said it would make it too hard for</p>

	<p>federal agents to find and deport ex-convicts who are a danger to communities.</p> <p>Most of the local governments siding with the Trump administration are in Orange County, an area once considered a GOP stronghold but that voted for Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election. But it's starting to spread.</p> <p>Escondido in neighboring San Diego County has voted to support the federal lawsuit and last week the small city of Ripon in the state's Central Valley did the same.</p> <p>In many cases, meetings on the issue have drawn boisterous crowds. Anti-illegal immigration activists have traveled from city to city to attend, heightening tensions with those who want their communities to support immigrant-friendly policies or stay out of the fray.</p> <p>In response to the controversy, some local governments have taken the opposite approach. Leaders in Santa Ana, an Orange County city home to about 330,000 residents, voted to support California in the lawsuit.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/16 Syrians Damascus rally support military
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-large-rally-damascus-supporting-assads-army-54494618?
GIST	<p>Hundreds of Syrians gathered on Monday in a landmark square in Syria's capital, Damascus, rallying in support of their armed forces, which they say succeeded in confronting the unprecedented joint airstrikes by the West over the weekend.</p> <p>State TV broadcast the rally live from the central Omayyad Square. Protesters waved Syrian flags at the demonstration, dubbed a "salute to the achievements of the Arab Syrian Army," set off fireworks and unleashed celebratory gunfire.</p> <p>Shouts of "Allah, Syria, and only Bashar," a reference to Syrian President Bashar Assad, rang out.</p> <p>The joint airstrikes by the United States, Britain and France bombed sites that the three countries said were linked to Syria's chemical weapons program. The airstrikes were triggered by an alleged chemical attack in the town of Douma, just outside of Damascus.</p> <p>Syrian activists said more than 40 people were killed, but Syria and Russia deny the attack. Russia accused Britain of staging the attack.</p> <p>Saturday's airstrikes came shortly after a fact-finding mission from the Organization of the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons arrived in Syria to investigate the attack. The mission is still expected to make it to Douma, where government security agencies and Russian military police have deployed after the town fell under government control, raising complaints from the Syrian opposition that evidence of chemical weapons' use might no longer be found.</p> <p>The OPCW is holding an emergency meeting Monday in the Hague to discuss the suspected chemical attack in Douma.</p> <p>The strikes have ratcheted up international tension, as the U.S. and Russia exchanged threats of retaliation. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley has indicated new economic sanctions will be announced Monday against Russia for enabling Assad's government to continue using chemical weapons.</p> <p>Russian President Vladimir Putin said the military strikes violated the U.N. Charter and that if they continue, "it will inevitably entail chaos in international relations," according to a Kremlin statement on Sunday.</p>

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HEADLINE	04/15 Protestors rally to shutdown Starbucks
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/protesters-rally-philadelphia-starbucks-black-men-handcuffed-arrested/story?
GIST	<p>Protestors rallied Sunday at the downtown Philadelphia Starbucks where two black men were led out in handcuffs by police and accused of trespassing to decry the actions of the coffee company and the cops.</p> <p>Armed with bullhorns and signs, a small group of protestors gathered outside the Starbucks on Spruce Street and demanded action in the wake of Thursday's arrests. They directed their rage at Starbucks, the police department and the workers who called the cops in the first place.</p> <p>"We want the manager fired from this establishment for racially profiling black people," a man boomed from the bullhorn. "We want the police officers in the arrest fired as well."</p> <p>The protester with the bullhorn said the activists were "not going anywhere" and vowed, "We're going to show you what a shutdown means."</p> <p>The arrests of the men -- who have not been identified, but have retained an attorney -- was captured on video and tweeted by Melissa DePino, a 50-year-old mother of two who told ABC News she's vowed to not shop at Starbucks again.</p> <p>It's since been viewed more than 9 million times as of Sunday afternoon.</p> <p>"It was humiliating for those guys," Depino told ABC News. "They were completely minding their own business."</p> <p>Both men were later freed and the charges they were facing -- trespassing and disturbance -- were dropped Thursday night.</p> <p>This happened while paperwork was being drawn up. District Attorney Larry Krasner also refused to prosecute once Starbucks asked to not press charges, according to a video testimonial released by Philadelphia Police Commissioner Richard Ross Jr. on Saturday.</p> <p>Attempting to deflect blame away from his department, the commissioner assured the public that he has reviewed the facts and defended the cops, saying they "did absolutely nothing wrong."</p> <p>"I can tell you candidly these officers did a service they were called to do," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Spring blizzard pounds Midwest
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/04/15/spring-blizzard-pounds-midwest-flights-canceled-deaths-reported.html
GIST	<p>Amid a spring blizzard in the Midwest that prompted hundreds of flights to be canceled Saturday, one runway has reopened at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, officials said Sunday.</p> <p>A total of 469 flights had been canceled at the Minnesota airport alone, airport spokesman Patrick Hogan said. All of Saturday's incoming and outgoing flights were canceled because of heavy snowfall and low visibility.</p> <p>The snow was coming down too fast for plows to keep the runways clear or for crews to keep the planes deiced, airport officials said.</p>

	<p>Hogan said crews were working to get other runways open.</p> <p>St. Paul also declared a snow emergency, as blizzard warnings continued into Sunday, the Minneapolis Star Tribune reported.</p> <p>“This system will rank up there as one of the most significant winter storms in some time,” read a Weather Service report early Saturday. It declared the storm “historic,” shortly after, the Star Tribune reported.</p> <p>“This is certainly one of the more powerful [storms] in recent memory,” Jacob Beitlich, a Weather Service meteorologist, said, according to the paper. “Any time you close a Twin Cities airport, it’s gotta be usually a pretty bad snowstorm.”</p> <p>Blizzard conditions have closed the airport for two days in Sioux Falls, South Dakota’s largest city.</p> <p>The snowfall, part of a storm system stretching from the Gulf Coast to the Great Lakes, brought snow, tornadoes, rain and hail.</p> <p>At least three weather-related deaths occurred in Wisconsin, Nebraska and Louisiana.</p> <p>By Saturday night, Minneapolis was buried under more than 13 inches of snow.</p> <p>It marked the first time a blizzard has descended on the metro area of the Twin Cities since 2005, the Star Tribune said, citing the National Weather Service.</p> <p>Hundreds of crashes and spinouts were reported across the state, according to the Star Tribune. One fatality occurred Saturday when a vehicle struck a pedestrian in Medina, but it was unclear whether it was weather-related.</p> <p>The weather is expected to persist through Sunday in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan before moving into New York state and New England.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 US, Jordan joint military exercise
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/simulated-chemical-incident-part-jordan-us-military-drill-54479293?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The United States and Jordan have launched a 12-day military exercise with scenarios ranging from border security to counter-terrorism and for the first time a simulated chemical incident.</p> <p>The Eager Lion drill started Sunday, a day after the U.S., France and Britain launched missiles at Syrian military targets in response to an alleged chemical weapons attack near Damascus a week ago.</p> <p>Maj. Gen. Jon Mott, the director of Exercises and Training at the U.S. Central Command, told reporters that a mobile laboratory team will respond to a simulated chemical incident.</p> <p>He said that it's a "threat all too real, as we've seen recently in Syria."</p> <p>More than 7,000 troops, including 3,500 U.S. service members, are participating in the annual drill, the U.S. military's largest and most complex in the region.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Jefferson Co. to offer CERT training
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SOURCE	https://www.peninsuladailynews.com/news/jefferson-county-to-offer-community-emergency-response-team-training/
GIST	<p>PORT TOWNSEND — Jefferson County is about to start a Community Emergency Response Team training program.</p> <p>Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training has been provided in neighboring Clallam County but not in Jefferson County, until now.</p> <p>The Jefferson County Department of Emergency Management, all county fire districts and the Neighborhood Preparedness (NPREP) action group through Local 20/20 are collaborating on the program, said Lynn Sterbenz, director of Jefferson County Department of Emergency Management.</p> <p>The CERT program educates volunteers about disaster preparedness for possible hazards and trains them in such basic disaster response skills as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization and disaster medical operations.</p> <p>A program manager course will be offered May 21-22, while a three-day train-the-trainer course is planned May 23-25. Both are offered free, with training materials provided, but prerequisites and pre-registration are required.</p> <p>Interested participants must complete and return a registration form by May 16. Registration will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Class size is limited to 30 students with minimum being 15.</p> <p>Qualified volunteers are sought for both courses, Sterbenz said.</p> <p>The first step for the Jefferson County program is to build a cadre of volunteer CERT instructors, Sterbenz said.</p> <p>The county now has seven qualified CERT instructors, as opposed to more than 25 in Clallam County.</p> <p>“We know there are highly qualified retired people in Jefferson County, some of whom are likely CERT trained already who might be interested in joining our instructor pool,” Sterbenz said.</p> <p>Program managers will assist in the ongoing logistical aspects of coordinating the CERT program. The course will prepare participants to work with the Department of Emergency Management, fire districts and NPREP.</p> <p>The prerequisites for both courses are the same: Participants must have completed the CERT basic training course (any location is acceptable) or completed the online course IS-317: Introduction to CERT, which can be found at https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-317.</p> <p>It also is necessary to have a referral from a CERT-sponsoring agency, such as the Department of Emergency Management, city or county government, fire districts, schools, hospitals, or a community-based organization such as NPREP.</p> <p>The registration form is available on the State of Washington, Emergency Management Division’s Training and Exercise calendar. Visit https://mil.wa.gov/training-and-exercise and click on the In-State Training Calendar.</p> <p>CERT offers a consistent, nationwide approach to volunteer training and organization that professional responders can rely on during disaster situations, which allows them to focus on more complex tasks, Sterbenz said.</p> <p>“Through CERT, the capabilities to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters is built and enhanced,” she said in a news release.</p>

	<p>The CERT program was designed as a grassroots initiative and is structured so that the local and state program managers have the flexibility to form their programs in the way that best suits their communities, Sterbenz said.</p> <p>There are more than 2,700 local CERT programs nationwide, with more than 600,000 individuals trained since CERT became a national program.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Britain: no new attacks planned for now
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2018-04-15/no-new-attacks-planned-against-syria-for-now-says-britain
GIST	<p>LONDON (Reuters) - There are no plans as yet to repeat missile strikes on Syria, but Britain will consider further action if President Bashar al-Assad again uses chemical weapons against his people, foreign minister Boris Johnson said on Sunday.</p> <p>In a show of support for Prime Minister Theresa May's decision to join the United States and France in attacking chemical weapons facilities in Syria on Saturday, her one-time political rival Johnson said it was the right thing to do.</p> <p>But the prime minister may not find such backing when she faces parliament on Monday, where some lawmakers are angry that May took military action without their approval - a process that has increasingly become a tradition in Britain.</p> <p>Speaking to the BBC, Johnson said what he described as the successful strikes on three sites in Syria were a message from the world that enough was enough, but acknowledged he could not say whether Assad still had chemical weapons.</p> <p>"There is no proposal on the table at the moment for further attacks because so far, thank heavens, the Assad regime have not been so foolish as to launch another chemical weapons attack," he told the Andrew Marr show.</p> <p>"If and when such a thing were to happen then clearly, with allies, we would study what the options were."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Best age to claim Social Security?
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/personalfinance/retirement/2018/04/14/9-different-ages-for-claiming-social-security-and-what-they-mean-to-you/33696453/
GIST	<p>Social Security serves as a key source of income for millions of retired seniors, and as an eligible worker, you get an eight-year window to start taking benefits. Here are the various ages at which you might claim Social Security, and their impact on your benefits.</p> <p>Age 62 Age 62 is the earliest point at which you can file for Social Security, and it's also the most popular age for seniors to claim benefits. The advantage of filing at 62 is that you get your money sooner. The downside, however, is that you'll face the greatest reduction in benefits by going this route.</p> <p>If you're entitled to a full monthly benefit of \$1,500 at age 67, for example, then filing at 62 will knock each payment you collect down to \$1,050. That said, if you're unemployed come 62 or need the money for another reason, you're better off taking benefits than resorting to credit card debt.</p> <p>Age 63 Filing for Social Security at 63 still means taking benefits early and having them significantly reduced.</p>

Still, if you're desperate for cash, it often pays to take that hit, which won't be quite as bad as it would if you were to file at 62. Using our example above, a \$1,500 benefit at age 67 would be whittled down to \$1,125 at 63 -- not ideal, but better than collecting just \$1,050.

Age 64

Claiming Social Security at age 64 will also result in a sizable reduction in your full monthly benefit. But it won't be as drastic as filing at an earlier age. In the case of a \$1,500 benefit at 67, you'd only lose about 20% by filing at 64, thereby resulting in a \$1,200 monthly payment.

Age 65

Once you turn 65, you're eligible for coverage under Medicare. As such, some people get confused and assume that 65 is the age at which they're able to collect their Social Security benefits in full. Not so. Still, if you retire at 65 once Medicare kicks in and decide to file for benefits simultaneously, you won't face such an extreme reduction. Following the above example, a \$1,500 monthly benefit at 67 would only be reduced to \$1,300 at 65.

Age 66

Age 66 is a significant one from a Social Security standpoint because it's when workers born between 1943 and 1954 reach full retirement age and are thereby eligible to collect their monthly benefits without a reduction. Your full retirement age is a function of your year of birth, as follows:

YEAR OF BIRTH	FULL RETIREMENT AGE
1943-1954	66
1955	66 and 2 months
1956	66 and 4 months
1957	66 and 6 months
1958	66 and 8 months
1959	66 and 10 months
1960	67

Data source: Social Security Administration.

Therefore, if you were born after 1954 but before 1960, your full retirement age is 66 and a certain number of months. If you were born in 1960 or later and have a full retirement age of 67, filing for Social Security at 66 will reduce your benefits by about 6.67%. That means a full monthly benefit of \$1,500 would go down to just \$1,400 if you were to take them a year earlier.

Age 67

If you were born in 1960 or later, this is perhaps the age you've been waiting for, since it's when you get to take your monthly benefits in full. In our example, age 67 is when you'd get that \$1,500 we keep talking about. That said, you don't have to file for Social Security at full retirement age. You can hold off and grow your benefits for a higher monthly payout.

Age 68

Though 68 is hardly a common age for taking Social Security, it's a strategic one nonetheless. That's because for each year you delay your benefits past full retirement age up until age 70, you get an 8% boost in payments, which, in our ongoing example, would take a full monthly benefit of \$1,500 at 67 up to \$1,620 at 68. That increase then remains in effect for the rest of your life. Of course, not everyone wants or can afford to hold off on benefits all the way until 70, but waiting until 68 is a decent compromise --

you get a modest boost without having to wait too long.

Age 69

Age 69 is a good time to take your benefits if you don't need them sooner. Doing so will boost our aforementioned \$1,500 benefit to \$1,740, thus guaranteeing a higher payout for as long as you collect Social Security.

Age 70

The credits you accrue for delaying benefits past full retirement age stop accumulating once you reach 70. Therefore, it's considered the latest age to file for Social Security. Granted, you don't have to sign up for benefits at that time, but there's really no financial incentive not to. If you're dealing with a full retirement age of 67, filing at 70 means boosting your benefits by 24%, which would turn a \$1,500 monthly payment into \$1,860 -- for life.

Which of the above ages is the right one for you to take benefits? It depends on a host of circumstances, from your savings level to your employment status to the state of your health. The key is to understand the pros and cons of filing at various ages so you land on the one that works best for you.

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HEADLINE	04/14 Recall: 200M eggs
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/nation-now/2018/04/14/200-million-eggs-recalled-over-salmonella-fears/518245002/
GIST	<p>GREENSBORO, N.C. — More than 200 million eggs are being recalled over fears of salmonella.</p> <p>Rose Acre Farms of Seymour, Ind., is voluntarily recalling the eggs due to possible contamination with the bacteria.</p> <p>According to the Food and Drug Administration, 22 illnesses have been reported so far.</p> <p>The eggs were distributed from the farm in Hyde County, N.C., and reached consumers in Colorado, Florida, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia through retail stores and restaurants.</p> <p>They were sold under the brand names Country Daybreak; Crystal Farms; Coburn Farms; Sunshine Farms; Glenview; Great Value; as well as at Walmart and Food Lion stores.</p> <p>The egg recall is the largest in the United States since 2010, according to Food Safety News.</p> <p>The recall involves eggs with the plant number P-105, with the Julian date range of 011 through 012 printed on either side of the carton or package.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 France: Syria used chemicals in attack
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/04/14/France-issues-report-with-evidence-Assad-used-chemicals-in-attack/8611523742681/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=1
GIST	<p>April 14 (UPI) -- In the aftermath of the early morning attacks on Syria, France declassified a report with details they say prove that a chemical attack in Syria last week was carried out by the regime of President Bashar Assad.</p> <p>The seven-page report, released by the Foreign Ministry on Saturday, said chemicals used in attacks on the Damascus suburb of Douma April 7 left victims with skin and cornea burns, suffocation and other breathing difficulties and extreme salivation and secretions from the mouth and nose, all markers</p>

	<p>consistent with the effects of chlorine gas.</p> <p>The report also states other strikes using chemical weapons have been carried out by the Syrian government since April 4, 2017, when a chemical attack in Syria's northern Idlib province left more than 80 civilians dead.</p> <p>French President Emmanuel Macron had been under pressure to back his claim that France has "proof" of Assad's role in the chemical attack in Douma.</p> <p>France joined the United States and Great Britain early Saturday in firing 105 missiles at three sites in a "proportional" attack, destroying "fundamental components" of Syria's chemical weapons infrastructure including a research center in greater Damascus, a chemical weapons storage facility and another storage facility and command center, both in Homs.</p> <p>France's conclusions were supported U.S. officials who determined that chlorine and sarin, a highly toxic nerve agent, were used on the civilians in the April 7 attack.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Australia bushfire threatens Sydney
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-43773656
GIST	<p>Hundreds of Australian firefighters are tackling a large bushfire that has reportedly affected homes in the southern suburbs of Sydney.</p> <p>The New South Wales Rural Fire Service (RFS) said it was concerned that flying embers could spark new blazes ahead of the advancing fire front.</p> <p>Some residents have been instructed to seek shelter as evacuation is now too dangerous.</p> <p>Recent weather in south-eastern Australia has been unseasonably hot.</p> <p>Shane Fitzsimmons from the RFS said the fire was behaving "very aggressively".</p> <p>Strong winds have been pushing the flames north and east towards suburban areas.</p> <p>The fire has burned nearly 2,500 hectares of land, the RFS said.</p> <p>More than 70 fire appliances were stationed along roads dividing bushland from homes while helicopters were dumping water on the fire from above, SBS reported.</p> <p>Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull praised the emergency response.</p> <p>"It is unseasonably hot and that's a matter of obviously great concern, but we have to deal with the worst that Mother Nature can throw at us and the worse Australians are presented with by nature, the better it brings out the Australian spirit," he said.</p> <p>New South Wales police have declared the area a crime scene but the RFS says it is too early to know if the fire was started deliberately, SBS reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Gun rights rallies at state capitols
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2018/04/15/gun-rights-supporters-hold-rallies-at-state-capitols-across-us.html

<p>GIST</p>	<p>Gun rights advocates rallied at state capitols across the country on Saturday to make their voices heard amid recent efforts to impose stricter gun-control laws that they fear undermine their Second Amendment rights.</p> <p>Peaceful protesters numbering in the hundreds gathered outside statehouses from Maine to Wyoming to hear speakers warn that any restrictions on gun ownership or use could eventually lead to bans for law-abiding gun owners.</p> <p>“Gun owners have been portrayed in a negative way and it is our hope that this peaceable rally will show that we are safe, law-abiding individuals that happen to take our constitutional rights very seriously,” Dave Gulya, an organizer for the Maine event that attracted about 800 people, told the Bangor Daily News.</p> <p>The National Constitutional Coalition of Patriotic Americans sponsored the 45 planned rallies across the U.S. in support of the right to bear arms, according to the paper.</p> <p>"If you have a building and you take a brick out every so often, after a while you're not going to have a building," said Westley Williams, who joined about 100 people outside the state Supreme Court building in Cheyenne, Wyo.</p> <p>An estimated 160 Second Amendment supporters rallied in Atlanta, with some carrying firearms, flags and signs saying “Don’t Tread on Me” as they listened to speakers talk about gun rights.</p> <p>Protesters in Vermont took to the steps of the Statehouse in Montpelier, where days earlier they felt Gov. Phil Scott “betrayed” them when he signed three major gun control measures.</p> <p>“Three days ago, on these steps, we were betrayed,” Joe Nagle told the Burlington Free Press. “We were promised no new gun laws.”</p> <p>The paper reported that the National Rifle Association criticized Scott, a Republican, and called on gun owners to abandon the governor, who changed his stance in February after an alleged school shooting plot shook the state.</p> <p>Saturday's protests came less than three weeks after hundreds of thousands marched in Washington, New York and elsewhere to demand tougher gun laws after the Feb. 14 school shooting in Parkland, Fla., that killed 17. Organizers of those protests demanded a ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, and called for universal background checks on potential gun owners.</p> <p>Pro-gun protesters also showed up in Boston; Indianapolis; Albany, N.Y.; Austin, Texas; Des Moines, Iowa; and other cities.</p>
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<p>HEADLINE</p>	<p>04/14 Experts: strikes won't stop Syria Assad</p>
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/trump-s-u-s-led-airstrike-syria-won-t-stop-n866046</p>
<p>GIST</p>	<p>The Pentagon boasted Saturday that its coordinated show of military force obliterated key chemical weapons facilities in Syria and set back the country's chemical weapons capabilities "for years."</p> <p>But military and Middle East experts say the predawn onslaught — touted by the Defense Department as "precise, overwhelming and effective" — appears to have been little more than an empty gesture and likely did not do much to alter Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's military calculus.</p> <p>Gen. Douglas Lute, the former U.S. ambassador to NATO, said that Assad's threshold for pain is very high because "he's in a fight for his life" to maintain control of his country, which has been mired in a seven-year civil war.</p>

The airstrikes, which targeted three facilities involved in research or storage of chemical weapons in western Syria, won't disable him from taking further action — whether chemical or conventional, Lute said.

"I think he's feeling reasonably good right now," Lute said of Assad. "Some of his facilities were struck, but it doesn't really challenge his hold on the country."

But experts said it's unclear how long of an impact the strike would have on Assad's weapon capabilities and whether it would dissuade him, as intended, from using chemical weapons in the future. Syria has repeatedly denied using chemical weapons against its people.

They also said the so-called red line that the Trump administration is drawing, meant as a marker for reprisals, could be problematic.

"People will see [the reasoning for the strike] and say, 'Does that mean that Bashar al-Assad has the green light to use conventional munitions against defenseless civilians?'" said former Ambassador Lincoln Bloomfield, who served in the past three Republican administrations, most recently as the assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs under President George W. Bush.

Assad, meanwhile, appeared unruffled Saturday as he strolled into the presidential palace in Damascus, briefcase in hand and mere miles from where some of the missiles struck chemical weapons depots hours earlier, according to a video released on Twitter by the Syrian regime.

While the attack may have destroyed the facilities where Syria combines its chemical agents, the strike likely will only cripple the country's ability to deploy certain agents, such as sarin gas, experts told NBC News.

Sarin was not the only agent used in the alleged chemical attack last week on the rebel stronghold of Douma, east of Damascus, senior Trump administration officials said Saturday.

Defense Secretary James Mattis told reporters Friday that chlorine gas was also used. Experts say that it's a common industrial chemical that is not difficult to produce and can be added to a barrel bomb or improvised artillery rocket.

It's unlikely Syria's ability to produce or find the chemical were inhibited by the airstrikes in any way, said Justin Bronk, a research fellow at the Royal United Services Institute in London.

The widespread use of chlorine for commercial purposes means that it is not included in the Chemical Weapons Convention that came into effect in 1997, a point readily cited by the Russian and Syrian governments. But the use of it as a gas in war or as an attachment to an explosive does constitute a war crime, experts said, and it's a simple weapon that has roots that go as far back as World War I.

That's why some experts don't think the strategic strike on chemical weapons facilities in Syria will have a long-term effect on the Assad regime, including its military operations.

"I don't think [their chemical weapons] capability will have been affected significantly at all," Bronk said. "And the delivery mechanism that is the Syrian Air Force — we have not seen much in terms of bases being hit as opposed to chemical facilities. The aircraft were mostly evacuated so they would have remained untouched."

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HEADLINE 04/14 US warns 'locked, loaded' on Syria

SOURCE <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/syria-strikes-haley-warns-u-s-locked-and-loaded-if-syrian-regime-uses-poisonous-gas-again/>

GIST	<p>The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations said President Donald Trump told her Saturday morning that if the Syrian regime uses poisonous gas again, "the United States is locked and loaded" to strike again. Nikki Haley relayed the message from Mr. Trump at an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council on Saturday.</p> <p>"When our president draws a red line, our president enforces the red line," she said.</p> <p>Haley said the message from the U.S., U.K. and French airstrikes overnight that "crippled Syria's chemical weapons program" was "crystal clear."</p> <p>"The United States of America will not allow the Assad regime to continue using chemical weapons," she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Closer look at targets hit in Syria
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/syrian-airstrikes-hit-chemical-weapons-facilities-2018-04-14/
GIST	<p>The U.S., together with the U.K. and France, targeted three sites in Syria overnight in response to the Syrian regime's alleged use of chemical weapons on civilians last weekend. The Pentagon said a total of 105 weapons were launched in the operation.</p> <p>"This is going to set the Syrian chemical weapons program back for years," Lt. Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, a director of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Saturday morning.</p> <p>Chief Pentagon spokeswoman Dana White described the target choices as "very methodical" and called it a "deliberate decision" to go after chemical weapons facilities.</p> <p>"The strikes went at the very heart of the enterprise to the research, to develop, to storage. So we are very confident that we have significantly crippled Assad's ability to produce these weapons," White said.</p> <p>Barzeh research and development center, Damascus The Pentagon said 76 missiles were aimed at the research center located northeast of central Damascus. McKenzie said 57 of the missiles were Tomahawk missiles, adding that the strikes "successfully destroyed" three buildings in the city.</p> <p>The research center was used for development, production and testing of chemical and biological warfare technology, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen. Joseph Dunford said at a news conference Friday.</p> <p>Britain's Ministry of Defense said the facility was a former missile base where the Syrian regime keeps "chemical weapon precursors stockpiled in breach of Syria's obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention." It said the facility is located "some distance from any known concentrations of civilian habitation, reducing yet further any such risk."</p> <p>Images from The Associated showed the damage to the facility that was essentially reduced to rubble.</p> <p>CBS News correspondent Seth Doane visited the site Saturday where the complex once stood. He spoke with a scientist only identified as Sayed who said his office -- and life's work -- were inside the building.</p> <p>Sayed said he'd worked there for 38 years and cried when he saw the complex in ruins. He said it's "totally incorrect" that chemical weapons were being developed there. "The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) visited here and didn't report anything wrong with this place," he said.</p> <p>Him Shinshar chemical weapons storage site, west of Homs The facility is located 15 miles west of Homs and was the primary location of Syrian serin and precursor production equipment, Dunford said.</p>

Twenty-two weapons were aimed at the site, including naval cruise missiles and scout teams, McKenzie said Saturday.

Second chemical weapons storage site, west of Homs

Seven missiles targeted the bunker, which was successfully hit, Gen. McKenzie said Saturday. He said the missiles were delivered from British, French and U.S. from the Mediterranean, and each strike hit around 4 a.m. in Syria.

"This strike aimed to deliver a clear and unambiguous message to the Syrian regime that their use of chemical weapons against innocent civilians is inexcusable and to deter any future use of chemical weapons," McKenzie said Saturday.

He said initial indications showed the strikes accomplished the Pentagon's "military objections without material interference from Syria."

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HEADLINE	04/14 Warship ruse, new stealth missiles
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-14/warship-ruse-and-new-stealth-missiles-how-they-attacked-syria
GIST	<p>President Donald Trump's outrage over another apparent chemical weapons attack by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was clear. And for the second time in his presidency, the U.S. commander-in-chief demanded retaliation.</p> <p>As images of sick or dying children flooded global media all week, the U.S. guided-missile destroyer USS Winston Churchill churned toward the Mediterranean to join a flotilla of allied warships, including another U.S. destroyer, the USS Donald Cook.</p> <p>It was a ruse.</p> <p>While both vessels carry as many as 90 Tomahawk missiles -- the main weapon used in the Friday evening strike on Syria -- neither ship in the end fired a shot. Instead, according to a person familiar with White House war planning, they were part of a plan to distract Russia and its Syrian ally from an assault Assad's government could do little to defend itself against.</p> <p>It worked. Pentagon officials on Saturday said they faced little resistance to their targeted attack on what they said were three Syrian chemical weapons facilities. Most of the Syrian countermeasures, including defensive ballistic missiles, were fired after U.S. and allied weapons hit their targets, Lieutenant General Kenneth McKenzie told reporters on Saturday.</p> <p>"No Syrian weapon had any effect on anything we did," McKenzie said. He described the joint U.S., French and U.K. strike as "precise, overwhelming and effective."</p> <p>Brazen as it was perceived to be, the Assad regime's decision to again use chemical weapons on own people didn't by itself spur the U.S. to act. The Trump administration was also motivated by how closely the attack followed the use of a nerve agent to poison a Russian ex-spy and his daughter in England in March, an action the U.K. government and its allies blamed on Russia.</p> <p>The English incident added to concerns held by Trump, his top aides, and leaders in the U.K. and France that not responding might encourage proliferation of chemical weapons, according to two administration officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the deliberations.</p> <p>As the strategy of how to respond took shape, Trump appeared to telegraph his intentions to the world with a tweet on April 11: "Russia vows to shoot down any and all missiles fired at Syria. Get ready Russia,</p>

because they will be coming, nice and new and ‘smart!’”

Analysts suggested Assad’s regime would respond to Trump’s threats by protectively moving weapons and personnel away from likely targets. An already difficult battle plan -- which required hitting Assad without provoking Russian reprisals or injecting the U.S. further into Syria’s seven-year civil war -- was getting harder.

In the White House, Trump met with military officials and made several calls to his French and British counterparts, President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Theresa May, with the goal of following through on a threat to impose a “big price” on Syria -- a vow made in an earlier tweet, on April 8.

During a meeting with the National Security Council and top military leaders early in the week, Trump had been presented five large target options -- called sets -- for potential strikes, according to the person familiar with the plans. The president largely listened as Pentagon chief Jim Mattis, Joint Chiefs Chairman Marine Corps General Joe Dunford and other military leaders did most of the talking. New National Security Adviser John Bolton -- who started work on April 9 -- and Vice President Mike Pence were also on hand.

The president asked Bolton and the military leaders to justify each potential target, and was particularly focused on limiting the risk of escalation by Russia. There was unanimity among Trump’s top national security staff about conducting strikes but debate about how hard to hit the Syrians, the person said.

Trump, who just a week earlier said he wanted to pull U.S. troops out of Syria “very soon,” didn’t want to become drawn into the civil war there and instead focused the military response on deterring the use of chemical weapons, according to the official.

With the allies on board and the USS Winston Churchill arriving in the Mediterranean region, the attack was nearly under way.

As the president addressed the nation at 9 p.m. Washington time, on Friday, a barrage of 105 U.S., U.K. and French missiles converged on Syria. They came from the Red Sea, the Arabian Gulf and the Mediterranean, homing in from three directions to overwhelm whatever missile defenses Assad’s regime might deploy. Russia’s more advanced air defense system didn’t engage the allied weapons.

According to the Pentagon, the allied weaponry included 19 new “Extended-Range” stealthy Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Attack Munitions launched by two B-1B bombers based out of Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, and six Tomahawk cruise missiles launched from the Virginia-class USS John Warner submarine. The bomber-launched missiles, built by Lockheed Martin Corp., had never been used in combat.

The cruiser USS Monterey fired 30 Tomahawks and the destroyer USS Laboon fired seven Tomahawks from the Red Sea. The destroyer USS Higgins fired 23 Tomahawks from the North Arabian Gulf, according to McKenzie.

The weapons also included French SCALP-EG cruise missiles and British Storm Shadow standoff missiles launched by Tornado and Typhoon jets. Nine SCALP missiles were fired at what the Pentagon said was a chemical weapons storage complex at Hims-Shinshar, along with two SCALPS, nine Tomahawks and eight Storm Shadows.

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HEADLINE	04/15 Caravan migrants on freight train to US
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/14/americas/central-america-migrant-caravan-train/index.html
GIST	Tultitlán, Mexico (CNN)A stampede of Central American migrants rushed to the tracks Saturday when the first whistle of the train rang out.

After a few days in Mexico City, it was time to continue their journey north to the US border. About 500 migrants traveling in a caravan climbed onto the freight train just outside the Mexican city of Tultitlán.

They were about 1,500 miles south of the US-Mexico border as they started heading northwest to the city of Celaya.

As the train slowed down, migrants scrambled around the train cars to find a way to climb aboard, throwing small bags of belongings onto the train and hastily helping one another.

Police and guards watched from a few feet away. Some took photos. None took action to stop the migrants as they climbed the train.

As migrants set makeshift tents with blankets to protect them from the dusty wind and scorching sun, people from the ground and a bridge above waved. Some tossed water and snacks. As the train pulled forward, one migrant yelled out, "Gracias Mexico!" ("Thank you Mexico!")

More than 1,100 people set on the journey across Mexico on March 25, but they have dispersed into smaller groups as they headed north, organizers said.

The government of Mexico has granted many of the migrants temporary permission to stay in the country. Most of the migrants agree Mexico has been a welcoming place. Police have escorted the caravan at times and stopped traffic to help the convoys stay together. Churches and shelters have opened their doors, providing food and a safe place to sleep. Some of the migrants have decided to stay in Mexico.

The migrants, most from Honduras, say they are fleeing violence and poverty. Honduras and El Salvador are among the countries with the highest homicide rates in the world.

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HEADLINE	04/14 US confident Syria used chlorine, sarin
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/14/politics/us-chlorine-sarin-syria/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Senior US officials expressed confidence Saturday that both chlorine and sarin gas were used in Syria's alleged chemical weapons attack on the Damascus enclave of Douma last week -- a conclusion that went a step further than Vice President Mike Pence did in his remarks earlier Saturday.</p> <p>"While the available information is much greater on the chlorine use, we do have significant information that also points to sarin use," a senior administration official said on a call with reporters, citing reports from media, nongovernmental organizations and other open sources.</p> <p>"They do point to miosis -- constricted pupils -- convulsions and disruptions to central nervous systems. Those symptoms don't come from chlorine. They come from nerve agents. ... It's a much more efficient weapon, unfortunately, the way the regime has been using it, and it's resulted in higher deaths, it resulted in terrible pictures."</p> <p>The comments come a day after the United States launched targeted airstrikes against suspected chemical weapons facilities in Syria in coordination with the British and French.</p> <p>Earlier Saturday, Pence held off from expressing a final judgment about whether sarin gas was deployed in the chemical weapons attack.</p> <p>"Chlorine and possibly nerve agents were used," Pence said during his address at the Summit of the Americas in Peru.</p> <p>Another administration official laid out evidence on Saturday for the United States' conclusion that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government was behind the chemical weapons attack; that included</p>

eyewitness accounts of Syrian government helicopters circling the site of the attack on April 7 and high-resolution photos that "clearly" documented asphyxiation and foaming at the mouth.

"Assad has established himself as a user of chemical weapons" from past attacks, the official added.

Another official said, "We have incontrovertible evidence from the photos" that chemical weapons were used and it was "clear to the international community."

The administration maintains that it "exhausted every avenue in the international community" for diplomacy and sanctions before launching the missile strike, and that the President and allies felt the appropriate response was military action.

US officials said they hope the strike will serve to deter Syria's government from using chemical weapons in the future.

"If this step does not succeed, we will be prepared to act again," an official said on the call, echoing what other top administration officials emphasized on Saturday. Whether or not that happens is up to Syria and also Russia, the officials said.

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HEADLINE	04/15 US, allies: end Syria chem. program
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/15/middleeast/us-uk-france-russia-un-syria-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The United States, the United Kingdom and France are pushing for an "irreversible" end to Syria's chemical weapons program, amid furious recriminations from Russia over the effectiveness and legality of a wave of US-led missile strikes on Syrian targets.</p> <p>UN diplomats shared with CNN a new resolution, led by France and backed by the US and the UK, calling for an independent investigation into the suspected chemical weapons attack inside Syria that precipitated the cruise missile strikes unleashed by the Western allies Friday.</p> <p>France's ambassador to the United Nations, Francois Delattre, said Syria's chemical weapons program must be dismantled in a "verifiable and irreversible way."</p> <p>The renewed push for a UN-backed diplomatic solution follows a volatile emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, called by Moscow Saturday, with Russia's UN ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, condemning the joint US-British-French strikes as a violation of international law.</p> <p>Nebenzia said Friday's missile strikes, targeted at facilities associated with the Syrian regime's chemical weapons program, had been a "blow to the political settlement" in the divided Middle Eastern nation.</p> <p>The Russian-led response to the strikes, though limited to words, comes amid days of building pressure and talk among UN diplomats of a potential new Cold War.</p> <p>UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has urged all Security Council members to show restraint, as US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley told the meeting that Washington remains "locked and loaded" to respond to any future Syrian chemical attacks.</p> <p>Outside of the UN, protests against the strikes were held around the world Saturday, including in major cities in the US, Mexico, Greece and the UK.</p> <p>While some of the protestors came out in support of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's regime, many others were opposed to the use of military action by Western powers against Syria.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Russia: Western-designed nerve agent
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russia-trace-western-made-nerve-agent-uk-samples-54468326
GIST	<p>Russia's foreign minister says Moscow has received a document from a Swiss lab that analyzed the samples in the nerve agent poisoning of an ex-Russian spy, which points at a Western-designed nerve agent as a likely cause.</p> <p>Minister Sergey Lavrov said Saturday that Moscow received the confidential information from the laboratory in Spiez, Switzerland, that analyzed samples from the site of the March 4 poisoning of Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the English city of Salisbury.</p> <p>He said the analysis was done at the request of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.</p> <p>The OPCW's report confirmed British findings that the Skripals were poisoned with a military-grade nerve agent, but didn't say who was responsible.</p> <p>Britain has accused Russia of poisoning them with a Soviet-designed agent, an accusation that Moscow denies.</p> <p>Lavrov said the document indicated that the samples from Salisbury contained BZ nerve agent and its precursor. He said BZ was part of chemical arsenals of the U.S., Britain and other NATO countries, while the Soviet Union and Russia never developed the agent.</p> <p>Lavrov added that the Swiss lab also pointed at the presence of the nerve agent A234 in the samples, but added that the lab noted that its presence in the samples appeared strange, given the substance's high volatility and the relatively long period between the poisoning and the sample-taking.</p> <p>He noted that OPCW's report didn't contain any mention of BZ, adding that Russia will ask the chemical weapons watchdog for an explanation.</p> <p>Britain said that the A234 agent belonged to the family of Soviet-designed nerve agents dubbed Novichok.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Thousands protest in Athens against US
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/thousands-protest-athens-us-led-syria-airstrikes-54478012?
GIST	<p>Thousands of Greeks turned up at a rally and march in central Athens organized by the Communist Party to protest the U.S.-led airstrikes against Syria.</p> <p>The protesters gathered Saturday at Athens' central Syntagma Square before marching to the U.S. Embassy, chanting anti-U.S. slogans and carrying banners. Some wrote on the pavement in red paint: "Americans, murderers of people."</p> <p>Police vehicles barricaded access to the embassy and protesters left peacefully.</p> <p>Dimitris Koutsoumbas, the Communist Party's leader, blasted Greek politicians for believing "flimsy excuses about a use of chemical weapons" by Syria. He also criticized their "subservience" to the EU and NATO, as well as their support for Israel.</p> <p>He told the crowd "the imperialists once again spill the blood of the local people. They destroy and splinter states by using fabricated evidence."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Israel: Hamas tunnel network destroyed
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/israel-destroys-hamas-tunnel-network-gaza-54478033?
GIST	<p>The Israeli military said Sunday it has destroyed a Gaza attack tunnel built by Hamas militants that penetrated Israeli territory.</p> <p>Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus, a military spokesman, said the new Hamas tunnel was connected to a network dug in the northern Gaza Strip and entered Israel near the Israeli community of Nahal Oz. It's the fifth such Hamas tunnel Israel has destroyed in as many months.</p> <p>Conricus said the tunnel was adjacent to the site of recent mass protests, which Israel says Hamas is using as a cover for attacks.</p> <p>Conricus said Hamas began building the tunnel following the 2014 war. Israel has placed a high priority on halting the tunnel threat since Hamas infiltrated Israel during the war. Although they did not manage to reach civilian areas, the infiltrations caught Israel off guard, with one attack killing five soldiers, and terrified the local population.</p> <p>In two weeks of protests, 28 Palestinians have been killed and more than 1,500 wounded by Israeli fire. The marches have been organized by Gaza's militant Hamas rulers, but large turnouts on two preceding Fridays were also driven by Gaza's dire living conditions and desperation among the territory's 2 million residents, who have been enduring a crippling border closure by Israel and Egypt since 2007.</p> <p>Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman said this was the longest and deepest tunnel Israel has discovered thus far.</p> <p>"It's a tunnel that cost millions of dollars to dig, money that instead of going to ease the hardship of Gaza's residents has sunk in the sand," he said. "Residents of Gaza: Hamas is burning your money on tunnels to nowhere."</p> <p>Hamas had no immediate comment.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 France urges Russia join peace push
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/france-urges-russia-join-peace-push-syria-strike-54478584?
GIST	<p>France is urging Russia to join a push for a political solution in Syria after joint U.S., French and British attacks on Syrian chemical weapons sites.</p> <p>French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said in an interview published Sunday in the Journal du Dimanche newspaper that "we should join our efforts to promote a political process in Syria that would allow a way out of the crisis."</p> <p>France has continued to talk regularly with Russia even as East-West tensions have grown. French President Emmanuel Macron spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday, hours before the Western missile strikes.</p> <p>Western countries blamed Syria's government for a chemical attack on a rebel-held area earlier this month that killed more than 40 people. The Syrian government and its ally Russia denied the allegations.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Security Council rejects Russia outcry
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/us-locked-loaded-syria-chemical-weapons-nikki-haley/story?id=54466163&cid=clicksource_4380645_1_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>The U.S. announced that overnight airstrikes succeeded in dealing a severe blow against the Syrian government's capacity to use chemical weapons.</p> <p>But U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley also warned Saturday that the U.S. is "locked and loaded" in case Syrian President Bashar al-Assad uses chemical weapons again.</p> <p>"Last night, we successfully hit the heart of Syria's chemical weapons enterprise, and because of these actions, we are confident that we have crippled Syria's chemical weapons program," Haley said at an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council. "I spoke to the president this morning and he said that if the Syrian regime uses this poisonous gas again, the United States is locked and loaded."</p> <p>She added, "When our president draws a red line, our president enforces the red line."</p> <p>The Security Council meanwhile rejected a Russian resolution calling for condemnation of the "aggression" by the U.S. and its allies against Syria. Only two other countries, China and Bolivia, joined Russia in supporting the resolution. Eight countries voted against it, and three abstained. A resolution needs at least nine "yes" votes to pass.</p> <p>Anatoly Antonov, Russia's ambassador to the United States, tweeted that the strike would have repercussions. "We warned that such actions will not be left without consequences."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Report: Seattle w/most regressive taxes
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/953315/seattle-regressive-taxes/
GIST	<p>Washington state's tax system has been called the most unfair to the poor in the nation. Now, Seattle is ranked as having the most regressive taxes in the state.</p> <p>According to a report from the Economic Opportunity Institute, a Seattle household making \$25,000 per year pays 17 percent of its income in state and local taxes. Meanwhile, a household earning \$250,000 pays just 4.4 percent.</p> <p>"Even if public expenditures are relatively progressive in nature, city projects are increasingly being built on the backs of those who can least afford to pay for them," the report from the Institute states.</p> <p>Seattle, the Institute criticizes, likes to imagine itself as a progressive beacon. But of the major cities in Washington, it's Spokane that has the least regressive taxes. A household earning \$25,000 has 10.4 percent of its income taxed</p> <p>Of course, King County voters tend to approve higher taxes to fund schools and projects more than outside cities.</p> <p>But Seattle is trapped within the state's already regressive tax system.</p> <p>"Every major statewide tax in Washington is regressive," according to the report.</p>
Return to Top	<i>You can read the entire report here</i>

HEADLINE	04/13 Probe: SPD cops violated force policy
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/two-seattle-officers-violated-force-policies-in-eastlake-

	<u>shooting-internal-probe-finds/</u>
GIST	<p>Two Seattle police officers violated policies when they fired a barrage of gunshots that injured the driver and passenger of a stolen car fleeing an Eastlake alley in October, the department's internal-investigation unit has found.</p> <p>The Office of Police Accountability (OPA) recommended that allegations regarding excessive use of force, use of deadly force on a fleeing person and firing weapons at a moving vehicle be sustained, said Andrew Myerberg, OPA's civilian director.</p> <p>Myerberg said the officers' chain of command agreed with the findings, which were jointly submitted to Interim Police Chief Carmen Best for a final decision and any potential disciplinary action.</p> <p>Neither officer was named by the OPA, but the department has previously identified them as Officer Kenneth Martin and Officer Tabitha Sexton. They will be given the opportunity to meet with the chief before a decision is reached. Hearings have been set for May.</p> <p>In Martin's case, the OPA recommended that an additional allegation of failure to de-escalate the situation also be sustained.</p> <p>No details on the findings were released. The Seattle Times has filed a public-disclosure request for the OPA's written findings and analysis. Kevin Stuckey, president of the Seattle Police Officers' Guild, could not be reached for comment.</p> <p>On Oct. 8, Martin and Sexton fired dozens of rounds at a fleeing Subaru in an alley west of the 2200 block of Yale Avenue East. Video footage captured by officers' body cameras and dashboard cameras was released by the department's public-affairs office two days after the incident.</p> <p>Police had responded to a call reporting two people using drugs and possibly handling a gun inside a car.</p> <p>The video shows officers moving toward a car as an officer asks "is that them right there?" Officers then yell for one of the individuals to get on the ground, but the person ran toward the car.</p> <p>The video then shows four officers running toward the car, with one of them — identified as Martin — standing in front of the car and moving out of the way as the driver leaves a parking stall and heads north through the alley.</p> <p>Martin and Sexton initially opened fire as the car pulled out. The driver briefly stopped the car twice as the officers opened fire again with numerous gunshots. The driver then turned the vehicle right and drove off.</p> <p>The driver and passenger were not seriously hurt and were arrested later in Everett.</p> <p>In charging documents filed against both occupants of the car, a Seattle police detective wrote that as officers approached the car on foot, they shouted commands that the suspects ignored.</p> <p>Martin was standing in front the car, and patrol-car video showed the driver accelerated forward and struck Martin as he was trying to get out of the way, according to the detective.</p> <p>"To stop the imminent threat, officers fired their firearms," the detective wrote.</p> <p>One issue to arise in the incident was whether the officers had justification to fire the second volley of shots, when the car appeared to be driving away.</p> <p>According to the Police Department's manual, officers shouldn't fire at a moving vehicle "unless a person in the vehicle is immediately threatening the officer or another person with deadly force by means other than the vehicle." The manual states that the moving vehicle itself shall not "presumptively constitute a threat that justifies" deadly force.</p>

Officers also should move out of the path of a vehicle unless the person is immediately threatening the officer or another person.

King County prosecutors conducted a preliminary review of the incident, but tentatively declined to bring criminal charges against Martin and Sexton. Prosecutors, who will make a final determination later, returned the case to the Police Department for further investigation.

Myerberg said the OPA didn't reach a conclusion on whether the two officers committed violations of law, leaving that decision to prosecutors.

Prosecutors charged a man and his mother in connection with the stolen car after their fingerprints were found on the Subaru Impreza, according to court documents. The car had been found abandoned in North King County.

Joshua Brooks, 21, the driver, pleaded guilty April 5 to possession of a stolen vehicle and is awaiting sentencing. His mother, Wendy Lee, 46, who pleaded guilty to taking a motor vehicle without permission, was sentenced in December to 49 days of time served in the King County Jail.

Before they were booked into jail, Brooks and Lee were both treated at Harborview Medical Center for injuries suffered in the shooting. Brooks had two gunshot wounds to his lower back, and Lee's lower back and legs were peppered with tiny pieces of shrapnel, according to court documents.

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HEADLINE	04/13 Everett, KCSO plan new gang units
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/13/gang-units-what-are-they-and-do-we-need-them/
GIST	<p>EVERETT, Wash. – From Snohomish to Pierce counties, we've seen an increase in gang violence.</p> <p>Just months after Everett elected a new mayor, police say a 13-year-old with gang affiliation shot and killed a 14-year-old.</p> <p>"My focus is on public safety and gang violence. We're seeing a real uptick and it's frightening, the age of the kids we're seeing," said Everett Mayor Cassie Franklin.</p> <p>To combat that, the Everett Police Department is now working on putting together a new gang unit.</p> <p>There's talk of the same thing in King County after 13-year-old Elizabeth Juarez and 19-year-old Eveona Cortez were shot and killed in Burien in late March.</p> <p>"Talking to the sheriff {Mitzi Johanknecht} today, she would like to get a gang unit, maybe not just in King County maybe not just in Burien, but getting all the agencies involved," said county sheriff's Sgt. Ryan Abbott.</p> <p>Jonathan Wender is a 20-year police veteran and the CEO and president of Polis Soutlions, a consulting firm that helps train police departments across the nation in partnership with the Department of Justice. He says now is the time to bring back gang units that were disbanded across the Puget Sound.</p> <p>"We have an uptick in gang activity now and we want to reallocate those resources to address that issue," said Wender.</p> <p>He says gang unit members play a vital role in stopping gun violence. But he says it means either adding more funding to hire more officers or shifting some current officers and deputies to the newly formed gang unit.</p>

	<p>“It means they’re good investigators, they have unimpeachable honesty, they’ve got credibility, they can be firm, and they can be fair,” said Wender.</p> <p>Wender says gang units are more than just about learning gang signs, or knowing who wears which color, or if this is graffiti or tagging.</p> <p>“It’s really not a secret who those folks are. The challenge is that you can build up a relationship with them, that you can deal with crimes when they occur but most importantly prevent the crimes from occurring in the first place,” said Wender.</p> <p>The emotions from a vigil in Burien for the two slain teenagers show the damage gangs can do in a community, but Wender says a gang unit isn’t the only solution.</p> <p>“It’s not an either-or proposition. Do we need more case workers? Do we need more drug and alcohol treatment, better mental health care? Absolutely,” said Wender.</p> <p>In about a month, Everett police say they’ll have the groundwork laid for the new gang unit. It’ll be just in time for the normal uptick in gun and gang violence we normally see across the area during the warmer, summer months.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Seattle: standard min. wage for disabled
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-becomes-first-in-country-to-require-standard-minimum-wage-for-disabled/731855072
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Seattle Mayor Durkan today signed legislation banning the allowance of sub-minimum wages for people with disabilities.</p> <p>For KIRO 7 News at 5, Essex Porter was at Seattle City Hall today, where the bill was signed to promote integration and equal treatment for people with disabilities.</p> <p>The bill, authored by Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda, made Seattle the first city in the U.S. to require standard minimum wage for disabled people.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 DOJ demands Seattle documents
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/doj-demands-seattle-give-documents-related-to-compliance-with-immigration-authorities/731916316
GIST	<p>The U.S. Department of Justice on Thursday, April 12, sent letters to the city of Seattle and the state of Vermont demanding they produce documents that show whether each jurisdiction is “unlawfully restricting information sharing by its law enforcement officers with federal immigration authorities.”</p> <p>An excerpt from the DOJ announcement is below:</p> <p>"The Department of Justice previously contacted these jurisdictions and raised concerns about laws, policies, or practices that may violate 8 U.S.C. § 1373, a federal statute that promotes information sharing related to immigration enforcement and with which compliance is a condition of FY2016 and FY2017 Byrne JAG awards.</p> <p>"The letters also state that failure to respond, respond completely, or respond in a timely manner will be subject to a Department of Justice subpoena."</p> <p>What’s happening Friday?</p>

The federal government is demanding documentation proving that local law enforcement has been compliant with a law that requires cooperation with federal agencies, including ICE. It's telling Seattle to hand over documents to that end or they will be subpoenaed anyway. If Seattle is found to be uncompliant, it could face federal funding cuts.

What federal funding?

Byrne Grants. The letter says: "These materials are critical to our ongoing review. Should the Department determine your jurisdiction is out of compliance with section 1373, the Department may, as detailed in your award documents, seek return of your FY 2016 grant funds, require additional conditions for receipt of any FY 2017 Byrne JAG funding for which you have applied, and/or deem you ineligible for FY 2017 Byrne JAG funds."

What's a Byrne Grant?

The Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grants Program (Byrne JAG) is the cornerstone federal crime-fighting program, enabling communities to target resources to their most pressing local needs.

How has it helped the state of Washington?

Law enforcement agencies in Western Washington get nearly \$8 million in federal grant funding for a range of projects designed to enhance community safety and improve crime fighting technologies, announced U.S. Attorney Annette L. Hayes.

King County called this kind of action bullying last July.

NEW FEDERAL REQUIREMENT: Certify compliance with Section 1373, a federal statute applicable to state and local governments that generally bars restrictions on communications between state and local agencies and officials at the Department of Homeland Security

CURRENT KING COUNTY POLICY: King County has always been in compliance with U.S. Code Section 1373. As it relates to immigration enforcement, King County does not ask people for their immigration status and does not collect immigration information

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HEADLINE	04/14 Putin sits back as US strikes Syria
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/news/europe/putin-sits-back-as-us-allies-strike-syria-1.522046
GIST	<p>MOSCOW — Facing a stark choice between engaging the United States, Britain and France in combat or passively watching them strike his ally, President Vladimir Putin has opted for the peaceful route. That cautious response may dent the Russian leader's tough-man image but it won't undermine his gains in Syria or erode his authority at home.</p> <p>The Kremlin had warned Washington that Russia would fend off any strike that jeopardized its servicemen in Syria, and the West respected the red line by giving advance notice of Saturday's attack, just as it did a year ago when it struck a Syrian air base. Russia had sat idle back then, but this time, it had threatened to retaliate.</p> <p>Such a clash could have quickly spun out of control — an extremely dangerous scenario that was widely compared to the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, when the world narrowly escaped a nuclear conflict.</p> <p>"With our allies, we ensured that the Russians were warned ahead of time," said French Defense Minister Florence Parly. The U.S.-led strike was a response to a purported chemical attack on civilians in the Syrian town of Douma on April 7. Russia said its experts found no trace of chemical agents.</p>

A senior French official noted that President Emmanuel Macron did not tell Putin about the strikes when they spoke on the phone Friday, but "certain de-confliction mechanisms" had already been triggered by that point, and "both knew that a new phase was going to begin quickly."

Putin condemned Saturday's strikes as an "act of aggression" that will worsen the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria and have a "destructive influence on the entire system of international relations." He criticized Washington and its allies for attacking without waiting for inspectors from the international chemical weapons watchdog group to visit Douma, just outside Damascus.

The Russian military said its air defenses at two bases in Syria tracked the incoming missiles but didn't engage them.

Russian social media buzzed Saturday with angry nationalist comments blasting Putin for failing to protect his ally. But state TV focused on criticizing the West for acting on the basis of what Moscow called a faked chemical attack.

The Kremlin's tight control over the media will help Putin avoid any significant damage to his carefully nurtured image of a strong leader.

In fact, his cautious stance could boost his popularity further amid fears of war that swept Russia. In recent days, state media have been offering tips on how to behave in a nuclear conflict and what supplies to take to bomb shelters.

Most Russians will now heave a sigh of relief and feel grateful to Putin for pulling back from the brink. State TV channels compared what they described as U.S. President Donald Trump's reckless action with the responsible, statesmanlike stance taken by Putin.

Fyodor Lukyanov, head of the Council for Foreign and Defense Policies, an association of top Russian foreign policy and security experts, said on state TV that Moscow's warning to strike back "clearly hasn't come unnoticed by the Pentagon, and the strike was quite careful."

The Kremlin will also use the crisis to advance its narrative of an aggressive West that plunges the world into chaos and disregards international law. Russian officials and lawmakers compared it to the 2003 invasion of Iraq that was launched on claims that Baghdad was developing suspected nuclear weapons — allegations that proved to be false.

Commentators on state TV argued that Trump and British Prime Minister Theresa May launched the attack to distract attention from their political problems at home.

For now, Putin has limited his response to calling an urgent meeting of the U.N. Security Council.

No military measures were immediately announced, but in a clear warning to the U.S. and its allies, Col. Gen. Sergei Rudskoi of the Russian military's General Staff said Moscow could boost Syria's Soviet-era air defense assets with batteries of state-of-the-art S-300 missiles. He noted that Moscow so far has heeded Western requests not to provide the missiles to Damascus, but said it may now reconsider.

Rudskoi added that Moscow could also supply long-range missiles to unidentified other countries, a possible reference to Iran that has taken deliveries of S-300s in the past.

The statement clearly was aimed at discouraging the West from more attacks on Syria that could endanger Assad's gains on the battlefield, where Russian support has helped him secure control of most strategic areas.

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HEADLINE	04/14 UN chief urges restraint in Syria
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-un-guterres/u-n-chief-urges-restraint-avoid-escalation-in-syria-idUSKBN1HL10X
GIST	<p>UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged all states on Saturday “to show restraint in these dangerous circumstances and to avoid any acts that could escalate matters and worsen the suffering of the Syrian people.”</p> <p>He said international investigators were in Syria and ready to visit the site of a suspected deadly chemical weapons attack in Douma, which prompted military action by the United States, France and Britain.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Britain hits Syria w/cruise missiles
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-britain/britain-attacks-syria-with-cruise-missiles-to-deter-more-chemical-attacks-idUSKBN1HL037
GIST	<p>LONDON (Reuters) - Britain struck Syria with air-launched cruise missiles on Saturday to cripple President Bashar al-Assad’s chemical weapons facilities and prevent what Prime Minister Theresa May cast as a global slide towards their greater use.</p> <p>Four Royal Air Force Tornado jets from the Akrotiri base in Cyprus fired Storm Shadow missiles at a military facility near Homs where it was assessed that Syria had stockpiled chemicals, Britain’s Ministry of Defense said.</p> <p>May said the strike was “limited and targeted” and came after intelligence indicated that Syrian military officials had co-ordinated a chlorine attack in the Damascus suburb of Douma on April 7.</p> <p>Missile attacks by the United States, France and Britain had been aimed at deterring Assad’s further use of chemical weapons and were not an attempt to topple the Syrian government, May said. The mission had been a success, she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 France: Syria chem. capacity weakened
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-homs/france-says-syrias-capacity-to-produce-chemical-weapons-considerably-weakened-idUSKBN1HL12K?il=0
GIST	<p>PARIS (Reuters) - The capacity of the Syrian regime to produce and store chemical weapons has been “considerably weakened” after the air strikes conducted by the French, U.S and British military on Saturday, Defense Minister Florence Parly said.</p> <p>Parly said some of the strikes had targeted two sites used by Bashar al-Assad’s regime to store and assemble chemical weapons near the Syrian city of Homs.</p> <p>“The mission is a success. The goals had been carefully chosen and I observe that there are no incidents to report between our forces and other forces active in the region,” Parly told a news conference.</p> <p>French army chief Francois Lecointre added Syria’s ground-to-air defense system had been effective but that its efficiency proved “very limited.” Russian assets deployed in Syria were “neither active nor proactive” he said.</p> <p>He added that there was no reason to think there could have been any collateral victim.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Iran: West attack on Syria 'a crime'
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-iran-guards/irans-supreme-leader-says-western-attack-on-syria-a-crime-idUSKBN1HL0DO
GIST	<p>ANKARA (Reuters) - Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said coordinated air strikes on Syria by the United States, France and Britain on Saturday were a crime that would bring no benefit.</p> <p>"Today's dawn attack on Syria is a crime. I clearly declare that the president of the United States, the president of France and the British prime minister are criminals," Khamenei said in a speech, according to his Twitter account.</p> <p>"They will not benefit (from the attack) as they went to Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan in the past years and committed such crimes and did not gain any benefits," Khamenei added.</p> <p>Iran — the dominant Shi'ite Muslim power which is in rivalry with Saudi Arabia and the United States' other Sunni Arab allies — has been Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's most supportive ally against insurgents throughout the conflict.</p> <p>Militias backed by Tehran helped Assad's army stem rebel advances and, following Russia's entry into the war in 2015, turn the tide decisively in the Syrian government's favor.</p> <p>Iran's pragmatist President Hassan Rouhani warned that the U.S.-led missile attacks would lead to further destruction in the Middle East, the semi-official Tasnim news agency reported.</p> <p>"Such attacks will have no result but more destruction ... the Americans want to justify their presence in the region by such attacks," Rouhani was quoted as saying, signaling that Iran's support for Assad would grow.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Syria vows to press war against rebels
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-army/syrian-army-vows-to-press-war-rebels-say-strikes-not-enough-idUSKBN1HL0BG
GIST	<p>BEIRUT (Reuters) - The Syrian opposition said Western strikes on Saturday would not change the course of the seven-year-old war as the army said it would crush remaining rebel parts of the country.</p> <p>The missiles by the United States, Britain, and France targeted President Bashar al-Assad's chemical weapons capabilities in response to a deadly poison gas attack near Damascus a week ago, Washington said.</p> <p>But rebels and opposition politicians said the Western powers should also hit Assad's conventional weapons which have killed many more people during the war.</p> <p>Some insurgent officials said they feared an onslaught against the rebel bastion of Idlib, which a senior Iranian official has indicated could be the next target.</p> <p>"Maybe the regime will not use chemical weapons again, but it will not hesitate to use weapons," opposition leader Nasr al-Hariri said.</p> <p>A rebel fighter said he was bracing for further attacks as "revenge" by the government with its allies on rebel territory in the northwest, including the Idlib region.</p> <p>"More was expected from the American strike to affect the path of the war and to curb Assad's crimes," he told Reuters from Hama province.</p> <p>Damascus and its allies have said reports about poison gas in Douma were fabricated as a pretext for</p>

	Western strikes.
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HEADLINE	04/13 UN puts Myanmar military on blacklist
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/04/13/myanmar-military-put-on-un-blacklist-for-sexual-violence.html
GIST	<p>UNITED NATIONS – A U.N. report puts Myanmar's armed forces on a U.N. blacklist of government and rebel groups "credibly suspected" of carrying out rapes and other acts of sexual violence in conflict for the first time.</p> <p>An advance copy of Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' report, obtained Friday by The Associated Press, says international medical staff in Bangladesh have documented that many of the nearly 700,000 Rohingya Muslims who fled from Myanmar "bear the physical and psychological scars of brutal sexual assault."</p> <p>The U.N. chief said the assaults were allegedly perpetrated by the Myanmar Armed Forces "at times acting in concert with local militias, in the course of military 'clearance' operations in October 2016 and August 2017."</p> <p>Guterres said this was part of a strategy "to humiliate, terrorize and collectively punish the Rohingya community."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Arizona to require 'travel ID' for TSA
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/travel/2018/04/13/arizona-residents-will-soon-need-travel-id-to-board-planes.html
GIST	<p>The Arizona Department of Transportation has announced that state residents will require a new form of identification to pass through Transportation Security Administration screeners in the near future.</p> <p>As of Oct. 1, 2020, Grand Canyon state residents traveling out of Phoenix Sky Harbor International, Phoenix Mesa-Gateway, Flagstaff, Tucson International and Yuma International airports will need to carry "Voluntary Travel IDs" or be grounded, AZ Family is reporting.</p> <p>The new ID will also be requisite to access restricted federal buildings and military bases, as standard credentials will no longer suffice.</p> <p>Minors under age 18 will not be required to have the new ID if they are traveling with an adult who does.</p> <p>According to AZ Central, driver's licenses are not compliant with the REAL ID Act passed by Congress in 2005, which amped up identification requirements for air travelers in the wake of 9/11. To compensate, the Arizona Legislature passed a law that said a license or card holder must voluntarily take steps to secure a Voluntary Travel ID.</p> <p>"Now is a great time to get a Voluntary Travel ID because the federal deadline gets closer every day," Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) Director Eric Jorgensen told AZ Family.</p> <p>"MVD is making this process simple. Customers can go to ServiceArizona.com and make an office appointment. The website provides information about what documents customers should bring with them to meet the REAL ID requirements for the Voluntary Travel ID."</p> <p>The Voluntary Travel ID's cost \$25 and are valid for eight years, according to the Arizona Department of Transportation. The new ID sets itself apart from the standard state driver's license with a gold star in the top right corner.</p>

	<p>While the new measures may seem intense, Arizona is not alone in increasing travel security.</p> <p>In correlation with the 2005 REAL ID Act, as of Jan. 22, 2018, residents of Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Washington were supposed to be required to have their passports to fly anywhere, although the federal government has granted extensions.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 US: blood samples show nerve agent
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/mideast/u-s-has-blood-samples-show-nerve-agent-syria-gas-n865431
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The U.S. now has blood and urine samples from last Saturday's deadly attack in Syria that have tested positive for chemical weapons, according to two U.S. officials familiar with the intelligence.</p> <p>The samples suggested the presence of both chlorine gas and an unnamed nerve agent, two officials said. Typically, such samples are obtained through hospitals and collected by U.S. or foreign intelligence assets on the ground. The officials said they were "confident" in the intelligence, though not 100 percent sure.</p> <p>The Assad regime is known to have stocks of the nerve agent sarin, and has previously used a mixture of chlorine and sarin in attacks, say U.S. officials.</p> <p>Officials also said that the U.S. has compiled intelligence from the U.S. and other countries, including images, that indicate the Syrian government was behind the weekend attack.</p> <p>Activists and aid groups say that dozens died in Saturday's airborne assault on Douma, the last rebel stronghold in eastern Ghouta, which has been subjected to intensive bombing by Syria's Russian-backed Assad regime.</p> <p>Russia and Syria have denied any involvement in the alleged chemical attack.</p> <p>U.S. officials say the Assad regime has conducted multiple chlorine attacks on rebels during the past six months.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Death involves 911 system w/issues
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/kyle-plushs-death-is-latest-incident-involving-911-system-riddled-with-issues/
GIST	<p>A teenager trapped in a minivan made desperate pleas to 9-1-1 for help, but responders didn't get there in time. It happened in Cincinnati -- focusing new attention on the city's troubled emergency response system.</p> <p>Kyle Plush, 16, had to use voice commands to call 911. He was trapped in the back of his minivan, while his phone was in the front.</p> <p>"I'm stuck in my van outside the Seven Hills [unintelligible] parking lot," Plush said.</p> <p>"The Seven Hills what parking lot?" the dispatcher asked.</p> <p>"Send help, I am going to die here," Plush said.</p> <p>Police said Plush was reaching for his tennis gear in the back when the third row of the 2004 Honda</p>

	<p>Odyssey collapsed, pinning him upside down and crushing his chest.</p> <p>Twelve minutes after he called, police were at the scene but couldn't locate him. While they were there, Plush called 911 again and gave specifics on his car -- and his last wishes.</p> <p>"I probably do not have much time left, so tell my mom that I love her if I die," Plush said. "I'm stuck in my gold Honda Odyssey. This is not a joke, this is not a joke, I am stuck in my gold Honda Odyssey van."</p> <p>The 911 operator, who has been put on leave, didn't relay the make or model to police, and police officers gave up after 11 minutes. She claims she couldn't hear Plush and her computer froze.</p> <p>Critics say it is the latest incident in a 911 system riddled with issues. Cincinnati's mayor John Cranley said Friday the problems of management, supervision and technology have plagued the 911 center for years.</p> <p>"Time's up for waiting for our 9-1-1 system to fix itself," said Councilman Chris Seelbach. "We have to take urgent action immediately to have a system in place that ensures that you can call three numbers and within minutes police and fire officers will be on the scene."</p> <p>Six hours after the first 911 call, Plush's father discovered his son in car. Internal police records show that the 911 operator who was put on leave, received an "unacceptable" rating for her performance.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 CDC: likely source E. coli outbreak
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cdc-romaine-lettuce-likely-source-of-e-coli-outbreak/
GIST	<p>Health officials say chopped romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona growing region is the likely source of the current E. coli outbreak that has now sickened people in 11 states, and they're warning consumers across the country to avoid eating lettuce that may have been contaminated.</p> <p>According to the latest update from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, so far there have been 35 cases of illness, 22 of which led to hospitalizations. Three people have developed a severe complication -- a type of kidney failure called hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) which can be life-threatening. The outbreak involves a particularly dangerous strain of the bacteria known as Shiga toxin-producing E. coli O157:H7.</p> <p>"Information collected to date indicates that chopped romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona growing region could be contaminated with E. coli O157:H7 and could make people sick," the CDC said in a statement.</p> <p>No common grower, supplier, or distributor has been identified yet. State and local public health investigators continue interviewing ill people to determine what they ate and how they might have been exposed.</p> <p>So far, cases of illness from this outbreak have been reported in Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Washington.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Pentagon: successfully hit every target
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/strikes-on-syria-pentagon-briefing-today-2018-04-14-live-stream-updates/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON -- Pentagon spokesperson Dana White said Saturday the U.S. and its allies "successfully hit every target" in airstrikes in Syria overnight. The U.S., U.K. and France and U.K. launched the strikes</p>

Friday night Eastern Time in response to the Syrian regime's alleged use of chemical weapons last weekend. In total, the U.S. used 105 weapons against three targets.

"I can assure you we took every measure and precaution to strike only what we targeted and — and we successfully hit every target," White told reporters Saturday.

White said the U.S. believes it has "significantly crippled" Syrian President Bashar Assad's ability to carry out a chemical weapons attack. White said the mission in Syria remains defeating the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), but the U.S. will not stand by while Assad attacks "innocent Syrian people."

Later Saturday morning, the U.N. Security Council was meeting at Moscow's request.

Lt. Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, the director of the Joint Staff at the Pentagon, told reporters Saturday the initial assessment is that the Defense Department accomplished its goals "without material interference" from Syrian defenses. The attempts from Syrian defenses were imprecise, in contrast to the U.S. mission, he said.

"We are confident that all of our missiles reached their targets," McKenzie emphasized, reiterating what White said.

McKenzie said, "As of right now, we are not aware of any civilian casualties," although they cannot be certain, given the defense launched by the Syrians.

Secretary of Defense James Mattis emphasized that the targets were infrastructure related to the Syrian regime's chemical weapons program, and that there are no plans at this time for further strikes.

But the president, in his address to the nation from the White House, declared that the U.S. is prepared to continue military intervention until Assad stops the use of chemical weapons.

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HEADLINE	04/14 Syria police units enter Douma
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-syrian-police-units-enter-town-douma-54464281?
GIST	<p>The Latest on developments in Syria (all times local):</p> <p>10:50 p.m.</p> <p>Syrian state-run TV says Syrian police units are entering the town of Douma, site of a suspected chemical weapons attack and the last rebel town in the eastern Ghouta region.</p> <p>Syrian TV showed police waving Syrian flags apparently on the edge of the town just east of Damascus, and said the "terrorist presence" in Douma will end "in a few hours."</p> <p>The entry of government forces to Douma follows a Russian-mediated deal that secured the surrender and evacuation of the rebels and thousands of civilians from the town.</p> <p>Douma and the sprawling eastern Ghouta region near the capital, Damascus, had been under rebel control since 2012 and was a thorn in the side of President Bashar Assad's government for years. The government's capture of Douma, the last town held by the rebels in eastern Ghouta, marks a major victory for Assad.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Syrians in Damascus show defiance
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SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syrians-gather-capital-defiance-airstrikes-54464277?
GIST	<p>Hundreds of Syrians gathered at landmark squares in the Syrian capital Saturday, honking their car horns, flashing victory signs and waving Syrian flags in scenes of defiance that followed unprecedented joint airstrikes by the United States, France and Britain.</p> <p>A few hours earlier, before sunrise, loud explosions jolted Damascus and the sky turned orange as Syrian air defense units fired surface-to-air missiles in response to three waves of military strikes meant to punish President Bashar Assad for his alleged use of chemical weapons.</p> <p>Associated Press reporters saw smoke rising from east Damascus and what appeared to be a flame lighting up the sky. From a distance, U.S. missiles hitting suburbs of the capital sounded like thunder. Shortly after the one-hour attack ended, vehicles with loudspeakers roamed the streets of Damascus blaring nationalist songs.</p> <p>"Good souls will not be humiliated," Syria's presidency tweeted after the airstrikes began.</p> <p>Immediately after the attack, hundreds of residents gathered in Damascus' landmark Omayyad square, celebrating what they said was the army's success in shooting down or derailing some of the missiles. Many waved Syrian, Russian and Iranian flags. Some clapped their hands and danced, others drove in convoys, honking their horns in defiance.</p> <p>"We are not scared of America's missiles. We humiliated their missiles," said Mahmoud Ibrahim, half his body hanging outside his car window, waving a Syrian flag. The crowd then moved toward the nearby Damascus University where pro-government fighters danced, waving their automatic rifles over their heads.</p> <p>The seemingly limited strikes with no apparent future strategy for how to deal with the wider civil war was a cause for celebration by Assad supporters but criticized by the Syrian opposition.</p> <p>Mohammad Alloush, spokesman for the Army of Islam rebel group, called the airstrikes a "farce" in a Twitter posting. Nasr al-Hariri, a senior opposition leader, said Syrians need a strategy that leads to a political solution to "save it from the brutality of the Syrian regime."</p> <p>A Syrian military statement said in all, 110 missiles were fired by the U.S., Britain and France and that most of them were shot down or derailed. Russia's military said Syrian air defense units downed 71 out of 103 cruise missiles launched by the U.S. and its allies.</p> <p>Syrian TV called the attacks a "blatant violation of international law and shows contempt for international legitimacy."</p> <p>U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis said there were no reports of U.S. losses during the initial airstrikes.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Europe leaders back strikes on Syria
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/european-leaders-back-syria-strikes-warn-escalation-54466093?
GIST	<p>Many European leaders voiced support and understanding Saturday for the U.S.-led air strikes against Syria, but warned against allowing the seven-year conflict to escalate.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>"It has always been Bulgaria's position that no cause justifies the killing of innocent people, including children; that the use of chemical weapons is a war crime and the strike on Syrian targets was a response to a war crime." Bulgarian government statement. Bulgaria currently holds the rotating EU presidency.</p> <p>_____</p>

"Strikes by US, France and UK make it clear that Syrian regime together with Russia & Iran cannot continue this human tragedy, at least not without cost. The EU will stand with our allies on the side of justice." - Tweet by European Council President Donald Tusk.

"What has occurred in Syria in recent days goes far beyond the constant violation of cease fires. The response to these atrocities is legitimate and proportionate." - Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy.

"This was a limited and targeted action to strike the capacity of building or diffusing chemical arms. It cannot and should not be the start of an escalation." - Italian Premier Paolo Gentiloni.

"The strike against the Syrian regime that uses chemical weapons to attack the civilian population was inevitable." - Acting Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis.

"We support the fact that our U.S., UK and French allies took on responsibility in this way as permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. The military strike was necessary and appropriate in order to preserve the effectiveness of the international ban on the use of chemical weapons and to warn the Syrian regime against further violations." - German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

"The international community has the responsibility to identify and hold accountable those responsible of any attack with chemical weapons. This was not the first time that the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons against civilians but it must be the last." - European Union Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker.

"The strike against the Syrian regime that uses chemical weapons to attack the civilian population was inevitable." - Acting Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis.

"Belgium strongly condemns all use of chemical weapons which are a blatant violation of international law. Belgium therefore understands the military action in Syria of our American, French and British partners who have targeted identified production facilities." - Belgian government statement.

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HEADLINE	04/14 Military, chemical weapon sites targeted
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/us-strike-syria-targets-military-chemical-weapons-sites/story?id=54435901
GIST	<p>President Donald Trump said Friday he had ordered "precision strikes" against Syria's chemical weapons capability in conjunction with the France and the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Included in the targets was a scientific research center in the greater Damascus area, described by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunford as a center for research, development, production and testing of chemical weapons.</p> <p>Two other sites were near the city of Homs: the site of Syria's primary sarin production facility and a chemical weapons storage facility that included an important command post.</p> <p>He said that while the coalition forces had many potential targets from which to choose, the three sites</p>

	<p>were chosen for their significance to Syria's chemical weapons program and well as their location and layout, in an attempt to minimize risk to innocent civilians.</p> <p>Perhaps heeding the possibility of U.S. military action, Russian news agency Interfax reported on Wednesday that Russia's Navy will conduct military exercises off the coast of Syria on Wednesday.</p> <p>According to Syria state TV 110 rockets were launched in the attack by the U.S., U.K. and France around 3:55 a.m. Syrian time.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Russia warns US of 'consequences'
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/russia-responds-us-attack-syria-actions-left-consequences/story?id=54464208&cid=clicksource_4380645_1_takeover_2_column_vod_headlines
GIST	<p>Russia, the Syrian regime's top ally, reacted strongly to the air strikes launched by the United States and its allies on Damascus and Homs early Saturday, warning of "consequences."</p> <p>The U.S., U.K. and France launched a series of strikes on three locations identified as critical to Syria's production of chemical weapons, including a scientific research center in Damascus, and a production facility and storage facility in Homs, according to U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunford.</p> <p>The Russian embassy in U.S. wasted no time in reacting to the strikes late Friday in the U.S., with Ambassador Anatoly Antonov saying on Twitter, "The worst apprehensions have come true. Our warnings have been left unheard."</p> <p>"A pre-designed scenario is being implemented," the statement continued. "Again, we are being threatened. We warned that such actions will not be left without consequences."</p> <p>Russia has long been an ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Syria serves as an important access point to the Mediterranean Sea for Russian ships and a hub for Russia in the Middle East. They have also supplied Assad with the military resources necessary to fight back against the rebels who nearly overthrew him in 2011.</p> <p>President Donald Trump criticized Russia in his address to the country following the launch of missiles on Friday night.</p> <p>"In 2013, President [Vladimir] Putin and his government promised the world that they would guarantee the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons," Trump said. "Assad's recent attack, and today's response, are the direct result of Russia's failure to keep that promise."</p> <p>Putin responded to Saturday's attack by calling the strikes "an act of aggression against a sovereign state that is at the forefront of the fight against terrorism."</p> <p>"The current escalation of the situation around Syria has a devastating impact on the whole system of international relations," Putin said. "History will put everything in its place, and it has already laid heavy responsibility on Washington for bloody reprisals against Yugoslavia, Iraq and Libya."</p> <p>Putin also called for an emergency meeting U.N. Security Council.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 US, allies strike Syria
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/trump-orders-strike-syria-response-chemical-attack/story?id=54459378

GIST	<p>President Donald Trump ordered a strike on Syria Friday in response to last weekend's chemical weapons attack.</p> <p>Addressing the nation Friday evening, Trump said the strike was a joint operation with France and the United Kingdom.</p> <p>"A short time ago, I ordered the United States Armed Forces to launch precision strikes on targets associated with the chemical weapons capabilities of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad," Trump said.</p> <p>Trump said that the "massacre" last weekend in Syria "was a significant escalation in a pattern of chemical weapons use by that very terrible regime."</p> <p>"The evil and the despicable attack left mothers and fathers, infants and children thrashing in pain and gasping for air. These are not the actions of a man," Trump said, referring to Assad. "They are crimes of a monster instead."</p> <p>In a later briefing, Defense Secretary James Mattis said the strike demonstrates the international resolve to prevent the use of chemical weapons, saying he is "confident the Syrian regime conducted a chemical attack on innocent people in the last week."</p> <p>"Clearly the Assad regime did not get the message last year," Mattis said, adding that this time the U.S. struck harder.</p> <p>"We have gone to great lengths to avoid civilian and foreign casualties," he said. "... I believe that we sent a very strong message."</p> <p>Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunford said the strike specifically hit three targets associated with the production and storage of chemical weapons: a scientific research center; a storage center for sarin and its precursor components; and a chemical weapons storage facility and command post.</p> <p>"Important infrastructure was destroyed," said Dunford.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	04/16 Changing cyber threat landscape
SOURCE	https://cybersecurity.cioreview.com/news/the-changing-cyber-threat-landscape-nid-26065-cid-145.html
GIST	<p>Over the course of 2017, the number of global cyber attacks continued growing at a rapid pace which also resulted in the reshaping of the cybersecurity arena. With the adoption of various technology, traditional threats such as generic Trojans, ransomware, and spambots received facelifts with military-grade coding and tactics. Threats including GoldenEye and WannaCry gave numerous organizations tears and forced many to down their shutters.</p> <p>The effectiveness of these kinds of sophisticated threats can be analyzed by using lateral movement vectors that augment zero-day exploits such as EternalBlue and EternalRomance, allowing malware to 'hop' from one network to another across the globe. These targeted attacks are reshaping corporate and government digital security initiatives, while simultaneously causing fallout in the consumer space.</p> <p>The past year witnessed the rapid rise of commoditization of cybercrime, with Ransomware-as-a-Service and Malware-as-a-Service becoming easily and widely available on the dark web. Furthermore, the year also witnessed the growth of advanced services, like FUD (fully undetected), which enable attackers to upload malware to an analysis service for a fee. The past year also witnessed a new generation of IoT-based attacks known as Reaper. Analysis revealed that the attack codes were armed with exploits spanning</p>

	a variety of IoT vendors, including Linksys, NetGear, GoAhead, and Avtech. The growth of cyber attacks is simply an example of the sorts of the ongoing development of security exploits.
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HEADLINE	04/16 National Guard mission: cyber defense
SOURCE	https://federalnewsradio.com/cyber-exposure/2018/04/national-guard-preparing-to-defend-cyberspace-for-states/
GIST	<p>National Guard units are ramping up their defensive cyber capabilities across the board, and in the not-too-distant future will be able to quickly respond to cyber attacks in their home states and territories, much as they do today for natural disasters.</p> <p>“The Air National Guard (ANG) has 15 Cyber Operations Squadrons that provide Cyber Protection Teams (CPTs) and National Mission Teams (NMTs) in support of DoD cyber missions,” said Sgt. 1st Class W. Michael Houk, a spokesman for the National Guard Bureau. “In addition, the Army National Guard (ARNG) Cyber Brigade is building a full cyber brigade with five battalions consisting of 11 CPTs, five cybersecurity companies and five cyber warfare companies.”</p> <p>The guard also is actively working on cyber missions across the country.</p> <p>“ARNG personnel are currently mobilized as part of Task Force Echo under the control of Army Cyber in support of U.S Cyber Command to engineer, operate and maintain critical network infrastructure,” Houk said. “The ANG continually provides two CPTs and continually fills portions of a NMT in support of U.S. Cyber Command.”</p> <p>While guard cyber units already contribute to military missions around the globe, the National Guard’s recent efforts are a result of a 2016 Government Accountability Office study that underscored the importance of the guard’s readiness against cyber threats. At the time, many guard units had some limited cyber capabilities, but they were mostly assigned to local duties, such as protecting the online assets of the unit.</p> <p>Despite early success, the guard acknowledged that quite a few challenges remain in this new area. One is the long-standing fact that most guard personnel are part-time, something that was less of a concern when performing more traditional missions.</p> <p>“We have in our ranks people with cyber expertise gained through civilian experience,” said John Goheen, the director of communications for the National Guard Association of the United States. “The military could really use these people full time, but the salaries they command as civilians makes that challenging.”</p> <p>And it’s not just the guard that is experiencing, or will soon experience, the same situation.</p> <p>“The active military will likely run into the same problem moving forward,” Goheen said. “They train bright, young people — and then lose them to private industry. We have a place for them in the guard, but again, they will only be part-time. The military needs to find ways to tap this resource.”</p> <p>Another hurdle is one the National Guard has always experienced — that of running a branch of the national military within the jurisdictions of each individual state.</p> <p>“The nature of the National Guard enables our personnel to work with state and local authorities on critical infrastructure,” Goheen said. “In fact, a lot of guard cyber exercise involves assisting with defending power plants and water systems.”</p> <p>In an actual incident, such as an attack on a power plant through its cyber infrastructure, a state government could activate the guard, and called upon it to stop it, officials said. After it halted the main attack, a guard cyber unit could remain behind to protect the infrastructure while the critical infrastructure</p>

	<p>owner constructed the new cyber defenses.</p> <p>The scope and capabilities of any given state-level mission would be up to the governor of that state, not unlike traditional guard missions.</p> <p>“National Guard forces would likely respond to a cyber incident in the same manner as other domestic emergencies such as hurricanes or floods,” Houk said. “A governor may activate National Guard personnel in state-funded, State Active Duty in accordance with state and local laws and DoD policy.”</p> <p>Additionally, under the United States Code Title 32, a state governor, with approval from the secretary of Defense or the president, may activate guardsmen for homeland defense activities, or to provide support for civil authorities.</p> <p>National Guard leaders expressed confidence that the guard would soon be responding to cyber incidents on a regular basis, just like they do for floods, snowstorms and missions to maintain the peace in extraordinary circumstances. Now, maintaining the peace extends to cyberspace.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 India bitcoin exchange suffers setback
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/someone-stole-3-million-in-bitcoin-from-coinsecure-bitcoin-exchange/
GIST	<p>In a security notice, the Indian Bitcoin exchange Coinsecure has revealed that it has suffered a setback after 438 BTC which is over \$3 million (\$3,542,957) according to current Bitcoin price were stolen from its offline Bitcoin wallets</p> <p>The company maintains that it has never been hacked or compromised and the incident took place when its CSO Dr. Amitabh Saxena was extracting BTG (Bitcoin Gold) to distribute to its customers. Saxena, on the other hand, claims that funds were lost in the process during the extraction of the private keys.</p> <p>The company has launched a complaint with the Cyber Cell in Delhi and is also conducting an investigation with the help of cybersecurity experts. However, a look at the police complaint points to an inside job as the company’s director Mohit Kalra stated in the complaint that:</p> <p>“As the private keys are kept with Dr. Amitabh Saxena, we feel that he is making a false story to divert our attention and he might have a role to play in this entire incident. The incident reported by Dr. Amitabh Saxena does not seem convincing to us. Dr. Amitabh Saxena also has an Indian Passport and he might fly out of the country soon, therefore, his passport should be seized as he cannot fly out of the country”</p> <p>Ningning Niumai, founder of Greymeter, a social network for college students and young professionals tweeted that Dr. Amitabh Saxena was appointed almost 6 months ago by the company, therefore, handing over private keys of Coinsecure is very suspicious.</p> <p>“Dr. Amitabh Saxena appointed barely 6 months ago has the private key to Coinsecure’s wallet?!! Is he a Scapegoat?!! Very suspicious and convenient blame game after the recent RBI ruling on Bitcoin,” said Niumai.</p> <p>It is noteworthy that Coinsecure incident has occurred days after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) barred banks and financial institutions from dealing in cryptocurrencies from April 6th, 2018.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 FTC: 2016 Uber hack impacted 25M
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/25-million-us-individuals-impacted-2016-uber-hack
GIST	The 2016 data breach that Uber made public in November 2017 impacted over 25 million riders and drivers in the United States, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) reveals.

	<p>The hack, which the ride-sharing company kept silent about for a year, impacted more than 57 million users globally. Hackers managed to access data stored on an Amazon Web Services (AWS) account and steal names, email addresses and mobile phone numbers of customers around the world.</p> <p>In February this year, Uber chief information security officer said that two individuals living in Canada and Florida were responsible for the massive data breach.</p> <p>In an attempt to cover up the hack, Uber paid the attackers \$100,000 through its third-party “bug bounty” program, which was designed to reward those who responsibly disclose vulnerabilities, rather than those who maliciously exploit them.</p> <p>The company came under scrutiny after the hack was made public in November 2017, and even became the target of a US criminal investigation. The data breach was revealed only three months after Uber agreed to implement new data protection measures in a settlement with the FTC over a 2014 incident.</p> <p>Now, the Commission says the ride-sharing company has agreed to expand the proposed settlement and that it will be subject to additional requirements. Under the new settlement, Uber could be subject to civil penalties if it doesn't notify the FTC of future breaches in due time.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Hoaxes, scams w/school violence fears
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/email-hoaxes-and-phishing-scams-prey-off-of-school-violence-fears/article/758240/
GIST	<p>A Swiss hacking group has reportedly claimed credit for using a hijacked email domain to bombard schools around the U.S. with fake threats of violence. And in related news, security awareness training provider KnowBe4 issued a warning on Thursday about a credentials phishing campaign that also preys on school shooting fears by impersonating a campus security alert.</p> <p>According to multiple news outlets, a group called the Apophis Squad sent disturbing hoax emails to school district superintendents in at least 46 states last Sunday and Monday, triggering an increased police presence and in some cases class cancellations. The emails featured the subject line "Student help!" and purported to be authored by a bullied student who threatened to show up at school "with 3 bombs, and a .22 handgun."</p> <p>The adversaries reportedly used the email address apophissquad@zonix.us, after hijacking the domain of Zonix, a Dallas-based online online gaming company that provides Minecraft servers.</p> <p>"Over the past few hours we were directly contacted by a group that threatened to send a bomb hoax spoofing our email domain in an attempt to directly smear and harm Zonix," states a series of tweets posted on Zonix's official Twitter account on Apr. 9. "We began to realize the threat was credible when we began hearing responses from school superintendents pertaining to this situation. We are aware that some schools might have been affected by this and we apologize for any inconvenience or panic that could have happened because of this situation.</p> <p>Apophis Squad's account on Twitter, meanwhile, has been suspended. But a journalist with the Union-Democrat in Sonora, Calif. reportedly made contact with one of the hackers, who said the attack's motive was to taunt law enforcement, adding "We got nothing better to do." The hacker also stated future plans to leak information originating from a U.S. Army database.</p> <p>Reportedly, the same perpetrators previously sent similar threats to UK-based schools in March 2018, using the domain of Zonix competitor VeltPvP.</p> <p>Meanwhile, an unnamed community college in Florida was recently targeted in phishing campaign</p>

	<p>spoofing its campus-wide security alerts, according to a KnowBe4 founder and CEO Stu Sjouwerman, who warns in a company blog post that this scheme could easily spread to additional educational institutions as well as companies and organizations that have established active shooter protocols.</p> <p>The email arrives with a subject line such as "IT DESK: Security Alert Reported on Campus," "IT DESK: Campus Emergency Scare" or "IT DESK: Security Concern on Campus Earlier," and instructs recipients to click a link to a memo containing proper instructions. However, the link leads to a credentials phishing page that imitates the Microsoft log-in process, which many campuses computers require.</p> <p>"What makes this particular attack so infuriating," remarks Sjouwerman, is that it exploits current concerns over active shooters on education campuses, a sensitive issue that could likely generate panicked, reflexive clicks from recipients who are already on edge over the recent shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, also in Florida."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Federal agency data under siege
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/federal-agency-data-under-siege/a/d-id/1331467
GIST	<p>The US government continues to grapple with the same cybersecurity challenges faced by most organizations, but it has a different set of hurdles to overcome than its private-sector counterparts. As a result, federal agencies are experiencing more data breaches than other industry sectors. Despite skyrocketing IT security spending, successful attacks are escalating across the board. Federal agencies in particular are weathering a perfect storm around data that puts agency secrets — and the personal data of over 330 million American citizens — at risk.</p> <p>According to Thales' 2018 Data Threat Report—Federal Government Edition, 57% of federal respondents reported data breaches, a threefold increase over the 18% recorded back in 2016. As many as 12% experienced multiple breaches in 2017 and in previous years.</p> <p>Many agencies are in a difficult position. Federal agencies must protect sensitive data and both thwart bad guys hunting for citizens' private data and nation-state hackers with their own agendas — in addition to grappling with perennial underfunding, understaffing, and antiquated systems that commercial enterprises tossed into the dumpster years ago. At the same time, they need to make government more accessible and transparent via digital transformation, which inevitably exposes them to more cyber threats.</p> <p>But these factors don't completely explain the growing numbers of breaches at federal agencies.</p> <p>Catching Up with the Private Sector</p> <p>Despite these troubles, agency IT security professionals are trying to stay positive, partly because spending is sharply increasing this year. "Like most other sectors, data security spending plans in the US federal sector are up compared to last year — way up," says Garrett Bekker, 451 Research's principal analyst for information security, as highlighted in the Thales report. "Perhaps more importantly, for the first time, the US federal government ranks the highest of any US vertical in terms of spending increase plans — more than nine out of 10 (93%) plan to increase security spending in 2018."</p> <p>In fact, a staggering 73% of federal agencies say their IT security spending will be much higher in 2018, according to the report. This comes after several years of IT security spending well below that of commercial enterprises.</p> <p>"The bad news is that reports by US federal respondents of successful breaches last year (57%) are far ahead of the global average (36%), and also the global federal sector (26%). Further, 70% of US federal respondents say their agencies were breached at some point in the past," says Bekker.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/16 Woolworths hit by IT glitch
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/woolworths-turning-customers-away-following-it-outage/
GIST	<p>Woolworths is turning customers away from its stores, following reports the Australian supermarket chain is suffering a nationwide IT outage.</p> <p>Customers took to Twitter Monday afternoon, posting photos of security screens pulled shut at stores around the country, with some reporting being told by store managers that an IT glitch had affected its cash registers.</p> <p>ZDNet understands the glitch didn't make its way to all stores, however, with some operating as usual.</p> <p>Woolworths eventually confirmed the outage, apologising for the inconvenience via Twitter.</p> <p>"We can confirm that an IT issue impacted registers in our supermarkets for a short period of time this afternoon. The registers are now back online in all our stores. We apologise for any inconvenience caused. Thanks," the reply to many reads.</p> <p>Woolworths in August apologised to customers following reports that some experienced a second batch of payments withdrawn from their bank accounts.</p> <p>A Woolworths spokesperson told ZDNet at the time it received confirmation from Cuscal, one of its payment processors that services financial institutions, that due to an error at its datacentre, some Woolworths customers received incorrect transactions on accounts processed by Cuscal.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/16 Windows servers targeted to cryptomine
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/windows-servers-targeted-for-cryptocurrency-mining-via-iis-flaw/
GIST	<p>Hackers are leveraging an IIS 6.0 vulnerability to take over Windows servers and install a malware strain that mines the Electroneum cryptocurrency.</p> <p>Attacks aren't widespread, as they target a quite old IIS version, but they are happening at scale.</p> <p>Hackers using former IIS 6.0 zero-day</p> <p>Hackers are using CVE-2017-7269 to take over servers. This is a vulnerability discovered by two Chinese researchers in March 2017 that affects IIS' WebDAV service. At the time it was discovered last year, the flaw was a zero-day, being under heavy exploitation for almost nine months, since June 2016.</p> <p>Microsoft initially said it was not planning to fix the flaw because IIS 6.0 was end-of-life, and so were the operating systems that shipped with IIS 6.0 by default —Windows XP and Windows Server 2003.</p> <p>But the vulnerability shared some common traits with the EXPLODINGCAN NSA exploit leaked in April 2017 by the Shadow Brokers, and it eventually received a fix in mid-June 2017.</p> <p>Since then, it's been used by at least one threat actor to deploy Monero miners on Windows servers still running the old IIS 6.0 version.</p> <p>Now, F5 Labs says it found another hacker group using the same exploit, but deploying an Electroneum miner instead of Monero.</p> <p>According to experts, the threat actor uses CVE-2017-7269 to deliver an ASCII shellcode which contains a Return-Oriented Programming (ROP) exploit chain that installs a reverse shell on vulnerable hosts.</p>

	<p>Attackers then use the reverse shell to download the miner and start the mining process. The infection process is masked by the use of the Squiblydoo technique and by disguising the miner as the legitimate lsass.exe (Local Security Authority Subsystem Service) process.</p> <p>F5 experts said the Electroneum address they found in attacks stored only \$99, suggesting they either caught the campaign at its beginning, or crooks are rotating address IDs to avoid researchers from tracking their entire operation.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/16 Russia blocks Telegram messenger
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-telegram-blocking/russia-starts-blocking-telegram-messenger-regulator-idUSKBN1HN13J
GIST	<p>MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia's state telecommunications regulator said on Monday it had begun blocking access to messenger service Telegram after the service's owner refused to comply with an order to give Russian state security access to users' secret messages.</p> <p>The watchdog, Roskomnadzor, said in a statement on its website that it had sent telecoms operators a notification about blocking access to Telegram inside Russia</p> <p>The service, set up by a Russian entrepreneur, has more than 200 million global users and is ranked as the world's ninth most popular mobile messaging app.</p> <p>Interfax news agency quoted an official at the watchdog as saying it would take several hours to complete the operation to block access. In Moscow, the Telegram app was still functioning as normal early on Monday afternoon.</p> <p>Roskomnadzor was implementing a decision handed down on Friday by a Russian court that Telegram should be blocked because it was in violation of Russian regulations.</p> <p>Telegram had refused a request by Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) to give them access to users' encrypted messages.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/16 'Digital resurrections' bring back dead?
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/mach/science/will-digital-resurrections-let-us-bring-back-dead-ncna865806
GIST	<p>Humans have always looked for tangible ways to remember departed loved ones. We save letters and emails they wrote us. We look fondly at photos of them. We watch and rewatch old videos just to see their faces and hear them talk.</p> <p>But the rise of digital technologies may soon give us even more compelling ways to remember lost friends and family. These include apps that let us text with digital representations of the dead — we'd type a message and then get some sort of comforting reply — and maybe even systems that let us speak with and possibly touch realistic avatars of the ones we miss most.</p> <p>Maybe that sounds creepy, but some experts believe we'll find comfort in continuing our interactions with people whose biological existences have come to an end.</p> <p>"Many people visit the headstone of a loved one to help come to terms with their passing, and have a one-sided conversation where they think about the memory of them," says Bruce Duncan, managing director of Terasem Movement Foundation, a Bristol, Vermont-based nonprofit that promotes digital resurrections.</p> <p>"Being able to have a two-way conversation with a digital version of them, where you can be reminded of</p>

their mannerisms or behavioral patterns in an interactive way, could become a natural part of the grieving process.”

Several companies, including Luka, a San Francisco-based startup, and research organizations including the MIT Media Lab, are working on digital resurrection technology.

It goes without saying that the digital version of a person is no match for the living, breathing human being. But scientists are experimenting with algorithms that can take a person's emails and text messages and use them to generate text messages that are at least evocative of a specific person. The messages can use emojis like the dead person once did. And with data pulled from the internet, the texts can even include back-and-forths about topical things like weather and current events.

In coming years, Duncan believes, there may be browser plug-ins capable of capturing an entire life's worth of social media posts, emails, photos, and other digital data and using everything to approximate an individual's personality, complete with values and opinions.

Digital resurrection technology is unlikely to stop with chatbots. Duncan and other experts foresee a time when we'll be able to interact with lost loved ones not just via texts but in virtual reality.

“You'd be able to put on your virtual reality glasses and headset, and experience typical everyday situations with that person, like sitting at the breakfast table or taking a walk in a nearby park,” says Charlotte Runius, CEO of Fenix Begravning, a Stockholm, Sweden-based funeral planning agency that is working with AI experts to develop these technologies. “Hearing their voice and seeing them would allow you to actually feel like you're next to the person again, and you can talk to them and get replies in a much more realistic way.”

By wearing a bodysuit and gloves studded with sensors and actuators, it might even be possible to interact physically with a realistic-looking avatar of a deceased person. The technology could monitor a living person's movements, voice, and facial expressions and then later use them to direct an avatar to respond appropriately — perhaps by offering advice or giving a comforting hug.

In the distant future, one can imagine that it would be possible to create a robotic avatar of a beloved one — a bit like the scenario depicted in a popular episode of the Netflix series "Black Mirror," in which a grieving widow's late partner is resurrected in robotic form with help from his texts, photos, and emails.

The only snag with these scenarios is that much of the data used to resurrect someone would have to be collected while he or she was still alive — for instance, by having him or her speak a thousand or so words and be recorded on video.

EMOTIONAL COMFORT — OR PAIN?

What would it be like to interact with someone who's been brought back in digital form? Some experts say it could aid the grieving process. Others worry that interacting with a virtual representation of a person who is no longer alive would only intensify feelings of sadness and loss.

Studies have shown that bereaved people can experience grief hallucinations, and there are concerns that interacting with avatars might raise the risk.

Duncan believes that, at least for most people, the experience will be akin to watching home movies and enjoying the memories that they trigger.

“Enjoying talking to past loved ones via digital media may eventually become the future version of looking through photographs of past events... It's hard to predict the future, but just as we've adjusted to using Skype and cell phones I think we'll consider it valuable to continue some connection with a person we care about.”

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HEADLINE	04/15 Pushing back Russia disinformation
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/one-tiny-corner-u-s-government-pushes-back-against-russian-n866021
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — When reports began to emerge last month that Russian mercenaries had attacked a U.S. base in Syria, Russia issued a flat denial, and the U.S. was silent.</p> <p>Then, leaked recordings surfaced on the internet.</p> <p>"We've had our asses f--- kicked. So one squadron f--- lost 200 people ...the Yankees knew for sure that the Russians were coming."</p> <p>The tapes seemed to show Russian guns-for-hire acknowledging a crushing defeat in the Feb. 8 incident. It was an embarrassment for the Kremlin, which was forced to admit that Russian citizens had been killed by the U.S. military — something an American general later confirmed to NBC News.</p> <p>With their election interference and ongoing manipulation of social media platforms like Twitter, the Russians have been regularly outfoxing America in the information realm, U.S. intelligence officials acknowledge. Who turned the tables this time?</p> <p>Not the White House, the State Department or the CIA. The recordings were published by a U.S.-government-funded web site called Polygraph.info, whose reporter says she got them from a source close to the Kremlin.</p> <p>Polygraph is a relatively new fact-checking arm of an obscure, diminutive media effort by the U.S. to highlight Russian misdeeds and counter Russian propaganda.</p> <p>It's an anomaly in the Trump administration — perhaps the only part of the U.S. government whose job is to regularly punch back against what experts say is a stream of Russian disinformation aimed at America and the West.</p> <p>"At the end of the day, the Russians are engaging in information warfare — they're telling lies," said John Lansing, a former television executive who oversees the effort. "And we're confronting them toe-to-toe with fact-based, truthful, professional journalism."</p> <p>Russia's proficiency at information war has been on display in the wake of the U.S.-led military strike Friday night in Syria. Russia called the strikes illegal and said the chemical weapons attacks that prompted them were staged. To get that message out, there was a 2000 percent spike in activity in the hours since the strike by fake Russian propaganda accounts on social media, a Pentagon spokeswoman said Saturday. A web site that tracks a slice of those accounts, Hamilton 68, found that they were pumping out the Russian government narrative in English.</p> <p>THEY'RE "EATING OUR LUNCH"</p> <p>The U.S. is ill-equipped to respond. Polygraph, part of the tiny corner of the government that's trying, has a staff of five that doesn't usually work on the weekends.</p> <p>"We focus mostly on Russia right now because there is a large flow of disinformation that's coming from Russia," said Jim Fry, a former Dallas television reporter who runs Polygraph from Washington.</p> <p>Polygraph is a joint venture of the Voice of America and Radio Liberty, which are funded by — but independent of — the U.S. government. They fall under the umbrella of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, whose mission is to promote freedom and democracy and "tell America's story" around the world. But they are walled off, editorially, from the administration in power.</p> <p>"The law protects us from interference by U.S. government officials," said Tom Kent, who spent 44 years at The Associated Press before becoming president of Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe. "They can't</p>

tell us what to broadcast."

During the Cold War, the VOA and Radio Liberty sought to counter communist propaganda and funnel information to the news-starved citizenry behind the Iron Curtain.

Those muscles — and budgets — have long since atrophied. But in recent years, there have been growing calls for a new twist on that old mission.

When Lansing became CEO of the Broadcasting Board of Governors in 2015, he said he was confronted on Capitol Hill and throughout the government with a single question:

"Why are the Russians eating our lunch in terms of information warfare?"

People were talking mainly about RT, the former Russia Today, which spends hundreds of millions of dollars a year on an English language broadcast and web platform that regularly skewers American and the West. The U.S. government has labeled RT a propaganda operation.

The State Department came under criticism earlier this year when news reports highlighted its failure to spend \$120 million that had been allocated to push back on Russian propaganda abroad.

Lost in that conversation was the fact that one month into the Trump Administration, Lansing and his team launched Current Time America, a 24-hour Russian-language broadcasting and web platform. The budget was \$20 million — around one-tenth the size of RT's budget, Lansing says. But one year later, Current Time America is available on TV screens in 30 countries, and officials counted 400 million view views on social media last year.

Still, U.S. information efforts are minuscule compared to the Russian campaign. While Current Time America is available in Russia, the Russian government makes it difficult to find — keeping it off cable systems and requiring special tuning for satellite reception.

The broadcasting board's total budget this year is about \$660 million dollars, about a third of what was spent in 1991, adjusted for inflation.

"I think we should be investing more," Lansing said.

The Russian government labels the entire U.S.-funded journalism operation "propaganda" that is "part of a broader, wide-reaching American system of pressure on our country."

Irina van Dusen, who heads the effort as chief of Voice of America's Russian-language programming, knows what propaganda looks like. She grew up in the Soviet Union, listening to the VOA on an illegal short wave radio for scraps of accurate reporting.

She got her journalism degree in Moscow, but decided that if she wanted to practice real journalism, she would have to move to the West.

During the Cold War, she says, the VOA was trying to break through jamming and censorship. Now there has been a proliferation of Russian TV and web channels that put out a cacophony of news, nearly all of it favorable to Vladimir Putin. The task in 2018 is trying to break through a fog of disinformation.

The prevailing view in Russia, she said, is that "There is no truth. There is only different versions, different narratives... We stand by the fact that there is truth. And there are facts."

From a TV studio near not far from where special counsel Robert Mueller comes to work each day, Current Time America covers Washington, offering live broadcasts of Congressional hearings with simultaneous translations.

"People can listen, see how it's done, how policies are made, what questions asked, what facts are being brought up," she said.

The channel also covers Russia, to "provide Russian speaking audiences with a true portrait of the society, you know? As opposed to state-run Russian television that — interprets everything that is done in the world...as some kind of a United States manipulation and United States meddling in world affairs."

Polygraph.info, and its Russian-language counterpart, Factograph — try to be slightly edgier than a traditional news operation.

"What our reporters do every day is they begin the day looking at Russian media," said Fry. "Looking at what's coming out of Russia. And then we decide whether there's something to fact check. Usually, almost every day, there's more to fact check than we could possibly do with our staff."

The site is modeled after other media fact check efforts, including Politifact and factcheck.org. It highlights a claim, say, by Putin or another Russian official, and brands it for veracity, with labels like "Partially True," "False" or "Misleading."

In March, the site fact-checked a Putin documentary that alleged the Russian leader had always believed that the Ukrainian territory of Crimea was part of Russia. It highlighted remarks by Putin in 2008 in which he said something very different: "Crimea is absolutely not a disputed territory." Six years later, Putin seized Crimea from Ukraine, to international condemnation.

Polygraph also challenged Russia's denial that the nerve agent used to poison a former spy in the UK was made only in Russia, and its assertion that no chemical attack took place in Syria.

Polygraph reporters are not afraid to endorse criticism of the U.S. when it's accurate. When Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov criticized a list of Russian oligarchs that the Treasury Department admitted it cribbed from Forbes magazine, Polygraph labeled his comments, "Partially True."

In January, reporters examined a fur coat shown off on Facebook by Russia's foreign ministry spokeswoman. She said it was a fake, bought at a fair in Russia. Polygraph found that the fair didn't sell any coat — and that the coat may have been a fur from an endangered ocelot.

Polygraph's traffic numbers are usually in the low thousands, but that video got 37,000 views, Fry said.

The audio recordings of the Russian mercenaries were a huge coup, even if the site did not seem to get much credit for the scoop. Fry said a Polygraph journalist in Europe, who did not want to be identified, obtained the tapes from a Kremlin source. He acknowledged that he could not rule out U.S. intelligence involvement in distributing the tapes, but that would also be true if the audio had been obtained by a mainstream journalism organization, he said.

The recordings describe an incident in which a number of Russian mercenaries led a group of pro-Assad fighters in an attack on a U.S. base beginning Feb. 7. The mercenaries were from the Wagner Group, it's been widely reported — co-owned by Russian oligarch Yevgeniy Prigozhin, who is close to Vladimir Putin. Prigozhin is also one of the defendants in the indictment brought by Mueller against Russians accused of illegal election activity.

It was the largest ever attack on U.S. troops in Syria, and it was perhaps the first time in many decades that Russian and American troops fought in open combat. Russian mercenaries were among the hundreds who died as the Americans strafed, bombed and shelled the assault force, Army Brig. Gen. Jonathan Braga told NBC's Richard Engel.

The tapes, Fry said, depicted "people who worked for this Russian paramilitary company who were involved in this attack...It showed they knew they were (counterattacked) by Americans. And it showed that there were people who were killed."

	<p>Interestingly enough, he added, "within days of our story, the Russian government started admitting there had been involvement of the private military company, the Russian company, in that attack."</p> <p>Sometimes it's obvious that Russians are more nimble than the Americans at the information game.</p> <p>On Friday, when the Russian defense ministry accused Britain of faking the chemical attack in Syria, RT was leading its web site with an article highlighting the allegations — making no mention of denunciations from the United Nations and U.S. and British officials.</p> <p>Polygraph, meanwhile, was leading with a story fact-checking a statement from Russian state media that Hitler had become more popular than Harry Potter in Latvia. It made no mention of the bogus Russian allegation against Britain.</p> <p>"We didn't get to that today," Fry said, reached by phone. "I wish I could respond as quickly as what they put out."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Europol busts bitcoin laundering ring
SOURCE	https://interestingengineering.com/europol-busts-bitcoin-drug-money-laundering-ring
GIST	<p>In what may now seem like an almost prophetic event, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) expressed concerns last February that billions in illegal proceeds were hidden in Europe in crypto-cash. Now, Europol in cooperation with global law enforcement agencies has arrested 11 people involved in a cryptocurrency drug trafficking ring that laundered over €8 million.</p> <p>The operation, named Tulipan Blanca, saw Spain's Guardia Civil, Finnish law enforcement authorities and the US Department of Homeland Security come together to investigate 137 individuals. "As a result of the operation, the Spanish Guardia Civil carried out eight searches and seized several computers, devices, and the equipment used to commit the crimes, such as money bags or money counting machines," Europol said in a statement.</p> <p>The statement explained that drug traffickers contacted the criminal ring to launder money obtained from their illicit activities. The ring proceeded to split the money into small cash amounts deposited into 174 bank accounts.</p> <p>From there, the criminals used credit cards linked to the fraudulent bank accounts to withdraw the illegal proceeds from Columbia. However, realizing that these transactions could be tracked, the criminal group then turned to cryptocurrencies.</p> <p>To cover their tracks, the ring used an unnamed Finnish cryptocurrency exchange to turn their cash into bitcoins and then subsequently further converted the bitcoins into Colombian pesos.</p> <p>"With cryptocurrencies increasingly used to finance and carry out criminal activities, Europol will continue to coordinate across EU Member States and beyond, to effectively respond to this rising threat," Europol's statement said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Targeting tax pros w/fraud returns
SOURCE	https://www.cnbc.com/2018/04/14/cybercriminals-now-targeting-tax-pros-to-cash-in-on-fraudulent-returns.html
GIST	The deadline to file your taxes is rapidly approaching, but cyber criminals have already been hard at work trying to cash in with fraudulent tax returns.

This tax season, experts say instead of targeting individual tax payers, scam artists are targeting tax professionals.

"One of the challenges that we're seeing this year is that as tax professionals and the I.R.S. have become more and more sophisticated, so too have the adversaries," said Caleb Barlow, IBM Security's vice president of threat intelligence.

Tax fraud is big business for cyber criminals. Last year Internet crimes netted the perpetrators \$445 billion, with tax fraud as a primary focus, according to IBM Security, which monitors cyber crimes.

"We had about 75 tax professionals report that they had been victims of some sort of a tax payer breach. So that unfortunately is a 60 percent increase for the same period of time last year," said Cecilia Barreda, an I.R.S. spokeswoman.

The I.R.S. can recognize if a computer of an individual is filing too many tax returns, and will stop them for likely being fraudulent. But the agency expects tax professionals to file dozens, if not hundreds of tax returns on behalf of their clients.

"If they [cybercriminals] can compromise a tax professional, they get access to two key things. One is the private information of that tax professional's clients that can be used to file tax returns on their behalf," Barlow said.

"And in addition to that, they can use the IP address and the computer of the tax professional to actually do the filing with the I.R.S.," he added.

Here is how the scam works: Cyber criminals target tax professionals with what is known as phishing — spam email that seems legitimate, but contains links or attachments laden with malware.

"The minute that you click on that link, well, then you're owned by the adversary. And what this often means is that they can take control of that system that's normally used by that tax professional," Barlow said.

Once a tax professional's computer is compromised, an attacker can steal the numbers and log-in information they use to file.

"It's an I.P. address we seen before, it's a signature of a computer we seen before. We know it's a tax professional, so they are going be submitting lots of returns," said Barlow.

This year's tax season may be the perfect storm. With a new tax code coming in this year, there has been extra confusion.

"This is kind of a perfect storm where you have a lot of misinformation, a dearth of information, and these new techniques that are being widely used by these criminals looking for compromised computers belonging to tax prep professionals," said Roman Sannikov, the director of European research and analysis for Flashpoint, a cybersecurity company.

He added that "they can use to not only steal information, but also to file these returns in a much more successful way."

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HEADLINE 04/15 Guarding rail against evolving threats

SOURCE <http://www.railjournal.com/index.php/technology/cybersecurity-guarding-rail-against-evolving-threats.html>

GIST

As the railway seeks to harness the benefits of digitalisation and the Internet of Things, the links between information technology and operational technology become ever-more intertwined. However, these trends are completely redefining the railway security environment as systems become vulnerable to new types of threats. Keith Barrow assesses how the industry is responding to the cybersecurity challenge.

ON May 13 2017, passengers at mainline stations in Germany glanced up at the information screens and saw something unusual. Obscuring the lists of departures and arrivals, a ransomware notice demands a \$US 300 payment in Bitcoin.

The WannaCry virus had infected 450 German Rail (DB) computers, bringing down passenger information systems, ticket machines, and CCTV networks.

This was a very public demonstration of rail's vulnerability to cyberattack, and while the target in this case was the company's business systems, the attack also highlighted the need to secure operational systems against hackers.

Until recently, Industrial Automated Control Systems (IACS) were considered relatively well-insulated against external influence with a high degree of immunity to security threats and attacks. However, the threat landscape has altered significantly in recent years with the proliferation of digital technologies and the increasing interconnectivity between the business and operational functions of companies.

Research by IBM shows cyberattacks on ICAS increased by more than 600% between 2012 and 2014, while according to Dell's 2015 cybersecurity report, attacks on supervisory control and data acquisition (Scada) systems surged from 91,676 in January 2012 to 675,186 in January 2014.

Mr François Hausman, mainline cybersecurity manager for Alstom and leader of Shift²Rail's cybersecurity work package, told delegates at Railtech's recent Intelligent Rail Summit in Vienna that the characteristics of railway networks make them a potential cyberattack target. These include:

- distributed architecture - electronic components spread along a section of line or a train
- long lifecycles for equipment
- high level of certification for safety-related systems
- diversity of supply chain and technology, and
- small-medium volume production of components.

Mr Domenico Raguseo, technical sales manager, Europe, for IBM says systems are vulnerable to hackers when there is a high degree of integration between IT and operational technology (OT).

"The railway industry is very secure from a cybersecurity point-of-view - hackers would have a lot of difficulty getting into your systems," he says. "With high standards and tonnes of security control, a hacker needs to invest a lot of time if he wants to create a problem for you. Unfortunately, the good news stops here. The safety-first philosophy of rail - that the train stops to protect the lives of the passengers - is good for hackers, because they don't want to kill people, they want to get money. So it would be fantastic for a hacker to stop a train."

As senior managers seek ever more data on the day-to-day performance of the railway, business and operational systems are increasingly interconnected, and wherever there are interfaces, there are potential points of attack.

Mr Lovan Pushparatnam, head of tramway systems and telecoms with Systra, says any cybersecurity strategy must consider people as well as technology. "The best results are achieved when cybersecurity is treated as part of an overall security policy addressing technical aspects and operational procedures, with continuous assessment and measurement," he says. "It's not about protection, it's about process and preparation, monitoring both your assets and your organisation."

Testing the vulnerability of railway systems to cyberattack is a particular challenge because of the difficulty of simulating attacks under realistic operating conditions. "When we model attack patterns, we

need to understand how it is possible to attack,” Raguseo says. “It’s not easy to do penetration testing in a real environment, so you need to create a test environment. Developing a test environment is complicated for IT - I’d say it’s impossible for a complex environment like rail.”

The European Union (EU) Directive on security of network and information systems (NIS Directive) came into force in August 2016, and is intended to boost the overall level of cybersecurity in member states. The NIS Directive is due to be transposed into the legal systems of the member states by next month and specifically identifies train operators and railway infrastructure managers as entities that could be considered “operators of essential services.” Businesses in this category will be required to implement risk management practices, taking “appropriate and proportional technical and organisational measures to manage the risks posed to the security of networks and information systems which they use in their operations.” Significant cyber attacks must be reported to a “competent national NIS authority.”

All of this leaves railway industry stakeholders with the challenge of securing assets which can have a lifespan of several decades against a threat that is constantly evolving. System architecture is therefore a crucial consideration in safeguarding next-generation rail technologies against attack.

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HEADLINE	04/15 Experts warn: Russia cyber warfare
SOURCE	https://www.standard.co.uk/news/world/syria-news-latest-russia-could-launch-cyber-warfare-within-days-after-us-led-military-action-expert-a3814226.html
GIST	<p>Russia could “launch cyber warfare within weeks” in retaliation to US-led airstrikes on Syria bringing down City firms, the UK transport network and the NHS, experts have warned.</p> <p>Theresa May hailed “targeted and limited” action on key sites of Syria’s chemical weapons regime “a success” while Donald Trump branded the offensive “perfectly executed”.</p> <p>But Russia warned of “consequences” following the strike which has left the Prime Minister facing questions over why the decision was not put to a parliamentary vote.</p> <p>Now experts have said the action in retaliation to a suspected chemical attack in Douma a week ago could lead to “cyber warfare”.</p> <p>"I suspect Russia will choose not to respond in military terms. But cyber warfare is highly likely," he says.</p> <p>"It will be an attack on national infrastructure, not just upsetting city firms, but getting inside the transport system, or the health system, or air traffic control. It could affect everyone."</p> <p>Mark Almond, director of the Crisis Research Institute, Oxford agreed that the strikes would spark retaliation and said Britain was most vulnerable to a counter-attack.</p> <p>Despite admitting that the "immediate risk of a wider war" has been avoided for now, he warned that sources of potential conflict are still very much active on the ground in Syria.</p> <p>He wrote in the Sunday Telegraph: "Bad relations could easily encourage a reckless Russian freebooter, prompted and paid by Iran, to try his luck getting revenge on the pockets of US and British forces operating in eastern Syria.</p> <p>"Britain is more exposed to potential revenge attacks, despite only four Tornados taking part in the strikes, because they flew from Akrotiri in Cyprus - so close to Syria and to Lebanon."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 ‘Operation Parliament’ targets Mideast
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SOURCE	https://www.forbesmiddleeast.com/en/new-cyberattack-operation-parliament-targets-governments-military-and-intelligence-organizations/
GIST	<p>A new potentially geopolitically-motivated cyberattack dubbed Operation Parliament has been targeting governmental departments and large private entities across the Middle East, according to global cybersecurity company Kaspersky Lab.</p> <p>Operation Parliament has so far affected an unknown number of organizations in over 27 countries, mostly in the Middle East and North Africa, including Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. Financial impact of the attack has not been disclosed.</p> <p>In a campaign believed to have been active since 2017, the cybercriminals targeted selected victims through malware disguised as legitimate email attachments. Upon opening the attachments victims unwittingly gave the criminals access to their systems, enabling them to remotely gain control over their devices and mine data, as well as activate tools such as webcams. It is believed that the attackers had previously gained access to large databases of contacts for sensitive organisations and targeted non-trained staff.</p> <p>The criminal group “hid in plain sight” accordingly to Kaspersky Lab. The malware was first discovered during an operation to uncover a phishing scam targeting political figures. At first it appeared to be the work of another group already known to officials. However, under further inspection the encrypted malware was found to be very different to any previous attacks.</p> <p>Victims are known to include parliaments, senates, top state offices and officials, political science scholars, military and intelligence agencies, ministries, media outlets, research centres, election commissions, Olympic organizations and large trading companies. Over 130 individual users have been identified as victims so far. Efforts are now underway by law enforcers to find the group behind the attacks and prevent any further damage.</p> <p>“Operation Parliament is another symptom of the continuously developing tensions in the Middle East and North Africa. We are witnessing higher sophistication and smarter techniques used by attackers and it doesn’t look like they will stop or slow down anytime soon” said Mohamad Amin Hasbini, Senior Security Researcher, Global Research & Analysis Team at Kaspersky Lab.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 UK considers retaliatory cyberattacks
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-russia-cyber/uk-could-launch-retaliatory-cyber-attack-on-russia-if-infrastructure-targeted-sunday-times-idUSKBN1HL1BT
GIST	<p>LONDON (Reuters) - Britain would consider launching a cyber attack against Russia in retaliation if Russia targeted British national infrastructure, the Sunday Times reported, citing unnamed security sources.</p> <p>Britain’s relations with Russia are at a historic low, after it blamed Russia for a nerve agent attack on former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in England, prompting mass expulsions of diplomats.</p> <p>Russia has denied involvement, and on Saturday also condemned strikes against Syria by Western powers, which Britain took part in.</p> <p>Cyber security has become a focal point of the strained relations. On Thursday, a British spy chief said that his GCHQ agency would “continue to expose Russia’s unacceptable cyber behaviour”, adding there would be increasing demand for its cyber expertise.</p> <p>The Sunday Times also said that British spy officials had been preparing for Russia-backed hackers to release embarrassing information on politicians and other high-profile people since the attack on the Skripals.</p>

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HEADLINE	04/14 US: 2000% rise disinformation campaign
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/04/14/russian-trolls-launch-disinformation-campaign-after-syria-airstrikes-pentagon.html
GIST	<p>Following U.S.-led coalition strikes in Syria to degrade chemical weapons capabilities, the Pentagon says it's seen a "2,000 percent increase" in Russian "disinformation."</p> <p>Russia, a close ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, has reportedly started a new campaign to spread propaganda and other false narratives on social media after the U.S., France and the United Kingdom staged airstrikes in Syria this weekend in response to Assad's alleged use of chemical weapons.</p> <p>Chief Pentagon spokeswoman Dana White said at a briefing on Saturday that "there has been a 2,000 percent increase in Russian trolls in the last 24 hours."</p> <p>Saturday's briefing was an attempt to counter any false information.</p> <p>An investigation into the 2016 presidential elections by the federal government has found that a number of Kremlin-backed hacking groups spread politically charged content across social media platforms in an attempt to influence the outcome.</p> <p>At a meeting of the U.N. Security Council Saturday, U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley took aim at Russian ambassador Vasily Nebenzia over the "fake news."</p> <p>"The pictures of dead children are not fake news," she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Yahoo, AOL read, share users' emails
SOURCE	https://www.cnet.com/news/yahoo-aol-oath-privacy-policy-verizon-emails-messages/
GIST	<p>Oath, the media division of Verizon that runs both AOL and Yahoo, is finally unifying the privacy policy of its two giant legacy Internet brands. That means an updated set of privacy terms and policies for hundreds of millions of users. And in an online world where privacy expectations have been radically reshaped in light of Facebook's Cambridge Analytica mess, it's more important than ever to read the fine print on those splash screens.</p> <p>When we logged in to a Yahoo Mail account Friday, we were greeted with the privacy policy you see below (Jason Kint had pointed to the policy earlier on Twitter). In it, Oath notes that it has the right to read your emails, instant messages, posts, photos and even look at your message attachments. And it might share that data with parent company Verizon, too.</p> <p>To be clear, Yahoo's previous privacy policy had already stated that Yahoo "analyzes and stores all communications content, including email content," so the company has previously disclosed that it's been able to scan the contents of your emails, at least. (AOL's legacy privacy policy doesn't say anything like that.)</p> <p>When you dig further into Oath's policy about what it might do with your words, photos, and attachments, the company clarifies that it's utilizing automated systems that help the company with security, research and providing targeted ads -- and that those automated systems should strip out personally identifying information before letting any humans look at your data. But there are no explicit guarantees on that.</p> <p>Notably, Google used to scan its Gmail messages for better ad targeting, though it stopped the practice in June of 2017.</p>

	<p>In other words, emails related to your banking and financial transactions appear to be equally in the crosshairs of Oath's ad targeting engine.</p> <p>There appears to be another big change for Yahoo users, too: Oath's previous mutual arbitration clause and class-action waiver has been updated and extended across the company's services to include Yahoo as well. What it means is if you don't like what the company does with your data, you'll have a hard time suing.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Google loses 'right to be forgotten' case
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/google-loses-right-to-be-forgotten-legal-case-europe/
GIST	<p>A U.K. court has ruled in favor an unnamed businessman who wanted Google to remove search results of his past conviction history in a landmark "right to be forgotten" case. The search engine had previously refused to delete results about his conviction, BBC News reports.</p> <p>Ten years ago, the businessman was convicted of conspiring to intercept communications. He spent six months in jail. He argued that his conviction was no longer relevant to the public.</p> <p>Google said in a statement Friday it would respect the judge's decision. "We work hard to comply with the right to be forgotten," it said, "but we take great care not to remove search results that are in the public interest."</p> <p>However, Justice Mark Warby rejected a separate claim by a businessman who had committed a more serious crime. More than 10 years ago, the second man was convicted of conspiring to account falsely. He spent four years in jail.</p> <p>Warby said the winning businessman had shown remorse, while the other man continued to "mislead the public."</p> <p>In 2014, the European Court of Justice set legal precedent for the "right to be forgotten" after a Spanish man asked Google to remove results about his financial history. Google said it has removed 800,000 pages from its results over similar requests, but companies can decline to remove information if they believe they are in the public interest.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	04/15 Using social media inspire potential terror
SOURCE	https://theconversation.com/since-boston-bombing-terrorists-are-using-new-social-media-to-inspire-potential-attackers-94944
GIST	<p>Five years ago, a deadly attack during the Boston Marathon made America's nightmare come true: the radicalized boy next door.</p> <p>The research my colleagues and I conduct at Georgia State University tracks how terrorist organizations expose people – mostly young men – to radical messages and extreme violence on social media. The goal: changing their worldview and eventually guiding them to act.</p> <p>The Boston Marathon bombing marked the beginning of a new trend that is almost impossible to prevent. Before, individuals would receive guidance and training from terrorist organizations in person. Now, these same groups simply inspire individuals to carry out attacks on their own, for which the group can claim credit if they are successful. We call that "self-radicalizing."</p>

Radicalization of the boy next door

It remains puzzling to many how Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, a 19-year-old stoner who listened to Jay-Z and watched “The Walking Dead,” could – with his older brother, Tamerlan – killed and injured so many innocent civilians. Authorities at least knew more about Dzhokhar because he was taken alive. His brother died during a police chase.

Courtroom sketch of Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. Jane Flavell Collins via AP
Dzhokhar did not fit the profile experts have identified as typical of self-radicalized terrorists – either jihadi (a Muslim Holy warrior) or extreme right-wing versions. They were unlike many terrorists who gravitate to extremist ideologies.

According to researchers Alice Marwick and Becca Lewis, people who are radicalized “may have a hard time finding like-minded friends in their day-to-day lives, or connecting with romantic partners.”

Dzhokhar was described by Rolling Stone magazine, for example, as attractive, popular and a student athlete. He was also flunking courses and lost his financial aid at University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth in the semester leading up to the attack. But that hardly explains why he went on to plan the deaths of potentially hundreds of runners and spectators.

Eventually, prosecutors found copies of Inspire magazine on Dzhokhar’s laptop. The magazine is an English-language online publication that was published by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. They also found videos of sermons by Anwar al-Awlaki, the American-born firebrand jihadi cleric who was killed in 2011 in Yemen by two U.S. drones. Awlaki’s videos are still circulating on social media years after his death.

The evidence and Dzhokhar’s testimony suggest that the brothers were inspired by propaganda. Both Awlaki’s sermons and Inspire magazine advocate and provide specific “how-to” instructions on mass casualty attacks. Dzhokhar and his brother learned how to make the pressure-cooker bombs from one of the most well-known articles published by the magazine: “How to Build a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom.”

For example, the text explains: “Can I make an effective bomb that causes damage to the enemy from ingredients available in any kitchen in the world? The answer is yes. But before how, we ask why? It is because Allah says ... every Muslim is required to defend his religion and his nation.”

In the five years since the Boston bombing, the number of social media platforms disseminating terrorist propaganda has increased tenfold. And thus, so has the scale and scope of possible future attacks.

Shift to encrypted platforms

As technology evolves, new online platforms provide avenues for terrorist organizations to share information. Platforms have gone from an open interface model, in which anyone can observe what is occurring, to closed and encrypted platforms in which privacy and security settings are protected. These platforms are not readily accessible nor can they be viewed without already being a member of the chat room or channel. When used by terrorist groups, encrypted platforms are harder to police and monitor.

Telegram is an encrypted application developed by Pavel Durov, the inventor of Russia’s Facebook equivalent, VKontakte. Telegram has all but replaced Twitter and Facebook for jihadi communication. Open platforms like Twitter and Facebook have increasingly policed jihadi content, shut down their sites, and taken down their content within minutes of it being posted.

Social media allows terrorist groups to foster a virtual community and a sense of belonging. Research on radicalization suggests that their methods involve taking advantage of individuals’ feelings of loneliness and alienation. However, this doesn’t explain why well-adjusted, well-integrated individuals who appear to have assimilated into Western society – like the Tsarnaevs – gravitate to violent extremist ideologies.

	<p>Research I've done with colleagues on social media demonstrates that terrorist organizations also deliberately foster a type of addiction to the platform and to its content.</p> <p>They do this by creating a schedule of positive reinforcement that modifies behavior, like gambling or playing slot machines. The result changes every time such that one cannot anticipate the outcome and continues to engage in behavior in hopes of a reward the next time around. Not knowing whether you are on the verge of a big win sustains the individual to continue the behavior (in some cases, gambling), whereas not knowing what type of reward the terrorist platform will offer equally sustains user engagement.</p> <p>This keeps the individual tethered to his or her computer, making certain rewards more valuable, limiting how much time you have to join a group or access material, making access exclusive, and varying content to prevent boredom.</p> <p>Through this process, it is possible that ordinarily well-adjusted individuals can be persuaded to channel everyday feelings of frustration, disappointment or anger into acts of extreme violence.</p> <p>As the Islamic state further recedes and loses even more territory, it is adapting to exist almost entirely digitally. Those who fight terrorism need to understand the difference between individuals who are inspired and those who are directly encouraged to engage in violence. Likewise, terrorism researchers need to understand the role of social media in capturing the imagination of young men and instigating them to perpetrate violence.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 ISIS member families on rise in Anbar
SOURCE	https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/number-of-islamic-state-members-families-on-the-rise-in-anbar-as-displaced-people-return-back-home/
GIST	<p>Anbar (IraqiNews.com) The number of families of Islamic State members has been growing as hundreds of displaced families returned to their regions, a security source from Anbar police said on Sunday.</p> <p>Speaking to Almaalomah website on Sunday, the source said “number of IS families in Hit city and surrounding regions reached 150 families, which indicate terrorist operations that could target security troops and civilians, given that those families provide the militants with information about security personnel in order to target them.”</p> <p>“The presence of those families in Hit threaten safety and stability of the region. Displacing them could be hard due to pressures by rights groups,” the source added.</p> <p>Thousands of IS militants as well as Iraqi civilians were killed since the government campaign, backed by paramilitary troops and the coalition, was launched in October 2016 to fight the militant group.</p> <p>In December, Abadi announced full liberation of Iraqi lands, declaring end of war against IS members. However, Islamic State continues to launch sporadic attacks across Iraq against troops. Security reports indicate that the militant group still poses threat against stability in the country.</p> <p>As many as 3,298 civilians were killed and 4,781 others were wounded in 2017, excluding Anbar civilian casualty figures for November and December, which are not available, UNAMI said in a report in December.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/16 ISIS threatens New York subways
SOURCE	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5620103/ISIS-threaten-bomb-New-Yorks-subway-chilling-

	propaganda-poster.html
GIST	<p>ISIS propaganda chiefs have issued a chilling threat to bring death and destruction to New York's subway.</p> <p>The terror group has vowed to attack Paris and the World Cup finals in Russia in recent weeks as part of a global campaign of lone wolf strikes as it continues to lose territory in the Middle East.</p> <p>In its latest warning, uploaded to militant Islamist messaging platforms, a man is pictured standing on the platform at New York's High Street - Brooklyn Bridge Station with explosives and a timer behind him.</p> <p>The poster includes the threat: 'You will not expect where we will attack.'</p> <p>Last year extremists also threatened to attack the Queen and the Vatican City.</p> <p>The group's propaganda wing – the Wafa Media Foundation - is continuing to churn out threats despite the so-called ISIS caliphate suffering huge losses in Syria and Iraq.</p> <p>ISIS fanatics are increasingly turning to lone-wolf supporters to take up their violent cause around the world.</p> <p>'Wafa Media Foundation specialises in these types of graphics. Wafa's threat, like others recently issued by pro-ISIS media groups, is a specific attack directive within a larger push by ISIS for lone wolf attacks as it rapidly loses territory in Iraq and Syria,' said Rita Katz, director of the respected SITE Intelligence Group,</p> <p>'Though these threats should be taken seriously, there is also a publicity element to pro-ISIS media groups' threats against places like the Vatican or events like 2018 FIFA World Cup.'</p>
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HEADLINE	04/16 Extremists hamper polio eradication
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/nigerias-boko-haram-extremists-hamper-polio-eradication-54494701?
GIST	<p>Islamic extremists made Imana Alhaji Gana's village in northeastern Nigeria too dangerous for health workers to vaccinate against polio. Now that she and her family have fled to a displacement camp, those workers want to catch her children in time.</p> <p>Here in the camps housing thousands of families seeking safety from the extremists, health teams are going from tent to tent, inoculating youngsters against the disease that withers limbs and disables children for life.</p> <p>At first, Gana is afraid to let the outreach workers vaccinate her baby. Eventually they persuade her that the three-week-old child is not too young for immunization, which can take place as early as the day of birth.</p> <p>The complicated fight against polio is yet another way the Nigeria-based extremist group Boko Haram has disrupted life in the northeast, leaving children vulnerable to an entirely preventable disease.</p> <p>"When such children come to the camps or host communities they become a threat to other children," said Almai Some, the field coordinator in Borno state for the vaccination campaign run by Rotary.</p> <p>Some of the families arriving are from areas where polio vaccinators have not been able to visit for as long as six years.</p> <p>Boko Haram's insurgency began in Maiduguri, Borno state's capital, but its reach has expanded beyond Nigeria's borders to neighboring Niger, Chad and Cameroon. Its violence has proved to be a major setback to the international campaign against polio.</p>

	<p>Nigeria is one of just three countries where polio is endemic and has not been eliminated, along with Pakistan and Afghanistan. The final phase to wipe out polio is "proving to be extraordinarily difficult" because "the poliovirus is surviving despite all the good work and in the face of everything that is being thrown at it," said a WHO-appointed monitoring group at the end of last year.</p> <p>In Nigeria, there is little or no surveillance data in Borno state, and "unless there is a breakthrough to reach those areas in Borno, the entire polio (eradication) program is at risk," said the monitoring group. Nigeria had other outbreaks last year including cholera, hepatitis, monkeypox, Lassa and yellow fevers, showing the challenges to the country's health care system. Globally the campaign to eradicate polio has been faced with outbreaks last year in non-endemic countries like Congo and Syria.</p> <p>Now the WHO says it will be spending \$127 million toward eradicating polio in Nigeria between 2018 and 2019. Rotary's program is helping that effort by targeting some 2.1 million children in 24 accessible local governments. But there are still three areas in Borno state that are not included because of ongoing instability: Kala-Balge, Marte and Abadam. For those unreachable areas, the vaccinators train Nigerian soldiers in how to administer the vaccines.</p> <p>In a few cases, villagers have reported being threatened by Boko Haram fighters to avoid the polio vaccine. And in 2013 a number of vaccinators were attacked and killed by the extremists, leading some of their colleagues to disguise their vaccine carriers or hide them under their hijabs.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Turkey: US pastor faces terror trial
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-pastor-trial-alleged-terror-ties-spying-turkey-54478886?cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>An American pastor imprisoned in Turkey is going on trial for alleged terror ties and spying in a case that has increased tensions between Washington and Ankara.</p> <p>Andrew Craig Brunson, a 50-year-old evangelical pastor from North Carolina, is facing up to 35 years in prison on charges of "committing crimes on behalf of terror groups without being a member" and "espionage." The trial begins Monday in western Izmir province.</p> <p>Brunson was arrested in December 2016 for alleged links to both an outlawed Kurdish insurgent group and the network of the U.S.-based Muslim cleric who Turkey blames for a masterminding a failed military coup that year. The cleric, Fethullah Gulen, denies the claim.</p> <p>Brunson, who has lived in Turkey for 23 years, has denied all allegations, saying that he solely worked as a pastor.</p> <p>The Turkish government has clearly linked Brunson's case with its determination to force the U.S. to extradite Gulen — and some see the pastor as a diplomatic pawn.</p> <p>The American Center for Law and Justice, a conservative Christian group in the U.S., has called Brunson a "hostage of the Turkish government." A petition has garnered more than half a million signatures, claiming that the case was putting Christianity on trial.</p> <p>Brunson's lawyer, Ismail Cem Halavurt, told The Associated Press on Sunday he expects the pastor's acquittal, arguing that the "weak" indictment lacked sufficient evidence to make the case hold up in court.</p> <p>American officials have repeatedly requested that Brunson be released — President Donald Trump himself asked Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to have his government "expeditiously" return the pastor to the U.S.</p>

	But Erdogan fired back at Washington, demanding that the U.S. first return Gulen.
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HEADLINE	04/14 Mali militants attack UN camp
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mali-attack-kills-peacekeeper-wounds-10-french-soldiers-54474009?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Officials say a U.N. peacekeeper is dead and 10 French soldiers have been wounded after a jihadist attack in northern Mali.</p> <p>Residents in the town of Timbuktu reported hearing two large detonations Saturday near a camp for the U.N. mission known as MINUSMA.</p> <p>Ten soldiers from the French military operation known as Barkhane were among those hurt — five seriously, according to the Malian security ministry.</p> <p>There was no immediate claim of responsibility though a number of extremist groups are active in the region.</p> <p>A security official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to reporters, said one of the vehicles used in the attack had been disguised as a MINUSMA vehicle while the other was marked as a Malian military vehicle.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Syria: eastern Ghouta 'fully liberated'
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-syrian-police-units-enter-town-douma-54464281?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The Syrian army has declared the eastern suburbs of the capital Damascus "fully liberated" after the last group of gunmen left the town of Douma.</p> <p>An army statement read by chief military spokesman Brig. Gen. Ali Mayhoub said Saturday that special units are clearing streets and squares of Douma from mines and explosives planted by rebels.</p> <p>Douma is the largest town of the suburbs known as eastern Ghouta and its capture marks the biggest victory for President Bashar Assad's forces since the conflict began seven years ago.</p> <p>The army said that troops discovered weapons factories, arms depots, tunnels and food storage places.</p> <p>It added that the army is preparing eastern Ghouta for tens of thousands who were displaced over the past two months during a crushing government offensive to retake the area.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Afghan, Pakistan forces border clash
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/afghan-pakistani-forces-clash-disputed-border-54478030?
GIST	<p>An Afghan official says Pakistani forces have crossed into eastern Afghanistan and clashed with Afghan troops.</p> <p>Col. Abdul Hanan, the acting provincial police chief in the eastern Khost province, says the fighting broke out early Sunday and is still underway. He was not immediately able to confirm reports of casualties.</p>

	<p>The two countries are separated by the 2,400-kilometer (1,500-mile) Durand Line, which was drawn by British rulers in 1896. Kabul does not recognize it as an international border and has objected to new fortifications being built by Pakistan.</p> <p>The two U.S. allies routinely accuse each other of failing to crack down on militants who operate along the porous border.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Militants attack Afghan checkpoint; 11 dead
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/insurgents-attack-checkpoint-afghanistan-kill-police-54477896?
GIST	<p>At least 11 Afghan paramilitary forces were killed when the Taliban attacked their checkpoint, an official said Sunday.</p> <p>Zabi Amani, a spokesman for the governor of the northern Sari Pul province, said two other forces were wounded in the attack late Saturday. He said three insurgents were killed, including a local commander, and four others were wounded.</p> <p>Those targeted were members of the Local Uprising Forces, militias supported by the government.</p> <p>No one immediately claimed the attack, but Amani blamed the Taliban, who are active in the area.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Austrian convicted for terror attack plans
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/04/13/austrian-man-convicted-for-plans-for-attacks-in-germany.html
GIST	<p>VIENNA – An Austrian court has convicted a 19-year-old of involvement in plans for two Islamic extremist attacks in Germany, one of which was supposed to be carried out by a 12-year-old boy.</p> <p>The Austria Press Agency reported that the defendant was convicted Friday in Vienna of attempted incitement to murder as a terrorist crime. He was given a nine-year sentence.</p> <p>The Austrian of Albanian descent was accused of trying to incite a 12-year-old to attack a Christmas market in Ludwigshafen in 2016, and plotting an attack on the United States' Ramstein Air Base along with a 16-year-old girl.</p> <p>Defense lawyer Wolfgang Blaschitz said he is considering appealing.</p> <p>The defendant testified he became a supporter of the Islamic State group following a previous jail term for robbery. He denied ordering any attacks.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Boko Haram abductions, killings
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/boko-haram-abducted-1000-children-killed-2000-teachers/story?
GIST	<p>Boko Haram has abducted more than 1,000 children in northeast Nigeria since 2013, the United Nations' children's agency announced Friday.</p> <p>The number of children kidnapped by the Nigerian terrorist group includes 276 girls snatched from a boarding school in the northeast town of Chibok on the night of April 14, 2014, four years ago today.</p>

Some of the Chibok schoolgirls managed to escape, while others were later rescued or freed following negotiations. But four years on from that fateful night, more than 100 of them have yet to be returned to their families, according to UNICEF.

"The four-year anniversary of the Chibok abduction reminds us that children in northeastern Nigeria continue to come under attack at a shocking scale," Mohamed Malick Fall, UNICEF representative in Nigeria, said in a statement Friday. "They are consistently targeted and exposed to brutal violence in their homes, schools and public places."

Since Boko Haram launched its insurgency in the northeast region nine years ago, at least 2,295 teachers have been killed and over 1,400 schools have been destroyed. Most of these schools haven't been able to reopen due to extensive damage or ongoing insecurity in the area, according to UNICEF.

Most recently, suspected Boko Haram fighters abducted 110 students from an girls' boarding school in the northeast town of Dapchi in the middle of the night on Feb. 19. More than a month later, 104 of the schoolgirls were freed by their captors following "back-channel efforts and with the help of some friends of the country," according to Segun Adeyemi, spokesman for Nigeria's Ministry of Information and Culture.

The relentless onslaughts show not even children and schools are spared from Boko Haram's wrath -- rather, they are the targets.

The Nigerian jihadist group's uprising was fueled largely through the group's systematic campaign of abducting children and forcing thousands of girls and boys into their ranks, according to a report issued in April 2017 by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

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HEADLINE	04/14 Egypt: suicide bombers Sinai kill 8
SOURCE	http://abcnews.com/International/wireStory/egypt-troops-killed-15-wounded-sinai-clashes-54465542?
GIST	<p>Militants wearing explosive belts blew themselves up as they tried to infiltrate a military base in Egypt's central Sinai, killing eight soldiers and wounding 15 others, the military said on Saturday.</p> <p>The clashes at dawn left 14 militants dead. They were armed with rifles and RPGs, the armed forces said in a statement. The attack comes two months after the launch of a massive operation against militants in Sinai as well as parts of Egypt's Nile Delta and Western Desert, along the porous border with Libya.</p> <p>There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack which bore the hallmarks of the extremist Islamic State group, whose local affiliate is spearheading an Islamic insurgency in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.</p> <p>Egypt has for years been struggling to contain the Islamic insurgency in the turbulent Sinai region. It has carried out military operations there that, it says, have killed hundreds of militants.</p> <p>It has also built a buffer zone along the border with Gaza to curb the flow of militants and weapons through a vast tunnel network. The insurgency, however, has shown no signs of abating.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	04/14 'Warranty void if removed' stickers illegal
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/government/ftc-warranty-void-if-removed-stickers-are-

	illegal/
GIST	<p>The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) sent letters this week to six major companies containing warnings that using "warranty void if removed" or similarly worded stickers on their products is illegal.</p> <p>The FTC said the six companies sell automobiles, cellular devices, and video gaming systems, all industry verticals where such practices are rampant.</p> <p>But besides the use of anti-tampering "warranty void if removed" stickers, the letters also warn companies against forcing customers into using replacement parts or repair services provided by certain companies for users to keep their warranties intact.</p> <p>In other words, the FTC has officially shown its support for the Right To Repair movement that's been becoming popular in the US and Europe.</p> <p>"Provisions that tie warranty coverage to the use of particular products or services harm both consumers who pay more for them as well as the small businesses who offer competing products and services," said Thomas B. Pahl, Acting Director of the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection.</p> <p>Limiting repair options illegal under 1975 US law</p> <p>The FTC says that such practices are illegal under the Magnuson-Moss Warranty Act, a law that governs consumer product warranties, and which states that no company can put restrictions on the way users choose to repair their products.</p> <p>The law says that companies can't force users to use only certain types of (astronomically-priced) replacement parts, take produces for repair jobs only at certain repair shops, or can't plaster anti-tampering stickers on products to prevent users from repairing their own products.</p> <p>Over the past two decades, companies in the US have been ignoring this law and have been locking down products and repair practices, using "warranty voiding" as punishment for those users who make modifications to products or dare to find cheaper or faster ways of repairing products.</p> <p>The FTC says this is illegal. The Commission plans to review the six companies it sent letters to after 30 days and see if they have dropped their current practices, threatening legal action if they did not.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Fake gov. letters surface in Clark Co.
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/fake-inslee-letter-posted-on-doors-around-clark-county/
GIST	<p>VANCOUVER — On Thursday morning, Gary Berreth stepped outside his house and found an unexpected letter attached to his front door.</p> <p>The letter featured the Washington state seal and claimed to be from the Office of the Governor. It warned of "an adjustment in property taxes" due to the shutdown of an oil terminal and an agreement with BNSF Railway to prohibit the shipping of oil, lumber and coal by rail through Vancouver.</p> <p>At the end of the letter was a carefully scrawled signature: "Jay Inslee," Washington's Democratic governor. Copied on the letter were Clark County Assessor Peter Van Nortwick and Treasurer Doug Lasher.</p> <p>"I instantly knew that there is no way the government does business like this," said Berreth, who said he saw the same letter attached to other doors throughout his Green Meadows neighborhood.</p> <p>Berreth was correct in assuming the letter was a hoax.</p>

In an era of growing concerns of fake news spreading online, these apparent dirty tricksters have taken up a more old-fashioned approach to spreading misinformation.

Simon Vila, spokesman for Inslee, confirmed that neither the governor nor his staff were out posting notes to residents' doors.

"This is definitely not from our office," he said.

Vila said the governor's office suspects that whoever is behind the fake notes is also behind a series of strange letters directed to supporters of U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Washington. These letters were typically signed by "Titania," a character from the play, "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

Vila noted that the fonts of both letters are similar.

The letter's reference to "shutting down the oil terminal" is a likely reference to Inslee's decision earlier this year to reject a proposed crude-by-rail terminal at the Port of Vancouver.

The letter's claim that BNSF, which operates a large network of railways, has entered an agreement to end the shipment of oil, lumber and coal by rail through Vancouver is also highly questionable.

Courtney Wallace, director of public affairs for BNSF, said in an email that as "a common carrier, we are obligated by federal law to move all regulated goods."

"I'm just surprised someone took the time to write something like this up," said Van Nortwick, a Republican. He took to Facebook to debunk the letter, although pointed out that not all of it was fake news.

"It's very rare that someone gets my name spelled right," he said

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HEADLINE	04/15 Newest threat to Calif. redwoods: pot
SOURCE	https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/The-newest-threat-to-California-s-redwoods-isn-t-12835952.php
GIST	<p>A new industry is thriving in California. It is green in terms of the money being made and the crop itself. Yet it is anything but that when it comes to the environment, posing horrendous ecological threats to the region's redwood forests.</p> <p>Lindgren Lumber and Humboldt Flakeboard are the newest additions to the Medical Marijuana Innovation Zone, an area in Arcata, California, zoned specifically for marijuana cultivation and processing. As businesses like Humboldt Harvest Wellness and Talking Tree Farms apply for the necessary permits to process cannabis in the former mill complex, it is evident that the cannabis business may restore the economy of redwood country.</p> <p>But this new industry might also undermine the environmental activism that has long fought to preserve the redwoods as a natural resource.</p> <p>Not long ago, activists thought they had won this fight. And they had - until now. They successfully dislodged corporate logging, but the old timber mills are being used to churn out marijuana. Marijuana cultivation subjects North Coast forests to a barrage of environmental assaults: soil erosion, heavy pesticide use, stream diversion, irresponsible grading and land clearing, all of which threaten to lay waste to the redwoods.</p> <p>As marijuana businesses repurpose Arcata's remaining lumber mills, a renewed ecological peril haunts</p>

Humboldt County. Just like timber companies in decades past, marijuana interests are positioning themselves to shape regulations that protect the industry, not the environment. Americans only have to look back a few decades to the activism that saved the redwoods to understand just how high the stakes are.

Precipitating the "timber wars," that activism began when logging companies expanded operations during the post-World War II housing boom. Timber yields exploded between 1940 and 1970, and increased demand led logging companies to clear-cut large swaths of North Coast redwood forest. This practice had broad ramifications. Leveling a patch of forest compromised entire watersheds by eroding soil and increasing siltation in streams, which left forests vulnerable to flooding, landslides and myriad other environmental problems.

Efforts at redwood preservation proved ineffective when protected groves were surrounded by denuded land. Consequently, environmental advocates intensified their push to create an expansive national park in Northern California that would protect the redwoods from the damage caused by clear-cutting.

By 1968, the Redwood National Park Act established a federal park that protected 58,000 acres of forest. Preservationists had originally proposed acquiring 90,000 acres to ensure the ecological stability of the region, but fierce resistance from timber companies forced a compromise. Yet because environmental impacts were not confined by man-drawn property lines, this compromise meant clear-cuts on nearby private property ended up threatening protected redwood stands anyway.

Activists requested the National Park Service exercise its discretionary power to create a buffer zone around sensitive groves. Three separate studies confirmed the grave ecological hazards presented by nearby logging operations.

NPS, though, was new to the area, and hoped to avoid making waves as it worked to integrate itself into the community. As a result, jobs and the local economy trumped ecological health. NPS took an approach that empowered private interests, adopting a utilitarian cost-benefit analysis that overrode preservationist policy.

Increased harvests led to new logging roads, clear-cut sites, stream diversion and, perhaps most shocking, aerial spraying of Agent Orange, a herbicide known to contain carcinogens. Roads and clear-cuts interrupted the ecosystem and directly threatened wildlife habitat. Road-building itself led to erosion and presented dangers for aquatic life. The use of Agent Orange compounded these problems not only by poisoning habitats, but also by destroying the roots and undergrowth that stabilized the forest floor.

Nevertheless, passing legislation to protect additional old growth proved difficult because of the political might of corporations like Maxxam, a multinational conglomerate that muscled its way into Humboldt's timber industry during the redwood wars. Activists spent years fighting to save remaining old-growth redwood stands. Finally, the Clinton administration brokered a deal to preserve sensitive groves.

But the victory was short-lived. Although the timber industry fell, a robust pot industry soon sprouted in its place. This was not the same pot industry once concentrated in small, personal gardens and largely associated with hippies, back-to-the-landers and other counterculture migrants. The growing popularity of pot, along with increasing legalization, has turned marijuana cultivation into big business. And despite its reputation as a liberal bastion, California left regulation to local authorities.

The result is a tangled web of lenient laws. Despite the liberalization of marijuana laws in the state, semi-legal and illegal cultivation persists. Marijuana's illegality elsewhere continues to fuel a robust black market. Intending to sell on this market, pot farmers interested in a cash crop have little incentive to seek permits or comply with regulations. In any case, the odd dichotomy under which marijuana is legal in California, but illegal under federal law, makes it hard to enforce regulations as local officials find themselves at odds with federal agencies.

At best, pot farmers loosely adhere to regulations while they operate in a legal gray area. At worst, inconsistent enforcement encourages illegal cultivation - which poses serious environmental consequences as these grow sites often contain banned pesticides and other toxic contaminants.

And that creates real environmental hazards. According to Rep. Jared Huffman, a Democrat, authorities have removed 8,188 pounds of fertilizer, 104 pounds of rodenticide, 560 gallons of insecticide, 50 gallons of garbage and miles of irrigation line from illegal grow sites on the North Coast.

Perhaps the most detrimental contaminant making its way into the forests is carbofuran, a toxic pesticide banned in the United States. These pesticides leach into streams and other waterways, increasing their deadly reach. Chemical runoff from grow sites poisons swimming holes and has the potential to seep into city water supplies, which is alarming because carbofuran is lethal to humans in small doses. Ecologists have also determined that chemicals are endangering wildlife such as the Pacific fisher and the northern spotted owl.

In addition to the impact from toxins, the water usage demanded by marijuana cultivation does serious ecological harm. A marijuana plant requires around 22.7 liters of water a day. Unregulated cultivation can easily deplete surface water sources as farmers divert streams and springs.

Water isn't the only resource that pot devours. The plants require lots of sun, which encourages farmers to clear grow sites of trees and plants that might compete with cannabis for light. Satellite imaging has revealed the alarming rate at which these clearings are breaking up otherwise continuous forest. And grow sites require access, which means additional land is cleared and improperly graded as rogue farmers build roads.

All of these changes in the land accrue: Forest and other habitat is fragmented, streams are buried, diverted or polluted, and wildlife dies.

These trends are disturbing. California produces 60 to 70 percent of the marijuana consumed in the United States, which means the state is shouldering most of the environmental cost. As one study of the North Coast indicates, the danger from marijuana cultivation is particularly concerning because the "region is a recognized biodiversity hotspot." The redwoods constitute an ecosystem that is unique and rare - and now marijuana cultivation even poses a threat to Redwood National Park.

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HEADLINE	04/15 China sends warning to Taiwan, US
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/15/asia/taiwan-us-china-xi-jinping-drills-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Chinese President Xi Jinping has sent a clear message of Beijing's disapproval over growing ties between the United States and Taiwan by ordering live-fire drills in the Taiwan Strait.</p> <p>The drills, to be held this coming Wednesday, will mark the first time the Chinese Navy has held drills with live ammunition in the strait since September 2015, in the lead-up to the self-ruled island's presidential election.</p> <p>Prior to those elections, relations between the two were at a high point after Xi met with then-President Ma Ying-jeou, the first such meeting in history between leaders of the two governments.</p> <p>But since then, tensions between China and the island it views as a breakaway province have become strained under Ma's successor, President Tsai Ing-wen.</p> <p>The new Trump administration has sought closer ties to President Tsai's government, angering Beijing by signing two deals in the past month to tighten ties with the island, including a travel act which will allow more official visits between the US and Taipei.</p>

"(China) wants to highlight that the Chinese navy is ever ready and secondly, it is a signal to the government in Taipei you better not go further," Collin Koh, research fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies' Maritime Security Program, told CNN.

The planned live-fire exercises follow a massive show of force by the PLA Navy on April 10 and 11, which conducted the country's largest military drills ever in the South China Sea.

Chinese President Xi personally reviewed the troops himself from the deck of the Chinese destroyer Changsha on Thursday, speaking to the troops about the need for the navy to become "world-class."

Responding to the news of the upcoming live-fire drills, the Taiwanese Defense Military said in a statement the drills were taking place in a routine military zone and reiterated their national army could protect the country from any threat.

"Our people please rest assured," the statement said.

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HEADLINE	04/15 FDA pulls concentrated caffeine
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/fda-acts-pull-concentrated-caffeine-market-n865716
GIST	<p>Bulk caffeine products may have killed at least two people and they don't belong on the market, the Food and Drug Administration said Friday.</p> <p>The FDA declared concentrated, bulk caffeine products illegal and said it would act to get them off the shelves.</p> <p>"These products present a significant public health threat because of the high risk that they will be erroneously used at excessive, potentially dangerous doses," the FDA said in a statement.</p> <p>"Highly concentrated and pure caffeine, often sold in bulk packages, have been linked to at least two deaths in otherwise healthy individuals."</p> <p>The FDA has been warning about powdered caffeine since 2014, when an Ohio teenager died after using it. It's also specifically asked sellers to stop providing it directly to consumers.</p> <p>"Despite multiple actions against these products in the past, we've seen a continued trend of products containing highly concentrated or pure caffeine being marketed directly to consumers as dietary supplements and sold in bulk quantities, with up to thousands of recommended servings per container," FDA Commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb said in a statement.</p> <p>"We know these products are sometimes being used in potentially dangerous ways. For example, teenagers, for a perceived energy kick, sometimes mix dangerously high amounts of super-concentrated caffeine into workout cocktails."</p> <p>It would be easy to get a dangerous dose, the FDA said.</p> <p>"A half cup of a highly concentrated liquid caffeine can contain approximately 2,000 mg of caffeine and just a single teaspoon of a powdered pure caffeine product can contain approximately 3,200 mg of caffeine. This is equivalent to about 20 to 28 cups of coffee, a potentially toxic dose of caffeine," the agency said.</p> <p>"Regardless of whether the product contains a warning label, such products present a significant and unreasonable risk of illness or injury to the consumer," the FDA added.</p> <p>Too much caffeine can cause fatal heartbeat irregularities.</p>

The FDA's action does not include energy drinks or energy products that contain caffeine, or supplements. "Moreover, this guidance does not affect other types of products that might also contain caffeine, such as prescription or over-the-counter drugs or conventional foods, like traditionally caffeinated beverages," it said.

But the bulk products can easily confuse people, who may accidentally overdose on them.

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HEADLINE	04/14 MBTA rail safety system off track
SOURCE	http://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2018/04/14/who-driving-your-commuter-train-likely-someone-with-wreck-record/sLRyEIPMFvZqDoe6Je8YFI/story.html
GIST	<p>Dean Walker's license has been suspended 39 times for everything from driving to endanger to refusing a breathalyzer test. He's been caught speeding 16 times and convicted of drunken driving twice.</p> <p>To fellow motorists, he's a hazard.</p> <p>To the Registry of Motor Vehicles, he's a chronic offender. But to Keolis, the MBTA's commuter rail operator, Walker is something else entirely — an engineer.</p> <p>Despite his appalling driving history, Walker is entrusted with operating six-car trains, at speeds averaging 60 miles per hour, carrying hundreds of commuters to and from the city.</p> <p>Robert Ronquillo III, son of the chief justice of the Boston Municipal Court, was also penalized multiple times for safety violations on the job.</p> <p>And he has plenty of company among his peers. About 110 commuter rail engineers, more than half of them, have driving records that experts described as poor considering the sensitive line of work they're in — at least three infractions such as speeding, causing accidents, and failing to stop.</p> <p>Nearly 50 engineers have had their driver's licenses suspended — 44 of them more than once, according to Registry of Motor Vehicle records reviewed by the Globe.</p> <p>The engineers' supervisors don't set much of an example, either. Manager of engineer training Shawn Monahan, who teaches aspiring engineers what they need to know before they can operate a train, has received 11 speeding tickets and caused two accidents.</p> <p>Keolis's head engineer, Mark Neverett, has 13 speeding tickets, eight accidents, and an operating under the influence on his driving record, though he's had no recorded offenses since 2010.</p> <p>The records obtained by the Globe, which span decades, raise serious concerns about safety on the commuter rail, experts say. Train operators aren't required to have a driver's license, and driving a 144-ton locomotive on fixed tracks is a very different discipline than driving a car. But a history of recklessness on the roads makes it much more likely someone will be reckless on the rails, they say.</p> <p>"Someone who is known to have engaged in multiple incidents of risky and illegal behavior with an automobile should not be permitted to operate a train," said David Hughes, the former chief engineer and acting CEO of Amtrak. "Locomotive engineers aren't allowed mistakes on the job."</p> <p>Many of the engineers with poor driving records have, records show, also faced discipline on the railway — ranging from counseling to suspension — for such on-the-job infractions as running a stop signal, failing drug tests, or causing derailments.</p>

But perhaps the harshest penalty was reserved for the Keolis executive who sounded the alarm about the number of engineers with dismal driving records.

Robert T. McCarthy, the vice president of safety, was dismissed after he warned the company about the potential risks in employing engineers with problematic personal driving histories, according to documents obtained by the Globe.

McCarthy left Keolis last fall, just a year and a half after the company heralded his arrival from the Southern California Regional Rail Authority, where he served as deputy chief operating officer.

Before leaving, McCarthy sent an audit to Keolis's general manager raising a host of safety concerns, including the engineers' driving records. He concluded: "If there were a catastrophic incident, Keolis would be scrutinized and would not fare well in a [federal] investigation."

Keolis, which has operated the commuter rail system for the MBTA since July 2014, said Friday that "nothing is more important" than safety.

Spokesman Tory Mazzola said the company has invested \$15 million into improving safety systems, including a new training simulator and safety technology for engineers. Mazzola noted that its engineer supervisors are "valuable, hard-working employees with excellent work records" and their personal driving records have "absolutely no bearing" on their job performance.

Keolis said it inherited most of its workforce from the Massachusetts Bay Commuter Railroad Company, which ran the system from 2003 to mid-2014, and Amtrak, which ran the system before then. Keolis promised in its bid for the contract to review the qualifications of its workforce. Mazzola said Keolis relied on the employee certification and background checks performed by the prior rail system operators.

Keolis and MBCR officials both have said that commuter rail management is hamstrung by federal rules that allow a railroad to look at an engineer's driving record only for the three-year period prior to certifying him or her as fit for the job. Also, the railroad cannot consider speeding violations, only drunken driving convictions and related license suspensions. And even enforcing that standard is hard; the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen union fights the company whenever it seeks to impose discipline on one of its members, they said.

Keolis officials have faced questions about the company's engineers since the Globe reported in February that engineer Roberto Ronquillo III had 10 license suspensions and multiple stops for drunken driving on his record. At the time, Keolis and MBCR officials suggested Ronquillo, the son of a Boston judge, was an anomaly whose driving record was somehow missed during the vetting process.

Newly obtained internal documents suggest otherwise. Commuter rail officials pulled his driving record in 2011 when he was training to be an engineer. MBCR required Ronquillo to undergo enhanced drug and alcohol testing as a condition of getting the new job.

But the broader Globe review found that Ronquillo's alarming driving record barely stands out among commuter rail engineers, who earn around \$100,000 a year.

Among them: Veteran engineer Richard Russell who chalked up 13 speeding tickets, got into three accidents, and had his license suspended 14 times.

And Alcino Fernandes, who ran up 16 speeding tickets, caused 11 accidents, and received four citations for passing a school bus, records show. He is not currently operating a train, according to Keolis officials, and is awaiting a disciplinary hearing. Officials would not provide details.

Fernandes, the only engineer who responded to a Globe request for comment, said that most of his violations were "well over 10 or 20 years ago." However, records show he was caught speeding in 2010 and committed a "state highway violation" in 2015.

“All that stuff took place long before I started with the railroad,” said Fernandes, 51. “I was a young kid when all that ridiculous stuff happened.”

As a group, the system’s engineers racked up a staggering number of violations, including more than 200 license suspensions, according to the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles. Besides motor vehicle infractions, drivers can lose their license for failing to pay fees or fines.

Eighty-five engineers received more than two speeding tickets. Six have been declared habitual traffic offenders. And more than 85 percent of the engineers have at least one driving infraction.

Hughes, who led national rail operator Amtrak, said locomotive engineers, like other transportation professionals, should have pristine driving records.

“In the trucking industry, you can’t drive a truck if you don’t have a clean record,” said Hughes. “Same with taxi industry. To have 80 percent of your engineers with an operating infraction is appalling. . . . I would imagine you might find 10 percent, maybe.”

In the Massachusetts’ commuter rail system, the opposite is true — fewer than 10 percent had no driving citations and no incidents of discipline.

“Yes, those are by far, the worst engineer records I’ve ever seen in decades of railroading,” said another expert, who asked to remain anonymous because he works for another railroad and fears retaliation.

Inside Keolis, executives had been warned about the problems in their corps of engineers.

In the preliminary safety audit submitted to the Keolis general manager, David Scorey, in November, McCarthy, then the executive in charge of safety, pointed out that motor vehicle regulators had identified many of the company’s engineers as “habitual offenders” because of repeated speeding violations on their personal driving records.

Even so, McCarthy wrote, the company has not decertified — that is, declared unfit for service — any engineers for speeding on the rails during the history of the Keolis contract.

“This is highly suspicious given the propensity of our employees to speed [on the job],” he wrote.

Excessive speed has been the cause of several fatal railroad accidents across the country, including a 2013 crash in the Bronx that killed four and injured 61 and a crash in Philadelphia in 2015 that killed eight and injured more than 200.

About 100,000 people ride Keolis’s commuter rail system each day, completely in the dark about the driving history of the engineer behind the controls.

“I can’t talk now, I’m too shocked,” commuter Mary Connaughton said after hearing a description of some of the engineers’ driving records.

“What’s it going to take, a train wreck for Keolis and the T to get ahead of this and put public safety first?” asked Connaughton — a former Massachusetts Turnpike Authority board member — when she later called back.

While Keolis and MBCR have reported few major incidents, records show at least 80 engineers have committed serious infractions while on the job — safety violations that include failing alcohol or drug tests, running stop signals, and causing derailments, records show.

While the company insists that safety is its top priority, the Federal Railroad Administration and the MBTA itself have raised concerns about its compliance with federal safety rules and the terms of its

contract with the T.

The FRA, which regulates railroads, has fined Keolis some \$350,000 for violations that include leaving trains unsecured, operating moving trains with a door or doors open, and failing to conduct all engineer performance testing required under federal law, records show.

Joe Pesaturo, spokesman for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, said the agency “steadfastly holds” the commuter rail contractor accountable for providing safe and reliable service.

“Because safety is of paramount importance, the MBTA closely monitors the contract under which Keolis manages a qualified workforce that is in full compliance with all Federal Railroad Administration regulations,” Pesaturo said in a statement. “The commuter rail operator has demonstrated its strong commitment to safety through significant investments in equipment, training, and personnel.”

Some suspect that Keolis may feel financial pressure to keep engineers on the job even when they have problems at work.

Under its operators agreement with the MBTA, the company is penalized when a train is late or canceled. If an engineer is removed from service, the on-time performance may suffer.

A longtime issue

Experts say the problems with the commuter rail and its workforce go way back — before Keolis took over the \$2.7 billion contract in 2014.

Upon taking over the rail operation, Keolis, a French company, had just a few months to decide whom to retain from its inherited workforce, officials from both companies said.

And once hired or retained, employees are rarely, if ever, terminated — regardless of their personal history or work record.

Experts say that if a railroad wanted to impose order and discipline, it could refuse to promote an employee with a poor driving record, or could subject such a driver to increased testing. In extreme cases, the railroad could fire the employee for conduct unbecoming an employee under a clause in the company’s contract with the MBTA.

Governor Charlie Baker has repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with Keolis’s performance, and transportation officials have said they will not automatically extend the company’s contract when it expires in June 2022.

David Gunn, the former chief executive of Amtrak, which once operated the Massachusetts commuter rail system, said the large number of engineers with bad driving records points to a deep problem.

“You really need to change the culture of the place,” said Gunn, who also ran transit agencies in New York, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and Toronto. Of all the places he worked, Gunn said, “the T was the most challenging in terms of controlling the workforce. Not that they were all bad people, but the structure and the union and political meddling in management decision-making was the absolute worst at the T.”

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HEADLINE	04/14 Oregon state pension: \$76K per month
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/14/business/pension-finance-oregon.html
GIST	A public university president in Oregon gives new meaning to the idea of a pensioner.

Joseph Robertson, an eye surgeon who retired as head of the Oregon Health & Science University last fall, receives the state's largest government pension.

It is \$76,111.

Per month.

That is considerably more than the average Oregon family earns in a year.

Oregon — like many other states and cities, including New Jersey, Kentucky and Connecticut — is caught in a fiscal squeeze of its own making. Its economy is growing, but the cost of its state-run pension system is growing faster. More government workers are retiring, including more than 2,000, like Dr. Robertson, who get pensions exceeding \$100,000 a year.

The state is not the most profligate pension payer in America, but its spiraling costs are notable in part because Oregon enjoys a reputation for fiscal discipline. Its experience shows how faulty financial decisions by states can eventually swamp local communities.

Oregon's costs are inflated by the way in which it calculates pension benefits for public employees. Some of the pensions include income that employees earned on the side. Other retirees benefit from long-ago stock market rallies that inflated the current value of their payouts.

For example, the pension for Mike Bellotti, the University of Oregon's head football coach from 1995 to 2008, includes not just his salary but also money from licensing deals and endorsements that the Ducks' athletic program generated. Mr. Bellotti's pension is more than \$46,000 a month.

The bill is borne by taxpayers. Oregon's Public Employees Retirement System has told cities, counties, school districts and other local entities to contribute more to keep the system afloat. They can neither negotiate nor raise local taxes fast enough to keep up. As a result, pensions are crowding out other spending. Essential services are slashed.

"You get to the point where you can no longer do more with less — you just have to do less with less," said Nathan Cherpeski, the manager of Klamath Falls, a city of about 21,000 in south-central Oregon.

Klamath Falls's most recent biennial bill from the pension system, known as PERS, was \$600,000 more than the one before. PERS has warned that the bills will keep rising. Mr. Cherpeski has had to cut back on repairing streets and bridges.

Even as the American economy is humming, many states and cities are still hurting from the 2008 financial meltdown. The crash hammered their pension funds and tax revenues, but didn't reduce the amounts they owe retirees.

It wasn't until 2016 that average state tax collections returned to pre-2008 levels. In the meantime, states and cities have had to rebuild pension funds to cover the rising numbers of retirees drawing benefits. That has left less money for the police, school sports programs and everything else. Local residents might not know why, but they are paying more taxes and getting scantier services in return.

Costs are rising even in places that previously acted to defuse the problem. Colorado trimmed pensions in 2010, but a new \$32 billion shortfall means more pension cuts and tax increases are likely. Detroit sliced its pension obligations in bankruptcy and persuaded philanthropists to chip in, but it is not clear that the city has an affordable plan.

In San Francisco, the school board wants voters to approve a \$298 "parcel tax" on real estate, ostensibly to raise \$50 million to pay teachers a living wage.

"That's a worthy objective, but it's not the real reason," said David Crane, a former trustee of the

California teachers' pension system. He said the school district's retirement costs had grown by \$50 million over the last five years, devouring resources that would have gone to teachers.

Oregon is a blue state, but in its restive red hinterlands, tax increases are politically off limits and financial distress has been severe since 1994, when logging was curtailed to save an endangered owl. Lately, things have been getting even worse.

When a man was reported yelling and firing his gun on the property of a school in rural Josephine County, it took two hours for a sheriff's deputy to arrive, said Kate Dwyer, chairwoman of the board for the Three Rivers School District.

The county has cut sheriff patrols, closed its mental health department and kept its jail at less than half capacity because of a lack of guards.

Dave Valenzuela, the Three Rivers school superintendent, traces the latest woes directly to PERS. The system is run at the state level, but it is bankrolled in large part by obligatory contributions from local governments.

This year, Three Rivers was poised to receive its first increase in state education funding in years, a reflection of growing enrollment. But Oregon raised by more than 50 percent the amount that Three Rivers had to contribute to PERS. So Mr. Valenzuela had to lop five days off the school year, ask each school to cut its budget by 10 percent and lay off the district librarian and English specialist.

PERS sets the pension bill for each entity — local government, university system and the like — based on the pay and demographics of its workers. Just about everyone's bills are getting bigger.

That includes the state, by far the system's biggest contributor.

Oregon now has fewer police officers than in 1970, is losing foster-care workers at an alarming rate and has allowed earthquake and tsunami preparations to lapse. A 2016 survey turned up "a large number of bridges with critical and near-critical conditions" because of "longstanding inadequate funding."

Even prosperous communities are being pinched. The Beaverton School District, outside Portland, had to get rid of 75 teachers last year when its mandatory pension contribution rose by \$14 million. That was after shedding 340 teachers in 2012.

"I have town hall meetings, and the parents are just confounded by this," said Mark Hass, a Democratic state senator from Beaverton.

A Golden Touch

Oregon's unusual method for calculating pensions tends to generate lavish payouts.

For decades, PERS calculated pensions two different ways, and retirees could choose whichever produced the bigger numbers.

The first way was similar to what most states do, basing pensions on each worker's final salary and years of service. But Oregon's lawmakers included a golden touch, redefining "salary" to include remuneration from any source.

That was how Mr. Bellotti, the former football coach, came to be the state's third-highest-paid pensioner, at roughly \$559,000 a year.

Mike Bellotti in 2007, when he was the University of Oregon's head football coach. After retiring as the university's athletic director in 2010, he started drawing the biggest government pension in the state. Since then, two other retirees have surpassed him. Credit Chris Pietsch/The Register-Guard, via Associated Press

When he retired in 2010 as the university's athletic director, the standard pension formula was applied to his salary, plus a share of the outside licensing fees and product endorsements the football program brings in. (His pension details, along with those of other retirees in the system, were first obtained in 2011 from PERS by two newspapers, The Oregonian and The Statesman Journal.)

Mr. Bellotti said he never asked for a supersize pension. In 1995, he said, the university started to include a percentage of all endorsement and licensing fees in coaches' salaries.

"It was basically to augment the university's ability to pay a competitive salary to its coaching staff," he said.

When Mr. Bellotti retired, he was partway through a five-year, \$1.9 million-a-year contract, which he said was still below the league average of about \$3 million.

PERS made up for it with a big pension. "It was pay later as opposed to paying now," he said.

Dr. Robertson, the former Oregon Health & Science University president, said he had retired and started drawing his pension last fall, after learning he had multiple sclerosis. He said he agreed to stay on through the end of the academic year, without pay, "for the sake of continuity."

A spokeswoman for the medical center said Dr. Robertson's pension was based on his salary, incentive payments, clinical pay and unused sick or vacation time.

Oregon's second way of calculating pensions dates back to 1946: For decades, every public worker got a simulated tracking account. It was credited with 6 percent of each paycheck, then left to compound at a predetermined rate.

In the early years, a low rate was used because the pension system invested in bonds that didn't yield much.

But in the 1970s, lawmakers started nudging the rate up, eventually to 8 percent. Then, the system's trustees decided 8 percent should be a guaranteed minimum. In years when markets produced higher returns, the accounts compounded at those rates, after money-management fees. During the 1990s bull market, accounts compounded by up to 21 percent a year.

When workers retired, their employers were required to "match" the account balances, doubling them. Then PERS would base the pensions on the total.

'Planet Tiffany'

Randall Pozdena, an economist who supervised the pension system's investments in the 1990s, gave speeches warning that the situation was unsustainable.

"The only way you're going to get out of this is if the state is hit by a golden asteroid from Planet Tiffany," he recalled saying.

But efforts to change the system, including a 1994 ballot initiative, were blocked by the State Supreme Court, which ruled that accruals could not be reduced during any public worker's career.

So, when lawmakers required government retirees to pay Oregon's 9 percent income tax, as everybody else did, they also increased pensions by 9.89 percent, giving retirees extra money to pay the tax with.

"It's an affront to everybody who pays taxes," said Bruce Dennis, a retired carpenter from outside Portland who earned a \$54,000-a-year pension by swinging a hammer for 45 years. No one gives him extra money to cover his taxes.

Students at Evergreen and other schools in the Three Rivers district, which covers a thinly populated area larger than Rhode Island, spend hours on buses every day. The district has asked Oregon officials to help cover its transportation costs, so far in vain. Credit Leah Nash for The New York Times

“At every step of the way, they’ve made decisions that went against the interests of the public,” he said.

Starting in 2003, the tracking accounts were phased out. But workers who already had the accounts were allowed to keep them. New hires got a more modest retirement plan.

“The cost of this pension system is not caused by the people we are hiring today,” said Steven Rodeman, executive director of the Public Employees Retirement System. “This is a legacy problem from the 1980s and 1990s.”

For workers with the tracking accounts, PERS dialed back the annual returns to 8 percent, then to 7.5 percent in 2016. That is still more than what PERS’s investments have generated over the last decade. And so the pension fund’s financial hole continues to deepen.

Across Oregon, local officials have been told to brace for 15 to 20 more years of rising pension bills. That’s when the current generation of retirees will start dying out.

“All we can do is wait,” said Jay Meredith, finance director of Grants Pass, the seat of Josephine County.

In the meantime, mounting pension costs mean that a generation of schoolchildren is growing up in the area with no theater program, no orchestra, no wood shop and minimal sports, chorus and art.

That’s if they can get to school.

A county road recently washed out, stranding 300 people. Ms. Dwyer, of the Three Rivers School District, reported the problem to a public-works official.

She recalled his response: “I have trucks, but I can’t put gas in them to come to you and dig it out.”

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HEADLINE	04/13 Concern: pyrosomes on Oregon coast
SOURCE	http://www.kptv.com/story/37955183/unusual-phenomenon-of-pyrosomes-on-oregon-coast-concerns-researchers?autostart=true
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, OR (KPTV) - Strange sea creatures continue to be found in the water on the Oregon coast.</p> <p>Last year, researchers said they were surprised to see pyrosomes washing up in Oregon, as they are mostly found in temperate or tropical climates.</p> <p>Now, researchers are surprised they are still here.</p> <p>Laurie Weitkamp with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said her team was studying salmon last month, but pyrosomes were pulled up in the fish nets.</p> <p>She said there were “buckets and buckets” of them.</p> <p>While she isn’t sure if salmon are eating them, workers did find a rockfish that had eaten a pyrosome.</p> <p>Scientists are still working to understand how they fit into the food system of the sea. The pyrosomes also weighing down fishermen’s nets and can cause other issues.</p>

	“Once they got here, we were kind of expecting them to go away, and nobody really knows why they are here or what is keeping them here,” Weitkamp said.
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HEADLINE	04/13 Homeless tent blocks school entry
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/953514/tent-whitman-middle-school/
GIST	<p>KIRO 7’s Gary Horcher first reported that a tent belonging to a homeless person has been sitting on the grounds of Ballard’s Whitman Middle School since Tuesday. Little has been done about it.</p> <p>Whitman Middle School parent Erika Nagy told KIRO Radio’s Dori Monson that the tent sits inside a doorway of the school “literally on school property,” along with drug paraphernalia and other debris.</p> <p>“If there was a fire in the building, if school was happening today, the kids would not be able to get out of that doorway due to this tent,” she said.</p> <p>Whitman Middle School</p> <p>The tent’s occupier left the scene before the Seattle Police Department showed up on Friday, but Nagy said that she has no doubt the person will return. Whitman is currently on spring break, but classes will resume on Monday.</p> <p>According to Nagy, this is not the first time something like this has happened in Ballard. She blames city leadership for letting the homeless problem get out of control to the extent of a tent being set up on the property of a school.</p> <p>“Common sense has absolutely flown out the window,” she said.</p> <p>Nagy said that during a Wednesday evening public meeting with Seattle City Councilmember Mike O’Brien, who represents the Ballard area, O’Brien stressed that more money needed to be spent on the issue. Nagy, however, pointed out that Seattle is already spending more money per homeless person than any other city in the nation.</p> <p>“We are throwing hundreds of millions, almost a billion dollars, at this problem, and it has only gotten worse,” she said. “There is absolutely no accountability with any of our representatives ... Mike O’Brien is absolutely not representing Ballard residents whatsoever.”</p> <p>Elsewhere in Ballard</p> <p>The coming Whittier Heights tiny house encampment is a prime example of the city’s lack of consideration for its residents, Nagy said. The encampment, which allows drug and alcohol consumption, will bring drug use and prostitution within blocks of three Ballard schools, she argued.</p> <p>“For LIHI (the Low-Income Housing Institute) and SHARE (the Seattle Housing and Resource Effort), this is a cash cow,” Nagy said. “There’s no incentive for them to make it better, because the money goes away.”</p> <p>The tiny house encampment is being forced on the Whittier Heights neighborhood “with absolutely no community input whatsoever,” Nagy said.</p> <p>“How is this getting any better, and why is the only solution that Mike O’Brien can put forward more money?” she asked.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 UK: Russia spied on ex-spy 5yrs
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-russia-skripal-spy/russia-spied-on-skripal-and-daughter-for-at-least-five-years-uk-idUSKBN1HK1OR
GIST	<p>LONDON (Reuters) - Russia's intelligence agencies spied on former double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia for at least five years before they were attacked with a nerve agent in March, the national security adviser to Britain's prime minister said.</p> <p>Mark Sedwill said in a letter to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Friday that email accounts of Yulia had been targeted in 2013 by cyber specialists from Russia's GRU military intelligence service.</p> <p>Sedwill also said in the letter, which was published by the government, that it was "highly likely that the Russian intelligence services view at least some of its defectors as legitimate targets for assassination."</p> <p>The Skripals were targeted by what London says was a nerve agent attack that left both of them critically ill for weeks. British Prime Minister Theresa May has said it is highly likely that Moscow was behind the attack.</p> <p>Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov noted on Friday that a report this week by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) did not confirm the origin of the poison used against the Skripals.</p> <p>Lavrov said the report only confirmed the composition of the substance and that Britain's claim that it confirmed the UK position on the Skripal case was overstated.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Israel: Iran drone tasked to attack
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-43762193
GIST	<p>Israel has said the Iranian drone it shot down in February was loaded with explosives and "tasked to attack".</p> <p>On Friday, Israel's military said that it came to the conclusion after "flight path analysis" and an "intelligence-based investigation" of the remnants.</p> <p>Israel said its "combat helicopters prevented the attack Iran had hoped to carry out in Israeli territory".</p> <p>The drone was launched from an airbase in Syria, against which Israel later carried out air strikes.</p> <p>Israel lost one of its F-16 planes in the counter-offensive - a rare loss for the Israeli air force, though both crew members survived after ejecting.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 'Hidden' radioactive objects around us
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20180405-why-people-collect-radioactive-objects
GIST	<p>It began with an online video. Andrew Walker had watched as a collector of radioactive objects showed off the items he had procured over the years, such as antiques containing uranium. Walker thought that looking for such pieces 'in the wild' might make an interesting and unusual hobby – so he bought himself a Geiger counter.</p> <p>He quickly realised, as scientists will tell you, that radioactivity is everywhere. The first elevated reading he got was in the parking area at a Mexican fast-food restaurant in Idaho. "I noticed that when we pulled in there, my Geiger counter was going off," he recalls. Something nearby was flinging out the tiny subatomic particles that make up radiation in slightly higher quantities than might be expected – and though he</p>

couldn't figure out what it was, Walker was suddenly aware of this otherwise invisible activity.

After that, he began looking for other intriguing examples.

His pursuit of radioactive objects is still a hobby. By day, Walker is a cinema projectionist and a filmmaker, not a scientist. But he enjoys sharing some of his finds on Twitter and Instagram, where he can discuss them with others who are similarly curious.

Radioactivity is something we live with constantly – it's always there in relatively small amounts. Around the world, naturally occurring, higher-than-average levels of radioactivity are found in various types of beaches and soils, among other places. Meanwhile, most concrete is radioactive, though levels obviously vary. In the US, it is possible to get your home tested for radon gas – which is produced slowly over time by radioactive construction materials. Even the human body is slightly radioactive because we contain elements like potassium-40, which decay.

Walker lives in Bozeman, Montana. He later discovered a curious historical fact: slag containing small amounts of uranium and radium was used in the past for concrete used in construction in his neighbouring state of Idaho. He wonders whether this led to his readings outside the Mexican restaurant.

Walker likes to plan trips to local areas where he thinks he might find interesting material. If he does, he then documents his discoveries. There are plenty of old uranium mines (and now deserted uranium mining towns) in the US and Walker has visited some of these on his travels.

He also began frequenting antique malls. "At every antique shop I have ever gone to so far, I have always been able to find something radioactive," he says.

These items include "Vaseline" glassware, which contains uranium and is a striking yellow-green in colour. But he's also found orange-red plates and bowls that were coloured with a uranium-based dye and which often produce even stronger readings. The US government guidelines advise against using such crockery for food or drink, though the health risk of simply owning these items is negligible.

Then there are watch and clock faces with glow-in-the-dark paint that contains radium. Such objects are relatively safe as long as they are not taken apart, but the women who made them in factories would often hold their paint brushes using their lips. This caused them to ingest small amounts of the radium paint. As a result, many developed serious illnesses including bone cancer in their jaws.

This is why Walker tries not to put himself at any unnecessary risk. Regarding his mildly radioactive crockery, he says, "If they weren't radioactive I'd probably have them out, but they're tucked away."

Still, his new hobby has intrigued friends and family. "They ask why am I going to these places and exploring this stuff," he explains with a laugh. "It's something I'm interested in; it's just fascinating."

He's even found a few local landmarks, including public buildings like train stations, where the tiles produce slightly elevated levels of radioactivity – again, presumably a result of having been made with particular dyes or glazes.

What is radiation?

Radiation is essentially energy. The radiation detected by Geiger counters concerns energy released by decaying atoms – atoms that are constantly expelling a barrage of tiny particles. Some of this radiation can dislodge electrons from other atoms to create charged particles – this is known as 'ionising radiation'. Three key forms of ionising radiation, from largest to smallest, are:

Alpha – A bundle of two protons and two neutrons

Beta – An electron, or positron, which is like a positively charged electron

Gamma – Tiny photons, which at different wavelengths also make up visible light

Radioactive elements that decay producing these forms of radiation include uranium and radium. Alpha particles can be stopped with a sheet of paper, or the outer layer of human skin. But gamma rays can penetrate much further and are often only blocked by very dense materials such as lead.

Geiger counters are easy to make – so much so, in fact, that some hobbyists assemble their own and experiment with finding sources of radioactivity with which to test them. Walker himself bought one for \$1,300 (£930), a RadEye meter that detects alpha, beta and gamma radiation (see box, “What is radiation?”).

Radiochemist Nick Evans at Nottingham Trent University points out that radioactivity can be measured in a variety of different ways. One approach is to observe the rate of nuclei decaying over time; the international unit used for this is the Becquerel. But people may be more familiar with measurements in Sieverts (or indeed Microsieverts or Millisieverts).

This is the effective dose of the radiation and the unit Walker uses. However, Evans says that the standard way of taking these readings is actually to hold the Geiger counter one metre away from the source so that objects’ radioactivity can be compared accurately.

High energy

The fascinating thing about Walker’s expeditions is the ease with which he has found so many examples. Evans says this is partly a legacy of industries that treated radioactivity as a potential marketing ploy in the decades following its discovery in the late 19th Century. It was quickly capitalised on as a potential selling point for weird and wonderful new products.

“It was very, very different to anything else,” says Evans. “It was sort of mystical and people obviously wanted to try all sorts of things with it, play with it, if you like.”

Some of the things manufacturers came up with are mind-boggling today. Take radioactive suppositories, for example, a ‘treatment’ with no actual grounding in medical science. Surely there are safer ways to restore “your normal manly vigour”.

But that wasn’t the only health-related product seeking to help patients to a dose of decaying atoms. There was also radioactive toothpaste and even condoms.

“I’ve no idea what the thinking behind those was,” says Evans of the latter. “I have a tin of them – not that I use them, I hasten to add.”

The notion that increased doses of radioactivity could somehow be good for you is still with us today. There is a spa in the Austrian Alps called Bad Gastein where people can visit the humid tunnels of a former gold mine and sweat away their ailments – while breathing radon gas.

Many scientists have long bemoaned the public’s instinctive distrust of anything to do with radiation. Anxiety associated with it is exaggerated, argue some. Indeed, dangers like pollution don’t spark the same sense of trepidation and yet pollution kills millions of people every year. One study found that, in stark contrast, only 190 people died between 1980 and 2013 as a direct result of overexposure.

Walker says that many fears increasingly seem “irrational” to him thanks to his explorations. On the other hand, of course, his treks and antique shop visits really just show off how ubiquitous radioactivity really is.

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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/13/science/virosphere-evolution.html
GIST	<p>High in the Sierra Nevada mountains of Spain, an international team of researchers set out four buckets to gather a shower of viruses falling from the sky.</p> <p>Scientists have surmised there is a stream of viruses circling the planet, above the planet’s weather systems but below the level of airline travel. Very little is known about this realm, and that’s why the number of deposited viruses stunned the team in Spain. Each day, they calculated, some 800 million viruses cascade onto every square meter of the planet.</p> <p>Most of the globe-trotting viruses are swept into the air by sea spray, and lesser numbers arrive in dust storms.</p> <p>“Unimpeded by friction with the surface of the Earth, you can travel great distances, and so intercontinental travel is quite easy” for viruses, said Curtis Suttle, a marine virologist at the University of British Columbia. “It wouldn’t be unusual to find things swept up in Africa being deposited in North America.”</p> <p>The study by Dr. Suttle and his colleagues, published earlier this year in the International Society of Microbial Ecology Journal, was the first to count the number of viruses falling onto the planet. The research, though, is not designed to study influenza or other illnesses, but to get a better sense of the “virosphere,” the world of viruses on the planet.</p> <p>Generally it’s assumed these viruses originate on the planet and are swept upward, but some researchers theorize that viruses actually may originate in the atmosphere. (There is a small group of researchers who believe viruses may even have come here from outer space, an idea known as panspermia.)</p> <p>Whatever the case, viruses are the most abundant entities on the planet by far. While Dr. Suttle’s team found hundreds of millions of viruses in a square meter, they counted tens of millions of bacteria in the same space.</p> <p>Mostly thought of as infectious agents, viruses are much more than that. It’s hard to overstate the central role that viruses play in the world: They’re essential to everything from our immune system to our gut microbiome, to the ecosystems on land and sea, to climate regulation and the evolution of all species. Viruses contain a vast diverse array of unknown genes — and spread them to other species.</p> <p>Last year, three experts called for a new initiative to better understand viral ecology, especially as the planet changes. “Viruses modulate the function and evolution of all living things,” wrote Matthew B. Sullivan of Ohio State, Joshua Weitz of Georgia Tech, and Steven W. Wilhelm of the University of Tennessee.</p> <p>“But to what extent remains a mystery.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Calif. police: SUV cliff driver ‘drunk’
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/mother-intentionally-drove-family-off-cliff-drunk-police/story?id=54463696
GIST	<p>The mother who intentionally drove her family off a cliff in Northern California in late March was drunk, according to preliminary toxicology reports.</p> <p>The California Highway Patrol said on Friday that Jennifer Hart, who was driving the SUV that plunged off the cliff in Mendocino County on March 26 carrying her wife and six children, had a blood alcohol level above the legal limit.</p> <p>Her wife, Sarah Hart, had a significant amount of the ingredient in Benadryl in her system, as did two of</p>

	<p>the children, CHP said.</p> <p>All eight people in the vehicle are presumed dead in the accident, according to authorities. Three of the children were missing, though the body of a girl believed to be one of the missing children was found near the site of the accident last week. The body has yet to be identified.</p> <p>One of the children missing is 15-year-old Devonte Hart, whose photo hugging a police officer with tears streaming down his face during a protest went viral in 2014.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	04/15 US helping Mexico fight opium
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/us-has-been-quietly-helping-mexico-with-new-high-tech-ways-to-fight-opium/2018/04/15/dc18eda0-26d5-11e8-a227-fd2b009466bc_story.html?utm_term=.c04a2468faf5
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY — In the past few opiate-soaked years, U.S. officials say, nearly all the heroin coursing through American cities has come from one place: Mexico.</p> <p>U.S. authorities have expressed alarm at what they call an explosion of opium poppy in their southern neighbor. Echoing a federal drug agency assessment, President Trump has declared that “an astonishing 90 percent of the heroin in America comes from south of the border” and cited that as one reason to build a giant border wall.</p> <p>Yet Mexican and U.S. officials have struggled in recent years to answer some basic questions about Mexico’s illegal poppy crop: How much is actually being grown? How much of it is the Mexican government destroying? And how much is being turned into heroin?</p> <p>Now the Trump administration is intensifying its efforts to help Mexico get a more detailed picture of its poppy problem. It has begun to supply Mexican authorities with drones and geolocation technology and is funding studies to pinpoint how much poppy is being planted and how much heroin is produced from it.</p> <p>The new initiatives emerged from several high-level meetings between Mexican and U.S. officials last year, as well as a trip in July by then-Homeland Security Secretary John F. Kelly, who flew to see poppy fields in Guerrero state with Mexican military leaders, according to Mexican and U.S. officials.</p> <p>Trump’s harsh rhetoric about Mexico on illegal immigration, trade and the wall could jeopardize that kind of security cooperation. On April 9, President Enrique Peña Nieto’s office said he had instructed cabinet secretaries to review their bilateral programs with the United States, following a tense week in which Trump criticized Mexico about a caravan of migrants heading toward the U.S. border.</p> <p>But on certain issues, such as poppy, the two sides have already quietly made progress. With Trump as president, “we thought that there would have been a chilling of relations,” said Juan Carlos Silva, chief of the anti-drug division of Mexico’s federal police. “On the contrary, we have grown closer.”</p> <p>The Drug Enforcement Administration said in a report last year that Mexico supplies 93 percent of all heroin consumed in the United States, up from half of it in 2012 — even though it lags far behind Afghanistan and Burma as an opium poppy producer, according to U.N. figures.</p> <p>The DEA also reported that production more than tripled in Mexico between 2013 and 2016, to 79,000 acres, in part because of “reduced poppy eradication.”</p> <p>But there is no consensus on those estimates, particularly the production numbers.</p>

	<p>Mexican military officials deny that poppy production has tripled and say they have increased eradication efforts, deploying more than 20,000 soldiers on ground or aerial missions.</p> <p>The troops destroyed about 71,000 acres last year and are on pace this year to surpass that, the officials said.</p> <p>A decade ago, Mexico eradicated 27,000 acres, according to the United Nations.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 FBI: \$20M for 'El Chapo' cartel partner
SOURCE	https://www.inquisitr.com/4867880/the-fbi-offers-20-million-award-for-the-capture-of-el-chapo-guzmans-partner/
GIST	<p>The FBI has announced a \$20 million bounty for the capture of a fugitive drug lord, Rafael Caro Quintero, who is also believed to be one of Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman's partners within the Sinaloa Cartel, as reported by Time. Currently believed to be in his 50s, he's credited as one of the godfathers of the Mexican drug trade. Quintero was initially imprisoned in 1985 but was released on a technicality on August 9, 2013.</p> <p>He had, by that time, spent 28 years in jail. Quintero got his break when a judge ruled that he had been improperly tried in a federal courtroom instead of a state court. Orders for his re-arrest were issued a few days later, but the drug lord had already gone into hiding. His release led to tensions between the Mexican and American governments due to his alleged involvement in the killing of U.S. Drug Enforcement agent, Enrique Camarena Salazar, writer John Clay Walker, and pilot Alfredo Zavala Avelar in 1985.</p> <p>The kingpin fled to Costa Rica after the killings but was soon after apprehended and extradited to Mexico, where he was handed a 40-year sentence for the murders. His cartel, the Guadalajara Cartel, disintegrated after his incarceration, with its members being incorporated into the Juárez Cartel, El Chapo's Sinaloa Cartel, and the Tijuana Cartel.</p> <p>News of renewed interest for his recapture comes in the wake of a new investigative report published by the Huffington Post illustrating the current life of the fallen drug lord. According to the report, he lives in hiding, changing his location every day. He and his henchmen are reportedly always on the lookout for drones and Mexican authorities. Residing in a mountainous region in Mexico, a place known for the growing, harvesting, and processing of drugs, he lives in perpetual fear of apprehension and reportedly suffers from a diseased prostate, but refuses to seek treatment as a result.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/16 S.C. prison: 7 inmates dead; 17 injured
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/c3db6362f47242a8a35e42f52a0422c9/7-inmates-dead,-17-injured-in-South-Carolina-prison-fighting
GIST	<p>COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — A South Carolina prisons spokesman says seven inmates are dead and 17 others required outside medical attention after hours of fighting inside a maximum security prison.</p> <p>Prisons spokesman Jeff Taillon announced the grim outcome after State Law Enforcement Division agents helped secure Lee Correctional Institution around 3 a.m. Monday.</p> <p>Taillon said multiple inmate fights that broke out at 7:15 p.m. Sunday.</p> <p>Taillon said no officers were wounded.</p> <p>The maximum-security facility in Bishopville houses about 1,500 inmates, some of South Carolina's most violent and longest-serving offenders.</p>

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HEADLINE	04/15 Arrest in gas station hostage situation
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/955070/suspect-arrested-hostage-kirkland/
GIST	<p>Police responded to a hostage situation at a 76 gas station at 11848 Northeast 85th Street in Kirkland on Sunday afternoon.</p> <p>Bellevue police confirmed to KIRO 7 that a suspect came into the gas station threatened a employee. The suspect allegedly told the employee he had a bomb, and to lock the doors, according to police.</p> <p>The 76 gas station is about five blocks north of Lake Washington High School and about three blocks north of Kirkland Cemetery.</p> <p>Officers on scene were able to convince the suspect to give himself up outside of the store. The suspect was arrested once outside the store and had “no device on his person” when arrested, according to police.</p> <p>Police say the clerk inside the gas station “left the store and was unharmed but shaken from the incident.”</p> <p>The suspect is described as a male in his early 20s. Police say the suspects motives are unknown at this point.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Another indecent exposure case WWU
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/police-investigate-another-indecent-exposure-case-near-wwu
GIST	<p>BELLINGHAM, Wash. -- Bellingham Police are busy investigating a series of indecent exposure cases.</p> <p>More than one week after an incident at the City's southeast side comes another lewd conduct case Sunday morning.</p> <p>Western Washington University senior Sydney Miller and many others got an alert from the school early Sunday to be on the lookout for a suspicious man who reportedly exposed himself outside the window of a home.</p> <p>The incident happened about 2 a.m. Sunday on North Garden Street near campus.</p> <p>"I had to read it a couple of times. I was like, wait, that's my street. That's literally my block...kind of creepy to get that," Miller said.</p> <p>Miller isn't surprised because it's been happening so often in Bellingham. Police say there have been two dozen or more similar cases of lewd conduct and voyeurism on campus and surrounding neighborhoods since last summer.</p> <p>Police suspect there are several different people connected to the many lewd acts reported.</p> <p>In Sunday's case, officers are looking for a thin, 25-year-old man, about 6 feet tall. He was wearing a dark hoodie and jeans.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Quebec mosque shooter's motivation
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/14/americas/quebec-shooter-motive/index.html
GIST	(CNN)A man who killed six worshippers at a Quebec City mosque told an investigator he carried out the

January 2017 attack after seeing reports the Canadian government would welcome more refugees into the country, according to CNN partner CBC.

A video of Alexandre Bissonnette's interrogation was played in court Friday during the third day of his sentencing hearing, CBC reported. Bissonnette pleaded guilty to six counts of first-degree murder and six counts of attempted murder in March.

In the interrogation video, Bissonnette said he was watching TV reports about the Canadian government's policy of welcoming refugees.

"The Canadian government was, you know, going to take in more refugees, you know, those who couldn't go to the United States would end up here," Bissonnette told Quebec City police Sgt. Steve Girard during an interrogation. "I just lost it."

Bissonnette told Girard he wanted to save people from terrorist attacks, according to CBC, and that "maybe, thanks to what I did, there will be hundreds of people saved." He said he had been obsessing for months over the idea that his parents or twin brother would be victims of a terrorist attack after a string of such attacks in Europe.

"I had to do something, it was torturing me inside."

On January 29, Bissonnette entered the Quebec Islamic Cultural Center and fired indiscriminately into a crowd of men, women and children, according to witnesses.

When it was all over, Bissonnette had killed six Muslim worshippers -- Mamadou Tanou Barry, 42; Abdelkrim Hassane, 41; Khaled Belkacemi, 60; Aboubaker Thabti, 44; Azzeddine Soufiane, 57; and Ibrahima Barry, 39.

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HEADLINE	04/14 Teen asked for directions; gets shot at
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/14/us/michigan-man-shoots-at-teen-asking-for-directions/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A Michigan man is out on bail after police said he fired a shotgun at a teenager who had stopped at his house to ask directions.</p> <p>Jeffery Craig Zeigler, 53, was charged Friday with assault with intent to murder and possession of a firearm in the commission of a felony.</p> <p>During Zeigler's arraignment, Judge Julie Nicholson entered a plea of not guilty for him.</p> <p>The teen's mother told CNN affiliate WDIV she thought there was a racial component to the case. The teen is black and the man is white.</p> <p>"It definitely was a hate crime," she said.</p> <p>Brennan Walker, 14, said he was walking alone to school Thursday after he missed the bus. As he trekked the 4 miles to Rochester High School in Rochester Hills, he got lost and knocked on the doors of several houses, he said.</p> <p>The teen said he went up to one home and knocked on the door a few times. A woman came to the door, yelling at him, he told WDIV.</p> <p>"I was trying to explain to that I wanted to get directions to go to my school," he said. The man eventually came out with a shotgun and fired one shot at the teen who was running away.</p>

	<p>The teen said he fled when he saw the man with the shotgun. The teen was not wounded.</p> <p>Deputies responded to a call of a male trying to break into a house, the sheriff's department said in a news release. Both the boy and Zeigler were taken to a police station and questioned. Zeigler was arrested. A prosecutor said at Zeigler's arraignment that there was a surveillance video from the house that caused her to doubt Zeigler's recollection of the incident. His story was not borne out by the video, she said.</p> <p>Zeigler was released Friday from Oakland County Jail on a \$50,000 bond. A judge also ordered the man to stay more than 10 miles from the teenager, which means he will likely have to live elsewhere until trial.</p> <p>He was also ordered to turn over all his firearms and wear a GPS monitor.</p> <p>Zeigler told the judge that there is "a lot more to the story than what's being told."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 PD chief defends arrests in Starbucks
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/14/us/philadelphia-police-starbucks-arrests/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Philadelphia Police Commissioner Richard Ross is defending the actions of officers seen in a viral video arresting two men at a Starbucks.</p> <p>The video, which has racked up millions of views since it was posted to Twitter on Thursday, shows Philadelphia police officers arresting two African-American men inside a Starbucks location.</p> <p>Melissa DePino, who posted the video, wrote, "The police were called because these men hadn't ordered anything. They were waiting for a friend to show up, who did as they were taken out in handcuffs for doing nothing."</p> <p>In the video a man is seen telling an officer that he was meeting the two men there and asking what they did to warrant police being called.</p> <p>Others off screen are heard saying, "They didn't do anything."</p> <p>Ross said Saturday his officers "did absolutely nothing wrong."</p> <p>Ross recorded a statement on Facebook Live in which he explains that Starbucks employees called 911 to report a trespassing complaint.</p> <p>The employees told officers the two men wanted to use the restroom but were told the facilities are only for paying customers. The Starbucks employees then asked the men to leave, but they refused, Ross says. Officers responded and asked the men three times to "politely to leave the location because they were being asked to leave by employees because they were trespassing." When the men again refused to leave, they were arrested "without incident," Ross says.</p> <p>The men were taken to a police station and released when it became clear Starbucks didn't want to press charges.</p> <p>"They did a service that they were called to do," Ross says of the officers. "And if you think about it logically, that if a business calls and they say that someone is here that I no longer wish to be in my business, (officers) now have a legal obligation to carry out their duties. And they did just that."</p> <p>Ross, who is black, references his own experiences while making his case, saying, "As an African-American male, I am very aware of implicit bias."</p> <p>"We are committed to fair and unbiased policing and anything less than that will not be tolerated in this</p>

	department." In statement posted on Twitter, Starbucks apologized "to the two individuals and our customers."
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HEADLINE	04/14 Parkland accounts: chaos, confusion
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/newly-released-accounts-parkland-shooting-relate-chaos-confusion/story?id=54470790
GIST	<p>New documents released Friday paint the clearest picture to date of the chaos and confusion officers experienced in the early moments of the Feb. 14 school shooting in Parkland, Florida.</p> <p>The incident report includes 11 officers' accounts of their responses in the first few minutes after School Resource Officer Scott Peterson screamed "Shots fired!" over the radio.</p> <p>Despite being the first to report the gunfire, Peterson was accused of failing to enter the school building after hearing those initial shots. He claimed to have thought they were coming from outside the building.</p> <p>In February, President Trump said that the officer "did a poor job," adding that he either "didn't react properly" or was a "coward." Peterson was suspended by the sheriff's office in the weeks following the shooting. He resigned soon after amid public scorn.</p> <p>In one account released by the Broward County Sheriff's Office, an officer said he headed towards a nearby Walmart following a dispatch that suggested the shooter was moving in a "westward" direction. Shortly after arriving, he learned the suspect was possibly already in custody.</p> <p>"I then stayed at my new location ... where I prevented any non-law enforcement traffic from entering the area of the school and assisted in directing traffic," the officer said.</p> <p>Armed with an AR-15 style rifle, 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz shot and killed 17 people at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School, prosecutors say. Seventeen others were injured.</p> <p>As the situation developed, another officer said, he did not inform his fellow officers that he would be responding to the scene due to "heavy radio transmissions" following the first mention of an active shooter. Instead, he arrived at the school and entered the building, possibly contributing to some of the uncertainty regarding the number of officers in the school and where they had entered the building.</p> <p>"I attempted to enter building 12 from the west but was confronted by several law enforcement officers who had entered from the east end of the building," said one officer. "To mitigate a crossfire situation, I exited the building and continued to hold cover to the south while the other deputies and officers worked to clear the building and treat the injured."</p> <p>Two officers both reported having accidentally switched off their body cameras in their rush to confront a suspect. They turned them back on later when they realized what had happened. One of them said that had happened several times.</p> <p>"It should be noted that my BWC (body camera) was activated but was turned off accidentally by the on and off button being hit by possibly the rifle sling. Upon noticing it was off I immediately turned it back on," the officer said.</p> <p>"This occurred more than once," he added.</p> <p>Earlier reports of the shooting also indicate confusion about which building the shootings were occurring in and where the assault rifle was left in its aftermath.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Supremacist died w/ISIS-type bombs
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/suspected-white-supremacist-died-building-isis-style-bombs?ref=home
GIST	<p>Benjamin Morrow was found dead with white supremacist literature and the ingredients for a notorious bomb known as the “Mother of Satan.”</p> <p>Morrow, 28, died in an explosion in the kitchen of his Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, apartment on March 5. His home was filled with bomb-making substances so volatile that firefighters chose to destroy the 16-unit apartment block in a controlled blaze, rather than let Morrow’s neighbors continue to live in the building.</p> <p>A search warrant unsealed last week revealed that Morrow kept white supremacist literature in his home. Investigators’ application for a second warrant suggests that Morrow had plans, announcing that he was clearing out a rented storage locker just hours before his death.</p> <p>Kevin Heimerl of the Wisconsin Department of Justice called Morrow’s apartment a “homemade explosives laboratory.” When they responded to reports of an explosion at the home, investigators passed “a one gallon metal container of acetone,” an investigator told a judge in a newly unsealed warrant application.</p> <p>Acetone is an explosive substance and ingredient in the “Mother of Satan”: a volatile bomb used by terrorists in ISIS attacks in Manchester, England, and Paris, France, in recent years.</p> <p>Also sitting in plain sight where two white cardboard boxes stamped with the words “mix it, shake it, shoot it,” and three more packages labeled “sonic boom,” Heimerl testified, adding that he suspected the boxes contained materials that would explode when combined. Investigators also found pipes and pipe caps in the apartment.</p> <p>When they entered the kitchen, investigators found Morrow dead in front of a still-lit stove. An “overpressure blast” had destroyed much of the room, blowing out the doors and windows and burying Morrow under the collapsed ceiling. Containers with more chemicals were spilling out an open refrigerator door.</p> <p>The scene was so volatile that authorities barred the rest of the apartment building’s residents from re-entering their homes, and burned the entire building to the ground in a 1,600-degree controlled blaze overseen by 100 firefighters. Residents left their valuables inside. One of Morrow’s neighbors told the Wisconsin State Journal he planned on digging through the rubble to find a dead relative’s World War II dog tags, which had been left inside to burn.</p> <p>At the time of the fire, the contents of Morrow’s apartment remained a mystery. But an unsealed warrant describes Morrow as building a terrifying arsenal.</p> <p>In addition to more bomb-making materials, Morrow also had a collection of guns and accessories including a rifle scope, masks, vests, a ballistic helmet, and thousands of rounds of ammunition.</p> <p>Morrow also had “white supremacist material” in his bedroom, the warrant said.</p> <p>Beaver Dam police said the white supremacist literature didn’t necessarily mean Morrow was a white supremacist.</p> <p>“It does cause me some concern but I want to make very clear just because Mr. Morrow was in the possession of this material, does not categorize in any particular light,” Lt. Terrence Gebhardt told CBS 58. “He could have been an individual that was doing research.”</p> <p>But state investigators suggested the opposite. In an application for a search warrant, Heimerl raised the</p>

possibility that Morrow had worked with or been inspired by others, pointing to the white supremacist literature when a judge asked about “propaganda that raises concern for this kind of collaborative work.”

The investigator who swept Morrow’s room described the literature as relating to white supremacist groups that “will involve multiple members” in potentially violent activities. He did not specify which groups were named in the literature.

Members of Morrow’s church community have pushed back on the idea that Morrow built the bombs in his bedroom and kitchen, for which investigators found handwritten instructions.

“I’d love to defend Ben because he has been described as a bomb maker and he’s not a bomb maker,” Rev. Jerry Marsden, the pastor who conducted Morrow’s funeral told the Associated Press. “He wasn’t a recluse as some have said he is. He was far from that.”

In an obituary, Morrow’s family described him as a religious man, who grew up homeschooled and later studied pre-pharmacy, math, and chemistry at Pensacola Christian College in Florida. The search warrant revealed Morrow had a Bible among his white supremacist literature and bomb-making material.

When he wasn’t building bombs, he worked as a quality control technician at Richelieu Foods, according to his LinkedIn profile. His coworkers told investigators Morrow sometimes came to work with an unpleasant smell on his clothes.

“Some of those co-workers reported that it was common for Benjamin Morrow to arrive for work and he had an odor emitting from his person that co-worker’s described as smelling like moth balls,” Heimerl told a judge in an application for a second warrant. “Those co-workers further stated that they had made comments to Benjamin Morrow about the fact that they could smell moth balls on him.”

Mothballs are made of flammable chemicals, which may explain the smell.

The second warrant application reveals that police were interested in the contents of a storage unit Morrow rented. On the morning of the fatal explosion, Morrow visited the storage company “and notified the business that he would be moving his personal property out of the storage unit by the end of March,” Heimerl told the judge in the warrant application, speculating that Morrow might have rented the storage unit to keep strong-smelling chemicals from his home.

The second warrant, the findings of which are not public, also extend to Morrow’s computers, flash drives, and phone. The records could reveal where Morrow received the white supremacist literature—and whether he was acting alone.

“I am aware that a person could work solely to connect this type of manufacturing homemade explosives themselves,” Heimerl said. “But I am also equally aware that individuals oftentimes communicate, inspire and engage with other persons to manufacture homemade explosives.”

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HEADLINE	04/13 Deadly war on drugs in Philippines
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/inside-the-deadly-war-on-drugs-in-the-philippineswhere-murder-is-a-meme?ref=home
GIST	<p>NEW YORK—Philippine journalist Patricia Evangelista does not think a single story she has written has saved anyone’s life, but yet she keeps writing. Her stories about the Philippines’ deadly war on drugs for the online-news network Rappler chronicle murder in cold blood, often carried out in front of families with young children by vigilantes acting out the wishes of the state under Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte.</p> <p>Rappler has been stripped of its official credentials and investigated for bogus crimes, including tax evasion and cyber libel. Evangelista has personally received death and rape threats for reporting the truth</p>

and for trying to humanize the victims.

She described her disturbing work to John Avlon, editor-in-chief of The Daily Beast, at the ninth annual Women in the World summit in New York on Friday morning against a backdrop of photos of dead bodies and blood-stained sidewalks. “Duterte is sensitive to criticism, so those of us who cover stories are told we are not patriots, that we are fake news,” she said.

No one knows exactly how many people have died in Duterte’s war on drugs. The state officially lists the number at around 4,000 people who were killed by police acting in “self defense.” Human Rights Watch estimates that closer to 12,000 people have been murdered in cold blood by police and vigilantes.

Duterte, who enjoys a high approval rating, won his office by promising to kill 100,000 criminals who are pushers and drug users alike. He makes no differentiation between pushers, addicts, and casual users—and those who are killed are often never arrested, and certainly never brought to trial.

Those who do the killing aren’t always police, sometimes they are men working under curious impunity who are never brought to justice, either. There are around 16,000 “killings under investigation” by Philippine authorities, but Evangelista says there is no transparency about those cases.

The killings are often carried out in broad daylight in the slum areas of Manila. The victims are often on a watch list created by the government, which is suspected of paying the vigilantes for each person killed. Evangelista has reported on men who have been shot bound and gagged with packing tape wrapped around their heads. The killers generally leave a note with the body stating that the victim was an addict or pusher. Evangelista recalled one instance in which the killer had drawn a smiley face on the victim’s corpse. Other bodies have been found with hashtag-laden signs that parody internet memes.

Evangelista says that, in reality, the Philippines has half the global average of per capita drug abuse. But when the country’s anti-drug czar reported this statistic, he was fired. What disturbs Evangelista most is that many of the killings target those living in extreme poverty, who are often the primary breadwinners for their families. When those victims die, the future of whole families dies with them.

She recalled a story about a family of six that lived in a cinder block house in a shantytown in the poor suburbs of Manila. The mother, nine-months pregnant, was home with the children one day when the police came looking for the patriarch of the house. He wasn’t home, so police arrested the pregnant woman and took her away instead. When the father returned, the family urged him to leave, too, or he might be killed. He came back early one morning to prepare a surprise birthday breakfast for one of the children. Police, staking out the house, charged in and told the children to get out. They pushed the father’s head down on the sofa, and the second eldest child, Christine, then 12 years old, jumped on her father’s back to try to protect him. Police pulled her away and shot him in the back of the head several times. One of the children later found a bullet in the cushions of the sofa. When Evangelista talked to the traumatized daughter some months later, she said her father’s death was her fault. “If I had hugged him harder, he would still be alive,” she told her.

The family now lives with an elderly grandmother who doesn’t have the financial means to support them. The mother gave birth, but remains in jail, meaning there is one more mouth to feed. It was never clear whether the father had been a user, a dealer, or neither. The official police report identified the father as a “scavenger” and said he was shot because the police were acting “in self defense.” There were no reports of police injuries, and no one official ever talked to Christine, the only witness.

Duterte has been condemned by the international community—which has called his deadly policy a crime against humanity—but Evangelista says the president’s response has always been to ask, “Frankly, are they human?”

Evangelista says the hardest part about telling stories about this bloody war on drugs is the risks those who talk about it face. “The risks for the people who tell their stories are enormous,” she said. “They could be dead the next day. Or their fathers or sons could be dead.”

She is also concerned that journalists are increasingly afraid to expose the truth. She has little optimism things will ever get better. "I'm not sure about hope," she said. "But I believe in journalism. If we tell the stories, we keep them human. They are people. He may have been a user, he may not have been, but he was a human."

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HEADLINE	04/13 Judge: Lakewood cops killing trial delay
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article208855809.html
GIST	<p>The alleged getaway driver of a man who gunned down four Lakewood police officers in 2009 made an unsuccessful bid for a new attorney Friday.</p> <p>Dorcus Dewayne Allen is awaiting retrial in Pierce County Superior Court, which won't happen until the Washington State Supreme Court finishes reviewing his case.</p> <p>"What I gather is that you're unhappy with the delay," Superior Court Judge Stanley Rumbaugh told Allen on Friday, after reading his motion for a new attorney.</p> <p>That can't be helped, the judge explained, because the Supreme Court's decision determines what charges prosecutors can bring.</p> <p>Division II of the Washington State Court of Appeals said last year that prosecutors couldn't retry Allen for aggravated first-degree murder, which would mean an automatic sentence of life without parole.</p> <p>Prosecutors appealed the decision to the Supreme Court, which accepted the case earlier this year.</p> <p>If the high court upholds the decision, Allen's retrial will be for first-degree murder. If it doesn't, trial for aggravated murder and a possible automatic life sentence would be back on the table.</p> <p>"I'm ready to go, but I just need to know what the charges are," Rumbaugh said.</p> <p>Allen, who turns 47 on Saturday (April 14) and also goes by the first name Darcus, told the court he doesn't believe his "due process issues" are being addressed "while we're in this standstill."</p> <p>He argued that defense attorney Mary K. High seems to be "totally unaware," when it comes to specifics about his Sixth Amendment rights.</p> <p>Rumbaugh said he didn't see anything deficient about High's work on the case, and he pointed out that the work of Allen's defense counsel on his appeal is the reason he's back in court at all.</p> <p>"I'm going to deny your motion," the judge said.</p> <p>High told the court she understood Allen's frustration.</p> <p>"I have endeavored to represent Mr. Allen to the best of my ability," she said. "... As Mr. Allen knows, I have been very committed to this case."</p> <p>And she'll continue to do so, she said.</p> <p>Allen, who has pleaded not guilty, is suspected of driving Maurice Clemmons to the Parkland coffee shop where Clemmons killed the four officers in November 2009, and then driving him away.</p> <p>Clemmons fatally shot police Sgt. Mark Renninger and officers Tina Griswold, Gregory Richards and Ronald Owens.</p>

	<p>A Seattle police officer fatally shot Clemmons after a manhunt.</p> <p>At Allen's initial trial, jurors found him guilty of four counts of first-degree murder and not of the aggravated murder charges.</p> <p>He was sentenced to 400 months in prison, but won an appeal in which he argued there was prosecutorial misconduct during closing arguments in the case.</p> <p>Prosecutors sought to retry Allen for four counts of aggravated murder, but Allen's defense team, including High, argued that would be double jeopardy, because jurors already said no to the aggravated murder charges.</p> <p>Then-Superior Court Judge Katherine Stolz agreed with the defense and prosecutors appealed her decision to Division II. The appellate court agreed with Stolz, and prosecutors appealed to the state Supreme Court in January.</p> <p>Oral arguments are expected later this year.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Teen jailed 1yr for deadly fight
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/judge-sentences-teen-who-killed-another-teen-in-a-fight-to-more-than-the-maximum/731973913
GIST	<p>In a move rarely seen in a Snohomish County court, a judge sentenced a Marysville teen who killed another teen in a fight to more than the maximum penalty for the crime.</p> <p>The judge said the kick to the head that killed 16-year-old Robbie Myrick Jr. and the actions that followed last August were so cruel that the boy responsible deserves a harsher punishment.</p> <p>Myrick -- and the teen we are not naming because he is a minor -- had agreed to the fight in these Marysville woods. The teen admitted to punching Robbie so hard he fell and then kicking him so hard he suffered irreversible brain damage. No one called 911 for at least an hour, including four adults watching the fight.</p> <p>"I pray to God Robbie was not cognizant of being left on the ground like some discarded piece of trash," Robbie's uncle Rod Hampton told the Snohomish County judge Friday.</p> <p>At the teen's sentencing, a shattered family pleaded for the judge to give more than the 30-day maximum sentence for second-degree manslaughter committed by a minor.</p> <p>"The defendant in this case claims he didn't intend to end someone's life. I'd be willing to bet that your average drunk driver who ends up killing someone in an accident didn't get behind the wheel with the intention of killing someone, but if they did they would be charged with vehicular homicide, and they wouldn't be looking at a token sentence of 30 days," Robbie's father, Robert Myrick Sr., told the judge.</p> <p>And the judge agreed -- 30 days is not enough.</p> <p>"He was down on the ground, he could do nothing to you — you had won the fight, to put it that way — and for some reason I will never know, you decided to up the ante on your victim and that resulted in his death," Judge Richard Okrent said to the teen, sitting next to his attorney.</p> <p>The teen was sentenced to one year in juvenile detention.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Sex workers devastated; eye alternatives
SOURCE	https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/arizona-investigations/2018/04/12/sex-workers-seeking-alternatives-other-websites-after-backpage-closure/507900002/
GIST	<p>When the Department of Justice unceremoniously shut down Backpage last week, it was the first public-facing step in a sweeping criminal case against the website's executives.</p> <p>But before federal authorities could issue a statement, before the classified site's owners would face a judge, and before the public would learn of their charges, the narrative around Backpage had taken on a life of its own.</p> <p>The site had served as a microcosm of a larger debate on prostitution in recent years, and the seizure of what the DOJ called the "Internet's leading forum for prostitution ads" ignited swift reactions on both sides.</p> <p>Anti-sex-trafficking advocates, including Cindy McCain, cheered Backpage's demise as a blow to an abusive industry.</p> <p>Meanwhile, sex workers across the U.S. and Canada swarmed social media to air concerns rarely heard in political discourse: To them, Backpage's demise meant the end of safeguards and a reliable revenue stream in a profession that's not going anywhere.</p> <p>"They're devastated," said Laura Dilley, executive director of PACE, a Vancouver-based nonprofit that advocates for decriminalizing prostitution.</p> <p>If sex workers can't advertise online, they can't screen their clients beforehand and are forced back out to bars and into the street, Dilley said.</p> <p>"I am going to do what I have to do to survive... I might have to work the streets, work the bars; you do what you have to do."</p> <p>While many sex workers told The Arizona Republic they would continue posting on other smaller websites, they also worry about the future. On Wednesday morning, President Trump signed a bill giving prosecutors more power to go after websites that knowingly host sex-trafficking ads. It also gives women who claimed they were trafficked the ability to sue.</p> <p>It's not clear how websites will respond. After the bill passed Congress, for example, Craigslist took down its singles ads. And as the bill was moving through Congress, Backpage restricted postings on singles ads to photos, phone numbers and web links.</p> <p>"There's a lot of uncertainty; a lot of grief and fear," said Jelena Vermilion, a sex worker based outside of Toronto. "A lot of people are essentially planning to be homeless, planning how to fall gracefully as much as possible...From Friday, a lot of these people haven't had any calls."</p> <p>IndyStar columnist Tim Swarens spent more than a year investigating a lucrative business where abused children are bought and sold. USA TODAY</p> <p>After the Backpage closure April 6, an Arizona-based sex worker called Vegas said she relied on her regular clients to get her through that weekend.</p> <p>"I am going to do what I have to do to survive," she said. "I might have to work the streets, work the bars; you do what you have to do."</p> <p>Prostitution is still illegal in 49 states, the exception being certain counties in Nevada. For this reason, The Arizona Republic has agreed to withhold the sex workers' legal names for this story. In Canada, selling sex is legal, but buying it isn't.</p>

Vegas said Backpage afforded her more anonymity than meeting strangers in public. And it gave her a barrier to screen her clients and meet them in a safe place.

“It will push it underground,” Vegas said, noting that Backpage screened for ads that appeared to include someone underage or trafficking victims.

“Backpage had an incentive to review the ads and make sure nothing was going on,” she said. “Now, it’s going to force people out to the streets, where we can’t really fight.”

A Michigan woman who goes by the name Sarah Fenix on Twitter posted a viral thread about how the ability to screen on Backpage saved her from riskier sex work. Fenix told The Republic she used the site to test the client before they met up. She would ask them to text their favorite movie “so I know you’re real,” or to bring her fruit or bagels.

“The guys who could follow that one simple instruction were actually better than the ones who couldn’t,” she said. “It’s not necessarily about the information you get, it’s about gauging someone’s willingness to follow instruction.”

Fenix said she is no longer in the business and now works a "cube" job. Seeing the closure of Backpage though, she said, was like watching a childhood house burn down.

A broader debate

The reactions over Backpage generally boil down to two camps: Those who believe prostitution should be illegal and those who don’t. Advocates for decriminalization say the sex industry will always be around, and regulation would make it safer. Those against it argue that selling sex, by nature, is abusive.

Advocates have succeeded in changing police attitudes about prostitutes from being seen as criminals to women in need of rescue. Many sex workers, however, reject the “victim” label.

In recent years, some anti-trafficking advocacy and political groups have begun blurring the lines between prostitution and sex trafficking: Per the expanded definition, a sex-trafficking victim is someone who enters prostitution by force, fraud or coercion. A minor, by definition is always considered a trafficking victim.

In a press statement, FBI Director Christopher Wray said Backpage’s closing strips traffickers of a key tool.

“This website will no longer serve as a platform for human traffickers to thrive,” he said. “Whether on the street or on the Internet, sex trafficking will not be tolerated.”

Backpage executives are not charged with a sex-trafficking crime, but instead crimes related to facilitating prostitution and money laundering. But the indictment states that many of the ads published on Backpage “depicted children who were victims of sex trafficking.”

Prosecutors say Backpage executives showed a financial incentive to allow the ads to run.

In recent years, law-enforcement actually worked Backpage to conduct prostitution-related sting operations. Police, including those in Phoenix, have previously posted ads on Backpage posing as an underage girl for sale, or as a trafficker searching for victims.

Jonathan Howard, a spokesman for the Phoenix Police Department, rejected the notion that sites like Backpage should remain in place because it confined criminals to one area.

"Just because it's easy doesn't mean it's right," he said. "We knew that that was one of the most prolific

	<p>sites for sex trafficking, but we still have to hold people accountable."</p> <p>Howard said police hope Backpage's closure encourages troubled young women and men to seek options other than prostitution.</p> <p>"It is extremely easy for them to go to sites like Backpage.com, and immediately be drawn into this high-risk lifestyle," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Docs keep licenses despite sex abuse
SOURCE	https://www.yahoo.com/news/ap-investigation-doctors-keep-licenses-despite-sex-abuse-145310788--politics.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — The first time that Dr. Anthony Bianchi came onto a patient, California's medical board alleged, the gynecologist placed a chair against the exam room door, put his fingers into the woman's vagina and exposed his erect penis.</p> <p>The second time, the board claimed, he told a patient that he couldn't stop staring at her breasts and recounted a dream in which he performed oral sex on her in the office.</p> <p>The third time, the board charged, he told a pregnant patient suffering from vaginal bleeding that she shouldn't shave her pubic hair before her next visit, as he was getting too excited.</p> <p>These episodes led to disciplinary actions by the state's medical board in 2012 and in 2016. Bianchi agreed not to contest the charges, and he held onto his medical license. Under a settlement with California's medical board, he agreed to seek therapy and refrain from treating women during five years of probation.</p> <p>Bianchi did not respond to telephone messages from The Associated Press left for him at the workers' compensation clinic in Fresno, California, where he now evaluates occupational health claims.</p> <p>In recent months, Hollywood moguls, elite journalists and top politicians have been pushed out of their jobs or resigned their posts in the wake allegations of sexual misconduct. In contrast, the world of medicine is often more forgiving, according to an AP investigation.</p> <p>When the doctors are disciplined, the punishment often consists of a short suspension paired with mandatory therapy that treats sexually abusive behavior as a symptom of an illness or addiction, the AP found.</p> <p>Decades of complaints that the physician disciplinary system is too lenient on sex-abusing doctors have produced little change in the practices of state medical boards. And the #MeToo campaign and the rapid push in recent months to increase accountability for sexual misconduct in American workplaces do not appear to have sparked a movement toward changing how medical boards deal with physicians who act out sexually against patients or staffers.</p> <p>The sentencing of Larry Nassar, a former doctor for the U.S. Olympic gymnastics program convicted of abusing more than 150 women and girls, has put a high-profile case of physician misconduct in the spotlight. But across the country, most doctors accused of sexual misconduct avoid a medical license review entirely. A study last year found that two-thirds of doctors who were sanctioned by their employers or paid a settlement as the result of sex misconduct claims never faced medical board discipline.</p> <p>"There's been a failure of the medical community to take a stand against the issue," said Azza Abbudagga, a health services researcher with nonprofit advocacy organization Public Citizen.</p> <p>She published a report recently detailing sexual misconduct among physicians. Its findings showed that of the 253 doctors reported to the National Practitioner Data Bank for having been sanctioned by their</p>

respective hospitals or health care organizations for sexual misconduct, or paid a settlement that stemmed from such an allegation, 170 of them were not disciplined by state medical boards, even though all boards have access to the reports filed with the data bank.

"They could tell the public that they will investigate every single case. There are many things that can be done, even just having a policy of zero tolerance," she said. "If every single hospital would just take a stand and issue a statement saying clearly that any sexual misconduct with patients won't be tolerated and that there will be consequences including permanently revoking the medical license of every doctor found guilty."

Current guidelines from the Federation of State Physician Health Programs, which represents doctor rehab programs in 47 states, are largely silent on handling sexual misconduct treatment and describe sexual harassment as a "cause of impairment" in a doctor. Programs to treat doctor impairment are inherently supposed to be "nondisciplinary," per the federation's guidelines.

Linda Bresnahan, who heads the federation, said its guidelines are being rewritten and, despite their language, should not be applied to sexual misbehavior. A statement provided by the federation says only about half of doctor rehab programs nationwide accept doctors accused of sexual misconduct, a choice the group considers to be "a local issue beyond the purview of national guidance."

The harm committed by sexually abusive doctors is aggravated by the personal nature of the doctor-patient relationship, according to experts and doctors' victims.

When Marissa White came to Dr. Gunwant Dhaliwal in 2007 for neck pain after a car accident, he reached under her shirt and into her bra, grabbing her breasts.

A jury convicted him of misdemeanor battery in the case, and Florida's medical board concluded that his crime demonstrated his "lack of good moral character" and "lack of worthiness" to practice medicine. But despite that finding — and at least six other similar allegations made by women patients and employees, both before and after the incident with White, according to court cases and police complaints — Dhaliwal can still be found practicing at his Tampa-area urgent care clinics.

"I had to sit there in front of him, look him in the eye, they made their guilty verdict and that's it, nothing came of it," White told the AP of her experience at trial. She still lives in Florida, but won't even go to the neighborhood where Dhaliwal practices medicine.

"He should have lost his license a long time ago. He should have lost it the first time it happened."

But his office manager told the AP that, while the Florida board referred him to the state's impaired physician network for evaluation, nothing came of it.

"They did an evaluation and did not find anything wrong," the woman told the AP. "They don't do any treatment."

The office manager, who refused to provide the AP with her full name, noted that Dhaliwal had not had any new complaints brought against him since his settlement with the medical board. When the AP asked to speak with Dhaliwal, she said that he was declining on the advice of his lawyers.

Dhaliwal did not respond to requests for comment left with his clinic's staff or a voicemail left with his lawyer.

Examples of problematic behavior are easy to find in states across the country.

In Arkansas, Dr. Robert Rook was allowed to keep his family practice open, so long as he's chaperoned, despite facing multiple criminal charges for rape. Prosecutors subsequently downgraded the charges to more than 20 counts of sexual assault in the second- and third-degree, charges for which Rook says he is

innocent.

Rook did not return phone messages left with a secretary at his Conway office. He is set to face trial later this year.

The Idaho State Board of Medicine in May reinstated the license of Richard Pines, a child and adolescent psychiatrist who lost his license in 2013 after the board accused him of having sexual relationships with four former patients, including taking nude photos of a 14-year-old and convincing the boys that he needed to practice giving naked massages to keep his medical license.

The state's highest court in 2015 ruled that Pines had engaged in sexual misconduct, but determined that two of the four alleged victims were not former patients. The court remanded Pines' case to a lower court and vacated his punishment, instead ordering the board to re-evaluate the scope of disciplinary action based on the charges the court upheld. The court's order also blasted the board for being impartial, accusing its members of "passionately railing" against Pines in its decision.

The AP reached out to Pines' former employers and contacted his most recent attorneys, but was unable to reach him. The AP also left a message for a biller at Sage Health Care, where Pines still processes invoices. The receptionist said Pines bills through the office but was unable to provide more details about his current practice.

State-authorized programs that attempt to oversee the rehabilitation of doctors who have committed sexual misconduct aren't always forthcoming about their methods. In Florida, the Professional's Resource Network, which the state medical board assigned to evaluate Gunwant Dhaliwal after his battery conviction, asked the AP to provide detailed questions and a list of sources before it would answer questions.

After the AP provided the head of the program, Alexis Polles, with basic questions about the program's approach to clearing doctors for return to work after instances of sexual abuse, she declined to answer any of them.

The lenience of penalties for sexually abusive doctors sometimes a source of frustration even for members of the medical board who administer the discipline, according to Jason Rosenberg, a former chairman of the Florida medical board.

"This is incredibly inappropriate," Rosenberg said during one 2013 meeting when Florida's medical board allowed James Yelton-Rossello, a psychiatrist alleged to have molested jailed psychiatric patients, to keep his license. The settlement with the Florida board of medicine did not require Yelton-Rossello to admit guilt.

"You can't do this and serve french fries," Rosenberg said at that meeting, citing fast food restaurants' policies against hiring sex offenders. "I'm ashamed of what's going on here."

Yelton-Rossello's lawyer did not respond to telephone messages or an email request for comment.

Some medical boards blame administrative law judges for tying their hands from seeking harsher punishments.

In an interview last year, Rosenberg said he responded to an administrative law judge's refusal to uphold a different license revocation by attempting to compel that doctor to display a sign stating "I molest patients" in his office.

Rosenberg's effort failed, though some doctors have been required to post signs in their office stating that they must be chaperoned in the presence of female patients.

Bob Cohen, the chief judge in Florida's division of administrative hearings, rejected the idea that

administrative law judges are responsible for watering down the punishments of sexually abusive doctors. He said the board of medicine could seek to override administrative law decisions they disagree with, something the Florida board acknowledged in a statement to the AP.

"One of the reasons they don't always appeal is they have a lot of cases," Cohen said of state health officials. He acknowledged, however, that "consistency" was a goal in punishments, and that past leniency shown to doctors sets a precedent for weaker punishments in the present day.

The question of doctor punishments is part of a larger problem in the medical field. Numerous factors, including hospitals' disinclination to report abusive doctors, to shortfalls in a private, interstate system meant to flag them to future employers, and patients' simple reluctance to challenge a medical professional, skew the field in doctors' favor, according to a 2016 investigation by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Some doctors who are reported to medical boards for sexual misconduct receive reprimands instead of suspensions. G. Eric Nielson, a medical malpractice attorney in Utah, says that's because doctors tend to try to protect other doctors as much as possible.

"There's an institutional bias on the part of the medical review board," he said. "They're generally doctors, they work very hard to get their medical degrees and they're very, very disinclined to yank the license of another doctor. The primary focus is: Let's take care of the doctor and help him get through this problem."

A medical board in California in 2009 revoked the license of Dr. Kamron Hakhamimi after it ruled that his conduct constituted abuse, neglect and exploitation when he prescribed powerful drugs to a woman he met online and then had sex with her; he had previously pleaded no contest to a pair of misdemeanor charges stemming from the incident. But the board stayed the revocation in favor of seven years' probation and a requirement that he complete an ethics class and a course on professional boundaries, though the California Department of Health Care Services barred Hakhamimi from participating in any federally funded programs for 12 years.

When contacted for comment, Hakhamimi said, "Nothing happened in the clinic. No medical malpractice, no suspension." When asked whether the courses were effective, he said, "they're mandatory for a reason: It's a business," and then hung up.

Sexually abusive physicians are not generally required to apologize or even acknowledge having acted inappropriately in order to keep their license. Three years after his misdemeanor battery conviction, for example, Florida doctor Dhaliwal was acquitted of molesting another patient. He took the opportunity to issue a news release calling the women who have accused him of misconduct liars motivated by greed.

In email statement, Florida Medical Board spokesman Brad Dalton said the doctor disciplinary boards "do not have the legal authority to force a physician to speak or place a gag order on them to prevent them from doing so."

In practice, even some lawyers who represent doctors find the physician health programs to be problematic.

David Spicer, who has represented doctors facing medical board discipline in Florida, says the state's doctor rehabilitation program isn't well designed to evaluate or treat sexual misbehavior. The program's key component, he said, is a "one-size-fits-all" requirement that doctors engage in therapy sessions and not get into trouble for a specified period, generally five years.

Spicer said Florida's program, run by an independent organization called the Physician Research Network, does a better job dealing with doctors' who abuse alcohol or drug, but it hasn't been effective at evaluating or treating doctors with sexual problems.

Experts in the treatment of sexual misbehavior question whether the treatments mandated for doctors who

	<p>molest patients are even appropriate for such misconduct.</p> <p>"It's insufficient," said Rory Reid, a UCLA psychology professor who studies addiction and hypersexual behavior. While some types of sexual behavior, such as the compulsive viewing of pornography, might best be addressed through addiction treatment therapy, rehabilitation programs for sex offenders typically focus on restitution and empathy for a person's victims.</p> <p>"We have clinical trials for everything underneath the sun," Reid said. "But there's not one clinical trial that I'm aware of on the efficacy of treatment for doctors who have engaged in sexual misconduct."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Backpage CEO pleads guilty
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/backpage-ceo-pleads-guilty-testify-54437158
GIST	<p>The chief executive of Backpage.com pleaded guilty to state and federal charges including conspiracy and money laundering, and agreed to testify in ongoing prosecutions against others at the website that authorities have dubbed a lucrative nationwide "online brothel," authorities said.</p> <p>"For far too long, Backpage.com existed as the dominant marketplace for illicit commercial sex, a place where sex traffickers frequently advertised children and adults alike," U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions said in a statement. "But this illegality stops right now."</p> <p>Backpage brought in a half-billion dollars since it began in 2004, mostly through prominent risqué advertising for escorts and massages, among other services and some goods for sale, according to federal prosecutors. Authorities allege the site was often used to traffic underage victims, while company officials said they tried to scrub the site of such ads.</p> <p>Chief Executive Officer Carl Ferrer will serve no more than five years in prison under a California agreement in which he pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy and three counts of money laundering in California. Also Thursday, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton announced the company pleaded guilty to human trafficking.</p> <p>And a federal judge in Phoenix unsealed an April 5 plea deal revealing that Ferrer pleaded guilty to conspiracy, and Backpage.com pleaded guilty to money laundering conspiracy.</p> <p>Under his plea agreement, Ferrer agreed to make the company's data available to law enforcement as investigations and prosecutions continue. The guilty pleas are the latest in a cascade of developments in the last week against the company founded by the former owners of the Village Voice in New York City, Michael Lacey, 69, and James Larkin, 68.</p> <p>The company founders were among Backpage officials indicted by a federal grand jury in Arizona. Attorneys for the company and Lacey, Larkin and Ferrer did not respond to multiple telephone and email messages from The Associated Press.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Online pharmacy fined; illegal imports
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/latest-online-pharmacy-sentenced-illegal-imports-54452599
GIST	<p>The Latest on the sentencing of an online Canadian pharmacy for illegally importing drugs into the U.S. (all times local):</p> <p>1 p.m.</p> <p>A Montana judge has sentenced a Canadian online pharmacy to pay \$34 million for importing counterfeit and unapproved drugs into the U.S.</p>

	<p>U.S. District Judge Dana Christensen on Friday accepted plea agreements with Canada Drugs and its founder, Kris Thorkelson.</p> <p>The company pleaded guilty to introducing misbranded drugs into interstate commerce, and two subsidiary companies pleaded guilty to selling counterfeit drugs.</p> <p>Thorkelson pleaded guilty to knowing about and concealing a felony crime.</p> <p>Prosecutors say the company has made at least \$78 million since 2001 by importing mislabeled and unapproved drugs. That includes two counterfeit cancer drugs that had no active ingredients.</p> <p>Canada Drugs was also sentenced to five years' probation and ordered to stop selling unapproved, misbranded and counterfeit drugs.</p> <p>Thorkelson received five years' probation with six months' house arrest. He also must pay a \$250,000 fine.</p>
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Date: Mon Apr 16 2018 09:20:09 CDT
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Editor's Note: InFOCUS will not be published this Friday, 20 April; will return to publication next week Monday, 23 April 2018.

Washington State Fusion Center

InFOCUS

Monday – 16 Apr 2018

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HEADLINE

04/16 US envoy fears: chem. site tampered

SOURCE

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-chemicalweapons/russia-may-have-tampered-with-chemical-attack-site-u-s-envoy-says-idUSKBN1HN126?il=0>

GIST

THE HAGUE (Reuters) - Russia may have tampered with the site of an alleged chemical weapons attack in Syria's Douma, the U.S. envoy to the global watchdog said on Monday, urging the body to condemn the continuing use of banned chemical weapons.

The comments came during a closed-door meeting at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, convened after an April 7 attack in the town of Douma, outside the Syrian capital, in which dozens of people were allegedly killed with poison gas.

“It is long overdue that this council condemns the Syrian government for its reign of chemical terror and demands international accountability for those responsible for these heinous acts,” U.S. Ambassador Kenneth Ward said in comments obtained by Reuters.

“It is our understanding the Russians may have visited the attack site. It is our concern that they may have tampered with it with the intent of thwarting the efforts of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission to conduct an effective investigation.”

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HEADLINE

04/14 End of credit card receipt signatures

SOURCE

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/14/business/credit-card-signature.html?action=click&module=In%20Other%20News&pgtype=Homepage&action=click&module=Latest&pgtype=Homepage>

GIST

The next time you sign a credit card receipt, savor it.

While it may take time for the news to filter down to retailers, Visa, American Express, Discover and Mastercard have said that as of this month, they will no longer require customers to sign their names when paying with a credit card.

The signature has had a good run. It’s not dead, but it is dying.

American culture has preferred credit to debit, and so signing has stuck around longer. But new credit cards have converted to chip cards that are harder to counterfeit.

“Signatures are becoming more irrelevant,” said Harshita Rawat, an analyst at Bernstein Research. “The final nail in the coffin was the chip card.”

If you want to pay with your phone, many use fingerprint scanners to authorize transactions, and Apple’s got facial recognition on its iPhone X while Samsung uses iris scanning on the Galaxy S8. Visa has also rolled out prototype rings, pins and even sunglasses that you can scan instead of using a card.

Several of the largest retailers, including Walmart and Target, have moved to drop the signature requirement. Home Depot had already waived the requirement for purchases under \$50, and plans to do the same for larger purchasers, but hasn't set a date yet. Stephanie Cunha, a spokeswoman for CVS, said "We are evaluating our options but have no specific changes to announce at this time."

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HEADLINE

04/15 US plans new sanctions on Russia

SOURCE

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/15/us/politics/trump-russia-sanctions-syria.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage>

GIST

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration plans to impose new sanctions against Russia on Monday to punish it for enabling the Syrian government's use of chemical weapons in its civil war, the latest in a series of actions by both sides underscoring the deterioration in relations between Moscow and the West.

The sanctions, coming shortly after American-led airstrikes against facilities linked to Syria's chemical weapons, are meant to signal that the United States holds responsible not just the government of President Bashar al-Assad but also his patrons in Russia and Iran. President Trump has vowed that Syria's allies will pay a "big price" for facilitating the suspected use of poison gas.

But it remained unclear how far Mr. Trump would go in trying to shape events in Syria, which has been racked by civil war for seven years. President Emmanuel Macron of France, who along with Prime Minister Theresa May of Britain joined in the strike on Syrian targets, said on Sunday night that he had persuaded Mr. Trump to keep a small American ground force in Syria despite the president's public declaration that he wanted to get out.

"We convinced him it was necessary to stay," Mr. Macron said in a televised interview with French journalists. "I assure you, we have convinced him that it is necessary to stay for the long term."

American officials, however, disputed that, saying that Mr. Macron misinterpreted the conversation. About 2,000 American troops are in Syria to fight the Islamic State, or ISIS, not to play a role in the civil war. In public comments before the chemical attack that prompted him to launch airstrikes, Mr. Trump said he wanted to pull them out right away. Advisers urged him to hold off, and he gave them five to six months to complete a withdrawal.

“The U.S. mission has not changed — the president has been clear that he wants U.S. forces to come home as quickly as possible,” Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House press secretary, said in a statement Sunday night. “We are determined to completely crush ISIS and create the conditions that will prevent its return. In addition, we expect our regional allies and partners to take greater responsibility both militarily and financially for securing the region.”

The new American sanctions were announced on Sunday by Nikki R. Haley, the ambassador to the United Nations and the administration’s leading public voice excoriating Russia in recent days. “They will go directly to any sort of companies that were dealing with equipment related to Assad and chemical weapons use,” she said on “Face the Nation” on CBS. “And so I think everyone is going to feel it at this point. I think everyone knows that we sent a strong message, and our hope is that they listen to it.”

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HEADLINE

04/15 Minor quake near Salem Oregon

SOURCE

<http://mynorthwest.com/954831/3-1-magnitude-earthquake-hits-near-oregon-state-capital-city/>

GIST

SILVERTON, Ore. (AP) — No injuries or property damage have been reported following a 3.1 magnitude earthquake near the Oregon state capital.

The U.S. Geological Survey confirmed the earthquake hit about 4 miles (6.4 kilometers) southwest of Silverton at 8:45 p.m. Saturday.

Some nearby residents said they felt the earthquake, which also struck near the state capital city of Salem.

In nearby Mollala, northeast of this site, a magnitude 4.0 quake also hit last December.

Experts have said for years that Oregon and the Pacific Northwest are due for a catastrophic earthquake with a magnitude of 8.0 or higher.

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HEADLINE

04/15 Oregon gov. declares drought emergency

SOURCE

<http://q13fox.com/2018/04/15/oregon-governor-declares-drought-emergency-in-second-county/>

GIST

SALEM, Ore. — Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has declared a drought emergency in the second county in a month.

Brown on Friday announced a drought emergency in Grant County due to low snowpack, lack of precipitation, low streamflows and warming temperatures.

The declaration comes after Brown announced a drought emergency in Klamath County on March 13.

They're the first state drought declarations since 2015.

The governor's drought declarations allow increased flexibility in how water is managed to ensure that limited supplies are used as efficiently as possible.

The drought declarations also position farmers and ranchers in the county for federal aid as Oregon braces for the upcoming wildfire season.

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HEADLINE

04/15 Summer fire rules in effect

SOURCE

<http://q13fox.com/2018/04/15/summer-fire-rules-kick-off-today-in-washington/>

GIST

It may not feel warm outside yet, but Washington's "summer fire rules" are now in effect.

“Whether fire season is delayed or not, Washington’s forests always face the threat of wildfire,” said Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz. “We’re preparing now to be ready for fire season before the weather heats up, and I encourage all our neighbors to do the same.”

The state's summer fire rules are in effect until October 15. The rules apply to the 13 million acres of private and state forestlands protected by the Washington Department of Natural Resources.

These regulations affect loggers, firewood cutters, land clearers, road builders, heavy equipment operators, off-road motorcyclists, and others. During fire season, people using motorized equipment in the woods must have approved spark arresters and follow fire safety precautions. In addition, those working in the woods must have fire prevention and extinguishing equipment in good working order at the job site and workers trained in proper use.

The rules are intended to prevent forest fires and to extinguish small fires before they spread to the forested lands. These rules restrict cigarette smoking in forested areas to roads, gravel pits, or other clearings and prohibit lighting fireworks on forestland.

According to experts, Washington's forests always face the threat of wildfire. So even though we have above average snowpack, the risk of wildfire can change quickly during the springtime.

"As soon as the weather conditions warm up and the humidity begins to drop, the ground conditions become much more of a tinderbox very very quickly and certainly as the summer goes on," Kyle Ohashi of Puget Sound Regional Fire told Q13 News.

Property owners can reduce fire risk to their homes and lands by keeping dead vegetation off roofs and away from buildings. The Firewise program explains how to use these techniques and offers incentives to communities who follow Firewise principles.

Last year, more than 32,800 acres of DNR-protected lands were consumed by 815 wildfires. Out of 815 wildfires, 90 percent were human-caused.

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HEADLINE

04/15 Koreas to finalize working-level talks

SOURCE

https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/04/15/South-and-North-Korea-to-finalize-working-level-talks-on-inter-Korean-summit/9871523843348/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=2

GIST

SEOUL, April 15 (UPI) -- With less than a fortnight until the South and North Korea hold their first summit in more than a decade, officials from both sides are expected to wrap up the final details this week.

Yonhap reported Sunday that an additional working-level meeting will be held Wednesday at the Tongilgak, a North Korean building at the Panmunjom truce village on the inter-Korean border.

After the protocol, security, media coverage and other technical details of the summit are finalized during the talks, a high-level meeting is expected to be held between South Korea's Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon and Ri Son-gwon, chairman of the North's agency for inter-Korean affairs, for Wednesday.

The presidential official said the high-level meeting will likely be held within the week.

Meanwhile, Seoul has announced, "Peace, a New Beginning," will be the slogan for the inter-Korean talks.

Presidential spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom told reporters Sunday that the slogan indicates the start of world peace through the first inter-Korean meeting in eleven years, followed by the first-ever summit between the United States and North Korea.

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HEADLINE

04/16 Russia reinforcements head to Syria

SOURCE

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5618609/Russian-ships-laden-tanks-seen-Bosphorus-en-route-Tartus-Syria-led-air-strikes.html>

GIST

Two Russian warships laden with military vehicles have been spotted en route to Syria after Friday's US-led airstrikes obliterated three suspected chemical weapons sites.

An Alligator-landing ship was pictured cruising down The Bosphorus on Sunday as the world awaits Vladimir Putin's response to this week's co-ordinated military action against Syria.

The vessel was spotted on its way to the Russian naval base at Tartus on the north Syrian coast.

On its fourth deployment of Russian military equipment to the war-torn country the ship was seen laden with tanks, trucks, ambulances and an IED radar.

A yellow RoRo Alexandr Tkachenko was also pictured heading for Tartus carrying high-speed patrol boats, a temporary bridge structure and several trucks. The images were posted on social media by Bosphorus-based naval observer Yörük Işık.

They come in wake of Friday's US-led campaign against Bashar al-Assad's regime and a chemical weapons attack that brutally murdered 75 civilians.

The blue Project 117 LST Orsk 148 ship was carrying Soviet BTR-80 tanks, Ramaz trucks and a Pelena-1 bomb radar, used to detect IEDs.

A second yellow cargo vessel was equipped with a BMK-T boat used for building temporary bridges and an array of other military hardware.

The Russian warships approaching Syria come after the United States outlined new economic sanctions in response to Moscow's continued support of Assad's regime in Syria.

Nikki Haley, US Ambassador to the United Nations, said measures to be imposed on Monday will send a message to Russia after it blocked six UN attempts to investigate its use of chemical weapons.

Meanwhile French President Emmanuel Macron today insisted the allied forces had not 'declared war' on Syria.

He told a French TV station: 'We have not declared war on the regime of Bashar al-Assad.' During the

two-hour interview he also claimed he had 'convinced' Trump to maintain a military presence in Syria after the US leader threatened to pull out of the country entirely.

It emerged that Trump called Mr Macron twice before he shared his intention to strike Syria in a Twitter post. But he failed to call UK Prime Minister Theresa May in the early stages of the operation, giving the French leader the opportunity to claim France is America's leading ally in Europe.

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HEADLINE

04/16 Oklahoma wildfires force evacuations

SOURCE

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/13/us/oklahoma-wildfires/index.html>

GIST

(CNN)Wildfires have killed one person and forced the evacuation of four towns in Oklahoma, authorities said.

The state chief medical examiner's office reported a 61-year-old man died Thursday in Roger Mills County as a result of injuries sustained in a fire that began southeast of Leedey, the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management said.

A 54-year-old hunter reported missing in the large Dewey County fire was found alive, Oklahoma Forestry Services Fire Chief Scott Huff said. The man was flown to an area hospital Friday, but his condition was unknown.

Officials said the man was one of three hunters who got caught in the wildfire. The two others were found Thursday.

About 1,000 people evacuated Vici, more than 100 miles northwest of Oklahoma City, Dewey County Sheriff Clay Sander said.

Evacuations were also ordered in the Dewey County towns of Seiling, Taloga and Putnam, said Michelle Finch-Walker, spokeswoman for Oklahoma Forestry Services.

The Rhea Fire in Dewey County has burned an estimated 138,000 acres and is 0% contained, she said.

Around midday Friday, the National Weather Service issued an advisory saying that fire was approaching the Iochem iodine plant east of Vici. Sander told CNN about 30 residents were asked to evacuate immediately as the wildfire closed in on the chemical plant.

Some 450 people were evacuated in adjacent Woodward County. The estimated size of that fire was changed from 115,000 to 59,000 acres because of more accurate mapping, Finch-Walker said. There are two other major fires in the state.

The blazes have consumed 200,000 acres, Gov. Mary Fallin said in announcing a state of emergency for 52 counties because of wildfire and drought conditions.

"I'm asking all Oklahomans to be vigilant and careful, and to do their part to prevent fires," Fallin said in a statement. "Anything that can be done to minimize fires will help to keep both our firefighters and the public safe."

'The fire is rapidly spreading'

State officials said dry conditions and strong winds have combined to create potential fire dangers.

"These fires are going to continue to be quite explosive under these conditions, with that kind of wind pushing it, and all the dry fuels that are available," Finch-Walker told CNN. "The fire is rapidly spreading and growing and we will continue to see extreme fire behavior until we can get through this event."

"We've got historic conditions as far as fire. We haven't seen these kinds of conditions in a decade," said Matt Lehenbauer, emergency management director for Woodward County.

"We've had half an inch of rain in six months," Lehenbauer said.

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HEADLINE

04/16 US, Russia enter new era of animosity

SOURCE

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-16/syria-strikes-lock-u-s-and-russia-into-a-new-era-of-animosity>

GIST

A few weeks ago, Donald Trump invited Vladimir Putin to meet -- maybe even at the White House. After U.S.-led missile strikes in Syria, the two nations' officials can't get into the same room without insulting each other.

Speaking at an emergency session of the United Nations Security Council Saturday, hours after the U.S., France and the U.K. launched missiles intended to take out Syria's chemical weapons capability, American Ambassador Nikki Haley called on Russia -- the main backer of the Syrian regime -- "to take a hard look at the company it keeps." Her Russian counterpart Vassily Nebenzia retorted that the U.S. and its allies were engaged in the "diplomacy of myth-making."

The strikes against the regime of Russia's ally Bashar al-Assad put an exclamation point on how swiftly ties between the former Cold War foes have deteriorated in recent weeks, with President Trump even overcoming his past unwillingness to criticize President Putin by name.

Now, the U.S.-Russia relationship, already under severe strain over issues from Russian meddling in the 2016 American presidential campaign to its role in Syria and Ukraine, may be irretrievably broken for the foreseeable future. There may be too much bad blood, too much suspicion and too much anger on both sides to turn the animosity around.

"I don't see things getting better," said Boris Zilberman, deputy director of congressional relations at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and a Russia expert. "We're at a very low point and clearly the administration's position on Russia has hardened."

The result has been an unprecedented wave of retaliations and tit-for-tat actions. After the U.K. blamed Russia for the poisoning of a former spy in Britain, more than 150 Russian diplomats were expelled by the U.K. and allies including the U.S. The Trump administration followed with new sanctions on Russian oligarchs including billionaire aluminum magnate Oleg Deripaska. His company lost half its value in a day after the sanctions were announced.

Haley raised the prospect of still more sanctions on Russia, saying Sunday on CBS's "Face the Nation" that a fresh round of penalties would "go directly to any sorts of companies that were dealing with equipment" related to Assad and his chemical weapons.

While for now no significant new U.S. sanctions seem likely --limiting Russian market losses after last week's sharp declines -- in Moscow, lawmakers are starting Monday to discuss a draft law with counter-measures against the U.S..

"What kind of cooperation can there be? Where?" asked Fyodor Lukyanov, head of Russia's Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, who advises the Kremlin. Russia gets "new sanctions and threats every week," he said. "Americans believe that you can humiliate and put pressure everywhere and at the same time offer cooperation where they need it. This does not happen."

The two countries routinely accuse each other of fabricating events, as they did during the Cold War.

The U.S. says Russia is blocking investigators from the scene of the chemical attack that prompted the latest airstrikes. Russia has argued both that the attack in the Syrian city of Douma never happened or that it was orchestrated by the U.S. and its allies to provoke a military response.

"Americans need to understand that the wars of the future will look more like this: Russia is investing significant resources to create propaganda and disinformation," said Senator Ben Sasse, a Nebraska Republican, after Russia claimed that almost all the missiles fired into Syria were shot down -- an assertion the U.S. denied. "Our enemies will work to create confusion and distrust among Americans here at home."

What limited cooperation there was between the two countries has ground to a halt. A November agreement between the two sides to press all parties in Syria toward negotiations known as the Geneva process has stalled and they have abandoned plans for more "de-escalation zones" to ease the violence. Instead, Russia is attempting to create such zones with Turkey and Iran.

From the White House, there is still hope that Russia will change its posture, and Trump's informal invitation for an eventual meeting with Putin hasn't been rescinded.

"After his last call with President Putin on March 20, the president confirmed that the two had discussed a bilateral meeting at a number of potential venues, including the White House," Robert Palladino, a spokesman for the National Security Council, said in a statement Sunday night. "The desire for a meeting still stands, as the president believes a better relationship with Russia is in our mutual interest. That said, the president has been consistent and tough on Russia."

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HEADLINE

04/15 Russia: chaos if West strikes Syria again

SOURCE

<https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/putin-syria-global-chaos/2018/04/15/id/854589/>

GIST

Russian President Vladimir Putin warned on Sunday that further Western attacks on Syria would bring chaos to world affairs, while signs emerged that Moscow and Washington want to pull back from the worst crisis in their relations for years.

Putin made his remarks in a telephone conversation with Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani after the United States, France and Britain launched missile strikes on Syria on Saturday over a suspected poison gas attack.

A Kremlin statement said Putin and Rouhani agreed that the Western strikes had damaged the chances of achieving a political resolution in the multi-sided, seven-year conflict that has killed at least half a million people.

"Vladimir Putin, in particular, stressed that if such actions committed in violation of the U.N. Charter continue, then it will inevitably lead to chaos in international relations," a Kremlin statement said.

The attacks struck at the heart of Syria's chemical weapons programme, Washington said, in retaliation for a suspected poison gas attack a week ago. All three participants insisted the strikes were not aimed at toppling President Bashar al-Assad or intervening in the conflict.

The bombings, hailed by U.S. President Donald Trump as a success but denounced by Damascus and its allies as an act of aggression, marked the biggest intervention by Western countries against Assad and ally Russia, whose foreign minister Sergei Lavrov called them "unacceptable and lawless".

Putin's comments were published shortly after Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov struck a more conciliatory note by saying Moscow would make every effort to improve political relations with the West.

When asked whether Russia was prepared to work with the proposals of Western countries at the United Nations, Ryabkov told TASS news agency: "Now the political situation is extremely tense, the atmosphere is extremely electrified, so I will not make any predictions.

"We will work calmly, methodically and professionally, using all opportunities to remove the situation

from its current extremely dangerous political peak."

Russian Foreign Ministry official Vladimir Ermakov said Washington would want to maintain a dialogue with Moscow about strategic stability after the raids, Russian media reported.

In an indication that the West, too, would prefer to lower tensions, the United States and Britain both reiterated that their military action on Saturday was not aimed at Assad, Putin's ally, only at his use of chemical weapons.

Speaking to the BBC, Britain's Foreign Secretary (Minister) Boris Johnson said that Western powers had no plans for further missile strikes, though they would assess their options if Damascus used chemical weapons again.

"This is not about regime change ... This is not about trying to turn the tide of the conflict in Syria," he told the BBC, adding that Russia was the only country able to pressure Assad to negotiate an end to the conflict.

Asked about U.S.-Russia relations, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said ties were "very strained" but that the United States still hoped for a better relationship.

Haley said that the United States would not pull its troops out of Syria until its goals were accomplished. Speaking on Fox News Sunday, Haley listed three aims for the United States: ensuring that chemical weapons are not used in any way that poses a risk to U.S. interests, that Islamic State is defeated and that there is a good vantage point to watch what Iran is doing.

Trump has made clear he wants to withdraw the roughly 2,000 U.S. troops involved in the anti-Islamic State campaign in Syria. But he appeared to contradict that message when he said on Saturday that Western allies were prepared to "sustain" the military response if Assad does not stop using prohibited chemical weapons.

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HEADLINE

04/15 Opposition to sanctuary spreads in Calif.

SOURCE

<https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/us-california-sanctuary-backlash/2018/04/15/id/854625/>

GIST

More local governments in California are resisting the state's efforts to resist the Trump administration's immigration crackdown, and political experts see politics at play as Republicans try to fire up voters in a state where the GOP has grown weak.

Since the Jeff Sessions-led Department of Justice sued California last month over its so-called "sanctuary state" law limiting police collaboration with immigration agents, at least a dozen local governments have voted to either join or support the lawsuit or for resolutions opposing the state's position. Those include the Board of Supervisors in Orange County, which has more than three million people.

More action is coming this week, with leaders in the Orange County city of Los Alamitos scheduled to vote Monday on a proposal for a local law to exempt the community of 12,000 from the state law. On Tuesday, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors is meeting to consider joining the Trump administration lawsuit.

Immigration has been a hot topic across the country since President Donald Trump campaigned in 2016 on promises of tougher enforcement and a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border. It has been a lightning rod issue in California far longer.

The state passed a measure backed by Republican Gov. Pete Wilson in the 1990s to deny public healthcare and education to immigrants in the country illegally. It was later overturned but left a lingering resentment among the state's growing Hispanic population.

In recent years, California Republicans have taken a less strident approach to immigration in a state where one in four people are foreign-born. But the Trump administration lawsuit has energized many in a party that has been rendered nearly irrelevant at the state level, where Democrats control every key office.

"When the attorney general of the United States decides to take a firm position against it, I think that gave a signal to a lot of us that, 'Hey, California is on the wrong side of this thing,'" said Fred Whitaker, chairman of the Republican Party in Orange County. He also is a councilman in the city of Orange who proposed a local resolution on the issue that passed last week.

Raphael Sonenshein, executive director of the Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs at California State University, Los Angeles, said it's not surprising Republicans are galvanizing over immigration.

"Politics is very much about emotions, especially in midterms," he said. "I think it was only a matter of

time when people went back to the issue that actually hits the nerve in the Republican base these days more than any other."

Under Democratic leadership, California has enacted a series of laws in recent years aimed at helping immigrants, including issuing driver's licenses regardless of legal status and assisting with tuition at state universities. After Trump was elected, lawmakers passed the measure to limit police collaboration with federal immigration agents.

Immigrant and civil rights advocates applauded the measure, known as SB54, as a way to encourage immigrants to report crime to police without fearing deportation. Critics said it would make it too hard for federal agents to find and deport ex-convicts who are a danger to communities.

Most of the local governments siding with the Trump administration are in Orange County, an area once considered a GOP stronghold but that voted for Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election. But it's starting to spread.

Escondido in neighboring San Diego County has voted to support the federal lawsuit and last week the small city of Ripon in the state's Central Valley did the same.

In many cases, meetings on the issue have drawn boisterous crowds. Anti-illegal immigration activists have traveled from city to city to attend, heightening tensions with those who want their communities to support immigrant-friendly policies or stay out of the fray.

In response to the controversy, some local governments have taken the opposite approach. Leaders in Santa Ana, an Orange County city home to about 330,000 residents, voted to support California in the lawsuit.

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HEADLINE

04/16 Syrians Damascus rally support military

SOURCE

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-large-rally-damascus-supporting-assads-army-54494618?>

GIST

Hundreds of Syrians gathered on Monday in a landmark square in Syria's capital, Damascus, rallying in

support of their armed forces, which they say succeeded in confronting the unprecedented joint airstrikes by the West over the weekend.

State TV broadcast the rally live from the central Omayyad Square. Protesters waved Syrian flags at the demonstration, dubbed a "salute to the achievements of the Arab Syrian Army," set off fireworks and unleashed celebratory gunfire.

Shouts of "Allah, Syria, and only Bashar," a reference to Syrian President Bashar Assad, rang out.

The joint airstrikes by the United States, Britain and France bombed sites that the three countries said were linked to Syria's chemical weapons program. The airstrikes were triggered by an alleged chemical attack in the town of Douma, just outside of Damascus.

Syrian activists said more than 40 people were killed, but Syria and Russia deny the attack. Russia accused Britain of staging the attack.

Saturday's airstrikes came shortly after a fact-finding mission from the Organization of the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons arrived in Syria to investigate the attack. The mission is still expected to make it to Douma, where government security agencies and Russian military police have deployed after the town fell under government control, raising complaints from the Syrian opposition that evidence of chemical weapons' use might no longer be found.

The OPCW is holding an emergency meeting Monday in the Hague to discuss the suspected chemical attack in Douma.

The strikes have ratcheted up international tension, as the U.S. and Russia exchanged threats of retaliation. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley has indicated new economic sanctions will be announced Monday against Russia for enabling Assad's government to continue using chemical weapons.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said the military strikes violated the U.N. Charter and that if they continue, "it will inevitably entail chaos in international relations," according to a Kremlin statement on Sunday.

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HEADLINE

04/15 Protestors rally to shutdown Starbucks

SOURCE

<http://abcnews.go.com/US/protesters-rally-philadelphia-starbucks-black-men-handcuffed-arrested/story?>

GIST

Protestors rallied Sunday at the downtown Philadelphia Starbucks where two black men were led out in handcuffs by police and accused of trespassing to decry the actions of the coffee company and the cops.

Armed with bullhorns and signs, a small group of protestors gathered outside the Starbucks on Spruce Street and demanded action in the wake of Thursday's arrests. They directed their rage at Starbucks, the police department and the workers who called the cops in the first place.

"We want the manager fired form this establishment for racially profiling black people," a man boomed from the bullhorn. "We want the police officers in the arrest fired as well."

The protester with the bullhorn said the activists were "not going anywhere" and vowed, "We're going to show you want a shutdown means."

The arrests of the men -- who have not been identified, but have retained an attorney -- was captured on video and tweeted by Melissa DePino, a 50-year-old mother of two who told ABC News she's vowed to not shop at Starbucks again.

It's since been viewed more than 9 million times as of Sunday afternoon.

"It was humiliating for those guys," Depino told ABC News. "They were completely minding their own business."

Both men were later freed and the charges they were facing -- trespassing and disturbance -- were dropped Thursday night.

This happened while paperwork was being drawn up. District Attorney Larry Krasner also refused to prosecute once Starbucks asked to not press charges, according to a video testimonial released by Philadelphia Police Commissioner Richard Ross Jr. on Saturday.

Attempting to deflect blame away from his department, the commissioner assured the public that he has reviewed the facts and defended the cops, saying they "did absolutely nothing wrong."

"I can tell you candidly these officers did a service they were called to do," he said.

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HEADLINE

04/15 Spring blizzard pounds Midwest

SOURCE

<http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/04/15/spring-blizzard-pounds-midwest-flights-canceled-deaths-reported.html>

GIST

Amid a spring blizzard in the Midwest that prompted hundreds of flights to be canceled Saturday, one runway has reopened at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, officials said Sunday.

A total of 469 flights had been canceled at the Minnesota airport alone, airport spokesman Patrick Hogan said. All of Saturday's incoming and outgoing flights were canceled because of heavy snowfall and low visibility.

The snow was coming down too fast for plows to keep the runways clear or for crews to keep the planes deiced, airport officials said.

Hogan said crews were working to get other runways open.

St. Paul also declared a snow emergency, as blizzard warnings continued into Sunday, the Minneapolis Star Tribune reported.

"This system will rank up there as one of the most significant winter storms in some time," read a Weather Service report early Saturday. It declared the storm "historic," shortly after, the Star Tribune reported.

“This is certainly one of the more powerful [storms] in recent memory,” Jacob Beitlich, a Weather Service meteorologist, said, according to the paper. “Any time you close a Twin Cities airport, it’s gotta be usually a pretty bad snowstorm.”

Blizzard conditions have closed the airport for two days in Sioux Falls, South Dakota’s largest city.

The snowfall, part of a storm system stretching from the Gulf Coast to the Great Lakes, brought snow, tornadoes, rain and hail.

At least three weather-related deaths occurred in Wisconsin, Nebraska and Louisiana.

By Saturday night, Minneapolis was buried under more than 13 inches of snow.

It marked the first time a blizzard has descended on the metro area of the Twin Cities since 2005, the Star Tribune said, citing the National Weather Service.

Hundreds of crashes and spinouts were reported across the state, according to the Star Tribune. One fatality occurred Saturday when a vehicle struck a pedestrian in Medina, but it was unclear whether it was weather-related.

The weather is expected to persist through Sunday in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan before moving into New York state and New England.

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HEADLINE

04/15 US, Jordan joint military exercise

SOURCE

http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/simulated-chemical-incident-part-jordan-us-military-drill-54479293?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed

GIST

The United States and Jordan have launched a 12-day military exercise with scenarios ranging from border security to counter-terrorism and for the first time a simulated chemical incident.

The Eager Lion drill started Sunday, a day after the U.S., France and Britain launched missiles at Syrian military targets in response to an alleged chemical weapons attack near Damascus a week ago.

Maj. Gen. Jon Mott, the director of Exercises and Training at the U.S. Central Command, told reporters that a mobile laboratory team will respond to a simulated chemical incident.

He said that it's a "threat all too real, as we've seen recently in Syria."

More than 7,000 troops, including 3,500 U.S. service members, are participating in the annual drill, the U.S. military's largest and most complex in the region.

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HEADLINE

04/15 Jefferson Co. to offer CERT training

SOURCE

<https://www.peninsuladailynews.com/news/jefferson-county-to-offer-community-emergency-response-team-training/>

GIST

PORT TOWNSEND — Jefferson County is about to start a Community Emergency Response Team training program.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training has been provided in neighboring Clallam County but not in Jefferson County, until now.

The Jefferson County Department of Emergency Management, all county fire districts and the Neighborhood Preparedness (NPREP) action group through Local 20/20 are collaborating on the program, said Lynn Sterbenz, director of Jefferson County Department of Emergency Management.

The CERT program educates volunteers about disaster preparedness for possible hazards and trains them in such basic disaster response skills as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization and disaster medical operations.

A program manager course will be offered May 21-22, while a three-day train-the-trainer course is planned May 23-25. Both are offered free, with training materials provided, but prerequisites and pre-registration are required.

Interested participants must complete and return a registration form by May 16. Registration will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Class size is limited to 30 students with minimum being 15.

Qualified volunteers are sought for both courses, Sterbenz said.

The first step for the Jefferson County program is to build a cadre of volunteer CERT instructors, Sterbenz said.

The county now has seven qualified CERT instructors, as opposed to more than 25 in Clallam County.

“We know there are highly qualified retired people in Jefferson County, some of whom are likely CERT trained already who might be interested in joining our instructor pool,” Sterbenz said.

Program managers will assist in the ongoing logistical aspects of coordinating the CERT program. The course will prepare participants to work with the Department of Emergency Management, fire districts and NPREP.

The prerequisites for both courses are the same: Participants must have completed the CERT basic training course (any location is acceptable) or completed the online course IS-317: Introduction to CERT, which can be found at <https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-317>.

It also is necessary to have a referral from a CERT-sponsoring agency, such as the Department of Emergency Management, city or county government, fire districts, schools, hospitals, or a community-based organization such as NPREP.

The registration form is available on the State of Washington, Emergency Management Division’s Training and Exercise calendar. Visit <https://mil.wa.gov/training-and-exercise> and click on the In-State Training Calendar.

CERT offers a consistent, nationwide approach to volunteer training and organization that professional responders can rely on during disaster situations, which allows them to focus on more complex tasks,

Sterbenz said.

“Through CERT, the capabilities to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters is built and enhanced,” she said in a news release.

The CERT program was designed as a grassroots initiative and is structured so that the local and state program managers have the flexibility to form their programs in the way that best suits their communities, Sterbenz said.

There are more than 2,700 local CERT programs nationwide, with more than 600,000 individuals trained since CERT became a national program.

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HEADLINE

04/15 Britain: no new attacks planned for now

SOURCE

<https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2018-04-15/no-new-attacks-planned-against-syria-for-now-says-britain>

GIST

LONDON (Reuters) - There are no plans as yet to repeat missile strikes on Syria, but Britain will consider further action if President Bashar al-Assad again uses chemical weapons against his people, foreign minister Boris Johnson said on Sunday.

In a show of support for Prime Minister Theresa May's decision to join the United States and France in attacking chemical weapons facilities in Syria on Saturday, her one-time political rival Johnson said it was the right thing to do.

But the prime minister may not find such backing when she faces parliament on Monday, where some lawmakers are angry that May took military action without their approval - a process that has increasingly become a tradition in Britain.

Speaking to the BBC, Johnson said what he described as the successful strikes on three sites in Syria were a message from the world that enough was enough, but acknowledged he could not say whether Assad still had chemical weapons.

"There is no proposal on the table at the moment for further attacks because so far, thank heavens, the Assad regime have not been so foolish as to launch another chemical weapons attack," he told the Andrew Marr show.

"If and when such a thing were to happen then clearly, with allies, we would study what the options were."

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HEADLINE

04/14 Best age to claim Social Security?

SOURCE

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/personalfinance/retirement/2018/04/14/9-different-ages-for-claiming-social-security-and-what-they-mean-to-you/33696453/>

GIST

Social Security serves as a key source of income for millions of retired seniors, and as an eligible worker, you get an eight-year window to start taking benefits. Here are the various ages at which you might claim Social Security, and their impact on your benefits.

Age 62

Age 62 is the earliest point at which you can file for Social Security, and it's also the most popular age for seniors to claim benefits. The advantage of filing at 62 is that you get your money sooner. The downside, however, is that you'll face the greatest reduction in benefits by going this route.

If you're entitled to a full monthly benefit of \$1,500 at age 67, for example, then filing at 62 will knock each payment you collect down to \$1,050. That said, if you're unemployed come 62 or need the money for another reason, you're better off taking benefits than resorting to credit card debt.

Age 63

Filing for Social Security at 63 still means taking benefits early and having them significantly reduced. Still, if you're desperate for cash, it often pays to take that hit, which won't be quite as bad as it would if you were to file at 62. Using our example above, a \$1,500 benefit at age 67 would be whittled down to \$1,125 at 63 -- not ideal, but better than collecting just \$1,050.

Age 64

Claiming Social Security at age 64 will also result in a sizable reduction in your full monthly benefit. But it won't be as drastic as filing at an earlier age. In the case of a \$1,500 benefit at 67, you'd only lose about 20% by filing at 64, thereby resulting in a \$1,200 monthly payment.

Age 65

Once you turn 65, you're eligible for coverage under Medicare. As such, some people get confused and assume that 65 is the age at which they're able to collect their Social Security benefits in full. Not so. Still, if you retire at 65 once Medicare kicks in and decide to file for benefits simultaneously, you won't face such an extreme reduction. Following the above example, a \$1,500 monthly benefit at 67 would only be reduced to \$1,300 at 65.

Age 66

Age 66 is a significant one from a Social Security standpoint because it's when workers born between 1943 and 1954 reach full retirement age and are thereby eligible to collect their monthly benefits without a reduction. Your full retirement age is a function of your year of birth, as follows:

YEAR OF BIRTH

FULL RETIREMENT AGE

1943-1954

66

1955

66 and 2 months

1956

66 and 4 months

1957

66 and 6 months

1958

66 and 8 months

1959

66 and 10 months

1960

67

Data source: Social Security Administration.

Therefore, if you were born after 1954 but before 1960, your full retirement age is 66 and a certain number of months. If you were born in 1960 or later and have a full retirement age of 67, filing for Social Security at 66 will reduce your benefits by about 6.67%. That means a full monthly benefit of \$1,500 would go down to just \$1,400 if you were to take them a year earlier.

Age 67

If you were born in 1960 or later, this is perhaps the age you've been waiting for, since it's when you get to take your monthly benefits in full. In our example, age 67 is when you'd get that \$1,500 we keep talking about. That said, you don't have to file for Social Security at full retirement age. You can hold off and grow your benefits for a higher monthly payout.

Age 68

Though 68 is hardly a common age for taking Social Security, it's a strategic one nonetheless. That's because for each year you delay your benefits past full retirement age up until age 70, you get an 8% boost in payments, which, in our ongoing example, would take a full monthly benefit of \$1,500 at 67 up to \$1,620 at 68. That increase then remains in effect for the rest of your life. Of course, not everyone wants or can afford to hold off on benefits all the way until 70, but waiting until 68 is a decent compromise -- you get a modest boost without having to wait too long.

Age 69

Age 69 is a good time to take your benefits if you don't need them sooner. Doing so will boost our aforementioned \$1,500 benefit to \$1,740, thus guaranteeing a higher payout for as long as you collect Social Security.

Age 70

The credits you accrue for delaying benefits past full retirement age stop accumulating once you reach 70. Therefore, it's considered the latest age to file for Social Security. Granted, you don't have to sign up for benefits at that time, but there's really no financial incentive not to. If you're dealing with a full retirement age of 67, filing at 70 means boosting your benefits by 24%, which would turn a \$1,500 monthly payment into \$1,860 -- for life.

Which of the above ages is the right one for you to take benefits? It depends on a host of circumstances, from your savings level to your employment status to the state of your health. The key is to understand the pros and cons of filing at various ages so you land on the one that works best for you.

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HEADLINE

04/14 Recall: 200M eggs

SOURCE

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/nation-now/2018/04/14/200-million-eggs-recalled-over-salmonella-fears/518245002/>

GIST

GREENSBORO, N.C. — More than 200 million eggs are being recalled over fears of salmonella.

Rose Acre Farms of Seymour, Ind., is voluntarily recalling the eggs due to possible contamination with the bacteria.

According to the Food and Drug Administration, 22 illnesses have been reported so far.

The eggs were distributed from the farm in Hyde County, N.C., and reached consumers in Colorado, Florida, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia through retail stores and restaurants.

They were sold under the brand names Country Daybreak; Crystal Farms; Coburn Farms; Sunshine Farms; Glenview; Great Value; as well as at Walmart and Food Lion stores.

The egg recall is the largest in the United States since 2010, according to Food Safety News.

The recall involves eggs with the plant number P-105, with the Julian date range of 011 through 012 printed on either side of the carton or package.

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HEADLINE

04/14 France: Syria used chemicals in attack

SOURCE

https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/04/14/France-issues-report-with-evidence-Assad-

GIST

April 14 (UPI) -- In the aftermath of the early morning attacks on Syria, France declassified a report with details they say prove that a chemical attack in Syria last week was carried out by the regime of President Bashar Assad.

The seven-page report, released by the Foreign Ministry on Saturday, said chemicals used in attacks on the Damascus suburb of Douma April 7 left victims with skin and cornea burns, suffocation and other breathing difficulties and extreme salivation and secretions from the mouth and nose, all markers consistent with the effects of chlorine gas.

The report also states other strikes using chemical weapons have been carried out by the Syrian government since April 4, 2017, when a chemical attack in Syria's northern Idlib province left more than 80 civilians dead.

French President Emmanuel Macron had been under pressure to back his claim that France has "proof" of Assad's role in the chemical attack in Douma.

France joined the United States and Great Britain early Saturday in firing 105 missiles at three sites in a "proportional" attack, destroying "fundamental components" of Syria's chemical weapons infrastructure including a research center in greater Damascus, a chemical weapons storage facility and another storage facility and command center, both in Homs.

France's conclusions were supported U.S. officials who determined that chlorine and sarin, a highly toxic nerve agent, were used on the civilians in the April 7 attack.

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HEADLINE

04/15 Australia bushfire threatens Sydney

SOURCE

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-43773656>

GIST

Hundreds of Australian firefighters are tackling a large bushfire that has reportedly affected homes in the southern suburbs of Sydney.

The New South Wales Rural Fire Service (RFS) said it was concerned that flying embers could spark new blazes ahead of the advancing fire front.

Some residents have been instructed to seek shelter as evacuation is now too dangerous.

Recent weather in south-eastern Australia has been unseasonably hot.

Shane Fitzsimmons from the RFS said the fire was behaving "very aggressively".

Strong winds have been pushing the flames north and east towards suburban areas.

The fire has burned nearly 2,500 hectares of land, the RFS said.

More than 70 fire appliances were stationed along roads dividing bushland from homes while helicopters were dumping water on the fire from above, SBS reported.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull praised the emergency response.

"It is unseasonably hot and that's a matter of obviously great concern, but we have to deal with the worst that Mother Nature can throw at us and the worse Australians are presented with by nature, the better it brings out the Australian spirit," he said.

New South Wales police have declared the area a crime scene but the RFS says it is too early to know if the fire was started deliberately, SBS reported.

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HEADLINE

04/15 Gun rights rallies at state capitols

SOURCE

<http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2018/04/15/gun-rights-supporters-hold-rallies-at-state-capitols-across-us.html>

GIST

Gun rights advocates rallied at state capitols across the country on Saturday to make their voices heard amid recent efforts to impose stricter gun-control laws that they fear undermine their Second Amendment rights.

Peaceful protesters numbering in the hundreds gathered outside statehouses from Maine to Wyoming to hear speakers warn that any restrictions on gun ownership or use could eventually lead to bans for law-abiding gun owners.

"Gun owners have been portrayed in a negative way and it is our hope that this peaceable rally will show that we are safe, law-abiding individuals that happen to take our constitutional rights very seriously," Dave Gulya, an organizer for the Maine event that attracted about 800 people, told the Bangor Daily News.

The National Constitutional Coalition of Patriotic Americans sponsored the 45 planned rallies across the U.S. in support of the right to bear arms, according to the paper.

"If you have a building and you take a brick out every so often, after a while you're not going to have a building," said Westley Williams, who joined about 100 people outside the state Supreme Court building in Cheyenne, Wyo.

An estimated 160 Second Amendment supporters rallied in Atlanta, with some carrying firearms, flags and signs saying "Don't Tread on Me" as they listened to speakers talk about gun rights.

Protesters in Vermont took to the steps of the Statehouse in Montpelier, where days earlier they felt Gov. Phil Scott "betrayed" them when he signed three major gun control measures.

"Three days ago, on these steps, we were betrayed," Joe Nagle told the Burlington Free Press. "We were promised no new gun laws."

The paper reported that the National Rifle Association criticized Scott, a Republican, and called on gun owners to abandon the governor, who changed his stance in February after an alleged school shooting plot shook the state.

Saturday's protests came less than three weeks after hundreds of thousands marched in Washington, New York and elsewhere to demand tougher gun laws after the Feb. 14 school shooting in Parkland, Fla., that killed 17. Organizers of those protests demanded a ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, and called for universal background checks on potential gun owners.

Pro-gun protesters also showed up in Boston; Indianapolis; Albany, N.Y.; Austin, Texas; Des Moines, Iowa; and other cities.

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HEADLINE

04/14 Experts: strikes won't stop Syria Assad

SOURCE

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/trump-s-u-s-led-airstrike-syria-won-t-stop-n866046>

GIST

The Pentagon boasted Saturday that its coordinated show of military force obliterated key chemical weapons facilities in Syria and set back the country's chemical weapons capabilities "for years."

But military and Middle East experts say the predawn onslaught — touted by the Defense Department as "precise, overwhelming and effective" — appears to have been little more than an empty gesture and likely did not do much to alter Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's military calculus.

Gen. Douglas Lute, the former U.S. ambassador to NATO, said that Assad's threshold for pain is very high because "he's in a fight for his life" to maintain control of his country, which has been mired in a seven-year civil war.

The airstrikes, which targeted three facilities involved in research or storage of chemical weapons in western Syria, won't disable him from taking further action — whether chemical or conventional, Lute said.

"I think he's feeling reasonably good right now," Lute said of Assad. "Some of his facilities were struck, but it doesn't really challenge his hold on the country."

But experts said it's unclear how long of an impact the strike would have on Assad's weapon capabilities and whether it would dissuade him, as intended, from using chemical weapons in the future. Syria has repeatedly denied using chemical weapons against its people.

They also said the so-called red line that the Trump administration is drawing, meant as a marker for reprisals, could be problematic.

"People will see [the reasoning for the strike] and say, 'Does that mean that Bashar al-Assad has the green light to use conventional munitions against defenseless civilians?'" said former Ambassador Lincoln Bloomfield, who served in the past three Republican administrations, most recently as the assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs under President George W. Bush.

Assad, meanwhile, appeared unruffled Saturday as he strolled into the presidential palace in Damascus, briefcase in hand and mere miles from where some of the missiles struck chemical weapons depots hours earlier, according to a video released on Twitter by the Syrian regime.

While the attack may have destroyed the facilities where Syria combines its chemical agents, the strike likely will only cripple the country's ability to deploy certain agents, such as sarin gas, experts told NBC News.

Sarin was not the only agent used in the alleged chemical attack last week on the rebel stronghold of Douma, east of Damascus, senior Trump administration officials said Saturday.

Defense Secretary James Mattis told reporters Friday that chlorine gas was also used. Experts say that it's a common industrial chemical that is not difficult to produce and can be added to a barrel bomb or improvised artillery rocket.

It's unlikely Syria's ability to produce or find the chemical were inhibited by the airstrikes in any way, said Justin Bronk, a research fellow at the Royal United Services Institute in London.

The widespread use of chlorine for commercial purposes means that it is not included in the Chemical Weapons Convention that came into effect in 1997, a point readily cited by the Russian and Syrian governments. But the use of it as a gas in war or as an attachment to an explosive does constitute a war crime, experts said, and it's a simple weapon that has roots that go as far back as World War I.

That's why some experts don't think the strategic strike on chemical weapons facilities in Syria will have a long-term effect on the Assad regime, including its military operations.

"I don't think [their chemical weapons] capability will have been affected significantly at all," Bronk said.

"And the delivery mechanism that is the Syrian Air Force — we have not seen much in terms of bases being hit as opposed to chemical facilities. The aircraft were mostly evacuated so they would have remained untouched."

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HEADLINE

04/14 US warns 'locked, loaded' on Syria

SOURCE

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/syria-strikes-haley-warns-u-s-locked-and-loaded-if-syrian-regime-uses-poisonous-gas-again/>

GIST

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations said President Donald Trump told her Saturday morning that if the Syrian regime uses poisonous gas again, "the United States is locked and loaded" to strike again. Nikki Haley relayed the message from Mr. Trump at an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council on Saturday.

"When our president draws a red line, our president enforces the red line," she said.

Haley said the message from the U.S., U.K. and French airstrikes overnight that "crippled Syria's chemical weapons program" was "crystal clear."

"The United States of America will not allow the Assad regime to continue using chemical weapons," she said.

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HEADLINE

04/14 Closer look at targets hit in Syria

SOURCE

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/syrian-airstrikes-hit-chemical-weapons-facilities-2018-04-14/>

GIST

The U.S., together with the U.K. and France, targeted three sites in Syria overnight in response to the Syrian regime's alleged use of chemical weapons on civilians last weekend. The Pentagon said a total

of 105 weapons were launched in the operation.

"This is going to set the Syrian chemical weapons program back for years," Lt. Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, a director of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Saturday morning.

Chief Pentagon spokeswoman Dana White described the target choices as "very methodical" and called it a "deliberate decision" to go after chemical weapons facilities.

"The strikes went at the very heart of the enterprise to the research, to develop, to storage. So we are very confident that we have significantly crippled Assad's ability to produce these weapons," White said.

Barzeh research and development center, Damascus

The Pentagon said 76 missiles were aimed at the research center located northeast of central Damascus. McKenzie said 57 of the missiles were Tomahawk missiles, adding that the strikes "successfully destroyed" three buildings in the city.

The research center was used for development, production and testing of chemical and biological warfare technology, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen. Joseph Dunford said at a news conference Friday.

Britain's Ministry of Defense said the facility was a former missile base where the Syrian regime keeps "chemical weapon precursors stockpiled in breach of Syria's obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention." It said the facility is located "some distance from any known concentrations of civilian habitation, reducing yet further any such risk."

Images from The Associated showed the damage to the facility that was essentially reduced to rubble.

CBS News correspondent Seth Doane visited the site Saturday where the complex once stood. He spoke with a scientist only identified as Sayed who said his office -- and life's work -- were inside the building.

Sayed said he'd worked there for 38 years and cried when he saw the complex in ruins. He said it's "totally incorrect" that chemical weapons were being developed there. "The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) visited here and didn't report anything wrong with this place," he said.

Him Shinshar chemical weapons storage site, west of Homs

The facility is located 15 miles west of Homs and was the primary location of Syrian serin and precursor production equipment, Dunford said.

Twenty-two weapons were aimed at the site, including naval cruise missiles and scout teams, McKenzie said Saturday.

Second chemical weapons storage site, west of Homs

Seven missiles targeted the bunker, which was successfully hit, Gen. McKenzie said Saturday. He said the missiles were delivered from British, French and U.S. from the Mediterranean, and each strike hit around 4 a.m. in Syria.

"This strike aimed to deliver a clear and unambiguous message to the Syrian regime that their use of chemical weapons against innocent civilians is inexcusable and to deter any future use of chemical weapons," McKenzie said Saturday.

He said initial indications showed the strikes accomplished the Pentagon's "military objections without material interference from Syria."

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HEADLINE

04/14 Warship ruse, new stealth missiles

SOURCE

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-14/warship-ruse-and-new-stealth-missiles-how-they-attacked-syria>

GIST

President Donald Trump's outrage over another apparent chemical weapons attack by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was clear. And for the second time in his presidency, the U.S. commander-in-chief demanded retaliation.

As images of sick or dying children flooded global media all week, the U.S. guided-missile destroyer USS Winston Churchill churned toward the Mediterranean to join a flotilla of allied warships, including another U.S. destroyer, the USS Donald Cook.

It was a ruse.

While both vessels carry as many as 90 Tomahawk missiles -- the main weapon used in the Friday evening strike on Syria -- neither ship in the end fired a shot. Instead, according to a person familiar with White House war planning, they were part of a plan to distract Russia and its Syrian ally from an assault Assad's government could do little to defend itself against.

It worked. Pentagon officials on Saturday said they faced little resistance to their targeted attack on what they said were three Syrian chemical weapons facilities. Most of the Syrian countermeasures, including defensive ballistic missiles, were fired after U.S. and allied weapons hit their targets, Lieutenant General Kenneth McKenzie told reporters on Saturday.

"No Syrian weapon had any effect on anything we did," McKenzie said. He described the joint U.S., French and U.K. strike as "precise, overwhelming and effective."

Brazen as it was perceived to be, the Assad regime's decision to again use chemical weapons on own people didn't by itself spur the U.S. to act. The Trump administration was also motivated by how closely the attack followed the use of a nerve agent to poison a Russian ex-spy and his daughter in England in March, an action the U.K. government and its allies blamed on Russia.

The English incident added to concerns held by Trump, his top aides, and leaders in the U.K. and France that not responding might encourage proliferation of chemical weapons, according to two administration officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the deliberations.

As the strategy of how to respond took shape, Trump appeared to telegraph his intentions to the world with a tweet on April 11: "Russia vows to shoot down any and all missiles fired at Syria. Get ready Russia, because they will be coming, nice and new and 'smart!'"

Analysts suggested Assad's regime would respond to Trump's threats by protectively moving weapons and personnel away from likely targets. An already difficult battle plan -- which required hitting Assad without provoking Russian reprisals or injecting the U.S. further into Syria's seven-year civil war -- was getting harder.

In the White House, Trump met with military officials and made several calls to his French and British counterparts, President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Theresa May, with the goal of following through on a threat to impose a "big price" on Syria -- a vow made in an earlier tweet, on April 8.

During a meeting with the National Security Council and top military leaders early in the week, Trump had been presented five large target options -- called sets -- for potential strikes, according to the person familiar with the plans. The president largely listened as Pentagon chief Jim Mattis, Joint Chiefs Chairman Marine Corps General Joe Dunford and other military leaders did most of the talking. New National Security Adviser John Bolton -- who started work on April 9 -- and Vice President Mike Pence were also on hand.

The president asked Bolton and the military leaders to justify each potential target, and was particularly focused on limiting the risk of escalation by Russia. There was unanimity among Trump's top national security staff about conducting strikes but debate about how hard to hit the Syrians, the person said.

Trump, who just a week earlier said he wanted to pull U.S. troops out of Syria "very soon," didn't want to become drawn into the civil war there and instead focused the military response on deterring the use of chemical weapons, according to the official.

With the allies on board and the USS Winston Churchill arriving in the Mediterranean region, the attack was nearly under way.

As the president addressed the nation at 9 p.m. Washington time, on Friday, a barrage of 105 U.S., U.K. and French missiles converged on Syria. They came from the Red Sea, the Arabian Gulf and the Mediterranean, homing in from three directions to overwhelm whatever missile defenses Assad's regime might deploy. Russia's more advanced air defense system didn't engage the allied weapons.

According to the Pentagon, the allied weaponry included 19 new "Extended-Range" stealthy Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Attack Munitions launched by two B-1B bombers based out of Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, and six Tomahawk cruise missiles launched from the Virginia-class USS John Warner submarine. The bomber-launched missiles, built by Lockheed Martin Corp., had never been used in combat.

The cruiser USS Monterey fired 30 Tomahawks and the destroyer USS Laboon fired seven Tomahawks from the Red Sea. The destroyer USS Higgins fired 23 Tomahawks from the North Arabian Gulf, according to McKenzie.

The weapons also included French SCALP-EG cruise missiles and British Storm Shadow standoff missiles launched by Tornado and Typhoon jets. Nine SCALP missiles were fired at what the Pentagon said was a chemical weapons storage complex at Hims-Shinshar, along with two SCALPS, nine Tomahawks and eight Storm Shadows.

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HEADLINE

04/15 Caravan migrants on freight train to US

SOURCE

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/14/americas/central-america-migrant-caravan-train/index.html>

GIST

Tultitlán, Mexico (CNN)A stampede of Central American migrants rushed to the tracks Saturday when the first whistle of the train rang out.

After a few days in Mexico City, it was time to continue their journey north to the US border. About 500 migrants traveling in a caravan climbed onto the freight train just outside the Mexican city of Tultitlán.

They were about 1,500 miles south of the US-Mexico border as they started heading northwest to the city of Celaya.

As the train slowed down, migrants scrambled around the train cars to find a way to climb aboard, throwing small bags of belongings onto the train and hastily helping one another.

Police and guards watched from a few feet away. Some took photos. None took action to stop the migrants as they climbed the train.

As migrants set makeshift tents with blankets to protect them from the dusty wind and scorching sun, people from the ground and a bridge above waved. Some tossed water and snacks. As the train pulled forward, one migrant yelled out, "Gracias Mexico!" ("Thank you Mexico!")

More than 1,100 people set on the journey across Mexico on March 25, but they have dispersed into smaller groups as they headed north, organizers said.

The government of Mexico has granted many of the migrants temporary permission to stay in the country. Most of the migrants agree Mexico has been a welcoming place. Police have escorted the caravan at times and stopped traffic to help the convoys stay together. Churches and shelters have opened their doors, providing food and a safe place to sleep. Some of the migrants have decided to stay in Mexico.

The migrants, most from Honduras, say they are fleeing violence and poverty. Honduras and El Salvador are among the countries with the highest homicide rates in the world.

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HEADLINE

04/14 US confident Syria used chlorine, sarin

SOURCE

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/14/politics/us-chlorine-sarin-syria/index.html>

GIST

(CNN)Senior US officials expressed confidence Saturday that both chlorine and sarin gas were used in Syria's alleged chemical weapons attack on the Damascus enclave of Douma last week -- a conclusion that went a step further than Vice President Mike Pence did in his remarks earlier Saturday.

"While the available information is much greater on the chlorine use, we do have significant information that also points to sarin use," a senior administration official said on a call with reporters, citing reports from media, nongovernmental organizations and other open sources.

"They do point to miosis -- constricted pupils -- convulsions and disruptions to central nervous systems. Those symptoms don't come from chlorine. They come from nerve agents. ... It's a much more efficient weapon, unfortunately, the way the regime has been using it, and it's resulted in higher deaths, it resulted in terrible pictures."

The comments come a day after the United States launched targeted airstrikes against suspected chemical weapons facilities in Syria in coordination with the British and French.

Earlier Saturday, Pence held off from expressing a final judgment about whether sarin gas was deployed in the chemical weapons attack.

"Chlorine and possibly nerve agents were used," Pence said during his address at the Summit of the Americas in Peru.

Another administration official laid out evidence on Saturday for the United States' conclusion that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government was behind the chemical weapons attack; that included eyewitness accounts of Syrian government helicopters circling the site of the attack on April 7 and high-resolution photos that "clearly" documented asphyxiation and foaming at the mouth.

"Assad has established himself as a user of chemical weapons" from past attacks, the official added.

Another official said, "We have incontrovertible evidence from the photos" that chemical weapons were used and it was "clear to the international community."

The administration maintains that it "exhausted every avenue in the international community" for diplomacy and sanctions before launching the missile strike, and that the President and allies felt the appropriate response was military action.

US officials said they hope the strike will serve to deter Syria's government from using chemical weapons in the future.

"If this step does not succeed, we will be prepared to act again," an official said on the call, echoing what other top administration officials emphasized on Saturday. Whether or not that happens is up to Syria and also Russia, the officials said.

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HEADLINE

04/15 US, allies: end Syria chem. program

SOURCE

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/15/middleeast/us-uk-france-russia-un-syria-intl/index.html>

GIST

(CNN)The United States, the United Kingdom and France are pushing for an "irreversible" end to Syria's chemical weapons program, amid furious recriminations from Russia over the effectiveness and legality of a wave of US-led missile strikes on Syrian targets.

UN diplomats shared with CNN a new resolution, led by France and backed by the US and the UK, calling for an independent investigation into the suspected chemical weapons attack inside Syria that precipitated the cruise missile strikes unleashed by the Western allies Friday.

France's ambassador to the United Nations, Francois Delattre, said Syria's chemical weapons program must be dismantled in a "verifiable and irreversible way."

The renewed push for a UN-backed diplomatic solution follows a volatile emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, called by Moscow Saturday, with Russia's UN ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, condemning the joint US-British-French strikes as a violation of international law.

Nebenzia said Friday's missile strikes, targeted at facilities associated with the Syrian regime's chemical weapons program, had been a "blow to the political settlement" in the divided Middle Eastern nation.

The Russian-led response to the strikes, though limited to words, comes amid days of building pressure and talk among UN diplomats of a potential new Cold War.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has urged all Security Council members to show restraint, as US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley told the meeting that Washington remains "locked and loaded" to respond to any future Syrian chemical attacks.

Outside of the UN, protests against the strikes were held around the world Saturday, including in major cities in the US, Mexico, Greece and the UK.

While some of the protestors came out in support of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's regime, many others were opposed to the use of military action by Western powers against Syria.

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HEADLINE

04/14 Russia: Western-designed nerve agent

SOURCE

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russia-trace-western-made-nerve-agent-uk-samples-54468326>

GIST

Russia's foreign minister says Moscow has received a document from a Swiss lab that analyzed the samples in the nerve agent poisoning of an ex-Russian spy, which points at a Western-designed nerve agent as a likely cause.

Minister Sergey Lavrov said Saturday that Moscow received the confidential information from the

laboratory in Spiez, Switzerland, that analyzed samples from the site of the March 4 poisoning of Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the English city of Salisbury.

He said the analysis was done at the request of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The OPCW's report confirmed British findings that the Skripals were poisoned with a military-grade nerve agent, but didn't say who was responsible.

Britain has accused Russia of poisoning them with a Soviet-designed agent, an accusation that Moscow denies.

Lavrov said the document indicated that the samples from Salisbury contained BZ nerve agent and its precursor. He said BZ was part of chemical arsenals of the U.S., Britain and other NATO countries, while the Soviet Union and Russia never developed the agent.

Lavrov added that the Swiss lab also pointed at the presence of the nerve agent A234 in the samples, but added that the lab noted that its presence in the samples appeared strange, given the substance's high volatility and the relatively long period between the poisoning and the sample-taking.

He noted that OPCW's report didn't contain any mention of BZ, adding that Russia will ask the chemical weapons watchdog for an explanation.

Britain said that the A234 agent belonged to the family of Soviet-designed nerve agents dubbed Novichok.

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HEADLINE

04/15 Thousands protest in Athens against US

SOURCE

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/thousands-protest-athens-us-led-syria-airstrikes-54478012?>

GIST

Thousands of Greeks turned up at a rally and march in central Athens organized by the Communist Party to protest the U.S.-led airstrikes against Syria.

The protesters gathered Saturday at Athens' central Syntagma Square before marching to the U.S. Embassy, chanting anti-U.S. slogans and carrying banners. Some wrote on the pavement in red paint: "Americans, murderers of people."

Police vehicles barricaded access to the embassy and protesters left peacefully.

Dimitris Koutsoumbas, the Communist Party's leader, blasted Greek politicians for believing "flimsy excuses about a use of chemical weapons" by Syria. He also criticized their "subservience" to the EU and NATO, as well as their support for Israel.

He told the crowd "the imperialists once again spill the blood of the local people. They destroy and splinter states by using fabricated evidence."

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HEADLINE

04/15 Israel: Hamas tunnel network destroyed

SOURCE

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/israel-destroys-hamas-tunnel-network-gaza-54478033?>

GIST

The Israeli military said Sunday it has destroyed a Gaza attack tunnel built by Hamas militants that penetrated Israeli territory.

Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus, a military spokesman, said the new Hamas tunnel was connected to a network dug in the northern Gaza Strip and entered Israel near the Israeli community of Nahal Oz. It's the fifth such Hamas tunnel Israel has destroyed in as many months.

Conricus said the tunnel was adjacent to the site of recent mass protests, which Israel says Hamas is using as a cover for attacks.

Conricus said Hamas began building the tunnel following the 2014 war. Israel has placed a high priority

on halting the tunnel threat since Hamas infiltrated Israel during the war. Although they did not manage to reach civilian areas, the infiltrations caught Israel off guard, with one attack killing five soldiers, and terrified the local population.

In two weeks of protests, 28 Palestinians have been killed and more than 1,500 wounded by Israeli fire. The marches have been organized by Gaza's militant Hamas rulers, but large turnouts on two preceding Fridays were also driven by Gaza's dire living conditions and desperation among the territory's 2 million residents, who have been enduring a crippling border closure by Israel and Egypt since 2007.

Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman said this was the longest and deepest tunnel Israel has discovered thus far.

"It's a tunnel that cost millions of dollars to dig, money that instead of going to ease the hardship of Gaza's residents has sunk in the sand," he said. "Residents of Gaza: Hamas is burning your money on tunnels to nowhere."

Hamas had no immediate comment.

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HEADLINE

04/15 France urges Russia join peace push

SOURCE

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/france-urges-russia-join-peace-push-syria-strike-54478584?>

GIST

France is urging Russia to join a push for a political solution in Syria after joint U.S., French and British attacks on Syrian chemical weapons sites.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said in an interview published Sunday in the Journal du Dimanche newspaper that "we should join our efforts to promote a political process in Syria that would allow a way out of the crisis."

France has continued to talk regularly with Russia even as East-West tensions have grown. French President Emmanuel Macron spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday, hours before the

Western missile strikes.

Western countries blamed Syria's government for a chemical attack on a rebel-held area earlier this month that killed more than 40 people. The Syrian government and its ally Russia denied the allegations.

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HEADLINE

04/14 Security Council rejects Russia outcry

SOURCE

http://abcnews.go.com/International/us-locked-loaded-syria-chemical-weapons-nikki-haley/story?id=54466163&cid=clicksource_4380645_1_hero_headlines_bsq_hed

GIST

The U.S. announced that overnight airstrikes succeeded in dealing a severe blow against the Syrian government's capacity to use chemical weapons.

But U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley also warned Saturday that the U.S. is "locked and loaded" in case Syrian President Bashar al-Assad uses chemical weapons again.

"Last night, we successfully hit the heart of Syria's chemical weapons enterprise, and because of these actions, we are confident that we have crippled Syria's chemical weapons program," Haley said at an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council. "I spoke to the president this morning and he said that if the Syrian regime uses this poisonous gas again, the United States is locked and loaded."

She added, "When our president draws a red line, our president enforces the red line."

The Security Council meanwhile rejected a Russian resolution calling for condemnation of the "aggression" by the U.S. and its allies against Syria. Only two other countries, China and Bolivia, joined Russia in supporting the resolution. Eight countries voted against it, and three abstained. A resolution needs at least nine "yes" votes to pass.

Anatoly Antonov, Russia's ambassador to the United States, tweeted that the strike would have repercussions. "We warned that such actions will not be left without consequences."

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HEADLINE

04/13 Report: Seattle w/most regressive taxes

SOURCE

<http://mynorthwest.com/953315/seattle-regressive-taxes/>

GIST

Washington state's tax system has been called the most unfair to the poor in the nation. Now, Seattle is ranked as having the most regressive taxes in the state.

According to a report from the Economic Opportunity Institute, a Seattle household making \$25,000 per year pays 17 percent of its income in state and local taxes. Meanwhile, a household earning \$250,000 pays just 4.4 percent.

"Even if public expenditures are relatively progressive in nature, city projects are increasingly being built on the backs of those who can least afford to pay for them," the report from the Institute states.

Seattle, the Institute criticizes, likes to imagine itself as a progressive beacon. But of the major cities in Washington, it's Spokane that has the least regressive taxes. A household earning \$25,000 has 10.4 percent of its income taxed

Of course, King County voters tend to approve higher taxes to fund schools and projects more than outside cities.

But Seattle is trapped within the state's already regressive tax system.

"Every major statewide tax in Washington is regressive," according to the report.

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[You can read the entire report here](#)

HEADLINE

04/13 Probe: SPD cops violated force policy

SOURCE

<https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/two-seattle-officers-violated-force-policies-in-eastlake-shooting-internal-probe-finds/>

GIST

Two Seattle police officers violated policies when they fired a barrage of gunshots that injured the driver and passenger of a stolen car fleeing an Eastlake alley in October, the department's internal-investigation unit has found.

The Office of Police Accountability (OPA) recommended that allegations regarding excessive use of force, use of deadly force on a fleeing person and firing weapons at a moving vehicle be sustained, said Andrew Myerberg, OPA's civilian director.

Myerberg said the officers' chain of command agreed with the findings, which were jointly submitted to Interim Police Chief Carmen Best for a final decision and any potential disciplinary action.

Neither officer was named by the OPA, but the department has previously identified them as Officer Kenneth Martin and Officer Tabitha Sexton. They will be given the opportunity to meet with the chief before a decision is reached. Hearings have been set for May.

In Martin's case, the OPA recommended that an additional allegation of failure to de-escalate the situation also be sustained.

No details on the findings were released. The Seattle Times has filed a public-disclosure request for the OPA's written findings and analysis. Kevin Stuckey, president of the Seattle Police Officers' Guild, could not be reached for comment.

On Oct. 8, Martin and Sexton fired dozens of rounds at a fleeing Subaru in an alley west of the 2200 block of Yale Avenue East. Video footage captured by officers' body cameras and dashboard cameras was released by the department's public-affairs office two days after the incident.

Police had responded to a call reporting two people using drugs and possibly handling a gun inside a car.

The video shows officers moving toward a car as an officer asks "is that them right there?" Officers then

yell for one of the individuals to get on the ground, but the person ran toward the car.

The video then shows four officers running toward the car, with one of them — identified as Martin — standing in front of the car and moving out of the way as the driver leaves a parking stall and heads north through the alley.

Martin and Sexton initially opened fire as the car pulled out. The driver briefly stopped the car twice as the officers opened fire again with numerous gunshots. The driver then turned the vehicle right and drove off.

The driver and passenger were not seriously hurt and were arrested later in Everett.

In charging documents filed against both occupants of the car, a Seattle police detective wrote that as officers approached the car on foot, they shouted commands that the suspects ignored.

Martin was standing in front the car, and patrol-car video showed the driver accelerated forward and struck Martin as he was trying to get out of the way, according to the detective.

“To stop the imminent threat, officers fired their firearms,” the detective wrote.

One issue to arise in the incident was whether the officers had justification to fire the second volley of shots, when the car appeared to be driving away.

According to the Police Department’s manual, officers shouldn’t fire at a moving vehicle “unless a person in the vehicle is immediately threatening the officer or another person with deadly force by means other than the vehicle.” The manual states that the moving vehicle itself shall not “presumptively constitute a threat that justifies” deadly force.

Officers also should move out of the path of a vehicle unless the person is immediately threatening the officer or another person.

King County prosecutors conducted a preliminary review of the incident, but tentatively declined to bring criminal charges against Martin and Sexton. Prosecutors, who will make a final determination later, returned the case to the Police Department for further investigation.

Myerberg said the OPA didn't reach a conclusion on whether the two officers committed violations of law, leaving that decision to prosecutors.

Prosecutors charged a man and his mother in connection with the stolen car after their fingerprints were found on the Subaru Impreza, according to court documents. The car had been found abandoned in North King County.

Joshua Brooks, 21, the driver, pleaded guilty April 5 to possession of a stolen vehicle and is awaiting sentencing. His mother, Wendy Lee, 46, who pleaded guilty to taking a motor vehicle without permission, was sentenced in December to 49 days of time served in the King County Jail.

Before they were booked into jail, Brooks and Lee were both treated at Harborview Medical Center for injuries suffered in the shooting. Brooks had two gunshot wounds to his lower back, and Lee's lower back and legs were peppered with tiny pieces of shrapnel, according to court documents.

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HEADLINE

04/13 Everett, KCSO plan new gang units

SOURCE

<http://q13fox.com/2018/04/13/gang-units-what-are-they-and-do-we-need-them/>

GIST

EVERETT, Wash. – From Snohomish to Pierce counties, we've seen an increase in gang violence.

Just months after Everett elected a new mayor, police say a 13-year-old with gang affiliation shot and killed a 14-year-old.

"My focus is on public safety and gang violence. We're seeing a real uptick and it's frightening, the age of the kids we're seeing," said Everett Mayor Cassie Franklin.

To combat that, the Everett Police Department is now working on putting together a new gang unit.

There's talk of the same thing in King County after 13-year-old Elizabeth Juarez and 19-year-old

Eveona Cortez were shot and killed in Burien in late March.

“Talking to the sheriff {Mitzi Johanknecht} today, she would like to get a gang unit, maybe not just in King County maybe not just in Burien, but getting all the agencies involved,” said county sheriff’s Sgt. Ryan Abbott.

Jonathan Wender is a 20-year police veteran and the CEO and president of Polis Soutions, a consulting firm that helps train police departments across the nation in partnership with the Department of Justice. He says now is the time to bring back gang units that were disbanded across the Puget Sound.

“We have an uptick in gang activity now and we want to reallocate those resources to address that issue,” said Wender.

He says gang unit members play a vital role in stopping gun violence. But he says it means either adding more funding to hire more officers or shifting some current officers and deputies to the newly formed gang unit.

“It means they’re good investigators, they have unimpeachable honesty, they’ve got credibility, they can be firm, and they can be fair,” said Wender.

Wender says gang units are more than just about learning gang signs, or knowing who wears which color, or if this is graffiti or tagging.

“It’s really not a secret who those folks are. The challenge is that you can build up a relationship with them, that you can deal with crimes when they occur but most importantly prevent the crimes from occurring in the first place,” said Wender.

The emotions from a vigil in Burien for the two slain teenagers show the damage gangs can do in a community, but Wender says a gang unit isn’t the only solution.

“It’s not an either-or proposition. Do we need more case workers? Do we need more drug and alcohol treatment, better mental health care? Absolutely,” said Wender.

In about a month, Everett police say they’ll have the groundwork laid for the new gang unit. It’ll be just in time for the normal uptick in gun and gang violence we normally see across the area during the

warmer, summer months.

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HEADLINE

04/13 Seattle: standard min. wage for disabled

SOURCE

<https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-becomes-first-in-country-to-require-standard-minimum-wage-for-disabled/731855072>

GIST

SEATTLE - Seattle Mayor Durkan today signed legislation banning the allowance of sub-minimum wages for people with disabilities.

For KIRO 7 News at 5, Essex Porter was at Seattle City Hall today, where the bill was signed to promote integration and equal treatment for people with disabilities.

The bill, authored by Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda, made Seattle the first city in the U.S. to require standard minimum wage for disabled people.

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HEADLINE

04/13 DOJ demands Seattle documents

SOURCE

<https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/doj-demands-seattle-give-documents-related-to-compliance-with-immigration-authorities/731916316>

GIST

The U.S. Department of Justice on Thursday, April 12, sent letters to the city of Seattle and the state of Vermont demanding they produce documents that show whether each jurisdiction is “unlawfully restricting information sharing by its law enforcement officers with federal immigration authorities.”

An excerpt from the DOJ announcement is below:

"The Department of Justice previously contacted these jurisdictions and raised concerns about laws, policies, or practices that may violate 8 U.S.C. § 1373, a federal statute that promotes information sharing related to immigration enforcement and with which compliance is a condition of FY2016 and FY2017 Byrne JAG awards.

"The letters also state that failure to respond, respond completely, or respond in a timely manner will be subject to a Department of Justice subpoena."

What's happening Friday?

The federal government is demanding documentation proving that local law enforcement has been compliant with a law that requires cooperation with federal agencies, including ICE. It's telling Seattle to hand over documents to that end or they will be subpoenaed anyway. If Seattle is found to be uncompliant, it could face federal funding cuts.

What federal funding?

Byrne Grants. The letter says: "These materials are critical to our ongoing review. Should the Department determine your jurisdiction is out of compliance with section 1373, the Department may, as detailed in your award documents, seek return of your FY 2016 grant funds, require additional conditions for receipt of any FY 2017 Byrne JAG funding for which you have applied, and/or deem you ineligible for FY 2017 Byrne JAG funds."

What's a Byrne Grant?

The Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grants Program (Byrne JAG) is the cornerstone federal crime-fighting program, enabling communities to target resources to their most pressing local needs.

How has it helped the state of Washington?

Law enforcement agencies in Western Washington get nearly \$8 million in federal grant funding for a range of projects designed to enhance community safety and improve crime fighting technologies, announced U.S. Attorney Annette L. Hayes.

King County called this kind of action bullying last July.

NEW FEDERAL REQUIREMENT: Certify compliance with Section 1373, a federal statute applicable to state and local governments that generally bars restrictions on communications between state and local agencies and officials at the Department of Homeland Security

CURRENT KING COUNTY POLICY: King County has always been in compliance with U.S. Code Section 1373. As it relates to immigration enforcement, King County does not ask people for their immigration status and does not collect immigration information

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HEADLINE

04/14 Putin sits back as US strikes Syria

SOURCE

<https://www.stripes.com/news/europe/putin-sits-back-as-us-allies-strike-syria-1.522046>

GIST

MOSCOW — Facing a stark choice between engaging the United States, Britain and France in combat or passively watching them strike his ally, President Vladimir Putin has opted for the peaceful route. That cautious response may dent the Russian leader's tough-man image but it won't undermine his gains in Syria or erode his authority at home.

The Kremlin had warned Washington that Russia would fend off any strike that jeopardized its servicemen in Syria, and the West respected the red line by giving advance notice of Saturday's attack, just as it did a year ago when it struck a Syrian air base. Russia had sat idle back then, but this time, it had threatened to retaliate.

Such a clash could have quickly spun out of control — an extremely dangerous scenario that was widely compared to the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, when the world narrowly escaped a nuclear conflict.

"With our allies, we ensured that the Russians were warned ahead of time," said French Defense Minister Florence Parly. The U.S.-led strike was a response to a purported chemical attack on civilians in the Syrian town of Douma on April 7. Russia said its experts found no trace of chemical agents.

A senior French official noted that President Emmanuel Macron did not tell Putin about the strikes when they spoke on the phone Friday, but "certain de-confliction mechanisms" had already been triggered by that point, and "both knew that a new phase was going to begin quickly."

Putin condemned Saturday's strikes as an "act of aggression" that will worsen the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria and have a "destructive influence on the entire system of international relations." He criticized Washington and its allies for attacking without waiting for inspectors from the international chemical weapons watchdog group to visit Douma, just outside Damascus.

The Russian military said its air defenses at two bases in Syria tracked the incoming missiles but didn't engage them.

Russian social media buzzed Saturday with angry nationalist comments blasting Putin for failing to protect his ally. But state TV focused on criticizing the West for acting on the basis of what Moscow called a faked chemical attack.

The Kremlin's tight control over the media will help Putin avoid any significant damage to his carefully nurtured image of a strong leader.

In fact, his cautious stance could boost his popularity further amid fears of war that swept Russia. In recent days, state media have been offering tips on how to behave in a nuclear conflict and what supplies to take to bomb shelters.

Most Russians will now heave a sigh of relief and feel grateful to Putin for pulling back from the brink. State TV channels compared what they described as U.S. President Donald Trump's reckless action with the responsible, statesmanlike stance taken by Putin.

Fyodor Lukyanov, head of the Council for Foreign and Defense Policies, an association of top Russian foreign policy and security experts, said on state TV that Moscow's warning to strike back "clearly hasn't come unnoticed by the Pentagon, and the strike was quite careful."

The Kremlin will also use the crisis to advance its narrative of an aggressive West that plunges the world into chaos and disregards international law. Russian officials and lawmakers compared it to the 2003 invasion of Iraq that was launched on claims that Baghdad was developing suspected nuclear weapons — allegations that proved to be false.

Commentators on state TV argued that Trump and British Prime Minister Theresa May launched the attack to distract attention from their political problems at home.

For now, Putin has limited his response to calling an urgent meeting of the U.N. Security Council.

No military measures were immediately announced, but in a clear warning to the U.S. and its allies, Col. Gen. Sergei Rudskoi of the Russian military's General Staff said Moscow could boost Syria's Soviet-era air defense assets with batteries of state-of-the-art S-300 missiles. He noted that Moscow so far has heeded Western requests not to provide the missiles to Damascus, but said it may now reconsider.

Rudskoi added that Moscow could also supply long-range missiles to unidentified other countries, a possible reference to Iran that has taken deliveries of S-300s in the past.

The statement clearly was aimed at discouraging the West from more attacks on Syria that could endanger Assad's gains on the battlefield, where Russian support has helped him secure control of most strategic areas.

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HEADLINE

04/14 UN chief urges restraint in Syria

SOURCE

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-un-guterres/u-n-chief-urges-restraint-avoid-escalation-in-syria-idUSKBN1HL10X>

GIST

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged all states on Saturday "to show restraint in these dangerous circumstances and to avoid any acts that could escalate matters and worsen the suffering of the Syrian people."

He said international investigators were in Syria and ready to visit the site of a suspected deadly chemical weapons attack in Douma, which prompted military action by the United States, France and Britain.

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HEADLINE

04/14 Britain hits Syria w/cruise missiles

SOURCE

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-britain/britain-attacks-syria-with-cruise-missiles-to-deter-more-chemical-attacks-idUSKBN1HL037>

GIST

LONDON (Reuters) - Britain struck Syria with air-launched cruise missiles on Saturday to cripple President Bashar al-Assad's chemical weapons facilities and prevent what Prime Minister Theresa May cast as a global slide towards their greater use.

Four Royal Air Force Tornado jets from the Akrotiri base in Cyprus fired Storm Shadow missiles at a military facility near Homs where it was assessed that Syria had stockpiled chemicals, Britain's Ministry of Defense said.

May said the strike was "limited and targeted" and came after intelligence indicated that Syrian military officials had co-ordinated a chlorine attack in the Damascus suburb of Douma on April 7.

Missile attacks by the United States, France and Britain had been aimed at deterring Assad's further use of chemical weapons and were not an attempt to topple the Syrian government, May said. The mission had been a success, she said.

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HEADLINE

04/14 France: Syria chem. capacity weakened

SOURCE

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-homs/france-says-syrias-capacity-to-produce-chemical-weapons-considerably-weakened-idUSKBN1HL12K?il=0>

GIST

PARIS (Reuters) - The capacity of the Syrian regime to produce and store chemical weapons has been "considerably weakened" after the air strikes conducted by the French, U.S and British military on Saturday, Defense Minister Florence Parly said.

Parly said some of the strikes had targeted two sites used by Bashar al-Assad's regime to store and assemble chemical weapons near the Syrian city of Homs.

"The mission is a success. The goals had been carefully chosen and I observe that there are no incidents to report between our forces and other forces active in the region," Parly told a news

conference.

French army chief Francois Lecointre added Syria's ground-to-air defense system had been effective but that its efficiency proved "very limited." Russian assets deployed in Syria were "neither active nor proactive" he said.

He added that there was no reason to think there could have been any collateral victim.

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HEADLINE

04/14 Iran: West attack on Syria 'a crime'

SOURCE

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-iran-guards/irans-supreme-leader-says-western-attack-on-syria-a-crime-idUSKBN1HL0DO>

GIST

ANKARA (Reuters) - Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said coordinated air strikes on Syria by the United States, France and Britain on Saturday were a crime that would bring no benefit.

"Today's dawn attack on Syria is a crime. I clearly declare that the president of the United States, the president of France and the British prime minister are criminals," Khamenei said in a speech, according to his Twitter account.

"They will not benefit (from the attack) as they went to Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan in the past years and committed such crimes and did not gain any benefits," Khamenei added.

Iran — the dominant Shi'ite Muslim power which is in rivalry with Saudi Arabia and the United States' other Sunni Arab allies — has been Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's most supportive ally against insurgents throughout the conflict.

Militias backed by Tehran helped Assad's army stem rebel advances and, following Russia's entry into the war in 2015, turn the tide decisively in the Syrian government's favor.

Iran's pragmatist President Hassan Rouhani warned that the U.S.-led missile attacks would lead to

further destruction in the Middle East, the semi-official Tasnim news agency reported.

“Such attacks will have no result but more destruction ... the Americans want to justify their presence in the region by such attacks,” Rouhani was quoted as saying, signaling that Iran’s support for Assad would grow.

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HEADLINE

04/13 Syria vows to press war against rebels

SOURCE

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-army/syrian-army-vows-to-press-war-rebels-say-strikes-not-enough-idUSKBN1HL0BG>

GIST

BEIRUT (Reuters) - The Syrian opposition said Western strikes on Saturday would not change the course of the seven-year-old war as the army said it would crush remaining rebel parts of the country.

The missiles by the United States, Britain, and France targeted President Bashar al-Assad’s chemical weapons capabilities in response to a deadly poison gas attack near Damascus a week ago, Washington said.

But rebels and opposition politicians said the Western powers should also hit Assad’s conventional weapons which have killed many more people during the war.

Some insurgent officials said they feared an onslaught against the rebel bastion of Idlib, which a senior Iranian official has indicated could be the next target.

“Maybe the regime will not use chemical weapons again, but it will not hesitate to use weapons,” opposition leader Nasr al-Hariri said.

A rebel fighter said he was bracing for further attacks as “revenge” by the government with its allies on rebel territory in the northwest, including the Idlib region.

“More was expected from the American strike to affect the path of the war and to curb Assad’s crimes,”

he told Reuters from Hama province.

Damascus and its allies have said reports about poison gas in Douma were fabricated as a pretext for Western strikes.

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HEADLINE

04/13 UN puts Myanmar military on blacklist

SOURCE

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/04/13/myanmar-military-put-on-un-blacklist-for-sexual-violence.html>

GIST

UNITED NATIONS – A U.N. report puts Myanmar's armed forces on a U.N. blacklist of government and rebel groups "credibly suspected" of carrying out rapes and other acts of sexual violence in conflict for the first time.

An advance copy of Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' report, obtained Friday by The Associated Press, says international medical staff in Bangladesh have documented that many of the nearly 700,000 Rohingya Muslims who fled from Myanmar "bear the physical and psychological scars of brutal sexual assault."

The U.N. chief said the assaults were allegedly perpetrated by the Myanmar Armed Forces "at times acting in concert with local militias, in the course of military 'clearance' operations in October 2016 and August 2017."

Guterres said this was part of a strategy "to humiliate, terrorize and collectively punish the Rohingya community."

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HEADLINE

04/13 Arizona to require 'travel ID' for TSA

SOURCE

<http://www.foxnews.com/travel/2018/04/13/arizona-residents-will-soon-need-travel-id-to-board-planes.html>

GIST

The Arizona Department of Transportation has announced that state residents will require a new form of identification to pass through Transportation Security Administration screeners in the near future.

As of Oct. 1, 2020, Grand Canyon state residents traveling out of Phoenix Sky Harbor International, Phoenix Mesa-Gateway, Flagstaff, Tucson International and Yuma International airports will need to carry "Voluntary Travel IDs" or be grounded, AZ Family is reporting.

The new ID will also be requisite to access restricted federal buildings and military bases, as standard credentials will no longer suffice.

Minors under age 18 will not be required to have the new ID if they are traveling with an adult who does.

According to AZ Central, driver's licenses are not compliant with the REAL ID Act passed by Congress in 2005, which amped up identification requirements for air travelers in the wake of 9/11. To compensate, the Arizona Legislature passed a law that said a license or card holder must voluntarily take steps to secure a Voluntary Travel ID.

"Now is a great time to get a Voluntary Travel ID because the federal deadline gets closer every day," Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) Director Eric Jorgensen told AZ Family.

"MVD is making this process simple. Customers can go to ServiceArizona.com and make an office appointment. The website provides information about what documents customers should bring with them to meet the REAL ID requirements for the Voluntary Travel ID."

The Voluntary Travel ID's cost \$25 and are valid for eight years, according to the Arizona Department of Transportation. The new ID sets itself apart from the standard state driver's license with a gold star in the top right corner.

While the new measures may seem intense, Arizona is not alone in increasing travel security.

In correlation with the 2005 REAL ID Act, as of Jan. 22, 2018, residents of Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Washington were supposed to be

required to have their passports to fly anywhere, although the federal government has granted extensions.

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HEADLINE

04/12 US: blood samples show nerve agent

SOURCE

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/mideast/u-s-has-blood-samples-show-nerve-agent-syria-gas-n865431>

GIST

WASHINGTON — The U.S. now has blood and urine samples from last Saturday's deadly attack in Syria that have tested positive for chemical weapons, according to two U.S. officials familiar with the intelligence.

The samples suggested the presence of both chlorine gas and an unnamed nerve agent, two officials said. Typically, such samples are obtained through hospitals and collected by U.S. or foreign intelligence assets on the ground. The officials said they were "confident" in the intelligence, though not 100 percent sure.

The Assad regime is known to have stocks of the nerve agent sarin, and has previously used a mixture of chlorine and sarin in attacks, say U.S. officials.

Officials also said that the U.S. has compiled intelligence from the U.S. and other countries, including images, that indicate the Syrian government was behind the weekend attack.

Activists and aid groups say that dozens died in Saturday's airborne assault on Douma, the last rebel stronghold in eastern Ghouta, which has been subjected to intensive bombing by Syria's Russian-backed Assad regime.

Russia and Syria have denied any involvement in the alleged chemical attack.

U.S. officials say the Assad regime has conducted multiple chlorine attacks on rebels during the past six months.

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HEADLINE

04/13 Death involves 911 system w/issues

SOURCE

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/kyle-plushs-death-is-latest-incident-involving-911-system-riddled-with-issues/>

GIST

A teenager trapped in a minivan made desperate pleas to 9-1-1 for help, but responders didn't get there in time. It happened in Cincinnati -- focusing new attention on the city's troubled emergency response system.

Kyle Plush, 16, had to use voice commands to call 911. He was trapped in the back of his minivan, while his phone was in the front.

"I'm stuck in my van outside the Seven Hills [unintelligible] parking lot," Plush said.

"The Seven Hills what parking lot?" the dispatcher asked.

"Send help, I am going to die here," Plush said.

Police said Plush was reaching for his tennis gear in the back when the third row of the 2004 Honda Odyssey collapsed, pinning him upside down and crushing his chest.

Twelve minutes after he called, police were at the scene but couldn't locate him. While they were there, Plush called 911 again and gave specifics on his car -- and his last wishes.

"I probably do not have much time left, so tell my mom that I love her if I die," Plush said. "I'm stuck in my gold Honda Odyssey. This is not a joke, this is not a joke, I am stuck in my gold Honda Odyssey van."

The 911 operator, who has been put on leave, didn't relay the make or model to police, and police officers gave up after 11 minutes. She claims she couldn't hear Plush and her computer froze.

Critics say it is the latest incident in a 911 system riddled with issues. Cincinnati's mayor John Cranley said Friday the problems of management, supervision and technology have plagued the 911 center for years.

"Time's up for waiting for our 9-1-1 system to fix itself," said Councilman Chris Seelbach. "We have to take urgent action immediately to have a system in place that ensures that you can call three numbers and within minutes police and fire officers will be on the scene."

Six hours after the first 911 call, Plush's father discovered his son in car. Internal police records show that the 911 operator who was put on leave, received an "unacceptable" rating for her performance.

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HEADLINE

04/13 CDC: likely source E. coli outbreak

SOURCE

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cdc-romaine-lettuce-likely-source-of-e-coli-outbreak/>

GIST

Health officials say chopped romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona growing region is the likely source of the current E. coli outbreak that has now sickened people in 11 states, and they're warning consumers across the country to avoid eating lettuce that may have been contaminated.

According to the latest update from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, so far there have been 35 cases of illness, 22 of which led to hospitalizations. Three people have developed a severe complication -- a type of kidney failure called hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) which can be life-threatening. The outbreak involves a particularly dangerous strain of the bacteria known as Shiga toxin-producing E. coli O157:H7.

"Information collected to date indicates that chopped romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona growing region could be contaminated with E. coli O157:H7 and could make people sick," the CDC said in a statement.

No common grower, supplier, or distributor has been identified yet. State and local public health investigators continue interviewing ill people to determine what they ate and how they might have been exposed.

So far, cases of illness from this outbreak have been reported in Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Washington.

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HEADLINE

04/14 Pentagon: successfully hit every target

SOURCE

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/strikes-on-syria-pentagon-briefing-today-2018-04-14-live-stream-updates/>

GIST

WASHINGTON -- Pentagon spokesperson Dana White said Saturday the U.S. and its allies "successfully hit every target" in airstrikes in Syria overnight. The U.S., U.K. and France and U.K. launched the strikes Friday night Eastern Time in response to the Syrian regime's alleged use of chemical weapons last weekend. In total, the U.S. used 105 weapons against three targets.

"I can assure you we took every measure and precaution to strike only what we targeted and — and we successfully hit every target," White told reporters Saturday.

White said the U.S. believes it has "significantly crippled" Syrian President Bashar Assad's ability to carry out a chemical weapons attack. White said the mission in Syria remains defeating the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), but the U.S. will not stand by while Assad attacks "innocent Syrian people."

Later Saturday morning, the U.N. Security Council was meeting at Moscow's request.

Lt. Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, the director of the Joint Staff at the Pentagon, told reporters Saturday the initial assessment is that the Defense Department accomplished its goals "without material interference" from Syrian defenses. The attempts from Syrian defenses were imprecise, in contrast to the U.S. mission, he said.

"We are confident that all of our missiles reached their targets," McKenzie emphasized, reiterating what White said.

McKenzie said, "As of right now, we are not aware of any civilian casualties," although they cannot be certain, given the defense launched by the Syrians.

Secretary of Defense James Mattis emphasized that the targets were infrastructure related to the Syrian regime's chemical weapons program, and that there are no plans at this time for further strikes.

But the president, in his address to the nation from the White House, declared that the U.S. is prepared to continue military intervention until Assad stops the use of chemical weapons.

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HEADLINE

04/14 Syria police units enter Douma

SOURCE

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-syrian-police-units-enter-town-douma-54464281?>

GIST

The Latest on developments in Syria (all times local):

10:50 p.m.

Syrian state-run TV says Syrian police units are entering the town of Douma, site of a suspected chemical weapons attack and the last rebel town in the eastern Ghouta region.

Syrian TV showed police waving Syrian flags apparently on the edge of the town just east of Damascus, and said the "terrorist presence" in Douma will end "in a few hours."

The entry of government forces to Douma follows a Russian-mediated deal that secured the surrender and evacuation of the rebels and thousands of civilians from the town.

Douma and the sprawling eastern Ghouta region near the capital, Damascus, had been under rebel control since 2012 and was a thorn in the side of President Bashar Assad's government for years. The government's capture of Douma, the last town held by the rebels in eastern Ghouta, marks a major victory for Assad.

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HEADLINE

04/14 Syrians in Damascus show defiance

SOURCE

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syrians-gather-capital-defiance-airstrikes-54464277?>

GIST

Hundreds of Syrians gathered at landmark squares in the Syrian capital Saturday, honking their car horns, flashing victory signs and waving Syrian flags in scenes of defiance that followed unprecedented joint airstrikes by the United States, France and Britain.

A few hours earlier, before sunrise, loud explosions jolted Damascus and the sky turned orange as Syrian air defense units fired surface-to-air missiles in response to three waves of military strikes meant to punish President Bashar Assad for his alleged use of chemical weapons.

Associated Press reporters saw smoke rising from east Damascus and what appeared to be a flame lighting up the sky. From a distance, U.S. missiles hitting suburbs of the capital sounded like thunder. Shortly after the one-hour attack ended, vehicles with loudspeakers roamed the streets of Damascus blaring nationalist songs.

"Good souls will not be humiliated," Syria's presidency tweeted after the airstrikes began.

Immediately after the attack, hundreds of residents gathered in Damascus' landmark Omayyad square, celebrating what they said was the army's success in shooting down or derailing some of the missiles. Many waved Syrian, Russian and Iranian flags. Some clapped their hands and danced, others drove in convoys, honking their horns in defiance.

"We are not scared of America's missiles. We humiliated their missiles," said Mahmoud Ibrahim, half his body hanging outside his car window, waving a Syrian flag. The crowd then moved toward the nearby Damascus University where pro-government fighters danced, waving their automatic rifles over their heads.

The seemingly limited strikes with no apparent future strategy for how to deal with the wider civil war was a cause for celebration by Assad supporters but criticized by the Syrian opposition.

Mohammad Alloush, spokesman for the Army of Islam rebel group, called the airstrikes a "farce" in a Twitter posting. Nasr al-Hariri, a senior opposition leader, said Syrians need a strategy that leads to a political solution to "save it from the brutality of the Syrian regime."

A Syrian military statement said in all, 110 missiles were fired by the U.S., Britain and France and that most of them were shot down or derailed. Russia's military said Syrian air defense units downed 71 out of 103 cruise missiles launched by the U.S. and its allies.

Syrian TV called the attacks a "blatant violation of international law and shows contempt for international legitimacy."

U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis said there were no reports of U.S. losses during the initial airstrikes.

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HEADLINE

04/14 Europe leaders back strikes on Syria

SOURCE

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/european-leaders-back-syria-strikes-warn-escalation-54466093?>

GIST

Many European leaders voiced support and understanding Saturday for the U.S.-led air strikes against Syria, but warned against allowing the seven-year conflict to escalate.

"It has always been Bulgaria's position that no cause justifies the killing of innocent people, including children; that the use of chemical weapons is a war crime and the strike on Syrian targets was a response to a war crime." Bulgarian government statement. Bulgaria currently holds the rotating EU presidency.

"Strikes by US, France and UK make it clear that Syrian regime together with Russia & Iran cannot continue this human tragedy, at least not without cost. The EU will stand with our allies on the side of justice." - Tweet by European Council President Donald Tusk.

"What has occurred in Syria in recent days goes far beyond the constant violation of cease fires. The response to these atrocities is legitimate and proportionate." - Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy.

"This was a limited and targeted action to strike the capacity of building or diffusing chemical arms. It cannot and should not be the start of an escalation." - Italian Premier Paolo Gentiloni.

"The strike against the Syrian regime that uses chemical weapons to attack the civilian population was inevitable." - Acting Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis.

"We support the fact that our U.S., UK and French allies took on responsibility in this way as permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. The military strike was necessary and appropriate in order to preserve the effectiveness of the international ban on the use of chemical weapons and to warn the Syrian regime against further violations." - German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

"The international community has the responsibility to identify and hold accountable those responsible of any attack with chemical weapons. This was not the first time that the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons against civilians but it must be the last." - European Union Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker.

"The strike against the Syrian regime that uses chemical weapons to attack the civilian population was inevitable." - Acting Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis.

"Belgium strongly condemns all use of chemical weapons which are a blatant violation of international law. Belgium therefore understands the military action in Syria of our American, French and British partners who have targeted identified production facilities." - Belgian government statement.

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HEADLINE

04/14 Military, chemical weapon sites targeted

SOURCE

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/us-strike-syria-targets-military-chemical-weapons-sites/story?id=54435901>

GIST

President Donald Trump said Friday he had ordered "precision strikes" against Syria's chemical weapons capability in conjunction with the France and the United Kingdom.

Included in the targets was a scientific research center in the greater Damascus area, described by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunford as a center for research, development, production and testing of chemical weapons.

Two other sites were near the city of Homs: the site of Syria's primary sarin production facility and a chemical weapons storage facility that included an important command post.

He said that while the coalition forces had many potential targets from which to choose, the three sites were chosen for their significance to Syria's chemical weapons program and well as their location and layout, in an attempt to minimize risk to innocent civilians.

Perhaps heeding the possibility of U.S. military action, Russian news agency Interfax reported on Wednesday that Russia's Navy will conduct military exercises off the coast of Syria on Wednesday.

According to Syria state TV 110 rockets were launched in the attack by the U.S., U.K. and France around 3:55 a.m. Syrian time.

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HEADLINE

04/14 Russia warns US of 'consequences'

SOURCE

http://abcnews.go.com/International/russia-responds-us-attack-syria-actions-left-consequences/story?id=54464208&cid=clicksource_4380645_1_takeover_2_column_vod_headlines

GIST

Russia, the Syrian regime's top ally, reacted strongly to the air strikes launched by the United States and its allies on Damascus and Homs early Saturday, warning of "consequences."

The U.S., U.K. and France launched a series of strikes on three locations identified as critical to Syria's production of chemical weapons, including a scientific research center in Damascus, and a production facility and storage facility in Homs, according to U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunford.

The Russian embassy in U.S. wasted no time in reacting to the strikes late Friday in the U.S., with Ambassador Anatoly Antonov saying on Twitter, "The worst apprehensions have come true. Our warnings have been left unheard."

"A pre-designed scenario is being implemented," the statement continued. "Again, we are being threatened. We warned that such actions will not be left without consequences."

Russia has long been an ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Syria serves as an important access point to the Mediterranean Sea for Russian ships and a hub for Russia in the Middle East. They have also supplied Assad with the military resources necessary to fight back against the rebels who nearly overthrew him in 2011.

President Donald Trump criticized Russia in his address to the country following the launch of missiles on Friday night.

"In 2013, President [Vladimir] Putin and his government promised the world that they would guarantee the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons," Trump said. "Assad's recent attack, and today's response, are the direct result of Russia's failure to keep that promise."

Putin responded to Saturday's attack by calling the strikes "an act of aggression against a sovereign state that is at the forefront of the fight against terrorism."

"The current escalation of the situation around Syria has a devastating impact on the whole system of international relations," Putin said. "History will put everything in its place, and it has already laid heavy responsibility on Washington for bloody reprisals against Yugoslavia, Iraq and Libya."

Putin also called for an emergency meeting U.N. Security Council.

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HEADLINE

04/14 US, allies strike Syria

SOURCE

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/trump-orders-strike-syria-response-chemical-attack/story?id=54459378>

GIST

President Donald Trump ordered a strike on Syria Friday in response to last weekend's chemical weapons attack.

Addressing the nation Friday evening, Trump said the strike was a joint operation with France and the United Kingdom.

"A short time ago, I ordered the United States Armed Forces to launch precision strikes on targets associated with the chemical weapons capabilities of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad," Trump said.

Trump said that the "massacre" last weekend in Syria "was a significant escalation in a pattern of chemical weapons use by that very terrible regime."

"The evil and the despicable attack left mothers and fathers, infants and children thrashing in pain and gasping for air. These are not the actions of a man," Trump said, referring to Assad. "They are crimes of a monster instead."

In a later briefing, Defense Secretary James Mattis said the strike demonstrates the international resolve to prevent the use of chemical weapons, saying he is "confident the Syrian regime conducted a chemical attack on innocent people in the last week."

"Clearly the Assad regime did not get the message last year," Mattis said, adding that this time the U.S. struck harder.

"We have gone to great lengths to avoid civilian and foreign casualties," he said. "... I believe that we sent a very strong message."

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunford said the strike specifically hit three targets associated with the production and storage of chemical weapons: a scientific research center; a storage center for sarin and its precursor components; and a chemical weapons storage facility and command post.

"Important infrastructure was destroyed," said Dunford.

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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE

04/16 Changing cyber threat landscape

SOURCE

<https://cybersecurity.cioreview.com/news/the-changing-cyber-threat-landscape-nid-26065-cid-145.html>

GIST

Over the course of 2017, the number of global cyber attacks continued growing at a rapid pace which also resulted in the reshaping of the cybersecurity arena. With the adoption of various technology, traditional threats such as generic Trojans, ransomware, and spambots received facelifts with military-grade coding and tactics. Threats including GoldenEye and WannaCry gave numerous organizations tears and forced many to down their shutters.

The effectiveness of these kinds of sophisticated threats can be analyzed by using lateral movement vectors that augment zero-day exploits such as EternalBlue and EternalRomance, allowing malware to 'hop' from one network to another across the globe. These targeted attacks are reshaping corporate and government digital security initiatives, while simultaneously causing fallout in the consumer space.

The past year witnessed the rapid rise of commoditization of cybercrime, with Ransomware-as-a-Service and Malware-as-a-Service becoming easily and widely available on the dark web. Furthermore, the year also witnessed the growth of advanced services, like FUD (fully undetected), which enable attackers to upload malware to an analysis service for a fee. The past year also witnessed a new

generation of IoT-based attacks known as Reaper. Analysis revealed that the attack codes were armed with exploits spanning a variety of IoT vendors, including Linksys, NetGear, GoAhead, and Avtech. The growth of cyber attacks is simply an example of the sorts of the ongoing development of security exploits.

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HEADLINE

04/16 National Guard mission: cyber defense

SOURCE

<https://federalnewsradio.com/cyber-exposure/2018/04/national-guard-preparing-to-defend-cyberspace-for-states/>

GIST

National Guard units are ramping up their defensive cyber capabilities across the

board, and in the not-too-distant future will be able to quickly respond to cyber attacks in their home states and territories, much as they do today for natural disasters.

“The Air National Guard (ANG) has 15 Cyber Operations Squadrons that provide Cyber Protection Teams (CPTs) and National Mission Teams (NMTs) in support of DoD cyber missions,” said Sgt. 1st Class W. Michael Houk, a spokesman for the National Guard Bureau. “In addition, the Army National Guard (ARNG) Cyber Brigade is building a full cyber brigade with five battalions consisting of 11 CPTs, five cybersecurity companies and five cyber warfare companies.”

The guard also is actively working on cyber missions across the country.

“ARNG personnel are currently mobilized as part of Task Force Echo under the control of Army Cyber in support of U.S Cyber Command to engineer, operate and maintain critical network infrastructure,” Houk said. “The ANG continually provides two CPTs and continually fills portions of a NMT in support of U.S. Cyber Command.”

While guard cyber units already contribute to military missions around the globe, the National Guard’s recent efforts are a result of a 2016 Government Accountability Office study that underscored the importance of the guard’s readiness against cyber threats. At the time, many guard units had some limited cyber capabilities, but they were mostly assigned to local duties, such as protecting the online assets of the unit.

Despite early success, the guard acknowledged that quite a few challenges remain in this new area.

One is the long-standing fact that most guard personnel are part-time, something that was less of a concern when performing more traditional missions.

“We have in our ranks people with cyber expertise gained through civilian experience,” said John Goheen, the director of communications for the National Guard Association of the United States. “The military could really use these people full time, but the salaries they command as civilians makes that challenging.”

And it’s not just the guard that is experiencing, or will soon experience, the same situation.

“The active military will likely run into the same problem moving forward,” Goheen said. “They train bright, young people — and then lose them to private industry. We have a place for them in the guard, but again, they will only be part-time. The military needs to find ways to tap this resource.”

Another hurdle is one the National Guard has always experienced — that of running a branch of the national military within the jurisdictions of each individual state.

“The nature of the National Guard enables our personnel to work with state and local authorities on critical infrastructure,” Goheen said. “In fact, a lot of guard cyber exercise involves assisting with defending power plants and water systems.”

In an actual incident, such as an attack on a power plant through its cyber infrastructure, a state government could activate the guard, and called upon it to stop it, officials said. After it halted the main attack, a guard cyber unit could remain behind to protect the infrastructure while the critical infrastructure owner constructed the new cyber defenses.

The scope and capabilities of any given state-level mission would be up to the governor of that state, not unlike traditional guard missions.

“National Guard forces would likely respond to a cyber incident in the same manner as other domestic emergencies such as hurricanes or floods,” Houk said. “A governor may activate National Guard personnel in state-funded, State Active Duty in accordance with state and local laws and DoD policy.”

Additionally, under the United States Code Title 32, a state governor, with approval from the secretary of Defense or the president, may activate guardsmen for homeland defense activities, or to provide support for civil authorities.

National Guard leaders expressed confidence that the guard would soon be responding to cyber incidents on a regular basis, just like they do for floods, snowstorms and missions to maintain the peace in extraordinary circumstances. Now, maintaining the peace extends to cyberspace.

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HEADLINE

04/13 India bitcoin exchange suffers setback

SOURCE

<https://www.hackread.com/someone-stole-3-million-in-bitcoin-from-coinsecure-bitcoin-exchange/>

GIST

In a security notice, the Indian Bitcoin exchange Coinsecure has revealed that it has suffered a setback after 438 BTC which is over \$3 million (\$3,542,957) according to current Bitcoin price were stolen from its offline Bitcoin wallets

The company maintains that it has never been hacked or compromised and the incident took place when its CSO Dr. Amitabh Saxena was extracting BTG (Bitcoin Gold) to distribute to its customers. Saxena, on the other hand, claims that funds were lost in the process during the extraction of the private keys.

The company has launched a complaint with the Cyber Cell in Delhi and is also conducting an investigation with the help of cybersecurity experts. However, a look at the police complaint points to an inside job as the company's director Mohit Kalra stated in the complaint that:

“As the private keys are kept with Dr. Amitabh Saxena, we feel that he is making a false story to divert our attention and he might have a role to play in this entire incident. The incident reported by Dr. Amitabh Saxena does not seem convincing to us. Dr. Amitabh Saxena also has an Indian Passport and he might fly out of the country soon, therefore, his passport should be seized as he cannot fly out of the country”

Ningning Niumai, founder of Greymeter, a social network for college students and young professionals tweeted that Dr. Amitabh Saxena was appointed almost 6 months ago by the company, therefore, handing over private keys of Coinsecure is very suspicious.

“Dr. Amitabh Saxena appointed barely 6 months ago has the private key to Coinsecure's wallet?!! Is he a Scapegoat?!! Very suspicious and convenient blame game after the recent RBI ruling on Bitcoin,” said Niumai.

It is noteworthy that Coinsecure incident has occurred days after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) barred banks and financial institutions from dealing in cryptocurrencies from April 6th, 2018.

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HEADLINE

04/13 FTC: 2016 Uber hack impacted 25M

SOURCE

<https://www.securityweek.com/25-million-us-individuals-impacted-2016-uber-hack>

GIST

The 2016 data breach that Uber made public in November 2017 impacted over 25 million riders and drivers in the United States, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) reveals.

The hack, which the ride-sharing company kept silent about for a year, impacted more than 57 million users globally. Hackers managed to access data stored on an Amazon Web Services (AWS) account and steal names, email addresses and mobile phone numbers of customers around the world.

In February this year, Uber chief information security officer said that two individuals living in Canada and Florida were responsible for the massive data breach.

In an attempt to cover up the hack, Uber paid the attackers \$100,000 through its third-party “bug bounty” program, which was designed to reward those who responsibly disclose vulnerabilities, rather than those who maliciously exploit them.

The company came under scrutiny after the hack was made public in November 2017, and even became the target of a US criminal investigation. The data breach was revealed only three months after Uber agreed to implement new data protection measures in a settlement with the FTC over a 2014 incident.

Now, the Commission says the ride-sharing company has agreed to expand the proposed settlement and that it will be subject to additional requirements. Under the new settlement, Uber could be subject to civil penalties if it doesn't notify the FTC of future breaches in due time.

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HEADLINE

04/13 Hoaxes, scams w/school violence fears

SOURCE

<https://www.scmagazine.com/email-hoaxes-and-phishing-scams-prey-off-of-school-violence-fears/article/758240/>

GIST

A Swiss hacking group has reportedly claimed credit for using a hijacked email domain to bombard schools around the U.S. with fake threats of violence. And in related news, security awareness training provider KnowBe4 issued a warning on Thursday about a credentials phishing campaign that also preys on school shooting fears by impersonating a campus security alert.

According to multiple news outlets, a group called the Apophis Squad sent disturbing hoax emails to school district superintendents in at least 46 states last Sunday and Monday, triggering an increased police presence and in some cases class cancellations. The emails featured the subject line "Student help!" and purported to be authored by a bullied student who threatened to show up at school "with 3 bombs, and a .22 handgun."

The adversaries reportedly used the email address apophissquad@zonix.us, after hijacking the domain of Zonix, a Dallas-based online gaming company that provides Minecraft servers.

"Over the past few hours we were directly contacted by a group that threatened to send a bomb hoax spoofing our email domain in an attempt to directly smear and harm Zonix," states a series of tweets posted on Zonix's official Twitter account on Apr. 9. "We began to realize the threat was credible when we began hearing responses from school superintendents pertaining to this situation. We are aware that some schools might have been affected by this and we apologize for any inconvenience or panic that could have happened because of this situation.

Apophis Squad's account on Twitter, meanwhile, has been suspended. But a journalist with the Union-Democrat in Sonora, Calif. reportedly made contact with one of the hackers, who said the attack's motive was to taunt law enforcement, adding "We got nothing better to do." The hacker also stated future plans to leak information originating from a U.S. Army database.

Reportedly, the same perpetrators previously sent similar threats to UK-based schools in March 2018, using the domain of Zonix competitor VeltPvP.

Meanwhile, an unnamed community college in Florida was recently targeted in phishing campaign

spoofing its campus-wide security alerts, according to a KnowBe4 founder and CEO Stu Sjouwerman, who warns in a company blog post that this scheme could easily spread to additional educational institutions as well as companies and organizations that have established active shooter protocols.

The email arrives with a subject line such as "IT DESK: Security Alert Reported on Campus," "IT DESK: Campus Emergency Scare" or "IT DESK: Security Concern on Campus Earlier," and instructs recipients to click a link to a memo containing proper instructions. However, the link leads to a credentials phishing page that imitates the Microsoft log-in process, which many campuses computers require.

"What makes this particular attack so infuriating," remarks Sjouwerman, is that it exploits current concerns over active shooters on education campuses, a sensitive issue that could likely generate panicked, reflexive clicks from recipients who are already on edge over the recent shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, also in Florida."

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HEADLINE

04/13 Federal agency data under siege

SOURCE

<http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/federal-agency-data-under-siege/a/d-id/1331467>

GIST

The US government continues to grapple with the same cybersecurity challenges faced by most organizations, but it has a different set of hurdles to overcome than its private-sector counterparts. As a result, federal agencies are experiencing more data breaches than other industry sectors. Despite skyrocketing IT security spending, successful attacks are escalating across the board. Federal agencies in particular are weathering a perfect storm around data that puts agency secrets — and the personal data of over 330 million American citizens — at risk.

According to Thales' 2018 Data Threat Report—Federal Government Edition, 57% of federal respondents reported data breaches, a threefold increase over the 18% recorded back in 2016. As many as 12% experienced multiple breaches in 2017 and in previous years.

Many agencies are in a difficult position. Federal agencies must protect sensitive data and both thwart bad guys hunting for citizens' private data and nation-state hackers with their own agendas — in addition to grappling with perennial underfunding, understaffing, and antiquated systems that commercial enterprises tossed into the dumpster years ago. At the same time, they need to make government more accessible and transparent via digital transformation, which inevitably exposes them to more cyber threats.

But these factors don't completely explain the growing numbers of breaches at federal agencies.

Catching Up with the Private Sector

Despite these troubles, agency IT security professionals are trying to stay positive, partly because spending is sharply increasing this year. "Like most other sectors, data security spending plans in the US federal sector are up compared to last year — way up," says Garrett Bekker, 451 Research's principal analyst for information security, as highlighted in the Thales report. "Perhaps more importantly, for the first time, the US federal government ranks the highest of any US vertical in terms of spending increase plans — more than nine out of 10 (93%) plan to increase security spending in 2018."

In fact, a staggering 73% of federal agencies say their IT security spending will be much higher in 2018, according to the report. This comes after several years of IT security spending well below that of commercial enterprises.

"The bad news is that reports by US federal respondents of successful breaches last year (57%) are far ahead of the global average (36%), and also the global federal sector (26%). Further, 70% of US federal respondents say their agencies were breached at some point in the past," says Bekker.

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HEADLINE

04/16 Woolworths hit by IT glitch

SOURCE

<https://www.zdnet.com/article/woolworths-turning-customers-away-following-it-outage/>

GIST

Woolworths is turning customers away from its stores, following reports the Australian supermarket chain is suffering a nationwide IT outage.

Customers took to Twitter Monday afternoon, posting photos of security screens pulled shut at stores around the country, with some reporting being told by store managers that an IT glitch had affected its cash registers.

ZDNet understands the glitch didn't make its way to all stores, however, with some operating as usual.

Woolworths eventually confirmed the outage, apologising for the inconvenience via Twitter.

"We can confirm that an IT issue impacted registers in our supermarkets for a short period of time this afternoon. The registers are now back online in all our stores. We apologise for any inconvenience caused. Thanks," the reply to many reads.

Woolworths in August apologised to customers following reports that some experienced a second batch of payments withdrawn from their bank accounts.

A Woolworths spokesperson told ZDNet at the time it received confirmation from Cuscal, one of its payment processors that services financial institutions, that due to an error at its datacentre, some Woolworths customers received incorrect transactions on accounts processed by Cuscal.

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HEADLINE

04/16 Windows servers targeted to cryptomine

SOURCE

<https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/windows-servers-targeted-for-cryptocurrency-mining-via-iis-flaw/>

GIST

Hackers are leveraging an IIS 6.0 vulnerability to take over Windows servers and install a malware strain that mines the Electroneum cryptocurrency.

Attacks aren't widespread, as they target a quite old IIS version, but they are happening at scale.

Hackers using former IIS 6.0 zero-day

Hackers are using CVE-2017-7269 to take over servers. This is a vulnerability discovered by two Chinese researchers in March 2017 that affects IIS' WebDAV service. At the time it was discovered last year, the flaw was a zero-day, being under heavy exploitation for almost nine months, since June 2016.

Microsoft initially said it was not planning to fix the flaw because IIS 6.0 was end-of-life, and so were the

operating systems that shipped with IIS 6.0 by default —Windows XP and Windows Server 2003.

But the vulnerability shared some common traits with the EXPLODINGCAN NSA exploit leaked in April 2017 by the Shadow Brokers, and it eventually received a fix in mid-June 2017.

Since then, it's been used by at least one threat actor to deploy Monero miners on Windows servers still running the old IIS 6.0 version.

Now, F5 Labs says it found another hacker group using the same exploit, but deploying an Electroneum miner instead of Monero.

According to experts, the threat actor uses CVE-2017-7269 to deliver an ASCII shellcode which contains a Return-Oriented Programming (ROP) exploit chain that installs a reverse shell on vulnerable hosts.

Attackers then use the reverse shell to download the miner and start the mining process. The infection process is masked by the use of the Squiblydoo technique and by disguising the miner as the legitimate lsass.exe (Local Security Authority Subsystem Service) process.

F5 experts said the Electroneum address they found in attacks stored only \$99, suggesting they either caught the campaign at its beginning, or crooks are rotating address IDs to avoid researchers from tracking their entire operation.

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HEADLINE

04/16 Russia blocks Telegram messenger

SOURCE

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-telegram-blocking/russia-starts-blocking-telegram-messenger-regulator-idUSKBN1HN13J>

GIST

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia's state telecommunications regulator said on Monday it had begun blocking access to messenger service Telegram after the service's owner refused to comply with an order to give Russian state security access to users' secret messages.

The watchdog, Roskomnadzor, said in a statement on its website that it had sent telecoms operators a notification about blocking access to Telegram inside Russia

The service, set up by a Russian entrepreneur, has more than 200 million global users and is ranked as the world's ninth most popular mobile messaging app.

Interfax news agency quoted an official at the watchdog as saying it would take several hours to complete the operation to block access. In Moscow, the Telegram app was still functioning as normal early on Monday afternoon.

Roskomnadzor was implementing a decision handed down on Friday by a Russian court that Telegram should be blocked because it was in violation of Russian regulations.

Telegram had refused a request by Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) to give them access to users' encrypted messages.

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HEADLINE

04/16 'Digital resurrections' bring back dead?

SOURCE

<https://www.nbcnews.com/mach/science/will-digital-resurrections-let-us-bring-back-dead-ncna865806>

GIST

Humans have always looked for tangible ways to remember departed loved ones. We save letters and emails they wrote us. We look fondly at photos of them. We watch and rewatch old videos just to see their faces and hear them talk.

But the rise of digital technologies may soon give us even more compelling ways to remember lost friends and family. These include apps that let us text with digital representations of the dead — we'd type a message and then get some sort of comforting reply — and maybe even systems that let us speak with and possibly touch realistic avatars of the ones we miss most.

Maybe that sounds creepy, but some experts believe we'll find comfort in continuing our interactions with people whose biological existences have come to an end.

“Many people visit the headstone of a loved one to help come to terms with their passing, and have a one-sided conversation where they think about the memory of them,” says Bruce Duncan, managing director of Terasem Movement Foundation, a Bristol, Vermont-based nonprofit that promotes digital resurrections. “Being able to have a two-way conversation with a digital version of them, where you can be reminded of their mannerisms or behavioral patterns in an interactive way, could become a natural part of the grieving process.”

Several companies, including Luka, a San Francisco-based startup, and research organizations including the MIT Media Lab, are working on digital resurrection technology.

It goes without saying that the digital version of a person is no match for the living, breathing human being. But scientists are experimenting with algorithms that can take a person's emails and text messages and use them to generate text messages that are at least evocative of a specific person. The messages can use emojis like the dead person once did. And with data pulled from the internet, the texts can even include back-and-forths about topical things like weather and current events.

In coming years, Duncan believes, there may be browser plug-ins capable of capturing an entire life's worth of social media posts, emails, photos, and other digital data and using everything to approximate an individual's personality, complete with values and opinions.

Digital resurrection technology is unlikely to stop with chatbots. Duncan and other experts foresee a time when we'll be able to interact with lost loved ones not just via texts but in virtual reality.

“You'd be able to put on your virtual reality glasses and headset, and experience typical everyday situations with that person, like sitting at the breakfast table or taking a walk in a nearby park,” says Charlotte Runius, CEO of Fenix Begravning, a Stockholm, Sweden-based funeral planning agency that is working with AI experts to develop these technologies. “Hearing their voice and seeing them would allow you to actually feel like you're next to the person again, and you can talk to them and get replies in a much more realistic way.”

By wearing a bodysuit and gloves studded with sensors and actuators, it might even be possible to interact physically with a realistic-looking avatar of a deceased person. The technology could monitor a living person's movements, voice, and facial expressions and then later use them to direct an avatar to respond appropriately — perhaps by offering advice or giving a comforting hug.

In the distant future, one can imagine that it would be possible to create a robotic avatar of a beloved one — a bit like the scenario depicted in a popular episode of the Netflix series "Black Mirror," in which a grieving widow's late partner is resurrected in robotic form with help from his texts, photos, and emails.

The only snag with these scenarios is that much of the data used to resurrect someone would have to be collected while he or she was still alive — for instance, by having him or her speak a thousand or so words and be recorded on video.

EMOTIONAL COMFORT — OR PAIN?

What would it be like to interact with someone who's been brought back in digital form? Some experts say it could aid the grieving process. Others worry that interacting with a virtual representation of a person who is no longer alive would only intensify feelings of sadness and loss.

Studies have shown that bereaved people can experience grief hallucinations, and there are concerns that interacting with avatars might raise the risk.

Duncan believes that, at least for most people, the experience will be akin to watching home movies and enjoying the memories that they trigger.

“Enjoying talking to past loved ones via digital media may eventually become the future version of looking through photographs of past events... It’s hard to predict the future, but just as we’ve adjusted to using Skype and cell phones I think we’ll consider it valuable to continue some connection with a person we care about.”

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HEADLINE

04/15 Pushing back Russia disinformation

SOURCE

<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/one-tiny-corner-u-s-government-pushes-back-against-russian-n866021>

GIST

WASHINGTON — When reports began to emerge last month that Russian mercenaries had attacked a U.S. base in Syria, Russia issued a flat denial, and the U.S. was silent.

Then, leaked recordings surfaced on the internet.

"We've had our asses f--- kicked. So one squadron f--- lost 200 people ...the Yankees knew for sure that the Russians were coming."

The tapes seemed to show Russian guns-for-hire acknowledging a crushing defeat in the Feb. 8 incident. It was an embarrassment for the Kremlin, which was forced to admit that Russian citizens had been killed by the U.S. military — something an American general later confirmed to NBC News.

With their election interference and ongoing manipulation of social media platforms like Twitter, the Russians have been regularly outfoxing America in the information realm, U.S. intelligence officials acknowledge. Who turned the tables this time?

Not the White House, the State Department or the CIA. The recordings were published by a U.S.-government-funded web site called Polygraph.info, whose reporter says she got them from a source close to the Kremlin.

Polygraph is a relatively new fact-checking arm of an obscure, diminutive media effort by the U.S. to highlight Russian misdeeds and counter Russian propaganda.

It's an anomaly in the Trump administration — perhaps the only part of the U.S. government whose job is to regularly punch back against what experts say is a stream of Russian disinformation aimed at America and the West.

"At the end of the day, the Russians are engaging in information warfare — they're telling lies," said John Lansing, a former television executive who oversees the effort. "And we're confronting them toe-to-toe with fact-based, truthful, professional journalism."

Russia's proficiency at information war has been on display in the wake of the U.S.-led military strike Friday night in Syria. Russia called the strikes illegal and said the chemical weapons attacks that prompted them were staged. To get that message out, there was a 2000 percent spike in activity in the hours since the strike by fake Russian propaganda accounts on social media, a Pentagon spokeswoman said Saturday. A web site that tracks a slice of those accounts, Hamilton 68, found that they were pumping out the Russian government narrative in English.

THEY'RE "EATING OUR LUNCH"

The U.S. is ill-equipped to respond. Polygraph, part of the tiny corner of the government that's trying, has a staff of five that doesn't usually work on the weekends.

"We focus mostly on Russia right now because there is a large flow of disinformation that's coming from Russia," said Jim Fry, a former Dallas television reporter who runs Polygraph from Washington.

Polygraph is a joint venture of the Voice of America and Radio Liberty, which are funded by — but independent of — the U.S. government. They fall under the umbrella of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, whose mission is to promote freedom and democracy and "tell America's story" around the world. But they are walled off, editorially, from the administration in power.

"The law protects us from interference by U.S. government officials," said Tom Kent, who spent 44 years at The Associated Press before becoming president of Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe. "They can't tell us what to broadcast."

During the Cold War, the VOA and Radio Liberty sought to counter communist propaganda and funnel information to the news-starved citizenry behind the Iron Curtain.

Those muscles — and budgets — have long since atrophied. But in recent years, there have been growing calls for a new twist on that old mission.

When Lansing became CEO of the Broadcasting Board of Governors in 2015, he said he was confronted on Capitol Hill and throughout the government with a single question:

"Why are the Russians eating our lunch in terms of information warfare?"

People were talking mainly about RT, the former Russia Today, which spends hundreds of millions of dollars a year on an English language broadcast and web platform that regularly skewers American and the West. The U.S. government has labeled RT a propaganda operation.

The State Department came under criticism earlier this year when news reports highlighted its failure to spend \$120 million that had been allocated to push back on Russian propaganda abroad.

Lost in that conversation was the fact that one month into the Trump Administration, Lansing and his team launched Current Time America, a 24-hour Russian-language broadcasting and web platform. The budget was \$20 million — around one-tenth the size of RT's budget, Lansing says. But one year later, Current Time America is available on TV screens in 30 countries, and officials counted 400 million view views on social media last year.

Still, U.S. information efforts are minuscule compared to the Russian campaign. While Current Time America is available in Russia, the Russian government makes it difficult to find — keeping it off cable systems and requiring special tuning for satellite reception.

The broadcasting board's total budget this year is about \$660 million dollars, about a third of what was spent in 1991, adjusted for inflation.

"I think we should be investing more," Lansing said.

The Russian government labels the entire U.S.-funded journalism operation "propaganda" that is "part of a broader, wide-reaching American system of pressure on our country."

Irina van Dusen, who heads the effort as chief of Voice of America's Russian-language programming, knows what propaganda looks like. She grew up in the Soviet Union, listening to the VOA on an illegal short wave radio for scraps of accurate reporting.

She got her journalism degree in Moscow, but decided that if she wanted to practice real journalism, she would have to move to the West.

During the Cold War, she says, the VOA was trying to break through jamming and censorship. Now there has been a proliferation of Russian TV and web channels that put out a cacophony of news, nearly all of it favorable to Vladimir Putin. The task in 2018 is trying to break through a fog of disinformation.

The prevailing view in Russia, she said, is that "There is no truth. There is only different versions, different narratives... We stand by the fact that there is truth. And there are facts."

From a TV studio near not far from where special counsel Robert Mueller comes to work each day, Current Time America covers Washington, offering live broadcasts of Congressional hearings with simultaneous translations.

"People can listen, see how it's done, how policies are made, what questions asked, what facts are being brought up," she said.

The channel also covers Russia, to "provide Russian speaking audiences with a true portrait of the society, you know? As opposed to state-run Russian television that — interprets everything that is done

in the world...as some kind of a United States manipulation and United States meddling in world affairs."

Polygraph.info, and its Russian-language counterpart, Factograph — try to be slightly edgier than a traditional news operation.

"What our reporters do every day is they begin the day looking at Russian media," said Fry. "Looking at what's coming out of Russia. And then we decide whether there's something to fact check. Usually, almost every day, there's more to fact check than we could possibly do with our staff."

The site is modeled after other media fact check efforts, including Politifact and factcheck.org. It highlights a claim, say, by Putin or another Russian official, and brands it for veracity, with labels like "Partially True," "False" or "Misleading."

In March, the site fact-checked a Putin documentary that alleged the Russian leader had always believed that the Ukrainian territory of Crimea was part of Russia. It highlighted remarks by Putin in 2008 in which he said something very different: "Crimea is absolutely not a disputed territory." Six years later, Putin seized Crimea from Ukraine, to international condemnation.

Polygraph also challenged Russia's denial that the nerve agent used to poison a former spy in the UK was made only in Russia, and its assertion that no chemical attack took place in Syria.

Polygraph reporters are not afraid to endorse criticism of the U.S. when it's accurate. When Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov criticized a list of Russian oligarchs that the Treasury Department admitted it cribbed from Forbes magazine, Polygraph labeled his comments, "Partially True."

In January, reporters examined a fur coat shown off on Facebook by Russia's foreign ministry spokeswoman. She said it was a fake, bought at a fair in Russia. Polygraph found that the fair didn't sell any coat — and that the coat may have been a fur from an endangered ocelot.

Polygraph's traffic numbers are usually in the low thousands, but that video got 37,000 views, Fry said.

The audio recordings of the Russian mercenaries were a huge coup, even if the site did not seem to get much credit for the scoop. Fry said a Polygraph journalist in Europe, who did not want to be identified, obtained the tapes from a Kremlin source. He acknowledged that he could not rule out U.S. intelligence involvement in distributing the tapes, but that would also be true if the audio had been obtained by a mainstream journalism organization, he said.

The recordings describe an incident in which a number of Russian mercenaries led a group of pro-Assad fighters in an attack on a U.S. base beginning Feb. 7. The mercenaries were from the Wagner Group, it's been widely reported — co-owned by Russian oligarch Yevgeniy Prigozhin, who is close to Vladimir Putin. Prigozhin is also one of the defendants in the indictment brought by Mueller against Russians accused of illegal election activity.

It was the largest ever attack on U.S. troops in Syria, and it was perhaps the first time in many decades that Russian and American troops fought in open combat. Russian mercenaries were among the hundreds who died as the Americans strafed, bombed and shelled the assault force, Army Brig. Gen. Jonathan Braga told NBC's Richard Engel.

The tapes, Fry said, depicted "people who worked for this Russian paramilitary company who were involved in this attack...It showed they knew they were (counterattacked) by Americans. And it showed that there were people who were killed."

Interestingly enough, he added, "within days of our story, the Russian government started admitting there had been involvement of the private military company, the Russian company, in that attack."

Sometimes it's obvious that Russians are more nimble than the Americans at the information game.

On Friday, when the Russian defense ministry accused Britain of faking the chemical attack in Syria, RT was leading its web site with an article highlighting the allegations — making no mention of denunciations from the United Nations and U.S. and British officials.

Polygraph, meanwhile, was leading with a story fact-checking a statement from Russian state media that Hitler had become more popular than Harry Potter in Latvia. It made no mention of the bogus Russian allegation against Britain.

"We didn't get to that today," Fry said, reached by phone. "I wish I could respond as quickly as what they put out."

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HEADLINE

04/14 Europol busts bitcoin laundering ring

SOURCE

<https://interestingengineering.com/europol-busts-bitcoin-drug-money-laundering-ring>

GIST

In what may now seem like an almost prophetic event, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) expressed concerns last February that billions in illegal proceeds were hidden in Europe in crypto-cash. Now, Europol in cooperation with global law enforcement agencies has arrested 11 people involved in a cryptocurrency drug trafficking ring that laundered over €8 million.

The operation, named Tulipan Blanca, saw Spain's Guardia Civil, Finnish law enforcement authorities and the US Department of Homeland Security come together to investigate 137 individuals. "As a result of the operation, the Spanish Guardia Civil carried out eight searches and seized several computers, devices, and the equipment used to commit the crimes, such as money bags or money counting machines," Europol said in a statement.

The statement explained that drug traffickers contacted the criminal ring to launder money obtained from their illicit activities. The ring proceeded to split the money into small cash amounts deposited into 174 bank accounts.

From there, the criminals used credit cards linked to the fraudulent bank accounts to withdraw the illegal proceeds from Columbia. However, realizing that these transactions could be tracked, the criminal group then turned to cryptocurrencies.

To cover their tracks, the ring used an unnamed Finnish cryptocurrency exchange to turn their cash into bitcoins and then subsequently further converted the bitcoins into Colombian pesos.

"With cryptocurrencies increasingly used to finance and carry out criminal activities, Europol will continue to coordinate across EU Member States and beyond, to effectively respond to this rising threat," Europol's statement said.

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HEADLINE

04/14 Targeting tax pros w/fraud returns

SOURCE

<https://www.cnbc.com/2018/04/14/cybercriminals-now-targeting-tax-pros-to-cash-in-on-fraudulent-returns.html>

GIST

The deadline to file your taxes is rapidly approaching, but cyber criminals have already been hard at work trying to cash in with fraudulent tax returns.

This tax season, experts say instead of targeting individual tax payers, scam artists are targeting tax professionals.

"One of the challenges that we're seeing this year is that as tax professionals and the I.R.S. have become more and more sophisticated, so too have the adversaries," said Caleb Barlow, IBM Security's vice president of threat intelligence.

Tax fraud is big business for cyber criminals. Last year Internet crimes netted the perpetrators \$445 billion, with tax fraud as a primary focus, according to IBM Security, which monitors cyber crimes.

"We had about 75 tax professionals report that they had been victims of some sort of a tax payer breach. So that unfortunately is a 60 percent increase for the same period of time last year," said Cecilia Barreda, an I.R.S. spokeswoman.

The I.R.S. can recognize if a computer of an individual is filing too many tax returns, and will stop them for likely being fraudulent. But the agency expects tax professionals to file dozens, if not hundreds of tax returns on behalf of their clients.

"If they [cybercriminals] can compromise a tax professional, they get access to two key things. One is the private information of that tax professional's clients that can be used to file tax returns on their behalf," Barlow said.

"And in addition to that, they can use the IP address and the computer of the tax professional to actually do the filing with the I.R.S.," he added.

Here is how the scam works: Cyber criminals target tax professionals with what is known as phishing — spam email that seems legitimate, but contains links or attachments laden with malware.

"The minute that you click on that link, well, then you're owned by the adversary. And what this often means is that they can take control of that system that's normally used by that tax professional," Barlow said.

Once a tax professional's computer is compromised, an attacker can steal the numbers and log-in information they use to file.

"It's an I.P. address we seen before, it's a signature of a computer we seen before. We know it's a tax professional, so they are going be submitting lots of returns," said Barlow.

This year's tax season may be the perfect storm. With a new tax code coming in this year, there has been extra confusion.

"This is kind of a perfect storm where you have a lot of misinformation, a dearth of information, and these new techniques that are being widely used by these criminals looking for compromised computers belonging to tax prep professionals," said Roman Sannikov, the director of European research and analysis for Flashpoint, a cybersecurity company.

He added that "they can use to not only steal information, but also to file these returns in a much more successful way."

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HEADLINE

04/15 Guarding rail against evolving threats

SOURCE

<http://www.railjournal.com/index.php/technology/cybersecurity-guarding-rail-against-evolving-threats.html>

GIST

As the railway seeks to harness the benefits of digitalisation and the Internet of Things, the links between information technology and operational technology become ever-more intertwined. However, these trends are completely redefining the railway security environment as systems become vulnerable to new types of threats. Keith Barrow assesses how the industry is responding to the cybersecurity challenge.

ON May 13 2017, passengers at mainline stations in Germany glanced up at the information screens and saw something unusual. Obscuring the lists of departures and arrivals, a ransomware notice demands a \$US 300 payment in Bitcoin.

The WannaCry virus had infected 450 German Rail (DB) computers, bringing down passenger information systems, ticket machines, and CCTV networks.

This was a very public demonstration of rail's vulnerability to cyberattack, and while the target in this case was the company's business systems, the attack also highlighted the need to secure operational systems against hackers.

Until recently, Industrial Automated Control Systems (IACS) were considered relatively well-insulated against external influence with a high degree of immunity to security threats and attacks. However, the threat landscape has altered significantly in recent years with the proliferation of digital technologies and the increasing interconnectivity between the business and operational functions of companies.

Research by IBM shows cyberattacks on ICAS increased by more than 600% between 2012 and 2014, while according to Dell's 2015 cybersecurity report, attacks on supervisory control and data acquisition (Scada) systems surged from 91,676 in January 2012 to 675,186 in January 2014.

Mr François Hausman, mainline cybersecurity manager for Alstom and leader of Shift2Rail's cybersecurity work package, told delegates at Railtech's recent Intelligent Rail Summit in Vienna that the characteristics of railway networks make them a potential cyberattack target. These include:

- *distributed architecture - electronic components spread along a section of line or a train
- *long lifecycles for equipment
- *high level of certification for safety-related systems
- *diversity of supply chain and technology, and
- *small-medium volume production of components.

Mr Domenico Raguseo, technical sales manager, Europe, for IBM says systems are vulnerable to hackers when there is a high degree of integration between IT and operational technology (OT).

"The railway industry is very secure from a cybersecurity point-of-view - hackers would have a lot of difficulty getting into your systems," he says. "With high standards and tonnes of security control, a hacker needs to invest a lot of time if he wants to create a problem for you. Unfortunately, the good news stops here. The safety-first philosophy of rail - that the train stops to protect the lives of the passengers - is good for hackers, because they don't want to kill people, they want to get money. So it would be fantastic for a hacker to stop a train."

As senior managers seek ever more data on the day-to-day performance of the railway, business and operational systems are increasingly interconnected, and wherever there are interfaces, there are potential points of attack.

Mr Lovan Pushparatnam, head of tramway systems and telecoms with Systra, says any cybersecurity strategy must consider people as well as technology. "The best results are achieved when cybersecurity is treated as part of an overall security policy addressing technical aspects and operational procedures, with continuous assessment and measurement," he says. "It's not about protection, it's about process and preparation, monitoring both your assets and your organisation."

Testing the vulnerability of railway systems to cyberattack is a particular challenge because of the difficulty of simulating attacks under realistic operating conditions. "When we model attack patterns, we need to understand how it is possible to attack," Raguseo says. "It's not easy to do penetration testing in a real environment, so you need to create a test environment. Developing a test environment is complicated for IT - I'd say it's impossible for a complex environment like rail."

The European Union (EU) Directive on security of network and information systems (NIS Directive) came into force in August 2016, and is intended to boost the overall level of cybersecurity in member states. The NIS Directive is due to be transposed into the legal systems of the member states by next month and specifically identifies train operators and railway infrastructure managers as entities that could be considered "operators of essential services." Businesses in this category will be required to implement risk management practices, taking "appropriate and proportional technical and organisational measures to manage the risks posed to the security of networks and information systems which they use in their operations." Significant cyber attacks must be reported to a "competent national NIS authority."

All of this leaves railway industry stakeholders with the challenge of securing assets which can have a lifespan of several decades against a threat that is constantly evolving. System architecture is therefore a crucial consideration in safeguarding next-generation rail technologies against attack.

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HEADLINE

04/15 Experts warn: Russia cyber warfare

SOURCE

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/world/syria-news-latest-russia-could-launch-cyber-warfare-within-days-after-us-led-military-action-expert-a3814226.html>

GIST

Russia could "launch cyber warfare within weeks" in retaliation to US-led airstrikes on Syria bringing down City firms, the UK transport network and the NHS, experts have warned.

Theresa May hailed "targeted and limited" action on key sites of Syria's chemical weapons regime "a success" while Donald Trump branded the offensive "perfectly executed".

But Russia warned of “consequences” following the strike which has left the Prime Minister facing questions over why the decision was not put to a parliamentary vote.

Now experts have said the action in retaliation to a suspected chemical attack in Douma a week ago could lead to “cyber warfare”.

"I suspect Russia will choose not to respond in military terms. But cyber warfare is highly likely," he says.

"It will be an attack on national infrastructure, not just upsetting city firms, but getting inside the transport system, or the health system, or air traffic control. It could affect everyone."

Mark Almond, director of the Crisis Research Institute, Oxford agreed that the strikes would spark retaliation and said Britain was most vulnerable to a counter-attack.

Despite admitting that the "immediate risk of a wider war" has been avoided for now, he warned that sources of potential conflict are still very much active on the ground in Syria.

He wrote in the Sunday Telegraph: "Bad relations could easily encourage a reckless Russian freebooter, prompted and paid by Iran, to try his luck getting revenge on the pockets of US and British forces operating in eastern Syria.

"Britain is more exposed to potential revenge attacks, despite only four Tornados taking part in the strikes, because they flew from Akrotiri in Cyprus - so close to Syria and to Lebanon."

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HEADLINE

04/15 'Operation Parliament' targets Mideast

SOURCE

<https://www.forbesmiddleeast.com/en/new-cyberattack-operation-parliament-targets-governments-military-and-intelligence-organizations/>

GIST

A new potentially geopolitically-motivated cyberattack dubbed Operation Parliament has been targeting governmental departments and large private entities across the Middle East, according to global cybersecurity company Kaspersky Lab.

Operation Parliament has so far affected an unknown number of organizations in over 27 countries, mostly in the Middle East and North Africa, including Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. Financial impact of the attack has not been disclosed.

In a campaign believed to have been active since 2017, the cybercriminals targeted selected victims through malware disguised as legitimate email attachments. Upon opening the attachments victims unwittingly gave the criminals access to their systems, enabling them to remotely gain control over their devices and mine data, as well as activate tools such as webcams. It is believed that the attackers had previously gained access to large databases of contacts for sensitive organisations and targeted non-trained staff.

The criminal group “hid in plain sight” accordingly to Kaspersky Lab. The malware was first discovered during an operation to uncover a phishing scam targeting political figures. At first it appeared to be the work of another group already known to officials. However, under further inspection the encrypted malware was found to be very different to any previous attacks.

Victims are known to include parliaments, senates, top state offices and officials, political science scholars, military and intelligence agencies, ministries, media outlets, research centres, election commissions, Olympic organizations and large trading companies. Over 130 individual users have been identified as victims so far. Efforts are now underway by law enforcers to find the group behind the attacks and prevent any further damage.

“Operation Parliament is another symptom of the continuously developing tensions in the Middle East and North Africa. We are witnessing higher sophistication and smarter techniques used by attackers and it doesn’t look like they will stop or slow down anytime soon” said Mohamad Amin Hasbini, Senior Security Researcher, Global Research & Analysis Team at Kaspersky Lab.

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HEADLINE

04/14 UK considers retaliatory cyberattacks

SOURCE

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-russia-cyber/uk-could-launch-retaliatory-cyber-attack-on->

russia-if-infrastructure-targeted-sunday-times-idUSKBN1HL1BT

GIST

LONDON (Reuters) - Britain would consider launching a cyber attack against Russia in retaliation if Russia targeted British national infrastructure, the Sunday Times reported, citing unnamed security sources.

Britain's relations with Russia are at a historic low, after it blamed Russia for a nerve agent attack on former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in England, prompting mass expulsions of diplomats.

Russia has denied involvement, and on Saturday also condemned strikes against Syria by Western powers, which Britain took part in.

Cyber security has become a focal point of the strained relations. On Thursday, a British spy chief said that his GCHQ agency would "continue to expose Russia's unacceptable cyber behaviour", adding there would be increasing demand for its cyber expertise.

The Sunday Times also said that British spy officials had been preparing for Russia-backed hackers to release embarrassing information on politicians and other high-profile people since the attack on the Skripals.

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HEADLINE

04/14 US: 2000% rise disinformation campaign

SOURCE

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/04/14/russian-trolls-launch-disinformation-campaign-after-syria-airstrikes-pentagon.html>

GIST

Following U.S.-led coalition strikes in Syria to degrade chemical weapons capabilities, the Pentagon says it's seen a "2,000 percent increase" in Russian "disinformation."

Russia, a close ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, has reportedly started a new campaign to spread propaganda and other false narratives on social media after the U.S., France and the United Kingdom staged airstrikes in Syria this weekend in response to Assad's alleged use of chemical weapons.

Chief Pentagon spokeswoman Dana White said at a briefing on Saturday that “there has been a 2,000 percent increase in Russian trolls in the last 24 hours.”

Saturday’s briefing was an attempt to counter any false information.

An investigation into the 2016 presidential elections by the federal government has found that a number of Kremlin-backed hacking groups spread politically charged content across social media platforms in an attempt to influence the outcome.

At a meeting of the U.N. Security Council Saturday, U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley took aim at Russian ambassador Vasily Nebenzia over the “fake news.”

“The pictures of dead children are not fake news,” she said.

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HEADLINE

04/13 Yahoo, AOL read, share users’ emails

SOURCE

<https://www.cnet.com/news/yahoo-aol-oath-privacy-policy-verizon-emails-messages/>

GIST

Oath, the media division of Verizon that runs both AOL and Yahoo, is finally unifying the privacy policy of its two giant legacy Internet brands. That means an updated set of privacy terms and policies for hundreds of millions of users. And in an online world where privacy expectations have been radically reshaped in light of Facebook’s Cambridge Analytica mess, it’s more important than ever to read the fine print on those splash screens.

When we logged in to a Yahoo Mail account Friday, we were greeted with the privacy policy you see below (Jason Kint had pointed to the policy earlier on Twitter). In it, Oath notes that it has the right to read your emails, instant messages, posts, photos and even look at your message attachments. And it might share that data with parent company Verizon, too.

To be clear, Yahoo’s previous privacy policy had already stated that Yahoo “analyzes and stores all

communications content, including email content," so the company has previously disclosed that it's been able to scan the contents of your emails, at least. (AOL's legacy privacy policy doesn't say anything like that.)

When you dig further into Oath's policy about what it might do with your words, photos, and attachments, the company clarifies that it's utilizing automated systems that help the company with security, research and providing targeted ads -- and that those automated systems should strip out personally identifying information before letting any humans look at your data. But there are no explicit guarantees on that.

Notably, Google used to scan its Gmail messages for better ad targeting, though it stopped the practice in June of 2017.

In other words, emails related to your banking and financial transactions appear to be equally in the crosshairs of Oath's ad targeting engine.

There appears to be another big change for Yahoo users, too: Oath's previous mutual arbitration clause and class-action waiver has been updated and extended across the company's services to include Yahoo as well. What it means is if you don't like what the company does with your data, you'll have a hard time suing.

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HEADLINE

04/14 Google loses 'right to be forgotten' case

SOURCE

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/google-loses-right-to-be-forgotten-legal-case-europe/>

GIST

A U.K. court has ruled in favor an unnamed businessman who wanted Google to remove search results of his past conviction history in a landmark "right to be forgotten" case. The search engine had previously refused to delete results about his conviction, BBC News reports.

Ten years ago, the businessman was convicted of conspiring to intercept communications. He spent six months in jail. He argued that his conviction was no longer relevant to the public.

Google said in a statement Friday it would respect the judge's decision. "We work hard to comply with

the right to be forgotten," it said, "but we take great care not to remove search results that are in the public interest."

However, Justice Mark Warby rejected a separate claim by a businessman who had committed a more serious crime. More than 10 years ago, the second man was convicted of conspiring to account falsely. He spent four years in jail.

Warby said the winning businessman had shown remorse, while the other man continued to "mislead the public."

In 2014, the European Court of Justice set legal precedent for the "right to be forgotten" after a Spanish man asked Google to remove results about his financial history. Google said it has removed 800,000 pages from its results over similar requests, but companies can decline to remove information if they believe they are in the public interest.

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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE

04/15 Using social media inspire potential terror

SOURCE

<https://theconversation.com/since-boston-bombing-terrorists-are-using-new-social-media-to-inspire-potential-attackers-94944>

GIST

Five years ago, a deadly attack during the Boston Marathon made America's nightmare come true: the radicalized boy next door.

The research my colleagues and I conduct at Georgia State University tracks how terrorist organizations expose people – mostly young men – to radical messages and extreme violence on social media. The goal: changing their worldview and eventually guiding them to act.

The Boston Marathon bombing marked the beginning of a new trend that is almost impossible to prevent. Before, individuals would receive guidance and training from terrorist organizations in person.

Now, these same groups simply inspire individuals to carry out attacks on their own, for which the group can claim credit if they are successful. We call that “self-radicalizing.”

Radicalization of the boy next door

It remains puzzling to many how Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, a 19-year-old stoner who listened to Jay-Z and watched “The Walking Dead,” could – with his older brother, Tamerlan – killed and injured so many innocent civilians. Authorities at least knew more about Dzhokhar because he was taken alive. His brother died during a police chase.

Courtroom sketch of Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. Jane Flavell Collins via AP

Dzhokhar did not fit the profile experts have identified as typical of self-radicalized terrorists – either jihadi (a Muslim Holy warrior) or extreme right-wing versions. They were unlike many terrorists who gravitate to extremist ideologies.

According to researchers Alice Marwick and Becca Lewis, people who are radicalized “may have a hard time finding like-minded friends in their day-to-day lives, or connecting with romantic partners.”

Dzhokhar was described by Rolling Stone magazine, for example, as attractive, popular and a student athlete. He was also flunking courses and lost his financial aid at University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth in the semester leading up to the attack. But that hardly explains why he went on to plan the deaths of potentially hundreds of runners and spectators.

Eventually, prosecutors found copies of Inspire magazine on Dzhokhar’s laptop. The magazine is an English-language online publication that was published by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. They also found videos of sermons by Anwar al-Awlaki, the American-born firebrand jihadi cleric who was killed in 2011 in Yemen by two U.S. drones. Awlaki’s videos are still circulating on social media years after his death.

The evidence and Dzhokhar’s testimony suggest that the brothers were inspired by propaganda. Both Awlaki’s sermons and Inspire magazine advocate and provide specific “how-to” instructions on mass casualty attacks. Dzhokhar and his brother learned how to make the pressure-cooker bombs from one of the most well-known articles published by the magazine: “How to Build a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom.”

For example, the text explains: “Can I make an effective bomb that causes damage to the enemy from ingredients available in any kitchen in the world? The answer is yes. But before how, we ask why? It is because Allah says ... every Muslim is required to defend his religion and his nation.”

In the five years since the Boston bombing, the number of social media platforms disseminating terrorist propaganda has increased tenfold. And thus, so has the scale and scope of possible future attacks.

Shift to encrypted platforms

As technology evolves, new online platforms provide avenues for terrorist organizations to share information. Platforms have gone from an open interface model, in which anyone can observe what is occurring, to closed and encrypted platforms in which privacy and security settings are protected. These platforms are not readily accessible nor can they be viewed without already being a member of the chat room or channel. When used by terrorist groups, encrypted platforms are harder to police and monitor.

Telegram is an encrypted application developed by Pavel Durov, the inventor of Russia's Facebook equivalent, VKontakte. Telegram has all but replaced Twitter and Facebook for jihadi communication. Open platforms like Twitter and Facebook have increasingly policed jihadi content, shut down their sites, and taken down their content within minutes of it being posted.

Social media allows terrorist groups to foster a virtual community and a sense of belonging. Research on radicalization suggests that their methods involve taking advantage of individuals' feelings of loneliness and alienation. However, this doesn't explain why well-adjusted, well-integrated individuals who appear to have assimilated into Western society – like the Tsarnaevs – gravitate to violent extremist ideologies.

Research I've done with colleagues on social media demonstrates that terrorist organizations also deliberately foster a type of addiction to the platform and to its content.

They do this by creating a schedule of positive reinforcement that modifies behavior, like gambling or playing slot machines. The result changes every time such that one cannot anticipate the outcome and continues to engage in behavior in hopes of a reward the next time around. Not knowing whether you are on the verge of a big win sustains the individual to continue the behavior (in some cases, gambling), whereas not knowing what type of reward the terrorist platform will offer equally sustains user engagement.

This keeps the individual tethered to his or her computer, making certain rewards more valuable, limiting how much time you have to join a group or access material, making access exclusive, and varying content to prevent boredom.

Through this process, it is possible that ordinarily well-adjusted individuals can be persuaded to channel everyday feelings of frustration, disappointment or anger into acts of extreme violence.

As the Islamic state further recedes and loses even more territory, it is adapting to exist almost entirely digitally. Those who fight terrorism need to understand the difference between individuals who are inspired and those who are directly encouraged to engage in violence. Likewise, terrorism researchers need to understand the role of social media in capturing the imagination of young men and instigating them to perpetrate violence.

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HEADLINE

04/15 ISIS member families on rise in Anbar

SOURCE

<https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/number-of-islamic-state-members-families-on-the-rise-in-anbar-as-displaced-people-return-back-home/>

GIST

Anbar (IraqiNews.com) The number of families of Islamic State members has been growing as hundreds of displaced families returned to their regions, a security source from Anbar police said on Sunday.

Speaking to Almaalomah website on Sunday, the source said “number of IS families in Hit city and surrounding regions reached 150 families, which indicate terrorist operations that could target security troops and civilians, given that those families provide the militants with information about security personnel in order to target them.”

“The presence of those families in Hit threaten safety and stability of the region. Displacing them could be hard due to pressures by rights groups,” the source added.

Thousands of IS militants as well as Iraqi civilians were killed since the government campaign, backed by paramilitary troops and the coalition, was launched in October 2016 to fight the militant group.

In December, Abadi announced full liberation of Iraqi lands, declaring end of war against IS members. However, Islamic State continues to launch sporadic attacks across Iraq against troops. Security reports indicate that the militant group still poses threat against stability in the country.

As many as 3,298 civilians were killed and 4,781 others were wounded in 2017, excluding Anbar civilian casualty figures for November and December, which are not available, UNAMI said in a report in December.

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HEADLINE

04/16 ISIS threatens New York subways

SOURCE

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5620103/ISIS-threaten-bomb-New-Yorks-subway-chilling-propaganda-poster.html>

GIST

ISIS propaganda chiefs have issued a chilling threat to bring death and destruction to New York's subway.

The terror group has vowed to attack Paris and the World Cup finals in Russia in recent weeks as part of a global campaign of lone wolf strikes as it continues to lose territory in the Middle East.

In its latest warning, uploaded to militant Islamist messaging platforms, a man is pictured standing on the platform at New York's High Street - Brooklyn Bridge Station with explosives and a timer behind him.

The poster includes the threat: 'You will not expect where we will attack.'

Last year extremists also threatened to attack the Queen and the Vatican City.

The group's propaganda wing – the Wafa Media Foundation - is continuing to churn out threats despite the so-called ISIS caliphate suffering huge losses in Syria and Iraq.

ISIS fanatics are increasingly turning to lone-wolf supporters to take up their violent cause around the world.

'Wafa Media Foundation specialises in these types of graphics. Wafa's threat, like others recently issued by pro-ISIS media groups, is a specific attack directive within a larger push by ISIS for lone wolf attacks as it rapidly loses territory in Iraq and Syria,' said Rita Katz, director of the respected SITE Intelligence Group,

'Though these threats should be taken seriously, there is also a publicity element to pro-ISIS media groups' threats against places like the Vatican or events like 2018 FIFA World Cup.'

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HEADLINE

04/16 Extremists hamper polio eradication

SOURCE

<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/nigerias-boko-haram-extremists-hamper-polio-eradication-54494701?>

GIST

Islamic extremists made Imana Alhaji Gana's village in northeastern Nigeria too dangerous for health workers to vaccinate against polio. Now that she and her family have fled to a displacement camp, those workers want to catch her children in time.

Here in the camps housing thousands of families seeking safety from the extremists, health teams are going from tent to tent, inoculating youngsters against the disease that withers limbs and disables children for life.

At first, Gana is afraid to let the outreach workers vaccinate her baby. Eventually they persuade her that the three-week-old child is not too young for immunization, which can take place as early as the day of birth.

The complicated fight against polio is yet another way the Nigeria-based extremist group Boko Haram has disrupted life in the northeast, leaving children vulnerable to an entirely preventable disease.

"When such children come to the camps or host communities they become a threat to other children," said Almai Some, the field coordinator in Borno state for the vaccination campaign run by Rotary.

Some of the families arriving are from areas where polio vaccinators have not been able to visit for as long as six years.

Boko Haram's insurgency began in Maiduguri, Borno state's capital, but its reach has expanded beyond Nigeria's borders to neighboring Niger, Chad and Cameroon. Its violence has proved to be a major setback to the international campaign against polio.

Nigeria is one of just three countries where polio is endemic and has not been eliminated, along with Pakistan and Afghanistan. The final phase to wipe out polio is "proving to be extraordinarily difficult" because "the poliovirus is surviving despite all the good work and in the face of everything that is being thrown at it," said a WHO-appointed monitoring group at the end of last year.

In Nigeria, there is little or no surveillance data in Borno state, and "unless there is a breakthrough to reach those areas in Borno, the entire polio (eradication) program is at risk," said the monitoring group. Nigeria had other outbreaks last year including cholera, hepatitis, monkeypox, Lassa and yellow fevers, showing the challenges to the country's health care system. Globally the campaign to eradicate polio has been faced with outbreaks last year in non-endemic countries like Congo and Syria.

Now the WHO says it will be spending \$127 million toward eradicating polio in Nigeria between 2018 and 2019. Rotary's program is helping that effort by targeting some 2.1 million children in 24 accessible local governments. But there are still three areas in Borno state that are not included because of ongoing instability: Kala-Balge, Marte and Abadam. For those unreachable areas, the vaccinators train Nigerian soldiers in how to administer the vaccines.

In a few cases, villagers have reported being threatened by Boko Haram fighters to avoid the polio vaccine. And in 2013 a number of vaccinators were attacked and killed by the extremists, leading some of their colleagues to disguise their vaccine carriers or hide them under their hijabs.

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HEADLINE

04/15 Turkey: US pastor faces terror trial

SOURCE

http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-pastor-trial-alleged-terror-ties-spying-turkey-54478886?cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed

GIST

An American pastor imprisoned in Turkey is going on trial for alleged terror ties and spying in a case that has increased tensions between Washington and Ankara.

Andrew Craig Brunson, a 50-year-old evangelical pastor from North Carolina, is facing up to 35 years in prison on charges of "committing crimes on behalf of terror groups without being a member" and "espionage." The trial begins Monday in western Izmir province.

Brunson was arrested in December 2016 for alleged links to both an outlawed Kurdish insurgent group and the network of the U.S.-based Muslim cleric who Turkey blames for a masterminding a failed military coup that year. The cleric, Fethullah Gulen, denies the claim.

Brunson, who has lived in Turkey for 23 years, has denied all allegations, saying that he solely worked as a pastor.

The Turkish government has clearly linked Brunson's case with its determination to force the U.S. to extradite Gulen — and some see the pastor as a diplomatic pawn.

The American Center for Law and Justice, a conservative Christian group in the U.S., has called Brunson a "hostage of the Turkish government." A petition has garnered more than half a million signatures, claiming that the case was putting Christianity on trial.

Brunson's lawyer, Ismail Cem Halavurt, told The Associated Press on Sunday he expects the pastor's acquittal, arguing that the "weak" indictment lacked sufficient evidence to make the case hold up in court.

American officials have repeatedly requested that Brunson be released — President Donald Trump himself asked Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to have his government "expeditiously" return the pastor to the U.S.

But Erdogan fired back at Washington, demanding that the U.S. first return Gulen.

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HEADLINE

04/14 Mali militants attack UN camp

SOURCE

http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mali-attack-kills-peacekeeper-wounds-10-french-soldiers-54474009?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed

GIST

Officials say a U.N. peacekeeper is dead and 10 French soldiers have been wounded after a jihadist attack in northern Mali.

Residents in the town of Timbuktu reported hearing two large detonations Saturday near a camp for the U.N. mission known as MINUSMA.

Ten soldiers from the French military operation known as Barkhane were among those hurt — five seriously, according to the Malian security ministry.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility though a number of extremist groups are active in the region.

A security official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to reporters, said one of the vehicles used in the attack had been disguised as a MINUSMA vehicle while the other was marked as a Malian military vehicle.

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HEADLINE

04/14 Syria: eastern Ghouta 'fully liberated'

SOURCE

http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-syrian-police-units-enter-town-douma-54464281?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed

GIST

The Syrian army has declared the eastern suburbs of the capital Damascus "fully liberated" after the last group of gunmen left the town of Douma.

An army statement read by chief military spokesman Brig. Gen. Ali Mayhoub said Saturday that special units are clearing streets and squares of Douma from mines and explosives planted by rebels.

Douma is the largest town of the suburbs known as eastern Ghouta and its capture marks the biggest victory for President Bashar Assad's forces since the conflict began seven years ago.

The army said that troops discovered weapons factories, arms depots, tunnels and food storage places.

It added that the army is preparing eastern Ghouta for tens of thousands who were displaced over the

past two months during a crushing government offensive to retake the area.

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HEADLINE

04/15 Afghan, Pakistan forces border clash

SOURCE

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/afghan-pakistani-forces-clash-disputed-border-54478030?>

GIST

An Afghan official says Pakistani forces have crossed into eastern Afghanistan and clashed with Afghan troops.

Col. Abdul Hanan, the acting provincial police chief in the eastern Khost province, says the fighting broke out early Sunday and is still underway. He was not immediately able to confirm reports of casualties.

The two countries are separated by the 2,400-kilometer (1,500-mile) Durand Line, which was drawn by British rulers in 1896. Kabul does not recognize it as an international border and has objected to new fortifications being built by Pakistan.

The two U.S. allies routinely accuse each other of failing to crack down on militants who operate along the porous border.

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HEADLINE

04/15 Militants attack Afghan checkpoint; 11 dead

SOURCE

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/insurgents-attack-checkpoint-afghanistan-kill-police-54477896?>

GIST

At least 11 Afghan paramilitary forces were killed when the Taliban attacked their checkpoint, an official said Sunday.

Zabi Amani, a spokesman for the governor of the northern Sari Pul province, said two other forces were wounded in the attack late Saturday. He said three insurgents were killed, including a local commander, and four others were wounded.

Those targeted were members of the Local Uprising Forces, militias supported by the government.

No one immediately claimed the attack, but Amani blamed the Taliban, who are active in the area.

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HEADLINE

04/13 Austrian convicted for terror attack plans

SOURCE

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/04/13/austrian-man-convicted-for-plans-for-attacks-in-germany.html>

GIST

VIENNA – An Austrian court has convicted a 19-year-old of involvement in plans for two Islamic extremist attacks in Germany, one of which was supposed to be carried out by a 12-year-old boy.

The Austria Press Agency reported that the defendant was convicted Friday in Vienna of attempted incitement to murder as a terrorist crime. He was given a nine-year sentence.

The Austrian of Albanian descent was accused of trying to incite a 12-year-old to attack a Christmas market in Ludwigshafen in 2016, and plotting an attack on the United States' Ramstein Air Base along with a 16-year-old girl.

Defense lawyer Wolfgang Blaschitz said he is considering appealing.

The defendant testified he became a supporter of the Islamic State group following a previous jail term for robbery. He denied ordering any attacks.

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HEADLINE

04/14 Boko Haram abductions, killings

SOURCE

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/boko-haram-abducted-1000-children-killed-2000-teachers/story?>

GIST

Boko Haram has abducted more than 1,000 children in northeast Nigeria since 2013, the United Nations' children's agency announced Friday.

The number of children kidnapped by the Nigerian terrorist group includes 276 girls snatched from a boarding school in the northeast town of Chibok on the night of April 14, 2014, four years ago today.

Some of the Chibok schoolgirls managed to escape, while others were later rescued or freed following negotiations. But four years on from that fateful night, more than 100 of them have yet to be returned to their families, according to UNICEF.

"The four-year anniversary of the Chibok abduction reminds us that children in northeastern Nigeria continue to come under attack at a shocking scale," Mohamed Malick Fall, UNICEF representative in Nigeria, said in a statement Friday. "They are consistently targeted and exposed to brutal violence in their homes, schools and public places."

Since Boko Haram launched its insurgency in the northeast region nine years ago, at least 2,295 teachers have been killed and over 1,400 schools have been destroyed. Most of these schools haven't been able to reopen due to extensive damage or ongoing insecurity in the area, according to UNICEF.

Most recently, suspected Boko Haram fighters abducted 110 students from an girls' boarding school in the northeast town of Dapchi in the middle of the night on Feb. 19. More than a month later, 104 of the schoolgirls were freed by their captors following "back-channel efforts and with the help of some friends of the country," according to Segun Adeyemi, spokesman for Nigeria's Ministry of Information and Culture.

The relentless onslaughts show not even children and schools are spared from Boko Haram's wrath -- rather, they are the targets.

The Nigerian jihadist group's uprising was fueled largely through the group's systematic campaign of

abducting children and forcing thousands of girls and boys into their ranks, according to a report issued in April 2017 by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

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HEADLINE

04/14 Egypt: suicide bombers Sinai kill 8

SOURCE

<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/egypt-troops-killed-15-wounded-sinai-clashes-54465542?>

GIST

Militants wearing explosive belts blew themselves up as they tried to infiltrate a military base in Egypt's central Sinai, killing eight soldiers and wounding 15 others, the military said on Saturday.

The clashes at dawn left 14 militants dead. They were armed with rifles and RPGs, the armed forces said in a statement. The attack comes two months after the launch of a massive operation against militants in Sinai as well as parts of Egypt's Nile Delta and Western Desert, along the porous border with Libya.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack which bore the hallmarks of the extremist Islamic State group, whose local affiliate is spearheading an Islamic insurgency in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.

Egypt has for years been struggling to contain the Islamic insurgency in the turbulent Sinai region. It has carried out military operations there that, it says, have killed hundreds of militants.

It has also built a buffer zone along the border with Gaza to curb the flow of militants and weapons through a vast tunnel network. The insurgency, however, has shown no signs of abating.

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE

04/14 'Warranty void if removed' stickers illegal

SOURCE

<https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/government/ftc-warranty-void-if-removed-stickers-are-illegal/>

GIST

The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) sent letters this week to six major companies containing warnings that using "warranty void if removed" or similarly worded stickers on their products is illegal.

The FTC said the six companies sell automobiles, cellular devices, and video gaming systems, all industry verticals where such practices are rampant.

But besides the use of anti-tampering "warranty void if removed" stickers, the letters also warn companies against forcing customers into using replacement parts or repair services provided by certain companies for users to keep their warranties intact.

In other words, the FTC has officially shown its support for the Right To Repair movement that's been becoming popular in the US and Europe.

"Provisions that tie warranty coverage to the use of particular products or services harm both consumers who pay more for them as well as the small businesses who offer competing products and services," said Thomas B. Pahl, Acting Director of the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection.

Limiting repair options illegal under 1975 US law

The FTC says that such practices are illegal under the Magnuson-Moss Warranty Act, a law that governs consumer product warranties, and which states that no company can put restrictions on the way users choose to repair their products.

The law says that companies can't force users to use only certain types of (astronomically-priced) replacement parts, take products for repair jobs only at certain repair shops, or can't plaster anti-tampering stickers on products to prevent users from repairing their own products.

Over the past two decades, companies in the US have been ignoring this law and have been locking down products and repair practices, using "warranty voiding" as punishment for those users who make modifications to products or dare to find cheaper or faster ways of repairing products.

The FTC says this is illegal. The Commission plans to review the six companies it sent letters to after 30 days and see if they have dropped their current practices, threatening legal action if they did not.

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HEADLINE

04/15 Fake gov. letters surface in Clark Co.

SOURCE

<https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/fake-inslee-letter-posted-on-doors-around-clark-county/>

GIST

VANCOUVER — On Thursday morning, Gary Berreth stepped outside his house and found an unexpected letter attached to his front door.

The letter featured the Washington state seal and claimed to be from the Office of the Governor. It warned of “an adjustment in property taxes” due to the shutdown of an oil terminal and an agreement with BNSF Railway to prohibit the shipping of oil, lumber and coal by rail through Vancouver.

At the end of the letter was a carefully scrawled signature: “Jay Inslee,” Washington’s Democratic governor. Copied on the letter were Clark County Assessor Peter Van Nortwick and Treasurer Doug Lasher.

“I instantly knew that there is no way the government does business like this,” said Berreth, who said he saw the same letter attached to other doors throughout his Green Meadows neighborhood.

Berreth was correct in assuming the letter was a hoax.

In an era of growing concerns of fake news spreading online, these apparent dirty tricksters have taken up a more old-fashioned approach to spreading misinformation.

Simon Vila, spokesman for Inslee, confirmed that neither the governor nor his staff were out posting notes to residents’ doors.

“This is definitely not from our office,” he said.

Vila said the governor’s office suspects that whoever is behind the fake notes is also behind a series of strange letters directed to supporters of U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Washington. These letters were typically signed by “Titania,” a character from the play, “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.”

Vila noted that the fonts of both letters are similar.

The letter’s reference to “shutting down the oil terminal” is a likely reference to Inslee’s decision earlier this year to reject a proposed crude-by-rail terminal at the Port of Vancouver.

The letter’s claim that BNSF, which operates a large network of railways, has entered an agreement to end the shipment of oil, lumber and coal by rail through Vancouver is also highly questionable.

Courtney Wallace, director of public affairs for BNSF, said in an email that as “a common carrier, we are obligated by federal law to move all regulated goods.”

“I’m just surprised someone took the time to write something like this up,” said Van Nortwick, a Republican. He took to Facebook to debunk the letter, although pointed out that not all of it was fake news.

“It’s very rare that someone gets my name spelled right,” he said

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HEADLINE

04/15 Newest threat to Calif. redwoods: pot

SOURCE

<https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/The-newest-threat-to-California-s-redwoods-isn-t-12835952.php>

GIST

A new industry is thriving in California. It is green in terms of the money being made and the crop itself. Yet it is anything but that when it comes to the environment, posing horrendous ecological threats to the

region's redwood forests.

Lindgren Lumber and Humboldt Flakeboard are the newest additions to the Medical Marijuana Innovation Zone, an area in Arcata, California, zoned specifically for marijuana cultivation and processing. As businesses like Humboldt Harvest Wellness and Talking Tree Farms apply for the necessary permits to process cannabis in the former mill complex, it is evident that the cannabis business may restore the economy of redwood country.

But this new industry might also undermine the environmental activism that has long fought to preserve the redwoods as a natural resource.

Not long ago, activists thought they had won this fight. And they had - until now. They successfully dislodged corporate logging, but the old timber mills are being used to churn out marijuana. Marijuana cultivation subjects North Coast forests to a barrage of environmental assaults: soil erosion, heavy pesticide use, stream diversion, irresponsible grading and land clearing, all of which threaten to lay waste to the redwoods.

As marijuana businesses repurpose Arcata's remaining lumber mills, a renewed ecological peril haunts Humboldt County. Just like timber companies in decades past, marijuana interests are positioning themselves to shape regulations that protect the industry, not the environment. Americans only have to look back a few decades to the activism that saved the redwoods to understand just how high the stakes are.

Precipitating the "timber wars," that activism began when logging companies expanded operations during the post-World War II housing boom. Timber yields exploded between 1940 and 1970, and increased demand led logging companies to clear-cut large swaths of North Coast redwood forest. This practice had broad ramifications. Leveling a patch of forest compromised entire watersheds by eroding soil and increasing siltation in streams, which left forests vulnerable to flooding, landslides and myriad other environmental problems.

Efforts at redwood preservation proved ineffective when protected groves were surrounded by denuded land. Consequently, environmental advocates intensified their push to create an expansive national park in Northern California that would protect the redwoods from the damage caused by clear-cutting.

By 1968, the Redwood National Park Act established a federal park that protected 58,000 acres of forest. Preservationists had originally proposed acquiring 90,000 acres to ensure the ecological stability of the region, but fierce resistance from timber companies forced a compromise. Yet because environmental impacts were not confined by man-drawn property lines, this compromise meant clear-cuts on nearby private property ended up threatening protected redwood stands anyway.

Activists requested the National Park Service exercise its discretionary power to create a buffer zone around sensitive groves. Three separate studies confirmed the grave ecological hazards presented by nearby logging operations.

NPS, though, was new to the area, and hoped to avoid making waves as it worked to integrate itself into the community. As a result, jobs and the local economy trumped ecological health. NPS took an approach that empowered private interests, adopting a utilitarian cost-benefit analysis that overrode preservationist policy.

Increased harvests led to new logging roads, clear-cut sites, stream diversion and, perhaps most shocking, aerial spraying of Agent Orange, a herbicide known to contain carcinogens. Roads and clear-cuts interrupted the ecosystem and directly threatened wildlife habitat. Road-building itself led to erosion and presented dangers for aquatic life. The use of Agent Orange compounded these problems not only by poisoning habitats, but also by destroying the roots and undergrowth that stabilized the forest floor.

Nevertheless, passing legislation to protect additional old growth proved difficult because of the political might of corporations like Maxxam, a multinational conglomerate that muscled its way into Humboldt's timber industry during the redwood wars. Activists spent years fighting to save remaining old-growth redwood stands. Finally, the Clinton administration brokered a deal to preserve sensitive groves.

But the victory was short-lived. Although the timber industry fell, a robust pot industry soon sprouted in its place. This was not the same pot industry once concentrated in small, personal gardens and largely associated with hippies, back-to-the-landers and other counterculture migrants. The growing popularity of pot, along with increasing legalization, has turned marijuana cultivation into big business. And despite its reputation as a liberal bastion, California left regulation to local authorities.

The result is a tangled web of lenient laws. Despite the liberalization of marijuana laws in the state, semi-legal and illegal cultivation persists. Marijuana's illegality elsewhere continues to fuel a robust black market. Intending to sell on this market, pot farmers interested in a cash crop have little incentive to seek permits or comply with regulations. In any case, the odd dichotomy under which marijuana is legal in California, but illegal under federal law, makes it hard to enforce regulations as local officials find themselves at odds with federal agencies.

At best, pot farmers loosely adhere to regulations while they operate in a legal gray area. At worst, inconsistent enforcement encourages illegal cultivation - which poses serious environmental consequences as these grow sites often contain banned pesticides and other toxic contaminants.

And that creates real environmental hazards. According to Rep. Jared Huffman, a Democrat, authorities have removed 8,188 pounds of fertilizer, 104 pounds of rodenticide, 560 gallons of insecticide, 50

gallons of garbage and miles of irrigation line from illegal grow sites on the North Coast.

Perhaps the most detrimental contaminant making its way into the forests is carbofuran, a toxic pesticide banned in the United States. These pesticides leach into streams and other waterways, increasing their deadly reach. Chemical runoff from grow sites poisons swimming holes and has the potential to seep into city water supplies, which is alarming because carbofuran is lethal to humans in small doses. Ecologists have also determined that chemicals are endangering wildlife such as the Pacific fisher and the northern spotted owl.

In addition to the impact from toxins, the water usage demanded by marijuana cultivation does serious ecological harm. A marijuana plant requires around 22.7 liters of water a day. Unregulated cultivation can easily deplete surface water sources as farmers divert streams and springs.

Water isn't the only resource that pot devours. The plants require lots of sun, which encourages farmers to clear grow sites of trees and plants that might compete with cannabis for light. Satellite imaging has revealed the alarming rate at which these clearings are breaking up otherwise continuous forest. And grow sites require access, which means additional land is cleared and improperly graded as rogue farmers build roads.

All of these changes in the land accrue: Forest and other habitat is fragmented, streams are buried, diverted or polluted, and wildlife dies.

These trends are disturbing. California produces 60 to 70 percent of the marijuana consumed in the United States, which means the state is shouldering most of the environmental cost. As one study of the North Coast indicates, the danger from marijuana cultivation is particularly concerning because the "region is a recognized biodiversity hotspot." The redwoods constitute an ecosystem that is unique and rare - and now marijuana cultivation even poses a threat to Redwood National Park.

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HEADLINE

04/15 China sends warning to Taiwan, US

SOURCE

<https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/15/asia/taiwan-us-china-xi-jinping-drills-intl/index.html>

GIST

(CNN)Chinese President Xi Jinping has sent a clear message of Beijing's disapproval over growing ties between the United States and Taiwan by ordering live-fire drills in the Taiwan Strait.

The drills, to be held this coming Wednesday, will mark the first time the Chinese Navy has held drills with live ammunition in the strait since September 2015, in the lead-up to the self-ruled island's presidential election.

Prior to those elections, relations between the two were at a high point after Xi met with then-President Ma Ying-jeou, the first such meeting in history between leaders of the two governments.

But since then, tensions between China and the island it views as a breakaway province have become strained under Ma's successor, President Tsai Ing-wen.

The new Trump administration has sought closer ties to President Tsai's government, angering Beijing by signing two deals in the past month to tighten ties with the island, including a travel act which will allow more official visits between the US and Taipei.

"(China) wants to highlight that the Chinese navy is ever ready and secondly, it is a signal to the government in Taipei you better not go further," Collin Koh, research fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies' Maritime Security Program, told CNN.

The planned live-fire exercises follow a massive show of force by the PLA Navy on April 10 and 11, which conducted the country's largest military drills ever in the South China Sea.

Chinese President Xi personally reviewed the troops himself from the deck of the Chinese destroyer Changsha on Thursday, speaking to the troops about the need for the navy to become "world-class."

Responding to the news of the upcoming live-fire drills, the Taiwanese Defense Military said in a statement the drills were taking place in a routine military zone and reiterated their national army could protect the country from any threat.

"Our people please rest assured," the statement said.

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HEADLINE

04/15 FDA pulls concentrated caffeine

SOURCE

<https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/fda-acts-pull-concentrated-caffeine-market-n865716>

GIST

Bulk caffeine products may have killed at least two people and they don't belong on the market, the Food and Drug Administration said Friday.

The FDA declared concentrated, bulk caffeine products illegal and said it would act to get them off the shelves.

"These products present a significant public health threat because of the high risk that they will be erroneously used at excessive, potentially dangerous doses," the FDA said in a statement.

"Highly concentrated and pure caffeine, often sold in bulk packages, have been linked to at least two deaths in otherwise healthy individuals."

The FDA has been warning about powdered caffeine since 2014, when an Ohio teenager died after using it. It's also specifically asked sellers to stop providing it directly to consumers.

"Despite multiple actions against these products in the past, we've seen a continued trend of products containing highly concentrated or pure caffeine being marketed directly to consumers as dietary supplements and sold in bulk quantities, with up to thousands of recommended servings per container," FDA Commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb said in a statement.

"We know these products are sometimes being used in potentially dangerous ways. For example, teenagers, for a perceived energy kick, sometimes mix dangerously high amounts of super-concentrated caffeine into workout cocktails."

It would be easy to get a dangerous dose, the FDA said.

"A half cup of a highly concentrated liquid caffeine can contain approximately 2,000 mg of caffeine and just a single teaspoon of a powdered pure caffeine product can contain approximately 3,200 mg of caffeine. This is equivalent to about 20 to 28 cups of coffee, a potentially toxic dose of caffeine," the agency said.

“Regardless of whether the product contains a warning label, such products present a significant and unreasonable risk of illness or injury to the consumer,” the FDA added.

Too much caffeine can cause fatal heartbeat irregularities.

The FDA's action does not include energy drinks or energy products that contain caffeine, or supplements. "Moreover, this guidance does not affect other types of products that might also contain caffeine, such as prescription or over-the-counter drugs or conventional foods, like traditionally caffeinated beverages," it said.

But the bulk products can easily confuse people, who may accidentally overdose on them.

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HEADLINE

04/14 MBTA rail safety system off track

SOURCE

<http://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2018/04/14/who-driving-your-commuter-train-likely-someone-with-wreck-record/sLRyEIPMFvZqDoe6Je8YFI/story.html>

GIST

Dean Walker's license has been suspended 39 times for everything from driving to endanger to refusing a breathalyzer test. He's been caught speeding 16 times and convicted of drunken driving twice.

To fellow motorists, he's a hazard.

To the Registry of Motor Vehicles, he's a chronic offender. But to Keolis, the MBTA's commuter rail operator, Walker is something else entirely — an engineer.

Despite his appalling driving history, Walker is entrusted with operating six-car trains, at speeds averaging 60 miles per hour, carrying hundreds of commuters to and from the city.

Robert Ronquillo III, son of the chief justice of the Boston Municipal Court, was also penalized multiple times for safety violations on the job.

And he has plenty of company among his peers. About 110 commuter rail engineers, more than half of them, have driving records that experts described as poor considering the sensitive line of work they're in — at least three infractions such as speeding, causing accidents, and failing to stop.

Nearly 50 engineers have had their driver's licenses suspended — 44 of them more than once, according to Registry of Motor Vehicle records reviewed by the Globe.

The engineers' supervisors don't set much of an example, either. Manager of engineer training Shawn Monahan, who teaches aspiring engineers what they need to know before they can operate a train, has received 11 speeding tickets and caused two accidents.

Keolis's head engineer, Mark Neverett, has 13 speeding tickets, eight accidents, and an operating under the influence on his driving record, though he's had no recorded offenses since 2010.

The records obtained by the Globe, which span decades, raise serious concerns about safety on the commuter rail, experts say. Train operators aren't required to have a driver's license, and driving a 144-ton locomotive on fixed tracks is a very different discipline than driving a car. But a history of recklessness on the roads makes it much more likely someone will be reckless on the rails, they say.

"Someone who is known to have engaged in multiple incidents of risky and illegal behavior with an automobile should not be permitted to operate a train," said David Hughes, the former chief engineer and acting CEO of Amtrak. "Locomotive engineers aren't allowed mistakes on the job."

Many of the engineers with poor driving records have, records show, also faced discipline on the railway — ranging from counseling to suspension — for such on-the-job infractions as running a stop signal, failing drug tests, or causing derailments.

But perhaps the harshest penalty was reserved for the Keolis executive who sounded the alarm about the number of engineers with dismal driving records.

Robert T. McCarthy, the vice president of safety, was dismissed after he warned the company about the potential risks in employing engineers with problematic personal driving histories, according to documents obtained by the Globe.

McCarthy left Keolis last fall, just a year and a half after the company heralded his arrival from the Southern California Regional Rail Authority, where he served as deputy chief operating officer.

Before leaving, McCarthy sent an audit to Keolis's general manager raising a host of safety concerns, including the engineers' driving records. He concluded: "If there were a catastrophic incident, Keolis would be scrutinized and would not fare well in a [federal] investigation."

Keolis, which has operated the commuter rail system for the MBTA since July 2014, said Friday that "nothing is more important" than safety.

Spokesman Tory Mazzola said the company has invested \$15 million into improving safety systems, including a new training simulator and safety technology for engineers. Mazzola noted that its engineer supervisors are "valuable, hard-working employees with excellent work records" and their personal driving records have "absolutely no bearing" on their job performance.

Keolis said it inherited most of its workforce from the Massachusetts Bay Commuter Railroad Company, which ran the system from 2003 to mid-2014, and Amtrak, which ran the system before then. Keolis promised in its bid for the contract to review the qualifications of its workforce. Mazzola said Keolis relied on the employee certification and background checks performed by the prior rail system operators.

Keolis and MBCR officials both have said that commuter rail management is hamstrung by federal rules that allow a railroad to look at an engineer's driving record only for the three-year period prior to certifying him or her as fit for the job. Also, the railroad cannot consider speeding violations, only drunken driving convictions and related license suspensions. And even enforcing that standard is hard; the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen union fights the company whenever it seeks to impose discipline on one of its members, they said.

Keolis officials have faced questions about the company's engineers since the Globe reported in February that engineer Roberto Ronquillo III had 10 license suspensions and multiple stops for drunken driving on his record. At the time, Keolis and MBCR officials suggested Ronquillo, the son of a Boston judge, was an anomaly whose driving record was somehow missed during the vetting process.

Newly obtained internal documents suggest otherwise. Commuter rail officials pulled his driving record in 2011 when he was training to be an engineer. MBCR required Ronquillo to undergo enhanced drug and alcohol testing as a condition of getting the new job.

But the broader Globe review found that Ronquillo's alarming driving record barely stands out among commuter rail engineers, who earn around \$100,000 a year.

Among them: Veteran engineer Richard Russell who chalked up 13 speeding tickets, got into three accidents, and had his license suspended 14 times.

And Alcino Fernandes, who ran up 16 speeding tickets, caused 11 accidents, and received four citations for passing a school bus, records show. He is not currently operating a train, according to Keolis officials, and is awaiting a disciplinary hearing. Officials would not provide details.

Fernandes, the only engineer who responded to a Globe request for comment, said that most of his violations were “well over 10 or 20 years ago.” However, records show he was caught speeding in 2010 and committed a “state highway violation” in 2015.

“All that stuff took place long before I started with the railroad,” said Fernandes, 51. “I was a young kid when all that ridiculous stuff happened.”

As a group, the system’s engineers racked up a staggering number of violations, including more than 200 license suspensions, according to the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles. Besides motor vehicle infractions, drivers can lose their license for failing to pay fees or fines.

Eighty-five engineers received more than two speeding tickets. Six have been declared habitual traffic offenders. And more than 85 percent of the engineers have at least one driving infraction.

Hughes, who led national rail operator Amtrak, said locomotive engineers, like other transportation professionals, should have pristine driving records.

“In the trucking industry, you can’t drive a truck if you don’t have a clean record,” said Hughes. “Same with taxi industry. To have 80 percent of your engineers with an operating infraction is appalling. . . . I would imagine you might find 10 percent, maybe.”

In the Massachusetts’ commuter rail system, the opposite is true — fewer than 10 percent had no driving citations and no incidents of discipline.

“Yes, those are by far, the worst engineer records I’ve ever seen in decades of railroading,” said another expert, who asked to remain anonymous because he works for another railroad and fears retaliation.

Inside Keolis, executives had been warned about the problems in their corps of engineers.

In the preliminary safety audit submitted to the Keolis general manager, David Scorey, in November, McCarthy, then the executive in charge of safety, pointed out that motor vehicle regulators had identified many of the company's engineers as "habitual offenders" because of repeated speeding violations on their personal driving records.

Even so, McCarthy wrote, the company has not decertified — that is, declared unfit for service — any engineers for speeding on the rails during the history of the Keolis contract.

"This is highly suspicious given the propensity of our employees to speed [on the job]," he wrote.

Excessive speed has been the cause of several fatal railroad accidents across the country, including a 2013 crash in the Bronx that killed four and injured 61 and a crash in Philadelphia in 2015 that killed eight and injured more than 200.

About 100,000 people ride Keolis's commuter rail system each day, completely in the dark about the driving history of the engineer behind the controls.

"I can't talk now, I'm too shocked," commuter Mary Connaughton said after hearing a description of some of the engineers' driving records.

"What's it going to take, a train wreck for Keolis and the T to get ahead of this and put public safety first?" asked Connaughton — a former Massachusetts Turnpike Authority board member — when she later called back.

While Keolis and MBCR have reported few major incidents, records show at least 80 engineers have committed serious infractions while on the job — safety violations that include failing alcohol or drug tests, running stop signals, and causing derailments, records show.

While the company insists that safety is its top priority, the Federal Railroad Administration and the MBTA itself have raised concerns about its compliance with federal safety rules and the terms of its contract with the T.

The FRA, which regulates railroads, has fined Keolis some \$350,000 for violations that include leaving trains unsecured, operating moving trains with a door or doors open, and failing to conduct all engineer performance testing required under federal law, records show.

Joe Pesaturo, spokesman for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, said the agency “steadfastly holds” the commuter rail contractor accountable for providing safe and reliable service.

“Because safety is of paramount importance, the MBTA closely monitors the contract under which Keolis manages a qualified workforce that is in full compliance with all Federal Railroad Administration regulations,” Pesaturo said in a statement. “The commuter rail operator has demonstrated its strong commitment to safety through significant investments in equipment, training, and personnel.”

Some suspect that Keolis may feel financial pressure to keep engineers on the job even when they have problems at work.

Under its operators agreement with the MBTA, the company is penalized when a train is late or canceled. If an engineer is removed from service, the on-time performance may suffer.

A longtime issue

Experts say the problems with the commuter rail and its workforce go way back — before Keolis took over the \$2.7 billion contract in 2014.

Upon taking over the rail operation, Keolis, a French company, had just a few months to decide whom to retain from its inherited workforce, officials from both companies said.

And once hired or retained, employees are rarely, if ever, terminated — regardless of their personal history or work record.

Experts say that if a railroad wanted to impose order and discipline, it could refuse to promote an employee with a poor driving record, or could subject such a driver to increased testing. In extreme cases, the railroad could fire the employee for conduct unbecoming an employee under a clause in the company’s contract with the MBTA.

Governor Charlie Baker has repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with Keolis’s per

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	04/16 US envoy fears: chem. site tampered
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-chemicalweapons/russia-may-have-tampered-with-chemical-attack-site-u-s-envoy-says-idUSKBN1HN126?il=0
GIST	<p>THE HAGUE (Reuters) - Russia may have tampered with the site of an alleged chemical weapons attack in Syria's Douma, the U.S. envoy to the global watchdog said on Monday, urging the body to condemn the continuing use of banned chemical weapons.</p> <p>The comments came during a closed-door meeting at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, convened after an April 7 attack in the town of Douma, outside the Syrian capital, in which dozens of people were allegedly killed with poison gas.</p> <p>"It is long overdue that this council condemns the Syrian government for its reign of chemical terror and demands international accountability for those responsible for these heinous acts," U.S. Ambassador Kenneth Ward said in comments obtained by Reuters.</p> <p>"It is our understanding the Russians may have visited the attack site. It is our concern that they may have tampered with it with the intent of thwarting the efforts of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission to conduct an effective investigation."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 End of credit card receipt signatures
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/14/business/credit-card-signature.html?action=click&module=In%20Other%20News&pgtype=Homepage&action=click&module=Latest&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>The next time you sign a credit card receipt, savor it.</p> <p>While it may take time for the news to filter down to retailers, Visa, American Express, Discover and Mastercard have said that as of this month, they will no longer require customers to sign their names when paying with a credit card.</p> <p>The signature has had a good run. It's not dead, but it is dying.</p> <p>American culture has preferred credit to debit, and so signing has stuck around longer. But new credit cards have converted to chip cards that are harder to counterfeit.</p>

	<p>“Signatures are becoming more irrelevant,” said Harshita Rawat, an analyst at Bernstein Research. “The final nail in the coffin was the chip card.”</p> <p>If you want to pay with your phone, many use fingerprint scanners to authorize transactions, and Apple’s got facial recognition on its iPhone X while Samsung uses iris scanning on the Galaxy S8. Visa has also rolled out prototype rings, pins and even sunglasses that you can scan instead of using a card.</p> <p>Several of the largest retailers, including Walmart and Target, have moved to drop the signature requirement. Home Depot had already waived the requirement for purchases under \$50, and plans to do the same for larger purchasers, but hasn’t set a date yet. Stephanie Cunha, a spokeswoman for CVS, said “We are evaluating our options but have no specific changes to announce at this time.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 US plans new sanctions on Russia
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/15/us/politics/trump-russia-sanctions-syria.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Trump administration plans to impose new sanctions against Russia on Monday to punish it for enabling the Syrian government’s use of chemical weapons in its civil war, the latest in a series of actions by both sides underscoring the deterioration in relations between Moscow and the West.</p> <p>The sanctions, coming shortly after American-led airstrikes against facilities linked to Syria’s chemical weapons, are meant to signal that the United States holds responsible not just the government of President Bashar al-Assad but also his patrons in Russia and Iran. President Trump has vowed that Syria’s allies will pay a “big price” for facilitating the suspected use of poison gas.</p> <p>But it remained unclear how far Mr. Trump would go in trying to shape events in Syria, which has been racked by civil war for seven years. President Emmanuel Macron of France, who along with Prime Minister Theresa May of Britain joined in the strike on Syrian targets, said on Sunday night that he had persuaded Mr. Trump to keep a small American ground force in Syria despite the president’s public declaration that he wanted to get out.</p> <p>“We convinced him it was necessary to stay,” Mr. Macron said in a televised interview with French journalists. “I assure you, we have convinced him that it is necessary to stay for the long term.”</p> <p>American officials, however, disputed that, saying that Mr. Macron misinterpreted the conversation. About 2,000 American troops are in Syria to fight the Islamic State, or ISIS, not to play a role in the civil war. In public comments before the chemical attack that prompted him to launch airstrikes, Mr. Trump said he wanted to pull them out right away. Advisers urged him to hold off, and he gave them five to six months to complete a withdrawal.</p> <p>“The U.S. mission has not changed — the president has been clear that he wants U.S. forces to come home as quickly as possible,” Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House press secretary, said in a statement Sunday night. “We are determined to completely crush ISIS and create the conditions that will prevent its return. In addition, we expect our regional allies and partners to take greater responsibility both militarily and financially for securing the region.”</p> <p>The new American sanctions were announced on Sunday by Nikki R. Haley, the ambassador to the United Nations and the administration’s leading public voice excoriating Russia in recent days. “They will go directly to any sort of companies that were dealing with equipment related to Assad and chemical weapons use,” she said on “Face the Nation” on CBS. “And so I think everyone is going to feel it at this point. I think everyone knows that we sent a strong message, and our hope is that they listen to it.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Minor quake near Salem Oregon
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/954831/3-1-magnitude-earthquake-hits-near-oregon-state-capital-city/
GIST	<p>SILVERTON, Ore. (AP) — No injuries or property damage have been reported following a 3.1 magnitude earthquake near the Oregon state capital.</p> <p>The U.S. Geological Survey confirmed the earthquake hit about 4 miles (6.4 kilometers) southwest of Silverton at 8:45 p.m. Saturday.</p> <p>Some nearby residents said they felt the earthquake, which also struck near the state capital city of Salem.</p> <p>In nearby Mollala, northeast of this site, a magnitude 4.0 quake also hit last December.</p> <p>Experts have said for years that Oregon and the Pacific Northwest are due for a catastrophic earthquake with a magnitude of 8.0 or higher.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Oregon gov. declares drought emergency
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/15/oregon-governor-declares-drought-emergency-in-second-county/
GIST	<p>SALEM, Ore. — Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has declared a drought emergency in the second county in a month.</p> <p>Brown on Friday announced a drought emergency in Grant County due to low snowpack, lack of precipitation, low streamflows and warming temperatures.</p> <p>The declaration comes after Brown announced a drought emergency in Klamath County on March 13.</p> <p>They're the first state drought declarations since 2015.</p> <p>The governor's drought declarations allow increased flexibility in how water is managed to ensure that limited supplies are used as efficiently as possible.</p> <p>The drought declarations also position farmers and ranchers in the county for federal aid as Oregon braces for the upcoming wildfire season.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Summer fire rules in effect
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/15/summer-fire-rules-kick-off-today-in-washington/
GIST	<p>It may not feel warm outside yet, but Washington's "summer fire rules" are now in effect.</p> <p>"Whether fire season is delayed or not, Washington's forests always face the threat of wildfire," said Commissioner of Public Lands Hilary Franz. "We're preparing now to be ready for fire season before the weather heats up, and I encourage all our neighbors to do the same."</p> <p>The state's summer fire rules are in effect until October 15. The rules apply to the 13 million acres of private and state forestlands protected by the Washington Department of Natural Resources.</p> <p>These regulations affect loggers, firewood cutters, land clearers, road builders, heavy equipment operators, off-road motorcyclists, and others. During fire season, people using motorized equipment in the woods must have approved spark arresters and follow fire safety precautions. In addition, those working in the woods must have fire prevention and extinguishing equipment in good working order at the job site and workers trained in proper use.</p>

	<p>The rules are intended to prevent forest fires and to extinguish small fires before they spread to the forested lands. These rules restrict cigarette smoking in forested areas to roads, gravel pits, or other clearings and prohibit lighting fireworks on forestland.</p> <p>According to experts, Washington's forests always face the threat of wildfire. So even though we have above average snowpack, the risk of wildfire can change quickly during the springtime.</p> <p>"As soon as the weather conditions warm up and the humidity begins to drop, the ground conditions become much more of a tinderbox very very quickly and certainly as the summer goes on," Kyle Ohashi of Puget Sound Regional Fire told Q13 News.</p> <p>Property owners can reduce fire risk to their homes and lands by keeping dead vegetation off roofs and away from buildings. The Firewise program explains how to use these techniques and offers incentives to communities who follow Firewise principles.</p> <p>Last year, more than 32,800 acres of DNR-protected lands were consumed by 815 wildfires. Out of 815 wildfires, 90 percent were human-caused.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Koreas to finalize working-level talks
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/04/15/South-and-North-Korea-to-finalize-working-level-talks-on-inter-Korean-summit/9871523843348/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=2
GIST	<p>SEOUL, April 15 (UPI) -- With less than a fortnight until the South and North Korea hold their first summit in more than a decade, officials from both sides are expected to wrap up the final details this week.</p> <p>Yonhap reported Sunday that an additional working-level meeting will be held Wednesday at the Tongilgak, a North Korean building at the Panmunjom truce village on the inter-Korean border.</p> <p>After the protocol, security, media coverage and other technical details of the summit are finalized during the talks, a high-level meeting is expected to be held between South Korea's Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon and Ri Son-gwon, chairman of the North's agency for inter-Korean affairs, for Wednesday.</p> <p>The presidential official said the high-level meeting will likely be held within the week.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Seoul has announced, "Peace, a New Beginning," will be the slogan for the inter-Korean talks.</p> <p>Presidential spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom told reporters Sunday that the slogan indicates the start of world peace through the first inter-Korean meeting in eleven years, followed by the first-ever summit between the United States and North Korea.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/16 Russia reinforcements head to Syria
SOURCE	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5618609/Russian-ships-laden-tanks-seen-Bosphorus-en-route-Tartus-Syria-led-air-strikes.html
GIST	<p>Two Russian warships laden with military vehicles have been spotted en route to Syria after Friday's US-led airstrikes obliterated three suspected chemical weapons sites.</p> <p>An Alligator-landing ship was pictured cruising down The Bosphorus on Sunday as the world awaits Vladimir Putin's response to this week's co-ordinated military action against Syria.</p>

The vessel was spotted on its way to the Russian naval base at Tartus on the north Syrian coast.

On its fourth deployment of Russian military equipment to the war-torn country the ship was seen laden with tanks, trucks, ambulances and an IED radar.

A yellow RoRo Alexandr Tkachenko was also pictured heading for Tartus carrying high-speed patrol boats, a temporary bridge structure and several trucks. The images were posted on social media by Bosphorus-based naval observer Yörük Işık.

They come in wake of Friday's US-led campaign against Bashar al-Assad's regime and a chemical weapons attack that brutally murdered 75 civilians.

The blue Project 117 LST Orsk 148 ship was carrying Soviet BTR-80 tanks, Ramaz trucks and a Pelena-1 bomb radar, used to detect IEDs.

A second yellow cargo vessel was equipped with a BMK-T boat used for building temporary bridges and an array of other military hardware.

The Russian warships approaching Syria come after the United States outlined new economic sanctions in response to Moscow's continued support of Assad's regime in Syria.

Nikki Haley, US Ambassador to the United Nations, said measures to be imposed on Monday will send a message to Russia after it blocked six UN attempts to investigate its use of chemical weapons.

Meanwhile French President Emmanuel Macron today insisted the allied forces had not 'declared war' on Syria.

He told a French TV station: 'We have not declared war on the regime of Bashar al-Assad.' During the two-hour interview he also claimed he had 'convinced' Trump to maintain a military presence in Syria after the US leader threatened to pull out of the country entirely.

It emerged that Trump called Mr Macron twice before he shared his intention to strike Syria in a Twitter post. But he failed to call UK Prime Minister Theresa May in the early stages of the operation, giving the French leader the opportunity to claim France is America's leading ally in Europe.

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HEADLINE	04/16 Oklahoma wildfires force evacuations
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/13/us/oklahoma-wildfires/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Wildfires have killed one person and forced the evacuation of four towns in Oklahoma, authorities said.</p> <p>The state chief medical examiner's office reported a 61-year-old man died Thursday in Roger Mills County as a result of injuries sustained in a fire that began southeast of Leedey, the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management said.</p> <p>A 54-year-old hunter reported missing in the large Dewey County fire was found alive, Oklahoma Forestry Services Fire Chief Scott Huff said. The man was flown to an area hospital Friday, but his condition was unknown.</p> <p>Officials said the man was one of three hunters who got caught in the wildfire. The two others were found Thursday.</p> <p>About 1,000 people evacuated Vici, more than 100 miles northwest of Oklahoma City, Dewey County Sheriff Clay Sander said.</p>

Evacuations were also ordered in the Dewey County towns of Seiling, Taloga and Putnam, said Michelle Finch-Walker, spokeswoman for Oklahoma Forestry Services.

The Rhea Fire in Dewey County has burned an estimated 138,000 acres and is 0% contained, she said.

Around midday Friday, the National Weather Service issued an advisory saying that fire was approaching the Iochem iodine plant east of Vici. Sander told CNN about 30 residents were asked to evacuate immediately as the wildfire closed in on the chemical plant.

Some 450 people were evacuated in adjacent Woodward County. The estimated size of that fire was changed from 115,000 to 59,000 acres because of more accurate mapping, Finch-Walker said. There are two other major fires in the state.

The blazes have consumed 200,000 acres, Gov. Mary Fallin said in announcing a state of emergency for 52 counties because of wildfire and drought conditions.

"I'm asking all Oklahomans to be vigilant and careful, and to do their part to prevent fires," Fallin said in a statement. "Anything that can be done to minimize fires will help to keep both our firefighters and the public safe."

'The fire is rapidly spreading'

State officials said dry conditions and strong winds have combined to create potential fire dangers.

"These fires are going to continue to be quite explosive under these conditions, with that kind of wind pushing it, and all the dry fuels that are available," Finch-Walker told CNN. "The fire is rapidly spreading and growing and we will continue to see extreme fire behavior until we can get through this event."

"We've got historic conditions as far as fire. We haven't seen these kinds of conditions in a decade," said Matt Lehenbauer, emergency management director for Woodward County.

"We've had half an inch of rain in six months," Lehenbauer said.

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HEADLINE	04/16 US, Russia enter new era of animosity
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-16/syria-strikes-lock-u-s-and-russia-into-a-new-era-of-animosity
GIST	<p>A few weeks ago, Donald Trump invited Vladimir Putin to meet -- maybe even at the White House. After U.S.-led missile strikes in Syria, the two nations' officials can't get into the same room without insulting each other.</p> <p>Speaking at an emergency session of the United Nations Security Council Saturday, hours after the U.S., France and the U.K. launched missiles intended to take out Syria's chemical weapons capability, American Ambassador Nikki Haley called on Russia -- the main backer of the Syrian regime -- "to take a hard look at the company it keeps." Her Russian counterpart Vassily Nebenzia retorted that the U.S. and its allies were engaged in the "diplomacy of myth-making."</p> <p>The strikes against the regime of Russia's ally Bashar al-Assad put an exclamation point on how swiftly ties between the former Cold War foes have deteriorated in recent weeks, with President Trump even overcoming his past unwillingness to criticize President Putin by name.</p> <p>Now, the U.S.-Russia relationship, already under severe strain over issues from Russian meddling in the 2016 American presidential campaign to its role in Syria and Ukraine, may be irretrievably broken for the</p>

foreseeable future. There may be too much bad blood, too much suspicion and too much anger on both sides to turn the animosity around.

“I don’t see things getting better,” said Boris Zilberman, deputy director of congressional relations at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and a Russia expert. “We’re at a very low point and clearly the administration’s position on Russia has hardened.”

The result has been an unprecedented wave of retaliations and tit-for-tat actions. After the U.K. blamed Russia for the poisoning of a former spy in Britain, more than 150 Russian diplomats were expelled by the U.K. and allies including the U.S. The Trump administration followed with new sanctions on Russian oligarchs including billionaire aluminum magnate Oleg Deripaska. His company lost half its value in a day after the sanctions were announced.

Haley raised the prospect of still more sanctions on Russia, saying Sunday on CBS’s “Face the Nation” that a fresh round of penalties would “go directly to any sorts of companies that were dealing with equipment” related to Assad and his chemical weapons.

While for now no significant new U.S. sanctions seem likely --limiting Russian market losses after last week’s sharp declines -- in Moscow, lawmakers are starting Monday to discuss a draft law with counter-measures against the U.S..

“What kind of cooperation can there be? Where?” asked Fyodor Lukyanov, head of Russia’s Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, who advises the Kremlin. Russia gets “new sanctions and threats every week,” he said. “Americans believe that you can humiliate and put pressure everywhere and at the same time offer cooperation where they need it. This does not happen.”

The two countries routinely accuse each other of fabricating events, as they did during the Cold War.

The U.S. says Russia is blocking investigators from the scene of the chemical attack that prompted the latest airstrikes. Russia has argued both that the attack in the Syrian city of Douma never happened or that it was orchestrated by the U.S. and its allies to provoke a military response.

“Americans need to understand that the wars of the future will look more like this: Russia is investing significant resources to create propaganda and disinformation,” said Senator Ben Sasse, a Nebraska Republican, after Russia claimed that almost all the missiles fired into Syria were shot down -- an assertion the U.S. denied. “Our enemies will work to create confusion and distrust among Americans here at home.”

What limited cooperation there was between the two countries has ground to a halt. A November agreement between the two sides to press all parties in Syria toward negotiations known as the Geneva process has stalled and they have abandoned plans for more “de-escalation zones” to ease the violence. Instead, Russia is attempting to create such zones with Turkey and Iran.

From the White House, there is still hope that Russia will change its posture, and Trump’s informal invitation for an eventual meeting with Putin hasn’t been rescinded.

“After his last call with President Putin on March 20, the president confirmed that the two had discussed a bilateral meeting at a number of potential venues, including the White House,” Robert Palladino, a spokesman for the National Security Council, said in a statement Sunday night. “The desire for a meeting still stands, as the president believes a better relationship with Russia is in our mutual interest. That said, the president has been consistent and tough on Russia.”

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HEADLINE 04/15 Russia: chaos if West strikes Syria again

SOURCE <https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/putin-syria-global-chaos/2018/04/15/id/854589/>

GIST

Russian President Vladimir Putin warned on Sunday that further Western attacks on Syria would bring chaos to world affairs, while signs emerged that Moscow and Washington want to pull back from the worst crisis in their relations for years.

Putin made his remarks in a telephone conversation with Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani after the United States, France and Britain launched missile strikes on Syria on Saturday over a suspected poison gas attack.

A Kremlin statement said Putin and Rouhani agreed that the Western strikes had damaged the chances of achieving a political resolution in the multi-sided, seven-year conflict that has killed at least half a million people.

"Vladimir Putin, in particular, stressed that if such actions committed in violation of the U.N. Charter continue, then it will inevitably lead to chaos in international relations," a Kremlin statement said.

The attacks struck at the heart of Syria's chemical weapons programme, Washington said, in retaliation for a suspected poison gas attack a week ago. All three participants insisted the strikes were not aimed at toppling President Bashar al-Assad or intervening in the conflict.

The bombings, hailed by U.S. President Donald Trump as a success but denounced by Damascus and its allies as an act of aggression, marked the biggest intervention by Western countries against Assad and ally Russia, whose foreign minister Sergei Lavrov called them "unacceptable and lawless".

Putin's comments were published shortly after Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov struck a more conciliatory note by saying Moscow would make every effort to improve political relations with the West.

When asked whether Russia was prepared to work with the proposals of Western countries at the United Nations, Ryabkov told TASS news agency: "Now the political situation is extremely tense, the atmosphere is extremely electrified, so I will not make any predictions.

"We will work calmly, methodically and professionally, using all opportunities to remove the situation from its current extremely dangerous political peak."

Russian Foreign Ministry official Vladimir Ermakov said Washington would want to maintain a dialogue with Moscow about strategic stability after the raids, Russian media reported.

In an indication that the West, too, would prefer to lower tensions, the United States and Britain both reiterated that their military action on Saturday was not aimed at Assad, Putin's ally, only at his use of chemical weapons.

Speaking to the BBC, Britain's Foreign Secretary (Minister) Boris Johnson said that Western powers had no plans for further missile strikes, though they would assess their options if Damascus used chemical weapons again.

"This is not about regime change ... This is not about trying to turn the tide of the conflict in Syria," he told the BBC, adding that Russia was the only country able to pressure Assad to negotiate an end to the conflict.

Asked about U.S.-Russia relations, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said ties were "very strained" but that the United States still hoped for a better relationship.

Haley said that the United States would not pull its troops out of Syria until its goals were accomplished. Speaking on Fox News Sunday, Haley listed three aims for the United States: ensuring that chemical weapons are not used in any way that poses a risk to U.S. interests, that Islamic State is defeated and that there is a good vantage point to watch what Iran is doing.

	Trump has made clear he wants to withdraw the roughly 2,000 U.S. troops involved in the anti-Islamic State campaign in Syria. But he appeared to contradict that message when he said on Saturday that Western allies were prepared to "sustain" the military response if Assad does not stop using prohibited chemical weapons.
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HEADLINE	04/15 Opposition to sanctuary spreads in Calif.
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/us-california-sanctuary-backlash/2018/04/15/id/854625/
GIST	<p>More local governments in California are resisting the state's efforts to resist the Trump administration's immigration crackdown, and political experts see politics at play as Republicans try to fire up voters in a state where the GOP has grown weak.</p> <p>Since the Jeff Sessions-led Department of Justice sued California last month over its so-called "sanctuary state" law limiting police collaboration with immigration agents, at least a dozen local governments have voted to either join or support the lawsuit or for resolutions opposing the state's position. Those include the Board of Supervisors in Orange County, which has more than three million people.</p> <p>More action is coming this week, with leaders in the Orange County city of Los Alamitos scheduled to vote Monday on a proposal for a local law to exempt the community of 12,000 from the state law. On Tuesday, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors is meeting to consider joining the Trump administration lawsuit.</p> <p>Immigration has been a hot topic across the country since President Donald Trump campaigned in 2016 on promises of tougher enforcement and a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border. It has been a lightning rod issue in California far longer.</p> <p>The state passed a measure backed by Republican Gov. Pete Wilson in the 1990s to deny public healthcare and education to immigrants in the country illegally. It was later overturned but left a lingering resentment among the state's growing Hispanic population.</p> <p>In recent years, California Republicans have taken a less strident approach to immigration in a state where one in four people are foreign-born. But the Trump administration lawsuit has energized many in a party that has been rendered nearly irrelevant at the state level, where Democrats control every key office.</p> <p>"When the attorney general of the United States decides to take a firm position against it, I think that gave a signal to a lot of us that, 'Hey, California is on the wrong side of this thing,'" said Fred Whitaker, chairman of the Republican Party in Orange County. He also is a councilman in the city of Orange who proposed a local resolution on the issue that passed last week.</p> <p>Raphael Sonenshein, executive director of the Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs at California State University, Los Angeles, said it's not surprising Republicans are galvanizing over immigration.</p> <p>"Politics is very much about emotions, especially in midterms," he said. "I think it was only a matter of time when people went back to the issue that actually hits the nerve in the Republican base these days more than any other."</p> <p>Under Democratic leadership, California has enacted a series of laws in recent years aimed at helping immigrants, including issuing driver's licenses regardless of legal status and assisting with tuition at state universities. After Trump was elected, lawmakers passed the measure to limit police collaboration with federal immigration agents.</p> <p>Immigrant and civil rights advocates applauded the measure, known as SB54, as a way to encourage immigrants to report crime to police without fearing deportation. Critics said it would make it too hard for</p>

federal agents to find and deport ex-convicts who are a danger to communities.

Most of the local governments siding with the Trump administration are in Orange County, an area once considered a GOP stronghold but that voted for Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election. But it's starting to spread.

Escondido in neighboring San Diego County has voted to support the federal lawsuit and last week the small city of Ripon in the state's Central Valley did the same.

In many cases, meetings on the issue have drawn boisterous crowds. Anti-illegal immigration activists have traveled from city to city to attend, heightening tensions with those who want their communities to support immigrant-friendly policies or stay out of the fray.

In response to the controversy, some local governments have taken the opposite approach. Leaders in Santa Ana, an Orange County city home to about 330,000 residents, voted to support California in the lawsuit.

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HEADLINE	04/16 Syrians Damascus rally support military
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-large-rally-damascus-supporting-assads-army-54494618?
GIST	<p>Hundreds of Syrians gathered on Monday in a landmark square in Syria's capital, Damascus, rallying in support of their armed forces, which they say succeeded in confronting the unprecedented joint airstrikes by the West over the weekend.</p> <p>State TV broadcast the rally live from the central Omayyad Square. Protesters waved Syrian flags at the demonstration, dubbed a "salute to the achievements of the Arab Syrian Army," set off fireworks and unleashed celebratory gunfire.</p> <p>Shouts of "Allah, Syria, and only Bashar," a reference to Syrian President Bashar Assad, rang out.</p> <p>The joint airstrikes by the United States, Britain and France bombed sites that the three countries said were linked to Syria's chemical weapons program. The airstrikes were triggered by an alleged chemical attack in the town of Douma, just outside of Damascus.</p> <p>Syrian activists said more than 40 people were killed, but Syria and Russia deny the attack. Russia accused Britain of staging the attack.</p> <p>Saturday's airstrikes came shortly after a fact-finding mission from the Organization of the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons arrived in Syria to investigate the attack. The mission is still expected to make it to Douma, where government security agencies and Russian military police have deployed after the town fell under government control, raising complaints from the Syrian opposition that evidence of chemical weapons' use might no longer be found.</p> <p>The OPCW is holding an emergency meeting Monday in the Hague to discuss the suspected chemical attack in Douma.</p> <p>The strikes have ratcheted up international tension, as the U.S. and Russia exchanged threats of retaliation. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley has indicated new economic sanctions will be announced Monday against Russia for enabling Assad's government to continue using chemical weapons.</p> <p>Russian President Vladimir Putin said the military strikes violated the U.N. Charter and that if they continue, "it will inevitably entail chaos in international relations," according to a Kremlin statement on Sunday.</p>

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HEADLINE	04/15 Protestors rally to shutdown Starbucks
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/protesters-rally-philadelphia-starbucks-black-men-handcuffed-arrested/story?
GIST	<p>Protestors rallied Sunday at the downtown Philadelphia Starbucks where two black men were led out in handcuffs by police and accused of trespassing to decry the actions of the coffee company and the cops.</p> <p>Armed with bullhorns and signs, a small group of protestors gathered outside the Starbucks on Spruce Street and demanded action in the wake of Thursday's arrests. They directed their rage at Starbucks, the police department and the workers who called the cops in the first place.</p> <p>"We want the manager fired from this establishment for racially profiling black people," a man boomed from the bullhorn. "We want the police officers in the arrest fired as well."</p> <p>The protester with the bullhorn said the activists were "not going anywhere" and vowed, "We're going to show you what a shutdown means."</p> <p>The arrests of the men -- who have not been identified, but have retained an attorney -- was captured on video and tweeted by Melissa DePino, a 50-year-old mother of two who told ABC News she's vowed to not shop at Starbucks again.</p> <p>It's since been viewed more than 9 million times as of Sunday afternoon.</p> <p>"It was humiliating for those guys," Depino told ABC News. "They were completely minding their own business."</p> <p>Both men were later freed and the charges they were facing -- trespassing and disturbance -- were dropped Thursday night.</p> <p>This happened while paperwork was being drawn up. District Attorney Larry Krasner also refused to prosecute once Starbucks asked to not press charges, according to a video testimonial released by Philadelphia Police Commissioner Richard Ross Jr. on Saturday.</p> <p>Attempting to deflect blame away from his department, the commissioner assured the public that he has reviewed the facts and defended the cops, saying they "did absolutely nothing wrong."</p> <p>"I can tell you candidly these officers did a service they were called to do," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Spring blizzard pounds Midwest
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/04/15/spring-blizzard-pounds-midwest-flights-canceled-deaths-reported.html
GIST	<p>Amid a spring blizzard in the Midwest that prompted hundreds of flights to be canceled Saturday, one runway has reopened at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, officials said Sunday.</p> <p>A total of 469 flights had been canceled at the Minnesota airport alone, airport spokesman Patrick Hogan said. All of Saturday's incoming and outgoing flights were canceled because of heavy snowfall and low visibility.</p> <p>The snow was coming down too fast for plows to keep the runways clear or for crews to keep the planes deiced, airport officials said.</p>

Hogan said crews were working to get other runways open.

St. Paul also declared a snow emergency, as blizzard warnings continued into Sunday, the Minneapolis Star Tribune reported.

“This system will rank up there as one of the most significant winter storms in some time,” read a Weather Service report early Saturday. It declared the storm “historic,” shortly after, the Star Tribune reported.

“This is certainly one of the more powerful [storms] in recent memory,” Jacob Beitlich, a Weather Service meteorologist, said, according to the paper. “Any time you close a Twin Cities airport, it’s gotta be usually a pretty bad snowstorm.”

Blizzard conditions have closed the airport for two days in Sioux Falls, South Dakota’s largest city.

The snowfall, part of a storm system stretching from the Gulf Coast to the Great Lakes, brought snow, tornadoes, rain and hail.

At least three weather-related deaths occurred in Wisconsin, Nebraska and Louisiana.

By Saturday night, Minneapolis was buried under more than 13 inches of snow.

It marked the first time a blizzard has descended on the metro area of the Twin Cities since 2005, the Star Tribune said, citing the National Weather Service.

Hundreds of crashes and spinouts were reported across the state, according to the Star Tribune. One fatality occurred Saturday when a vehicle struck a pedestrian in Medina, but it was unclear whether it was weather-related.

The weather is expected to persist through Sunday in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan before moving into New York state and New England.

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HEADLINE	04/15 US, Jordan joint military exercise
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SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/simulated-chemical-incident-part-jordan-us-military-drill-54479293?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
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GIST	The United States and Jordan have launched a 12-day military exercise with scenarios ranging from border security to counter-terrorism and for the first time a simulated chemical incident.
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The Eager Lion drill started Sunday, a day after the U.S., France and Britain launched missiles at Syrian military targets in response to an alleged chemical weapons attack near Damascus a week ago.

Maj. Gen. Jon Mott, the director of Exercises and Training at the U.S. Central Command, told reporters that a mobile laboratory team will respond to a simulated chemical incident.

He said that it's a "threat all too real, as we've seen recently in Syria."

More than 7,000 troops, including 3,500 U.S. service members, are participating in the annual drill, the U.S. military's largest and most complex in the region.

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HEADLINE	04/15 Jefferson Co. to offer CERT training
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SOURCE	https://www.peninsuladailynews.com/news/jefferson-county-to-offer-community-emergency-response-team-training/
GIST	<p>PORT TOWNSEND — Jefferson County is about to start a Community Emergency Response Team training program.</p> <p>Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training has been provided in neighboring Clallam County but not in Jefferson County, until now.</p> <p>The Jefferson County Department of Emergency Management, all county fire districts and the Neighborhood Preparedness (NPREP) action group through Local 20/20 are collaborating on the program, said Lynn Sterbenz, director of Jefferson County Department of Emergency Management.</p> <p>The CERT program educates volunteers about disaster preparedness for possible hazards and trains them in such basic disaster response skills as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization and disaster medical operations.</p> <p>A program manager course will be offered May 21-22, while a three-day train-the-trainer course is planned May 23-25. Both are offered free, with training materials provided, but prerequisites and pre-registration are required.</p> <p>Interested participants must complete and return a registration form by May 16. Registration will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Class size is limited to 30 students with minimum being 15.</p> <p>Qualified volunteers are sought for both courses, Sterbenz said.</p> <p>The first step for the Jefferson County program is to build a cadre of volunteer CERT instructors, Sterbenz said.</p> <p>The county now has seven qualified CERT instructors, as opposed to more than 25 in Clallam County.</p> <p>“We know there are highly qualified retired people in Jefferson County, some of whom are likely CERT trained already who might be interested in joining our instructor pool,” Sterbenz said.</p> <p>Program managers will assist in the ongoing logistical aspects of coordinating the CERT program. The course will prepare participants to work with the Department of Emergency Management, fire districts and NPREP.</p> <p>The prerequisites for both courses are the same: Participants must have completed the CERT basic training course (any location is acceptable) or completed the online course IS-317: Introduction to CERT, which can be found at https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-317.</p> <p>It also is necessary to have a referral from a CERT-sponsoring agency, such as the Department of Emergency Management, city or county government, fire districts, schools, hospitals, or a community-based organization such as NPREP.</p> <p>The registration form is available on the State of Washington, Emergency Management Division’s Training and Exercise calendar. Visit https://mil.wa.gov/training-and-exercise and click on the In-State Training Calendar.</p> <p>CERT offers a consistent, nationwide approach to volunteer training and organization that professional responders can rely on during disaster situations, which allows them to focus on more complex tasks, Sterbenz said.</p> <p>“Through CERT, the capabilities to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters is built and enhanced,” she said in a news release.</p>

	<p>The CERT program was designed as a grassroots initiative and is structured so that the local and state program managers have the flexibility to form their programs in the way that best suits their communities, Sterbenz said.</p> <p>There are more than 2,700 local CERT programs nationwide, with more than 600,000 individuals trained since CERT became a national program.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Britain: no new attacks planned for now
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2018-04-15/no-new-attacks-planned-against-syria-for-now-says-britain
GIST	<p>LONDON (Reuters) - There are no plans as yet to repeat missile strikes on Syria, but Britain will consider further action if President Bashar al-Assad again uses chemical weapons against his people, foreign minister Boris Johnson said on Sunday.</p> <p>In a show of support for Prime Minister Theresa May's decision to join the United States and France in attacking chemical weapons facilities in Syria on Saturday, her one-time political rival Johnson said it was the right thing to do.</p> <p>But the prime minister may not find such backing when she faces parliament on Monday, where some lawmakers are angry that May took military action without their approval - a process that has increasingly become a tradition in Britain.</p> <p>Speaking to the BBC, Johnson said what he described as the successful strikes on three sites in Syria were a message from the world that enough was enough, but acknowledged he could not say whether Assad still had chemical weapons.</p> <p>"There is no proposal on the table at the moment for further attacks because so far, thank heavens, the Assad regime have not been so foolish as to launch another chemical weapons attack," he told the Andrew Marr show.</p> <p>"If and when such a thing were to happen then clearly, with allies, we would study what the options were."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Best age to claim Social Security?
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/personalfinance/retirement/2018/04/14/9-different-ages-for-claiming-social-security-and-what-they-mean-to-you/33696453/
GIST	<p>Social Security serves as a key source of income for millions of retired seniors, and as an eligible worker, you get an eight-year window to start taking benefits. Here are the various ages at which you might claim Social Security, and their impact on your benefits.</p> <p>Age 62 Age 62 is the earliest point at which you can file for Social Security, and it's also the most popular age for seniors to claim benefits. The advantage of filing at 62 is that you get your money sooner. The downside, however, is that you'll face the greatest reduction in benefits by going this route.</p> <p>If you're entitled to a full monthly benefit of \$1,500 at age 67, for example, then filing at 62 will knock each payment you collect down to \$1,050. That said, if you're unemployed come 62 or need the money for another reason, you're better off taking benefits than resorting to credit card debt.</p> <p>Age 63 Filing for Social Security at 63 still means taking benefits early and having them significantly reduced.</p>

Still, if you're desperate for cash, it often pays to take that hit, which won't be quite as bad as it would if you were to file at 62. Using our example above, a \$1,500 benefit at age 67 would be whittled down to \$1,125 at 63 -- not ideal, but better than collecting just \$1,050.

Age 64

Claiming Social Security at age 64 will also result in a sizable reduction in your full monthly benefit. But it won't be as drastic as filing at an earlier age. In the case of a \$1,500 benefit at 67, you'd only lose about 20% by filing at 64, thereby resulting in a \$1,200 monthly payment.

Age 65

Once you turn 65, you're eligible for coverage under Medicare. As such, some people get confused and assume that 65 is the age at which they're able to collect their Social Security benefits in full. Not so. Still, if you retire at 65 once Medicare kicks in and decide to file for benefits simultaneously, you won't face such an extreme reduction. Following the above example, a \$1,500 monthly benefit at 67 would only be reduced to \$1,300 at 65.

Age 66

Age 66 is a significant one from a Social Security standpoint because it's when workers born between 1943 and 1954 reach full retirement age and are thereby eligible to collect their monthly benefits without a reduction. Your full retirement age is a function of your year of birth, as follows:

YEAR OF BIRTH	FULL RETIREMENT AGE
1943-1954	66
1955	66 and 2 months
1956	66 and 4 months
1957	66 and 6 months
1958	66 and 8 months
1959	66 and 10 months
1960	67

Data source: Social Security Administration.

Therefore, if you were born after 1954 but before 1960, your full retirement age is 66 and a certain number of months. If you were born in 1960 or later and have a full retirement age of 67, filing for Social Security at 66 will reduce your benefits by about 6.67%. That means a full monthly benefit of \$1,500 would go down to just \$1,400 if you were to take them a year earlier.

Age 67

If you were born in 1960 or later, this is perhaps the age you've been waiting for, since it's when you get to take your monthly benefits in full. In our example, age 67 is when you'd get that \$1,500 we keep talking about. That said, you don't have to file for Social Security at full retirement age. You can hold off and grow your benefits for a higher monthly payout.

Age 68

Though 68 is hardly a common age for taking Social Security, it's a strategic one nonetheless. That's because for each year you delay your benefits past full retirement age up until age 70, you get an 8% boost in payments, which, in our ongoing example, would take a full monthly benefit of \$1,500 at 67 up to \$1,620 at 68. That increase then remains in effect for the rest of your life. Of course, not everyone wants or can afford to hold off on benefits all the way until 70, but waiting until 68 is a decent compromise --

you get a modest boost without having to wait too long.

Age 69

Age 69 is a good time to take your benefits if you don't need them sooner. Doing so will boost our aforementioned \$1,500 benefit to \$1,740, thus guaranteeing a higher payout for as long as you collect Social Security.

Age 70

The credits you accrue for delaying benefits past full retirement age stop accumulating once you reach 70. Therefore, it's considered the latest age to file for Social Security. Granted, you don't have to sign up for benefits at that time, but there's really no financial incentive not to. If you're dealing with a full retirement age of 67, filing at 70 means boosting your benefits by 24%, which would turn a \$1,500 monthly payment into \$1,860 -- for life.

Which of the above ages is the right one for you to take benefits? It depends on a host of circumstances, from your savings level to your employment status to the state of your health. The key is to understand the pros and cons of filing at various ages so you land on the one that works best for you.

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HEADLINE	04/14 Recall: 200M eggs
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/nation-now/2018/04/14/200-million-eggs-recalled-over-salmonella-fears/518245002/
GIST	<p>GREENSBORO, N.C. — More than 200 million eggs are being recalled over fears of salmonella.</p> <p>Rose Acre Farms of Seymour, Ind., is voluntarily recalling the eggs due to possible contamination with the bacteria.</p> <p>According to the Food and Drug Administration, 22 illnesses have been reported so far.</p> <p>The eggs were distributed from the farm in Hyde County, N.C., and reached consumers in Colorado, Florida, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia through retail stores and restaurants.</p> <p>They were sold under the brand names Country Daybreak; Crystal Farms; Coburn Farms; Sunshine Farms; Glenview; Great Value; as well as at Walmart and Food Lion stores.</p> <p>The egg recall is the largest in the United States since 2010, according to Food Safety News.</p> <p>The recall involves eggs with the plant number P-105, with the Julian date range of 011 through 012 printed on either side of the carton or package.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 France: Syria used chemicals in attack
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/04/14/France-issues-report-with-evidence-Assad-used-chemicals-in-attack/8611523742681/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=1
GIST	<p>April 14 (UPI) -- In the aftermath of the early morning attacks on Syria, France declassified a report with details they say prove that a chemical attack in Syria last week was carried out by the regime of President Bashar Assad.</p> <p>The seven-page report, released by the Foreign Ministry on Saturday, said chemicals used in attacks on the Damascus suburb of Douma April 7 left victims with skin and cornea burns, suffocation and other breathing difficulties and extreme salivation and secretions from the mouth and nose, all markers</p>

	<p>consistent with the effects of chlorine gas.</p> <p>The report also states other strikes using chemical weapons have been carried out by the Syrian government since April 4, 2017, when a chemical attack in Syria's northern Idlib province left more than 80 civilians dead.</p> <p>French President Emmanuel Macron had been under pressure to back his claim that France has "proof" of Assad's role in the chemical attack in Douma.</p> <p>France joined the United States and Great Britain early Saturday in firing 105 missiles at three sites in a "proportional" attack, destroying "fundamental components" of Syria's chemical weapons infrastructure including a research center in greater Damascus, a chemical weapons storage facility and another storage facility and command center, both in Homs.</p> <p>France's conclusions were supported U.S. officials who determined that chlorine and sarin, a highly toxic nerve agent, were used on the civilians in the April 7 attack.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Australia bushfire threatens Sydney
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-43773656
GIST	<p>Hundreds of Australian firefighters are tackling a large bushfire that has reportedly affected homes in the southern suburbs of Sydney.</p> <p>The New South Wales Rural Fire Service (RFS) said it was concerned that flying embers could spark new blazes ahead of the advancing fire front.</p> <p>Some residents have been instructed to seek shelter as evacuation is now too dangerous.</p> <p>Recent weather in south-eastern Australia has been unseasonably hot.</p> <p>Shane Fitzsimmons from the RFS said the fire was behaving "very aggressively".</p> <p>Strong winds have been pushing the flames north and east towards suburban areas.</p> <p>The fire has burned nearly 2,500 hectares of land, the RFS said.</p> <p>More than 70 fire appliances were stationed along roads dividing bushland from homes while helicopters were dumping water on the fire from above, SBS reported.</p> <p>Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull praised the emergency response.</p> <p>"It is unseasonably hot and that's a matter of obviously great concern, but we have to deal with the worst that Mother Nature can throw at us and the worse Australians are presented with by nature, the better it brings out the Australian spirit," he said.</p> <p>New South Wales police have declared the area a crime scene but the RFS says it is too early to know if the fire was started deliberately, SBS reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Gun rights rallies at state capitols
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2018/04/15/gun-rights-supporters-hold-rallies-at-state-capitols-across-us.html

<p>GIST</p>	<p>Gun rights advocates rallied at state capitols across the country on Saturday to make their voices heard amid recent efforts to impose stricter gun-control laws that they fear undermine their Second Amendment rights.</p> <p>Peaceful protesters numbering in the hundreds gathered outside statehouses from Maine to Wyoming to hear speakers warn that any restrictions on gun ownership or use could eventually lead to bans for law-abiding gun owners.</p> <p>“Gun owners have been portrayed in a negative way and it is our hope that this peaceable rally will show that we are safe, law-abiding individuals that happen to take our constitutional rights very seriously,” Dave Gulya, an organizer for the Maine event that attracted about 800 people, told the Bangor Daily News.</p> <p>The National Constitutional Coalition of Patriotic Americans sponsored the 45 planned rallies across the U.S. in support of the right to bear arms, according to the paper.</p> <p>"If you have a building and you take a brick out every so often, after a while you're not going to have a building," said Westley Williams, who joined about 100 people outside the state Supreme Court building in Cheyenne, Wyo.</p> <p>An estimated 160 Second Amendment supporters rallied in Atlanta, with some carrying firearms, flags and signs saying “Don’t Tread on Me” as they listened to speakers talk about gun rights.</p> <p>Protesters in Vermont took to the steps of the Statehouse in Montpelier, where days earlier they felt Gov. Phil Scott “betrayed” them when he signed three major gun control measures.</p> <p>“Three days ago, on these steps, we were betrayed,” Joe Nagle told the Burlington Free Press. "We were promised no new gun laws."</p> <p>The paper reported that the National Rifle Association criticized Scott, a Republican, and called on gun owners to abandon the governor, who changed his stance in February after an alleged school shooting plot shook the state.</p> <p>Saturday's protests came less than three weeks after hundreds of thousands marched in Washington, New York and elsewhere to demand tougher gun laws after the Feb. 14 school shooting in Parkland, Fla., that killed 17. Organizers of those protests demanded a ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, and called for universal background checks on potential gun owners.</p> <p>Pro-gun protesters also showed up in Boston; Indianapolis; Albany, N.Y.; Austin, Texas; Des Moines, Iowa; and other cities.</p>
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<p>HEADLINE</p>	<p>04/14 Experts: strikes won't stop Syria Assad</p>
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/trump-s-u-s-led-airstrike-syria-won-t-stop-n866046</p>
<p>GIST</p>	<p>The Pentagon boasted Saturday that its coordinated show of military force obliterated key chemical weapons facilities in Syria and set back the country's chemical weapons capabilities "for years."</p> <p>But military and Middle East experts say the predawn onslaught — touted by the Defense Department as "precise, overwhelming and effective" — appears to have been little more than an empty gesture and likely did not do much to alter Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's military calculus.</p> <p>Gen. Douglas Lute, the former U.S. ambassador to NATO, said that Assad's threshold for pain is very high because "he's in a fight for his life" to maintain control of his country, which has been mired in a seven-year civil war.</p>

The airstrikes, which targeted three facilities involved in research or storage of chemical weapons in western Syria, won't disable him from taking further action — whether chemical or conventional, Lute said.

"I think he's feeling reasonably good right now," Lute said of Assad. "Some of his facilities were struck, but it doesn't really challenge his hold on the country."

But experts said it's unclear how long of an impact the strike would have on Assad's weapon capabilities and whether it would dissuade him, as intended, from using chemical weapons in the future. Syria has repeatedly denied using chemical weapons against its people.

They also said the so-called red line that the Trump administration is drawing, meant as a marker for reprisals, could be problematic.

"People will see [the reasoning for the strike] and say, 'Does that mean that Bashar al-Assad has the green light to use conventional munitions against defenseless civilians?'" said former Ambassador Lincoln Bloomfield, who served in the past three Republican administrations, most recently as the assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs under President George W. Bush.

Assad, meanwhile, appeared unruffled Saturday as he strolled into the presidential palace in Damascus, briefcase in hand and mere miles from where some of the missiles struck chemical weapons depots hours earlier, according to a video released on Twitter by the Syrian regime.

While the attack may have destroyed the facilities where Syria combines its chemical agents, the strike likely will only cripple the country's ability to deploy certain agents, such as sarin gas, experts told NBC News.

Sarin was not the only agent used in the alleged chemical attack last week on the rebel stronghold of Douma, east of Damascus, senior Trump administration officials said Saturday.

Defense Secretary James Mattis told reporters Friday that chlorine gas was also used. Experts say that it's a common industrial chemical that is not difficult to produce and can be added to a barrel bomb or improvised artillery rocket.

It's unlikely Syria's ability to produce or find the chemical were inhibited by the airstrikes in any way, said Justin Bronk, a research fellow at the Royal United Services Institute in London.

The widespread use of chlorine for commercial purposes means that it is not included in the Chemical Weapons Convention that came into effect in 1997, a point readily cited by the Russian and Syrian governments. But the use of it as a gas in war or as an attachment to an explosive does constitute a war crime, experts said, and it's a simple weapon that has roots that go as far back as World War I.

That's why some experts don't think the strategic strike on chemical weapons facilities in Syria will have a long-term effect on the Assad regime, including its military operations.

"I don't think [their chemical weapons] capability will have been affected significantly at all," Bronk said. "And the delivery mechanism that is the Syrian Air Force — we have not seen much in terms of bases being hit as opposed to chemical facilities. The aircraft were mostly evacuated so they would have remained untouched."

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HEADLINE 04/14 US warns 'locked, loaded' on Syria

SOURCE <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/syria-strikes-haley-warns-u-s-locked-and-loaded-if-syrian-regime-uses-poisonous-gas-again/>

GIST	<p>The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations said President Donald Trump told her Saturday morning that if the Syrian regime uses poisonous gas again, "the United States is locked and loaded" to strike again. Nikki Haley relayed the message from Mr. Trump at an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council on Saturday.</p> <p>"When our president draws a red line, our president enforces the red line," she said.</p> <p>Haley said the message from the U.S., U.K. and French airstrikes overnight that "crippled Syria's chemical weapons program" was "crystal clear."</p> <p>"The United States of America will not allow the Assad regime to continue using chemical weapons," she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Closer look at targets hit in Syria
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/syrian-airstrikes-hit-chemical-weapons-facilities-2018-04-14/
GIST	<p>The U.S., together with the U.K. and France, targeted three sites in Syria overnight in response to the Syrian regime's alleged use of chemical weapons on civilians last weekend. The Pentagon said a total of 105 weapons were launched in the operation.</p> <p>"This is going to set the Syrian chemical weapons program back for years," Lt. Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, a director of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Saturday morning.</p> <p>Chief Pentagon spokeswoman Dana White described the target choices as "very methodical" and called it a "deliberate decision" to go after chemical weapons facilities.</p> <p>"The strikes went at the very heart of the enterprise to the research, to develop, to storage. So we are very confident that we have significantly crippled Assad's ability to produce these weapons," White said.</p> <p>Barzeh research and development center, Damascus The Pentagon said 76 missiles were aimed at the research center located northeast of central Damascus. McKenzie said 57 of the missiles were Tomahawk missiles, adding that the strikes "successfully destroyed" three buildings in the city.</p> <p>The research center was used for development, production and testing of chemical and biological warfare technology, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen. Joseph Dunford said at a news conference Friday.</p> <p>Britain's Ministry of Defense said the facility was a former missile base where the Syrian regime keeps "chemical weapon precursors stockpiled in breach of Syria's obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention." It said the facility is located "some distance from any known concentrations of civilian habitation, reducing yet further any such risk."</p> <p>Images from The Associated showed the damage to the facility that was essentially reduced to rubble.</p> <p>CBS News correspondent Seth Doane visited the site Saturday where the complex once stood. He spoke with a scientist only identified as Sayed who said his office -- and life's work -- were inside the building.</p> <p>Sayed said he'd worked there for 38 years and cried when he saw the complex in ruins. He said it's "totally incorrect" that chemical weapons were being developed there. "The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) visited here and didn't report anything wrong with this place," he said.</p> <p>Him Shinshar chemical weapons storage site, west of Homs The facility is located 15 miles west of Homs and was the primary location of Syrian serin and precursor production equipment, Dunford said.</p>

Twenty-two weapons were aimed at the site, including naval cruise missiles and scout teams, McKenzie said Saturday.

Second chemical weapons storage site, west of Homs

Seven missiles targeted the bunker, which was successfully hit, Gen. McKenzie said Saturday. He said the missiles were delivered from British, French and U.S. from the Mediterranean, and each strike hit around 4 a.m. in Syria.

"This strike aimed to deliver a clear and unambiguous message to the Syrian regime that their use of chemical weapons against innocent civilians is inexcusable and to deter any future use of chemical weapons," McKenzie said Saturday.

He said initial indications showed the strikes accomplished the Pentagon's "military objections without material interference from Syria."

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HEADLINE	04/14 Warship ruse, new stealth missiles
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-14/warship-ruse-and-new-stealth-missiles-how-they-attacked-syria
GIST	<p>President Donald Trump's outrage over another apparent chemical weapons attack by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was clear. And for the second time in his presidency, the U.S. commander-in-chief demanded retaliation.</p> <p>As images of sick or dying children flooded global media all week, the U.S. guided-missile destroyer USS Winston Churchill churned toward the Mediterranean to join a flotilla of allied warships, including another U.S. destroyer, the USS Donald Cook.</p> <p>It was a ruse.</p> <p>While both vessels carry as many as 90 Tomahawk missiles -- the main weapon used in the Friday evening strike on Syria -- neither ship in the end fired a shot. Instead, according to a person familiar with White House war planning, they were part of a plan to distract Russia and its Syrian ally from an assault Assad's government could do little to defend itself against.</p> <p>It worked. Pentagon officials on Saturday said they faced little resistance to their targeted attack on what they said were three Syrian chemical weapons facilities. Most of the Syrian countermeasures, including defensive ballistic missiles, were fired after U.S. and allied weapons hit their targets, Lieutenant General Kenneth McKenzie told reporters on Saturday.</p> <p>"No Syrian weapon had any effect on anything we did," McKenzie said. He described the joint U.S., French and U.K. strike as "precise, overwhelming and effective."</p> <p>Brazen as it was perceived to be, the Assad regime's decision to again use chemical weapons on own people didn't by itself spur the U.S. to act. The Trump administration was also motivated by how closely the attack followed the use of a nerve agent to poison a Russian ex-spy and his daughter in England in March, an action the U.K. government and its allies blamed on Russia.</p> <p>The English incident added to concerns held by Trump, his top aides, and leaders in the U.K. and France that not responding might encourage proliferation of chemical weapons, according to two administration officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the deliberations.</p> <p>As the strategy of how to respond took shape, Trump appeared to telegraph his intentions to the world with a tweet on April 11: "Russia vows to shoot down any and all missiles fired at Syria. Get ready Russia,</p>

because they will be coming, nice and new and ‘smart!’”

Analysts suggested Assad’s regime would respond to Trump’s threats by protectively moving weapons and personnel away from likely targets. An already difficult battle plan -- which required hitting Assad without provoking Russian reprisals or injecting the U.S. further into Syria’s seven-year civil war -- was getting harder.

In the White House, Trump met with military officials and made several calls to his French and British counterparts, President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Theresa May, with the goal of following through on a threat to impose a “big price” on Syria -- a vow made in an earlier tweet, on April 8.

During a meeting with the National Security Council and top military leaders early in the week, Trump had been presented five large target options -- called sets -- for potential strikes, according to the person familiar with the plans. The president largely listened as Pentagon chief Jim Mattis, Joint Chiefs Chairman Marine Corps General Joe Dunford and other military leaders did most of the talking. New National Security Adviser John Bolton -- who started work on April 9 -- and Vice President Mike Pence were also on hand.

The president asked Bolton and the military leaders to justify each potential target, and was particularly focused on limiting the risk of escalation by Russia. There was unanimity among Trump’s top national security staff about conducting strikes but debate about how hard to hit the Syrians, the person said.

Trump, who just a week earlier said he wanted to pull U.S. troops out of Syria “very soon,” didn’t want to become drawn into the civil war there and instead focused the military response on deterring the use of chemical weapons, according to the official.

With the allies on board and the USS Winston Churchill arriving in the Mediterranean region, the attack was nearly under way.

As the president addressed the nation at 9 p.m. Washington time, on Friday, a barrage of 105 U.S., U.K. and French missiles converged on Syria. They came from the Red Sea, the Arabian Gulf and the Mediterranean, homing in from three directions to overwhelm whatever missile defenses Assad’s regime might deploy. Russia’s more advanced air defense system didn’t engage the allied weapons.

According to the Pentagon, the allied weaponry included 19 new “Extended-Range” stealthy Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Attack Munitions launched by two B-1B bombers based out of Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, and six Tomahawk cruise missiles launched from the Virginia-class USS John Warner submarine. The bomber-launched missiles, built by Lockheed Martin Corp., had never been used in combat.

The cruiser USS Monterey fired 30 Tomahawks and the destroyer USS Laboon fired seven Tomahawks from the Red Sea. The destroyer USS Higgins fired 23 Tomahawks from the North Arabian Gulf, according to McKenzie.

The weapons also included French SCALP-EG cruise missiles and British Storm Shadow standoff missiles launched by Tornado and Typhoon jets. Nine SCALP missiles were fired at what the Pentagon said was a chemical weapons storage complex at Hims-Shinshar, along with two SCALPS, nine Tomahawks and eight Storm Shadows.

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HEADLINE	04/15 Caravan migrants on freight train to US
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/14/americas/central-america-migrant-caravan-train/index.html
GIST	Tultitlán, Mexico (CNN)A stampede of Central American migrants rushed to the tracks Saturday when the first whistle of the train rang out.

After a few days in Mexico City, it was time to continue their journey north to the US border. About 500 migrants traveling in a caravan climbed onto the freight train just outside the Mexican city of Tultitlán.

They were about 1,500 miles south of the US-Mexico border as they started heading northwest to the city of Celaya.

As the train slowed down, migrants scrambled around the train cars to find a way to climb aboard, throwing small bags of belongings onto the train and hastily helping one another.

Police and guards watched from a few feet away. Some took photos. None took action to stop the migrants as they climbed the train.

As migrants set makeshift tents with blankets to protect them from the dusty wind and scorching sun, people from the ground and a bridge above waved. Some tossed water and snacks. As the train pulled forward, one migrant yelled out, "Gracias Mexico!" ("Thank you Mexico!")

More than 1,100 people set on the journey across Mexico on March 25, but they have dispersed into smaller groups as they headed north, organizers said.

The government of Mexico has granted many of the migrants temporary permission to stay in the country. Most of the migrants agree Mexico has been a welcoming place. Police have escorted the caravan at times and stopped traffic to help the convoys stay together. Churches and shelters have opened their doors, providing food and a safe place to sleep. Some of the migrants have decided to stay in Mexico.

The migrants, most from Honduras, say they are fleeing violence and poverty. Honduras and El Salvador are among the countries with the highest homicide rates in the world.

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HEADLINE	04/14 US confident Syria used chlorine, sarin
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/14/politics/us-chlorine-sarin-syria/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Senior US officials expressed confidence Saturday that both chlorine and sarin gas were used in Syria's alleged chemical weapons attack on the Damascus enclave of Douma last week -- a conclusion that went a step further than Vice President Mike Pence did in his remarks earlier Saturday.</p> <p>"While the available information is much greater on the chlorine use, we do have significant information that also points to sarin use," a senior administration official said on a call with reporters, citing reports from media, nongovernmental organizations and other open sources.</p> <p>"They do point to miosis -- constricted pupils -- convulsions and disruptions to central nervous systems. Those symptoms don't come from chlorine. They come from nerve agents. ... It's a much more efficient weapon, unfortunately, the way the regime has been using it, and it's resulted in higher deaths, it resulted in terrible pictures."</p> <p>The comments come a day after the United States launched targeted airstrikes against suspected chemical weapons facilities in Syria in coordination with the British and French.</p> <p>Earlier Saturday, Pence held off from expressing a final judgment about whether sarin gas was deployed in the chemical weapons attack.</p> <p>"Chlorine and possibly nerve agents were used," Pence said during his address at the Summit of the Americas in Peru.</p> <p>Another administration official laid out evidence on Saturday for the United States' conclusion that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government was behind the chemical weapons attack; that included</p>

eyewitness accounts of Syrian government helicopters circling the site of the attack on April 7 and high-resolution photos that "clearly" documented asphyxiation and foaming at the mouth.

"Assad has established himself as a user of chemical weapons" from past attacks, the official added.

Another official said, "We have incontrovertible evidence from the photos" that chemical weapons were used and it was "clear to the international community."

The administration maintains that it "exhausted every avenue in the international community" for diplomacy and sanctions before launching the missile strike, and that the President and allies felt the appropriate response was military action.

US officials said they hope the strike will serve to deter Syria's government from using chemical weapons in the future.

"If this step does not succeed, we will be prepared to act again," an official said on the call, echoing what other top administration officials emphasized on Saturday. Whether or not that happens is up to Syria and also Russia, the officials said.

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HEADLINE	04/15 US, allies: end Syria chem. program
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/15/middleeast/us-uk-france-russia-un-syria-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The United States, the United Kingdom and France are pushing for an "irreversible" end to Syria's chemical weapons program, amid furious recriminations from Russia over the effectiveness and legality of a wave of US-led missile strikes on Syrian targets.</p> <p>UN diplomats shared with CNN a new resolution, led by France and backed by the US and the UK, calling for an independent investigation into the suspected chemical weapons attack inside Syria that precipitated the cruise missile strikes unleashed by the Western allies Friday.</p> <p>France's ambassador to the United Nations, Francois Delattre, said Syria's chemical weapons program must be dismantled in a "verifiable and irreversible way."</p> <p>The renewed push for a UN-backed diplomatic solution follows a volatile emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, called by Moscow Saturday, with Russia's UN ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, condemning the joint US-British-French strikes as a violation of international law.</p> <p>Nebenzia said Friday's missile strikes, targeted at facilities associated with the Syrian regime's chemical weapons program, had been a "blow to the political settlement" in the divided Middle Eastern nation.</p> <p>The Russian-led response to the strikes, though limited to words, comes amid days of building pressure and talk among UN diplomats of a potential new Cold War.</p> <p>UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has urged all Security Council members to show restraint, as US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley told the meeting that Washington remains "locked and loaded" to respond to any future Syrian chemical attacks.</p> <p>Outside of the UN, protests against the strikes were held around the world Saturday, including in major cities in the US, Mexico, Greece and the UK.</p> <p>While some of the protestors came out in support of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's regime, many others were opposed to the use of military action by Western powers against Syria.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Russia: Western-designed nerve agent
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russia-trace-western-made-nerve-agent-uk-samples-54468326
GIST	<p>Russia's foreign minister says Moscow has received a document from a Swiss lab that analyzed the samples in the nerve agent poisoning of an ex-Russian spy, which points at a Western-designed nerve agent as a likely cause.</p> <p>Minister Sergey Lavrov said Saturday that Moscow received the confidential information from the laboratory in Spiez, Switzerland, that analyzed samples from the site of the March 4 poisoning of Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the English city of Salisbury.</p> <p>He said the analysis was done at the request of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.</p> <p>The OPCW's report confirmed British findings that the Skripals were poisoned with a military-grade nerve agent, but didn't say who was responsible.</p> <p>Britain has accused Russia of poisoning them with a Soviet-designed agent, an accusation that Moscow denies.</p> <p>Lavrov said the document indicated that the samples from Salisbury contained BZ nerve agent and its precursor. He said BZ was part of chemical arsenals of the U.S., Britain and other NATO countries, while the Soviet Union and Russia never developed the agent.</p> <p>Lavrov added that the Swiss lab also pointed at the presence of the nerve agent A234 in the samples, but added that the lab noted that its presence in the samples appeared strange, given the substance's high volatility and the relatively long period between the poisoning and the sample-taking.</p> <p>He noted that OPCW's report didn't contain any mention of BZ, adding that Russia will ask the chemical weapons watchdog for an explanation.</p> <p>Britain said that the A234 agent belonged to the family of Soviet-designed nerve agents dubbed Novichok.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Thousands protest in Athens against US
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/thousands-protest-athens-us-led-syria-airstrikes-54478012?
GIST	<p>Thousands of Greeks turned up at a rally and march in central Athens organized by the Communist Party to protest the U.S.-led airstrikes against Syria.</p> <p>The protesters gathered Saturday at Athens' central Syntagma Square before marching to the U.S. Embassy, chanting anti-U.S. slogans and carrying banners. Some wrote on the pavement in red paint: "Americans, murderers of people."</p> <p>Police vehicles barricaded access to the embassy and protesters left peacefully.</p> <p>Dimitris Koutsoumbas, the Communist Party's leader, blasted Greek politicians for believing "flimsy excuses about a use of chemical weapons" by Syria. He also criticized their "subservience" to the EU and NATO, as well as their support for Israel.</p> <p>He told the crowd "the imperialists once again spill the blood of the local people. They destroy and splinter states by using fabricated evidence."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Israel: Hamas tunnel network destroyed
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/israel-destroys-hamas-tunnel-network-gaza-54478033?
GIST	<p>The Israeli military said Sunday it has destroyed a Gaza attack tunnel built by Hamas militants that penetrated Israeli territory.</p> <p>Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus, a military spokesman, said the new Hamas tunnel was connected to a network dug in the northern Gaza Strip and entered Israel near the Israeli community of Nahal Oz. It's the fifth such Hamas tunnel Israel has destroyed in as many months.</p> <p>Conricus said the tunnel was adjacent to the site of recent mass protests, which Israel says Hamas is using as a cover for attacks.</p> <p>Conricus said Hamas began building the tunnel following the 2014 war. Israel has placed a high priority on halting the tunnel threat since Hamas infiltrated Israel during the war. Although they did not manage to reach civilian areas, the infiltrations caught Israel off guard, with one attack killing five soldiers, and terrified the local population.</p> <p>In two weeks of protests, 28 Palestinians have been killed and more than 1,500 wounded by Israeli fire. The marches have been organized by Gaza's militant Hamas rulers, but large turnouts on two preceding Fridays were also driven by Gaza's dire living conditions and desperation among the territory's 2 million residents, who have been enduring a crippling border closure by Israel and Egypt since 2007.</p> <p>Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman said this was the longest and deepest tunnel Israel has discovered thus far.</p> <p>"It's a tunnel that cost millions of dollars to dig, money that instead of going to ease the hardship of Gaza's residents has sunk in the sand," he said. "Residents of Gaza: Hamas is burning your money on tunnels to nowhere."</p> <p>Hamas had no immediate comment.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 France urges Russia join peace push
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/france-urges-russia-join-peace-push-syria-strike-54478584?
GIST	<p>France is urging Russia to join a push for a political solution in Syria after joint U.S., French and British attacks on Syrian chemical weapons sites.</p> <p>French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said in an interview published Sunday in the Journal du Dimanche newspaper that "we should join our efforts to promote a political process in Syria that would allow a way out of the crisis."</p> <p>France has continued to talk regularly with Russia even as East-West tensions have grown. French President Emmanuel Macron spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday, hours before the Western missile strikes.</p> <p>Western countries blamed Syria's government for a chemical attack on a rebel-held area earlier this month that killed more than 40 people. The Syrian government and its ally Russia denied the allegations.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Security Council rejects Russia outcry
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/us-locked-loaded-syria-chemical-weapons-nikki-haley/story?id=54466163&cid=clicksource_4380645_1_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>The U.S. announced that overnight airstrikes succeeded in dealing a severe blow against the Syrian government's capacity to use chemical weapons.</p> <p>But U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley also warned Saturday that the U.S. is "locked and loaded" in case Syrian President Bashar al-Assad uses chemical weapons again.</p> <p>"Last night, we successfully hit the heart of Syria's chemical weapons enterprise, and because of these actions, we are confident that we have crippled Syria's chemical weapons program," Haley said at an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council. "I spoke to the president this morning and he said that if the Syrian regime uses this poisonous gas again, the United States is locked and loaded."</p> <p>She added, "When our president draws a red line, our president enforces the red line."</p> <p>The Security Council meanwhile rejected a Russian resolution calling for condemnation of the "aggression" by the U.S. and its allies against Syria. Only two other countries, China and Bolivia, joined Russia in supporting the resolution. Eight countries voted against it, and three abstained. A resolution needs at least nine "yes" votes to pass.</p> <p>Anatoly Antonov, Russia's ambassador to the United States, tweeted that the strike would have repercussions. "We warned that such actions will not be left without consequences."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Report: Seattle w/most regressive taxes
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/953315/seattle-regressive-taxes/
GIST	<p>Washington state's tax system has been called the most unfair to the poor in the nation. Now, Seattle is ranked as having the most regressive taxes in the state.</p> <p>According to a report from the Economic Opportunity Institute, a Seattle household making \$25,000 per year pays 17 percent of its income in state and local taxes. Meanwhile, a household earning \$250,000 pays just 4.4 percent.</p> <p>"Even if public expenditures are relatively progressive in nature, city projects are increasingly being built on the backs of those who can least afford to pay for them," the report from the Institute states.</p> <p>Seattle, the Institute criticizes, likes to imagine itself as a progressive beacon. But of the major cities in Washington, it's Spokane that has the least regressive taxes. A household earning \$25,000 has 10.4 percent of its income taxed</p> <p>Of course, King County voters tend to approve higher taxes to fund schools and projects more than outside cities.</p> <p>But Seattle is trapped within the state's already regressive tax system.</p> <p>"Every major statewide tax in Washington is regressive," according to the report.</p>
Return to Top	<i>You can read the entire report here</i>

HEADLINE	04/13 Probe: SPD cops violated force policy
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/two-seattle-officers-violated-force-policies-in-eastlake-

	<u>shooting-internal-probe-finds/</u>
GIST	<p>Two Seattle police officers violated policies when they fired a barrage of gunshots that injured the driver and passenger of a stolen car fleeing an Eastlake alley in October, the department's internal-investigation unit has found.</p> <p>The Office of Police Accountability (OPA) recommended that allegations regarding excessive use of force, use of deadly force on a fleeing person and firing weapons at a moving vehicle be sustained, said Andrew Myerberg, OPA's civilian director.</p> <p>Myerberg said the officers' chain of command agreed with the findings, which were jointly submitted to Interim Police Chief Carmen Best for a final decision and any potential disciplinary action.</p> <p>Neither officer was named by the OPA, but the department has previously identified them as Officer Kenneth Martin and Officer Tabitha Sexton. They will be given the opportunity to meet with the chief before a decision is reached. Hearings have been set for May.</p> <p>In Martin's case, the OPA recommended that an additional allegation of failure to de-escalate the situation also be sustained.</p> <p>No details on the findings were released. The Seattle Times has filed a public-disclosure request for the OPA's written findings and analysis. Kevin Stuckey, president of the Seattle Police Officers' Guild, could not be reached for comment.</p> <p>On Oct. 8, Martin and Sexton fired dozens of rounds at a fleeing Subaru in an alley west of the 2200 block of Yale Avenue East. Video footage captured by officers' body cameras and dashboard cameras was released by the department's public-affairs office two days after the incident.</p> <p>Police had responded to a call reporting two people using drugs and possibly handling a gun inside a car.</p> <p>The video shows officers moving toward a car as an officer asks "is that them right there?" Officers then yell for one of the individuals to get on the ground, but the person ran toward the car.</p> <p>The video then shows four officers running toward the car, with one of them — identified as Martin — standing in front of the car and moving out of the way as the driver leaves a parking stall and heads north through the alley.</p> <p>Martin and Sexton initially opened fire as the car pulled out. The driver briefly stopped the car twice as the officers opened fire again with numerous gunshots. The driver then turned the vehicle right and drove off.</p> <p>The driver and passenger were not seriously hurt and were arrested later in Everett.</p> <p>In charging documents filed against both occupants of the car, a Seattle police detective wrote that as officers approached the car on foot, they shouted commands that the suspects ignored.</p> <p>Martin was standing in front the car, and patrol-car video showed the driver accelerated forward and struck Martin as he was trying to get out of the way, according to the detective.</p> <p>"To stop the imminent threat, officers fired their firearms," the detective wrote.</p> <p>One issue to arise in the incident was whether the officers had justification to fire the second volley of shots, when the car appeared to be driving away.</p> <p>According to the Police Department's manual, officers shouldn't fire at a moving vehicle "unless a person in the vehicle is immediately threatening the officer or another person with deadly force by means other than the vehicle." The manual states that the moving vehicle itself shall not "presumptively constitute a threat that justifies" deadly force.</p>

Officers also should move out of the path of a vehicle unless the person is immediately threatening the officer or another person.

King County prosecutors conducted a preliminary review of the incident, but tentatively declined to bring criminal charges against Martin and Sexton. Prosecutors, who will make a final determination later, returned the case to the Police Department for further investigation.

Myerberg said the OPA didn't reach a conclusion on whether the two officers committed violations of law, leaving that decision to prosecutors.

Prosecutors charged a man and his mother in connection with the stolen car after their fingerprints were found on the Subaru Impreza, according to court documents. The car had been found abandoned in North King County.

Joshua Brooks, 21, the driver, pleaded guilty April 5 to possession of a stolen vehicle and is awaiting sentencing. His mother, Wendy Lee, 46, who pleaded guilty to taking a motor vehicle without permission, was sentenced in December to 49 days of time served in the King County Jail.

Before they were booked into jail, Brooks and Lee were both treated at Harborview Medical Center for injuries suffered in the shooting. Brooks had two gunshot wounds to his lower back, and Lee's lower back and legs were peppered with tiny pieces of shrapnel, according to court documents.

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HEADLINE	04/13 Everett, KCSO plan new gang units
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/13/gang-units-what-are-they-and-do-we-need-them/
GIST	<p>EVERETT, Wash. – From Snohomish to Pierce counties, we've seen an increase in gang violence.</p> <p>Just months after Everett elected a new mayor, police say a 13-year-old with gang affiliation shot and killed a 14-year-old.</p> <p>"My focus is on public safety and gang violence. We're seeing a real uptick and it's frightening, the age of the kids we're seeing," said Everett Mayor Cassie Franklin.</p> <p>To combat that, the Everett Police Department is now working on putting together a new gang unit.</p> <p>There's talk of the same thing in King County after 13-year-old Elizabeth Juarez and 19-year-old Eveona Cortez were shot and killed in Burien in late March.</p> <p>"Talking to the sheriff {Mitzi Johanknecht} today, she would like to get a gang unit, maybe not just in King County maybe not just in Burien, but getting all the agencies involved," said county sheriff's Sgt. Ryan Abbott.</p> <p>Jonathan Wender is a 20-year police veteran and the CEO and president of Polis Soutlions, a consulting firm that helps train police departments across the nation in partnership with the Department of Justice. He says now is the time to bring back gang units that were disbanded across the Puget Sound.</p> <p>"We have an uptick in gang activity now and we want to reallocate those resources to address that issue," said Wender.</p> <p>He says gang unit members play a vital role in stopping gun violence. But he says it means either adding more funding to hire more officers or shifting some current officers and deputies to the newly formed gang unit.</p>

	<p>“It means they’re good investigators, they have unimpeachable honesty, they’ve got credibility, they can be firm, and they can be fair,” said Wender.</p> <p>Wender says gang units are more than just about learning gang signs, or knowing who wears which color, or if this is graffiti or tagging.</p> <p>“It’s really not a secret who those folks are. The challenge is that you can build up a relationship with them, that you can deal with crimes when they occur but most importantly prevent the crimes from occurring in the first place,” said Wender.</p> <p>The emotions from a vigil in Burien for the two slain teenagers show the damage gangs can do in a community, but Wender says a gang unit isn’t the only solution.</p> <p>“It’s not an either-or proposition. Do we need more case workers? Do we need more drug and alcohol treatment, better mental health care? Absolutely,” said Wender.</p> <p>In about a month, Everett police say they’ll have the groundwork laid for the new gang unit. It’ll be just in time for the normal uptick in gun and gang violence we normally see across the area during the warmer, summer months.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Seattle: standard min. wage for disabled
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-becomes-first-in-country-to-require-standard-minimum-wage-for-disabled/731855072
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Seattle Mayor Durkan today signed legislation banning the allowance of sub-minimum wages for people with disabilities.</p> <p>For KIRO 7 News at 5, Essex Porter was at Seattle City Hall today, where the bill was signed to promote integration and equal treatment for people with disabilities.</p> <p>The bill, authored by Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda, made Seattle the first city in the U.S. to require standard minimum wage for disabled people.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 DOJ demands Seattle documents
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/doj-demands-seattle-give-documents-related-to-compliance-with-immigration-authorities/731916316
GIST	<p>The U.S. Department of Justice on Thursday, April 12, sent letters to the city of Seattle and the state of Vermont demanding they produce documents that show whether each jurisdiction is “unlawfully restricting information sharing by its law enforcement officers with federal immigration authorities.”</p> <p>An excerpt from the DOJ announcement is below:</p> <p>"The Department of Justice previously contacted these jurisdictions and raised concerns about laws, policies, or practices that may violate 8 U.S.C. § 1373, a federal statute that promotes information sharing related to immigration enforcement and with which compliance is a condition of FY2016 and FY2017 Byrne JAG awards.</p> <p>"The letters also state that failure to respond, respond completely, or respond in a timely manner will be subject to a Department of Justice subpoena."</p> <p>What’s happening Friday?</p>

The federal government is demanding documentation proving that local law enforcement has been compliant with a law that requires cooperation with federal agencies, including ICE. It's telling Seattle to hand over documents to that end or they will be subpoenaed anyway. If Seattle is found to be uncompliant, it could face federal funding cuts.

What federal funding?

Byrne Grants. The letter says: "These materials are critical to our ongoing review. Should the Department determine your jurisdiction is out of compliance with section 1373, the Department may, as detailed in your award documents, seek return of your FY 2016 grant funds, require additional conditions for receipt of any FY 2017 Byrne JAG funding for which you have applied, and/or deem you ineligible for FY 2017 Byrne JAG funds."

What's a Byrne Grant?

The Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grants Program (Byrne JAG) is the cornerstone federal crime-fighting program, enabling communities to target resources to their most pressing local needs.

How has it helped the state of Washington?

Law enforcement agencies in Western Washington get nearly \$8 million in federal grant funding for a range of projects designed to enhance community safety and improve crime fighting technologies, announced U.S. Attorney Annette L. Hayes.

King County called this kind of action bullying last July.

NEW FEDERAL REQUIREMENT: Certify compliance with Section 1373, a federal statute applicable to state and local governments that generally bars restrictions on communications between state and local agencies and officials at the Department of Homeland Security

CURRENT KING COUNTY POLICY: King County has always been in compliance with U.S. Code Section 1373. As it relates to immigration enforcement, King County does not ask people for their immigration status and does not collect immigration information

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HEADLINE	04/14 Putin sits back as US strikes Syria
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/news/europe/putin-sits-back-as-us-allies-strike-syria-1.522046
GIST	<p>MOSCOW — Facing a stark choice between engaging the United States, Britain and France in combat or passively watching them strike his ally, President Vladimir Putin has opted for the peaceful route. That cautious response may dent the Russian leader's tough-man image but it won't undermine his gains in Syria or erode his authority at home.</p> <p>The Kremlin had warned Washington that Russia would fend off any strike that jeopardized its servicemen in Syria, and the West respected the red line by giving advance notice of Saturday's attack, just as it did a year ago when it struck a Syrian air base. Russia had sat idle back then, but this time, it had threatened to retaliate.</p> <p>Such a clash could have quickly spun out of control — an extremely dangerous scenario that was widely compared to the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, when the world narrowly escaped a nuclear conflict.</p> <p>"With our allies, we ensured that the Russians were warned ahead of time," said French Defense Minister Florence Parly. The U.S.-led strike was a response to a purported chemical attack on civilians in the Syrian town of Douma on April 7. Russia said its experts found no trace of chemical agents.</p>

A senior French official noted that President Emmanuel Macron did not tell Putin about the strikes when they spoke on the phone Friday, but "certain de-confliction mechanisms" had already been triggered by that point, and "both knew that a new phase was going to begin quickly."

Putin condemned Saturday's strikes as an "act of aggression" that will worsen the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria and have a "destructive influence on the entire system of international relations." He criticized Washington and its allies for attacking without waiting for inspectors from the international chemical weapons watchdog group to visit Douma, just outside Damascus.

The Russian military said its air defenses at two bases in Syria tracked the incoming missiles but didn't engage them.

Russian social media buzzed Saturday with angry nationalist comments blasting Putin for failing to protect his ally. But state TV focused on criticizing the West for acting on the basis of what Moscow called a faked chemical attack.

The Kremlin's tight control over the media will help Putin avoid any significant damage to his carefully nurtured image of a strong leader.

In fact, his cautious stance could boost his popularity further amid fears of war that swept Russia. In recent days, state media have been offering tips on how to behave in a nuclear conflict and what supplies to take to bomb shelters.

Most Russians will now heave a sigh of relief and feel grateful to Putin for pulling back from the brink. State TV channels compared what they described as U.S. President Donald Trump's reckless action with the responsible, statesmanlike stance taken by Putin.

Fyodor Lukyanov, head of the Council for Foreign and Defense Policies, an association of top Russian foreign policy and security experts, said on state TV that Moscow's warning to strike back "clearly hasn't come unnoticed by the Pentagon, and the strike was quite careful."

The Kremlin will also use the crisis to advance its narrative of an aggressive West that plunges the world into chaos and disregards international law. Russian officials and lawmakers compared it to the 2003 invasion of Iraq that was launched on claims that Baghdad was developing suspected nuclear weapons — allegations that proved to be false.

Commentators on state TV argued that Trump and British Prime Minister Theresa May launched the attack to distract attention from their political problems at home.

For now, Putin has limited his response to calling an urgent meeting of the U.N. Security Council.

No military measures were immediately announced, but in a clear warning to the U.S. and its allies, Col. Gen. Sergei Rudskoi of the Russian military's General Staff said Moscow could boost Syria's Soviet-era air defense assets with batteries of state-of-the-art S-300 missiles. He noted that Moscow so far has heeded Western requests not to provide the missiles to Damascus, but said it may now reconsider.

Rudskoi added that Moscow could also supply long-range missiles to unidentified other countries, a possible reference to Iran that has taken deliveries of S-300s in the past.

The statement clearly was aimed at discouraging the West from more attacks on Syria that could endanger Assad's gains on the battlefield, where Russian support has helped him secure control of most strategic areas.

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HEADLINE	04/14 UN chief urges restraint in Syria
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-un-guterres/u-n-chief-urges-restraint-avoid-escalation-in-syria-idUSKBN1HL10X
GIST	<p>UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged all states on Saturday “to show restraint in these dangerous circumstances and to avoid any acts that could escalate matters and worsen the suffering of the Syrian people.”</p> <p>He said international investigators were in Syria and ready to visit the site of a suspected deadly chemical weapons attack in Douma, which prompted military action by the United States, France and Britain.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Britain hits Syria w/cruise missiles
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-britain/britain-attacks-syria-with-cruise-missiles-to-deter-more-chemical-attacks-idUSKBN1HL037
GIST	<p>LONDON (Reuters) - Britain struck Syria with air-launched cruise missiles on Saturday to cripple President Bashar al-Assad’s chemical weapons facilities and prevent what Prime Minister Theresa May cast as a global slide towards their greater use.</p> <p>Four Royal Air Force Tornado jets from the Akrotiri base in Cyprus fired Storm Shadow missiles at a military facility near Homs where it was assessed that Syria had stockpiled chemicals, Britain’s Ministry of Defense said.</p> <p>May said the strike was “limited and targeted” and came after intelligence indicated that Syrian military officials had co-ordinated a chlorine attack in the Damascus suburb of Douma on April 7.</p> <p>Missile attacks by the United States, France and Britain had been aimed at deterring Assad’s further use of chemical weapons and were not an attempt to topple the Syrian government, May said. The mission had been a success, she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 France: Syria chem. capacity weakened
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-homs/france-says-syrias-capacity-to-produce-chemical-weapons-considerably-weakened-idUSKBN1HL12K?il=0
GIST	<p>PARIS (Reuters) - The capacity of the Syrian regime to produce and store chemical weapons has been “considerably weakened” after the air strikes conducted by the French, U.S and British military on Saturday, Defense Minister Florence Parly said.</p> <p>Parly said some of the strikes had targeted two sites used by Bashar al-Assad’s regime to store and assemble chemical weapons near the Syrian city of Homs.</p> <p>“The mission is a success. The goals had been carefully chosen and I observe that there are no incidents to report between our forces and other forces active in the region,” Parly told a news conference.</p> <p>French army chief Francois Lecointre added Syria’s ground-to-air defense system had been effective but that its efficiency proved “very limited.” Russian assets deployed in Syria were “neither active nor proactive” he said.</p> <p>He added that there was no reason to think there could have been any collateral victim.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Iran: West attack on Syria 'a crime'
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-iran-guards/irans-supreme-leader-says-western-attack-on-syria-a-crime-idUSKBN1HL0DO
GIST	<p>ANKARA (Reuters) - Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said coordinated air strikes on Syria by the United States, France and Britain on Saturday were a crime that would bring no benefit.</p> <p>"Today's dawn attack on Syria is a crime. I clearly declare that the president of the United States, the president of France and the British prime minister are criminals," Khamenei said in a speech, according to his Twitter account.</p> <p>"They will not benefit (from the attack) as they went to Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan in the past years and committed such crimes and did not gain any benefits," Khamenei added.</p> <p>Iran — the dominant Shi'ite Muslim power which is in rivalry with Saudi Arabia and the United States' other Sunni Arab allies — has been Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's most supportive ally against insurgents throughout the conflict.</p> <p>Militias backed by Tehran helped Assad's army stem rebel advances and, following Russia's entry into the war in 2015, turn the tide decisively in the Syrian government's favor.</p> <p>Iran's pragmatist President Hassan Rouhani warned that the U.S.-led missile attacks would lead to further destruction in the Middle East, the semi-official Tasnim news agency reported.</p> <p>"Such attacks will have no result but more destruction ... the Americans want to justify their presence in the region by such attacks," Rouhani was quoted as saying, signaling that Iran's support for Assad would grow.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Syria vows to press war against rebels
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-army/syrian-army-vows-to-press-war-rebels-say-strikes-not-enough-idUSKBN1HL0BG
GIST	<p>BEIRUT (Reuters) - The Syrian opposition said Western strikes on Saturday would not change the course of the seven-year-old war as the army said it would crush remaining rebel parts of the country.</p> <p>The missiles by the United States, Britain, and France targeted President Bashar al-Assad's chemical weapons capabilities in response to a deadly poison gas attack near Damascus a week ago, Washington said.</p> <p>But rebels and opposition politicians said the Western powers should also hit Assad's conventional weapons which have killed many more people during the war.</p> <p>Some insurgent officials said they feared an onslaught against the rebel bastion of Idlib, which a senior Iranian official has indicated could be the next target.</p> <p>"Maybe the regime will not use chemical weapons again, but it will not hesitate to use weapons," opposition leader Nasr al-Hariri said.</p> <p>A rebel fighter said he was bracing for further attacks as "revenge" by the government with its allies on rebel territory in the northwest, including the Idlib region.</p> <p>"More was expected from the American strike to affect the path of the war and to curb Assad's crimes," he told Reuters from Hama province.</p> <p>Damascus and its allies have said reports about poison gas in Douma were fabricated as a pretext for</p>

	Western strikes.
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HEADLINE	04/13 UN puts Myanmar military on blacklist
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/04/13/myanmar-military-put-on-un-blacklist-for-sexual-violence.html
GIST	<p>UNITED NATIONS – A U.N. report puts Myanmar's armed forces on a U.N. blacklist of government and rebel groups "credibly suspected" of carrying out rapes and other acts of sexual violence in conflict for the first time.</p> <p>An advance copy of Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' report, obtained Friday by The Associated Press, says international medical staff in Bangladesh have documented that many of the nearly 700,000 Rohingya Muslims who fled from Myanmar "bear the physical and psychological scars of brutal sexual assault."</p> <p>The U.N. chief said the assaults were allegedly perpetrated by the Myanmar Armed Forces "at times acting in concert with local militias, in the course of military 'clearance' operations in October 2016 and August 2017."</p> <p>Guterres said this was part of a strategy "to humiliate, terrorize and collectively punish the Rohingya community."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Arizona to require 'travel ID' for TSA
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/travel/2018/04/13/arizona-residents-will-soon-need-travel-id-to-board-planes.html
GIST	<p>The Arizona Department of Transportation has announced that state residents will require a new form of identification to pass through Transportation Security Administration screeners in the near future.</p> <p>As of Oct. 1, 2020, Grand Canyon state residents traveling out of Phoenix Sky Harbor International, Phoenix Mesa-Gateway, Flagstaff, Tucson International and Yuma International airports will need to carry "Voluntary Travel IDs" or be grounded, AZ Family is reporting.</p> <p>The new ID will also be requisite to access restricted federal buildings and military bases, as standard credentials will no longer suffice.</p> <p>Minors under age 18 will not be required to have the new ID if they are traveling with an adult who does.</p> <p>According to AZ Central, driver's licenses are not compliant with the REAL ID Act passed by Congress in 2005, which amped up identification requirements for air travelers in the wake of 9/11. To compensate, the Arizona Legislature passed a law that said a license or card holder must voluntarily take steps to secure a Voluntary Travel ID.</p> <p>"Now is a great time to get a Voluntary Travel ID because the federal deadline gets closer every day," Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) Director Eric Jorgensen told AZ Family.</p> <p>"MVD is making this process simple. Customers can go to ServiceArizona.com and make an office appointment. The website provides information about what documents customers should bring with them to meet the REAL ID requirements for the Voluntary Travel ID."</p> <p>The Voluntary Travel ID's cost \$25 and are valid for eight years, according to the Arizona Department of Transportation. The new ID sets itself apart from the standard state driver's license with a gold star in the top right corner.</p>

	<p>While the new measures may seem intense, Arizona is not alone in increasing travel security.</p> <p>In correlation with the 2005 REAL ID Act, as of Jan. 22, 2018, residents of Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Washington were supposed to be required to have their passports to fly anywhere, although the federal government has granted extensions.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/12 US: blood samples show nerve agent
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/mideast/u-s-has-blood-samples-show-nerve-agent-syria-gas-n865431
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The U.S. now has blood and urine samples from last Saturday's deadly attack in Syria that have tested positive for chemical weapons, according to two U.S. officials familiar with the intelligence.</p> <p>The samples suggested the presence of both chlorine gas and an unnamed nerve agent, two officials said. Typically, such samples are obtained through hospitals and collected by U.S. or foreign intelligence assets on the ground. The officials said they were "confident" in the intelligence, though not 100 percent sure.</p> <p>The Assad regime is known to have stocks of the nerve agent sarin, and has previously used a mixture of chlorine and sarin in attacks, say U.S. officials.</p> <p>Officials also said that the U.S. has compiled intelligence from the U.S. and other countries, including images, that indicate the Syrian government was behind the weekend attack.</p> <p>Activists and aid groups say that dozens died in Saturday's airborne assault on Douma, the last rebel stronghold in eastern Ghouta, which has been subjected to intensive bombing by Syria's Russian-backed Assad regime.</p> <p>Russia and Syria have denied any involvement in the alleged chemical attack.</p> <p>U.S. officials say the Assad regime has conducted multiple chlorine attacks on rebels during the past six months.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Death involves 911 system w/issues
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/kyle-plushs-death-is-latest-incident-involving-911-system-riddled-with-issues/
GIST	<p>A teenager trapped in a minivan made desperate pleas to 9-1-1 for help, but responders didn't get there in time. It happened in Cincinnati -- focusing new attention on the city's troubled emergency response system.</p> <p>Kyle Plush, 16, had to use voice commands to call 911. He was trapped in the back of his minivan, while his phone was in the front.</p> <p>"I'm stuck in my van outside the Seven Hills [unintelligible] parking lot," Plush said.</p> <p>"The Seven Hills what parking lot?" the dispatcher asked.</p> <p>"Send help, I am going to die here," Plush said.</p> <p>Police said Plush was reaching for his tennis gear in the back when the third row of the 2004 Honda</p>

	<p>Odyssey collapsed, pinning him upside down and crushing his chest.</p> <p>Twelve minutes after he called, police were at the scene but couldn't locate him. While they were there, Plush called 911 again and gave specifics on his car -- and his last wishes.</p> <p>"I probably do not have much time left, so tell my mom that I love her if I die," Plush said. "I'm stuck in my gold Honda Odyssey. This is not a joke, this is not a joke, I am stuck in my gold Honda Odyssey van."</p> <p>The 911 operator, who has been put on leave, didn't relay the make or model to police, and police officers gave up after 11 minutes. She claims she couldn't hear Plush and her computer froze.</p> <p>Critics say it is the latest incident in a 911 system riddled with issues. Cincinnati's mayor John Cranley said Friday the problems of management, supervision and technology have plagued the 911 center for years.</p> <p>"Time's up for waiting for our 9-1-1 system to fix itself," said Councilman Chris Seelbach. "We have to take urgent action immediately to have a system in place that ensures that you can call three numbers and within minutes police and fire officers will be on the scene."</p> <p>Six hours after the first 911 call, Plush's father discovered his son in car. Internal police records show that the 911 operator who was put on leave, received an "unacceptable" rating for her performance.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 CDC: likely source E. coli outbreak
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cdc-romaine-lettuce-likely-source-of-e-coli-outbreak/
GIST	<p>Health officials say chopped romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona growing region is the likely source of the current E. coli outbreak that has now sickened people in 11 states, and they're warning consumers across the country to avoid eating lettuce that may have been contaminated.</p> <p>According to the latest update from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, so far there have been 35 cases of illness, 22 of which led to hospitalizations. Three people have developed a severe complication -- a type of kidney failure called hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS) which can be life-threatening. The outbreak involves a particularly dangerous strain of the bacteria known as Shiga toxin-producing E. coli O157:H7.</p> <p>"Information collected to date indicates that chopped romaine lettuce from the Yuma, Arizona growing region could be contaminated with E. coli O157:H7 and could make people sick," the CDC said in a statement.</p> <p>No common grower, supplier, or distributor has been identified yet. State and local public health investigators continue interviewing ill people to determine what they ate and how they might have been exposed.</p> <p>So far, cases of illness from this outbreak have been reported in Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Washington.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Pentagon: successfully hit every target
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/strikes-on-syria-pentagon-briefing-today-2018-04-14-live-stream-updates/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON -- Pentagon spokesperson Dana White said Saturday the U.S. and its allies "successfully hit every target" in airstrikes in Syria overnight. The U.S., U.K. and France and U.K. launched the strikes</p>

Friday night Eastern Time in response to the Syrian regime's alleged use of chemical weapons last weekend. In total, the U.S. used 105 weapons against three targets.

"I can assure you we took every measure and precaution to strike only what we targeted and — and we successfully hit every target," White told reporters Saturday.

White said the U.S. believes it has "significantly crippled" Syrian President Bashar Assad's ability to carry out a chemical weapons attack. White said the mission in Syria remains defeating the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), but the U.S. will not stand by while Assad attacks "innocent Syrian people."

Later Saturday morning, the U.N. Security Council was meeting at Moscow's request.

Lt. Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, the director of the Joint Staff at the Pentagon, told reporters Saturday the initial assessment is that the Defense Department accomplished its goals "without material interference" from Syrian defenses. The attempts from Syrian defenses were imprecise, in contrast to the U.S. mission, he said.

"We are confident that all of our missiles reached their targets," McKenzie emphasized, reiterating what White said.

McKenzie said, "As of right now, we are not aware of any civilian casualties," although they cannot be certain, given the defense launched by the Syrians.

Secretary of Defense James Mattis emphasized that the targets were infrastructure related to the Syrian regime's chemical weapons program, and that there are no plans at this time for further strikes.

But the president, in his address to the nation from the White House, declared that the U.S. is prepared to continue military intervention until Assad stops the use of chemical weapons.

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HEADLINE	04/14 Syria police units enter Douma
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-syrian-police-units-enter-town-douma-54464281?
GIST	<p>The Latest on developments in Syria (all times local):</p> <p>10:50 p.m.</p> <p>Syrian state-run TV says Syrian police units are entering the town of Douma, site of a suspected chemical weapons attack and the last rebel town in the eastern Ghouta region.</p> <p>Syrian TV showed police waving Syrian flags apparently on the edge of the town just east of Damascus, and said the "terrorist presence" in Douma will end "in a few hours."</p> <p>The entry of government forces to Douma follows a Russian-mediated deal that secured the surrender and evacuation of the rebels and thousands of civilians from the town.</p> <p>Douma and the sprawling eastern Ghouta region near the capital, Damascus, had been under rebel control since 2012 and was a thorn in the side of President Bashar Assad's government for years. The government's capture of Douma, the last town held by the rebels in eastern Ghouta, marks a major victory for Assad.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Syrians in Damascus show defiance
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SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syrians-gather-capital-defiance-airstrikes-54464277?
GIST	<p>Hundreds of Syrians gathered at landmark squares in the Syrian capital Saturday, honking their car horns, flashing victory signs and waving Syrian flags in scenes of defiance that followed unprecedented joint airstrikes by the United States, France and Britain.</p> <p>A few hours earlier, before sunrise, loud explosions jolted Damascus and the sky turned orange as Syrian air defense units fired surface-to-air missiles in response to three waves of military strikes meant to punish President Bashar Assad for his alleged use of chemical weapons.</p> <p>Associated Press reporters saw smoke rising from east Damascus and what appeared to be a flame lighting up the sky. From a distance, U.S. missiles hitting suburbs of the capital sounded like thunder. Shortly after the one-hour attack ended, vehicles with loudspeakers roamed the streets of Damascus blaring nationalist songs.</p> <p>"Good souls will not be humiliated," Syria's presidency tweeted after the airstrikes began.</p> <p>Immediately after the attack, hundreds of residents gathered in Damascus' landmark Omayyad square, celebrating what they said was the army's success in shooting down or derailing some of the missiles. Many waved Syrian, Russian and Iranian flags. Some clapped their hands and danced, others drove in convoys, honking their horns in defiance.</p> <p>"We are not scared of America's missiles. We humiliated their missiles," said Mahmoud Ibrahim, half his body hanging outside his car window, waving a Syrian flag. The crowd then moved toward the nearby Damascus University where pro-government fighters danced, waving their automatic rifles over their heads.</p> <p>The seemingly limited strikes with no apparent future strategy for how to deal with the wider civil war was a cause for celebration by Assad supporters but criticized by the Syrian opposition.</p> <p>Mohammad Alloush, spokesman for the Army of Islam rebel group, called the airstrikes a "farce" in a Twitter posting. Nasr al-Hariri, a senior opposition leader, said Syrians need a strategy that leads to a political solution to "save it from the brutality of the Syrian regime."</p> <p>A Syrian military statement said in all, 110 missiles were fired by the U.S., Britain and France and that most of them were shot down or derailed. Russia's military said Syrian air defense units downed 71 out of 103 cruise missiles launched by the U.S. and its allies.</p> <p>Syrian TV called the attacks a "blatant violation of international law and shows contempt for international legitimacy."</p> <p>U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis said there were no reports of U.S. losses during the initial airstrikes.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Europe leaders back strikes on Syria
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/european-leaders-back-syria-strikes-warn-escalation-54466093?
GIST	<p>Many European leaders voiced support and understanding Saturday for the U.S.-led air strikes against Syria, but warned against allowing the seven-year conflict to escalate.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>"It has always been Bulgaria's position that no cause justifies the killing of innocent people, including children; that the use of chemical weapons is a war crime and the strike on Syrian targets was a response to a war crime." Bulgarian government statement. Bulgaria currently holds the rotating EU presidency.</p> <p>_____</p>

"Strikes by US, France and UK make it clear that Syrian regime together with Russia & Iran cannot continue this human tragedy, at least not without cost. The EU will stand with our allies on the side of justice." - Tweet by European Council President Donald Tusk.

"What has occurred in Syria in recent days goes far beyond the constant violation of cease fires. The response to these atrocities is legitimate and proportionate." - Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy.

"This was a limited and targeted action to strike the capacity of building or diffusing chemical arms. It cannot and should not be the start of an escalation." - Italian Premier Paolo Gentiloni.

"The strike against the Syrian regime that uses chemical weapons to attack the civilian population was inevitable." - Acting Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis.

"We support the fact that our U.S., UK and French allies took on responsibility in this way as permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. The military strike was necessary and appropriate in order to preserve the effectiveness of the international ban on the use of chemical weapons and to warn the Syrian regime against further violations." - German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

"The international community has the responsibility to identify and hold accountable those responsible of any attack with chemical weapons. This was not the first time that the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons against civilians but it must be the last." - European Union Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker.

"The strike against the Syrian regime that uses chemical weapons to attack the civilian population was inevitable." - Acting Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis.

"Belgium strongly condemns all use of chemical weapons which are a blatant violation of international law. Belgium therefore understands the military action in Syria of our American, French and British partners who have targeted identified production facilities." - Belgian government statement.

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HEADLINE	04/14 Military, chemical weapon sites targeted
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/us-strike-syria-targets-military-chemical-weapons-sites/story?id=54435901
GIST	<p>President Donald Trump said Friday he had ordered "precision strikes" against Syria's chemical weapons capability in conjunction with the France and the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Included in the targets was a scientific research center in the greater Damascus area, described by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunford as a center for research, development, production and testing of chemical weapons.</p> <p>Two other sites were near the city of Homs: the site of Syria's primary sarin production facility and a chemical weapons storage facility that included an important command post.</p> <p>He said that while the coalition forces had many potential targets from which to choose, the three sites</p>

	<p>were chosen for their significance to Syria's chemical weapons program and well as their location and layout, in an attempt to minimize risk to innocent civilians.</p> <p>Perhaps heeding the possibility of U.S. military action, Russian news agency Interfax reported on Wednesday that Russia's Navy will conduct military exercises off the coast of Syria on Wednesday.</p> <p>According to Syria state TV 110 rockets were launched in the attack by the U.S., U.K. and France around 3:55 a.m. Syrian time.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Russia warns US of 'consequences'
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/russia-responds-us-attack-syria-actions-left-consequences/story?id=54464208&cid=clicksource_4380645_1_takeover_2_column_vod_headlines
GIST	<p>Russia, the Syrian regime's top ally, reacted strongly to the air strikes launched by the United States and its allies on Damascus and Homs early Saturday, warning of "consequences."</p> <p>The U.S., U.K. and France launched a series of strikes on three locations identified as critical to Syria's production of chemical weapons, including a scientific research center in Damascus, and a production facility and storage facility in Homs, according to U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunford.</p> <p>The Russian embassy in U.S. wasted no time in reacting to the strikes late Friday in the U.S., with Ambassador Anatoly Antonov saying on Twitter, "The worst apprehensions have come true. Our warnings have been left unheard."</p> <p>"A pre-designed scenario is being implemented," the statement continued. "Again, we are being threatened. We warned that such actions will not be left without consequences."</p> <p>Russia has long been an ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Syria serves as an important access point to the Mediterranean Sea for Russian ships and a hub for Russia in the Middle East. They have also supplied Assad with the military resources necessary to fight back against the rebels who nearly overthrew him in 2011.</p> <p>President Donald Trump criticized Russia in his address to the country following the launch of missiles on Friday night.</p> <p>"In 2013, President [Vladimir] Putin and his government promised the world that they would guarantee the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons," Trump said. "Assad's recent attack, and today's response, are the direct result of Russia's failure to keep that promise."</p> <p>Putin responded to Saturday's attack by calling the strikes "an act of aggression against a sovereign state that is at the forefront of the fight against terrorism."</p> <p>"The current escalation of the situation around Syria has a devastating impact on the whole system of international relations," Putin said. "History will put everything in its place, and it has already laid heavy responsibility on Washington for bloody reprisals against Yugoslavia, Iraq and Libya."</p> <p>Putin also called for an emergency meeting U.N. Security Council.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 US, allies strike Syria
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/trump-orders-strike-syria-response-chemical-attack/story?id=54459378

GIST	<p>President Donald Trump ordered a strike on Syria Friday in response to last weekend's chemical weapons attack.</p> <p>Addressing the nation Friday evening, Trump said the strike was a joint operation with France and the United Kingdom.</p> <p>"A short time ago, I ordered the United States Armed Forces to launch precision strikes on targets associated with the chemical weapons capabilities of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad," Trump said.</p> <p>Trump said that the "massacre" last weekend in Syria "was a significant escalation in a pattern of chemical weapons use by that very terrible regime."</p> <p>"The evil and the despicable attack left mothers and fathers, infants and children thrashing in pain and gasping for air. These are not the actions of a man," Trump said, referring to Assad. "They are crimes of a monster instead."</p> <p>In a later briefing, Defense Secretary James Mattis said the strike demonstrates the international resolve to prevent the use of chemical weapons, saying he is "confident the Syrian regime conducted a chemical attack on innocent people in the last week."</p> <p>"Clearly the Assad regime did not get the message last year," Mattis said, adding that this time the U.S. struck harder.</p> <p>"We have gone to great lengths to avoid civilian and foreign casualties," he said. "... I believe that we sent a very strong message."</p> <p>Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph Dunford said the strike specifically hit three targets associated with the production and storage of chemical weapons: a scientific research center; a storage center for sarin and its precursor components; and a chemical weapons storage facility and command post.</p> <p>"Important infrastructure was destroyed," said Dunford.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	04/16 Changing cyber threat landscape
SOURCE	https://cybersecurity.cioreview.com/news/the-changing-cyber-threat-landscape-nid-26065-cid-145.html
GIST	<p>Over the course of 2017, the number of global cyber attacks continued growing at a rapid pace which also resulted in the reshaping of the cybersecurity arena. With the adoption of various technology, traditional threats such as generic Trojans, ransomware, and spambots received facelifts with military-grade coding and tactics. Threats including GoldenEye and WannaCry gave numerous organizations tears and forced many to down their shutters.</p> <p>The effectiveness of these kinds of sophisticated threats can be analyzed by using lateral movement vectors that augment zero-day exploits such as EternalBlue and EternalRomance, allowing malware to 'hop' from one network to another across the globe. These targeted attacks are reshaping corporate and government digital security initiatives, while simultaneously causing fallout in the consumer space.</p> <p>The past year witnessed the rapid rise of commoditization of cybercrime, with Ransomware-as-a-Service and Malware-as-a-Service becoming easily and widely available on the dark web. Furthermore, the year also witnessed the growth of advanced services, like FUD (fully undetected), which enable attackers to upload malware to an analysis service for a fee. The past year also witnessed a new generation of IoT-based attacks known as Reaper. Analysis revealed that the attack codes were armed with exploits spanning</p>

	a variety of IoT vendors, including Linksys, NetGear, GoAhead, and Avtech. The growth of cyber attacks is simply an example of the sorts of the ongoing development of security exploits.
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HEADLINE	04/16 National Guard mission: cyber defense
SOURCE	https://federalnewsradio.com/cyber-exposure/2018/04/national-guard-preparing-to-defend-cyberspace-for-states/
GIST	<p>National Guard units are ramping up their defensive cyber capabilities across the board, and in the not-too-distant future will be able to quickly respond to cyber attacks in their home states and territories, much as they do today for natural disasters.</p> <p>“The Air National Guard (ANG) has 15 Cyber Operations Squadrons that provide Cyber Protection Teams (CPTs) and National Mission Teams (NMTs) in support of DoD cyber missions,” said Sgt. 1st Class W. Michael Houk, a spokesman for the National Guard Bureau. “In addition, the Army National Guard (ARNG) Cyber Brigade is building a full cyber brigade with five battalions consisting of 11 CPTs, five cybersecurity companies and five cyber warfare companies.”</p> <p>The guard also is actively working on cyber missions across the country.</p> <p>“ARNG personnel are currently mobilized as part of Task Force Echo under the control of Army Cyber in support of U.S Cyber Command to engineer, operate and maintain critical network infrastructure,” Houk said. “The ANG continually provides two CPTs and continually fills portions of a NMT in support of U.S. Cyber Command.”</p> <p>While guard cyber units already contribute to military missions around the globe, the National Guard’s recent efforts are a result of a 2016 Government Accountability Office study that underscored the importance of the guard’s readiness against cyber threats. At the time, many guard units had some limited cyber capabilities, but they were mostly assigned to local duties, such as protecting the online assets of the unit.</p> <p>Despite early success, the guard acknowledged that quite a few challenges remain in this new area. One is the long-standing fact that most guard personnel are part-time, something that was less of a concern when performing more traditional missions.</p> <p>“We have in our ranks people with cyber expertise gained through civilian experience,” said John Goheen, the director of communications for the National Guard Association of the United States. “The military could really use these people full time, but the salaries they command as civilians makes that challenging.”</p> <p>And it’s not just the guard that is experiencing, or will soon experience, the same situation.</p> <p>“The active military will likely run into the same problem moving forward,” Goheen said. “They train bright, young people — and then lose them to private industry. We have a place for them in the guard, but again, they will only be part-time. The military needs to find ways to tap this resource.”</p> <p>Another hurdle is one the National Guard has always experienced — that of running a branch of the national military within the jurisdictions of each individual state.</p> <p>“The nature of the National Guard enables our personnel to work with state and local authorities on critical infrastructure,” Goheen said. “In fact, a lot of guard cyber exercise involves assisting with defending power plants and water systems.”</p> <p>In an actual incident, such as an attack on a power plant through its cyber infrastructure, a state government could activate the guard, and called upon it to stop it, officials said. After it halted the main attack, a guard cyber unit could remain behind to protect the infrastructure while the critical infrastructure</p>

	<p>owner constructed the new cyber defenses.</p> <p>The scope and capabilities of any given state-level mission would be up to the governor of that state, not unlike traditional guard missions.</p> <p>“National Guard forces would likely respond to a cyber incident in the same manner as other domestic emergencies such as hurricanes or floods,” Houk said. “A governor may activate National Guard personnel in state-funded, State Active Duty in accordance with state and local laws and DoD policy.”</p> <p>Additionally, under the United States Code Title 32, a state governor, with approval from the secretary of Defense or the president, may activate guardsmen for homeland defense activities, or to provide support for civil authorities.</p> <p>National Guard leaders expressed confidence that the guard would soon be responding to cyber incidents on a regular basis, just like they do for floods, snowstorms and missions to maintain the peace in extraordinary circumstances. Now, maintaining the peace extends to cyberspace.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 India bitcoin exchange suffers setback
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/someone-stole-3-million-in-bitcoin-from-coinsecure-bitcoin-exchange/
GIST	<p>In a security notice, the Indian Bitcoin exchange Coinsecure has revealed that it has suffered a setback after 438 BTC which is over \$3 million (\$3,542,957) according to current Bitcoin price were stolen from its offline Bitcoin wallets</p> <p>The company maintains that it has never been hacked or compromised and the incident took place when its CSO Dr. Amitabh Saxena was extracting BTG (Bitcoin Gold) to distribute to its customers. Saxena, on the other hand, claims that funds were lost in the process during the extraction of the private keys.</p> <p>The company has launched a complaint with the Cyber Cell in Delhi and is also conducting an investigation with the help of cybersecurity experts. However, a look at the police complaint points to an inside job as the company’s director Mohit Kalra stated in the complaint that:</p> <p>“As the private keys are kept with Dr. Amitabh Saxena, we feel that he is making a false story to divert our attention and he might have a role to play in this entire incident. The incident reported by Dr. Amitabh Saxena does not seem convincing to us. Dr. Amitabh Saxena also has an Indian Passport and he might fly out of the country soon, therefore, his passport should be seized as he cannot fly out of the country”</p> <p>Ningning Niumai, founder of Greymeter, a social network for college students and young professionals tweeted that Dr. Amitabh Saxena was appointed almost 6 months ago by the company, therefore, handing over private keys of Coinsecure is very suspicious.</p> <p>“Dr. Amitabh Saxena appointed barely 6 months ago has the private key to Coinsecure’s wallet?!! Is he a Scapegoat?!! Very suspicious and convenient blame game after the recent RBI ruling on Bitcoin,” said Niumai.</p> <p>It is noteworthy that Coinsecure incident has occurred days after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) barred banks and financial institutions from dealing in cryptocurrencies from April 6th, 2018.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 FTC: 2016 Uber hack impacted 25M
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/25-million-us-individuals-impacted-2016-uber-hack
GIST	The 2016 data breach that Uber made public in November 2017 impacted over 25 million riders and drivers in the United States, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) reveals.

	<p>The hack, which the ride-sharing company kept silent about for a year, impacted more than 57 million users globally. Hackers managed to access data stored on an Amazon Web Services (AWS) account and steal names, email addresses and mobile phone numbers of customers around the world.</p> <p>In February this year, Uber chief information security officer said that two individuals living in Canada and Florida were responsible for the massive data breach.</p> <p>In an attempt to cover up the hack, Uber paid the attackers \$100,000 through its third-party “bug bounty” program, which was designed to reward those who responsibly disclose vulnerabilities, rather than those who maliciously exploit them.</p> <p>The company came under scrutiny after the hack was made public in November 2017, and even became the target of a US criminal investigation. The data breach was revealed only three months after Uber agreed to implement new data protection measures in a settlement with the FTC over a 2014 incident.</p> <p>Now, the Commission says the ride-sharing company has agreed to expand the proposed settlement and that it will be subject to additional requirements. Under the new settlement, Uber could be subject to civil penalties if it doesn't notify the FTC of future breaches in due time.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Hoaxes, scams w/school violence fears
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/email-hoaxes-and-phishing-scams-prey-off-of-school-violence-fears/article/758240/
GIST	<p>A Swiss hacking group has reportedly claimed credit for using a hijacked email domain to bombard schools around the U.S. with fake threats of violence. And in related news, security awareness training provider KnowBe4 issued a warning on Thursday about a credentials phishing campaign that also preys on school shooting fears by impersonating a campus security alert.</p> <p>According to multiple news outlets, a group called the Apophis Squad sent disturbing hoax emails to school district superintendents in at least 46 states last Sunday and Monday, triggering an increased police presence and in some cases class cancellations. The emails featured the subject line "Student help!" and purported to be authored by a bullied student who threatened to show up at school "with 3 bombs, and a .22 handgun."</p> <p>The adversaries reportedly used the email address apophissquad@zonix.us, after hijacking the domain of Zonix, a Dallas-based online online gaming company that provides Minecraft servers.</p> <p>"Over the past few hours we were directly contacted by a group that threatened to send a bomb hoax spoofing our email domain in an attempt to directly smear and harm Zonix," states a series of tweets posted on Zonix's official Twitter account on Apr. 9. "We began to realize the threat was credible when we began hearing responses from school superintendents pertaining to this situation. We are aware that some schools might have been affected by this and we apologize for any inconvenience or panic that could have happened because of this situation.</p> <p>Apophis Squad's account on Twitter, meanwhile, has been suspended. But a journalist with the Union-Democrat in Sonora, Calif. reportedly made contact with one of the hackers, who said the attack's motive was to taunt law enforcement, adding "We got nothing better to do." The hacker also stated future plans to leak information originating from a U.S. Army database.</p> <p>Reportedly, the same perpetrators previously sent similar threats to UK-based schools in March 2018, using the domain of Zonix competitor VeltPvP.</p> <p>Meanwhile, an unnamed community college in Florida was recently targeted in phishing campaign</p>

	<p>spoofing its campus-wide security alerts, according to a KnowBe4 founder and CEO Stu Sjouwerman, who warns in a company blog post that this scheme could easily spread to additional educational institutions as well as companies and organizations that have established active shooter protocols.</p> <p>The email arrives with a subject line such as "IT DESK: Security Alert Reported on Campus," "IT DESK: Campus Emergency Scare" or "IT DESK: Security Concern on Campus Earlier," and instructs recipients to click a link to a memo containing proper instructions. However, the link leads to a credentials phishing page that imitates the Microsoft log-in process, which many campuses computers require.</p> <p>"What makes this particular attack so infuriating," remarks Sjouwerman, is that it exploits current concerns over active shooters on education campuses, a sensitive issue that could likely generate panicked, reflexive clicks from recipients who are already on edge over the recent shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, also in Florida."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Federal agency data under siege
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/federal-agency-data-under-siege/a/d-id/1331467
GIST	<p>The US government continues to grapple with the same cybersecurity challenges faced by most organizations, but it has a different set of hurdles to overcome than its private-sector counterparts. As a result, federal agencies are experiencing more data breaches than other industry sectors. Despite skyrocketing IT security spending, successful attacks are escalating across the board. Federal agencies in particular are weathering a perfect storm around data that puts agency secrets — and the personal data of over 330 million American citizens — at risk.</p> <p>According to Thales' 2018 Data Threat Report—Federal Government Edition, 57% of federal respondents reported data breaches, a threefold increase over the 18% recorded back in 2016. As many as 12% experienced multiple breaches in 2017 and in previous years.</p> <p>Many agencies are in a difficult position. Federal agencies must protect sensitive data and both thwart bad guys hunting for citizens' private data and nation-state hackers with their own agendas — in addition to grappling with perennial underfunding, understaffing, and antiquated systems that commercial enterprises tossed into the dumpster years ago. At the same time, they need to make government more accessible and transparent via digital transformation, which inevitably exposes them to more cyber threats.</p> <p>But these factors don't completely explain the growing numbers of breaches at federal agencies.</p> <p>Catching Up with the Private Sector</p> <p>Despite these troubles, agency IT security professionals are trying to stay positive, partly because spending is sharply increasing this year. "Like most other sectors, data security spending plans in the US federal sector are up compared to last year — way up," says Garrett Bekker, 451 Research's principal analyst for information security, as highlighted in the Thales report. "Perhaps more importantly, for the first time, the US federal government ranks the highest of any US vertical in terms of spending increase plans — more than nine out of 10 (93%) plan to increase security spending in 2018."</p> <p>In fact, a staggering 73% of federal agencies say their IT security spending will be much higher in 2018, according to the report. This comes after several years of IT security spending well below that of commercial enterprises.</p> <p>"The bad news is that reports by US federal respondents of successful breaches last year (57%) are far ahead of the global average (36%), and also the global federal sector (26%). Further, 70% of US federal respondents say their agencies were breached at some point in the past," says Bekker.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/16 Woolworths hit by IT glitch
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/woolworths-turning-customers-away-following-it-outage/
GIST	<p>Woolworths is turning customers away from its stores, following reports the Australian supermarket chain is suffering a nationwide IT outage.</p> <p>Customers took to Twitter Monday afternoon, posting photos of security screens pulled shut at stores around the country, with some reporting being told by store managers that an IT glitch had affected its cash registers.</p> <p>ZDNet understands the glitch didn't make its way to all stores, however, with some operating as usual.</p> <p>Woolworths eventually confirmed the outage, apologising for the inconvenience via Twitter.</p> <p>"We can confirm that an IT issue impacted registers in our supermarkets for a short period of time this afternoon. The registers are now back online in all our stores. We apologise for any inconvenience caused. Thanks," the reply to many reads.</p> <p>Woolworths in August apologised to customers following reports that some experienced a second batch of payments withdrawn from their bank accounts.</p> <p>A Woolworths spokesperson told ZDNet at the time it received confirmation from Cuscal, one of its payment processors that services financial institutions, that due to an error at its datacentre, some Woolworths customers received incorrect transactions on accounts processed by Cuscal.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/16 Windows servers targeted to cryptomine
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/windows-servers-targeted-for-cryptocurrency-mining-via-iis-flaw/
GIST	<p>Hackers are leveraging an IIS 6.0 vulnerability to take over Windows servers and install a malware strain that mines the Electroneum cryptocurrency.</p> <p>Attacks aren't widespread, as they target a quite old IIS version, but they are happening at scale.</p> <p>Hackers using former IIS 6.0 zero-day</p> <p>Hackers are using CVE-2017-7269 to take over servers. This is a vulnerability discovered by two Chinese researchers in March 2017 that affects IIS' WebDAV service. At the time it was discovered last year, the flaw was a zero-day, being under heavy exploitation for almost nine months, since June 2016.</p> <p>Microsoft initially said it was not planning to fix the flaw because IIS 6.0 was end-of-life, and so were the operating systems that shipped with IIS 6.0 by default —Windows XP and Windows Server 2003.</p> <p>But the vulnerability shared some common traits with the EXPLODINGCAN NSA exploit leaked in April 2017 by the Shadow Brokers, and it eventually received a fix in mid-June 2017.</p> <p>Since then, it's been used by at least one threat actor to deploy Monero miners on Windows servers still running the old IIS 6.0 version.</p> <p>Now, F5 Labs says it found another hacker group using the same exploit, but deploying an Electroneum miner instead of Monero.</p> <p>According to experts, the threat actor uses CVE-2017-7269 to deliver an ASCII shellcode which contains a Return-Oriented Programming (ROP) exploit chain that installs a reverse shell on vulnerable hosts.</p>

	<p>Attackers then use the reverse shell to download the miner and start the mining process. The infection process is masked by the use of the Squiblydoo technique and by disguising the miner as the legitimate lsass.exe (Local Security Authority Subsystem Service) process.</p> <p>F5 experts said the Electroneum address they found in attacks stored only \$99, suggesting they either caught the campaign at its beginning, or crooks are rotating address IDs to avoid researchers from tracking their entire operation.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/16 Russia blocks Telegram messenger
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-telegram-blocking/russia-starts-blocking-telegram-messenger-regulator-idUSKBN1HN13J
GIST	<p>MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia's state telecommunications regulator said on Monday it had begun blocking access to messenger service Telegram after the service's owner refused to comply with an order to give Russian state security access to users' secret messages.</p> <p>The watchdog, Roskomnadzor, said in a statement on its website that it had sent telecoms operators a notification about blocking access to Telegram inside Russia</p> <p>The service, set up by a Russian entrepreneur, has more than 200 million global users and is ranked as the world's ninth most popular mobile messaging app.</p> <p>Interfax news agency quoted an official at the watchdog as saying it would take several hours to complete the operation to block access. In Moscow, the Telegram app was still functioning as normal early on Monday afternoon.</p> <p>Roskomnadzor was implementing a decision handed down on Friday by a Russian court that Telegram should be blocked because it was in violation of Russian regulations.</p> <p>Telegram had refused a request by Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) to give them access to users' encrypted messages.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/16 'Digital resurrections' bring back dead?
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/mach/science/will-digital-resurrections-let-us-bring-back-dead-ncna865806
GIST	<p>Humans have always looked for tangible ways to remember departed loved ones. We save letters and emails they wrote us. We look fondly at photos of them. We watch and rewatch old videos just to see their faces and hear them talk.</p> <p>But the rise of digital technologies may soon give us even more compelling ways to remember lost friends and family. These include apps that let us text with digital representations of the dead — we'd type a message and then get some sort of comforting reply — and maybe even systems that let us speak with and possibly touch realistic avatars of the ones we miss most.</p> <p>Maybe that sounds creepy, but some experts believe we'll find comfort in continuing our interactions with people whose biological existences have come to an end.</p> <p>"Many people visit the headstone of a loved one to help come to terms with their passing, and have a one-sided conversation where they think about the memory of them," says Bruce Duncan, managing director of Terasem Movement Foundation, a Bristol, Vermont-based nonprofit that promotes digital resurrections.</p> <p>"Being able to have a two-way conversation with a digital version of them, where you can be reminded of</p>

their mannerisms or behavioral patterns in an interactive way, could become a natural part of the grieving process.”

Several companies, including Luka, a San Francisco-based startup, and research organizations including the MIT Media Lab, are working on digital resurrection technology.

It goes without saying that the digital version of a person is no match for the living, breathing human being. But scientists are experimenting with algorithms that can take a person's emails and text messages and use them to generate text messages that are at least evocative of a specific person. The messages can use emojis like the dead person once did. And with data pulled from the internet, the texts can even include back-and-forths about topical things like weather and current events.

In coming years, Duncan believes, there may be browser plug-ins capable of capturing an entire life's worth of social media posts, emails, photos, and other digital data and using everything to approximate an individual's personality, complete with values and opinions.

Digital resurrection technology is unlikely to stop with chatbots. Duncan and other experts foresee a time when we'll be able to interact with lost loved ones not just via texts but in virtual reality.

“You'd be able to put on your virtual reality glasses and headset, and experience typical everyday situations with that person, like sitting at the breakfast table or taking a walk in a nearby park,” says Charlotte Runius, CEO of Fenix Begravning, a Stockholm, Sweden-based funeral planning agency that is working with AI experts to develop these technologies. “Hearing their voice and seeing them would allow you to actually feel like you're next to the person again, and you can talk to them and get replies in a much more realistic way.”

By wearing a bodysuit and gloves studded with sensors and actuators, it might even be possible to interact physically with a realistic-looking avatar of a deceased person. The technology could monitor a living person's movements, voice, and facial expressions and then later use them to direct an avatar to respond appropriately — perhaps by offering advice or giving a comforting hug.

In the distant future, one can imagine that it would be possible to create a robotic avatar of a beloved one — a bit like the scenario depicted in a popular episode of the Netflix series "Black Mirror," in which a grieving widow's late partner is resurrected in robotic form with help from his texts, photos, and emails.

The only snag with these scenarios is that much of the data used to resurrect someone would have to be collected while he or she was still alive — for instance, by having him or her speak a thousand or so words and be recorded on video.

EMOTIONAL COMFORT — OR PAIN?

What would it be like to interact with someone who's been brought back in digital form? Some experts say it could aid the grieving process. Others worry that interacting with a virtual representation of a person who is no longer alive would only intensify feelings of sadness and loss.

Studies have shown that bereaved people can experience grief hallucinations, and there are concerns that interacting with avatars might raise the risk.

Duncan believes that, at least for most people, the experience will be akin to watching home movies and enjoying the memories that they trigger.

“Enjoying talking to past loved ones via digital media may eventually become the future version of looking through photographs of past events... It's hard to predict the future, but just as we've adjusted to using Skype and cell phones I think we'll consider it valuable to continue some connection with a person we care about.”

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HEADLINE	04/15 Pushing back Russia disinformation
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/one-tiny-corner-u-s-government-pushes-back-against-russian-n866021
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — When reports began to emerge last month that Russian mercenaries had attacked a U.S. base in Syria, Russia issued a flat denial, and the U.S. was silent.</p> <p>Then, leaked recordings surfaced on the internet.</p> <p>"We've had our asses f--- kicked. So one squadron f--- lost 200 people ...the Yankees knew for sure that the Russians were coming."</p> <p>The tapes seemed to show Russian guns-for-hire acknowledging a crushing defeat in the Feb. 8 incident. It was an embarrassment for the Kremlin, which was forced to admit that Russian citizens had been killed by the U.S. military — something an American general later confirmed to NBC News.</p> <p>With their election interference and ongoing manipulation of social media platforms like Twitter, the Russians have been regularly outfoxing America in the information realm, U.S. intelligence officials acknowledge. Who turned the tables this time?</p> <p>Not the White House, the State Department or the CIA. The recordings were published by a U.S.-government-funded web site called Polygraph.info, whose reporter says she got them from a source close to the Kremlin.</p> <p>Polygraph is a relatively new fact-checking arm of an obscure, diminutive media effort by the U.S. to highlight Russian misdeeds and counter Russian propaganda.</p> <p>It's an anomaly in the Trump administration — perhaps the only part of the U.S. government whose job is to regularly punch back against what experts say is a stream of Russian disinformation aimed at America and the West.</p> <p>"At the end of the day, the Russians are engaging in information warfare — they're telling lies," said John Lansing, a former television executive who oversees the effort. "And we're confronting them toe-to-toe with fact-based, truthful, professional journalism."</p> <p>Russia's proficiency at information war has been on display in the wake of the U.S.-led military strike Friday night in Syria. Russia called the strikes illegal and said the chemical weapons attacks that prompted them were staged. To get that message out, there was a 2000 percent spike in activity in the hours since the strike by fake Russian propaganda accounts on social media, a Pentagon spokeswoman said Saturday. A web site that tracks a slice of those accounts, Hamilton 68, found that they were pumping out the Russian government narrative in English.</p> <p>THEY'RE "EATING OUR LUNCH"</p> <p>The U.S. is ill-equipped to respond. Polygraph, part of the tiny corner of the government that's trying, has a staff of five that doesn't usually work on the weekends.</p> <p>"We focus mostly on Russia right now because there is a large flow of disinformation that's coming from Russia," said Jim Fry, a former Dallas television reporter who runs Polygraph from Washington.</p> <p>Polygraph is a joint venture of the Voice of America and Radio Liberty, which are funded by — but independent of — the U.S. government. They fall under the umbrella of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, whose mission is to promote freedom and democracy and "tell America's story" around the world. But they are walled off, editorially, from the administration in power.</p> <p>"The law protects us from interference by U.S. government officials," said Tom Kent, who spent 44 years at The Associated Press before becoming president of Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe. "They can't</p>

tell us what to broadcast."

During the Cold War, the VOA and Radio Liberty sought to counter communist propaganda and funnel information to the news-starved citizenry behind the Iron Curtain.

Those muscles — and budgets — have long since atrophied. But in recent years, there have been growing calls for a new twist on that old mission.

When Lansing became CEO of the Broadcasting Board of Governors in 2015, he said he was confronted on Capitol Hill and throughout the government with a single question:

"Why are the Russians eating our lunch in terms of information warfare?"

People were talking mainly about RT, the former Russia Today, which spends hundreds of millions of dollars a year on an English language broadcast and web platform that regularly skewers American and the West. The U.S. government has labeled RT a propaganda operation.

The State Department came under criticism earlier this year when news reports highlighted its failure to spend \$120 million that had been allocated to push back on Russian propaganda abroad.

Lost in that conversation was the fact that one month into the Trump Administration, Lansing and his team launched Current Time America, a 24-hour Russian-language broadcasting and web platform. The budget was \$20 million — around one-tenth the size of RT's budget, Lansing says. But one year later, Current Time America is available on TV screens in 30 countries, and officials counted 400 million view views on social media last year.

Still, U.S. information efforts are minuscule compared to the Russian campaign. While Current Time America is available in Russia, the Russian government makes it difficult to find — keeping it off cable systems and requiring special tuning for satellite reception.

The broadcasting board's total budget this year is about \$660 million dollars, about a third of what was spent in 1991, adjusted for inflation.

"I think we should be investing more," Lansing said.

The Russian government labels the entire U.S.-funded journalism operation "propaganda" that is "part of a broader, wide-reaching American system of pressure on our country."

Irina van Dusen, who heads the effort as chief of Voice of America's Russian-language programming, knows what propaganda looks like. She grew up in the Soviet Union, listening to the VOA on an illegal short wave radio for scraps of accurate reporting.

She got her journalism degree in Moscow, but decided that if she wanted to practice real journalism, she would have to move to the West.

During the Cold War, she says, the VOA was trying to break through jamming and censorship. Now there has been a proliferation of Russian TV and web channels that put out a cacophony of news, nearly all of it favorable to Vladimir Putin. The task in 2018 is trying to break through a fog of disinformation.

The prevailing view in Russia, she said, is that "There is no truth. There is only different versions, different narratives... We stand by the fact that there is truth. And there are facts."

From a TV studio near not far from where special counsel Robert Mueller comes to work each day, Current Time America covers Washington, offering live broadcasts of Congressional hearings with simultaneous translations.

"People can listen, see how it's done, how policies are made, what questions asked, what facts are being brought up," she said.

The channel also covers Russia, to "provide Russian speaking audiences with a true portrait of the society, you know? As opposed to state-run Russian television that — interprets everything that is done in the world...as some kind of a United States manipulation and United States meddling in world affairs."

Polygraph.info, and its Russian-language counterpart, Factograph — try to be slightly edgier than a traditional news operation.

"What our reporters do every day is they begin the day looking at Russian media," said Fry. "Looking at what's coming out of Russia. And then we decide whether there's something to fact check. Usually, almost every day, there's more to fact check than we could possibly do with our staff."

The site is modeled after other media fact check efforts, including Politifact and factcheck.org. It highlights a claim, say, by Putin or another Russian official, and brands it for veracity, with labels like "Partially True," "False" or "Misleading."

In March, the site fact-checked a Putin documentary that alleged the Russian leader had always believed that the Ukrainian territory of Crimea was part of Russia. It highlighted remarks by Putin in 2008 in which he said something very different: "Crimea is absolutely not a disputed territory." Six years later, Putin seized Crimea from Ukraine, to international condemnation.

Polygraph also challenged Russia's denial that the nerve agent used to poison a former spy in the UK was made only in Russia, and its assertion that no chemical attack took place in Syria.

Polygraph reporters are not afraid to endorse criticism of the U.S. when it's accurate. When Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov criticized a list of Russian oligarchs that the Treasury Department admitted it cribbed from Forbes magazine, Polygraph labeled his comments, "Partially True."

In January, reporters examined a fur coat shown off on Facebook by Russia's foreign ministry spokeswoman. She said it was a fake, bought at a fair in Russia. Polygraph found that the fair didn't sell any coat — and that the coat may have been a fur from an endangered ocelot.

Polygraph's traffic numbers are usually in the low thousands, but that video got 37,000 views, Fry said.

The audio recordings of the Russian mercenaries were a huge coup, even if the site did not seem to get much credit for the scoop. Fry said a Polygraph journalist in Europe, who did not want to be identified, obtained the tapes from a Kremlin source. He acknowledged that he could not rule out U.S. intelligence involvement in distributing the tapes, but that would also be true if the audio had been obtained by a mainstream journalism organization, he said.

The recordings describe an incident in which a number of Russian mercenaries led a group of pro-Assad fighters in an attack on a U.S. base beginning Feb. 7. The mercenaries were from the Wagner Group, it's been widely reported — co-owned by Russian oligarch Yevgeniy Prigozhin, who is close to Vladimir Putin. Prigozhin is also one of the defendants in the indictment brought by Mueller against Russians accused of illegal election activity.

It was the largest ever attack on U.S. troops in Syria, and it was perhaps the first time in many decades that Russian and American troops fought in open combat. Russian mercenaries were among the hundreds who died as the Americans strafed, bombed and shelled the assault force, Army Brig. Gen. Jonathan Braga told NBC's Richard Engel.

The tapes, Fry said, depicted "people who worked for this Russian paramilitary company who were involved in this attack...It showed they knew they were (counterattacked) by Americans. And it showed that there were people who were killed."

	<p>Interestingly enough, he added, "within days of our story, the Russian government started admitting there had been involvement of the private military company, the Russian company, in that attack."</p> <p>Sometimes it's obvious that Russians are more nimble than the Americans at the information game.</p> <p>On Friday, when the Russian defense ministry accused Britain of faking the chemical attack in Syria, RT was leading its web site with an article highlighting the allegations — making no mention of denunciations from the United Nations and U.S. and British officials.</p> <p>Polygraph, meanwhile, was leading with a story fact-checking a statement from Russian state media that Hitler had become more popular than Harry Potter in Latvia. It made no mention of the bogus Russian allegation against Britain.</p> <p>"We didn't get to that today," Fry said, reached by phone. "I wish I could respond as quickly as what they put out."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Europol busts bitcoin laundering ring
SOURCE	https://interestingengineering.com/europol-busts-bitcoin-drug-money-laundering-ring
GIST	<p>In what may now seem like an almost prophetic event, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) expressed concerns last February that billions in illegal proceeds were hidden in Europe in crypto-cash. Now, Europol in cooperation with global law enforcement agencies has arrested 11 people involved in a cryptocurrency drug trafficking ring that laundered over €8 million.</p> <p>The operation, named Tulipan Blanca, saw Spain's Guardia Civil, Finnish law enforcement authorities and the US Department of Homeland Security come together to investigate 137 individuals. "As a result of the operation, the Spanish Guardia Civil carried out eight searches and seized several computers, devices, and the equipment used to commit the crimes, such as money bags or money counting machines," Europol said in a statement.</p> <p>The statement explained that drug traffickers contacted the criminal ring to launder money obtained from their illicit activities. The ring proceeded to split the money into small cash amounts deposited into 174 bank accounts.</p> <p>From there, the criminals used credit cards linked to the fraudulent bank accounts to withdraw the illegal proceeds from Columbia. However, realizing that these transactions could be tracked, the criminal group then turned to cryptocurrencies.</p> <p>To cover their tracks, the ring used an unnamed Finnish cryptocurrency exchange to turn their cash into bitcoins and then subsequently further converted the bitcoins into Colombian pesos.</p> <p>"With cryptocurrencies increasingly used to finance and carry out criminal activities, Europol will continue to coordinate across EU Member States and beyond, to effectively respond to this rising threat," Europol's statement said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Targeting tax pros w/fraud returns
SOURCE	https://www.cnbc.com/2018/04/14/cybercriminals-now-targeting-tax-pros-to-cash-in-on-fraudulent-returns.html
GIST	The deadline to file your taxes is rapidly approaching, but cyber criminals have already been hard at work trying to cash in with fraudulent tax returns.

This tax season, experts say instead of targeting individual tax payers, scam artists are targeting tax professionals.

"One of the challenges that we're seeing this year is that as tax professionals and the I.R.S. have become more and more sophisticated, so too have the adversaries," said Caleb Barlow, IBM Security's vice president of threat intelligence.

Tax fraud is big business for cyber criminals. Last year Internet crimes netted the perpetrators \$445 billion, with tax fraud as a primary focus, according to IBM Security, which monitors cyber crimes.

"We had about 75 tax professionals report that they had been victims of some sort of a tax payer breach. So that unfortunately is a 60 percent increase for the same period of time last year," said Cecilia Barreda, an I.R.S. spokeswoman.

The I.R.S. can recognize if a computer of an individual is filing too many tax returns, and will stop them for likely being fraudulent. But the agency expects tax professionals to file dozens, if not hundreds of tax returns on behalf of their clients.

"If they [cybercriminals] can compromise a tax professional, they get access to two key things. One is the private information of that tax professional's clients that can be used to file tax returns on their behalf," Barlow said.

"And in addition to that, they can use the IP address and the computer of the tax professional to actually do the filing with the I.R.S.," he added.

Here is how the scam works: Cyber criminals target tax professionals with what is known as phishing — spam email that seems legitimate, but contains links or attachments laden with malware.

"The minute that you click on that link, well, then you're owned by the adversary. And what this often means is that they can take control of that system that's normally used by that tax professional," Barlow said.

Once a tax professional's computer is compromised, an attacker can steal the numbers and log-in information they use to file.

"It's an I.P. address we seen before, it's a signature of a computer we seen before. We know it's a tax professional, so they are going be submitting lots of returns," said Barlow.

This year's tax season may be the perfect storm. With a new tax code coming in this year, there has been extra confusion.

"This is kind of a perfect storm where you have a lot of misinformation, a dearth of information, and these new techniques that are being widely used by these criminals looking for compromised computers belonging to tax prep professionals," said Roman Sannikov, the director of European research and analysis for Flashpoint, a cybersecurity company.

He added that "they can use to not only steal information, but also to file these returns in a much more successful way."

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HEADLINE 04/15 Guarding rail against evolving threats

SOURCE <http://www.railjournal.com/index.php/technology/cybersecurity-guarding-rail-against-evolving-threats.html>

GIST

As the railway seeks to harness the benefits of digitalisation and the Internet of Things, the links between information technology and operational technology become ever-more intertwined. However, these trends are completely redefining the railway security environment as systems become vulnerable to new types of threats. Keith Barrow assesses how the industry is responding to the cybersecurity challenge.

ON May 13 2017, passengers at mainline stations in Germany glanced up at the information screens and saw something unusual. Obscuring the lists of departures and arrivals, a ransomware notice demands a \$US 300 payment in Bitcoin.

The WannaCry virus had infected 450 German Rail (DB) computers, bringing down passenger information systems, ticket machines, and CCTV networks.

This was a very public demonstration of rail's vulnerability to cyberattack, and while the target in this case was the company's business systems, the attack also highlighted the need to secure operational systems against hackers.

Until recently, Industrial Automated Control Systems (IACS) were considered relatively well-insulated against external influence with a high degree of immunity to security threats and attacks. However, the threat landscape has altered significantly in recent years with the proliferation of digital technologies and the increasing interconnectivity between the business and operational functions of companies.

Research by IBM shows cyberattacks on ICAS increased by more than 600% between 2012 and 2014, while according to Dell's 2015 cybersecurity report, attacks on supervisory control and data acquisition (Scada) systems surged from 91,676 in January 2012 to 675,186 in January 2014.

Mr François Hausman, mainline cybersecurity manager for Alstom and leader of Shift²Rail's cybersecurity work package, told delegates at Railtech's recent Intelligent Rail Summit in Vienna that the characteristics of railway networks make them a potential cyberattack target. These include:

- distributed architecture - electronic components spread along a section of line or a train
- long lifecycles for equipment
- high level of certification for safety-related systems
- diversity of supply chain and technology, and
- small-medium volume production of components.

Mr Domenico Raguseo, technical sales manager, Europe, for IBM says systems are vulnerable to hackers when there is a high degree of integration between IT and operational technology (OT).

"The railway industry is very secure from a cybersecurity point-of-view - hackers would have a lot of difficulty getting into your systems," he says. "With high standards and tonnes of security control, a hacker needs to invest a lot of time if he wants to create a problem for you. Unfortunately, the good news stops here. The safety-first philosophy of rail - that the train stops to protect the lives of the passengers - is good for hackers, because they don't want to kill people, they want to get money. So it would be fantastic for a hacker to stop a train."

As senior managers seek ever more data on the day-to-day performance of the railway, business and operational systems are increasingly interconnected, and wherever there are interfaces, there are potential points of attack.

Mr Lovan Pushparatnam, head of tramway systems and telecoms with Systra, says any cybersecurity strategy must consider people as well as technology. "The best results are achieved when cybersecurity is treated as part of an overall security policy addressing technical aspects and operational procedures, with continuous assessment and measurement," he says. "It's not about protection, it's about process and preparation, monitoring both your assets and your organisation."

Testing the vulnerability of railway systems to cyberattack is a particular challenge because of the difficulty of simulating attacks under realistic operating conditions. "When we model attack patterns, we

need to understand how it is possible to attack,” Raguseo says. “It’s not easy to do penetration testing in a real environment, so you need to create a test environment. Developing a test environment is complicated for IT - I’d say it’s impossible for a complex environment like rail.”

The European Union (EU) Directive on security of network and information systems (NIS Directive) came into force in August 2016, and is intended to boost the overall level of cybersecurity in member states. The NIS Directive is due to be transposed into the legal systems of the member states by next month and specifically identifies train operators and railway infrastructure managers as entities that could be considered “operators of essential services.” Businesses in this category will be required to implement risk management practices, taking “appropriate and proportional technical and organisational measures to manage the risks posed to the security of networks and information systems which they use in their operations.” Significant cyber attacks must be reported to a “competent national NIS authority.”

All of this leaves railway industry stakeholders with the challenge of securing assets which can have a lifespan of several decades against a threat that is constantly evolving. System architecture is therefore a crucial consideration in safeguarding next-generation rail technologies against attack.

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HEADLINE	04/15 Experts warn: Russia cyber warfare
SOURCE	https://www.standard.co.uk/news/world/syria-news-latest-russia-could-launch-cyber-warfare-within-days-after-usled-military-action-expert-a3814226.html
GIST	<p>Russia could “launch cyber warfare within weeks” in retaliation to US-led airstrikes on Syria bringing down City firms, the UK transport network and the NHS, experts have warned.</p> <p>Theresa May hailed “targeted and limited” action on key sites of Syria’s chemical weapons regime “a success” while Donald Trump branded the offensive “perfectly executed”.</p> <p>But Russia warned of “consequences” following the strike which has left the Prime Minister facing questions over why the decision was not put to a parliamentary vote.</p> <p>Now experts have said the action in retaliation to a suspected chemical attack in Douma a week ago could lead to “cyber warfare”.</p> <p>“I suspect Russia will choose not to respond in military terms. But cyber warfare is highly likely,” he says.</p> <p>“It will be an attack on national infrastructure, not just upsetting city firms, but getting inside the transport system, or the health system, or air traffic control. It could affect everyone.”</p> <p>Mark Almond, director of the Crisis Research Institute, Oxford agreed that the strikes would spark retaliation and said Britain was most vulnerable to a counter-attack.</p> <p>Despite admitting that the “immediate risk of a wider war” has been avoided for now, he warned that sources of potential conflict are still very much active on the ground in Syria.</p> <p>He wrote in the Sunday Telegraph: “Bad relations could easily encourage a reckless Russian freebooter, prompted and paid by Iran, to try his luck getting revenge on the pockets of US and British forces operating in eastern Syria.</p> <p>“Britain is more exposed to potential revenge attacks, despite only four Tornados taking part in the strikes, because they flew from Akrotiri in Cyprus - so close to Syria and to Lebanon.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 ‘Operation Parliament’ targets Mideast
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SOURCE	https://www.forbesmiddleeast.com/en/new-cyberattack-operation-parliament-targets-governments-military-and-intelligence-organizations/
GIST	<p>A new potentially geopolitically-motivated cyberattack dubbed Operation Parliament has been targeting governmental departments and large private entities across the Middle East, according to global cybersecurity company Kaspersky Lab.</p> <p>Operation Parliament has so far affected an unknown number of organizations in over 27 countries, mostly in the Middle East and North Africa, including Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. Financial impact of the attack has not been disclosed.</p> <p>In a campaign believed to have been active since 2017, the cybercriminals targeted selected victims through malware disguised as legitimate email attachments. Upon opening the attachments victims unwittingly gave the criminals access to their systems, enabling them to remotely gain control over their devices and mine data, as well as activate tools such as webcams. It is believed that the attackers had previously gained access to large databases of contacts for sensitive organisations and targeted non-trained staff.</p> <p>The criminal group “hid in plain sight” accordingly to Kaspersky Lab. The malware was first discovered during an operation to uncover a phishing scam targeting political figures. At first it appeared to be the work of another group already known to officials. However, under further inspection the encrypted malware was found to be very different to any previous attacks.</p> <p>Victims are known to include parliaments, senates, top state offices and officials, political science scholars, military and intelligence agencies, ministries, media outlets, research centres, election commissions, Olympic organizations and large trading companies. Over 130 individual users have been identified as victims so far. Efforts are now underway by law enforcers to find the group behind the attacks and prevent any further damage.</p> <p>“Operation Parliament is another symptom of the continuously developing tensions in the Middle East and North Africa. We are witnessing higher sophistication and smarter techniques used by attackers and it doesn’t look like they will stop or slow down anytime soon” said Mohamad Amin Hasbini, Senior Security Researcher, Global Research & Analysis Team at Kaspersky Lab.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 UK considers retaliatory cyberattacks
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-russia-cyber/uk-could-launch-retaliatory-cyber-attack-on-russia-if-infrastructure-targeted-sunday-times-idUSKBN1HL1BT
GIST	<p>LONDON (Reuters) - Britain would consider launching a cyber attack against Russia in retaliation if Russia targeted British national infrastructure, the Sunday Times reported, citing unnamed security sources.</p> <p>Britain’s relations with Russia are at a historic low, after it blamed Russia for a nerve agent attack on former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in England, prompting mass expulsions of diplomats.</p> <p>Russia has denied involvement, and on Saturday also condemned strikes against Syria by Western powers, which Britain took part in.</p> <p>Cyber security has become a focal point of the strained relations. On Thursday, a British spy chief said that his GCHQ agency would “continue to expose Russia’s unacceptable cyber behaviour”, adding there would be increasing demand for its cyber expertise.</p> <p>The Sunday Times also said that British spy officials had been preparing for Russia-backed hackers to release embarrassing information on politicians and other high-profile people since the attack on the Skripals.</p>

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HEADLINE	04/14 US: 2000% rise disinformation campaign
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/04/14/russian-trolls-launch-disinformation-campaign-after-syria-airstrikes-pentagon.html
GIST	<p>Following U.S.-led coalition strikes in Syria to degrade chemical weapons capabilities, the Pentagon says it's seen a "2,000 percent increase" in Russian "disinformation."</p> <p>Russia, a close ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, has reportedly started a new campaign to spread propaganda and other false narratives on social media after the U.S., France and the United Kingdom staged airstrikes in Syria this weekend in response to Assad's alleged use of chemical weapons.</p> <p>Chief Pentagon spokeswoman Dana White said at a briefing on Saturday that "there has been a 2,000 percent increase in Russian trolls in the last 24 hours."</p> <p>Saturday's briefing was an attempt to counter any false information.</p> <p>An investigation into the 2016 presidential elections by the federal government has found that a number of Kremlin-backed hacking groups spread politically charged content across social media platforms in an attempt to influence the outcome.</p> <p>At a meeting of the U.N. Security Council Saturday, U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley took aim at Russian ambassador Vasily Nebenzia over the "fake news."</p> <p>"The pictures of dead children are not fake news," she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Yahoo, AOL read, share users' emails
SOURCE	https://www.cnet.com/news/yahoo-aol-oath-privacy-policy-verizon-emails-messages/
GIST	<p>Oath, the media division of Verizon that runs both AOL and Yahoo, is finally unifying the privacy policy of its two giant legacy Internet brands. That means an updated set of privacy terms and policies for hundreds of millions of users. And in an online world where privacy expectations have been radically reshaped in light of Facebook's Cambridge Analytica mess, it's more important than ever to read the fine print on those splash screens.</p> <p>When we logged in to a Yahoo Mail account Friday, we were greeted with the privacy policy you see below (Jason Kint had pointed to the policy earlier on Twitter). In it, Oath notes that it has the right to read your emails, instant messages, posts, photos and even look at your message attachments. And it might share that data with parent company Verizon, too.</p> <p>To be clear, Yahoo's previous privacy policy had already stated that Yahoo "analyzes and stores all communications content, including email content," so the company has previously disclosed that it's been able to scan the contents of your emails, at least. (AOL's legacy privacy policy doesn't say anything like that.)</p> <p>When you dig further into Oath's policy about what it might do with your words, photos, and attachments, the company clarifies that it's utilizing automated systems that help the company with security, research and providing targeted ads -- and that those automated systems should strip out personally identifying information before letting any humans look at your data. But there are no explicit guarantees on that.</p> <p>Notably, Google used to scan its Gmail messages for better ad targeting, though it stopped the practice in June of 2017.</p>

	<p>In other words, emails related to your banking and financial transactions appear to be equally in the crosshairs of Oath's ad targeting engine.</p> <p>There appears to be another big change for Yahoo users, too: Oath's previous mutual arbitration clause and class-action waiver has been updated and extended across the company's services to include Yahoo as well. What it means is if you don't like what the company does with your data, you'll have a hard time suing.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Google loses 'right to be forgotten' case
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/google-loses-right-to-be-forgotten-legal-case-europe/
GIST	<p>A U.K. court has ruled in favor an unnamed businessman who wanted Google to remove search results of his past conviction history in a landmark "right to be forgotten" case. The search engine had previously refused to delete results about his conviction, BBC News reports.</p> <p>Ten years ago, the businessman was convicted of conspiring to intercept communications. He spent six months in jail. He argued that his conviction was no longer relevant to the public.</p> <p>Google said in a statement Friday it would respect the judge's decision. "We work hard to comply with the right to be forgotten," it said, "but we take great care not to remove search results that are in the public interest."</p> <p>However, Justice Mark Warby rejected a separate claim by a businessman who had committed a more serious crime. More than 10 years ago, the second man was convicted of conspiring to account falsely. He spent four years in jail.</p> <p>Warby said the winning businessman had shown remorse, while the other man continued to "mislead the public."</p> <p>In 2014, the European Court of Justice set legal precedent for the "right to be forgotten" after a Spanish man asked Google to remove results about his financial history. Google said it has removed 800,000 pages from its results over similar requests, but companies can decline to remove information if they believe they are in the public interest.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	04/15 Using social media inspire potential terror
SOURCE	https://theconversation.com/since-boston-bombing-terrorists-are-using-new-social-media-to-inspire-potential-attackers-94944
GIST	<p>Five years ago, a deadly attack during the Boston Marathon made America's nightmare come true: the radicalized boy next door.</p> <p>The research my colleagues and I conduct at Georgia State University tracks how terrorist organizations expose people – mostly young men – to radical messages and extreme violence on social media. The goal: changing their worldview and eventually guiding them to act.</p> <p>The Boston Marathon bombing marked the beginning of a new trend that is almost impossible to prevent. Before, individuals would receive guidance and training from terrorist organizations in person. Now, these same groups simply inspire individuals to carry out attacks on their own, for which the group can claim credit if they are successful. We call that "self-radicalizing."</p>

Radicalization of the boy next door

It remains puzzling to many how Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, a 19-year-old stoner who listened to Jay-Z and watched “The Walking Dead,” could – with his older brother, Tamerlan – killed and injured so many innocent civilians. Authorities at least knew more about Dzhokhar because he was taken alive. His brother died during a police chase.

Courtroom sketch of Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. Jane Flavell Collins via AP
Dzhokhar did not fit the profile experts have identified as typical of self-radicalized terrorists – either jihadi (a Muslim Holy warrior) or extreme right-wing versions. They were unlike many terrorists who gravitate to extremist ideologies.

According to researchers Alice Marwick and Becca Lewis, people who are radicalized “may have a hard time finding like-minded friends in their day-to-day lives, or connecting with romantic partners.”

Dzhokhar was described by Rolling Stone magazine, for example, as attractive, popular and a student athlete. He was also flunking courses and lost his financial aid at University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth in the semester leading up to the attack. But that hardly explains why he went on to plan the deaths of potentially hundreds of runners and spectators.

Eventually, prosecutors found copies of Inspire magazine on Dzhokhar’s laptop. The magazine is an English-language online publication that was published by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. They also found videos of sermons by Anwar al-Awlaki, the American-born firebrand jihadi cleric who was killed in 2011 in Yemen by two U.S. drones. Awlaki’s videos are still circulating on social media years after his death.

The evidence and Dzhokhar’s testimony suggest that the brothers were inspired by propaganda. Both Awlaki’s sermons and Inspire magazine advocate and provide specific “how-to” instructions on mass casualty attacks. Dzhokhar and his brother learned how to make the pressure-cooker bombs from one of the most well-known articles published by the magazine: “How to Build a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom.”

For example, the text explains: “Can I make an effective bomb that causes damage to the enemy from ingredients available in any kitchen in the world? The answer is yes. But before how, we ask why? It is because Allah says ... every Muslim is required to defend his religion and his nation.”

In the five years since the Boston bombing, the number of social media platforms disseminating terrorist propaganda has increased tenfold. And thus, so has the scale and scope of possible future attacks.

Shift to encrypted platforms

As technology evolves, new online platforms provide avenues for terrorist organizations to share information. Platforms have gone from an open interface model, in which anyone can observe what is occurring, to closed and encrypted platforms in which privacy and security settings are protected. These platforms are not readily accessible nor can they be viewed without already being a member of the chat room or channel. When used by terrorist groups, encrypted platforms are harder to police and monitor.

Telegram is an encrypted application developed by Pavel Durov, the inventor of Russia’s Facebook equivalent, VKontakte. Telegram has all but replaced Twitter and Facebook for jihadi communication. Open platforms like Twitter and Facebook have increasingly policed jihadi content, shut down their sites, and taken down their content within minutes of it being posted.

Social media allows terrorist groups to foster a virtual community and a sense of belonging. Research on radicalization suggests that their methods involve taking advantage of individuals’ feelings of loneliness and alienation. However, this doesn’t explain why well-adjusted, well-integrated individuals who appear to have assimilated into Western society – like the Tsarnaevs – gravitate to violent extremist ideologies.

	<p>Research I've done with colleagues on social media demonstrates that terrorist organizations also deliberately foster a type of addiction to the platform and to its content.</p> <p>They do this by creating a schedule of positive reinforcement that modifies behavior, like gambling or playing slot machines. The result changes every time such that one cannot anticipate the outcome and continues to engage in behavior in hopes of a reward the next time around. Not knowing whether you are on the verge of a big win sustains the individual to continue the behavior (in some cases, gambling), whereas not knowing what type of reward the terrorist platform will offer equally sustains user engagement.</p> <p>This keeps the individual tethered to his or her computer, making certain rewards more valuable, limiting how much time you have to join a group or access material, making access exclusive, and varying content to prevent boredom.</p> <p>Through this process, it is possible that ordinarily well-adjusted individuals can be persuaded to channel everyday feelings of frustration, disappointment or anger into acts of extreme violence.</p> <p>As the Islamic state further recedes and loses even more territory, it is adapting to exist almost entirely digitally. Those who fight terrorism need to understand the difference between individuals who are inspired and those who are directly encouraged to engage in violence. Likewise, terrorism researchers need to understand the role of social media in capturing the imagination of young men and instigating them to perpetrate violence.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 ISIS member families on rise in Anbar
SOURCE	https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/number-of-islamic-state-members-families-on-the-rise-in-anbar-as-displaced-people-return-back-home/
GIST	<p>Anbar (IraqiNews.com) The number of families of Islamic State members has been growing as hundreds of displaced families returned to their regions, a security source from Anbar police said on Sunday.</p> <p>Speaking to Almaalomah website on Sunday, the source said “number of IS families in Hit city and surrounding regions reached 150 families, which indicate terrorist operations that could target security troops and civilians, given that those families provide the militants with information about security personnel in order to target them.”</p> <p>“The presence of those families in Hit threaten safety and stability of the region. Displacing them could be hard due to pressures by rights groups,” the source added.</p> <p>Thousands of IS militants as well as Iraqi civilians were killed since the government campaign, backed by paramilitary troops and the coalition, was launched in October 2016 to fight the militant group.</p> <p>In December, Abadi announced full liberation of Iraqi lands, declaring end of war against IS members. However, Islamic State continues to launch sporadic attacks across Iraq against troops. Security reports indicate that the militant group still poses threat against stability in the country.</p> <p>As many as 3,298 civilians were killed and 4,781 others were wounded in 2017, excluding Anbar civilian casualty figures for November and December, which are not available, UNAMI said in a report in December.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/16 ISIS threatens New York subways
SOURCE	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5620103/ISIS-threaten-bomb-New-Yorks-subway-chilling-

	propaganda-poster.html
GIST	<p>ISIS propaganda chiefs have issued a chilling threat to bring death and destruction to New York's subway.</p> <p>The terror group has vowed to attack Paris and the World Cup finals in Russia in recent weeks as part of a global campaign of lone wolf strikes as it continues to lose territory in the Middle East.</p> <p>In its latest warning, uploaded to militant Islamist messaging platforms, a man is pictured standing on the platform at New York's High Street - Brooklyn Bridge Station with explosives and a timer behind him.</p> <p>The poster includes the threat: 'You will not expect where we will attack.'</p> <p>Last year extremists also threatened to attack the Queen and the Vatican City.</p> <p>The group's propaganda wing – the Wafa Media Foundation - is continuing to churn out threats despite the so-called ISIS caliphate suffering huge losses in Syria and Iraq.</p> <p>ISIS fanatics are increasingly turning to lone-wolf supporters to take up their violent cause around the world.</p> <p>'Wafa Media Foundation specialises in these types of graphics. Wafa's threat, like others recently issued by pro-ISIS media groups, is a specific attack directive within a larger push by ISIS for lone wolf attacks as it rapidly loses territory in Iraq and Syria,' said Rita Katz, director of the respected SITE Intelligence Group,</p> <p>'Though these threats should be taken seriously, there is also a publicity element to pro-ISIS media groups' threats against places like the Vatican or events like 2018 FIFA World Cup.'</p>
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HEADLINE	04/16 Extremists hamper polio eradication
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/nigerias-boko-haram-extremists-hamper-polio-eradication-54494701?
GIST	<p>Islamic extremists made Imana Alhaji Gana's village in northeastern Nigeria too dangerous for health workers to vaccinate against polio. Now that she and her family have fled to a displacement camp, those workers want to catch her children in time.</p> <p>Here in the camps housing thousands of families seeking safety from the extremists, health teams are going from tent to tent, inoculating youngsters against the disease that withers limbs and disables children for life.</p> <p>At first, Gana is afraid to let the outreach workers vaccinate her baby. Eventually they persuade her that the three-week-old child is not too young for immunization, which can take place as early as the day of birth.</p> <p>The complicated fight against polio is yet another way the Nigeria-based extremist group Boko Haram has disrupted life in the northeast, leaving children vulnerable to an entirely preventable disease.</p> <p>"When such children come to the camps or host communities they become a threat to other children," said Almai Some, the field coordinator in Borno state for the vaccination campaign run by Rotary.</p> <p>Some of the families arriving are from areas where polio vaccinators have not been able to visit for as long as six years.</p> <p>Boko Haram's insurgency began in Maiduguri, Borno state's capital, but its reach has expanded beyond Nigeria's borders to neighboring Niger, Chad and Cameroon. Its violence has proved to be a major setback to the international campaign against polio.</p>

	<p>Nigeria is one of just three countries where polio is endemic and has not been eliminated, along with Pakistan and Afghanistan. The final phase to wipe out polio is "proving to be extraordinarily difficult" because "the poliovirus is surviving despite all the good work and in the face of everything that is being thrown at it," said a WHO-appointed monitoring group at the end of last year.</p> <p>In Nigeria, there is little or no surveillance data in Borno state, and "unless there is a breakthrough to reach those areas in Borno, the entire polio (eradication) program is at risk," said the monitoring group. Nigeria had other outbreaks last year including cholera, hepatitis, monkeypox, Lassa and yellow fevers, showing the challenges to the country's health care system. Globally the campaign to eradicate polio has been faced with outbreaks last year in non-endemic countries like Congo and Syria.</p> <p>Now the WHO says it will be spending \$127 million toward eradicating polio in Nigeria between 2018 and 2019. Rotary's program is helping that effort by targeting some 2.1 million children in 24 accessible local governments. But there are still three areas in Borno state that are not included because of ongoing instability: Kala-Balge, Marte and Abadam. For those unreachable areas, the vaccinators train Nigerian soldiers in how to administer the vaccines.</p> <p>In a few cases, villagers have reported being threatened by Boko Haram fighters to avoid the polio vaccine. And in 2013 a number of vaccinators were attacked and killed by the extremists, leading some of their colleagues to disguise their vaccine carriers or hide them under their hijabs.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Turkey: US pastor faces terror trial
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-pastor-trial-alleged-terror-ties-spying-turkey-54478886?cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>An American pastor imprisoned in Turkey is going on trial for alleged terror ties and spying in a case that has increased tensions between Washington and Ankara.</p> <p>Andrew Craig Brunson, a 50-year-old evangelical pastor from North Carolina, is facing up to 35 years in prison on charges of "committing crimes on behalf of terror groups without being a member" and "espionage." The trial begins Monday in western Izmir province.</p> <p>Brunson was arrested in December 2016 for alleged links to both an outlawed Kurdish insurgent group and the network of the U.S.-based Muslim cleric who Turkey blames for a masterminding a failed military coup that year. The cleric, Fethullah Gulen, denies the claim.</p> <p>Brunson, who has lived in Turkey for 23 years, has denied all allegations, saying that he solely worked as a pastor.</p> <p>The Turkish government has clearly linked Brunson's case with its determination to force the U.S. to extradite Gulen — and some see the pastor as a diplomatic pawn.</p> <p>The American Center for Law and Justice, a conservative Christian group in the U.S., has called Brunson a "hostage of the Turkish government." A petition has garnered more than half a million signatures, claiming that the case was putting Christianity on trial.</p> <p>Brunson's lawyer, Ismail Cem Halavurt, told The Associated Press on Sunday he expects the pastor's acquittal, arguing that the "weak" indictment lacked sufficient evidence to make the case hold up in court.</p> <p>American officials have repeatedly requested that Brunson be released — President Donald Trump himself asked Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to have his government "expeditiously" return the pastor to the U.S.</p>

	But Erdogan fired back at Washington, demanding that the U.S. first return Gulen.
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HEADLINE	04/14 Mali militants attack UN camp
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mali-attack-kills-peacekeeper-wounds-10-french-soldiers-54474009?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Officials say a U.N. peacekeeper is dead and 10 French soldiers have been wounded after a jihadist attack in northern Mali.</p> <p>Residents in the town of Timbuktu reported hearing two large detonations Saturday near a camp for the U.N. mission known as MINUSMA.</p> <p>Ten soldiers from the French military operation known as Barkhane were among those hurt — five seriously, according to the Malian security ministry.</p> <p>There was no immediate claim of responsibility though a number of extremist groups are active in the region.</p> <p>A security official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to reporters, said one of the vehicles used in the attack had been disguised as a MINUSMA vehicle while the other was marked as a Malian military vehicle.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Syria: eastern Ghouta 'fully liberated'
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-syrian-police-units-enter-town-douma-54464281?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The Syrian army has declared the eastern suburbs of the capital Damascus "fully liberated" after the last group of gunmen left the town of Douma.</p> <p>An army statement read by chief military spokesman Brig. Gen. Ali Mayhoub said Saturday that special units are clearing streets and squares of Douma from mines and explosives planted by rebels.</p> <p>Douma is the largest town of the suburbs known as eastern Ghouta and its capture marks the biggest victory for President Bashar Assad's forces since the conflict began seven years ago.</p> <p>The army said that troops discovered weapons factories, arms depots, tunnels and food storage places.</p> <p>It added that the army is preparing eastern Ghouta for tens of thousands who were displaced over the past two months during a crushing government offensive to retake the area.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Afghan, Pakistan forces border clash
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/afghan-pakistani-forces-clash-disputed-border-54478030?
GIST	<p>An Afghan official says Pakistani forces have crossed into eastern Afghanistan and clashed with Afghan troops.</p> <p>Col. Abdul Hanan, the acting provincial police chief in the eastern Khost province, says the fighting broke out early Sunday and is still underway. He was not immediately able to confirm reports of casualties.</p>

	<p>The two countries are separated by the 2,400-kilometer (1,500-mile) Durand Line, which was drawn by British rulers in 1896. Kabul does not recognize it as an international border and has objected to new fortifications being built by Pakistan.</p> <p>The two U.S. allies routinely accuse each other of failing to crack down on militants who operate along the porous border.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Militants attack Afghan checkpoint; 11 dead
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/insurgents-attack-checkpoint-afghanistan-kill-police-54477896?
GIST	<p>At least 11 Afghan paramilitary forces were killed when the Taliban attacked their checkpoint, an official said Sunday.</p> <p>Zabi Amani, a spokesman for the governor of the northern Sari Pul province, said two other forces were wounded in the attack late Saturday. He said three insurgents were killed, including a local commander, and four others were wounded.</p> <p>Those targeted were members of the Local Uprising Forces, militias supported by the government.</p> <p>No one immediately claimed the attack, but Amani blamed the Taliban, who are active in the area.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Austrian convicted for terror attack plans
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/04/13/austrian-man-convicted-for-plans-for-attacks-in-germany.html
GIST	<p>VIENNA – An Austrian court has convicted a 19-year-old of involvement in plans for two Islamic extremist attacks in Germany, one of which was supposed to be carried out by a 12-year-old boy.</p> <p>The Austria Press Agency reported that the defendant was convicted Friday in Vienna of attempted incitement to murder as a terrorist crime. He was given a nine-year sentence.</p> <p>The Austrian of Albanian descent was accused of trying to incite a 12-year-old to attack a Christmas market in Ludwigshafen in 2016, and plotting an attack on the United States' Ramstein Air Base along with a 16-year-old girl.</p> <p>Defense lawyer Wolfgang Blaschitz said he is considering appealing.</p> <p>The defendant testified he became a supporter of the Islamic State group following a previous jail term for robbery. He denied ordering any attacks.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Boko Haram abductions, killings
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/boko-haram-abducted-1000-children-killed-2000-teachers/story?
GIST	<p>Boko Haram has abducted more than 1,000 children in northeast Nigeria since 2013, the United Nations' children's agency announced Friday.</p> <p>The number of children kidnapped by the Nigerian terrorist group includes 276 girls snatched from a boarding school in the northeast town of Chibok on the night of April 14, 2014, four years ago today.</p>

Some of the Chibok schoolgirls managed to escape, while others were later rescued or freed following negotiations. But four years on from that fateful night, more than 100 of them have yet to be returned to their families, according to UNICEF.

"The four-year anniversary of the Chibok abduction reminds us that children in northeastern Nigeria continue to come under attack at a shocking scale," Mohamed Malick Fall, UNICEF representative in Nigeria, said in a statement Friday. "They are consistently targeted and exposed to brutal violence in their homes, schools and public places."

Since Boko Haram launched its insurgency in the northeast region nine years ago, at least 2,295 teachers have been killed and over 1,400 schools have been destroyed. Most of these schools haven't been able to reopen due to extensive damage or ongoing insecurity in the area, according to UNICEF.

Most recently, suspected Boko Haram fighters abducted 110 students from an girls' boarding school in the northeast town of Dapchi in the middle of the night on Feb. 19. More than a month later, 104 of the schoolgirls were freed by their captors following "back-channel efforts and with the help of some friends of the country," according to Segun Adeyemi, spokesman for Nigeria's Ministry of Information and Culture.

The relentless onslaughts show not even children and schools are spared from Boko Haram's wrath -- rather, they are the targets.

The Nigerian jihadist group's uprising was fueled largely through the group's systematic campaign of abducting children and forcing thousands of girls and boys into their ranks, according to a report issued in April 2017 by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

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HEADLINE	04/14 Egypt: suicide bombers Sinai kill 8
SOURCE	http://abcnews.com/International/wireStory/egypt-troops-killed-15-wounded-sinai-clashes-54465542?
GIST	<p>Militants wearing explosive belts blew themselves up as they tried to infiltrate a military base in Egypt's central Sinai, killing eight soldiers and wounding 15 others, the military said on Saturday.</p> <p>The clashes at dawn left 14 militants dead. They were armed with rifles and RPGs, the armed forces said in a statement. The attack comes two months after the launch of a massive operation against militants in Sinai as well as parts of Egypt's Nile Delta and Western Desert, along the porous border with Libya.</p> <p>There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack which bore the hallmarks of the extremist Islamic State group, whose local affiliate is spearheading an Islamic insurgency in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.</p> <p>Egypt has for years been struggling to contain the Islamic insurgency in the turbulent Sinai region. It has carried out military operations there that, it says, have killed hundreds of militants.</p> <p>It has also built a buffer zone along the border with Gaza to curb the flow of militants and weapons through a vast tunnel network. The insurgency, however, has shown no signs of abating.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	04/14 'Warranty void if removed' stickers illegal
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/government/ftc-warranty-void-if-removed-stickers-are-

	illegal/
GIST	<p>The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) sent letters this week to six major companies containing warnings that using "warranty void if removed" or similarly worded stickers on their products is illegal.</p> <p>The FTC said the six companies sell automobiles, cellular devices, and video gaming systems, all industry verticals where such practices are rampant.</p> <p>But besides the use of anti-tampering "warranty void if removed" stickers, the letters also warn companies against forcing customers into using replacement parts or repair services provided by certain companies for users to keep their warranties intact.</p> <p>In other words, the FTC has officially shown its support for the Right To Repair movement that's been becoming popular in the US and Europe.</p> <p>"Provisions that tie warranty coverage to the use of particular products or services harm both consumers who pay more for them as well as the small businesses who offer competing products and services," said Thomas B. Pahl, Acting Director of the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection.</p> <p>Limiting repair options illegal under 1975 US law</p> <p>The FTC says that such practices are illegal under the Magnuson-Moss Warranty Act, a law that governs consumer product warranties, and which states that no company can put restrictions on the way users choose to repair their products.</p> <p>The law says that companies can't force users to use only certain types of (astronomically-priced) replacement parts, take produces for repair jobs only at certain repair shops, or can't plaster anti-tampering stickers on products to prevent users from repairing their own products.</p> <p>Over the past two decades, companies in the US have been ignoring this law and have been locking down products and repair practices, using "warranty voiding" as punishment for those users who make modifications to products or dare to find cheaper or faster ways of repairing products.</p> <p>The FTC says this is illegal. The Commission plans to review the six companies it sent letters to after 30 days and see if they have dropped their current practices, threatening legal action if they did not.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Fake gov. letters surface in Clark Co.
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/fake-inslee-letter-posted-on-doors-around-clark-county/
GIST	<p>VANCOUVER — On Thursday morning, Gary Berreth stepped outside his house and found an unexpected letter attached to his front door.</p> <p>The letter featured the Washington state seal and claimed to be from the Office of the Governor. It warned of "an adjustment in property taxes" due to the shutdown of an oil terminal and an agreement with BNSF Railway to prohibit the shipping of oil, lumber and coal by rail through Vancouver.</p> <p>At the end of the letter was a carefully scrawled signature: "Jay Inslee," Washington's Democratic governor. Copied on the letter were Clark County Assessor Peter Van Nortwick and Treasurer Doug Lasher.</p> <p>"I instantly knew that there is no way the government does business like this," said Berreth, who said he saw the same letter attached to other doors throughout his Green Meadows neighborhood.</p> <p>Berreth was correct in assuming the letter was a hoax.</p>

In an era of growing concerns of fake news spreading online, these apparent dirty tricksters have taken up a more old-fashioned approach to spreading misinformation.

Simon Vila, spokesman for Inslee, confirmed that neither the governor nor his staff were out posting notes to residents' doors.

"This is definitely not from our office," he said.

Vila said the governor's office suspects that whoever is behind the fake notes is also behind a series of strange letters directed to supporters of U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Washington. These letters were typically signed by "Titania," a character from the play, "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

Vila noted that the fonts of both letters are similar.

The letter's reference to "shutting down the oil terminal" is a likely reference to Inslee's decision earlier this year to reject a proposed crude-by-rail terminal at the Port of Vancouver.

The letter's claim that BNSF, which operates a large network of railways, has entered an agreement to end the shipment of oil, lumber and coal by rail through Vancouver is also highly questionable.

Courtney Wallace, director of public affairs for BNSF, said in an email that as "a common carrier, we are obligated by federal law to move all regulated goods."

"I'm just surprised someone took the time to write something like this up," said Van Nortwick, a Republican. He took to Facebook to debunk the letter, although pointed out that not all of it was fake news.

"It's very rare that someone gets my name spelled right," he said

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HEADLINE	04/15 Newest threat to Calif. redwoods: pot
SOURCE	https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/The-newest-threat-to-California-s-redwoods-isn-t-12835952.php
GIST	<p>A new industry is thriving in California. It is green in terms of the money being made and the crop itself. Yet it is anything but that when it comes to the environment, posing horrendous ecological threats to the region's redwood forests.</p> <p>Lindgren Lumber and Humboldt Flakeboard are the newest additions to the Medical Marijuana Innovation Zone, an area in Arcata, California, zoned specifically for marijuana cultivation and processing. As businesses like Humboldt Harvest Wellness and Talking Tree Farms apply for the necessary permits to process cannabis in the former mill complex, it is evident that the cannabis business may restore the economy of redwood country.</p> <p>But this new industry might also undermine the environmental activism that has long fought to preserve the redwoods as a natural resource.</p> <p>Not long ago, activists thought they had won this fight. And they had - until now. They successfully dislodged corporate logging, but the old timber mills are being used to churn out marijuana. Marijuana cultivation subjects North Coast forests to a barrage of environmental assaults: soil erosion, heavy pesticide use, stream diversion, irresponsible grading and land clearing, all of which threaten to lay waste to the redwoods.</p> <p>As marijuana businesses repurpose Arcata's remaining lumber mills, a renewed ecological peril haunts</p>

Humboldt County. Just like timber companies in decades past, marijuana interests are positioning themselves to shape regulations that protect the industry, not the environment. Americans only have to look back a few decades to the activism that saved the redwoods to understand just how high the stakes are.

Precipitating the "timber wars," that activism began when logging companies expanded operations during the post-World War II housing boom. Timber yields exploded between 1940 and 1970, and increased demand led logging companies to clear-cut large swaths of North Coast redwood forest. This practice had broad ramifications. Leveling a patch of forest compromised entire watersheds by eroding soil and increasing siltation in streams, which left forests vulnerable to flooding, landslides and myriad other environmental problems.

Efforts at redwood preservation proved ineffective when protected groves were surrounded by denuded land. Consequently, environmental advocates intensified their push to create an expansive national park in Northern California that would protect the redwoods from the damage caused by clear-cutting.

By 1968, the Redwood National Park Act established a federal park that protected 58,000 acres of forest. Preservationists had originally proposed acquiring 90,000 acres to ensure the ecological stability of the region, but fierce resistance from timber companies forced a compromise. Yet because environmental impacts were not confined by man-drawn property lines, this compromise meant clear-cuts on nearby private property ended up threatening protected redwood stands anyway.

Activists requested the National Park Service exercise its discretionary power to create a buffer zone around sensitive groves. Three separate studies confirmed the grave ecological hazards presented by nearby logging operations.

NPS, though, was new to the area, and hoped to avoid making waves as it worked to integrate itself into the community. As a result, jobs and the local economy trumped ecological health. NPS took an approach that empowered private interests, adopting a utilitarian cost-benefit analysis that overrode preservationist policy.

Increased harvests led to new logging roads, clear-cut sites, stream diversion and, perhaps most shocking, aerial spraying of Agent Orange, a herbicide known to contain carcinogens. Roads and clear-cuts interrupted the ecosystem and directly threatened wildlife habitat. Road-building itself led to erosion and presented dangers for aquatic life. The use of Agent Orange compounded these problems not only by poisoning habitats, but also by destroying the roots and undergrowth that stabilized the forest floor.

Nevertheless, passing legislation to protect additional old growth proved difficult because of the political might of corporations like Maxxam, a multinational conglomerate that muscled its way into Humboldt's timber industry during the redwood wars. Activists spent years fighting to save remaining old-growth redwood stands. Finally, the Clinton administration brokered a deal to preserve sensitive groves.

But the victory was short-lived. Although the timber industry fell, a robust pot industry soon sprouted in its place. This was not the same pot industry once concentrated in small, personal gardens and largely associated with hippies, back-to-the-landers and other counterculture migrants. The growing popularity of pot, along with increasing legalization, has turned marijuana cultivation into big business. And despite its reputation as a liberal bastion, California left regulation to local authorities.

The result is a tangled web of lenient laws. Despite the liberalization of marijuana laws in the state, semi-legal and illegal cultivation persists. Marijuana's illegality elsewhere continues to fuel a robust black market. Intending to sell on this market, pot farmers interested in a cash crop have little incentive to seek permits or comply with regulations. In any case, the odd dichotomy under which marijuana is legal in California, but illegal under federal law, makes it hard to enforce regulations as local officials find themselves at odds with federal agencies.

At best, pot farmers loosely adhere to regulations while they operate in a legal gray area. At worst, inconsistent enforcement encourages illegal cultivation - which poses serious environmental consequences as these grow sites often contain banned pesticides and other toxic contaminants.

And that creates real environmental hazards. According to Rep. Jared Huffman, a Democrat, authorities have removed 8,188 pounds of fertilizer, 104 pounds of rodenticide, 560 gallons of insecticide, 50 gallons of garbage and miles of irrigation line from illegal grow sites on the North Coast.

Perhaps the most detrimental contaminant making its way into the forests is carbofuran, a toxic pesticide banned in the United States. These pesticides leach into streams and other waterways, increasing their deadly reach. Chemical runoff from grow sites poisons swimming holes and has the potential to seep into city water supplies, which is alarming because carbofuran is lethal to humans in small doses. Ecologists have also determined that chemicals are endangering wildlife such as the Pacific fisher and the northern spotted owl.

In addition to the impact from toxins, the water usage demanded by marijuana cultivation does serious ecological harm. A marijuana plant requires around 22.7 liters of water a day. Unregulated cultivation can easily deplete surface water sources as farmers divert streams and springs.

Water isn't the only resource that pot devours. The plants require lots of sun, which encourages farmers to clear grow sites of trees and plants that might compete with cannabis for light. Satellite imaging has revealed the alarming rate at which these clearings are breaking up otherwise continuous forest. And grow sites require access, which means additional land is cleared and improperly graded as rogue farmers build roads.

All of these changes in the land accrue: Forest and other habitat is fragmented, streams are buried, diverted or polluted, and wildlife dies.

These trends are disturbing. California produces 60 to 70 percent of the marijuana consumed in the United States, which means the state is shouldering most of the environmental cost. As one study of the North Coast indicates, the danger from marijuana cultivation is particularly concerning because the "region is a recognized biodiversity hotspot." The redwoods constitute an ecosystem that is unique and rare - and now marijuana cultivation even poses a threat to Redwood National Park.

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HEADLINE	04/15 China sends warning to Taiwan, US
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/15/asia/taiwan-us-china-xi-jinping-drills-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Chinese President Xi Jinping has sent a clear message of Beijing's disapproval over growing ties between the United States and Taiwan by ordering live-fire drills in the Taiwan Strait.</p> <p>The drills, to be held this coming Wednesday, will mark the first time the Chinese Navy has held drills with live ammunition in the strait since September 2015, in the lead-up to the self-ruled island's presidential election.</p> <p>Prior to those elections, relations between the two were at a high point after Xi met with then-President Ma Ying-jeou, the first such meeting in history between leaders of the two governments.</p> <p>But since then, tensions between China and the island it views as a breakaway province have become strained under Ma's successor, President Tsai Ing-wen.</p> <p>The new Trump administration has sought closer ties to President Tsai's government, angering Beijing by signing two deals in the past month to tighten ties with the island, including a travel act which will allow more official visits between the US and Taipei.</p>

"(China) wants to highlight that the Chinese navy is ever ready and secondly, it is a signal to the government in Taipei you better not go further," Collin Koh, research fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies' Maritime Security Program, told CNN.

The planned live-fire exercises follow a massive show of force by the PLA Navy on April 10 and 11, which conducted the country's largest military drills ever in the South China Sea.

Chinese President Xi personally reviewed the troops himself from the deck of the Chinese destroyer Changsha on Thursday, speaking to the troops about the need for the navy to become "world-class."

Responding to the news of the upcoming live-fire drills, the Taiwanese Defense Military said in a statement the drills were taking place in a routine military zone and reiterated their national army could protect the country from any threat.

"Our people please rest assured," the statement said.

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HEADLINE	04/15 FDA pulls concentrated caffeine
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/fda-acts-pull-concentrated-caffeine-market-n865716
GIST	<p>Bulk caffeine products may have killed at least two people and they don't belong on the market, the Food and Drug Administration said Friday.</p> <p>The FDA declared concentrated, bulk caffeine products illegal and said it would act to get them off the shelves.</p> <p>"These products present a significant public health threat because of the high risk that they will be erroneously used at excessive, potentially dangerous doses," the FDA said in a statement.</p> <p>"Highly concentrated and pure caffeine, often sold in bulk packages, have been linked to at least two deaths in otherwise healthy individuals."</p> <p>The FDA has been warning about powdered caffeine since 2014, when an Ohio teenager died after using it. It's also specifically asked sellers to stop providing it directly to consumers.</p> <p>"Despite multiple actions against these products in the past, we've seen a continued trend of products containing highly concentrated or pure caffeine being marketed directly to consumers as dietary supplements and sold in bulk quantities, with up to thousands of recommended servings per container," FDA Commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb said in a statement.</p> <p>"We know these products are sometimes being used in potentially dangerous ways. For example, teenagers, for a perceived energy kick, sometimes mix dangerously high amounts of super-concentrated caffeine into workout cocktails."</p> <p>It would be easy to get a dangerous dose, the FDA said.</p> <p>"A half cup of a highly concentrated liquid caffeine can contain approximately 2,000 mg of caffeine and just a single teaspoon of a powdered pure caffeine product can contain approximately 3,200 mg of caffeine. This is equivalent to about 20 to 28 cups of coffee, a potentially toxic dose of caffeine," the agency said.</p> <p>"Regardless of whether the product contains a warning label, such products present a significant and unreasonable risk of illness or injury to the consumer," the FDA added.</p> <p>Too much caffeine can cause fatal heartbeat irregularities.</p>

The FDA's action does not include energy drinks or energy products that contain caffeine, or supplements. "Moreover, this guidance does not affect other types of products that might also contain caffeine, such as prescription or over-the-counter drugs or conventional foods, like traditionally caffeinated beverages," it said.

But the bulk products can easily confuse people, who may accidentally overdose on them.

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HEADLINE	04/14 MBTA rail safety system off track
SOURCE	http://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2018/04/14/who-driving-your-commuter-train-likely-someone-with-wreck-record/sLRyEIPMFvZqDoe6Je8YFI/story.html
GIST	<p>Dean Walker's license has been suspended 39 times for everything from driving to endanger to refusing a breathalyzer test. He's been caught speeding 16 times and convicted of drunken driving twice.</p> <p>To fellow motorists, he's a hazard.</p> <p>To the Registry of Motor Vehicles, he's a chronic offender. But to Keolis, the MBTA's commuter rail operator, Walker is something else entirely — an engineer.</p> <p>Despite his appalling driving history, Walker is entrusted with operating six-car trains, at speeds averaging 60 miles per hour, carrying hundreds of commuters to and from the city.</p> <p>Robert Ronquillo III, son of the chief justice of the Boston Municipal Court, was also penalized multiple times for safety violations on the job.</p> <p>And he has plenty of company among his peers. About 110 commuter rail engineers, more than half of them, have driving records that experts described as poor considering the sensitive line of work they're in — at least three infractions such as speeding, causing accidents, and failing to stop.</p> <p>Nearly 50 engineers have had their driver's licenses suspended — 44 of them more than once, according to Registry of Motor Vehicle records reviewed by the Globe.</p> <p>The engineers' supervisors don't set much of an example, either. Manager of engineer training Shawn Monahan, who teaches aspiring engineers what they need to know before they can operate a train, has received 11 speeding tickets and caused two accidents.</p> <p>Keolis's head engineer, Mark Neverett, has 13 speeding tickets, eight accidents, and an operating under the influence on his driving record, though he's had no recorded offenses since 2010.</p> <p>The records obtained by the Globe, which span decades, raise serious concerns about safety on the commuter rail, experts say. Train operators aren't required to have a driver's license, and driving a 144-ton locomotive on fixed tracks is a very different discipline than driving a car. But a history of recklessness on the roads makes it much more likely someone will be reckless on the rails, they say.</p> <p>"Someone who is known to have engaged in multiple incidents of risky and illegal behavior with an automobile should not be permitted to operate a train," said David Hughes, the former chief engineer and acting CEO of Amtrak. "Locomotive engineers aren't allowed mistakes on the job."</p> <p>Many of the engineers with poor driving records have, records show, also faced discipline on the railway — ranging from counseling to suspension — for such on-the-job infractions as running a stop signal, failing drug tests, or causing derailments.</p>

But perhaps the harshest penalty was reserved for the Keolis executive who sounded the alarm about the number of engineers with dismal driving records.

Robert T. McCarthy, the vice president of safety, was dismissed after he warned the company about the potential risks in employing engineers with problematic personal driving histories, according to documents obtained by the Globe.

McCarthy left Keolis last fall, just a year and a half after the company heralded his arrival from the Southern California Regional Rail Authority, where he served as deputy chief operating officer.

Before leaving, McCarthy sent an audit to Keolis's general manager raising a host of safety concerns, including the engineers' driving records. He concluded: "If there were a catastrophic incident, Keolis would be scrutinized and would not fare well in a [federal] investigation."

Keolis, which has operated the commuter rail system for the MBTA since July 2014, said Friday that "nothing is more important" than safety.

Spokesman Tory Mazzola said the company has invested \$15 million into improving safety systems, including a new training simulator and safety technology for engineers. Mazzola noted that its engineer supervisors are "valuable, hard-working employees with excellent work records" and their personal driving records have "absolutely no bearing" on their job performance.

Keolis said it inherited most of its workforce from the Massachusetts Bay Commuter Railroad Company, which ran the system from 2003 to mid-2014, and Amtrak, which ran the system before then. Keolis promised in its bid for the contract to review the qualifications of its workforce. Mazzola said Keolis relied on the employee certification and background checks performed by the prior rail system operators.

Keolis and MBCR officials both have said that commuter rail management is hamstrung by federal rules that allow a railroad to look at an engineer's driving record only for the three-year period prior to certifying him or her as fit for the job. Also, the railroad cannot consider speeding violations, only drunken driving convictions and related license suspensions. And even enforcing that standard is hard; the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen union fights the company whenever it seeks to impose discipline on one of its members, they said.

Keolis officials have faced questions about the company's engineers since the Globe reported in February that engineer Roberto Ronquillo III had 10 license suspensions and multiple stops for drunken driving on his record. At the time, Keolis and MBCR officials suggested Ronquillo, the son of a Boston judge, was an anomaly whose driving record was somehow missed during the vetting process.

Newly obtained internal documents suggest otherwise. Commuter rail officials pulled his driving record in 2011 when he was training to be an engineer. MBCR required Ronquillo to undergo enhanced drug and alcohol testing as a condition of getting the new job.

But the broader Globe review found that Ronquillo's alarming driving record barely stands out among commuter rail engineers, who earn around \$100,000 a year.

Among them: Veteran engineer Richard Russell who chalked up 13 speeding tickets, got into three accidents, and had his license suspended 14 times.

And Alcino Fernandes, who ran up 16 speeding tickets, caused 11 accidents, and received four citations for passing a school bus, records show. He is not currently operating a train, according to Keolis officials, and is awaiting a disciplinary hearing. Officials would not provide details.

Fernandes, the only engineer who responded to a Globe request for comment, said that most of his violations were "well over 10 or 20 years ago." However, records show he was caught speeding in 2010 and committed a "state highway violation" in 2015.

“All that stuff took place long before I started with the railroad,” said Fernandes, 51. “I was a young kid when all that ridiculous stuff happened.”

As a group, the system’s engineers racked up a staggering number of violations, including more than 200 license suspensions, according to the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles. Besides motor vehicle infractions, drivers can lose their license for failing to pay fees or fines.

Eighty-five engineers received more than two speeding tickets. Six have been declared habitual traffic offenders. And more than 85 percent of the engineers have at least one driving infraction.

Hughes, who led national rail operator Amtrak, said locomotive engineers, like other transportation professionals, should have pristine driving records.

“In the trucking industry, you can’t drive a truck if you don’t have a clean record,” said Hughes. “Same with taxi industry. To have 80 percent of your engineers with an operating infraction is appalling. . . . I would imagine you might find 10 percent, maybe.”

In the Massachusetts’ commuter rail system, the opposite is true — fewer than 10 percent had no driving citations and no incidents of discipline.

“Yes, those are by far, the worst engineer records I’ve ever seen in decades of railroading,” said another expert, who asked to remain anonymous because he works for another railroad and fears retaliation.

Inside Keolis, executives had been warned about the problems in their corps of engineers.

In the preliminary safety audit submitted to the Keolis general manager, David Scorey, in November, McCarthy, then the executive in charge of safety, pointed out that motor vehicle regulators had identified many of the company’s engineers as “habitual offenders” because of repeated speeding violations on their personal driving records.

Even so, McCarthy wrote, the company has not decertified — that is, declared unfit for service — any engineers for speeding on the rails during the history of the Keolis contract.

“This is highly suspicious given the propensity of our employees to speed [on the job],” he wrote.

Excessive speed has been the cause of several fatal railroad accidents across the country, including a 2013 crash in the Bronx that killed four and injured 61 and a crash in Philadelphia in 2015 that killed eight and injured more than 200.

About 100,000 people ride Keolis’s commuter rail system each day, completely in the dark about the driving history of the engineer behind the controls.

“I can’t talk now, I’m too shocked,” commuter Mary Connaughton said after hearing a description of some of the engineers’ driving records.

“What’s it going to take, a train wreck for Keolis and the T to get ahead of this and put public safety first?” asked Connaughton — a former Massachusetts Turnpike Authority board member — when she later called back.

While Keolis and MBCR have reported few major incidents, records show at least 80 engineers have committed serious infractions while on the job — safety violations that include failing alcohol or drug tests, running stop signals, and causing derailments, records show.

While the company insists that safety is its top priority, the Federal Railroad Administration and the MBTA itself have raised concerns about its compliance with federal safety rules and the terms of its

contract with the T.

The FRA, which regulates railroads, has fined Keolis some \$350,000 for violations that include leaving trains unsecured, operating moving trains with a door or doors open, and failing to conduct all engineer performance testing required under federal law, records show.

Joe Pesaturo, spokesman for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, said the agency “steadfastly holds” the commuter rail contractor accountable for providing safe and reliable service.

“Because safety is of paramount importance, the MBTA closely monitors the contract under which Keolis manages a qualified workforce that is in full compliance with all Federal Railroad Administration regulations,” Pesaturo said in a statement. “The commuter rail operator has demonstrated its strong commitment to safety through significant investments in equipment, training, and personnel.”

Some suspect that Keolis may feel financial pressure to keep engineers on the job even when they have problems at work.

Under its operators agreement with the MBTA, the company is penalized when a train is late or canceled. If an engineer is removed from service, the on-time performance may suffer.

A longtime issue

Experts say the problems with the commuter rail and its workforce go way back — before Keolis took over the \$2.7 billion contract in 2014.

Upon taking over the rail operation, Keolis, a French company, had just a few months to decide whom to retain from its inherited workforce, officials from both companies said.

And once hired or retained, employees are rarely, if ever, terminated — regardless of their personal history or work record.

Experts say that if a railroad wanted to impose order and discipline, it could refuse to promote an employee with a poor driving record, or could subject such a driver to increased testing. In extreme cases, the railroad could fire the employee for conduct unbecoming an employee under a clause in the company’s contract with the MBTA.

Governor Charlie Baker has repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with Keolis’s performance, and transportation officials have said they will not automatically extend the company’s contract when it expires in June 2022.

David Gunn, the former chief executive of Amtrak, which once operated the Massachusetts commuter rail system, said the large number of engineers with bad driving records points to a deep problem.

“You really need to change the culture of the place,” said Gunn, who also ran transit agencies in New York, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and Toronto. Of all the places he worked, Gunn said, “the T was the most challenging in terms of controlling the workforce. Not that they were all bad people, but the structure and the union and political meddling in management decision-making was the absolute worst at the T.”

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HEADLINE	04/14 Oregon state pension: \$76K per month
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/14/business/pension-finance-oregon.html
GIST	A public university president in Oregon gives new meaning to the idea of a pensioner.

Joseph Robertson, an eye surgeon who retired as head of the Oregon Health & Science University last fall, receives the state's largest government pension.

It is \$76,111.

Per month.

That is considerably more than the average Oregon family earns in a year.

Oregon — like many other states and cities, including New Jersey, Kentucky and Connecticut — is caught in a fiscal squeeze of its own making. Its economy is growing, but the cost of its state-run pension system is growing faster. More government workers are retiring, including more than 2,000, like Dr. Robertson, who get pensions exceeding \$100,000 a year.

The state is not the most profligate pension payer in America, but its spiraling costs are notable in part because Oregon enjoys a reputation for fiscal discipline. Its experience shows how faulty financial decisions by states can eventually swamp local communities.

Oregon's costs are inflated by the way in which it calculates pension benefits for public employees. Some of the pensions include income that employees earned on the side. Other retirees benefit from long-ago stock market rallies that inflated the current value of their payouts.

For example, the pension for Mike Bellotti, the University of Oregon's head football coach from 1995 to 2008, includes not just his salary but also money from licensing deals and endorsements that the Ducks' athletic program generated. Mr. Bellotti's pension is more than \$46,000 a month.

The bill is borne by taxpayers. Oregon's Public Employees Retirement System has told cities, counties, school districts and other local entities to contribute more to keep the system afloat. They can neither negotiate nor raise local taxes fast enough to keep up. As a result, pensions are crowding out other spending. Essential services are slashed.

"You get to the point where you can no longer do more with less — you just have to do less with less," said Nathan Cherpeski, the manager of Klamath Falls, a city of about 21,000 in south-central Oregon.

Klamath Falls's most recent biennial bill from the pension system, known as PERS, was \$600,000 more than the one before. PERS has warned that the bills will keep rising. Mr. Cherpeski has had to cut back on repairing streets and bridges.

Even as the American economy is humming, many states and cities are still hurting from the 2008 financial meltdown. The crash hammered their pension funds and tax revenues, but didn't reduce the amounts they owe retirees.

It wasn't until 2016 that average state tax collections returned to pre-2008 levels. In the meantime, states and cities have had to rebuild pension funds to cover the rising numbers of retirees drawing benefits. That has left less money for the police, school sports programs and everything else. Local residents might not know why, but they are paying more taxes and getting scantier services in return.

Costs are rising even in places that previously acted to defuse the problem. Colorado trimmed pensions in 2010, but a new \$32 billion shortfall means more pension cuts and tax increases are likely. Detroit sliced its pension obligations in bankruptcy and persuaded philanthropists to chip in, but it is not clear that the city has an affordable plan.

In San Francisco, the school board wants voters to approve a \$298 "parcel tax" on real estate, ostensibly to raise \$50 million to pay teachers a living wage.

"That's a worthy objective, but it's not the real reason," said David Crane, a former trustee of the

California teachers' pension system. He said the school district's retirement costs had grown by \$50 million over the last five years, devouring resources that would have gone to teachers.

Oregon is a blue state, but in its restive red hinterlands, tax increases are politically off limits and financial distress has been severe since 1994, when logging was curtailed to save an endangered owl. Lately, things have been getting even worse.

When a man was reported yelling and firing his gun on the property of a school in rural Josephine County, it took two hours for a sheriff's deputy to arrive, said Kate Dwyer, chairwoman of the board for the Three Rivers School District.

The county has cut sheriff patrols, closed its mental health department and kept its jail at less than half capacity because of a lack of guards.

Dave Valenzuela, the Three Rivers school superintendent, traces the latest woes directly to PERS. The system is run at the state level, but it is bankrolled in large part by obligatory contributions from local governments.

This year, Three Rivers was poised to receive its first increase in state education funding in years, a reflection of growing enrollment. But Oregon raised by more than 50 percent the amount that Three Rivers had to contribute to PERS. So Mr. Valenzuela had to lop five days off the school year, ask each school to cut its budget by 10 percent and lay off the district librarian and English specialist.

PERS sets the pension bill for each entity — local government, university system and the like — based on the pay and demographics of its workers. Just about everyone's bills are getting bigger.

That includes the state, by far the system's biggest contributor.

Oregon now has fewer police officers than in 1970, is losing foster-care workers at an alarming rate and has allowed earthquake and tsunami preparations to lapse. A 2016 survey turned up "a large number of bridges with critical and near-critical conditions" because of "longstanding inadequate funding."

Even prosperous communities are being pinched. The Beaverton School District, outside Portland, had to get rid of 75 teachers last year when its mandatory pension contribution rose by \$14 million. That was after shedding 340 teachers in 2012.

"I have town hall meetings, and the parents are just confounded by this," said Mark Hass, a Democratic state senator from Beaverton.

A Golden Touch

Oregon's unusual method for calculating pensions tends to generate lavish payouts.

For decades, PERS calculated pensions two different ways, and retirees could choose whichever produced the bigger numbers.

The first way was similar to what most states do, basing pensions on each worker's final salary and years of service. But Oregon's lawmakers included a golden touch, redefining "salary" to include remuneration from any source.

That was how Mr. Bellotti, the former football coach, came to be the state's third-highest-paid pensioner, at roughly \$559,000 a year.

Mike Bellotti in 2007, when he was the University of Oregon's head football coach. After retiring as the university's athletic director in 2010, he started drawing the biggest government pension in the state. Since then, two other retirees have surpassed him. Credit Chris Pietsch/The Register-Guard, via Associated Press

When he retired in 2010 as the university's athletic director, the standard pension formula was applied to his salary, plus a share of the outside licensing fees and product endorsements the football program brings in. (His pension details, along with those of other retirees in the system, were first obtained in 2011 from PERS by two newspapers, The Oregonian and The Statesman Journal.)

Mr. Bellotti said he never asked for a supersize pension. In 1995, he said, the university started to include a percentage of all endorsement and licensing fees in coaches' salaries.

"It was basically to augment the university's ability to pay a competitive salary to its coaching staff," he said.

When Mr. Bellotti retired, he was partway through a five-year, \$1.9 million-a-year contract, which he said was still below the league average of about \$3 million.

PERS made up for it with a big pension. "It was pay later as opposed to paying now," he said.

Dr. Robertson, the former Oregon Health & Science University president, said he had retired and started drawing his pension last fall, after learning he had multiple sclerosis. He said he agreed to stay on through the end of the academic year, without pay, "for the sake of continuity."

A spokeswoman for the medical center said Dr. Robertson's pension was based on his salary, incentive payments, clinical pay and unused sick or vacation time.

Oregon's second way of calculating pensions dates back to 1946: For decades, every public worker got a simulated tracking account. It was credited with 6 percent of each paycheck, then left to compound at a predetermined rate.

In the early years, a low rate was used because the pension system invested in bonds that didn't yield much.

But in the 1970s, lawmakers started nudging the rate up, eventually to 8 percent. Then, the system's trustees decided 8 percent should be a guaranteed minimum. In years when markets produced higher returns, the accounts compounded at those rates, after money-management fees. During the 1990s bull market, accounts compounded by up to 21 percent a year.

When workers retired, their employers were required to "match" the account balances, doubling them. Then PERS would base the pensions on the total.

'Planet Tiffany'

Randall Pozdena, an economist who supervised the pension system's investments in the 1990s, gave speeches warning that the situation was unsustainable.

"The only way you're going to get out of this is if the state is hit by a golden asteroid from Planet Tiffany," he recalled saying.

But efforts to change the system, including a 1994 ballot initiative, were blocked by the State Supreme Court, which ruled that accruals could not be reduced during any public worker's career.

So, when lawmakers required government retirees to pay Oregon's 9 percent income tax, as everybody else did, they also increased pensions by 9.89 percent, giving retirees extra money to pay the tax with.

"It's an affront to everybody who pays taxes," said Bruce Dennis, a retired carpenter from outside Portland who earned a \$54,000-a-year pension by swinging a hammer for 45 years. No one gives him extra money to cover his taxes.

Students at Evergreen and other schools in the Three Rivers district, which covers a thinly populated area larger than Rhode Island, spend hours on buses every day. The district has asked Oregon officials to help cover its transportation costs, so far in vain. Credit Leah Nash for The New York Times

“At every step of the way, they’ve made decisions that went against the interests of the public,” he said.

Starting in 2003, the tracking accounts were phased out. But workers who already had the accounts were allowed to keep them. New hires got a more modest retirement plan.

“The cost of this pension system is not caused by the people we are hiring today,” said Steven Rodeman, executive director of the Public Employees Retirement System. “This is a legacy problem from the 1980s and 1990s.”

For workers with the tracking accounts, PERS dialed back the annual returns to 8 percent, then to 7.5 percent in 2016. That is still more than what PERS’s investments have generated over the last decade. And so the pension fund’s financial hole continues to deepen.

Across Oregon, local officials have been told to brace for 15 to 20 more years of rising pension bills. That’s when the current generation of retirees will start dying out.

“All we can do is wait,” said Jay Meredith, finance director of Grants Pass, the seat of Josephine County.

In the meantime, mounting pension costs mean that a generation of schoolchildren is growing up in the area with no theater program, no orchestra, no wood shop and minimal sports, chorus and art.

That’s if they can get to school.

A county road recently washed out, stranding 300 people. Ms. Dwyer, of the Three Rivers School District, reported the problem to a public-works official.

She recalled his response: “I have trucks, but I can’t put gas in them to come to you and dig it out.”

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HEADLINE	04/13 Concern: pyrosomes on Oregon coast
SOURCE	http://www.kptv.com/story/37955183/unusual-phenomenon-of-pyrosomes-on-oregon-coast-concerns-researchers?autostart=true
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, OR (KPTV) - Strange sea creatures continue to be found in the water on the Oregon coast.</p> <p>Last year, researchers said they were surprised to see pyrosomes washing up in Oregon, as they are mostly found in temperate or tropical climates.</p> <p>Now, researchers are surprised they are still here.</p> <p>Laurie Weitkamp with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said her team was studying salmon last month, but pyrosomes were pulled up in the fish nets.</p> <p>She said there were “buckets and buckets” of them.</p> <p>While she isn’t sure if salmon are eating them, workers did find a rockfish that had eaten a pyrosome.</p> <p>Scientists are still working to understand how they fit into the food system of the sea. The pyrosomes also weighing down fishermen’s nets and can cause other issues.</p>

	“Once they got here, we were kind of expecting them to go away, and nobody really knows why they are here or what is keeping them here,” Weitkamp said.
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HEADLINE	04/13 Homeless tent blocks school entry
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/953514/tent-whitman-middle-school/
GIST	<p>KIRO 7’s Gary Horcher first reported that a tent belonging to a homeless person has been sitting on the grounds of Ballard’s Whitman Middle School since Tuesday. Little has been done about it.</p> <p>Whitman Middle School parent Erika Nagy told KIRO Radio’s Dori Monson that the tent sits inside a doorway of the school “literally on school property,” along with drug paraphernalia and other debris.</p> <p>“If there was a fire in the building, if school was happening today, the kids would not be able to get out of that doorway due to this tent,” she said.</p> <p>Whitman Middle School</p> <p>The tent’s occupier left the scene before the Seattle Police Department showed up on Friday, but Nagy said that she has no doubt the person will return. Whitman is currently on spring break, but classes will resume on Monday.</p> <p>According to Nagy, this is not the first time something like this has happened in Ballard. She blames city leadership for letting the homeless problem get out of control to the extent of a tent being set up on the property of a school.</p> <p>“Common sense has absolutely flown out the window,” she said.</p> <p>Nagy said that during a Wednesday evening public meeting with Seattle City Councilmember Mike O’Brien, who represents the Ballard area, O’Brien stressed that more money needed to be spent on the issue. Nagy, however, pointed out that Seattle is already spending more money per homeless person than any other city in the nation.</p> <p>“We are throwing hundreds of millions, almost a billion dollars, at this problem, and it has only gotten worse,” she said. “There is absolutely no accountability with any of our representatives ... Mike O’Brien is absolutely not representing Ballard residents whatsoever.”</p> <p>Elsewhere in Ballard</p> <p>The coming Whittier Heights tiny house encampment is a prime example of the city’s lack of consideration for its residents, Nagy said. The encampment, which allows drug and alcohol consumption, will bring drug use and prostitution within blocks of three Ballard schools, she argued.</p> <p>“For LIHI (the Low-Income Housing Institute) and SHARE (the Seattle Housing and Resource Effort), this is a cash cow,” Nagy said. “There’s no incentive for them to make it better, because the money goes away.”</p> <p>The tiny house encampment is being forced on the Whittier Heights neighborhood “with absolutely no community input whatsoever,” Nagy said.</p> <p>“How is this getting any better, and why is the only solution that Mike O’Brien can put forward more money?” she asked.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 UK: Russia spied on ex-spy 5yrs
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-russia-skripal-spy/russia-spied-on-skripal-and-daughter-for-at-least-five-years-uk-idUSKBN1HK1OR
GIST	<p>LONDON (Reuters) - Russia's intelligence agencies spied on former double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia for at least five years before they were attacked with a nerve agent in March, the national security adviser to Britain's prime minister said.</p> <p>Mark Sedwill said in a letter to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Friday that email accounts of Yulia had been targeted in 2013 by cyber specialists from Russia's GRU military intelligence service.</p> <p>Sedwill also said in the letter, which was published by the government, that it was "highly likely that the Russian intelligence services view at least some of its defectors as legitimate targets for assassination."</p> <p>The Skripals were targeted by what London says was a nerve agent attack that left both of them critically ill for weeks. British Prime Minister Theresa May has said it is highly likely that Moscow was behind the attack.</p> <p>Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov noted on Friday that a report this week by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) did not confirm the origin of the poison used against the Skripals.</p> <p>Lavrov said the report only confirmed the composition of the substance and that Britain's claim that it confirmed the UK position on the Skripal case was overstated.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Israel: Iran drone tasked to attack
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-43762193
GIST	<p>Israel has said the Iranian drone it shot down in February was loaded with explosives and "tasked to attack".</p> <p>On Friday, Israel's military said that it came to the conclusion after "flight path analysis" and an "intelligence-based investigation" of the remnants.</p> <p>Israel said its "combat helicopters prevented the attack Iran had hoped to carry out in Israeli territory".</p> <p>The drone was launched from an airbase in Syria, against which Israel later carried out air strikes.</p> <p>Israel lost one of its F-16 planes in the counter-offensive - a rare loss for the Israeli air force, though both crew members survived after ejecting.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 'Hidden' radioactive objects around us
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20180405-why-people-collect-radioactive-objects
GIST	<p>It began with an online video. Andrew Walker had watched as a collector of radioactive objects showed off the items he had procured over the years, such as antiques containing uranium. Walker thought that looking for such pieces 'in the wild' might make an interesting and unusual hobby – so he bought himself a Geiger counter.</p> <p>He quickly realised, as scientists will tell you, that radioactivity is everywhere. The first elevated reading he got was in the parking area at a Mexican fast-food restaurant in Idaho. "I noticed that when we pulled in there, my Geiger counter was going off," he recalls. Something nearby was flinging out the tiny subatomic particles that make up radiation in slightly higher quantities than might be expected – and though he</p>

couldn't figure out what it was, Walker was suddenly aware of this otherwise invisible activity.

After that, he began looking for other intriguing examples.

His pursuit of radioactive objects is still a hobby. By day, Walker is a cinema projectionist and a filmmaker, not a scientist. But he enjoys sharing some of his finds on Twitter and Instagram, where he can discuss them with others who are similarly curious.

Radioactivity is something we live with constantly – it's always there in relatively small amounts. Around the world, naturally occurring, higher-than-average levels of radioactivity are found in various types of beaches and soils, among other places. Meanwhile, most concrete is radioactive, though levels obviously vary. In the US, it is possible to get your home tested for radon gas – which is produced slowly over time by radioactive construction materials. Even the human body is slightly radioactive because we contain elements like potassium-40, which decay.

Walker lives in Bozeman, Montana. He later discovered a curious historical fact: slag containing small amounts of uranium and radium was used in the past for concrete used in construction in his neighbouring state of Idaho. He wonders whether this led to his readings outside the Mexican restaurant.

Walker likes to plan trips to local areas where he thinks he might find interesting material. If he does, he then documents his discoveries. There are plenty of old uranium mines (and now deserted uranium mining towns) in the US and Walker has visited some of these on his travels.

He also began frequenting antique malls. "At every antique shop I have ever gone to so far, I have always been able to find something radioactive," he says.

These items include "Vaseline" glassware, which contains uranium and is a striking yellow-green in colour. But he's also found orange-red plates and bowls that were coloured with a uranium-based dye and which often produce even stronger readings. The US government guidelines advise against using such crockery for food or drink, though the health risk of simply owning these items is negligible.

Then there are watch and clock faces with glow-in-the-dark paint that contains radium. Such objects are relatively safe as long as they are not taken apart, but the women who made them in factories would often hold their paint brushes using their lips. This caused them to ingest small amounts of the radium paint. As a result, many developed serious illnesses including bone cancer in their jaws.

This is why Walker tries not to put himself at any unnecessary risk. Regarding his mildly radioactive crockery, he says, "If they weren't radioactive I'd probably have them out, but they're tucked away."

Still, his new hobby has intrigued friends and family. "They ask why am I going to these places and exploring this stuff," he explains with a laugh. "It's something I'm interested in; it's just fascinating."

He's even found a few local landmarks, including public buildings like train stations, where the tiles produce slightly elevated levels of radioactivity – again, presumably a result of having been made with particular dyes or glazes.

What is radiation?

Radiation is essentially energy. The radiation detected by Geiger counters concerns energy released by decaying atoms – atoms that are constantly expelling a barrage of tiny particles. Some of this radiation can dislodge electrons from other atoms to create charged particles – this is known as 'ionising radiation'. Three key forms of ionising radiation, from largest to smallest, are:

Alpha – A bundle of two protons and two neutrons

Beta – An electron, or positron, which is like a positively charged electron

Gamma – Tiny photons, which at different wavelengths also make up visible light

Radioactive elements that decay producing these forms of radiation include uranium and radium. Alpha particles can be stopped with a sheet of paper, or the outer layer of human skin. But gamma rays can penetrate much further and are often only blocked by very dense materials such as lead.

Geiger counters are easy to make – so much so, in fact, that some hobbyists assemble their own and experiment with finding sources of radioactivity with which to test them. Walker himself bought one for \$1,300 (£930), a RadEye meter that detects alpha, beta and gamma radiation (see box, “What is radiation?”).

Radiochemist Nick Evans at Nottingham Trent University points out that radioactivity can be measured in a variety of different ways. One approach is to observe the rate of nuclei decaying over time; the international unit used for this is the Becquerel. But people may be more familiar with measurements in Sieverts (or indeed Microsieverts or Millisieverts).

This is the effective dose of the radiation and the unit Walker uses. However, Evans says that the standard way of taking these readings is actually to hold the Geiger counter one metre away from the source so that objects’ radioactivity can be compared accurately.

High energy

The fascinating thing about Walker’s expeditions is the ease with which he has found so many examples. Evans says this is partly a legacy of industries that treated radioactivity as a potential marketing ploy in the decades following its discovery in the late 19th Century. It was quickly capitalised on as a potential selling point for weird and wonderful new products.

“It was very, very different to anything else,” says Evans. “It was sort of mystical and people obviously wanted to try all sorts of things with it, play with it, if you like.”

Some of the things manufacturers came up with are mind-boggling today. Take radioactive suppositories, for example, a ‘treatment’ with no actual grounding in medical science. Surely there are safer ways to restore “your normal manly vigour”.

But that wasn’t the only health-related product seeking to help patients to a dose of decaying atoms. There was also radioactive toothpaste and even condoms.

“I’ve no idea what the thinking behind those was,” says Evans of the latter. “I have a tin of them – not that I use them, I hasten to add.”

The notion that increased doses of radioactivity could somehow be good for you is still with us today. There is a spa in the Austrian Alps called Bad Gastein where people can visit the humid tunnels of a former gold mine and sweat away their ailments – while breathing radon gas.

Many scientists have long bemoaned the public’s instinctive distrust of anything to do with radiation. Anxiety associated with it is exaggerated, argue some. Indeed, dangers like pollution don’t spark the same sense of trepidation and yet pollution kills millions of people every year. One study found that, in stark contrast, only 190 people died between 1980 and 2013 as a direct result of overexposure.

Walker says that many fears increasingly seem “irrational” to him thanks to his explorations. On the other hand, of course, his treks and antique shop visits really just show off how ubiquitous radioactivity really is.

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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/13/science/virosphere-evolution.html
GIST	<p>High in the Sierra Nevada mountains of Spain, an international team of researchers set out four buckets to gather a shower of viruses falling from the sky.</p> <p>Scientists have surmised there is a stream of viruses circling the planet, above the planet’s weather systems but below the level of airline travel. Very little is known about this realm, and that’s why the number of deposited viruses stunned the team in Spain. Each day, they calculated, some 800 million viruses cascade onto every square meter of the planet.</p> <p>Most of the globe-trotting viruses are swept into the air by sea spray, and lesser numbers arrive in dust storms.</p> <p>“Unimpeded by friction with the surface of the Earth, you can travel great distances, and so intercontinental travel is quite easy” for viruses, said Curtis Suttle, a marine virologist at the University of British Columbia. “It wouldn’t be unusual to find things swept up in Africa being deposited in North America.”</p> <p>The study by Dr. Suttle and his colleagues, published earlier this year in the International Society of Microbial Ecology Journal, was the first to count the number of viruses falling onto the planet. The research, though, is not designed to study influenza or other illnesses, but to get a better sense of the “virosphere,” the world of viruses on the planet.</p> <p>Generally it’s assumed these viruses originate on the planet and are swept upward, but some researchers theorize that viruses actually may originate in the atmosphere. (There is a small group of researchers who believe viruses may even have come here from outer space, an idea known as panspermia.)</p> <p>Whatever the case, viruses are the most abundant entities on the planet by far. While Dr. Suttle’s team found hundreds of millions of viruses in a square meter, they counted tens of millions of bacteria in the same space.</p> <p>Mostly thought of as infectious agents, viruses are much more than that. It’s hard to overstate the central role that viruses play in the world: They’re essential to everything from our immune system to our gut microbiome, to the ecosystems on land and sea, to climate regulation and the evolution of all species. Viruses contain a vast diverse array of unknown genes — and spread them to other species.</p> <p>Last year, three experts called for a new initiative to better understand viral ecology, especially as the planet changes. “Viruses modulate the function and evolution of all living things,” wrote Matthew B. Sullivan of Ohio State, Joshua Weitz of Georgia Tech, and Steven W. Wilhelm of the University of Tennessee.</p> <p>“But to what extent remains a mystery.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Calif. police: SUV cliff driver ‘drunk’
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/mother-intentionally-drove-family-off-cliff-drunk-police/story?id=54463696
GIST	<p>The mother who intentionally drove her family off a cliff in Northern California in late March was drunk, according to preliminary toxicology reports.</p> <p>The California Highway Patrol said on Friday that Jennifer Hart, who was driving the SUV that plunged off the cliff in Mendocino County on March 26 carrying her wife and six children, had a blood alcohol level above the legal limit.</p> <p>Her wife, Sarah Hart, had a significant amount of the ingredient in Benadryl in her system, as did two of</p>

	<p>the children, CHP said.</p> <p>All eight people in the vehicle are presumed dead in the accident, according to authorities. Three of the children were missing, though the body of a girl believed to be one of the missing children was found near the site of the accident last week. The body has yet to be identified.</p> <p>One of the children missing is 15-year-old Devonte Hart, whose photo hugging a police officer with tears streaming down his face during a protest went viral in 2014.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	04/15 US helping Mexico fight opium
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/us-has-been-quietly-helping-mexico-with-new-high-tech-ways-to-fight-opium/2018/04/15/dc18eda0-26d5-11e8-a227-fd2b009466bc_story.html?utm_term=.c04a2468faf5
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY — In the past few opiate-soaked years, U.S. officials say, nearly all the heroin coursing through American cities has come from one place: Mexico.</p> <p>U.S. authorities have expressed alarm at what they call an explosion of opium poppy in their southern neighbor. Echoing a federal drug agency assessment, President Trump has declared that “an astonishing 90 percent of the heroin in America comes from south of the border” and cited that as one reason to build a giant border wall.</p> <p>Yet Mexican and U.S. officials have struggled in recent years to answer some basic questions about Mexico’s illegal poppy crop: How much is actually being grown? How much of it is the Mexican government destroying? And how much is being turned into heroin?</p> <p>Now the Trump administration is intensifying its efforts to help Mexico get a more detailed picture of its poppy problem. It has begun to supply Mexican authorities with drones and geolocation technology and is funding studies to pinpoint how much poppy is being planted and how much heroin is produced from it.</p> <p>The new initiatives emerged from several high-level meetings between Mexican and U.S. officials last year, as well as a trip in July by then-Homeland Security Secretary John F. Kelly, who flew to see poppy fields in Guerrero state with Mexican military leaders, according to Mexican and U.S. officials.</p> <p>Trump’s harsh rhetoric about Mexico on illegal immigration, trade and the wall could jeopardize that kind of security cooperation. On April 9, President Enrique Peña Nieto’s office said he had instructed cabinet secretaries to review their bilateral programs with the United States, following a tense week in which Trump criticized Mexico about a caravan of migrants heading toward the U.S. border.</p> <p>But on certain issues, such as poppy, the two sides have already quietly made progress. With Trump as president, “we thought that there would have been a chilling of relations,” said Juan Carlos Silva, chief of the anti-drug division of Mexico’s federal police. “On the contrary, we have grown closer.”</p> <p>The Drug Enforcement Administration said in a report last year that Mexico supplies 93 percent of all heroin consumed in the United States, up from half of it in 2012 — even though it lags far behind Afghanistan and Burma as an opium poppy producer, according to U.N. figures.</p> <p>The DEA also reported that production more than tripled in Mexico between 2013 and 2016, to 79,000 acres, in part because of “reduced poppy eradication.”</p> <p>But there is no consensus on those estimates, particularly the production numbers.</p>

	<p>Mexican military officials deny that poppy production has tripled and say they have increased eradication efforts, deploying more than 20,000 soldiers on ground or aerial missions.</p> <p>The troops destroyed about 71,000 acres last year and are on pace this year to surpass that, the officials said.</p> <p>A decade ago, Mexico eradicated 27,000 acres, according to the United Nations.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 FBI: \$20M for 'El Chapo' cartel partner
SOURCE	https://www.inquisitr.com/4867880/the-fbi-offers-20-million-award-for-the-capture-of-el-chapo-guzmans-partner/
GIST	<p>The FBI has announced a \$20 million bounty for the capture of a fugitive drug lord, Rafael Caro Quintero, who is also believed to be one of Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman's partners within the Sinaloa Cartel, as reported by Time. Currently believed to be in his 50s, he's credited as one of the godfathers of the Mexican drug trade. Quintero was initially imprisoned in 1985 but was released on a technicality on August 9, 2013.</p> <p>He had, by that time, spent 28 years in jail. Quintero got his break when a judge ruled that he had been improperly tried in a federal courtroom instead of a state court. Orders for his re-arrest were issued a few days later, but the drug lord had already gone into hiding. His release led to tensions between the Mexican and American governments due to his alleged involvement in the killing of U.S. Drug Enforcement agent, Enrique Camarena Salazar, writer John Clay Walker, and pilot Alfredo Zavala Avelar in 1985.</p> <p>The kingpin fled to Costa Rica after the killings but was soon after apprehended and extradited to Mexico, where he was handed a 40-year sentence for the murders. His cartel, the Guadalajara Cartel, disintegrated after his incarceration, with its members being incorporated into the Juárez Cartel, El Chapo's Sinaloa Cartel, and the Tijuana Cartel.</p> <p>News of renewed interest for his recapture comes in the wake of a new investigative report published by the Huffington Post illustrating the current life of the fallen drug lord. According to the report, he lives in hiding, changing his location every day. He and his henchmen are reportedly always on the lookout for drones and Mexican authorities. Residing in a mountainous region in Mexico, a place known for the growing, harvesting, and processing of drugs, he lives in perpetual fear of apprehension and reportedly suffers from a diseased prostate, but refuses to seek treatment as a result.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/16 S.C. prison: 7 inmates dead; 17 injured
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/c3db6362f47242a8a35e42f52a0422c9/7-inmates-dead,-17-injured-in-South-Carolina-prison-fighting
GIST	<p>COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — A South Carolina prisons spokesman says seven inmates are dead and 17 others required outside medical attention after hours of fighting inside a maximum security prison.</p> <p>Prisons spokesman Jeff Taillon announced the grim outcome after State Law Enforcement Division agents helped secure Lee Correctional Institution around 3 a.m. Monday.</p> <p>Taillon said multiple inmate fights that broke out at 7:15 p.m. Sunday.</p> <p>Taillon said no officers were wounded.</p> <p>The maximum-security facility in Bishopville houses about 1,500 inmates, some of South Carolina's most violent and longest-serving offenders.</p>

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HEADLINE	04/15 Arrest in gas station hostage situation
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/955070/suspect-arrested-hostage-kirkland/
GIST	<p>Police responded to a hostage situation at a 76 gas station at 11848 Northeast 85th Street in Kirkland on Sunday afternoon.</p> <p>Bellevue police confirmed to KIRO 7 that a suspect came into the gas station threatened a employee. The suspect allegedly told the employee he had a bomb, and to lock the doors, according to police.</p> <p>The 76 gas station is about five blocks north of Lake Washington High School and about three blocks north of Kirkland Cemetery.</p> <p>Officers on scene were able to convince the suspect to give himself up outside of the store. The suspect was arrested once outside the store and had “no device on his person” when arrested, according to police.</p> <p>Police say the clerk inside the gas station “left the store and was unharmed but shaken from the incident.”</p> <p>The suspect is described as a male in his early 20s. Police say the suspects motives are unknown at this point.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 Another indecent exposure case WWU
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/police-investigate-another-indecent-exposure-case-near-wwu
GIST	<p>BELLINGHAM, Wash. -- Bellingham Police are busy investigating a series of indecent exposure cases.</p> <p>More than one week after an incident at the City's southeast side comes another lewd conduct case Sunday morning.</p> <p>Western Washington University senior Sydney Miller and many others got an alert from the school early Sunday to be on the lookout for a suspicious man who reportedly exposed himself outside the window of a home.</p> <p>The incident happened about 2 a.m. Sunday on North Garden Street near campus.</p> <p>"I had to read it a couple of times. I was like, wait, that's my street. That's literally my block...kind of creepy to get that," Miller said.</p> <p>Miller isn't surprised because it's been happening so often in Bellingham. Police say there have been two dozen or more similar cases of lewd conduct and voyeurism on campus and surrounding neighborhoods since last summer.</p> <p>Police suspect there are several different people connected to the many lewd acts reported.</p> <p>In Sunday's case, officers are looking for a thin, 25-year-old man, about 6 feet tall. He was wearing a dark hoodie and jeans.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Quebec mosque shooter's motivation
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/14/americas/quebec-shooter-motive/index.html
GIST	(CNN)A man who killed six worshippers at a Quebec City mosque told an investigator he carried out the

January 2017 attack after seeing reports the Canadian government would welcome more refugees into the country, according to CNN partner CBC.

A video of Alexandre Bissonnette's interrogation was played in court Friday during the third day of his sentencing hearing, CBC reported. Bissonnette pleaded guilty to six counts of first-degree murder and six counts of attempted murder in March.

In the interrogation video, Bissonnette said he was watching TV reports about the Canadian government's policy of welcoming refugees.

"The Canadian government was, you know, going to take in more refugees, you know, those who couldn't go to the United States would end up here," Bissonnette told Quebec City police Sgt. Steve Girard during an interrogation. "I just lost it."

Bissonnette told Girard he wanted to save people from terrorist attacks, according to CBC, and that "maybe, thanks to what I did, there will be hundreds of people saved." He said he had been obsessing for months over the idea that his parents or twin brother would be victims of a terrorist attack after a string of such attacks in Europe.

"I had to do something, it was torturing me inside."

On January 29, Bissonnette entered the Quebec Islamic Cultural Center and fired indiscriminately into a crowd of men, women and children, according to witnesses.

When it was all over, Bissonnette had killed six Muslim worshippers -- Mamadou Tanou Barry, 42; Abdelkrim Hassane, 41; Khaled Belkacemi, 60; Aboubaker Thabti, 44; Azzeddine Soufiane, 57; and Ibrahima Barry, 39.

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HEADLINE	04/14 Teen asked for directions; gets shot at
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/14/us/michigan-man-shoots-at-teen-asking-for-directions/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A Michigan man is out on bail after police said he fired a shotgun at a teenager who had stopped at his house to ask directions.</p> <p>Jeffery Craig Zeigler, 53, was charged Friday with assault with intent to murder and possession of a firearm in the commission of a felony.</p> <p>During Zeigler's arraignment, Judge Julie Nicholson entered a plea of not guilty for him.</p> <p>The teen's mother told CNN affiliate WDIV she thought there was a racial component to the case. The teen is black and the man is white.</p> <p>"It definitely was a hate crime," she said.</p> <p>Brennan Walker, 14, said he was walking alone to school Thursday after he missed the bus. As he trekked the 4 miles to Rochester High School in Rochester Hills, he got lost and knocked on the doors of several houses, he said.</p> <p>The teen said he went up to one home and knocked on the door a few times. A woman came to the door, yelling at him, he told WDIV.</p> <p>"I was trying to explain to that I wanted to get directions to go to my school," he said. The man eventually came out with a shotgun and fired one shot at the teen who was running away.</p>

	<p>The teen said he fled when he saw the man with the shotgun. The teen was not wounded.</p> <p>Deputies responded to a call of a male trying to break into a house, the sheriff's department said in a news release. Both the boy and Zeigler were taken to a police station and questioned. Zeigler was arrested. A prosecutor said at Zeigler's arraignment that there was a surveillance video from the house that caused her to doubt Zeigler's recollection of the incident. His story was not borne out by the video, she said.</p> <p>Zeigler was released Friday from Oakland County Jail on a \$50,000 bond. A judge also ordered the man to stay more than 10 miles from the teenager, which means he will likely have to live elsewhere until trial.</p> <p>He was also ordered to turn over all his firearms and wear a GPS monitor.</p> <p>Zeigler told the judge that there is "a lot more to the story than what's being told."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/15 PD chief defends arrests in Starbucks
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/14/us/philadelphia-police-starbucks-arrests/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Philadelphia Police Commissioner Richard Ross is defending the actions of officers seen in a viral video arresting two men at a Starbucks.</p> <p>The video, which has racked up millions of views since it was posted to Twitter on Thursday, shows Philadelphia police officers arresting two African-American men inside a Starbucks location.</p> <p>Melissa DePino, who posted the video, wrote, "The police were called because these men hadn't ordered anything. They were waiting for a friend to show up, who did as they were taken out in handcuffs for doing nothing."</p> <p>In the video a man is seen telling an officer that he was meeting the two men there and asking what they did to warrant police being called.</p> <p>Others off screen are heard saying, "They didn't do anything."</p> <p>Ross said Saturday his officers "did absolutely nothing wrong."</p> <p>Ross recorded a statement on Facebook Live in which he explains that Starbucks employees called 911 to report a trespassing complaint.</p> <p>The employees told officers the two men wanted to use the restroom but were told the facilities are only for paying customers. The Starbucks employees then asked the men to leave, but they refused, Ross says. Officers responded and asked the men three times to "politely to leave the location because they were being asked to leave by employees because they were trespassing." When the men again refused to leave, they were arrested "without incident," Ross says.</p> <p>The men were taken to a police station and released when it became clear Starbucks didn't want to press charges.</p> <p>"They did a service that they were called to do," Ross says of the officers. "And if you think about it logically, that if a business calls and they say that someone is here that I no longer wish to be in my business, (officers) now have a legal obligation to carry out their duties. And they did just that."</p> <p>Ross, who is black, references his own experiences while making his case, saying, "As an African-American male, I am very aware of implicit bias."</p> <p>"We are committed to fair and unbiased policing and anything less than that will not be tolerated in this</p>

	department." In statement posted on Twitter, Starbucks apologized "to the two individuals and our customers."
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HEADLINE	04/14 Parkland accounts: chaos, confusion
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/newly-released-accounts-parkland-shooting-relate-chaos-confusion/story?id=54470790
GIST	<p>New documents released Friday paint the clearest picture to date of the chaos and confusion officers experienced in the early moments of the Feb. 14 school shooting in Parkland, Florida.</p> <p>The incident report includes 11 officers' accounts of their responses in the first few minutes after School Resource Officer Scott Peterson screamed "Shots fired!" over the radio.</p> <p>Despite being the first to report the gunfire, Peterson was accused of failing to enter the school building after hearing those initial shots. He claimed to have thought they were coming from outside the building.</p> <p>In February, President Trump said that the officer "did a poor job," adding that he either "didn't react properly" or was a "coward." Peterson was suspended by the sheriff's office in the weeks following the shooting. He resigned soon after amid public scorn.</p> <p>In one account released by the Broward County Sheriff's Office, an officer said he headed towards a nearby Walmart following a dispatch that suggested the shooter was moving in a "westward" direction. Shortly after arriving, he learned the suspect was possibly already in custody.</p> <p>"I then stayed at my new location ... where I prevented any non-law enforcement traffic from entering the area of the school and assisted in directing traffic," the officer said.</p> <p>Armed with an AR-15 style rifle, 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz shot and killed 17 people at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School, prosecutors say. Seventeen others were injured.</p> <p>As the situation developed, another officer said, he did not inform his fellow officers that he would be responding to the scene due to "heavy radio transmissions" following the first mention of an active shooter. Instead, he arrived at the school and entered the building, possibly contributing to some of the uncertainty regarding the number of officers in the school and where they had entered the building.</p> <p>"I attempted to enter building 12 from the west but was confronted by several law enforcement officers who had entered from the east end of the building," said one officer. "To mitigate a crossfire situation, I exited the building and continued to hold cover to the south while the other deputies and officers worked to clear the building and treat the injured."</p> <p>Two officers both reported having accidentally switched off their body cameras in their rush to confront a suspect. They turned them back on later when they realized what had happened. One of them said that had happened several times.</p> <p>"It should be noted that my BWC (body camera) was activated but was turned off accidentally by the on and off button being hit by possibly the rifle sling. Upon noticing it was off I immediately turned it back on," the officer said.</p> <p>"This occurred more than once," he added.</p> <p>Earlier reports of the shooting also indicate confusion about which building the shootings were occurring in and where the assault rifle was left in its aftermath.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Supremacist died w/ISIS-type bombs
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/suspected-white-supremacist-died-building-isis-style-bombs?ref=home
GIST	<p>Benjamin Morrow was found dead with white supremacist literature and the ingredients for a notorious bomb known as the “Mother of Satan.”</p> <p>Morrow, 28, died in an explosion in the kitchen of his Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, apartment on March 5. His home was filled with bomb-making substances so volatile that firefighters chose to destroy the 16-unit apartment block in a controlled blaze, rather than let Morrow’s neighbors continue to live in the building.</p> <p>A search warrant unsealed last week revealed that Morrow kept white supremacist literature in his home. Investigators’ application for a second warrant suggests that Morrow had plans, announcing that he was clearing out a rented storage locker just hours before his death.</p> <p>Kevin Heimerl of the Wisconsin Department of Justice called Morrow’s apartment a “homemade explosives laboratory.” When they responded to reports of an explosion at the home, investigators passed “a one gallon metal container of acetone,” an investigator told a judge in a newly unsealed warrant application.</p> <p>Acetone is an explosive substance and ingredient in the “Mother of Satan”: a volatile bomb used by terrorists in ISIS attacks in Manchester, England, and Paris, France, in recent years.</p> <p>Also sitting in plain sight where two white cardboard boxes stamped with the words “mix it, shake it, shoot it,” and three more packages labeled “sonic boom,” Heimerl testified, adding that he suspected the boxes contained materials that would explode when combined. Investigators also found pipes and pipe caps in the apartment.</p> <p>When they entered the kitchen, investigators found Morrow dead in front of a still-lit stove. An “overpressure blast” had destroyed much of the room, blowing out the doors and windows and burying Morrow under the collapsed ceiling. Containers with more chemicals were spilling out an open refrigerator door.</p> <p>The scene was so volatile that authorities barred the rest of the apartment building’s residents from re-entering their homes, and burned the entire building to the ground in a 1,600-degree controlled blaze overseen by 100 firefighters. Residents left their valuables inside. One of Morrow’s neighbors told the Wisconsin State Journal he planned on digging through the rubble to find a dead relative’s World War II dog tags, which had been left inside to burn.</p> <p>At the time of the fire, the contents of Morrow’s apartment remained a mystery. But an unsealed warrant describes Morrow as building a terrifying arsenal.</p> <p>In addition to more bomb-making materials, Morrow also had a collection of guns and accessories including a rifle scope, masks, vests, a ballistic helmet, and thousands of rounds of ammunition.</p> <p>Morrow also had “white supremacist material” in his bedroom, the warrant said.</p> <p>Beaver Dam police said the white supremacist literature didn’t necessarily mean Morrow was a white supremacist.</p> <p>“It does cause me some concern but I want to make very clear just because Mr. Morrow was in the possession of this material, does not categorize in any particular light,” Lt. Terrence Gebhardt told CBS 58. “He could have been an individual that was doing research.”</p> <p>But state investigators suggested the opposite. In an application for a search warrant, Heimerl raised the</p>

possibility that Morrow had worked with or been inspired by others, pointing to the white supremacist literature when a judge asked about “propaganda that raises concern for this kind of collaborative work.”

The investigator who swept Morrow’s room described the literature as relating to white supremacist groups that “will involve multiple members” in potentially violent activities. He did not specify which groups were named in the literature.

Members of Morrow’s church community have pushed back on the idea that Morrow built the bombs in his bedroom and kitchen, for which investigators found handwritten instructions.

“I’d love to defend Ben because he has been described as a bomb maker and he’s not a bomb maker,” Rev. Jerry Marsden, the pastor who conducted Morrow’s funeral told the Associated Press. “He wasn’t a recluse as some have said he is. He was far from that.”

In an obituary, Morrow’s family described him as a religious man, who grew up homeschooled and later studied pre-pharmacy, math, and chemistry at Pensacola Christian College in Florida. The search warrant revealed Morrow had a Bible among his white supremacist literature and bomb-making material.

When he wasn’t building bombs, he worked as a quality control technician at Richelieu Foods, according to his LinkedIn profile. His coworkers told investigators Morrow sometimes came to work with an unpleasant smell on his clothes.

“Some of those co-workers reported that it was common for Benjamin Morrow to arrive for work and he had an odor emitting from his person that co-worker’s described as smelling like moth balls,” Heimerl told a judge in an application for a second warrant. “Those co-workers further stated that they had made comments to Benjamin Morrow about the fact that they could smell moth balls on him.”

Mothballs are made of flammable chemicals, which may explain the smell.

The second warrant application reveals that police were interested in the contents of a storage unit Morrow rented. On the morning of the fatal explosion, Morrow visited the storage company “and notified the business that he would be moving his personal property out of the storage unit by the end of March,” Heimerl told the judge in the warrant application, speculating that Morrow might have rented the storage unit to keep strong-smelling chemicals from his home.

The second warrant, the findings of which are not public, also extend to Morrow’s computers, flash drives, and phone. The records could reveal where Morrow received the white supremacist literature—and whether he was acting alone.

“I am aware that a person could work solely to connect this type of manufacturing homemade explosives themselves,” Heimerl said. “But I am also equally aware that individuals oftentimes communicate, inspire and engage with other persons to manufacture homemade explosives.”

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HEADLINE	04/13 Deadly war on drugs in Philippines
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/inside-the-deadly-war-on-drugs-in-the-philippineswhere-murder-is-a-meme?ref=home
GIST	<p>NEW YORK—Philippine journalist Patricia Evangelista does not think a single story she has written has saved anyone’s life, but yet she keeps writing. Her stories about the Philippines’ deadly war on drugs for the online-news network Rappler chronicle murder in cold blood, often carried out in front of families with young children by vigilantes acting out the wishes of the state under Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte.</p> <p>Rappler has been stripped of its official credentials and investigated for bogus crimes, including tax evasion and cyber libel. Evangelista has personally received death and rape threats for reporting the truth</p>

and for trying to humanize the victims.

She described her disturbing work to John Avlon, editor-in-chief of The Daily Beast, at the ninth annual Women in the World summit in New York on Friday morning against a backdrop of photos of dead bodies and blood-stained sidewalks. “Duterte is sensitive to criticism, so those of us who cover stories are told we are not patriots, that we are fake news,” she said.

No one knows exactly how many people have died in Duterte’s war on drugs. The state officially lists the number at around 4,000 people who were killed by police acting in “self defense.” Human Rights Watch estimates that closer to 12,000 people have been murdered in cold blood by police and vigilantes.

Duterte, who enjoys a high approval rating, won his office by promising to kill 100,000 criminals who are pushers and drug users alike. He makes no differentiation between pushers, addicts, and casual users—and those who are killed are often never arrested, and certainly never brought to trial.

Those who do the killing aren’t always police, sometimes they are men working under curious impunity who are never brought to justice, either. There are around 16,000 “killings under investigation” by Philippine authorities, but Evangelista says there is no transparency about those cases.

The killings are often carried out in broad daylight in the slum areas of Manila. The victims are often on a watch list created by the government, which is suspected of paying the vigilantes for each person killed. Evangelista has reported on men who have been shot bound and gagged with packing tape wrapped around their heads. The killers generally leave a note with the body stating that the victim was an addict or pusher. Evangelista recalled one instance in which the killer had drawn a smiley face on the victim’s corpse. Other bodies have been found with hashtag-laden signs that parody internet memes.

Evangelista says that, in reality, the Philippines has half the global average of per capita drug abuse. But when the country’s anti-drug czar reported this statistic, he was fired. What disturbs Evangelista most is that many of the killings target those living in extreme poverty, who are often the primary breadwinners for their families. When those victims die, the future of whole families dies with them.

She recalled a story about a family of six that lived in a cinder block house in a shantytown in the poor suburbs of Manila. The mother, nine-months pregnant, was home with the children one day when the police came looking for the patriarch of the house. He wasn’t home, so police arrested the pregnant woman and took her away instead. When the father returned, the family urged him to leave, too, or he might be killed. He came back early one morning to prepare a surprise birthday breakfast for one of the children. Police, staking out the house, charged in and told the children to get out. They pushed the father’s head down on the sofa, and the second eldest child, Christine, then 12 years old, jumped on her father’s back to try to protect him. Police pulled her away and shot him in the back of the head several times. One of the children later found a bullet in the cushions of the sofa. When Evangelista talked to the traumatized daughter some months later, she said her father’s death was her fault. “If I had hugged him harder, he would still be alive,” she told her.

The family now lives with an elderly grandmother who doesn’t have the financial means to support them. The mother gave birth, but remains in jail, meaning there is one more mouth to feed. It was never clear whether the father had been a user, a dealer, or neither. The official police report identified the father as a “scavenger” and said he was shot because the police were acting “in self defense.” There were no reports of police injuries, and no one official ever talked to Christine, the only witness.

Duterte has been condemned by the international community—which has called his deadly policy a crime against humanity—but Evangelista says the president’s response has always been to ask, “Frankly, are they human?”

Evangelista says the hardest part about telling stories about this bloody war on drugs is the risks those who talk about it face. “The risks for the people who tell their stories are enormous,” she said. “They could be dead the next day. Or their fathers or sons could be dead.”

She is also concerned that journalists are increasingly afraid to expose the truth. She has little optimism things will ever get better. "I'm not sure about hope," she said. "But I believe in journalism. If we tell the stories, we keep them human. They are people. He may have been a user, he may not have been, but he was a human."

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HEADLINE	04/13 Judge: Lakewood cops killing trial delay
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article208855809.html
GIST	<p>The alleged getaway driver of a man who gunned down four Lakewood police officers in 2009 made an unsuccessful bid for a new attorney Friday.</p> <p>Dorcus Dewayne Allen is awaiting retrial in Pierce County Superior Court, which won't happen until the Washington State Supreme Court finishes reviewing his case.</p> <p>"What I gather is that you're unhappy with the delay," Superior Court Judge Stanley Rumbaugh told Allen on Friday, after reading his motion for a new attorney.</p> <p>That can't be helped, the judge explained, because the Supreme Court's decision determines what charges prosecutors can bring.</p> <p>Division II of the Washington State Court of Appeals said last year that prosecutors couldn't retry Allen for aggravated first-degree murder, which would mean an automatic sentence of life without parole.</p> <p>Prosecutors appealed the decision to the Supreme Court, which accepted the case earlier this year.</p> <p>If the high court upholds the decision, Allen's retrial will be for first-degree murder. If it doesn't, trial for aggravated murder and a possible automatic life sentence would be back on the table.</p> <p>"I'm ready to go, but I just need to know what the charges are," Rumbaugh said.</p> <p>Allen, who turns 47 on Saturday (April 14) and also goes by the first name Darcus, told the court he doesn't believe his "due process issues" are being addressed "while we're in this standstill."</p> <p>He argued that defense attorney Mary K. High seems to be "totally unaware," when it comes to specifics about his Sixth Amendment rights.</p> <p>Rumbaugh said he didn't see anything deficient about High's work on the case, and he pointed out that the work of Allen's defense counsel on his appeal is the reason he's back in court at all.</p> <p>"I'm going to deny your motion," the judge said.</p> <p>High told the court she understood Allen's frustration.</p> <p>"I have endeavored to represent Mr. Allen to the best of my ability," she said. "... As Mr. Allen knows, I have been very committed to this case."</p> <p>And she'll continue to do so, she said.</p> <p>Allen, who has pleaded not guilty, is suspected of driving Maurice Clemmons to the Parkland coffee shop where Clemmons killed the four officers in November 2009, and then driving him away.</p> <p>Clemmons fatally shot police Sgt. Mark Renninger and officers Tina Griswold, Gregory Richards and Ronald Owens.</p>

	<p>A Seattle police officer fatally shot Clemmons after a manhunt.</p> <p>At Allen's initial trial, jurors found him guilty of four counts of first-degree murder and not of the aggravated murder charges.</p> <p>He was sentenced to 400 months in prison, but won an appeal in which he argued there was prosecutorial misconduct during closing arguments in the case.</p> <p>Prosecutors sought to retry Allen for four counts of aggravated murder, but Allen's defense team, including High, argued that would be double jeopardy, because jurors already said no to the aggravated murder charges.</p> <p>Then-Superior Court Judge Katherine Stolz agreed with the defense and prosecutors appealed her decision to Division II. The appellate court agreed with Stolz, and prosecutors appealed to the state Supreme Court in January.</p> <p>Oral arguments are expected later this year.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Teen jailed 1yr for deadly fight
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/judge-sentences-teen-who-killed-another-teen-in-a-fight-to-more-than-the-maximum/731973913
GIST	<p>In a move rarely seen in a Snohomish County court, a judge sentenced a Marysville teen who killed another teen in a fight to more than the maximum penalty for the crime.</p> <p>The judge said the kick to the head that killed 16-year-old Robbie Myrick Jr. and the actions that followed last August were so cruel that the boy responsible deserves a harsher punishment.</p> <p>Myrick -- and the teen we are not naming because he is a minor -- had agreed to the fight in these Marysville woods. The teen admitted to punching Robbie so hard he fell and then kicking him so hard he suffered irreversible brain damage. No one called 911 for at least an hour, including four adults watching the fight.</p> <p>"I pray to God Robbie was not cognizant of being left on the ground like some discarded piece of trash," Robbie's uncle Rod Hampton told the Snohomish County judge Friday.</p> <p>At the teen's sentencing, a shattered family pleaded for the judge to give more than the 30-day maximum sentence for second-degree manslaughter committed by a minor.</p> <p>"The defendant in this case claims he didn't intend to end someone's life. I'd be willing to bet that your average drunk driver who ends up killing someone in an accident didn't get behind the wheel with the intention of killing someone, but if they did they would be charged with vehicular homicide, and they wouldn't be looking at a token sentence of 30 days," Robbie's father, Robert Myrick Sr., told the judge.</p> <p>And the judge agreed -- 30 days is not enough.</p> <p>"He was down on the ground, he could do nothing to you — you had won the fight, to put it that way — and for some reason I will never know, you decided to up the ante on your victim and that resulted in his death," Judge Richard Okrent said to the teen, sitting next to his attorney.</p> <p>The teen was sentenced to one year in juvenile detention.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Sex workers devastated; eye alternatives
SOURCE	https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/arizona-investigations/2018/04/12/sex-workers-seeking-alternatives-other-websites-after-backpage-closure/507900002/
GIST	<p>When the Department of Justice unceremoniously shut down Backpage last week, it was the first public-facing step in a sweeping criminal case against the website's executives.</p> <p>But before federal authorities could issue a statement, before the classified site's owners would face a judge, and before the public would learn of their charges, the narrative around Backpage had taken on a life of its own.</p> <p>The site had served as a microcosm of a larger debate on prostitution in recent years, and the seizure of what the DOJ called the "Internet's leading forum for prostitution ads" ignited swift reactions on both sides.</p> <p>Anti-sex-trafficking advocates, including Cindy McCain, cheered Backpage's demise as a blow to an abusive industry.</p> <p>Meanwhile, sex workers across the U.S. and Canada swarmed social media to air concerns rarely heard in political discourse: To them, Backpage's demise meant the end of safeguards and a reliable revenue stream in a profession that's not going anywhere.</p> <p>"They're devastated," said Laura Dilley, executive director of PACE, a Vancouver-based nonprofit that advocates for decriminalizing prostitution.</p> <p>If sex workers can't advertise online, they can't screen their clients beforehand and are forced back out to bars and into the street, Dilley said.</p> <p>"I am going to do what I have to do to survive... I might have to work the streets, work the bars; you do what you have to do."</p> <p>While many sex workers told The Arizona Republic they would continue posting on other smaller websites, they also worry about the future. On Wednesday morning, President Trump signed a bill giving prosecutors more power to go after websites that knowingly host sex-trafficking ads. It also gives women who claimed they were trafficked the ability to sue.</p> <p>It's not clear how websites will respond. After the bill passed Congress, for example, Craigslist took down its singles ads. And as the bill was moving through Congress, Backpage restricted postings on singles ads to photos, phone numbers and web links.</p> <p>"There's a lot of uncertainty; a lot of grief and fear," said Jelena Vermilion, a sex worker based outside of Toronto. "A lot of people are essentially planning to be homeless, planning how to fall gracefully as much as possible...From Friday, a lot of these people haven't had any calls."</p> <p>IndyStar columnist Tim Swarens spent more than a year investigating a lucrative business where abused children are bought and sold. USA TODAY</p> <p>After the Backpage closure April 6, an Arizona-based sex worker called Vegas said she relied on her regular clients to get her through that weekend.</p> <p>"I am going to do what I have to do to survive," she said. "I might have to work the streets, work the bars; you do what you have to do."</p> <p>Prostitution is still illegal in 49 states, the exception being certain counties in Nevada. For this reason, The Arizona Republic has agreed to withhold the sex workers' legal names for this story. In Canada, selling sex is legal, but buying it isn't.</p>

Vegas said Backpage afforded her more anonymity than meeting strangers in public. And it gave her a barrier to screen her clients and meet them in a safe place.

“It will push it underground,” Vegas said, noting that Backpage screened for ads that appeared to include someone underage or trafficking victims.

“Backpage had an incentive to review the ads and make sure nothing was going on,” she said. “Now, it’s going to force people out to the streets, where we can’t really fight.”

A Michigan woman who goes by the name Sarah Fenix on Twitter posted a viral thread about how the ability to screen on Backpage saved her from riskier sex work. Fenix told The Republic she used the site to test the client before they met up. She would ask them to text their favorite movie “so I know you’re real,” or to bring her fruit or bagels.

“The guys who could follow that one simple instruction were actually better than the ones who couldn’t,” she said. “It’s not necessarily about the information you get, it’s about gauging someone’s willingness to follow instruction.”

Fenix said she is no longer in the business and now works a "cube" job. Seeing the closure of Backpage though, she said, was like watching a childhood house burn down.

A broader debate

The reactions over Backpage generally boil down to two camps: Those who believe prostitution should be illegal and those who don’t. Advocates for decriminalization say the sex industry will always be around, and regulation would make it safer. Those against it argue that selling sex, by nature, is abusive.

Advocates have succeeded in changing police attitudes about prostitutes from being seen as criminals to women in need of rescue. Many sex workers, however, reject the “victim” label.

In recent years, some anti-trafficking advocacy and political groups have begun blurring the lines between prostitution and sex trafficking: Per the expanded definition, a sex-trafficking victim is someone who enters prostitution by force, fraud or coercion. A minor, by definition is always considered a trafficking victim.

In a press statement, FBI Director Christopher Wray said Backpage’s closing strips traffickers of a key tool.

“This website will no longer serve as a platform for human traffickers to thrive,” he said. “Whether on the street or on the Internet, sex trafficking will not be tolerated.”

Backpage executives are not charged with a sex-trafficking crime, but instead crimes related to facilitating prostitution and money laundering. But the indictment states that many of the ads published on Backpage “depicted children who were victims of sex trafficking.”

Prosecutors say Backpage executives showed a financial incentive to allow the ads to run.

In recent years, law-enforcement actually worked Backpage to conduct prostitution-related sting operations. Police, including those in Phoenix, have previously posted ads on Backpage posing as an underage girl for sale, or as a trafficker searching for victims.

Jonathan Howard, a spokesman for the Phoenix Police Department, rejected the notion that sites like Backpage should remain in place because it confined criminals to one area.

"Just because it's easy doesn't mean it's right," he said. "We knew that that was one of the most prolific

	<p>sites for sex trafficking, but we still have to hold people accountable."</p> <p>Howard said police hope Backpage's closure encourages troubled young women and men to seek options other than prostitution.</p> <p>"It is extremely easy for them to go to sites like Backpage.com, and immediately be drawn into this high-risk lifestyle," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/14 Docs keep licenses despite sex abuse
SOURCE	https://www.yahoo.com/news/ap-investigation-doctors-keep-licenses-despite-sex-abuse-145310788--politics.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — The first time that Dr. Anthony Bianchi came onto a patient, California's medical board alleged, the gynecologist placed a chair against the exam room door, put his fingers into the woman's vagina and exposed his erect penis.</p> <p>The second time, the board claimed, he told a patient that he couldn't stop staring at her breasts and recounted a dream in which he performed oral sex on her in the office.</p> <p>The third time, the board charged, he told a pregnant patient suffering from vaginal bleeding that she shouldn't shave her pubic hair before her next visit, as he was getting too excited.</p> <p>These episodes led to disciplinary actions by the state's medical board in 2012 and in 2016. Bianchi agreed not to contest the charges, and he held onto his medical license. Under a settlement with California's medical board, he agreed to seek therapy and refrain from treating women during five years of probation.</p> <p>Bianchi did not respond to telephone messages from The Associated Press left for him at the workers' compensation clinic in Fresno, California, where he now evaluates occupational health claims.</p> <p>In recent months, Hollywood moguls, elite journalists and top politicians have been pushed out of their jobs or resigned their posts in the wake allegations of sexual misconduct. In contrast, the world of medicine is often more forgiving, according to an AP investigation.</p> <p>When the doctors are disciplined, the punishment often consists of a short suspension paired with mandatory therapy that treats sexually abusive behavior as a symptom of an illness or addiction, the AP found.</p> <p>Decades of complaints that the physician disciplinary system is too lenient on sex-abusing doctors have produced little change in the practices of state medical boards. And the #MeToo campaign and the rapid push in recent months to increase accountability for sexual misconduct in American workplaces do not appear to have sparked a movement toward changing how medical boards deal with physicians who act out sexually against patients or staffers.</p> <p>The sentencing of Larry Nassar, a former doctor for the U.S. Olympic gymnastics program convicted of abusing more than 150 women and girls, has put a high-profile case of physician misconduct in the spotlight. But across the country, most doctors accused of sexual misconduct avoid a medical license review entirely. A study last year found that two-thirds of doctors who were sanctioned by their employers or paid a settlement as the result of sex misconduct claims never faced medical board discipline.</p> <p>"There's been a failure of the medical community to take a stand against the issue," said Azza Abbudagga, a health services researcher with nonprofit advocacy organization Public Citizen.</p> <p>She published a report recently detailing sexual misconduct among physicians. Its findings showed that of the 253 doctors reported to the National Practitioner Data Bank for having been sanctioned by their</p>

respective hospitals or health care organizations for sexual misconduct, or paid a settlement that stemmed from such an allegation, 170 of them were not disciplined by state medical boards, even though all boards have access to the reports filed with the data bank.

"They could tell the public that they will investigate every single case. There are many things that can be done, even just having a policy of zero tolerance," she said. "If every single hospital would just take a stand and issue a statement saying clearly that any sexual misconduct with patients won't be tolerated and that there will be consequences including permanently revoking the medical license of every doctor found guilty."

Current guidelines from the Federation of State Physician Health Programs, which represents doctor rehab programs in 47 states, are largely silent on handling sexual misconduct treatment and describe sexual harassment as a "cause of impairment" in a doctor. Programs to treat doctor impairment are inherently supposed to be "nondisciplinary," per the federation's guidelines.

Linda Bresnahan, who heads the federation, said its guidelines are being rewritten and, despite their language, should not be applied to sexual misbehavior. A statement provided by the federation says only about half of doctor rehab programs nationwide accept doctors accused of sexual misconduct, a choice the group considers to be "a local issue beyond the purview of national guidance."

The harm committed by sexually abusive doctors is aggravated by the personal nature of the doctor-patient relationship, according to experts and doctors' victims.

When Marissa White came to Dr. Gunwant Dhaliwal in 2007 for neck pain after a car accident, he reached under her shirt and into her bra, grabbing her breasts.

A jury convicted him of misdemeanor battery in the case, and Florida's medical board concluded that his crime demonstrated his "lack of good moral character" and "lack of worthiness" to practice medicine. But despite that finding — and at least six other similar allegations made by women patients and employees, both before and after the incident with White, according to court cases and police complaints — Dhaliwal can still be found practicing at his Tampa-area urgent care clinics.

"I had to sit there in front of him, look him in the eye, they made their guilty verdict and that's it, nothing came of it," White told the AP of her experience at trial. She still lives in Florida, but won't even go to the neighborhood where Dhaliwal practices medicine.

"He should have lost his license a long time ago. He should have lost it the first time it happened."

But his office manager told the AP that, while the Florida board referred him to the state's impaired physician network for evaluation, nothing came of it.

"They did an evaluation and did not find anything wrong," the woman told the AP. "They don't do any treatment."

The office manager, who refused to provide the AP with her full name, noted that Dhaliwal had not had any new complaints brought against him since his settlement with the medical board. When the AP asked to speak with Dhaliwal, she said that he was declining on the advice of his lawyers.

Dhaliwal did not respond to requests for comment left with his clinic's staff or a voicemail left with his lawyer.

Examples of problematic behavior are easy to find in states across the country.

In Arkansas, Dr. Robert Rook was allowed to keep his family practice open, so long as he's chaperoned, despite facing multiple criminal charges for rape. Prosecutors subsequently downgraded the charges to more than 20 counts of sexual assault in the second- and third-degree, charges for which Rook says he is

innocent.

Rook did not return phone messages left with a secretary at his Conway office. He is set to face trial later this year.

The Idaho State Board of Medicine in May reinstated the license of Richard Pines, a child and adolescent psychiatrist who lost his license in 2013 after the board accused him of having sexual relationships with four former patients, including taking nude photos of a 14-year-old and convincing the boys that he needed to practice giving naked massages to keep his medical license.

The state's highest court in 2015 ruled that Pines had engaged in sexual misconduct, but determined that two of the four alleged victims were not former patients. The court remanded Pines' case to a lower court and vacated his punishment, instead ordering the board to re-evaluate the scope of disciplinary action based on the charges the court upheld. The court's order also blasted the board for being impartial, accusing its members of "passionately railing" against Pines in its decision.

The AP reached out to Pines' former employers and contacted his most recent attorneys, but was unable to reach him. The AP also left a message for a biller at Sage Health Care, where Pines still processes invoices. The receptionist said Pines bills through the office but was unable to provide more details about his current practice.

State-authorized programs that attempt to oversee the rehabilitation of doctors who have committed sexual misconduct aren't always forthcoming about their methods. In Florida, the Professional's Resource Network, which the state medical board assigned to evaluate Gunwant Dhaliwal after his battery conviction, asked the AP to provide detailed questions and a list of sources before it would answer questions.

After the AP provided the head of the program, Alexis Polles, with basic questions about the program's approach to clearing doctors for return to work after instances of sexual abuse, she declined to answer any of them.

The lenience of penalties for sexually abusive doctors sometimes a source of frustration even for members of the medical board who administer the discipline, according to Jason Rosenberg, a former chairman of the Florida medical board.

"This is incredibly inappropriate," Rosenberg said during one 2013 meeting when Florida's medical board allowed James Yelton-Rossello, a psychiatrist alleged to have molested jailed psychiatric patients, to keep his license. The settlement with the Florida board of medicine did not require Yelton-Rossello to admit guilt.

"You can't do this and serve french fries," Rosenberg said at that meeting, citing fast food restaurants' policies against hiring sex offenders. "I'm ashamed of what's going on here."

Yelton-Rossello's lawyer did not respond to telephone messages or an email request for comment.

Some medical boards blame administrative law judges for tying their hands from seeking harsher punishments.

In an interview last year, Rosenberg said he responded to an administrative law judge's refusal to uphold a different license revocation by attempting to compel that doctor to display a sign stating "I molest patients" in his office.

Rosenberg's effort failed, though some doctors have been required to post signs in their office stating that they must be chaperoned in the presence of female patients.

Bob Cohen, the chief judge in Florida's division of administrative hearings, rejected the idea that

administrative law judges are responsible for watering down the punishments of sexually abusive doctors. He said the board of medicine could seek to override administrative law decisions they disagree with, something the Florida board acknowledged in a statement to the AP.

"One of the reasons they don't always appeal is they have a lot of cases," Cohen said of state health officials. He acknowledged, however, that "consistency" was a goal in punishments, and that past leniency shown to doctors sets a precedent for weaker punishments in the present day.

The question of doctor punishments is part of a larger problem in the medical field. Numerous factors, including hospitals' disinclination to report abusive doctors, to shortfalls in a private, interstate system meant to flag them to future employers, and patients' simple reluctance to challenge a medical professional, skew the field in doctors' favor, according to a 2016 investigation by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Some doctors who are reported to medical boards for sexual misconduct receive reprimands instead of suspensions. G. Eric Nielson, a medical malpractice attorney in Utah, says that's because doctors tend to try to protect other doctors as much as possible.

"There's an institutional bias on the part of the medical review board," he said. "They're generally doctors, they work very hard to get their medical degrees and they're very, very disinclined to yank the license of another doctor. The primary focus is: Let's take care of the doctor and help him get through this problem."

A medical board in California in 2009 revoked the license of Dr. Kamron Hakhamimi after it ruled that his conduct constituted abuse, neglect and exploitation when he prescribed powerful drugs to a woman he met online and then had sex with her; he had previously pleaded no contest to a pair of misdemeanor charges stemming from the incident. But the board stayed the revocation in favor of seven years' probation and a requirement that he complete an ethics class and a course on professional boundaries, though the California Department of Health Care Services barred Hakhamimi from participating in any federally funded programs for 12 years.

When contacted for comment, Hakhamimi said, "Nothing happened in the clinic. No medical malpractice, no suspension." When asked whether the courses were effective, he said, "they're mandatory for a reason: It's a business," and then hung up.

Sexually abusive physicians are not generally required to apologize or even acknowledge having acted inappropriately in order to keep their license. Three years after his misdemeanor battery conviction, for example, Florida doctor Dhaliwal was acquitted of molesting another patient. He took the opportunity to issue a news release calling the women who have accused him of misconduct liars motivated by greed.

In email statement, Florida Medical Board spokesman Brad Dalton said the doctor disciplinary boards "do not have the legal authority to force a physician to speak or place a gag order on them to prevent them from doing so."

In practice, even some lawyers who represent doctors find the physician health programs to be problematic.

David Spicer, who has represented doctors facing medical board discipline in Florida, says the state's doctor rehabilitation program isn't well designed to evaluate or treat sexual misbehavior. The program's key component, he said, is a "one-size-fits-all" requirement that doctors engage in therapy sessions and not get into trouble for a specified period, generally five years.

Spicer said Florida's program, run by an independent organization called the Physician Research Network, does a better job dealing with doctors' who abuse alcohol or drug, but it hasn't been effective at evaluating or treating doctors with sexual problems.

Experts in the treatment of sexual misbehavior question whether the treatments mandated for doctors who

	<p>molest patients are even appropriate for such misconduct.</p> <p>"It's insufficient," said Rory Reid, a UCLA psychology professor who studies addiction and hypersexual behavior. While some types of sexual behavior, such as the compulsive viewing of pornography, might best be addressed through addiction treatment therapy, rehabilitation programs for sex offenders typically focus on restitution and empathy for a person's victims.</p> <p>"We have clinical trials for everything underneath the sun," Reid said. "But there's not one clinical trial that I'm aware of on the efficacy of treatment for doctors who have engaged in sexual misconduct."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Backpage CEO pleads guilty
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/backpage-ceo-pleads-guilty-testify-54437158
GIST	<p>The chief executive of Backpage.com pleaded guilty to state and federal charges including conspiracy and money laundering, and agreed to testify in ongoing prosecutions against others at the website that authorities have dubbed a lucrative nationwide "online brothel," authorities said.</p> <p>"For far too long, Backpage.com existed as the dominant marketplace for illicit commercial sex, a place where sex traffickers frequently advertised children and adults alike," U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions said in a statement. "But this illegality stops right now."</p> <p>Backpage brought in a half-billion dollars since it began in 2004, mostly through prominent risqué advertising for escorts and massages, among other services and some goods for sale, according to federal prosecutors. Authorities allege the site was often used to traffic underage victims, while company officials said they tried to scrub the site of such ads.</p> <p>Chief Executive Officer Carl Ferrer will serve no more than five years in prison under a California agreement in which he pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy and three counts of money laundering in California. Also Thursday, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton announced the company pleaded guilty to human trafficking.</p> <p>And a federal judge in Phoenix unsealed an April 5 plea deal revealing that Ferrer pleaded guilty to conspiracy, and Backpage.com pleaded guilty to money laundering conspiracy.</p> <p>Under his plea agreement, Ferrer agreed to make the company's data available to law enforcement as investigations and prosecutions continue. The guilty pleas are the latest in a cascade of developments in the last week against the company founded by the former owners of the Village Voice in New York City, Michael Lacey, 69, and James Larkin, 68.</p> <p>The company founders were among Backpage officials indicted by a federal grand jury in Arizona. Attorneys for the company and Lacey, Larkin and Ferrer did not respond to multiple telephone and email messages from The Associated Press.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/13 Online pharmacy fined; illegal imports
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/latest-online-pharmacy-sentenced-illegal-imports-54452599
GIST	<p>The Latest on the sentencing of an online Canadian pharmacy for illegally importing drugs into the U.S. (all times local):</p> <p>1 p.m.</p> <p>A Montana judge has sentenced a Canadian online pharmacy to pay \$34 million for importing counterfeit and unapproved drugs into the U.S.</p>

	<p>U.S. District Judge Dana Christensen on Friday accepted plea agreements with Canada Drugs and its founder, Kris Thorkelson.</p> <p>The company pleaded guilty to introducing misbranded drugs into interstate commerce, and two subsidiary companies pleaded guilty to selling counterfeit drugs.</p> <p>Thorkelson pleaded guilty to knowing about and concealing a felony crime.</p> <p>Prosecutors say the company has made at least \$78 million since 2001 by importing mislabeled and unapproved drugs. That includes two counterfeit cancer drugs that had no active ingredients.</p> <p>Canada Drugs was also sentenced to five years' probation and ordered to stop selling unapproved, misbranded and counterfeit drugs.</p> <p>Thorkelson received five years' probation with six months' house arrest. He also must pay a \$250,000 fine.</p>
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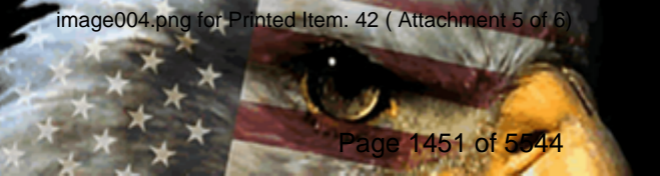
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Cyber Security News

Electrical Substations Exposed to Attacks by Flaws in Siemens Devices

From Security Week (04.11.2018) Eduard Kovacs

Electrical substations and other power supply facilities are exposed to hacker attacks due to several potentially serious vulnerabilities discovered by researchers in some Siemens protection relays. On March 8, Siemens and ICS-CERT published advisories to warn organizations of the existence of three vulnerabilities in SIPROTEC 4, SIPROTEC Compact, and Reyrolle devices, which provide integrated protection, control, measurement, and automation functions for electrical substations and other applications. The vendor has released patches and mitigations for each of the flaws. Positive Technologies, the company whose researchers discovered the flaws, has now provided information regarding the risk and impact. One of the vulnerabilities, tracked as CVE-2018-4840 and rated high severity, can be exploited by a remote and unauthenticated attacker to modify the device's configuration and overwrite access passwords. Another security hole, CVE-2018-4839, is a medium severity issue that allows a local or network attacker to recover the access authorization password by intercepting network traffic or obtaining data from the targeted device. The password can be used to gain complete access to a relay, Positive Technologies said. [Link](#)

[Securityweek\[.\]com/electrical-substations-exposed-attacks-flaws-siemens-devices](https://www.securityweek.com/electrical-substations-exposed-attacks-flaws-siemens-devices)

*Microsoft Patches Two Dozen Critical Flaws in Windows, Browsers

From Security Week (04.10.2018) Eduard Kovacs

Microsoft's Patch Tuesday updates for April 2018 resolve a total of 66 vulnerabilities, including nearly two dozen critical issues affecting Windows and the company's web browsers. None of the flaws patched this month appear to have been exploited in the wild, but one privilege escalation vulnerability discovered by a Microsoft researcher in SharePoint has been disclosed to the public. A majority of the critical flaws affecting Internet Explorer and Edge are related to scripting engines and they allow remote code execution. A remote code execution flaw affecting the VBScript engine has also been rated critical. The security hole can be exploited via malicious websites or documents. Trend Micro's Zero Day Initiative (ZDI) noted that while this is similar to browser bugs, the attack surface is broader due to the possibility of exploitation using Office documents. Several critical vulnerabilities that allow remote code execution have also been found in graphics components, specifically font libraries and how they handle embedded fonts. Microsoft also informed customers that its Wireless Keyboard 850 is affected by a security feature bypass vulnerability that can be exploited to simulate keystrokes and send malicious commands to the targeted computer. An attacker could also exploit this flaw to read keystrokes, which can include sensitive information, such as passwords. [Link](#)

[Securityweek\[.\]com/microsoft-patches-two-dozen-critical-flaws-windows-browsers](https://www.securityweek.com/microsoft-patches-two-dozen-critical-flaws-windows-browsers)

*Microsoft Half-Patches Old Outlook Vulnerability

From Bleeping Computer (04.11.2018) Catalin Cimpanu

Microsoft has published a patch for an Outlook vulnerability first reported in late 2016, but the patch has been deemed incomplete and additional workarounds are needed, according to the security researcher who discovered it. Yesterday's April 2018 Patch Tuesday updates train included a fix for CVE-2018-0950, a vulnerability in Microsoft Outlook discovered by Will Dormann, a vulnerability analyst at the CERT Coordination Center (CERT/CC). According to Dormann, the main problem with CVE-2018-0950 is that Microsoft Outlook will automatically render the content of remote OLE objects embedded inside rich formatted emails without prompting the user, something that Microsoft does in other Office apps such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. This leads to a slew of problems that come from automatically rendering OLE objects, a common attack vector for malware authors. Dormann says that during his experiments he was able to exploit this Outlook OLE handling design decision to steal user account passwords (NTLM hashes, to be more precise) from Windows computers. An attacker would only need to collect these hashes, crack them offline, and use them to infiltrate the user's computer and then other parts of the internal network. [Link](#)

[Bleepingcomputer\[.\]com/news/security/microsoft-half-patches-old-outlook-vulnerability/](https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/microsoft-half-patches-old-outlook-vulnerability/)

*Adobe patches critical vulnerabilities in Flash, InDesign

From ZDNet (04.11.2018) Charlie Osborne

Adobe has released a new security update which resolves critical vulnerabilities in products including Adobe Flash Player and Adobe InDesign. On Tuesday, the tech giant published a security advisory detailing a total of 19 vulnerabilities in Adobe Flash Player, Adobe Experience Manager, Adobe InDesign CC, Digital Editions, ColdFusion and the Adobe PhoneGap Push plugin. Adobe Flash, a common inclusion in the company's security updates, has received a patch which resolves critical vulnerabilities which affect Adobe Flash Player version 29.0.0.113 and earlier on Windows, Macintosh, Linux and Chrome OS systems. In total, three vulnerabilities are deemed critical. A use-after-free flaw, CVE-2018-4932, and two out-of-bounds write errors, CVE-2018-4935 and CVE-2018-4937, can all lead to remote code execution if exploited. In addition, Adobe has patched two additional out-of-bounds read bugs, CVE-2018-4933 and CVE-2018-4934, as well as a heap overflow issue, CVE-2018-4936. These vulnerabilities can lead to information disclosure. [Link](#)

[Zdnet\[.\]com/article/adobe-patches-critical-vulnerabilities-in-flash-indesign/](https://www.zdnet.com/article/adobe-patches-critical-vulnerabilities-in-flash-indesign/)

Pivotal patches holes in the Spring Framework

From Heise Security (04.06.2018) Olivia von Westernhagen

Several versions of Spring, a framework for Java application development, have serious security vulnerabilities. New, fixed versions are available. There are three security holes in the Spring Development Framework, an open-source framework for cross-platform development of Java applications. As can be seen from a Pivotal Software safety note, all versions from 5.0 to 5.0.4 and from 4.3 to 4.3.14 (including the first and last mentioned version numbers) are affected. One of the gaps is described as critical and could be misused to perform a remote code execution attack on applications based on Spring. Among other things, the framework is used in the Confluence wiki software and used to develop applications for Oracles Fusion Middleware. The new Spring versions 5.0.5 and 4.3.15 fill in the gaps. Application developers should move quickly to provide updated versions of existing Spring-based software. Users should check for updates. [Link](#)

[Heise\[.\]de/security/meldung/Pivotal-patcht-Luecken-im-Spring-Framework-4012159\[.\]html](https://heise.de/security/meldung/Pivotal-patcht-Luecken-im-Spring-Framework-4012159)

FIDO2: Authenticate easily with phishing-resistant security

From Help Net Security (04.11.2018)

The FIDO Alliance and the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) have achieved a standards milestone in the global effort to bring simpler yet stronger web authentication to users around the world. The W3C has advanced Web Authentication (WebAuthn), a collaborative effort based on Web API specifications submitted by FIDO to the W3C, to the Candidate Recommendation (CR) stage. The CR is the product of the Web Authentication Working Group, which is comprised of representatives from over 30 member organizations. CR is a precursor to final approval of a web standard, and the W3C has invited online services and web app developers to implement WebAuthn. WebAuthn defines a standard web API that can be incorporated into browsers and related web platform infrastructure which gives users new methods to securely authenticate on the web, in the browser and across sites and devices. CTAP enables an external authenticator, such as a security key or a mobile phone, to communicate strong authentication credentials locally over USB, Bluetooth or NFC to the user's internet access device (PC or mobile phone). The FIDO2 specifications collectively enable users to authenticate easily to online services with desktop or mobile devices with phishing-resistant security. Google, Microsoft, and Mozilla have committed to supporting the WebAuthn standard in their flagship browsers and have started implementation for Windows, Mac, Linux, Chrome OS and Android platforms. [Link](#)

[Helpnetsecurity\[.\]com/2018/04/11/phishing-resistant-security/](https://helpnetsecurity[.]com/2018/04/11/phishing-resistant-security/)

DHS 'Cyber Storm' exercise tests manufacturing and transportation sectors

From Cyberscoop(04.10.2018) Sean Lyngaas

A global cybersecurity drill hosted Tuesday by the Department of Homeland Security served to “push participants out of their comfort zone” to practice information sharing at a time of heightened risk to critical infrastructure, top DHS cybersecurity official Jeanette Manfra said. This week’s exercise includes participants from the transportation and “critical manufacturing” sectors, the latter which DHS recently warned Russian government hackers were targeting in a multi-stage attack campaign. More than 1,000 people, including corporate executives, law enforcement personnel and intelligence and defense officials, are participating in this sixth iteration of the exercise known as Cyber Storm, which DHS touts as “the most extensive government-sponsored cybersecurity exercise of its kind.” While a group of participants gathered at Secret Service headquarters in Washington, D.C., many others joined the drill from their own offices across the country. The seven participating states are Colorado, Delaware, Iowa, Montana, Texas, Virginia and Washington. The latest version of the congressionally-mandated DHS exercise includes a simulated social media platform that bombards participants with information, which could include reports of a new software vulnerability. Manfra said that some vulnerability researchers have in recent years posted their discoveries to social media rather than going through a disclosure process, presenting a new challenge to government analysts. Phyllis Schneck, DHS’s former deputy undersecretary for cybersecurity and communications, told CyberScoop that the biennial exercise had evolved considerably since its 2006 inception to keep pace with the threat landscape. [Link](#)

[Cyberscoop\[.\]com/dhs-cyber-storm-jeanette-manfra-critical-infrastructure/](#)

UK to Invest More Money in Police Efforts Against Online Crime

From ZDNet (04.11.2018) Danny Palmer

Cybercriminals who use the 'anonymity' of the dark web to carry out illegal activities ranging from hacking and malware distribution to selling drugs, firearms and people face a crackdown as part of plans to bolster law enforcement's ability to take the fight to crooks who use underground forums. Figures by the Home Office say that only 30 percent of UK police forces currently meet the minimum cyber capabilities required to investigate and pursue cybercriminals. The funding is set to be announced by UK Home Secretary Amber Rudd during a speech at CYBERUK, the National Cyber Security Centre's conference in Manchester. The NCSC is the specialist cyber security arm of intelligence agency GCHQ. In order to aid the fight against crime on the dark web, the government has announced that a £9m fund is being made available to specialist law enforcement units who deal with cybercrime and dark web activity. The funding is intended to build intelligence services, conduct research into cybercrime, teach police officers new skills to be able to handle dark web and hacking related crimes as well extra training to be able to provide victim support and care. All of the funding comes from an existing £50m designed to ensure police and prosecutors have the capabilities to combat cybercrime at a local, regional and national level. It forms part of the Home Office's National Cyber Security Program, which has seen £150m spent in the fight against cybercrime since 2015. [Link](#)

[Zdnet\[.\]com/article/dark-web-crackdown-more-funding-for-police-targeting-online-crime/](#)

Aviation Tech

UFA ATTower simulator to support FAA TFDM

From Air Traffic Management (04.11.2018)

UFA has been selected by Leidos to deliver its ATTower tower simulator to support testing, training, prototyping, and development of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Terminal Flight Data Manager (TFDM) system. TFDM is the FAA program to modernize air traffic control tower equipment at 89 airports in the United States by improving the exchange of electronic flight data, implementing electronic flight strips and other airport surface efficiency tools. ATTower is being integrated with TFDM to provide surface surveillance and flight data, which Leidos uses to test the system during development. ATTower will also be deployed as part of the local test and verification system. The company's ATView image generator and ATVoice voice recognition and response system were used with ATTower during early TFDM hands-on prototyping activities. [Link](#)

[Airtrafficmanagement\[.\]net/2018/04/ufa-attower-sim-to-support-faa-tfdm/](#)

Germany's MTU Aero Engines Expands Its High-tech Facility in Poland in Order to Conduct Additive Manufacturing

From Aviation Pros (04.11.2018)

MTU Aero Engines, Germany's leading engine manufacturer, is once again adding new production and assembly capacities at its facility in Rzeszów, Poland. Plans are for MTU Aero Engine Polska's existing floor space to be enlarged by another 11,400 square meters, with groundbreaking for the construction planned in September 2018. The number of employees will increase from nearly 800 today to over 1,000 by 2020. The new jobs being created in this region are primarily for activities related to new technologies. The tremendous advancements in the field of additive manufacturing technologies and the steep increase in production rates within the whole MTU Group are behind this move. For instance, production volumes of components for the latest geared turbofan engines will increase significantly as well as the activities for assembly and production of components and modules for latest widebody propulsion systems powering the 787 Dreamliner and the 777X. The MTU Group's investment in the site so far amounts to €100 million and it is the plan to invest an additional €80 million in the next 5 years (2018-2022). According to plans, the new parts of the facility will be up and running no later than the end of 2019. Of a total of 11,400 square meters of added floor space, 7,500 square meters will be dedicated to production and 3,900 square meters will be used to provide the additional space required to support production. The space in the newly built part of the facility will, first and foremost, house activities in connection with new technologies, like, for example, additive manufacturing, plus activities needed to cope with the increased volumes associated with the production ramp-up now under way. [Link](#)

[Aviationpros\[.\]com/press_release/12407419/mtu-aero-engines-polska-further-expands-its-high-tech-facility-in-polands-aviation-valley](#)

Legislation & Regulation News

EASA warns of possible missile strikes on Syria

From Air Traffic Management (04.11.2018)

Eurocontrol is relaying a warning to airlines to exercise caution in the eastern Mediterranean due to the risk of air strikes into Syria in the next 72 hours. On its Network Operations Portal, air navigation safety agency Eurocontrol has alerted airlines planning to fly near that airspace that the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) had issued a Rapid Alert Notification for the Eastern Mediterranean / Nicosia Flight Information Region (FIR). This added that due to the possible launch of air strikes into Syria with air-to-ground and / or cruise missiles within the next 72 hours, and the possibility of intermittent disruption of radio navigation equipment, "due consideration" needs to be taken when planning flight operations in this area and that airlines needed to check any relevant NOTAMs. US President Donald Trump on Monday warned of a 'quick, forceful' response once responsibility for the recent Syria attacks was established. Aviation authorities in countries including the United States, Britain, France and Germany have issued previous warnings against airlines entering Syrian airspace leading most carriers to avoid the area. The United Nations International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) which launched a web page specifically to warn about risks to aircraft operating near conflict zones following the Malaysia Airlines MH17 tragedy, has failed to issue any relevant notice, however. Concerns over risks to civil aviation operating through known conflict zones came to the fore in the wake of the 2014 downing of Flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine. [Link](#)

[Airtrafficmanagement\[.\]net/2018/04/easa-warns-of-possible-missile-strikes-on-syria/](#)

FAA Says Risk-based Oversight Progressing, But Work Remains

From MRO Network (04.10.2018) Sean Broderick

FAA's transition to a risk-based oversight philosophy is progressing well, but the change remains "in its early days" and the agency is listening to industry feedback as part of making the new approach more effective, FAA Associate Administrator of Aviation Safety Ali Bahrami said. Addressing an aftermarket-focused audience at MRO Americas here April 10, Bahrami said improving the new Safety Assurance System (SAS) tool is a particular focus. Rolled out about five years ago, SAS is the primary tool that FAA inspectors use to collect and share data. In theory, the system will help FAA prioritize surveillance based on what's happening at airlines and repair stations, putting more emphasis on certificate holders that show signs of risk, such as inconsistent procedures. But SAS's most important element--data collection--continues to present challenges. FAA is still training its workforce on how to use the system, and is learning how to better apply it. "The idea behind the system is good, but we're learning," Bahrami said. "We're still in the very early stages." SAS is the core of a major philosophical shift that has FAA working more collaboratively with industry on several fronts. Data-sharing is a major one, and Bahrami emphasized the importance of industry participating in initiatives such as the Aviation Safety Information Analysis and Sharing Program (ASIAS). More than 100 operators participate in the data-sharing program, but only two--AAR Corp. and Haeco Americas--are MRO providers. This needs to change, Bahrami said, especially as aftermarket analytics becomes more prevalent, and issues that could affect safety--such as a part failing regularly that could lead to an in-service incident--are unearthed. [Link](#)

[mro-network\[.\]com/maintenance-repair-overhaul/risk-based-oversight-progressing-work-remains-faa-](#)

says

Physical Security News

Green Bay Packers player arrested for allegedly making false bomb threat at airport

From ANC News (04.10.2018) Emily Shapiro

A Green Bay Packers player has been arrested for allegedly making a false bomb threat at the Los Angeles International Airport, police said. During routine questioning at the Hawaiian Airlines ticket counter Sunday morning, an agent asked wide receiver Trevor Davis, who was with a woman, whether he had packed aerosols or fireworks or other dangerous items. Davis replied "yes" and then "turned to the female companion and said, 'Did you pack the explosives?'" airport police spokesman Rob Pedregon told ABC News. "Based on that statement, he was arrested for making a false bomb threat," a misdemeanor, Pedregon said. Davis, 24, apologized and told the responding officer he was joking, Pedregon said, but the ticket agent said she thought he was serious. Pedregon, the airport police spokesman, said, "You don't scream fire in a theater and you don't talk about bombs at an airport. As it is, people are nervous when they fly." [Link](#)

[Abcnews\[.\]go\[.\]com/US/green-bay-packers-player-arrested-allegedly-making-false/story?id=54359535](http://abcnews.go.com/US/green-bay-packers-player-arrested-allegedly-making-false/story?id=54359535)

Miscellaneous News

Indonesia's Lion Air confirms \$6.2 billion deal for Boeing 737s, flags 787 jet order

From Reuters (04.10.2018) Cindy Silviana

Indonesia's Lion Air Group announced on Tuesday a firm order to buy 50 Boeing Co 737 MAX 10 narrowbody jets worth \$6.24 billion and said it plans to place a provisional order for Boeing 787 widebody jets in the next few weeks. Lion Air, which already has offshoots in Malaysia and Thailand, also plans to establish a new airline in a Southeast Asian country this year, co-founder Rusdi Kirana told reporters. He declined to elaborate on the number of 787s to be ordered or in which country the new airline would be established. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the purchase of 787s would be announced in "two to three weeks", he said. His comments came after the privately-owned company earlier in the day confirmed the purchase of the 50 Boeing 737 MAX 10 jets by announcing a firm order. The jets are worth \$6.24 billion at list prices, but airlines usually get discounts for bulk purchases. Kirana said the Indonesian government's infrastructure expansion, which included airports, was fueling Lion's demand for more aircraft. [Link](#)

[Reuters\[.\]com/article/us-lion-air-boeing/indonesias-lion-air-confirms-6-2-billion-deal-for-boeing-737s-flags-787-jet-order-idUSKBN1HH0XE](http://Reuters.com/article/us-lion-air-boeing/indonesias-lion-air-confirms-6-2-billion-deal-for-boeing-737s-flags-787-jet-order-idUSKBN1HH0XE)

Germany risks losing key technology in Chinese takeovers

From Reuters (04.11.2018) Andrea Shalal

Germany's head of domestic intelligence agency urged vigilance about increased moves by Chinese companies to invest in and acquire high-technology German companies, warning the loss of key technologies could harm the German economy. Hans-Georg Maassen said intelligence officials had been initially puzzled by a sharp drop in Chinese cyber espionage activities about two years ago, but then realized Beijing was simply using other, legal tools such as direct takeovers, to gain access to German know-how. "Industrial espionage is no longer necessary if one can simply take advantage of liberal economic regulations to buy companies and then disembowel them or cannibalize them to gain access to their know-how," he told a cyber conference. Maassen said Germany remained open to foreign investment, including from China, but steps were needed to safeguard key technologies. He said he had been particularly concerned about the takeover of German robotics maker Kuka by a Chinese firm in 2016 given the sensitive technology involved. German concerns were stoked by news last month that Chinese grid operator State Grid Corporation of China tried to buy a 20 percent stake in German grid operator 50Hertz, and moves by China's Geely to quietly build up a 10 percent stake in carmaker Daimler. The German economy ministry is also reviewing a Chinese bid for aerospace supplier Cotesa, a move which could lead to Berlin blocking the sale. Karl Wendling, a senior official with the German Economy Ministry, said Chinese acquisitions of German firms had stabilized at a high level, around \$14 billion, a huge increase from the \$530 million value of deals seen in 2015. Maassen said the issue was particularly worrying in China's case, since private Chinese firms were required to share data with the Chinese government, and had to set up party committees that gave the Chinese government control over company decisions. [Link](#)

[Reuters\[.\]com/article/us-germany-security-china/germany-risks-losing-key-technology-in-chinese-takeovers-spy-chief-idUSKBN1HI2IS](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-security-china/germany-risks-losing-key-technology-in-chinese-takeovers-spy-chief-idUSKBN1HI2IS)

U.S. Department of Transportation Crisis Management Center Daily Report

Commercial In-Flight Incidents

*American 957, B772

- o April 11, 2018 at 12:03 AM EDT
- o Enroute from Miami, FL (Miami International Airport) to Santiago, Chile (Comodoro Arturo Merino Benítez International Airport)
- o Generator problem
- o Returned to Miami, FL; landed without incident at 12:20 AM EDT

*JetBlue 174, A320

- o April 10, 2018 at 5:45 PM EDT
- o Enroute from Punta Cana, Dominican Republic (Punta Cana International Airport) to Fort Lauderdale, FL (Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport)

- o Minimum Fuel
- o Diverted to Miami, FL (Miami International Airport); landed without incident

*JetBlue 2394, E190

- o April 10, 2018 at 5:42 PM EDT
- o Enroute from Nassau, Bahamas (Lynden Pindling International Airport) to Palm Beach, FL (Palm Beach International Airport)
- o Fuel problem
- o Diverted to Fort Myers, FL; landed without incident

*JetBlue 2401, A320

- o April 10, 2018 at 5:31 PM EDT
- o Enroute from New York, NY (John F. Kennedy International Airport) to Fort Myers, FL (Southwest Florida International Airport)
- o Minimum fuel
- o Continued to Fort Myers, FL; landed without incident at 5:38 PM EDT

*United 1021, B738

- o April 10, 2018 at 4:43 PM EDT
- o Enroute from Newark, NJ (Newark Liberty International Airport) to Panama City, Panama (Tocumen International Airport)
- o Engine problem
- o Returned to Newark, NJ; landed without incident

*Delta 2981, B752

- o April 10, 2018 at 1:53 PM EDT
- o Enroute from Seattle, WA (Seattle-Tacoma International Airport) to Salt Lake City, UT (Salt Lake City International Airport)
- o Cell-phone was on fire in the cabin; crew extinguished the fire
- o Continued to Salt Lake City, UT; landed without incident at 1:54 AM EDT
- o 0 fatalities; 0 injuries

*United 761, A319

- o April 10, 2018 at 6:44 AM EDT
- o Enroute from New York, NY (LaGuardia Airport) to Chicago, IL (O'Hare International Airport)

- o Flight control problem
- o Diverted to Newark, NJ; landed without incident at 6:56 AM EDT

The Daily Aviation Memo is a daily update of foreign and domestic commercial aviation news compiled from open sources and commercially-available information. Information contained in this report is provided for situational awareness only and does not represent the views of the Aviation ISAC. Please send comments or distribution requests to [a-isac.advisory@a-isac\[.\]com](mailto:a-isac.advisory@a-isac[.]com).

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image002.jpg for Printed Item: 49 (Attachment 2 of 9)

AVIATION ISAC Fifth Summit

The Future of Aviation Cybersecurity: Navigating the Threat Landscape



aisac-summit.com | [@AviationISAC](https://twitter.com/AviationISAC) | September 19-21, 2018 | Kissimmee, FL

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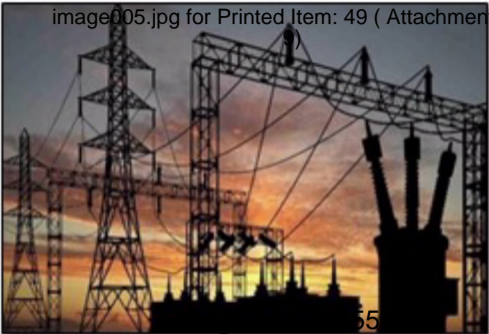
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From: Larm, Doug <doug.larm@seattle.gov> on
behalf of Larm, Doug <Doug.Larm@seattle.gov>
<doug.larm@seattle.gov>
To: Larm, Doug <doug.larm@wsfc.wa.gov>
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: 2018_04_06 Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources
(InFOCUS)
Date: Fri Apr 06 2018 08:51:49 CDT
Attachments: 2018_04_06.pdf

InFOCUS

Friday

6 April 2018

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Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

FRIDAY — 6 APR 2018



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Event Calendar

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Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php
Return to Top	**indicates new event/new information added during reporting week		

Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	04/05 Homeless riders rack up bus fare fines
SOURCE	https://www.seattleweekly.com/news/homeless-riders-rack-up-bus-fare-fines/
GIST	<p>Roughly a quarter of all fines and levied misdemeanor charges for not paying fares on King County Metro's RapidRide bus lines were given to homeless riders in recent years, a recent report from the King County Auditor's office shows.</p> <p>The report, which was released by the Auditor's Office on April 4, states that 25 percent of all financial penalty citations and 30 percent of all misdemeanor charges for fare evasion between 2015 and 2017 were given to individuals experiencing homelessness. The audit also found that of the 19,000 individuals penalized in that time period, 99 riders accounted for 6 percent of all fare evasion penalties. The majority of those who were frequently penalized were either people of color or people experiencing homelessness, or both.</p> <p>Additionally, the report found that fare enforcement on RapidRide lines costs the county \$1.7 million annually—a fifth of which goes toward District Court processing of fare evasion citations. However, the vast majority of these fare evasion citations go unpaid. In 2016, less than three percent of fines were paid.</p> <p>The frequency of fare violations is due in part to the design of the system. Launched by King County Metro in 2010, the RapidRide system provides frequent runs on fixed, high-demand routes where passengers pay their bus fare at terminals before boarding instead of onboard the bus, allowing riders to board from multiple doors on the buses. Rather than the bus drivers enforcing fares, Metro contracts with a private company, Securitas, to do the dirty work.</p> <p>The report comes on the heels of a planned expansion of the RapidRide system, which would increase the number of routes from the six current lines to 19 by 2025 and 26 by 2040.</p> <p>The audit has prompted swift responses from Metro. The day the report was released, General Manager of King County Metro Rob Gannon stated in a blog post that he welcomed the report, and that an internal review by Metro has revealed similar issues.</p> <p>"We fully welcome the auditors' guidance to improve our fare enforcement program. The program needs to encourage fare payment while also including options that work for people with little or no money," he wrote.</p> <p>In the blog post, Gannon said that Metro has already adjusted its policies to give juveniles one additional warning before levying a \$124 citation and will temporarily decline to refer repeat fare evasion offenders to the Metro Transit Police who, along with the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, could levy misdemeanor charges.</p> <p>"A lot of things have changed since 2010. We have a severe homelessness crisis," said Scott Gutierrez, a spokesperson for King County Metro. "We recognize that."</p> <p>Metro plans to convene a stakeholder group to devise a fare enforcement system that doesn't</p>

	<p>disproportionately penalize low-income and homeless riders, according to Gutierrez. The plan is to have formal recommendations by September.</p> <p>Metro officials have floated the idea of directing repeat offenders who lack the money to pay for transit away from the court system and to a theoretical in-house center where they would be provided access to discounted ORCA Lift cards—a discounted bus pass for low-income riders—and other services.</p> <p>“We really see this as an opportunity to reinvent our fare enforcement model,” Guitierrez said. “We want to explore some other options that don’t needlessly penalize people and send them into the court system.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Officials: Rattlesnake Ridge still moving
SOURCE	http://www.ifiberone.com/columbia_basin/emergency-officials-rattlesnake-ridge-near-yakima-still-moving/article_0d528f60-3915-11e8-9810-c704e3ee0ab0.html
GIST	<p>UNION GAP - Yakima County Emergency Management officials recently provided a public update about the situation at Rattlesnake Ridge above Union Gap.</p> <p>Geologists say the slide mass continues to move south in to the quarry at a constant rate that has remained nearly unchanged since January. The land is moving at a rate of 1.4 feet per day.</p> <p>The Pacific Seismic Network and Washington State Department of Transportation continue to monitor the slide. Resident who were evacuated in January have returned.</p> <p>Geologists say the likelihood of the slide happening becomes more probable as the slide rate increases.</p> <p>Experts say the slide will likely happen slowly when the earth finally gives way.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Free online courses disaster response
SOURCE	http://www.govtech.com/em/disaster/Free-Online-Courses-Enable-Training-of-Spontaneous-Volunteers-Before-or-During-Disaster.html
GIST	<p>First responders can only do so much during a disaster. Volunteers are increasingly a huge part of the equation, and that includes spontaneous volunteers.</p> <p>There has been little or no training for these responders, but that just changed with the launch of VolunteerReady.org, an online portal that provides free courses for volunteers or potential volunteers.</p> <p>The video-based courses run from 10 to 15 minutes and are accessible by smartphone, PC or tablet.</p> <p>The initial phase or pilot consists of five graphically driven videos, each with downloadable infographics that outline the key points of the topics. At the end of each video is a knowledge assessment to drive home the key ideas of the subject matter.</p> <p>The videos were developed by software provider Cornerstone OnDemand in collaboration with FEMA, Catholic Charities USA; Emergency Management Institute; Mennonite Disaster Service; Points of Light; Southern Baptist Disaster Relief; Team Rubicon; and The Salvation Army.</p> <p>“We know from working with our working group and the number of organizations in our orbit [Cornerstone OnDemand also previously launched DisasterReady.org] is we have heard consistently from these organizations that are working with spontaneous volunteers that there is a lack of training and resources for this audience,” said Alexis Denny, director of grants and consulting for the Cornerstone OnDemand Foundation.</p>

Denny said the groups with which Cornerstone OnDemand has been affiliated have been mostly focused on affiliated volunteers, who have been given specific training. “For individuals just showing up, most of them have no experience and don’t necessarily understand what they’re stepping into, and there’s really nothing that exists in terms of on-demand training.”

For volunteer coordinators, the scene can be chaotic and dealing with new, spontaneous volunteers who need some direction is difficult. A coordinator can point potential volunteers to the videos to see what they may be getting into, what they may be asked to do and help the potential volunteer decide if it’s really what he/she wants to do at the time.

The courses, so far, include: Spirit of Service; Know Before You Go; Code of Conduct; Rules and Disaster Response; Physical Safety; and Emotional Resiliency. Denny said those five were chosen from a long list of subjects and that more course will be available in the next couple of months.

The Spirit of Service course, Denny said, is a bit of an introduction to volunteering. “A feel-good video, if you will,” she said. “We talk about what contributions someone who isn’t necessarily experienced can bring and how they can work with professional organizations.”

She said the Code of Conduct course teaches safety and effectiveness of volunteers and how to help people during times of need and grief with respect to cultural differences and emotions.

“The energy and enthusiasm of local volunteers is welcomed and encouraged when disasters strike,” read a statement by Team Rubicon’s Deputy Director of Field Operations Pat Ross, on the VolunteerReady.org website. “Pausing to ensure individuals are ready to go, enhances safety, promotes effective integration into volunteer organizations, and ensures an awesome experience for those volunteering,” he continued.

Denny said the idea came to light two years ago when after launching DisasterReady.org, which focusses on training humanitarian workers outside of the country, that the foundation wanted to have an influence in the States also.

With the number of disasters and the high incident of volunteerism, the foundation convened a working group. “The idea is that people can take this training in advance or even onsite,” Denny said.

“It’s intended to provide some basic concepts they need to know and also help people understand if they should show up to help. If you’re a volunteer coordinator, it’s super chaotic and the likelihood you’re going to be able to step away and give someone very clear instruction before you put them into a task is highly unlikely.”

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HEADLINE	04/06 Lessons from Philly Super Bowl parade
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/emergency-preparedness/takeaways-from-big-philly-events-made-super-bowl-parade-success/
GIST	<p>Planning and being prepared for everything from the plausible to the improbable is a standard of emergency management and public safety.</p> <p>If you had asked Philadelphia Eagles fans at the 2017 NFL Draft, coincidentally held in Philadelphia last April, if their city would host a Super Bowl parade at the end of the season, they would have responded with a mix of Philly wit, laughter, and skepticism.</p> <p>But nine months later, the Eagles won the Super Bowl. A championship celebration followed. The Lombardi Trophy, standing tall at 22 inches in front of millions, led a four-hour parade along five-and-a-half miles of Philadelphia streets. The trophy’s journey ended on the same Benjamin Franklin Parkway where only months prior it was posing for photo ops with fans at the NFL Draft.</p>

City planners had no prior Super Bowl Parade plan to go on: this was the city's first Super Bowl win. But as the game clock hit 0:00 and green confetti fell, the Feb. 8 parade became an actuality. With only three days of planning, city partners quickly mobilized to sketch out their strategy for the largest parade in the city's history.

With several recent, successful large-scale events behind it, Philadelphia drew on numerous best practices, operational plans, and experiences to guide the intense, compressed planning effort.

Three Takeaways That Helped Eagles Parade Planning

The Eagles parade plan was a culmination of best practices learned from previous special events along with already established infrastructure and relationships with partner agencies. It was a matter of thoughtful examination of the event route and celebration program along with factoring in a variable: the number of passionate Eagles fans who would attend.

Keep public transportation moving

The Philadelphia Phillies' World Series parade in 2008 provided takeaways on mass-transit planning. Millions of people descended on Center City Oct. 31. As crowds left, public transit and roadways were overwhelmed in certain locations. This was considered during the papal visit and built upon for the Super Bowl parade.

Philadelphia's mass-transit system, SEPTA, knew what volume it could handle on rail lines while still providing service. A defined quantity of one-day passes were sold for suburban rail lines for both Pope Francis' visit and the Super Bowl parade. The Market-Frankford elevated train was put on a special schedule to shuttle passengers as quickly and safely as possible.

Streamline authoritative communications

A takeaway from Pope Francis' visit was the importance of relaying information developed inside stakeholder meetings to the public in a positive tone. This allows people to know their role in public safety plans, sets realistic expectations, and helps prepare them for their experience. Messaging also helps government agencies realize and address concerns that people have prior to the event.

Something else that emergency planners learned from Pope Francis' visit: the critical need for a good communications system to be utilized by public safety agencies. This provides one-voice public messaging through media outlets and social media accounts that is truly uniform in order to avoid confusing and contradictory messages.

A best practice that emerged from DNC included creating a crisis communications and social media group within city government that streamlined messaging, authorized spokespersons, and addressed both news media and social media messaging. The communications group model is scalable and used for everyday events.

Press conferences held prior to the parade along with social media messaging let people know about adjustments made to the city's mass transit system to handle anticipated crowds, closures to city streets, expected traffic delays on city roads, and the need for parade attendees to wear comfortable, weather-appropriate clothing for all the walking and standing that they would experience.

Get connected with the public

City social and digital media platforms are viewed as newsrooms to keep people informed.

A campaign to keep fans apprised of Eagles-related news from the city was launched during the playoffs. This built followers on ReadyPhiladelphia and city social media accounts and helped to further disseminate details released by the city. The Office of Emergency Management's Twitter account, @PhilaOEM, added 2,500 followers during the Super Bowl itself.

ReadyPhiladelphia, an Everbridge product, has a community engagement text-to-enroll feature which

makes signing up for alerts quick and easy. The keyword “ReadyEagles” was decided upon to add to the appeal. Due to an established campaign prior to the Super Bowl, messaging quickly transitioned that set ReadyEagles as the place to get very important parade details and public safety information. Nearly 100,000 subscribers signed up for ReadyEagles text messages in the days leading up to the parade.

ReadyEagles was not only used for public safety information, but kept parade-goers informed of the movement of the team from their departure from Lincoln Financial Field all the way to the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. This was useful to those who waited hours along long stretches of the route, so they were aware of when they may be able to catch a glimpse of the Lombardi Trophy. Pertinent information was also sent out pertaining to mass-transit updates, road re-openings, and post event clean-up.

Through social media, parade-goers thanked city departments and partners who helped keep them informed and safe in what they deemed a successful event, one that the Office of Emergency Management looks to build on for the future.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Coastal counties practice tsunami alert
SOURCE	http://kuow.org/post/coastal-counties-put-heads-together-avoid-future-tsunami-alert-glitches
GIST	<p>Emergency managers from Washington coastal counties and tribes practiced tsunami alert communication and coordination with state and federal partners Thursday. They're trying to smooth out glitches revealed after an undersea earthquake in Alaska in January.</p> <p>When that magnitude 7.9 quake hit off the coast of Alaska, it triggered a tsunami watch along the Oregon, Washington and California coasts. Most people slept right through the alert because it came in the middle of the night.</p> <p>Coastal residents who did get the alert were often confused about what to do in a tsunami watch, said Pacific County Emergency Management Director Scott McDougall.</p> <p>"We had people who were self-evacuating as a result of the watch, which just basically said, 'Pay attention, we're going to tell you what to do later.' But they thought that meant they needed to go," he said.</p> <p>McDougall said the difference in messaging a tsunami watch and a tsunami warning needs to be clearer. The warning alert means waves are incoming and you should move inland or to higher ground immediately. A tsunami watch is less urgent than a warning, and it does not set off sirens.</p> <p>City of Ocean Shores Mayor Crystal Dingler said during the January incident information didn't filter down as quickly and as well as she would have liked. She said she and many other Northwest coast residents have updated their NOAA weather radios since then or checked to make sure they were opted in to county telephone notification services.</p> <p>There are many ways to get tsunami alerts, most of which require a person to sign up for something such as texts, email or an automated telephone call. Even if people don't opt in, the highest alert level will set off warning sirens along the coast and trigger emergency messages on radio and TV.</p> <p>The tsunami generated by the January 23 Alaska earthquake ended up being barely noticeable on the Pacific Northwest coast and did not cause any damage.</p> <p>On Thursday, more than 50 local, state and federal emergency managers and responders gathered at the state Emergency Operations Center at Camp Murray near Tacoma for a tabletop exercise using a dire scenario of a distant tsunami generated by a magnitude 9.2 Alaska subduction zone earthquake.</p> <p>Coastal areas of the Pacific Northwest would have three to five hours of advance warning in this instance.</p>

During the exercise, participants reviewed who would be notified at each stage of the evolving situation and the correct response to imperfect knowledge of whether a damaging wave was coming.

"This way, we've practiced, we've tested, we've refined, we're on the same page," Washington Emergency Management Earthquake Program Manager Maximilian Dixon said.

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HEADLINE	04/04 In eastern Europe, EU faces rebellion
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/in-eastern-europe-the-eu-faces-a-rebellion-more-threatening-than-brex/2018/04/04/310a6d8e-2604-11e8-a227-fd2b009466bc_story.html?utm_term=.1f4f180287d0
GIST	<p>BUDAPEST — It was a continent-wide party to mark the end of history.</p> <p>On a spring night in 2004, a chorus sang in a Warsaw square. Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" — the anthem of the European Union — echoed across once-bloody frontiers. Midnight fireworks sparkled along the Mediterranean. The next morning, organizers set a white-tablecloth breakfast on Budapest's Chain Bridge for revelers still celebrating the dawn of a new era for Europe.</p> <p>"The divisions of the Cold War are gone — once and for all," declared then-European Commission President Romano Prodi as he welcomed 10 new members to the E.U., eight from the former communist East.</p> <p>And yet, 14 years later, new divisions are emerging — many of them following old lines. The triumph of liberal democracy is being attacked from within by E.U. members that openly deride the club's values, principles and rules. The bloc, meanwhile, has been incapable of fighting back, its weakness a side effect of the optimism with which it grew.</p> <p>Ground zero for the rebellion is here in Hungary, where Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is running for reelection Sunday with boasts of his illiberalism, swipes at the hostile E.U. "empire" and promises to further tighten his grip on a country dancing ever closer to the edge of autocracy.</p> <p>Orbán's defiance presents the E.U. with a far different threat than the one it faced in 2016, when Britain voted to exit and speculation swirled over who might go next. It may be more serious than that — a challenge that endangers the character of the union.</p> <p>"Orbán doesn't want to leave the E.U.," a senior German official said. "He really wants to change the E.U."</p> <p>By some measures, he's succeeding. Far from being a pariah, Orbán has found imitators in Poland and admirers in the Czech Republic, Austria and even at top political levels in Germany.</p> <p>Orbán's European opponents, meanwhile, have proved unable to curb his behavior. Rather than punish Hungary for its intransigence, Brussels continues to supply the government with billions of euros in E.U. subsidies — money that Orbán's domestic critics say is vital to his survival because it boosts the economy and puts cash in the pockets of favored cronies.</p> <p>"Orbán is waging his freedom fight against the E.U. with huge amounts of E.U. money," said Peter Kreko, executive director of the Budapest-based policy research firm Political Capital. "Lenin said, 'Capitalists will sell the rope to us with which we'll hang them.' Well, the E.U. is not selling. It's giving it to Orbán for free."</p> <p>The E.U. never gave itself adequate tools for dealing with a wayward leader such as Orbán because it never imagined needing them, even as the alliance spread far beyond its original Western European core to</p>

countries with scant experience of democratic governance.

At the start of the millennium, the bloc had just 15 members — none of them east of the old Iron Curtain. But after the fall of communism, East European countries that had been in the orbit of the Soviet Union looked to the E.U. and NATO as institutions that could bind them to the West and keep them out of Moscow's grasp. Prosperous Western neighbors spotted an opportunity to spread their influence across the continent.

Everyone assumed that, with time, differences would recede as the new members grew to adopt the values, rules and institutions of the old ones.

“We wanted to believe it. History would go on and we would be on the right side of it,” said the German official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak for the record. “We never imagined that history could go the other way.”

For Hungarians, too, there were expectations that, in retrospect, look naively optimistic.

“It was a fantastic constellation. We wanted it. The West wanted it. It was back wind in every respect,” said Peter Balazs, a former Hungarian diplomat who was deeply engaged in the E.U. accession process. “And the follow-up was in the fairy tales: They live happily ever after.”

Balazs, who would go on to become the country's foreign minister, said Hungary spent a decade proving to the E.U. that it was worthy of membership, working assiduously to meet the club's strict rules for entry.

But once Hungary had joined, the union's best leverage to keep the country on a free and democratic path evaporated. Meanwhile, no one had seriously planned for what would happen after Hungary and others joined the bloc — a failure that Balazs attributed to parallel illusions.

“A Hungarian illusion that the E.U. would do it, that somebody else would solve our problems,” he said. “And for Europe, the illusion that they would be like us.”

The result was fertile ground for Orban. Since coming to power in 2010, he has simultaneously used the bloc as a rhetorical foil and cash spigot — all without fear of meaningful consequences.

“I have, in fact, more respect for the decency of Euroskeptics who at least say, ‘Well, I don't like the European Union, and I don't like the values, and I'll go out,’ ” Guy Verhofstadt, who was prime minister of Belgium when Hungary joined the E.U., told Orban last year when the Hungarian leader came to speak at the European Parliament. “You want to continue the money of European funds, the money of the European Union, but not the European values.”

Verhofstadt, who is now the leader of a centrist bloc of the European Parliament, has condemned fellow E.U. leaders for refusing to hit Hungary with sanctions.

Orban openly brags of his aim to build “an illiberal state based on national foundations” and cites Russia and China as exemplary models.

He has consolidated his party's influence over formerly independent arms of the Hungarian state and society, including prosecutors' offices, government auditors and the media. If he wins reelection, as is widely expected, the 54-year-old Orban has promised to press ahead with legislation that would allow the banning of aid groups that work on behalf of refugees or other immigrants.

On the campaign trail, he delights crowds by lashing out at Brussels, part of a trinity of enemies that also includes Muslim refugees and the Hungarian American investor George Soros.

As recently as 2011, Hungary scored the highest rating possible from Freedom House, an international nongovernmental organization, but it is now the least free of all E.U. members. The corruption monitor

Transparency International ranks it the second most corrupt country in the bloc, just behind Bulgaria.

Yet Hungary is also among the greatest net beneficiaries of E.U. funds, receiving 4.5 billion euros (or \$5.5 billion) in 2016 — equivalent to 4 percent of the country’s economic output — while contributing less than 1 billion euros, or \$1.23 billion.

The money has helped to buoy the Hungarian economy, which has been growing at a healthy clip. It also has found its way into the pockets of friends, allies and family members of the prime minister.

“It’s E.U. taxpayers that feed the system and allow Orban to grow strong,” said Sandor Lederer, chief executive of the Budapest-based anti-corruption watchdog K-Monitor. “He’s decided it’s not enough for you to be the political leader. You also have to be the leader of the thieves, and this is the only way you can really exercise power.”

The mayor of Orban’s home village, a gas-fitter by trade, has become one of Hungary’s richest men during his schoolmate’s run leading the nation. Much of his wealth has been fueled by government contracts.

Companies owned or operated by Orban’s son-in-law have also fared well in the competition for government work, winning lucrative E.U.-funded contracts to upgrade street lighting in towns and cities across the nation. In January, the E.U.’s anti-fraud monitor found “serious irregularities” and “conflicts of interest” in the awarding of those contracts, which totaled more than 40 million euros, or nearly \$50 million.

But Brussels-based investigators are virtually powerless to do anything about it. Authority to pursue the matter resides in Hungary, with prosecutors who are widely perceived to do the bidding of the ruling party.

That is typical of the E.U.’s dilemma in how to address Hungary’s piece-by-piece moves against the rule of law and democratic norms.

Until recently, the bloc did not even have measures to address rule-of-law violations that fell short of triggering the bloc’s nuclear option — E.U. sanctions that would suspend a country’s voting rights.

In 2013, as a direct reaction to Orban’s moves, the E.U. enacted new rules that gave policymakers in Brussels the power to flag developments in member countries that set off rule-of-law concerns and force a dialogue with national leaders. But the new powers were not retroactive, and Hungary had already enshrined many of its legal changes. The rules also lacked teeth. Although E.U. officials searched for ways to open investigations, they found Orban was an excellent tactician, walking right up to their lines without crossing them.

“We can’t just go in there flippantly,” said a senior E.U. official who is involved in monitoring violations of European treaties and who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe backroom discussions.

Other countries, too, may have Hungary’s back. Away from the campaign trail, Orban can often be seen joking around with fellow leaders at E.U. summits in Brussels. If they were to move against Orban, it would cost them comity and allies at an already fractious time.

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HEADLINE	04/06 Palestinians heading to Gaza border
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/bfc315e966cd4d2ba2e4a589fadd4756/Palestinians-streaming-toward-Gaza-border-protest-camps
GIST	KHUZAA, Gaza Strip (AP) — Palestinians streamed on Friday to tent camps along the Gaza-Israel border ahead of what the territory’s Hamas rulers hope will be the second mass protest in a week. As Israel and the Hamas-led protesters geared up for another showdown along the border fence, concerns

grew about more bloodshed. Last week, more than a dozen protesters were killed by Israeli fire and hundreds injured, Gaza health officials said.

Just before Muslim noon prayers Friday, hundreds of people arrived at one of the tent camps, near the community of Khuzaa.

Activists plan to burn large numbers of tires in hopes that thick black smoke will block the view of Israeli snipers deployed on the other side of the border fence.

At one point on Friday, Israeli forces fired tear gas that landed inside the encampment, briefly sending people fleeing.

Yehia Abu Daqqa, a 20-year-old student, said he had come to demonstrate and honor those killed in the past.

“Yes, there is fear,” he said of the risks of advancing toward the fence. “We are here to tell the occupation that we are not weak.”

Protesters also moved toward other camps, including east of Gaza City, where a senior Hamas leader, Mahmoud Zahar, greeted the crowd. Nearby, smoke from burning tires rose into the sky.

Friday’s march is the second in what Gaza’s Hamas rulers said would be several weeks of protests against a decade-old border blockade of the territory.

Israel has accused Hamas of trying to carry out border attacks under the cover of large protests and said it will prevent a breach of the fence at all costs.

Israel’s defense minister has warned that protesters approaching the border fence endanger their lives, drawing condemnation from rights groups that said such seemingly broad open-fire rules are unlawful.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Puerto Rico to close 283 schools
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/642ea22aa7cf48dba088ce9c7992a8f4/Puerto-Rico-to-close-283-schools-amid-sharp-enrollment-drop
GIST	<p>SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Puerto Rico’s Department of Education announced Thursday that it will close 283 schools this summer following a sharp drop in enrollment amid the island’s long economic slump and the continued departure of families after Hurricane Maria.</p> <p>Education Secretary Julia Keleher said there would be no layoffs, with teachers and other employees being reassigned to other schools as part of a fiscal plan that aims to save the department some \$150 million.</p> <p>The U.S. territory currently has more than 1,100 public schools that serve 319,000 students.</p> <p>“We know it’s a difficult and painful process,” Keleher said. “Our children deserve the best education that we are capable of giving them taking into account Puerto Rico’s fiscal reality.”</p> <p>Keleher said that enrollment has dropped by more than 38,700 students since just last May and that nearly half of the schools are using only 60 percent of their capacity.</p> <p>After the closures, 828 public schools will remain operational. Keleher said she has invited mayors in the island’s 78 municipalities to propose new uses for the shuttered schools.</p> <p>The announcement of closures came two weeks after Gov. Ricardo Rossello signed a bill for implementing a charter schools pilot program in 10 percent of public schools and offering private school</p>

	vouchers to 3 percent of students starting in 2019-2020 as part of an education overhaul.
	Aida Diaz, president of a union that represents some 30,000 teachers, said she and others would fight the closures.
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HEADLINE	04/06 Britain identifies lab in spy poisoning
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/britain-pinpoints-secretive-russian-facility-which-made-deadly-nerve-agent?ref=home
GIST	<p>Britain has identified the secretive Russian facility where it believes the deadly Novichok nerve agent, used in the attempted murders of former spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia, was made.</p> <p>The facility is named as Shikhany, which is around 800 kilometers southeast of Moscow, and British intelligence believes it's been used over the past decade to test whether the Novichok nerve agents could be used in assassinations abroad, according to a report.</p> <p>The stockpiles of nerve agent detected at the facility were small, suggesting it was intended for targeted attacks rather than on the battlefield.</p> <p>Hamish de Bretton Gordon, former commander of Britain's Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Regiment, who has seen the intelligence, told The Times of London: "The intelligence Britain has clearly points to Russia and Shikhany," he said, adding: "No doubt the Russians are scrubbing it down as we speak."</p> <p>De Bretton Gordon said the intelligence disproves claims the Novichok could have come from elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, such as Ukraine or Uzbekistan.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Interview with the Saudi crown prince
SOURCE	http://time.com/5228006/mohammed-bin-salman-interview-transcript-full/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>As Karl Vick writes in the April 16 issue of TIME, the United States hasn't seen a visit from a foreign leader like the Crown Prince of Saudi's ongoing three-week trip since Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev arrived in America nearly 60 years ago. The kingdom Mohammed bin Salman, 32, essentially rules—as iron-fisted regent of his ailing, 82-year-old father, King Salman—defines frenemy.</p> <p>The Crown Prince's U.S. itinerary is as wide-ranging as the American distrust of his homeland: 55% of Americans disapprove of Saudi Arabia, according to the latest Gallup survey.</p> <p>He is in the United States to sell skeptical Americans on his audacious, risky plan to modernize Saudi Arabia and reassert its primacy in the Middle East. Over the course of three years since his father became King, MBS, as he is known, has brutally consolidated control over all the kingdom's economic and security power centers. He has used his ascendancy to introduce modest liberalization and sharply escalate a wide-ranging proxy war with Iran across the region. And he proposes to wean the kingdom off oil exports and diversify its economy for a post-petroleum future.</p> <p>On March 29, TIME interviewed the Crown Prince at New York City's Plaza Hotel, which had been taken over by the Crown Prince's traveling party. When told that the hotel had once been owned by President Donald Trump, who the Crown Prince had visited in Washington the week before, replied, "Really? Oh." Ahead of planned visits to Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Houston, the Crown Prince made his pitch during a 75-minute conversation.</p> <p>The Crown Prince defended his handling of foreign affairs, urging President Trump to keep troops in</p>

[Syria](#) and backing Israel's "right to live and coexist" with a Palestinian state. He laid out his ambitions for the Saudi economy all the while portraying himself as a man in a hurry.

"I don't want to waste my time," he says. "I am young."

An edited and condensed transcript of the conversation follows.

TIME: How long have you been thinking about doing this [tour], and what's your rationale behind this?

MOHAMMED BIN SALMAN: When I started to think about doing a tour, we had a plan for Saudi Arabia. And we do whatever we should do to deliver and implement these plans. And to implement what we are doing, we have to have a lot of partners around the world. The United States of America is one of our oldest allies in the whole world, and we are the oldest ally of the United States of America in the Middle East. And the economic relationship between both countries is very deep.

You spent some time in Washington. How was that? It seems like you have a pretty good personal relationship with the President and his family.

Of course we have a good relationship with President Trump, with his team, with his family, with all the key people in his administration, and also we have a very good relationship with many members of Congress from both parties and a lot of people in the United States of America. And everyone believes in the importance of both countries to face the dangers facing us and also to continue growing and getting a better future for both countries.

Coming off of the previous administration, things had gotten pretty thorny at the end, specifically about the Yemen conflict.

Yeah. Well, we might disagree on some things that President Obama—some of President Obama's views, but also we agree on a lot of things. So we worked together to fight terrorism with President Obama in the beginning of 2016 we had the same views of the Iranian regime and the danger of the Iranian regime. The only difference was in the tactics of how we should deal with that evil narrative of the Iranian regime. So it's not a big difference. We are aligned 99 percent. The difference is only 1 percent. But, you know, people try to focus on the 1 percent and avoid the 99 percent that we agreed on.

You brought up Iran. You saw I'm sure that President Trump had recently named John Bolton to be his National Security Advisor. And he shares a lot of the views that you have specifically on Iran. What was your response was when he was named?

Well, we deal with the United States of America, whoever represents America, we will work with him. And we believe that our interest is aligned with those American interests. And I believe we can, we work with him of course. We don't get into much in his view because it is his personal view. It's not the views of the United States of America. I'm sure when he's appointed he will represent the views of the United States of America, and we will deal with him and we will see what happens. But of course we will support him.

I'm really curious about how you came to your plan for Saudi Arabia.

We are now in the third Saudi Arabia which was established by King Abdulaziz, also known as Ibn Saud, my grandfather. And the first Saudi Arabia was established before 300 years, so after the time of King Abdulaziz and King Saud the establishment of the third Saudi Arabia, King Faisal came with a really great young team, and among his team were King Khaled, King Fahd, King Abdullah, King Salman, Prince Sultan, Prince Nayef, and many other people. And they've transformed the country from mud houses to world standard modern cities, modern infrastructure, a country among the G20, among the top 20 economies around the world, a lot of things. And it's too hard to convince them that there is something more to do because what happened in their time, in that 50, 60 years, it's like what happened in the last 300, 400 years history of the United States of America. And they've seen the whole movement in their lifetime.

But for us as a young generation, we've not seen this, because we were born in that great modern city. We lived in an economy that is already among the top 20 economies of the world, and our eyes are focusing on

what we are missing, what we can't do. And we believe that Saudi Arabia until today used only 10 percent of its capacity, and we have 90 percent to go.

So the plans and the vision is shaped around this missing 90 percent: How can we implement it as much, as soon as possible. And we are shaping our plan based on our strength. Not trying to copy things. We are not trying to build a Silicon Valley. There's some media houses talking about Saudi Arabia building Silicon Valley in Saudi Arabia. This is not true. We are shaping our economy based on our strengths: oil downstream petrochemicals, materials, mobility, transportation, minerals, and gas. We have a lot of gas explorations in the Red Sea, we have local content, balance of payment. We spend \$230 billion US a year outside Saudi Arabia. If we do nothing, it will go up in 2030 to between \$300-400 billion US spent outside of Saudi Arabia.

The plan is to spend half of it in Saudi Arabia. We have many programs to do this. We have privatization. At the top of the pyramid we have the IPO of Aramco, pushing this money, pushing other government assets, pushing other assets, and other cash reserves into the public investment fund, and pushing it to be the biggest fund in the whole world, above \$2 trillion. Two years ago, the size of public investment fund was \$150 billion US. Today it's \$300 billion US. At the end of 2018 it will be around \$400 billion US. In 2020, it will be something between \$600-700 billion US, and in 2030 it will be above \$2 trillion. We will invest half of this money to empower Saudi Arabia, and the other 50 percent we will invest it abroad to be sure that we are part of the emerging sectors around the world.

How much of your challenge is putting investment in the right places, and how much of it is changing the nature of education in Saudi Arabia and of cultural expectations around who does the work?

So first of all, our education, it's not bad. It's good. We are ranked 41 among education systems around the world. France is ranked 40, so we are almost like France, as to the quality of the education system. And no big country or big economy can be among the top 10. It's too hard. Because if you see the top 10 best education systems, you will see Singapore and you will see small countries that they can easily focus on their education system. But our ambition is not to continue to be next to France. Our ambition is to be in the top 30 to 20 in the next coming years. Especially the method of education is changing in the world. So if we still want to keep even the rank 41 and do nothing, with the new change of the method of education and understanding of education, the next 10 years we'll not be among the top 100. So we are working on that. We are watching that carefully and don't want to maintain our position. We want to be in a better position in the next 12 years. This is talking about education.

In terms of culture and social aspects: We want to drive the best talent, to get the best talent to live and come abroad to work in Saudi Arabia, you have to have good social and cultural standards. You cannot have bad livability standards and cultural standards if you want to grow and to be much bigger economically. So this is a very important thing that we are trying to improve. And I believe in the last three years, Saudi Arabia did more than in the last 30 years. And that's because it's aligned with our interest as Saudis to be competitive in livability and cultural and social. And Islam it's open. It's not like what the extremists are trying to represent Islam after '79.

So we are working hard in this area and we are trying to do our best. We have more than 10 million foreigners in Saudi Arabia, most of them working and others families of those employees. And we believe it will not decrease, it will increase because we believe Saudi Arabia for its ambition it needs a lot of human resource and human power, so a lot of jobs will be created for Saudis and for foreign people to deliver what we are trying to build in Saudi Arabia.

Do you think you can get a culture of work?

Of course. We have to do that. We have to be competitive.

The Islam you describe is not necessarily the one that everyone associates with your country.

We believe the practice today in a few countries, among them Saudi Arabia, it's not the practice of Islam. It's the practice of the people who have hijacked Islam after '79. And also it's not the practice of the social life in Saudi Arabia even before '79. And even it's not aligned with the idea of Saudi Arabia that it's a

country following the religion of Islam from the first Saudi Arabia. You see the idea that the first Saudi Arabia tried to tackle. For Islam it's totally different from what the extremists are trying to promote today.

In the first Saudi Arabia, they are trying to let people not worship a palm tree, to worship god, because at that time people were worshipping a palm tree to have a kid. Extremists tried to promote that the first Saudi Arabia is coming to promote their ideas, that what they were building after '79, especially that they've hijacked the education system and a lot of areas to manipulate that.

And this is what we are trying to show to the Saudi people and to challenge them with the practice of the First, Second, Third Saudi Arabia before '79 and also the practice of the Prophet himself in his days. So if someone comes and says "women cannot participate in sport," we tell them how about the Prophet raced with his wife. If someone comes and say "women cannot do business," the wife of the Prophet, she is a businesswoman and he used to work for her as a Prophet. So also the Prophet's practice, it is in our side.

So I believe we can do it very fast. We are not wasting time. I don't want to waste my time. I am young. I don't want 70 percent of the Saudi population to waste their lives trying to get rid of this. We want to do it now. We want to spend 70 percent of our time building things, improving our economy, creating jobs, creating new things, making things happen.

Do you see it being dangerous in any way for your own well-being in terms of trying to make that break from the Wahhabists?

What's Wahhabist? You've got to explain what's Wahhabist. Because there is nothing called Wahhabist. And this is one of the ideas of the extremists after '79 to put the Wahhabist things, to let the Saudis be part of something that they are not part of it. So I need someone to explain to me what are the teachings of Wahhabism. There is nothing called Wahhabist. In Saudi Arabia we have Sunni and Shiite sects. We have four schools of thought of Sunni, we have a lot of schools of thought of Shiite, and they are living normally in Saudi Arabia. They are living as Saudis in Saudi Arabia. And our laws are derived from the Qur'an and the practices of the prophet. These laws do not specify any one specific sect or school of thought.

There is member of the cabinet, the council of ministers in Saudi Arabia who is Shiite. There are members of the parliament who are Shiite. The CEO of Aramco, the biggest company in the whole world is Shiite. The most important university in the whole Middle East, west of Saudi Arabia, KAUST, who's the head of it? Shiite. So we don't differentiate among Saudis based on sects. We live in Saudi Arabia as Saudis in Saudi Arabia.

So the idea of Wahhabism, it's promoted by two sides. Extremists who want Saudi Arabia to be hijacked by the idea that they are not promoting something new, that they wanted something old, that this is the foundation of Saudi Arabia so we have to stick to it. So this is one. Two, by the Iranian regime to isolate us from the whole Muslim world by claiming that we are coming with a different sect in Saudi Arabia. And if you look at the council of clerics which is like the fatwa board you will find it comprised of people who might be closer to the Hanbali school of thought and others who are closer to the Hanafi school of thought or the Shafai'i or the Maliki. We encourage this mix of different schools in Saudi Arabia.

Do you have any concern about trying to break away there?

Fears from what?

Personal security.

No. We are doing the right things. No reasonable person can argue with what's right and what's true and what's of interest. So what we are doing is Islam, what we are doing the prophet's practice, what we are doing our ancestors practiced in the First, Second, Third Saudi Arabia before '79. Second, what we are doing is in the interest of the whole people and public. And the majority of humans, the big majority of humans, they are realistic. And of course if we work well, people understand that. And of course without people's support we wouldn't be able to do what we have been doing in the last three years. Actually we thought it would take more than 10 years to do it. But why we do it in three years? Because people support the movement.

I'll give you an example. The last national day. You know, people in Saudi Arabia they weren't used to celebrating the national day because a lot of extremists told them it was forbidden to celebrate the national day. When the Saudi officials programmed the national day planning in each city and town in Saudi Arabia, extremists attack that, that this is against Islam, no one will go, it's against the will of the people. And the national day, the people are seen and we have millions in the street celebrating the national day. So it's clear that the people are supporting that. Without the support of the people, no way, no way we would achieve anything.

Can you see the country progressing to less than an absolute monarchy in the future? King Abdullah of Jordan says he'd like to be a constitutional monarch someday?

What we should focus on is the end, not the means, and these ends are the rule of law, freedom of speech, freedom to work and security. These are the ends that everyone agrees on, that we agree on in Saudi Arabia in our own way. We should take the means that get us to this end.

And just to remind Americans, if it's not about absolute monarchy, you will not have the United States of America today. Three hundred years who helped in the independence of America? It was the absolute monarchy of France. Without their help, this will be a different country, different area, different history. So what we should focus on in any kind of regime that it could be a risk for the United States of America, like the Soviet Union, then you have to deal with it. But if there is any kind of regime that could create opportunity and progress with the United States of America or other countries, that means it's a regime representing what their people think is working. And we can see it in 2011 [with the Arab Spring], the regimes and the establishment of countries that didn't fit with the people, what happened to them?

You not only represent the skipping a generation, but also only one family. So it looks to people like you might be more precarious, maybe less stable. And yet you've made very strong moves.

No, actually, first of all, the king has the right to choose the crown prince and the deputy crown prince, and he cannot become the crown prince and the deputy crown prince without the vote among 34 voters representing King Abdulaziz' sons. So I get the highest vote in the history of Saudi Arabia, more than anyone before me. I got 31 from 34 votes of the Allegiance Council. So this is the highest. The second highest is 22 in Saudi Arabia. So historically I made a record in approval votes among the royal family. And their roles end when they vote. I become officially crown prince or deputy crown prince.

Second, I am not working alone. I'm working with all of my generation of really smart people from the royal family. We have for example more than 13 princes working in 13 regions at my age, at my generation, and also in the cabinet we have a few of them working very hard, and also in different positions in different government departments we have a lot. So I'm working with more than 40 people from the royal family from different lines to make things happen in Saudi Arabia.

I want to get back to the Iran deal. Did you talk to the White House about that and possible decertification? And also you mentioned before that if Iran sprints for a weapon that Saudi will as well. Have you directed your government to do some research on what that would take and how quickly you could obtain one?

Well, I can't speak about that, but I can tell you that the Iranians, they're the cause of problems in the Middle East, but they are not a big threat to Saudi Arabia. But if you don't watch it, it could turn into a threat. They are the main cause of problems, but they are not a threat to Saudi Arabia.

Why? Simple. Iran is not among the five largest economies in the Muslim world. Saudi Arabia's economy is double the size of the Iranian economy. It's growing at least two times or three times faster than the Iranian economy. UAE's economy is bigger than the Iranian economy. Egyptian economy is larger than the Iranian economy. Turkey's economy is larger than the Iranian economy... There are a lot of economies in the Muslim world larger than the Iranian economy.

Same thing goes for the army. They are not among the top five armies in the Middle East. So they are far away. But the regime's problem is that they hijack the country. They use the country's assets for their own ideological sake. And they've seen that every day from '79 to today, that they are spreading their ideology.

Even in the United States of America. And when they do that, the hidden Imam he will appear from hiding to rule the whole world: United States of America, Japan, the whole world. And they are believing in this and they are saying this loud and clear. And if they are not saying this, the Supreme Leader can prove me wrong after this interview to say I don't believe in what I'm saying.

They are doing that from '79, and if you see any problem in the Middle East, you will find Iran. Iraq? Iran's there. Yemen? Iran is there. Syria? Iran is there. Lebanon? Iran's there. Where is the stable country? Egypt? Iran is not there. Sudan? Iran's not there. Jordan? Kuwait? Iran is not there. Bahrain? Iran's not there. So all the stable countries they are stable because Iran didn't engage in it.

And it's not between Iran and Saudi Arabia. It's between Iran and Saudi Arabia and UAE and Egypt and Kuwait and Bahrain and Yemen, a lot of countries around the world. So what we want to be sure of is that whatever they want to do, they do it within their borders. We drove them out of Africa heavily, more than 95 percent. Same thing goes for Asia. Same thing goes for Yemen. And we can see in Iraq 70,000 Iraqis raising the Saudi and Iraqi flag at the game between the two national teams: Iraqi team and Saudi Arabia. So they're almost pushed back inside Iran. We hope that the Iranian people and Iran as a nation have better future without those leaders. And if that changes, of course Iran will be close to us as it used to be before '79. But if that doesn't change, they can enjoy themselves for a very long time 'til they change.

And you have to defend your country and be prepared in that case.

Of course.

So have you begun to look into obtaining a weapon?

You mean nuclear?

Yes.

No, regarding nuclear weapons, we have not started to do anything, and we will not start to do anything until we see Iran announce that they have a nuclear weapon. So this will not happen until that happens. And of course we are preparing our army. We have a very strong army, well-equipped army, the best in quality and mixing of quality and size of armies in the Middle East. You may find bigger armies in the region but their equipment is very low in quality. You will find only one army they has better technology than us, but we are much bigger in scale, five times. So one considering quality and size Saudi Arabia has the best army but what we want to make sure of is that whatever happens of course it's there.

But what we want to be assured is that whatever happens, the Saudi people shouldn't feel it. The economy shouldn't be harmed or even feel it. So we are trying to be sure that we are far away from whatever escalation happens, it doesn't affect the normal social life and the normal economic life in Saudi Arabia. We have that, but we want to be far away assured on that.

So would you use ground troops in Yemen?

Yemen, it's a battle between Yemeni people, Yemeni government trying to get rid of the terrorists who hijacked their country and their normal life. And it's their battle. Whatever they ask us in Saudi Arabia or the other 12 countries in the coalition, we'll provide. Until today they didn't ask for soldiers on the ground.

So you would consider it?

If it's needed, if they ask for it, we will help them and we will answer the call of the legitimate elected Yemeni president recognized by all the countries around the world, supported by the Security Council.

The UN has said that 10,000-some civilians have been killed in this conflict, and members of Congress and independent humanitarian groups have said that air strikes carried out by your country have risen to the level of war crimes. How you would respond to those criticisms?

Well, first of all, in any military operation mistakes happen. We cannot fight any military operation around the whole world, even United States of America, even Russia, all the countries, without mistakes. The question is are these mistakes are accidents or by mistake or intentional. Of course any mistakes made by Saudi Arabia or the coalition are unintended mistakes.

And we're working with other countries around the world to increase our rules of engagement to be sure that there are no civilian casualties in these military operations. We are the biggest donor in the history of Yemen. We are still doing our best to be sure that the humanitarian need in Yemen and the interests of the people, health care, education, whatever, it's supported. And any initiative made from the UN or any other groups around the world, immediately we help and we try to do our best to push positively in that side.

But sometimes in the Middle East, not all the choices it will be between good and bad choices. Sometimes we are between bad and worse choice. But let me tell you one important thing. The humanitarian problem in Yemen didn't start in 2015. It started in 2014 when the Houthis started to move. But what if the coalition and the Security Council didn't answer the call of the Yemeni president and the Yemeni legitimate government? You would see Yemen divided between two terrorist groups: the Houthis, the new Hezbollah in the north, and Al Qaeda in the south, they are trying to take advantage of what's happening there and they are trying to grow in 2015. So you will see Yemen split between those two terrorist groups.

It would have been much, much worse than Iraq. Because in Iraq in 2013 you have ISIS occupying half of Iraq and in the other half you have a legitimate government with an army and it took five years to get rid of those bad guys. And during these five years, we saw millions of refugees and a lot of operations, terrorist operations around the world.

So imagine kicking them out from Iraq and giving them better haven in Yemen without any ally, without any government, without any army to help us inside Yemen, how much will it take? It will take more than 5 years. It will take more than 10 years. It will take around 20 years. And it will take a coalition of more than 60 countries, a coalition more than that. And it will block 13 percent of the world trade through Babel-Mandeb [the straight between Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula]. And this 13 percent, they've tried to block it, the terrorist group, and they couldn't because of the work of the coalition. 13 percent of world trade, what does that mean? That means 13 percent of American trade, 13 percent of China trade, 13 percent of everyone's trade. That means it could harm the world economy.

So seeing that, should we wait 'til it happens? So we prove it, then we engage. Then it will be tough. There won't be any problem for the next 20 years? Or should we act? That's why there's intelligence in Saudi Arabia. That's why there is CIA in US of America. That's why there's intelligence everywhere: to read the future, to see what's happening, to see the scenarios and to avoid it from happening. And this is what happened in Yemen. We try our best to push for positive solution. We know it will not end without political solution. But until that day comes, we have no choice but to continue the military operation.

The air strikes are intended to get them to the negotiating table, and you've been pounding them for three years to do just that. And it seems that increasingly they're lobbing ballistic missiles towards your capital. So what does it take to end this conflict? I mean, you're saying 20 years. That's a generation of Saudis that will perpetually be at war.

No, no. I'm saying 20 years if we didn't act. And it will not take us 20 years. It will take the whole world 20 years. The Houthis don't care about interests, they don't care about Yemen interests. They only care about their ideology, the Iranian ideology, the Hizbollah ideology. Or they want to die. This is what they care about. So that's why it's hard to negotiate with them, to settle with them. The UN announced that, and the envoy announced that very clearly, that who was running away from the negotiation table is the Houthis. It's not the Yemeni government and the other Yemeni party. But of course we have to open the window for them if they want to come back and negotiate.

But today, and I'm saying that loud, that we are working through intelligence to divide the Houthis themselves. So we want to give opportunity. If there is in the second line of leaders, or the third line, or people among the Houthis who want to have different future, we will help them to split from the first line of ideological leaders of Houthis.

How much do Saudi Arabia's interests align with Israel's interests? Would there be room for Israel in your development plan?

Well, it seems that we have a common enemy, and it seems that we have a lot of potential areas to have economic cooperation. And we cannot have a relation with Israel before solving the peace issue, the

Palestinians, because both of them they have the right to live and coexist. And since that day happen, we will watch. We will try to support a peace solution. And when it happens, of course next day we'll have good and normal relations with Israel and it will be the best for everyone.

Is the story true Abu Mazen was summoned to you to be told to take it or leave it, this is the best you would do?

We have great relation with Abu Mazen. And ... and I believe Abu Mazen answered that rumor himself, that it's not true.

It's not true. What is right in there?

Actually King Salman told him that there is a saying in Saudi Arabia. We say the people of Mecca know best their ways. So always King Salman reminds him and tells him, you know, Abu Mazen, the people of Mecca know best their ways. And we say the people of Palestine know best their ways. So we told him that whatever you think is good for you, we will support it. Whatever we hear from our allies, from the Americans we will try to explain it, we will try to support it, to make things happen. But if it doesn't work for you, that means it doesn't work.

But what Trump has done with Jerusalem, it kind of leaves you as the new broker.

Actually we are trying to do our best. I try to focus positively and I try to focus on what's the opportunity, what's next, how you take things in a better situation, not how to argue with any mistakes.

Syria for a minute. What is the realistic end to that tragedy?

I don't know if some people will be angry if I answer that question, but I don't lie. I believe lying to people is really shameful, especially that in the year 2018, it's almost impossible to hide something from people. I believe Bashar is staying for now. And Syria has been part of the Russian influence in the Middle East for a very long time. But I believe Syria's interest is not to let the Iranians do whatever they want in Syria for the mid-term and long-term because if Syria changes ideologically, then Bashar, will be a puppet for Iran.

So better for him is to have his regime strengthened in Syria, and also it's good for Russia. Russia, better for them is to have direct strength and they empower Bashar and have direct influence in Syria and not through Iran. So these interests could reduce the Iranian influence significantly, but we don't know how much of a percentage. But Bashar for the time being is not leaving. I don't believe Bashar will leave without a war, and I don't believe that anyone wants to launch this war because it will get conflict between the United States of America and Russia and no one wants to see that.

So you'd like to see the fighting stop because it's already a foregone conclusion.

I think it's almost there. Now we have territory controlled by Bashar, other territory controlled by the Syrian people supported by the United States of America. And we are trying to focus in Saudi Arabia how can we help people through aid and we don't send it directly, we send it through the UN, we send it through the United States of America and through our allies, and we hope things stop as soon as possible. Because people are suffering there.

So the President said I think today, that they're going to pull out American troops from Syria. Is that something that you applaud?

Well, we believe the American troops should stay for at least the mid-term if not the long-term because United States of America need to have cards to negotiate and to apply pressure. If you get these troops out, you lose this card. Two, you need to have a checkpoint in the corridor between Iran and Hizbollah. If you take those troops out from east Syria, you will lose that checkpoint and this corridor could escalate other things around the region.

So that's something you fear, that direct corridor.

Of course. But we will handle it – but it will be tougher.

I wanted to go back to Yemen. Under the Trump Administration, you mentioned targeting being improved. So what has been the change under this administration that has enabled you to

either improve your targeting, your intelligence gathering and that sort of thing?

We don't get a lot of support from the United States of America and we don't ask for a lot of support from United States of America. We are doing this ourselves by the coalition from the Middle East and we believe we are doing it in the interests of the whole world, most of the countries around the world, economically, security, as we explained in the beginning of this interview.

Sure. But there is a U.S. role of course.

They are watching what's happening there. We are fighting together Al Qaeda. We have a lot of operation going in Saudi Arabia to do that, a lot of planning, a lot of programs, and we are increasing our work to hit Al Qaeda heavily in Yemen. And there is a lot of areas, a lot of cities people can't walk freely. There are cities now that are under the ruling of the legitimate government for the first time in 15 years that used to be under the control of Al Qaeda. So Al Qaeda they take a lot of hits in the last three years, more than what they took in the last 15 years, and they are almost disappearing and hiding in the caves and different areas in Yemen. And the role that we are focusing in with the United States of America is to work more and more against Al Qaeda in Yemen and do more and more and be sure that we erase them totally as soon as possible.

The extremism question. What can be done to reverse that? I understand what you're trying to do inside your kingdom. What about outside?

Yeah. First of all, Saudi doesn't spread any extremist ideology. Saudi Arabia is the biggest victim of the extremist ideology. If I am Osama bin Laden or any extremist or any terrorist, and I want to spread my ideology and I want to recruit, where will I recruit? Should I go to Morocco to recruit and spread my ideology or should I do it in Malaysia? Definitely not. If I want to spread my ideology I will have to go to Saudi Arabia. I have to go to the Qibla of Muslims. I have to go to the country that hosts the holy mosque. Because if I spread it there, it will reach everywhere.

And this is what happened after '79. All those extremist groups, terrorists targeting our country to recruit more from our country, to spread their ideology in our country because they want it to be spread around the world. And that's happened and we've paid the first country and the biggest debt in that. The first operations around the world happened in Saudi Arabia and Egypt in the '90s. And Osama bin Laden is manipulating the people in the beginning of the '90s. And we've asked that Osama bin Laden, should get arrested. He was outside Saudi Arabia. He should have been arrested. And The Independent answered us in '93 that Osama bin Laden was a freedom fighter practicing free speech. You can go back to this article in The Independent in '93, Osama bin Laden! That was before 9/11, 10 years before 9/11. We were saying that he was a dangerous guy. He was a terrorist. That he had to be arrested immediately. We had terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia. We had terrorist attacks in Egypt in the '90s but we were accused of repressing freedom of speech until 9/11 happened. So it's very clear that we are the victims, and it's very clear that we are on the front line because they cannot continue recruiting people and spreading ideology if they cannot do it in Saudi Arabia, if we stood up and fight the war. And we are doing that today in Saudi Arabia.

So there's a lot of things to do. One, fighting terrorists, get them, kill them or arrest them. Two, fighting extremists. So all the extremist organizations in Saudi Arabia, we treat them as terrorist organizations, like the Muslim Brotherhood. They are very dangerous, and they are classified in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE and a lot of countries in the Middle East as a terrorist organization.

So the person, he doesn't get from normal to terrorist. He gets from normal to a little bit conservative, to a little bit extreme then more extreme 'til he's ready to turn into a terrorist. And the Muslim Brotherhood network, it's part of this movement. So if you see Osama bin Laden, he used to be in the Muslim Brotherhood. . .If you see Baghdadi the leader of ISIS, he used to be from the Muslim Brotherhood. Actually if you see any terrorist, you will find that he used to be from the Muslim Brotherhood.

And you know what's the biggest danger? They're not in the Middle East because they know that the Middle East is taking good strategy against them in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, Jordan, and a lot of countries. Their main target is to radicalize Muslim communities in Europe. They hope that Europe in 30 years will turn to a Muslim brotherhood continent, and they want to control the Muslims, in Europe by

manipulating the Muslim Brotherhood. So this will be much more dangerous than the Cold War, than ISIS, than Al Qaeda, than whatever we've seen in the last hundred years of history.

So fighting extremism is not only by going against them, spreading moderation, this is part of it. But there is also a lot of things that have to be done: recognizing those groups, putting laws to fight those groups, spreading what do you think it will take us to make people as a terrorist. That doesn't mean freedom of speech. You have to pay attention because this is the route of taking people to terrorism.

So there is a lot of things that have to be tackled a different way. We are trying to do our part in Saudi Arabia and our laws and our achievements in the security planning, security strategy and also in our media strategy and our education system, we did a lot. In the last three years we did a lot, also before that, and we are doing more in the future, and also we are doing a lot of things with a lot of countries around the world. But we feel that the Western countries, they are only trying to fight those extremists by just announcing opportunity of moderation and openness in the West. If you want to fight them, you have to put them as a criminal in your laws.

Is that what's happening in Saudi?

Yeah. The Muslim Brotherhood have been classified as a terrorist organization for many years.

We have the Muslim Brotherhood including the Saruris. So a lot of documentaries around the world, are calling the Saruris as Wahhabis — actually we call them in Saudi Arabia Saruris. So those ahead a little bit within the Muslim Brotherhood, viewing things more extremely in the Middle East. So we have the Muslim Brotherhood including the Saruris. But in our law they are criminals and whenever we have enough evidence against any one of them, they will face a court.

What do you think has been the biggest American mistake in the Middle East in the last 15, 20 years?

First of all, mistakes happen. Mistakes will not stop because we are human. So a country will make mistakes, individual will make mistakes. Our mission is how to minimize these mistakes as much as we can. I believe two big mistakes. Getting into Iraq, it's a big mistake. I believe the United States of America should stop after they finish the job in Afghanistan and they should have focused on how to turn Afghanistan from an inferior state to a normal state. So this is one mistake. The other mistake is taking the American forces out of Iraq and disbanding the Iraqi army.

So these are the two biggest mistakes that created other things today in the Middle East.

I want to go back to the internal. I was wondering if you were making any moves in respect to ending or rolling back public beheadings and executions.

You mean executing extremist people?

I believe until today the United States of America and a lot of states, they have capital punishment. We've tried to minimize that so we have clear laws that we can change, like if a person kills a person, they have to be executed in our law. But there are few areas that we can change it from execution to life in prison. His Majesty, the King, doesn't wake up and just sign whatever he wants to sign. He works by the law, by the book. So there are laws also how the king functions as a king or as a prime minister.

So we are working for two years through the government and also the Saudi parliament to build new laws in that area. And we believe it will take one year, maybe a little bit more, to have it finished.

So it is an initiative.

Yeah, of course it's an initiative. But we will not get it 100 percent, but to reduce it big time.

And in the same realm of law, human rights groups point to people who they consider political activists who are put in jail or bloggers. Are you sensitive to that subject? You talk about the ideal of freedom of speech

We used to call them — in the '90s, they used to call Osama bin Laden the same thing and he turned out to

be the biggest danger for the whole world. And they call them today the same thing, and we call them the Muslim Brotherhood Party or the Saruris Party or people that are linked to agencies and working for different countries. And in each case, when the investigation ends, we announce the details publicly.

Is there — the delay with the IPO, why have you delayed that and are you still considering putting it on the New York Stock Exchange?

We do not delay it. We said we will be ready to IPO around 2018. And we are ready. We did all the laws. We did all the steps that are making us ready to IPO it. Now it's a matter of choosing the right time. So we believe oil prices will get higher in this year and also get higher in 2019, so we are trying to pick the right time. But we are ready to IPO it now if the time is right.

Are you still considering putting it on the New York Stock Exchange?

We are looking into all options, and the team who's working in Aramco IPO keep telling me, "Don't say anything about that."

I was wondering with all these initiatives that you have, the solar initiative and some of the reforms at home, I was wondering how dependent that is on the finite nature of oil.

Yeah.

So how big of a role does it play?

I don't believe it will harm the role of oil. Let's talk a little bit about oil then we will talk about the initiative, if it's okay. First of all, oil demand is rising and according to Aramco's estimate's they believe that demand will continue to grow until 2040. But according to the most conservative estimates from around the world they believe that it will continue growing till 2030. And to continue raising to 2030 an amount 1.5 percent every year. And after that it will decline.

So today the demand is around 100 million barrels per day. In 2030 it will be around 120 million barrels per day. In 2040 it will go back to something around 100 million barrels per day. Then in 2050, '60 it will be something around 80, 70 million barrels per day. 85 percent — 85 million barrels from this demand approximately it's going to fuel. 30-40 million barrels for cars fuel and the rest is fuel for airplanes and ships.

What's changing today, it's the cars, because of the electric car, but the effect we will not see it until after 2030. But the ships and the planes it seems it will continue for quite a long amount of time because no one today is talking about electric planes or ships. When they start talking about it, we will see it materialize after 20 years.

From the other side, the 50 million barrels or less of demand for petrochemicals and materials, it's increasing every year 3.5 percent. So it will be in 2030 around 20 million barrels. And in 2050, 2060, it will be around 50 million barrels. So this is a new demand for oil.

Just to give example, every one of you is wearing part of these petrochemicals and materials. In your buttons and your pen and your shoes and your phones you have some of these materials, and more will come such as carbon fiber. Carbon fiber is one of the best materials around the world. It's expensive, but we are investing in that. That will lower the price so we will see it used in planes, in ships, and in cars. So there is a new growing demand and continuity of demand.

The other side is the supply. A lot of supply will disappear in the next 20 years. After five years, China will produce nothing. Today they produce around 4 million barrels per day. They will produce nothing in five years. And other countries after 10 years, a lot of countries disappear. A lot of the supply coming from the United States of America will disappear after ten years.

After 18 years, the whole Russian supply will disappear, 11 million barrels. It will turn to zero after 18 years. So it seems that we are not only keeping the 10 million barrels we're producing, it seems that we will produce much, much, much — a lot of barrels in the future. So it's very clear the sustainability of oil if we take the conservative estimates not Aramco's estimates.

So solar energy doesn't harm oil because it's not used for fuel to airplanes or ships and it will not go against the growing of the petrochemical demand. Actually we believe that pushing in that direction, it will help that the oil play more of a good role to protect the environment because if you produce plastic, you shouldn't throw it away. You should treat it and recycle it in an environmentally friendly way, better than producing oil for cars.

The opportunity now, what we are doing in Saudi Arabia is in solar energy is that we believe that we are the only country that can make a breakthrough in this field and solar manufacturing field is Saudi Arabia because we have all the elements of success. So a lot of countries have sun: Algeria, India, name it. We have sun. But not all countries have the local demand. So fewer countries have local demand. No country can have a demand of 150 gigawatts, 200 gigawatts. It's us, India, and a few countries. Other countries in the Middle East couldn't even reach 30 gigawatts of demand. So the huge demand push for things to make it happen.

Three, we have more than that. We have the whole supply chain for manufacturing solar panels in Saudi Arabia. Four, we have the whole kind of material for that. So we have silica, a lot of silica, but it's not like the silica in Algeria and Africa and other countries, even UAE and other countries. The silica in the north side of Saudi Arabia, it's purity can reach 99.7%. The other silica around the world, it doesn't even reach 90 percent. So the silica in Saudi Arabia costs nothing to manufacture it and to build it. It costs nothing. So this is not just material. It's also cheap and high quality material.

And the other countries who have a lot of silica, much lower quality and expensive... we will have the other kind of material. So part of the material, the cables, the cable cover, and we have a lot of cable in Saudi Arabia, a lot. To manufacture this to do the solar panel, you need a lot of gas, and we have a lot of discovery of gas in the Red Sea.

So the mix of the materials, supply chain, demand, sun are all available in Saudi Arabia. It doesn't exist anywhere around the world. So if we say, "We cancel the project. We will not do the 200 gigawatts," no one will do it. So we worked very hard in the last few months to gather the best partners for that from different areas from the world, from America, from China, from Japan, and now we are in the final stage to shape the new Aramco Saudi Arabia. Maybe since the biggest partner is Japan, we could maybe call it Jaramco or something like that.

So this it will help Saudi Arabia to save \$40 billion every year. It will increase Saudi Arabia GDP by \$20 billion. It will create 100,000 jobs, and it will help us to export because we will export for the whole world the cheapest solar panel and the highest efficient solar panel. So we are helping the whole world to produce energy, continuous energy cheaper than they ever have. And we are taking the risk to push all of our demand in that area.

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HEADLINE	04/05 NYC settles w/Muslim groups
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/5/new-york-city-settles-american-muslims-after-years/
GIST	<p>New York City has reached a settlement giving Muslims a say in police training and policies, and the city agreed to pay mosques and businesses who said they were illegally targeted for surveillance because of their religion, Muslim groups said Thursday.</p> <p>The groups said they've been targeted for years following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attack, and they hope this settlement sends a message to the Trump administration to be careful about its own plans, such as the president's travel ban.</p> <p>The Muslim groups said roughly 20 mosques, two Muslim student organizations in New Jersey, 14 restaurants, two grade schools and 11 retail stores faced surveillance. Visitors and customers were</p>

photographed and undercover officers and informants infiltrated some of the organizations during a decade-long period.

The organizations sued, saying they were being singled out purely because of their religion. A federal district court ruled against them in 2014 but the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals stepped in a year later and said their lawsuit could proceed, comparing the surveillance to targeting of the Japanese during World War II.

That led to Thursday's settlement, in which the New York Police Department agreed not to engage in surveillance on the basis of religion or ethnicity, to meet with the plaintiffs to talk about their concerns, and to pay damages to mosques and businesses that suffered from the surveillance.

"The message to police departments from coast to coast is loud and clear: you cannot treat someone as a suspect based on their faith," said Farhana Khera, executive director of Muslim Advocates, a legal advocacy group that represented the plaintiffs.

The city, while acknowledging the settlement, said it wasn't admitting to any misconduct or violations of law.

"The resolution of this case affirms and enhances the NYPD's commitment to conducting effective investigations to prevent crime and terrorism," said James P. O'Neill, the police commissioner.

The city will pay \$47,500 to businesses and mosques who suffered financially from the surveillance, as well as \$25,000 to the individual plaintiffs. The city will also pay \$950,000 in fees to the lawyers for the Muslim plaintiffs.

Under the agreement, the plaintiffs' lawyers will also be able to review and make recommendations on policy and training guidelines surrounding religious and First Amendment activities.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Montana gov. says no Guards to border
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/5/steve-bullock-montana-governor-refuses-deploy-nati/
GIST	<p>Montana Gov. Steve Bullock says he'll never deploy National Guard troops "based simply on the whim of the President's morning Twitter habit."</p> <p>Bullock, a Democrat, said in a statement Thursday that the responsibility of sending Guard soldiers anywhere is one of the most difficult things he faces.</p> <p>Trump signed a memorandum on Wednesday that would allow the use of National Guard troops to help fight illegal immigration and drug trafficking on the U.S.-Mexico border.</p> <p>That morning, the president wrote in a tweet that the nation's border laws are weak and "we will be taking strong action today."</p> <p>Bullock administration officials say the request for troops would have to come directly from the governor of a border state, and Montana had received no such requests as of Thursday.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Time for the Daffodil Parade
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article207805374.html
GIST	Newly crowned Queen Allie Brooks will preside over Saturday's Daffodil Festival Grand Floral Parade.

	<p>More than 180 entries, including marching bands and floats decorated with thousands of daffodils, will travel through Tacoma, Puyallup, Sumner and Orting. The theme of this year's parade, the 81st, is "Traditions in Bloom."</p> <p>The Daffodil Festival is 85 years old this year, and there have been parades every year since 1934, except in 1943, 1944 and 1945 during World War II.</p> <p>Start times for the parades are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tacoma: 10:15 a.m. ▪ Puyallup: 12:45 p.m. ▪ Sumner: 2:30 p.m. ▪ Orting: 5 p.m. <p>Brooks, a senior at Lincoln High School in Tacoma, was crowned queen of this year's Daffodil Festival at a ceremony Saturday at Tacoma's Rialto Theater. Her duties will include a year of community service and appearances. Brooks was selected from a court of 23 students from Pierce County high schools.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Seattle PD expands Naloxone program
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/947220/seattle-pd-expands-naloxone-program-amid-opioid-crisis/
GIST	<p>It's a move that the Seattle Police Department hopes will help save people struggling with opioid addiction.</p> <p>On Thursday, SPD announced the expansion of their Naloxone program. Naloxone is designed to rapidly reverse an overdose.</p> <p>Interim Police Chief Carmen Best says during the last two years of the program, officers have saved approximately two dozen people.</p> <p>Amid the opioid epidemic, Chief Best says it is the department's responsibility to step up.</p> <p>"There is still so much to do," she said.</p> <p>The department will receive 100 Naloxone donations. Chief Best says eventually they want a kit for every patrol car.</p> <p>Prior to SPD's announcement, Surgeon General Dr. Jerome Adams called on more Americans to carry Naloxone. He said he wants more federal funding to increase access to the medication. It can cost around \$80 for one dose.</p> <p>"You don't have to be a policeman or a firefighter or a paramedic to save a life," Adams said.</p> <p>More than 42,000 Americans died from opioid overdoses in 2016. That is double the number who died in 2010.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Marysville police prevented massacre?
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/947303/how-marysville-police-used-erpo-to-prevent-possible-vegas-style-

	massacre/
GIST	<p>Marysville Police may have prevented a Vegas-style massacre after initiating their first Extreme Risk Protection Order.</p> <p>Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO) are Washington state’s version of a red flag law. They allow police or family members to ask courts to temporarily remove someone’s gun rights, even if they haven’t committed a crime when they exhibit certain dangerous behavior.</p> <p>Investigators say the case in Marysville is exactly how ERPOs are meant to be used.</p> <p>It all started a few weeks ago when police received a 911 call from a woman saying her husband was acting strangely. She said he was extremely paranoid and possibly having some sort of mental breakdown.</p> <p>Marysville Police Commander Mark Thomas says that’s when officers went to the home.</p> <p>“When we arrived on scene we got more information that he thought he was being watched and followed and possibly poisoned by government sources and other individuals and sent her out of the house,” he said.</p> <p>The woman’s husband hadn’t made a threat to his family or his wife at that point. “We were on scene for over an hour trying to contact him. We did see him through the window, we knew that he had an AR-15 assault rifle that he was carrying with him and a gas mask that he was carrying with him.”</p> <p>After trying to engage the man for more than an hour to get him some help or services, police made the decision to pull out to keep from escalating the situation and let things calm down.</p> <p>“He didn’t make any threats to harm a family member or anything so there’s no domestic violence situation, he actually asked his wife to leave for her own protection, so we didn’t have a crime. And what we didn’t want to do is force a confrontation and get in a position where we’d have to use force or even deadly force to resolve the situation where we have someone who has not committed a crime and in their house carrying a firearm.”</p> <p>And that firearm was completely legal. The man has a concealed pistol license and bought the AR-15 legally.</p> <p>The next day the man’s family called the police again, with new information.</p> <p>“Basically saying, that he has rented two hotel rooms at the Tulalip Casino Resort, that he has firearms with him and that he is still really paranoid, people following him, very agitated. Those kinds of things.”</p> <p>Commander Thomas says that raised serious red flags.</p> <p>“Of course I am thinking Las Vegas and those kinds of incidences. The fact that he has access to lots of weapons — we know for a fact that at least one of them is an assault weapon. His state of mind, his paranoia, you just don’t know what he’s seen, right? I mean, it’s potentially one of those things that if we don’t act then what can we live with after the fact?”</p> <p>At that point, the man had been talking with his daughter on the phone, telling her he rented hotel rooms. Police began talking with police at Tulalip, but the man was not there and nobody knew where he was. His daughter tracked his phone to help police locate him.</p> <p>Eventually, they found him at a friend’s house in Seattle.</p> <p>“They get the address, they set up, and then we dispatched two units down there to hopefully contact him in a safe manner which eventually happens,” Thomas said.</p> <p>When police arrived, he had a loaded firearm on him. They confiscated the gun and took him into custody.</p>

He was involuntarily committed to the hospital for a 72-hour mental health evaluation.

“During that process, the family members give us permission to search the house and we search the house and we find eleven other firearms,” Thomas explained. “Some of them are hidden, secreted around the house. That in and of itself is disconcerting; that he’s staged weapons around the house. So we recovered those weapons, we recovered a weapon that was on him at the time, and there were additional weapons in his truck. We eventually take possession for safekeeping all of the weapons.”

Police were allowed to take those weapons for safe keeping because the family asked them to, but the man had not committed a crime so it was just a temporary fix.

Police used an Extreme Risk Protection Order to ensure he couldn’t get his hands on a gun after he left the hospital.

“It took us a day to put together all of the information and then talking to the family to get updates and things like that and then we produced our affidavit,” Marysville Prosecuting Attorney Jennifer Millett. “Then when we went to our court, our court was very quick with it. We filed it in the morning. We had a hearing at eleven o’clock, and by 11:30 we had the ex parte order to go and serve him and get transferred to superior court.”

Millett says this particular case is exactly what ERPOs are for.

“I can’t think of a better example than the facts that we had in this case in regards to using this law.”

As for whether getting the ERPO prevented a mass shooting, Thomas says, “personally, I’d feel horrible if we could have done something and didn’t do anything if somebody got hurt. It’s hard to say if having done what we’ve done we’ve saved people or saved injury because you just don’t know. He might have come to his senses or the family might have been able to convince him to seek out medical attention and you just don’t know. But when you’re dealing with firearms — large-capacity type firearms — it’s not worth the risk.”

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HEADLINE	04/05 Kashmir students clash w/India police
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/kashmir-students-clash-india-police-lockdown-ends-54250671?
GIST	<p>Students protesting Indian rule in disputed Kashmir clashed with government forces on Thursday after authorities reopened schools following the killings of 13 rebels and five civilians.</p> <p>Government forces fired tear gas to stop students from marching at several colleges in Indian-controlled Kashmir’s main city of Srinagar. The students chanted anti-India slogans and marched on the streets in the city center while demanding an end of Indian rule over the region.</p> <p>Clashes also erupted in other parts of Kashmir as students hurled rocks at police and paramilitary soldiers. They also burned a police bunker in Srinagar.</p> <p>Some students were reportedly injured in the clashes.</p> <p>The students were protesting the killings of 13 rebels and five civilians on Sunday in fighting with Indian troops. At least three Indian soldiers were also killed in the fighting, which was followed by a security clampdown and a strike called by separatists who challenge India’s sovereignty over Kashmir.</p> <p>Authorities shut schools and colleges and canceled university exams in an attempt to stop protests by students.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 China tops global solar energy investment
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/china-leads-global-solar-energy-investment-us-europe-54255420?
GIST	<p>A U.N.-backed report shows more money was invested in solar energy last year than in any other power source, with China responsible for much of the boom.</p> <p>Overall, a record 98 gigawatts of new solar capacity were installed worldwide in 2017. Global investment in solar topped \$160 billion, an increase of 18 percent compared to the previous year.</p> <p>China alone spent \$86.5 billion on solar installations, adding 53 gigawatts of capacity.</p> <p>The report, published Thursday, found renewable energy investments in the United States, Europe and Japan declined noticeably in 2017, partly due to falling prices.</p> <p>Total renewable energy investments reached almost \$280 billion last year. Coal and gas accounted for \$103 billion, while spending on large hydropower dams and nuclear plants stood at \$45 billion and \$42 billion respectively.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 UK opens military base in Bahrain
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/uk-opens-persian-gulf-naval-base-bahrain-54254619?
GIST	<p>Britain opened its first permanent military base in the Middle East in more than four decades on Thursday in the Persian Gulf country of Bahrain, giving the U.K. an expansive presence along key international shipping routes.</p> <p>The HMS Juffair naval facility can house up to around 500 Royal Navy personnel, including sailors, soldiers and airmen, in a region where maritime security ensures oil shipments and goods make it from Asia to Europe. British officials have described it as the first permanent British base east of the Suez Canal since 1971.</p> <p>"The aim of the Royal Navy being out here anyway is to enhance and ensure the maritime security in the region, and whether or not that's law and order on the high seas, countering piracy, countering terrorism, making sure that the high seas are all safe for the free-flow of commerce, the free flow of trade to be able to take place," said Commodore Steve Dainton, U.K. Maritime Component Commander.</p> <p>Bahrain, located off the coast of Saudi Arabia and just west of its rival Iran, also plays host to the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet. Tense encounters have occurred between U.S. and Iranian naval forces in the Persian Gulf, though military officials say provocations of U.S. navy ships in recent months have halted.</p> <p>The new British hub makes it easier for the Royal Navy to conduct longer-term deployments in the Persian Gulf and will offer engineering and logistical support for ships. The facility includes sleeping accommodations, sport facilities and recreational areas for troops.</p> <p>"It offers us a much better base than we've had before, a much more permanent presence and a real infrastructure for our people who are working and operating here all the time," said Commander of the Joint Forces Command of the U.K. Gen. Chris Deverell.</p> <p>The port would also be able to service mine sweepers and aircraft carriers, though carriers like the HMS Queen Elizabeth will not be able to dock there because the water is too shallow.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 When Native activists invaded Ft Lawton
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/05/when-native-americans-invaded-fort-lawton/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE -- Randy Lewis was 23 years old when he invaded Magnolia's Fort Lawton. He was fresh off occupying Alcatraz Island, where he had met Bernie Whitebear, another Native American activist from the Colville reservation in northeast Washington.</p> <p>Lewis recalled when Whitebear came to him with news the government planned to make Fort Lawton a federal surplus, meaning it would be offered to non-federal groups at a steep discount.</p> <p>"So Bernie said, 'If it's gonna be declared federal surplus, then Native Americans have first refusal rights,'" Lewis said.</p> <p>They tried to stake a claim on the land as a place to serve their struggling population of urban Indians.</p> <p>"We needed an educational center, we needed a health care center, so many things," Lewis said.</p> <p>According to Lewis, they applied for the federal surplus but were ignored. At the time, Whitebear had said that if it took an occupation to get their point across, then that's what they would do.</p> <p>"The plan was just to come in originally. See, we didn't expect to be attacked," Lewis said.</p> <p>It was March 8, 1970, and it was chaos. When about 100 Native Americans and supporters scaled the fort, the military police quickly outnumbered them.</p> <p>"All hell was breaking loose," Lewis said. "The Jeeps were trying to run people down. Jeeps were flipped, vehicles destroyed. Little kids had run and hidden under the barracks. The MPs were trying to flush them out so they were throwing grenades underneath."</p> <p>"Did they know they were kids?" asked Q13 reporter Simone Del Rosario.</p> <p>"I don't know," Lewis replied. "I don't think they really cared at that point."</p> <p>The military police kicked out the women and children and locked up the men. Lewis said they were beaten, bones were broken and they were only released when a human rights lawyer stepped in.</p> <p>"He had to come in and, literally, with a writ, get us out."</p> <p>The first invasion had failed but the movement was gaining ground with public opinion. The activists had given the media front-row access to their cause. Actress Jane Fonda was there and helped draw international attention.</p> <p>They readied for their second strike, this time climbing the cliffs.</p> <p>"I went up to the berm to look and as far as I could see, stretched out MPs in riot gear, big shields," Lewis said.</p> <p>They were hauled off again and dozens were arrested. One more attempted invasion later and their fight was no longer physical.</p> <p>"From then on it became the battle in the public media," he said.</p> <p>It was a battle they would eventually win. They didn't get all 1,100 acres, many of which would become today's Discovery Park. But United Indians for All Tribes secured 20 acres, and with it they created a cultural center, family services, education classes and a preschool. It opened in 1977.</p>

	<p>"If you can imagine what the celebration was like when we opened this building, when we had the pow wow, it was incredible. What was once thought of as a fantasy became reality," Lewis said.</p> <p>The cultural center remains as a tangible result of their civil rights movement to pass on to the next generation.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Seattle home median nears \$820,000
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/home-prices-have-risen-fastest-in-south-seattle-as-citywide-median-nears-820000/
GIST	<p>South Seattle neighborhoods have taken the brunt of the region's biggest home-price increases, pricing some people out of an area that had long been an affordable option for those not making huge incomes.</p> <p>Every neighborhood in King County has seen home costs balloon since the region's real-estate market first started to catch fire six years ago. But the rise hasn't been completely even.</p> <p>In the first three months of 2012, the cost of a typical home in Southwest Seattle, which includes Sodo and Beacon Hill, was \$222,000. In the first few months of this year? \$661,000.</p> <p>In Southeast Seattle, which includes Rainier Valley and Mount Baker, home costs have grown from \$275,000 to \$650,000 during that span.</p> <p>In all, home prices nearly tripled in some southern neighborhoods since the bottom of the recession, while home values in the pricier central and northern parts of the city roughly doubled.</p> <p>The figures come from the Northwest Multiple Listing Service, which on Thursday released its latest monthly home-sales report showing the region's homebuying market has, yet again, gotten even hotter.</p> <p>Citywide, Seattle home prices topped \$800,000 for the first time. The median cost of a single-family house, now just under \$820,000, smashes the old record of \$777,000, which was set just one month prior.</p> <p>South Seattle remains the most affordable option — if you can call it that — in the city. But median homes in South Seattle are now more expensive than the typical house in pricey cities like Boston, Washington, D.C., Miami and Denver.</p> <p>South Seattle homes are even 65 percent more expensive than they were right before the housing bubble burst a decade ago.</p> <p>The housing market's effects on South Seattle have been well-documented: The black population has plummeted, gentrification fears have grown and development has transformed neighborhoods.</p> <p>A big part of what's been lost is the promise of an affordable home inside the city limits for working-class people. Six years ago, the household income required to afford a mortgage on a home in South Seattle was about \$50,000; now, it's about \$130,000.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Germany denies Spain extradition request
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/04/05/German-court-grants-Puigdemont-bail-rejects-Spains-extradition-request/8701522953952/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_tn_int&utm_medium=6
GIST	April 5 (UPI) -- A German court granted bail to former Catalan President Carles Puigdemont on Thursday

and denied Spain's request for extradition on the grounds of rebellion.

The Higher Regional Court in Schleswig said it would not accept Spain's extradition request because the country doesn't have a comparable law. The court said it would consider an extradition request based on allegations of corruption, though.

The court ordered Puigdemont's release on about \$90,000 bail.

German police arrested Puigdemont in March while he was crossing into the country from Denmark on his way from Finland to Belgium. Puigdemont had been living in self-imposed exile in Brussels after the Catalan Parliament unilaterally declared independence from Spain in October.

After a referendum in Catalonia, the central government in Madrid voided the Catalan regional government, imposed direct rule and called new elections. Spain's Supreme Court determined 25 Catalan leaders should be tried for rebellion, embezzlement or disobeying the state. Spain issued a European Arrest Warrant for Puigdemont in March, shortly before his arrest in Germany.

Also Thursday, Spanish police arrested Josep Lluís Traperó, the former head of the Catalan police force, for his alleged role in the independence bid.

Spanish national court judge Carmen Pamela said the regional police force "shared a common goal of bringing about Catalonia's secession and the proclamation of a republic, and in this manner changing the political organization of the state and the government, contrary to the Constitution and the statute of autonomy."

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HEADLINE	04/06 Army: program cuts likely in reorg
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2018/04/06/Program-cuts-likely-under-Army-secretarys-new-Futures-Command/6821522958394/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_tn_us&utm_medium=1
GIST	<p>April 6 (UPI) -- The secretary of the U.S. Army said Thursday he plans to build a more lethal force under the Futures Command.</p> <p>Secretary Mark Esper described the plans at the Heritage Foundation, and said they will likely include cutting some of the 800-plus Army programs to finance modernization.</p> <p>The Futures Command is the first Army reorganization effort since 1973 and will use technologies to make the branch more successful through six tactics that include improving manned and unmanned vehicles, updating missiles and improving helicopter and air defenses.</p> <p>In order to support production for these prototypes, Esper said he'll have to free up funds for the new initiatives.</p> <p>"We can't continue to ramble along funding 800 programs when we have higher priority needs," he said. "That's spreading the peanut butter, as we like to say, and I think the days of spreading peanut butter are over."</p> <p>Esper did not say which programs would be shut down, but said he will avoid arbitrary cuts.</p> <p>The secretary also said while he is not concerned for the 2018 and 2019 fiscal years, he wants to start looking ahead to the 2020 and 2021 budgets -- that could finance new technologies like directed-energy weapons, hypersonics and cybersecurity</p> <p>Dan Grazier of the Project on Government Oversight said restructuring initiatives like the Futures Command is a tactic to cut into existing programs to fund larger budgets that use money to unnecessarily</p>

	<p>upgrade equipment.</p> <p>"I would hope everyone is careful about what they cut and they actually evaluate things not just on their age but on their effectiveness and contribution to the overall mission," Grazier said.</p> <p>Introducing newer equipment can induce extra complicity, Grazier said. He also mentioned that innovative systems can distract from a military mission because newer prototypes do not always equal efficiency.</p> <p>"We actually spend more time fiddling with our own systems than facing outward, thinking about what we are trying to accomplish and what we are going to do with the enemy," he said.</p> <p>Esper said new technologies are necessary to advance military success against adversaries on the ground and in increasing cybersecurity threats.</p> <p>"We need to make the leap to the next generation of technologies," he said. "That's why we want to move things left in terms of prototyping and production."</p> <p>Jacob Cohn of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments said he agrees with the secretary's logic to cut programs for the benefit of the Futures Command.</p> <p>"The choices might not be easy, but it's necessary to fund the kind of transformation that the Army needs to make," Cohn said.</p> <p>Esper also talked about recruiting civilian talent to support technological advancements, saying he plans to headquarter the command in an urban environment where the Army can recruit a team of engineers and other industry forces whose expertise can help predict what future threat environments will look like.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/06 Calif. 'sanctuary laws' roil DOJ in fight
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2018/04/06/Sanctuary-laws-roil-California-in-fight-with-Justice-Department/2741522290007/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=1
GIST	<p>April 6 (UPI) -- California has become ground zero in a battle over so-called "sanctuary laws" aimed at protecting people from arrest and deportation amid a Trump administration crackdown on illegal immigration.</p> <p>State laws that took effect Jan. 1 aim to circumvent local responsibility for immigration enforcement. But some California cities, counties and towns are revolting, instead taking measures to support enforcement.</p> <p>"Overall what's at stake is many states and localities have been experimenting with different policy efforts to protect immigrants and to get their local government officials out of the business of immigration enforcement," said Annie Lai, co-director of the Immigrant Rights Clinic at the University of California-Irvine.</p> <p>On March 6, the U.S. Department of Justice sued California over three state laws passed last year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- One that prohibits state and local law enforcement agencies from using public funds to "investigate, interrogate, detain, detect or arrest persons for immigration enforcement purposes." -- One that requires Immigration and Customs Enforcement to obtain a judicial warrant to enter a place of business that has non-public space without consent and restricts employers from sharing information with ICE without ensuring they have a warrant or subpoena. -- A public safety omnibus that includes provisions preventing state and local agencies from entering into contracts with the federal government to detain immigrants and allowing the state attorney general to

monitor federal immigration detention facilities.

"Federal law is the supreme law of the land," U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions said during a recent speech in Sacramento. "A refusal to apprehend and deport those, especially the criminal element, effectively rejects all immigration law."

Beyond California, some cities have declared themselves safe spaces, including New Orleans, Philadelphia, Las Vegas, Miami, Milwaukee, New York and Cook County, Ill., which includes Chicago. In July, the Justice Department announced it would withhold federal funding from sanctuary cities.

Federal judges in Chicago and San Francisco issued nationwide injunctions preventing the Trump administration from adding conditions to Justice Department grant funding and a federal judge in Philadelphia ruled to block efforts to interfere with funds.

DOJ threatened subpoenas against 23 counties, cities and states demanding records of their sanctuary policies. But California, which has a history of pro-immigration legislation and Democratic leadership who have feuded with Trump, was the only state to face legal action seeking to block the measures.

"The state overall is pretty Democratic and so it has a lot of support in passing these sanctuary laws," Rob Robinson, an assistant professor in political science at California State University-Fullerton, said. "It's not surprising to me that this is the state where the sanctuary city issue is the strongest and because it is the strongest, that's part of what drives the pushback."

New state laws

Senate Bill 54 is the most comprehensive of the three laws included in the lawsuit.

"The idea with SB 54 is to limit the circumstances under which local government institutions or officials would be either providing information that ICE is demanding or access to people in a local jail or otherwise facilitate their transfer of custody to ICE," Lai said.

The law contains some provisions based on a person's criminal history under which communication and facilitation of transportation is permitted but it also provides localities the opportunity to further limit interaction between law enforcement and ICE.

"SB 54 does make clear that it is the new state standard, but it is not the ceiling," Grisel Ruiz, staff attorney at the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, told UPI. "So while all cities, counties and law enforcement have to comply with SB 54 they are more than welcome to pursue and adopt stronger policies."

Assembly Bill 450 deals with worksite raids and audits.

"If ICE came to a workplace today and wanted to enter into a private area such as an office, the employer wouldn't be allowed to give ICE consent unless ICE has a warrant," Ruiz said.

AB 450 also requires employers to notify employees if ICE is preparing to conduct an audit.

"That's not unlawful, in fact it can be useful for clearing up misunderstandings," Lai said.

Assembly Bill 103 on public safety includes provisions preventing state and local agencies from entering into contracts with the federal government to detain immigrants and allowing the state attorney general to monitor federal immigration detention facilities.

The law makes California the only U.S. state that provides local oversight of immigration jails, Ruiz said.

Local laws

Since the state laws took effect, some municipalities have taken steps to further limit interaction with ICE, while others have sought new ways to provide federal immigration officials with information about undocumented immigrants.

On Tuesday, the Board of Supervisors of Orange County -- California's third-largest county -- voted unanimously to join Sessions in the lawsuit claiming the laws are unconstitutional.

"Senate Bill 54 prohibits state and local police agencies from notifying federal officials before immigrants in their custody who may be subject to deportation are released," Supervisor Lisa Bartlett said. "I took an oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States, not the unconstitutional actions of the state of California."

Trump tweeted in support of Orange County as "defending their rights against California's illegal and unconstitutional sanctuary policies."

"California's sanctuary laws release known dangerous criminals into communities across the state. All citizens have the right to be protected by federal law and strong borders," he said.

The City of Huntington Beach voted 6 to 1 on Monday to file a lawsuit against the state over the sanctuary laws.

In March, the small Southern California town of Los Alamitos voted 4 to 1 to be exempt from SB-54 as Councilman Warren Kusumoto, who introduced the legislation, said it was "looking out for the constituents in our city."

On Feb. 25, Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf warned residents about a potential ICE raid after receiving information from "credible sources" about an impending sweep.

Sessions said Schaaf was actively seeking to help undocumented immigrants avoid apprehension by ICE.

"Her actions support those who flout our laws and boldly validate the illegality," he said.

The sanctuary law case will be tried by Magistrate Judge Kendall Newman of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California in Sacramento. ICE director Thomas Holman is set to testify before April 13 at the request of the state.

Robinson said such moves by California municipalities are largely examples of "symbolic politics" as the cities and counties have no independent power to resist state law.

"This is a way they can kind of be with the president, but not in a way that would make people as angry as being with the president would in California," Robinson said.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Study: college students hungry, homeless
SOURCE	http://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article207845959.html
GIST	<p>Sarah Barrett didn't need a grand study to tell her a bunch of students on Kansas State University's campus had been going without food.</p> <p>As an assistant dean of students, she had heard enough of them talk about choosing books or housing costs over food to know that the university needed to do something to help its hungry students.</p> <p>K-State students are not alone. The problem of college students' inability to afford food is common on campuses across the country.</p>

According to a first-of-its-kind survey of two- and four-year private and public schools, 36 percent of students on college campuses in the U.S. do not get enough to eat.

On Wednesday afternoon just after the noon lunch hour, the UMKC Kangaroo Pantry opened its doors to a short line of students needing food. Katie Garey, who manages the pantry, and a student volunteer were busy stuffing plastic bags with nonperishable food items requested by the handful of students who filled out order forms that day.

"We are pretty busy," Garey said. "At the end of the semester, we start recognizing that students no longer have food on their meal plans or maybe their financial aid has run out or they have given up a job so they can study, so they no longer have that income."

And that lost income could also impact housing. Nearly as many of those who are food insecure don't have secure housing. The U.S. Department of Education describes the homeless as "lacking fixed, regular, adequate housing," which includes those living in shelters, hotels, cars, tents or "couch surfing" at friends' houses.

While it found that 36 percent of university students and nearly half of community college students surveyed fit the category of "housing insecure" in the past year, it also found that 9 percent of university students were fully homeless, as were 12 percent of community college students.

The study led by Temple University Professor Sara Goldrick-Rab and her team at the Wisconsin HOPE Lab speaks to a national trend impacting students in Missouri and Kansas, but only the University of Central Missouri was among the 65 colleges and universities that participated in the survey.

Those examining the national situation don't place the blame on rising college costs alone. Other factors may include inadequate financial aid packages and the fact that today more low-income students have access to college through the help of tuition grants, federal loans and scholarships that don't always pay for food or housing.

There are also a number of international students who don't qualify for federal aid and older students who are trying to go to school while working part-time jobs to care for a family.

Some colleges are unwilling to admit they have students enrolled at their school who don't have permanent housing or who go hungry, the study says.

The study refers to the condition these students find themselves in as being "food insecure." The USDA defines it as not having consistent access to adequate food and being limited by financial challenges.

"A lot of folks tend to associate attending college with a certain amount of privilege, but that is not necessarily true," said Jonathan Pryor, the assistant director of LGBT services at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Pryor also coordinates the campus food pantry, opened in 2015 after university leaders heard repeated complaints from students struggling to afford groceries.

"Mac and cheese every night may not be what's considered adequate nutritious food," Barrett said.

The Washington Post reports that the survey report, out Tuesday, says that one in 10 community college students report having gone an entire day without food. About 6 percent of four-year university students have made the same report.

Experts have long known that kids in elementary, middle and high school who come to class hungry are less likely to perform well academically. The study found the same to be true for college students.

Students who take on the rigors of college study while experiencing basic needs insecurities are clearly committed to school and are trying to work to make ends meet. "But their academics still suffer," the

report says. "Among students who reported receiving D's and F's in college, more than half were food insecure, with more than 40 percent at the very lowest level of food security."

Education experts say that in many cases, those students end up dropping out.

In 2014, Barrett and some of her colleagues launched a survey of their own at K-State to assess the need for help with food on the Manhattan, Kan., campus. It revealed that 39.4 percent of "students who were experiencing financial hardship also experienced difficulty finding food," Barrett said.

Studies at other universities had similar findings. The University of California found that 40 percent of its students were missing meals, and four universities in Illinois found the number to be 35 percent on their campuses.

The national survey report said: "While university students are more likely than community college students to have access to on-campus housing and meal plans, even these supports do not shield students from these challenges."

Evelyn "Evie" Craig, president and chief executive officer of ReStart, a nonprofit agency that provides services for homeless young people in the Kansas City area, recalled being contacted by colleges to house homeless students who had no home to go to during holidays and campus breaks, when dormitories are shut down.

"We have some 'Leave It to Beaver' notion that because a kid is in college, every kid has a home with a white-picket fence to go to," Craig said.

"In the five-county Kansas City metro area, 6,000 students identify as homeless. That's K-12, but you have to assume that if a student is homeless as a senior in high school, that is not suddenly going to change as they enter college. There is so little support directed at these young adults age 18 to 24."

To help combat the food insecurity problem, universities here began opening food pantries, like the ones at K-State and at UMKC.

"We realized that this supports what has become a growing trend across the country," Pryor said, adding that the UMKC pantry "gets pretty consistent use" during the months school is in session.

Much of the UMKC pantry is stocked with food bought at discount prices from Harvesters. And like at other college food pantries, some of the food comes from donations and food drives held by faculty and student groups.

Even though a fairly sizable number of students share in the predicament, many of them still worry about the stigma attached to needing to get food from a food pantry. So, universities tend to tuck their pantries away in an inconspicuous location to protect their students' privacy. UMKC's Kangaroo Pantry is located in the converted office space in a university building just north of campus.

K-State opened its pantry in 2014, when it hauled shelving in to a computer lab and stocked it with food and toiletries after assessing the school had a real need.

When K-State had asked students whether they ever considered leaving school because of financial needs, more than 50 percent said yes, Barrett said. More recently, more than 90 percent of students who experience some financial struggle said in a subsequent survey that having the food pantry — called the Cat's Cupboard — has helped alleviate some of that financial stress.

University officials at Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville notice a growing number of their students were going hungry and opened a pantry in 2016. Every year more students are using it. In March 2016, 19 students sought help at the pantry. In March 2017, 47 students used the pantry.

	<p>"I think there is more need," said Sue Nickerson, who is executive secretary of Student Affairs and coordinator for the Northwest Missouri State pantry. She said a recent assessment at her school showed about 35 percent of students there need help with food or are having to decide between eating and paying bills.</p> <p>"That should not be a decision our students have to make," Nickerson said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Elderly 'hooked' on vitamins
SOURCE	https://californiahealthline.org/news/older-americans-are-hooked-on-vitamins-despite-scarce-evidence-they-work/
GIST	<p>More than half of Americans take vitamin supplements, including 68 percent of those age 65 and older, according to a 2013 Gallup poll. Among older adults, 29 percent take four or more supplements of any kind, according to a Journal of Nutrition study published in 2017.</p> <p>Often, preliminary studies fuel irrational exuberance about a promising dietary supplement, leading millions of people to buy in to the trend. Many never stop. They continue even though more rigorous studies — which can take many years to complete — almost never find that vitamins prevent disease, and in some cases cause harm.</p> <p>“The enthusiasm does tend to outpace the evidence,” said Dr. JoAnn Manson, chief of preventive medicine at Boston’s Brigham and Women’s Hospital.</p> <p>There’s no conclusive evidence that dietary supplements prevent chronic disease in the average American, Manson said. And while a handful of vitamin and mineral studies have had positive results, those findings haven’t been strong enough to recommend supplements to the general U.S. public, she said.</p> <p>The National Institutes of Health has spent more than \$2.4 billion since 1999 studying vitamins and minerals. Yet for “all the research we’ve done, we don’t have much to show for it,” said Dr. Barnett Kramer, director of cancer prevention at the National Cancer Institute.</p> <p>A big part of the problem, Kramer said, could be that much nutrition research has been based on faulty assumptions, including the notion that people need more vitamins and minerals than a typical diet provides; that megadoses are always safe; and that scientists can boil down the benefits of vegetables like broccoli into a daily pill.</p> <p>Vitamin-rich foods can cure diseases related to vitamin deficiency. Oranges and limes were famously shown to prevent scurvy in vitamin-deprived 18th-century sailors. And research has long shown that populations that eat a lot of fruits and vegetables tend to be healthier than others.</p> <p>But when researchers tried to deliver the key ingredients of a healthy diet in a capsule, Kramer said, those efforts nearly always failed.</p> <p>It’s possible that the chemicals in the fruits and vegetables on your plate work together in ways that scientists don’t fully understand — and which can’t be replicated in a tablet, said Marjorie McCullough, strategic director of nutritional epidemiology for the American Cancer Society.</p> <p>More important, perhaps, is that most Americans get plenty of the essentials, anyway. Although the Western diet has a lot of problems — too much sodium, sugar, saturated fat and calories, in general — it’s not short on vitamins, said Alice Lichtenstein, a professor at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University.</p> <p>And although there are more than 90,000 dietary supplements from which to choose, federal health agencies and advisers still recommend that Americans meet their nutritional needs with food, especially</p>

	<p>fruits and vegetables.</p> <p>Also, American food is highly fortified — with vitamin D in milk, iodine in salt, B vitamins in flour, even calcium in some brands of orange juice.</p> <p>Without even realizing it, someone who eats a typical lunch or breakfast “is essentially eating a multivitamin,” said journalist Catherine Price, author of “Vitamina: How Vitamins Revolutionized the Way We Think About Food.”</p> <p>That can make studying vitamins even more complicated, Price said. Researchers may have trouble finding a true control group, with no exposure to supplemental vitamins. If everyone in a study is consuming fortified food, vitamins may appear less effective.</p> <p>The body naturally regulates the levels of many nutrients, such as vitamin C and many B vitamins, Kramer said, by excreting what it doesn’t need in urine. He added: “It’s hard to avoid getting the full range of vitamins.”</p> <p>Not all experts agree. Dr. Walter Willett, a professor at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, says it’s reasonable to take a daily multivitamin “for insurance.” Willett said that clinical trials underestimate supplements’ true benefits because they aren’t long enough, often lasting five to 10 years. It could take decades to notice a lower rate of cancer or heart disease in vitamin takers, he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 China’s foreign companies restrictions
SOURCE	http://money.cnn.com/2018/04/05/news/economy/china-foreign-companies-restrictions/index.html
GIST	<p>China is vital for many top international brands, but doing business there often comes with a high entry fee.</p> <p>Some major US companies including GM (GM) and Qualcomm (QCOM) sell more of their products in China than anywhere else in the world.</p> <p>"Our economic interests with China are significant and growing," said Jacob Parker, vice president of the US-China Business Council, a trade group that represents US companies' interests in China. "China is a \$600 billion market for the American economy."</p> <p>But the Chinese government is now coming under increased pressure over the demands it makes of foreign firms seeking to gain access to that vast market. The Trump administration is pointing to unfair practices by Beijing as the reason for US plans to slap tariffs on around \$50 billion of Chinese goods, a move that has intensified fears of a trade war between the two countries.</p> <p>International companies have long complained that China has strong-armed them into handing over trade secrets in exchange for market access. In some sectors, Beijing will only let foreign firms operate through joint ventures in which Chinese partners have the majority stake.</p> <p>'Training their future competitors'</p> <p>That's the case in the auto industry, where many top brands like GM (GM), Volkswagen (VLKAF) and Toyota (TM) have teamed up with local players rather than face steep tariffs on imported vehicles.</p> <p>The partnerships have often delivered blockbuster sales, but they have also raised concerns that they lead to Chinese companies getting their hands on their foreign partners' technologies.</p> <p>International automakers are "training their future competitors and receiving only a fraction of what their intellectual property would earn" if they were allowed to go it alone in China, said Mary Lovely, a</p>

professor at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

"It's no surprise that some domestic Chinese brands resemble American or European models" because of this practice, said Scott Kennedy, a China expert at the Center for Strategic & International Studies.

New technology at stake

The race to develop the cutting-edge technologies that power electric vehicles has intensified concerns.

A report published last week by US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer claimed that Chinese government rules mean foreign firms have to hand over all of the key technologies used in electric vehicles if they want to sell them in China.

Foreign companies often have to "make difficult choices about managing the trade-off of technology sharing and market access," said Parker, the US-China Business Council executive. He said that about a fifth of American companies operating in China have been asked to transfer technology to Chinese partners in the past three years.

The true figure could be even higher. Surrendering key technologies and intellectual property to Chinese firms is a sensitive topic.

"Firms currently operating in China may be reluctant to speak out against the practice because they fear it will hurt their current business," Lovely said.

Companies that refuse to play ball are left on the outside, forced to pay potentially hefty tariffs at the border for the goods they ship to China.

That's the case with electric car maker Tesla (TSLA), which has been trying for years to strike a deal to build a factory inside China without a local partner.

CEO Elon Musk voiced his frustration earlier this month, tweeting at President Donald Trump that "the current rules make things very difficult. It's like competing in an Olympic race wearing lead shoes."

Boeing's success

There are exceptions to the rule, though. Boeing (BA) has enjoyed bumper sales in China without having to surrender key technologies or expertise.

China is Boeing's second biggest market after the United States, generating revenues of almost \$12 billion for the company last year. But the plane maker only does a small amount of manufacturing in China and doesn't have any major joint ventures there.

The company runs a Chinese factory in partnership with the country's state-owned jet maker Comac, but it only puts the finishing touches on planes, like installing seats and stapling carpets. There's "no real technology transfer," said Richard Aboulafia, a vice president at the Teal Group, an aviation consultancy.

That's most likely because China needs Boeing's planes for its rapidly growing air travel industry. Its airlines have very limited alternatives to Boeing and European plane maker Airbus (EADS).

Unlike in the auto sector, China has had difficulty cultivating jet manufacturers that can compete with foreign rivals. Comac's ARJ21, the Chinese government's first attempt at building its own jetliner, has struggled commercially.

"Getting into the car industry is much easier than getting into the jetliner industry," Aboulafia said.

Even Beijing's new proposed tariffs of 25% on American aircraft imports may leave Boeing largely

unscathed. The tariffs would only apply to planes below a certain weight, suggesting most Boeing jets on order in China would be unaffected, according to analysts at equity research firm Vertical Research Partners.

Beijing's defense

Many foreign companies that are already established in China are also unhappy about how things work there.

In its latest annual survey, the American Chamber of Commerce in China found that almost half of its members feel foreign businesses are treated unfairly by the Chinese government compared with local ones.

They complain about regulations being inconsistently applied and continuing restrictions on their ability to invest across wide swathes of the economy.

Some recent Chinese deals have been blocked in the United States over national security concerns. But international business leaders have pointed out that Chinese companies are often able to carry out takeovers in Europe and North America in sectors that are off limits to foreign investors in China.

Chinese government officials have rejected accusations that foreign companies are treated unfairly and dismissed the findings of the US Trade Representative's report on intellectual property theft as "unfounded."

Beijing argues that any tech secrets that firms handed over in the country were part of deals that had been mutually agreed upon. And it insists that it is working to strengthen intellectual property protection in the country more broadly.

"We are ready to look at the specific cases if there is any violation of intellectual property rights ... We are ready to deal with these issues in accordance with our own laws," Cui Tiankai, China's ambassador to the United States, said this week.

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HEADLINE	04/05 China aims at soybean farmers
SOURCE	http://money.cnn.com/2018/04/05/news/economy/soybeans-china-trade-us/index.html
GIST	<p>American soybean farmers are worried about their best customer.</p> <p>China was the United States' largest buyer last year, gobbling up \$12.3 billion worth of soybeans, according to the Department of Agriculture. But China is planning to make US farmers pay a 25% tariff to sell beans in the country in retaliation for President Trump's proposed tariffs on Chinese goods.</p> <p>Chinese tariffs would hit farm states and more than 300,000 soybean jobs. Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Indiana and Nebraska were the largest soybean producers in 2016, according to the Agriculture Department.</p> <p>"For those farmers that are operating on thin lines of profit and credit and are already financially unstable, it easily has the ability to be the straw that breaks the camel's back," said Brent Bible, who grows soybeans and corn on 5,000 acres in Lafayette, Indiana. Bible is also a member of Farmers for Free Trade, a group that opposes Trump's tariffs.</p> <p>China has "the ability to be stubborn for a lot longer than we can remain solvent," he said.</p> <p>Tariffs would cause Bible to re-evaluate his planting strategy and possibly cut back on growing soybeans. "Do I want to plant a crop that looks more likely [to] lose money?" he wondered.</p>

Soybeans are America's leading agricultural export, with \$21.6 billion in sales last year. Nearly 60% of the beans went to China, followed by Mexico and Japan, according to Panjiva, a research firm.

American soybean production exceeds this country's demand for the crop, forcing producers to look overseas. More than half of the US soy crop is exported every year, according to the American Soybean Association, an industry trade group.

China has been an eager buyer.

Chinese companies buy raw beans from US producers and crush them up to use as a protein source in animal feed. The average soy bean seed is 36% protein, said Bill Nelson, an economist at Doane Advisory Services. Soybeans are also processed into cooking oil, used for diesel production and blended into foods like tofu and milk.

China is "trying to improve the diet of the average Chinese person. That has involved a phenomenal increase in the amount of protein meals they are consuming," Nelson said.

Farmers have benefited as China puts muscle on pigs, cows and chickens with the help of US soybeans. US bean exports to China have nearly tripled in the past decade to 32 million tons, according to the Agriculture Department.

But Brazil has overtaken the United States as China's largest soybean importer, and tariffs targeting American beans could widen Brazil's lead or boost Argentina, the third largest supplier to China.

Tariffs would make US beans less competitive to Chinese buyers and Brazil's crop more attractive. "World demand will remain roughly the same, but all these extra expenses will have to pass through," Nelson said. "Farmers are going to be the victim."

Brazil has already ramped up its crop for 2018, and its beans are slightly richer in protein than the United States' -- points that "likely underscore the Chinese government's confidence to retaliate," Barclays' Adam Seiden wrote in a note Wednesday.

Weather can influence soybeans' protein proportion, and Brazil has experienced warmer seasons, Nelson noted.

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HEADLINE	04/06 Oklahoma teachers continue walkout
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/06/us/oklahoma-teachers-walkout/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)For the fifth consecutive day, Oklahoma teachers will pack the state Capitol as lawmakers discuss three measures that affect education funding on Friday.</p> <p>Schools in Oklahoma City and Tulsa will be closed Friday because of the walkout.</p> <p>Teachers will be back in the Capitol's rotunda and the grounds outside, to pressure lawmakers on three bills.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A bill amendment would require sales from third-party retailers selling through internet outlets such as Amazon to be subject to sales tax. The Senate could vote on the Amazon sales tax bill that was passed in the House earlier in the week, which could bring in about \$20 million annually in education funding. 2. The "ball and dice" tax for gambling would also bring in about \$20 million. 3. Also at play is the hotel and motel tax that was repealed by the House after it had passed as part of Bill 1010XX last week. The state Senate will consider whether to remove the fee. <p>The Oklahoma Education Association says the motel tax, which it says would be paid by mostly non-Oklahomans, would add \$42 million in revenue and opposes its repeal.</p>

"We strongly disagree with this repeal and are asking senators to vote no on the repeal of the hotel/motel tax," said Katherine Bishop, vice president of the OEA in a Facebook message Thursday. "This is a valuable revenue source that could provide much needed additional funding for our kids and is widely supported by the public."

The OEA wants the Senate to approve the first two measures -- the Amazon tax and the "ball and dice" tax.

If those two pass, "this would make a major victory for our students that would not have happened without the thousands of people who have come to the Capitol to make their voices heard," Bishop said. "To be clear, this is why we are here, because we all want to do more for our students."

Teachers in Oklahoma say more spending on education is needed, asserting that things such as facilities, equipment and textbooks are run down, outdated or in short supply.

They and the state government are at odds over salaries and funding. Gov. Mary Fallin recently signed a bill that raises the average teacher salary by \$6,100, but the teachers' union wanted that figure to be \$10,000.

The state ranks 49th in the nation in teacher salaries, according to the National Education Association, in a list that includes Washington, DC. Two states, Mississippi and South Dakota rank lower than Oklahoma.

Fallin also signed a bill that raises education funding by \$50 million; the teachers' union wanted that number to be higher.

Since Monday, teachers have swarmed the Capitol with signs and slogans.

"I think they thought we were not going to come out in the forces that we did especially throughout the week... but we're holding strong and you don't mess with teachers when we're trying to fight for our kids," Amanda Girdler, a fourth grade teacher told CNN.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Atlantic hurricane season forecast
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/2018-atlantic-hurricane-season-colorado-state-university/
GIST	<p>The Atlantic hurricane season will be slightly above-average this year, Colorado State University (CSU) hurricane researchers predicted Thursday. The researchers cited a "relatively low likelihood of significant El Niño" conditions as a main factor.</p> <p>In total, the team believes there will be 14 named storms. Hurricane researchers predict seven of the storms will become hurricanes and three will reach "major hurricane strength with sustained winds of 111 miles per hour or greater."</p> <p>They explained why El Niño patterns are likely to make a difference.</p> <p>"El Niño tends to increase upper-level westerly winds across the Caribbean into the tropical Atlantic, tearing apart hurricanes as they try to form," the researchers said.</p> <p>CSU hurricane researchers believe this season's activity will be about 135 percent of the average season. For reference, last year's hurricane activity -- which included one major storm after another -- was nearly two and a half times greater than average.</p> <p>The team forms their forecasts by using 60 years of data, referencing sea surface temperatures, vertical wind shear levels, sea level pressures, El Niño conditions and other factors. They plan to provide updates</p>

	on May 31, July 2 and Aug. 2. The 2018 Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 to Nov. 30.
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HEADLINE	04/05 Canada: NAFTA moving forward
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-trade-nafta/nafta-nations-moving-forward-in-significant-way-canadas-trudeau-idUSKCN1HC23H
GIST	<p>OTTAWA (Reuters) - The United States, Mexico and Canada are “moving forward in a significant way” at talks to modernize the NAFTA trade pact, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Thursday.</p> <p>Trudeau’s remarks to reporters in Quebec City were the latest in a series of upbeat comments by officials in the three countries about the chances of striking some kind of deal soon on the North American Free Trade Agreement.</p> <p>“I believe we’re in a moment where we’re moving forward in a significant way. Hopefully there will be some good news coming,” Trudeau said.</p> <p>“We know these negotiations, there are good moments and there are slower moments. But right now we’re having a very productive moment of engaging with the United States and Mexico,” he added.</p> <p>Mexican officials say that with enough progress, the leaders of the three nations could make an announcement at a regional summit in Peru next week.</p> <p>The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump is pressing for a deal in principle to avoid clashing with Mexican presidential elections on July 1.</p> <p>Any such agreement would likely tackle a main issue of autos content while leaving other contentious chapters to be dealt with later, officials say.</p> <p>Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland will hold talks in Washington on Friday with U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Mexican Economy Minister Ildefonso Guajardo, said a Canadian government source.</p> <p>Freeland said on Wednesday that there was still work to do before the talks could be wrapped up.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 States sue EPA over methane delay
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-epa-methane/epa-sued-by-14-states-over-delay-in-methane-emission-standards-idUSKCN1HC2X9
GIST	<p>(Reuters) - Fourteen states filed suit on Thursday accusing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency of failing to issue regulations for curbing emissions of methane, a potent greenhouse pollutant, from existing oil and gas operations as required under the Clean Air Act.</p> <p>The legal challenge, led by New York state, came nine months after a federal appeals court sided with environmental activists who sued to block the EPA from freezing enforcement of its own rules to control methane leaks from new or modified fossil fuel facilities.</p> <p>In both instances, EPA chief Scott Pruitt has been accused of putting the interests of oil and gas companies ahead of the agency’s obligation to protect air quality, including the control of heat-trapping pollutants that scientists blame for global climate change.</p>

Pruitt, who was a leading EPA critic as attorney general of the oil-producing state of Oklahoma before beginning his tenure as head of the EPA, has said he does not believe greenhouse gas emissions are the principal driver of climate change.

As EPA administrator, Pruitt has moved to carry out U.S. President Donald Trump's campaign pledge to roll back or reconsider a slew of environmental protections deemed burdensome by the industry, including climate change regulations.

In March 2017 Trump signed an order to undo climate rules. And the EPA that month halted efforts to collect data from fossil fuel operations to prepare performance standards that states would have to follow in devising methane-control measures for existing wells, pipelines, storage tanks, pumping stations and other facilities.

It was EPA's "unreasonable delay" in developing those standards that Thursday's lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court in Washington, cited as a Clean Air Act violation.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Utah cops injured helping man on fire
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/six-utah-cops-injured-trying-help-suicidal-man-fire-n863181
GIST	<p>Six police officers were injured Thursday when they tried to help a man who lit himself on fire inside a gas station convenience store in Kaysville, Utah, near Salt Lake City, officials said.</p> <p>The Kaysville Police Department said on its Facebook page that officers responded to a report that a man was pouring gasoline on himself in the store bathroom in an attempt to commit suicide. Officers tried to wrest a lighter from the man's hand, but he lit himself on fire, burning himself and four of the officers.</p> <p>The gas station in Kaysville, Utah, where a man tried to commit suicide on Thursday. Google Maps Chief Solomon Oberg said two other officers were treated for smoke inhalation. One of the officers with the worst burns might have fallen in a puddle of gasoline created when the suicidal man filled a Jerry can with fuel from a pump and brought it into the bathroom, he said in a phone interview.</p> <p>The suicidal man, with severe burn injuries, was taken by helicopter to a hospital, the department said. Oberg said he was in critical condition.</p> <p>Noman Khan, a spokesman for the University of Utah Hospital in Salt Lake City, said four burn victims were brought to the hospital and were in good to critical condition. He said privacy laws prevented him from providing more detail.</p> <p>Oberg said one officer sustained burns on his back while another sustained arm and face burns. "I saw some of the burns, and they were substantial," he told NBC News Salt Lake City affiliate KSL.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Can National Guard troops go to border?
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/does-trump-have-power-send-national-guard-troops-border-n862891
GIST	<p>President Donald Trump announced this week that he was sending the National Guard to the U.S.-Mexico border to fight illegal immigration, signing a proclamation Wednesday invoking a part of the U.S. Code called Title 32 to do so. He estimated on Thursday that he could send anywhere from 2,000 to 4,000 troops, and that they would remain indefinitely.</p> <p>"Well probably keep them or a large portion of them until the wall is built," Trump told reporters aboard</p>

Air Force One.

Rep. Ted Lieu, D-Calif., argued earlier Thursday that Trump wasn't actually "sending" the National Guard to the border, but simply requesting individual states to do so.

Does Trump have the authority to deploy the National Guard himself? Here's how it's worked before.

The military has no legal mandate to deal with immigration issues, but there are two ways for the federal government to use the National Guard to enhance the country's border efforts.

Under the provisions of U.S. Code Title 10, the one Lieu cited in his tweet, the movement of federally funded National Guard troops is controlled by the secretary of defense. This is in effect the "federalization" of the Guard.

However, under U.S. Code Title 32, which Trump used as the basis for his proclamation, the federally funded troops remain under state control, sent only at the determination of a participating state's governor.

Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush both used Title 32 to direct National Guard forces to the southern border. In addition, the authority of Title 10 has for decades been used to federally fund military groups fighting transnational gangs that attempt to cross U.S. borders, according to a 2012 Government Accountability Office report.

WHY USE TITLE 32, NOT TITLE 10?

Title 32 broadens the scope of what National Guard personnel can do at the border.

National Guard troops under control of the federal government, as they would be under Title 10, are prohibited by the Posse Comitatus Act (PCA) from enforcing domestic laws. The PCA bars military forces from getting involved with domestic issues like immigration. The troops can only take a support role, such as training or loaning and operating equipment, as well as being involved in certain counterdrug and counterterrorism efforts.

State National Guard personnel are not subject to the PCA. In 2004, Congress passed a law that previous administrations have used to allow the federal government to fund National Guard troops participating in border security operations triggered by "homeland defense activity" under Title 32, according to a 2013 Congressional Research Report.

NBC News reported Wednesday that it is unlikely the Guard troops will have physical contact with immigrants at the border. The exact number of troops and how long they will be deployed to the border will be firmed up in the coming days, officials said.

Border states can fund and send their own National Guard troops to secure their borders, though historically many have requested Title 32 efforts so that the federal government, not the states, picks up the tab.

They can also refuse to send troops, as then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, R-Calif., did in 2006 when Bush requested that his state more than double the number of National Guard personnel deployed to the border.

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said Wednesday the administration had already started talking with states about utilizing their National Guard.

Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey and Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, both border-state Republicans, welcomed the deployments, while a spokesman for California Gov. Jerry Brown, a Democrat who has been sharply critical of the president, told reporters the request will be reviewed promptly.

Oregon's Democratic Gov. Kate Brown said she would say no.

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HEADLINE	04/06 China vows to fight tariffs 'to the end'
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-05/trump-orders-consideration-of-100-billion-in-new-china-tariffs
GIST	<p>China said it would counter U.S. protectionism "to the end, and at any cost," as a war of words over President Donald Trump's proposed tariffs on Chinese imports escalated.</p> <p>After Trump ordered his administration to consider tariffs on an additional \$100 billion in Chinese goods on Thursday, sending U.S. stock futures tumbling, China's Commerce Ministry said in a statement in Beijing Friday that the nation doesn't want a trade war, but is ready to fight one.</p> <p>Trump's unexpected move threatens to unravel efforts by top U.S. and Chinese trade officials to lower the heat and reach an agreement that could stave off an escalating conflict, after the release of a list of tariff targets earlier this week prompted immediate threats of retaliation from Beijing.</p> <p>U.S. stock futures dropped on Trump's latest trade directive to the U.S. Trade Representative. S&P 500 Index futures slid as much as 1.6 percent, after the underlying gauge ended up 0.7 percent Thursday. Asian equities were mixed, while the yen rose before retracing most of the move.</p> <p>"In light of China's unfair retaliation, I have instructed the USTR to consider whether \$100 billion of additional tariffs would be appropriate under section 301 and, if so, to identify the products upon which to impose such tariffs," Trump said in a statement issued by the White House.</p> <p>A White House official later said the \$100 billion figure Trump used in the statement referred to the value of the imports that would be covered by the additional tariffs, not the total amount of tax that would be charged on the products.</p> <p>"The Chinese side will follow suit to the end and at any cost, and will firmly attack, using new comprehensive countermeasures, to firmly defend the interest of the nation and its people," the Commerce Ministry said in a statement on its website, without further detailing any planned measures.</p> <p>"This is starting to feel like the beginnings of a trade war, if simply each proposal is matched with a retaliation," said Patrick Bennett, a Hong Kong-based strategist at Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. "The U.S. risks isolating itself from global trade in this process and we think the U.S., USD and U.S. asset markets have more to lose."</p> <p>China said Wednesday it would levy a 25 percent tariff on about \$50 billion of U.S. imports including soybeans, automobiles, chemicals and aircraft. That was in response to the release by the U.S. of a list of proposed tariffs a day earlier, covering \$50 billion in Chinese products.</p> <p>Were China to want to match Trump's latest threat in kind, it wouldn't have enough American goods imports to target. It could still take other measures -- like curbing package tours or student transfers to the U.S., or steps against American companies' operations in China.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Poisoned daughter Russian spy recovery
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/04/05/yulia-skripal-says-she-glad-say-my-strength-growing-daily/488731002/
GIST	LONDON — Police in the British capital say Yulia Skripal, who was poisoned with nerve agent along with her ex-Russian spy father, is in recovery.

Yulia Skripal, 33, said in a statement carried by the Metropolitan Police Service on Thursday that she woke up over a week ago and "am glad to say my strength is growing daily."

Sergei Skripal, 66, an ex-Russian military intelligence colonel, was found unconscious on March 4 with Yulia Skripal on a bench in Salisbury, a city in southern England. The United Kingdom has blamed Russia for the poisoning with Novichok nerve agent while the Kremlin denies any responsibility.

Yulia Skripal said she had "many people to thank" for her recovery, "and would especially like to mention the people of Salisbury that came to my aid when my father and I were incapacitated." Her father remains in the hospital.

She also thanked the staff at Salisbury District Hospital "for their care and professionalism."

She asked for the public to respect her privacy at this time.

"I am sure you appreciate that the entire episode is somewhat disorientating, and I hope that you'll respect my privacy and that of my family during the period of my convalescence," Yulia Skripal said in her statement.

A state-owned Russian TV channel released a recorded phone call earlier Thursday that it claimed took place between Yulia Skripal and her cousin Viktoria.

In the conversation played on the 60 Minute program on Rossiya 1, a woman said to be Yulia allegedly said: "Everything is ok. He (Sergei Skripal) is resting now, having a sleep. Everyone's health is fine, there are no irreparable things. I will be discharged soon. Everything is ok."

The program's hosts said they couldn't confirm if the call was authentic.

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HEADLINE	04/05 NYPD defends fatal shooting
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/saheed-vassell-brooklyn-shootings-protests/2018/04/05/id/852892/
GIST	<p>Police seeking to quell simmering anger over their shooting of a mentally disturbed black man on a New York City street released a montage of security videos Thursday that showed him minutes earlier thrusting a metal object that looked like a gun into the faces of several people — including a woman holding the hand of her child.</p> <p>A final video snippet showed the man raising the object in a two-handed shooting stance as police arrived, the edited video frozen just before officers unleashed 10 shots that left 34-year-old Saheed Vassell dead. His weapon turned out to be nothing more than an L-shaped section of pipe.</p> <p>The shooting in Brooklyn on Wednesday evening prompted two nights of protests among many who felt police should have known that Vassell, a fixture in the Crown Heights neighborhood, had emotional problems.</p> <p>But Mayor Bill De Blasio didn't lay blame on the officers, who were not from the local precinct and were passing through at the time. He said they had no information that the person they were confronting was mentally ill.</p> <p>"It's a tragedy because a man with a profound mental health problem ... was doing something that people perceived to be a threat to the safety of others," de Blasio said at a news conference shortly before the images and a partial transcript of 911 calls were released.</p> <p>"What we have seen from the images that are publicly available, people in the community thought he had a</p>

weapon and was aiming it at residents," the mayor said. "That's the kind of calls, multiple calls, that NYPD received."

According to the transcripts, one caller to 911 reported that Vassell "looks like he's crazy but he's pointing something at people that looks like a gun."

"Where is the gun?" a dispatcher asked one caller. "His hand," the caller replied.

In police radio traffic posted online, dispatchers directing officers to the scene said 911 callers were reporting only that a person was pointing a gun at people. After the shooting, the officers can be heard frantically calling for dispatchers to send an ambulance.

The release of the edited material on the New York Police Department's Twitter account — the full videos and transcripts weren't immediately provided — was meant to back up claims by the police department that the four plainclothes and two uniformed officers who responded had a legitimate reason to believe they needed to move swiftly to stop a deadly threat.

The material released by the department didn't answer questions about whether the officers had identified themselves or ordered the victim to drop the object before they opened fire. The city's medical examiner found he was hit seven to nine times, including one shot to the head.

At a vigil Thursday night, Vassell's mother, Lorna, said her son "came from a good home" and that he was not homeless.

Vassell's father, Eric, told reporters that his son had been hospitalized several times for psychiatric problems, some involving encounters with the police, but that he was polite and kind.

"Police had a choice. They always have a choice. They should not train them to kill. They should train them to protect life, to save life," Eric Vassell said in an interview with WABC-TV.

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HEADLINE	04/05 US considers additional tariffs on China
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/politics/china-tariffs-trade-war-trade-negotiations/2018/04/05/id/852884/
GIST	<p>President Donald Trump on Thursday ordered U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer to consider placing \$100 billion in additional tariffs on Chinese goods.</p> <p>"In light of China's unfair retaliation, I have instructed the USTR to consider whether \$100 billion of additional tariffs would be appropriate under section 301," Trump said in a statement issued by the White House.</p> <p>"If so, to identify the products upon which to impose such tariffs," the president said.</p> <p>Lighthizer called Trump's action "an appropriate response to China's recent threat of new tariffs."</p> <p>"The president is right to ask for additional appropriate action to obtain the elimination of the unfair acts, policies, and practices identified in USTR's report," he said in a statement.</p> <p>Beijing on Wednesday announced tariffs on 106 American products — including soybeans, pork, whiskey, and automobiles — the day after Trump slapped duties on \$50 billion in Chinese imports.</p> <p>Trump cited unfair trade practices as rationale for the tariffs, as well as to punish China for its theft of trade secrets, including software, patents, and other technology.</p> <p>President Trump has repeatedly slammed China for its unfair trade practices and for devaluing its currency</p>

against the American dollar.

The tariffs have sent Wall Street stocks tumbling in recent sessions on fears of a trade war and have threatened to unravel efforts by top U.S. and Chinese officials to reach an agreement to prevent harm to the world's two largest economies.

However, both Trump and chief economic adviser Larry Kudlow have denied a trade war would erupt with China.

"I think we're going to come to agreements," Kudlow told Neil Cavuto on Fox News on Wednesday. "I believe that the Chinese will back down and will play ball."

Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross also said he expected trade actions between the United States and China to end in a negotiated deal.

But President Trump continued the attacks on China earlier Thursday during a roundtable on tax reform in West Virginia.

"For many years, no president wanted to go against China economically," Trump told the White Sulphur Springs Civic Center. "We're going to do it.

"We had a trade deficit of almost \$500 billion last year with China.

"It was time that we did something," he said, referring to the initial round of tariffs. "We can't continue to allow this to happen.

"We can't be taken advantage of any longer," the president said. "So, we're at a point where we had to do this.

"You have to go after the people that aren't treating you right," Trump said.

In his statement, Lighthizer said "after a detailed investigation, USTR found overwhelming evidence that China's unreasonable actions are harming the U.S. economy.

"In the light of such evidence, the appropriate response from China should be to change its behavior, as China's government has pledged to do many times.

"Economies around the world, including China's own, would benefit if China would implement policies that truly reward hard work and innovation, rather than continuing its policies that distort the vital high-tech sector," he continued.

"Unfortunately, China has chosen to respond thus far with threats to impose unjustified tariffs on billions of dollars in U.S. exports, including our agricultural products.

"Such measures would undoubtedly cause further harm to American workers, farmers, and businesses," Lighthizer said.

Trump's proposed tariffs would not take effect until after the administration holds a public hearing May 15 for U.S. businesses to comment on the plan.

"No tariffs will go into effect until the respective process is complete," Lighthizer said.

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HEADLINE 04/05 Moderate quake off southern Calif. coast

SOURCE <https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/magnitude-53-quake-strikes-off-southern-california->

	coast-54264435?
GIST	<p>A magnitude 5.3 earthquake struck Thursday under the ocean off Southern California and was felt widely along the mainland coast, but there were no reports of damage except to a chimney on one of the Channel Islands.</p> <p>The U.S. Geological Survey said the quake occurred at 12:29 p.m. in the Channel Islands region, about 38 miles (61 kilometers) southwest of the mainland city of Ventura.</p> <p>Some bricks fell from a chimney at an 1860s ranch on Santa Cruz Island, but no one was hurt, said Yvonne Menard, spokeswoman for Channel Islands National Park.</p> <p>The quake's epicenter was 17 miles (27 kilometers) from Santa Cruz Island, which is largely unpopulated but does have some staff and is visited by campers.</p> <p>Authorities in Los Angeles and Ventura counties did not report any immediate damage.</p> <p>The Los Angeles Fire Department said it went into "earthquake mode" and firefighters from all 106 of its firehouses began surveys of their territories, including bridges, dams, large buildings and power lines.</p> <p>"We currently have no reports of damage or injuries," spokeswoman Margaret Stewart said.</p> <p>Scientists at the California Institute of Technology's seismology laboratory in Pasadena said the earthquake warning system under development for the West Coast gave about 10 seconds of warning before shaking arrived.</p> <p>Earthquakes of such size usually occur about once a year in Southern California, although the most recent one was in 2014, according to veteran seismologist Lucy Jones, recently retired from the USGS.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Hawaii: medically-assisted suicide legal
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/hawaii-legalizes-medically-assisted-suicide-54267794?
GIST	<p>Hawaii became the latest liberal-leaning state to legalize medically assisted suicide Thursday as the governor signed a measure into law allowing doctors to fulfill requests from terminally ill patients to prescribe life-ending medication.</p> <p>"It is time for terminally ill, mentally competent Hawaii residents who are suffering to make their own end-of-life choices with dignity, grace and peace," Gov. David Ige said.</p> <p>Ige said the law was written to ensure the patient is in full control and it provides just one option available for end-of-life care, knowing assisted suicide is not for everyone.</p> <p>"But we know that we have gotten to a point in our community that it does make sense to give the patient a choice to request the medication, obtain it and take it, or ultimately change their mind," the governor said.</p> <p>Hawaii's heavily Democratic lawmakers approved the legislation late last month. The state joins California, Colorado, Oregon, Vermont, Washington state and the District of Columbia in allowing the practice.</p> <p>Critics say they are concerned that the option will lead to hasty decisions, misdiagnoses and waning support for palliative care, in which dying people can be sedated to relieve suffering.</p> <p>The law has safeguards to prevent abuse. Two health care providers are required to confirm a patient's diagnosis, prognosis, ability to make decisions and that the request is voluntary.</p>

	<p>A counselor also must determine that the patient isn't suffering from conditions that may interfere with decision-making, such as a lack of treatment of depression.</p> <p>The patient must make two oral requests for the life-ending medication, with a 20-day waiting period in between, and sign a written request witnessed by two people, one of whom can't be a relative.</p> <p>Criminal penalties will apply to anyone who tampers with a request or coerces a prescription for life-ending medication.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Mexico slams US Nat'l Guard border plan
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mexican-senate-candidates-slam-deployment-us-guardsmen-54256890?
GIST	<p>Mexican politicians put aside differences Thursday to condemn U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to deploy National Guard troops to the border.</p> <p>In the midst of a hotly contested campaign ahead of the July 1 presidential elections, President Enrique Pena Nieto praised even opposition candidates he usually quarrels with, as they joined in criticizing Trump's latest move.</p> <p>"The presidential candidates, independently of their natural differences, all of them coincided in rejecting these measures that run counter to good relations between neighbors," Pena Nieto said in a broadcast message.</p> <p>He mentioned all four candidates, including front runner Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, at whom he has levelled veiled criticism in the past, in part because Lopez Obrador has pledged to undo some of Pena Nieto's market-oriented reforms if elected.</p> <p>Lopez Obrador said on Wednesday that "we will not accept the use of force, the militarization of the border. Problems aren't solved that way; peace and tranquility are derived from justice." Lopez Obrador said Mexico should send a line of white-clad peace demonstrators to the border.</p> <p>Pena Nieto added, addressing Trump, "if your recent statements are derived from your frustration with (U.S.) domestic politics, with your laws or your congress, deal with them, not with us Mexicans. We will not allow any negative rhetoric to define our actions."</p> <p>The country's Senate passed a resolution Wednesday calling on Mexico's government to suspend cooperation with the U.S. on illegal immigration and drug trafficking in retaliation for Trump's move.</p> <p>Presidential candidate Ricardo Anaya went further, saying Mexico should limit anti-terrorism cooperation until the National Guard is withdrawn. Anaya is the candidate of a left-right coalition in the country's July 1 presidential election.</p> <p>Ruling party candidate Jose Antonio Meade said that "independently of our political differences, it is time for all the presidential candidates to unite in defense of the sovereignty and dignity of the nation ... to reject and repudiate thus kind of measure."</p> <p>Others took Trump's decision with a grain of salt after the Mexican government said Guard troops "will not carry weapons or have immigration or customs duties."</p> <p>The newspaper El Heraldo said in a headline Thursday "U.S. deploys National Guard ... tin soldiers."</p> <p>On the border, Mexicans unanimously rejected the measure, but also agreed it wouldn't have much practical effect.</p>

	<p>"The attitude of militarization seems to us like just one more insult that we Mexicans don't deserve," said Ramon Galindo, the state government representative in Ciudad Juarez, across the border from El Paso, Texas.</p> <p>"Having soldiers on the other side won't make absolutely any difference at all," Galindo said, noting that migration, trade and cross-border exchanges are a reality.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Panama pulls ambassador out Venezuela
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/venezuela-suspends-panamanian-businesses-airline-54269119?
GIST	<p>Panama pulled its ambassador from Venezuela on Thursday, retaliating after the South American nation banned key Panamanian businesses from operating within its borders.</p> <p>Tension between the two countries began escalating in recent days when Panama put President Nicolas Maduro on a list of Venezuelan officials as being at "high risk" for laundering money.</p> <p>Venezuela on Thursday announced a temporary ban for a group of Panamanian businesses and leaders. That included President Juan Carlos Varela and Copa, one of the few airlines still operating within Venezuela.</p> <p>In announcing the withdrawal of its envoy, Panama's government described the Venezuelan move as being "a political reaction lacking substance." Panama also asked Venezuela to call home its ambassador from Panama, officials said.</p> <p>The dispute comes as Venezuela is mired in economic and political crisis and finds itself increasingly isolated from the global community.</p> <p>The 90-day ban restricts commercial activities within Venezuela by 22 business leaders and 46 companies in Panama.</p> <p>Caracas justified the suspension by saying it adds a "measure of protection of the financial, economic and commercial system."</p> <p>Panama has named 16 Venezuelan companies and 55 individuals suspected of money laundering.</p> <p>The list also includes Venezuela's vice president, socialist party leader Diosdado Cabello and Attorney General Tarek William Saab.</p> <p>The United States has sanctioned Maduro and dozens of top officials, accusing the country of human rights abuses and sliding into a dictatorship.</p> <p>The European Union has also imposed economic and travel sanctions on seven senior Venezuelan officials accused of breaching the rule of law.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/06 Russia: Britain 'playing w/fire' in spy case
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russia-britain-playing-fire-spy-case-54276345?
GIST	<p>The international furor over the poisoning of a former Russian spy and his daughter intensified, with Russia warning Britain that it was "playing with fire."</p>

At a U.N. Security Council meeting on Thursday, Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia claimed that Russia was the victim of a hasty, sloppy and ill-intentioned defamation campaign by London and its allies.

Britain has blamed Russia for the March 4 poisoning of Sergei Skripal and his daughter. In response, more than two dozen Western allies including Britain, the U.S. and NATO have ordered out over 150 Russian diplomats in a show of solidarity. Moscow has fiercely denied its involvement in the nerve agent attack and expelled an equal number of envoys. The diplomatic turmoil has hit lows unseen even at the height of the Cold War.

Moscow assumes "with a high degree of probability" that the intelligence services of other countries are likely responsible for the incident, Nebenzia said at the U.N.

"Everything confirms this is a coordinated, very well-planned campaign" intended "to discredit and even delegitimize Russia," he added.

Britain's U.N. Ambassador Karen Pierce shot back that Russia has come up with 24 theories on who bears responsibility for the poisoning, but the United Kingdom has only one — that it's highly likely Russia was responsible.

Nebenzia refused to name the intelligence services that Russia suspects, but said their goal is to accuse Moscow of using "a horrible, inhumane weapon, of concealing the arsenal of this substance," of violating the Chemical Weapons Convention, and putting in question Russia's "role not only in finding a solution in Syria, but anywhere else."

He warned: "We have told our British colleagues that you are playing with fire and you will be sorry."

Britain's Pierce said Russia's 24 theories for the attack include blaming it on terrorists and saying Britain wanted to distract from Brexit, its departure from the European Union.

Adding to the intrigue was a recording aired Thursday by Russian state Rossiya TV of a purported phone call between Yulia Skripal and her cousin in Russia. In the call, Yulia Skripal allegedly said she and her father were both recovering and in normal health, and that her father's health was not irreparably damaged.

Rossiya TV said Skripal's niece, Viktoria, who lives in Moscow, gave it the purported recording, although the broadcaster said it could not verify its authenticity.

Moscow has steadfastly hammered away at Britain's account of what befell the Skripals on March 4, especially the claim that their exposure to a Novichok nerve agent developed by the Soviet Union meant the attack was carried out by Russia.

During the Security Council meeting, Nebenzia questioned the British government's claims of Russian responsibility by posing a series of questions.

He asked why the British policeman was affected by the nerve agent immediately when it took four hours for Skripal and his daughter to be affected. He asked what antidotes for exposure to Novichok the Skripals were given, where the Skripals were for four hours without cellphones on the day of the attack, and what happened to two cats and two guinea pigs in the Skripal's house.

Russia has said it never produced Novichok and completed the destruction of its chemical arsenals under international control last year. Nebenzia insisted that Britain is required to allow Russia to cooperate in the investigation.

"Great Britain refuses to cooperate with us on the pretext that the victim does not cooperate with the criminal," he said. "A crime was committed on British territory, possibly a terrorist act, and it is our citizens who are the victims."

	<p>He said both Skripal and Yulia are Russian citizens, and Moscow must be granted access to them.</p> <p>Pierce said the U.K. has left it to Yulia to decide whether to give Russia consular access to her.</p> <p>The British government says it relied on a combination of scientific analysis and other intelligence to conclude that the nerve agent came from Russia. But the Foreign Office on Wednesday deleted a tweet from last month that said scientists at Britain's defense research facility, the Porton Down laboratory, had identified the substance as "made in Russia."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/06 Israel, Hamas in border showdown
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/israel-hamas-gear-gaza-border-showdown-54276550?
GIST	<p>Israel and Hamas geared up Friday for another showdown on the Gaza-Israel border, amid concerns about renewed bloodshed after more than a dozen Palestinians were killed and hundreds injured by Israeli fire in a mass protest last week.</p> <p>Friday's march is the second in what Gaza's Hamas rulers said would be several weeks of protests against a decade-old border blockade of the territory.</p> <p>Activists plan to burn large numbers of tires Friday, in hopes that clouds of black smoke will block the view of Israeli snipers deployed on the other side of the border fence.</p> <p>Israel has accused Hamas of trying to carry out border attacks under the cover of large protests and said it will prevent a breach of the fence at all costs.</p> <p>Israel's defense minister has warned that protesters approaching the border fence endanger their lives, drawing condemnation from rights groups that said such seemingly broad open-fire rules are unlawful.</p> <p>A leading Israeli rights group, B'Tselem, issued a rare appeal to Israeli soldiers to refuse "grossly illegal" orders to fire at unarmed protesters.</p> <p>Last Friday, thousands of Gaza residents participated in a mass demonstration, many gathering in five tent encampments that had been set up from north to south along the narrow coastal strip's border with Israel, each at a distance of about several hundred meters from the fence. Smaller groups, mostly young men, rushed forward, throwing stones, hurling firebombs or burning tires and drawing Israeli fire.</p> <p>In all, 22 Palestinians were killed in Gaza over the past week, among them 16 involved in last Friday's protests, according to Gaza health officials. This includes a 30-year-old who died on Friday of injuries sustained last week, the officials said.</p> <p>The six other deaths included three gunmen killed in what Israel said were attempts to attack the border and three men who were struck by Israeli tank fire.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/06 Israel deploys tanks to Gaza border
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-israeli-snipers-tanks-deploy-gaza-border-54278382?
GIST	The Latest on the Gaza Palestinians protest march and the violence along the Gaza-Israel border (all times local):

10:20 a.m.

Israeli snipers and tanks have taken up positions ahead of an expected mass protest by Palestinians along the Gaza-Israel border fence.

In one location, protesters burned several tires near the border on Friday, sending clouds of black smoke into the air. Palestinian activists plan to burn many tires in hopes the smoke will block the view of snipers.

The planned march is the second in what Gaza's Hamas rulers have said would be weeks of protests against a decade-old border blockade of the territory. Israel alleges Hamas is trying to carry out border attacks under the cover of protests and says it will prevent a breach of the fence at all costs.

The Gaza death toll since last week rose to 22, after a 30-year-old man died on Friday of injuries from last week's demonstrations.

8 a.m.

Israel and Hamas are gearing up for another showdown on the Gaza-Israel border, amid concerns about more bloodshed after more than a dozen Palestinians were killed in a mass protest last week.

Israel says it will prevent a border breach at all costs, warning that protesters approaching the border fence will endanger their lives. Rights groups have denounced such seemingly broad open-fire rules as unlawful.

Friday's march is the second in what Gaza's Hamas rulers say will be weeks of protests against a decade-old border blockade. Activists say they will burn tires to block the view of Israeli snipers with black smoke.

Turnout has been driven by desperation among Gaza residents and Hamas' tight organization. The group has promised to pay compensation to the families of those killed and wounded.

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HEADLINE	04/06 Pakistan PM arrives in Afghanistan
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/pakistani-prime-minister-afghanistan-ease-tensions-54277720?
GIST	<p>Pakistan's prime minister arrived in Afghanistan on Friday for a day-long visit many see as an effort to ease strained relations between the two neighbors and revive a push for peace talks with the Taliban.</p> <p>Shahid Khaqan Abbasi was welcomed by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and the two inspected an honor guard at the Presidential Palace in Kabul before heading in for meetings.</p> <p>Abbasi, accompanied by several other top Pakistani officials on the trip, his first to Kabul since becoming prime minister last year, is to hold meetings with a string of Afghan officials, according to Ghani's spokesman, Shah Hussain Murtazawi.</p> <p>Pakistan has been under pressure from Kabul and Washington to stop offering safe havens to militants blamed for attacks in Afghanistan, a charge Islamabad denies.</p> <p>Pakistan, widely believed to be the only party that can bring the Taliban to the negotiating table, also insists its influence over the insurgents has been exaggerated.</p> <p>Kabul and Islamabad regularly trade accusations of harboring the other country's militants and the harsh language has underscored the strains between them.</p>

	<p>Late on Thursday, Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement rejecting a claim made by Kabul of Islamabad having violated Afghan airspace with Pakistani Air Force raids inside Afghan territory during counter-terrorism operations earlier in the week.</p> <p>The statement said information about the ongoing "operations is shared with the Afghan security forces on a regular basis." In the latest military actions, Pakistan told the Afghan about them and stressed that these operations were on Pakistani side of the border, it said.</p> <p>Islamabad accuses Kabul of failing to take action against militant groups who continue to attack Pakistan from their sanctuaries across the border in Afghanistan.</p> <p>"Pakistan urges Afghanistan to focus on taking effective counter-terrorism actions, including plugging in of large gaps existing along the Afghan side of Pakistan-Afghanistan border," the statement said, adding that "it is also important that the Afghan government should refrain from the blame game."</p> <p>Also on Thursday, Javid Faisal, deputy spokesman for Afghanistan's chief executive, Abdullah Abdullah, said that Pakistan's support was critical to talks with the Taliban and that Abbasi's visit would help improve the troubled Afghan-Pakistan relations.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 China files complaint US tariff measures
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/china-files-complaint-us-tariff-measures/story?id=54259862&cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>China has formally filed a complaint against planned U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods, the World Trade Organization said today.</p> <p>China "requested consultations" over the Trump administration's plans to impose tariffs, officially initiating a dispute with the WTO, the global trade body said.</p> <p>"Consultations give the parties an opportunity to discuss the matter and to find a satisfactory solution without proceeding further with litigation," the WTO said. "After 60 days, if consultations have failed to resolve the dispute, the complainant may request adjudication by a panel."</p> <p>The United States on Tuesday proposed adding a 25 percent tariff to \$50 billion of goods imported from China, and China said the next day it would impose its own 25 percent tariff on approximately \$50 billion of U.S. exports and that it had initiated a dispute settlement procedure against the U.S.</p> <p>Both countries have listed specific products from the other country that they said they planned to tax.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Experts: danger of open work spaces
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/youtube-shooting-spotlights-danger-open-work-spaces-expert/story?
GIST	<p>Tuesday's shooting at YouTube headquarters has highlighted the vulnerabilities in workplace security -- especially in the open campus model often favored by Silicon Valley tech companies.</p> <p>"There are some companies, particularly in the tech sector, that try to create a work environment that's open, that's more relaxed," said John Cohen, an ABC News contributor and former U.S. counterterrorism coordinator for the Department of Homeland Security. "The whole idea is that in addition to the stressful work that employees are involved in every day, that there are parts of the environment that's meant to be conducive to relaxation."</p>

"Most companies have embraced security protocols that restrict access" to these open campuses, Cohen told ABC News. However "once you're in the campus, they're designed to be free and open spaces because that's conducive to the type of environment they want to have in place to foster creativity and productivity."

"The problem is, from a security perspective, the more open, the more that an individual can move around and come into contact with other people, the easier it is for an attacker to operate in that environment, as well," Cohen said.

With open work spaces, employees "aren't in self-contained offices with doors that can lock -- they're instead in these huge rooms. There may be controlled access to get into that work space," Cohen said, but "that controlled access can be bypassed by someone who is really committed to do it." And once you get inside the open space, there is "tremendous accessibility," he added.

The Silicon Valley is unique in that it is peppered with big-name tech companies with wide open campuses meant to be a relaxing environment for their employees.

Some Silicon Valley companies are reluctant to talk about the open campus security issues in the wake of Tuesday's shooting. But the YouTube attack does have some companies reviewing security procedures.

Google, YouTube's parent company, said in a statement that it is reviewing the events of Tuesday and taking action worldwide.

In the wake of the shooting, San Bruno Police Chief Ed Barberini said officers have "trained with YouTube regarding critical incidents."

"There is security on site," Barberini told reporters today. "We just have to figure out the area where she entered, what level of security existed at that point."

Chief Barberini said, "From a law enforcement perspective we're always advocating for heightened security."

"I know we might measure that with people having to operate a business," Barberini said, "so, I guess from a law enforcement perspective it's just a little biased. We're always looking for opportunities to harden targets or making environments as safe as possible for folks that work there."

Workplace security goes beyond open campuses and has evolved over time.

Before 9/11, "Security was generally seen as a cost and it was not typically a priority for the business leadership," said Cohen.

"After 9/11 there was growing recognition among security professionals that more needed to be done to secure private businesses," Cohen added.

However, Cohen said, "There was always sort of a conflict -- security professionals who wanted to secure locations ... and business leaders from those corporate entities who were concerned about the perception that oversecritization [like physical security personnel and building upgrades] might create." And it was still seen as a "cost on the balance sheet," he added.

Now, business leaders are increasingly recognizing the damage to their brand should a successful attack take place at one of their facilities, Cohen said.

"We're beginning to see those same business leaders come to understand that creating a safe environment for the workers and for visitors not only can enhance your brand but can make people more comfortable and more productive," Cohen said.

To Cohen, the main security threat for businesses right now is an individual with a vendetta against an employee or company gaining access to the building and then using a knife or gun to target employees.

Cohen said the two key places where business professionals should focus their attention are: controlling access to the building and then controlling access to the interior of the building or campus.

And as business leaders address the security points, they must also communicate with their employees, finding the delicate balance of not creating a fearful environment or negatively impacting productivity, but still making the employees prepared through tools like active shooter training and online classes.

To Cohen, not investing in security may be "short-sighted" because a successful attack could dramatically undermine the company by: impacting the brand, hurting the ability to bring in employees and interrupting the ability to conduct business and generate revenue.

"Not every company is going to have the resources to hire security intelligence analysts," Cohen said, "but in this current threat environment, every company has to have some awareness into these security issues and they have to factor that into their business planning."

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HEADLINE	04/05 Minneapolis PD new body-cam policy
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/minneapolis-police-beefing-body-cam-policy-scrutiny/story?
GIST	<p>Minneapolis police issued new body camera regulations in the wake of a controversial case in which they were not activated -- when a woman was fatally shot by a police officer in July 2017.</p> <p>The new rules allow the department to discipline officers who do not comply, which was not done in the case of Justine Ruszczuk Damond.</p> <p>But John Elder, the department's public information officer, denied that the policy change was a "knee-jerk" reaction to the Damond case.</p> <p>"I won't say that it's a coincidence" that the policy changes are coming after the public scrutiny over the officer-involved shooting, Elder told ABC News. "What I can say is, in fact, we've learned a lot over the totality of the use of body cameras and we made changes and we may continue to make changes to better serve everybody the policy is intended to serve."</p> <p>The city's police department has been using body cameras for a little over a year, Elder said, and the new policies reflect some changes they believe are needed.</p> <p>"We knew as any new policy starts there's going to be tweaks to it and there are going to be different and better ways to serve," he said.</p> <p>Under the new rules, after receiving a 911 call or call for service, officers are required to activate their body cameras within two blocks of the destination. If the call comes within two blocks of the destination, they must activate it immediately.</p> <p>Elder said that by shortening the activation period to within two blocks of the destination as opposed to when the call is received, the department will save money on storage of the footage.</p> <p>"The fact of the matter is we're spending a great deal of money in storage of this data and we're able to accomplish the same outcome if we have the officers activate it at the minimum two blocks away," he told ABC News.</p> <p>The potential disciplinary actions under the rules range from a 40-hour suspension to termination, according to The Star Tribune.</p>

	<p>"For the first time, we're going to give it teeth," Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey said at a news conference Wednesday, according to The Star Tribune.</p> <p>The Damond shooting put a spotlight on the use of body cameras. Damond had called 911 to report a possible assault behind her house and she ended up being fatally shot by one of the responding officers.</p> <p>Neither of the officers had activated their body cameras. The officer who fired the fatal shots, Mohamed Noor, was charged with murder. He was released on bail last month and it was not clear if he entered a plea.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	04/05 Secret Service warns of chip card scheme
SOURCE	https://krebsonsecurity.com/2018/04/secret-service-warns-of-chip-card-scheme/
GIST	<p>The U.S. Secret Service is warning financial institutions about a new scam involving the temporary theft of chip-based debit cards issued to large corporations. In this scheme, the fraudsters intercept new debit cards in the mail and replace the chips on the cards with chips from old cards. When the unsuspecting business receives and activates the modified card, thieves can start draining funds from the account.</p> <p>Signs of a card with an old or invalid chip include heat damage around the chip or on the card, or a small hole in the plastic used to pry the chip off the card. Image: U.S. Secret Service.</p> <p>According to an alert sent to banks late last month, the entire scheme goes as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Criminals intercept mail sent from a financial institution to large corporations that contain payment cards, targeting debit payment cards with access to large amount of funds. 2. The crooks remove the chip from the debit payment card using a heat source that warms the glue. 3. Criminals replace the chip with an old or invalid chip and repackage the payment card for delivery. 4. Criminals place the stolen chip into an old payment card. 5. The corporation receives the debit payment card without realizing the chip has been replaced. 6. The corporate office activates the debit payment card; however, their payment card is inoperable thanks to the old chip. 7. Criminals use the payment card with the stolen chip for their personal gain once the corporate office activates the card. <p>The reason the crooks don't just use the debit cards when intercepting them via the mail is that they need the cards to be activated first, and presumably they lack the privileged information needed to do that. So, they change out the chip and send the card on to the legitimate account holder and then wait for it to be activated.</p> <p>The Secret Service memo doesn't specify at what point in the mail process the crooks are intercepting the cards. It could well involve U.S. Postal Service employees (or another delivery service), or perhaps the thieves are somehow gaining access to company mailboxes directly. Either way, this alert shows the extent to which some thieves will go to target high-value customers.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/06 Cyberattacks more organized, structured
SOURCE	https://www.helpnetsecurity.com/2018/04/06/2018-trustwave-global-security-report/
GIST	<p>Trustwave released the 2018 Trustwave Global Security Report which reveals the top security threats, breaches by industry, and cybercrime trends from 2017. The report is derived from the analysis of billions of logged security and compromise events worldwide, hundreds of hands-on data-beach investigations and internal research.</p> <p>Findings depict improvement in areas such as intrusion to detection however, also showed increased sophistication in malware obfuscation, social engineering tactics, and advanced persistent threats.</p> <p>North America and retail lead in data breaches Although slightly down from the previous year, North America still leads in data breaches investigated by Trustwave at 43% followed by the Asia Pacific region at 30%, Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) at 23% and Latin America at 4%. The retail sector suffered the most breach incidences at 16.7% followed by the finance and insurance industry at 13.1% and hospitality at 11.9%.</p> <p>Compromise and environment type matters Half of the incidents investigated involved corporate and internal networks (up from 43% in 2016) followed by e-commerce environments at 30%. Incidents impacting point-of-sale (POS) systems decreased by more than a third to 20% of the total. This is reflective of increased attack sophistication and targeting of larger service providers and franchise head offices and less on smaller high-volume targets in previous years.</p> <p>Social engineering tops methods of compromise In corporate network environments, phishing and social engineering at 55% was the leading method of compromise followed by malicious insiders at 13% and remote access at 9%. This indicates the human factor remains the greatest hurdle for corporate cybersecurity teams. “CEO fraud”, a social engineering scam encouraging executives to authorize fraudulent money transactions continues to increase.</p> <p>All web applications found to be vulnerable One hundred percent of web applications tested displayed at least one vulnerability with 11 as the median number detected per application. 85.9% of web application vulnerabilities involved session management allowing an attacker to eavesdrop on a user session to commandeer sensitive information.</p> <p>Web attacks becoming more targeted Targeted web attacks are becoming prevalent and much more sophisticated. Many breach incidents show signs of careful preplanning by cybercriminals probing for weak packages and tools to exploit. Cross-site scripting (XSS) was involved in 40% of attack attempts, followed by SQL Injection (SQLi) at 24%, Path Traversal at 7%, Local File Inclusion (LFI) at 4%, and Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) at 3%.</p> <p>Malware using persistence techniques Although 30% of malware examined used obfuscation to avoid detection and bypass first line defenses, 90% used persistence techniques to reload after reboot.</p> <p>Service providers are now in the crosshairs Of great concern is a marked increase at 9.5% in compromises targeting businesses that provides IT services including web-hosting providers, POS integrators and help-desk providers. A compromise of just one provider opens the gates to a multitude of new targets. In 2016, service provider compromises did not register in the statistics.</p> <p>Large disparity when breaches are detected internally versus externally The median time between intrusion and detection for externally detected compromises was 83 days in 2017, a stark increase from 65 days in 2016. Median time between intrusion and detection for compromises discovered internally however, dropped to zero days in 2017 from 16 days in 2016, meaning businesses discovered the majority of breaches the same day they happened.</p>

Payment card data is still king

Down from the previous year, payment card data at 40% still reigns supreme in terms of data types targeted in a breach. The figure is split between magnetic stripe data at 22% and card-not-present (CNP) at 18%. Surprisingly, incidents targeting hard cash is on the rise at 11% mostly due to fraudulent ATM transaction breaches enabled by compromise of account management systems at financial institutions.

Necurs keeps malware-laced spam high

Several major Necurs botnet campaigns for propagating ransomware (including WannaCry), banking trojans and other damaging payloads kept spam containing malware high at 26%, down from 34.6% in 2016. Interestingly, more than 90% of spam-borne malware are delivered inside archive file such as .zip, .7z and RAR, typically labeled as invoices or other types of business files.

Database and network security, a year of critical patching

The number of vulnerabilities patched in five of the most common database products was 119, down from 170 in 2016. Fifty three percent of computers with SMBv1 enabled were vulnerable to MS17-010 "ETERNALBLUE" exploits used to disseminate the WannaCry and NotPetya ransomware attacks.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Atlanta shuts water dept. website
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-cyber-atlanta-water/atlanta-takes-down-water-department-website-two-weeks-after-cyber-attack-idUSKCN1HC2WB
GIST	<p>(Reuters) - Atlanta took down its water department website indefinitely on Thursday, two weeks after a ransomware cyber attack tore through the city's computer systems in one of the most disruptive hacks ever to strike a U.S. local government.</p> <p>"The Department of Watershed Management's website ... will be offline for server maintenance and updates until further notice," the City of Atlanta wrote on Twitter.</p> <p>Atlanta's watershed department was among the operations hard-hit by the March 23 attack that continues to block access to databases, postpone municipal court dates and stifle the city's ability to collect some payments for public services.</p> <p>Employees with the water department said they were unable to turn on their work computers or gain wireless internet access for roughly a week after the attack, but they were instructed to report to their offices at City Hall anyway.</p> <p>Many of the department's systems have lumbered back to life in recent days, but there is still disruption, said one employee, who asked not to be identified.</p> <p>"There's definitely work not being done and there's definitely bills not being able to be paid," the employee said.</p> <p>Hackers used a potent computer virus known as SamSam to encrypt large swaths of city data in the attack and demanded a payment of six bitcoins, worth \$51,000 at the time, to release the information.</p> <p>Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, who took office in January, has declined to say whether the city was negotiating with the hackers.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Retail sector top cyberattack target
SOURCE	https://www.computerweekly.com/news/252438382/Retail-sector-top-cyber-attack-target

GIST

The retail sector suffered the most breach incidences (16.7%) in 2017 as attackers became more organised, the latest Trustwave security report shows.

The retail sector was followed by the finance and insurance industry (13.1%) and hospitality (11.9%), according to the 2018 Trustwave global security report, which is based on the analysis of billions of security events worldwide, hundreds of data-breach investigations and internal research.

However, despite the high volume of attacks on the retail sector, the report shows that incidents impacting point-of-sale (POS) systems decreased by more than a third to 20% of the total, which is attributed to increased attack sophistication and targeting of larger service providers and franchise head offices rather than smaller high-volume targets.

The report notes a marked increase of 9.5% in compromises targeting businesses that provides IT services including web-hosting providers, POS integrators and help-desk providers. A compromise of just one provider opens the gates to a multitude of new targets. In 2016, service provider compromises did not register in the statistics, the report said.

Phishing and social engineering was the top method of compromise (55%), followed by malicious insiders (13%) remote access (9%). This indicates the human factor remains the greatest hurdle for corporate cyber security teams, the report, noting that “CEO fraud”, a social engineering scam encouraging executives to authorise fraudulent money transactions continues to increase.

All web applications tested displayed at least one vulnerability with 11 as the median number detected per application. Most of the web application vulnerabilities (85.9%) involved session management allowing an attacker to eavesdrop on a user session to commandeer sensitive information.

Targeted web attacks are becoming prevalent and much more sophisticated, the report shows, with many breach incidents showing signs of careful preplanning by cyber criminals probing for weak packages and tools to exploit

Cross-site scripting (XSS) was involved in 40% of attack attempts, followed by SQL injection (SQLi) at 24%, path traversal at 7%, local file inclusion (LFI) at 4%, and distributed denial of service (DDoS) at 3%.

Although 30% of malware examined used obfuscation to avoid detection and bypass first line defences, 90% used persistence techniques to reload after reboot, the report said.

The median time between intrusion and detection for externally detected compromises was 83 days in 2017, up from 65 days in 2016. However, the median time between intrusion and detection for compromises discovered internally dropped to zero days in 2017 from 16 days in 2016, meaning businesses discovered the majority of breaches the same day they happened.

Although down from the previous year, payment card data is still the most highly targeted type of data in breaches, accounting for 40% of data stolen in all the breaches analysed.

The data shows that several major Necurs botnet campaigns were responsible for propagating ransomware, banking trojans and other damaging payloads, with spam containing malware remaining high at 26%, although down from 34.6% in 2016. More than 90% of spam-borne malware is delivered inside archive file such as .zip and is typically labeled as invoices or other types of business files the report said.

Computers vulnerable

Although the number of vulnerabilities patched in five of the most common database products was 119 – down from 170 in 2016 – the report said 53% of computers with server message block protocol version 1 enabled were vulnerable to the Eternalblue exploit used to disseminate the WannaCry and NotPetya attacks.

Vulnerabilities have seen a sharp surge in the past decade, the report said, with a marked increase in

	<p>vulnerability disclosures from 2012 and a dramatic spike in 2017.</p> <p>“This is in part due to the doubling of internet users over the course of a decade. The technically savvy, including both security researchers and criminals, are now actively looking for vulnerabilities with the latter selling corresponding exploits on the dark web to make hefty profits. More vulnerabilities equate to greater potential for exploitations,” the report said.</p> <p>The report shows that cyber criminals and their attacks are becoming more methodical and organised, said Steve Kelley, chief marketing officer at Trustwave. “As long as cyber crime remains profitable, we will continue to see threat actors quickly evolving and adapting methods to penetrate networks and steal data.</p> <p>“Security is as much a ‘people’ issue as it is a technology issue. To stay on par with determined adversaries, organisations must have access to security experts who can think and operate like an attacker while making best use of the technologies deployed,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/06 Russia sues to block Telegram app
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-telegram/russia-files-lawsuit-to-block-telegram-messaging-app-idUSKCN1HD143
GIST	<p>MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia’s state communications watchdog said on Friday it had filed a lawsuit to limit access to the Telegram messaging app after the company refused to give Russian state security services access to its users’ secret messages.</p> <p>Ranked as the world’s ninth most popular mobile messaging app, Telegram is widely used in countries across the former Soviet Union and Middle East. Active users of the app reached 200 million in March.</p> <p>As part of its services, Telegram allows users to communicate via encrypted messages which cannot be read by third parties, including government authorities.</p> <p>But Russia’s FSB Federal Security service has said it needs access to some messages for its work, including guarding against terrorist attacks. Telegram has refused to comply with its demands, citing respect for user privacy.</p> <p>Russia’s Roskomnadzor communications watchdog said it had filed a lawsuit at a Moscow court on Friday “with a request to restrict access on the territory of Russia to the information resources of ... Telegram Messenger Limited Liability Partnership.”</p> <p>It said the suit was connected to statements by the FSB that Telegram was not complying with its legal obligations as an “organizer of information distribution.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/06 Facebook secretly deletes some messages
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/facebook-secretly-deletes-some-of-zuckerbergs-private-messages-1?ref=home
GIST	<p>Lots of us have sent a message on Facebook we wish we could delete, but, unlike other messaging apps such as WhatsApp, you can’t take back sent messages on the site—unless, that is, you’re Mark Zuckerberg.</p> <p>Facebook has confirmed some of the Facebook founder’s messages to users have disappeared from their inboxes, with the company claiming it was done to protect corporate security.</p> <p>Facebook never publicly disclosed the removal of messages from users’ inboxes, nor privately informed</p>

	<p>the recipients, news site TechCrunch reported.</p> <p>A spokesperson for Facebook said: “After Sony Pictures’ emails were hacked in 2014, we made a number of changes to protect our executives’ communications. These included limiting the retention period for Mark’s messages in Messenger. We did so in full compliance with our legal obligations to preserve messages.”</p> <p>Normal Facebook users cannot delete their messages from recipients’ inboxes, indicating Zuckerberg and other executives receive special treatment in being able to pull back their sent messages.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Facebook scans users private messages
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/mark-zuckerberg-admits-facebook-scans-user-private-messages/
GIST	<p>If you thought your conversations on Facebook Messenger are private then think again.</p> <p>In a recent interview founder and CEO of Facebook Mark Zuckerberg admitted that the social media giant scans user messages to block any content that goes against the company’s rules and regulations.</p> <p>This was revealed by Zuckerberg during a podcast interview with Ezra Klein, Vox’s editor at large in which he recalled a situation where the company detected that people were trying to spread “sensational messages” in Myanmar concerning the Rohingya community and the incitement of violence on both sides. As a result, Facebook detected and stopped them from reaching its destination.</p> <p>“It is clear that people [are] trying to use our tools in order to incite real harm,” said Zuckerberg. “Our systems detect what’s going on ... We stop those messages from going through.”</p> <p>“On Messenger, when you send a photo, our automated systems scan it using photo matching technology to detect known child exploitation imagery or when you send a link, we scan it for malware or viruses,” a Facebook spokesperson confirmed to Bloomberg.</p> <p>“Facebook designed these automated tools so we can rapidly stop abusive behavior on our platform.” The scanned data is not used for advertising, the spokesperson claimed.</p> <p>Although not surprising, Zuckerberg’s admission did disappoint Facebook users to some extent. The news came days after Facebook users on Android devices while downloading their Facebook data, found out that the company collected their personal data including call and SMS logs.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 The Pirate Bay is down once again
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/yes-the-pirate-bay-is-down-once-again/
GIST	<p>You are not alone – The Pirate Bay has been down for last seven hours.</p> <p>It is just another day with just another disappointing news for The Pirate Bay fans. Yes, you are not alone, the torrent search and downloading giant is down for everyone.</p> <p>Those visiting The Pirate Bay right now can see “Error 522 Connection timed out” message generated by Cloudflare since The Pirate Bay uses its CDN and DDoS protection service.</p> <p>According to Cloudflare, Error 522 indicates that the service was unable to reach the origin web server at all. It could be so because the server was overloaded or down, its firewall was blocking requests or misconfiguration with DNS and IP addresses.</p> <p>Is It Down Right Now noted that The Pirate Bay is facing service outage for almost 7 hours, however,</p>

	<p>there are several The Pirate Bay alternatives available here. Another good news is that the dark web domain of The Pirate Bay is still up and available for visitors.</p> <p>Remember, The Pirate Bay has been suffering service outage every now and then since its .SE domain was taken from the company on the orders of a Swedish court. But the reason for its increasing downtime still remains unclear.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Report: 100% web apps w/vulnerabilities
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/100-of-web-apps-contain/
GIST	<p>A totality – a full 100% – of web applications are vulnerable to hackers.</p> <p>According to Trustwave’s 2018 Global Security Report, derived from the analysis of billions of logged security and compromise events worldwide, all apps tested displayed at least 1 vulnerability, with 11 as the median number detected per application. A majority (85.9%) of web application vulnerabilities involved session management, allowing an attacker to eavesdrop on a user session to commandeer sensitive information.</p> <p>Vulnerabilities overall have seen a sharp surge, the report found. After remaining relatively level from 2008 to 2011, a marked increase in vulnerability disclosures began in 2012, with a dramatic spike in 2017. This is in part due to the doubling of internet users over the course of a decade, Trustwave pointed out: The technically savvy, including both security researchers and criminals, are now actively looking for vulnerabilities with the latter selling corresponding exploits on the dark web to make hefty profits. More vulnerabilities of course equate to greater potential for exploitations.</p> <p>The report also found that web attacks are becoming more targeted, more prevalent and much more sophisticated. Many breach incidents show signs of careful preplanning by cybercriminals probing for weak packages and tools to exploit. Cross-site scripting (XSS) was involved in 40% of attack attempts, followed by SQL injection (SQLi) at 24%, path traversal at 7%, local file inclusion (LFI) at 4%, and distributed denial of service (DDoS) at 3%.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Sears, Kmart, Delta hit w/3rd party breach
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/sears-kmart-and-delta-hit-with/
GIST	<p>Customers of Sears, Sears subsidiary Kmart and Delta Airlines have had their customer payment information stolen, thanks to a cybersecurity breach at a software provider that they all use.</p> <p>The firm, called [24]7.ai, provides online customer support services based on artificial intelligence and machine learning. The breach affected users processed through its platform starting on September 26, 2017; the issue persisted until its discovery on October 12, 2017. It is, however, just now notifying its customers; Sears said it wasn’t notified of the incident until mid-March, and Delta only found out on March 28. Other details are scant.</p> <p>“The unknown factor is whether or not that information was encrypted, or how,” said Lee Munson, security researcher at Comparitech.com. “From an incident response point of view, it is a shame to learn [that] the attack has only now come to light, having occurred and been spotted last year, though we are, of course, unaware of when affected customers were notified.”</p> <p>The department store said that hackers were able to access credit-card information of about 100,000 of its customers across Sears and Kmart. Delta didn’t provide numbers but characterized the number of affected users as a “small subset” of its customer base. The airline also said that personal details related to passport, government identification, security and SkyMiles information were not impacted.</p>

It's unclear if other clients are also affected, but the issue has the potential to be far-reaching. The company said itself that the "world's largest and most recognizable brands are using intent-driven engagement from [24]7.ai to assist several hundred million visitors annually, through more than 1.5 billion conversations, most of which are automated."

The issue, unlike other payment-card breaches, doesn't involve point-of-sale malware or a network compromise at the affected companies but rather a weak link at a partner. Third-party contractors are just a fact of today's corporate life, meaning that businesses need to be aware of the security profile of one's technology partners.

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HEADLINE	04/05 New macOS backdoor w/cyber espionage
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/new-macos-backdoor-linked-cyber-espionage-group
GIST	<p>A recently discovered macOS backdoor is believed to be a new version of malware previously associated with the OceanLotus cyber-espionage group, Trend Micro says.</p> <p>Also known as APT 32, APT-C-00, SeaLotus, and Cobalt Kitty, OceanLotus is believed to be operating out of Vietnam and has been targeting high-profile corporate and government organizations in Southeast Asia. Well-resourced and determined, the group uses custom-built malware and already established techniques.</p> <p>Some of the group's targets include human rights organizations, media organizations, research institutes, and maritime construction firms.</p> <p>The newly discovered macOS backdoor, which Trend Micro detects as OSX_OCEANLOTUS.D, has been observed on machines that have the Perl programming language installed.</p> <p>The malware is being distributed via malicious documents attached to emails. The document masquerades as the registration form for an event with HDMC, an organization in Vietnam that advertises national independence and democracy.</p> <p>The document contains malicious, obfuscated macros with a payload written in Perl. The macro extracts an XML file from the Word document. This file is an executable acting as the dropper for the final payload, which is the backdoor.</p> <p>The dropper, which has all of its strings encrypted using a hardcoded RSA256 key, is also used to establish the backdoor's persistence on the infected systems. The dropper checks whether it runs as root or not, and uses different path and filename based on that.</p> <p>The dropper sets the backdoor's attributes to "hidden" and uses random values for the file date and time, and deletes itself at the end of the process.</p> <p>The backdoor has two main functions, which collect platform information and sending it to the command and control (C&C) server. It can also receive additional C&C communication information, which is encrypted before being sent.</p> <p>"Malicious attacks targeting Mac devices are not as common as its counterparts, but the discovery of this new macOS backdoor that is presumably distributed via phishing email calls for every user to adopt best practices for phishing attacks regardless of operating system," Trend Micro concludes.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/06 Best Buy reveals payment card breach
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/best-buy-hit-247ai-payment-card-breach

<p>GIST</p>	<p>After Delta Air Lines and Sears Holdings, Best Buy has also come forward to warn customers that their payment card information may have been compromised as a result of a breach suffered by online services provider [24]7.ai.</p> <p>Similar to Delta and Sears, Best Buy contracted [24]7.ai for online chat/support services. The retailer says it will contact impacted customers and provide free credit monitoring if needed.</p> <p>Best Buy has not specified exactly how many of its customers are impacted, but noted that “only a small fraction of our overall online customer population could have been caught up in this [24]7.ai incident, whether or not they used the chat function.”</p> <p>San Jose, CA-based [24]7.ai provides customer acquisition and engagement solutions to organizations in a wide range of sectors and any of them could be impacted by this incident. Its website lists several major firms, but some of them apparently no longer do business with the company.</p>
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<p>HEADLINE</p>	<p>04/05 Intel urges: delete remote keyboard app</p>
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>https://www.scmagazine.com/intel-finds-critical-flaw-in-remote-keyboard-app-halts-spectre-fixes/article/756540/</p>
<p>GIST</p>	<p>Intel is instructing users of its remote keyboard to delete the app after a critical flaw was found and also the firm is halting Spectre fixes on older chips.</p> <p>Escalation of privilege vulnerabilities in all version of the keyboard app allow a network attacker to inject keystrokes as a local user, inject keystrokes into another remote keyboard session and allow an authorized local attacker to execute arbitrary code as a privileged user, according to an recent notification post.</p> <p>The vulnerabilities CVE-2018-3641, CVE-2018-3645 and CVE-2018-3638 were rated 9.0 Critical, 8.8 High, and 7.2 High respectively.</p> <p>As a result Intel issued a Product Discontinuation notice and recommended all users of the application uninstall the app as soon as possible.</p> <p>The chip manufacturer also announced it is halting Spectre fixes on older chips citing limited ecosystem support.</p> <p>Intel decided to not release microcode updates for these products for one or more reasons which may have included Micro-architectural characteristics that preclude a practical implementation of features mitigating Variant 2 (CVE-2017-5715).</p> <p>Other possible explanations included limited Commercially Available System Software support, and based on customer inputs, most of these products are implemented as “closed systems” and therefore are expected to have a lower likelihood of exposure to these vulnerabilities, the firm said in its microupdate.</p>
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<p>HEADLINE</p>	<p>04/05 Microsoft: cyberthreat tools w/Office 365</p>
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>https://www.scmagazine.com/microsoft-adds-ransomware-protection-recovery-tools-to-office-365/article/756577/</p>
<p>GIST</p>	<p>Microsoft has rolled out a series of new tools to protect its Office 365 Home and 365 Personal customers from a variety of cyberthreats, including ransomware.</p> <p>Kirk Koenigsbauer, Microsoft's corporate vice president for Office, said subscribers to these two Office productivity suites will receive additional measures to protect against ransomware, email-based threats,</p>

stronger password protection and advanced link checking in Office products.

The first new ransomware defense has the company bringing its File Restore feature over from OneDrive for Business to the consumer-level OneDrive accounts. Files Restore allows you to restore an entire OneDrive account to a previous point in time within the last 30 days. This would allow a person to rebuild or replace any files encrypted by a ransomware attack, Koenigsbauer wrote in a blog.

Microsoft's next step is adding the ability to detect a ransomware attack in progress in Office 365 and then lead the victim through the recovery process.

“If an attack is detected, you will be alerted through an email, mobile, or desktop notification and guided through a recovery process where you'll find the date and time of attack preselected in Files Restore,” he said.

For 365 users who share important information via email or through links, Microsoft will enable password protection for these actions. If the subscriber so chooses he or she can set a password that has to be input to access a shared file. Microsoft believes this will protect a document if it is accidentally shared with an unauthorized person.

Also on the email front, Outlook.com will now offer end-to-end email encryption and an Outlook user can now prevent an email, and any attached documents, from being forwarded beyond its intended recipient.

The final security upgrade has the company bringing its advanced link checking technology to Word, Excel and PowerPoint from Outlook.com. Microsoft Word has recently become a popular conduit for cyberattackers who used the documents and their various vulnerabilities to launch fileless attacks.

“Starting later this year, links you click in Word, Excel and PowerPoint will also be checked in real-time to determine if the destination website is likely to download malware onto your computer or if it's related to a phishing scam. If the link is suspicious, you will be redirected to a warning screen recommending you don't access the site,” Koenigsbauer said.

Microsoft added this advanced protection to Outlook last fall.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Supply chain attacks in healthcare
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/perimeter/supply-chain-attacks-could-pose-biggest-threat-to-healthcare/d/d-id/1331468
GIST	<p>Healthcare organizations often overlook the part of their operations where they are most vulnerable. Supply chain attacks pose a greater threat than exposed medical devices, report researchers who have analyzed the industry's risk since WannaCry hit in May 2017.</p> <p>WannaCry may not have been built to target healthcare but the massive ransomware operation still left its mark on the industry, blocking National Health Service (NHS) trust hospitals from accessing patient records and forcing doctors to reschedule appointments and surgeries.</p> <p>The profound effect on the healthcare industry prompted researchers at Trend Micro and the Healthcare Information Trust Alliance (HITRUST) to investigate healthcare network risks flying under the radar. They specifically looked into how supply chain cyberthreats, and exposed connected medical systems and devices, affected organizations' security posture.</p> <p>Connected medical devices demand scrutiny as cybercriminals can take advantage of their exposure to break into organizations, run botnets, take data, or launch ransomware attacks.</p> <p>"There's definitely more devices now, and wider exposure brings a greater landscape, greater aperture for</p>

attack," says Greg Young, vice president of cybersecurity at Trend Micro. Confidentiality, integrity, and availability are always considered in device security but with healthcare devices, safety must be considered as well, he adds. It's not a stretch to recognize an IoT attack on medical devices could cause physical harm to patients.

Diagnosing Supply Chain Threats

Industries like telecom, financial services, and consumer technology know all too well the risk of supply chain attacks. As healthcare relies more heavily on supply chain vendors, third-party service providers, and cloud-based systems, its organizations are also recognizing the risk.

Attackers can abuse third-party goods and services to steal confidential information, change data, install malicious software, introduce an unapproved function or design, or bring counterfeit devices into the organization. The risk of supply chain attacks in healthcare has grown along with the number of devices as attackers see an opportunity to manipulate them.

Researchers highlight several entry points an attacker can use to compromise a hospital's supply chain. A key one is the device manufacturer; a hospital has no control over whether a device is tampered with during the manufacturing process. They also lack insight into the security of distribution centers, suppliers, software developers, and shipping companies.

"Globally, supply chain and counterfeit devices are an increased risk," says Young. Older, harder-to-patch devices, many of which aren't subject to protective inspections like a regular operating system, are a "stepping stone" into the rest of the IT environment.

The industry has started to buckle down on device security to prevent certain types of supply chain attacks. For example, the FDA now mandates Unique Device Identification codes for all medical devices. This code indicates a device's version, model, manufacturing date and batch number, expiration date, and serial number. All this data is entered in a global, publicly accessible database so patients can check if a device is counterfeit.

Ransomware Down, Targeting Up

Researchers found cybercriminals are narrowing their focus on the healthcare space, opting for more focused attacks as opposed to broader campaigns.

Young points out how ransomware attacks on healthcare organizations steadily declined between October and December 2017. High-risk indicators of compromise (IoCs) dropped from 4,330 to 2,354 between November and December, and total IoC have also declined from October through December. The shift is a sign that attackers are changing tactics.

"The broad splashing of random kinds of attacks is down, but how much they're targeted is definitely up," he explains. The number of ransomware families has been growing since 2012, with a major spike from 29 families in 2015 to 247 families in 2016, and 327 in 2017.

Massive campaigns waste resources and are more likely to be tracked, says Young. Cybercriminals are using specific attacks to maximize their impact on each organization. For example, if they know an organization has a Windows 10 environment, they'll use a Windows 10-based attack.

"My own belief is the level of targeted attack is increasing more rapidly than the granularity of defenses," he notes.

Healing Healthcare Security

Young warns not to get too distracted by healthcare-specific needs. Patching, response capabilities, and monitoring are essential: "Those are the basics and the things almost everybody gets wrong today, but

	<p>those are the high-impact areas," he says.</p> <p>It's also important to pay attention to non-medical IoT devices entering the hospital, which could also prove a risk. Smart televisions in patients' rooms, smartboards, or smart devices in labs that aren't part of normal testing could all be a jumping-off point for attack.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Mirai variant botnet targets financials
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/mirai-variant-botnet-takes-aim-at-financials/d/d-id/1331472
GIST	<p>Criminals, like carpenters, hate to see a good tool go unused. It's no surprise, then, that the Mirai botnet has been in action once again, this time in concert with other botnets and with targets in the financial sector.</p> <p>Insikt Group, the threat research group within Recorded Future, found that a Mirai botnet variant was used to attack a company, or companies, in the financial sector in January. And it might not have been alone; they found that it was possibly linked to the IoTroop or Reaper botnet.</p> <p>Three financial companies were hit by DDoS attacks on Jan. 28: two at the same time, and the third a few hours later. On Jan. 29, ABN Amro, a Dutch bank, reported that they had been hit by a DDoS attack the previous day and that other Dutch banks had also been hit. Insikt Group says that the DNS amplification attack used against one of the first targets hit 30 Gbps - highly disruptive, but not the largest attack seen.</p> <p>According to the researchers, the botnet involved in the first company attack was 80% compromised MikroTik routers and 20% various IoT devices. Those devices range from Apache and IIS web servers to webcams, DVRs, TVs, and routers. Manufacturers of the recruited devices include companies from the very small up to Cisco and Linksys.</p> <p>Irfan Saif is cyber risk services principal for Deloitte Risk and Financial Advisory. In an interview with Dark Reading he points out that the IoT devices brought into the botnets have processing, communication, and networking capabilities, so it's not surprising that they're being recruited for nefarious purposes. "It will be a continuing problem and the intricacies and complexities will continue to evolve," he says.</p> <p>"There's an ever-increasing set [of IoT applications] in industries and for facilities management that will broaden the set of devices that can be taken," Saif says, adding, "The complexity of devices that can be taken will continue to increase."</p> <p>The analysts at Insikt Group say that, while many of the devices used in the attacks were previously available for use in other botnets, many others were not known to be subject to existing botnet malware.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Researchers: 1.5B sensitive files exposed
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/1-5-billion-sensitive-files-exposed-by-misconfigured-servers-storage-and-cloud-services/
GIST	<p>Researchers have discovered over 1.5 billion sensitive files including payroll information, credit card details, medical data, and patents for intellectual property are exposed online, putting consumers and businesses at risk of theft, cybercrime, and espionage.</p> <p>But the information exposed online -- which amounts to a total of 12,000 terabytes of data -- isn't there as a result of hacking or other cybercriminal activity, it has been stored in publicly available locations ranging from Amazon Simple Storage Service (Amazon S3) buckets, rsync, SMB and FTP servers, misconfigured websites, and unsecured NAS drives.</p>

In just the first three months of 2018, a total of 1,550,447,111 exposed files have been detected by researchers at Digital Shadows, who outlined the findings in a new report.

While data has been left exposed by organisations in almost all countries around the world, it's the US that is the country most affected by the problem, with 239,607,590 files exposed, accounting for 16 percent of the total.

However, when combined into one entity, the countries of the European Union were found to have exposed the most data, with 537,720,919 files available publically online -- accounting for 37 percent of the total data.

One of the most common forms of identifiable personal data found to be exposed were payroll and tax return files, which accounted for 700,000 and 60,000 files respectively. If abused, this sensitive information could be used to commit fraud, identity theft, or other financial crime.

However, the exposed data isn't restricted to financial information: researchers found over two million .dcm -- Digital Imaging and Communications in Medicine -- files exposed on a single open SMB port in Italy.

These could potentially contain health information -- highly personal data which patients would definitely not appreciate being left exposed.

However, in one instance, a patent for a yet-to-be released renewable energy product was found in a document labelled as 'strictly confidential' and containing detailed pictures and information about the patent.

This marks just one instance of confidential plans being publically uploaded as a result of accidental backing up of data onto open SMB and FTP servers, rsync and Amazon S3 buckets.

So while organisations might worry that hacking groups and other sophisticated threat actors could be targeting their IP, the reality is they could have already released that information themselves.

"While we often hyperfocus on responding to adversaries conducting intrusions into our environments and silently exfiltrating our data, we aren't focusing on our external digital footprints and the data that is already publicly available via misconfigured services," said Rick Holland, chief information security officer at Digital Shadows.

"The volume of this sensitive data exposure should be a major cause for concern for any security and privacy conscious organisation. In addition, with GDPR fast approaching, there are clear regulatory implications for any organization with EU citizen data," he added.

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HEADLINE	04/05 CDN subdomains hijacked in experiment
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/researchers-hijack-over-2-000-subdomains-from-legitimate-sites-in-cloudfront-experiment/
GIST	<p>Security experts from MindPoint Group, an information security firm, have hijacked over 2,000 subdomains from legitimate websites while researching possible security flaws in Amazon's CloudFront CDN service.</p> <p>Experts found that CloudFront's CDN routing mechanism that linked a site's domain and subdomains to a specific server contained a flaw that allowed attackers to point misconfigured subdomains to their own endpoint instead, effectively hijacking the subdomain from legitimate CloudFront users.</p>

	<p>MindPoint security analyst Matt Westfall coded and deployed a proof-of-concept Python script that automatically scanned CloudFront domains and hijacked vulnerable subdomains, pointing the servers to a demo page he created.</p> <p>Westfall says he hijacked over 2,000 subdomains over the period of a few days just by using his script. Some of the most high-profile subdomains belonged to companies such as the Red Cross, Bloomberg, Reuters, Dow Jones, Harvard, University of Maryland, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, and two US government agencies.</p> <p>"When subdomains from a high-trust domain are hijacked, they can be set up as a watering hole for delivering malware that has a high likelihood of bypassing filtering mechanisms," Westfall says.</p> <p>Furthermore, these subdomains are perfect for spear-phishing attacks, being almost impossible to detect even by the most astute and security-hardened user.</p> <p>The researcher says he notified Amazon of his findings, and in the span of three days, he transferred ownership of these vulnerable subdomains back to Amazon, who is now running a warning on the subdomains, hoping that the legitimate owners rectify the misconfigured CDNs.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Strange story of WhiteRose ransomware
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/the-whiterose-ransomware-is-decryptable-and-tells-a-strange-story/
GIST	<p>A new ransomware has been discovered by MalwareHunterTeam that is based off of the InfiniteTear ransomware family, of which BlackRuby and Zenis are members. When this ransomware infects a computer it will encrypt the files, scramble the filenames, and append the .WHITEROSE extension to them.</p> <p>It is not currently known for sure how this ransomware is being distributed, but reports indicate it is being manually installed by hacking into Remote Desktop services. Furthermore, based on the submissions to ID-Ransomware, the developer of this ransomware appears to be targeting European countries, with a strong focus on Spain.</p> <p>The good news is this ransomware appears to be decryptable by Michael Gillespie. So if you become infected with WhiteRose, do not pay the ransom, and instead post a request for help in our WhiteRose Support & Help topic. You may also be able to receive help through Dr.Web, but that is a paid for service.</p> <p>The WhiteRose ransom note reads like a poem</p> <p>Both the BlackRuby Ransomware and now WhiteRose have ransom notes that read more like an assignment from a creative writing course rather than a ransom demand.</p> <p>In WhiteRose's ransom note, the developer tells the story of an isolated and lonely hacker surrounded by white roses in a garden. They go on to state that they want to share their white roses with the world by encrypting your computer and transforming it into a flower.</p> <p><i>I do not think about selling white roses again. This time, I will plant all the white roses of the garden to bring a different gift for the people of each country. No matter where is my garden and where I am from, no matter if you are a housekeeper or a big company owner, it does not matter if you are the west of the world or its east, it's important that the white roses are endless and infinite. You do not need to send letters or e-mails to get these roses. Just wait it tomorrow. Wait for good days with White Rose.</i></p> <p><i>I hope you accept this gift from me and if it reaches you, close your eyes and place yourself</i></p>

in a large garden on a wooden chair and feel this beautiful scene to reduce your anxiety and everyday tension.

Thank you for trusting me. Now open your eyes. Your system has a flower like a small garden; A white rose flower.

This is definitely a step up from BlackRuby's ransom note, which was nonsense.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Hacker exploited Verge network bug
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/cryptocurrency/hacker-uses-exploit-to-generate-verge-cryptocurrency-out-of-thin-air/
GIST	<p>An unknown attacker has exploited a bug in the Verge cryptocurrency network code to mine Verge coins at a very rapid pace and generate funds almost out of thin air.</p> <p>The Verge development team is preparing a hard-fork of the entire cryptocurrency code to fix the issue and revert the blockchain to a previous state before the attack to neutralize the hacker's gains.</p> <p>The incident took place yesterday, and initially, users thought it was a ">51% attack," an attack where a malicious actor takes control over the more than half of the network nodes, giving himself the power to forge transactions.</p> <p>Rumors swirled around all day yesterday, as users feared the attacker might use his dominant network position to siphon funds from their accounts.</p> <p>The Verge team eventually came out and clarified the details surrounding the incident, denouncing rumors of a 51% attack, but not revealing additional info about the real cause of the incident.</p> <p>Nonetheless, users who looked into the suspicious network activity eventually tracked down what happened, revealing that a mysterious attacker had mined Verge coins at a near impossible speed of 1,560 Verge coins (XVG) per second, the equivalent of \$78/s.</p> <p>Under normal circumstances, a single miner wouldn't have ever been able to receive such a high reward for processing Verge blockchain computations.</p> <p>The malicious mining lasted only three hours, according to the Verge team, who promised to fix the bug in a hard-fork that's expected later today.</p> <p>According to unofficial estimations, some users who tracked the illegally mined funds on the Verge blockchain said the hacker appears to have made around 15.6 million Verge coins, which is around \$780,000.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Twitter: 1.2M accounts dropped for terror
SOURCE	http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-twitter-terrorism-accounts-20180405-story.html
GIST	<p>Twitter Inc. said Thursday it suspended 1.21 million accounts from its social media platform between August 2015 and the end of 2017 for "violations related to the promotion of terrorism."</p> <p>Twitter also said the suspensions were on a downswing.</p> <p>They included 274,460 suspended accounts in the second half of 2017, which were down 8.4% from the previous reporting period and the second consecutive period "in which we've seen a drop in the number of</p>

accounts being suspended for this reason," Twitter said in a blog post covering its 12th biannual "transparency report."

Twitter also said 74% of the accounts involved in the latest reporting period "were suspended before their first tweet."

"We continue to see the positive, significant impact of years of hard work making our site an undesirable place for those seeking to promote terrorism, resulting in this type of activity increasingly shifting away from Twitter," the company said.

Twitter said that 93% of the 274,460 accounts suspended in the last half of 2017 "were flagged by [the company's] internal, proprietary tools" and that government reports of such violations accounted for only 0.2% of all suspensions.

Twitter began mass suspensions of such accounts in early 2014 as the San Francisco-based company responded to criticism that it wasn't doing enough to crack down on users who promote or are linked to terrorist groups.

In December 2015, after the mass shooting in San Bernardino that left 14 dead, President Obama called on Twitter and other tech leaders to "make it harder for terrorists to use technology to escape from justice."

Last year, relatives of the victims of the attack filed a federal lawsuit against Twitter, Google and Facebook, accusing the tech giants of knowingly supporting Islamic State and its extremist agenda.

The lawsuit contends the companies allowed Islamic State to build an outsized online presence and propagate its extremist beliefs and draw recruits, such as the couple who carried out the attacks on the San Bernardino social services center.

In the fourth quarter of last year, Twitter reported 330 million average monthly users of its platform overall.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Facebook faces global backlash
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/04/05/as-facebook-confronts-tough-questions-on-data-misuse-europe-might-force-real-change/?utm_term=.ff29761f3173
GIST	<p>BERLIN — These days, you might get more applause for not being on social media than for reaching a follower milestone in Europe's liberal hubs such as Berlin or Paris. Concerns over privacy and ethics have triggered an unprecedented debate here that revolves around how, and not whether, to regulate U.S. tech giants.</p> <p>Europe's more loyal users of Facebook and other social media advocates may have felt comforted that major scandals over privacy settings and the platform's business model appeared to mainly affect its U.S. side, such as the recent outcry over how Cambridge Analytica's personal data collection affected "30 million profiles of American Facebook users."</p> <p>But now, Facebook says that Cambridge Analytica may have obtained data on far more users — with about 20 percent of them estimated to in fact live outside of the United States. In a separate revelation, Facebook also had to acknowledge on Wednesday that "malicious actors" were able to discover the identities and collect data on most of its 2 billion global users.</p> <p>The mechanisms used by Cambridge Analytica and the "malicious actors" cited by Facebook appear to have been legal and do not constitute a data hack, but rather a deliberate exploitation of information through tools or loopholes Facebook itself provided in the past. While tens of millions of U.S. consumers are affected in both cases, the misuse of foreign users' data could now turn out to be the real problem for</p>

Facebook since other countries take privacy issues more seriously than the U.S. government.

In Australia, the government watchdog organization opened an investigation into Facebook's practices on Thursday, writing in a statement that it "will consider whether Facebook has breached the Privacy Act 1988 (Privacy Act)."

"Given the global nature of this matter, the OAIC will confer with regulatory authorities internationally," the watchdog wrote.

In India, where over a half-million users are estimated to be affected, the allegations have resulted in a governmental request to Facebook and Cambridge Analytica for more detailed information, with a Saturday deadline.

Even though India is now Facebook's biggest market — ahead of the United States — no Indian media outlets were able to ask questions in a conference call with CEO Mark Zuckerberg on Wednesday. The heavy U.S.-focus immediately triggered criticism because privacy advocates are still looking into reports that Cambridge Analytica may have used Facebook data to influence Indian politics, as well.

Facebook's acknowledgments in recent weeks have also triggered furious reactions in a privacy-conscious Europe that has long sought ways to rein in U.S. social media and tech giants. European Union regulators have always been much tougher on the tech companies than their U.S. counterparts, for instance forcing them to give users more control, imposing fines for noncompliance and requiring platforms to spot and delete illegal content. The latest revelations could serve as a pretext to toughen existing rules further and force social media companies to implement broader changes worldwide.

Germany's justice minister, Katarina Barley, recently said it was unacceptable that users "were being spied on against their will, in order to bombard them with deliberate political adverts or hatred against political opponents." Barley called Facebook's practices a "threat to democracy." The European Union's justice commissioner, Vera Jourova, similarly said Facebook had facilitated "deep manipulation." Both remarks came before Wednesday's announcement that Europeans had been targeted, too.

That's why two countries included in Facebook's acknowledgment on Wednesday are likely to cause the social media company a particular headache: Britain and Germany.

Perhaps even more damaging to Facebook's business model than tumbling shares may be the sort of E.U.-style regulation efforts that have been introduced here in recent years. Nevertheless, Zuckerberg applauded the European efforts in a conference call with journalists on Wednesday, calling them "very positive," in a somewhat surprising assessment.

His praise for Europe's tough data rules — that have so far been considered detrimental to the company's business model — may either indicate a real strategy change or could be an effort to calm Europe's nervous regulators by promising eventual change. Zuckerberg has struck an unusually humble tone in recent weeks, as his company has gone through its worst crisis so far, even as critics say that the company has shied away from some key issues.

"We intend to make all the same controls and settings available everywhere, not just in Europe," Zuckerberg said on Wednesday, referring to a major new online privacy law that will take effect in May. Introduced as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the massive overhaul will force all companies operating here to tell their European users which data they have stored on them and provide them with an option to delete that information, among other changes.

While European social media skeptics have celebrated the law as almost revolutionary, Zuckerberg stopped short on Wednesday of promising the same rights to users in the United States or other countries disproportionately affected by the latest revelations, including the Philippines, Indonesia, Mexico and Canada.

	“Is it going to be exactly the same format? Probably not. We need to figure out what makes sense in different markets with the different laws and different places. But — let me repeat this — we’ll make all controls and settings the same everywhere, not just in Europe,” Zuckerberg said.
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HEADLINE	04/05 Russia blasts Facebook ‘censorship’
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/russia-facebook-troll-factory-content-internet-research-agency-censorship/
GIST	<p>The Kremlin on Thursday blasted Facebook's move to remove content created by more than 100 accounts deemed to be linked to a Russian "troll farm" as hostile censorship. Under intense scrutiny, the social media giant announced Wednesday that it was scrubbing even more accounts, ads and other content generated by the Russia-based Internet Research Agency (IRA).</p> <p>As CBS News' Olivia Victoria Gazis reported Wednesday, Facebook's chief security officer Alex Stamos wrote that 70 Facebook accounts, 65 Instagram accounts and 138 Facebook Pages linked to the IRA would be scrubbed from the company's platforms.</p> <p>The "vast majority" (95 percent) of the content was written in Russian, Stamos said, and targeted audiences in Russia or in neighboring, former Soviet countries. In total, roughly 1.5 million unique users followed at least one of the purged accounts, according to Stamos' post.</p> <p>The IRA garnered intense scrutiny after media reports and assessments by the U.S. intelligence community revealed how professional trolls at the Kremlin-linked company sought to sow discord and disinformation via online influence operations during the 2016 U.S. presidential election.</p> <p>On Thursday, President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov agreed with a journalist from one of the media organizations which had content removed from Facebook who asked whether the Russian government viewed the action as censorship.</p> <p>"Yes it is," Peskov said on a conference call with journalists. "We are of course following this and we regret it."</p> <p>Facebook's move this week followed a previous purge in September of 470 IRA accounts and pages that the company deemed "inauthentic" and said were designed to spread divisive content.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Slack allows employers to read texts
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/better/business/slack-updates-privacy-policy-employers-can-read-private-dms-without-ncna862811
GIST	<p>Digital technology makes it easy for your employer to monitor everything you do — the email, instant messages or texts you send and receive — on any company-provided digital devices or work platforms.</p> <p>Even so, it’s easy to see how employees could assume — mistakenly — that by using Slack, the popular instant-messaging workplace collaboration tool, their direct messages (DMs) are limited to those in their small user group.</p> <p>The company, based in San Francisco, says more than 6 million U.S. workers use its service every day.</p> <p>Slack, which stands for “Searchable Log of All Conversations and Knowledge” was originally a way for team members to communicate, but it has “expanded to become a more social platform as well,” as noted in a recent news report in the Daily Mail. Slack has chat rooms (called channels) and users can include emojis in their messages to express reactions.</p>

	<p>“Slack is a work collaboration tool, plain and simple,” said attorney Bradley Shear, founder of Digital Armour, a privacy consulting service based in Bethesda, Maryland. “It’s definitely not a watercooler area or any type of place where you should be saying inappropriate things – whether it’s about your boss or other people, or talking about politics, religion or anything of that nature. Slack is something that should only be used specifically for productivity and work purposes.”</p> <p>Since 2014, Slack customers who bought its premium “Plus” plan have been able to download and read communications transmitted via Slack through what’s called a “Compliance Export.” This cannot be done in real time, but the archive downloaded can go back to when that Slack group was created. When an export is done, employees in that Slack group are automatically notified that the boss is watching.</p> <p>Automatic notices to employees will be discontinued. The employer will now decide whether users will be told their conversations are being exported.</p> <p>Slack says its policy changes are related to the pending implementation of the European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which takes effect on May 25. This is an attempt “to achieve a balance across regulatory requirements, user expectations and customer needs,” the company said in a statement to NBC News BETTER.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	04/06 UK purges extremist transport workers
SOURCE	https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/purge-of-extremist-workers-on-london-transport-a3807521.html
GIST	<p>A purge of potential terrorists working on London’s transport system is being carried out to protect the public from another Islamic State attack, Britain’s security minister revealed today.</p> <p>Ben Wallace said that extremists who “would pose a risk to London and its transport network” had already been removed from their posts during an intensive drive to identify potential attackers.</p> <p>He revealed that the new action was intended to help police and the intelligence agencies cope with the “acute” threat and suggested that further removals would take place as part of the continued effort to disrupt would-be terrorists before they could strike. His comments came during an interview with the Evening Standard in which Mr Wallace also disclosed that:</p> <p>Some foreign fighters from Britain were “re-engaging” in the conflict in Syria and only a “tiny” number were attempting to return.</p> <p>“A number” of other UK Islamists were detained in Syria in addition to the two so-called “Beatles” Alexander Kotey and El Shafee Elsheikh held by Kurdish fighters.</p> <p>In Britain, IS and far-Right extremists have been grooming people with autism to turn them towards violence.</p> <p>But his most significant comments were on the ongoing effort to remove potentially dangerous extremists from jobs on London’s transport network and in other “sensitive” areas.</p> <p>The problem was highlighted following the London Bridge attack last year when it emerged that Khurram Butt, one of the three killers, had previously worked for London Underground.</p> <p>Mr Wallace said that with about 3,000 terror suspects under active scrutiny and a further 20,000 logged as former “subjects of interest”, police and MI5 needed other methods, beyond arresting suspects, to keep the</p>

	<p>public safe. Disrupting potential attackers through early intervention was one way, particularly when they could use their jobs for malign purposes. “We’ve done a lot of work over the last year about people working in sensitive areas who shouldn’t be, and removing their ability to do so,” Mr Wallace said.</p> <p>“It’s reducing the insider threat. There are definitely people who have worked in sensitive areas that we have now removed who would pose a risk to London and its networks of transport.</p> <p>“We’ve got to protect as well as pursue. There are more things we can do around where these people work.” Mr Wallace said that other methods to disrupt potential terrorists included targeting them through immigration powers or welfare policies.</p> <p>He added: “We have an acute number of people in this country who are attracted to extremism or violent extremism. You can’t arrest your way out of that so you have to develop a way that you can early intervene with some people. Disruption is really important.</p> <p>“There are some people whose immigration status may be rightly examined to remove them from threat and there are people involved in normal crime who we could take off the streets. There are people who have social issues — are they neglecting their families, are they a troubled family that the troubled family scheme could deal with, are they being exposed to non-regulated school settings?</p> <p>“We seize a number of these people who have autism, who are targeted and groomed by IS and the far-Right — so are we doing enough in mental health to identify vulnerable people?”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Somalia emergency declaration extended
SOURCE	http://allafrica.com/stories/201804060369.html
GIST	<p>U.S President Donald Trump has signed an executive order extending a national emergency declaration for Somalia, which had been slated to expire in May, the White House said in a statement on Wednesday.</p> <p>It also cited the nation's continued threat to U.S. national security and foreign policy.</p> <p>"The situation with respect to Somalia continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States.</p> <p>"For this reason, the national emergency declared on April 12, 2010, and the measures adopted on that date and on July 20, 2012, to deal with that emergency, must continue in effect beyond April 12, 2018," the release said.</p> <p>It said the emergency was first declared in 2010 and had been extended several times due to piracy off the Somali coast and internal attacks by al-Shabab, a terrorist group affiliated with al-Qaeda (both are banned in Russia).</p> <p>According to the release, Wednesday's action extended the emergency declaration for one year.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Police train to swarm London 'terror targets'
SOURCE	https://news.sky.com/story/hundreds-of-specially-trained-police-ready-to-swarm-terror-targets-in-london-11318002
GIST	<p>Hundreds of specially-trained police will be ready to deploy to potential London terror targets at short notice under a new plan called Project Servator.</p> <p>The officers could be sent to patrol locations like shopping centres, transport hubs and tourist attractions in</p>

	<p>a move aimed at deterring, detecting and disrupting possible attacks.</p> <p>The plans involve undercover and highly visible police trained in how to spot people planning such acts.</p> <p>Project Servator has already been used for four years by City of London Police, and was trialled in Wandsworth and Lambeth last year.</p> <p>In the past four years under Servator deployments, the force has carried out 938 searches leading to 547 arrests.</p> <p>Superintendent Nick Aldworth said traditional techniques for stopping terrorism have not worked against new, simpler terrorist attack methods such as using vehicles as weapons.</p> <p>He said: "When we look globally and nationally, we have seen that terrorists now use simple methodologies that perhaps have evaded some of our traditional techniques for countering terrorism.</p> <p>"In terms of specific methodologies, we put a lot of time and energy into future forecasting.</p> <p>"We look at Syria and some of the things that are happening there, and how that might be migrated back into the UK.</p> <p>"That's an ongoing piece of work, not only by us but through our intelligence services colleagues as well."</p> <p>The London Bridge and Finsbury Park attacks both saw rented vans hit and kill members of the public, while a car was used to kill people on Westminster Bridge last year.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 France poised to expel radical imam
SOURCE	<p>https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/05/world/europe/france-extremism-doudi.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=second-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news</p>
GIST	<p>MARSEILLE, France — No ordinary preacher, El Hadi Doudi is perhaps France’s leading proponent of fundamentalist Islam. His influence extends throughout Europe, where his lawyer says the cleric is the only imam authorized to issue fatwas. Over 37 years, he has often berated Jews, women and the modern world, yet the authorities have tolerated his hard-line sermons and occasionally cultivated him as an ally.</p> <p>That was until now.</p> <p>The government of President Emmanuel Macron appears poised to expel the preacher in one of the most striking examples of its hardening stance toward radical Islam. Mr. Macron has already used his huge majority in Parliament to inscribe into law some government tactics — searches and seizures, house arrests, shutting down mosques — that had been applied before only as part of the state of emergency put in place after terrorist attacks in Paris killed 130 people in November 2015.</p> <p>The case of Imam Doudi, 63, who was born in Algeria and is not a French citizen, is part of a high-profile effort by the Macron administration to intensify scrutiny of Muslim clerics and, in some cases, to deport them. Some analysts say that Mr. Macron is using it to display toughness, as European governments struggle for tools to battle radical Islam, and as he fends off political challenges from the far right.</p> <p>“They want to make an example of him,” said Vincent Geisser, an Islam expert at the University of Aix-Marseille. “It’s got more to do with communicating firmness.”</p> <p>The tough line is another example of the unique stance Mr. Macron has taken since winning office almost a year ago. He is hailed globally as a great defender of liberal democracy, a voice of reason in a Europe</p>

awash in angry populism. Yet he has also assumed great executive powers, alarming critics who have charged the Macron government with overreaching in areas like immigration, and who now worry about his approach to fighting terrorism.

France was hardly passive toward extremism in the past; the Interior Ministry kicked out 40 Muslim clerics from 2012 to 2015, and another 52 people, including clerics, over the last 28 months. Not all of those recent expulsions have come during Mr. Macron's time in office, yet his government seems determined to make clear that France now has a far lower tolerance for radical preaching.

"It's not just the terrorist organizations, the armies of Daesh, the imams of hate and death that we are fighting," Mr. Macron said, referring to the Islamic State, in a speech last week honoring Lt. Col. Arnaud Beltrame, a police officer who died in terrorist attack at a supermarket in southern France after swapping himself with a hostage.

"What we are fighting is also is this subterranean Islamism, which advances through social networks, which accomplishes its task invisibly, which works silently on the weak and the unstable, betraying even those it claims to represent, who, on our very soil, indoctrinate through proximity and daily corrupt," Mr. Macron said.

The expulsion of Imam Douidi was recommended by the Marseille authorities under a French law regarding "deliberate acts tending to provoke discrimination, hatred and violence toward an individual or a group."

In a confidential investigative report seen by The New York Times, the authorities blamed Imam Douidi's "patient and insistent proselytizing" for helping to turn a quarter of Marseille's practicing Muslims — the largest concentration in France — into practitioners of Salafism, an ultraconservative movement within Sunni Islam. For the country as a whole, the proportion of Muslims who are Salafists is much lower, about 5.5 percent.

Imam Douidi's influence, the report noted, extends all over France and even "goes well beyond the country's frontiers" and throughout Europe, as other countries, in particular Germany, have had their own troubles with Salafist preachers and monitor them carefully.

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HEADLINE	04/05 US 'mismanaged' Afghan power project
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/news/middle-east/report-army-corps-of-engineers-mismanaged-60-million-afghan-power-project-1.520506
GIST	<p>A \$60 million power project overseen by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Afghanistan couldn't be powered up for fear it would put Afghan lives at risk, and shoddy work could leave the system structurally unstable, a government watchdog found.</p> <p>The third phase in the Corps' North East Power System project strung high-voltage power lines through 32 miles of Parwan and Kapisa provinces as part of an international effort to build up Afghanistan's power grid and bring electricity to communities and military installations throughout the beleaguered country.</p> <p>But when the system was turned over to the Afghan government, residents in some areas were still living and farming on land used for the project, perhaps dangerously close to the transmission towers and high-voltage power lines — in some cases, directly under them — according a review by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, published Wednesday.</p> <p>Inspectors also found what they said were signs of poor workmanship at some of the 18 transmission towers inspected last fall, which the report said could lead to their collapse from crumbling concrete foundations or erosion.</p>

	<p>A Corps official at Bagram Air Field said officials reviewed the structural concerns raised in the report and found they do not pose a risk to the system’s long-term operation. Spokeswoman Britney Walker said other issues noted in the report had been resolved and the power would be turned on in seven days.</p> <p>In an official response included in the SIGAR report, the Corps rejected most of the report’s findings and recommendations — including its title, which accused the Corps of “mismanagement.”</p> <p>Officials said SIGAR ignored the fact that some features of the power system, such as connecting the third phase of the project to its power source, were supposed to be done by other organizations involved in building out the grid, such as the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Asian Development Bank or the governments of Afghanistan, France or India.</p> <p>“The SIGAR report appears to suggest that if (the Corps) finished a project before another critical piece of the grid was available, (it) should build the incomplete segment or terminate the contract,” the response said.</p> <p>Acknowledging the difficulty of completing power projects in the embattled country, where insurgents control, influence or contest more than half of the districts, Walker said officials “are confident the Afghan government can operate these systems safely.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Evacuations rebel-held town suspended
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/evacuation-syrias-douma-suspended-disagreements-54255072?
GIST	<p>Evacuations from the rebel-held town of Douma near the Syrian capital were suspended on Thursday, days after hundreds of opposition fighters and their relatives left for areas of the country's north as part of a surrender deal following a massive government offensive.</p> <p>State news agency SANA said the suspension was the result of disagreements within the Army of Islam rebel group, adding that buses that entered Douma for the evacuations on Thursday returned without passengers.</p> <p>Douma is the last town held by rebels in the eastern Ghouta suburbs of Damascus. Other rebel groups agreed to relocate to the north after a Russia-backed government offensive in February and March that killed hundreds of people and caused catastrophic destruction.</p> <p>The Army of Islam appears to have reached a deal with Russia to relocate to parts of northern Syria controlled by Turkey-allied opposition forces. On Wednesday, 650 fighters and civilians escorted by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent left Douma and headed north toward the town of Jarablus, according to SANA and opposition activists.</p> <p>The Army of Islam has never publicly confirmed the agreement, and is said to be divided on whether to leave Douma, with hard-liners wanting to stay and fight.</p> <p>The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the suspension was triggered by measures taken by Turkish troops in areas where opposition fighters are arriving. It said there are about 14,000 Army of Islam fighters in Douma and the nearby eastern Qalamoun region.</p> <p>On Thursday, a reporter for Syrian state TV speaking from an area on the edge of Douma said no Army of Islam fighters have left so far, adding that those who departed over the past three days belonged to other groups.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Iraq PM in Japan; seeks assistance
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iraq-leader-japan-talks-peace-reconstruction-54249661
GIST	<p>Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi sought international support in Japan on Thursday to restore peace and prosperity in his country, torn by extremism.</p> <p>Al-Abadi co-hosted a meeting in Tokyo with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to discuss ways to improve public safety in Iraq while promoting the country's sustainable economic development.</p> <p>Abe announced a 35 billion yen (\$330 million) loan for irrigation projects in Iraq during talks with al-Abadi later Thursday and pledged Japan's continuing support. The loan is part of Japan's \$6 billion pledge to stabilize the Middle East, the source of 80 percent of its oil imports.</p> <p>The conference was aimed at helping Iraq reconstruct by establishing a system to eliminate weapons held by many civilians. The goal is to create jobs, provide vocational training and motivate people to return to their ordinary lives, Japanese officials said.</p> <p>The Iraqi government in December announced the end of its operations against the militants. But automatic rifles and other weapons are widespread in Iraq and have been used by Islamic extremists in recent years, officials said.</p> <p>"We have fought the fight against terrorism with strong determination. Now we shift toward making the country safer and we are moving to an excellent level of development," al-Abadi told a joint news conference.</p> <p>Iraqi officials cited unemployment among youth and other vulnerable groups as a potential source of violent extremism, and said organizing vocational training appropriate for the labor market is a challenge.</p> <p>Japan hopes to contribute its expertise from a U.N.-led disarmament and demobilization project in Afghanistan that ended in 2006.</p> <p>Officials from 30 countries and international organizations attended the conference.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 US slams Houthis attack on shipping
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/maritime-security/white-house-slams-houthis-attack-commercial-shipping/
GIST	<p>The White House slammed the Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen for threatening critical shipping lanes with their rocket attack on an oil tanker Tuesday off of Yemen's key port city Al Hudaydah.</p> <p>The attack on the Saudi tanker happened at about 1:30 p.m. local time in international waters. The Saudis said the ship sustained "a slight but ineffective hit," with no crew members injured, before moving on its way toward the Red Sea with a warship escort.</p> <p>The Houthis claimed they "targeted a battleship belonging to the coalition" in revenge for a Monday airstrike in Al Hudaydah that killed several civilians.</p> <p>Saudi-led Arab coalition spokesman Col. Turki Al-Maliki told reporters that there are deeper fears for maritime traffic in the Bab Al-Mandab strait, including threats of boats laden with explosives targeting vessels in the busy waterway.</p> <p>The official Saudi Press Agency said Al-Maliki vowed that the coalition "will continue taking the necessary measures and means to keep the security and stability of the region, and the continuation of the freedom of regional and international navigation in the Red Sea and Bab-Al-Mandab strait, as part of its</p>

	<p>commitment to make Yemen a safe and secure place.”</p> <p>A statement from White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said the United States “is very concerned about the Houthis’ latest attempt to escalate the war in Yemen, this time by attacking a commercial vessel while it transited one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes, the Bab al-Mandab, in international waters.”</p> <p>“A significant portion of global trade moves through the Bab al-Mandab every day, including key energy and food supplies. In January, the Houthis publicly threatened to attack international commercial maritime traffic in the Red Sea, and launched this attack near the vital port of Hodaydah,” Sanders said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Pulse nightclub attack survivors lawsuit
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/04/06/pulse-nightclub-attack-survivors-sue-google-facebook-twitter-over-material-support-to-isis.html
GIST	<p>Survivors of the Pulse nightclub massacre in Orlando, Fla., perpetrated by a supporter of the Islamic State terror group, are suing Google, Facebook, and Twitter, alleging that the tech firms allowed the group to proliferate and spread propaganda.</p> <p>In a lawsuit filed Wednesday in Orlando’s federal courthouse, 16 victims of the June 12, 2016 shooting -- the second deadliest in American history -- claim that the three tech giants were responsible for letting ISIS disseminate propaganda on their platforms, thus providing “material support” to the terror group, in violation of the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA).</p> <p>Such support, the suit alleges, let gunman Omar Mateen carry out his attack, which left 49 people dead and another 58 injured, the Orlando Sentinel reported. Mateen was killed in a shootout with responding police officers.</p> <p>“By the time of the terror attacks in this case, ISIS had become one of the largest and most widely recognized and feared terrorist organizations in the world ... due in large part to its use of the Defendants’ social media platforms to promote and carry out its terrorist activities,” wrote Ari Kresch and Keith Altman, the Michigan attorneys who filed the lawsuit.</p> <p>“The expansion and success of ISIS is in large part due to its use of the defendants’ social media platforms to promote and carry out its terrorist activities,” the lawsuit reads. “But for ISIS’s postings using defendants’ social media platforms, Mateen would not have engaged in his Orlando attack.”</p> <p>The survivors of the attack also argue that the tech giants profited from content created by ISIS and that the terror group may have received money from Google-owned YouTube in the form of ad revenue.</p> <p>The suit requests a judge to declare that the three companies “have violated, and are continuing to violate, the Anti-Terrorism Act” and force them to pay “compensatory damages in amounts to be determined at trial” in addition to covering legal costs and other relief.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Brain injury center opens at JBLM
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/brain-injury-center-opens-at-joint-base-lewis-mcchord/281-535733736
GIST	<p>The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have brought the issue of brain injury into sharper focus.</p> <p>Once called "shell shock" or "having your bell rung," soldiers would often shake off blast injuries and head back to their units, only to have headaches, depression, other psychological and family problems</p>

emerge weeks, months and even years later.

In too many cases, soldiers take their own lives.

The Madigan Army Medical Center is now the recipient of a \$12 million fully equipped facility to deal directly with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). TBI is often associated with the blast forces from Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) triggered close to troops on foot or in vehicles. While many IED explosions lead to horrific physical as well as brain injuries, many times the injuries are not obvious because they are contained within the skull.

The facility is known as the Intrepid Spirit Center, and the one now officially opened at Joint Base Lewis-McChord is the sixth of nine such centers around the country. Another West Coast location at Camp Pendleton, California, also opened Thursday. The centers are built with private donations raised by the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund, then the entire center is donated to the Department of Defense.

When a soldier comes in, they are treated by an integrated team of specialists and therapists who work on a comprehensive treatment plan.

"It really covers maybe seven or eight domains," said Col. Beverly Scott, M.D., a neurologist who runs the center and has also dealt with brain injuries in Afghanistan.

Col. Scott says those areas "include medical, psychological, intellectual, spiritual and social." Often soldiers are reached through their creative side; there is art as well as physical therapy.

One goal of the centers is to help restore soldiers to active duty. The Intrepid Center at Ft. Campbell, Kentucky, opened in 2014 and claims a 94 percent success rate.

But Scott says that's just one measure, adding that some soldiers come in shortly before retiring from the military.

"It's never too late to help our service members, it's never too late for them to seek care and enter our program," said Scott.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Djibouti grounds all US military flights
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/flights-grounded-u-s-military-base-africa-crucial-anti-terror-n862961
GIST	<p>The government of Djibouti grounded all U.S. military flights Wednesday at a base crucial to the U.S. fight against terror in Yemen and Somalia after mishaps with two aircraft in as many days, according to three U.S. defense officials.</p> <p>Both aircraft were participating in Alligator Dagger, an annual amphibious exercise in the region. The U.S. military announced Thursday that it has now cancelled the remainder of the exercise.</p> <p>On Tuesday, a U.S. Marine Corps AV-8B Harrier jet crashed as it was taking off at the African nation's Ambouli International Airport. The pilot ejected and is in stable condition at Camp Lemonnier, the U.S. Naval Expeditionary Base there.</p> <p>On Wednesday, a CH-53 helicopter suffered structural damage during a landing in Arta Beach. No one was injured, according to Cmdr. Bill Urban, spokesperson for U.S. Naval Forces Central Command.</p> <p>A U.S. Marine CH-53 helicopter dislodges U.S. and Philippine marines during a live-fire exercise called Phiblex 2013 in the northern Philippines on Oct. 16, 2012. Bullit Marquez / AP File</p> <p>The U.S. has about 4,000 troops stationed at Camp Lemonnier, which serves as a base for U.S. operations</p>

	<p>against jihadis in Somalia and Yemen. Djibouti is on the Horn of Africa across the Gulf of Aden from southwestern Yemen.</p> <p>During this flight suspension U.S. military aircraft cannot operate from either the commercial airport or from the U.S. military base.</p> <p>The officials could not say how long the aircraft would be grounded or what impact it is having on U.S. military operations in the region.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 ISIS attempts to re-emerge in Syria
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/trump-mulls-pullout-attempts-emerge-syria-54263846?
GIST	<p>Even as President Donald Trump mulls a U.S. pullout from Syria, insisting that the Islamic State group is "almost completely defeated," the extremist group is showing signs of a revival.</p> <p>Despite being kicked out of the main towns they once occupied near the Iraqi border, the militants have regrouped elsewhere and revised their tactics, recently mounting a brazen attack on a border city in eastern Syria and expanding their footprint inside the Syrian capital itself.</p> <p>Talk of a U.S. troop withdrawal has alarmed the United States' main ally in Syria, the Kurds, who fought alongside the Americans to roll back the Islamic State group. They fear not only an IS resurgence, but also that without U.S. troops in the country, Turkey, Russia and Iran will fill the void and wrest control of northern and eastern Syria.</p> <p>The White House said Wednesday that the U.S. military mission against IS in Syria is coming to a "rapid end," but offered no timetable for the withdrawal of the 2,000 U.S. troops other than to say they will leave just as soon as the last remaining IS fighters can be vanquished.</p> <p>Trump, however, has signaled to his advisers that ideally, he wants all troops out within six months, according to three U.S. officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss what transpired in a meeting with the president.</p> <p>Developments on the ground, however, suggest it will be difficult, if not impossible, to completely snuff out the group before then.</p> <p>"Daesh is not over," said the commander of the U.S.-backed Manbij Military Council, the joint Kurdish-Arab body administering this strategic northern Syrian town.</p> <p>"Daesh still has cells present in all areas and every now and then there are problems in areas where the cells are still operating," said the commander, who spoke on condition he be identified only by his nom de guerre, Mohammed Abu Adel, in line with regulations, and referred to IS by its Arabic acronym.</p> <p>Speaking to the Associated Press on Wednesday, he said the U.S. statements about a pullout were a cause for "concern on the street level" but that Kurdish officials were receiving reassurances from U.S. generals on the ground that American troops were staying.</p> <p>Last week, an explosion killed two coalition personnel, an American and a Briton, during an operation to capture a known IS member in Manbij, where U.S. troops maintain a large presence. It was the first such blast to hit the U.S.-led coalition since it deployed in the town months after the U.S.-backed forces liberated it from IS in 2016 following fierce battles that lasted nearly three months.</p> <p>Since then, the town has served as a model of stabilization, but officials are now expressing concern about IS attempting to re-emerge.</p>

The U.S.-backed forces — a mix of Kurdish and Arab fighters known as the Syrian Democratic Forces, or SDF, — routed IS militants from almost all the territory the extremists controlled in northern Syria, including the group's de facto capital of Raqqa, in October. In November, a coalition of Iranian, Iraqi, Syrian and Russian forces secured the militant's last urban stronghold, Boukamal, in eastern Syria on the border with Iraq.

That seemed to herald victory over the militants. The various sides then turned their attention to pursuing their own interests in the disintegrated country.

The IS militants kept a sliver of territory along the Euphrates River near Boukamal, and some nebulous zones of control in the desert of eastern Syria and on the border with Iraq — but nothing that seemed beyond containment.

But in a surprise attack, the militants stormed Boukamal on Monday, triggering heavy fighting before Iranian-backed Shiite militias beat them out, according to a war monitoring group and Syrian opposition activists with connections to the region. Approximately 400 Islamic State fighters crossed the Euphrates River and ambushed the town, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group, killed 11 pro-government fighters in clashes, and losing five of their own.

From their desert territory the IS militants have harassed forces at oil stations, as well, according to Mohammad al-Ayed, director of the Palmyra News Network.

U.S. and Kurdish officers had warned of an IS resurgence when Turkey attacked the town of Afrin in northwestern Syria in March to drive out the main Kurdish militia, known as the YPG.

The YPG forms the backbone of the Syrian Democratic Forces, America's main partner in Syria, which then shifted hundreds of fighters from operations against IS in eastern Syria to the front lines against Turkey in Afrin.

That forced a pause in operations against the main IS holdout in Syria. The U.S.-led coalition has cut its airstrikes against IS by half since the Kurdish-led fighters moved away from eastern Syria, said coalition spokesman Col. Ryan Dillon.

The U.S. relies on ground maneuvers by the Syrian Democratic Forces to flush out IS fighters and expose them to airstrikes, Dillon said. "If the SDF are not constantly putting pressure on ISIS elements, that allows them to quietly reconsolidate," he added, using an alternate acronym for the Islamic State group.

Meanwhile, with the Syrian government focused on vanquishing the rebels in their stronghold of eastern Ghouta, near Damascus, IS militants surged from a pocket of territory they hold on the southern edge of the capital to snatch a neighborhood right from under the government's nose.

IS has lost almost all the territory it once controlled in Syria and Iraq, land that had encompassed a third of those countries. But the pockets it still holds provide protection.

IS fighters have excellent knowledge of the desert areas along the Syria-Iraq border, dating back to the early days of the Islamic State group and even before, when the group was called al-Qaida in Iraq, said Jalal al-Hamad, a Europe-based Syrian activist who monitors the war with an organization called Justice for Life.

IS has extensive tunnels there and can move relatively undetected, avoiding Syrian and Russian airstrikes, al-Hamad said, though American planes can detect them. The militants use bad weather, particularly dust storms, to cross the Euphrates, he said.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces control about 25 percent of Syria, and the Kurds are hoping to emerge from the conflict with a degree of self-rule in their territory.

	<p>But they fear that an American withdrawal will leave them unable to hold on to much of that. It would allow Turkey, which succeeded in capturing Afrin, to carry out its threat to attack Manbij and try to take other Kurdish-held territory along the Syrian-Turkish border.</p> <p>It would also, they warn, cede the east completely to Damascus' allies Russia and Iran, which have set up a series of bases in the country during seven years of war.</p> <p>Ilham Ahmed, a senior Kurdish official in Syria's Raqqa province, said an American pullout would open the way for "total chaos in Syria."</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	04/05 Seattle homeless erect 'tent mansion'
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/947212/seattle-homeless-tent-mansion-low-priority-for-city-cleanup/
GIST	<p>Two days after Melissa Burns' tent encampment was swept by City of Seattle workers from the small triangle city park at Third Avenue and Broad Street, a small crew of homeless volunteers helped her begin to build a much larger wood and tarp structure half a block away, on a busy Third Avenue sidewalk.</p> <p>The structure, complete with glass French doors connected to wooden-pallet walls, surrounding their interior furniture, can be easily seen by Seattle tourists heading up and down the Space Needle elevators.</p> <p>"When in Rome, you modify, adapt and overcome," said one of the homeless carpenters who built the structure, which passers-by have dubbed the "Tent Mansion."</p> <p>Melissa Burns is friendly to everyone who passes by with questions.</p> <p>"We're homeless, so we're solving that problem," she said. "We are creating a home here."</p> <p>Burns told KIRO 7 she's a former children's social worker who moved to Seattle from West Virginia. "We appreciate Seattle's liberal vibe," she said.</p> <p>She and her boyfriend say when city workers swept them out of a homeless camp a block away, they moved to this highly visible space for a number of reasons.</p> <p>"We're not going to cower in our tent like we're scared of the world," she said. "We're going to come out and live and we're going to help other people, because we feed other homeless people with food bank food, and we plan to set these up all over town."</p> <p>KIRO 7 sent photos of Burns' sidewalk structure to four Seattle agencies, including the mayor's office. The city's homeless navigation team contacted KIRO 7 four hours later, saying Burns and everyone else who lives in the encampment refused offers for shelter days ago.</p> <p>The city navigation team says only 37 percent of homeless people they contact accept offers of shelter. Burns says few shelters accept couples to live together, and she and her boyfriend don't want to comply with a typical shelter's rigid rules.</p> <p>"We don't want to change our lifestyle to fit their requirements," she said.</p> <p>The city of Seattle told KIRO 7 they've gotten complaints about 400 illegal unsanctioned encampments. They say their outreach teams are stretched so thin they average removing only two to three per day.</p> <p>Burns says she asked the navigation team questions.</p>

“The options that I asked them for at the last sweep was information,” she said. “Where is it safe to set up? We don’t use drugs, so where would we be able to go and not have needles all around us, and where would we able to go and not get robbed or be in a position where if someone attacked us that we could still receive emergency services?”

The city says they expect complaints—they expect to reach out to Burns again, and they’ll keep offering services — and housing — before they give her 72 hours’ notice to move again. They say the encampment could be there for days – or weeks — because they prioritize encampments which are safety hazards first — and there are hundreds on their list before this one.

When asked if she would accept permanent housing offers, Burns said she would not likely accept them.

“We intend to stay here,” she said. “This is the solution to the homeless problem. We want autonomy, right here.”

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HEADLINE	04/05 Hamas pays for protest deaths, injuries
SOURCE	https://www.yahoo.com/news/israeli-fire-kills-palestinian-gaza-border-more-protests-094735729.html
GIST	<p>GAZA (Reuters) - Israeli fire killed a Palestinian at the Gaza border on Thursday and another died of wounds suffered several days ago, health officials said, bringing to 19 the number of Palestinian dead from a week of frontier protests.</p> <p>The Israeli military said one of its aircraft targeted an armed militant near the security fence along the Gaza Strip.</p> <p>Tens of thousands of Palestinians are holding a six-week-long protest in tent encampments along the fenced border of the Israeli-blockaded Gaza Strip, an enclave of two million ruled by the militant Hamas Islamist group.</p> <p>The demonstrators are pressing for a right of return for refugees and their descendants to what is now Israel.</p> <p>Many of the demonstrators who turned out for the first wave of protests along the border returned to their homes and jobs over the week. But organisers expect large crowds again on Friday, the Muslim sabbath.</p> <p>Protesters on Thursday were bringing more tents and thousands of tyres to burn, in what has become known as “The Friday of Tyres.” They say they intend to use mirrors and laser pointers to distract Israeli sharpshooters.</p> <p>“Friday is going to be a special day, they will see that we are not afraid,” said one Palestinian youth as he delivered tyres to the area. But Ahmed Ali, a 55-year-old teacher, said that while he wanted his family to see the tent camp, but would not come back on Friday.</p> <p>“I taught my children one day we will be returning to Jaffa, our home, but I can’t allow them to throw stones because the Israelis won’t hesitate to kill them,” he said.</p> <p>Hamas said on Thursday it would pay \$3,000 to the family of anyone killed in the protests, \$500 for critically injuries and \$200 for more minor injuries. Israeli leaders say that such payments serve to instigate violence.</p> <p>Visiting the frontier this week, Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman warned protesters that "every person who comes close to the fence is endangering their lives."</p>

	<p>The protest action is set to wind up on May 15, when Palestinians mark the "Naqba", or "Catastrophe", when hundreds of thousands fled or were driven out of their homes during violence that culminated in war in May 1948 between the newly created state of Israel and its Arab neighbours.</p> <p>Israel has long ruled out any right of return, fearing it would lose its Jewish majority.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Bottlenose dolphins in Puget Sound
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/05/rare-visitors-bottlenose-dolphins-living-in-puget-sound/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE -- There's been a rare sighting in Puget Sound recently. A group of bottlenose dolphins has been spotted regularly over the past seven months.</p> <p>Researchers at the nonprofit Cascadia Research tell us this has never happened before. Aside from a few random sightings in the years since 2008, they've never seen the dolphins hang around in the area for this long. Bottlenose dolphins tend to live in warmer, tropical waters, not the cold waters of Puget Sound.</p> <p>"People don't see bottlenose dolphins here," said Laurie Shuster, a volunteer research assistant with the Olympia-based Cascadia Research. "Pacific white-sided dolphins are native to this area so in the past that's the type of dolphin people would be likely to see, so it is unusual for them (bottlenose) to be up here."</p> <p>People first spotted the bottlenose dolphins in September 2017. Researchers say based on the sightings and images, they estimate five or six are living in Puget Sound, but only three bottlenose dolphins have been identified.</p> <p>Researchers believe the dolphins are part of the California coastal stock. One of the dolphins has been identified as a well-known dolphin first photographed by researchers in 1983 named "Miss." This is the first time that an individual bottlenose dolphin in the Puget Sound has been traced to a specific population.</p> <p>"Miss" has been moving all her life. She was first spotted in Southern California in the 1980s, Monterey Bay in the 1990s and then in San Francisco Bay area in 2012. Now she's in Puget Sound.</p> <p>So why are they here? Cascadia Research says they don't know why just yet.</p> <p>"I'd like to pin it on something that easy, but there's really no definitive connections right now to climate change or global warming," said Shuster. "It could be that they are looking for prey, that they're looking for a different habitat. We have no idea why they're up here."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 'Feel better' fad sweeping Los Angeles
SOURCE	http://www.latimes.com/business/la-fi-fitness-fads-20180405-story.html
GIST	<p>When Amber Dodson needs a break from her rigorous workout regimen, she steps nearly naked into a high-tech machine that looks like a giant energy drink can. Only her head is visible as the temperature in the chamber plummets to minus 292 degrees Fahrenheit for three minutes, liquid nitrogen vapor billowing down the sides.</p> <p>"I tend to get extremely inflamed and I don't like taking days off," said Dodson, 36, who pays \$299 a month for up to 30 sessions at Coast Cryo in Marina del Rey. "It's been a lifesaver because I can't deal with sore muscles and bad sleep."</p> <p>Cryotherapy, a freezing treatment used by elite athletes such as LeBron James and Michael Phelps, is just one of the pricey injury recovery and prevention strategies that are exploding in popularity in Los Angeles — despite a lack of scientific evidence in many cases to support their efficacy. Cryotherapy alone is</p>

expected to grow to a \$5.6-billion global industry by 2024, up from \$2.5 billion in 2016, according to Grand View Research, a market research and consulting company.

The remedies — which also include IV therapy drips, vitamin-infused booster shots, hyperbaric oxygen chambers and compression therapy — cater to workout fanatics who insist an old-fashioned ice pack and a Gatorade won't suffice. They're now being offered at so-called wellness boutiques dedicated to administering the treatments; medical offices, weight loss clinics and traditional spas are also getting in on the craze.

Drip Doctors in downtown Los Angeles, for example, offers more than two dozen intravenous drips and booster shots to increase energy, promote faster recovery and aid in weight loss.

There's an \$89 Hydroboost IV vitamin drip "perfect for those who need instant hydration," a \$30 Supercharged booster shot for customers who are looking for "an intense burst of oomph" or a wallet-busting \$220 Limitless IV vitamin drip. That one is billed as "an 'all in one' concoction" that will "optimize performance, neurological function, immune support, detox, and keep you feeling rejuvenated."

Skeptics contend that there is little benefit to IV drip therapy for people who are essentially healthy, saying people are capable of hydrating sufficiently and getting the nutrients they need through food. They instead point to a placebo effect.

"This is Los Angeles after all, where anything that promises to make you feel better becomes the latest fad," said Dr. Michael Gottlieb, a specialist in internal medicine who practices in Los Angeles.

True believers, however, counter with the argument that IV therapy works and beats dependence on painkillers. The global market for IV tubing and related equipment is expected to grow at a steady rate of just under 4% to more than \$1.2 billion by 2025, according to a new report from Persistence Market Research.

"It's taking a more natural and preventive approach to health," said Dr. Anthony Ho, a co-founder and chief of business operations at Drip Doctors, which also provides house calls. "It started out being more at the high end, with celebrities, corporate types. We wanted to make it available to the masses."

Even hyperbaric oxygen chambers have gone beyond the traditional use of saving the lives of deep-sea divers who surface too quickly. Sessions claim to boost energy, reduce pain and inflammation, and speed injury recovery times, and they can cost \$350 to \$450 per treatment.

Postal worker Nicholas Howard Hayes, 28, uses the hyperbaric oxygen chamber at Infusio in Beverly Hills to help alleviate sore muscles after long days at work.

"Not only am I walking 12 to 15 miles a day on my routes, I'm also lifting a lot of heavy, awkward packages, like small refrigerators, microwaves, even small beds," he said. After his day job is done, Hayes hits the gym, where he works as a personal trainer.

"I'm constantly overexerting myself," Hayes said. But after a session in the hyperbaric chamber, where the air pressure is increased to allow the lungs to gather more oxygen, "it's amazing how I feel after 20 minutes. I feel so good that I go the gym to work out" afterward.

Infusio describes itself as "a sports optimization medical clinic specializing in integrative medical and cutting-edge stem cell therapy."

"We can use it for all sorts of problems for patients who have issues, like with their joints," said Suzanne Kim, one of the clinic's doctors.

Other fitness recovery businesses tout compression therapy. At HM Sports Performance and Recovery in Santa Monica, customers slip into pairs of bulky NormaTec boots that extend all the way to the upper

thighs.

At \$45 for a 30-minute session (or \$350 for a package of 10), customers "recover faster between trainings and after performance by increasing blood flow and flushing metabolites from the workout out of the body," according to the company website.

Industry professionals say the fitness recovery fad stems from the rise in more intense workouts, especially in cities like L.A. The two are so closely linked that many recovery boutiques have opened up next door to fitness studios, and some cryotherapy businesses are now offering appointments on popular workout app ClassPass.

Dodson is an example. She has memberships at two gyms — Gold's and Equinox — because, as she puts it, "one gym just isn't enough." At the Marina del Rey home she shares with her restaurateur husband and her three young children, there's also a \$1,995 Peloton spin bike, with its \$39-per-month online classes.

So shelling out a few hundred dollars a month for whole-body cryotherapy "sounds expensive, but it absolutely isn't" when considering the benefits, she said.

But some of the unconventional therapies, while no doubt trendy among the bootcamp-spinning-yoga-kombucha crowd, have been heavily criticized by those who doubt the purported benefits and say providers are making misleading and potentially dangerous claims.

A consumer update by the Food and Drug Administration in 2016 deemed cryotherapy — now offered at boutiques in Santa Monica, Beverly Grove and Costa Mesa — "a 'cool' trend that lacks evidence, poses risks." It said despite claims that cryo helps treat conditions like Alzheimer's, fibromyalgia, migraines, rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, stress, anxiety or chronic pain, "this so-called 'treatment' hasn't been proven to do any of these things."

Some studies suggest one can get as much localized benefit from a simple ice pack. But a study conducted by the France-based National Institute of Sport, Expertise and Performance focused mainly on sports injuries and found that whole body cryotherapy reduced inflammation and aches, and aided in faster muscle injury recovery.

Matt Sarbello, 41, owner of Coast Cryo, first tried cryotherapy in Texas, when he was working out so intensely to lose weight that he woke up barely able to move some mornings.

"I started doing cryo four or five times a week," Sarbello said. "I moved out here and I was like, 'How is there no cryotherapy available on the Westside?'" He went on to open Coast Cryo in late 2015.

Less controversial are stretch labs, where customers pay for one-on-one stretch sessions. They're designed to help gain more mobility and flexibility than one can get on his or her own.

Costa Mesa-based StretchLab, for example, charges \$35 for 25 minutes with a "flexologist" and \$65 for 50 minutes. Monthly rates range from \$119 to \$229 depending on the length of the sessions.

Business is booming. "We opened our first location in 2015 and we're already about to open our fourth," said Saul Janson, a co-owner of StretchLab, which operates boutiques in Venice, Santa Monica and the West Hollywood area.

Social media and Hollywood have also fueled the boutique fitness recovery fad.

Actress Mandy Moore, "Dancing with the Stars" Derek Hough and Mark Ballas, and athletes Floyd Mayweather and Shaquille O'Neal are just some of the celebrities who have touted the benefits of cryotherapy, posting photos on Instagram of them emerging from the chambers.

Two years ago, "Beverly Hills, 90210" actress Shannen Doherty shared a photo of herself lying in a

	<p>hyperbaric chamber as part of what she called an "outside of the box" treatment for cancer recommended by her surgeon.</p> <p>And Madonna once told a radio station about how she gave Justin Timberlake a B12 shot in the butt when they were working together "because we only had a certain amount of days in the studio" and she wanted his energy levels to be high.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 UK 'sin taxes' are working
SOURCE	http://money.cnn.com/2018/04/05/news/economy/sin-tax-sugar-diesel-plastic-uk/index.html
GIST	<p>First it was plastic. Then diesel cars. Soda is next.</p> <p>The United Kingdom is on a mission to change people's behavior by slapping new taxes on products deemed harmful to health and the environment.</p> <p>The government has, in quick succession, introduced new or higher taxes on plastic bags, diesel cars and sugary soft drinks in an attempt to undermine their popularity.</p> <p>The moves have prompted some criticism. The Institute of Economic Affairs, a free market think tank, ranked the United Kingdom as the second worst country in the European Union for "nanny state oppression," after Finland.</p> <p>There are signs, however, that the taxes are producing exactly the results policymakers were hoping for:</p> <p>1. Plastic bags</p> <p>Customers at large UK retailers have been paying 5 pence (7 cents) for plastic shopping bags since 2015.</p> <p>The government wanted to reduce the number of bags used, while also cutting down on waste, litter and environmental degradation.</p> <p>In the year leading up to April 2017, top retailers gave out around 83%, or 6 billion, fewer bags as a result of the tax, according to government research. That translates to 25 bags per person instead of 140.</p> <p>The big payoff? A study published Thursday in the journal Science of the Total Environment showed a decline in the number of plastic bags found in coastal waters.</p> <p>2. Sugary soft drinks</p> <p>The United Kingdom will implement a new tax on sugary soft drinks on Friday.</p> <p>Drinks with total sugar content above 5 grams per 100 milliliters will be affected by the levy, with a higher rate for drinks with more than 8 grams.</p> <p>The new tax was announced in 2016 as part of an effort to reduce sugar consumption and childhood obesity -- and evidence shows it's already working.</p> <p>The government said Thursday that more than 50% of manufacturers have already cut the sugar content of their drinks.</p> <p>3. Diesel cars</p> <p>A higher tax on diesel vehicle purchases was introduced on April 1.</p>

	<p>The government said the measure was aimed at improving air quality by getting dirty cars off the road.</p> <p>The new levy is discouraging purchases. Plans to ban sales of new gasoline and diesel cars starting in 2040 and the Volkswagen diesel emissions scandal have also scared away buyers.</p> <p>UK diesel car sales slumped 37% over the previous year in March, according to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. Declines in January and February were in the 25% range.</p> <p>Analysts said the new tax has created confusion among buyers because some very clean models that would be exempt are not yet for sale.</p> <p>Colin Couchman, the director of global automotive sales forecasting at IHS Markit, said that many are buying gasoline cars or simply holding off their purchases because "clean" models remain very expensive.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 First theme park certified autism center
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/sesame-place-becomes-worlds-first-theme-park-designated-as-a-certified-autism-center/
GIST	<p>Sesame Place -- Pennsylvania's "Sesame Street"-themed amusement park -- has just become the world's first amusement park designated as a certified autism center. The park announced the news on Facebook this Monday, in honor of Autism Awareness Day, writing: "It's our goal to provide every family with an enjoyable and memorable visit, and we are proud to offer specialized services to guests with autism and other special needs."</p> <p>The theme park partnered with The International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) to ensure that all its staff members received autism sensitivity and awareness training in areas like sensory awareness, motor skills, program development, social skills, communication, environment and emotional awareness. All of its rides are now ranked on a special sensory guide from one to 10.</p> <p>Sesame Place offers a Ride Accessibility Program to help visitors determine which rides are an appropriate match. The goal is to maximize both enjoyment and safety for visitors with special needs. To enroll a child in the RAP program, parents simply have to fill out the Ride Accessibility Questionnaire on the amusement park's website. Once the form is validated, a personalized list of rides and attractions, tailored to the individual child's physical and mental attributes, will be provided.</p> <p>The park has also unveiled a number of new features for guests who may be suffering from sensory overstimulation throughout the day. There are two newly-renovated quiet rooms with adjustable lighting, where autistic children can take a break from all the sensory stimulation of the park. There are also two areas of the park now designated as "low sensory areas" for guests in need of some quiet time, who want to remain within the park while migrating to areas that may be a bit less populated. Noise-canceling headphones are also now available on a first come, first served basis for guests with auditory sensitivity.</p> <p>Guests who want to take in one of the park's signature parades, but wish to do so without direct character interaction such as "hugs" or "high fives," are encouraged to sit close to where the parade begins or several rows back from the parade viewing line. There are also now special instructions on the park's website for guests who would prefer to dine in quieter environments or who would like to book special "character dines" with limited character interaction or seating furthest away from the performances.</p> <p>Last but not least, parents can take their autistic children to meet Julia, the adorable "Sesame Street" character that debuted in 2017. Julia is the first muppet to be on the autism spectrum.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Seattle café cannabis-infused lattes
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/seattle-cafe-to-offer-cannabis-infused-lattes/281-535730574
GIST	<p>A double tall latte with a shot of - cannabis?</p> <p>Cafe Hitchcock Express, a pop-up offshoot of Cafe Hitchcock in downtown Seattle, will be serving grab-and-go food, coffee and soon CBD oil-infused "wellness lattes," which were recently added to the menu, reports Eater Seattle.</p> <p>The lattes will be made with cannabis' calming non-psychoactive, so the drinks' won't make you high - just chill you out and make you feel good.</p> <p>The Cafe Hitchcock Express popup will open in the former Tully's location at 821 2nd Avenue later in April through the summer. Eventually, they plan to become a permanent fixture.</p> <p>Other items on the menu include Cafe Vita coffee and espresso, cold-pressed juices, sodas made on site, and Iggy's Honeybrew Kombucha. As for food offerings, Chef Brendan McGill plans to combine hot items with grab-and-go options for workers in a hurry. Sandwiches served on Sea Wolf Bakery bread might include smoked ham with brie and arugula, for example.</p> <p>When it opens, Cafe Hitchcock Express will operate Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Vermont: making tourists into residents
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-05/this-weekend-aging-vermont-will-try-to-make-tourists-into-residents
GIST	<p>It's not only the ski slopes that are white in Vermont. It's the hair on the heads of many state residents, whose median age, 42.6 in 2016, is the second-highest in the nation after Maine's. With young people moving away, the state's labor force is smaller than it was before the last recession, so labor shortages are serious. The unemployment rate in February was 2.8 percent, tied for fourth-lowest in the nation.</p> <p>To rejuvenate its population, Vermont is starting a Stay to Stay Weekend tourism program that combines sightseeing and other standard tourist stuff on Saturdays and Sundays with a networking reception on Friday nights and visits on Mondays to employers, chambers of commerce, real estate agents, and incubators and makerspaces. Governor Phil Scott announced the program last month. The first one is April 6-9.</p> <p>Other states have pitched tourists on becoming residents, but Vermont is the first to make a formal program out of it, says Wendy Knight, commissioner of the Department of Tourism and Marketing, who came up with the idea. "I got to thinking, visitors are an ideal captive audience," she says.</p> <p>The aim is not only to fill vacancies at local employers but to attract people who might want to start businesses or work remotely for employers in, say, New York or San Francisco. Lots of people dream about living in Vermont, with its postcard scenery and tranquility, Knight says. "We want to take down some of the barriers" that have prevented them from going ahead and doing so, she says.</p> <p>A dozen people are attending the first program, which Knight calls "a pilot of a pilot." One chamber representative told her that if not enough people show up to justify a networking reception, "maybe I'll take them out for a beer."</p> <p>The state's goal is to expand to about 1,000 visitors a year. The first participating cities are Bennington, Brattleboro, and Rutland, which are in southern Vermont and relatively accessible by car from population centers such as Albany, N.Y., Boston, Hartford, and New York City. She says other parts of Vermont are already expressing interest in getting in on the action.</p>

	Vermont isn't the only place that's getting creative to deal with labor shortages. Bloomberg Businessweek recently featured the efforts of three cities with ultralow unemployment rates: Ames, Iowa; Marietta, Ga.; and Portland, Maine.
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HEADLINE	04/05 Unclear cause CDC worker drowning
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/authorities-unclear-caused-cdc-worker-drown-54274754?cid=clicksource_26_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>Now that authorities have found the body of a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention employee who disappeared more than seven weeks ago, they will focus on piecing together his final moments.</p> <p>Timothy Cunningham's body was found by fishermen partially submerged in water and mud on the west bank of the Chattahoochee River in northwest Atlanta, fire-rescue department spokesman Sgt. Cortez Stafford said at a news conference Thursday.</p> <p>Stafford said rescue crews had to use boats and special equipment to reach Cunningham's body after it was first found Tuesday because it was in difficult terrain in a "remote area not easily accessible."</p> <p>Fulton County Chief Medical Examiner Jan Gorniak determined the cause of death as drowning, but said she couldn't provide additional information because she was still awaiting toxicology reports.</p> <p>"Since the investigation is ongoing, we do not have ... whether it was an accident, a suicide, or anything other than that" Cunningham drowned, Gorniak said.</p> <p>Gorniak said the decomposing body was positively identified using dental records.</p> <p>Fishermen first discovered Cunningham's body and called authorities, said Stafford, who noted that the body was found in an area authorities had searched in February without finding anything. The site where the body was found was not far from Cunningham's house, Maj. Michael O'Connor of the Atlanta Police Department's Major Crimes Section said. He did not elaborate.</p> <p>O'Connor said investigators were satisfied that they had spoken to everyone of importance in the case.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/06 Vietnam jails democracy advocates
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/vietnam-harsh-jail-terms-activists-subversion-54273610?
GIST	<p>Six human rights activists were sentenced to harsh prison terms in Vietnam after being convicted of attempting to overthrow the government by advocating a multiparty democracy.</p> <p>Prominent human rights lawyer Nguyen Van Dai received the most severe penalty of 15 years in prison and five years of house arrest at the one-day trial Thursday, said his lawyer Nguyen Van Mieng. The others received sentences from seven to 12 years.</p> <p>They were charged with affiliating with a group called Brotherhood for Democracy, whose purpose was to change the leadership of the Communist Party and build a multiparty system.</p> <p>"The sentences are too harsh to the defendants," Mieng said. "They fought for human rights, they fought for the rights of multi-party system ... which are recognized achievements of mankind, but the court sees it as serious (threat) to the regime."</p>

	<p>Five of the defendants including Dai maintained they were innocent because what they did was right, Mieng said. One defendant confessed to the crime and got the most lenient sentence, he added.</p> <p>"The purpose of the group is to change the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam, build a multi-party system," the official Vietnam News Agency quoted the verdict as saying. "The defendants' act is not fight for democracy, but acts that aim at overthrowing the people's administration."</p> <p>"The defendants' act is especially serious because it directly impacts the survival of the people's administration," it said.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	04/05 Wisc. police: explosive lab, guns, ammo
SOURCE	https://www.cbs58.com/news/white-supremacist-material-guns-ammunition-found-in-apartment-of-man-killed-in-beaver-dam-explosion
GIST	<p>BEAVER DAM, Wis. (CBS 58) – Newly unsealed search warrants are detailing what investigators found inside the Beaver Dam apartment where police say they found bomb-making materials.</p> <p>On March 5, officials were called to an apartment complex on Knaup Drive for an explosion. Inside, they found 28-year-old Benjamin Morrow dead and volatile chemicals inside the apartment.</p> <p>Investigators call Morrow’s apartment a “homemade explosive laboratory and in addition to bomb-making equipment, they found literature about white supremacist groups in his bedroom.</p> <p>According to the court documents, Morrow was found dead in front of the stove, which was on, and investigators testified they believe he was making explosive at the time of the blast.</p> <p>Inside the apartment, investigators found a fridge full of homemade explosives along with other explosive chemicals, pipes, fuses, and chemistry equipment.</p> <p>They also found several guns and hundreds of rounds of ammunition along with a ballistics helmet and vest. Morrow also had white supremacist materials but police say they’re still investigating what role that played in Morrow’s apartment full of deadly devices.</p> <p>“It does cause me some concern but I want to make very clear just because Mr. Morrow was in the possession of this material, does not categorize in any particular light. He could have been an individual that was doing research,” said Lt. Terrence Gebhardt, Beaver Dam Lieutenant of Detectives.</p> <p>The FBI is reviewing those white supremacy documents. A spokesman for the FBI said they cannot comment on open investigations.</p> <p>Beaver Dam residents say it is scary learning what was inside Morrow’s apartment.</p> <p>Residents and police say they never thought something like this would happen in Beaver Dam. Detectives say the materials found in the apartment are relatively easy to get and it’s disturbing how easy it can be to make explosives. Officials also found instructions on how to make the bombs as well.</p> <p>“We would not expect anything like this in the city of Beaver Dam. In my 25-year career, I’ve never encountered anything of this magnitude. It causes concern and pause and reflecting on my career,” said Gebhardt.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Belgium: Netherlands organized crime
SOURCE	https://nltimes.nl/2018/04/05/belgium-blames-netherlands-organized-crime-violence-spikes
GIST	<p>Increasing violence and drug trafficking in Antwerp has its roots in Netherlands organized crime, according to Antwerp mayor Bart de Wever. "The drug problems in terms of cocaine trafficking have moved from Rotterdam to Antwerp in recent years. Which means that the Netherlands owes a debt to the rest of Europe", he said to Nieuwsuur.</p> <p>"Due to the Dutch tolerance policy, organized crime has become deeply entrenched in the Netherlands. And now we share in that, with a port that is also very important for South America", De Wever said. The extreme violence of Dutch drug gangs - cocaine is known to be traded by the gangs involved in multiple assassinations in Amsterdam and Utrecht over the past years - has moved into Belgium, according to the mayor.</p> <p>Half of all cocaine seized in Europe arrives at the port of Antwerp. The Belgian city has thus become the main import port for cocaine in Europe. "Five years ago it was still 5 thousand kilos, last year 40 thousand kilos", De Wever said to Nieuwsuur. "And our efforts to search for drugs have not increased. The flow has really shifted from Rotterdam to Antwerp."</p> <p>The growing problems with organized crime in Antwerp led De Wever to declare a 'war on drugs'. "It has already yielded many results, such as reducing drug problems, thousands of arrests and closing dozens of drug buildings." In a second phase the Antwerp city government wants to start working more on tackling money flows from the drug environment, because according to De Wever, drug gangs are still gaining influence in his city. "Organized crime is in the Netherlands, but they are looking for accomplices here in Antwerp."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 London struggles to fight crime spike
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/5/london-struggles-to-fight-crime-spike-as-2018-murd/
GIST	<p>LONDON (AP) — Friends say Israel Ogunsola was a bubbly young man with a knack for making people laugh.</p> <p>This week the 18-year-old became London's 53rd murder victim of 2018. The British capital is being shaken by a spike in deadly violence, much of it involving young people with knives caught up in gang feuds.</p> <p>If the trend continues, London will far surpass the 130 murders it saw in 2017 and reach a number not seen since the early 2000s.</p> <p>Police and community workers say London's surge in violence is partly driven by battles over control of the illegal drug trade and a "postcode war" between street gangs.</p> <p>The crime wave has multiple causes, from cuts in police budgets to social media posts that can incite violence.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Federal Way grocery store shooting
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article208098534.html
GIST	<p>A person was shot in the leg at a Federal Way grocery store Thursday afternoon, according to police.</p> <p>The shooting happened about 5 p.m. at the store in the 2100 block of Southwest 336th Street, police spokesman Kurt Schwan said.</p>

The 19-year-old man was conscious and speaking with police after they arrived, Schwan said. He was transported to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle with the non-life-threatening gunshot wound to his lower leg.

The man is believed to have been in a fight with another man in his late teens or early 20s before he was shot, Schwan said. The suspect fled the scene before police arrived.

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HEADLINE	04/06 New Zealand immigration data collection
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/nz-immigration-rejects-racial-profiling-claims-in-visa-data-modelling-project/
GIST	<p>The New Zealand government kicked off a pilot program 18 months ago that uses data collected through the country's visa application process to determine firstly those in breach of their visa conditions before deciding who should be asked to leave.</p> <p>Speaking on Radio New Zealand this week, Immigration Minister Iain Lees-Galloway explained that the process seeks people that are "over-stayers" or are in the country unlawfully due to breaching visa conditions, rather than filtering people based on their age, gender, and ethnicity.</p> <p>"This is not about trying to predict who will commit a crime, this is about looking at the over 11,000 people who are in New Zealand unlawfully and prioritising where best to use Immigration New Zealand's resources to make sure that they are deporting the people who impose the greatest risk to New Zealand," the minister said.</p> <p>"We need to maintain the integrity of our immigration system and where people are in New Zealand unlawfully ... then we need to be doing everything we can to make sure these deportations go ahead."</p> <p>Rejecting the idea the data-collection project is racial profiling, Lees-Galloway said Immigration looks at a range of issues, including at those who have made -- and have had rejected -- multiple visa applications.</p> <p>"It looks at people who place the greatest burden on the health system, people who place the greatest burden on the criminal justice system, and uses that data to prioritise those people," he continued.</p> <p>"It is important that we protect the integrity of our immigration system and that we use the resources that immigration has as effectively as we can -- I do support them using good data to make good decisions about where best to deploy their resources."</p> <p>While the minister might support the department he oversees, he only became aware of the data-modelling project on Thursday morning when he received a briefing before his radio appearance.</p> <p>"I am disappointed that I was not informed," he added.</p> <p>"We do collect data -- obviously we do collect a lot of data when people make a visa application, there's nothing new about that, we also do have some data around people who are in New Zealand illegally who are making use of the health system and we do have some idea of who those people are and that's useful data to use when trying to determine which over-stayers Immigration New Zealand should use its resources to enforce those deportation liability notices on."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Turkey: gunman kills 4 at university
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/turkey-staff-members-killed-attack-university-

	54253122?
GIST	<p>A research assistant shot and killed four staff members at a university in central Turkey, the university's president said Thursday.</p> <p>Prof. Hasan Gonen of Osmangazi University, in the city of Eskisehir, some 250 kilometers west of Ankara, told reporters that the gunman shot and killed a deputy dean, a secretary and two teaching staff at the university's faculty of education.</p> <p>The attacker, identified as Volkan Bayar, was apprehended by police as he left the scene, Gonen said.</p> <p>Gonen said the motive of the attack appeared to be a personal dispute. The attacker's main target appeared to be the university dean, who was not in his office when the gunman arrived, he added.</p> <p>He said the gunman, who was studying for a doctor's degree, had been under investigation at the university after he accused a number of staff members of being followers of U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen, whom Turkey blames for a failed coup in 2016.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Pot shops call for state's help
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/after-a-string-of-robberies-pot-shops-call-for-states-help/727885863
GIST	<p>Three pot stores were broken into within the last week in the Puget Sound area -- the latest, happened Thursday morning in Tacoma.</p> <p>Have a Heart's Greenwood location in Seattle got robbed again on Friday. Now, it's calling for lawmakers to do something. They want more help from the state to get out of being a cash-based business.</p> <p>Robbers go for both cash and marijuana products. Shops say there would be a simple way to get rid of half the incentive - if they had access to banks and shoppers could just use their credit cards.</p> <p>Right now, transactions with customers, paying vendors, and employees – it's all still cash for pot shops.</p> <p>"Would-be crooks and thieves view our shops and other shops as fish in a barrel," said Marcelo Ramirez of Have a Heart.</p> <p>Its Greenwood location was robbed Friday by three men who rammed their door down with a car and filled duffel bags full of products.</p> <p>An attempted robbery happened at the Highway 7 Recreational Marijuana Store Thursday morning, and there was a burglary at Port Orchard's Kitsap Cannabis Wednesday.</p> <p>"It is on the rise for sure," Ramirez said.</p> <p>Have a Heart says it has five locations in the Seattle area. But among three of their stores, they've been robbed more than 10 times.</p> <p>Their loss? About a quarter-million dollars. And with no liability insurance offered to the industry, the loss is all out of pocket.</p> <p>"It's kind of sad," Ramirez said. "If this happened to a liquor store, we wouldn't be having this conversation," he said.</p> <p>Pot stores say they have generated a lot of money for the state, but say they don't feel like they have the support of lawmakers.</p>

The state earned nearly \$315 million dollars from a 37 percent excise tax on pot product sales in 2017. Marijuana shops also pay the 10 percent sales tax that goes to both the state and county.

Have a Heart says it's contributing a great deal to Washington's economy and it's time for the state to step up.

Ramirez says all the cash is an unnecessary risk. He wants something like a state-run credit union, an option that California lawmakers are looking into.

"There needs to be some sort of netting that helps us maintain a level of safety," Ramirez said.

Lawmakers say they are trying.

State Senator Mark Mullet (D-WA District 5) chairs the Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee for the Senate.

"My goal is to figure out how every retail marijuana shop or processing shop or growing shop has access to banking services," Mullet said.

State legislators passed a bill last session that says Washington State won't go after any banks or credit unions for working with the legal cannabis industry. But he says with the Trump administration, taking that further is a challenge.

"Everything is really frustrating. It's not safe for our communities and it's not good for our tax base, and I don't see anybody wining from having this business be predominately cash," Mullet said.

The WA Liquor and Cannabis Board says its representatives just returned from a trip to D.C. to speak with congress about the many challenges of being a cash-based business. Mullet and the LCB say a big step toward making banking services available to pot shops would be getting marijuana reclassified, so it's no longer a "Schedule 1" drug – currently the same category as heroin.

KIRO7 also reached out to U.S. Rep. Denny Heck (D-WA 10th District) who is on the House Financial Services Committee.

His office says Heck has been working for the past three sessions to get a "Safe Banking Act" passed, where banks would be exempt for working with legal pot shops. His office is hopeful there will be another chance to get that passed in 2019, and bring another level of safety for stores in the marijuana business.

The Seattle Police Department says its responded to four robberies/burglaries in the city so far this year, and there does seem to be an uptick – but it also points out there are more pot shops entering the market.

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HEADLINE	04/06 London crime wave: 6 stabbings 90min.
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/nation-now/london-crime-wave-shock-as-six-teenagers-stabbed-in-90-minutes/465-8c974ef3-094a-43bd-83be-6f224bf7d177
GIST	<p>LONDON — Shocked residents of the British capital are calling for an end to a surge in violence that has now seen six teenagers stabbed in the space of 90 minutes.</p> <p>The incidents came days after London's murder rate surpassed New York City's for the first time. At least 55 people have been killed in London in 2018, over 30 of them in stabbings.</p> <p>Police in the Tower Hamlets borough of east London said Thursday that two 15-year-old boys were taken to the hospital with serious injuries after they were stabbed at about 6 p.m. local time Thursday. A 16-year-old who was treated for minor knife injuries was arrested for conspiracy to commit grievous bodily</p>

harm, and another male was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder, police said.

In a separate incident in the Newham borough of east London, police said three juveniles were arrested after a 13-year-old boy was stabbed. The victim is in serious but stable condition.

Elsewhere in the city, a teenager was taken to hospital when he was stabbed in Ealing Broadway, west London, and a 15-year-old boy was stabbed in Westferry, east London, but suffered no serious injury.

Also Thursday, a crowd gathered to commemorate stabbing victims at a train station in the east London area of Hackney, near the scene of the fatal stabbing Wednesday of Israel Oguniola, 18.

Local youth worker Janette Collins, 58, told the London Evening Standard: "We need to stop this. Everybody keeps asking the same question, but the answers are in the young people. We the organisations are only trying to come out, to come together, and we are here to talk to young people and try to stop the violence."

David Lammy, the opposition Labour Party's member of Parliament for the Tottenham area of north London, accused Prime Minister Theresa May and Home Secretary Amber Rudd, both of the ruling Conservative Party, of failing to act on the rising murder rate. He said four young people have been killed in his area since Christmas.

The number of police officers in England and Wales has fallen by 21,500 as part of a government drive to cut spending since May became home secretary in 2010. May became prime minister in 2016.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Gang violence rattles Burien
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/gang-violence-rattles-burien-residents-ask-for-help/281-535797219
GIST	<p>The shooting deaths of two teenagers more than a week ago has Burien residents looking for help and answers from King County leaders and sheriff's deputies.</p> <p>Eveona Cortez, 19, and a 13-year-old girl were murdered in the 13700 block of Ambaum Boulevard SW on Wednesday, March 28. No arrests have been made yet.</p> <p>According to the King County Sheriff's Office, the shooting appears to be gang-related and that rattles people who live and work here, especially because the victims are so young.</p> <p>Dee Thoman works steps away from where the shooting happened. Now a memorial marks the spot, and serves as a daily reminder for her.</p> <p>"I just couldn't believe it when I heard it, that they were so young. That is just not right," said Thoman.</p> <p>Liz Giba with the North Highline Unincorporated Area Council, included the topic of gang violence and the impact on youth in the group's monthly meeting on Thursday night.</p> <p>"It very much brought it home because that is something we have been trying to tell our elected officials for years," said Giba.</p> <p>Giba says the neighborhoods in Burien and White Center need more attention from County leaders. She claims part of the problem is fair housing laws are not enforced, and kids are raised in unhealthy neighborhoods.</p> <p>"I think there is a concentration of poverty in those neighborhoods that do not have opportunities for their young people," said Giba.</p>

	In response to the teens' deaths, the City of Burien is inviting the community to a town hall discussion on Monday night. The focus will be on how to engage youth and prevent future violence.
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HEADLINE	04/05 Bellingham cop charged w/abuse
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/05/bellingham-cop-charged-with-repeatedly-abusing-woman-since-late-2016/
GIST	<p>BELLINGHAM, Wash. (AP) — A Bellingham police officer is facing a total of 16 charges related to the alleged repeated abuse of a woman.</p> <p>The Bellingham Herald reports 33-year-old Brooks Laughlin of Everson was arrested March 27. Additional charges were filed Wednesday in Whatcom County Superior Court.</p> <p>Charging documents say Laughlin is charged with multiple counts of assault, tampering with a witness, harassment, violating a no-contact order, one count of stalking and one count of criminal trespass.</p> <p>Documents say Laughlin has been abusing the woman, who is known to him, since September 2016. Documents say he became increasingly physically aggressive toward the woman and beat her in the head, face and body.</p> <p>He's currently in Skagit County Jail on \$200,000 bail.</p> <p>Laughlin has been with the police department for 13 years.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Arrest in Calif. store explosive device
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/04/05/explosive-device-detonates-in-california-sams-club-suspect-in-custody.html
GIST	<p>Authorities in California have a suspect in custody after an explosive device detonated inside of a Sam's Club in California on Thursday afternoon.</p> <p>Hugo Gonzalez, 49, of Fontana, was identified as the man suspected of detonating the device, the Ontario Police Department tweeted, noting it's believed he acted alone and a motive remains unclear.</p> <p>Law enforcement was dispatched to the Sam's Club store in Ontario after it was reported around 2 p.m. that someone heard a "popping sound," KABC reported.</p> <p>"Responded to a possible fire structure at [Sam's Club]," the Ontario Police Department tweeted earlier Thursday. "It has been determined the suspect detonated a small explosive device in the store."</p> <p>A follow-up tweet stated, "There appears to be no structural damage or any injuries at this point," and noted that "All employees and customers are accounted for."</p> <p>Miles from the store, Gonzalez was pulled over and detained, police said. Within his car, investigators found "[additional] materials" that were "similar to those used in the devices" found inside Sam's Club.</p> <p>Police are now investigating an apartment in Fontana, "which is believed to be associated w/Gonzalez."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Judge tosses 11,000+ Mass. convictions
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SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/thousands-convictions-tainted-rogue-lab-chemist-tossed-54267392?
GIST	<p>A judge on Massachusetts' highest court has ordered the dismissal of thousands of cases tainted by a former chemist who authorities say was high almost every day she worked at a state drug lab for eight years.</p> <p>The American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts and the state's public defender agency say more than 11,000 convictions in nearly 7,700 cases are being tossed.</p> <p>Prosecutors agreed to dismiss the cases tainted by Sonja Farak, who pleaded guilty in 2014 to stealing drugs from the lab.</p> <p>The ACLU and Committee for Public Counsel Services also are asking the court to throw out thousands of other cases potentially impacted by the rogue chemist.</p> <p>Farak's case is separate from another Massachusetts drug lab scandal that resulted in the dismissal of some 21,000 convictions last year.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/06 Ex-SKorea leader gets 24yr prison term
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/south-korean-leader-park-due-corruption-verdict-54273612?
GIST	<p>Former South Korean President Park Geun-hye was formally convicted and sentenced to 24 years in prison on Friday, a year after she was driven from office and arrested over a corruption scandal that saw months of massive street rallies calling for her ouster.</p> <p>The conviction, which she can appeal, is the latest hit in a dramatic fall for South Korea's first female president. Once seen as the darling of South Korean conservatives, she was dubbed "Queen of Elections" by local media for her track record of leading her party to victory in tight races and still has a small group of fierce supporters who regularly stage rallies calling for her release.</p> <p>Park maintains she's a victim of "political revenge" and has been refusing to attend court sessions since October. She didn't attend Friday's verdict, citing a sickness that wasn't specified publicly.</p> <p>In a nationally televised verdict, the Seoul Central District Court convicted Park of bribery, extortion, abuse of power and other charges. "It's inevitable that the defendant should be held strictly responsible for her crimes, if only to prevent the unfortunate event of (a president) abusing the power given by the people and causing chaos in state affairs," chief judge Kim Se-yun said.</p> <p>Along with the prison sentence, Park was also fined 18 billion won (\$16.8 million), Kim said.</p> <p>Both Park and the prosecutors have one week to appeal. Park has previously maintained her innocence; prosecutors in February demanded a 30-year prison term.</p>
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[DISCLAIMER and FAIR USE Notice](#)**Event Calendar**[Top of page](#)

Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php
Return to Top	**indicates new event/new information added during reporting week		

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HEADLINE	04/05 Some in caravan won't stop in Mexico
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/05/americas/caravan-mexico-migrants/index.html
GIST	<p>Puebla, Mexico (CNN)The caravan of Central American migrants going through Mexico to the US border isn't ending. Instead, its participants will disperse into smaller groups after reaching Mexico City.</p> <p>While some will stay in Mexico to try to get refugee status there, others will continue north to the US border.</p> <p>Organizers of the caravan estimate that some 200 or so people will proceed all the way to the US border in the coming days, although the number could be higher. Last year, about 150 went all the way to the border, they said.</p> <p>Pueblo Sin Fronteras caravan or People Without Borders has organized the event for years. The caravan has always dispersed into separate, smaller groups at some point along the journey. What has been striking is that this year's event has the largest number of people ever, with more than 1,100.</p> <p>Poverty, violence and political unrest in their home countries forced them to make the journey, migrants say. Many are from Honduras, where organized crime fuels widespread violence and protesters recently took to the streets after a contested election.</p> <p>Those who seek a new life in the US often present themselves at ports of entry and are taken into custody. While they rarely succeed in winning asylum, their cases can take years to make their way through the backlogged system.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 FEMA 'blunt' new message to public
SOURCE	https://federalnewsradio.com/management/2018/04/fema-has-a-blunt-new-message-it-wont-be-there-for-every-future-disaster/
GIST	<p>Last year's severe hurricanes and wildfires were devastating and historic, but they did prompt some good at the Federal Emergency Management Agency.</p> <p>FEMA took advantage of a dire situation and piloted in the field in Texas, Florida, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico several new innovative ways to streamline its work — and change its strategic plan for the next four years.</p> <p>"FEMA is not a first responder," Daniel Kaniewski, the agency's deputy administrator, said in a speech Wednesday at George Washington University's Center for Cyber and Homeland Security. "We are going</p>

to be very blunt with the American public about what FEMA can and can't do, about what the federal government can and can't do, and I hope state and local governments take this forward as well.”

FEMA, can't, for example, manage and lead emergency response efforts for every single disaster.

“FEMA will continue to fund the recovery for smaller disasters, but increasingly, we will be looking for state and local governments to manage those programs,” Kaniewski said. “I will assert, maybe that's a high goal. It depends on what state or what community you're talking about — whether or not they can step up and manage those programs.”

To that end, FEMA wants to help states reach a point where they can successfully take on some of this work on their own. It wants to foster a “culture of preparedness” and spread those messages as part of a new national campaign, Kaniewski said.

FEMA is hosting disaster planning seminars for its other federal partners, Kaniewski said. The Health and Human Services and Transportation Departments lent a hand in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico.

The Surge Capacity Force, which the Homeland Security Department originally piloted and expanded to other cabinet-level agencies, is one example. DHS last fall sourced employees from 15 other agencies to help with translating or registering disaster survivors for assistance.

“Thank you to the federal workforce who stepped up to the plate and volunteered for that mission,” said Kaniewski, who described his experience meeting a NASA employee who spoke with confidence about his disaster relief work in Puerto Rico.

It's also speaking about current disaster assistance programs in a new way. They're “federally supported, state managed and locally executed recovery programs,” Kaniewski said.

The agency instead wants to focus its attention and resources on the truly catastrophic events — like Hurricanes Harvey and Maria. When Harvey hit in Texas last August, FEMA already had personnel deployed in 32 other disasters across the country.

Simplifying FEMA's recovery programs is another strategic goal for the agency.

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HEADLINE	04/04 W. Va. fusion center marks 10yr. service
SOURCE	http://www.fayetttribune.com/news/w-va-intelligence-fusion-center-honored-for-th-anniversary/article_c33a5c76-36aa-11e8-9a50-2be359041c5b.html
GIST	<p>CHARLESTON — It helps police locate killers and unmask multi-state crime rings.</p> <p>It thwarts human traffickers and aids keeping crowds safe at Bridge Day, the National Scout jamboree and other events.</p> <p>And on March 17, the W.Va. Intelligence Fusion Center marked its first decade of service.</p> <p>Governor Jim Justice has honored the Fusion Center for its 10th anniversary with a proclamation, presented March 16 to Director Jessica Griffith by Deputy Chief of Staff Ann Urling.</p> <p>The Fusion Center was formed on March 17, 2008 to apply a bitter lesson from Sept. 11. As a result, an array of local, state and federal law enforcement and public safety agencies as well as private sector partners now share information, resources and expertise. This approach harnesses their respective strengths to prevent, detect, investigate and respond to all hazards — including but not limited to terrorist and criminal activity.</p>

Also taking part in the ceremony at the Governor’s Mansion were U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin, who was governor when the Fusion Center began, and Secretary of State Mac Warner, who has enlisted the center in his mission to defend digital democracy.

“The West Virginia Intelligence Fusion Center is extremely proud of the dedicated service by its men and women both past and present,” Governor Justice wrote. “During the past decade, the Fusion Center has been nationally recognized countless times for its accomplishments.”

Governor Justice also signed an Executive Order last month declaring, for the first time, the Fusion Center to be a criminal justice entity — a critical designation under federal law that enhances its capabilities.

The analysts and specialists who staff the Fusion Center routinely provide effective, behind-the-scenes assistance both in the Mountain State and across the country. The center’s numerous successes including locating the killers of a North Carolina couple as they drove through West Virginia, and a Putnam County homicide suspect after he had fled to a Boston suburb; linking a bogus check to a multi-state fraud ring targeting casinos; and educating everyone from law enforcement to hairdressers on how to spot would-be human traffickers and their victims.

Recent achievements include helping law enforcement identify more than 70 persons of interest and multiple drug trafficking operatives to aid the fight against the opioid crisis and resulting crime in Huntington.

The Fusion Center’s well-honed skill sets and high-tech tools play similarly critical roles in preventing or avoiding hazards. It helps conduct pre-event threat and security assessments and then provides on-site support for all manner of gatherings, from the Greenbrier Classic and this winter’s congressional retreat at the resort to Bridge Day and the jamborees hosted at the Summit Bechtel Reserve.

Much of this assistance occurs below-the-radar and without fanfare. But the Fusion Center’s contributions to public safety and homeland security have still been recognized by numerous organizations and partners, including the U.S. attorneys for both of West Virginia’s federal court districts and the International Association of Special Investigation Units.

Director Griffith, a veteran analyst for the office, became just the second person to earn that title last month. She succeeded Thom Kirk, whose hiring in 2008 marked the center’s creation. Kirk was also honored at Friday’s ceremony, and remains Deputy Secretary and General Counsel of the W.Va. Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety. The Fusion Center is part of WV DMAPS.

“During its 10-year history, the Fusion Center has accomplished so much behind the scenes,” said DMAPS Secretary Jeff Sandy. “The Fusion Center concept is simple in its purpose of protecting Americans from domestic and international threats to our way of life, but complex in its methods to achieve those goals. The citizens of West Virginia owe it a world of thanks.”

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HEADLINE	04/04 For Puerto Rico hurricane season looms
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/in-puerto-ricos-last-mile-power-is-still-elusive-as-next-hurricane-season-looms/2018/04/04/00dc0cb4-1e69-11e8-b2d9-08e748f892c0_story.html?utm_term=.8511e9bbac35
GIST	CAYEY, Puerto Rico — Norma Ramos and Helga Marrero stood outside, chatting, as a Thursday afternoon dusk diluted the last bits of blue sky and sunshine in La Merced. Nearly every cement-block house along their meandering mountain road flickered to life as indoor lighting flashed on. A girl ran through the barrio and yelled, “Luz!” Power had returned. But the electrification only went as far as the bakery on the corner, where the linemen piled into bucket trucks and called it a day.

For Ramos and Marrero, one more long-suffering day. Who knew how much longer it would be until they, too, could rejoice at flipping a switch?

“Sunday,” Ramos said, reaching for a flashlight. “They promised we’d have electricity by Sunday. I guess I can wait. I’ve waited this long.”

The neighbors belong to a community along Puerto Rico’s “last mile,” the cluster of communities marking Hurricane Maria’s destructive path across difficult and isolated terrain, from the island’s southeast corner through the central mountains and out the northwest coast. They are among the last people on the island still without power, more than six months after the storm.

The hurricane knocked down the frail power grid that distributes wattage from generation plants in the south across transmission towers spread like dominoes along the peaks of the island’s mountains. The local public utility, which struggled to maintain normalcy in good times, has been trying alongside the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to restore electrical service since September.

It has been a wearisome operation tainted by allegations of corruption and coordination, meltdowns, and the cacophony of politics, experts say. Many residents report that having been without power for so long has led them to lose faith in the state-owned power company and, ultimately, the island’s government.

“There has been no sense of urgency,” said Josian Santiago, the mayor of Comerio, whose town still has outages in its more isolated sections; some might never have their municipal power restored and will have to resort to alternatives. “The problem is not that we don’t have a lightbulb to turn on or a refrigerator to cool. . . . They are torturing the people.”

Left out of those statistics: More than 1,200 FEMA-provided generators are still the primary source of power for most of the island’s hospitals, more than two dozen police and fire stations, correctional facilities, and water pumps throughout Puerto Rico.

For every electric meter that fires back to life, there also is the fear — inevitable, at this point — that it will go dead again because of a substation fire, a transformer explosion or a snapped line. In mid-February, an explosion at a power plant plunged nearly 1 million people into darkness around San Juan, and rolling blackouts are common.

And another hurricane season looms just months away.

Crews are working against the clock to shore up a dilapidated system that took way longer to repair than anyone expected, and their work is largely returning the grid to its prior state, which everyone knows couldn’t handle a big storm.

“It’s going to fall again,” said Aníbal Díaz Collazo, a Puerto Rican politician representing Cayey, in the central mountains about 30 miles south of San Juan. “There will be new cables and new poles but no significant infrastructure improvements for a system that has already proven too weak to withstand.”

PREPA’s chief of technical operations, Carlos Alvarado, said the utility is working to improve construction standards and is making changes that will help the power grid be more resilient. It could take a decade to completely harden the system, he said.

“The way the authority’s system was designed does not make it apt to withstand another Category 5 storm,” Alvarado said. “But we are studying how we can improve it. We have been mitigating by installing metal poles, higher-quality cables and relocating certain lines and cutting down vegetation.”

For many Puerto Ricans and their political leaders, the haphazard nature of the repairs has been puzzling at times and infuriating at others. They have demanded answers about the plan for power restoration and have been told they will have better information soon. PREPA just recently started giving mayors maps and timelines of its work schedule.

Federal officials asked the Army Corps of Engineers in late September to lead a temporary power-restoration mission — a job it previously had never done — and took control over contracting companies and ordering materials for work with which they had little experience.

In the early days of the island-wide blackout, PREPA did not activate the mutual-aid agreements that would have brought equipment and thousands of public-utility workers from the mainland United States onto the island quickly to begin the work. Instead, it sought help from a private contractor, Whitefish Energy, which promised to act quickly and efficiently, even if its going hourly rates were much higher than what linemen would normally receive.

The bulk of the workers from outside Puerto Rico did not start on the job until November — two months after the storm — according to contracting documents obtained by The Washington Post. Whitefish, a small Montana firm with little documented experience, was awarded a \$300 million contract that drew scrutiny in part because of its size. The no-bid contract was canceled, and PREPA's executive director was removed.

To Puerto Ricans, it looked like chaos, a confusing hodgepodge of work that resulted in one neighborhood street getting its power back while the next block, a few hundred yards away, remained dark.

PREPA was officially in charge of setting the priorities for restoration. A unified command met in San Juan with Carlos Torres, the governor's appointee to coordinate the mission, along with the Energy Department, engineering corps leaders and FEMA, which worked to assign specific lines to each crew. But power struggles, finger-pointing and a lack of trust hampered the pace and direction of the operation.

"Yes, it can be messy, and yes, partners can have arguments about a problem, but you needed this complement of forces," said Col. Jason A. Kirk, who is leading the corps in Puerto Rico. He then cited Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower: "Coalitions are not the most efficient, but in the long term it is the most effective."

Contractors and industry experts observing the power mission in Puerto Rico said in interviews that it was unclear who was in charge, leading to confusion and citizen reports of crews waiting around for assessments or for a line to be de-energized, or for tools to show up.

Mayors grew increasingly frustrated as they saw protests develop in their communities, and they had no information to help ease tensions. Municipal leaders stormed out of a meeting with PREPA and government officials in late February when they didn't receive the detailed plan of action they were seeking.

Examples of the chaos were abundant. Jesús Colón Berlingeri, the mayor of Orocovis, said he once learned from PREPA's Twitter account that the public utility was sending four brigades to his town. When the mayor called the power company's main office to find out where they were, he was told the real presence in town was just a driver and one worker, but they were nowhere to be found.

"We are the ones who have to answer to the people," said Colón, whose criticism earned him a rebuke by text message from Gov. Ricardo Rosselló. "We don't believe them."

The governor has been critical of the corps from the start. As his administration was pummeled by the Whitefish scandal and calls from Congress to investigate other PREPA contracts, Rosselló lashed out. Echoed by members of his administration, he accused the corps of moving too slowly.

"I don't see the urgency," Rosselló said during a news conference on Feb. 28 following a meeting with island mayors, the corps and PREPA. "Today was the day the Army Corps of Engineers was supposed to give account for the work they've done. It was also supposed to be an opportunity for the mayors to express their concerns. I share those concerns and join in their demands for urgency so that the necessary materials and brigades can be assigned to restore the power grid."

Alvarado, PREPA's chief of technical operations, said the utility has improved its communication procedures, and days after Colón's comments, top officials met privately with community leaders to lay out when crews would be there. The corps is now providing mayors with maps of the house-level plans for line work.

"Let's see what happens," Colón said as he emerged from the meeting.

Out in the field, line workers needed conductors, wiring and concrete poles, but they were difficult to come by on the island. Many pieces, including customized transformers, had to be shipped in by barge from U.S. factories.

The Army corps took control of ordering the estimated 35 million pieces of material to avoid competition and duplication. Officials relied on PREPA and contractors to tell them what was needed, and the corps submitted orders through the Defense Department.

But a supply crunch among mainland manufacturers left crews in Puerto Rico waiting for weeks for barges to arrive with new wires, poles and custom parts.

The governor and his surrogates publicly blamed the corps for delays and material shortages that kept brigades from repairs. Contractors had to buy electrical tape from local hardware stores, cables strewn across the ground were recycled on the fly, and workers pieced together transformers with parts salvaged from broken ones.

Amid the shortage, the corps confiscated previously undisclosed equipment sitting in a PREPA warehouse, causing some locals to call it a raid. The utility declined to explain the unused materials, noting that a Puerto Rico Department of Justice investigation found no violations of law on the part of the public utility regarding its storage of materials.

The corps' largest contractor, Fluor, is leaving the island while restoration efforts are still incomplete. People close to the Puerto Rican government and involved in power restoration on the island said Fluor's exit is tied to slow performance. Lines given to Fluor's contractors in the east and southeast of the island have been reassigned.

"There were expectations created that have not been completely fulfilled," Alvarado said about the corps and its contractors.

The Texas-based global contractor said the scarcity of needed materials was a "limiting factor" but noted that Fluor restored power to more than 232,000 customers since October. Demobilization is a "normal part of the life cycle" when reaching the end of a government contract, the company said in a statement.

Puerto Rico's geography made the restoration work daunting, contractors said. Road access to transmission towers often was nonexistent, overgrown with trees, or too narrow or rocky to support large work trucks. Workers were unaccustomed to the terrain, weather and topographical diversity.

"If we were working an ice storm in New England, we expect a certain type of terrain," said Aaron Strickland, an executive with another corps contractor, PowerSecure. "In Texas and Florida, you're in flat land. But in Puerto Rico, you had flat lands, mountains, hills, swamps and everything in between."

He noted one accident as emblematic of the issue: While contractors were working on power restoration, a road caved in, sending their truck down a steep embankment. While there were no injuries, the linemen were shaken — and knew they faced similar conditions elsewhere in the mountains.

"It pushes our limits just about every way you can look at pushing worker limits," Strickland said.

The conditions of PREPA's electrical grid before the storm hit magnified the difficulty afterward, said

FEMA deputy regional administrator Ahsha Tribble. It was clear from the outset that to fix Puerto Rico's long-term energy problems, simply restoring what existed before the storm would not be good enough.

But the engineering corps and FEMA have little wiggle room within federal regulations — specifically the Stafford Act, which directs federal agencies to restore what existed to its pre-disaster condition — to harden PREPA's entire system to be more resilient. When possible, authorities have used steel or concrete poles to replace wooden ones. Lines that hadn't been serviced in years were reinforced. New towers in some cases replaced those brittle from decades of rust.

The restoration will not modernize the technology into a smart-grid system that could allow authorities to more easily monitor and distribute power, nor will it create microgrids that could power regions individually if one part of the system fails. PREPA's power grid uses few renewable energy sources, and outdated power plant machinery will not see design enhancements.

"I want to get Puerto Rico to the point where it says, 'Bring it on!' to future storms," FEMA's federal coordinating officer, Michael Byrne, told contractors in late February.

PREPA, which is bankrupt, had fallen behind in modernizing its grid, especially in terms of infrastructure. The system's reliance on fossil fuels and an outdated design gave Puerto Rico's system a reputation for poor efficiency, low reliability and high costs, according to Lisa Donahue, who was hired to restructure PREPA between 2014 and 2017 and testified about the issue before Congress.

Tribble said FEMA is working with a commission of industry experts and engineers to redesign the electrical grid from a 1950s centralized distribution system to one that includes regional microgrids and renewable energies. Changes to the law after Hurricane Sandy gave the agency some flexibility to fund projects that build more resilient infrastructure rather than just replace what was damaged.

But those funds are part of a fairly new program through the Department of Housing and Urban Development that are tied to fixed-cost estimates for each project; if costs are any higher than the estimates developed by the federal government, the jurisdiction must foot the bill — something Puerto Rico cannot afford.

In an effort to move forward, Rosselló is selling off some of PREPA's assets and is privatizing parts of its operation. It is a plan demonized by the governor's critics and union members who say there is no guarantee that a private company will run the system more efficiently. They also fear that customer rates would increase and that transparency would worsen. The governor's allies see PREPA as an outdated monopoly and bloated bureaucracy that offers poor service and is plagued by corruption; they view privatization as the best solution.

PREPA has a new executive director, industry veteran Walter Higgins, who came out of retirement after running a power company in Bermuda.

"We have a real opportunity here, not just to restore power but to eventually deliver lower-cost, reliable power for all the citizens of Puerto Rico," Higgins said in a statement.

There are still vast stretches of the island where there are no signs of improvement and the desperation is palpable.

During his daily radio program, host Luis Francisco Ojeda takes call after call from sobbing and angry residents reporting which barrios still have outages despite public pronouncements from PREPA that power has been restored.

"I don't know where they got 10 percent?" said Carlos Collazo, a resident of Yabucoa who regularly listens to Ojeda's show. "People from all over still don't have power. I'm an accountant, and I don't understand how they do their numbers."

	In Collazo's community, the water pumps are powered by generators the mayor bought from a local businessman. A main road has power, but the surrounding neighborhoods don't. Residents have protested by candlelight.
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HEADLINE	04/05 What's behind US-China trade fight?
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/abb3a62ad3e84209b5a9a67baf5e2297/AP-News-Guide:-What's-behind-the-US-China-trade-fight
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States and China, the world's two largest economies, have roiled financial markets and fueled fears of a protracted trade war by threatening tariffs this week on each other's goods.</p> <p>The United States on Tuesday said it would impose 25 percent duties on \$50 billion of imports from China, and China quickly retaliated by listing \$50 billion of products that it could hit with its own 25 percent tariffs. Earlier in the week, Beijing announced separate import duties on \$3 billion of U.S. goods in response to the Trump administration's duties on all steel and aluminum imports, including from China.</p> <p>U.S. officials sought to downplay the threat of a broader trade dispute, saying a negotiated outcome is still possible. Even so, economists warned that the tit-for-tat moves bear the hallmarks of a classic trade rift that could escalate.</p> <p>"The seeds of a more serious conflict are there," said Adam Slater, lead economist at Oxford Economics, a consulting firm.</p> <p>Some of the largest American brands, from Apple to Boeing to Kentucky Fried Chicken, are increasingly intertwined with the Chinese market. They either sell billions of dollars of goods there or make some of their products in China, or both.</p> <p>So h did we get here, and what might the impact be?:</p> <p>—</p> <p>WHY DID THIS DISPUTE BLOW UP?</p> <p>President Donald Trump says Beijing is violating its free-trade commitments by pressuring foreign companies to hand over technology to potential Chinese competitors in exchange for market access.</p> <p>A U.S. trade official said Wednesday that the administration was moved by concerns that China is increasing its use of unfair trade practices, expanding them from industries such as steel to high-tech industries where U.S. companies dominate.</p> <p>A key irritant is Beijing's long-range industry plan, dubbed "Made in China 2025." It calls for establishing Chinese global leadership in electric cars, robotics and other fields. Foreign companies complain that the initiative will limit or outright block their access to those industries.</p> <p>Trump has also pledged to narrow the U.S. trade deficit with China, which Washington estimated at \$337.2 billion last year, a record for any country.</p> <p>—</p> <p>WILL U.S. CONSUMERS END UP PAYING MORE?</p> <p>Not yet. The United States plans to impose tariffs on mostly machinery and high-tech goods typically purchased by businesses. The duties would mostly steer clear of the billions of dollars of consumer goods that the U.S. imports from China, such as iPhones, toys, and shoes. Only about one-tenth of China's goods exports to the United States would be affected.</p>

Still, economists say many companies might try to pass their extra costs from the tariffs onto consumers. Prices would rise, though likely only slightly. Kathy Bostjancic, an economist at Oxford Economics, estimates they could raise inflation by just one-tenth of a percentage point.

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WILL THE DISPUTE HURT U.S. ECONOMY?

The steps taken so far shouldn't have much of an impact. Only about 2.5 percent of all U.S. imports are affected by the tariffs. And imports from all countries amount to just 15 percent of the economy.

Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics, estimates that the tariffs threatened so far could slice U.S. growth by just one or two-tenths of a percentage point this year.

"So far, at least, this is relatively minor," he said. "It's going to take a lot to derail this economy."

Still, specific industries would feel some pain if threats of higher tariffs are carried out. China is the top overseas market for U.S. soybeans. And China has included soybeans on its list of 106 products that would be hit by retaliatory tariffs.

Automakers such as Tesla, BMW and Mercedes-Benz would also be hit. BMW exports 89,000 cars a year from the U.S. to China, while Mercedes-Benz sends 65,000 cars, according to analysts at Sanford C. Bernstein. Tesla expects to sell about 15 percent of its Model S and Model X cars in China this year.

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WHAT WILL LIKELY HAPPEN NEXT?

So far, no tariffs have actually been imposed. And some U.S. officials say they're at least partly intended as a negotiating ploy. U.S. officials say they'll hold hearings on the administration's proposed target list of 1,300 products in mid-May and haven't set a deadline for when the tariffs would take effect.

Nor has China set a date for imposing tariffs on the 106 products it has targeted.

"It will be a couple months before tariffs on either side would go into effect and be implemented, and we're hopeful that China will do the right thing," White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Koreas begin preparatory talks for summit
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/eadba8403f194b058ad20a13685437bc/Koreas-begin-preparatory-talks-to-set-up-Kim-Moon-summit
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The rival Koreas on Thursday began preparatory talks to set up a summit later this month between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in amid a global diplomatic push to resolve tensions over the North's nuclear program.</p> <p>The meeting of working-level officials at the border village of Panmunjom was to discuss security, protocol and media coverage issues for the April 27 summit.</p> <p>The Koreas after a high-level meeting last week agreed on the date of the summit. South Korean officials have said the summit will be focused on disarming North Korea of nuclear weapons, although the North hasn't officially confirmed this through its state-run media.</p> <p>A summit between Kim and President Donald Trump is anticipated by the end of May.</p>

	<p>It may take more than one meeting for the Koreans to work out the details of the summit that will take place on the South Korea-controlled side of Panmunjom. The Koreans would need to agree on how Kim would arrive at the venue, including whether he would cross the military demarcation line that bisects the Koreans by foot in a symbolic gesture. The Koreans also need to determine how many times he and Moon would meet on that day and also whether parts of their meeting would be broadcast on live television.</p> <p>The Koreans have held only two summits since the 1950-53 Korean War.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 France: students, medics protest reforms
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/da425e75efe044d9ae9e7c3dd8c22d5b/New-French-unrest:-Students,-medics-protest-Macron-reforms
GIST	<p>ROUEN, France (AP) — Students and medical workers are facing off against riot police in a protest over reforms by President Emmanuel Macron’s government.</p> <p>The protest is taking place Thursday outside a hospital in the Normandy city of Rouen, where Macron is visiting a unit dedicated to children with autism.</p> <p>Medical workers brandished union flags and banners decrying “Hospital Hell” to express anger over cuts to the public health care system.</p> <p>Local students also joined the protest. Students have been blocking some campuses around France in recent weeks to protest plans to allow selection at public universities, and other changes.</p> <p>The protest comes after two days of crippling strikes on the state railway network. Macron’s efforts to overhaul the French economy are meeting increasing resistance.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Opioid addiction costs employers \$2.6B
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/e48ad7f479384ef38cb362f949ce789b/Opioid-addiction-costs-employers-\$2.6B-a-year-for-care
GIST	<p>A new report shows large employers spent \$2.6 billion to treat opioid addiction and overdoses in 2016, an eightfold increase since 2004. More than half went to treat employees’ children.</p> <p>The analysis released Thursday by the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation finds such spending cost companies and workers about \$26 per enrollee in 2016.</p> <p>Employers have been limiting insurance coverage of opioids because of concerns about addiction. The report finds spending on opioid prescriptions falling 27 percent from a peak in 2009.</p> <p>Researchers analyzed insurance claims from employers with more than 1,000 workers. Most are self-insured, meaning they assume the financial risk.</p> <p>Workers share the costs. Steve Wojcik of the National Business Group on Health says for every \$5 increase, employers typically cover \$4 and pass \$1 to workers.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Wanted: big city school superintendents
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/the-report/articles/2018-04-04/big-cities-struggle-to-fill-school-superintendent-positions

GIST

LOS ANGELES, Washington, Houston, Las Vegas, Oklahoma City and Seattle are just a handful of the big cities looking to fill one of the most important jobs on their payroll – that of the school superintendent.

Also on the hunt: Columbus, Ohio; Newark, New Jersey; Jackson, Mississippi; Raleigh, North Carolina; and Jacksonville, Florida. Until last month, New York City and Boston were also in the market.

The annual school superintendent hunting season is open, and as usual, about a dozen cities are jockeying to woo an ever-shrinking pool of qualified candidates for a demanding job that requires one part managerial skills, one part political savvy and one part education-policy acumen for a tenure that, on average, lasts barely more than three years.

"These jobs are difficult. They take a real toll on people," says Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, a coalition of the country's largest urban public school systems. "They are extremely demanding and whoever takes them has precious little in the way of personal and family time."

The number of openings, while striking, isn't out of the normal range. At one point in 2014, for example, more than 20 big city school superintendent openings were up for grabs. What's unusual this year, however, is the high-profile nature of many of them, including three of the top 10 biggest school districts in the country, and two, Washington and Newark, where the politics of education reform efforts often make national headlines.

Moreover, the openings come at a critical time for many of the cities, nearly all of which are grappling with funding issues, major achievement gaps between students of color and their white peers, a seemingly never-ending pipeline of low-performing schools, and, like every school district in the country, next school year they'll be operating new accountability systems and faced with new reporting requirements, thanks to the final stage of implementation of the federal K-12 law, the Every Student Succeeds Act.

"There's not very many positions either in the public or private sector where you have this unusual stew of race and religion and income and language needs with everyone struggling over the one thing they care about the most, which is their children," Casserly says. "So it makes the balancing act and the political demands, plus the demands for results, more acute than almost any other CEO-like position in any field one can imagine."

Research from AASA, the School Superintendents Association, shows, for example, that when asked what chases people away from superintendent jobs, 76 percent of superintendents reported inadequate state and local funding, 68 percent reported job stress, another 50 percent reported excessive time requirements, and 48 percent reported the intrusion of federal regulations.

Of course some cities come with more baggage than others: Houston is still recovering from last year's hurricane season, D.C. is still in free fall after its recent graduation rate scandal, and Los Angeles continues its roiling debate over the future of charter schools in the city.

So who is attracted to a job where the failure rate soars above that of even incremental success?

Turns out, a shrinking number of people. Big-city superintendent positions, which used to draw anywhere from 50 to 100 applicants, are now lucky to receive 10 to 20, Casserly says.

That's one of the reasons for an ever-revolving cast of characters that tend to leapfrog from city to city. New York City, for example, recently stole Richard Carranza away from Houston Independent School District, leaving the hurricane-handicapped city with its opening. Prior to Houston, Carranza was head of schools in San Francisco, and before that was superintendent of the northwest region of Clark County schools, which includes Las Vegas.

But when it comes to the anatomy of a successful big-city school superintendent, there are some qualities they tend to have in common.

For starters, candidates must have some grounding in education policy – something that in decades past wasn't as much of a requirement as managerial skills – and also be open to a mix of policy solutions. Any candidate with roots in the city is a plus, though not necessary, and prioritizing community input is a must. Candidates must also be politically savvy, able to cull the support of city government, the school board as well as community organizations, all while taking heat for any district misstep, big or small.

In short, it's the balancing act of all balancing acts.

"The superintendent shouldn't come into any city as a man on horseback with a complete solution, nor should they come in as someone to hold the lid on and keep everyone from fighting," says Paul Hill, founder of the Center on Reinventing Public Education and professor at the University of Washington.

Also of top importance is a superintendent's ability to build a strong coalition to support his or her plans for the district.

"We can think about the urban superintendents as a political operator – someone who builds coalitions across sectors, including the city government, but also with foundations and universities, and someone who wants to open up the K-12 system to the best the city can offer," says Hill, who points to places like Cleveland, Denver and Indianapolis as cities where superintendents have been doing just that.

"They have to start building a constituency that's outside the orbit of a union and a school board," he says. "That doesn't mean you defy them. That means you have people on your side in addition to them."

Robert McCord, professor in residence at AASA, where he conducts research on superintendents for the association, underscores the value in recruiting educators who have a track record being successful principals.

"The line is very, very direct and if you create a cadre of really well qualified principals, you will create a pool of well qualified superintendents," says McCord, who worked for more than 30 years in Clark County Nevada and has been a headhunter and consultant on superintendent hiring for years. "Without doing the first one you cannot get the second one."

He also emphasized the importance of hiring someone who has spent a lot of time in the classroom and is seen as an instructional leader.

"You can hire a politically savvy individual, you can hire a great finance individual who can put the numbers together, you can hire someone who can run referenda and such, but if you really want to get the heart of the institution, people in the public and we in the business should never lose focus on the fact that the individual needs to be an instructional leader."

Perhaps even more important than the qualifications of the candidate, however, is an agreement among the school board about the direction in which they want a superintendent to take the city's schools.

"I think what's more important is that the board of education pick a superintendent whose vision for the future is aligned with theirs so that there isn't a surprise when a new superintendent comes on board what it is he or she is going to do," says Casserly, whose organization represents the majority of cities that are currently seeking a superintendent.

"Sometimes that really undermines the tenure of superintendents when the board hasn't been clear with itself about where it is they want to take the school district," he says. "Then the board and superintendent sooner rather than later look up at one another and say, 'Gee, this is not what I had in mind.'"

To be sure, big-city school superintendents are paid handsomely. In 2014, the salaries of superintendents at cities that are part of the Council for the Great City Schools ranged from \$99,000 to \$339,000, in addition to platinum health care, pensions, life insurance and other related benefits. Most superintendents

	<p>of the biggest school districts clear \$300,000 easily, with the job of helming New York City schools drawing upward of \$500,000.</p> <p>"Anybody who gets into this knows full well that the demands are extremely high," Casserly says. "The context in which you do this job now is probably more difficult now than it's ever been. It does give some people pause."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 DHS: illegal immigration up 200%
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/4/illegal-immigration-200-percent-march-along-us-mex/
GIST	<p>Illegal immigration across the southwest border surged 200 percent in March compared to the same month last year, according to Homeland Security statistics released late Wednesday that back up White House's claims that things are quickly deteriorating on the border.</p> <p>The year-over-year surge is by far the largest in the records, which date back to 2011, and it could be a signal that the Senate's debate on legalizing illegal immigrants earlier this year has sparked a new wave of migration.</p> <p>The Border Patrol and officers at the ports of entry nabbed 50,308 people in March — up from less than 37,000 in February, and three times the 16,588 people apprehended in March 2017, when President Trump's tough enforcement talk had sparked a major drop in illegal immigration attempts.</p> <p>That drop only lasted a few months and since last summer the numbers have been steadily increasing again, reaching back to levels not seen since the middle of the illegal immigration surge during the Obama administration.</p> <p>The numbers were released just as Mr. Trump was signing an order deploying National Guard troops to the southwest border to assist in enforcement. The government couldn't yet say how many troops were being sent, what their duties would be, nor how much it would cost — though Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said they could be deployed as early as Wednesday night.</p> <p>According to the new numbers, the Border Patrol caught 37,393 illegal immigrants in March. Customs and Border Protection Officers, who man the ports of entry, encountered another 12,915 people who showed up without permission to enter.</p> <p>Those numbers are considered a rough yardstick for the overall flow of illegal traffic, so increases in the number of people caught signals an increase in overall illegal immigration.</p> <p>Analysts say that migration is seasonal, so comparisons to the same time in previous years gives the best sense for where things are headed.</p> <p>Particularly troubling for officials was a major jump in the number of illegal immigrants traveling as families. Nearly 9,000 were nabbed by the Border Patrol and another 5,100 were stopped at ports of entry. By contrast, in March 2017 the Border Patrol caught just 1,125 immigrants traveling as families, and the officers at the ports of entry stopped just 768.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Seattle mayor wants congestion tolling
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/946087/report-seattle-mayor-wants-road-tolls-by-end-of-first-term/
GIST	Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan wants to implement congestion pricing in the city by 2021.

The Seattle Times first reported the city will create a plan based on a study of downtown neighborhoods. Results from the study could be released this year.

A press release sent less than an hour after the Times story published online said Durkan will announce “bold short- and long-term steps that the City will take to advance towards its greenhouse gas reduction goals to reach its commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement.” Part of that plan is the development of a “congestion pricing strategy,” the mayor’s office confirmed. The press release only mentions easing mobility “through the downtown core.”

The city will do what Durkan called “deep outreach” as it works to create a policy around congestion pricing. During a press conference mid-morning on Wednesday, Durkan said it will not be “top-down government.”

Prior to her election, Durkan and mayoral candidate Cary Moon said the city should consider congestion pricing. Durkan said the city will need a “range” of solutions to deal with the current traffic problem.

In an interview with KIRO Radio last year, Durkan said the city needs a “more holistic way” to get traffic flowing. That holistic approach, according to Durkan, includes staggered start times for large employers, to incentivize carpooling, and encouraging the use of public transportation.

On Tuesday, April 3, Durkan’s office posted a blog titled “Ahead of Mega Gridlock Expected Downtown, Mayor Jenny Durkan Commits to Additional Actions to Lessen Impact on Commuters and Businesses.” The post does not mention congestion pricing. However, it does point to the need to reduce traffic as mega projects also lead to “mega gridlock.”

Citing the 2017 Center City Modesplit Survey, Durkan’s office says transit use has increased in the last seven years in downtown during the morning commute. As did walking, biking, and rideshares. Meanwhile, there are approximately 4,500 fewer single-occupancy vehicles in the city.

It’s unclear what form of congestion pricing the mayor will push for. That may all depend on the study. Durkan told the Times the money generated from tolling the city’s roads would be pumped back into public transit.

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HEADLINE	04/04 New Seattle public schools superintendent
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/946733/ex-montana-education-leader-picked-as-seattle-superintendent/
GIST	<p>HELENA, Mont. (AP) — Montana’s former Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau has been selected as the next superintendent of Seattle Public Schools.</p> <p>The Independent Record reports that Juneau was selected Wednesday night. She was one of the three finalists Seattle’s school board interviewed for the job.</p> <p>Juneau will manage a district of nearly 54,000 students. She oversaw about 150,000 students in Montana.</p> <p>Juneau will be responsible for closing large achievement gaps and coping with a significant budget shortfall. But until that happens, Juneau told the public she is prepared to have tough conversations about where to put limited resources.</p> <p>The Seattle Times reported that Juneau will be the school district’s fifth superintendent in 10 years and is expected to earn around \$300,000.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Oregon didn’t warn on Hart family issues
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SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/why-oregon-didnt-warn-washington-about-child-welfare-issues-with-hart-family/281-535180981
GIST	<p>Before Jennifer Hart drove her family’s SUV off of a California cliff, killing her wife, Sarah, and at least three of their six children, there were several child welfare complaints against the mothers with allegations ranging from withholding food as a punishment to beating one of their daughters with a belt.</p> <p>The family moved from Minnesota, to Oregon, and then to Washington. In each state, either neighbors or teachers reported possible child abuse and authorities investigated the complaints.</p> <p>But when the Harts left Oregon and moved to Washington less than a year ago, Oregon never told Washington officials about the issues. And when the Harts moved to Oregon from Minnesota, it’s likely that state didn’t report anything amiss, either.</p> <p>Information about specific child welfare cases is difficult to come by because much of the information is protected under privacy laws as the cases involve minors.</p> <p>But in general, Oregon’s Department of Human Services explained when they would, and would not, report child welfare concerns to other states.</p> <p>“If a case is closed and a family moves, the Department of Human Services would not notify the other state as we don’t track families once cases are closed,” said Christine Stone, spokeswoman for DHS.</p> <p>Stone said if the family moves when a case is still open, Oregon would notify the other state if there were child safety issues that officials believe still need to be addressed.</p> <p>“If the assessment were closing and children were determined safe in our state, a new report to the other state would not likely need to occur,” she said.</p> <p>In addition, there is no national database for child welfare cases, so one state can’t search any kind of master database to find out whether a family has a history of alleged abuse.</p> <p>States are required to keep a database of child welfare reports, but states don’t have access to each other’s databases.</p> <p>Stone said other states will sometimes reach out when they open a new child welfare case.</p> <p>“It is common for Oregon as well as other states to request Child Protective Services information on families when they have an open assessment/open case and there is reason to believe they resided in another state,” she said.</p> <p>A domestic abuse case involving Sarah Hart in 2011 was closed before she moved from Minnesota to Oregon.</p> <p>Another child welfare complaint was filed by a neighbor in Oregon against the Harts in 2013 but the neighbor said she was told that Oregon officials determined there was not enough evidence to make a case. Because of this, Oregon would not have notified Washington state of any child welfare concerns when the Harts moved in 2017.</p> <p>The Hart’s neighbors in Washington reported the family to Washington state’s Child Protective Services on March 23, 2018. After CPS visited the home, the family left for California.</p> <p>Sarah, Jennifer and three of their children were found dead at the base of a cliff three days later. The Hart’s three other children are missing and presumed dead.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Seattle police new inspector general
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/tucson-police-official-tapped-for-key-oversight-job-in-seattle-police-department/
GIST	<p>After a 10-month nationwide hunt, the Tucson Police Department’s longtime legal adviser has been nominated to serve as the Seattle Police Department’s first civilian inspector general, Councilmember M. Lorena González and the search committee who chose her announced Wednesday.</p> <p>The selection of Lisa Judge, who has held the Tucson post for 20 years, is subject to confirmation by the City Council.</p> <p>If confirmed, Judge will oversee an office created as part of historic police-accountability legislation passed by the council last year.</p> <p>The office is viewed as having a critical role in sustaining federally mandated, court-ordered reforms to address excessive force and biased policing under the city’s 2012 consent decree with the U.S. Justice Department.</p> <p>The inspector general will provide broad oversight of the management, practices and policies of the Police Department and the Office of Police Accountability, which conducts internal investigations.</p> <p>In Tucson, Judge’s duties “put her on the forefront of many issues that communities in Seattle face today, including innovations in interactions with people suffering with mental illness or in crisis,” according to a news release on her nomination.</p> <p>She also oversaw officers as they put a priority on treatment over incarceration in a department with a Critical Incident Review Board and Force Review Board built around transparency and community participation, the release said.</p> <p>In accepting this position, Judge said, “This is a very exciting time for law-enforcement reform, and this endeavor provides an important opportunity to do work of real value in furtherance of that reform. I am eager to work for the community of Seattle, and I look forward to a fruitful partnership with the Community Police Commission, the Office of Police Accountability, and the Seattle Police Department that is equal parts respect, trust, and healthy skepticism.”</p> <p>González, who heads the council committee overseeing public safety, and Mayor Jenny Durkan cited the importance of the position as the city enters a two-year period where it must show its court-approved compliance with the federal reforms is locked in place.</p> <p>“Ms. Judge has a background in police reform, an understanding of police culture and policing, a commitment to procedural justice and an articulated vision on how accountability and community coexist,” González said.</p> <p>Judge is Latina and identifies as a member of the LGBTQ community, according to the news release. She will appear at 9:30 a.m. on April 25 before González’s Gender Equity, Safe Communities, New Americans and Education committee to begin her confirmation process in council chambers.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Turkey secretly snatches wanted nationals
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/04/05/turkish-spy-agency-has-snatched-80-people-from-18-countries.html
GIST	ANKARA, Turkey – Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdag says Turkey’s intelligence agency has snatched at least 80 Turkish nationals wanted for their alleged links to the 2016 failed coup, in operations in 18 countries.

	<p>Bozdag's comments during a television interview Thursday came after Turkey secretly arranged the deportation from Kosovo of six Turkish men accused of supporting the coup attempt, sparking the dismissal of Kosovo's interior minister and intelligence chief and criticism from human rights groups.</p> <p>Bozdag did not name the countries. He said such operations would continue.</p> <p>Turkey accuses U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen of masterminding the 2016 failed coup. Gulen denies the accusation. Those deported from Kosovo worked in schools and clinics supported by Gulen's movement.</p> <p>Turkey has arrested more than 38,000 people for links to Gulen and fired some 110,000 public servants.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Israel airstrike near Gaza border kills 1
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/04/05/israeli-airstrike-on-gaza-border-kills-palestinian.html
GIST	<p>JERUSALEM – Health officials in the Gaza Strip say a Palestinian man was killed in an Israeli airstrike near the Gaza-Israel border.</p> <p>The Israeli military says its aircraft targeted an "armed terrorist adjacent to the security fence" in the northern part of the coastal territory on Thursday. The Gaza Health Ministry confirmed the man's death but did not immediately release his identity.</p> <p>Also, a Palestinian wounded in the mass protest along the border last week died of his wounds on Thursday.</p> <p>The two fatalities raise the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli fire in Gaza since last Friday to 21.</p> <p>The Israeli military is on high alert as more mass demonstrations are expected along the border on Friday.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Pentagon looking to expand border duties
SOURCE	https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2018/04/04/dod-looking-at-ways-to-expand-border-duties/
GIST	<p>The Pentagon is looking at ways it can fulfill President Donald Trump's request to have the military guard the U.S.-Mexico border, spokesman Dana White said.</p> <p>"There are a number of ways the Department of Defense is already supporting the [Department of Homeland Security] border security mission," White said. "We are still in consultation with the White House about ways we can expand that support."</p> <p>As it has become apparent that Congress was not going to give Trump the full funding he has requested to build a border wall, the president has looked to the military to fill the gap.</p> <p>Last week Trump suggested on Twitter that the Pentagon could spend some of its just-signed 2018 budget to help pay for the wall, which is estimated to cost about \$25 billion.</p> <p>Then on Monday, Trump said he'd spoken to Defense Secretary Jim Mattis about how the military could further support the wall beyond funding.</p> <p>"I've been speaking with General Mattis. We're going to be doing things militarily," Trump said. "Until we can have a wall and proper security, we're going to be guarding our border with the military. That's a big step. We really haven't done that before, or certainly not very much before."</p>

	A defense official who spoke on the condition of not being identified suggested that one possibility is that National Guard forces could be used to secure the border as they did in the 2006 to 2008 Operation Just Cause, but the official had no additional details beyond that.
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HEADLINE	04/04 Calif. DMV: 1M illegals w/licenses
SOURCE	http://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/capitol-alert/article207939584.html
GIST	<p>More than 1 million undocumented immigrants have received driver's licenses, the California Department of Motor Vehicles announced Wednesday.</p> <p>Assembly Bill 60, authored by then-Assemblyman Luis Alejo in 2013, required California DMV offices to issue driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants as long as they can prove their identity and residence within the state. The law has led to 1,001,000 undocumented immigrants receiving licenses as of March 31 but doesn't give the licensees carte blanche to drive outside of California or fly across state or federal borders.</p> <p>"Immigrants are getting tested, licensed and insured and this is making our roads safer for everyone," said Alejo, now a Monterey County supervisor, in a prepared statement. "Today, we see the law working the way it was intended to and has dramatically improved the lives of a million immigrants and their families."</p> <p>Twelve states plus Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico allow undocumented immigrants to obtain driver's licenses. Undocumented immigrants were free to receive driver's licenses anywhere in the U.S. until 1993, when California became the first state to restrict access and 45 others followed suit.</p> <p>In 2015, the first year the law took effect, approximately 605,000 undocumented immigrants received licenses. Fewer people applied after an initial spike, and the DMV now issues about 10,000 AB 60 licenses statewide per month.</p> <p>A study published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences showed hit-and-run accidents dropped in California after AB 60 went into effect, and had no discernible impact on the total number of crashes or auto-related fatalities in the state. The California Research Bureau's required January 2018 report found no AB 60 license holders had filed complaints with state agencies alleging discrimination related to their license ownership.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Russia pushes back accusations at UN
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/russia-pushes-back-at-united-nations-against-poisoning-accusations-sergei-skripal/
GIST	<p>UNITED NATIONS -- At the United Nations on Thursday, Russia will be pushing back after the U.K. accused Moscow of using a nerve agent to poison a former spy and his daughter in Britain last month. Russia called for an open meeting Thursday afternoon of the U.N. Security Council to refute the poisoning allegations.</p> <p>Requesting the meeting, Russia's ambassador to the U.N. Vassily Nebenzia wrote to the Security Council president, saying the use of chemical weapons by anyone anywhere is "inadmissible and must be investigated and punished."</p> <p>Russia's requested meeting Thursday takes place one week before the results of tests of samples collected from individuals exposed to a nerve agent in Salisbury are expected to be sent to the UN's Secretariat by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).</p> <p>On the basis of the investigation, the U.N. Secretariat will produce a report, Ahmet Üzümcü, the Director-</p>

General of the OPCW said.

The OPCW report comes after Russia and the U.K. traded barbs this week Wednesday at the Organization's meeting in The Hague in which Moscow accused British and U.S. secret services of being responsible for the poisoning of the former Russian spy.

In addition to the samples collected from Sergei Skripal and his daughter, samples were also collected from a third individual – a police official – reportedly exposed to the chemical.

Russia's ambassador said the meeting was called on the basis of a letter sent by British Prime Minister Theresa May, which states that the British government believes that it is "highly likely" that the Russian Federation was responsible for this attack.

"The United Kingdom police have conducted a thorough investigation, which has identified that the chemical that was used in Salisbury was a specific nerve agent from a class of chemical warfare agents known as novichok. These were originally developed by the Soviet Union, and then inherited by the Russian Federation," the letter stated.

According to Russia's state television, RT, Russia's U.N. Ambassador was prompted to request the meeting after the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office deleted a March 22 tweet in which it claimed experts at their chemical weapons laboratory confirmed the substance that allegedly poisoned the former Russian spy and his daughter was military-grade nerve agent produced in Russia.

Russian officials, including its Foreign Minister, have said that Russia had nothing to do with the poisoning of the former Russian spy in Britain.

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HEADLINE	04/04 Britain: nerve agent source found
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/sergei-skripal-poisoning-britain-believes-it-has-found-russian-lab-that-made-nerve-agent-salisbury/
GIST	<p>British security forces believe they have found the Russian lab that made the nerve agent novichok, which was used in the attack on ex-spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in Salisbury on March 4, the Times of London reported Wednesday. Security sources told the London newspaper that while they are not 100 percent certain, they have a "high degree of confidence in the location."</p> <p>A government source told the Times that security forces "knew pretty much by the time of the first Cobra [the emergency co-ordination briefing that took place the same week] that it was overwhelmingly likely to come from Russia."</p> <p>Security sources told the Times they believe Russians conducted tests to see whether novichok could be used for assassinations.</p> <p>The international chemical weapons watchdog on Wednesday rejected Russia's call for a joint investigation into the Salisbury poisoning. But Russia said the number of countries that abstained from the vote suggested many have doubts about Britain's allegations that Moscow was behind the attack and now plans to take its denials of involvement to the U.N. Security Council.</p> <p>Britain said Russia's proposal for a joint investigation received only six votes at a special session of the executive council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The council has representatives from 41 countries.</p> <p>Russia requested the session in The Hague, Netherlands, to push its repeated rejection of Britain's claim that Moscow orchestrated the poisonings of Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia. The British government has invited experts from OPCW to help identify the substance that sickened the Skripals on</p>

March 4.

"The purpose of Russia's ludicrous proposal at The Hague was clear - to undermine the independent, impartial work of the international chemical weapons watchdog," British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said in a statement.

Russia's OPCW envoy Alexander Shulgin said the 17 abstentions from Wednesday's vote meant "more than half of the members of the executive council refused to support the U.S. and U.K. position."

The United States and more than two dozen British allies have expelled more than 150 Russian diplomats in a show of solidarity over the attack. Moscow has responded in kind.

Russia's U.N. ambassador called for an open meeting Thursday of the U.N. Security Council about the case. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia made the request at the end of his speech Wednesday to a council meeting on chemical weapons in Syria.

Russia requested the Security Council meeting because it shares the principle that the use of chemical weapons "is not acceptable and must be investigated and perpetrators punished," Nebenzia said.

Kuwait's U.N. ambassador, Mansour Al-Otaibi, told reporters the meeting is scheduled at 3 p.m. EDT Thursday.

At the special meeting in The Hague, Russia and Britain traded accusations of duplicity and untrustworthiness.

The British envoy said that a joint investigation, as proposed by Russia, would force "a victim to engage the likely perpetrator."

"To do so would be perverse," acting U.K. Permanent Representative John Foggo said, adding that Moscow's demand showed "disdain."

But Russia complained that Britain's work with the agency has lacked transparency.

"Russia, as well as other states that are members of the executive committee, have been pushed aside from this investigation," Shulgin told reporters.

"They tell us that they can inform us of the results of this investigation ... only with the good will of Great Britain," Shulgin said. "But, knowing how our so-called partners have conducted themselves, we are not going to count on their good will."

The United States and many of Britain's European allies have supported the U.K. in assigning blame for the poisonings to Russia. Moscow has worked strenuously to undermine the allegation and pressured Britain to provide evidence backing its claim that Russia was responsible.

A spokeswoman for the Russian Foreign Ministry said Wednesday that Britain needed to provide information about the pets that lived in Sergei Skripal's house in Salisbury, England.

Wednesday that Russia has reliable information that there were pets in the Salisbury residence of Sergei Skripal.

"Where are the pets? What is their condition?" ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said. "This is about living creatures, and if a toxic chemical agent was indeed used in their house, these living creatures should have been hurt."

The chief of Britain's defense research lab, the Porton Down laboratory, acknowledged Tuesday it has not been able to pinpoint the precise source of the nerve agent.

Gary Aitkenhead said scientists there identified the substance used on Sergei and Yulia Skripal as a Soviet-developed nerve agent known as Novichok. But he added "it's not our job to say where that was actually manufactured."

The British government says it relied on a combination of scientific analysis and other intelligence to conclude that the nerve agent came from Russia.

Britain is standing by its assessment, but the Foreign Office on Wednesday deleted a tweet from last month saying Porton Down scientists had identified the substance as "made in Russia."

Still, Russian President Vladimir Putin had quickly seized on Aitkenhead's comments as proof that British accusations against Russia were baseless. He noted that at least 20 other nations now have the capacity to produce Novichok.

Asked Wednesday if Russia expects an apology from Britain, Putin said "we are not expecting anything like that."

"We are just expecting reason to prevail so that international relations don't sustain damage like what we have seen recently," he said after a summit in Ankara, Turkey.

"This not only concerns the assassination attempt on Skripal, but also all other aspects of international relations," he said. "We need to work within the framework of sound political processes, founded on fundamental norms of international law, and this will make the world a more stable and predictable place."

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HEADLINE	04/04 Sagging school funding fuels protests
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-education-funding-analysis/sagging-school-funding-fuels-u-s-teacher-protests-idUSKCN1HB35W
GIST	<p>CHICAGO (Reuters) - U.S. teacher demonstrations are likely to spread as more educators hit the streets to take on states that they claim are choosing tax cuts over the education of students in elementary and secondary public schools.</p> <p>Protests have erupted in states with some of the lowest teacher salaries in the nation, leading to multi-day job actions in a few states.</p> <p>Educator unrest began in West Virginia, where teachers ended a nine-day strike last month after the state approved a 5 percent pay hike.</p> <p>This week, massive teacher protests closed schools in Oklahoma.</p> <p>American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten said the demonstrations, which have so far taken place in right-to-work states with weak labor laws, underscore how fed up teachers have become over the deprivation caused by inadequate funding due to tax cuts.</p> <p>Meanwhile, teacher unrest is growing in Arizona.</p> <p>Median teacher salaries in the Grand Canyon state are among the lowest in the nation, leading to a retention problem. A report last year by the Morrison Institute for Public Policy at Arizona State University found that almost a quarter of teachers hired between 2013 and 2015 were no longer teaching after a year, while 42 percent of teachers hired in 2013 lasted no more than three years.</p> <p>Dan Hunting, a senior policy analyst at the institute, said taxes in Arizona as a percentage of the economy have been reduced by about a third since the early 1990s, resulting in less state money for schools.</p>

“It’s going to take a while for us to get out of this. There’s not going to be a magic bullet,” Hunting said.

The common thread in all three states is tax cuts that were undertaken in the years before and after the Great Recession, according to Michael Leachman, director of state fiscal research at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. The group describes itself as a nonpartisan research institute.

“Teacher compensation is the biggest part of school budgets,” he said. “If you cut the revenue that’s available to spend on schools it makes it hard to pay for qualified teachers.”

On a national basis, 47 percent of funding for public schools comes from states, with 45 percent raised locally and 8 percent coming from the federal government, Leachman said. In more than half of the states, per-pupil funding from state and local sources from 2008 through 2015 was below 2008 levels.

Leachman said problems could be brewing in the low-teacher pay states of North Carolina and Mississippi.

For example, North Carolina is projecting budget shortfalls topping \$1 billion starting in fiscal 2020 as income tax cuts are phased in, according to a July five-year forecast.

When state funding falls, some mostly poorer school districts are unable to make up the difference, leading to inequities among districts.

Funding inequities have fueled lawsuits in 46 states over the last 45 years, according to Michael Rebell, who heads the Center for Educational Equity at Columbia University’s Teachers College, which tracks school funding litigation. He said districts and other plaintiffs that have sued states have prevailed 60 percent of the time.

To remedy those cases, states tend to hold rich districts harmless and give poor districts a bigger funding increase, he said.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Media: China will never back down
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trade-china/china-says-it-never-backs-down-in-the-face-of-threats-after-trade-salvos-with-u-s-idUSKCN1HC0S2?il=0
GIST	<p>BEIJING (Reuters) - China has never surrendered to external pressure and it will win any trade war with the United States, the nation’s state media stressed in a series of editorials and columns in the hours after the world’s two top economies targeted each other with steep tariffs.</p> <p>While China’s Ambassador to the United States Cui Tiankai stressed in comments to reporters in Washington that Beijing’s preference was to resolve the trade dispute through negotiations, Beijing’s official mouthpieces were taking a more belligerent line.</p> <p>The ruling Communist Party’s People’s Daily newspaper said Beijing’s quick counter-move had caught the Americans off guard.</p> <p>“Within 24 hours of the U.S. publishing its list, China drew its sword, and with the same strength and to the same scale, counterattacked quickly, fiercely and with determination,” the paper said in a commentary on Thursday.</p> <p>“The confidence to know that [China] will win the trade war comes from the scale of [China’s] consumer market,” the paper said, noting that China’s market potential is incomparable to other economies.</p> <p>Many American consumer product and industrial companies see the Chinese market as a big source for</p>

future growth given the continued rise in the number of people joining both the middle class and the wealthier levels of Chinese society.

The United States' proposed list of \$50 billion in duties on Chinese goods is aimed at forcing Beijing to address what Washington says is deeply entrenched theft of U.S. intellectual property and forced technology transfer from U.S. companies.

China hit back within hours with its own threatened tariffs on U.S. imports including soybeans, planes, cars, whiskey and chemicals.

The official Xinhua news agency said late on Wednesday that the U.S. tariffs proposal would cost the United States "dearly".

"China will not be afraid or back down if a trade war is unavoidable. The country has never surrendered to external pressure, and it will not surrender this time either," Xinhua said.

The apparent determination not to retreat is at the polar opposite of comments by White House National Economic Council Director Larry Kudlow, who told Fox News Channel on Wednesday: "I believe that the Chinese will back down and will play ball."

"China's counter tariffs are a spectacular way of standing up to America's bullying tactics, not only for itself, but for other countries threatened by the United States' new trade policies," the nationalist Global Times said in an editorial on Thursday.

While Beijing's claims that Washington is the aggressor and spurring global protectionism, China's trading partners for years have complained that it abuses WTO rules, and practices unfair industrial policies at home that lock foreign companies out of crucial sectors with the intent of creating domestic champions.

China has repeatedly pledged that it would open up sectors such as financial services, including promises to the Trump administration last year that it would give "full and prompt market access" to U.S. payment network operators.

But despite a 2012 WTO ruling that China was discriminating against foreign payment card companies, no U.S. firm has yet been granted a license.

Trump has said in speeches that the United States will no longer let China take advantage of it on trade, and bipartisan support has been steadily building in Washington to address what are seen as Chinese abuses.

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HEADLINE	04/04 Amazon to open Spheres twice month
SOURCE	https://www.geekwire.com/2018/amazon-open-spheres-public-twice-month-turning-new-leaf-seattle-landmark/
GIST	<p>The Amazon Spheres have proven to be a hit with employees of the tech giant, who have enjoyed exclusive access to the glass orbs — designed specifically for them as a unique office space in downtown Seattle — since CEO Jeff Bezos officially opened them on Jan. 29. Now the public will get a closer look at what's going on inside the plant-filled structures.</p> <p>Amazon is opening the Spheres to visitors on two Saturdays per month. Just like the workers who stroll the walkways, sit beside the waterfalls, stare up at the 4,000-square-foot living wall or down from the 55-foot-high treetops, the general public will be allowed unguided access.</p> <p>This is a change from Amazon's original plan, which was to allow curious plant lovers and architecture</p>

geeks an inside look only on official campus HQ tours. That was a tough pill to swallow for Seattleites who had seen the dramatic domes take shape between the company's Doppler and Day 1 office towers and figured they would be able to just walk right in.

A visitor center located on Seventh Avenue at the base of the Spheres, called Understory, teases non-Amazonians with limited access and a museum-style exhibit — but no view of the 40,000 plants in their tropical environment, dashing the hopes of people who thought they were getting full access.

Amazon certainly didn't want its new employee space, featuring a delicate ecosystem, to be overrun in the early going. Even employees had to use a reservation system when the structures opened. John Schoettler, Amazon's vice president of global real estate and facilities, told GeekWire before the Spheres opened about the vision for who would get inside.

"There's an amazing teaching moment here, and we envision being able to open these Spheres to the public occasionally for field trips and for educational purposes with different schools and universities," Schoettler said. "This is our office space, and we don't invite the public into any of the towers. This is just an alternative working space for our employees."

But a couple months into the process, the plants are thriving and Amazon is ready for more visitors.

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HEADLINE **04/04 Wild ride becomes new normal US stocks**

SOURCE <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-04/stocks-wild-ride-the-new-normal-as-trump-agenda-roils-markets>

GIST Stunned by the about-face in U.S. stocks? Get used to it.

The S&P 500 Index roared back from a 1.5 percent plunge at the open to close higher, marking the sixth intraday reversal of at least 1 percent since January. That equals the total of the past two years, when stocks went virtually straight up on rising optimism in the economy.

Investors have been whipsawed by Washington's changing policy priorities following President Donald Trump's legislative wins on traditional pro-business policies like tax cuts. The administration's now pushing protectionist proposals that are less eagerly supported by many corporate leaders, while the president ratchets up attacks on individual companies. The result is a market that's grown increasingly reactive to tweets.

"This is very much headline driven," said Quincy Krosby, chief market strategist at Prudential Financial Inc. "You can see how -- absent something that the market can focus on squarely, such as earnings -- the market is vulnerable to headlines, both for moving higher and moving lower."

Wednesday's turnaround had everything to do with trade talk. U.S. investors awoke to a 2 percent drop in S&P 500 futures after China issued a rapid response to American tariff proposals. By midmorning, officials from China and the Trump administration were leaving the door open to a negotiated solution that would avoid levies, which wouldn't take effect for months.

Stocks got a boost when National Economic Council Director Larry Kudlow suggested on Fox Business that Trump's bluster was part of a negotiating strategy to win better trade terms. He call the list of tariffs "a first step."

"Investors are trying to come to terms with the understanding that the market is not going to go up in straight line forever," said James Gaul, a portfolio manager at Boston Advisors LLC, which oversees about \$5.1 billion. "There are changes coming, whether it's in monetary policy, trade policy or regulation, some of which have unknown element to it."

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HEADLINE	04/04 Thousands march to 'keep dream going'
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/martin-luther-king-march-memphis-civil-rights/2018/04/04/id/852652/
GIST	<p>With thoughts on the past and eyes to the future, thousands marched and sang civil rights songs Wednesday to honor the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., the "apostle of nonviolence" silenced by an assassin 50 years ago.</p> <p>At events ranging from a jubilant concert to a solemn wreath-laying, admirers across the country took time to both reflect on King's legacy and discuss how his example can apply to racial and economic divides still plaguing society.</p> <p>Among the largest gatherings was a march through the Mississippi River city where the civil rights leader was shot dead on a motel balcony in 1968. Memphis police estimated a crowd of about 10,000.</p> <p>The Rev. James Lawson, who invited King to Memphis 50 years ago to assist with a strike by underpaid sanitation workers, helped lead the march and said more progress is needed toward King's goal of equality for all.</p> <p>"I'm still anxious and frustrated," said Lawson, his black hair turned gray. "The task is unfinished."</p> <p>Speaking in King's hometown of Atlanta, the Rev. Bernice King recalled her father as a great orator whose message of peaceful protest was still vital decades later.</p> <p>"We decided to start this day remembering the apostle of nonviolence," she said during a ceremony to award a prize named for her father.</p> <p>As painful as losing her father was, she said she wouldn't change history.</p> <p>"Actually, I'm glad that everything happened the way that it happened because I can't imagine the world that we live in without the contributions of Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King and the sacrifice that they made," she said.</p> <p>Before the Memphis march, the rapper Common and pop singer Sheila E had the crowd dancing and bobbing their heads. Then, as the march began, people locked arms or held signs as they chanted and sang songs such as "We Shall Overcome."</p> <p>"We know what he worked hard for, we know what he died for, so we just want to keep the dream going," said Dixie Spencer, who came to the march from nearby Hardeman County, where she's an NAACP leader. "We just want to make sure that we don't lose the gains that we have made."</p> <p>Martin Luther King III addressed marchers at the end of their route, focusing on the triple evils of poverty, racism and war. "There's something wrong in our nation where a minimum of 48 million people are living in poverty. That's unacceptable. We must do better. America should be embarrassed about having people living in poverty."</p> <p>In the evening, ringing bells marked the moment King was gunned down at age 39. Members of King's family pulled a rope together to ring a bell 39 times at the pool surrounding the Atlanta crypt of King and his wife. The family then laid a wreath of multicolored flowers in front of the crypt. The crowd gathered outside Memphis' old Lorraine Motel fell silent as the bell began to ring there. A red and white wreath was placed on the balcony where King had been standing when he was shot.</p> <p>Small-time criminal James Earl Ray pleaded guilty to the killing and quickly recanted, claiming he was set up. The conviction stood, and Ray died in prison in 1998.</p>

	<p>Marking the anniversary of the assassination, President Donald Trump issued a proclamation in honor of the slain leader, saying: "In remembrance of his profound and inspirational virtues, we look to do as Dr. King did while this world was privileged enough to still have him."</p> <p>The president has been the target of veiled criticism by some speakers at King commemorations in recent days as they complained of fraught race relations and other divisions since he was elected.</p> <p>Observances marking King's death were planned coast-to-coast. In New York, the Dance Theatre of Harlem planned an evening performance in his honor. Another march was scheduled in Yakima, Washington.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Puerto Rico sues Pharma for opioid crisis
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/puerto-rico-sues-purdue-pharma-opioid-crisis-54239884?
GIST	<p>Puerto Rico's Justice Department has filed a lawsuit against Purdue Pharma accusing the drugmaker of causing an opioid crisis in the U.S. territory.</p> <p>Officials said Wednesday that they are seeking to hold the company responsible for all government costs incurred as a result of the damage opioids have caused. The suit also accuses the company of misrepresenting the risk of abuse and addiction, among other things.</p> <p>The lawsuit says that opioid distribution more than doubled in Puerto Rico from 1999 to 2013 and that 1,661 fatal overdoses were reported from January 2007 to March 2016.</p> <p>A Purdue Pharma spokesman denies the allegations and says the company is collaborating to solve the abuse crisis.</p> <p>Dozens of states, cities and counties in the U.S. mainland have filed similar lawsuits.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Lebanon seeks funds to aid economy
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/lebanon-seeks-funds-troubled-economy-paris-conference-54248765?
GIST	<p>Lebanon hopes to secure billions of dollars for infrastructure this week at an international donor conference in Paris, as it grapples with low growth and soaring debt.</p> <p>Some 50 countries and international organizations are expected at the CEDRE (Cedar) conference that begins Friday, where Beirut will request up to \$22 billion for an eight to 12 year investment program. Lebanon hopes an influx of cash will help revive the economy, which has been hammered by political unrest and spillover from the war in neighboring Syria.</p> <p>Lebanon is home to some 1.2 million refugees, accounting for nearly a quarter of its population. The civil war next door has also hindered land exports to Jordan, Iraq and oil-rich Gulf nations.</p> <p>From 2007 until 2010, Lebanon's economy grew at an average of 9 percent annually. But it hit a major downturn in 2011, when a political crisis brought down the government and the Syrian uprising stoked unrest among Lebanese factions.</p> <p>Since then, growth has averaged a mere 1.5 percent, according to government estimates, and rampant corruption has hollowed out infrastructure and basic services. Nearly three decades after the end of the 1975-1990 civil war, Lebanon still experiences frequent cutoffs of water and electricity. With public</p>

	<p>transport networks virtually non-existent, its aging roads are clogged with traffic. Chronic problems with waste management have sparked mass protests in recent years.</p> <p>"Lebanon currently is facing major economic challenges, and these challenges range from budgetary problems to balance of payment to growth to unemployment," said Nadim Munla, senior adviser to Prime Minister Saad Hariri.</p> <p>"It has been characterized by many as a very difficult time," with some calling it a "doomsday scenario," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 NYPD cops fatally shot man holding pipe
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/police-shoot-kill-man-pointed-pipe/story?
GIST	<p>A man with a pipe was fatally shot in New York today by officers who believed he was pointing a gun, police said.</p> <p>At just before 5 p.m., the New York Police Department received multiple 911 calls about a man described as "pointing what is described as a silver firearm at people on the street," Chief of Department Terence Monahan said in a statement, noting that three different callers said the man had a gun.</p> <p>Officers responded to the corner of Utica Avenue and Montgomery Street in Brooklyn, Monahan said, where they found a man who matched the suspect's description.</p> <p>As officers approached him, the man "took a two-handed shooting stance," pointing the object he was holding at the officers, Monahan said. The officers opened fire, hitting the suspect.</p> <p>They "immediately" called an ambulance and administered aid to the man, Monahan said. The suspect was then transported to a local hospital, where he was pronounced dead.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Military: 3rd aviation accident 48hrs
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/pilot-condition-unknown-16-crash-nevada/story?
GIST	<p>A pilot with the U.S. Air Force's elite Thunderbirds flight-demonstration team died Wednesday when the pilot's F-16 crashed near Nellis Air Force Base outside Las Vegas.</p> <p>The Thunderbirds pilot died during a routine training flight at the Nevada Test and Training Range around 10:30 a.m., the Air Force confirmed in a statement.</p> <p>The Air Force is not yet identifying the pilot so his family can be notified, according to the statement, which added that "an investigation is being conducted into the cause of the mishap."</p> <p>The Thunderbirds have canceled their appearance at this weekend's "March Field Air & Space Expo" at March Air Reserve Base in California, and "it is unknown how this accident will impact the remainder of the 2018 Thunderbirds Season," according to the statement.</p> <p>Wednesday's crash was the third aviation incident for the U.S. military in the last 48 hours.</p> <p>On Tuesday, a Marine Corps Harrier crashed shortly after takeoff near the runway at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti. The pilot ejected to safety.</p> <p>That same day, a Marine Corps CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter crashed near El Centro, California. All four crew members on board were killed, the Marine Corps said.</p>

	<p>This latest crash in Nevada follows a string of incidents at or near Nellis Air Force Base.</p> <p>In January, an aircraft was required to abort its takeoff and subsequently caught fire. No personnel were harmed.</p> <p>In September, a pilot was killed during a crash at the Nevada Test and Training Range.</p> <p>On June 2, 2016, a Thunderbirds jet crashed outside of Colorado Springs, Colorado, following a flyover at the Air Force's commencement exercises. The pilot ejected to safety. A later investigation revealed that the F-16 crashed because of an equipment malfunction.</p> <p>That incident occurred the same day that 32-year-old Jeff Kuss, a member of with the Navy's elite Blue Angels team, crashed his F/A-18 and died while preparing for an airshow in Tennessee.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 National Guard to southern border
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-signs-proclamation-ordering-national-guard-southern-border/story?id=54242454&cid=clicksource_4380645_1_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>Speaking at the White House Wednesday to follow up on President Donald Trump's surprise announcement that he would order the military to help secure the southern border, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen refused to detail the size, scope or cost of a planned deployment of National Guard troops, but said it was hoped they could be deployed "immediately" – as early as Wednesday night.</p> <p>Wednesday evening, a senior administration official said the president had signed a proclamation authorizing the National Guard to assist the border patrol.</p> <p>While the president could order active duty military personnel or federalized National Guard troops to assist with border security operations, they would not be allowed to carry out law enforcement duties like detaining migrants crossing the border illegally.</p> <p>"The Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security have been directed to work together with our governors to deploy the National Guard to our southwest border, to assist the Border Patrol," Nielsen said.</p> <p>She said the administration hopes the deployment of the National Guard will begin immediately and Trump officials are in touch and coordinating with governors in impacted states. She also said that the U.S. has also been in touch with Mexico about the decision and that Mexicans “understand and respect our national sovereignty.”</p> <p>President George W. Bush in 2006 and President Barack Obama in 2010 also sent thousands of National Guard troops to assist with border operations, primarily in administrative and surveillance roles, in order to free up Customs & Border Protection personnel to focus on enforcement.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 US floats talks after China retaliates
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trade-china/u-s-floats-talks-after-china-strikes-back-in-trade-fight-idUSKCN1HB0G6?il=0
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON/BEIJING (Reuters) - President Donald Trump's administration said on Wednesday talks with Beijing could resolve an escalating U.S.-China trade fight after China retaliated against U.S. proposals to slap tariffs on \$50 billion in Chinese goods by targeting key American imports with similar duties.</p>

	<p>Just 11 hours after the Trump administration proposed 25 percent tariffs on some 1,300 Chinese industrial, technology, transport and medical products, China responded with a list of similar duties on key American imports including soybeans, planes, cars, beef and chemicals.</p> <p>Global stock markets, fearful of a trade war between the world's two economic superpowers, were shaken by the salvos between China and the United States but have since regained some lost ground.</p> <p>Trump, who contends his predecessors served the United States badly in trade matters, rejected the notion that the tit-for-tat moves amounted to a trade war.</p> <p>"We are not in a trade war with China that war was lost many years ago by the foolish, or incompetent, people who represented the U.S.," he wrote on Twitter.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Supporters radical Pakistan cleric rally
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/hundreds-stage-sit-supporting-radical-pakistani-cleric-54230257?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>About a thousand supporters of a radical Pakistani cleric have staged a sit-in in Lahore after a court declared him a fugitive over violent rallies in Islamabad last year, in which five people were killed.</p> <p>Wednesday's sit-in was organized by Khadim Hussain Rizvi, a controversial cleric who led rallies in Islamabad in November, forcing the then law minister to quit over an omitted reference to Islam's Prophet Muhammad in a parliamentary bill.</p> <p>That protest disrupted life in Islamabad for three weeks and ended with an accord with the government following clashes with police.</p> <p>Authorities then assured Rizvi that action would be taken against those responsible for mistakes in the bill.</p> <p>Now, an Islamabad court now wants Rizvi to be tried for provoking the violence.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Russia launches 3-day Baltic naval drills
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russia-launches-day-baltic-maneuvers-54231466?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The Russian navy has launched drills in the Baltic Sea that have raised worries in NATO member Latvia.</p> <p>The Russian Defense Ministry said the three-day exercises that started Wednesday will involve the firing of live ammunition at sea and air targets.</p> <p>Shipborne helicopters will also conduct training flights and practice searching for enemy submarines. Three corvettes and a frigate are taking part.</p> <p>Latvia's Defense Ministry has summoned Russia's military attache to demand details of the drills.</p> <p>In a statement last week after learning of the plan, it said the maneuvers would disrupt sea transport civilian flights and that the exercises are "perceived as provocative and can be considered a display of power."</p> <p>Relations between Russia and NATO have deteriorated in recent years over the conflict in Ukraine and other issues.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Greece: vigilant against enemy Turkey
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/greek-minister-country-vigilant-enemy-turkey-54230402?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Greece's defense minister described Turkey on Wednesday as an "enemy that continues to provoke us" and said he had ordered the deployment of more military personnel to islands in the eastern Aegean Sea.</p> <p>Defense Minister Panos Kammenos said 7,000 service members were being moved to the islands and a border area in northeast Greece amid a spike in tension between the two NATO allies.</p> <p>"If they have the guts, let them dare to challenge one inch of our territory," Kammenos said while attending a reservist exercise on the island of Ikaria. "The Greeks, united, will crush them."</p> <p>There was no immediate comment from Turkish officials.</p> <p>Greece and Turkey remain at odds over air and sea boundaries in the Aegean Sea, as well as oil and gas drilling off the coast of nearby Cyprus, which has been divided into ethnically Greek and Turkish sides for decades.</p> <p>The March 1 arrest of two Greek soldiers who strayed into Turkish territory while on a border patrol has further strained relations between the two countries. The soldiers remain detained in a Turkish prison.</p> <p>"What is needed is the vigilance of the entire Greek people in facing an opponent, an enemy that continues to provoke us," Kammenos said. "We are not frightened or brought to our knees by their provocations, their threats, and their insults. They make us stronger."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 OPCW rebuffs Russia probe request
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russia-points-finger-uk-us-agencies-poisoning-54224593?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>An international chemical weapons watchdog rebuffed Russia's request Wednesday to join Britain's investigation of the nerve-agent poisonings of an ex-spy and his daughter in England. Undeterred, Moscow next plans to take its denials of involvement to the U.N. Security Council.</p> <p>Britain said Russia's proposal for a joint investigation received only six votes at a special session of the executive council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The council has representatives from 41 countries.</p> <p>Russia requested the Wednesday session in The Hague, Netherlands, to push its repeated rejection of Britain's allegation that Moscow was behind the March 4 poisonings of Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia. The British government has invited experts from OPCW to help identify the substance that sickened the Skripals.</p> <p>"The purpose of Russia's ludicrous proposal at The Hague was clear — to undermine the independent, impartial work of the international chemical weapons watchdog," British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said in a statement.</p> <p>Seeking a different international stage, Russia's U.N. ambassador called for an open meeting of the U.N. Security Council Thursday on the case that has chilled relations between Moscow and the West. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia made the request at the end of his speech Wednesday to a council meeting on chemical weapons in Syria.</p>

	Nebenzia said Russia requested the council meeting because it shares the principle that the use of chemical weapons anywhere "is not acceptable and must be investigated and perpetrators punished, and that impunity is unacceptable."
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HEADLINE	04/04 Mossad: 100% Iran seeks nuke bomb
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mossad-chief-100-percent-iran-seeks-nuclear-bomb-54237189?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The head of Israel's Mossad intelligence agency is "100 percent certain" that Iran remains committed to developing a nuclear bomb and believes the international community must change or scrap its nuclear deal with the Islamic Republic.</p> <p>Yossi Cohen, who leads the shadowy spy agency, has been holding discussions about the Iranian nuclear program and delivered his assessment in a recent closed meeting with senior officials, according to a person who attended the meeting.</p> <p>Cohen called the nuclear deal a "terrible mistake," saying it allows Iran to keep key elements of its nuclear program intact and will remove other restraints in a few years.</p> <p>"Then Iran will be able to enrich enough uranium for an arsenal of nuclear bombs," Cohen said, according to the meeting participant, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was discussing a classified security matter.</p> <p>Cohen also criticized the decision to lift sanctions on Iran, saying it has resulted in "significantly increased" aggression by Iran, and noted Iran's continued development of long-range ballistic missiles.</p> <p>"As head of the Mossad, I am 100 percent certain that Iran has never abandoned its military nuclear vision for a single instant. This deal enables Iran to achieve that vision," Cohen said. "That is why I believe the deal must be completely changed or scrapped. The failure to do so would be a grave threat to Israel's security."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Experts: NYC vulnerable moderate quake
SOURCE	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5577117/New-York-overdue-earthquake-destroy-6-000-buildings.html
GIST	<p>New York City could be hit with a \$39 billion in damage with 30 million tons of debris clogging the streets if a long-overdue earthquake hit.</p> <p>The city of 8.5 million people is not thought of as a tremor hot spot, but the five boroughs are riddled with fault lines that could bring dozens of buildings down.</p> <p>Because the city is so dense and littered with thousands of tall buildings, even a 5.0 magnitude earthquake nearby would cause such damage, experts fear.</p> <p>New York statistically gets a quake like that every 100 years and the last one was in 1884 - making it well overdue for another.</p> <p>The city also statistically gets a 6.0 about every 670 years, and a 7.0 about every 3,400 years, both of which would do massive damage.</p> <p>If a 7.0 magnitude quake hit, more than 6,000 older unreinforced masonry buildings would almost certainly crumble in a huge disaster.</p>

The biggest fault line runs down 125th Street all the way from New Jersey to the East River running past Central Park and into Roosevelt Island.

The Dyckman Street Fault runs from Inwood over to Morris Heights in the Bronx with the Mosholu Parkway Fault farther north.

The long East River Fault runs down the western side of Central Park before turning at 32nd Street and heading to the East River.

Some of these were big enough to alter the course of the Hudson River when the last Ice Age defrosted thousands of years ago.

They are complemented by dozens of others making up a 'brittle grid' under the streets of Manhattan and the other boroughs.

Nearby bigger faults in other states could also have their own earthquakes that could radiate shocks into New York through its faults.

The biggest danger is the thousands of older buildings not subject to stringent anti-earthquake codes from 1995 onwards.

Even a moderate quake would shake them enough to dislodge bricks and masonry, littering the streets and preventing emergency services from bringing help.

A 5.0 or higher could see many of those buildings come down like a house of cards, destroying homes and trapping people in the rubble.

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HEADLINE	04/04 More Americans avoiding the doctor
SOURCE	https://www.marketwatch.com/story/why-americans-are-avoiding-the-doctor-2018-04-04
GIST	<p>Between a third and a half of people age 45 to 59 and a quarter of those 60+ went without needed health care in the past year due to its cost, according to a troubling new survey from the West Health Institute and NORC at the University of Chicago.</p> <p>“We were surprised by the magnitude of the findings,” said Dr. Zia Agha, chief medical officer at the West Health Institute, a nonprofit applied medical research organization based in San Diego. “And 80% of the people we surveyed had health insurance, so just having insurance does not make you immune to health care costs.”</p> <p>The researchers at West Health Institute and NORC at the University of Chicago (a nonpartisan research institution) interviewed 1,302 adults. Their findings were released at the American Society on Aging’s 2018 Aging in America conference in San Francisco.</p> <p>Age 45 to 59 skipping health care</p> <p>Specifically, the survey found these results for people age 45 to 59 (members of Generation X and boomers) as a result of health care costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 49% didn’t go to the doctor last year when they were sick or injured • 45% skipped a recommended medical test or treatment • 43% didn’t go to a dentist when they needed treatment • 40% went without a routine physical or other preventive health care • 30% didn’t fill a prescription or took less than the prescribed dose of medicine

Age 60+ skipping health care

The percentages were less dramatic for people 60 + (boomers aged 60 to 72 and Americans older than 72) — perhaps partly because those 65 and older have Medicare. But they are still concerning:

- 30% didn't go to a dentist last year when they needed treatment
- 27% went without a routine physical or other preventive health care
- 25% didn't fill a prescription or took less than the prescribed dose of medicine
- 25% skipped a recommended medical test or treatment
- 24% didn't go to the doctor when they were sick or injured

Younger Americans were even more likely to go without health care due to costs last year, the survey found.

“The younger generations have lower savings, are less financially stable and are more likely to be not insured or underinsured,” said Agha. “As you get older, you understand the importance of health care more and you're more likely to seek care.”

A problem that spans all ages

But, Agha added, the survey's findings show that “this problem spans all ages. It's not an old person problem or a young person problem.”

Given how much boomers and Gen Xers realize the importance of taking care of their health and their greater financial wherewithal to do so, it's especially striking that so many are letting their health go.

But it's also understandable, given ever-rising health care costs.

In Kaiser Health Foundation polls, since 2015, a growing percentage of the public has said they've had a difficult time affording medical costs. Last year, 37% reported having trouble affording health insurance premiums, up from 27% in 2015; 43% had trouble affording deductibles, up from 34% and 31% had trouble affording copays for doctor visits and prescription drugs, up from 24%.

And the West Health Institute survey found that most Americans don't feel they're getting a good value for their health care dollars.

The danger for older Americans' health

Agha worries that forgoing medical appointments, treatments and prescriptions could lead to worsening health outcomes in the future.

“I can't tell you what will happen to these particular 1,300 people. But as a physician I know that one of the largest problems we face is the burden of chronic diseases like hypertension and diabetes. For those, early detection and intervention is where medical science can help the most,” he said. By letting such diseases go untreated or undertreated, Agha added, “those problems become much more magnified and can lead to heart disease, kidney failure and a risk for getting a stroke.”

Overall, 53% of survey respondents say they had at least one of the following situations due to health care costs in the past year: they depleted their savings; they racked up credit card debt; they had to decide between paying medical bills and basic necessities or they couldn't save any money.

Lack of health cost transparency

The survey also found that, overall, 54% of Americans say they received a medical bill in the past year that they thought was covered by insurance and 53% got one where the amount they owed was higher than expected.

Speaking at the American Society on Aging's 2018 Aging in America conference Monday, Agha attributed those findings, in part, to a lack of price transparency and a lack of health care competition.” He said: “Combine those two and most consumers don't have choices. We need to figure out how to let

	<p>choices flourish.”</p> <p>In my interview with Agha before the conference, he explained: “As a health care consumer, you have very little information about the cost of care and the choices you should be making that will impact costs. The transparency issue is a huge problem in driving the cost of health care up.”</p> <p>Health care prices are much easier to get and compare in many other countries, according to experts at the recent West Health Institute 2018 Healthcare Costs Innovation Summit in Washington, D.C., that Next Avenue reporter Holly Lawrence covered.</p> <p>“There are prices on walls in doctors’ offices in France. In Australia, people are entitled to binding estimates before they go in for elective surgery,” Dr. Elisabeth Rosenthal, editor in chief of Kaiser Health News, said at that summit.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Silicon Valley grapples w/security
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-04/silicon-valley-grapples-with-security-risks-after-youtube-shooting
GIST	<p>A shooting outside the offices of YouTube on Tuesday prompted an outpouring of support from fellow technology workers, as well as a sense of dread over whether other corporate headquarters in Silicon Valley were vulnerable to similar attacks.</p> <p>YouTube’s campus in San Bruno, California, where three people were injured by gunfire, is laid out much like other tech offices nearby. It consists of a group of buildings within close proximity, spread across a suburban area. There’s outdoor seating and grassy pastures inviting colleagues to congregate. Visitors and employees can wander freely together in the vicinity, and security guards typically stay at desks inside the buildings.</p> <p>“Companies invest in security but purposefully keep physical security measures discreet because the vibe is casual and relaxed,” said Joe Sullivan, the former chief security officer at Uber Technologies Inc. and Facebook Inc. who’s now an independent consultant. “Leaders want to stay connected with their teams, generally choosing less visible security than you would see in traditional finance or media companies.”</p> <p>A woman -- identified by police as Nasim Aghdam -- shot and injured at least three people before killing herself. She was found at the scene and appeared to be dead of “a self-inflicted” gunshot wound, San Bruno Police Chief Ed Barberini said at a press conference Tuesday. No motive was given for the shooting.</p> <p>In an American age where shooting rampages have become increasingly common, openness can work against companies, said Jeff Harp, a retired agent at the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation in San Francisco who consults for technology companies. While employees are required to badge into buildings, access to many outdoor areas is generally accessible to all.</p> <p>The episode could prompt executives to tighten security, Harp said. “Companies are going to be asking themselves, ‘Maybe our guard services need to be where they pull into the parking lot.’</p> <p>The modern tech office park is modeled after a college campus. At Google and Facebook, employees walk or ride bikes between meetings. Executives take pride in showing off their architecture to the public. Facebook has a Frank Gehry-designed building with a garden roof where employees can walk along a half-mile track, and YouTube has a red slide connecting its second and third floors that can accommodate three people at a time. Alphabet Inc., YouTube’s parent company, is working on a giant terrarium-like campus spanning more than 60 acres.</p> <p>Visitors are tolerated and sometimes welcomed. Tourists regularly stop to pose for photos in front of the</p>

	<p>large thumbs-up sign in front of the Facebook campus or the Android statues at Google.</p> <p>Even as shootings have mushroomed across the U.S., gun violence at work is rare, especially in Silicon Valley. A decade ago, a man who was fired from Santa Clara, California, chipmaker SiPort killed three people, including the chief executive officer and a human resources manager.</p> <p>Harp, the security consultant, said companies watch every incident closely. "We always learn something you should be doing better."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Migrant caravan in Mexico abandons plan
SOURCE	https://www.afp.com/en/news/826/migrant-caravan-abandons-plan-travel-us-border-doc-13p1ry3
GIST	<p>A caravan of Central American migrants whose trek across Mexico infuriated President Donald Trump has decided not to travel to the US border, leaders said Tuesday.</p> <p>"We will wrap up our work in Mexico City," said Irineo Mujica, the head of the migrant advocacy group People Without Borders (Pueblo sin Fronteras).</p> <p>"We have support teams at the border if there are people who need assistance there, but they would have to travel on their own," he told AFP in the town of Matias Romero, in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca.</p> <p>The just over 1,000 migrants who currently make up the caravan -- many traveling in families of up to 20 people -- have been camped in the southern town since the weekend, deciding their next move in the face of daily attacks from Trump.</p> <p>The Republican president vowed to send the US military to secure the border and threatened to axe the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) if Mexico did not stop the caravan.</p> <p>The caravan is in fact a yearly event whose goal is more to raise awareness about the plight of migrants than to reach the United States -- though some participants have traveled to the border in the past.</p> <p>Mujica said this year's caravan was so large it would have been dangerous to travel to the border by train-hopping.</p> <p>"There are too many children -- 450 in all. There are lots of babies. Hopping the train, as we did in the past, would have been crazy," he said.</p> <p>The caravan now plans to travel to the central city of Puebla for a conference, then on to Mexico City for a series of demonstrations -- and end its journey there.</p> <p>The group, mainly Hondurans, also includes Salvadorans, Guatemalans and Nicaraguans, mostly fleeing the brutal gang violence that has made Central America home to some of the highest murder rates in the world.</p> <p>Organizers say Mexican immigration authorities are working with the migrants to get them papers to stay in Mexico.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	04/04 Once a target, always a target
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/once-a-target-always-a-target-if-youre-hit-by-hackers-youre-likely-

	to-be-hit-again/
GIST	<p>If you're unlucky enough to fall victim to hackers, you're likely to fall victim to a similar cyber-attack or data breach in the months following the initial problem.</p> <p>According to the newly-released FireEye M-Trends annual report for 2018, 56 percent of organisations that were targets of a significant attack in the last year and a half were targeted a second time in that period. That figure is up from 38 percent in 2013.</p> <p>Almost half of those who fell victim to an additional attack (49 percent) were successfully attacked within the first 12 months following the initial incident and 86 percent of those who fell victim to additional 'significant' attacks were found to have more than one unique attacker active in their networks and systems.</p> <p>While falling victim to repeated attacks is a problem for organisations around the world, those in the Asia-Pacific region are far more likely to succumb to this threat: FireEye found that 91 percent of APAC organisations fell victim to another attack, compared with 44 percent of organisations in the Americas and 47 percent in Europe and the Middle East.</p> <p>One of the key reasons for breached organisations falling victim to additional attacks is that hacking groups are keen to finish the work they've started, even if they've been discovered in the network.</p> <p>"Attackers rarely randomly target organisations; once the reconnaissance has been conducted on a target the attacker will want to complete their attack. For nation-state actors, they will be tasked with gaining access or regaining access if it has been lost," Stuart McKenzie, VP of Mandiant at FireEye, told ZDNet.</p> <p>But the second attack isn't necessarily going to be anything to do with the original hackers -- it could be a separate attack by a different hacking group eager to take advantage of what they perceive to be a weak target.</p> <p>According to analysis in the report, organisations in the high-tech, communications and education sectors are viewed as the most valuable for attackers to attempt to breach, and could therefore have multiple groups within the network at any one time. That's especially the case if the organisation is known to have previously suffered a breach.</p> <p>"Unfortunately, if you've been breached, our statistics show that you are much more likely to be attacked and suffer another breach. If you have not taken steps to enhance your security posture, you are taking a significant risk," said the report.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Cyberattack behind police car shortage
SOURCE	http://www.fox5atlanta.com/news/apd-cruiser-shortage-may-be-due-to-cyberattack-on-city
GIST	<p>ATLANTA - Police supervisors in Atlanta are scrambling to find vehicles to put officers in for service. A car shortage developed as a result of a slowdown at the city shop responsible for parts and repairs.</p> <p>What caused the slowdown is the hacking of computers at City Hall. The shop computers are still down. Workers there have to make other arrangements to secure the car parts.</p> <p>The problem got so bad in the Buckhead zone that some officers were put on a foot beat. Usually, that step is taken at holiday time to show presence around the shopping centers.</p> <p>The shrinking number of working cruisers is also acute in southeast Zone 3.</p> <p>The director of the police union in Atlanta said the situation has to be corrected very soon. Vince Champion said foot beats cannot be a replacement for squad cars positioned all over the city for the</p>

	<p>quickest response.</p> <p>However, Carlos Campos, a department spokesperson, said citizens can rely on the 911 dispatch system. He said the law enforcement work is getting done despite the City Hall hack.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Atlanta continues cyberattack recovery
SOURCE	http://www.govtech.com/security/Nearly-Two-Weeks-Post-Cyberattack-Atlanta-Continues-Its-Recovery.html
GIST	<p>Its major emergency response systems were unaffected by a ransomware cyberattack that shuttered many computers at city hall, but some areas of Atlanta municipal government are still recovering from the March 22 breach, which made national news.</p> <p>To date, officials have not publicly discussed the origin of the attack. And the FBI, U.S. Secret Service and Department of Homeland Security have all assisted the city's incident response team, as have units from Microsoft, Cisco and security solutions provider Secureworks.</p> <p>Service at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the nation's busiest airport, was never disrupted, Nikki Forman, press secretary in Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms' office, said via email.</p> <p>The airport's Wi-Fi, which "was voluntarily disabled out of an abundance of precaution," Forman said, was restored on April 2 according to the airport's Twitter account.</p> <p>Similarly, "Atlanta Police Department's ability to respond to 911 calls and emergencies has not been impacted," the press secretary said.</p> <p>"We temporarily returned to handwritten incident reports but have begun using our incident report database, allowing officers to resume filing incident reports electronically. Additionally officers are able to take out arrest warrants and check for outstanding warrants," Forman said.</p> <p>"I want to be clear that for many services, telephone and paper options were always available and not simply the default due to the cyberattack," Forman added.</p> <p>City hall employees "have been instructed to turn on their computers," the press secretary said, declining comment on the extent to which computers and electronic archives remain affected "as this is an ongoing investigation." According to a news release, city hall computers and printers were first activated again on March 27, roughly five days after the attack.</p> <p>Forman also declined to discuss the attack's origin or type, whether officials have paid a ransom demand believed to be around \$50,000, and how the city's short-term cybersecurity posture has changed since the attack.</p> <p>Asked via email how the city would update or strengthen its longer-term cybersecurity position, Forman referred to the mayor's March 26 press conference. During that event, Bottoms indicated "everything" could be on the table, with respect to the city's restoration of its infrastructure.</p> <p>"I think what we see is that more work remains to be done with our digital infrastructure in the city of Atlanta. Certainly this has sped things up," said the mayor, who characterized the breach as "much bigger than a ransomware attack."</p> <p>"This is an attack on our government, which means it's an attack on all of us. We need to make sure we're doing all we need to do to keep secure," Bottoms added.</p> <p>Elsewhere across Atlanta's spectrum of city services, the city announced on March 30 that the Atlanta</p>

	<p>Municipal Court was still unable to process online or in-person ticket payments, and Failure to Appear walk-in Court “will not resume until systems are restored.”</p> <p>The city’s online business license payment and renewal platforms were also inaccessible as of March 30, as was the portal used to create an electronic version of a business license. Businesses were given until April 20 to pay for their business licenses without penalty.</p> <p>Online and telephone water and sewer bill payments were unavailable as of March 30, but its departments of Watershed Management and Finance were able to accept water and sewer bill, and business license payments in person at city hall. No late fees will be levied until all payment options and billing cycles are restored.</p> <p>New water meter sales, which had been interrupted, were resumed by cash payment. Similarly some Department of City Planning processes, including inspection assignments, could be “slower than normal,” but were fully operational the city said and employment applications had resumed at the Department of Human Resources.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Gas pipeline network vulnerable
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/04/business/energy-environment/pipeline-cyberattack.html
GIST	<p>HOUSTON — A cyberattack on a shared data network forced four of the nation’s natural-gas pipeline operators to temporarily shut down computer communications with their customers over the last week.</p> <p>No gas service was interrupted, the companies said, and the interruption of customer transactions was merely a precaution. It was unclear whether any customer data was stolen.</p> <p>The attack highlighted the potential vulnerability of the nation’s energy system, cyberexperts say. Beyond consumer and business data — energy companies possess much proprietary information about their holdings, trading strategies and exploration and production technologies — the increasing dependence of pipeline infrastructure on digital systems makes them a particularly ripe target. Control valves, pressure monitors and other equipment connected to wireless networks are vital to daily functions of everything from refineries to oil wells.</p> <p>With nearly 2.5 million miles of oil, gas and chemical pipelines crisscrossing the country, intrusions into control systems could do more than disrupt deliveries, said Andrew R. Lee, a cybersecurity expert at the law firm Jones Walker in New Orleans. The risks include “explosions, spills, or fires, which easily will threaten human life, property and the environment,” he said.</p> <p>Nothing close to that kind of disaster happened this time. But the pipeline industry leaders Oneok; Energy Transfer Partners; Boardwalk Pipeline Partners; and Eastern Shore Natural Gas, a Chesapeake Utilities subsidiary, all reported communications system interruptions.</p> <p>The attack’s target appears to have been Latitude Technologies, a Texas-based provider of electronic data-sharing between pipeline companies and their gas producer and utility customers. The company handles the critical computer communications of gas storage facilities, as well as sales contracts and shipment scheduling.</p> <p>Chris Bronk, a cybersecurity expert at the University of Houston, said such attacks on the gas marketing communications hub is a way to gather intelligence on the entire gas industry.</p> <p>“If I compromise their operations, I can see all the buyers and sellers,” he said. “If I can persistently be in their network I can issue fake transactions.” In that way, Mr. Bronk added, hackers could potentially jumble gas shipments, and even cause electricity production outages.</p>

Latitude Technologies, a unit of Energy Services Group, declined to discuss the disruption in detail. In a statement, it said, “We do not believe any customer data was compromised.”

The Department of Homeland Security was investigating the attack, and no suspect has been publicly identified. But the attack came shortly after the department and the F.B.I. issued a report alleging that Russia was taking aim at the electric grid and other critical infrastructure with cyber probes.

The House Committee on Science, Space and Technology released a staff report this month that described Russian efforts to influence American energy markets and energy policy through inflammatory posts on social media. The motivation for such efforts appeared to be the increase in exports of liquefied natural gas from the United States, a challenge to Russian dominance in European markets.

Cybercriminals, frequently suspected of working for foreign governments, have been increasingly active in the energy sector in recent years. Last fall, hackers penetrated safety systems of a petrochemical plant in Saudi Arabia, the latest in a spate of increasingly sophisticated attacks on the kingdom’s energy infrastructure. An attack on Ukraine’s grid in 2015 led to extensive blackouts.

American gas pipeline companies were targeted in 2012, although the damage was believed to have been limited. Employees of several pipeline companies have been targets of spear-phishing attacks — efforts to lure them to click on email attachments containing malicious code.

The Trump administration has announced that it is establishing an office within the Department of Energy to shore up cybersecurity for critical infrastructure like nuclear plants, refineries and pipelines.

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HEADLINE	04/04 Facebook: ‘malicious actors’ took data
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-switch/wp/2018/04/04/facebook-said-the-personal-data-of-most-its-2-billion-users-has-been-collected-and-shared-with-outsiders/?utm_term=.39b3c0ac1ac3
GIST	<p>Facebook said Wednesday that “malicious actors” took advantage of search tools on its platform, making it possible for them to discover the identities and collect information on most of its 2 billion users worldwide.</p> <p>The revelation came amid rising acknowledgement by Facebook about its struggles to control the data it gathers on users. Among the announcements Wednesday was that Cambridge Analytica, a political consultancy hired by President Trump and other Republicans, had improperly gathered detailed Facebook information on 87 million people, of whom 71 million were Americans.</p> <p>But the abuse of Facebook’s search tools -- now disabled -- happened far more broadly and over the course of several years, with few Facebook users likely escaping the scam, company officials acknowledged.</p> <p>The scam started when malicious hackers harvested email addresses and phone numbers on the so-called “Dark Web,” where criminals post information stolen from data breaches over the years. Then the hackers used automated computer programs to feed the numbers and addresses into Facebook’s “search” box, allowing them to discover the full names of people affiliated with the phone numbers or addresses, along with whatever Facebook profile information they chose to make public, often including their profile photos and hometown.</p> <p>“We built this feature, and it’s very useful. There were a lot of people using it up until we shut it down today,” Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg said in a call with reporters Wednesday.</p> <p>Facebook said in a blog post Wednesday, “Given the scale and sophistication of the activity we’ve seen, we believe most people on Facebook could have had their public profile scraped.”</p>

Facebook users could have blocked this search function, which was turned on by default, by tweaking their settings to restrict finding their identities by using phone numbers or email addresses. But research has consistently shown that users of online platforms rarely adjust default privacy settings and often fail to understand what information they are sharing.

Hackers also abused Facebook's account recovery function, by pretending to be legitimate users who had forgotten account details. Facebook's recovery system served up names, profile pictures and links to the public profiles themselves. This tool could also be blocked in privacy settings.

Names, phone numbers, email addresses and other personal information amount to critical starter kits for identity theft and other malicious online activity, experts on Internet crime say. The Facebook hack allowed bad actors to tie raw data to people's real identities and build fuller profiles of them.

Privacy experts had issued warnings that the phone number and email address lookup tool left Facebook users' data exposed.

Facebook didn't disclose who the malicious actors are, how the data might have been used, or exactly how many people were affected.

The revelations about the privacy mishaps come at a perilous time for Facebook, which since last month has wrestled with the fallout of how the data of tens of millions of Americans ended up in the hands of Cambridge Analytica. Those reports have spurred investigations in the United States and Europe and sent the company's stock price tumbling.

The news quickly reverberated on Capitol Hill, where lawmakers are set to grill Zuckerberg at a series of hearings next week.

"The more we learn, the clearer it is that this was an avalanche of privacy violations that strike at the core of one of our most precious American values – the right to privacy," said Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.), who serves on the Senate Commerce Committee, which has called on Zuckerberg to testify at a hearing next week.

Perhaps the most urgent question for Facebook is whether its practices ran afoul of a settlement it brokered with the Federal Trade Commission in 2011 in response to previous controversies over its handling of user data.

At the time, the FTC faulted Facebook for misrepresenting the privacy protections it afforded its users and required the company to maintain a comprehensive privacy policy and ask permission before sharing user data in new ways. Violating the terms could result in many millions of dollars of fines.

The FTC said last week that it would open a new investigation in light of the Cambridge Analytica news, and Wednesday's revelations are likely to complicate the legal situation, said David Vladeck, a former FTC director of consumer protection who oversaw the 2011 consent decree.

"This is a company that is, in my view, likely grossly out of compliance with the FTC consent decree," said Vladeck, now a Georgetown University Law professor. "I don't think that after these revelations they have any defense at all." He called the numbers "just staggering."

The data Cambridge Analytica obtained relied on different techniques and was more detailed and extensive than what the hackers collected using Facebook's search functions. The Cambridge Analytica data set included user names, hometowns, work and educational histories, religious affiliations and Facebook "likes" of users and their friends, among other data. Other users affected were in countries including the Philippines, Indonesia, U.K., Canada and Mexico.

Facebook said it banned Cambridge Analytica last month because the data firm improperly obtained profile information.

Personal data on users and their Facebook friends was easily and widely available to developers of apps before 2015.

Facebook in March declined to say how much user data went to Cambridge Analytica, saying only that 270,000 people had responded to a survey app created by the researcher in 2014. The researcher was able to gather information on the friends of the respondents without their permission, vastly expanding the scope of his data. That researcher then passed the information on to Cambridge Analytica.

Facebook declined to say at the time how many other users may have had their data collected in the process. A Cambridge Analytica whistleblower, former researcher Christopher Wylie, said last month the real number of affected people was at least 50 million.

Wylie tweeted on Wednesday afternoon that Cambridge Analytica could have obtained even more than 87 million profiles. "Could be more tbh," he wrote, using an abbreviation for "to be honest."

Cambridge Analytica on Wednesday responded to Facebook's announcement by saying that it had licensed data on 30 million users, and deleted it upon Facebook's request. It has denied any wrongdoing in collecting or using Facebook data.

Cambridge Analytica was funded by a multimillion-dollar investment by hedge-fund billionaire Robert Mercer and headed by his daughter, Rebekah Mercer, who was the company's president, according to documents provided by Wylie. Serving as vice president was conservative strategist Stephen K. Bannon, who also was the head of Breitbart News. He has since left both jobs and also his post as top White House adviser to Trump.

With its moves over the past week, Facebook is embarking on a major shift in its relationship with third-party app developers that have used Facebook's vast network to expand their businesses. What was largely an automated process will now involve developers agreeing to "strict requirements," the company said in its blog post Wednesday. The 2015 policy change curtailed developers' abilities to access data about people's friends networks but left open many loopholes that the company tightened on Wednesday.

"This latest revelation is extremely troubling and shows that Facebook still has a lot of work to do to determine how big this breach actually is," said Rep. Frank Pallone Jr. (D-N.J.), the top Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which will hear from Zuckerberg next Wednesday.

"I'm deeply concerned that Facebook only addresses concerns on its platform when it becomes a public crisis, and that is simply not the way you run a company that is used by over 2 billion people," he said.

Facebook announced plans on Wednesday to add new restrictions to how app developers, data brokers and other third parties can gain access to this data, the latest steps in a years-long process to improve its damaged reputation as a steward of the personal privacy of its users.

Developers who in the past could get access to people's relationship status, calendar events, private Facebook posts, and much more data, will now be cut off from access or be required to endure a much stricter process for obtaining the information, Facebook said.

Until Wednesday, apps that let people input a Facebook event into their calendar could also automatically import lists of all the people who attended that event, Facebook said. Administrators of private groups, some of which have tens of thousands of members, could also let apps scrape the Facebook posts and profiles of members of that group. App developers who want this access will now have to prove their activities benefit the group. Facebook will now need to approve tools that businesses use to operate Facebook pages. A business that uses an app to help it respond quickly to customer messages, for example, will not be able to do so automatically. Developers' access to Instagram will also be severely restricted.

	Facebook is now banning apps from accessing users' information about their religious or political views, relationship status, education, work history, fitness activity, book reading habits, music listening and news reading activity, video watching and games. Data brokers and businesses collect this type of information to build profiles of their customers' tastes.
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HEADLINE	04/04 Cyber security: keeping safe, up to date
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/cyber-security-developments-keeping-safe-up-to-date/
GIST	<p>Cyber security is the backbone any online businesses – Here are some quick tips to keep yourself informed about the latest threats surrounding your business.</p> <p>Within a standard nine to five working day, it's said that there are almost two million data records lost or stolen. Cybercrime has become something of an epidemic in recent years – and it's no exaggeration to say that everyone is at risk.</p> <p>Hackers operate in an increasingly complex way and are happy to target small businesses and individuals, who are most likely to be vulnerable to attack. The nature of the threat changes as technology advances and so the only way to stay safe is to stay up to date.</p> <p>But that's easier said than done, right? How do you keep up to date with the latest cybersecurity developments?</p> <p>Follow the news</p> <p>When it comes to cyber security, ignorance is not bliss – it's a recipe for disaster. It's imperative that you identify and follow a news feed that you can trust. By doing so, you can keep on top of any fresh threats that have emerged, learn lessons from other cyber attacks and pick up the latest tips and advice from influencers and experts in this field.</p> <p>News from this sector really shouldn't be seen as the preserve of IT specialists – the scale and nature of the threat suggest that this should be of interest to everyone. There's a burgeoning band of podcasts available on the subject for people who prefer to digest content in this way too.</p> <p>Bring up the 'security question'</p> <p>If you think that installing an anti-virus program is enough, then you're mistaken. Don't just presume that you're safe because you have this because this is merely the first line of defense to root out attacks. By adopting a safety first mindset you can ensure that the way you handle your data is less risky.</p> <p>Whether it's securing your Wi-Fi network at home, managing and updating your passwords on a regular basis or the way you collect, collate and analyze data through the point of sale software at work, continually ask yourself 'is this safe?' Just as ignorance isn't bliss, complacency could prove your undoing. Place 'security' high on the list of credentials to consider when buying new software or hardware, don't just go for the cheapest option.</p> <p>Training</p> <p>Even the experts are constantly having to refresh their understanding of the threat posed by cyber attacks. It pays to search out training opportunities, especially if you're a business. You are, after all, only as safe as the people operating your software and systems and you don't want to put the security of your business in the hands of someone who is unsure about what they are doing. Individuals and businesses alike can find free learning materials on Cybrary to help plug any knowledge gaps they have.</p> <p>It's good to talk</p> <p>Cyber attacks are incredibly common – but people don't often enough talk about their experiences. Perhaps you're afraid or embarrassed to have been caught out? There's no need to be. In fact, talking with friends and colleagues could really help you to stay safe. Pass on tips about new apps, good software, neat</p>

	<p>tips and tricks and any new cyber attack tactics you have come across and you can help to do your own bit to combat the criminals.</p> <p>By keeping up to speed with security news, refreshing your training, sharing tips and tricks and adopting a safety first attitude you'll give yourself the best possible chance of staying on top of cyber security developments and, best of all, safe.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Claim: 20,000 new software flaws 2017
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/flexera-20000-new-software-flaws/
GIST	<p>The number of new software vulnerabilities discovered by Flexera in 2017 reached nearly 20,000 – an all-time high.</p> <p>The firm's Secunia Research division monitors more than 55,000 applications, appliances and operating systems to gain valuable insight into the level of potential risk organizations are exposing themselves to.</p> <p>Its Vulnerability Review 2018 revealed an increase in software flaws of 14% – up from 17,147 in 2016 to 19,954 last year. Some 17% were rated as “highly critical,” although this figure was largely unchanged from the previous year.</p> <p>As per the previous year, the primary attack vector used to trigger a vulnerability was via a remote network (55%), followed by a local network (32%).</p> <p>The good news for firms is that avoiding attacks which exploit these vulnerabilities is possible, as patches were available for 86% on the day of disclosure. In fact, zero-day threats are increasingly rare: just 14 of the 19,954 known vulnerabilities in 2017 were zero-days, a 40% decrease from 2016.</p> <p>However, organizations are not making the most of available intelligence on vulnerabilities, which would help them prioritize which ones to patch, the report claimed.</p> <p>In addition, deficiencies in operational processes can create major disruptions when big breaches hit the headlines.</p> <p>“There's no question based on this year's results, the risks remain high,” said Kasper Lindgaard, director of research and security at Flexera. “As the potential for breaches expands, the pressure is on executives to increase vigilance through better operational processes – instead of reacting to risks that hit media headlines and cause disruption. The Equifax breach and WannaCry attacks taught us that.”</p> <p>He added that the gap between identifying and fixing vulnerable applications must close.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 EMEA attack dwell time hits 175days
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/emea-dwell-time-hits-175-days/
GIST	<p>EMEA organizations take around 2.5 months longer to spot hackers inside their networks than the global average, but are getting better at discovering breaches internally, according to FireEye.</p> <p>The security vendor's annual M-Trends report put the global median dwell time at 101 days, growing to 175 days for EMEA, but standing at just 75.5 days in the Americas.</p> <p>Dwell time is important as the longer an adversary is inside an organization's network, the more information they could lift, the deeper into private systems they could penetrate and the more expensive the eventual clean-up and remediation may be.</p>

	<p>On the plus side, global organizations are getting better at finding the attackers themselves, rather than being notified by law enforcement or another party.</p> <p>Globally the median dwell time for internally discovered incidents was 57.5 days, dropping to 42.5 days in the Americas and just 24.5 days in EMEA.</p> <p>Stuart McKenzie, vice-president of Mandiant at FireEye, claimed the growth in EMEA median dwell time of 40% from the previous year was disappointing, especially given the imminent arrival of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which mandates that organizations get better at spotting and preventing breaches.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 UK businesses open to IoT attacks
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/27m-uk-businesses-wide-open-iot/
GIST	<p>About 2.7 million businesses in the UK are leaving themselves vulnerable to internet of things (IoT) hacks.</p> <p>ForeScout worked with CensusWide to conduct an independent survey of 500 CIOs and IT decisionmakers to see how prepared they are for IoT cybersecurity and the results were concerning: 47% admitted to not updating default passwords on all IoT devices when they are added to corporate networks; 15% admitted to not keeping security patches up to date.</p> <p>With 5.7 million registered businesses in the UK, that means nearly 2.7 million are still leaving obvious vulnerabilities in the system for bad actors to exploit.</p> <p>Making matters worse, UK businesses have a blind spot when it comes to the number of devices connected to their network. Only 54% of respondents had total confidence that they have full visibility and can identify every device on their network.</p> <p>The visibility challenge for business is only set to increase, with 40% of respondents stating that they are planning to increase their operational technology (OT) spend on connected devices. However, 72% IT managers are concerned about the security implications of adding additional OT devices to their company's network.</p> <p>“The convergence between IT and OT is where businesses are looking to drive some major efficiency gains in 2018, but it makes the challenge of knowing exactly what devices are on your network that much harder,” explained Myles Bray, vice president of EMEA at ForeScout.</p> <p>“IoT has expanded the attack surface considerably for all firms, and without basic security hygiene it is easy for bad actors to gain a foothold and then move laterally on a network to reach high-value assets and cause business disruption. With GDPR just around the corner businesses need to act now.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Breaches increasingly found internally
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/breaches-increasingly-discovered-internally-mandiant
GIST	<p>Organizations are getting increasingly better at discovering data breaches on their own, with more than 60% of intrusions in 2017 detected internally, according to FireEye-owned Mandiant.</p> <p>The company’s M-Trends report for 2018 shows that the global median time for internal detection dropped to 57.5 days in 2017, compared to 80 days in the previous year. Of the total number of breaches investigated by Mandiant last year, 62% were discovered internally, up from 53% in 2016.</p> <p>On the other hand, it still took roughly the same amount of time for organizations to learn that their</p>

systems had been compromised. The global median dwell time in 2017 – the median time from the first evidence of a hack to detection – was 101 days, compared to 99 days in 2016.

Companies in the Americas had the shortest median dwell time (75.5 days), while organizations in the APAC region had the longest dwell time (nearly 500 days).

Data collected by Mandiant in 2013 showed that more than one-third of organizations had been attacked again after the initial incident had been remediated. More recent data, specifically from the past 19 months, showed that 56% of Mandiant customers were targeted again by either the same group or one with similar motivation.

In cases where investigators discovered at least one type of significant activity (e.g. compromised accounts, data theft, lateral movement), the targeted organization was successfully attacked again within one year. Organizations that experienced more than one type of significant activity were attacked by more than one threat actor.

Again, the highest percentage of companies attacked multiple times and by multiple threat groups was in the APAC region – more than double compared to the Americas and the EMEA region.

When it comes to the most targeted industries, companies in the financial and high-tech sectors recorded the highest number of significant attacks, while the high-tech, telecommunications and education sectors were hit by the highest number of different hacker groups.

Last year, FireEye assigned names to four state-sponsored threat groups, including the Vietnam-linked APT32 (OceanLotus), and the Iran-linked APT33, APT34 (OilRig), and APT35 (NewsBeef, Newscaster and Charming Kitten).

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HEADLINE	04/04 NKorea hackers behind online casino attack
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/north-korean-hackers-behind-online-casino-attack-report
GIST	<p>The infamous North Korean hacking group known as Lazarus is responsible for attacking an online casino in Central America, along with various other targets, ESET says.</p> <p>The Lazarus Group has been active since at least 2009 and is said to be associated with a large number of major cyber-attacks, including the \$81 million cyber heist from Bangladesh's account at the New York Federal Reserve Bank.</p> <p>Said to be the most serious threat against banks, the group has shown increased interest in cryptocurrencies and has recently updated its arsenal of tools.</p> <p>ESET now reports that an attack on an online casino in Central America and assaults on various other targets last year are the doings of this group. The attackers used a similar toolset in all incidents, including the KillDisk wiping tool.</p> <p>Also referred to as Hidden Cobra, the Lazarus Group is said to be backed by the North Korean government. The hackers use a broad range of custom tools, but also leverage various projects that are either available from GitHub or provided commercially.</p> <p>In the attack against an online casino in Central America, the hackers used various tools alongside the destructive KillDisk disk-wiper. Almost all of the malicious tools were designed to run as a Windows service and require administrator privileges for that, meaning that the attackers expected such privileges, ESET points out.</p> <p>Detected as NukeSped, one of the tools is a TCP backdoor. The malware dynamically resolves the</p>

	required DLL names during initial execution, and also constructs dynamically the procedure names of Windows APIs. The backdoor listens to a specific port that it ensures is not blocked by the firewall.
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HEADLINE	04/04 Cryptomix ransomware gets face lift
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/cryptomix-ransomware-receives-face-lift/article/756120/
GIST	<p>The malicious actors behind Cryptomix ransomware have pushed out a new variant, with the primary change being the inclusion of a new extension and minor alterations to the contact info and ransom note.</p> <p>Bleeping Computer, with a hat tip to MalwareHunterTeam for making the initial discovery, noted the new variant attaches a .MOLE66 extension to all encrypted files, however the encryption methodology remains the same. There is also no known decryptor at this time so victims must either pay the ransom or use their backup files to restore the impacted system.</p> <p>There is also a new email address, alpha2018a@aol.com, that the victim can use to contact the attacker and pay the ransom, and the note itself is now labeled _HELP_INSTRUCTIONS_.TXT and appears as a notepad document.</p> <p>The people behind this ransomware campaign appear intent on keeping their malware fresh, as two month ago they rolled out a similar update changing the extension and contact emails.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 DHS: unauthorized foreign Stingrays D.C.
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/dhs-acknowledged-the-use-of-foreign-cell-site-simulators-in-near-capital/article/756273/
GIST	<p>The United States government for the first time publicly acknowledged the existence of what appear to be stingray devices used by a foreign intelligence service in the U.S. capital region.</p> <p>U.S. Senator Ron Wyden wrote a letter to the Department of Homeland Security in November 2017 requesting information about the use of unauthorized foreign cell-site simulators, aka stingrays, in the area.</p> <p>On March 26, 2018, Christopher C. Krebs, DHS Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary, responded acknowledging that the agency had “observed anomalous activity in the National Capital Region (NCR) that appears to be consistent with International Mobile Subscriber Identity (IMSI) catchers.”</p> <p>The DHS went on to say the agency has not validated or attributed the activity to any specific entities or devices and that the information was reported to unnamed “federal partners” at the time it was observed.</p> <p>When questioned on whether or not the DHS has the technical capability to detect foreign stingray devices, Krebs told Sen. Wyden that the DHS doesn't have the capability and would require additional funding to obtain such capability.</p> <p>An anonymous DHS official told the Associated Press the unauthorized stingray activity was detected during a 90-day trial beginning in January 2017 with equipment from ESD America, a Las Vegas-based DHS contractor.</p> <p>This isn't the first time legislators have raised concerns about the use of stingray devices near the capital. In 2014 researchers conducted public sweeps that found suspected unauthorized devices near the White House, the Supreme Court, the Commerce Department and the Pentagon and other high profile buildings.</p> <p>Krebs also said that the DHS is aware of rogue stingray activity outside the NCR and that the agency also</p>

	<p>doesn't have the technical capabilities to detect 4G/LTE IMSI catchers which are currently being openly advertised by surveillance technology companies.</p> <p>“To support such a capability, DHS would require funding to procure, deploy, operate and maintain the capability, which includes the costs of hardware, software, and labor,” even though malicious use of the devices may threaten U.S. national and economic security, Krebs said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Rarog cryptominer flies under the radar
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/named-after-a-slavic-mythology-fire-demon-the-malware-is-primarily-used-to-mine-monero-but-has-other-capabilities-as-well/article/756298/
GIST	<p>A relatively unknown cryptomining malware dubbed “Rarog” is giving cybercriminals an affordable way for entry level players to enter the field.</p> <p>Named after a Slavic mythological fire demon, the malware is primarily used to mine Monero, but also has the capability to mine other currencies. To accomplish these tasks it employs several botnet techniques, such as, downloading and executing other malware, levying DDoS attacks against others, and being able to auto update itself, according to an April 4, 2018 blog post.</p> <p>Rarog also provides mining statistics to users, configures various processor loads for the running the miner, has the ability to infect USB devices, and can load additional DLLs onto a victim.</p> <p>The malware was first noticed on different Russian-speaking criminal underground forums in June 2017 and is sold for 6,000 Rubles, or roughly \$104 at today's exchange rate.</p> <p>Researchers identified 2,500 unique Rarog samples, connecting to 161 different command and control (C2) servers and confirmed over 166,000 Rarog-related infections worldwide, the majority of which were in the Philippines, Russia, and Indonesia.</p> <p>The malware also offers a guest administration panel to allow potential buyers the chance to “test drive” the malware by interacting with its interface.</p> <p>Researchers linked the malware to the twitter handles “arsenkoo135” and “foxovsky” and tied one of the handles to a Github repository that hosts various other malware families. Researchers said the evidence point to these two handles as the individuals behind the threat.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Flaw leaves Cisco switches vulnerable
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2018/04/cisco-switches-hacking.html
GIST	<p>Security researchers at Embedi have disclosed a critical vulnerability in Cisco IOS Software and Cisco IOS XE Software that could allow an unauthenticated, remote attacker to execute arbitrary code, take full control over the vulnerable network equipment and intercept traffic.</p> <p>The stack-based buffer overflow vulnerability (CVE-2018-0171) resides due to improper validation of packet data in Smart Install Client, a plug-and-play configuration and image-management feature that helps administrators to deploy (client) network switches easily.</p> <p>Embedi has published technical details and Proof-of-Concept (PoC) code after Cisco today released patch updates to address this remote code execution vulnerability, which has been given a base Common Vulnerability Scoring System (CVSS) score of 9.8 (critical).</p> <p>Researchers found a total of 8.5 million devices with the vulnerable port open on the Internet, leaving</p>

approximately 250,000 unpatched devices open to hackers.

To exploit this vulnerability, an attacker needs to send a crafted Smart Install message to an affected device on TCP port 4786, which is opened by default.

"To be more precise, the buffer overflow takes place in the function `smi_ibc_handle_ibd_init_discovery_msg`" and "because the size of the data copied to a fixed-size buffer is not checked, the size and data are taken directly from the network packet and are controlled by an attacker," Cisco explain in its advisory.

The vulnerability can also result in a denial-of-service condition (watchdog crash) by triggering indefinite loop on the affected devices.

Researchers demonstrated the vulnerability at a conference in Hong Kong after reporting it to Cisco in May 2017.

The vulnerability was tested on Catalyst 4500 Supervisor Engines, Cisco Catalyst 3850 Series Switches, and Cisco Catalyst 2960 Series Switches devices, as well as all devices that fall into the Smart Install Client type are potentially vulnerable, including:

- Catalyst 4500 Supervisor Engines
- Catalyst 3850 Series
- Catalyst 3750 Series
- Catalyst 3650 Series
- Catalyst 3560 Series
- Catalyst 2960 Series
- Catalyst 2975 Series
- IE 2000
- IE 3000
- IE 3010
- IE 4000
- IE 4010
- IE 5000
- SM-ES2 SKUs
- SM-ES3 SKUs
- NME-16ES-1G-P
- SM-X-ES3 SKUs

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HEADLINE	04/04 Iran as 'new China' hacking threat
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/perimeter/iran-the-new-china-as-a-pervasive-nation-state-hacking-threat/d/d-id/1331450
GIST	<p>Of the four new advanced persistent threat (APT) groups christened by FireEye last year, three were out of Iran.</p> <p>Mandiant, the incident response services arm of FireEye, witnessed a major increase in nation-state hacking activity by Iranian attackers in 2017, especially on the cyber espionage side of things. Iranian groups now are maintaining and keeping a foothold in victim organizations for months and sometimes years, demonstrating their sophistication, according to Mandiant's newly published M Trends Report on its incident investigations in 2017.</p> <p>"In a way, it felt like Iran was the new China," notes Charles Carmakal, a vice president at Mandiant. "There were so many Chinese threat actors in operations [in previous years], it felt like everyone had at least one Chinese actor" attacking them, he notes.</p>

This time, it was Iran, which was one of the most prolific and pervasive nation states last year, he says. "In 2017, it felt like Iran was all over the place."

Security researchers and incident responders from various organizations have been well aware of Iran's increasing sophistication and expansion of its cyber operations. It's come a long way from its unsophisticated yet effective distributed-denial-of-service (DDoS) hacktivist-style attack MO that came to a head in late 2011 through 2013, when a DDoS campaign crippled US bank networks. The DDoS campaign hit a crescendo in September of 2012, in some cases reaching 140-gigabits-per-second of unwanted data traffic to the banks' networks, resulting in hundreds of thousands of banking customers unable to access their bank accounts online. The attacks cost victims tens of millions of dollars.

"When I first started tracking Iran groups in 2012, it felt like we were dealing with a bunch of amateurs with no real technical capability. They could have been confused with Anonymous ... their weapon of choice was DDoS," Carmakal says. "Today, they've figured out how to organize, fund, and develop tools and are very successful in their offensive operations."

Adam Meyers, vice president of intelligence at CrowdStrike, says it's not so much that Iran is employing more sophisticated cyberattack weapons: they are just more savvy in how they employ them. "It's the sophistication around their tradecraft, methodologies, and operations," he says. "Their weapons are not that much more advanced. It's the way they use them [now]."

Iranian attackers in 2012 deployed the data-destruction Shamoos attacks on two Middle East targets including Saudi Aramco, which was the first signs of a more aggressive and evolving Iranian threat, he says. Today, the geopolitical cloud of questions over whether the US will continue the Iranian nuclear deal or reinstitute sanctions against Iran could ultimately elicit more destructive attacks against US financial organizations if things don't go Iran's way. "If they want to hurt us, they want to go after financial" institutions, Meyers says.

Mandiant now considers Iran nation-state groups on par with other nation-states in terms of the pace and scale of their attacks, including employing Web server attacks that gather multiple victims. "Rather than relying on publicly available malware and utilities, they develop and deploy custom malware. When they are not carrying out destructive attacks against their targets, they are conducting espionage and stealing data like professionals," according to the M Trends Report.

Carmakal says it's known that some Iranian groups have access to Western organizations, so the US could be next in line as a target of a destructive-type attack from Iran.

That's something that Tom Kellermann, chief cybersecurity officer at Carbon Black, is predicting to occur in the wake of the Trump administration's tough rhetoric and possible policy changes against Iran. "Iran and North Korea never had true A teams," he says, but Iran's operations have evolved and could well be turned on US targets in the near-term.

Iran's destructive bent is where it's very different from Chinese APTs, which typically focus on cyber espionage and stealing intellectual property.

Mandiant investigated a security incident targeting an energy company early last year that illustrated Iran's more strategic cyber espionage capabilities. APT35 – aka Newscaster and newly added to Mandiant's list of APT groups – was the culprit. APT35 typically gathers intel from US and Middle Eastern military, as well as diplomatic, government, media, energy, defense industrial base, engineering, business services, and telecommunications sector targets.

In the energy company attack, APT35 infected the target via a spear phishing email with a link to a phony resume that was hosted on a compromised, but legitimate website. The resume was infected with the PUPYRAT backdoor, and the attackers dropped a custom backdoor called BROKEYOLK onto the compromised system that allowed the attackers to use the victim's VPN credentials to log into their

	<p>company systems. In all, APT35 stole credentials from 500 systems in the victim's network.</p> <p>That was all APT35 needed to read emails and steal data on Middle East organizations that they later targeted in data-destruction attacks, according to Mandiant.</p> <p>"Like Chinese [APTs], they stole gigabytes of data," Carmakal says. It wasn't clear why they stole some of the information, however, he says.</p> <p>In addition to APT35, Mandiant also named two other Iranian threat groups officially last year, APT33 and APT34, plus one out of Vietnam, APT32 aka Ocean Lotus.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 White House emails poorly protected
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/endpoint/authentication/report-white-house-email-domains-poorly-protected-from-fraud/d/d-id/1331454
GIST	<p>If you want to stop email-based phishing, the Domain Message Authentication Reporting & Conformance (DMARC) protocol is a recognized tool for the job. According to DMARC.org it's a tool being used by nearly 200,000 organizations to secure their email. But according to a report from the Global Cyber Alliance, it's a tool that's not being used very effectively by the White House.</p> <p>The Alliance surveyed the domains under the control of the Executive Office of the President (EOP) and found that only one - Max.gov - has implemented the protocol at the highest level, which protects most completely against delivery of spoofed email. Seven other domains, including whitehouse.gov and eop.gov have implemented the protocol at the lowest level, which includes only monitoring.</p> <p>The other 18 domains under the office's control have not implemented any level of DMARC at all. This could be important for those in government and the general public because these government domains are frequent choices for spoofed addresses in phishing campaigns.</p> <p>Last year, the US Department of Homeland Security mandated that all federal agencies implement DMARC. The Global Cyber Alliance report indicates that not all agencies have embraced the mandate. The private sector has not fully embraced DMARC, either: A recent survey by Agari Data shows that only 8% of businesses have implemented the protocol.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Misconfigured clouds compromised
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/cloud/misconfigured-clouds-compromise-424--more-records-in-2017/d/d-id/1331457
GIST	<p>Insider mistakes like networked backup incidents and misconfigured cloud servers caused nearly 70% of all compromised records in 2017, according to new data from IBM X-Force. These types of incidents affected 424% more records last year than the year prior, they report.</p> <p>It wasn't all bad news from the IBM X-Force Threat Intelligence Index, which pulls insights on data from millions of endpoints across hundreds of countries. Researchers found 2.9 billion records were reported breached, nearly 25% less than the 4B reported in 2016. Frequently targeted industries saw a decline in attacks (18%) and security incidents (22%) since 2016, a drop that can be primarily attributed to a decline in Shellshock attacks throughout 2017.</p> <p>Hackers aren't slowing down but they are changing their strategies, researchers say, swapping data breaches for ransomware. Instead of compromising large amounts of data, they decided it was more lucrative to lock down data access and demand ransom in return.</p>

"Attackers are pretty much following the money," says Paul Griswold, director of strategy and product management at IBM X-Force. The shift to ransomware "wasn't super surprising," he says, since ransomware can be more profitable than stealing data. This idea extends to attacks like WannaCry and NotPetya, where the goal was seemingly destruction, not financial gain.

"Chances are, those guys were being paid by somebody," says Griswold of these attacks. While they didn't profit from the ransomware directly, he anticipates the threat actors didn't launch global ransomware campaigns "just for fun." They still earned money for the attacks.

The most common class of attack vector between 2016-2017 was injection attacks, which accounted for 79% of malicious activity on enterprise networks - nearly double what it was last year. Researchers say the reason injection attacks increased is because both botnet-based command injection local file inclusion attacks and command injection attacks used embedded coin-mining tools.

Still Foggy on Cloud Configuration

Businesses struggle to properly configure cloud servers, and cybercriminals know it. Inadvertent mistakes are costing companies big-time as attackers discover and target misconfigured cloud environments, IBM researchers report, and poorly configured systems were responsible for exposing more than 2 billion records that X-Force tracked in 2017.

Cloud misconfigurations are split into three categories: misconfigured cloud databases, which caused 566.4M breached records, publicly accessible cloud storage (345.8M), and improperly secured rsync backups or open Internet-connected network area storage devices (393.4M).

"I think this just goes to show the inexperience in doing that," says Griswold of moving to the cloud. "Chances are with on-prem, people understand how the data is stored and how the server is configured because they're the ones who did it ... with cloud, it's a little bit different."

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HEADLINE	04/04 Delta: credit card hack data breach
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/security/delta-cyberattack-may-have-exposed-credit-card-details-n862856
GIST	<p>Delta Air Lines said Wednesday that some of its customers' payment information may have been breached in a cyberattack last fall.</p> <p>The airline said the incident involved (24)7.ai, a chat-services provider used by Delta and other companies.</p> <p>Delta says only "a small subset" of customers were affected, with payment information exposed from Sept. 26 to Oct. 12. It says no other personal details about customers, such as their passport, security or frequent-flyer account information, was affected.</p> <p>The Atlanta-based airline says (24)7.ai informed it of the breach last week. Delta brought in federal law enforcement and forensic teams and confirmed that the unauthorized access was cut off by October.</p> <p>Delta says it will make sure customers aren't held responsible if their payment cards were used fraudulently. It will launch a website Thursday to update customers.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 How YouTube creators get paid
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/news/2018/04/04/how-youtube-creators-get-paid-ads-and-why-

GIST	<p>some-have-been-angry/485032002/</p> <p>A shooting at YouTube's headquarters in California has sparked questions about recent changes the video service made to how its creators get paid.</p> <p>Authorities have identified the suspect as Nasim Aghdam, 39, accused of shooting three people before apparently taking her own life.</p> <p>Police say Aghdam's apparent motive for the shooting was frustration with the policies and practices of YouTube. Social media posts made by Aghdam, along with comments made by her father, suggest the shooter was "angry" because YouTube had stopped paying her for videos.</p> <p>Although YouTube does not directly pay its content creators, users can make money through ads that run on their video or subscriptions collected by YouTube Red premium service. However, recent policy changes have rankled many creators.</p> <p>Here's a breakdown of how YouTube creators can make money:</p> <p>What is monetization? For YouTube, it's a way for creators to make money off their videos. YouTube hosts a Partners Program where creators earn money from ads appearing on their videos or Red subscriptions. The ads run through AdSense, Google's platform for serving ads to websites including YouTube.</p> <p>For its bigger names, making a living through YouTube can prove lucrative. According to Forbes, the highest-paid YouTube star, Daniel Middleton, raked in \$16.5 million in income last year thanks to his channel DanTDM.</p> <p>What are the changes users seem upset about? Last April, YouTube updated its Partners Program to no longer serve ads on videos until a channel reaches 10,000 lifetime views. It also revealed work on a review process for new members of the program. The change was made in response to tactics such as channels taking original videos and uploading them again to rake in ad money.</p> <p>"We want creators of all sizes to find opportunity on YouTube, and we believe this new application process will help ensure creator revenue continues to grow and end up in the right hands," Ariel Bardin, YouTube's vice president of product management, said in a blog post last April.</p> <p>In January, YouTube boosted those thresholds to 4,000 hours of watch time over the last 12 months and 1,000 subscribers. As of Feb. 20, any channels below these requirements could no longer make money through ads.</p> <p>Why did YouTube make these changes? Major advertisers including AT&T and Verizon started pulling their business from YouTube in March 2017 after discovering their ads were appearing on offensive or extremist videos. YouTube parent company Google said it would start an "extensive review" of its ad policies. Last August, YouTube said it was working more quickly to pull terrorist content from its site.</p> <p>What did this mean for YouTube creators? If you were an established YouTube star with millions of followers, the policy didn't change things. But smaller channels on the edges of YouTube's thresholds were shut out, as this Guardian piece from January details.</p> <p>Although YouTube acknowledged in January a significant number of channels would be affected by the change, it said 99% of affected channels were making less than \$100 per year in the last year.</p> <p>Those changes arrived as it weathered controversy surrounding one of its biggest names, Logan Paul. In February, the vlogger saw ads on his channel suspended temporarily after uploading a video of him</p>
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	shocking a rat with a taser.
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HEADLINE	04/04 Twitter cracks down fake news accounts
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/twitter-cracks-accounts-accused-spreading-false-youtube-shooting/story?
GIST	<p>Multiple Twitter accounts appear to have been suspended or curtailed in the wake of Tuesday's shooting at YouTube headquarters in San Bruno, California.</p> <p>The actions come amid continued concerns over the online spread of false information that occurs on social media around shootings and other major news events, much of which involves the naming of false suspects.</p> <p>On Tuesday, BuzzFeed reporter Jane Lytvynenko identified numerous tweets purporting to identify the assailant in the YouTube shooting, which left four people injured. Many of the tweets, Lytvynenko pointed out, resurfaced false claims from previous mass casualty incidents; one even misidentified the shooter as Lytvynenko herself.</p> <p>An ABC News analysis shows 19 of the 34 disputed tweets Lytvynenko found have been deleted, while 11 of the accounts appear to have been suspended.</p> <p>Law enforcement identified the suspect as 39-year-old Nasim Aghdam, who was found dead at the scene of an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound. On Wednesday, San Bruno officials said her motive was believed to be dissatisfaction over YouTube's practices and policies.</p> <p>Less than two hours after the shooting was first reported on Tuesday, Twitter tweeted that it was reacting to the spread of false information.</p> <p>"We are also aware of attempts by some people to deceive others with misinformation around this tragedy," Twitter said. "We are tracking this and are taking action on anything that violates our rules."</p> <p>Requiring tweet deletion "is the approach we take during situations where misnaming someone could put those individuals in harm's way," a Twitter spokesperson told ABC News.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Judge: Massachusetts can sue Equifax
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-equifax-cyber/massachusetts-can-sue-equifax-over-data-breach-judge-rules-idUSKCN1HB2QQ
GIST	<p>BOSTON (Reuters) - Massachusetts can move forward with a lawsuit accusing credit reporting firm Equifax Inc (EFX.N) of failing to safeguard its databases or provide prompt notice of a breach that exposed the personal data of 147 million people, a state court judge has ruled.</p> <p>Suffolk County Superior Court Judge Kenneth Salinger in Boston, in a decision made public on Wednesday, denied a motion by Equifax to dismiss a lawsuit that Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey filed in September after the breach was disclosed.</p> <p>Salinger wrote that the lawsuit stated a plausible claim that Equifax breached its legal duties to address all reasonably foreseeable risks to its data security and to implement reasonably up-to-date fixes to its software.</p> <p>The lawsuit alleged that Equifax knew or should have known by March 2017 that a serious security vulnerability existed in computer code that the company used in its systems but failed to patch or upgrade its software to eliminate it.</p>

	The lawsuit is one of several legal challenges facing Equifax related to the data breach. It also faces class action lawsuits, investigations by more than 40 state attorneys general and a probe by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission.
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HEADLINE	04/04 Facebook: 87M users in data scandal
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/04/facebook-updates-the-number-of-users-impacted-by-cambridge-analytica-leak-to-87-million.html
GIST	<p>Facebook raised the number of users whose information was improperly shared with Cambridge Analytica to 87 million Wednesday, up from previous estimates of 50 million.</p> <p>Facebook issued the updated number in a lengthy post by CTO Mike Schroepfer about its privacy changes, which include restricting third party app access and deleting phone call and text information that's over a year old.</p> <p>Facebook also said it's ending a feature that lets users search for a profile using a phone number or personal email, and suggested that bad actors have abused the ability and taken information from personal profiles as a result.</p> <p>"Given the scale and sophistication of the activity we've seen, we believe most people on Facebook could have had their public profile scraped in this way," Schroepfer said in the post. "So we have now disabled this feature."</p> <p>Cambridge Analytica was accused of improperly gaining access to personal information of Facebook users, spurring legal probes and changes to Facebook's privacy policies.</p> <p>Media reports last month alleged a UK-based researcher collected the data from Facebook users when just 270,000 users downloaded a psychology quiz app that requested access to their personal data.</p> <p>Facebook's policies regarding third party apps at the time allowed apps to request the data of users who downloaded the apps and those users' friends, impacting a much larger swath of people.</p> <p>Facebook has said since that it ended that practice years ago.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	04/04 The ISIS files
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/04/04/world/middleeast/isis-documents-mosul-iraq.html
GIST	<p><i>On five trips to battle-scarred Iraq, journalists for The New York Times scoured old Islamic State offices, gathering thousands of files abandoned by the militants as their 'caliphate' crumbled.</i></p> <p>MOSUL, Iraq — Weeks after the militants seized the city, as fighters roamed the streets and religious extremists rewrote the laws, an order rang out from the loudspeakers of local mosques.</p> <p>Public servants, the speakers blared, were to report to their former offices.</p> <p>To make sure every government worker got the message, the militants followed up with phone calls to supervisors. When one tried to beg off, citing a back injury, he was told: "If you don't show up, we'll come and break your back ourselves."</p>

The phone call reached Muhammad Nasser Hamoud, a 19-year-veteran of the Iraqi Directorate of Agriculture, behind the locked gate of his home, where he was hiding with his family. Terrified but unsure what else to do, he and his colleagues trudged back to their six-story office complex decorated with posters of seed hybrids.

They arrived to find chairs lined up in neat rows, as if for a lecture.

The commander who strode in sat facing the room, his leg splayed out so that everyone could see the pistol holstered to his thigh. For a moment, the only sounds were the hurried prayers of the civil servants mumbling under their breath.

Their fears proved unfounded. Though he spoke in a menacing tone, the commander had a surprisingly tame request: Resume your jobs immediately, he told them. A sign-in sheet would be placed at the entrance to each department. Those who failed to show up would be punished.

Meetings like this one occurred throughout the territory controlled by the Islamic State in 2014. Soon municipal employees were back fixing potholes, painting crosswalks, repairing power lines and overseeing payroll.

“We had no choice but to go back to work,” said Mr. Hamoud. “We did the same job as before. Except we were now serving a terrorist group.”

The disheveled fighters who burst out of the desert more than three years ago founded a state that was acknowledged by no one except themselves. And yet for nearly three years, the Islamic State controlled a stretch of land that at one point was the size of Britain, with a population estimated at 12 million people.

At its peak, it included a 100-mile coastline in Libya, a section of Nigeria’s lawless forests and a city in the Philippines, as well as colonies in at least 13 other countries. By far the largest city under their rule was Mosul.

Nearly all of that territory has now been lost, but what the militants left behind helps answer the troubling question of their longevity: How did a group whose spectacles of violence galvanized the world against it hold onto so much land for so long?

Part of the answer can be found in more than 15,000 pages of internal Islamic State documents I recovered during five trips to Iraq over more than a year.

The documents were pulled from the drawers of the desks behind which the militants once sat, from the shelves of their police stations, from the floors of their courts, from the lockers of their training camps and from the homes of their emirs, including this record detailing the jailing of a 14-year-old boy for goofing around during prayer.

The New York Times worked with outside experts to verify their authenticity, and a team of journalists spent 15 months translating and analyzing them page by page.

Individually, each piece of paper documents a single, routine interaction: A land transfer between neighbors. The sale of a ton of wheat. A fine for improper dress.

But taken together, the documents in the trove reveal the inner workings of a complex system of government. They show that the group, if only for a finite amount of time, realized its dream: to establish its own state, a theocracy they considered a caliphate, run according to their strict interpretation of Islam.

The world knows the Islamic State for its brutality, but the militants did not rule by the sword alone. They wielded power through two complementary tools: brutality and bureaucracy.

ISIS built a state of administrative efficiency that collected taxes and picked up the garbage. It ran a

marriage office that oversaw medical examinations to ensure that couples could have children. It issued birth certificates — printed on Islamic State stationery — to babies born under the caliphate's black flag. It even ran its own D.M.V.

The documents and interviews with dozens of people who lived under their rule show that the group at times offered better services and proved itself more capable than the government it had replaced.

They also suggest that the militants learned from mistakes the United States made in 2003 after it invaded Iraq, including the decision to purge members of Saddam Hussein's ruling party from their positions and bar them from future employment. That decree succeeded in erasing the Baathist state, but also gutted the country's civil institutions, creating the power vacuum that groups like ISIS rushed to fill.

A little more than a decade later, after seizing huge tracts of Iraq and Syria, the militants tried a different tactic. They built their state on the back of the one that existed before, absorbing the administrative know-how of its hundreds of government cadres. An examination of how the group governed reveals a pattern of collaboration between the militants and the civilians under their yoke.

One of the keys to their success was their diversified revenue stream. The group drew its income from so many strands of the economy that airstrikes alone were not enough to cripple it.

Ledgers, receipt books and monthly budgets describe how the militants monetized every inch of territory they conquered, taxing every bushel of wheat, every liter of sheep's milk and every watermelon sold at markets they controlled. From agriculture alone, they reaped hundreds of millions of dollars. Contrary to popular perception, the group was self-financed, not dependent on external donors.

More surprisingly, the documents provide further evidence that the tax revenue the Islamic State earned far outstripped income from oil sales. It was daily commerce and agriculture — not petroleum — that powered the economy of the caliphate.

The United States-led coalition, trying to eject the Islamic State from the region, tried in vain to strangle the group by bombing its oil installations. It's much harder to bomb a barley field. It was not until last summer that the militants abandoned Mosul, after a battle so intense that it was compared to the worst combat of World War II.

While the militants' state eventually crumbled, its blueprint remains for others to use.

“We dismiss the Islamic State as savage. It is savage. We dismiss it as barbaric. It is barbaric. But at the same time these people realized the need to maintain institutions,” said Fawaz A. Gerges, author of “ISIS: A History.”

“The Islamic State's capacity to govern is really as dangerous as their combatants,” he said.

Land for the Taking

The day after the meeting, Mr. Hamoud, a Sunni, returned to work and found that his department was now staffed 100 percent by Sunnis, the sect of Islam practiced by the militants. The Shia and Christian colleagues who previously shared his office had all fled.

For a while, Mr. Hamoud and the employees he supervised at the agriculture department went on much as they had before. Even the stationery they used was the same, though they were instructed to use a marker to cover up the Iraqi government's logo.

But the long-bearded men who now oversaw Mr. Hamoud's department had come with a plan, and they slowly began to enact it.

For generations, jihadists had dreamed of establishing a caliphate. Osama bin Laden frequently spoke of it and his affiliates experimented with governing in the dunes of Mali, in the badlands of Yemen and in

pockets of Iraq. Their goal was to recreate the society that existed over a millennium ago during the time of the Prophet Muhammad.

In Mosul, what had been called the Directorate of Agriculture was renamed Diwan al-Zera'a, which can be translated as the Ministry of Agriculture. The term "diwan" harks back to the seventh-century rule of one of the earliest caliphs.

ISIS printed new letterhead that showed it had branded at least 14 administrative offices with "diwan," renaming familiar ones like education and health. Then it opened diwans for things that people had not heard of: something called the hisba, which they soon learned was the feared morality police; another diwan for the pillaging of antiquities; yet another dedicated to "war spoils."

What began as a cosmetic change in Mr. Hamoud's office soon turned into a wholesale transformation.

The militants sent female employees home for good and closed the day care center. They shuttered the office's legal department, saying disputes would now be handled according to God's law alone.

And they did away with one of the department's daily duties — checking an apparatus, placed outside, to measure precipitation. Rain, they said, was a gift from Allah — and who were they to measure his gift?

Employees were also told they could no longer shave, and they had to make sure the leg of their trousers did not reach the ankle.

Glossy pamphlets, like the one below, pinpointed the spot on the calf where the hem of the garb worn by the companions of the Prophet around 1,400 years ago was said to have reached.

Eventually, the 57-year-old Hamoud, who wears his hair in a comb-over and prides himself on his professional appearance, stopped buying razors. He took out the slacks he wore to work and asked his wife to trim off 5 centimeters.

But the biggest change came five months into the group's rule, and it turned the hundreds of employees who had reluctantly returned to work into direct accomplices of the Islamic State. The change involved the very department Mr. Hamoud headed, which was responsible for renting government-owned land to farmers.

To increase revenue, the militants ordered the agriculture department to speed up the process for renting land, streamlining a weekslong application into something that could be accomplished in an afternoon.

That was just the beginning.

It was then that government workers got word that they should begin renting out property that had never belonged to the government. The instructions were laid out in a 27-page manual emblazoned with the phrase "The Caliphate on the Path of Prophecy." The handbook outlined the group's plans for seizing property from the religious groups it had expelled and using it as the seed capital of the caliphate.

"Confiscation," the manual says, will be applied to the property of every single "Shia, apostate, Christian, Nusayri and Yazidi based on a lawful order issued directly by the Ministry of the Judiciary."

Islamic State members are exclusively Sunni and see themselves as the only true believers. Mr. Hamoud's office was instructed to make a comprehensive list of the properties owned by non-Sunnis — and to seize them for redistribution.

The confiscation didn't stop at the land and homes of the families they chased out. An entire ministry was set up to collect and reallocate beds, tables, bookshelves — even the forks the militants took from the houses they seized. They called it the Ministry of War Spoils.

It was housed in a stone-faced building in western Mosul that was hit by an airstrike in the battle to retake the city. The ensuing fire consumed the structure and blackened its walls. But the charred shapes left behind still told a story. Each room served as a warehouse for ordinary household objects: kerosene heaters in one; cooking ranges in another; a jumble of air coolers and water tanks in yet another.

The few papers that did not burn up showed how objects seized from the religious groups they had chased out were offered as rewards to ISIS fighters.

“Please kindly approve the request of the family of the late Brother Durayd Salih Khalaf,” says one letter written on the letterhead of the Islamic State’s Prisoners and Martyrs Affairs Authority. The request was for a stove and a washing machine. A note scribbled at the bottom says: “To be provided with a plasma TV and stove only.”

Another application from the General Telecommunications Authority requested, among other things, clothes hangers.

The Islamic State’s promise of taking care of its own, including free housing for foreign recruits, was one of the draws of the caliphate.

“I’m in Mosul and it’s really the top here,” Kahina el-Hadra, a young Frenchwoman who joined the group in 2015, wrote in an email that year to her secondary school teacher, according to a transcript contained in a report by the Paris Criminal Brigade, which was obtained by The Times.

“I have an apartment that is fully furnished,” Ms. Hadra gushed. “I pay no rent nor even electricity or water lol. It’s the good life!!! I didn’t buy so much as a single fork.”

When her concerned teacher wrote back that the apartment had probably been stolen from another family, she shot back: “Serves them right, dirty Shia!!!”

Ms. Hadra, according to police records, was the pregnant wife of one of the suicide bombers who blew himself up in the packed Bataclan concert hall during the Paris attacks of 2015.

The Paper Trail

I got into the habit of digging through the trash left behind by terrorists in 2013, when I was reporting on Al Qaeda in Mali. Locals pointed out buildings the group had occupied in the deserts of Timbuktu. Beneath overturned furniture and in abandoned filing cabinets, I found letters the militants had hand-carried across the dunes that spelled out their vision of jihad.

Those documents revealed the inner workings of Al Qaeda, and years later I wanted to investigate the Islamic State in the same way.

When the coalition forces moved to take Mosul back from the militants in late 2016, I rushed to Iraq. For three weeks, I tried — and failed — to find any documents. Day after day, my team negotiated access to buildings painted with the Islamic State logo, only to find desk drawers jutting out and hard drives ripped out.

Then, the day before my return flight, we met a man who remembered seeing stacks of paper inside the provincial headquarters of the Islamic State’s Ministry of Agriculture in a small village called Omar Khan, 25 miles southeast of the city. The next day we traveled to the town, no more than a speck on the map of the Nineveh Plains, and entered House No. 47.

My heart sank as we pushed open the door and saw the closets been flung open — a clear sign that the place had already been cleared.

But on the way out, I stopped at what seemed to be an outhouse. When we opened the door, we saw piles of yellow folders cinched together with twine and stacked on the floor.

We pulled one out, laid it open in the sun — and there was the unmistakable black banner of the Islamic State, the flag they claim was flown by the Prophet himself.

Folder after folder, 273 in all, identified plots of land owned by farmers who belonged to one of the faiths banned by the group. Each yellow sleeve contained the handwritten request of a Sunni applying to confiscate the property.

Doing so involved a step-by-step process, beginning with a report by a surveyor, who mapped the plot, noted important topographical features and researched the property's ownership. Once it was determined that the land was owned by one of the targeted groups, it was classified as property of the Islamic State. Then a contract was drawn up spelling out that the tenant could neither sublet the land nor modify it without the group's permission.

The outhouse discovery taught me to stay off the beaten track. I learned to read the landscape for clues, starting with باقية — “baqiya” — the first word of the Islamic State slogan. It can be translated as “will remain,” and marked the buildings the group occupied, invoking its claim that the Islamic State will endure.

Once we confirmed that a building had been occupied by the group, we lifted up the mattresses and pulled back the headboards of beds. We rifled through the closets, opened kitchen cupboards, followed the stairs to the roof and scanned the grounds.

The danger of land mines and booby-traps hung over our team. In one villa, we found a collection of records — but could search only one set of rooms after security forces discovered an unexploded bomb.

Because the buildings were near the front lines, Iraqi security forces nearly always accompanied our team. They led the way and gave permission to take the documents. In time, the troops escorting us became our sources and they, in turn, shared what they found, augmenting our cache by hundreds of records.

The Times asked six analysts to examine portions of the trove, including Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, who maintains his own archive of Islamic State documents and has written a primer on how to identify fraudulent ones; Mara Revkin, a Yale scholar who has made repeated trips to Mosul to study the group's administration; and a team of analysts at West Point's Combating Terrorism Center who analyzed the records found in Bin Laden's hide-out in Pakistan.

They deemed the records to be original, based on the markings, logos and stamps, as well as the names of government offices. The terminology and design were consistent with those found on documents issued by the group in other parts of the caliphate, including as far afield as Libya.

As lease after lease was translated back in New York, the same signature inked at the bottom of numerous contracts kept reappearing: “Chief Technical Supervisor, Mahmoud Ismael Salim, Supervisor of Land.”

On my first trip back to Iraq, I showed the leases to a local police officer. He recognized the angular signature and offered to escort me to the home of the ISIS bureaucrat.

The officer shrugged when asked why a man who had taken part in the group's organized land theft had not been arrested. His men were overwhelmed investigating those who had fought and killed on behalf of the terrorist group, he said. They didn't have time to also go after the hundreds of civil servants who had worked in the Islamic State's administration.

Hours later, the man whose signature appeared on the lease for farmland seized from a Christian priest, on the contract for the orchards taken from a monastery, and on the deed for land stolen from a Shia family allowed us into his modest home.

The only decoration in his living room was a broken clock whose hand trembled between 10:43 and 10:44.

A stooped man with thick glasses, the 63-year-old Salim was visibly nervous. He explained that he had spent years overseeing the provincial office of the government of Iraq's Directorate of Agriculture, where he reported to Mr. Hamoud, whom we contacted for the first time a few days later.

Mr. Salim acknowledged that it was his signature on the leases. But speaking haltingly, he claimed to have been forcibly conscripted into the bureaucracy of the terrorist state.

"They took our files and started going through them, searching which of the properties belong to Shia, which of them belong to apostates, which of them are people who had left the caliphate," he said.

He described informants phoning in the addresses of Shias and Christians.

Sunnis who were too poor to pay the rent upfront were offered a sharecropping agreement with the Islamic State, allowing them to take possession of the stolen land in return for one-third of the future harvest.

On busy days, a line snaked around his office building, made up of Sunni farmers, many of them resentful of their treatment at the hands of a Shia-led Iraqi government. In the same compound where we found the stacks of yellow folders, Mr. Salim received men he knew, whose children had played with his. They came to steal the land of other men they all knew — whose children had also grown up alongside theirs.

With the stroke of his pen, farmers lost their ancestors' cropland, their sons were robbed of their inheritance and the wealth of entire families, built up over generations, was wiped out.

"These are relationships we built over decades, from the time of my father, and my father's father," Mr. Salim said, pleading for understanding. "These were my brothers, but we were forced to do it."

A Clean Sweep

As 2014 blurred into 2015 and Mr. Hamoud and his colleagues helped keep the machinery of government running, Islamic State soldiers set out to remake every aspect of life in the city — starting with the role of women.

Billboards went up showing an image of a woman fully veiled. The militants commandeered a textile factory, which began manufacturing bales of regulation-length female clothing. Soon thousands of niqab sets were delivered to the market, and women who didn't cover up began to be fined.

Mr. Hamoud, who is known as "Abu Sara," or Father of Sara, gave in and bought a niqab for his daughter.

As he walked to and from work, Mr. Hamoud began taking side streets to dodge the frequent executions that were being carried out in traffic circles and public squares. In one, a teenage girl accused of adultery was dragged out of a minivan and forced to her knees. Then a stone slab was dropped onto her head. On a bridge, the bodies of people accused of being spies swung from the railing.

But on the same thoroughfares, Mr. Hamoud noticed something that filled him with shame: The streets were visibly cleaner than they had been when the Iraqi government was in charge.

Omar Bilal Younes, a 42-year-old truck driver whose occupation allowed him to crisscross the caliphate, noticed the same improvement. "Garbage collection was No. 1 under ISIS," he said, flashing a thumbs-up sign.

The street sweepers hadn't changed. What had was that the militants imposed a discipline that had been lacking, said a half-dozen sanitation employees who worked under ISIS and who were interviewed in three towns after the group was forced out.

"The only thing I could do during the time of government rule is to give a worker a one-day suspension without pay," said Salim Ali Sultan, who oversaw garbage collection both for the Iraqi government and

later for the Islamic State in the northern Iraqi town of Tel Kaif. “Under ISIS, they could be imprisoned.”

Residents also said that their taps were less likely to run dry, the sewers less likely to overflow and potholes fixed more quickly under the militants, even though there were now near-daily airstrikes.

Then one day, residents of Mosul saw earthmovers heading toward a neighborhood called the Industrial Area in the eastern half of the city. Laborers were seen paving a new blacktop road that would eventually run for roughly one mile, connecting two areas of the city and reducing congestion.

The new highway was called “Caliphate Way.”

The new government did not concern itself only with administrative matters. For morality, as for everything else, there was a bureaucracy.

Citizens stopped in the street by the hisba, the morality police, and accused of an offense were ordered to hand over their IDs in return for a “confiscation receipt.” The ID was taken to the group’s office, where residents were forced to appear and face judgment. Religious specialists weighed the crime, filling out a form.

Afterward, the offender was made to sign another form: “I, the undersigned, pledge not to cut or trim my beard again,” said one. “If I do that again, I will be subject to all kinds of punishments that the Hisba Center may take against me.”

The zeal with which the Islamic State policed the population is reflected in the 87 prison transfer records they abandoned in one of their police stations. Citizens were thrown into jail for a litany of obscure crimes, including eyebrow plucking, inappropriate haircuts, raising pigeons, playing dominoes, playing cards, playing music and smoking the hookah.

In early 2016, Mr. Hamoud’s daughter Sara ran out for a quick errand without covering her eyes.

She was spotted by an officer from the morality police. Before she could explain, he smashed his fist into her eye.

From then on, her father forbade her to leave the house, except to drive to the hospital for the appointments that followed the assault, which left her with vision loss, the family said.

With change sweeping the region, residents were forced to make fraught choices, among them: Stay or leave, rebel or accommodate.

Mr. Hamoud decided to try to escape. He and his eldest son, 28-year-old Omar, had set aside over \$30,000 to buy a new home. The morning of their planned departure, Omar withdrew all but around \$1,000 from the bank account.

Not even two hours later, a unit of masked fighters banged down the family’s front door. One of them was holding the bank slip Omar had signed.

“Try this again and we’ll kill every last one of you,” the militants warned.

The Money Machine

On the western banks of the Tigris River, in a pulverized building, I found an abandoned briefcase.

The documents that spilled out revealed that the briefcase belonged to Yasir Issa Hassan, a young professional whose photo identification shows a balding man with a large, aquiline nose. He was the administrator of the Trade Division inside the Islamic State Ministry of Agriculture.

The group’s outsize ambitions and its robust bureaucracy hinged on its ability to generate funds. Bulging

with accounting forms, budget projections and receipts, as well as two CD-ROMs containing spreadsheets, the briefcase shed light on the scope of the organization's revenue machine and offered a blueprint for how it worked.

The financial reports tallied over \$19 million in transactions involving agriculture alone.

The documents describe how it made money at every step in the supply chain: Before a single seed of grain, for example, was sown, the group collected rent for the fields it had confiscated. Then, when the crops were ready to be threshed, it collected a harvest tax.

It did not stop there.

The trucks that transported the grain paid highway tolls. The grain was stored in silos, which the militants controlled, and they made money when the grain was sold to mills, which they also controlled. The mills ground the grain into flour, which the group sold to traders.

Then the bags of flour were loaded onto trucks, which traversed the caliphate, paying more tolls. It was sold to supermarkets and shops, which were also taxed. So were the consumers who bought the finished product.

In a single 24-hour period in 2015, one of the spreadsheets in the briefcase shows, the Islamic State collected \$1.9 million from the sale of barley and wheat.

Another table shows that the militants earned over \$3 million in three months from gross flour sales in just three locations in Mosul.

The organization appeared intent on making money off every last grain — even crops that were damaged.

On just one day, according to another statement, it took in over \$14,000 from wheat described as having been scorched in a bombing, and \$2,300 from the sale of spoiled lentils and chickpeas. It also took in over \$23,000 from grain that had been scraped off the bottom of a tank, according to one spreadsheet.

The Islamic State's tax arm reached into every facet of life in Mosul. Households in Iraq were taxed 2,000 dinars per month (less than \$2) for garbage collection, 10,000 dinars (about \$8) for each 10 amperes of electricity, and another 10,000 for municipal water.

Businesses wishing to install a landline paid a 15,000-dinar (about \$12) installation fee to the group's telecommunications office, followed by a 5,000-dinar monthly maintenance fee.

Municipal offices charged for marriage licenses and birth certificates.

But perhaps the most lucrative tax was a religious tax known as zakat, which is considered one of the five pillars of Islam. It is calculated at 2.5 percent of an individual's assets, and up to 10 percent for agricultural production, according to Ms. Revkin, the Yale researcher. While some of these fees had been charged by the Iraqi and Syrian governments, the mandatory asset tax was a new development.

Ordinarily in Islamic practice, the zakat is a tithe used to help the poor. In the Islamic State's interpretation, an act of charity became a mandatory payment, and while some of the funds collected were used to help needy families, the Ministry of Zakat and Charities acted more like a version of the Internal Revenue Service.

Most accounts of how the Islamic State became the richest terrorist group in the world focus on its black-market oil sales, which at one point brought in as much as \$2 million per week, according to some estimates. Yet records recovered in Syria by Mr. Tamimi and analyzed by Ms. Revkin show that the ratio of money earned from taxes versus oil stood at 6:1.

Despite hundreds of airstrikes that left the caliphate pocked with craters, the group's economy continued to function, fed by streams of revenue that could not be bombed under international norms: the civilians under their rule, their commercial activity and the dirt under their feet.

According to estimates from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the land that the militants seized was Iraq's most fertile, and at the group's height, the fields that were harvested accounted for 40 percent of the country's annual wheat production and more than half of its barley crop. In Syria, the group at one point controlled as much as 80 percent of the country's cotton crop, according to a study by the Paris-based Center for the Analysis of Terrorism.

It all added up to astonishing sums, as much as \$800 million in annual tax revenue, according to the study.

Still, the group's ambition of running a state meant it also had large bills.

On a single day in the summer of 2016, the owner of the briefcase handed over \$150,000 to one of the group's accountants to pay for the transport of wheat from one town to another, according to one financial report.

In a two-week period the same year, he paid over \$16,000 to the Islamic State trade division in the Dijlah district and \$14,000 to the one in Kirkuk. He gave an \$8,400 cash advance to the group's Hawija office, \$16,800 to the land department and \$8,400 to the Islamic State province straddling the Euphrates River.

Tax collection continued until the very end. At least 100 documents labeled "Daily Gross Revenue" that showed incoming cash were dated November 2016, a month after the start of the coalition's push to take back the city.

Even as tanks were rolling in and taking surrounding neighborhoods, the trade division continued to make money, pocketing \$70,000 in a single sale.

After ISIS

One day in late 2016, a flier decorated with the Iraqi flag floated down onto the Hamoud family's home.

The agricultural department official and his extended family were hunkered down inside the living room, sitting elbow-to-elbow on an L-shaped couch, he recalls. By then, the militants had banned both cellphones and satellite dishes. They were cut off from the world.

The flier was one of millions dropped over Mosul warning the population to take cover. The military assault was about to begin.

"Could this really be happening?" Mr. Hamoud wondered. Then he used a lighter to incinerate the flier.

The fighters whose plans of building a state had been met with ridicule proved surprisingly good at it. It took nine months to wrest Mosul from the militants' grip, a slog that one senior American general said was the most difficult battle he had witnessed in 35 years.

Since then, the militants have lost all but 3 percent of the territory in Iraq and Syria they once held. But they clung so tightly to their caliphate that block after city block was leveled during the battle to take back cities and towns. Thousands of people have lost their homes. New mass graves are being discovered every month. One of them contains the remains of four of Mr. Hamoud's cousins.

His daughter Sara now wears thick glasses to correct her vision, which has been blurry since the day she was punched by the hisba. Even through her compromised eyesight, she can see the mountain of trash rising in the empty lot across from her family's home.

Few have anything good to say about their old rulers — unless prodded to talk about the services they provided.

“We have to be honest,” Mr. Hamoud said. “It was much cleaner under ISIS.”

Though the militants are gone, reminders of the Islamic State and their particular style of governance remain.

In the northern town of Tel Kaif, for example, residents recall how the militants conscripted a committee of electrical engineers to fix an overloaded power grid. They installed new circuit breakers, and for the first time, residents who had been accustomed to at most six hours of electricity a day could now reliably turn on lights.

In early 2017, Iraqi soldiers reclaimed the town, and were welcomed as heroes. But then they disconnected the Islamic State circuit breakers — and the power failures resumed.

“If the government was to go back to the system that ISIS put in place, we would go so far as to kiss their foreheads,” Mr. Younes, the truck driver, said at the time.

Within a few months, the government did just that.

The irony that it had taken a terrorist group to fix one of the town’s longstanding grievances was not lost on its citizens.

“Although they were not recognized as a state or a country,” said one shopkeeper, Ahmed Ramzi Salim, “they acted like one.”

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HEADLINE	04/04 ISIS militants renew loyalty pledge
SOURCE	https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-islamic-state/islamic-state-militants-renew-loyalty-pledge-to-caliph-baghdadi-idUKKCN1HB1XK
GIST	<p>BAGHDAD (Reuters) - Islamic State militants have restated their loyalty to the group’s leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, in what is believed to be their first public pledge of allegiance to him since his “caliphate” in Syria and Iraq collapsed last year.</p> <p>The group continues to carry out bombings, ambushes and assassinations in both countries, as well as in Libya. However, Baghdadi’s whereabouts have been unknown since the cross-border “caliphate” he declared in 2014 disintegrated with the fall of Mosul and Raqqa, its strongholds in Iraq and Syria respectively.</p> <p>“To infuriate and terrorise the infidels, we renew our pledge of loyalty to the commander of the faithful and the caliph of the Muslims, the mujahid sheikh Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi al-Hussaini al-Qurashi may god preserve him,” militants said in a statement posted on their social media groups.</p> <p>Hisham al-Hashimi, who advises several governments including Iraq’s on Islamic State affairs, said this was the first known pledge of loyalty to Baghdadi since Iraqi forces recaptured Mosul in July and an alliance of Kurdish and Arab militias took Raqqa in November, in both cases backed by a U.S.-led coalition.</p> <p>There have been conflicting reports over whether Baghdadi, an Iraqi, is still alive.</p> <p>However, Hashimi told Reuters that he was believed to be hiding in the vast desert area that straddles the Syria-Iraq border,</p> <p>U.S. airstrikes killed most of his top lieutenants, including Islamic State’s “war minister” Abu Omar al-Shishani, “governor of the Iraqi region” Abu Muslim al-Turkmani, group spokesman Abu Mohammed al-</p>

	Adnani and “governor for Syria” Abu Ali al-Anbari.
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HEADLINE	04/05 Inside the Google of counter-terrorism
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-05/once-snubbed-by-fbi-europol-is-now-google-of-counter-terrorism
GIST	<p>Shortly after taking over Europol a decade ago, former British MI5 officer Rob Wainwright met with then-FBI Director Robert Mueller to pitch the idea of sharing data, figuring he couldn't turn the European Union's budding criminal-intelligence service into a global force without America's help.</p> <p>Mueller wasn't interested, so the Welshman says he winged it.</p> <p>“If the FBI doesn't engage here with their equivalents, the leading lights of the police world in Europe, then you're a second-rater basically,” Wainwright said in his corner office at Europol's headquarters in The Hague, a state-of-the-art complex with bulletproof windows. “I had to do something about that.”</p> <p>Milking cooperation accords with hundreds of other agencies across Europe and abroad, Wainwright, who's stepping down in May, has turned Europol into a transnational clearing house for information on terrorism, trafficking, laundering and hacking that now has 38 U.S. attaches—including four from the FBI. Often confused with Interpol, which operates more like the United Nations, Europol has a bigger budget, more staff and arguably greater impact than its better-known cousin.</p> <p>In the last year, Europol has worked with U.S. officials to take down two of the dark web's largest bazaars, the result of an elaborate sting that Wainwright announced in Washington alongside U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions. Europol and the FBI have also helped arrest 900 people linked to a global pedophile ring and, just two weeks ago, assisted Spanish authorities in capturing the Ukrainian who allegedly masterminded a malware scheme that stole 1 billion euros (\$1.2 billion), including by hijacking ATMs across Europe.</p> <p>But it's Wainwright's obsession with expanding a kind of in-house Google for terrorism that paved the way for greater cooperation with U.S. law enforcement. Recruited by MI5 after graduating from the London School of Economics in the 1980s, the affable and fit 50 year-old said learning the art of counter-terrorism at a time when Irish nationalists were still bombing English towns taught him an invaluable lesson: always work to maximize your knowledge.</p> <p>When he was named executive director in 2009, Europol's database of suspected terrorists and their networks held fewer than 6,000 “objects,” a term that refers to everything from names and addresses to phone numbers and license plates. Now it contains more than half a million, including more than 46,000 individuals.</p> <p>“Europol was not really prominent in our minds seven or eight years ago, but Rob's ability to make people aware of its capabilities has made it relevant,” said Kumar Kibble, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's lead representative in The Hague. “It's taken on a momentum of its own. He's been a visionary.”</p> <p>Wainwright said Europol's reputational arrival came hours after the attacks on Paris in November 2015, when teams of gunmen and suicide bombers killed more than 130 people at six different locations. Europe had never seen an assault like that and the French were desperate for leads, so they asked Europol to join the probe and arrange assistance from Washington.</p> <p>“It takes events and live cases like that to really break the mold of what your reputation is,” Wainwright, who stands 6'5 (1.96 meters), said after a late-night flight from Bulgaria, where he was awarded the Foreign Ministry's highest honor. “And from that, they said, ‘Ok, well what else can you do?’”</p>

Europol, which doesn't have arrest powers, has played a key role in major terrorism investigations since, including the bombing of American singer Ariana Grande's concert in Manchester, England, last May. The agency, which has a staff of about 1,200 and a budget of 123 million euros, was formally founded in 1999 to combat the most sophisticated criminal networks, a mandate that now includes coordinating the cyberdefenses of the bloc's 28 members.

The agency is currently helping with probes into the Wannacry ransomware attack that crippled parts of Britain's National Health Service and NotPetya, which caused two companies losses of about \$300 million. While not surprising to Europol's cybercrime sleuths, Wainwright said these and other digital assaults, including Russia's alleged burrowing into the U.S. electric grid, have served as belated wake-up calls in capitals throughout Europe.

"We recognized there was a gap in our collective systems," he said. Each country already has a team ready to respond to major cyber incidents "and now we're trying to network them across Europe in a more effective way."

Wainwright, who will help run Deloitte LLP's cybersecurity unit later this year, pointed to a recent series of bank heists as a prime example of the ever-expanding arsenal of tech weaponry that criminal groups are continuously deploying.

A gang that's been active since at least 2013, first in conjunction with mafia in Russia and then in Moldova, infected more than 100 financial institutions in Moscow and around the globe with malware called Carbanak and Cobalt that allowed the criminals to manipulate payment systems and commandeer cash machines.

All over Central and Eastern Europe, he said mules would show up at ATMs in the middle of the night and fill up suitcases with bills that spewed out at designated times. Then they'd move down the street to the next machine and do it again a few minutes later.

It was a "brilliant, Hollywood-type scene," he said, "probably the most advanced form of social engineering that we've seen."

As the Europol chief prepares to pivot to the private sector after fighting crime on behalf of the public for 28 years, he'd like to say that he's helped make Europe a safer place, but that would be naively optimistic.

In the last year, 18 months, there's been "a perceptible trend towards a blending of state-actor capability with the criminal community," Wainwright said without elaboration. "It's therefore becoming a more dangerous game."

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HEADLINE	04/05 Yemen fear: deadly attacks target clerics
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/fear-grips-yemens-aden-deadly-attacks-target-clerics-54248489?
GIST	<p>A spate of deadly drive-by shootings targeting Muslim clerics and preachers has sparked panic and fear in Yemen's southern port city of Aden, prompting some imams to quit and abandon their mosques while dozens have fled the country.</p> <p>The killings have also brought attention to a rivalry that has emerged in Aden as yet another layer to Yemen's complex civil war.</p> <p>Since 2015, the conflict has pitted a Saudi-led coalition of mostly Arab states against the country's Shiite rebels, known as Houthis, who control much of northern Yemen and its capital, Sanaa. The coalition is fighting to restore Yemen's internationally recognized President Abed-Rabbo Mansour Hadi to power.</p>

The United Arab Emirates joined the war as a key partner in the coalition, sending forces to southern Yemen and managing to carve out a zone of influence across the region. The UAE has set up heavily-armed militias in a challenge to forces loyal to Hadi, who has been in self-imposed exile in Saudi Arabia for most of the past two years.

In several instances, UAE-trained militiamen, some operating under the umbrella of the Southern Transitional Council — which many see as a secessionist force fighting for an independent Southern Yemen — have engaged in deadly clashes with Hadi's forces. The UAE has also been linked to secret prisons where terror suspects are tortured and held without trial, a charge the Emiratis deny.

The Gulf Arab state also holds deep enmity toward Hadi's top ally in the south, the Muslim Brotherhood branch in Yemen, known as the Islah party.

Many of the slain clerics belonged to the Islah party. In most cases, they were shot by gunmen while leaving their mosques after Friday prayers, or outside their homes.

A tally by The Associated Press shows that at least 25 clerics, preachers, and religious scholars have been gunned down since 2016 in Aden and the southern provinces, with over 15 killed in the past six months alone.

The slayings have stoked anger against the UAE in Aden. Recently, graffiti saying, "Down with the UAE occupation" surfaced in the streets. On Tuesday, a joint statement by 12 political parties and movements denounced the "evil hands behind the assassinations" of the clerics. It said those killed are all supporters of Hadi's government.

Minister of Religious Endowment Ahmed Attiya said the killings are "systematic" and that over 50 clerics have left Yemen so far, fleeing to countries such as Egypt and Jordan.

"If this continues, we will ask the clerics to stay home and stop going to mosques," he said from Riyadh.

Hadi's government, which operates mostly out of exile with only a few ministers on the ground in Aden, has denounced the slayings as "desperate attempts by terrorist elements and outlaws" against Yemen's legitimate government.

No group has claimed responsibility for the killings. Security authorities in Aden would only say that they are investigating and that they have rounded some suspects.

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HEADLINE	04/04 Afghan airstrikes hit school graduation
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/children-feared-dead-afghan-airstrikes-targeting-taliban-kill-dozens-n862651
GIST	<p>KABUL, Afghanistan — Dozens of Afghan civilians, including children, were feared dead Wednesday after government airstrikes hit a religious school graduation in the north of the country, witnesses told NBC News.</p> <p>In the hours after Monday's bombing, the Afghan Ministry of Defense insisted that the strikes had exclusively targeted senior Taliban insurgents plotting an attack on the military, before conceding the next day that civilians had died.</p> <p>There are conflicting accounts as to casualty numbers, and the volatility of the region — much of which is held or contested by the insurgent group — makes independent reporting difficult.</p> <p>However, attendees of the event that included families from the area said they had seen dozens of fatalities in the aftermath of the bombing. A chef who had been working at the ceremony told NBC News that he</p>

	<p>had been preparing food for 2,000 people.</p> <p>Describing the attack in the Dasht-e-Archi district of Kunduz, another witness, Qari Abdul Rahim, told NBC News that he had been sitting in the third row when aircraft appeared overhead.</p> <p>"I looked to the sky and saw smoke under the aircraft, and I dropped myself to the ground and managed to escape the building," he said in a phone call.</p> <p>"I managed to get close to the building later on," he added. "I saw a lot of dead bodies, including children, on the road. While they were trying to escape, they were all hit."</p> <p>Footage and photographs released by the Taliban purported to show dead and injured children being buried or carried away from the rubble on stretchers. The Taliban, which has a history of exaggerating its battlefield victories and underplaying its defeats, insisted none of their forces had been present at the ceremony.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 US warns Syria on chemical weapons
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/chemical-weapons-nikki-haley-united-states-united-nations-syria/
GIST	<p>Despite pleas, sanctions, international condemnation and even a recent U.S. airstrike, the international community has been unable to stop the use of chemical weapons against civilians in Syria. During a meeting at the U.N. Wednesday, Ambassador Nikki Haley was clear where the U.S. places the blame.</p> <p>"The Assad regime continued using chemical weapons against the Syrian people," she said. "One member of this council shielded the Assad regime from any consequences, and then blocked us from renewing the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). Our consensus broke down."</p> <p>After the attack, a UN-OPCW report concluded that the "leadership panel is confident that the Syrian Arab Republic is responsible for the release of sarin at Khan Shaykhun."</p> <p>The frustration at the council, particularly in light of the poisoning attack in Britain, took a new turn: accountability for the attacks.</p> <p>"The OPCW-United Nations JIM was created for this purpose, but regrettably, its mandate was not renewed," Thomas Markram, director and deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, told the council while referring to the veto by Russia. "While allegations of the use of chemical weapons have not stopped, consideration of a mechanism for accountability has apparently slowed, if not come to a standstill. The Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs have repeatedly underlined the need to avoid impunity to ensure that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons are identified and held responsible."</p> <p>"Perpetrators of such crimes must be held accountable. We cannot accept impunity," added Sweden's alternative Ambassador Carl Skau.</p> <p>The threats of prosecution come as the Syrian government is making strides in the battle in Syria. Syrian forces have reclaimed parts of eastern Ghouta and President Trump has indicated a possible withdrawal of the 2,000 troops on the ground, which includes U.S. special forces and the waging of air strikes.</p> <p>Lama Fakih, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch lamented the lack of action by saying in part: "One year after the horrific sarin attack on Khan Sheikhoun, neither the UN Security Council nor the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has acted to uphold the prohibition against chemical weapon attacks."</p> <p>Markram told the Council that "efforts have continued toward the destruction of the two remaining</p>

	<p>chemical weapons production facilities, by the Syrian Arab Republic."</p> <p>"Destruction of these facilities, which will be verified by the OPCW, is expected to be completed within two to three months from the start of destruction," Markram said.</p> <p>At the council meeting, Haley brought Dr. Mamoun Morad who is the doctor that was on duty in Khan Sheikhoun last year and was featured in a "60 Minutes" broadcast.</p> <p>Last month, Haley warned that Washington "remains prepared to act if we must." On Wednesday, she issued a new warning.</p> <p>"Even as the Security Council has remained deadlocked, some have stood up to demand accountability for the use of chemical weapons," Haley said. "The General Assembly overwhelmingly approved the creation of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism on crimes committed in Syria, which is collecting evidence for future prosecutions."</p> <p>French Ambassador Francois Delattre added to the warning by saying in part: "Let us not be mistaken, the use of chemical weapons brings to the fore the threat to the international nonproliferation regime."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 US to withdraw from Syria 'in months'?
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/dni-dan-coats-says-decision-on-u-s-troop-withdrawal-from-syria-has-been-made/
GIST	<p>Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats said Wednesday morning that a decision was made Tuesday about U.S. troops in Syria and whether they will be withdrawn, CBS News' Mary Walsh reports, and he said that a statement would be released shortly.</p> <p>But soon after Coats made the remark, White House press secretary Sarah Sanders issued a statement that said nothing about troop removal from Syria. Nor did it offer a timeline.</p> <p>"The military mission to eradicate ISIS in Syria is coming to a rapid end, with ISIS being almost completely destroyed," the statement said. "The United States and our partners remain committed to eliminating the small ISIS presence in Syria that our forces have not already eradicated. We will continue to consult with our allies and friends regarding future plans. We expect countries in the region and beyond, plus the United Nations, to work toward peace and ensure that ISIS never re-emerges."</p> <p>CBS News "Face the Nation" anchor Margaret Brennan reports that at the all-hands-on-deck Syria meeting Tuesday, President Trump was seized by the idea of a complete U.S. military withdrawal from Syria. He had said earlier in the day that he would decide "very quickly" whether to remove troops from Syria, declaring that their primary mission had been to defeat the Islamic State insurgents, and "we've almost completed that task."</p> <p>Despite the opposition of Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Joint Chiefs Chairman Joseph Dunford, as well as his entire national security team, Mr. Trump said he wants to completely pull out of Syria within "months." Brennan reports that Dunford and Mattis tried to intervene, and when Mattis said that this would be an inadequate amount of time to complete the mission, he was told the decision had been made. The president also does not want to continue the U.S. stabilization efforts and believes the Saudis will for the bill for efforts to de-mine and clear the areas liberated from ISIS. Those efforts also include restoring water, power and other infrastructure.</p> <p>Mr. Trump did not seem to be convinced by arguments that a rapid withdrawal will result in handing the territory over to Iran and Russia or that ISIS has not been dealt an "enduring defeat." He was complaining that the U.S. is doing it all and needs to get out.</p>

The Syria meeting did not provide the clarity the State Department was looking for on Friday's decision by the White House to halt \$200 million funding for U.S. reconstruction efforts in Syria, CBS News' Kylie Atwood reports, based on her conversations with three State Department officials. The projects to restore essential services for Syrians -- including de-mining -- will continue only until the 2017 money runs out, which should be in a matter of weeks.

Mr. Trump has said that he wants other countries to foot the bill for reconstruction and stabilization efforts, but no other country or body has yet officially agreed. The State Department is not part of those discussions at this time. They are being led by Trump. Before Tuesday's meeting, the State Department tried to remind the Pentagon ahead of the White House meeting that the stabilization programs often create a safer environment for U.S. boots on the ground. The fact that these programs were not a focal part of the discussion indicates that the military had its own fight to consider -- Mattis focused on making the case for giving military operations more time in Syria, which Mr. Trump is resisting.

Before former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson left office, he gave a speech laying out the administration's Syria policy. That included a commitment to staying in Syria until the fight against ISIS is finished. He also described efforts to take on Iran in the region, as a whole. He warned that "disengagement from Syria would provide Iran a golden opportunity to further strengthen its position in Syria. Mr. Trump was said not to have receive that open-ended speech well.

President Trump has asked Saudi Arabia to contribute more money to the efforts on the ground in Syria, though there is no formal commitment on that yet. A Saudi official told CBS News that, as of March 2018, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has donated nearly \$820 million to support Syria since the inception of the Syrian civil war. This aid has been in the form of food and water security, sanitation projects, emergency relief, shelters for displaced Syrians, education, among others, and has been distributed in a concentrated manner across various locations, including: Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey."

The Pentagon is also not convinced that the fight against ISIS is over.

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HEADLINE	04/04 Egypt jails 35 for life on terror charges
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/egypt-sentences-35-life-terror-charges-54225524?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Egypt on Wednesday sentenced 35 alleged Muslim Brotherhood members to life in prison for allegedly forming "terrorist cells" to attack security forces and state institutions.</p> <p>The Sohag Criminal Court in central Egypt sentenced another 155 defendants to three to 15 years on similar charges, including plotting to kill public figures and security officials, and joining an outlawed group, a reference to the Brotherhood. The verdict can be appealed, and 124 suspects who remain at large will be re-tried once they are apprehended.</p> <p>Also on Wednesday, an Egyptian military court sentenced four suspected Muslim Brotherhood members to life imprisonment on terror-related charges, a defense lawyer said. Two of the suspects were sentenced in absentia and they will be re-tried once they are apprehended, Khaled el-Masry told The Associated Press.</p> <p>The court sentenced two others to 10 years each and acquitted 13, he said. The charges include plotting militant attacks against the security personnel and bombing malls in Cairo in addition to belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood group, he said.</p> <p>The Brotherhood won a series of free elections after Egypt's 2011 uprising, and a senior Brotherhood figure, Mohammed Morsi, was elected president in 2012. A year later, the military overthrew Morsi amid mass protests against his rule. Authorities have since branded the Brotherhood a terrorist organization.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 US forces in Syria set up new positions
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-forces-syria-setting-front-line-positions-54236331?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>A week ago, there was just a single house where U.S. soldiers had hoisted an American flag on a hill not far from a tense front line in Syria.</p> <p>On Wednesday, there was a growing fortified position with a perimeter of large sand barriers and barbed wire, a new watch tower and a half-dozen armored vehicles.</p> <p>Even as U.S. President Donald Trump spoke of pulling out of Syria "very soon," an Associated Press team saw American forces setting up front-line positions outside the strategic northern town of Manbij, west of the Euphrates River.</p> <p>The area is the scene of a tense standoff. U.S.-backed Kurdish-led forces who hold Manbij are facing off against Turkish-backed Syrian fighters.</p> <p>Turkey has vowed to retake Manbij and other Kurdish-held territory along the Syrian-Turkish border; the U.S. troops stationed here are a key reason why they are holding back.</p> <p>The U.S.-led coalition in Syria said last week that there were no U.S. bases in the area and that U.S. patrols were not fixed in one place.</p> <p>In response to an AP query, Pentagon spokesman Eric Pahon said the coalition cannot discuss specific movements and locations of forces in Syria.</p> <p>He said that commanders are delegated the authority and the responsibility to position people and resources needed to accomplish the mission and to protect themselves.</p> <p>"Occasional modifications to force size would therefore be normal," Pahon said in an email.</p> <p>The AP team, which was escorted by Kurdish fighters, saw that the new U.S. outpost was a work in progress.</p> <p>A half-dozen armored vehicles sat on opposite sides of the outpost, each with a soldier on watch. A couple of soldiers at one end plowed the ground to lay sandbags, while another group worked out at the other end. Inside an observation post atop a roof, a soldier scanned the horizon through binoculars. A forklift was parked near some wooden planks, indicating more work remains to be done.</p> <p>The outpost was clearly visible from a main road, with civilians and a mosque nearby.</p> <p>A front-line commander in Manbij and a member of the Manbij Military Council, the joint Kurdish-Arab body leading the U.S.-allied forces here, said the post went up a week ago.</p> <p>"We are 1 kilometer from (the village of) Datat, the front line. There is a new U.S. position constructed here. It has been here for seven or eight days here," said the commander, who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with the Kurdish-led force's regulations but goes by the nom de guerre of Ali Manbij.</p> <p>Previously, the U.S. forces only patrolled the front line and kept one position near Manbij, but now more forces are expected at the new post, the local commander said.</p> <p>"Before, it was only patrols. Now it is better," he said. "It is to protect the area and to ensure that there is no attack from Turkey or from the mercenaries in the area."</p>

	A Kurdish official on the site said more such posts are expected to be built along the more than 50-kilometer front line with Turkey-backed Syrian fighters.
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HEADLINE	04/04 Turkey: oust Kurds from northern Syria
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/leaders-russia-iran-turkey-meet-syria-54223537?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Wednesday that his military "won't stop" trying to oust Syrian Kurdish fighters from northern Syria, as he met with the leaders of Russia and Iran for talks on trying to resolve the conflict.</p> <p>The three countries, which have teamed up to work for a Syria settlement despite their differences, reaffirmed their commitment to Syria's territorial integrity and the continuation of local cease-fires. They called on the international community to provide more aid for war-ravaged Syria.</p> <p>Erdogan, President Vladimir Putin of Russia and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani were holding their second summit to discuss Syria's future since attending a similar meeting in Sochi, Russia, in November. Russia and Iran have provided crucial support to President Bashar Assad's forces, while Turkey has backed the rebels seeking to overthrow him.</p> <p>Speaking at a joint news conference, Erdogan said Turkish troops, which last month took control of the northwestern Kurdish enclave of Afrin, would move eastward into Manbij and other areas controlled by the U.S.-backed militia, the Peoples' Protection Units, or YPG, which Turkey considers to be terrorists.</p> <p>"I say here once again that we will not stop until we have made safe all areas controlled by the (YPG), starting with Manbij," Erdogan said.</p> <p>He stressed that Turkey's fight against the YPG would not distract from efforts to eliminate the remnants of Islamic State group from the country.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	04/05 NKorea missile 'soon to reach UK'
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-43648259
GIST	<p>North Korea will almost certainly be able to reach UK shores with an intercontinental ballistic missile within six to 18 months, MPs have said.</p> <p>However, the Commons' Defence Select Committee report said there was as yet no evidence that North Korea could arm these missiles with nuclear warheads.</p> <p>MPs, who have been investigating the threat posed by North Korea, added that such a strike seemed "highly unlikely".</p> <p>They described the country's ruler, Kim Jong-un, as "ruthless but rational".</p> <p>He was "ruthless, like other Communist dictators before him, but he is rational" and could be "dissuaded from the use of nuclear weapons, by means of a policy of deterrence and containment", the report said.</p> <p>North Korea has carried out six nuclear tests, and has a ballistic missile that experts believe could put the whole of the US in striking range. In doing so, Pyongyang said it had achieved its mission of becoming a nuclear state.</p>

	<p>However, last month, after months of mutual hostility, Mr Kim was said to be "committed to denuclearisation" as he and US President Donald Trump agreed to talks, in an unprecedented move.</p> <p>Despite the developments, the MPs' report said North Korea was unlikely to abandon its weapon programme and would achieve its goal of posing a nuclear threat to its opponents soon.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Oregon gov. will not deploy Nat'l Guard
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/4/kate-brown-defy-trump-if-oregon-national-guard-ord/
GIST	<p>The Democratic governor of Oregon said Wednesday that she will refuse to send National Guard forces to guard the border with Mexico.</p> <p>Gov. Kate Brown even trolled President Trump, tagging his "RealDonaldTrump" handle in the tweets in which she said her state's units will not participate in his border-security plan.</p> <p>"If @realDonaldTrump asks me to deploy Oregon Guard troops to the Mexico border, I'll say no. As Commander of Oregon's Guard, I'm deeply troubled by Trump's plan to militarize our border," she wrote on Twitter.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Big crack: East Africa splitting in two?
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/05/africa/crack-africa-rift-valley-continent-splitting-two/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A large crack, stretching several kilometres, made a sudden appearance recently in south-western Kenya.</p> <p>The tear, which continues to grow, caused part of the Nairobi-Narok highway to collapse and was accompanied by seismic activity in the area.</p> <p>The Earth is an ever-changing planet, even though in some respects change might be almost unnoticeable to us. Plate tectonics is a good example of this. But every now and again something dramatic happens and leads to renewed questions about the African continent splitting in two.</p> <p>The Earth's lithosphere (formed by the crust and the upper part of the mantle) is broken up into a number of tectonic plates.</p> <p>These plates are not static, but move relative to each other at varying speeds, "gliding" over a viscous asthenosphere.</p> <p>Exactly what mechanism or mechanisms are behind their movement is still debated, but are likely to include convection currents within the asthenosphere and the forces generated at the boundaries between plates.</p> <p>These forces do not simply move the plates around, they can also cause plates to rupture, forming a rift and potentially leading to the creation of new plate boundaries. The East African Rift system is an example of where this is currently happening.</p> <p>The East African Rift Valley stretches over 3,000km from the Gulf of Aden in the north towards Zimbabwe in the south, splitting the African plate into two unequal parts: the Somali and Nubian plates.</p> <p>Activity along the eastern branch of the rift valley, running along Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania, became</p>

evident when the large crack suddenly appeared in south-western Kenya.

When the lithosphere is subject to a horizontal extensional force it will stretch, becoming thinner. Eventually, it will rupture, leading to the formation of a rift valley.

This process is accompanied by surface manifestations along the rift valley in the form of volcanism and seismic activity. Rifts are the initial stage of a continental break-up and, if successful, can lead to the formation of a new ocean basin.

An example of a place on Earth where this has happened is the South Atlantic ocean, which resulted from the break up of South America and Africa around 138m years ago -- ever noticed how their coastlines match like pieces of the same puzzle?

The East African Rift is unique in that it allows us to observe different stages of rifting along its length. To the south, where the rift is young, extension rates are low and faulting occurs over a wide area. Volcanism and seismicity are limited.

Towards the Afar region, however, the entire rift valley floor is covered with volcanic rocks. This suggests that, in this area, the lithosphere has thinned almost to the point of complete break up.

When this happens, a new ocean will begin forming by the solidification of magma in the space created by the broken-up plates. Eventually, over a period of tens of millions of years, seafloor spreading will progress along the entire length of the rift.

The ocean will flood in and, as a result, the African continent will become smaller and there will be a large island in the Indian Ocean composed of parts of Ethiopia and Somalia, including the Horn of Africa.

Dramatic events, such as sudden motorway-splitting faults or large catastrophic earthquakes may give continental rifting a sense of urgency but, most of the time, it goes about splitting Africa without anybody even noticing.

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HEADLINE	04/04 Why female shooters are rare
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/04/health/female-shooters-youtube/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)As the investigation continues into why a female shooter opened fire at YouTube headquarters, data show that it's rare for women to carry out such shootings -- making Tuesday's incident unusual.</p> <p>The shooting unfolded at the San Bruno, California, company premises when a woman shot and injured three people, and then apparently took her own life, officials said.</p> <p>She appeared to have killed herself with a handgun, San Bruno Police Chief Ed Barberini said. The woman has been identified as Nasim Najafi Aghdam, a 39-year-old from San Diego, California.</p> <p>The motive remains unclear.</p> <p>Women are rarely behind active shooting incidents, according to data from an FBI study.</p> <p>The FBI examined active shooter incidents, defined as "an individual engaging in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area" in the United States. Nine of the 220 incidents that had been identified by the FBI (about 4%) had female shooters, according to the FBI list from 2000 to 2016.</p> <p>The women in those shootings were usually armed with handguns and opened fire inside colleges, businesses, their current or former workplaces, according to the list.</p>

The latest incident at YouTube may not qualify as a mass shooting or murder as three of the victims are hospitalized with injuries.

But in general, there are less female shooters when it comes to firearm homicides, said Adam Lankford, criminal justice professor at the University of Alabama.

FBI data from 2016 showed that 7.6% murder offenders in 2016 were female.

"Research shows that basically males commit more homicides than females, regardless of the subtype of homicide," Lankford said.

When it comes to mass shootings, there isn't one accepted definition. The Gun Violence Archive, which compiles data, defines it as an incident in which an offender shoots or kills four or more people. And the Congressional Research Service's defines it as when the perpetrator kills four or more people, selecting victims randomly and attacks in a public place.

But in those incidents, female mass shooters are rare.

"Men commit the overwhelming majority of mass shootings for basically the same reasons they commit most violent crimes," Dewey G. Cornell, a licensed forensic clinical psychologist and director of the Virginia Youth Violence Project at the University of Virginia, wrote in an email to CNN on Tuesday night.

"Men tend to be more violent than women because of a complex interaction of evolutionary and psycho-social factors. Men tend to be more aggressive and less inhibited by empathy, and men in distress seem to be less willing to turn to others for help," he wrote.

None of the perpetrators behind the 28 mass attacks in 2017 were female, according to a report by the US Secret Service.

A study led by Lankford, published in the journal *Violence and Victims*, looked at 292 public mass shooters worldwide from 1966 to 2012 and found that only one of those was female.

When asked why women are rarely mass shooters, Lankford said: "We can't really answer that question of differences between male and female offenders because we don't have enough female offenders. The problem, or the good news, is we don't have enough female offenders for a statically significant sample."

But there have been cases where women have carried out deadly mass shootings.

A married couple, Syed Rizwan Farook, and his wife, Tashfeen Malik massacred 14 people at a holiday party in 2015 in San Bernardino, California. Farook had worked with the San Bernardino County health department, which was hosting the party when the attack took place. They were both killed in a shootout with police.

On January 30, 2006, Jennifer San Marco visited her former place of employment, a postal distribution center in Goleta, California, and fatally shot six employees after killing a one-time neighbor.

She then killed herself.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Retiring with \$1M nest egg is enough?
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/will-1-million-be-enough-in-retirement/
GIST	When talking about saving for retirement, we're often told that a \$1 million nest egg is the magic number to aim for. But depending on where you live as a senior, \$1 million may not get you very far.

GOBankingRates analyzed the buying power of \$1 million across all 50 states and found that it might last for less than 12 years in retirement, or it might last upward of 26 years, depending on your zip code. It pays to review this data because it could not only inform your decision on where to retire, but also prompt you to boost your savings efforts during your working years.

Where \$1 million won't get you very far

Those states that tend to have the highest cost of living in general are also the least retiree-friendly, monetarily speaking. In Hawaii, for example, a \$1 million nest egg will last just 11 years and 11 months on average when you factor in costs such as housing and groceries, which are higher there than in any other state in the nation.

Meanwhile, a \$1 million nest egg will typically last for 16 years and five months in California and 17 years in Alaska. Chalk it up to high housing prices for the former and high food and consumer goods costs for the latter.

Moving over to the East Coast, we find that a \$1 million nest egg in New York will last for 17 years and one month on average, mostly due to outrageous housing costs. And retirees won't fare much better in Massachusetts, where \$1 million will last 17 years and four months for the typical retiree.

Where \$1 million will last much longer

On the other hand, a \$1 million nest egg will serve you pretty well in Mississippi, where you'll get a good 26 years and 4 months of covered expenses out of that sum. In Arkansas, \$1 million will enable the average senior to cover living expenses for 25 years and six months, and in Oklahoma, that sum will last for 25 years and two months.

If you don't mind the cold, you'll do pretty well with a \$1 million savings balance in Michigan. That sum will last the typical senior for a full 25 years. The same holds true for retirees who choose to settle down in Tennessee.

Make sure your savings last

If you're intent on retiring comfortably (which you should be), you can take certain steps to ensure that your savings hold up, regardless of where you live. For one thing, save more. There's no rule stating that once you hit the \$1 million threshold, it's time to stop, so aim to max out your IRA or 401(k) during the latter part of your working years, even if you have saved nicely to date.

Those 50 and over can contribute up to \$6,500 a year to an IRA and \$24,500 a year to a 401(k). Max out the latter for just five years, and you'll boost your nest egg by \$122,500 without factoring in investment performance.

Once you've established your nest egg, you'll want to keep it invested smartly to ensure an appropriate amount of growth during retirement. To this end, resist the urge to dump your stocks the minute you stop working. Holding stocks as a senior will allow your savings to grow even once you're no longer actively contributing, thus allowing that money to last longer.

But don't go crazy with stocks, either. If the market takes a major dip and you're forced to sell investments at a loss because you need the money, you'll risk running out of it later in life. Rather, aim for a relatively equal distribution of stocks and bonds during your earlier retirement years, and gradually shift away from stocks over time.

Finally, if you are going to retire in a more expensive state, you may need to get creative about generating extra income as a senior since your nest egg itself will only get you so far. Thankfully, you have plenty of options in this regard. You can try renting out a portion of your home, monetizing a hobby or consulting part-time in your former field, to name just a few.

Knowing how well your savings will hold up can help you make smart decisions about where to retire.

That said, don't give up on living out your dream just because your ideal locale is pricier than some of its counterparts. If you've always wanted to retire in Hawaii, you may have other means of generating income that allow you to live there comfortably, even if you've only amassed \$1 million to date.

The key is to be informed as well as flexible in your approach to spending and earning money.

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HEADLINE	04/04 Experts: sin taxes worth the effort
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/taxing-sodas-junk-food-tobacco-works-task-force-argues-n862816
GIST	<p>Taxing junk food, sodas, tobacco and other unhealthy products work to cut both disease and the cost to society and are well worth the effort, experts argued on Wednesday.</p> <p>A global analysis of such “sin” taxes show they discourage people from smoking and from eating and drinking unhealthy foods, and raise money to help fight and treat the diseases they cause.</p> <p>And, contrary to popular belief, these taxes do not disproportionately hurt the poor, the experts found.</p> <p>“Taxes are an underused instrument for the prevention of premature death and disease because they can discourage consumption of products like tobacco, alcohol, and sugary beverages that contribute to cardiovascular disease, cancers, diabetes, mental health problems, and injuries,” wrote Larry Summers, a former treasury secretary and an emeritus professor at Harvard University.</p> <p>“Tobacco and alcohol taxes consistently raise prices, reduce consumption, and save lives, while generating additional revenues to support public services,” Summers added in a commentary on the study, published in the Lancet Medical Journal.</p> <p>Several U.S. cities have tried to tax or otherwise limit sodas and other sugary drinks. The American Beverage Association has succeeded in taking Philadelphia’s tax to the Pennsylvania state supreme court. San Francisco, Oakland, and Boulder, Colorado as well as other cities have small, one to two-cent per ounce taxes.</p> <p>Studies show the taxes work to reduce consumption. Tobacco taxes are less controversial than taxes on foods and drink, but sugary drinks and junk food have been shown to cause cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and other so-called non-communicable diseases, which are also the biggest killers globally.</p> <p>An argument against the taxes is that they hit poorer people harder, but Louis Niessen of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and colleagues reviewed dozens of studies and found the argument does not hold up.</p> <p>“The poor, with already shorter life expectancies and bearing the brunt of undernutrition, malnutrition, childhood diseases, major infections, and pregnancy-related conditions, are the most likely to be affected by non-communicable diseases,” Niessen said in a statement.</p> <p>“Compared with richer households, people with lower incomes get sick more often and die earlier from consuming tobacco, alcohol, and non-essential energy dense foods,” Summers added.</p> <p>And, the researchers said the evidence shows that richer people spend more on alcohol, soft drinks and snacks than do the poor.</p> <p>The World Health Organization said in 2016 that a 20 percent price increase could reduce consumption of sweet drinks by the same proportion.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Missionaries spread Christianity to NKorea
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/missionaries-border-spread-christianity-north-korea-54248253?
GIST	<p>To the North Koreans gathered beneath a crucifix in an apartment in this northeastern Chinese border region, she is known as "mom." She feeds them, gives them a place to stay and, on occasion, money.</p> <p>In return, the 69-year-old Korean-Chinese woman asks them to study the Bible, pray and sing hymns. She also has a more ambitious, and potentially dangerous, goal: She wants the most trusted of her converts to return to North Korea and spread Christianity there.</p> <p>Along the North Korean border, dozens of such missionaries are engaged in work that puts them and their North Korean converts in danger. Most are South Koreans, but others, like the woman, are ethnic Koreans whose families have lived in China for generations. In recent years, 10 such front-line missionaries and pastors have died mysteriously, according to the Rev. Kim Kyou Ho, head of the Seoul-based Chosen People Network, a Christian group that runs a memorial hall in the South Korean capital for the victims. North Korea is suspected in all those deaths.</p> <p>Hundreds of other missionaries have been imprisoned or expelled by China, which bans foreigners from proselytizing.</p> <p>It is perilous work. Li Baiguang, a Chinese human rights lawyer whose work defending Christian pastors and farmers had prompted repeated death threats, died on Feb. 26, hours after being admitted to a Chinese military hospital for what his relatives described as a minor stomach ailment.</p> <p>The case has prompted calls for an independent investigation from Amnesty International and the Washington-based National Endowment for Democracy, which noted Li had been "detained and physically attacked many times" for his work and cited reports he had recently appeared to be in good health.</p> <p>The Korean-Chinese woman said she is monitored by both North Korean and Chinese authorities, yet, despite the risks, has carried out 20 years of missionary work with North Koreans, mostly women who are in China legally after being granted visas to visit relatives living there.</p> <p>"I always pray and I'm with God, so I'm not worried," said the woman, who despite that assertion asked that her name not be published because of safety concerns for herself, her family and the North Koreans to whom she ministers.</p> <p>She lives so close to North Korea that it is common to see women doing laundry on the other side of the Yalu River or workers riding bicycles past rundown North Korean buildings just a stone's throw away.</p> <p>The border missionaries provide their North Korean visitors with room and board, and those escaping with places to hide. In return, they ask them to memorize the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed and other prayers. Some of the most trusted converts return home to North Korea and covertly share what they've learned, sometimes carrying Bibles.</p> <p>It's almost impossible to determine what happens when those North Koreans return home to evangelize. From the outside, there is no indication that Christianity has grown in any serious manner in the North in recent years, let alone that it's helping shake North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's power.</p> <p>The North accuses South Korea's spy agency of using missionaries to gather information about North Korea's secretive nuclear program and other sensitive topics, as well as to smuggle propaganda materials via leaflets, CDs and USB sticks, and to build underground churches to undermine Kim's leadership — allegations the Seoul government strongly denies.</p> <p>At least two South Korean pastors are detained in the North on such charges.</p>

	Officially, North Korea says it guarantees freedom of religion to its 24 million people. But in reality, people involved in Bible distribution, secret prayer services and underground church networks are imprisoned or executed, according to activists and defectors. The North has five government-sanctioned churches in Pyongyang, but critics say they are showpiece facilities opened only for foreign visitors.
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HEADLINE	04/05 Sumo uproar w/female first responders
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/sumo-uproar-women-responders-ordered-ring-54247915?
GIST	<p>The head of Japan's sumo association has apologized over an incident in which women first responders were asked to get out of the ring as they attempted to revive an official who collapsed.</p> <p>In sumo's tradition, the ring is considered sacred and women are prohibited from entering.</p> <p>That posed a problem Wednesday when Ryozo Tatami, the 67-year-old mayor of Maizuru in northern Kyoto, collapsed during a ring-top speech. Two women, apparently medical experts, rushed in and started performing first aid as several male sumo officials surrounding the mayor looked on.</p> <p>When two more women rose to the ring trying to join the first aid effort, announcements demanded the women get out of the ring.</p> <p>"Ladies, please get off the ring," a sumo referee said, determinedly. "Only gentlemen go up."</p> <p>Footage posted on social media triggered outrage, with many criticizing sumo officials and saying they were choosing tradition over life.</p> <p>Sumo chief Nobuyoshi Hakkaku called the announcement inappropriate and apologized late Wednesday, while thanking the women for working to save the mayor.</p> <p>In a statement, Hakkaku said the announcement was made by an official who panicked after seeing the women in the ring, but never touched on the divisive tradition.</p> <p>"It was an inappropriate response in a life-threatening situation," Hakkaku said.</p> <p>The mayor, who had an acute cerebral hemorrhage, survived and was in stable condition Thursday after receiving emergency surgery at a hospital, city officials said.</p> <p>The footage posted on YouTube was shown on major Japanese networks and other media as the news topped headlines Thursday.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 NFL player credited in flagging threat
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/england-patriots-receiver-lauded-flagging-school-shooting-threat/story?id=54239920
GIST	<p>The New England Patriots' Julian Edelman, known for his quick feet on the turf, is now being praised for his quick thinking off the field, which may have thwarted another school shooting.</p> <p>In March, an Instagram user notified the NFL wide receiver of a comment posted to Edelman's Instagram account, threatening to shoot up a school.</p> <p>"Dude," the Instagram user said. "There is a kid in your comment section says he [is] going to shoot up a</p>

school, I think you should alert the authority."

Edelman immediately reached out to his assistant in Boston, who reportedly pored over comments in search of the post. She eventually found it. The post said: "I'm going to shoot my school up watch the news."

According to The New York Times, Edelman said he was moved to do something in the wake of the Parkland school shooting in Florida.

"With the emotions of what happened, and I have a kid now, I said, 'Holy Toledo, what is going on?'" he told the Times.

His assistant then reached out to the police in Boston.

"Boston PD reached out to our department. Our on-duty supervisors immediately started looking into the information that was provided," said Capt. Joe Platzer of the Port Huron Police Department in Michigan. "We take these threats very seriously. We look into them very thoroughly. Like we tell everybody, if you see something, if you hear something, say something."

According to Platzer, police traced the message back to a 14-year-old boy in Port Huron, Michigan. He said the teen was brought in for questioning and admitted to writing the threat.

Police also said they found two rifles in the teen's home that belonged to his mother.

The teen, whom police have not identified, was arrested and charged with making a false report of a threat of terrorism, which is a four-year felony in the state.

According to Platzer, Port Huron detectives spoke to Edelman and credited him with bringing the threat forward. Without Edelman's reaction to the alarming social media post, police said, it's likely they would not have known about the threat.

According to authorities, 79 percent of mass casualty attacks last year came with warning signs that were either missed or ignored.

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HEADLINE	04/04 Unlikely anthem of teachers' movement
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/were-not-gonna-take-it-twisted-sister-hit-becomes-unlikely-anthem-of-teachers-movement/
GIST	<p>A day after 36,000 Oklahoma teachers took part in a massive walkout demanding higher pay and an increase in school funding, the music teachers among them picked up their instruments and blasted out an unlikely anthem: "We're Not Gonna Take It" by Twisted Sister.</p> <p>"If I didn't have a second job, I'd be on food stamps," Rae Lovelace, a single mom and a third-grade teacher at Leedey Public Schools in northwest Oklahoma told CBS News. She works 30 to 40 hours a week at a second job teaching online courses for a charter school, and she isn't alone.</p> <p>Inside the state capitol on Tuesday, hundreds of teachers boomed as members of the Oklahoma House adjourned without taking up Senate-approved revenue-raising measures for public school classrooms. And outside, protesters let their brass instruments do the talking.</p> <p>Thanks to its catchy and direct refrain, teachers in Kentucky, New Jersey, West Virginia and Pennsylvania have also taken up the metal anthem as a sort of rallying cry over the past several months, prompting Twisted Sister frontman Dee Snider to tweet about the peculiarity of the song choice.</p>

	"While I totally support underpaid teacher's cause, it is kind of weird that a song that was on the "Filthy 15" is now every oppressed groups battlecry," the singer wrote on Twitter.
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HEADLINE	04/04 Fire in Moscow shopping mall kills 1
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/fire-moscow-shopping-mall-kills-person-injures-54226858
GIST	<p>Russian officials say a fire in a Moscow shopping center has killed one person and injured six.</p> <p>Ilya Denisov, head of the Emergency Situations Ministry's Moscow branch, said the fire Wednesday at a shopping center in an eastern Moscow district killed an employee and left six firefighters injured. Denisov said the employee went in the opposite direction from the emergency exit and suffocated.</p> <p>Authorities did not give the cause but said the fire started in a storage area on the top floor.</p> <p>The fire happened just a week after a fire in a Siberian shopping mall claimed 64 lives, shocking the nation.</p> <p>Authorities vowed to step up fire safety, and stores and offices across Russia began conducting fire drills and checking fire-fighting equipment.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 'Significant health breach' CO hospital
SOURCE	http://denver.cbslocal.com/2018/04/04/sterilization-breach-porter-hospital/
GIST	<p>DENVER (CBS4)– A sterilization breach at Porter Adventist Hospital could have impacted an unknown number of patients. The investigation centers around people who had orthopedic or spine surgery over an 18-month period and could be at risk for Hepatitis B or HIV.</p> <p>The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment is investigating what it calls a “significant health breach” at Porter Adventist Hospital in Denver.</p> <p>Dr. Larry Wolk with the health department told CBS4 that the organization is working with the hospital to notify people who had orthopedic or spine surgery there between July 21, 2016 and Feb. 20, 2018.</p> <p>The infection control breach may have put some orthopedic or spine surgery patients at risk for surgical site infections or for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or HIV.</p> <p>Wolk said in a statement, “The process for cleaning surgical instruments following orthopedic and spine surgeries was found to be inadequate, which may have compromised the sterilization of the instruments.”</p> <p>When CBS4’s Jamie Leary asked how wide spread the health breach is, a health department spokesperson said it was “significant.” No specific numbers of patients at risk was provided. The hospital mailed letters on April 4 to patients who may have been put at risk.</p> <p>The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment was notified of the breach on Feb. 21. The department conducted an on-site survey of the infection control practices at the hospital the next day. A disease control investigation is ongoing.</p> <p>Health officials with the state last visited the hospital on March 28 and determined that the current infection-control practices meet standards.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	04/04 ACLU sues in Calif. jailhouse informants
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/aclu-sues-over-california-jailhouse-informant-scandal/
GIST	<p>SANTA ANA, Calif. (AP) — The American Civil Liberties Union has filed a lawsuit over the jailhouse informant scandal that has upended more than a dozen criminal cases in Southern California.</p> <p>The suit announced Wednesday claims the Orange County district attorney’s office and the sheriff’s department engaged in an elaborate scheme to violate defendants’ constitutional rights through a secret network of jailhouse snitches.</p> <p>The complaint also claims that the district attorney’s office illegally withheld information about the informants from defense attorneys.</p> <p>The allegations led to mass killer Scott Dekraai avoiding the death penalty.</p> <p>District Attorney Tony Rackauckas and Sheriff Sandra Hutchens have denied systemic misuse of jailhouse informants.</p> <p>A DA’s office statement says it hasn’t been served with the lawsuit but says use of informants has been consistently upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Extradited Russian hacker tries to escape
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-04/u-s-says-russian-suspect-in-linkedin-hack-trying-to-escape
GIST	<p>A Russian citizen accused of hacking LinkedIn and Dropbox was supposed to have a bail hearing Wednesday before a U.S. judge, but plans went sideways after prosecutors said he tried to escape.</p> <p>Yevgeniy Nikulin, 30, appeared in San Francisco federal court wearing shackles after being extradited last week from the Czech Republic over objections from Russian officials who sought him on separate charges.</p> <p>Nikulin had been ordered March 30 to undergo a medical evaluation. Marshals who supervised him in custody described his behavior as defiant, including physical confrontation and an attempt to escape, a prosecutor said in court Wednesday.</p> <p>The Russian was indicted on multiple counts of computer-enabled fraud and identity theft stemming from cyber-attacks on LinkedIn, Dropbox and Formspring, a San Francisco-based social networking company, in 2012 and 2013. He faces a lengthy prison term if convicted.</p> <p>His public defender told the judge that “an innocent defendant has the right to be treated with respect and dignity.” Nikulin’s bail hearing was postponed until later this month.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Feds: pot homes linked w/China criminals
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/60e9e35eeb81482b85acce911a582266/US-seizes-pot-growing-houses-tied-to-China-based-criminals
GIST	<p>SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Hundreds of federal and local law enforcement agents have seized roughly 100 Northern California houses purchased with money wired to the United States by a Chinese-</p>

based crime organization and used to grow massive amounts of marijuana illegally, authorities said Wednesday.

The raids culminated a monthlong investigation focusing on dozens of Chinese nationals who bought homes in seven counties. Most of the buyers were in the country legally and were not arrested as authorities investigate if they were indebted to the gang and forced into the work, U.S. Attorney McGregor Scott said.

Much of the pot was shipped to Georgia, Illinois, New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania through Atlanta, Chicago and New York City, he said. The drug is legal in California but requires permits to grow and can't be sent across state lines. It is still banned by the U.S. government.

Black-market pot-growing houses have proliferated in the inland California region where authorities carried out the raids, and many of them were traced to Chinese criminal organizations from the San Francisco Bay Area in the mid-2000s, Scott said. The high number of grow houses in the area may be because of low property prices compared with the Bay Area and the state's large Chinese population, the prosecutor said.

Scott called the recent crackdown "a game-changer" that may have cost the criminal organization "hundreds of millions of dollars" in lost drug profits and the money it spent on the homes.

"It hits the criminals right where it counts — in the pocketbook," he said.

Authorities tracked at least 125 wire transfers totaling \$6.3 million from Fujian Province in China, all just below the \$50,000 limit imposed by the Chinese government.

Officials are trying to learn if the homebuyers are what Scott called "indentured servants" — indebted to the Chinese gang and brought to the United States to buy and tend the grow houses. Many speak only Mandarin Chinese.

"We're treating them as victims" who may have been "forced or coerced" to work in what can be toxic environments, FBI Special Agent in Charge Sean Ragan said.

The buyers generally used the same Sacramento real estate agents, borrowed from private lenders instead of traditional banks, and used straw buyers who purchased the properties on behalf of the real owners.

The U.S. crackdown comes as California is months into creating the world's largest legal marijuana market amid uncertainty about whether the U.S. government will try to shut it down.

More than 500 officers, including SWAT teams, fanned out over two days to search and seize 81 houses and two real estate businesses. Another 25 houses were raided previously.

They seized more than 61,000 marijuana plants, 200 kilograms (440 pounds) of processed marijuana, at least \$100,000 in cash and 15 firearms, including one that had been stolen.

The U.S. Department of Justice said it was one of the largest residential forfeiture operations ever. Prosecutors will now ask judges to transfer ownership of the houses to the U.S. government to resell while they track the enterprise back to its roots, Scott said.

Most of the suburban houses were valued at \$300,000 to \$700,000, though some were in rural areas and some in more upscale neighborhoods.

U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions said in a statement that transnational criminal organizations are "a blight on our communities, bringing dangerous drugs to our streets and trying to impose a false sovereignty over our neighborhoods."

	The Chinese consulate general's office in San Francisco did not respond to multiple requests for comment.
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HEADLINE	04/05 Mosque bombing suspects indicted
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/2123f101c5a7425c8ac597bacf725cc3/Mosque-bombing-suspects-indicted-on-weapons-charges
GIST	<p>URBANA, Ill. (AP) — A federal grand jury in central Illinois has indicted three men suspected of bombing a Minnesota mosque on a charge of possessing a machine gun. A fourth man not linked to the bombing was also indicted.</p> <p>Forty-seven-year-old Michael Hari, 29-year-old Michael McWhorter, 22-year-old Joe Morris and 18-year-old Ellis Mack were arrested on March 13 on the weapons charge. On the same day, Hari, McWorter and Morris, all of Clarence, Illinois, were charged in Minnesota with bombing the Dar al Farooq Islamic Center in Bloomington last August. The explosion caused fire damage, but no injuries.</p> <p>Wednesday's indictment alleges the four men possessed a machine gun from October 2017 through Feb. 27, 2018.</p> <p>U.S. attorney spokeswoman Sharon Paul says the dates of their initial appearances on the indictment have yet to be determined. It wasn't immediately known if the four have attorneys to comment on their behalf.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Scientist in smuggling plot jailed
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/4/chinese-national-sentenced-121-months-stealing-gen/
GIST	<p>A Chinese scientist was sentenced to 121 months in federal prison Wednesday for conspiring to steal genetically-modified rice seeds from a Kansas research facility, the Justice Department said.</p> <p>Weiqian Zhang, 51, a Chinese national and U.S. legal permanent resident living in Manhattan, Kansas, was convicted on Feb. 15, 2017, of one count of conspiracy to commit interstate transportation of stolen property and one count of interstate transportation of stolen property.</p> <p>Zhang, who worked as a rice breeder at Ventria Bioscience in Junction City, Kansas. The company develops genetically programmed rice for use in medicine and therapeutics.</p> <p>During his time at Ventria, Zhang stole hundreds of the company's rice seeds and stored them at his residence, according to court documents. Zhang had planned to give the seeds to a Chinese crop research institute, prosecutors allege. Members of that research institute meet Zhang at his Kansas residence in the summer of 2013.</p> <p>On August 7, 2013, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers found Ventria rice seeds in the luggage of the research institute members as they prepared to return to China, the Justice Department said.</p> <p>“Weiqiang Zhang betrayed his employer by unlawfully providing its proprietary rice seeds to representatives of a Chinese crop institute,” said acting Assistant Attorney General John Cronan. “Today’s sentence demonstrates the significant consequences awaiting those who would steal trade secrets from American companies. The Criminal Division and its law enforcement partners will continue to work closely with companies like Ventria to protect American intellectual property — which is essential to our economy and way of life—against all threats both foreign and domestic.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Lakewood: man tries to run over cop
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article207972104.html
GIST	<p>A Lakewood police officer had pulled a man over early Tuesday along Tacoma Mall Boulevard when a 65-year-old Tacoma man ran across the street toward the officer, waving his hands and screaming at the officer before stopping in the middle of the road.</p> <p>The officer told the man that he needed to get out of the street, then returned to the first man's car to continue with his traffic stop.</p> <p>Moments later, the 65-year-old got into his minivan, gunned the engine and attempted to run down the officer before leading him on a chase through two cities, Pierce County prosecutors say.</p> <p>The 65-year-old was arraigned Wednesday afternoon in Pierce County Superior Court on charges of attempted first-degree assault and eluding police. Court Commissioner Meagan Foley set the man's bail at \$500,000 and ordered him to resolve pending warrants in Grays Harbor County, Tacoma and Bonney Lake before being released.</p> <p>The man had pleaded guilty to harassment in Pierce County Superior Court in September 2017 and received a suspended 364-day jail sentence. He has been arraigned three times since then for failing to comply with the terms of the suspended sentence, which was revoked March 16.</p> <p>Once he was handcuffed, read his Miranda rights and placed in the back of the patrol car, the man started yelling that he hated the police officer for ruining his life two weeks before the incident, but he kept using the wrong officer's name. He started praying that the officer would drop dead in the car.</p> <p>The officer had never seen the man before.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 FBI: more packages tied to Everett man
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/fbi-has-found-additional-packages-tied-to-everett-man-total-at-18
GIST	<p>SEATTLE, Wash. -- The FBI says it has found additional packages likely tied to an Everett man charged with shipment of explosives and that the total number of packages stands at 18.</p> <p>An FBI spokeswoman in Seattle said the additional packages "appear similar to those allegedly mailed by" Thanh Cong Phan. Phan, 43, was arrested last week and accused of sending packages to government offices and military installations. Last week, the count of packages tied to him had reached 13.</p> <p>Court documents say several of the packages were tested and found to have small amounts of black explosive powder. There have been no reports that any of the packages exploded.</p> <p>The additional packages were safely recovered and more work needs to be done to establish a definite connection to Phan, the FBI said.</p> <p>The packages were sent to government facilities.</p> <p>The FBI said it doesn't have any information that there are other packages in the mail.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Bellingham: cache guns, bombs in home
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/search-uncovers-makeshift-bombs-guns-at-felons-home-in-bellingham
GIST	BELLINGHAM, Wash. -- Investigators discovered a cache of guns, ammunition and three makeshift

	<p>explosive devices at the Bellingham home of a convicted felon who is a suspect in a drive-by shooting last month, the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office said.</p> <p>The suspect, Robert K. Chase, has been in jail since he and an accused accomplice were arrested on March 7 following the shooting that nearly wounded a 17-year-old boy, the Bellingham Herald reported. Chase has pleaded not guilty.</p> <p>During the investigation, detectives learned there might be illegal guns and explosives at Chase's home in the 2600 block of Cagey Road.</p> <p>A search warrant served Tuesday morning uncovered three explosive devices -- two described as a makeshift grenade and a third that was a dual-triggered bomb containing pellets and large screws, police said. Bomb squad technicians destroyed the explosive devices.</p> <p>In addition, investigators found two rifles, a handgun, parts and tools used to make fully automatic guns, additional bomb making materials, and thousands of rounds of ammunition.</p> <p>Deputies say state and federal prosecutors are now considering additional charges against Chase, who as a convicted felon is prohibited from owning guns. For now, he remains held on charges related to the drive-by shooting.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Federal Way standoff ends; suspect dead
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/local/komo/article/12-hour-standoff-over-with-suspect-shot-dead-by-12807169.php
GIST	<p>A man who barricaded himself inside a Federal Way home has died after exchanging gunfire with police Wednesday night.</p> <p>The gunfire came after a nearly 12-hour standoff with the man.</p> <p>It all began just after 11:30 a.m. when officers were called to a hit-and-run crash near Military Road South and South 282nd Street.</p> <p>Witnesses said after the crash a man driving one of the vehicles ran into a nearby home in the 28100 block of 28th Avenue South.</p> <p>"The guy is barricaded in our house and now the SWAT team is here so we don't know anything more than that but we're more importantly worried about our cat," said Julie Hocking, who owns the home. "My sister's cat is in the house and we don't care about anything else, he can do whatever else he wants."</p> <p>Investigators said the man barricaded himself inside and refused to come out.</p> <p>Police said no one else was inside the home at the time.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Sheriff: SUV crash no longer accident
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/04/us/hart-family-search/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The mysterious California seaside crash in which at least five members of a family were killed is being labeled a crime by the man heading up the investigation.</p> <p>Mendocino County Sheriff Tom Allman told HLN's "Crime & Justice with Ashleigh Banfield" on Wednesday that Jennifer Hart was driving her family's SUV when it went over a California cliff last week.</p>

The sheriff said Jennifer Hart and spouse Sarah Hart were found dead wearing seat belts, but three children found near the vehicle had not been belted in.

"I'm to the point where I no longer am calling this an accident; I'm calling it a crime," Allman told HLN.

The sheriff said investigators were also looking at a cell phone found near the accident scene on the Northern California coast.

The bodies of Jennifer and Sarah Hart were found on March 26 inside the family's SUV, which had crashed at the rocky shoreline below a cliff. The bodies of three of their children -- Markis, 19, Jeremiah, 14, and Abigail, 14 -- were found nearby.

But their three other children -- Devonte, 15, Hannah, 16, and Sierra, 12 -- are missing, officials said.

A large-scale search and rescue operation for the three missing children continued Wednesday, with about 80 people combing the surrounding area.

A tip led authorities to have divers search the water near the coastline about 30 or 40 miles south of the scene, but Allman said there was nothing yet to report from the search there.

Earlier Wednesday, the California Highway Patrol released a photo of Jennifer Hart shopping at a grocery store a day before her family's SUV plunged off a cliff.

Police also released a fuller timeline of the Hart family's movements before the fatal crash. The Hart family was in and around the Newport, Oregon area around 8:15 a.m. on March 24, and officials believe they then drove south along US 101 until they reached Leggett, California.

The family then traveled south along state Route 1 until they reached Fort Bragg around 8 p.m. that night, and remained there for about a day, police said. California Highway Patrol released an image from surveillance cameras of Jennifer Hart at a Safeway in Fort Bragg on the morning of March 25.

Police had earlier said that several facts led them to believe the crash may have been intentional.

"At this point in our investigation, that is the direction we are going," said Greg Baarts of the California Highway Patrol's Northern Division.

There were no skid marks in the area leading up to the fatal crash.

And there were no witnesses to help guide police on what happened. The SUV was discovered only after a passerby saw the mangled wreckage at the foot of the cliff.

Data from the vehicle's software air bag module suggests the car had stopped at the scenic highway outcrop overlooking the cliff and then accelerated off the road, Baarts said.

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HEADLINE	04/04 Police: YouTube shooter 'cooperative'
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/04/04/youtube-shooting-suspect-nasim-aghdam/484699002/
GIST	Eleven hours before Nasim Aghdam launched a terrifying attack at YouTube's California headquarters, police found her sleeping in her car about 30 miles away — a "calm and cooperative" woman during a 20-minute interaction. A few hours later, she would practice shooting at a gun range. And then she opened fire on people after

decades of commitment to animal rights and veganism.

Wednesday brought those stunning revelations as federal investigators searched houses connected with the Iranian-born Aghdam and tried to piece together the final hours of someone apparently filled with fury at the popular video-sharing service. The incident prompted YouTube officials to boost security at their offices worldwide.

Aghdam, 39, killed herself after shooting three people at the San Bruno campus on Tuesday afternoon, sending thousands of tech workers fleeing and shocking Silicon Valley. Police say the only connection they can find between Aghdam and YouTube is her anger that the service had recently changed how she was compensated for posting videos.

Aghdam, an animal rights activist, posted a mishmash of workout videos, rants against animal cruelty and vegan cooking tips online. Her father told police she was upset because she felt YouTube was making it harder for her to earn money via advertising on her videos.

"They only care for personal short term profits and do anything to reach their goals..." Aghdam posted on her website. "There is no free speech in the real world and you will be suppressed for telling the truth that is not supported by the system."

The ongoing investigation aims to understand Aghdam's motivations and actions, including how and where she acquired the 9mm handgun used in the shooting, and her movements and social media posts in the days before the attack.

Aghdam described herself on her Instagram account as "Athlete Artist Comedian Poet Model Singer Host Actor Director Producer," and the videos she made mix satire, glamour shots and dark humor to rail against authority, capitalism and popular culture. She posted videos in English, Turkish and Farsi.

Wednesday, police in the town of Mountain View, Calif., disclosed that officers there found Aghdam sleeping in her car the night before the shooting, contacting her at the request of her parents. Mountain View is about 30 miles south of San Bruno, and Aghdam in a conversation at approximately 1:40 a.m. told officers she was looking for work in the area.

Because she didn't appear to be a danger to herself or others, Mountain View police left her alone: "At no point during our roughly 20-minute interaction with her did she mention anything about YouTube, if she was upset with them, or that she had planned to harm herself or others. Throughout our entire interaction with her, she was calm and cooperative."

Eleven hours later, police said, Aghdam walked into the YouTube building and opened fire. Three people were shot and a fourth suffered an ankle injury while fleeing, San Bruno Police Chief Ed Barberini said. He told reporters on Wednesday that Aghdam visited a local gun range on Tuesday morning and that she gained access to the YouTube campus through a parking garage. In a statement, YouTube officials said Aghdam never actually entered the building itself.

Police said there was no evidence she knew the victims or that individuals were specifically targeted. "Whether that rises to the level of terrorism will be determined over the next few weeks," Barberini added.

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HEADLINE	04/05 Motive: YouTube shooter's videos
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/youtube-shooters-bizarre-videos-key-suspected-motive-54248523?
GIST	The woman whom police say shot three people at YouTube's headquarters was prolific at producing videos and posting them online, many of them bizarre such as a clip in which she removes a revealing purple dress to expose fake breasts with the message, "Don't Trust Your Eyes."

In others, Nasim Aghdam exercises, promotes animal rights and explains the vegan diet, often in elaborate costumes or carrying a rabbit.

The videos have become central to the motive authorities have settled on for the shooting: Aghdam's anger with the policies of YouTube — the world's biggest online video website.

Nasim Aghdam, who was in her late 30s, posted the videos under the online name Nasime Sabz, and a website in that name decried YouTube's policies, saying the company was trying to "suppress" content creators.

"Youtube filtered my channels to keep them from getting views!" one of the messages said. "There is no equal growth opportunity on YOUTUBE or any other video sharing site, your channel will grow if they want to!!!!!"

People who post on YouTube can receive money from advertisements that accompany their videos, but the company "de-monetizes" some channels for reasons including inappropriate material or having fewer than 1,000 subscribers.

YouTube had no comment about any actions related to Aghdam's videos.

Nasim Aghdam also ran a Farsi-language public channel on the messaging app Telegram, which had 6,000 followers. Telegram reportedly has some 40 million users in Iran. In one post she says, "Internet crackdown and filtering is increasing in the West."

Police who found Nasim Aghdam sleeping in her car early Tuesday in the city of Mountain View about 25 miles (40 kilometers) from YouTube headquarters said she was calm and said nothing about being angry with YouTube or having any plans to harm others or herself.

"It was a very normal conversation. There was nothing in her behavior that suggested anything unusual," said Mountain View Police Chief Max Bosel.

Later that day, Aghdam went to a gun range before walking through a parking garage into a courtyard at YouTube's campus south of San Francisco, where she opened fire with a handgun and wounded three people, police said. She then killed herself.

Two women wounded in the shooting were released Wednesday from a San Francisco hospital. The third victim, a 36-year-old man, was upgraded from critical to serious condition.

The suspect's father, Ismail Aghdam, told the Bay Area News Group he warned police the day before the attack that his daughter was upset with how YouTube handled her videos and might be planning to go to its offices.

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HEADLINE	04/04 Florida police arrest 'fake veteran'
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/man-arrested-pretending-veteran-claimed-earned-20-medals/story?id=54232971
GIST	<p>A Florida man who posed as a U.S. military veteran and claimed to have earned more than 20 medals and badges has been arrested, according to police.</p> <p>Port St. Lucie Police had been investigating 46-year-old Edward Louis Liroff for three weeks before they arrested him after he allegedly tried to apply for a job using a fraudulent DD214 form, a certificate of release from active duty, said Master Sgt. Frank Sabol.</p>

	<p>On March 8, Liroff applied for a code compliance officer position with the City of Port St. Lucie, Sabol said. The city's assistant director of neighborhood services then contacted Port St. Lucie Officer Joseph Byrne -- a military veteran -- to help review the form.</p> <p>Byrne began an investigation into Liroff after noting several irregularities in the form, Sabol said.</p> <p>On the form, Liroff stated that he served in the U.S. military from 1988 to 2004 and listed that he was the recipient of more than 20 medals and badges, included the Distinguished Service Medal, the Silver Star Medal, the Purple Heart Medal and the Air Medal for Valor, according to authorities.</p> <p>As a result of the investigation, Byrne discovered that Liroff had never served in the U.S. military, Sabol said. In addition, Byrne discovered that Liroff had been receiving treatment from the Veteran's Administration and had fraudulently obtained a Florida driver's license with a veteran designation and a Purple Heart vehicle registration, Sabol said.</p> <p>The DD214 form claiming veteran's preference Liroff submitted with his job application was also determined to be fake, according to authorities.</p> <p>Liroff was arrested on Wednesday after Byrne presented his findings to the Florida State Attorney's Office. He has been charged with uttering a forged instrument, unlawful use of uniforms, medals or insignia and fraudulently obtaining a driver's license, jail records show.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Looter during hurricane sentenced 20yrs
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/looter-20-years-stealing-5k-tvs-cigarettes-hurricane/story?
GIST	<p>A man has been sentenced to 20 years in prison for looting over \$5,000 worth of TVs and cigarettes during Hurricane Harvey.</p> <p>Thomas Gamelin, 38, was arrested and charged with burglary of a building after a Houston police unit was driving by a Walmart on Aug. 29, four days after Harvey roared ashore in Texas as a Category 4 storm. The storm hovered over Houston for days, dumping record-breaking rainfall on the city.</p> <p>Officers saw Gamelin carrying a television out of the store. He was also captured on the store's surveillance cameras.</p> <p>"Our city was in the midst of the worst natural disaster in its history, and the defendant saw that as the perfect opportunity to take advantage and try to make a profit," Assistant District Attorney Joshua Raygor said in a statement. "While so many people were coming together to help others, Thomas Gamelin was off on his own looting."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/05 Arrested: woman's 7th DUI in 7 states
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/woman-arrested-7th-dui-7th-state/story?
GIST	<p>Authorities are calling a Minnesota woman "one of the worst DUI offenders in the United States" after her seventh arrest in as many states.</p> <p>Police in Riverside, Illinois, arrested Tasha Lynn Schleicher, 41, of New Hope, Minnesota, April 2 and charged her with two counts of felony aggravated drunk driving, two counts of misdemeanor drunk driving, not having vehicle insurance, driving with a revoked license and transportation of open alcohol while driving.</p> <p>Schleicher had 11 prior arrests, all of which were DUI-related, the Riverside Police Department said in a statement. She had three active warrants from multiple states.</p>

	<p>Schleicher's 11 children all have been taken away by the State of Minnesota, Riverside Police Chief Thomas Weitzel said.</p> <p>"This is one of the worse DUI offenders we have ever dealt with," Weitzel said. "I've classified her as one of the worst DUI offenders in the United States."</p> <p>Previously, Schleicher had been arrested for driving under the influence in Kentucky, Wisconsin, Indiana, California, Oregon and Minnesota. Her outstanding warrants were from Nebraska, Idaho and Oregon.</p> <p>"When she was arrested in a state, she would just not show up in court unless she was held in custody," Weitzel said. "That's one of the reasons for so many outstanding warrants."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 DOJ sues Bosnia war criminals
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2018/04/04/Justice-Dept-sues-Bosnia-war-criminals-to-strip-US-citizenship/4801522863588/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_tn_us&utm_medium=3
GIST	<p>April 4 (UPI) -- The Justice Department filed lawsuits Wednesday against two convicted Bosnian war criminals, who it says fraudulently gained naturalized U.S. citizenship.</p> <p>According to the lawsuits, Edin Dzeko, 46, and Sammy Rasema Yetisen, 45, were part of an elite unit of the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.</p> <p>U.S. officials said during the Bosnian war in the 1990s, the two killed civilians and prisoners of war due to their religion and ethnicity, concealed their crimes and fraudulently obtained refugee status and eventual naturalized U.S. citizenship.</p> <p>The lawsuits say Dzeko and Yetisen participated in the April 16, 1993, Trusina massacre, an attack that killed 22 unarmed civilians. The attackers targeted Bosnian-Croats because of their Christian religion and Croat ethnicity.</p> <p>A Bosnian court found that Dzeko and Yetisen played key roles in the massacre and were both part of a firing squad that also executed six unarmed prisoners of war and civilians.</p> <p>To make sure they all died, Yetisen shot them repeatedly -- while Dzeko killed a crippled elderly man and shot his wife because she wouldn't stop crying, according to the lawsuits.</p> <p>"Dzeko and Yetisen concealed and affirmatively misrepresented their criminal history, military service, and persecutory acts throughout their immigration proceedings," the department said. "Such benefits would have been denied had immigration authorities known about the defendants' roles in the Trusina massacre."</p> <p>U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions said the United States will not be a safe haven for war criminals.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Police: YouTube shooter at gun range
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/youtube-shooting-officials-update-san-bruno-california-headquarters-suspect-nasim-najafi-aghdam-live-updates-today-4-4-2018/
GIST	<p>SAN BRUNO, Calif. -- A Southern California woman went to a gun range Tuesday prior to opening fire at the YouTube campus, injuring three people before allegedly killing herself, authorities said Wednesday. San Bruno Police Chief Ed Barberini gave an update Wednesday following the shooting at the sprawling headquarters in San Bruno, California.</p>

	<p>San Bruno police identified the suspect late Tuesday as Nasim Najafi Aghdam, 39. She was found dead at the scene from what authorities believe is a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Three people were transported to local hospitals with gunshot wounds.</p> <p>Barberini said the motive appears to be that Aghdam was upset with the "policies and practices" of YouTube, but they are continuing to investigate. In several videos posted to the platform, Aghdam accused YouTube of censoring her and expressed anger to the company.</p> <p>Barberini told reporters Aghdam went to a "local" gun range before the shooting, but didn't name the facility. Aghdam legally purchased and owned the handgun with which she opened fire on a campus patio while workers were eating lunch, according to police.</p> <p>Aghdam is believed to have accessed the building by a parking garage after parking her car at an adjacent business, Barberini said. Police are still working to determine the level of security in the location where she entered the campus.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Iran: supporter Sufi leader faces death
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/report-supporter-sufi-leader-sentenced-death-54235447?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Iran's semi-official ISNA news agency is reporting that a supporter of a Sufi Islam leader who rammed a bus into a group of policemen, killing three and injuring 30 before being arrested, has been sentenced to death.</p> <p>The incident in Tehran took place during February clashes between the Sufi leader's followers and police.</p> <p>Mohammad Salas testified during hearings in March that he had no intention of killing the policemen but was trying to flee the clashes.</p> <p>Sufi leader Nourali Tabandeh's supporters had rallied near his residence fearing he would be arrested, despite police assurances he would not.</p> <p>Iran's clerically overseen government frowns on Sufism, the mystical strain of Islam. Many conservatives view it as a deviation from the faith.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Cameroon: 18 seized hostages freed
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/cameroon-security-forces-free-18-hostages-separatists-54226860?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Cameroon security forces have freed 18 hostages, including 12 European tourists, who had been seized by separatists fighting for the independence of English-speaking regions, the government said Wednesday.</p> <p>Seven Swiss and five Italian hostages were freed Monday in Manyu in the southwest after heavy exchanges of gunfire, said spokesman Issa Tchiroma Bakary. Residents helped the military locate the hostages, whose vehicle had been seized while they were visiting a lake in the region several days earlier, he said.</p> <p>"Many hostage-takers were neutralized," he said.</p> <p>Six municipal counsellors in Cameroon's northwest who were kidnapped by separatists also have been freed, the spokesman said.</p>

	<p>Separatists had warned the council members not to vote in March 25 senatorial elections, saying that English-speaking parts of Cameroon were now an independent state called Ambazonia and would not accept any election organized by a foreign country.</p> <p>Tchiroma said at least a dozen other people, including two senior state officials, are still being held hostage by the separatists.</p> <p>The tensions in Cameroon started in 2016 when English teachers and lawyers went on strike against the use of the French language. Violence has intensified in Anglophone regions since then. Hundreds of people, including 30 policemen and soldiers, have been killed this year, the government said.</p>
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(InFOCUS)
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InFOCUS

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4 April 2018

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[DISCLAIMER and FAIR USE Notice](#)**Event Calendar**[Top of page](#)

Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php
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HEADLINE	04/04 Claim: DHS profiled leftist protesters
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/wearing-black-feds-say-you-may-be-an-anarchist-newly-released-documents-show
GIST	<p>Counterprotesters at white supremacist rallies risk being characterized as “anarchist extremists,” even if they have nothing to do with the movement, Department of Homeland Security documents show.</p> <p>A September 2016 DHS report describes law enforcement action during clashes between white supremacists and antifascists (commonly known as “antifa”). The report, obtained by the government transparency nonprofit Property of the People and shared with The Daily Beast, reveals how the Obama DHS profiled leftist protesters. Just months after the report’s release, the Trump Justice Department would use similar, overbroad profiles to prosecute hundreds of people who protested at President Donald Trump’s inauguration ceremony.</p> <p>The DHS report highlights “two violent clashes in 2016 in Sacramento and Anaheim between anarchist extremists and lawfully protesting white supremacists at legally permitted rallies.”</p> <p>The report uses those cases to describe how law enforcement might target future “anarchist extremists” who protest at white supremacist rallies. But the agency’s description of “anarchist extremists” is dubious and suggests the DHS might be conflating multiple distinct social movements.</p> <p>Anarchists want to abolish the government. Some anarchists also participate in the antifascist movement, although the latter also includes leftists and liberals who support support the idea of a state.</p> <p>The report’s guide to “symbols often associated with anti-racist anarchist extremists” includes an “A” in a circle (a popular anarchist symbol), but also images associated with the broader leftist movement. One symbol, three downward arrows in a circle, originated in 1930s Germany among opponents to the Nazi party. Originally designed to plaster over swastikas, the symbol has become common among antifascists and other anti-Trump protesters. Another antifascist symbol in the report is a pair of flags: one black in reference to the anarchist movement, and another red to symbolize other leftist affiliations. The list of symbols also includes a crossed-out swastika, and the “Good Night White Pride” symbol: the silhouette of a man kicking a Nazi.</p> <p>The report also includes a list of “potential indicators of planned violence” that law enforcement can use to “justify increased suspicion” of counterprotesters. The list includes things like carrying knives, but also innocuous activity like wearing dark clothing or bandanas, scouting a marching route in advance, and carpooling to a demonstration—actions that could apply to a wide swath of protesters.</p> <p>The DHS’ inclusion of generalized behavior is “troubling and consistent with what we’ve seen of the FBI targeting and surveilling environmentalists, civil rights activists, and lumping them together based on a few incidents,” Vera Eidelman, a Brennan fellow at the ACLU’s Speech, Privacy, and Technology Project</p>

told The Daily Beast. “There’s a tendency to sweep up a huge group of people who might not even share an ideology.

“The carpooling example is particularly interesting because all people are doing is pooling resources. You could argue that going with friends is part of the appeal,” Eidelman said, adding that the scrutiny might chill political activism by large groups.

Already, sweeping definition of left-wing extremism has had real consequences. On Jan. 20, 2017, three months after the DHS report’s publication, D.C. police arrested hundreds of people at a protest outside Trump’s inauguration. Prosecutors initially pressed charges against 200 people, accusing them of conspiring to riot based on evidence as thin as the defendants allegedly walking with a group or wearing dark clothing.

Six defendants were later found not guilty on all charges in December. The U.S. attorney’s office subsequently dropped charges against 129 other defendants but is still pushing charges against 59 people, including a journalist who was arrested while covering the anti-Trump protests, and an activist who was arrested at his home after the protests. He previously told The Daily Beast he wasn’t even at the demonstrations when the mass arrests occurred.

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HEADLINE	04/03 Report: 11.8M enrolled in 2018 ACA
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/nearly-12-million-people-enrolled-in-2018-health-coverage-under-the-aca/2018/04/03/247d3496-377c-11e8-8fd2-49fe3c675a89_story.html?utm_term=.d004a65cb83a
GIST	<p>A total of 11.8 million Americans signed up for Affordable Care Act health insurance for 2018, a drop of just 400,000 from the previous year despite widespread predictions that enrollment would plummet amid political and insurance industry turbulence surrounding the law.</p> <p>The final figures, released Tuesday by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, show that the proportion of first-time customers for this year dipped slightly, from 31 percent to 27 percent, while the high proportion qualifying for government subsidies that help consumers afford their insurance premiums stayed level at 83 percent.</p> <p>The enrollment total in the new federal report is identical to that from a compilation issued in February by an outside group, the National Academy for State Health Policy.</p> <p>In an uncharacteristic move, CMS Administrator Seema Verma announced the fifth-year tally in a series of tweets shortly before the report was issued late Tuesday afternoon. The tweets were a blend of praise for what she called “the most cost-effective and successful open enrollment to date” and the Trump administration’s characteristic naysaying about the marketplaces that were created by the sprawling 2010 health-care law it has been seeking to dismantle.</p> <p>Verma noted that, without taking subsidies into account, the average monthly premium for 2018 health plans was \$621, or 30 percent more than last year’s average of \$476. But the data show that customers with incomes too high to be eligible for a subsidy tended to choose less expensive health plans, averaging \$522 per month.</p> <p>A greater share of the 2018 customers picked the lowest tier of coverage, known as bronze plans, compared with the year before.</p> <p>The federal report also shows that 70 percent of customers had incomes between the federal poverty level and 250 percent of that — roughly the same as a year ago. This is the group that previously qualified for less expensive deductibles and other lower out-of-pocket expenses because of cost-sharing reduction subsidies to ACA insurers — payments that President Trump ended last fall.</p>

	<p>The report makes clear that all of the enrollment drop occurred in the 39 states that rely on the federal insurance marketplace and HealthCare.gov. In states operating their own marketplaces under the law, enrollment was flat.</p> <p>ACA proponents reacted to Tuesday’s statistics by saying they provide fresh evidence that Americans want the insurance the law’s marketplaces offer, which is intended for people who cannot get access to affordable health benefits through a job.</p> <p>Josh Peck, co-founder of the pro-ACA group Get America Covered, said, “While enrollment remained steady because of high consumer satisfaction and more affordable premiums for those who qualify for tax credits, enrollment would have outpaced previous years’ if the administration had focused on signing people up instead of derailing open-enrollment efforts.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 China imposes tariffs on 106 US products
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/china-fires-back-at-trump-with-tariffs-on-106-us-products-including-soybeans-cars/2018/04/04/338134f4-37d8-11e8-b57c-9445cc4dfa5e_story.html?utm_term=.18f7661f4e98
GIST	<p>BEIJING — China responded to Trump’s latest trade move by announcing tariffs on 106 U.S. products, including soybeans, airplanes and cars, in the latest escalation of what risks becoming a tit-for-tat trade war between the world’s two largest economies.</p> <p>The plan, which was announced Wednesday, would see China slap 25 percent levies on a range of U.S. goods worth about \$50 billion dollars. Though China said the timing depends on U.S. moves, the news is likely to have an impact on markets, including the soybean market.</p> <p>The announcement came just a day after the White House unveiled plans for tariffs on \$50 billion in Chinese imports across 1,300 categories, targeting 25 percent levies on Chinese goods ranging from electronics, aerospace and machinery to phones, shoes and furniture.</p> <p>Though a Chinese response was widely expected, the speed of the announcement came as a surprise, deepening fears of a rapid escalation that could hurt both sides.</p> <p>The targeting of U.S. soybean exports by China could have a major political impact stateside. Soybeans are the top U.S. agricultural export to China and U.S. soybean farmers and their allies fought hard to prevent tariffs.</p> <p>In late March, the U.S. announced steel and aluminum tariffs that would penalize China to the tune of about \$3 billion a year. On Monday, China returned fire by imposing similar measures on \$3 billion dollars worth of U.S. pork, fruit and other items.</p> <p>Then, on Tuesday, the White House went ahead with tariffs that target manufacturing technology, arguing that Chinese trade practices have unfairly hurt U.S. business. China vowed a swift response — and followed through.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Supervised injection sites a solution?
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/articles/2018-04-03/as-donald-trump-calls-for-war-on-drugs-a-push-for-safe-injection-sites
GIST	<p>AMID A PRESIDENTIAL call for ominous commercials and increased use of the death penalty to curb the U.S. opioid crisis, areas around the country are toying with a different idea to stop the deadly scourge:</p>

letting people use drugs freely, but under supervision.

The notion of so-called safe injection or consumption sites butts heads with what critics of President Donald Trump's recently announced plan to battle the epidemic consider a return to the "war on drugs" policies of the past. Such facilities allow people to use previously obtained drugs like heroin in a sterile environment under the supervision of medical professionals or trained staff, who would be available to educate on safe drug use, administer the counteracting drug naloxone in the event of an overdose and offer access to treatment or other social services if requested.

The Per Capita Cost of Opioid Crisis

Approximately 100 of these types of legally sanctioned sites exist around the world, with the first established in Bern, Switzerland, in 1986. Vancouver's Insite, which opened in 2003, was the first sanctioned supervised injection facility in North America.

While none exist in the U.S., officials in places like San Francisco; Seattle; Philadelphia; New York City; Portland, Maine; and Ithaca, New York, all have considered opening or allowing one, despite the threat of likely legal action by the federal government.

In January, Philadelphia officials announced the city would encourage private-sector development of consumption sites by nonprofits or medical organizations, and since have met with residents in neighborhoods that could host the sites – such as Kensington and Fox Chase – to discuss concerns about them. They have not announced a date for when a site might open.

Across the country, officials in Seattle and King County, Washington, approved the opening of two sites – including one in the city itself – more than a year ago and allocated \$1.3 million in budget funding to help them do so. They, too, have faced opposition and are stuck on picking a location.

Another front-runner to be first in the country is San Francisco, where safe-use facilities could open as soon as this summer. They may be backed initially by private funding to avoid liability issues.

"We are still working out legal and siting issues and are not in a position to announce locations or partner organizations yet," Rachael Kagan, a spokeswoman for the San Francisco Department of Public Health, tells U.S. News.

On average, 115 Americans die each day from an opioid overdose, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Studies have said safe injection sites mitigate risky drug behavior, reduce the frequency of overdoses, curb the spread of HIV and viral hepatitis, do not increase drug use or local crime and have the potential to save millions of dollars in the U.S. public health sector.

Proponents say the sites are proven tools that hold enormous potential for battling opioid abuse in the U.S. And they contend a return to a "war on drugs" strategy – initially touched off by President Richard Nixon in the 1970s, taken up by President Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, and recently revisited by Trump and Attorney General Jeff Sessions – will only deepen a punitive mentality that has proved ineffective in the past.

"There is something fundamentally wrong with the way that we approach drug policy [in] that, number one, this has been a problem for so long, and number two, that we keep pretending that it's a new problem, which also has been going on for 100 years or more," says David Herzberg, an associate professor of history at the University at Buffalo-State University of New York, who's working on a book about the history of addiction to pharmaceuticals in the U.S.

While government officials and critics have argued safe injection sites could encourage increased drug use and expose populations to more drug activity, Herzberg says drugs are already around, and the sites instead would provide safety and potential help for drug users while moving their activities out of the public eye.

"It provides them with contact with people who know stuff about drugs, and if they want help, they're seeing someone every day – it's not like they wanted help on Thursday, and, you know, by next Tuesday when they saw somebody, that moment was over," Herzberg says. "They stay in contact with people who care about their lives, and if opportunities to help them get better come up, then they get to take them – that's awesome."

Shilo Murphy, an activist behind the push for a Seattle injection site, says there have been "zero deaths in any consumption room in the entire world in all 30 years they've been in operation."

"On top of that, there've been hundreds of thousands of people referred to detoxing treatment and services," says Murphy, founder of Urban Survivors Union and The People's Harm Reduction Alliance. "They're not moralistic enough for people, but they are incredibly successful."

However, Dr. Jay Butler, chief medical officer in the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, says he's unsure if the evidence surrounding safe injection sites shows an actual, overall shift toward decreasing drug use and increasing treatment access.

Notably, Canada is grappling with a fentanyl-fueled opioid crisis of its own, and British Columbia – home to Vancouver and the Insite facility – has seen a spike in illicit-drug overdose deaths from approximately 500 in 2015 to nearly 1,000 in 2016 and more than 1,400 last year. Vancouver police also say around 200 potential overdose deaths were reversed at five safe consumption sites in a roughly two-month period from the end of 2016 to early 2017.

"It's definitely a harm-reduction tool. Is it ready for prime time? I'm not sure. We've talked a lot with our colleagues in Vancouver. What I haven't seen from Vancouver is data that it's making an impact [on its drug use epidemic], and I really struggle with that," Butler says.

"It's intriguing in terms of doing something to save lives, but ... it's a tourniquet," he continues. "A gunshot wound to the leg, you put a tourniquet on it, but you don't then walk away and say, 'Hey, good luck with that.' You get people into definitive care. We're talking about things that will save lives, but they're not solving that person's problem, much less the larger public health issue."

Aside from the debate over their effectiveness, the sites would appear to run afoul of federal law. A portion of U.S. Code known as the "crack house statute" makes it illegal to "knowingly open or maintain ... any place" for the use of a controlled substance. Clients using the clinic also would be testing the federal prohibition on illicit drug possession.

"It's enabling and continuing people to use, and with all the fentanyl that's in the region right now, there is no safe way to use fentanyl, period. There just isn't," says Patrick Trainor, a spokesman for the Drug Enforcement Agency's Philadelphia Division. "To say that these safe injection sites are a way to use safely is not something that we agree with."

Trainor says he also remains unconvinced that supervised injection sites would result in a big push for people who use drugs to enter treatment, especially if they're only on-site for a limited period of time.

"To think that they're going to be engaged in that time period is just not a realistic thing in our experience," Trainor says.

Other federal authorities have come out against the potential sites as well. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Vermont, for example, warned local advocates late last year that opening the sites would expose users, site workers and overseers to criminal charges, and could result in "federal forfeiture" of the venues themselves.

"Such facilities would also threaten to undercut existing and future prevention initiatives by sending exactly the wrong message to children in Vermont: the government will help you use heroin," a statement

	<p>from the office said. "It is a crime, not only to use illicit narcotics, but to manage and maintain sites on which such drugs are used and distributed."</p> <p>Still, Urban Survivors Union's Murphy contends there's no silver bullet for solving the opioid crisis, but that safe consumption sites are a piece of the puzzle that means fewer people dying from fatal overdoses. With medically trained staff on hand, people can continue to use drugs until they may be ready to seek treatment, at which point they'd have the opportunity and access to do so immediately, rather than having to wait days or weeks.</p> <p>"The idea that we would choose not to use a piece of the puzzle has always surprised me," Murphy says.</p> <p>He also says he's not afraid of the likely legal battles looming over opening such a site, predicting the fight eventually will go all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 China threatens 'same strength' US tariffs
SOURCE	http://time.com/5227148/china-us-tariff-trade-response/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>(BEIJING) — China on Wednesday vowed to take measures of the “same strength” in response to a U.S. tariff hike on \$50 billion worth of Chinese goods in a spiraling dispute over technology policy that has fueled fears it might set back a global economic recovery.</p> <p>The Commerce Ministry said it would immediately file a challenge the U.S. move in the World Trade Organization.</p> <p>“At the same time, we are preparing to take measures of the same strength and same scope against U.S. goods,” said a ministry statement. “These measures will be announced shortly.”</p> <p>Chinese officials have given no indication what U.S. goods might be targeted but businesspeople and economists have cited Boeing jetliners and soybeans as possible targets.</p> <p>The dispute has fueled fears it might set back the global recovery if other governments are prompted to raise their own import barriers.</p> <p>The U.S. Trade Representative’s Office said it took the action in response to Chinese policies that “coerce American companies into transferring their technology and intellectual property to domestic Chinese enterprises.”</p> <p>On Monday, Beijing announced a tariff hike on a \$3 billion list of U.S. goods including pork, apples and steel pipe in response a higher American import duties on steel and aluminum.</p> <p>The U.S. tariff hike on steel and aluminum has little impact on China but the latest duties will be far more sensitive because they target what Chinese leaders see as important future industries including telecoms and medical technology.</p> <p>The Chinese measures announced Monday raised tariffs on pork, aluminum scrap and some other products by 25%. A 15% tariff was imposed on apples, almonds and some other goods.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Tariffs on China electronic imports?
SOURCE	http://time.com/5227104/trump-tariffs-50-billion-chinese-electronics-imports/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration on Tuesday escalated its aggressive actions on trade by proposing 25 percent tariffs on \$50 billion in Chinese imports to protest Beijing’s alleged theft of American technology.</p>

The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative issued a list targeting 1,300 Chinese products, including industrial robots and telecommunications equipment. The suggested tariffs wouldn't take effect right way: A public comment period will last until May 11, and a hearing on the tariffs is set for May 15. Companies and consumers will have the opportunity to lobby to have some products taken off the list or have others added.

The latest U.S. move risks heightening trade tensions with China, which on Monday had slapped taxes on \$3 billion in U.S. products in response to earlier U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum imports.

“China’s going to be compelled to lash back,” warned Philip Levy, a senior fellow at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and an economic adviser to President George W. Bush.

Indeed, China immediately threatened to retaliate against the new U.S. tariffs, which target the high-tech industries that Beijing has been nurturing, from advanced manufacturing and aerospace to information technology and robotics.

Early Wednesday in Beijing, China’s Commerce Ministry said it “strongly condemns and firmly opposes” the proposed U.S. tariffs and warned of retaliatory action.

“We will prepare equal measures for U.S. products with the same scale” according to regulations in Chinese trade law, a ministry spokesman said in comments carried by the official Xinhua News Agency.

The U.S. sanctions are intended to punish China for using strong-arm tactics in its drive to become a global technology power. These include pressuring American companies to share technology to gain access to the Chinese market, forcing U.S. firms to license their technology in China on unfavorable terms and even hacking into U.S. companies’ computers to steal trade secrets.

The administration sought to draw up the list of targeted Chinese goods in a way that might limit the impact of the tariffs — a tax on imports — on American consumers while hitting Chinese imports that benefit from Beijing’s sharp-elbowed tech policies. But some critics that American will end up being hurt.

“If you’re hitting \$50 billion in trade, you’re inevitably going to hurt somebody, and somebody is going to complain,” said Rod Hunter, a former economic official at the National Security Council and now a partner at Baker & McKenzie LLP.

Even representatives of American business, which have complained for years that China has pilfered U.S. technology and discriminated against U.S. companies, were critical of the administration’s latest action.

“Unilateral tariffs may do more harm than good and do little to address the problems in China’s (intellectual property) and tech transfer policies,” said John Frisbie, president of the U.S.-China Business Council.

Even some technology groups contending directly with Chinese competition expressed misgivings.

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HEADLINE	04/03 Russia warns: NATO crossed ‘red line’
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/3/russia-claims-nato-has-crossed-red-line-boosting-e/
GIST	NATO has recently crossed a “red line” and aggravated relations with Russia by bolstering its air defenses in Eastern Europe, according to Russian officials. “NATO countries are trying to find a balance between defense and dialogue, but they have crossed a red line,” Russian deputy foreign minister Alexander Grushko told the state-run RIA Novosti news agency on

Tuesday in Moscow.

In the past week, Russian military operatives have conducted ballistic missile and interceptor missile test-launches in response to reports that NATO is conducting a major military build-up along its borders.

“Not only in politics, but also in the field of military development, NATO began resorting to Cold War schemes that should have been left in the past,” Mr. Grushko said.

Relations between the Kremlin and the West have soured dramatically ever since a nerve-agent attack last month on former Russian spy, Sergei Skripal, in Britain last month — which British intelligence has blamed on Moscow.

Last week, NATO joined a wave of countries and groups expelling Russian diplomats in response to the attacks, expelling seven Russian diplomats. Overall more than 20 countries expelled a total of more than 150 Russian diplomats, including 60 kicked out by the U.S.

Russia denounced the actions as “boorish” and retaliated by expelling a roughly equal number of Western diplomats.

On the NATO defense front — alongside last week’s expulsions — reports also emerged from Warsaw that its officials had agreed to purchase \$4.75 billion worth of Patriot missile defense systems from the U.S..

“There is no justification for NATO’s military building up near the borders of Russia,” Mr. Grushko told Pravda on Tuesday.

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HEADLINE	04/02 IG: ATF not adequately tracking weapons
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/2/atf-not-adequately-tracking-weapons-ig-report-says/
GIST	<p>The ATF’s inadequate record-keeping policies creates a risk of ammunition, explosives and less-lethal devices such as smoke canisters being lost or stolen without the bureau knowing, according to a report released Monday by the Justice Department’s inspector general.</p> <p>In fact, the poor record-keeping has already resulted in 23 firearms issued to agents being either lost or stolen between 2014 and 2017, the inspector general reported.</p> <p>A total of 26 weapons were reported lost, stolen or missing, although three of them disappeared during shipment and thus were not the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives’ fault, the inspector general said. One of those three weapons was used in a crime.</p> <p>Of the 26 missing firearms, 15 would eventually be recovered, according to the report.</p> <p>However, that number of guns lost during that three-year period actually represents a “substantial improvement” over what a similar report uncovered in 2008, said Michael Horowitz, the Justice Department’s inspector-general.</p> <p>Marino Vidoli, assistant director of office field operations for the ATF, said in a letter to Mr. Horowitz that the bureau concurs with his recommendations.</p> <p>A survey of 13 ATF field offices found inconsistent or lacking records for munitions and explosives, and also found mixing different types of ammunition on tracking records, the report said.</p> <p>The field offices underestimated total ammunition by nearly 31,000 rounds in just those 13 office — a</p>

number likely many times greater nationwide across the ATF's roughly 275 field offices, the report said.

Mr. Horowitz said the lack of proper record-keeping, despite the lower number of missing guns, is still troubling because audits in 2002 and 2008 raised similar concerns that led to new ATF storage policies.

"Our findings are particularly concerning because prior audits identified similar issues and recommended corrective actions," he said.

The ATF field offices surveyed were not following ammunition storage protocols, the report said. Specifically, six ATF locations were missing ammunition records from periods ranging between 15 and 38 months over the past four years. The Nashville field office did not begin using the required ammunition records until OIG investigators asked for copies before their site visit.

Furthermore, 11 of the 13 ATF sites audited found that officials had not consistently documented additions or withdrawals on ammunition records. For example, the Cheyenne, Wyoming, office cataloged 1,800 rounds of 5.56-caliber rifle ammunition on July 7, 2014. The next entry, dated Oct. 1, 2014, shows a balance of 900 rounds, but no records documented what happened to the other 900 rounds of ammunition.

The inspector general blamed the inventory discrepancy on misinterpretation of ATF policy. For example, field office officials said some of the inventory discrepancies occurred because the ATF requires offices to only account for full cases of ammunition. Thus, once a case is opened, the entire case is removed from the records regardless of how many rounds are in that case. But the inspector general said the requirement to count full cases of ammunition applies only to biannual ATF-wide property inventories.

Although the inspector general found that the ATF had strong physical control of its explosives, it identified two types of explosives at the bureau's National Center for Explosive Training and Research that had incorrect balances, according to the report. The discrepancies were because ATF officials relied upon the quantities handwritten on the outside of the explosive box rather than the counting the actual amount inside.

"As a result, ATF cannot provide evidence that the explosives were not lost or stolen either prior to or after the donated explosives were received," the report said.

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HEADLINE	04/03 DACA program grows after restart order
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/3/daca-program-grows-after-judges-ordered-restart/
GIST	<p>More than 64,000 illegal immigrant Dreamers have applied to renew their status under the Obama-era DACA program since a federal judge ordered the Trump administration to restart the program, the government said in new numbers released Tuesday.</p> <p>About half of them have already been approved, with the others pending, according to the data from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.</p> <p>All told, nearly 694,000 people were being protected from deportation under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program as of last week.</p> <p>The numbers suggest significant interest in the program, which President Trump tried to cancel last year, announcing a six-month phaseout he hoped would pressure Congress to come up with a more permanent solution for the Dreamers.</p> <p>But a federal judge in California, followed by another judge in New York, ruled the phaseout illegal, saying Homeland Security cut too many corners. Both judges ordered Mr. Trump to restart the program by allowing those who had been protected before to apply for renewals — though no first-time applications</p>

	<p>are allowed.</p> <p>Immigrant-rights groups had grappled with how to approach the renewal process, with many Dreamers wary of engaging with the Trump administration at this point.</p> <p>DACA grants a two-year amnesty from deportation and allows Dreamers to get work permits, which then allow them to get Social Security cards, apply for driver’s licenses and access some taxpayer benefits.</p> <p>President Obama announced the DACA program in 2012, and since then nearly 815,000 people have been approved. Of those, some have found other more permanent legal status, while others have left the country or dropped out of the program, and several thousand were kicked out for criminal behavior — leaving 694,000 people covered as of March 31.</p> <p>The chaos of the phaseout and the judges’ subsequent restart has complicated matters, and left Dreamers scrambling.</p> <p>Some 2,200 Dreamers are slated to have their DACA status expire this month. Of those, 1,020 have renewal applications pending. For May, 7,010 people could lose status — and 2,680 have applied for renewal.</p> <p>Those who have renewal applications pending are safe from deportation even if they haven’t been officially reapproved, the government says.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Military to guard border until wall is up?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/3/trump-says-hell-guard-mexican-border-military/
GIST	<p>President Trump said Tuesday that he will deploy the U.S. military to the Mexican border to plug security gaps until his border wall is completed and that his increasingly tough talk has already forced Mexican officials to break up the massive caravan of migrants who were en route to the U.S.</p> <p>“Until we can have a wall and proper security, we’re going to be guarding our border with the military. That’s a big step. We really haven’t done that before, or certainly not very much before,” the president said with Defense Secretary James Mattis at his side.</p> <p>The White House later elaborated on Mr. Trump’s plans, saying he envisions “mobilization of the National Guard” — though what tasks they would perform remains unclear.</p> <p>His demand for the military to assist on the border surprised Mexico, which lodged an official demand for more details, but said it would not welcome whatever he had in mind.</p> <p>Officials said Mr. Trump, who last week floated the idea of using Pentagon money to fund construction of the border wall, explored his plans in a Tuesday afternoon meeting with Mr. Mattis, Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen and Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.</p> <p>The president’s ire has been stoked over the past week as the “Viacrucis Migrantes” caravan, consisting of perhaps 1,500 migrants from Central America, makes its way across Mexico intent on reaching the U.S.</p> <p>The caravan is a symbol of flaccid U.S. laws and weak enforcement by Mexico, Mr. Trump said. Unless Mexico does more to divert the caravan, he said, he will cancel the North American Free Trade Agreement and take other steps to punish Latin American nations.</p> <p>The Mexican government responded late Monday. It said it wouldn’t be bullied but insisted that it was working to handle the caravan.</p>

Mexican officials said in a statement that the caravan's participants were in the country illegally and some 400 had been deported. Mexico also said it was reaching out to screen others in the caravan and offer some of them refugee status, which would allow them to remain in Mexico.

Still, reports on the ground in Mexico this week suggested that the Mexican government's intervention was having an effect and the caravan was losing steam. Some splinter groups said they would try to reach the U.S., and others were planning to pursue humanitarian visas in Mexico.

The president, in his appearances Tuesday, also cut the size of his planned border wall, saying he envisions "700 to 800 miles of the 2,000-mile stretch" covered by a wall when all is said and done.

That is down from the 900-mile maximum Mr. Trump suggested in July and is less than the 1,000 miles of barrier that the Homeland Security Department requested in a report to Congress this year laying out \$25 billion in border security needs.

The land border, which stretches 1,954 miles, currently has 354 miles that are protected by pedestrian fencing and another 300 miles with vehicle barriers, which can hinder cars and trucks but not people and wildlife.

Much of that fencing was erected during the past decade, when President George W. Bush deployed the National Guard to do a massive round of fence-building and to plug gaps in surveillance and intelligence gathering while the Border Patrol staffed up.

It's not clear whether that is how Mr. Trump envisions using the military this time.

Mexico seemed surprised by the president's declaration Tuesday and asked the Trump administration for clarity on its military plans.

"It's certainly not something the Mexican government welcomes," Geronimo Gutierrez, Mexico's ambassador to the U.S., told CNN.

Under the Posse Comitatus Act, signed into law in 1878, U.S. troops are severely restricted in what actions they can take on U.S. soil.

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HEADLINE	04/03 DNR supports 'Dreamer' firefighters
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/matt-driscoll/article207690624.html
GIST	<p>Most people run away from fires.</p> <p>Noe Vazquez decided to run toward them.</p> <p>In 2016 Vazquez, a 20-year-old "Dreamer" from Tonasket — a small town of just over 1,000 residents near Washington's northern border — began what he hoped would be a career with the state Department of Natural Resources wildland firefighting team.</p> <p>What Vazquez couldn't have realized at the time was that only a year later that career would be jeopardized after his DACA status was rescinded. Eventually, Vazquez found himself hundreds of miles from home, detained at Tacoma's Northwest Detention Center and facing the very real prospect of deportation to a country he's never known.</p> <p>Amidst an increasingly contentious national DACA debate, something very unusual happened next — the state Department of Natural Resources stepped up and went to bat for Vazquez and the thousands of Dreamers just like him.</p>

“When I read about Noe’s story, it really sort of put a face on this issue as we watch the debate about DACA,” said Public Lands Commissioner Hilary Franz. “It was absolutely critical that I share this story.”

That’s why in early March she called a press conference to highlight Vazquez’s plight. Together with Vazquez’s legal team from Colectiva Legal and the Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network, Franz gathered in front of TV cameras and a contingent of journalists in an attempt to explain what was at stake not just for Vazquez but for the state’s largely volunteer wildland firefighting team.

Franz’s office brought the issue to the attention of U.S. Senator Murray, who dispatched a representative to the press conference.

“For a lands commissioner, this was a pretty extraordinary step to take,” a DNR spokesman said bluntly.

Considering the highly politicized and partisan immigration debate, taking a high-profile stance in support of Dreamers didn’t come without risks for Franz and the agency she leads. Tasked with managing more than 3 million acres of land, it would have been easier, and certainly far simpler, for DNR to stay silent.

According to Franz, the decision to speak up was an uncomplicated one.

Vazquez isn’t the only Dreamer on DNR’s wildland firefighting team, she said, and each are important, valued members of a team that makes significant sacrifices each year to keep the state safe.

Franz said DNR must recruit more than 500 seasonal firefighters each season to help battle blazes across the state. Dreamers like Vazquez often bring a skillset to the job — including the ability to communicate important information to rural, Spanish-speaking communities — that’s essential to success.

Vazquez — thanks to his year of experience fighting wildfires in 2016 — had already proven to be up to the job.

“The reality is we need more people who are willing to put their lives on the line and be brave and strong and have the kind of work ethic and commitment ... that we see in Noe,” Franz said.

After spending three weeks in Tacoma, Vazquez was released on bond while his case proceeded. Luckily, two weeks ago, his DACA status was renewed — thanks in part to the legal assistance he received.

The good news is Vazquez is once again free to live without fear and free to get back to fighting fires.

At least for now.

That’s because on Easter President Donald Trump took to Twitter to deliver his latest incendiary and somewhat incoherent immigration rant, further stoking the DACA debate and — once again — putting the future of Dreamers at risk.

“NO MORE DACA DEAL!” the commander-in-chief declared in his typical all caps, no-nuance style.

When I saw the news, I couldn’t help but think of Vazquez. I thought about the contributions he’s made and the impact he hopes to have for his small, rural community.

“(Dreamers are) trying to do something for our communities and trying to be someone for this country,” Vazquez said. “I’m just hoping that a permanent solution gets put into place and something gets worked out.”

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HEADLINE 04/03 Civil rights complaint deportation case

SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/945886/civil-rights-complaint-filed-in-mans-deportation-case/
GIST	<p>VANCOUVER, Wash. (AP) — A civil rights complaint has been filed on behalf of a Vancouver man, alleging that a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer eavesdropped on a courthouse conversation between the man and his defense attorney.</p> <p>The Columbian reports that the Seattle-based Northwest Immigrant Rights Project filed the complaint on Tuesday with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties.</p> <p>It accuses the officer of violating Jorge Luis Acebal-Coria’s attorney-client privilege. In addition to the complaint, Northwest Immigrant Rights Project filed a motion with the U.S. Immigration Court in Tacoma to dismiss Acebal-Coria’s deportation case.</p> <p>Lori Haley, Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokeswoman for the Western Region, declined to comment on the pending litigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 SEA installs automated screening lanes
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/945574/security-changes-sea-tac-airport/
GIST	<p>Sea-Tac Airport says new technology at one of its checkpoints will help move travelers through security faster.</p> <p>Automated Screening Lanes were installed at checkpoint 5 at the north end of the airport terminal last week, just in time for spring break travel. The change is expected to free up Transportation Security Administration agents to focus more on potential threats and less on arbitrary tasks like moving bins around.</p> <p>“This investment by the Port of Seattle is about improving the customer experience, security and efficiency – all goals to serve our travelers better,” said Lance Lyttle, Managing Director of Sea-Tac Airport.</p> <p>Sea-Tac released a video to prepare travelers for the changes. Most notable improvement: bigger bins that put themselves away.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 China tells NKorea: appreciates efforts
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles-china/china-tells-north-korea-it-appreciates-its-efforts-on-denuclearization-idUSKCN1HA0GH
GIST	<p>BEIJING (Reuters) - China appreciates North Korea’s “important efforts” to ease tension on the Korean peninsula, senior Chinese diplomat Wang Yi told the North’s foreign minister on Tuesday, hours after he called on all sides to stay focused on talks.</p> <p>China has traditionally been secretive North Korea’s closest ally, though ties had been frayed by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s pursuit of nuclear weapons and missiles and Beijing’s backing of tough U.N. sanctions in response.</p> <p>But in late March Beijing vowed to uphold its friendship with its isolated neighbor and won a pledge from Kim to denuclearize the peninsula during a meeting with President Xi Jinping.</p> <p>China’s Foreign Ministry gave only hours notice that Wang, a State Councillor and China’s Foreign Minister, would meet North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho.</p> <p>Wang told Ri that Xi and Kim had reached an important consensus on achieving a peaceful resolution to</p>

	<p>the peninsula nuclear issue during Kim’s visit to Beijing, his first known trip outside North Korea since he assumed power in 2011.</p> <p>“China appreciates North Korea’s position working toward denuclearization of the peninsula and its important efforts to ease the situation on the peninsula, and supports meetings between the leaders of the North and South and between the North and the United States,” Wang said, according to a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement.</p> <p>The ministry cited Ri as saying that North Korea would “maintain close strategic communications” with China on peninsula-related issues, and that the Kim-Xi meeting was an “important juncture” in the development of bilateral relations.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 China notifies WTO: retaliatory tariffs
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trade-china/china-formally-notifies-the-wto-of-retaliatory-tariffs-against-u-s-idUSKCN1HA1YV
GIST	<p>GENEVA (Reuters) - China has notified the World Trade Organization it is imposing \$611.5 million worth of retaliatory tariffs on \$2.75 billion worth of U.S. imports including pork, nuts and ethanol in response to U.S. duties on aluminum and steel, a WTO document showed.</p> <p>The document, dated last Thursday but posted only after the Easter public holidays, came after China said late on Sunday it has increased tariffs by up to 25 percent on 128 U.S. products, escalating a dispute between the world’s biggest economies.</p> <p>China has fulfilled its legal duty to notify the WTO and other member states of its retaliatory measures.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Avalanche forecasters in uphill battle
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/2018/04/avalanche-forecasters-grapple-deadly-season
GIST	<p>On the morning of Monday, Feb. 26, Jeremy Allyn got the kind of call he dreads. An avalanche had killed two teenagers in Snoqualmie Pass the day before. As a professional observer with the Northwest Avalanche Center, Allyn and a co-worker were tapped to investigate the cause of the fatal slide.</p> <p>They arrived at the Alpentel Valley parking lot just as the ambulance was pulling out with the bodies of 18-year-old Niko Suokko and 17-year-old Declin Ervan, both of Bellevue, who were asphyxiated by a crushing quantity of snow that buried them on a steep area known as the Snow Lake Divide.</p> <p>After a debriefing from the search-and-rescue team, the pair skied two miles into the valley to the avalanche site. Like a forensic team investigating a crime scene or a plane crash, they snapped photos and gathered technical information about the avalanche’s depth and the snowpack on which it slid. The accident report was published last week.</p> <p>The tail end of winter made for a tragic season in the Cascades, one that has claimed multiple lives and stretched the Northwest Avalanche Center thin at a time when it is aiming, over the long term, to see everybody come home safely from a day in the mountains. The Feb. 26 incident was the first of a string of deadly local avalanches over the last month, with snowshoers, skiers and snowmobilers among the victims in three consecutive weekends of fatalities.</p> <p>Altogether, Washington is responsible for seven of the 19 avalanche deaths in the U.S. so far this season, more than any other state. That startling statistic has cast a spotlight on the Northwest Avalanche Center (NWAC), the nation’s second oldest, which operates out of the National Weather Service station in Seattle’s Sand Point.</p>

Even though snow on the ground outside the office window is rare, the center, which is under the auspices of the U.S. Forest Service, employs three meteorologists and two avalanche specialists to produce daily forecasts during the winter season and periodic forecasts in the spring for the Cascades, Olympics and Mt. Hood.

Some people start their day with a quick scan of a favorite weather app, but for the legions of Northwest residents who recreate in our snowy mountains, reading the avalanche forecast on the NWAC app is a regular ritual from mid-November until the end of May — and it has far more life-or-death consequences than the day's chance of rain.

NWAC has been vigilant in advising backcountry skiers, snowshoers and snowmobilers about an elevated risk of avalanches for most of the winter, but not everyone has adequately heeded those warnings.

The forecast combines a host of information from meteorological satellites, 25 remote weather stations at key mountain locations, updates from the Washington Department of Transportation crews that clear mountain passes and reports from ski resorts and national park rangers.

The center's forecasts have become ever more important as winter backcountry travel grows. At weekend information booths this winter at popular trailheads, center staff counted 400 people traveling into the Alpentel Valley backcountry on a single sunny weekend day, part of some 2,000 backcountry users they counted over 10 visits. Website traffic to the center's forecasts have grown about 3 percent annually.

In the pre-dawn hours, the avalanche center's Allyn, 49, saddles up his pick-up truck with ski gear like he does roughly three times a week each winter to make the reverse commute from his Green Lake home to the mountains.

Allyn has worked in Washington's outdoor industry since he moved here from Massachusetts to study at the University of Puget Sound in the late 1980s. He took a year off from college to ski patrol at Crystal, then worked his way into mountain guiding. A climbing accident in Canada that broke both his feet ended his guiding career, but he found a niche in avalanche education — teaching courses on how to identify and avoid avalanche hazards — and eventually, in professional observation. He works as a carpenter in the off-season, but hopes to return to NWAC full-time next winter.

Allyn's field observations are essential to the forecast's mix, and last week he took a routine trip to the backcountry near Crystal Mountain ski resort. Responsible for the central and southern Cascades, including Snoqualmie Pass, Mt. Rainier, and White Pass, some reports of skier-triggered avalanches — with no burials — had piqued his interest to check out conditions firsthand.

The bumper-to-bumper headlights on I-5 North soon melded into the strip mall detritus of Auburn, which gave way to Enumclaw horse country. Outside of Greenwater, the rain turned to light snow and blanketed the evergreens with a white sheen.

"I'm pretty tired right now, to be honest," Allyn, who has the taciturn nature of someone who spends a lot of solitary time in the mountains, admitted on the way. "The last month has been quite busy and we've had a lot of near-misses and a number of avalanche fatalities. The combination of physical, mental and emotional fatigue is definitely setting in."

The day before, Allyn had attended two celebrations of life in the same day: one for Suokko and another for his girlfriend's co-worker, who perished in the Methow Valley slide. After the heavy load this season, the avalanche center is looking to put a trauma and grief counselor on retainer for future incidents.

But there was still a job to do, and Allyn was on the trail using alpine touring skis with climbing skins even before Crystal's lifts began operating for the day. Over the course of four hours, Allyn explored the weekend's avalanches in Bullion Basin, where two crowns, the clearly visible line left on the snow when a slope slides, stood out with ski tracks running above and below.

Equipped with a pack stocked with avalanche observation gear, Allyn picked two spots to dig four-foot deep pits. Allyn has the lean build one would expect from someone who climbs mountains for a living, and he had the pit dug and shaved to a clean surface in minutes — one suspects he'd be handy to dig out a buried car — revealing a snow profile like a sedimentary rock or tree-ring growth: a cross-section that reveals change over time.

Thin lines running horizontally indicated rain storms over the last few months of winter weather that were buried in the snowpack. On the surface, skiers might know these as rain crusts that make for bad skiing. Once buried, these so-called “weak layers” might not hold when skiers or a snowmobile glide on top of them, causing the entire snowpack above to slide.

In 30 years of mountain travel, Allyn has never been caught in an avalanche that buried him — setting off small, controlled avalanches is sometimes part of the job — though he says he did help rescue a guiding client once in British Columbia's Valhalla Mountains.

Using the shovel to tap the snow and see its reaction to pressure, it took three tries and maximum force to get a foot-deep cube of snow to slide off the most recent rain crust — a good sign the fresh powder was bonding well to the snowpack beneath it, at least at this elevation and aspect.

The day's field work completed, Allyn transitioned into downhill mode and zipped down the face of Blue Bell Knoll, a slope already laced with s-marks from the weekend's backcountry ski crowd — the kind that depend on NWAC's forecasts to make decisions about how to balance avalanche risk with good-quality skiing.

And by mid-afternoon, camped out at an Enumclaw coffee shop, Allyn filed his daily report so that the forecasters back at Sand Point could add it to the list of data points that would inform the next day's forecast.

While the idea of getting paid to traipse around the mountains might sound appealing to aspiring ski bums, Allyn must be out there even in frigid cold or soaking rain. Over the course of a season, especially one with multiple avalanche investigations, that routine takes its toll.

Although Allyn mostly sticks to the technical language of his craft, regularly using phrases like “party members,” “uphill mode,” and “mitigate your hazard,” he does get a bit more personal. He admits that the life-and-death decisions that result from his contribution to the forecast are “constantly” on his mind.

“Last year was the first time I was doing a lot of incident reporting and wrapping my brain around the human side of what can happen,” he said. “Interviewing loved ones and partners and fully investigating these incidents, you can't help but look at them from a perspective of, hey, this could be my friends or my partners, or me.”

The avalanche center has grown considerably from its humble roots as a University of Washington project that issued its first avalanche advisory in 1975. While the Forest Service pays for the office-based staff's \$360,000 annual cost, nonprofit Friends of the Northwest Avalanche Center raises another \$480,000 from corporate and individual donations to pay for the team of eight professional observers, half in Seattle and half in outposts like Bellingham, Mt. Hood, Leavenworth and the Methow Valley.

NWAC has a robust social media presence and runs a series of avalanche awareness lectures at REI for first-timers as well as continuing education talks for backcountry users who have already taken the industry-standard level-one course.

Despite its blizzard of outreach, the center is up against a factor perhaps just as dangerous as a touchy snowpack: human desire.

“We've still got a long way to go in terms of how we get people to change their behavior,” Scott Schell,

executive director of the nonprofit side, said, describing an ideal risk candidate as “the person who works five days a week sitting behind a computer who’s dreaming of getting outside on the weekend and skiing that line they’ve read about on the forums.”

This season’s deaths have been a setback on the road to the avalanche industry’s goal of no fatalities by 2025, but Schell is heartened by long-term trends.

“Fatal accidents have been pretty flat over last 20 years, and at the same time it’s safe to assume that backcountry use in the U.S. has increased somewhere around tenfold,” he said.

Although a 1910 Stevens Pass avalanche was the deadliest in U.S. history, Washington’s high share of avalanche fatalities this season is a recent historical anomaly. Alaska, Colorado, and Montana all have had more avalanche accident reports and fatalities, while Utah is about on par with Washington, according to the Avalanche Accident Database, whose records date back to the 1998-1999 season.

Schell attributes this year’s exceptional number of deaths to “an unusual snowpack” that featured what in avalanche-speak are called “deep persistent weak layers,” or places buried way down in the snowpack that, while unlikely to trigger a slide, will lead to a catastrophic avalanche if they do. Investigations fingered those layers as the likely culprit in most of the fatal avalanches over the last month, although Allyn stressed the goal of investigations is not to assign blame but rather to educate and contribute to the industry’s collective knowledge on snow science.

Convincing local skiers, snowshoers and snowmobilers to heed the danger has been the cardinal challenge of the 2017-2018 winter season, Schell said.

“As an avy center that’s where we have a lot of progress to make,” Schell said, calling it an “uphill battle,” just like the slog his team’s observers make every winter day.

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HEADLINE	04/03 States sue to stop citizenship question
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/3/ny-16-other-states-sue-stop-citizenship-question/
GIST	<p>New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman filed a lawsuit Tuesday challenging the Trump administration’s decision to ask about citizenship on the 2020 census, saying the question will ruin the upcoming count, violating the Constitution’s demand for an accurate count.</p> <p>The challenge, joined by attorneys general from 16 states and attorneys from big cities such as Philadelphia, San Francisco and D.C., says that immigrants — both legal and illegal — and others will be scared away from taking part in the 2020 count because they don’t want to answer their citizenship status.</p> <p>That, the challengers said, will skew the census, undercutting the Constitution’s requirement of an “actual Enumeration” of the whole population every decade.</p> <p>The citizenship question has become the latest explosive dividing line in immigration and race under President Trump, with the full array of anti-Trump organizations lining up to oppose the 2020 census decision.</p> <p>That was on display Tuesday in New York, where Democratic lawmakers and immigrant-rights groups staged a rally to announce the lawsuit.</p> <p>“Are you ready to do this fight? Are you ready to take on Trump,” said Steven Choi, executive director of the New York Immigrant Community.</p> <p>Asking about citizenship used to be standard on the full decennial census up through the middle of the 20th century. It was then shifted to the census “long form,” which went to about one in six households</p>

	<p>during the decennial count.</p> <p>The long form has now been discontinued and instead the census relies on the American Community Survey, which is sent to between 1 and 2 percent of households each year, for citizenship estimates.</p> <p>Mr. Schneiderman said those estimates are good enough for government work, and there's no good reason to ask about the question of everyone.</p> <p>"Decade after decade, census officials have said very clearly that simply asking about immigration status would create an environment of fear and mistrust in immigrant communities, communities of color," he said.</p> <p>He also said procedurally the Trump administration added the question in without putting it through the full array of tests that are usually required before any new questions are added.</p> <p>The crux of the legal battle is likely to turn on what the Constitution requires when it demands the government conduct an "actual Enumeration" every decade.</p> <p>The Constitution says the count is used to apportion congressional districts between the states, but in reality the information is used for much more, including drawing the district lines for Congress and state legislatures, and for doling out hundreds of billions of dollars in federal cash assistance for education, infrastructure and other needs.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 City removes Confederate name streets
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/confederate-names-removed-from-residential-street-signs-hollywood-florida/
GIST	<p>HOLLYWOOD, Fla. -- The names of Confederate generals are being removed from street signs in one Florida city. The Hollywood city commission voted in August to remove the names of Robert E. Lee, Nathan Bedford Forrest and John Bell Hood from residential streets.</p> <p>In a Sun Sentinel report, officials said about half the signs have been replaced so far. The rest should be replaced by the end of April.</p> <p>The streets were renamed Freedom, Hope and Liberty. Mayor Josh Levy said the new signs display a message that is "a lot better than the message the prior names were sending."</p> <p>Laurie Schecter was one of the residents who petitioned for the sign changes in 2017. She said the new names "better represent the character of our city and the people who live here."</p> <p>The debate over Confederate street names, statues and other symbols is being conducted in several communities around the nation.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Israel PM retracts migrant resettlement
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/israel-s-netanyahu-changes-his-mind-migrant-resettlement-plan-n862266
GIST	<p>JERUSALEM — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Tuesday he was canceling an agreement with the U.N. refugee agency to relocate thousands of African migrants, bowing to right-wing pressure to scrap the deal.</p> <p>The pact would have given thousands of other migrants the right to stay in Israel.</p>

	<p>Hours after announcing the arrangement on Monday, Netanyahu posted on his Facebook page that he was putting its implementation on hold until a further review.</p> <p>He then declared the agreement dead at a meeting on Tuesday with representatives of residents of south Tel Aviv, a poor area that has attracted the largest migrant community. Many of its inhabitants want the Africans out.</p> <p>"I have listened carefully to the many comments on the agreement. As a result, and after I again weighed the advantages and disadvantages, I decided to cancel the deal," a statement from the prime minister's office quoted Netanyahu as saying at the session.</p> <p>The fate of about 37,000 Africans in Israel has posed a moral dilemma for a state founded as a haven for Jews from persecution and a national home.</p> <p>The right-wing government has been under pressure from its nationalist voter base to expel the migrants. It had been moving ahead with plans to deport many of them to Rwanda when Israel's Supreme Court intervened and froze such deportations in March.</p> <p>According to the agreement with the U.N. refugee agency that Netanyahu outlined on Monday, about 16,250 African migrants, most of them from Eritrea and Sudan, would have been relocated to Western nations.</p> <p>"Despite legal restraints and international difficulties that are piling up, we will continue to act with determination to explore all of the options at our disposal to remove the infiltrators," Netanyahu said in the statement on Tuesday.</p> <p>Netanyahu's backtrack was largely seen in Israel as an attempt to appease his voter base and keep its support at a time of political uncertainty.</p> <p>Since 2005, around 64,000 Africans have entered Israel illegally over its border with Egypt, although thousands have since left. A fence Israel has built over the past few years along the frontier has largely stemmed the flow.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Another Calif. city sues sanctuary law
SOURCE	http://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2018/04/02/huntington-beach-sanctuary-city-status/
GIST	<p>HUNTINGTON BEACH (CBSLA) — Another Orange County city is joining the fight against sanctuary city status.</p> <p>The Huntington Beach City Council voted 6 to 1 to sue the state over SB 54 — the Senate bill that would protect undocumented immigrants by limiting the cooperation between local police and ICE agents.</p> <p>More than 100 people were at the meeting to tell the council they wanted to join the Orange County lawsuit, just days after Los Alamitos became the first city in Orange County to leave their sanctuary city status behind.</p> <p>Congressman Dana Rohrabacher could barely be heard over the hecklers.</p> <p>"I am very proud of the USA," said Rohrabacher. "I would suggest that those who advocate for sanctuary states are betraying the American people."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 N.C. 'disturbing' police videos released
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/02/us/asheville-police-body-camera/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The city of Asheville, North Carolina, released "disturbing, difficult to watch" videos from nine body-worn cameras related to the beating and tasing of a man who was suspected by police of jaywalking, the city said.</p> <p>One video from an officer on the scene shows Asheville police officer Christopher Hickman wrap his arms around the man's neck from behind as police attempt to subdue him.</p> <p>The footage provides greater insight into the August 2017 arrest of Johnnie Jermaine Rush, the man Asheville police arrested for jaywalking.</p> <p>Hickman, 31, was removed from patrol duty a day after the incident. He resigned from the department in January, the same day that he was to be terminated, according to a timeline of the case released by the city council.</p> <p>Video of the arrest recorded by Hickman's body camera was published by the Asheville Citizen-Times on February 28, setting off outrage in the western North Carolina city. The newspaper has not revealed how it obtained the video.</p> <p>Hickman was taken into custody on March 8 and charged with one count each of assault by strangulation, assault inflicting serious injury and communicating threats, the city said.</p> <p>"Christopher Hickman served the City of Asheville for 10 years and received numerous commendations," Thomas Amburgey, an attorney for Hickman, said in a statement. "It's unfortunate that so many individuals have rushed to judge my client. I am confident that when a fair and impartial jury hears the whole story that Mr. Hickman will be acquitted. Any notion that my client had any criminal intent to harm Mr. Rush is without basis."</p> <p>The city on Monday also released video recorded a little more than an hour after Rush's arrest, in which he, Hickman and an officer in training can be heard candidly discussing the incident as they are standing outside a hospital.</p> <p>"No disrespect with you sir, I understand that I ran and whatnot, but you didn't have to keep punching me and choking me," Rush said.</p> <p>"Yeah, I did," Officer Hickman said. "Because you never complied with my order."</p> <p>Rush said he wasn't able to comply and put his hands behind his back because he was on the ground being choked.</p> <p>"I didn't start choking you until after I probably punched you ten times," Hickman responded.</p> <p>In another of the videos taken after the use of force, Hickman speaks to a supervisor, Sgt. Lisa Taube, on the scene and admits to using the taser to punch the man in the face several times.</p> <p>"I hit him in the face as if it was a club like three times. That was effective," Hickman says. "That's what happened to his left side, I punched him in the face with it about as hard as I could."</p> <p>A Buncombe County Superior Court Judge granted the City of Asheville's petition to release the video, which was made public Monday at 2 p.m.</p> <p>In an open letter from the Asheville City Council, Interim City Manager Cathy Ball and Police Chief Tammy Hooper said the videos were being released in the interest of transparency.</p> <p>"This incident has created a loss of trust within the community, particularly among people of color. The</p>

City of Asheville understands that there is substantial work to do to restore the public's trust," they said in a statement.

Rush initially was charged with second-degree trespassing and resisting a public officer. He filed a complaint with police the day he was arrested alleging Hickman used excessive force.

Chief Hooper watched the body camera footage and ordered Hickman off the street and told him to turn in his badge and gun, according to a timeline from the city.

The district attorney and Asheville police agreed to dismiss the charges against Rush in September after watching the body camera footage, according to documents from the City Council.

The actions of Hickman's supervisor, Sgt. Taube, have also drawn criticism. Department policy requires the supervisor in a use of force incident to conduct a preliminary investigation and collect supplemental documents from all parties.

In video from her body camera, Taube can be seen arriving at the scene, speaking to Hickman and listening to his side of the story. She then goes to speak to Rush in the back of a police vehicle.

As Rush tells his version of events and says that he was hit in the face and choked, she repeatedly interrupts him and disagrees with him.

"You were in the wrong. You were told by an officer (you're) under arrest," she said. "You resisted and did not comply and ran away."

Later, she speaks with a woman who identifies herself as the mother of Rush's son. Taube tells her that Rush was being arrested for resisting arrest and trespassing, and suggests he may also receive charges for being "intoxicated" and disruptive.

The woman says she just saw Rush and that he didn't have anything to drink.

"Well, he's intoxicated on something," Taube says.

Sgt. Taube received disciplinary action for "poor performance," the city of Asheville said on its website, and was ordered to undergo remedial training in connection with the incident.

Rondell Lance, the president of the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge in Asheville, told CNN that the videos showed that Taube acted properly and appropriately given the situation.

She was disciplined because she did not watch the body camera video that night or the next morning, Lance said. Her decision not to watch the videos was just an error in thinking and was not made with bad intentions, he said.

"There wasn't (anything) that she tried to hide or cover up," he said.

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HEADLINE	04/02 Hurricane outlook: near normal season
SOURCE	https://www.accuweather.com/en/weather-news/2018-atlantic-hurricane-outlook-4-us-impacts-predicted-amid-another-active-season/70004533
GIST	After a devastating hurricane season for the United States in 2017, forecasters are predicting a near normal to slightly above-normal year with between 12 to 15 tropical storms. Of those storms, 6 to 8 are forecast to become hurricanes and 3 to 5 are forecast to become major hurricanes.

	<p>“Last year we had 17 tropical storms. This year may not be quite as active, but still probably normal to slightly above normal,” AccuWeather Atlantic Hurricane Expert Dan Kottlowski said.</p> <p>Similar to last year, sea surface temperatures are expected to remain warmer than normal across most of the basin and normal to above normal over the main developmental region, where more than 85 percent of all tropical storms form.</p> <p>“Right now, we are in a weakening La Niña pattern, but the climate pattern is expected to go into what’s called a neutral pattern, which promotes near-normal wind shear,” Kottlowski said.</p> <p>This should limit tropical development.</p> <p>“The thing that’s causing the balance to tip in one direction [this year] is that sea surface temperatures are warmer than normal,” he said.</p> <p>Warm water creates more favorable conditions for tropical development.</p> <p>While last year brought six impacts to the United States, including Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, this year is more likely to result in three or four.</p> <p>According to Kottlowski, conditions are ripe for early season development in the Gulf of Mexico due the warm water already in place in that part of the Atlantic basin.</p> <p>As for the rest of the season, historical records and the projected pattern suggest the area from Houston to Florida and up through the Outer Banks of North Carolina will be more favorable for direct impacts from tropical storms and hurricanes.</p> <p>“Anywhere else along the coast, everybody should still be vigilant and prepare for a possible direct impact,” Kottlowski said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Council: 20% drivers w/out insurance
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/consumer/nearly-20-percent-of-drivers-in-washington-dont-have-insurance
GIST	<p>A lot of people drive around without insurance. It’s about 17 percent of the motorists in Washington, according to the latest report from the Insurance Research Council. That means we are the seventh worst state in the country for uninsured drivers.</p> <p>"You can buy coverage to protect yourself and those in your vehicle from others on the road who are not carrying enough liability insurance or who may not have any insurance at all," said Kenton Brine, president of the NW Insurance Council. "That coverage is called Uninsured Motorist coverage or Underinsured Motorists coverage."</p> <p>While it's against the law to drive without insurance, uninsured motorist coverage and underinsured motorist coverage are optional in Washington. Insurance companies must offer you this coverage, but you can decline it.</p> <p>So, what happens if you do that?</p> <p>"If you were hit by an uninsured driver or someone who doesn't have enough coverage to pay for your damages or injuries, that is going to end up being on you and come out of your own pocket to pay for damages to your vehicles or injuries to passengers or yourself while you're in your car," Brine said.</p>

	The Northwest Insurance Council tells me the cost of adding uninsured and underinsured motorist coverage to a policy is typically between 5-10 percent of your annual premium.
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HEADLINE	04/04 Triple wave of wet weather to Seattle
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/weather/blog/triple-wave-of-wet-weather-headed-to-seattle/281-534895765
GIST	<p>A warm front moved into western Washington overnight, and it brought rain for Wednesday. The rain arrived along the coast and parts of the Southwest Interior Tuesday night, and continued to spread inland through the night.</p> <p>The rain, while not very heavy, will be with us much of the day. Much of western Washington is looking at between 0.25 - 0.5" of rain. The showers taper late Wednesday afternoon.</p> <p>Soon as this first system exits, another is quick on its heels. A second frontal system brings more wet weather Thursday. After a brief break Friday, yet another system arrives over the weekend. This stretch of wet weather will likely continue into next week.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Seattle sues census citizenship question
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/seattle-among-6-cities-suing-trump-administration-over-census-citizenship-question/
GIST	<p>Seattle and Washington state are among six cities and 17 states suing to block President Donald Trump's administration from demanding citizenship information in the 2020 U.S. census.</p> <p>Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Conference of Mayors are also part of the lawsuit filed Tuesday in federal court in New York.</p> <p>New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman is leading the effort, accusing the Trump administration of violating the Enumeration Clause of the U.S. Constitution.</p> <p>In a statement, Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan called the administration's plan an unreasonable, unjust and unconstitutional attempt to "stifle democracy, strip our community of much-needed resources and undercount communities of color and immigrants."</p> <p>Demanding citizenship information would likely depress census participation among immigrants, causing a population undercount that would disproportionately harm states and cities with large immigrant communities, Durkan said.</p> <p>"In the last decade, Seattle's population has skyrocketed, which is why it's critical the upcoming census provides accurate and fair representation," she said.</p> <p>"Without an accurate count, Seattle could lose billions of dollars of federal investments in housing, schools, and hospitals, and other critical federal resources."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 MLK assassination still clouded mystery
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2018/04/04/MLK-assassination-still-clouded-with-mystery-after-50-years/3871522767459/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=2
GIST	April 4 (UPI) -- Despite growing threats on his life, Martin Luther King Jr. had committed to going to

Memphis.

There, he wanted to march with striking minority sanitation workers. Before the trip was over, the civil rights leader was dead and one of the most controversial -- and mysterious -- cases in U.S. history began.

Raised in Georgia, King became a Baptist minister at 18 and would spend the next two decades building a civil rights legacy recognized the world over. His national crusade, though, was abruptly cut short 50 years ago, on April 4, 1968.

In the decades since his death, King's assassination has been pored over perhaps more than any case other than the shooting of President John F. Kennedy. Examinations and re-examinations of King's death have been done at local and congressional levels, and conspiracy theories are nearly as common as those surrounding Kennedy.

The shooting

King arrived in Memphis on April 3, 1968, after his flight was delayed by a bomb threat. That evening, he gave the final speech of his life -- in which his words later seemed prophetic.

"I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop," he said. "Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. ... But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land.

"I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land. And so I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man."

Because King's visit to Memphis had been well advertised, it was no secret that he was staying at the Lorraine Motel. James Earl Ray, who at one time confessed to being the assassin, changed his residence on April 4 -- police said in order to be closer to King's motel. At a rooming house, he checks into room No. 8 under the name John Willard.

After purchasing a pair of binoculars, Ray returns to his room -- where police said he kept an eye on King's balcony. At 6:01 p.m., King emerged from the room with a few associates and a single shot rang out. The 39-year-old civil rights leader was struck in the head and thrown violently backward as members of his entourage, immortalized in a now-famous photograph, pointed toward the area they heard the shot come from -- Ray's rooming house.

"Martin Luther King took his cross on his shoulder over at the Lorraine Motel, and there he was crucified," the Rev. Ralph Abernathy said in 1968.

The escape

According to the official version of events, Ray immediately packed up his belongings and fled the rooming house -- wrapping the rifle and a few other items in a blanket. After exiting to the street, he panicked when he spotted a police car and dumped the bundle of evidence on the sidewalk in front of the Canipe Amusement Co. offices. He hopped into his white Ford Mustang and took off.

Ray was identified as the shooter by two witnesses in the Canipe office and a resident of the rooming house who'd seen the gunman flee in the moments after the gunshot.

Within an hour, Ray had driven to Mississippi, then went on to Alabama and finally, Georgia. He then ditches the Mustang and takes a Greyhound bus to Michigan before slipping across the U.S.-Canadian border.

It wasn't until June 8 that the 40-year-old suspect was ultimately tracked down in Britain, where he was

arrested at London's Heathrow Airport attempting to board a flight to Belgium. Authorities said using multiple aliases, Ray's final destination was to be Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), a segregated country of Africa where he believed he would be a celebrated mercenary for killing King. He was extradited to the United States.

The trial and 'Raoul'

After firing his original attorney, Ray is represented at trial by famed defense lawyer Percy Foreman -- who convinces the accused gunman that an acquittal is impossible. Ray opts to plead guilty to the King assassination. He is sentenced to 99 years in Tennessee's Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary.

Three days later, Ray abruptly recants his guilty plea and claims he was merely a pawn in a grand conspiracy to kill King -- and that a shadowy figure named "Raoul" pulled the strings.

According to Ray, he first met Raoul months before the shooting in Memphis as a means to obtain Canadian immigration papers. He said from that point forward, he participated in a number of criminal enterprises with the mastermind that took him across the United States. In April, he said, he was instructed by Raoul to buy a 30-06 rifle -- and the Mustang -- and told to rent the room adjacent to the Lorraine Motel.

Ray would claim for the rest of his life that he was actually miles away from the scene when King was shot, although no one has ever been able to corroborate his alibi. Raoul, he said, disappeared after the assassination.

The investigations

Memphis police and the FBI concluded that Ray was responsible for killing King, although some argue federal authorities didn't conduct an adequate conspiracy investigation. With Ray's guilty plea, many investigators felt the case didn't need to be examined further.

In 1976, eight years after King's death and Ray's repeated denials, the case received a second look by a congressional committee that convened to investigate the assassinations of King and Kennedy -- largely due to public doubts and significant elements of conspiracy in both cases.

Another element of suspicion among the general public was added by the FBI's taking the lead in the investigation. Former bureau director J. Edgar Hoover had previously made efforts to compromise King's crusade and his involvement in the probe had a direct impact on the public's questioning of whether the FBI could be impartial. Hoover once called King the "most notorious liar in the United States."

While the House panel was most noted for its work on the Kennedy killing, it concluded that it was likely King died as the result of a conspiracy. However, investigators noted the conspiracy most likely involved Ray's brothers, not the U.S. government, as some theories alleged.

Ray testified before the committee and again told panel members he'd only been a puppet for the mysterious Raoul. While most experts have dismissed the existence of a Raoul, it was ultimately learned that the FBI in 1968 had followed up on a potential lead for such a figure -- stemming from a phone call Ray received while staying in Los Angeles before King's death from a man who identified himself as "J.C. Hardin." The bureau even went so far as to commission a composite sketch of Hardin, but dropped the pursuit after Ray pleaded guilty.

The Justice Department has doubted the existence of anyone named Raoul in the case.

Some materials from the FBI's 1968 investigation remain classified, and sealed, until 2027. An effort to get the documents released via Congress failed in 2010.

Ray's appeals

Ray spent three decades attempting to get a new trial in King's assassination, but was ultimately unsuccessful. He was, however, able to persuade a number of people -- including members of the King family and the pastor's former lawyer -- that he was railroaded.

Several members of the King family -- including his widow, Coretta Scott King, and sons Martin Luther King III and Dexter King -- believe Ray was not the shooter.

"The evidence pointed away from Mr. Ray," she said in 1999. "He was not the person we felt that really actually killed him."

The attorney, William Pepper, wrote multiple books on the assassination and argued that a conspiracy involving the U.S. government, the Pentagon and the U.S. intelligence community had a hand in the shooting -- largely because they wanted to "silence King's growing criticism of the Vietnam War and his anti-poverty campaign."

"We've basically solved the case, telling people how it happened and why it happened," Pepper told the Detroit Metro Times last month.

Threats against King's life had increased substantially in the months and years preceding his death, as many segregationists viewed him as a prominent enemy.

"He caused more strife in this country than anyone I can think of," Eugene Bull Connor, the former police commissioner in Birmingham, Ala., told UPI in 1968.

Ray attempted multiple times to escape from prison and was attacked during a 1981 riot.

He ultimately died in prison in 1998 at age 70 after serving nearly 30 years of his 99-year sentence. To this day, the most incriminating evidence that argues for his guilt are his fingerprints on both the 30-06 rifle that killed King and the binoculars.

King's legacy

A half-century after his death, King remains one of the most celebrated civil rights leaders in U.S. history. Endless city streets and buildings have been renamed in his honor, and the Lorraine Motel -- where he spent his final day -- is now the National Civil Rights Museum, which opened in 1991.

"Let's pledge our best efforts to protect the advances that we have inherited and make real the legacy that has been entrusted to each of us," former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder told Memphis' Commercial Appeal this week. "That is our charge, and this is our moment."

Despite the threats on his life, King continued to preach peaceful protest -- a hallmark Abernathy and others who picked up his mantle adopted in the years that followed.

King is perhaps best known for the 1963 speech he delivered on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., -- in which he proclaimed, "I have a dream." The speech followed the civil rights March on Washington.

"We are still marching," Holder said. "We are still striving. And we are still calling on our nation's leaders to act with a sense of justice, compassion and common humanity."

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HEADLINE 04/04 Russia: West fomenting new Cold War

SOURCE <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/04/04/russian-officials-accuse-west-fomenting-new-cold-war.html>

GIST	<p>MOSCOW – Top Russian defense and security officials are accusing the West of fomenting a new Cold War in a bid to retain waning influence in global affairs.</p> <p>Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu says NATO is using "the non-existent Russian threat to methodically boost its military potential" and beef up its forces near Russia's borders.</p> <p>Speaking at a security conference Wednesday, Shoigu said Moscow will respond to NATO's moves by strengthening its defense capabilities to "ensure military security of Russia and its allies."</p> <p>Russia-West relations have sunk to their lowest level since the Cold War following Moscow's 2014 annexation of Crimea and support for separatists in eastern Ukraine. Tensions further escalated this month after the poisoning of an ex-Russian spy in Britain, leading to mass diplomats' expulsions by the West and Russia.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Renewed commitment to MLK's legacy
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/04/04/resilience-resolve-and-renewed-commitment-to-mlks-legacy.html
GIST	<p>MEMPHIS, Tenn. – Half a century ago, the enthusiastic crowd eager to hear from the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. roused him from his bed at the Lorraine Motel across town in a thunderstorm to Memphis' Mason Temple Church of God in Christ.</p> <p>King's words rang anew during the program before his youngest child, Bernice King, addressed the audience. Calling her older brother, Martin Luther King III, to join her in the pulpit, she discussed the difficulty of publicly mourning their father — a man hated during his lifetime, now beloved around the world.</p> <p>"It's important to see two of the children who lost their daddy 50 years ago to an assassin's bullet," said Bernice King, now 55. "But we kept going. Keep all of us in prayer as we continue the grieving process for a parent that we've had yet to bury."</p> <p>As the world prepares to mark the 50th anniversary of King's murder, the milestone coincides with a resurgence of white supremacy, the continued shootings of unarmed black men and a parade of discouraging statistics on the lack of progress among black Americans on issues from housing to education to wealth. But rather than despair, the resounding message repeated in the building was one of resilience, resolve, and a renewed commitment to King's legacy and unfinished work.</p> <p>Just as it was on King's last night in Memphis, the forecast Tuesday called for a storm to again rattle the church walls, evoking the memory of King's pronouncement that he had "been to the mountaintop," his thunderous remarks were outdone only by the evening's weather.</p> <p>With an enthusiastic crowd filling Memphis' Mason Temple Church of God in Christ, the atmosphere was heavy with nostalgia Tuesday for the evening 50 years ago that the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his final speech.</p> <p>A gospel singer led a rousing rendition of "Lift Every Voice and Sing," and the gathering took on the air of a mass meeting, as if the crowd could again will King from his hotel bed across town. It was in this sanctuary that he delivered his famous "Mountaintop" speech the night before he was assassinated. The commemoration was part of a week of events celebrating King's legacy.</p> <p>Lee Saunders, a national labor leader, recounted how that night in 1968, King made an unplanned appearance to deliver the famous speech without notes after his aides saw how passionate the crowd was: "There was one man they wanted to hear from."</p>

But Saunders stressed that the purpose of the week's commemorations was not just to look to the past.

"Dr. King's work — our work — isn't done. We must still struggle; we must still sacrifice. We must still educate and organize and mobilize. That's why we're here in Memphis. Not just to honor our history, but to seize our future," he said.

Saunders was among the first speakers, taking the pulpit just after a video message from former President Barack Obama.

"As long as we're still trying, Dr. King's soul is still rejoicing," Obama said on the video.

Some of the sanitation workers who participated with King in a 1968 strike sat in the front row and were treated like celebrities, with audience members stopping to take photos with them before the event started. Contemporaries of King's including the Rev. Jesse Jackson were also in attendance.

The commemoration of the "Mountaintop" speech followed an announcement earlier in the day by civil rights leaders who are reviving an economic justice campaign first planned by King. The organizers of a new Poor People's Campaign are planning 40 days of marches, sit-ins and other peaceful protests.

"This first 40 days is not the end; it's the launch," said the Rev. William Barber of North Carolina, one of the co-chairs of the revived campaign. "You will see simultaneous moral direct action. You will see simultaneous training of people to prepare for a season of massive voter mobilization."

Starting May 14, clergy, union members and other activists will take part in the events in about 30 states, targeting Congress and state legislatures. Then, on June 23, organizers plan a large rally in Washington — similar to what King had envisioned. The original Poor People's Campaign was carried out in 1968 after King's death by other civil rights leaders.

King had envisioned the Poor People's Campaign in Washington as a way to speak out against economic injustice, as he shifted his focus from civil rights to human rights. But before he could finish those plans, he came to Memphis in 1968 to support a strike by black sanitation workers who were tired of dealing with low pay and dangerous working conditions.

King led a march in Memphis that turned violent on March 28, and he went back home to Atlanta. Seeking to prove that non-violent protests still worked, King vowed to lead a peaceful march and returned to Memphis days later.

The civil rights leader was standing on the balcony of the old Lorraine Motel when he was shot on April 4, 1968. He died at a hospital at age 39.

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HEADLINE	04/04 EMS-police gap in Austin bombing case?
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/04/04/austin-bomber-may-have-benefited-from-ems-police-communication-mishap-officials-say.html
GIST	<p>Addressing a communication breakdown that may have tipped off the Austin, Texas, bomber last month, emergency medical personnel on Tuesday announced changes in how they'll work with local police.</p> <p>The suspected communication mishap occurred March 20, the day before authorities closed in on Mark Conditt, who blew himself up after attacks that left two people dead and several others injured.</p> <p>Officials said two medics from the Pflugerville, Texas, Fire Department knocked on the door of Conditt's home, despite a team of officers staking out the site, waiting to arrest him, the Austin American-Statesman reported.</p>

The medics were supposed be on standby in case something went wrong, as cops planned to approach the home around 4 p.m. that day, when the suspect was supposed to return home, the newspaper reported.

Instead, a roommate of Conditt answered the door and told the medics no one needed assistance in the house.

Police were irate that the medics had compromised their surveillance work, according to the paper.

EMS officials said they have established a new system when it comes to working with officers during sensitive arrests and searches to avoid another misstep.

Meanwhile, interim Austin police Chief Brian Manley told FOX 7 on Tuesday that in hindsight, he regretted having called the bomber “a challenged young man” and apologized for a member of his team making public comments claiming the first bombing victim may have created and accidentally detonated the device himself.

“Those were comments that, if you have to investigate something, fine, but that's just not something that you put out publicly,” Manley said.

The interim chief praised the works of his officers, and all the agencies that assisted in what he said “was the most complex case” of his career.

“The partnership amongst the agencies that may not always get along was tremendous. Egos were left at the door, titles were left at the door, agencies were left at the door and everybody worked together to keep Austin safe,” he said.

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HEADLINE	04/03 France rail workers 3mo. rolling walkout
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/03/europe/france-rail-strikes-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Rail workers across France have gone on strike for the first day of a three-month rolling walkout, the latest and potentially biggest battle over labor laws in the country since President Emmanuel Macron took office last May promising to transform the jobs market.</p> <p>Train services have been severely disrupted, with around 87% of high-speed trains and 80% of regional services canceled Tuesday, according to SNCF, France's state-owned rail company.</p> <p>Eurostar services were also affected, with one in four services from Paris canceled. High-speed Thalys trains towards Belgium and the Netherlands were operating almost as normal, but there were no services towards Switzerland, Spain or Italy.</p> <p>Tuesday's walkout -- dubbed "Black Tuesday" by the French media -- comes less than two weeks after a nationwide strike across the public and transport sectors as workers protested the government's proposed labor overhauls, including the plans to open the SNCF to competition.</p> <p>Unions have called for the "strongest possible" strike to protest proposed reforms that they believe would lead to the privatization of the railways, and to call for higher wages and an end to precarious jobs. The government said there were no plans to privatize SNCF, which is 45 billion euros (\$56 billion) in debt, according to Reuters.</p> <p>"We're striking for several reasons, but at the top of the list is the government wanting to open up the service to competition," the spokesman for rail union Sud Rail, Eric Santinelli, told CNN. "They don't want to do it in a progressive manner, they want to do it in an accelerated manner."</p> <p>Both sides have made it clear that they will not concede, and each sees the strikes as a test of their resolve</p>

	<p>and credibility. The government believes it is acting with a mandate for change, but the unions have always succeeded in making the government back down.</p> <p>The walkout, which began at 7 p.m. local time Monday and will end at 8 a.m. Thursday, is the first of 18 two-day walkouts planned before the end of June. The next is scheduled for April 8-9.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Britain: joint Russia probe 'perverse'
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-russia-chemicalweapons/britain-russian-proposal-for-joint-salisbury-probe-perverse-idUSKCN1HB12I
GIST	<p>THE HAGUE (Reuters) - The British delegation to the global chemical weapons body on Wednesday dismissed a Russian proposal for a joint U.K.-Russian investigation into the Salisbury poisoning of former spy Sergei Skripal as "perverse".</p> <p>"Is it a diversionary tactic, and yet more disinformation designed to evade the questions the Russians authorities must answer," the U.K. delegation said in a tweet during a special meeting at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Mexico screens migrant caravan
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-caravan/mexico-vets-and-disperses-central-american-migrant-caravan-idUSKCN1HA2D0
GIST	<p>MATIAS ROMERO, Mexico (Reuters) - Mexican officials on Tuesday screened a dwindling group of hundreds of largely Central American migrants who are moving through Mexico toward the United States, seeking to break up the "caravan" that has drawn the ire of U.S. President Donald Trump.</p> <p>Trump, doubling down on his tough stance against illegal immigration, has railed against those making their way from the Guatemala-Mexico border in the past 10 days.</p> <p>Trump repeated threats to torpedo the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which underpins much of Mexico's foreign trade, and said he wanted to send troops to the U.S. border to stop illegal immigrants until a long-promised border wall is built.</p> <p>In response, the Mexican government has said the migrants are being vetted to determine whether they have a right to stay, or would be returned to their countries of origin.</p> <p>Hundreds of men, women and children from Central America were stuck on Tuesday in the town of Matias Romero in the poor southern Mexican state of Oaxaca awaiting clarification of their legal status after officials began registering them.</p> <p>Confused and frustrated by paperwork, many were uncertain what lay in store, and desperate for information.</p> <p>"What was the point of all this then if they don't let us stay?" Elizabeth Avalos, 23, a migrant from El Salvador who was traveling with two children, said angrily. "There's no food, my children haven't eaten since yesterday."</p> <p>Hundreds of people camped out overnight in a park near the town's train station, with shoes and bags strewn about.</p> <p>Around them, Mexican migration officials with notepads and pens took basic information from the migrants, asking for names, nationalities, dates of birth and proof of identity.</p>

The caravan was organized by U.S.-based advocacy group Pueblo Sin Fronteras, which seeks to draw attention to the rights of migrants and provide them with aid. The Mexican government says the caravan, which like others travels by road, rail and on foot, has been organized every year since 2010.

Honduran Carlos Ricardo Ellis Garcia clutched a handwritten list of names belonging to more than 100 people who joined the caravan in the southern border town of Tapachula, where it began on March 25, reaching a peak of around 1,500 people.

But by Tuesday the number was down to about 1,100, according to Pueblo Sin Fronteras spokeswoman Gina Garibo.

Many had broken off from the group, eager to move on more quickly, she said. Many others aimed to stay in Mexico because they had family ties there or planned to work, Garibo said.

“Now they’re separating these groups,” Ellis Garcia said, referring to an estimated 300 people who split from the caravan on Monday. “I don’t know what’s the deal, we have no answers.”

Advocacy groups told Reuters dozens of people left the caravan and traveled to the crime-ridden eastern state of Veracruz, where they were met by migration officials and police.

The government said on Monday evening around 400 people in the caravan had already been sent back to their home countries.

Geronimo Gutierrez, Mexico’s ambassador to the United States, told CNN that Mexican authorities were “looking at the status of the individuals so we can proceed either with a repatriation process” or offer humanitarian relief. That could include granting asylum or humanitarian visas.

Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala are among the most violent and impoverished countries in the Americas, prompting many people to leave in search of a better life.

In a country where millions of people have friends or relatives who have migrated legally or illegally to the United States, many Mexicans harbor sympathy for the Central Americans.

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HEADLINE	03/29 Inside Russia’s Seattle consulate
SOURCE	https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/03/29/what-really-went-on-at-russias-seattle-consulate-217761
GIST	<p>Among the 27 countries that have retaliated for what is believed to be a Kremlin-ordered chemical-weapon attack on an ex-Russian intelligence officer and his daughter in Britain earlier this month, the United States took by far the most dramatic steps: ousting 60 diplomats in total, including 15 suspected intelligence operatives based at Russia’s United Nations Mission alone—the most significant action of its type since the Reagan administration. (The move prompted Russia, on Thursday, to announce the expulsion of 60 U.S. diplomats and the closure of the U.S. consulate in Saint Petersburg.) But it was the Trump administration’s announcement of the shuttering of Russia’s consulate in Seattle that turned heads. Why Seattle? What was going on there? Would the closure matter?</p> <p>While Seattle is an important city for Russian intelligence collection efforts domestically, its consulate’s profile has generally been quieter than San Francisco’s or New York’s, according to two former U.S. intelligence officials who asked to remain anonymous but have knowledge of Russian activities in these areas. But the closure of the consulate is noteworthy nonetheless: Along with the administration’s shuttering of the San Francisco consulate in 2017, Russia will now lack a diplomatic facility west of Houston, or any diplomatic presence on the West Coast for the first time since 1971. Russian intelligence officers—at least those under diplomatic cover—will no longer operate in easy proximity to America’s</p>

two great tech capitals. Indeed, at least in Seattle, suspected Russia spies have already been caught attempting to infiltrate local tech companies.

“Certainly, there were enough issues that were important to the Russians in Seattle—the naval bases, Microsoft, Boeing, Amazon,” says John Sipher, a former CIA officer who worked closely with the FBI on counterespionage issues. “There was always nervousness within the national security agencies that the sheer number of ethnic Russians in these industries was something the Russians could take advantage of. I don’t know if closing Seattle was a strategic choice; nonetheless, the concentration of high-tech and military resources makes it a sensible target.”

After the closure of the Russian consulate in San Francisco, former senior U.S. intel officials told me that facility had, for decades, functioned as the primary hub for Russian intelligence-gathering in the Western United States. It featured key classified communications systems, and was a crucial collection center in Russia’s long-running effort to map out America’s fiber-optic cable network.

One of the two anonymous former intelligence officials I spoke with called Seattle a top-five U.S. city for Russian counterintelligence work, but a “smaller operation” than San Francisco. Seattle did not have the same type of communications facilities as San Francisco, the two former officials said. In fact, Russian diplomats used to regularly drive a van with protected diplomatic information from San Francisco to Seattle, said a second official, though the frequency of those trips decreased over time, when U.S. officials suspected the Russians had begun to move their communications to encrypted channels online.

Still, the Seattle area has some rich espionage targets. Firms like Boeing and Microsoft have long been of interest to Russian operatives, the former intel officials said. So have the many military bases in the area, including, pre-eminently, Naval Base Kitsap, located just across the Puget Sound from Seattle and home to eight nuclear-armed submarines. Administration officials have openly cited the Seattle consulate’s proximity to Boeing, and sensitive military bases, as reasons for its closure.

Because there is a seven-hour float from Kitsap to these nuclear-armed submarines’ dive point, the two former officials said, there are numerous opportunities to track the subs’ movements—a longstanding concern for U.S. intelligence and military officials. Knowing when a submarine is headed out to sea or how many submarines are running patrols at a given time, and potentially identifying new technologies on these vessels, are all valuable pieces of intelligence, these officials said. Moreover, U.S. intel officials have worried that in a worst-case-scenario—actual armed hostilities between the two countries—information gleaned from Russian operatives in the Pacific Northwest could be used to identify “choke points.” For instance, they might know the ideal places to fire a rocket-propelled grenade at a fishing boat in a narrow channel, which could prevent military vessels from deploying.

In the past, suspected intel operatives based at Russia’s Seattle consulate were observed engaging in the same sorts of behavior as their counterparts in San Francisco, the two former intel officials said, including tracking down potential fiber-optic nodes (as part of Russia’s long-term effort to map where data were being transferred), or Cold War-era intelligence-collection sites, in Northwestern forests. U.S. officials also believed Russian operatives were traveling to remote beaches in the area in order to “signal,” or cryptically transmit and receive data, with interlocutors offshore. (There was a specific beach in Oregon these individuals would favor, the two former officials said.)

More recently, however, these activities appeared to die down, these individuals said, an event one of the former intel officials attributes to Edward Snowden’s 2013 disclosures, which some in the intelligence community believe led Russia to overhaul its strategies for domestic intelligence-gathering. Generally, this person said, Seattle seemed like a “proving ground” for junior Russian intelligence officers, a place to send less-experienced operatives to acclimate them to the United States. After Snowden, U.S. intel officials started seeing more “travelers” in the Seattle area—suspected intelligence operatives working under both diplomatic and nonofficial cover—flying in remotely to meet with individuals, the two former officials said.

The biggest Russia-related concern in Seattle was “cyber-related activities,” which were separate from the

consulate, the two former officials said—including those of the local Kaspersky Labs affiliate. In July 2017, U.S. officials banned Moscow-based Kaspersky, which produces anti-virus software, from being used on any government computers, over fears about the company’s connections to Russian intelligence. U.S. counterintelligence officials were concerned that Kaspersky was being used as a tool for Russian covert communications, the two former officials said, and were also examining whether individuals affiliated with Kaspersky were actually engaging in cyber-espionage domestically. “As a private company, Kaspersky Lab does not have inappropriate ties to any government, including Russia, and the company has never helped, nor will help, any government in the world with its cyber espionage efforts,” a spokesperson for Kaspersky said. “The U.S. government actions against Kaspersky Lab lack sufficient basis, are unconstitutional, have been taken without any evidence of wrongdoing by the company, and rely upon subjective, non-technical public sources, such as uncorroborated and often anonymously sourced media reports, related claims, and rumors, which is why the company has challenged the validity of these actions in federal court.”

“Was Kaspersky looking at Microsoft or Boeing as opportunities to exploit? Was it just business development? Or were they actually engaged in trying to penetrate these enterprises?” asked one of the former officials. “The suspicions on Kaspersky have pretty much been borne out ... when you look at the recent U.S. government decision, and what has been publicly reported on what the Israelis have been able to find out.” In 2017 the New York Times reported that Israeli intelligence had hacked into a Russian espionage operation, observing Russian operatives using back doors in Kaspersky software to scan for, and purloin, U.S. intelligence documents.

Russia’s interest in Microsoft is also well-documented. In 2010, U.S. officials deported Alexey Karetnikov, a 23-year-old Russian national, from the Seattle area, where he had been working at Microsoft as a software tester. U.S. officials believed he was actually a Russian intelligence officer, and linked him to the ring of 10 “illegals”—Russian deep-cover operatives who had been living in the United States—that U.S. officials had arrested and deported earlier that year. Two of those undercover operatives, Michael Zottoli and Patricia Mills (whose real names are Mikhail Kutsik and Natalia Pereverzeva), had lived in Seattle for years, even starting a family there. In Seattle, Kutsik worked at a telecommunications firm, and both operatives took finance classes at the University of Washington. In a 2017 article in Seattle Met Magazine, Kutsik and Pereverzeva’s former investments professor said he believed the Russians were interested in his class because many of his students went on to work for Amazon, Boeing or Microsoft. Kutsik, Pereverzeva and Karetnikov were not known to have been coordinating their activities with the Seattle consulate, one of the former officials said.

Even as Russian espionage continues to migrate outside consular facilities—to travelers, and individuals working locally under nonofficial cover—it is “no coincidence” that both shuttered diplomatic outposts were on the West Coast, said one of the former officials. No matter when—or if—these two consulates are reopened, Russian interest in the West Coast is likely to continue far into the foreseeable future.

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HEADLINE	04/03 Effects, dangers of K2 synthetic marijuana
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Health/spotlighting-effects-dangers-k2-synthetic-marijuana/story?id=54206649
GIST	<p>It’s called K2, synthetic marijuana, and it has caused a cluster of deaths in Chicago.</p> <p>The Chicago Tribune reported three arrests over Easter weekend after large amounts of K2 being sold at a convenience store were discovered to be contaminated with a toxic compound used as rat poison.</p> <p>Between March 10 and April 2, 56 people have been hospitalized in Illinois, all related to K2, the Tribune reported. Two have died.</p> <p>Here's what you need to know:</p>

What is synthetic marijuana?

Contrary to what many think, synthetic marijuana is not one drug, and it is very different from tetrahydrocannabinol (aka THC, the main compound in natural marijuana). Synthetic marijuana is a “designer drug,” a chemical engineered to create the same effects as an illegal drug, but one that is different enough to avoid drug laws.

Synthetic cannabinoids (substances mimicking marijuana) work on the same brain receptors as THC, but can bind to the receptor up to 100 times more tightly than THC. Most were actually developed for research purposes so that scientists could better understand the role of THC receptors in the brain. Unlike marijuana, they have no reported potential for medical use. Eighty-four new synthetic cannabinoids were identified by the National Forensic Laboratory Information System in 2015 alone (for comparison, there were only two in 2009). These chemicals, all vastly different from each other, do not cause identical responses in the brain.

A synthetic marijuana chemical is most often sprayed onto a mix of plant materials so that it can be smoked. The chemicals can also be mixed into a liquid for vaping with e-cigarettes or added directly to herbal tea or foods. According to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), this manufacturing and packaging happens “without pharmaceutical-grade chemical purity standards” and “ignoring any control mechanisms to prevent contamination or to ensure a consistent, uniform concentration of the powerful and dangerous drug in each package.”

Why do people use synthetic marijuana?

People use synthetic cannabinoids for many reasons: easy access, lower cost or the promise of a more intense high than they get with marijuana. Many hope that use of synthetic marijuana will avoid a positive urine drug test since many of the chemicals used to make the drugs are not known to the DEA.

In fact, the makers of synthetic marijuana are constantly tweaking the structures of their chemicals to avoid being recognized by the government as an illegal substance and to prevent scientists from developing a drug test for their compound.

Most are made in Asia and smuggled into the U.S., branded as something else. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “There are no standards for making, packaging, or selling synthetic cannabinoid chemicals. That means that two packets of a brand-named product may have completely different chemicals.”

Despite all this, cannabinoids are marketed to unwitting buyers as safe and legal alternatives to marijuana. The CDC says that these drugs “are distributed worldwide under countless trade names and packaged in colorful wrappers designed to appeal to teens, young adults, and first-time drug users.”

They are labeled as “natural” compounds based on the plants inside -- even though the active ingredient is a factory-made chemical. Because they have never earned approval from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), cannabinoids are sold as “herbal products,” “incense,” or “potpourri” to disguise their real use. Most packages are marked with “not for human consumption” -- not because the makers don’t want human to use them, but so that the company cannot be held at fault for problems associated with smoking or eating the drug.

So, are these substances actually legal?

Based on major concerns about the danger of these products, the DEA and local agencies are attempting to keep up with drugmakers to ban every known synthetic marijuana substance, but it’s tough to stay on top of all the compounds. As of 2017, 26 cannabinoids were listed as Schedule 1 controlled substances (the most severely restricted substances), though there are likely hundreds more being sold.

What are the effects of synthetic pot on the body?

The effects of these drugs are highly unpredictable, as the actual chemical in the package is widely different and may even change from batch to batch. Many buyers experience different effects than intended.

First and foremost, these are “psychoactive” substances, which cause an altered mental perception of the world. This high can be associated with irritability, confusion, sleepiness, dizziness and inability to concentrate. At worst, they cause hallucinations (fives times more often than THC), suicidal thoughts and violent behavior. They are also far more likely than marijuana to cause other symptoms like vomiting and muscle breakdown. They can lead to heart problems such as fast heart rate, high blood pressure and even heart attacks. There have been reports of rapid and complete kidney failure related to specific strains of synthetic marijuana. In 2018 so far (through March), Poison Control Centers have received 462 calls concerning symptoms related to these drugs. In 2015, there were 7,762 total calls, the highest year on record. Of the people who call poison control or come to the emergency department for problems related to synthetic cannabinoids each year, approximately 1 in 100 die from these events.

Unlike marijuana, synthetic cannabinoids are addictive and regular users report feeling intense withdrawal symptoms when they stop using.

What else is in the package?

Another highly concerning feature of synthetic cannabinoids: These drugs are frequently contaminated with other drugs, and buyers have no idea what may be in the packet. The most common contaminating drug is another designer drug, in a drug class called “cathinones.”

Just as synthetic cannabinoids are designed to mimic THC, cathinones are designed to mimic the effects of cocaine or methamphetamines. Their effects are just as unpredictable and dangerous. When sold by themselves, they are sold as “bath salts” or “plant food” in order to use the label “not for human consumption.” This class of medications most commonly cause confusion, agitation, aggressive and self-harming behavior. They can also lead to fast heart rate, high blood pressure, muscle breakdown, kidney failure and death.

What about the Chicago cases?

The contaminating substance in the recently reported cluster of illnesses is brodifacoum. This is the first time that this substance has been reported in synthetic marijuana, but it has previously been reported to be mixed with other drugs of abuse to make their effects last longer.

Brodifacoum is a rat poison. It is made from the more commonly known rat poison, Coumadin (or warfarin), whose name you may recognize, since, in small doses, it’s used as a medically prescribed blood thinner. Warfarin and brodifacoum interfere with the body’s natural clotting factors and can cause life-threatening bleeding.

Brodifacoum is known as a “superwarfarin,” which means that its effects on the body last a long time and are very difficult to reverse. Bleeding can occur from any part of the body: Several of the recent cases reported bleeding from the eyes and ears, and deaths occurred due to unstoppable internal bleeding.

Take-home message

Though they are sold as safe, legal alternatives to marijuana (and a way to avoid getting caught using drugs), synthetic cannabinoids are a different class of chemicals completely.

They are unpredictable and highly dangerous on their own -- and can be contaminated with even more toxic and unreported chemicals, making this a hazardous trend that will likely be marked with more reports of deadly events in the future. In addition, know that there is no standardization in the labels or packets, no guarantee what is inside and no idea, if you take a synthetic cannabinoid, what will happen to you.

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HEADLINE 04/04 Long-hidden toxic waste endangers Serbia

SOURCE <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/long-hidden-toxic-waste-endangers-serbias-health->

	eu-54224590?
GIST	<p>Dozens of rusty barrels and plastic tubs filled with a dark, oily liquid cluttered a muddy yard where chickens roamed. More brimming containers packed a wooden barn.</p> <p>The property in northern Serbia, located next to farmland and a railway line, stored about 100 tons of likely hazardous waste altogether, the country's environmental protection ministry said. Authorities found it last month, along with another big batch cemented into the walls of a nearby brick factory.</p> <p>A string of similar discoveries has triggered alarms in Serbia, where masses of poorly secured industrial waste are believed to have been dumped or hidden and could pose long-term environmental and public health dangers.</p> <p>The situation arising from decades of neglect, corruption and economic decay is "dramatic," Serbian Environmental Protection Minister Goran Trivan said.</p> <p>"People actually buried hazardous waste in their own yards as if it were some kind of hidden treasure," Trivan said in an interview with The Associated Press. "This has to stop."</p> <p>The problem has come into focus as Serbia and other Balkan nations move closer to joining the European Union, a step that ultimately will require their environmental protection standards to be in line with those in existing EU member countries. Such reforms could take the EU candidates years to achieve.</p> <p>Hazardous waste must be exported from Serbia to places such as Austria, Romania and Switzerland because the country does not have its own processing facilities. The shipments are costly, so some manufacturers and waste-management companies get rid of production residues improperly.</p> <p>The concern about concealed pollutants results from simple math, Trivan said. The country generates some 130,000 to 220,000 tons of hazardous waste every year, and while part of it is either exported or stored properly inside Serbia, a chunk remains unaccounted for, he said.</p> <p>"So, where is it?" Trivan said. "Figures tell us that we could be dealing with serious quantities, possibly thousands of tons."</p> <p>The way to handle the problem would be to step up government oversight and to introduce harsher sentences for offenders while encouraging private investments in waste management, Trivan said.</p> <p>The ministry has teamed up with the state security agency, the prosecutor's office and police to locate as much dumped waste as soon as possible. A public campaign urges citizens to report sites where they suspect toxic materials might be stored.</p> <p>Andjelka Mihajlov, an environmental scientist on the Serbian government team working to revise the country's laws to be in line with EU membership, said the potential damage that hidden toxic hazards pose to the country's people and environment cannot be estimated. It depends on factors such as the type of substances and where and how they were stowed.</p> <p>"If not handled properly, hazardous waste poses a serious concern for public health," said Mihajlov, who served briefly as Serbia's environment minister.</p> <p>Authorities say that out of the more than a hundred companies registered in Serbia to handle hazardous waste, only about a dozen followed proper labeling, storage and disposal regulations. Instead, many waste management firms pocket the money companies pay them and abandon loads that were supposed to be shipped abroad somewhere in Serbia.</p> <p>Officials suspect that was the case with the barrels and plastic tubs found on the property in the town of Pancevo in mid-March. A business named Eko 21 had been hired to deal with production waste disposed of the containers in an inhabited area without fences or any other safeguards to keep the population safe.</p>

	<p>Residents of a village near the Serbian capital, Belgrade, were warned not to use their wells after dozens of barrels of toxic waste containing carcinogenic benzene were found buried in Obrenovac. The property owner was arrested and faces a prison term of up to five years if convicted of illegally storing dangerous substances.</p> <p>Trivan said unreported waste could have been seeping into the ground for years at a number of as-yet unknown locations, polluting the surrounding water and land.</p> <p>"I am astonished by the level of negligence toward our own lives," he lamented.</p> <p>Serbia also has unaddressed environmental problems with its waste water; all Serbian cities and many factories dump it straight into rivers. Air quality, drinking water safety and pollution from mines and power plants are worries as well.</p> <p>Trivan acknowledged that his country is lagging at least 25 to 30 years behind in environmental protection, but is optimistic it will steer its way clear.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Russia: US, UK staged poisoning
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russia-points-finger-uk-us-agencies-poisoning-54224593?
GIST	<p>Russia's spymaster says the poisoning of an ex-Russian spy and his daughter in Britain was staged by U.K. and U.S. intelligence agencies.</p> <p>Sergei Naryshkin, director of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service, the top KGB successor agency, said the March 4 poisoning of Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia was a "grotesque provocation rudely staged by the British and U.S. intelligence agencies."</p> <p>Speaking Wednesday at an international security conference organized by the Russian Defense Ministry, Naryshkin said the poisoning was the latest U.S. effort to undermine Russia and was akin to its practices during the Cold War.</p> <p>Britain has blamed Russia for the nerve agent attack, an accusation that Russia has vehemently denied. Consequently, relations between the West and Russia are at their lowest ebb since the Cold War.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Marine helicopter crash in Calif.
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/feared-dead-marine-helicopter-crash-california/story?
GIST	<p>Four crew members are presumed dead after a Marine helicopter crashed on Tuesday during a training mission in Southern California, the military said.</p> <p>Officials said the CH-53E Super Stallion crashed around 2:35 p.m. Tuesday near El Centro, not far from the U.S.-Mexico border. The helicopter belonged to the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing in San Diego.</p> <p>The Marine Corps said it would withhold the identities of the deceased for 24 hours until next-of-kin notifications were complete.</p> <p>"Four crew members were aboard the aircraft. The status of all four is presumed dead pending positive identification," the Marines said in a statement.</p> <p>The Naval Air Facility in El Centro sent its condolences to those impacted by the tragedy early</p>

	Wednesday in a Facebook post.
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HEADLINE	04/03 Recall: Stella Artois beer bottles
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/04/03/Stella-recalls-some-beer-bottles-with-possible-pieces-of-glass/9001522782485/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts tn int&utm_medium=4
GIST	<p>April 3 (UPI) -- Stella Artois is recalling some of its beer bottles in the United States and Canada over concerns the containers may include shards of glass.</p> <p>The voluntary recall applies to 11.2-ounce bottles of Stella Artois beer, the Belgian brand said in a release Monday.</p> <p>The company said "a glass packaging flaw ... may cause a small piece of glass to break off and possibly fall into the beer." Stella Artois said a third party produced the bottles.</p> <p>The company said the recall affects less than 1 percent of its glass battles sold in North America annually.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 States vow to defend auto fuel efficiency
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-epa-autos/u-s-states-vow-to-defend-auto-fuel-efficiency-standards-idUSKCN1HA2DI?il=0
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Nearly a dozen U.S. states and Washington D.C. on Tuesday promised to defend federal automobile efficiency standards against a rollback proposed this week by Scott Pruitt, the embattled head of the Environmental Protection Agency.</p> <p>"All Americans ... deserve to enjoy fuel-efficient, low-emission cars and light trucks that save money on gas, improve our health and support American jobs," the attorneys general from 11 states said in a statement responding to Pruitt's proposal on Monday to ease the Obama-era standards.</p> <p>The standards called for roughly doubling by 2025 the average fuel efficiency of new vehicles sold in the United States to about 50 miles (80 km) per gallon. Proponents say they help spur innovation in clean technologies and cut emissions of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide.</p> <p>California has long been allowed by an EPA waiver to impose stricter standards than Washington does on vehicle emissions of some pollutants. And 12 other states follow California's lead on cleaner cars.</p> <p>The attorneys general, from states including New York, Iowa and Massachusetts, said they would challenge a rollback in court. California Attorney General Xavier Becerra has already threatened to sue in defense of the standards.</p> <p>The statement, also signed by more than 50 mayors from around the country, said automakers have been making progress in meeting the national standards and that compliance costs have been lower than projected.</p> <p>Auto industry executives have not publicly sought specific reductions in the requirements negotiated with the Obama administration in 2011 as part of a bailout deal. But they have urged Pruitt and President Donald Trump to revise the standards so it becomes easier and less costly to meet the targets.</p> <p>Pruitt defended his decision at EPA headquarters on Tuesday.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 FDA orders mandatory kratom recall
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/fda-forces-mandatory-recall-kratom-says-it-s-first-n862481
GIST	<p>The Food and Drug Administration ordered the mandatory recall Tuesday of kratom products distributed by one company that may be contaminated with salmonella.</p> <p>The FDA said it's the first time it has used its mandatory recall power for a food product after first trying to get the company to voluntarily take the products back. The agency has been criticized for years by consumer advocates and some members of Congress who say it moves too slowly to recall potentially contaminated foods.</p> <p>Kratom is a plant supplement sold to treat pain, to help people stop using opioids or as a stimulant. The FDA has been warning against its use in general and later issued a large voluntary recall notice after some samples were found to be contaminated with salmonella and sickened 87 people.</p> <p>"As of April 2, 2018, the FDA and state partners have tested multiple kratom products, and 26 different products were positive for Salmonella," it said.</p> <p>Tuesday's mandatory recall affects Triangle Pharmanaturals, which bills itself as a consultant and packager of supplement products.</p> <p>"The agency took this action after the company failed to cooperate with the FDA's request to conduct a voluntary recall," the FDA said in a statement.</p> <p>"This is the first time the agency has issued a mandatory recall order to protect Americans from contaminated food products."</p> <p>Two samples of products made by Triangle and sold in Oregon tested positive for salmonella, the FDA said.</p> <p>"The FDA is advising consumers to discard the products that are part of the mandatory recall, which include, but are not limited to: Raw Form Organics Maeng Da Kratom Emerald Green, Raw Form Organics Maeng Da Kratom Ivory White, and Raw Form Organics Maeng Da Kratom Ruby Red," it said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Russia demands thorough poisoning probe
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/sergei-skripal-russia-nerve-agent-poisoning-investigation-vladimir-putin/
GIST	<p>MOSCOW -- Russian President Vladimir Putin says Moscow wants a thorough probe into the poisoning of an ex-Russian spy in Britain and will demand to be part of it. Putin, speaking Tuesday in Ankara following talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, cited the head of Britain's defense laboratory who said that its scientists have not identified the precise source of the nerve agent used to attack former double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter.</p> <p>Putin said, given the lack of precise information about the agent's origin, "the speed at which the anti-Russian campaign has been launched causes bewilderment."</p> <p>Britain and its allies have blamed Russia for the poisoning, which Russia has vehemently denied. Western countries and Russia have expelled more than 150 diplomats each in the dispute, with relations between the U.S. and Russia declining to the lowest level in decades.</p> <p>Putin said the type of the nerve agent used in the March 4 poisoning could be made in some 20 nations.</p>

	<p>Skripal was imprisoned in Russia after he sold secrets to British intelligence. He was released in a 2010 spy swap and moved to Britain.</p> <p>The Russian Foreign Ministry said Wednesday that British special services could have been behind the poisoning. British officials have previously rejected such Russian claims as nonsense.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Israel vows tough response to protests
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/israel-defense-minister-vows-tough-response-gaza-protests-54198452?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Israel's defense minister said Tuesday that the military will not change its tough response to Hamas-led mass protests near Gaza's border with Israel, warning that those who approach the border are putting their lives at risk.</p> <p>Avigdor Lieberman spoke near Gaza, where 18 Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire Friday, the first day of what Hamas says will be six weeks of intermittent border protests against a stifling blockade of the territory.</p> <p>On Tuesday, a 25-year-old Gaza man was killed by Israeli fire as he threw stones in the area of the border fence, Gaza's Health Ministry said.</p> <p>Lieberman's comments raised the possibility of more bloodshed this Friday, when another mass protest is expected.</p> <p>The international group Human Rights Watch accused Lieberman and other senior Israeli officials Tuesday of unlawfully calling for the use of live fire against Palestinian protesters who posed no imminent threat to life.</p> <p>Last Friday, thousands of Palestinians marched near the border fence between Israel and Gaza, many gathering around tent encampments set up several hundred meters (yards) from the frontier. Smaller groups moved closer to the fence, throwing stones, hurling firebombs or burning tires. Israeli troops were lined up on the other side of the fence, including snipers perched on high earth embankments overlooking Gaza.</p> <p>Palestinian health officials have said 18 Palestinians were killed that day, including 13 involved in the mass protest, making it the bloodiest day in Gaza since the 2014 war between Israel and the Islamic militant group Hamas.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Dominica: hurricane recovery progress
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/tourists-exports-return-storm-hit-island-dominica-54207056?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The small Caribbean island of Dominica is making progress toward recovery after a devastating blow from last year's Hurricane Maria, the country's prime minister said Tuesday.</p> <p>Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerit said the country has exported the first crops harvested since Maria roared across Dominica as a fierce Category 5 on Sept. 18 and that tourism is recovering with the return of cruise ships and the re-opening of hotels on the mountainous island in the eastern Caribbean.</p> <p>He also said water has now been fully restored to all communities in Dominica and that many homes are being rebuilt. The country has received about \$400 million in assistance from the World Bank, the European Union and other international institutions.</p>

	<p>Skerrit said the island needs about \$1 billion to rebuild and prepare for future storms.</p> <p>"We are much better than yesterday," the prime minister said in an interview on the sidelines of a disaster-recovery workshop in Miami organized by the Clinton Foundation. "We have a long way to go because we are going to build back better and that takes time."</p> <p>Hurricane Maria struck Dominica with sustained winds of about 160 mph, killing at least 31 people and damaging 90 percent of homes on the island of about 74,000 people. Skerrit, who had to flee his own home when it was damaged in the storm, said about 5,000 houses need to be rebuilt still and 20,000 require repairs.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 UN: attack in CAR killed peacekeeper
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/peacekeeper-killed-11-hurt-car-attack-54206918?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Mostly Christian militias attacked a U.N. peacekeeping base in the Central African Republic early Tuesday, and in an exchange of fire that lasted several hours one peacekeeper was killed and 11 others were injured, the United Nations said.</p> <p>U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said the attack by the anti-Balaka militias took place at a temporary U.N. peacekeeping base in Tagbara, about 60 miles northeast of the central mining town of Bambari. The mission said 22 anti-Balaka fighters died in the clash.</p> <p>He said the U.N. peacekeeping mission sent reinforcements to the base, and he strongly condemned the attack.</p> <p>Separately, Dujarric said, the U.N. mission reported that it later discovered the bodies of 21 civilians, including four women and four children, in Tagbara.</p> <p>Dujarric said U.N. peacekeepers were informed Monday evening that a rebel group known as the UPC had detained 23 people in Tagbara, including 13 women and three children. He said they were released peacefully to U.N. peacekeepers and spent the night at the temporary base to ensure their safety.</p> <p>In another incident, Dujarric said, U.N. peacekeepers and CAR forces launched a joint operation on Saturday and rescued 15 people who had been taken hostage by the Lord's Resistance Army rebel group led by Joseph Kony, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes.</p> <p>The LRA has wreaked havoc in Central Africa over the years in violent rampages that include the abduction of children. It has taken boys who are then forced to become fighters and girls who become sex slaves, one of the reasons the group has gained international attention in recent times.</p> <p>Dujarric said the U.N. mission condemned the UPC and LRA incidents as well.</p> <p>The Central African Republic has faced deadly interreligious and intercommunal fighting since 2013, when predominantly Muslim Seleka rebels seized power in the capital, Bangui. Mostly Christian anti-Balaka militias fought back, resulting in thousands of people killed and hundreds of thousands displaced.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Russia: UK must apologize
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-chemical-weapons-watchdog-meet-spy-case-54203293?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed

GIST	<p>The Latest on the poisoning of a former Russian spy in Britain (all times local):</p> <p>11 p.m.</p> <p>The Kremlin says Britain will have to apologize for unfounded accusations against Russia over the poisoning of an ex-spy.</p> <p>Speaking Tuesday in Ankara, Russian President Vladimir Putin cited the head of Britain's defense laboratory who said that its scientists couldn't identify the precise source of the nerve agent used to attack former double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter.</p> <p>Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that Britain will have to apologize to Russia for its "mad accusations" that "have no foundation whatsoever." Peskov says that London will have to account for its claims before its allies, who have evicted scores of Russian diplomats in a show of solidarity.</p> <p>Britain blames Russia for the March 4 attack on Skripal and his daughter, a claim that Moscow denies.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 China minister: visit to Russia a 'signal'
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/chinas-defense-chief-moscow-trip-signal-us-54205721
GIST	<p>China's new defense minister says his visit to Russia is a signal to the United States about the increasingly close military ties between Moscow and Beijing.</p> <p>The unusually bold statement Tuesday by Gen. Wei Fenghe at the start of his talks with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu reflected the growing military cooperation between the two former Communist rivals.</p> <p>Speaking in Moscow, Wei emphasized that he chose Russia for his first trip abroad since becoming the international face of China's military last month to "show the world a high level of development of our bilateral relations and firm determination of our armed forces to strengthen strategic cooperation."</p> <p>Wei added he would attend a security conference Wednesday hosted by the Russian Defense Ministry to "let the Americans know about the close ties between the armed forces of China and Russia."</p> <p>Shoigu said Wei's visit "underlines a special character of relations between Russia and China," adding that it will help further deepen ties between the two militaries.</p> <p>Moscow and Beijing have forged what they described as a "strategic partnership," expressing their shared opposition to the "unipolar" world — the term they use to describe perceived U.S. global domination.</p> <p>As part of their burgeoning military cooperation, Moscow and Beijing have conducted joint military maneuvers, including exercises in the South China Sea and last summer's joint navy drills in the Baltics.</p> <p>The Baltic exercise marked the first time that China had flexed its military muscle in a region where tensions between Russia and NATO have escalated following Moscow's 2014 annexation of Crimea.</p> <p>In December, the Russian and Chinese militaries held missile defense drills intended to practice a joint response to missile threats from other countries.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Teachers seize Oklahoma capitol bldg.
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SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/thousands-teachers-seize-oklahoma-capitol-building-demand-education/story?id=54201499
GIST	<p>Thousands of determined and boisterous Oklahoma teachers seized every floor of their state capitol building Tuesday vowing not to leave until lawmakers loosen the purse strings on education funding.</p> <p>In a show of force, educators stayed out of classrooms throughout the state for a second day and said in unison that they will continue their walkout until the Republican-dominated legislature substantially boosts money for school resources.</p> <p>"We'll be back on Wednesday!" chanted the teachers.</p> <p>Many of them were holding signs reading, "Let's Start Funding" and "Fund our Future."</p> <p>"I'm hearing that we have more people today than we had yesterday," Katherine Bishop, vice president of the Oklahoma Education Association told the crowd to loud cheers. "I just heard that people in the House can hear us. We need to be even louder."</p> <p>There were so many people waiting to get into the capitol to speak with lawmakers that officials have occasionally declared the building at capacity and temporarily shut the doors.</p> <p>Thousands more teachers stood outside the capital as buses filled with educators who kept pouring in from across the state.</p> <p>The massive classroom walkout caused school districts across the state -- including those in the largest cities of Oklahoma City, Tulsa and Norman -- to cancel classes for a second day.</p> <p>Bishop implored to the crowd to skip school for at least the remainder of the week to keep the protest going.</p> <p>The teachers are demanding that Republican Gov. Mary Fallin and the state legislature restore funding for education programs and supplies they say have been drastically slashed over the last decade.</p> <p>Most of the Oklahoma teachers walked out of classrooms across the state to attend the rally in Oklahoma City. Many said they were frustrated with the lack of resources in their schools, and some said they were teaching students about science and technology with textbooks from the 1990s.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Some police returning military vehicles
SOURCE	https://www.militarytimes.com/news/2018/04/02/some-wisconsin-police-are-returning-military-vehicles/
GIST	<p>MADISON, Wis. — Some Wisconsin police are returning mine-resistant vehicles on loan from the Defense Department and replacing them with smaller, armored emergency vehicles they say are more appropriate for law enforcement.</p> <p>The Defense Department has transferred excess military equipment and armored vehicles to law enforcement agencies through the Law Enforcement Support Office.</p> <p>Police departments in Superior and Madison plan to return their vehicles to the program, Wisconsin Public Radio reported. They may eventually be transferred to other law enforcement agencies.</p> <p>Mine-resistant ambush protected vehicles are designed to be used by the U.S. military and are able to withstand attacks from improvised explosive devices.</p> <p>The vehicles have drawn criticism regarding the militarization of police.</p>

“I heard from citizens that they didn’t view it as an appropriate piece of equipment for the Police Department — that they thought we were overdoing things when we had that type of vehicle out,” said Superior Police Chief Nick Alexander.

The community perception combined with maintenance issues prompted the department to seek other options, he said. The Superior City Council recently approved the purchase of a smaller emergency operations vehicle.

The mine-resistant vehicle doesn’t meet the Madison Police Department’s law enforcement needs, said Madison Assistant Police Chief Victor Wahl.

“It’s really designed to take a small number of troops, sort of seal them up inside and then drive through a hostile area and allow them to survive if there’s small arms fire or improvised explosive devices that they drive over,” he said. “Stuff that civilian police use armored vehicles for, it needs a lot more capacity to carry people, easier access to get in and out. It needs to be a little bit more nimble and flexible for maneuverability.”

The vehicle is large, heavy and difficult to maintain, he said.

“The MRAP we got from the military, but you can’t go down to the auto parts store and get spare parts for it,” Wahl said. “As things break down or as there’s issues with it, it becomes more and more challenging to keep it up and running and maintain it.”

There are 36 mine-resistant vehicles in the state, said a spokeswoman with Wisconsin Emergency Management.

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HEADLINE	04/03 DHS: rogue tracking devices in D.C.
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/d716aac4ad744b4cae3c6b13dce12d7e
GIST	<p>For the first time, the U.S. government has publicly acknowledged the existence in Washington of what appear to be rogue devices that foreign spies and criminals could be using to track individual cellphones and intercept calls and messages.</p> <p>The use of what are known as cellphone-site simulators by foreign powers has long been a concern, but American intelligence and law enforcement agencies — which use such eavesdropping equipment themselves — have been silent on the issue until now.</p> <p>In a March 26 letter to Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden, the Department of Homeland Security acknowledged that last year it identified suspected unauthorized cell-site simulators in the nation’s capital. The agency said it had not determined the type of devices in use or who might have been operating them. Nor did it say how many it detected or where.</p> <p>The agency’s response, obtained by The Associated Press from Wyden’s office, suggests little has been done about such equipment, known popularly as Stingrays after a brand common among U.S. police departments. The Federal Communications Commission, which regulates the nation’s airwaves, formed a task force on the subject four years ago, but it never produced a report and no longer meets regularly.</p> <p>The devices work by tricking mobile devices into locking onto them instead of legitimate cell towers, revealing the exact location of a particular cellphone. More sophisticated versions can eavesdrop on calls by forcing phones to step down to older, unencrypted 2G wireless technology. Some attempt to plant malware.</p> <p>They can cost anywhere from \$1,000 to about \$200,000. They are commonly the size of a briefcase; some</p>

are as small as a cellphone. They can be placed in a car next to a government building. The most powerful can be deployed in low-flying aircraft.

Thousands of members of the military, the NSA, the CIA, the FBI and the rest of the national-security apparatus live and work in the Washington area. The surveillance-savvy among them encrypt their phone and data communications and employ electronic countermeasures. But unsuspecting citizens could fall prey.

Wyden, a Democrat, wrote DHS in November requesting information about unauthorized use of the cell-site simulators.

The reply from DHS official Christopher Krebs noted that DHS had observed “anomalous activity” consistent with Stingrays in the Washington area. A DHS official who spoke on condition of anonymity because the letter has not been publicly released added that the devices were detected in a 90-day trial that began in January 2017 with equipment from a Las Vegas-based DHS contractor, ESD America .

Krebs, the top official in the department’s National Protection and Programs Directorate, noted in the letter that DHS lacks the equipment and funding to detect Stingrays even though their use by foreign governments “may threaten U.S. national and economic security.” The department did report its findings to “federal partners” Krebs did not name. That presumably includes the FBI.

The CEO of ESD America, Les Goldsmith, said his company has a relationship with DHS but would not comment further.

Legislators have been raising alarms about the use of Stingrays in the capital since at least 2014, when Goldsmith and other security-company researchers conducted public sweeps that located suspected unauthorized devices near the White House, the Supreme Court, the Commerce Department and the Pentagon, among other locations.

The executive branch, however, has shied away from even discussing the subject.

Aaron Turner, president of the mobile security consultancy Integricell, was among the experts who conducted the 2014 sweeps, in part to try to drum up business. Little has changed since, he said.

Like other major world capitals, he said, Washington is awash in unauthorized interception devices. Foreign embassies have free rein because they are on sovereign soil.

Every embassy “worth their salt” has a cell tower simulator installed, Turner said. They use them “to track interesting people that come toward their embassies.” The Russians’ equipment is so powerful it can track targets a mile away, he said.

Shutting down rogue Stingrays is an expensive proposition that would require wireless network upgrades the industry has been loath to pay for, security experts say. It could also lead to conflict with U.S. intelligence and law enforcement.

In addition to federal agencies, police departments use them in at least 25 states and the District of Columbia, according to the American Civil Liberties Union.

Wyden said in a statement Tuesday that “leaving security to the phone companies has proven to be disastrous.” He added that the FCC has refused to hold the industry accountable “despite repeated warnings and clear evidence that our phone networks are being exploited by foreign governments and hackers.”

After the 2014 news reports about Stingrays in Washington, Rep. Alan Grayson, D-Fla, wrote the FCC in alarm. In a reply, then-FCC chairman Tom Wheeler said the agency had created a task force to combat illicit and unauthorized use of the devices. In that letter, the FCC did not say it had identified such use

	<p>itself, but cited media reports of the security sweeps.</p> <p>That task force appears to have accomplished little. A former adviser to Wheeler, Gigi Sohn, said there was no political will to tackle the issue against opposition from the intelligence community and local police forces that were using the devices “willy-nilly.”</p> <p>“To the extent that there is a major problem here, it’s largely due to the FCC not doing its job,” said Laura Moy of the Center on Privacy and Technology at Georgetown University. The agency, she said, should be requiring wireless carriers to protect their networks from such security threats and “ensuring that anyone transmitting over licensed spectrum actually has a license to do it.”</p> <p>FCC spokesman Neil Grace, however, said the agency’s only role is “certifying” such devices to ensure they don’t interfere with other wireless communications, much the way it does with phones and Wi-Fi routers.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Europe air traffic control system failure
SOURCE	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5573959/Up-half-flights-Europe-face-delays-EU-air-traffic-control-computer-failure.html
GIST	<p>Up to half of all flights in Europe face delays today after a Europe-wide air traffic control system failed.</p> <p>Eurocontrol, which runs the system, said that a technical problem means that as many as half a million passengers could be affected, disrupting travellers who went away for the Easter weekend.</p> <p>'Today 29,500 flights were expected in the European network. Approximately half of those could have some delay as a result of the system outage,' Eurocontrol said. The agency said the system would be back up and running tomorrow.</p> <p>London's Gatwick Airport said seven or eight flights an hour were being delayed as a result and told passengers to check with their airlines.</p> <p>Eurocontrol - which covers 41 countries including all 28 EU nations plus others in Europe including Ukraine, Turkey and Norway - said it hoped to have the system back up and running by tomorrow.</p> <p>The cause had been identified, it said, without saying what it was. The agency said 'contingency procedures' were in place to stop the system becoming overloaded but that these would be lifted later this evening.</p> <p>Eurocontrol added that flight plans from before 11.26am BST were 'lost' and asked airlines to refile them.</p> <p>How does Eurocontrol's Enhanced Tactical Flow Management System work? Eurocontrol's Enhanced Tactical Flow Management System compares demand for flights in a particular area with the available capacity.</p> <p>The system pulls together data such as flight plans, taxiing time, and flight position from numerous sources in multiple countries and collates them.</p> <p>It can then track planes in real time to manage the number of planes in the air to make sure it doesn't get too crowded.</p> <p>Precise monitoring prevents the carefully balanced system from being thrown out by planes with delayed departures or arrivals.</p> <p>Planes can then be herded into departure and landing slots at airports to keep the thousands of flights in</p>

Europe flowing smoothly.

ETFMS also helps plan flight schedules up to a week in advance to help airlines and air traffic controllers plan each day down to the minute.

The agency said it was a 'technical fault' and that the system had not been hacked, saying they were now 'in recovery mode'.

Some 59 per cent of departing flights at Gatwick were delayed between 3pm and 4pm, according to airline data company FlightStats.

Gatwick said it anticipated traffic would be back to normal later this evening.

A spokesperson for Gatwick said: 'Following a failure of Eurocontrol's Enhanced Tactical Flow Management System (ETFMS), and associated flight plan system, some flights in and out of London Gatwick are experiencing delays.

'Passengers are advised to check with their airline for the latest information on flights and we apologise for any inconvenience that this may cause passengers.'

Several airports across the continent warned of problems, with Amsterdam's Schiphol saying that the 'system failure' at Eurocontrol could have 'possible consequences' for departures.

The breakdown comes a day after the Easter holidays when many travellers are on the move around Europe, and as commuters across France faced disruption from a massive rail strike in protest at President Emmanuel Macron's reforms.

The disruption comes as flights at the UK's two busiest airports could be hit with delays over the next three weeks as air traffic controllers introduce new technology.

Both Heathrow and Gatwick will suffer disruption as Nats (National Air Traffic Services) replaces paper flight information strips with a digital system at its control centre in Swanwick, Hampshire.

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HEADLINE	04/03 UN: world's worst humanitarian crisis
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/03/middleeast/yemen-worlds-worst-humanitarian-crisis-un-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The war in Yemen is now the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with more than 22 million people - three-quarters of the population -- in desperate need of aid and protection, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres said.</p> <p>As the conflict enters its fourth year, millions are without access to clean drinking water and the country is at high risk of a cholera epidemic, Guterres said at a donor conference in Geneva on Tuesday.</p> <p>He said over 8 million people in the country "did not know where they will obtain their next meal," and that "every ten minutes, a child under five dies of preventable causes."</p> <p>With many struggling to support their families, child marriage rates have also risen. "Nearly two-thirds of girls are married before the age of 18, and many before they are 15," said Guterres.</p> <p>More than half of the required funds needed for the UN's humanitarian response plan -- \$2.96 billion -- have not been met, Guterres told the conference.</p> <p>However he added that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have already provided \$930 million</p>

for the UN's plan, and had pledged to secure an additional \$500 million for the region.

Since March 2015, neighboring Saudi Arabia has been leading a coalition of Gulf states against Houthi rebels in Northern Yemen, after the rebels drove out the US-backed and pro-Saudi government.

Often called the "forgotten war" amid Western media focus on Syria, Yemen's situation is now catastrophic, with "nearly half of all children aged between six months and 5 years old chronically malnourished," according to Guterres.

Both sides of the conflict have used food as a weapon of war, but the crisis is caused primarily by a brutal air, land and sea blockade imposed by a Saudi Arabia-led coalition.

In principle, the coalition says the purpose of the blockade is to stop Iranian weapons from entering Yemen to supply the Houthi rebels who are in control of much of the north, including the capital Sanaa. But in practice, it has also cut the amount of desperately needed food, medicine and fuel getting into the country, according to aid groups.

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HEADLINE	04/03 Florida cities sue state over gun laws
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/03/us/south-florida-cities-sue-state-over-gun-regulation/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Ten South Florida cities have filed a lawsuit challenging a law that gives the state of Florida the authority to regulate firearms and imposes strict penalties on local officials who pass their own gun laws.</p> <p>In announcing the lawsuit Monday, the mayors of some of those cities said constituents demanded action after the February 14 massacre of 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland near Fort Lauderdale.</p> <p>"We get phone calls every day, 'What are you going to do?' " Miramar Mayor Wayne Messam said at a news conference.</p> <p>"This is about doing the right thing," Weston Mayor Daniel Stermer said. "If not now, when? If this tragedy wasn't enough in our own backyard, what has to happen to have something change?"</p> <p>The lawsuit was filed Monday in Leon County Circuit Court in Tallahassee, the state capital. Ten cities and 31 local officials joined the suit. The municipalities are Weston, Cutler Bay, Lauderhill, Miami Beach, Miami Gardens, Miramar, Pinecrest, Pompano Beach, South Miami and Coral Gables. Parkland is not a plaintiff.</p> <p>Gov. Rick Scott's office said Tuesday it was reviewing the lawsuit but had no further comment. State Attorney General Pam Bondi's office said it had not been served yet.</p> <p>The state law passed in 1987 says that "the Legislature hereby declares that it is occupying the whole field of regulation of firearms and ammunition ... to the exclusion of all existing and future county, city, town or municipal ordinances."</p> <p>Penalties were added in 2011. Municipal leaders who pass gun laws could be removed from office, fined up to \$5,000 and sued personally for damages, said Jamie Cole, city attorney for the city of Weston and the lead attorney for the cities in the lawsuit. If they were sued, the local officials could not use public funds in their legal defense, Cole said.</p> <p>"The Legislature's stated intent in imposing these penalties was to chill and deter local governments from taking any action at all that might affect firearms," the lawsuit says.</p> <p>The mayors said they want the power to regulate guns in public spaces in their cities. Messam noted that</p>

	<p>Miramar recently opened a 5,000-seat amphitheater but cannot prohibit people from bring guns inside.</p> <p>"In my own City Hall, somebody can walk in with a concealed weapon, and there's legally nothing I can do about it, nothing," Miami Beach Mayor Dan Gelber said.</p> <p>Coral Gables considered a firearms regulation in February but got an email from an unnamed "guns rights organization" that threatened legal action if the law passed, the lawsuit says. The city backed off, the suit says.</p> <p>Some groups in Florida like the gun law, saying it creates uniformity and eliminates confusion.</p> <p>"Counties with 25 cities, it would be impossible to enforce" different ordinances, Mike Adkinson, president of the Florida Sheriffs Association, said in February. "It would be confusing." He's also the sheriff of Walton County, Florida.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	04/03 Live Chat widgets leak employee info
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/live-chat-widgets-leak-employee-details-from-high-profile-companies/
GIST	<p>At least two live chat widgets used on hundreds of high-profile sites are leaking the personal details of company employees.</p> <p>The vulnerable widgets are used on sites managed by Google, Verizon, Spring, Bank of America, PayPal, Orange, Sony, Tesla, Bitdefender, Kaspersky Lab, Disney, and many others.</p> <p>The leak occurs when an attacker engages in a live chat session with a support staffer. According to Project Insecurity researchers Cody Zacharias and Kane Gamble, the widgets leak information on the support staffer, such as his real name, company email address, employee ID, support center name, location, supervisor name, supervisor ID, or software used by the employee.</p> <p>These details vary from company to company, depending on how each business has set up its support widgets, and for some, no information may leak.</p> <p>Bleeping Computer was able to confirm the leak on several sites, albeit not all we tested were exposing employee data. We will not name the sites where the live chat widgets leaked employee data, for security reasons.</p> <p>"The type of information being exposed is everything a person would need to successfully perform social engineering attacks against the company by using an employee's real information such as their full name, employee ID and supervisor's name to impersonate them," Zacharias and Gamble said.</p> <p>"This could lead to somebody gaining access to employee tools and even allow them to gain a foothold in the internal network," the researcher added.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 NCCIC growth helps tackle cyber issues
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/federal-pages/dhs/nccic-growth-helps-tackle-most-serious-and-enduring-strategic-risks-to-us/
GIST	The National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center utilized "some innovative enhancements" to its information technology and operational technology assessment capabilities to expand

the size of its teams and breadth of services, the DHS agency said in a report reviewing fiscal year 2017.

Teams found the most frequently identified enterprise system vulnerabilities to be susceptibility to email phishing, poor password practices, poor patch management, and improper configuration. The most frequently identified control system vulnerabilities were boundary protection — pegged as “the single most prevalent area of concern, continuing a four-year trend” — along with identification and authentication of legitimate system users and allocation of resources.

The report outlined the NCCIC response to the WannaCry ransomware attack beginning in May 2017. “Due in part to the coordinated and sustained counteraction by NCCIC and its domestic and foreign partners, WannaCry had limited impact on U.S. CI,” the agency said, noting coordination with more than 40 IT and cybersecurity companies to convey what NCCIC knew.

“As part of its mission to protect federal departments and agencies, NCCIC also led Cybersecurity Coordination, Assessment, and Response (C-CAR) meetings to share actionable information about the threats. C-CARs are a critical complement to NCCIC’s technical alerts and follow a standard protocol,” the report continues. “This protocol enables DHS to convey information to CISOs and request action from federal departments and agencies to gain awareness of potentially affected systems across the Federal Government. Recognizing that not all users would be able to install patches immediately, NCCIC also shared additional mitigation guidance to assist government and private sector network defenders.”

In FY17, NCCIC led DHS planning and coordination for Cyber Guard, an annual two-week exercise headed by the Department of Defense U.S. Cyber Command and co-sponsored by DHS and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Cyber Guard 2017 included experts from over 100 organizations, including the Federal Government, state governments, industry, academia, and international allies.

“Misuse of, threats to, and malicious attacks on these systems pose some of the most serious and enduring strategic risks to the United States. The increasing frequency and scale of malicious cyber activity threatens us all,” said Assistant Secretary for Cybersecurity and Communications Jeanette Manfra. “As more devices connect to the Internet, the threat landscape broadens and compounds the challenge for security practitioners.”

Manfra added that in FY17 NCCIC “streamlined its product portfolio, further integrated core functions and capabilities, and improved services to customers in a number of important ways.”

“We continue to explore ways to enrich cyber threat indicator data and leverage analytics and automation to improve the information we deliver to customers. We are also helping customers improve readiness and technical expertise by enhancing our training and exercise capabilities,” she added. “These and other enhancements—together with the growing strength and breadth of our global partnerships—will help to ensure that the NCCIC continues to arm our customers with the critical information products, services, and capabilities they require.”

In FY18, NCCIC will lead all aspects of Cyber Storm, a national-level exercise occurring every two years that will focus on the Critical Manufacturing and Transportation Sectors with participation from the Information Technology and Communications Sectors; law enforcement, defense, and intelligence agencies; state and local governments; and international partners.

Goals for FY18 including building the NCCIC workforce, expanding exercises and training, supporting election infrastructure, realigning operations to better serve customers, expanding incident response capacity, and enriching data and automating cybersecurity.

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HEADLINE	04/04 Hackers targeted Singapore universities
SOURCE	http://www.tnp.sg/news/singapore/iranian-hackers-targeted-singapore-universities
GIST	<p>Four Singapore universities were attacked by an Iranian hacking syndicate that is believed to have pilfered more than 31 terabytes of academic data and intellectual property from varsities across the world.</p> <p>There was a breach of 52 staff accounts across Nanyang Technological University (NTU), National University of Singapore (NUS), Singapore Management University and Singapore University of Technology and Design, said the Cyber Security Agency (CSA) of Singapore and Ministry of Education (MOE) yesterday.</p> <p>The nine Iranians allegedly responsible have been charged in the US for attempting to hack into 144 US and 176 foreign universities across 21 countries - including those in Singapore - at the behest of the Iranian government, the US Department of Justice said in a March 23 statement.</p> <p>The CSA said it received information on the breach in the user accounts of the local universities last week and alerted the MOE and the institutions.</p> <p>"The universities have stepped up their vigilance and users have been advised to change their passwords immediately," the agencies told The Straits Times.</p> <p>The CSA also said the incident did not appear to be linked to last year's cyber attacks on the NUS and NTU networks, and "at this time" there was no evidence that sensitive information had been breached.</p> <p>Among the accounts affected were those of faculty members. The four universities said measures such as resetting of passwords and scanning of affected computers were carried out following the alert.</p> <p>Internal investigations are also ongoing as the institutes continue to work with the authorities on the matter.</p> <p>Charges against the Iranians, which were made public on March 23, include several counts of identity theft, fraud and conspiracy to commit computer intrusions.</p> <p>The group is also accused of being linked to the Mabna Institute, an Iran-based company that has conducted a coordinated campaign of cyber intrusions into computer systems since 2013, the US Department of Justice said in a statement.</p> <p>Data from all fields of research and academic disciplines, such as science and technology, engineering, medical and social sciences, were targeted in what US court papers termed the "University Hacking Campaign".</p> <p>The campaign, which took place from 2013 to 2017, targeted over 100,000 accounts of professors worldwide. About half of those targeted were at US-based universities.</p> <p>About 8,000 professor accounts worldwide were compromised, of which 3,768 belonged to academics in US-based universities, said the court papers.</p> <p>The data and compromised account details were then allegedly used to benefit the Iranian government, specifically the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and other Iranian customers, including Iran-based universities, the US Justice Department said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Israel websites targeted in cyberattack
SOURCE	http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Major-Israeli-websites-targeted-in-large-anti-Israel-cyberattack-547834

GIST	<p>More than a dozen major Israeli websites were the target of an anti-Israel cyberattack on Tuesday evening, seemingly in response to clashes between the IDF and Gazan protesters last weekend.</p> <p>Websites belonging to Israeli hospitals, local authorities, Israel Opera, Israel Teachers' Union and the Israeli Defense Forces Widow & Orphans organization were among those targeted by a hacker known as DarkCoder or Th3Falcon.</p> <p>Affected websites temporarily displayed a full-screen image from clashes on the Gaza border on Friday, accompanied by Arabic music and the messages "Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine" and "Al Aqsa is a red line." Most of the websites were taken offline shortly after the attack.</p> <p>The hacker wrote on Twitter that the attack was part of a coordinated effort by anti-Israel groups to sabotage Israeli websites known as OpIsrael, which forms part of a wider collective of hackers called Anonymous.</p> <p>Initiated in April 2013, OpIsrael is an annual effort to hack key Israeli websites and leak information in protest at alleged Israeli treatment of Palestinians, intended to correspond with Israel's Holocaust Remembrance Day. Major hacking attempts are often met by pro-Israel hackers targeting Arab government websites.</p> <p>Previous targets of cyberattacks include Israel's Holocaust remembrance center Yad Vashem and the Ministry of Education.</p> <p>The perpetrator of Tuesday's hacking act attacked social media users who sought to report his Twitter account, writing, "Message to some Zionists: you can't stop me by reporting my account even if my twitter got blocked this won't stop me. "Stand up for what you believe in even if it means standing alone". "</p> <p>In July 2017, the same hacker attacked Israel's left-wing Meretz party's website amid rising tensions over the installment of metal detectors at Jerusalem's Temple Mount following a deadly terror attack at the religious site.</p> <p>"Alquds (Jerusalem) is ours. It will never be yours," said the hacker's message on the party's website.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Facebook to remove Russia-linked pages
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/3/facebook-to-remove-over-270-russia-linked-pages-ac/
GIST	<p>Mark Zuckerberg on Tuesday announced that Facebook will remove “more than 270 pages and accounts” operated by a Russian organization called the Internet Research Agency.</p> <p>In a blog post the firm’s embattled CEO said, “Most of our actions against the IRA to date have been to prevent them from interfering in foreign elections. This update is about taking down their pages targeting people living in Russia. This Russian agency has repeatedly acted deceptively and tried to manipulate people in the US, Europe, and Russia — and we don’t want them on Facebook anywhere in the world.”</p> <p>Earlier this year, as part of special counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, a federal grand jury indicted 13 Russian nationals and three Russian entities — including the IRA — of operating Eastern European and Russian troll farms and waging “information warfare” against the U.S.</p> <p>Since the 2016 poll, which featured waves of Russian propaganda flooding America’s unregulated social media platforms, including Twitter and Google, Facebook has come under increasing pressure too better regulate its online ads and newsfeeds to prevent the spread of misinformation.</p>

	<p>Initially, Mr. Zuckerberg dismissed the notion that his social media platform had been manipulated by foreign agents to influence the 2016 vote.</p> <p>But last month another controversy engulfed the firm after news broke about its ties to Cambridge Analytica — a data analysis firm hired by the 2016 Trump campaign and accused of exploiting the personal information of millions of Facebook users without their permission.</p> <p>Since that scandal broke, Facebook’s stock has dropped almost 20 percent and lost the company roughly \$80 billion in market value.</p> <p>Mr. Zuckerberg is scheduled to appear before Capitol Hill lawmakers next week to defend Facebook and has recently been on a major damage control publicity blitz.</p> <p>Earlier this year he admitted social media is awash in “sensationalism, misinformation and polarization.”</p> <p>On Tuesday, Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg added that the firm’s efforts to address the IRA would continue. Last year the firm shuttered 470 fake accounts it suspected of being connected to the shadowy outfit.</p> <p>“The IRA has a history of targeting people with deceptive content and it has no place on Facebook anywhere in the world,” Ms. Sandberg said on Tuesday in a blog post.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Grindr shares users’ HIV status
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/gay-dating-app-grindr-user-hiv-location-data/
GIST	<p>Grindr shared personal, HIV and geolocation-related data with two of its third-party contractors without informing users.</p> <p>As a way to make relationships safer, the gay flirting application Grindr allows users to share information about whether or not they are infected with HIV and the date of the last test. This data is extremely sensitive and private and serves to only inform future potential partners, but it turned out that Grindr was sharing this with two third-party contractors to optimize its algorithm.</p> <p>This was revealed by a security researcher Antoine Pultier who works for a Norway based NGO Sintef. In a conversation with BuzzFeed, Pultier said that Grindr saved the data of over 3.6 million daily users and passed it on to Localytics and Apptimize, two of its third-party contractors.</p> <p>According to Pultier, the shared data contained users’ HIV information, phone numbers, email addresses and geolocation making it not only easier for them to identify but locate them in real time. What’s worse is that some of the data was not even encrypted.</p> <p>In response to the allegations, chief technology officer at Grindr Scott Chen justified the practice of sharing data and wrote a blog post stating that data sharing with Localytics and Apptimize follows industry standards to “test and validate” app. He also claimed that the data was never sold to anyone.</p> <p>The company also vows not to share HIV data with anyone outside the company. In a conversation with CNNMoney, the company said that “it has already deleted HIV data from Apptimize, and is in the process of removing it from Localytics.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Fake WhatsApp riskware in copycatting
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/fake-whatsapp-riskware-copycatting/

GIST	<p>An Android app dubbed WhatsApp Plus has been unmasked as a variant of Android/PUP.Riskware.Wtaspin.GB, which steals information, photos, phone numbers and so on from a mobile phone.</p> <p>Fake WhatsApp riskware, usually found in third-party app stores, dates back to mid-2017. However, the newest version is notable in that its pathology indicates a copycat phenomenon occurring among malware developers.</p> <p>The malware, once installed, tells users that their app is out of date and offers a download link. Once clicked, users are taken to a webpage written entirely in Arabic. The page calls the app “Watts Plus Plus WhatsApp” and purports to be developed by someone named Abu.</p> <p>Looking into the code, researcher Nathan Collier at Malwarebytes found that while it has abilities to hide itself in various ways – “very spy-like behavior,” he said – it’s the same incriminating Android/PUP.Riskware.Wtaspin.GB code found within the receivers, services and activities of existing fake WhatsApp APKs.</p> <p>“The only difference of the aforementioned version from above is the code points to the Arabic webpage to update,” Collier explained. “After analyzing several different versions of PUP.Riskware.Wtaspin.GB, it appears all have different URLs from which to update. Thus, everyone is just copycatting the original source code and adding their own update website.”</p> <p>The original author of the riskware is unlikely to be the Arabic developer, Abu, he added.</p> <p>“The code of this riskware is complex,” Collier said. “The webpage of the developer claiming to be owner – not so complex. Although I won’t completely rule out the possibility, let’s just say I am skeptical.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Poll: critical infrastructure unprepared
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/majority-of-critical/
GIST	<p>Nearly 60% of executives at critical infrastructure operators polled in a recent survey said they lack appropriate controls to protect their environments from security threats.</p> <p>While organizations have made significant investments to secure their IT infrastructures, they have not fully addressed threats to operational technology (OT) environments: 57 out of 100 executives from various critical infrastructure organizations surveyed by Indegy said they are not confident that their enterprise nor other infrastructure companies are in control of OT security.</p> <p>The poll also underscores the lack of preparedness in key sectors, including energy, utilities and manufacturing. For instance, 35% of respondents said they have little visibility into the current state of security within their environment, while 23% reported they have no visibility. Meanwhile, 63% said that insider threats and misconfigurations are the biggest security risks they currently face.</p> <p>“We have been tracking the escalation in cyber-threat activity specifically targeting critical infrastructures for some time,” says Barak Perelman, CEO of Indegy. “As the recent joint DHS/FBI CERT Technical Alert illustrates, adversaries have compromised facilities across the US to conduct reconnaissance and likely develop ‘red button’ capability for future attacks.”</p> <p>The two agencies issued a joint alert saying that Russian government cyber-actors are actively targeting organizations in the US energy, nuclear, commercial facilities, water, aviation, government and critical manufacturing sectors. They characterized the activity as a “multi-stage intrusion campaign,” where the hackers first targeted peripheral organizations such as trusted third-party suppliers with less-secure networks and through them gain remote access into energy-sector networks.</p>

	The good news is that in tandem with this, 44% of all respondents indicated that their organizations plan to increase spending for industrial control system (ICS) security measures in the next 12–24 months. About a third (29%) reported that they were not sure.
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HEADLINE	04/04 Gas pipeline firms affected by cyberattack
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/several-us-gas-pipeline-firms-affected-cyberattack
GIST	<p>Several natural gas pipeline operators in the United States have been affected by a cyberattack that hit a third-party communications system, but the incident does not appear to have impacted operational technology.</p> <p>Energy Transfer Partners was the first pipeline company to report problems with its Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) system due to a cyberattack that targeted Energy Services Group, specifically the company’s Latitude Technologies unit.</p> <p>EDI is a platform used by businesses to exchange documents such as purchase orders and invoices. In the case of energy firms, the system is used to encrypt, decrypt, translate, and track key energy transactions. Latitude says it provides EDI and other technology services to more than 100 natural gas pipelines, storage facilities, utilities, law firms, and energy marketers across the U.S. US gas pipeline companies hit by cyberattack</p> <p>Bloomberg reported that the incident also affected Boardwalk Pipeline Partners, Chesapeake Utilities Corp.’s Eastern Shore Natural Gas, and ONEOK, Inc. However, ONEOK clarified that its decision to disable the third-party EDI service was a “purely precautionary step.”</p> <p>“There were no operational interruptions on ONEOK's natural gas pipelines,” the company stated. “Affected customers have been advised to use one of the alternative methods of communications available to them for gas scheduling purposes.”</p> <p>Few details are known about the cyberattack, but Latitude did tell Bloomberg that it did not believe any customer data had been compromised and no other systems appeared to have been impacted. A status update provided by Latitude on its website on Tuesday informed customers that the initial restoration of EDI services had been completed and the company had been working on increasing performance.</p> <p>SecurityWeek has reached out to Latitude Technologies and Energy Services Group for more information about the attack and will update this article if they respond.</p> <p>“This looks like a financially-motivated cyberattack, likely by cybercriminals, but we've seen in the past that cybercriminals often collaborate with nation-states and share hacking tools with each other,” said Phil Neray, VP of Industrial Cybersecurity at CyberX, a critical infrastructure and industrial cybersecurity firm based in Boston. “It's easy to imagine a ransomware attack that uses nation-state tools to hijack ICS/SCADA systems and hold the pipeline hostage for millions of dollars per day.”</p> <p>Bryan Singer, director of Security Services at IOActive, has described some worst-case scenarios that could result from attacks targeting pipeline operators.</p> <p>“A lot of pipelines have 24-48 hour capacity within the pipelines. If hackers find a way to poison the product, you could have downstream impact for months or more. You could have gas compressors or lift stations where there’s a fire or explosion, and where you have to scramble to cap the ends before the fire spreads out. If it’s an oil rig, it could certainly be tougher to contain,” Singer told SecurityWeek.</p> <p>“Hackers can cause some intermediate problems at first, but if they have access long enough, there’s a possibility that airports could go down (they often rely on fuel delivered directly) and gas stations could run out of gas. If they’re able to maintain an attack for a couple days, there can be very large downstream</p>

	<p>impact. We're mostly out of winter, but if we don't have power, we're in need of that heat," he added.</p> <p>Back in 2012, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) warned that malicious actors had been targeting the natural gas industry. While critical infrastructure operators in general have since become more aware of the risks posed by cyberattacks, many organizations are still unprepared.</p> <p>In the case of the oil and gas industry in the United States, a study commissioned last year by German engineering giant Siemens showed that this sector is largely unprepared to address cybersecurity risks in operational technology (OT) environments.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 CareFirst exposed in phishing attack
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/information-on-6800-carefirst-members-exposed-in-phishing-attack/article/755772/
GIST	<p>CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield said one of its employees recently fell victim to a phishing attack that led to thousands of its members' personal information being exposed.</p> <p>How many victims? CareFirst believes about 6,800 of its members may have been involved.</p> <p>What type of information? Member names, identification numbers, dates of birth, and in limited cases (eight individuals) Social Security numbers. No medical or financial information was compromised.</p> <p>What happened? CareFirst determined on March 12 that a staffer fell victim to a phishing scam that led to the compromise of the employee's email account. This account was then used to send emails to individuals not associated with CareFirst. Since the criminals had access to the email account, they could have gained access to member data, the company said.</p> <p>What was the response? The phishing email has been analyzed by CareFirst's and a third-party's security teams. CareFirst claims there is no evidence that the email contained malware and that no other suspicious activity was detected on the company's systems. There was also no sign that any data had been removed or accessed, but as an extra precautionary measure CareFirst will offer two years of free credit monitoring and identity theft protection to those affected. Potentially affected members will be contacted directly by CareFirst with information about enrolling in the protections being offered.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Evolving exploit builder kit: ThreatKit
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/evolving-exploit-builder-kit-threadkit-used-for-rat-and-banking-trojan-campaigns/article/755975/
GIST	<p>Researchers from Proofpoint last week revealed a new exploit builder kit that has been used by the sophisticated Cobalt Gang cybercriminal group, as well as other attackers who have used it to spread malware including banking trojans and remote access trojans.</p> <p>Dubbed ThreadKit, the kit has evolved several times since its activity was first identified in June 2017, according to a Proofpoint blog post detailing the various changes. The most recent iteration, seen in the wild in February and March 2018, includes exploits for the use-after-free Adobe Flash Player bug CVE-2018-4878 and the Microsoft Office remote code execution flaws CVE-2018-0802 and CVE-2017-8570. Proofpoint reports recently observing a "large spike" in email campaigns featuring ThreadKit-generated Office attachments exploiting these two added Microsoft bugs, as well as a third, CVE-2017-11882, a memory corruption vulnerability that was added last November.</p> <p>According to Proofpoint, ThreadKit bears similarities to the Microsoft Word Intruder (WMI) kit, yet is its own distinct entity. The kit offers users the ability to track infection statistics and is associated with the</p>

	<p>banking malwares Trickbot and Chthonic and the RATs FormBook and Loki Bot.</p> <p>Initial clues to Threadkit's existence emerged last summer when Proofpoint researchers saw a forum advertising the toolset. At the time, the kit exploited the Windows arbitrary code execution vulnerability CVE-2017-0199 in order to download and execute an HTA file. This file introduced a decoy doc and malicious VBScript that would extract and run the embedded downloader Smoke Loader, which subsequently produced Trickbot.</p> <p>Then in October, a new build of the kit added an exploit for the Microsoft .NET Framework RCE bug CVE-2017-8759. One month later, CVE-2017-11882 was added.</p> <p>"Document exploit builder kits like ThreadKit enable even low-skilled threat actors to take advantage of the latest vulnerabilities to distribute malware," state blog post authors and Proofpoint researchers "Axel F" and Matthew Mesa. "Organizations and individuals can mitigate the risk from ThreadKit and other document exploit-based attacks by ensuring that clients are patched for the latest vulnerabilities in Microsoft office and other applications.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Magento sites hacked: malicious scripts
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/over-1-000-magento-stores-hacked-to-steal-card-data-run-cryptojacking-scripts/
GIST	<p>Security researchers say they've identified at last 1,000 Magento sites that have been hacked by cybercriminals and infected with malicious scripts that steal payment card details or are used as staging points in the delivery of other malware.</p> <p>"The Magento sites are being compromised through brute-force attacks using common and known default Magento credentials," Flashpoint researchers say.</p> <p>"Brute-force attacks such as these are simplified when admins fail to change the credentials upon installation of the platform," researchers add. "Attackers, meanwhile, can build simple automated scripts loaded with known credentials to facilitate access of the panels."</p> <p>Once attackers gain access to these sites, researchers say they've observed three main patterns of malicious activities.</p> <p>The most common practice is to insert malicious code in Magento core files, code that logs payment card information entered inside the checkout process. Such malware is named a card scraper, and users should expect to find one on any e-commerce store that looks to have missed a few updates.</p> <p>Second, attackers also deploy cryptojacking scripts that mine Monero on the computers of store visitors, a practice that has become quite common these days, across all sites, not just Magento stores.</p> <p>Last but not least, hackers also use these compromised Magento stores to redirect some of the infected sites' visitors to malicious sites that attempt to trick users into downloading and installing malware on their computers. According to cases investigated by Flashpoint researchers, the most prevalent tactic was to redirect users to sites offering phony Adobe Flash Player update packages, which would infect users with the AZORult infostealers.</p> <p>According to researchers, the vast majority of these 1,000+ compromised sites were in the education and healthcare sectors, with the vast majority of compromised sites hosted on servers located in UE and the US.</p> <p>Security experts believe that the sites they discovered are only a small sample of all the compromised Magento stores.</p>

	Flashpoint says that besides Magento, threat intelligence gathered from entry-level and top-tier Deep & Dark Web forums suggests that cybercriminals are also very interested in other e-commerce platforms, not just Magento, such as OpenCart and Powerfront CMS.
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HEADLINE	04/03 New Monero-mining Android malware
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/new-monero-mining-android-malware-discovered
GIST	<p>A newly discovered malware family attempts to leverage the (limited) computing power of Android devices to mine for Monero crypto-currency, Trend Micro warns.</p> <p>Dubbed HiddenMiner, the malware was developed with self-protection and persistence mechanisms that allow it to hide itself from the unwitting user and to abuse the Device Administrator feature to perform its nefarious activities.</p> <p>The main issue with this threat, however, is the fact that it has no switch, controller, or optimizer in its code, meaning that it essentially continuously mines for Monero until all of the device's resources are depleted. Because of that, the malware can cause the infected devices to overheat and potentially fail, Trend Micro's researchers point out.</p> <p>HiddenMiner is used in an active campaign that has resulted in its operators already making several thousands of dollars as of last week (based on the known Monero mining pools and wallets connected to the malware).</p> <p>HiddenMiner, Trend Micro says, is somehow similar to the Loapi Monero-mining Android malware, which has been previously observed causing a device's battery to bloat. Furthermore, both Loapi and HiddenMiner use a similar technique to lock the device screen after revoking device administration permissions.</p> <p>The new threat spreads via third-party application marketplaces and has been observed impacting only users in India and China so far. However, the security researchers say it might spread beyond these two countries as well.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 New malware records calls, steals data
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2018/04/android-spying-trojan.html
GIST	<p>Security researchers at Cisco Talos have uncovered variants of a new Android Trojan that are being distributed in the wild disguising as a fake anti-virus application, dubbed "Naver Defender."</p> <p>Dubbed KevDroid, the malware is a remote administration tool (RAT) designed to steal sensitive information from compromised Android devices, as well as capable of recording phone calls.</p> <p>Talos researchers published Monday technical details about two recent variants of KevDroid detected in the wild, following the initial discovery of the Trojan by South Korean cybersecurity firm ESTsecurity two weeks ago.</p> <p>Though researchers haven't attributed the malware to any hacking or state-sponsored group, South Korean media have linked KevDroid with North Korea state-sponsored cyber espionage hacking group "Group 123," primarily known for targeting South Korean targets.</p> <p>The most recent variant of KevDroid malware, detected in March this year, has the following capabilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •record phone calls & audio

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •steal web history and files •gain root access •steal call logs, SMS, emails •collect device' location at every 10 seconds •collect a list of installed applications <p>Malware uses an open source library, available on GitHub, to gain the ability to record incoming and outgoing calls from the compromised Android device.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Michigan: ransomware possession illegal
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-michigan-law-makes-possession-of-ransomware-illegal/
GIST	<p>On Monday, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder signed two bills into law that criminalize the possession of ransomware "with the intent to introduce it into a computer or computer network without authorization" and punish offenders with a three-year prison sentence, respectively.</p> <p>Legislators initially sought a ten years prison sentence, but this was knocked down to three years in subsequent deliberations.</p> <p>According to the new bill, if a suspected cybercriminal is arrested and ransomware is found on his computer, the suspect would end up in prison, even if he didn't get to infect any victims. This, in theory, should make it easier for state authorities to go after suspected ransomware developers, affiliates, and others involved in Ransomware-as-a-Service operations.</p> <p>Just like most crimes, investigators must prove "intent to use" before charging someone with ransomware possession, which is now a felony.</p> <p>Michigan legislators weren't absurd —unlike their Georgia fellows— and left room for security experts to possess ransomware for research purposes.</p> <p>According to FBI statistics, there were over 1,300 ransomware incidents reported in the state of Michigan last year, with damages estimated at around \$2.6 million.</p> <p>"Cybercrime and tough measures to combat it is a rapidly evolving effort, and it's integral our law enforcement agencies have the tools to identify, prevent and penalize it," Gov. Snyder said on Monday.</p> <p>Both bills passed with the same vote tallies, 103 to 3 in the House, and 34 to 0 in the Michigan Senate.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Hackers targeted 911 call centers
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/hackers-have-taken-down-dozens-911-centers-why-it-so-n862206
GIST	<p>When news broke last week of a hacking attack on Baltimore's 911 system, Chad Howard felt a rush of nightmarish memories.</p> <p>Howard, the information technology manager for Henry County, Tennessee, faced a similar intrusion in June 2016, in one of the country's first so-called ransomware attacks on a 911 call center. The hackers shut down the center's computerized dispatch system and demanded more than \$2,000 in bitcoin to turn it back on. Refusing payment, Howard's staff tracked emergency calls with pencil and paper for three days as the system was rebuilt.</p> <p>"It basically brought us to our knees," Howard recalled.</p>

Nearly two years later, the March 25 ransomware attack on Baltimore served as another reminder that America's emergency-response networks remain dangerously vulnerable to criminals bent on crippling the country's critical infrastructure — either for money, or something more nefarious.

There have been 184 cyberattacks on public safety agencies and local governments in the past 24 months, according to a compilation of publicly reported incidents by the cybersecurity firm SecuLore Solutions. That includes Atlanta, which fell victim to a ransomware attack a couple days before the one on Baltimore, scrambling the operations of many agencies, but not the 911 system.

911 centers have been directly or indirectly attacked in 42 of the 184 cases on SecuLore's list, the company says. Two dozen involved ransomware attacks, in which hackers use a virus to remotely seize control of a computer system and hold it hostage for payment.

Most of the other attacks involve “denial of service,” in which centers are immobilized by a flood of automated bogus calls. One of the first occurred in October 2016, when Meetkumar Desai, then 18, of Arizona, distributed a computer bug on Twitter that overwhelmed 911 centers in 12 states. The motivations for such attacks are often less about the money than doing damage — sometimes as a form of protest, as when the “hacktivist” group Anonymous took down Baltimore's city website after the death of Freddie Gray while in police custody, experts say. Desai reportedly told authorities he meant his attack more as a prank.

“911 is the perfect [target] because it can't afford to be down,” said Tim Lorello, SecuLore's president and CEO.

This is how 911 works: When someone dials for help — typically from a mobile phone — the call gets routed from a cell tower to a 911 center, where a “telecommunicator” answers the phone and gathers basic information. The telecommunicator enters that information into a computer-aided dispatch system, where a dispatcher picks it up and coordinates a response from firefighters, police officers or ambulances.

This 911 system relies on redundancy, meaning that call centers that are taken out of service by a hacking attack can work around the disruption by shutting down the computer-aided dispatch system and sharing information person-to-person, or by sending calls to a nearby center. But depending on the type of attack and a 911 center's resources, those disruptions can make it more difficult for people to reach someone in case of an emergency. A July 2017 investigation by Scripps News on the vulnerabilities of 911 systems noted the case of a 6-month-old Dallas boy who died after his babysitter's 911 calls were delayed during an apparent denial-of-service attack.

J.J. Guy, chief technology officer at the cybersecurity firm Jask, said that the spread of ransomware attacks on public safety agencies and other key government operations shows the potential for cyberterrorists to target the country's critical infrastructure.

Last month, the Department of Homeland Security outlined in a report how Russian hackers have gained access to American power plants. The hackers did not cause service interruptions, but the fact that they could gain access at all is troubling to security experts.

“To date, if you don't have credit cards or lots of personal information, attackers had little motivation and thus you were mostly safe,” Guy said in an email. “This will change those dynamics. Manufacturing, logistics, etc — any field with an operations mindset that loses money when ‘the line is down’ will be targeted.”

The attack on Baltimore was discovered March 25, after a morning breach of its computer-aided dispatch system, officials said. The city's cybersecurity unit took the system down, forcing support staff to pass 911 calls to dispatchers using paper rather than electronically. Call-center operations returned to normal early the next day, officials said. Investigators later determined that the intrusion was an attempted ransomware attack, but “no ransom was demanded or paid,” a city spokesman James Bentley said. He declined to

explain further, saying that “could compromise the investigation.”

Most ransomware cases end similarly, with governments refusing to pay hackers, choosing instead to switch to a more primitive version of 911 services while they rebuild their systems. Governments have caved at times, however, although officials decline to say much about those incidents, out of concern that it will encourage more attacks.

Another problem with the current 911 system is that it doesn’t accommodate the ways people communicate in the modern world — through texts, photos, videos, etc. That is why the 911 industry is pushing telecommunication companies and state and local governments to adopt what it calls Next Generation 911, which allows callers to send data through approved telecommunications carriers and internet service providers (while still taking calls from landlines).

Adoption of Next Generation 911 has been slow and costly, said Brian Fontes, CEO of the National Emergency Number Association, or NENA. A tiny fraction of America is on Next Generation 911; the short list includes Maine and Vermont, with Indiana, Washington state’s King County and part of Texas getting close, Fontes said.

The Next Generation 911 systems will have advanced security baked into their foundations, including the ability to instantly identify suspicious activity, immediately shut down in response to intrusions, and simultaneously move incoming calls to other centers in a way that is undetectable to someone dialing for help, officials say.

But the increased connectivity also opens the modern systems to new potential modes of attack, experts say. No matter how sophisticated a defense, all it takes is one overlooked vulnerability to let hackers in, experts say.

That makes it essential to develop sophisticated defense systems run by in-house cybersecurity teams, they say.

In Baltimore’s case, the ransomware attack was discovered and repelled by Baltimore City Information Technology, which maintains defenses across the local government. It determined that the hackers had found access after a technician troubleshooting the computer-aided dispatch system made a change to a firewall and mistakenly left an opening, the city’s chief information officer, Frank Johnson, said in a statement. The FBI is now helping the city investigate.

Howard, in Tennessee, knows how his attacker obtained access to the 911 center — by finding a weak password left by a deceased former system administrator. The FBI told him it looked as if the attack came from Russia. But he still isn’t sure.

Howard cleaned and rebuilt his system, but struggles to maintain patches for his outdated CAD system. “It’s been a nightmare,” he said.

No one has been caught or prosecuted in the Tennessee or Baltimore attack.

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HEADLINE	04/03 YouTube shooting fake news rampant
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/youtube-shooting-fake-news-hoaxes-social-media/
GIST	Even before police secured YouTube's headquarters after a shooting there Tuesday, social media was flooded with a familiar scourge: Fake news. Police say three victims in the shooting in San Bruno, California, were transported for emergency treatment and the suspected female shooter was found dead from what they believe was a self-inflicted gunshot wound. The headquarters has been evacuated and law enforcement officers are continuing to investigate.

But on Twitter, various accounts claimed to know much more about the incident and its perpetrator than law enforcement. Many were passed over, but some still managed to attract dozens of interactions.

Twitter responded Tuesday saying it was "tracking" the accounts and "taking action on anything that violates our rules"...

That didn't stop someone who rebooted a common hoax that actor Sam Hyde was the shooter, a frequent accusation following shootings. The post included a photo of Hyde carrying an assault weapon.

Some of those tweets have since been removed. Another bogus claim was that YouTuber Matt Jarbo is behind the shooting...

False flag conspirators reemerged in their corner of Twitter to make their familiar claims about crisis actors participating in the shooting.

YouTube itself, which has been subject to widespread criticism for surfacing conspiratorial videos in the wake of tragedies, was promoting verified media sources through the early waves of reports.

On Reddit, subreddits known for incubating conspiracies that spread to other networks linked the shooting as a "false flag" to be "anti-gun" or positing that the suspect was wearing a hijab and resembled prominent Women's March co-chair Linda Sarsour.

On Gab, a social network that has become a haven for extremist and conspiratorial threads, speculation familiar to anyone following the rise of fake news emerged: That a description of the suspect that was deleted appeared to be the same as early descriptions of Parkland shooting suspect Nikolas Cruz.

CNET's Facebook account was subjected to comments promoting fake news before they were removed, echoing a refrain that Parkland shooting survivor and activist David Hogg was in some way involved.

Every major social network has its own challenges with disinformation. They've enacted series of algorithmic and structural changes in order to combat its spread. Just as Tuesday's shooting raged, Facebook said it was scrubbing more than 270 pages linked to a Russian troll farm.

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HEADLINE	04/03 Shooting captured on Facebook Live
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/facebook-live-captures-man-shot-woman-playing-gun/story?id=54207093
GIST	<p>A shooting captured on Facebook Live has left a man in critical condition.</p> <p>Police in Houston, Texas, are investigating an apparently accidental shooting that occurred when three people sitting in a car were "playing with two pistols," early Sunday, according to a press release. A woman in the vehicle accidentally discharged one weapon, striking the victim in the head, the release said.</p> <p>ABC station KTRK said the victim can be heard saying, "You're making me nervous," in the Facebook Live video.</p> <p>Video shows the woman hold a gun up to the camera, load the weapon and point it toward the victim. The gun discharges and the man goes still.</p> <p>The woman in the incident has been identified by Houston police as Cassandra Damper, 25.</p> <p>Officers responding to the shooting detained Damper, who allegedly tried to destroy evidence, police said.</p> <p>"While detained, Damper attempted to destroy the evidence by wiping off any gunshot residue that may have been present," Houston police said in the release.</p>

	<p>Damper has been charged with tampering/fabricating of evidence, according to the release.</p> <p>A grand jury will investigate any further charges related to the shooting, the release said.</p> <p>Another person was questioned at the scene, the release said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Bitcoin's rise as dramatic as fall
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/after-meteoric-rise-bitcoins-fall-is-as-nearly-dramatic/
GIST	<p>Bitcoin may have climbed on Monday while major U.S. stock indexes were tumbling, but don't think the debate over the cryptocurrency is any closer to being resolved. After all, bitcoin prices -- whose stratospheric rise made some rich and confounded many professional money managers -- have plummeted to earth in recent weeks. However, that's not keeping the digital currency's proponents from swearing their side is winning.</p> <p>The skeptics just point to the overall price plunge. After peaking near \$20,000 in December, it has further slid from \$11,520 on March 5 to around \$6,986 on Monday afternoon, according to CoinDesk's Bitcoin Price Index. Rivals to bitcoin in the cryptocurrency market such as ethereum, ripple and bitcoin cash have also been crushed.</p> <p>According to GMO co-founder Jeremy Grantham, who correctly predicted the market downturns in 2000 and 2007, bitcoin is a speculative bubble that's bursting. He recently told his clients in a letter that it "may well crash and burn even before the broad market peaks."</p> <p>Of course, bitcoin's fans -- and they are legion -- see better times ahead in 2018.</p> <p>"I talk to hedge funds, high net-worth individuals, even commodity speculators," Bill Barhydt, CEO of Abra, a cryptocurrency startup backed by American Express (AXP), told Business Insider. "They look at the volatility in the crypto markets and they see it as a huge opportunity. Once that happens, all hell will break loose."</p> <p>Speaking to Bloomberg recently, LDJ Capital head David Drake declared that after a "long, cold winter," bitcoin prices would reach \$30,000 by year-end. He invests in initial coin offerings (ICOs), a process for launching new digital currencies similar to initial public offerings for stocks, which regulators have argued is a haven for scammers. Google (GOOG) and Facebook (FB) have both decided not to accept ICO ads.</p> <p>Whether bitcoin will regain the \$20,000 level (never mind hit \$30,000) or will dwindle to irrelevance remains unknowable -- but that won't stop the arguments from both sides any time soon.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 FBI: easy to buy opioids on darknet
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/opioid-fentanyl-darknet-drugs-fbi/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON -- His moniker was "DARKKING22," and authorities say he offered a cornucopia of illicit drugs through the click of a mouse. But it was his ads on a hidden website for pure fentanyl, the powerful painkiller driving a record number of overdose deaths across the U.S., that caught FBI agents' attention.</p> <p>They bought some, and days later it arrived in a small, clear, plastic bag complete with a thank-you card -- a sign of how easy it is to buy drugs on the so-called darknet.</p> <p>The dealer did not stay anonymous for long. Federal authorities say "DARKKING22" was 28-year-old Antoin Austin, of Euclid, Ohio. His arrest last week is among the first by a new team of federal agents,</p>

computer experts and analysts tasked with fighting the kind of online opioid trafficking that law enforcement officials say can be more persistent and vexing than more traditional trafficking by cartels.

Frustrating authorities in their pursuit of online dealers is the anonymity in which they work. Buyers access stores through secret web browsers and make purchases using encrypted channels, code names and virtual currency such as bitcoin.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions said darknet vendors are "pouring fuel on the fire of the national drug epidemic" and this year doubled the number of federal agents working on those cases. It's part of the Trump administration's tough approach to the drug crisis that has focused on harsh punishments for dealers. Critics say the overall strategy resembles a return to failed drug-war tactics and that the record \$4.6 billion included in the spending plan the president signed last month is not nearly enough to establish the kind of treatment system needed to reverse the crisis.

But there's bipartisan agreement that more resources and new restrictions are needed to stem the stream of opioids entering the U.S. from overseas, especially China, and into households through the U.S. mail.

Darknet marketplaces are thriving, even after authorities in recent years dismantled two of the most notorious, the Silk Road and AlphaBay, where hundreds of thousands of customers bought not just illegal drugs but weapons, malware and counterfeit and stolen identification. Authorities on the new task force, the Joint Criminal Opioid Darknet Enforcement team, in this case targeted the vendors who sell illicit fentanyl by mail.

"It's not enough simply to take the sites down," Acting Deputy Assistant Attorney General Richard Downing said. "Vendors look for another opportunity, another site, another place where they can go and sell their drugs and guns."

In its first operation, the team arrested Austin and seven others and seized weapons, computer equipment and more than 2,000 lethal doses of the deadly drug. Investigators uncovered 19 overdose deaths they believe are connected to fentanyl purchased online.

Agents in Pittsburgh, for example, have found drug gangs that traditionally peddled narcotics smuggled from beyond the southern border are now also selling drugs from China online, said Shawn A. Brokos, a supervisory special agent there. Buyers sometimes turn to the dark web for drugs to then deal on the street.

"A lot of them start on a smaller level and then they see how lucrative this can be and they keep expanding," she said.

Investigators from several agencies made a list of "targets," not just the fentanyl peddling vendors, but buyers and users, then set out to contact them, building on existing intelligence. They spoke to more than 160 people, getting a clearer picture of the landscape, said Kyle Rau, of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

"They share their secrets, they share their tradecraft," said Emily Odom, chief of the FBI's Hi-Tech Organized Crime Unit. "They're working together, so we have to do a better job working together as well."

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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	04/04 Expert: age of jihadist drone arrived
SOURCE	https://www.standard.co.uk/news/world/drones-are-the-new-jihadist-terror-weapons-says-us-security-expert-a3805201.html
GIST	Britain must prepare to face the threat of Islamic State terrorists using drones to attack buildings and other landmark targets, a security expert will warn in a book published next month.

Nicholas Grossman said that IS had already used drones packed with explosives in Syria and that no terror group had done more to exploit the new technology.

He said options for protecting against the danger included using electrical repulsion systems.

But he warned that if the use of drones for commercial deliveries and other purposes becomes more common it will become increasingly difficult to stop terrorists using drones to destructive effect.

There are already concerns about the potential risk that such devices could pose to aircraft if they stray into flight paths, and the possibility that out-of-control drones could injure people. But in his book *Drones and Terrorism*, Mr Grossman, an academic from the University of Illinois, warns that the “age of the drone terrorist” has arrived, with IS and other extremist groups already using them for attacks in conflicts overseas.

He says the technology is likely to be exploited further to mount attacks in Western cities. “As drones become more commonplace in cities, they will become less conspicuous, making it easier for a terrorist to case or attack a target,” he writes.

“Electronically repelling drones from restricted airspace, or forcing them to land, would protect landmarks, airports, government buildings or other potential targets ... [but] of course someone will find a way around any anti-drone technology.

“Perhaps the biggest danger is to airports. If a terrorist could fly a drone into a jet engine during take-off or landing, they could inflict mass casualties.”

The warning echoes similar comments by former Scotland Yard counter-terrorism chief Richard Walton. He told the Standard last month that vigilance was needed about potential attacks using drones because “there are very few methodologies used by terrorist organisations in their war zones that don’t at some stage come over here”.

Mr Walton added that both IS and al-Qaeda, which had not gone away, remained “globally networked organisations” capable of organising attacks.

A recent report by the London Assembly suggested that the “controlled use of drones should be explored” in planning for the future transport needs of the capital.

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HEADLINE	04/04 Terrorists, criminals and governance
SOURCE	https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/04/terrorism-governance-religion/556817/
GIST	<p>The Taliban claims to adhere to a strict interpretation of Islamic law, but that didn’t stop them from learning to love the poppy. The Islamic State developed an unforgiving set of laws to govern its caliphate, even as it engaged in widespread smuggling of antiquities and the synthetic drug Captagon. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (the FARC) were once puritanically anti-drugs but turned wholeheartedly to supporting the cocaine economy following their Eighth Party Congress in 1982. This isn’t necessarily surprising. Despite initial protestations, militant groups often engage in criminal operations—drugs, trafficking, and smuggling—to fund their activities.</p> <p>But crime is not their primary calling—they also seek to govern. These groups may be despicable but they can also be rational, calculating, and sometimes surprisingly effective, outperforming existing governments. Yet this fundamental point is often lost on policymakers.</p> <p>The Trump administration has made a lot of noise about defeating groups like the Islamic State, but it has said little about how to prevent them from reemerging in the future. In fairness, President Trump is only building on the “counterterrorism first” policy of his predecessor, President Obama. And the Trump</p>

administration's hard line on illegal drugs coming from Mexico—setting aside the issue of the border wall—has echoes in that of previous Republican and Democratic administrations. But what if the true cause of instability isn't terrorism or crime but the absence of effective governance?

How the Taliban and the Islamic State (and even some organized crime organizations) think about governance is shaped and, in some cases, driven by ideological and religious motivations. Latin America offers an intriguing contrast. There are, of course, violent actors in Latin America—quite a lot of them. Countries like Mexico have seen Middle East-like levels of violence. Some of the most brutal tactics of al-Qaeda in Iraq in the 2000s, such as beheadings, were also used by Mexican drug cartels like Los Zetas. But tactics and the willingness to kill aside, much of the violence in Latin America is of a different kind, with religion and ideology playing a declining role.

In Latin America during the Cold War, Marxism was invoked by left-wing insurgents, as was nationalism by right-wing militias, in their attempts to seize control of the state. But with successful democratic transitions throughout the continent, states largely appropriated socialist demands by legalizing leftist parties and pushing a new brand of redistributive economics. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the moderation of socialist parties in countries made demands for a radically different political order seem unappealing (or unnecessary) to the vast majority of citizens.

Meanwhile, secularization and declining levels of religious observance throughout Latin America meant a receding political role for Catholicism. In Michoacán, Mexico, one exception has been the criminal group La Familia Michoacana, which has made extensive use of Christian imagery. In 2009, before the state fought back, the group reportedly had influence over (or extorted anyway) perhaps as many as 180,000 gas stations, truck shops, street markets, movie theaters, and businesses.

While some members of La Familia genuinely subscribed to the evangelically influenced, albeit distorted, religious practices, Christianity mainly functioned as a frame to justify their rule. References to a Christianity "purer" than that of the Catholic Church were meant to cement the group's legitimacy with the local population. Christian ideology was also used to prevent defections to rival criminal groups or collaboration with state authorities by ensuring absolute obedience. La Familia also imposed certain mores of personal conduct—including, ironically, a ban on the use of drugs by cartel members.

In these cases, however, Christianity did not have much bearing on the content of governance. La Familia did not, for example, seek to impose any particular religious conduct on local populations. By contrast, in the case of the Islamic State, religion provided much more than mere justification; it informed the whole approach to governance, including an elaborate network of legal institutions.

In Latin America, the slow disappearance of genuine Marxist alternatives led elected leaders to deemphasize state coercion for resolving disputes or conducting politics. Unlike the Middle East, Latin America has experienced no interstate war since 1995, no international terrorist attacks since 1994, and no proliferation of weapons of mass destruction since 1945. There are no longer successful separatist or irredentist armed groups. No major political party based on religion has come close to having an electoral majority in the last two decades.

The Colombian peace process that began in 2010—featuring the once-avowedly Marxist FARC—reflects the general trend toward addressing ideological differences within state institutions that began with the democratic transitions of the 1970s and 1980s. The decline of religious politics coupled with the integration of socialist ideology into mainstream politics has had major implications for violent conflict: Today, armed groups have virtually no alternative popular ideologies upon which to credibly draw.

The closest substitute, which does not quite rise to the level of ideology in the traditional sense, is loyalty toward a gang, militia, or criminal organization, offering an alternative basis for social solidarity. For its part, the United States, since the end of the Cold War, has helped reduce ideological tensions by choosing not to intervene directly, by and large, in the region or pick partners on the basis of ideology.

But even in the absence of clear ideological and religious motivations, some nonstate actors still play

important governance roles across Latin America. Where state presence is weak, this is inevitable. But even where states are not weak, governments may simply decide that the cost of establishing a state presence outweighs the benefits. Even wealthy countries like the United States, Germany, and France lack full control in pockets of territory—inner cities, refugee camps, migrant communities, or banlieues. Alienated minority communities may be reluctant to cooperate with authorities, increasing the cost of maintaining a state presence. But just because the state isn't interested in providing governance doesn't mean no one will.

Which leads us back to a basic theme: People seek out governance from whoever can deliver it, and if the state cannot, they'll find somebody else to do the job. In the Middle East and Asia, religion and ideology matter, but, beyond making a concerted effort to understand how Islam influences politics, there's little the United States can do to influence Islam's evolution (it's challenging enough for Muslim countries). What it can do is focus on the things it does know about and the things it can influence—and perhaps even change.

To put it more simply, its governing ideology aside, the Islamic State would not have been able to govern large swathes of Syria and Iraq if there had been a legitimate, responsive state there already governing. Within the broad category of “governance,” there is a common thread that sticks out across regions, religions, and cultures: the demand for justice, even if it is of the “rough and ready” variety. Order and security are what residents demand most, at least at first. Even when local orders are brutal, they can offer the swift and predictable dispute resolution that populations crave.

In Afghanistan, conflicts over land and water and tribal feuds have escalated after the end of the Taliban regime as a result of weak institutional rule and power usurpation. The post-Taliban formal courts have not been able to stop or resolve such conflicts. Worse, the courts became corrupt and themselves a tool of land expropriation, something that worsened during the presidency of Hamid Karzai. The Taliban has moved to fill the gap by providing free mediation of tribal, criminal, and personal disputes. Afghans report a great degree of satisfaction with Taliban verdicts, unlike those of the official justice system, where petitioners often have to pay considerable bribes.

The Taliban's code of conduct—the so-called Taliban La'iha—is designed both to maintain control of the Taliban rank-and-file and to limit the emergence of rogue elements. The Quetta Shura of the Taliban, one of its key leadership groups now based in Quetta, Pakistan, has even established teams to travel throughout Afghanistan and uncover complaints from local populations against the Taliban—about corruption, brutality, or other mistreatment. It has also distributed phone numbers throughout the country for reporting abuses. How much the local population trusts this reporting system and actually experiences any redress of grievances varies considerably, of course. In practice, the population is intimidated and abused by Taliban fighters and officials. Still, it says something that the Taliban feels it stands to gain from establishing and advertising such a system in the first place.

Similarly, the Islamic State went about building a distinctive legal order, allowing it to justify violence, regulate economic transactions, and reduce crime and corruption. In short order, with the international community paying little attention, it set up fairly elaborate institutional structures, oriented around interlocking sharia courts, binding fatwas, and detailed tax codes. This was what Yale University's Andrew March and Mara Revkin term “scrupulous legality.” Distinguishing itself in governance terms was not particularly difficult, since the bar was so low; the other choices were the chaotic rule of other rebel groups consumed by infighting, the mass murder of the Assad regime, or the sectarianism of the Iraqi government and Shia militias.

In Latin America, various criminal groups maintain control of neighborhoods with a mix of coercion and public services, similar in many ways to the Taliban or the Islamic State, although not on the same scale. For example, in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, gangs such as Primeiro Comando da Capital regulate criminal activity with a so-called “criminal constitution,” which sets limits on what members of one gang can do to another or to the local population. Gangs also sponsor the development of public spaces such as plazas and sport facilities—they have even improved water delivery in one Rio favela. They help pay for

the medical expenses of residents who run into trouble or provide small-scale loans to those who cannot make ends meet. Prison-based gangs, particularly in countries where they have achieved national influence such as Brazil and El Salvador, are also in the business of governance. They regulate and make predictable the otherwise brutal conditions in overcrowded jails.

Meanwhile, Mexico's Sinaloa Cartel, long led by the notorious Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, has provided handouts to local schools, clinics, and churches; built soccer stadiums; and sponsored fiestas. The cartel's "governance," including levying illegal taxes—extortion—was predictable and restrained compared to other criminal groups, at least prior to El Chapo's extradition to the United States in 2017. During her fieldwork in Tijuana 2011 and 2013, one of the authors was repeatedly told by business operators that while all of the local criminal groups extort businesses, the Sinaloa Cartel's taxes were by far the most tolerable.

Organized crime organizations sometimes even integrate into local civil society and politics. In Medellín, Colombia, local paramilitary organizations and gangs would join neighborhood civil society groups and serve on community boards. Social workers in Medellín reported that residents would turn to the dominant criminal organization to settle disputes or to deal with petty crime because local inhabitants prefer swift (if sometimes violent) resolution of problems over prolonged and uncertain interactions with the police and the courts. In Brazil, politicians seeking to be elected frequently need to bargain for permission to enter neighborhoods controlled by gangs or militias, which provides another avenue by which organized crime can shape politics and society.

Whether in the Middle East, Latin America, or elsewhere, the question of how international actors can improve governance in places they don't quite understand is always a difficult one. Good governance—or even good enough governance—isn't easy. At times, it can seem like a stand-in for the heroically impossible, requiring Marshall Plan-style ambition, visionary leadership, and massive financial resources. But there is such thing as realistic governance goals—realistic in that they might require billions of dollars, a modest amount for the United States, but more importantly political will along with feasible timelines. Most of all, though, they require a change of attitude.

The difficult, often tragic experiences of the United States and the international community in Iraq and Afghanistan have produced resignation and exhaustion. Far from wanting to promote state-building and good governance, many officials call for a hands-off approach beyond the occasional remote killing of terrorists. Or, if a military intervention is in fact necessary, they call for handing over the responsibilities of governance to local powerbrokers as quickly as possible. Yet this is exactly why such limited interventions produce such limited, disappointing, and even disastrous results. And this is why armed nonstate actors remain a persistent threat—not simply because they are violent or because not enough of them are killed, but because they provide public goods as well as public bads.

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HEADLINE	04/04 Claim: Indonesia ISIS leader identified
SOURCE	https://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/bombmaker-names-aman-abdurrahman-as-isis-leader-in-indonesia/news-story/18d3cb98e47e01c5ae7053405656b566
GIST	<p>A convicted Indonesian bomb maker who claims to have been radicalised by listening to secretly-recorded sermons by jailed cleric Aman Abdurrahman told a Jakarta court he believed the firebrand Islamist was Islamic State's leader in Indonesia.</p> <p>Kurnia Widodo, who served four years in prison over a failed suicide bombing in the west Java city of Bandung, told the South Jakarta district court he was inspired to use his background in chemical engineering to become a bomb maker after listening to lectures delivered by Aman down a phone line from prison and broadcast over loudspeakers at a Bandung mosque.</p> <p>His plan to assist in the 2010 suicide bombing attack was foiled and Kurnia was arrested and sentenced to six years in Cipinang, a high security prison off the coast of Java, where Aman was then serving a nine-</p>

year sentence for aiding a militant training camp.

The 46-year-old cleric, said to be the key ideologue for militant groups that make up Indonesia's ISIS-inspired Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), is now facing a possible death sentence on charges of inciting others to commit terror attacks in Indonesia, including the January 2016 central Jakarta attack in which eight people were killed.

Kurnia testified yesterday that Aman was still preaching to his followers from Cipinang jail in 2011 when he shared a prison cell block with the cleric, though by then he was "no longer following Aman's teaching".

"I stopped believing police (were) infidels," he said.

But, he added; "My friends referred to Aman as the ISIS leader of Indonesia. I believed them, because his teaching served as a reference to all ISIS supporters in Indonesia and his words are seen as instructions."

Aman was shifted to Indonesia's maximum security Nusakambangan prison in 2015, where many of the country's death row prisoners are held.

It was in Nusakambangan that Kurnia said he understood Aman convinced Abu Bakar Bashir, the ageing cleric and spiritual leader of the Jemaah Islamiah militant group behind the deadly Bali bombings, to pledge allegiance to ISIS.

"That's what I learned from my colleagues. It was widely discussed on jihadist WhatsApp groups. Abu (Bakar Bashir) wouldn't have abandoned the JAT (Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid, a militant group Bashir founded) and pledged allegiance to ISIS. Abu must have been influenced by someone else. And the person influencing him was Aman Abdurrahman," Kurnia said.

But Aman yesterday dismissed Kurnia's testimony, insisting he had never met Abu Bakar Bashir and was not an ISIS leader.

"How can you say that I am an ISIS leader? I am not an ISIS chief. If you say people use me as reference, then yes," he said.

"But I am not their leader."

Aman was rearrested in August last year just days before he was scheduled to be released after serving out his time for his first conviction. He has since been placed in isolated cells at several police headquarters for fear he may radicalise more people and incite further attacks.

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HEADLINE	04/04 Iraq troops kill senior ISIS leader
SOURCE	https://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/iraqi-troops-kill-senior-islamic-state-leader-seven-aides-in-diyala/
GIST	<p>Baghdad (Iraqinews.com) – Iraqi security forces launched on Wednesday a military operation to hunt for dormant Islamic State (IS) militants in Diyala governorate, managing to kill a senior leader along with seven of his aides, security sources were quoted as saying.</p> <p>"Acting upon accurate intelligence reports, Iraqi troops killed Abu Nabil al-Iraqi, the mastermind of several terrorist attacks launched by Islamic State, and seven of his aides in a military operation in northeastern Diyala," Shafaq News quoted the sources as saying.</p> <p>Al-Iraqi, according to the sources, was in charge of "providing the militant group with financial and logistic support to target security forces in Diyala."</p>

	<p>In January 2015, Iraqi forces announced liberation of Diyala province from Islamic State extremist militants who proclaimed an “Islamic Caliphate” in Iraq and Syria in 2014.</p> <p>The province has seen months of fighting between Iraqi troops and IS militants especially in the Jalawla and Saadiyah areas in the province’s north and areas near the town of Muqdadiyah.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Israel: attack on navy ship foiled
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/04/04/israel-says-it-thwarted-gaza-militant-attack-on-navy-ship.html
GIST	<p>JERUSALEM – Israel's Shin Bet security service says it has arrested 10 Palestinians suspected of planning an attack against a navy ship off the Gaza coast.</p> <p>The cell's alleged leader was being indicted Wednesday. The Shin Bet says Amin Jamaa's interrogation revealed a plan to send a decoy boat that would distract the navy ship, after which a rocket would be fired at it and militants would then try to abduct wounded soldiers on board as bargaining chips for future prisoner swaps.</p> <p>The Shin Bet identified the men as members of the Islamic Jihad militant group.</p> <p>The disclosure follows mass protests along the Israel-Gaza border last Friday in which 18 Palestinians were killed.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 US considering pullout of Syria?
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-syria/trump-seeks-syria-pullout-as-advisers-warn-of-hard-work-ahead-idUSKCN1HA2DA
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump said on Tuesday he wanted to “get out” of Syria but offered no timetable, as his advisers warned of the hard work left to defeat Islamic State and stabilize areas recaptured from the hardline militant group.</p> <p>Trump told a news conference the United States would “not rest until ISIS is gone,” using an acronym for the militant group. But he also suggested that victory was imminent.</p> <p>The Pentagon and State Department have held that a longer term U.S. effort would be needed to ensure that Islamic State’s defeat is a lasting one.</p> <p>“It’s time,” Trump told reporters, when asked if he was inclined to withdraw U.S. forces.</p> <p>“We were very successful against (Islamic State). We’ll be successful against anybody militarily. But sometimes it’s time to come back home, and we’re thinking about that very seriously.”</p> <p>The United States is waging near-daily air strikes in Syria and has deployed about 2,000 troops on the ground, including U.S. special operations forces whose advising has helped Kurdish militia and other U.S.-backed fighters capture territory from Islamic State.</p> <p>U.S. Army General Joseph Votel, who oversees U.S. troops in the Middle East as the head of Central Command, estimated on Tuesday that more than 90 percent of the group’s territory in Syria had been taken back from the militants since 2014.</p> <p>Trump estimated the percentage of territory recaptured in Iraq and Syria at “almost 100 percent,” a figure</p>

that U.S. officials say is correct - it is about 98 percent - but does not highlight the work left in Syria.

The big hurdle, in the U.S. military's view, is seizing Islamic State-held territory around the Syrian town of Abu Kamal.

That effort that has been slowed as U.S.-backed Kurdish fighters shift their focus away from Islamic State toward a Turkish offensive against Kurdish allies elsewhere in Syria's complex, multi-pronged civil war, now in its eighth year.

Brett McGurk, the special U.S. envoy for the global coalition against Islamic State, speaking alongside Votel at an event in Washington on Tuesday, said the U.S. fight against Islamic State was not over.

"We are in Syria to fight ISIS. That is our mission and our mission isn't over and we are going to complete that mission," McGurk said.

Experts were divided about the significance of Trump's simultaneous musings about withdrawal and his assurance that the United States will not depart until Islamic State is defeated.

The militant group is widely expected to revert to guerilla tactics once the last remnants of its once self-styled "caliphate" are captured by U.S.-backed forces.

Jon Alterman at the Center for Strategic and International Studies think-tank, said a precipitous U.S. withdrawal would undermine U.S. leverage in talks to end Syria's civil war.

Experts warn an abrupt U.S. withdrawal could benefit Russia and Iran, U.S. rivals who could extend their influence in Syria.

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HEADLINE	04/04 Iraq grapples pre-election Iran influence
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iraq-grapples-iranian-influence-ahead-elections-54223229?
GIST	<p>Iran's influence is looming large as Iraqis prepare to head to the polls for parliamentary elections in May, with many in the country worried that Tehran may be looking to strengthen its political grip on Baghdad through the ballot box.</p> <p>Iranian support and military advisers helped Baghdad's Shiite-led government beat back the Islamic State group. But with IS militants now largely defeated militarily, Iran's expanding influence has emerged as one of Iraq's most divisive issues ahead of the balloting.</p> <p>That influence has sown fear among Iraq's disenchanting minority Sunnis, who bore the brunt of the war's destruction, and has also caused concern in Washington. Despite tensions between the United States and Iran, both remain key allies of Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's government.</p> <p>U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis last month accused Iran of "mucking around" in Iraq's upcoming elections, telling reporters the U.S. has what he called "worrisome evidence" that Iran is funneling "not an insignificant amount of money" into Iraq to try to sway votes. Baghdad rejected the accusation.</p> <p>Government spokesman Saad al-Hadithi stressed that the use of foreign money in domestic politics "is illegal and unconstitutional."</p> <p>"The government is taking great efforts to hold free and fair elections and prevent the manipulation of election results," he said.</p> <p>Both Iran and Iraq are Shiite-majority countries and share deep economic and cultural ties — as well as a</p>

1,500-kilometer (900-mile) border.

The two countries fought a devastating war in the 1980s that left hundreds of thousands dead. But Iranian influence in Iraq has steadily grown since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion that toppled Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, marking the start of a prolonged period of sectarian division, extremist violence and political strife.

Under Saddam, many of Iraq's Shiite political elite spent years in exile in Iran. Since Saddam's ouster, Iraqi markets have been stocked with Iranian goods and millions of Iranian pilgrims descend on Iraq each year to visit holy shrines in the cities of Samarra, Baghdad, Najaf and Karbala.

When entire divisions of Iraq's military disintegrated following the fall of the city of Mosul to IS in the summer of 2014, Iranian influence soared.

Weeks before the U.S. began a bombing campaign against IS, Iranian advisers and support for Iraqi Shiite militias, which became known as Popular Mobilization Units, helped halt IS' advance, which came dangerously close to Baghdad. From then on, the militias became instrumental in the battle against IS.

More than 500 members of the paramilitary forces or political figures associated with the militias are now running for parliament.

Ahmed al-Asadi is one of the candidates with strong paramilitary ties. An elected member of parliament from Baghdad and former spokesman for the PMU, al-Asadi cut his ties with the force before launching his re-election bid — a formality required by a governing body overseeing the May vote.

"Iran is the ally of the powerful forces that supported Iraq against terrorism," he said, dismissing concerns that Tehran plays a destabilizing role in Iraq.

But other Iraqi politicians worry that if a large number of men like al-Asadi win seats in parliament, Iraq will be even more beholden to its eastern neighbor.

Saleh al-Mutlaq, a longtime Iraqi politician and former deputy prime minister, said he expects candidates with ties to the Shiite militias to do well in upcoming elections.

"These elections will be disastrous for this country," he said. "The PMU will be a key player in the political process and this will give Iran a role and a word in forming the government and in choosing a prime minister."

Iran is not the only one trying to influence the May vote, said Joost Hiltermann, a longtime Iraq researcher with the International Crisis Group.

"Everybody is trying to buy or gain influence, anybody who has a stake in Iraq that is, whether they do it with money or intimidation or other kinds of incentives," he said. "Ever since there have been elections in 2005, there's been meddling."

The future of American forces in Iraq hinges in large part on who becomes Iraq's next prime minister and who gets to lead the country's most powerful ministries.

While the Shiite militias racked up several early victories against IS, it was U.S.-led coalition airstrikes that allowed Iraqi forces to retake urban areas. Iraq remains deeply dependent on U.S. military aid, training and intelligence sharing.

While al-Abadi, who is seeking re-election with his recently formed Victory Alliance party, has said he is open to long-term American training programs for Iraqi forces, some of his opponents have taken a much harder line, describing any U.S. forces in Iraq as occupiers.

	<p>The U.S. still has more than 5,000 troops in Iraq, supporting its fight against remaining pockets of IS, most significantly along Iraq's volatile border with Syria, in western Anbar province and around the city of Kirkuk — areas that have seen an uptick in militant activity.</p> <p>"I'm not going to speculate on anything that could or would happen," coalition spokesman Col. Ryan Dillon said when asked if there is concern that a change in government could affect the U.S.-led coalition's presence in Iraq.</p> <p>"We are here at the invitation of the government of Iraq to support their operation to defeat Daesh, and we'll continue to do so as long as we are invited," he said, referring to IS by an Arabic acronym.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 France police database flags 78,000
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/france-puts-78000-security-threats-vast-police-database-54224059?
GIST	<p>France has flagged more than 78,000 people as security threats in a database intended to let European police share information on the continent's most dangerous residents — more than all other European countries put together — according to an analysis by The Associated Press.</p> <p>A German parliamentarian, Andrej Hunko, was the first to raise the alarm about potential misuse of the Schengen Information System database in a question to his country's Interior Ministry about "discreet checks" — secret international checks on people considered a threat to national security or public safety. He questioned whether and why different countries seemed to apply very different criteria.</p> <p>"The increase in alerts cannot be explained by the threat of Islamist terrorism alone. Europol reports a four-digit number of confirmed foreign fighters, yet the increase of SIS alerts in 2017 is several times that," Hunko said in a statement late last month when he released the Interior Ministry response to his query.</p> <p>That response included a spreadsheet detailing for the first time how many discreet checks each European country had flagged up last year — more than 134,000 in all.</p> <p>"This could mean that families and contacts of these individuals are also being secretly monitored. It is also possible that the measure is being used on a large scale for combatting other criminal activity," Hunko said.</p> <p>The number of French police entries "indicates a misuse" of the system intended to monitor dangerous criminals, he added.</p> <p>The Schengen database — which is separate to the Europol database and far more widely used — forms the backbone of European security, allowing police, judicial authorities and other law enforcement to immediately check whether a person is wanted or missing, or a car is stolen, or a firearm is legal, for example. The database was checked 5 billion times in 2017 alone, according to the director of the EU-LISA agency, Krum Garkov.</p> <p>But a relatively unknown provision in European law allows countries to flag people for the "discreet checks" — allowing law enforcement in one country to notify counterparts elsewhere of a person's location and activities. Use of the system — intended for individuals who pose a threat to national security or public safety — has expanded enormously since Islamic State extremists attacked Paris and Brussels in 2015 and 2016, from 69,475 in 2015 to 134,662 last year, according to data from EU-LISA and Germany.</p> <p>If someone is flagged for a discreet check, their name will come up for any law enforcement official who has stopped them anywhere in Europe — whether trying to cross an external border or running a red light. In the entry, the requesting country can ask for a subsequent action, ranging from simply reporting back</p>

their location, vehicle, and traveling companions to detaining them immediately for arrest.

Discreet checks, unlike arrest warrants, expire after a year, although Garkov said countries are notified of pending expirations and can renew them at will.

But vast disparities in its use by individual countries raise questions about both the effectiveness of the tools and the criteria countries are using to enter people into the system. With 78,619 entries by 2017, France makes up 60 percent of the discreet check database. Britain, with nearly the same population and 16,991 people flagged, comes in a distant second. Germany, Europe's most populous country, had 4,285 people flagged last year, according to the Interior Ministry data.

To put the French number in perspective, the country's intelligence chief, Laurent Nunez, said late last year that France had recorded 18,000 people as suspected extremists, and considered 4,000 of those to be highly dangerous. The Interior Ministry did not respond to requests to comment about the criteria for discreet checks. CNIL, the government data protection agency, said the 78,000 entries covered every person that France wanted flagged for any reason.

Like the U.S. "no fly list," people can only learn by inference whether they are flagged for a discreet check.

"People are not informed about the existence of this alert, which makes sense. But at the same there needs to be a proportionality assessment," said Niovi Vavoula, a legal scholar at Queen Mary University of London who studies the use of the database. "If certain member states are introducing alerts en masse to the system, this needs to be flagged as a problem."

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HEADLINE	04/03 US mulls changes to Syria policy
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/u-s-mulls-changes-to-syria-policy-after-trump-says-u-s-will-leave-syria-soon/
GIST	<p>President Trump's declaration last week that the U.S. will get out of Syria "soon" came just a day before the administration halted \$200 million in U.S.-led reconstruction efforts. The pair of announcements set off alarm bells within the U.S. government and among allies who are worried Washington's commitment to Syria may be wavering.</p> <p>Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-South Carolina, said on "Fox News Sunday" this weekend that pulling out of Syria would be the "single worst decision" that Mr. Trump could make. European government officials agreed.</p> <p>"This is not the moment to give up on Syria," explained one European government official. "After Mosul, some said it is all over for ISIS. Well, no it is not. If you were to walk away now, we think there is a real risk that things could go back over time to how they were. You can't do this work from afar."</p> <p>A lot depends on a White House meeting on Tuesday, which will take a close look at the Trump administration's Syria policy. Mr. Trump wants other countries, such as Saudi Arabia, to play a greater role and pick up a bigger portion of the bill in Syria. European countries admit that they have to do more to help out in Syria, as displaced Syrians will in many cases wind up as refugees in Europe.</p> <p>Countries involved in the global coalition to defeat ISIS in Syria and Iraq have said they are not expecting a quick and dramatic U.S. exit. But they are wary of the Trump administration's sudden decision to halt support for stabilization efforts.</p> <p>These U.S. efforts, led by the State Department and USAID, are focused on the essentials in the war-ravaged lands: removing landmines, supporting the opening of hospitals and schools, enabling the flow of water and turning on electricity.</p>

Over the last six months, the U.S. sent additional diplomats to Syria to work with partners on the ground to facilitate these programs, though the U.S. diplomatic presence in the country remains at under a dozen people. State Department officials explained that Acting Secretary of State John Sullivan would attend the meeting on Tuesday in an attempt to protect the stabilization efforts and renew funding.

State Department officials know that Trump is more likely to listen to Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis than other officials in the room. So before Tuesday's meeting, the diplomats reminded the Defense Department that stabilization efforts also include programs like clearing out IEDs. Their argument was simple: those programs don't just make it possible for Syrians to return home -- they also protect U.S. forces on the ground from deadly explosions.

The State Department was shocked by the administration's decision to halt the stabilization funding. Some officials were told that the pause came after Trump read news articles about the U.S. role in Syria.

"I cannot picture that within six months that U.S. will be out of Syria. At least not responsibly," said a U.S. government official. "More Syrians will die if the U.S leaves," said another official.

Yet with the ouster of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and the imminent departure of National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster, there are fewer voices calling for the U.S. to remain committed to Syria.

"The U.S. is now re-litigating its policy on Syria," explained a European government official. "The table was set to stay and the tablecloth got pulled out with Tillerson and McMaster leaving. The plan that they shepherded through may be dead."

Earlier this year, Tillerson declared that stabilization initiatives in areas that have been liberated from ISIS "are essential" to creating conditions for normal life and for preventing ISIS from re-emerging.

"Terrorists thrive under conditions that allow them to peddle their warped and hateful messages to vulnerable people in conflict-stricken areas. Our stabilization efforts will help those people turn away from the prospect of terrorism and toward integration in their local communities," Tillerson said.

It is now unclear whether those stabilization efforts will continue.

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HEADLINE	04/03 Remains US hostages found in Syria?
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/human-remains-recovered-search-us-hostages-killed-isis/story?id=54208210
GIST	<p>The FBI is conducting painstaking DNA tests on a batch of human remains which could be those of American hostages killed in ISIS captivity, after agents and U.S. commandos recently unearthed them from liberated areas in Syria, ABC News has learned.</p> <p>It may be months before testing at the FBI Laboratory in Quantico, Va., determines whether any are those of Americans or other westerners executed by ISIS or killed while held hostage, officials and family members said.</p> <p>The successful recovery of human remains gives hope to American families eager to lay their loved ones to rest at home -- even as they are urging the U.S. government to bring to justice two captured ISIS guards who helped U.S. authorities pinpoint the Syrian grave sites where remains were recovered.</p> <p>Several officials told ABC News that a decision still has not been made on what to do with the pair of Londoners captured by allied Kurdish YPG fighters in January, Alexandra Kotey and El Shafee Elsheikh, who according to the U.S. Department of State were half of the British terror quartet their captives called "the Beatles."</p>

The families reminded officials, according to sources present at the meeting, of an Obama Presidential Policy Directive issued four months after Kayla Mueller's death in 2015 (which has not been rescinded) emphasizing the prosecution of hostage-takers.

"The United States shall diligently seek to ensure that hostage-takers of U.S. nationals are arrested, prosecuted, and punished through a due process criminal justice system in the United States or abroad for crimes related to the hostage-taking," the directive states.

The U.K., which revoked the citizenship of all four "Beatles" including Mohammed Emwazi, the ISIS executioner dubbed "Jihadi John" by the media, has also objected to the men facing anything but a civilian trial, several sources said. Emwazi was killed in a CIA drone strike in Raqqa, Syria, in 2016 and Aine Davis, the fourth alleged "Beatle," was captured in Turkey.

"The Brits are not in support of the death penalty and Guantanamo but that was not a threat or demand to not help," one counterterrorism official said.

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HEADLINE	04/03 Russia, Turkey, Iran Syrian challenge
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/03/middleeast/syria-russia-iran-turkey-talks-analysis-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Despite the eagerness to declare it ebbing, Syria's war is unlikely to get closer to its end simply because Vladimir Putin, Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Hassan Rouhani are meeting in Ankara this week.</p> <p>Yes, these leaders represent the three largest foreign military forces operating now inside Syria, excluding the US, whose commander-in-chief said late last week that America would soon be letting "others" take care of Syria. But Russia, Turkey and Iran meet without the contribution of a reasonably important factor in this ghastly experiment in human cruelty: Syrians.</p> <p>You can argue that the regime in Damascus will do what Tehran or Moscow tells it to. But the prospect of Russia, Turkey and Iran agreeing what a new status quo inside Syria should look like is a short-term stopgap at best, and one that overlooks the underlying and unresolved causes of the war.</p> <p>The accepted premise of this trilateral solution is that Iran and Russia are content that the regime has full access to the coast and a clear channel all the way to the Iraqi capital Baghdad -- through which Tehran can slowly harass Israel and dominate the region, and Moscow can retain an airbase on the Mediterranean.</p> <p>Turkey is meant to be happy as its proxies control the area west of the Euphrates Rivers along to Idlib, and provide a space for Sunni militants to create their own communities into which millions of Syrian refugees currently in Turkey might return.</p> <p>The unspoken annex to this is that the Americans retain adequate firepower and influence in the northeast for the area to remain a de facto Syria-Kurdish enclave for the years to come.</p> <p>Yet already the short-term flaws to this solution are emerging. Ankara has its sights on harassing Manbij, just across to the west of the Euphrates, which is currently held by Syrian Kurds with American backing. And the regime is also eyeing the most populated area in the northwest, where Turkey has large influence: Idlib. It is to Idlib that the Syrian Sunni rebels of Ghouta, Aleppo and elsewhere have fled, along with tens of thousands of civilians.</p> <p>These are just the short-term problems. The longer-term ones are even harder to solve.</p> <p>Essentially, this supposed trilateral arrangement fails to deal with the underlying demographic and sectarian issues that began the war in the first place.</p>

Syria's Sunnis rose up against a predominantly Shia regime in 2012. These Sunnis still lack proper representation or a functional homeland. They are squeezed into a tiny pocket of the northwest, and outside Syria's borders into Turkey and Jordan, with many in Lebanon too.

Keeping this disenfranchised, beleaguered and under-resourced population in the rubble, tents and rural flatlands of Idlib won't reduce the influence of extremists in their midst -- it will amplify it.

There are two things you can count on in the months ahead: that Russia and the regime will bombard Idlib and its thousands of civilians, and that the Sunni rebel militants who take shelter in it will respond as extremely as they can. Both sides will continue to do what they have done before.

Secondly, Syria's Kurds, thanks to the near-defeat of ISIS in Syria, control an outsized chunk of the northeast now. Everything east of the Euphrates River was not exclusively Kurdish before ISIS and is not entirely so now, but the Syrian Democratic Forces are the unwavering authority there.

If the US leaves, as President Donald Trump has said is likely, then the Syrian Kurds will have to either forge a deal of coexistence with the Syrian regime or go it alone, potentially against both Turkish and regime forces.

Yes, the Iran- and Russia-backed Shia regime has solidified its control over the territory it wants, but the majority of the country -- the Sunnis of Syria -- has not settled the question of where they will live and who will rule them. That started this, and must be resolved if it is to end.

Finally, Syria's three dominant forces -- Turkish-backed rebels, US-backed Syrian Kurds and the regime supported by Iran and Russia -- have backers with totally opposed agendas. Turkey wants to defeat the Kurds. The regime wants to defeat the rebels Turkey is backing, and keep the US out. And the US wants to defeat Iranian and regime ambitions in the region, while also keeping Russia in check.

Russia, Iran and Turkey can smile for the cameras in Ankara, but they still walk on Syria's broken glass.

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	04/03 Claim: Putin behind trolling abroad
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/putin-pays-over-100000-troll-russias-opponents-abroad-hacked-emails-reveal-869699
GIST	<p>Russian President Vladimir Putin has been paying hundreds of thousands of dollars to trolls, hackers and paid protesters to sow dissent and quell anti-Russian sentiment in foreign countries, according to a trove of leaked emails from Kremlin-linked figures.</p> <p>The emails were released by the hacker group the Ukrainian Cyber Alliance, which was responsible for the so-called Surkov leaks, over a gigabyte of hacked emails allegedly taken from Putin's close political adviser and senior Kremlin official Vladislav Surkov in 2016.</p> <p>The new set of leaked emails was analyzed by Bob Seely, a Conservative Parliament member in Great Britain and an expert on Russian warfare. Seely told the British newspaper The Times that the emails revealed a "shopping list of subversion," including hacking, propaganda, and staged protests.</p> <p>The Kremlin was prepared to pay between \$100 and \$300 for email hacking. But trolling political opponents on social media and collecting personal data on individuals thought to be Kremlin opponents was valued at around \$130,500, according to the emails. Plans were also outlined to promote historical and philosophical ideas in line with the Kremlin's worldview, and to send trained athletes to agitate at rallies and bribe the media to cover the events. The Kremlin was willing to pay \$19,200 for a month of rallies with 100 participants and three organizers.</p>

	<p>The emails demonstrate Russia used these tactics in Ukraine, where Moscow supports pro-Russian separatists. The emails allegedly belong to Surkov's deputy Inal Ardzinba and to a leader of Ukraine's Communist Party, which advocates closer ties with Russia. But experts warn that the Kremlin is using similar tactics in the U.S. and the European Union.</p> <p>The Kremlin has claimed that the Surkov leaks are fake and that Ardzinba has never been involved in spreading propaganda in Ukraine. Researchers, however, said that the previous set of Surkov leaks were authentic, and this latest dump of emails is probably real as well.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 DHS: mobile snooping devices in D.C.
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/03/politics/dhs-stingrays-washington-dc/index.html
GIST	<p>Washington (CNN)The Department of Homeland Security has confirmed that it has detected evidence of mobile snooping devices around Washington, DC.</p> <p>The devices could be the work of foreign governments or entities, however, DHS hasn't determined their origin, the agency said in a letter. At issue are what are known alternatively as Stingrays, IMSI catchers or cell-site simulators. The devices essentially act as fake cellphone towers, and as mobile devices connect to them, the devices are able to snoop on the traffic that goes through.</p> <p>Responding to an inquiry from Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon, DHS top infrastructure and cybersecurity official Christopher Krebs confirmed that DHS has detected activity consistent with such devices. Law enforcement in the US does use such techniques as well, though courts have been scrutinizing that.</p> <p>DHS "has observed anomalous activity in the National Capital Region (NCR) that appears to be consistent with International Mobile Subscriber Identity (IMSI) catchers," Krebs wrote. "NPPD has not validated or attributed such activity to specific entities or devices. This information was reported to our federal partners at the time it was observed."</p> <p>Krebs was responding to a question from Wyden as to whether DHS had evidence of foreign IMSI catchers operating in the DC area, but Krebs repeatedly declined to attribute the activity to any entity in particular.</p> <p>He did say the use of Stingrays "by malicious actors to track and monitor cellular users is unlawful and threatens the security of communications, resulting in safety, economic and privacy risks," but he said DHS would need more resources to develop an ongoing ability to detect the use of the devices.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Hawaii problem: too low unemployment
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/c83bd5c9d3f04901a39b3c9113389866/What's-wrong-with-very-low-unemployment?-Hawaii-knows
GIST	<p>HONOLULU (AP) — Are there downsides to a low unemployment rate? In Hawaii, which has the United States' lowest jobless rate at a minuscule 2.1 percent, the answer is yes.</p> <p>Employers are frustrated by their inability to find workers. And unfilled jobs may be slowing the state's economic growth.</p> <p>A low unemployment rate is certainly better than a high one. And many employers are responding to the worker shortage by offering higher pay.</p>

Still, Hawaii's experience serves as a cautionary tale for the nation as a whole: Low unemployment can mask underlying problems. Nationwide, the jobless rate is at a 17-year low of 4.1 percent, and economists forecast it could drop another half-point by next year. That would bring the rate to a half-century low.

U.S. employers are already complaining about their struggles to find qualified employees. The number of open jobs nationwide reached the highest level on record in January.

Like the rest of the country, Hawaii has an aging population, and its unemployment rate has been held down in part by retiring baby boomers.

The state also has unique challenges, such as an economy long dominated by tourism. Many of Hawaii's available jobs are in the service sector and don't pay enough to cover the state's high housing costs. And economists say Hawaii's ongoing economic sluggishness could make it harder for the state to pay its public pension obligations in the future, and fund highways and other expensive infrastructure.

U.S. Rep. Colleen Hanabusa, a Democrat, cited the deceptively rosy jobless rate when she launched her campaign challenging a sitting governor from her own party in this year's election.

"We cannot wait as more and more of our young people, discouraged by the future they see for themselves here, leave Hawaii in hopes for better opportunities on the mainland," Hanabusa said in January. A recent poll conducted for the Honolulu Star-Advertiser gave her a 20-percentage point lead over Gov. David Ige in the August primary.

Hanabusa was pointing to a trend reflected in census data: People are moving away from Hawaii even as employers here clamor for workers.

Last year, the state suffered a net loss of more than 1,000 people. On Oahu, home to Honolulu and major military installations like Pearl Harbor, the population declined an average of 11 people per day. The median price of an Oahu home tops \$770,000.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 47 percent of Hawaii's residents spend more than a third of their monthly income on rent. That's greater than any other state. About one-quarter of renters put half of their income toward housing.

The personnel squeeze is forcing employers to offer incentives to attract workers.

Maui Divers Jewelry, a retailer in the old whaling town of Lahaina, offers employees extra money to cover the cost of driving to its stores from Maui's bigger cities.

Star of Honolulu Cruises and Events has raised the hourly wage for servers on its boat cruises to \$12 from \$10.

"They can be picky now, I feel like. The ball is in their court," Sheridan Andres, the company's human resources manager, said of job applicants. Star of Honolulu is also advertising for kitchen staff, boat maintenance workers, bus drivers and supervisors.

Hawaii Pacific Health, one of the state's largest health care providers, is pursuing a pilot program to train medical assistants at five public high schools so they'll be ready to walk into jobs when they graduate. The company has 7,000 employees, along with 44 openings for medical assistants and more than 400 openings overall.

The demand for labor is driven by a tourism surge that brought a record 9.4 million visitors to the islands last year. Strong hiring and income gains in the Western U.S. mean more Americans can make the trip. And Japan and Canada, where most of the state's overseas visitors come from, also are experiencing solid growth.

That's led to an increase in low-paying hotel and restaurant jobs, which accounted for 60 percent of Hawaii's job growth in 2017, according to data compiled by Moody's Analytics. Hotels and restaurants employ about one of every five workers in the state, double the proportion in the rest of the U.S.

Adam Kamins, a senior economist at Moody's Analytics, says the state has had little success in luring better-paying tech jobs from western states such as California or Washington, because of high housing and business costs. Tech firms are instead moving to cheaper states such as Utah, Colorado and Idaho.

An economy with an unemployment rate as low as Hawaii's should be growing about 3 percent a year, said Eugene Tian, the state's chief economist. Instead, it's growing at about 1.5 percent.

"We don't have enough housing. We don't have enough trained labor. That's limiting the growth," Tian said. "They are connected."

Paul Brewbaker, an economist with consulting firm TZ Economics, said Hawaii's growth rate has lagged the nation's for the past decade. On average, Hawaii's economy has grown just 1.6 percent per year compared with the national average of 2.1 percent since 2009.

On a per-capita basis, gross domestic product in Hawaii was one-third higher than the national average 40 years ago, Brewbaker said. It's now the same. The trend could have profound consequences for Hawaii in the long term.

"Where do we go from here? If we're on this road, how do we pay for the public employee retirement system? If we're on this road, will we ever be able to build another freeway, not to mention a mass transit system?" Brewbaker said.

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HEADLINE	04/04 Indonesia declares emergency in oil spill
SOURCE	http://time.com/5227209/indonesia-oil-spill-borneo-emergency/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>Indonesia declared a state of emergency Tuesday after a deadly oil spill off the coast of the island of Borneo continued to spread, the BBC reports.</p> <p>At least four people were killed and hundreds of local residents say they have experienced health problems since the spill was reported early Saturday near the port city of Balikpapan in Indonesia's East Kalimantan province.</p> <p>The slick, which now covers an area of seven sq. mi., also threatens fishing waters off the tropical island.</p> <p>Authorities managed to extinguish the flames after the oil spill caught fire over the weekend, Agence France-Presse reports.</p> <p>"The fire was quite big, about two kilometers [1.2 miles] high. It can be seen from Balikpapan city and the smell was all over the place," a senior official with East Borneo's search and rescue agency told AFP.</p> <p>The cause of the spill, which occurred near a refinery operated by the state-owned oil and gas company Pertamina, is not yet known. Pertamina has denied responsibility for the disaster, according to the BBC.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Skagit Co. 'poop smart' campaign
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/tech/science/environment/poop-happens-so-skagit-county-wants-you-to-poop-smart/281-534659734
GIST	Karen DuBose is a modest woman with a humble job in Skagit County government. "I'm the poop finder,"

	<p>she says with a laugh.</p> <p>Karen's job is making your business her business. Karen is in charge of stopping the problem of pollution in Puget Sound that comes from... poop.</p> <p>It finds its way into Puget Sound in all kinds of ways -- dogs, farms, failing septic systems -- even hikers and fishermen. Excrement routinely contaminates the waters of Samish Bay, making it unsafe for swimming and fishing.</p> <p>It's a very serious problem that Karen is taking on by tapping into everyone's inner 5-year-old.</p> <p>"Poop is funny," she says. "We all have an inner 5-year-old who thinks that poop is hilarious."</p> <p>With that, Skagit County is launching a scatologically-centered public awareness and social media campaign called Poop Smart.</p> <p>Through cute little cartoons, poopie emojis, and of course a hashtag #PoopSmart, the county is offering tips, tools and financial help to people who need to clean up their act.</p> <p>"Your dog's poop may not seem like a lot, but there are thousands of dogs in Skagit County," says Karen. "There's a hundred and some thousand people in Skagit county. All those tiny sources add up to a big pollution problem."</p> <p>Karen hopes bringing a bit of levity and bathroom humor to an otherwise uncomfortable subject will convince people to make a change.</p> <p>"Poop happens," she says. "Join the movement!"</p> <p>The site goes on:</p> <p>"You may think it's much a-doo about nothing, but it may lead to a variety of problems – for your family's health and for the health of our fishing and shellfish harvesting areas. Read on to help prevent a Revenge of the Turds situation," the site reads.</p> <p>The site contains tips for how to dispose of fecal matter when you're out enjoying the outdoors, if you own a property with a septic system, if you own a small farm with livestock, or if you simply have pets.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Bellevue PD probes detective's 'inaction'
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/the-officer-still-did-nothing-bellevue-police-investigate-detectives-alleged-inaction-during-hate-crime/
GIST	<p>A veteran Bellevue police detective is the subject of an internal investigation for allegedly walking away and failing to intervene as a white man hurled racial slurs and threatened violence against African-American bus riders at the Bellevue Transit Center in January, according to Bellevue's police chief and King County prosecutors.</p> <p>The man suspected of yelling the threats has been identified as Robert Panera, a 53-year-old transient who has been charged with malicious harassment, the state's hate-crime statute, court records show. A \$25,000 warrant has been issued for his arrest.</p> <p>Charging documents identify the officer as "Det. Lindquist," who was working an off-duty job at a nearby construction site and was approached for help by the alleged victim, a 32-year-old black man.</p> <p>Based on a LinkedIn page and a news account of a 2017 police awards ceremony, it appears the officer in</p>

question is Detective Jim Lindquist, who has been a Bellevue police officer for 31 years.

Bellevue Police Chief Steve Mylett would not confirm the name of the officer, but acknowledged there is an internal investigation involving a member of the police department's detectives bureau.

"All we have right now is an allegation. Until we get to the bottom of it, he'll continue to do his job," Mylett said of the detective.

The investigation into the detective's conduct is still in its early stages, said Mylett, who will eventually receive a recommendation from the detective's chain of command and decide if the officer should be disciplined.

According to charging documents, the alleged victim turned over videos of the incident to police that he recorded on his cellphone, and his account was corroborated by two witnesses.

State law defines malicious harassment — a felony commonly referred to as a hate crime — as intentionally injuring, damaging property or threatening someone because of his or her perception of the victim's race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or mental, physical or sensory handicap.

The incident at the downtown Bellevue Transit Center happened around 2:30 p.m. on Jan. 23.

Panera, the suspect, called 911 to report he was being attacked at the transit center, at 10850 N.E. Sixth St., and three officers responded, charging papers say. They spoke with Panera and an older black man, but the officers "were unable to develop probable cause for a crime that involved the two."

The officers also spoke with Lindquist, the detective, who provided clothing descriptions and pointed out another male who had boarded a bus, the charges say.

According to Mylett and charging papers, Lindquist didn't mention anything to the responding patrol officers about threats or racial slurs. One officer filed an informational report but took no further action, the charges say.

A short time later, the alleged victim called Bellevue police to report the incident and a police captain took his statement, charging papers say.

The alleged victim said he had been waiting for a bus at the transit center and witnessed a disturbance between Panera and the older black man, then saw Panera call 911 and heard him claim to have been attacked, even though Panera had been the aggressor, the charges say.

When the alleged victim confronted Panera about his claim, Panera turned his attention on him. Panera yelled at him, followed him around the transit center and made threats of violence while repeatedly using expletives and racial slurs, the charges say.

The alleged victim "hurriedly walked to the east side of the transit center and contacted a police officer, later identified as Detective Lindquist," and asked him for help, say the charges.

Lindquist, who had been working as a flagger at a nearby construction site, walked over to where the two men were and Panera continued to yell slurs "at persons of color even though Lindquist was present," the victim later said, according to the charges.

At one point, the alleged victim was so afraid of Panera that he hid behind Lindquist as Panera yelled and lunged at him before Panera abruptly walked away, say the charges. According to the charges, the alleged victim "felt so unsafe that he boarded the first available bus" and called 911 from home.

One witness told police Panera walked down a line of people waiting for a bus and "singled out each

	<p>African American, pointed at them” and yelled racial slurs, the statement says.</p> <p>She told police the last rider to be accosted was the alleged victim, who sought help from an officer. But the officer said something to the effect of, “This happens all the time” before walking away, the charges say.</p> <p>A second woman also told police the officer “did nothing” and looked bored or exasperated during the incident, according to charging papers.</p> <p>She “felt duty-bound to inform the officer that he had witnessed a hate crime under state law,” the charges say. “The officer still did nothing.”</p> <p>When the alleged victim asked for the officer’s name and badge number, the “officer turned, walked away and muttered something indistinguishable,” the witness said, according to the charges.</p> <p>The captain and two other officers involved in the investigation agreed Panera threatened the alleged victim due to Panera’s perception of the man’s race, and that the alleged victim feared for his safety and believed Panera intended to harm him, the charges say.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 SEA facility: costs up, behind schedule
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/boeing-aerospace/sea-tacs-new-international-facility-is-running-over-budget-and-behind-schedule/
GIST	<p>The expected cost of the new International Arrivals Facility at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport has swelled since last August by a further \$40 million and now stands at \$830 million, or 21 percent higher than originally estimated, according to a memo prepared by the Port of Seattle.</p> <p>In addition, officials announced at a Port Commissioners meeting this past week that the project is running five months late and is now not expected to open until February 2020.</p> <p>The original adjusted estimate of the project’s cost was \$684 million. According to a list of the added costs in the Port’s memo, the largest budget-busting items — \$86 million out of the total \$146 million overrun — were attributed to contractor Clark Construction initially underestimating its design costs, failing to design to the adjusted budget and misjudging airport building-code requirements.</p> <p>Ralph Graves, the Port’s senior director for Capital Development, told the commissioners that Clark consistently fell short in performance reviews for more than two years.</p> <p>David Brush, the Port’s IAF program leader, told Bowman that “we did raise holy hell with the senior managers” at Clark.</p> <p>Clark representatives did not attend the meeting and could not be reached for comment late Tuesday.</p> <p>When Port officials presented a memo on the cost increase and delay at the meeting this past week, Commissioners Peter Steinbrueck and Stephanie Bowman expressed their concern.</p> <p>“The budget and time schedule have been moving and shifting quite dramatically,” Steinbrueck said. “It’s a moving target.”</p> <p>And Bowman called out last year’s commission president, Tom Albro — “our point person on the IAF” — for lack of oversight. Albro is no longer on the commission.</p> <p>“We’re going to be digging deep into this and expecting a lot more information, much more than has been requested over the last year,” Bowman told the port officials. “Expect to be here frequently.”</p>

The new International Arrivals Facility (IAF) — a 450,000-square-foot add-on to the current Concourse A in the main terminal building — will double peak international arrival capacity to 2,600 passengers per hour, according to the Port.

Arriving international passengers will walk along a new 900-foot-long aerial walkway, 85 feet above the existing airplane taxiway, from the south satellite over the top of Concourse A to the IAF.

Some 80 percent of the cost of the IAF will come from the federal fees of \$4.50 per ticket that are tacked onto every passenger's ticket at all U.S. airports. The remainder of the IAF budget is covered by the Port using funds such as fees levied from the parking garage, airport concessions and taxis, Port spokesman Perry Cooper said.

In 2015, the original estimated cost of the IAF was just \$608 million, though later some additions to the plan later bumped it up to \$684 million.

In January 2016, the Port authorized Clark Construction to begin design work.

By mid-2017, according to the staff memo, Clark's design had exceeded the target budget by approximately \$100 million. And that August, when construction commenced, hazardous polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were discovered on the construction site that required \$4 million in remediation and caused three months of delay.

The increased cost of building materials and labor in the frenzied Seattle construction market also added some \$14 million to the project's cost.

Finally, in late 2017, when the design was nearing completion, certain project specifications were changed late in the process, which caused additional costs and further delay.

A final "guaranteed maximum price" still has not been determined, the staff memo states, while forecasting the new ceiling of \$830 million.

As for the delay, the Port staff project team and Clark are "exploring measures that could accelerate the remaining work in order to deliver it as close as possible to the original September 2019 date."

However, the memo warns that "such acceleration would further increase costs."

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HEADLINE	04/03 Police investigate livestream shootings
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/teens-shooting-death-detroit-livestreamed-instagram-54202190?
GIST	<p>Police are investigating accidental shootings in Detroit and Houston that were livestreamed on social media and that left a teenager dead and a man on life support.</p> <p>Detroit police say two 18-year-olds were live on Instagram Saturday night showing money and a gun when one of them shot the other in the back of the head, killing him. Police say the teen who fired the gun told investigators he accidentally put his finger on the trigger and that the rifle discharged. He was taken into custody.</p> <p>The victim died before paramedics arrived at the home, which is on Detroit's northwest side.</p> <p>Police haven't released the names of the shooter or the victim.</p> <p>In Houston, a 25-year-old woman shot a male acquaintance early Sunday while waving a handgun inside</p>

	<p>of a parked car. The shooting, which police are treating as accidental, was streamed on Facebook live.</p> <p>The victim, identified by family members as Devyn Holmes, was sitting in the car when he was hit. He was hospitalized but is brain dead and on life support, authorities said.</p> <p>In the video, Cassandra Damper can be seen waving the handgun while Holmes tells her, "Hey man, you're making me nervous."</p> <p>An unidentified third person in the vehicle, a man, is heard saying, "She got no clip bud," a reference to the lack of an ammunition clip in the gun. But seconds later, the gun fires, hitting Holmes on the side of his head. A gun without an ammunition clip can still fire if there was a bullet in the gun's chamber, though police are still investigating and haven't said that was the case in Holmes' shooting.</p> <p>Damper has been charged with tampering/fabricating evidence. Authorities say she tried to wipe off any gunshot residue she might have had on her hands.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 European grid fixes clock-slowng lag
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/spring-forward-european-grid-fixes-lag-slowed-clocks-54198904?
GIST	<p>One excuse fewer for being late: electricity grid operators in Europe have fixed a glitch that had slowed down countless clocks across the continent for months.</p> <p>The problem started earlier this year after a dispute between Serbia and Kosovo resulted in energy being diverted from the local grid. That triggered a domino effect , reducing the electric frequency across the 25-country network that stretches from Portugal to Poland, and Greece to Germany.</p> <p>Because many radio alarms, oven clocks and devices used to program heating systems keep time with the help of the grid frequency, they were slowed down by several minutes since January.</p> <p>The European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity said Tuesday that its members added energy into the system over the course of March to bring the frequency back to its target average of 50 Hertz.</p> <p>"One of the effects is notably that the digital clocks geared by electric frequency are now back on time," said spokeswoman Claire Camus.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Study: 36% college students lack food
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2018/04/03/Study-36-percent-of-college-students-lack-food-secure-housing/7971522778275/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts tn us&utm_medium=2
GIST	<p>April 3 (UPI) -- More than one-third of U.S. university students do not have enough to eat and lack a secure home, according to a new survey Tuesday by researchers at Temple University and the Wisconsin HOPE Lab.</p> <p>The survey focused on 43,000 students at 66 institutions in 20 states and Washington, D.C. Included in the survey are students from 4-year universities and community colleges during 30 days preceding the survey.</p> <p>The findings show the basic needs -- food and housing -- of 36 percent of university students are not being met. Numbers among community college students are higher, with 42 percent lacking food and 46 lacking housing.</p>

	<p>The research also found 9 percent of university students and 12 percent of community college students were homeless at one point during the last year.</p> <p>Rates of food and housing insecurity were higher among students who worked longer hours, the report said.</p> <p>Researchers blame increased college costs, insufficient aid packages and more low-income students enrolling in college, who often find campus grants do not cover all their expenses.</p> <p>The report also found other disparities. For example, more than 60 percent of former foster youth were both food and housing insecure, and 24 percent had experienced homelessness during the last year.</p> <p>Students who identify themselves as non-binary, homosexual or bisexual were over-represented among students who lacked food or housing security.</p> <p>The report also found African-American and Native American students were much more likely than non-Hispanic white or Asian students to experience trouble.</p> <p>To help with the growing problem, student-led food drives have been created, many of which are part of the College and University Food Bank Alliance. The National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness and the Student Government Resource Center also are focusing on student hunger, and offer toolkits and support in partnership with CUFBA.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Thrill-seekers hiding 24hrs in stores
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/wheres-your-teen-sleeping-check-chuck-e-cheese-then-walmart-1522769632
GIST	<p>Have you ever wanted to camp overnight in a big-box store or fast-food restaurant, hiding out among the shelves and perhaps using rolls of paper towels as pillows? Didn't think so.</p> <p>Apparently short of actual adventures, teens and 20-somethings are sneaking into chain stores and restaurants, including McDonald's, Walmart, Chuck E. Cheese's and IKEA, staying all night and posting videos online as evidence. A YouTube search for 24-hour overnight challenges turns up 1.6 million results.</p> <p>A closer examination of the phenomenon reveals something thrill-seekers didn't expect—spending extended periods inside an empty chain store can be really, really dull.</p> <p>Michael Manfre, who is 19, said he and his friends have done several overnight challenges since late 2016. For one, they stayed all night in a McDonald's on the Jersey Shore, figuring it would be a blast to have the place to themselves. As employees closed up for the night, the friends hid in the colorful crawling tubes in the indoor playground.</p> <p>"It looked weird to have older kids hanging out in the play area," he said "but we pulled it off."</p> <p>After the initial thrill of escaping detection, they passed the time by going down the small slide, flipping water bottles and filming themselves whispering in the dark. They tried to sleep—Mr. Manfre in a toy car.</p> <p>"It was very uncomfortable," he said. "We tried to make the best of it."</p> <p>Young people boast of holding the overnight challenges in trampoline parks, bowling alleys, home improvement stores and supermarkets, too. Companies mostly seem perplexed.</p> <p>"We appreciate that people are interested in IKEA and want to create fun experiences with us," said a U.S.</p>

spokeswoman for Inter IKEA Systems BV. “We cannot guarantee safety in our stores after closing hours and that’s why we do not allow this kind of activity.” McDonald’s declined to comment.

A Walmart Inc. spokesman said the company has been “dealing with this” for more than a year, with the teens “mainly hiding out in the toilet paper section, trying to meet their challenge.”

If spotted, they are asked to leave, he said. “We’re familiar with the incidents and obviously don’t condone the behavior.”

The craze appears to go back to 2016, when Belgian youngsters hid inside an IKEA after it closed and then posted the video online. The fad soon spread to the U.K., where a boy slept overnight in an IKEA furniture store, worrying his family, who didn’t know where he was.

South Yorkshire Police flagged the phenomenon in a February Facebook post, warning about a “recent increase in young people sharing and taking part in the latest internet trend known as the “24 hour challenge.” The goal, they reported, was “to hide and build forts in large stores and warehouses overnight, before sneaking out the next morning.”

Mr. Manfre, who passed the uneventful night at the New Jersey McDonald’s, said a separate attempted sleepover at a Walmart proved more thrilling when an employee discovered his fort, which he made out of packages of toilet paper. The employee lightly “punched the fort” and Mr. Manfre was told to leave, he says.

“A lot of these places are definitely locking down now,” he added, “because it’s such a viral trend.”

A spokeswoman for Chuck E. Cheese’s, another target for the overnight challenges, suggested the pranks are inside jobs—with the culprits getting assistance from friends who work at the pizza restaurants.

“Some of our cast members may have gotten in trouble for helping,” said spokeswoman Christelle Dupont. “We had our audit team look at the footage.”

The footage showed it’s not all that much fun for teens to spend endless hours in a pizza parlor designed for small children.

The security film that caught one incident at Chuck E. Cheese’s last year, Ms. Dupont said, showed that the thrill-seekers arrived at the end of the night, played some games and shot some video—and then slipped out before the doors were locked.

“They were not spending 24 hours in our location,” she said, though the video they posted online made it look as though they had.

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HEADLINE	04/03 ‘Nightmare’ antibiotic resistant bacteria
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/03/health/nightmare-bacteria-cdc-vital-signs/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)More than 200 rare antibiotic-resistant genes were found in "nightmare" bacteria tested in 2017, according to a Vital Signs report released Tuesday by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>"I was surprised by the numbers we found," said Dr. Anne Schuchat, principal deputy director of the CDC. The report focused on the new and highly resistant germs that have yet to spread widely. Still, a variety of resistant germs can be found in every state.</p> <p>"Two million Americans get infections from antibiotic resistance, and 23,000 die from those infections each year," Schuchat said.</p>

Testing 5,776 isolates of antibiotic-resistant germs from hospitals and nursing homes, the CDC found that about one in four had a gene that helped spread its resistance, while 221 contained an "especially rare resistance gene," she said.

During followup screening, nearly one in every 10 contacts also tested positive, "meaning the unusual resistance had spread to other patients and could have continued spreading if left undetected," Schuchat said. It is unknown how frequently "asymptomatic carriers" spread the disease to uninfected people, she noted.

"This wasn't just a problem in one or two states," Schuchat said, adding that the 221 rare genes were found in isolates gathered in 27 states from infection samples that included pneumonia, bloodstream infections and urinary tract infections.

Because this was the first year of testing for rare genes, the CDC does not have trend data, she said, but she hopes this won't be the "beginning of an inevitable march upwards."

The new report highlights the work of the CDC's Antibiotic Resistance Laboratory Network, formed in 2016 to help detect antibiotic resistance in health care, food and the community.

In 1988, health officials in the United States learned that some germs within one family of bacteria, Enterobacteriaceae, could produce an enzyme capable of breaking down common antibiotics. By 2001, the germs had begun to evolve, becoming more resistant to carbapenems and other antibiotic drugs. These carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae, or CRE -- dubbed "nightmare bacteria" by the CDC -- spread rapidly in the US and around the globe.

Today, the CDC promotes an aggressive "containment strategy" that includes rapid detection tests and screening for reducing the spread of antibiotic resistance.

"CDC estimates show that even if only 20% effective, the containment strategy can reduce the number of nightmare bacteria cases by 76% over three years in one area," Schuchat said.

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HEADLINE	04/03 India quickly shelves 'fake news' rule
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/03/asia/india-fake-news-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The Indian government is shelving a rule to punish journalists for publishing "fake news" just 48 hours after its introduction.</p> <p>The proposed order would have given the government the authority to strip individuals and media organizations of their accreditation -- which is needed to go to government functions and makes access to government offices easier -- if they received a complaint of reporting so-called fake news, a term that was not specifically defined.</p> <p>Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government said the measure was meant to help stop the spread of misinformation throughout the country, but critics swiftly condemned it as an attack on free speech in the world's most populous democracy.</p> <p>"Make no mistake: (T)his is a breathtaking assault on mainstream media," Shekhar Gupta, one of India's most prominent journalists, tweeted to his nearly 2 million followers. He is the editor-in-chief of ThePrint, an Indian website focusing on politics and policy.</p> <p>A spokesman for Modi's office confirmed the Indian leader ordered the rule be pulled.</p> <p>Smriti Irani, India's minister of information and broadcasting, said Tuesday the now-removed order had generated debate and that media organizations could work with the government to fight what she called</p>

	"the menace of 'fake news.' "
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HEADLINE	04/03 Mystery continues SUV Calif. cliff crash
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/03/us/family-suv-pacific-coast-crash-search-warrant-affidavit/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)As the search continued Tuesday for three siblings and questions mounted over how the rest of their family ended up dead at the bottom of a California cliff, investigators hope a laptop and iPad yield clues, an affidavit shows.</p> <p>Police seized the devices from the Woodland, Washington, home of Jennifer and Sarah Hart, on Thursday, according to court documents related to the search warrant.</p> <p>In the affidavit requesting the search warrant, a Clark County, Washington, sheriff's deputy says he is seeking evidence that will shed light on what happened to the family. That evidence could include travel itineraries, bank records, phone records, credit card receipts, hotel receipts or "handwritten or typed journals or notes related to travel, care for the children and or suicide note/s."</p> <p>It adds that the California Highway Patrol's investigators believe "a felony has been committed."</p> <p>The bodies of the mothers, both 38, were discovered inside their overturned SUV near a remote stretch of Highway 1 in Northern California on March 26. Jennifer Hart was in the driver's seat, according to the search warrant affidavit.</p> <p>Emergency responders found the bodies of three of their six adopted children -- Markis, 19, and Jeremiah and Abigail, both 14 -- outside the car, which landed upside down on the rocky shoreline below the cliff. Evidence from the scene and data retrieved from the car has led investigators to believe Jennifer Hart may have intentionally drove the SUV off the cliff.</p> <p>Their other children -- Hannah, 16, Devonte, 15, and Sierra, 12 -- are missing. Nobody reported seeing the crash.</p> <p>Though a police news release says the California Highway Patrol and Mendocino County Sheriff's Office are continuing an "active search" for the missing children, the search warrant affidavit says they, too, may have been in the SUV.</p> <p>The kids "have not been located and it is feared that they may have also been involved in the collision and presumed deceased," the affidavit says.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Sanctions busting scheme aided Iran
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/billion-dollar-sanctions-busting-scheme-aided-iran-documents-show/2018/04/03/37be988a-3356-11e8-94fa-32d48460b955_story.html?utm_term=.dc04d97c49ec
GIST	<p>MANAMA, Bahrain — Investigators have uncovered evidence of a multibillion-dollar corruption scheme by a Persian Gulf bank that secretly helped Iran evade sanctions for more than a decade, according to documents filed in a legal dispute.</p> <p>Records from a Bahraini government audit reveal that the now-closed Future Bank — a joint venture partly owned by two of Iran's largest lenders — routinely altered financial documents to mask illicit trade</p>

between Iran and dozens of foreign partners, the documents show.

The bank allegedly concealed at least \$7 billion of transactions between 2004 and 2015, a time when many Iranian banks were barred by sanctions from accessing international financial markets, the records show.

Auditors also discovered hundreds of bank accounts tied to individuals convicted of crimes including money laundering and terrorism financing, as well as phantom loans provided to companies that operate as fronts for Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, according to confidential court filings obtained by The Washington Post.

Bahraini officials likened the bank to a Trojan horse operating inside the tiny Persian Gulf country, allowing Iran to buy and sell billions' worth of goods in defiance of international sanctions intended to punish Tehran over its nuclear program and support for terrorist groups.

Bahrain, in the papers submitted in February before an international arbitration court in the Netherlands, accused Future Bank officials of a "vast range of illicit conduct" with numerous foreign partners, adding that the activities uncovered so far are probably only the "tip of the iceberg" because many transactions appear to have been cleverly concealed.

"Bahrain has never faced violations of this magnitude," the kingdom asserted in a written summation to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague. "The ramifications rising from Future Bank's systemic malfeasance cannot be overestimated."

Neither Future Bank nor Iran's mission at the United Nations responded to written requests for comment.

Future Bank, established in 2004 as a joint venture between Bahrain's Ahli United Bank and Iran's Bank Mellī and Bank Saderat, had previously been accused of helping Iran skirt trade restrictions, allegations that led U.S. and European officials to blacklist the bank and ban it from using the international electronic payment messaging system known as SWIFT. Ahli Bank placed its shares of Future Bank's stock in a blind trust in 2008.

The new accusations stem from an intensive investigation that began after Bahraini regulators formally closed the bank in 2015. The closure prompted Future Bank's two Iranian shareholders to file a complaint in The Hague accusing Bahrain of improperly shutting down the bank and demanding the return of frozen assets.

In response, Bahrain submitted hundreds of pages of audit findings that paint a portrait of a financial institution that operated mainly with "the aim of concealment," the documents state, giving Iranian companies secret access to the foreign markets and the international monetary system.

The audit "revealed crimes and violations of Bahraini and international law of massive proportions," Bahraini Foreign Minister Khalid bin Ahmed al-Khalifa said in a written statement to The Post. He said that criminal proceedings were underway in Bahrain and that the results of the investigation were being shared with other capitals, because they will "also be of concern to the international community."

Among the practices cited in the report was a systematic use of "wire-stripping," the deliberate removal or changing of identifying information when transferring money between banks. Auditors said they discovered more than 4,500 instances of wire-stripping by bank officials to conceal Iran's role as the sender or recipient of funds.

The amount of money known to have changed hands in those transactions totals \$4.7 billion, but the true sum is likely to be far greater, Bahraini officials say. Some transactions appear to have been subjected to multiple instances of wire-stripping at different banks, one Bahraini official said, "like layers of an onion, with the originator deeply concealed."

In hundreds of cases, bank transfers were accompanied by specific instructions to avoid references to Iran

or Iranian banking codes.

“Do not mentioned [sic] our bank name, BIC code ref. no., in any message routed through U.S.A. and do not route through New York,” Future Bank officials were instructed in one message from Iran’s Bank Melli.

Other banks, including some in the West, have famously engaged in wire-stripping to conceal payments to countries under international sanctions. In 2010, the Obama administration slapped a \$298 million fine on the British banking giant Barclays for using wire-stripping to hide \$500 million of financial transactions with Iran.

In addition to the amount accounted for by wire-stripping, the Bahraini bank concealed \$2.7 billion in Iranian transactions using an informal alternative to the SWIFT system that is difficult to trace, documents show. The audit also identified thousands of transactions that directly violated international sanctions against Iran, as well as more than 10,000 infractions of Bahraini banking and money-laundering laws, government officials allege. Among the violations cited were 260 instances in which the bank opened accounts for individuals convicted of financial crimes such as money laundering and supporting terrorist causes.

According to former U.S. officials familiar with the case, the findings are troubling because they suggest ongoing deceptive behavior by banking officials at a time when Future Bank was under intense scrutiny by U.S. and Bahraini government agencies.

“If you’re engaging in wire-stripping, you’re hiding the nature of transactions from regulators, and possibly even from the bank itself,” said Matthew Levitt, a former Treasury Department counterterrorism official and director of the Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. “It becomes difficult to know what funds might be going to support activities such as terrorism, or Iran’s nuclear or military establishment.”

Future Bank’s founding as an Iranian-Bahraini venture in 2004 occurred when Bahraini leaders were seeking to mend strained relations between the tiny gulf kingdom and Iran, its vastly larger neighbor to the north. Bahrain’s majority-Shiite population has close cultural and religious ties to Iran, but the kingdom’s Sunni ruling family has closely aligned itself with the Saudi-based Gulf Cooperation Council.

The two Iranian shareholders, Bank Melli and Bank Saderat, have been accused by U.S. officials of helping finance Iran’s nuclear program and what they say is its international terrorism network.

Since 2011, the Bahraini government has struggled to contain a Shiite resistance movement that includes peaceful dissenters as well as violent extremists armed with weapons that independent investigators have traced to Iran. Bahrain has repeatedly accused Iran of fomenting violence against the country’s monarchy, but its actions to stifle opposition groups have led to international criticism over alleged human rights violations.

One of the more controversial allegations in the Future Bank case involves a Shiite cleric with close ties to opposition movements. Bahraini officials criticized Future Bank for allowing the cleric, Isa Qassim, to make cash deposits totaling millions of dollars over several years, and directing some of the money to a charity Bahraini officials have linked to terrorism. U.S. investigators say much of Qassim’s cash appears to consist of tithes and alms collected from worshipers under a Shiite tradition known as khums.

“This is a politically sensitive area, and it is difficult to find hard proof of terrorist financing,” said one former U.S. official familiar with the investigation. “We share the concern over the fact that it involves millions of dollars being moved around in a way that is not at all transparent.”

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HEADLINE 04/02 San Diego Co. fights elder abuse

SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/articles/2018-04-02/elder-abuse-rises-in-san-diego-county
GIST	<p>SAN DIEGO — TERRIFIC weather, welcoming beaches and a famous zoo have earned San Diego a reputation for family fun.</p> <p>It's also among the safest big cities in the country, crows San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan, with its crime rate at a 49-year low and its homicide rate at its lowest ever. And San Diego County's above-average score in public safety – based on homicide and crime rates, deadly vehicle crashes and other data from recent years – helped it crack U.S. News' ranking of America's top 500 Healthiest Communities, a project that assessed some 3,000 communities across the U.S. on a range of factors tied to residents' overall health.</p> <p>In March, however, Stephan's office launched a new initiative to go after a scourge of elder abuse – a category of illicit activity that includes physical assault and financial crime, and is often perpetrated by caretakers and even the victims' children. It's been on the increase in San Diego County, which encompasses the city of San Diego and is home to some 3 million people, and is bound to become more of a national problem as the baby boomer generation ages.</p> <p>In the last five years, Stephan says, the county has seen a 37 percent rise in crimes against seniors. Her office in response has compiled a "blueprint" designed to better protect seniors – defined in the document as those 65 and older – and, when necessary, prosecute their abusers more effectively.</p> <p>The effort also focuses on dependent adults, or those younger than 65 who may have restrictive physical or mental limitations. Stephan believes it ultimately will prove valuable nationwide, since across the country at least \$2.9 billion is believed to be stolen from seniors annually, according to a 2011 report.</p> <p>While the blueprint is the first document of its kind produced by the county, Stephan says it wouldn't have been possible without many years of focus on crimes against the elderly and other vulnerable populations – such as children and victims of human trafficking – in which an "integrated and wide-ranging system" is needed to promote public safety. The district attorney's office established an elder abuse unit in 1996, and the county reportedly sees approximately 9,000 cases of elder and dependent adult abuse each year.</p> <p>Stephan says the blueprint aspires to broaden understanding of how to better recognize and investigate abusive situations, given that victims of elder abuse often suffer from dementia and can be too ashamed of getting duped to talk about what happened with authorities.</p> <p>And one reason elder abuse can be so pervasive is that police aren't necessarily trained in how best to address these kinds of crime. "A lot of police officers don't investigate these cases," says Paul Greenwood, a San Diego County deputy district attorney who built the elder abuse unit and prosecuted such cases for more than 20 years before retiring in March.</p> <p>Police may assume, for example, that an 87-year-old with dementia isn't capable of being a credible witness in court.</p> <p>"When there's an allegation of financial exploitation ... cops will say, 'That's a civil matter, we're not going to deal with that,'" Greenwood says. The blueprint offers recommendations for interviewing victims with Alzheimer's disease or otherwise diminished mental capacity, such as documenting nonverbal reactions and trying to conduct interviews in the morning, when dementia patients are less likely to "sundown," or become more confused.</p> <p>The document also provides a recommended list of questions for victims of financial abuse, as well as victims of physical abuse or neglect. The idea is to help make victims more comfortable speaking up, but also to help investigators recognize common forms of elder abuse.</p> <p>In addition to prosecutors, police and other traditional law enforcement personnel, Stephan adds that protecting older people from abuse can mean coordinating with social services organizations, health care</p>

	<p>providers and even bank tellers and notary publics.</p> <p>"People are signing off [on] homes without anyone checking as to whether they really are in their right minds," she says.</p> <p>Since police can't be everywhere, Stephan says a crucial element of preventing financial abuse is to help bank tellers recognize when a customer is withdrawing more money than usual, or if someone seems to be monitoring him or her.</p> <p>"The oldest trick in the book is to tell a senior that they need to withdraw this money because they actually owe a very large electric bill, and if they don't get the money out immediately to be given, their lights are going to be turned off," she says. "We need that clerk to be the eyes and ears, to be the upstander instead of the bystander."</p> <p>Stephan says in 2016, the county also saw 780 incidents of violent crimes against seniors. "Those are violent incidents of homicide, sexual assault, physical assault on seniors, forms of torture of our seniors – so that's the part that just breaks your heart to see that," she says.</p> <p>These types of crimes include the occasional random attack, but it's much more common for seniors to be victimized by people they trust, including their caretakers and children.</p> <p>"Many times we've seen, sadly, that the abuser is an older son of a female widow," Stephan says. "That son is addicted to drugs. The most common is methamphetamine because it causes violent tendencies, and that son is taking care of the mother, but it also turns into huge abuse."</p> <p>Elderly abuse schemes can be more elaborate as well.</p> <p>In July, a couple in the wealthy San Diego County community of Fairbanks Ranch pleaded guilty to three counts of elderly financial abuse and one of grand theft. William Phillips and his wife Lisa Sidney swindled about \$2.5 million from at least a dozen seniors, convincing them to invest their savings in nearly worthless gemstones.</p> <p>Phillips won victims over with his charm and persistence on the phone. Greenwood says his office has recovered about \$1.1 million for them, but hundreds of thousands of dollars remains missing.</p> <p>After pleading guilty, Phillips has begun to serve a four-year prison sentence. Greenwood says Sidney will have to serve a 365-day sentence after he is released.</p> <p>In the meantime, she's been taking care of her elderly mother.</p>
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<p>HEADLINE</p>	<p>04/03 Miss. private prison: bad things happen</p>
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/03/us/mississippi-private-prison-abuse.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=first-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news</p>
<p>GIST</p>	<p>JACKSON, Miss. — On the witness stand and under pressure, Frank Shaw, the warden of the East Mississippi Correctional Facility, could not guarantee that the prison was capable of performing its most basic function.</p> <p>Asked if the guards were supposed to keep inmates in their cells, he said, wearily, “They do their best.”</p> <p>According to evidence and testimony at a federal civil rights trial, far worse things were happening at the prison than inmates strolling around during a lockdown: A mentally ill man on suicide watch hanged himself, gang members were allowed to beat other prisoners, and those whose cries for medical attention</p>

were ignored resorted to setting fires in their cells.

So many shackled men have recounted instances of extraordinary violence and neglect in the prison that the judge has complained of exhaustion.

The case, which has received little attention beyond the local news media, provides a rare glimpse into the cloistered world of privately operated prisons, at a time when the number of state inmates in private facilities is increasing and the Trump administration has indicated that it will expand their use.

Management & Training Corporation, the private company that runs the East Mississippi facility near Meridian in Lauderdale County, already operates two federal prisons and more than 20 facilities around the nation.

The use of private prisons has long been contentious. A 2016 Justice Department report found that they were more violent than government-run institutions for inmates and guards alike, and the Obama administration sought to phase out their use on the federal level. Early last year, President Trump's attorney general, Jeff Sessions, reversed the ban.

Several states, including Michigan and Utah, have stopped using private prisons in recent years because of security problems.

But more than two dozen other states, including Mississippi, contract with privately managed prison companies as a way to reduce costs. Prisons are usually among the most expensive budget items for states.

Since 2000, the number of people housed in privately operated prisons in the nation has increased by 45 percent, while the total number of prisoners has risen by only about 10 percent, according to an analysis by the Sentencing Project.

The genesis of the problems at East Mississippi, according to prisoner advocates, is that the state requires private prisons to operate at 10 percent lower cost than state-run facilities. Even at its state-run institutions, Mississippi spends significantly less on prisoners than most states, a fact that state officials once boasted about.

The federal civil rights lawsuit, filed against the state by the American Civil Liberties Union and the Southern Poverty Law Center after years of complaints from inmates, seeks to force wholesale changes at the prison.

Testimony has described dangerous conditions, confused lines of oversight and difficulty in attracting and retaining qualified staff.

Security staff at East Mississippi earn even less than the \$12-an-hour starting wage made by their public service counterparts, and private prison guards receive only three weeks of training — less than half the training time required of state prison guards.

The state's contract with Management & Training Corporation is particularly economical. Mississippi pays the company just \$26 a day — or about \$9,500 a year — for each minimum-security inmate. That is far less than the \$15,000 a year neighboring Alabama spends per inmate, and only 13 percent of what New York, which spends more than any other state, pays per inmate.

Called as an expert witness for the Mississippi inmates, Eldon Vail, the former state prisons chief in Washington State, told the court that the focus on cutting costs had sent East Mississippi into a downward spiral.

“There are not a sufficient number of correctional officers, and most of their problems stem from that issue,” he said.

Mr. Vail said that with too few guards to maintain order, inmates felt compelled to protect themselves with crudely made knives and other weapons, prompting a chain of retaliatory violence. And having too few doctors and nurses meant that inmates with mental illnesses were also more likely to act out violently.

Lawyers for the state and representatives of Management & Training say prisons are meant to be tough environments, and that East Mississippi is no worse than most others.

“We can say — unequivocally — that the facility is safe, secure, clean, and well run,” Issa Arnita, a spokesman for the company, said in a statement released during the trial. “From the warden on down, our staff are trained to treat the men in our care with dignity and respect. Our mission is to help these men make choices in prison and after they’re released that will lead to a new and successful life in society.”

Trial testimony has presented a radically different picture.

Mr. Shaw, the warden — who works for Management & Training, not for the state — receives incentives for staying within budget, but is not penalized when inmates die under questionable circumstances or when fires damage the prison. Four prisoners have died this year.

The warden said that he had been unaware of cases in which inmates had been so badly beaten that they required hospitalization, and that he had not disciplined guards who failed to ensure that inmates were unable to jam door locks and leave their cells.

When Mr. Shaw was asked about the variety of homemade objects used to commit assaults at the prison, he was dismissive. “Inmates have weapons,” he said. “It’s a fact of life.”

Mr. Shaw had previously been warden at an Arizona prison operated by Management & Training, where there was a riot in 2015. A scathing state report determined the riot was sparked by Management & Training’s “culture of disorganization, disengagement and disregard” of “policies and fundamental inmate management and security principles.”

At East Mississippi, the prison designated by the state to hold mentally ill inmates, there was a glaring lack of oversight of inmate care, according to testimony. Four out of five inmates in the prison receive psychiatric medication, but the facility has not had a psychiatrist since November.

The state prison mental health director is not a medical doctor, but a marriage and family therapist. And Gloria Perry, who became the prison system’s chief medical officer in 2008, said that she had never been to the East Mississippi prison.

Pelicia E. Hall, the commissioner of the state prison system, testified that she may have been unaware of many problems at the facility because she did not read weekly performance reports from the state’s own monitor.

In the courtroom, the reports were delivered in person: An inmate testified in tears that a female guard had mocked him when he tried to report being raped in a cell in January. The guard never informed her superiors about the rape.

In an unrelated assault, surveillance video showed an inmate being beaten by other prisoners for 14 minutes before guards arrived.

Neither the state nor the private prison company has contested the accuracy of the prisoners’ accounts heard in court, although lawyers for the state say the stories should be treated with skepticism.

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HEADLINE 04/03 Ferry riders help police catch suspect

SOURCE <http://mynorthwest.com/945885/fellow-ferry-riders-help-police-in-fatal-hit-and-run-case/>

GIST	<p>PORT ORCHARD, Wash. (AP) — Charging documents say a Washington state man accused in a fatal hit and run near Port Orchard is known by fellow ferry commuters to be an erratic driver.</p> <p>The Kitsap Sun reports that 33-year-old Dominic Landric Dixon was charged on Tuesday with felony hit and run for the March 22 crash that killed 34-year-old Katherine Phillips as she attempted to pour gas into a car stalled on Sedgwick Road.</p> <p>A Southworth ferry commuter told investigators the day after the crash that she saw a gold Chevrolet Impala drive over the road flares while other cars were avoiding them. She said she recognized the car as belong to a fellow ferry commuter — Dixon.</p> <p>Another commuter contacted investigators the day of the crash and told them about an Impala he had observed several times driving erratically.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Tacoma gun shop: 8th break-in, 2yrs
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/03/tacoma-gun-shop-broken-into-for-8th-time/
GIST	<p>TACOMA -- Police are investigating a burglary at a gun store near Tacoma Mall -- and it's not the first time the shop has been broken into.</p> <p>The front doors of Quantico Arms & Tactical Supply were bashed in around 5:00 a.m. Tuesday.</p> <p>Authorities say at least one BB gun was taken, but store employees were still doing inventory to determine if anything else was taken.</p> <p>Four men were seen running from the scene when police arrived. Surveillance video was turned over to police.</p> <p>Owners say the shop has been burglarized eight times in the last two years. They credited the quick response time from Tacoma police for preventing more guns from being taken.</p> <p>Employees say dangerous weapons are stored in a safe to prevent them from getting into the wrong hands.</p> <p>Damage to the front door will be the biggest expense -- costing thousands to repair.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Pierce Co. record pace murders
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/944694/pierce-county-record-pace-murders/
GIST	<p>Over the first three months of 2018, the murder rate in Pierce County nearly tripled when compared to last year, according to county records.</p> <p>Authorities are at a loss to explain why.</p> <p>Pierce County Sheriff Paul Pastor said he hopes it is an outlier and that the rate will diminish.</p> <p>“All of us around here are saying this is a bit of an anomaly,” he said. “Here’s a fact that will take place: As we grow in this county — as we approach a million people — we will have spikes like this and they will be closer together.”</p> <p>First reported in the Tacoma News Tribune, the current tally of 23 murders nearly triples the nine homicides recorded through the first 81 days of 2017.</p> <p>That pace, if maintained for the next nine months, would lead to the most violent year in two decades.</p>

	<p>Pastor said even if the rate drops to normal levels, the county is unlikely to stop at the 2017 total of 38. And while this year's murder rate is high so far, it is unlikely to reach the peak level of 66 murders in 1992.</p> <p>The King County murder rate climbed for 2017 after remaining largely steady during four years prior. In 2017, the county saw 74 homicides compared to 66 in 2016, 67 in 2015 and 63 in 2014.</p> <p>Both counties are experiencing an economic boom. The violent crime rate, paradoxically, rises during those periods, Pastor said. People get displaced, he said, envy builds and tensions rise.</p> <p>The vast majority of homicides, he said, happen between people who know each other and have a dispute. That is the case for nearly every homicide in Pierce County so far.</p> <p>"None of these murders are random murders," he said. "There is not somebody loose in the county who is preying on county residents.</p> <p>"(These) are people who know one and other, who have disputes with one and other, or there is an issue of mental illness, issues of drugs, but the victims are usually known to the perpetrator."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 MS-13 member pleads guilty in slaying
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/04/03/gang-member-pleads-guilty-to-role-in-boston-teens-slaying.html
GIST	<p>BOSTON – A member of the violent MS-13 gang has pleaded guilty to his role in the slaying of a 15-year-old Boston boy who was lured to his death by a fake Facebook page.</p> <p>Federal prosecutors say 21-year-old Carlos Melara pleaded guilty last week to racketeering conspiracy.</p> <p>Authorities say the El Salvador national and other gang members engaged in a "catfishing" scheme to entice the boy to an East Boston beach in September 2015 by posing as a girl on Facebook who wanted to meet him. Melara, pretending to be the girl's friend, picked up the victim on a scooter and drove him to the beach, where several gang members stabbed him to death.</p> <p>Prosecutors say the killing earned Melara promotion within the gang, which has deep Central American ties.</p> <p>He is scheduled to be sentenced July 30.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Report: mass grave found in Mali
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mass-grave-found-central-mali-amnesty-report-54199283?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>A mass grave has been discovered in central Mali just days after arrests by the military as it responds to increasing jihadist attacks in the region, Amnesty International said in a new report Tuesday.</p> <p>Concerns are growing about alleged abuses as Mali's military tries to stop extremism from spreading further in the West African nation.</p> <p>Residents in Dogo village identified six bodies found in the mass grave as people who had been arrested on March 22 by the military, the human rights group said, adding that the victims appear to have been blindfolded.</p>

	<p>"Military forces fighting armed groups have also committed crimes under international law including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and arbitrary arrests," the group said.</p> <p>On Feb. 21, military forces arrested and blindfolded nine men in Daresalam, residents told the rights group. Two men from the Bambara ethnic group were released but seven Peulh men have not returned.</p> <p>The United Nations mission in Mali has reported that at least 43 people were victims of enforced disappearances by Malian security forces during anti-extremist operations between May and June last year.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Arlington probes rock-throwing incidents
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/north-sound-news/police-investigate-rock-throwing-incidents-in-arlington/726677035
GIST	<p>Arlington Police are investigating a series of incidents that left a trail of broken glass and smashed windows in the North Sound.</p> <p>They say vandals appear to have targeted cars and homes in Arlington, in the streets surrounding the intersection of French Avenue and 1st Street.</p> <p>The results of this were a spree of extreme vandalism that ended with smashed car windows and at least one home damaged, according to the spokesperson for the city of Arlington.</p> <p>Arlington Police say they received five reports from Sunday-to-Monday.</p> <p>The owner of another vehicle on East 1st Street also had her car damaged. She suspects the vandals hit her car repeatedly to make sure it would break.</p> <p>She found the window shattered but intact -- until she touched it and it shattered.</p> <p>Kristin Banfield with the city of Arlington says an investigation has opened, and said the string of incidents was unusual and dangerous.</p> <p>"It's not acceptable in this community, it's not acceptable in anybody's community," Banfield said. "And that's exactly why we want to identify these suspects."</p> <p>The spree may have began early Sunday morning before 5 a m, people have discovered the damage since then. Banfield said a house was also hit; crimes of extreme inconvenience that can touch anyone, anywhere.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Olympia police investigate shooting
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/04/olympia-police-investigating-shooting-that-injured-two-one-man-believed-shot-in-head/
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. — Police were investigating a shooting in the 200 block of 5th Avenue SE in Olympia late Tuesday night.</p> <p>"More than one person has been injured at the scene," the police department tweeted. "Detectives are investigating."</p> <p>The Olympia Fire Department said one of the men had been shot in the head and was in critical condition.</p>

	There was no information on another injury.
	The police released no other details, but tweeted, “No known additional threat to public.”
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HEADLINE	04/04 Hundreds arrests in FBI dark web probe
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/briefings/daily-news-analysis/dark-web-opiate-investigation-leads-to-hundreds-of-arrests/
GIST	<p>An FBI operation to target the buying and selling of illegal opiates on the dark web has led to hundreds of arrests.</p> <p>The FBI-led enforcement action last week, named Operation Disarray, is part of a recently launched Department of Justice initiative to disrupt the sale of opioids online and was the first operation of its kind to occur simultaneously in all 50 states.</p> <p>Hundreds of FBI agents and federal partners—including personnel from the Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Internal Revenue Service, Department of Homeland Security, and U.S. Postal Inspection Service—conducted searches, made arrests, and carried out “knock and talks” with more than 160 individuals known to have bought or sold drugs through the marketplaces. Leads from the investigation identified 19 overdose deaths of persons of interest.</p> <p>Special Agent Chris Brest, who helped organize the effort said: “The point of Operation Disarray is to put drug traffickers on notice: Law enforcement is watching when people buy and sell drugs online. For those who think the Darknet provides anonymity,” he explained, “you are mistaken.”</p> <p>Darknet marketplaces resemble legitimate e-commerce sites, complete with shopping carts, thousands of products, sales promotions, and customer reviews. But the Darknet sites’ drop-down menus direct customers to cocaine, heroin, fentanyl, and other illegal drugs.</p> <p>The marketplaces are accessed through a type of software that claims to make the buyer and seller anonymous. Drug users anywhere in the world can sit in front of a computer screen and, with a click of the mouse, buy narcotics without having to risk a face-to-face interaction.</p> <p>Special Agent Eric Yingling, who specializes in Darknet investigations from the FBI’s Pittsburgh Division said: “We see a number of individuals go from consuming to becoming distributors because they’ve become comfortable using the marketplaces. Anyone who owns a computer could potentially be involved in this type of activity.”</p> <p>In January 2018, the Department of Justice announced the Joint Criminal Opioid Darknet Enforcement (J-CODE) team, an FBI-led initiative that brings together a variety of federal agencies to disrupt illicit opioid sales online.</p> <p>As part of the effort, the FBI is training hundreds of agents, as well as local and state law enforcement partners, about the increasing use of Darknet marketplaces to facilitate the sale of opiates.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Cops contacted YouTube shooter earlier
SOURCE	https://www.mercurynews.com/2018/04/03/youtube-shooters-father-says-she-was-angry-at-company/
GIST	The night before Nasim Aghdam opened fire in a courtyard at YouTube’s headquarters Tuesday afternoon, Mountain View police found the San Diego woman sleeping in her car.

She had been reported missing by her family in Southern California, and her father Ismail Aghdam told police she might be going to YouTube because she “hated” the company. Police called the family at 2 a.m. Tuesday to say she’d been found and that everything was “under control,” her father said.

But hours later, his daughter was dead of a self-inflicted gunshot after shooting three people and causing an afternoon of terror at YouTube’s headquarters.

In an interview Tuesday night with the Bay Area News Group, Ismail Aghdam said his 38-year-old daughter told her family a couple of weeks ago that YouTube had been censoring her videos and stopped paying her for her content. “She was angry,” he said in an interview from his Riverside County home.

It wasn’t clear Tuesday night what Mountain View police knew about her history with YouTube.

A police spokeswoman confirmed that officers had found a woman of the same name asleep in a vehicle early Tuesday morning in a parking lot.

“Our officers made contact with the woman after the license plate of her vehicle matched that of a missing person out of Southern California,” said Mountain View Police spokeswoman Katie Nelson.

“The woman confirmed her identity to us and answered subsequent questions. At the conclusion of our discussion, her family was notified that she had been located.”

Ismail Aghdam said his daughter was a vegan activist and animal lover. As a youngster, she would not even kill ants that invaded the family home, instead using paper to remove them to the back yard, he said. State records show she had once established a charity called Peace Thunder Inc., to “educate people about animal cruelty, environmental pollution” and other causes.

“For me, animal rights equal human rights,” Aghdam told the San Diego Union-Tribune at a People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals protest in 2009 outside Camp Pendleton.

She told her family that YouTube had stopped paying her for the content she posted to the site, Ismail Aghdam said. YouTubers can receive payment for advertisements accompanying their videos, but the company “de-monetizes” some channels for various reasons, meaning ads don’t run with them.

Aghdam was prolific on social media, posting videos and photos on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube. Her YouTube channel included strange workout video clips, graphic animal abuse videos and vegan cooking tutorials. But recent posts show evidence of her growing frustration.

Aghdam’s YouTube, Facebook and Instagram pages were all taken down late Tuesday, but not before reporters from this news organization were able to view much of the material.

On a March 18 Instagram post, she railed at YouTube: “All my youtube channels got filtered by youtube so my videos hardly get views and it is called “merely relegation.” This is also happening to many other channels on youtube. This is the peaceful tactic used on the internet to censor and suppress people who speak the truth and are not good for the financial, political ... gains of the system and big businesses. I recently got filtered on instagram too and maybe its related to youtube and youtube staff asked instagram to filter me here too!!?”

On Jan. 28, Aghdam recorded a video of herself lamenting her perceived “discrimination” by YouTube, particularly railing on how YouTube determined her ab workout video was too racy and, therefore, filtered it.

“I’m being discriminated and filtered on YouTube and I’m not the only one,” the video begins, as Aghdam, wearing a black, white and orange long-sleeved shirt and short jet black hair stands in front of a background of green and white stars. “They age restricted my ab workout video. A video that has nothing bad in it. Nothing sexual.”

	On one of her many websites, she claims to have at least four YouTube channels, one in English, and then others in Farsi and Turkish.
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HEADLINE	04/04 Thailand: largest crystal meth haul
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/04/asia/thai-meth-drug-bust-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Bangkok, Thailand (CNN)Authorities in Thailand seized hundreds of kilograms of crystal methamphetamine Tuesday in the largest haul of its type in the country's history.</p> <p>Lt. Gen. Sommai Kongvisaisuk, chief of the Narcotics Suppression Bureau, told CNN a truck containing 788 kilograms (1,740 lb) of the drug, was detained by military and police in Chiang Rai province near the Mekong Delta on Tuesday.</p> <p>Around 10 million amphetamine pills were seized during the same operation. The drugs were hidden inside tea bags and packets of fertilizer and Kongvisaisuk said the "14K" criminal syndicate was behind the banned substances.</p> <p>In total, the amount of drugs seized on April 3 had a street value of \$55 million, police said.</p> <p>The haul follows a series of high-profile raids targeting the drug trade in Thailand, which saw thousands of kilograms of crystal meth, speed and marijuana seized between March 25 and April 1.</p> <p>But despite the large seizures the country's drug problem was only growing more serious, Jeremy Douglas, Southeast Asia Regional Representative for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, told CNN.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Women rarely pull trigger mass shootings
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2018/04/03/youtube-shooting-rare-women-ones-pulling-trigger-active-shooting-incidents/483753002/
GIST	<p>As YouTube's bright headquarters in Northern California became the epicenter of the latest shooting in the U.S. on Tuesday, five words from police at an afternoon news conference stood out: The female suspect is dead.</p> <p>It is rare for women to pull the trigger in workplace and mass shootings.</p> <p>Of 28 mass attacks analyzed by the Secret Service in 2017, all 28 involved male attackers, the service said in a recent report.</p> <p>In Tuesday's incident, the female suspect died in an apparent suicide after opening fire at the YouTube facility in San Bruno, Calif., about 11 miles south of San Francisco, police said. Her motive was still being investigated.</p> <p>One of the most recent cases of a female shooter was that of Tashfeen Malik, 27, the wife of Syed Farook, 28. Malik helped her husband carry out a deadly rampage in San Bernardino, Calif., on Dec. 2, 2015, when the couple burst into a meeting room at the Inland Regional Center, an agency that provides services for the developmentally disabled, and gunned down 14 people.</p> <p>Farook was a U.S.-born citizen of Pakistani descent and worked at the health department; Malik was a Pakistani-born lawful permanent resident of the U.S. The couple, who lived in Redlands, fled after the assault and later died in a shootout with police.</p>

A special report by USA TODAY documents how rare female shooters are: Women are suspects in just 6% of mass killings in the U.S., according to "Behind the Bloodshed," a USA TODAY analysis. The average age of a female mass killing suspect is 33; the youngest is 18, according to the report. That compares to men with an average age of 31.

More: 64% of assailants in mass attacks suffered from symptoms of mental illness, Secret Service report finds

More: Female suspect dead, 4 injured after shooting at YouTube headquarters in California

In another analysis, only six of 160 shootings from 2000 to 2013 that fit the active shooter definition were carried out by females, according to a 2014 study by the FBI and Texas State University. Law enforcement officials use the term "active shooter" to describe an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area.

Those included:

- Yvonne Hiller, 43, who opened fire on her co-workers at a Kraft Foods Factory in Philadelphia on September 2010 shortly after being suspended from her job. Hiller had been escorted from the building but returned. Two people were killed and one was wounded. Hiller exchanged gunfire with police but was eventually apprehended.
- Biology professor Amy Bishop Anderson, 44, who killed three and wounded three others after opening fire in February 2010 at a department meeting at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. Anderson, who had been denied tenure at the university almost a year earlier, did not open fire until 30 minutes into the meeting. She surrendered to responding officers.
- Latina Williams, 23, who killed two fellow students in a classroom at Louisiana Technical College in Baton Rouge in February 2008. She fired six rounds, then reloaded and committed suicide before police arrived.
- Former postal worker Jennifer San Marco, 44, who opened fire in January 2006 at the Santa Barbara U.S. Postal Processing and Distribution Center in Goleta, Calif. She killed six before turning the gun on herself. San Marco, who left the postal service three years before the incident, suffered from mental illness.
- In April 2001, Cathline Repunte, 36, opened fire at the Laidlaw Transit Services maintenance yard in San Jose, Calif., killing a fellow school bus driver. At her trial, psychiatrists said Repunte suffered from paranoid schizophrenia.

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HEADLINE	04/04 YouTube shooter 'hated' the company
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/youtube-shooter-told-family-members-hated-company-54224046?cid=clicksource_79_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>A woman who believed she was being suppressed by YouTube and told her family members she "hated" the company opened fire at YouTube's headquarters in California, wounding three people before taking her own life, police said.</p> <p>Investigators do not believe Nasim Aghdam specifically targeted the three victims when she pulled out a handgun and fired off several rounds in a courtyard at the company's headquarters south of San Francisco on Tuesday, police said.</p> <p>But a law enforcement official with knowledge of the investigation told The Associated Press that Aghdam had a longstanding dispute with the company. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the case, said Aghdam used the name "Nasime Sabz" online.</p>

	<p>A website in that name decried YouTube's policies and said the company was trying to "suppress" content creators.</p> <p>"Youtube filtered my channels to keep them from getting views!" one of the messages on the site said. "There is no equal growth opportunity on YOUTUBE or any other video sharing site, your channel will grow if they want to!!!!!"</p> <p>Aghdam "hated" YouTube and was angry that the company stopped paying her for videos she posted on the platform, her father, Ismail Aghdam, told the Bay Area News Group.</p> <p>On Monday, he called police to report his daughter missing after she didn't answer the phone for two days and warned officers that she might go to YouTube, he said.</p> <p>Officers in Mountain View — about 30 miles (48 kilometers) from YouTube's headquarters — found her sleeping in her car in a parking lot around 2 a.m. Tuesday but let her go after she refused to answer their questions. Aghdam didn't appear to be a threat to herself or others, police spokeswoman Katie Nelson said.</p> <p>Nelson would not say whether officers had been warned that Aghdam might have been headed to YouTube headquarters.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/04 Suspect YouTube HQ shooting found dead
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/police-respond-active-shooter-youtubes-california-headquarters/story?id=54211484&cid=clicksource_4380645_1_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>The suspect in a shooting at YouTube's headquarters in California's Bay Area is believed to be a woman found dead from an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound, police said.</p> <p>The suspect has been identified as Nasim Najafi Aghdam of San Diego, San Bruno Police Chief Ed Barberini told ABC News, confirming earlier reports.</p> <p>Authorities said they are still searching for a motive. Earlier reports linked the attack to a domestic situation, two law enforcement officials told ABC News. The incident did not appear to be terror-related, the sources said.</p> <p>The scene of the incident is being processed for evidence by San Bruno Police as well as the San Mateo County Crime Lab.</p> <p>At least four victims were transported to area hospitals, Barberini said. Three of those victims sustained gunshot wounds, while the fourth victim suffered a non-life-threatening injury such as a broken or twisted ankle, he said.</p> <p>Three people were transported to Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital, spokesman Brett Andrew told reporters at a press conference.</p> <p>A 36-year-old male patient was in critical condition, Andrew said. A female victim, 32, was in serious condition, and another female victim, 27, was in fair condition, he said earlier on Tuesday.</p> <p>The victim in critical condition is believed to have been the suspect's intended target, two law enforcement sources told ABC News. The other victims were apparently unintended.</p> <p>The shooting appears to have occurred in a courtyard area on YouTube's campus, Barberini said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Apple watch data leads to murder arrest
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/report-apple-watch-data-leads-to-arrest-in-2016-murder/
GIST	<p>AUSTRALIA - Data collected from an Apple smartwatch helped lead to an arrest in the murder of a southern Australian woman, according to testimony heard in court. Earlier this month, police arrested the daughter-in-law of Myrna Nilsson, 57, who was found dead in her Adelaide home in 2016, according to reports by the Australian Broadcasting Commission.</p> <p>Prosecutors called the victim's Apple Watch a "foundational piece of evidence" in proving that the daughter-in-law lied about her involvement in the beating death, according to the ABC.</p> <p>Police were first called to the home of Myrna Nilsson in September 2016 after her daughter-in-law, Caroline Nilsson, came out of the house "gagged and distressed," according to ABC reporters. Caroline reportedly told police that Myrna was followed home by two men, and that the three of them argued outside the home.</p> <p>In her account to police, she did not hear her mother-in-law being murdered because she was hiding in another room. Afterwards, she said, the men tied her up.</p> <p>But prosecutors say she staged the entire break-in and lied to police-- and the watch proves it.</p> <p>Biometric data recorded by Myrna Nilsson's Apple watch is consistent with her being ambushed as she walked into her home just after 6:30 p.m., prosecutor Carmen Matteo said March 29 before the Adelaide Magistrates Court. The watch can track the wearer's movement and heart rate, and it reportedly recorded the time Nilsson's body showed signs of going into shock and losing consciousness.</p> <p>"The deceased must have been attacked at around 6:38pm and had certainly died by 6:45 p.m.," Matteo said, according to the network.</p> <p>Caroline Nilsson did not come out of the house until after 10 p.m.</p> <p>Prosecutors also say there is no DNA evidence to support Caroline Nilsson's version of events. The victim's three young grandchildren were reportedly home at the time of the killing, and neighbors said they heard screaming.</p> <p>Nilsson's application for bail has been denied based on the strength of the prosecution's case, the network reports.</p> <p>The case will return to court in June.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Britain to ban ivory sales
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/britain-ban-ivory-sales-stamp-abhorrent-trade-54198615?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Britain says it will ban the sale of ivory, no matter how old, to help protect the world's elephant population.</p> <p>The government said Tuesday that the ban is the toughest in Europe and will impose a maximum five-year prison sentence for offenders.</p> <p>Environment Secretary Michael Gove says "the abhorrent ivory trade should become a thing of the past."</p> <p>There will be exceptions for some old musical instruments and for works of art, such as portrait miniatures, that are more than a century old.</p>

	Conservationists say about 20,000 elephants a year are killed for their tusks. David Cowdrey of the International Fund for Animal Welfare says the British ban sends "a clear and unequivocal message that ivory trade is over and rightly being consigned to the history books."
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HEADLINE	04/03 UK lab: no ID for source of nerve agent
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/top-russian-diplomat-britain-poisoned-spy-54198504?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The head of Britain's defense laboratory said Tuesday that its scientists have not identified the precise source of the nerve agent that poisoned former Russian spy Sergei Skripal, although it's likely the attack was carried out by a "state actor."</p> <p>Britain blames Russia for the March 4 attack on Skripal and his daughter Yulia, a claim that Moscow fiercely denies.</p> <p>Scientists at the U.K's Porton Down lab have identified the poison as a Soviet-developed type of nerve agent known as Novichok, and the British government says the only plausible explanation is that it came from Russia.</p> <p>Porton Down chief executive Gary Aitkenhead said scientists at the lab "have not verified the precise source, but we provided the scientific information to the government who have then used a number of other sources to piece together the conclusions that they have come to."</p> <p>"It's our job to provide the scientific evidence that identifies what the particular nerve agent is ... but it's not our job to say where that was actually manufactured," he told Sky News.</p> <p>Aitkenhead said the attack with a highly toxic chemical weapon was "probably only within the capabilities of a state actor."</p> <p>The British government said several pieces of information contributed to its conclusion that the Russian government was responsible for the nerve agent attack, including intelligence that Russia had produced Novichok within the last decade and had investigated ways of delivering nerve agents for assassination.</p> <p>Russian officials have claimed the poison may have come from Britain, pointing out that Porton Down conducts secret chemical and biological weapons research.</p> <p>Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko called the poisoning a "provocation arranged by Britain" in order to justify high military spending because "they need a major enemy."</p> <p>Aitkenhead said there is "no way" the nerve agent could have come from the high-security facility.</p> <p>"We deal with a number of very toxic substances as part of the work that we do, we've got the highest levels of security and controls," he said.</p>
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TUESDAY – 3 APR 2018

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Event Calendar

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Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php

Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000

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**indicates new event/new information added during reporting week

Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	04/03 British Muslims defiant in 'punish day'
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/04/03/british-muslims-defiant-after-leaflets-call-punish-muslim-day/480878002/
GIST	<p>LONDON — British Muslims were defiant Tuesday after anonymous leaflets mailed to addresses across the country called for April 3 to be a day of violence against Muslims.</p> <p>Police are investigating after the leaflets referring to "Punish a Muslim Day" were sent to addresses in several cities with large Muslim populations, including London and Bradford.</p> <p>"The campaign has caused serious fear within Muslim communities, especially among Muslim women, who often suffer the most from Islamophobia," said the Muslim Council of Britain, which represents a number of Islamic organizations, in a statement.</p> <p>"The Muslim Council of Britain has been urging vigilance but also recognizes the importance of keeping calm and carrying on, for those who are able," it added.</p> <p>WhatsApp messages urged women to hide their hijabs and advised people to make sure their doors are locked and how to explain the situation to their children, the Mirror reported.</p> <p>One of the messages read: "Sisters please be warned that on 3rd April DO NOT GO OUT they have made a national punish a muslim day!" according to the Daily Mirror.</p> <p>The message continued: "This is not a joke its sick plan they have a pointing system where they will b giving points nd reporting ona site with vids etc punishments include taking off hijabs...beating up and even acid throwing.</p> <p>"May Allah protect us all.(sic)."</p> <p>Recorded incidents of hate crime in Britain have leaped since the country voted to leave the European Union in a 2016 referendum. Controlling immigration was a major issue during campaigning ahead of the vote.</p> <p>Iman Atta, director of Tell Mama — an independent organisation that records anti-Muslim incidents in the United Kingdom — advised people to continue with their normal activities, to be vigilant, not to stay indoors and to report any incidents to the organization, the London Evening Standard reported.</p> <p>#PunishAMuslimDay was trending on Twitter as people voiced their concerns and solidarity...</p> <p>Meanwhile, West Yorkshire Police in northern England said its officers were investigating a number of reports of "potentially malicious communications sent to individuals" in the city of Bradford.</p> <p>London's Metropolitan Police said it was aware that the leaflets had been circulating in the capital.</p> <p>"The MPS does not tolerate any form of hate crime. If anyone believes they have been a victim of such an offence we would encourage them to report it to police so it can be fully investigated," it said in a statement.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 NY braces for viral anti-Muslim campaign
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/punish-muslim-day-new-york-braces-869163
GIST	<p>Police patrols are being stepped up at New York mosques and Islamic centers in response to fears that a viral anti-Muslim campaign that originated in the U.K. will spread to the city.</p> <p>Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams announced the increased security measures at a meeting Monday at the Pakistani American Youth Society in Ditmas Park, the New York Daily News reported.</p> <p>In March, a letter began circulating in the U.K. that said April 3 had been designated Punish a Muslim Day. It laid out a points-based reward system for violence carried out against Muslims, including 50 points to “throw acid in the face of a Muslim” and 1000 points to “burn or bomb a mosque.”</p> <p>As the letter went viral on social media, there were concerns the campaign could spark violence in New York. Adams called for it to be countered by a message of tolerance.</p> <p>“Our message must be just as loud,” Adams said. “Not punish a Muslim, let’s embrace a Muslim, let’s embrace a Christian, let’s embrace a person of Jewish faith, let’s embrace the diversity that this city has to offer.”</p> <p>The NYPD’s Intelligence Bureau learned of the threat in mid-March after the flyers appeared, Police Department spokesman J. Peter Donald told local news site Patch.</p> <p>“While we have not seen any evidence of this threat gaining traction here, it has generated understandable concern,” Donald said.</p> <p>In the U.K., Muslims have been urged to “unite” and “carry on as normal” as the day approaches.</p> <p>A spokesman for London’s Metropolitan Police told the Evening Standard that though there was no “credible information” that anti-Muslim attacks were being planned, police officers remained alert for potential incidents.</p> <p>People from six U.K. communities received the letters, which have been investigated by counterterrorism officials. A number of the letters appeared to have been sent from the northern English city of Sheffield, police said.</p> <p>“Are you a sheep like the vast majority of the population?” the letter reads. “Sheep follow orders and are easily led. They are allowing the white-majority nations of Europe and north America to become overrun by those who would like nothing more than to do us harm and to turn our democracies into sharia-led police states.”</p> <p>One British Muslim activist has called for April 3 to instead be designated Love Muslim Day to combat the letter’s message of hate, with points to be awarded for acts of kindness and charity towards Muslims. Under activist Shahab Adris’s scheme, 25 points would be won for buying Muslims coffee with cake, 500 points for fasting with Muslims during Ramadan, and 1,000 points for raising funds to help victims of conflict in Iraq or Syria.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Supreme Court shields cop from lawsuit
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/supreme-court-shields-a-police-officer-from-lawsuit-for-shooting-a-woman-in-her-front-yard/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Monday shielded a police officer from being sued for shooting an Arizona woman in her front yard, once again making it harder to bring legal action against officers who use excessive force, even against an innocent person.</p>

With two dissents, the high court tossed out a lawsuit by a Tucson woman who was shot four times outside her home because she was seen carrying a large knife.

The ruling — which comes at a time of growing controversy over police shootings nationwide — effectively advises courts to rely more heavily on the officer’s view of such incidents, rather than the victim’s.

Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg said in dissent the victim did not threaten the police or a friend who was standing nearby. This “decision is not just wrong on the law; it also sends an alarming signal to law enforcement officers and the public. It tells officers that they can shoot first and think later,” Sotomayor wrote.

Civil liberties advocates on the right and the left sharply criticized the ruling.

“Today’s ruling gives yet another green light to officers who use deadly force as a tool of first resort instead of last,” said Clark Neily, vice president of the libertarian Cato Institute. “It does so based on a legal doctrine — qualified immunity — that the Supreme Court invented out of whole cloth to help create a policy of near-zero accountability for law enforcement.”

David Cole, legal director for the American Civil Liberties Union, said officers who use lethal force unconstitutionally should be held accountable. “Giving a free pass to officers under these circumstances will only exacerbate the problem.”

Since the Civil War, federal law has allowed people to sue government officials, including the police, for violating their constitutional rights. But in recent years, the Supreme Court has erected a shield of immunity for police and said officers may not be sued unless victims can point to a nearly identical shooting that had been deemed unconstitutionally excessive in a previous decision.

Police shootings of unarmed people, many of them African Americans, have sparked protests across the country, most recently in Sacramento, California. Often prosecutors have been reluctant to bring criminal charges in such cases because they would need to convince an entire jury that the officer was guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

Civil suits that seek damages are in theory easier to win because plaintiffs need only present convincing evidence that the officer used unreasonable force. But the high court has repeatedly made it harder for victims to bring such claims before a jury.

In an eight-page unsigned opinion in *Kisela v. Hughes*, the justices did not rule on whether officer Andrew Kisela acted reasonably when he used potentially deadly force against Amy Hughes, who was standing in her driveway a few feet away from her friend and roommate, Sharon Chadwick. The police had been called after a neighbor reported seeing a woman acting strangely and carrying a large knife.

Rather than decide whether Kisela used excessive force, the court instead ruled he could not be sued because the victim could not cite a similar case involving a police shooting of a person holding a knife.

“Police officers are entitled to qualified immunity unless existing precedent squarely governs the specific facts at issue. . . . This is far from an obvious case in which any competent officer would have known that shooting Hughes to protect Chadwick would violate the 4th Amendment” and its ban on unreasonable seizures, the court said Monday.

The decision reversed the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, which had allowed the woman’s lawsuit to go before a jury.

In recent months, legal scholars and the Cato Institute have joined civil rights lawyers in criticizing the court’s approach to police shootings. University of Chicago law professor William Baude, a former clerk

for Chief Justice John Roberts, has argued the justices invented the doctrine of “qualified immunity” in the 1980s and have steadily expanded it to block suits in cases of excessive force.

In her dissent, Sotomayor quoted a law review article by Judge Stephen Reinhardt from Los Angeles, who died last week. “Nearly all of the Supreme Court’s qualified immunity cases come out the same way — by finding immunity for the officials,” Reinhardt wrote in 2015.

Three years ago, the justices tossed out a lawsuit brought by a mentally ill San Francisco woman shot five times by officers who pushed their way into her private room. They said they shot her because she was holding a bread knife.

The Tucson shooting took place a few blocks from the University of Arizona campus. Police were called to “check welfare” after a neighbor called about a woman who was acting erratically and brandishing a knife. Three officers, including Kisela, arrived and saw a woman, later identified as Hughes, leave the house and walk toward Chadwick. She was carrying a knife. A chain-link fence prevented the officers from approaching, but they called out to Hughes to drop the knife.

She ignored them and came within 6 feet of Chadwick. The other woman was calm and said there was no threat. But Kisela then fired four shots, striking Hughes. She was handcuffed, and taken to a hospital. She recovered from her injuries and sued Kisela for an unreasonable seizure and an excessive use of force.

The 9th Circuit appeals court said that while some key facts are in dispute, a “rational jury could find that (Hughes) had a constitutional right to walk down her driveway holding a knife without being shot.”

Lawyers for Arizona appealed and said the suit should be dismissed. “Qualified immunity exists to protect the public from unwarranted timidity on the part of public officials,” they said.

The justices agreed and ruled Kisela was entitled to immunity.

Sotomayor said the majority had revised the facts to favor the officer. Hughes “held a kitchen knife down at her side with the blade facing away from Chadwick. Hughes was nowhere near the officers, had committed no illegal act, was suspected of no crime, and did not raise the knife in the direction of Chadwick or anyone else,” she wrote. Two officers kept talking, but “without giving a warning that he would open fire, he (Kisela) shot Hughes four times, leaving her seriously wounded. If this account of Kisela’s conduct sounds unreasonable, that is because it was,” Sotomayor said.

She said the court’s “one-sided approach to qualified immunity transforms the doctrine into an absolute shield for law enforcement officers, gutting the deterrent effect of the 4th Amendment.”

Erwin Chemerinsky, dean of the University of California, Berkeley Law School, said Monday’s decision is part of a trend. “In case after case involving excessive police force, the Supreme Court is finding for the police and keeping juries from ever being able to decide if the police acted impermissibly. This contributes significantly to the difficulties in holding police accountable,” he said.

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HEADLINE	04/02 Martin Luther King's voice lives on
SOURCE	https://patch.com/georgia/atlanta/50-years-after-bullet-mlks-voice-lives
GIST	<p>ATLANTA, GA — On the evening of April 4, 1968, an assassin's bullet ended the life of 39-year-old civil-rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. On Wednesday, fifty years later, a new generation will gather to remember a man whose message of equality and nonviolence could never be silenced.</p> <p>A Nobel Peace Prize winner and the first president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, King led the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott and the 1963 March on Washington. His "Letter From a</p>

Birmingham Jail" and "I Have A Dream" speech remain iconic civil-rights documents.

In countries around the world, bells will toll 39 times at 6:01 p.m. Wednesday (when King was shot) in remembrance. At the King Center campus in downtown Atlanta, family members of the civil rights legend will place wreaths on the crypts of King and his late wife, Coretta Scott King.

During their first joint interview in more than a decade, Bernice King and her brothers, Dexter and Martin, recently told CBS News they still relive the trauma of their father's assassination. The brothers saw the fatal shooting while watching television.

"Even to this day, when I see a breaking news flash I have PTSD," Dexter King said. "You see your father being shot on television, and that's very, very traumatic."

Older brother Martin said he remembered his mother saying, "Your dad has gone home to live with God."

In Atlanta, where King preached as pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change has a full slate of events scheduled to mark the day.

"Today, we remember my father's death, but most importantly, we must remember the purpose and power of his life," the center's CEO, Bernice A. King, said in a news release. "Although this day is challenging for our family and for many around the world, I encourage you to hope today and to hope always Our family encourages you to not be angered by my father's death; be bolstered by his teachings and awakened by his work."

A day before he was murdered, King arrived in Memphis to help lead a peaceful protest march by the city's striking sanitation workers that was set for April 5. While there, he delivered his "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech, which referenced death and fear.

"We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live—a long life; longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain," King said. "And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. So I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man."

The next evening, April 4, a white supremacist named James Earl Ray fatally shot the father of four with a high-powered rifle from the window of a rooming house across the street from King's motel.

As the country grappled with a deadly white supremacist march in Virginia last summer, Atlanta unveiled a statue of King at the Georgia State Capitol. The King family was on hand for the event, which came as much of the nation, especially the South, debated the import of monuments and markers. The issue has simmered for years, but it boiled over with the tragic clashes in Charlottesville.

King's daughter Bernice spoke at the event, saying that "now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children."

King's impact has endured over the decades despite his never having held political office. And while some observers say it is easy for today's leaders to claim they would have supported King, his words ring as true today as they did in the 1960s.

In his last Sunday sermon, King called on good people to speak out against injustice instead of remaining on the sidelines. His words still ring true in an era of gun-violence, marches, police-shooting protests and #MeToo.

"Human progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability," King told a largely white congregation at Washington National Cathedral. "It comes through the tireless efforts and the persistent work of dedicated

individuals who are willing to be co-workers with God."

He went on to condemn "the appalling silence and indifference of the good people who sit around and say, 'Wait on time.'"

When tempers frayed and flared, King urged patience.

One of King's most memorable quotes, from his book "Strength to Love" that was first published in 1963, continues to ring true:

"Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction."

King's three surviving children have made headlines for court battles over two of their father's most famed possessions. His sons Martin and Dexter have been at odds with their sister Bernice over whether to sell their father's Bible and Nobel Prize. The siblings were in court several years ago seeking legal right to the artifacts. One historian accused them of being motivated by greed.

King's Bible was last seen in public when President Barack Obama used it in early 2013 while taking the oath of office at his second inauguration, according to Associated Press. Former President Jimmy Carter has urged the siblings to remove themselves from the business of running their father's estate, which they said they plan to do.

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HEADLINE	04/03 Saudi crown prince: triangle of evil
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/irans-leader-worse-hitler-and-wants-spread-islam-america-says-saudi-prince-869194
GIST	<p>The heir to the Saudi throne has lambasted Iran, saying its Supreme Leader is the first side of a "triangle of evil" along with the Muslim Brotherhood and extremist Islamist groups like Isis.</p> <p>In an echo of former U.S. president George W. Bush's 2002 reference to Iran's supposed role in an "axis of evil," Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman told The Atlantic that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was akin to Hitler and headed a regime that wanted to spread "extremist Shiite ideology."</p> <p>The crown prince added that if Tehran got its way, "the hidden Imam will come back again and he will rule the whole world from Iran and spread Islam even to America," referring to the final savior of humankind according to Iran's Twelver Shia faith.</p> <p>He said: "The second part of the triangle is the Muslim Brotherhood, which is another extremist organization. They want to use the democratic system to rule countries and build shadow caliphates everywhere... And the other part is the terrorists, al-Qaeda, ISIS, that want to do everything with force.</p> <p>"I believe that the Iranian supreme leader makes Hitler look good. But the supreme leader is trying to conquer the world. He believes he owns the world. They are both evil guys. He is the Hitler of the Middle East," he added.</p> <p>The wide-ranging interview will be seen as the latest move by the royal to present a different image of his country. In November he ordered a crackdown on businessmen and officials accused of corruption, which has reportedly recovered 100 billion dollars in financial settlements, although critics said it was a purge of his rivals to consolidate power.</p> <p>The crown prince insists his country is part of a group of moderate Muslim nations which include Jordan,</p>

Oman, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates which are, in his view, countries based on the founding principles of the United Nations whose values are at odds with those of the “evil triangle.”

But Salman puzzled his interviewer when he denied that Wahhabism, the austere fundamentalist strand of Islam which is the bedrock of the country, even existed in Saudi Arabia.

“No one can define Wahhabism. There is no Wahhabism. We don’t believe we have Wahhabism. We believe we have, in Saudi Arabia, Sunni and Shiite. We believe we have within Sunni Islam four schools of thought,” he said, adding that Shiites held many positions of power in government and society.

He said he has no religious objections to the right of Israel to exist, and that his concerns were solely about the fate of the holy mosque in Jerusalem and the rights of the Palestinian people.

“I believe that each people, anywhere, has a right to live in their peaceful nation. I believe the Palestinians and the Israelis have the right to have their own land. But we have to have a peace agreement to assure the stability for everyone and to have normal relations.

"We have religious concerns about the fate of the holy mosque in Jerusalem and about the rights of the Palestinian people. This is what we have. We don’t have any objection against any other people.

"Our country doesn’t have a problem with Jews. Our Prophet Muhammad married a Jewish woman. Not just a friend—he married her. Our prophet, his neighbors were Jewish. You will find a lot of Jews in Saudi Arabia coming from America, coming from Europe. There are no problems between Christian and Muslims and Jews. We have problems like you would find anywhere in the world, among some people. But the normal sort of problems," said the crown prince.

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HEADLINE	04/01 State’s firearm records months behind
SOURCE	http://www.heraldnet.com/news/states-firearms-records-months-behind/
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA — Had lawmakers passed new rules governing sales of semiautomatic rifles, it could have been months — if not years — before details of any transactions made it into a state firearms database relied upon by law enforcement officers.</p> <p>That’s because the database, which now only deals with handguns, lacks information on the make, model, serial number and caliber of weapons sold dating back to early 2015.</p> <p>The backlog reached 478,006 pistol transfer records at the end of February, according to the state Department of Licensing, which maintains the database.</p> <p>As it has grown from 106,000 in November 2013 to 327,000 in September 2016, agency officials have asked the Legislature for money to hire extra staff to catch up. Lawmakers didn’t come through.</p> <p>This year the agency didn’t ask and, ironically, lawmakers did allot \$382,000 in the supplemental state budget to tackle the problem.</p> <p>It happened after Democratic senators learned a suite of gun-related bills they were pushing would, if enacted, put further strain on the department’s ability to ensure all the data is up to date.</p> <p>In particular, there was concern about a bill that would have raised the age for purchasing a semiautomatic rifle and required background checks on buyers. It would have mandated, for the first time, that information from semiautomatic rifle sales be put in the database.</p> <p>“I explained that if you add another type of weapon to the database, I don’t think it can handle it,” recalled Beau Perschbacher, the agency’s legislative and policy director.</p>

It wasn't a hard sell.

"We thought let's take care of the backlog and clear the way" for the bills, said Sen. Christine Rolfes, D-Bainbridge Island, chairwoman of the Senate Ways and Means Committee and the chamber's chief budget writer.

With extra funding secured, the next step is figuring out how it should be best spent.

A year ago, agency leaders talked of hiring a data-entry firm to do the work and predicted the backlog — which was roughly 150,000 fewer records — could be erased in six months.

They may not follow that course now. Department officials want to switch to a new system and are finding out about different options. They could settle on something in 2019. They want to understand how efforts to clear the backlog might, or might not, align with any transition.

"We are still working on what will be the most effective way to use those dollars to alleviate the problem," said Stephanie Sams, a policy and legislative analyst for the agency.

In Washington, the Department of Licensing is tasked with collecting data from sales of handguns by licensed firearms dealers and getting those details into the database.

It also inputs information from the courts and law enforcement agencies on people obtaining or renewing a concealed pistol license and those who are ineligible to possess a firearm due to a court order or because they are deemed mentally unfit. Agency officials say this specific information is current in the database.

It's been difficult keeping up with gun sale records.

In its 2017 budget request, the department said it receives 240,000 records per year of firearm sales and licenses. Of those, 85 percent are submitted on paper and must be entered manually into the database.

What concerns agency leaders about the backlog is the potential safety risk of law enforcement officers who are not getting a complete picture of what firearms a person may have purchased.

For example, if a person who is not supposed to possess a firearm bought one at some point in the recent past, the database would be the place to find out. That wouldn't happen, though, if the record of the sale is stuck in the backlog.

In last year's budget request, agency officials made their concerns pretty blunt.

"Law enforcement officers' inability to electronically access pistol sale and transfer information on a CPL (concealed pistol license) holder deemed by the courts to be ineligible to possess a firearm presents a risk to public safety," read the request.

And they cautioned in that same request, the backlog poses a risk "of misinforming, delaying, or impeding" law enforcement agencies in the course of their work.

They use this system a lot. Officers from city, county, state and federal law enforcement agencies will check it more than 2 million times a year, agency officials estimate.

It is seen as a good starting point for an officer when they have to track a firearm for investigation, said Steve Strachan, executive director of the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs. And when a stolen firearm is recovered, the serial number can be punched in to find the legal owner to whom it can be returned, he said.

But it is not their only option. The federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives manages

	<p>the National Tracing Center which law enforcement officers can use for investigating the source of weapons made in the United States or overseas.</p> <p>That's important because with so many missing records in the state system, officers know it is not always going to be useful, Strachan said.</p> <p>"The fact that it's been so far behind is a concern," he said. "Any time a database is more robust and more accurate and up-to-date is good for law enforcement."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 EPA scraps fuel efficiency rules
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/2/scott-pruitt-epa-chief-scraps-obama-era-fuel-efic/
GIST	<p>In a move that could upend the U.S. auto industry and spark a bitter legal fight with states such as California, the Trump administration said Monday that it will scrap Obama-era fuel economy standards and effectively cancel the looming requirement that all vehicle fleets average more than 50 miles per gallon by 2025.</p> <p>Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt said the program, known as Corporate Average Fuel Economy, or CAFE standards, fell victim to politics during the Obama administration as officials sought to take dramatic action against climate change.</p> <p>He said his predecessors at the EPA rushed through rules governing fuel economy for model years 2022 through 2025 without fully understanding their potential consequences, and that it's now clear those rules simply aren't realistic.</p> <p>The decision represents a major defeat for green groups and other backers of the program, which was one of the most sweeping and lasting environmental actions of the prior administration.</p> <p>"The Obama administration's determination was wrong," Mr. Pruitt said in a statement. "Obama's EPA ... made assumptions about the standards that didn't comport with reality, and set the standards too high."</p> <p>The announcement also marks a turning point for how the government handles fuel economy for cars and light trucks, and could slow what had been a steady climb toward more efficient vehicles on U.S. roads. Car manufacturers, though, insist that cleaner cars will continue to roll off assembly lines.</p> <p>The current iteration of the CAFE program began with 2012 models and was the result of intense negotiations between the Obama administration and automakers. Although the benchmarks will remain in effect through 2021, the next phase — in which all automakers would have had to ensure that their vehicles averaged about 54.5 mpg — was seen as the most difficult to achieve.</p> <p>Supporters said it would result in a dramatic reduction in harmful tailpipe emissions. Critics argued that it was a misguided federal mandate that pushed consumers toward electric cars or other vehicles that they couldn't afford or simply didn't want.</p> <p>Auto industry groups praised the about-face and vowed to work with Mr. Pruitt to rewrite the standards in a more realistic way. The EPA chief said he intends to immediately begin work on a replacement program, though it's unclear when or if such a plan will materialize.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 SDOT workers complain bias, favoritism
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/2018/04/city-transportation-workers-complain-gender-bias-favoritism

GIST

Employees of the Seattle Department of Transportation perceive a workplace that discriminates against women, plays favoritism in hiring, limits opportunities for voicing concern and lacks communication between management, according to the results of an internal focus group study.

The results were sent to the department's employees last Monday and were provided to Crosscut by an employee.

In an email to staff, Goran Sparrman, the acting director of the department, acknowledged the feedback and pledged the department, which has some 750 employees and a budget of more than \$500 million, would do better.

"Going forward we want to make it clear that favoritism and discrimination are not acceptable behaviors within the department," he wrote. "As an example, we heard strong feedback that many women inside SDOT do not feel they are treated as equitably as men or given the same level of professional respect. This is not acceptable. We need to ensure that employees feel they do have a voice in SDOT, and that they will not experience retaliation for speaking up. Indeed, we want to encourage a culture where employees are comfortable raising issues and contributing ideas."

A spokesperson for the department said Sparrman did not wish to comment further.

In recent months, employees across the City of Seattle have voiced concerns about their workplace environment. Mayor Jenny Durkan and the Seattle City Council have pledged to revisit dated harassment policies. They have also formed an inter-departmental team to address other issues that have been raised by employees across the city, particularly in City Light and Human Resources.

The examination of SDOT's internal climate began in the third quarter of 2017, according to Marcus Scott, a consultant with PeopleFirm, the company that conducted the work with the department's employees. (Scott Kubly was still the director of the department at that time.)

Much of the perceived lack of equity was reported by women workers.

"I feel like what I say isn't heard unless a man says it," said one respondent. "That just isn't right."

Another complained about feeling objectified. "I've given up wearing skirts to work," this person said. "When I wore a skirt, men would ask me about my exercise regimen."

More broadly, employees felt that promotion only went to those who knew the right people. One person accused leadership of "cronyism."

In the face of the perceived favoritism, workers said there were few positive avenues for voicing concern. Speaking out, some believed, would lead to negative consequences.

"I know firsthand the field workers will not talk up because they are scared of retaliation," said one employee.

"Voicing an opinion has a certain degree of fear that is instilled," said another. "It is that sort of 'don't you forget you're replaceable' attitude."

Leadership took heavy blame for rewarding friends and not fostering an open or communicative department. According to the results of the focus groups, employees perceived from leadership a my-way-or-the-highway mentality and a lack of trust in employees.

"A lot of people seem to want the authority and title of being a leader but not the responsibility that comes with it," said one person.

"We have directors yelling and cussing at people and when you defend yourself you get reprimanded,"

	<p>said another.</p> <p>One respondent pleaded: “Managers, please put more trust into your employees. We know more than you think we do, give us a chance.”</p> <p>There were some positive pieces of the results, namely that employees seem to genuinely believe in the work at SDOT. Participants praised their colleagues and said people do work hard.</p> <p>“My career (it’s not just a job) is in transportation,” said one person. “We’re here because of a sense of service.”</p> <p>In an email to employees, Sparrman said he wanted to involve employees in a collaborative process to create an action plan. “Sharing these findings and continuing the conversations about them is an important first step.</p> <p>“I’m determined that we make the most of this opportunity to address the issues we face.”</p> <p>Several employees told Crosscut they’re hopeful that Durkan will back up her pledges to address the city’s workplace environment with action.</p> <p>Durkan has yet to announce steps for hiring a permanent director of SDOT. Several weeks after Durkan took office, Kubly resigned — not fired, exactly, but not asked to remain either.</p> <p>In an email, Durkan spokesperson Stephanie Formas said Sparrman is conducting a “thorough evaluation of SDOT and the City’s transportation system,” including “on project delivery, organizational structure, culture, and day-to-day operations.”</p> <p>When that is complete in the coming weeks, Durkan will begin the process for finding a permanent director.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Everett appeals bikini barista case
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/944853/everett-files-federal-court-appeal-in-bikini-barista-case/
GIST	<p>EVERETT, Wash. (AP) — Lawyers for the city of Everett have filed a brief in the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals asking for a temporary ban on a dress code for bikini baristas to be lifted.</p> <p>The Daily Herald reported Monday that lawyers contend U.S. District Court Judge Marsha Pechman erred in ruling that it was unconstitutional for the city to require coffee stand employees to cover up at work.</p> <p>The 66-page brief argues that the judge was wrong in suggesting that the rules were vague in describing what body parts can’t be on display. They also said the judge failed to consider evidence that the stands are adult-oriented businesses with associated crime problems.</p> <p>The city wants to require such workers to at minimum dress in tank tops and shorts.</p> <p>Bikini stand owners and their employees argued the dress code puts their civil rights at risk.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Apple, cherry industry wary trade war
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/944684/washingtons-apple-and-cherry-industry-wary-of-trade-war/
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — Cherry and apple growers in Washington state are worried their exports to China will be hurt by a trade war that escalated on Monday when that country raised import duties on a \$3 billion list of products.</p>

	<p>China buys Washington-grown cherries, apples and pears, which are all included in the trade dispute.</p> <p>Kate Woods, a vice president of the Northwest Horticultural Council in Yakima, Washington, says they hope the issue is resolved before cherry harvest begins in June.</p> <p>The council handles international trade issues for the agriculture industries in Washington, Oregon and Idaho.</p> <p>China is the top export market for Washington cherries, buying 2.9 million cases worth \$127 million per year.</p> <p>China also bought about \$50 million worth of apples and \$1.5 million worth of pears from Washington last year.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Seattle eyes massive parking changes
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/944893/seattle-parking-changes/
GIST	<p>Tenants without cars won't have to pay for parking spots in their building after the Seattle City Council passed on Monday legislation that allows unbundling in leases, among other changes.</p> <p>The changes outlined in Council Bill 119221 (approved by the council 7-1), would require the unbundling of parking space rental from multi-family dwellings and lease agreements in new and existing structures with 10 dwelling units or more. Tenants would have the option to refuse a parking space, which would mean paying less for rent. The legislation would also allow building owners to make parking available for public use.</p> <p>Councilmember Mike O'Brien says there's actually plenty of parking in Seattle.</p> <p>"We have lots of off-street parking that costs people money that they're choosing not to use," O'Brien said. "The shortage is not a shortage of parking. It's a shortage of free on-street parking in our congested neighborhoods."</p> <p>A parking study done by King County Metro found that 30-35 percent of parking in existing buildings goes unused. The changes would allow flexibility in deciding how much parking to include in development projects in areas with frequent transit.</p> <p>The City of Seattle says the legislation would enact several parking suggestions to improve housing affordability and neighborhood livability.</p> <p>"We know that an over supply of cheap parking has a negative impact on Seattle – it increases driving and traffic congestion, increases our carbon footprint, and makes housing more expensive," Councilmember Rob Johnson said in a news release following the vote.</p> <p>The Seattle Times reports that new apartments came with an average of 1.5 parking spots in 2004. That number dropped to 0.6 spots in 2017. Supporters say that allowing developers to eliminate parking altogether would lower the cost of construction and thus, lower the cost of rent. Ultimately, no parking would establish a cheaper cost of living.</p> <p>"People who cannot afford a car or choose not to own a car should not have to pay anything for parking," Donald Shoup, author of The High Cost of Free Parking, said in a news release. "If drivers don't pay for their parking, someone else has to pay for it, and that someone is everyone. But a city where everyone happily pays for everyone else's free parking is a fool's paradise."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Turkey, Russia ties growing closer
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/turkey-russia-deepen-ties-amid-troubled-relations-west-54171413?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Ties between Russia and Turkey are growing closer than ever, as Russia runs into widespread diplomatic fallout from the poisoned spy scandal and Turkey's relations with its Western allies worsens over human rights issues and its military operations against Kurdish militia in Syria.</p> <p>Russian President Vladimir Putin heads back to Turkey on Tuesday, joining Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at a symbolic ground-breaking ceremony for a Russian-made nuclear power plant being built on Turkey's Mediterranean coast at Akkuyu. On Wednesday, Putin, Erdogan and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani are expected to hold a summit in the Turkish capital of Ankara to discuss Syria's future.</p> <p>Turkey and Russia have put aside their traditional rivalries and differences on regional issues to forge strong economic ties. In December, they finalized an agreement for Turkey to purchase Russia's long-range S-400 missile defense system, a deal that raised eyebrows among some of Turkey's NATO allies. Aside from the power plant, the two countries are also building the "Turkstream" pipeline to transport Russian gas to Turkey.</p> <p>"Turkish-Russian relations are in a better mood compared with two years before . both parties are working together," said Mitat Celikpala, a professor of international relations at Istanbul's Kadir Has University.</p> <p>"They managed to compartmentalize issues," Celikpala said, citing Turkish and Russian divisions, including over the divided island of Cyprus and Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea. "If you set aside all those issues . they are good partners for the resolution of immediate interests."</p> <p>Their warming relations come as ties between European Union nations and Turkey have become increasingly testy.</p> <p>Turkey's EU membership talks have stalled and many EU countries have voiced concerns over the Turkish government's growing authoritarian turn and its crackdown on rights and freedoms, especially following an attempted coup in 2016 that Turkey blames on a U.S.-based Islamic cleric.</p> <p>Turkey in turn, accuses EU countries of supporting Kurdish rebels as well as the alleged perpetrators of the 2016 failed coup.</p> <p>Turkey's relations with the United States have fared even worse, with Turkey accusing Washington of harboring the cleric, Fethullah Gulen, and backing Syrian Kurdish militia that Turkey considers to be terrorists.</p> <p>Last week, Turkey announced it would not be following NATO and EU allies in ousting Russian diplomats in response to the poisoning in Britain of a former Russian spy. Britain has accused Russia of being behind the nerve agent attack on former double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter, prompting nearly two dozen nations to expel over 150 Russian diplomats. Russia has responded by expelling a similar number of envoys.</p> <p>Turkey condemned the nerve agent attack on British soil without naming Russia, adding that it enjoyed "positive" relations with Moscow.</p> <p>"Just because some countries took a step based on an allegation, we don't have to take the same step," Erdogan said.</p> <p>Putin and Erdogan have met several times in the past year and regularly speak on the phone.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Puerto Rico gov. defies federal board
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/puerto-rico-gov-defies-board-rejects-reform-pension-54172920?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Puerto Rico's governor is defying the federal control board overseeing the island's troubled finances.</p> <p>Ricardo Rossello says he will submit a fiscal plan to the board on Thursday that will not contain any layoffs, reductions in pensions or a labor reform.</p> <p>The announcement late Sunday defies the board's demands that the U.S. territory implement a labor reform and a 10 percent cut to a pension system facing nearly \$50 billion in liabilities.</p> <p>A board spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>Public Affairs Secretary Ramon Rosario told NotiUno radio station on Monday that the board cannot impose public policy in Puerto Rico and asked members to reach a consensus with the island's government.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Inspirational quotes Martin Luther King Jr
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/martin-luther-king-jr-10-inspirational-quotes/story?id=54097261
GIST	<p>Martin Luther King Jr., whose assassination was 50 years ago this week, was known for his soaring oratory as well as his leadership of the U.S. civil rights movement.</p> <p>Here are some inspirational quotes from the minister and civil rights leader who was gunned down in Memphis on April 4, 1968:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." (Letter from Birmingham City Jail) 2. "If a man hasn't discovered something he will die for, he isn't fit to live." (Preview of the "Dream" at Detroit March) 3. "As long as there is poverty in this world, no man can be totally rich even if he has a billion dollars." ("The American Dream") 4. "Negroes of the United States, following the people of India, have demonstrated that nonviolence is not sterile passivity, but a powerful moral force..." (Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech) 5. "Civilization and violence are antithetical concepts." (Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech) 6. "Everybody can be great ... because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart..." ("The Drum Major Instinct," Ebenezer Baptist Church) 7. "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." (Letter from Birmingham City Jail) 8. "We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right." (Letter from Birmingham City Jail) 9. "Somewhere we must come to see that human progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of dedicated individuals..." (Oberlin College Commencement)

	10. “Mankind must put an end to war or war will put an end to mankind.” (Oberlin College commencement)
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HEADLINE	04/03 Seattle schools wary ‘punish Muslim day’
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-schools-to-have-increased-security-tuesday-over-social-media-post/726058692
GIST	<p>Seattle Public Schools is warning parents that it will have extra security at its schools on Tuesday as a result of a social media post called “Punish a Muslim Day.”</p> <p>The campaign started in the United Kingdom and has gone viral.</p> <p>School officials sent a letter to parents on Monday warning about the post and that it would have increased security.</p> <p>The letter said:</p> <p>“Dear families,</p> <p>In recent weeks, a social media post from the United Kingdom began promoting April 3 as “Harm a Muslim” Day. Social media can spread messages quickly, and some of SPS students are talking about this. While this activity seems to be focused in Europe, in an abundance of caution, there will be increased security at schools. If you hear of something, please contact the district Safety & Security office at 206-252-0510 or call 9-1-1 if it is an emergency. As a school system, we will do everything we can to make sure our students are safe while in our care. Anyone who feels unsafe or targeted for any reason should immediately contact a trusted adult. Harassment of any kind is not, and will not, be tolerated in Seattle Public Schools.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Seattle’s rodent problem getting worse?
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/02/rat-city-is-seattles-rodent-problem-getting-worse/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE -- Rats. They’re every city’s dirty little secret, and Seattle is no exception.</p> <p>“There’s a lot more than people would like to think,” said Don Pace, an inspector for Seattle & King County Public Health’s Rodent Prevention Program.</p> <p>Exactly how many live in the region? Pace said there’s no way to count, but “it’s a lot.”</p> <p>“I’d say we’re outnumbered,” said Chris Pape, a Seattle & King County Public Health inspector in-training who previously worked for a local pest control company.</p> <p>According to Orkin’s annual survey, Seattle is the ninth rattiest city in the country, and some say it’s getting worse.</p> <p>“I’m extremely busy,” said Eric Oland, better known as “the rodent guy.”</p> <p>Oland owns Puget Sound Rodent Exclusion Specialist and has been ridding homes of rats for 20 years. These days, he has more business than he can handle. “It’s pretty much constantly ringing off the hook.”</p>

	<p>The question is: Is the rodent population growing along with the city?</p> <p>“I think certainly people are being more vocal,” said Oland.</p> <p>Pest control specialists and King County health inspectors agree: There aren’t more rats, just more sightings and more people calling to complain. Two things that may be contributing to the issue are demolition and new construction.</p> <p>“Anytime you disturb the environment, they’re going to scatter,” said Pace.</p> <p>Pace added that sometimes tearing down an old home can push not only the human residents out but the rat residents as well. That’s why ever since January 2017, the city of Seattle no longer issues demolition permits unless the applicant includes a plan for rat eradication.</p> <p>The King County Health Department is also doing its part to contain the rodent problem by baiting the sewers, but they admit they are not trying to kill all the rats.</p> <p>“They’ve been here longer than we’ve been here -- to expect to get rid of them is impossible,” said Pace.</p> <p>Oland said he gets the most calls from residents living in Seattle neighborhoods north of the cut. That includes Ballard, Fremont, the U-district, Wallingford and north Seattle. Oland goes as far as to say that at some point, every home in Seattle will have a rat problem.</p> <p>“They all have rats,” said Oland. “They think as long as they don’t see them, then they’re not in the living space, but they’ll be thriving in the attic space or in the crawlspace.”</p> <p>A covered home and consistent food supply are the keys to keeping rats around older homes; those that have holes, rock walls and greenery are a rats’ paradise.</p> <p>There are a few things you can do to keep the rats out: don’t leave bird or pet food out, keep your trash neat, tend to your compost but most of all, don’t ignore the problem. If you think you have rats, call someone because the problem can only get worse.</p> <p>“It doesn’t take long to have them get seriously out of control,” said Oland.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 OIG critical FBI handling polygraphs
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/briefings/government-reports-and-summaries/oig-fbis-handling-of-unresolved-polygraph-results-may-cause-security-vulnerabilities/
GIST	<p>The OIG has found that the way the FBI handles unresolved employee polygraph results may lead to security and operational vulnerabilities.</p> <p>DoJ Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz announced that a classified report examining the FBI’s handling of polygraph results in applicant and employee examinations has been submitted to Congress, DOJ leadership, and the FBI. The report focuses on the FBI’s process for investigating and addressing “unresolved results,” or results that found alleged deception or use of countermeasures by the applicant or employee.</p> <p>A public, unclassified summary of the report’s findings has been released, which found that investigations and adjudications of unresolved results in employee polygraph examinations were often lengthy, taking an average of 357 days. The report also highlighted that the FBI allowed certain employees who were unable to pass multiple polygraph examinations to retain access to highly sensitive information. As a result, some employees were allowed to retain access to sensitive information, systems, and spaces for extended periods of time without the risk assessments that FBI policy requires — potentially posing a security risk.</p>

In addition, FBI personnel conducting investigations in response to unresolved employee polygraph examinations did not always share information regarding alleged employee conduct with the FBI office responsible for investigating employee misconduct or with the OIG and the FBI did not fully document or centralize its record keeping of polygraph case information, including, at times, information explaining the test results. Finally, in a sample of 12 cases, the OIG found that that the FBI did follow its policy of not offering employment to applicants whose initial polygraph or retest examination results were unresolved.

The classified report makes eight recommendations for the FBI to improve the timeliness, consistency, and thoroughness of investigations and adjudications of unresolved polygraph results; to improve the identification and handling of derogatory information developed during polygraph examinations and AIU investigations; and to improve the documentation, tracking, and record keeping of unresolved polygraph results.

“It’s essential that the FBI address, promptly and completely, the vulnerabilities and other issues we identified,” said DoJ Inspector General Michael Horowitz. “To address the risk areas, our classified report made eight recommendations to the FBI, and the FBI agreed with all of them.”

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HEADLINE	04/03 Anti-Semitism serious concern Europe
SOURCE	http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20180403-european-antisemitism-trends-to-watch-in-9-countries-in-2018
GIST	<p>Anti-Semitism is once again a serious concern in Europe. Incidents are rising in several countries. Violent attacks, assaults and vandalism against the French Jewish community are making headlines nearly every day. Earlier this week, Jews in the United Kingdom took to the streets to protest deep-seated anti-Semitism in the Labor Party and the failure of political leaders on the left, including Labor Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, to adequately address their concerns.</p> <p>ADL says that an ADL’s international affairs team recently visited six European capitals including Paris, Berlin, Stockholm, Brussels, Budapest, and Rome to meet with Jewish community leaders and government officials to discuss concerns about rising anti-Semitism on the continent. They shared ADL’s best practices for confronting anti-Semitism, as well as information and data on rising anti-Semitic incidents in the United States.</p> <p>Here’s ADL’s assessment of the current situation in nine European countries:</p> <p>France</p> <p>The French Jewish community of almost 500,000 lives in a state of constant insecurity, despite their government’s good-faith efforts to address anti-Semitic violence. The recent murder of Mireille Knoll, an 85 year-old Holocaust survivor, was the 11th anti-Semitic murder in France over the past twelve years, a stark contrast to the absence of such crimes in the prior three decades. Frequent assaults on Jews – on average, twice per week – also drive their sense of insecurity. In early February, ADL met in Paris with officials in the prime minister’s office, responsible for coordinating the government’s efforts against anti-Semitism and racism, to discuss ADL’s work on cyberhate, a problem the French government has identified as a major factor in radicalization. We also met with the head of the Jewish community’s security group to discuss extremism in France and offered our assistance of ADL experts.</p> <p>Germany</p> <p>German Jews are worried about anti-Semitism among the new migrant and refugee population, many from Syria and Iraq, and by the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, which now holds 13 percent of the parliament and is the third largest party. In March, ADL met in Berlin with organizations that monitor and combat anti-Semitism in Muslim communities and on the far-right and with senior government officials whose work directly impacts the Jewish community and integration of new immigrants. Recent incidents include the anti-Semitic bullying of Jewish schoolgirl in Berlin by her Muslim classmates.</p>

Poland

In our public statements and private conversations with Polish officials, ADL has condemned the outbreak of anti-Semitic rhetoric on Poland, following the adoption of a libel law on Polish involvement in the Holocaust. The Polish Jewish community took the extraordinary step on 19 February to issue an open letter, saying “Polish Jews do not feel safe in Poland” due to “the current wave of anti-Semitism [which] arose in response to” the libel law.

Sweden

Synagogues were targeted after President Trump announced U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, with Molotov cocktails thrown at the Gothenburg synagogue and an anti-Semitic demonstration held in front of the Malmo synagogue. Together with Swedish Jewish community representatives, ADL met with the Swedish Police Authority in February to discuss training their officers about extremism.

U.K.

For the first time in years, British Jewish leaders felt compelled to call a public demonstration to protest the constant stream of anti-Semitic incidents in the Labor Party and the failure of its leader, Jeremy Corbyn, to address anti-Semitism seriously. Their “Enough is Enough” event was widely covered in British media, and jump-started a serious public conversation about the problem.

Hungary

The Hungarian Jewish community of almost 100,000 has experienced only a few anti-Semitic assaults in recent years, but is concerned about the political atmosphere. Over the past months, leading up to the 8 April election, political campaigns have featured the Jewish financier George Soros as an enemy of the state, intent on flooding Hungary with Muslim immigrants. While the billboards and posters do not feature overt anti-Semitic images, Jewish community leaders worry that the campaign appeals to anti-Semitic sentiment in the Hungarian public. Hungary scored poorly in ADL’s Global 100 survey of anti-Semitic attitudes with a score of 41 percent, compared to 9 percent in the United States and 25 percent on average in the European Union. In March, ADL met Jewish community leaders, extremism researchers, and U.S. Embassy officials. ADL made a direct request to a senior official in the prime minister’s office to cease campaigns that feature George Soros.

Iceland and Denmark

The right to circumcise Jewish newborn boys is under threat in Iceland and Denmark. While Iceland is home to just a hundred or so Jews, ADL is deeply concerned that a circumcision ban there could set a precedent in Europe, especially for Denmark, home to 6,000 Jews, where a public petition in parliament is gaining signatures and public support for a ban is around 80 percent. ADL submitted a strong letter to the Icelandic Parliament, warning that a ban would not only infringe on religious freedom, but also make Iceland a darling of neo-Nazis and other anti-Semitic bigots, who would see that decision as a step to making Iceland judenrein, free of Jews.

Russia

Following the tragic fire at a shopping mall in Siberia that killed 64 people on 25 March, anti-Semitic posts began to appear on Russian social media, suggesting that Jews were responsible and murdered the victims to get blood for Passover matzah, a classic blood libel. Using our social media search capabilities, ADL says it was able to assess the prevalence of these anti-Semitic posts across multiple platforms and reassure Russian Jewish leaders of the limited presence on Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and VK (a popular Russian platform similar to Facebook). This came on the heels of remarks by President Vladimir Putin suggesting that Jews and other minorities may have been behind the meddling in the 2016 U.S. elections.

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HEADLINE 04/02 Panel: change deadly force inquests

SOURCE <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/history-of-transparency-king-county-panel->

	<u>recommends-overhaul-of-police-deadly-force-inquests/</u>
GIST	<p>A King County committee is calling for significant changes in the way inquests into the police use of deadly force are conducted, including giving jurors the option of suggesting ways to prevent fatal confrontations.</p> <p>In an 89-page report, the six-member review committee recommended that county judges and prosecutors no longer oversee inquests and that they be replaced with hearing examiners and staff attorneys.</p> <p>Jurors also should be given the opportunity to hear summary statements from various attorneys, including those representing the families of those killed by police. The move would add an element of debate to a narrow process that has been seen by some as biased toward law enforcement.</p> <p>Inquests should continue to focus on fact-finding, but with a clear message that jurors should not affix fault on police or the person killed — a definition that has been somewhat lost in the process as people look for a verdict.</p> <p>But inquests should not serve as a “passive consumer” of the underlying investigation into the death, but as “robust, probing and public review mechanism,” the committee said in a report submitted to King County Executive Dow Constantine over the weekend.</p> <p>Constantine, who formed the committee in December to examine how the county conducts inquests into shooting deaths and other fatalities at the hands of police, was to unveil the panel’s key proposals during his state of the county speech Monday morning. But the speech was canceled when demonstrators protesting construction of a new county youth jail disrupted the event.</p> <p>Constantine plans to review the report and seek public comment before making any changes to the inquest process.</p> <p>Declaring that families, law enforcement and the community need to know the facts, Constantine said he will craft a directive that provides the “greatest opportunity to understand what happened in these tragic circumstances, and help ensure future inquests — and the incidents that make them necessary — are as rare as we can possibly make them.”</p> <p>In January, several pending inquests were temporarily halted — and no new inquests were to be ordered — until the review committee completed its work.</p> <p>And, in the same month, the Metropolitan King County Council dealt with one issue when it unanimously adopted legislation to provide publicly funded legal representation during inquest proceedings to families of those killed — something police officers have been routinely provided.</p> <p>In a statement responding to the report, Corey Guilmette, an attorney at the Public Defender Association, said, “The Inquest Review Committee has rightfully highlighted the widespread community concern that the current inquest process is one sided in favor of law enforcement, and too narrow in scope to answer the most important community questions in the aftermath of police killings.”</p> <p>He commended the committee for its hard work, saying it incorporated many key reforms identified by community leaders that will “create a fairer and more meaningful inquest process.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Instagram effect? Area hikers doubled
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/instagram-effect-number-of-seattle-area-hikers-has-doubled-in-less-than-10-years-data-show/
GIST	Let me tell you about my most recent hiking adventure.

It was a sunny, warm Sunday in late summer, and my friends and I decided to hit Snow Lake, a popular spot less than an hour's drive from Seattle. We probably left a little later in the morning than we should have, and trying to find parking was not unlike Capitol Hill on a Saturday night. The trail was jampacked, a steady stream of people and dogs all the way up and all the way down — not quite the escape from crowded city life we'd hoped for.

I suspect a lot of folks around here can relate.

More than 940,000 adults who live in the Seattle area say they've been hiking in the past 12 months — double the number from 2008, according to survey data from market-research firm Nielsen.

Part of the reason there are so many more hikers here is the same reason that traffic is so much worse these days — there's just a lot more people living here. But that's not the whole story.

In fact, the increase in the number of hikers is seven times greater than our population growth over the past decade.

Hiking has always been popular in Seattle, for obvious reasons. But right now, hiking is having its moment.

In 2008, less than a quarter of local adults said they hiked, according to Nielsen. Last year, it was 41 percent.

That ranks Seattle third for hiking among the 75 largest metro areas included in the survey. Salt Lake City is No. 1, with 43 percent of adults saying they hike. Portland comes in second, by just a fraction ahead of Seattle.

The place where hiking is least popular? Miami, by a fairly wide margin. It's not that you can't hike in Florida, which has more than 5,000 miles of trails. But if you've ever wondered how many people would choose to trek through the Everglades, fighting off mosquitoes, rather than hang out at the beach — well, here's your answer: 4 percent. That's how many Miami adults have been on a hike in the past 12 months.

The data show that hiking has grown in popularity pretty much everywhere over the past decade — even in Miami, a bit — but the increase here in Seattle has easily outpaced the national average.

“Any hike within an hour, an hour and a half of Seattle has seen significant increase,” said Kindra Ramos, director of communications and outreach for the Washington Trails Association (WTA). “Folks are looking (for hikes) in that 3- to 6-mile range. That's a lot of what's off the I-90 corridor.”

Ramos says there's been a surge in visitors to the WTA's website, and in the number of folks leaving trip reports, which are kind of like Yelp reviews for hikes.

What's driving the increase?

For the most part, millennials.

According to Nielsen, there's been a significant shift in the age demographics of hikers in the U.S. In 2008, adults age 35-49 had the highest rate of participation in the activity. Not anymore. Nationally, interest in hiking has doubled among those 18-34, surging from a participation rate of 15 percent in 2008 to 30 percent last year. This change has shaved more than three years off the median age of the American hiker (it's now 38).

It seems likely that Seattle's hiking boom is related to the influx of young newcomers to this area — and well over half of millennial-age residents here say they've been hiking in the past 12 months, according to the data.

Some people point to the 2012 best-selling memoir “Wild” by Cheryl Strayed (and the subsequent movie), about the author’s cathartic, 1,100-mile trek on the Pacific Crest Trail, as sparking a new interest in hiking among young people.

And then there’s the Instagram effect.

Maybe you felt a twinge of jealousy seeing your friends’ awesome hiking photos on social media. The next thing you know, you’re on the mountain, taking your own awesome photos — and, naturally, sharing them on social media.

Nielsen data show that people who hike are 43 percent more likely than average to have used Instagram in the past 30 days.

Ramos thinks it’s because folks need that outdoors “fix” now more than ever.

“As our lives get busier and busier, and more and more technology-reliant,” she said, “the call of the mountains is even stronger.”

While the influx of new hikers presents some challenges in terms of overcrowding and trail maintenance, Ramos believes the positives outweigh the negatives.

“There are places where we need to be thoughtful, and where the crowds do have an impact. But are there too many people out hiking?” she said.

“NO. I think it’s an opportunity — an opportunity to inspire more people to become advocates for these places.”

Ramos points out that hiking’s surge in popularity also represents an economic opportunity. The outdoor-recreation industry is booming across the country, and particularly so in Washington.

“And it’s a chance to invest in local communities,” she said. “Those gateway communities — Darrington, Winthrop, Trout Lake — those places where people stop before they start their next adventure.”

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HEADLINE	04/02 Russia consulate in Seattle closes
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/u-s-state-department-officials-stand-guard-outside-closed-russian-consulate-in-seattle/
GIST	<p>The mood on the 25th floor of One Union Square was subdued compared to the flurry of activity that enveloped the downtown Seattle office last week.</p> <p>Monday was the deadline for the Russian Consulate to close in Seattle. Security officers from the U.S. State Department stood guard outside the office suite, which was the last Russian Consulate on the West Coast. A sign with orange writing behind officers, in the entry of the consulate, read “Closed.”</p> <p>A State Department spokesperson said personnel accredited to the Seattle consulate, including the Consul General, have to transfer to another U.S. mission or leave the country and that the office space and residence can no longer be used. “The Russian government will no longer be able to use the properties for diplomatic consular purposes. We will follow our standard procedures and fulfill our responsibilities appropriately,” the spokesman said.</p> <p>Last Thursday, the unmistakable sound of moving, packing tape being stretched across boxes, emanated from behind the window where visitors to the consulate were greeted. A man working at the consulate on Thursday told a reporter, “Sorry sir. There is nothing I can say. Just regular moving of boxes.”</p>

	<p>The consulate and the consulate residence in Madison Park were ordered closed by the Trump administration in retaliation for Russia's alleged use of a nerve agent to poison a former Russian intelligence agent and his daughter in Britain. The United States expelled 60 Russian diplomats and closed Russia's Seattle operation, which the White House identified as an outpost for intelligence agents.</p> <p>Russia responded by closing the U.S. Consulate in St. Petersburg and expelling 60 U.S. diplomats.</p> <p>A former special agent in charge of the FBI Seattle office told The Seattle Times that consulates can be used to run covert activities and that the Seattle area has some tempting targets, such as Naval Base Kitsap with its fleet of Trident submarines and companies like Boeing and Microsoft.</p> <p>On Thursday, packed boxes were being ferried down from the 25th floor to the loading dock and into a mid-sized moving van. On Monday, the loading dock was occupied by delivery trucks. Other than the security officers standing guard, there is little trace left of the Russians. The only external remnant of the consulate was the sign designating reserved street parking on Sixth Avenue for consulate vehicles. Last week the spot was occupied by a black van with black tinted windows and consulate plates.</p> <p>The parking space was empty Monday.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 UN: Papua New Guinea still needs aid
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/04/02/UN-ships-food-to-Papua-New-Guinea-says-270K-still-need-aid-after-quake/2271522687895/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=lh&utm_medium=9
GIST	<p>April 2 (UPI) -- More than one month after a 7.5-magnitude earthquake killed more than 160 people in Papua New Guinea, the World Food Program said some 270,000 people still require humanitarian assistance.</p> <p>The U.N. agency said Monday it airlifted 80 metric tons of nutrient-dense biscuits to the Pacific island -- enough to feed about 60,000 people.</p> <p>Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, vice president and prime minister of the United Arab Emirates, provided the plane for the food delivery, WFP said.</p> <p>"More than 60 percent of [U.N. Humanitarian Response Depot] transports originate from Dubai. This makes Dubai WFP's largest humanitarian hub in the world, thanks to the excellent logistical facilities and ongoing Government support," said Stefano Peveri, head of UNHRD in Dubai.</p> <p>Before the earthquake hit February 26, Papua New Guinea was already experiencing food scarcity. About 60,000 people were "severely food insecure" before the temblor, the WFP said.</p> <p>"The earthquake and its aftershocks have further impacted people in the most vulnerable areas of the country, destroying root crops and vegetable gardens; the primary food sources in the affected area," a release from the agency said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 NYC heaviest April snowfall in 36yrs
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2018/04/02/NYC-sees-heaviest-April-snowfall-in-36-years/1221522693337/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=1
GIST	<p>April 2 (UPI) -- New York City woke up Monday morning to its largest April snowfall since 1982, accumulating more than half a foot in some areas, meteorologists said.</p>

Parts of the Bronx and Grammercy Park in Manhattan saw more than 6 inches of snow as of late morning Monday. The highest snowfall totals of more than 7 inches were in New York's Nassau and Westchester counties, New Jersey's Essex and Bergen counties, and Connecticut's Fairfield and New Haven counties, the National Weather Service said.

The snowfall didn't quite measure up to the accumulations seen during the region's four nor'easter storms this winter, but the totals were unusual for the month of April. The last time New York City had this much snow in April was in 1982, when there was about 10 inches of accumulation.

The rare April snowfall meant the New York Yankees had to postpone the team's opening home game against the Tampa Bay Rays. The league rescheduled the game for Tuesday afternoon, when there was expected to be a 90 percent chance of rain with a low of 40 degrees and high of 42 degrees.

FlightAware flight tracking website said flights into and out of LaGuardia, Newark and John F. Kennedy airports had the highest percent of cancelations and delays Monday. Accumulatively, about 175 flights were canceled and nearly 600 were delayed as of 4:15 p.m.

JFK International Airport tweeted that most delays were 15 minutes or less as of 1:30 p.m.

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HEADLINE	04/02 Fla. students question new security measures
SOURCE	http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/parkland/florida-school-shooting/fl-florida-school-shooting-clear-backpacks-20180330-story.html
GIST	<p>Marjory Stoneman Douglas High created a new environment Monday, with clear backpacks, bag searches, I.D. lanyards, police officers at every entrance and a student body skeptical that any of it will make them safer.</p> <p>District officials say Stoneman Douglas, the site of a Feb. 14 shooting that killed 17, is serving as a pilot for possible district-wide security changes. Some schools already have more cops on campus, and dozens are now armed with AR-15 rifles. The district says it's expediting plans to provide fencing and gates at about 100 schools.</p> <p>The district limited the number of places students could enter Stoneman Douglas in the morning to four, with guards stationed at each spot. Metal-detecting wands weren't being used Monday but are being considered, officials said.</p> <p>"This is still being explored by the district. No decision or date has been set for the use of metal-detection wands," district spokeswoman Cathleen Brennan said.</p> <p>The new precautions didn't prevent the school from receiving an emailed bomb threat Monday, which the Broward Sheriff's Office determined to be unfounded.</p> <p>"The BSO bomb squad responded and swept the school with negative results," Sheriff's Office spokeswoman Keyla Concepcion said. "Additional deputies were placed on campus as a precaution. The investigation is ongoing."</p> <p>The school district said the students were not evacuated.</p> <p>On Monday, the first day back from Spring Break, administrators handed out clear backpacks — the only ones allowed at the school for the time being, officials say. The school confiscated non-clear backpacks, returning them to students at the end of the day. Band instruments and sports equipment were left with teachers and coaches.</p> <p>Students were also given lanyards to hold photo identification cards, which they'll be required to wear at</p>

all times.

Are clear backpacks at Stoneman Douglas an effective deterrent? Are they a privacy issue? Some students compared their school to an airport, others to a prison. Few voiced support for the changes.

“Do you want me to take my shoes off when I walk into school as well?” tweeted Carly Novell, a senior at the school and editor of the Eagle Eye student newspaper.

Ariana Lopez, a junior at the school tweeted, “First member of my family to be in prison — oh wait. I'm in school, sorry, can't tell the difference without my glasses.”

On Monday morning, many students entered the campus carrying plastic grocery bags containing their books and other belongings. Students reported a number of bag searches by school officials.

“Got my brown paper lunch bag checked today while walking to class. Lady saw my sandwich and figured it wasn't a threat,” tweeted Christy Ma, an Eagle Eye editor.

No backpacks

Returning to school after spring break on Monday, April 2, 2018, students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School carry their items in plastic bags instead of traditional backpacks. (Joe Cavaretta/Sun Sentinel) The police presence was heavy Monday and will remain so at least until the end of the school year, officials say. Gov. Rick Scott is providing up to eight Florida Highway Patrol officers to guard the school, and extra Broward Sheriff's deputies and district police officers are also stationed there.

The backpacks were donated by Walmart and the Broward Education Foundation. Many students posted photos of them on Twitter, along with sarcastic comments.

One student complained about the smell of her bag, comparing it to “the inflatable pool toys when they're immediate taken out of the box.” Another said the bags are bound to get mixed up when everyone has the same one.

Student activist Jaelyn Corin accessorized her bag with buttons that said, “Vote,” “March for Our Lives,” and “MSDStrong.”

“They should've been given to a school that actually needs the supplies,” she tweeted. “But since we're stuck with them, I decided to make the most out of the situation & decorate!”

Delaney Tarr, who has been a leader in the student movement to fight for tighter gun laws, tweeted, “Starting off the last quarter of senior year right, with a good ol' violation of privacy!”

Kyrah Simon, a 17-year-old junior, questioned the benefits of the clear backpacks.

“I think it's the illusion of security, and it's not going to accomplish anything, except make students feel like their privacy is being violated,” Simon told the South Florida Sun Sentinel Monday.

Holden Kasky, 16, a ninth-grader with autism and the brother of student activist Cameron Kasky, hand-wrote a letter to Superintendent Robert Runcie asking the district to reconsider the backpack rule. He said it makes his fellow students uncomfortable, particularly girls who may carry feminine products.

“I don't want people to feel uncomfortable or judged,” he wrote in the letter his father Jeff posted on Twitter. “If you really want to bring a weapon to school, you'll [still] be able to hide it.”

Runcie responded to Holden, “we will continue to re-evaluate and make changes based on experience and feedback from you and other students.”

Runcie told the Sun Sentinel the clear backpacks are “an initial measure, not a permanent one.”

	<p>He said the district may allow other backpacks after the district sees how well the wands work. The district is preparing a security assessment of all schools as part of a grant application to receive state dollars, he said.</p> <p>Many students and parents have been on edge in the past few weeks.</p> <p>In addition to the shooting, there have been a string of other incidents at the school, including a student making a threat on social media, two students being arrested for bringing knives to school and the brother of killer Nikolas Cruz being arrested for trespassing on the campus.</p> <p>The new policies are an attempt to balance convenience and privacy with safety and security, Stoneman Douglas Principal Ty Thompson wrote in a weekend memo to parents. He said these policies may be facing some adjustment in the coming weeks.</p> <p>“It is very difficult to balance both convenience/privacy with safety/security; if there is more of one, the other often suffers, but I will do my best to balance the two,” he wrote.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 DOJ sues Calif. over sales federal land
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-sues-california-over-sales-of-u-s-lands/
GIST	<p>The Justice Department is suing California over its attempt to block the sale of federal lands within the state's borders, CBS News' Paula Reid reports. Fearing that President Trump and the GOP-majority Congress would move to sell off federal lands, California enacted a law in October seeking to penalize anyone who attempts to transfer federal lands.</p> <p>The California law gives the state the first right to buy federal lands, to arrange for a specific buyer, as well as the ability to block the sale, donation or exchange of federal lands by the federal government or to any other person or entity. The Justice Department is calling this another "extreme" law passed by California and argues the U.S. Constitution empowers the federal government to determine when lands are sold.</p> <p>The federal government owns about 640 million acres of land in the U.S. (28 percent of all land). Most of those acres are in the western U.S. The federal government owns around 46 percent of the land in California.</p> <p>The U.S. government says California's law, which took effect Jan. 1, is delaying land sales — even for projects that have been in the works for years — and is depressing their value. The auction of 1.7 acres owned by the U.S. Postal Service was suspended when nobody bid, and a developer looking to purchase property at the now-closed Naval Air Station Alameda has requested a delay, the lawsuit contends.</p> <p>The lawsuit also cites the sale of Army property east of San Francisco, which the state declined to purchase. The State Lands Commission has requested information about a planned property sale in Santa Barbara County to decide whether to buy first, according to the lawsuit.</p> <p>California Democrats welcomed the latest fight and vowed to defend the law.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 China ready for proportionate response
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trade-china-tariffs-response/china-ready-for-proportionate-response-to-u-s-tariffs-envoy-idUSKCN1HA0DM
GIST	BEIJING (Reuters) - China will take counter-measures of the “same proportion” and scale if the United

States imposes further tariffs on Chinese goods, China's ambassador to Washington said, amid growing fears of an impending trade war.

Cui Tiankai made the comments ahead of what is expected to be the announcement this week of U.S. tariffs on \$50 billion to \$60 billion in Chinese imports following an investigation under Section 301 of the 1974 U.S. Trade Act.

"If they do, we will certainly take countermeasures of the same proportion, and the same scale, same intensity," Cui said in an interview posted on the website of China Global Television Network (CGTN) and broadcast on state television on Tuesday.

The U.S. tariffs are expected to target products benefiting from Beijing's "Made in China 2025" industrial development program, although it may be more than two months before the import curbs take effect, U.S. officials have said.

China on Sunday announced tariffs on \$3 billion in imports of U.S. food and other goods in response to U.S. tariffs on imports of aluminum and steel, a skirmish that investors fear is a prelude to a broader trade war.

The Section 301 investigation initiated by U.S. President Donald Trump is focused on accusations of theft of intellectual property and forced technology transfer by China, charges Beijing denies.

Cui said China has been bolstering its protection of intellectual property rights.

"China has been strengthening its efforts and strengthening our legal system on this particular issue, and we are making good progress," he said.

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HEADLINE	04/01 Health officials alarm on gabapentin
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/americas-heroin-epidemic/health-officials-are-sounding-alarm-drug-gabapentin-it-s-not-n861111
GIST	<p>It's fast becoming the go-to drug for addicts in search of a stronger high — and it is not even an opioid.</p> <p>Gabapentin, a purportedly nonaddictive painkiller primarily used to treat shingles and control seizures, has landed on the radar of beleaguered health officials and law enforcement already battling the deadly opioid epidemic that has ripped through the Rust Belt and claimed thousands of lives across the country.</p> <p>Kentucky last year became the first state to classify gabapentin as a controlled substance after the drug showed up in a third of the state's fatal overdoses in 2016, as The Louisville Courier Journal first reported.</p> <p>And police in Ohio have reported a dramatic rise in the abuse of gabapentin, better known by brand names like Neurontin, Gralise or Horizant. There have already been reports of 300 milligram pills being sold on the street for as little as 75 cents apiece in the college town of Athens, Ohio.</p> <p>"We started hearing from pharmacists about people trying to get early refills," Van Ingram, executive director of the Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy, told NBC News. "That is usually a sign that something is being abused. "</p> <p>So Kentucky lawmakers classified gabapentin as a Schedule 5 drug, meaning that every time it is sold it will be "reported to our prescription monitoring program," Ingram said. "We'll be looking at that data."</p> <p>What makes Kentucky's move all the more unusual is that gabapentin has the seal of approval from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a nonopioid treatment for chronic pain. In fact, it has been seen as a safe alternative to addictive opioid painkillers.</p>

“I don’t want to declare war on gabapentin,” said Ingram. “I think it’s a good drug. But when it’s being used in conjunction with other drugs or alcohol there may be a problem.”

That’s because gabapentin is, in the parlance of the drug abuse experts, a “potentiate.” That means it can make already dangerous drugs like fentanyl or heroin even more lethal.

“This means that when the drugs interact in the human body, they each increase the effects caused by the other drug,” the informational website Addict Help reported. “For alcohol, this means that the alcoholic high is stronger and kicks in with less alcohol. It also means, for both drugs, that unfortunate side effects common with these drugs are equally heightened.”

So is the danger. A Canadian study published last year, which tracked patients in Ontario from August 1997 to December 2013 who had been prescribed both opioids and gabapentin for pain, found a “substantial increase in the risk of opioid-related death.”

“Clinicians should consider carefully whether to continue prescribing this combination of products and, when the combination is deemed necessary, should closely monitor their patients and adjust opioid dose accordingly,” the researchers concluded.

How did gabapentin become such the problem? The same way opioids did — through over-prescription, said Dr. James Patrick Murphy, a pain specialist based in Louisville.

“It got prescribed so much that everybody taking an opioid for chronic pain was also taking gabapentin,” said Murphy. “People have a tendency to want to abuse anything that is mind-altering and a lot of time it is what is readily available to them.”

The fact is gabapentin “is not really that strong of a drug and relatively safe,” Murphy said. It is also a cousin to the nongeneric pain medications like Lyrica, sales of which have reportedly tripled in recent years.

“But some people will take a valium with opioids and some people will take a handful of gabapentin,” Murphy said. “The sad thing for patients who do well on gabapentin is that this will make physicians less likely to prescribe gabapentin.”

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HEADLINE	04/02 Airplanes collide at Indiana airport
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/airplanes-collide-indiana-airport-killing-two-n862251
GIST	<p>Two firefighters were killed Monday when their single-engine airplane collided with a jet on an airport runway in Marion, Indiana, officials said.</p> <p>The firefighters were identified as Kyle Hibst and David Wittkamper of Pipe Creek Township Fire Department, north of Indianapolis, according to a statement from Madison County Emergency Management and Homeland Security.</p> <p>Jim McKinney, president of the Marion Municipal Airport Board, said the firefighters' Cessna 150 split in half after the collision, ejecting one of the men. He died on impact, according to a doctor who witnessed the collision, McKinney said.</p> <p>McKinney said the Cessna 150, which was taking off, collided with the larger plane, a Cessna 525 CitationJet which was landing at Marion Municipal Airport, between Indianapolis and Fort Wayne. He said the pilot of the Cessna 150 either did not see the jet or thought that it had cleared the runway and that it was safe to take off.</p>

	In a statement, the Federal Aviation Administration, or FAA, said the smaller plane struck the tail of the jet — which was carrying five people — shortly after 5 p.m. The agency said that the airport does not have an air traffic control tower and that pilots are expected to announce their intentions over radio.
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HEADLINE	04/02 Wall St. shares take a plunge
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/finance/markets/stocks-dow-wall-street/2018/04/02/id/852023/
GIST	<p>Wall Street shares plunged on Monday as investors fled technology stocks amid resurgent trade war worries, with key indexes trading below their 200-day moving averages and the S&P 500 closing below that pivotal technical level for the first time since Britain's vote to leave the European Union in June 2016.</p> <p>The first trading day of the second quarter began with a broad selloff concentrated in the technology and consumer discretionary sectors, as losses by Amazon.com, Tesla and Microsoft, among others, took center stage from retaliatory trade measures China unveiled on Sunday.</p> <p>"It's more complicated than just a tech selloff. What's hurting everything is that the S&P went through its 200-day moving average," said Brian Battle, director of trading at Performance Trust Capital Partners in Chicago. "That attracts momentum sellers and they don't care what the fundamentals are."</p> <p>The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 458.92 points, or 1.9 percent, to 23,644.19 after dipping below its 200-day moving average. The S&P 500 fell 58.99 points, or 2.23 percent, to 2,581.88 and the Nasdaq Composite dropped 193.33 points, or 2.74 percent, to 6,870.12.</p> <p>Amazon.com was the biggest drag on the S&P 500, down 5.2 percent, as President Donald Trump continued his twitter attacks on the online retailer.</p> <p>All 11 major sectors of the S&P 500 closed lower, with the biggest losses seen by the consumer discretionary and technology indexes, which were down 2.8 percent and 2.5 percent, respectively.</p> <p>The tech-heavy Nasdaq was dragged lower by Microsoft , Intel, Apple Inc, Facebook and Alphabet.</p> <p>Shares of Tesla Inc ended the day down 5.1 percent after the company was reported to be making 2,000 Model 3s per week, missing its 2,500 target.</p> <p>The electric automaker's losses extend last week's near 14-percent decline as investigations of a fatal California crash and a Moody's credit downgrade weighed on the stock.</p> <p>Health insurer Humana Inc's shares closed up 4.4 percent on news it was in talks with Walmart to expand their partnership or possibly be acquired by the retailer . Walmart stock fell 3.8 percent.</p> <p>U.S. Treasury yields fell to two-month lows as investors fled sliding stocks for safety ahead of Friday's closely watched jobs report.</p> <p>Declining issues outnumbered advancing ones on the NYSE by a 4.17-to-1 ratio; on Nasdaq, a 4.14-to-1 ratio favored decliners.</p> <p>Volume on U.S. exchanges was 7.71 billion shares, compared to the 7.29 billion average over the last 20 trading days.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Saudi crown prince 'recognizes' Israel
SOURCE	http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-saudi-israel-20180402-story.html

GIST

Saudi Arabia's young crown prince said in an interview published Monday that Israelis, alongside Palestinians, "have the right to have their own land," seemingly opening the door to the possibility of an eventual normalization of ties with Israel.

Mohammed bin Salman, the 32-year-old heir to the Saudi throne, told the Atlantic magazine that any Mideast peace agreement would need to address the fate of Islam's third-holiest site, which is located in Jerusalem, and ensure "the rights of the Palestinian people." Even so, his comments appeared to mark a break with the public posture adopted by most Arab leaders.

Two Arab countries, Jordan and Egypt, have peace treaties with Israel, but most Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, do not recognize Israel. However, there have been recent signs of a warming between Israel and the conservative kingdom, whose aging monarch, King Salman, has already handed many leadership responsibilities over to the crown prince.

The Trump administration has pinned hopes on Saudi Arabia as a key interlocutor in any Mideast peace accord. Mohammed is currently on a U.S. visit that's focused on attracting investment and presenting himself as a reformist who has pushed for social changes such as granting Saudi women the right to drive.

The young crown prince is close to President Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and a bitter Saudi rivalry with Iran's government dovetails neatly with Trump's own hawkish views on Tehran.

Critics are mistrustful of Mohammed, however, painting a recent anti-corruption drive by the crown prince as a thinly veiled power grab meant to sideline royal rivals and force wealthy business leaders to sign over billions of dollars in assets.

In the Atlantic interview, Mohammed was asked whether he believed that the Jewish people had the right to a nation-state in at least part of their ancestral homeland.

"I believe the Palestinians and the Israelis have the right to have their own land," he replied. "But we have to have a peace agreement to assure the stability for everyone and to have normal relations."

Referring to the contested plateau in Jerusalem's Old City revered by Jews as the Temple Mount and by Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary, the crown prince said Saudi Arabia had "religious concerns about the fate of the holy mosque in Jerusalem and the rights of the Palestinian people."

But he added, "We don't have any objection against any other people."

Although Trump has said he regards Mideast peace as "the ultimate deal," the rift between Israel and the Palestinians has widened during his tenure to date. Palestinians were infuriated by Trump's declaration that the United States recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital — seemingly dismissing a Palestinian claim to part of the city as the capital of their future state.

Saudi Arabia was among the many states across the Muslim world that denounced the Trump administration's stance on the holy city.

Mohammed, in the interview, suggested that shared economic interests might be a powerful driver of normalization efforts with Israel.

"Israel is a big economy compared to their size, and it's a growing economy," he said. "Of course there are a lot of interests we share with Israel, and if there is peace, there would be a lot of interest between Israel and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and countries like Egypt and Jordan."

Saudi Arabia's position, like most other Arab states, has long been that there can be no ties with Israel until it cedes territory captured in the 1967 Middle East war to make way for a Palestinian state.

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HEADLINE	04/02 DOJ metrics on immigration judges
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/politics/us-immigration-judges/2018/04/02/id/852159/
GIST	<p>The Trump administration has introduced production quotas for immigration judges in an effort to reduce enormous court backlogs, drawing criticism from some that decisions may be unfairly rushed.</p> <p>The Justice Department's Executive Office for Immigration Review said judges must complete 700 cases a year to earn a satisfactory grade. The standards, which take effect Oct. 1, include six other measures indicating how much time judges should spend on different types of cases and court motions.</p> <p>The move, while significant, didn't come as a surprise. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who oversees immigration courts, has sought major changes to unclog the courts as a sharp increase in deportation arrests under President Donald Trump has pushed the court backlog above 650,000 cases. In December, Sessions wrote judges that performance measures would aid in "the efficient and timely completion of cases and motions" while maintaining fairness.</p> <p>James McHenry, director of the Executive Office for Immigration Review, used similar language in an email Friday that details the new measures for the department's approximately 350 immigration judges.</p> <p>"Using metrics to evaluate performance is neither novel nor unique to (the Executive Office for Immigration Review)," McHenry wrote. "The purpose of implementing these metrics is to encourage efficient and effective case management while preserving immigration judge discretion and due process."</p> <p>The Associated Press obtained a copy of McHenry's memo and performance plan, whose contents were first reported by The Wall Street Journal.</p> <p>The measures are highly specific. A judge who completes more than 560 cases a year but fewer than 700 "needs improvement." Deciding fewer than 560 cases a year is deemed unsatisfactory.</p> <p>The Justice Department said Monday that judges complete an average of 678 cases a year.</p> <p>Under one benchmark, judges must rule the same day on every plea by asylum seekers to pass an initial threshold of establishing "credible" or "reasonable" fear to earn a satisfactory mark, unless the Homeland Security Department is responsible for them failing to show. Anything less than 80 percent is considered unsatisfactory.</p> <p>The National Immigration Judges Association, which represents the judges in collective bargaining agreements, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>Laura Lynch, senior policy counsel for the American Immigration Lawyers Association, said immigration attorneys were deeply concerned that cases will be "rushed through" to meet arbitrary measures.</p> <p>"Subjecting judges to numerical goals undermines one of the core principles of our judicial system, which is really a fair day in court," she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Migrant caravan takes break in Mexico
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/migrant-caravan-raising-concerns-us-takes-break-mexico-54193526
GIST	<p>A big caravan of Central American migrants that has stirred up concerns in the U.S., including drawing tweets from President Donald Trump, has halted its march for a rest at a sports field in southern Mexico.</p> <p>The U.S. leader warned about "caravans" of migrants heading to the U.S., and others questioned whether the caravan of approximately 1,100 people was moving across Mexico toward its northern border with the</p>

intent of crossing into the United States.

On Monday, the mass of mostly Hondurans that had been walking along roadsides and train tracks stopped in Oaxaca state at the field, where they are getting advice on filing for transit or humanitarian visas in Mexico. Many took refuge from the hot afternoon sun by resting in the stands under the awning. As night fell, the migrants, many with children, lit fires to cook their meager rations.

A group of a couple hundred men did break off from the march Sunday, hopping a freight train north probably with hopes of trying to enter the U.S. But the rest seemed unlikely to move again until Wednesday or Thursday, and they probably would take buses to the last scheduled stop for the caravan, a migrant rights symposium in central Puebla state.

Irineo Mujica, director of Pueblo Sin Fronteras, the activist group behind the annual symbolic event designed to draw attention to the plight of migrants, said the caravan would continue only to Puebla southeast of Mexico City, "but not in a massive way."

After the symposium, some migrants might go to Mexico's capital, where it is easier to make an asylum claim. Mujica said about 300 to 400 say they have relatives living in Mexico and so may consider staying here at least temporarily.

There were reports Mexican officials were seeking to end the caravan, but it was for all intents and purposes over anyway. The participants were never equipped to march en masse to the U.S. border or anywhere near it.

The "Stations of the Cross" caravans have been held annually in southern Mexico for about 10 years. They began as short processions of migrants, some dressed in biblical garb and carrying crosses, as an Easter-season protest against the kidnappings, extortion, beatings and killings suffered by many Central American migrants as they cross Mexico.

The organized portions of the caravans usually have not gone much farther north than the Gulf coast state of Veracruz, although some participants have then gone off by bus or truck to the U.S. border, moving as individuals or in small groups.

This year's event seems to have gotten more notice in the U.S., and Trump has sent some angry tweets that raised hackles in Mexico.

"Mexico is doing very little, if not NOTHING, at stopping people from flowing into Mexico through their Southern Border, and then into the U.S. They laugh at our dumb immigration laws. They must stop the big drug and people flows, or I will stop their cash cow, NAFTA. NEED WALL!" Trump wrote in one. "With all of the money they make from the U.S., hopefully they will stop people from coming through their country and into ours."

Mexico's interior secretary, Alfonso Navarrete Prida, rejected such pressure.

"We will act with complete sovereignty in enforcing our laws," he said Monday. "Of course we will act ... to enforce our immigration laws, with no pressure whatsoever from any country whatsoever."

In a statement late Monday, Mexico's government said about 400 participants in the caravan had already been sent back to their home countries. "Under no circumstances does the Mexican government promote irregular migration," the Interior Ministry statement said.

But it added that Mexico considers the annual caravans to be "a public demonstration that seeks to call attention to the migration phenomenon and the importance of respecting the rights of Central Americans." The U.S. government has been kept fully informed of the situation, it said.

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HEADLINE	04/03 India's new rule to control 'fake news'
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/india-government-issues-sweeping-rule-control-fake-news-54195750?
GIST	<p>India's government has issued a sweeping new order allowing reporters' press credentials to be suspended simply for an accusation of spreading "fake news."</p> <p>The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting said in a statement late Monday that the accreditation of any journalist who "created and/or propagated the fake news" would be suspended until an inquiry is completed.</p> <p>The statement, which doesn't define fake news or say who can make a complaint, says anyone found to be peddling fake news would lose their government accreditation for six months in the first case, one year in the second case and permanently if it happens again.</p> <p>The inquiries will be conducted by groups that include journalists, media owners and sometimes politicians.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Argentine drought hits farmers hard
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/argentine-drought-hits-farmers-hard-undermining-economy-54193491?
GIST	<p>Jorge Josifovich is silent and downcast as he walks under the pounding sun in one of Argentina's most fertile agricultural regions, staring at soy crops parched by the country's worst drought in years.</p> <p>The drought, which began in November, has caused big losses, reduced expectations of economic growth and raised concerns among farmers, government officials and experts in the world's third-largest exporter of soybean and corn.</p> <p>"It's dramatic," said Josifovich, a farmer and agricultural engineer who provides advice to growers. He picked up soy seeds from a plant that stands at about half its normal height.</p> <p>"Not only is there the physical loss of grain yield, but there's also the loss of quality, which lowers the product's final price."</p> <p>That's a blow to Argentina, where farming is the economy's main engine, and high or low prices for soy and other commodities can either help sustain or bust government investment plans.</p> <p>President Mauricio Macri was counting on a near-record soy crop this year to boost economic growth to 3.5 percent in 2018. Instead, what is expected to be the poorest harvest in at least a decade has already cut growth forecasts by up to a percentage point.</p> <p>Argentina's famed meat and dairy industries, which depend on corn and soymeal for animal feed, are facing more than \$600 million in losses, according to the exchange. The drought has also hurt the poultry and pork sectors as well as the silos that store grain and the trucking and shipping companies that transport it.</p> <p>"You'll have less beef and a problem with (a rise) in prices," Ezequiel de Freijo, chief economist at the Argentine Rural Society, said about the outlook for next year.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 French strike causes railway chaos
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SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/french-strikes-railway-chaos-challenge-macron-54196626?
GIST	<p>A major French railway strike has brought the country's famed high-speed trains to a halt, leaving passengers stranded and posing the biggest test so far for President Emmanuel Macron's economic strategy.</p> <p>The SNCF national rail authority says about 12 percent of trains are running Tuesday, in the first of a series of strikes set to last three months.</p> <p>Passengers are packing platforms or hitching rides on traffic-clogged roads and sharing travel tips online.</p> <p>Traffic is also disrupted on Eurostar lines to Britain and trains to Germany, though most trains are running as usual.</p> <p>Rail workers are protesting government plans to eliminate worker protections. It's part of Macron's broader plans to make France more globally competitive.</p> <p>Strikes and protest actions Tuesday are also hitting Air France flights, garbage collection and universities.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Oklahoma, Kentucky teachers protest
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/thousands-teachers-students-converge-oklahoma-kentucky-capitals-labor/story?id=54174751
GIST	<p>Braving chilly weather, tens of thousands of public school teachers in Kentucky and Oklahoma converged on their state capitals today demanding higher wages and better classroom resources.</p> <p>Teachers in the two red states, both run by Republican governors and Republican-dominated legislatures, said they're fed up with persistent cuts in education funding. Many of the demonstrators Monday wore red T-shirt reading "I Support Public Schools," in solidarity with the nationwide #RedForEd grass-roots movement started online.</p> <p>The Oklahoma teachers plan to continue the classroom walkout on Tuesday at the state capitol, prompting the Oklahoma City, Tulsa and other districts to cancel school for a second day.</p> <p>Thousands of teachers and supporters in Kentucky joined outside the Kentucky Education Association headquarters in Frankfort around 9 a.m., many fuming over their state legislature's decision to overhaul their pension plan without any say from them.</p> <p>"We're putting them on notice today that if they don't pass a budget that protects public services of Kentucky, if they don't pass a budget that provides adequate funding for the schools in the Commonwealth, then we're going to vote them out," Stephanie Winkler, president of Kentucky Education Association and a fourth-grade teacher from Madison County, Kentucky, told the crowd before leading a march from the union's headquarters around the capitol building.</p> <p>The teachers, most of them on their first day of spring break, were joined in a show of solidarity by members of other public-employee unions, including those representing firefighters, police, plumbers and pipe fitters.</p> <p>Meanwhile, thousands of Oklahoma teachers and education advocates staged a classroom walkout and converged on the state capitol in Oklahoma City to call on lawmakers, including Gov. Mary Fallin, to restore funding for education programs and supplies they say have been drastically slashed over the last decade.</p> <p>Most of the Oklahoma teachers walked out of classrooms across the state to attend the rally in Oklahoma</p>

City. Many said they were frustrated with the lack of resources in their schools, and some said they were teaching students about science and technology with textbooks from the 1990s.

The Oklahoma protest came after Fallin signed legislation Thursday granting teachers annual pay raises averaging \$6,100, the largest in state history. Oklahoma teachers had been making an average of \$45,276 a year, among the lowest for educators nationwide, according to a 2017 report by the National Education Association.

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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	04/02 Russian cyber spy admits intel sharing?
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/politics-government/article207724239.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON - A senior leader in Russia's spy agency, wanted by the FBI and suspected to be linked to Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. election, has agreed to plead partially guilty to sharing information with foreign intelligence, according to a Russian media report.</p> <p>The Russian news site RBC reported Monday that Dmitry Dokuchaev, a major in the FSB intelligence service, has admitted that he indirectly transferred information to foreign intelligence, presumably the United States. RBC, citing two anonymous sources, said that Dokuchaev insisted it amounted to informal information-sharing about activities of cybercriminals who did not work for Russia.</p> <p>That's at odds with a report from another Russian news outlet last year, which said that one of the individuals about whom Dokuchaev shared information was alleged Russian hacker Yevgeniy Nikulin. On Friday, it became public that the United States had succeeded in its attempt to extradite Nikulin from the Czech Republic – an effort bitterly fought by Moscow. Nikulin faces charges in California for allegedly hacking the databases of LinkedIn, Dropbox and Formspring in 2012.</p> <p>Dokuchaev, 34, once a high-ranking official in the FSB's unit that investigates cybercrime, is also the target of an arrest warrant in the U.S. The FBI accused him in February 2017 of directing and facilitating criminal hackers who stole user information on 500 million Yahoo accounts.</p> <p>How exactly Nikulin and Dokuchaev fit into Russia's efforts to interfere in the U.S. presidential election is not completely clear. The FSB is known to tolerate cybercriminals because it can piggyback off their illicit behaviors. U.S. intelligence believes the high-profile hacks of U.S. tech-firm databases allowed Russia to mine hundreds of millions of user accounts for personal information on election officials and U.S. political activists. This data could be used to try to enter secure websites or hypothetically to gather compromising information.</p> <p>Importantly, Dokuchaev's signed pre-trial agreement reported by RBC means evidence collected against him might not be made public and he could receive a lighter sentence if convicted. The Kremlin has said little publicly about Dokuchaev, and his alleged ties to accused hackers has provoked speculation of involvement in U.S. election meddling.</p> <p>Dokuchaev and his boss, the cybercrime unit's deputy director Sergey Mikhailov, were arrested on treason charges and reportedly led out of FSB headquarters with sacks over their heads in December 2016 — but that wasn't revealed until shortly after the release of the so-called Trump dossier, a collection of business-intelligence memos compiled by former British spy Christopher Steele that alleged collusion between Russia and members of the Trump campaign team.</p> <p>That explosive document, published in full on Jan. 10, 2017, by the news site BuzzFeed, led to congressional investigations and was in part the basis for the appointment of former FBI Director Robert Mueller III as special counsel to investigate possible collusion. Earlier this year, Mueller brought charges against 13 alleged Russian intelligence officials, accusing them of attempting to undermine confidence in</p>

	<p>U.S. election results.</p> <p>Adding to the intrigue of that period, Gen. Oleg Erovinkin, a former FSB leader, was found dead in the back seat of his car on Dec. 26, 2016. His death later sparked speculation that he might have been somehow involved in sharing information that made it into the dossier.</p> <p>The next public hearing in Dokuchaev's case is expected on Wednesday, RBC reported. A lawyer for Mikhailov, also facing treason charges, told RBC his client was not admitting guilt.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Russia: extradition may hurt Czech ties
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-czech-usa-russia-ministry/russia-says-czech-extradition-of-alleged-hacker-to-usa-may-hurt-ties-idUSKCN1H90XK
GIST	<p>MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia's Foreign Ministry said on Monday that the Czech Republic's extradition to the United States of Yevgeny Nikulin, a Russian charged with hacking U.S. tech companies, appeared to be aimed at damaging ties between Moscow and Prague.</p> <p>Nikulin, 30, was arrested in Prague in 2016. He was extradited to the United States last week, where he pleaded not guilty to charges that he hacked into the systems of three U.S. technology firms, potentially compromising the personal details of at least 100 million users, including on LinkedIn.</p> <p>"We regard Prague's decision as a conscious, politically-motivated step by the Czech side aimed at undermining the constructive basis of bilateral cooperation," the ministry said in a statement. It said it would take all necessary measures to ensure Nikulin's rights are respected.</p> <p>LinkedIn, owned by Microsoft Corp, has said the case was related to a breach that might have compromised the information of 100 million users or more.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Lessons from Atlanta cyber extortion
SOURCE	https://www.forbes.com/sites/dantedisparte/2018/04/02/cities-held-for-ransom-lessons-from-atlantas-cyber-extortion/#370cd2245996
GIST	<p>Time has run out on the city of Atlanta to respond to cyber extortionists who have successfully crippled several critical systems across the city. From first responders like the police department, which has been prevented from using certain databases, to the judicial system, city-wide payment processing for traffic fines and other areas, many citizen services in Atlanta were taken offline by a sophisticated ransomware attack. Meanwhile public servants have been relegated to switching back to analog carrying out paper-based work to maintain the semblance of business as usual in the bustling city. The cyber criminals who perpetrated this attack demanded payment of \$51,000 in bitcoin, lest Atlanta face wider repercussions from this exploit, such as the deletion of critical data, crippling of systems, among other possible consequences. Whether Atlanta paid the cyber ransom or not, cities are in the crosshairs of cyber and other man-made risks posing serious threats to national security.</p> <p>Atlanta joins a growing number of municipal, state and government-level targets to fall prey to an increasingly complex cyber threat environment. Just as a heating and cooling vendor served as the backdoor to Target's breach, cities may very well be a backdoor to broader cyber vulnerabilities affecting U.S. national security. In short, our lawmakers and governments are not immune to a risk that evolves according to Moore's Law – a painful lesson Atlanta's public servants learned during an arduous recovery. All too often, cyber criminals who seek monetary gains from their ransomware attacks exploit so called soft targets, which makes many government agencies easy prey. This is so due to the lack of synchronization of critical systems, harmonization among the numerous third parties' states rely on to render their services, as well as the difficulty in attracting high-demand cybersecurity professionals who</p>

can make a more lucrative career in the private sector. It does not help that governments, like private enterprises, do not typically treat cyber risk like an enterprise-wide threat, but rather consign it to cash-strapped and ill-equipped IT departments and vendors.

City and government cyber resilience is not aided by the placebo effect that cybersecurity technologies and “safe brands” can create. These blindsides conspire to make the public sector particularly vulnerable to cyber threats. Add in the effect of human errors, indifference and deliberate actions (“between the keyboard and the chair” risks) and hardening the information systems of an entity as complex as a city comes into focus. All the more so as government transparency, public accountability and digital transformation are highly sought-after goals. The increasing reliance in cities on connected devices to measure everything from traffic flows to water levels and issuing fines through ubiquitous speed cameras, creates an enormous and highly vulnerable attack subsurface. The internet of things (IoT) has opened a veritable Pandora’s box of cyber threats that even well-heeled private entities are struggling to contain. Cities will be hard-pressed to get ahead of self-sovereign cyber threats, as well as making the absolute amount of cybersecurity spend a proxy for safety. Many city leaders may come to rue the day they connected every citizen service to the internet, without thinking through the potential for unintended consequences.

Mercifully Atlanta’s cyber-attack had a financial motive and or a path to negotiation. Similar exploits aimed at proving a political point or sowing panic, such as cyber terrorism or an act of cyber warfare, are much harder to respond to and recover from. This highlights the reality that cyber risk is more of a continuity of government threat than a matter of privacy and the provision of basic citizen services. In Atlanta’s case, how many months could a city go on under the presumption of business as usual if its critical systems were taken down? Cyber risk is all too often conflated with a breach of privacy and citizen or customer trust, when in reality it is a business continuity threat. Because many cities rely on private sector cybersecurity consultants to “harden their systems,” they often take a similar tack as private enterprises. Namely, hardening databases that store so called “crown jewels,” such as health records, citizen information, tax records, among others. A veritable arms race of cybersecurity spending primarily benefits consultants and technologies, yet many vulnerabilities remain, the human element is often forgotten, and no panaceas exist.

While citizen services are vital, especially when it comes to the provision of essential government services, in the priority list of where to place cybersecurity resources, continuity of government comes first. This much is true at the state level and continuity of government begins with the state house, critical infrastructure, first responders, such as police, fire departments, emergency medical care and finally the provision of basic citizen services. By this measure, cities like Atlanta must begin reframing the economics of cyber threats from a value at risk lens, rather than a cost of remediation or notification approach, which is the dominant model in cyber risk management. By looking at the economic value at risk in Atlanta, or the share of the city’s GDP exposed to cyber threats, \$2.62 billion could be eradicated due to this faceless and infinitely patient threat according to the Lloyd’s City Risk Index. Indeed, cyber-attacks are highlighted as the third most consequential threat to the city of Atlanta, a rank held for North American cities, where more than \$93 billion in economic output is at risk. The second and third order effects of cyber threats can hobble the global economy.

Combining city and state requirements to maintain a balanced budget, the measure of economic value at risk together with the reality that taxpayers are the first line of financial defense, makes a compelling case for pooling “blended” risk capital into government cyber risk transfer approaches. Structures that recognize cyber threats (even when monetary demands are relatively small) as potential catastrophic losses can help shield limited public coffers from the economic consequences of these risks. Indeed, Lloyd’s research shows that for every 1% increase in insurance penetration, there is a corresponding 22% decrease in the share of risk borne by taxpayers. Cyber risks unlike property damage, which tends to be a finite and easily calculated economic exposure, can cause incalculable harm. Therefore, when it comes to cyber threats, prevention is much better than cure. In short, even if you are fully insured, a cyber threat will be painful.

Just as the great city of Atlanta has a fire brigade to save lives and limit property damage, cities and indeed

countries, must consider creating cyber fire brigades as a common good and not as a service spared for those who pay the most money. Cyber threats exploit weak links to get at more desirable or lucrative targets. Therefore, approaches that view cyber threats from the lens of collective defense can go a long way in improving overall resilience. Atlanta's ransomware woes should serve as a wakeup call to all cities and government entities that cyber threats have not only come of age, the next time around the motive may not be monetary.

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HEADLINE	04/02 London chief: 99% crooks escape cyber
SOURCE	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5570959/Just-one-100-crimes-web-ends-conviction.html
GIST	<p>Only one in ten cases of cyber crime is investigated by police and 99 per cent of crooks escape justice, shocking statistics revealed last night.</p> <p>It came as the country's top anti-fraud cop, City of London police commissioner Ian Dyson, conceded: 'We cannot arrest our way out of this problem.'</p> <p>Mr Dyson said the explosion in fraud and cyber crime means it is impossible to haul all the culprits before the courts, adding: 'You are more likely to have money taken from you online than you are in the street.'</p> <p>The officer, who has been a victim of card fraud, also said some online scams were so simple to set up, he questioned why criminals would bother to rob a bank.</p> <p>He believes the scale of the problem is so vast, the national reporting system 'couldn't cope' if the banks passed on all of their fraud reports to police.</p> <p>Describing cyber crime as an 'industry', Mr Dyson said his officers had to be honest with victims about the chances of culprits being caught: 'From the very start we are managing expectations, but equally what we don't want is a mindset that says there is no point in reporting to us because we are not going to do anything.'</p> <p>Mr Dyson spoke out as the new figures show there were 735,098 frauds and cyber crimes reported across the UK in the 12 months to March 2017. But in the same period, just 71,133 reports – less than 10 per cent – were investigated. The figures show that 8,214 people were prosecuted, representing just 1 per cent of cases.</p> <p>Asked if the public should accept that in the majority of cases fraudsters won't be brought to justice, Mr Dyson said: 'I think that's the case now, but it's a subtle message. I would want people to report it, but to understand that it's more about saying you can't enforce your way out of this problem.'</p> <p>In the past year the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau run by Mr Dyson's force shut down 170,856 bank accounts, websites and phone lines associated with fraud. He said the public tended to lose their 'common sense hackles' when they go online and the number of victims will continue to rise as more of our business is done online.</p> <p>The commissioner revealed that he fell victim to fraudsters three years ago: 'Someone spent Christmas in a Travelodge on my credit card then tried to renew their car insurance and that was a big chunk of money so the bank alerted me.'</p> <p>He said the police will always need more resources to tackle cyber crime, but the solution was not to haul officers off the beat to hunt for online offenders, adding: 'When it happened to me, I was a bit p***ed off that someone had used my bank account, to be honest.'</p> <p>'But would I vote to say I want to see less officers patrolling the area because of that?'</p>

	'I'm not sure... there is a balance to be had.'
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HEADLINE	04/02 Grid hacking exercise reveals shortfall
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/electric-grid-hacking-exercise-reveals-shortfalls-security-clearance-shortage/
GIST	<p>As foreign hackers continue to probe the U.S. grid for weaknesses, a cyber exercise for the North American energy sector has shown that many utility personnel still lack access to the classified information needed to stay on top of the threat.</p> <p>Not enough utility employees had the clearances needed to share threat information for a serious cyberattack scenario rehearsed during the exercise, according to a report published Friday by regulator North American Electric Reliability Corp. (NERC).</p> <p>"Government should plan to quickly declassify information that utilities need to prevent or respond to attacks," the report states.</p> <p>During the two-day exercise, which took place in November, government officials and utility executives worked together to respond to simulated "cyber and physical attacks" against control systems and generation and transmission facilities "that caused widespread and prolonged power outages," the report notes.</p> <p>Energy industry officials have long urged the U.S. government to expedite the clearance process for private sector operators. Last year, American Gas Association CEO Dave McCurdy told lawmakers that his industry was in pressing need of actionable cyberthreat information.</p> <p>This fourth iteration of the biennial "GridEx" exercise convened a record 6,500 people from 450 organizations, including electricity transmission authorities and academics. As hackers have grown bolder in attacking the industrial control systems (ICS) that underpin the grid in places like Ukraine, observers credit GridEx with sharpening the North American grid's defenses.</p> <p>"GridEx does a great job in finding new areas to explore and focus on rather than a rinse-and-repeat sort of mentality," Ben Miller, director of threat operations for ICS security firm Dragos, told CyberScoop.</p> <p>The most recent GridEx included new pre-exercise training, dubbed Move 0, that focused on the reconnaissance hackers carry out before an attack. "Attacks don't occur in minutes but instead weeks or months and Move 0 helped illustrate this to the attendees," Miller said.</p> <p>Such reconnaissance techniques have been on display in an ongoing hacking campaign targeting the U.S. energy sector that the Department of Homeland Security has attributed to Russian government actors. DHS warned last month that the hackers had used spear-phishing and watering-hole attacks to collect information on ICS.</p> <p>The NERC report on GridEx found other areas for improvement. Twenty-two percent of participants said the exercise didn't effectively test utilities' communication plans with groups like law enforcement and state officials – a crucial point of contact in the event of serious hacking incident. In the 2015 cyberattack of the Ukrainian power grid, hackers cut power for at least 225,000 customers but also hit the power company's customer call center, hampering the recovery process.</p> <p>The NERC report also floated the possibility of the electric industry's cyber-threat sharing hub, known as E-ISAC, adding a "common operating picture" to give utilities a clearer view of overall grid security.</p> <p>Energy officials in Europe and elsewhere also are increasingly carrying out more complex cyber exercises to try to keep pace with hacking operations. Last October, Swedish nuclear plant employees drilled for a</p>

	range of attacks, including one based on the 2015 hack of the Ukrainian grid. It was the most technically sophisticated exercise in which the UN's nuclear watchdog has participated.
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HEADLINE	04/02 Energy firm: pipeline data cyberattack
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-02/energy-transfer-says-cyber-attack-shut-pipeline-data-system
GIST	<p>A cyber attack that hobbled the electronic communication system used by a major U.S. pipeline network has been overcome.</p> <p>Energy Transfer Partners LP was confident that, after 6 p.m. New York time on Monday, files could safely be exchanged through the EDI platform provided by third-party Energy Services Group LLC, the pipeline company said in a notice. Earlier in the day, it reported a shutdown of the system because of an attack, while saying there was no effect on the flow of natural gas.</p> <p>The EDI system conducts business through a computer-to-computer exchange of documents with customers. Though it's not clear who was responsible for the attack, it comes after U.S. officials warned in March that Russian hackers are conducting a broad assault on the nation's electric grid and other targets. Last month, Atlanta's municipal government was hobbled for several days by a ransomware attack.</p> <p>Energy Transfer, run by billionaire Kelcy Warren, isn't the only pipeline company using EDI. Other operators with similar systems include Kinder Morgan Inc. and Tallgrass Energy Partners LP, according to their websites. Representatives for Kinder and Tallgrass said the companies' systems weren't affected.</p> <p>Boardwalk Pipeline Partners LP also had an EDI outage, though it didn't provide the cause.</p> <p>The attack didn't impact operations otherwise and no data was compromised, Vicki Granado, an Energy Transfer spokeswoman, said earlier.</p> <p>The company's wide network of pipeline units includes Panhandle Eastern Pipe Line Co., Transwestern Pipeline Co. and Rover Pipeline LLC.</p> <p>The Panhandle natural gas pipeline network includes four large-diameter pipelines stretching from the Anadarko Basin of Texas and Oklahoma into several midwestern states. The Trunkline system, which extends from the Gulf Coast into the Southeast and Midwest, and the Sea Robin system in the Gulf of Mexico are also part of the Panhandle network.</p> <p>The Transwestern pipeline system connects gas supplies in the Rockies and the Permian Basin of West Texas and New Mexico to customers in California, Arizona and Nevada. The Rover pipeline, also controlled by Energy Transfer, is designed to transport gas from West Virginia and Ohio to markets in the Midwest and Canada.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Phishing scam hits Italy soccer club
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/phishing-scam-italian-football-club-scammed/
GIST	<p>An Italian football club Lazio has been scammed as the club sent out an outstanding transfer bill of €2 million (\$2,460,840) to a fraudster's bank account. The club was tricked by email fraudsters, who claimed to be representing a team negotiating for the release of funds that the Italian club owed for a player's transfer.</p> <p>Serie A team from the Lazio club released funds after receiving an email, which apparently looked legitimate. The email was supposedly sent by representatives of Dutch club Feyenoord. In the email, the</p>

sender demanded final payment of a player's transfer that occurred in 2014. It is clear that the fraudsters knew about the details of this deal. In this deal, defender Stefan de Vrij was transferred to Lazio from Feyenoord.

Italian newspaper II Tempo reports that fraudsters tricked Lazio club's accountants into releasing the outstanding balance and transfer the money to the bank account they provided details of. However, when inquired, Feyenoord denied any such communication carried out by any of its staff members. Furthermore, the Dutch club clarified that it never even received the funds.

Prosecutors state that the money trail has been tracked and that it has been transferred to a Dutch bank account but it does not belong to Feyenoord.

However, it shows the caliber of cybercriminals and the innovativeness that they have achieved over time as they come up with one unique strategy after another. This particular incident is a clear example of how lucrative phishing scams can be. Especially if cybercrooks are aware of such high-profile deals involving large sums of cash transferred through banks.

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HEADLINE	04/03 Pirate site 123movies shuts down
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/streaming-site-123movies-shut-down-and-its-alterntives/
GIST	<p>On March 19th, the world's most popular pirate streaming website 123movies which is also known as 123movieshub and GoMovies announced that it is shutting down its operation, meaning that it will be no longer available.</p> <p>The news came as a shock to the fans who witnessed an unusual message on the site's homepage urging them to "respect" the filmmakers by paying for their content including movies and TV shows rather than pirating them.</p> <p>"We've been providing links to movies and shows for years. Now it's time to say goodbye. Thank you for being our friends and thanks for staying with us that long," the message stated. "PS: Please pay for the movies/shows, that's what we should do to show our respect to people behind the movies/shows."</p> <p>According to reports, authorities were aware that the site was being operated from Vietnam while 123movies itself was listed as "the world's most popular illegal site" by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), a United States-based association that represents the six major Hollywood studios.</p> <p>In a statement on March 15th, 2018 just days before 123movies announced it was shutting down, the executive vice president & chief of Global Content Protection Van Voorn had said that "Right now, the most popular illegal site in the world, 123movies.to (at this point), is operated from Vietnam, and has 98 million visitors a month."</p> <p>"There are more services like this [123movies] – sites that are not helpful for local legitimate businesses," added Voorn, who is working with the Office of the Police Investigation Agency (C44) to tackle the issue.</p> <p>Why 123movies shut down?</p> <p>123movies fans are still struggling to understand why the pirating streaming giant suddenly announced shutting down. However, according to a recent report from TorrentFreak in March last year US Ambassador to Vietnam Ted Osius asked the country's government for a crackdown against pirate website including 123movies and it could be the result of the meeting that year that 123movies has been confined history.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Boxing match w/hundreds illegal streams
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/joshua-vs-parker-boxing-match/
GIST	<p>The highly anticipated world-title boxing match between Anthony Joshua and Joseph Parker on Saturday night – in which Joshua triumphed to capture a bevy of titles – saw hundreds of pirated streams as fans found ways to tune in online or without paying the pay-per-view fee.</p> <p>Content security specialist Irdeto identified 339 streams that illegally redistributed the fight. Aside from the theft of intellectual property and the revenue lost, many of the streams were lower quality that put consumers at risk of a poor viewing experience and missing key moments during the fight.</p> <p>Social media was again found to have been a major vehicle for illegal streams, with 207 pirate streams detected using multiple social media channels, including Facebook, YouTube, Periscope and Twitch, reaching approximately 225,804 viewers.</p> <p>Pirates also took advantage of illicit streaming plugins for Kodi, the popular media player, with 71 streams identified on that platform.</p> <p>Further, pirates often create professional-looking websites and services to fool users into thinking their illegal content offering is legitimate. They tend to use popular e-commerce sites to proactively advertise their services to consumers, despite those sites explicitly banning the sale of illegal streaming devices. Irdeto identified 180 advertisements for illicit streaming devices offering Joshua vs. Parker on e-commerce websites, including eBay and Gumtree, in just one day in the week leading up to the fight.</p> <p>“High-profile live sporting events like this are major targets for criminals looking to profit from illegal streams,” said Rory O’Connor, senior vice president of cybersecurity services at Irdeto. “Content owners and rights holders can combine state-of-the-art anti-piracy technology, proactive services and comprehensive cybercrime business intelligence services to shut down streams in real time and protect their content investments.”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Equifax sent erroneous letters to victims
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/the-credit-reporting-agency-sent-the-wrong-letters-to-some-victims/article/755226/
GIST	<p>During the aftermath of the massive data breach which compromised the data of nearly 150 million consumers, Equifax notified some people using inaccurate letters.</p> <p>The company confirmed a "small percentage" of those affected were sent erroneous notification letters some of which contained the correct address but wrong name, according to CNBC.</p> <p>"We recently initiated this notification process by mail and have learned that a very small percentage of the notifications were sent to the wrong addresses due to the complex nature of determining the best address match to a consumer and, in some cases, mailing addresses on record may be out-of-date or incorrect," Equifax said in a statement to the publication.</p> <p>The credit reporting agency refused to say exactly how many wrong letters were sent out however, the firm did stressed that the notification letters didn't contain sensitive information or credit data.</p> <p>Last month the firm announced the breach was worse than initially expected upping the sum of those affected from 143 million to 147.9 million. The latest revelation has left some to suspect there may be more negative news to come from the firm.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 njRAT upgraded w/ransomware
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/the-trojan-was-first-spotted-in-2013-and-has-remained-one-of-the-most-prevalent-malware-families-using-multiple-net-obfuscation-tools/article/755647/
GIST	<p>The njRAT, also known as Bladabindi, has been upgraded to push Lime Ransomware and a bitcoin wallet stealer.</p> <p>This old time trojan was first spotted in 2013 and has remained one of the most prevalent malware families using multiple .NET obfuscation tools that make detection difficult for antivirus solutions and that hinder analysis by security researchers, according to an April 1 Zscaler blog post.</p> <p>The malware was developed using the Microsoft .NET framework and uses multiple .NET obfuscation tools to make detection difficult for antivirus solutions and that hinder analysis by security researchers.</p> <p>The malware also uses dynamic DNS for command-and-control (C2) servers and communicates using a custom TCP protocol over a configurable port the blog said.</p> <p>Deepen Desai, Zscaler's senior director for security research and operations told SC Media the source of the malware is unclear, but that researchers know the payload is being served from a server in Australia that is hosting a compromised site.</p> <p>Seventy percent of the users affected were in South America, while the remaining 30 percent were in North America. The new RAT variant added ransomware and bitcoin wallet stealing features which appear to contradict each other in practice.</p> <p>"This is an interesting development, especially the ransomware feature, given that RATs by nature operate in stealth," Desai said. "Ransomware on the other hand will reveal the infection."</p> <p>Desai added the, author is taking a shortcut by stealing existing wallets, but it said he wouldn't be surprised if the author also adds support for mining bitcoins on the compromised system in a future variants .</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 DOD extends bug bounty program
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/vulnerabilities---threats/hack-the-defense-travel-system-dod-extends-its-bug-bounty-program/d/d-id/1331428
GIST	<p>The US Department of Defense and HackerOne have announced a new DoD bug bounty program, "Hack the DTS," which will let vetted white-hat hackers take aim at the Defense Travel System, an enterprise platform used by millions of employees to book work-related travel.</p> <p>This is the fifth bug bounty challenge the two have created since 2016, when the inaugural Hack the Pentagon program let participants hunt for vulnerabilities in DoD websites, applications, and networks. Hack the DTS opened registration on April 1, 2018 and will conclude on April 29.</p> <p>"The scale of users, volume of travel booked, and sensitive information it is responsible for maintaining makes DTS both a compelling asset for researcher and a priority for DoD to harden its security," says Reina Staley, chief of staff and co-founder at Defense Digital Service, who says this program will have the same execution as earlier ones but "inevitably yield unique findings."</p> <p>Eligible participants must be US taxpayers and either citizens of, or eligible to work in, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, or New Zealand. Proof of citizenship is required to register.</p> <p>Active US military members and contractors can join the challenge if they're eligible but can't receive financial rewards. Anyone who submits a vulnerability report must undergo a security and criminal background check before they are rewarded for their findings, HackerOne reports.</p>

	While the DoD's initial bug bounty initiative first took security experts by surprise, the DoD's bug bounty programs launched with HackerOne have proven a valuable resource for finding and addressing vulnerabilities. More than 3,000 flaws have been resolved since the 2016 launch of Hack the Pentagon, with ensuing programs leading to more flaws discovered and larger bounties.
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HEADLINE	04/03 Twitter updates reporting guidelines
SOURCE	http://www.zdnet.com/article/twitter-updates-reporting-guidelines-to-include-people-with-disabilities/
GIST	<p>Twitter has updated its reporting form to include content that targets people with disabilities, the social networking giant announced on Monday.</p> <p>"It is against our rules to directly attack or threaten someone based on their protected category, including disability," Twitter said. "You asked us to clarify this in our reporting flow, and we've updated it to be more specific."</p> <p>Twitter's report page now includes "disability" as an example of a tweet that "Directs hate against a protected category" along with race, religion, gender, and orientation, having previously been omitted.</p> <p>The update follows calls from disability advocate Natalie Weaver for Twitter to include hate against people with disabilities as a category in their violation reporting. Weaver had originally reported a tweet that used a photo of her daughter, who has Rett syndrome, to promote eugenics, according to The Mighty.</p> <p>Twitter had initially refused to take down the tweet before eventually doing so and deleting the offending account, The Mighty reported.</p> <p>Twitter had told a reporter that it didn't initially include hate towards disabled people in its violation reporting tool "because there wasn't enough space", according to Weaver, before finally making the changes on Monday.</p> <p>Twitter said in December that it would enforce new rules going forward to "reduce hateful conduct and abusive behaviour" on its platform.</p> <p>These include new rules on violence and physical harm, including a crackdown on accounts that "affiliate with organisations that use or promote violence" or content that "glorifies violence or the perpetrators of a violent act".</p> <p>It also includes rules against behaviour that threatens other people "on the basis of their group characteristics", including violent threats or multiple slurs, epithets, racist or sexist tropes, or content that "incites fear or reduces someone to less than human".</p> <p>Hateful imagery such as symbols or logos with the purpose of promoting hostility and malice against others "based on race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or ethnicity/national origin" was also made "sensitive imagery" under its media policy.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Tor Project discontinues Tor Messenger
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/software/tor-project-discontinues-tor-messenger-after-only-25-years/
GIST	The Tor Project announced today plans to discontinue Tor Messenger, the organization's security-hardened instant messaging application.

Tor developers cited a multitude of reasons for their decision today, all containing valid reasons, in hindsight.

Tor Messenger launched in late 2015

The Tor Project launched Tor Messenger in October 2015, as an alternative to the multitude of IM clients that were available on the market, at the time.

The main attraction point was that Tor Messenger would ship with Off-the-Record (OTR) Messaging enabled by default and would exchange all messages via the Tor network. In layman terms, this meant that all messages would be automatically encrypted and travel over a secure network like Tor, keeping private conversations safe from prying eyes.

At the time of launch, Tor developers admitted that Tor Messenger wasn't 100% secure, as it was still built on a client-server architecture that allowed servers to log IM metadata, even if the server wasn't able to view the content of the messages.

Back then, the Tor team said they were looking into alternatives to this architectural model flaw, which would arrive in future versions.

Tor team encountered problems after problems

But eleven beta versions later, Tor Messenger development ground to a halt and the Tor team didn't even manage to ship even a single stable version.

Probably the biggest issue that led Tor developers to drop Tor Messenger developers was that Mozilla stopped working on Instantbird, the IM client at the base of Tor Messenger.

While Mozilla chose to integrate Instantbird's chat features into Thunderbird, the Tor team didn't have the resources to continue the development of a separate IM client or rebase Tor Messenger on anything else.

Even if it could have extracted the chat features from the Thunderbird codebase, Tor devs would still have needed a GUI component for their IM client, something they didn't have the resources to cover.

But this wasn't the only issue. Tor developers also weren't able to address the client-server architecture problem they promised to fix. This meant servers would still be able to log messages sent between Tor Messenger clients.

All of this was only exacerbated by the fact that funds were never plentiful for the development team.

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HEADLINE	04/03 Android Trojan steals IM clients data
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/android-trojan-steals-data-from-facebook-messenger-skype-other-im-clients/
GIST	<p>Security researchers have found a new Android malware strain that has been designed to steal data from mobile instant messaging clients.</p> <p>This new trojan is quite simple in its design, researcher from cyber-security firm Trustlook said in a report published on Monday.</p> <p>Trojan has only a handful of features</p> <p>The trojan has only a few abilities. The first is to gain boot persistence by unpacking code from an infected app's resources. The code will attempt to modify the "/system/etc/install-recovery.sh" file, which if</p>

successful, would allow the malware execute with every boot.

Second, the malware can extract data from the following Android IM clients, data that it will later upload to a remote server. The malware retrieves the IP of this server from a local configuration file.

Facebook Messenger
 Skype
 Telegram
 Twitter
 WeChat
 Weibo
 Viber
 Line
 Coco
 BeeTalk
 Momo
 Voxer Walkie Talkie Messenger
 Gruveo Magic Call
 TalkBox Voice Messenger

Researchers spotted the malware inside a Chinese app named Cloud Module (in Chinese), with the package name com.android.boxa.

Simple features, but advanced evasion techniques

Trustlook researchers say that despite the singular focus on stealing IM data, the malware uses a few advanced evasion techniques. For example, the malware uses anti-emulator and debugger detection techniques to evade dynamic analysis, and also hides strings inside its source code to thwart lackadaisical code reversing attempts.

It is strange that Android malware only comes with one single functionality, that to extract and exfiltrate IM data. A theory for this design choice would be that attackers are collecting private conversations, images, and videos, in an attempt to identify sensitive data that they could later leverage in extortion attempts, especially against high-profile victims.

Researchers have not shared any info on the malware's distribution methods, but taking into account that the malware has a Chinese name and that there's no Play Store in China, the malware's authors may be distributing the malicious app via third-party stores and links on Android app forums.

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HEADLINE	04/02 Report: Panera site leaked for months
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2018/04/02/Panera-website-leaked-customer-info-for-months-report-says/6711522723207/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts tn us&utm_medium=3
GIST	<p>April 2 (UPI) -- Millions of customer records stored on Panera's website were leaked over a period of eight months, cybersecurity analysts said Monday.</p> <p>The leaked customer records on PaneraBread.com include names, email and physical addresses, birthdays and the last four digits of the customer's credit card number, Krebs On Security reported.</p> <p>The fast food chain allows customers to place orders on its website at approximately 2,100 locations around the country.</p> <p>Krebs On Security said security researcher Dylan Houlihan first discovered the breach and notified Mike Gustavison, Panera's director of information security about the breach on August 2, 2017.</p>

	<p>However, eight months after that warning, the customer records were still being leaked.</p> <p>"The flaw never disappeared," Houlihan told Krebs on Security. "I checked on it every month or so because I was pissed."</p> <p>Panera said it is investigating the breach and said the report of millions of customers exposed is false and the number is "fewer than 10,000."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Fringe websites attacking Parkland teens
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/internet/mainstream-pundits-apologize-fringe-sites-cash-attacking-parkland-teens-n862191
GIST	<p>One of the most notorious internet purveyors of conspiracy theories and debunked science has launched an entire website dedicated to attacking a single person: David Hogg, who survived the school shooting in Parkland, Florida.</p> <p>The people behind Natural News, who publish stories about the dangers of tap water and vaccinations, launched a new hub eight days ago called HoggWatch.com. The website is populated almost entirely with content from Natural News founder Mike Adams and senior writer J.D. Heyes.</p> <p>Fringe websites have ridiculed the surviving teens from February's shooting in Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School as they've spurred nationwide anti-gun protests in the last month. Hogg and classmate Emma Gonzalez have been the subject of high-profile conspiracy theories in the aftermath of the shooting — some even pushed by celebrities like Roseanne Barr and Frank Stallone.</p> <p>Criticism of Parkland students has been met with its own counterattacks, including from the students themselves. Fox News host Laura Ingraham lost several major advertisers and apologized after attacking Hogg. But on the fringe parts of the internet, attacking Hogg remains a popular — if not lucrative — endeavor. On Monday, Hoggwatch pushed users to Natural News' sprawling network of sites, where Adams sells dietary supplements, water defluoridation devices and doomsday preparation materials.</p> <p>An article that was crossposted on both HoggWatch and Natural News received several call-outs on Monday from Alex Jones, whose InfoWars website also makes money from similar ads. Gateway Pundit, whose articles appear on Hoggwatch, have devoted much of their website's coverage to criticizing Hogg's media appearances since the shooting.</p> <p>Every article on HoggWatch is about Hogg or refers to him in some way. HoggWatch hammers home many of the same conspiracy theories and inflammatory political talking points pushed by Natural News and InfoWars, but uses the Parkland student as a central antagonist.</p> <p>Adams, whose flagship site Natural News was banned from YouTube in March, penned an article titled "Hogg Hitler! YouTube puts warning on hilarious David Hogg spoof video." Several articles attack CNN, and other articles warn of an impending civil war.</p> <p>The Hoggwatch article about atrazine links out to Pesticides.news, which sells breath sprays and other supplements through Natural News' store.</p> <p>The site's article feeds are hosted on a Natural News subsite, AlternativeNews.com, and shares a Disqus comment section with Natural News.</p> <p>Natural News claims on its website that it is "affiliated with the 501(c)3 nonprofit known as the Consumer Wellness Center."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Report: IT background checks waived
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/ig-democrats-waive-background-checks/2018/04/02/id/852125/
GIST	<p>Nearly 50 House Democrats waived background checks for Pakistani IT aides accused of hacking Congressional data, according to an inspector general report.</p> <p>The report comes nearly a year after Rep. Debbie Wasserman-Schultz, D-Fla., continued to employ a former House IT Aide who was arrested on bank fraud charges. Imran Awan was tossed off the House network nearly five months before Wasserman-Schultz fired him for reportedly staling data and emails from Congress.</p> <p>House security policy requires mandatory background checks but includes a technical loophole that allows other members to vouch for them, according to investigative reporter Luke Rosiak.</p> <p>"It was as casual as that before you turn over the passwords that give these guys access to all the emails to members of Congress and every file on their hard drives and all their staffer's hard drives," Rosiak said to Fox Business' Maria Bartiromo on "Mornings with Maria."</p> <p>"As a result they gave these guys access to everything," he said, "And the [House Inspector General] determined that they were funneling data to the House network."</p> <p>Awan served as a tech aide in Congress for 13 years, and managed to help get jobs for brothers Abid and Jamal, wife Hina Alvi and friend Rao Abbas. All five were making close to \$165,000 a year. A background check on him would have found several red flags, including a \$1.1 million bankruptcy, six lawsuits against him or one of his companies and at least three misdemeanors.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	04/03 ISIS gaining ground in Bangladesh?
SOURCE	http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/global-concerns-over-islamic-forces-gaining-ground-in-bangladesh-118040300460_1.html
GIST	<p>As Bangladesh gears up for the general elections to be held in December this year, the Islamic forces in the country have started gaining ground.</p> <p>The Khalida Zia-led Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), in alliance with Jamaat-e-Islami and other Islamic fundamentalist groups, are making attempts to root out the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League.</p> <p>Experts believe that the Jamaat-e-Islami has committed war crimes during the 1971 Liberation War and killed three million people in the name of Islam.</p> <p>Around 500,000 women were reportedly violated by the Pakistan Army and their collaborators</p> <p>Shahriar Kabir, a Dhaka-based journalist and human rights activist, said, "The rise of Islamic militancy, terrorism in the name of Islam that is being perpetrated by the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Hifazat-e-Islam, and backed by the BNP, one of the largest political parties of Bangladesh. Because of the BNP, the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Hifazat-e-Islam as well as other fundamentalist and extremist groups have become so violent and we have see their violence starting from February 2013.</p> <p>Experts sitting offshore are also concerned over the growing alliance of the BNP and Islamic fundamentalists as they believe the perpetrators of 1971 are still stronger than pro-liberation forces.</p>

Rohan Gunaratna, an international terrorism expert based in Singapore said, "The Jamaat-e-Islami ideology has formed the sea bed, the foundation for the emergence of extremist and terrorist groups in Bangladesh. If not for the Jamaat-e-Islami, so many people would not have been radicalised and we have seen the emergence of JMB (Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh), HuJI-B, the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islami Bangladesh and a number of other groups."

The rise of Islamic forces in Bangladesh not only affects the common people in the country, but also raises concerns for the fragile neighbourhood

BNP-Jamaat-led coalition governments in the past had provided shelter, funds and training to secessionist insurgent groups of north eastern India.

A BNP return to power would mean New Delhi facing a hostile government in Dhaka as it would again allow anti-India groups to gain ground on Bangladesh soil.

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HEADLINE	04/03 US: Pakistan group an 'alias' for terror
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-usa/u-s-designates-pakistan-group-an-alias-for-militants-on-terrorist-list-idUSKCN1HA0SC
GIST	<p>ISLAMABAD (Reuters) - The United States has placed a Pakistani political group called the Milli Muslim League (MML) on its list of foreign terrorist organisations, saying it was merely an alias for a militant group blamed for a bloody 2008 attack in India.</p> <p>The Milli Muslim League is controlled by Islamist leader Hafiz Saeed, who has a \$10 million U.S. bounty on his head. The group shot to prominence after fielding a candidate in a September 2017 by-election to fill a seat vacated by deposed prime minister Nawaz Sharif.</p> <p>Saeed is the founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), or Army of the Pure, which is also on the U.S. terrorist list and blamed by the United States and India for a four-day militant attack on the Indian city of Mumbai in 2008 in which 166 people were killed.</p> <p>Saeed has repeatedly denied involvement in the attack.</p> <p>The U.S. State Department said the Milli Muslim League alias had been added to the LeT's designations as a terrorist group.</p> <p>"These designations seek to deny LeT the resources it needs to plan and carry out further terrorist attacks," the State Department said in a statement.</p> <p>"Make no mistake: whatever LeT chooses to call itself, it remains a violent terrorist group. The United States supports all efforts to ensure that LeT does not have a political voice until it gives up violence as a tool of influence," it added.</p> <p>Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not immediately respond to request for comment.</p> <p>Saeed was placed under house arrest in January 2017 after years of living freely in Pakistan but a court ordered his release in November 2017.</p> <p>India welcomed the U.S. decision saying Pakistan has failed to crack down on militants.</p> <p>"Terrorist individuals and entities are allowed to change names and continue to operate freely from territory under Pakistan's control," an Indian foreign office spokesman said in New Delhi.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Russia: Syrian rebels evacuate stronghold
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/40c4e6af6d334ce0a8870b5bae511b99/Russia-says-1,100-have-evacuated-rebel-stronghold-Ghouta
GIST	<p>MOSCOW (AP) — The Russian military says 1,100 Syrian rebels and their family members have evacuated from a stronghold in the Damascus suburbs in the past 24 hours.</p> <p>The town of Douma was one of the earliest hubs of the uprising against President Bashar Assad in 2011 and home to the Army of Islam, the largest rebel group in the eastern Ghouta suburbs of the Syrian capital.</p> <p>The Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement Tuesday that 24 buses in the past 24 hours have taken more than 1,100 rebels and their families to the rebel-held north of Syria. The evacuation began Monday.</p> <p>The deal struck between the group and the Russian military marks the end of a weeks-long push by the Syrian government to consolidate its control of the suburbs.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Syria: largest rebel group evacuating
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/largest-syrian-rebel-group-starts-leaving-damascus-enclave-54170816?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The most powerful Syrian rebel faction on the fringes of Damascus began abandoning its stronghold in the once rebel-held enclave of eastern Ghouta on Monday, opening the way for government forces to secure full control of the area, after seven years of revolt.</p> <p>The first fighters from the Army of Islam left the town of Douma around midday as part of an evacuation deal that will hand the town to the Syrian government, reported the state SANA news agency.</p> <p>The rebels were headed to Jarablus, a town in northern Syria where control of the territory is shared between Syrian rebels and Turkish forces.</p> <p>The Syrian government dispatched more than 50 buses to Douma to take the rebels out, SANA reported. By mid-afternoon, eight buses had departed, with 448 people aboard — rebel fighters and their family members.</p> <p>There was no immediate comment from the Army of Islam. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which monitors the civil war through a network of activists on the ground, also reported the evacuation.</p> <p>Rami Abdurrahman, the Observatory's director, said some factions within the Army of Islam oppose evacuating and surrendering Douma to the government of President Bashar Assad.</p> <p>The deal over Douma would mark the end of a weeks-long push by Assad's forces to consolidate their control over eastern Ghouta, just outside the capital.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Yemen: Saudi-led airstrike kills 14
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/group-criticizes-yemen-rebel-missile-attacks-saudi-arabia-54170626?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	An airstrike by the Saudi-led coalition near Yemen's Red Sea port of Hodeida killed at least 14 people on Monday, according to a senior health official.

	<p>The airstrike hit a compound housing displaced people in the town of al-Hami, according to Walid al-Emmad, the deputy health minister. He says at least eight women and five girls were among those killed.</p> <p>The Saudi-led coalition has been at war with Iran-allied Houthi rebels for more than three years, a conflict that has killed more than 10,000 people and devastated the Arab world's poorest country. Saudi-led airstrikes have killed thousands of civilians and destroyed hospitals, schools and markets.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Afghan official: airstrike kills 30 Taliban
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/afghan-official-48-schoolgirls-sickened-poisoning-54170991?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>An Afghan official says an airstrike on a Taliban training camp in northern Afghanistan killed more than 30 insurgents and wounded many more on Monday, while the Taliban said the airstrike hit a religious school during a graduation ceremony, killing dozens of civilians.</p> <p>It was not immediately possible to reconcile the conflicting accounts. A number of children were being treated for wounds at a local hospital, indicating civilians were in the area.</p> <p>Defense Ministry spokesman Mohammad Radmanish said that the airstrike in the Dashti Archi district of Kunduz province killed more than 30 Taliban fighters, including nine commanders, updating an earlier toll. "I can confirm that a Taliban training center was bombed and no civilians were present," he said.</p> <p>He said a large number of fighters had gathered in the area, where they wanted to hold a military parade.</p> <p>The Taliban said in a statement that the airstrike hit a madrasa, or Islamic religious school, killing and wounding more than 100 clerics, religious students and other civilians.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Pakistan: gunmen kill 9 in attacks
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/pakistan-sentences-10-death-including-singers-killer-54175677?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Gunmen riding on motorcycles carried out two separate attacks in the Pakistani city of Quetta on Monday, killing five Muslims in one shooting and four members of a Christian family in the other, police said.</p> <p>Abdul Qadeer, a local police chief, said the attacks were apparently unrelated. It was unclear who was behind the attacks in Quetta, which is home to ethnic Baluch separatists as well as Islamic militants.</p> <p>Earlier Monday, Pakistan's army chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa confirmed death sentences for 10 convicted militants, including the killer of a well-known Sufi singer, according to a military statement.</p> <p>The military courts found the "terrorists" guilty of taking part in separate attacks that killed 62 people, it said.</p> <p>The trials are closed to the public, but defendants are allowed to hire lawyers.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Iraq: more bodies from mass grave
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iraq-identifies-bodies-mass-grave-tikrit-54180704?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	Iraqi authorities say they have found the remains of another 158 people in a mass grave outside the city of

	<p>Tikrit, where the Islamic State group is believed to have massacred hundreds of captured soldiers when it rampaged across the country in the summer of 2014.</p> <p>Iraq's forensic department said Monday it has identified a total of 1,153 bodies from the grave.</p> <p>IS captured an estimated 1,700 soldiers after seizing Tikrit in 2014. The soldiers were trying to flee from nearby Camp Speicher, a former U.S. base just outside the northern city.</p> <p>IS later circulated graphic images of gunmen shooting the soldiers dead after forcing them to lie face-down in a shallow ditch.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Afghan official: airstrike kills civilians
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/04/03/afghan-official-5-civilians-killed-in-airstrike-on-taliban.html
GIST	<p>KABUL, Afghanistan – An Afghan official says at least five civilians and 35 insurgents have been killed in an airstrike by Afghan forces in northern Kunduz province.</p> <p>Nematullah Temori, spokesman for the provincial governor in Kunduz, said Tuesday that 55 civilians were wounded in the attack a day earlier in Dashti Archi district. He said a government delegation is investigating the incident.</p> <p>Defense Ministry spokesman Mohammad Radmanish earlier said the airstrike targeted Taliban fighters and killed more than 30 of them, including nine commanders. He said large number of fighters had gathered in the area to hold a military parade.</p> <p>The Taliban said in a statement that the airstrike hit a madrassa, or Islamic religious school, killing and wounding more than 100 clerics, religious students and other civilians.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 FBI atypical terror case comes to close
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/04/02/atypical-terror-case-comes-to-close-with-20-year-sentence.html
GIST	<p>BALTIMORE – It was July 2015 when the FBI, scrambling to contain a surge in Islamic State group propaganda, first visited an Egyptian-American newspaper deliveryman in Maryland.</p> <p>Agents needed to ask Mohamed Elshinawy why his phone number had surfaced in an investigation involving ISIS extremists and how he came to receive a \$1,000 Western Union transaction from Egypt.</p> <p>During hours of questioning, Elshinawy first suggested the money was from his mother. Next he said it was for an iPhone purchase for a friend. After being reminded it was a crime to lie to federal agents, he proceeded to tell a whole new story — that he had indeed received money from the Islamic State but that he was actually scamming the group instead of planning an attack.</p> <p>It was a pivotal moment in a months-long FBI investigation. Elshinawy was sentenced Friday to 20 years in prison on terrorism-related charges.</p> <p>The investigation stretched from a modest townhome northeast of Baltimore across multiple continents, unveiled a shadowy network of illicit payments and shell companies, and revealed a direct link to an ISIS hacker killed in Syria just before Elshinawy's arrest. It also had a chilling twist: Officials say that among the roughly 150 IS-linked cases U.S. authorities have brought since 2014, this is the only prosecution they're aware of in which money was transmitted from IS group operatives abroad to someone in the U.S.</p>

Law enforcement officials involved in the case spoke to The Associated Press about it in detail, recounting a high-intensity investigation that required constant surveillance, the scouring of money transfers and concern that funds sent to Elshinawy would fund an attack.

Brian Nadeau, a Baltimore FBI assistant special agent in charge, said the case raised a lot of red flags.

"Why is the money coming this way? Who is this person? What level are they at?" he said. The FBI, he said, "can't let someone who's receiving ISIS money be out running around. Who knows if we're in the middle of it, the beginning of it, the end, and what their plan is?"

Elshinawy's lawyers didn't return messages seeking comment, but they have argued that his social media and other communications — such as his claim that he was an ISIS soldier and was committed to violent jihad — were protected by the First Amendment, were not directed by the Islamic State and were merely aspirational.

Under a plea agreement, Elshinawy admitted conspiring with the IS group, but he defended himself at his sentencing hearing, saying, "I am not a terrorist," according to the Baltimore Sun.

It's not clear how close Elshinawy came to an attack, though FBI officials said they believed the threat of violence was real. Elshinawy's lawyers said in a sentencing memorandum that he was provided little to no specific direction, though Elshinawy told authorities he was given multiple options for violence, including a suicide bombing, and images of individuals who were potential targets, court papers say.

The Islamic State generally doesn't need to fund attacks in the U.S. given the inexpensive nature of the violence it advocates and its reliance on social media to motivate followers. But officials believe jihadists exploited a personal connection: a childhood friend of Elshinawy's from Egypt who joined the Islamic State in Syria, communicated with him on social media and encouraged him to pledge allegiance to the group.

His technological know-how and skill in covering his electronic tracks — he used encrypted communications applications and proxy servers — likely made Elshinawy a natural conduit, officials said.

Elshinawy received nearly \$9,000 in money transfers, including through PayPal accounts, and used the funds for phones, a laptop and a virtual private network for communication with militants overseas. The funds, disguised as money for printers, were routed through a web of wire transfers. Much of it came from a United Kingdom-based IT company run by Siful Sujan, an IS computer hacker killed in December 2015 airstrikes in Syria.

"I think they thought they were going to just have a run-of-the-mill ISIS case, and when they peeled back the onion, they realized that (Elshinawy) was a key node," said Seamus Hughes, deputy director of George Washington University's Program on Extremism, who has written about the case.

The FBI's first interview with Elshinawy came weeks after an attempted rampage at a Prophet Mohammed cartoon contest in Texas and one day after shootings at military facilities in Tennessee.

Officials say he deflected questions about the money transfer with answers they knew were untruthful. At one point he pulled out an iPhone to display a Facebook conversation in Arabic. The English translation he provided was clearly improvised, an FBI official said.

After several hours, he admitted under pressure to receiving the money from the Islamic State but said he was scamming the group because he never intended to commit violence, officials said. He said that his cleverness should be rewarded and that he should be hired by the FBI to help untangle the IS money network, officials say.

The interviews continued over several weeks, and the results from search warrants and subpoenas yielded

	<p>insights that alarmed officials further.</p> <p>Elshinawy had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group in February 2015 and, in conversations with his friend, pronounced himself ready for jihad and asked for advice in bomb-making, court papers say.</p> <p>He responded to the unrest in Baltimore that followed the death of Freddie Gray by praising violence against police. And, the FBI says, he attempted to recruit a brother in Saudi Arabia to join the Islamic State.</p> <p>Elshinawy has been in custody since his December 2015 arrest.</p> <p>Agents searching his home found a box of articles about IS attacks. His laptop held an image of a severed head next to an IS flag, and he accessed on his phone images of government buildings in Baltimore that officials believe were potential targets.</p> <p>"If this turned out to be successful," said Hughes, "it would be a whole different way of looking at ISIS external operations in the U.S."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 ISIS claims killing Pakistani Christians
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/03/asia/pakistan-isis-christian-family-killed-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)ISIS has claimed responsibility for an attack which killed four Christians in Pakistan's Balochistan province on Easter Monday.</p> <p>An Islamic State press statement released on Tuesday said that a "covert unit" of ISIS militants "managed to target a number of the combatant Christians."</p> <p>The statement adds that the militants "shot them with a pistol, which resulted in the killing of four of them, and all praise is due to Allah"</p> <p>The shooting, which targeted a single family, occurred in the western city of Quetta, the provincial capital. Armed men opened fire at a rickshaw carrying the family of three who were returning home from a bazaar at around 6:45 p.m. (9.45 a.m. ET) local time. The men fled on a motorcycle.</p> <p>All the victims, including the rickshaw driver, were members of the local Christian community, police officer Muhammad Anwar told CNN.</p> <p>The terror group has claimed responsibility but so far has not offered evidence of its involvement. The city has seen a rise in attacks by militants including ISIS-affiliated groups.</p> <p>Pakistan's Christian minority has often been targeted by militants.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Kashmir violence tempting for ISIS?
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/03/asia/violence-kashmir-isis-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Indian-administered Kashmir is again in the grip of deadly violence, following a series of raids by Indian security forces against militant groups Sunday.</p> <p>At least twenty people have been killed, including 13 militants, and several civilians who took to the streets to protest the army operations.</p> <p>For more than two decades several domestic militant groups, demanding either independence for Kashmir</p>

or for the area to become part of Pakistan, have fought Indian security forces. Now, into this volatile mix comes a new, potentially more significant threat: al Qaeda and ISIS.

Powerful recruitment tool

ISIS first declared its intention to move into Kashmir in 2016, describing it as part of its Khorasan province. But only in the past few months have there been the first signs of activity there.

In February, ISIS claimed the killing of a police officer in Kashmir's capital, Srinagar, through a Telegram channel called 'Kashmir Villayah.' State police chief Shesh Paul Vaid said the attack was a "cause of worry," telling Indian network NDTV that though there didn't seem to be a substantial presence of ISIS in the region, the attack could have been driven by ISIS ideology.

It was the second ISIS claim in Kashmir in three months. In November, the Qaraar media outlet claiming to represent the "mujahideen of the Islamic Caliphate in the gateway of India" posted a photograph of a militant who was killed in an attack in Srinagar that left a policeman dead. At his funeral, the militant's body was wrapped in an ISIS flag.

Officials in New Delhi have flatly denied that ISIS exists in Kashmir; Vaid also asserted it had no "substantial" presence in the region. But there is concern that ISIS' ideology may attract militant Kashmiri youth. Amira Jadoon of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point says that "unlike their predecessors of the 1990s, this generation is educated and highly active on social media, a powerful recruitment tool for the Islamic State."

Militant cells in Kashmir benefit from widespread support among young Kashmiri men. On several occasions in recent months, hundreds of them have pelted security forces with stones in an effort to shield militants. The situation has been exacerbated by the lack of any political progress on Kashmir's future.

Jihadi networks

Two Pakistan-based groups - Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed -- have long been the main jihadi networks in Kashmir, and they are viscerally opposed to ISIS. No surprise, perhaps, that the pro-ISIS media outlet al-Qaraar has urged Muslims to abandon these groups and wage "pure jihad" under its banner, while describing Pakistan as an "enemy of Islam."

ISIS may find it difficult to challenge the Pakistan-based groups because -- in the eyes of the US and other western governments -- they enjoy the support of Pakistani military intelligence.

US Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats told Congress in March that "militant groups supported by Islamabad will continue to take advantage of their safe haven in Pakistan to plan and conduct attacks in India and Afghanistan."

Additionally, Kashmiri militancy has been focused on liberating the region from Indian rule; it hasn't had much time for global jihad.

Jadoon says the possibility that ISIS can "inspire a sufficiently large number of young Kashmiris to stimulate an entire new wave of jihad in Jammu and Kashmir seems unlikely, at least in the short term."

But the region is potentially attractive to ISIS, with a large community of radicalized youth, mountainous territory, and a long-established insurgency that could potentially be co-opted.

Now that it has lost virtually all its territory in Iraq and Syria, ISIS is looking for areas in which to regenerate, from the Philippines to Pakistan to west Africa (as well as inside Iraq).

It has established a presence in Afghanistan, and across the border in the Pakistani province of Balochistan. On Monday, it claimed responsibility for murdering four Christians in the Balochi capital, Quetta.

	Preventing ISIS from establishing a foothold in the region would be one of the very few things on which India and Pakistan could agree.
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HEADLINE	04/02 US: 'kill or capture ISIS member' mission
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/02/politics/us-british-soldiers-killed-syria-isis-kill-mission/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The US and British soldiers killed in an improvised explosive device blast in Manbij, Syria, last week were on a classified mission to "kill or capture a known ISIS member" according to Pentagon spokesman Major Adrian Rankine-Galloway. The US military is releasing few details about the mission that killed Master Sgt. Jonathan J. Dunbar and UK soldier Sgt. Matt Tonroe.</p> <p>They were killed and five other troops were wounded in a March 30 IED blast. The US military has not said if the IED was in a building, a vehicle or buried in the road. The troops were out of their vehicles at the time of the explosion, according to a US official. There is also no word on whether the target was found and captured or killed.</p> <p>One indicator of the sensitivity of the mission is Dunbar was identified publicly by the Army only as being "assigned to Headquarters, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, N.C." That specific language has been used in the past when troops killed in action have actually been part of the Army's elite Delta Force, a counterterrorism unit that is not publicly identified.</p> <p>Another US official confirmed to CNN that Dunbar was assigned to Delta. Delta Force and the Naval Special Warfare Development Group -- popularly known as Seal Team Six -- are among the so-called Tier One units that specialize in high-risk counterterrorism and hostage rescue missions that are rarely acknowledged. Special operations forces have been in the Manbij area recently looking for high-value ISIS operatives that may have fled to the area the US official said.</p> <p>The US maintains about 2,000 US troops in Syria, who mostly work with local allies fighting ISIS in Syria.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	04/02 FBI oldest forensic case
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/02/science/mummy-head-fbi-dna.html
GIST	<p>In 1915, a team of American archaeologists excavating the ancient Egyptian necropolis of Deir el-Bersha blasted into a hidden tomb. Inside the cramped limestone chamber, they were greeted by a gruesome sight: a mummy's severed head perched on a cedar coffin.</p> <p>The room, which the researchers labeled Tomb 10A, was the final resting place for a governor named Djehutynakht (pronounced "juh-HOO-tuh-knocked") and his wife. At some point during the couple's 4,000-year-long slumber, grave robbers ransacked their burial chamber and plundered its gold and jewels. The looters tossed a headless, limbless mummified torso into a corner before attempting to set the room on fire to cover their tracks.</p> <p>The archaeologists went on to recover painted coffins and wooden figurines that survived the raid and sent them to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in 1921. Most of the collection stayed in storage until 2009 when the museum exhibited them. Though the torso remained in Egypt, the decapitated head became the star of the showcase. With its painted-on eyebrows, somber expression and wavy brown hair peeking through its tattered bandages, the mummy's noggin brought viewers face-to-face with a mystery.</p> <p>"The head had been found on the governor's coffin but we were never sure if it was his head or her head,"</p>

said Rita Freed, a curator at the museum.

The museum staff concluded only a DNA test would determine whether they had put Mr. or Mrs. Djehutynakht on display.

“The problem was that at the time in 2009 there had been no successful extraction of DNA from a mummy that was 4,000-years-old,” said Dr. Freed.

Egyptian mummies pose a unique challenge because the desert’s scorching climate rapidly degrades DNA. Earlier attempts at obtaining their ancient DNA either failed or produced results contaminated by modern DNA. To crack the case, the museum turned to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The F.B.I. had never before worked on a specimen so old. If its scientists could extract genetic material from the 4,000-year-old mummy, they would add a powerful DNA collecting technique to their forensics arsenal and also unlock a new way of deciphering Egypt’s ancient past.

“I honestly didn’t expect it to work because at the time there was this belief that it was not possible to get DNA from ancient Egyptian remains,” said Odile Loreille a forensic scientist at the F.B.I. But in the journal *Genes in March*, Dr. Loreille and her colleagues reported that they had retrieved ancient DNA from the head. And after more than a century of uncertainty, the mystery of the mummy’s identity had been laid to rest.

What lies in Tomb 10A

Governor Djehutynakht and his wife, Lady Djehutynakht, are believed to have lived around 2000 B.C. during Egypt’s Middle Kingdom. They ruled a province of Upper Egypt. Though the walls in their tomb were bare, the coffins were embellished with beautiful hieroglyphics of the afterlife.

“His coffin is a classic masterpiece of Middle Kingdom art,” said Marleen De Meyer, assistant director for archaeology and Egyptology at the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo, who re-entered the tomb in 2009. “It has elements of a rare kind of realism.”

The team that discovered Djehutynakht’s desecrated chamber more than a century ago was led by archaeologists George Reisner and Hanford Lyman Story. As they explored the cliffs of Deir el-Bersha, which is about 180 miles south of Cairo on the east bank of the Nile, they uncovered a 30-foot burial shaft beneath boulders. With the help of dynamite, they entered the tomb.

In their original reports the archaeologists said the dismembered body parts belonged to a woman, presumably Lady Djehutynakht. Dr. De Meyer suspected the head belonged to the governor and not his wife.

Missing facial bones

As Dr. Freed, the museum curator prepared the items from Tomb 10A for exhibition in 2005, she reached out to Massachusetts General Hospital. Its CT scan revealed the head was missing cheek bones and part of its jaw hinge — features that may have potentially provided insight into the mummy’s sex.

“From the outside you could not tell that the mummy had been so internally tinkered with,” said Dr. Rajiv Gupta, a neuroradiologist at Massachusetts General. “All the muscles that are involved in chewing and closing the mouth, the attachment sites of those muscles had been taken out.”

They now had another mystery: Why did the mummy have these facial mutilations?

Along with Dr. Paul Chapman, a neurosurgeon at the hospital, Dr. Gupta hypothesized that they might be part of an ancient Egyptian mummification practice known as the “Opening of the Mouth Ceremony.” The ritual was performed so the deceased could eat, drink and breathe in the afterlife.

“It’s a very specific cut they made,” said Dr. Gupta, referring to the surgical removal of part of the mandible. “There’s a precision to it which is what we were surprised by. Someone was actually doing coronoidectomy 4,000 years ago.”

Some doctors and Egyptologists doubted that ancient Egyptians could perform that complex operation with primitive tools.

To show it was possible, Dr. Gupta, Dr. Chapman and an oral and maxillofacial surgeon performed the bone removal on two cadavers using a chisel and mallet. They drove the chisel between the lips and gums behind the wisdom teeth, and were able to remove the same bones missing in the mummified skull.

Still, the question of the mummy’s identity lingered.

Tooth raiders

The doctors and museum staff determined their best chance of retrieving DNA would be by extracting the mummy’s molar. “The core of the tooth was where the money was,” Dr. Chapman said. Teeth often act as tiny genetic time capsules. Researchers have used them to tell the tales of our prehistoric human cousins called Denisovans, as well as to provide insight into the medical history of long dead people.

“The advantage we had is that we had a hole in the neck because the head had been torn off,” said Dr. Chapman.

They snaked a long scope with a camera into the back of the mouth. The first tooth they targeted would not budge, so Dr. Fabio Nunes, who was then a molecular biologist at Massachusetts General, switched to a different molar. Sweating, he clamped down with dental forceps, gave it a few wiggles, then a few twists and “pop” — it was free.

“My main concern was: Don’t drop it, don’t drop it, don’t drop it,” he said. After he successfully maneuvered out from the neck, the room exhaled and gazed upon their prize.

“This looked like an absolutely cavity free, perfectly preserved tooth,” Dr. Freed said. “I thought maybe it was Mrs. Djehutyakht who had died in childbirth. Total speculation.”

The F.B.I. ’s oldest forensic case

For several years, other teams of scientists tried fruitlessly to get DNA from the molar. Then the crown of the tooth came to Dr. Loreille at the F.B.I. ’s lab in Quantico, Va., in 2016.

Dr. Loreille had joined the F.B.I. after 20 years of studying ancient DNA. Previously, she had extracted genetic material from a 130,000-year-old cave bear, and worked on cases to identify unknown Korean War victims, a two-year old child who drowned on the Titanic and two of the Romanov children who were murdered during the Russian Revolution (though she was unable to confirm if one was the famed Anastasia).

In the F.B.I.’s clean lab, Dr. Loreille drilled into the tooth’s core and collected a tiny bit of powder. She then dissolved the tooth dust to make a DNA library that allowed her to amplify the amount of DNA she was working with, like a copy machine, and bring it up to detectable levels.

To determine whether what she had extracted was ancient DNA or contamination from modern people, she analyzed how damaged the sample was. It showed signs of heavy damage, confirmation that she was studying the mummy’s genetic material.

She plugged her data into computer software that analyzed the ratio of chromosomes in the sample. “When you have a female you have more reads on X. When you have a male you have X and Y,” she said.

The program spit out “male.”

Dr. Loreille discovered the mummified severed head had indeed belong to Governor Djehutynakht. And in doing so she had help establish that ancient Egyptian DNA could be extracted from mummies.

“It’s one of the Holy Grails of ancient DNA to collect good data from Egyptian mummies,” said Pontus Skoglund, a geneticist at The Francis Crick Institute in London who helped confirm the accuracy of the finding while he was a researcher at Harvard. “It was very exciting to see that Odile got something that looked like it could be authentic ancient DNA.”

Unraveling the mummy’s genetic history

Dr. Loreille’s examination also showed that Governor Djehutynakht’s DNA carried clues to another mystery. For centuries archaeologists and historians have debated the origins of the ancient Egyptians and how closely related they were to modern people living in North Africa. To the researchers’ surprise, the governor’s mitochondrial DNA indicated his ancestry on his mother’s side, or haplogroup, was Eurasian.

“No one will ever believe us,” Dr. Loreille recalled telling her colleague Jodi Irwin. “There’s a European haplogroup in an ancient mummy.”

Dr. Irwin, the supervisory biologist at the F.B.I.’s DNA support unit, had similar concerns. To verify the results they sent a portion of the tooth to a Harvard lab, and then to the Department of Homeland Security, for further sequencing.

Then last year as the F.B.I. scientists worked to confirm their results, another group affiliated with the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History in Germany reported the first successful extraction of ancient DNA from Egyptian mummies. Their results showed that their ancient Egyptian samples were closer to modern Middle Eastern and European samples than to modern Egyptians, who have more sub-Saharan African ancestry.

“It was at the same time ‘Dang! We’re not first,’” Dr. Loreille said. “But also we’re happy to see they had this Eurasian ancestry.”

Alexander Peltzer, a population geneticist at the Planck Institute and an author on the first Egyptian mummy DNA paper, said Dr. Loreille’s genetic findings fit well with what his team had found.

“Of course, one has to be careful to deduce too much from single genomes and only two locations,” he said.

Dr. Irwin also expressed caution with how the public interprets her team’s results, saying that mitochondrial DNA provides, “just a very small glimpse into somebody’s ancestry.”

Future ancient DNA work will provide insight into how diverse populations moved and mixed in Egypt millenniums ago, according to Verena Schünemann, a paleogeneticist at the University of Zurich in Switzerland who led the Egyptian mummy DNA study that was published before the F.B.I.’s.

Obtaining mummified samples for genetic sequencing may prove difficult for researchers outside of Egypt as the country’s government has barred foreign researchers from taking artifacts and ancient human remains out of the country since 1983. Many investigations will instead rely on museum samples, like Djehutynakht’s decapitated head.

In addition to helping lay groundwork for future exploration of ancient Egypt’s migration history, Dr. Loreille and her team’s work may prove beneficial to F.B.I. forensic efforts.

“We are testing techniques that may in the future help them work on remains that are highly degraded, like

	<p>in the desert or that are burned,” she said.</p> <p>But for the Egyptologists and medical professionals enthralled by Tomb 10A, the biggest prize was finally solving the mystery of the mummified head.</p> <p>“You almost feel like it’s a child, like you just identified the gender of a baby,” Dr. Nunes said. “It is a boy!”</p> <p>Dr. Freed agreed. “We now know that we have the governor himself,” she said. “We already show the head at the museum, but now we’ll have to change the label!”</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Antarctica coastal glaciers in retreat
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2018/04/02/an-alarming-10-percent-of-antarcticas-coastal-glaciers-are-in-retreat-scientists-find/?utm_term=.3a4936a86206
GIST	<p>Antarctica’s ocean-front glaciers are retreating, according a new satellite survey that raises additional concerns about the massive continent’s potential contribution to rising sea levels.</p> <p>Antarctica, which contains enough ice to raise the oceans by about 200 feet, is a continent of ice that flows outward to the ocean at numerous large glaciers. These mostly submerged glaciers rest deep on the seafloor at a point called the “grounding line,” where ocean, ice and bedrock meet.</p> <p>But at 10.7 percent of these glaciers, the ice masses are moving at a significant speed back toward the center of the continent as they melt from below, often because of the incursion of warm ocean water, which causes the grounding line to retreat. Only about 1.9 percent of glaciers were growing at a significant speed, suggesting a net retreat.</p> <p>And the more glaciers are retreating, the more one worries about sea-level rise. Retreating grounding lines can expose more ice to the ocean, allowing it to flow outward more rapidly.</p> <p>The research used satellite techniques to infer changes to glacier grounding lines based on changes in the height of the glacier’s surface. Scanning one-third of Antarctica’s marine-based glaciers along a roughly 10,000-mile stretch of coastline, the work presents a more comprehensive look than other studies of Antarctic glaciers, which have tended to focus on grounding lines in just one key region.</p> <p>“We were able to quantify more or less all around Antarctica,” said Hannes Konrad, the lead author of the research. Konrad works at the University of Leeds in Britain, along with a number of co-authors of the study. Other authors worked at University College London.</p> <p>The research found that from 2010 through 2016, about 80 square miles per year of ice is being lifted off of the seafloor and going afloat as grounding lines retreat. That’s about four times the size of Manhattan every year.</p> <p>At the same time, the 10.7 percent of Antarctic grounding lines were retreating at a rate faster than 25 meters per year, which the study takes as a benchmark because that rate of retreat is believed to have occurred at the end of the last ice age. Just 1.9 percent of Antarctic grounding lines were advancing faster than 25 meters per year.</p> <p>The sea-level implications of the research are troubling, if not direct — researchers cannot precisely quantify sea-level rise just based on the retreat of grounding lines, although they are certainly related.</p> <p>“We find that 10 percent of the Antarctica ice sheet significantly retreating, but we can’t somehow extrapolate sea level rates that come from that,” Konrad said. “But to say 10 percent of Antarctica, this massive ice body, is retreating, still should be some sign of warning. It’s large.”</p>

	A key factor driving the retreat of Antarctic grounding lines is the incursion of warm, deep ocean water which melts glaciers at their bases and causes the grounding line to retreat.
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HEADLINE	04/02 IRS audits fewest tax returns in 15yrs
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/2/irs-tax-return-audit-rate-lowest-15-years/
GIST	<p>The IRS is auditing fewer tax returns than at any other time in the past 15 years as the agency struggles with what it says is a shrinking budget and pressure from Congress to be less zealous in enforcement.</p> <p>Just six out of every 1,000 individual taxpayers faced an audit last year, the government said in the latest IRS Data Book released last week, marking the lowest rate since 2002.</p> <p>Analysts said that is unlikely to change this year, as the April 17 deadline for this year’s filing season nears and as the IRS grapples with endemic budget cuts and the strain of having to administer the new tax law.</p> <p>Some taxpayer advocates cheered the news, saying it’s time the IRS was brought to heel after years of excesses, including targeting tea party groups for illegal scrutiny and making tax-filing season tougher than it had to be as a protest against budget cuts.</p> <p>“It should be a healthy sign if they’re auditing less,” said Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform. “I would very much like to live in a world where the IRS doesn’t have to do too much auditing because the tax code is simple enough for people to understand.”</p> <p>But the agency’s defenders said having a working IRS is critical to collecting money owed to the government — particularly after Congress made the job even more complicated with the passage in December of the \$1.5 trillion tax cut legislation.</p> <p>“You’ve got this depleted workforce, they’re auditing fewer people, and now here comes this tax law that invites all kind of rampant tax sheltering, and they provide no additional money,” said Chuck Marr, director of federal tax policy at the left-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.</p> <p>The IRS has been begging for more resources to conduct enforcement, but the Republican-led Congress has been reluctant to allocate the money.</p> <p>Former IRS Commissioner John Koskinen has estimated that the agency leaves up to \$8 billion per year in legitimately owed taxes on the table because of a lack of resources for enforcement.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Protesters build longhouse at PSE HQ
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article207740454.html
GIST	<p>Protesters of a liquefied natural gas plant being built on Tacoma’s Tideflats gathered outside Puget Sound Energy’s headquarters in Bellevue on Monday and did a little building of their own.</p> <p>KOMO News reports that protesters built a small replica of a Native American longhouse directly outside the entrance to PSE’s headquarters on Monday morning.</p> <p>The longhouse was built without permits, protesters told KOMO, though they told KOMO they’ve applied for permits with the city of Bellevue.</p> <p>The demonstration was a dig at PSE, which was issued a notice of violation by the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency last April for “failure to obtain a notice of construction approval prior to construction, installation,</p>

establishment or modification of a source,” according to a letter the agency sent PSE.
Never miss a local story.

"This is how it feels when your consent is taken from you — we're building without permission on PSE property, just as PSE is doing on our land," Puyallup Tribe member Dakota Case told KOMO. "But ours is a peaceful symbolic gesture, not a bullying, dangerous, and profit-taking one."

The Puyallup Tribal Council and individual members have said the tribe was not consulted about the project, which they say is being built on ancestral tidelands, and have argued that consultation is an important part of the Puyallup Land Claims Settlement of 1990. The land where the plant is being built is owned by the Port of Tacoma.

PSE spokesman Grant Ringel said the company supports the rights of the protesters to express their opinions. He said the protesters arrived about 8 a.m. and left about 10:30 a.m.

"The only issue we had with this protest was that it created a safety issue because it blocked people from getting into the building to do their jobs from the street entrance, and blocked people from exiting the building through that entrance," Ringel said.

Puyallup Tribal Council member James Rideout said Monday the tribe continues to be concerned about the plant's construction.

"The liquid natural gas plant that is currently being constructed on Tacoma's waterfront is dangerous, and construction should be stopped until proper permits have been completed," Rideout said. "We deserve to fully understand all risks associated with this project."

When completed, the facility would produce 250,000 gallons of LNG a day. A storage tank at the plant would hold 8 million gallons of LNG. Most of that would be sold to customers, including the shipping company TOTE Maritime. PSE also plans to use the tank's contents as a backup supply for high-demand gas days.

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HEADLINE	04/02 Israel: deal reached to settle migrants
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/israel-deal-reached-resettle-african-migrants-west-54172444?
GIST	<p>Israel said Monday it has reached an agreement with the United Nations to scrap its contested plans to deport African asylum seekers and will resettle many of them in Western countries instead.</p> <p>Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said the "unprecedented understandings" with the U.N. refugee agency would send more than 16,000 migrants to various Western countries that are willing to absorb them. It said the new deal would be implemented in three stages over five years, with many of those remaining in Israel integrated and granted official status.</p> <p>Netanyahu and his interior minister, Ariele Deri, announced the deal at a joint press conference.</p> <p>The deal lifts the threat of a forced expulsion to unnamed African destinations, widely believed to be Rwanda and Uganda, with whom Israel had reached a secret agreement. Israel had planned to begin the mass deportations on April 1.</p> <p>Netanyahu said the plan was canceled after it became clear that the "third country" could not handle the absorptions. Migrants who had earlier agreed to return to Africa had reported abuses and broken promises after arriving in Rwanda. In some cases, their travel papers were confiscated or they were quickly sent to Uganda.</p>

	<p>"From the moment in the past few weeks that it became clear that the third country as an option doesn't exist, we basically entered a trap where all of them would remain," he said. He described Monday's compromise as the best available option.</p> <p>Shlomo Mor-Yosef, a senior official at Israel's Interior Ministry, said migrants would be absorbed throughout the European Union, as well as in Canada and the United States.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Seattle probes \$23M streetcar deficit
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/city-to-launch-investigation-into-seattle-streetcars-23-million-deficit
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Construction of the Seattle Streetcar extension has been put on a six moth hold by Mayor Jenny Durkan.</p> <p>Now comes details of an investigation into 'who knew what when' at Seattle's Department of Transportation regarding a \$23 million deficit in the project.</p> <p>The city's budget director, Ben Noble, said a third party consultant should be selected within the week to investigate how officials in the department could have seriously underestimated the capital costs of the 1.2 mile project - which will link up the South Lake Union Streetcar to the First Hill line, which terminates in Pioneer Square.</p> <p>The investigation will look into project performance assumptions as well as operating costs.</p> <p>Metro, the operator of the streetcar, has said the city underestimated operating costs of the entire line by almost 50 percent.</p> <p>"We want to make sure all the risks associated with this project are appropriately priced, at this point I don't have confidence that they are," SDOT interim Director Goran Sparrman told city council members on Monday.</p> <p>"Right now we are looking at a \$23 million deficit and clearly that's resources the project doesn't have," said Sparrman.</p> <p>The capital costs for the project are projected to be \$165,763.932. But, federal and local funds committed to the project are \$142,600,000 leaving the city \$23,163.932 short.</p> <p>Noble provided new estimates to the council that showed a six month delay in the project could cost the city nearly \$13 million, if the council and the mayor decided to restart it.</p> <p>"Whenever you are talking about misstatements or incorrect information, that's huge, let's stop the project and get to the bottom of it," said City Council President Bruce Harrell.</p> <p>When council members tried to ask Sparrman the 'who knew what when' type of questions, City Attorney Pete Holmes advised city officials not to answer in a public session, because of potential issues with contractors committed to the project.</p> <p>City Council President Bruce Harrell said he's fully committed to a transparent investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 'State of county' address canceled
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SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/seattlenews/article/State-of-County-address-canceled-by-youth-12799794.php
GIST	<p>Opponents of the under-construction youth detention center in Seattle continued their efforts to shut the project down, forcing the cancellation of a major speech from King County Executive Dow Constantine on Monday.</p> <p>Constantine was set to give his "State of the County" address Monday at 11 a.m. at the Burien Library, but a group of protesters from European Dissent, which identifies itself as a "network of white anti-racist organizers," forced the cancellation of the speech.</p> <p>The speech will instead be distributed via video on the county's website, according to Constantine's office.</p> <p>A video posted to the European Dissent Facebook page showed protesters standing behind a lectern holding a sign reading "People's moratorium, stop the youth jail" as city and county officials milled around.</p> <p>In the video, activist Olivia Smith asked Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan for comment on the "No Youth Jail" movement. Durkan talked about the need to provide social services to youth.</p> <p>"We have to make sure opportunity is present from the time they are born," Durkan said. "We've got to get good prenatal care. We've got to get good pre-K. We've got to make sure that there is a schools-to-opportunity pipeline. That is the No. 1 thing we have to do, and as mayor I'm going to work on ways to do that."</p> <p>When pressed to comment on the legal status of the Children and Family Justice Center, Durkan walked away.</p> <p>Smith then asked King County Councilmember Larry Gossett if it was unwise for the county to continue building the facility after a state Court of Appeals ruled that Proposition 1, the 2012 levy that provided funding for the \$210 million project, included imprecise language in the ballot title that jeopardized the county's ability to collect property taxes for the project.</p> <p>"No, because We've continued to build things that have been challenged before," Gossett said. "The most important thing is that the voters voted for it."</p> <p>Gossett declined to speculate on where funds for the detention center might come from if the state Supreme Court does not reverse the appellate court decision. King County petitioned the state's highest court to review the decision in December, but there's not yet been any indication whether it would take up the case.</p> <p>After settling down attendees (except for the demonstrators holding the banner) sat quietly for roughly 15 minutes until Constantine's Director of Communications Alex Fryer informed the crowd that "the state of the county was delivered and recorded earlier today" and would be available online later on Monday.</p> <p>Monday's demonstration was the latest in a series of recent actions from "youth jail" opponents.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Mystery lingers in Calif. SUV crash
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/02/us/family-suv-pacific-coast-crash-what-we-know/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A family's SUV found upside down at the bottom of a cliff near a remote stretch of highway on the Northern California coast. Five bodies recovered, including three teens. Questions surrounding whether the vehicle was deliberately driven off the road.</p> <p>The deaths of Jennifer and Sarah Hart, both 38, and their children -- Markis, 19, and Jeremiah and Abigail,</p>

both 14 -- are indeed a mystery. The couple's other children -- Hannah, 16, Devonte, 15, and Sierra, 12 -- are still missing. Investigators aren't certain whether they were in the SUV when it tumbled into the sea.

Here is what we know about the Hart family, and the fatal crash last week:

The children

The children were adopted in Texas in 2006 and 2009, according to Tiffani Butler, a spokeswoman for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services.

Butler couldn't immediately say if both women or just one of them legally adopted the six children.

Siblings Abigail, Hannah and Markis were adopted first, in September 2006, in Colorado County, according to Butler. Sierra, Jeremiah and Devonte, also siblings, were adopted in February 2009 in Harris County. Out-of-state adoptions are not uncommon, according to Butler.

Devonte, who is black, earned national attention when a touching photo of him went viral in 2014.

In the photo, tears streamed down his face as he embraced a white police officer in the middle of a Portland, Oregon, demonstration over a grand jury's decision not to indict Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson in the fatal shooting of Michael Brown.

Devonte had been holding a sign offering "Free Hugs."

The fatal crash

The SUV plunged 100 feet into the water from a flat, gravel-covered outcrop where travelers stop to admire the view, walk their dog and stretch their legs, according to Mendocino County Sheriff Tom Allman.

The bodies of Jennifer and Sarah Hart were found inside the overturned SUV on March 26, the Mendocino County Sheriff's Office said. Emergency responders recovered the bodies of Markis, Jeremiah and Abigail outside the SUV. Scattered belongings, including a purse, were found nearby.

Investigators found no skid marks or brake marks.

A passerby happened to notice the vehicle but nobody reported seeing the crash, so authorities don't know when or how it happened.

On Sunday, police said preliminary information suggested the SUV may have been intentionally driven off the edge of the cliff.

There is "every indication" that Hannah, Devonte and Sierra were riding in the SUV, too, but it's also possible they were left behind with friends, Allman said.

Authorities are still searching for the three children.

The Hart family

Jennifer and Sarah Hart once lived in Minnesota, where Sarah Hart pleaded guilty to misdemeanor domestic assault involving one of the children in 2010, according to court records from Douglas County, Minnesota.

The child had told an elementary school teacher of pain in her stomach and back, which was discovered to be caused by bruises. Sarah Hart told police she had spanked the child over the edge of the bathtub because of the child's behavior. She was sentenced to community service and one year of probation.

About 10 months ago, the Harts moved into their home in Woodland in Washington state, said neighbor Bruce DeKalb. He said the family was "very private."

Another neighbor, Bill Groener, said the children were home-schooled and kept inside most of the time. Zippy Lomax, a friend of the couple, told CNN affiliate KOIN: "Jen and Sarah really were the kind of parents that I think the world desperately needs."

Neighbor's suspicions

DeKalb told HLN last week that Devonte and one of his sisters had said they were being mistreated. He recalled two disturbing encounters he had with the children.

"One of the girls came to the door at 1:30 in the morning and said that she needed help and the parents were not treating her properly, and (she) wanted us to protect her," DeKalb said. "We ended up getting her back to her parents ... and then I went over there the next morning and just checked on things, and everything seemed normal, and we let it go from there."

DeKalb said he and his wife also encountered Devonte, the one child he saw doing outside chores, such as taking the garbage bins to and from the street.

"About a week ago, he (Devonte) started coming over asking for food and saying that they were taking meals away from him due to punishment," DeKalb told HLN. "And it started out as one time a day and escalated up to three times a day, until a week went by and we decided that we needed to get professional help."

DeKalb said he called Child Protective Services on March 23, and they arrived just after Jennifer Hart came home from work. But she didn't answer the door.

Sarah Hart came home soon after, DeKalb said. By the next morning, the family and their vehicle were gone.

Child Protective Services tried to visit the family twice more -- on March 26 and March 27 -- but had no success, according to the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. The agency was trying to get in touch after the "now deceased children were identified as potential victims of alleged abuse or neglect," according to a statement from the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. The department said it had no history with the Hart family.

On March 29, Clark County, Washington, sheriff's deputies executed a search warrant at the family's Woodland home, looking for any evidence in the missing persons case, Sgt. Brent Waddell said then.

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HEADLINE	04/02 Medical pot reduces opioid abuse?
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/medical-marijuana-may-reduce-opioid-use-little-n862101
GIST	<p>Making medical marijuana available might help reduce opioid prescriptions, researchers reported Monday.</p> <p>They found states that legalized the medical use of marijuana saw small reductions in opioid prescriptions for Medicare and Medicaid patients.</p> <p>Since opioid prescriptions are considered to be a major driver of the opioid abuse epidemic, the researchers said, medical marijuana laws could be a part of the solution.</p> <p>"State implementation of medical marijuana laws was associated with a 5.88 percent lower rate of opioid prescribing," wrote Hefei Wen of the University of Kentucky College of Public Health and Jason Hockenberry of the Emory University Rollins School of Public Health.</p> <p>"Marijuana is one of the potential non-opioid alternatives that can relieve pain at a relatively lower risk of addiction and virtually no risk of overdose," they wrote in one of two reports published in the Journal of</p>

the American Medical Association's JAMA Internal Medicine.

The researchers looked at the prescription records of people using Medicaid and also Medicare Part D – the prescription add-on plan for Medicare recipients.

In the Medicare study, Wen and colleagues found that states with medical marijuana laws had a more than 8 percent reduction in opioid prescriptions compared to states with no such laws.

“We found that overall opioid prescribing in Part D was lower when states permit access to medical cannabis,” they wrote.

“Prescriptions filled for all opioids decreased by 2.11 million daily doses per year from an average of 23.08 million daily doses per year when a state instituted any medical cannabis law,” they added.

“Prescriptions for all opioids decreased by 3.742 million daily doses per year when medical cannabis dispensaries opened.”

State and federal officials are looking for ways to reduce opioid deaths and to reduce the overuse of opioid prescriptions.

The National Center for Health Statistics says 63,600 people died of drug overdoses in 2016.

Opioids killed or helped kill 42,249 people in 2016, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says. Opioid overdose deaths were five times higher in 2016 than in 1999.

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HEADLINE	04/03 North Atlantic right whales face extinction
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/whales-fade-movement-spawned-hope-54194139
GIST	<p>Regina Asmutis-Silvia, a biologist who has dedicated her career to saving right whales, is cleaning out a file cabinet from the early 1990s, and the documents inside tell a familiar story — the whales are dying from collisions with ships and entanglements in commercial fishing gear, and the species might not survive.</p> <p>Fast forward through a quarter-century of crawl-paced progress, and it's all happening again.</p> <p>"It's a little scary to think if we hadn't been working on this all these years, would they have been relegated to history instead of Cape Cod Bay?" said Asmutis-Silvia, of Plymouth, Massachusetts-based Whale and Dolphin Conservation. "We're standing on the cliff and going, 'It matters, they're still here, they're still something to fight for'."</p> <p>Despite eight decades of conservation efforts, North Atlantic right whales are facing a new crisis. The threat of extinction within a generation looms, and the movement to preserve the whales is trying to come up with new solutions.</p> <p>The whales are one of the rarest marine mammals in the world, numbering about 450. The 100,000-pound animals have been even closer to the brink of extinction before, and the effort to save them galvanized one of the most visible wildlife conservation movements in U.S. history.</p> <p>But the population's falling again because of poor reproduction coupled with high mortality from ship strikes and entanglement. Scientists, environmentalists, whale watch captains and animal lovers of all stripes are rallying to renew interest in saving right whales, but many admit to feeling close to defeated.</p> <p>Charles "Stormy" Mayo, director of the right whale ecology program at the Center for Coastal Studies in Provincetown, and other scientists have said the species could be extinct as soon as 2041. Mayo, a ninth</p>

generation resident of Cape Cod whose ancestors harpooned whales in the 18th and 19th centuries, now leads expeditions to find the animals and try to learn how to save them.

"There's a fair amount of sadness, dealing with these creatures. They are on the brink of extinction now, and their future is truly in doubt," he said. "I don't think any of us are discouraged, but many of us are fearful. I certainly am."

The decline of right whales dates back to the whaling era of centuries ago, when they were targeted as the "right" whale to hunt because they were slow and floated when killed. They were harvested for their oil and meat, and might have dwindled to double digits until international protections took hold in 1935.

Preserving the whales became an international cause, championed by environmentalists, scientists and the U.S. government, and their population grew to about 275 in 1990 and 500 around 2010. But then things changed.

Scientists are still trying to figure out why the whales have lost about 10 percent of their population in just eight years, but one hypothesis places blame on the warming of the Atlantic Ocean. The whales migrate from Georgia and Florida to New England and Canada every year, seeking food. They are aided by a complex system of protected areas, shipping regulations and commercial fishing restrictions that try to ensure safe passage as they gorge on copepods, crustaceans the size of a flea.

But as waters have warmed, the tiny organisms they need to survive appear to be moving, and the whales are following, sometimes putting themselves in harm's way, said Mark Baumgartner, a scientist with Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. They also just aren't eating enough, he said.

"The whales are moving around a lot more and they are not finding food," he told fishermen at the Maine Fishermen's Forum in early March.

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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	04/02 Seattle purse snatching teens arrested
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/teens-arrested-following-purse-snatching-incident-in-seattle-police-say/725805790
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Seattle police officers arrested three teens following a purse-snatching incident in the International District Sunday afternoon, officials said.</p> <p>Police said three teens approached a couple around 5:30 p.m. Sunday in the 1200 block of South King Street, and one of the teens took the woman's purse before running away with the group.</p> <p>Responding officers found the three teens attempting to scale a fence in the 1200 block of South Lane Street. The teens stopped when they were told to do so by officers, and police took the group into custody without incident.</p> <p>Police said they found a purse that contained an identification card of the victim 10 feet from where the suspects were taken into custody.</p> <p>While searching the suspects, police said they found additional identification cards and debit cards that belonged to the victim.</p> <p>Three suspects -- two 15-year-olds and one 16-year-old suspect -- were booked into the King County Youth Services Center on investigation of robbery, according to police.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Illinois: synthetic pot deaths, arrests
SOURCE	http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-met-update-synthetic-outbreak-investigation-20180402-story.html
GIST	<p>State health officials have now linked two deaths and dozens of illnesses to synthetic marijuana known as K2, while authorities on Monday said they found a large amount of synthetic pot laced with a toxic substance often used in rat poison being sold at a West Side convenience store.</p> <p>Fouad Masoud, owner of King Mini Mart at 1303 S. Kedzie Ave. in Lawndale, and two of his employees, Jamil Abdelrahman Jad Allah and Adil Khan Mohammed, could face 20 years in prison after an undercover officer bought K2 branded with names that included “Blue Giant,” “Crazy Monkey” and “Matrix” from the workers, according to a federal complaint.</p> <p>The investigation leading to the arrests began last week after Illinois State Police gave Chicago police information about someone who had experienced adverse side effects after using synthetic pot purchased at King Mini Mart. An undercover officer was sent into the store and bought synthetic pot.</p> <p>After the undercover buy, the CPD’s Vice Control License Section Unit conducted a search of the store with the two employees behind the counter, and officers found several packages of K2 on Jad Allah and 1,920 grams of the substance in a bucket behind the store.</p> <p>Tests on the synthetic pot seized from the mini mart determined it contained toxic brodifacoum, a poison used in rodent control, the complaint said. In the recent outbreak associated with synthetic pot, nine people tested positive for brodifacoum, officials said.</p> <p>Jad Allah, 44, of Justice, and Mohammed, 44, of Chicago, were arrested Sunday. That evening, an unnamed witness told Masoud about Jad Allah’s arrest, according to the complaint. Shortly after, police on a stake out at Masoud’s townhouse saw him leaving with a large grocery bag with \$280,000 inside, according to the complaint. Masoud, 48, also was arrested. Police searched his home and recovered 2,900 grams of suspected synthetic cannabis labeled “Purple Giant,” the complaint said.</p> <p>State and local health officials issued a warning last week about a new symptom of synthetic pot — excessive bleeding from the eyes and ears. Those symptoms are associated with brodifacoum.</p> <p>Over the weekend, the Illinois Department of Public Health announced that one person had died after using synthetic pot. On Monday, the state agency announced that a second person had died. Both victims were men in their 20s, the agency said.</p> <p>Of those sickened, nearly half were in the Peoria area, and more than 20 were in the Chicago area. Generally, those who became ill after using the drug were hospitalized for internal bleeding as well as blood coming from the ears, eyes and mouth.</p> <p>The Peoria County coroner’s office was still investigating the death of a 22-year-old man who died Thursday morning and was being counted by the state health department as one of the fatalities in the outbreak. The cause and manner of the man’s death were pending results from toxicology tests that could take 20 to 30 days to complete, said Jamie Harwood, the Peoria County coroner.</p> <p>The man reportedly had used K2 before he was hospitalized for severe internal bleeding, Harwood said.</p> <p>The second death that could be linked to the outbreak is being investigated by officials in west suburban Kane County. Other than the victim being a man in his 20s, information about the death was not immediately available.</p> <p>In total, 56 people have been hospitalized in Illinois since March 10, according to the state health department.</p>

	Of that total, 17 people have been hospitalized in Chicago and five others elsewhere in Cook County, according to the health department. At least 14 people have been hospitalized in Peoria County. In adjoining Tazewell County, 12 people have been hospitalized, state officials said.
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HEADLINE	04/02 E-DUI emphasis patrol in state 2 weeks
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/944520/e-dui-emphasis-patrol-in-effect-across-state-for-two-weeks/
GIST	<p>Starting Monday, law enforcement agencies across Washington began watching more intently for drivers using electronics while driving.</p> <p>The Washington Traffic Safety Commission announced extra statewide patrols that will focus on distracted driving from April 2 to 14.</p> <p>Over 150 agencies will be participating in the crackdown, which will emphasize the state's new E-DUI law.</p> <p>If drivers are caught holding a cellphone, watching videos, using a tablet or holding any handheld electronic device, they will be subject to a \$136 ticket for the first offense. It also includes those stopped in traffic or at a stoplight.</p> <p>Drivers who receive a second E-DUI citation within five years will be fined \$234.</p> <p>Also it's important to note that information on all cellphone infractions will be made available to insurance companies, meaning premiums could increase for those who are caught breaking the law.</p> <p>The commission said cellphone use while driving increases the risk of crashing by three times.</p> <p>The law does allow for hands-free use of a device or operating a mounted device with just a single touch.</p> <p>Since the E-DUI law began in July of last year, there have been nearly 1,500 drivers ticketed each month in the state, the commission said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 'Affluenza teen' released from jail
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/affluenza-teen-ethan-couch-expected-released-jail/story?id=54130494&cid=clicksource_81_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>Ethan Couch, the young Texas man at the center of the so-called affluenza case, was released from jail this morning.</p> <p>Couch, now 20, was sentenced to two years in Tarrant County jail after violating his probation conditions for a 2013 fatal drunk-driving accident that killed four people and injured several others.</p> <p>His case gained national attention when a psychologist involved in the case said then-16-year-old Couch was a product of "affluenza" -- a term he used to describe Couch's irresponsible lifestyle associated with his affluent upbringing. Couch had a blood-alcohol level three times the legal limit on the night of the crash.</p> <p>After leaving the Tarrant County jail this morning, Couch was sent to meet with probation officers in a separate building.</p> <p>"[Couch] will now serve the remaining six years of his period of community supervision under the terms and conditions imposed by the court," his lawyers, Scott Brown and Reagan Wynn, said in a statement to ABC News. "From the beginning, Ethan has admitted his conduct, accepted responsibility for his actions,</p>

and felt true remorse for the terrible consequences of those actions.

"Now, nearly five years after this horrific event, Ethan does not wish to draw attention to himself and requests privacy so he may focus on successfully completing his community supervision and going forward as a law-abiding citizen," the lawyers' statement said.

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HEADLINE	04/02 Growing concern South King Co. violence
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/02/government-leaders-community-work-to-stem-violence-in-south-king-county/
GIST	<p>BURIEN, Wash. – King County leaders are concerned with what appears to be a growing violence problem lurking in the southern portion of the county.</p> <p>The latest incident happened just five days ago as two teenage girls were killed in a shooting outside an apartment building.</p> <p>Elizabeth Juarez, 13, and Eveona Cortez, 19, were both shot and killed near the Alturas apartment complex on Wednesday night.</p> <p>Police say so far they have no suspects but believe it was gang-related.</p> <p>On Monday Q13 News heard for the very first time from high-level county officials about the violence - and what community members are doing to take back their streets.</p> <p>“This terrible tragedy with two teenage girls being gunned down in this community cannot go unanswered,” said King County Executive Dow Constantine.</p> <p>Elizabeth’s sister Mary says she was a young, amazing girl who got caught up with a street gang.</p> <p>“Her being affiliated and involved with all that made her feel like she needed to be tougher,” she said.</p> <p>Gang shootings have happened before in south King County and Constantine says the most difficult struggle is keeping young people out of that kind of life in the first place.</p> <p>“That is a pattern we have seen before and quite recently, where there is a shooting and one in retaliation and it goes on indefinitely,” he said. “That requires police officers to stop and it requires a functional criminal justice system to be able to keep people safe, keep them from harming others, the interventions are critical, figuring out how to get these kids out of that life and on track is critical.”</p> <p>“Everybody in the city is just appalled by this,” said Burien resident Rob Halpin. “We’re shocked and certainly scared, a number of us, and we feel terrible for the families involved.”</p> <p>Halpin and his online group Localists.org hopes to make a difference where they can.</p> <p>He says neighbors are now cataloging locations of possible graffiti, and they’re working on plans to help private property owners cover up tags in an effort to take back their neighborhoods.</p> <p>“A lot of the tags seems to have a common theme and we’d like to make sure whoever is making these tags knows our neighborhoods aren’t going to take it,” he said.</p> <p>Burien residents spoke out at a City Council meeting Monday night.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Man charged setting fire to police car
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/lets-both-burn-in-hell-man-accused-of-setting-fire-to-seattle-police-car-as-he-was-being-driven-to-jail/
GIST	<p>Seattle police say a man who was being driven to jail set fire to the patrol car and yelled to the officer behind the wheel, "Let's both burn in hell!"</p> <p>Nickolas Osborne, a 24-year-old Seattle man, was charged last week with first-degree malicious mischief for allegedly causing extensive damage to the patrol car by using a lighter to ignite the headliner of the vehicle last month. Neither Osborne or the officer who was driving were injured.</p> <p>Osborne was arrested March 24 for allegedly harassing people at Lincoln Park in West Seattle and threatening them with a stick, according to charging papers.</p> <p>He was placed in the back seat of the patrol car, with his hands cuffed behind his back and the seat belt secured across his front, say the charges. About nine minutes into the ride to the King County Jail on northbound Interstate 5, "Osborne slipped his handcuffed hands to the front of his body, unbuckled his seat belt and began violently kicking the rear driver side window," charging papers say.</p> <p>The officer radioed ahead, asking for assistance from jail staff and requesting a backup officer meet him at the jail, the charges say.</p> <p>Osborne stopped kicking the window. The patrol car's interior camera captured him bending down and picking something up from the floor, which turned out to be a lighter, the charges say.</p> <p>He flicked the lighter on and tried to set the seat belt on fire, but when the belt failed to ignite, Osborne held the lighter up to the vehicle's headliner, according to the charges.</p> <p>"Within seconds the ceiling area caught fire and Osborne was heard yelling out, 'There we go! Let's both burn in hell!'" say the charges.</p> <p>The officer rolled down the rear windows to vent the smoke and flames. He then broadcast over his police radio that a fire had started in his vehicle and he pulled over on the James Street offramp, where other officers helped remove Osborne from the burning patrol car and then put out the flames, the charges say.</p> <p>A piece of burning insulation fell on Osborne's pant leg, but officers immediately extinguished the flames and he was unhurt, say charging papers.</p> <p>He was driven the rest of the way to the jail in an ambulance.</p> <p>In addition to the malicious mischief charge filed in Superior Court, Osborne has also been charged with misdemeanor harassment in Seattle Municipal Court, jail records show. He remains jailed in lieu of \$10,000 bail.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Calif. upholds DNA collection w/arrest
SOURCE	http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/california/la-me-ln-dna-supreme-court-20180402-story.html
GIST	<p>For years civil libertarians hoped to end California's practice of taking DNA from people arrested on suspicion of a felony and storing that genetic information in an offender database — regardless of whether the suspects were later acquitted or had their charges dropped.</p> <p>That fight for more protective rules in the government's DNA collection suffered a major setback Monday when the California Supreme Court let stand a provision of a 2004 voter initiative that said any adult arrested or charged with a felony must give up his or her DNA.</p>

On a 4-3 vote, the state's highest court refused to throw out that part of the Proposition 69, which has led to the storing of DNA profiles of tens of thousands of people arrested but never charged or convicted.

A majority of states collect DNA from arrestees, and the U.S. Supreme Court has approved the practice. Privacy advocates, though, argued that California's law was more invasive than rules in other places.

Justice Leandra R. Kruger, an appointee of Gov. Jerry Brown, wrote Monday's ruling, a victory for prosecutors. The court's three more conservative justices joined her.

Brown's two other judges on the state high court and a Democratic appointee on an appeals court dissented.

Kruger stressed the majority ruling was narrow and applied only to the facts of the case before the court. She said the DNA program for arrestees could still be challenged by someone else at a later date.

"We recognize that the DNA Act may raise additional constitutional questions that will require resolution in other cases," she wrote.

The more liberal justices wanted the court to use the opportunity to strike down a DNA program they said affects thousands of innocent people each year, and disproportionately African Americans.

Of the 200,000 to 300,000 people arrested in California annually on suspicion of a felony, about a third are either acquitted or never formally charged.

Yet the genetic profiles of the vast majority of them remain in a DNA offender database and can be combed by law enforcement to search for suspects in crimes.

"The fact that felony arrests of African Americans disproportionately result in no charges or dropped charges means that African Americans are disproportionately represented among the thousands of DNA profiles that the state has no legal basis for retaining," Justice Goodwin Liu wrote in one of Monday's dissents.

By allowing for the retention of DNA profiles of people not even charged with a crime, "it is not that far a step for the state to collect and retain DNA from law-abiding people in general," Liu wrote.

Monday's majority decision overturned a 2014 ruling by a San Francisco appeals court that found the DNA collection program for arrestees violated California's Constitution.

That ruling prompted state lawmakers to pass a bill, signed by Brown, to limit the arrestee DNA provisions in the event that the state Supreme Court also agreed they were unconstitutional.

Because Monday's ruling did not upend Proposition 69's requirements, the protections for innocent arrestees added in the new law will not now take effect.

Michael T. Risher, senior staff attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation of Northern California, called the decision disappointing.

"This maintains the status quo, at least for the time being," he said.

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HEADLINE 04/03 South Africa miners killed in bus attack

SOURCE <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-safrica-union-violence/six-workers-at-south-african-platinum-mine-killed-in-bus-attack-idUSKCN1HA0Y5>

GIST	<p>JOHANNESBURG (Reuters) - Six miners were killed when unknown attackers threw a petrol bomb at a bus transporting them to the Modikwa platinum mine in north east South Africa, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) said on Tuesday.</p> <p>The attack took place late on Monday night. Modikwa is operated by African Rainbow Minerals and Anglo American Platinum.</p> <p>“Six workers were burned beyond recognition and the other workers had to escape through windows. We also do not know what is the motive of the attack,” Phillip Mankge, the NUM’s North East Regional Secretary, said in a statement.</p> <p>Africa Rainbow Minerals and police could not immediately be reached for comment. Several workers were also injured, Mankge said in the statement.</p> <p>South Africa is the world’s top platinum producer and its platinum belt has been rocked by periodic bouts of violence and labor unrest in recent years with local communities demanding more jobs or more benefits from the industry.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 India: violence erupts w/caste order
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/violence-erupts-india-lowest-caste-protests-supreme-court-order-n862091
GIST	<p>NEW DELHI — Unrest took hold of several parts of northern and central India on Monday as thousands of Dalits, members of Hinduism's lowest caste, protested an order from the country's top court that they say dilutes legal safeguards put in place for their marginalized community.</p> <p>Caste prejudice is endemic in Hindu-majority India, even though the constitution outlaws the practice and has made it a crime punishable by up to a year in prison.</p> <p>The law also states that anyone accused of a caste-related crime can face immediate arrest. However, last month the Supreme Court ruled that in order to prevent misuse of the law, government officers accused of flouting it can be arrested only after their supervisors sign off on an inquiry.</p> <p>Dalit groups say that the law is already poorly enforced, with abysmally low conviction rates, and that the top court's order dilutes it further. Several groups called for a nationwide protest on Monday demanding that the top court review its order.</p> <p>As protests spread across the states of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, India's law minister, Ravi Shankar Prasad, told reporters that the federal government would petition the court seeking a review.</p> <p>The Dalits are lowest in Hinduism's caste hierarchy and for centuries were marginalized and forced to perform only certain jobs considered menial by other castes. These included skinning dead animal carcasses and cleaning toilets. They were not allowed into temples or permitted to study religious texts.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 DEA crackdown nets arrests, licenses
SOURCE	https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/dea-surge-drug-diversion-investigations-leads-28-arrests-and-147-revoked-registrations
GIST	<p>For 45 days in February and March, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration surged its enforcement and administrative resources to identify and investigate prescribers and pharmacies that dispensed disproportionately large amounts of drugs. The ultimate goal of the surge was remediating or removing</p>

those whose actions perpetuate the controlled prescription drug crisis in America, particularly opioid drugs.

During that period, the DEA surged the efforts of special agents, diversion investigators, and intelligence research specialists to analyze 80 million transaction reports from DEA-registered manufacturers and distributors, as well as reports submitted on suspicious orders and drug thefts and information shared by federal partners, such as the Department of Health and Human Services. This resulted in the development of 366 leads to DEA field offices, 188 of which (51 percent) resulted in active investigations by DEA's 22 field divisions.

The culmination of those investigations was 28 arrests, 54 other enforcement actions including search warrants and administrative inspection warrants, and 283 administrative actions of other types. These additional actions included scheduled inspections, letters of admonition, memoranda of agreement/understanding, surrenders for cause of DEA registrations, orders to show cause, and immediate suspension orders (the immediate revocation of registrations).

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HEADLINE	04/02 Fort Worth PD investigates arrest video
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/fort-worth-arrest-black-man-video/2018/04/02/id/852135/
GIST	<p>The Fort Worth Police Department is investigating a weekend arrest in which a white officer was caught on video kneeling on a black man's back and punching him while a black officer kneeed him.</p> <p>In the 50-second video of Saturday's arrest posted on Facebook by the Next Generation Action Network, which organizes demonstrations against police abuse, two Fort Worth police officers can be seen restraining Forrest Curry as he lies face-down in the street. A white officer kneels on Curry's back and repeatedly punches him as he cries, "Why the f--- are you punching me? Why?" A black officer next to Curry knees him repeatedly in his side.</p> <p>Police Chief Joel Fitzgerald said in a statement Sunday that the officers were responding to a call for backup from fire department personnel, who told the officers that Curry "appeared to be intoxicated and had attempted to assault them."</p> <p>It took three officers and one supervisor about five minutes to subdue Curry, Fitzgerald said.</p> <p>Curry, 35, was booked into Tarrant County Corrections Center on charges of resisting officers and evading arrest. Jail records showed that Curry was being held Monday on a \$2,250 bond.</p> <p>One of his attorneys, L. Chris Stewart of Atlanta, said Curry has a history of seizures and had one Saturday while walking that caused him to collapse in the street.</p> <p>When Fort Worth emergency medical staff arrived in response to a call for help, Curry came to and, disoriented, took off running.</p> <p>"It's just sad that in a medical emergency, (police) couldn't have been more patient or understanding," Stewart said.</p> <p>It is the latest in a string of confrontations that have raised questions about the Fort Worth Police Department's use of force policies.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Thailand seizes \$29M drugs; 11 arrests
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/thailand-finds-29m-drugs-arrests-11-week-

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GIST	<p>Thai authorities say they have seized drugs worth about \$29 million and arrested 11 people in recent days as narcotics case surge in the country.</p> <p>The drugs included amphetamine pills, marijuana, ketamine and ice seized in 11 unconnected cases since March 25. The haul displayed Tuesday at the Narcotics Suppression Division outside Bangkok was spread along a row of tables about 15 meters long (49 feet).</p> <p>The total was estimated to be worth 890 million baht (\$29 million), with the largest single haul being 700 kilograms (1,500 pounds) of ice, or crystal methamphetamine recovered March 28.</p> <p>They also seized nearly 1,800,000 pills of yaba, which is a local caffeine-methamphetamine mix, 1,380 kilograms (3,000 pounds) of marijuana, and smaller quantities of cocaine, ecstasy pills, ketamine and other drugs combinations.</p> <p>Thai police have dealt with more than 1,000 drug cases since October, compared to about 450 in the previous one-year period.</p> <p>The most recent was Monday, when officers arrested a Thai woman returning from Ethiopia with 50 containers of cocaine concealed inside her body.</p> <p>The 11 recent arrests include a Malaysian and a Tanzanian.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/03 Corner of Spain battles drug smuggling
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/corner-spain-struggle-staunch-drug-smuggling-54196795?
GIST	<p>Faces hidden by masks and hoods, a group of 40 men emerge from the darkness of beach-front houses and step into the sand as a state-of-the-art speedboat approaches the shore. They frantically unload dozens of plastic-wrapped burlap bundles, each containing 30 kilograms (66 pounds) of Moroccan hashish.</p> <p>In little over two minutes, most of the cargo has filled two full-size SUVs. All seats but the drivers' have been removed. The lights are off and the windows have been darkened with black spray.</p> <p>Then, somebody yells: "Cut it! Cut it!"</p> <p>As fast as they came, the SUVs speed away and the smugglers find shelter in the narrow streets of the La Atunara fishing neighborhood. The boat vanishes into the night, still holding half of its cargo. When a patrol car arrives seconds later, all that remains is the sound of the waves.</p> <p>Another night, another chapter in the battle between Spanish authorities and the crime gangs who have turned this neglected town in the shadow of the Rock of Gibraltar into a key European entry point for Moroccan cannabis resin.</p> <p>"Right now, we are losing this battle," said Francisco Mena, leader of Nexos, a federation of local community action groups that offer rehab for drug addicts. "Trafficking can't be stopped with the human resources and material means that we have in place at the moment."</p> <p>He insisted the war could still be won. But such optimism flies in the face of the brazen drug operations witnessed by Associated Press journalists, and of the very words of drug chieftains who agreed to rare interviews.</p> <p>One of the area's most notorious "narcos" insisted that the illicit trade is here to stay.</p>

"Trafficking has always existed, and it always will. If not here, it will move elsewhere along the coast," said the gang leader, who like others spoke on condition that they not be named because they feared prosecution. "If drug trafficking didn't end in Colombia with death penalties and extraditions to the United States, nobody will end it here."

Half a dozen trafficking ring members and their leaders pointed to the 30 percent provincial jobless rate in the Cadiz province, the highest in the country, as a fuel for their criminal activity. They claimed that shipping drugs is a way of life in this forgotten corner, justifying it as a "necessary bad" that feeds hundreds of families directly, and thousands more indirectly.

"Many of us are fathers. We need to take food home," said another gangster who asked to be identified as Pepe. "If we couldn't provide for our children this way, another kind of violence would come."

Three dozen clans are believed to be working in Campo de Gibraltar, a county of 268,000 that cradles the Bay of Algeciras. On a clear day, the contours of the coast of Morocco, the world's top producer of hashish, are visible across a busy shipping waterway at the mouth of the Mediterranean, just 30 kilometers (less than 19 miles) away.

A new generation of bolder gangsters is challenging underfunded law enforcement agencies, as local families watch their teenagers lured into a life of easy money.

"The national government needs to do more, and not only when the media's attention is here," said Mena. "When the state disappears, what appears is impunity."

Criminals that in the past dropped their few hundred kilograms of cargo in the sea as soon as they came across a customs surveillance boat are now ready to defend their bigger, bulkier shipments.

The RIBs, or rigid-hulled inflatable boats known as "rubbers," are partially to blame. With three, four and even five 350-horsepower engines, they can ship an average cargo of 1 to 3 tons of hashish in over one hour from northern Moroccan shores. A trafficker told the AP he held the local record: 178 stashes, or 5.3 tons, in a single shipment.

Car chases at high-speeds and personal threats to judges, prosecutors and underpaid, short-handed officers have now become common.

On land and at sea, traffickers use shuttle vehicles — SUVs or rubbers without cargo whose function is to mislead authorities and, increasingly, ram patrol cars and boats.

So far, casualties have been higher on the traffickers' side. Two years ago, four traffickers died when a patrol vessel sailed over their rubber, prompting angry protests against the authorities.

According to police investigators and drug traffickers themselves, the uptick in violence is also related to inter-gang burglaries of drug cargo from beaches or from hundreds of "kindergartens" — storage spaces, often in local homes. These "vuelcos" are often the work of outsiders, the sources said, frequently gangs from Eastern Europe.

"The earlier generation had a respect for police uniform but there is now a new generation that has an absolute contempt for authority," says Juan Franco, the mayor of La Linea, "My worry is that these guys are armed and so far, they are not using them against civil guard or police agents, but that's the next step."

Fears that civilians could also be caught in the crossfire reached a height last month when a group of drug traffickers stormed the emergency ward in La Linea's public hospital. The assailants freed Samuel Crespo, a top aide and nephew to Los Castanitas, two brothers who run the town's most influential drug clans.

Police say there were at least 20 attackers, armed with sticks and knives. Witnesses have disputed the official account, saying a handful of unarmed youngsters took Crespo away with little resistance from their two custodians. The attacked policemen said using their guns inside the busy emergency ward would have escalated things.

The events hit a nerve in La Linea, a town of 63,000. "How can a handful of young criminals be so bold to act with such impunity in broad daylight?" asks Mena, the activist. "Why were there only two policemen guarding a prominent gangster? And why didn't they have any other means to stop the attackers?"

Outrage increased when news emerged that the fugitive was taken in a jet ski across the Strait of Gibraltar for treatment in a private clinic in northern Morocco. A police investigation led to the arrests of two of those involved in the attack, in addition to one person that was detained on the spot at the hospital.

Crespo himself is now back in Spain according to his aides' account. He remains at large.

A week after the attack, the country's Interior Minister descended on the town with an entourage of bodyguards and special police forces. Juan Ignacio Zoido's visit was timed to announce a police operation that led to the arrest of 16 people, members of a sophisticated gang that had installed radar to monitor patrol boats. Police found it under rooftop solar panels in a waterfront house. They also snatched 4 tons of hashish, 17 vehicles and four firearms.

Zoido promised crime squads and additional security measures for the county over coming months.

That same morning, a 90-minute drive away, men in hoods entered a guarded compound and stole a speedboat that had been confiscated and held in evidence, along with a truck to pull it.

The Cadiz province, which at its southernmost tip only 14 kilometers (8.6 miles) away from North Africa, already amounts for 40 percent of the drugs entering Spain, according to Interior Ministry figures.

Hashish is arriving on these beaches at the pace of seven to 20 loaded rubbers per day, according to calculations by police and traffickers. A Civil Guard operation last year dismantled a network that used dangerous night helicopter journeys to fly drugs into hideouts further inland.

The county is also a main entry point for cocaine, Europe's second most popular drug according to the region's Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addictions. It makes its way concealed in containers and merchant ships docking in Algeciras, across the bay from La Linea.

Some of the smuggled drugs are consumed south of the Pyrenees, but most of it —up to 90 percent, by some police accounts— travels on land to France, Italy and the Netherlands, which plays a central role as a regional distribution hub, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

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HEADLINE	04/02 Pa. police: ammo, gun found after threat
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/ammunition-gun-found-student-threatened-shoot-school-police/story?
GIST	<p>Over 1,600 rounds of ammunition and a semiautomatic firearm were found after a student was arrested for threatening to shoot up a Pennsylvania school, officials said Monday.</p> <p>An Tso Sun, an exchange student from Taiwan, was arrested last week and charged with terrorist threats with the intent to terrorize another, according to Upper Darby Police.</p> <p>Police Superintendent Michael Chitwood said Sun bought the parts for the firearm online and “put it together” himself.</p>

“It was a weapon capable of firing,” Chitwood said.

Among the recovered ammunition were 225 rounds of 12-gauge shotgun ammunition; 663 rounds of 9mm ammunition; 295 rounds of AR-15 ammunition; and 425 rounds of AK-47 ammunition, according to Chitwood.

On the day of his arrest, Sun’s host mother, who has not yet been identified, allegedly packed up the ammunition and the weapon, and gave them to another person, Chitwood said.

“She went back to the house and loads all the ammo and the gun into a black bag. She then takes that to another person at another location,” Chitwood said, “She didn’t give it to the police.”

Investigators recovered the objects last Thursday after receiving a tip. Chitwood did not say where they found them.

The host mother has not been charged.

Last week, Sun was arrested after he told a fellow student at Bonner Prendergast Catholic High School to “not come to school on May 1” because he “was going to shoot up the school,” according to Chitwood. That student told school officials, and police were notified.

Sun allegedly told the student he was “kidding.”

Prior to uncovering the ammunition and firearm, officials found a number of items in Sun’s bedroom including: a military-style ballistic vest; a high-powered crossbow with scope and light; arrows; 29 rounds of 9mm ammunition; a strangling device; a "military" ski mask; and ear protectors for firing.

“When you add it all together, it’s a major concern,” Chitwood said.

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Senators challenge Trump on wall funding ... Experts dispute Mattis' transgender study
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TURKEY, RUSSIA, IRAN PLOT SYRIA'S FUTURE: Russian President Vladimir Putin is in Turkey today for a two-day visit in which he'll meet not only with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan but also with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

Putin arrives in the driver's seat after Russia just arranged an evacuation of 1,100 Syrian rebels and their family members from a stronghold in the suburbs of Damascus, a move that will allow the government of Bashar Assad to consolidate control in the eastern Ghouta area of the Syrian capital.

The visit underscores the continental drift of Turkey, a NATO ally, toward Moscow and Tehran, both strategic adversaries of the U.S. Along with discussions about the future of Syria, Putin is scheduled to launch the first unit of Turkey's Akkuyu nuclear power station, which was funded by Russia. It also demonstrates how Putin has been able to sideline the U.S. in Syria

SYRIA WINNING, U.S. LOSING: Last month, U.S. Central Commander Gen. Joseph Votel told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the U.S. has been outmaneuvered in Syria by Putin. "Is it too strong a statement to say that, with Russia and Iran's help, Assad has won the civil war in Syria?" asked Sen. Lindsey Graham. "I do not think that is too strong of a statement," Votel replied.

The U.S. military has strict orders to stay out of the Syrian civil war and remain laser-focused on defeating the Islamic State. As Votel pointed out in previous congressional testimony, countering Iran or Russia is not one of the coalition's missions. "Moscow plays both arsonist and firefighter, fueling tensions among all parties in Syria ... then serving as an arbiter to resolve disputes, attempting to undermine and weaken each party's bargaining positions."

FUMBLING ON THE 2-YARD LINE: Turkey, Iran and Russia are discussing who will control what in Syria, as President Trump has very publicly expressed his frustration with the complex war zone and signaled his intent to leave "very soon" and "let the other people take care of it now."

A National Security Council meeting on Syria is set for today, but Trump's threat to cut and run is causing deep frustration that's bordering on anger among U.S. commanders, and undercutting the crucial alliance with the Kurds who have been vanquishing ISIS on the ground. That's according to an

NBC report, which is said to be based on private conversations with more than a half-dozen senior officials. "We're on the two-yard line. We could literally fall into the end zone. We're that close to total victory, to wiping out the ISIS caliphate in Syria," one U.S. special forces commander told NBC. "We're that close and now it's coming apart."

The biggest factor forestalling the final death blow for ISIS is Turkey's offensive into the Kurdish enclave of Afrin in northwest Syria that began in late January, a move that prompted the Kurdish elements of the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces to leave the ISIS fight and head home to fight the Turks.

DELTA FORCE MISSION: The U.S. and its coalition partners continue to do what they can to keep ISIS, which is down to about 3,000 fighters, from using the confusion to reconstitute. The U.S. military confirmed that Master Sgt. Jonathan Dunbar — identified by sources as a member of Army's elite Delta Force — was killed on a mission targeting an ISIS leader near Manbij.

"Coalition forces, in an advise, assist and accompany capacity with our partners, were conducting a mission to kill or capture a known ISIS member when they were struck by an improvised explosive device," said Col. Ryan Dillon, a spokesman for the U.S.-led anti-ISIS coalition.

The U.S. has since sent reinforcements to bolster the small number U.S. troops in Manbij, the Pentagon confirmed yesterday.

PUTIN'S WHITE HOUSE INVITE: Trump is considering hosting Putin at the White House later this year, but nothing has been scheduled yet. "As the President himself confirmed on March 20, hours after his last call with President Putin, the two had discussed a bilateral meeting in the 'not-too-distant future' at a number of potential venues, including the White House," spokesman Raj Shah said in a statement.

Meanwhile, escalating tensions between the U.S. and Russia and the political hurdles Trump faces at home are making it increasingly difficult for Trump to achieve his campaign goal of warmer relations between Washington and Moscow, writes Sarah Westwood.

Good Tuesday morning and welcome to Jamie McIntyre's Daily on Defense, compiled by Washington Examiner National Security Senior Writer Jamie McIntyre (@jamiejmcintyre), National Security Writer Travis J. Tritten (@travis_tritten) and Senior Editor David Brown (@dave_brown24). Email us here for tips, suggestions, calendar items and anything else. If a friend sent this to you and you'd like to sign up, click here. If signing up doesn't work, shoot us an email and we'll add you to our list. And be sure to follow us on Twitter @dailyondefense.

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HAPPENING TODAY — VOTEL TALKS IRAQ, SYRIA: The U.S. Institute of Peace holds a keynote panel discussion at 1:30 p.m. on the future of the fight against the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria with Votel; Stephen Hadley, the principal foreign policy adviser to President George W. Bush; Brett McGurk, the special envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS; and Ambassador Mark Green, the administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development. The institute will also hold panels through the late morning with Iraqi and Kurdish officials as well as foreign policy experts.

PENTAGON'S WALL FUNDING AUTHORITY CHALLENGED: The Pentagon has "no legal authority" to fund Trump's proposed wall along the southern border with Mexico, two Democratic senators told Defense Secretary Jim Mattis on Monday. Sens. Jack Reed, the top Democrat on the Armed Services Committee, and Dick Durbin, the ranking member on the Senate Appropriations defense subcommittee, wrote a letter telling Mattis their conclusion and asked the secretary to respond with his own assessment. "We conclude that the Department of Defense has no legal authority, with or without a

reprogramming request, to use appropriated funds for the construction of a border wall,” they wrote.

Trump floated the idea in a tweet last month for the military to pay for the border wall, which is estimated to cost about \$25 billion, and the Pentagon confirmed last week that Mattis discussed it with the president. The senators said any funding shift would have to go to similar military purposes and any transfer would have to be for higher priority military requirements. Funding in 2006 and 2008 for the National Guard to assist the Department of Homeland Security on building roads and fences along the border required a presidential budget amendment request and a specific appropriation by Congress. That process “indicated that the Department of Defense had no inherent legal authority to use appropriations for those more limited purposes at the time the president made the request,” they told Mattis.

EXPERTS DISPUTE MATTIS TRANSGENDER STUDY: Two leading associations of psychiatrists and psychologists say the Pentagon is misrepresenting the effectiveness of treatment for transgender people in its new personnel policy proposal. Mattis’ 44-page review of existing research concluded that the scientific evidence is at best “unclear” for treatment of gender dysphoria, the condition of being unhappy in your current gender.

“That’s really not true and it’s certainly not true among the actual experts who treat these people,” said Dr. Jack Drescher, a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who is a distinguished fellow at the American Psychiatric Association. “We shouldn’t assume just because somebody has a psychiatric diagnosis that they are not able to function and there is no reason to believe, based on what we know of people who have gotten treatment for their gender dysphoria, that they are any different. If people get treatment for their gender dysphoria, then they are doing fine.”

The association denounced the Pentagon plan as discriminatory last week. The American Psychological Association, which also called it discriminatory, said it was “alarmed by the administration’s misuse of psychological science” as a basis to bar transgender service. “It’s hard to see how they got to the conclusion they got to except by basically already prejudicially knowing the conclusion they wanted to reach and just spinning out a story to support and justify that conclusion,” said Clinton Anderson, the director of the Office on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity at the American Psychological Association.

MATTIS REVIEW LEAVES OUT CONTEXT: The panel put together by Mattis and its 44-page review acknowledge “serious differences of opinion on this issue, even among military professionals,” but at times downplay or omit context from a variety of recent transgender studies cited. See our examination of the cited research [here](#).

SUPPORTERS LAUD A CONSISTENT, JUSTIFIED POLICY: The proposed policy remains just a recommendation for now and is being blocked by four federal lawsuits. Tom Spoehr, director of the Center for National Defense at the Heritage Foundation, has called it a common-sense move that is “completely consistent” with other military recruitment policies. “In recruiting offices across the country, recruiters and doctors discriminate every day about who comes into the military,” said Spoehr, a retired Army lieutenant general. “There is all kinds of discrimination going on in recruiting, and it’s all lawful, and it’s all for an easily justifiable purpose.”

Mattis’ review of the existing research was a ray of hope that the military is going to discard the Obama-era open service policy and politicized views of transgender service, said Elaine Donnelly, founder and president of the Center for Military Readiness, a group that advocates for right-wing conservative policies. “The information about all the studies that discredit the transgender claims about their so-called medically necessary treatments, which really don’t cure underlying problems at all, that’s new and a welcome addition to the public debate,” said Donnelly, who has examined the study.

THE QUIET WAR GRINDS ON: U.S. Africa Command announced yesterday that five suspected terrorists were killed in Somalia over the weekend when a missile fired from a U.S. drone hit their vehicle. It’s the latest report from the front lines of a war that few Americans are paying attention to, but

where some 500 U.S. troops, including special operations commandos, are working with the Somali military to battle al-Shabaab, the al Qaeda affiliate.

Every couple of weeks, AFRICOM announces the deaths of a small number of al-Shabaab fighters. Last month, two were killed and three were wounded in a drone strike. In February, the U.S. announced it killed nine suspected terrorists in three separate strikes.

FLAWED IRAN NUKE DEAL: The Foundation for Defense of Democracies is out with a new analysis of one of the major flaws of the Iran nuclear deal that Trump is considering ripping up next month. Former Israeli acting national security adviser Brig. Gen. Jacob Nagel argues the current inspection regime is inadequate and should be strengthened by granting the International Atomic Energy Agency “anywhere, anytime” access to all Iranian civilian and military sites.

MORE CERTAINTY ON NERVE AGENT ATTACK: British authorities investigating the poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal on U.K. soil believe the sophistication of the chemical attack demonstrates that it was likely approved by the Kremlin, a source briefed on the investigation told CNN on Monday.

Those examining the scene said the placement of the nerve agent on Skripal’s door is proof of Russian government-level sophistication, and therefore it is assumed the attack was approved by the highest level of the Russian government.

BUNKER MENTALITY: A new book claims the White House has a massive secret bunker beneath its north lawn for doomsday scenarios, while staffers battle a more immediate menace — insects — with pressurized salt guns. The bunker, built during the Obama administration, was toured by members of Trump’s staff last year, author Ronald Kessler wrote in *The Trump White House: Changing the Rules of the Game*, which was released Monday.

Kessler, a former Washington Post reporter and author of several books on the Secret Service and national security, wrote that the facility is large enough to fit the White House workforce indefinitely. “At least five stories deep, the bunker, which was completed near the end of President Obama’s tenure, can house the staff of the entire West Wing indefinitely in the event of a weapons of mass destruction attack,” Kessler wrote. “After Trump became president, top staffers toured the bunker, whose existence is classified.”

THE RUNDOWN

Defense One: Could Trump Actually Use Military Funding for His Border Wall?

Daily Beast: U.S. Downplays its War Games in Korea

38 North: Please Go, But Not Quite Yet: The Question of US Troops in South Korea

Foreign Policy: Will the Real Trump Russia Policy Please Stand Up?

Reuters: Afghan Air Strike Against Taliban Causes Dozens Of Casualties: Officials

Defense News: Short-Range Air Defense battalions will grow in both Army’s active force and National Guard

Task and Purpose: SOCOM Accidentally Bought Way, Way Too Much Combat Gear

AFP: Drone footage shows destruction in Syria's Douma

Business Insider: This crazy photo shows the power of the Carl Gustaf M4 bazooka

South China Morning Post: China-Built Carrier Set To Make Sea Trial This Month

Task and Purpose: One Of The Navy's Newest Warships Is Coming Home After 3 Months Stranded In Canada

Marine Corps Times: Marines 'not at the point of contact' in Afghanistan

New York Times: Sermons and Shouted Insults: How Erdogan Keeps Turkey Spellbound

The New Yorker: A Saudi Prince's Quest to Remake the Middle East

War on the Rocks: The Emigrant Sisters Return: The Growing Role of the Islamic State's Women

New York Times: How a Photographer Got a Rare Shot of James Mattis

USNI News: It's Always 1700 Somewhere: Jimmy Buffett Presented Navy Civilian Award

Calendar

TUESDAY | APRIL 3

10 a.m. 2301 Constitution Ave. NW. Iraq and Syria: Views from the U.S. Administration, Military Leaders and the Region with Gen. Joseph Votel, CENTCOM Commander, Stephen Hadley, and Brett McGurk, Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIS. usip.org

WEDNESDAY | APRIL 4

8 a.m. 2401 M St. NW. Defense Writers Group breakfast with Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats.

8 a.m. 2101 Wilson Blvd. Health Affairs Breakfast featuring Kenneth Bertram, the Principal Assistant for Acquisition for the US Army Medical Research and Materiel Command. ndia.org

4:30 p.m. 1030 15th St. NW. Big Small Companies: How Size Matters in Defense Contracting. atlanticcouncil.org

THURSDAY | APRIL 5

10 a.m. 1775 Massachusetts Ave. NW. Autonomous weapons and international law with introduction by Pauline Krikke, Mayor of the Hague. brookings.edu

12 p.m. 1201 Pennsylvania Ave. NW. The Future of the JCPOA: Implications for the U.S., Its Allies, and Adversaries. hudson.org

2 p.m. 1616 Rhode Island Ave. NW. The Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen. csis.org

5 p.m. 1779 Massachusetts Ave. NW. "Meddling—How to Win Friends and Influence People: Ivan Maisky, Soviet Ambassador in London, 1932-43," a presentation by Gabriel Gorodetsky and a conversation with Strobe Talbott. carnegieendowment.org

6:30 p.m. 1777 F St. NW. Foreign Affairs Issue Launch: Letting Go: Trump, America, and the World. cfr.org

FRIDAY | APRIL 6

10 a.m. 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW. Book discussion of “The Kremlinologist: Llewellyn E. Thompson, America's Man in Cold-War Moscow” with authors Jenny Thompson and Sherry Thompson. wilsoncenter.org

10 a.m. 1775 Massachusetts Ave. NW. Seeking solutions for Somalia. brookings.edu

10:30 a.m. 1030 15th Street NW. Iran’s Sunnis Resist Extremism, But for How Long? atlanticcouncil.org

MONDAY | APRIL 9

9 a.m. 201 Waterfront St. Opening day of Sea-Air-Space, the Navy League’s global maritime exposition. seaairspace.org

10:30 a.m. 1616 Rhode Island Ave. NW. The Russian Way of Warfare. csis.org

12:30 p.m. 1777 F St. NW. U.S.-North Korea Relations: Any Progress on Nonproliferation Efforts? A discussion with Victor Cha and retired Adm. Mike Mullen, former Joint Chiefs chairman. cfr.org

TUESDAY | APRIL 10

7 a.m. 6715 Commerce St. 2018 Ground Robotics Capabilities Conference and Exhibition. ndia.org

9 a.m. 201 Waterfront St. Sea-Air-Space, the Navy League’s global maritime exposition with Adm. Paul Zukunft, Commandant of the Coast Guard, and others. seaairspace.org

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

“We’re on the two-yard line. We could literally fall into the end zone. We’re that close to total victory, to wiping out the ISIS caliphate in Syria. We’re that close and now it’s coming apart.”

An unidentified U.S. special operations commander in Syria, speaking to NBC News.

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Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php
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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	04/02 Q&A: US, SKorea war drills
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/0e5dcfc5661a48e590f8b42aa56b5022/Q&A:-Things-to-know-about-US-South-Korea-war-drills
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Another spring on the Korean Peninsula, another round of war games by the U.S. and South Korean militaries.</p> <p>This week's drills, however, will feature a new and unusually low-key approach, with the allies resisting bringing in their big guns, and the North, for the time being, avoiding its usual belligerent propaganda against exercises that it claims are an invasion rehearsal.</p> <p>The reason for this departure? There's interest in Washington and Seoul in nurturing a diplomatic outreach by North Korea's young leader, Kim Jong Un, after months of weapons tests and threats of nuclear war by the North.</p> <p>On Sunday, the first day of this year's drills, instead of vowing to destroy Seoul, Kim attended a concert in Pyongyang of visiting South Korean pop singers, clapping his hands and asking for more such performances.</p> <p>Some questions and answers about this year's drills, which come ahead of two separate historic summits between Kim and his South Korean and U.S. counterparts:</p> <p>—</p> <p>Q: Are the drills really more low-key than in past years?</p> <p>A: Yes, they are.</p> <p>This year's exercises were postponed because of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, where the Koreas worked out a series of rapprochement steps, including parading together behind a single flag during the opening ceremony and fielding a unified women's hockey team.</p>

Seoul and Washington both publicly say the training this time will be similar to previous years. But South Korean defense officials say there are no immediate plans to bring in U.S. aircraft carriers, powerful bombers or other strategic assets that have been deployed in and around the Korean Peninsula during past drills. The North loathes such American weapons.

The two sets of drills, one field-training and the other computer-simulated, typically run for two months, but this year's exercises are scheduled to last for just one month. The allies also have no immediate plans to publicize the training, according to Seoul's Defense Ministry.

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Q: How will North Korea react to this year's drills?

A: North Korea's state media haven't said anything about the drills so far. Even if there is some criticism later, it will likely be milder than past warlike rhetoric, which often saw daily threats to launch nuclear strikes on Seoul and Washington or void the armistice that ended the 1950-53 Korean War.

Kim told visiting South Korean officials last month that he "understands" the drills will take place and expressed hope that they'll be modified once the situation on the peninsula stabilizes, according to the South Korean government.

While diplomacy holds, it's also unlikely that North Korea will test any weapons, as it has during past drills. Such tests could endanger the North's outreach and crush the current rapprochement.

South Korea's Defense Ministry said Monday that it hadn't detected any suspicious activities by the North Korean military.

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Q: What's next after the drills?

A: Kim's planned meeting with South Korean President Moon Jae-in on April 27 comes around the time the U.S.-South Korean drills end.

The meeting will be the third-ever inter-Korean summit since the Koreas' 1945 division. It is crucial because it may offer insight about what nuclear disarmament steps Kim could offer, and what concessions the allies might be willing to provide.

It is unlikely that Kim will completely give up his nukes. Only last year he claimed to have functional nuclear missiles targeting the entire U.S. mainland, though foreign experts believe the North still hasn't perfected such missiles. Kim's dictator father and grandfather long aspired to have such power.

During Kim's visit to China last week, his first overseas trip since taking office in 2011, he indicated that he prefers step-by-step, not immediate, disarmament-for-aid deals with the United States and South Korea. This could spell trouble because some hard-line U.S. officials want the North to take immediate, complete disarmament steps so as not to repeat past negotiations in which the North was seen as winning badly needed aid while covertly continuing its bomb program.

Kim and President Donald Trump plan to meet in May, but the exact date and location of their meeting haven't been announced.

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HEADLINE 04/01 UK cities facing 'punish a Muslim day'

SOURCE	https://www.thenational.ae/world/europe/punish-a-muslim-day-uk-cities-stand-together-in-the-face-of-islamophobic-threat-1.717770
GIST	<p>Communities across the UK are bracing themselves for Punish a Muslim Day after letters were sent out calling for violence against Muslims on April 3.</p> <p>Last month, letters were circulated by post in major cities and on social media suggesting ways to hurt people and awarding points for certain “punishments”.</p> <p>The letters, which are being investigated by British counter-terrorism police, appear to be in response to ISIL-inspired attacks, four of which took place in the UK in 2017.</p> <p>"They have hurt you. They have made your loved ones suffer. They have caused you pain and heartache. What are you going to about it?" read one of the letters which was circulated online.</p> <p>The Saudi Embassy in London said it had been in contact with the British authorities about the contents of the letter and advised its citizens in the UK to exercise caution and vigilance.</p> <p>In the city of Leicester, where Muslims make up 20 per cent of the population, fears of attacks are high. Last week, Paul Moore, 21, was sentenced to a minimum of 20 years in prison for attempted murder after he attacked a woman and a 12-year-old girl wearing Islamic clothing.</p> <p>Leicestershire Police have said they will be ready to take action on April 3 if Muslims feel threatened.</p> <p>“We have operational plans in place should anything happen on what will hopefully be an ordinary day,” Chief Constable Simon Cole said last week.</p> <p>“It is particularly distasteful and unpleasant and I almost don’t want to talk about it in case of dignifying it and making it something it isn’t.”</p> <p>“We take hate crime seriously, and I hope the conviction and sentence of Paul Moore yesterday proves that.”</p> <p>In February, Darren Osborne, a 48-year-old, was sentenced to life imprisonment for attacking worshippers outside Finsbury Park Mosque in London last year. Osborne killed one man and injured 12 others after he drove a van into pedestrians outside the mosque who had attended nighttime prayers during Ramadan. A handwritten note was found in the van, which referred to Muslims as “feral” and lambasted London’s Muslim mayor, Sadiq Khan.</p> <p>Metropolitan Police said they were aware of concerns following the Punish a Muslim Day letters but that there was no credible information to suggest criminal activity would take place.</p> <p>However, the Met urged anyone with any information about hate crime to contact them immediately.</p> <p>The National Police Chiefs Association released a statement on Thursday about the letters, assuring the public that threats were being taken seriously and that it had taken measures to stop people becoming victims of crime.</p> <p>Meanwhile, community leaders across the country have called for unity in the face of the threat.</p> <p>In Nottingham, one of the cities where letters were circulated, 28 Muslim groups endorsed a statement asking citizens “to make a conscious effort to counter such hate by supporting the Muslim community on April 3”.</p> <p>"An attack on any part of our community is an attack on us all. Our vision like everyone else, is to live in a society that is compassionate, kind and committed to justice and peace," the statement read.</p>

	<p>In Leicester, a community group has organised an event in defiance of Punish a Muslim Day.</p> <p>St Matthew's Big Local will be holding a day of celebration for Muslims and non-Muslims alike on April 3, with activities including story-telling, face painting and a walking bus march.</p> <p>St Matthew's wrote on Twitter: "We are bringing our community together on Tuesday as our diversity is our strength."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Analysis: blacks left out high-paying jobs
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/76ba3a042b454d0b8f5341f37490c6cc/AP-analysis:-Blacks-largely-left-out-among-high-paying-jobs
GIST	<p>BOSTON (AP) — Jonathan Garland’s fascination with architecture started early: He spent much of his childhood designing Lego houses and gazing at Boston buildings on rides with his father away from their largely minority neighborhood.</p> <p>But when Garland looked around at his architectural college, he didn’t see many who looked like him — there were few black faces in classroom seats, and fewer teaching skills or giving lectures.</p> <p>“If you do something simple like Google ‘architects’ and you go to the images tab, you’re primarily going to see white males,” said Garland, 35, who’s worked at Boston and New York architectural firms. “That’s the image, that’s the brand, that’s the look of an architect.”</p> <p>And that’s not uncommon in other lucrative fields, 50 years after the Rev. Martin Luther King — a leader in the fight for equal-employment opportunities — was assassinated.</p> <p>An Associated Press analysis of government data has found that black workers are chronically underrepresented compared with whites in high-salary jobs in technology, business, life sciences, and architecture and engineering, among other areas. Instead, many black workers find jobs in low-wage, less-prestigious fields where they’re overrepresented, such as food service or preparation, building maintenance and office work, the AP analysis found.</p> <p>In one of his final speeches, King described the “Other America,” where unemployment and underemployment created a “fatigue of despair” for African-Americans. Despite economic progress for blacks in areas such as incomes and graduation rates, some experts say many African-Americans remain part of this “Other America” — with little hope of attaining top professional jobs, thanks to systemic yet subtle racism.</p> <p>The AP analysis found that a white worker had a far better chance than a black one of holding a job in the 11 categories with the highest median annual salaries, as listed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The ratio of white-to-black workers is about 10-to-1 in management, 8-to-1 in computers and mathematics, 12-to-1 in law, and 7-to-1 in education — compared with a ratio of 5.5 white workers for every black one in all jobs nationally. The top five high-paying fields have a median income range of \$65,000 to \$100,000, compared with \$36,000 for all occupations nationwide.</p> <p>In Boston — a hub for technology and innovation, and home to prestigious universities — white workers outnumber black ones by about 27-to-1 in computer- and mathematics-related professions, compared with the overall ratio of 9.5-to-1 for workers in the city. Overall, Boston’s ratio of white-to-black workers is wider than that of the nation in six of the top 10 high-income fields.</p> <p>Boston — where King had deep ties, earning his doctorate and meeting his wife — has a history of racial discord. Eight years after King’s assassination, at the height of turbulent school desegregation, a Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph from an anti-busing rally at City Hall showed a white man attacking a black</p>

bystander with an American flag.

The young victim was Theodore Landsmark. He's now 71, a lawyer, an architect and director of Northeastern University's Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy.

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. addresses civil rights marchers on Boston Common on April 23, 1965.

He said "structural discrimination" is the overarching cause of disproportionate race representation in high-paying fields. Landsmark and others say gains are elusive for myriad reasons: Substandard schools in low-income neighborhoods. White-dominated office cliques. Boardrooms that prefer familiarity to diversity. Discriminatory hiring practices. Companies that claim a lack of qualified candidates but have no programs to train minority talent.

Some also say investors are more likely to support white startups. When Rica Elysee — a lifelong Boston resident who grew up in predominantly black neighborhoods — brought her idea of an online platform linking beauty professionals with customers for in-home appointments to investors, she was shunned, she said.

"They said I didn't belong in the program, that they couldn't identify with it because they weren't black," said Elysee, 32, who initially marketed BeautyLynk to black women like herself. "I remember crying pretty harshly. They couldn't relate to what I was doing."

Some even advised her to move out of Boston, which had a booming innovation economy but was "not encouraging minorities in the tech space," she said. Three years later, Elysee said BeautyLynk is slowly growing but still needs capital.

Most American metro areas are like Boston, with AP's analysis showing that racial disparities in employment are indifferent to geography and politics. California's Silicon Valley struggles to achieve diversity in computer fields. In Seattle, home to Amazon, whites outnumber blacks nearly 28-to-1 in computer- and math-related fields. Financial powerhouse New York has a 3-to-1 ratio of white-to-black workers in all occupations, but nearly 6-to-1 in business and finance. Hollywood shows inequality in entertainment, with almost nine whites for every black worker.

In Atlanta, King's hometown, the proportional representation of black-to-white workers is close to even in many fields. Many reasons are cited. Atlanta has historically black colleges and universities such as King's alma mater, Morehouse; the first black mayor, Maynard Jackson, pressed for policies helping black professionals after his 1973 election; and events like the 1996 Olympics opened doors for entrepreneurs of all races.

Atlanta is an exception. For nearly all of the past half-century, black unemployment nationally has hovered at about twice that of whites.

In Boston, Democratic Mayor Marty Walsh said in a recent speech that the city is addressing the issue and is committed to placing 20,000 low-income residents in "good-paying jobs" by 2022.

Landsmark said stronger role models may be a solution. As Boston Architectural College's president, he mentored Garland. They discussed race issues in the professional world — as when Garland, trying to land jobs in his neighborhood, realized many people who looked like him were unfamiliar with the very concept of architecture. He once had to explain to a homeowner who wanted his roof reframed: "I'm not a builder, I'm an architect."

Today, Garland speaks at high schools and works at the DREAM Collaborative, which focuses on projects in low-income neighborhoods.

"I know the barriers exist in other folks' minds, and I have to disprove that," he said. "I keep myself focused on the issues."

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HEADLINE	04/01 Fear: JUUL craze getting teens addicted
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/1/juul-smoking-craze-sparks-teen-nicotine-addiction-/
GIST	<p>It's the latest smoking craze that has teenagers buzzing on social media — and public health officials warning of a new nicotine-addicted generation.</p> <p>“People JUUL at parties, JUUL when they’re driving — it’s a social thing. They’re JUULing all the time,” said C., 17, who said some students at her high school use the popular electronic cigarette in class.</p> <p>Similar to vaping, JUUL is a brand-name e-cigarette that has outpaced its competition thanks to its sleek, discreet shape — many compare it to the size and look of a thumb drive — and its unique vaping formula of flavored nicotine and salt.</p> <p>Its battery can be recharged on a laptop within one hour, and its liquid-filled cartridges come in flavors — cool mint, creme brulee, fruit medley — that anti-smoking advocates say target teens.</p> <p>Juul’s website, which asks users if they are 21 or older before allowing access, says the device is not for teens or anyone who has never smoked. It is intended only as an alternative for cigarette smokers who have had little success in quitting smoking, the company says.</p> <p>“The entire conception, premise, operations, mission of the company is to eliminate cigarettes and get adult smokers to switch to our vapor product,” said company spokeswoman Christine Castro.</p> <p>“It is not intended to be discreet. It was not designed to look like a flash drive,” Ms. Castro said. “It was designed specifically and intentionally to help smokers switch.”</p> <p>Still, on Twitter, Instagram and other online forums, young people have put up funny posts about using, losing or being addicted to their JUULs. Some post videos of themselves in classrooms or locker rooms using their JUULs and playing with the smoke.</p> <p>The problem has become widespread at their co-ed, religious school in New York, and administrators have listed it on announcements of banned substances, “no smoking, no drinking, no vaping,” said the two students, who asked not to be identified for fear of reprisals.</p> <p>“But vaping isn’t JUULing,” C. said. “JUULing is more intense.”</p> <p>That intensity is the rush of nicotine into the system from the company’s unique liquid formula. At 5 percent nicotine per volume, one JUUL cartridge, or pod, is the equivalent to a pack of cigarettes.</p> <p>“We’re very concerned about JUUL because it has become such a popular product among young people very, very rapidly,” said Robin Koval, CEO of the Truth Initiative, a nonprofit youth anti-smoking organization.</p> <p>According to internal research by the Truth Initiative, a survey of teenagers found that a significant percentage using JUULs said they were “unaware or unsure that the product contains nicotine.”</p> <p>“We know that nicotine has effects on young people’s cognitive development. If you become addicted to nicotine at a younger age, it makes you more susceptible to other addictions later on. It makes it harder to quit nicotine, whether that’s from an e-cigarette-type product or combustible product,” Ms. Koval said.</p> <p>Among teenagers, anti-smoking campaigns and tighter restrictions on cigarette sales have helped curb cigarette use to a historic low of 4.2 percent among high school seniors in 2017, compared with a peak of</p>

	<p>24.6 percent in 1997, according to the National Institutes of Health’s Monitoring the Future Survey.</p> <p>Yet applause by health officials and advocates is tempered by a rise in vaping popularity. In its first survey of the subject, it found that nearly one-third of 12th-graders reported using some kind of vaping device. The majority said they vaped “just liquid,” followed by nicotine and marijuana.</p> <p>The JUUL company says on its website that it sells only to adults 21 and older, uses verification tools to prevent underage purchases and has a youth prevention section with an email contact to address concerns.</p> <p>“Kids should not use any nicotine product including ours and we’re working very hard to make headway on that,” said Ms. Castro.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 China: 128 US products w/steep tariffs
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/apr/1/china-announces-128-tariffs-us-meat-fruit-other-pr/
GIST	<p>China slapped a heavy tariff Monday on U.S. meat, fruits, wine and other products, saying it was a retaliation against President Trump’s import tax on steel and aluminum.</p> <p>Beijing had warned the U.S. that the tariffs were coming after the Trump administration announced a regime of new tariffs, first on steel and aluminum and then on Chinese high-tech.</p> <p>China’s Ministry of Commerce said the U.S. had “seriously violated” the principles of non-discrimination under World Trade Organization rules. It said the U.S. also had damaged China’s interests.</p> <p>“China’s suspension of some of its obligations to the United States is its legitimate right as a member of the World Trade Organization,” the ministry said in a statement.</p> <p>Beijing, which has insisted it wants to avoid a trade war, also called for more negotiations to resolve disputes between the world’s two largest economies.</p> <p>The Trump administration had said to expect retaliation, but said that Beijing’s unfair trade practices and theft of intellectual property warranted tariffs and other strict measures.</p> <p>China’s new tariffs hit 128 U.S. products worth a total of \$3 billion in trade, including a 25 percent tax on frozen pork and scrap aluminum, and a 15 percent tax on food commodities such as nuts, fruit and wine.</p> <p>The retaliation also included a 15 percent increase in duties on rolled steel bars.</p> <p>The tit-for-tat tariffs smacked of the trade war the U.S. business leaders and investors feared when the Trump administration began enacting get-tough policies on Beijing.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 Regional park and rides high demand
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/2018/03/puget-sound-region-grows-park-and-rides-fill
GIST	<p>The Mountlake Terrace park and ride’s crowding reflects the challenges of meeting demand as the region continues to grow and more people look to transit for less stressful and more environmentally responsible commuting options. A 2009 rebuild nearly tripled the parking capacity at the park and ride, which is owned by Snohomish County’s Community Transit. But now, the garage is again bursting at the seams.</p> <p>All across the region, these free first-come, first-serve park-and-ride lots are in high demand. According to data collected by the Puget Sound Regional Council in 2017, almost a third of park-and-ride lots in the</p>

region have an occupancy rate of 90 percent or higher on weekdays. Sound Transit estimates more than half of the 37 park-and-ride lots the agency operates have more than a 90 percent occupancy rate, 12 of which are completely full most weekdays.

“Build more parking” is one of the most common requests Sound Transit receives as its light rail system expands into the sprawling suburbs, where culs-de-sac built for automobiles dominate the landscape.

“Many Sound Transit customers have few reasonably available alternatives for accessing Sound Transit services besides driving and parking a private vehicle,” Kimberly Reason, a spokesperson for Sound Transit, wrote in an email. “In some cases, lack of available parking ... will be a limiting factor for access to the transit system.”

But adding more free parking doesn't come cheap. Rising property values and soaring construction costs have pushed the price for a future Kent park-and-ride lot at over \$100,000 per stall.

To some, that's a pricey subsidy when it only benefits about a third of Sound Transit customers.

And others, including Seattle City Councilmember Rob Johnson, see parking lots as an unwise use of land adjacent to transit.

“As a [Sound Transit] board member, I spend a lot of time encouraging my fellow board members to think about the millions of dollars being spent in their neighborhoods to build structured parking garages and [to] think differently about how they might want that money to be spent on things like buses, bikes or housing,” Johnson said.

He said Seattle has a longstanding policy of discouraging park and rides in the city, “because we are of the belief we should be building more housing near our transit [instead of] parking lots.”

But his fellow board member, Redmond Mayor John Marchione, says that parking is needed in suburban cities because of insufficient bus service. “The further away you get from the center of the system, the more parking you need,” he said.

“In Redmond, we are focused on both bike and pedestrian access but we also have parking planned for our station that's further east,” Marchione said. He said many people will drive in from Sammamish, Duvall or elsewhere to board light rail.

The first-mile/last-mile dilemma

Making that first connection from home to transit is one of the biggest hurdles potential riders must clear — an obstacle known to transportation planners as the first-mile/last-mile dilemma. Many suburban residents don't live within walking or biking distance of a bus stop, and even if they did, many jurisdictions lack the adequate infrastructure to ensure those are safe travel options.

“The reason we have parking investments in our plans is because, through the community process, that's what folks in those communities told us that they need to access and use our system,” said Matt Shelden, Sound Transit's director of planning and innovation.

According to Sound Transit, about a third of riders across the agency's system use the park-and-ride lots, of which the vast majority are solo drivers. The rest walk, bike, carpool, take a feeder bus or get dropped off.

The Sound Transit 3 plan — approved by voters in 2016 — adds some 10,000 new parking spaces, which is estimated to cost nearly \$700 million, or roughly \$69,000 per space to build. This will increase the number of park-and-ride spaces Sound Transit owns or leases by 64 percent, from 15,832 to nearly 26,000.

Transportation Choices Coalition (TCC), a transportation advocacy group that works to expand transit

options, agrees with Sound Transit that many suburban riders lack other options besides driving to access transit. But TCC doesn't see building more parking as the answer to the first-mile/last-mile dilemma.

Hester Serebrin, the policy director at TCC, in an email suggested there were better ways to spend money on transit, instead of earmarking it for parking. She said, for instance, "if officials focused development efforts on transit-oriented development — housing and employment centers around those now-suburban stations — all of a sudden more taxpayers in the Sound Transit district [will] have more access to transit, in more affordable and sustainable ways."

Sound Transit is wrestling with rising project costs that have delayed the opening of the Lynnwood Link Extension, an 8.5-mile expansion that will run from Northgate to Lynnwood, with two stops in Shoreline and one in Mountlake Terrace. One suggestion to keep the project on time and under budget is to first eliminate new parking from the plan.

But "if parking is not provided where it is really needed, it is going to have a dampening effect on ridership," Sound Transit's Shelden said. And that will mean more cars on I-5.

If parking is going to be expanded, TCC's Serebrin would rather Sound Transit lease existing parking rather than build new parking; build shared parking with other new development in the area; or build parking in a flexible way so it could be converted to other uses in the future. The advocacy group also wants transit agencies to begin charging a daily price for parking.

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HEADLINE	04/01 'Ricky's Law' goes into effect
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SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/long-awaited-rickys-law-goes-into-effect-in-washington/281-109557738
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GIST	A new law took effect April 1, 2018 aimed at helping people fighting addiction. Ricky's Law is named after suicide survivor Ricky Garcia. He believes he could have been helped sooner if Washington had involuntary commitment.
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The new law allows someone to be involuntarily committed if they are deemed at-risk of harming themselves. The law also designates nine facilities for involuntary commitment.

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HEADLINE	04/02 Easter snow brings cold start to April
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SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/easter-snow-brings-cold-start-to-april/281-534086827
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GIST	Easter brought with it some interesting weather. Definitely not the sunny and 60-degree weather we saw on Saturday. Sunday's wintry conditions will push into the first week of April.
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The cold front that brought Sunday's rain and wind moved through bringing much cooler air and dropped overnight temps into the mid-to-upper 30s. A wet snowflake can't be ruled out Monday morning around 1,000 feet. Luckily, there isn't much moisture left so little to no accumulation is expected.

The next issue is in the mountains (central Cascades) where a Winter Weather Advisory is in effect until 5 a.m. Monday. The National Weather Service says snow accumulations up to three inches are expected Monday morning. Travel through the passes could be tricky, so check with WSDOT before heading out.

Although Monday will start out a bit cooler, with a few lingering showers, the sun returns by the afternoon. Tuesday looks nice with lots of sunshine and slightly warmer temps. Rainy, but warmer, weather is expected mid-to-late week.

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HEADLINE	04/01 Smoking, vaping illegal Redmond parks
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/01/smoking-vaping-is-now-illegal-in-redmond-parks/
GIST	<p>REDMOND, Wash. — You can't smoke or vape in any Redmond park or trail. The new park rule went into effective March 31.</p> <p>City officials said they made the rule after an extensive public outreach effort focused on addressing criminal and civil behaviors in city parks.</p> <p>This is the first change the city made to its park rules in 24 years.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Wild ride behind crown prince visit to US
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-04-02/a-wild-ride-behind-the-scenes-as-saudi-crown-prince-does-america
GIST	<p>The phone call came at 8 p.m. from the Saudi royal court: Come to The Plaza, immediately.</p> <p>We journalists rushed over to the Manhattan hotel, but it was almost three hours before anything happened. And when it did -- when Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Masayoshi Son, Softbank's chief executive officer, wordlessly signed papers and declared that a "huge step in human history" had been taken -- we had no idea what they were talking about. As the prince left, Son stood still for several long seconds before taking questions.</p> <p>"What just happened?" I ventured.</p> <p>The public signing of a Saudi plan to build a \$200 billion solar facility was indeed historic. If successful, it will be the world's largest solar-energy installation by a factor of 100. But no one told us what was going on as we sat on the floor (no chairs). It was just another day -- or night -- in the chaotic life of the hundreds of officials, business figures and communications consultants who are trailing the heir to the Saudi throne around the world as he tries to drum up investment and boost his country's image. He's in the middle of a three-week U.S. visit. After Washington, Boston and New York, the delegation headed to the West Coast for meetings with Microsoft founder Bill Gates and the heads of Amazon, Apple, Google and Uber.</p> <p>Visa Rush</p> <p>The trip got off to a madcap start when the Saudis applied at the last minute for more than 500 U.S. visas, according to a person familiar with the matter. As organizers weighed whether to allow media access to a gala dinner in Washington, I was invited, dis-invited and then re-invited.</p> <p>At least three government entities, along with outside firms, are involved in coordinating press coverage of the visit but information has been scarce. Journalists gleaned the outline of the prince's schedule -- when he would travel to different cities, who would accompany him and whom he would meet -- through rumors and anonymous sources.</p> <p>Part of the tension appears to be over how much to publicize -- and how much change the Saudi public can handle. While in New York, Prince Mohammed met with U.S. Zionist leaders, including from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the American Jewish Committee. But the participants were sworn to secrecy. Meanwhile, another meeting he held in New York, with religious figures including Roman Catholic clergy and two rabbis, was heralded by the Saudi embassy as inter-religious dialogue that "emphasized the common bond among all people, particularly people of faith."</p> <p>Asked about the unannounced meeting, one Saudi government representative didn't respond while a second referred back to the press release about the interfaith gathering without further comment.</p>

Glazed Eyes

The prince is in a hurry to remake the once fiercely closed-off Islamic kingdom, diversifying its economy away from oil and loosening social restrictions even as he tightens his political grip over the authoritarian state. He's famous for working long hours and late nights, as the glazed eyes of the employees arranging his trip can attest. He'd barely finished official visits to Egypt and the U.K. when he jetted to Washington.

Some chaos is inevitable on a trip of such scale. But it's also a symptom of the growing pains Saudi Arabia is going through as its secretive government pledges more transparency -- crucial in the lead-up to the initial public offering of as much as 5 percent of state oil company Saudi Aramco. For a society that has long valued discretion, a road show promoting openness is a bit of an alien concept.

The Saudi government has undeniably opened up during the past few years, issuing a slew of visas for foreign journalists and appointing spokesmen where none existed. In New York, Prince Mohammed met with reporters and editors at the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal, albeit mostly off the record.

"We have committed to increasing the level of transparency and accountability," said Husameddin AlMadani, head of Saudi Arabia's National Center for Performance Management, a government agency that measures progress on the targets set by the prince. "It helps investors. It helps think tanks and researchers."

How that will play out is far from clear as officials lurch between traditional silence and promises of openness. The result is often a bizarre blend, a kind of twilight zone where something -- it's just not always clear what -- is being announced. That's what happened last week at the Plaza at midnight. As quickly as it started, the event was over. Reporters were left to meander past the closed bar and dishes of Saudi dates, observing a handful of delegates working into the morning hours.

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HEADLINE	04/01 Statues offensive Native Americans next?
SOURCE	http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-native-american-stature-removal-20180401-story.html
GIST	<p>Over the decades, this quiet coastal hamlet has earned a reputation as one of the most liberal places in the nation. Arcata was the first U.S. city to ban the sale of genetically modified foods, the first to elect a majority Green Party city council and one of the first to tacitly allow marijuana farming before pot was legal.</p> <p>Now it's on the verge of another first.</p> <p>No other city has taken down a monument to a president for his misdeeds. But Arcata is poised to do just that. The target is an 8½-foot bronze likeness of William McKinley, who was president at the turn of the last century and stands accused of directing the slaughter of Native peoples in the U.S. and abroad.</p> <p>"Put a rope around its neck and pull it down," Chris Peters shouted at a recent rally held at the statue, which has adorned the central square for more than a century.</p> <p>Peters, who heads the Arcata-based Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous People, called McKinley a proponent of "settler colonialism" that "savaged, raped and killed."</p> <p>A presidential statue would be the most significant casualty in an emerging movement to remove monuments honoring people who helped lead what Native groups describe as a centuries-long war against their very existence.</p> <p>The push follows the rapid fall of Confederate memorials across the South in a victory for activists who view them as celebrating slavery. In the nearly eight months since white supremacists marched in central Virginia to protest the removal of a Robert E. Lee statue, cities across the country have yanked dozens of Confederate monuments. Black politicians and activists have been among the strongest supporters of the</p>

removals.

This time, it's tribal activists taking charge, and it's the West and California in particular leading the way. The state is home to the largest Native American population in the country and more than 100 federally recognized tribes.

In February, San Francisco officials said they planned to remove a prominent downtown monument depicting a defeated Native American at the feet of a vaquero and a Spanish missionary. In March, the San Jose City Council booted a statue of Christopher Columbus from the lobby of City Hall.

Other states are joining the movement. The city of Kalamazoo, Mich., said last month it would take down a park monument of a Native American in a headdress kneeling before a westward-facing pioneer. In Alcalde, N.M., and El Paso, statues of the conquistador Juan de Oñate have become subjects of renewed debate.

In Baltimore, a city councilman has vowed to replace a smashed Columbus monument with something that better reflects "current-day values."

In Arcata, a city of about 17,000 about two hours south of the Oregon state line, a long-simmering debate over McKinley caught fire after Charlottesville. Area tribes and activists launched a petition campaign and descended on City Hall. The protesters said they couldn't watch Confederate monuments fall without thinking of their own statue.

By the winter, the plaza played host to regular protests. McKinley became a symbol of Arcata's sins against Natives and, by extension, other races too, forcing the city to confront some of its embarrassing history. In 1886, for example, Arcata passed a law calling for the "total expulsion of the Chinese."

McKinley also became a target for anger at President Trump, who has stoked racial tensions with his comments — including his continued insistence that there were "very fine people" among the white supremacists who rallied in Charlottesville.

One Arcata resident was so incensed over McKinley that he protested 26 days straight on the plaza. He held a sign that read, "This Christmas, give the gift of not supporting racism and murder. Remove the statue."

The debate culminated in February during a long and anger-filled City Council meeting, when dozens of residents packed City Hall to testify on both sides of the issue. In the end, the council voted 4 to 1 to get rid of the statue.

"Is there a difference between honoring McKinley and Robert E. Lee?" the mayor, Sofia Pereira, who was part the majority, said in a recent interview. "They both represent historical pain."

The land that is now Arcata was once inhabited by the Wiyot Tribe. Then in the 1850s the logging boom began — and pioneers seeking wealth began rapidly grabbing tribal lands. In 1860, settlers massacred dozens of Wiyots, whom tribe members still mourn today. Wiyot children were commonly abducted and forced into servitude.

McKinley, a Republican who was president from 1897 until his assassination in 1901, never set foot in the region. But after his death dozens of memorials to him popped up across the nation.

In Honolulu, there's McKinley High School. In Philadelphia, a McKinley statue stands in front of City Hall. Chicago has McKinley Park neighborhood, with a statue of the president at the entrance to its main park.

The highest mountain in North America, Alaska's Mt. Denali, was named Mt. McKinley until it was officially returned to his original name in 2015. Unlike other sites, the mountain got its name before

McKinley died.

Just north of Arcata is an unincorporated area called McKinleyville.

The McKinley statue has been in Arcata Plaza since 1906, when a local businessman commissioned and gifted it to the city to honor "the first modern president."

The city eventually grew into a haven for hippies from the Bay Area who sought a quieter life and cheaper land. Marijuana growers flocked to the area, as did activists who enrolled at Humboldt State University for its environmental and Native American studies programs.

But the statue remained as a vestige of a more conservative past. Locals embraced the president as a mascot, dressing him as a lumberjack, and placing bunny ears on his head for Easter. Pranksters have been known to put condoms on his outstretched fingers and stuff cheese in his ears.

Local tribes long resented the statue but remained silent on the matter, figuring there was little chance it would ever come down.

"The Native people here have avoided that square for years," said Ted Hernandez, chairman of the 620-member Wiyot Tribe, which is based on a reservation about 20 miles south of the city. "Why do we have this man standing in this square where they used to sell our children?"

Hernandez's tribe is one of more than a dozen whose members showed up in Arcata or sent letters of protest over the months against McKinley.

Bernadette Smith, who recently drove four hours north from the Manchester Band of Pomo Indians rancheria to protest the monument, described getting rid of the statue as "bigger than just a small victory for our community."

"What happened is going to inspire Natives across America," she said. Smith, 31, said the win in Arcata spurred her to launch a campaign to rename the Garcia River that divides her tribe's land back to its original name of P'da Hau.

The McKinley statue also has its supporters. Dozens showed up at City Hall in February to make their case before the vote. They came again in March when the City Council briefly floated the idea of opening up the statue debate to a citywide vote.

David LaRue, an Arcata resident for the last 22 years, started a Facebook group called "Let the people vote on our McKinley statue" and is now gathering signatures for ballot initiative to do just that.

He said that unlike Confederate leaders whose monuments are no longer widely accepted, McKinley fought for the Union in the Civil War. LaRue also pointed out that McKinley defied the norms of his time in appointing several African Americans to federal posts.

"Certainly by today's standards, he had different ways of looking at things," he said. "But looking at Abraham Lincoln by today's standards, you could also say he was a horrible racist."

The debate has also divided families.

Former Arcata Mayor Bob Ornelas, who has lived in the city since 1979, said tearing down McKinley would take away from the city's culture. He said he couldn't imagine the square, home to the Saturday farmers market and nearly every major city festival, without the McKinley statue there.

"I don't read much into it," said Ornelas, who is Mexican American. "It's not Robert E. Lee. If it was somebody who is known to fight their cousins for the right to have a slave, I would be offended. But during his time he got pushed around by a Congress that was hungry for ... expanding the American

empire."

He sees things differently than his wife, a councilwoman who was mayor last year when the push to remove the statue resurged.

"We are in a small northern part of Northern California where Native people are active in our lives daily," Susan Ornelas said. "It's not just a lost thought. McKinley didn't back Native Americans at all. He backed the Curtis Act, which took away Native rights on a lot of land. Natives were so misused in that era. He didn't really directly hurt them locally but he did through federal laws."

Susan Ornelas suggested allowing residents to vote on the statue's fate before taking back that proposal.

For now, the former president stands in Arcata with his days numbered. The city estimates it will take eight months before he's gone. California law requires a lengthy environmental review, a process that is expected to bring the total cost of removal to \$65,000. Anti-statue activists say they will raise the money.

A veterans hall seven blocks away has offered to house the president.

Other monuments protested by Native peoples are also getting private caretakers. The Columbus statue in San Jose was moved to the hall of the Italian American Heritage Foundation, where the group said it will be enclosed as protection from vandalism.

In San Francisco, the city has considered moving the "Early Days" statue to a museum, though a legal challenge has kept it up for the time being.

Another Columbus statue — the most widely seen in the world — appears to be staying put. It stands 76 feet high at the center of Columbus Circle in Manhattan.

After the Charlottesville violence, New York Mayor Bill de Blasio vowed to examine all "symbols of hate." While the city decided Columbus would stay, the mayor promised "new historical markers" near the monument to contextualize it as well as a new monument honoring "indigenous peoples."

Pereira, the Arcata mayor, said simply adding context to the McKinley monument would amount to too little, too late.

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HEADLINE	04/01 Tourists to Puerto Rico boost recovery
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/puerto-rico-crisis/puerto-rico-tourists-boost-recovery-though-some-still-remain-dark-n861866
GIST	<p>SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — The music blared from the lobby at the San Juan Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino — which was finally packed with tourists and not just emergency workers.</p> <p>For months, this hotel and others on the island catered to FEMA contractors and National Guard members. It was among the few that didn't lose power in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, when the hotel scrambled to maintain industrial backup generators as the island's economy ground to a halt.</p> <p>"I'm very happy that the island is open for business," said Jose Gonzalez-Espinosa, the Marriott's general manager.</p> <p>It is an island finding its rhythm again.</p> <p>More than six months after the Category 4 hurricane ravaged Puerto Rico, tourists are slowly returning and the U.S. territory's economic engine is sputtering to life.</p>

Outside the capital city, however, several mountain communities are still desperate for power, supplies and attention. Though some damaged resorts will still be closed for months, more than 85 percent of the island's hotels are back up and running. The industry is critical for the long-term recovery here.

Meanwhile, the Carnival cruise ship Fascination — which carries more than 2,000 passengers and departs from San Juan to tour the Caribbean — is sold out.

Tourism officials are hoping for almost 2 million cruise passengers over the next year — pumping a quarter billion dollars into the local economy.

In Old San Juan, business is booming again. Coffee shops are packed and reservations are hard to snag at Marmalade, a high-end restaurant where the roof collapsed during Maria.

"I think the best thing that people can do is come and not donate your money but let us serve you," said Peter Schintler, the executive chef.

Still, other parts of the island continue to struggle. In southeastern Puerto Rico, blue tarps and splintered power poles still litter neighborhoods in Yabucoa, where the monster hurricane first made landfall.

Six months after the storm, the town's mayor, Rafael Surillo, said that 70 percent of its residents were still without power. He told NBC News he was furious with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' recent decision to scale back resources.

Col. Jason Kirk said that relief effort has brought "unprecedented" logistical challenges.

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HEADLINE	04/01 More protests planned for Sacramento
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/04/01/easter-sunday-calm-after-tense-night-when-sheriffs-suv-hits-acgivioproester-stephon-clark-vigil-sacra/476610002/
GIST	<p>SAN FRANCISCO — More events are planned for this week in Sacramento as the city continues to deal with outrage over the death of Stephon Clark, an unarmed black man who was killed by police on March 18.</p> <p>Sunday was calm after a tense interaction during a peaceful vigil Saturday evening in which a sheriff's SUV struck a protester.</p> <p>"Be on the look out" for upcoming rallies and protests, the Sacramento Black Lives Matter group said on its Facebook page Sunday.</p> <p>"We will continue to demand justice for not just Stephon, but for all lives that have been unjustly taken at the hands of law enforcement," it said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Orange Co. fights Calif. sanctuary law
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/california-orange-county-sanctuary-law/2018/04/01/id/851916/
GIST	<p>California and its Democratic-controlled Legislature have built a reputation for leading resistance against the Trump administration's immigration crackdown.</p> <p>But at the local level, there's a backlash brewing.</p> <p>On Tuesday, the Orange County Board of Supervisors voted to condemn the state's sanctuary law and join a U.S. Justice Department lawsuit that contends it's unconstitutional.</p>

The law, Senate Bill 54, limits police cooperation with federal immigration authorities. It's a capstone of the effort by Gov. Jerry Brown, legislators and mayors of the largest cities in the state to resist stepped-up efforts to deport people in the country illegally and to stop President Donald Trump from building a wall along the U.S. border with Mexico.

The Justice Department welcomed Orange County's decision and Trump blasted the state's law on Twitter.

"My Administration stands in solidarity with the brave citizens in Orange County defending their rights against California's illegal and unconstitutional Sanctuary policies," he posted Wednesday.

Orange County, home to 3.2 million people, including hundreds of thousands of immigrants, has seen its decades-long reputation as a conservative GOP base erode in recent years. Hillary Clinton won more votes than Trump in the county in the 2016 election.

But on Tuesday its all-Republican Board of Supervisors voted 4-0 to join the federal lawsuit filed earlier this month against SB 54 and two other pro-immigrant state laws.

Supervisor Michelle Steel, an immigrant from South Korea, told the crowd that fixing the country's immigration system will take time.

"Along the way, law enforcement should absolutely cooperate fully within the constraints of federal law," she said.

About a dozen people holding American flags and signs reading "Support Our Constitution" cheered the board's actions.

"We cannot have all the states with different immigration laws. It just doesn't make sense," Doris Matyasovich told the board. "Our constitutional republic depends on following the rule of law."

Immigrant advocates, however, felt the supervisors had taken a step back in the county where, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, nearly a third of the residents are immigrants.

"History tells us that we will win. So I will be able to look in my children's and grandchildren's eyes and tell them I was on the right side of history," Bethany Anderson of Fullerton told supervisors. "Will you be able to do that?"

State Sen. Kevin de Leon, a Los Angeles Democrat who wrote the state's law, called the decision a "pretty sad use of taxpayer resources."

"This kind of obsessive immigrant bashing is embarrassing to the county and its residents, and seems designed to court the approval of a racist President and his cronies," he said in a statement.

The move highlights longstanding divisions over immigration in California. For years, some local governments have sought to help federal immigration agents pick up inmates from their jails to prevent them from being released back into their communities, while others have tried to keep their distance to encourage immigrant residents to trust police enough to come forward to report crimes.

In Orange County, leaders of the small city of Los Alamitos recently voted for an ordinance to exempt itself from the state's law while leaders in the county seat of Santa Ana — a self-declared immigrant sanctuary — will consider filing an amicus brief to support California in federal court.

The county also moved this week to improve communication with federal immigration agents by publishing the release dates of inmates online. The Sheriff's Department used to screen inmates in the county's jails to help Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents identify those subject to deportation but had to stop when the state law passed.

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HEADLINE	04/02 China space lab burns up reentry
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/defunct-chinese-space-lab-forecast-enter-atlantic-54167092?cid=clicksource_79_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>China's defunct Tiangong 1 space station mostly burned up on re-entry into the atmosphere Monday over the central South Pacific, Chinese space authorities said.</p> <p>The experimental space laboratory re-entered around 8:15 a.m. Beijing time, the China Manned Space Engineering Office said.</p> <p>Scientists monitoring the craft's disintegrating orbit had forecast the craft would mostly burn up and would pose only the slightest of risks to people. Analysis from the Beijing Aerospace Control Center showed it had mostly burned up.</p> <p>Brad Tucker, an astrophysicist at Australian National University, said that Tiangong 1's re-entry was "mostly successful" and that it would have been better if the space station had not been spinning toward Earth.</p> <p>"It could have been better, obviously, if it wasn't tumbling, but it landed in the Southern Pacific Ocean, and that's kind of where you hope it would land," Tucker said.</p> <p>"It's been tumbling and spinning for a while, which means that when it really starts to come down it's less predictable about what happens to it," Tucker said. He likened it to an airplane landing, saying it's more difficult to predict where a plane that is "shaking around and moving" will land than one that is smoothly descending.</p> <p>Launched in 2011, Tiangong 1 was China's first space station, serving as an experimental platform for bigger projects, such as the Tiangong 2 launched in September 2016 and a future permanent Chinese space station.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Russia queries OPCW for info spy case
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/expelled-russian-diplomats-return-us-amid-spy-dispute-54158222
GIST	<p>The Russian Foreign Ministry asked the international agency that monitors chemical weapons for information Sunday about the investigation of the poisoning of a former Russian spy and his daughter in England.</p> <p>A list of questions submitted to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons includes what sort of assistance Britain requested from the watchdog agency and which sampling procedures were used to collect the substance that sickened Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia.</p> <p>OPCW representatives were among a group of experts Britain asked to analyze the chemical agent involved in the poisonings. Britain claims it was the Soviet-manufactured nerve agent Novichok and has said Russia is likely responsible, which Moscow adamantly denies.</p> <p>The Foreign Ministry's request came on the same day that Russian diplomats and their families returned to Moscow on two planes after being expelled from the United States, part of the international fallout from the March 4 attack on the Skripals.</p> <p>Russia consistently has complained that Britain has not provided evidence to back up its claim of Russian</p>

	<p>involvement or that the poison that afflicted the Skripals was a Russia-developed nerve agent.</p> <p>The Russian Foreign Ministry also submitted questions to British and French authorities on Saturday. The ministry did not say what actions Russia might take if the parties do not answer the questions or provide partial responses.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Strike, security clampdown shuts Kashmir
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/kashmir-shut-strike-security-day-deadly-fighting-54170394
GIST	<p>A security clampdown and a strike sponsored by separatists fighting against Indian rule Monday shut most of Indian-administered Kashmir a day after deadly protests and fierce fighting killed 16 combatants and four civilians.</p> <p>Armed police and paramilitary soldiers in riot gear fanned out across the region Monday and are patrolling streets in anticipation of anti-India protests and clashes.</p> <p>Authorities have also clamped a curfew in the old parts of the disputed region's main city of Srinagar, the urban center of protests and clashes against Indian rule.</p> <p>Shops and businesses closed in other areas where no security restrictions were in place. Separatist leaders who challenge India's sovereignty over Kashmir have called for a shutdown on Monday against the killings.</p> <p>Authorities shut schools and colleges and canceled university exams in an attempt to stop protests by students. They also stopped train services and cut cellphone internet services in the most restive towns, and reduced connection speeds in other parts of the Kashmir Valley, a common government practice aimed to calm tensions and prevent anti-India demonstrations from being organized.</p> <p>Troops laid steel barricades and coiled razor wire on roads and intersections to cut off neighborhoods as authorities anticipated widespread protests.</p> <p>At least 13 rebels and three Indian army soldiers were killed in Sunday's fighting in three gunbattles in the southern Kashmir where new-age rebels have revived militancy and challenged New Delhi's rule with guns and effective use of social media.</p> <p>As the fighting raged, massive anti-India protests erupted in several parts of Indian-controlled Kashmir and at least four civilians were killed and dozens injured in the latest round of anti-India protests.</p> <p>In recent years, Kashmiris, mainly youths, have displayed open solidarity with anti-India rebels and sought to protect them by engaging troops in street clashes during military operations against the militants. The protests have persisted despite the Indian army chief warning recently that tough action would be taken against stone-throwers during counterinsurgency operations.</p> <p>Nuclear-armed India and Pakistan each administer part of Kashmir, but both claim it in its entirety.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Deportation plan sparks protests Israel
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/plan-deport-20000-asylum-seekers-sparks-protests-fear/story?id=54097368&cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	Thousands of Israelis have taken to the streets of Tel Aviv to protest a new deportation initiative by Benjamin Netanyahu, which calls for the deportation of 20,000 African Eritrean and Sudanese asylum

	<p>seekers -- whom the prime minister has called "infiltrators" and illegal economic migrants.</p> <p>The vast majority of them crossed illegally into Israel between 2006 and 2014.</p> <p>The movement against the deportations has drawn a vocal minority, including Israelis who have compared what the Africans are facing to the plight of the Jews during the Holocaust.</p> <p>The deportation plan calls for the removal of single male African asylum seekers who have illegally crossed into Israel from Egypt's Sinai desert. They have a choice: take \$3,500 and a plane ticket and leave voluntarily, or face jail and forced deportation.</p> <p>The policy was supposed to take effect Sunday, but Israel's High Court froze the plan until April 9 after asylum seekers filed a petition, questioning its legality.</p> <p>Much of the controversy surrounds the plan to deport the asylum seekers to Rwanda and Uganda.</p> <p>The deportation plan is not without its supporters, however. In fact, according to a poll by the Israeli Democracy Institute, 66 percent of Israelis support deportation.</p> <p>And Education Minister Naftali Bennett recently tweeted, "The government must not fold in the face of the campaign to keep the illegal job infiltrators in Israel. Otherwise we will become the employment office for the world."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Spring snowstorm heads to Northeast
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/spring-snowstorm-headed-northeast-5th-major-storm-march/story?
GIST	<p>After pounding the Midwest, a spring storm is getting ready to hit the Northeast early Monday -- the fifth major storm since March to barrel through the region.</p> <p>By around 3 a.m., Scranton, Pennsylvania and Hartford, Connecticut, will be blanketed by about 1 to 4 inches of a slushy mix of rain and snow.</p> <p>Some parts of the Northeast could see as much as 4 to 6 inches as well, making many highways and roadways perilously icy and slick.</p> <p>Conditions are expected to worsen by sunrise on Monday as the night's dose of slush turns into heavy, wet snow in cities like Philadelphia and New York City.</p> <p>Some airports, including New York's John F. Kennedy International, LaGuardia and Newark, are already bracing for the weather situation. Delta Airlines and JetBlue has issued a travel waiver for some passengers set to fly out of or into those hubs.</p> <p>By mid-afternoon, the sun is expected to peek through the clouds, the snow should recede and the temperature will surge back to less shivering mid-40s.</p> <p>The storm is the fifth major one to hit the Northeast in as many weeks, following four nor'easters since the beginning of March.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Teachers to rally in Kentucky, Oklahoma
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/tens-thousands-teachers-planning-massive-rallies-classroom-walkouts/story?id=54161538&cid=clicksource_81_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed

GIST	<p>Tens of thousands of public school teachers in Kentucky and Oklahoma plan to attend rallies on Monday at their state capitols in what they hope will be the latest display of muscle by the nation's educators demanding higher wages and better classroom resources.</p> <p>The double demonstrations come less than a month after West Virginia teachers went on a nine-day strike that ended with the governor there signing legislation giving them a 5 percent pay hike -- their first raise in four years.</p> <p>"What happened in West Virginia is inspiring for sure," Charles Main, spokesman for the Kentucky Education Association, told ABC News Sunday.</p> <p>The planned rallies also come on the heels of one on Wednesday in which 2,500 teachers in Arizona -- who are demanding a 20 percent raise -- demonstrated at the state's capitol in Phoenix. Gov. Doug Ducey didn't directly address the teachers' demands, but noted that the state already gave teachers a 4.3 percent raise from 2016 to 2017.</p> <p>On Monday, thousands of teachers and supporters in Kentucky are expected to descend on the state capitol in Frankfort to demand Gov. Matt Bevin veto a bill that overhauls their pension plan, which they say was forged by lawmakers in secret backroom deals.</p> <p>Meanwhile, thousands of Oklahoma teachers and advocates for better education are poised to stage a classroom walkout and converge on the state capitol in Oklahoma City to call on lawmakers, including Gov. Mary Fallin, to restore funding for education programs and supplies they say have been drastically slashed over the last decade.</p> <p>The Oklahoma protest comes after Fallin signed legislation Thursday granting teachers annual pay raises averaging \$6,100, the largest in state history. Oklahoma teachers had been making an average of \$45,276 a year, among the lowest wages for educators in the country, according to a 2017 report by the National Education Association.</p> <p>While teachers in Oklahoma say they appreciate the pay raise, they are upset that state lawmakers shortchanged their students by slating only \$50 million for education programs and supplies.</p> <p>Alicia Priest, president of the Oklahoma Education Association, said the union had asked that teachers' pay be raised by \$10,000 annually and that funding for education be boosted by \$200 million over the next three years.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Homeless man sues Portland in shooting
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/homeless-man-sues-city-for-13-million-after-getting-shot-by-portland-police-03-31-2018
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. — A homeless man who was shot by Portland police has filed a \$1.3 million lawsuit against the city.</p> <p>The incident happened in February of last year in the 2100 block of Southeast Lafayette Street.</p> <p>Police responded to a report of a potentially suicidal person.</p> <p>They say a replica handgun fell out of the vehicle Don Perkins was living in. When Perkins reached for it, police shot him in the stomach and arm.</p> <p>The lawsuit claims the two officers who responded to the incident were not properly trained to deal with the situation.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Army eyes more adviser brigades
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/news/with-1st-sfab-deployed-army-looks-to-build-more-adviser-brigades-1.519734
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Building on what was merely a concept at the beginning of 2017, the Army hopes to boast five brigades of conventional soldiers hand-selected and specially trained to advise indigenous partner forces by the end of next year. Army officials say the service is seeking to quickly build its Security Force Assistance Brigades, units designed to shoulder the bulk of the Pentagon’s train, advise and assist missions throughout the world. That is why the Army is seeking funding to build three SFABs — it has begun assembling two — in fiscal year 2019, according to the service’s budget request sent last month to Congress.</p> <p>The Army’s goal is to build six SFABs, five in the active-duty Army and one in the National Guard. The service is considering building two division headquarters to manage the brigades, Army officials said. “My view right now is that with regard to irregular warfare, we’re going to be engaged in that indefinitely,” Army Secretary Mark Esper told Stars and Stripes in an interview last month. “There will always be a need to help build allied or partnered forces, so [the SFABs] can take on that mission. Which is far better than us doing it with our combat brigades’ soldiers.”</p> <p>The Army for decades has worked to train partner forces to fight. In recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army has often pulled apart its traditional combat brigades to build small training-and-advising units for that mission. The problem, Esper said, is that has meant those brigades were not focused on their primary charge — training to fight.</p> <p>With the new SFAB units focused on the Army’s train, advise and assist responsibilities, it should free the service’s 58 brigade combat teams to concentrate on preparing for potential full-spectrum combat operations — the kind of fighting they would face in a near-peer war against an adversary such as Russia, China, North Korea or Iran, Esper said.</p> <p>The Army is still ironing out how the SFABs fit into the service’s model, including where it will station units.</p> <p>SFABs are unlikely to focus simply on advising partner forces in combat, Esper said. Instead they are likely to be used to help train allies across the globe, perhaps in areas like South Korea, Eastern Europe, Africa and South America.</p> <p>Much will be learned from the 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade’s current deployment to Afghanistan, he said. The Fort Benning, Ga., unit arrived there early this month, charged with advising Afghan troops close to the front lines in the 16-year fight against the Taliban.</p> <p>“Anytime you get to stand up a brand new organization is exciting,” said Army Col. Scott Jackson, the commander of 1st SFAB. “Anytime you get to stand up something built like this one is, is even more exciting. To say you’re breaking ground on something is phenomenal for everybody in this organization.”</p> <p>The unit that began taking shape last summer has already started passing on lessons learned to the 2nd Security Force Assistance Brigade, which the Army began building at Fort Bragg in North Carolina in January.</p> <p>The 1st SFAB will learn much more about the proper way to operate as it works in Afghanistan, Jackson said.</p> <p>The security force assistance brigades are the brainchild of Gen. Mark Milley, the Army’s chief of staff, who has long contended privately that the Army would need teams of soldiers to train partner forces outside of the special operations community.</p>

	<p>Milley, a Green Beret, has insisted that while similar to the traditional role of Special Forces, the SFAB concept does not infringe on their responsibilities.</p> <p>“In today’s world, we think the mission profile of train, advise, assist exceeds the capacity of Special Forces — who are running at a very, very high op tempo,” Milley told lawmakers March 15. “So, Special Forces is primarily now — not exclusively, but primarily — training and advising host nation special operations.”</p> <p>The SFABs, meanwhile, will focus on training partners’ conventional forces — those who conduct traditional ground operations.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Malala returns for first visit to hometown
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/03/31/Nobel-laureate-Malala-visits-hometown-for-first-time-since-attack/6061522519949/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=lh&utm_medium=2
GIST	<p>March 31 (UPI) -- Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai was happy to return to her hometown, Mingora, Pakistan, Saturday, her first time back since a Taliban attack in 2012.</p> <p>Yousafzai, 20, visited her old school and home in Mingora, located in the Swat valley area of Pakistan.</p> <p>"My first visit to Swat valley after 5 and half years since the attack. I have felt so happy. I am proud of my land and culture, Yousafzai wrote in the school's guestbook, CNN reported.</p> <p>Yousafzai became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Prize at age 17 in 2014 for her work to advocate for girls' right to education. The last time she was home she suffered a bullet wound to her head from a Taliban gunman.</p> <p>Yousafzai still faces some critics of her advocacy work for girls' education in Pakistan.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Governor quits over Russia mall fire
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-43610306
GIST	<p>The long-serving governor of the Russian region where a shopping mall fire left dozens of people dead has resigned.</p> <p>Aman Tuleyev said stepping aside from governing Kemerovo was "the right, conscious and only true decision" following the disaster.</p> <p>He announced the move in a video address posted on the regional administration's website.</p> <p>Last month's fire killed more than 60 people, most of them children.</p> <p>Thousands of people protested in the aftermath of the tragedy over alleged safety failings at the Winter Cherry mall.</p> <p>Investigators say the fire alarm was broken and exits were blocked - and that security guards, who were supposed to help with any emergency evacuation, were among the first to flee when the fire broke out.</p> <p>Many children became victims because they were using entertainment facilities at the top of the mall, including a cinema whose doors are said to have been locked.</p> <p>Investigators are looking at whether the fire could have been started by an electrical short-circuit or arson</p>

	<p>in the children's play area.</p> <p>President Vladimir Putin - who visited Kemerovo in the wake of the fire - blamed "criminal negligence" for the blaze.</p> <p>Mr Tuleyev - whose niece was reportedly killed in the fire - had been governor of the coal-mining region since 1997, AFP news agency reports.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 US, SKorea begin military exercises
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/04/01/us-south-korea-begin-military-exercises-after-olympics-delay.html
GIST	<p>The United States and South Korea are resuming joint military exercises Sunday on the Korean Peninsula after a hiatus because of the 2018 Winter Olympic Games.</p> <p>Approximately 300,000 South Korean soldiers will be joined by more than 11,500 U.S. troops for a monthlong operation dubbed Foal Eagle, Yonhap News Agency reported.</p> <p>The annual joint exercises between the two nations usually begin in late February or early March, and last for two months. This year the exercises were pushed back and condensed because of the Olympics, which were held Feb. 9-25 in Pyeongchang, South Korea.</p> <p>The United States agreed to the change so as not to provoke North Korea, which sent athletes, artists and a government delegation to the Games.</p> <p>South Korean President Moon Jae-in reportedly requested the military rescheduling prior to the event.</p> <p>North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has long viewed the annual military exercises as a provocation.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Mukilteo teens 'never again' at rally
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/mukilteo-teens-say-never-again-at-rally-to-end-gun-violence/281-533867186
GIST	<p>A week after thousands of people marched to push for an end to gun violence, a community gathers for their own event. The issue hits close to home in Mukilteo, where three teenagers were shot and killed at a party in 2016.</p> <p>The rally was called "Never Again: Mukilteo" and was organized by teens. They took center stage at the event, which included poems and music.</p> <p>"Kids are more invested in this issue now because of what we've experienced as a school with lockdowns, with friends we've lost," said Ketta Davis.</p> <p>Several took the stage to talk about how gun violence impacted their lives and the changes they want to see. Paul Kramer, the father of Will Kramer who was shot at that party in 2016, spoke to the group about his frustrations and hope.</p> <p>"When there's another shooting, the wounds get reactivated, retraumatized so to speak. It's sad that this continues," he said.</p> <p>Kramer said the teens' energy and enthusiasm for change give him hope they can reduce the likelihood that other families and communities will face the same tragedy.</p>

	<p>"It's sad that we haven't been able to do it, that's the job of the adults to make the changes when they need to take place, and we haven't gotten it done," said Kramer.</p> <p>The teens encouraged voter registration and said it's time to get rid of politicians who don't support their agenda. State Senator Marco Liias says he believes they will take on some of the issues in their next session.</p> <p>"The issue of assault weapons should they be legal at all? And if they are, what are the background checks and age restrictions? What about high capacity magazines? What about a waiting period?" he said.</p> <p>Students put painted hands on a bench they're working on as a memorial to Jake, Anna, and Jordan, who died in the shooting. They hope a more lasting memorial will be a change in the law that prevents families from dealing with this in the future.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Anti-India protests erupt in Kashmir
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/anti-india-protests-erupt-kashmir-troops-kill-rebels-54157117?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Deadly protests against Indian rule erupted in several parts of Indian-controlled Kashmir on Sunday following the killings of at least eight rebels in fighting with government forces, officials said.</p> <p>The new round of anti-India protests and clashes, which led to the killing of at least one civilian, comes after Indian troops launched deadly counterinsurgency operations targeting mainly the southern parts of Kashmir, where new-age rebels have revived militancy and challenged New Delhi's rule with guns and effective use of social media.</p> <p>The gunbattles in southern Kashmir began overnight after government forces raided two villages following a tip that rebels were hiding there and came under fire, police said.</p> <p>Police said the militants tried to escape from a security cordon while firing their guns and grenades but were killed in the ensuing fighting.</p> <p>Seven militants, including some commanders, were killed in the Shopian area, while one rebel was killed and another captured in Anantnag early Sunday, said top police officer S.P. Vaid.</p> <p>Police said a third gunbattle also erupted in Shopian, where several rebels were trapped.</p> <p>No rebel group fighting against Indian rule immediately issued any statement about Sunday's fighting.</p> <p>As the fighting raged, anti-India protests erupted in several villages in southern Kashmir in solidarity with the rebels.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Gaza protests shrink as funerals held
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/31/middleeast/gaza-protests-and-funerals/index.html
GIST	<p>Gaza (CNN) Hundreds of Palestinians marched Saturday in Gaza along the border with Israel, as funerals were held for protesters killed the day before in confrontations with Israeli forces.</p> <p>The protests were much smaller than on Friday, when thousands of Palestinians massed along the border in what was supposed to be a peaceful demonstration called the March of Return. Israeli forces fired upon marchers it said participated in violence, killing 17 people and injuring more than 1,400 others in the</p>

	deadliest day in Gaza since the 2014 war.
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HEADLINE	04/01 US blocks UN inquiry Gaza violence
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/31/middleeast/gaza-protests-un-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Gaza (CNN)The US blocked a United Nations Security Council statement Saturday morning, which called for an independent inquiry into Friday's violence in Gaza that left at least 17 Palestinians dead and more than 1,400 injured, two UN diplomats tell CNN.</p> <p>Following Friday's escalated confrontations, Kuwait drafted a statement asking the Security Council to take action.</p> <p>It is unclear if other countries would have also objected, UN diplomats tell CNN. If one country objects, then the statement cannot be adopted.</p> <p>But Israel's UN Ambassador Danny Danon lodged a complaint with the United Nations Security Council for holding an emergency session on the first night of Passover -- a major Jewish holiday -- according to a statement released by Israel's UN Mission on Sunday.</p> <p>Danon claimed Kuwait intentionally called for the session as Israel's UN Mission was observing Passover, thus barring their participation while they observed a religious holiday.</p> <p>He said the move "exploited procedural rules" and is "antithetical to the spirit of the UN," according to the Israeli Mission statement.</p> <p>UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had called for the independent inquiry into Friday's violence.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Sacramento sheriff vehicle hits protester
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/01/us/stephon-clark-protests/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A bystander video shows the moment a demonstrator was hit by a Sacramento Sheriff's deputy's vehicle Saturday night as people protested the shooting death of Stephon Clark.</p> <p>The collision happened during a vigil as a woman carrying a "Stephon Clark Rest in Power" sign walked in front of a sheriff's vehicle and motioned the driver to stop, according to a video from the National Lawyers Guild Legal Observers obtained by CNN.</p> <p>The deputy then drove away, said Guy Danilowitz, a legal observer who recorded the video.</p> <p>"The vehicle accelerated and struck her, accelerated very fast and struck her violently and she fell to the ground," Danilowitz said.</p> <p>"It was a very fast acceleration, not the way you would move with people around," he added.</p> <p>About eight seconds before the collision, a deputy inside the sheriff's SUV could be heard on a loudspeaker repeatedly telling protesters to "back away from my car."</p> <p>The California Highway Patrol said it is investigating a collision involving a Sacramento County Sheriff's vehicle and "a pedestrian."</p> <p>A spokesman with the California Highway Patrol would not confirm whether the woman was a protester or if the incident was a hit and run.</p>

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HEADLINE	03/31 Russia hunting defectors in America?
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/russian-defectors-america-putin-russia-threat-skripal-868013
GIST	<p>They get lonely. They miss their friends and family left behind in Russia. And so, despite the danger of exposing themselves to Kremlin retribution, Russian defectors hiding abroad make phone calls or send emails back to relatives in the motherland.</p> <p>And when they do, the Kremlin is listening.</p> <p>“It’s easy to find us, if they are really determined,” one defector in the U.S. tells Newsweek. Phone calls and emails make it easy for Russian eavesdroppers to locate them. A visit from a relative back home makes it even easier. Agents can just trail them to a defector’s doorstep.</p> <p>Some U.S. security sources say there has been an uptick in Russian activity here over the past two years. Suspected Russian agents have been spotted cruising the neighborhoods of some defectors protected by CIA security teams, they say. The FBI and CIA have been “bringing people out of retirement, people who worked against the Russians in the 1990s,” to cope with the the challenge, the defector said, speaking anonymously out of fears for his personal safety.</p> <p>The CIA declined to comment. The FBI did not respond to questions about Russian activity in America.</p> <p>The March 4 nerve-agent attack on Sergei Skripal, a former Russian spy for British intelligence, in a shopping mall in Salisbury, England has U.S. counterintelligence agencies on edge.</p> <p>“Everyone’s been on high alert since the Skripal poisoning,” Michelle Van Cleave, head of the National Counterintelligence Executive under President George W. Bush, tells Newsweek. On Thursday, another former Russian double agent in the U.K, Boris Karpichkov, reported that he’d been warned last month that Kremlin agents were coming for him, too. “Be careful, look around, something is probably going to happen,” an old comrade told him in mid-February, according to NBC News. “It’s very serious, and you are not alone.”</p> <p>Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, were assaulted with Novichok, a lethal chemical agent invented by Soviet-era biowarfare engineers in the 1980s. A policeman who came to their aid was also infected. Skripal remains in critical condition; his daughter, who had recently left Russia to visit her father in England, is “recovering rapidly,” authorities said.</p> <p>A similar attack is not unthinkable here, CIA veterans with long histories with Moscow tell Newsweek.</p> <p>“I’ve heard nothing along those lines, but it’s very plausible.,” former CIA analyst and Russia specialist Mark Stout says. “Even without the recent events I’d be concerned.” The Russians, he said, “largely got out of this business in the mid-1970s,” but with the rise of Vladimir Putin to power in the 1990s they got back into “tracking down and hunting defectors.”</p> <p>“I would certainly not rule out” an attempt on a defector’s life here, says Daniel Hoffman, a 30-year CIA veteran who spent five years on duty in Russia. “Putin has demonstrated there are no limits to the methods he would use to target Russia’s ‘main enemy’ and our allies.”</p> <p>“The Russians have always sought to locate Russian defectors in the U.S. and Britain, and attempt to lure them back to Russia if possible,” fellow CIA veteran and Russia hand John Sipher told Newsweek. Their message: “all is forgiven.” Few believe it. Only one defector is known publicly to have returned home and lived to tell about it: Vitaly Yurchenko, who in 1985 changed his mind, apologized to his CIA minder in a Georgetown pub, walked out the door and up the street to what was then the Soviet embassy. The Russians made propaganda hay out of his turnaround, probably to encourage other re-defections.</p>

The recent string of events suggests Russia has abandoned the carrot for the stick. “The attack on Skripal should be ringing alarm bells for all NATO member countries, including the United States, that something like that could happen here,” says Hoffman. “We can assume that there has been a recent step-up in activity” here, Sipher says, “given the events in the U.K.”

Led by British Prime Minister Theresa May, European leaders responded furiously to the Skripal attack, expelling scores of suspected Russian spies working under official diplomatic cover in their countries. President Donald Trump, as is his fashion, declined to join the Europeans in their harsh criticism of the Kremlin, but the administration booted 60 Russian diplomats from the U.S.—48 from its Washington, D.C. embassy and 12 from the Russian mission to the United Nations—and shuttered the Russian consulate in Seattle. Moscow responded in kind, expelling 58 U.S. diplomats and closing the American consulate in St. Petersburg.

Moscow rejected any responsibility for the attack on Skripal—and at least some spy veterans raised questions about it, too. The Russian defector who spoke with Newsweek called it an amateuristic job, “very unprofessional,” not only because it failed to kill its target but inevitably pointed a finger at the Kremlin. A top Russian assassin, he said, would have avoided a public attack and used a poison dust delivered via, say, a mailed letter that killed its victim “three days after” being inhaled, obscuring its source and the perpetrator. He also pointed Newsweek to a recent Russian documentary film alleging that quantities of Novichok, the nerve agent fingered in the Skripal attack, had been stolen from the Russian lab.

And why Skripal, the defector asked? The former GRU officer had been unmasked as a British mole years earlier and squeezed dry under interrogation before being released in a trade for 10 Russian spies arrested in the U.S. in 2010. “He had no more secrets with him,” the defector says. “He was no threat to Russia. There was no reason to punish him any more.” More likely, he says, some former GRU comrades whom Skripal betrayed to British intelligence were taking revenge, using “idiots” in the Russian mob to carry out the “amateuristic” hit.

The Russian ambassador to the U.S., Anatoly Antonov, said much the same. “He spent five years in Russian jail. So it was enough time for us to know everything that he knew,” the ambassador told NBC News. “Why we should make revenge?”

That’s easy, Hoffman says. “Putin wanted to whip up his electorate with anti-western rhetoric” before the March 18 elections. And he was assured of “an intense reaction” over Skripal from May, who was home secretary in 2006 when another defector, Alexander Litvinenko, was fatally poisoned by plutonium. The expulsions, Hoffman said, allowed Putin to “portray Russia as a besieged fortress, which only he could defend.”

The Kremlin has a long history of none-too-subtle assassinations, its critics point out. A Russian agent murdered former revolutionary Leon Trotsky with an ice pick to the head in Mexico in August 1940. Six months later, an outspoken Russian defector, Walter Krivitsky, was found in a pool of blood in his room in a Washington, D.C. hotel. The official investigation, unaware he was on a Soviet hit list, concluded he committed suicide.

Likewise last year in Washington, D.C. police officially concluded that Putin’s former media chief, Mikhail Lesin, died of blunt-force injuries to the head, neck, and torso from falls during a in November 2015 drinking binge. But “everyone thinks he was whacked and that Putin or the Kremlin were behind it,” an FBI agent recently told BuzzFeed. In February, the news site also surfaced evidence implicating Russia “in 14 suspicious deaths on British soil that the U.K. government had largely ignored.”

The Lesin affair, says former FBI intelligence analyst Aaron Arnold, “could be a good test to see if they could get away with it—a litmus test to see how far people would let them go.”

In January, Democrats on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee issued a report warning that the long, deadly arm of Russian intelligence might well reach into the United States and take somebody out. “The

trail of mysterious deaths, all of which happened to people who possessed information that the Kremlin did not want made public, should not be ignored by Western countries on the assumption that they are safe from these extreme measures,” it said.

Putin said as much after the FBI rounded up Anna Chapman and nine other deep-cover Russian “illegals” here in 2010. Whoever betrayed them would suffer: “It always ends badly for traitors,” he said. “As a rule, their end comes from drink or drugs, lying in the gutter. And for what?”

The defector Newsweek spoke with is fatalistic about his chances of living peacefully into old age here.

“I know it’s going to happen to me sooner or later,” he said on the phone as a baby cried in the background. “All I can do is renew my life insurance. If they send a professional, I’m done.”

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HEADLINE	03/31 Saudi crown prince quiet visit to Seattle
SOURCE	http://www.heraldnet.com/northwest/saudi-arabias-crown-prince-quietly-visits-boeing-in-everett/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The crown prince of Saudi Arabia was in town Friday and Saturday on a very secretive visit amid tight security.</p> <p>Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s private VIP 747 jumbo jet, inbound from New York, landed at Paine Field in Everett just after 2 p.m. Friday for a tour of Boeing — his first West Coast stop on a three-week U.S. trip to refashion the image of Saudi Arabia in the eyes of Americans.</p> <p>After a tour of the widebody jet plant that built his airplane, the 32-year-old crown prince looked on as Boeing Chairman and Chief Executive Dennis Muilenburg signed a memorandum of agreement to set up a \$450 million joint venture in Saudi Arabia that will provide maintenance and repair support for the kingdom’s military aircraft.</p> <p>The crown prince’s final itinerary and plans in Seattle were not announced.</p> <p>In an advance draft itinerary obtained by The Seattle Times, meetings were also penciled in with Amazon and Microsoft executives, with Bill Gates and with former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, who lives in the state.</p> <p>However, Saturday morning meetings listed on the advance agenda with Washington state’s governor and Seattle’s mayor aren’t happening — both politely declined the Saudi meeting requests, on the grounds they are busy that morning.</p> <p>On Friday morning, the Fairmont Olympic Hotel in downtown Seattle, home for the day to a large Saudi royal court delegation, though not the crown prince himself, was surrounded by black Chevy Suburbans with government license plates and Seattle police vehicles.</p> <p>Inside the hotel entrance, visitors entered through an airport-style baggage-screening machine to find the lobby swarming with Saudi and American security personnel. A couple of bomb-sniffing dogs lounged on the thick carpet.</p> <p>The whereabouts of the crown prince himself, and even where his 747 would land, were not disclosed in advance.</p> <p>The crown prince, effectively the power behind the throne held by his father, is here to rebrand the image of the desert kingdom that’s best known for its vast oil wealth and adherence to a strict fundamentalist brand of Sunni Islam, and to discuss a diversification of its economy away from oil.</p> <p>The crown prince presents himself as a liberalizing modern, reforming and opening up the claustrophobic</p>

kingdom and in particular allowing more freedom to women.

He just lifted a 35-year-long ban on cinemas and allowed Saudi women for the first time to attend mixed-gender public entertainments such as soccer games

And in a plan dubbed Saudi Vision 2030, he has declared his intention to make Saudi Arabia “a global investment powerhouse.”

That’s the reason for meeting with so many corporate leaders while in the U.S.

Coinciding with his visit, multiple media accounts report that a 97-page glossy magazine promoting the crown prince has turned up on shelves in unlikely parts of the U.S., such as a Walmart in rural New Hampshire.

Entirely free of ads, the advertorial-style magazine is published by American Media, the Florida-based tabloid publisher headed by President Donald Trump’s friend David Pecker.

The agreement announced in Everett on Friday will form a joint venture between Boeing and state-owned Saudi Arabian Military Industries (SAMI) that will become the sole provider of maintenance support for the Saudi air force’s fleet of military jets.

Boeing also agreed to transfer the technological know-how required to install weaponry on these aircraft as well as localize the supply chain for spare parts.

The idea is to build up local expertise within Saudi Arabia, furthering the crown prince’s Vision 2030 plan. The agreement will create 6,000 jobs in Saudi Arabia, Boeing said.

In a news release, H.E. Ahmed Al-Khateeb, chairman of SAMI, said the joint venture with Boeing will help build “a strong autonomous military-industries ecosystem in the Kingdom.”

The joint venture was part of the package of U.S. defense deals touted last May during Trump’s state visit to Saudi Arabia. Boeing CEO Muilenburg accompanied the president on that trip.

The crown prince’s planned meeting with Bill Gates is likely intended to add some philanthropic luster to his image. Last fall, Gates met with the crown prince in Riyadh, where the two announced a \$10 million initiative to empower young people.

Some in Seattle are critical of the welcome that business interests have laid on for the crown prince and in particular of any military support offered for Saudi Arabia as it wages a bloody proxy war in Yemen against forces aligned with Iran.

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HEADLINE	03/30 SEA international wait times getting worse
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/sea-tac-international-arrival-wait-times-are-getting-worse-but-relief-is-on-the-way/724529811
GIST	<p>At midday, almost every day, Sea-Tac Airport's passport control is jammed.</p> <p>Airline schedules mean many planes from overseas arrive at nearly the same time.</p> <p>"We are over capacity for that time of day," said Mark Wilkerson, Seattle Area port director for U.S. Customs and Border Protection.</p> <p>Luggage carousels for customs in the 43-year-old facility are so overcrowded, the airport pays workers just to move bags to make room.</p>

Miguel Vilar flew in from Paris, and had to wait in a crowded corridor before even reaching passport control.

The airport holds people in a hallway between the gate and passport control to manage congestion.

Last year, the airport said the average wait -- just in the hallway -- was 25 minutes.

So far this year, it's averaging 27 minutes.

"What can a person think about that after a 10-hour flight?" Vilar said. "I just want to take my luggage and go home."

Sometimes, passengers are held on arriving planes, either on the tarmac or the gate, if there's not enough space.

Port officials said Norwegian and Virgin Atlantic planes now don't even go to gates to offload passengers, and load them directly onto buses instead.

Wilkerson said he even if he had more agents, they wouldn't be able to move passengers any faster through Sea-Tac's cramped space.

"We're very hopeful for the future and leaving this 40-plus-year-old international facility behind," said Charles Goedken, terminal operations manager for Sea-Tac Airport.

The Port of Seattle says a new international arrivals facility costing nearly \$800 million will solve the problem by nearly doubling the number of international-capable gates and creating a 450,000-square-foot facility for Customs and Border Protection, compared to the 80,000 current square feet.

"A lot of the lines we see at Sea-Tac today will basically go away," Wilkerson said.

Customs and Border Protection is expected to offer biometric technology at the new facility to help move passengers through faster.

The new arrivals facility is under construction and expected to open late in 2019.

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HEADLINE 03/30 Squatter complaints on rise in Seattle

SOURCE <https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/squatter-complaints-on-the-rise-in-seattle/724544347>

GIST More than 18 months after KIRO 7 first went along with a new Seattle task force focused on squatters and vacant property issues, numbers show that complaints are on the rise.

According to the city's Department of Construction and Inspections, in 2015, there were 354 vacant building complaints. In 2016, the year the task force launched, there 419. In 2017, there were 439.

Most recently, neighbors have complained about squatters who have taken up residence in the parking lot of a closed Sam's Club on Aurora Avenue. They said they've found garbage in the lot and also around the neighborhood.

"Condom wrappers, condoms, needle caps, needles, broken glass pipes and things of that nature," neighbor Bliss Moore said. "It's not very cool. If they would just clean up their mess.... Then I wouldn't feel so hesitant about having them in the 'hood.'"

"The city launched this new task force. Why is this problem getting worse?" KIRO 7 reporter Linzi

Sheldon asked Faith Lumsden, the city code compliance director.

“Well, we are seeing a lot of people breaking into vacant buildings seeking shelter,” Lumsden said. She said the city is growing and so is redevelopment.

Addressing problem properties can be like playing Whack-a-Mole.

“We are doing better at keeping vacant buildings from becoming really, really horrible,” she said. “We see it, we fix it, it shifts to some other building.”

Squatting isn't just against the law.

When KIRO 7 went along with the city's task force in 2016, police and fire officials explained the houses can be dangerous for first responders: some squatters have even set booby traps.

But the task force has had successes. Examples include a problematic Wallingford site owned by developer Robert Hardy that had several fires. A neighbor sent KIRO 7 a photo on Friday showing a brand new structure going up.

And after squatters moved into a foreclosed house on MLK Jr. Way South in South Seattle, the city cleaned it up, boarded it up, and sent bills to the mortgage company.

Changes in the city code last fall, Lumsden said, have been “very, very helpful.” One allows speedier demolition of sites with two unauthorized entries and a memo from first responders about the dangers.

The other enables the city to bill the site's owner not just for securing the site with things like fencing and plywood, but also for cleaning up the outside. Garbage, Lumsden said, can be a signal to other squatters that a building is vacant.

“Now we can clean up the whole nuisance,” she said. “We don't have to just board it up but leave a yard filled with trash and overgrown weeds.”

Lumsden only has two inspectors and they are not full-time.

“Do you need more inspectors?” KIRO 7 reporter Linzi Sheldon asked.

“I always need more inspectors,” she said. “I'm pretty sure I'm not supposed to say that on television but yes, indeed, we need more inspectors. Of course we do.”

“When you see the numbers going up, is that frustrating?” Sheldon asked.

“Is it better reporting [of problems]? Is it ever going to stop? I don't think so,” Lumsden said. “I think we'll see this as long as Seattle keeps growing.”

She said the city is trying to work with developers and nonprofits to see if they can have tenants or caretakers in properties longer while permits are going through. This, she said, will reduce the time they are vacant and vulnerable to squatters.

Lumsden said the city is also considering increasing the minimum standards for securing a building—perhaps, she said, requiring owners to use sturdy plexiglass, which is very difficult for squatters to remove, as opposed to plywood.

She said anyone who currently owns a vacant home or building needs to understand the risks.

“People need to know that having a vacant property, especially a vacant house, is dangerous,” she said. “It's going to—sooner or later—invite someone to break in.”

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HEADLINE	03/30 Some Seattle recycling heads to landfills
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/some-seattle-recycling-heads-to-landfills-amid-new-rules-from-china/281-533718269
GIST	<p>Some recycled material from Seattle is now ending up in landfills as a result of new recycling restrictions from China, The Seattle Times first reported Thursday.</p> <p>China only wants recyclables that are empty, clean and dry. So at the beginning of this year, China started cracking down. The Washington Refuse and Recycling Association says China banned the import of 24 varieties of solid waste and recyclables and imposed a new 0.5% contaminant limit.</p> <p>KING 5 reported in October that the new policy was coming and businesses, like The Recycling Depot, were bracing for the impact.</p> <p>Friday, we went back to The Recycling Depot, where manager Joe Salvatore said they were preparing to close the Rainer Avenue location.</p> <p>"We've been here for 38 years," said Salvatore. "Recycling has changed. We just can't make the profit that we need to stay open."</p> <p>Customers still arrive with truckloads of cardboard, but the cash isn't coming in like it use to.</p> <p>"I've got just two employees left. I've let everybody else go," said Salvatore.</p> <p>He says the closure, that's likely imminent, has a lot to do with China. The rules there are making it harder to run the business, according to Salvatore.</p> <p>"China is a big player in the world of recycling, and boy, when they make a move as dramatic as this one has been, it affects the entire world," he said.</p> <p>"In Washington, some communities are diverting recyclables to landfills to prevent public health and fire code issues," said Brad Lovaas, WRRRA Executive Director. "It's not safe to store large quantities of recyclables inside for fire code reasons and not feasible to store them outside due to our wet climate."</p> <p>Since China is the largest consumer of recyclables in the world, the ban has driven prices way down.</p> <p>"If I can't pay my customers a good amount of money to bring it in to me, then its not worth it for them to pick it up," said Salvatore. "We've been here a long time and people just depend on this place to bring their stuff. It is going to be a shame if we have to shut down."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 April: National Sex Assault Awareness
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/onpolitics/2018/03/31/donald-trump-sexual-assault-awareness-prevention-month-april/475350002/
GIST	<p>President Trump, who faces sexual misconduct accusations from numerous women, on Friday declared April as National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month.</p> <p>"Sexual assault crimes remain tragically common in our society, and offenders too often evade accountability," Trump's presidential proclamation read.</p> <p>Since 2001, the U.S. has observed April as sexual assault awareness month, with some advocates holding</p>

	<p>events to mark the month since the 1990s, according to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center. Both former president Barack Obama and Trump previously used presidential proclamations to raise awareness for the issue in April.</p> <p>Since Trump last designated the month in April 2017, a national reckoning around sexual assault and harassment has occurred with the #MeToo movement. According to a USA TODAY survey, 94% of women in the entertainment industry say they experienced some form of sexual harassment or assault during their careers in Hollywood, where the movement first started.</p> <p>"We must respond to sexual assault by identifying and holding perpetrators accountable. Too often, however, the victims of assault remain silent," Trump's 2018 proclamation continued.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 CDC: flu season continuing decline
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2018/03/31/CDC-Flu-season-continuing-its-decline/9291522503445/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_hn&utm_medium=13
GIST	<p>SATURDAY, March 31, 2018 -- Spring continues to take the bite out of this year's brutal flu season, new numbers show.</p> <p>For starters: yet another drop was seen in doctor visits, and less severe strains of influenza are becoming ever more dominant.</p> <p>But hospitalizations for the flu are still a problem, and there have been additional pediatric deaths, the latest federal numbers show.</p> <p>For the seventh week in a row, there was a decrease in the number of doctor visits for flu-like illness, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Friday.</p> <p>As of March 24, the CDC said, 2.5 percent of patient visits to doctors were for the flu, down from 2.7 percent of patient visits the week before.</p> <p>And, as health officials predicted, cases of less severe influenza B infections continue to be more common than cases of more severe influenza A infections.</p> <p>For the week ending March 24, influenza B infections accounted for 58 percent of cases, while influenza A infections accounted for 42 percent. For the entire season so far, influenza A strains have been responsible for 70 percent of all cases, the CDC report noted.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 UN peacekeeping mission Liberia ends
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/03/30/UN-ends-peacekeeping-mission-in-Liberia-after-15-years/2831522436008/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_tn_int&utm_medium=4
GIST	<p>March 30 (UPI) -- U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres congratulated the government of Liberia for turning "the page on crisis and conflict" as the United Nations ended its mission in the west African nation Friday.</p> <p>U.N. peacekeepers departed Liberia after nearly 15 years in the wake of two deadly civil wars.</p> <p>"The secretary-general congratulates the people and government of Liberia for their determination to turn the page on crisis and conflict," a statement on behalf of Guterres said. "He commends the government's continued efforts to ensure sustained peace and sustainable development in Liberia."</p> <p>U.N. peacekeeping troops entered the country in October 2003 at the end of the second Liberian civil war</p>

	<p>between a rebel group in the north, one in the south and the government of former President Charles Taylor.</p> <p>The first Liberian civil war, from 1989 to 1997, left about 250,000 people dead and the second claimed nearly 300,000 lives. After the second war, conflict remained.</p> <p>"The secretary-general expresses his profound respect to the memory of the 202 peacekeepers who lost their lives in the service of peace during the nearly 15 years the mission was deployed in Liberia. He expresses his gratitude to all troop- and police-contributing countries," the U.N. statement said.</p> <p>Guterres said U.N. officials would remain in Liberia in order to support the government in reforms and establishing peace.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Israel fires warning shots at Gaza border
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-palestinians-protests/israeli-troops-wound-13-on-gaza-border-day-after-deadly-protest-idUSKBN1H70AU
GIST	<p>GAZA (Reuters) - Israeli troops fired warning shots toward Palestinian youths gathered at the Gaza-Israel border on Saturday, wounding 13 people, health officials said.</p> <p>Tension remained high in the area a day after deadly violence broke out in one of the biggest Palestinian demonstrations there in years.</p> <p>An Israeli military spokesman said he was checking the details of Saturday's unrest.</p> <p>On Friday at least 15 Palestinians were killed by Israeli security forces confronting protesters, some of whom the military said had opened fire, rolled burning tires and hurled rocks and fire bombs toward troops across the border.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Autopsy results fuel more Calif. protests
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-california-police/autopsy-of-california-black-man-shot-by-police-fuels-more-protests-idUSKBN1H707K
GIST	<p>SACRAMENTO, Calif. (Reuters) - About 200 demonstrators squared off with police in riot gear overnight in California's capital and more protests were planned for Saturday after an autopsy on Stephon Clark contradicted the police account of the shooting of the unarmed black man by officers.</p> <p>Waving signs and chanting Clark's name in unison, the protesters gathered at city hall before marching into the Old Sacramento part of the city, filled with bars, restaurants and tourists.</p> <p>Protesters, some with megaphones and black masks covering their faces, shouted "Shoot us down, we shut you down", along with expletives directed at the police.</p> <p>More than 80 police and California Highway Patrol officers in riot gear blocked protesters from marching onto a highway. There were no arrests, the Sacramento Bee reported.</p> <p>Clark's death two weeks ago was the most recent in a string of fatal shootings of black men by police that have triggered protests across the United States and fueled a national debate about bias in the American criminal justice system.</p> <p>The latest demonstrations were touched off by a new private autopsy on Clark that showed that none of the eight bullets that hit him struck him in the front, contradicting the police version of events, a lawyer for the</p>

	deceased's family said on Friday.
	Clark was shot six times in the back, once in the side and once in the leg, the autopsy found.
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HEADLINE	03/21 UK plays down search of Russia plane
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-43606085
GIST	<p>The UK has rejected a complaint from Russia over a search of one of its aircraft at London's Heathrow Airport, as a row over the poisoning of a former Russian spy deepens.</p> <p>The British government described the search of the Aeroflot plane on Friday as "routine" after Russia suggested it was "illegal".</p> <p>Aeroflot flight SU2582 landed at Heathrow on Friday at 15:40 local time.</p> <p>A man identified by Russian TV as pilot Vitaly Mitrofanov said he was confined to his cockpit by a team with a sniffer dog.</p> <p>The Border Force officers inspected the plane for up to three minutes before leaving with a "thank you", he added.</p> <p>The pilot maintains they "gave no reasons" for the inspection, and he was not allowed to "observe their actions" or accompany them in their work.</p> <p>"If there is no explanation, the Russian side will deem the actions towards our plane as illegal and also reserve the right to take similar action against British airlines," Russia's ministry of transport said in a statement.</p> <p>Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova dubbed the search a "provocation" so the British government could "save its face in any possible way".</p> <p>UK Security Minister Ben Wallace said in a statement that it was "routine for Border Force to search aircraft to protect the UK from organised crime and from those who attempt to bring harmful substances like drugs or firearms into the country".</p> <p>He added: "Once these checks were carried out the plane was allowed to carry on with its onward journey."</p> <p>Former chief executive of the UK Border Agency Rob Whiteman said intelligence would have been a factor.</p> <p>"This incident with the Aeroflot flight at Heathrow being searched would have been a routine security search which the security services would have undertaken acting on intelligence," he told the BBC.</p> <p>"These searches are routine - they don't happen every day, but they do happen fairly regularly."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Armed French officers spark Italy row
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-43606225
GIST	<p>Armed French customs officers have provoked widespread anger by entering a migrant clinic over the border in Italy.</p> <p>Five officers forced one individual to undergo a urine test at the facility west of the city of Turin on Friday</p>

evening, Italian reports say.

The premises is located about 1km (0.6 miles) inside the Italian border.

Political figures in Italy, which has received over 600,000 migrants in the last four years, condemned the move.

The French ambassador, Christian Masset, was called into the Italian foreign ministry in Rome on Saturday to explain what had happened.

"French border agents entered - armed - the clinic run in Bardonecchia, forcing a migrant to a urine test and intimidating our doctor and the mediators and lawyers," the medical organisation which operates a clinic at the premises, Rainbow for Africa, said.

The organisation said the actions of the French officers "seriously interfered" with the work of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Italian institutions.

It added that the French border was becoming "increasingly militarised" and called for a change in France's strict policy in rejecting migrants.

However, the French government responded by saying they had asked for permission to enter the centre and were allowed in. They said a team of French customs officers on board a train travelling into Italy suspected a Nigerian train passenger with Italian residency of carrying drugs.

French customs officials were allowed to use the station at Bardonecchia under a bi-national agreement, it said.

Bardonecchia mayor Francesco Avato said he was "very upset" by the news, adding that the French officers "had no right" to go into the property.

Former Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta said the incident was "yet another mistake on the issue of migrants".

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HEADLINE	03/30 Russian ambassador: 'toxic' US relations
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/u-s-russian-relations-worst-ambassador-antonov-can-remember-n861391
GIST	<p>Russia's ambassador to the United States has told the "Today" show that he can't remember a period of worse relations between Washington and Moscow, after both countries expelled dozens of diplomats following the poisoning of a former Russian spy.</p> <p>In an exclusive interview with Savannah Guthrie broadcast Friday, Anatoly Antonov also reiterated Russia's denials that it meddled in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, saying it was "impossible to imagine" that the Kremlin was responsible.</p> <p>Special counsel Robert Mueller's indictment of 13 Russian nationals on suspicion of interfering in the vote was, according to the ambassador, "not a proof" of responsibility.</p> <p>"It seems to me that atmosphere in Washington is poisoned — it's a toxic atmosphere," he said. "It depends upon us to decide whether we are in Cold War or not. But ... I don't remember such [a] bad shape of our relations."</p> <p>He added that "there is great mistrust between the United States and Russia" at present.</p>

	"Today Russia's responsible for everything, even for bad weather," he said. "It's high time for us to stop blaming each other. It's high time for us to start a real conversation about real problems."
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HEADLINE	03/30 'Teddy Bear Patrol' seeks donations
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/life/heartwarming/teddy-bear-patrol-police-given-bears-to-comfort-children/281-533681917
GIST	<p>A Lake Forest Park Police Officer handed a stuffed animal to a child amid an Amber Alert earlier this week. In an act of compassion, police officers and first responders are giving children toys to cope with traumatic incidents.</p> <p>Departments throughout Northwest Washington have this program in place as a part of an annual Bartell Drugs drive for the stuffed animals. In partnership with WARM 106.9 FM, the "Teddy Bear Patrol" campaign runs April 1 through 28 and is in its 29th year of operation.</p> <p>Stores in King, Snohomish, and Pierce counties are designated locations for teddy bear donations. The drug stores are also sponsoring a matching bear program in which they'll match each customer's purchase of an official "Bartell Bear" for \$8 and they will donate the second bear to the campaign.</p> <p>Last year's drive saw more than 15,000 bears donated to the cause. The stores are accepting donations through April 28 and are asking for bears to longer than 12 inches.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Seattle mayor halts streetcar project
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle-mayor-halts-streetcar-project-cites-rising-costs/281-533650829
GIST	<p>The Seattle streetcar project, the "Center City Connector", is dead, for now. The project is now estimated at \$200 million.</p> <p>On Friday afternoon, Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan announced in a statement the immediate halt of the streetcar, citing rising costs. The project was previously estimated at \$177 million.</p> <p>The mayor's office says the project is facing a \$23 million shortfall driven by "increased design expenditures, escalating construction costs, and errors in estimating the full cost of the streetcar vehicles."</p> <p>Durkan's decision comes a week after ordering an independent review of the costs related to the Center City Connector, according to a release.</p> <p>"The City of Seattle has a critical obligation to spend taxpayer dollars wisely and an equal obligation to transparency," said Mayor Durkan.</p> <p>Last week, Seattle City Council member Lisa Herbold expressed her concern for the project and called for a pause on the multi-million dollar project.</p> <p>Following the mayor's announcement, Herbold released a statement Friday that read in part, "This step is necessary to ensure that the independent review ordered by the Mayor is meaningful. Had work proceeded as scheduled-especially in awarding a construction contract- it would be more difficult to integrate the results of the independent review, or delay or stop the project."</p> <p>Durkan joins the City Attorney's Office to investigate the project's management.</p> <p>Senior Deputy Mayor Mike Fong says the project will not move forward until all reviews and</p>

	investigations are complete, issues surrounding costs are resolved, and the city can determine if additional financial resources are necessary.
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HEADLINE	03/30 Milwaukee responds lead level reports
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/milwaukee-parents-concerned-lead-levels-after-troubling-report/
GIST	<p>Parents in Milwaukee say city leaders aren't doing enough to protect their kids from lead. While the national average for lead poisoning is about three percent, more than 11 percent of Milwaukee's children in 2016 suffered from it. Wisconsin health officials are reviewing Milwaukee's lead prevention program after several reports highlighted deficiencies in keeping lead away from kids.</p> <p>Milwaukee's mayor said lead from paint is the city's primary concern, since lead-based paint is in at least 100,000 homes. Some residents are also worried about lead pipes, even though the water is treated to keep the lead out, reports CBS News' Adriana Diaz. One of those residents is Aminah Al-Mujaahid, who painstakingly prepares water for her family, filtering it pitcher by pitcher.</p> <p>Last year her youngest son Shu'aib had a blood lead level of 11.4 – more than double what is considered lead poisoning. Lead can affect IQ, and Aminah and her husband Nazir believe it's stunted their five-year-old son's brain development.</p> <p>"In my assessment he's operating more on a three, three-and-a-half-year-old level," he said. "I'll say 'hey what's your name' or 'how old are you'....He'll look at you, he'll look at you like he's trying to decipher and figure it out."</p> <p>Milwaukee health officials say lead from paint poses the greatest risk to local families, but the Al-Mujaahid's believe it's in their water after recently learning they have lead service lines, which supply water to their home. The city says its water meets federal lead standards and it's treated to prevent lead from leaching from the pipes.</p> <p>Improperly treated water in Flint, Michigan, caused widespread lead contamination there three years ago. Up to 10 million homes nationwide still have lead service lines, even though Congress banned lead plumbing supplies more than 30 years ago. About 74,000 are in Milwaukee, where the city has a program to split the cost of replacing lead pipes with homeowners but so far only one percent has been done.</p> <p>"Any time they touch the water, it's alarming for me because I'm thinking about the exposure, their lives are important to us and....But it's difficult to see the city, not care," Aminah said.</p> <p>The Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program doesn't have records of investigating about 100 addresses where kids blood lead levels reached 20 or higher. Health officials also don't know if 4,500 families received follow-up letters with children's lead test results.</p> <p>"Well, a big part of this we don't know the answer to," Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett said. "I was told by my staff, that we did not have the documentation that established with certainty that all the kids had received this letter. That was enough for me to say, well then we're gonna send out another reminder."</p> <p>Wisconsin congresswoman Gwen Moore wants the federal government to investigate and has raised concerns over the funding and effectiveness of Milwaukee's lead removal programs.</p> <p>"The problem is devastating," Moore said. "It's really important to have this independent audit done by the Centers for Disease Control."</p> <p>Mayor Barrett is not against the idea of an audit by the CDC.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Israel: will respond if violence continues
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/fcb59618f063452c9c701aab8538dbe1/Israel-says-it-will-expand-response-if-Gaza-clashes-go-on
GIST	<p>GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel will target militant groups inside Gaza if violence along the territory’s border with Israel drags on, the chief military spokesman warned on Saturday, a day after thousands of Palestinians staged protests near the border fence.</p> <p>The mass marches were largely led by Gaza’s ruling Hamas group and touted as the launch of a six-week-long protest campaign against a stifling decade-old blockade of the territory.</p> <p>Protests are to culminate in a large border march on May 15, the 70th anniversary of Israel founding. The date is mourned by Palestinians as their “nakba,” or catastrophe, when hundreds of thousands were uprooted in the 1948 Mideast war over Israel’s creation.</p> <p>Palestinian health officials said 15 Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire and more than 750 hit by live rounds, making Friday the bloodiest day in Gaza since the 2014 cross-border war between Israel and Hamas.</p> <p>It appears unlikely protests will continue at such a scale, with larger turnouts expected after Friday noon prayers, the highlight of the Muslim religious week.</p> <p>On Saturday, several dozen Palestinians approached the border fence in an area east of Gaza City, but stopped about 200 meters before the barrier.</p> <p>An Associated Press reporter saw two men who walked closer to the fence get shot in the legs by Israeli soldiers, in separate incidents about 15 minutes apart.</p> <p>Medics at the scene said both were shot by live rounds. In all, at least 10 Palestinians were wounded by live fire Saturday, health officials said.</p> <p>In Friday’s confrontations, large crowds had gathered near the fence, with smaller groups of protesters rushing forward, throwing stones and burning tires.</p> <p>Israeli troops responded with live fire and rubber-coated steel pellets, while drones dropped tear gas from above. Soldiers with rifles were perched on high earthen embankments overlooking the scene.</p> <p>Israel’s military initially claimed Friday that “thousands of Palestinians are rioting in six locations throughout the Gaza Strip, rolling burning tires and hurling stones.” Video released by the army did not back such a description.</p> <p>On Saturday, the chief army spokesman, Brig. Gen. Ronen Manelis, said that while thousands of Palestinians approached the border Friday, those engaged in stone-throwing were in the hundreds.</p> <p>Manelis denied soldiers used excessive force, saying those killed by Israeli troops were men between the ages of 18 and 30 who were involved in violence and belonged to militant factions.</p> <p>Protest organizers have said mass marches would continue until the day of the “nakba,” an anniversary with particular resonance in Gaza where the vast majority of 2 million residents are descendants of refugees. The day, May 15, will this year also coincide with the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.</p> <p>Manelis reiterated Saturday that Israel “will not allow a massive breach of the fence into Israeli territory.”</p> <p>He said that Hamas and other Gaza militant groups are using protests as a cover for staging attacks. If violence continues, “we will not be able to continue limiting our activity to the fence area and will act</p>

	<p>against these terror organizations in other places too,” he said.</p> <p>The border protests were seen as a new attempt by Hamas to break the border blockade, imposed by Israel and Egypt after the Islamic militant group seized Gaza from forces loyal to its rival, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, in 2007. The continued closure has made it increasingly difficult for Hamas to govern.</p> <p>The large turnout of marchers in the dangerous border zone also seemed to signal desperation among Gaza residents.</p> <p>Life in the coastal strip has deteriorated further in recent months, with rising unemployment, grinding poverty and daily blackouts that last for hours.</p> <p>The prospect of more protests and Palestinian casualties in coming weeks could also place Israel on the defensive.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Palestinians prepare for fresh protests
SOURCE	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5564717/Palestinians-prepare-fresh-protests-funerals-begin-16-people-killed-clashes.html
GIST	<p>Palestinians are preparing for further protests after 16 people were killed in the Gaza's bloodiest day in years.</p> <p>Protesters are returning to a tent city near the Israel-Palestine border to resume a demonstration planned to last six weeks.</p> <p>Funerals for those who were killed saw mourners chanted 'revenge' while holding Palestinian flags.</p> <p>Israel has defended its soldiers who yesterday opened fire on Palestinians who had strayed from the tent city protest.</p> <p>Tens of thousands of demonstrators descended on the site as Israeli troops approached the heavily fortified fence and cut off the Gaza strip.</p> <p>Military chiefs said Israeli soldiers began shooting when troops were bombarded with stones and firebombs.</p> <p>They also claimed Palestinians tried to damage fencing and infiltrate Israel and that protesters opened fire on Israeli soldiers along the border.</p> <p>But Palestinian officials have accused Israel of disproportionate force, while human rights groups questioned Israel's use of live fire.</p> <p>UN chief Antonio Guterres called for an 'independent and transparent investigation.'</p> <p>More than 1,400 protesters were also wounded - 758 of them by live fire.</p> <p>Others were injured by rubber bullets and tear gas inhalation, according to the Gazan health ministry.</p> <p>Israel has not reported any casualties among its troops.</p> <p>Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas has declared a day of national mourning and said Israel is fully responsible for the deaths.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Teacher unrest keeps spreading
SOURCE	http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2018/03/red-state-teacher-unrest-just-keeps-spreading.html
GIST	<p>Eight Kentucky school districts — including those in Louisville and Lexington — are closed today as teachers stay home to protest the GOP legislature’s destructive “reforms” of their pension system. Oklahoma teachers are planning to strike on Monday despite winning a \$6,100 pay raise. And Arizona teachers rallied at the state capital on Wednesday and are threatening to strike if their demands for major pay raises and restoration of education funding cuts are not met.</p> <p>As this wave of unrest among teachers spreads nationally, it’s clear it has been inspired by the nine-day strike that won West Virginia teachers (and other state employees) a pay raise earlier this month. But there’s something more fundamental going on than copycat protests. We’re seeing a teacher-led backlash against years, and even decades, of Republican efforts at the state level to cut taxes and starve public investments. This is very clear in Oklahoma, where a quick pay raise the legislature passed this week is deemed by teachers to have missed the larger point:</p> <p>“While this is major progress, this investment alone will not undo a decade of neglect. There is still work to do to get this legislature to invest more in our classrooms. And that work will continue Monday, when educators descend on the capitol,” Alicia Priest, president of the Oklahoma Education Association, said in a Facebook video Wednesday.</p> <p>The pay-raise bill signed by Governor Mary Fallin yesterday brought in \$447 million in new revenues from higher taxes on cigarettes and oil-production facilities. But the teachers are demanding \$3.3 billion “to restore millions of dollars in school funding that have been cut in the past decade,” as Vox reports.</p> <p>Similarly, in Arizona the teacher protests are not just about teacher pay, though they are among the lowest paid in the country. Their demands are much broader, as the Washington Post notes:</p> <p>Teachers, who organized a grassroots campaign on social media, are demanding a 20 percent raise and restoration of school funding to 2008 levels, before the Great Recession struck, according to the Arizona Republic. They are also asking state lawmakers to stop cutting taxes until Arizona’s per-student spending reaches the national average.</p> <p>Asking Republican legislators to “stop cutting taxes” is a demand many of its objects would consider outrageous, even unnatural. But this collision is a reminder that GOP claims that tax cuts at the state as well as the federal level would pay for themselves by generating sustained economic growth have once again proved faulty, with public education being the primary victim of chronic budget shortfalls.</p> <p>While Republican pols in Arizona and Oklahoma, like their counterparts in West Virginia, are backpedaling furiously and trying to prevent or resolve strikes, the conflict may go too deep for an easy resolution. In Arizona, for example, the Republican governor and legislature are engaged in a radical experiment in “portable” education funding giving parents unprecedented freedom to use public dollars for private schools (led, as it happens, by the GOP candidate in a congressional special election next month) that could pose an existential threat to public education in the state. In Kentucky, teacher grievances are mostly focused on the pursuit by Republican governor Matt Bevin and the GOP legislature of another big conservative cause: public pension “reform,” which in this case meant serious reductions in benefits and a complete revocation of teacher pension security. That the “reform” was whipped through the legislature suddenly after being attached to a sewer regulation bill did not improve its aroma.</p> <p>Perhaps the current wave of teacher protests and strikes will subside as the school year ends. But more likely, it will spill over into the election season this fall, when 36 governorships and most of the national state legislatures are up for grabs.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Gaza protests: 16 killed, 1,400+ injured
SOURCE	http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/LIVE-COVERAGE-Multiple-dead-and-hundreds-hurt-as-Palestinians-clash-with-IDF-on-Gaza-Border-547534
GIST	<p>PA leader Mahmoud Abbas said on Friday that Israel is responsible for the deaths of Gazan protesters who participated in the Friday riots near the border fence.</p> <p>"The marches today prove that the Palestinian people will not aid any plan that wishes to close the lid on the Palestinian issue", he said.</p> <p>"Jerusalem will remain Arab," said Abbas.</p> <p>The US decision to recognize Jerusalem as the Israeli capital angered many in the Arab and Muslim world, leading some Palestinians to argue that the US may no longer be a suitable peace negotiator between Israelis and Palestinians.</p> <p>21:50 Hamas spokesperson claims 16 dead after riots</p> <p>Sixteen Palestinians died as a result of taking part in the Friday riots at the border fence near the Gaza strip, said Ashraf al-Qidra, a spokesman for the Hamas-run Health Ministry In Gaza.</p> <p>He also stated that 1,416 protesters had been injured.</p> <p>The IDF stated that over 30,000 people had taken part in the riots and that the IDF snipers used live ammunition only in cases when the fence was about to be breached or when IDF troops were about to be shot at.</p> <p>Two terrorists had been spotted and neutralized by IDF forces near the border fence on Seder night during Friday evening.</p> <p>Saturday had been declared a day of national mourning by the Palestinian Authority to honor the protesters who died.</p> <p>21:24 Abbas declares day of national mourning in the PA</p> <p>PA leader Mahmoud Abbas declared Saturday to be a day of national mourning following the deaths of 12 Palestinian protesters during the Land Day riots that took place at the border fence on Friday.</p> <p>More than a thousand Palestinians were injured as the IDF soldiers used tear gas fired by drones and sniper fire to prevent terrorists from breaching the fence or firing on Israeli troops.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Russia expels more foreign diplomats
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/30/europe/russia-diplomats-retaliation-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Moscow (CNN)Russia ordered the expulsion of diplomats from at least 23 countries Friday, as a reciprocal move after those countries expelled Russian diplomats in solidarity with the United Kingdom over the poisoning of a former Russian double agent.</p> <p>More than 20 countries announced this week that they would expel Russian diplomats in support of Britain, which blames Moscow for the March 4 nerve agent attack against Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia Skripal, on British soil. Russia denies involvement.</p> <p>According to Russia's state-run Sputnik news outlet, Russia has now expelled the following: 13 Ukrainian, four Canadian, four Polish, four German, three Lithuanian, three Czech, three Moldovan, two Italian, two Dutch, two Spanish and two Danish diplomats.</p>

Also expelled are one Finn, one Latvian, one Swede, one Norwegian, one Romanian, one Croatian and one Irish diplomat, as well as an Estonian military attache.

Moscow reserved the right to respond to Belgium, Hungary, Montenegro and Georgia with regard to their actions over the Skripal case, Sputnik said.

The wave of expulsions comes a day after Russia announced that it would expel 60 US diplomats and close the US consulate in St. Petersburg in retaliation for a similar step by Washington, which said Monday it would be expelling 60 Russian diplomats and closing the Russian consulate in Seattle.

"This message from Moscow is not surprising," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said in response to the expulsion of German envoys. "We had not taken the decision to expel the Russian diplomats lightly. Our reaction in the case of Skripal was necessary and appropriate as a political signal."

Maas said the decision was made in solidarity with Britain and because Russia had "refused to give any clarification" on the matter. "Nevertheless, even in the current situation, we remain committed to dialogue with Russia and will work for European security and a constructive future for relations between our countries," he said.

Russia's state-run Tass news agency reported that Russia had also demanded that Britain reduce the number of staff in its Moscow embassy to match the number of Russian diplomats remaining in London.

UK Prime Minister Theresa May ordered the expulsion of 23 Russian diplomats on March 14, describing them as "undeclared intelligence officers." Russia in turn ordered 23 British diplomats to leave Moscow and closed the UK Consulate in St. Petersburg.

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HEADLINE	03/31 Russia tells UK more diplomats to leave
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/31/europe/uk-russia-spy--intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Moscow (CNN)The UK will be expected to cut around 50 personnel from its diplomatic missions in Russia as relations between the two nations deteriorate further following the poisoning of a former Russian spy and his daughter in England.</p> <p>Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told CNN on Saturday that the number was calculated to ensure the two nations achieve parity in how many staff members they have working at their diplomatic missions.</p> <p>Moscow initially expelled 23 British diplomats after 23 Russian diplomats were told to leave the UK. Russia is now insisting that more leave so the staff will be the same size in the countries' respective embassies.</p> <p>More than 25 countries announced this week that they would expel Russian diplomats in support of Britain, which blames Moscow for the March 4 nerve agent attack against Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, in the southern English city of Salisbury. Russia denies involvement.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 UN calls for inquiry into Gaza violence
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/31/middleeast/gaza-protests-un-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Gaza (CNN)UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called for an independent inquiry into Friday's violence in Gaza that left at least 17 Palestinians dead and more than 1,400 injured.</p> <p>Guterres made his comments late Friday before an emergency UN Security Council meeting to address the</p>

issue. UN spokesman Farhan Haq relayed his statement to the media.

"This tragedy underlines the urgency of revitalizing the peace process aiming at creating the conditions for a return to meaningful negotiations for a peaceful solution that will allow Palestinians and Israelis to live side by side peacefully and in security," Guterres was reported as saying.

Funerals are being held Saturday for those killed when thousands of Palestinians marched to Gaza's border with Israel a day earlier.

The first in a series of protests planned through mid-May, Friday marked Land Day, when Palestinian land was confiscated by Israel in 1976.

The day quickly turned into the bloodiest day in Gaza since the 2014 war as Palestinian protesters and Israeli military clashed along the fence.

In northern Gaza, CNN witnessed at least two dozen people being taken away by ambulances in a half-hour span Friday as protests started across Gaza. CNN also saw a small number of protesters throwing rocks. People were injured by live rounds, rubber bullets and tear gas. The majority were young men -- one woman was among the injured.

A spokesman for the Palestinian Ministry of Health told CNN that doctors were already running out of essential emergency medicine and blood for transfusions due to the high number of injured.

In an article on its website, the United Nations reported that Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, the deputy UN political affairs chief, told Friday's Security Council meeting that around 30,000 people participated in and around the March at various locations in Gaza.

Soon after the demonstrations started, the UN report said, "The situation turned deadly in several spots." "Some of the casualties were reportedly the result of live ammunition used by Israeli security forces during the March. Other casualties followed armed clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces, including the shelling of a Hamas observation point," the United Nations said.

"Reports indicate that most of the demonstrators stayed well away from the border fence and were not violent," the United Nations reported Zerihoun as saying.

"However, there are also reports that some protesters engaged in stone-throwing and violent behavior; some reportedly carrying weapons," Zerihoun said.

He reportedly told the Security Council that Israeli security forces said that militants tried to get through the fence in attempt to plant explosives.

In a briefing Saturday, IDF spokesman Brig. Gen. Ronen Manelis said there had been three attempts at throwing projectiles, including live fire and Molotov cocktails at Israeli soldiers across the fence.

However, there appears to be a disparity in the number of Palestinians injured by live bullets. Manelis said only "a few scores were hit by live ammunition," while the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza said 758 people were injured.

Manelis said the protests were organized by Hamas, the militant political group that controls Gaza, adding that if these continue IDF will "hit targets deep inside Gaza."

Manelis said that most killed in Gaza were known as "terror activists," known to Israel by name and affiliation. He did not elaborate further regarding identities of those killed.

Confrontations further escalated late Friday. Israeli fighter jets targeted three Hamas sites after an IDF position was shot at in northern Gaza, according to an IDF statement. Tank fire also targeted the three sites

	following an exchange of fire.
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HEADLINE	03/30 Pittsburgh public safety drones
SOURCE	http://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2018/03/30/pittsburgh-public-safety-drones-surveillance-concerns/
GIST	<p>PITTSBURGH (KDKA) — Drones will be on duty in Pittsburgh this summer.</p> <p>The city’s Public Safety Department is getting two high-tech drones to assist police and firefighters.</p> <p>It’s state-of-the-art technology that can go where police, firefighters and paramedics can’t without the risk to life and limb.</p> <p>“It’s much safer and much cheaper to use technology than put a police officer or firefighter in jeopardy,” Pittsburgh Public Safety Director Wendell Hissrich said.</p> <p>The two public safety drones are set to arrive in the next two weeks and will become their eye in the sky at fires, search and rescue operations or active shooter situations. To that end, each is tricked out with three high-def, tilt-and-zoom cameras as well as thermal imaging — and that makes some people nervous.</p> <p>While the department says drones won’t be used as an investigation tool, the director of the American Civil Liberties Union in Pittsburgh, Vic Walczak, has concerns about their surveillance capabilities, especially by law enforcement.</p> <p>“They could be flying a drone outside here while we’re talking and they’re looking in the window,” Walczak said. “This is a significant expansion of the police department’s ability to invade people’s privacy.”</p> <p>“That’s not the intent here. The intent is for a public safety response, whether it’s a hazardous materials situation, a SWAT situation where we might have an active shooter or a fire situation,” Hissrich said. “It’s not used for surveillance.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Claim: cops shot unarmed man in back
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/stephon-clark-shot-times-times-back-independent-autopsy/story?id=54122396&cid=clicksource 81 2 hero headlines headlines hed
GIST	<p>Stephon Clark, the unarmed black man who was fatally shot by police in his grandmother's backyard, was struck eight times -- including six bullets in the back, according to a private autopsy commissioned by the family.</p> <p>Civil Rights Attorney Benjamin Crump, who is representing Clark's family, released the independent autopsy report at a news conference Friday.</p> <p>Dr. Bennet Omalu, who was the first doctor to discover chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), conducted the autopsy. Omalu, who brought awareness to the issue of concussions and brain trauma to the NFL, was depicted film "Concussion," in which Will Smith played him in the leading role.</p> <p>"He was shot in the back six times. The seventh gunshot wound was slightly to the side of his body but to the back of the side of his body," Omalu said during the news conference. "Each one of these bullets independently possessed a fatal capacity."</p> <p>Crump, meanwhile, said the family autopsy proved Clark wasn't running toward police.</p>

	"The narrative that had been put forth was that they had to open fire because he was charging at them," Crump told reporters. "Well, obviously, based on Dr. Omalu's findings in the family's autopsy, it suggests all the bullets were from behind."
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HEADLINE	03/30 Officer who shot Alton Sterling fired
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/police-officer-shot-alton-sterling-fired-baton-rouge/story?id=54134701
GIST	<p>Officer Blane Salamoni, who shot Alton Sterling, has been fired from the police department, Baton Rouge Police Chief Murphy Paul announced Friday.</p> <p>Paul said he came to his decision "based on the actions of the officers" in the incident.</p> <p>"These actions were not minor deviations from policy, as they contributed to the outcome to the death of another human being," he said.</p> <p>Salamoni had been on administrative leave before the decision was made, Paul said. His last day as a Baton Rouge police officer was today.</p> <p>The other officer involved in the shooting -- Howie Lake II -- will be suspended without pay for three days, Paul said.</p> <p>The police department also released body camera and surveillance footage from the shooting.</p> <p>Body camera footage shows an officer approaching Sterling. The officer then instructs Sterling to put his hands on a car "right quick" before grabbing Sterling's wrist and forcing it onto a hood of a nearby sedan. Meanwhile, Sterling asks multiple times what he did.</p> <p>The camera captures the commotion that ensues, and a stun gun is heard going off in the background.</p> <p>Once Sterling is on the ground, someone yells that he "has a gun."</p> <p>In another body camera video -- from the second officer's perspective -- the officer says to Sterling, "Put your hands on the car or I'm a shoot you in your f----- head, you understand me?" as he pushes Sterling onto the hood of the car and points a gun at him.</p> <p>"Alright, hold up, hold up, man," Sterling says as he struggles under the officer's weight. "You're hurting my arm."</p> <p>One officer then instructs the other to Tase Sterling, and the same commotion follows.</p> <p>Cellphone video of the shooting had been released in the past. Video shows the fatal shooting of Alton Sterling during a confrontation with police officers outside the store in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.</p> <p>Sterling, a 37-year-old black man, was shot and killed on July 5, 2016, after being confronted by a pair of white police officers -- Salamoni and Lake -- outside Baton Rouge's Triple S Convenience Store. His death prompted protests across the country over police brutality.</p> <p>Paul said the Sterling family has the department's prayers and that he hopes the announcement brings "some closure" to them.</p> <p>Going forward, the department is going to ensure that officers get the "proper training" to ensure another "incident" does not occur.</p> <p>In a press conference Friday, Paul urged members of the community to adhere to commands by police</p>

	<p>officers.</p> <p>"Treat our police officers with the respect that their positions deserve, and I assure you that the men and women of the Baton Rouge Police Department will reciprocate that gesture," Paul said. "Please stop resisting. Stop running. When a police officer gives you directions, listen."</p> <p>Now that the decision regarding the officers' employment at the department has been made and the investigation concluded, healing can begin, Paul said, adding that the "cloud" of Sterling's death had been hanging over the community for "too long."</p> <p>"We're gonna allow our community to heal, and we're gonna allow our police officers to heal," he said.</p> <p>Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry announced Tuesday that the two officers involved in Sterling's shooting wouldn't face charges in the case.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Deadly year for police?
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/2018-deadly-year-cops/story?id=53859585
GIST	<p>A troubling increase</p> <p>While officers die in traffic-related incidents more than any other situation, this year, the deaths of officers by guns has climbed to a "troubling" number.</p> <p>From Jan. 1 to March 30, 2017, 10 on-duty officers were shot dead. From Jan. 1 to March 30 of this year, 20 on-duty officers were shot dead.</p> <p>"I do worry about these firearm-related deaths," Steve Groeninger, senior director of communications and marketing at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, told ABC News. "It's troubling."</p> <p>"It's too soon to know if it's a trend," Groeninger added. "As [the second quarter] plays out and we receive data forms from departments who lost an officer this year, we'll be able to better assess and quantify."</p> <p>In 2017, 46 on-duty officers were killed by guns, according to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund. The year before, it was 67, and in 2015, it was 43.</p> <p>If this year's pattern continues at its current rate, 2018 could see 80 on-duty police deaths from gun violence.</p> <p>Former FBI agent and ABC News contributor Steve Gomez called the increase from 2017 to 2018 "disturbing."</p> <p>"This is a trend that we are seeing with regard to people acting out, people not having self-control, especially when dealing with law enforcement officers. I think it's a symptom of both that lack of control and complying with law enforcement and we are now seeing more people who have [behavioral and mental problems] and they have access to firearms," Gomez said. "That's a deadly combination."</p> <p>"This has been the deadliest year for law enforcement in many, many years [so far]," said former Dallas police chief and ABC News contributor David Brown. While the trend appears to be on the rise this year, Brown said, he added that overall it hasn't reached the peaks of the 1970s, '80s and '90s.</p> <p>Officers in small towns are just at risk as officers in cities, Brown said. A police officer in urban Pomona, California, and an officer in rural Clinton, Missouri, were both shot dead this month.</p> <p>An especially a big fear now is police ambushes, which Brown said are increasing. The uptick has led to</p>

more officers being told to wait for cover and not quickly rush in as often when responding to crisis calls, he said.

"There's always a high degree of alert among law enforcement professionals," Groenginer said. "They never know what could be around the corner. They never know when they could be targeted just because they are in a uniform."

Police applications on the decline

"One of the most concerning things is not a lot of people are wanting to be police officers" due to police criticism and heightened dangers, Brown said.

Gomez agreed. He said one official told him departments are "struggling to get qualified candidates to apply" and Gomez thinks it's partly because of what he calls the "Ferguson effect."

In 2014, a white police officer fatally shot an African-American teen in Ferguson, Missouri, sparking large-scale protests.

Gomez said Ferguson and similar police shootings have since "continued to impact the perception of law enforcement."

"Potential candidates entering into law enforcement feel that they don't have the support of the public and of government officials," Gomez said.

Jonathan Thompson, executive director of the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA), said that five years ago, there were 100 applicants for every vacancy. Today, that number is down to the low 60s, he said.

Last year, 34-year-old New York City police officer Miosotis Familia was gunned down while she was sitting in her marked police command vehicle, writing in her memo book.

One day after the shooting, the NYPD police commissioner reassured hundreds of recruits at their swearing-in ceremony that they had "absolutely" made the right career choice.

"The work of officer Miosotis Familia is not finished," NYPD Commissioner James O'Neill said, telling the recruits that it is their job as cops to finish it.

'The profession is on edge'

What's likely contributing to the increase in deadly shootings is some officers are now hesitant to use force in dangerous situations because they feel they no longer have support from the public and the government, Gomez said.

"If you're hesitant in using force, especially deadly force, then you are putting yourself at a disadvantage in a dangerous situation," Gomez said.

According to The Washington Post's database cataloging fatal police-involved shootings, 264 people have been shot and killed by police so far this year. In 2017, 987 people were fatally shot by police, and as of last week, there have been four fewer shootings this year than at the same time last year.

Brown said he thinks there's a decrease in trust of the government and thus a decrease in trust of law enforcement as well.

"I sense a lot of anger" within officers around the country, Brown said.

Many officers feel they can only trust themselves and their partners, Brown said, "and that is not the sentiment you want for a public servant."

"I'm really concerned that the 'us against them' mentality will take over, which is not healthy for delivering the best police service."

"The profession is on edge," he said, "and that is when you make mistakes and overreact."

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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	03/30 Cyberattacks 'cash-strapped' local govt.
SOURCE	https://www.denverpost.com/2018/03/30/cdot-cyberattack-local-government-preparation/
GIST	<p>ATLANTA — Atlanta police officers initially had to write reports by hand. Residents still can't pay water bills online. Municipal court dates are being reset. All are fallout from a ransomware attack last week that hobbled the city's invisible infrastructure.</p> <p>Another ransomware attack hit Baltimore's 911 dispatch system over the weekend, prompting a roughly 17-hour shutdown of automated emergency dispatching. The Colorado Department of Transportation suffered two attacks just over a month ago. And the North Carolina county that's home to Charlotte totally rebuilt its system after a December attack.</p> <p>For cash-strapped local governments, paying for robust protection against the invisible menace of a cyberattack can be a hard sell. But cyberattacks continue to proliferate, and experts say preparation and strong defensive measures are necessary to avoid the crippling effects.</p> <p>"As elected officials, it's often quite easy for us to focus on the things that people see because, at the end of the day, our residents are our customers," Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms said at a news conference Monday. "But we have to really make sure that we continue to focus on the things that people can't see, and digital infrastructure is very important."</p> <p>Although it's vital to make sure systems are up to date and have the latest patches, malware evolves so quickly that experts also stress the importance of comprehensive backups and a quick response when an attack does happen.</p> <p>"I don't think any security is flawless," said Craig McCullough, a vice president at security firm Commvault. "I always approach it from the standpoint of it's not a matter of if but when, and when it happens, are you prepared? Are you going to be able to get your data back?"</p> <p>Governments, public agencies and companies need to know what data they have and make sure it's backed up. Software and hardware can be replaced, but data is much more difficult, McCullough said.</p> <p>A quick response can help minimize the damage, said Dmitri Alperovitch, chief technology officer of security firm CrowdStrike. If a threat is detected immediately after it enters the network — for example, when someone clicks on a link in a phishing email or through a vulnerable server — it might be possible to stop before it spreads beyond the initially infected computer, he said.</p> <p>Atlanta officials won't say whether they'll pay the \$51,000 ransom, though Bottoms has said all options are on the table. Mike Cote, president of Secureworks, a security firm hired by Atlanta, has said they know who's behind the attack but aren't releasing that information.</p> <p>Cybersecurity experts say the attack is consistent with the SamSam group, which is known as a sophisticated attacker and negotiator, said Jake Williams, founder of security firm Rendition Infosec.</p> <p>Unlike other ransomware that might raise alarms upon infection, SamSam compromises machines without immediately locking up their files. That access is then used to spread through the network "before they</p>

press the encrypt button,” Williams said.

“They put you into an extreme pain point position where paying is actually an attractive option,” Williams said

He said he regularly tells clients they must make a business decision on whether to pay. He acknowledges that can be more difficult for governments, whose rules might block them from spending public funds on extortion.

Although Atlanta’s critical physical infrastructure — including the city’s airport, emergency response systems and water safety and treatment — were not directly affected, other departments are operating manually and some services have been suspended. Nuisances at first, issues caused by the outages could have compounded effects if they persist.

The mayor has been cautious, declining to give a timeline for when things might be up and running again after the cyberattack announced March 22. She has repeatedly said the investigation and recovery is “a marathon, not a sprint,” and her focus is on making sure the city’s network is safe moving forward.

But the road could be long.

The Colorado Department of Transportation was hit by a SamSam attack on Feb. 21 and again on March 1, and it was back to 80 percent functionality by Thursday said Deborah Blyth, the state’s chief information security officer. Luckily, they had strong backups so they didn’t even think about paying the ransom, she said.

In the weeks since the attack, they’ve implemented two-factor authentication for remote access and accelerated the implementation of other security measures that were already planned.

In Mecklenberg County, N.C., where Charlotte is located, it took a little more than 60 days for things to return to normal after a ransomware attack that began with a phishing email in December.

County officials didn’t pay the ransom after consulting with federal authorities and realizing their data was backed up so they didn’t need to pay to get it back, County manager Dena Diorio said. But the process was still tedious as they had to essentially rebuild the system.

The county has taken steps to prevent another attack, including making its email system more secure and limiting employees’ internet access. And they have more expensive plans — segmenting their data and moving to a cloud-based system — that will take about two years to implement, Diorio said.

Remembering the scary early days, Diorio had advice for her counterparts in Atlanta: “All I can say is: Don’t panic and stay focused.”

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HEADLINE	04/02 Email scams costing businesses billions
SOURCE	https://www.wvnews.com/statejournal/law/email-scams-costing-medium--to-small-sized-businesses-billions/article_b0e63460-020e-572a-b144-bb6c2c276b1a.html
GIST	<p>FAIRMONT — Thieves looking for new ways to get their hands on your money are using emails to target small- to mid-sized companies.</p> <p>The FBI says since 2013, when it began tracking so-called “business email compromise” scams, “organized crime groups have targeted large and small companies and organizations in every U.S. state and more than 100 countries around the world — from nonprofits and well-known corporations to churches and school systems.”</p>

As of January 2017, the FBI said losses were in the \$3 billion range “and climbing.”

Methods vary, but the so called, “cyber-thieves” typically identify and target employees who have access to company finances — then try to trick them into wiring money to bank accounts they think belong to trusted customers or business partners. The accounts, however, are controlled by the cyber-thieves.

Eric Huber, vice president of International and Strategic Initiatives at the National White Collar Crime Center in Fairmont, said the cyber-criminals typically study their victims, figuring out who in an organization is responsible for paying vendors and even the tone of their electronic interactions with bosses.

That person may they get an email appearing to be from the CEO telling them he or she is, for instance, boarding a plane and needs the unwitting employee to quickly and quietly wire money to some obscure destination in, say, Poland.

He said the thieves are banking on the employee following orders — not asking questions, sending the money and keeping quiet about it long enough for them to get their hands on it.

“It’s one of the big trends,” Huber said. “Bad guys used to spend a lot of time trying to hack into small- and medium-sized business computers to steal banking credentials, then use them to steal money from firms. They’ll still do that, but what they’ve discovered is that it’s easier just to ask for money. So, they’ll either do research for open source intelligence or compromise someone’s email, read it and then pretend to be the CEO or a senior executive.”

He said the cyber-thieves will “see how (the organization) communicates, who sends wires...and craft it to look like the email came from inside the organization, or in some cases they’ll take over the email.”

The thieves are banking on the employee following orders—not asking questions, sending the money as instructed and keeping quiet about it long enough for them to get their hands on it, he said.

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Huber said nowadays, employees need to take the time to verify the legitimacy of those kinds of requests before they hit the send button. He said medium-sized and smaller businesses tend to be targeted because they “don’t have as much money to throw at protecting infrastructure. They may not have anyone devoted to informational security or if they do, that person is probably overwhelmed.”

“They don’t have the resources to protect themselves,” he adds. “That’s the reason they’re targeting small- and medium-sized businesses for this sort of compromise—it’s (less believable) that the CEO of a Fortune 500 company would say ‘send this wire,’ but with small- to medium-sized businesses, it’s believable.”

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HEADLINE	04/01 Atlanta still locked-out of files
SOURCE	https://gizmodo.com/the-city-of-atlanta-is-still-locked-out-files-over-a-we-1824242001
GIST	<p>City officials in Atlanta, Georgia are still trying to recover 10 days after a ransomware attack on municipal computer systems hit at least five out of 13 departments, knocking out some city services and forcing others to revert to paper records.</p> <p>Per Reuters, over a week has passed since the SamSam ransomware began spreading throughout city computer systems, with a \$51,000 ransom payment demanded by the hackers going unpaid. While the recovery began last week, large stretches of computer systems remain encrypted by the attackers. Three city council members were sharing a single old laptop over the weekend as they tried to reconstruct records, with councilman Howard Shook telling the news agency the situation was “extraordinarily frustrating.”</p>

According to the Reuters report, numerous local officials have found their file systems corrupted, with tags like “weapologize” and “imsorry” appended to document titles. Though the ransomware was not able to corrupt everything—just eight out of 18 computers in the auditors’ office were affected, for example—it sounds like much of the information may be unrecoverable:

“Everything on my hard drive is gone,” City Auditor Amanda Noble said in her office housed in Atlanta City Hall’s ornate tower.

City officials have not disclosed the extent to which servers for backing up information on PCs were corrupted or what kind of information they think is unrecoverable without paying the ransom.

Atlanta police returned to taking written case notes and have lost access to some investigative databases, department spokesman Carlos Campos told Reuters. He declined to discuss the contents of the affected files.

The SamSam ransomware is particularly advanced and “infiltrates by exploiting vulnerabilities or guessing weak passwords in a target’s public-facing systems,” then uses techniques like the Mimikatz password recovery tool to seize control of the rest of a network, according to Wired. That means attackers don’t need to launch social engineering attacks or trick users into running malware for it to spread, and SamSam can easily spread via “remote desktop protocols, Java-based web servers, File Transfer Protocol servers, and other public network components.”

The city was just beginning to implement some of the recommendations of a cybersecurity audit released in January that found “the large number of severe and critical vulnerabilities identified has existed for so long the organizations responsible have essentially become complacent and no longer take action,” per CBS. The audit said that “departments tasked with dealing with the thousands of vulnerabilities do not have enough time or tools to properly analyze and treat the systems,” leading to a “significant level of preventable risk exposure to the city.”

“Ransomware is dumb,” Parameter Security founder Dave Chronister told Wired. “Even a sophisticated version like this has to rely on automation to work. Ransomware relies on someone not implementing basic security tenets... Not to be harsh, but looking at this their security strategy must be pretty bad.”

The FBI and Department of Homeland Security are assisting Atlanta officials, but it’s not clear to what extent they can help. As Reuters noted, the FBI “typically discourages ransomware victims from paying up,” but former DHS official Mark Weatherford said that might have been one of the few options for Atlanta to avoid so much hassle.

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HEADLINE	04/01 Data breach Saks Fifth Ave, Lord & Taylor
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/f48940efeb834144adac1b7473d2c272/Data-breach-hits-Saks-Fifth-Avenue,-Lord-&-Taylor-stores
GIST	<p>A data breach at department store chains Saks Fifth Avenue, Saks Off Fifth and Lord & Taylor has compromised the personal information of customers who shopped at the stores.</p> <p>The chains’ parent company, Canada-based Hudson’s Bay Co., announced the breach of its store payment systems on Sunday. The company said it was investigating and taking steps to contain the attack.</p> <p>The disclosure came after New York-based security firm Gemini Advisory LLC revealed on Sunday that a hacking group known as JokerStash or Fin7 began boasting on dark websites last week that it was putting up for sale up to 5 million stolen credit and debit cards. The hackers named their stash BIGBADABOOM-2. While the extent of its holdings remains unclear, about 125,000 records were immediately released for sale.</p>

	<p>The security firm confirmed with several banks that many of the compromised records came from Saks and Lord & Taylor customers.</p> <p>Hudson’s Bay said in a statement that it “deeply regrets any inconvenience or concern this may cause,” but it hasn’t said how many Saks or Lord & Taylor stores or customers were affected. The company said there’s no indication that the breach affected its online shopping websites or other brands, including the Home Outfitters chain or Hudson’s Bay stores in Canada.</p> <p>The company said customers won’t be liable for fraudulent charges. It plans to offer free credit monitoring and other identity protection services.</p> <p>There is evidence that the breach began about a year ago, said Dmitry Chorine, Gemini Advisory’s co-founder and chief technology officer. He said the prolific hacking group has previously targeted major hotel and restaurant chains.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Europe plans fake news crackdown
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/europe-plans-fake-news-crackdown-on-social-media-companies?ref=home
GIST	<p>The European Commission—worried that next year’s European elections could be vulnerable to conspiracy theories, fake news and doctored videos—is eying new powers to crack down on social media companies which spread ‘disinformation.’</p> <p>In the wake of the Cambridge Analytica data-harvesting scandal which rocked Facebook, Julian King, the European commissioner for security, wrote in a letter obtained by the Financial Times that there must be a "clear game plan" on how to deal with social media giants during election periods.</p> <p>“It is clear that the cyber-security threat we are facing is changing from one primarily targeting systems to one that is also increasingly about deploying cyber means to manipulate behavior, deepen societal divides, subvert our democratic systems and raise questions about our democratic institutions," he wrote.</p> <p>The letter adds that the alleged “psychometric targeting activities” of data analysis companies such as Cambridge Analytica are just a “preview of the profoundly disturbing effects such disinformation could have on the functioning of liberal democracies."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Animal abuse site hacked; users exposed
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/animal-abuse-website-hacked-users-exposed/
GIST	<p>An animal abuse website or otherwise called a “bestiality” platform (whose name will not be shared here) has been hacked and as a result, personal details of over 3,000 registered users have been leaked and exposed online.</p> <p>The hack was identified by Troy Hunt, founder of HaveIbeenpwned and according to him, personal details of 3,200 users have been exposed including email addresses, passwords stored as bcrypt hashes, date of birth and most importantly IP addresses.</p> <p>On the other hand, Hunt also provided a set of leaked data to Motherboard who has confirmed that the leaked data is linked to the animal abuse forum and noted that there are hundreds of private messages containing conversations between site users.</p> <p>“Regardless of what you’re into in your personal time, this incident serves as a reminder that anything you do online may one day be leaked publicly,” Hunt told Motherboard.</p>

	<p>Laws affecting animal abuse or zoophilic activities vary across different countries and other sub-national jurisdictions. However, as of February 10th, 2018, in the United States, 45 states, and 2 territories ban such activities with animals.</p> <p>It is unclear if the targeted site is operated from the United States or the leaked accounts belonged to the users in the States. Nevertheless, should authorities decide to look into the matter, tracking users could be an easy task since their IP addresses are part of the leaked data.</p> <p>Previously, the online hacktivist group Anonymous targeted animal abuse sites under the banner of operation #OpBEAST in which two websites were compromised and one was completely deleted by the hacktivist group.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 India power billing system ransomware
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/hackers-demand-ransom-indian-power-billing-records/
GIST	<p>The AMR system (automatic meter reading system) of Uttar Haryana Bijli Vitran Nigam (UHBVN) (Haryana power utilities) in Panchkula, India became a victim of cyber-attack by unknown hackers last week.</p> <p>The New Indian Express (TNIE) reports that hackers stole billing data from UHBVN computer systems and are demanding 1 Crore Indian rupee (\$153,800) in Bitcoin from the state government for decrypting the files and restoring access to the AMR system.</p> <p>The case has already been filed in Sector 5 Police Station of Panchkula under several sections of the Indian Penal Code and the IT Act but TNIE hasn't named the sections in its report.</p> <p>UHBVN, one of the two power discoms in Haryana, monitors electricity billing of nine Haryana districts. The hack attack occurred on 21 March at exactly 17 minutes past midnight. Hackers uploaded a ransom message on the UHBVN head office computers.</p> <p>According to TNIE, On 22 March, when the computers were turned on, the ransom message got displayed on the screens narrating the demands of the hackers. Soon after the attack was identified, concerned officials, IT and cyber-security experts collectively conducted full system study and found that the database was encrypted.</p> <p>The attacked ARM system was installed, operated and managed by Tata Consultancy Services Ltd (TCS). It was installed in 2011 and since then the electricity billings of the 9 districts namely Ambala, Karnal, Kaithal, Kurukshetra, Panchkula, Panipat, Sonapat, Rohtak and Yamunanagar were managed by this system.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 College students turn to cryptomining
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/college-kids-turn-to-cryptomining/
GIST	<p>The higher-education landscape has become a fertile field for growing crypto-mining revenue. College students are crypto-mining from their dorm rooms, while outside actors are targeting their online activities for web-based attacks.</p> <p>According to Vectra's 2018 RSA Conference Edition of its Attacker Behavior Industry Report, higher education is a prime arena given that students are usually not protected by universities' open networks. These same students also do their own crypto-mining, because they get free electricity.</p> <p>"Students are more likely to perform crypto-mining personally as they don't pay for power, the primary</p>

cost of crypto-mining,” said Chris Morales, head of security analytics at Vectra. “Universities also have high-bandwidth capacity networks with a large volume of easy targets, especially as students are more likely to use untrusted sites (like illegal movies, music and software) hosting crypto-mining malware.”

The report, which analyzed traffic and collected metadata from more than 4.5 million devices and workloads from customer cloud, data-center and enterprise environments, found that 60% of cryptocurrency mining detections occurred in higher education, followed by entertainment and leisure (6%), financial services (3%), technology (3%) and healthcare (2%). Mining overall has surged with the rising price of cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin, Monero and Ethereum.

Colleges and universities aren’t just over-indexing in crypto-mining. The highest volume of attacker behaviors per industry were in higher education (3,715 detections per 10,000 devices) followed by engineering (2,918 detections per 10,000 devices).

“Students are exceedingly intelligent and very enterprising,” said Daniel Basile, executive director of the Security Operations Center (SOC) at Texas A&M University. “This is a time that many of them are working with new technologies, and it is not surprising that they utilizing their machines for cryptocurrency mining. However, there is also a large increase in websites that will crypto-jack your PC while you are on their website. This new trend of mining Bitcoin for revenue instead of ads can directly affect students. With the increase in online video streaming resources, this creates a large amount of cryptocurrency mining.”

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HEADLINE	03/29 ‘Fauxpersky’ malware via USB drives
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/fauxpersky-credential-stealer-spreads-usb-drives
GIST	<p>A recently discovered credential stealing malware is masquerading as Kaspersky Antivirus and spreading via infected USB drives, according to threat detection firm Cybereason.</p> <p>Dubbed Fauxpersky, the keylogger was written in AutoIT or AutoHotKey, which are simple tools to write small programs for various automation tasks on Windows. AHK can be used to write code to send keystrokes to other applications, and to create a ‘compiled’ exe with their code in it.</p> <p>On systems infected with Fauxpersky, the security researchers discovered four dropped files, each named similarly to Windows system files: Explorers.exe, Spoolsv.exe, Svchost.exe, and Taskhosts.exe.</p> <p>Once executed, the malware gathers a list of drives on the machine and starts replicating itself to them, which allows it to spread to any of the connected external drives.</p> <p>Furthermore, the keylogger renames the external drives to match its naming scheme. Specifically, the drive’s new name would include its original name, its size, and the string “(Secured by Kaspersky Internet Security 2017)”.The malware also creates an autorun.inf file to point to a batch script.</p> <p>“This malware is by no means advanced or even very stealthy. Its authors didn’t put any effort into changing even the most trivial things, such as the AHK icon that’s attached to the file. However, this malware is highly efficient at infecting USB drives and collecting data from the keylogger, exfiltrating it through Google Forms and depositing it in the attacker’s inbox,” Cybereason concludes.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Arrests Italy, Romania in phishing scam
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/20-arrested-italy-and-romania-spear-phishing-scam
GIST	Authorities this week arrested 20 individuals in Italy and Romania for their role in a banking phishing scam that defrauded bank customers of €1 million (\$1.23 million).

The arrests were the result of a two-year long cybercrime investigation conducted by the Romanian National Police and the Italian National Police, with support from Europol, the Joint Cybercrime Action Taskforce (J-CAT), and Eurojust.

The arrests were made on March 28, following a series of coordinated raids. 9 of the individuals were arrested in Romania and 11 in Italy. The Romanian Police raided 3 houses, while the Italian authorities conducted 10 home and computer searches.

The hackers, Europol reveals, engaged in a banking fraud scheme that netted €1 million from hundreds of customers of 2 major banking institutions.

The group, mainly comprised of Italian nationals, sent spear phishing emails impersonating tax authorities to victims, in an attempt to harvest their online banking credentials.

Unlike common phishing scams, where millions of generic emails are sent to potential victims, spear phishing emails are highly personalized, featuring content that makes them appear as coming from a reputable source, such as the bank.

Since 2016, the investigators have been tracking the manner in which the arrested individuals have been using the stolen online banking credentials to log into their victims' accounts and transfer funds to the attacker-controlled accounts.

Next, they would withdraw the funds from Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) in Romania, using credit/debit cards linked to the criminal accounts.

The highly organized hackers pursued their criminal activities using encrypted chat applications. They also used intimidating and punitive methods towards affiliates and competitors to establish power, Europol says.

Furthermore, authorities suspect the group of money laundering, as well as drug and human trafficking, prostitution, and participation in a criminal organization.

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HEADLINE	03/30 Malware attacks leverage Office docs
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/malware-attacks-leveraging-ms-word-documents-grew-by-33-in-q4/article/754927/
GIST	<p>Amidst a major rise in zero-day malware attacks in Q4 2017, researchers have observed how hackers are increasingly using Microsoft Office documents as carriers to deliver malicious payloads in enterprise systems while using phishing techniques to trick employees into downloading and opening malicious attachments in emails.</p> <p>The latest Internet Security Report released by WatchGuard Technologies has revealed how hackers are increasingly exploiting issues within the Microsoft Office standard to execute code and to inject powerful malware into enterprise systems.</p> <p>In fact, 'macro-less malware' attacks or Dynamic Data Exchange (DDE) attacks featured in the firm's list of top-ten malware attack types for the firm time and also grew by 33 percent compared to the previous quarter. Two other hacking techniques that leveraged Microsoft Office weaknesses also featured in the list for the first time.</p> <p>Commenting on the report's findings, Andy Norton, director of threat intelligence at Lastline, told SC Magazine UK that it is quite difficult nowadays for employees to detect if a Microsoft Word document is malicious or not as cyber-criminals are using new techniques to weaponise such documents.</p>

	<p>"The attacks abuse features in MS Office documents such DDE or Scriptlets. The ruse is often "this document is protected, enable editing to view content". So, in a percentage of cases, the user enables editing and in doing so starts the infection chain.</p> <p>Corey Nachreiner, chief technology officer at WatchGuard Technologies, said that the report has reiterated how cyber-criminals are continuing to leverage sophisticated, evasive attacks and resourceful malware delivery schemes to steal valuable data.</p> <p>"Although these criminal tactics may vary over time, we can be certain that this broad trend will persist, so the risks have never been greater for small and midsize organisations with less IT and security resources," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Fin7 behind sale 5M credit bank cards
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/jokerstash-fin7-syndicate-posts-sale-of-5m-credit-bank-cards-likely-stolen-from-saks-lord-taylor/article/755180/
GIST	<p>The five million stolen credit and debit cards offered for sale starting March 28 by a JokerStash hacking syndicate known as Fin7 likely came from records stolen from Saks Fifth Avenue and Lord & Taylor customers between 2017 until their release last month.</p> <p>“Based on the analysis of the available data, the entire network of Lord & Taylor and 83 Saks Fifth Avenue locations have been compromised” and the majority of cards were “obtained from New York and New Jersey locations,” according to a Gemini advisory, which said around 125,000 records were for sale with the remainder of the cache, advertised on the dark web as BIGBADABOOM-2, expected to roll out in the coming months.</p> <p>Gemini expressed “a high level of confidence” that the stolen cards came that victims of the attack are Saks Fifth Avenue, its discount outlet Saks Fifth Avenue OFF 5TH, and Lord & Taylor Stores, all operated by Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), a Canadian firm.</p> <p>Fin7 has successfully hacked hotel chains like Trump Hotels and Omni Hotels & Resorts, as well as retailers like Whole Foods, Jason's Deli and Chipotle. The group last year also launched spearphishing campaigns targeting Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) filings using a fileless attack framework.</p> <p>“This incident shows once again merchants still need to protect themselves against POS system infiltration attacks targeting cardholder data. A multi-layer security strategy is necessary,” including segmenting POS networks and upping monitoring and threat detection capabilities, said Mark Cline, vice president at Netsurion. “If nothing else, dwell time of such an attack would be reduced to hours or days. After all, the report is that this attack has persisted for almost a year, just as we have seen in previous massive card breaches.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Accused Russian hacker extradited to US
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/accused-linkedin-dropbox-hacker-appears-in-us-court-after-diplomatic-battle/d/d-id/1331413
GIST	<p>Yevgeniy Nikulin, the Russian hacker accused of being responsible for breaching DropBox and the 2012 LinkedIn attack that saw 117 million passwords stolen, has been extradited to the US in a process that has implications for the larger relationship between the US and Russia.</p> <p>Detained in the Czech Republic since October 2016, Nikulin had requested asylum there after warrants for his arrest were issued by both Russia and the US. The Czech government denied his bid for asylum and turned him over the US where he appeared in a federal courtroom on Friday morning.</p>

	<p>During his initial court appearance in San Francisco, Nikulin's attorney told the judge that his client has severe medical issues that require immediate attention. A medical evaluation has been ordered by the court.</p> <p>Russia's government has expressed its displeasure with the decision to turn him over to the US, saying that the Czech government reached its conclusion without considering all the available facts.</p> <p>According to a report on CNN, the Czech minister of justice made the decision after considering the seriousness of the charges leveled by the US and Russia and the two countries' intensity of desire to extradite and prosecute Nikulin.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Software bug massive telephony outage
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/software/software-bug-behind-biggest-telephony-outage-in-us-history/
GIST	<p>A software bug in a telecom provider's phone number blacklisting system caused the largest telephony outage in US history, according to a report released by the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) at the start of the month.</p> <p>The telco is Level 3, now part of CenturyLink, and the outage took place on October 4, 2016.</p> <p>Software sees empty field as wildcard selector</p> <p>According to the FCC's investigation, the outage began after a Level 3 employee entered phone numbers suspected of malicious activity in the company's network management software.</p> <p>The employee wanted to block incoming phone calls from these numbers and had entered each number in fields provided by the software's GUI.</p> <p>The problem arose when the Level 3 technician left a field empty, without entering a number. Unbeknownst to the employee, the buggy software didn't ignore the empty field, like most software does, but instead viewed the empty space as a "wildcard" character.</p> <p>As soon as the technician submitted his input, Level 3's network began blocking all telephone calls.</p> <p>Level 3 telephony network goes down for 84 minutes</p> <p>The event had massive repercussions, affecting the entire US. For 84 minutes between 10:06 and 11:30 AM Eastern Daylight Time (EDT), Level 3's network blocked all calls, a massive number of 111 million calls, 109 million of which were VoIP-based.</p> <p>Approximately 29.4 million VoIP users and around 2.3 million wireless users were affected.</p> <p>FCC said the event had "nationwide impact" and called it "the largest [outage] reported in the Federal Communications Commission's Network Outage Reporting System (NORS)" history.</p> <p>Calls to 911 were also blocked, but due to the emergency system's redundancy, only 15 of 117 calls failed to connect to a public safety answering point (PSAP).</p> <p>The outage could have been more prolonged if Level 3 didn't have systems in place that alerted operators of abnormal activity. FCC says Level 3 became aware of the incident four minutes after it started.</p> <p>FCC blames software supplier</p>

	<p>"The technician was unaware of the consequences of leaving a field in the network management software blank," the FCC concluded in its report, absolving the employee and company of guilt. "Level 3 personnel had not previously observed or experienced this behavior in their network management software. According to Level 3, this was the first time that anti-fraud operations in network equipment caused an outage."</p> <p>The FCC report also mentions that Level 3 used "vendor-supplied network management software," but did not name the supplier.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Subaru deploys facial recognition
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/technology/subaru-deploys-facial-recognition-to-detect-driver-fatigue/
GIST	<p>Subaru has become the first car maker to deploy facial recognition inside a vehicle for the purpose of detecting driver fatigue.</p> <p>The feature, named DriverFocus, is part of the EyeSight Driver Assist Technology that will come with the fifth generation of Subaru Forester SUVs, which debuted last week at the New York International Auto Show.</p> <p>"DriverFocus is a driver monitoring system that uses facial recognition software to identify signs of driver fatigue or driver distraction," Subaru said in a press release. "DriverFocus works with Subaru's award-winning EyeSight Driver Assist Technology to reduce the chance of an accident."</p> <p>EyeSight is a powerful technology, supporting features like pre-collision braking, adaptive cruise control, lane sway warnings, and lane-keep assist.</p> <p>This means that if DriverFocus detects that the driver dozing off or moving his gaze away from the road for too much time, it automatically enables EyeSight Driver Assist to stop the vehicle.</p> <p>Facial recognition will not be used to start cars</p> <p>DriverFocus is the first fatigue detection system deployed in a consumer car. Scientists have been working on fatigue detection systems for many years, but only at a theoretical level.</p> <p>For example, scientists from the Indian Institute of Technology proposed last year a system that reads the position of a driver's eyes and mouth to detect common signs of fatigue, such as yawning, head nodding, frequent blinking, and more.</p> <p>Their system relied on a video camera installed in the car. Currently, Subaru hasn't revealed how exactly DriverFocus works but said the system wasn't designed to authenticate drivers and start a car's engine.</p> <p>Nonetheless, the system can distinguish between up to five drivers and remember presets for seat position, climate, multifunction display, and more.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 AutoHotKey for building malware
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/autohotkey-malware-is-now-a-thing/
GIST	AutoHotKey has now become one of the most trendy technologies for building malware, according to several reports put out by cyber-security firms and insights Bleeping Computer received from malware experts.

AutoHotKey, or AHK, is an open-source scripting language developed for the Microsoft Windows operating system back in 2003.

AHK was born when its creator tried and failed to add support for keyboard shortcuts (hotkeys) in AutoIt, a similar Windows scripting language.

The failed attempt to improve the older AutoIt language spurred the AHK creator to put together a new scripting engine that later became AutoHotKey and, which, over the next several years developed into a behemoth on the Windows scripting landscape.

Besides original support for remapping keyboard shortcuts, AutoHotKey is now a powerful system that can now interact with the local filesystem, monitor or close programs, set up scheduled tasks, but also automate repetitive operations inside third-party software.

Furthermore, the AHK scripting language uses a simple syntax that even non-technical users can understand.

Because of these features, over the years, AutoHotKey became the prime technology used for the creation of aimbots and other game cheating tools. But in recent months, the language has also started catching on with some malware developers, as well.

A first report highlighting the rising number of AHK-based malware came from the security research team at Ixia, who found AHK malware samples distributing cryptocurrency miners and a clipboard hijacker towards the end of February.

Ixia's findings were doubled this month when another cyber-security firm, Cybereason, published a similar report on another AHK-based malware strain the company discovered and named Fauxpersky because it tried to imitate a Kaspersky antivirus.

But these aren't the only malware strains researchers spotted, and the list of AHK malware is getting larger by the day.

"We are still finding fresh and new samples, both in their content and their structure," Gabriel Cirlig, a security researcher at Ixia told Bleeping Computer in a private conversation.

"Every day we find the same clibankers/droppers/keyloggers that only have minor changes done to their code as well as samples that even employ complex obfuscation techniques and file structure," Cirlig said. "Even as we speak the list is growing faster and faster."

And these malware families are evolving in terms of complexity. For example, Cybereason researchers Amit Serper and Chris Black described Fauxpersky as a very simplistic and unconvincing threat.

"This malware is by no means advanced or even very stealthy," Serper and Black wrote in their report. "Its authors didn't put any effort into changing even the most trivial things, such as the AHK icon that's attached to the file."

But Cirlig says newer malware strains discovered in recent days are far more advanced, showing that crooks are slowly learning how to utilize AHK for more and more complex tasks.

"The latest that we found, and we're still analyzing, is the first one to use five different obfuscation functions that intertwine each other," Cirlig said.

The trend is clear, and that's that malware authors are increasingly looking at AHK when it comes to choosing the language for their next malware.

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HEADLINE	03/27 Claim: Atlanta compromised in April 2017
SOURCE	https://www.renditioninfosec.com/2018/03/atlanta-government-was-compromised-in-april-2017-well-before-last-weeks-ransomware-attack/
GIST	<p>Last Thursday, the City Of Atlanta suffered outages from a ransomware attack. During the press conference (recorded here), city officials indicated that they were invested in cyber security. They noted that they were working with state and federal law enforcement to resolve the incident and had even been in contact with the Secret Service. Officials noted that this type of attack (and outage) were happening to many organizations. Officials attempted to convey that despite adopting cyber security best practices, the City of Atlanta was victimized. This prompts the question “Was the City of Atlanta following cyber security best practices?”</p> <p>Though little is known about the internals of the city’s cyber security posture, we quickly learned that the city had exposed remote desktop protocol (RDP) to the Internet with no multi-factor authentication*. This is extremely important because if attackers get a valid username and password combination, they can directly access your information systems if no multi-factor authentication is in place.</p> <p>*Full disclosure: We’re a little biased on the need for multi-factor authentication, Rendition Infosec installs and monitors multi-factor authentication solutions, click here to learn more.</p> <p>Cybersecurity Hygiene</p> <p>Leaving RDP open to the Internet is bad, but leaving SMB (windows file sharing, or Server Message Block) open to the Internet is much worse. Most readers probably remember the WannaCry ransomware campaign that shut down services at the UK’s National Health Service and elsewhere in May 2017. These attacks were powered by the leaked NSA (allegedly) exploit EternalBlue. In June, the same leaked exploit was used with the NotPetya attacks to target Ukrainian businesses (though impacts were felt worldwide). The EternalBlue exploit targets the SMB service on unpatched computers.</p> <p>Twitter user “Huy” noted that after the announcement of the ransomware attack that a number of computers apparently owned by the City of Atlanta had SMB exposed to the Internet. This is obviously a departure from best practices. However, it should be noted that just because SMB or RDP is exposed to the Internet, this doesn’t necessarily mean that these machines were compromised by attackers. It is indicative of a poor overall cybersecurity posture.</p> <p>When EternalBlue was released into the wild in April 2017, Rendition Infosec realized that this exploit was going to be a big deal. The vulnerability (MS17-010) was patched in March, 2017. But we know that many organizations don’t patch for 30-60 days or more. Further, those who are exposing services like SMB to the Internet are already displaying substandard cybersecurity hygiene, making it less likely that they’ll be patching in anything approaching a timely manner.</p> <p>To understand patterns of exploitation, Rendition began scanning for machines that were exposing SMB to the Internet. For each machine we discovered that was exposing this service, we sent a special “ping” command to communicate with the DoublePulsar malware that is temporarily installed when a computer is compromised with the EternalBlue exploit. When the DoublePulsar malware is present, the ping command returns a special response. Using this response, we can conclusively determine which machines have been compromised. With DoublePulsar running on a compromised machine, any attacker can upload malware to the machine and execute it with system privileges (no further exploitation or authentication is required).</p> <p>Because of ethical and legal concerns, Rendition did not attempt to interact any further with machines that were discovered to be running DoublePulsar. However, we can say that those machines were compromised for some reason by some third party. In most incident response cases we’ve worked at Rendition involving EternalBlue and DoublePulsar, these tools are just used to install end-stage malware (such as ransomware) on the compromised machines.</p> <p>It’s also important to note that the DoublePulsar malware disappears when a machine is rebooted. This</p>

means that our scan data is very likely incomplete. Any positive scan results should be considered an absolute indication of compromise. However, the absence of scan results does not necessarily indicate that no compromise occurred (it just means we didn't see it). A more thorough investigation (typically referred to as [threat hunting](#)) should be conducted if you have any suspicion of compromise.

Rendition performed a number of scans in late April and the first few days of May. Of course we notified our clients of any of their IP's and hostnames discovered in the scan data. However, the magnitude of the scan data prohibited reaching out to everyone compromised. Our largest scan indicated that more than 148k machines were compromised – the raw number of results simply precluded us from contacting each victim individually. We were discussing with legal counsel how to best communicate vulnerability data when WannaCry hit in mid May 2017. After WannaCry, we decided to shelve the idea of reaching out to victims, figuring most had also been hit with WannaCry (and we're not ambulance chasers). However, given the events in Atlanta, we're now seeing that this data is relevant even now and we're dusting off our data set.

The City of Atlanta Had Five Systems Compromised in April 2017

Our scan data indicates that the City Of Atlanta had the following five systems fully compromised in April 2017:

65.82.136.163 atlantaga.gov
 65.82.136.220 webmail10.atlantaga.gov
 65.82.136.164 atlantaga.gov
 65.82.136.35 atlantaga.gov
 65.82.136.79 ditweb.atlantaga.gov

Note that DNS names were resolved at the time of scans and rely on correct DNS PTR records to be supplied by atlantaga.gov's DNS server. Of these systems, the webmail10.atlantaga.gov server is probably the most concerning since an attacker could conceivably download all email (given the superuser privileges obtained with EternalBlue).

This scan data conclusively shows that the City of Atlanta was not patching its Internet facing hosts more than a month after *critical* patches were released by Microsoft. Microsoft released patches on March 14, 2017. Our scan data shows these hosts being vulnerable (and compromised by unknown attackers) on dates spanning from April 23, 2017 to May 1, 2017. After doing some searching for statements from the City or Atlanta, we can't find any indication that they were aware of this compromise at all. We reached out to let them know that they were previously compromised before this was posted publicly.

It's further worth noting that our scan data only includes machines that had SMB exposed to the Internet. We know that public facing machines tend to receive patches (especially those labeled as critical with publicly available exploits) before the rest of the network. There are an unknown number of machines in the City of Atlanta's internal network that were likely also unpatched at the time we performed our scans. In our experience, it is generally safe to infer overall cyber security hygiene from a representative sample like what we have.

Even if we don't infer overall hygiene, the fact remains that the City of Atlanta couldn't be bothered to patch at least five Internet facing servers for more than a month in April 2017 – even when there was a publicly available exploit.

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HEADLINE	03/31 Atlanta struggles to recover cyberattack
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-cyber-atlanta/with-paper-and-phones-atlanta-struggles-to-recover-from-cyber-attack-idUSKBN1H70R0
GIST	ATLANTA (Reuters) - Atlanta's top officials holed up in their offices on Saturday as they worked to restore critical systems knocked out by a nine-day-old cyber attack that plunged the Southeastern U.S. metropolis into technological chaos and forced some city workers to revert to paper.

On an Easter and Passover holiday weekend, city officials labored in preparation for the workweek to come.

Police and other public servants have spent the past week trying to piece together their digital work lives, recreating audit spreadsheets and conducting business on mobile phones in response to one of the most devastating “ransomware” virus attacks to hit an American city.

Three city council staffers have been sharing a single clunky personal laptop brought in after cyber extortionists attacked Atlanta’s computer network with a virus that scrambled data and still prevents access to critical systems.

“It’s extraordinarily frustrating,” said Councilman Howard Shook, whose office lost 16 years of digital records.

One compromised city computer seen by Reuters showed multiple corrupted documents with “weapologize” and “imsorry” added to file names.

Ransomware attacks have surged in recent years as cyber extortionists moved from attacking individual computers to large organizations, including businesses, healthcare organizations and government agencies. Previous high-profile attacks have shut down factories, prompted hospitals to turn away patients and forced local emergency dispatch systems to move to manual operations.

Ransomware typically corrupts data and does not steal it. The city of Atlanta has said it does not believe private residents’ information is in the hands of hackers, but they do not know for sure.

City officials have declined to discuss the extent of damage beyond disclosed outages that have shut down some services at municipal offices, including courts and the water department.

Nearly 6 million people live in the Atlanta metropolitan area. The Georgia city itself is home to more than 450,000 people, according to the latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

City officials told Reuters that police files and financial documents were rendered inaccessible by unknown hackers who demanded \$51,000 worth of bitcoin to provide digital keys to unlock scrambled files.

“Everything on my hard drive is gone,” City Auditor Amanda Noble said in her office housed in Atlanta City Hall’s ornate tower.

City officials have not disclosed the extent to which servers for backing up information on PCs were corrupted or what kind of information they think is unrecoverable without paying the ransom.

Noble discovered the disarray on March 22 when she turned on her computer to discover that files could not be opened after being encrypted by a powerful computer virus known as SamSam that renamed them with gibberish.

“I said, ‘This is wrong,’” she recalled.

City officials then quickly entered her office and told her to shut down the computer before warning the rest of the building.

Noble is working on a personal laptop and using her smartphone to search for details of current projects mentioned in emails stored on that device.

Not all computers were compromised. Ten of 18 machines in the auditing office were not affected, Noble said.

OLD-SCHOOL ANALOG

Atlanta police returned to taking written case notes and have lost access to some investigative databases, department spokesman Carlos Campos told Reuters. He declined to discuss the contents of the affected files.

“Our data management teams are working diligently to restore normal operations and functionalities to these systems and hope to be back online in the very near future,” he said. By the weekend, he added, officers were returning to digital police reports.

Meanwhile, some city employees complained they have been left in the dark, unsure when it is safe to turn on their computers.

“We don’t know anything,” said one frustrated employee as she left for a lunch break on Friday.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, which is helping Atlanta respond, typically discourages ransomware victims from paying up.

FBI officials could not immediately be reached for comment. A Department of Homeland Security spokesman confirmed the agency is helping Atlanta respond to the attack, but declined to comment further.

Hackers typically walk away when ransoms are not paid, said Mark Weatherford, a former senior DHS cyber official.

Weatherford, who previously served as California’s chief information security officer, said the situation might have been resolved with little pain if the city had quickly made that payment.

“The longer it goes, the worse it gets,” he said. “This could turn out to be really bad if they never get their data back.”

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HEADLINE	03/31 Judge dismisses Pulse shooting lawsuit
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/31/us/pulse-nightclub-lawsuit/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A Michigan judge on Friday dismissed a lawsuit by more than a dozen families of the Pulse nightclub shooting victims against social media companies.</p> <p>The lawsuit, filed in December 2016, accused Facebook, Twitter and YouTube (owned by Google) of knowing that ISIS recruited members online and doing nothing to stop it. Because the Pulse gunman, Omar Mateen, was able to view extremist propaganda on these social sites, the lawsuit said they were civilly liable. The complaint demanded a trial by jury.</p> <p>"Without ... Twitter, Facebook, and Google (YouTube), the explosive growth of (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) over the last few years into the most feared terrorist group in the world would not have been possible," the complaint reads.</p> <p>CNN has reached out to Facebook, Twitter and Google, but has not received a response.</p> <p>The judge said there was no evidence that anything Mateen viewed online directly led to the June 2016 attack at Pulse nightclub in Orlando.</p> <p>The attorney for the families, Keith Altman, said his clients will appeal.</p>

	<p>"We are not surprised that the law is unsettled in the terms of holding social media companies accountable. We will absolutely appeal," Altman said. "We feel the judge didn't see the case in the right way and will continue to fight. We have just as much resolve as we did before."</p> <p>The dismissal of the lawsuit came the same day a jury acquitted Mateen's wife, Noor Salman. The Pulse victims' families did not have comment on Salman's acquittal, Altman said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Under Armour: MyFitnessPal data breach
SOURCE	http://time.com/5222015/how-to-change-myfitnesspal-password/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>Under Armour notified users of its MyFitnessPal app of a security breach affecting 150 million users on Thursday.</p> <p>Under Armour learned on March 25 that "an unauthorized party acquired data associated with MyFitnessPal user accounts in late February 2018," the company said in a release. Four days later, Under Armour contacted MyFitnessPal users through email and the app's messaging system. The company is requiring users to change their passwords and recommended they do so as soon as possible.</p> <p>Users' usernames, email addresses and passwords were affected, but Under Armour says no payment information was affected by the data breach because it is collected and processed separately.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 How to minimize tracking online
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/how-youre-tracked-online-facebook-google-amazon-uber-what-you-can-do-about-it/
GIST	<p>NEW YORK -- Though Facebook gets the attention because of a recent data privacy scandal, the social network is far from alone in collecting massive amounts of data on you to help marketers sell you stuff. Google, for one, also does extensive tracking to power its advertising engines.</p> <p>Web developer Dylan Curran posted a thread on Twitter last weekend that quickly went viral. He tweeted, "Want to freak yourself out? I'm gonna show just how much of your information the likes of Facebook and Google store about you without you even realising it."</p> <p>In his series of tweets and an opinion piece in The Guardian, Curran -- who told CBSN he "was basically a nobody before this exploded" -- outlined the information Google stores on users, ranging from users' location to app usage to their YouTube history. He similarly highlighted Facebook's collection of personal information, saying the social media giant "has reams and reams of data on you, too."</p> <p>And many other websites and apps run ads sold by Facebook and Google and exchange data with them. Beyond that, plenty of services including Uber and Amazon keep detailed histories on you.</p> <p>Here are some of the ways to block or minimize such tracking -- but they come with trade-offs.</p> <p>Tracking IDs</p> <p>Websites have long used unique IDs in "cookies" -- data files stored in your browser -- to know it's you when you return a week later. Cookies also let advertising networks run by the likes of Facebook and Google connect you as you visit multiple websites. Phones and tablets have a device advertising ID that apps can use to track you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combating this: You can reset the cookie ID by clearing cookies periodically. Most browsers also have a private mode to limit tracking through cookies, though it's not foolproof. Companies can still link you if you've signed in, for instance. As for the device ID, you can reset that or tell

advertisers not to target ads through the phone's settings. Many browsers also let you install add-ons that block ad trackers. Notable add-ons include Ghostery or the Electronic Frontier Foundation's Privacy Badger.

- The trade-offs: You'll still get ads, just not targeted ones. And clearing cookies makes your browser forget who you are, so you'll have to sign back into any site that was saving your login. Tracker blockers can sometimes prevent websites from displaying or working properly.

Location Services

Many apps need your location to work. Mapping apps, for instance, can't tell you when to turn without knowing where you are. Video services typically have rights only in certain countries and need to verify your location. But location can be used for much more. Google, for instance, keeps a fairly detailed account of your whereabouts through a feature called Timeline.

- Combating this: You can turn off location services in the phone's settings, though for apps to work properly, it's better to turn them off for specific services that don't really need them. As for Timeline, you can pause or delete location history in Google settings.
- The trade-offs: Some apps won't work without your location. Others, such as weather apps, will require you enter your location manually. And you might miss out on recommendations such as better commuting routes via apps like Waze.

Signing In

Signing into an online account gives services a sure-fire way of tracking you. Facebook won't work at all without an account; Google merely works better with one. And you'll generally need an account with any service that charges you, although sometimes you can sign in with your Facebook or Google ID instead.

- Combating this: Resist creating an account or signing whenever you can -- such as when you're merely browsing rather than buying. Avoid using Facebook or Google IDs whenever possible, as those companies could then track you. You can also use a different email address for each account to frustrate efforts to connect you across services, although it can be a major pain.
- The trade-offs: Some services require signing in, and creating accounts on each service means more passwords to remember (though you might consider using a password manager). Whatever you do, don't reuse the same passwords across service; that makes them easy to hack.

IP Address

The Internet Protocol address lists where your phone or computer lives on the internet; it's how you get messages and load websites. But IP addresses can also help companies remember who you are and link the various devices you use, since most homes use a single IP address for the whole network. Databases can also map IP addresses to physical locations.

- Combating this: You can mask your IP address by using a secure intermediary. VPN services, common in corporate settings, will route your traffic through a separate IP address; a secure web browser called Tor automatically sends traffic through multiple third parties. You still need to avoid signing in.
- The trade-offs: Tor can slow down performance, particularly with high-data tasks such as video. And with VPNs, you need to trust the VPN operator, whether that's your boss or a private service.

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HEADLINE	03/30 US to tie visas w/social media accounts
SOURCE	https://www.yahoo.com/news/us-visa-seekers-disclose-social-media-153100492.html
GIST	Washington (AFP) - Travelers to the United States will soon have to submit their social media identities,

	<p>previous telephone numbers and email addresses, a measure that could touch 10 million people per year.</p> <p>According to a State Department plan published Friday, visa seekers -- whether visitors or would-be immigrants -- will be presented with a list of social media platforms.</p> <p>Applicants will be required to identify which they use and provide "any identifiers used by applicants for those platforms during the five years preceding the date of application."</p> <p>"Other questions seek five years of previously used telephone numbers, email addresses, and international travel," the notice, published in the Federal Register, revealed.</p> <p>When these new rules were first suggested last year as part of what US President Donald Trump has called "extreme vetting" of would-be visitors, civil liberties groups sounded the alarm about privacy.</p> <p>But officials say they could identify potential extremists, such as one of the attackers in the December 2015 San Bernadino shooting -- who got a visa despite allegedly advocating "jihad" on social media.</p> <p>The measures apply both to the DS-260 "Immigrant Visa and Alien Registration Form" and the DS-160 "Application for Nonimmigrant Visa."</p> <p>In the last fiscal year, 559,536 people applied for US immigrant visas and 9,681,913 for various forms of visitor visa. Friday's announced measures will not touch diplomatic or official travelers.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	04/01 Somalia: Al-Shabaab attack kills dozens
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/01/al-shabaab-attack-kills-ugandan-soldiers-in-somalia
GIST	<p>Dozens of Ugandan soldiers are thought to have been killed when Islamist extremists attacked their base on Sunday in the latest of a series of bloody strikes against peacekeepers in Somalia.</p> <p>Local officials told the Guardian that as many as 46 Ugandan troops, part of the 22,000-strong regional force in Somalia, died in the attack by the al-Qaida affiliated al-Shabaab movement in the town of Bulamarer, 80 miles south-west of the capital, Mogadishu, at around 9am local time.</p> <p>Ugandan officials have said only four soldiers were killed in the attack, which was repulsed with heavy casualties among the extremists.</p> <p>Such attacks are designed to hasten the departure of Amisom, the military and policing coalition under the authority of the African Union, which has been fighting al-Shabaab for more than a decade.</p> <p>Al-Shabaab, which once controlled much of Somalia, wants to topple the western-backed government in Mogadishu.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 US-based ISIS plotter sentenced 20yrs
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-43613255
GIST	<p>A businessman who accepted payments from Cardiff firms to fund a terrorist attack in the US has been sentenced to 20 years in prison.</p> <p>Mohammed Elshinawy, 33, admitted accepting overseas payments to plan and help carry out a so-called</p>

	<p>Islamic State attack, at a court in Maryland.</p> <p>FBI documents revealed Pontypridd businessman Siful Sujan financed IS plots across the Atlantic. He died in a US-led air strike near Raqqa in December 2015.</p> <p>Bangladesh-born Sujan, 31, left Wales in July 2014 for Syria, where he became a computer hacker for IS. Following his death, a Pentagon spokesman was quoted as saying "ISIL [another name for IS] has lost a key link between networks".</p> <p>Sujan allegedly used some of his south Wales companies to send military-grade surveillance equipment to Spain and to an address in Turkey close to the Syrian border, and to transfer funding to an IS supporter in the US.</p> <p>FBI documents revealing the links were released following a court case in Baltimore, Maryland, in August 2017.</p> <p>Elshinawy, 33, previously pleaded guilty to accepting payments from overseas to plan and help carry out a terrorist attack in the US, as well as three other terrorism-related charges.</p> <p>Information published on the Maryland Attorney's website on 30 March, states that between February and December 2015, he conspired with others to provide material and resources to IS, including personnel, communication and financial services.</p> <p>The attorney's office said Elshinawy described himself as a "soldier, committed to making violent jihad" and he received £6,207 (US\$8,700) from a UK-based company, believed to belong to Sujan, to fund a terrorist attack.</p> <p>He was sentenced to 20 years in prison followed by 15 years of supervised release.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Iraq: 'ISIS slaughterer' killed
SOURCE	https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1224591/iraqi-forces-kill-'isis-slaughterer'-anbar-desert
GIST	<p>Iraqi forces announced on Sunday that they killed Abou Taha al-Tunsi, also known as the "ISIS Slaughterer," one of the terror group's most notorious members.</p> <p>The terrorist and nine of his companions were killed in a security operation in Iraq's Anbar province, revealed intelligence sources.</p> <p>The operation was initially launched after information was received that the terrorists were in the area and they were preparing to carry out attacks against security forces, they added.</p> <p>The forces discovered during their raid secret tunnels that the group was using in the Anbar desert. There, they confiscated weapons, narcotic pills and liquor.</p> <p>The operation in Anbar is part of a larger operation the armed forces are carrying out in the desert, where hundreds of ISIS members are still located.</p> <p>Head of the Iraq Sahwa Conference Sheikh Ahmed Abou Risha told Asharq Al-Awsat that in wake of battles to liberate areas that were seized by ISIS in 2014, the terrorists chose to flee instead of fighting the incoming forces.</p> <p>They consequently fled to the desert, he explained, where they remain.</p> <p>"ISIS used to fiercely fight in regions it could not escape from," he added.</p>

	<p>The Anbar desert is vast and it still feeds several other regions with ISIS cells that are carrying out various attacks using new methods, such as ambushes, said Abou Risha.</p> <p>Iraqi security expert Abou Fadel Raghif told Asharq Al-Awsat that regardless of Abou Taha al-Tunsi's death, "the truth is clear that 95 percent of the major ISIS leaderships have not engaged in battle, but chose to hide in various regions, including beyond Iraq."</p> <p>"None of these figures have been arrested," he stressed.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Nigeria: Boko Haram attack kills 15
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-security/suspected-boko-haram-militants-kill-15-in-nigerias-maiduguri-emergency-services-idUSKCN1H90L2
GIST	<p>MAIDUGURI, Nigeria (Reuters) - A suspected Boko Haram attack in the northeast Nigerian city of Maiduguri killed 15 people and wounded 68, an emergency agency official said on Monday, in the biggest strike since the government said it was in talks with the Islamist group.</p> <p>Maiduguri is the epicenter of the nine-year conflict with Boko Haram that has killed more than 20,000 people.</p> <p>President Muhammadu Buhari has prioritized improving security and previously said the group, which is trying establish an Islamic State and split into two factions in 2016, had been defeated.</p> <p>The gun attack took place on Sunday night in Bale Shuwari, a settlement near army barracks on the edge of Maiduguri's inner city, military sources said.</p> <p>"Sixty-eight were injured and 15 innocent people were killed," said Bello Dambatta, chairman of the rapid response team for the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA).</p> <p>It is the most significant attack on the city since the government said last week it was in talks with the insurgents with the aim of securing a permanent ceasefire.</p> <p>The government has not disclosed which elements of Boko Haram it is in discussions with, and neither was it clear which faction carried out Sunday's attack.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Taliban have gone high-tech
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/01/world/asia/taliban-night-vision.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=first-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Once described as an ill-equipped band of insurgents, the Taliban are increasingly attacking security forces across Afghanistan using night-vision goggles and lasers that United States military officials said were either stolen from Afghan and international troops or bought on the black market.</p> <p>The devices allow the Taliban to maneuver on forces under the cover of darkness as they track the whirling blades of coalition helicopters, the infrared lasers on American rifles, or even the bedtime movements of local police officers.</p> <p>With this new battlefield visibility, the Taliban more than doubled nighttime attacks from 2014 to 2017, according to one United States military official who described internal Pentagon data on the condition of</p>

anonymity. The number of Afghans who were wounded or killed during nighttime attacks during that period nearly tripled.

That has forced American commanders to rethink the limited access they give Afghan security forces to the night-vision devices. Commanders now worry that denying the expensive equipment to those forces puts them at a technological disadvantage, with potentially lethal consequences.

For years, American commanders have been reluctant to give night-vision equipment to rank-and-file Afghan soldiers and police officers out of concern of widespread corruption among those forces. The devices — headsets and infrared lasers — are usually given only to elite Afghan commandos and police special mission units, according to American military officials.

As some of this equipment falls into Taliban hands, the militants are joining a larger trend, said David W. Barno, a retired lieutenant general who led the war effort in Afghanistan from 2003 to 2005. Advanced equipment, such as drones and precision weapons, is being seized by other extremist groups in other global conflict zones, he said.

“It’s going to be a problem,” Mr. Barno said, “and it’s going to change how we operate.”

With the spread of the devices, infantry units on patrols have been told not to use certain marking devices that can be seen only by night-vision equipment. Helicopter crews have been made distinctly aware that their aircraft are no longer cloaked by darkness.

In one case last November, Taliban fighters wearing night-vision goggles attacked a police outpost in Farah Province, in western Afghanistan. By the time the predawn assault was over, eight Afghan officers lay dead in their beds, Haji Abdul Rahman Aka, the elder of the province’s Pule Regi area, said at the time. Only one Afghan officer survived.

The frequency and ferocity of the nighttime Taliban attacks are linked to attempts by Afghan forces, based in small checkpoints across the country, to hold territory that has been wrested away from the militants.

Previously unreported documents, obtained by The New York Times, underline concerns about the Taliban’s growing sophistication on the battlefield after 16 years of war — and American commanders’ efforts to stunt it.

The documents show that the American military has begun to send older models of night-vision hardware to regular Afghan Army units. Those headsets cost an estimated \$3,000 each, officials said.

One of the first batches of night-vision equipment for conventional units in southern Afghanistan, part of a monthslong pilot program, was sent to the embattled 215th Corps in Helmand Province in the spring of 2016.

Only 161 of the 210 devices were returned, according to the military documents obtained by The Times, and the equipment was not effectively used, in part because the forces were not properly trained to use it.

Afghan troops said the missing devices were reported as “battle losses,” but could not support that claim with any proof or records to explain where or when they were left behind, according to the documents.

At the time, the commander of the 215th Corps was Maj. Gen. M. Moein Faqir. He was later arrested on sweeping corruption charges that included misuse of food money meant for his troops.

Last year, and with better results, night-vision equipment was sent to the 205th Corps, located around Kandahar, the military documents showed.

Five devices were lost between July and December, when the program ended, according to the documents. Over the summer and fall, the Afghan National Army suffered 15 percent fewer casualties around

Kandahar than it had during the same period in 2016.

The documents credited the night-vision equipment for the marked reduction, concluding that the devices are “becoming an integral part of base defense plans.” The American military is now planning to equip the unit with roughly 2,500 night-vision goggles as part of what the documents described as a concept for a “permanent program.”

Despite those measured successes, it remains unclear if the American military will give the devices to the rest of the Afghan Army.

The American military headquarters in Kabul has said it equips only Special Operations units in the Afghan Army and police forces with night-vision technology.

Capt. Tom Gresback, a spokesman for United States forces in Afghanistan, declined to comment on the plans to distribute the devices to the Afghan National Army, as outlined in the military documents. He said American commanders would provide Afghan national defense and security forces “with the resources necessary to promote security throughout Afghanistan.”

But some American advisers closer to the ground fight are already trying to get the technology for their Afghan counterparts, according to a United States official. He said that would require a decision made through the leadership in Kabul and the Pentagon to allow American commanders to distribute the devices to even more Afghan security forces.

With the night-vision devices, Taliban fighters have been able to approach Afghan bases nearly undetected before attacking.

Initially, such ambushes were attributed to Taliban forces known as “Red Units” located in Afghanistan’s southern provinces. But over the last year, the night-vision devices have frequently turned up in the country’s north and east, according to two American military officials, signaling a widespread distribution into other groups of Taliban fighters.

Those officials said the Taliban were using both tightly controlled American-made devices and gear that is widely available for purchase. In some cases, American officials said, the equipment was left on the battlefield by United States or Afghan troops, including those who were killed in action.

In others, Afghan soldiers are believed to have sold the devices to the extremists.

That was disputed by Gen. Dawlat Waziri, who until recently served as spokesman for the Afghan Ministry of Defense. He said all night-vision equipment provided to Afghan troops by the American military had been “accounted for.”

“No case of night vision sold by our soldiers to the Taliban has been reported,” General Waziri said.

Zabihullah Mujahid, a spokesman for the Taliban, said fighters obtained night-vision devices after attacking Afghan bases or capturing members of the Afghan security forces.

Rank-and-file Afghan police officers are particularly under threat by increasing numbers of deadly nighttime attacks, said one of the American military officials. Those units are spread farther into sparsely populated areas across Afghanistan than are army soldiers.

Officers with the Afghan National Police, especially in the south, have been making desperate requests for the equipment for months, the official said. The police are part of the Ministry of Interior, which is suspected of rampant corruption.

In Helmand Province, Marine Corps advisers are helping a request by the 505th Zone of the Afghan National Police to receive night-vision devices, Col. C.J. Douglas, the head of the Marines’ police

	advising component there, said in an email.
	It is unclear if the Afghan police unit will get them.
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HEADLINE	04/01 Syria: rebels leaving last-held town
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/small-number-rebels-start-leave-syrias-douma-54158154?
GIST	<p>A rebel faction trapped by government forces outside the Syrian capital agreed to evacuate to northern Syria on Sunday as reports swirled of a larger agreement that would have the government retake full control of the eastern Ghouta region after seven years of revolt.</p> <p>Fighters from the Faylaq al-Rahman group left Douma on buses sent by the Syrian government to the rebel-held province of Idlib, SANA state news agency reported. Some 1,300 fighters, activists, and civilians signed up to leave the town, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group.</p> <p>It was the first organized evacuation of fighters from Douma, one of the earliest centers of the anti-government demonstrations that swept through the country in 2011. Security forces responded by putting the town and other suburbs around Damascus under siege, bombing hospitals and residential areas, and blocking the entry of food and medical relief.</p> <p>Douma is a stronghold of the powerful Army of Islam rebel group. The town is one of the last around the capital to hold out against the government.</p> <p>Later Sunday, a media outlet linked to the Syrian military reported that the Army of Islam also agreed to leave to north Syria, effectively transferring control of Douma to Damascus.</p> <p>The deal would mark the end of a weeks-long push by the government to consolidate its control of the eastern Ghouta region just outside the capital.</p> <p>Fighters from the Army of Islam would evacuate to Jarablus, a town in the northern Aleppo province that is shared between rebel and Turkish control. Turkey, with support from rebels, is running its own military operations against a U.S.-backed Kurdish party that controls territory along the frontier.</p> <p>A local council for Douma would be formed with the approval of the central government, said the government-linked Central Military Media outlet.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Syria: final evacuation deal reached
SOURCE	https://www.afp.com/en/news/205/final-evacuation-deal-reached-syrias-ghouta-doc-13j2kl2
GIST	<p>A final deal has been reached for fighters and civilians to leave the last opposition-held pocket of Eastern Ghouta, a monitor said Sunday, paving the way for Syria's regime to retake the onetime rebel enclave near Damascus.</p> <p>The deal brokered by regime ally Russia would see fighters with the Jaish al-Islam rebel faction leave Ghouta's main town of Douma for opposition-held territory in northern Syria, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.</p> <p>There was no immediate confirmation from the rebels, but pro-regime newspaper Al-Watan quoted "diplomatic sources" as saying the agreement would see fighters give up heavy weapons and leave Douma for northern Syria.</p>

	<p>The retaking of Eastern Ghouta would mark a major milestone in President Bashar al-Assad's efforts to regain control of territory seized by rebel factions during Syria's seven-year civil war.</p> <p>Backed by Russia, Assad's forces have scored a series of victories over rebel forces in recent years, often through campaigns of siege, aerial bombardment and ground offensives that have drawn widespread international condemnation.</p> <p>The Observatory, a Britain-based monitoring group, said Sunday's deal provides for Jaish al-Islam fighters and their families, as well as civilians who want, to be evacuated to rebel-held areas in the northern province of Aleppo.</p> <p>It will also see Russian military police enter the town and government institutions return to the area, the monitor said.</p> <p>Regime forces had already retaken more than 95 percent of Eastern Ghouta in a six-week air and ground blitz that forced tens of thousands from their homes.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Syria army declares victory
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/state-tv-towns-syrias-ghouta-cleared-rebels-54144500
GIST	<p>The Syrian army declared victory in eastern Ghouta Saturday after opposition fighters evacuated from most of the area near the capital except for the town of Douma where negotiations are still underway for rebels there to leave or face an all-out government offensive.</p> <p>The government has given rebels in Douma — the area's largest town and stronghold of the powerful Army of Islam rebel group — an ultimatum to agree on leaving by late Saturday. Some pro-government new websites reported that the army is massing troops around Douma, adding that the ultimatum may be extended until Sunday.</p> <p>The army statement came shortly after another group of opposition fighters and their relatives left southern and western parts of eastern Ghouta Saturday afternoon, bringing President Bashar Assad's forces a step closer to eliminating threats from insurgents groups nearby.</p> <p>State TV said 38 buses left the towns of Zamalka, Ein Tarma, Arbeen and Jobar taking more than 1,700 rebels and civilians to the northwestern rebel-held province of Idlib. The channel said troops entered the towns and raised the national flag in Arbeen's main square.</p> <p>"The importance of this victory lies in restoring security and stability to the city of Damascus and its surrounding areas after the suffering of its civilians from the crimes of terrorists over several years," said the army statement, read on TV by Brig. Gen. Ali Mayhoub.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Egypt: Sinai militants kill 2 soldiers
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/egypt-soldiers-killed-sinai-54157726?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Egypt's military says two soldiers have been killed in the last week in the northern Sinai Peninsula, where it is battling an Islamic State-led insurgency.</p> <p>The statement issued Sunday said another two soldiers were wounded, and that six militants were killed.</p>

	<p>The military said more than 500 suspected militants and criminals have been arrested. It said troops had dismantled more than 160 explosive devices.</p> <p>It was not possible to confirm the military's claims as access to the northern Sinai is heavily restricted.</p> <p>At least 22 troops have been killed since early February, when Egypt launched a wide-scale operation against Islamic extremists.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Volatile: US, Turkey on opposing sides
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/news/middle-east/at-volatile-syrian-front-line-us-turkey-on-opposing-sides-1.519784
GIST	<p>HALAWANJI, Syria -- Perched on a green hilltop, Kurdish and Arab fighters face a tense front line separating them from Turkish-backed forces in this part of northern Syria. Behind them, American troops drive up and down the roads. Their aim: Make their presence known to prevent bursts of gunfire from spiraling into a battle.</p> <p>Down the hill and across a stream are the rival forces: Syrian opposition fighters. They have taken positions on a crossroads in the village of Halawanji and on rooftops with views up to the hill. Beyond them, on another hill, Turkish troops have a base, ready to back up their allies if needed.</p> <p>This front line threatens to ignite at any time, with the militaries of two NATO members on opposing sides. The crowded terrain has become more combustible as Turkey ever more loudly threatens to push through these lines to attack the nearby Kurdish-Arab town of Manbij and other Kurdish-run towns further east. The presence of the Americans is a main obstacle preventing them from doing so.</p> <p>Further hiking tensions, a roadside bomb in Manbij late Thursday killed two coalition personnel, an American and a Briton. Kurdish officials accuse Turkey and its allies of carrying out acts of violence in the town to sow instability, including several recent smaller bombings, protests and an attempted assassination attempt on a Kurdish official - although there is also the possibility Islamic State group militants are behind the violence.</p> <p>Manbij is highly strategic: the main town on westernmost edge of the stretch of Syrian territory held by the U.S.-backed Syrian Kurds, running along the border with Turkey. Mixed Kurdish-Arab Syrian forces liberated Manbij from the rule of the Islamic State group in 2016 with help from the U.S.-led coalition. But Kurdish control of the town infuriated Turkey, which views the main U.S. Kurdish ally, the YPG militia, as "terrorists" linked to Kurdish insurgents on its own soil.</p> <p>U.S. troops first deployed in the area about 16 months ago, after Turkish-backed Syrian forces advanced on areas near Manbij, in a race for control of territories as IS militants collapsed. The deployment prevented repeated clashes between the two rival forces.</p> <p>The U.S.-backed Syrian fighters at Halwanji say their Turkish-backed rivals downhill increasingly open fire on them, trying to provoke a fight and create a pretext for an incursion. One commander said it happens as often as three times a week. Another said the "provocations" increased after Turkish troops and their allies successfully captured another town further west, Afrin, from the YPG. The commanders say their forces do not respond to the fire.</p> <p>On Thursday, one commander, Abu Ali Nejm, said U.S. troops have increased their presence "in a noticeable way" in the area in recent days to prevent an eruption of violence, following the capture of Afrin, Turkey's threats and a recent build-up of Turkish troops and their allies.</p> <p>"They have become part of the front line to reassure the people in Manbij and the military forces and to raise morale," said Abu Ali, who uses his nom de guerre and is a leading member of the Manbij Military</p>

Council, the joint Kurdish-Arab body leading the U.S.-allied forces here.

U.S. Col. Ryan Dillon, of the U.S.-led coalition, said there were no new U.S. bases in the area. "Our patrols move around. They are not static," he said. "The purpose of our forces is to prevent the reemergence of (IS militants)" and prevent "any type of incursion from any other group in the area."

Turkey and the United States have held talks aimed at defusing the standoff, with a round set for Friday in Washington. But a solution remains unclear: Turkey says the YPG power across northern Syria is a threat, and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has vowed to roll back the Kurdish fighters, starting from Manbij all the way to the Iraqi border. On Friday, Erdogan angrily lashed out at French President Emmanuel Macron for meeting with Kurdish officials and offering to mediate. Erdogan said he would not negotiate with "terrorists" and brusquely said Macron was "over his head."

Meanwhile, at Halwanji, Abu Ali said the Turkish-backed fighters fired on his forces Thursday, using heavy machine guns and small arms. His troops did not respond, in accordance with orders, and instead reported the incident to U.S. troops nearby, he said.

"We inform, and they come to the front and see for themselves. They have their own contacts or coordination with the Turkish forces, something they don't have to tell us about," he said, adding that when the rival side sees the Americans they don't fire.

A team of Associated Press reporters arrived to the scene soon after the incident. A convoy of U.S. troops was seen on the road. All was quiet and all sides returned to their positions. But as the AP team drove away, new shooting rang out in the distance.

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HEADLINE	03/31 Military seeks Afghanistan progress
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/news/middle-east/in-afghanistan-us-military-sprints-to-prove-it-can-reverse-insurgent-tide-1.519789
GIST	<p>BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan - The U.S. military is racing to demonstrate it is making progress in Afghanistan during a critical period that will test President Donald Trump's strategy and, potentially, political support for the war.</p> <p>Military leaders say the arrival of new troops and aircraft, along with a renewed mission to advise local operations more closely, will help reverse a Taliban resurgence that has exposed the fragility of the long American project in Afghanistan.</p> <p>"This is not another year of the same thing we've been doing for 17 years," Gen. Joseph Dunford Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said during a tour of military facilities across Afghanistan last week. "This is a fundamentally different approach."</p> <p>With an increased U.S. force of about 15,000, focused largely on efforts to ensure Afghan troops can launch offensives against the Taliban, Dunford said that "the right people at the right level with the right training" are in place ahead of the 2018 fighting season, a sentiment repeated by other commanders.</p> <p>Yet looming over the battlefield push are questions about how long support can be sustained, given skepticism in Europe about an open-ended military effort and ambivalence from Trump about involvement in foreign wars.</p> <p>The stepped-up campaign comes as the architect of Trump's Afghanistan strategy, national security adviser H.R. McMaster, prepares to exit the White House. His successor, John Bolton, may be a less ardent proponent of a muscular U.S. campaign.</p> <p>Ronald ENeumann, who served as U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan under President George W. Bush, said</p>

the questions swirling in Western capitals were impossible for U.S. commanders to ignore. "That's what's driving the sense of speed" in large part, he said. "They don't know how much firmness we have in our own project."

In a sign of the renewed Pentagon focus on Afghanistan, Dunford's tour was one of several high-level visits in recent weeks, including stops by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Gen. Joseph Votel, who heads U.S. Central Command.

Over four days, generals and advisers traveling with Dunford fanned out across the country to gather information on the readiness of Afghan forces and their foreign advisers.

Officials said Afghan forces are demonstrating an improved ability to employ their own air power - with newly trained pilots, combat-ready helicopters and small-scale drones - and are coordinating maneuvers with the army, police and elite commandos.

If sustained, it would be a major change from the period following the end of U.S. combat operations in 2014, when once-secure districts fell to the Taliban and Afghan forces made desperate appeals for American air power, then limited by a smaller U.S. force and a narrower mission. The message from Washington during those years was, in some officials' rueful characterization, "Don't lose."

Now, with a re-energized air campaign and new advisory units placed with Afghan army battalions, U.S. officials are trying to build confidence among local units.

As an example of the kind of momentum Pentagon leaders hope will break the cycle of dependence on foreign forces, U.S. advisers described a recent operation to clear Taliban forces from a district of Laghman province, to the east of Kabul.

Aided by intelligence gathered by Afghanistan's spy agency, local commandos conducted raids in narrow valleys abutting the Alingar River that officials said the Taliban used to launch attacks on Afghan checkpoints and lob rockets or artillery at nearby bases. Then Afghan police and army troops from the 201st Corps pushed into the area, backed by U.S. and Afghan aircraft.

When the operation was over, the provincial governor arrived in the area in an attempt to cement government control.

But the Taliban has a stronger grip in southern strongholds, vast parts of which remain no-go zones for security forces.

In an echo of previous years, U.S. Marines in Helmand province are advising the Afghan army's 215th Corps as it seeks to clear roads around towns and cities that are hotbeds for insurgent activity.

While U.S. advisers report growing autonomy among Afghan units, they acknowledge that many areas will remain outside government's grip for the foreseeable future.

Operations in the south are "now based on what the Afghan army wants to do, where do they really think they need to have security," said Lt. Col. Ryan Benson, a Marine adviser at Camp Shorab. "They know what they can hold, and they know what's less important."

A key aspect of the strategy centers on the newly formed Security Force Assistance Brigade, which will advise battalion-level units and, sometimes, accompany them into the field. Pentagon leaders say the Obama administration's decision to end the practice of embedding advisers with lower-level Afghan army units, part of its plan to extricate the United States from the war, set the stage for the Taliban comeback after 2014.

Dunford said the Afghan government is gradually gaining ground, expanding its control of populated areas from 64 percent late last year to close to 70 percent today. The government hopes to add 10 percent more

this year, he said.

Whether Afghanistan can hold parliamentary elections without major violence will help Pentagon officials gauge the strategy's success in coming months, as will the number of Afghan military casualties. While the Afghan government does not disclose exact figures, U.S. officials say combat losses remain in the thousands each year.

Officials also hope to see a payoff from changes initiated by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, including a plan to retire thousands of politically connected senior officers. Until recently, U.S. officials like to say, the average age of corps commanders exceeded Afghanistan's life expectancy by a decade.

Some experts remain skeptical the new approach can succeed where President Barack Obama's 2010-2011 surge, with far more troops, could not.

The Afghan forces would have to become "so capable and lethal" that they could defeat the Taliban in battles with little help, said retired Lt. Gen. David Barno, who commanded U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan from 2003 to 2005. "I am not optimistic we are going to see that happen anytime soon."

Gen. John Nicholson Jr., commander of international forces in Afghanistan, said the strategy includes pressing Pakistan to shut down Taliban safe havens and squeezing the Taliban diplomatically after a recent peace initiative put forward by Ghani.

In more emphatic terms than ever before, military leaders are calling for a negotiated end to the war. The new urgency reflects an awareness of the Taliban's ability to regenerate and an acknowledgment that the United States and NATO are unlikely to provide high levels of resources indefinitely.

"The No. 1 metric is how are we doing toward reconciliation," Nicholson told reporters during Dunford's visit.

While there have been episodic efforts to foster peace talks since 2001, the prospect of negotiations with a group responsible for killing thousands of Americans has been met with resistance at the Pentagon in the past.

Now, in a twist, the new push for peace lacks equal high-level support outside the military. In January, Trump rejected talking to the Taliban after a bloody suicide attack. The State Department, which has led reconciliation efforts in the past, has not appointed a senior official to work on that subject and recently laid off the few staff members involved.

Military leaders are also seeking to get more lower-level fighters to lay down their arms. Such efforts have taken place previously without recruiting a critical mass of fighters.

David Sedney, a top Pentagon official for Afghanistan during the Obama administration and now a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said important Taliban figures in Pakistan continue to believe that military victory is possible.

"However, among Taliban fighters in Afghanistan, the growing disillusionment with those Pakistan-based leaders is fueling a rising interest in peace," he said. "It is too soon to say whether this will result in peace talks this year, but the possibility exists where it did not a year ago."

Adding urgency to the complicated U.S. mission is the unpredictability of a commander in chief who acknowledged as he unveiled his plan to redouble the Afghanistan effort that his original instinct had been withdrawal.

"I share the American people's frustration . . . over a foreign policy that has spent too much time, energy, money and, most importantly, lives," Trump said last year.

	<p>It's not yet clear how Trump's ambivalence will be affected by the arrival of Bolton, who has voiced distrust in nation-building overseas and appears more focused on North Korea and Iran than Afghanistan.</p> <p>Andrew Wilder, an Afghanistan scholar at the U.S. Institute for Peace, said that signaling continuity in U.S. plans would be crucial. "With the new leadership, it's important to be messaging that the strategy remains in place and the U.S. is committed to it, or its biggest advantage, which is that it's not time-based, is lost," he said.</p> <p>Reassuring European nations is equally important. While several NATO nations recently announced increased troop levels, there are signs of growing resistance.</p> <p>Ian Lesser, vice president of the German Marshall Fund, a think tank, said NATO leaders were increasingly focused on threats from a resurgent Russia and terrorism groups on Europe's eastern and southern borders. Adding to that, low public support for Afghanistan means that "the political pressure is definitely on," he said.</p> <p>"The fact that allies were able to make modest new investments reflects the fact that they didn't want to get off on the wrong foot with the United States," Lesser said. But he added, "For different reasons all around the alliance, people are going to have an increasingly hard time justifying this as an open-ended commitment."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Syria: most eastern enclave regained
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-ghouta/syrian-army-command-says-it-has-regained-most-of-eastern-ghouta-idUSKBN1H70IX
GIST	<p>AMMAN (Reuters) - The Syrian army command said on Saturday it had regained most of the towns and villages in eastern Ghouta and was pressing its military operations in the last rebel bastion of Douma.</p> <p>In a televised statement, the Syrian army spokesman said the weeks-long military campaign had now brought security to the Syrian capital Damascus and also secured its main links to other parts of the country, stretching north and all the way to the Iraqi border to the east.</p> <p>The army command said military operations were continuing in the outskirts of the city of Douma, controlled by the Jaish al-Islam rebel group, the last patch of eastern Ghouta still held by insurgents.</p> <p>Douma's fall would seal the rebels' worst defeat since 2016, driving them from their last big stronghold near the capital, and would also carry potent symbolism. The town was the main center of street protests in the Damascus suburbs against President Bashar al-Assad's rule that ignited the conflict seven years ago.</p> <p>The army said hundreds of rebels had been killed in the ferocious offensive. The opposition says a relentless air campaign was waged in which where the army used napalm, chlorine and incendiary bombs to demoralize rebels by targeting civilian areas.</p> <p>The rebels say the indiscriminate bombing forced them to capitulate and agree to surrender deals that force them either to make peace or leave to rebel held areas after weeks of bombing and sieges that prevented food from reaching the enclaves.</p> <p>The Syrian army has repeatedly said regaining control over rebel-held suburbs would stop rocket attacks on the capital.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Jury foreman on shooter's wife acquittal
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SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/03/31/jury-convicted-noor-salman-knew-pulse-nightclub-attack-but-had-no-option-but-to-acquit-foreman-says.html
GIST	<p>The jury foreman in the concluded trial of Noor Salman -- widow of Pulse nightclub gunman Omar Mateen – said jurors were “convinced” she knew of the attack beforehand, but had “no option but to return a verdict of not guilty.”</p> <p>In a statement provided to the Orlando Sentinel, the juror -- who requested to remain anonymous -- said “a verdict of not guilty did NOT mean that we thought Noor Salman was unaware of what Omar Mateen was planning to do,” rather that the jury was “not tasked with deciding if she was aware of a potential attack.”</p> <p>“On the contrary we were convinced she did know,” the statement continued. “She may not have known what day, or what location, but she knew.”</p> <p>Mateen killed 49 people and wounded 58 others at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Fla., on June 12, 2016, before he was killed by police.</p> <p>Salman avoided a potential life sentence Friday after she was found not guilty on charges of obstruction and aiding and abetting by attempting to provide material support to a terrorist organization – a controversial decision that left survivors frustrated and angry.</p> <p>Such negative reactions to the verdict prompted the jury foremen to issue the statement to the newspaper.</p> <p>“I felt compelled to at least clarify several misconceptions,” expressing “sympathy to family and friends of the victims of this senseless tragedy,” the foreman said.</p> <p>“I understand the desire to hold someone accountable for this heinous act of violence. Omar Mateen is dead. He cannot be punished,” the statement read. “It is only logical the world would look next to Noor Salman.”</p> <p>The juror also acknowledged “there were several significant inconsistencies with the written summaries of her statements,” as the FBI did not record its interviews with Salaman following the attack, according to the paper.</p> <p>However, the statement credited both the prosecution and defense for “an excellent job presenting their case.”</p> <p>“The bottom line is that, based on the letter of the law, and the detailed instructions provided by the court, we were presented with no option but to return a verdict of not guilty,” the statement read.</p> <p>Salman did not testify in her defense.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 US freezes \$200M Syria recovery funds
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/president-donald-trump-freezes-200-million-in-funds-earmarked-for-syria-recovery/
GIST	<p>President Trump's administration has frozen \$200 million earmarked for Syria recovery efforts, CBS News' Margaret Brennan and Kylie Atwood confirmed. The development comes after Mr. Trump said this week the U.S. will be pulling out of Syria "very soon."</p> <p>Atwood reports the decision was relayed to the State Department Friday in a call that White House chief of staff John Kelly made to Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan. There is some recovery funding that will continue for the next few weeks, but all future money is on hold.</p> <p>The money -- to have been spent by the State Department for infrastructure projects like power, water and</p>

roads -- had been announced by fired Secretary of State Rex Tillerson at an aid conference last month in Kuwait.

The State Department has been asked to provide the White House with more information on the Syria recovery funding, Atwood reports -- such as specific projects to be laid out. Mr. Trump wants other countries to step up to the plate, and do and pay more. The freeze does not impact Department of Defense operations.

Brennan reports the president has it in his mind that he wants to get out of Syria, but also told Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday that the U.S. is not done fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). In short, Brennan reports, the president's remarks -- and this freeze -- contradict policy that had been in place under Tillerson.

Meanwhile, U.S. Central Command and the State Department are scheduled to host an event Tuesday about rebuilding Syria and Iraq after ISIS. Secretary of Defense James Mattis, Brennan reports, has been consistent that the military needs to gradually, and not suddenly, hand matters off to diplomats. Mr. Trump's pivot also makes the fate of Syrian president Bashar al Assad unclear.

Mr. Trump described his intent to get out of Syria in a speech to union workers Thursday in Ohio -- a speech that was billed as an infrastructure plan pitch.

"Things are changing, folks," Mr. Trump told the crowd. "But now is the time to rebuild our country, to take care of our people, and to fight for our great American workers for a change. ... We'll be coming out of Syria, like, very soon. Let the other people take care of it now. Very soon. Very soon, we're coming out. We're going to have 100 percent of the caliphate, as they call it -- sometimes referred to as 'land.' We're taking it all back quickly. Quickly. But we're going to be coming out of there real soon. We're going to get back to our country, where we belong, where we want to be."

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HEADLINE	03/30 Syria bomb kills US, UK troops
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syrian-official-roadside-bomb-explodes-tense-manbij-town-54117901?
GIST	<p>A roadside bomb in northern Syria killed two coalition personnel, an American and a Briton, and wounded five others in a rare attack since the U.S.-led coalition sent troops into the war-torn country, the U.S. and British militaries and a U.S. defense official said Friday.</p> <p>The military did not say where the attack took place or give the nationalities of the other casualties but it came hours after a local Syrian official said that a roadside bomb exploded in the tense, mixed Arab-Kurdish town of Manbij that is not far from the border with Turkey.</p> <p>Manbij is under threat of a Turkish military operation. Ankara says Syrian Kurdish militiamen it views as "terrorists" and an extension of Kurdish insurgents inside Turkey are in control of the town.</p> <p>The U.S. military statement said the attack happened Thursday night and that the wounded were being evacuated for further medical treatment. The statement said details were being withheld pending further investigation.</p> <p>A Department of Defense official in Washington said one of the two killed was an American service member and the other was of another nationality.</p> <p>No other information about the deceased American was immediately available. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because details had not yet been publicly released.</p> <p>A U.K. defense ministry spokesman said the British armed forces member was killed during an operation</p>

	<p>against the Islamic State group. The spokesman added that an improvised explosive device killed the service member who was embedded with U.S. forces on Thursday.</p> <p>No details on the casualty's service branch, unit or gender were immediately provided.</p> <p>The U.S. military member killed was the fourth American who has died in Syria since the U.S. began attacking Islamic State militants there in September 2014, according to the Pentagon's Defense Casualty Analysis System.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 UK ISIS members: beheadings 'mistake'
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/notorious-members-revoking-uk-citizenship-unfair-54126797
GIST	<p>Two British militants believed to have been part of an Islamic State group cell notorious for beheading hostages in Syria were unapologetic in their first interview since their capture, denouncing the U.S. and Britain as "hypocrites" who will not give them a fair trial.</p> <p>The men, along with two other British jihadis, allegedly made up the IS cell nicknamed "The Beatles" by surviving captives because of their English accents.</p> <p>The nickname belied the cell's brutality. In 2014 and 2015, it held more than 20 Western hostages in Syria and tortured many of them. It beheaded seven American, British and Japanese journalists and aid workers and a group of Syrian soldiers, boasting of the butchery in videos released to the world.</p> <p>Speaking to The Associated Press at a Kurdish security center, the two men, El Shafee Elsheikh and Alexandra Amon Kotey, repeatedly refused to address allegations they were part of the cell — clearly having a future trial in mind. They complained that they could "disappear" after Britain reportedly revoked their citizenship.</p> <p>They were captured in January in eastern Syria by the Kurdish-led, U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces amid the collapse of IS. Their detention has set off a debate in the U.S. and Europe over how to prosecute their citizens who joined IS — as the Kurds pressure the West to take them back to relieve overcrowding in prisons.</p> <p>The two said the killings of the captives were a mistake — but for tactical reasons.</p> <p>Many in IS "would have disagreed" with the killings "on the grounds that there is probably more benefit in them being political prisoners," Kotey said.</p> <p>"I didn't see any benefit (in killing them). It was something that was regrettable." He also blamed Western governments for failing to negotiate, noting that some hostages were released for ransoms.</p> <p>Elsheikh said the killings were a "mistake" and might not have been justified. But, he said, they were in retaliation for killings of civilians by the U.S.-led coalition fighting IS. He said the militants shouldn't have initially threatened to kill the hostages because then they had to go ahead with it or else "your credibility may go."</p> <p>The beheadings, often carried out on camera, horrified the world soon after IS took over much of Iraq and Syria in 2014. The group also committed widescale atrocities including massacring thousands of Iraqi troops and civilians and taking sex slaves.</p> <p>The leader of the cell, Mohammed Emwazi, was dubbed "Jihadi John" in the British media after he appeared, masked, in the videos, sometimes performing the butchery. He was killed in a U.S.-led coalition drone strike in 2015 in the Syrian city of Raqqa, the de facto IS capital. Another member, Aine Lesley</p>

Davis, was arrested in Turkey and convicted there in 2017, sentenced to seven years in prison.

Elsheikh, whose family came to Britain from Sudan when he was a child, was a mechanic from White City in west London.

He traveled to Syria in 2012, initially joining al-Qaida's branch before moving on to IS, according to the U.S. State Department's listing of the two men for terrorism sanctions. It said he "earned a reputation for waterboarding, mock executions and crucifixions while serving as an (IS) jailer."

Kotey, who is of Ghanaian and Greek-Cypriot descent and converted to Islam in his 20s, is from London's Paddington neighborhood.

Serving in the IS cell as a guard, he "likely engaged in the group's executions and exceptionally cruel torture methods," the State Department said. It also said he was an IS recruiter who brought other Britons into the group.

Elsheikh and Kotey spoke to the AP at a Kurdish security building in the town of Kobani, where they were brought, initially in handcuffs and face covers that were removed. They appeared to speak openly with no signs of duress and were friendly with SDF security who came in and out of the room.

They were both initially confrontational but over the interview became more conversational. Kotey often cracked jokes — when asked whether IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was alive, he joked that some people thought Elvis never died and Tupac Shakur is still alive. Elsheikh was straightlaced and reserved, referring more often to Islamic texts.

They were unrepentant about belonging to IS — though they said they did not agree with everything it did. Kotey said he did not think suicide bombings were permissible in Islam. Elsheikh said IS's killing of a captured Jordanian pilot by burning him alive in a cage was "atrocious."

But they seemed dismissive of the idea that IS was egregious in brutality.

"I am not here to justify or shun every act IS did," Elsheikh said, arguing that nationals of a country can't be held responsible for crimes by the state.

The U.S. has been pressing for the home countries of foreign jihadis in Iraq and Syria to take their nationals for trial. Britain's defense secretary has said they should not be allowed back into the country. Former captives of the cell and families of its victims have called on Elsheikh and Kotey to be given a fair trial, whether in the United States or Britain, arguing that locking them away in a facility like Guantanamo Bay would only fuel further radicalism.

Kurdish officials complain they are being left to deal with the IS legacy, including overburdened prisons full of militants, including foreign fighters whose home countries don't want to take them back.

Elsheikh and Kotey are held in an undisclosed location. Kotey said he shares a cell with 70 others, all but four of them Syrians, and that they are sleeping like "sardines, literally head to toe, head to toe." Despite the overcrowding, he said, they get fresh air, play games and have classes.

Kotey said the U.S. and Britain were not upholding their own laws of due process. "Where are they now or are they just applicable when they suit you?" he said. "It just looks very hypocritical, double standards."

The two denounced as "illegal" the British government's reported decision in February to strip them of citizenship. The decision was widely reported in British media, though officials have not confirmed or denied it, citing privacy rules.

The revocation exposes them to "rendition and torture," Elsheikh said.

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HEADLINE	03/30 Wife Pulse nightclub shooter acquitted
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/pulse-nightclub-shooters-wife-found-guilty/story?id=54122947&cid=clicksource_4380645_1_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>Noor Salman, the wife of Pulse nightclub shooter Omar Mateen, was declared not guilty on all counts Friday morning.</p> <p>She faced charges of obstruction and providing material support to a terrorist organization. She faced life in prison if convicted.</p> <p>"The family is elated," said Susan Clary, a family spokeswoman, outside of court after the verdict. "Noor can go home now to her son ... resume her life and try to pick up the pieces from two years in jail."</p> <p>Prosecutors and defense attorneys painted radically different pictures of Salman over the course of the trial: on the one hand, helping her husband prepare for the attack and on the other, an abused woman who "married a monster."</p> <p>John Mina, the chief of the Orlando Police Department, released a statement following the verdict, saying he believes in the criminal justice system and is thankful for the hard work of the jurors, attorneys and the FBI involved in the case.</p> <p>"Nothing can erase the pain we all feel about the senseless and brutal murders of 49 of our neighbors, friends, family members and loved ones," Mina said in the statement.</p> <p>"Our community is strong, and the men and women of the Orlando Police Department stand ready to put themselves in harm's way to protect our residents and visitors," he said.</p> <p>However, Orange County Sheriff Jerry Demings said he was "disappointed."</p> <p>"I am disappointed in the outcome of the trial and know that the victims and/or their families are more disappointed," Demings said in a statement.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 India: car crash 'causes' hotel collapse
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/01/at-least-10-killed-after-car-crash-causes-hotel-collapse-in-india
GIST	<p>A four-storey rickety hotel building collapsed in central India, killing at least 10 people and injuring another three, police said Sunday.</p> <p>Rescuers working through the night with sledgehammers and chainsaws pulled alive 10 people from the debris of the building that came crashing down in Indore, a city in Madhya Pradesh state, on Saturday night, said police officer Sanju Kamle.</p> <p>Up to five people may still be trapped under the rubble, said Nishant Warwade, the district collector.</p> <p>The Times of India newspaper said the dilapidated building collapsed after a car smashed its front portion.</p> <p>The hotel with 25 rooms was located in the commercial hub of Indore, close to railway and bus stations. Indore is nearly 900 kilometres (560 miles) south of New Delhi.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Military families w/deportation issues
SOURCE	https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2018/04/01/as-many-as-11800-military-families-face-deportation-issues-group-says/
GIST	<p>As many as 11,800 currently serving in the U.S. military are dealing with a spouse or family member who is facing deportation, a national immigration advocacy group announced Friday.</p> <p>No previous estimate, official or unofficial, has been available on just how many of the 1 million married military members currently on active duty, National Guard or Reserve status may be dealing with the stress of having a spouse, dependent or parent deported.</p> <p>It's also not a number that can be easily checked, or verified, because neither DoD, the Department of Homeland Security nor U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement tracks military status in immigration proceedings.</p> <p>American Families United, a non-profit immigration advocacy group, calculated the estimate using 2011 U.S. Census statistics, which found that 6.3 percent of the 129 million married Americans are married to foreign-born spouses. The Pew Research Center found that one in four of those foreign-born spouses are in the country illegally. About 75 percent of that population comes from countries like Mexico, where if they entered illegally, they have a harder time obtaining legal status, as opposed to a person from Europe who might have overstayed a visa, said American Families United President Randall Emery.</p> <p>"So we derived the total of military (active and reserves) married to people with inadmissibility-type immigration issues by taking the total (1 million), multiplying by the national percentage of foreign-born (6.3 percent, so 63,000 current U.S. military are married to immigrants), and then the 25 percent of the total which have problems with immigration law: 15,750. Of that, Pew's data indicates 75 percent are from sources characterized by entry without inspection and similar issues, that would be about 11,800," Emery said.</p> <p>While it may not be exact, AFU generated the military estimate to "create awareness and get some of these legislators who say they support the military to actually act on it" and recognize that this is a bigger military problem than previously thought, said Nancy Kuznetsov, the group's military liaison.</p> <p>While the active duty members themselves are protected — because in order to enlist a service member has to show proof that they are in the country legally — their undocumented spouses are not.</p> <p>An earlier "parole in place" program that was previously championed by Vice President Mike Pence to give relief to military families is no longer being utilized due to stricter enforcement of deportation proceedings under Trump.</p> <p>That's meant more military families calling the group for assistance, Emery said.</p> <p>"Recently, we've seen an increase in cases of both active-duty personnel and veterans who have been failed by immigration law," Emery said. "These estimates give us perspective on the problem."</p> <p>When asked, neither DoD, DHS nor ICE could say how many military families are facing deportation proceedings, because it's not data they track or report,</p> <p>While an ICE official said the agency "respects the service and sacrifice of those in military service, and is very deliberate in its review of cases involving U.S. military veterans," the agency does not track military status in its removal statistics, the official said.</p> <p>ICE referred queries on how many military families were facing removal proceedings to the Department of Justice's Executive Office for Immigration Review.</p>

	But that court “does not track military status among respondents or their spouses,” when prosecuting immigration cases, said spokesman Devin O’Malley, so there’s no way to know how many military family members were among those persons removed last year.
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HEADLINE	04/01 NKorea Kim attends K-pop concert
SOURCE	http://time.com/5223877/kim-jong-un-k-pop-stars/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>(SEOUL) — South Korean media say North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has watched a rare performance by South Korean pop stars visiting Pyongyang.</p> <p>A South Korean artistic group including K-pop singers flew to Pyongyang on Saturday for performances in the North Korean capital amid thawing ties between the rivals. The leaders of the Koreas are to meet at a border village on April 27.</p> <p>South Korean media pool reports from Pyongyang say Kim and his wife, Ri Sol Ju, watched Sunday’s performance by the South Korean group.</p> <p>The reports say Kim clapped his hands during the performance at the East Pyongyang Grand Theater. Kim shook hands with South Korean performers and took a group photo with them after their performance.</p> <p>It hadn’t been known whether Kim would attend the performance.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 First sperm whale seen inland waters
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/944256/first-sperm-whale-recorded-in-washington-state-inland-waters/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — The Pacific Whale Watch Association says it has recorded its first sighting of a sperm whale in inland waters in Washington state.</p> <p>KOMO-TV reported Sunday that the association says its members captured photos and hydrophone audio of the whale — the first of its kind seen by whale watching tours in the Salish Sea.</p> <p>The photos were captured in the Haro Strait just off Turn Point on Stuart Island in the San Juan Islands.</p> <p>The whale was named Yukusam when it first appeared in Johnstone Strait in British Columbia in February 2018.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 San Diego unique approach to homeless
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/mar/29/san-diego-homelessness-big-tents
GIST	<p>Bob McElroy strode through the busy entrance of the vast, gleaming-white tent, greeting people right and left. The prominent homeless services provider calls the new structure, located on the outskirts of downtown San Diego, “the Rolls-Royce of tents”.</p> <p>It is double-insulated and has wifi. And it is the sunny seaside destination’s millionaire-funded attempt to get a grip on an emergency that sees thousands of homeless people sleep on its streets every night.</p> <p>The industrial-sized tent holds 324 people in neatly spaced, numbered bunks. People can bring their pets, and 70 dogs also live in the shelter. It offers a bed and services – from healthcare to employment assistance to showers and laundry – while people wait for a place of their own. In appearance, it evokes a military installation or a refugee camp.</p>

“You come in here with nothing and they provide everything,” said Sylvia Saliman, 58.

Saliman sat on her top bunk with Daisy, her American blue nose pitbull, who was napping after a long walk. Saliman said she had been homeless for 16 months and in the shelter for two. She said she’d lost everything except her dog. Thanks to the tent, “I’m doing great right now,” she said.

Cities throughout the western and southern US, such as San Diego, face a dilemma: they are grappling with visible, intransigent street homelessness, and the supply of affordable housing is meager and increasing only slowly. This tent, along with two others built by the city, fills the gap – it is known as a “bridge” shelter.

Officials from California cities large and small, including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Fresno and Oxnard, have come to tour the structures. The Fresno city council member Steve Brandau brought a group to San Diego in February and said a huge tent could be the solution for his city’s shortage of about 150 beds. “We like the San Diego structure,” he said, “the feel of it, the types of services provided.”

It is not the first time San Diego has housed people in large tents. For nearly three decades, two such structures, one for veterans and one for adults, went up during winter months. But that program was scrapped in 2015.

“In the communities where they’re solving homelessness, they’re not doing it with tents,” the then city council member Todd Gloria told the San Diego Union-Tribune.

A spike in homelessness, especially downtown, and, last year, a deadly outbreak of hepatitis A that killed 20 people and had the city washing its sidewalks in bleach, forced city leaders to reconsider. Two wealthy San Diego businessmen, Dan Shea, a restaurateur, and Peter Seidler, managing partner of the San Diego Padres baseball team, told Mayor Kevin Faulconer they would put up \$1.5m for new tents if the city would fund the operations for at least two years.

Shea and Seidler say they represented a larger San Diego business community frustrated by a lack of action on the part of elected officials. It will take years to build the necessary housing, Shea said in an interview with KPBS radio. “Do we just leave those people on the street for five years, seven years, 10 years waiting for housing to be built?”

Beds are prioritized for people with mental or physical disabilities who qualify for housing subsidies. They are also available for people who just need a few months of respite to get back on their feet. Everyone in the shelter is paired with a housing “navigator” whose job is to find appropriate housing as quickly as possible. Altogether, the three tents have almost 700 beds.

“Without this, can you imagine how hard it is to find a client on the streets?” said Amy Gonyeau, chief operating officer for Alpha Project, the service provider that runs the tent for adults. “Now we know where they are – well, at least 700 of them.”

The goal is for providers to move about two-thirds of shelter residents into permanent housing within four months, yet early data shows meeting this goal might prove challenging. During its first four months of operation, 44 people from the largest tent, with its capacity of more than 300, moved into permanent housing. Another 15 exited to other programs or moved in with family or friends.

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HEADLINE	04/01 Claim: World Cup drone attack plot
SOURCE	https://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/football/news/isis-planning-terror-attacks-using-12285487
GIST	ISIS terrorists are preparing for attacks at the World Cup in Russia using drones, it has been claimed. Sick propaganda has been shared a number of times implying the terror group will target the tournament

due to take place in June.

Now chilling images have been shared on the messaging app Telegram which reportedly show preparations for attacks.

They show drones being armed with grenades, missiles and mortars that can be dropped on targets.

Weaponised drones are already being used by ISIS fighters in Syria and Iraq.

They are the cheap kind normally used by filmmakers and hobbyists, but with deadly bombs attached.

It comes after ISIS supporters previously spread images of a terrorist brandishing a sub machine gun and a bomb, with the Volgograd Arena in Southern Russia in the background.

England are set to play one of their World Cup matches at the stadium.

The words 'Wait for Us' are underneath the sinister figure.

The stadium will host Gareth Southgate's side when they face Tunisia on June 18.

Although Volgograd is not an area which the Home Office advises football fans not to visit, it has urged supporters travelling to watch the tournament to see travel advice before travelling.

The image, shared throughout pro-ISIS channels on the encrypted messaging application Telegram, featured an excerpt of a Quranic verse manipulated by the ISIS followers to urge fellow jihadis to take every opportunity to conduct deadly attacks in the U.S. and Russia.

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HEADLINE	04/02 Source: Kremlin approved spy poisoning
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/02/europe/skripal-poisoning-uk-kremlin-approval-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)British authorities examining the poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal believe the daring placement of the nerve agent on his door shows a sophistication that likely had the approval of the Kremlin, a source briefed on the investigation has confirmed to CNN.</p> <p>Skripal, 66, and his daughter Yulia, 33, were poisoned on March 4 after being exposed to what the British government says was a military-grade nerve agent.</p> <p>British officials believe an attack of this type could only be carried out by a person (or more than one person) with key training involving Novichok, the substance used in the attack.</p> <p>There are doubts that rogue agents could have carried out the attack without approval from the top levels of Russian government.</p> <p>The New York Times first reported this latest theory regarding responsibility.</p> <p>Last week, Russia again denied any involvement in the poisoning, with Russian Foreign Minister spokeswoman Maria Zakharova accusing the UK government of seeking to "bring about a totally absurd situation."</p> <p>The UK government has long pointed fingers at Russia for the March 4 nerve agent attack against the former double agent and his daughter on British soil.</p> <p>In a speech before parliament one week after the attack, British Prime Minister Theresa May said it was "highly likely" that the attack constituted "an unlawful use of force by the Russian state against the United</p>

	Kingdom." Officials believe this type of nerve agent attack is also meant to send a strong warning to Russian dissidents in the West, the source said.
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HEADLINE	04/02 Police probe if SUV crash 'intentional'
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/02/us/family-suv-pacific-coast-crash/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A family's SUV found at the bottom of a California cliff last week may have been deliberately driven off the road, police told media Sunday.</p> <p>The bodies of Jennifer and Sarah Hart, both 38, were discovered inside their overturned SUV near a remote stretch of Highway 1 in Northern California last Monday. Emergency responders found the bodies of three of their six children -- Markis, 19, and Jeremiah and Abigail, both 14 -- outside the car.</p> <p>Their other children -- Hannah, 16, Devonte, 15, and Sierra, 12 -- are missing. Nobody reported seeing the crash, so authorities don't know exactly when or how it happened and it is unclear whether the three missing children were in the SUV when it fell 100 feet into the sea.</p> <p>Police said that preliminary information suggested the car may have been intentionally driven straight off the edge of the cliff.</p> <p>Data from the vehicle's air bag module and software indicated that the car had stopped at the pull out and then accelerated off the road, said Greg Baarts, acting assistant chief of the California Highway Patrol's Northern Division.</p> <p>"At this point in our investigation, that is the direction we are going," Baarts said.</p> <p>Preliminary data from the car suggested that there had been approximately 70 feet of continuous acceleration from the last moment the brakes were applied before the SUV went over and hit the ocean floor, Baarts said.</p> <p>There was also no evidence to suggest the car had been driving at an angle when it left the road, he said. Baarts stressed that investigators were still verifying the information, but that authorities believed that a felony had been committed.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 What happens for lying on census?
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/are-you-citizen-here-s-what-happens-if-you-lie-n861841
GIST	<p>Article I, Section 2, of the Constitution requires the enumeration of people in the U.S. every 10 years for the purpose of apportioning congressional representatives.</p> <p>The "Census Clause" also requires that representatives be apportioned among the states "according to their respective Numbers." Section 2 of the 14th Amendment further provides that House representatives "shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State." The Census Act of 1790 provides for the enumeration of the "inhabitants of the United States."</p> <p>Federal law requires that the secretary of commerce take a census of "population" — not citizens — and the same law authorizes the secretary to "obtain such other census information as necessary."</p>

The Constitution says "persons" — not "citizens" or "green card holders." That's why the Trump administration's move to include a citizenship question on the census is meeting such intense opposition; there are concerns that it will deter participation and lead to an inaccurate population count.

Federal law provides that anyone who refuses to answer or willfully neglects to answer any of the questions in connection with any census or survey shall be fined a maximum of \$100, or a maximum of \$500 if the person gives false information.

In theory, noncitizens should not fear answering census questions. Surveys are mailed to addresses, rather than to specific individuals. Not including individual names on the address label is meant to protect the confidentiality of the participating households.

Additionally, federal law provides immunity for persons who give answers to census questions. Information furnished cannot be "used to the detriment of the persons to whom such information relates." Census reports may not be admitted as evidence or used in any action or proceeding, without consent.

These laws are designed to deter someone from refusing to answer questions on the census claiming a Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination.

Practically speaking, though, anyone who is concerned about their legal status may not want to volunteer this to the same federal government that could deport them. It's hardly a sentiment limited only to noncitizens. In past enumerations, some Republican leaders have all but encouraged open defiance of the law.

Then-Sen. Trent Lott, a Mississippi Republican, once advised constituents to fill out "the basic census information" but added that if they felt "their privacy is being invaded by those (additional) questions, they (could) choose not to answer those questions."

And George W. Bush, then a candidate for president, said he "(understood) why people don't want to give over that information to the government."

Prosecutions for failure to participate in the census are rare; most significant court cases dealing with these crimes date back to the 1970s.

The perceived risk of answering remains greater than the virtually nonexistent risk of not answering because the Justice Department is not likely to start prosecuting offenders for refusing to answer.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions has indicated that illegal immigration will be a priority for the DOJ under his command, but going after noncitizens who refuse to answer census questions, motivated by fear of being removed from the country, would contradict the overall message the census is trying to send: It is here to count you, not to hurt you. Plus, courts have indicated in the past that purposeful discrimination by census authorities can give rise to a defense of selective prosecution.

Ultimately, the refusal to answer census questions is a federal crime, but not really.

Some categories of federal criminal statutes are heavily enforced. Drug crimes and immigration crimes make up over 50 percent of the federal prosecution caseload.

Then there are those federal crimes that are technically crimes, but not really. For example, it's a federal crime for a peanut dealer to refuse to tell the government how many peanuts he has. It's also a federal crime to mail a package of dead bees without writing "DEAD BEES" on every side of the box, using black letters at least an inch tall.

There are a lot of federal crimes. Not all of them are enforced. Refusing to answer the census or lying on it will likely remain in that second category — a crime, but not really.

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HEADLINE	04/01 UK uses doctors' info to find migrants
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/medical-ethics-uk-data-doctors-find-migrants-54157725
GIST	<p>To track down people in Britain who may have broken immigration rules, the government is turning to a new and controversial source of information: doctors.</p> <p>Doctors who work with refugees and asylum-seekers have described the move as a major breach of medical ethics, saying it isn't up to physicians to enforce immigration rules.</p> <p>In letters recently made public, politicians sparred with immigration officials over a data-sharing agreement quietly signed in 2016 that gives the government access to personal information collected by the country's family doctors. Medical details are excluded.</p> <p>A parliamentary health committee condemned the situation as "unacceptable," calling for the agreement to be suspended.</p> <p>But Britain's immigration department has dismissed those concerns, arguing that such data sharing allows the U.K. to remove people "who might pose a danger to the public."</p> <p>Medical workers back the health committee's viewpoint.</p> <p>"We understand the government has a job to do, but going into health records to get patient information is not OK," said Lucy Jones, director of programs at Doctors of the World U.K. "The idea that any patient information is being shared with a government body immediately breaks their trust in a doctor-patient relationship."</p> <p>Several leading medical organizations, including the Royal College of General Practitioners, Public Health England and the General Medical Council, have all slammed the data-sharing deal, saying it could worsen the health of vulnerable people and drive disease outbreaks underground, hurting health care for all.</p> <p>Dr. Kitty Worthing, a London-based doctor with the group Docs Not Cops, said "the cornerstone of the doctor-patient relationship is confidentiality and this data-sharing is a direct breach of that." She said when she's advised people that their personal information could be shared with immigration officials "their reaction is always fear."</p> <p>Elsewhere in Europe, many countries have a strict firewall that stops information gathered by health services from being disclosed to other government agencies. Germany's data protection office said regulations prohibit any blanket sharing of such information. In France, no data obtained by doctors is shared with the Interior Ministry.</p> <p>Some health experts said it was critical that some types of health care are available to everyone in the U.K., regardless of their immigration status.</p> <p>"With HIV treatment, it makes much more sense to treat everybody with HIV, because treatment lowers the level of virus in your blood so you can't pass it on," said Kat Smithson of the National AIDS Trust. "If people are not diagnosed because they're not accessing health care, they're not aware they're living with HIV, which means they're far more likely to pass it on to somebody else."</p> <p>The British government, however, says protecting its borders outweighs those concerns.</p>
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HEADLINE **04/01 SUV cliff plunge: 'felony committed'****SOURCE** <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/04/01/death-plunge-vehicles-speedometer-pinned-at-90-mph->

	authorities-say.html
GIST	<p>The speedometer of a Washington state family's SUV was "pinned" at 90 mph when the vehicle was found Monday afternoon, crushed along the rocks of a Northern California shoreline, court documents say.</p> <p>Authorities included the information in an affidavit for a search warrant for the home of Jennifer and Sarah Hart, adoptive parents of six children -- all of whom are believed to have perished when the vehicle plunged off the Pacific Coast Highway, Fox 12 Oregon reported.</p> <p>The two women and three of the children were found dead at the crash site Monday, but it was unclear how much time had elapsed between the accident and the discovery.</p> <p>Three other children are missing and may have been carried out to sea, authorities have said.</p> <p>The family had been living in Oregon until last year when they moved to Woodland, Wash.</p> <p>Meanwhile, law enforcement officers believe "a felony has been committed" in the case, the court documents say.</p> <p>The exact nature of the suspected felony was not known, but according to the documents, "Based upon the California Highway Patrol investigation, it is their belief 'a felony has been committed,'" Fox 12 Oregon reported.</p> <p>However, authorities maintain there's no evidence to suggest the crash was intentional, the Oregonian reported.</p> <p>The court documents indicate that CHP investigators found no "acceleration marks, tire friction marks or braking furrow marks" at the scene, and there was no evidence the car collided with the embankment as it "traversed towards the tidal zone below," Fox 12 reported.</p> <p>According to the Oregonian, friends' depictions and social media posts of the Hart family are at odds with police records.</p> <p>According to accounts of the family's neighbors in Washington state, one child had shown up at a neighbor's doorstep alleging abuse while another had asked neighbors for food because it was supposedly being withheld as punishment.</p> <p>Another child reportedly told police that Sarah Hart had hit her repeatedly with a closed fist and put her in a cold bath. According to the Oregonian, Hart pleaded guilty to the abuse in April 2011 and was sentenced to a year of probation. In another July 2013 incident, authorities responded to a call at the family's residence.</p> <p>Days before the fatal crash, the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services opened a case into the family because the children had been identified as "potential victims of alleged abuse or neglect," the Oregonian reported. The agency had attempted to contact the family but they had reportedly left home that day.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Doubts w/Hanford plant reopening 2022
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/doubts-raised-that-massive-hanford-plant-could-open-by-2022/281-533730951
GIST	<p>The U.S. Department of Energy has doubts that a massive nuclear waste treatment plant at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation can open by a 2022 deadline.</p> <p>But the agency has not notified the state of Washington that legal deadlines for the project are at risk.</p>

	<p>Instead, the Tri-City Herald reports the agency has directed contractor Bechtel National to improve its performance.</p> <p>Bechtel is building the \$17 billion plant intended to turn liquid nuclear wastes into glass-like logs for burial. The project has been plagued by safety and design issues.</p> <p>Hanford is located near Richland and for decades made plutonium for nuclear weapons. The site contains a huge volume of radioactive wastes.</p> <p>Bechtel's contract requires it to start treating radioactive waste by 2022. Construction on the plant started in 2002.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Cancer experts, studies: coffee is safe
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/health/2018/03/30/cancer-experts-say-coffee-is-safe-despite-californias-new-warning-label-requirement.html
GIST	<p>A California court judge's ruling ordering coffee companies to put cancer warning labels on their products is not changing the minds of scientists and health professionals who say there is no credible evidence to warrant the dramatic move.</p> <p>Some say that despite any well-meaning intention that may have prompted the ruling by Superior Court Judge Elihu Berle on Wednesday, it could end up unnecessarily confusing and even frightening people.</p> <p>Many studies tying a chemical, acrylamide – which is formed when coffee beans are roasted – to cancer were conducted using animals who were given quantities much larger than a human would consume, J. Leonard Lichtenfeld, the deputy chief medical officer for the American Cancer Society, told Fox News.</p> <p>“The substance is present in many of our foods, not just coffee,” said Lichtenfeld, who has worked in oncology for decades. “There was a minor scare about it being in French fries, and foods that are cooked in higher temperatures. Demonstrating a direct cause to cancer is very difficult. You always have to put a [suspected] risk into perspective.”</p> <p>“I’m going to come right back and say we have other areas we need to put more attention to,” he said. “Smoking and obesity are some of those [risky] areas.”</p> <p>A judge recently ruled that coffee sellers in California must post warnings that coffee may pose a cancer risk. But coffee is not the only item the state has imposed restrictions on. Proposition 65 requires businesses to provide a warning about exposures to hundreds of harmful chemicals in our food.</p> <p>The Council for Education and Research on Toxics, a nonprofit group, sued Starbucks and about 90 other companies, including grocery stores and retail shops, under a state law that requires warnings on a wide range of chemicals that can cause cancer. One of those chemicals is acrylamide, present in coffee.</p> <p>The Metzger Law Group, which filed the suit, says on its website: "Acrylamide is an industrial carcinogen which, in recent years, has unfortunately been recognized as a substantial constituent of many foods we eat."</p> <p>"In 2002, Swedish researchers published an important study showing that potatoes and certain other foods heated at high temperatures contain very high levels of acrylamide," it added. "The highest levels of the carcinogen were found in french fries and potato chips, but high levels of acrylamide have also been found in cereals, breads, and coffee."</p> <p>The coffee industry had claimed the chemical was present at harmless levels and should be exempt from</p>

	<p>the law because it results naturally from the cooking process necessary to make the beans flavorful.</p> <p>The ruling came despite eased concerns in recent years about the possible dangers of coffee, with some studies finding health benefits.</p> <p>In 2016, the International Agency for Research on Cancer — the cancer agency of the World Health Organization — moved coffee off its “possible carcinogen” list.</p> <p>Studies indicate coffee is unlikely to cause breast, prostate or pancreatic cancer, and it seems to lower the risks for liver and uterine cancers, the agency said. Evidence is inadequate to determine its effect on dozens of other cancer types.</p> <p>Kathryn M. Wilson, a cancer epidemiologist at Harvard University who has studied the impact of acrylamide on human, told the newspaper: "I think the evidence that acrylamide makes a difference for human cancer risk is pretty weak...It's a lot more helpful to look at coffee as a food."</p> <p>She noted, for instance, that coffee is a source of antioxidants, and has been shown in credible studies to have significant benefits, such as reducing the likelihood of liver cancer and Type 2 diabetes.</p> <p>Critics of the lawsuit and, now, ruling, say it feeds further into California’s penchant for regulations over what they say are trivial and even questionable issues.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Olympics: NKorea in 2020, 2022 Games
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/ioc-chief-says-north-korea-committed-tokyo-2020-olympic-games-n861691
GIST	<p>PYONGYANG, North Korea — International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach met with Kim Jong Un in Pyongyang on Friday and said the North Korean leader is committed to having his country participate in the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics and the Beijing Winter Games in 2022.</p> <p>"We had a very fruitful meeting where it became clear that the supreme leader has a clear vision of the role that sport can play in a society with regard to education, with regard to health," Bach said after the two met on Friday for a 30-minute formal meeting followed by a 45 minutes of casual conversation while watching a football match at Pyongyang's May Day Stadium.</p> <p>He added that Kim told him the North's participation in the Pyeongchang games and marching together with South Korean athletes were an "important contribution to a peaceful dialogue."</p> <p>Bach, who also met with North Korea's sports minister, said he received a commitment from the county's National Olympic Committee to participate in Tokyo in 2020 and Beijing in 2022, along with competing in the respective youth Olympic Games.</p> <p>"This commitment has been fully supported by the supreme leader Kim Jong Un in a meeting we had this afternoon," he said. "He explained that sport is a pillar in his policy for the future development of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Illinois officials warn synthetic pot users
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/illinois-reports-rash-severe-bleeding-among-synthetic-pot-users-n861596
GIST	Illinois public health officials are warning users of synthetic pot about the ultimate buzz kill — a rash of cases of severe bleeding that are believed to be linked to contaminated drugs.

As of Friday, 32 cases have been reported across the state since the outbreak began on March 7, half of which were in the Chicago metropolitan area, according to the Illinois Department of Public Health.

The agency warns that authorities have not traced the source of the contamination, and affected users have reported obtaining their synthetic cannabinoids from friends, dealers and even convenience stores.

"Synthetic cannabinoids have become popular because users often believe that it's legal and safe, but that's just not the case," department spokeswoman Melaney Arnold told NBC News. The narcotics are often marketed as K2 or Spice.

"They're certainly not safe, and in many cases they're actually banned."

Arnold said symptoms of the outbreak have included severe bloody noses, coughing up blood, bleeding gums and blood in urine.

While the synthetic drugs are dubbed "cannabinoids" because they affect the same brain cell receptors as marijuana, they are actually potentially made up of hundreds of chemicals — many of which can be toxic.

In three of the patients tested, traces of brodifacoum, a chemical used in rat poison, have been found, said Arnold.

"This bleeding is not expected, at least in such a significant population so quickly," Dr. Melissa Millewich, an emergency room physician at Advocate Good Samaritan Hospital in Downers Grove, Illinois, told The Chicago Tribune.

But she added that users of synthetic pot have been treated at the hospital in previous cases for kidney failure and psychosis.

"People don't realize how dangerous this is," said Millewich.

The Department of Public Health is urging any users in the state experiencing abnormal bleeding to seek medical treatment immediately and to avoid using any synthetic cannabinoids bought in the last month.

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HEADLINE	03/30 Undersea cables target for sabotage?
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/c2e7621bda224e2db2f8c654c9203a09/Could-enemies-sabotage-undersea-cables-linking-the-world
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — Russian ships are skulking around underwater communications cables, causing the U.S. and its allies to worry the Kremlin might be taking information warfare to new depths.</p> <p>Is Moscow interested in cutting or tapping the cables? Does it want the West to worry it might? Is there a more innocent explanation? Unsurprisingly, Russia isn't saying.</p> <p>But whatever Moscow's intentions, U.S. and Western officials are increasingly troubled by their rival's interest in the 400 fiber-optic cables that carry most of world's calls, emails and texts, as well as \$10 trillion worth of daily financial transactions.</p> <p>"We've seen activity in the Russian navy, and particularly undersea in their submarine activity, that we haven't seen since the '80s," Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, commander of the U.S. European Command, told Congress this month.</p> <p>Without undersea cables, a bank in Asian countries couldn't send money to Saudi Arabia to pay for oil. U.S. military leaders would struggle to communicate with troops fighting extremists in Afghanistan and</p>

the Middle East. A student in Europe wouldn't be able to Skype his parents in the United States.

All this information is transmitted along tiny glass fibers encased in undersea cables that, in some cases, are little bigger than a garden hose. All told, there are 620,000 miles of fiber-optic cable running under the sea, enough to loop around the earth nearly 25 times.

Most lines are owned by private telecommunications companies, including giants like Google and Microsoft. Their locations are easily identified on public maps, with swirling lines that look like spaghetti. While cutting one cable might have limited impact, severing several simultaneously or at choke points could cause a major outage.

The Russians "are doing their homework and, in the event of a crisis or conflict with them, they might do rotten things to us," said Michael Kofman, a Russian military expert at nonprofit research group CNA Corp.

It's not Moscow's warfighting ships and submarines that are making NATO and U.S. officials uneasy. It's Russia's Main Directorate of Deep Sea Research, whose specialized surface ships, submarines, underwater drones and mini subs conduct reconnaissance, underwater salvage and other work.

One ship run by the directorate is the Yantar. It's a modest, 354-foot oceanographic vessel that holds a crew of about 60. It most recently was off South America's coast helping Argentina search for a lost submarine.

Parlamentskaya Gazeta, the Russian parliament's publication, last October said the Yantar has equipment "designed for deep-sea tracking" and "connecting to top-secret communication cables." The publication said that in September 2015, the Yantar was near Kings Bay, Georgia, home to a U.S. submarine base, "collecting information about the equipment on American submarines, including underwater sensors and the unified (U.S. military) information network." Rossiya, a Russian state TV network, has said the Yantar can not only connect to top-secret cables, but could cut them and "jam underwater sensors with a special system."

Russia's Defense Ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

There is no hard evidence that the ship is engaged in nefarious activity, said Steffan Watkins, an information technology security consultant in Canada tracking the ship. But he wonders what the ship is doing when it's stopped over critical cables or when its Automatic Identification System tracking transponder isn't on.

Of the Yantar's crew, he said: "I don't think these are the actual guys who are doing any sabotage. I think they're laying the groundwork for future operations."

Members of Congress are wondering, too.

The Yantar's movements have previously raised eyebrows.

On Oct. 18, 2016, a Syrian telecom company ordered emergency maintenance to repair a cable in the Mediterranean that provides internet connectivity to several countries, including Syria, Libya and Lebanon. The Yantar arrived in the area the day before the four-day maintenance began. It left two days before the maintenance ended. It's unknown what work it did while there.

Watkins described another episode on Nov. 5, 2016, when a submarine cable linking Persian Gulf nations experienced outages in Iran. Hours later, the Yantar left Oman and headed to an area about 60 miles west of the Iranian port city of Bushehr, where the cable runs ashore. Connectivity was restored just hours before the Yantar arrived on Nov. 9. The boat stayed stationary over the site for several more days.

Despite the relatively few publicly known incidents of sabotage, most outages are due to accidents.

Two hundred or so cable-related outages take place each year. Most occur when ship anchors snap cables or commercial fishing equipment snags the lines. Others break during tsunamis, earthquakes and other natural disasters.

But even accidental cuts can harm U.S. military operations.

In 2008 in Iraq, unmanned U.S. surveillance flights nearly screeched to a halt one day at Balad Air Base not because of enemy mortar attacks or dusty winds. An anchor had snagged a cable hundreds of miles away from the base, situated in the “Sunni Triangle” northwest of Baghdad.

The severed cable had linked controllers based in the United States with unmanned aircraft flying intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions for coalition forces in the skies over Iraq, explained Ret. Air Force Col. Dave Lujan of Hampton, Virginia.

“Say you’re operating a remote-controlled car and all of a sudden you can’t control it,” said Lujan, who was deputy commander of the 332nd Expeditionary Operations Group at the base when the little-publicized outage lasted for two to three days. “That’s a big impact,” he said, describing how U.S. pilots had to fly the missions instead.

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HEADLINE	03/30 Study: plastic swallowed w/every meal
SOURCE	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5563435/How-swallow-114-pieces-plastic-meal.html
GIST	<p>We could be swallowing more than 100 tiny plastic particles with every main meal, a shocking study reveals.</p> <p>The plastic, which can come from soft furnishings and synthetic fabrics, gets into household dust which falls on plates and is consumed.</p> <p>UK scientists made the discovery after putting Petri dishes containing sticky dust traps on the table next to dinner plates in three homes at meal times.</p> <p>Up to 14 pieces of plastic were found in the Petri dishes at the end of a 20-minute meal – the equivalent of 114 plastic fibres falling on the average dinner plate given their much larger size.</p> <p>The scientists, from Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, concluded that the average person swallows up to 68,415 potentially dangerous plastic fibres a year simply through sitting down to eat.</p> <p>The study confirms the alarming spread of plastic in the air which was recently uncovered by the Daily Mail.</p> <p>An investigation by this newspaper, which has run a longstanding Turn The Tide on Plastic campaign, revealed earlier this month that fillets of fresh fish from open counters at major supermarkets contain up to 139 pieces of plastic for every 240g.</p> <p>The particles were too large to have passed from the gut into the flesh of the fish so the University of Portsmouth scientists who oversaw our investigation believe the plastics came from airborne contamination.</p> <p>Experts warn that ingesting plastic particles can damage lungs, poison kidneys and interfere with hormones.</p> <p>It had previously been thought the risk to human health was largely from eating fish polluted by plastic waste in the oceans. But the Edinburgh scientists set out to compare plastic fibres found in mussels with</p>

	<p>the amount in the average household meal.</p> <p>They found fewer than two microplastics in each mussel, which could be linked to the marine environment, and conclude that the average person can expect to consume 100 plastic particles a year through eating the shellfish.</p> <p>But they will ingest anything from 13,731 to 68,415 fibres in a year during meals because of household dust.</p> <p>Dr Ted Henry, senior author of the study and professor of environmental toxicology at Heriot-Watt University, said: 'These results may be surprising to some people who may expect the plastic fibres in seafood to be higher than those in household dust.</p> <p>'We do not know where these fibres come from, but it is likely to be inside the home and the wider environment.'</p> <p>The plastic fibres found in the home-cooked meals did not come from the food or the cooking environment, but household dust, the authors believe.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Dalai Lama caught in middle India, China
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/30/asia/india-tibet-china-dalai-lama-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>New Delhi (CNN)Is India distancing itself from the Tibetan exile community six decades after the Dalai Lama fled to the country?</p> <p>That's the question many are asking after celebrations to mark the 60th anniversary of the spiritual leader's arrival in India have been moved or canceled, as Beijing and New Delhi seek to reboot ties in the wake of a tense year in bilateral relations.</p> <p>From March 31, Tibetans in India are holding a year-long "Thank You India" event as a prelude to celebrating the Dalai Lama's time in the country and to show gratitude to the Indian government and its people for their support of Tibetan refugees.</p> <p>But what should have been a moment of joy has been overshadowed by a flurry of speculation about the future of the exiled Tibetan community -- and especially the freedom they have enjoyed in India since the late 1950s.</p> <p>"It looks like the Government of India is changing its policy," said Claude Apri, an India-based expert on Tibet and author of several books on Tibetan issues.</p> <p>After an unsuccessful revolt against the Chinese occupation of Tibet, the 14th Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader, fled the capital Lhasa in secret.</p> <p>He crossed into India on March 31, 1959 and has made India his home ever since.</p> <p>A living god-like figure for millions of Buddhists, India officially calls him "the most esteemed and honored guest of India." China accuses of him of being a "a wolf in monk's robes," engaged in "anti-China separatist activities under the cloak of religion with the aim of breaking Tibet away from China."</p> <p>In early March, news emerged that the Indian Foreign Secretary penned a classified advisory asking senior leaders and government officials to refrain from attending events planned by exiled Tibetans in India. The note reportedly said the events, in March and April, came at a "very sensitive time in the context of India's relations with China."</p>

A week later, the Tibetan Central Administration -- the government in exile -- decided to move a major cultural event that was originally planned to be held in the Indian capital New Delhi with a speech by the Dalai Lama, to Dharamsala, where the exiled community is based.

A Dalai Lama-led inter-faith prayer ceremony was also scrapped, the Tibetan Central Administration said, as was the Seventh World Parliamentarians Convention on Tibet that was meant to be held on April 26-28 in Delhi.

The Tibetan Parliament-in-exile, the organizers of the convention, declined to give a reason for the cancellation of the high-profile event.

Sonam Dagpo, a spokesman for the Tibetan Central Administration said that there has been no direct communication from the Indian authorities and that the plans were changed out of respect to the Indian government's position.

"Once we (heard about the note), we decided to shift the venue," he said. "There are no ill feelings. If you weigh what the Indian government has done for us, that is far more than this."

The Indian foreign ministry issued a statement this month saying there is no change in India's position, and that "His Holiness is accorded all freedom to carry out his religious activities in India."

Recent statements from Beijing and Delhi show the two governments are seeking to mend ties after a turbulent year in bilateral relations.

Last year, troops from both countries were involved in a months-long border standoff in Doklam, up in the Himalayas near Bhutan.

India boycotted China's flagship summit in Beijing last May on its Belt and Road Initiative, an ambitious global trade plan. The Dalai Lama's visit in April to the northeastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh -- a territory that China claims as its own -- also sparked diplomatic tensions between Beijing and New Delhi.

At a press conference last month, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the two countries leaders "have developed a strategic vision for the future of our relations: the Chinese 'dragon' and the Indian 'elephant' must not fight each other, but dance with each other."

India's Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale visited Beijing in February, where he said both sides noted the need to "address differences on the basis of mutual respect and sensitivity to each other's concerns, interests and aspirations."

Manoj Joshi, a fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, said India is keen to keep ties balanced, especially with China growing closer to rival Pakistan.

Tibetans may be the big losers if India and China do mend things up, said Tshering Chonzom Bhutia, associate fellow at the Institute of Chinese Studies in New Delhi.

"If policymakers in India continue to be guided by the perception that serving up the Tibet issue on the diplomatic plate to China is the most efficient way to improve India-China relations, then we can anticipate more restrictions on Tibetan activities in India," she said.

Against the backdrop of China's rising dominance in India's neighboring countries, Tibet is a minor issue for Delhi, said Tsering Shakya, a Tibet scholar and research chair at the University of British Columbia in Canada.

"India is sensing Tibet's appeal in the West is declining," Shakya said, freeing Delhi to play to Beijing's feelings on the issue.

	<p>Adding to all this uncertainty is the confusion of what happens after the Dalai Lama dies.</p> <p>In 2011, in a move to democratize the system of government, the Dalai Lama gave up his political and administrative powers and chose to remain as just a spiritual leader, but he is still far and away the community's most influential figure.</p> <p>The 82-year-old recently decided to cut down on his travels citing age and exhaustion. It remains unclear who will be the next Dalai Lama, how that person will be picked, or whether there will be another Dalai Lama.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Judge: coffee requires cancer warning
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/california-judge-rules-coffee-requires-cancer-warning-54117433?cid=clicksource_26_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>Scientists haven't rendered a verdict on whether coffee is good or bad for you but a California judge has. He says coffee sellers in the state should have to post cancer warnings.</p> <p>The culprit is a chemical produced in the bean roasting process that is a known carcinogen and has been at the heart of an eight-year legal struggle between a tiny nonprofit group and Big Coffee.</p> <p>The Council for Education and Research on Toxics wanted the coffee industry to remove acrylamide from its processing — like potato chip makers did when it sued them years ago — or disclose the danger in ominous warning signs or labels. The industry, led by Starbucks Corp., said the level of the chemical in coffee isn't harmful and any risks are outweighed by benefits.</p> <p>Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Elihu Berle said Wednesday that the coffee makers hadn't presented the proper grounds at trial to prevail.</p> <p>"While plaintiff offered evidence that consumption of coffee increases the risk of harm to the fetus, to infants, to children and to adults, defendants' medical and epidemiology experts testified that they had no opinion on causation," Berle wrote in his proposed ruling. "Defendants failed to satisfy their burden of proving ... that consumption of coffee confers a benefit to human health."</p> <p>The suit was brought against Starbucks and 90 companies under a controversial law passed by California voters in 1986 that has been credited with culling cancer-causing chemicals from myriad products and also criticized for leading to quick settlement shakedowns.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Police stepping up E-DUI patrols
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/04/01/put-down-that-phone-police-stepping-up-e-dui-patrols-in-april/
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. — Tempted to grab your cellphone while behind the wheel? Don't!</p> <p>Beginning Monday, over 150 extra law enforcement agencies will be looking for distracted drivers. The statewide initiative goes through April 14, according to the Washington Traffic Safety Commission.</p> <p>Under the "Driving Under the Influence of Electronics" (E-DUI) law, drivers may not hold cell phones or watch videos while they are driving, stopped in traffic, or at a stop light. This includes tablets, laptops, games, or any hand-held electronic devices. The law restricts hands-free use to a single touch.</p> <p>"Our goal is to raise public awareness about the dangers of distracted driving," said Erika Mascorro,</p>

	<p>program manager for Washington Traffic Safety Commission. “Research shows that drivers are three times more likely to crash when talking on the phone, and 23 times more likely to crash when entering information into their phone.”</p> <p>A statewide survey of Washington drivers found that 96 percent agree that using a cell phone while driving is dangerous, 88 percent said they don’t check social media while driving and most said they do not read incoming texts. Only one percent felt comfortable being a passenger in a car with a driver who was texting.</p> <p>Nearly 1,500 drivers have been ticketed each month since Washington’s new E-DUI law began in July 2017. The first E-DUI ticket will cost drivers \$136. If the driver incurs a second ticket within five years, the fine increases to \$234.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Miami: drive by shooting kills 4yr-old
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/police-4-year-old-fatally-shot-in-miami-drive-by-shooting/
GIST	<p>MIAMI (AP) — Police say a 4-year-old girl was fatally shot in a drive-by shooting in Miami.</p> <p>In a statement, police spokesman Michael Vega said officers were called to Miami’s Liberty Square housing complex Saturday morning about a child that had been shot.</p> <p>The 4-year-old had already been taken to a hospital by her mother by the time officers arrived. Vega said the girl died at the hospital.</p> <p>Police said another child and an adult were injured at the scene by shattered glass.</p> <p>Vega said a male suspect who fled the scene later turned himself in at a police station.</p> <p>Police have not released the names of either the girl or the suspect.</p> <p>Vega said the motive for the shooting remained unclear.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Austin PD bomb squad grueling toll
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/austin-bombings-put-police-squad-under-emotional-strain/
GIST	<p>AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — After a 16-hour workday investigating the Austin bombings, police Lt. Courtney Renfro arrived home to find Amazon packages on his doorstep.</p> <p>Renfro paused, even though he had ordered the packages himself.</p> <p>Members of the Austin police bomb squad investigated a series of explosions that killed two people and injured several others over a three-week period. They also dealt with the grueling toll of chasing thousands of reports of suspicious packages, and trying to locate a suspected bomber who turned out to have no criminal history.</p> <p>Renfro told the Austin American-Statesman that the series of attacks left him “in utter shock that this was happening in our city.”</p> <p>“I have always told the guys to be prepared, but something told me it’s never going to happen in little Austin,” he said.</p>

As the bombings were occurring, bomb technicians responded to more calls during one key week than they had the entire year before. One day, Renfro said he found a fellow officer, Cpl. Jesse Carrillo, sleeping on the floor of his office.

“They were sleeping in their cars, sleeping in their offices, getting an hour here or there,” Renfro said.

Every explosion generated many more calls to police about suspicious packages or offering leads on the bomber.

“When a blast would happen, we would all have to respond,” Carrillo said. “Just as things would slow down, there would be another explosion.”

Beginning on March 2, police say 23-year-old Mark Anthony Conditt planted bombs in different parts of Austin, killing two people and severely wounding four others.

Authorities say he began by placing explosives in packages left overnight on doorsteps, killing 39-year-old Anthony Stephan House and 17-year-old musician Draylen Mason. He then rigged an explosive to a tripwire along a public trail, injuring two young men who crossed it. Finally, he sent two parcels with bombs via FedEx, one of which exploded and injured a worker at a distribution center near San Antonio.

Investigators say Conditt used one of his own devices to blow himself up as authorities approached his SUV before dawn on March 21.

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HEADLINE	04/01 Anatomy bomb investigation: ATF lab
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/01/us/atf-bomb-lab-beltsville.html
GIST	<p>BELTSVILLE, Md. — About an hour outside Washington, tucked in a cinder-block building run by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, orderly piles of charred and twisted matter are spread across a secure laboratory.</p> <p>Inside is evidence from Austin, Tex., where Mark Conditt, 23, terrorized the city for three weeks in March by setting off a half- dozen homemade explosives before blowing himself up.</p> <p>The collections in the Maryland lab look more suited to a landfill than to a secure government facility. Though law enforcement officials would not discuss specifics or allow photographs of evidence, each jumble would be tested and prodded, with technicians hoping to unlock insight into Mr. Conditt and the small but active group of people like him: America’s domestic bombers.</p> <p>Evidence from hundreds of domestic bombing cases passes through A.T.F. labs every year. A few, like the one in Austin, attract widespread attention. The majority prompt no headlines: husbands trying to kill wives with amateur car bombs, rival motorcycle gangs lobbing improvised explosive devices, a mischievous student who accidentally blows up a mailbox.</p> <p>“Each explosive investigation is going to be different,” said Matt Farr, section chief of the DNA analysis division at the laboratory here. “It’s very scene- and device-specific.”</p> <p>Few domestic bombings are the same. Deconstructing them requires a combination of logistical skill — physically analyzing explosives and their components — and creative psychology, involving analysis of the motivation and patterns of the bombers. And the digital age has made it increasingly easy to experiment with amateur devices.</p> <p>“There’s a lot of information available on the internet now,” said Doug Klapec, the chief of the arson and explosive division in Beltsville. “People used to have to go to the library and check out ‘Anarchist</p>

Cookbook.””

In the post-9/11 era, the notion of bombings has become almost inextricably linked to Islamic extremist terrorism, which the F.B.I. investigates. But the majority of bombings in the United States bear no nexus to Islamic terrorism. The evidence in those cases is sent to Beltsville, or one of its two sister labs, in Atlanta and Walnut Creek, Calif.

Since 1886, the A.T.F.’s laboratory division has been spread across those three places. Its modest staff includes chemists, forensic biologists and scientists who analyze evidence each year from thousands of fires, explosions and other crimes. In 2017, A.T.F. labs helped close 314 explosives cases.

“I don’t know that there’s a better bomb lab in the country,” Brad A. Galvan, a former A.T.F. agent who ran the bureau’s explosives unit in San Diego until 2017, said of Beltsville.

To go from a blast site to Beltsville or a similar facility, a deactivated bomb — or parts of it — is transported to one of the A.T.F. labs. Stored at the facilities in bunkers, the samples can be road maps to suspects.

“We’re going to dissect that device down to its lowest common denominator,” Mr. Galvan said. “Anything that’s used and recovered, we’re going to try and identify. It’s very manpower-intensive.”

Each piece, down to the type of tape used to hold a bomb together, helps build a profile of the suspect. Shrapnel types, a certain kind of PVC piping, spit on the back of a stamp — any could lead to the right security footage or hardware store.

“Sometimes these areas are remote enough that you’ve only got one Lowe’s or one Home Depot in the whole area,” Mr. Klapac said.

In one instance, Mr. Klapac said, investigators found a suspect through DNA that his girlfriend had left on the cork of a wine bottle. The bottle had been filled with gasoline and put into a gift basket, which detonated when handled.

“It’s only limited by your imagination and the size of the container you want to put it into,” Mr. Galvan said of improvised bombs.

Pipe bombs remain the typical case, Mr. Klapac said. Most bombings use what is called a low explosive, something like black powder, instead of a high explosive like dynamite. Most are one-offs aimed at specific targets, not serial bombings.

The macabre mentality of multiple bombings can be gripping, Mr. Klapac said.

“Most serial bombers take their time,” he said. “There’s a lot of psychological components.”

Crucial to catching a bomber like Mr. Conditt is finding a pattern.

“As you do more and more things in a bomb, you create more and more of a signature,” Mr. Klapac said.

The A.T.F. maintains a database known as the Bomb Arson Tracking System, or BATS, where every detail of every domestic bomb in the United States is supposed to be logged. It can help investigators connect cases committed by the same person, even years apart.

Historically given limited resources, the A.T.F. has at times struggled to keep up with the volume of requests that enter its lab system.

“We have so much work that we have to turn some cases away,” Mr. Klapac said.

Current and former agents and officials at the agency lament its political handicaps — as the broker of the country’s gun regulations, it has been hamstrung by the powerful gun lobby — and the A.T.F.’s tendency to work in the shadow of bigger agencies like the F.B.I., which has its own bomb division.

A memorandum of understanding between the two agencies, brokered by the Justice Department, helps guide jurisdiction of bombing investigations. But those guidelines have pitfalls.

“The biggest time we butt heads is when you have domestic terrorism. What really is that?” said Mr. Klapac, noting the debate that emerged about whether Mr. Conditt should be considered a domestic terrorist. “Is everything domestic terrorism?”

Law enforcement officials have said Mr. Conditt should not be labeled a terrorist because he did not appear to be motivated by hate.

But for the city terrorized by him, Mr. Conditt’s actions qualify. “There is no mistaking the fear these attacks inflicted on an entire city,” the editorial board of The Austin American-Statesman wrote the morning after he killed himself. “That makes this terrorism.”

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HEADLINE	04/01 Police: fatal shooting near Seattle Center
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SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/944044/police-investigate-fatal-shooting-near-seattle-center/
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GIST	SEATTLE (AP) — Police are investigating a fatal shooting near Seattle Center.
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Authorities say witnesses called 911 just after 2:10 a.m. Sunday to report gunshots in the Lower Queen Anne neighborhood. Officers found a 21-year-old man shot in the head and provided first aid until medics arrived and pronounced him dead.

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HEADLINE	03/29 French police arrest driver aiming car
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SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/france-car-attack-soldiers-varces-allieres-et-risset-barracks-isere-manhunt/
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GIST	PARIS -- A man shouted death threats from his car window at several groups of French soldiers out for a Thursday morning jog in the French Alps, then tried to run two of them over, a military spokesman said. Col. Benoit Brulot, a French Army spokesman, said the driver circled the military barracks in Varcès-Allières-et-Risset, in the southeastern Isère region, shouting at groups of soldiers. He returned later and tried to hit the two soldiers with his car before making a quick getaway.
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The National Police said in a brief statement on Twitter that an individual had been arrested in connection with the incident in the city of Grenoble, not far from Varcès-Allières-et-Risset. The police said they were not treating the incident as terrorism yet, but the motivation remained unclear.

Brulot said that none of the soldiers, from the 27th Mountain Infantry Brigade, was injured.

Security sources told French news agency AFP that the suspect shouted threats at the soldiers in both French and Arabic before returning to take aim at them with his car. AFP said the man was driving a car with false license plates when he drove at the soldiers.

Authorities were on high alert as the incident occurred one week after an Islamic extremist shot at police returning from a jog in southern France, before taking hostages in a supermarket in an attack that claimed four lives.

Brulot said several of the soldiers were questioned Thursday morning by gendarmes in nearby Grenoble.

	The motives for the attempted attack were unclear.
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HEADLINE	03/29 Parkland shooter brother gets probation
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/alleged-parkland-shooters-brother-gets-probation-for-trespassing-at-marjory-stoneman-douglas/
GIST	<p>FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — The brother of the suspected Florida high school gunman pleaded no contest Thursday to trespassing on the campus where the deadly rampage occurred and was sentenced to time served and six months of probation.</p> <p>Circuit Judge Melinda Kirsch Brown also ordered Zachary Cruz, 18, to enroll in therapy, wear an ankle bracelet and said he cannot possess firearms or ammunition. The judge also said Zachary Cruz must be tested to make sure he isn't consuming drugs or alcohol and must stay at least 1 mile from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School during probation. He can never visit the school again and must not contact any victims or their families.</p> <p>He was arrested March 19 after police found him skateboarding at Stoneman Douglas after school, 33 days after his 19-year-old brother, Nikolas Cruz, killed 17 students and staff members and wounded 17 others during a Valentine's Day shooting. Broward sheriff's deputies say Zachary Cruz had told him not to come on campus, but his attorney, Joseph Kimok, denied that.</p> <p>Zachary Cruz had spent the last 10 days in custody on \$500,000 bond ordered by a different judge. The typical bond in Broward County for trespassing, a second-degree misdemeanor, is \$25.</p> <p>But this was not a typical trespassing case. Cruz, shackled at the wrists and ankles and wearing a tan prison jumpsuit, was led into court by six deputies Thursday as numerous reporters and TV cameras looked on.</p> <p>Prosecutor Sarahnell Murphy announced a plea deal had been reached, the conditions were read and the judge asked if he understood. He softly replied, "Yes, ma'am." After the judge accepted his plea and pronounced sentence, Kimok read an apology from Cruz, saying he was sorry if he scared anyone by visiting the school.</p> <p>After the hearing, Kimok called Zachary Cruz's 10-day detention on \$500,000 bond on a trespassing charge "immoral and unconstitutional." He said there is no doubt that was done simply because of who his brother is. He said no one else would have been arrested.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 When govt. lies about you in court
SOURCE	http://www.weeklystandard.com/the-firestarter-what-happens-when-the-government-lies-about-you-in-court/article/2012095
GIST	<p>Is there a hole in our justice system where corruption is allowed to fester? Yes.</p> <p>Sixty years ago, John Leo Brady was tried for murder in a Maryland court. Brady never denied helping to plan a robbery with his accomplice, Donald Boblit, but insisted that Boblit had pulled the trigger when the scheme went awry. Brady's lawyer argued that his client should therefore be sentenced to life in prison, not death. The jury disagreed and voted to execute him. It was only after Boblit himself was convicted and sentenced to death that Brady's lawyer learned that the prosecutor had intentionally kept hidden Boblit's admission to the crime.</p> <p>Ruling on Brady's appeal, the Maryland Court of Appeals agreed that the suppression of exculpatory evidence was a 14th Amendment due-process violation, and remanded the case to the trial court on the</p>

question of punishment. In 1963, the Supreme Court affirmed in *Brady v. Maryland* that exculpatory evidence withheld from the defense by the prosecution violates constitutional protections. Ever since then "Brady violations" have resulted in sanctions against prosecutors and police, as well as overturned criminal convictions.

But what happens when the government withholds exculpatory evidence during the prosecution of a civil lawsuit against an individual or company? Nothing, apparently.

With Brady deemed to apply only to criminal cases, no specific case law punishes a government lawyer for failing to disclose evidence that would've been helpful to a civil defendant. If there were, then last year the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals might not have denied a motion by Sierra Pacific Industries, a California forest products company, to set aside a consequential settlement it had made in 2012 with the U.S. Department of Justice. For that matter, if there had been a civil equivalent of Brady, there probably wouldn't have been a settlement in the first place.

* * *

In 2009, the Justice Department's Eastern District of California filed a lawsuit against Sierra Pacific Industries (and some minor defendants) for damages stemming from a 2007 forest fire in California's Sierra Nevadas. The fire burned about 65,000 acres of forest, most of them national lands. The suit was based on an origin-and-cause report filed by Joshua White, an investigator from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire), that claimed a tractor operated by SPI's logging subcontractor had struck a rock, generating a spark that ignited some forest duff and then turned into a conflagration.

California filed a separate suit against SPI but signed a joint prosecution agreement with DOJ, allowing the two government agencies to prepare cooperatively. The only substantial difference between the two suits was the amount they sought in damages. The state of California wanted about \$10 million. The feds wanted nearly a \$1 billion. Which seemed excessive, since the total value of the land was about \$25 million and the costs of fighting the fire were less than \$10 million. The outsized damages were just the first sign that something was very wrong with the government's case.

Sierra Pacific Industries sounds like a big, faceless corporation, but in reality it's a family-owned company, founded more than six decades ago as a tiny sawmill by Archie Aldis "Red" Emerson, who'd survived a truly Dickensian childhood by outworking everyone around him. Now one of the country's most successful lumber suppliers, SPI fought back as if its future was at stake. Because it was.

Over the course of nearly three years of discovery, Emerson's lawyers in Sacramento deposed witnesses and produced evidence that comprehensively dismantled the investigator's report. They found that White and his counterpart from the United States Forest Service had failed to follow established investigative protocols, fabricated inculpatory evidence, hid exculpatory evidence, invented both a false theory of the fire and a false ignition point for the fire, lied under oath, and intentionally disregarded the possible involvement of a young man named Ryan Bauer, who started volunteering unsolicited alibis and statements which turned out to be contradicted by facts and subsequent statements.

Whether or not Bauer had had anything to do with the fire, the circumstantial evidence of his involvement appeared so compelling that SPI's lead attorney, William Warne, planned to put him on the stand as a dramatic symbol of the government's flawed investigation. That Cal Fire's White had deliberately ignored Bauer would underscore for the jury how poorly he had done his job—unless, that is, his job had been to target a deep-pocketed company instead of someone the state would be on the hook for incarcerating. (There was also a known arsonist in the area at the time of the fire. White ignored him, too.)

But just before trial, Assistant United States Attorney Kelli Taylor filed motions warranting to the court that there was not a "shred of physical evidence" to suggest another party might have been liable, and asked the court to preclude SPI from turning the trial into an "arson witch hunt." Judge Kimberly Mueller assented. SPI would not, she ruled, be allowed "to argue that someone else started the fire."

Now Red Emmerson faced a stark choice. Where victory once seemed certain, the odds had fallen to about 50-50—not good enough to risk possibly losing his company. Reluctantly, he and his sons George and Mark, who now ran SPI, agreed in July 2012 to transfer 22,500 acres of California forest owned by SPI to the United States Forest Service, and pay \$50 million. The DOJ valued the settlement at \$122.5 million and celebrated it as the "largest ever received by the United States for damages caused by a wildfire."

Emmerson explained that what made the decision to settle somewhat easier was knowing he would still get his day in court, as long as the California judge didn't issue a similar ruling.

Warne and his team were prepping for that trial when he got a call from Ryan Bauer's father, Edwin, who "wanted to gloat," Warne says, "about the settlement." Then Bauer mentioned "the bribe."

"What are you talking about?" Warne asked.

In late spring of 2012, officials from the Justice Department went to serve a subpoena on Bauer's father, Edwin. During the encounter, Edwin claimed that Warne had approached the Bauers' attorney and offered them money in exchange for Ryan Bauer admitting to starting the fire. Edwin claimed that his attorney had presented this offer to the Bauers and that the Bauers had refused it.

The DOJ investigators immediately contacted the Bauers' lawyer—but he denied that any such thing had happened, and proved it to their satisfaction. This lawyer later told Warne he'd naturally assumed Warne had been informed about the Bauers' allegation. But he hadn't been. No one from DOJ ever mentioned it to the defense, or the court.

Warne was shocked but not surprised. After all, AUSA Taylor hadn't dropped the suit even after seeing it was based on a dishonest investigation. Now she had withheld knowledge of a false accusation made by a percipient witness, too.

The disclosure would have contradicted Taylor's assertion that there was not a "shred" of evidence pointing to anyone else, and presumably would have inclined Judge Mueller to allow the defense to put Bauer on the stand. In which case, the federal trial would have proceeded. And given what soon happened in California, the verdict can be reasonably supposed.

Scheduled for July 2013, the California trial never took place. After reading hundreds of pages of motions, Superior Court Judge Leslie Nichols dismissed the lawsuit, calling it "corrupt and tainted," and ordered Cal Fire to pay the defendants \$32 million (the largest discovery sanction ever ordered by a judge against a government agency) for its "egregious and reprehensible conduct."

While the state ruling didn't affect the federal suit, Judge Nichols's finding of pervasive misconduct confirmed the defendants' belief that the prosecutors had perpetrated a "fraud on the court," for which there was ample precedent to set aside the settlement.

Warne filed a motion with the district court, which dismissed it, then appealed to the 9th Circuit, which ruled "the district court correctly concluded that Brady does not generally apply in civil proceedings . . . the government did not have a specific duty to disclose the false bribe information, beyond its standard discovery obligations."

Of course, those standard discovery obligations had also applied to Brady's prosecutor in 1958, and yet the Supreme Court decided 7-2 that such obligations would be honored more diligently if the prosecution faced sanctions for failing to abide by an inscription carved into the walls of the Department of Justice, as quoted by Justice William O. Douglas in his Brady opinion: "The United States wins its point whenever justice is done its citizens in the courts."

By that reasoning, it is nothing less than an injustice that "courts" doesn't refer also to civil courts.

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HEADLINE	03/31 ICE arrests farmworkers sparking fears
SOURCE	http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-farmworkers-ice-20180316-htmlstory.html
GIST	<p>Jesus Aceves was driving three of his fellow farmworkers to the tomato fields in the early-morning darkness when he saw lights flash behind him.</p> <p>ICE agents pulled him over and asked for his license, registration and insurance and, most forebodingly, whether the men were in the United States legally.</p> <p>Aceves and his passengers were taken to an immigrant detention facility. But none of them had been the target of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.</p> <p>Three of the men had no criminal records. The most serious blots on the 44-year-old Aceves' record were several convictions — the most recent in 2012 — for driving without a license.</p> <p>That morning, an ICE spokesman said, agents went to a Kern County residence where they thought an immigration target lived. One of the men who got into Aceves' car matched that person's description, he said. The ICE agents followed.</p> <p>The arrests were part of a larger sweep in California's agricultural heartland that has sent fear through the Central Valley, where for generations, immigrants here — both legally and illegally — have picked crops. In some fields, almost all of the foreign workers are in the country without legal status.</p> <p>While many immigrants have been on edge since President Trump vowed a crackdown on illegal immigration, the recent sweeps have been particularly concerning because they included the arrests of people not specifically targeted by ICE.</p> <p>The concern extends to farmers, who fear more sweeps will drive away labor at a time when some are struggling to get enough workers to pick the crops.</p> <p>Manuel Cunha Jr., president of Nisei Farmers League, which represents agricultural employers and their workers throughout the state, said farmers are worried about losing trusted workers. He said the increasingly tense relationship between the Trump administration and California, which declared itself a "sanctuary state," has upped the anxiety.</p> <p>"They're not going to be replaced by American workers," Cunha said. "Don't punish the businesses. We're not the ones that came up with the sanctuary state."</p> <p>In the February sweep across the Central Valley, 232 people were arrested. Of those, 180 were either convicted criminals, had been issued a final order of removal or had been previously removed from the U.S. and returned illegally.</p> <p>The United Farm Workers of America identified at least 26 farmworkers arrested in Kern, Tulare and Madera counties, most of them stopped before dawn on their way to work.</p> <p>ICE Director Thomas Homan has said that immigrants who have entered the U.S. illegally "should be afraid."</p> <p>He warned that California's so-called sanctuary policies, which limit the cooperation between local and federal law enforcement, give the agency no choice but to make arrests in neighborhoods and at work sites. That leads to the arrests of other immigrants in the country illegally who are not intended targets, he said.</p> <p>"This is a prime example of how sanctuary policies, which have pushed ICE out of jails, force our officers to conduct more enforcement in the community — which poses increased risks for law enforcement and the public," Homan said in a statement to The Times. "It also increases the likelihood that ICE will</p>

encounter other illegal aliens who previously weren't on our radar. It is nonsensical to demand that ICE solely focus on criminals, while simultaneously preventing ICE from arresting criminal aliens inside the secure confines of local jails.”

Win Eaton, an attorney in Bakersfield, is representing some of the detained farmworkers in immigration court.

“It’s just terrible that these people are going to be used as pawns,” he said.

Dozens of workers have fled since immigration agents began checking employee records at San Joaquin Valley farms. ICE said 77 businesses — in the jurisdiction that includes Northern California, Hawaii, Guam and Saipan — were served with employment authorization audit notices in January.

Farmers have struggled in recent years with labor shortages. A summer 2017 survey by the California Farm Bureau Federation showed that 55% of responding farmers experienced shortages, with problems most acute among those whose crops require intensive hand labor, such as tree fruits and grapes.

Phil Martin, professor emeritus of agricultural and resource economics at UC Davis, said while that’s true, it would take a huge, targeted immigration operation to really put a dent in the agricultural industry. That’s because production requires so many workers and the industry is using more and more people from a temporary guestworker program.

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HEADLINE	04/01 London murder rate overtakes NYC
SOURCE	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5566689/London-murder-rate-overtakes-New-York-time-including-11-killings-just-16-days.html
GIST	<p>London's murder rate has overtaken New York City's for the first time ever as the twelfth person has been killed in just 19 days.</p> <p>February marked the first month in history books that London had more murders than the American city with a total of 15 homicides. Out of the 15 killed, nine were aged 30 or younger.</p> <p>In March, there were 22 murders, which is likely to match if not beat out New York's numbers.</p> <p>The murder epidemic continued on Sunday when a man in his twenties was fatally stabbed after leaving a bar in Wandsworth, marking the 12th person to be murdered in London in 19 days.</p> <p>According to a report by the Sunday Times, New York City's murder statistics have decreased by 87 per cent since the 1990s.</p> <p>Meanwhile, London's rate has grown by nearly 40 per cent in just three years, not including deaths caused by terrorist attacks.</p> <p>Although New York last year had nearly double the number of murders than London, experts are concerned the gap is steadily closing.</p> <p>Officials are concerned about the uptick in fatal stabbings, fearing there is a dangerous surge in knife crime.</p> <p>Last year there was a total of 80 fatal stabbings in the capital - the most in almost a decade. And official figures show that 2017 was the worst year for knife deaths among young people since at least 2002.</p> <p>Forty-six people aged 25 or under were stabbed to death in London, up by 21 compared with the previous year, according to police figures.</p>

	<p>The victim's death comes as London's murder rates have overtaken New York City 's numbers for the first time ever.</p> <p>The man's death on Sunday marks the 12th murder in London in 19 days.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Virginia: university bomb threat arrest
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/marymount-university-evacuated-after-bomb-threat-student-in-custody-2018-03-31/
GIST	<p>The campus at Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia, has reopened after authorities investigated a bomb threat made on social media. One student was taken into custody Sunday, and police said there was no evidence that a bomb was on campus.</p> <p>The university was evacuated Sunday morning, with those on campus asked to go across the street. The university was on Easter break during the incident.</p> <p>Canine units with the Arlington County Police Department swept the campus as a precaution, but it was later reopened and the community was cleared to return.</p> <p>"We want to express our sincere appreciation to the law enforcement officers who responded promptly to protect the safety of our campus community," Eric Hols, the university's director of campus safety, said in a statement. "We will continue to cooperate fully as their investigation continues."</p> <p>The Arlington County Police Department reminded the community that while it was April Fool's Day, threats of violence are not a joke.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Chicago police: drop in violent crimes
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/violent-crimes-drop-fewer-shootings-chicago-police-2018/
GIST	<p>CHICAGO -- New numbers released by the Chicago Police Department show a big drop in violent crimes across the city, CBS Chicago reports. This March had 17 percent fewer shootings than March 2017.</p> <p>Overall since the beginning of the year, shootings are down 25 percent from this time last year.</p> <p>According to Chicago Police, murders are down 22 percent.</p> <p>And total citywide crime is down 15 percent this year.</p> <p>The department says 1,900 guns have been taken off the streets.</p> <p>Chicago Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson released a statement that says in part "our work is far from over. We will continue our hiring plan and identify ways we can integrate technology into the crime fight."</p>
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HEADLINE	04/02 Atlanta: drive-by shooting kills 3yr-old
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/three-year-old-killed-in-drive-by-shooting-just-outside-atlanta-dekalb-county/
GIST	<p>ATLANTA -- Police near Atlanta are investigating after a three-year-old boy was shot and killed late Sunday night, reports CBS Atlanta affiliate WGCL-TV. The child's mother said a grey Dodge Charger</p>

	<p>pulled up to her vehicle at a stop light just before midnight, and the driver showed what she thought was a paintball gun.</p> <p>She told police she heard a pop, but drove on.</p> <p>"She heard a real gunshot. She didn't think anything of it," DeKalb County Police Chief James Conroy told the station.</p> <p>The suspect fled the scene, and the mother drove on, then noticed her child wasn't breathing. The boy was transported to a hospital, where he was later pronounced dead.</p>
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HEADLINE	04/01 Mexico: prison riot fire kills 7
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/police-die-quell-prison-riot-mexico-54160759?
GIST	<p>Six police officers died Sunday from smoke inhalation after prisoners started a fire while resisting an effort to transfer dangerous inmates out of a prison in Mexico's Gulf coast state of Veracruz, authorities said.</p> <p>Veracruz Gov. Miguel Angel Yunes said a seventh person died but it was unclear if he was an inmate or prison guard.</p> <p>Yunes said four "highly dangerous" inmates had been helping run criminal networks in the area around the La Toma prison in the town of Amatlan de los Reyes, so officials had decided to transfer them to a maximum-security federal prison.</p> <p>Yunes did not name the criminal gang involved, but the area was long dominated by Zetas cartel.</p> <p>When local police, in support of state police, went into the prison to get the four inmates for transfer, they were apparently ambushed by prisoners, who blocked their escape and lit a fire that suffocated six officers, the governor said.</p> <p>"The six police officers were attacked and were enclosed in an area with no exit. The inmates started a fire, and with the smoke, they caused the asphyxiation and death of the six police officers," Yunes said.</p> <p>The seventh dead man was not wearing a uniform, and could have been an inmate or guard, Yunes said. His body was being examined.</p> <p>Seven inmates were injured, two seriously, and 15 police officers were hospitalized, one with serious injuries, authorities said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Group: transgender killed; 7th this year
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/30/us/transgender-woman-killed-baton-rouge.html
GIST	<p>A young black transgender woman was shot dead in a Louisiana motel this week, becoming at least the seventh transgender woman known to have been killed in the United States this year, rights advocates said.</p> <p>The woman, Amia Tyrae, 28, was killed Monday at about 1:15 a.m. at a motel on Airline Highway, according to the Baton Rouge Police Department.</p> <p>Dr. William Clark, the East Baton Rouge Parish coroner, ruled Ms. Tyrae's death a homicide, caused by a gunshot wound to the chest.</p> <p>The Police Department said Friday night that Dedrick Butler, 22, of Denham Springs, La., had been</p>

arrested in the killing. He was charged with second-degree murder, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, and possession of a firearm with an obliterated serial number.

Between 25 to 28 transgender people were reported killed in the United States last year, the highest number in at least a decade, according to a report by the Human Rights Campaign and the Trans People of Color Coalition. The violence disproportionately affects transgender women of color.

The killing of Ms. Tyrae came less than a month after the shooting death of another transgender woman, Phylcia Mitchell, 46, outside her apartment in Cleveland on Feb. 23. Transgender women were also killed in New Mexico, Florida, New York, Massachusetts and California this year, according to data compiled by Glaad.

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HEADLINE	04/01 UCF police chief: prevented disaster
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/31/us/florida-chinese-student-guns-deported/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A Chinese college student who made no threats but had alarmed a roommate and a friend with his behavior and bought two semiautomatic rifles will be deported for an unrelated visa issue, University of Central Florida police said Thursday.</p> <p>Police at the Orlando school said they were first alerted by a campus official in late January that Wenliang Sun, 26, was a "student of concern," UCF police Chief Richard Beary said.</p> <p>Campus police received information that Sun had altered his appearance and his behavior was changing, the chief said. They contacted the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and were told Sun owned an AR-15-style rifle and ammunition.</p> <p>"We know that in today's world that a person in distress who owns a high-powered firearm, we just cannot ignore that," Beary said. "We have a duty and an obligation to make sure our people are safe."</p> <p>There was "red flag after red flag," that something bad would happen, he added.</p> <p>Those red flags, the chief said, included Sun being uncommunicative with others and not leaving his room, dying his hair blond, paying for a fast expensive car with cash, and referring to one of his guns as a "sniper rifle."</p> <p>Beary said Sun also went to a gun range to practice with his rifle and also wouldn't return calls from authorities when they tried to notify him his immigration status was subject to change.</p> <p>But the chief acknowledged there were no comments in interviews or in reviews of his electronic devices that Sun was planning to harm anyone.</p> <p>"That's the interesting thing in this case, there were no specific threats. Reiterating that, there were no threats," Beary said.</p> <p>The chief said the red flags looked at separately might not mean much but when all of them were considered collectively they were concerning.</p> <p>"I think there was a disaster about to happen and we stopped it," the chief said.</p> <p>Sun is at a US Immigration and Customs Enforcement holding facility in Macclenny, Florida, according to ICE.</p> <p>"Under normal circumstances, it probably would not have moved that quickly," an official with Homeland Security said. "He probably would've been placed on notice, and we would have issued him a notice to</p>

appear, indicating that he would need to go before an immigration judge in order to deal with his status, or lack thereof."

The official said he didn't know when Sun would be deported.

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HEADLINE	03/31 Monroe police raid pawn shop
SOURCE	http://www.heraldnet.com/news/nw-gold-buyers-pawn-shop-raided-by-police/
GIST	<p>MONROE — On a billiards table in the center of the pawn shop's back room, police pulled up a white sheet to reveal enough probiotics, Claritin and pregnancy tests to stock a pharmacy aisle.</p> <p>Cardboard boxes full of pills, from Allegra to Zyrtec, lined the walls of the store. Many still had QFC tags.</p> <p>Monroe police believe the owner of NW Gold Buyers knew he'd been fencing thousands of dollars in shoplifted goods online over the past two years.</p> <p>On Friday morning, a half-dozen officers raided the business in a strip mall on Highway 99, the climax of a two-year investigation that led officers from the owner's defunct pawn shop in Monroe to his new storefront near Lynnwood.</p> <p>Police dumped a mound of Flonase bottles onto the floor in a back room, sifting through them for signs that they were obviously stolen.</p> <p>"Whoa!" an officer said. "The fair market value is \$2,500 for that box."</p> <p>At first they expected to be in the store all day, making an exhaustive inventory. Once they saw the scope of the task, they decided to bring all of the merchandise back to the police station, to add it up later. They picked things off shelves, off the pool table and out of the moving boxes.</p> <p>Online ads say NW Gold Buyers will pay "top dollar" for jewelry, coins, watches and silver. Search warrant papers say the owner was, in reality, often offering 12 to 20 percent of retail value for razors, medications and other items that could be concealed and stolen en mass from legitimate stores. Customers showed up to sell, not to buy. The merchandise was kept behind a locked door. The business had a core of about 20 people who would sell goods, officer Nathan Erdmann said.</p> <p>"It was all a front," Erdmann said. "At the other one, he actually had stuff for sale up front, but that wasn't what this business was about."</p> <p>The case began because of a missing vacuum cleaner. Theft prevention workers at a hardware store reported the possible theft in January 2016, and relayed that a new pawn shop in Monroe might be taking stolen goods. Erdmann studied security video from the vacuum case. He recognized the suspect as an often-homeless heroin user. He checked an online database and noticed "odd transactions that were not typical of items that would be purchased by a pawn shop," according to the search warrant affidavit.</p> <p>Rogaine, Nicorette, teeth-whitening kits, electric toothbrushes as well as memory supplements, allergy medication, routers and electric razors were standard fare. Other local businesses reported a spike in thefts of health and beauty products.</p> <p>Hints that a large-scale investigation was under way can be found in 2-year-old arrest reports. One Monroe man, then 29, admitted in 2016 to stealing electric razors to pawn so he could buy heroin. He'd made 59 transactions for more than \$7,600 at One Stop Pawn Shop over three months. He told officers he typically received 30 percent the product's worth, indicating his theft total during that time was about \$22,000.</p> <p>Police worked closely with local businesses, enlisted undercover officers from other agencies, interviewed</p>

theft suspects and used confidential informants during the course of the investigation. Thieves told police they were making a beeline to the One Stop Pawn Shop.

Police believe the goods were sold online, on Amazon or eBay.

One Stop Pawn was closing in the fall of 2016, when Erdmann paid the owner a visit. Near the end of the chat, Erdmann shared his suspicions.

“I told him that the stores in Monroe were cleaned out of many of the items that he was buying because there was so much theft,” he wrote, in the affidavit for the search warrant that was served Friday. “I told him that if he was not already closing down his business I would be coming after him and find some way to charge him, because no reasonable person could look at the things he was buying and not know (they were) stolen ... I asked if that made sense, and he acknowledged that it did.”

Even after the business was shuttered, Erdmann kept a watchful eye. He learned that the suspect would meet at night in and around Lynnwood with people wanting to sell bags of stolen goods.

A confidential informant reported being given specific lists of items to steal, including Prevagen, Viviscal, Crest 3D Luxe and Alli, an over-the-counter weight loss pill.

In February 2017, the new business was registered in a triangular strip mall on Highway 99, between Everett and Lynnwood.

Video surveillance showed people waiting in parking lots late at night for the pawn shop owner to drive up in a Mercedes to conduct business.

One confidential informant told police the owner was getting nervous, inquiring about any possible connection to Monroe and saying he’d heard there might be a rat.

Police noticed an extremely high volume of traffic into the store by a small number of people. One man made 85 sales since October 2017. A woman had more than 90 transactions during the same period. In the online database, almost all of the transactions were listed as gift cards.

The suspect “has a common practice of entering transactions as the purchase of a gift card or multiple gift cards, when it is obvious that a large amount of unknown items is actually brought in,” Erdmann wrote. “Additionally, the frequency with which the same people routinely visit the store, taking bags and bags of items in on an almost daily basis, and sometimes twice in a day, would lead any reasonable person to question whether the items were legitimately obtained.”

Police believe the store had taken in about \$428,000 in revenue.

Outside the store, officers handcuffed the owner, 22, and booked him into the Snohomish County Jail for investigation of attempted trafficking in stolen property.

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HEADLINE	03/29 Bellevue: teen arrested in mosque fire
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/941490/bellevue-police-arrest-teen-in-fire-at-vacant-mosque/
GIST	<p>BELLEVUE, Wash. (AP) — Bellevue police say they’ve arrested a teenager they suspect of having started a fire at a vacant mosque.</p> <p>The Islamic Center of Eastside was closed after having been previously damaged in a January 2017 arson. It was burned again on March 21, and police said traffic camera footage showed a group of five people running from the building moments before the fire.</p>

	<p>The Bellevue Police Department said in a news release Thursday that school resource officers recognized them. Investigators located them on Tuesday and brought them in for questioning. One of the five, an 18-year-old, was identified as the primary suspect and booked into the King County Jail for investigation of first-degree arson.</p> <p>Investigators say there is no indication the fire was a hate crime or bias-related.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Arrests in casino loansharking probe
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/two-arrested-in-loansharking-money-laundering-probe-at-tuwkila-casino
GIST	<p>TUKWILA, Wash. -- The Washington State Gambling commission says an employee of the Macau Casino in Tukwila made high-interest loans of cash and chips to 100 customers and fellow employees for at least \$300,000.</p> <p>The same casino worker also laundered \$1.5 million through the casino, the Gambling Commission said. The amount is 10 times the worker's reported annual income, the commission said. The source of the money is under investigation.</p> <p>As a result of the investigation, the worker, a 45-year-old woman, and her 27-year-old boyfriend were arrested earlier this month and booked into jail.</p> <p>The gambling commission also suspended the license of the general manager of the casino. The manager, a 48-year-old man from Federal Way, knew about the money laundering and loansharking but didn't report the activity, the Gambling Commission says.</p> <p>Complaints had come to the Gambling Commission and Tukwila Police Department in the last two years about loansharking and money laundering at the casino.</p> <p>The investigation showed the employee was loaning cash and chips, then charging what the commission called "exorbitant interest rates." In some case, the interest rates were 10 times the maximum amount state law allows.</p> <p>The worker targeted people who had gambling problems. Many made minimum wage and had a hard time covering the monthly or weekly interest of 10 to 15 percent on the loans, the Gambling Commission said.</p> <p>The worker and her boyfriend and others "utilized fear tactics and threatened violence in order to collect on debts."</p> <p>Search warrants at the woman's home turned up a luxury vehicle, jewelry, big-screen TVs, high-end handbags and numerous smartphones, tablets and gaming platforms in the original packaging, the Gambling Commission said.</p> <p>Agents also seized more than \$45,000 in cash.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Arrest in Seattle home invasion
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/arrest-in-seattle-home-invasion-that-left-elderly-woman-shot-2-still-at-large/281-533717000
GIST	<p>Seattle police have arrested one suspect wanted in connection with a home invasion robbery and the shooting of an elderly woman earlier this month. Two additional suspects are still on the loose.</p>

	<p>Police arrested the 23-year-old man Friday afternoon, according to an SPD Blotter post.</p> <p>Detectives spotted the suspect at a gas station near the 500 block of S Dearborn Street.</p> <p>On March 6, an elderly couple on Renton Avenue S. had just arrived home from the store when police say two suspects walked up and asked for directions.</p> <p>The woman was shot. She was also pistol-whipped in the head by the suspects. The two teenage suspects ran off with the woman's purse with \$60 inside.</p> <p>A neighbor's surveillance camera captured a grainy photo of a red Kia Spectra.</p> <p>A few days later, a patrol officer found the Kia parked in a parking lot on the 9400 block of Rainier Avenue South. Another surveillance camera captured footage of the suspects climbing into a late model, silver Toyota Corolla Hybrid.</p> <p>One suspect is described as a light-skinned black male in his late teens, 6 feet tall, wearing a white jacket and white pants and armed with a black handgun. A second suspect is described as a light-skinned black teen, 5 feet 6 inches tall, skinny, wearing a blue jacket and dark pants. He had a mustache at the time of the attack. (It's not yet known which suspect was arrested.)</p> <p>Seattle police believe a third suspect was driving the getaway car.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 'Palm Sunday Massacre' gunman freed
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/03/31/palm-sunday-massacre-gunman-who-killed-10-people-in-1984-discreetly-released-from-prison.html
GIST	<p>The gunman behind the 1984 "Palm Sunday Massacre" that left 10 people dead and was considered one of New York City's largest mass shootings in decades was quietly released from prison in January.</p> <p>Christopher Thomas, 68, was released from Shawangunk Correctional Facility on Jan. 5 and is believed to be residing in Queens, NY, the New York Post reported. He was released after serving about two-thirds of his 50-year maximum sentence, good behavior and fulfilling other criteria, a New York State Department of Corrections spokesperson said.</p> <p>"The parole board did not let him out," the spokesperson said. "He had five appearances before the parole board and was denied every time. He doesn't need board approval because he served two-thirds."</p> <p>Thomas was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to 25 to 50 years in 1985, following the massacre. He was able to avoid a murder rap because it was determined his heavy cocaine usage "contributed to his actions," the New York Post reported.</p> <p>A sole motive for the slaying was never determined.</p> <p>On Palm Sunday in 1984, Thomas shot and killed 10 people in an apartment in Brooklyn. Thomas was embroiled in a dispute with the apartment owner, convicted drug dealer Enrique Bermudez. The victims of the slaying were Bermudez's pregnant wife, another adult woman, and eight children.</p> <p>One person survived the shooting, a toddler named Christina Rivera who was adopted by a police officer who was at the scene of the slayings, The New York Times reported.</p> <p>Ray Kelly, the former commissioner of the New York Police Department [NYPD] said Thomas' "heinous crime warranted the maximum penalty."</p>

	Retired NYPD Lt. Herbert Hohmann told the New York Post that Thomas does not deserve to be free. “He doesn’t deserve to be on the street. He killed poor, innocent children,” Hohmann said.
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HEADLINE	03/29 Probing allegations Syrian war crimes
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/investigators-quietly-probe-allegations-syrian-war-crimes-n858641
GIST	<p>In a drab office building in a European capital amid the sound of humming document scanners, a team of human rights lawyers is hard at work processing thousands of documents that they say link the Syrian government to war crimes.</p> <p>The papers point to an unmistakable conclusion, according to those leading the effort: The government of Syria's President Bashar al-Assad has violated the international rules of war through attacks on civilians, torture, rape, and the use of chemical weapons, among other crimes.</p> <p>“We have stronger evidence than we had for any past conflicts, any past tribunals, any past international justice efforts,” said Chris Engels, deputy director of the Commission for International Justice and Accountability, which has been documenting human rights abuses by Syrian officials since the start of the civil war in 2011.</p> <p>According to CIJA adviser Stephen Rapp, the Syrian government meticulously documented its treatment of thousands of detainees — a product of its large bureaucracy. As a result, thousands of leaked photos mean prosecutors have far stronger evidence of war crimes than what existed to convict the Nazis at Nuremberg, said Rapp, the former U.S. ambassador-at-large for war crimes issues under President Barack Obama.</p> <p>The documents amassed so far form a “paper trail of war crimes” noteworthy for their specificity, according to Engels, who requested NBC News not reveal the location of the group's office out of concern for investigators’ safety and the security of the evidence. The documents are stored in a vault.</p> <p>The group's 140-person staff is made up of lawyers, investigators, and translators. That includes more than 40 "document hunters" in Syria whose mission is to extract material produced by the regime, authorizing the detention, torture, and execution of people for suspected anti-government activity.</p> <p>Documents identify who in the regime signed off on what, who was targeted, and why. In some cases where the documents indicate that a prisoner admitted to participating in anti-regime activity, CIJA tracked down the accused, who later said their confessions were extracted through torture.</p> <p>The organization was founded by Bill Wiley, a Canadian former war crimes investigator, as news reports began surfacing of widespread abuses by the Assad regime in 2011. It receives funding from Western countries, including the British and Canadian governments, to carry out its work.</p> <p>Added to the trove of documents is vital visual evidence: roughly 50,000 photos shot between the start of the war in 2011 and 2013, cataloging more than 6,700 victims of torture by pro-regime forces. They were taken by a forensic photographer known by the pseudonym Caesar who worked for the Syrian military and smuggled them out of the country on hard drives in 2013.</p> <p>Assad has disputed the veracity of the photos, but Human Rights Watch called the images authentic. The New York-based group confirmed the identity of 27 victims in the photos through interview with relatives, while former prisoners and defectors have corroborated the widespread torture in government prisons. In a separate analysis, the FBI confirmed a portion of the photo trove as authentic. So did a U.N. report.</p> <p>Caesar’s photos show emaciated corpses, many stripped naked, arrayed on the ground — some with</p>

gouged-out eyes, bloodied genitals, and severed fingers. Many show signs of bruises, burn marks, and gashes covering discolored skin.

Other investigators and activists have also collected testimony, images and videos documenting atrocities committed by all sides during Syria's war, a U.N. quasi-prosecutorial body has said. The team announced Monday that it is preparing case files and has engaged with war crimes investigative units of different countries including in Europe, whose courts can exercise universal jurisdiction to prosecute.

CIJA's goal is to prove government officials' individual criminal culpability, from the highest echelons in Damascus down to the provincial level. The Syrian government's formalized command-and-control structure, as well as its careful record-keeping, make that work easier.

The Syrian government is "process driven," Engels said. Directives — even those authorizing torture — were documented "to make sure that everyone does what they're supposed to be doing."

CIJA's work is logistically difficult and comes with significant risks. Over the course of the war, where rebels seized regime territory, CIJA's document hunters entered abandoned government facilities and extracted material — USBs, computer hard drives, reams of paper — that might contain evidence of war crimes.

Next they had to safely store the material, and when possible, smuggle it through checkpoints and out of Syria. Engels says no one directly employed by CIJA was ever killed in the process, but people who worked closely with the team were.

Once the documents are ferried out of Syria, the rest of the CIJA team sifts through them to build cases for future criminal prosecutions.

Despite what CIJA and other investigators consider to be clear and overwhelming evidence of war crimes by Assad's government, the regime remains more firmly entrenched than at any other point in the war due in large part to the support of Russia, Iran and Iran-backed Lebanese militia Hezbollah.

Now a concern among human rights lawyers pursuing a case against Assad's government is that victims of the regime will never see officials held to account.

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HEADLINE	03/31 Violence threatens Mexico tourism
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/03/31/mexico-tourist-fears-violence-cancun-los-cabos/471115002/
GIST	<p>PLAYA DEL CARMEN, Mexico — Tourists taking the ferry from this tourist town to the island of Cozumel now walk down a wharf lined with police, heavily armed soldiers and bomb-sniffing dogs.</p> <p>Those safeguards came after a Feb. 21 explosion ripped through one of the ferries, injuring 24 people, including five Americans. Explosives were later found on another ferry owned by the same company.</p> <p>"It's something that makes you feel safer," Roberto Cintrón, president of the Cancún hotel owners' association, said about the soldiers and security after a recent ferry ride to Cozumel. "It's the complete opposite situation of the insecurity many people think of."</p> <p>Numerous reports about crime and tourist tragedies have made recent headlines as the violence plaguing this country erupts in cities popular with foreign visitors.</p> <p>Incidents causing concern in Cancún and outlying Quintana Roo state range from bars allegedly serving adulterated liquor to unsuspecting tourists to police targeting visitors in rental cars for bribes.</p>

A vacationing Iowa family of four was found dead March 23 in a condo in Tulum on the Caribbean coast. Authorities suspect the cause was a gas leak from a faulty water heater

Violence in resort cities such as Cancún, Playa del Carmen (in Quintana Roo state) and Los Cabos resembles the rest of the country, but it threatens Mexico's lucrative tourism industry.

"The common thread in Los Cabos and Quintana Roo is the public security system had been totally dismantled," said Francisco Rivas, director of the National Citizen Observatory, which monitors security issues in Mexico. "There were prosecutor's offices that didn't investigate and police that couldn't prevent or react to crime."

Analysts offer a variety of explanations for the rising crime across Mexico, from drug cartels to the U.S. opioid crisis prompting cartels to switch from growing marijuana to producing heroin.

Mexico had the most murders on record in 2017, with 29,158 homicides. The homicide rate in the first two months of 2018 was already up 21% over the same period last year.

The U.S. State Department in January issued a strict travel advisory for five Mexican states, including Guerrero, home to Acapulco and Ixtapa. The "do not travel to" advisory put the states of Sinaloa, Colima, Michoacán, Guerrero and Tamaulipas (on the Texas border) on the same level as war-torn countries like Syria.

Mexico's Tourism Secretariat said the advisory was based on crime statistics and atrocities "not related to incidents that directly affected foreign visitors."

The secretariat noted the list did not include Mexico's five biggest tourist destinations: Cancún, the Mayan Riviera, Los Cabos, Puerto Vallarta-Riviera Nayarit and Mexico City.

The U.S. government closed its consular agency here in Playa del Carmen in early March, citing a security threat after the ferry explosion, but service has since resumed. Mexican authorities said the explosion was unrelated to organized crime.

Cintrón, the hotelier, said violence strikes overwhelmingly in areas not visited by tourists. Hotel occupancy hovers at 83%, roughly the same as the same time last year, he said.

"This is not happening in tourist areas," Cintrón said. "There have been cases, we can't deny that" in the tourist areas, he added, "But it's something very targeted" and not putting tourists at risk.

Mexico welcomed nearly 40 million foreign visitors in 2017, and tourism accounts for 8% of the country's GDP. Tourist hotspots also attract millions of Mexicans seeking jobs.

"There's lots of work here and it pays better," said Fabiola López, a waitress who moved to Playa del Carmen from Chiapas, Mexico's poorest state. "I was able to buy a house."

Tourists often ask about security, said Israel Uribe, a concierge in Playa del Carmen. After a shootout on the tourist strip here in early 2017, his bosses instructed him, "Don't say anything" when asked about security.

Some in this region support the U.S. tourist advisory, saying that's the only way the Mexican government will take security issues seriously.

"This is something that will open our government's eyes, that the threat here is real," said Daniel Villaseñor Pérez, a lawyer and community activist in Cancún.

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HEADLINE	03/30 China: gangs smuggled \$80M via drones
SOURCE	http://money.cnn.com/2018/03/30/technology/drone-iphones-smugglers-china/index.html
GIST	<p>Smugglers in China are going high-tech.</p> <p>Chinese authorities busted a criminal ring that allegedly used drones to smuggle almost \$80 million worth of Apple (AAPL) iPhones and other smartphones, according to state media.</p> <p>Chinese customs officials told state media the suspects illegally transported up to 15,000 devices per night across the border from Hong Kong to the neighboring city of Shenzhen.</p> <p>Authorities said the gang used drones to suspend two, 200 meter-long cables between buildings on either side of the border. Bags carrying smartphones were attached to the cables and then pulled over to Shenzhen.</p> <p>Customs officers said it was the first case they had encountered where drones were used to smuggle goods, according to state media. The bust was made in February as part of a joint operation between authorities in the two cities.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Maryland: 6 suspected MS-13 indicted
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/federal-jury-indicts-alleged-ms-13-members-maryland-54127115
GIST	<p>A federal grand jury in Maryland has indicted six alleged members of a violent street gang that's been a prime Trump administration target.</p> <p>Six defendants — ranging in age from 19 to 22 — were charged in a nine-count indictment unsealed this week. The alleged members of MS-13, a gang with deep Central American ties, are charged with murder, conspiracy and racketeering.</p> <p>The men, all living in Annapolis, were detained on federal or state criminal charges and their initial court appearances have not yet taken place, according to prosecutors. Their immigration status was not immediately clear.</p> <p>The latest indictments come roughly two weeks after a MS-13 member from another Maryland community was convicted in a federal racketeering conspiracy. Raul Ernesto Landaverde Giron of Silver Spring, just outside of Washington D.C., was found guilty of murder in aid of racketeering and faces a mandatory sentence of life in prison.</p> <p>Following that conviction, U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions said Maryland has "suffered terribly" because of the "uniquely barbaric" gang's criminal activities.</p> <p>In charges announced Thursday, Juan Carlos Sandoval Rodriguez, 20, is accused of luring a victim to a park in Annapolis, where he and other alleged MS-13 members and associates murdered him. Prosecutors believe the March 2016 killing was motivated by a desire to enhance or maintain rank within the gang or gain status as a member.</p> <p>In October 2016, four defendants allegedly attempted to murder two others in Annapolis, largely by stabbing the victims repeatedly.</p> <p>Last year, Sessions designated MS-13 as a "priority" for the Department of Justice's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force. That designation directs prosecutors to pursue all legal avenues to target the gang and lets local police agencies tap into federal money to help pay for gang-related investigations.</p> <p>MS-13, or the Mara Salvatrucha, is believed by federal prosecutors to have thousands of members</p>

	nationwide, primarily immigrants from Central America. It emerged in the 1980s from a stronghold in Los Angeles. But its true rise began after members were deported back to El Salvador in the 1990s.
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HEADLINE	03/30 Calif. gov. pardons men facing deportation
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/california-governor-pardons-men-facing-deportation-54136644
GIST	<p>California Gov. Jerry Brown on Friday pardoned five ex-convicts facing deportation, including two whose families fled the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia four decades ago.</p> <p>The pardons don't automatically stop deportation proceedings, but eliminate the state convictions federal authorities based their deportation decisions on. That gives the men's lawyers strong legal arguments before immigration judges to try to prevent the deportations.</p> <p>"The pardon does provide enormous benefit to immigrants facing deportation," said Anoop Prasad, an immigration staff attorney at Asian Law Caucus.</p> <p>Brown's intervention for the men — among 56 pardoned — marked the Democratic governor's third consecutive pardon round in which he intervened on behalf of immigrants who were deported or faced deportation because of criminal convictions. Brown has accused the administration of President Donald Trump of "basically going to war" with California over immigration policy.</p> <p>Brown last year signed sanctuary legislation limiting state and local cooperation with federal enforcement of immigration laws. U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions responded with a Department of Justice lawsuit seeking to invalidate three state laws protecting residents living in the country without documentation.</p> <p>Those pardoned Friday included Sokha Chhan and Phann Pheach, both of whom face deportation to Cambodia, a country ruled in the 1970s by the genocidal Khmer Rouge. Chhan was convicted of two counts of misdemeanor domestic violence in 2002 and served 364 days in jail.</p> <p>Pheach was convicted of possessing drugs and obstructing a police officer in 2005 and served six months in jail. His wife said he is in federal custody.</p> <p>Also pardoned was Daniel Maher, who was convicted in 1995 of kidnapping, robbery and being a felon in possession of a firearm and served five years in prison. Maher is facing deportation to China.</p> <p>Chhan, Pheach and Maher hold permanent U.S. residency but had exhausted all legal avenues to fight deportation, making Brown's pardons for them their last hope to stay in the U.S., Prasad said.</p> <p>"This is a life-changing, enormous event," he said.</p> <p>Also pardoned while facing deportation were Daniel Mena and Francisco Acevedo Alaniz, but their home countries were not immediately known. Mena was convicted in 2003 of possessing illegal drugs. Alaniz served five months in prison for a 1997 auto theft conviction.</p> <p>Brown on Friday also commuted the sentences of 14 others convicted of crimes.</p> <p>The governor is a former Jesuit seminarian and traditionally issues pardons close to major Christian holidays. Easter falls on Sunday.</p> <p>California's longest-serving governor has now issued 1,519 pardons, including 404 during his first two terms as governor from 1975 to 1983.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/30 Kentucky: cop killer suspect dead
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/kentucky-police-officer-gunned-suspected-cop-impersonator/story?id=54122297
GIST	<p>An off-duty police officer in a close-knit Kentucky community was gunned down on March 29 by a man who allegedly was pretending to be a cop.</p> <p>Here is what we know about the shooting, the manhunt and the slain officer.</p> <p>At about 5:10 p.m. Thursday, Hopkinsville police officer Phillip Meacham was off-duty and in his personal car but responding to a "potential criminal situation" when he was pulled over by a man pretending to be a police officer, according to police and the mayor of Hopkinsville.</p> <p>"Shortly after that" Meacham was shot, the Hopkinsville police said.</p> <p>The suspected gunman, 34-year-old James DeCoursey of Hopkinsville, fled on foot and stole a pickup truck, the Kentucky State Police said.</p> <p>Meacham, a married father of two, died at a hospital, authorities said.</p> <p>In the middle of the night, authorities zeroed in on the stolen truck in a restaurant parking lot in Clarksville, Tennessee, a city just across the border from Kentucky that's about 30 miles south of Hopkinsville.</p> <p>At about the same time, a call came in to police from a hotel across the street, reporting that a man who looked like the suspect was there asking for a cigarette, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation said.</p> <p>Authorities were headed toward the hotel when two Montgomery County Sheriff's deputies and a U.S. Marshal came across DeCoursey walking across the street back toward the restaurant, the TBI said.</p> <p>It appeared DeCoursey "ignored repeated commands and the situation escalated," resulting in the officers firing at DeCoursey and killing him, the TBI said.</p> <p>No law enforcement officers were injured in that shooting, the TBI said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Escaped ICE detainee caught in Chicago
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/prisoner-escaped-ice-custody-jfk-airport-captured-chicago/story?id=54143321
GIST	<p>The prisoner who escaped from immigration officials at John F. Kennedy International Airport earlier this week was captured halfway across the country on Friday.</p> <p>An Immigration and Customs Enforcement official confirmed Mohamadou Lamine Mbacke was taken into custody in Chicago Friday afternoon. Chicago ABC station WLS reported Mbacke was found while at a Starbucks at about 1:30 p.m.</p> <p>Mbacke, 31, was spotted by undercover officers at the coffee shop, according to a witness.</p> <p>"All of a sudden see seven cops kind of running from the outside into the inside, and they kinda huddled around him. There wasn't any fuss or anything, it was just they all exchanged words with him, they got the handcuffs, and they left in like a group huddle," Zimbo Gessert, a Starbucks employee, told WLS.</p> <p>Mbacke was being deported to his native Senegal on Tuesday night when he bailed from Terminal 4 at JFK Airport at about 8:30 p.m. According to ICE, surveillance footage showed Mbacke hailing a cab and</p>

	<p>driving off.</p> <p>The prisoner was with officials at JFK while waiting for a connecting flight from Detroit to Dakar. New York ABC station WABC, citing sources, said the officials had turned to get him food when he took off.</p> <p>It is not clear how he got to Chicago.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/31 Texas: woman gets 5yrs for illegal vote
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/texas-woman-sentenced-years-prison-illegally-voting-2016/story?
GIST	<p>A trip to her local polling place may have earned a Texas woman five years behind bars.</p> <p>Crystal Mason was sentenced to five years in prison this week after she voted in the 2016 election while on parole, according to Dallas ABC affiliate WFAA. Mason was on parole after serving time for a federal tax crime, her lawyer said.</p> <p>"She had a good faith belief she could vote legally and she did so," Mason's attorney Warrent St. John told WFAA.</p> <p>The 43-year-old Mason says she had no idea she was committing a crime. Mason voted in Tarrant County, just west of Dallas.</p> <p>"She testified this week in court that she was never told by the federal judge she couldn't vote," St. John said. "She was never told by halfway house folks she couldn't vote."</p> <p>Mason did not want to speak when reached by WFAA, but she told The Dallas Morning News she "didn't even want to vote."</p> <p>Texas law states it is illegal for a felon to vote while serving their sentence, including while on parole.</p> <p>"Our society is built on personal responsibility," Tarrant County District Attorney Sharen Wilson said in a statement given to WFAA. "There were multiple safeguards in place to keep Crystal Mason from breaking the law, but she still made that choice."</p> <p>Mason has already appealed the conviction, WFAA reported.</p>
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THURSDAY – 29 MAR 2018



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HEADLINE	03/28 Audit: Portland police still w/gang list
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/audit-finds-portland-police-maintain-list-of-gang-members/
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Portland police still maintain an informal list of active gang members despite discontinuing a formal gang designation practice following criticism from community advocates last year, according to a city audit.</p> <p>Portland auditors were examining the operations of the police bureau’s Gang Enforcement Team when they discovered that it has kept the list since 2015, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported Wednesday.</p> <p>The list that’s posted on the bureau’s intranet is not supervised and does not include a method for notifying subjects on it, auditors said. The list contains information of about 30 people, including their names, addresses, gang affiliations and details on their probation or supervision.</p> <p>The list is used to provide investigators with potential leads, ultimately aiming to prevent victimization and violence, said Sgt. Pete Simpson, a bureau spokesman.</p> <p>“The purpose is to identify people who have demonstrated that they are at risk for being involved in gang-related violence, based on recent involvement in such incidents,” Simpson said.</p> <p>The bureau ended a gang designation system last fall after about two decades of operation. Under that system, officers were required to record evidence that people met criteria to be on the list. Police also had to notify people on the list and provide an opportunity for them to appeal the designation.</p> <p>City Auditor Mary Hull Caballero said police need supervision over the active list, noting the 1994 ruling by a federal judge that prohibited Portland police from designating gang members without due process.</p> <p>Police Chief Danielle Outlaw said guidelines for the list will be drafted by July. The guidelines are expected to cover how police identify people for the list and how its information is used.</p> <p>“As a police agency, we remain committed to transparency and are willing to always pursue enhancements that benefit the bureau’s efforts in ensuring public safety in our service of the Portland community,” Outlaw said in a statement.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Activists urge no settlement w/police claim
SOURCE	https://www.thestranger.com/slog/2018/03/28/25968058/activists-urge-city-not-to-settle-police-officers-defamation-claim-against-kshama-sawant

GIST	<p>The two Seattle police officers who fatally shot Che Taylor and later sued City Council Member Kshama Sawant for defamation withdrew their lawsuit in January.</p> <p>But officers Michael Spaulding and Scott Miller are still asking for damages over remarks Sawant made to win in 2016, alleging the council member defamed them when she called Taylor’s death a “brutal murder” involving “racial profiling.” Neither officer was charged for the shooting after a fact-finding inquest found they both feared for their lives before Taylor’s death.</p> <p>Last month, the officers filed a claim with the City of Seattle for an unspecified amount of damages over the same allegations. And this time, they want to settle the case out of court. Attorney Daniel Brown sent a letter to Council President Bruce Harrell on February 2 requesting mediation of the claims, rather than a court case, “in the hopes of resolving what would otherwise be a very public and costly dispute.” The city has until April 2 to respond to the claim, after which the officers would have the option of pursuing another lawsuit. Brown did not respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>Activists gathered at the steps of City Hall today to pressure officials not to pay the officers damages for their defamation claim. Andre Taylor, the brother of Che Taylor, said settling would set a dangerous precedent.</p> <p>“We cannot afford for Seattle to cave into the demands of officers’ hurt feelings,” Taylor said. “They weren’t injured. No one physically harmed them. My brother was physically harmed and killed.”</p> <p>Emerson Johnson, an organizer leading the effort known as the Kshama Sawant Solidarity Campaign, pointed out that the officers’ original lawsuit stated that they “do not want one red cent of public money.”</p> <p>Other community activists who spoke in support of Sawant included former mayoral candidate Nikkita Oliver, the Democratic Socialist of America’s Shaun Scott, and Jenn Kaplan, Seattle chapter president of the National Lawyers Guild. Sawant also spoke during the rally, but did not address the case, citing her lawyer’s advice.</p> <p>Free speech lawyers told Stranger reporter Heidi Groover in August that neither case stood a good chance of prevailing.</p> <p>Before the two officers dropped their lawsuit earlier this year, the City of Seattle agreed to represent Sawant over her comments about the Che Taylor shooting. That’s in addition to representing Sawant in a separate defamation case stemming from her calling the landlord Carl Haglund a “slumlord.” Lawyers for the city estimated that it may spend more than \$300,000 defending Sawant in the two cases.</p> <p>A spokesperson for the office of Finance and Administrative Services, which oversees claims against the city, did not immediately respond to request for comment.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 ACE Walla Walla deploy Puerto Rico
SOURCE	http://www.union-bulletin.com/local_columnists/etcetera/corps-of-engineers-deploys-aid-to-puerto-rico/article_06687ece-32aa-11e8-8d0a-2b6c36c33ecc.html
GIST	<p>Humanitarian work continues in Puerto Rico, where 19 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Walla Walla District employees deployed this past week to support Federal Emergency Management Agency’s hurricane-recovery efforts.</p> <p>Hurricane Maria ravaged Dominica and Puerto Rico between Sept. 16-Oct. 2, doing an estimated \$91.6 billion in damage, according to 60 sources for an article on Wikipedia.</p> <p>The work after 183 days on March 22 includes 99.9 percent completed temporary blue roof installs on 59,469 eligible structures; 96 percent temporary emergency power with 2,057 tasks complete out of 2,149</p>

total sites; 96 percent completed debris management for 21 out of 55 municipalities completed and 3.75 million cubic yards out of 3.9 million cubic yards assigned.

Most customers in the island's regions are seeing 93.4 percent restoration to their power as the grid is repaired, except for Caguas, which stood at 73 percent customers with power.

Fifteen of the Walla Walla District Corps volunteers deployed with its temporary emergency power response team to support FEMA's nonfederal generator operations and maintenance mission. Four volunteered to provide support to FEMA's power grid restoration mission.

District emergency management officials added that a safety and occupational health specialist deployed to support FEMA's California wildfire recovery mission in Sonoma County in the wake of the October fires; and two engineers with expertise in cost estimation are providing reach-back support to FEMA missions from their offices in the District Headquarters in Walla Walla.

The volunteers come from duty locations around the District, including Walla Walla Headquarters; Ice Harbor Lock and Dam near Burbank; McNary Lock and Dam near Umatilla; Little Goose Lock and Dam near Starbuck; Lower Monumental Lock and Dam near Kahlotus; Dworshak Dam and Reservoir near Ahsahka, Idaho; and Lucky Peak Dam and Lake near Boise.

While deployed, volunteers are serving in such roles as contract specialist, area officer and mission liaison, and safety and quality assurance specialists, mission managers, electrical engineers and electricians.

In addition to having the technical knowledge and skills needed for a specific deployment position, employee-volunteers must have their supervisor's permission to deploy, meet FEMA and Corps training requirements and complete a medical screening to be approved to go.

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HEADLINE	03/29 State studying preparedness priorities
SOURCE	http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2018/mar/29/state-studying-priorities-to-prepare-for-killer-qu/
GIST	<p>Washington will spend about \$1.4 million in the next 15 months to start determining the top priorities for protecting institutions and buildings against a major earthquake or tsunami.</p> <p>They are looming catastrophes the state can anticipate, but not predict.</p> <p>Or as Gov. Jay Inslee put it Wednesday during a meeting of state and local officials, it's something you know is going to happen sometime: "It's like the Mariners winning the World Series. You just don't know what year it's going to be."</p> <p>Historically, the Cascadia Subduction Zone of the Pacific Coast has had a catastrophic quake every 200 to 600 years, and the last one was 318 years ago.</p> <p>"That puts us right in the middle of the window," said Robert Ezelle, director of the state Emergency Management Division.</p> <p>The state's entire Pacific Coast, which has about 200,000 people during the tourist season, is a tsunami zone, he said. It also has schools on the lowlands that aren't built with shelters to be above the waves, and would be difficult to evacuate to higher ground.</p> <p>A Cascadia quake of 9.0 magnitude, and the following tsunami, would likely do the most damage. It's estimated at \$49 billion in Washington alone, Ezelle said, with recovery taking years.</p> <p>But other geologic faults on both sides of the state have the potential for significant destruction, particularly for buildings that aren't built to current standards. Those faults pose a significant risk too,</p>

Ezelle said. Over the next 50 years, there's an 80 percent chance of a destructive quake in one of those faults, compared with a 10 to 20 percent probability of a Cascadia Subduction Zone quake.

Among the buildings most at risk would be unreinforced masonry buildings, or URMs, where ceilings and floors can collapse and the exteriors could fall on pedestrians or into the street, blocking traffic. An estimated 185,000 buildings could be vulnerable, including many historic buildings throughout the state that haven't been updated.

Again, schools are a problem.

The state has 200 school buildings within a mile of a geologic fault, said Corina Forson, chief hazard geologist for the Department of Natural Resources. It has 214 in high to moderate liquefaction zones, where the ground can "liquefy" in the tremors of a major quake.

The money from the capital budget is going to fix those problems. Retrofitting a single school can cost millions of dollars, said Alicia Henderson, superintendent of the Aberdeen School District. Her district has several schools in the tsunami zone.

The \$1.4 million will be spent to understand the scope of the problem and set priorities for where the state can best spend money in the future to prepare for quakes that will come sometime.

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HEADLINE	03/29 Japan opens talks w/NKorea
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/japan-opens-talks-with-north-korea-1522304420
GIST	<p>TOKYO—Japan said it has begun talks with North Korea through its embassy in Beijing, a sign that Tokyo doesn't want to be left on the sidelines in the recent flurry of diplomacy.</p> <p>North Korean leader Kim Jong Un visited Beijing this week for talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Mr. Kim is also set to meet South Korean President Moon Jae-in in April, followed by a planned summit with President Donald Trump.</p> <p>On Thursday, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's top aide, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga, said that Tokyo-Pyongyang talks have begun through the two countries' embassies in Beijing as well as through "various means." He declined to give details.</p> <p>That followed a phone call March 16 in which Mr. Abe told Mr. Moon that Tokyo wanted to talk to North Korea.</p> <p>Mr. Suga disclosed the talks when asked about a report in Japan's Asahi newspaper that North Korea's ruling party told party cadres a summit meeting between Messrs. Kim and Abe might take place in early June in Pyongyang. The Asahi said the association of North Korean residents in Japan, known as Chongryon, was serving as an intermediary for the Japan-North Korea talks, a role it has often played in the past.</p> <p>A Chongryon spokesman said the story was "not worth commenting on."</p> <p>Asked about a possible summit between North Korea and Japan, China Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang didn't respond directly but said Beijing hopes that such interactions will proceed smoothly and bolster regional peace and stability.</p> <p>Japan shares the concerns of its main ally, the U.S., about North Korea's development of missiles and nuclear weapons. Tokyo also wants to raise with Pyongyang the issue of Japanese abducted by North Korea in the 1970s and 1980s.</p>

	Speaking in Parliament on Wednesday, Mr. Abe acknowledged in response to a question that Japan could be left behind in the diplomatic rush and that the abductee issue—which he called “the most important item for Japan”—could get ignored. To prevent that, he said he would convey Japan’s views at an April meeting in Washington with Mr. Trump.
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HEADLINE	03/29 NBA game w/heavy police presence
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/d4e5e3b79b414bd68fefdb27c8f2289d/The-Latest:-Police-will-protect-NBA-game-from-protesters
GIST	<p>SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — The Latest on the fatal shooting of an unarmed man in Sacramento, California (all times local):</p> <p>8:10 p.m.</p> <p>The Sacramento Kings say there will be a heavy police presence to keep protesters from blocking fans from entering the team’s arena for a third time.</p> <p>Demonstrators upset by the fatal shooting of an unarmed black man by police in California’s capital earlier this month twice prevented thousands of fans from entering Golden 1 Center. Team members and owners supported the protest at another game, with members donning warm-up T-shirts honoring 22-year-old Stephon Clark.</p> <p>His funeral is Thursday at a Sacramento church.</p> <p>The team warned Wednesday night that they and Sacramento police are committed to avoiding another disruption for fans at Thursday night’s game with the Indiana Pacers.</p> <p>That will include a significant police presence around the arena, with security and ticket checks at the outskirts of the team’s property.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 More armed security officers in schools
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/8609138b5c2a43588658c58ea83af887/Study:-Armed-security-officers-are-on-the-rise-in-US-schools
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — Armed security officers are becoming more prevalent at America’s schools, according to a federal study released Thursday amid a heated debate over whether teachers and other school officials should carry guns.</p> <p>Armed officers were present at least once a week in 43 percent of all public schools during the 2015-16 school year, compared with 31 percent of schools a decade before, according to data from a survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics.</p> <p>Last month’s mass shooting at a Florida high school put renewed focus on the role of armed school security guards, after a video showed that a sheriff’s deputy at the school approached but did not enter the building where the attack was taking place.</p> <p>The study came out a day after Education Secretary Betsy DeVos kicked off a federal school safety panel. DeVos has said that schools should have the option to arm teachers. She’s being criticized by teachers’ unions for not including educators, students and experts in the panel, which consists only of her and three other Cabinet secretaries.</p> <p>The percentage of schools with a security guard, a school resource officer or other sworn law enforcement</p>

officer on campus at least once a week has gone up from 42 percent in 2005-06 to 57 percent a decade later. While security at schools of all grade levels increased, the shift is clearer among elementary schools, where the share with security staff has gone from 26 percent to 45 percent in the same time period.

“There has been an increase in security staff in school over the last 10 years and it’s more pronounced at the primary school level,” said Lauren Musu-Gillette, lead author of the report.

Experts, however, are divided on whether putting such officers on school campuses will make the schools safer or frighten children and lead to more arrests.

School resource officers are sworn law enforcement personnel who have been trained to work in schools. Their duties include controlling outside traffic, patrolling the school, maintaining discipline, identifying problems and mentoring at-risk students, teaching law-related classes and serving as liaisons between schools and police. The school security study released Thursday includes school resource officers, other sworn law enforcement and additional security staff.

Ronald Stephens, executive director of the National School Safety Council, agrees, saying that trained officers carrying weapons can help prevent a shooting inside the school and deter a possible shooter from entering.

“It sends the signal that the school is being watched and that the care and supervision of children is an important priority,” Stephens said.

Others have questions.

A 2013 congressional report found that the available research “draws conflicting conclusions about whether SRO programs are effective at reducing school violence.”

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HEADLINE	03/29 Neighbors reported family before crash
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/cbb50639639b41a29cf6a07bd81c056b/The-Latest:-6-kids-believed-to-be-in-SUV-that-went-off-cliff?utm_campaign=SocialFlow&utm_source=Twitter&utm_medium=APWestRegion
GIST	<p>MENDOCINO, Calif. (AP) — The Latest on a family who died when their SUV plunged off a cliff in California (all times local):</p> <p>5:35 p.m.</p> <p>A Washington state couple who lived next door to a family whose SUV plunged off a California cliff say they called authorities because they were concerned that one of the children was going hungry.</p> <p>Bruce and Dana DeKalb said Wednesday that they called child welfare officials Friday after becoming concerned that one of the children, Devonte Hart, had been coming to their house too often in the past week asking for food.</p> <p>Devonte gained widespread attention when he was photographed hugging a white officer during a 2014 protest over a fatal police shooting of a black man.</p> <p>Property records show married couple Jennifer and Sarah Hart and their children bought the two-story home in Woodland, Washington, on two acres with a fenced pasture in May 2017.</p> <p>The DeKalbs recounted a night three months after the family moved in when one of the girls rang their doorbell at 1:30 a.m.</p>

Bruce DeKalb says she “was at our door in a blanket saying we needed to protect her. She said that they were abusing her.”

5 p.m.

Authorities in Northern California say they believe all six children from a family were in a vehicle that plunged off a coastal cliff.

Mendocino County Sheriff Tom Allmon told reporters Wednesday that only three bodies of the children have been recovered. Their parents also died Monday.

He says specialized crash investigators are studying the scene for clues, but it’s very curious because there were no skid or brake marks. But Allmon says there’s no reason to believe the crash was a deliberate act.

The sheriff appealed for the public’s help in retracing where the family had been in recent days.

Allmon says a passer-by called 911 about the crash, but investigators don’t know exactly when the SUV plunged into the ocean. He says “an entire family vanished and perished during this tragedy.”

3:50 p.m.

One of three children who is missing after their siblings and parents were killed when their SUV plunged off a California cliff had gained fame when a picture of him hugging a white police officer during a protest went viral.

Fifteen-year-old Devonte Hart, who is black, was photographed during a 2014 protest in Portland, Oregon, over a grand jury’s decision not to indict a police officer in the shooting of a black man in Missouri.

Authorities say two women and three children were killed Monday when their SUV fell 100 feet from a cliff along Pacific Coast Highway in Mendocino County.

At the Portland rally Hart stood crying out of sadness over the events in Ferguson. He was holding a “Free Hugs” sign.

A Portland policeman saw his sign and asked if he could have a hug. The photo showed an emotional Devante embracing the officer.

3:20 p.m.

A woman who died when her family plunged off a Northern California cliff in an SUV pleaded guilty to a domestic assault charge in Minnesota in 2011.

Online court records say Sarah Hart’s plea in Douglas County, Minnesota, also led to the dismissal of a charge of malicious punishment of a child. No other details were immediately available.

The California Highway Patrol says she and another woman died along with their three children when their vehicle went off a cliff Monday. Their three other children are missing, and searchers are scouring the region.

	<p>—</p> <p>2 p.m.</p> <p>Authorities say they're searching for three children who are unaccounted for after their siblings and parents plunged off a Northern California cliff.</p> <p>The California Highway Patrol said Wednesday that 19-year-old Markis Hart, 14-year-old Jeremiah Hart and 14-year-old Abigail Hart died along with their parents, Jennifer and Sarah Hart.</p> <p>Their SUV plunged 100 feet from the Pacific Coast Highway onto rocks in the ocean Monday.</p> <p>Highway patrol says the couple's three other children haven't been found and searchers are scouring the region. They're using boats, aircraft and unmanned drones to look for 16-year-old Hannah Hart, 15-year-old Devonte Hart and 12-year-old Sierra Hart.</p> <p>The family lived in Woodland, Washington, a suburb of Portland, Oregon.</p> <p>California authorities say the family appeared to be on a short road trip because many belongings remained in the home along with chickens and a pet.</p> <p>—</p> <p>1:40 p.m.</p> <p>Authorities say child welfare officials in Washington state had recently visited the home of two women who died along with three children when their vehicle plunged off a cliff in Northern California.</p> <p>The California Highway Patrol identified the adult victims Wednesday as Jennifer Hart and Sarah Hart, both 39. The agency says their SUV was driving Monday on the Pacific Coast Highway when it pulled into a dirt turnout and continued driving off the cliff.</p> <p>Clark County sheriff's Sgt. Brent Waddell told The Associated Press that the family lived in Woodland, Washington, and recently had a visit from Child Protective Services.</p> <p>He says the sheriff's office later entered the house and found no obvious signs of trouble or violence.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Diabetes: most expensive health condition
SOURCE	https://health.usnews.com/health-care/for-better/articles/2018-03-28/diabetes-our-nations-most-expensive-health-condition
GIST	<p>The statistics are staggering: 1 in 11 Americans has diabetes; nearly 1 in every 2 adults has diabetes or prediabetes; and more than 300 million work days are lost to the economy due to diabetes. Diabetes is a disease that requires rigorous self-management and additional health care services and tools, and its heavy economic burden threatens the American economy.</p> <p>As detailed in the American Diabetes Association's new "Economic Costs of Diabetes in the U.S. in 2017" report, 1 in every 4 health care dollars spent in 2017 (24 percent) was for the care of people with diabetes, and 1 of every 7 health care dollars (14 percent) can be attributed directly to care for diabetes. In 2017, \$327 billion was spent on diagnosed diabetes. During our March 22 audience with Sens. Susan Collins and Jeanne Shaheen to release the report, it was clear the report's results sound the alarm bell once again about the devastating fiscal impact of diabetes on our nation: \$237 billion in direct medical costs and \$90 billion in reduced productivity; plus, diabetes resulted in 277,000 premature deaths.</p>

According to a 2016 report in the Journal of the American Medical Association, at \$327 billion annually, diabetes exceeds the costs of the other top five health care costs: cardiovascular diseases (\$231 billion); other noncommunicable diseases (\$192 billion); mental and substance abuse disorders (\$188 billion); musculoskeletal diseases (\$184 billion); and injuries (\$168 billion).

In 2017, America spent \$327 billion on both direct and indirect expenses for diagnosed diabetes. These costs are passed to each one of us, regardless of whether or not we have diabetes. Each of us contributes to covering these costs in the form of higher health insurance premiums, additional taxes, reduced earnings and reduced standard of living.

Since the 1990s, research advances resulting in reduced morbidity and mortality are impressive, and we have significantly improved the care and outcomes for people with diabetes – the vast majority of whom are living longer, healthier lives with diabetes. However, our research advances are tempered by the fact that the overall global burden of the disease is projected to increase by 48 percent by 2045. In the U.S., another individual is newly diagnosed with diabetes every 21 seconds (4,110 people today). And diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in America, killing more people than AIDS and breast cancer combined.

We must heed the warnings of the scientific evidence before us – diabetes is our nation's most expensive health condition. We must take action to reduce both the incidence and prevalence of diabetes, thereby reducing its costs.

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HEADLINE	03/28 America is on the move again
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2018-03-28/america-is-on-the-move-again-and-this-is-where-theyre-going
GIST	<p>No, Texas. Everyone doesn't want to move there, despite population trends showing that six of the 10 fastest-growing counties in the country are in the Lone Star State. Same goes for you, Arizona. Sure, you're growing, but not at the rate you were prior to the Great Recession. And California? You're only getting bigger at a faster rate than the national average because of immigration. You're actually losing more residents than you're gaining from migration from other states.</p> <p>U.S. Census numbers released recently show a shift in America's population to the Sunbelt, with states such as Texas, Utah, Florida, Colorado and Nevada showing double-digit growth in population from July 2010 to July 2017, with Southern and Western states such as Arizona, California, Georgia and the Carolinas growing at a rate faster than the 5.3 percent national average. But a closer look at the numbers indicates that the trends are more nuanced than a simple shift from the post-industrial Northeast and Midwest to warmer climes, demographers say.</p> <p>True, "the biggest-gaining metro areas are in the Sunbelt. But in many of these areas, the gains this year are not as big as they were in last year's (Census report)," says William Frey, a demographer with the Brookings Institution. "A lot of these places did not do very well during the recession" and are just picking up now, he says.</p> <p>People move for myriad reasons, experts note. The job market is a key driver, with people (especially more mobile younger workers) gravitating to places where they can find work. Housing costs both attract and repel would-be residents. And retirement has older people looking at places to spend their golden years – often in sunnier states, but in recreation-friendly areas like Bozeman, Montana (one of the fastest-growing micropolitan (smaller metro) areas in the country, from July 2016-17) or parts of outdoorsy New England.</p> <p>What's affecting all of those categories now, population analysts say, is the end of the Great Recession. Young people, burdened with student debt and unable to find jobs tended to stay put during the economic</p>

downturn (perhaps very local, as in their parents' basements). But now they are able to move for job opportunities, notes Kenneth Johnson, senior demographer at the Carsey School of Public Policy and professor of sociology at the University of New Hampshire. Retirees were also economically hamstrung, their 401(k)s suffering and with little ability to get a part-time job to supplement their retirement incomes.

The booming economy and strong housing market has released that pent-up demand, Johnson says. The current trends "reflect the start of a return to the migration patterns that were common before the Great Recession. The flow to the South had been fairly noticeable prior to the recession, and slowed down" during it, he explains.

"That kind of frozen-up migration that wasn't happening during the recession is making people, especially millennials, much more footloose than they were before," Frey says. "They may be spreading out a bit to other parts of the country more than they were before."

The result? For the one-year period ending July 2017, six Texas counties (Harris, Tarrant, Bexar, Dallas, Denton and Collin) were among the top-10 population gainers in numeric terms, according to the Census bureau. Maricopa County, Arizona, Clark County, Nevada, and Riverside County, California, took the first three spots, while King County, Washington, came in fourth. In terms of percentage growth, Texas dominates again, with three counties Comal (second), Hays (fourth) and Kendall (fifth) making the top 10. Counties in Virginia, Florida, Georgia and Utah made up the rest of the leaders in percentage growth.

Longer-term, trends indicate a move to the South and West as well. Statewide, Texas grew by 12.1 percent from 2008-17, while during that period Nevada expanded by 10.9 percent; Utah, by 11.8 percent; Colorado, by 11.1 percent; Arizona, by 9.5 percent, North Carolina, by 7.3 percent and South Carolina, by 8.4 percent.

Meanwhile, states like New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Michigan are growing more slowly than the 5.3 percent U.S. average (Illinois has actually lost population in absolute terms), part of a long-term trend reflecting the decline of the old industrial and manufacturing economies that long dominated the Northeast-Midwest region.

But it's not accurate to conclude that the population is flocking to the Sunbelt, experts say. Arizona, for example, is getting more populous (Maricopa County, where Phoenix is located, added the biggest number of resident from July 2016-July 2017, and Phoenix last year overtook Philadelphia as the nation's fifth-largest city). But growth in the state has not rebounded to the levels it was in the 1990s and early 2000s, says Tom Rex, associate director of the Center for Competitiveness and Prosperity Research at Arizona State University and an expert on Arizona demographics.

"What we are seeing here in the Phoenix area is a fair number of people moving here of retirement age, but not as many as you'd expect given the huge number of potential" retirees, Rex says. Meanwhile, the region is not attracting as many young people, since there aren't as many new jobs as there once was, he adds. Rex attributes that to the state's poor record on education (U.S. News' Best States ranking put Arizona at 43rd place in education), which leaves businesses with a less-prepared workforce.

The Coming Keystone of the South

Other states in the region, too, are not growing as much as they did pre-recession and are adding residents for different reasons. The nation's most populous state, California, continues to grow at a better-than-average rate (5.9 percent from 2008-17) despite its high housing costs. But it's because of new people from other nations, says Texas State Demographer Lloyd Potter. California is losing more residents than it is gaining from domestic migration, and is only growing because of immigration, Potter says.

And Texas? Chalk it up to big families. About half of Texas's growth comes from the fact that births well outnumbered deaths during that period, Potter says. "Texas is a pretty young state, in terms of our age structure, and we're also a minority-majority state," meaning bigger families, Potter explains. "And so the result is, we have a pretty healthy natural increase" in the population.

Both Hispanics and African-Americans in the United States have higher birth rates than white Americans, according to the Pew Research Center. "When you look at Texas and see how much we're growing, it's not as simple as everyone moving here from other states," Potter says.

Still, the population shifts will mean more than bragging rights for the Sunbelt if the trends continue. The 2020 Census will decide how many congressional districts – as well as electoral votes, in the presidential election – each state will receive. And that, demographers note, is where the Sunbelt can flex its most powerful muscle.

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HEADLINE	03/28 Clark family wants action, not sympathy
SOURCE	http://time.com/5218459/stephon-clark-sacramento-shooting-family-funeral/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>(SACRAMENTO, Calif.) — A blinding national spotlight is shining on the family of Stephon Clark, the 22-year-old unarmed black man killed by Sacramento police last week.</p> <p>“You don’t know what it’s like until you experience it,” Clark’s uncle, Curtis Gordon, told The Associated Press in an interview Tuesday. “You can see it on TV, it’s totally OK to deal with those realities when it’s just through a television and they’re not in your home. It’s different now.”</p> <p>Television cameras and national media were there Monday for a news conference where Gordon supported Clark’s grandmother, who sobbed uncontrollably as she recounted the shooting and asked why something significantly less lethal than a barrage of 20 bullets could not have been used by police.</p> <p>They were there Tuesday morning when the city’s first black police chief pleaded for calm after more than a week of unrest and later in the day when Clark’s brother and supporters disrupted a City Council meeting and then demonstrators for a second time blocked thousands of NBA fans from entering the arena for the hometown Kings game.</p> <p>They will be there Wednesday for Clark’s wake and on Thursday when the Rev. Al Sharpton plans to give the eulogy at Clark’s funeral.</p> <p>For all the angst and raw emotions, grieving and weary family members are skeptical that any substantive change will result before the next young black man dies from police gunfire and siphons away the national media and banner headlines.</p> <p>“So we appreciate the conversation, but conversation without implementation of some true reformation means nothing,” Gordon said. “It brought us to this moment, but what about tomorrow? What about next week?”</p> <p>“You know, sadly, I have no confidence in America and the fact that I will probably hear another story sometime this year of an innocent life lost over excessive police force. It’s so common, you’re numb to it.”</p> <p>Clark was killed March 18 when two Sacramento police officers responding to a report of someone breaking car windows fatally shot him in his grandparents’ backyard. Police say they believe Clark was the suspect and he ran when a police helicopter responded, then did not obey officers’ orders.</p> <p>Police say they thought Clark was holding a gun when he moved toward them, but he was found only with a cellphone.</p> <p>The California attorney general’s office on Tuesday joined the investigation, a move Sacramento Police Chief Daniel Hahn said he hopes will bring “faith and transparency” to a case that he said has sparked “extremely high emotions, anger and hurt in our city.”</p> <p>Attorney General Xavier Becerra’s office will provide oversight of the investigation and conduct a review</p>

of the police department's policies and use-of-force training. The decision of whether to bring criminal charges against the officers involved remains with District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert, although Becerra said his office could also bring charges.

Clark's family is skeptical that the investigation will provide appropriate results, Gordon said.

"It's all talk at this point," he said. "Show me."

African-Americans have been dealing with implicit and explicit bias for centuries, Gordon said. Many factors play a role but he said one necessity is for police forces to do a better job weeding out those who should not be officers.

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HEADLINE	03/28 Calif. officials: can share info w/DHS
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/mar/28/california-sanctuary-law-exception-police-can-shar/
GIST	<p>California officials issued new guidance Wednesday making clear state and local police can — and should — share information about illegal immigrants with the federal Homeland Security Department, in what amounts to a major exception to the state's new sanctuary laws.</p> <p>Police and sheriff's departments are still banned from asking about someone's immigration status and cannot hold illegal immigrants at the request of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. But in instances where they do have information on legal status they are required to share it, as required by federal law, the new guidance says.</p> <p>"This provision does not prohibit inquiries into an individual's immigration status to immigration authorities, or exchanging immigration status information with any other federal, state, or local government entity," Kevin Gardner, the chief of the state Department of Justice's law enforcement division, wrote in two new memos.</p> <p>The new guidance also seems to give Orange County the go-ahead for its new policy, where the sheriff is now posting the release dates of all of its jail inmates online. Since the information is publicly available, Orange County can also flag it for ICE, analysts said.</p> <p>And the guidance says state and local cops can respond to calls for assistance from federal immigration officials, as long as there's some state law that's also being policed at the time.</p> <p>That new caveat could help smooth out some early problems that have arisen with local police refusing to respond to drunken drivers or highway chases the Border Patrol has called in.</p> <p>"In these limited circumstances, a California law enforcement officer may assist any law enforcement official, even if those officials are engaged in immigration enforcement, but only when the California law enforcement officer is enforcing state law," Mr. Gardner wrote — though he warned that shouldn't be used as a loophole to enforce broader immigration laws.</p> <p>Beyond those exceptions, the guidance does rule out much of the cooperation that used to exist between federal immigration authorities and state and local cops.</p> <p>California deputies and officers cannot participate in joint task forces that involve immigration enforcement — which could end some anti-gang efforts — nor can they take part in the 287(g) program that would deputize them to help identify and oust illegal immigrants.</p> <p>State Sen. Kevin de Leon, who was a driving force behind the sanctuary law, known as SB54, said the new guidance should deflate some of the arguments against the policy.</p>

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HEADLINE	03/28 Judge tosses Seattle landlord law
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/940813/seattle-landlord-law-fails-court/
GIST	<p>A controversial City of Seattle ordinance that required landlords to rent to the first qualified applicant was overturned in King County Superior Court Wednesday.</p> <p>Judge Suzanne Parisien ruled that the measure amounted to an “uncompensated taking” by government because it eliminated a property owner’s discretion to choose a renter.</p> <p>The judge, in granting the plaintiffs’ request for summary judgement, noted that while the city council-approved ordinance had a worthwhile goal of thwarting renter-discrimination, it didn’t “directly and materially advance the city’s interest in preventing discrimination because it precludes the use of landlord discretion.”</p> <p>Pacific Legal Foundation attorney Ethan Blevins, who represented a group of landlords opposing the rule, hailed the ruling as a victory for small landlords.</p> <p>“Today’s ruling is a major victory for property rights and our clients, who can once again make basic judgment calls over who will live on their property,” he said. “A landlord isn’t just a convenience store where customers come and go within minutes. They have long-term relationships with their tenants, and they deserve the chance to decide who those tenants will be.”</p> <p>“The court’s ruling today is a major relief for Seattle’s small landlords who just want to protect their investment and decide who they are comfortable renting to,” Blevins said.</p> <p>John Schochet, spokesman for Seattle City Attorney Pete Holmes, said the city is “disappointed” in the ruling and that it will decide whether or not to appeal in coming days.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Low funding school quake assessments
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/940602/school-earthquake-assessment-funding/
GIST	<p>The chance of a Nisqually-size earthquake striking the Pacific Northwest is around 86 percent in the next 50 years.</p> <p>There’s a 10-20 percent chance Cascadia event that will cause an earthquake of magnitude 8.7 or higher in next 50 years.</p> <p>On Wednesday, March 28, Gov. Inslee was told by experts that 72 percent of Washington’s K-12 public schools are at “high or very high seismic risk.” About 200 are within 1 mile of an active fault.</p> <p>The good news is the Legislature recently approved \$1.2 million to assess school building safety.</p> <p>But Inslee wanted to know when the assessment is complete, will the state know what are the most vulnerable school buildings?</p> <p>The answer is no.</p> <p>“We will be in a position to start doing that,” Inslee was told. “We really need to look at a larger sample size in order to make that and have a really educated estimate for the whole entire state. We’ll be closer to making that estimate, but with only 220 school buildings of over 4,000 school buildings, we really can’t say for certain what that means for the entire state. So I think we’re going to need another few years before we make a meaningful extrapolation.”</p>

The state will need \$10 million to \$15 million just to complete the preliminary assessment of school buildings. That work won't be complete for 10 to 20 years at the rate it's currently funded, according to information presented to the governor.

A comprehensive assessment of all public school buildings would cost \$50 million to \$75 million. At the current funding rate, that work wouldn't be complete for at least 100 years.

Of course, the more funding the faster the work.

However, locally funded projects are happening. Seattle, for example, has done a comprehensive engineering assessment of more than 100 school buildings. The cost to retrofit them ranges from \$4,500 to more than \$7 million.

Unfortunately, not all areas are as wealthy as Seattle.

Earlier this week, a new study was released that found a magnitude 9.0 earthquake could cause up to a 60-foot wave that would hit several coastal communities and even flow into Aberdeen.

There are 37 school campuses within tsunami zones, according to state officials. For school districts such as Aberdeen, the need for additional funding for capital projects is real, but not an easy ask.

Earthquake expert Lucy Jones was in Seattle last week to discuss Los Angeles' Resilience by Design program. She told GeekWire that California's San Andreas Fault has a worse worst-case scenario going for it than a Cascadia quake in Washington. However, the Cascadia threat is likely underestimated, even with all the hype around it.

At least in the next decade the state will know what schools it should have reinforced for the "Big One."

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HEADLINE	03/29 Australia passes critical infrastructure bill
SOURCE	http://www.zdnet.com/article/government-passes-critical-infrastructure-national-security-bill/
GIST	<p>Australia's Parliament has passed the Security of Critical Infrastructure Bill in what the government called a bid to protect the electricity, gas, ports, and water sectors from "foreign involvement" that could lead to espionage, sabotage, and coercion, and giving ministers the power to direct companies to conduct risk mitigation actions.</p> <p>The legislation [PDF] was designed for the purpose of increasing the federal government's capacity to manage national security risks arising as a result of offshore and overseas involvement and control over infrastructure.</p> <p>According to a statement by Minister for Home Affairs Peter Dutton, while foreign involvement has "an important and beneficial role in supporting our national economic growth", it opens up Australia's infrastructure to more risk.</p> <p>"This legislation establishes a register of Australia's highest-risk critical infrastructure assets, including information on asset ownership, access, and control," Dutton said on Thursday.</p> <p>"It introduces a ministerial directions power that allows the government to take action where a risk cannot otherwise be mitigated which will significantly enhance the Critical Infrastructure Centre's capacity to assess and manage complex risks."</p> <p>The latter power will be used to "seek information and issue directions to owners and operators of critical assets in the high-risk sectors when a there is a risk that is prejudicial to security that cannot otherwise be</p>

	<p>mitigated", the revised explanatory memorandum [PDF] explains.</p> <p>Under s32(2), the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) can provide advice to the minister in the form of a security assessment, with the minister then able to "direct critical infrastructure owners or operators to do or not do a certain thing to mitigate a risk that has been identified as prejudicial to security".</p> <p>Such directions would be based on addressing any security risks set out by the ASIO's adverse security assessment.</p> <p>However, s32(3)(c) provides that the minister not give directions unless "an adverse security assessment in respect of the entity has been given to the minister for the purposes of this section".</p> <p>"The 'last resort' directions power could be used to direct asset owners and operators to undertake or refrain from certain actions," Finance Minister Mathias Cormann said during the Bill's second reading speech.</p> <p>"Importantly, this power is limited to instances where: There is a risk identified which is prejudicial to security; through collaboration, the owner or operator does not or cannot implement mitigations to address the risk; and there are no existing regulatory frameworks that can be used to enforce mitigations."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Judge dismisses travel ban challenge
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/mar/28/judge-dismisses-class-action-challenge-travel-ban/
GIST	<p>A federal judge in Washington who had been a thorn in the side of the Trump administration reversed course Tuesday and ruled she could not force the State Department to grant visa lottery approvals to would-be immigrants from Iran and Yemen.</p> <p>The complicated case doesn't directly challenge President Trump's travel ban, but it does deliver a rare lower-court legal victory on one aspect of the ban, which has restricted visits and immigration from a number of majority-Muslim nations.</p> <p>Judge Tanya Chutkan ruled that the government had managed to run out the clock on would-be immigrants from Yemen and Iran, and there is no longer anything she can do to preserve their pathway to immigration.</p> <p>"There is no longer any meaningful relief this court can provide. Therefore, it must dismiss this case as moot," she wrote.</p> <p>The case had been at the nexus of two controversial policies: Mr. Trump's travel ban and the diversity visa lottery, which doles out immigration passes based on chance.</p> <p>The plaintiffs — citizens of Iran and Yemen — managed to win the lottery in fiscal year 2017, meaning their names were picked out of millions of people who entered for some of the 50,000 slots.</p> <p>But before they had a chance to finish the process Mr. Trump imposed his travel ban, which in its original form denied entry to people from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Sudan and Yemen.</p> <p>The lottery winners argued their spots should be preserved so they could claim them once the ban expired or was ruled illegal. And for a time, Judge Chutkan sided with them, ordering the government to hold open spots.</p> <p>But after Mr. Trump released a third — and current — version of the travel ban, the Supreme Court</p>

	<p>dismissed challenges against the previous versions without ruling on the legality.</p> <p>Judge Chutkan said that without a final ruling of illegality from the justices, and with the new fiscal year 2018 already begun, she no longer had the power anymore to order the State Department to admit people who'd won in the 2017 lottery.</p> <p>"Given the Supreme Court's decision to moot the challenges to the Executive Order and its decision not to rule on the legality of the Executive Order, events have "outrun the controversy," she wrote.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 Aging Seattle based cutter faces repairs
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/aging-seattle-based-coast-guard-cutter-getting-much-needed-repairs
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Our country's only heavy ice breaker has made its way back home to Seattle for yearly maintenance.</p> <p>But these days, it spends far more time being worked on, than at sea.</p> <p>While the mighty hull of the Polar Star is still able to cut through up to 20 feet of ice -- crews said the insides are showing their 45 years.</p> <p>"It's extremely hard to keep the aging ship active," said Commanding Officer Michael Davanzo.</p> <p>He said while they were able to fulfill their resupply mission of the McMurdo Research Station in Antarctica, and clear a path for other ships, it almost didn't happen.</p> <p>"So this year, we were in the middle of cutting the ice channel and two of our shaft seals leaked and we had flooding in our engine room," said Davanzo.</p> <p>Davanzo said the vibrations are taking their toll on the ship. He said breaking ice is like driving on a rumble strip.</p> <p>"If you could just imaging doing that 24 hours a day for a 30-day period at a time," Davanzo said.</p> <p>Lt. Spencer Ross' job is to fix everything that rattles loose.</p> <p>But that's easier said than done, with parts that haven't been made for decades.</p> <p>"Switches, resisters, voltage traps, all designed in the 60s and 70s when the ship was build," said Ross. "If one component goes bad in the switchboard, there's no 'Control F' function to figure out where this component is and what it is."</p> <p>They even had to purchase one fuse from the last remaining source: Ebay.</p> <p>The Polar Star is the last remaining heavy ice breaker in the Coast Guard's fleet.</p> <p>Its sister ship was in even worse shape and is now just used for parts.</p> <p>Davanzo said a new ship is critical, and not just for science.</p> <p>"But we're also down there for national sovereignty, a presence in the Pacific, and we do search and rescue and law enforcement as well," he said.</p> <p>The Polar Star is now going to dry dock.</p>

"It's like a scavenger hunt looking for any cracked brackets and degraded piping so we can try to fix it before it happens," said Ross.

There, it will be worked on every day between now and the end of November, so it will be able to try and make the voyage again next year.

Just days ago, KOMO News talked with Washington Democratic Sen. Maria Cantwell, who said they were able to include funding for a new ship in this year's budget.

But it will still take several years to complete.

"That is what we think we need at a minimum. We think we probably need more, because the arctic is going to become a very big path for lots of activity," said Cantwell.

The Coast Guard does have other smaller ice breakers, but they can't do the same work as the Polar Star.

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HEADLINE	03/28 State testing pay-by-mile program
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/state-kicks-off-test-of-pay-by-mile-program/723311460
GIST	<p>The state formally kicked off a yearlong test of a road-usage charge, which might someday replace the gas tax as a way to pay for roads.</p> <p>KIRO 7 producer Katelin Wangberg signed up to join the pilot project, and is one of 2,000 drivers now reporting their mileage.</p> <p>Wangberg chose a device that plugs into her car.</p> <p>"It's a little thing, you plug it in and you forget about it and it tracks everything," Wangberg said. Using GPS, it records everywhere she drives.</p> <p>"I'll be honest, I didn't really care" about the tracking, Wangberg said.</p> <p>People more concerned about privacy can choose a reporting method without GPS and log odometer readings in person or by smart phone.</p> <p>On Tuesday, state officials kicked off the pilot program testing a possible replacement for the gas tax, which is becoming less reliable for funding roads as cars grow more efficient.</p> <p>"It is time for a change, we actually have a flattening of the gas tax revenue," said State Rep. Judy Clibborn (D-Mercer Island).</p> <p>A road usage charge has skeptics, like State Rep. Ed Orcutt (R-Kalama), who is from a rural area where people need to drive long distances.</p> <p>"I'm concerned about this approach, I'm concerned about the impact on my constituents," he said. Katelin Wangberg has a small, fuel-efficient car.</p> <p>For the first 462 miles of the test, the app she's using calculated a road-usage charge of about two cents a mile would have cost her \$11.03, compared to the \$7.74 she's now paying in gas taxes.</p> <p>"I did not expect that I would be paying more for the road tax than I would be paying for the gas tax," Wangberg said.</p> <p>Consultants running the test program say the average car in Washington gets 22 miles per gallon, and that</p>

	<p>drivers who get better mileage would pay more under a road-usage charge.</p> <p>After the test, a report will go to lawmakers in 2020, who will decide whether to actually implement a pay-by-mile system.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Study: 72% schools high risk from quakes
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/disaster/72-percent-of-schools-at-high-risk-from-quakes-in-washington/281-532980773
GIST	<p>An estimated 72 percent of schools are rated at 'high' or 'very high' risk from earthquakes so governor Jay Inslee sat down with his resilience cabinet on Wednesday to tackle the issue.</p> <p>Geologists say they're vulnerable because of their proximity to the state's network of earthquake faults. Those faults range from the massive Cascadia Subduction Zone, which runs for hundreds of miles off the Washington, Oregon, Northern California and British Columbia, Canada coast lines and expected to unleash a tsunami on the scale of the one that hit northeastern Japan in 2011. Then there is the Seattle Fault which runs across Bainbridge island, past the southern edge of downtown Seattle to the Cascades. The South Whidbey Island Fault, and newer fault discoveries in the eastern half of the state.</p> <p>This past legislative session saw \$1.2 million passed to begin assessing the ability of school buildings to stand up to earthquakes. In an Update on Washington State School Seismic Safety Awareness, the authors say the state's 1,1 million students study in some 9,000 permanent and portable school buildings. Of those schools, only 232 have been built since 2004, when building codes for quakes were upgraded. Some 37 school campuses housing some 9,000 students are located in tsunami inundation zones.</p> <p>That initial \$1.2 million is designed to assess about 220 of the most vulnerable buildings. But at that funding level it could take a century or more to do a full assessment for all school buildings in the state.</p> <p>While control of schools is primarily at the local level, the state's Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction says it has obtained \$748,419 in FEMA grant money along with another \$300,000 state match, to create an earthquake mitigation program for schools that face natural hazards.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 Stocks reboot after tech problems, losses
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-global-markets/stocks-reboot-after-tech-problems-first-quarter-losses-loom-idUSKBN1H500Z
GIST	<p>LONDON (Reuters) - Stock markets and other riskier assets steadied on Thursday as investors dusted themselves down after a woeful week for the tech sector, readying for what was set to be the first quarterly drop in global equities in two years.</p> <p>Banks and consumer stocks helped Europe's main bourses 0.2-0.4 percent higher as the region built on a positive session for Asia's heavyweight Nikkei, Hang Seng and Chinese markets.</p> <p>For currencies traders, the dollar steadied too after a stronger-than-expected revision to Q4 growth data and hopes a nuclear standoff with North Korea has been averted gave it its largest daily gain in six months on Wednesday.</p> <p>The tentative return of risk appetite and upcoming German inflation data also cooled safety plays like Bunds.</p> <p>Benchmark yields - which move inversely to prices - on German government bonds crept back above 0.5 percent having been on a sharp slide for most of the month. Spanish yields meanwhile saw their</p>

<p>biggest monthly fall since mid-2016.</p> <p>The 10-year U.S. Treasury yield was at 2.773 percent after touching a near two-month low of 2.743 percent overnight amid the strains on Wall Street.</p> <p>“I think most of these markets are staring at the 200-day moving average on the S&P 500 to see if it breaks,” said Societe Generale’s Kit Juckes.</p> <p>“We will see if German CPI numbers (due at 1200 GMT) surprise on the upside... but I think if there is going to be another surprise in Q2 it will be yen strength again.”</p> <p>Wall Street futures were pointing to a marginally higher open.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 China warns US on trade ‘Pandora Box’
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-usa-trade/china-warns-u-s-not-to-open-pandoras-box-unleash-trade-ills-on-world-idUSKBN1H504C
GIST	<p>BEIJING (Reuters) - China warned the United States on Thursday not to open Pandora’s Box and spark a flurry of protectionist practices across the globe, even as Beijing pointed to U.S. goods that it could target in a deepening Sino-U.S. trade dispute.</p> <p>China could target a broad range of U.S. businesses from agriculture to aircraft, autos, semiconductors and even services if the trade conflict escalates, the official China Daily newspaper said in an editorial on Thursday.</p> <p>President Donald Trump’s move last week to slap up to \$60 billion in tariffs on some Chinese imports has since provoked a warning from Beijing that it could retaliate with duties of up to \$3 billion of U.S. imports.</p> <p>China’s biggest U.S. imports are aircraft and related equipment, soybeans and autos, with the total bill about \$40 billion last year.</p> <p>“The malicious practices of the United States are like opening Pandora’s Box, and there is a danger of triggering a chain reaction that will spread the virus of trade protectionism across the globe,” a commerce ministry spokesman said.</p> <p>The official line from China continues to be stern even as Beijing says it is all for dialogue and negotiations. The feedback from U.S. and Chinese officials on the nature and extent of trade talks remains mixed, media reports show.</p> <p>The Financial Times reported only on Monday that China had offered to buy more U.S. micro-chips and move more quickly to finalize rules allowing foreign firms to take majority stakes in Chinese securities firms, citing people briefed on the negotiations.</p> <p>Chinese customs data shows the U.S. accounted for just \$2.6 billion, or 1 percent, of China’s total semiconductor imports last year by value, with suppliers in South Korea, Taiwan and Japan commanding a bigger share.</p> <p>But a source in the U.S. semiconductor industry said U.S. companies have slightly more than 50 percent of China’s market for chips, though export data doesn’t reflect that because much of the product is sent off-shore for low value added processing.</p> <p>The source said the U.S. semiconductor industry had not asked the Trump administration to urge China to buy more U.S. chips and had been told by senior U.S. officials that the U.S. government had not made such a request to Beijing.</p>

	<p>“We don’t need China to buy more chips,” the source said, adding that U.S. industry was concerned about being targeted by Chinese non-tariff barriers.</p> <p>“It’s more about (Chinese) subsidies, IP protection, and cyber rules,” the source said, referring to concerns over Chinese retaliation.</p> <p>China has long said it would like to import more U.S. high-tech goods, including high-end chips, but has been stymied by U.S. export controls set on national security grounds.</p> <p>China’s commerce ministry said on Thursday the U.S. approach to trade could trigger a domino effect and U.S. trade protectionism will only hurt U.S. consumers.</p> <p>While China hopes the U.S. will resolve trade conflicts with China through dialogue, it will take all possible steps to protect its interests, ministry spokesman Gao Feng told a regular briefing in Beijing.</p> <p>“Negotiations must be equal, and China will not accept any consultation under unilateral coercion,” Gao said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Embattled VA secretary fired; replaced
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/trump-replaces-embattled-va-secretary-personal-physician-n859496
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump ousted Secretary of Veterans Affairs David Shulkin Wednesday, announcing his intent to nominate the White House physician, Admiral Ronny Jackson, to fill the post and ending weeks of speculation about when the embattled cabinet official would leave the administration.</p> <p>Trump tweeted a confirmation of the news, which was first reported by Reuters. In a statement, the president described Jackson as "highly trained and qualified and as a service member himself." Trump also thanked Shulkin for his service and the "many great things we did together at Veterans Affairs."</p> <p>Jackson has been a White House physician to both presidents Trump and Barack Obama. Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Robert Wilkie will serve as interim secretary until Jackson is confirmed by the Senate, Trump said in a follow-up tweet.</p> <p>Shulkin's departure comes amid a spate of other high level administration exits over the past month — including the secretary of state, national security adviser, top economic adviser, and communications director.</p> <p>Shulkin, who served as undersecretary in charge of the veterans’ health system during the Obama administration, clashed with Trump political appointees who surrounded him at the VA. Some of the tension arose from a central policy dispute: The Trump appointees, both within the VA and at the White House, want to see the VA transition to subsidizing private health care for veterans, while Shulkin resisted those efforts.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 Experts opine NKorea Kim visit China
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/kim-jong-un-met-china-s-president-xi-what-does-n860731
GIST	<p>Kim Jong Un’s long, slow train journey from Pyongyang to Beijing was an attempt for the dictator and his host to gain leverage ahead of the North Korean leader’s summit with President Donald Trump, according to experts.</p>

Kim's trip to meet with the country's oldest and only real ally has been shrouded in mystery. Little is known about what was discussed between the two leaders other than an official statement published through China's state-run media.

His departure from China also came one day before the date for the first inter-Korean summit in 11 years was announced. Kim will meet with South Korean President Moon Jae-in on April 27, officials confirmed Thursday.

"It seems China was not comfortable with the idea of Kim meeting with Moon and Trump before having ever met with Xi," said Paul Haenle, who served as China affairs director for the National Security Council under George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

From a North Korean perspective, it may also have made sense to shore up their sometimes fractious relationship with Beijing ahead of any U.S. meeting, Haenle added.

"Kim may have felt he had secured some leverage against Xi having independently secured summits with Trump and Moon," said Haenle, who is now director of the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy in Beijing. "He'll now feel more confident knowing where things stand with Beijing heading into those same meetings."

Kim's visit comes just weeks after China's rubber-stamp parliament voted to abolish term limits, effectively allowing President Xi Jinping to rule the superpower indefinitely. It also comes amid heightened tensions between Beijing and Washington over trade, with Trump announcing new tariffs on imported steel and aluminium from China earlier this month.

Cristina Varriale, a research analyst specializing in proliferation and nuclear policy at the London-based Royal United Services Institute, told NBC News this week's visit could help ensure China plays a much more active role in any denuclearization agreement.

"With the recent engagement between North and South Korea and the South Koreans going to the U.S. it started to look very much like a tri-lateral initiative between those three countries," she said. "By pulling China back into it, North Korea are balancing it out again and having their patron back on their side as part of this process."

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HEADLINE	03/28 Sacramento mobilizes to make #LastOne
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/sacramento-determined-stephon-clark-s-death-not-bevain-n861016
GIST	<p>SACRAMENTO — They didn't know Stephon Clark, but they came anyway Wednesday from all around this capital city, and parts beyond. They came because they said the 22-year-old could have been their brother, or son or grandson and they wanted to try to make sure that the way he died — unarmed and innocent, as far as they could tell — will never happen again.</p> <p>While Clark's girlfriend and two young sons watched over his body for hours at BOSS Church on the south side of town, strangers shared a grief they said belongs not only to their city but to all of America.</p> <p>On their way in and out of the wake, the mourners raised tough questions: about other tactics the police might have tried, about warnings they said did not come, about another recent deadly police shooting of another unarmed black man in their city and about why some of the country's mass murderers come away from police encounters better than Clark did.</p> <p>"I'm so tired, so tired. I just don't want to see this no more," said Cynthia Brown, who recently retired after 32 years as an executive assistant in the state Franchise Tax Board. Brown said she never knew Clark</p>

but came to the vigil to tell anyone who would listen that things had to change.

She had vented on Facebook the night before and invented a hashtag — #StephonClarkLastOne. "Please let him be the last one," Brown told a reporter. "He has to be the last one."

Joining Clark outside the church not far from the the Gardens neighborhood where Clark died on March 18 were many others who felt the same way and who realized that made them not so different than the teens from Parkland, Florida, who have made it a crusade to make the mass killing at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas high school a true turning point.

"Everything has an ending. This has to be an ending," said Rahim Wasi, "60-something," who is an employment training instructor for the state of California.

Many of them wondered why the police couldn't have used a taser, or a beanbag gun, or simply backed off and surrounded the yard where they found him. Didn't they have a helicopter looking down? Was there truly a danger, if all police were looking for was a car burglar?

"I mean, you can taze him, or get around him or throw a net on him. Something," said Wasi. "But instead you shoot him. The training is to shoot him. Why not just disable him?"

"There has to be a better way," Wasi said.

Police shooting of unarmed black men have been a cause celebre nationally for years, most famously in Ferguson, Missouri, after the 2014 police shooting of Michael Brown. People in Sacramento's poor, minority neighborhoods recall an even more recent deadly confrontation. In July, 2016, police shot and killed a 51-year-old black man with a history of mental disabilities.

Joseph Mann was taken down by 14 bullets, including those fired by an officer who had once been stripped of his weapon because of alcohol and domestic abuse allegations, the Sacramento Bee reported. The two officers involved in the shooting left the police force late last year, though they were not prosecuted.

Cynthia Brown said she strains for what to tell her own grandsons, 23, 15 and 10 years old. Perhaps they should always have their phones in a pouch, never having them in hand, where they might be mistaken for a gun. Or maybe they should throw themselves to the ground, their hands outstretched, any time the police stop them.

"They are perceiving all our young men as one type of person — thuggish, gun-toting, disrespectful," said Brown. "And every black kid is not a thug. They are not gun-toting. A lot of our black children have love, respect and compassion."

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HEADLINE	03/28 Report: VA missed background checks
SOURCE	https://www.militarytimes.com/veterans/2018/03/28/report-va-missed-background-checks-for-thousands-of-employees/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Veterans Affairs officials employed more than 6,000 workers — many with access to patients and sensitive personal information — without performing proper background checks, according to a new inspector general investigation released this week.</p> <p>The news comes just months after the watchdog found that department leaders consistently failed to report potentially dangerous medical providers to outside health systems, a problem which raised patient safety issues not just for veterans but for the public as a whole.</p> <p>The new report from the inspector general found that mandatory background checks, mandated under</p>

federal rules within 14 days of employment, were not handled properly in about 6 percent of new VA hires over a five-year period.

In one case, a registered nurse at an Ohio VA facility worked for 1,452 days before a proper background investigation was begun.

“VA lacks assurance that the (Veterans Health Administration) workforce is properly vetted and appropriate for providing health care to the nation’s veterans,” the report stated. “In addition, initiating background investigations in a timely manner is critical to mitigate the risk to VHA and ensure that unsuitable staff may be removed during the probationary employment period.”

Investigators blamed the problem on a lack of oversight and mismanagement at the department’s Operations, Security, and Preparedness office, noting that “the absence of adequate oversight controls by OSP and VHA permitted these delinquencies to remain undetected for many years.”

Department leaders said they are already working on fixes for the problem.

OSP officials in a statement to the inspector general said they have a target of reducing delinquent background checks to under 2,500 by this October, and a full review of current processes by September.

But investigators warned that more needs to be done to provide full confidence that VA employees are properly vetted to provide care and handle veterans’ personal medical information.

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HEADLINE 03/28 NAACP sues census citizenship question

SOURCE <https://www.newsmax.com/politics/naACP-lawsuit-trump-administration-2020-census/2018/03/28/id/851363/>

GIST The NAACP on Wednesday sued the Trump administration over concerns the 2020 census will not accurately count African-Americans and other people of color, resulting in less federal funding for minority communities, The Hill reports.

The lawsuit, filed in conjunction with Prince George's County in Maryland, comes the same week Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross announced that the 2020 census will include a question about citizenship status in order to "provide census block level citizenship voting age population data that are not currently available from government survey data." The citizenship question was asked on most decennial census forms until 1950, and has been asked on the yearly American Community Survey form.

"The census must not serve as a mechanism for diluting the political power of African-American communities and depriving them of their fair share of federal resources for an entire decade," said Derrick Johnson, the NAACP president and CEO. "We are prepared to fight against any plan that effectively turns the census into another form of voter suppression and economic disempowerment in our communities."

California Attorney General Xavier Becerra and New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman also filed lawsuits challenging the inclusion of the citizenship question.

"When the Census Bureau undercounts my community, we lose political power, and fewer of our federal tax dollars end up coming home to fix our roads, run our schools, and fund our federal programs," said Brian Ross, president of the NAACP's Prince George's County Branch and a plaintiff in the case. "We felt these effects in the aftermath of the 2010 census, and all signs indicate that the 2020 Census will be even worse."

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HEADLINE 03/28 Russian spies in the Northwest

SOURCE	http://www.thenewtribune.com/news/state/article207177809.html#storylink=latest_side
GIST	<p>Wanted — FBI recruits for a career in surveillance. Must be comfortable tailing subjects by foot, vehicle or on public transportation, use electronic equipment, and work nights and weekends as necessary.</p> <p>The online job post at fbijobs.gov gives a glimpse into the shadowy world of espionage that continues to unfold between the United States and Russia. The Trump administration cited the risk of such clandestine activities in its decision Monday to close the Russian Consulate in Seattle.</p> <p>The Cold War spy craft that was the stuff of John le Carré thrillers may have taken a back seat in the popular imagination in the age of post-9/11 terrorism, but for FBI agents trying to identify Russian consular staff who are using their positions as cover for intelligence gathering, the work never stopped, and it may have intensified amid growing tensions between Moscow and the West.</p> <p>“It’s no secret that consulates serve as a potential platform for covert activities,” said Charles Mandigo, a former special agent in charge of the FBI Seattle office, “just as consulate personnel and embassy staff provide the country with the opportunity to insert a spy onto U.S. soil.”</p> <p>Seattle has everything to attract espionage interests from Russia, or any number of other countries, he said.</p> <p>“Think about it. There’s Boeing, which runs all kinds of black operations,” said Mandigo, referring to the giant defense contractor’s secret work with the Pentagon. “There’s the University of Washington, which gets all kinds of government contracts. There’s Microsoft. There’s proximity from a military point of view, particularly Bangor.”</p> <p>Naval Base Kitsap, near Bremerton, includes the submarine base at Bangor, home to the West Coast fleet of Trident submarines, part of America’s triad of land-, air- and sea-based nuclear arsenal. It’s estimated that within the past decade, up to a quarter of the country’s nearly 10,000 nuclear weapons have been stored there.</p> <p>David Major, a former FBI agent involved in counterintelligence, estimates that a third of a Russian Consulate’s staff may be involved in intelligence work. Major is president of CI Centre, which is involved in counterintelligence training and education.</p> <p>Tracking when Russian officials come and go from work, when they retire for the night, and who their friends are can be labor-intensive work.</p> <p>“It can take a long time to identify somebody,” Major said. “You want to know everything you can about this person to paint a picture of them.”</p> <p>A senior Trump administration official did not cite any specific incident of Seattle-based espionage linked to this week’s orders but said the actions, which included the expulsion of dozens of Russian diplomats, were part of a broader effort to “degrade” the Russian capability to spy.</p> <p>The closure of the Seattle consulate — which leaves only three remaining in the country, none on the West Coast — is part of a broader response in the West to allegations that the Kremlin was involved in the nerve-agent poisoning of a former Russian spy and his daughter in Salisbury, England.</p> <p>“There will be a response”</p> <p>The closure and expulsions were condemned by Russian government officials, who are expected to announce retaliatory measures. They say that diplomatic staff being expelled have worked in space, science, trade, culture and other areas.</p> <p>“Truth will always prevail. We shall not be provoked into an emotional outburst. But there will be a response,” declared the Russian ambassador, Anatoly Antonov, in a statement posed on the embassy website.</p>

The decision to close the consulate has also received pushback from some Americans. They point out that the U.S. and Russia both use diplomatic installations for intelligence gathering, and that in this era of frosty relations, it is important to keep consulates, and lines of communications, open.

“We regret that the interests of U.S. businesses and private citizens are being jeopardized in a political ‘tit-for-tat’ exchange between the governments,” wrote Derek Norberg, president of the Washington-based Council for U.S.-Russia Relations, in a letter to State Department officials after last year’s announcement of the closing of the Russian Consulate in San Francisco. He is drafting a similar letter of protest about the closing of the Seattle consulate.

Spying subs

Russian espionage interest in Washington state stretches back for decades — long before the 1992 opening of the Seattle consulate.

In 1987, even amid the glasnost thaw, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer broke a story that Soviet submarines — using intelligence garnered from the spy ring formed by John Walker — had penetrated the Strait of Juan de Fuca through the 1980s. Walker served many years in the U.S. Navy, and the leaked information helped Russians slip past U.S. anti-sub defenses.

A decade later, in 1998, Jack Daly, then a Navy lieutenant and intelligence officer, was dispatched on a Canadian helicopter to take surveillance photographs of a Russian cargo ship in the Strait of Juan de Fuca that was suspected of spying on the Trident submarines. He says the ship fired a laser that singed his retinas. He sued in U.S. District Court over the laser attack and his injury, but in 2002, a jury rejected his claim.

As Russian President Boris Yeltsin took power in the 1990s, there was lots of talk of democracy in Russia, and many U.S. officials thought espionage would ebb. “We wanted our peace dividend, and didn’t want to worry about this anymore,” said Major, who added that the spying did not end and the FBI fought to continue support for counterintelligence as the new consulate opened in Seattle in 1992.

Ayn Dietrich-Williams, FBI spokeswoman in Seattle, declined to comment on FBI surveillance operations in the Puget Sound region. She said the FBI does not disclose the numbers of employees at the Seattle field office because it fluctuates.

Mandigo, who served 29 years in the FBI until his retirement in 2003, said the bureau has remained fiercely protective of its role in counterespionage, as there aren’t other law-enforcement agencies assigned to the task. He said the Seattle “active” counterintelligence division survived the shifting priorities within the bureau in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Mandigo’s leadership of the Seattle FBI office included nominal oversight of agents, technicians and others assigned to foreign counterintelligence. But Mandigo explained that he had very little to do with these operations because they were supervised and directed out of FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C., or from New York.

In addition to keeping track of Russians, some of this FBI work also involved debriefing Americans who traveled to Russia.

One Washington businessman with work that takes him to Russia said he repeatedly has been approached by FBI officials who want to understand what he does. They don’t ask him to conduct espionage but want him to report any criminal activity he sees, said the businessman, who requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of those contacts.

FBI agents also may be involved in sting operations that target Americans trying to sell secrets.

In 2017, Gregory Allen Justice, a 49-year-old Boeing engineer from Culver City, Calif., pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in California to charges of attempted economic espionage. He tried to sell documents to an undercover agent he believed to be a Russian intelligence officer in a case developed out of the FBI office in Los Angeles.

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HEADLINE 03/29 China space lab hurtling toward Earth

SOURCE <https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/chinas-defunct-space-lab-hurling-earth-entry-54088824>

GIST China's defunct and reportedly out-of-control Tiangong 1 space station is expected to re-enter Earth's atmosphere sometime this weekend. It poses only a slight risk to people and property on the ground, since most of the bus-size, 8.5-ton vehicle is expected to burn up on re-entry, although space agencies don't know exactly when or where that will happen.

Below are some questions and answers about the station, its re-entry and the past and future of China's ambitious space program.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AND HOW GREAT IS THE DANGER?

The European Space Agency predicts the station will re-enter the atmosphere between Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon — an estimate it calls "highly variable," likely because the ever-changing shape of the upper atmosphere affects the speed of objects falling into it.

The Chinese space agency's latest estimate puts re-entry between Saturday and Wednesday.

Western space experts say they believe China has lost control of the station. China's chief space laboratory designer Zhu Zongpeng has denied Tiangong was out of control, but hasn't provided specifics on what, if anything, China is doing to guide the craft's re-entry.

Based on Tiangong 1's orbit, it will come to earth somewhere between 42.7 degrees of latitude north and 42.7 degrees south, or roughly somewhere over most of the United States, China, Africa, Southern Europe, Australia and South America. Out of range are Russia, Canada and northern Europe.

Based on its size, only about 10 percent of the spacecraft will likely survive being burned up on re-entry, mainly its heavier components such as its engines. The chances of anyone person on earth being hit by debris is considered less than one in a trillion.

HOW COMMON IS MAN-MADE SPACE DEBRIS?

Debris from satellites, space launches and the International Space Station enters the atmosphere every few months, but only one person is known to have been hit by any of it: American woman Lottie Williams, who was struck but not injured by a falling piece of a U.S. Delta II rocket while exercising in an Oklahoma park in 1997.

Most famously, America's 77-ton Skylab crashed through the atmosphere in 1979, spreading pieces of wreckage near the southwestern Australia city of Perth, which fined the U.S. \$400 for littering.

The breakup on re-entry of the Columbia space shuttle in 2003 killed all seven astronauts and sent more than 80,000 pieces of debris raining down on a large swath of the southern United States. No one on the ground was injured.

In 2011, NASA's Upper Atmosphere Research Satellite was considered to pose a slight risk to the public when it came down to earth 20 years after its launching. Debris from the 6-ton satellite ended up falling into the Pacific Ocean, causing no damage.

China's own space program raised major concerns after it used a missile to destroy an out-of-service Chinese satellite in 2007, creating a large and potentially dangerous cloud of debris.

WHAT IS TIANGONG 1 AND WHAT WAS IT USED FOR?

Launched in 2011, Tiangong 1 was China's first space station, serving as an experimental platform for bigger projects such as the Tiangong 2 launched in September 2016 and a future permanent Chinese space station.

The station, whose name translates as "Heavenly Palace," played host to two crewed missions that included China's first female astronauts and served as a test platform for perfecting docking procedures and other operations. Its last crew departed in 2013 and contact with it was cut in 2016. Since then it has been orbiting gradually closer and closer to Earth on its own while being monitored.

The station had two modules, one for its solar panels and engines, and one for a pair of astronauts to live in and conduct experiments. A third astronaut slept in the Shenzhou spaceships that docked with the station, which also contained facilities for personal hygiene and food preparation.

HOW ADVANCED IS CHINA'S SPACE PROGRAM?

Since China conducted its first crewed mission in 2003 — becoming only the third country after Russia and the U.S. to do so — it has taken on increasingly ambitious projects, including staging a spacewalk and landing its Jade Rabbit rover on the moon.

China now operates the Tiangong 2 precursor space station facility, while the permanent station's 20-ton core module is due to be launched this year. The completed 60-ton station is set to come into full service in 2022 and operate for at least a decade.

China was excluded from the 420-ton International Space Station mainly due to U.S. legislation barring such cooperation and concerns over the Chinese space program's strong military connections. China's space program remains highly secretive and some experts have complained that a lack of information about Tiangong 1's design has made it harder to predict what might happen upon its re-entry.

A mission to land another rover on Mars and bring back samples is set to launch in 2020. China also plans to become the first country to soft-land a probe on the far side of the moon.

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HEADLINE	03/29 Anger over deadly Venezuela jail riot, fire
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/angry-families-demand-facts-deadly-venezuela-jail-riot-54087923
GIST	<p>Distraught families are clamoring for information about detained relatives following a fire that Venezuela's chief prosecutor says killed 68 people when it swept through the cells of the state police station.</p> <p>Angry relatives fought with police outside the facility Wednesday after being unable to get any information on casualties from Wednesday's fire, which townspeople said erupted after a disturbance</p>

involving detainees. Officers used tear gas to disperse the crowd, and local officials would confirm only that there were fatalities.

Late Wednesday, Attorney General Tarek William Saab said on his official Twitter account that 68 people were dead and nearly all of them were prisoners. He said the dead included two women who were staying overnight at the station, but he didn't provide any further details.

Saab said four prosecutors had been named to determine what happened at the state police headquarters in Valencia, a town in Carabobo state about 100 miles (160 kilometers) west of Caracas.

It was one of the worst jail disasters in Venezuela, where human rights groups complain about poor conditions in prisons and jails. A fire at a prison in the western state of Zulia killed more than 100 inmates in 1994.

A Window to Freedom, a nonprofit group that monitors conditions at Venezuela's jails and prisons, said preliminary but unconfirmed information indicated the riot began when an armed detainee shot an officer in the leg. Shortly after that a fire broke out, with flames growing quickly as the blaze spread to mattresses in the cells, it said. Rescuers apparently had to break a hole through a wall to free some of the prisoners inside.

Photos shared by the group showed prisoners being taken out on stretchers, their limbs frozen in awkward positions as skin peeled off.

Carlos Nieto Palma, director of A Window to Freedom, said officials should be held accountable for failing to address the poor conditions in police station jails. The group said overcrowding has become common throughout Venezuela, with detainees being kept long past customary brief holding periods before being let go or sent to larger jails to await trial.

"It's grave and alarming," Nieto Palma said. "What happened today in Carabobo is a sign of that."

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HEADLINE	03/29 Seoul: Koreas summit April 27th
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/rival-koreas-begin-high-level-talks-meant-set-54085645?cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will meet South Korean President Moon Jae-in at a border village on April 27, the South announced Thursday after the nations agreed on a rare summit that could prove significant in global efforts to resolve a decades-long standoff over the North's nuclear program.</p> <p>The announcement was made after officials met at the border village of Panmunjom. The Koreas plan to hold another preparatory meeting on April 4 to discuss protocol, security and media coverage issues, according to a joint statement released by the countries.</p> <p>The leaders of the two Koreas have held talks only twice since the 1950-53 Korean War, in 2000 and 2007, under previous liberal governments in Seoul. The Korean Peninsula was divided in 1945 into a U.S.-dominated south and Soviet-backed north, three years before the Koreas each became sovereign nations.</p> <p>Seoul's Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon, one of the three South Korean participants in Thursday's talks, told reporters beforehand that setting up discussions between the leaders on ways to rid the North of its nuclear weapons would be a critical point.</p> <p>Cho after the meeting told South Korean reporters there was a "sufficient exchange of opinions" on the agendas of the summit, but didn't provide a clear answer on whether the discussions included the nuclear issue.</p>

	<p>"Both sides agreed to prepare for (the summit) in a way that would allow sincere and heartfelt discussions (between the leaders). If there's a need, we decided to continue discussions on the summit agendas through follow-up high level meetings in April," Cho said.</p> <p>"Both sides will continue working level discussions (on the agendas) while focusing on the issues surrounding the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the stabilization of peace and the development relations between the South and North."</p> <p>When asked whether such issues would shape the discussions between Kim and Moon, Cho said "yes."</p> <p>The North's three delegates were led by Ri Son Gwon, chairman of a state agency that deals with inter-Korean affairs. The countries earlier this month reached an agreement for a summit on the southern side of the border village. Thursday's meeting was held to determine the date and other issues.</p> <p>Ri after the meeting hailed the agreement over the summit he said provides "immense expectations and new hope for the entire nation that desires for peace on the Korean Peninsula." He called for officials from both countries to do their best to "perfectly secure the historic meeting between the leaders."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Fed orders Puerto Rico pension cuts
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/03/28/board-orders-pension-cuts-studies-puerto-rico-wage-increase.html
GIST	<p>SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – A federal control board overseeing Puerto Rico's finances is demanding cuts to the island's crumbling public pension system and says it will consider raising the minimum wage if certain conditions are met.</p> <p>The demands were outlined in various letters sent Wednesday to Gov. Ricardo Rossello. He has repeatedly rejected imposing a 10 percent cut to pensions of more than \$1,000 a month and is seeking to increase the minimum wage from \$7.25 an hour to \$8.25 by 2021.</p> <p>The board also stated that mandatory vacation and sick leave should be immediately reduced to 14 days a year, and that a Christmas bonus should be made voluntary by 2019 as part of a proposed labor reform that Puerto Ricans have widely rejected.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 US limits UN peacekeeping costs to 25%
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/03/28/us-wont-pay-over-25-percent-un-peacekeeping-anymore.html
GIST	<p>UNITED NATIONS – The United States is saying it will no longer shoulder more than a quarter of the multibillion-dollar costs of the United Nations' peacekeeping operations.</p> <p>U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley said so Wednesday at a Security Council debate on peacekeeping reform.</p> <p>The U.S. is the biggest contributor to the U.N.'s 15 peacekeeping missions worldwide. Washington is paying about 28.5 percent of this year's \$7.3 billion peacekeeping budget.</p> <p>President Donald Trump's administration has complained before that the budget and the U.S. share are too high. At Washington's urging, the current budget is \$570 million below last year's.</p> <p>Haley said the U.S. will work to make sure cuts in its portion are done "in a fair and sensible manner that protects UN peacekeeping."</p>

	The General Assembly sets the budget and respective contributions by vote.
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HEADLINE	03/28 Pressure builds on Russia w/expulsions
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/kremlin-vows-respond-diplomatic-expulsions-54063237?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Pressure increased Wednesday on Moscow over the poisoning of a former Russian double agent in Britain as more Russian diplomats were being expelled or recalled. Russia says it will respond to the moves, but a senior diplomat said there is no hurry to retaliate.</p> <p>Russia denies Britain's accusation that it was behind the March 4 nerve agent attack on Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the city of Salisbury. Both remain in critical condition.</p> <p>Skripal was imprisoned in Russia before being sent to Britain in a 2010 spy swap.</p> <p>More than 20 nations have announced the expulsion of more than 150 Russian diplomats in the dispute, including 60 by the United States. Britain expelled 23 and Russia retaliated with the same number, but it has not responded to the other moves.</p> <p>Montenegro on Wednesday announced it would expel a Russian diplomat. Slovakia and Malta said they would recall their ambassadors from Russia.</p> <p>Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said Moscow is in "no rush" to retaliate.</p> <p>He told the RIA Novosti state news agency that Russia is "thoughtfully and thoroughly" considering its response. Separately, he was quoted by the Interfax news agency as saying the expulsions were directed by London and Washington, adding that other nations succumbed to their pressure. He added that "all options are on the table" regarding Russia's response.</p> <p>President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, told reporters that Russia's response would come soon and that it will be "timely and will suit the interests of Russia."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Ecuador cuts Assange embassy internet
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ecuador-cutting-off-wikileaks-founders-communications-54072450?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Ecuador's government said Wednesday it has cut off WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's internet connection at the nation's London embassy after his recent activity on social media decrying the arrest of a Catalan separatist politician.</p> <p>In a statement, officials said Assange's recent posts "put at risk" the good relations Ecuador maintains with nations throughout Europe and had decided as of Tuesday to suspend his internet access "in order to prevent any potential harm."</p> <p>Assange has since gone silent on social media.</p> <p>Ecuador granted Assange asylum in the South American nation's London embassy in 2012, where he has remained cooped up ever since. Ecuador has repeatedly tried to find a solution that would allow Assange to leave without the threat of arrest, but with no success. He remains wanted in Britain for jumping bail and also fears a possible U.S. extradition request based on his leaking of classified State Department documents.</p>

	<p>Relations between Assange and his host nation have often grown prickly.</p> <p>Ecuador suspended his internet access in 2016 after a WikiLeaks dump targeting Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign. And while former President Rafael Correa hailed Assange's work, the South American country's current head of state has called him a hacker and warned him not to meddle in politics.</p> <p>As part of an agreement allowing him to stay at Ecuador's embassy, Assange is forbidden from sending any messages that would interfere with the country's diplomatic relations other nations.</p> <p>"He violated that agreement," said Maria Fernanda Espinosa, Ecuador's minister of foreign affairs.</p> <p>She added that Ecuador's government would be sending of a group of diplomats to meet with Assange's legal team in London next week while also continuing a dialogue with British officials on how to resolve "an inherited problem."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 UK: ex-spy likely poisoned at home
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-russia-britain-poisoned-spy-54063397
GIST	<p>British police say they believe a Russian ex-spy and his daughter first came into contact with a military-grade nerve agent at their front door.</p> <p>Deputy Assistant Commissioner Dean Haydon says in a statement Wednesday police are now focusing their investigation in and around Sergei Skripal's home.</p> <p>London's Metropolitan Police say they have "identified the highest concentration of the nerve agent, to-date, as being on the front door of the address."</p> <p>The revelation is significant because it's the first time police have offered any suggestion about where the Skripals were poisoned. Police have also searched a variety of sites around Salisbury, including a pub, a restaurant and a cemetery.</p> <p>Britain blames Russia for the poisoning, triggering a diplomatic dispute between Moscow and Western countries. Moscow vehemently denies any involvement.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Allegations of FBI surveillance abuses
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/28/politics/doj-inspector-general-fbi-surveillance-abuses/index.html
GIST	<p>Washington (CNN)The Justice Department's internal watchdog announced Wednesday it has launched a probe into the department and the FBI's handling of warrant applications under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.</p> <p>The review by Inspector General Michael Horowitz came after requests from Attorney General Jeff Sessions and members of Congress, the IG's office said.</p> <p>For weeks, President Donald Trump and his allies on Capitol Hill have pointed to the House Intelligence Committee's controversial memo -- the so-called Nunes Memo -- slamming how the FBI obtained a FISA warrant to monitor Trump foreign policy aide Carter Page to argue that the nation's top law enforcement agency is politically biased. The memo claims the FBI failed to adequately inform the judge who approved the warrant that it relied, in part, on opposition research funded by the Democratic National Committee and Clinton's campaign.</p> <p>The IG "will review information that was known to the DOJ and the FBI at the time the applications were filed from or about an alleged FBI confidential source," Horowitz's office said. The investigation will also</p>

	<p>"review the DOJ's and FBI's relationship and communications with the alleged source as they relate to the (Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court) applications."</p> <p>Attorney General Jeff Sessions told reporters last month that Horowitz's office was looking at whether the FBI handled the FISA warrant on Page properly -- prompting Trump to lash out on Twitter and causing Sessions to respond with a rare statement defending his "integrity and honor."</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	03/28 Hawaii: state targeted in phishing attacks
SOURCE	http://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/37824382/state-agencies-victim-of-cyber-attacks-over-the-weekend
GIST	<p>HONOLULU (HawaiiNewsNow) - So-called "phishing attacks" targeted state computers over the holiday weekend, officials confirm.</p> <p>The attacks came just days after a major international sweep of Iranians who sought to hack into Hawaii state computers.</p> <p>The first phishing attack happened Saturday when an employee from the Department of Agriculture clicked on a corrupted link.</p> <p>A warning from the state's IT office was sent out to workers reminding them not to open links without investigating first.</p> <p>But then on Monday, a state holiday, an employee with the state Department of Human Services did it, too.</p> <p>The state's chief IT security officer, Vincent Hoang, said both times alarms went off immediately and they were able to limit the damage to just the affected employees' inboxes. Hoang said they believe the two cases are connected and the emails come from the same source.</p> <p>However, Hoang doesn't know if they are connected to a sweeping federal indictment last week of nine Iranians.</p> <p>"The timing is very coincidental and quite honestly, I don't know if we'd be able to answer one way or the other," he said.</p> <p>Hawaii was listed as a target of the Iranian group that went after state and university systems all over the world.</p> <p>Former Honolulu Police Department cyber crimes expert Chris Duque said if this past weekend's incidents are not part of that group, it could be copycats who saw Hawaii as easily compromised.</p> <p>"They'll try and test the waters," he said.</p> <p>Cyber crimes are difficult to trace since most of the emails originate overseas.</p> <p>Hoang said the state's security in place helps defend against millions of individual attacks every year, but every once in awhile one will get through.</p> <p>He admits that two in one weekend is alarming, though, and said the state depends on employees to be the last line of defense.</p>

	<p>"We can throw a lot of technology at it but at the end of the day, the best defense is relying on our users by educating them," he said.</p> <p>Hoang added that the state conducts mock cyber attacks sending out fake links to see how many state workers click on them. He said they have had positive results with only a relatively small group falling for the test scam.</p> <p>He added the two attacks did not penetrate the state's internal system so no resident information was compromised.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 NKorea suspected in bitcoin heist
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/north-korea-is-suspected-in-bitcoin-heist-1522303177
GIST	<p>SEOUL—Investigators in South Korea are looking into North Korea’s possible involvement in a heist from a bitcoin exchange that collapsed here on Tuesday, according to people familiar with the situation, as the sanctions-choked regime develops new ways to raise money.</p> <p>The investigation into the hack of Seoul-based exchange Youbit, led by South Korean law enforcement and a state cybersecurity agency, is still in its infancy and a review of the malware code could take weeks, the people said.</p> <p>But the people said there were telltale signs and historical evidence that North Korea was behind the Youbit attack. North Korean hackers in April targeted the same cryptocurrency exchange, operating under a different name, several of the people said. Yapiian, the company that operates Youbit, suspended trading and filed for bankruptcy after Tuesday’s hack.</p> <p>The bitcoin heist follows similar suspected Pyongyang-directed offensives against other South Korean cryptocurrency exchanges—and an increasing number of attempts to steal from individual investors.</p> <p>On Tuesday, the White House said North Korea directed this year’s WannaCry ransomware attack, which locked digital files and demanded bitcoin payment for their release.</p> <p>South Korean police and the Korea Internet & Security Agency said they had begun an investigation into the Youbit hack but were still determining the scope of the situation.</p> <p>A North Korean cyber army of 7,000 hackers around the world has shifted tactics over the past two years to become more motivated by financial gain, pilfering from banks and, more recently, focusing on cryptocurrencies, according to cybersecurity researchers. North Korea has denied involvement in the hacking incidents.</p> <p>Bitcoin is a virtual currency, but very few people use it to actually pay for things because of transaction fees and its rising value. WSJ's Thomas Di Fonzo takes to the streets of New York to try to spend bitcoin at brick-and-mortar establishments.</p> <p>North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has a critical need for funds as his regime advances its nuclear-weapons program in the face of tightened economic sanctions.</p> <p>“North Korea is an ideal country to use hacking and financial tools like bitcoin,” said Troy Stangarone, a senior director at the Korea Economic Institute in Washington. “They’re experimenting with ways to earn back lost money from sanctions.”</p> <p>The bitcoin craze has created a unique opportunity, as a rush of new investors bet on a market they had barely heard of until recently, said Ryan Kalember, a senior vice president at Proofpoint Inc., a cybersecurity firm that published a recent report detailing Pyongyang’s bitcoin campaigns.</p>

“Much of the cryptocurrency system is highly vulnerable,” Mr. Kalember said. “Because this world is moving so fast and now it’s so lucrative, it’s really exactly what a cybercriminal” is looking for.

Pyongyang’s cyberwarfare capabilities first drew global attention for the hack of Sony Pictures Entertainment in 2014, when the regime’s cyber goals were more focused on obtaining military information, destabilizing networks or intimidating opponents.

North Korea has turned in recent years to increasingly sophisticated financial warfare.

North Korea was blamed for last year’s cybertheft of \$81 million from Bangladesh’s central bank, followed by a \$60 million theft this year from a Taiwanese bank. Cybersecurity researchers say North Korea was involved in other attacks in Mexico, Poland, India and the U.K.

The hackers have executed scams such as planting viruses into South Korean ATMs or point-of-sale devices to steal personal information, according to researchers. South Korean government groups and agencies withstand 1.5 million daily North Korean hacking attempts, law-enforcement and intelligence officials said.

Pyongyang’s bitcoin interest has taken root more recently. North Korea targeted three cryptocurrency exchanges in South Korea between April and October, people familiar with that investigation said. That includes an April attack on a predecessor to Youbit, then known as Yapizon.

Steve Lim, chief strategy officer at the Coinone exchange, doesn’t think the Youbit incident alone will dramatically curb bitcoin interest. “People will shrug it off in a few months’ time, as long as there aren’t any more of these kinds of incidents,” he said.

Yapian said the security breach caused it to lose 17% of its total assets, but didn’t specify the financial value of the losses. The value of the heist is difficult to determine as exchanges aren’t required to provide information about their operations beyond registering their business when they first open.

On Dec. 1, Youbit purchased a one-year cyberinsurance policy from DB Insurance Co., a South Korean firm, with damage coverage up to about \$2.8 million.

A spokesman at DB Insurance said Youbit hasn’t filed a claim. Youbit has up to three years to do so.

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HEADLINE	03/29 Claim: most FTSE 100 firms fail to share
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/ftse-100-firms-fail-to-share/
GIST	<p>Most FTSE 100 companies are not being transparent with their board or the wider public about security strategy, according to new Deloitte research.</p> <p>The global consultancy analyzed reporting practices on cyber-risk covering all FTSE 100 annual reports in the year ending 30 September 2017.</p> <p>It found that just 21% disclosed that they provide cybersecurity updates to the board on a regular, monthly to bi-annual, basis. Even fewer (20%) disclosed details of specific cyber-risk testing, such as ethical hacking, designed to find vulnerabilities in their IT systems.</p> <p>The research revealed that FTSE 100 firms are either under-investing in cybersecurity or failing to be transparent about their efforts, which could be a missed opportunity to reassure investors and customers they understand the online threat.</p> <p>Organizations must focus their efforts on analyzing the business for any weaknesses which could be</p>

	<p>exposing them to hackers, argued Pete Banham, cyber-resilience expert at Mimecast.</p> <p>“It has never been more imperative for businesses to implement a cyber resilience strategy,” he added. “This should include strong methods of protection, combined with a reliable archive and recovery strategy for data that will ensure uninterrupted access and use of vital systems like email in the event of a breach.”</p> <p>The opacity in reporting highlighted by Deloitte will need to change when the GDPR lands in May, according to the firm’s head of cyber risk services, Phill Everson.</p> <p>“As we see GDPR regulations introduced from May 25 this year this becomes even more important as they require regulators to be notified within 72 hours of a breach,” he explained. “In preparation, companies will be looking at their processes for delivering security updates to the right people in a timely manner. However, with just two months to go to GDPR, our analysis shows there is still some work to do.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 Dismal state cybersecurity in aviation
SOURCE	http://www.computerweekly.com/news/252437816/Most-airports-not-protected-from-cyber-threats
GIST	<p>The chairman of the Israel Airports Authority paints a dismal picture of the state of cyber security in aviation, and offers advice on what can be done to avert the next disaster.</p> <p>The heightened focus on airport security started well over 40 years ago after Israeli forces had freed hostages from a hijacked aircraft in a major attack, according to Eliezer Marum, chairman of the Israel Airports Authority.</p> <p>Today, the airport is equipped with sophisticated physical security systems and intelligent security units to fend off growing threats that have also become increasingly cyber in nature.</p> <p>“We must assume that the threat is imminent,” Marum said at CyberTech Asia 2018 in Singapore, noting that there are sophisticated, trained terrorists who are plotting attacks against airports, including interconnected airport IT systems, to hit the news headlines.</p> <p>Adding to the challenge is the reality that unlike military systems, IT systems at airports cannot be isolated from the internet as passengers and airport employees depend on them to facilitate travel and airport operations, said Marum, a retired vice admiral and former commander of the Israeli Navy.</p> <p>As more airport operators such as Singapore’s Changi Airport Group start to offer fully automated passenger experiences, Marum said the impact of a cyber attack will be even more severe, to the extent of paralysing entire terminals.</p> <p>Despite the risks, Marum said most aviation regulations only address physical security, not cyber security. “There’s almost nothing on cyber, apart from some guidelines here and there,” he said. “If I paralyse your screening systems to allow bad things to pass, your airport will be exposed to big physical security threats.”</p> <p>Speaking from his experience and without revealing loopholes in airport IT systems for security reasons, Marum said most of the world’s airports are vulnerable to cyber attacks. “They have many physical security people, but they’re not protected in cyber,” he said.</p> <p>To address this, Marum said the Israel Airports Authority is considering establishing and leading a cyber association of airport operators to draft new security standards for airports.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Marum offered some advice on securing aviation systems. He said airports must recognise potential threats, integrate physical and cyber security, as well as adopt security measures like a hurdle</p>

race – that is, to place more obstacles in the way of threat actors who are more likely to give up after repeated failures to compromise a system.

International cooperation is also key, so that threat intelligence can be shared between airport operators and intelligence agencies to avert the next major terrorist attack, which Marum said is likely to be bigger than the 9-11 attack on the US. “You will not see the enemy, who will be sitting somewhere in an air-conditioned room ready to attack and surprise you,” he warned.

According to a recent survey, nearly 70% of cyber security leaders in the Asia-Pacific region believe a major attack affecting critical infrastructure across multiple countries will happen in the next two years.

However, the respondents were not confident of their ability to deal with looming threats. More than half of them said the lack of funds and security staff had hampered their ability to fight threats.

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HEADLINE	03/28 FBI tackles ‘going dark’ dilemma
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/mar/28/fbi-revamping-plan-tackling-going-dark-encryption-/
GIST	<p>The FBI plans to create a new unit within the bureau’s Operational Technology Division (OTD) aimed at better addressing the worsening “Going Dark” dilemma that’s hindered criminal investigators’ ability to access digital evidence stored on encrypted devices.</p> <p>An internal FBI audit involving the 2015 terrorist attack in San Bernardino, California, found that federal investigators are revamping the way they pursue access data off encrypted devices including smartphones and computers, according to a Justice Department Office of the Inspector General’s report released Tuesday.</p> <p>“During the course of our inquiry, we were informed that the FBI intends to add a new section in OTD to consolidate resources to address the ‘Going Dark’ problem and improve coordination between the units that work on computer and mobile devices,” the report states.</p> <p>“We believe that such efforts to improve communication and coordination are worthwhile, and should help to avoid some of the disconnects we found occurred in this very important and high profile investigation,” the report said.</p> <p>While authorities have wrestled for years with accessing data off encrypted devices, the issue took center stage following the December 2015 attack in San Bernardino when federal investigators found themselves unable to glean evidence from an Apple iPhone belonging to slain suspect Syed Farook. The FBI sued Apple in federal court in hopes of compelling the company’s complete assistance, but relented after receiving the assistance of a third-party security firm.</p> <p>The inspector general “found that inadequate communication and coordination within OTD caused a delay in engaging all relevant OTD personnel in the search for a technical solution to the Farook iPhone problem, as well as the outside party that ultimately developed the method that unlocked the phone, issues that we learned the FBI has since taken steps to address,” the report said.</p> <p>Based in Quantico, Virginia, the OTD “develops and deploys technology-based solutions to enable and enhance the FBI’s intelligence, national security and law enforcement operations,” according to the FBI’s website.</p> <p>“Counter-encryption” is a primary function of the OTD’s digital forensics team, according to the website.</p> <p>The FBI pointed to its response to the inspector general report when asked Wednesday for further details about the new OTD division.</p>

	<p>“FBI/OTD has realigned mission areas for several Units in preparation for a larger reorganization,” the agency said.</p> <p>Federal investigations have increasingly been stymied in recent years by strong, hard-to-crack encryption used to protect data on devices like iPhone and Google Android phones, among others.</p> <p>The FBI was unable to access data from 7,775 digital devices during fiscal 2017, constituting more than half of the total devices lawfully seized by federal investigators during that span, FBI Director Christopher Wray said in January.</p> <p>“While the FBI and law enforcement happen to be on the front lines of this problem, this is an urgent public safety issue for all of us,” Mr. Wray said. “Because as horrifying as 7,800 in one year sounds, it’s going to be a lot worse in just a couple of years if we don’t find a responsible solution.”</p> <p>A 2017 report published by the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office found that the number of locked smartphones lawfully seized by local prosecutors surged nearly tenfold in recent years, from 78 in 2014 to 702 in the first 10 months of 2017, including 466 locked Apple iPhones and 236 locked devices running Google’s Android operating system.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 iPhone camera app flaw goes phishing
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/iphone-camera-app-flaw-takes-users-to-phishing-sites/
GIST	<p>Last week it was reported that there were a bunch of malware-infected QR reader apps on Play Store which was downloaded half a million time. Now, Infosec’s security researcher Roman Mueller has identified a flaw in the way iOS camera application manages QR codes; the flaw leads to redirecting users to malicious destinations.</p> <p>The vulnerability is present in the app’s automatic QR code scanning function. It results in displaying a URL that can lead the unsuspecting user to unauthentic and even infected websites.</p> <p>Mueller proved his findings with an example where the QR code scanned by the iPhone’s camera app displayed a link that redirected to Facebook.com through Safari browser but the user was redirected to Mueller’s own website (https://infosec.rm-it.de/).</p> <p>It must be noted that with iOS 11, Apple Inc. introduced the brand new feature of a built-in camera app. The app allowed users to scan QR codes and access links or other types of content. Through this new feature, users of iPhone were no longer required to install a third-party app for scanning of QR codes.</p> <p>Mueller stated that it only took few minutes’ time to identify a way to construct a QR code that displays a harmless looking domain in the notification but actually leads the user to a completely different and somewhat unsecure destination in Safari browser. He further asserted that this is a grave vulnerability as it opens a plethora of opportunities for cybercrooks; they can lead users to phishing sites or link containing malicious exploit.</p> <p>Apple was notified about the vulnerability by Mueller on December 23, 2017, but the company hasn’t yet fixed it. Considering the time elapsed since the date of notifying Apple, Mueller thought it was the right time to publicly disclose the flaw.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Legal depts. struggle w/GDPR role
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/legal-departments-struggle-with/

<p>GIST</p>	<p>The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is set to take effect on May 25, and research suggests that while businesses are busy scrambling to fill data protection officer (DPO) vacancies, other areas of the organization, especially the legal department, could be taken by surprise.</p> <p>According to accounting and advisory firm BDO, about half (48%) of legal team respondents in a recent survey claim GDPR is not applicable to their organization. Given that any US or foreign company that deals with EU citizens' personal data – the definitions of which are not entirely clear – will be subject to the GDPR's stringent requirements, that perception is likely not in line with reality.</p> <p>“It behooves every organization – whether they touch EU personal data or not – to regularly review how information is used and managed to maximize its value and minimize risk,” said Karen Schuler, BDO National Information Governance practice leader. “GDPR is just the catalyst for a higher standard of data privacy and protection to which every company should aspire.”</p> <p>This confusion comes as digital assets increasingly become corporate counsels' purview: Among respondents whose organizations have a defined information governance program, 42% of those programs are led by legal, surpassed only by the CIO (47%).</p> <p>At the same time, legal officers' cyber-responsibilities continue to expand: 73% of respondents believe their boards are more involved in cybersecurity than they were 12 months ago. About a third (34%) of the counsel surveyed say their organizations will increase cyber-investment by 10% or more in the next 12 months.</p> <p>The survey also uncovered that, to keep pace with mounting digital risks, almost half (46%) of senior counsel plan to increase their investment in information governance in the next 12 months.</p> <p>“Ultimately, today's corporate counsel must take a holistic view of their organization's digital risk profile – assessing risk based on data flows, cross-functional interdependencies and global operations – and play a proactive, rather than reactive, role in risk-based strategic planning,” said Stephanie Giammarco, partner and BDO Technology & Business Transformation Services practice leader.</p>
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<p>HEADLINE</p>	<p>03/28 Big business of bad bots</p>
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>https://www.securityweek.com/big-business-bad-bots</p>
<p>GIST</p>	<p>Bad bots are big news largely because of the FBI investigation into Russia's involvement in the 2016 presidential election. But bad bots are a bigger problem than automated tweeting: 42.2% of all website traffic comes from bots; and 21.8% of it is down to bad bots.</p> <p>Distil Networks' 2018 Bad Bot Report, based on an analysis of hundreds of billions of bad bot requests, shows that bad bot traffic increased by 9.5% in 2017. Bad bots differ from good bots, whose traffic also increased by 8.8% to 20.4%. It means that only -- on average -- 57.8% of visiting traffic comes from a genuine human being interested in the website content.</p> <p>Good bots are those that all websites require. They include the search engine page indexing bots from Google and Bing, and they bring humans to the site. Bad bots, however, are secretive and nefarious. They come from outright criminals and commercial competitors; and their purpose is to detract and/or steal from the website.</p> <p>Distil highlights eight different bad bot functions: price scraping, content scraping, account takeover, account creation, credit card fraud, denial of service, gift card balance checking, and denial of inventory. They fall into three primary categories: competitive, organized criminal, and nuisance.</p> <p>Price scraping and content scraping are generally competitor attacks. Price scraping allows competitors to maintain price levels slightly lower to score more highly in search engine rankings. Content scraping is</p>

simply the theft of proprietary content to augment another site's own content.

Account takeover bots are automated attempts at illegal log-ins. They can deliver brute-force attacks cycling through the most popular passwords to see if one of them works, or they can use the process known as credential stuffing.

Distil reports a 300% increase in credential stuffing bad bots in the weeks following a new major credential theft. This involves the automatic application of stolen passwords on different websites. "Here," notes the report, "bot operators make two assumptions. The first is that people reuse their credentials on many websites. The second is that newly stolen credentials are more likely to still be active. This is why businesses should anticipate bad bots running those credentials against their website after every breach."

Account creation bad bots simply generate vast numbers of new accounts -- for example, on Twitter -- to spam out messages or amplify propaganda.

Credit card fraud bots test out credit card numbers, trying to identify missing information -- such as the expiry date and the CVV.

The denial of service bad bot can be either competitive or nuisance. It can be used to reduce the performance of a competitor, or to disrupt the service of a small website either because of a grudge, or simply because it is possible. It can be effected either from a small number of attacking IP addresses, or from a larger number of rotating addresses. Automated defenses often fail because the number of accesses from each IP address is below the warning threshold before it moves to other addresses, while manual whack-a-mole IP blocking simply cannot keep up.

Gift card balance checking bots are used to steal money from gift card accounts that contain a balance.

'Denial of inventory' is a relatively new competitor attack prompted by the growth of ecommerce. In this attack, bots place stock items in online shopping baskets, taking them out stock lists. If the item is no longer available, then visiting human buyers will go elsewhere to make the purchase.

Bad bots are a difficult problem. Many website owners are not aware of them, while common defenses have little effect. Geo-blocking, for example, is only somewhat effective. Many sites block all Russian traffic. While this will inevitably include some bad bot traffic, it may also exclude some genuine human traffic. Russia is, however, the most blocked country.

In reality, the greatest source of bad bot traffic is the U.S. (although the operators may be elsewhere). According to Distil, 45.2% of all bad bot traffic originates in the United States (China is second, but way down with just 10.5%). This is because nobody, anywhere in the world, is likely to block all traffic coming from the U.S.

"This year bots took over public conversation, as the FBI continues its investigation into Russia's involvement in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and new legislation made way for stricter regulations," said Tiffany Olson Jones, CEO of Distil Networks. "Yet, as awareness grows, bot traffic and sophistication continue to escalate at an alarming rate. Despite bad bot awareness being at an all-time high, this year's Bad Bot Report illustrates that no industry is immune to automated threats and constant vigilance is required in order to thwart attacks of this kind."

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HEADLINE	03/29 Flaw exposes Drupal websites to attack
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/drupalgeddon-critical-flaw-exposes-million-drupal-websites-attacks
GIST	All versions of the Drupal content management system are affected by a highly critical vulnerability that can be easily exploited to take complete control of affected websites in what may turn out to be Drupalgeddon 2.0.

While analyzing the security of Drupal, Jasper Mattsson discovered a serious remote code execution flaw that impacts versions 6, 7 and 8. This represents more than one million websites that can be hacked by a remote and unauthenticated attacker.

The security hole, tracked as CVE-2018-7600 and assigned a risk score of 21/25, can be exploited simply by accessing a page on the targeted Drupal website. Once exploited, it gives the attacker full control over a site, including access to non-public data and the possibility to delete or modify system data, Drupal developers warned.

The vulnerability has been patched with the release of Drupal 7.58, 8.5.1, 8.3.9 and 8.4.6. While Drupal 6 has reached end of life and it's not supported since February 2016, a fix has still been developed due to the severity of the flaw and the high risk of exploitation.

Besides updating their installations to the latest version, users can protect their websites against attacks by making some changes to the site's configuration. However, the required changes are "drastic."

"There are several solutions, but they are all based on the idea of not serving the vulnerable Drupal pages to visitors. Temporarily replacing your Drupal site with a static HTML page is an effective mitigation. For staging or development sites you could disable the site or turn on a 'Basic Auth' password to prevent access to the site," Drupal developers said.

Cloudflare also announced that it has pushed out a rule to its Web Application Firewall (WAF) to block potential attacks.

While no technical details have been made public, Drupal believes that exploits targeting the vulnerability will be created within hours or days, which is why it alerted users of the flaw and an upcoming patch one week in advance. This appears to have been a good strategy, but many websites may still remain vulnerable for extended periods of time.

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HEADLINE	03/28 Grindr flaws spill personal info, location
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/grindr-flaws-spill-personal-info-on-users-reveals-locations/article/754486/
GIST	<p>Security flaws in Grindr can expose the personal information and location of its three million or so users.</p> <p>An app developer discovered the vulnerabilities when creating the C*ckblocked website that lets users find out who blocked them on the dating app, according to a report from NBC News.</p> <p>After users logged in to the website using their Grindr names and passwords, developer Trevor Faden, CEO of Atlas Lane, could access private user data, including their emails, location and unread messages, through a loophole eerily similar to the one that allowed Cambridge Analytica to collect the data of 50 million unwitting Facebook users.</p> <p>"One could, without too much difficulty or even a huge amount of technological skill, easily pinpoint a user's exact location," NBC cited Faden as saying.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Destructive, false flag attacks to escalate
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/destructive-and-false-flag-cyberattacks-to-escalate/d/d-id/1331390
GIST	Olympic Destroyer. NotPetya. Bad Rabbit. OilRig. These disruptive and in most cases destructive

cyberattacks were just the beginning.

Geopolitical tensions typically map with an uptick in nation-state cyberattacks, and security experts are gearing up for more aggressive and damaging attacks to ensue against the US and its allies in the near-term, including crafted false flag operations that follow the strategy of the recent Olympic Destroyer attack on the 2018 Winter Olympics network.

As US political discord escalates with Russia, Iran, North Korea, and even China, there will be expected cyberattack responses, but those attacks may not all entail the traditional, stealthy cyber espionage. Experts say the Trump administration's recent sanctions and deportation of Russian diplomats residing in the US will likely precipitate more aggressive responses in the form of Russian hacking operations. And some of those could be crafted to appear as the handiwork of other nation-state actors.

A shift in Russia's M.O. against the US infamously began in 2016 with the hacks of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), and Hillary Clinton campaign manager John Podesta's email account, all of which were punctuated with data dumps via WikiLeaks, DC Leaks, and Guccifer 2.0.

US companies Merck and Federal Express were believed to be collateral damage from the NotPetya attack Russia forged last year against Ukrainian targets, posing as a ransomware attack but instead wiping data from hard drives at infected sites. But such attacks may well become more direct in the near future, experts believe.

Security experts worry that Russia will continue to ratchet up more aggressive cyberattacks against the US - likely posing as other nations and attack groups for plausible deniability - especially given the success of recent destructive attack campaigns like NotPetya. Not to mention the successful chaos caused by Russia's election-meddling operation during the 2016 US presidential election.

That doesn't mean Russia or any other nation-state could or would cause a massive power grid outage in the US, however. Instead, US financial services and transportation networks could be next in line for disruption via nation-state actors, experts say.

Vikram Thakur, senior manager on Symantec's security response team, says Olympic Destroyer scratched the surface for cloak-and-dagger attacks. "We think the future is going to get even more complicated with actors relying more and more on false flags, in some cases, throwing another group [under] the bus from an attribution standpoint."

"To say the waters are muddied would be such an understatement," he says. Not only are some nations teaming up outside of cyber, but others are happy to pilfer from one another's cyber domains as well: "We're aware of groups happy to steal others' information and sit on their command and control server. We're aware of false flag operations."

But Tom Kellermann, chief cybersecurity officer at Carbon Black, expects more nefarious activity out of Russia, and possibly from Iran and North Korea, against the US. He expects some regimes to team up in the long term to target the US and other Western allies/NATO in cyberspace. For example, the nomination of CIA director Mike Pompeo - who has criticized the Iran nuclear deal - as the new US Secretary of State to replace Rex Tillerson, could spark online retaliation from Iran, he says.

"You're going to see a dramatic escalation of Iranian cyberattacks against US infrastructure" that follow White House and State Department rhetoric, he says. Iran already has dramatically improved its cyberattack capabilities, he says, and he believes it's learning from Russia's tactics. "They're all using the same playbook" now, he says, with similar "kill chain" methods in their attacks and payloads.

Kellermann says he believes Russia is providing North Korea and Iran with the technologies and tactics to advance their attacks. It may not be direct coordination, but there's some element of technology transfer from Russia to those nations, he maintains.

The Iranian OilRig attackers, for instance, have advanced in their ability to mask lateral movement within a targeted organization, he notes, and they have adopted methods similar to Russia's Fancy Bear group, including an AppLocker bypass exploit, indirect code execution, and the increasingly popular file-less malware method where legitimate system tools are used against victims rather than custom malware.

This move away from custom malware to so-called file-less malware also complicates attribution and helps embolden false-flag operations. "[Custom malware] was one of the primary methods for identifying certain groups in the past. Without that, it becomes difficult to determine who the perpetrator might be," Symantec's Thakur says.

That doesn't mean attribution is dead. "It's becoming a lot more challenging. But in the end they are still humans and even if they write scripts in PowerShell or JavaScript or PHP, at the end of the day they will reuse code and are lazy. That helps us" identify them, he says.

North Korea's Hidden Cobra, believed to be behind the sophisticated attacks bank members of the SWIFT network, also is maturing fast. "The M.O. they use against the financial sector reminds me of the M.O. of Russian cybercriminals," says Kellermann. Their custom Trojan development aside, they employed similar communications methods, including a custom binary protocol to beacon back to the C2 servers over TCP port 8080, 8088, and their use of SSL, he says, as well as when they overwrote the ServiceDLL in the Windows registry.

Thakur says his team at Symantec hasn't seen much cooperation among different nations to date. Multiple hacking teams from a particular nation, such as Iran, will work in tandem in an attack campaign, splitting up different stages of the attack. "I don't think different countries are going to collaborate on malware or on different active campaigns. Most are very nationalistic, or have ambitions for intellectual property" theft, he says.

One high-profile exception, of course, was Stuxnet. Although neither the US nor Israeli governments ever took credit for the hack that sabotaged uranium centrifuges in Iran, experts who studied the attacks pointed to fingerprints from both nations' intelligence agencies.

CrowdStrike vice president of intelligence Adam Meyers says he hasn't seen much overlap of nation-state groups working together, but points to nations such as Iran modeling some of their techniques after Russian ones. Take Iran's initial dabbling with destructive attacks via the Shamoon campaign, which hit a couple of targets.

"It was a shot across the bow," Meyers says. But starting in 2016, Iran waged a series of destructive cyberattacks targeting the Saudi government and infrastructure and business, he notes. "That was for maximum impact and psychological impact on the people of Saudi Arabia," he says. "It's what Russia has been doing against Ukraine for seven years."

Meyers believes the issue is more about Iran's cyberweapon capability improving and maturing – likely inspired by Russia's.

Symantec's Thakur says the likelihood of the number of destructive cyberattacks against the US and others increasing in the coming months is "more realistic" now than ever. "It's more about the motivation by threat actors working on behalf of certain countries that will reach the threshold where they would more often cause destruction to someone's network," he says. "There are a lot of factions. It's fair to assume some might get more reckless."

But that doesn't mean widespread critical infrastructure damage. "That doomsday scenario isn't fair. It's extremely unlikely we would face a situation of a widescale blackout across the country," Thakur says. "If anything, there are small pockets of the country that don't have the redundancy or rollover, who might be at elevated risk of cyberattacks and some kinetic" threat, he says.

	<p>Even with the recent confirmation by the federal government that Russia's DragonFly hacking team is well embedded in US power companies and other industrial networks, there's a silver lining, he says. "Today our infrastructure in the US is in a much better place than a year ago" security-wise, he says.</p> <p>In the runup to a possible meeting between Kim Jong-Un and Donald Trump, meantime, North Korean hacking teams will likely escalate their attacks. "They want to get intel around the US strategy," notes CrowdStrike's Meyers. "And leading up to those meetings, there is increasing pressure on the US government and POTUS to maintain a hard line on sanctions against North Korea ... So [North Korea] may step up their criminal operations," especially on the lucrative cryptocurrency mining attacks, he says.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Android cryptojacker can brick phones
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/mobile/new-android-cryptojacker-can-brick-phones/d/d-id/1331398
GIST	<p>A little CPU power can go a long way in a criminal application. That was the lesson of the Mirai botnet and now also a lesson being applied by a new cryptojacker mining Monero user the power of the Android phone.</p> <p>Researchers at Trend Micro recently discovered ANDROIDOS_HIDDENMINER, a piece of malware that embeds itself in an Android device, obfuscates its presence, and proceeds to use the device CPU to mine Monero, a cryptocurrency that has gained favor with criminals because of its anonymous, untraceable nature.</p> <p>Researchers have seen an increase in cryptojacking in 2018 as cybercriminals turn to malware that seems more reliable than ransomware and less likely to draw the immediate attention of law enforcement. Cryptojackers have begun using delivery mechanisms like EternalBlue to plant themselves on systems, indicating that the same sort of criminal organizations that were banking on ransomware have now turned to the less aggressive cryptojackers for revenue.</p> <p>Like other cryptojackers, ANDROIDOS_HIDDENMINER is far from benign. The demands that cryptocurrency mining places on a CPU are so great that the CPU can overheat causing the device to lock, fail, and be permanently damaged. Similar malware such as Laopi has been known to cause heat-related battery swelling to the point that the phone case actually bubbled and buckled, according to one report.</p> <p>ANDROIDOS_HIDDENMINER is currently being delivered through a fake Google Play update app. So far, it has been available to users in China and India, though the Trend Micro researchers note that there's no technical reason that the malware couldn't enter other markets, and that they fully expect to see spread to other geographies in the future.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 Boeing confirms malware attack
SOURCE	http://www.zdnet.com/article/boeing-confirms-malware-attack-downplays-production-impact/
GIST	<p>After reports emerged on Wednesday afternoon that Boeing had found itself the latest victim of the WannaCry ransomware attack, the company issued a statement to explain that its cybersecurity operations centre had merely detected a "limited intrusion" of malware that had affected a small number of its systems.</p> <p>Although ZDNet has reached out to Boeing for comment, a statement issued to sister site CNET downplays the concerns over the company's production impact.</p> <p>"A number of articles on a malware disruption are overstated and inaccurate," Linda Mills, vice president of Boeing commercial airplanes communications, told CNET.</p> <p>"Our cybersecurity operations center detected a limited intrusion of malware that affected a small number</p>

	<p>of systems. Remediations were applied and this is not a production or delivery issue."</p> <p>Claims Boeing had been struck by the virus that caused global panic when it spread last year were made after the company's commercial airplane chief engineer Mike VanderWel distributed a memo to staff that called for "all hands on deck".</p> <p>"It is metastasizing rapidly out of North Charleston and I just heard 777 (automated spar assembly tools) may have gone down," the Seattle Times reported VanderWel as writing in the memo. He reportedly added that he was concerned the virus would hit equipment used in functional tests of planes ready to roll out and potentially "spread to airplane software".</p> <p>The WannaCry ransomware, labelled the biggest challenge of 2017, saw ransomware spread with the help of a leaked NSA exploit and infect over 300,000 PCs at major organisations around the globe.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Boeing deals w/suspected ransomware
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/boeing-is-dealing-with-a-suspected-wannacry-ransomware-outbreak/
GIST	<p>In a baffling turn of events, computers at Boeing have allegedly been infected with the WannaCry Ransomware. According to the Seattle Times, a memo was sent out by a Boeing employee that states that systems have been affected and that their were concerns the ransomware would "spread to airplane software".</p> <p>The Seattle Times reports that this memo was sent out by Mike VanderWel, chief engineer at Boeing Commercial Airplane production engineering, that states:</p> <p>"It is metastasizing rapidly out of North Charleston and I just heard 777 (automated spar assembly tools) may have gone down," VanderWel wrote, adding that he's concerned the virus will hit equipment used in functional tests of airplanes ready to roll out and potentially "spread to airplane software."</p> <p>While WannaCry is still spotted occasionally trying to spread, for the most part this ransomware was effectively stopped by security researcher Marcus "MalwareTech" Hutchins registered a domain that acted as a kill switch for the ransomware component.</p> <p>That is why it is so baffling that almost a year later, with all the patches that were released, almost all AV software detecting it, and all the media attention that WannaCry generated that Boeing would become infected with this ransomware in 2018.</p> <p>At this time, the ransomware has not been 100% confirmed as WannaCry and it could very well be an imitation as we have seen those released in the past. If anyone works for Boeing and can share a screenshot or a sample, it could be readily confirmed if this was the original Wannacry.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Facebook hit w/class-action lawsuit
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/mar/28/facebook-users-sue-over-feature-collected-call-and/
GIST	<p>Facebook was sued in federal court Tuesday for quietly scraping the call and text data of account holders who used its Android smartphone apps, adding fresh litigation to the embattled social network's growing list of legal woes.</p> <p>Brought on behalf of Facebook users Anthony Williams, Tyoka Brumfield and Wendy Burnett, the 22-page class action complaint filed in San Francisco federal court alleges the world's largest social network</p>

	<p>violated consumer protection and privacy laws by siphoning phone data from Android users who ran older versions of its Messenger and Lite apps.</p> <p>The apps scraped “years worth of call and text data, including whether each call was ‘Incoming,’ ‘Outgoing’ or ‘Missed,’ the date and time of each call, the number dialed, the individual called and the duration of each call,” attorney L. Timothy Fisher wrote in the complaint.</p> <p>“These data are then sent to Facebook and incorporated into the company’s trove of User Data, which in turn are monetized for advertising purposes,” the lawsuit alleges.</p> <p>“In all reasonable probability,” Mr. Fisher wrote, plaintiffs “would not have installed or used the Facebook Messenger app, or would have used it on materially different terms, had [they] known the truth about the app’s practice of scraping call and text logs.”</p> <p>The lawsuit seeks class action status on behalf of all affected Facebook users and requests unspecified compensatory, statutory and punitive damages.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Northern Irish parliament cyberattack
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/northern-irish-parliament-hit-by-brute-force-attack/
GIST	<p>The email service at the Northern Ireland Parliament, Stormont has been hit by a brute force attack allowing unknown attackers to access email accounts of several members.</p> <p>According to an internal email seen by the BBC, Members of the NI Parliament have been notified that the attack was an external source trying to access assembly mailboxes with numerous password attempts.</p> <p>Although the compromised accounts were disabled by Stormont’s IT department, staff have been told to change their passwords and remain vigilant. The cyber attack is being investigated by the National Cyber Security Centre.</p> <p>However, the attack came days after it was revealed that APT15 hacking group who are associated with Chinese intelligence had allegedly hacked a UK government contractor and stole military secrets from its computers.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Siemens warns of critical vulnerabilities
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/critical-flaws-found-siemens-telecontrol-building-automation-products
GIST	<p>Siemens informed customers this week that critical vulnerabilities have been found in some of its telecontrol and building automation products, and revealed that some SIMATIC systems are affected by a high severity flaw.</p> <p>One advisory published by the company describes several critical and high severity flaws affecting Siveillance and Desigo building automation products. The security holes exist due to the use of a vulnerable version of a Gemalto license management system (LMS).</p> <p>The bugs affect Gemalto Sentinel LDK and they can be exploited for remote code execution and denial-of-service (DoS) attacks.</p> <p>The vulnerabilities were discovered by researchers at Kaspersky Lab and disclosed in January. The security firm warned at the time that millions of industrial and corporate systems may be exposed to remote attacks due to their use of the vulnerable Gemalto product.</p>

Siemens warned at the time that more than a dozen versions of the SIMATIC WinCC Add-On were affected. The company has now informed customers that some of its building automation products are impacted as well, including Siveillance Identity and SiteIQ Analytics, and Desigo XWP, CC, ABT, Configuration Manager, and Annual Shading.

The German industrial giant has advised customers to update the LMS to version 2.1 SP4 (2.1.681) or newer in order to address the vulnerabilities.

A separate advisory published by Siemens this week informs customers of a critical vulnerability affecting TIM 1531 IRC, a communication module launched by the company nearly a year ago. The module connects remote stations based on SIMATIC controllers to a telecontrol control center through the Sinaut ST7 protocol.

“A remote attacker with network access to port 80/tcp or port 443/tcp could perform administrative operations on the device without prior authentication. Successful exploitation could allow to cause a denial-of-service, or read and manipulate data as well as configuration settings of the affected device,” Siemens explained.

The company said there had been no evidence of exploitation when it published its advisory on Tuesday.

A third advisory published by Siemens this week describes a high severity flaw discovered by external researchers in SIMATIC PCS 7, SIMATIC WinCC, SIMATIC WinCC Runtime Professional, and SIMATIC NET PC products.

The vulnerability allows an attacker to cause a DoS condition on the impacted products by sending specially crafted messages to their RPC service. Patches or mitigations have been made available by Siemens for each of the affected systems.

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HEADLINE	03/28 NY medical practice exposes records
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/unsecured-ny-medical-practice-server-exposes-42000-records/article/754284/
GIST	<p>A Long Island, N.Y., medical practice left an exposed port normally used for remote synchronization open exposing at least 42,000 medical records.</p> <p>UpGuard Director of Cyber Risk Research Chris Vickery found that port 873, normally used for remote synchronization and moving data between devices, on a server belong to the medical practice of Cohen Bergman Klepper Romano Mds PC open and configured for global access allowing anyone who knew the server's IP address to find the data. A secure server would only allow access from select IP addresses, UpGuard wrote.</p> <p>The flaw allowed the patient names, Social Security numbers, ethnicity, insurance information, dates of birth, phone numbers and insurance information of the Huntington, N.Y. practice to be exposed. In addition, physician's personal information to include Social Security numbers and more than three million of the doctor's notes on their patients along with emails were also left unprotected, UpGuard said.</p> <p>The unsecured server was found on January 25, 2018 and secured on March 19.</p> <p>“Beyond the obvious sensitivity of any exposure of an individual's medical background, the leak of patient - and doctor - Social Security numbers, in association with personal details like home address, insurance information, and date of birth, provide ample ammunition for fraudsters. Armed with the contact information for patients, and the knowledge of which doctor's office they go to, malicious actors could also socially engineer exposed individuals, posing as a representative of the physicians to further extract</p>

	sensitive information,” UpGuard reported.
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HEADLINE	03/28 Lizard Squad member sentenced 3mo.
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/lizard-squad-member-zachary-buchta-receives-three-month-sentence/article/754287/
GIST	<p>One of the founders of the notorious hacking group Lizard Squad and PoodleCorp was sentenced to three months in prison after having plead guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit damage to a protected computer.</p> <p>Zachary Buchta, 20, pleaded guilty in December in the Northern District Court for the District of Illinois to the charge and also agreed to pay a \$350,000 fine. The charge carried a potential sentence of 10 years in prison, but the amount of time to be served was reduced due to Buchta's willingness to work with prosecutors, according to court documents.</p> <p>Lizard Squad was best known for knocking the gaming sites Xbox Live and PlayStation Network offline on Christmas Day in 2014 with DoS attacks and then hacking Taylor Swift's social media accounts the following year. The group also stole payment card information and sold their hacking services.</p> <p>Buchta's most visible role with the group, which was comprised of an international group of men several of whom have been arrested in their countries, was to applaud Lizard Squad's activity and troll law enforcement as they tried to bring down the gang.</p> <p>His online handle was @fbiarelosers and he promoted these illegal activities through a variety of Twitter accounts, including “@pein,” “@fbiarelosers,” “@xotehpoodle,” and “@PoodleCorp,” the sentencing document stated.</p> <p>“By tweeting messages such as “Arrest us” and “You can't arrest a lizard” (and using the moniker “@fbiarelosers”), defendant encouraged others to believe such computer crimes could be committed with impunity,” the court document stated.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Hajime botnet makes a comeback
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hajime-botnet-makes-a-comeback-with-massive-scan-for-mikrotik-routers/
GIST	<p>If you've been following the infosec Twitter community for the last few days, you couldn't ignore the constant talk about the massive scans currently taking place online, carried out by a Hajime IoT botnet looking to mass-infect unpatched MikroTik devices.</p> <p>All of the hoopla started on Sunday, March 25, when suspicious scans for port 8291 popped up out of the blue on everyone's honeypots.</p> <p>The scans only continued in the following days, showing no sign of abating, and attracting attention from security researchers from all over the globe.</p> <p>The attention was warranted as the scans weren't something small, and continued at an intensive rate. The first to spot the scans were researchers from Qihoo 360's Netlab team, who said today this Hajime botnet performed over 860,000 scans in the last three days, albeit they couldn't tell how many of these scans were also successful infections.</p> <p>The exploit attackers were trying to use was a vulnerability known as "Chimay Red," a bug that affects MikroTik RouterOS firmware 6.38.4 and earlier, and allows attackers to execute code and take over the</p>

	<p>device.</p> <p>This is the same flaw that was included in the WikiLeaks "Vault 7" leak of alleged CIA hacking tools, and the same flaw that some jokesters used during the past year to deface MikroTik routers by changing hostnames of vulnerable devices to all sorts of expressions that included the word "hacked."</p> <p>But this time around, attackers didn't joke around and they installed the Hajime bot, a strain of IoT malware known primarily for building giant botnets, with the last one reaching over 300,000 devices in the spring of 2017.</p> <p>It is worth mentioning that in the past, the Hajime IoT botnet was never used for massive DDoS attacks, and its existence was a mystery for many researchers, as the botnet only gathered infected devices but almost never did anything with them (except scan for other vulnerable devices).</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Some VPN providers leak customers' data
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/many-vpn-providers-leak-customers-ip-address-via-webrtc-bug/
GIST	<p>Around 20% of today's top VPN solutions are leaking the customer's IP address via a WebRTC bug known since January 2015, and which apparently some VPN providers have never heard of.</p> <p>The discovery belongs to Paolo Stagno, a security researcher who goes by the pseudonym of VoidSec, and who recently audited 83 VPN apps on this old WebRTC IP leak.</p> <p>Stagno says he found that 17 VPN clients were leaking the user's IP address while surfing the web via a browser.</p> <p>The researcher published his results in a Google Docs spreadsheet. The audit list is incomplete because Stagno didn't have the financial resources to test all commercial VPN clients.</p> <p>The researcher is now asking the community to test their own VPN clients and send him the results. For this, he set up a demo web page that users must access in their browser with their VPN client enabled. The code running on this page is also available on GitHub, if users want to test the leak locally, without exposing their IP on somebody else's server.</p> <p>Stagno's code is based on the WebRTC bug discovered in January 2015 by security researcher Daniel Roesler. Back then, Roesler found that WebRTC STUN servers, which intermediate WebRTC connections, will keep records of the user's public IP address, along with his private IP address, if the client is behind-NAT network, proxy, or VPN client.</p> <p>The problem was that STUN servers would disclose this information to websites that had already negotiated an WebRTC connection with a user's browser.</p> <p>Since then, many advertisers and law enforcement agencies have used this WebRTC-related bug to acquire a site's visitor's IP address.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 World Backup Day: saving your data
SOURCE	https://www.welivesecurity.com/2018/03/28/world-backup-day-saving-day-saving-data/
GIST	World Backup Day, celebrated annually on March 31, is a timely reminder of the importance of taking effective measures that can make all the difference when a data loss incident strikes. It is also a good time to pause and reflect on the rising tide of threats that organizations, notably those operating in critical

industries, face in cyberspace.

It is a safe bet to say that Hippocrates didn't expect the wisdom of the oath named after him to extend nicely to cybersecurity one day. And yet, thousands of years later, many security practitioners will probably swear by one of the dicta contained in modern versions of the physicians' pledge, namely that "prevention is preferable to cure".

Nevertheless, as threats are constantly evolving and become more pervasive, incident response and recovery are increasingly jostling for the attention of organizations' cyber-defenders. Indeed, the threat landscape gives a sense that security ills are sometimes well-nigh unavoidable. Given our reliance on technology, having a plan for how to respond when the chips are down has never been more important.

In information security, best practices in preparations for a possible emergency include implementing a robust plan for data backup and recovery. World Backup Day, celebrated since 2011, helps raise awareness of the fact that a data loss event can cost people and organizations dearly. The causes of such incidents clearly run the gamut and include a hardware or system failure, a human error, a malicious insider, and a cyberattack.

To be sure, there is also the possibility of a physical disaster. However, compared to, say, fire or flood, cyber-incidents – especially of a malicious bent – pose a range of specific challenges for both detection and recovery. To begin with, it may not even be immediately obvious that something is amiss. Also, the actual extent of the damage or the timing of the intrusion may not be immediately apparent. The risk of a contagion spreading to other systems is yet another of a number of challenges that cybersecurity incidents bring.

Whatever the cause of the incident, an organization needs to restore the lifeblood of its operations – its mission-critical data – in order to begin a recovery. The journey to restoring the organization's vital functions begins with a pre-purchased ticket, which in this case is a robust backup of its data.

Indeed, reconstituting lost or corrupted data, especially business-critical data, can be a matter of survival for any business. In critical infrastructure, the stakes are particularly high. For services that are essential for the functioning of entire societies, even short-term disruptions can have particularly dire ramifications.

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HEADLINE	03/28 Electronic medical records carry risks
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2018/03/28/Electronic-medical-records-carry-some-risks-study-says/8981522261254/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=lh&utm_medium=6
GIST	<p>WEDNESDAY, March 28, 2018 -- Advances in medical technology sometimes come with drawbacks, and in the case of electronic health records, a new study suggests these systems occasionally put patients at risk.</p> <p>"There's no question that electronic health records have clear benefits for clinicians and patients, and can improve the care process," said senior author Raj Ratwani. He is director of the MedStar Health National Center for Human Factors in Healthcare in Washington, D.C.</p> <p>"However, nearly all health care systems have adopted an [electronic health record system] and this technology has introduced some new risks to patient safety, as our study has shown," Ratwani said in a MedStar news release.</p> <p>The analysis of more than 1.7 million reports from the Pennsylvania Patient Safety Authority and another mid-Atlantic health system found 557 cases of possible patient harm in which problems using electronic record systems were a factor.</p> <p>"Our view is that even one patient harm event that stems from electronic health record usability issues is</p>

	<p>unacceptable," Ratwani said.</p> <p>Trouble spots include data entry, alerts and interoperability, or the ability of computer systems or software to exchange and make use of information. The usability issues affected placement of prescription orders and medication administration.</p> <p>Examples of the problems cited include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Order placement: A doctor put a medication order in the system while a surgery patient was in recovery, then left the hospital. Though the orders looked complete, they were not activated. • Alerts: Even though a patient's drug allergy was listed in the record, the system failed to issue an alert about the allergy. <p>"These are solvable issues, and we are committed to improving electronic health record usability and patient safety," Ratwani said.</p> <p>The study was published March 27 in the Journal of the American Medical Association.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Reddit unplugs bitcoin payments
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/reddit-unplugs-bitcoin-payments/
GIST	<p>Reddit, one of bitcoin's first adopters, is no longer accepting payments in the digital currency.</p> <p>A favored hangout for fans of cryptocurrencies, the social media platform in recent days disengaged the option to use bitcoin to purchase a premium membership due to snags in the system and because of a decision by Coinbase, a digital-assets exchange, to discontinue its merchant product in favor of a new platform.</p> <p>Reddit users began commenting on Friday that the only payment options for the membership program were limited to credit cards and PayPal, without the previous choice of bitcoin.</p> <p>Asked for confirmation, Reddit spokesperson Leigh Ann Benicewicz in an email directed CBS MoneyWatch to a comment from a Reddit administrator addressing the change.</p> <p>"Yup that's right. The upcoming Coinbase change, combined with some bugs around the Bitcoin payment option that were affecting purchases for certain users, led us to remove Bitcoin as a payment option," wrote a Reddit board administrator with the user name emoney04.</p> <p>"We're going to take a look at demand and watch the progression of Coinbase Commerce before making a decision on whether to reenable," the Reddit administrator also wrote.</p> <p>Coinbase plans to release a service, called Coinbase Commerce, for merchants to take bitcoin, bitcoin cash, ethereum and litecoin payments and deposit them in their own digital wallet, the San Francisco company said in a blog post last month.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Tweet on Facebook, Google data goes viral
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/web-developer-dylan-curran-thread-on-info-that-facebook-and-google-store-goes-viral/
GIST	<p>Web developer Dylan Curran posted a thread on Twitter over the weekend that quickly went viral. He tweeted, "Want to freak yourself out? I'm gonna show just how much of your information the likes of Facebook and Google store about you without you even realizing it."</p>

In his series of tweets and an [opinion piece in The Guardian](#), Curran, who told CBSN on Wednesday that he "was basically a nobody before this exploded," outlined the information Google stores on users, ranging from users' location to app usage to their YouTube history.

He similarly highlighted Facebook's collection of personal information, saying the social media giant "has reams and reams of data on you, too."

"This includes every message you've ever sent or been sent, every file you've ever sent or been sent, all the contacts in your phone, and all the audio messages you've ever sent or been sent," he wrote in The Guardian.

Speaking on CBSN Wednesday from Ireland, he noted "there are settings to opt out of [Facebook and Google's] data collection," but "not a lot of people have realized that's there."

He also said that consumers have given up so much data voluntarily that "for the current generation and maybe all generations, so millennials and up, the damage is a little bit done." Facebook and Google "have enough information on us to create an advertising profile for the rest of our lives, and it's enough information that can be used against us, for the rest of our lives."

"I'm not saying that they will, just that that information does exist," he added.

Curran said Google had the equivalent of about 3 million Word documents worth of information stored about him, including every Google search he had made since 2009. He said Facebook stored another roughly 400,000 documents worth of information.

The first tweet in his thread has been retweeted more than 146,000 times since Saturday. It has received more than 228,000 likes.

Ex-NSA contractor Edward Snowden called it "an exquisite breakdown using real-life examples of how @Facebook and @Google exploited your trust to quietly create a decade-long dossier of your most private activities."

The interest in Curran's thread comes amid a slew of questions -- and heightened concerns -- about data privacy following revelations [about Cambridge Analytica](#), the consulting firm accused of harvesting data on as many as 50 million unwitting Facebook users through a personality quiz app. Facebook has apologized for the incident and [announced changes](#) to its privacy policy.

Curran said the response and attention he's received in the wake of his tweets have made him think "that there's something going on on a larger scale with the population, where people just don't understand what these products are doing and the potential damage that can happen in the future from just freely using them."

A Google spokesperson said in a statement to CBS News that "in order to make the privacy choices that are right for them, it's essential that people can understand and control their Google data. Over the years, we've developed tools like [My Account](#) expressly for this purpose, and we'd encourage everyone to review it regularly."

Facebook users can also review information about their data and contacts via Facebook's help section, [here](#) and [here](#).

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HEADLINE 03/29 Malaysia: central bank foils cyberattack

SOURCE <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-malaysia-cenbank-cybersecurity-incident/malaysias-central-bank-says-foiled-attempts-at-unauthorized-fund-transfers-idUSKBN1H50YF>

GIST	<p>KUALA LUMPUR (Reuters) - Malaysia's central bank said on Thursday it had detected and foiled an attempted cyber attack and efforts to transfer funds without authorization using falsified SWIFT messages.</p> <p>Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) did not suffer any financial loss in the incident, which occurred on Tuesday, it said in a statement.</p> <p>The bank did not say in the statement if the messages came via the SWIFT global payments network and did not immediately respond to requests for more details on the falsified messages.</p> <p>"All unauthorized transactions were stopped through prompt action in strong collaboration with SWIFT, other central banks and financial institutions," BNM said.</p> <p>The attempt at BNM is the latest in a series of cyber attacks on financial institutions.</p> <p>Unidentified hackers stole \$81 million from Bangladesh Bank's account at the New York Fed in February 2016, using fraudulent orders on the SWIFT payments system. In February, the Russian central bank said unknown hackers stole 339.5 million rubles from a Russian bank last year in an attack using the SWIFT system.</p> <p>The Malaysian central bank said there was no disruption to other payment and settlement systems the central bank operates, and that it has taken additional safeguards to protect its stakeholders.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 India govt. sends notice to Facebook
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/india-sends-notice-facebook-alleged-data-breach-54088576?cid=clicksource_79_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>India's government has sent a notice to Facebook asking whether the personal data of Indian voters and users has been compromised by U.K.-based Cambridge Analytica or any other downstream entity.</p> <p>A similar notice was dispatched to Cambridge Analytica last week following media reports that it had misused data to profile Indians and influence their elections. The government set a Saturday deadline for Cambridge Analytica and April 7 for Facebook to respond to its inquiry.</p> <p>Facebook is facing unprecedented scrutiny following reports that the data mining firm used ill-gotten data from tens of millions of its users to try to influence elections.</p> <p>India's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology said in a statement late Wednesday that Facebook has its largest footprint in India in terms of its user base and sought to know "what proactive measures it is taking to ensure the safety, security and privacy of such large user data and to prevent its misuse by any third party."</p> <p>The governing Bharatiya Janata Party and the main opposition Congress Party have accused each other of utilizing the services of the British company, but denied any link with it. Cambridge Analytica's allegedly unauthorized harvesting of Facebook data and a series of leaks linked to India's biometric database has refocused public attention on digital privacy in the country.</p> <p>Digital law experts say Indian regulations offered particularly weak safeguards against data breach.</p> <p>The Indian government's notice to Facebook sought to know "whether Facebook or its related or downstream agencies utilizing Facebook's data have previously been engaged by any entities to manipulate the Indian electoral process."</p> <p>"If any such downstream entity misused data from Facebook, what is the protection available to the data subject?" it asked.</p>

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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	03/29 Westminster attack: efficient investigation
SOURCE	https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/westminster-attack-khalid-masood-jihadi-manifesto-report-details-message-whatsapp-a8278616.html
GIST	<p>Details of a jihadi manifesto sent by the Westminster attacker on WhatsApp minutes before launching the atrocity have been revealed in a report that probed why police arrested a dozen potential suspects and then set them free.</p> <p>Khalid Masood placed a photo of himself on the front page of the document, which was entitled “Jihad” and included extracts from the Quran and other Islamic sources that he claimed to support violence.</p> <p>A report by the Independent Reviewer of Legislation detailed how police traced the contacts who received Masood’s final message to launch a wave of arrests across the country, starting in Birmingham.</p> <p>Max Hill QC said investigators initially believed Masood had sent the document to “specific individuals who may be of interest, but it quickly transpired to the police that a large number of individuals received this message and it wasn’t targeted at specific associates”.</p> <p>The Independent understands that the document did not include a pledge of allegiance to Isis, which claimed responsibility for the Westminster attack in a statement describing Masood as a “soldier of the Islamic State”.</p> <p>Intelligence investigations found he had researched Isis online, alongside methods of attack using knives and vehicles favoured by its followers, but the discovery raises the prospect that the terrorist group issued its claim opportunistically and without proof of his support.</p> <p>Masood had been known to security services since 2004, over his links with al-Qaeda supporters and Anjem Choudary’s banned Islamist network, but was not under active investigation at the time of the attack.</p> <p>A review by Mr Hill’s predecessor found that neither MI5 nor the police had any reason to anticipate the attack, concluding that Masood was “a long way from the top of anyone’s grid”.</p> <p>The 52-year-old Muslim convert was shot dead after killing five pedestrians on Westminster Bridge with his car and stabbing PC Keith Palmer to death outside Parliament.</p> <p>The rampage on 22 March 2017 lasted just 82 seconds but left 29 other victims injured, becoming the first terror attack claimed by Isis in the UK.</p> <p>A report into the ensuing police investigation said counter-terror officers launched a “fast-moving” probe that initially relied on just the items found in the crashed hire car.</p> <p>Masood’s phone was locked but notifications showed the content of recent messages, while financial information revealed that he had stayed at a hotel in Brighton on the previous night.</p> <p>The premises were searched, as was a hostel in Birmingham and the homes of friends and relatives in the city and London.</p> <p>Police arrested 12 people in total – eight men and four women aged between 20 and 58 – but all were later released without charge.</p>

The sweep contributed to a record number of terror arrests recorded in the UK last year, when the Westminster attack was the first of five atrocities to strike London and Manchester.

Mr Hill found “no major fault” with the investigation but made four recommendations for police to improve practices.

“I considered very hard the fact that 12 people were arrested and detained but none were charged, but I reached the conclusion that this was an efficient investigation, and a reasoned and proportionate use of the relevant terrorism legislation,” he told The Independent.

Those arrested in the wake of the attack included Masood’s ex-wife, who had two young children with the attacker.

In a statement released through police, she said she was “saddened and shocked” by his attack, condemning his actions.

Notifications on the terrorist’s phone showed she had tried to call him on the day of the attack, when she contacted police identifying him as the attacker.

“She stated in interview that she received a text message from Masood with a pdf named ‘Jihad’,” the report said.

“When she saw the incident on Twitter she was worried he might be involved and tried several times to get a hold of him.”

The woman cooperated fully with police and passed on details of Masood’s other associates.

Among them was a 58-year-old man who had also tried to call the attacker and was due to travel abroad with him “imminently”, sparking suspicion that he was complicit in the attack.

He was “initially not forthcoming as to the full extent of his relationship with Masood”, claiming he had only met him weeks before and complained about his arrest and the impact on his children.

One of Masood’s relatives, a 27-year-old man, was also arrested after he refused to hand police his phone because he needed it for work.

Officers uncovered messages the man sent to Masood two hours after the attack reading: “I will take care of her inshallah [God willing]. Ameen. Please give us a call when possible”, and then minutes later: “May Allah grant you peace and honour Ameen.”

Later the same evening, he texted Masood saying he had visited his home: “Khalid... called you and no answer..what is going on? We just knocked for you but no answer.”

The report said the man fully cooperated with police and denied knowledge of the attack, describing himself as a strict Muslim but “ignores the situation in Syria as he finds it too depressing”.

Another man, a 30-year-old associate of Masood was arrested after police found out he had received religious instruction from the terrorist had was “becoming more extreme and talking about jihad”.

Call data showed he had been in contact with Masood in the days and weeks leading up to the attack, and had visited Westminster for unclear purposes earlier in March.

He refused to answer questions in his first police interview on the advice of a solicitor, but later told investigators he met Masood at a gym, describing him as a “mentor who assisted him with his separation and child access issues”.

The man said he had not seen the terrorist for some time before the attack and knew nothing about it.

Four Hungarians who lived at an address where Masood was a former tenant were arrested, but did not know him.

Nor did a man and woman in their 20s living in a homeless hostel, which they moved into hours before being arrested.

Police also detained a Saudi Arabian married couple who were in a “professional relationship” with Masood through his teaching work.

Financial records showed the wife paid a total of £2,100 into Masood’s bank account in the two months before the attack with the reference “friend”, but they told police the payments were for “educational work completed”.

In total, police seized 584 pieces of potential evidence, including 256 electronic devices.

The evidence will be considered in ongoing inquests into the deaths of Masood and his five victims, British mother Aysha Frade, Romanian architect Andreea Cristea, pensioner Leslie Rhodes, American tourist Kurt Cochran and PC Palmer.

Mr Hill said police had fully accepted the findings of his report, which called on officers to give “greater thought” to transporting detainees hundreds of miles from the place of arrest, as was seen following the Westminster attack.

The lawyer, who has himself prosecuted several high-profile terror cases involving Isis and other groups, called on authorities to consider making it possible to release people arrested under the Terrorism Act on bail, make sure detainees are given their rights as soon as possible and review training on how people are questioned on their religion.

“None of them are major criticisms but they present learning opportunities,” Mr Hill said.

“I wanted to present as much information on the public as possible on Masood and his plans.

“There little public information as to what process follows when people are arrested on suspicion terror offences... it’s at the heart of this country’s response to terrorism and there’s a right to understand what police and individuals in their charge go through.”

Amber Rudd, the Home Secretary, said she would carefully consider the report’s recommendations and respond formally in due course.

It was published the day after an independent review into the emergency services’ response to the Manchester attack in May exposed failings by the fire service, which did not respond to the bombing for two hours after “poor communication” with police.

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HEADLINE	03/28 US almost struck Russians again Syria
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/us-wanted-attack-russians-syria-again-moscow-stepped-mattis-says-864666
GIST	<p>Defense Secretary James Mattis revealed Tuesday that U.S. forces nearly bombed Russians fighting on behalf of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad sometime in the past week, but a call with Moscow's own armed forces defused the situation.</p> <p>Mattis said he believed Russian military officials when they said they were not giving orders to private</p>

Russian citizens battling the Islamic State militant group (ISIS) and rebel groups as part of a coalition of pro-Syrian government militias. Following an incident last month, in which the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS killed a large number of these pro-Assad fighters, including Russians, Mattis said another clash was recently avoided after Marine Corps General Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, contacted Russia's top military leader, Army General Valery Gerasimov, via a deconfliction hotline.

"There were other Russian elements like this moving across the deconfliction line, which is the river, as you know, into an area that we'd agreed with the Russians they could operate in, as they had allowed us to operate basically to the west of the river, up at Tabqa and around Raqqa. We'd agreed for them being slightly east of the river at Deir Ezzor," Mattis told reporters at the Pentagon.

"These were forces moving into more advanced positions, too close. Deconfliction discussions between our chairman and his Russian counterpart, General Gerasimov [took place] and those elements fell back. So we have also drawn off slightly in order to maintain a deconfliction between the elements there," he continued.

"So it looks like, this time, it was resolved through the deconfliction communication line. It did not, you know, go into harm's way, as it did there a month ago," he added.

The battleground in eastern Syria has only grown more complex as the U.S.-led, mostly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces and the Russia-backed Syrian military fought two separate campaigns to destroy ISIS. As the Syrian military, backed by various pro-government militias—many of which were supported by Iran—and Russian warplanes, retook Deir Ezzor city and the border town of Al-Bukamal, they declared victory over ISIS and reclaimed the region for Assad.

On the other side of the Euphrates River, however, the Syrian Democratic Forces maintained control of lucrative oil fields. The Kurdish leadership had reportedly entered into preliminary talks with the Syrian government to negotiate the return of these sites in exchange for greater autonomy across majority-Kurdish northern Syria, but two major developments have upset the dynamics of eastern Syria.

First, Turkey protested to a U.S. plan to establish a Syrian Democratic Forces border force. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened to crush the U.S.-backed Kurdish "terror army" he accused of being linked to the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) that has waged a decades-long separatist guerrilla war in Turkey. Turkey rallied its rebel, once-CIA-backed Free Syrian Army allies in January to take the Kurd-held town of Afrin and Kurdish fighters have left the U.S.-led coalition frontlines in eastern Syria to resist the spreading Turkish invasion alongside pro-Syrian government forces as part of a deal with Assad.

Not long after, the mostly Arab faction of the Syrian Democratic Forces in eastern Syria said they had come under attack by pro-Syrian government forces. The U.S.-led coalition responded with massive force, killing up to 100 pro-Assad fighters, including at least dozens of Russian citizens—many of which were reportedly operating as part of private military companies.

Russia stated it had no control over Russian nationals working outside the military, but blamed the U.S. for provoking the attack and denied coalition claims that the U.S. had contacted Russian military officials before, during and after the attack. A U.S. drone killed more pro-Syrian government forces in a Russian tank days later.

While the degree to which Gerasimov was able to influence irregular Russian fighters on the ground was unclear, the elite general issued a direct warning that the U.S. military must not place his troops in danger. As negotiations over the evacuation of civilians and rebels from the insurgent-held districts outside of Damascus accompanied a violent Syrian air campaign earlier this month, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley warned that "the United States remains prepared to act" in response to reports of chemical weapons and civilian casualties.

Russia has denied its Syrian ally's involvement in chemical weapons attacks, including an alleged sarin gas

	attack last April that convinced President Donald Trump to launch airstrikes at a Syrian air base, a move Russia argued threatened the lives of its personnel. In response to Haley's renewed threat against the Syrian military, Gerasimov said he would "take retaliatory measures to target both the missiles and their delivery vehicles" if Russian lives were put in harm's way.
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HEADLINE	03/28 Somber spring in Kashmir Valley
SOURCE	http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/sombre-spring-in-kashmir-valley-as-six-youth-go-missing/article23375205.ece
GIST	<p>Photos of three of them with weapons in hand surface online; those not found include a university student and a head constable's son.</p> <p>Security agencies in Kashmir are alarmed as six youth had gone missing in the Valley in March. Photos of three of them with weapons in hand surfaced online in the past few days, raising suspicion that they have joined militancy.</p> <p>One of those missing is a student of the University of Kashmir and another is a policeman's son. Protests broke out on the university campus on Wednesday, demanding the whereabouts of Sameer Ahmad Dar, a Department of Earth Sciences student, be revealed. The students say Dar has been missing since March 19 after leaving home at Kakpora in Pulwama.</p> <p>"The university has written to the Director-General of Police and requested him to ascertain the student's whereabouts. We request the agitating students to maintain calm and cooperate till the police ascertain the facts," a university official said.</p> <p>A senior police official told The Hindu that an investigation had failed to establish that Dar had links with the militants, but they could not rule out the possibility.</p> <p>At Kawa Mohallah in Khanyar of Old City here, Mymoona Jan, mother of Fahad Mushtaq Waza, 18, known as Faid, appealed to her son to "quit militancy". Faid went on a religious programme on March 23 and on Tuesday, his gun-wielding pictures were splashed on social media sites. He allegedly joined the Lashkar-e-Taiba and took the name Abu Usama.</p> <p>"He [Waza] betrayed, and lied to, me. He said he would be back by Monday after finishing a religious programme. I appeal to him to return now," Ms. Jan said.</p> <p>In Kupwara, the police have declared Junaid Ahmad Wani (25) of Tikkipora "missing". "The matter is under investigation. We cannot conclude that Wani has joined militancy," a senior police official said.</p> <p>Bilal Ahmad Shah (25), also from Kupwara, allegedly joined the militant ranks on March 20. He had been missing for three weeks and was seen carrying an AK 47 rifle in a photo posted online recently, showing that he has joined the Hizbul Mujahideen.</p> <p>Another youth who announced his alleged association with militants on social media is Abid Maqbool Bhat, son of a head constable at Tral in Pulwama, He is said to have joined the Jasih-e-Muhammad.</p> <p>Junaid Ahmad Khan, son of the newly appointed Tehreek-e-Hurriyat chairman Muhammad Ashraf Sehrai, joined the Hizb.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Victory declared; US, Turkey remain
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/iraq-syria-win-wars-against-isis-us-turkey-will-not-leave-862653

GIST

Iraq and Syria have declared victory over the Islamic State militant group (ISIS), an international jihadi network whose presence in the Middle East drew in multiple local and international forces against it. However, months after Baghdad and Damascus both pronounced the militants' self-styled caliphate dead, the U.S. and Turkey have fought on in spite of calls to withdraw their forces.

While the U.S. has argued its indefinite military presence was necessary in both countries to prevent the resurgence of Islamist groups, Turkey has used the opportunity to launch a new campaign against Kurdish militias supported by the Pentagon but considered terrorist organizations by Ankara. As Turkish forces launched new attacks on Iraqi and Syrian Kurdish fighters combatting the remnants of ISIS, both countries have attempted to reduce or completely expel Turkey.

In a press conference Tuesday, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi assured reporters that the Iraqi military was "in complete control of all of Iraq's borders" and that the government had "a timetable for the reduction of the number of foreign troops in Iraq."

In neighboring Syria, where only Russia and Iran were considered legitimate foreign allies, an official Foreign and Expatriates Ministry statement issued Monday renewed "the demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Turkish occupation forces from Syrian territory."

On Tuesday, Syrian ambassador to the United Nations Bashar al-Jaafari condemned "attacks directed against the sovereignty, safety and territorial integrity of Syria" by the U.S.-led coalition, Turkey and Israel, according to the ruling Baath Party's official newspaper.

The Kurds are a Middle Eastern ethnic minority that claim parts of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey as their ancestral homeland and have alleged political oppression by the majority communities in all four countries. Iraqi and Syrian Kurds have since taken advantage of unrest in their home nations to challenge the dominance of their mostly Arab central governments.

ISIS formed out of a merger of jihadi groups, including Al-Qaeda in Iraq, in the wake of the 2003 U.S. invasion and overthrow of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, a member of Iraq's Sunni Muslim minority and opponent both of the fellow Baathist government in neighboring Syria and of the Kurdish ambitions at home. As ISIS took half of Iraq and Syria in 2014, a U.S.-led coalition began bombing it, while also supporting Kurdish forces on the ground in these countries.

The U.S.'s 2015 decision to establish the mostly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces angered Turkey, which linked Syrian Kurdish militias such as the People's Protection Units (YPG) to the militant Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) at home. With ISIS mostly defeated in Syria, thanks to campaigns by the U.S.-led coalition and its Syrian Democratic Forces allies, as well as the Syrian military supported by Russia and Iran, Turkey launched a new offensive against U.S.-backed Kurds in the northwestern region of Afrin in January and successfully took the city earlier this month,

The campaign has caused major friction between Turkey and the U.S., which has refused to withdraw Special Forces operating alongside Kurds in the northern city of Manbij, one of at least six Syrian and Iraqi cities located along Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's warpath. The U.S. has also declined support for Kurds leaving the battle against ISIS in the east to enter into a deal with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, whom the U.S. has attempted to overthrow since the beginning of Syria's seven-year civil war.

As Assad's government reclaimed most of the territory lost to rebels and jihadis, he and his Russian and Iranian allies have called on the U.S. to withdraw. But the Trump administration has declined to offer any timetables as to when or if it planned to withdraw U.S. forces.

Jennifer Cafarella, a senior intelligence planner at the Institute for the Study of War, told Newsweek that "the U.S. needs to be prepared to defend its positions in Syria and Iraq with force." She noted that "Russia, Iran and Assad seek to expel the U.S. from Syria and have attacked U.S. and partnered forces on numerous occasions" since President Donald Trump ordered a cruise missile strike against a Syrian air base in the

aftermath of what the U.S. said was a chemical weapons attack perpetrated by the Syrian military in the rebel-held province of Idlib last April.

In Afrin, the rebel Free Syrian Army, once backed by the CIA, has planted Turkish flags, signaling a potentially long-term presence for Ankara as it eyes the nearby town of Tel Rifaat, which reportedly was recently transferred from Syrian Democratic Forces to Syrian government control. The U.S.-led coalition said officials acknowledged "the departure of some SDF forces from the Middle Euphrates River Valley and continue to point out the potential costs of any distraction from the Defeat-ISIS fight" in a statement sent to Newsweek earlier this month.

Turkish airstrikes have also hit Kurdish militia targets in northern Iraq, where Ankara also felt vulnerable to PKK infiltration. Unlike Assad, Abadi has attempted to maintain a working relationship with Turkey, mostly due to its alliance with the U.S., which entered its 15th consecutive year operating in Iraq earlier this month. A number of local politicians have become increasingly vocal in their opposition to Turkish and U.S. military presence, however, and Abadi assured journalists on Tuesday that he told Turkish Foreign Minister Binali Yildirim that Iraqi forces could handle Kurdish militant activity in northern Iraq.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari also told his Turkish counterpart earlier this week that Turkey should withdraw from the city of Bashiqa. In addition to growing anger over the Turkish military presence in Iraq, Abadi has faced increased pressure to push for the U.S. to exit the country from the powerful, influential collective of Iran-backed Shiite Muslim militias known as the Popular Mobilization Forces.

This large paramilitary force was assembled in 2014 and fought alongside both Iraqi and Syrian troops to defeat ISIS. Earlier this month, they were made an official part of Iraq's armed forces. As Abadi prepared for elections later this year, the mostly Shiite Muslim force—which also included many Sunni Muslims, Yazidi Christians and other communities—has urged him to expedite the withdrawal of U.S. forces, threatening to wage a new conflict if they did not leave.

"The Iranians may be preparing to escalate against U.S. forces in Iraq in an attempt to expel them, as well," Cafarella told Newsweek.

"Iranian proxies are campaigning for Iraq's upcoming elections on a platform of resisting U.S. 'occupation.' Iran's proxies likely submitted a recent resolution that passed the vote in Iraqi parliament that demands a timeline on the full withdrawal of coalition forces. Iran likely seeks to gain an Iran-friendly prime minister after the election, enabling it to eject the U.S. politically," she added.

Earlier this month, the U.S.-led coalition told Newsweek in a separate statement that "as invited guests in Iraq, we work closely with the government of Iraq and its security forces" and that the coalition was "committed to the lasting defeat of Daesh [the Arabic-language acronym for ISIS] in Iraq and Syria."

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HEADLINE	03/29 Gunmen attack central Mali hotel
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/03/29/gunmen-attack-central-mali-hotel-kill-1-and-hurt-2-others.html
GIST	<p>BAMAKO, Mali – A government official in Mali says gunmen killed one person and wounded two others in an attack on a hotel frequented by aid workers and businessmen in central Bandjagara city.</p> <p>Interior security spokesman Amadou Sangho says four gunmen entered the Hotel la Falaise late Wednesday, opening fire on a soldier standing guard. He fired back but was killed. Two civilians, including a hotel employee, were wounded.</p> <p>The attack comes days after Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubeye Maiga visited Bandjagara, promising to defeat Islamic extremists.</p>

	<p>No group has claimed responsibility for the attack, though jihadists have increasingly carried out attacks in central and northern Mali. It is the first such attack in Bandjagara.</p> <p>The Dogon region once was a major tourist site, but jihadist violence since 2012 has reduced visits.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 Pakistan PM: terrorism eliminated
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/malala-yousafzai-pakistan-shahid-khaqan-abbasi-imran-khan-taliban-defeated/
GIST	<p>ISLAMABAD -- Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai returned to her native Pakistan early Thursday for the first time since she was shot in 2012 by Taliban militants angered at her championing of education for girls. Tight security greeted the now-20-year-old university student upon her arrival at Benazir Bhutto International Airport.</p> <p>Local television showed her with her parents in the lounge at the airport before leaving in a convoy of nearly 15 vehicles, many of them occupied by heavily armed police.</p> <p>Hours after her arrival, Yousafzai met with Pakistan Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, who praised her and said he was happy to welcome her back to Pakistan, where he said terrorism has been eliminated.</p> <p>Yousafzai said she was excited to be back. With tears in her eyes, she recalled having to leave the country for treatment when she was shot. At a ceremony at Abbasi's office, the university student said she had always thought about returning to Pakistan.</p> <p>"It is now actually happening and I am here," she said, vowing to continue to campaign for the education of girls.</p> <p>Her return had been shrouded in secrecy and it wasn't immediately clear how long she would be in the city or whether she planned to travel to her hometown of Mingora, where the shooting occurred.</p> <p>Local television channels have been showing her return to Pakistan with some replaying the horror of her shooting and the rush to get her treatment.</p> <p>Pakistani officials say they captured several suspects after the attack on Yousafzai, but the head of the Taliban in Pakistan, Mullah Fazlullah, is still on the run and believed to be hiding in neighboring Afghanistan.</p> <p>Fazlullah's spokesman, Mohammad Khurasani, earlier this month said Fazlullah's son was among 21 "holy warriors" killed by missiles fired by a U.S. drone at a seminary in Afghanistan.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Judge rejects motion to dismiss 9/11 suit
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/judge-rejects-saudi-arabias-attempt-toss-911-lawsuits-54084366?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>A judge on Wednesday rejected Saudi Arabia's motion to end a New York lawsuit seeking to hold it responsible in the Sept. 11 attacks.</p> <p>In dismissing the motion, U.S. District Judge George Daniels said the plaintiffs' allegations met the requirements for the court to assume jurisdiction under the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act.</p> <p>Congress passed the act in 2016 over then-President Barack Obama's veto, allowing the claims to go forward against Saudi Arabia after they were rejected once in the courts.</p>

"This is really a historic day for the families," said Sean Carter, attorney for the plaintiffs. "The families have been trying for many years to have an opportunity for the Saudi government to answer on the merits."

A message seeking comment from lawyers representing the Saudi government was not immediately returned.

Daniels had previously rejected arguments that Saudi Arabia backed the hijackers. In Wednesday's ruling, he also dismissed claims against two Saudi banks and a construction company with ties to Osama bin Laden, saying he lacked jurisdiction.

Hundreds of victims' relatives and injured survivors, along with injured corporations, sued the Saudi government in 2003, saying its employees knowingly assisted hijackers who carried out the attacks and fueled al-Qaida's development into a terrorist organization by funding charities that supported the group.

Fifteen of the 19 attackers were Saudis. The U.S. investigated some Saudi diplomats and others with Saudi government ties who knew hijackers after they arrived in the U.S., according to now-declassified documents.

The 9/11 Commission report found "no evidence that the Saudi government as an institution or senior Saudi officials individually funded" the attacks al-Qaida masterminded, but the commission also noted "the likelihood" that Saudi-government-sponsored charities did.

The Saudi government has long denied any involvement in the attacks.

At a hearing in January, attorney Michael Kellogg, arguing for Saudi Arabia, cited the report repeatedly, along with the findings of probes by the FBI and CIA.

"All rejected Saudi Arabia was responsible," he said.

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HEADLINE	03/29 Militant leader, bin Laden ally, roams free
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/militant-leader-bin-laden-ally-roams-freely-pakistan-54088127?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>He is crisscrossing Pakistan championing a fatwa, or Islamic religious decree, forbidding militant violence inside the country. But the mere fact that Fazlur Rehman Khalil, veteran leader of an organization designated as a terror group by the U.S., is free has experts questioning Pakistan's willingness to fight extremism.</p> <p>Khalil, once a close friend of the late al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden, co-founded Harakat-ul-Mujahedeen, a group accused by India of attacking its forces in the Kashmir region and by the U.S. of training militants and carrying out attacks in Afghanistan. The group has undergone several name changes over time and is now known as Ansar-ul Ummah.</p> <p>But authorities have left him alone. At his home on the outskirts of the capital, Islamabad, the gates are protected by a burly, bushy bearded guard whose automatic rifle is always at his side. Khalil's madrassa, or religious school, named for Khalid bin Al-Waleed, one of the most prominent early Muslim commanders leading the conquest of Iraq and Syria in the 7th century, occupies a sprawling compound next door in the middle of a crowded market.</p> <p>In an interview with The Associated Press, Khalil denied the accusations against his group and he applauded the fatwa, which he joined other Sunni and Shiite religious scholars in writing, denouncing militant violence in Pakistan as against Islam. The fatwa, issued in January, is the first such decree issued by such a broad range of scholars in Pakistan.</p>

"Terrorism, suicide attacks, blasts, and killing of innocent people are forbidden in Pakistan, in accordance with Sharia (Islamic law)," Khalil said, dressed in a starched white traditional shalwar kameez and looking relaxed on the manicured lush green lawn of his compound.

"Religious scholars belonging to different schools of thought are unanimous on the issue and are against terrorism."

Afghanistan has criticized the fatwa because it is specific to Pakistan. Khalil said Afghan President Ashraf Ghani should call Islamic scholars in his country together to issue a fatwa of their own. He offered to go to Kabul to help craft the fatwa.

"If Ghani does this we will support his initiative. We wish he would do it. If Afghans sit with us we will support them," he said.

Since the beginning of the year Pakistan has come under relentless pressure from the United States to crack down on militants, particularly the Haqqani network, it says has found safe havens in Pakistan. While Islamabad denies organized havens, it says insurgents move around among the 1.5 million Afghan refugees still living in Pakistan.

U.S. President Donald Trump in a blistering New Year's day tweet accused Pakistan of "lies and deceit" and later suspended hundreds of millions of dollars in military aid.

The 55-year-old Khalil's stature in the militant hierarchy has waned since the late 1990s, when he signed on to bin Laden's fatwa ordering the faithful to attack U.S. interests wherever they found them.

Still, his organization's publications are used to raise money and have exhorted the faithful to fight in Afghanistan, where the Afghan National Army, backed by the U.S.-led coalition, is struggling against a resurgent Taliban.

That sort of fundraising has contributed to the likelihood that Pakistan will be placed on a so called 'gray list' of countries doing too little to stop terrorism when the Financial Action Task Force, an inter-government group trying to stem terror financing, meets in June.

The U.S. State Department in 2014 said Khalil's group still runs training camps in eastern Afghanistan. In 2016, Indian security forces said they arrested five Harakat members on its side of the disputed Kashmir region, allegedly planning attacks on Indian dignitaries.

"This is someone who had close and direct ties to Osama Bin Laden, and is very plugged in to the militant networks of South Asia," said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the U.S.-based Wilson Center. "Even if he's not making much noise, he shouldn't be taken lightly."

Khalil dismissed U.S. criticism of Pakistan for allowing militant leaders to roam free.

"Whether America likes it or doesn't like it makes no difference to me. I am Pakistani. We have courts. We are not U.S. slaves," he said.

"If Pakistan has any charges of terrorism they can summon us. I am ready to go to court. The U.S. is not interested in courts, it is pressing for extra-judicial actions," he said.

Khalil called U.S. policy confused and contradictory. He dismissed suggestions that the Haqqani network, which the U.S. has declared a terrorist group, is separate from the Taliban, which has not been declared a terrorist group to leave open the possibility of future negotiations.

"You can't separate the two. ... Taliban and Haqqanis are the same," he said. "Sirajuddin Haqqani is the Number 2 in the Taliban. How can you separate the two?"

Khalil, like many militants in south and southeast Asia, traces his career back to Afghanistan during the Soviet Union's occupation in the 1980s. Then he fought on the side of the United States, which backed the mujahedeen — or, as President Ronald Reagan called them, "freedom fighters." Today, many have joined the Afghan Taliban.

Khalil said U.S. intelligence trained him on the sophisticated U.S. Stinger anti-aircraft missiles that historians say turned the tide of the war. The Soviets withdrew in 1989.

"I have fought with the Americans in Afghanistan," he said. "But I haven't gone to Kashmir for a single day."

Analysts say Pakistan's policy of allowing militants their freedom is mostly motivated by its concerns about India, against whom it has fought three wars, two of them over Kashmir.

Pakistan also repeatedly reminds the United States and its critics that it has lost thousands of soldiers — more than the U.S. and NATO combined in Afghanistan — fighting militants on its territory. It says U.S. criticism is unfair and an attempt to put its own failures in Afghanistan on the shoulders of Pakistan.

"Pakistan has certainly taken aggressive action against some militant groups" said Seth Jones, director of Transnational threats Project at the U.S.-based Center for Strategic and International Studies.

But its intelligence agencies "continue to use some militants as a tool of foreign policy in countries like Afghanistan and India."

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HEADLINE	03/29 Philippines: extremist leader surrenders
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/filipino-extremist-blamed-bombings-killings-surrenders-54087823?
GIST	<p>A senior commander of the Abu Sayyaf extremist group blamed for bombings and kidnappings has surrendered in the south, the defense chief said Thursday, expressing hope it would bring the "eventual collapse" of a key militant stronghold.</p> <p>Nurhassan Jamiri surrendered with 13 of his men to army forces in southern Basilan province Wednesday. They handed over 10 assault rifles and a large cache of ammunition and were undergoing questioning, military officials said.</p> <p>Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said that Jamiri's surrender, which came after negotiations with authorities, "will hopefully bring the eventual collapse of the Abu Sayyaf group in Basilan," the birthplace of the small but violent group, "and bring justice to the death of thousands of soldiers."</p> <p>Emerging in the late 1980s as an offshoot of the decades-long Muslim separatist rebellion in the south, the Abu Sayyaf lost its top commanders early in combat and descended into a bloody path toward terrorism and criminality.</p> <p>The United States and the Philippines have blacklisted the Abu Sayyaf as a terrorist organization.</p> <p>Jamiri has been blamed for years of bloody attacks, including a 2007 ambush in largely Muslim Basilan that killed 24 Philippine marines, several of whom were beheaded. His group has given sanctuary to other Abu Sayyaf militants behind piracy and kidnappings, including of Vietnamese sailors in recent years, the military said.</p> <p>His group has also carried out bombings in the Basilan cities of Isabel and Lamitan and the southern port city of Zamboanga across the Basilan Strait, along with ransom kidnappings and extortion, military</p>

	<p>officials said.</p> <p>Military officials did not say if Jamiri and his men would be prosecuted for the bloody attacks.</p> <p>Last month, Malaysian security officials suspected that Jamiri was killed with two other gunmen in a firefight in a plantation in the east coast of the Malaysian state of Sabah. But Philippine military officials said the militant was in Basilan at the time.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 Italy: arrests 2016 Berlin Christmas attack
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/italian-police-arrest-linked-berlin-christmas-attacker-54088825?
GIST	<p>Italian police say they have arrested five people connected to Anis Amri, the Tunisian who carried out the 2016 Berlin Christmas market truck attack and was later killed in a shootout with police in Italy.</p> <p>In a tweet Thursday, police said one of the five was believed to have procured the fake Italian identity papers that allowed Amri, a failed asylum-seeker, to move around Europe.</p> <p>Amri killed 12 people when he hijacked a truck and drove it into a crowded Berlin Christmas market on Dec. 19, 2016. The attack was later claimed by the Islamic State group. Using fake documents, he fled to Italy and died in a shootout with police near Milan four days later.</p> <p>The arrests were the latest in a marked uptick in recent police operations targeting suspected extremists.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 UK: ISIS-inspired teacher gets 25yrs
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/03/28/isis-inspired-british-teacher-gets-25-years-in-prison-for-attempting-to-recruit-army-children.html
GIST	<p>A British teacher was sentenced to prison for a minimum of 25 years Tuesday after he was convicted of trying to recruit students to carry out Islamic State-inspired attacks across London.</p> <p>Umar Haque, 25, was accused of radicalizing some 110 children at two schools and a mosque making them re-enact deadly attacks on London and role-play attacks on police officers; he even exposed the children to gruesome videos of beheadings, Reuters reported.</p> <p>“The children were paralyzed by fear of Haque, who they understood to have connections to terrorists and who essentially told them that a violent fate would befall them if they told anyone what he was doing,” said Dean Haydon, the head of Metropolitan Police’s Counterterrorism Command.</p> <p>Haydon said a “number of exercise books” were recovered from Haque’s home and it was “evident from his notes that his plan was a long-term one.”</p> <p>“[Haque] intended to execute his plan years later, by which time he anticipated he would have trained and acquired an army of soldiers, including children,” he said.</p> <p>Haydon said Haque planned to “create an army of children” that would help carry out attacks at “multiple sites using multiple weapons.”</p> <p>“He tried and he did, we believe, radicalize vulnerable children from the ages of 11 to 14,” Haydon said.</p> <p>Prosecutors said Haque wanted to use the “army” to attack Big Ben, soldiers who guard Queen Elizabeth II and shopping centers.</p>

	<p>Police believe Haque was radicalized through the internet and was inspired by last year's attack on the Westminster Bridge that killed four people.</p> <p>Haque lacked qualifications for academic positions, however, police said he became employed under the guise of teaching Islamic studies, Reuters reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Bombing near aid office in Somalia
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/hurt-bomb-explodes-aid-office-somalia-54072063?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Somali police say at least three people are wounded after a bomb attached to their vehicle exploded near the office of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the capital, Mogadishu.</p> <p>Officer Abdifitah Ahmed confirms that the bomb went off shortly after the three left in the vehicle from a parking lot next to the ICRC office on Wednesday.</p> <p>The ICRC says it is "shocked and deeply troubled" that one of its staffers was hurt.</p> <p>The police officer says one victim is in critical condition while the other two are lightly wounded.</p> <p>The Somalia-based extremist group al-Shabab, which is linked to al-Qaida, often targets high-profile areas of the capital.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Strike kills high-ranking AQ member
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/us-strike-kills-high-ranking-al-qaeda-member/story?id=54072709&cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>An American military strike in Libya over the weekend that killed a high-ranking al-Qaeda member marked a notable expansion in the U.S. campaign there.</p> <p>While previous airstrikes inside Libya have targeted ISIS, the latest strike was the first to go after the al-Qaeda affiliate called al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb, or AQIM.</p> <p>Saturday's strike near Ubari in the country's southwest, killed two al-Qaeda terrorists, including Musa Abu Dawud, a high-ranking AQIM official who trained recruits inside Libya for attack operations in the region, U.S. Africa Command confirmed in a statement on Wednesday.</p> <p>"[Dawud] provided critical logistics support, funding and weapons to AQIM, enabling the terrorist group to threaten and attack U.S. and Western interests in the region," AFRICOM said.</p> <p>The U.S. assessed no civilians to be have been killed in the strike, which was done in coordination with the U.S.-backed Libyan Government of National Accord.</p> <p>The strike was only the second conducted by the U.S. military in Libya this year. In 2017, seven airstrikes were conducted — all against ISIS targets, AFRICOM told ABC News.</p> <p>"We're not going to discuss any future operations," AFRICOM said in an email. "That said, we have repeatedly stated that the U.S. will take all appropriate and effective measures to protect the United States, defend its partners and interests, and deny safe haven to terrorist groups."</p> <p>AQIM, which operates in the greater African Maghreb and Sahel regions, took advantage of the security</p>

	<p>vacuum left in Libya after the fall of former leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.</p> <p>U.S. intelligence found individuals affiliated with the group planned the attacks against the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya that killed U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens in 2012.</p> <p>This past year, the group conducted major attacks in Mali and Burkina Faso.</p> <p>"Al-Qa'ida and other terrorist groups, such as ISIS, have taken advantage of under-governed spaces in Libya to establish sanctuaries for plotting, inspiring, and directing terror attacks; recruiting and facilitating the movement of foreign terrorist fighters, and raising and moving funds to support their operations," AFRICOM said in a statement.</p> <p>"Left unaddressed, these organizations could continue to inflict casualties on the civilian populations and security forces, and plot attacks against U.S. citizens and allied interests in the region," it continued.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Pulse nightclub shooter target: Disney
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/pulse-nightclub-shooter-intended-attack-disney-world-prosecutors-say-n860786
GIST	<p>ORLANDO, Fla. — The Orlando nightclub shooter intended to attack Disney World's shopping and entertainment complex by hiding a gun in a stroller but became spooked by police and instead chose the gay club as his target, prosecutors said Wednesday.</p> <p>Prosecutors revealed the details during their closing arguments in the trial of Noor Salman, the widow of Pulse nightclub shooter Omar Mateen.</p> <p>Salman, 31, is accused of aiding her husband in the attack that killed 49 people in 2016. She is charged with obstruction and providing material support to a terrorist organization.</p> <p>"The defendant's steps don't have to equal to her husband," Assistant U.S. Attorney Sara Sweeney told jurors.</p> <p>Defense attorneys have described Salman as a simple woman with a low IQ who was abused by her husband, and who didn't know of his plans because he concealed much of his life from her. They will present their closing arguments later Wednesday.</p> <p>Sweeney said Salman didn't know that Mateen was going to the Pulse nightclub on the night of the attack — she thought he was at Disney World. They two had visited Disney in the days before the attack, according to one of her statements to federal authorities.</p> <p>"The target of that terrorist attack was not the Pulse nightclub," Sweeney said. "The target of the attack was Disney."</p> <p>Sweeney showed a video of the Disney Springs complex that captured Mateen walking near the House of Blues club in the hours before the Pulse attack. In it, he looks behind him at police officers standing nearby.</p> <p>"He had to choose a new target," she said.</p> <p>Sweeney also said that Mateen had bought a baby stroller and doll at Walmart on June 11 — the day before the attack — and had a plan to hide a gun in the stroller while going to Disney.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Military airstrikes against AQ in Libya
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/28/politics/us-airstrike-al-qaeda-libya/index.html
GIST	<p>Washington (CNN)The US military conducted its first airstrike against al Qaeda in Libya Saturday, killing one of the group's leaders, according to US Africa Command, which oversees US military operations in the region.</p> <p>"This is the first precision airstrike the US has conducted against al Qaeda," Africa Command spokesperson Robyn Mack told CNN.</p> <p>Africa Command said in a statement Wednesday that the strike, which took place near Ubari, Libya, killed "two al Qaeda terrorists, including Musa Abu Dawud, a high ranking al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) official."</p> <p>AQIM is the local al Qaeda affiliate in North Africa.</p> <p>"Dawud trained AQIM recruits in Libya for attack operations in the region. He provided critical logistics support, funding and weapons to AQIM, enabling the terrorist group to threaten and attack US and Western interests in the region," the statement added.</p> <p>The statement said the strike was "conducted in coordination with the Libyan Government of National Accord" and that the US military assesses that no civilians were killed.</p> <p>The US has carried out a series of airstrikes targeting ISIS in Libya, a country beset by internal divisions and conflict following the ousting of Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi in 2011.</p> <p>US aircraft carried out over 500 airstrikes against ISIS in the coastal city of Sirte after the terror group seized control of the city, helping to drive ISIS out by the end of 2016. The US has carried out additional strikes against ISIS in remote areas of the Libyan Desert.</p> <p>"It's very very hard to plan some kind of operation that has a large effect when you have two to three guys in the Libyan desert," a Africa Command official told CNN last month.</p> <p>"It's not an ideal solution but we're keeping them degraded," the official added.</p> <p>However, this is the first time the US has specifically targeted the local al Qaeda affiliate in Libya, though US forces have targeted operatives with links to the group. AQIM also has a presence in neighboring Algeria and other North African countries like Mali.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	03/29 IRS auditing fewer Americans
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-irs-is-auditing-a-lot-fewer-americans-1522315800
GIST	<p>The percentage of individuals receiving tax audits declined for the sixth consecutive year in 2017 to reach the lowest level since 2002, further showing the effect of budget cuts at the Internal Revenue Service.</p> <p>The IRS, which has lost nearly one-third of its enforcement staffers since the 2010 peak, audited 0.62% of individual returns in the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, according to data to be released Thursday. The audit of about 1 in 160 individual returns in 2017 is down from 1 in 90 in 2010, the peak year in the past decade.</p> <p>The audit rate declined most for high-income households, even though the Treasury inspector general said over two years ago that these earners should be an enforcement priority for the IRS. In 2017, the IRS</p>

audited 4.37% of returns with income of \$1 million and higher, less than half of the 9.55% audit rate of such returns in 2015. It marked the lowest rate of audits for that income group since 2004, when the data was first released.

The audit rate for other income groups also declined, but not as much. For taxpayers earning less than \$200,000, the percentage of returns audited dropped to 0.59% in 2017 from 0.76% in 2015.

Andy Mattson, a certified public accountant at Moss Adams LLP in Silicon Valley with many wealthy clients, said he has noticed the decline in audits of high earners. “We get far more state audits of our clients than IRS audits,” he said.

In 2017, IRS funding was \$11.2 billion, down nearly 8% from its high in 2010, although the number of individual returns grew nearly 5% over the same period. In the past, the IRS has said that it can generate about \$4 to \$6 in tax revenue for every additional dollar it receives. For fiscal year 2018, the IRS’s funding rises slightly, to \$11.4 billion.

Revenue from individual income taxes is the single largest source of federal receipts and has been growing as a percentage of the total. In fiscal year 2017, it accounted for nearly 48% of federal revenue compared with 45% a decade earlier. The revenue from corporate taxes accounted for 9% of total revenue in 2017, according to data released by the Joint Committee on Taxation.

Business audits declined in 2017 for the second consecutive year. The audit rate for all businesses dropped to 0.44% in 2017 from 0.71% in 2012, the peak for the decade. The only category of businesses for which audits didn’t drop in 2017 was partnerships. Their audit rate was 0.38% for both 2016 and 2017.

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HEADLINE	03/28 Alt-Right is self-destructing?
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/less-than-a-year-after-charlottesville-the-alt-right-is-self-destructing?ref=home
GIST	<p>Some have turned federal informant. Others are facing prison time. More are named in looming lawsuits. All of them are fighting.</p> <p>Last summer, the American alt-right was presenting itself as a threatening, unified front, gaining national attention with a deadly rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. The collection of far-right and white nationalist groups proclaimed victory after President Donald Trump hesitated to directly condemn them and instead blamed “both sides” and the “alt left” for the violence. But less than a year after Charlottesville, the alt-right is splintering in dramatic fashion as its leaders turn on each other or quit altogether.</p> <p>Matthew Heimbach’s arrest in a March trailer park brawl with members of his neo-Nazi group—some of whom he was allegedly screwing—felt like a too-obvious metaphor. Heimbach was the head of the Traditionalist Worker Party, a youth-focused white supremacist group that floated to the front of media coverage and hate rallies in the run-up to Donald Trump’s election.</p> <p>But by March, Heimbach and the TWP had spent the previous months embroiled in a series of online spats with other alt-right factions. On March 14, police in his Indiana hometown arrested Heimbach after he allegedly assaulted TWP spokesperson Matthew Parrott during a fight over their wives, both of whom Heimbach was allegedly sleeping with. Heimbach’s wife is Parrott’s stepdaughter.</p> <p>The high-profile bust was an accelerant in what had been a slow-burning feud among the alt-right. Heidi Beirich, director of the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Intelligence Project, said the schism started after Unite the Right, a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, last August. The rally turned deadly after a man affiliated with a white supremacist group plowed a car into a crowd of counterprotesters, killing one and injuring more.</p>

“I think the splintering started there, but I have to say what happened in the last couple weeks has been at a much higher level,” Beirich told The Daily Beast on Wednesday.

Threats from the far-right are by no means over. The SPLC recently released a map documenting 954 hate groups in the U.S., a rise in 20 percent since 2014. In a January report, the Anti-Defamation League found that white supremacists had killed 18 people in 2017.

But the alt-right has had a bad month. In recent weeks, as Beirich described, prominent white supremacist Richard Spencer has dropped a lawsuit against Kent State University and canceled his speaking tour, after anti-fascist protesters opposed him at every stop. “Antifa is winning,” Spencer conceded in a video. Days earlier, Kyle Bristow, an alt-right lawyer who has represented Spencer, announced he was quitting the movement after the Detroit Free Press wrote an article critical of him.

Heimbach was arrested days after Spencer canceled his tour.

“The implosion of the Traditionalist Worker Party, it’s not exactly as though that was planned in some way, but it’s a spectacular implosion of a key player in this universe,” Beirich said of the alt-right’s terrible two weeks.

Even the TWP’s diehards say its prospects are bleak.

“There is no way for us to continue on with the TWP branding after what happened,” Tony Hovater, a TWP leader, wrote on Gab, a social media platform popular among the alt-right. In November, Hovater was the subject of an arguably sympathetic New York Times profile. Now he was on Gab discussing his plans to start a new organization after Heimbach’s arrest, which was “without a doubt a shameful” incident, he wrote. (Journalist Elizabeth King noted on Twitter that the TWP may have rebranded or splintered into something called the Nationalist Initiative.)

“I have no comment,” Parrott, the former TWP spokesperson whose wife allegedly slept with Heimbach, told The Daily Beast on Wednesday. “I am no longer involved in the movement, and I have no stake in all the stupid shit going on in it.”

He’s not the only one headed to the exits over infighting.

Earlier in March—after Bristow quit the movement, but before Spencer canceled his college tour—Heimbach and the TWP acted as a security force for Spencer outside a speech to a handful of people at Michigan State University. They scrapped with counterprotesters, resulting in at least a dozen arrests—including that of Greg Conte, director of operations for an alt-right group, HuffPost reported.

The physical brawl turned into a Twitter feud between Spencer and Patrick Casey, the executive director of white supremacist group Identity Evropa. Identity Evropa participated in the violent clashes at Charlottesville. But after the deadly rally, and two leadership changes (leader Nathan Damigo quit after Charlottesville, and his successor Eli Mosely quit to join a Spencer-affiliated group before it was revealed that Mosely lied about serving in the Iraq War) Identity Evropa promoted Casey to its head and attempted to rebrand itself as clean-cut.

On Twitter, two days after the TWP got in a brawl while acting as Spencer’s security force, Identity Evropa claimed to be “explicitly non-violent” and “peacefully effecting cultural change.” In a press-friendly, but largely meaningless semantic ploy, the group denied being a white supremacist organization.

Spencer interpreted the tweet as an attack. In a tweet of his own, Spencer said he was “baffled and shocked at the behavior” of Casey, and accused him of expelling Identity Evropa members who had supported Spencer during the brawl outside Michigan State University.

The spat was the latest over the alt-right’s “optics,” a divisive subject among the movement. The Unite the Right rally was so toxic for the alt-right’s image that some members started arguing that in-person protests

were bad publicity for the cause.

Currently “the biggest divide is between people who believe in online activism versus real-world activism.” Beirich said. After Charlottesville, Daily Stormer founder “Andrew Anglin, for example, posted things criticizing in-real-life protests... When PayPal and Facebook started banning accounts, he was pointing out that ‘these aren’t good things for us, taking to the streets isn’t necessarily positive, the optics were bad.’”

Anglin is currently on the run and claims to be in Cambodia while he attempts to avoid a lawsuit by a Jewish woman whose address and phone number he posted online after she argued with Spencer’s mother. Anglin encouraged readers on his neo-Nazi website The Daily Stormer to call the woman and visit her home, unleashing a campaign of harassment against her.

An opposing alt-right movement accuses people like Anglin of “optics-cucking,” a reference to a porn genre in which a man watches another man have sex with his wife. (The term was in vogue with the alt-right long before Parrott stood on a box outside a trailer to watch Heimbach have sex with Parrott’s wife, according to a police report in the incident.) The anti-optics crowd accuses the pro-optics faction of trying to splinter the movement.

Among the optics-skeptical is Chris Cantwell, a white supremacist who featured prominently in a Vice documentary on the Unite the Right rally, and who later became a meme when he cried on camera. Since Charlottesville, Cantwell has produced a podcast, which ran on The Daily Stormer until Anglin allegedly removed it without telling Cantwell earlier this month.

“As far as I can tell, that’s what’s going on and they’re just throwing barbs back and forth over it,” Beirich said. “I think there’s also a lot of, maybe ‘professional’ is the wrong word, but professional jealousies here. Cantwell’s blog or podcast gets more popular, that pisses off other members of the alt-right who want to be center-stage.”

On Gab, Cantwell alleged a conspiracy.

“I found out that new content was not being syndicated to [The Daily Stormer] when somebody asked about it in my Gab mentions. So I can’t say with any certainty what the motivation was,” Cantwell wrote last week. He suggested that the removal of his show and the flood of negative news about the TWP, in which he is not involved, was part of an effort to discredit the alt-right.

“I smell subversion,” he wrote.

Hovater, the remaining TWP leader who called Heimbach’s arrest “shameful,” shared the post. Cantwell’s attack on The Daily Stormer soon landed him in trouble with other members of the alt-right, when one of the blog’s contributors revealed that Cantwell was an FBI informant.

Andrew Auernheimer, a Daily Stormer contributor and hacker best known by his screen name “Weev,” posted screenshots of a conversation with Cantwell, in which Cantwell admitted to reporting members of Philadelphia ARA (anti-racist action groups) to authorities.

“I talked to cops too. gonna talk to the feds soon most likely,” Cantwell told Weev in the undated conversation, which references Cantwell’s pending felony case for alleged illegal use of tear gas at the Charlottesville rally. “I’m going after Philly ARA. Not throwing our people under the bus. We weren’t the bad guys last August, and Charlottesville is ignoring that fact. The feds want to bust Antifa and I’m keen to help them.”

Weev replied that “if you hadn’t talked to cops and media in the first place and had gotten scarce you wouldn’t be facing 40 years in prison.”

After Weev posted the screenshots, Cantwell confirmed their authenticity in a blog post of his own titled

“I Am A Federal Informant,” in which he attacked Weev as “a Jew in a foreign country” in reference to rumors that the neo-Nazi blogger is actually of Jewish ancestry. Cantwell also confirmed that his attorney had spoken with the FBI. The admission set off a fresh volley of criticism from alt-righters who are opposed to communicating with law enforcement.

Cantwell has good reason to try to deflect blame onto anti-fascist protesters. In addition to his pending criminal charges, he is named in two civil lawsuits against Unite the Right rioters. (He is only a defendant in one of the cases.) Between them, the lawsuits also name Spencer, the TWP, Identity Evropa, and the League of the South, the latter of which signed an agreement Monday not to host any future armed protests in Charlottesville.

Beirich said the two lawsuits “will probably drive some other people to abandon the movement. They just don’t want to get caught up in the legal fees.”

In her extensive time tracking the far-right, Beirich has seen other similar movements grow and implode. She drew a parallel between the alt-right and the National Alliance, a neo-Nazi group that, until the early 2000s, “was the biggest neo-Nazi group in America. It was the main player.”

But when the National Alliance’s leader William Pierce died in 2002, the group turned on itself.

“Within a very short period of time, the whole group was essentially decimated. One year after Pierce was dead, that group was done and had splintered into a whole bunch of factions,” Beirich said. “That was the case where a leader died, and I imagine Heimbach’s downfall is almost a death to the Traditionalist Worker Party.”

Under the pressure of lawsuits, jail time, scandal, and shame, she imagines some current alt-righters will simply slink away, if they haven’t already.

“I’m sure we’re going to lose some people and we’re going to have some fighting over the crumbs that are left.”

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HEADLINE	03/28 Bonney Lake crash and UFO mystery
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/940224/bonney-lake-crash-ufo-mystery/
GIST	<p>On the evening of Wednesday, April 1, 1959, an Air Force C-118 – that’s the military version of a DC-6 airliner – was on a training exercise. It was doing “touch and go” landings at McChord Air Force Base, or what’s now JBLM, taking off and landing, and then flying around the nearby countryside.</p> <p>At about 8:12 p.m. that night, the tower at McChord asked the pilots of the C-118 to delay their next return to the runway because several fighter planes were landing. The C-118 headed east toward Bonney Lake to fly in a holding pattern.</p> <p>It was about five minutes later when something went terribly wrong. The C-118 went down.</p> <p>And within a few days, some people were blaming a UFO. Some still aren’t sure what exactly happened.</p> <p>The crash site</p> <p>Lee Corbin is a retired military and airline pilot who for many years has been researching the story of what happened to the C-118. Last Friday, Corbin led a reporter on a hike to a wooded area not far from Highway 410, during an unusual bout of springtime snow.</p> <p>The woods where Corbin walked are in Pierce County near Bonney Lake, south of Highway 410, and not far from the growing “master planned community” called Tehaleh. Corbin had parked his truck off the</p>

side of the road, near a dead end that will one day connect the east and west halves of the development, and then walked up a gentle slope and onto a woodsy plateau.

“At the time this happened, and this is where the UFO controversy comes in, is supposedly the [pilot] made a radio call saying ‘We’ve hit something or something has hit us,’” Corbin said, leading the way along an old logging or fire road leftover from when the land belonged to Weyerhaeuser.

“[And] you don’t find [mention of that] in any of the accident reports, interestingly enough, but several newspapers carried that story,” Corbin said.

That quote mentioned by Corbin – with the pilots reporting some kind of collision – was attributed to Colonel Robert E. Booth, commander of the 1705th Air Transport Group. It appeared in the Seattle Times on April 2, 1959.

What had happened, it was later reported by the Air Force, was that the pilot and co-pilot thought the tower at McChord was tracking the plane’s altitude, and the tower thought the pilot and co-pilot were tracking their own altitude.

It was dark, and there weren’t many houses or lights in that area in those days. As it turned out, the plane was flying too low to clear a place called “Spar Pole Hill” near Orting. The right wing of the C-118 struck the treetops there. The wing was badly damaged, and it caught fire, but the plane kept flying.

Six or so miles north of Spar Pole Hill, the damage from striking the trees proved to be too much.

“The right wing peels off the airplane, and about this same time the co-pilot makes a radio call saying ‘This is it,’ because they know they’re going in,” Corbin said.

The pilot was later credited with somehow steering the plane clear of the homes and businesses in and around downtown Orting.

“So the airplane loses its wing, rolls inverted, then just basically noses in right here,” Corbin said, pointing to a wooded area, dense with underbrush and 50-foot tall evergreens.

The plane crashed and exploded, and a huge fire consumed much of the wreckage and was still smoldering the next day. At the crash site on Friday, Lee Corbin easily found pieces of the wreckage – small chunks of thick and twisted aluminum, some with rivets still attached – just sitting on the forest floor.

All four men aboard the plane died in the fiery crash, including 1st Lieutenant Robert Roy Dimick, the pilot; 1st Lieutenant Thomas E. Lasater, co-pilot; and Technical Sergeant Guy J. Cunningham and Staff Sergeant Arthur T. Foote, both flight engineers.

Corbin has researched military aviation accidents around the Northwest, and he lives not too far from the site of the C-118 crash. He’d ultimately like to see some kind of monument to the crew of the C-118, maybe when the Tehaleh development reaches this, so far, relatively untouched piece of land.

Corbin has also been in touch with the developers and asked them to keep him apprised when work is set to begin in the area near where the C-118 crashed, so that he can help keep a lookout for artifacts that might turn up during any tree removal or excavation.

What actually caused the crash? Officially, the Air Force cited “operator error” and “supervisory error” in the downing of the C-118, pointing to the confusion over who was keeping track of the plane’s altitude.

But in addition to the crash that night, a series of sonic booms had been heard and felt around much of the Puget Sound, and a series of odd and seemingly inexplicable lights had been witnessed near Bonney Lake. This, combined with the news that the pilot had reported that they might’ve hit something, helped spawn theories that the crash was caused by a collision with a UFO.

These theories were collected and written about by a Seattle firefighter named Bob Gribble. Gribble was a pioneer in the amateur scientific study of UFOs – and sharing of information – going back to the 1950s. He’s in his 90s now, and reportedly suffering from dementia.

Gribble is best known in the UFO community for founding the National UFO Reporting Center and UFO hotline in Seattle in the 1970s. When Gribble stepped down from running the hotline, a UW fisheries school graduate named Peter Davenport volunteered to take over.

Davenport had witnessed a UFO as a small child with his family in St. Louis back in the 1950s, and he wrote about UFOs for a local paper in New Hampshire as a teenager.

In July 1994, Davenport heard that Bob Gribble was thinking of closing down the hotline. So he called him up.

“We talked, and before I knew it, Bob said, ‘Would you like the hotline?’ He said, ‘If you’d like it, it’s yours,’” Davenport said by telephone late last week.

“I accepted the responsibility for the hotline in that conversation,” Davenport said. “There are many times when I wished I’d turned my back on the generous offer and not accepted it, because it has resulted in tens of thousands of hours of work, very interesting work in many instances, but work nevertheless.”

Davenport calls the hotline “work,” but it’s more of a volunteer project or labor of scientific love.

“Most of the expenses are met by me, out of my savings, in order to keep the process going. It’s a measure of my dedication to the field, but I’m convinced that we are being visited, frequently visited, by these objects we call UFOs,” Davenport said.

“The US government, is trying to convince people that it’s all a hoax and a fiction, but I don’t believe so,” Davenport said. “And I think it’s extremely important . . . that the American people know the truth about the UFO phenomenon.”

Peter Davenport was based in Seattle for more than 20 years and only recently moved his residence – and the hotline – to Eastern Washington. He’s heard as a guest, discussing recent UFO reports almost every week on “Coast to Coast AM,” broadcast nightly at 10pm on KIRO Radio.

As for the Bonney Lake crash, it’s not as famous as the time when Kenneth Arnold coined the term “flying saucer” near Mount Rainier in 1947 or the Maury Island Incident in the same year, but Peter Davenport had heard of it.

“I think Bob Gribble did mention this case to me once before,” Davenport said. “What triggered my memory was the fact that the plane appeared to have been pressed down vertically to earth rather than hitting, striking the earth at a slant angle.”

Gribble published an article in May 1959 in a publication called “A.P.R.O. Bulletin” – short for “Aerial Phenomena Research Organization.” Gribble’s piece detailed his investigations into the Bonney Lake crash. He described the odd sounds and lights that many witnesses had reported that evening, and what he described as the “silencing” of local officials in Orting – by the military – about what had really happened on the night of April 1, 1959.

UFO mystery years later

Nearly 60 years later, it doesn’t really help clear things up much to see that the crash investigation report prepared back then by the US Air Force still has about two pages of text redacted—even though Lee Corbin has tried for years to get the full report and has been denied multiple times.

All those details aside, it's fascinating to hear Peter Davenport describe the big-picture, scientific and non-sensationalized national approach that Bob Gribble took to studying UFOs, from right here in Seattle.

"He set up the National UFO Reporting Center and the Aerial Phenomena Research Group, and he also formed a telephone hotline which is the hotline I run today," Davenport said. "It's been in continuous operation since October of 1974." Gribble, Davenport says, also did mass mailings of information about the hotline to law enforcement agencies around the country, to make sure word got out that there was a place to call to report UFO sightings.

As it turns out, Bob Gribble was just one of several nationally influential people in this area who compiled information and studied UFOs for decades.

Dr. Marilyn Childs and her late husband Laurence Childs moved to Seattle in 1971 and were the first husband-and-wife team of UFO investigators. They were part of a local chapter of group called the Mutual UFO Network, or "MUFON" for short.

"What we did was, we kept the metaphysical part out of MUFON," Childs said earlier this week. "There's a lot of us who do believe in this stuff, but we want to keep it strictly scientific . . . because if it's going to [be taken seriously], we're going to have to do that."

"So we concentrated on mainly education and scientific research, and we trained our people," many of whom were engineers from Boeing and Fluke, Childs said.

The various groups also got along with each other, and the members of different organizations attended each other's meetings and were supportive of their groups' respective activities.

Marilyn Childs says this was unusual compared to what she heard about or saw in other parts of the country.

"I haven't ever heard of anybody working together like we all did," Childs said. "But we just loved each other and nobody was on a big ego trip, and it just worked out perfectly."

The earlier era described by Childs sounds downright idyllic, and it also seems to have changed somewhat in recent years.

Meanwhile, Peter Davenport is not sure about who's going to take over the hotline when he retires. He's also not sure about what will happen to the decades of UFO reports that he and Bob collected. Aside from their value to UFO researchers, these records likely say much about broad aspects of American culture and the human psyche.

"I've approached the University of Washington to inquire whether they'd like to have my records, and they expressed disinterest," Davenport said. "The library said, 'Because we don't have courses in the subject, we're not interested in having the archives.' Which makes sense, I guess. I might just burn it. There's very little good that the archives would do if people are not going to pay attention . . . I don't know what to do about it. I don't have a solution to that problem."

Davenport may also write a book about his experiences, but he says it likely won't be strictly about UFOs.

"It will be about the peculiar facets of human psychology that I've been witness to as a UFO investigator," Davenport said. "People do and say and believe strange things, some of which are true, most of which, in my opinion, are probably not true."

"But it's hard to know for sure."

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HEADLINE	03/28 No more tax payer funded govt. portraits
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/mar/28/trump-signs-law-banning-tax-dollars-portraits/
GIST	<p>Remember Ed Schaefer? You should — you paid \$30,500 for his hand-painted portrait.</p> <p>How about Steve Preston? His official government portrait cost you \$19,500.</p> <p>But the days of taxpayers paying for oil paintings of government officials, obscure or memorable, are gone.</p> <p>President Trump signed a law Tuesday prohibiting the use of government funds to pay for oil portraits of the president, vice president, Cabinet members and lawmakers. The portraits, an old tradition in Washington, can often cost \$20,000-\$40,000.</p> <p>The measure was first introduced in Congress in 2013, after reports that federal agencies spent more than \$400,000 on portraits displayed in government buildings, often in secure locations not open to the public.</p> <p>The Obama administration was guilty of the vanity practice, often as high-level officials were on their way out. The Environmental Protection Agency spent nearly \$40,000 on a portrait of Administrator Lisa Jackson, \$41,200 for a painting of Air Force Secretary Michael Donley, and \$22,500 for a 3-by-4-foot portrait of Agriculture Secretary Thomas Vilsack.</p> <p>The Washington Times reported in 2012 that the Obama administration paid out at least \$180,000 for official portraits in the previous year.</p> <p>The George W. Bush administration also indulged in the Washington tradition, spending more than \$40,000 on a painting of former Attorney General John Ashcroft.</p> <p>Mr. Schaefer, a former Bush administration Agriculture secretary, also was immortalized in oil paint. So was Mr. Preston, who served as secretary of Housing and Urban Development for only seven months in the waning days of the Bush administration.</p> <p>The current law, known as the EGO Act (Eliminating Government-Funded Oil-Painting), was introduced in January 2017 by Republican Sens. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana and Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, and Democratic Sens. Claire McCaskill of Missouri and Deb Fischer of Nebraska.</p> <p>“When America is trillions of dollars in debt, we should take every reasonable measure to reduce the burden passed on to our children and grandchildren,” Mr. Cassidy said at the time. “Tax dollars should go to building roads and improving schools — not oil paintings that very few people ever see or care about.”</p> <p>Portraits of former President Barack Obama and former first lady Michelle Obama, costing about \$500,000, were commissioned by the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery, which unveiled the paintings last month.</p> <p>The White House Historical Association also has commissioned portraits of presidents with private donations.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 China facial recognition for jaywalkers
SOURCE	https://www.fastcompany.com/40550856/china-is-using-ai-and-facial-recognition-to-fine-jaywalkers-via-text
GIST	Traffic authorities in the Chinese city of Shenzhen have teamed up with an AI firm named Intellifusion to carry out the rather dystopian policing, reports the South China Morning Post.

Already traffic police in the city have been using Intellifusion software and cameras to identify passing jaywalkers and project their faces and identifying information on large screens located near intersections for all to see, but now Intellifusion is taking its surveillance a step further.

The company is partnering with social media platforms including WeChat and Sina Weibo and local mobile phone carriers so it can text jaywalkers the second they offend. Police will also have the option of delivering a ticket and fine on the spot for people who are picked up by the AI system for repeat offenses.

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HEADLINE	03/28 Bellingham Police Dept. under scrutiny
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/bellingham-police-dept-under-fire-after-three-officers-arrested-in-nearly-two-years
GIST	<p>BELLINGHAM, Wash. - For Bellingham Police Chief David Doll it's a question of what to do next.</p> <p>Three officers arrested in nearly two years – one fired, one facing trial and the third in jail after being accused of violent crimes.</p> <p>“I’m crushed. I want our community to know that we are a professional law enforcement organization,” Doll said in an interview with KOMO Wednesday. “It’s not easy.”</p> <p>Late Monday night Doll received the latest call – Cpl. Brooks Laughlin was being sought by nearby Everson police for allegedly violating a domestic violence no-contact order.</p> <p>“It’s awful. It’s awful as a police chief,” Doll said. “I know I’m the one who is going to hold them accountable.”</p> <p>The victim, said Everson Police Chief Daniel MacPhee, said Laughlin contacted her almost daily since the no contact order was signed and Laughlin was charged with criminal trespass last month.</p> <p>“He agreed to turn himself in to the Bellingham Police Department,” MacPhee said about Laughlin.</p> <p>On Wednesday, Laughlin was ordered held in lieu of \$200,000 bail. The judge said she was denying the defense attorney’s request for a reduced bail amount because she feared Laughlin’s release would be a danger to community safety.</p> <p>The deputy prosecutor told the judge the victim was worried Laughlin wouldn’t stop harassing her.</p> <p>“One of her fears is Brooks was tracking her and trying to find her whereabouts,” he said. “She’s concerned Brooks is at the point where feels he has he has nothing to lose.”</p> <p>Laughlin’s attorney countered in court that his client is “not a danger to the community.”</p> <p>Doll, a longtime Bellingham officer who has only been chief for a few months, said he can’t recall another time there have been so many officers facing criminal allegations in his city.</p> <p>He said he has spoken to community groups, even posted a plea on Facebook, asking people to trust officers.</p> <p>“Know that we will hold our people accountable for things that they do,” Doll said.</p> <p>Doll said the Snohomish County Sheriff’s Office is investigating Laughlin’s case. A private attorney is reviewing the department’s adherence to city policies as well, he said.</p> <p>Laughlin’s arrest follows the arrest of Bellingham Officer Sukhdev Dhaliwal. He was charged with assault</p>

	<p>and harassment last year after allegedly beating up a man in Blaine, according to police.</p> <p>Doll said Dhaliwal he remains on administrative leave and is pending trial.</p> <p>Last fall Officer Jacob Esparza pleaded guilty to domestic violence harassment for assaulting his ex-wife. He has been fired, Doll said.</p> <p>“I’m hoping it’s a string of bad luck,” Doll said. “We are looking at systems that we can put into place so if there are people who are experiencing issues of domestic violence we can make it easier for them to reach out for help.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 Colorado rise in rabid skunks
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/great-outdoors/2018/03/29/colorado-seeing-rise-in-rabid-skunks.html
GIST	<p>The state of Colorado has seen what’s been described as an “unprecedented” increase in rabid skunks.</p> <p>So far in 2018, 23 skunks have tested positive for rabies across El Paso County, with similar problems elsewhere in the state, the Colorado Springs Gazette reported.</p> <p>Denver has seen 45 rabid skunks this year, the newspaper reported.</p> <p>“It’s kind of a cyclic thing that occurs; we happen to be in an up-cycle,” Robyn Weber, an El Paso County Public Health epidemiologist, told the newspaper. “One of the big concerns is that we have a lot of people and a lot of pets in these areas where we’re testing positive.”</p> <p>Warmer-than-average winter weather and a rising skunk population in the state are considered to be factors, state and county health officials say.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Electric ferries coming to Washington?
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/electric-ferries-could-be-coming-to-washington/281-532970269
GIST	<p>Toyota Prius cars are a pretty common sight on Washington streets and highways, and prototypes exist for electric trucks and airplanes. Electric-powered ferries could be next.</p> <p>Part of the 2018 state transportation budget recently signed by Gov. Jay Inslee includes funds to look into converting some of the ferry fleet, reports Northwest News Network.</p> <p>The Legislature gave \$600,000 to Washington State Ferries to explore converting three of the ferries from diesel to hybrid electric propulsion. The three ferries being proposed for conversation are the Tacoma, Wenatchee, and Puyallup, which serve the Bainbridge and Edmonds-Kingston runs.</p> <p>“We’ve done pre-design studies already to look at the vessels, terminals and the charging of the vessels,” Matt von Ruden, Director of Vessels with Washington State Ferries told Northwest News Network. “So we’re ready now to move forward to actually engage industry on the solution.”</p> <p>Ruden says massive banks of batteries would be installed below the deck of the three largest vessels of the fleet. Ruden says technology has advanced where battery power alone could propel a jumbo ferry across the Puget Sound. Some converted ferries, however, would still have backup diesel generators on board.</p> <p>A WSF spokesperson said we could potentially start riding electric-powered ferries in five years.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Dangerous drug trend: wasping
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Health/dangerous-drug-trend-called-wasping-combines-meth/story?id=54068422&cid=clicksource_26_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The term “wasping” may not sound familiar, but first responders are learning about the emerging trend.</p> <p>The concerning new drug practice is an abuse of the active components in insect killer, most commonly wasp killer spray, to achieve a high. Abused in combination with methamphetamines or used as a meth substitute, it has been reported by users to generate a “rush,” feelings of déjà vu and a hallucinatory sense of smell. Users either spray the liquid onto the methamphetamine or crystallize the liquid using hot metal sheets, allowing the finished product to be inhaled or injected.</p> <p>Extreme physical responses to wasping have been reported in some cases. But because this practice is relatively new, it remains to be seen how toxic or deadly it will be on a large scale.</p> <p>How can an insect killer get someone high? The active ingredient in pesticides is a class of molecules known as pyrethroids, which penetrate the insect’s nervous system. In insects, pyrethroids stun and then kill. In humans, they block normal nerve signaling, causing abnormal sensation and, in the worst cases, seizures or even paralysis.</p> <p>The substance also causes over-activation of the sympathetic nervous system, often referred to as the “fight or flight” response, which can lead to excitability, heart racing and difficulty breathing.</p> <p>Pyrethroids are toxins that can be deadly, either through respiratory failure or paralysis. Other side effects that have been described are headache, nausea, incoordination, tremors, facial flushing and swelling and burning and itching sensations.</p> <p>The concern over people preparing and intentionally inhaling the drug is also tied to its known warnings -- the drug is most dangerous when inhaled. Working with the insect killer can lead to severe illness in approximately 4 to 14 percent of cases. On rare occasion, it can lead to death, which has been reported to occur in people with pre-existing lung conditions such as asthma.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 Israel army nabs Gaza infiltrators
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/israeli-army-nabs-gaza-infiltrators-ahead-mass-protests-54089126?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The Israeli military says it has caught two Palestinians from Gaza who sneaked into Israel carrying knives.</p> <p>Thursday's incident is the fifth such infiltration in as many days and raises concern ahead of mass protests Palestinians are planning Friday along the Israel-Gaza border.</p> <p>Earlier this week, three Gazans with grenades made it about 20 kilometers (12.5 miles) onto Israel before they were caught. No one was harmed in the infiltrations but they set off great worry in southern Israeli communities already fearful that militants have dug underground tunnels they could use to enter Israel to carry out attacks.</p> <p>Gaza's Hamas rulers are urging residents to gather near the fence and march toward Israeli positions. The Israeli military is warning it will take extreme measures if the border is breached.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Increased activity at NKorea nuke site
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SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ahead-trump-summit-activity-north-korea-nuke-site-54062730
GIST	<p>Increased activity at a North Korean nuclear site has once again caught the attention of analysts and renewed concerns about the complexities of denuclearization talks as President Donald Trump prepares for a summit with Kim Jong Un in the coming weeks.</p> <p>Satellite imagery taken last month suggests the North has begun preliminary testing of an experimental light water reactor and possibly brought another reactor online at its Yongbyon Nuclear Research Center.</p> <p>Both could be used to produce the fissile materials needed for nuclear bombs.</p> <p>The findings come at a particularly sensitive time. Trump and Kim are planning to meet by May, according to officials, and denuclearization will likely be the biggest topic on their agenda if they do meet. North Korea tested its biggest nuclear device to date last September. Pyongyang claims it was an H-bomb.</p> <p>While the North hasn't conducted any tests since, or test-launched any long-range missiles since Nov. 28, the heightened activity at the Yongbyon complex could be ominous.</p> <p>According to an analysis in Jane's Intelligence Review published earlier this month, a testing program is now underway at the experimental reactor, which means it could become operational with "little warning later in 2018 or in 2019." It said the preliminary testing follows increased activity throughout 2017.</p> <p>The reactor was completed five years ago and is primarily designed to generate electricity for civilian use. But it could also be used to produce plutonium or tritium.</p> <p>The Jane's report cautioned that without international inspections it's impossible to tell for sure if it's being used to produce civilian electricity or weapons-grade material for bombs. The reactor has been linked to the local electricity grid and is believed to be potentially able to power a city of about 50,000 if operated at full capacity.</p> <p>"Further monitoring of the type and cadence of activity at the site is likely to reveal clues about North Korea's ultimate intentions," the Jane's report concluded.</p> <p>In a separate report posted on 38 North, a website that specializes in North Korea news and analysis, experts said they have detected activity at another reactor in the Yongbyon complex, which is located north of Pyongyang, that could be an even bigger concern.</p> <p>Imagery of Yongbyon's 5-megawatt reactor suggests it was brought into operation very recently. The website said that would mean "North Korea has resumed production of plutonium presumably for its nuclear weapons program."</p> <p>It said commercially available satellite imagery of the reactor revealed steam vapor plumes emanating from the generator hall, along with river ice melt near the reactor. Additionally, North Korean technicians might have stepped up efforts to conceal signs of the reactor's operations, "making monitoring efforts more difficult going forward."</p> <p>The March 5 report added that a military tent camp has been set up at Yongbyon, possibly for troops doing construction or providing enhanced security.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Pilots report close encounter UFO
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/pilots-report-close-encounters-ufo-arizona-passed-us/story?id=54067123&cid=clicksource_81_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	Two pilots on different aircraft reported having close encounters with a mysterious object flying high

above Arizona last month, according to the Federal Aviation Administration.

The sightings occurred within minutes of each other on the afternoon of Feb. 24, some 40,000 feet above southern Arizona near the New Mexico border. ABC News obtained the audio recording of the conversation between the pilots and the Albuquerque Air Route Traffic Control Center, released by the FAA.

The news comes amid a series of reports of military pilots coming into contact with what they believed to be UFOs and the disclosure of a secret, but now-defunct Pentagon program to track such incidents.

The controller was unable to verify that any other aircraft was in the area at the time of the reported sightings, according to a spokesperson for the FAA.

"We have a close working relationship with a number of other agencies and safely handle military aircraft and civilian aircraft of all types in that area every day, including high-altitude weather balloons," the spokesperson told ABC News in an email Wednesday.

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HEADLINE	03/28 China challenges US Navy at sea
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/28/asia/south-china-sea-drills-liaoning-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)In a move surely intended to put Washington on notice China's military has put on a show of force in the South China Sea, new satellite images show, with drills at sea and in the air to reinforce its claims in the contested region.</p> <p>Analysts said the images, provided by Planet Labs Inc and date-stamped March 26, showed China's only operational aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, accompanied by dozens of other vessels in the South China Sea, just south of the Chinese island province of Hainan.</p> <p>While the aircraft carrier has visited the South China Sea before, it was unusual to see such a large number of Chinese naval vessels training together in the area, Collin Koh, research fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies' Maritime Security Program, told CNN.</p> <p>"I would say this is the new normal and this will not be a one-off show of force," he said.</p> <p>China said Friday that it would conduct live-fire military drills in the South China Sea at an undisclosed future date, adding they weren't "targeted toward any specific country or aim," state media reported. The Global Times, a state-run tabloid, said the Liaoning would likely take part.</p> <p>However, it wasn't clear if the photos were of the drills announced last week. The Chinese military has not released any official information on the Liaoning's movements.</p> <p>The carrier group is only the latest in a series of military maneuvers by the Chinese government in March. Images on Chinese state media showed armored amphibious vehicles training in the waters of the South China Sea on Monday and Tuesday. On Sunday, China's state media announced air force exercises had been carried out over the South China Sea and the West Pacific.</p> <p>On March 21, the Liaoning aircraft carrier sailed through the Taiwan Strait towards the South China Sea, according to Taiwan's Defense Ministry.</p> <p>A US State Department official told CNN the United States was concerned about China's lack of transparency around its military exercises and "associated strategic intentions."</p> <p>Koh said the flurry of military activity was the result of a newly-empowered Chinese President Xi Jinping following through on his plans for the country's armed forces.</p>

	"This show of force is not just to symbolize that China is ready to fight ... There is a lot more resolute determination on the part of China to push the military to much greater degrees of readiness," he said.
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	03/28 Huge Texas drug bust: 43 indicted
SOURCE	https://www.statesman.com/news/local/new-details-indicted-for-role-central-texas-based-drug-ring/Ebmpz6aaaRyBZtPIKZb47N/
GIST	<p>Federal and local authorities on Wednesday arrested 18 people who they say are part of a Central-Texas-based international drug ring that was distributing cocaine, methamphetamine and heroin.</p> <p>The arrests come as part of a federal grand jury indictment against 43 people for charges including conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine, methamphetamine and heroin and money laundering, the Drug Enforcement Administration said.</p> <p>DEA special agent in charge Will Glaspy called it one of the most significant drug busts in the state's history, if not the largest ever.</p> <p>According to the DEA, the drug ring has ties to the La Familia cartel in Michoacán, Mexico and was operating its distribution center out of a North Austin mechanic shop called J&J Auto Services and also had a large drug processing lab located in Central Texas.</p> <p>More than 300 law enforcement from several Central Texas agencies assisted in the year-long investigation, seizing as much as 147 pounds of crystal meth, 56 gallons of liquid methamphetamine, 62 pounds of cocaine, 13 pounds of heroin and \$400,000 in currency, the DEA said.</p> <p>Fourteen of those who have been arrested are from Austin, two are from Pflugerville and two are from Leander, records show. If found guilty, they face between 20 years and life in prison, the DEA said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 US, Mexico new maritime front in drug war
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/9ffa13d422934b8d879d35c786b3b4a0/AP-Exclusive:-US,-Mexico-open-new-maritime-front-in-drug-war
GIST	<p>SAN DIEGO (AP) — The U.S. and Mexican governments are sparring over immigration and trade, but the two countries are joining forces on the high seas like never before to go after drug smugglers.</p> <p>The United States, Mexico and Colombia will target drug smugglers off South America's Pacific coast in an operation that is scheduled to begin Sunday and last for the foreseeable future, Coast Guard officials told The Associated Press.</p> <p>U.S. Coast Guard Adm. Paul F. Zukunft teased the idea during a recent defense conference in San Diego, saying the United States "can't do it alone."</p> <p>"It's no secret we are besieged with the flow of drugs from Latin America to the United States," he said.</p> <p>U.S. and Mexican forces have routinely worked together at sea, but the latest effort "marks a significant step in terms of information sharing, collaboration and cooperation between the United States, Mexico and other partner nations," according to the Coast Guard.</p> <p>The Americans and Mexicans will exchange intelligence more freely than in the past, which could mean</p>

sharing information on well-traveled routes for drug smugglers or preferred paths for specific smuggling organizations, Coast Guard spokeswoman Alana Miller said.

They will also board the other country's vessels to view operations and gain expertise, Miller said. In 2015, three members of the Mexican navy boarded a Coast Guard vessel during a port call in Huatulco, Mexico, but this operation calls for more frequent exchanges, and they will be at sea.

The operation will last "for the foreseeable future as long as it's working for everyone," Miller said. "It's sort of open-ended."

Traffickers over the years have increasingly turned to the sea to move their illegal goods, traversing an area off South America that is so big, the continental United States could be dropped inside. Smugglers routinely move cocaine out of countries like Colombia to Central America and Mexico via fishing boats, skiffs, commercial cargo ships — even homemade submarines.

The operation comes after five years of record seizures by the Coast Guard. But U.S. officials say because of limited resources, the U.S. military's smallest service still catches only about 25 percent of illegal shipments in the Pacific.

Even so, the Coast Guard annually seizes three times the amount of cocaine confiscated at the U.S.-Mexico border. Yet ocean smuggling has not grabbed lawmakers' attention like the flow of drugs across the nearly 2,000-mile-long (3,200-kilometer-long) land border, where the Trump administration wants to spend billions to build a continuous wall.

As much as 20 percent of the cocaine moving through South America ends up in the United States, and most of it lands first in Mexico from seafaring smugglers. The hope is boats will be stopped before their shipments are loaded onto Mexican trucks that fan out on various routes bound for the U.S. border, authorities said. Large boats can cart 20 tons (18 metric tons) of cocaine or more.

Mexico has historically been among the Latin American countries that are most reluctant to join operations with the U.S., which can be traced back to the Mexican-American War that was fought 170 years ago. The United States cannot open military bases in Mexico, and U.S. officials, for instance, cannot venture into Mexican waters without prior permission, even if they are chasing drug vessels.

The Coast Guard now stops its pursuit and alerts Mexican authorities if suspicious boats cross into their territorial waters.

It's unclear whether this new cooperation will affect those restrictions.

Treaties with nations such as Colombia have allowed U.S. authorities more latitude, such as permitting Coast Guard officers to board Colombian-flagged ships. U.S. officials have touted Colombia's joint anti-drug efforts as a model for the region.

The U.S. and Mexican military relationship has strengthened since the two nations signed the 2008 Merida Initiative to work together in the drug war. There have been more cross-border trainings, especially with the Mexican Navy, which is considered less corrupt than the Mexican Army and has raised its profile with the captures and killings of drug bosses.

The combined operation was planned in a series of meetings over the past year. The maritime services signed letters of intent to work together to fight organized crime while respecting each country's sovereignty and territorial waters.

David Shirk, associate professor of political science at the University of San Diego, said the operation falls in line with Trump's vow to go after the "bad hombres," while President Enrique Peña Nieto has recognized organized crime is so severe that Mexico needs help.

	<p>“With more walled-off sections of the border, we’ve seen drug trafficking organizations literally go underground or offshore,” he said.</p> <p>Last year, the Coast Guard seized more than 455,000 pounds (206,000 kilograms) of cocaine worth more than \$6 billion and brought more than 600 suspected traffickers back to the United States for prosecution. The Coast Guard has been criticized for holding suspects on ships where they cannot easily access lawyers. Shirk said joint operations could lead “to serious violations of suspects’ rights at sea and possible human rights violations in the process.”</p> <p>Coast Guard officials say they respect suspects’ rights. Where suspects will be sent with the three countries participating in the operation will be decided on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>U.S. military officials have been reluctant to openly discuss details of the cooperation with their Mexican counterparts, sensitive to the Mexican public’s historical view and recent barbs between the two presidents.</p> <p>Jorge Chabat, a political scientist at the Center for Economic Research and Teaching in Mexico City, said he doubts the combined operation will get much negative reaction from a Mexican public tired of drug violence.</p> <p>“The more insecurity we have, the less nationalism we have in Mexico,” he said.</p> <p>Ultimately, he doubts the joint operation will make much difference.</p> <p>“This is something they have to do to maintain drug trafficking at the same level, and not allow it to grow,” he said. “That’s the most you can do. You can’t just surrender.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 ‘Lie and try’ gun prosecutions
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/mar/28/officials-charge-eight-rhode-island-suspects-alleg/
GIST	<p>Federal and state prosecutors announced charges Wednesday against eight Rhode Island residents who they said lied on their background checks in order to buy guns, marking the latest prosecutions as the Trump administration steps up efforts to enforce gun laws already on the books.</p> <p>In at least some of the cases the buyers were “straw purchasers,” getting guns that they would then pass on to other individuals who were unable to buy or possess firearms themselves. In one of the cases the person was accused of lying about his marijuana use when buying firearms.</p> <p>These kinds of cases, dubbed “lie and try,” have launched to the forefront after recent high-profile shootings.</p> <p>“Stemming the flow of illegal firearms into our neighborhoods by keeping them out of the hands of those who either purchase them illegally or are prohibited by law from possessing them is a top priority of this office and of our law enforcement partners,” said U.S. Attorney Stephen G. Dambruch.</p> <p>Rhode Island federal and state prosecutors have charged five people in federal complaints with making false statements during purchases of firearms: Molyka Preap, 31, and Darien Young, 23, both of Providence, Ademola Kayode Jr., 25, of Warwick, Lucilo Mena, 56, of Cranston, and Tarriek Gill, 24, of Cumberland.</p> <p>Three people — Brian Luna, 22, Alex Cuevas-Polanco, 20, and Daniel Carides, 22, all of Providence — have been arrested on state firearms and drug charges.</p>

In the case of Mr. Mena, authorities say he bought one 9 mm pistol knowing he was going to resell it, but didn't say that on his purchase form. The gun was later recovered during an investigation into a shooting in Boston last summer.

It's a federal crime for someone lie on a background check form to try to hide past criminal or mental issues that would bar him from buying a gun, or to hide a straw purchase.

Earlier this month, Attorney General Jeff Sessions urged U.S. Attorneys across the country to swiftly and aggressively prosecute people who "lie and try" to buy guns, after the Obama administration oversaw a broad decline in gun-related prosecutions.

The number of prosecuted cases arising based on denials through the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) was "extremely low" compared to other gun crimes, according to a 2016 Justice Department inspector general report.

From 2008 to 2015, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) referred 509 cases to U.S. attorneys and 254 of those were accepted for prosecution, the report said.

But in 2003 alone, 166 subjects were accepted for prosecution consideration, it said.

Prosecutions from U.S. Attorneys were most frequent when "aggravated circumstances" existed in addition to a false "no" on a gun buy application form, the report said.

Gun-related prosecutions have gotten renewed interest in the wake of last month's Parkland, Florida, shooting that killed 17 students and faculty at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

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HEADLINE	03/28 Guilty plea for threats against mosque
SOURCE	https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/missouri-man-pleads-guilty-hate-crimes-making-threats-against-augusta-mosque
GIST	<p>On March 26, 2018, Preston Q. Howard, 49, of Wright City, Missouri, entered a guilty plea before Chief United States District Court Judge J. Randal Hall, to three charges of Obstruction of Persons in the Free Exercise of Religious Beliefs, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 247(a)(2). He faces up to 20 years in prison without the possibility of parole for each offense, and is subject to a sentencing enhancement because he chose his victims based on their religion, classifying his actions as hate crimes.</p> <p>According to information presented at the March 26 hearing, between June 22, 2017 and August 8, 2017, Howard made numerous telephone calls to the Islamic Society of Augusta, during which he threatened to "kill," "bomb," "shoot," "behead," "slaughter," "execute," "light on fire," and "murder" members of the mosque, to "hunt down" and "zone in" on Muslims, and to "blow up the mosque." At the hearing, Howard admitted committing these acts and obstructing or attempting to obstruct the mosque members' free exercise of their religious beliefs. Howard remains in federal custody pending his sentencing hearing, which has not yet been scheduled.</p> <p>"All people, regardless of where they worship or which religion they belong to, are entitled to live free from the threat of violence and discrimination," said Acting Assistant Attorney General John Gore of the Civil Rights Division. "Howard's threatening and hateful calls were criminal and unlawful. The Department of Justice will continue to hold anyone who commits hate crimes accountable under the law."</p> <p>"Those who perpetrate hate crimes by making abhorrent and venomous threats against members of our community in violation of federal law will be held accountable! We continue to work with our law enforcement partners to identify and bring to justice those who terrorize our citizens," said U.S. Attorney Bobby L. Christine for the Southern District of Georgia</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 Better port security thru global training
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/maritime-security/building-better-port-security-through-global-training-spot-illicit-cargo/
GIST	<p>Port control units trained under a U.S.-backed initiative to boost interdiction of illegal good in shipping containers intercepted 45.5 tons of cocaine in Latin America and the Caribbean last year, the UN said in a recently released annual summary report.</p> <p>The United Nations' Office on Drugs and Crime Container Control Programme offers training "to build capacity in countries seeking to improve risk management, supply chain security and trade facilitation in sea, land and airports in order to prevent the crossborder movement of illicit goods." Four dozen countries participate with operational CCP programs while another seven have initiated CCP activities. The United States and the European Union are among the program's international donors.</p> <p>UN Security Council Resolution 1540 "establishes legally binding obligations to develop and enforce appropriate legal and regulatory measures against the proliferation of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons and their means of delivery." Thus, CCP has developed advanced, three-phase training programs focusing on cross-border transport and the "control of imports, exports and transit of commodities subject to licensing or authorization, namely strategic trade controls on weapons of mass destruction, dual-use goods, and CBRNE materials."</p> <p>The program reported that after initiating Strategic Trade and Export Control Training (STEC training) in the third quarter of 2016 they "saw immediate positive seizure results," and as a result "will increase ... focus on this training module in the coming years." STEC training is focused on several regions "at high risk for trafficking in strategic materials and dual-use goods," including in Latin America, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Southeastern Europe.</p> <p>This specialized training is conducted by the UN with the sponsorship of the Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) Program at the U.S. State Department.</p> <p>To tackle the "complex and dangerous activity, often transnational and organized in nature" of illegal fishing, CCP and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) joined forces to strengthen customs agencies to better detect and prevent fisheries crime. Their FishNET training program launched in March 2017 with the first specialized three-day course in Chittagong, Bangladesh, centered on "international and national frameworks, methods, monitoring, control and surveillance."</p> <p>Another concern in cargo security has been intercepting looted and trafficked cultural property, with the UNODC calling it "an urgent issue in recent years," especially due to ISIS and al-Qaeda getting in on the illicit trade in stolen artifacts to "provide crucial income" to fund their nefarious activities.</p> <p>In response, CCP is developing specialized training including "advanced cultural property identification training, which will provide specialized knowledge for region-specific types of cultural property and methods to detect shipments containing such goods, as well as study tours to benchmark ports." Training in Jordan is planned this year and may later extend into Latin America and Southeast Asia.</p> <p>The UN report noted that air cargo is "at high risk of exploitation by organized criminal groups and terrorist organizations that exploit weak, ineffective and inconsistent border controls at airports," as evidenced by the 2010 printer bombs that originated as air freight in Yemen and went through several airports before being discovered in Britain. CCP-Air was developed to apply methodology used for land and seaport cargo screening training to air freight and "prevent the misuse of the international air transport system by establishing inter-agency units at airports" while contributing "to terrorism prevention through supporting civil aviation implementation of flight safety procedures in the screening of cargo."</p> <p>As far as seizure levels from trained units, the UNODC says that by the third quarter of last year CCP port control units had seized more than 200 tons of cocaine since the program's inception and throughout 2017</p>

	<p>“also made significant seizures of drugs, precursor chemicals, IPR goods and protected wildlife” including more than 1.5 tons of cannabis in a trio of Southeastern Europe seizures and 12 tons of ammonium nitrate, typically used to make explosive devices, in Afghanistan.</p> <p>Units in Latin America and the Caribbean also participated in the two-week international “Sports Bag” operation that netted more than 7 tons of cocaine.</p> <p>“Across all regions and countries PCU seizures have included a wide range of controlled goods, including IPR goods, illegal timber, falsified medicines, cigarettes and alcohol, incorrectly declared and under-valuated goods,” said the UN report. “For the first time, after specialized training on fisheries crime was delivered, two illegal fishing-related seizures have been made in Ghana and Maldives.”</p> <p>Last September, the CCP also launched its “Chemical check-I” operation with Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to prevent trafficking of chemicals and associated substances through international supply chains. The op focused on “proper verification and identification of all chemicals/substances entering Afghanistan, either directly or transiting through other countries towards Afghanistan, as well as cargo that could potentially be re-exported to Afghanistan” and “interception of smuggled consignments of substances.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Smugglers swipe ‘nicest’ boats out Fla.
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/federal-pages/dhs/uscg/smugglers-swiping-nicest-boats-out-florida-docks-driveways/
GIST	<p>Florida boat owners are being warned to secure their vessels after an uptick in boat thefts believed to be linked to international drug and human smuggling rings.</p> <p>Instead of just being swiped from docks and stripped of the motor and other parts, boat owners are learning from the Coast Guard that their vessels are gone and bound for Mexico to be used for nefarious purposes.</p> <p>The boat thieves usually come at night and are favoring twin or triple engine boats at least 30 feet long, reported Tampa Bay’s News Channel 8. In some cases, boats have been stolen from owners’ driveways.</p> <p>“They don’t go after the little ones and they don’t go after the old ones, they go after the nicest ones they can find that are not secured,” said Longboat Key Police Chief Pete Cumming.</p> <p>Law enforcement agencies across the state are teaming up to confront the spike in thefts, News Channel 8 reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 KCSO: teen girls shot, killed in Burien
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/local/komo/article/2-women-injured-in-drive-by-shooting-in-Burien-12789841.php
GIST	<p>BURIEN, Washington -- King County sheriff's deputies are investigating after two teen girls were killed in a shooting in Burien on Wednesday night.</p> <p>Deputies were called to an apartment complex near Ambaum Boulevard Southwest and Southwest 139th Street just after 9:30 p.m. for reports of shots fired.</p> <p>When they arrived, they described a chaotic scene with people running around. Both victims were found with gunshot wounds.</p>

	<p>Detectives believe it started as some sort of fight in the parking lot outside the building.</p> <p>Both victims were rushed in critical condition to Harborview Medical Center, where they both later died.</p> <p>Detectives said they are talking with witnesses but don't yet have a motive or any suspect descriptions.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 Libya: gunmen abduct mayor of capital
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/03/29/gunmen-abduct-mayor-libyan-capital-from-his-home.html
GIST	<p>BENGHAZI, Libya – Libyan officials say gunmen have abducted the mayor of the capital after storming his home.</p> <p>The municipality for central Tripoli said it suspended operations on Thursday in protest against the abduction of Abdul-Raouf Hassan Bitlmal the previous night. It called on the U.N.-backed government in Tripoli to make every effort to secure his release.</p> <p>The Interior Ministry said a search is underway, without providing further details.</p> <p>Libya descended into chaos following a 2011 uprising that toppled and killed longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi. The country is now split between rival governments in the east and the west, each backed by an array of militias.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 Parkland shooting suspect lots of fan mail
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/03/29/parkland-suspect-nikolas-cruz-showered-with-fan-mail-donations-report.html
GIST	<p>Lovestruck groupies from around the country are showering the Parkland, Fla., gunman Nikolas Cruz with fan mail, including sexually provocative photos and donations, according to a Wednesday report.</p> <p>One 18-year-old from Texas purportedly professed her love to Cruz in a March 15 letter adorned with smiley faces and hand-drawn hearts, South Florida's Sun-Sentinel reported.</p> <p>"When I saw your picture on the television, something attracted me to you," the letter said. "Your eyes are beautiful and the freckles on your face make you so handsome."</p> <p>The missive flatly concludes: "I'm really skinny and have 34C sized breasts."</p> <p>Another Texas woman reportedly sent a bizarre handwritten love note less than a week after Cruz gunned down 17 people Feb. 14 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.</p> <p>"I reserve the right to care about you, Nikolas!" read the unsolicited declaration.</p> <p>A Chicago woman reportedly sent Cruz numerous suggestive photos, including one in which she slurps a Popsicle while wearing a bikini, and another in which she shows off her backside for the camera.</p> <p>Cruz, who jail officials say has received nearly \$800 in donations to his prison commissary account since the shooting, has also caught the eye of some members of his own sex.</p> <p>A New Yorker with a bushy moustache sent Cruz a card featuring a cat and a photo of himself sitting in a white 1992 Nissan convertible, according to the Sun-Sentinel.</p>

	<p>At least for now, though, the mass murderer's suitors are pining at the wind. Jail officials, who screen all letters to inmates, said Cruz has not seen the letters, and remains on suicide watch.</p> <p>As a matter of policy, authorities seize letters that contain obscene material, privileged communications, or threats to public safety.</p> <p>"We read a few religious ones to him that extended wishes for his soul and to come to God," Broward County Public Defender Howard Finkelstein told the Sun-Sentinel, "but we have not and will not read him the fan letters or share the photos of scantily-clad teenage girls."</p> <p>Finkelstein added that he's "never seen this many letters to a defendant" in his 40 years as a public defender.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 Paris rally for murdered Holocaust survivor
SOURCE	http://www.france24.com/en/20180329-france-paris-rally-murdered-holocaust-survivor-mireille-knoll-jewish-anti-semitism
GIST	<p>The mood was sombre yet indignant as thousands marched in Paris on Wednesday in memory of Mireille Knoll, 85, who was found dead on Friday after what police suspect was a robbery and murder motivated by anti-Semitism.</p> <p>Knoll – who as a nine-year-old child escaped deportation to Auschwitz in the notorious 1942 Vel d’Hiv roundup – was found dead at her home in Paris’s 11th arrondissement (district) on March 23, with 11 stab wounds. Her apartment had been set on fire after the attack and her body was severely burnt.</p> <p>"I’m here to express my sadness," one demonstrator, Algerian-French poet Abder Zegout, told FRANCE 24. "It’s odious that someone could do this and not leave an old lady to live her last years in peace. This has to stop."</p> <p>Indeed, there was a strong feeling of anger as well as sorrow at the march. "Ne touche pas mon pote" ("Don’t touch my friend"), read cardboard cut-outs of hands held aloft by numerous demonstrators. Several banners bearing the insignia of the UEJF (Union of French Jewish Students) said: "In France, grandmothers are killed because they are Jewish."</p> <p>The murder of Knoll is the latest in a string of anti-Semitic killings in France that have caused increasing alarm in the country’s Jewish community.</p> <p>"Since 2000, there’s been a rise in anti-Semitism in France," said Robert Ejnas, executive director of CRIF, an umbrella organisation of French Jewish groups that organised Wednesday’s rally.</p> <p>"This has been expressed through violence, especially through the deaths of 11 people for the only reason being that they were Jewish," Ejnas told FRANCE 24. "There was Ilan Halimi in 2006, the Toulouse killings in 2012, the kosher supermarket in 2015, Sara Halimi last year, and now Mrs. Knoll."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/29 French police hunt swerving car driver
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-security/french-police-hunt-man-who-drove-car-at-soldiers-idUSKBN1H50XX
GIST	<p>LYON, France (Reuters) - French police were hunting a man who had appeared to drive his car at a group of soldiers jogging outside their base in the foothills of the Alps on Thursday, authorities said.</p> <p>It was not clear if the driver had sought to run down the 10-strong group from the 93rd Mountain Artillery</p>

regiment or simply scare them, a spokesman for the local prefecture said.

The incident caused alarm in a country on edge after an Islamic State loyalist went on a rampage in southern France last Friday, killing four people in the first militant attack since President Emmanuel Macron lifted a state of emergency.

“We don’t know if it was an involuntary action, an act to try to scare the soldiers, or a deliberate gesture,” the spokesman said.

No one was injured in the incident, which took place in Varcès-Allières-et-Risset, a small town south of Grenoble.

The mayor said school children were being kept indoors while the driver remained at large, local media reported.

A source close to the investigation said the driver’s motivations were unclear, but that the incident was being taken seriously.

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HEADLINE	03/28 Seattle ‘Amber Alert’ ends in arrests
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/boy-in-amber-alert-dramatically-rescued-in-seattle-2-men-arrested/281-532888858
GIST	<p>A boy who was the subject of an Amber Alert out of Lake Forest Park Wednesday afternoon was rescued and two men, one believed to be his father, were taken into custody after police boxed in their car in Seattle. The arrest happened at about 2 p.m.</p> <p>Police said the 5-year-old boy was taken from a residence by his father, Taraille Chesney about 11 a.m.</p> <p>The incident started when operators received a 911 call from the residence and heard an argument taking place. Then the call ended abruptly according to Lake Forest Park Police Chief Stephen Sutton. When officers arrived, they saw the suspect’s car speed away from the scene recklessly. Officers gave chase but Chesney got away.</p> <p>"Chesney is well know and is a violent offender," said Sutton. While on the loose, Sutton said Chesney was involved in multiple crashes.</p> <p>Officers put out an Amber Alert about two and a half hours after the abduction. Sutton said it took that long to make sure the case met the criteria of an Amber Alert.</p> <p>After the abduction, police say Chesney parked a silver Mercedes at a gas station off East Marginal Way in Seattle. A young boy followed behind him into the store. He bought food for the child, then went to fill up, but backed into another car. After talking with the other driver, the gas station manager came out. The manager says Chesney told him his sick son was with him and he had to go. Then Chesney drove away.</p> <p>Within 45 minutes, tips came in and police located the car in Seattle.</p> <p>After a short chase, police cornered and surrounded the car at NE 63rd Street and 15th Avenue NE near Roosevelt High School. As police had their guns drawn, one man got out of the car and was taken into custody.</p> <p>During the chase, Sutton said Chesney tried to ram a Seattle police officer and that he appeared to be intoxicated.</p> <p>Officers pulled the boy from the car moments later. He was later seen sitting on the trunk of a police car</p>

	<p>with an officer, holding what appeared to be a stuffed animal. Sutton said many officer carry comfort Teddy bears for cases like this.</p> <p>The boy was taken to Children's Hospital, checked out and released to the custody of the state. Sutton said the boy is a ward of the state but his grandmother has access rights.</p> <p>Chesney will face multiple charges, Sutton said, including child endangerment, custodial interference and DUI.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 DOJ charges ex-FBI agent for 'media leaks'
SOURCE	http://www.startribune.com/justice-dept-charges-minnesota-fbi-agent-for-leaking-secret-document-to-news-outlet/478203203/
GIST	<p>A former Minneapolis FBI agent who sought to expose what he called “systemic biases” within the bureau has been charged after allegedly leaking secret documents to a national news reporter, according to federal criminal charges filed in Minnesota this week.</p> <p>The charges, filed by prosecutors for the Justice Department’s National Security Division, are the first to come in Minnesota since Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced a broad crackdown on government leaks last year.</p> <p>A two-page felony information, a charging document that typically signals an imminent guilty plea, outlines two counts filed against Terry James Albury of unlawfully disclosing and retaining national defense information.</p> <p>Albury is accused of sharing a document on assessing confidential human sources — otherwise referred to as informants — and a document “relating to threats posed by certain individuals from a particular Middle Eastern country” with a reporter for a national media organization.</p> <p>The second count charged against Albury alleged that he failed to turn over a document “relating to the use of an online platform for recruitment by a specific terrorist group” last year.</p> <p>The charges do not name the reporter or news organization but allege that Albury possessed and shared the information between February 2016 and Jan. 31, 2017 — the same date that the Intercept published an entry to its “FBI’s Secret Rules” series on how the bureau assesses potential informants.</p> <p>The report drew upon a secret document obtained by the Intercept that has the same publication date described in the charges against Albury.</p> <p>In a statement Wednesday, attorneys JaneAnne Murray and Joshua Dratel said Albury would be taking responsibility for the charges, while also hinting at his motivations.</p> <p>“Terry Albury served the U.S. with distinction both here at home and abroad in Iraq,” the statement read. “He accepts full responsibility for the conduct set forth in the Information. We would like to add that as the only African-American FBI field agent in Minnesota, Mr. Albury’s actions were driven by a conscientious commitment to long-term national security and addressing the well-documented systemic biases within the FBI.”</p> <p>The FBI in Minneapolis and Justice Department both declined to comment on the charges on Wednesday.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Drug trafficking ring bust: 20 charged
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SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article207199514.html
GIST	<p>Federal agents from the Drug Enforcement Administration lowered the boom Wednesday on a drug-trafficking ring supplying methamphetamine and heroin to King, Pierce and Thurston counties.</p> <p>Agents arrested 16 people, including Seattle resident Derrick Donnell Taylor-Nairn, 32, believed to be the ringleader. Search warrants served in Tacoma, Seattle, Auburn, Fife, Renton, Bonney Lake and Tumwater yielded more than a dozen firearms and 11 pounds of heroin.</p> <p>“I commend the strong partnership between federal, state and local law enforcement that led to charges against twenty defendants responsible for pumping the misery of methamphetamine into south King County and beyond,” U.S. Attorney Annette L. Hayes said.</p> <p>U.S. Attorneys filed charges against 20 people in connection with the case. They were scheduled to appear Wednesday in U.S. District Court in Tacoma. The list of defendants includes residents of Bonney Lake, Fife, Tacoma, Puyallup, Auburn and Tumwater.</p> <p>The arrests reflect a collaboration among multiple agencies, including the Tahoma Narcotics Enforcement team (TNET) and the Puyallup Police Department.</p> <p>“Our partnership reveals the strength of federal and local agencies working together to make our communities safer,” Puyallup Police Chief Scott Engle said.</p> <p>Court records show an additional charge against a Seattle man accused of being a “straw buyer” and attempting to acquire a gun illegally for Taylor-Nairn, who wanted to pass the weapon to one of his enforcers. Both men were prohibited from buying guns themselves, according to court records.</p> <p>The straw buyer, a 49-year-old man, tried to purchase a gun known generically as a “Draco” and favored for its threatening look.</p> <p>“Because these firearms resemble short-barrelled assault rifles, they are intimidating in appearance, thereby making them popular among street gangs and organized crime groups,” according to court documents.</p> <p>Court records indicate that investigators used wiretaps to track Taylor-Nairns’ calls in September and October 2017, which revealed the plan to purchase the Draco for Taylor-Nairns’ associate. The trail led to a gun store in Federal Way. The alleged buyer ultimately tried and failed to make the purchase while under surveillance.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Fla. officials: boy wanted to ‘kill kids’
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/13-year-told-investigators-wanted-school-shooter-officials/story?id=54067824
GIST	<p>A 13-year-old boy who was taken into custody under Florida's Baker Act allegedly told investigators that he wanted to become the "next school shooter."</p> <p>The teen was taken into custody early Saturday after a woman called 911 to report a "young man" who was barefoot and passed out drunk on the sidewalk in the city of Davenport, the Polk County Sheriff's Office said in a press release.</p> <p>He was "falling everywhere," "nodding out" and had "bruises all over him," a woman said in the 911 call obtained by ABC Orlando affiliate WFTV.</p> <p>After the boy was taken to a local hospital, he allegedly made alarming statements to investigators that prompted them to investigate further and take him in for an involuntary mental health evaluation under</p>

Florida's Baker Act.

The teen allegedly told Polk County sheriff's deputies that "he wanted to die and see God" and that "he wanted to kill a lot of kids," according to a press release.

The 13-year-old also said that he wanted to "shoot up" Westside K-8 School in Osceola County, from which he was expelled from last month, because he wanted to be the "next school shooter," the sheriff's office said.

The boy said that he wanted to commit the killings because some of the children at the school "snitched" on him and got him expelled. He also said that he was expelled and charged with threatening a student from the school because the student "tried him."

The teen also claimed that he buried a handgun in his neighbor's backyard because he didn't want his mother to know that he had one, but no gun was found, according to the press release.

The boy told investigators at the hospital that he had drunk an entire bottle of liquor from his parents' liquor cabinet as well as taken a bunch of "happy pills."

The teen had threatened to bring a knife to school and kill another teen, according to the press release. He was expelled from the school in February for making similar statements and for "written threats to kill." The Osceola County Sheriff's Office also took him into custody under the Baker Act at the time of his expulsion.

During a search of the teen's home, detectives found images of Nikolas Cruz, the 19-year-old accused in the Parkland, Florida, school shooting, as well as images from the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado on his Playstation, the sheriff's office said.

Eric Harris, whose son attends Westside K-8 School, told WFTV that "you have to take a threat very seriously," even if the student tries to pass it off as a joke.

"They gotta learn they can't joke like that," Harris said.

ABC News is not identifying the teen because he is a minor. He was charged in Polk County for aggravated stalking as a result of the most recent incident.

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HEADLINE	03/29 NYC: Black Lives Matter protest arrests
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/11-arrested-black-lives-matter-protest-york/story?
GIST	<p>At least 11 people were arrested, most for disorderly conduct, during a Black Lives Matter protest in New York City Wednesday night as hundreds gathered to express their anger over the recent death of Stephon Clark.</p> <p>The protesters marched from Columbus Circle to Times Square, approximately 15 to 20 blocks, according to ABC station WABC-New York. Social media videos of the march showed at least one police officer leaping over a barricade to make an arrest.</p> <p>Clark, 22, was killed in Sacramento on March 18 when two police officers shot at him 20 times as he stood in his grandmother's backyard holding a cellphone.</p> <p>Police were responding to a 911 call that a suspect allegedly was breaking car windows and hiding in a yard nearby. According to body-cam footage, the officers thought Clark may have been holding a toolbar or some other form of weapon.</p>

	The Rev. Al Sharpton is expected to deliver the eulogy at Clark's funeral Thursday in Sacramento.
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HEADLINE	03/28 Study: 'ACLU effect' Chicago crime rise
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/03/28/aclu-effect-is-to-blame-for-chicagos-sharp-rise-in-crime-study-says.html
GIST	<p>The American Civil Liberties Union is to blame for a spike in bloodshed on the troubled streets of Chicago – that is the conclusion of a new study released by the University of Utah.</p> <p>You may remember the shooting of Laquan McDonald. Dramatic video of a Chicago police officer shooting him 16 times was released in 2015. What followed was massive street demonstrations and strained discussion about ethnic profiling by police. Particular attention was paid to police officers stopping young black men and checking them for weapons.</p> <p>An agreement was reached between the Chicago Police Department and the ACLU and, by 2016, a plan was implemented requiring street cops to fill out contact cards with enhanced detail explaining why individuals were stopped. The cards have 70 entries, some in essay form.</p> <p>Authors of the study claim the paperwork takes 15 to 20 minutes to complete and has discouraged police from stopping suspicious people and checking them for weapons.</p> <p>About 100,000 stops were recorded for all of 2016, an 82 percent decrease from 600,000 the previous year. For the same time period, gun violence spiked – 754 people were killed in Chicago, a 58 percent increase from 480 the previous year. The study concludes Chicago endured 1,100 additional shootings from the previous year.</p> <p>“Criminals on the streets of Chicago became more emboldened to carry guns. The deterrent effect decreased,” said Paul Cassell, one of two authors of the study. “When there are more guns on the street being carried by criminals, the predictable result is an increase in gun-related crimes.”</p> <p>The ACLU argues that the study is flawed, that the authors simply looked at a couple of developments on a timeline and jumped to the conclusion that one caused the other.</p> <p>“It’s junk science,” said Karen Sheley, a lawyer with the ACLU. “It makes the claim that the math it uses can show one thing caused another. When people who understand social science know the most it can show is correlation that two things might have happened at the same time.”</p> <p>The ACLU also argues that the report disregards other factors, like anger on the street over the McDonald shooting and the appearance that police falsified their reports following the shooting.</p> <p>Cassell defends that he did look at factors like anger and mistrust of police, even the opioid epidemic. The study concludes that the anomaly is what he calls the ACLU effect; the administrative burden placed on street cops making them reluctant to police pro-actively. That, he claimed, loosened the scrutiny on criminals and resulted in bloodshed.</p> <p>“We have a collection of data,” Cassell said, “that comes together to make it clear that causation exists here.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Quebec mosque shooter pleads guilty
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/quebec-mosque-shooting-suspect-mind-pleads-guilty-54069044?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed

<p>GIST</p>	<p>The man accused in the slayings of six men at a Quebec City mosque asked for forgiveness Wednesday after changing his mind and pleading guilty.</p> <p>Alexandre Bissonnette faced six charges of first-degree murder and six of attempted murder. More than 50 people were at the Islamic Cultural Centre in January last year when the shooting began during evening prayers. Six men aged between 39 and 60 were killed.</p> <p>"Every minute of my existence I bitterly regret what I did, the lives I have destroyed, the pain and suffering I have caused to so many people, without forgetting the members of my own family," Alexandre Bissonnette said as he read out a letter in court. "I am ashamed of what I did."</p> <p>Bissonnette, 28, spoke to the court shortly after a judge accepted his guilty pleas. Many people in the courtroom burst out sobbing and held hands as the judge confirmed the guilty pleas.</p> <p>He originally pleaded not guilty to the 12 charges Monday morning but that afternoon announced he wanted to plead guilty.</p> <p>Superior Court Justice Francois Huot refused to accept the pleas Monday pending a psychiatric assessment of the accused to ensure he fully understood the consequences of his decision. Huot placed a publication ban on Monday afternoon's proceedings but agreed Wednesday to accept the 12 guilty pleas.</p>
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<p>HEADLINE</p>	<p>03/28 UK police: new arrest 2015 jewel heist</p>
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/uk-police-make-arrest-major-2015-jewel-heist-54073498?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed</p>
<p>GIST</p>	<p>London police have made a new arrest in the 2015 Hatton Garden jewel heist, one of the largest burglaries in English history.</p> <p>Police said Wednesday that a 57-year-old man was taken into custody the day before on suspicion of burglary after a search of his home in the Islington neighborhood of London. The man has not been identified or charged. Police say a number of items were seized during the search.</p> <p>The Hatton Garden gang of mostly elderly men drilled through a concrete vault wall in London's diamond district over the Easter holiday in April 2015 and ransacked more than 70 safe deposit boxes. Prosecutors say they stole cash, jewelry and gold worth more than 14 million pounds from the vaults.</p> <p>Six men have been convicted in the theft.</p>
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<p>HEADLINE</p>	<p>03/28 Mexico: arrests in killing of journalist</p>
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mexico-arrests-suspects-killing-journalist-54074907?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed</p>
<p>GIST</p>	<p>Prosecutors in Mexico said Wednesday they have arrested six suspects in the January killing of a journalist in the border city of Nuevo Laredo.</p> <p>The Jan. 13 stabbing of Carlos Dominguez Rodriguez may have been related to his journalistic work but was not related to organized crime, said prosecutors in the northern state of Tamaulipas.</p> <p>"The results up to this time indicate a probable link between these events and the exercise of freedom of expression," the federal attorney general's office said in a statement.</p> <p>Located across from Laredo, Texas, Nuevo Laredo is dominated by the Northeast cartel and has been the</p>

	<p>scene of recent shootouts.</p> <p>State prosecutor Irving Barrios said the motives were still under investigation, but that Dominguez Rodriguez didn't write about organized crime topics.</p> <p>Barrios said three of the six suspects "worked in the information industry, but we are still checking whether they were working journalists."</p> <p>Officials refused to release the names of the suspects, citing Mexican law which prohibits publicly incriminating people until they are found guilty.</p> <p>Nor did prosecutors explain why the suspects — who local media reported worked as independent journalists — would have wanted to kill Dominguez Rodriguez, or why the killing was so brutal.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Penn. police: arrest for school threat
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/exchange-student-arrested-pennsylvania-allegedly-threatening-shoot-high/story?id=54070076&cid=clicksource_4380645_1_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>An 18-year-old exchange student from Taiwan was arrested Tuesday night for allegedly "threatening to shoot up" a Pennsylvania high school, local police said this morning.</p> <p>According to the Upper Darby Police, the suspect, An Tso Sun, had items a slew of items in his home including: a military-style ballistic vest; high-powered crossbow with scope and light; arrows; 29 rounds of 9mm ammunition; a strangling device; a "military" ski mask; and ear protectors for firing.</p> <p>Authorities also found a school-issued iPad that allegedly showed Sun was searching weapons like AK-47s and AR-15s, said Michael Chitwood, superintendent of Upper Darby Police.</p> <p>Sun allegedly told a fellow student at Bonner Prendergast Catholic High School to "not come to school on May 1" because he "was going to shoot up the school," Chitwood said at a news conference today. Sun then allegedly told the classmate he was "kidding," Chitwood said.</p> <p>The classmate also said Sun asked how to purchase a gun, Chitwood said.</p> <p>That student went to school officials, who notified Upper Darby Police, Chitwood said. It was not immediately clear if Sun had a lawyer.</p> <p>Sun was charged with terrorist threats with the intent to terrorize another. He was arraigned Tuesday night and held without bail pending a psychological evaluation, authorities said.</p> <p>The teen is on a student visa that was issued in July 2017 and expires in July 2022, authorities said today. Federal authorities have been contacted.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 San Francisco: driver mows down 5
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/hit-and-run-altercation-several-injured-san-francisco-today-2018-03-28/
GIST	<p>SAN FRANCISCO -- Five people have been struck by a car in San Francisco in a hit-and-run incident, police say. One victim has since died, according to a hospital spokesman. CBS San Francisco reports that police spokeswoman Giselle Linnane said the incident happened at around 10:24 a.m. in the city's Dogpatch neighborhood.</p>

	<p>The driver of a vehicle got into a physical altercation with five people and struck all five with his car, Linnane said.</p> <p>The Associated Press reports that three of the victims were in serious condition and the fourth was in fair condition, according to Brent Andrew of the San Francisco General Hospital. He didn't get into the details of the nature of their injuries.</p> <p>A witness who chose to remain anonymous said it was a dispute between a driver of a van and four or five people on the street which led to the driver getting out of his van and chasing after the people with an ax or a hatchet. The witness said the people were able to disarm the man and chase him back to his van, where he then got back in the vehicle and drove onto the sidewalk and into the group at high speed.</p> <p>The driver fled the scene and the five victims were taken to the hospital, with four of the victims in life-threatening condition, police said.</p> <p>Another witness told CBS San Francisco that the incident may have been how a "turf discussion" ended.</p> <p>Officials held a press briefing to say it was an isolated incident and that the public is not at risk.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/28 Immigration raid Arizona: 34 detained
SOURCE	https://ca.news.yahoo.com/u-officials-detain-over-30-people-phoenix-immigration-144603087.html
GIST	<p>(Reuters) - Thirty-four people said to be illegal immigrants were in custody on Wednesday after federal agents raided a "drop house" in Phoenix suspected of being a part of a human smuggling operation, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials said.</p> <p>The raid late on Tuesday was precipitated by a tip that a "local residence contained a large group of suspected undocumented aliens," Lauren Mack, a spokeswoman for ICE, said in a statement.</p> <p>The information led agents with ICE Homeland Security Investigations to "dismantle a human smuggling drop house," she said.</p> <p>"Federal agents discovered 34 undocumented aliens inside the residence. The group included 27 Guatemalan nationals, 5 Mexican nationals and 2 Honduran nationals," Mack said.</p> <p>All 34 were detained for violations associated with the failed human smuggling operation and processed for removal. "The investigation into the smuggling activity is ongoing," Mack said.</p>
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Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

MONDAY – 26 MAR 2018



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Event Calendar

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9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php
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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	03/26 Daniels interview on television
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/25/politics/60-minutes-stormy-daniels-interview-main/index.html
GIST	<p>Washington (CNN)In her first extended television news interview since the news of her alleged 2006 affair with Donald Trump emerged, adult film actress Stormy Daniels declined to discuss whether she had evidence of the affair and said that she was threatened to stay silent about it.</p> <p>Risking hefty fines for violating a \$130,000 hush agreement, Daniels detailed what she said was the only time she and Trump had sex -- saying she spanked Trump with a magazine and that Trump had compared her to his daughter Ivanka.</p> <p>She also said she was threatened in Las Vegas in 2011 after attempting to sell her story of the alleged affair.</p> <p>The "60 Minutes" interview with Anderson Cooper is the most detailed televised account Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, has so far offered of the affair she says she had with Trump. She also said Trump told her he and wife Melania, who had just given birth to their son, Barron, slept in separate rooms.</p> <p>Daniels didn't reveal evidence of the alleged affair with Trump, but continued to hint that she isn't yet revealing all she has.</p> <p>Asked if she has videos, pictures, emails or text messages that corroborate the affair, Daniels said, "I can't answer that right now."</p> <p>The threat, she said in an interview with CBS's "60 Minutes," came weeks after she'd agreed in May 2011 to sell the story of her affair to a magazine for \$15,000. The magazine backed out of the agreement after Trump's lawyer Michael Cohen threatened to sue, two former employees of the magazine told "60 Minutes." Daniels said she never received the money. The White House has denied the affair happened.</p> <p>Daniels said she was in a parking lot preparing to go into a fitness class, and was pulling her infant daughter's car seat and diaper bag out of her vehicle.</p> <p>"And a guy walked up on me and said to me, 'Leave Trump alone. Forget the story,'" Daniels said. "And then he leaned around and looked at my daughter and said, 'That's a beautiful little girl. It'd be a shame if</p>

	<p>something happened to her mom.' And then he was gone."</p> <p>Asked if she took it as a direct threat, Daniels said: "Absolutely."</p> <p>"I was rattled," she said. "I remember going into the workout class. And my hands are shaking so much, I was afraid I was going to drop her."</p> <p>Daniels didn't offer evidence that the approach she detailed had taken place. She said she never saw the man again.</p> <p>"If I did, I would know it right away," she said. "100%. Even now, all these years later. If he walked in this door right now, I would instantly know."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Spokane 'Patriot' event ended peaceful
SOURCE	http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2018/mar/25/spokane-keeps-its-peace-as-patriot-prayer-leader-j/#/0
GIST	<p>Fears of a confrontation were dispelled Sunday as political rallies for and against a conservative U.S. Senate candidate – whose staged events have drawn violent altercations in the past – went off without incident.</p> <p>Joey Gibson, the Vancouver, Washington-based leader of the controversial Patriot Prayer group who recently announced his candidacy against Sen. Maria Cantwell, held a small rally in Spokane Valley's Centerplace Event Center, where a group of about 40 people peacefully gathered to hear talking points on his platform.</p> <p>At City Hall in downtown Spokane, several left-leaning groups held counterprotests, drawing about 50 people to march and rally outside on a chilly spring afternoon. Organizers said they made the decision not to protest at Gibson's event so as to not risk a violent confrontation.</p> <p>"I want to inspire Washington state," Gibson told the crowd seated in a small room in the event center's second floor. "To inspire people to believe in yourselves. It doesn't matter who you are."</p> <p>On hand were several deputies with the Spokane County Sheriff's Office. David Machado, Gibson's head of security, said he made it a point to call for extra security, given the candidate's history with clashes erupting at his rallies.</p> <p>In Portland, Seattle and Berkeley, California, Gibson and Patriot Prayer have drawn the presence of alt-right members and white supremacists, including the group Identity Evropa, which has claimed credit for the recent round of racist flyers posted in downtown Spokane and around area colleges.</p> <p>In response to these past appearances, members of Antifa, anti-fascists and anarchists have attended as well, and clashes have broken out as a result.</p> <p>Jeremy Christian, the Portland man charged in the stabbing deaths of two men on the MAX train in December 2017, had a brief affiliation with Patriot Prayer. Christian allegedly screamed racist slurs at a pair of teenage girls (one wearing a hijab), and stabbed two men to death, injuring another, when the men attempted to protect the teens.</p> <p>Gibson disavowed him after the Portland attack. Gibson did not, however, cancel a pro-Trump rally scheduled in the city the following week, and when it occurred, it drew a massive counterprotest. Several assaults were reported, and Portland police made 14 arrests, confiscating bricks, hammers, bats and sticks.</p> <p>Gibson told the Spokane crowd he's been maced a handful of times, and so has his staff.</p>

	<p>Gibson has repeatedly criticized the rhetoric of various white-supremacist groups that have been drawn to his rallies, but continues to push for an extreme position on freedom of speech. At rallies in the past, and again on Sunday, Gibson reiterated that he believes the First Amendment is under attack by the left.</p> <p>“There’s a battle going on for people’s minds,” he said. “And free speech is at the front line of this battle.”</p> <p>At City Hall in Spokane, Joan Braune, a lecturer at Gonzaga and member of the Spokane Democratic Socialists of America, helped organize the counterprotest.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Stock market worst week in 2yrs
SOURCE	http://time.com/5213656/trade-war-stock-market-slump/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>Stocks around the world plunged Friday as investors feared that a trade conflict between the U.S. and China, the biggest economies in the world, would escalate. A second day of big losses pushed U.S. stocks to their worst week in two years.</p> <p>Investors fear that if China responds in kind to sanctions on \$60 billion worth of Chinese imports the White House announced on Thursday, it will be a first step toward a full-blown trade war that could damage the global economy and slash profits at big U.S. exporters like Apple and Boeing.</p> <p>The market’s two biggest sectors slumped the most. Technology stocks have made enormous gains over the past year, but since they do so much business outside the U.S., investors see them as particularly vulnerable in a trade dispute. The sector dropped 7.9 percent this week.</p> <p>Banks also fell sharply. Amid the trade-war rumblings, investors fled to the safety of bonds and drove down yields, a potential negative for bank profits. That marked a reversal from earlier in the week, when banks rose as the Federal Reserve raised interest rates.</p> <p>It wound up being the worst week for U.S. indexes since January 2016. The S&P 500 index sank 6 percent. Among notable decliners was Facebook, which lost 13.9 percent, or \$68 billion in value, as outrage mounted over its handling of user data. That’s about as much as the company was worth in 2012, the year of its initial public offering.</p> <p>Stocks sagged at the start of this month after tariffs on aluminum and steel were announced, but they quickly recovered as the administration said the tariffs wouldn’t be as severe as they first looked. The losses this week were worse, and investors are hoping for hints the sanctions on China are more of a negotiating tactic.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Pakistan officials seek border wall
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/mar/25/donald-trump-border-wall-calls-echo-pakistan/
GIST	<p>NORTH WAZIRISTAN, Pakistan — The Trump administration and national security officials in Pakistan don’t see eye to eye on issues these days — save, perhaps, for one.</p> <p>Mr. Trump’s desire for a border wall is finding a distinct echo thousands of miles away in Islamabad, where top military leaders often cite the U.S. president’s case for walling off the nation’s southern border with Mexico to defend Pakistan’s efforts to seal its porous border territories with Afghanistan.</p> <p>“Why is the U.S. looking at a border wall in Mexico? Because you need it. We need it in Pakistan as well,” Maj. Gen. Nadeem Ahmed Anjum, inspector general of Pakistan’s Frontier Corps for Balochistan</p>

province, said of the drive to erect a fence along the contested border with Afghanistan.

“It is the simplest solution in the history of the world,” he said.

Pakistani forces have begun lining the nearly 500 miles of its shared border with Afghanistan with chain-link fence and concertina wire, initially focused on cutting off access across the rugged terrain in North Waziristan.

The move has outraged the Kabul government, which has never recognized the Durand Line as the official border.

Standing on the parapets of Fort Kitton-2, one of several large Pakistani forts along the “zero line” between North Waziristan and Afghanistan’s Khost province, an observer can pick out long strands of shimmering metal and barbed wire crisscrossing the various peaks and valleys up to the horizon.

Troops from Pakistan’s Tochi Scouts, the Frontier Corps unit guarding the North Waziristan line, man small mud-brick outposts spaced evenly along the border fence. Pakistan’s 7th Army Division jointly patrols the volatile border regions in Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas, including North Waziristan.

Islamabad plans to have the country’s entire 515-mile border with Afghanistan sealed off by next year, said Gen. Nadeem, head of the Frontier Corps’ Chaman Scouts. The Scouts are responsible for a majority of the Afghan-Pakistani border belt that cuts between Pakistan’s Balochistan province. “In three years, we will be able to completely seal this border,” he said during an interview at his headquarters in Chaman.

Gen. Nadeem made his comments days before Mr. Trump’s first visit to California as president this month to inspect prototypes for his proposed border wall with Mexico. The promise to build a wall was a staple of Mr. Trump’s campaign speeches in 2016 and remains the linchpin of the administration’s immigration and border policy, despite congressional resistance to financing the estimated \$25 billion project.

“We have a lousy wall over here now, but at least it stops 90, 95 percent,” Mr. Trump said of illegal border crossings. “When we put up the real wall, we’re going to stop 99 percent. Maybe more than that.”

But officials in the government of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani say a wall likely won’t work and won’t address the deeper problem of Islamabad’s treatment of militants within its territory.

A border wall is a ridiculous approach to the problem of extremist violence, Afghan National Security Adviser Mohammad Hanif Atmar told reporters Thursday on a visit to Washington.

“The terrorists cannot be walled off,” he said a breakfast roundtable at the Afghan Embassy. “You cannot stop the extremists with a wall or a chain-link fence.”

In Pakistan, the issue driving a border barrier with Afghanistan is not illegal immigration but terrorism and Kabul’s supposed ineffectiveness to control Islamist extremists from crossing the border and creating havoc in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Afghanistan’s southern and eastern provinces, long seen as safe havens for insurgents who can operate on both sides of the border, were the last areas handed over to Afghan security forces when U.S. and NATO troops transitioned to an advisory role at the end of 2014 under President Obama.

Pakistan has fielded just over 1,100 posts along the nearly 500 miles bordering Afghanistan’s southeastern provinces, which traditionally have been the sites of some of the toughest fighting, said Maj. Gen. Azhar Ali Shah, head of all 7th Division forces in North Waziristan.

By comparison, Afghan forces have fielded only 145 border posts along the same stretch of territory, roughly a 7-1 ratio, Gen. Azhar said, which has allowed extremists to flourish in the borderlands.

	Pakistan said in December that it had completed 92 percent of the border wall and hoped to finish it by the end of this year.
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HEADLINE	03/24 'March for our lives' fills Tacoma streets
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article206711404.html
GIST	<p>Renee Lloyd stood on the porch of her Tacoma home and clapped as more than 1,000 people marched down South 9th Street holding signs and chanting, "Guns in schools have got to go."</p> <p>"I love this," she said. "I love that we are doing this here and if we are doing this in every major city, hopefully it helps out."</p> <p>There were 838 "March for Our Lives" gun violence protests scheduled nationwide Saturday morning. Tacoma's march started and finished at People's Park and covered about 1.3 miles.</p> <p>Courtney Stoker and Kassandra Withrow were impressed with the size of the turnout. "The organization ability of these kids is phenomenal to see," Withrow said. "It's not easy to do."</p> <p>Stoker and Withrow want to see "sensible gun legislation." Withrow said that last year a friend of theirs bought a gun and later that day used it to kill herself.</p> <p>"My hope is that lawmakers will put our lives before guns and the NRA," Stoker said. "It seems ridiculous that we feel like we need to protest and say things like 'Protect kids, not guns.'"</p> <p>Other than occasional comments from passersby, there did not appear to be a guns rights presence at the march.</p> <p>C.J. Mercado watched the march pass his South 9th Street home and felt conflicted by what he saw.</p> <p>Mercado said he "basically grew up with a gun in his hand," loves hunting and has taught his children how to safely use guns.</p> <p>"I support their right to stand up for their believes," Mercado said of the marchers, "but at the same time the whole gun control thin is a gray area to me. I feel like we need to teach (children) about guns."</p> <p>He turned to his young son and asked, "Where do you point your gun?" The boy replied, "Up or down." "And never at a person," Mercado added.</p> <p>"I think it is more the video games that people play these days," Mercado said. "'Grand Theft Auto' and all these killing and shooting games where they kill mass people online and laugh about it. They (children) are totally desensitized."</p> <p>Saturday morning's march, was the second nationwide gun violence protest in less than two weeks. Students staged a school walkout March 14. The protests are a response to the Feb. 14 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, that left 17 people dead.</p> <p>When the march arrived back at People's Park, several students spoke to the crowd. Mei Yun Loya, a 17-year-old Stadium High senior, urged marchers to vote for legislators who support stricter gun laws. She said she has already registered and will be of legal voting age by November's mid-term elections.</p> <p>The rally concluded with chants of "Vote them out."</p> <p>"I want people to know that we mean this," Loya said after the rally. "This is not just one march."</p>

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HEADLINE	03/25 Northwest Detention Center operator sues
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/937704/immigration-detention-center-operator-sues-city-of-tacoma/
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. (AP) — The private company that runs the Northwest Detention Center is suing the city of Tacoma over an ordinance passed last month that restricts the facility from expanding.</p> <p>Florida-based GEO Group sued in federal court Thursday, saying that while Tacoma’s ordinance purports to be about land use control, it’s meant to ban federal immigration detention facilities such as the Northwest Detention Center because of the city’s political disagreement with current federal immigration policy.</p> <p>GEO Group is a for-profit company that runs the immigration detention center in Tacoma on contract with U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement.</p> <p>The company is asking the court to invalidate the ordinance.</p> <p>The News Tribune reports that Tacoma Deputy City Attorney Steve Victor says the ordinance was meant to protect economically valuable land in the port of Tacoma from encroachment by non-industrial uses, including detention and correctional facilities.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 More explosives sniffing dogs at SEA
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/938115/more-explosives-sniffing-dogs-now-at-sea-tac-airport/
GIST	<p>TSA is doubling the number of explosive sniffing dogs at Sea-Tac Airport, just in time for the busiest travel season of the year.</p> <p>The number of these specially trained dogs at Sea-Tac was just five, but Port of Seattle officials said they need at least 10 dogs. And Saturday the feds came through.</p> <p>Everyone coming through Sea-Tac airport during peak travel times knows getting through security can seem daunting, but the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is beefing up its arsenal with some additional four-legged workers to speed up wait times.</p> <p>“The TSA is introducing additional passenger-screening K-9s into Sea-Tac,” said Sen. Maria Cantwell, (D) WA.</p> <p>Washington’s junior senator made the announcement flanked by Sea-Tac and Port of Seattle officials.</p> <p>Cantwell said she had to make the case to officials in Washington D.C. about just how critical these explosives-trained dogs are. “Our booming economy has led this airport to grow faster over the last five years than any other large airport in the country,” Cantwell said.</p> <p>And that growth has come at the cost of much longer security lines. These dogs are trained to sniff out explosives before a traveler ever gets to the screening line. Five dogs were pressed into service a few months ago. Now five more dogs are joining the team.</p> <p>“You saw the line move much more rapidly when one of those TSA-trained dogs are helping move it along,” said Courtney Gregoire, Port of Seattle Commission President.</p> <p>And that was greeted with cheers from many travelers.</p> <p>“I love it, absolutely,” said Helene Reczka, a traveler from New Jersey. “It makes you feel safer. More</p>

	<p>security, the better it is.”</p> <p>But the dogs frightened others.</p> <p>“For a family going on a vacation, didn’t expect it,” said Rebecca Orth of Bonney Lake. “And the dog was circling us. We have like nothing. It was a little tough.”</p> <p>Gregoire says they plan to put up signs to let travelers know they could be sniffed by these explosives-trained dogs.</p> <p>Anyone who is allergic or frightened of dogs or is traveling with a pet, can skip the K-9 sniffing line, but it might mean more time getting through security.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Technology trade war with China looms
SOURCE	http://www.zdnet.com/article/trump-fires-starting-gun-on-technology-trade-war-with-china/
GIST	<p>Technology is front and centre of the looming trade war between Washington and Beijing, as United States President Donald Trump initiated the process of installing tariffs on a number of Chinese products, restricting Chinese investment in "industries and technology deemed important" to US interests, and taking China to the World Trade Organization (WTO) for discriminatory technology licensing practices.</p> <p>In a Presidential Memorandum signed on Thursday, Trump said an investigation by United States Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer concluded that China uses foreign ownership restrictions to require technology transfer from US companies to Chinese organisations, as well as conducting espionage to acquire intellectual property and confidential business information.</p> <p>Additionally, the memorandum said China "directs and facilitates" investment and acquisitions of US companies for technology transfer purposes according to Beijing's plans, and lowers the ability of US companies to license technology to Chinese firms at proper market rates.</p> <p>As a consequence, Trump has directed Lighthizer to publish a list of products to have tariffs imposed upon them within the next 15 days, and to "pursue dispute settlement" at the WTO over China's technology licensing practices. The president has also directed Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin to address investment concerns.</p> <p>"We have a trade deficit, depending on the way you calculate, of \$504 billion, now some people would say it is really \$375 billion," Trump said on Thursday. "Many different ways of looking at it, but any way you look at it, it is the largest deficit of any country in the history of our world -- it's out of control."</p> <p>The president claimed intellectual property theft is costing America in the order of hundreds of billions of dollars each year, and the tariffs could hit \$60 billion worth of Chinese imports to America.</p> <p>"We are doing things for this country that should have been done for many, many years -- we've had this abuse by many other countries and groups of countries that were put together in order to take advantage of the United States, and we don't want that to happen, we're not going to let that happen," Trump said.</p> <p>"Frankly, it's going to make us a much stronger, much richer nation."</p> <p>Lighthizer added that the US has 44 million workers involved in "high-technology areas" and that technology would be the "the backbone of the future" for the American economy.</p> <p>On Friday, China announced a list of US goods including pork, apples, and steel pipe that it says may be hit with higher import duties in response to Trump's tariff hike on steel and aluminium.</p>

The Chinese Commerce Ministry called on Washington to negotiate a settlement as soon as possible, but set no deadline.

A ministry statement said the higher US tariffs "seriously undermine" the global trading system.

"The Chinese side urges the US side to resolve the concerns of the Chinese side as soon as possible," the ministry said. It appealed for dialogue "to avoid damage to overall Chinese-US cooperation".

Goods targeted for possible higher Chinese tariffs include wine, apples, and ethanol, which would hit agricultural areas where voters supported Trump in the 2016 presidential election.

The ministry said China bought about \$1 billion worth of those goods last year. They would be hit with a 15 percent tariff increase, mirroring the US duty hike of 15 percent on aluminium.

A second group of products targeted for a possible 25 percent tariff, mirroring the higher American charge on steel, includes pork and aluminium scrap, according to the ministry.

In September 2015, the two countries signed an agreement ostensibly to prevent economic espionage from being conducted online, which was subsequently claimed to be breached the very next day.

Over recent months, the United States has stepped up its rhetoric against China, particularly in the realm of technology.

In February, the heads of the CIA, FBI, NSA, and the director of national intelligence to the Senate Intelligence Committee recommended that Americans not use products from Huawei and ZTE.

Earlier this month, Trump issued an order sinking Broadcom's proposed takeover of Qualcomm, saying there was "credible evidence" the deal would hurt the national security of the United States.

At the time, the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States said that if Broadcom succeeded in its plans, it could weaken Qualcomm and allow China to have greater influence over standards such as 5G.

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HEADLINE	03/23 Gov. boosts oil safety measures
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/935898/gov-jay-inslee-signs-bill-to-boost-oil-safety-measures/
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — Washington Gov. Jay Inslee has signed a measure that aims to boost safety around the transportation of oil in the state.</p> <p>The new law, signed Friday, extends the state's oil barrel tax to pipelines. That tax pays for spill response and prevention measures and currently applies to oil received by train or vessels.</p> <p>The measure also directs state regulators to address the risks of certain types of oil that sink or submerge as well as to study ways to reduce oil risks in Puget Sound. The new law also sets up an annual forum for the state to work with Canadian agencies on issues related to reducing oil spill risk and navigational safety.</p> <p>Starting in mid-2019, the first \$200,000 collected by the tax will be allocated to the National Guard for oil spill training and cleanup every year.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Recall: Milo's Kitchen dog treats
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/03/25/recall-milos-kitchen-dog-treats-may-contain-elevated-levels-of-thyroid-hormone/

<p>GIST</p>	<p>The company that sells Milo’s Kitchen® dog treats has issued a voluntary recall of two flavors because the products may contain elevated levels of beef thyroid hormone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milo’s Kitchen Steak Grillers / Steak Grillers Recipe with Angus Steak • Milo’s Kitchen Grilled Burger Bites with Sweet Potato and Bacon <p>So far, three illnesses have been reported to the FDA prompting J.M. Smucker Company to announce the recall.</p> <p>Dogs consuming high levels of beef thyroid hormone may be extra thirsty and urinate frequently. They may also experience weight loss, increased heart rate and restlessness.</p>
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<p>HEADLINE</p>	<p>03/25 Hate crimes rise prompts safety workshop</p>
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>http://q13fox.com/2018/03/25/rising-hate-crimes-in-seattle-prompts-workshop-for-womens-safety/</p>
<p>GIST</p>	<p>SEATTLE – Hate crimes in Seattle is why more than a dozen women attended a workshop called “Hijabs and Harassment” in West Seattle. They say wearing a hijab as part of their religion makes them a target for harassment.</p> <p>“For my mother and my sisters that cover, you see that they are Muslim walking down the street, so they’re an easier target than myself who chooses not to cover or Muslim men who don’t have outward signs of their faith,” said Nimco Bulale, education program manager at One America.</p> <p>Bulale, who was born in Somalia, left her home country after the civil war moving to Uganda then to America when she was six years old. She now teaches fellow Somali women how to protect themselves.</p> <p>Bulale says Muslim women are feeling a heightened sense of anxiety with more negative rhetoric around Muslims since President Trump took office.</p> <p>“We don’t know what our right, we don’t know what to do,” said Farhiya Mohamed, executive director of the Somali Family Safety Taskforce. She says many women in her community have come to her asking what to do if someone yells a racial slur while they’re at a bus stop or physically attacks them because they’re wearing a hijab, so she decided it was time to put together an educational workshop to address those concerns.</p> <p>“2017 was our highest year rate for incidents against all groups,” said detective Elizabeth Wareing, the bias crimes coordinator of the Seattle Police Department.</p> <p>Wareing says police means different things to people of different cultures, she is emphasizing that the Seattle police department is here to help women and anyone affected by a hate crime. She is teaching these women how to report a crime, why that’s important, how the dispatch system works and what to expect when a police officer arrives to their call.</p> <p>“I want to make sure they know what SPD officers is help, not persecution or embarrassment or something negative they may have faced at their home country,” said Wareing.</p> <p>She says unlike problems like property crime, hate crimes are more challenging to solve using traditional methods.</p> <p>“We can throw more officers at the area or change our patrol patterns and it changes the patterns of incident, like for property crimes, but with bias crimes, we’ve noticed they happen all over the city at time frames that are random,” said Wareing.</p> <p>She says it’s critical for these women and anyone affected by hate crimes to report them because she says</p>

	<p>if police don't know it's happening they can't act to mitigate it.</p> <p>The city shows 418 incidents of bias crime in 2017 for all groups, with downtown Seattle, Capitol Hill and Northgate seeing the highest numbers by neighborhood.</p> <p>This group of women says they want to learn how to work with police to help make them feel safer.</p> <p>"America is my second home," said Sofya Omar, one participant who says people avoid her on a bus because she is wearing a hijab and she's too fearful to go out at night because she may get harassed.</p> <p>"I wish the larger community would know that we too are here seeking opportunity and a better life just like everyone else," said Bulale.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/26 Philippines to patrol disputed shoals
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/03/26/philippines-to-patrol-disputed-shoal-despite-china-protest.html
GIST	<p>CAVITE, Philippines – The Philippine defense chief says the military will continue its aerial patrols of a Chinese-held shoal near the South China Sea despite protests from Beijing over the flights, especially using Japanese-donated aircraft.</p> <p>When asked if the Philippine military will stop the surveillance of Scarborough Shoal following the protests from Beijing, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said Monday the flights will continue because the area is within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone, giving the country internationally recognized sovereign rights.</p> <p>A Philippine official said China raised concerns over the patrols, including one that used a Japanese-donated TC-90 plane, when Chinese and Philippine officials met to discuss their territorial disputes in Manila last month.</p> <p>Japan turned over the last three of five TC-90 aircraft to the Philippines on Monday.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Thousands register to vote at 'March'
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/march-our-lives-pushes-expand-voter-rolls-across-country-n859756
GIST	<p>At many of the March for Our Lives events across the United States on Saturday, speakers reminded the hundreds of thousands of people in attendance that there was an important way they could push for gun reform: register to vote and go to the polls.</p> <p>According to many of the student speakers at the Washington rally, voting is the only way to pressure politicians to propose legislation that would meet the movement's demands, which include universal background checks and bans on assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines.</p> <p>"Let's take this to our local legislators and let's take this to midterm elections," said David Hogg, one of the survivors of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, who helped organize the march. "Because without the persistent heat, without the persistence of voters and Americans everywhere getting out to every election, democracy will not flourish."</p> <p>HeadCount, a nonpartisan organization that registers young voters at concerts, partnered with the students behind March for Our Lives and sent close to 1,000 volunteers to register marchers at Saturday's crowd in Washington, which numbered 800,000 people, according to organizers.</p>

HeadCount spokesman Aaron Ghitelman said volunteers, who were dressed in neon yellow or neon green shirts, were coming back with 10 to 20 filled-out voter forms each. And the young people who filled out those forms are from all over the country.

“That’s a really invigorating number,” Ghitelman said of the Washington returns. “I mean, damn that’s awesome.”

HeadCount also sent volunteers to the many other marches that occurred throughout the country, and several other organizations also worked to register students, parents and teachers at the massive demonstrations.

As of Sunday, Ghitelman said they had registered approximately 4,800 people across the country.

Diane Burrows, a vice president of the League of Women Voters in New York, said her group had trained and sent out 45 volunteers into the city’s march on Saturday. Each carried a clipboard and 10 registration forms, and several of them had come back to their headquarters for more.

Burrows said on Sunday they had registered more than 150 voters in New York alone — 74 had birthdays in 1999 or 2000 — but about half the volunteers had not yet turned in their registration forms and were expected to bring them in next week.

“The engagement has really increased and I think it’s an awareness,” said Burrows. “People are really understanding the power of the vote and that’s what’s really motivating a lot of them. They’re figuring out the importance and power of civic engagement.”

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HEADLINE	03/25 Gas prices rise; expected continue rising
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/gas-prices-rise/2018/03/25/id/850688/
GIST	<p>The average U.S. price of regular-grade gasoline shot up 7 cents a gallon over the past two weeks to \$2.66.</p> <p>Industry analyst Trilby Lundberg said Sunday the increase was driven primarily by rising crude oil prices.</p> <p>Lundberg says she expects prices to continue to rise over the next few weeks.</p> <p>The increase brings the price of gas to 32 cents a gallon higher than it was at this time last year.</p> <p>The highest average price in the contiguous 48 states was \$3.54 in the San Francisco Bay area. The lowest was \$2.22 in St. Louis.</p> <p>The average price for diesel fuel rose a penny, to \$3.01.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/26 Russian official: 64 dead in mall fire
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-fire-kemerovo/death-toll-in-russian-shopping-mall-fire-reaches-64-minister-idUSKBN1H10PG
GIST	MOSCOW (Reuters) - The death toll from a fire at a shopping mall in the Russian city of Kemerovo has reached 64 people, Russian Emergencies Minister Vladimir Puchkov said on Monday.
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HEADLINE	03/25 ‘March’ in all 50 states
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SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/50-us-states-participated-march-lives/story?
GIST	<p>Hundreds of thousands of energized protesters rallied in all 50 states and in Washington, D.C., in the March for Our Lives demanding action toward ending gun violence in the U.S.</p> <p>The marches Saturday came a little more than a month after the Valentine's Day school rampage in Parkland, Florida, that killed 17 students and teachers.</p> <p>The largest turnout was in the nation's capital, but solidarity was shown nationwide with protesters from toddlers to grandparents joining to echo the call of Parkland's high school students that "enough is enough."</p> <p>From bullseyes printed on kids' T-shirts in Alaska to "fists in the air!" rallying cries in Alabama, here are some of the sights and sounds from the day.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 NBA players protest fatal police shooting
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/unarmed-man-fatally-shot-police-honored-nba-game/story?id=54005259
GIST	<p>The Sacramento Kings took the home floor Sunday and donned T-shirts honoring the unarmed 22-year-old who was shot and killed by police last week.</p> <p>On the front of the shirts read "ACCOUNTABILITY. WE ARE ONE." On the back, there was a hashtag - - #StephonClark -- the name of the man who was killed March 18 in his grandmother's backyard.</p> <p>During a first-quarter timeout, a unified public service announcement from players from the Kings and the opposing team, the Boston Celtics, played on the JumboTron at Gold 1 Center in Sacramento.</p> <p>In it, the players, over soft music, deliver various messages over the 30-second clip: "There must be accountability."</p> <p>"We won't shut up and dribble."</p> <p>"These tragedies have to stop."</p> <p>Clark was killed after officers responded to a 911 call of a man in a hoodie breaking car windows and hiding in a backyard in the 7500 block of 29th Street.</p> <p>When the officers encountered Clark there, according to released body cam footage, they believed Clark was in possession of a "toolbar," according to police accounts.</p> <p>Officers said Clark motioned toward them and one of them can be heard yelling: "Show me your hands... Gun, gun, gun."</p> <p>After both officers fired 20 shots, fatally wounding Clark, investigators recovered a cell phone near Clark's body but no weapons.</p> <p>Since the shooting, protestors have taken to the streets to call for change.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 Thousands Seattle 'March' demand action
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/we-are-taking-action-at-seattles-march-for-our-lives-thousands-demand-stricter-gun-laws/
GIST	There have been two lockdowns at Nabrath Sheriff's high school in Sammamish since last month's

shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

Sheriff's school has added security measures and begun enforcing ones that had lapsed — doors that used to be open at Eastlake High are now closed, classrooms are locked and all visitors need badges.

Going to school feels subtly different, the 15-year-old sophomore said. The shooting at Parkland has made her newly conscious of a threat that's been there all along.

"Every time I walk in a classroom I'm looking for a place I could hide," Sheriff said. "I deserve to go to school and feel safe."

Sheriff was at Seattle's Cal Anderson Park on Saturday for the local March For Our Lives, joining thousands of others to march through downtown in a student-led protest demanding stricter gun laws in Washington and across the country.

Seattle's march was one of hundreds worldwide held alongside the main event in Washington, D.C., where hundreds of thousands of people packed into the nation's capital to hear 20 children and teenagers speak about the effect of gun violence on their lives. Among them were survivors of the Parkland shooting, which left 17 people dead.

The Parkland massacre was by no means the first, nor was it the deadliest, school shooting in U.S. history. But the outcry this time is unmatched, students said, in part because of the voices of the Parkland student activists who have used social media to recount their experiences, call out lawmakers and plan events such as Saturday's march.

Seeing those students on stage at rallies after the Feb. 14 shooting was impactful, said Rhiannon Rasaretnam, 17, a Tahoma High senior and march organizer. On Saturday, Rasaretnam was the one on stage.

"Now we are taking action to ensure that the next generation doesn't have to grow up with active shooter drills and faced with the reality that they and their classmates could be killed," she said.

While the energy of protest marches can sometimes fizzle into inaction, the student organizers have specific legislative goals in mind: universal background checks. Ending the effective ban on federally funded research into gun violence. Banning the sale of semi-automatic rifles. Raising the legal age to own a gun in Washington state, from 18 to 21.

Speakers and demonstrators emphasized that gun violence affects young people beyond school and that, while Parkland may be considered the tipping point for some, "others have been at that tipping point for years," Rasaretnam said. Representatives from the group Youth 4 Peace read names of young people killed by guns in Washington state and placed flowers in a pile after each name was read.

Dozens of volunteers fanned out along the march route, armed with clipboards to register potential voters. The importance of voting was a focus of the speakers and the organizers. The eight members of the march planning team signed voter-registration forms on stage, then held them up as the crowd cheered. Ingraham High senior and march organizer Catherine Zhu called the ballots "symbols of youth power."

"This is a youth-led effort and I want to be here to empower them," said Patricia Murray, 23, who was signing up voters. "Voting is one of the best ways we're able to make systematic change."

And the youth, whether they can vote in this election or not, are coming.

"Some of us can vote in 2018, most of us can vote in 2020 and all of us can vote in 2022," one speaker said. "We need to show our representatives that if they oppose us we will vote them out."

While much of the focus was on congressional inaction, some demonstrators looked to the state level as

	<p>well.</p> <p>“We live in a time when anyone who is 18 is able to go into a store, buy a gun and shoot other people, which is completely ridiculous.” said Sabreen Tuku, a 15-year-old freshman at Issaquah High School. “Start in Washington and then have other states follow, that’s going to be the most effective way for it to happen.”</p> <p>But even in reliably blue Washington, such changes have been few and far between.</p> <p>The Washington state Legislature recently banned bump stocks, which allow semi-automatic guns to fire nearly as rapidly as a machine gun.</p> <p>But efforts to pass more substantial gun laws — a ban on assault-style weapons, raising the age limit to buy such weapons and a ban on high-capacity magazines — stalled in the Democratic-controlled Legislature.</p> <p>Attorney General Bob Ferguson, a Democrat who has been pushing since 2016 for a ban on assault-style weapons, noted that Florida’s Republican-controlled Legislature recently raised the age for all gun purchases to 21.</p> <p>“Our Legislature did nothing,” Ferguson said, impugning his own party. “It is outrageous, it is unacceptable that our elected officials, in our state, in our home, will not listen.”</p> <p>He added: “I think they’re going to start listening now, because of each and every one of you.”</p> <p>Democratic Gov. Jay Inslee, in an interview after his speech at Seattle Center, said, “This is the start of an awakening of this generation that can help this state realize a new vision.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 CDC: doctor visits for flu down 6th week
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2018/03/24/CDC-Doctor-visits-for-flu-symptoms-down-for-6th-week-in-a-row/9771521902945/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_hn&utm_medium=15
GIST	<p>SATURDAY, March 24, 2018 -- It's been a particularly tough flu season, but spring -- and real relief -- may be near, new numbers show.</p> <p>The flu season continues to wind down, with yet another drop seen in doctor visits and less severe strains of influenza becoming ever more dominant.</p> <p>But hospitalizations for the flu are still a problem, and there have been additional pediatric deaths, the latest data shows.</p> <p>For the sixth week in a row, there was a decrease in the number of doctor visits for flu-like illness, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Friday.</p> <p>As of March 17, the CDC said, 2.7 percent of patient visits to doctors were for the flu, down from 3.3 percent of patient visits the week before.</p> <p>And, as health officials predicted, cases of less severe influenza B infections continue to be more common than cases of more severe influenza A infections.</p> <p>For the week ending March 17, influenza B infections accounted for 57.5 percent of cases, while influenza A infections accounted for 42.5 percent. For the entire season so far, influenza A strains have been responsible for 75.6 percent of all cases, the CDC report noted.</p>

	<p>Meanwhile, flu-linked hospitalization rates continued to rise -- from 89.9 per 100,000 people for the week ending March 10, to 93.5 per 100,000 people for the week ending March 17, the CDC data showed.</p> <p>Pediatric flu deaths are also still increasing slightly, with an additional five deaths reported for the week ending March 17. That brings the season's total to 133.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 NKorea criticizes South's plan
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/03/25/North-Korea-criticizes-South-Koreas-plans-for-more-jets-missiles/884152196111/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=1
GIST	<p>SEOUL, March 25 (UPI) -- Pyongyang criticized South Korea's plans to acquire more fighter jets and air-to-surface missiles to scale up its weapons capacity against the North, amid efforts to ease tensions on the Korean Peninsula.</p> <p>Following reports last week that 170 Taurus missiles were delivered to the South this month, as agreed in 2016, with 90 additional missiles expected to be acquired from 2019 to 2020.</p> <p>The German air-to-surface missiles can target North Korea's major weapons development facilities including the main nuclear test site of Punggye-ri and the Sohae missile launch site.</p> <p>North Koea's propaganda outlet Uriminzokkiri slammed the move to acquire extra Taurus missiles, warning the South not to "take actions that hinder the atmosphere for improving [inter-Korean] relations."</p> <p>"Its purchase of weapons targeting the same [Korean] people and continuing its frenzied schmes for military conflict is like smiling on the outside while sharpening the sword of provocation on the inside," it said Saturday.</p> <p>A column in the North's regime paper Rodong Sinmun on Sunday also stressed that "negotiations and maneuvers for war cannot coincide."</p> <p>The daily blasted Seoul's decision to deploy F-35A stealth fighter jets as well as the extra purchase of Taurus missiles, deeming such moves as "open provocations against the negotiating party" and a "dangerous move that counters the mood for reconciliation and unity."</p> <p>The South Korean military is set to unveil its first F-35A fighter jets this week but is expected to keep the ceremony low key amid efforts to improve inter-Korean relations and hold talks on denuclearizing the North, Yonhap reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 China air force drills in disputed sea
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-defence/china-air-force-drills-again-in-south-china-sea-western-pacific-idUSKBN1H103L
GIST	<p>BEIJING (Reuters) - China's air force has held another round of drills in the disputed South China Sea and the Western Pacific after passing though Japan's southern islands, the air force said on Sunday, calling such exercises the best preparation for war.</p> <p>China is in the midst of an ambitious military modernization program overseen by President Xi Jinping with a heavy focus on its air force and navy, from building stealth fighters to adding aircraft carriers.</p> <p>China insists it has no hostile intent, but its sabre-rattling in the busy South China Sea waterway, and around Taiwan, has touched a nerve in the region and in Washington.</p>

	<p>In a statement, the air force said H-6K bombers and Su-30 and Su-35 fighters, among other aircraft, carried out combat patrols over the South China Sea and exercises in the Western Pacific after passing over the Miyako Strait, which lies between two southern Japanese islands.</p> <p>It did not say when the exercises took place nor specify the parts of the South China Sea or the Western Pacific.</p> <p>In a “freedom of navigation” operation on Friday, a U.S. Navy destroyer came within 12 nautical miles of an artificial island China has built in the South China Sea, provoking condemnation from China, which claims most of the strategic waterway.</p> <p>Sending Su-35 fighters over the South China Sea aims to help increase the air force’s ability to fight far out at sea, the air force said in the statement on its microblog.</p> <p>Flying across the Miyako Strait, which also sits to the northeast of the self-ruled island of Taiwan that China claims as its own, accorded with international law and practice, it added.</p> <p>“Air Force exercises are rehearsals for future wars and are the most direct preparation for combat,” it said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Russia shopping mall fire kills 4
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-43531684
GIST	<p>At least four people, three of them children, have been killed and dozens injured in a fire at a shopping centre in Siberia, media reports say.</p> <p>The blaze started on the fourth floor of the Winter Cherry building in the city of Kemerovo, according to Russia's Sputnik news site.</p> <p>Video posted on social media showed smoke billowing from windows as fire crews worked to evacuate the property.</p> <p>People were also seen jumping from windows to escape the flames on Sunday.</p> <p>Initial reports said that four children had died, but this was later corrected to three children and a woman.</p> <p>A representative of Russia's Investigative Committee, Svetlana Petrenko, said that 26 people had sought treatment or had been taken to hospital.</p> <p>The fire started in part of the building that contains an entertainment complex and a cinema, local media reported, raising concerns that more children may have been trapped.</p> <p>The cause of the blaze is not yet known but authorities have launched an investigation into the incident, Sputnik added.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Data show dramatic change in politics
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/first-read/after-20-years-data-show-dramatic-changes-party-alignment-n859821
GIST	<p>In 2018, it’s essentially a given to say that the Democratic and Republican parties represent two different Americas. But a new set of data this week shows some of the most significant gaps between the two major parties are growing wider.</p>

The study of political partisanship from the Pew Research Center compares registered voters who self-identified as Republicans and Democrats in 1997 and 2017 and finds both are being affected by changes in the nation overall, but at very different rates. The net effect is that the two parties are in some ways headed in very different directions – demographically and culturally.

Take racial and ethnic diversity as a measure.

Of course, the data show the United States has grown more diverse since 1997. Among all voters in the Pew data, the percentage of white, non-Hispanic registered voters has dropped 14 points, to 69 percent in 2017 from 83 percent in 1997. But the numbers look very different for Democrats and Republicans.

The GOP has seen a smaller 9-point decline in the share of its voters who are white and non-Hispanic to 83 percent in 2017 from 92 percent in 1997. But the Democrats have seen a much steeper 16-point in the share of its voters who are white, to 59 percent from 75 percent in 1997.

As a result, the divide between the parties on the percentage of members who are white is wider now than it was then.

Age is another marker. The Pew data show the country is graying. In 2017, 50 percent of the registered voters they surveyed were older than 50. That number was up 10 points from 1997 when the figure was 40 percent. But the data show the Republicans are graying much faster than the Democrats.

In 2017, 57 percent of Republicans were age 50 or older, that age group made up only 39 percent of the party in 1997 – an increase of 16 points. Democrats have gotten grayer as well, but only by 5 percentage points – 47 percent now, versus 42 percent 20 years ago.

The partisan changes in college education rates are breathtaking. On the whole, more U.S. voters in the Pew data have a college degree than 20 years ago. The figure was 33 percent in 2017, up 8 points from 1997, when the number was 25 percent. But at the party level, the shift has been one-sided.

Among self-identified Democrats, the number of college-educated voters has climbed 15 points, to 39 percent, since 1997. But among Republicans, the number of college-educated voters is unchanged at 28 percent. This is a big shift. In 1997, Republicans were more likely to hold a college degree than Democrats. The figures are now reversed.

And on the often contentious issue of religion, the parties are moving further apart. In national terms, the percentage of registered voters with no religious affiliation is growing while the share of white evangelical Christians declines.

Again, this is true at the party-level as well, but the rates of change are dramatically different.

The percentage of Democrats with no religious affiliation climbed 24 points between 1997 and 2017. A third of Democrats, 33 percent, now claim no religious affiliation. With Republicans the increase was only 8 points. Only 13 percent of Republicans claim no religious affiliation today.

With white evangelical Christians, the differences are reversed.

The percentage of white Republican voters calling themselves evangelical Christians has declined ever so slightly since 1997, only 1 point to 33 percent. But among Democrats the white evangelical Christian drop has been much steeper, a 12-point drop to just 7 percent of all party voters.

In sum, the United States has changed a lot in the last 20 years and the nation's two major political parties haven't been immune to those changes. But the different rates of change among the Democrats and Republicans mean that the parties are, in many ways, growing ever further apart.

On all the measures listed here, the Democrats and Republicans look less similar than they did 20 years

	<p>ago, even as the two parties are generally moving in the same direction.</p> <p>And, to be clear, this is not merely an exercise in bean counting. The splits outlined here – race, age, education, religious adherence – are tied to deeper cultural and socio-economic differences that consistently appear in policy debates on a range of topics.</p> <p>In that way, these numbers are not just a tallying of party differences, they are numeric evidence for why compromise has become so scarce in Washington, and why it is only growing harder to find.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 How many attended 'March'?
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/march-for-our-lives-crowd-size-estimated-200000-people-attended-d-c-march/
GIST	<p>More than 200,000 people attended the March for Our Lives demonstration in Washington D.C. on Saturday, according to Digital Design & Imaging Service Inc (DDIS). The Virginia-based firm uses a proprietary method for calculating crowd size using aerial photos.</p> <p>The peak crowd size was 202,796 people, with a margin of error of 15 percent, the firm said. The crowd reached its largest size at 1 p.m., according to the company's estimates.</p> <p>The organizers put the total number of attendees at closer to 800,000. The largest single-day demonstration in U.S. history was the 2017 Women's March, with a crowd size of 440,000 people, according to DDIS' estimates.</p> <p>In addition to the massive march in Washington, an estimated 800 other marches were held across the country, including one in Parkland, Florida, where the movement was born following the shooting at Stoneman Douglas High School in February.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 Marysville first responders stretched thin
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/03/23/marysvilles-exploding-population-stretches-emergency-responders-to-breaking-point/
GIST	<p>MARYSVILLE, Wash. - Marysville doubled in size between 2006-2016, jumping from 32,000 people to 65,000.</p> <p>That kind of increase affects everything from housing and traffic to infrastructure. It also puts a strain on those who are sworn to serve and protect.</p> <p>Back in 2009, the Marysville fire department responded to 10,000 calls. Last year they responded to more than 15,000 – a 47 percent increase, that's seen average daily calls jump from 29 to 42, even as the number of firefighters on duty has remained the same.</p> <p>“We are currently spending out of our reserve just to keep up with the amount of calls that we run and sustain a good service,” said battalion chief Aaron Soper.</p> <p>“We are so lean there is nothing that can be cut out. We rely every day on mutual aid - mutual aid is when other departments come in and help us run our calls. Mutual aid was never intended for everyday events. It was a big event where you are overwhelmed and can't provide the service.”</p> <p>The question, of course, is how to pay for it. The city says something could be on a ballot by the end of the year.</p>

	“We will always do the best we can with what we have,” Soper said. “Of course we would like more funding and more manpower to protect our citizens.”
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HEADLINE	03/24 Small counter-protests amid ‘March’
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/march-for-our-lives-rallies-small-counter-demonstrations/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON -- Small counter-demonstrations were taking place Saturday in cities across the country as hundreds of thousands of teenagers and their supporters rallied under the banner "March for Our Lives" in the nation's capital -- and nationwide -- in support of gun control.</p> <p>About 30 gun-rights supporters staged a counter-demonstration in front of the FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C., standing quietly with signs such as "Armed Victims Live Longer" and "Stop Violating Civil Rights."</p> <p>In Boston, a group of about 100 counter-protesters began Saturday morning on the steps of the State House and moved onto Boston Common, CBS Boston reports. Counter-protesters and opposing activists shouted at one another. Police stepped in between the groups to keep the peace.</p> <p>When the counter-protesters moved to Boston Common, police officers on bicycles formed a perimeter around them to prevent any potential clashes.</p> <p>In Salt Lake City, a pro-gun rally was taking place Saturday. CBS affiliate KUTV reports gun rights advocates arrived at the Utah State Capitol. They chanted "freedom!" as they marched.</p> <p>The rally is called "March Before Our Lives" -- a counter-protest to the rally pressing for gun legislation. KUTV reports Utah Gun Exchange was holding the counter-demonstration.</p> <p>In Texas, Fort Worth police formed a protective circle Saturday morning around two counter-protesters using a microphone to disrupt the city's "March for Our Lives" event as it was about to get underway, J.D. Miles with CBS DFW reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 Students rally against gun violence
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/march-for-our-lives-huge-crowds-gather-for-rally-against-gun-violence-in-nations-capital/2018/03/24/4121b100-2f7d-11e8-b0b0-f706877db618_story.html?utm_term=.285aba0f558e
GIST	<p>Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators gathered in the nation’s capital and cities across the U.S. Saturday to demand action against gun violence, the latest and most visible show of force by a student-led political movement born in the wake of a deadly school shooting in Parkland, Fla.</p> <p>Led by students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, where a shooter’s rampage last month left 17 dead, the teens who took the stage at the March for Our Lives in downtown Washington called for Congress to enact stricter gun controls in response to the nation’s relentless, two-decade stretch of campus shootings. Hundreds of sister protests were taking place in cities across the United States, including Philadelphia, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles.</p> <p>Although the D.C. march was bankrolled by left-leaning celebrities including Oprah Winfrey and George and Amal Clooney, students who survived the Parkland shooting, students directly affected by gun violence have been its faces. Their unequivocal message on Saturday: The inaction that has repeatedly characterized federal lawmakers’ response to school massacres and everyday gun violence would no longer be tolerated.</p>

“To the leaders, skeptics and cynics who told us to sit down, stay silent and wait your turn, welcome to the revolution,” Cameron Kasky, a Stoneman Douglas High student, said to a standing-room only crowd that packed at least 10 blocks of Pennsylvania Avenue. “Either represent the people or get out. Stand for us or beware. The voters are coming.”

About 20 speakers — all of them kids or teens — spoke to a striking diverse crowd that included students from every background: black and white, rich and poor, suburban and inner-city.

A huge crowd is expected for what is billed as a youth-led movement spearheaded by student survivors of school shootings. Many D.C.-area families, businesses and organizations are lending their support, and “sibling marches” are planned nationwide.

Together, they sang along to Miley Cyrus and Ariana Grande, shed tears during a chorus of “Happy Birthday” to a Parkland victim and chanted “Enough is enough!” as one of the movement’s leaders, Emma Gonzalez, stood silently on the stage.

One of the rally’s most emotional speeches was delivered by Zion Kelly, a senior at Thurgood Marshall Academy in Washington DC, whose twin brother Zaire was shot and killed by a robber in September. Choking back tears before a rapt crowd, Kelly described the close bond he had with his brother.

“From the time we were born we shared everything. I spent time with him every day because we went to the same schools, shared the same friends and we even shared the same room,” he said. “I’m here to represent the hundreds of thousands of students who live everyday in constant paranoia and fear on their way to and from school.”

Because many of the demonstrators were children, authorities in the nation’s capital said they were taking extra security precautions.

Nearly 200 people have died in school shootings since the 1999 massacre at Columbine High School in Colorado, which left 13 dead and inaugurated a relentless two-decade stretch of campus gun violence. During that period, more than 187,000 students attending at least 193 primary or secondary schools have experienced a shooting on campus during school hours, according to a Washington Post analysis.

Organizers had hoped for a crowd of half a million in Washington. Police did not provide crowd estimates, though by 1 p.m. about 207,000 people had ridden Metro, officials said. That was more than three times normal Saturday ridership, although it did not approach the 470,000 people who used the system by 1 p.m. for the Women’s March last year.

More than 800 events were scheduled to take place around the world Saturday, according to March for Our Lives organizers. Beyond major cities, they included rallies in Las Vegas, where a gunman killed 58 people at a country music festival last year; in Parkland, Fla., home to Stoneman Douglas; and in Jonesboro, Ark., where the community is marking the 20th anniversary of a middle school shooting that left four students and a teacher dead.

Survivors or relatives of those killed in other mass shootings were also at the march in Washington, including some from Columbine, Sandy Hook and Marysville Pilchuck High School in Washington state, where four were fatally shot in 2014.

By mid-afternoon Saturday the rallies had proceeded peacefully, with small and scattered counter-protests by opponents of stricter gun control.

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HEADLINE 03/24 Thousands protest Israel deportation plan

SOURCE <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/thousands-africans-protest-israeli-deportation-plan-53988047?>

GIST	<p>Thousands of African asylum seekers and their local supporters are protesting against an Israeli plan to deport them.</p> <p>The Israeli government says the migrants have to leave the country for an unnamed African destination in exchange for \$3,500 and a plane ticket, or they will be incarcerated indefinitely.</p> <p>The Africans, nearly all from dictatorial Eritrea and war-torn Sudan, say they feel great appreciation for Israel, coupled with dread over the looming expulsions.</p> <p>Israel considers the vast majority of the nearly 40,000 migrants to be job seekers and says it has no legal obligation to keep them. Critics have called the government plan unethical and a stain on Israel's image as a refuge for Jewish migrants.</p> <p>Organizers say some 15,000 gathered in front of Tel Aviv City Hall Saturday.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 EU vows 'more steps' against Russia
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/03/23/eu-vows-more-steps-against-russia-as-shockwaves-from-spy-poisoning-continue-to-be-felt-throughout-europe.html
GIST	<p>The European Union vowed Friday to take "more steps" against Moscow over the poisoning of a former spy and his daughter in Britain in an incident that has rapidly heightened tensions between the two world superpowers.</p> <p>European Council President Donald Tusk said Friday that the 28-nation group will recall its ambassador from Moscow for consultations and that "more steps are expected at a national level" by Monday.</p> <p>"I think it is clear that Russia is challenging the values we share as Europeans, and it is right that we are standing together in defense of those values," British Prime Minister Theresa May said following a summit dinner where she shared information about why Britain is convinced Moscow was behind the March 4 attack.</p> <p>The UK has already expelled 23 Russian diplomats and their families, and Moscow responded by expelling 23 British diplomats, who are expected to return to the UK on Friday.</p> <p>Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar said his country will conduct a security assessment of Russian diplomats with a view to possibly expelling those who are not legitimate.</p> <p>"We will make that decision, I would say, in the early part of next week," he said.</p> <p>Danish Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen also says his country will consider "whether we should take unilateral steps."</p> <p>Dalia Grybauskaite, president of Lithuania, said that "from the beginning of next week, a lot of countries, we will go for our national measures."</p> <p>The EU added Friday it was highly likely that Russia was behind the nerve-agent attack – which left Sergei Skripal, 66, and his 33-year-old daughter Yulia in critical condition -- and could see no other plausible explanation for it.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Canada politicians in pipeline protest
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/local/politics/article/Connelly-Members-of-Canada-s-parliament-busted-

	12777585.php
GIST	<p>Two members of Canada's House of Commons were arrested Friday in a protest against the giant Kinder Morgan pipeline, which would create an oil port just east of Vancouver and send 34 tankers a month through waters shared by the U.S. and Canada.</p> <p>They are the latest of about 100 protesters detained for violating an exclusion zone around offices of the Texas company building the pipeline.</p> <p>"Non-violent civil disobedience is the moral obligation of the climate-aware, responsible citizen," said MP Elizabeth May, leader of Canada's Green Party, who represents a riding (district) on the Saanich Peninsula north of Victoria.</p> <p>The Houston-based Kinder Morgan pipeline builder plans to triple the volume of the existing Trans-Mountain Pipeline, which carries bitumen crude oil from Alberta's tar sands across British Columbia to Burnaby, B.C.</p> <p>The pipeline -- approved by the government of Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau -- would have the capacity of 890,000 barrels of oil a day. The oil would be shipped out through the Haro Strait, which separates Canada's Gulf Islands from the U.S. San Juan Islands, and the Strait of Juan de Fuca.</p> <p>The pipeline is opposed by both B.C. Premier John Horgan and Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, and by First Nations groups in Canada. Opponents fear the catastrophic consequences of an oil spill in the Salish Sea.</p> <p>The British Columbia Supreme Court has put a buffer around Kinder Morgan's base of operations, where demonstrators are not permitted.</p> <p>May and Kennedy Stewart marched behind a banner reading: "Trudeau: Climate Leaders Don't Build Pipelines."</p> <p>The Kinder Morgan project has damaged Trudeau's image as a champion of climate-change response. The prime minister's party holds 17 British Columbia seats in the House of Commons, almost all of them from Vancouver. An election is slated for next year.</p> <p>"Canadians have the constitutional right to peaceful protest especially when governments abuse their powers," Stewart told the protest. "During the last election, Justin Trudeau said that 'while governments grant permits . . . only communities can grant permission.</p> <p>"I am here to help amplify the voices of my constituents who do not grant permission for this pipeline."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Pierce Co. focus on tribal relations
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/pierce-county-puts-focus-on-tribal-relations/281-531505970
GIST	<p>Respecting government-to-government relations with Native American tribes is at the center of a renewed effort in Pierce County.</p> <p>Pierce County Executive Bruce Dammeier recognized Puyallup Tribal Councilmember Tim Reynon during his State of the County address this week.</p> <p>"It's very important that we work together and have that open line of communication," said Reynon, "We all have important needs and important interests that we have to respect."</p> <p>Reynon said when people think of Native Americans, they often think about the cultural side. While that is important, he says it's also imperative to recognize Native American tribes as sovereign nations.</p>

	<p>"I think there's a lot of people that don't really recognize that tribes are governments. We govern ourselves," said Reynon.</p> <p>Economic development may be one of the most visible forces on the Puyallup Reservation with the construction of a new casino underway.</p> <p>"We contribute millions of millions of dollars to the county economy... to the city's economy," said Reynon. He says it's important that county and city governments recognize that.</p> <p>This year, Pierce County hired its first tribal liaison, Sarah Coleen Sotomish, from the Quinault tribe. "We're going to respect the tribes and we're going to go out and talk to them when we implement laws, policies and procedures that would impact the tribe it's land or it's tribal members."</p> <p>The goal is foster respect and iron out differences.</p> <p>"We are living in the same place and we have similar interests, but we are also bumping up against each other and we need to figure out how to live together."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 First responders PTSD compensation
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/law-will-give-first-responders-ptsd-benefits/281-531411691
GIST	<p>Crystal Murphy loved helping people.</p> <p>That's why she became a Lacey firefighter/EMT.</p> <p>"She was passionate about her job," said wife Heather Murphy, "but that's hard when your passion is at odds with taking care of your own health."</p> <p>Crystal Murphy committed suicide last December.</p> <p>Heather Murphy said Crystal had been struggling with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after nearly a decade of stressful, everyday work.</p> <p>"The irregular sleep cycle, sleep deprivation, and the traumatic calls. There were a few in particular, really traumatic calls that just stuck with her," said Murphy.</p> <p>She said Crystal knew she had PTSD and started seeing a psychologist about it, but she was reluctant to come forward at work because of the stigma and a fear of losing her job.</p> <p>Under a state law signed by Governor Jay Inslee Friday, the Department of Labor and Industries can now pay worker's compensation claims for first responders who suffer PTSD from their work experiences.</p> <p>In the past, those claims were denied unless the illness could be attributed to a single incident, said Michael White, legislative liaison for the Washington State Council of Fire Fighters.</p> <p>"I think this allows for firefighters and cops to be fixed when our job breaks us," said White.</p> <p>Murphy was standing next to the governor when he signed the bill.</p> <p>She said Crystal was with her.</p> <p>"I was wearing her union necklace," said Murphy. "I think she'd be so proud of everyone's work... to make sure there are no more Crystals."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 Outrage over military transgender ban
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-transgender-military-ban-gop-silent-democrats-and-lgbt-groups-outraged/
GIST	<p>President Trump released an order Friday night banning most transgender troops from serving in the military except under "limited circumstances," following up on his calls last year to ban transgender individuals from serving.</p> <p>The White House said retaining troops with a history or diagnosis of "gender dysphoria" — those who may require substantial medical treatment — "presents considerable risk to military effectiveness and lethality."</p> <p>Mr. Trump surprised the Pentagon's leadership in a 2017 tweet when he declared he would reverse an Obama-era plan to allow transgender individuals to serve openly. His push for the ban has been blocked by several legal challenges, and four federal courts have ruled against the ban. The Pentagon responded by allowing those serving to stay in the military, and began allowing transgender individuals to enlist beginning Jan. 1.</p> <p>"This new policy will enable the military to apply well-established mental and physical health standards - including those regarding the use of medical drugs - equally to all individuals who want to join and fight for the best military force the world has ever seen," White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Friday.</p> <p>The new policy was promptly assailed by congressional Democrats and civil rights groups. House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi tweeted, "No one with the strength & bravery to serve in the U.S. military should be turned away because of who they are. This hateful ban is purpose-built to humiliate our brave transgender members of the military who serve with honor & dignity."</p> <p>Democrats on the House Armed Service Committee said that the president's decision is "vicious, inhumane and utterly wrong," and they pointed out, "There are scores of transgender men and women serving in the military right now, under a policy that had already been established & vetted by DOD and validated by the courts."</p> <p>The Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest LGBT civil rights organization, accused the Trump administration of pushing "anti-transgender prejudices onto the military."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 Obesity element grows in adults
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Health/obesity-epidemic-grows-adults-levels-off-youth/story?id=53974864
GIST	<p>The U.S. is big, and getting bigger. Since the 1980s, American adults' obesity is at epidemic proportions, and there does not seem to be an end in sight.</p> <p>Rates of obesity in those younger leveled off between 2005 and 2014, but a recent report in JAMA wanted to know if there has been any change.</p> <p>The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention looked at data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), which takes various measures of the health and nutrition of children and adults in the U.S., using interviews and physical exams.</p> <p>Body Mass Index (BMI) measures from almost 30,000 adults and 17,000 young people tell the story between 2007 and 2016.</p> <p>On BMI measurements: Adults are obese when their BMI is over 30; severe obesity is any BMI over 40. A</p>

normal BMI ranges between 18.5 and 24.9. In those under 20 years old, obesity is measured against what is normal for one's age -- obesity is greater than the 95th percentile, while severe obesity is at or above 120 percent of the 95th percentile.

The CDC results were mixed: in the young, the prevalence of obesity was 16.8 percent in 2007; it was 18.5 percent 10 years later.

There were no significant differences when looking at age or gender, but that's still nearly 2 out of every 10 kids weighing in as obese. Our youth aren't in the clear just yet.

For adults, it was a more stark story: obesity increased from 33.7 percent to 39.6 percent over 10 years -- it stood out most in women, and in adults over 40. That's a shocking 2 out of 5 adults.

Severely obese adults went from 5.7 percent to 7.7 percent, showing up the most in adults from age 20 to 59.

Americans, it seems, may not realize that these trends increase risk for all types of disease, from heart attack, stroke, and diabetes to many forms of cancer.

And although we are seeing a potential plateau of obesity cases in our kids, we continue to hear about them being diagnosed with high blood pressure and diabetes, requiring medication management -- for diseases we often associate with adults.

Although the report did not give any recommendations about these results, it is telling that the obesity epidemic isn't losing its heft.

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HEADLINE	03/24 Bolivians demand access to sea
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/bolivians-demand-access-sea-nationwide-parades-53970704
GIST	<p>Bolivians staged demonstrations across the country on Friday to demand sea access for their landlocked country.</p> <p>Bolivia lost its only seacoast to neighboring Chile during a war from 1879 to 1883 and the nation has demanded ocean access for generations. But Chile says the issue was settled once and for all in a 1904 treaty.</p> <p>Demonstrators flooded the streets of La Paz and other cities across Bolivia waving national flags and holding banners. It came at a time when the International Court of Justice is considering Bolivia's request to order Chile to negotiate access.</p> <p>President Evo Morales asked Chile's government on Friday to find a resolution for the benefit of future generations.</p> <p>"Let's not leave pending problems for our children and instead look for mutually beneficial solutions ... that can close the wounds of the past," Morales said in a speech in the Bolivian capital.</p> <p>Morales recently said that he's prepared to discuss options with neighboring Chile for gaining access to the Pacific, but he argues that powerful forces in Chile do not want talks.</p> <p>Chilean government spokeswoman Cecilia Perez said Friday that "Bolivia has no right to the Chilean sea or its territory." Chile's representative in The Hague, Claudio Grossman, said that Chile "will continue on the path of diplomacy, but does not feel judicially obliged."</p>

	The court's final and binding decision is expected to take months.
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HEADLINE	03/23 Puerto Rico rejects pension cut plan
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/puerto-rico-rejects-pension-cuts-sought-federal-board-53973860?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Puerto Rico government officials said Friday they will not bow to demands from a federal control board overseeing the island's finances that they implement cuts to a struggling public pension system as part of an upcoming fiscal plan to help pull the U.S. territory out of an economic crisis.</p> <p>Gov. Ricardo Rossello told reporters the biggest disagreement between his administration and the board is over a proposed average 10 percent cut to pensions of more than \$1,000 a month paid by a system facing nearly \$50 billion in liabilities.</p> <p>Christian Sobrino, the governor's representative to the board, defended the government's revised fiscal plan and said it would generate a \$5.5 billion surplus in upcoming years and help reverse the economic slump while avoiding the elimination of vacation or sick days and reductions in maternity leave, among other things he said the board has proposed.</p> <p>"We're not talking about business as usual here in Puerto Rico," Sobrino said. "The fiscal plan recognizes the island's fiscal and demographic spiral. If we don't stop it, the game is over. Puerto Rico will be a footnote in the history of the Caribbean."</p> <p>The board had been expected to vote on the revised fiscal plan Monday, but it announced Friday that it was postponing the vote, without providing a new date. The board has the power to implement its own measures if it disagrees with those proposed by the government.</p> <p>Sobrino warned that the board is considering some measures which would have a detrimental effect on an island mired in an 11-year-old recession as it struggles to rebound from Hurricane Maria and restructure a portion of its \$73 billion public debt.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 China tells US: will defend interests
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/chinas-economic-czar-tells-us-beijing-defend-interests-53979319?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>China's newly appointed economic czar told U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin on Saturday that Beijing is ready to defend its interests after President Donald Trump announced plans to slap tariffs on nearly \$50 billion in Chinese imports.</p> <p>Vice Premier Liu He told Mnuchin in a phone call that the order Trump signed Thursday violates international trade rules, China's official Xinhua News Agency reported.</p> <p>The White House says the planned tariffs are aimed at punishing Beijing for allegedly stealing American technology and pressuring U.S. companies to hand it over.</p> <p>Xinhua cited Liu as saying that China is "ready and capable of defending its national interest and hopes both sides will remain rational."</p> <p>China said Friday that it planned to raise tariffs on a \$3 billion list of U.S. goods, including pork, apples and steel pipes in response to the steel and aluminum duties earlier announced by Trump.</p> <p>The Chinese move appeared to be a warning shot aimed at increasing domestic U.S. pressure on Trump by</p>

	<p>making clear which exporters, including farm areas that voted for the president in 2016, might be hurt.</p> <p>On Friday, American farmers from hog producers in Iowa to apple growers in Washington state and winemakers in California expressed deep disappointment over being put in the middle of a potential trade war with China by the president many of them helped elect.</p> <p>China's Commerce Ministry said Beijing was considering a tariff increase of 25 percent on pork and aluminum scrap, mirroring Trump's 25 percent charge on steel. A second list of goods, including wine, apples, ethanol and stainless steel pipe, would be charged 15 percent, mirroring Trump's tariff hike on aluminum.</p> <p>Overall, the nation's farmers shipped nearly \$20 billion of goods to China in 2017. The American pork industry sent \$1.1 billion in products, making China the No. 3 market for U.S. pork.</p> <p>"No one wins in these tit-for-tat trade disputes, least of all the farmers and the consumers," said National Pork Producers Council President Jim Heimerl, a pig farmer from Johnstown, Ohio.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 Turkey Erdogan: anti-war youth terrorists
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/turkeys-president-refers-anti-war-students-terrorists-53982970
GIST	<p>Turkey's president has criticized anti-war students at a top university, calling them terrorists following a fight there.</p> <p>Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Saturday that "communist, traitor youth" tried to mess up a student stand opened by "religious, nationalist, local youth" at the public Bogazici University. Erdogan announced an investigation and said "we won't give these terrorist youth the right to study at these universities."</p> <p>On Monday, a group of students opened a stand distributing sweets dubbed "Afrin delight" to commemorate fallen soldiers in Turkey's cross-border operation in Syria. Another group protested against them, holding anti-war banners.</p> <p>Turkey's official Anadolu Agency said a fight broke out and 12 people were later detained.</p> <p>Turkey hasn't tolerated criticism of its military offensive to oust a Syrian Kurdish militia that it considers a terror group.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 'March for Our Lives' goes global
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/march-lives-takes-place-world-london-berlin/story?id=53982310
GIST	<p>March for Our Lives is anchored by the main event in Washington, D.C., but hundreds of satellite marches are also taking place Saturday in cities across the country and around the globe.</p> <p>There were more than 800 so-called "sibling marches" planned worldwide for this weekend in support of the students, teachers, parents and other members of the public converging in Washington, D.C., on Saturday to rally for gun control and school-safety measures in the wake of last month's shooting in a Florida high school.</p> <p>Each sibling march is an independent, student-led initiative, according to the March for Our Lives official website.</p>

The main protest was organized by students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, where a gunman killed 17 people and injured others on Valentine's Day. The accused shooter, 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz, was a former student at the school and was armed with an AR-15-style rifle he had legally purchased a year ago, authorities said.

Now, students around the country -- and their allies around the world -- are calling on American lawmakers to make schools safer and pass stricter gun-control laws, such as by prohibiting the sale of high-capacity magazines and banning the high-powered, highly-lethal assault-style weapons often used in mass shootings.

As thousands of people began to gather in the U.S. capital Saturday morning, other marches were already underway in cities abroad, including London, Paris, Rome, Berlin and Sydney.

Outside the newly-built U.S. embassy in London, a young child participating in the March for Our Lives there held a sign that read, "Love is greater than FEAR." A minute of silence was held in honor of the victims of the Feb. 14 school shooting in Florida.

One of the London event's organizers from Amnesty International told Sky News how he admires the strength and courage of the shooting survivors in the U.S.

"They have come together at a very difficult time and raised their voices and really taken control of the narrative around gun control in the USA," he said.

March for Our Lives participants in Paris issued a poignant, rallying cry for gun control, with chants reminiscent of the Vietnam War protests.

American and international students wielding loudspeakers amassed near the U.S. Embassy in Rome. Some held banners reading, "Protect People, Not Guns," "Enough is Enough" and "Dress Codes Are More Regulated Than Guns."

American citizen Katelin Meffert participated in the March for Our Lives in Berlin. Meffert, who's originally from Michigan, told ABC News she's expecting her first child in May and will eventually return home to the United States, at which point she hopes lawmakers will have enacted tougher gun-control laws.

"As an American abroad living in a country where I don't feel fear, I see the benefit of creating common sense legislation that keeps people safe," Meffert said.

Australians participating in the March for Our Lives in Sydney read out the names and ages of the victims of the Florida school shooting.

March for Our Lives organizers explain on the official website that they support the constitutional right of law-abiding U.S. citizens to bear arms, but say the recent surge of mass shootings, particularly at schools, calls for an honest discussion about guns.

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HEADLINE	03/23 Seoul: NKorea accepts high-level talks
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/23/asia/koreas-talks/index.html
GIST	<p>Seoul, South Korea (CNN) — South Korea said Saturday that North Korea has accepted its proposal to hold high-level inter-Korean talks next week.</p> <p>In a statement, South Korea's Unification Ministry said the talks are planned for Thursday.</p> <p>The talks were first proposed by South Korea to be held in the Panmunjom truce village in the Korean</p>

	<p>Demilitarized Zone.</p> <p>North Korea said it will be represented by a three-member delegation led by Ri Son Kwon, chairman of the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland Committee.</p> <p>South Korea stated earlier that its three-member delegation will be led by Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon.</p> <p>The announcement came a day after South Korean President Moon Jae-in teased the possibility of another meeting, this one among the United States, North Korea and South Korea.</p> <p>Moon said negotiations are continuing ahead of the "historic talks" planned for next month with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un. He's expected to meet with Kim in April, the first time the North Korean leader has publicly met with a foreign head of state.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 'March for our rights' rallies pop up
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/march-rights-rallies-pop-dc-utah-montana/story?
GIST	<p>Streets in Washington D.C. to Los Angeles became seas of protest on Saturday, led by hundreds of thousands of emboldened children, students, parents, and teachers in the "March for Our Lives" event pushing to end gun violence.</p> <p>But on the same day of these rallies, counter-protests took place with a central message of their own: protect the Second Amendment.</p> <p>In D.C., the pro-gun rally was surrounded by local cops and participants waved giant American flags.</p> <p>The 10 to 15 protesters may have been outnumbered, but they were vocal.</p> <p>Calling themselves "The Patriot Picket: Defenders of Liberty and the Second Amendment" the protesters stood on Pennsylvania Avenue in the middle of hundreds of thousands of March for Our Lives participants.</p> <p>Patriot Picket founder Jeff Hulbert told ABC that they thought it was important to come to the march and exercise their right to free speech and advocate for gun rights.</p> <p>Hulbert said there is actually a unified message on both sides, and that is to make schools safer.</p> <p>In Salt Lake City, chants of "Bill of Rights" were repeated as marchers, mostly older men garbed in black or camouflage, waved American flags.</p> <p>And as police whizzed by on a scooter or stood at a post on a street corner, the sparse crowd of pro-gun marchers yelled "Thank you!" and "Thank you, officer for keeping us safe!"</p> <p>When the crowd encountered a young man with blue-dyed hair one asked him to join them: "Come with us for your freedom," the protester said. "You'll be free to keep your blue hair."</p> <p>In Helena, Montana, not far from a local March for Our Lives protest, as many as 300 ontanans convened for a March for our Guns rally.</p> <p>State Representative Seth Berglee said he was glad he was there.</p> <p>He said that while the event was called "March for our Guns," it just as easily could have been called "March for our Rights."</p>

	<p>"It was just get together and reiterate what we believe in," Berglee, a 32-year-old reserve policeman and former soldier.</p> <p>He said that what started as a memorial quickly turned into a march trying to tread into gun rights.</p> <p>"We're all against gun violence. Nobody wants to see kids die," he said. "It comes down to solutions and in my perspective, we're marching for something but we want Montanans to know we haven't had a major school shooting for years and so it's not a major issue here."</p> <p>Rather, Berglee would like to see armed security guards and school buildings get modernized before guns and legal gun owners are forced to relinquish certain guns or rights.</p> <p>In the end, he agrees with memorializing the Parkland victims, but added, "Gun rights are important."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 'March' organizers pulled off revolution
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/march-lives-organizers-pulled-off-revolution-washington-analysis/story?id=53993159
GIST	<p>The organizers of the March for Our Lives rally managed a nearly impossible feat Saturday: they put on an event in the nation's capital that felt raw, authentic and pure.</p> <p>There were no signs from corporate sponsors. No time wasted on thank yous or acknowledgments. No politicians or career activists held a microphone -- with the exception of a few of the performers, hardly anyone over the age of 18 did.</p> <p>If anyone mentioned President Trump by name it was fleeting.</p> <p>While the students onstage called for political action and begged the crowd to register to vote, they did not align their message with one party. In a city paralyzed with partisanship there was no talk of red or blue teams.</p> <p>Instead, the students called themselves "the revolution," and said the entire system was broken and corrupt.</p> <p>Perhaps those students were able to talk unencumbered, simply presenting themselves as young people in America, because the biggest donors to the event were wealthy individuals -- Hollywood celebrity-types -- who did not ask for much in return.</p> <p>Sure, some companies and organizations sponsored buses and hotel rooms to get people to the march, but the folks in the crowd were quick to say it was a grassroots movement, those role model students from Stoneman Douglas High School, and their own experiences that inspired them to come to town.</p> <p>Hundreds of D.C. residents reportedly offered beds and couches to the visitors and marchers.</p> <p>Still, events of that scale and professionalism, at the steps of the U.S. Congress, with international press, A-list stars and security and infrastructure for a crowd stretching dozen of city blocks, do not appear out of thin air.</p> <p>Normally, in fact, they take months to plan.</p> <p>Remarkably, it has only been 37 days since the deadly shooting in Parkland, Florida.</p> <p>While the organizers made the poignant and powerful decision to limit the program to exclusively student</p>

voices, it took a very savvy team of political operatives to pull off the event.

Backstage, a team of seasoned Democrats, who have put on presidential inaugurations, campaigns and conventions in the past, saw the day through. Some of the same people who were backstage at The Women’s March again played an essential role this weekend.

The chief of staff for Saturday’s March for Our Lives event worked for the Obama administration. Now her Twitter handle describes her as an “organizing mercenary.”

Many of these top-tier staffers were called in just the final days to make the event happen.

The fact that that sort of organizing muscle was present should not take away from what the students themselves accomplished. If anything, it demonstrates that people at the highest levels are listening, wanting to help, and moving pieces in a city that is often so slow to react, in order to amplify their message.

It also reveals that at least someone inside these new, youth-led organizations calling for gun safety reform has a keen sense of what they need and what they don’t.

While it may take Washington insiders to build press risers and handle park police, American students’ outrage, vulnerability and exposure to violence has been enough to bring star-studded talent, millions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of protesters to this cause.

The leaders of this particular movement now have been smart and perceptive enough to decide their demands should be tall and their community should be wide, diverse and all-inclusive.

With their voting power yet to be realized, it seemed, at least Saturday, that they did.

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HEADLINE	03/24 Hundreds of thousands decry guns
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/8f1ed175286a40eb9086e0d6588f1924/Tens-of-thousands-gather-nationwide-to-march-for-gun-control
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — Summoned to action by student survivors of the Florida school shooting, hundreds of thousands of teenagers and their supporters rallied in the nation’s capital and cities across America on Saturday to press for gun control in one of the biggest youth protests since the Vietnam era.</p> <p>“If you listen real close, you can hear the people in power shaking,” David Hogg, a survivor who has emerged as one of the student leaders of the movement, told the roaring crowd of demonstrators at the March for Our Lives rally in Washington.</p> <p>He warned: “We will get rid of these public servants who only care about the gun lobby.”</p> <p>Chanting “Vote them out!” and bearing signs reading “We Are the Change,” “No More Silence” and “Keep NRA Money Out of Politics,” hundreds of thousands of protesters packed Pennsylvania Avenue between the Capitol and the White House.</p> <p>Large rallies with crowds estimated in the tens of thousands in some cases also unfolded in such cities as Boston; New York; Los Angeles; Chicago; Houston; Phoenix; Fort Worth, Texas; Minneapolis; and Parkland, Florida, the site of the Feb. 14 attack at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School that left 17 people dead.</p> <p>Tens of thousands swarmed into the nation’s capital to march for gun control and ignite political activism among the young. Teenage marchers are pledging to vote in November for candidates that will listen to their cries for gun control. (March 24)</p>

Protesters denounced the National Rifle Association and its allies and complained that they are scared of getting shot in school and tired of inaction by grown-ups after one mass shooting after another.

They called for such measures as a ban on high-capacity magazines and assault-type rifles like the one used by the Florida killer, tighter background checks and school security, and a raising of the age to buy guns.

Organizers of the big rally in the nation's capital hoped their protest would match in numbers and spirit last year's women's march, which far exceeded predictions of 300,000 demonstrators.

"We will continue to fight for our dead friends," Delaney Tarr, another survivor of the Florida tragedy, declared from the stage. The crowd roared with approval as she laid down the students' central demand: a ban on "weapons of war" for all but warriors.

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 9-year-old granddaughter Yolanda Renee King gave a rousing speech at the Washington rally, drawing from the civil rights leader's most famous words.

"I have a dream that enough is enough," she said. "That this should be a gun-free world. Period."

In Parkland, the police presence was heavy as more than 20,000 people filled a park near the school, chanting slogans such as "Enough is enough" and carrying signs that read "Why do your guns matter more than our lives?" and "Our ballots will stop bullets."

Since the bloodshed in Florida, students have tapped into a current of gun control sentiment that has been building for years — yet still faces a powerful foe in the NRA and its supporters.

Organizers hope the passions of the crowds and the under-18 roster of speakers will translate into a tipping point starting with the midterm congressional elections this fall. In addition to pushing for tighter gun laws, the students have been working to register young people to vote.

Polls indicate public opinion in the U.S. may be shifting on the issue.

A new poll conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that 69 percent of Americans think gun laws in the U.S. should be tightened. That is up from 61 percent in 2016 and 55 percent in 2013.

Overall, 90 percent of Democrats, 50 percent of Republicans and 54 percent of gun owners now favor stricter gun laws.

At the same time, the poll found that nearly half of Americans do not expect elected officials to take action.

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HEADLINE	03/23 Rural hospital closures increasing
SOURCE	https://www.cnbc.com/2018/03/23/rural-hospital-closures-force-towns-to-take-action.html
GIST	<p>The rates of rural hospital closures are the highest seen in the last few decades, according to the North Carolina Rural Health Research Program, a group which tracks rural hospital closures throughout the United States. There has been a total of 83 hospital closures from January 2010 to January 2018 in rural areas across the United States, the NC RHRP's data showed.</p> <p>Hospital closures often hit rural communities hard economically, Mark Holmes, director of the North Carolina Rural Health Research and Policy Analysis Center, told CNBC. They also leave a void of emergency medical services, causing residents to travel sometimes 10 to 25 miles further to meet their</p>

critical health-care needs, he said.

When Pioneer Community Hospital announced that it was closing last September after financial struggles, some residents had to travel as much as three to four hours to receive their health-care needs, Debbie Foley, director of economic development for Patrick County, told CNBC.

Foley said the hospital's parent company, Mississippi-based Pioneer Health Services, had "financially mismanaged them" and the hospital eventually had to file for bankruptcy protection in 2016. The Stuart hospital "was profitable prior to the cost put down from the corporate level," Foley said.

Mark Holmes at NC RHRP told CNBC that the reasons for hospital closures vary for every community. But one factor can include social demographics: Rural populations are often older, sicker and poorer than urban populations, he said.

Other factors include decreased demand for inpatient services, consolidation in the health-care space, and a state's decision of whether to expand Medicaid, said Holmes, also a health policy and management professor at the University of North Carolina.

Hospital closures have been ticking up since the Great Recession, the research group said, but have slowed slightly in the last few years.

"Our working hypothesis is that it is the reverse of low-hanging fruit that has gone rotten," George Pink, the NC RHRP's deputy director, told CNBC. "The hospitals that were weak have finally succumbed and now we're moving in an area of hospitals that were hanging on for longer."

Closures can also impact communities in ways besides economics and health. Like sports teams can often function as a source of pride for major metropolitan areas, "hospitals can serve a similar role for rural towns," Holmes said. "We have a certain self-value because we have a hospital in town."

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HEADLINE	03/25 Trump tightens screws on Putin
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-25/trump-tightens-screws-on-putin-but-says-he-wants-to-get-along
GIST	<p>President Donald Trump is poised to take his most aggressive actions yet against Russia on Monday, when he's likely to announce the expulsion of dozens of diplomats in response to the nerve-gas attack on a former Russian spy living in the U.K.</p> <p>The move, all but certain to provoke retaliation by President Vladimir Putin's government, comes as Trump has tried to maintain at least the semblance of a constructive relationship with the Russian leader.</p> <p>But the expulsions will align Trump with European allies who feel threatened by Russia and have had a turbulent relationship with the U.S. president, including U.K. Prime Minister Theresa May and German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Several European countries are expected to announce their own expulsions of Russian diplomats in concert with the U.S.</p> <p>While U.S. policy toward Russia has gradually grown more strident in recent months, the president's critics say he has been slow to respond to Putin's provocations. Some have drawn a connection to Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation of possible collusion between Trump's 2016 campaign and the Russian government as well as Trump's past business relationships with Russian figures.</p> <p>'Good Thing'</p> <p>Trump has denied any campaign collusion and as recently as Wednesday advocated for an amicable relationship with Russia. "Getting along with Russia (and others) is a good thing, not a bad thing," he said on Twitter.</p>

The U.S. considers the diplomats it plans to expel to be spies, carrying out intelligence activities under cover as embassy staff, one person familiar with the matter said. Trump's action would follow a similar move by May, who ordered 23 Russians that she said were spies to leave Britain over the attack on the former Russian spy, Sergei Skripal, and his daughter.

"The United States stands firmly with the United Kingdom in condemning Russia's outrageous action," White House Deputy Press Secretary Raj Shah said in a statement on Saturday. "The president is always considering options to hold Russia accountable in response to its malign activities."

But Putin has proven expert at exploiting even the slightest divisions among Western allies, and Trump is concerned that European capitals may not follow through on promises to tighten the screws on the Kremlin. The president regards Germany, in particular, as wobbly because of its dependence on Russian fuel supplies.

All of the people who discussed the president's deliberations asked not to be identified. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov declined to comment.

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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	03/25 Russian attacks energy grid spark alarm
SOURCE	http://thehill.com/policy/cybersecurity/380033-russian-attacks-on-energy-grid-spark-alarm
GIST	<p>Revelations about Russian cyberattacks on the U.S. energy grid are sparking new fears in Washington about the growing threat to the energy sector.</p> <p>The developments have some officials worried that Moscow or another nation state could execute a disruptive cyberattack targeting the U.S. power grid.</p> <p>"The next December 7 won't be airplanes and torpedoes coming at Pearl Harbor, it's going to be triggered with an attack on our energy grid with rolling blackouts and chaos," Rep. Don Bacon (R-Neb.), a member of the Homeland Security Committee, said this week.</p> <p>Officials with the Department of Homeland Security and FBI revealed last week that Russian hackers have staged cyberattacks against the energy sector and other critical infrastructure since 2016. They linked a coordinated hacking campaign the security community had been tracking for months to the Russian government.</p> <p>Officials issued a public alert describing how hackers penetrated commercial entities on the fringes of the energy sector to compromise their intended victims. They were ultimately able to gain access to information on industrial control systems, technology used to power critical services like electric power and water.</p> <p>In one case, hackers remotely accessed a Human Machine Interface, a device used by individuals to operate large industrial control systems – signaling they could have shut off power.</p> <p>"They were on machines that were on the operational network that had the control panel not only monitoring but also control for systems that were generating power, generating electricity," Eric Chien, technical director at cybersecurity firm Symantec, said.</p> <p>Lawmakers and other officials in Washington have sounded the alarm about potential cyber threats to the energy grid over the last year, after attacks took down power in parts of Ukraine in 2015 and 2016. Moscow is suspected in both attacks.</p>

Newly identified strains of malware targeting industrial control systems--which are highly rare--have underscored the threat. Last June, researchers released details on the malware linked to the 2016 attack in Ukraine. And in December, security firms identified malware targeting safety systems manufactured by Schneider Electric that shut down operations at an unknown industrial plant in the Middle East.

Experts note that the decentralized nature of the U.S. power grid--which is itself comprised of many small grids--means that it would take several simultaneous cyberattacks to take down power across a wide swath of the country.

But the latest revelations of Russian attacks spurred new concerns about the ability of hackers to breach power systems and other critical infrastructure, which are largely owned and operated by private companies.

"I am very much concerned, not only [about] Russia but any enemy, domestic enemy or foreign enemy," Rep. Bobby Rush (D-Ill.), who sits on the Energy and Commerce Committee, told The Hill. "Our energy sector is very vulnerable to invasive attacks."

The alert issued last week suggests that the Russians were collecting intelligence on control systems that could ultimately be used to stage disruptive or destructive attacks, should a motivation arise.

Those threats have been noticed at the Department of Energy, which last month announced plans to create a new office devoted to cybersecurity and energy security. The department's cyber funds would get a boost under President Trump's proposed fiscal 2019 budget, amid cuts to other programs.

In recent months, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which sets mandatory standards for grid operators, has also proposed a series of new rules governing cybersecurity and cyber incident reporting.

Energy Secretary Rick Perry addressed the Russian cyberattacks on Thursday during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing. Perry assured lawmakers the Trump administration was taking steps to stop attacks on the grid, though he refused to go into detail in a public setting.

"We're making, I think, every effort to protect the electrical grid from those types of attacks," Perry said.

When asked by Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) if the attacks were an act of war, Perry said he would "tend to agree."

Protecting the grid requires the Energy Department to coordinate with private companies in the energy sector and the Department of Homeland Security, which is responsible for protecting critical infrastructure from cyber and physical threats.

Rep. John Ratcliffe (R-Texas), who heads the Homeland Security subcommittee focused on cyber, told The Hill that his panel would examine the Russian attacks as part of its oversight role. Still, he expressed confidence that Homeland Security is responding adequately to the threat, citing the cyber expertise of Kirstjen Nielsen, the department's new secretary.

"We're constantly following up when we get reports like that," Ratcliffe said.

"The Department of Homeland Security has never had more cyber expertise than it has right now," Ratcliffe added. "For all of the concerns about Russian meddling into our election and more generally into our critical infrastructure, we're better equipped to deal with it than we've been at any point in the past."

Rep. Fred Upton (R-Mich.), chairman of the House Energy and Commerce subcommittee on energy, in an interview said he plans to make cybersecurity a big focus of an upcoming April 12 hearing with Perry.

The Russian grid attacks have widely been viewed in the context of Moscow's interference in the 2016

presidential election. The Trump administration disclosed the energy sector attacks when unveiling new sanctions on Moscow for meddling in the election and executing the global "notPetya" malware attack last summer.

Still, the threat to the energy sector extends beyond Moscow.

On Friday, U.S. officials indicted and sanctioned nine Iranian hackers for breaching hundreds of universities and other organizations to steal information on behalf of Iran's government and for financial gain.

One of their targets, officials said, was the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

"That is the agency that regulates the interstate transmission of electricity, natural gas, and oil," Geoffrey Berman, U.S. attorney for the southern district of New York, said Friday.

"That agency has details of some of this country's most sensitive infrastructure."

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HEADLINE	03/26 Cyberattack continues havoc on Atlanta
SOURCE	http://www.cbs46.com/story/37806583/cyberattack-continues-to-wreak-havoc-on-city-of-atlanta
GIST	<p>ATLANTA (CBS46) - As a new work week begins, many are wondering if Atlanta is back to full speed following a cyberattack on the city's computer systems last week.</p> <p>It all depends on the department. Some departments were not affected at all by the cyberattack while employees in others are still not able to turn on their computers.</p> <p>The fire and police departments were not affected at all by the ransomware attack. The same goes for the housing authority and Hartsfield Jackson International Airport, although the airport has suspended its wi-fi services, just in case.</p> <p>But other departments have been forced to conduct businesses the old-fashioned way, by using pen and paper.</p> <p>For example, if you have an issue with trash pickup, traffic signals and potholes, you'll have to resolve it over the phone. Also, the city jail is having to process inmates manually.</p> <p>CBS46 spoke with cyber security expert Alex Defreese and he says it's malicious software that takes over a computer or a system and encrypts it.</p> <p>"So that you can't access the contents unless you have the key," says Defreese. "And then they take that key and they ship it back to their servers and they hold the information and the systems and the drives and whatever ransom until you either manage to revert from a backup or pay them however much they're asking for it."</p> <p>City officials have not said if they'll pay the ransom but questions are circling as to how this data breach happened.</p> <p>The FBI is investigating.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Fla. health network paid 'ransom'
SOURCE	http://www.fltimes.com/news/finger-lakes-health-pays-ransom-over-cyber-attack/article_2ed1e11c-

	7b17-536c-832b-39355f90db04.html
GIST	<p>GENEVA — Finger Lakes Health officials confirmed Friday that a payment was made following the “ransomware” attack that disabled some electronic systems for close to a week.</p> <p>Lara Turbide, Finger Lakes Health’s vice president of community services, said the agency continues to bring systems back online after the cyber attack. She added that FL Health officials appreciate the community, patients, residents, family members and employees for their patience during the incident.</p> <p>“Our employees and medical staff are the heart of Finger Lakes Health,” Dr. Jose Acevedo, Finger Lakes Health’s president and CEO, said in a media statement. “We are very grateful to and proud of our incredible employees and medical staff’s efforts to serve our patients, residents and community.”</p> <p>The attack likely took place late last Saturday (March 17) night. Specific systems were encrypted by an unknown entity demanding payment to gain access to the systems.</p> <p>Turbide said computers and other electronic systems were shut down “for our own protection” within an hour of Finger Lakes Health being notified of the attack. Since then, the agency has been working with IT security professionals — both internal and external — to resolve the issue.</p> <p>Turbide said Finger Lakes Health’s information services team has been working around the clock and bringing systems back online in a step-wise approach. Email, internet, the majority of phone line access and several other electronic systems have been restored.</p> <p>“We are continuing to use our downtime paper procedures, which we have in place and utilize for situations including weather emergencies, power outages or other situations in which we have limited electronic access,” she said. “This underscores the reason that we regularly conduct downtime procedure drills which proved useful in our response preparedness.”</p> <p>Turbide said Finger Lakes Health has final confirmation from security experts that no patient, resident or employee data was compromised.</p> <p>“We have confirmation there was no unauthorized acquisition of protected health information or personally identifiable information,” she said.</p> <p>The FBI continues to investigate. Turbide said Finger Lakes Health has kept the FBI apprised of its work, including a decision to leverage the agency’s insurance carrier to make a payment to accelerate the recovery process.</p> <p>Turbide has repeatedly declined to say how much ransom was demanded.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Legal: unlock phones w/deceased prints
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/us-police-unlock-iphones/
GIST	<p>According to a report by Forbes, separate sources close to local and federal police investigations in New York and Ohio said it is now relatively common for fingerprints of the deceased to be depressed on the scanner of Apple iPhone devices, which have been wrapped up in increasingly powerful encryption over recent years.</p> <p>The article highlights that “once a person is deceased, they no longer have a privacy interest in their dead body.” This means that while some might consider it unethical, it is legal for the police to use this technique to gather evidence.</p> <p>For instance, the technique has been used in overdose cases, said one source. In such instances, the victim's phone could contain information leading directly to the dealer.</p>

	<p>Forbes also reported that the police are now looking at how they could use Apple's Face ID facial recognition technology, which was introduced on the iPhone X.</p> <p>Marc Rogers, researcher and head of information security at Cloudflare, told Forbes he'd been poking at Face ID in recent months and had discovered it didn't appear to require the visage of a living person to work. Whilst Face ID is supposed to use your attention in combination with natural eye movement, so fake or non-moving eyes can't unlock devices, Rogers found that the tech can be fooled simply using photos of open eyes. That was something also verified by Vietnamese researchers when they claimed to have bypassed Face ID with specially-created masks in November 2017, said Rogers.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 Facebook collected data off smartphones
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/technology/facebook-collected-call-and-sms-metadata-from-some-users-smartphones/
GIST	<p>Several Facebook users who downloaded an archive of their Facebook data in the wake of the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal discovered this week that the social network's mobile applications have been recording—in some cases—much more information than most people were expecting.</p> <p>Logged information includes data on all phone calls made on the phone, the start time of each call, its duration, and the contact's name. The Facebook app did not log phone calls to and from numbers not saved in the phone's address book.</p> <p>The app also gathered information on all sent or received SMS messages to contact list entries. Facebook did not record the SMS' actual text.</p> <p>The phone and SMS scraping behavior was confirmed earlier today by several users on Twitter, Reddit, and HackerNews, but also by this reporter, and an ArsTechnica journalist. In truth, we were all rediscovering something that Zimperium Android security expert Simone Margaritelli had found in January 2017, and detailed in a blog post on Medium (in Italian).</p> <p>The reason why only now people have noticed this issue is because of the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica privacy scandal that erupted last weekend, and after which many users decided to deactivate or delete their Facebook profiles.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Trickbot banking malware has new trick
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/trickbot-banking-malware-has-new-trick-up-its-sleeve/article/753255/
GIST	<p>Security researchers have discovered that the Trickbot malware has been updated with you capabilities to evade detection and lock victim's computers.</p> <p>The malware, first discovered in 2016, targets customers of major banks. According to a blog post by researchers at Webroot, the updated Trickbot has "continually undergone updates and changes in attempts to stay one step ahead of defenders".</p> <p>Researchers said that they observed a module (tabDII32 / tabDII64) being downloaded by TrickBot that has not been seen in the wild before this time. The malware is still, however, uses the MS17-010 Eternalblue vulnerability.</p> <p>The new module named spreader_x86.dll, exports four functions like the other TrickBot modules.</p> <p>"The file has an abnormally large rdata section which proves to be quite interesting because it contains two</p>

additional files intended to be used by spreader_x86.dll. The spreader module contains an additional executable SsExecutor_x86.exe and an additional module screenLocker_x86.dll,” said researchers.

According to Jason Davison, Webroot's advanced threat research analyst, the module screenLocker_x86.dll attempts to lock a user's machine.

“Similarly, to the other TrickBot modules, this module was written in Delphi. This is the first time TrickBot has shown any attempt at “locking” the victims machine,” he said.

He added that if the TrickBot developers are attempting to complete this locking functionality, this generates interesting speculation around the group's business model.

“Locking a victim's computer before you are able to steal their banking credentials alerts the victim that they are infected, thus limiting the potential for credit card or bank theft. However, extorting victims to unlock their computer is a much simpler monetisation scheme,” he said.

He said it was notable that this locking functionality is only deployed after lateral movement, meaning that it would be used to primarily target unpatched corporate networks.

Andy Norton, director of threat intelligence at Lastline, told SC Media UK that it's not just financial institutions that are targeted, it is the customers of financial institutions and the finance function that are always targeted. “The reason is again, that the bad guys are closer to the money. The side effect of having multiple payloads in order to maximise the chance of making money, is that, from a behavioural analysis alerting perspective these threats light up like a Christmas tree. Adding Dynamic or behavioural analysis to an organisations defence in depth strategy, will protect organisations from this type of threat,” he said.

Matt Walmsley, EMEA director at Vectra, told SC Media UK that Trickbot's use of a network worm means it is spreading like wildfire across vulnerable systems.

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HEADLINE	03/23 Github: 4M vulnerabilities in repositories
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/in-2017-the-code-sharing-site-started-vulnerability-scanning-for-known-common-vulnerabilities-and-exposures-in-ruby-and-javascript-libraries/article/753460/
GIST	<p>Github announced the discovery of more than 4 million vulnerabilities located in 500,000 plus repositories.</p> <p>In 2017, the code sharing site started vulnerability scanning for known Common Vulnerabilities and Exposures in its Ruby and JavaScript libraries, according to a March 21 blog post. The libraries are operated through the company's Dependency Graph which matches the code against the vulnerabilities.</p> <p>Shortly after the program was launched, Github said 450,000 of the identified flaws had been resolved by Dec. 1, 2017 and its rate of vulnerabilities resolved in the first seven days of detection has been about 30 percent.</p> <p>“Additionally, 15 percent of alerts are dismissed within seven days—that means nearly half of all alerts are responded to within a week,” the company said. “Of the remaining alerts that are unaddressed or unresolved, the majority belong to repositories that have not had a contribution in the last 90 days.”</p> <p>The company is seeing maintainers patching vulnerabilities in fewer than seven days for almost all repositories with recent contributions. Github emphasized that it never publicly discloses identified vulnerabilities for any repository and that it detects vulnerable dependencies in public repositories by default. Owners and admins of these repositories have the option to opt into vulnerability detection for the repository.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 New leak hits India national ID database
SOURCE	http://www.zdnet.com/article/another-data-leak-hits-india-aadhaar-biometric-database/
GIST	<p>India's national ID database has been hit by yet another major security lapse.</p> <p>Known as Aadhaar, the government ID database is packed with identity and biometric information -- like fingerprints and iris scans -- on more than 1.1 billion registered Indian citizens, official figures show.</p> <p>Anyone in the database can use their data -- or their thumbprint -- to open a bank account, buy a cellular SIM card, enroll in utilities, and even receive state aid or financial assistance. Even companies, like Amazon and Uber, can tap into the Aadhaar database to identify their customers.</p> <p>Enrolling in the database isn't mandatory, but Indian citizens who aren't subscribed are unable to access even basic government services. Other countries are set to follow India's lead.</p> <p>But the system has been dogged with security problems -- including, according to India's Tribune, a data breach. India's ruling Bharatiya Janata political party later called the report "fake news."</p> <p>Now, the database is leaking information on every Aadhaar holder, a security researcher has told ZDNet.</p> <p>A data leak on a system run by a state-owned utility company can allow anyone to download private information on all Aadhaar holders, exposing their names, their unique 12-digit identity numbers, and information about services they are connected to, such as their bank details and other private information.</p> <p>Karan Saini, a New Delhi-based security researcher who found the vulnerable endpoint, said that anyone with an Aadhaar number is affected.</p> <p>Yet the Indian authorities have done nothing to fix the flaw. ZDNet spent more than a month trying to contact the Indian authorities, but nobody responded to our repeated emails.</p> <p>We later contacted the Indian Consulate in New York and alerted Devi Prasad Misra, consul for trade and customs. Over two weeks, this issue was explained in detail, and we responded to many follow-up questions. A week passed, and the vulnerability was still not fixed. At the start of this week, we told the consul that we would publish our story on Friday and requested comment from the Indian government.</p> <p>The consul did not respond to that last email. At the time of publishing, the affected system is still online and vulnerable. For that reason, we're withholding specific details about the vulnerability until it's fixed. (Once it has been fixed, we will update the story with additional details.)</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 CLOUD Act passes; hidden in budget bill
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/government/us-congress-passes-cloud-act-hidden-in-budget-spending-bill/
GIST	<p>The United States Congress passed late last night a \$1.3 trillion budget spending bill that also contained a piece of legislation that allows internal and foreign law enforcement access to user data stored online without a search warrant or probable cause.</p> <p>The legislation is the Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data Act (CLOUD Act), a bill proposed in mid-February, this year (S. 2383 and H.R. 4943).</p> <p>Lawmakers use toddler trick to pass controversial bill</p> <p>US officials never discussed the bill, but merely appended it to the Omnibus budget spending bill (page</p>

2201) they introduced in Congress on Wednesday night.

The budget bill was deemed a priority and officials were almost forced to approve it in its current form to avoid a complete US government shutdown starting next week.

The budget bill passed a day later, Thursday, with a 256-167 vote in the House of Representatives, and a 65-32 vote on the Senate floor, including with the embedded CLOUD Act that got zero discussion, feedback, or modifications from regulators.

What is the CLOUD Act?

The unaltered and now official CLOUD Act effectively gets rid of the need for search warrants and probable cause for grabbing a US citizen's data stored online.

US police only need to point the finger at some account, and tech companies must abide and provide all the needed details, regardless if the data is stored in the US or overseas.

Further, the bill recognizes foreign law enforcement and allows the US President to sign data-sharing agreements with other countries without congressional oversight. The CLOUD Act will then allow foreign law enforcement to require data on their own citizens stored in the US, also without obtaining a warrant or proving probable cause.

Privacy groups like the Electronic Frontier Foundation argue that in the US' hunt for criminals located in other countries, it might enter data-sharing agreements with countries known for human rights abuses and allow autocratic regimes easy access to their own citizen's data. Since there's no more need for a foreign law enforcement agency to obtain US warrants or prove probable cause, this opens the door wide open to political abuses.

But these data-sharing agreements might be a poisoned pill that could be employed for espionage and intelligence gathering as well. For example, foreign law enforcement could request data from their own citizens engaging in communications with US citizens. Tech companies will then be required to pass over that foreign citizens' entire communications, including his messages exchanged with the US person, potentially exposing details that an intelligence agency will consider valuable.

EFF: There was no need to backdoor the Fourth Amendment

Nonetheless, giving law enforcement access to data stored overseas could have been done by preserving the need for search warrants and proving probable cause, and without backdooring the Fourth Amendment, as EFF experts bluntly put it.

The reason why the CLOUD Act was proposed in the first place was to end any future litigations like the one put forward by Microsoft five years ago when it fought a US police's request to access a US citizen's data stored on a server in Ireland.

Regulators also argued the CLOUD Act will help with fighting terrorism, albeit its most important impact will be in going after ordinary criminals, like fraudsters, hackers, scammers, and more.

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HEADLINE	03/23 US charges 9 Iranian 'hackers for hire'
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/us-charges-nine-iranians-with-hacking-over-300-universities/
GIST	US authorities have charged nine Iranian hackers with cyber-attacks against 144 US universities, 176 universities in 21 foreign countries, and 47 US and foreign companies active in various private sectors.

The nine Iranians acted as a group and US officials said they were "hackers-for-hire or affiliates of the Mabna Institute, an Iran-based company that, since at least 2013, conducted a coordinated campaign of cyber intrusions," at the behest of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), one of the country's intelligence agencies.

Officials said the group targeted the email accounts of more than 100,000 professors from all over the world, and appear to have successfully compromised 8,000 email accounts for professors at US universities.

Hackers then used access to these accounts to search internal networks for data, which they exfiltrated back to Iran. Some of the stolen data and login credentials into the hacked institutions ended up for sale on Megapaper.ir (Megapaper) and Gigapaper.ir (Gigapaper), two websites operated by a company controlled by one of the nine suspects.

The Mabna hackers, as some officials called them in a press conference today, were responsible for the theft of "more than 31.5 terabytes of academic data and intellectual property from universities, and email accounts of employees at private sector companies, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations."

Investigators estimated the value of the stolen intellectual property at around \$3.4 billion.

Answering questions from the press during a joint press conference, US officials declined to say if any of the stolen intellectual property has ended up in the hands of the Iranian government, academics, or other entities.

The US Department of Justice has filed official charges, and the FBI has added the nine suspected hackers to its list of Most Wanted cyber-criminals.

The US Treasury Department has blocked any assets associated with the nine hackers and forbade any US citizen or entity in engaging in business dealings with the nine.

The sanctions also include the Magna Institute and Behzad Mesri, a hacker the US charged last year on accusations of hacking and trying to extort HBO.

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HEADLINE	03/23 Rapid ransomware 2.0 released
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/rapid-20-ransomware-released-will-not-encrypt-data-on-pcs-with-russian-locale/
GIST	<p>Precisely two months on the day since the release of its first version, the group behind the Rapid ransomware strain has released v2.0 today.</p> <p>This new version has not suffered any major modifications compared to its previous release, but small changes have occurred.</p> <p>The biggest is the addition of a code routine that detects the user's PC locale settings before launching encryption operations. If the user has locale settings set to Russian, the ransomware will not encrypt files.</p> <p>Second, the ransomware now adds a randomly generated string as the file extension at the end of encrypted files. Version 1.0 used ".rapid", which allowed victims to easily detect what ransomware strain had infected their PCs.</p> <p>But users now can detect they've been infected with Rapid 2.0 because the ransom note says so right at the top. The ransom note also uses different wording, compared to v1.0, and a subsequent updated version that was deployed in fake IRS malspam campaign.</p>

	<p>Rapid 2.0 still relies on asking victims to get in contact with the ransomware's operators via email. This version uses supp1decr@cock.li and supp2decr@cock.li as contact addresses.</p> <p>First spotted by security researcher MalwareHunter, Rapid 2.0 seems to have been released into the wild by accident, as the ransomware's source code was not packed and included debug messages that helped researchers quickly analyze its source code. The AVCrypt ransomware, also spotted for the first time today, was also not packed, revealing its secrets to researchers in a similar manner.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 Hackers infect Linux servers w/miner
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hackers-infect-linux-servers-with-monero-miner-via-5-year-old-vulnerability/
GIST	<p>A hacker group has made nearly \$75,000 by installing a Monero miner on Linux servers after exploiting a five-year-old vulnerability in the Cacti "Network Weathermap" plugin.</p> <p>Experts from US security firm Trend Micro said they found evidence connecting these attacks to past attacks on Jenkins servers —during which a hacker group made around \$3 million installing a Moner miner on Jenkins installations by exploiting the CVE-2017-1000353 vulnerability.</p> <p>This time around, attackers leveraged CVE-2013-2618, a vulnerability in Cacti, a PHP-based open-source network monitoring and graphing tool, and more specifically in its Network Weathermap plugin, responsible for visualizing network activity.</p> <p>Just like in the previous attacks, hackers exploited the flaw to gain code execution ability on the underlying servers, where they downloaded and installed a customized version of XMRig, a legitimate Monero mining software.</p> <p>Attackers also modified the local cron jobs to trigger a "watchd0g" Bash script every three minutes, a script that checked to see if the Monero miner was still active and restarted XMRig's process whenever it was down.</p> <p>Attackers made approximately 320 XMR (\$75,000) using this simple mode of operation. All infected servers were running Linux, and most of the victims were located in Japan (12%), China (10%), Taiwan (10%), and the US (9%).</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 US grants foreign police access to data
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/03/25/congress-gives-police-other-countries-easier-access-u-s-data-raising-privacy-concerns/452782002/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Police in other countries will be able to get emails and other electronic communication more easily from their own citizens and from Americans under a bill that Congress stuffed inside the massive \$1.3 trillion spending deal passed this week.</p> <p>Supporters say the bill, dubbed the CLOUD Act, will simplify the process for the U.S. government and its allies to get evidence of serious crimes and terrorist threats when that evidence is stored on a server in another country.</p> <p>Under current law, Internet providers can stop police agencies from gaining access to their own citizens' emails if those emails are stored in a foreign nation. Microsoft alone stores data on about 1 million servers in 40 countries.</p>

"The CLOUD Act can save lives, preserve international relations, empower law enforcement, and ensure justice for citizens," said James Scott, senior fellow at the Institute for Critical Infrastructure Technology.

But opponents, including civil liberty and privacy rights groups, said the law could make it easier for nations with human rights abuses to spy on dissidents and collect data on Americans who communicate with foreign nationals.

"Tucked away in the omnibus spending bill is a provision that allows Trump, and any future president, to share Americans' private emails and other information with countries he personally likes," said Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore. "That means he can strike deals with Russia or Turkey with nearly zero congressional involvement and no oversight by U.S. courts."

In a letter to Congress, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Electronic Frontier Foundation, Human Rights Watch and other civil liberties groups said the CLOUD Act allows foreign governments to wiretap on American soil using standards that don't comply with U.S. law and gives the executive branch the power to enter into agreements with other nations without congressional approval.

The 24 groups said the law also would permit foreign police agencies to get information about people in the U.S. without having to follow the search and seizure rules imposed by the U.S. Constitution, and possibly give foreign governments access to information they could use to torture their critics.

"We believe the CLOUD Act undermines privacy and other human rights, as well as important democratic safeguards," the letter says.

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HEADLINE	03/25 NY man pleads guilty to 'sextortion'
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/03/25/man-pleads-guilty-to-sextortion-blackmailing-women-to-provide-lewd-photos.html
GIST	<p>A 22-year-old New York man pleaded guilty last week to threatening more than 30 women with posting "revenge porn" photos, prosecutors said.</p> <p>Joseph Iorio, 21, of Holtsville, a New York City suburb, was arrested last July on charges relating to an alleged "sextortion" scheme, the New York Post reported.</p> <p>Prosecutors say Iorio moderated a website's chat room, which featured explicit photos of women that had been submitted by men and boys, Newsday reported. Iorio would not allow clients to view the raciest material submitted by others until they disclosed names and contact information for the women in the photos the clients submitted.</p> <p>Iorio would then contact the women, and threaten to share the racy photos in his possession -- unless the women provided him with even more lurid shots, the report said.</p> <p>"We can only imagine the type of fear, isolation and desperation that these women must feel when they receive a message showing that someone they don't know has an image of them naked or performing a sex act," Suffolk County District Attorney Timothy Sini said Friday in a statement. He likened Iorio's actions to "a modern form of sexual torture."</p> <p>According to the Post, the DA's office was first notified of Iorio's alleged scheme in July 2017. A subsequent investigation revealed evidence that Iorio had uploaded the explicit images to an online forum along with the women's personal information.</p> <p>If convicted, Iorio faces five years in prison, Sini said. His sentencing is scheduled for May 2.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Craigslist closes personals section in US
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/craigslist-closes-personals-sections-in-u-s/
GIST	<p>SAN FRANCISCO -- Americans looking for love or companionship on Craigslist can't make a connection. The classified ads site on Friday has taken its personals section offline in the United States.</p> <p>The action comes after the U.S. Senate on Wednesday passed an anti-sex trafficking bill that could hold the website and others responsible for illegal activity if it becomes law. The company says the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act seeks to subject websites to criminal and civil liability.</p> <p>A message on the site says any tool or service can be misused and the company hopes it can bring them back "some day." Craigslist closed by saying: "To the millions of spouses, partners, and couples who met through craigslist, we wish you every happiness!"</p> <p>A message seeking comment from Craigslist was not immediately returned.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Atlanta mayor: massive inconvenience
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/atlanta-cyberattack-massive-inconvenience-city-mayor/story?
GIST	<p>Atlanta officials are reassuring the public that operations will continue as normal as they deal with a cyberattack on the city's systems.</p> <p>While most of the city's websites are working normally, a number of web pages that customers use to pay bills began to be affected Thursday morning. Access to court information was also affected.</p> <p>Whoever is behind the attack is asking for a \$50,000 ransom.</p> <p>As the city struggled to contain the spread of the attack, city officials have been forced to take down web pages in other departments and literally unplug city computers. Some city workers aren't even receiving email.</p> <p>Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms said that her office is working with the FBI.</p> <p>"We are continuing to work with our federal partners and other stakeholders who continue to advise us on how best to navigate and approach this," Bottoms said.</p> <p>City leaders stress that there have been no impacts to police, water service, 911 and Atlanta's Hartsfield International Airport. The city, they point out, was built before computers. As a protective measure, Wi-Fi at the airport has been turned off. Security wait time signs and flight information signs may not be accurate as a result, officials cautioned.</p> <p>The greatest impacts appear to be at municipal court and the city detention center -- with computers down, many taken down protectively, city employees are having to manually admit inmates, handle tickets and warrants. The city court currently cannot validate warrants or process ticket payments online or in person.</p> <p>Customers will not be penalized for late payments, the city said.</p> <p>The city government isn't getting specific about who the demands are from, what kind of data has been stolen and what's being held hostage, but it's clear that city's systems have been severely compromised.</p> <p>Bottoms did not say Friday whether the city planned to pay the \$50,000 ransom, but already city council members are promising her millions if she needs to build a new secure system from the ground up. She referenced similar ransom attacks on corporations, and on other government agencies in Colorado and North Carolina.</p>

“What we know is that someone is in our system, and that there is a weakness there,” Bottoms said.

“It is absolutely not what we wanted to have happened in the city of Atlanta. But to the extent that there are changes and upgrades that we need to make to our system, we need to do it now.”

She added: “This is a massive inconvenience to the city.”

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HEADLINE	03/23 Video games turn teens into millionaires
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/capital/story/20180323-how-video-games-make-some-teens-millionaires
GIST	<p>Alex Balfanz is an 18-year-old student at Duke University in North Carolina. Every day he has lectures or seminars, followed by assignments. Like many students his age, he devotes a couple of hours per day, and many more at weekends, to video games.</p> <p>But he’s not just playing them – he’s making them. And making a lot of money doing it.</p> <p>“In the 10 months that Jailbreak has been released, it has already yielded seven figure profits,” Balfanz says of his cops-and-robbers adventure game released last year. A few weeks ago, it was played for the billionth time.</p> <p>Balfanz is just one of thousands of young gaming entrepreneurs in their teens or twenties making money in an industry that made \$36 billion last year.</p> <p>It’s offering new ways to make a living that didn’t exist 10 or even five years ago, even within the games industry.</p> <p>Another 18-year-old student, Andrew Bereza, is the creator of Miner’s Haven and Azure Mines, two games he made over the last two years for Roblox, a kids-focused platform that allows children to build their own games and publish them online – it’s the same platform that houses Balfanz’s Jailbreak.</p> <p>“While I’m not in the annual millions like a couple of my colleagues have recently hit, I’ve been steadily earning six figures every year since I started,” he says.</p> <p>He is using his earnings to pay for university, where he is studying computer science.</p> <p>If he didn’t have a platform to distribute his games, “I don’t know how I ever would have been able to afford college or the ability to do full-time game development”, he says.</p> <p>Today, thanks to online sales platforms like the App Store, Steam or Roblox, anyone with the right idea and some development nous can reach more than a billion people.</p> <p>But while the technology and ecosystem to reach this vast customer base has only appeared in the last decade, the DIY mentality of young app developers is nothing new: it’s actually not too different from wannabe rock stars starting bands in their garages in the 1970s, or aspiring directors filming home movies on a VHS camcorder in the 1980s.</p> <p>“With creative industries, that’s always been the case, particularly in young people,” says Roger Altizer, co-founder of the entertainment arts and engineering programme at the University of Utah. He says that young people have always come up with creative expressions and have tried to monetise them.</p> <p>With video games specifically, Altizer points out that in the 1980s, young designers made their own video games, stored them on floppy disks and put them in plastic bags, then sold them physically at stores, capturing a certain entrepreneurial spirit.</p>

Today? We have indie games like Flappy Bird that become worldwide sensations, achieving overnight success. However, there are now so many being published, it's becoming an ever-more crowded market.

Still, the idea of possible success in this field fuels dreams.

A relatively new way of making money is by playing video games – and getting strangers on the internet to watch you do it.

“Let's Play” videos, in which an online personality films themselves playing a video game as they add colour commentary for viewers, is a trend that grew so popular, it eventually led to a new platform, Twitch – an entire site devoted to streaming videos of other people playing video games. It is now one of the most popular websites on the internet globally, and was bought by Amazon in 2014 for nearly \$1 billion.

Being a streamer on a place like Twitch requires entrepreneurial skills, scrappiness and a tolerance for risk.

Elsbeth Eastman, a Twitch streamer with 103,000 followers, says that after university she spent \$2,000 on a new computer to try her hand at streaming. Today, she says she makes a living doing what she loves full-time.

“Right now, I'm sitting in a room that's 90% wires and computers,” Eastman says over the phone from her filming studio. “It's absolutely your own business. You have to do everything at once: you're the lights guy, and you're also the person on stage.”

Eventually, it can lead to advertising partnerships, or paid subscriptions, with a cut of the funds going to the streamers. But for a lot of newer streamers, it's asking for donations from subscribers. It takes a while to get enough viewers to be able to monetise.

“This patronage model where people would sponsor artists is very common,” Altizer says.

Eastman and another streamer, who goes by Valkyrae who has 200,000 followers and has had a full-time job streaming for three years, point to the importance of networking and self-promoting yourself on social media, or filming videos with streamers who have more subscribers than you.

And like DIY app development, the community-centred nature of streaming can also drive a greater good. Valkyrae mentions a charity stream that she participated in last Christmas that raised \$8,700 in six hours for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

“One of my subscribers had cancer and he needed surgery,” she says. “And we raised enough money for his surgery, which was like \$8,000. You can help people financially – I'm helping my mum financially because of all this extra income I'm getting.”

But perhaps the most ambitious – and lucrative – avenue to success that didn't exist in the mainstream a decade ago is the rise of the professional video game player. Many of these people are in their 20s or younger.

The sport is estimated to attract 600 million viewers and be worth £1 billion (\$1.4bn) by 2020. The International Olympics Committee is even thinking about adding it to the official roster of events.

Sumail Hassan is the youngest gamer to win \$1 million in eSports winnings. He's made more than \$2.5 million playing Dota, an online multiplayer game. He calls it a full-time job.

“ESports have only gotten bigger since my career started in 2015,” Hassan says. He's 19 now but has been gaming since he was seven. “I knew video games were the thing I was best at and so went pro.”

Whether it's eSports, streaming or developing indie video games out of your bedroom, the games industry

	has evolved rapidly over the last couple of decades, and many of these new career paths were born alongside the growth of the internet.
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	03/24 France: IEDs found in market attack
SOURCE	http://time.com/5214027/france-terrorist-attack-supermarket/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>(TREBES, France) — A French judicial official says three homemade explosive devices have been found in the supermarket in southern France that was the site of a deadly attack by a man calling himself “a soldier” of the Islamic State group.</p> <p>Also found were a 7.65-caliber handgun and a hunting knife, the official said on Saturday. He wasn’t authorized to speak publicly about an ongoing investigation.</p> <p>The supermarket in Trebes was the site of an hours-long attack Friday that killed four people. The 25-year-old Moroccan-born attacker was himself killed when special police stormed the market.</p> <p>It wasn’t clear whether the knife and handgun found were the weapons he wielded when entering the supermarket.</p> <p>French police searching the home of the man found notes referring to the Islamic State group that appeared to be a final testament, the official said.</p> <p>Also found in the search of the home were a computer and telephone, the official said Saturday, a day after the attack.</p> <p>Police searched the home of Moroccan-born Redouane Lakdim, 25, after Friday’s attack that killed four people — two in a supermarket near the southern city of Carcassonne where the attacker was killed in an assault. The fourth victim, a gendarme who stood in for a female hostage and was shot, died early Saturday.</p> <p>The official says there apparently was no mention in the notes of the attack plans.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Canadian in Mich. charged with terrorism
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/federal-pages/doj/canadian-man-charged-superseding-indictment-terror-transcending-national-boundaries/
GIST	<p>Amor M. Ftouhi, 50, of Montreal, Canada, who was previously indicted in July 2017 for charges relating to an attack on a Bishop Airport officer in Flint, Mich., was charged Wednesday with an additional offense of committing an act of terrorism transcending national boundaries.</p> <p>According to court records, Ftouhi entered the United States from Canada for the purpose of killing government personnel in the United States. Before entering the United States on June 16, 2017, while in Canada, Ftouhi conducted online research of American gun laws and for gun shows in Michigan. Ftouhi subsequently traveled to Michigan where he was unsuccessful in purchasing a gun and purchased a knife instead. On June 20, 2017, Ftouhi walked up to the victim, who is a lieutenant with the Bishop Airport Authority and was in full uniform, and stabbed the police officer in the neck with a knife. Ftouhi referenced killings in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, and yelled “Allahu Akbar.” After his arrest, Ftouhi told law enforcement that he was a “soldier of Allah” and subscribed to the ideology of al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden.</p>

	Ftouhi will be arraigned on the new indictment in federal court in Flint. He faces a statutory maximum sentence of life in prison.
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HEADLINE	03/25 Yemen rebels missile barrage at Saudis
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/saudi-arabia-yemen-rebels/2018/03/25/id/850718/
GIST	<p>DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Yemen's Shiite rebels fired a barrage of ballistic missiles targeting Saudi Arabia late Sunday on the third anniversary of a kingdom-led war in Yemen, with fragments of one missile over Riyadh killing one person and wounding two.</p> <p>The casualties were the first in Saudi Arabia's capital since the Saudi-led war in Yemen began in March 2015, though previous rockets fired by the Yemeni rebels have caused deaths in other parts of the kingdom.</p> <p>The rebels known as Houthis said they launched a missile attack targeting Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport and other sites, again showing their ability to strike deep into the neighboring kingdom amid the stalemated war in Yemen, the Arab world's poorest country.</p> <p>The barrage likely will spark new criticism of Iran's role in the conflict as well, as the Houthis identified some of the missiles fired as a type that the United Nations and the West say comes from Tehran.</p> <p>The Saudi military said it intercepted seven ballistic missiles fired by the Houthis at the kingdom, three of them targeting Riyadh, two targeting Jazan and one apiece targeting Najran and Khamis Mushait.</p> <p>The Saudi-owned satellite news channel Al Arabiya aired footage that it said showed Patriot missile batteries firing at the incoming Houthi missiles. Online videos showed what appeared to be a missile fuselage lying on a street in Riyadh.</p> <p>One Egyptian national was killed and two other Egyptians suffered wounds when a fragment of a missile over Riyadh fell on a residential neighborhood, the state-run Saudi Press Agency said.</p> <p>Houthi ballistic missiles have increased in range over time, with the first one targeting Riyadh fired on May 19, 2017, according to the United Nations. A Nov. 4 launch previously targeted King Khalid International Airport, showing the missiles had a range of over 1,000 kilometers (620 miles).</p> <p>The Nov. 4 attack saw the Saudi-led coalition escalate its attacks. It wasn't immediately clear how the coalition would react to Sunday's attack, though the barrage marks some 90 Houthi ballistic missile launches targeting Saudi Arabia.</p> <p>Al Masirah, a Houthi-run satellite news channel, identified some of the missiles fired as the Burkan, or Volcano, missile. The United Nations, Western countries and the Saudi-led military coalition fighting in Yemen all say the Burkan mirrors characteristics of an Iranian Qiam ballistic missile. They say that suggests Tehran either shared the technology or smuggled disassembled missiles to the Houthis who then rebuilt them.</p> <p>Iran long has denied supplying arms to the Houthis, though a growing body of evidence contradicts their claim.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/26 Group: Yemen bombs show Iran influence
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/report-bombs-disguised-rocks-yemen-show-iranian-aid-54009253?

GIST

Roadside bombs disguised as rocks in Yemen bear similarities to others used by Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and by insurgents in Iraq and Bahrain, suggesting at the least an Iranian influence in their manufacture, a watchdog group said on Monday.

The report by Conflict Armament Research comes as the West and United Nations researchers accuse Iran of supplying arms to Yemen's Shiite rebels known as Houthis, who have held the country's capital since September 2014.

Those weapons allegedly included ballistic missiles used to target Saudi Arabia, which leads a military coalition of Arab nations backed by the United States that is stuck in a stalemate war with the Houthis. A barrage of Houthi missile fire late on Sunday killed one person in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, and wounded two others.

Iran has long denied supplying arms to the Houthis, and its mission to the United Nations is dismissing the new report. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has derided such weapons research as "fabricating evidence."

The report is just the latest sign of how the conflict in Yemen, the Arab world's poorest country where over 10,000 people have been killed, has changed from a civil war to a proxy fight among Mideast rivals. The Saudi-led war there turned three years old on Sunday.

"What we're hoping this does is make plausible deniability not very plausible," said Tim Michetti, head of regional operations for Conflict Armament Research. "You can't really deny this anymore once the components these things are made with are traced to Iranian distributors."

Michetti's organization, an independent watchdog group that receives funding from the United Arab Emirates, Germany and the European Union to research weaponry recovered in Yemen, said it examined a fake rock bomb in January near Mokha, some 250 kilometers (150 miles) southwest of the capital, Sanaa.

The fiberglass-encased bomb, packed with explosives, could be armed by radio and triggered by an infrared beam, the group said. It said there were three varieties, including anti-personnel mines and so-called explosively formed projectiles, which can penetrate armored vehicles and were used with lethal effect against U.S. troops following the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Electrical circuitry in the bombs mirrored those manufactured by militants in Bahrain, while the bombs bore markings suggesting one workshop mass-produced the explosives, the report said. Such bombs, however, have yet to be used in Bahrain, an island kingdom off Saudi Arabia in the midst of a crackdown on all dissent.

Investigators also found a type of Chinese-manufactured wire covering used in other Iranian materiel, the report said.

It said independent experts also examined the explosives. Those experts said that "construction indicates that the bomb maker had a degree of knowledge in constructing devices that resembled, and possibly functioned in a manner similar to (explosively formed projectile bombs) that have been forensically tied to Iran and Hezbollah," the report said.

Alireza Miryousefi, a spokesman for Iran's mission to the United Nations, dismissed the report, saying the Houthis had no need for such weapons as they control stockpiles of arms purchased under former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh. The Houthis killed Saleh, their one-time ally, in December.

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HEADLINE 03/26 France: partner of gunman radicalized

SOURCE <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/partner-french-gunman-police-radicalized->

	54009910?
GIST	<p>A French judicial official says the partner of the Islamist extremist who carried out an attack last week in southern France was, like him, known to police as radicalized.</p> <p>The 18-year-old woman was still being detained Monday by police for questioning in the case, as well as a 17-year-old friend of gunman Radouane Lakdim, the official said. He was speaking anonymously to discuss the ongoing investigation.</p> <p>Lakdim was known to police for drug-dealing, and since 2014 had been on the so-called "Fiche S" list, a government register of individuals suspected of being radicalized but who have yet to perform acts of terrorism.</p> <p>Four people were killed in a carjacking and the supermarket attack Friday near the city of Carcassonne.</p> <p>Lakdim was killed by police who stormed the supermarket.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/26 Egypt: militants killed in raid
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-polls-open-egypts-presidential-election-54009876?
GIST	<p>The Latest on Egypt's presidential election (all times local):</p> <p>9:35 a.m.</p> <p>Egypt's Interior Ministry says it has killed six militants believed to be involved in a weekend bombing in the coastal city of Alexandria that killed two policemen.</p> <p>The statement late on Sunday said the militants belonged to the Hasm movement and were killed in a raid on their hideout in Beheira province.</p> <p>The Alexandria blast occurred when an explosive device that was placed under a car detonated as the city's security chief's convoy was driving by in Saturday. He was unharmed.</p> <p>No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.</p> <p>The bombing came just ahead of Egypt's presidential election that got underway on Monday. President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi faces no serious challenge in the vote.</p> <p>Authorities consider Hasm, which routinely targets security personnel, to be a splinter group of the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood group. Militant attacks have surged in Egypt since the military's 2013 ouster of an elected Islamist president, Mohammed Morsi.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 Russia denies aiding Afghan Taliban
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-russia/russia-denies-aiding-afghan-taliban-in-wake-of-u-s-generals-comments-idUSKBN1H1064
GIST	<p>KABUL (Reuters) - Russia has rejected comments by NATO's top commander in Afghanistan that it has been supporting and even supplying weapons to the Taliban, in a clash of words that underlines growing tension over Moscow's involvement in the conflict.</p> <p>In an interview with the BBC last week, General John Nicholson said that Russia had been acting to undermine U.S. efforts in Afghanistan despite shared interests in fighting terrorism and narcotics, with</p>

	<p>indications that Moscow was providing financial support and even arms.</p> <p>“We’ve had weapons brought to this headquarters and given to us by Afghan leaders and said this was given by the Russians to the Taliban,” he said.</p> <p>A statement from the Russian embassy in Kabul dismissed the comments as “idle gossip”, repeating previous denials by Russian officials.</p> <p>“Once again, we insist that such statements are absolutely baseless and appeal to officials not to talk nonsense,” the embassy said.</p> <p>U.S. commanders, including Nicholson, have said on several occasions over the past year that Russia may be supplying arms to the Taliban although no confirmed evidence has so far been made public.</p> <p>However, Nicholson’s comments were unusually blunt and came in a context of growing tensions between NATO members and Moscow over the case of Sergei Skripal, a former intelligence agent found poisoned with a rare nerve agent in Britain.</p> <p>Russian officials have said that their limited contacts with the Taliban were aimed at encouraging peace talks and ensuring the safety of Russian citizens. Moscow has offered to help coordinate peace talks in Afghanistan.</p> <p>Taliban officials have told Reuters that the group has had significant contacts with Moscow since at least 2007, adding that Russian involvement did not extend beyond “moral and political support”.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Nigeria claims talks w/Boko Haram
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-security/nigeria-says-talking-to-boko-haram-about-possible-ceasefire-idUSKBN1H10OK?il=0
GIST	<p>ABUJA (Reuters) - Nigeria’s government is in talks with Islamist militant group Boko Haram about a possible ceasefire and the talks have been going on for some time, Information Minister Lai Mohammed said on Sunday.</p> <p>It is the first time in years the government has said it was talking to Boko Haram about a ceasefire. President Muhammadu Buhari’s government has previously said it was willing to hold talks with the group but has given no details.</p> <p>Boko Haram has waged an insurgency in northeast Nigeria and neighboring countries since 2009 and aims to create an Islamic state. Tens of thousands of people have been killed, more than 2 million displaced and thousands abducted.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Car bomb near Somalia parliament
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/03/25/car-bomb-near-parliament-in-somali-capital-kills-at-least-4-police-say.html
GIST	<p>A car bomb exploded near Somalia's parliament headquarters in the capital, Mogadishu, killing at least four people along with the driver, police said Sunday, with several others injured.</p> <p>A huge cloud of smoke could be seen billowing over the area dotted with security checkpoints erected along a road leading to the presidential palace, whose main gate is just 200 meters (yards) from the blast site. The checkpoint also is close to the interior ministry.</p>

	<p>The car bomb was detonated at a checkpoint after soldiers intercepted and stopped a suspicious vehicle, senior police Capt. Mohamed Hussein told The Associated Press. Those dead included two soldiers, he said, while many of the nearly 10 people wounded are rickshaw drivers.</p> <p>A few hours earlier, another car bomb outside the capital killed one person plus the driver, police said. Officer Mohamed Abdi told the AP that the explosion occurred after soldiers arrived at the scene to inspect the "suspicious" car which had become stuck on a sandy road in the Sinka Dheer area.</p> <p>The car bombings come three days after at least 14 people were killed and 10 others wounded in a car bomb blast near the Weheliye hotel on the busy Makka Almukarramah road.</p> <p>Mogadishu is often a target of attacks by the Somalia-based extremist group al-Shabab, the deadliest Islamic extremist group in Africa. A truck bombing in October killed 512 people in the country's deadliest-ever attack. Only a few attacks since 9/11 have killed more people.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 US: drone strike in Libya kills terrorists
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/03/25/drone-strike-in-libya-kills-2-terrorists-us-africa-command-says.html
GIST	<p>Two “terrorists” were killed on Saturday after the U.S. military launched a drone strike in Libya, a U.S. official told Fox News.</p> <p>The U.S. Africa Command said in a statement that no civilians were killed in Saturday’s strike.</p> <p>“In coordination with the Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA), U.S. forces conducted a precision airstrike near Ubari, Libya, on March 24, killing two terrorists,” the U.S. Africa Command said in a statement.</p> <p>“The United States will not relent in its mission to degrade, disrupt, and destroy terrorist organizations and bring stability to the region. We are committed to maintaining pressure on the terror network and preventing terrorists from establishing safe haven,” the statement added.</p> <p>Saturday’s drone strike was the second one in Libya this year. There were seven drone strikes launched in 2017. In 2016, the U.S. military carried out nearly 500 airstrikes against an ISIS enclave in the coastal city of Sirte.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 Car bomb Afghan sports stadium kills 13
SOURCE	https://nation.com.pk/24-Mar-2018/afghan-car-bomb-kills-13-wrestling-fans?show=756
GIST	<p>KABUL : A car packed with explosives blew up outside a sports stadium in Afghanistan’s restive south on Friday, killing at least 13 people and wounding dozens more, officials said, capping a bloody week in the war-torn country.</p> <p>The suicide attack happened in Lashkar Gah, the capital of opium poppy-rich Helmand province, as spectators were leaving a wrestling match at the stadium, provincial governor spokesman Omar Zwak told AFP.</p> <p>There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, which Zwak said killed at least 13 people and wounded 45 others, including children. Helmand police spokesman Salam Afghan had earlier given a lower toll of 10 dead and 35 wounded. Afghan officials often give conflicting figures in the wake of attacks.</p>

	<p>“The suicide bomber detonated his car bomb as spectators were leaving the stadium,” Zwak said. “The bomber wanted to go inside the stadium but he was identified by the police and he detonated himself.”</p> <p>Local officials were at the match, which witnesses said had been held as part of celebrations for Nawrooz, the Persian new year holiday that some fundamentalist Muslims consider un-Islamic.</p> <p>President Ashraf Ghani, whose government has been lambasted for its inability to protect ordinary Afghans, condemned the attack against “innocent people”, according to a statement.</p> <p>Helmand is largely controlled by the Taliban, which is under growing pressure to take up Ghani’s offer of peace talks to end the 16-year war. So far the Taliban, Afghanistan’s largest militant group, has given only a muted response.</p> <p>The attack caps a bloody few days in Afghanistan as Taliban and Islamic State militants ramp up attacks even before the official start of the spring fighting season.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 Malaysia: arrests foil militant plot
SOURCE	http://news.kuwaittimes.net/website/malaysia-arrests-7-men-with-islamic-state-militant-group-links/
GIST	<p>KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian police have arrested seven men with links to the Islamic State militant group who were planning attacks on non-Muslim places of worship and other targets, authorities said yesterday. The Muslim-majority country has been on high alert since gunmen allied with Islamic State (IS) carried out a series of attacks in Jakarta, the capital of neighboring Indonesia, in January 2016.</p> <p>Six Malaysians were arrested in Johor state, north of Singapore, while a seventh, a Filipino member of the IS-linked Abu Sayyaf group, was detained in the eastern state of Sabah, in multiple operations between Feb. 27 and Mar. 15, Inspector-General of Police Mohamad Fuzi Harun said in a statement. He said the six detained in Johor were members of an IS cell and included a 37-year-old technician who recruited new militants and was believed to be the mastermind of planned attacks on non-Muslim places of worship in the state’s capital.</p> <p>A second suspect was a security guard who served as the cell’s advisor and ensured members kept their activities secret. A third man was tasked with buying firearms from a neighboring country and identifying targets for attacks, he said. “All of them planned to escape to a neighboring country and seek shelter from members of a militant group there after successfully carrying out the plan,” Muhamad Fuzi said, without naming the country.</p> <p>Authorities arrested three other members of the same cell in follow-up operations, including a 25-year-old restaurant worker who had been ordered to kidnap and kill police personnel. Police also detained a 31-year-old Philippine national in Sabah, on Borneo Island, who was said to be a trusted lieutenant to Abu Sayyaf group leader Furuji Indama and has links to Malaysian militant Mahmud Ahmad, Mohamad Fuzi said.</p> <p>The man, wanted by the Philippines for his involvement in a a kidnap-for-ransom syndicate, was also an expert in making improvised explosive devices. Mohamad Fuzi said the suspect had planned to carry out several attacks in Sabah and was responsible for making the state a safe haven for terror groups from the Philippines. Malaysia has arrested hundreds of people over the past few years for suspected links to militant groups. A grenade attack on a bar on the outskirts of the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur, in June 2016 wounded eight people. Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack, the first such strike on Malaysian soil</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 Turkey, allies ‘total control’ Syria enclave
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SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/turkish-army-allies-total-control-syrias-afirin-53987757?
GIST	<p>The Turkish army and Syrian opposition fighters it backs have "total control" of the Kurdish enclave of Afrin in northern Syria, according to the country's official news agency on Saturday, nearly a week after they captured the main town that carries the same name.</p> <p>Anadolu news agency said the Turkish military was continuing its sweep for mines and explosives to allow Afrin's resident's to return, following airstrikes and clashes with Syrian Kurdish forces.</p> <p>Associated Press journalists on a press tour organized by the Turkish government Saturday passed through the northwestern town of Jinderes en route to central Afrin.</p> <p>Jinderes, captured by Turkey and allied Syrian opposition fighters, was the scene of heavy street clashes earlier in March. The AP saw a widely destroyed and empty town.</p> <p>Turkey launched a ground and air offensive on Jan. 20 codenamed Olive Branch to oust the main Syrian Kurdish militia known as the People's Protection Units, or YPG, from Afrin. Turkey considers the YPG a terror group and an extension of Kurdish rebels waging an insurgency within its own borders.</p> <p>Syrian Kurdish officials and the country's state media said the Turkish offensive displaced more than 200,000 people from their homes.</p> <p>In Afrin's town center, captured Sunday, allied Syrian forces patrolled the streets as Turkish tanks and armored personnel carriers drove past.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 France: gun-wielding extremist kills 3
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/france-hostage-situation-redouane-lakdim-trebes-grocery-store-2018-03-23-latest/
GIST	<p>TREBES, France -- A gun-wielding extremist went on a rampage Friday in a quiet corner of southern France, killing three people as he hijacked a car, opened fire on police and took hostages in a supermarket, where panicked shoppers hid in a meat locker or ran through the aisles. After an hours-long standoff, the 25-year-old attacker was killed as elite police forces stormed the market.</p> <p>They were aided by a heroic police officer who had offered himself up in a hostage swap and suffered life-threatening wounds as a result -- one of 16 people injured in the day's violence.</p> <p>The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) claimed responsibility for the attack near Carcassonne, a medieval city beloved by tourists, and the town of Trebes. It was the deadliest attack in France since Emmanuel Macron became president last May.</p> <p>The officer who volunteered to take the place a female hostage was identified as Col. Arnaud Beltrame. He managed to surreptitiously leave his cellphone on so that police outside could hear what was going on inside the supermarket. Officials said once they heard shots inside the market they decided to storm it.</p> <p>A police official who was not authorized to be publicly identified confirmed the officer's identity to The Associated Press.</p> <p>"He saved lives," Macron said.</p> <p>Macron said investigators will focus on establishing how the gunman, identified by prosecutors as Moroccan-born Redouane Lakdim, got his weapon, and how he became radicalized.</p> <p>CBS News correspondent Elizabeth Palmer reported that if, as it appeared, Friday's attack was the work of</p>

	<p>a lone gunman with little or no help from any coordinated terror cell, it may not prompt a change in France's already heightened security posture.</p> <p>On Friday night, authorities searched a vehicle and a building in central Carcassonne.</p> <p>Lakdim was known to police for petty crime and drug-dealing. But he was also under surveillance and since 2014 was on the so-called "Fiche S" list, a government register of individuals suspected of being radicalized but who have yet to perform acts of terrorism.</p> <p>Despite this, Paris prosecutor Francois Molins there was "no warning sign" that Lakdim would carry out an extremist attack.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 Egypt: car bomb in Alexandria kills 1
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/egypt-interior-ministry-explosion-alexandria-kills-53982059?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>A bomb placed under a nearby car exploded Saturday in the coastal city of Alexandria as the city security chief's convoy passed by, killing at least one policeman and wounding four others, the Interior Ministry said.</p> <p>Local media reports said Gen. Mostafa al-Nimr survived the explosion and he was seen on a local TV channel in good condition while inspecting the area of the blast shortly after it took place. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the explosion, which happened in the vicinity of a police station in the central district of Roshdi.</p> <p>The attack came just days ahead of Egypt's presidential election, in which President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi is virtually certain to be re-elected. It also comes during a massive security operation involving land, sea and air forces in areas covering north and central Sinai and parts of Egypt's Nile Delta and the Western Desert, along the porous border with Libya.</p> <p>The Interior Ministry said the explosive device had been placed under a car and it exploded as the convoy passed by.</p> <p>State-run MENA news agency said the public prosecutor ordered an investigation into the incident.</p> <p>Egypt has for years been struggling to contain an Islamic insurgency spearheaded by a local affiliate of the extremist Islamic State group in the turbulent Sinai region but attacks on the mainland have also occurred.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 France: ISIS notes in home of attacker
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-french-officer-mom-surprised-courage-53981434?
GIST	<p>The Latest on the extremist attack in southern France (all times local):</p> <p>4:25 p.m.</p> <p>A judicial official says French police searching the home of the man responsible for a deadly rampage in southern France have found notes referring to the Islamic State group that appeared to be a final testament.</p> <p>Also found in the search of the home were a computer and telephone, the official said Saturday, a day after the attack. He was not authorized to discuss an ongoing investigation and couldn't be named.</p>

	<p>Police searched the home of Moroccan-born Redouane Lakdim, 25, after Friday's attack that killed four people — two in a supermarket near the southern city of Carcassonne where the attacker was killed in an assault. The fourth victim, a gendarme who stood in for a female hostage and was shot, died early Saturday.</p> <p>The official says there apparently was no mention in the notes of the attack plans.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 France: 'hero' officer dies in terror attack
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/24/europe/france-trebes-officer-dead/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN) — A police officer who swapped places with a female hostage during an attack by an ISIS supporter on a supermarket in southern France has died of his wounds, French authorities said.</p> <p>Lt. Col. Arnaud Beltrame, 45, was shot in the neck Friday after offering to take the place of a woman in an gunman's assault on the Super U supermarket in Trèbes.</p> <p>The attacker, Radouane Lakdim, 26, a Moroccan-born French national, was a petty criminal already on the radar of French police for his links to radical Salafist networks, authorities said.</p> <p>When he burst into the supermarket Friday, he shouted he was a soldier from ISIS, witnesses said, before opening fire and killing a worker and a customer. He was shot dead by police on the scene.</p> <p>"Lt. Col. Arnaud Beltrame died in the service of the nation to which he had already contributed so much," French President Emmanuel Macron said in a statement. "By giving his life to end the murderous escapade of a jihadist terrorist, he died a hero."</p> <p>Interior Minister Gérard Collomb announced the officer's death Saturday, which raised the number of victims in the gunman's rampage to four.</p> <p>The attacker killed two other people and wounded more than a dozen others in the supermarket raid. Before then, he had killed another person Friday while stealing a car.</p> <p>"France will never forget his heroism, his bravery, his sacrifice," Collomb said on Twitter.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Suicide bombers attack Afghan mosque
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/bomb-inside-afghan-shiite-mosque-kills-wounds-53998377?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Two suicide bombers attacked a Shiite mosque in Afghanistan's western Herat province on Sunday, killing one person and wounding seven others in an attack claimed by the Islamic State group.</p> <p>Police spokesman Abdul Ahad Walizada said the toll may rise from Sunday's attack. He said both bombers tried to enter the mosque but one was shot dead by guards before making it inside.</p> <p>IS claimed the attack in a brief statement carried by its Aamaq news agency. The Sunni extremist group has frequently targeted Afghanistan's Shiite minority, which it views as apostates.</p> <p>An Islamic State suicide bomber targeted a group of Shiites marking the Persian new year in Afghanistan's capital last week, killing more than 30 people.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Syria rebels exit second enclave pocket
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syrian-rebels-exit-pocket-eastern-ghouta-53998548?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Hundreds of Syrian rebels and civilians were bussed out of a second pocket of the besieged eastern Ghouta suburbs of Damascus on Sunday after rebels agreed to leave several towns and villages after years of siege and weeks of heavy bombardment.</p> <p>Close to 900 people were evacuated from the southernmost of three eastern Ghouta pockets on Sunday, according to state-affiliated al-Ikhbariya TV, following some 1,000 fighters, family members, and other civilians who departed late Saturday, as reported by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.</p> <p>They left in a fleet of buses, including the lime-green municipal buses, that have come to symbolize defeat for the Syrian opposition, and the steady rearrangement of Syria's population as the government takes back control of cities around the country.</p> <p>Fighters dressed in fatigues slumped in their seats, hiding their faces from the news cameras on the road, and children peered out the windows.</p> <p>The evacuation is modeled on others in which rebels have surrendered swathes of territory around the capital and other major cities after years of siege and bombardment at the hands of President Bashar Assad's forces. They have been helpless against the government's overwhelming artillery and air power, boosted with support from Iran's Revolutionary Guard and Russia's air force.</p> <p>Rebels began evacuating another pocket of eastern Ghouta on Thursday. Some 7,000 people left the town of Harasta, bound for the rebel-held Idlib province in northern Syria.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	03/25 State wolf population surge slows
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/03/25/washingtons-wolf-population-surge-slows-worrying-advocates/
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — Growth in Washington's gray wolf population slowed dramatically last year, raising concerns from an environmental group that says the state should stop killing wolves that prey on livestock.</p> <p>At the end of 2017, Washington was home to at least 122 wolves, 22 packs and 14 successful breeding pairs, the state Department of Fish and Wildlife said in a report released last week.</p> <p>That's the highest the population has been since annual surveys started in 2008, the agency said. However, last year's count was up just 6 percent from the minimum of 115 wolves — with 20 packs and 10 breeding pairs — reported at the end of 2016.</p> <p>By contrast, wolf populations grew at a rate of around 30 percent per year the previous decade.</p> <p>“The sharp departure from wolf number increases in past years is cause for serious concern,” said Amaroq Weiss, wolf advocate at the Center for Biological Diversity. “While population growth hasn't stopped entirely, these modest numbers clearly indicate the state should not kill any more wolves.”</p> <p>Wolves are rebounding in several Western states after being wiped out in the continental U.S. in all but a slice of Minnesota. But their return has brought contentious discussions among conservationists, ranchers, hunters and others about how the animals should be managed.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Orange snow hit parts of Europe
SOURCE	http://time.com/5214941/orange-snow-europe/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>A rare phenomenon that occurs just once about every five years is turning the snow orange in eastern Europe.</p> <p>The orange snow is a result of sand storms from the Sahara Desert mixing with rain and snow, according to the BBC.</p> <p>People have taken to social media to post photos of the orange-tinted snow, which is falling in countries like Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria and Romania. Skiers posted photos of the colored snow at a resort near Sochi, Russia.</p> <p>Steven Keates, a meteorologist who works for the U.K.'s national weather service, known as the Met Office, told The Independent that the orange snow is caused by sand being lifted up into the upper layers of the atmosphere and spreading out due to the wind and weather patterns.</p> <p>“There has been a lot of lifted sand or dust originating from North Africa and the Sahara, from sand storms which have formed in the desert,” he explained to the U.K. newspaper. “Looking at satellite imagery from Nasa, it shows a lot of sand and dust in the atmosphere drifting across the Mediterranean. When it rains or snows, it drags down whatever is up there, if there is sand in the atmosphere.”</p> <p>Keates also said the orange snow phenomenon has previously been seen in other regions around the world.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Homicides, suicides rise in Pierce Co.
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article206598744.html
GIST	<p>Law enforcement leaders can't point to a single cause, but they feel the trend.</p> <p>“We have had a really hard spike. Our people have been worked very hard,” said county Sheriff Paul Pastor. “Why the spike, I don't know. Parents killing kids, kids killing parents. I don't expect we will be having those challenges constantly through the year, but we'll probably have a fairly high year in homicide.”</p> <p>The year 2017 saw 38 homicides — an average year in historical terms, according to figures compiled by The News Tribune and verified with the Pierce County Medical Examiner and the state Department of Health.</p> <p>This year's early surge sets an ominous pace. Law enforcement observers tend to think it's an anomaly even as they cross their fingers.</p> <p>“Even when crime trends down, there can be spikes,” said Pierce County Prosecutor Mark Lindquist, who pointed to an overall downward trend in felony referrals to his office when compared to last year.</p> <p>“I think the current spike in homicides could be an anomaly, or it could be violence feeding on itself, compounded by drugs and mental health issues,” Lindquist added. “Either way, we do our jobs, reduce crime through accountability, and try to keep the community safe. Our drug court and mental health court, for example, are designed to address these issues before they escalate.”</p> <p>Forecasting crime statistics is anything but a precise venture, but one approach involves regression to the mean. In other words, assume homicide trends for the rest of the year subside to average numbers.</p> <p>In that scenario, the county would still see 53 homicides, a number the area hasn't approached since 1998, when 52 homicides were recorded. That figure would still fall below the watermark of 66, set in 1992,</p>

largely driven by crime rates in Tacoma.

The city has seen its share of slayings already this year: Taxi driver Robert “Big Dave” Crall was fatally shot on March 15. A 19-year-old man suspected in a series of recent robberies has been charged with first-degree murder in the case. Before that, police responded to a pair of stabbing deaths. One killed a 15-year-old boy.

A separate shooting incident, deemed accidental by prosecutors, led to the death of 63-year-old Rhonda Randle, fatally shot by her son, who mistook her for an intruder.

Ask Tacoma Police spokeswoman Loretta Cool what accounts for the homicide uptick, and she points to a mixture of factors, including national events such as mass shootings. When she speaks to community groups about criminal justice, she's sometimes asked what she would fix with a magic wand. Her answer: kill the internet, and stop the flow of instant information and knee-jerk reaction.

“I think it’s kind of a confluence of things that are going on,” she said. “The political environment that people are bombarding all social media with. Everything is negative. We’ve had a tremendous amount of violent acts. People have been inundated with the idea that shooting is the answer.

“People have come out of the recession and some are recovering, but many people are not. People truly did lose their jobs, lose their houses and are not able to get them back. I think what we’re seeing overall is that homicide is, at this moment in time, an acceptable way to handle things.”

The number of killings adds a layer of despair to a separate and starker trend: the rising rate of suicide, which has climbed steadily since the Great Recession and continues upward, drawing additional momentum from the opioid epidemic.

State and local statistics tracking suicides tend to lag, since causes of death are more difficult to determine. Pierce County counted 173 suicides in 2016, according to the Department of Health. The number is a record: the highest in county history, and the peak of an upward line that has risen steadily since 2008.

“We’re getting two or three a day,” said Medical Examiner Thomas Clark. He can’t explain the trend, though he leans on “apocryphal knowledge” that suggests suicides rise in times of economic stress.

More practically, Clark can’t be precise about the latest suicide numbers. The sheer volume contributes to a backlog.

“The problem isn’t that we don’t track them, it’s getting them out,” he said.

Tracking suicides is a complicated task because the cause isn’t always clear. If people end their lives with firearms, determining the cause is comparatively simple. Add drugs and overdoses to the mix, and answers become elusive.

Like his counterparts throughout the state, Clark must rely on toxicology tests from the Washington State Patrol Crime Laboratory, which faces its own backlog. Clark is still waiting on results from 2017 deaths, and he can’t begin to count 2018.

Crime lab manager Brianna Peterson confirmed the backlog but said the primary driver of delay is an increased number of tests related to drunken driving cases. Such tests might take as little as two weeks, but that still represents time.

When it comes to assessing deaths related to possible drug overdoses, the process lengthens.

“Drug cases take longer,” Peterson said. “Once drugs are present, it might take four to eight weeks. We can’t just do one test that might detect every drug that might be present. We have to do multiple tests sometimes in order to detect the drugs that are there.”

	<p>Regardless of circumstances, unnatural deaths require a response and initial investigation from law enforcement. When homicides come in bunches, first responders feel the stress.</p> <p>“We go to all the suicides,” said sheriff’s spokesman Ed Troyer. “We go to all the death investigations. Suicides are jumping, and suicides of young people are jumping.”</p> <p>Troyer sees the same detectives responding to scene after scene. Deputies and police officers sometimes rely on grim humor to cope with such incidents, but it doesn’t always work. A March 13 triple homicide in Spanaway was one such example: a 29-year-old man despondent over his failing marriage shot his wife and two young children to death before turning his gun on himself.</p> <p>“It wears on people, especially when there’s kids involved,” Troyer said. “A lot of these deputies have kids of their own. When it’s kids, they’re very quiet, talking to each other very somberly.”</p> <p>Surveying the overall trends and pondering prevention, Sheriff Pastor returns to a familiar topic: personnel. He regularly notes that unincorporated Pierce County rank as the state’s second-largest city in terms of population, while adding that the number of deputies falls short of the need.</p> <p>“We’re a growing county,” Pastor said. “We’re going to have 1 million people in the next six or seven years. What are we doing about it now?”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Underfunded public pensions persist
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-financial-crisis2008-municipals-pensi/battered-by-great-recession-underfunded-public-pensions-to-persist-idUSKBN1H20EG
GIST	<p>CHICAGO (Reuters) - Ten years on from the financial crisis, many U.S. state and local public pension systems are still the worse for wear.</p> <p>Investment returns have been uneven and funding levels have yet to recover. Many pension funds have meanwhile attempted to boost returns by loading up on alternative investments to levels unheard of a decade earlier.</p> <p>“Some just cannot grow their way out of it. We have had several years of stellar (stock market) returns and it barely improved the underfunding situation,” said Mikhail Foux, municipal credit analyst at Barclays in New York.</p> <p>The benchmark S&P 500 U.S. stock index has tripled in the past nine years, driven in part by unprecedented zero interest rate policies and massive monetary stimulus from central banks around the globe aimed at combating the deepest recession in a generation.</p> <p>But pension returns struggled to match the broad market, and recent wobbles in U.S. equities have fed fears of another downturn.</p> <p>“Now what happens when markets are falling 10 to 15 percent?” Foux asked.</p> <p>In 2007, a year before the crisis began, the median funded level was 92 percent for state retirement and 97 percent for local plans, according to Wilshire Funding Studies. That fell to 68 percent for states and 72 percent for local governments by 2016, the most recent data.</p> <p>A lower funded ratio indicates the overall soundness of a pension fund is weaker and more money is required to meet future obligations.</p> <p>Persistently low post-crisis interest rates meant pension funds could no longer depend to the same degree</p>

on fixed income to help meet withdrawal demands of an aging pensioner population.

“When the crisis hit, it exposed the kind of precarious nature of the status of plans,” said Jean-Pierre Aubry, state and local research director at Boston College’s Center for Retirement Research.

Even with U.S. rates inching higher since 2016 and stocks mounting record highs, pensions still struggled to generate consistent returns.

The number of active public sector workers per retiree has been falling. That ratio declined to 1.42 in 2016 from 2.43 in 2001, according to a November 2017 National Association of State Retirement Administrators (NASRA) Public Fund Survey. That can boost pension costs when combined with a poorly funded plan.

The sharp economic downturn that accompanied the 2007-2009 financial crisis weighed on core tax revenue, leading governments to pursue an unprecedented amount of reform measures to shore up pensions by boosting contributions and cutting benefits.

“Just as these pension funds required higher contributions as a result of the market decline, the plan sponsors were less able to pay those higher contributions,” said Keith Brainard, NASRA’s research director.

That prompted retirement systems to turn to riskier alternative investments such as hedge funds, private equity, real estate and commodities to pad returns.

U.S. public pension funds became the biggest risk-takers among pension funds internationally, according to one academic study updated in February 2017.

Alternative investment allocations jumped to 24 percent in 2015 from 9 percent in 2005, according the Center for Retirement Research.

“We know for the most part that alternatives have not been the panacea since the financial crisis,” Aubry, noting that hedge funds and commodities have underperformed equities during that period.

Public pension funds’ assumed rates of investment return have trended lower since the crisis. If a plan’s returns fall below that expected rate, government sponsors need to make up for the loss.

But public plans in general have tended to lag private-sector pension plans in lowering those discount rates, according to data cited by New York’s Rockefeller Institute of Government last year.

Between 1993 and 2012, as 10-year U.S Treasury yields fell by 4.3 percentage points, large private-sector U.S. plans reduced their discount rates to 4.4 percent from 8.2 percent.

For large public plans for funding purposes, the rate only fell from 7.8 percent to 7.7 percent in the same period, according to the institute’s report.

In the years since the crisis it has proven difficult for some governments to modify retirement benefits, and legal wranglings are ongoing.

Legal or political constraints have stymied changes in states like Illinois, Kentucky and New Jersey, where contributions have lagged actuarially required levels for decades.

Lawsuits filed against more than 40 state and local governments since 2008 contested pension changes on constitutional grounds, according to the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, which tracks the litigation.

Courts in 13 states have upheld reductions in cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) for retirees’ pension payments, but have struck reductions down in four.

	In California, long-standing judicial rulings prohibiting the state and local governments from reducing benefits will be tested in three lawsuits before the state supreme court, according to Stuart Buck, the Arnold Foundation's vice president of research.
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HEADLINE	03/25 NKorea slows down nuke operations
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/03/25/North-Korea-slows-down-operations-at-main-nuclear-test-site/4221521958971/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=lh&utm_medium=1
GIST	<p>SEOUL, March 25 (UPI) -- North Korea appears to have slowed down operations at its main nuclear site of Punggyeri, ahead of leader Kim Jong Un's upcoming summits on denuclearization with South Korea and the United States.</p> <p>North Korea tracker 38th North cited satellite imagery from March 17 which showed there hadn't been new tunneling activities at the West Portal of the nuclear site.</p> <p>It also noted the lack of mining carts or personnel in the same area.</p> <p>Calling this an "important development," the commentary says the latest imagery compares with those from early March where there were signs of continued tunneling excavations which began September last year, shortly after the North's sixth underground nuclear test.</p> <p>Up until March 2, spoil pile had been growing as well as frequency of mining carts and personnel moving around in the area.</p> <p>A small group of personnel that was previously sighted in the nuclear site's Main Administration Area was also nowhere to be seen, although this may be due to seasonal factors, 38 North said.</p> <p>The apparent slowdown of tunneling activities came after North Korea's landmark decision to hold talks with Seoul and Washington.</p> <p>In a meeting with Seoul envoys in early March, Kim Jong Un also said he would freeze nuclear weapons development during the talks.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 China space station to hit Earth soon
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/science/2018/03/25/chinas-space-station-expected-to-hit-earth-soon-possibly-in-europe.html
GIST	<p>A space station launched by China – which it reportedly lost track of – is expected plummet to Earth on or near April Fool's Day.</p> <p>The Tiangong-1 stopped responding to China's commands 2016, according to Space.com. Scientists have since anticipated the space station returning to Earth as a manmade meteorite, but are unsure where it will land.</p> <p>In recent months, scientists have had a better approximation of where the station may land. According to the Washington Post, they've warned that Spain, Portugal, France and Greece may see the 19,000-pound meteorite plummet within their borders.</p> <p>Scientists say the Tiangong-1 is currently spinning around Earth at 17,500 mph, which amounts to a trip around the planet every 90 minutes. As the station descends closer to Earth and gains momentum, the thicker air will cause friction to surround the craft in superheated plasma, the Post reported.</p>

Depending on the time of day and location, the nonprofit research firm Aerospace says, the returning station may be visible for “up to a minute or more.”

There is reportedly a slight chance the falling debris will hit somebody.

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HEADLINE	03/23 Vanishing Arctic ice link to Nor-easters
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/how-vanishing-arctic-ice-may-set-stage-extreme-nor-easters-n858886
GIST	<p>The amount of ice formed in the Arctic was near an all-time low over the winter that just concluded, scientists announced Friday — part of a warming phenomenon that some experts believe has increased the likelihood of severe weather like the recent Nor’easters.</p> <p>Sea ice is believed to have reached its maximum extent over the Arctic Ocean on March 17, at 5.59 million square miles. That is the second lowest in the 39 years that satellite images have helped make measurements, slightly ahead of last year's total. The four lowest seasonal totals for Arctic ice have all come in the last four years.</p> <p>“This again shows the absolute urgency of what is happening to the planet’s climate system," said Rafe Pomerance, chairman of Arctic 21, a network of climate scientists and environmental advocates. “The globe is in a state of rapid transformation, and no place is clearer than the Arctic, where the sea ice loss is very fast and seemingly inexorable.”</p> <p>The extent of sea ice is tracked closely by researchers and is being connected by some scientists to unusual weather hundreds of miles to the south, including drought in California and big snowfalls along the East Coast. These researchers say that although it would be wrong to cite warming as the cause of any single weather event, the likelihood of extreme weather has increased as temperatures in the Arctic jump up.</p> <p>Other scientists cautioned against putting too much focus on Arctic warming, saying other factors are contributing to changing weather patterns in the lower latitudes. Both sides agree that more research is needed into the connection between warming in the far north and weather elsewhere.</p> <p>Temperatures in the Arctic have increased about twice as fast as they have in the rest of the globe over the past 25 years, an increase of seven degrees Fahrenheit, or more, in some areas. Less white ice on the Earth's surface means that less of the sun’s heat is reflected back into space. That exacerbates the warming pattern and, in a vicious cycle, melts even more ice.</p> <p>The scientific consensus is that the higher temperatures all over Earth have created secondary effects, like rapid sea level rise, more intense heat waves and a shifting in the ranges of some animals. As much as one-quarter of the globe's warming has been linked to the loss of sea ice.</p> <p>Researchers six years ago first suggested another profound impact: warming in the Arctic contributes to extreme weather events in the Northern Hemisphere. The theory goes like this: Warmer Arctic air is closer to the temperature in the lower latitudes, thereby weakening the atmospheric barrier that previously kept the jet stream flowing in a relatively straight line. The river of air that speeds west to east around the globe now meanders north and south. The peaks and troughs in this "wavier" path drive weather on Earth. And because the unleashed jet stream moves more slowly, weather systems tend to linger.</p> <p>“There are some very clear signals emerging from the noise, and one of them is this tendency for warm west, cold east in North America and very cold winters recently,” said Jennifer Francis, a Rutgers University research professor who co-authored one of the first papers connecting Arctic warming to jet stream upheaval. “It’s all a very consistent story, and there is no reason to think it’s going to go back to normal, maybe ever.”</p>

	As weather systems linger, then move on, only to stall again, they create a kind of “weather whiplash,” said Francis, who noted that Boston had record high temperatures in late February before flipping to the string of Nor’easters that dominated the last month.
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HEADLINE	03/23 UN report: Earth losing plants, animals
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/united-nations-reports-lonelier-planet-with-fewer-plants-animals-biodiversity/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON -- Earth is losing plants, animals and clean water at a dramatic rate, according to four new United Nations scientific reports that provide the most comprehensive and localized look at the state of biodiversity. Scientists meeting in Colombia issued four regional reports Friday on how well animal and plants are doing in the Americas; Europe and Central Asia; Africa; and the Asia-Pacific area.</p> <p>Their conclusion after three years of study: Nowhere is doing well.</p> <p>The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem was about more than just critters, said study team chairman Robert Watson. It is about keeping Earth livable for humans, because we rely on biodiversity for food, clean water and public health, the prominent British and U.S. scientist said.</p> <p>"This is undermining well-being across the planet, threatening us long-term on food and water," Watson said in an interview.</p> <p>Scientists pointed to this week's death of the last male northern white rhino in Africa, severe declines in the numbers of elephants, tigers and pangolins, but said those are only the most visible and charismatic of species that are in trouble.</p> <p>What's happening is a side effect of the world getting wealthier and more crowded with people, Watson said. Humans need more food, more clean water, more energy and more land. And the way society has tried to achieve that has cut down on biodiversity, he said.</p> <p>Crucial habitat has been cut apart, alien species have invaded places, chemicals have hurt plants and animals, wetlands and mangroves that clean up pollution are disappearing, and the world's waters are overfished, he said.</p> <p>Man-made climate change is getting worse, and global warming will soon hurt biodiversity as much as all the other problems combined, Watson said.</p> <p>"We keep making choices to borrow from the future to live well today," said Jake Rice, Canada's chief government scientist for fisheries and oceans, who co-chaired the Americas report.</p> <p>Duke University conservationist Stuart Pimm, who wasn't part of the study team, said the reports make sense and are based on well-established scientific data: "Are things pretty dire? Yes."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Massive floating island of plastic growing
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/great-pacific-garbage-patch-massive-floating-island-plastic/story?id=53962147&cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	A massive floating island of plastic between California and Hawaii is growing rapidly and is now three times the size of France, a new study finds.

	<p>The giant accumulation of plastic called the Great Pacific Garbage Patch contains at least 79,000 tons discarded plastic, covering an area of about 617,800 square miles (1.6 million square kilometers), according to a study published Thursday in Scientific Reports.</p> <p>That is three times the area of France and more than twice the size of Texas.</p> <p>The study's authors further said, "Our results suggest that ocean plastic pollution within the Great Pacific Garbage Patch is increasing exponentially."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 'Last ditch' plan: arm students w/stones
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/students-armed-stones-ditch-plan-ward-off-school/story?id=53961564
GIST	<p>A Pennsylvania school district has stocked its classrooms with stones as a "last-ditch" to fight off potential school shooters, according to the superintendent.</p> <p>Every elementary, middle and high school classroom in the Blue Mountain School District has a 5-gallon bucket full of river stones -- smooth, landscaping stones -- in the closet for students to throw at any armed intruder, district superintendent David Helsel told ABC News today.</p> <p>Blue Mountain School District, which is about 90 miles northwest of Philadelphia, has about 2,700 students, he said.</p> <p>"We've been trying to be proactive just in case," the superintendent said.</p> <p>"We wanted to provide some type of last response to an intruder," Helsel said, "rather than crawling under a desk and getting shot."</p> <p>The news of Helsel's stone policy -- which he said he implemented last fall -- started circulating after he mentioned it while testifying to the state House Education Committee last week in Harrisburg.</p> <p>But the stones are the last-ditch response, Helsel stressed.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 Mount Etna 'slowly moving to the sea'
SOURCE	https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/03/24/mount-etna-slowly-sliding-towards-mediterranean-sea/
GIST	<p>Mount Etna, Europe's largest and most active volcano, is slowly sliding towards the Mediterranean Sea, scientists have observed.</p> <p>The entire 3,350m (11,000ft) stratovolcano, located on the east coast of the Italian island of Sicily, is currently moving downslope at an average rate of 14 mm per year - or 1.4 metres over 100 years.</p> <p>Experts have warned the sliding could eventually lead to greater risk of large scale slope failure, which could trigger landslides, however researchers at The Open University emphasised there is currently no sign of that happening.</p> <p>Dr John Murray, lead author of the paper published in the Bulletin of Volcanology, stressed the minute movement currently posed no danger to life, but warned that monitoring the volcano for more significant changes was crucial.</p> <p>"At the moment there is no cause for concern from the sliding of the volcano towards the sea, the movement is just too small," Dr Murray told The Telegraph. "However, the possibility of things changing</p>

	<p>in the future needs to be taken seriously, so it is important to keep monitoring the movement.”</p> <p>The UK-led team, who monitored the changes using GPS technology placed around the mountain, found the sliding is lubricated by the weak sediments beneath Etna and the slope of the basement.</p> <p>Dr Murray, who has been working for 49 years studying the active volcanoes of Mount Etna, said if a sector collapse were to occur, the results could be “catastrophic”.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Venezuela tackles world's worst inflation
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/03/23/venezuela-hopes-to-tackle-the-worlds-worst-inflation-by-deleting-zeros-from-its-currency/
GIST	<p>CARACAS, Venezuela — Economic pledges may be par for the course in election campaigns, but in hyperinflationary Venezuela, the candidates' dueling promises are going further, with the incumbent vowing to lop a few zeros off the currency, while his main challenger calls for the adoption of the U.S. dollar.</p> <p>President Nicolás Maduro late Thursday briefly outlined his monetary rescue plan. In a country where a dozen eggs can cost 250,000 bolivars (\$5) amid worsening inflation, he would chop three zeros off the currency — arguably bringing the price for those eggs down to 250.</p> <p>“I ask you all for your prayers and support for the success of the monetary reconversion,” Maduro said in a televised event Thursday night.</p> <p>The move came as Henri Falcon — a former governor running against Maduro in elections set for May — is proposing a far more radical fix. He wants to follow the path of countries such as Ecuador and Panama by dollarizing the Venezuelan economy. Doing so, he says, would prevent the printing of new bills — instantly constraining inflation.</p> <p>Socialist Venezuela is going through a crisis that has left people struggling to pay for food and find medicines. Prices are being influenced by a black-market exchange rate that rises by the day and is currently five times the nearly inaccessible official rate.</p> <p>Customers are standing in hours-long lines at banks to take out a daily limit, set so low that it barely covers the price of a cup of coffee. Larger transactions are done by bank card or transfer — although some vendors are charging double for electronic payments.</p> <p>Maduro’s redenomination plan was met with serious skepticism by critics and analysts, who say that the impact on hyperinflation would be minimal — and that the plan would be confusing. By June 2, under Maduro’s plan, new bolivars with lower denominations would be circulated — but old ones, with denominations as high as 100,000, would remain valid. It would leave vendors charging two prices — one for old bills, the other for the redenominated bolivar.</p> <p>Salaries too would be redenominated — so little would change in terms of buying power.</p> <p>Economists say simply chopping zeros off the bolivar notes is unlikely to halt hyperinflation, since the government would still be printing reams of cash. In addition, the forces that have sent prices soaring, including food and medical scarcities, would remain in place. In fact, some Venezuelan business owners have already started eliminating three zeros from prices, simply because they're too long to fit in printed receipts.</p> <p>“Taking out three zeros doesn’t in any way solve any of the causes of hyperinflation,” said Jean Paul Leidenz, senior economist at Caracas-based Ecoanalitica. “It’s just a cosmetic fix that won’t work.”</p>

	<p>Maduro’s announcement is just his latest attempt to control runaway inflation: He has already launched a new cryptocurrency, the petro. An executive order by President Trump, however, has banned U.S. transactions in the petro, which U.S. officials have dubbed “a scam.” Few see the petro as a genuine solution — and Maduro’s new redenomination plan appears to be a tactical admission that the government is seeking another answer.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 When did clowns become scary?
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/533cac182c5841659222fd99f9d00a83/No-laughing-matter:-When-exactly-did-clowns-become-scary?
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (AP) — His nose was round and bright red, his face as white as a sheet. His mouth was surrounded by an exaggerated smear of red makeup and his arched eyebrows hung ridiculously high on his forehead.</p> <p>Such was the daily uniform of Bozo the Clown, who entertained kids for decades when TV was in its infancy. It’s also a uniform that for many now seems grotesque and sinister.</p> <p>The death of longtime Bozo performer Frank Avruch this week triggered both feelings — warm memories from some and a shiver of fear from others who associate clowns more with the film “It.”</p> <p>Which begs the question: When exactly did clowns go from birthday-party goofy to downright sinister? Well, hold onto your really big shoes — experts are divided.</p> <p>David Carlyon, author, playwright and a former clown with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus in the 1970s, argues that the fear of clowns — known officially as coulrophobia — is a relatively new phenomenon, born from the counter-culture 1960s and emerging as a popular force in the 1980s.</p> <p>“There is no ancient fear of clowns,” he said. “It wasn’t like there was this panic rippling through Madison Square Garden as I walked up through the seats. Not at all.”</p> <p>Carlyon said clowns were considered sweet and funny for two centuries until an inevitable backlash that included Stephen King’s hit novel “It,” the film “Poltergeist,” Heath Ledger’s white-faced maniac Joker, the misanthrope Krusty the Clown from “The Simpsons,” the shock band Insane Clown Posse and Homey D. Clown from “In Living Color.”</p> <p>“Anything that gets that much glorification and is sentimentalized within an inch of its life invites someone to snark at it,” said Carlyon, who recently discovered the cover of a National Lampoon from 1979 with a girl cowering in fear of a malevolent clown.</p> <p>“There’s nothing in any available evidence that kids were afraid of clowns in the ’40s, the ’50s, the ’60s, the ’70s,” he said. “Who said that about Red Skelton?”</p> <p>Not so fast, argues Benjamin Radford, an author and editor at Skeptical Inquirer magazine who literally wrote the book on the subject, 2016’s “Bad Clowns.” Not to throw a pie in anyone’s face, but he argues that evil clowns have always been among us.</p> <p>“It’s a mistake to ask when clowns turned bad because historically they were never really good. They’ve always had this deeply ambiguous character,” he said.</p> <p>“Sometimes they’re good; sometimes they’re bad. Sometimes they’re making you laugh. Other times, they’re laughing at your expense.”</p> <p>Radford traces bad clowns all the way to ancient Greece and connects them to court jesters and the Harlequin figure. He notes that Punch, an evil puppet who frequently smacks his partner Judy with a stick,</p>

made his first appearance in London in the 1500s. “You have this mass-murdering, baby-killing clown that’s beloved by Britons everywhere of all ages,” he said.

Clowns in America had their roots in circuses and they were at first meant to amuse adults, but clowning history took a detour in the 1950s and ’60s when the squeaky-clean Bozo and Ronald McDonald became the “quintessentially American default clowns” for kids, Radford said.

The more sinister clown waited patiently for his day to shine. “Stephen King didn’t invent the evil clown. That was long before his time. But what he did was turn the coin over, if you will,” Radford said.

Even if there’s debate on the issue, Radford paid homage to Avruch, the first nationally syndicated incarnation of the iconic Bozo. Without virtuous clowns like him to lay the foundation, the bad ones make no sense.

“The fact is that we need both bad and good clowns because without the good clowns like Bozo, there’s no contrast, there’s no tension to make the evil or scary clowns entertaining or interesting,” Radford said.

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HEADLINE	03/24 Saudis open airspace to Israel flight
SOURCE	https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-israel-airspace-rivadh-tel-aviv-flight-air-india-iran-flight-times-airlines-a8269891.html
GIST	<p>Saudi Arabia opened its airspace for the first time to a commercial flight to Israel with the inauguration of an Air India route between New Delhi and Tel Aviv.</p> <p>Flight 139 landed at Tel Aviv’s Ben Gurion Airport after a seven-and-a-half hour journey, marking a diplomatic shift for Riyadh that Israel says was fuelled by shared concern over Iranian influence in the region.</p> <p>“This is a really historic day that follows two years of very, very intensive work,” Israeli tourism minister Yariv Levin said, adding that using Saudi airspace cut travel time to India by around two hours and would reduce ticket prices.</p> <p>Saudi Arabia – birthplace of Islam and home to its holiest shrines – does not recognise Israel.</p> <p>Riyadh has not formally confirmed granting the Air India plane overflight rights. While the move ended a 70-year-old ban on planes flying to or from Israel through Saudi airspace, there is no indication that it will be applied for any Israeli airline.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 Mexico: Iowa family found dead
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2018/03/23/police-confirm-iowa-family-of-four-found-dead-in-mexico-condo/?utm_term=.37ba33f46420&wpisrc=nl_most&wpm=1
GIST	<p>Kevin and Amy Sharp informed their family members in Iowa that they had arrived safely at their vacation condominium in Tulum, Mexico. That was on March 15.</p> <p>So when their family didn’t hear from them on Thursday — a day after they were to have arrived in St. Louis — they became worried.</p> <p>“If you have any information (last contacted, resources, or ANYTHING!) contact the family ASAP!” said Ashli Peterson, a relative of the Sharps, in a Facebook post late Thursday night that was shared hundreds of thousands of times.</p> <p>On Friday afternoon, Peterson posted an update.</p>

“Please respect the family at this time as they go through the grieving process,” she wrote. “Thank you for all the posts, shares, and kind words.”

Kevin Wayne Sharp, 41, his wife, Amy Marie Sharp, 38, and their children Sterling Wayne Sharp, 12, and Adrianna Marie Sharp, 7, were found dead in the Tulum condominium where they had been vacationing, police confirmed Friday. The family had been reported missing by their immediate family members early Friday morning to police in Creston, Iowa, which is located about 70 miles southwest of Des Moines.

The Sharps had planned to return home Wednesday, family members said.

Police quickly made contact with the U.S. State Department, Creston police said in a statement. A welfare check at the condominium where the family was believed to be staying led to the discovery of the four bodies.

It is not immediately clear what led to the Sharp family’s deaths, but Creston police chief Paul Ver Meer told KCCI that there were no signs of trauma.

This was the Sharp family’s second trip to Mexico. They left the United States for Cancun on March 14, then rented a car and drove to Tulum, where they were renting a condo, according to Amy Sharp’s sister Renee Hoyt, who spoke with the Creston News Advertiser.

The family had planned to meet up with some friends at a water park, Amy Sharp’s cousin, Jana Weland, told ABC News.

But “they never showed up at that water park to meet them,” Weland said.

In fact, the Sharps’ family members hadn’t heard anything from Kevin or Amy since the day they arrived to Mexico.

It was also unusual for the family not to post photos of their vacation to social media, because “last year they shared pictures about every day,” Weland said.

About a week later, on Thursday night, the family had a sinking feeling that something wasn’t right. The Sharps were supposed to return to the United States about 2:45 p.m. Wednesday from Cancun and arrive in St. Louis at about 6 p.m., family members said.

The Sharps’ family members decided to wait for the last flight from Cancun to St. Louis to arrive on Thursday in case the Sharps had just planned to stay an extra day, Weland told ABC News.

“I guess we were all kind of hoping for the best,” she said.

Then, the family tracked Kevin Sharp’s phone using Apple’s Find my iPhone app. It pinged in Mexico, Hoyt told the Creston News Advertiser. The phone had not moved from its location since Thursday morning.

The family’s mysterious deaths come amid increased travel warnings to Quintana Roo state, which is home to Tulum — a popular destination for those looking to explore Mayan ruins or snorkel in limestone sinkholes. The State Department issued a Level 2 advisory to those traveling to Quintana Roo on March 16, meaning visitors should be cautious because of increased crime there. Department officials cited a spike in Quintana Roo’s homicide rate since 2016.

Last month, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel published an investigation that identified more than 150 reports from travelers who said they blacked out or became violently ill after having just one or two drinks at dozens of Mexican resorts in Cancun, Playa del Carmen, Puerto Vallarta and Los Cabos. It’s unclear whether those tourists were deliberately drugged or became random victims of tainted alcohol, according

	<p>to the investigation.</p> <p>Autopsies on the Sharps are being performed in Mexico. Local Mexican authorities have taken over the investigation, according to the State Department. The Mexican Tourism Board said in a statement obtained by CBS that “preliminary reports from local officials conclude that there were no signs of violence or struggle.”</p> <p>Paulina Chávez Alonzo, a spokeswoman for the Mexican Embassy in Washington D.C., told NBC News that the government offered its “deepest condolences to the family and friends of the Sharps.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Mexico: Iowa family inhaled toxic gas
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/25/us/iowa-family-dead-mexico/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)An Iowa couple and their two children died from inhaling toxic gas while vacationing in Mexico, local authorities said.</p> <p>The bodies of Kevin Wayne Sharp; his wife, Amy Marie Sharp; their son, Sterling, 12; and daughter Adrianna, 7, were discovered Friday at a rental condominium in the beach town of Tulum.</p> <p>The family had been dead for about 36 to 48 hours, the Quintana Roo prosecutor's office said Saturday. Autopsies showed they suffocated after inhaling toxic gases, but it's unclear what type of gas led to their deaths, the prosecutor's office added.</p> <p>There were no signs of foul play or suicide, officials said.</p> <p>Investigators ruled out a possible robbery because they did not see evidence of a disturbance inside the condo.</p> <p>Photos released by Mexican officials show crews and firefighters wearing masks while checking a gas stove in the condo.</p> <p>They performed "physical inspection of the room's gas installation" and are expected to release a technical report at a later date.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	03/25 Rio's poor hail military 'stop and search'
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/stop-and-search-this-poor-community-in-rio-says-yes-please/2018/03/25/df38e4e8-2b73-11e8-8dc9-3b51e028b845_story.html?utm_term=.483ab0d232f2
GIST	<p>RIO DE JANEIRO — To quell a burst of carjackings, supermarket lootings and murders, military troops rolled into this tropical metropolis last month heading straight for the slums. They set up checkpoints and sent armed patrols to root out criminals, searching everyone from children to grandmothers.</p> <p>The military campaign, the first of its scale since Brazil's return to democracy in the 1980s, brought an outcry from human rights groups. Had this happened in the United States or Europe, some argued, lawsuits would have been filed. Communities would have rebelled.</p> <p>But in Latin America's largest nation — where security has emerged as the No. 1 issue amid a surge of urban violence — an extraordinary thing happened. Rather than view the move as an invasion, violence-weary residents of the favelas, or shantytowns, hailed it as a liberation.</p>

“They want to check my ID? Fine!” said Magna Oliveira, 50, who runs a van-rental business in Vila Kennedy, a favela founded in the 1960s with the aid of U.S. funds disbursed by President John F. Kennedy’s government. One of Rio’s most violent slums, it is now the epicenter of the military takeover of the state’s security.

“Here, here,” she said, pretending to take multiple ID cards out of her pocket. “Check them. Please! I only wish I had more IDs for them to check. Everything has changed since they arrived. I feel free.”

The response here illustrates a national reality: Brazilians want security — and are backing heavy-handed tactics to get it.

To the chagrin of critics, but cheers from much of the public, one of those tactics is deploying the military to fight crime. In February 2017, the armed forces took over security in Espirito Santo state after 62 people were killed during the first three days of a police strike. The military also assumed control of security in the state of Rio Grande do Norte after it ran out of cash to pay police salaries.

There are indications the deployments may not be working — crime in the state of Rio, for instance, has continued to worsen despite the military takeover of security. Yet, as this troubled country of 208 million people hurtles toward presidential elections in October, calls for a firmer hand are growing.

“Fear of violence has reached such high levels that the population is crying for help,” said Renato Sérgio de Lima, president of the Brazilian Forum on Public Security, a think tank that studies violence. “It’s a demand for order that almost always brings risks of authoritarianism if you don’t have solid democratic institutions.”

In Rio, the showcase city of the 2016 Olympics Games is now a distant memory.

Crime has exploded, with a toxic mix of corrupt police officers, feuding drug dealers and gang warfare fueling the surge. The city is also floundering because of a massive nationwide corruption scandal and lower energy prices that hit one of its primary economic engines: the national oil giant, Petrobras.

With acute budget shortfalls looming, police officers are no longer being paid overtime, and many are owed back wages. Roughly 50 percent of police vehicles don’t work. The force lost 2,000 officers last year, more than three times the normal attrition rate.

Last year, homicides reached an eight-year high of 6,731, according to government figures. Car thefts rose by 30.3 percent year-on-year. Nearly 400 schools have had to cancel classes because of violence.

The military has been called to help with security in the city more than a dozen times in recent years. But past interventions were mostly limited to special events, such as the Olympics and the World Cup, or to operations in specific neighborhoods. This time, the military has been charged with overseeing security for the whole surrounding state — Brazil’s most densely populated, with 16.5 million inhabitants. The armed forces have been ordered to both deploy troops and take command of the state’s police force. Current plans have the military presiding over the state’s security at least through December.

Roughly 1,400 troops arrived a month ago. In the initial phase, soldiers stopped and searched thousands of people entering the west Rio slum, photographing their IDs and running their names through police databases for outstanding criminal warrants.

There are no statistics available on the total number of arrests by the military thus far. Some people have been detained simply for disrespecting the military.

The aggressive stop-and-search patrols, however, lasted only a few weeks — part of what the military called a blitz to gain a grip on the favela. Military officials insist they have succeeded in driving out at least some of the traffickers who controlled the area. In a sign of progress, city authorities who were

	<p>previously too afraid to enter the slum recently held a citizens' fair where residents lined up for yellow fever vaccinations, ID registrations and even to enroll for military service.</p> <p>"It's about bringing normalcy here," said Col. Carlos Cinelli, a military spokesman.</p> <p>Many residents say the problem isn't too much military presence — it's too little of it.</p> <p>Each day, the troops arrive at 6 a.m. and depart at 5 p.m. While their presence has brought a rare tranquility to the daylight hours, residents say, at night, the drug traffickers return and the cycle of violence resumes.</p> <p>Theoretically, the military is leaving the favela under the control of police at night — and taking special precautions to weed out corrupt officers who are as much responsible for the violence here, residents say, as the traffickers.</p> <p>But that plan doesn't seem to be working.</p> <p>Military officials themselves say it is unrealistic to think they could entirely fix the problem of entrenched urban violence — a problem that may require vast amounts of investment to boost education, fight poverty and offer the kinds of social services that troops cannot provide.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 Attempted robbery ends in shootout
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article206707004.html
GIST	<p>Three men were hospitalized Saturday morning when an attempted robbery ended with a shootout between the suspects and the residents, Tacoma Police spokeswoman Loretta Cool said.</p> <p>The owner of a home on the 3600 block of South Ainsworth Avenue armed himself with a handgun after noticing two intruders near his garage on his surveillance cameras at about 12:30 a.m., Cool said. He and his roommate confronted the alleged intruders.</p> <p>During the encounter the residents reportedly sprayed one suspect with bear spray and struck the other in the head with a baseball bat. One of the suspects then fired a gun at the victims, hitting one of them, Cool said. One of the residents then reportedly returned fire and hit one of the suspects.</p> <p>The two suspects were transported to a hospital to be treated for their injuries. The suspect's gun wound was considered life-threatening.</p> <p>The resident who was shot also was transported to the hospital. His injuries were considered serious but not life-threatening, Cool said.</p> <p>The incident is under investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Charge: made hoax calls to Coast Guard
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/936220/oregon-man-accused-of-making-hoax-calls-to-coast-guard/
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Authorities arrested an Oregon man accused of making hoax distress calls to the U.S. Coast Guard in 2016.</p> <p>The defendant — 35-year-old Bud Burkleo of Warrenton — pleaded not guilty Friday at the federal courthouse in Portland.</p> <p>U.S. Magistrate Judge John V. Acosta set a May 29 trial date and granted Burkleo pretrial release.</p>

	<p>An indictment unsealed Friday alleges Burkleo made four calls that led the Coast Guard to needlessly dispatch personnel. He's also accused of lying to federal investigators.</p> <p>The Coast Guard Sector Columbia River command center received dozens of false mayday calls in 2016. The agency released recordings of a few of them late that year in hopes of getting a tip from the public.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 WSP: string of hit-and-runs
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/state-patrol-calls-on-public-to-help-after-string-of-hit-and-runs
GIST	<p>TUKWILA, Wash. -- Since March 11, there have been at least seven very serious hit-and-run incidents in Western Washington where someone has been critically hurt or killed.</p> <p>On Sunday, a plea from Washington State Patrol.</p> <p>"We don't know the reasons that people are failing to stop at collision scenes," trooper Heather Axtman told KOMO News. "...we need witnesses to help in order to solve those collisions."</p> <p>Saturday night a pick up truck hit a 48-year-old man walking south on state Route 105 at Logan Road in Pacific County.</p> <p>The truck then fled the scene and the victim is recovering at a local hospital.</p> <p>Two days earlier on Thursday in Port Orchard, a 34-year-old ferry worker Katie Phillips was killed while helping a driver stranded on the side of the road.</p> <p>Thanks to tips from ferry employees and passengers, investigators now have found the suspected hit-and-run car, but not the driver.</p> <p>"A hit-and-run with serious bodily injury or death is a felony," Axtman said.</p> <p>On that same day on March 22, King County Sheriff's Office said a white cargo-style van with a roof rack hit and critically injured a man in Tukwila in the 13000 block of Military Road South.</p> <p>On March 18, a hit-and-run crash happened in the heart of downtown Tacoma.</p> <p>Police are looking for the driver spotted on surveillance video speeding away.</p> <p>The victim was a newlywed who was struck in the middle of a crosswalk at 11th and Broadway.</p> <p>In Everett, a motorcyclist was seriously hurt March 20 on the Interstate 5 overpass at 112th Street Southeast.</p> <p>Troopers said the hit-and-run car is a gray Dodge Stratus with extensive front-end damage.</p> <p>State Patrol is pleading with witnesses, or even people who are involved in the hit-and-run collisions, to help relay critical information about suspect drivers.</p> <p>"License plate is the biggest thing," Axtman said. "Even if you could get us a few numbers or letters on that license plate. Most of the time we are able to solve that case."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Coke bottler: Mexican city too dangerous
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SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-23/this-mexican-city-is-so-dangerous-that-coke-femsa-is-pulling-out
GIST	<p>Altamirano in the southwestern state of Guerrero in Mexico is so dangerous that Coca-Cola Femsa is leaving.</p> <p>Citing two months of harassment of workers by local criminal groups and the lack of an effective police response, the country's largest bottler said it's indefinitely closing its distribution operations there starting Friday, affecting about 160 jobs.</p> <p>"The lack of conditions to efficiently and safely operate in this part of Guerrero and the recent, unjustified aggression to one of our collaborators led the company to this decision," Coke Femsa said in a statement. Employees had received threats and the company's facilities had been affected.</p> <p>The company didn't elaborate beyond the statement.</p> <p>At least two mayors of towns in Guerrero have been gunned down recently. The wave of violence coincides with record homicides across Mexico. Last October was the deadliest month of the century, according to data from the Interior Minister.</p> <p>The company closed another facility in Guerrero in 2014 amid threats to delivery workers.</p> <p>Fomento Economico Mexicano SAB, better known as Femsa, owns 47 percent of Coke Femsa, according to the company's website.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Mexico: coordinated ambushes
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ambush-mexican-marines-kill-wound-12-border-city-54005821?
GIST	<p>A Mexican marine and four suspected gunmen were killed during a coordinated series of ambushes against marine patrols in a northern Mexico border city, authorities reported Sunday.</p> <p>The attacks late Saturday and early Sunday left a total of 12 marines wounded.</p> <p>Authorities said marines were ambushed three separate times in Nuevo Laredo, a city across the border from Laredo, Texas.</p> <p>Marines returned fire and killed one gunman in the first attack, but suffered three wounded.</p> <p>Another patrol was sent to help the wounded when it also came under fire; that ambush killed one marine and wounded several others.</p> <p>A third patrol was ambushed just outside the marine base as it responded to the first two attacks. In that shootout, three gunmen were killed.</p> <p>Mexico's navy said in a statement that the gunmen had fake Marine uniforms and Marine markings on their vehicles.</p> <p>Nuevo Laredo is dominated by the Northeast Cartel, an offshoot of the Zetas cartel.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/26 Mozambique: car veers into crowd; kills 23
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/23-killed-car-hits-party-goers-mozambique-

	54009249?
GIST	<p>Mozambican media say 23 people were killed when a vehicle veered into a crowd attending a party in the capital of the southern African nation.</p> <p>Radio Mocambique says the vehicle was traveling at high speed when it hit the crowd early Sunday in Maputo. The radio station describes it as an accident.</p> <p>A senior police official Paulo Langa says the driver of the vehicle ignored a police order to stop just before hitting the party-goers beside a pedestrian bridge on a main road.</p> <p>Radio Mocambique quotes Langa as saying the driver died.</p> <p>An investigation is underway.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/26 Man w/armor, gun arrested train station
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/man-wearing-body-armor-carrying-loaded-gun-arrested/story?
GIST	<p>Police in Chicago arrested a man wearing body armor and carrying a loaded gun at the city's Union Station on Friday.</p> <p>The Cook County state attorney's office told Chicago ABC station WLS that Isaiah Malailua, a native of California, was charged with unlawful use of a weapon/body armor.</p> <p>Malailua, 21, was allegedly carrying a loaded 9 mm pistol, wearing a bulletproof vest and had a duffel bag filled with SWAT equipment, WLS reported.</p> <p>A spokesperson for the Cook County state attorney's office told WLS they believe the SWAT gear was stolen from the New York Police Department.</p> <p>"We are aware of the incident and are working with authorities in Chicago," the NYPD said in a statement. "The investigation is ongoing."</p> <p>The suspect is being held on \$100,000 bond and is next due in court on Friday.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Kansas waterpark operators indicted
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/03/23/kansas-waterpark-operators-indicted-criminal-charges-childs-death/454932002/
GIST	<p>Operators of a Kansas waterslide were so infatuated with building the world's tallest ride that they ignored serious safety issues that led to the decapitation of a 10-year-old boy and at least a dozen injuries to others, according to a grand jury indictment unsealed Friday.</p> <p>The indictment charges the operator of Schlitterbahn Waterpark in Kansas City, along with its director Tyler Austin Miles, with involuntary manslaughter, endangering children, and a host of other criminal offenses.</p> <p>Killed in the August 7, 2016 accident on the Verruckt waterslide was Caleb Schwab, the son of Kansas Rep. Scott Schwab. The raft he was in went airborne, hitting a pole and netting designed to keep riders from being thrown from the ride.</p> <p>"The death of (Caleb) appeared at first to be an isolated and unforeseeable incident until whistleblowers from within Schlitterbahn's own ranks came forward and revealed that Schlitterbahn officials had covered</p>

	<p>up similar incidents in the past," said the indictment, filed in Wyandotte County, Kansas.</p> <p>The indictment says that a company co-owner, Jeffrey Wayne Henry, was the designer of the Verruckt, despite the fact that he "possesses no technical or engineering credentials" and is a high-school dropout.</p> <p>A video shows that Caleb Schwab was obeying all rider instructions when his raft went airborne and killed him, and also severely injured two adult women in the same raft, according to the indictment. Caleb was sitting in the front of the raft.</p> <p>"Experts in the field of amusement ride design and safety examined Verruckt and found physical evidence which indicated that other rafts had gone airborne and collided with the overhead hoops and netting before the fatality," the indictment alleged. "These experts noted that Verruckt's design violated nearly all aspects" of longstanding industry safety standards.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Germany FM condemns anti-Semitism
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/03/25/german-foreign-minister-condemns-anti-semitism-at-schools.html
GIST	<p>BERLIN – Germany's foreign minister has sharply condemned rising anti-Semitism at schools following a new case at an elementary school in Berlin.</p> <p>Heiko Maas told daily Bild on Sunday that, "if a child is threatened in anti-Semitic ways, that's shameful and unbearable. We have to counter any kind of anti-Semitism decisively."</p> <p>Daily paper Berliner Zeitung reported earlier this week that a Jewish girl was abused at a Berlin elementary school by Muslim immigrant children "because she doesn't believe in Allah," and that in the past she had also received death threats.</p> <p>Anti-Semitic incidents at schools across Germany have risen in recent years and led to some Jewish students leaving public schools for private schools.</p> <p>Maas, who is currently on a visit to Israel, is known as a strong advocate of minority rights.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Ohio: Texas trio \$1M fentanyl bust
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/03/25/1m-in-fentanyl-seized-from-texas-trio-plotting-to-mail-drugs-back-from-ohio-authorities-say.html
GIST	<p>Three Texans were arrested in Ohio last week after an investigation yielded evidence that they had attempted to mail a large quantity of fentanyl back to Texas, authorities said.</p> <p>According to U.S. Attorney Justin Herdman of the Northern District of Ohio, it was enough fentanyl "to kill everyone in Toledo several times over."</p> <p>One kilogram of the opioid was seized at a Toledo post office, and another half-kilo and \$8,500 in cash were seized at a motel room where the trio were staying, the Toledo Blade reported.</p> <p>The drugs had an estimated total street value of about \$1 million, authorities said.</p> <p>Fentanyl is "a dangerous synthetic opioid with deadly consequences for users and those in law enforcement," Steve Francis, special agent in charge of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement homeland security investigations office in Detroit, told the Blade.</p>

	<p>The investigation began Monday after authorities learned that three "suspicious" people had checked in to two rooms at a Red Roof Inn in Toledo, the Dallas Morning News reported.</p> <p>On Monday and Tuesday, police reportedly watched three individuals – identified as Darrius Lonzo Lewis, 29; Anthony Ray Robinson, 32; and Barbara Nykitta Wilson, 21 – leaving and entering the rooms.</p> <p>Authorities said they watched Robinson and Wilson drive in separate cars to a post office Tuesday. Robinson reportedly entered the post office with a package, while Wilson returned a rental car before going back to the hotel in Robinson's car, the Dallas Morning News reported.</p> <p>After obtaining a search warrant, police found the drugs and cash and arrested the suspects.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Austin bomber calls self 'psychopath'
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/25/us/austin-bombings-investigation/index.html
GIST	<p>Austin, Texas (CNN) — Days after the Austin bomber blew himself up as police closed in, investigators are no closer to answering the question nearly everyone in the community is asking: Why?</p> <p>Investigators searching for a potential motive are relying on Mark Anthony Conditt's own words from a 25-minute recording he made hours before he was confronted by a SWAT team early Wednesday.</p> <p>In the cellphone recording, Conditt, 23, refers to himself as a "psychopath" and shows no contrition for carrying out a nearly three-week-long bombing spree that left two people dead and spread fear across the city.</p> <p>"Why would someone do such a senseless act of random violence? To many of us it doesn't make a whole lot of sense," Texas Rep. Michael McCaul said Saturday. "All we really have at this point in time ... are his own words from his confession tape where he describes himself as a psychopath, apparently expressing no remorse for the killings that he committed.</p> <p>"It's hard to imagine someone whose mind is so sick that they could commit bombings like this and feel absolutely no remorse," McCaul said.</p> <p>Both McCaul and Austin Police Chief Brian Manley said Conditt does not address race in the recording, but authorities have not ruled anything out as the investigation continues.</p> <p>The two victims in the bombings were African-American and the first three bombings were carried out in a largely minority area of Austin, prompting fears of a racially motivated killer.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Texas home nurse eyed in other deaths
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/03/23/texas-home-nurse-reportedly-in-us-illegally-and-facing-murder-charge-now-being-eyed-in-other-deaths.html
GIST	<p>A home health care nurse who reportedly is in the U.S. illegally and is accused of smothering an 81-year-old Texas woman to death may have more victims, police said Friday.</p> <p>Billy Kipkorir Chemirmir, 45, was taken into custody Tuesday after Lu Thi Harris was found dead from homicidal violence in her Dallas home, police said. A source told FOX 4 News that she was found with a pillow nearby and her makeup was smeared, and that Chemirmir worked as a home health care nurse.</p> <p>Authorities said Friday that they are looking into Chemirmir's medical background and Dallas Police will analyze 750 unattended elderly female deaths in the area since 2010 to see if he is connected to any of</p>

	<p>them.</p> <p>Police have also set up a 24-hour tip line for the case.</p> <p>“This is terribly disturbing,” said Plano Police Chief Gregory W. Rushin.</p> <p>Rushin's department started tracking Chemirmir after another family reportedly became suspicious that he was stealing from a relative that he was seeing. While following him on Tuesday, officers saw Chemirmir discard a jewelry box and found jewelry, cash and a set of keys on him. They also found a piece of paper that they traced back to Harris' home.</p> <p>Two other possible victims have come forward and told police that he tried to sit on their chest and smother them with a pillow, according to FOX 4 News.</p> <p>Chemirmir is currently being held in in Dallas County Jail on a \$1 million bond and is facing a capital murder charge in Harris' death.</p> <p>Records show Chemirmir is in the U.S. illegally and has an immigration hold on him, according to Fox 4. Two Kenyan news websites reported that he hails from the African country.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Seattle man admits NJ armed robbery
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/local/crime/article/Seattle-man-charged-in-4-deaths-admits-to-armed-12778328.php
GIST	<p>A 33-year-old Seattle man who allegedly killed four people as retribution for U.S. policies in the Middle East pleaded guilty Friday to two charges related to armed robbery in New Jersey.</p> <p>Ali Muhammad Brown pleaded guilty to first-degree robbery and second-degree unlawful possession of a handgun in New Jersey Superior Court on Friday, according to the Asbury Park (N.J.) Press.</p> <p>Brown robbed a Washington, D.C., man outside a Point Pleasant Beach, N.J. cafe on June 29, 2014, four days after he allegedly killed a 19-year-old college student near Newark, N.J.</p> <p>Authorities say Brown was on the lam from a trio of killings in the Seattle area. He has been charged with the deaths of two men in the Leschi neighborhood on June 1, 2014 and the shooting death of another man on April 27, 2014 in Skyway.</p> <p>Investigative records filed in King County Superior Court indicate that Brown told King County and Seattle detectives in Essex County, New Jersey, that he was following his Muslim faith by killing people in retaliation for the United States' policies regarding Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan.</p> <p>"(If a) man sees evil then he must take action against that evil," Brown said, according to court records.</p> <p>The crime for which Brown pleaded guilty Friday was his undoing. He fled the scene with the victim's wallet and car keys but couldn't operate the vehicle because he didn't know how to drive a stick shift, police said. But, they added, he left behind a fingerprint and was later apprehended after another alleged robbery while in possession of the gun linked to the four killings.</p> <p>Brown was convicted in that later robbery and is serving a 35-year sentence for that crime.</p> <p>He is currently on trial for the New Jersey killing, after which he will await extradition for the Seattle-area slayings.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 NYPD neighborhood policing program
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/nypd-community-policing-lower-crime/
GIST	<p>In 2017, New York City saw some of its lowest violent crime numbers in decades. The nation's largest city police department reported historic reductions in crime last year, including the first time the number of shooting incidents fell below 800 and the number of murders below 300 — the city's lowest per-capita murder rate in almost 70 years. Other reductions were seen in the number of robberies and burglaries in the city.</p> <p>With those benchmarks in mind, the NYPD now faces the challenges of sustaining, and attempting to surpass, that progress in 2018. The police force kicked off the year with some key internal promotions including the appointment of Rodney Harrison as Chief of Patrol. At the core of their approach to crime reduction is a concept called neighborhood policing.</p> <p>"We have more police officers on the streets who are in the process of building relationships," said Harrison. "Having that shared responsibility with the residents of the city of New York, that's a great way of being able to maintain violence at a low level."</p> <p>That concept of "shared responsibility" is often reiterated by NYPD Commissioner James O'Neill. In order to build a sense of unity, the NYPD is training neighborhood coordination officers through the Neighborhood Policing Program to deepen community relationships and make cops accessible to residents, not just in times of distress but as an integral part of their daily lives.</p> <p>Officers John Buchanan and Robert Bramble are neighborhood coordination officers at the 79th Precinct, focusing on the people and issues of their Brooklyn community.</p> <p>"The policing module is changing the way the community and police interact," said Buchanan. "It's taking officers that are generally scattered throughout the precinct everyday and assigning them to the same areas consistently so that if they have an issue, a problem in that area, that they're aware of it and they respond.... A person doesn't have to re-explain their problem over and over. It provides a sense of consistency for the officer and person knowing who's gonna show up when they call 911."</p> <p>Modern technology also helps make them more accessible. All 36,000 officers in the department have cellphones and many use them as ways to be contacted by their local residents.</p> <p>"Have you ever had a personal issue like if you had an ailment you had to go see a doctor? You always go see the same doctor," said Chief Harrison. "Well, it's kind of the same thing now. You have police officers in your neighborhood that are always assigned to you and you have access to them and you'll be able to call them when you need them and you'll be able to email them and there's always dialogue going back and forth."</p> <p>This focus on developing more meaningful connections with neighborhood residents comes amid a tense time in modern policing. Individual cases of police brutality — often caught on video and circulated on social media — have fueled public outrage and heightened scrutiny of the actions of police officers.</p> <p>Tracie Keesee, PhD, is the Deputy Commissioner of Equity and Inclusion at the NYPD and formerly served as the Deputy Commissioner of Training. In addition to her leadership and work with the NYPD, Keesee also has a doctorate in human and intercultural communications. In her thesis she focused on racial profiling and the interactions "through the car window" between law enforcement and members of the African-American community. That deep understanding of the complex societal dynamics shines through in her work.</p> <p>"You'll hear a lot of conversations around unconscious bias or implicit bias, and so we're human," said Keesee of the officer's perspective. "With the person on the other side of that window — the driver, African-American, male — you're coming with a history of interactions with law enforcement hoping that it will go well, that you have everything you need for that interaction."</p>

But some in the community say the reality has yet to live up to the promise.

Terrell J. Starr is a senior reporter for The Root and a resident of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, one of the neighborhoods patrolled by neighborhood coordination officers like Buchanan and Bramble. Starr argues that policing is inherently an adversarial role and putting more police officers into an area can actually increase tension with community members, especially minorities.

"The average young black male in New York City, they're not engaging with police officers at that level. The only time they're engaged with a police officer is normally in handcuffs," said Starr.

He remains troubled by how easily police encounters can escalate into the use of deadly force — and dismayed by the justifications that are often given when that happens.

"That's all it takes for a police officer to shoot you or to attack or to apply force: 'I felt.' That's something that Trayvon Martin's mother said when she was talking about policing, 'I felt.' And I hope that a black cop, or even a Latino cop when they look at me, they're not going to have that 'I felt' something or 'I fear for my life,'" said Starr.

Starr's skepticism also comes from a belief among some residents that cops, even if diverse, have more of a loyalty to their uniform than to the community — considering themselves "blue" before any other color.

But police departments nationwide have come under fire for a perceived lack of accountability in the tense atmosphere surrounding police brutality and the use of force in disputed circumstances.

"The problem comes in when a police officer engages in egregious activity and they're not held accountable, that's something that has not been touched at all. That's not an NYPD issue, that's not even a state of New York issue, that's an America issue," said Marc Morial, the president of the National Urban League and former mayor of New Orleans.

Lack of accountability is also a key concern for Starr.

"I don't think we need more contact with police, I think we need less — and more accountability," he said.

The NYPD's training programs aim to address situations that could escalate to violence and prevent the situation from ever reaching the point of an unnecessary fatality.

By putting officers into high-pressure simulations before sending them into the field, the NYPD hopes to prepare officers for difficult situations, such as dealing with someone with mental health issues.

"We do the best that we can to have officers understand that some of these things you can control and some of them will happen so fast that you will have to do and react in a way that you might not find yourself normally doing. And I think that it's important, though, for us to find that balance to make sure they understand the dangers of the job," said Keesee.

By focusing on programs that increase community relations and diversity in the force, the NYPD hopes to rebuild some of the trust between city residents and law enforcement.

The NYPD is not the first big city police department to turn to a neighborhood policing strategy. In the 1990s, New Orleans saw a 60 percent drop in violent crime after the mayor at the time, Marc Morial, implemented a combination of community policing and community-oriented development programs. Morial recounted that they went from being a city with one of the highest number of FBI complaints for police brutality and misconduct to having just a handful per year.

Morial called the NYPD's efforts "an ambitious and worthwhile undertaking," but emphasized, "time will tell" if it's fully successful.

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HEADLINE	03/23 Spain charges Catalan leaders w/rebellion
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/spain-wraps-judicial-probe-catalan-secession-attempt-53956842?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>A Spanish Supreme Court judge charged 13 Catalan separatist politicians with rebellion Friday for their attempts to make the region independent of Spain, dealing a heavy blow to the secessionist movement with an indictment that could put its political elite behind bars for decades.</p> <p>Judge Pablo Llarena ordered five of the Catalan politicians who answered a court summons Friday to be held without bail. Another of the summoned politicians, the ERC party's Marta Rovira, did not heed the order and announced in a letter that she was fleeing the country to live "in exile." Spanish media reported that she went to Switzerland.</p> <p>The judge also ordered that European and international arrest warrants be issued for six fugitive Catalan politicians, including former regional president Carles Puigdemont and Rovira. Two other Catalan politicians are already in jail.</p> <p>The charges of rebellion stem from an illegal independence declaration by the Catalan parliament last October. Rebellion is punishable with up to 30 years in prison.</p> <p>Spanish courts sought Puigdemont's extradition from Brussels last year but canceled that petition amid concerns that Belgium might send him back but restrict the crimes with which he could be charged.</p> <p>The jailings Friday are likely to cause outrage in Catalonia, where many supporters describe the Catalan officials in custody as "political prisoners." The pro-independence civil society group ANC called for marches late Friday in towns across the region.</p> <p>The separatist movement in Catalonia, a wealthy region of 7.5 million in northeast Spain, has ignited Spain's biggest constitutional crisis in decades. The indictment Friday appeared to scotch hopes of breaking the political deadlock and installing a new Catalan government any time soon.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/24 Protests in Sacramento grow unruly
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/protests-sacramento-over-unarmed-mans-death-grow-unruly-stephon-clark/
GIST	<p>SACRAMENTO, Calif. -- Demonstrators broke at least one car window, doused a bystander with drinks, and blocked busy downtown Sacramento thoroughfares in a second day of protests over the fatal officer-involved shooting of an unarmed black man. The Sacramento Bee reports Friday's protests grew unruly and sometimes violent.</p> <p>About 200 protesters confronted drivers in traffic, breaking the rear window of one car as it made its way through the throng.</p> <p>One video shows a protester jumping on an SUV's hood and the vehicle starting to drive off with him on top. The man jumped off, and the SUV sped away.</p> <p>The California Highway Patrol blocked ramps to Interstate 5 from protesters trying to disrupt traffic for a second day.</p> <p>Police fatally shot 22-year-old Stephon Alonzo Clark in the darkened backyard of his grandparents' home. He was shot while holding a cellphone that police said they thought was a gun, CBS News' John</p>

	Blackstone reported.
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HEADLINE	03/23 Driver identified in Travis AFB crash
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/23/us/travis-air-force-base-security-breach/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN) — The man who died after the vehicle he drove onto Travis Air Force Base in Northern California caught fire has been identified, the FBI said Friday.</p> <p>Hafiz Kazi, 51, had lived in the United States since 1993 and was a legal resident, FBI Special Agent Sean Ragan said at a news conference. He was originally from India.</p> <p>Authorities have not announced a motive but the security breach does not appear at this point to be terrorism-related, Ragan said.</p> <p>"We don't have any nexus to terrorism at this point," he said.</p> <p>However, agents are searching his phones and social media for any possible connections. Kazi apparently lived in the San Francisco area and had worked as a cab driver, Ragan said.</p> <p>Ragan said a Kia minivan drove through the main gate at the base about 7 p.m. Wednesday. It looked like there were flames inside the vehicle, he said.</p> <p>The vehicle veered, crashed and started burning, Ragan said. By the time first responders broke through the locked doors, Kazi was dead, Ragan said.</p> <p>No shots were fired, he said. An autopsy is pending.</p> <p>Investigators discovered five propane tanks, three phones, gas cans, several lighters and a gym bag inside the car, Ragan said.</p> <p>"The investigation is ongoing and there are no current known threats to the base or community," the base said. " The main gate has reopened and all other facilities are operating as normal."</p> <p>Travis Air Force Base is home to 10,000 military personnel and is a major hub for logistics and military cargo in the Pacific. It's the largest military aerial port in the United States and includes facilities for airlift and aerial refueling.</p> <p>The base is located in Solano County and is midway between Sacramento and San Francisco.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/25 Germany arrests ex-Catalan leader
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/fugitive-catalan-leader-held-police-germany-53998737?
GIST	<p>Carles Puigdemont, the fugitive ex-leader of Catalonia and ardent separatist, was arrested Sunday by German police on an international warrant as he tried to enter the country from Denmark.</p> <p>The Spanish government told The Associated Press it had received "official confirmation from German authorities of the arrest" of Puigdemont in response to the warrant issued by Spain's Supreme Court.</p> <p>Police in the northern German state of Schleswig-Holstein said highway police arrested Puigdemont on Sunday morning near the A7 highway that leads into Germany.</p>

	<p>His lawyer, Jaume Alonso-Cuevillas, said Puigdemont was on his way back to Belgium where he has been staying since fleeing Spain following a failed bid by his regional government in October to declare independence from Spain.</p> <p>A Spanish Supreme Court judge reactivated an international arrest warrant for Puigdemont on Friday when he was visiting Finland. Arrest warrants have also been issued for five other fugitive Catalan separatists.</p> <p>Spain was plunged into its worst political crisis in three decades when Puigdemont's government flouted a court ban and held an ad-hoc referendum on independence for the northeastern region in October.</p>
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Subject: 2018_03_23 Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources
(InFOCUS)
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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	03/23 Who counted the votes in Russia?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/03/23/who-counted-the-votes-in-russia-we-checked/?utm_term=.485dec5958ee
GIST	<p>On March 18, 2018, Russians reelected President Vladimir Putin by a huge margin. Official reports say that 67 percent of voters went to the polls and that 76 percent of those supported the incumbent. This result comes as zero surprise, and media coverage has focused on the lack of true opposition candidates and allegations of ballot-stuffing.</p> <p>But there is more to this story. About 800,000 poll workers at more than 95,000 polling stations across Russia delivered basic administrative services for this election. This army of street-level bureaucrats verified voter identities, issued/counted the ballots and established the voting tallies at each precinct.</p> <p>How did Sunday’s election look, behind the scenes? We tend to assume that poll workers, whether they are in South Dakota or the Northern Caucasus, are professional and independent. Put simply, we expect poll workers to leave aside their political biases and ensure that voting takes place according to fair and impartial procedures.</p> <p>And we tend to believe that polling commissions — whose job is to organize and manage elections properly — should include representatives of different parties. This makes for balanced monitoring and control, which helps diminish voting manipulation and election fraud.</p> <p>Russia’s elections do not look impartial</p> <p>On the basis of data about poll workers that we collected and analyzed, a number of reasons exist to be doubtful that Russia’s election commissions were balanced and unbiased. We spent several months monitoring the composition of precinct commissions before the 2018 election. We used official data disclosed by the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation.</p> <p>We considered poll workers’ names, their positions as commissioners (head, deputy head, secretary, regular member), and what type of organization nominated them to the commission. Here is what we found:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Many poll workers probably came under pressure to manipulate the voting process and voting tallies. Russia’s political parties, gatherings of voters and civic organizations nominated about 385,000, 355,000 and 65,000 poll workers, respectively. These figures tell little about the exact political affiliations of poll workers, but they shed light on mechanisms for recruiting commissioners. And the “gatherings of voters” is the most voluminous and electorally sensitive mechanism of poll workers’ mobilization. <p>The vast majority (nearly two-thirds) of the 355,000 poll workers from this category were recruited from their workplaces. Many are “bjudgetniki” (from the word “budget”) — workers who get their salaries from the state. Thus, teachers, local bureaucrats and administrators, service members and workers at state enterprises are particularly vulnerable to administrative resource, a form of political coercion.</p>

This means their bosses — higher-ranking school administrators and bureaucrats, heads of enterprises and commanders — can either push them to commit illegal actions, electoral manipulations or fraud. Or they can calm poll workers who see these actions at their precincts and might think about reporting the irregularities.

2. Putin supporters occupied 1 in 3 electoral commission head positions. More than 60 political parties recruited 385,000 poll workers. And the vast majority of the electoral commissioners were nominated by political parties that got seats in the December 2016 Duma elections.

Among them, the governing United Russia party and ally Just Russia both supported the candidacy of Putin in 2018. These parties control a combined 37.5 percent of party-nominated commissioners. Heads of commissions, in particular, possess more powers, influence and discretion than regular poll workers: Whoever has control over the commissions' officers also has more control over the commission in general.

And this is exactly what we observed in the selection of Russia's commission heads. More than 38,000 of these heads were recruited from the gatherings of the voters' nominees, which means a large portion of them are, therefore, more vulnerable to administrative pressure, mainly at their workplaces. An additional 28,000 commission heads were recruited from United Russia, which, by itself, controls twice as many commission heads as all other parties combined.

What does this mean on the ground? Basically, every third head of a polling station commission in Russia was nominated by United Russia, which backed Vladimir Putin.

3. A closer look at Crimea's poll workers shows many newcomers. This was the first time that voters in Crimea cast ballots in a Russian presidential election since Russia occupied the peninsula in 2014. In our analysis, we compared the composition of poll workers in Crimea for the 2018 election with the poll workers from the last election, held in 2012 under Ukrainian rule.

We found that fewer than 20 percent of the 2012 poll workers were signed up to work in 2018. This suggests that the new regime has extensively substituted new poll workers for previous election administration personnel. Considering the absolute number of people needed — more than 14,000 commissioners — the Russian administration in Crimea seemed to set up an efficient system to recruit poll workers.

What do all of these findings suggest, then? Taken together, they paint a picture of the many ways that the Russian regime can control what happens on election day. By filling election commissions with poll workers who depend on the state for their livelihoods, integrating representatives from the parties that actively backed the Putin regime, and controlling officer positions — mainly heads of the commissions — the story seems straightforward.

In Russia, the regime does pay close attention to those “who count the votes.”

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HEADLINE	03/23 Congress just averted govt. shutdown
SOURCE	http://time.com/5212173/congress-shutdown-budget-1-3-trillion/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>(WASHINGTON) — Congress gave final approval Friday to a giant \$1.3 trillion spending bill that ends the budget battles for now, but only after late obstacles skirted close to another shutdown as conservatives objected to big outlays on Democratic priorities at a time when Republicans control the House, Senate and White House.</p> <p>Senate passage shortly after midnight averted a third federal shutdown this year, an outcome both parties wanted to avoid. But in crafting a sweeping deal that busts budget caps, they've stirred conservative opposition and set the contours for the next funding fight ahead of the midterm elections.</p>

	<p>The House easily approved the measure Thursday, 256-167, a bipartisan tally that underscored the popularity of the compromise, which funds the government through September. It beefs up military and domestic programs, delivering federal funds to every corner of the country.</p> <p>But action stalled in the Senate, as conservatives ran the clock in protest. Then, an unusual glitch arose when Sen. James Risch, R-Idaho, wanted to remove a provision to rename a forest in his home state after the late Cecil Andrus, a four-term Democratic governor.</p> <p>At one point, Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., stepped forward to declare the entire late-night scene “ridiculous. It’s juvenile.”</p> <p>Once the opponents relented, the Senate began voting, clearing the package by a 65-32 vote a full day before Friday’s midnight deadline to fund the government.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 School shooting generation #NeverAgain
SOURCE	http://time.com/longform/never-again-movement/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>It’s lunchtime on a Tuesday, and the kids are piling into a pizzeria booth in Coral Springs, Fla., to plot a revolution. “The adults know that we’re cleaning up their mess,” says Cameron Kasky, an 11th-grader at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, who started the #NeverAgain movement to curb gun violence three weeks earlier in his living room. “It’s like they’re saying, ‘I’m sorry I made this mess,’” adds buzzcut senior Emma González, “while continuing to spill soda on the floor.”</p> <p>Kasky and González are sitting with two more of the movement’s leaders, Alex Wind and Jaclyn Corin. Except they’re not sitting, exactly. They’re crouching diagonally on the seat and leaning back on one another’s knees in order to devour their calzones while maintaining as much physical contact as possible. Corin throws a crouton into González’s mouth. Kasky uses Corin’s knees as a pillow. The conversation turns from their fellow organizer David Hogg (“So laser-focused,” González says, that “he could make his body get pregnant if he wanted to”) to the conspiracy theory that they’re actors being paid by shadowy donors (prompting Kasky to ask why his credit card was recently declined at McDonald’s) to their prolific trolling of the NRA. They agree that the gun lobby’s spokeswoman, Dana Loesch, is “very hot but kind of scary,” as González puts it.</p> <p>The pizza joint is a few hundred yards away from the school where 17 of their peers and teachers were murdered a month ago. At 2:21 p.m. on Valentine’s Day, according to authorities, 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz, a former student, entered the freshman building armed with an AR-15 and opened fire into four classrooms on the first floor. Corin had just delivered carnations to the building to raise funds for junior prom; she had handed one flower to a girl who was shot minutes later. After the fire alarm went off during his AP environmental science class, Hogg took a video of students crouching inside a tiny classroom to hide from the shooter. The video went viral, landing him a recurring spot on the cable-TV circuit. The next day, Kasky invited Wind and Corin over to his house to plan a march for gun reform. Together, they started the #NeverAgain hashtag on Twitter.</p> <p>Most of these kids cannot vote, order a beer, make a hotel reservation or afford a pizza without pooling some of their allowance. On the surface, they’re not so different from previous generations of idealistic teenagers who set out to change the world, only to find it is not so easy. Yet over the past month, these students have become the central organizers of what may turn out to be the most powerful grassroots gun-reform movement in nearly two decades. For much of the rest of the country, numbed and depressed by repeated mass shootings, the question has become, Can these kids actually do it?</p> <p>No one thinks it will be easy. Gun violence in America is one of those problems that can feel truly hopeless. The U.S. has only 4.4% of the world’s population, yet it accounts for roughly 42% of the world’s guns, according to the comprehensive 2007 Small Arms Survey. And roughly 31% of the world’s mass shooters are American, according to a University of Alabama study. Even as mass-shooting deaths mount,</p>

our Second Amendment has made gun rights a third-rail issue: roughly 90% of Americans agree on “common-sense” solutions like universal background checks, yet absolutists stand in the way of any meaningful action.

After Adam Lanza killed 20 first-graders and six staff members at a Connecticut elementary school in December 2012, politicians tried to tackle the issue. President Obama issued Executive Orders to strengthen the background-check system and study gun violence, and several states tightened gun restrictions. Yet Congress failed to pass a modest bipartisan bill to close loopholes for gun sales. In the five years since, a familiar pattern has emerged. Every month or so, a killer shoots innocent people at random. There is a brief period of mourning. Democrats offer feeble pleas for new gun limits; Republicans offer “thoughts and prayers.” No substantial laws are passed, and the nation moves on. This was the response when Omar Mateen killed 49 people at an Orlando nightclub in 2016; when Stephen Paddock massacred 58 people at a Las Vegas concert last October; when Devin Patrick Kelley killed 26 people in a Sutherland Springs, Texas, church in November.

But in the days after the Parkland shooting, something different happened. The Parkland kids, at once tearful and cutting, publicly called out the NRA’s influence on national politics, and shamed the leaders they considered responsible for the nation’s lax gun laws. (Privately, they have dubbed Florida Governor Rick Scott “Voldemort” and called Senator Marco Rubio some names that are unprintable.) Their voices quickly went viral. González had no Twitter account before the shooting—11 days later, she had more followers than the NRA. They called for specific changes like a renewed assault-weapons ban, universal background checks and digitized gun—ownership records.

Perhaps most important, the Parkland kids painted the NRA and their allies as the mortal enemies of the roughly 50 million schoolkids growing up in what Kasky calls “the mass-shooting generation.” They took the mantle of “personal protection” from the gun lobby, while reframing the larger gun debate along generational lines.

And so news that was once met with sad resignation now drives teenagers to march in the streets. On March 14, nearly a million kids across the country left class for the National School Walkout to protest the school-shooting epidemic. Support for stronger gun regulations spiked to 68% after the shooting, up from 60% last November, according to a Politico/Morning Consult survey. Public support for the NRA is down to 37%, according to a WSJ/NBC poll, the first time since 2000 that the organization has been viewed more negatively than positively. Companies from Delta Airlines to Hertz to MetLife cut ties with the NRA. Dick’s Sporting Goods announced it would stop carrying assault weapons. Florida, known for its historically soft gun policies, passed a bill March 9 that bans bump stocks, imposes a waiting period, raises the minimum age to buy a weapon and allows cops to take guns from mentally disturbed people. Sixty-seven NRA-endorsed Republicans voted for the bill, and the gun-friendly GOP Governor Scott signed it.

How a movement catches fire is always a mystery, but the Parkland kids seem matched for this moment. They’re young enough to be victimized by a school shooting, but old enough to shape the aftermath. Like many teenagers, they’re at a peculiar stage in their lives where they feel at once vulnerable and invincible, highly social yet impervious to the etiquette expected from adults. Their bombastic style mirrors President Trump’s: they call their enemies names and hurl sick burns at politicians and lobbyists as if they’re shouting across the locker room.

None of which means they’ll actually succeed, and the kids are not entirely naive about their chances. They know the GOP-controlled Congress is unlikely to pass meaningful new gun laws. Although Trump briefly signaled support for strengthening background checks, he quickly abandoned that position. Nor do the Parkland kids speak for everyone, by a long shot: polls show that young people as a whole do not necessarily favor stricter gun laws than their parents. Which means the kids face the same question as the movements before them: If this government doesn’t respond to their demands, did their movement make a difference?

The first big test will come on March 24 with the student-led March for Our Lives, which already has registered more than 800 demonstrations in all 50 states and on six continents. (“Sorry, Antarctica, y’all

are gonna get shot,” Kasky quips.) The organizers plan to allow only young speakers to address the Washington march, and only artists under 24 can submit official poster designs. The march is meant to expand voter registration among like-minded members of the school-shooting generation: the kids that grew up post-Columbine, who huddled behind barricades during active-shooter drills and learned to tape construction paper over classroom windows.

From there, the Parkland kids plan to make gun reform the central issue for young voters in the midterms. “We’re going to show these politicians that we’re coming for them,” says Hogg. Kasky is more ambitious. “The world failed us,” he says, “and we’re here to make a new one that’s going to be easier on the next generation. If you’re against that, then get out.”

The youth revolt is being planned in a donated office space in a strip mall, next to a mediocre deli in a small town near Parkland. To get inside the three windowless rooms where the #NeverAgain movement is headquartered, you have to knock three times on a locked glass door and then loudly identify yourself so the kids are sure you’re not an armed stalker. (They have received death threats.) Inside the lair, there are boxes of March for Our Lives T-shirts and a bust of Robert F. Kennedy next to whiteboards with schedules of conference calls. On one wall there’s a collage of mail that runs the gamut from encouraging to obscene. (An excerpt from one letter, sent to 17-year-old Parkland organizer Delaney Tarr: “Shut the f-ck up, you stupid f-cking c-nt.”) On another there’s a map of the U.S. where the teens have labeled the hundreds of sibling marches. A broom closet near the back bears a sheet of notebook paper that says Cameron Kasky’s office, directly across from a tiny bathroom labeled Cameron Kasky’s other office.

Everything crackles with a sense of ferocious optimism. It feels like the last rehearsal of a high school musical, halftime at state championships, the final days of senior year. The kids stream in and out on no particular schedule, tumble to the floor to read their fan mail, twirl around on chairs while composing tweets and crowd into a tiny conference room for calls with reporters or lawmakers. One day, they spent an afternoon making a video mocking NRA spokeswoman Loesch (they call her “the woman from the SuperBeets commercial” after digging up an old spot she did for a beet-juice product). Another day, they met with Representative Ted Deutch, a Florida Democrat who represents Parkland in Congress. There’s a sense that anything can happen in this little corner of the teenage universe, because all kinds of things can.

Gun politics have vexed adult organizers for decades, but so far the Parkland teens have had striking successes. Even though the kids are disappointed in the Florida bill (“It’s like they tried to take a big step forward and then tripped,” Hogg says), it’s still the first significant piece of gun legislation to come out of the Florida legislature in at least 20 years. The March 14 school walkouts, organized by Women’s March youth groups, surpassed the 750,000 protesters who flooded the Washington Mall for the Million Mom March in 2000 in what was then the largest gun-safety protest in U.S. history. “This youth movement is unprecedented,” says Kris Brown, co-president of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, which was formed by the organizations behind the 2000 march. “What’s different here is that the children who are impacted are older, and they are able to give voice in a way that could not happen before.”

The #NeverAgain organizers built a movement with the skills they learned in high school. Hogg, an aspiring journalist who studies TV production at Stoneman Douglas, has anointed himself the movement’s “press secretary.” Corin, the bubbly junior class president who did a 50-page term paper on gun control last year, organized roughly 100 students to travel to Tallahassee to lobby the state legislature. Kasky and Wind, both drama kids, have given some of the most emotional testimony about the shooting and their dead classmates. González gave a speech about the NRA’s influence that was informed by an AP government lesson on special-interest groups.

The kids are social-media natives who have used Twitter to stir up the same kind of fervor Trump does. If the President can mock his enemies, they reason, then why can’t high school students? “People always say, ‘Get off your phones,’ but social media is our weapon,” says Corin. “Without it, the movement wouldn’t have spread this fast.”

Teens have always had a unique talent for humiliation, and social media only sharpens their knives. If the Parkland kids were targeting their classmates instead of powerful lobbyists or Senators, their taunts could

be mistaken for bullying. But going up against the NRA, they're like mouthy Davids slinging stones at Goliath. "They're using Twitter as a means to ridicule, to dismiss, to brush past the usual criticisms and just say, 'These people are full of it,'" says Robert Spitzer, a professor of political science at SUNY Cortland who has written five books on gun policy. "The door for this has been opened by Donald Trump himself."

As teenagers who survived a school shooting, they're politically hard to hit: if the NRA or the GOP fight back, they are attacking young victims of a tragedy. One GOP candidate for the Maine house of representatives who called González a "skinhead lesbian" on Twitter faced so much online backlash that he dropped out of the race.

The students have had plenty of help. They've raised more than \$4 million from small donors on the crowdfunding site GoFundMe, plus a couple million more from celebrities like George and Amal Clooney, Steven Spielberg and Oprah Winfrey. A top Hollywood PR firm is assisting with press requests pro bono, and Women's March organizer Deena Katz is volunteering as a consultant on the march. The gun-reform advocacy group Everytown for Gun Safety, backed by billionaire former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, has given out more than \$1 million in grants to local organizers planning sibling marches around the country, and the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence is sending busloads of kids to Washington, D.C. Democratic megadonor Tom Steyer pledged \$1 million to gun-safety groups' efforts to register more high school students to vote. "Our biggest problem is that we're getting too much help," says Corin.

They know that other youth campaigns against gun violence, including those led by black activists in urban communities, have not gotten the same financial support or media attention. "We came from an affluent area, and we're mostly white, and we have to use that privilege," says Tarr. The kids say they are trying to correct the imbalance. A letter from the Dream Defenders, a racial-justice group formed after the killing of Trayvon Martin, is hanging on the office wall. And in early March, the teens invited young activists from the Peace Warriors, a Chicago anti-violence group, to Parkland to discuss coordinating their efforts. "We're fighting for the same thing," says Arieyanna Williams, a high school senior from Chicago who has been working with the Peace Warriors since sophomore year. "We found our voice in Parkland. We didn't really have it here."

Inside the office, there is no adult supervision beyond Matt Deitsch and Kaylyn Pipitone, two 20-year-old college students and recent Stoneman Douglas alums who help with things that only adults can do, like signing contracts and insurance forms and paperwork for their 501(c)(4). "We want the grownups we need in this, and nothing more," says Kasky. "We only have people doing the things that as 17-year-olds we cannot." At an early #NeverAgain meeting, parents asked how they could help, recalls Alex Wind's mother.

The answer came back: "Order pizza."

The March for Our Lives almost certainly won't lead to major gun legislation in Congress this year. But the Parkland teens are taking the long view. To them, this movement is as much about mobilizing young voters as it is about gun violence. The voter-registration group HeadCount plans to dispatch roughly 5,000 volunteers to sign up young voters at U.S. marches. The Parkland kids say their goal is for 4 out of 5 young people to vote in November's midterm elections. "Either have the politicians pass legislation or set them up to be voted out," Kasky says. "It's a win-win." If only it were that simple. Only 39% of voters between 18 and 20 voted in the 2016 election, according to the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University, and only 14% of voters that age showed up to cast a ballot in the 2014 midterms. Previous turnout drives have not had much success. Not all young people vote Democratic, either. While Trump has a historically low approval rating among millennials (only 6% strongly approve of him, while 46% strongly disapprove), almost a third of millennials lean Republican, according to a Pew survey. Only 49% of 18-to-29-year-olds favored a renewed assault-weapons ban in a 2015 Pew survey, while more than half of respondents of other age groups did support a ban.

They envision a youth political movement that will address many of the other issues affecting the youngest

Americans. Hogg says he would like to have a youth demonstration every year on March 24, harnessing the power of teenage anger to demand action on everything from campaign-finance reform to net neutrality to climate change. But even if none of this works—even if they never pass comprehensive gun reform, and net neutrality fails, and Citizens United endures, and climate-change legislation stalls—today’s teenage rebels will become tomorrow’s establishment leaders, informed by the experience that may already be shaping the gun debate.

And that, says Hogg, is the bottom line for politicians who side with the NRA. “You’re gonna be smeared in the textbooks. Your legacy is gone,” he says. “If you don’t stand up with us now, you’ll be standing against us.”

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HEADLINE	03/22 Census: people, jobs, housing costs up
SOURCE	http://www.thenewtribune.com/news/business/article206326214.html
GIST	<p>Last year, enough people arrived in Pierce, King and Snohomish counties to fill Cheney Stadium nearly 10 times over.</p> <p>From April 2016 through April 2017, the population of the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue area grew by more than 64,000 people, according to data released Thursday by the U.S. Census Bureau.</p> <p>The three-county area was the sixth-fastest growing metro area in the country, topped only by Dallas, Houston, Atlanta, Phoenix and Washington, D.C., areas, the Census Bureau says.</p> <p>The population numbers account for births and deaths, with the primary driver for growth being people who came here from other places.</p> <p>King County accounted for more than half of the increase, with nearly 33,000 more people living there than the previous year. The county saw the sixth-highest growth nationally in the number of people who moved there.</p> <p>Pierce County’s growth was 26th nationally, with a little over 17,000 more people here in 2017 than the prior year. That’s more than 46 people moving to Pierce County or being born here each day.</p> <p>Last year also saw job growth throughout the region.</p> <p>According to figures from the Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle experienced 3 percent job growth in 2017. Pierce County was at 2 percent.</p> <p>Since 2010, the region has added nearly 370,000 jobs.</p> <p>All of this puts more pressure on transportation systems and is driving up housing costs throughout the region.</p> <p>Rents in the area remain among the fastest-growing nationwide, according to real estate data website Zillow. Median rent in Seattle is \$2,200 a month, a nearly 5 percent increase from the previous year.</p> <p>The pace of rent increases in Tacoma is stunning compared to national figures, where median rents increased nearly 3 percent to \$1,445 per month nationwide.</p> <p>Tacoma’s rents rose by 9 percent in a year, with typical rents hitting \$1,600 a month.</p> <p>If you’re looking for affordable housing, there’s more bad news: Zillow says a third fewer homes are on the market in Tacoma now than last year, when inventories hit a record low.</p>

Median home values in Tacoma rose 14 percent in a year, to a median of \$279,600, according to Zillow. (The company’s algorithm values all homes, not just those that sell.)

It’s already difficult to find a place to rent in some parts of Tacoma. Now Zillow says renters are staying in place longer for a variety of reasons: Those who want to buy can’t find a home, or if they want to move, it’s hard to find another apartment or rental home.

“Searching for the ‘right’ home has become a drawn-out affair, and rising prices require more savings for a down payment,” Zillow senior economist Aaron Terrazas said in a news release.

“Were it not for strong new apartment construction over the past half-decade, rental appreciation would be even stronger than it is now.”

Still, builders are not keeping pace with people moving here.

Construction firms have said they can’t hire skilled laborers fast enough, and the state predicts hundreds more construction jobs will be needed in the coming years to fill the demand.

As such, people have been venturing to areas farther from urban job centers, adding to rapid growth in smaller Western Washington communities.

The new census data noted that Shelton and Centralia were among the largest-gaining metropolitan areas in the United States — defined as urban areas with core populations of at least 10,000 but fewer than 50,000.

The two towns were ranked No. 9 and 10, respectively, on the latest Census Bureau list. Shelton’s population grew by 1,587 to 63,710; Centralia grew by 1,570 to 78,200.

The latest data track with trends seen last year of more people looking beyond Seattle to areas such as Mason County.

Kristy Buck, managing broker with John L. Scott’s Shelton office, told The News Tribune in September that its waterfront was “drawing people from Seattle, Tacoma and California.”

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HEADLINE	03/22 Teen wins Tacoma PD, mall lawsuit
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article206484374.html
GIST	<p>The teen thrown to the ground by an off-duty Tacoma police officer working security at the Tacoma Mall were awarded more than half a million dollars Thursday in federal court.</p> <p>Monique Tillman and her brother, Eric Branch, sued Officer Jared Williams and the city of Tacoma in U.S. District Court in Tacoma, alleging that Williams’ conduct while attempting to detain the two on May 24, 2014, in the mall parking lot was assaultive and excessive. A jury found their claims to be true and awarded them \$550,000, attorney Rick Friedman said.</p> <p>“Monique and Eric are just looking forward to putting this behind them and getting on with their lives,” Friedman said. “I think it was important for them to stand up for their civil rights and not take this lying down, but they also don’t want to hold any grudges moving forward.”</p> <p>A call and email seeking comment from the city of Tacoma were not immediately returned.</p> <p>Security footage captured Williams throwing Tillman to the ground by her hair after she and Branch were bicycling through the mall parking lot. Williams was in his Tacoma police cruiser and in uniform when he turned on the car’s lights and pulled them over without seeing them commit a crime.</p>

	<p>Tillman asked why she had been pulled over, and Williams said she had caused a disturbance and was going to trespass her from mall property, meaning she could be arrested if she returned. Tillman asked again why she had been pulled over, and then tried to bike away.</p> <p>As she rode away, Williams pulled her to the ground, then slammed her to the pavement and used his Taser on her.</p> <p>Williams remains employed as an officer with the Tacoma Police Department, spokeswoman Loretta Cool said Thursday.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 ACLU decries CBP raids Greyhound buses
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/2018/03/aclu-objects-immigration-raids-greyhound-buses
GIST	<p>The American Civil Liberties Union in Washington and other states have issued a letter asking that Greyhound Lines stop allowing U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents to routinely board its buses to question passengers about their immigration status.</p> <p>The ACLU and other advocates argue the raids, which customs agents have conducted on an increasing basis since the election of President Donald Trump — including here in Washington state near the Canadian border — violate passengers’ Fourth Amendment rights. Those rights protect against “unreasonable searches and seizures.”</p> <p>“These intrusive encounters often evince a blatant disregard for passengers’ constitutional rights and have even resulted in CBP agents removing passengers from buses and arresting them,” reads the letter sent on Wednesday to Dave Leach, president and chief executive officer of Greyhound Lines, Inc. based in Dallas, Texas.</p> <p>“Greyhound is in the business of transporting its passengers safely from place to place. It should not be in the business of subjecting its passengers to intimidating interrogations, suspicionless searches, warrantless arrests, and the threat of deportation.”</p> <p>Greyhound confirmed that it had received the letter and said it planned to respond.</p> <p>“We understand their concerns and those of our customers with regard to this matter,” Greyhound said in a statement provided to Crosscut. “However, Greyhound is required to comply with the law. We are aware that routine transportation checks not only affect our operations, but our customers’ travel experience, and will continue to do everything legally possible to minimize any negative experiences.”</p> <p>“Greyhound has opened a dialogue with the Border Patrol to see if there is anything that can be done to balance the enforcement of federal law with the dignity and privacy of our valued customers.”</p> <p>ACLU and other advocates argue Greyhound is not legally obligated to cooperate with Customs and Border Protection because as a business it, too, is protected under the Fourth Amendment.</p> <p>Under the law, officials are allowed to conduct warrantless searches as long as they’re near the border. “Case law seems to suggest within 100 air miles just about anything is fair game,” said Stephen I. Vladeck, a professor of law at the University of Texas. (According to The New York Times, a “measure to limit that distance to 25 miles passed the Senate in 2013 but was rejected by the House; it was proposed after Senator Patrick J. Leahy, Democrat of Vermont, was stopped by the Border Patrol at an immigration checkpoint.”)</p> <p>The U.S. Department of Justice adopted the regulations establishing officials’ ability to operate without a warrant close to the border in 1953. Two Supreme Court cases in the 1970s — <i>Almeida-Sanchez v. United</i></p>

States and *United States v. Martinez-Fuerte* — generally upheld the new regulations, Vladeck explained. Yet both Vladeck and the ACLU point out that, legally, officials must still have either probable cause or consent to conduct the searches — even without a warrant.

In fact, in 2013, the ACLU of Washington and the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project announced a settlement in a case that challenged the Border Patrol's practice of stopping vehicles and interrogating passengers on the Olympic Peninsula. As part of the settlement, the agency acknowledged that vehicle stops away from the border must be based on reasonable suspicion and promised to give agents additional training in Fourth Amendment protections.

Matt Adams, legal director of Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, said at the time: "This agreement confirms that Border Patrol can't pull over a vehicle because of the driver's race or ethnicity or simply because the person lives in proximity to the border."

In its March letter, the ACLU argues Border Patrol has fallen back on regularly interrogating passengers without probable cause and singling out individuals "because of the color of their skin or because they have a foreign accent."

According to U.S. Customs and Border Protection records obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request by the University of Washington's Center for Human Rights that were shared with Crosscut, agents who board Greyhound buses often stay at the front of the bus "near the driver's area to leave the aisle open to anyone who wished to freely enter or exit the bus."

"I went to the back of the bus and, in the English language[,] began to ask each passenger as to his or her citizenship," the description of a Greyhound search in a CBP document goes on to read. "When I questioned each passenger, I stood at the rear of seat in which the passenger was sitting to allow him or her to depart from the bus if they wished to do so."

Vladeck said the U.S. Supreme Court would likely be uncomfortable with the way those searches are being conducted. Agents make it clear they've given passengers the ability to leave the bus because otherwise they would be legally obligated to read them their Miranda Rights, which would include a statement about how they have the right to remain silent, Vladeck explained. With the way searches are conducted now, passengers have the right to remain silent when questioned but often aren't aware of the fact.

And even if passengers were aware of their rights, Adams of NWIRP asks: "What are they going to do, get off and lose out on their bus trip?"

"It just defies common sense to say oh, yes, they have the opportunity to walk away," Adams said.

According to the 856 pages of CBP documents obtained by the UW's Center for Human Rights, CBP has been routinely conducting Greyhound searches in Washington state. But information on exactly where the agents are boarding buses has been redacted in the documents.

According to CPB records from the first half of last year, from January 2017 to May 2017, the agency conducted Greyhound searches at least seven times, which averages to more than once a month. According to one news report, in 2017 alone, CBP agents took into custody at least 34 people in the Spokane area.

Angelina Godoy, director of the UW's Center for Human Rights, has filed an appeal challenging the redactions. According to Godoy, the agency had initially claimed it had no records pertaining to searches in Washington state. Customs and Border Protection also promised to respond to the Center's latest appeal by Feb. 9 but has not done so.

When asked directly, a spokesperson for CBP, which is an arm of the Department of Homeland Security, would not provide statistics on how often, or where, it questions passengers.

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HEADLINE	03/22 WA phases out Atlantic salmon farming
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/934759/washington-state-phases-out-atlantic-salmon-farming/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — Washington state is phasing out marine farming of Atlantic salmon and other nonnative fish under legislation signed by Gov. Jay Inslee.</p> <p>Inslee signed the measure Thursday but vetoed a section of the bill he said wasn't needed to implement the bill.</p> <p>Net pens have operated in state waters for several decades but the practice came under heavy criticism after thousands of nonnative fish escaped into waterways last summer.</p> <p>Inslee has said the risks, while low, are unacceptable given how much money and effort the state spends to restore wild Pacific salmon runs.</p> <p>The bill sponsored by Rep. Kristine Lytton would end state leases and permits for operations that grow nonnative finfish in state waters when current leases expire in 2022.</p> <p>It targets Canada's Cooke Aquaculture Pacific, which the state fined \$332,000 for the Aug. 19 net pen collapse. Cooke, the largest producer of farmed Atlantic salmon in the U.S., currently holds two leases with the state.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Regional Eastside bikeshare begins May
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/932691/bellevue-eastside-bikeshare-begins-may/
GIST	<p>One thing is clear after the Bellevue City Council discussed its emerging bikeshare program this week: officials are grateful Seattle went first before an Eastside bikeshare could be launched.</p> <p>"I drive around Seattle quite a bit ... I think we have something to show us how not to do things," said Bellevue Councilmember John Stokes. "But this is something that has worked in a lot of cities ... we're innovating and we're willing to go out and make things happen and work together."</p> <p>The Bellevue council discussed a proposed bikeshare pilot similar to Seattle's on Monday, March 19. Seattle's pilot has become a guinea pig for cities like Bellevue to develop their own, slightly tweaked program. For example, Bellevue will be the only city in America to launch an entirely electric bikeshare system, according to Clifford Chirls, a member of Bellevue's transportation commission.</p> <p>"We didn't want to see the situation that many of us have seen with bikes all over the place in Seattle, and many that have arrived on our shores," Chirls said, noting one lesson learned from Seattle. "We were concerned about clutter."</p> <p>Chirls wasn't alone with that sentiment as the Eastside bikeshare was discussed.</p> <p>"I appreciate the fact we've already learned some lessons from Seattle," Councilmember Jared Nieuwenhuis said. "Waiting for a full report from Seattle might not benefit us that much from some of the things I've seen. Limiting the eBikes makes a lot of sense ... I think we may get more use of the bikes if they are eBikes with our terrain and our hills."</p> <p>Eastside bikeshare</p> <p>Bellevue is among a handful of Eastside bikeshare programs. Bellevue Transportation Director Dave Berg informed the council that Kirkland and Redmond will allow bikeshare operators in their cities beginning in May.</p>

	<p>Bothell has already created a bikeshare program of its own. Limebike is currently up and running there.</p> <p>“Both Redmond and Kirkland are targeting a launch and permitting bikeshare in May of this year; this dockless type of bikeshare,” Berg said. “You’ve probably already seen these bikes in Bellevue. You see them all over the place, throughout the region, whether they are permitted or not. So we are trying to stay ahead of this with a permitting process.”</p> <p>Bellevue will accept applications from bikeshare operators in April. And like Redmond and Kirkland, it will allow companies to launch onto its streets in May. Bellevue will evaluate how well the program is operating in September and again in February 2019. The city council will revisit the experiment next March.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Oso community fundraising for memorial
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/934814/fundraising-oso-mudslide-memorial/
GIST	<p>It was four years ago today that a huge hill came crashing down on a neighborhood near Oso, killing 43 people.</p> <p>“It is very difficult, still,” said Tom Pszonka at the site of the slide. “And I imagine it will never go away.”</p> <p>On a Saturday morning, a wall of mud swallowed up the Steelhead Haven neighborhood, destroying 49 homes. Family members of those who were lost and Snohomish County leaders announced Thursday that a fundraising effort is underway for a memorial at the slide site. The memorial will honor those killed, the survivors, and the first responders who sifted through the debris for weeks.</p> <p>“I think it’s first and foremost for the families,” said Snohomish County Emergency Management Director Jason Biermann. “It’s to memorialize their loss and to have a place where they can come and have some peace. I think it’s humbling that they have chosen to have an area of it that is dedicated to the first responders.”</p> <p>Supporters say the memorial will also serve as a way to teach about what happened.</p> <p>“There were people who were very invested in the work, emotionally, physically, and mentally,” Biermann said. “There was a lot of work and a lot of people who were out here and it certainly established some strong bonds that will last forever.”</p> <p>“The first time we saw it, we were overwhelmed. We were all crying looking at it,” Karen Pszonka said at the slide site. “I think to be able to walk around there and see all this, it will make the site feel a lot better and look a lot better.</p>
Return to Top	<i>You can donate to the memorial effort at www.slidememorial.com.</i>

HEADLINE	03/22 Strikes in France disrupt air, rail services
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/strikes-in-france-disrupt-rail-air-service-in-opening-shot-against-macrons-labor-plans/2018/03/22/ba0b1abe-8a69-4729-90c9-bd94d839f60c_story.html?utm_term=.60243c314873
GIST	<p>PARIS — Railway workers and air traffic controllers led strikes across France on Thursday, opening a bitter showdown over labor overhauls sought by French President Emmanuel Macron.</p> <p>The strikes — which disrupted travel across the country — signal a critical test for Macron as his government seeks to challenge France’s tightly controlled public-sector labor markets in attempts to</p>

stimulate a stagnant economy.

Macron, a 40-year-old former investment banker, faced only minimal resistance to the first wave of workplace changes last fall, and unemployment figures have already begun to drop.

But France's powerful public sector, which employs more than 5 million people, is putting its foot down against the next stage: proposals to cut 120,000 public-sector jobs, hire more contract workers and slash budgets across the board.

Rail workers planned to go for the jugular with a new type of "rolling" protest: a two-day strike every three days, a major upheaval to a transport system that handles millions of passengers every day.

Many high-speed trains — including the renowned high-speed TGV service — were canceled between Paris and other French cities in Thursday's opening salvo. Commuter train service within the capital was also suspended.

Meanwhile, the Eurostar, connecting Paris with London, canceled some runs through the English Channel tunnel, and many short-haul flights at the Paris-area airports of Orly, Beauvais and Charles de Gaulle were grounded.

Teachers and other workers also joined the strike.

Elisabeth Borne, Macron's transport minister, defended the labor plans as crucial to ensure the strength and survival of France's state-owned railway company.

"This is a necessary, indispensable reform," Borne said, appearing on France's BFM TV on Thursday. "My hope is not a test of strength; my hope is for negotiations."

So far, Macron has been spared the kind of devastating strikes that have unraveled previous French governments.

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HEADLINE	03/22 US moves toward tariffs China goods
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/trump-moves-to-crack-down-on-china-trade-with-50-billion-in-tariffs-on-imported-products/2018/03/22/c09309e8-2de3-11e8-8ad6-fbc50284fce8_story.html?utm_term=.864dace1ad05
GIST	<p>President Trump took the first steps toward imposing tariffs on \$60 billion in Chinese goods and limiting China's ability to invest in the U.S. technology industry Thursday, saying the moves were a response to Beijing's history of forcing U.S. companies to surrender their trade secrets to do business in China.</p> <p>The president directed U.S. Trade Representative Robert E. Lighthizer to announce within 15 days a proposed list of products to be hit with tariff increases. After a public comment period, the final list, designed to target Chinese products that benefited from improper access to U.S. technology, will be made public.</p> <p>"We're doing things for this country that should have been done for many, many years," the president said before signing a memorandum setting in motion the trade actions.</p> <p>The president blamed China for the loss of 60,000 factories and 6 million jobs, a number that most economists say blends the impact on U.S. employment of both Chinese competition and automation.</p> <p>Trump said that unfair Chinese trade practices are responsible for the yawning U.S. trade deficit with China, which has reached a record \$375 billion on his watch.</p>

“Anyway you look at it, it’s the largest of any country in the history of our world,” the president said. “It’s out of control.”

The White House expects the new taxes, which could reach up to 1,300 specific imports, will have a “minimal impact” upon consumers. But markets were down sharply Thursday morning in anticipation of the move and many business groups voiced opposition.

“There is no way to impose \$50 billion in tariffs on Chinese imports without it having a negative impact on American consumers. Make no mistake, these tariffs may be aimed at China, but the bill will be charged to American consumers who will pay more at the checkout for the items they shop for every day,” said Hun Quach, vice president for international trade at the retail Industry Leaders Association.

The president described the actions against China as part of a broader reappraisal of U.S. global relationships, featuring a willingness to use tariff threats to force concessions from U.S. trading partners.

“We will end up negotiating these things rather than fighting over them,” Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said, in an apparent reference to fears of a trade war.

The president also alluded to political calculations, saying that voter concerns over economic losses from bad trade deals was “maybe one of the main reasons” he won the White House.

“The era of economic surrender is over,” added Vice President Michael Pence.

But the trade moves drew fire from the conservative National Taxpayers Union’s Bryan Riley, who called the proposed China tariffs “self-destructive and reckless.”

Under the measures targeting Beijing announced Thursday, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin will draw up new investment restrictions to address concerns about Chinese investors, including state-sponsored investment funds, acquiring American companies to gain access to their technology.

“The end objective of this is to get China to modify its unfair trading practices,” said Everett Eissenstat, deputy assistant to the president for international economic affairs.

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HEADLINE	03/22 Seattle ‘March for Our Lives’ to draw 50K
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/2018/03/when-lockdowns-are-normal-teens-say-its-time-march
GIST	<p>For Rhiannon Rasaretnam, it’s the future of her little sister, Dylan. For Emilia Allard, it’s the life of her four younger sisters, and one in particular: Charlotte. For Katalia Alexander, it’s the all-too-real potential that she could have lost her best friend a month ago in what mercifully turned out to be a false alarm.</p> <p>The high school seniors know all too well that a school shooting could still happen to them. Just as easily and abruptly and tragically as it happened in Parkland, Fla., last month or in Newtown, Conn., six years ago.</p> <p>They’ve prepared for years with “active shooter” drills and lockdowns that have been a routine part of their upbringing in a post-Columbine world. They’ve grown to somewhat shrug off mass shootings with the same desensitized apathy as much of the rest of the country. But, this time inspired by the Parkland students, they say: No more.</p> <p>On Saturday, these teenage students-turned-activists from metro Seattle will join the worldwide March For Our Lives. They’re taking a stand to give their siblings and friends and younger classmates a different future.</p> <p>“I have a little sister in the sixth grade, so she still has six more years in the school system,” Rasaretnam</p>

said of Dylan. “I don’t want her to be growing up in this society where gun culture is normalized, and she has to go into these active shooter drills and be afraid when she’s going to school in the morning.

“I just want to change our society to the point where all these young students growing up don’t have to go through the same process that my peers and I did,” she said.

March For Our Lives originated with the teenage activists from Parkland who are convening a primary march in Washington, D.C. Simultaneously around the globe, some 800 sister marches — including Seattle’s and several others around the Puget Sound area — will also call for politicians to change laws to improve school safety, stop mass shootings and end gun violence.

Seattle’s march is anticipated to draw around 50,000 people as it winds through downtown, from Cal Anderson Park on Capitol Hill to Seattle Center, beginning at 10 a.m.

“My biggest long-term goal would be to not have this march be a singular day where we all go out and scream about gun control because that’s not enough,” said Allard, an 18-year-old senior at Seattle’s Ballard High School. She and Rasaretnam are lead organizers of Saturday’s Seattle march. “We need more than that. We need to start having these conversations about sensible gun control but then actually doing things to implement that.”

Just this week, Rasaretnam, 17, participated in a lockdown drill at Tahoma High School in Maple Valley. The senior said it’s natural to talk about school shootings “with our parents, with our teachers, with our friends ... because, of course, we have to know how to defend ourselves if a school shooter comes in.”

Such conversations and the routine drills, she said, are her generation’s “normal.”

But lately, Rasaretnam says she’s been struck by the cruel reality of lockdown drills: “It’s just really hard when we’re having these conversations about how to position ourselves in a way that most students won’t be hit. But we all know that it’s inevitable that some kids would be shot and even killed” if a shooter broke through the classroom door.

“As a high schooler, it gives me the chills and I can’t imagine what these elementary and middle school kids are thinking” as they practice the same drills, she said.

For Allard, last month’s tragedy in Parkland sparked a painfully real topic of conversation with her mother — what might happen if her younger sister, Charlotte, was in a school that was under fire.

Charlotte is autistic. Because of that, said Allard, “she can’t just stay quiet and she can’t just hide in the back of the room. I mean, she can’t do it.”

“Just coming to terms with the barriers that would be stacked against my own sister if she were to be in a school shooting,” Allard continued, “I just realized that — obviously, I care about Charlotte a lot; she’s my sister — but I also care about the other 25 kids in that room that she would be putting at risk. She’d be putting herself at risk. And it’s not her fault and she shouldn’t be in those situations.”

In the days after Parkland, both Allard and Rasaretnam created social media pages for a Seattle March For Our Lives. They quickly teamed up and brought together dozens of student volunteers from Seattle and its suburbs.

The students started a GoFundMe page to raise \$60,000 for portable bathrooms, police barricades, staging and other costs associated with putting on Saturday’s Seattle march. As of mid-afternoon Wednesday, they had raised more than \$28,000.

They’ve also been taking donations at collection boxes at Cupcake Royale locations around Seattle.

Saturday’s march, said Rasaretnam, marks the start of a “huge movement” of youth activism that extends

	beyond gun control. “Racism, sexism, the environment. I think this is a catalyst for all of these students to realize that they do have an impact, they do have a voice.”
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HEADLINE	03/22 Milestones I-5 project in Tacoma
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/933415/milestones-on-the-horizon-for-i-5-project-in-tacoma/
GIST	<p>Four years of work remains, but drivers will soon to start to see the fruits of 17 years of construction on I-5 through Tacoma.</p> <p>The new northbound Puyallup River Bridge should open to all drivers in May. That is a huge step forward for the HOV widening project. But it’s not the only change.</p> <p>The horrible, temporary, collector-distributor lane on southbound I-5 that forces drivers to leave the freeway about two miles before the actual exit to Highway 16 will go away in a few weeks.</p> <p>“They have just a little bit of work left to pour that concrete and get those lanes striped, and then they are going to remove the barrier and return all southbound I-5 back to its almost original configuration,” Cara Mitchell with the Washington State Department of Transportation said. “All of the ramps have been rebuilt, and they have been realigned.”</p> <p>Before you start celebrating too hard, Mitchell said one of the most-hated lane configurations will return. The ramp from eastbound 16 to northbound I-5 is going to be reduced to one lane again.</p> <p>“We know this wasn’t very popular before,” Mitchell said, “but we really have no other way to access the work zone unless we reduce that ramp.”</p> <p>That change will happen in early April. It will remain that way until August.</p> <p>Construction continues to move along on the new dedicated HOV to HOV ramps from I-5 to Highway 16. Overnight closures on Tacoma Way began this week as workers began moving girders around.</p> <p>Work to rebuild the McKinley overpass continues too.</p> <p>Next year, construction will begin on the new southbound Puyallup River Bridge. That work will take several years to complete.</p> <p>Construction on this entire HOV project is set to finish in 2022. The projects began in 2001.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/21 Oregon in path of falling space station
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/oregon-in-path-of-chinese-space-station-on-collision-course-with-earth
GIST	<p>EUGENE, Ore. - A Chinese space station could reenter the Earth's atmosphere over Oregon in the next two weeks, according to experts in the field of space debris.</p> <p>China lost control of the Tiangong-1, the country told the United Nations in 2016.</p> <p>The space station will make an uncontrolled reentry into the Earth's atmosphere on April 1, 2018, plus or minus 4 days, according to The Aerospace Corporation of El Segundo, California.</p> <p>Aerospace says the space station will crash to Earth between 43 degrees north and 43 degrees south, roughly two-thirds of the planet's surface.</p>

	<p>For reference, Roseburg sits at 43.2165 degrees north.</p> <p>Medford is at 42.3265 degrees north - within the reentry window.</p> <p>Debris is more likely to land in regions towards the extremes of that range, which includes Southern Oregon and all of California, according to Aerospace. Those areas are denoted in yellow in the map above.</p> <p>Most of the space station will burn up upon reentry.</p> <p>"Hydrazine, a highly toxic and corrosive substance, may survive reentry on pieces of space debris," Aerospace notes.</p> <p>Overall, the debris poses little risk to the Earth, Aerospace says.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 'March for Our Lives' events western WA
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/list-march-for-our-lives-events-around-western-washington/281-531131942
GIST	<p>Marches to protest gun violence are planned across America for Saturday, March 24. More than a half-million people are expected to attend the main "March For Our Lives" event in Washington D.C., organized by students after the mass shooting at a high school in Parkland, Florida.</p> <p>Hundreds of similar events are scheduled around the country on Saturday, including several in Western Washington.</p> <p>Seattle – 10 a.m. – Cal Anderson Park to KeyArena Tacoma – 10 a.m. – People's Park Langley - 10 a.m. - Cascade Bluff Marysville - 11 a.m. - Asbery Athletic Field Olympia – 11 a.m. – State Capitol to Sylvester Park North Bend - 11 a.m. - North Bend Way to Bendigo Blvd. Vashon - 11 a.m. - Vashon H.S. to Town Center Auburn - 12 p.m. - Homewood Terrace Mount Vernon - 12 p.m. - Mount Vernon H.S. Silverdale - 12 p.m. Kitsap Mall Everett – 1 p.m. – Snohomish County Courthouse</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 IAFC: fire chiefs' legislative priorities
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/law-enforcement-and-public-safety/fire-chiefs-legislative-priorities-include-repealing-requirement-t-band-spectrum-auction/
GIST	<p>The International Association of Fire Chiefs unveiled its legislative priorities for the years, starting with working to increase funding for the U.S. Fire Administration in FY 2019 in order to see it funded at \$50 million. This increase will help USFA improve classes and training at the National Fire Academy.</p> <p>IAFC will also continue to ask Congress to fund the AFG and SAFER Grant programs at the FY 2011 amount of \$405 million, restore funding for the Urban Search and Rescue program and protect funding for homeland security grant programs, like the Urban Areas Security Initiative and the State Homeland Security Grant Program.</p> <p>“When Congress established FirstNet, it also mandated that the Federal Communications Committee</p>

(FCC) auction public-safety spectrum in the T-Band (470-512 MHz) by February 2021. Local public-safety organizations that use T-Band spectrum would have to clear this spectrum within two years of the auction,” IAFC said. “The problem with this requirement is that it would affect communications in 11 major metro areas, including New York City, the Washington, DC area, Boston, Chicago and Los Angeles. For example, the T-Band spectrum was used as the interoperable communications channel in Boston during the response to the Patriots’ Day bombing in 2013. In addition, the cost of migrating these jurisdictions would be catastrophic (\$5.9 billion), even though some jurisdictions would have no other spectrum to migrate to.”

Thus, the fire chiefs association is among affected organizations asking Congress to repeal the requirement that this T-Band spectrum be auctioned.

The IAFC will also be urging the Senate to pass the Firefighter Cancer Registry Act and will urge Congress to pass the Volunteer Responder Incentive Act (H.R. 1550/S. 1238), which would exempt, from federal taxation, any property tax benefits and up to \$600 in any other state and local benefits that are given to local volunteer firefighters.

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HEADLINE	03/23 White House declares new war on drugs
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/law-enforcement-and-public-safety/white-house-declares-new-war-drugs-stop-escalating-opioid-crisis/
GIST	<p>The White House this week announced a plan to stem drug supply and demand fueling the opioid crisis, with Attorney General Jeff Sessions telling law enforcement officers that “this administration will not stand back as addiction shatters our families and devastates our communities.”</p> <p>Sessions cited the sobering statistics of America’s opioid crisis during his Thursday speech in Tallahassee: 64,000 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2016, “the highest drug death toll and the fastest increase in that death toll in American history.”</p> <p>“That’s the equivalent of the entire city of Daytona Beach dying from drug overdoses in a single year,” he said. “Preliminary data show another — but what appears to be a smaller — increase for 2017. Amazingly, for Americans under the age of 50, drug overdoses are now the leading cause of death.”</p> <p>Of those 2016 overdose deaths, 42,000 were attributed to opioids.</p> <p>“We are experiencing death rates the likes of which we have never seen before. By the time I have finished speaking, another American will have died of an opioid overdose,” Sessions said. “...By the time this speech is over, another baby will be born in the United States who is physically dependent on opioids.”</p> <p>The initiative framework released by the White House aims to “address factors fueling the opioid crisis, including over-prescription, illicit drug supplies, and insufficient access to evidence-based treatment, primary prevention, and recovery support services.”</p> <p>President Trump’s Opioid Initiative, the White House said, will “reduce drug demand through education, awareness, and preventing over-prescription,” “cut off the flow of illicit drugs across our borders and within communities,” and “save lives now by expanding opportunities for proven treatments for opioid and other drug addictions.”</p> <p>The administration wants to support research and development “for a vaccine to prevent opioid addiction and non-addictive pain management options” and “cut nationwide opioid prescription fills by one-third within three years.” The plan also advocates border security to cut down drug smuggling and vows to “require advance electronic data for 90 percent of all international mail shipments (with goods) and consignment shipments within three years, in order for the Department of Homeland Security to flag high-risk shipments.”</p>

	<p>The Department of Justice Prescription Interdiction and Litigation Task Force will “expand the DOJ Opioid Fraud and Abuse Detection Unit’s efforts to prosecute corrupt or criminally negligent doctors, pharmacies, and distributors” and “aggressively deploy appropriate criminal and civil actions to hold opioid manufacturers accountable for any unlawful practices.”</p> <p>Furthermore, the White House vows to “work to ensure first responders are supplied with naloxone, a lifesaving medication used to reverse overdoses” and “leverage federal funding opportunities to state and local jurisdictions to incentivize and improve nationwide overdose tracking systems that will help resources to be rapidly deployed to hard-hit areas.” The plan would also support more “evidence-based addiction treatment” and screen federal inmates for opioid addiction.</p> <p>Sessions said his DOJ task force will “consider assisting with ongoing state and local government lawsuits against opioid manufacturers.”</p> <p>He announced that the DEA “will surge 250 task force officers — and dozens more analysts — to places across America where the opioid crisis is at its worst.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Report: air getting cleaner around ports
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/you-can-breathe-cleaner-around-puget-sound-ports-report-finds/
GIST	<p>The air is generally getting cleaner around Puget Sound ports, which over the decades have been a significant source of pollutants that increase the risk of respiratory problems and cancer.</p> <p>A new report finds that seven different air pollutants declined by amounts ranging from 9 to 97 percent in 2016 compared to 2011.</p> <p>The improvements result from a mix of voluntary investments in greening port operations and new regulations that require lower emissions and cleaner fuels, according to a report scheduled for release Thursday by the Puget Sound Maritime Air Forum.</p> <p>But those efforts, over the past five years, didn’t do much to change greenhouse-gas emissions — mainly carbon dioxide. These fossil-fuel emissions, which scientists say are driving climate change, have declined by 1 percent since 2011.</p> <p>The report covers a broad area, tracking pollutants in the U.S. portion of the international airshed formed by the Puget Sound and Georgia Basin.</p> <p>The reports uses models — rather than air monitors — to estimate emissions from a range of sources including cargo ships, harbor and recreational vessels, port equipment and trucks that deliver and take away freight.</p> <p>The report is developed by a partnership of ports, government agencies and businesses. It notes that the air has benefitted from International Maritime Organization regulations that took effect in 2015 requiring cargo ships to use lower-sulfur fuels within 200 miles of the U.S. coasts.</p> <p>That is the main reason emissions of sulfur dioxide, a pollutant that can make breathing more difficult and aggravate asthma, plummeted by 96 percent between 2011 and 2016 in the study area.</p> <p>Those rules also helped drive down emissions of particulates, which can damage the lungs and heart. Three different types of this pollution each declined by at least 60 percent, according to the estimates in the study.</p>

	<p>Environmental Protection Agency regulation also has played a role in improving the port’s air quality. During the past two decades, the agency has required dramatic changes to truck, train and ship engines and fuel sources as more information revealed the significant health dangers associated with diesel exhaust.</p> <p>In 2007, after a two-year study outlined just how dirty Puget Sound’s marine-transportation system was, the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency and the ports of Seattle, Tacoma and Everett, helped by EPA grants, set out to make reductions faster than required by law.</p> <p>One part of that effort has been to increase the use of electricity. Two of Seattle’s three cruise-ship terminals, for example, are outfitted with plug-ins to electric grid, so the vessels don’t have to generate power by idling while moored.</p> <p>The new study shows one pollutant — carbon monoxide — bucked the downward trend, increasing by 9 percent from 2011 to 2016. That was largely due to an increase in activity by recreational boats and harbor vessels, according to Graham VanderSchelden, environmental project manager for The Northwest Seaport Alliance.</p> <p>The strong maritime activity also makes it hard to achieve big reductions in greenhouse gases, according to Paul Meyer, a Seattle port official.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Seattle ‘March’ organizers demand change
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/seattles-march-for-our-lives-organizers-demand-concrete-political-change-to-end-gun-violence/
GIST	<p>Senior Rhiannon Rasaretnam didn’t know what to expect last Wednesday morning at Tahoma High School in Maple Valley, as a wave of demonstrations swept the nation in protest of gun laws the country’s young people say threaten their lives.</p> <p>But then 150 of her peers left class — far more than she thought would join her.</p> <p>“The biggest criticism was that it wasn’t accomplishing anything, or that kids just wanted to leave school,” said Rasaretnam, 17, of the National School Walkout demonstrations. “But when you participate, it inspires you to move forward. It shows how much we’re able to do.”</p> <p>Now she’s hoping that the energy she saw at her school last week translates to Saturday’s March For Our Lives, which she and other students throughout the Seattle area have spent a month planning.</p> <p>Those students have been brought together by a common goal: ending gun violence. They feel inspired by the momentum from March 17 school walkouts, and they hope it continues after the march.</p> <p>“We hope that this is not just one moment,” said Catherine Zhu, 18, a senior at Ingraham High School and a lead march coordinator. “We want concrete political change.”</p> <p>The march in Seattle is one of hundreds planned alongside the main event in Washington, D.C., in the wake of the shooting in Parkland, Florida, where 17 people were killed at their school. The march is set to begin at Cal Anderson Park at 10 a.m. with speeches, followed by a walk at 11 a.m. to Seattle Center. A second round of speeches and performances will start at 12 p.m. at Seattle Center.</p> <p>Nearly 10,000 people have replied on the event’s Facebook page that they’ll be attending. Elected officials, including Gov. Jay Inslee and Attorney General Bob Ferguson, are expected to speak. Singer-songwriter Brandi Carlile is expected to perform on a Seattle Center stage, as will students who have been directly affected by gun violence. Commuters should expect traffic delays in downtown Seattle and organizers are encouraging participants to take public transportation. Rideshare company Lyft is offering free rides to the rally at Cal Anderson Park.</p>

March organizers have specific demands, including raising the age allowed to buy assault weapons to 21 and banning the sale of high-capacity magazines. They want politicians to listen to them. And the politicians who don't?

"We aren't afraid to push them out" of office in the November election, said Ballard High School senior Emilia Allard, 17, a march organizer. The importance of voting will be a focus of Seattle's march; volunteers will be at booths and throughout the crowd with information about how to register to vote.

"The 18-21 voter turnout is historically low," said Rasaretnam, of Tahoma High. "We want to flip that. We want to stay engaged and active."

Last week, Zhu joined her Ingraham classmates and students from Lakeside as they lined an Interstate 5 overpass, chanting and holding signs. Allard walked out with Ballard students and then went to a larger rally at the University of Washington. Rasaretnam gathered in her school's commons area.

Throughout the past month, they've juggled school, extracurricular activities and jobs, along with planning an event for thousands of people. Earlier this week, they sat around a long table at Cupcake Royale on Capitol Hill, working on finalizing the speaker schedule and making sure all 400 volunteers are accounted for. Talks about gun laws were mixed in with stories about homework — and laughs when someone made a mess while eating her cupcake, decorated with the March For Our Lives logo.

For them, any gun legislation that comes will likely be too late for their school careers, they say.

But they're not thinking of themselves. They're thinking of their younger siblings, friends and classmates.

"We almost have no other choice (but to march)," said Allard, who has four younger siblings. "It literally is that — a march for our lives."

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HEADLINE	03/22 Saudi crown prince to visit Seattle Mar. 30th
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/boeing-aerospace/saudi-crown-prince-both-a-reformer-and-an-autocrat-will-visit-seattle/
GIST	<p>Mohammed bin Salman, the Crown Prince and effective ruler of Saudi Arabia, will visit Seattle on March 30, with expected stops to meet with Bill Gates and to tour Boeing's widebody jet plant in Everett, said people with knowledge of the plans.</p> <p>He's expected to leave the next day for California, though no details of the stop in the area have yet been confirmed, according to two people familiar with the planning.</p> <p>The 32-year-old prince, who typically travels with a huge entourage aboard a Saudi Royal VIP Boeing 747 jumbo jet, has jolted the politics of the Middle East, presenting himself as both a liberalizing modern and at the same time a military strongman.</p> <p>On the one hand, he just lifted a 35-year ban on cinemas and allowed Saudi women for the first time to attend mixed-gender public entertainments such as soccer games.</p> <p>On the other, he has aggressively confronted Iran, his Sunni kingdom's Shia rival, through proxy wars playing out in Syria and in Yemen, where his Air Force is conducting intense aerial bombing to suppress a Shia uprising.</p> <p>President Donald Trump welcomed Prince Mohammed to the White House on Tuesday at the beginning of a U.S. tour lasting almost three weeks, aimed at strengthening both foreign policy and economic ties with the U.S.</p>

	<p>The emphasis of the first week of the visit was on gathering support in Washington, D.C., for the U.S.-Saudi political and military axis now aligned against Iran.</p> <p>In that struggle for Middle East dominance, Trump has sided definitively with the Saudis.</p> <p>The Seattle stop is the first on a West Coast swing that will switch the focus mostly to business relationships.</p> <p>On this leg of the trip, the prince, who aims to diversify Saudi Arabia's economy and make it less dependent on oil revenue, will visit Seattle, San Francisco, Silicon Valley and Los Angeles.</p> <p>The Saudi Embassy said he'll meet with "philanthropic organizations, technology and defense companies, and entertainment conglomerates, including meetings at Google, Apple and Lockheed Martin."</p> <p>Bloomberg News added Amazon to that list, though it's unclear if that meeting will be in Seattle.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 State, local income, property taxes at high
SOURCE	https://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/terence-p-jeffrey/state-and-local-income-sales-and-property-taxes-hit-records-2017
GIST	<p>(CNSNews.com) - Real state and local income, sales and property taxes all hit records in 2017, according to data released this week by the Census Bureau.</p> <p>State and local governments collected a record \$404,509,000,000 in individual income taxes in 2017, according to the Census Bureau. Before 2017, the greatest level of individual income tax revenues collected by state and local governments occurred in 2015, when those governments collected \$399,933,270,000 in individual income taxes (in constant 2017 dollars converted using the Bureau of Labor Statistics inflation calculator).</p> <p>State and local governments also collected a record \$386,153,000,000 in general sales and gross receipts taxes in 2017. Prior to that, the largest state and local general sales and gross receipt tax collections took place in 2015, when state and local governments collected \$385,904,260,000 in those taxes (in constant 2017 dollars).</p> <p>At the same time, state and local governments collected a record \$573,064,000,000 in property taxes in 2017. Before 2017, the largest property tax collections took place in 2016, when state and local governments collected \$551,936,350,000 in property taxes (in constant 2017 dollars).</p> <p>Property taxes also hit a record in 2017 on a per capita basis. During the year, the record \$573,064,000,000 in property taxes that state and local governments collected from property owners equaled \$1,759 per each of the 325,719,178 men, women and children in the United States.</p> <p>Per capita state and local income taxes peaked in 2015 at approximately \$1,246 and per capita state and local general sales and gross receipts taxes peaked in 2006 at approximately \$1,214.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 EU confirms Brexit transition stance
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-eu-tusk/eu-leaders-confirm-brexit-transition-offer-joint-trade-line-idUSKBN1GZ16G
GIST	BRUSSELS (Reuters) - European Union leaders formally adopted on Friday their joint negotiating stance on a future trade relationship with Britain after it leaves the bloc, said the chairman of the summit, Donald

	<p>Tusk.</p> <p>That comes together with an offer of a 21-month transition period to help business adapt after Brexit, due in March 2019.</p> <p>The coup for British Prime Minister Theresa May comes at the expense of another fudge over how to avoid an Irish border.</p> <p>Both sides say that, after Brexit, they do not want to go back to border checks between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland - as was the case during decades of violence in the British province.</p> <p>Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar highlighted the EU stance that the transition would only become final as part of a broader deal between bloc and London, which means they have to settle on all outstanding issues - including the Irish border - first.</p> <p>“As Ireland, we’re not under particular time pressure, we’re not the ones who are leaving so we are not under time pressure in that regard,” Varadkar told reporters. “Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.”</p> <p>Under pressure from the EU and determined to get the interim transition deal to ease business concerns about the practical effects of Brexit, London agreed that its final agreement with the bloc would include an emergency backstop for Ireland.</p> <p>For the EU that would mean to go on treating Northern Ireland as if it remained inside the bloc’s customs union even after the end of transition period at the end of 2020.</p> <p>May, who says Britain will also be leaving the EU’s single market and the customs union, has strongly rejected that. But the two sides agreed some sort of emergency solution will be there to avoid an Irish border if everything else fails.</p> <p>“If we can have an agreement on the terms backstop or an alternative to the backstop before June, that’s something we would very much welcome,” Varadkar said.</p> <p>The Brexit schedule assumes the bloc and London would agree on the divorce deal, the transition and a framework for their future relationship in the summer so that the 27 EU leaders could endorse it at their summit in October and take back to their national capitals for ratification, hopefully early next year and before the Brexit date.</p> <p>The bloc’s Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier said the new deal with Britain, talks on which are due to start next month, “will have to respect the principles and the identity of the EU and our single market”.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Navy destroyer sails near disputed islands
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-southchinasea/exclusive-u-s-warship-sails-near-disputed-islands-in-south-china-sea-officials-say-idUSKBN1GZ0VY
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A U.S. Navy destroyer carried out a “freedom of navigation” operation on Friday, coming within 12 nautical miles of an artificial island built by China in the South China Sea, U.S. officials told Reuters, a move likely to anger Beijing.</p> <p>Friday’s operation was the latest attempt to counter what Washington sees as Beijing’s efforts to limit freedom of navigation in the strategic waters.</p> <p>The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the USS Mustin traveled close to Mischief Reef in the Spratly Islands and carried out maneuvering operations. China has territorial disputes with its</p>

	<p>neighbors over the area.</p> <p>Neither China’s Foreign nor Defence Ministries immediately responded to a request for comment.</p> <p>In the past, Beijing has reacted angrily to such moves, saying they are provocative.</p> <p>The U.S. military has a longstanding position that its operations are carried out throughout the world, including in areas claimed by allies, and they are separate from political considerations.</p> <p>However, the latest operation, the first since January, comes just a day after U.S. President Donald Trump lit a slow-burning fuse when he signed a presidential memorandum that will target up to \$60 billion in Chinese goods with tariffs, but only after a 30-day consultation period that starts once a list is published.</p> <p>The United States has criticized China’s construction of islands and build-up of military facilities in the sea, and is concerned they could be used to restrict free nautical movement.</p> <p>China’s claims in the South China Sea, through which about \$5 trillion in ship-borne trade passes each year, are contested by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam. The U.S. military put countering China and Russia at the center of a new national defense strategy recently unveiled.</p> <p>China’s navy will carry out combat drills in the South China Sea, the military’s official newspaper said on Friday, describing the move as part of regular annual exercises.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Europeans eye Russian expulsions
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-russia-eu/europeans-eye-russian-expulsions-over-uk-spy-attack-idUSKBN1GZ166
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS (Reuters) - Several European governments moved closer on Friday to expelling Russian diplomats in a show of support for Britain, which ordered out 23 “undeclared intelligence agents” after a nerve agent attack on a former Russian spy.</p> <p>In a boost for Prime Minister Theresa May, the European Union as a whole agreed late on Thursday to pin the blame on Moscow for the attack, which a judge in England said may have left Sergei Skripal and his daughter brain damaged.</p> <p>That hardened up previous EU language on the issue as French President Emmanuel Macron and others helped May overcome hesitation on the part of some of Moscow’s friendlier states, some of whom questioned how definitive Britain’s evidence is.</p> <p>In a symbolic move that displayed unity of purpose, the bloc also recalled the EU ambassador to Russia for consultations — a conventional form of diplomatic protest.</p> <p>And in a sign that nations were prepared to go further to punish Russia, which denies any involvement in the attack, several EU leaders said on Friday they were considering expelling diplomats.</p> <p>“What we will now consider in the coming days is whether we want to take individual action relating to Russian diplomats in Ireland,” Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar told reporters as he arrived at the second day of an EU summit in Brussels.</p> <p>“So we would have to do a security assessment just like they (Britain) did ... We’re not going to randomly expel people.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Local leaders react to China tariffs
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/politics/china-retaliation-to-tariffs-worries-washington-state-leaders/281-531170640
GIST	<p>Washington leaders are expressing bipartisan concern to President Donald Trump’s announcement of tariffs on Chinese goods, a move triggering fears of a potential trade war between the countries with the two biggest economies.</p> <p>Washington state, among the most trade dependent states in the nation, also counts China as its largest trading partner for both imports and exports. Last year, Washington exported more than \$18 billion in goods to China, according to U.S. trade data, with airplanes and wheat among the top exports.</p> <p>“I am concerned about the impact the Trump administration’s tariffs on Chinese imports will have on our businesses and consumers,” said Governor Jay Inslee in a statement to KING 5.</p> <p>President Trump, meanwhile, blasted the country’s trade imbalance with China and says the measures are designed to punish China for theft of American companies’ intellectual property.</p> <p>"We're gonna get it taken care of, and frankly, it's gonna make us a much stronger, much richer nation," President Trump said Thursday.</p> <p>“The issue of Chinese piracy is a real issue, and we need to deal with it, but I don't think this is going to accomplish that objective,” said former Republican gubernatorial candidate Bill Bryant, whose firm Bryant Christie works with U.S. exporters. “You're going to raise the price on cell phones, tennis shoes. The American consumer is going to pay a higher price.”</p> <p>The U.S. Trade Representative’s office will release a list within 15 days of proposed products that could face the higher tariffs.</p> <p>Experts caution it’s too early to know the full scope of potential impact, but Bryant and others worry about retaliation.</p> <p>“China is not going to take this lying down,” said Bryant. “They’re going to retaliate, and so yeah, if you’re exporting airplanes, or you’re exporting wheat, apples or seafood, any number of manufactured technology products, you should be concerned.”</p> <p>China’s embassy in a statement late Thursday only intensified fears, reading in part, “China is not afraid of and will not recoil from a trade war.</p> <p>“China would fight to the end to defend its own legitimate interests with all necessary measures,” the statement continued.</p> <p>By Thursday evening in the United States, China’s commerce ministry proposed a list of 128 U.S. products that could become potential retaliation targets, including pork, wine, fresh fruit, steel and recycled aluminum goods.</p> <p>“This is how trade wars begin, and the effects for Washington are real. We export more per capita than any other state, and therefore stand to lose the most in the event of a trade war,” said Lt. Governor Cyrus Habib in a statement Thursday.</p> <p>“Particularly concerning are the 15% tariffs on fruit and wine, two critical Washington state commodities,” Habib continued referencing the proposed reciprocal tariffs announced by China.</p> <p>Former Washington Governor Gary Locke, who also served as U.S. Ambassador to China, fears what it might mean for Boeing, which he says exports one-third of its planes to China.</p> <p>"A lot of those orders that are going to Chinese airlines will be given to Airbus. And so we're going to see</p>

a long term decline in the sales of Boeing airplanes which means less workers which means less jobs in the Puget Sound area," Locke said.

Bill Bryant also worries about the ancillary impact to port and transportation jobs if tariffs result in a decline in trade.

"We need to deal with Chinese piracy but we need to do it in a way that actually targets the problem, not imposes harm on people in Washington state, and certainly not in a way that costs people in Washington state their jobs," he said.

More reaction to Thursday's announcement:

Rep. Dave Reichert, R-Washington, chairman of subcommittee on trade:

"I share the same goal of protecting the technology and intellectual property of American companies, but we must pursue a strategy that targets the problem and protects American families and workers. A strategy that doesn't put an end to the problem, but harms American families and businesses, is not the right answer. A successful strategy requires a narrow approach and a global partnership to address China's unfair practices. If we don't apply the right remedy, it is Americans who will bear the brunt, not China," Reichert said in a statement.

Senator Maria Cantwell, D-Washington

"I want a more sophisticated approach to address trade disputes with China," Cantwell said in a tweet. "I get that a kind of stomp-your-feet approach makes some people feel good, but in the integrated economy that we already have, it's more complex."

Paul Guppy of the Washington Policy Center

"The U.S. and Washington state gain from trade with other countries, but if trade deals aren't fair they need to be re-balanced. If research shows China is taking advantage of U.S. firms, or using business partnerships to steal U.S. technology, Trumps tariff policy sends a positive signal that should lead to a negotiate solution, but he should carry the policy so far that it sparks a trade war with one of our largest trading partners," said Guppy.

Dr. Richard Ellings of the National Bureau of Asian Research and executive director of the IP Commission:

"The administration is acting to protect American interests in the face of coordinated political and commercial pressure from China to take the intellectual property of American companies and force their transfer of technology," said Dr. Ellings. "Our system must respond as an integrated whole to this challenge, and so charging the secretary of the Treasury to limit Chinese investment in the U.S. economy where it runs counter to American national security interests is a good first step."

Brian Kelly, Economics Professor at Seattle University, previously worked for U.S. Department of Commerce

"China does pressure companies to give up their intellectual property and this is a problem. But this needs to be addressed as a team effort with our allies in direct, forceful negotiation. Going straight to retaliation - the tariffs - will not cause China to change its behavior. In doing so, we give up one of our negotiating levers, just as we did in withdrawing from the TPP, without getting anything from China in return," said Kelly.

"In my experience, China retaliates. I think that they will wait to see what the White House ends up actually proposing. Perhaps, like the steel and aluminum tariffs, the actual policy will be watered down a lot, which China may view as a sufficient victory. But if the tariffs are as substantial as promised, I think that China will try to hit the us in areas where it has leverage, such as agriculture or services," Kelly continued.

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HEADLINE	03/22 Help wanted: teachers, police, even mayors
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2018/03/22/teachers-police-local-government-jobs-recruiting-retainment-stress/425752002/
GIST	<p>On Saturday, tens of thousands of students are expected to join March for Our Lives protests against gun violence. Many teachers will join them — and in some cases, former teachers.</p> <p>"I'll be there" at the Washington, D.C., march, said Rowan Langford, who used to teach at a school where fights broke out often. "The idea that we should add guns to that is mind boggling to me."</p> <p>Langford is opposed to the idea of arming teachers, which President Trump proposed after a gunman left 17 dead at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla.</p> <p>Among the dead was Scott Beigel, a social studies teacher credited with saving student lives. Such actions have led teachers across the country — who may have entered the field simply to share a love of chemistry or history — now to grapple with thoughts like those of police or firefighters: Will they put their lives on the line?</p> <p>"Nobody walks into teaching to martyr themselves," said Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers. "But people believe that they protect kids, and that is part and parcel of what we do." Though she said she hasn't seen anyone avoid teaching specifically because of shootings, it's a stressor that makes the job harder. "Teachers have become first responders for everything in a child's life."</p> <p>It was the many other stressors that drove out 23-year-old Langford.</p> <p>Within three weeks of the 2016-2017 school year, Langford says she was the sole Algebra II teacher at D.C.'s Ballou High School after another quit.</p> <p>"I knew that it was going to be hard," Langford said. "I just wasn't fully prepared to be thrown into that as much as I was." The job was stressful, and she faced "chaos" in her classroom.</p> <p>Just after winter break, Langford put in her two weeks notice. Now a data analyst at a consulting firm, Langford said she felt guilty for six months after quitting, but her new job is less stressful.</p> <p>Langford's case isn't unique, and teachers are not alone. Around the USA, jobs that are essential to civil society are struggling to attract new recruits and retain veteran professionals due to high stress, increased public scrutiny and, in some cases, low pay.</p> <p>Education: More than 40 states face teacher shortages, and 100,000 classrooms are filled with people not qualified to teach the subject they're assigned, said Linda Darling-Hammond, president of the non-profit, non-partisan Learning Policy Institute.</p> <p>The number of educators who said their mental health was "not good" for seven or more of the past 30 days rose to 58% in 2017, compared to just 34% two years earlier, according to a survey by the American Federation of Teachers.</p> <p>Local government: About half of mayoral elections from 2000 to 2016 in six states featured only one candidate, according to an analysis by Rice University's Center for Local Elections in American Politics.</p> <p>Law enforcement: Police departments around the United States have reported shortages in the past five years — including major cities, such as Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Los Angeles, Houston and Palo Alto, Calif. However, tracking national data on police officer recruitment is a challenge, said Jim Bueermann, president of the Police Foundation, a D.C.-based non-profit that seeks to support police forces nationwide through its research.</p> <p>Chief Jeff Hadley of Chatham County Police Department is trying to build his police department from scratch.</p>

After sharing a force for more than 10 years, Georgia's Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department split back into two departments. Hadley's seen interest from experienced officers in higher ranking roles, but his challenge has been finding recruits for patrol duty. Starting salary for a new recruit is roughly \$35,000, more than \$20,000 less than the U.S. median household income in 2016.

In some cases, there just aren't qualified candidates due to past felony convictions or drug use. Some flunk polygraph tests. Others don't complete the lengthy background investigation form.

The entire process can take up to three to six months, which weeds out people who need a job immediately, said Hadley, who also recruited officers when he was head of the public safety department in Kalamazoo, Mich.

To get 20 good applicants, it can take 200, he said.

Bueermann, who also worked 33 years in the Redlands, Calif., Police Department, said police departments need to have intentional recruitment processes. Police-work can be dangerous and hours can be long and irregular. Having the authority to use deadly force makes policing unique.

"You just don't see that in any other job," Bueermann said.

In a 2017 Pew survey of nearly 8,000 officers, 86% said high-profile fatal incidents between black citizens and police officers have made their jobs more challenging and 93% said the incidents have increased their concerns about their own safety.

"If that's the imagery you see all the time, it might be very difficult for you to consider policing as a potential occupation," Bueermann said of young people considering the career. "I don't think that there aren't enough people, it's that there aren't enough of the right people

Robert Congdon wanted to retire after 22 years in office, but no one stepped up. The first selectman of Preston, Conn., announced two years before the November 2017 election that he'd be stepping down.

Congdon, 69, is now in his 23rd year as the small rural town's chief executive, a role he compares to running a small business.

Preston is governed by a board of selectman, which sets the town's policy agenda, and a town meeting, which acts as a legislative body. When Congdon started this role, dozens would attend each meeting. Now, maybe 20 people show up each year, he said.

"What got lost is the discussion" on why decisions are made, Congdon said, and "we're not a better place because of it."

Similar to policing, social media has changed how elected officials work and how citizens interact with them

"When I first took my job 23 years ago, I would get 30 to 40 to 50 phone calls a day, and you actually talked to somebody who had a concern or issue. Today you receive 150 emails," Congdon said. Being first selectman "was the most rewarding job I ever had — and it's still very rewarding — but it was much more rewarding when you were dealing with people rather than Facebook or Twitter."

On top of dealing with angry citizens, many local elected roles receive little to no pay, especially in small towns, said Rice University political science professor Melissa Marschall.

When she studied mayoral elections in California, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota and Virginia, more than 70% of contests in small towns were unopposed.

“It's kind of volunteerism that takes a lot of time and energy,” Marschall said. “You don't hear from constituents when they're happy.”

Low pay and job insecurity may have contributed to no candidate rising to take Congdon's seat, the first selectman said. While he thinks it's important for young people to get involved in local politics, the role of first selectman comes with sacrifices he said he wouldn't recommend even his own children make.

When Congdon entered office, he had two specific goals that he said he feels he's accomplished: forming a strong relationship with a growing casino industry near his town and repurposing an abandoned mental health hospital to help fuel economic development in the area.

“You make your decisions based on what you think is best for the greatest good,” Congdon said of local office. While many people are “disenchanted” with politics at the national level, Congdon said the ability to accomplish specific goals could attract new people to local roles.

“It's not all partisan politics at the local level,” Marschall agreed. After the 2016 election, Marchall said she saw a slight uptick in candidates in the six states she studied. While it's not clear whether the increase will be sustained, it could be an indication of renewed interest.

Teachers, too, have seen recent positive change.

Teacher compensation gained national attention in recent weeks after educators from all 55 counties in West Virginia went on strike to protest their low pay. After nine school days, the strike ended with a deal to give all state employees a 5% raise and stop health insurance premiums raises.

What's needed is “to make sure teachers are armed with their voice now more than ever before,” said Weingarten, whose group's West Virginia chapter represented teachers. “There will always be people who want to teach because of a calling.”

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HEADLINE	03/22 Israeli tourists to US becomes easier
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/us-tourist-visas-israelis/2018/03/22/id/850272/
GIST	<p>Visiting the United States has just become one step easier for Israelis.</p> <p>The American embassy has dropped its requirement that Israeli citizens seeking to renew their U.S. tourist visas submit to an in-person interview.</p> <p>The American embassy in Israel has dropped a key requirement for some Israeli visa-seekers, making it easier for Israeli tourists to visit the United States, the Israeli media network Arutz Sheva reports.</p> <p>According to the embassy, any Israeli citizen who currently holds a valid tourist visa or a visa which expired within the last 12 months and was over the age of 14 when he or she received the last visa is eligible for the new visa renewal process.</p> <p>No interview is required for those eligible, and the application can be completed without travelling to either the U.S. embassy or consulate.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 EU backs Britain in blaming Russia
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/european-union-supports-britain-blame/2018/03/22/id/850298/
GIST	European Union leaders backed Britain on Thursday in blaming Moscow over a nerve agent attack on a former Russian spy in England, raising the possibility of additional retaliatory steps by European countries.

The solid show of support from the EU, at a time when Britain is grappling with its departure from the bloc, will boost Prime Minister Theresa May, who has been asking other nations to match her decision to expel Russians over the attack.

In what will form the basis of a formal statement later on Thursday, the chairman of the EU leaders' summit, Donald Tusk, said on Twitter that the bloc "agrees with U.K. government that [it is] highly likely Russia is responsible for the Salisbury attack and that there is no other plausible explanation."

May accused Russia of the first known offensive use of a nerve toxin in Europe since World War Two after Sergei Skripal, a former Russian double agent, and his daughter were found unconscious in the city of Salisbury on March 4.

The attack has sparked tit-for-tat retaliatory action, with May's decision to expel 23 Russian "undeclared intelligence officials" followed by similar measures from Moscow, including the closure of Britain's cultural centre in Russia's second city of St Petersburg.

Over a dinner of lamb, May called on EU leaders to work together to confront the challenge Russia presented, saying that the attack in Salisbury was "part of a wider pattern of behavior" by a country to thwart international norms.

"Russia staged a brazen and reckless attack against the United Kingdom," May told reporters in Brussels. "It's clear that the Russian threat does not respect borders and indeed the incident in Salisbury was a pattern of Russian aggression against Europe and its near neighbors."

In the early days after the attack, May won the support of French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and U.S. President Donald Trump when they said they shared Britain's assessment of Russian culpability.

But in Brussels, May had to convince more dovish states including Greece, Hungary and Bulgaria, that they should blame Russia squarely over the attack.

Tusk's statement means they had been convinced, opening the way for EU leaders to discuss future "coordinated action". Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė said she was ready to expel Russian spies and diplomats said Poland could do so too.

Both had held off to see who else would join.

Slovakia's new prime minister, Peter Pellegrini, said he wanted "constructive dialogue" with Russia despite the poisoning of the Skripals, who British authorities say have been critically ill since the attack by a Soviet-designed, military-grade nerve agent called Novichok.

May has also asked fellow European leaders to step up intelligence cooperation to start going after Russian spy networks, diplomats said.

"Britain says there are these networks that organise such things like Salisbury, that these networks exist across our borders and that it would be good to go after them together," a senior EU diplomat said.

Another diplomat said: "There is movement among several willing states to do something together in reaction to Skripal." The person added this would be done by states individually, so as not to press more reluctant EU member states too hard.

Russia has offered several different motives to explain the attack on the Skripals, who may have been left brain-damaged, and absolve Moscow of responsibility — something London labels disinformation and distraction.

	<p>On Thursday, Moscow's ambassador to London, Vladimir Yakovenko, said that, had Novichok been used, the Skripals would have died and he rebuked British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson for comparing Russia's hosting of the soccer World Cup this summer with Nazi Germany's hosting of the Olympics in 1936.</p> <p>In Moscow, President Vladimir Putin discussed Britain's "unfriendly and provocative" policy at a session of the national security council, RIA news agency quoted the Kremlin as saying.</p> <p>Ties between Russia and the West plummeted over Moscow's 2014 annexation of Crimea and support for rebels in eastern Ukraine. Both have triggered rounds of EU sanctions.</p> <p>A British official stressed that Britain was not seeking regime change in Russia, but that "Russia has shown itself as a strategic enemy, not a strategic partner."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 US to sell \$1B in arms to Saudi Arabia
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/politics/us-saudi-arabia-the-latest-arms-sale/2018/03/22/id/850284/
GIST	<p>The Trump administration is signing off on selling more than \$1 billion in arms to Saudi Arabia as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman visits the United States.</p> <p>The State Department says the administration told Congress on Thursday that it plans to approve the sale. Lawmakers will have 30 days to act if they want to try to stop it.</p> <p>The package includes up to about 6,700 U.S.-built anti-tank missiles. Raytheon Co. makes the missiles.</p> <p>Other items include support, maintenance and spare parts for American tanks, helicopters and other equipment already in Saudi Arabia's arsenal.</p> <p>Prince Mohammed met Tuesday with President Donald Trump as he started his three-week U.S. tour.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 China: \$3B US goods for possible retaliation
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/china-hike-tariffs-us-pork-aluminum-goods-53956078
GIST	<p>China announced a \$3 billion list of U.S. goods for possible retaliation in a tariff dispute with President Donald Trump and girded for a bigger battle over technology policy as financial markets sank on fears of disruption to global commerce.</p> <p>The Commerce Ministry said higher duties on pork, apples, steel pipe and other goods would offset Chinese losses due to Trump's tariff hike on steel and aluminum imports. It urged Washington to negotiate a settlement but set no deadline.</p> <p>In a separate dispute with potentially bigger consequences, the ministry criticized Trump's decision Thursday to approve a possible tariff hike on Chinese goods worth up to \$60 billion over Beijing's technology policy. It gave no indication of a possible response but the foreign ministry said Beijing will take "all necessary measures" to protect its interests.</p> <p>Financial markets sank on concern the escalating tensions might disrupt the biggest global trading relationship or lead other nations to raise import barriers.</p> <p>U.S. stocks sank. In Asia, Tokyo's benchmark tumbled by an unusually large 4.6 percent while the Shanghai Composite index fell 4.5 percent.</p>

	<p>The dollar dipped to 104.85 yen as investors shifted into the Japanese currency, which is viewed as a "safe haven" from risk.</p> <p>China's response Friday appeared to be aimed at increasing domestic U.S. pressure on Trump by making clear which exporters, including farm areas that voted for him in 2016, might be hurt.</p> <p>"Beijing is extending an olive branch and urging the U.S. to resolve trade disputes through dialogue rather than tariffs," said economist Vishnu Varathan of Mizuho Bank in a report. "Nevertheless, the first volley of shots and retaliatory response has been set off."</p> <p>The Commerce Ministry said Friday's list was linked to Trump's steel and aluminum tariffs , but companies already were looking ahead to potential disruption from the bigger squabble over American complaints Beijing steals or forces companies to hand over technology.</p> <p>The list made no mention of jetliners, soybeans or other products that are the biggest U.S. exports to China by value and that the American Chamber of Commerce in China said might be targets. That leaves Beijing options to take more drastic steps.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Pakistan celebrates National Day
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/pakistan-celebrates-national-day-military-parade-53955374?
GIST	<p>Pakistanis celebrated on Friday their National Day with a military parade in the capital, Islamabad, showcasing short- and long-range missiles, tanks, jets, drones and other hardware. Troops, including female soldiers, marched past a stand with political and military leaders.</p> <p>Thousands chanted "Long Live Pakistan" as Pakistani air force jets flew over, showing off the country's air power, and paratroopers jumped out of helicopters.</p> <p>Pakistan air force has been critical to the military's offensive against militant hideous in the tribal regions bordering Afghanistan. The military has claimed success in routing militants, but violent attacks have has continued.</p> <p>As part of security measures in Islamabad, authorities suspended mobile phone services during the parade, presumably as a precaution against homemade bombs being triggered remotely by cell phones.</p> <p>Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain used the occasion to promise to defeat militants who have killed thousands of people in attacks over the past decade. In a televised speech, he also criticized neighboring India for what he called human rights violations in the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir.</p> <p>Pakistan and India have tensed relations and they have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir.</p> <p>Authorities blocked some roads in Islamabad during the parade, considered a main event in the day's festivities. Later on Friday, 141 Pakistanis and foreigners are to be honored for outstanding services and achievements, as part of the celebrations.</p> <p>This year, Cuba's late ruler Fidel Castro is to be honored, in gratitude for sending Cuban doctors to Pakistan in the 2005 earthquake that killed 75,000 people.</p> <p>Pakistani right activist Asma Jahangir, who died last month in Lahore and often criticized the military's interference in civilian affairs, will also be honored. Her family will receive her award.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Mudslides, floods threaten Southern Calif.
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/mudslides-flash-floods-threaten-southern-california-months-deadly/story?
GIST	<p>Heavy rain has Southern California on alert for flash flooding and mudslides today, two months after deadly mudslides in Montecito.</p> <p>Rainfall totals are expected to mostly range from 2 to 5 inches across coastal and valley areas and 4 to 8 inches across foothills and coastal slopes. But the top rain total has been in San Luis Obispo County, which has seen 9.5 inches</p> <p>As of 11 a.m. local time, Santa Barbara had seen 2.7 inches of rain and Montecito 2.5 inches.</p> <p>Rainfall rates could be as high as an inch an hour, potentially causing mudslides and rockslides.</p> <p>In Santa Barbara County, 30,000 people were told to evacuate, including residents of Montecito.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 National security adviser resigning
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/gen-hr-mcmaster-resigning-national-security-adviser/story?id=53948256
GIST	<p>President Donald Trump and National Security Adviser Gen. H.R. McMaster mutually agreed that the three-star general and Iraq war veteran will leave the Trump administration, the White House confirmed on Thursday.</p> <p>He will be replaced by former United Nations ambassador John Bolton — the third person to take on the role during the current administration.</p> <p>“After thirty-four years of service to our nation, I am requesting retirement from the U.S. Army effective this summer after which I will leave public service. Throughout my career it has been my greatest privilege to serve alongside extraordinary servicemembers and dedicated civilians,” McMaster said in a statement adding. “I am thankful to President Donald J. Trump for the opportunity to serve him and our nation as national security advisor.”</p> <p>Trump lauded McMaster's service saying "I thank General McMaster and his family for their service and wish them the very best.”</p> <p>McMaster's departure in early 2018 had been planned and expected, especially as Trump re-tools his team ahead of historic talks with North Korea, sources with direct knowledge told ABC News.</p> <p>He was seen as adding a steady and intellectual voice to Trump’s security team, but the president chafed at his style and disposition in Oval Office briefings, the sources said. He also clashed with former Trump advisor Steve Bannon and other top military brass, including Defense Secretary Jim Mattis.</p> <p>He was also reportedly unable to keep the president's attention in complex briefings, correcting him when he doesn't want to be corrected, and seen as a lecturer, the sources said.</p> <p>Three months on the job, the New York Times reported that Trump described McMaster as "a pain" and complained he talked too much.</p> <p>Just last month, following new indictments targeting Russian cyber operatives, Trump publicly rebuked McMaster, tweeting the general forgot to mention that results of the 2016 election were not impacted or changed by the Russians - something the indictment never said.</p>

	<p>McMaster also broke with Trump on several issues.</p> <p>He has urged continuation of the Iran nuclear deal; opposes the label “radical Islamic terrorism;” supports free trade deals with key allies like South Korea, and forcefully protested the racially charged violence in Charlottesville.</p> <p>After reports surfaced that Trump revealed highly classified info to the Russians in an Oval Office meeting in May 2017, McMaster vigorously defended the president in an ad hoc press conference outside the West Wing.</p> <p>He remains on active duty as a Lieutenant General in the US Army (3-star). The Pentagon has considered giving McMaster a fourth star and new assignment in the military.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Dow tanks amid fears China trade war
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/dow-tanks-700-points-amid-fears-china-trade/story?
GIST	<p>The Dow Jones Industrial Average plunged more than 700 points today amid Wall Street fears of a potential trade war with China sparked by punishing tariffs announced by President Donald Trump.</p> <p>At the closing bell at the New York Stock Exchange, the Dow finished the day down 724 points to 23,957.</p> <p>The other major indexes also tanked. The S&P 500 fell 68 points to 2,643, while the Nasdaq plunged 178 to 7,168.</p> <p>The market tumble came shortly after Trump announced his plans for tariffs on up to \$60 billion annually in Chinese imports. The move by the White House was designed as retaliation for Beijing’s violation of U.S. intellectual property outlined in an administration report.</p> <p>Trump signed a presidential memorandum directing the U.S. Trade Representative to publish a proposed list of products in 15 days along with an intended tariff increase, after which the list will be opened up for public comment.</p> <p>The president said he’s spoken to China's President Xi Jinping about the actions and that he continues to have “tremendous respect” for him.</p> <p>On Tuesday, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang sent a warning to the White House to "act rationally" to avoid disrupting trade over steel and technology.</p> <p>"No one will emerge a winner from a trade war," Li said at an annual news conference held during the meeting of China's ceremonial legislature.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Young activists to ‘March for Our Lives’
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/young-activists-descend-washington-tomorrow-march-lives/story?id=53850670
GIST	<p>Tens of thousands of young people are set to descend on the nation's capital tomorrow for March for Our Lives, an event organized by the student survivors of the Feb. 14 mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida that killed 17 people.</p> <p>The student participants are marching "to demand that their lives and safety become a priority and that we end gun violence and mass shootings in our schools today," according to the event website.</p>

"In the tragic wake of the seventeen lives brutally cut short in Florida, politicians are telling us that now is not the time to talk about guns. March for Our Lives believes the time is now," the event said.

The march extends beyond Washington, D.C.: Over 800 sister marches are registered touching every part of the nation, from Hawaii to Alaska, and from Texas to Maine. Sister marches have even spread throughout the world, from Canada to Iceland, from Spain to Israel, and India to Hong Kong.

"It just shows that the youth are the future," Stoneman Douglas survivor Alex Wind told "Good Morning America" on Monday. "One day we're going to have a president from our generation, and we're trying to make the change before that happens."

"I just think young voices everywhere, they're just as equal as any other voice," another survivor, Ryan Deitsch, added on "GMA." "In this country, we have the freedom to say whatever we want and we have to use that to the best of our ability to be able to spread messages that we have to spread to make the world a better place."

Concerned parents are also participating.

Rebecca Boldrick, the mother of Stoneman Douglas student David Hogg, told ABC News, "As a mother and a teacher I am marching because our schools need to return to being the sanctuaries they should be. I don't want there to be any more senseless mass killings by assault rifles. I want to protect every American in school -- and in public."

Celebrities including Oprah Winfrey and Steven Spielberg have donated to March for Our Lives. George and Amal Clooney, who are among the A-listers who donated, also said they will participate in the march, which begins at noon EST Saturday.

Ariana Grande, Demi Lovato, Common, Jennifer Hudson and Vic Mensa will perform at the event.

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HEADLINE	03/22 Protest in fatal shooting unarmed man
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/demonstrators-protest-fatal-shooting-unarmed-man-sacramento/story?
GIST	<p>Demonstrators in Sacramento, California, gathered Thursday evening to protest the death of 22-year-old Stephon Clark, who was killed in his grandmother's backyard over the weekend after two police officers fired 20 shots at him.</p> <p>A crowd of people went to Sacramento's City Hall, chanting phrases like "Stand up, fight back" and "No justice, no peace." The march then moved to Interstate 5, which was shut down as a result, before demonstrators blocked the entrance to Golden 1 Center, delaying a Sacramento Kings game there. The game eventually got underway, but with few spectators as the doors to the arena were locked.</p> <p>Black Lives Matter Sacramento is hosting the demonstration, according to the Facebook event titled "Turn Up - for [Stephon] Clark!"</p> <p>"We are tired of Sacramento law enforcement killing us!" the event description reads. "We are tired of talking and meeting and sitting trying to convince our elected officials that there needs to be change!"</p> <p>Police released body camera footage from the shooting on Wednesday night as well as thermal-imaging video from a Sacramento Sheriff's Department helicopter, which shows Clark running from a neighbor's yard and onto his grandmother's property.</p> <p>After police are seen running down a driveway after Clark and taking cover at the edge of the building, they yell several times for Clark to stop and show them his hands before several shots are fired.</p>

	<p>Chopper video shows Clark moving toward the officers before the shooting, but it is unclear whether his arms were extended.</p> <p>Organizers wrote on the event page that they waited until the video was released to schedule a protest.</p> <p>In a press conference Thursday afternoon, Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg praised the city's efforts to remain transparent by releasing the video but also said "it is not fair" to "render a judgment on the specifics in this case until more facts are known that explain what we all saw in the video."</p> <p>Steinberg also encouraged the community to make sure voices heard, emphasizing his desire to make sure this kind of death never happens again.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 FDNY firefighter dies on blazing film set
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/fdny-firefighter-dies-fighting-blaze-harlem-set-ed/story?id=53956170
GIST	<p>A New York City firefighter died late Thursday battling a blaze on the Harlem set of a film starring Ed Norton and Bruce Willis.</p> <p>Michael Davidson, 37, a 15-year veteran, was separated from his unit while fighting the five-alarm fire and later found unconscious, FDNY Commissioner Dan Nigro said at a press conference early Friday morning.</p> <p>Two other firefighters suffered serious burns and three civilians experienced minor injuries, Nigro said.</p> <p>Officials do not yet know what caused the fire, which has been extinguished.</p> <p>Norton reportedly was at the scene of the fire, which sparked around 11 p.m. He wrote the screenplay for "Motherless Brooklyn," which is based on a Jonathan Lethem novel. Filming was not occurring at the time of the fire.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	03/22 Pop up ads help distribute botnets
SOURCE	https://blog.trendmicro.com/trendlabs-security-intelligence/pop-up-ads-and-over-a-hundred-sites-are-helping-distribute-botnets-cryptocurrency-miners-and-ransomware/
GIST	<p>The Trend Micro Cyber Safety Solutions team has been tracking a potentially unwanted app (PUA) distribution campaign that installs PUA software downloaders. During our research, we found that some of these distributors started pushing malware along with PUAs in late 2017. In this post we focus on one of the older PUA software downloaders called ICLoader (also called FusionCore and detected by Trend Micro as PUA_ICLOADER). Different reports identified it as a PUA software downloader because it installed adware or unwanted software.</p> <p>Like most threats, ICLoader evolved and adapted to the current landscape. In 2017, it began pushing various botnets, cryptocurrency miners, and the new emerging GandCrab ransomware (detected by Trend Micro as RANSOM_GANDCRAB.A). Pop-up ads were used to distribute the malware on file sharing websites and over a hundred fake software sharing websites — all of which are still live (at the time of writing). The distributors of ICLoader seem to be targeting users who are actively looking for specific software since even the pop-up ads are hosted on sites that supposedly share software.</p> <p>The distribution campaign</p>

While tracking the campaign, we found three sources distributing ICLoader. As mentioned above, one distribution method involves using pop-up ads on free file sharing service websites — a known avenue for distributing unwanted applications and malware. These file sharing websites allow users to upload their file and share a download link with other people. Pop-up advertisements appear when people click the download buttons on their page.

ICLoader uses these pop-up ads as lures for installation. When users click the download button, a pop-up ad opens on a new window with malicious links that lead to the ICLoader download page.

Users are led to believe that these are real files from the sharing website. Clicking on the link installs ICLoader, which can drop malware or unwanted apps onto the victim's device.

The second distribution vector is fake software sharing websites. One group has made 117 of these sites, each one sharing hundreds of cracked software. The sites list detailed descriptions of software and have 'free download' buttons to the cracked versions at the bottom of the page. We found that these download links all connect to servers that redirect users to download different PUA downloader software, mainly ICLoader.

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HEADLINE	03/22 Atlanta officials warn: data compromise
SOURCE	https://www.myajc.com/news/crime-law/atlanta-officials-warn-cyber-attack-may-compromise-sensitive-data/afZLYCO14WySOBFATzKXRP/
GIST	<p>City of Atlanta officials are struggling to determine how much sensitive information may have been compromised in a Thursday cyber attack.</p> <p>They urged employees to check their bank accounts to make sure their financial information had not been accessed and said that anyone who had conducted transactions with the city could be at risk.</p> <p>“Because we don’t know, I think it would be appropriate for the public just to be vigilant in checking their accounts and making sure their credit agencies have also been notified,” Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms said at a Thursday press conference.</p> <p>The city has also received demands that it pay a ransom of an unspecified amount, officials confirmed. But officials had yet to make a determination if it would pay the ransom.</p> <p>“We can’t speak to that right now,” Bottoms said. “We will be looking for guidance, specifically from our federal partners.”</p> <p>The FBI, the Department of Homeland Security and the Secret Service had been called on for advice.</p> <p>For years, the FBI has warned that the use of ransomware — malicious software that threatens to block access to data or to publish it unless the infected organization pays a ransom — is a fast growing criminal enterprise.</p> <p>Organizations often don’t learn they have been infected until they can’t access their data or until computer messages appear demanding a ransom payment in exchange for a decryption key, according to the FBI’s website.</p> <p>The messages include instructions on paying the ransom, usually in the form of bitcoins — a crypto currency that allows for anonymous transactions online.</p> <p>Both Davidson County North Carolina and the Colorado Department of Transportation suffered ransomware attacks last month.</p>

The city's Department of Atlanta Information Management at 5:40 a.m. Thursday learned of outages of various internal and customer applications "including some applications customers use to pay bills or access court related information," said Richard Cox, the city's interim Chief of Operations.

Cox called it a "ransomware cyber attack."

The public safety department, water services and the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport operated without incident, Cox said.

Cox said the city would offer employees additional resources to help them protect their information in coming days.

Bottoms said that the city's municipal courts should be open on Friday.

Atlanta Police Chief Erika Shields said that her department's emergency response system had not been affected at all.

Shields said that officers had reverted to writing reports on paper out of an abundance of caution, but that as far as she knew the police departments computer systems were still operational.

Shields insisted that earlier reports attributed to a department memo that warned that payroll might be disrupted were not true.

"We did not put out a memo," Shields said. "I can't control what is said. I'm deferring to experts here who said, 'It won't be affected.' And I believe them."

Bottoms also said that city's 8,000 employees would be paid on Friday.

"I'll be signing 8,000 checks today if necessary," Bottoms said.

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HEADLINE	03/22 Financial fallout from data breaches
SOURCE	https://www.govinfosecurity.com/financial-fallout-from-data-breaches-a-10734
GIST	<p>Recent financial reports from three healthcare sector organizations that suffered cyberattacks demonstrate how costly data breaches can be to not-for-profit healthcare providers and for-profit companies alike.</p> <p>For example, a new auditor report for Arizona-based Banner Health acknowledges that anticipated federal fines resulting from a 2016 breach incident, and a pending lawsuit, could impact the not-for-profit Arizona healthcare system's financial performance.</p> <p>Similarly, recent 2017 fiscal year-end filings with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission by medical transcription vendor software vendor Nuance and pharmaceutical giant Merck reveal the financial effect on each of those organizations of the NotPetya ransomware attacks last June that disrupted their operations.</p> <p>The financial impact from cyberattacks on all these organizations offers a powerful lesson for others, says privacy attorney Adam Greene of the law firm Davis Wright Tremaine.</p> <p>"Healthcare entities have historically lagged behind many other industries with respect to how much budget is spent on information security," he says. "But the last few years have really highlighted the substantial damage that information security breaches can cause, demonstrating a much higher return on investment for robust information security controls."</p> <p>Banner Health Breach</p>

A consolidated financial statement report for 2016 and 2017 issued on March 16 by the consultancy Ernst & Young about Banner Health notes that it's facing a consolidated class action lawsuit as well as an investigation by the Department of Health and Human Services related to a 2016 data breach.

The auditor report states that Banner Health expects potential "negative findings" from the breach investigation by HHS' Office for Civil Rights as well as a possible fine.

"The OCR investigation is still active, and OCR has indicated that initial Banner responses with respect to its past security assessment activities are inadequate," the report says. "Although Banner has supplemented its initial responses, Banner anticipates it may receive negative findings with respect to information technology security program and that a fine may be assessed against Banner."

The report notes that the class action lawsuit against Banner - which represents the consolidation of nine lawsuits - seeks damages and other remedies on behalf of individuals impacted by the breach. The report notes that Banner intends to vigorously defend itself against the suit and expects a "substantial portion of the potential exposure from the cyberattack and litigation" will be covered by its cyber risk insurance policy. "The extent of potential liability has not yet been settled," it notes.

The Ernst & Young report notes that a forensics investigation into the Banner breach determined that the organization's computer systems that process credit cards in food and beverage outlets at some locations were accessed by unauthorized users resulting in the copying of about 21,000 credit cards numbers. The attackers also gained access to a number of Banner servers containing other information of 3.7 million Banner patients and healthcare providers.

In a statement provided to Information Security Media Group, Banner says that after it reported the August 2016 cyberattack, OCR opened an initial investigation in November 2016, which is progressing. "Banner provided all of the information the OCR requested, and has fully cooperated in the investigation," the statement says.

"Over the last 16 months, Banner has participated in an ongoing dialogue with the OCR to ensure they were highly informed about the advances we are making in our information security program to help protect against future intrusions," the statement notes.

OCR declined to comment, saying it doesn't discuss current or potential investigations.

Privacy attorney David Holtzman, vice president of consulting firm CynergisTek, notes that the SEC recently issued guidance greatly expanding the responsibilities of public companies to disclose obligations related to cybersecurity risks and incidents.

"This new guidance applies to disclosures in registration statements and periodic reports filed by publicly traded companies," he says. But some not-for-profit organizations, such as Banner Health, apparently are choosing to follow the guidance as well, he points out.

Nuance's Financial Impact

Cyberattacks have also taken a financial toll on Nuance and Merck.

In Nuance's 10K filings with the SEC for fiscal 2017 ended Sept. 30, the Waltham, Mass.-based company says its revenue and operating results for fiscal year 2017 were negatively impacted by the NotPetya malware incident.

"For fiscal year 2017, we estimate that we lost approximately \$68 million in revenues, primarily in our healthcare segment, due to the service disruption and the reserves we established for customer refund credits," the company reports.

"Additionally, we incurred incremental costs of approximately \$24 million for fiscal year 2017 as a result of our remediation and restoration efforts, as well as incremental amortization expenses."

Nuance says in the filing that it's evaluating its insurance coverage to determine the amount, if any, of the malware incident losses that are recoverable under the company's policies.

Additionally, as a result of the ransomware attack, Nuance reports to the SEC it incurred capital expenditures of approximately \$13 million related to upgrading its existing technology infrastructures during the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2017.

Impact on Merck

In its 10-K filing with the SEC for its fiscal year 2017, which ended on Dec. 31, Merck says that the June 27, 2017, network attack involving NotPetya led to a disruption of the company's worldwide operations, including manufacturing, research and sales operations.

"Due to the cyberattack, the company was unable to fulfill orders for certain products in certain markets, which had an unfavorable effect on sales in 2017 of approximately \$260 million," Merck says in the filing. <p>

In addition, the company says it recorded other related expenses totaling \$285 million in 2017, net of insurance recoveries of approximately \$45 million.

But the impact on Merck will linger into 2018, the company warns.

"Due to a residual backlog of orders, the company anticipates that in 2018 sales will be unfavorably affected in certain markets by approximately \$200 million from the cyberattack. Merck does not expect a significant impairment to the value of intangible assets related to marketed products or inventories as a result of the cyberattack."

The company notes that it has insurance coverage insuring against costs resulting from cyberattacks and has received proceeds. "However, there may be disputes with the insurers about the availability of the insurance coverage for claims related to this incident," Merck says in the filing.

Sales Affected

Merck also notes that the temporary production shutdown as a result of the cyberattack also contributed to the company's inability to meet higher than expected demand for vaccine Gardasil 9, which resulted in Merck's decision to borrow doses of Gardasil 9 from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Pediatric Vaccine Stockpile.

"The company subsequently replenished a portion of the borrowed doses in 2017. The net effect of the borrowing and subsequent partial replenishment was a reduction in sales of \$125 million in 2017," according to the SEC filing.

Merck says it has implemented a variety of measures to further enhance its systems to guard against similar attacks and taking steps to enhance the company's resiliency following a cyberattack.

"The objective of these efforts is not only to protect against future cyberattacks, but also to improve the speed of the company's recovery from such attacks and enable continued business operations to the greatest extent possible during any recovery period," the company says.

Insurance Benefits

Banner, Nuance and Merck each appear hopeful that their cyber insurance policies can potentially help cover some of the expenses related to cyberattacks.

"The importance of cyber insurance cannot be understated," attorney Greene notes. "Because the cyber market is relatively new, insurance policies aren't as standardized. They should typically cover regulatory investigations and regulator settlements or fines, but each policy must be carefully reviewed on this point, including whether there are specific sub-limits."

	The attorney emphasizes: "It's very important that information security staff are involved in the cyber insurance process, so that an organization does not fill out an insurance application inaccurately regarding what safeguards are in place, potentially leading to coverage issues later should an incident occur."
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HEADLINE	03/22 Europe power plants brace for attacks
SOURCE	https://www.forbes.com/sites/davekeating/2018/03/22/european-power-plants-brace-for-russian-hack-attacks/#cdc20db72261
GIST	<p>Last week, the U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team warned that Russia had hacked into a number of public and private companies in the energy sector, including power plants. The targeted plants were in both the United States and Europe, they said.</p> <p>As alarming as the news was, it left many more questions than answers – particularly because the report did not specify which plants had been affected.</p> <p>It's unclear at this stage whether more specific information has been handed over to European governments by the Americans. A spokesperson for the European Commission, the European Union's executive, told me that while they cannot reveal the details of what information has been passed on from the American authorities, they are "cooperating very closely with the U.S. counterparts."</p> <p>However, a European national government source says many countries are still in the dark about what plants might have been affected, and if any intelligence has been passed on to specific EU member states, it isn't being shared.</p> <p>The Times, a British newspaper, reported this week that the manager of the UK's national electricity grid has been put on alert by the government, told to boost its security amid fears of a Russian cyber-attack.</p> <p>The warning went out to electricity, gas and water firms as well as a nuclear power plant, according to the paper, citing national security officials at the country's National Cyber Security Centre. Hospitals also received warnings.</p> <p>The warning comes as tensions between London and Moscow heat up after a nerve-agent attack in England that the government blames on Russia. Russia has denied being involved.</p> <p>Concern about the potential of state-sponsored cyber attacks has been growing for some time. But with global tensions rising, the anxiety has suddenly become acute.</p> <p>"The atmosphere around these types of attacks is ratcheting up as global tensions, and global interconnectivity, rise," says Chris Day, an expert with cybersecurity firm Cyxtera. "Ukraine's power grid was successfully infiltrated in 2015 and 2016, so it's not surprising that other countries are in the crosshairs. This is a real and present danger requiring immediate action."</p> <p>"Power companies should employ all offense and defence-oriented tools at their disposal."</p> <p>European response</p> <p>According to the current EU cyber incident regulations, preparedness for and responses to an attack against critical energy infrastructure is the responsibility of national European governments rather than the European Union. But the EU has set up a voluntary information sharing mechanism called the Computer Incident Response Teams.</p> <p>Under EU law, energy providers must adopt specific security measures to prevent network and information security incidents. And they must report any incidents that could impact energy supply.</p>

	<p>National governments are currently putting together detailed risk preparedness plans for an electricity crisis, which takes into account the possibility of a cyber attack.</p> <p>“We’ve put in place a cyber diplomacy toolbox for malicious cyber activities by state and non-state actors,” Nathalie Vandystadt, a spokesperson for the European Commission, told Forbes. “The framework is expected to encourage cooperation, facilitate mitigation of threats, and influence the behaviour of potential aggressors in the long term.” But these frameworks are still in development, having only recently become EU law.</p> <p>What power plants can do</p> <p>While these coordinated plans are coming into place, Day says there are specific things energy utilities should be doing at a minimum to protect themselves from cyber attacks.</p> <p>“Test the security of devices and applications and review architecture and source code,” he says. “Assess the security of networks and systems, searching for unpatched vulnerabilities and inadequate protection of system information.”</p> <p>He also recommends conducting adversary simulation, which can model an advanced persistent threat from inside the infrastructure and evaluate how the security team will react.</p> <p>Additionally, a software defined perimeter, which only grants access a one-to-one connection based on the context the user presents, can stop unauthorized access to network resources.</p> <p>The details of the potential risk to European plants detected by the US government are still unclear. But the subject may come up today at a summit of European national leaders in Brussels, where Russia, relations with the United States and the EU’s energy union are all on the agenda.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 The Pirate Bay down again third time
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/the-pirate-bay-is-down-for-3rd-time-in-a-week/
GIST	<p>Another day, another disappointing news for The Pirate Bay users – Today for the third time in 5 days The Pirate Bay domain has gone offline.</p> <p>Currently, those visiting the site can see “Error 522 Connection timed out” message generated by Cloudflare since The Pirate Bay uses its CDN and DDoS protection service.</p> <p>According to Cloudflare’s Michelle Zatlyn, Error 522 means that the service was unable to reach the origin web server at all. It could be so because the server was overloaded or down, its firewall was blocking requests or misconfiguration with IP and DNS addresses.</p> <p>The online service outage watchdog Is It Down Right Now noted that the domain went offline at 16:09:26 UTC. This means it has been over an hour that the domain is offline forcing visitors to find its alternatives.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Honeypot: database wiped out 13sec.
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/hackers-left-ransom-note-after-wipingout-mongodb-in-13-seconds/
GIST	<p>For the last couple of years, hackers have been exploiting unprotected MongoDB based servers to steal data and hold the exposed databases for ransom. In order to raise awareness, hackers leaked 36 million records of internal data collected from several vulnerable servers.</p> <p>The seriousness of the matter can be understood by the fact that in July of 2015 John Matherly of Shodan, the world’s first search engine for the Internet of Things (IoT devices) revealed that there are over 30,000</p>

unprotected MongoDB databases exposed for public access.

Now, to determine and measure the depth of attacks against MongoDB, the IT security researchers from German firm Kromtech conducted an experiment in which they purposely left a MongoDB database exposed to the public and kept an eye on the incoming connections.

This practice is called as honeypot which is a security mechanism set to detect and counteract attempts at unauthorized use of information systems.

According to Kromtech's blog post, the honeypot database contained 30GB of fake data. Little did they know, it took only three hours for hackers to identify the database before wiping out its data in just 13 seconds and leaving a ransom note demanding 0.2 Bitcoin.

Here it is noteworthy that in January 2017, hackers held several MongoDB databases for ransom and demanded 0.2 Bitcoin in return. It is unclear if the hackers who took over the honeypot database are part of the same group. However, according to Kromtech's Chief Communication Officer Bob Diachenko, the attack on their database has been traced back to China.

The researchers are certain that only an automated script can complete such task within 13 seconds.

“The attacker first connects to our database, then drops the databases to delete them, drops the Journals to erase their tracks, creates a database called Warning with Readme collection and the Solution Record, then drops the Journals again to cover their tracks. This was all completed in just thirteen seconds, leading to the conclusion that this was the work of an automated script,” noted Kromtech researchers.

The researchers are advising users to secure their database since exposed MongoDB servers are still at risk. Another important aspect of ransom attacks against MongoDB is that hackers are simply deleting the database therefore even if victim pays them off, their data will never be returned. Therefore, keep a back up of your data and never pay ransom in such cases.

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HEADLINE	03/22 Report: cyber-terrorism top threat by 2020
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/cyberterrorism-top-threat-by-2020/
GIST	<p>Nation-state-led cyber-terrorism will be a top threat by 2020 – and every organization should prepare.</p> <p>That's the word from the Information Security Forum (ISF)'s latest Threat Horizon 2020 report, which postulates that terrorist groups, organized criminals, hacktivists and hackers working in various collaborations and configurations to increasingly weaponize the cyber-domain, launching attacks on critical national infrastructure that cause widespread destruction and chaos. Further, their activities will take no account of land barriers or legislation.</p> <p>With power, communications and logistics systems down, organisations will lose the basic building blocks needed for doing business; heating, air conditioning, lighting, transport, information, communication and a safe working environment will no longer be taken for granted.</p> <p>“Over the next two years, business leaders will face regular and complex decisions about protecting their critical information and systems. Existing solutions that have been relied upon for years will be exposed as inadequate,” said Steve Durbin, managing director, ISF. “Only organizations that understand this rapidly changing and complex environment will remain firm and unshakable. Those that are unprepared and incapable of responding quickly will crumble as they defend against an onslaught of potent, day-to-day cyber-attacks.”</p> <p>Aside from the doomsday-like prediction, the report also predicts that technology will outpace controls. Capabilities that seemed impossible only a short time ago will develop extremely quickly, aiding those</p>

who see them coming and hindering those who don't. Developments in smart technology will create new possibilities for organizations of all kinds – but they will also create opportunities for attackers and adversaries by reducing the effectiveness of existing controls. Previously well-protected information will become vulnerable.

Also, according to the ISF, pressure will skew judgement. Existing controls and methods of managing information risk will be put under severe stress by an avalanche of new technologies, regulations and pressures on employees. Organizations that have a good record of securing information will be at risk of complacency, judging that the way they have always done things will continue to work in the future – a dangerous attitude to take.

“Over the coming years, the very foundations of today’s digital world will shake – violently,” Durbin said. Innovative and determined attackers, along with seismic changes to the way organizations conduct their operations, will combine to threaten even the strongest establishments. Only those with robust preparations will stand tall.”

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HEADLINE	03/22 Iran-linked hackers adopt new methods
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/iran-linked-hackers-adopt-new-data-exfiltration-methods
GIST	<p>An Iran-linked cyber-espionage group has been using new malware and data exfiltration techniques in recent attacks, security firm Nyotron has discovered.</p> <p>The threat actor, known as OilRig, has been active since 2015, mainly targeting United States and Middle Eastern organizations in the financial and government industries. The group has been already observed using multiple tools and adopting new exploits fast, as well as switching to new Trojans in recent attacks.</p> <p>Nyotron now says that OilRig has used roughly 20 different tools in its latest campaign, including off-the-shelf, dual-purpose utilities and previously unseen malware. In addition to data exfiltration, the group has been heavily focused on bypassing network-level security products to establish a foothold into targeted environments.</p> <p>Since November 2017, the notorious Iran-linked threat group has been targeting various organizations in the Middle East with evolved tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs), including the abuse of Google Drive and SmartFile for command and control (C&C) purposes, Nyotron’s report (PDF) reveals.</p> <p>After compromising a targeted network (phishing emails are likely used to steal login credentials), the group downloads necessary tools from public file sharing services such as Dropbox, Degoo, Files.fm, and File.ac, and from an attacker-controlled server.</p> <p>The hackers used Windows shares to transfer tools to endpoints that did not have an Internet connection or had downloads blocked by firewalls. They also used web shells to upload and execute files on compromised servers.</p> <p>For the attacks, the hacker(s) built a sophisticated Remote Access Trojan (RAT) that uses Google Drive for C&C purposes and which is deployed on the target systems as a file named Service.exe. The malware registers as a service to achieve persistence, receives commands from the attacker’s account on Google Drive, and sends files to it.</p> <p>With no anti-virus programs in VirusTotal detecting the RAT, multiple organizations appear to have been compromised by the malware. The account used to control the malware was created in August 2015, but wasn’t used until recently.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Report: cybercrime-as-a-service costs
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/you-can-ddos-organization-just-10-hour-cybercrime-report
GIST	<p>The cost of having an organization targeted by a distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack for an hour is as low as \$10, cybersecurity firm Armor says.</p> <p>The low cost of launching such attacks results from the proliferation of cybercrime-as-a-service, one of the most profitable business models adopted by cybercriminals over the past years. It allows criminals-wannabe to employ the resources of established cybercriminals for their nefarious purposes, including malware distribution, DDoS-ing, spam, and more.</p> <p>All that miscreants have to do is to access underground markets or forums and hire the desired cybercrime service to conduct the malicious actions for them. And while the incurred financial losses total billions or even more for affected organizations, the price of hiring such a service is highly affordable to anyone.</p> <p>According to Armor’s The Black Market Report: A Look into the Dark Web (PDF), anyone can DDoS an organization for only \$10 an hour or \$200 per day. Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP) access for a system for three months costs only \$35.</p> <p>The data was collected through the analysis of dozens of online underground markets and forums during the fourth quarter of 2017 and reveals a slight increase in prices compared to a couple of years ago. Considering how powerful DDoS attacks have become lately, however, the cost of launching an attack remains incredibly low.</p> <p>DDoS-for-hire services, however, are only one example of how cheap cybercrime services are on the dark web. The Disdain exploit kit could be rented for \$80 a day, \$500 a week or \$1,400 a month, Armor has discovered. A botnet capable of webinject and other nefarious actions was available at \$750 or \$1,200 a month, with support available at an extra \$100 or \$150 a month.</p> <p>“When source code is offered, there is a trend toward offloading risk by selling malware or exploit code to someone else and then selling support as well. In the spirit of helping others, some sellers have taken to hawking hacker tutorials and known exploits in bundles at relatively low cost, most likely to low-skill hackers known as script kiddies,” the security firm says.</p> <p>Armor’s researchers found a Microsoft Office exploit builder targeting the CVE-2017-0199 vulnerability available at \$1,000. A banking Trojan license, on the other hand, was available at \$3,000 to \$5,000, while a remote access Trojan was seen selling for \$200.</p> <p>On underground forums, buyers can also find code-signing certificates (a Class 3 code-signing certificate was selling for \$400, while an Extended Validation (EV) certificate was offered for \$2,500), account hacking programs (for as low as \$12.99), WordPress exploits (at \$100), password stealers (\$50), Android malware loader (\$1,500), ATM skimmers (\$700 - \$1,500), and various other tools as well.</p> <p>Credit card skimmers and magnetic stripe readers were found selling for as little as \$700 and \$450, respectively. Credit card data is available for purchase as well, with prices starting as low as \$7 for US Visa cards.</p> <p>Card numbers sold with additional identifying information are a bit more expensive: \$18 vs \$10-\$12 at the same vendor. Customers looking to verify the bank information number (BIN) may be charged as much as \$15 for the operation, Armor has discovered. American Express and Discover card numbers were available at \$12 to \$17 with BIN verification.</p> <p>The cost of credit card information was also influenced by the credit limit on the card: one with a \$10,000 limit was available at \$800, while another with a \$15,000 limit was \$1,000. Access to bank accounts too is priced in line with the available balance, ranging from \$200 to \$1,000 for accounts at Wells Fargo, JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America with balances between \$3,000 and \$15,000.</p>

PayPal accounts were also available for sale: \$200 for a verified PayPal account with a balance of \$3,000. Furthermore, the researchers found U.K. bank accounts up for sale, priced at 300 and 400 GBP, for accounts at Lloyds Bank with balances of 3,000 GBP and 5,000 GBP, respectively.

“Buying access to an account, however, is only part of a successful heist. From there, the buyer needs to be able to get their hands on the money. To accomplish this, cybercriminals traditionally have turned to money mules. Their role is to receive the funds from the compromised account, after which, they will be often tasked with transferring that money to another account overseas in exchange for a commission,” Armor notes.

The security researchers discovered that one can buy all kinds of compromised accounts on the dark web, not only finance-related accounts. One vendor offered 1,000 Instagram accounts for a price of \$15, 2,500 for \$25, 5,000 for \$40 and 10,000 for \$60. Another said they would hack into accounts for Facebook, Netflix, Twitter and other services for as low as \$12.99.

Personally identifiable information (PII) and counterfeit documents are also available on underground markets and forums. The price for U.S. PII (name, address, phone number, SSN, DOB, bank account data, employment history, credit history, criminal history) was of \$40 - \$200, while U.S. green cards, driver’s license, Insurance, and Passport Visas (bundled) would cost \$2,000.

Other data being sold on the dark web that attackers can turn into profit includes airline and hotel rewards points. A Southwest Airlines rewards account with at least 50,000 miles was being sold for \$98.88, while a large international hotel chain rewards points account with at least 50,000 points was available at \$74.99.

“Whether you are a small business owner, an enterprise executive or a private individual using a computer from the comfort of your home, there are attackers who are interested in your data. As long as these markets continue to thrive, cyberattacks will remain a constant threat, making it vital business leaders arm their security teams with the resources they need to keep information secure,” Armor concludes.

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HEADLINE	03/22 Study: malware from piracy sites
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/study-malware-counts-higher-on-computers-whose-users-visited-piracy-sites/article/753135/
GIST	<p>Each time a user doubles the amount of time he spends visiting illegal torrent and streaming websites, the malware count on his machine jumps another 20 percent, according to an academic paper released earlier this month.</p> <p>The report, by Carnegie Mellon University researcher Rahul Telang, is an attempt at quantifying the impact of illegal content websites on cybersecurity, following a year-long study of 253 users' online activities throughout all of 2016.</p> <p>Based on data collected by sensors, 174 out of the 253 studied users visited an illegal site at least once, and were found to have an average of 1.4 malware files on their machines, or 1.5 when factoring in adware. In contrast, users who did not use the illegal sites had an average of only 0.7 malware files on their devices -- although when factoring in adware, they had a considerably higher count of 1.4.</p> <p>"Doubling the amount of time spent (a 100% increase) on infringing sites increases the number of malware count by almost 0.05 units," Telang wrote in his report. "While this number may look small, the mean number of malware count on a user machine is 0.24 per month. So a 0.05 increase translates to a 20 percent increase in malware count due to infringing alone."</p> <p>Further extrapolating his results (albeit from a small sample size), Telang also determined that users who visited pirate sites were actually less likely to install anti-malware software as a precaution.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Cryptominers target Linux servers
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/hackers-exploit-old-flaw-to-turn-linux-servers-into-cryptocurrency-miners/article/753144/
GIST	<p>The malicious actors who installed and ran a cryptocurrency mining operation on hacked Tesla ASW servers and Jenkins servers is now targeting servers running Linux and has so far generated more than \$74,000 in Monero.</p> <p>The new campaign uses the legitimate, open-source XMRig cryptominer in conjunction with exploiting the old vulnerability CVE-2013-2618, which is found in Cacti's Network Weathermap plug-in, according to a Trend Micro Cyber Safety Solutions Team report. The vulnerability is a cross-site scripting vulnerability in editor.php in Network Weathermap before 0.97b and allows remote attackers to inject arbitrary web script or HTML via the map_title parameter.</p> <p>This active campaign is hitting targets primarily in active campaign, primarily affecting Japan, Taiwan, China, the U.S., and India.</p> <p>“As to why they're exploiting an old security flaw: Network Weathermap only has two publicly reported vulnerabilities so far, both from June 2014. It's possible these attackers are taking advantage not only of a security flaw for which an exploit is readily available but also of patch lag that occurs in organizations that use the open-source tool” the team wrote.</p> <p>Trend Micro was able to trace the activity back to two usernames associated with two Monero wallets where \$74,677 has been deposited as of March 21. However, Trend's team noted that the people behind this campaign have made in excess of \$3 million when the Tesla hack and Jenkins server vulnerability exploitation are included. In each of these cases XMRig was also used.</p> <p>The attackers do need to look for targets with a very specific set up in order to be successful.</p> <p>This includes having a web server running Linux (x86-64) and the server has to be publicly accessible. The Cacti plug-in has to be present and implemented with the Plugin Architecture working and an outdated Network Weathermap (0.97a and prior), the web server should not require authentication and finally the web server should be running with root permissions.</p> <p>The Trend researchers could understand why the first two issues might be present, but “why would one want to share network data publicly (Cacti)? Is the web server really being run as root?”</p> <p>They theorized that the server operator might have this set up in place in order might make it easier to monitor the servers, through say a basic browser bookmark, but it also makes it easier for any threat actors to find and gain access.</p> <p>Because turning a Linux server into a mining operation does require that an older vulnerability be left unpatched the best way to protect against such an attack is to keep systems updated with the latest patches, Trend suggested.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Guccifer 2.0 is Russian GRU operative
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/misstep-reveals-guccifer-20-as-russian-gru-operative/article/753229/
GIST	<p>Guccifer 2.0 apparently forgot to activate a virtual private network during communications, allowing U.S. investigators to identify the hacker as an intelligence agent at Russia's GRU.</p> <p>They were able to peg the hacker from his Moscow IP address, which appeared in a U.S. social media company's logs, according to a report from the Daily Beast.</p>

Guccifer 2.0 emerged in 2016 as a counterpoint to the narrative that Russia had hacked the Democrat National Committee (DNC), claiming to be the “lone hacker” behind the attack. President Trump adviser Roger Stone claimed to have communicated directly on Twitter with the self-proclaimed Romanian hacktivist.

Stone's seemingly prior knowledge that the emails of Hillary Clinton's campaign manager John Podesta would be leaked landed him before the House Intelligence Committee last September where he refused to answer questions around his interactions with WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, who released the emails in a steady drip throughout the 2016 presidential campaign.

At the time, Stone claimed in a pre-hearing statement that he had “no involvement in the alleged activities that are within the publicly stated scope of this committee's investigation -- collusion with the Russian state to affect the outcome of the 2016 election.”

The report said that Special Counsel Robert Mueller has taken the reins in the Guccifer 2.0 investigation.

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HEADLINE	03/22 Using web injects to steal cryptocurrency
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/criminals-using-web-injects-to-steal-cryptocurrency/d/d-id/1331350
GIST	<p>Criminals have deployed a variety of tactics in recent months to try and profit from the cryptocurrency boom.</p> <p>One of them is the use of Web injects to intercept and modify traffic between user browsers and cryptocurrency sites in order to steal coins from victims and transfer it to accounts held by criminals.</p> <p>Third-party risk management firm SecurityScorecard says it has seen recent evidence of threat actors using Web injects to target cryptocurrency exchange Coinbase and Bitcoin wallet Blockchain.info. Tens of thousands of bots can run the Web injects to steal cryptocurrency, making them a potent threat for investors and exchanges, according to SecurityScorecard.</p> <p>A Web inject is basically code for injecting malicious content into a Web page before the page is rendered on a user's browser. This work by intercepting and modifying traffic between a Web server and user browser in such a manner that the victim typically does not notice anything amiss.</p> <p>Web injects can be used to add or delete content on the Web pages that a victim sees. For instance, a Web inject can be used to add a field in the login screen for capturing the PIN a user might use to access his or her bank account, or it can be used to delete warnings that a user might normally see when viewing a particular Web page. Web injects typically have been used to steal credentials for accessing bank accounts, but recently have begun to play a role in cryptocurrency heists as well.</p> <p>Bot masters can readily buy the Web injects for Coinbase and Blockchain.info and distribute them to infected computers in a botnet, says Doina Cosovan, malware researcher at SecurityScorecard. The malware installed on those infected computers receive the Web injects and inject them in the Coinbase and Blockchain.info websites if a user happens to visit either site.</p> <p>These Web injects are provided as a service, so different malware families can use them. Cosovan says. "We noticed Zeus and Ramnit in particular, but these are simply examples we observed. Any other bot master controlling bots infected with a malware family which has capabilities to inject code in websites can buy and use these Web injects on their bots," she notes.</p> <p>The Web inject for Coinbase that SecurityScorecard discovered is designed to change the settings on a victim's account in order to enable digital coin transfers without requiring the user's confirmation. When a</p>

user tries to log in to his or her Coinbase account, the injected JavaScript content first disables the "Enter" key for the email and password fields so the user has to actually click on the "Submit" button in order to submit the form, according to SecurityScorecard.

It also creates a new button that has mostly the same attributes as the original button, and a few additional malicious ones. It then adds the rogue "Submit" button on top of the original sign-in button so that the victim clicks on the malicious button rather than the original. The ultimate goal is to capture the victim's multifactor authentication information and then using it to change account settings so further transactions can be carried out without requiring the user's approval.

"Once this change is made, the injected content can start making transactions without the need to authorize them with [two-factor authentication]," Cosovan says. "Even more, the user's access to the settings is blocked, so that he can't enable the two-factor authentication for transactions," she adds.

The Blockchain.info Web inject has somewhat similar functionality but in this case is designed to steal from a user's Bitcoin wallet and transfer the digital currency to accounts held by threat actors. As a final touch, the Web inject presents the user with a "Service Unavailable" notice after stealing the cryptocurrency, thereby delaying the victim's ability to detect the theft, SecurityScorecard said.

The use of Web injects in cryptocurrency theft is one of many tactics that cybercriminals are employing to profit from the surging interest in Bitcoin, Monero, and other cryptocurrencies worldwide. Even as defenders have adapted their tactics to deal with threats, criminals have come up with new ways around them.

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HEADLINE	03/22 Best Buy dumps Huawei smartphones
SOURCE	http://www.zdnet.com/article/best-buy-dumps-huawei-what-trade-war-fallout-hits-the-tech-sector-next/
GIST	<p>Best Buy will stop selling Huawei smartphones in a move that may highlight how an escalating trade war is going to hit technology vendors.</p> <p>CNET's Roger Cheng reported that Best Buy will end the sale of Huawei smartphones in the weeks ahead. Huawei already has been shut out by U.S. wireless carriers.</p> <p>On the surface, Best Buy's move isn't all that surprising. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • China-U.S. trade is becoming a larger issue with tariffs being launched on a bevy of goods. • Huawei has been flagged as a security concern by the U.S. government. Citing risks but no evidence, US intel chiefs warn against using Huawei, ZTE phones Huawei: National security concerns not a blank cheque for public policy decisions • Huawei has been a lightning rod in the U.S. for its power on networking infrastructure as well as mobile devices. • Brands are wary of being caught in the vortex of President Trump tweets and political issues. <p>From the Best Buy side of the equation, ditching Huawei makes business sense. The sales of Huawei's unlocked devices simply weren't enough to outweigh the potential risks.</p> <p>On the Huawei side of the fence, the Best Buy move is devastating from a distribution perspective. But it's worth pondering a few other wrinkles, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huawei has never had a foothold in the U.S. on the enterprise or consumer side of the business. Losing out on the U.S. isn't that big of a loss considering that Huawei was never a player. • Huawei's approach would likely be well received in the Android ecosystem • The game for Huawei is being dominant in the rest of the world on devices as well as networking and smart city deployments. Huawei has succeeded in emerging markets relative to U.S. rivals. • Via the passive aggressive U.S. ban on Huawei devices, the company may actually see a boost in

interest. In the U.S., a device like the Mate 10 may be seen as cooler simply because of the lack of availability. Demand abroad could also improve where Huawei is available. It's doubtful, Huawei would have a marketing line like "banned in the U.S.," but you get the gist.

Perhaps the broader question is what happens to other companies with China ties as trade tensions escalate. Will Lenovo have issues? What about those Apple devices manufactured in China? Huawei may or may not be a security threat, but it doesn't take much to play out more tech industry issues ahead.

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HEADLINE	03/23 GhostMiner advanced techniques net \$200
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/ghostminer-uses-fileless-techniques-removes-other-miners-but-makes-only-200/
GIST	<p>Security researchers from Minerva Labs have discovered a new strain of cryptocurrency-mining malware that uses PowerShell code to obtain fileless execution, and scans and stops the process of other miners that might be running on the same infected host.</p> <p>But in spite of all these highly advanced techniques, this coinminer strain —codenamed GhostMiner by researchers— has failed to earn any substantial revenue for its creators.</p> <p>Experts say that after a three-week-long campaign, GhostMiner only racked up 1.03 Monero, which is worth only around \$200, at the time of writing.</p> <p>This is peanuts compared to other coinmining crews who managed to rack up tens or hundreds of thousands, with one crew making nearly \$3 million.</p> <p>But while GhostMiner appears to be a resounding failure in terms of operational success, the malware is certainly not a technical fiasco.</p> <p>For starters, this appears to be the first fileless cryptocurrency miner malware strain detected. The fileless technique has become quite popular with malware in recent years, allowing them to run malicious code directly from memory, without leaving files on disk, hence fewer artifacts that classic antivirus engines could detect.</p> <p>Further, GhostMiner also employs another advanced technique, of hunting competing miners and shutting down their processes. The technique isn't new, as it's been used by another nondescript coinminer strain, but this shows that GhostScript's author has put a lot more thought into assembling his code than most other crooks.</p> <p>As for targeting, GhostMiner can infect systems running MSSQL, phpMyAdmin, and Oracle WebLogic servers. But according to Minerva Labs experts, only the WebLogic infection system was active when they analyzed the recent campaign.</p> <p>Researchers say GhostMiner would scan random IPs for WebLogic servers, use the CVE-2017-10271 exploit to gain a foothold on a new victim's system, and run two PowerShell scripts to launch into its fileless operational mode, from where it downloads its coinmining component and the self-protection mechanism.</p> <p>GhostMiner isn't the first or only coinminer that targets WebLogic servers, as two separate campaigns were detected active earlier this year [1, 2], with one of them earning more than \$226,000 in revenue.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 CoinMiner campaigns move to the cloud
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SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/coinminer-campaigns-move-to-the-cloud-via-docker-kubernetes/
GIST	<p>After becoming a scourge inside browsers, on desktops, and on servers, cryptocurrency-mining malware is now invading the cloud, and it appears to be quite successful.</p> <p>Several reports during the past month suggest malware authors are now actively looking to gain access to Docker and Kubernetes systems, two types of applications that are the basic building blocks of many of today's cloud computing services.</p> <p>The role of these two tools is to help developers roll out containerized/virtualized apps or even entire server setups whenever a company's infrastructure needs more processing power to handle traffic spikes or extra computing tasks.</p> <p>As such, if a hacker manages to gain access to these systems, they not only have the keys to a company's entire kingdom but also access to vast computational power.</p> <p>And based on recent reports, it appears that a vast majority of these recent hacks of cloud infrastructure are now focusing on using this enormous computational power to mine cryptocurrency for the attackers.</p> <p>And attacks aren't stopping. Just today, security researcher Robbie Wiggins spotted a cluster of 48 nodes where two hackers were fighting over server resources.</p> <p>All in all, these attacks are just part of a bigger picture that started to take shape last year when ransomware operations slowed down, and crooks migrated towards cryptocurrency mining.</p> <p>Past campaigns targeted almost any known type of technology (databases, browsers, CMSs, CRMs, etc.), and it was to be expected that at one point or another, hackers would look toward the cloud for running hidden cryptocurrency mining scripts.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Atlanta hit by ransomware cyberattack
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/city-of-atlanta-it-systems-hit-by-samsam-ransomware/
GIST	<p>The Mayor of Atlanta, Georgia has confirmed today in a press conference that several local government systems are currently down due to a ransomware infection.</p> <p>City officials said the ransomware infection took root earlier today, at around 5:40 AM, local time.</p> <p>Richard Cox, the City of Atlanta's new Chief Operations Officer, said the infection affected several internal and customer-facing applications, such as the online systems that residents used to pay city bills or access court documents.</p> <p>Cox, who is in his first week on the job, said that the infection did not affect the critical infrastructure such as the city's water services, the local airport, and the public safety system.</p> <p>Cox and his team are working with the FBI and DHS agents, but also with incident response teams from Cisco and Microsoft. Investigators are still assessing the damage and validating the infection's impact on city systems.</p> <p>Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms expects city departments to open tomorrow, but operate without IT support.</p> <p>Asked if the city plans to pay the ransom note, Mayor Bottoms said "We can't speak to that right now. We will be looking for guidance from specifically our federal partners."</p>

	<p>Not all IT infrastructure were affected because the city was in the process of moving some systems to cloud services, and those were not affected.</p> <p>According to 11Alive, a local TV station, the infection was caused by the SamSam ransomware, a strain that's been very active at the start of this year, and had previously also infected the Colorado Department of Transportation.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 User Facebook data \$5.20 on dark web
SOURCE	https://www.marketwatch.com/story/spooked-by-the-facebook-privacy-violations-this-is-how-much-your-personal-data-is-worth-on-the-dark-web-2018-03-20
GIST	<p>Perhaps this is the most depressing aspect of the recent privacy violations on Facebook FB, -1.61% : The most important parts of your identity can be sold online for just a few dollars.</p> <p>Consumers have to spend hours of their time — and, sometimes, their own money — when they find out their driver's license, Facebook "likes" or Social Security number have been exposed to hackers. But those who sell them are making only petty cash.</p> <p>That's according to a new report from the content marketing agency Fractl, which analyzed all the fraud-related listings on three large "dark web" marketplaces — Dream, Point and Wall Street Market — over several days last month.</p> <p>The "dark web" is part of the internet that people can only access by using special software. To create this report, Fractl accessed the dark web through the browser Tor. People buy other risky or illegal substances on the dark web, including drugs, pirated content like movies or music and materials that help with scams, including credit-card "skimmers."</p> <p>Facebook logins can be sold for \$5.20 each because they allow criminals to have access to personal data that could potentially let them hack into more of an individual's accounts. The credentials to a PayPal PYPL, -2.04% account with a relatively high balance can be sold on the dark web for \$247 on average, the report found.</p> <p>One's entire online identity, including personal identification numbers and hacked financial accounts, can be sold for only about \$1,200 on the dark web, Fractl found.</p> <p>That's because so much personal information may already available to hackers, after repeated data breaches across a range of industries. It comes down to supply and demand, said Adam Levin, the founder of the security firm CyberScout and the author of "Swiped." Hackers want to grab personal information and sell it as fast as they can, so they can move on, he said.</p> <p>"With 5.3 billion records released due to accidents and 2.6 billion records released due to hacking last year, personal information is becoming cheap," said Rick McElroy, a security strategist at the security firm Carbon Black.</p> <p>Wealthier individuals are more valuable to criminals, and those without money are worth less, said Al Pascual, a senior vice president and research director at the security firm Javelin. But the more information hackers have, the more valuable the data.</p> <p>"A college student with not a lot of money in the bank might be worth \$50," Pascual said. "If you're near retirement, with a fat retirement account and plenty of money in the bank, you'll be worth more."</p> <p>Voter data are also vulnerable and valuable during election season, Pascual said. There are more attempts to compromise voter records in the run-up to elections, including attacks against registrars' offices. Electronic voting machines can also be compromised, he said.</p>

	<p>Type of account Average price log-in goes for on dark web</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PayPal \$247 • Costco \$5 • ASOS (clothing) \$2 • Airbnb \$8 • Uber \$7 • T-Mobile \$10.51 • DHL \$10.40 • Facebook \$5.20 • Gmail \$1 • Grubhub \$9 <p>Logins for food delivery websites such as Grubhub can be sold for about \$9 because they allow criminals to fraudulently order expensive food and alcohol.</p> <p>And a login for the lodging site Airbnb can be sold for about \$8 because it opens up “a world of scams,” Fractl said. Fraudsters have changed hosts’ payment details to steal their earnings, or have been able to assume the identities of well-reviewed guests in order to book their own stays. Airbnb has updated its security measures in the last year to combat fraud.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/21 Revelations of open secrets
SOURCE	https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/cambridge-analytica-facebook-and-the-revelations-of-open-secrets
GIST	<p>What are we to make of the revelations published over the weekend, in the Observer and the Times, that Cambridge Analytica, the data-analytics and messaging company financed, in part, by the conservative billionaire Robert Mercer, used tens of millions of ill-gotten Facebook profiles to create algorithms aimed at “breaking” American democracy?</p> <p>First, that these were not really revelations at all. Reporters from the Guardian, The New Yorker, The New York Review of Books, Das Magazin, and the Intercept have been reporting these facts for years.</p> <p>We knew as early as December, 2015, for instance, that Facebook data obtained without users’ knowledge was being exploited by Cambridge Analytica on behalf of Senator Ted Cruz, who at that time was Mercer’s preferred candidate in the Republican Presidential primaries. Later, when the Mercer family, along with Steve Bannon, came to support Donald Trump, it was no secret that they brought with them Cambridge Analytica, a firm that boasted of being able to parse and influence the electorate through “psychographic” algorithms derived from that data. After Trump won, Alexander Nix, the head of Cambridge Analytica, crowed that the company’s psychographic algorithms had carried the day. (He later retracted that, then reaffirmed it.)</p> <p>The millions of Facebook accounts in question—as the reporter Mattathias Schwartz pointed out last March—were mostly culled from the friend networks of people who clicked on a cute personality quiz on the site. A significant number of the initial test takers, starting in around 2014, were paid freelancers recruited through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk marketplace by a British research company called GSR. They and others who took the quiz likely did not know that they were giving GSR permission to access their Facebook friends’ profiles. If Facebook officials were not aware of this at the time, when GSR sold this data to Cambridge Analytica, they certainly knew it by January, 2017, when the Swiss researchers Hannes Grassegger and Mikael Krogerus published “The Data That Turned the World Upside Down,” a detailed account of how C.A.’s psychological modelling was used by the Trump campaign. (The Guardian recently quoted a former Facebook employee in charge of data security explaining that he “always assumed there was something of a black market” for data obtained by third-party companies such as GSR, and that when he brought this up to his bosses he was discouraged from investigating too deeply. “Do you</p>

really want to see what you'll find?" he says a Facebook executive told him.)

When Facebook finally acknowledged that Cambridge Analytica was using Facebook data it had obtained surreptitiously, the company's response was not to alert its users or audit its partners or engage in any sort of meaningful reform. Rather, it sent a polite request to Cambridge Analytica asking it to delete the GSR-sourced material, some of which, according to the Times, remains on the company's servers.

This weekend's reports about Facebook and Cambridge Analytica did introduce us to Christopher Wylie, a twenty-eight-year-old Canadian coder and data scientist, who conceived and helped construct C.A.'s psychographic tools. For at least a year, it seems, Wylie had been feeding information to Carole Cadwalladr and her team at the Guardian and its sister paper, the Observer. Now he is out of the shadows. In a thirteen-minute video posted on the Guardian's Web site on Saturday, Wylie details the story of the creation and deployment of "the weapon" that he and Nix sold to Bannon, and then to Mercer, to fight their "culture war." It was in those early days of 2014, Wylie says, that he and Bannon began testing slogans like "drain the swamp" and "the deep state" and "build the wall," and found a surprising number of Americans who responded strongly to them. All they needed was a candidate to parrot them. Cambridge Analytica promised that psychographics could not only target people as voters but also as personalities. "We would know what kind of messaging you'd be susceptible to and where you are going to consume it and how many times we are going to have to touch you with it to change how you think about something," Wylie told the Guardian. "Web sites will be created. Blogs will be created—whatever we think this target profile will be receptive to. See it, click it, and go down the rabbit hole until they start to think something different." The goal was to break society. "It is only when you break it can you remodel the pieces into your vision of a new society." As one former executive of Mercer's hedge fund told The New Yorker's Jane Mayer, last year, "He wants it to all fall down."

Perhaps the most telling revelation from the recent reporting—aside from the U.K.'s Channel 4 catching Alexander Nix on camera explaining how his company could supply beautiful Ukrainian women to entrap politicians—is that Cambridge Analytica is essentially a shell company created by the British firm Strategic Communications Laboratories. During the 2016 campaign, according to Cadwalladr, C.A. was staffed primarily by non-U.S. citizens, in possible violation of American campaign-finance laws. This included the contractors the firm brought to Austin, Texas, to work with Trump's digital team there.

"We were really speaking directly to the voters in a number of states," one former C.A. employee, who worked with a number of non-U.S. citizens or green-card holders, told the Guardian. Cadwalladr writes, "It is understood that some were working on tourist visas. Another ex-employee claimed that they had been provided with letters to give to US border control officials where needed, stating that they would not be working" in the United States. And, she points out, Bannon, Nix, and Rebekah Mercer (Robert's daughter) knew that this was illegal. Their counsel, who happened to work at Rudolph Giuliani's law firm, let them know in a memo written in July, 2014.

These Cambridge Analytica contractors worked with Trump's digital team, headed by Brad Parscale and Jared Kushner. Alongside all of them were Facebook employees who were embedded with the Trump campaign to help them use Facebook's various tools most effectively—including the so-called "dark posts," used to dissuade African-Americans from showing up to vote. Did any of them know that the data that Cambridge Analytica was using to target voters, craft ads and blog posts, and determine Trump's travel schedule came from millions of American Facebook members whose data had been taken without consent and sold for a million dollars—what Cadwalladr is calling a massive data "breach"? Maybe, or maybe not—and it hardly matters. For more than a year, Cadwalladr has done yeoman work, reporting on the nihilism of Bannon and the Mercers, the cravenness of Nix, and connecting the dots between them and Trump and Facebook. But those millions of Facebook profiles do not in fact constitute a breach: they were obtained legally. Nobody hacked Facebook—nor would they have had to—because the business model of Facebook is predicated on mining the personal details of its two billion users. In a statement on Wednesday, Mark Zuckerberg could only chalk the whole saga up to "a breach of trust between Kogan, Cambridge Analytica and Facebook." The company is aided in maintaining this position by privacy policies that are as obscure as they are lax. As a consequence, Facebook created the conditions for millions of Americans to become unwitting cogs in the effort to get Trump elected.

	<p>Christopher Wylie knew all this, and he watched what he now calls his “grossly unethical experiment” unfold in real time. It is, he says, “something that I regret.” So now he’s blown the whistle and, in turn, Facebook has suspended his account. The company may have shot the messenger, but, even so, his message has been heard loud and clear, in Parliament (where Nix, who has now been suspended by Cambridge Analytica, will be called back to explain what appear to be the lies he told there last month, during hearings on fake news), in Congress (where Nix and possibly Zuckerberg will also be called to account), on the front page of newspapers around the world, and on Twitter (where the hashtags “Where’s Zuck?” and “DeleteFacebook” have been trending). Wylie’s words have also reverberated on Wall Street, where, in the first two hours of trading after his video confession (and the news that he had supplied e-mails and documents to American and British authorities), Facebook stock lost thirty billion dollars in value. It is now down by sixty billion dollars. It would not be wrong to call this payback.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Ransomware out; cryptojacking in
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/ransomware-out-cryptojacking-in/
GIST	<p>Cryptojacking attacks exploded by 8,500% in 2017 resulting from the sudden increase in cryptocurrency values. According to research released by Symantec, UK ranked as the fifth highest country worldwide, with a staggering 44,000% increase in coin-miner detections.</p> <p>With a low barrier to entry – only requiring a couple lines of code to operate – cyber-criminals are harnessing stolen processing power and cloud CPU usage from consumers and enterprises to mine cryptocurrency. Coin-miners can slow devices, overheat batteries, and in some cases, render devices unusable. For enterprise organizations, coin-miners can put corporate networks at risk of shutdown and inflate cloud CPU usage, adding cost.</p> <p>Symantec also found a 600% increase in overall IoT attacks in 2017, which means that cyber-criminals could exploit the connected nature of these devices to mine en masse.</p> <p>“Attackers could be co-opting your phone, computer or IoT device to use them for profit,” said Darren Thomson, CTO and VP EMEA, Symantec. “People need to expand their defences or they will pay the price for someone else using their device.”</p> <p>The Annual Threat Report also showed that while ransomware was still being used in 2017, there were fewer ransomware families and lower ransom demands. Symantec outlined in its report that “many cyber-criminals may have shifted their focus to coin mining as an alternative to cash in while cryptocurrency values are high” and that “some online banking threats have also experienced a renaissance as established ransomware groups have attempted to diversify.”</p> <p>Last year, the average ransom demand dropped to \$522, less than half the average of the year prior. While the number of ransomware variants increased by 46%, indicating the established criminal groups are still quite productive, the number of ransomware families dropped, suggesting they are innovating less and may have shifted their focus to new, higher value targets.</p> <p>The report analyzed data from the Symantec Global Intelligence Network, which tracks over 700,000 global adversaries, records events from 98 million attack sensors worldwide and monitors threat activities in over 157 countries and territories.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Netflix public bug bounty program
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/netflix-launches-public-bug-bounty-program
GIST	<p>Netflix announced on Wednesday the launch of a public bug bounty program with rewards of up to \$15,000, and Dropbox has made some changes to its vulnerability disclosure policy, promising not to sue</p>

	<p>researchers.</p> <p>Netflix has had a vulnerability disclosure policy for the past 5 years and a private bug bounty program since September 2016. The company has now decided to make its bug bounty initiative public through the Bugcrowd platform.</p> <p>Its vulnerability disclosure policy and private bug bounty have helped Netflix patch 190 vulnerabilities. The private program started with 100 of Bugcrowd's top researchers, but more than 700 white hat hackers were later invited in preparation for the public program.</p> <p>Researchers can earn between \$100 and \$15,000 for flaws affecting one of several Netflix domains and the mobile applications for iOS and Android. The company claims the highest reward paid out to date is \$15,000 for a critical security hole.</p> <p>The types of vulnerabilities that can be submitted include cross-site scripting (XSS), cross-site request forgery (CSRF), SQL injection, authentication and authorization, data exposure, remote code execution, redirection, business logic, MSL protocol, and mobile API issues. Netflix says it acknowledges vulnerability reports, on average, in less than 3 days.</p> <p>"Engineers at Netflix have a high degree of ownership for the security of their products and this helps us address reports quickly," Netflix said in a blog post. "Our security engineers also have the autonomy and freedom to make reward decisions quickly based on the reward matrix and bug severity. This ultimately helps create an efficient and seamless experience for researchers which is important for engagement in the program."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Supply chain cyberattacks surged 200%
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/supply-chain-cyberattacks-surged-200--in-2017/d/d-id/1331337
GIST	<p>Major software update compromises occurred at least once a month last year as attackers adopted this more stealthy and efficient way to reach their targets – compared to just three such attacks per year previously.</p> <p>That 200% increase in such supply chain attacks only accounts for breaches in 2017 that were reported publicly, so the actual rate of these attacks could be even higher, according to new cyber threat data from Symantec's annual "Internet Security Threat Report," published today.</p> <p>These are attacks where hackers hijack the software update process and replace it with malicious code; the most high-profile of these incidents last year was NotPetya, where Russian hackers compromised a Ukrainian accounting vendor's software as a way to spread malware to its targets.</p> <p>"All of a sudden this is a huge issue," says Kevin Haley, director of Symantec Security Response. "This is something organizations really need to be concerned about. It's not just some on-offs."</p> <p>Supply chain attacks were one of the main trends cited by CrowdStrike in its annual threat report as well. In addition to NotPetya, there were attacks on Avast's CCleaner and the HandBrake media player software for Apple Mac machines, notes Adam Meyers, vice president of intelligence at CrowdStrike. Attackers can target victims via plugins and other software updates, he says.</p> <p>"It used to be that we talked about the hardware supply chain" being at risk, Meyers says. "Now you get updates via an app store that will validate as much as possible" but still can be corrupted or abuse permissions, he says.</p> <p>It's tough to defend against supply chain attacks because patching software with the latest releases is a best</p>

security practice. "You can't stop" patching, but organizations should start looking at their supply chain vendors and be sure they are protecting them," Symantec's Haley says.

Behavior monitoring is another way to track any suspicious activity with an application update, but app vendors also need controls to catch any unauthorized changes in their update systems and processes, Symantec advises.

The spike in supply chain attacks coincided last year with a drop in zero-day attacks detected by Symantec. It's getting harder to find - and less appealing to burn – expensive zero-day vulnerabilities in an attack. Just under 30% of the 140 cyber threat groups Symantec tracks that wage targeted attacks have ever used an Oday in an attack. It's all part of the trend of sophisticated attackers employing legitimate tools and applications on their victims' networks to stay camouflaged for the long haul.

Targeted cyberattacks increased by 10% last year, with some 90% of the attacks purely for intelligence-gathering, including spying, information-stealing, and surveillance. Most of the attackers here are nation-state sponsored groups. About 10% of targeted attack groups wage disruptive attacks on their victims. Another 9% are doing so for financial gain, and spear phishing is the main initial attack vector (71%) in all targeted attacks.

Symantec has discovered an average of three new targeted attack groups per year, it says, and the most active ones hit an average of 42 organizations in the past three years. Researchers at Symantec identified 29 new such groups this past year. "And those are only the ones we know about," Haley says.

The US unsurprisingly is the most attacked, with nearly 30% of all targeted attack incidents.

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HEADLINE	03/21 Ex-employee visits cloud, steals data
SOURCE	https://www.csoonline.com/article/3265109/security/former-employee-visits-cloud-and-steals-company-data.html
GIST	<p>Employees aren't always going to be employees, and therefore you must have in place a mechanism to address what happens when someone is no longer a member of the company team. The circumstances of a person's departure may affect the manner and means in which you act, but the result needs to be the same: full and complete termination of access to company information. Any employee who departs is no longer a trusted insider.</p> <p>This is called off-boarding, and without a comprehensive off-boarding process, you risk being exploited by a malevolent former employee. Former employees whose access is not terminated can attempt to access data from which they should now be excluded.</p> <p>This is precisely what occurred to the Transformations Autism Treatment Center (TACT), in Bartlett, Tenn. One of its employees, a behavioral analyst, Jeffrey Luke, was terminated. The TACT did what many companies do: It terminated his access to sensitive data and changed the email address authorized to access its data. In this case, the TACT kept its patient records in the cloud, specifically the Google Drive version of cloud storage. The steps it took were consistent with what one would expect from an entity that falls under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).</p> <p>All looked good until the following month, when the TACT noticed that information on 300 current and past clients of TACT had been accessed. The executive director of the TACT, speaking to the Commercial Appeal, explained how TACT noticed files had been moved, and immediately called the police, who brought in the FBI.</p> <p>The IP address that was used in the compromise of the email address was traced to Luke's residence, according to the Department of Justice. The subsequent search of Luke's residence found that he had on his computer patient records, forms and templates, as well as records from a former employer, Behavioral</p>

and Counseling Services (BCS) in Somerville, Tenn. The BCS data also contained patient data.

Luke went on to plead guilty to the crime and was sentenced this month to 30 months' imprisonment and three years' supervised release, and he was ordered to pay approximately \$15,000 in restitution.

Luke, though he entered a guilty plea, appealed his sentence on March 14, to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit.

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HEADLINE	03/23 Facebook widening crisis over user data
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/ap-news-guide-facebooks-widening-crisis-user-data-53956220
GIST	<p>Facebook is facing the most serious crisis in its 14-year history as it deals with fallout from a major leak of user data to political consultants associated with the 2016 Trump campaign.</p> <p>Here's a look at the scandal and what it means.</p> <p>WHAT'S GOING ON?</p> <p>The U.K.-based data-mining firm Cambridge Analytica has been accused of lifting the Facebook profiles of more than 50 million users without their permission in order to manipulate elections. A former employee of the firm, Christopher Wylie, played a role in that action, and later told his story to journalists.</p> <p>The crisis has renewed questions about Facebook's ability to protect the privacy of its users while also exploiting their personal details to fuel its lucrative advertising business. It has also deepened concerns about the social media network's ability to avoid being exploited to spread propaganda and sway elections.</p> <p>Authorities in both the U.S. and the U.K. are investigating both Facebook and Cambridge Analytica. Facebook shares have fallen and some users are contemplating deleting their accounts.</p> <hr/> <p>WHAT DID CAMBRIDGE ANALYTICA DO?</p> <p>Wylie says the firm sought Facebook information in order to build psychological profiles on a large portion of the U.S. electorate. He said the company was able to amass the database quickly with the help of an academic, Aleksander Kogan, who developed a Facebook app called "This is Your Digital Life" that appeared to be a personality test.</p> <p>That app vacuumed up information from users who gave the app permission to access their accounts ... as well as additional data from their Facebook friends,</p> <p>Kogan paid about 200,000 people to take part; tens of millions of their friends were also caught in the data dragnet.</p> <hr/> <p>HOW DID CAMBRIDGE ANALYTICA RESPOND?</p> <p>Cambridge Analytica has denied wrongdoing, and the firm said it deleted any data it received from Kogan and denied using any Facebook data in its political work. Facebook, however, said it recently learned from journalists that Cambridge Analytica may have kept some of the data, spurring an investigation.</p> <p>Kogan said he has been scapegoated by both Cambridge and Facebook. He says the data firm approached</p>

him for the project and assured him that everything he did was legal.

WHAT'S THE CONNECTION TO THE TRUMP CAMPAIGN?

Federal election records show that the Trump campaign paid Cambridge Analytica roughly \$6 million. But the campaign has denied using the firm's data, saying it relied on the Republic National Committee for its voter information.

Cambridge Analytica was backed by the conservative billionaire Richard Mercer, a hedge fund manager who supported the Trump campaign. At one point, the firm's vice president was Stephen Bannon, who later became Trump's campaign chairman and White House adviser.

Trump's former national security adviser, Michael Flynn, disclosed an advisory role with Cambridge Analytica last August. But the firm's parent company, Strategic Communication Laboratories, later said that position never materialized. The company has surfaced in the U.S. probes into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election. Special counsel Robert Mueller has requested that the firm turn over the emails of any employees who worked on the campaign, according to a Wall Street Journal report.

Wylie, the whistleblower who worked for Cambridge from 2013 to 2015, said his team spoke to Americans in focus groups to identify deep-seated concerns and tested ways to tap into those fears through social media. He claims the slogans they developed later became the catchphrases of the Trump campaign, including "drain the swamp" and "build the wall."

Cambridge Analytica CEO Alexander Nix was caught bragging about the firm's pivotal role in the Trump campaign on a sting video from the U.K.'s Channel 4. He said Cambridge handled "all the data, all the analytics, all the targeting" for the campaign.

WHY ARE PEOPLE MAD AT FACEBOOK?

The Cambridge Analytics fiasco appears to have crystallized the anxiety many people feel about Facebook's enormous sway over daily life and its massive data trove.

A sell-off in Facebook shares reflects fear that the social network may face new regulations that could hurt profits — or that advertisers and users will sour on it.

A U.K. parliamentary media committee is investigating how Facebook uses data, and has summoned CEO Mark Zuckerberg to testify. Various U.S. congressional committees are also seeking answers, although Democrats and Republicans have disagreed on what steps to take. Privacy advocates have asked the Federal Trade Commission to investigate as well.

The hashtag #deletefacebook has been trending. Brian Acton, the co-founder of WhatsApp, which was acquired by Facebook four years ago for \$19 billion, has joined the cause. But there are no signs, so far, that users — or advertisers — are abandoning Facebook in droves.

HOW IS FACEBOOK ADDRESSING THE CRISIS?

After five days of silence, Zuckerberg released a Facebook post admitting mistakes and outlining steps to protect user data. He followed up with rare media appearances where he apologized for a breach of trust.

Facebook's response, however, is limited to a narrow range of technical changes that will further limit the

	<p>data apps can collect and lead to audits of apps that exhibit troubling behavior.</p> <p>Zuckerberg also emphasized steps the company has already taken, including reducing access outside apps had to user data in 2014. That came too late to stop Cambridge. The company said nothing about overhauling its data collection policies or taking steps to prevent the unauthorized political use of Facebook data.</p> <p>Facebook suspended Cambridge over allegations that it kept the improperly obtained user data. It has also suspended the access of Kogan and Wylie, as well as Cambridge's parent company, SCL.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Possible attempted attack Travis AFB
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/travis-air-force-base-gate-possible-attack-new-details/
GIST	<p>TRAVIS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. -- A car loaded with propane tanks ran through the main gate at Travis Air Force Base in northern California on Wednesday night. Military personnel ran up to the burning car that exploded in flame after breaching the security gates.</p> <p>In video posted on an Air Force forum on Facebook, firefighters are seen attempting to put out the flames.</p> <p>Law enforcement sources say the car carried propane tanks and the driver deliberately ignited the fire. He died inside the car, which drove off the road into a ditch. There are no reports of shots fired during the incident. The driver has been identified by law enforcement but not been named.</p> <p>Since he ignited himself, investigators are treating this as an act of terrorism. The FBI has joined the Air Force in the investigation.</p> <p>Travis Air Force Base is a main military air cargo and transport terminal on the West Coast, supporting operations across the Pacific. It's home to some 7,000 active U.S. Air Force military personnel.</p> <p>The main gate at Travis was closed for 12 hours after the incident and officials say there is no known threat to the base or the community.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 France: ISIS gunman opens fire in market
SOURCE	https://www.thelocal.fr/20180323/breaking-news-shooting-hostage-taking-at-supermarket-in-southern-france
GIST	<p>At least one person was believed to have been killed when a gunman claiming allegiance to the Islamic State group opened fire and took hostages at a supermarket in southwest France on Friday. French prosecutors are treating the incident as a terror attack.</p> <p>Main Info</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gunman opens fire and takes hostages in supermarket in Trèbes near Carcassonne • Unconfirmed reports that at least one person was killed • Supermarket gunman claims links to Isis • Gunman now alone in supermarket with member of French security forces, latest reports say • Earlier incident saw same gunman open fire on police who were jogging • One officer left injured, but not critical • Gunman reported as a Moroccan national

- At least one person was believed to have been killed after a gunman claiming allegiance to the Islamic State group opened fire and took hostages at a supermarket in the Aude department in southwest France on Friday.

In Trèbes, a picturesque medieval town of around 5,000 people, the man "entered the Super U supermarket at around 11:15 am and shots were heard," a source told AFP on condition of anonymity.

A witness who was in the supermarket at the time of the incident told France Info: "A man shouted and fired a number of times. I saw a fridge door, I asked people to come and get in. There were ten of us and we stayed there for an hour. There were more shots and we went out the back door. (...) He shouted 'Allahu...something', I did not see him."

French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe described the ongoing incident as a "serious situation" while Interior Minister Gerard Collomb announced he was heading immediately to Trèbes.

Reports claim at least one person was killed while some French media reported there were two victims in the supermarket believed to have been killed.

"We unfortunately presume one person has been killed, but we cannot bring a doctor on site to check," Jean-Valery Lettermann, the regional police chief.

The gunman claimed allegiance to the Islamic State group, the local prosecutor's office said.

According to French newspaper Le Depeche du Midi, the gunman was about 30-years-old, was armed with knives and one or more grenades and several reports stated that he spoke of wanting to "avenge Syria".

He is believed to be a Moroccan national, according to French press reports and was known to intelligence services for having been radicalized.

It has been reported that he has demanded for the release of Salah Abdeslam, the only surviving suspect of the 2015 Paris attacks, who is in jail in France.

The latest reports say the gunman was alone inside the supermarket along with a member of France's security forces.

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HEADLINE	03/22 Britain targets terror recruiters
SOURCE	http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/23/c_137058161.htm
GIST	<p>LONDON, March 22 (Xinhua) -- British Home Secretary Amber Rudd on Thursday pledged a new drive against extremist recruiters as families and friends of terror victims marked the anniversary of last year's Islamic State-inspired attack on Westminster Bridge near British Parliament.</p> <p>Rudd vowed that Britain will "not be defeated" by terrorism, saying action would be taken against both Islamist and far-right radicalizers seeking to spread hatred and violence.</p> <p>One aim will be to counter attempts by Islamic State to "foster a grievance narrative" by making Muslims in Britain feel under attack, she said, adding that there will be also renewed efforts to stop "racists" exploiting Islamist murders to justify retaliatory "acts of cruelty and hatred."</p> <p>Rudd, who attended a special service in memory of the five victims of the attack last year at the St Mary Undercroft Chapel in Parliament, said that all forms of terror needed to be stamped out.</p> <p>"Islamists and far-right terrorists share one thing in common -- they are united through their adherence to hate. We need to respond by stamping out those recruiters in the first place," she said.</p>

Five people were killed on March 22, 2017 after Khalid Masood drove his car at people on Westminster Bridge before stabbing PC Palmer in the Palace of Westminster.

Three people were killed outright on the bridge and one died later in hospital.

Victims' families and friends, politicians and police were among those who marked the anniversary by commemorating people killed or injured at Westminster and the terror atrocities which followed.

The following month, 22 people were killed in the Manchester arena suicide bombing, eight died in the London Bridge attack, and a man was killed when Darren Osborne rammed a van into a crowd at Finsbury Park mosque.

There was also a botched attempt to bomb a subway station at Parsons Green in London, which injured 30 people.

In a signed article published by the Evening Standard newspaper, Rudd said "We need to respond by stamping out those recruiters, whether it is an Islamist terrorist disseminating material that inspires and instructs how to carry out an attack, or a racist who uses Westminster to provide justification for further acts of cruelty and hatred."

"We cannot only deal with those who have been already drawn into terrorist activity," she wrote. "We need to intervene earlier and stop people being radicalized in the first place."

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HEADLINE	03/22 Belgium deals w/returning jihadist fighters
SOURCE	http://www.brusselstimes.com/brussels/10756/how-belgium-deals-with-returning-jihadist-fighters
GIST	<p>Two years after the terrorist attacks in Brussels, Belgium has learned some hard-won lessons and is doing relatively well in dealing with the threat of returning fighters. But there is still a risk of radicalization in Belgian prisons and the integration of released prisoners in society is a major challenge.</p> <p>According to researchers Rik Coolsaet and Tomas Renard at the Brussels-based Egmont Institute, Belgium was the first European country which already in 2012 warned other countries that radicalized youngsters had started travelling in growing numbers to join terrorist organisations.</p> <p>The federal counterterrorism centre has defined about 500 people from Belgium as foreign terrorist fighters. Out of them more than 400 people actually reached Syria and Iraq and 80 % among them were young men between 20 and 30. This made Belgium the country with the highest ratio of terrorist fighters in Europe.</p> <p>Since then, and after the defeat of the Islamic State, Belgian authorities have sought to craft a coherent response to the threat of returning fighters. According to the authors, the return rate up to now is about 30 %, with fighters having returned in different waves. About half of those still left in combat zones are assumed to have been killed.</p> <p>However, about 150 Belgian fighters are still thought to be alive – some of them prisoners in Iraq and Syria – and a number of these could still return. There are also about 130 Belgian children, mostly born there, who will return sooner or later.</p> <p>Definition of terrorist activities</p> <p>A multi-agency approach involving a broad range of actors among intelligence, enforcement, and social services has been developed and put down on paper in recent years.</p>

Furthermore, the Belgian penal code was revised in 2015 as regards the definition of a terrorist crime. Travelling to join a terrorist organisation abroad, providing or receiving terrorist training or funding a terrorist organisation abroad are now considered terrorist crimes.

Anyone returning from the battle fields in Syria and Iraq now faces pre-trial detention and a three–five-year (and sometimes longer) prison sentence. In January 2018, there were 100 foreign terrorist fighters, of which 44 were returnees, in Belgium’s 32 prisons.

In jail, most of them are spread among the general prison population with individual security measures and monitoring, as well as constant assessment of radicalization behaviour by trained staff and special units. This poses a dilemma for the prison authorities since radicalized detainees can influence other prisoners.

Dispersal or separation

According to the authors, the preferred regime in Belgium is dispersal among the general prison population. However, dangerous individuals are screened by the prison administration’s so-called CellExtremism unit and can be separated from other inmates though not kept isolated. The prisons of Hasselt and Ittre have 20 places each for such cases but only 22 places were used in January 2018.

Inmates are offered tailor-made disengagement programmes and probation measures to facilitate their return to society. Security services and local agencies receive information from the prison authorities to ensure continued monitoring and adequate counselling. But they caution that this is still work in progress, and there are still several weaknesses.

Prisons, for instance, are still breeding grounds for extremist ideologies. Although the majority of detainees are not religiously radicalized, CellExtremism is currently monitoring 237 detainees. It is estimated that a significant proportion of returnees might leave prison without leaving violent extremism behind.

“The transition to post-prison life remains one of the most challenging dimensions of the Belgian response to returnees,” according to the researchers.

Crime-terror nexus in Belgium

Another worrying problem is the connections between criminality and terrorism. In Belgium, like elsewhere, the authorities have witnessed criminals joining terror groups in Syria. There are also documented interactions between terrorist networks and criminal ones, for instance to acquire weapons or falsified identity documents.

An on-going study by two British researchers, Peter Neumann and Rajan Basra, aims at mapping the links between criminality and terrorism in all EU member states. The first results for Belgium and Luxembourg were presented last week at the Egmont Institute.

According to the writers, criminals and terrorists are often recruited from the same pool of people, not the least in prisons. A few charismatic persons managed to recruit hundreds of fighters in Belgium. Approximately half or more of those recruited had a criminal background. They see jihadism as a kind of redemption and justify crimes against “non-believers” as a means to fund terrorism.

Asked about the role of religion in the radicalisation of criminals, Neuman replied that a distinction should be made between religious knowledge, which almost is non-existent among them, and a new-born religious identity.

“Radicalisation isn’t a crime,” said a Brussels prosecutor. “We have to respect the rules of the game once a detainee is released and cannot limit his freedom. In Belgium we have chosen the right direction by focusing on local structures and task forces that can intervene at the first sign of violent extremism.”

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HEADLINE	03/22 US blacklists mystery Frenchman
SOURCE	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-5533345/US-blacklists-mystery-French-chemical-terrorist.html
GIST	<p>The United States on Thursday identified a Frenchman it says provided chemical weapons to the Islamic State group and whose name, previously unreported, came as a surprise to French experts.</p> <p>US officials described Joe Asperman as being born in the Cannes region of southern France between 1986 and 1988 and as "a senior chemical weapons expert" for the IS group in Syria.</p> <p>He has now been listed as a "Specially Designated Global Terrorist," placing him under US sanctions with notorious militants that Washington believes pose a threat outside their immediate battlefield.</p> <p>But they provided few details and French officials and experts alike said they had never heard the name of a suspect who does not appear to have attracted the attention of Paris authorities.</p> <p>"Asperman oversaw chemical operations production within Syria for ISIS and the deployment of these chemical weapons at the battlefield," the US State Department said, announcing the designation.</p> <p>Along with Bashar al-Assad's Damascus regime, the Islamic State group has also been accused of deploying chemical attacks in Syria, where it is one of the factions in the long-running civil war.</p> <p>Although hundreds of French fighters are known to have travelled to the Middle East to fight with jihadist groups -- and Cannes has been a French recruiting ground -- Asperman's name was not widely known.</p> <p>Several French experts, including Jean-Charles Brisard of the Center for the Analysis of Terrorism, confirmed to AFP the name had not previously been known as a suspect.</p> <p>And on Twitter, former French intelligence officer Claude Moniquet, now of the European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center," said it had "never, until today, circulated publicly."</p> <p>Several other French suspects have been placed on the US "global terrorist" list, including bomb-maker Ahmad Alkhalid, jihadist recruiter Omar Diaby and alleged IS executioner Maxime Hauchard.</p> <p>US citizens and residents are forbidden from doing business with SDGTs, and any assets they hold in areas under US jurisdiction are forfeit.</p> <p>The designation also serves as a warning to law enforcement worldwide to be on the look-out for the suspects, and is a sign that US intelligence deems the individual or group an important target.</p> <p>"This designation seeks to deny Asperman the resources he needs to plan and carry out further terrorist attacks," the statement said.</p> <p>But US officials told AFP that they could reveal no more information about the mysterious Asperman, and it was not clear whether the designation would have any immediate impact on his operations.</p> <p>In addition to Asperman, the State Department also designated the Katibat al-Imam al-Bukhari, an armed group it describes as an Al Qaeda ally and "the largest Uzbek fighting force in Syria."</p>
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HEADLINE 03/22 Iran: US created ISIS to destabilize region**SOURCE** <http://www.newsweek.com/us-created-isis-distract-world-israel-iran-defeated-it-khamenei-says->

	857359
GIST	<p>Iran's supreme leader criticized U.S. involvement in the Middle East, accusing it of sponsoring organizations such as the Islamic State militant group (ISIS) that were responsible for destabilizing the region.</p> <p>Speaking to a large audience gathered at the Shrine of Imam Reza in the northeastern city of Mashhad on Wednesday, Iranian Ayatollah Ali Khamenei wished Iranians and celebrants around the world a happy Nowruz—the Persian New Year—and called on citizens to invest in the local economy by purchasing domestically produced goods. He also took the opportunity to condemn an alleged conspiracy by the U.S. and its ally, Israel, which Iran has accused of illegally annexing Palestinian land.</p> <p>"The Islamic Republic could diffuse the United States' plan for the region. What was America's plan? The plan was to create venomous, evil, and destructive groups, such as ISIS, to divert nations' attention from the occupying Zionist regime and not to let them think about the Zionist regime. This is the plan we could defuse," Khamenei said.</p> <p>"They claim they were involved in the destruction of ISIS. This is a lie. The policy of the U.S. is to keep ISIS, but under their own thumb. Of course, ISIS, and other such groups, are easy to create for the U.S., but difficult to handle. They want to keep calling the shots with ISIS. Beside the fact that the U.S. is not able to make the region secure," he added.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Blast outside Somalia hotel kills 6
SOURCE	http://www.news.com.au/world/breaking-news/six-killed-in-blast-outside-somalia-hotel/news-story/542b81847d8b67704838605795931a74
GIST	<p>At least six people were killed and 22 injured when an explosion went off outside a busy hotel in Somalia's capital, followed by gunfire, police and rescue services say.</p> <p>Al Qaeda-linked al Shabaab militants claimed responsibility. The group carries out frequent bombings and other attacks in Mogadishu in a campaign to topple Somalia's Western-backed federal government.</p> <p>"The death toll has risen to six and the number of injured people to 22," said Abdikadir Abdirahman, director of Amin ambulances, on Thursday.</p> <p>Al Shabaab's military operation spokesman said his group had carried out the attack.</p> <p>"We are behind the blast. We killed ten people including soldiers and officers," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Rebels begin evacuating Syria enclave
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/22/middleeast/syrian-eastern-ghouta-fighters-deal-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Hundreds of rebel fighters began leaving the Syrian enclave of Eastern Ghouta on Thursday, forced out after weeks of heavy aerial bombardment that has caused more than 1,500 deaths.</p> <p>Eastern Ghouta, on the outskirts of the capital Damascus, is one of Syria's last significant rebel-held areas and the latest target of regime forces, who have besieged the territory. The Syrian regime is continuing with a sweeping campaign to flush rebel fighters from key parts of the country with the backing of their powerful ally Russia and its warplanes.</p> <p>Fighters belonging to the group Ahrar Al-Sham agreed to leave the Eastern Ghouta town of Harasta in a deal with the regime and Russia's support. Syria and Russia have agreed to provide them safe passage, and allowed them to take their weapons and families with them.</p>

As many as 1,500 fighters and 6,000 of their family members are expected leave Harasta, according to Al-Manar, a Lebanese television station affiliated with the regime-allied armed group Hezbollah. Syrian state news agency SANA reported that more than 500 people on 20 buses had left by early afternoon.

Thirteen men held by armed groups in the town were also released earlier in the day as part of the deal, Syrian state TV reported.

Ahrar Al-Sham is one of three main rebel groups in Eastern Ghouta. The regime offensive on Eastern Ghouta has split the enclave into three pockets, and Thursday's evacuation would essentially return power to the regime over the smallest of these pockets around Harasta.

There is no indication that the other two armed rebel groups have struck similar deals, but the agreement puts pressure on them to leave.

A spokesman for Ahrar al-Sham, Omran Mohammad, confirmed the agreement and said that fighters had begun leaving Thursday and were allowed to take their weapons and families.

It wasn't immediately clear where they would go, but previous similar deals have bussed rebels to Idlib, the only province fully controlled by rebel groups.

Idlib is also being bombarded by the regime. On Wednesday, 20 people, including 16 children, were killed in Idlib's countryside, according to the White Helmets rescue group and the activist Idlib Media Center.

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HEADLINE	03/21 Belgium: 3 attacks prevented since 2017
SOURCE	https://en.trend.az/world/europe/2875886.html
GIST	<p>Belgian special services have prevented three potential terrorist attacks since the beginning of 2017, Eric Jacobs, the head of the Federal Judicial Police (PJF) in Brussels, said on Wednesday, Sputnik reported.</p> <p>Belgium's terror alert level has remained at the third out of the four existing terror alert levels since the March 2016 attacks. The fourth level of alert was in effect for only three days after the bombings at the Brussels airport and underground that month.</p> <p>"Given the fact that the enemy is no longer so structured now, it is very difficult to talk about a thwarted attack. I will rather say that since early 2017, we had three sensitive cases," Jacobs told La Libre Belgique on Wednesday.</p> <p>According to Jacobs, special services are currently managing more than 1,000 cases related to terrorism.</p> <p>"This indicator has decreased, but we must remain vigilant, since the number of radicals, however, has not decreased... Last year, 45 percent of all PJF staff were engaged in [counterterrorism affairs]. Now, this figure is little under 30 percent," Jacobs added.</p> <p>On March 22, 2016, two explosions hit the Brussels airport, with a third detonating inside a train carriage at the Maalbeek metro station half an hour after the airport attack. A total of 32 people were killed, and over 300 more were injured. Daesh terrorist group claimed responsibility for the attacks.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Police: UK 'less hostile for terrorists'
SOURCE	https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/westminster-attack-uk-terrorists-counter-terror-police-isis-manchester-parsons-green-attacks-a8267061.html

GIST

Extremists were able to launch a barrage of attacks in the UK because it was a “less hostile place for terrorists” in 2017, the head of counter-terror policing has admitted.

Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner Neil Basu, who took over the post from Mark Rowley this month, said security services had “raised the bar” since the Westminster attack triggered four months of bloodshed.

“To say that there would not be another attack would be foolish,” he told The Independent. “But I am optimistic – I think we have an incredible machine in this country.”

It is a year since Islamist extremist Khalid Masood ploughed his car into pedestrians on Westminster Bridge, killing four victims before running towards Parliament and stabbing a police officer to death.

Masood, a Muslim convert with a history of violent crime, was known to MI5 for links to Islamist networks but was not under active investigation or considered an imminent threat.

His rampage was the first attack claimed by Isis in Britain, shaking the country that had previously been spared the massacres carried out in France, Belgium and elsewhere.

The assault was followed by the Manchester bombing on 22 May and the London Bridge attack on 3 June, both claimed by Isis, and the far-right Finsbury Park attack on 19 June.

The attacks killed a total of 36 victims, injuring hundreds, and saw all perpetrators apart from Finsbury Park attacker Darren Osborne die.

Melissa Cochran, whose husband Kurt was killed in the Westminster attack, said she was thinking of other victims of the “terrible day”.

“We all miss Kurt very much and speak of him often,” she added. “While I continue to grieve for my husband and all the victims of that day, I strive to move ahead and focus on my recovery, as well as honouring Kurt’s life by advocating love, forgiveness and peace.”

Inquests into the deaths of Mr Cochran, an American tourist, British mother Aysha Frade, Romanian architect Andreea Cristea, pensioner Leslie Rhodes and PC Keith Palmer are due to start in September.

Patrick Maguire, a lawyer representing injured victims on behalf of Slater and Gordon, said Masood had changed their lives forever with his “despicable act of evil”.

“Many still face a daily struggle with their physical injuries that are unlikely to ever properly heal,” he added.

“But what has blighted all of their lives are the mental scars from the horrors they experienced. The anniversary of this terrible day should be used to remember those who lost their lives and support those who survived with their recovery.

“We look forward to the inquest, when questions about how this atrocity was ever allowed to happen will hopefully be answered.”

Since the Westminster attack, a further 14 plots – 10 from Islamists and four by extreme the right wing – have been foiled, and terror arrests are averaging more than one a day.

But the UK threat level remains at “severe”, meaning an attack is deemed highly likely, and the risk from both jihadi and far-right extremists continues to rise.

Mr Basu said police had worked to “break the momentum” of attacks, sparking successful efforts to disrupt fresh plots in the latter part of 2017.

“People saw the bar had been lowered in this country and it was a less hostile place for terrorists,” he added. “I think we raised that bar again.”

The head of national counter-terror policing said the tempo of plots had increased to an unprecedented rate. “It is possible for attacks to get through, and we’ve seen that in the speed people are radicalised, the speed of which they plan and the speed they commit the crime,” he added.

“It’s becoming harder to stop these things.”

Mr Basu cited changes including online radicalisation and encrypted communications among the challenges, after calling for members of the public to provide real-world information on suspicious behaviour, which he said remains a “valuable part of the jigsaw”.

A review by David Anderson QC, the former Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, found security services missed opportunities to stop the Manchester and London Bridge attacks. But he concluded that neither MI5 nor the police had any reason to anticipate the Westminster attack.

“You’re looking at someone [Masood] who is such a long way from the top of anyone’s grid that, frankly, it’s a bit difficult to see how they would have been easily stopped, whatever agencies had done,” Mr Anderson said in December.

His review did not cover the Finsbury Park attack or Parsons Green bombing, in which a homemade device partly exploded on a District Line train in September.

Ahmed Hassan, an Iraqi teenager who told immigration officials he underwent Isis training in his home country, had been reported to Prevent on at least two occasions. An internal probe into potential failings is ongoing.

“We are always concerned if we haven’t joined all of the dots,” Mr Basu said.

“Over the course of the last five years 23 plots have been disrupted, all of which saved lives. We are good at this, we can always be better.”

The senior officer said it was a “prime objective” to have online propaganda removed using the Counter-Terrorism Internet Referral Unit and by working with social media companies.

And where potential extremists are caught viewing terrorist posts, police want to “take earlier action”.

“We want to act as soon as possible,” Mr Basu said. “Sometimes that may stop more serious offences being detected, but we won’t take risks with public safety.”

But he suggested that current punishments available for lower-level terror offences, like dissemination of terrorist publications and collecting information useful to someone planning an attack, are not sufficiently “robust”.

Many such cases see convicted terrorists imprisoned for fewer than five years, if at all, and the Parole Board raised concerns they could be further radicalised inside jail.

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HEADLINE	03/23 Iraq condemns Turkey attack on Kurds
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/03/23/baghdad-condemns-turkish-attacks-on-kurds-in-northern-iraq.html
GIST	BAGHDAD – Iraq's Foreign Ministry has condemned Turkey's attacks on what Ankara suspected were

	<p>Kurdish rebel camps in northern Iraq, along the countries' shared border.</p> <p>The ministry describes the attacks as "violations" that led to the death of a number of civilians in a statement released late on Thursday.</p> <p>Turkey's state-run news agency said Turkish jets launched the attacks after drones detected militants preparing to launch an attack against Turkey. Anadolu Agency said the operation reportedly "neutralized" nine militants.</p> <p>Turkey regularly targets the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, in northern Iraq, where they maintain bases.</p> <p>Turkey and its allies consider the group a terrorist organization.</p> <p>Turkey said this week its military may mount an offensive against the PKK in Iraq's Sinjar region if the Iraqi government doesn't act against the group.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Lone captive schoolgirl refused to convert
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/lone-nigerian-schoolgirl-still-captive-refused-to-convert-for-boko-haram/
GIST	<p>LAGOS, Nigeria -- The mother of the only Nigerian schoolgirl still in Boko Haram captivity after the extremists released 104 classmates said Thursday her daughter was blocked from boarding the vehicle to freedom and told to convert to Islam. Fifteen-year-old Leah refused, Rebecca Sharibu told The Associated Press.</p> <p>"She was about to board the vehicle that was to bring them back. Then Boko Haram said she should convert," the mother said.</p> <p>"Her friends said they tried to convince her but she said she will not convert to Islam. Boko Haram said since she will not convert to Islam she should remain behind. That was how they left her. She is alone."</p> <p>Leah Sharibu asked her departing Muslim classmates to pray for her.</p> <p>CBS News' Debora Patta said similar cases have been seen before. In the kidnapping of the Chibok girls several years ago, "some of them did refuse to renounce their Christianity, they refused to wear Muslim attire, to chant Muslim prayers, as was shown over and over again in those 'proof of life' videos," Patta said.</p> <p>President Muhammadu Buhari confirmed that Sharibu was the only schoolgirl still held by Boko Haram after the extraordinary release of the girls on Wednesday and vowed that she "will not be abandoned."</p> <p>Buhari, himself a Muslim, said "true followers of Islam all over the world respect the injunction that there is no compulsion in religion." He added that he looked forward to meeting with the girls who were freed.</p> <p>The president's statement had no word on the five girls still unaccounted for.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Claim: Philippine airstrikes routed militants
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/freed-filipino-priest-airstrikes-routed-extremists-53956555?
GIST	A Filipino Roman Catholic priest who was held by Islamic State group-linked militants last year says

	<p>airstrikes gave the military the crucial edge in crushing a siege by the extremists.</p> <p>The Rev. Teresito Soganub said Friday that his captors forced him and other hostages to gather explosive powder, which the militants turned into improvised bombs during his harrowing 116-day captivity in southern Marawi city. He says he constantly feared being killed in "the next hour or next minute" amid a barrage of airstrikes and artillery fire.</p> <p>Troops rescued Soganub in September before ending the siege, which left more than 1,100 combatants and civilians dead.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Group: Syria airstrikes kill 37 in town
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/activists-hours-cease-fire-37-killed-syrian-town-53956624?
GIST	<p>Syrian rescuers and a war monitoring group say 37 people were killed in airstrikes in a town in the eastern Ghouta region near the capital, Damascus, just hours before a cease-fire went into effect after midnight.</p> <p>The rebel group Faylaq al-Rahman, one of at least three operating in the sprawling region, says intense government attacks targeted the area it controls on Thursday.</p> <p>Rescuers, known as White Helmets, say the casualties were from an airstrike that hit an underground shelter in the town of Arbeen.</p> <p>Rebel spokesman Wael Oweilan said Friday negotiations with Russia will follow to allow for the evacuation of civilians from the area.</p> <p>A similar deal with another rebel group, Ahrar al-Sham, led to the evacuation of hundreds of fighters and civilians from Harasta, an eastern Ghouta town.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	03/22 Benton-Franklin Co. judges sue clerk
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/934499/benton-franklin-county-judges-sue-clerk-to-keep-paper-files/
GIST	<p>PASCO, Wash. (AP) — All seven judges from the Benton-Franklin County Superior Court have sued the Franklin County court clerk, alleging he has failed to follow a court rule to keep paper files of court cases.</p> <p>KONA-AM reports that the lawsuit filed in Franklin County Wednesday alleges Clerk Michael Killian, who is elected, has refused to follow the court's direction.</p> <p>The lawsuit says Killian told the court he would begin operating a paperless court records system earlier this year. In January, the court passed a local rule directing clerks to maintain paper files for all court cases until it can ensure that a paperless system will serve the community.</p> <p>Superior Court Judge Alex Ekstrom says he believes judge have the authority to order clerks to maintain paper files.</p> <p>Killian said the county has been on an electronic system that is used statewide and allows judges to access all files from wherever they are.</p> <p>He estimates that the paperless system saves taxpayers about \$20,000 per year.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Feds slam foster-care group homes
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/935034/feds-slam-foster-care-group-homes-after-surprise-visits/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — An audit report by federal officials says that unannounced visits in 2016 to 20 foster-care group homes in Washington revealed that every one of them failed to meet at least one state licensing requirement.</p> <p>The Seattle Times reports the audit report released Thursday by the U.S. Office of Inspector General shows that none of the homes fully complied with medical-safety requirements.</p> <p>Nearly all of them failed to meet one or more environmental-, space- or equipment-safety standards.</p> <p>In addition, 16 of the group homes had employees working who had failed to complete or pass required background checks; 11 didn't meet food-safety standards; and seven facilities ran afoul of fire-safety or emergency-practices requirements.</p> <p>Officials with Washington's Department of Social and Health Services, which oversees foster care in this state, have agreed with the audit's findings, have implemented some recommendations and plan to soon adopt the others.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Great Pacific Garbage Patch 'expanding'
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2018/03/22/plastic-within-the-great-pacific-garbage-patch-is-increasing-exponentially-scientists-find/?utm_term=.8e374b70c7fe
GIST	<p>Seventy-nine thousand tons of plastic debris, in the form of 1.8 trillion pieces, now occupy an area three times the size of France in the Pacific Ocean between California and Hawaii, a scientific team reported on Thursday.</p> <p>The amount of plastic found in this area, known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, is "increasing exponentially," according to the surveyors, who used two planes and 18 boats to assess the ocean pollution.</p> <p>"We wanted to have a clear, precise picture of what the patch looked like," said Laurent Lebreton, the lead oceanographer for the Ocean Cleanup Foundation and the lead author of the study.</p> <p>The Garbage Patch has been described before. But this new survey estimates that the mass of plastic contained there is four to 16 times larger than previously supposed, and it is continuing to accumulate because of ocean currents and careless humans both onshore and offshore.</p> <p>The "patch" is not an island or a single mass, leading some scientists to object to the name (which the current study uses). Instead, it's a large area with high volumes of plastics, one in which concentrations increase markedly as you move toward its center. The debris ranges from tiny flecks to enormous discarded fishing nets, which make up 46 percent of the material, the study found.</p> <p>The study was led by the Ocean Cleanup Foundation and researchers at institutions in New Zealand, the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Denmark, who published the findings in the journal Scientific Reports.</p> <p>There's a key distinction between the mass of plastic within the patch increasing — which it is — and the overall size of the patch, which does not seem to be changing. Rather, it's just that trash within the patch seems to be accumulating, or growing more dense.</p> <p>The plastic is probably mostly coming from Pacific countries, Lebreton said. But it could be coming from</p>

anywhere since plastic now travels across the entirety of the ocean and has even shown up in Arctic waters, where very few humans live. That suggests the plastic traveled there from elsewhere, riding the ocean currents.

Some of the debris probably also came from the 2011 tsunami that devastated Japan and washed large amounts of waste back out to sea, the study said.

The location of the patch is in a zone of slack currents where debris arrives and then lingers, increasing in the calm waters.

The study finds that, based on prior examinations dating back to the 1970s, the amount of plastic in the patch is steadily growing as more flows in than flows out — saying that plastic levels are “increasing exponentially.”

“We think there’s more and more plastic basically accumulating in this area,” Lebreton said.

The most striking aspect of the findings — and perhaps the most damaging — was the large volume of fishing nets or “ghostnets,” said Chelsea Rochman, an assistant professor at the University of Toronto who studies marine plastic but was not part of the current study.

“This suggests we might be underestimating how much fishing debris is floating in the oceans,” she said in an emailed comment. “Entanglement and smothering from nets is one of the most detrimental observed effects we see in nature.”

The fact that the plastic content of the Patch is increasing is consistent with research that has been conducted on land, showing that waste volumes entering the ocean are large and increasing, said Jenna Jambeck, an environmental engineer at the University of Georgia who has studied plastic waste processes.

In a 2015 study, Jambeck found that humans are filling the oceans with an estimated 8 million tons of plastic every year, and that is expected to increase 22 percent by 2025.

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HEADLINE	03/22 Gov. EO w/‘unintended consequences’
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/933920/inslee-immigration-order-consequences/
GIST	<p>An executive order signed by Washington Governor Jay Inslee aims to draw a line between local police and federal immigration enforcement. It’s proving to make things difficult for officers.</p> <p>“I think everybody has the same goal,” Steve Strachan told Dori Monson. “We want to keep truly bad, violent guys from doing bad things. But there’s a lot of unintended consequences as we move along. I would say the governor’s office has been open-minded about this. They understand it. They want to work together to find ways to fix this.”</p> <p>Strachan is executive director of the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs. He’s pointing out a flaw in an executive order signed by Inslee in February 2017. The order counters Trump administration immigration policies. State agencies are not allowed to share information that could lead to the discovery of a person’s immigration status. But it has proven to be difficult as state agencies try to work together.</p> <p>“State resources cannot be used, by his order, for immigration enforcement,” Strachan said. “What’s been going on since; state agencies like the department of licensing have been trying to comply with the governor’s order as best they can. But it’s a complicated issue.”</p> <p>“These different databases are connected because they should be,” he said. “When we work with folks like the FBI, we need to know what everyone else is doing and have good information. So it’s led to</p>

	<p>unintended consequences and I think that's what we are seeing now.”</p> <p>For example, the Washington State Department of Licensing told police it would no longer provide them social security numbers. That information could be used for immigration enforcement. However, that information is also used for gun control regulations and other protections.</p> <p>“This change with social security means that it will be more difficult to do background checks for pistol transfers, conceal permits, and the important one is for protective orders ... things like domestic violence,” Strachan said.</p> <p>“One of our chiefs mentioned to me that ‘We don’t do immigration enforcement, we understand that ... but we have other important enforcement to do,’” he said. “We have to be mindful of how these decisions ... affect the ability to do enforcement that has nothing to do with immigration.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Fewer foreign-born tech workers in state?
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/934053/will-washington-begin-to-see-fewer-foreign-born-tech-workers/
GIST	<p>Uncertainty over President Trump’s protectionist policies on immigration coupled with an increasingly difficult federal screening process appears to be leading to a decline in skilled worker visa applications in Washington state.</p> <p>According to interviews with employers and immigration attorneys who write the petitions for so-called H1B Visas, some local employers might have begun to lose faith in the long-term prospects in the U.S for legal, foreign-born workers.</p> <p>Washington employers are among the heaviest users of the visas nationally with 25,000 H1B employees statewide.</p> <p>Megan Vogel, an immigration attorney with Dave Wright Tremaine, said with the opening date for next year’s applications coming up on April 2, she’s seeing a surprising decline in worker visa interest when compared to previous years.</p> <p>“People are seeing much more prevalent denials and tougher requests for evidence on petitions that were filed so employers just might be a little gun shy right now to proceed with even trying,” she said.</p> <p>“It’s been a really tough year in the H1B world.”</p> <p>This is, in part, the intended effect of the president’s “Buy American, Hire American” agenda. From trade tariffs to new barriers for legal immigration and guest-worker employment, the Trump Administration has made a concerted push to narrow the flow of products and employees from other countries.</p> <p>And this is felt acutely by the local companies that use H1B visas which are defined as, “non-immigrant visa which allows U.S. employers to temporarily employ foreign professionals in specialty occupations for three years, extendable to six years,” according to the MyVisaJobs.com website.</p> <p>Popular among technology companies, the skilled worker visa historically has been used by employers seeking workers with skills not easily found domestically. Most of the 25,000 H1B workers in Washington are employed in tech companies, with Microsoft and Amazon leading the way.</p> <p>Critics have claimed tech companies have used the visa to expand the labor pool and drive down wages – something tech companies strongly deny. For states with more than 1,000 H1B workers, Washington state has the highest average H1B salary at \$107,000.</p> <p>Employers say that while the federal government hasn’t lowered the cap on H1Bs – something that might</p>

	<p>attract unwanted political attention – the US Citizen and Immigration Services department has strongly stepped up “requests for evidence” to slow or even stop the process.</p> <p>“We are definitely seeing more of those requests,” Vogel said.</p> <p>One local tech company employee who deals with helping to secure H1Bs, said the restrictions are a by-product of the Trump administration’s misunderstanding of foreign-born, non-citizen workers.</p> <p>“In the tech industry, it’s often more expensive to hire from other countries when you factor everything in, legal services, moving costs, employee retention,” said the worker who asked to remain anonymous out of fear of reprisals. “We hire American when we find qualified applicants. And we use H1Bs when we don’t.</p> <p>“And all of it grows the economy. It’s good for the U.S.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 UN: last 3yrs hottest on record
SOURCE	http://news.trust.org/item/20180322000132-95pr9/
GIST	<p>OSLO, March 22 (Reuters) - The past three years were the hottest on record and heat waves in Australia, freak Arctic warmth and water shortages in Cape Town are extending harmful weather extremes in 2018, the United Nations said on Thursday.</p> <p>Atlantic hurricanes and monsoon floods in India contributed to make 2017 the most costly year on record for severe weather and climate events, the U.N.'s World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) wrote in its annual report on the global climate.</p> <p>"The start of 2018 has continued where 2017 left off – with extreme weather claiming lives and destroying livelihoods," WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas wrote in the report.</p> <p>The study confirmed a provisional finding that 2016 was the warmest year in records dating back to the 19th century, with 2017 and 2015 tied for second place in a warming trend the WMO blames on man-made emissions of greenhouse gases.</p> <p>Last year was the hottest year without an extra boost from an El Nino event that releases heat from the Pacific Ocean.</p> <p>Talaas said unusually high temperatures in the Arctic in 2018 contrasted with bitter winter storms in Europe and North America.</p> <p>Also so far in 2018, "Australia and Argentina suffered extreme heat waves, whilst drought continued in Kenya and Somalia, and the South African city of Cape Town struggled with acute water shortages," he said.</p> <p>The report said that German reinsurer Munich Re estimated total disaster losses from weather and climate-related events in 2017 at \$320 billion, a record after adjustment for inflation.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 DOL: 32,000 car owners owe \$15 fee
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/over-32000-car-owners-to-get-15-uncollected-fee-notice/281-531151717
GIST	<p>If you recently brought your car from out-of-state to Washington, get ready to pay up.</p> <p>Over 32,000 car owners will be receiving a letter from the Washington Department of Licensing asking</p>

	<p>them to pay a \$15 fee that wasn't collected due to a processing error.</p> <p>The cars would have been brought between December 2016 and August 2017 and should have been assessed a \$15 Out of State Vehicle Check fee at the time they titled their vehicle in Washington state.</p> <p>The error resulted in about \$491,000 in uncollected fees, which are required by law to help fund highway safety programs.</p> <p>Drivers need to pay the \$15 before their next renewal and can pay in-person at a vehicle licensing office or online at dol.wa.gov.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Hurricane Harvey's toxic impact
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/hurricane-harveys-toxic-impact-deeper-than-public-told/
GIST	<p>HOUSTON — A toxic onslaught from the nation's petrochemical hub was largely overshadowed by the record-shattering deluge of Hurricane Harvey as residents and first responders struggled to save lives and property.</p> <p>More than a half-year after floodwaters swamped America's fourth-largest city, the extent of this environmental assault is beginning to surface, while questions about the long-term consequences for human health remain unanswered.</p> <p>County, state and federal records pieced together by The Associated Press and The Houston Chronicle reveal a far more widespread toxic impact than authorities publicly reported after the storm slammed into the Texas coast in late August and then stalled over the Houston area.</p> <p>Some 500 chemical plants, 10 refineries and more than 6,670 miles of intertwined oil, gas and chemical pipelines line the nation's largest energy corridor.</p> <p>Nearly half a billion gallons of industrial wastewater mixed with storm water surged out of just one chemical plant in Baytown, east of Houston on the upper shores of Galveston Bay.</p> <p>Benzene, vinyl chloride, butadiene and other known human carcinogens were among the dozens of tons of industrial toxins released into surrounding neighborhoods and waterways following Harvey's torrential rains.</p> <p>In all, reporters catalogued more than 100 Harvey-related toxic releases — on land, in water and in the air. Most were never publicized, and in the case of two of the biggest ones, the extent or potential toxicity of the releases was initially understated.</p> <p>Only a handful of the industrial spills have been investigated by federal regulators, reporters found.</p> <p>Texas regulators say they have investigated 89 incidents, but have yet to announce any enforcement actions.</p> <p>Testing by state and federal regulators of soil and water for contaminants was largely limited to Superfund toxic waste sites.</p> <p>Based on widespread air monitoring, including flyovers, officials repeatedly assured the public that post-Harvey air pollution posed no health threat. But the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency official in charge now says these general assessments did not necessarily reflect local "hotspots" with potential risk to people.</p> <p>Regulators alerted the public to dangers from just two, well-publicized toxic disasters: the Arkema</p>

chemical plant northeast of Houston that exploded and burned for days, and a nearby dioxin-laden federal Superfund site whose protective cap was damaged by the raging San Jacinto River.

Samuel Coleman, who was the EPA's acting regional administrator during Harvey, said the priority in the immediate aftermath was "addressing any environmental harms as quickly as possible as opposed to making announcements about what the problem was."

In hindsight, he said, it might not have been a bad idea to inform the public about the worst of "dozens of spills."

Local officials say the state's industry-friendly approach has weakened efforts by the city of Houston and surrounding Harris County to build cases against and force cleanup by the companies, many of them repeat environmental offenders.

"The public will probably never know the extent of what happened to the environment after Harvey. But the individual companies of course know," said Rock Owens, supervising environmental attorney for Harris County, home to Houston and 4.7 million residents.

The amount of post-Harvey government testing contrasts sharply with what happened after two other major Gulf Coast hurricanes. After Hurricane Ike hit Texas in 2008, state regulators collected 85 sediment samples to measure the contamination; more than a dozen violations were identified and cleanups were carried out, according to a state review.

In Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina's floodwaters ravaged New Orleans in 2005, the EPA and Louisiana officials examined about 1,800 soil samples over 10 months, EPA records showed.

"Now the response is completely different," said Scott Frickel, an environmental sociologist formerly at Tulane University in New Orleans.

Frickel, now at Brown University, called the Harvey response "unconscionable" given Houston's exponentially larger industrial footprint.

Reporters covered some environmental crises as they happened, such as AP's exclusive on the flooding of toxic waste sites and the Chronicle's Arkema warnings before fires broke out. But the sheer quantity of spills was impossible to document in real time.

Academic researchers are now trying to fill in the gaps in environmental monitoring, helped by grants from the National Science Foundation and National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. One project, a Harvey-related public health registry for Houston, was funded just this month but is not yet underway.

"People are left in a state of limbo of not knowing if they were exposed or not — or if they were, what the implications are for their health," said Dr. Nicole Lurie, who oversaw federal public health responses to the Superstorm Sandy and Deepwater Horizon disasters while at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Scientists say the paucity of data also could hamstring efforts to prepare for and mitigate damage from future violent weather events that climatologists predict will happen with increasing frequency.

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HEADLINE	03/23 Airlines balk at new lost bag rules
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-23/airlines-balk-at-new-rules-over-lost-bags
GIST	A federal rule change about how airlines count the luggage they lose has pitted Southwest Airlines Co., the "bags fly free" carrier, against its two larger rivals, which tend to charge for the privilege of using the

cargo hold.

For decades, an airline's lost-bag rate has been calculated by dividing the number of people it flies by the number of bags reported missing. Starting next year, the U.S. Department of Transportation plans to change the lost-bag rate arithmetic, replacing passenger counts with bag totals and requiring airlines to tally every checked bag they accept, including those at the gate, transferred from other carriers and the "valet" bags left on a jetway because the overhead bins were too stuffed.

To comply, U.S. airlines will have to improve their counting systems to achieve an accurate sum of the hundreds of millions of bags they fly each year. The rule change is likely to alter airlines' monthly performance rankings against each other (although it won't affect the tally of bags they lose, since that's based on customers reports.)

Last year, the dozen largest U.S. carriers misplaced 2.46 bags per 1,000 passengers, an improvement from 2.7 bags per 1,000 in 2016. Overall passenger numbers at the 12 rose by 21.2 million, to 652.2 million, in 2017. The DOT sees the new method for calculating mishandled baggage rates as more accurate.

American Airlines Group Inc. and United Continental Holdings Inc. contend the new rule would cost the industry more than \$16 million to comply. Southwest, which flies more domestic passengers than any U.S. carrier and favors the change, told the DOT it could equip 600 of its gates with technology to track gate-checked bags for less than \$3 million. In an earlier round of comments on the proposal, Delta Air Lines Inc. also opposed the measure, arguing that compliance would cost \$10.9 million, along with passenger delays and inconvenience.

American and United are also curious as to why Uncle Sam even tracks lost bags, given that Congress deregulated the industry 40 years ago. "No party has convincingly demonstrated that the government has a legitimate role in a deregulated industry of requiring airlines to report this service metric," the two giants wrote Feb. 21 in a joint letter to the agency. Moreover, neither the government nor anyone else has been able to show "any quantifiable, or even unquantifiable, public benefits" from having such a measure, American and United wrote.

The industry's divergence of opinion stems largely from the \$25-and-higher baggage fees that have become an integral component of U.S. airline profits—except at Southwest.

No one flies more bags than Southwest, in part because the carrier allows passengers to check two for free. This also means the carrier ends up with the most lost bag reports. Meanwhile, passengers who fly with its rivals—desperate to avoid those fees—try to scoot past the gate agent. When they fail, the items end up in baggage—and not always tallied.

"Right now, the metric is out of date and highly misleading," Leslie Abbott, a senior attorney for Southwest, said in an interview Wednesday. "It compares two numbers that are unrelated to each other."

Under the new rule, airlines also must start tracking and reporting mishandled wheelchairs and scooters. American and United haven't objected to that mandate.

"They do not have as many checked bags as Southwest Airlines."

"We don't oppose monthly operational metrics on Mishandled Baggage Reports," Meghan Ludtke, managing director of regulatory affairs for American Airlines. "We support a consistent industry standard that puts all carriers on a level playing field and gives consumers the ability to make a true comparison."

Dallas-based Southwest is also opposing its larger peers' efforts to squelch a DOT rule that would require airlines to report mishandled baggage, as well as on-time performance and denied-boarding, of flights operated by their domestic code-share partners. For example, if American flies a route on which Alaska Air Group Inc. has sold tickets, or vice-versa, it has to report any of these shortcomings. Southwest currently has no such flights.

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HEADLINE	03/23 Secret plot to reverse Brexit
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2018-03-23/inside-the-secret-plot-to-reverse-brexit
GIST	<p>Early every Wednesday morning, 15 people leave their homes and travel separately to a secret location in central London, where, over cups of Indian-style filter coffee and plates of cookies, they plot to stop Brexit. Those who gather, bleary-eyed, in the meeting room are a mix of women and men, old and young. They include politicians and activists, both professional and little-known, though their identities haven't been formally released. The one thing that unites them is opposition to Theresa May's plan for Britain to make a clean break from the European Union.</p> <p>Their aim: engineer a new referendum so the British people can reconsider Brexit before it's too late. "I do not want to see Brexit happen. I think it will destroy the futures of the next generation in this country," says Chuka Umunna, the charismatic, 39-year-old member of Parliament who chairs the weekly gathering. "But it's not about what I think—and shouting 'Stop Brexit' is not a political strategy. I want the people to get a vote."</p> <p>For the first time, people in the anti-Brexit movement in the U.K. are getting organized. That's because, for the first time, they believe they can win. Ever since May lost her majority in Parliament after a catastrophic gamble on an early election last June, it's been clear that she is in a weak position to lead the country through withdrawal from the EU. For six months after her election failure, she held her ruling Conservative Party together and managed to navigate the first phase of Brexit negotiations, albeit only after agreeing to pay the other 27 member states a 40 billion-pound (\$56.4 billion) divorce bill.</p> <p>Then came her first defeat. On Dec. 13, 11 members of May's Tory party defied her orders and overturned the government's will in a key vote in Parliament. The rebels ensured that lawmakers will get a binding vote on whether to accept or reject May's final Brexit deal once negotiations with the EU end later this year. Put simply, this means that May must get an agreement that is good enough to please her own lawmakers, and that she cannot simply impose her policy on the country.</p> <p>It is this make-or-break vote in Parliament—which is likely to come around October this year—that the Brexit resistance is now targeting. By lobbying legislators, they hope to block May's deal, bring about a new referendum, or perhaps trigger a new national election. The pro-EU alliance that Umunna chairs—which includes Brexit rebels in Parliament and thousands of activists around the country—played a crucial role behind the scenes in inflicting the defeat on May.</p> <p>Speaking in his exposed-wood and glass office overlooking the Palace of Westminster, Umunna says that campaigners across the country targeted different members of Parliament in the run-up to the December vote to persuade them to back the rebellion. They got "an avalanche of emails and hundreds of visits" to their offices, he says.</p> <p>Increasingly, the public and politicians alike can see the dangers of Brexit and are changing their attitude as the economic risks become clear, he says. A recent leak of government analysis showed how Brexit will reduce growth by as much as 5 percentage points over 15 years if there's a free-trade deal, or 8 points if there's no deal at all. The most-affected areas are likely to be some of those that voted heavily to leave the EU. "It terrified some people what it was saying was going to happen in their communities," Umunna says. "If it does happen, and they are still the members of Parliament, they won't be forgiven."</p> <p>Umunna is always immaculately dressed, a slick media performer who briefly stood for the leadership of his Labour party in 2015, before what he called "the added level of pressure" prompted him to pull out of the race. (It was ultimately won by socialist firebrand Jeremy Corbyn). Until recently, he's been careful to keep quiet about the work of his Grassroots Coordinating Group, as the committee is unfashionably known. He won't say where or exactly when they meet, because he doesn't want the gatherings to be mobbed by photographers and reporters.</p>

Away from prying camera lenses, Umunna and his fellow Brexit rebels have been seeking the help of European leaders for their mission. On Jan. 15, he joined senior members of the Conservative party, including Anna Soubry, a former business minister, and Dominic Grieve, who served as the U.K.'s Tory attorney general (before masterminding May's December defeat), to visit the EU's chief Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, in Brussels. They've met senior officials in other EU institutions, European foreign ministers, and ambassadors from the bloc's remaining 27 member states—even the heads of foreign governments. Some involved privately confide that the access to senior EU politicians has been “extraordinary.”

The high-level contact is paying off. While EU officials know they must tread lightly to avoid appearing to meddle in British affairs, they are privately feeding valuable intelligence on the unfolding negotiations to their British allies. On March 6, a day before the EU published its draft plan for the next phase of Brexit negotiations, Umunna was in his office, focusing on the future trade deal with the U.K. He told Bloomberg reporters something that not even the British government officially knew at that point: that the EU would make clear in its document that its offer of a limited trade deal, with poor access for services such as banks, could be improved—if May backs down on her own strict “red lines.”

The prime minister has laid down hard rules for the talks. She wants to leave the single market, the customs union, and the direct jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice, as well as to end the free migration of people. But Umunna's information proved accurate. When the bloc published its guidelines the following day, they said that if May's position “evolves” and she backs down on these issues, the EU will be willing to consider making a better offer.

The EU's controversial gambit became known as the “evolution clause.” It was seen as an attempt to pry open divisions among U.K. strategists, a temptation to water down May's hard-line stance. To some of the more paranoid anti-EU campaigners in the U.K., Umunna's prior knowledge of the clause will serve as evidence of an international conspiracy against Brexit.

May's defeat in December was a turning point for politicians in Europe, too. For many EU officials in Brussels and European capitals, Brexit had seemed inevitable. Their only hope was to limit the damage that the split would do and try to find a way to plug the 10 billion-euro hole in the bloc's annual budget that the U.K.'s exit will leave. All that changed after May lost the vote in Parliament. “They recognize that Theresa May does not necessarily have a mandate for her negotiating position,” Umunna says. “They are very aware that actually, she isn't in the driving seat of this. It is Parliament that will be in the driving seat.”

Since the start of the year, European leaders have lined up to tell Britain that it is free to change its mind. If May—or a different prime minister—were to write to European Council President Donald Tusk to say Brexit is off, the EU would welcome the country back into the club without hesitation, they say. While the EU continues to take the hardest line in the negotiations, officials have made clear privately that they will agree to pause the Brexit process to allow time for a new referendum, perhaps even another election if necessary, according to Umunna. “If a crisis is precipitated and there were a general election, or a new national poll, we would be granted the time to do that,” he says.

Six of the 10 groups that send representatives to join Umunna's Wednesday morning coffee meetings have now moved into the same offices at Milbank Tower, a 10-minute walk from Parliament. This shared space—along with the weekly gatherings—makes it easier for the separate groups to brainstorm, decide on the best media lines to use, and coordinate their campaign strategy and activities. “We've got six months to change the game and get a people's vote on the Brexit deal,” says Eloise Todd, chief executive of Best for Britain, one of the groups in Umunna's weekly meeting. Partly because it accepts large donations, including 400,000 pounds from billionaire investor George Soros, Best for Britain has found itself the target of right-wing newspapers that campaigned for the U.K. to leave the EU.

Todd reckons the press attacks backfired and fueled a surge of interest in—and donations to—her campaign. She puts the odds of engineering a new referendum at “50/50.” Her team has already trained 2,000 activists in street-campaigning techniques and aims to prepare an additional 1,000 by the end of

April. Digital operations are also getting the funding and resources they will need for a massive “Remain” campaign designed to build support over the summer for a referendum on May’s exit deal. Many in the movement believe that only a new public vote would have the political legitimacy to halt Brexit.

The public is warming to the idea of having the final say on the Brexit deal, says James McGrory, executive director of Open Britain. With more than 500,000 supporters, his is the largest group attending Umunna’s weekly meetings. “This is not a slam dunk, either with the public or Parliament,” McGrory says. “People will holler and say, ‘How dare you?’ but what is absolutely critical is that the democratic argument is on our side.”

The campaign against May’s version of Brexit faces huge challenges. There is no clear evidence that a new referendum would deliver a different result. In order to bring about a second national vote—against May’s wishes—Umunna and company will need to persuade enough Conservative politicians to defy their leader on an issue that could bring down her government. They must also convince the main opposition Labour Party to back their cause. At the moment, Corbyn does not support a new referendum, though he hasn’t ruled it out in the future. Umunna believes that Labour’s leadership could be persuaded, “particularly if they feel it can bring a general election closer.”

Nevertheless, the first task for the campaign groups is to make more noise in the run-up to the Parliamentary vote on May’s Brexit deal in October. “There is a weird silence that has befallen our country,” says Todd. “Businesses have persuaded themselves that they are Brexiting and they need to shore up their political capital. But it would be much better for businesses to speak truth to power.”

When it comes time for the fight, Umunna is confident the pro-EU side will be ready. The disparate groups now working together have learned from the insurgent campaign that Brexit backers fought to take Britain out of the EU. “There is a role-reversal now,” he says. “We are not the establishment any more.”

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HEADLINE	03/22 Manhole blasts during Manhattan rush hour
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/manhole-blasts-rattle-lower-manhattan-rush-hour/story?id=53949102
GIST	<p>Two manhole explosions rattled lower Manhattan this afternoon during the rush hour commute.</p> <p>At around 4:30 p.m., the New York City Fire Department was alerted to a loud explosion with smoke in Manhattan’s financial district, officials told ABC News.</p> <p>Roughly half an hour later, a second manhole exploded.</p> <p>One person experienced non-life threatening injuries and was transported to Bellevue Hospital for treatment.</p> <p>Firefighters evacuated two buildings due to high carbon monoxide levels. One building lost electrical service.</p> <p>Utility company Con Edison told ABC News that following snowstorms, salt on the streets and sidewalks can find its way underground and corrode equipment, leading to potential manhole fires.</p> <p>The cause of the explosions is under investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Bumped airline passenger \$10,000 voucher
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/bumped-united-passenger-walks-10000-voucher/story?id=53956077
GIST	A United Airlines passenger bumped from a flight on walking away with a travel voucher isn’t terribly surprising -- except that hers was worth \$10,000.

For Allison Preiss, a communications director from Washington who began tweeting Thursday morning from Dulles International Airport after she was asked to deboard, her travel experience ended much better than it began.

"Well," she later told ABC News, "I can say it was the best flight delay ever."

United oversold the flight and asked Preiss, the lowest-fair passenger, to deboard. Thus began her tweetstorm:

"United is offering \$1K in travel credit for an oversold flight. If nobody bites, they will kick off the lowest fare passenger by pulling them out of the boarding line. For a flight that THEY oversold. Unreal."

"I AM THE LOWEST FARE PASSENGER."

"They are kicking me off this flight."

"They can't board me on this plane because there is a broken seat."

“.@united IS THE WORST.”

"United tried to get me to sign a document that says I volunteered my seat on this plane when I was involuntarily denied boarding. Sketchy af."

"On the upside, I wasn't physically dragged off the plane and my dog wasn't killed on board, so I've got that going for me ... which is nice."

"They really do not want to give me cash. They just offered me \$10,000 in travel credit. TEN THOUSAND."

Preiss posted a photo of the voucher on Twitter with the comment, "This is how badly United didn't want to give me cash."

She added: "I also got two \$10 meal vouchers. I am going to go INSANE at Pizza Hut."

United raised its payment cap to \$10,000 last year after a passenger was literally dragged off a flight.

In a statement obtained by ABC News, United confirmed Preiss' account and that the flight was oversold.

"Yes," the airline said, "we issued this voucher per our policy."

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HEADLINE	03/23 Seattle-to-Nashville pot pipeline?
SOURCE	https://patch.com/tennessee/nashville/there-seattle-nashville-plane-based-pot-pipeline
GIST	<p>NASHVILLE, TN -- It appears there may be a Seattle-to-Nashville pot pipeline after another man was arrested with marijuana in his baggage at the airport in nearly identical circumstances to an incident earlier this week.</p> <p>Drug Enforcement Administration agents in Seattle alerted Nashville airport detectives that someone had checked two bags on an Alaska Airlines flight but did not board the plane.</p> <p>Once the plane landed at BNA, detectives say they saw Willie James Wilson, 50, stand near the luggage</p>

	<p>carousel and pick up the orphan baggage. Officers approached Wilson, telling him a K-9 had detected drugs in the bags and Wilson allowed a search, according to an affidavit.</p> <p>Inside the bags: 40 pounds of marijuana in 40 vacuum-sealed bags. Wilson reportedly told detectives he was paid \$1,500 to pick up the bags. He is charged with possession of a controlled substance.</p> <p>Earlier this week, a 27-year-old man reportedly admitted to being a "marijuana courier" after police found 25 pounds of pot in 25 vacuum-sealed bags in his luggage, also on a Seattle-to-Nashville Alaska Airlines flight.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Austin bombings not labeled 'terrorism'
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/22/us/terrorism-definition-trnd/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A man terrifies a city for weeks, detonating explosive devices that kill two people. Then, when cornered by police, he blows himself up with one of his bombs. The acts of a terrorist in some Middle Eastern nation? No, the acts of a "very challenged young man" in Texas.</p> <p>But when a man in a rented truck mows down people on a busy bicycle path near the World Trade Center - killing eight people -- the attack is almost immediately called an act of terror.</p> <p>Why are some violent acts labeled terrorism and others not? And does it even matter?</p> <p>What's terrorism?</p> <p>It's understandable that last fall's New York truck attack was called terrorism. The suspect, Sayfullo Habibullaevic Saipov, said he was inspired by ISIS, and other ISIS sympathizers have used vehicle-ramming attacks overseas to terrify and kill scores of people in recent years. It was the deadliest terror attack in New York since 9/11.</p> <p>But people in Austin, Texas, were also terrified over the past three weeks as 23-year-old Mark Anthony Conditt unleashed a wave of deadly bombings. Authorities won't call what Conditt did terrorism, especially since a 25-minute confession video found on his cell phone doesn't shed light on his motive.</p> <p>"He does not at all mention anything about terrorism, nor does he mention anything about hate," Austin police Chief Brian Manley said. "But, instead, it is the outcry of a very challenged young man talking about challenges in his personal life that led him to this point."</p> <p>That characterization of Conditt's actions -- that this was just the work of a troubled young man -- angers some people, who say violent acts by people of color are treated as terrorism, while those perpetrated by whites are downplayed as byproduct of troubled minds.</p> <p>So why aren't the Austin bombings being called acts of terror?</p> <p>Part of the confusion stems from the fact that the world has never really settled on a standard definition of "terrorism." The US Code of Federal Regulations defines it as "the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives."</p> <p>But it is not a standalone criminal charge.</p> <p>"There is not a domestic terrorism crime as such," FBI Director Christopher Wray said in a Senate hearing in September. "We in the FBI refer to domestic terrorism as a category, but it's more of a way in which we allocate which agents, which squad is going to work on it."</p> <p>So once again, it all comes down to motive. Was there a political or ideological agenda behind the attack? In another example, from March 2017, a white man named James Harris Jackson is accused of stabbing to</p>

death a black man in New York, saying he did so as a "practice" run for more killings of black people. Jackson was charged with murder in the second degree as a hate crime.

But Jackson also faces a terrorism charge in the case -- murder as an act of terrorism in the first and second degrees.

According to police, Jackson, a Baltimore resident, said he traveled to New York because it is the media capital of the world and he wanted to make a statement.

That was enough to convince Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance Jr. that Jackson should be charged with terrorism.

"James Jackson prowled the streets of New York for three days in search of a black person to assassinate in order to launch a campaign of terrorism against our Manhattan community and the values we celebrate," Vance said.

What's not terrorism?

Some attacks, at first glance, seem like they should be labeled terrorism. But they're not.

In October, Stephen Paddock smashed two windows on an upper floor at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas and fired on thousands of people at a country music festival below. He killed 58 people in the worst mass shooting in modern American history. But neither President Donald Trump nor investigators called the massacre an act of terror.

Trump described Paddock as a "sick man, demented man" but did not answer reporters' questions at the White House about whether he committed an act of domestic terror.

"We have to establish what his motivation was first," Clark County Sheriff Joseph Lombardo said at the time. The investigation, which is ongoing, has so far not discovered a motive for Paddock's violent rampage.

Think back to Dylann Roof and the killing of nine people at historically black Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, in June 2015. Roof, a white supremacist, said he killed the nine attendees of a Bible study at the church because he wanted to start a race war. He was convicted of hate crimes and sentenced to death but never charged with terrorism.

That's despite an outcry from many who said what Roof did was, in their eyes, the textbook definition of terrorism. In an CNN Digital opinion piece, CNN national security analyst Peter Bergen wondered what the United States would have called the attack if Roof had been a Muslim.

"But do the thought experiment: If this attack on the church in Charleston had been conducted by a Muslim man shouting 'Allahu Akbar,' what is already a big news story would have become even bigger, as it would appear to fit so well into the political and media narrative that Muslim militants are the major terrorist problem in the United States," Bergen wrote.

His comments get at what some observers have been saying for years -- some acts of violence are only labeled terrorism if the attacker is dark-skinned and Muslim.

"There's a danger that we only use the word 'terrorism' to refer to a particular racial profile of perpetrator," said Andrew Mumford with the Center for Conflict, Security and Terrorism. "The Charleston example is a really important one ... Sometimes (the label) terrorism is not used when the nationality of the perpetrator does not fit conventional stereotypes."

Does it matter what you call it?

There are legal distinctions to calling an act of violence a hate crime or terrorism. And because labeling something as terrorism has legal ramifications, it is not applied lightly.

Federal officials work with a very specific definition of when something is an act of domestic terrorism. It has to have three characteristics: an act that takes place in the United States, that's dangerous to human life, and is intended to intimidate civilians or affect government policy by "mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping."

Consider the Fort Hood, Texas, shooting in 2009. To the victims at the military base, it was an act of terror when Maj. Nidal Hassan opened fire on his fellow service members, killing 13 people. But again, even though the attack met some of the criteria, federal authorities never used the terrorism label. Avoiding the label made it easier for them to pursue the death penalty.

At the end of the day, does it really matter if something is or isn't labeled a hate crime or an act of terror? The pain and anguish felt by the survivors of such violence and the victims' families is just as unbearable - no matter what you call it.

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HEADLINE	03/22 Corruption scandal w/3 Peru presidents
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/the-corruption-scandal-thats-ensnared-not-one-but-three-peruvian-presidents/2018/03/22/7d15a75a-2c50-11e8-8dc9-3b51e028b845_story.html?utm_term=.647380358d0b
GIST	<p>LIMA, Peru — A day after tendering his resignation, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, the third Peruvian president to fall victim to Latin America’s rumbling corruption mega-scandal, appeared to be facing increasing legal jeopardy.</p> <p>According to local reports, prosecutors have requested that Kuczynski be barred from leaving the country until they finalize their investigations into his dealings with the Brazilian construction company Odebrecht SA, which has admitted paying about \$800 million in bribes to win public contracts in a dozen countries, mostly in Latin America.</p> <p>The move marks yet another humiliation for the 79-year-old center-right economist, whose surprise election in July 2016 was widely hailed as an advance for Peruvian governance. Elected in part on his promises to tackle rampant corruption, the Oxford- and Princeton-educated former senior World Bank official was regarded as a distinguished technocrat unconnected from most of Peru’s unpopular political class.</p> <p>But his downfall, over allegations of using his government contacts to lobby for Odebrecht in the past — including indirectly receiving six-figure payments for work reportedly carried out during a previous stint as economy minister — appears to have left Peru’s democracy in a more fragile state than ever.</p> <p>Kuczynski has said he is innocent, having placed a “Chinese wall” between his public work and his consulting firm, and said that the payments were for work done by business partners of which he was unaware. That explanation hasn’t convinced many Peruvians.</p> <p>Kuczynski had been facing an impeachment vote Thursday on allegations of “permanent moral incapacity,” which he was expected to lose. But lawmakers instead debated Kuczynski's resignation. They appeared likely to accept his resignation letter on Friday, rather than having an impeachment trial.</p> <p>Odebrecht is at the center of what has become Latin America’s biggest corruption scandal, with politicians across the region facing allegations of graft. Almost no major political figure in Peru has escaped the crisis. In recent weeks, Odebrecht executives have testified about undeclared campaign funding to various presidential candidates, including \$1.2 million for the 2011 presidential run of Keiko Fujimori, the leader of the opposition Popular Force.</p> <p>Some analysts are now comparing Peru’s plight with that of Brazil’s, where the Odebrecht scandal has</p>

tarnished virtually the entire political class and left the country with an unelected and unpopular chief executive after the 2016 impeachment of former president Dilma Rousseff.

Kuczynski's successor, Vice President Martín Vizcarra, was due to be sworn in to the top job on Friday and faces the urgent task of forming a cabinet just three weeks before Lima hosts the Summit of the Americas, to be attended by President Trump and other Western Hemisphere leaders. The meeting's theme, proposed by Kuczynski's administration, is "democratic governance against corruption."

A mild-mannered former regional governor who has been serving as Peru's ambassador to Canada, Vizcarra was reported to have fallen out with the president y after the lobbying revelations.

Despite leaving office with an 81 percent disapproval rating, Kuczynski was just about as unpopular as the Congress that forced him out. Its disapproval rating is 82 percent, according to a new survey by polling firm GFK, an indication of how generalized corruption, and the Odebrecht scandal in particular, have ravaged Peruvians' faith in their elected leaders. Nearly half the electorate wants an immediate general election, according to polls.

One previous president of Peru, Ollanta Humala, is in pretrial detention for allegedly receiving illegal campaign funding from Odebrecht, Latin America's largest engineering firm, while another, Alejandro Toledo, a former visiting lecturer at Stanford University, is fighting extradition from the United States on charges that he took millions of dollars in bribes. They both deny wrongdoing.

In court in New York, Odebrecht and an affiliate agreed in 2016 to pay a \$3.5 billion fine, thought to be a global record in a graft case, for paying bribes in various countries to get contracts. The United States claimed jurisdiction because some of the bribes flowed through its financial system.

Here in Peru, Kuczynski is hardly the only politician who has been seriously damaged in the last few days. Keiko Fujimori's estranged younger brother, Kenji, is facing expulsion from Congress after being caught on video apparently offering kickbacks to legislators in return for voting against impeachment.

He and nine other lawmakers had split from Popular Force in December after breaking with the party during a previous impeachment vote. Three days after they saved Kuczynski's political career, the president pardoned Alberto Fujimori, the 1990s strongman president serving a jail sentence for embezzlement and serious human rights violations. That move is said to have infuriated Keiko, who has opposed her father's liberation, which threatened to harm her own presidential ambitions.

The video of Kenji Fujimori was taped clandestinely by a lawmaker loyal to his sister. For many Peruvians, the surreptitious recording brought back painful memories of the corruption and blackmail techniques used by the Fujimori regime two decades ago.

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HEADLINE	03/22 Austin bomber audio 'confession'
SOURCE	https://www.mystatesman.com/news/crime--law/austin-bombing-suspect-recording-wish-were-sorry-but-not/ymCRWQSGfwSeqsKbye2xJ/
GIST	<p>The man who killed two people and wounded five others with a series of bomb attacks in the Austin area left an audio recording for police that includes a haunting revelation about himself.</p> <p>"I wish I were sorry but I am not," Mark Conditt said in the cell phone recording, according to sources familiar with his statements. He described himself as a "psychopath" and said he feels as though he has been disturbed since childhood.</p> <p>Conditt also promised that he would go inside a crowded McDonald's to blow himself up if he thought authorities were closing in on him, according to law enforcement sources briefed on the contents of the audio. The sources declined to be identified because they are not authorized to speak about the recording,</p>

which police are using as evidence in the case.

Interim Police Chief Brian Manley confirmed the existence of the audio in a news conference Wednesday, but provided limited details about its specifics. He called it a “confession.”

Police say Conditt, 23, detonated a bomb inside his car as officers closed in on him along Interstate 35. He had a laptop computer with him that was destroyed in the blast, but officials say they think it may have contained other recordings.

According to the sources, he began his 28-minute statement, which was recorded after 9 p.m. on Tuesday, saying “it’s me again” and blamed himself for helping investigators find him by going into a FedEx store on Brodie Lane in Sunset Valley to mail two explosive devices, one of which blew up at a transfer facility in Schertz.

That decision, Conditt realized, allowed him to be captured on video cameras inside the store and for outside cameras to snap photographs of his license plate, which authorities used to learn his identity.

Conditt also acknowledged that he recognized his actions left family members without loved ones, and caused permanent injuries to other victims, including an elderly woman, but said little else about them.

The sources also repeated what Manley said at the news conference: That Conditt gave no hint about how or why he chose the targets of the bomb attacks.

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HEADLINE	03/23 Hunt for Austin bomber frustrated police
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/us/articles/2018-03-23/hunt-for-austin-bomber-frustrated-police-before-breakthrough
GIST	<p>AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — After the first package exploded on an Austin doorstep, police assured the public that there was no wider threat, no signs of terrorism. The idea of a serial bomber striking random strangers never came up.</p> <p>The March 2 blast killed Anthony Stephan House, a 39-year-old man with a background in finance and an 8-year-old daughter. Investigators didn't rule out that House may have mishandled homemade explosives.</p> <p>Hours later, in an interrogation room, detectives told one of House's neighbors their main theory: The deadly package was retaliation, maybe from a drug cartel, for a raid days earlier that seized more than \$300,000 and 30 pounds of pot. The cartel just got the address wrong.</p> <p>"They're saying, 'Who's trying to blow you up?' They're trying to do the whole thing, 'Help us help you, because they're not going to miss again,'" said Mark McCrimmon, an Austin attorney who represents the neighbor.</p> <p>It wouldn't be the last wrong lead in the three-week search that eventually led to Mark Anthony Conditt, an unemployed community college dropout who blew himself up Wednesday as officers closed in.</p> <p>The manhunt intensified after more explosions in the weeks that followed House's death. By the time the suspect too was dead, his bombs had killed two people, badly wound four others and unnerved the Texas capital.</p> <p>On Thursday, authorities gave no indication they were any closer to understanding why Conditt did it. Austin Police Chief Brian Manley said the bomber left behind a 25-minute cellphone recording that amounted to a confession but revealed no clear motive.</p> <p>It's one last mystery in a case that police struggled to crack. More than 500 federal agents swarmed Austin</p>

in what Rep. Michael McCaul, chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, called the nation's largest bombing manhunt since the 2013 Boston Marathon attacks.

The trail to Conditt included many dead ends among more than 500 phoned-in tips. There were theories that didn't pan out and surveillance cameras that failed to record a glimpse of the suspect.

"They got a lot of calls," McCaul said of investigators, "but not a lot of credible leads."

Early miscalculations stoked frustration in the neighborhoods where the second and third bombings went off on March 12.

Because police initially believed House's death was an isolated attack, they did not warn Austin residents about suspicious deliveries before another package killed 17-year-old Draylen Mason and wounded his mother. Mason and House were both black and related to prominent Austin families, which led police to consider whether they were dealing with a hate crime.

"They didn't consider all the alternatives, and it came back to bite us," said Nelson Linder, president of the Austin chapter of the NAACP.

When the third bomb wounded a 75-year-old Hispanic woman, investigators wondered whether it was actually intended for a neighbor, Erica Mason, who has the same last name as the slain teenager.

Erica Mason, who is white, said she told police she had no connection to Draylen Mason's family. Police now think the shared name was just a coincidence.

Even after three bombings, investigators were still unsure whether they were dealing with a single attacker. "We're not calling it a serial bomber," Manley told reporters on March 12.

A week later, they were.

By then, police had urged residents to report any strange packages. The warning flooded 911 operators with more than 1,000 calls. Six days after Mason's death, authorities increased the pot of reward money to \$115,000 and tried a new tactic to draw the bomber out: a news conference that included a direct appeal for him to get in touch. Hours later, another explosion seemed to be his answer.

The fourth blast, triggered by a tripwire attached to a "children at play" sign that Conditt purchased at Home Depot, was the first on the city's more affluent west side. The new location dampened earlier theories about who the bomber was targeting.

After a fifth explosion Monday at a FedEx processing center outside San Antonio, authorities finally got their big break.

Conditt had been careful to avoid cameras before entering a FedEx store in southwest Austin disguised in a blond wig and gloves, said McCaul, who called it the bomber's "fatal mistake."

Surveillance at the store also captured a license plate linked to Conditt, which in turn gave authorities a cellphone number they could track.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said police were able to monitor Conditt and his movements for about 24 hours before his death. The cellphone number tied Conditt to bombing sites around Austin, but McCaul said Conditt had eluded authorities by powering off the phone for long stretches.

By Tuesday night, police began closing in on Conditt's home in suburban Pflugerville. They finally found him early Wednesday at a hotel north of Austin, and officers prepared to move in for an arrest. When the suspect's sport utility vehicle began to drive away, they followed.

	<p>Conditt drove into a ditch on the side of the road, and SWAT officers approached, banging on his window. That's when he ended his life by setting off one of his own devices inside the vehicle.</p> <p>Police found him because he turned his phone back on, McCaul said.</p> <p>"He turned it on. It pinged, and then the chase ensued," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Canadian drug smuggler pleads guilty
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/934799/canadian-who-ran-airborne-drug-smuggling-ring-pleads-guilty/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — A Canadian man who spent nearly a decade fighting his extradition to the U.S. for running a helicopter-based drug-smuggling ring has pleaded guilty.</p> <p>Colin Hugh Martin, formerly of Malakwa, British Columbia, entered the plea Thursday in U.S. District Court in Seattle to a conspiracy charge. The U.S. Attorney's Office said it would recommend no more than 10 years when he is sentenced in June.</p> <p>The 46-year-old admitted he headed a drug ring that flew marijuana and MDMA south into Washington state and cocaine north into Canada. One of his pilots, Sam Lindsay-Brown, killed himself in the Spokane County Jail after flying into a law-enforcement set-up in 2009.</p> <p>In an interview with the Associated Press that year, Martin said he became involved in the drug trade after watching his best friend get killed in a logging accident and seeing the region's logging industry dry up.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Ex-Seattle cop jailed in pot smuggling
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/935081/former-seattle-cop-gets-6-years-for-pot-smuggling-operation/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — A former Seattle police officer has been sentenced to six years in prison for his role in smuggling hundreds of pounds of marijuana to Baltimore.</p> <p>The U.S. Attorney's Office says 44-year-old Alex Chapackdee was sentenced Thursday.</p> <p>Chapackdee, who spent 16 years on the force, resigned shortly after his arrest last May. He pleaded guilty in November to conspiracy to distribute marijuana and conspiracy to commit money laundering.</p> <p>According to his plea agreement, Chapackdee conspired with his brother-in-law, Tuan Van Le, of Maple Valley, Washington, and two others to transport the drugs and launder the proceeds. He made multiple cross-country trips in 2016.</p> <p>Investigators said after a confidential source reported that Le had been paying Chapackdee \$10,000 a month to keep an eye on marijuana grow houses and to provide him with information about law-enforcement activities.</p> <p>Le was sentenced to 14 years in prison.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Man evaded police 25yrs faces justice
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/935409/man-who-evaded-police-for-25-years-guilty-of-manslaughter/
GIST	<p>EPHRATA, Wash. (AP) — A man who evaded authorities for 25 years has been found guilty by a Grant County jury of manslaughter in connection with the 1991 death of Barbara J. Kipp.</p>

	<p>The Columbia Basin Herald reported Thursday that 66-year-old Arnolfo Bravo had also faced second-degree murder, but the jury found him not guilty on that charge.</p> <p>Kipp was found dead Oct. 1, 1991, by her roommate. Court documents say people associated with Kipp told police she was planning on breaking up with Bravo.</p> <p>Bravo acknowledged to a detective that he stole items out of Kipp's house, as well as her vehicle, but he did not admit to killing her. Warrants were issued for Bravo's arrest after the interview, but he was able to avoid authorities until his November 2016 arrest in Texas.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Las Vegas gunman's final moments
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/22/us/las-vegas-shooting-stephen-paddock.html
GIST	<p>Sometimes we see him as other hotel guests would have seen him: as the tall gambler intent on the video poker machine across the casino floor, or as the customer standing in line in front of you at the gift shop, buying snacks, or as the guy you briefly glance at as he waits for you to get off the elevator — polite, unhurried, unmemorable.</p> <p>Sometimes we see him as the employees would have seen him, as the casually dressed V.I.P. with the many suitcases who jokes with bellhops, chats with valets and gives out tips along with handshakes. And sometimes we see him as only the surveillance cameras saw him — riding the elevator alone.</p> <p>Within a few days, he would use the arsenal he had moved upstairs in those suitcases to shoot and kill 58 people from his 32nd-floor suite at the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas.</p> <p>These were Stephen Paddock's final movements in the days before he opened fire from his hotel suite on Oct. 1: an apparently relaxed solo vacation that, as surveillance footage obtained by The New York Times from MGM Resorts makes clear, was actually the methodically planned prelude to a massacre.</p> <p>Rarely are investigators or the public able to track the preparations of a mass gunman in such molecular detail. Yet for all the material the footage offers about the who, the what, the where, the when and the how, we are no closer to the why.</p> <p>Watching the footage, nearly six months later, is a kind of compulsive ghost-hunting. In the antiseptic stare of the surveillance camera, even the most ordinary interactions are deformed, made weird only by what we know now. It is unnerving because it ends in the deadliest mass shooting in modern American history. It is unnerving because even with his every movement laid out, the grotesquely composed protagonist of this film gives away nothing.</p> <p>The faces of hotel guests and staff are blurred to preserve their privacy, reducing them to smudges that crisscross the screen at random. Mr. Paddock is the only person who appears throughout, the Waldo whose distinctive frame and faintly lopsided gait our eyes quickly learn to seek out in every frame. The clips begin when he appears and end after he leaves. The other people are little more than a backdrop.</p> <p>Except that some of them may become his victims. And some are already his unwitting accomplices.</p> <p>Over and over in the clips, Mr. Paddock is seen leaving the Mandalay Bay for his home in Mesquite, returning with a dark minivan loaded with suitcases. Over and over, valets take his keys; over and over, bellhops stack his luggage on gold carts, helping him transport at least 21 bags over the course of seven days. As they take the service elevator upstairs, Mr. Paddock chats with them. He cracks a joke. He tips.</p> <p>They have no idea that the suitcases they are so conscientiously carrying are full of guns and ammunition.</p> <p>Mandalay Bay employees are virtually the only people with whom Mr. Paddock interacts in the</p>

surveillance footage. He checks in at the V.I.P. desk, eats alone at the resort's sushi restaurant, makes snack runs to the gift shop and gambles at the high-stakes video poker machines. Casino hosts greet him as a regular. Security cameras capture him with arms aloft, celebrating a \$1,000 win.

But his movements are otherwise sedate, deliberate, unobtrusive, so much so that when he raises a hand to scratch his face in the elevator at one point, the extra movement registers as significant, even sinister.

Toward the end of the footage, two guests carrying shiny plastic inner tubes get off the elevator, padding out in flip-flops. Mr. Paddock pauses to let them off, then gets on.

It is the afternoon of Sept. 30. They seem to be on their way to the pool. He is on his way upstairs, where his guns await

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HEADLINE	03/22 Catching stoned drivers isn't so easy
SOURCE	http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-marijuana-dui-20180322-story.html
GIST	<p>The man San Diego Police Officer John Perdue pulled over in the Hillcrest neighborhood late last year did not hesitate to admit the smell wafting from his car was marijuana.</p> <p>After the driver said he not only smoked pot recently but did it on a regular basis, Perdue ran him through several field sobriety tests. The man passed them all without a stumble.</p> <p>In the case of a drunk driver, a breathalyzer could have confirmed whether a person was impaired by alcohol. But there isn't such a device for marijuana.</p> <p>Faced with a driver who confessed to habitually smoking marijuana but no proof the man was impaired at the moment, Perdue decided to let him go.</p> <p>After the legalization of recreational pot in California, law firms specializing in DUI stepped up warnings to marijuana users about being busted. Signs along freeways also have warned drivers that being high on marijuana can get them arrested. A bill proposed in the state Senate last month calls for a one-year driving suspension for any motorist under 21 caught with marijuana in his or her system.</p> <p>But as Perdue's stop in the waning months of 2017 shows, policing marijuana-induced DUIs isn't as easy as arresting and prosecuting drunk drivers. And with Proposition 64 now in full effect, police across California are more concerned than ever about stoned drivers taking to the state's streets and freeways.</p> <p>Unlike Washington — which also made recreational pot use legal — California has not established a "per se" level, such as a 0.08% blood-alcohol level, that would make a person legally too stoned to drive.</p> <p>Lt. Rob Sharpe, who works for the Washington State Patrol's impaired driving unit, said he believes establishing a legal limit for pot is a necessity.</p> <p>"If I don't know how much marijuana I can consume and safely drive, how can I be held to a standard that it's unsafe to drive?" he asked.</p> <p>Absent a standard, the final decision on whether an arrested driver was impaired will rest with a judge or jury.</p> <p>California, like other states that have legalized marijuana, now relies on drug recognition experts — police officers trained during a two-week course to conduct cognitive tests and notice other physical signs of drug-related impairment during a motor vehicle stop — to make the initial determination that a driver is intoxicated.</p>

Law enforcement officials said they believe these experts are more than capable of determining impairment, even without an objective standard. In addition to those experts, the California Highway Patrol has trained thousands of officers through its Advanced Roadside Impaired Driving Enforcement program, according to Sgt. Glen Glaser of the agency's impaired driving unit.

"They do a 12-step examination. It goes from having the subject perform a field sobriety test, but we also evaluate their physical signs, take their blood pressure several times, take their pulse," Glaser said. "It's a very thorough exam."

Glaser said the CHP has no interest in conducting sweeping arrests.

"We want them arresting people who are impaired," he said. "Those are the people we want to remove off the roadways. We don't want someone who just has the presence of THC."

But cannabis entrepreneur Virgil Grant said that's not good enough.

Although he wants to ensure that people don't get behind the wheel if they've ingested too much marijuana, Grant is concerned that the lack of an objective intoxication standard could lead to racial profiling in motor vehicle stops.

"As a black man in America, I think that's a no-brainer," Grant said. "If we left everything up to law enforcement in our community, we would be getting locked up at even more alarming rates."

San Diego police have been using two Dräger DrugTest 5000 machines during DUI checkpoints since March 2017. Although the devices can detect the presence of the psychoactive compound THC — which shows if a person has used marijuana recently — in a person's saliva, they cannot tell if a person is impaired.

The CHP does not have the devices, and the Los Angeles Police Department is not currently using them in the field.

Blood remains the forensic standard to measure intoxication in California, but it may take as long as two hours after a traffic stop to get the driver's blood drawn. Nearly 70% of the psychoactive THC in a person's bloodstream might vanish within an hour, according to Glaser, and that lag time could weaken a DUI case.

"The critical time element in any DUI case, whether marijuana or any other intoxicant, is the driver's condition at the time of driving," said attorney Darren Kavinoky, whose firm specializes in defending DUI cases. "If you're talking about a test a couple of hours later, you have some inherent difficulties."

Some cannabis users may be taking advantage of this state of flux, he added, especially because its effects are less obvious than effects produced by alcohol.

"They're more readily masked through Visine and breath mints," Kavinoky said. "You may not pick up on it, especially in the case of experienced marijuana users."

In the absence of more accurate testing, police officers have to make a judgment call to determine if someone is driving high.

"There's a lot of subjectivity on the officers, and it puts a lot of pressure on them, in that moment, to determine what to do without having any forensic evidence to prove it," said Lou Shapiro, a Los Angeles criminal defense attorney and member of the National College for DUI Defense.

It's also unlikely that a drug recognition expert can be present each time an officer is concerned about a marijuana-impaired driver. The CHP has increased the number of courses it offers to train such officers since the passage of Proposition 64, but there are only 1,549 qualified drug recognition experts across California, according to CHP records.

As of December 2016, more than 26 million people held drivers licenses in the state, according to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Drivers in Washington, where recreational marijuana became legal in December 2012, are presumed to be impaired if they have more than 5 nanograms of THC per milliliter in their bloodstream.

Statistics show that the number of fatal crashes involving people with marijuana in their system increased steadily from 2013 through 2016, although the data do not clarify whether or not the person was impaired at the time of the crash. The data track people who had carboxy-THC in their system, which can build up from repeated use, rather than psychoactive THC.

Recreational marijuana became legal in Colorado in January 2014. The number of marijuana-related crashes reported to the Colorado State Patrol has remained relatively static since 2014, records show.

The question of whether California should establish an impairment standard similar to Washington's has split marijuana advocates and attorneys.

Paul Armentano, a California-based deputy director for the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, believes establishing a hard cap for intoxication would fly in the face of accepted science.

"Peak drug effects lag behind peak drug blood levels," he said. "We don't have that with alcohol, fortunately. Peak blood-alcohol content corresponds with peak impairment of performance."

A study published by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration last year also suggests there is little correlation between THC levels and driver impairment.

Shapiro believes the lack of a uniform standard could open the door for unnecessary arrests and fear-driven plea deals. In Los Angeles, Shapiro said, he has seen a number of clients arrested on suspicion of impaired driving this year who almost immediately pleaded guilty to a lesser crime for fear of an effect on their license.

"You never know what a jury is going to do," he said. "They actually end up suffering a criminal conviction. It's not a DUI, but it does affect their public record, and they are put on probation. The status quo is really unacceptable, and it's unfair to the average recreational user... The state has to come up with some kind of law and/or technology to clear up all this ambiguity."

Calaveras County Sheriff Rick DiBasilio said California should have had a system in place before legalizing recreational marijuana.

"We can say the person crossed the double yellow line or he was lethargic or failed the field sobriety test, but it falls on the court to decide if the officer did their job correctly," he said. "We're back to the proverbial cart before the horse."

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HEADLINE	03/22 Britain: teen arrested for school threats
SOURCE	https://www.thesun.co.uk/legal-removal/5852726/teenager-arrested-over-bomb-hoax-that-closed-more-than-400-schools/
GIST	A TEENAGER has been arrested over a bomb hoax that saw more than 400 schools in England closed. The 19-year-old was held in Watford, Hertfordshire, after a chilling ransom note was emailed to schools on Monday.

A National Crime Agency spokesman said: "Hertfordshire police officers, working as part of an NCA-led investigation, arrested a 19-year-old man in Watford on suspicion of blackmail and making malicious communications relating to the hoax bomb threat that closed hundreds of UK schools this week.

"We understand parents' and teachers' concerns but stress there was no credible threat to the emails schools received. However we are taking the communications extremely seriously.

"As this is now a live investigation we are unable to comment further."

Schools in the North East, London, Bristol and Humberside received messages claiming an explosive had been placed on the grounds.

The messages went on to say the bombs would go off unless a cash payment was sent.

Up to 24,000 threatening emails were sent with parents told to pick their children up as schools across England were evacuated.

Humberside Police said 400 schools were affected across the country.

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HEADLINE	03/22 Man stole semi, crashed into JBLM
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/man-who-crashed-stolen-semi-into-jblm-pleads-not-guilty
GIST	<p>JOINT BASE LEWIS-McCHORD, Wash. -- A man who police say was high on meth in search of "better dope" when he crashed a stolen semi-truck onto the Joint Base Lewis-McChord base pleaded not guilty in court Thursday.</p> <p>Michael Thompson, 37, is facing charges of auto theft and driving without a license.</p> <p>Prosecutors say Thompson's wild ride began Tuesday evening when after he had "bad dope from Olympia", his car ran out of gas in Tacoma while in search of "better dope."</p> <p>He wandered into a Bates Technical College parking lot and stole one of their semi trucks for his continued quest, officials said.</p> <p>The problem (among many others)? He had never driven a semi truck before. Thompson told investigators he had trouble working the brakes and began losing control. He eventually careened through the yard of a home on 138th Street South and smashed into a fence thinking it would slow him down, he told police.</p> <p>It didn't.</p> <p>Thompson would eventually crash through two more fences -- then finally a fence that established the perimeter of the military base, investigators said.</p> <p>The semi finally stopped near an airstrip where as bad timing would have it, Special Forces military exercises were under way. Thompson made his way across a runway and was nearly struck by a plane, then saw four paratroopers fall from a plane flying over the base, police said. Thompson told detectives that in his drug-induced haze, he realized he had left his wallet in the truck and feared they were all coming to get him.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the property owner who had the semi truck plow through his yard called 911 and deputies followed the trail of destruction to the semi. They found the forgotten wallet, identifying the driver as an Olympia man who was wanted on a felony warrant out of Idaho.</p> <p>Military officers and a police dog eventually tracked Thompson down as he was trying to break into a fuel</p>

	<p>depot and he was arrested.</p> <p>"It just doesn't seem like something you could actually script," said Det. Ed Troyer with the Pierce County Sheriff's Department, "because it's something that seems made up. But it wasn't."</p> <p>Thompson is now being held on \$25,000 bail. Bates says it's looking into why the keys were left inside the semi.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Burien: standoff w/bank robber ends
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/deputies-in-standoff-with-suspected-bank-robber-in-burien/720159845
GIST	<p>BURIEN, Wash. - A 19-year-old suspect is in the King County Jail after deputies say he robbed a KeyBank in White Center and then threw a bag of money over the railing of a Burien apartment building.</p> <p>Khalid Mohamed appeared to smile as he was led by deputies to a waiting officer's car. The SWAT team had surrounded the Gateway Lanai apartment complex and was approaching the unit in which he was hiding when he surrendered Thursday afternoon.</p> <p>Deputies are also investigating whether Mohamed is a suspect in other robberies in the area.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Everett police search for pickpocket group
SOURCE	http://www.heraldnet.com/news/police-seek-well-traveled-pickpockets-after-thefts-here/
GIST	<p>EVERETT — Everett police are searching for a group of pickpockets suspected of an “extremely large and organized” theft ring that has nabbed wallets from unsuspecting customers across the country.</p> <p>Store security footage of the suspects was released Thursday by Everett police. Along with still images and video, detectives listed nine cases that appear to be connected in Snohomish and King counties. Many of those occurred at Panera Bread or Trader Joe's, where victims were distracted by someone else who was part of the scheme.</p> <p>The incidents include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On Dec. 9, thieves stole wallets at a Panera in Lynnwood and another location of the same chain in Woodinville. The same day, a thief took a purse at an Italian restaurant in Bellevue. • Around 2:30 p.m. Jan. 3, a wallet was stolen from a Panera in Factoria, with the thieves spending about \$4,000 at a Best Buy. • Around 1:15 p.m. Feb. 2, a thief stole a wallet at a Trader's Joe's on Everett Mall Way. • Around 2 p.m. Feb. 19, another wallet was stolen at a Panera in Bellevue. • Around noon March 7, a thief bumped into a woman at a Panera on Everett Mall Way. She later noticed her wallet was gone and found that about \$14,000 had been spent at Best Buy and Bed Bath & Beyond. Security footage showed multiple people using her credit cards. The same afternoon, a woman was approached by a stranger who asked her questions. After the conversation, she realized her wallet had been taken. Almost immediately, \$3,200 in gift cards were bought at a local Target. • On the afternoon of March 14, a wallet was stolen from a Panera Bread in Bellevue.

	<p>Suspects used the wallets to buy merchandise from Apple, Nordstrom and Target, or gift cards at retail stores.</p> <p>Local detectives are working with police across the country, from the Pacific Northwest to New York and Florida, to piece together the case.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Mistakenly released early; sues rearrest
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/washington-state-prisoner-mistakenly-released-early-sues-over-re-arrest/
GIST	<p>A man who was released early from a Washington state prison due to a software glitch is suing the Department of Corrections, saying his rearrest three years later to serve the remaining time was illegal and upended the life he had painstakingly rebuilt.</p> <p>Orlando Wright was released in 2012, 76 days early, from his eight-year term for robbery. He was one of more than 3,000 inmates released prematurely due to the coding error, which lasted from 2002 to 2015.</p> <p>State authorities discovered the problem in 2012, but fixes were repeatedly delayed before the department notified Gov. Jay Inslee in late 2015. Amid a public outcry, the department rearrested some offenders it had released early.</p> <p>Among them was Wright, who says by then he had obtained an apartment, a car and a job at a car wash; enrolled in a welding program at a technical school; and had a baby daughter, whom he saw regularly. When he was released again in April 2016, that was all gone. He wandered the streets of Seattle for nearly two weeks, homeless.</p> <p>“Seventy-six days: It’s just long enough to lose everything,” he said.</p> <p>Spokesman Jeremy Barclay said the department does not comment on pending litigation.</p> <p>According to a department report, officials reviewed more than 1,500 releases dating to 2011 and determined that 116 offenders should be rearrested. Authorities decided not to rearrest more than 1,000 others, under a state Supreme Court decision that held prisoners mistakenly released are entitled to credit for time spent at liberty if they don’t “abscond legal obligations.”</p> <p>It’s not clear why officials targeted Wright, but it is possible they declined to credit the time he spent in the community because he had supervision violations, including drinking alcohol and failing to report, in the months after his release. He later completed alcohol treatment, and in early 2015 — a year before he was rearrested — his community corrections officer notified King County Superior Court that Wright had “successfully completed his DOC supervision.”</p> <p>The department has faced claims from the families of two people killed by prisoners freed early, settling one for \$3.25 million. Barclay said he was not aware of other lawsuits brought by a rearrested offender.</p> <p>Several employees were demoted over the scandal. Four others resigned, including Corrections Secretary Dan Pacholke, who had only become chief in October 2015 and brought the issue to the governor’s attention. Lawmakers also passed reforms designed to avoid future problems.</p> <p>In his complaint, filed March 16 in U.S. District Court in Seattle, Wright, 37, seeks damages for wrongful arrest and constitutional violations. His maximum sentence date had expired, and officials had no authority to return him to prison over a mistake they had made and known about for three years, the complaint says.</p> <p>Nevertheless, they rearrested him. Instead of obtaining a warrant from a court, they issued a “secretary’s warrant” claiming he had escaped from custody or work-release — something his lawyer, Tiffany</p>

	<p>Cartwright, called “completely unauthorized.”</p> <p>Further, he should have been credited for time in the community because — despite having some missteps — he completed his supervision and thus did not “abscond legal obligations,” she said.</p> <p>“They knew the whole time they were releasing people early,” Cartwright said. “They let people go out and start to reintegrate and rebuild their lives, and when it became public, they wanted to make a big show and round everybody up.”</p> <p>Wright served his sentence for robbing a man at an ATM, at gunpoint, of \$300.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/23 Army: standoff w/barricaded man ends
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/03/23/army-says-standoff-with-barricaded-man-has-concluded.html
GIST	<p>ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. – Army officials say an incident involving a man who barricaded himself inside a home on a U.S. Army installation has been resolved after a 17-hour standoff.</p> <p>People living on four streets surrounding the home had to spend the night elsewhere as a precautionary measure.</p> <p>The Aberdeen Proving Ground has long been a place where the U.S. military tests its bombs, although in recent years it has diversified into a "megabase" where all sorts of military technology is evaluated.</p> <p>APG spokesman David Patterson says the man was alone in the home when a concerned relative called Thursday morning saying he'd locked himself inside.</p> <p>The installation tweeted early Friday that the incident "has concluded," without providing any more details.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Alabama to execute 1989 mail bomber
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/alabama-to-execute-convicted-mail-bomber-nearly-30-years-after-crimes/
GIST	<p>BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Judge Robert S. Vance was at his kitchen table on Dec. 16, 1989, when he opened a package that had been mailed to his home. The bomb hidden inside exploded with brutal force, killing Vance instantly and severely injuring his wife.</p> <p>Two days later, a similar device killed an attorney in Georgia. Two other mail bombs were later intercepted and defused, one at a federal courthouse in Atlanta and the other at an NAACP office in Jacksonville, Florida.</p> <p>The bombings created a wave of terror across the South. Now, nearly 30 years later, Alabama is preparing to execute the man convicted in Vance's killing, Walter Leroy Moody Jr. of Rex, Georgia. Moody is set for lethal injection next month.</p> <p>The long-delayed resolution to the old crime comes as Texas officials grapple with a deadly spate of bombings over three weeks that ended Wednesday when the suspect blew himself up.</p> <p>The complex investigation that led to Moody's prosecution is a reflection of how difficult it can be to get to the bottom of sporadic bombings like the ones in Texas. And it is also a testament to the lingering effects that such a crime can have.</p>

Tom Thurman, who retired from the FBI's crime laboratory after handling cases including the Vance assassination, said bombings are "more complicated in many aspects" than other crimes.

"On the investigative side it's so different from other crimes that involve personal contact," he said. "An individual is there to stab, hit or shoot somebody ... and a lot of times law enforcement is fortunate to have someone who was there. In most bombing cases, the person who sets the device or sends it is not there. They've got some anonymity."

Vance's son, Robert Vance Jr., said he is thankful Moody is in prison, and he feels for the victims in Texas, where two people were killed and four were badly injured by package bombs.

"I've been in the place of the families down in the Austin area going through this. It's just so frustrating because you don't know who is responsible or why," said Vance, now a Democratic state court judge seeking the office of chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court.

Moody has always maintained his innocence. Agents arrested him in July 1990 after what leaders called one of the largest federal investigations ever.

Robert S. Vance was a member of the Atlanta-based 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, and prosecutors alleged Moody targeted him out of anger at the 11th Circuit's refusal to overturn a conviction that blocked Moody, who had attended law school, from ever practicing law.

The bomb that killed Robert E. Robinson, a black civil rights attorney from Savannah, Georgia, was meant to cast suspicion on the Ku Klux Klan, as was the bomb sent to the NAACP office, authorities said.

By reconstructing the two bombs that killed Vance and Robinson and disarming the two others, investigators determined they were wrapped in nearly identical packages and mailed using the same kind of stamps. There were also similarities between the materials used in the bombs, including improvised detonators and wiring methods, Thurman said.

It's the same with any bombing case, Thurman said: Investigators have to consider a multitude of factors, starting with the components of the device. In Moody's case, the bomb was manufactured in a way that led back to its maker, he said.

After Vance's death, officials retrieved an intact bomb from the courthouse that housed 11th Circuit judges in Atlanta. Forensic chemist Lloyd Erwin of the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives recognized a unique element of its construction from a previous case: The ends of the pipe bomb were made of flat, welded pieces of metal rather than the screw caps most commonly used.

That tidbit led investigators to Moody, who had been convicted in a 1972 case involving a bomb with flat, welded end pieces.

Moody's former wife testified that she purchased bomb-making materials at his direction, and evidence linked Moody to a manual typewriter with a misplaced "a" that experts said had been used to write a letter claiming responsibility for the bombs. One letter talked about a "declaration of war" against the judiciary and complained about the 11th Circuit's "callous disregard for justice," court documents show.

A prosecution team led by Louis Freeh, who later became FBI director, convinced a federal jury that Moody was to blame for the bombing wave, and a judge sentenced him to seven life sentences plus 400 years in August 1991.

Moody was convicted on a state capital murder charge in 1996 in Vance's killing, and he has been on death row since 1997. Now 82, he is the oldest inmate awaiting execution in Alabama.

The Alabama Supreme Court has set Moody's lethal injection for April 19, but Moody has sent a letter to

	<p>Vance's son and others claiming he is the innocent victim of a government conspiracy. A federal defender has asked a federal court to block the execution, arguing the state can't execute Moody because he's technically in federal custody. A judge has not yet ruled.</p> <p>Vance said he feels peace "that justice has been done" in his father's case, and he doesn't plan to witness Moody's execution. But every new bombing, like the string of blasts in Texas, dredges up old feelings.</p> <p>"Usually these days I get up and don't really think about what happened 30 years ago," Vance said. "But when you see that in the media, you go back to December 1989."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/22 Parents of bombing suspect 'devastated'
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/parents-austin-serial-bombing-suspect-devastated-families-neighbors/story?
GIST	<p>The parents of the man police say was responsible for a string of bombings in Texas are "devastated for the other families," neighbors told ABC News.</p> <p>Jeff and Nancy Reep said the Conditts told them they had no idea their son, Mark Conditt, was the suspect in the serial bombings until a reporter knocked on their door asking for comment before dawn Wednesday.</p> <p>"They were shell-shocked," Nancy Reep told ABC News. "They're devastated for the other families."</p> <p>"Now, they're grieving their son," she added. "What he did was horrible and they know that too, but still, he's their son."</p> <p>Conditt's family said in a statement to ABC News that they "are devastated and broken at the news that our family member could be involved in such an awful way."</p> <p>"We had no idea of the darkness that Mark must have been in," the family continued in their statement. "Our family is a normal family in every way. We love, and we pray and, we try to inspire and serve others. Right now our prayers are for those families who have lost loved ones, for those impacted in any way, and for the soul of our Mark. We are grieving, and we are in shock. Please respect our privacy as we deal with this terrible, terrible knowledge and try to support each other at this time."</p> <p>"Mark was just a kid. He was quiet and very intelligent," Nancy Reep told ABC News. "They were good parents. They were involved parents. They did so much for their children. There's no rhyme or reason as to why this happened."</p> <p>"As far as we're concerned as neighbors, you know, you've got a great family living next door to you, you've got kids that were brought up and interacted with your children like any normal family would do," her husband, Jeff Reep, added.</p>
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Subject: 2018_03_19 Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources
(InFOCUS)
Date: Mon Mar 19 2018 07:26:28 CDT
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MONDAY – 19 MAR 2018



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Event Calendar

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9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php
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HEADLINE	03/19 Germany urges Putin to improve ties
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-russian-authorities-punish-ballot-stuffing-53845081?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Germany's president is urging Vladimir Putin to use the occasion of his re-election as Russian president to push for a normalization of relations with Germany and Western Europe.</p> <p>Frank-Walter Steinmeier congratulated Putin on his victory in a statement Monday.</p> <p>Steinmeier says Russia and Germany have enjoyed a "traditionally close relationship based upon a wide and solid foundation" and have worked since the Cold War's end for a "lasting, cooperative peaceful order on our continent."</p> <p>But, he says, "we are worryingly far away from that goal today. Mistrust, rearmament and a climate of insecurity contribute to instability."</p> <p>Steinmeier says he hopes "we'll be able to counteract the estrangement of our continent and between the people of Russia and Germany, and that you will use your new term in office for this purpose."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/19 Storm system w/severe weather South
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/large-storm-system-bring-severe-weather-south-east/story?id=53845929
GIST	<p>A large storm system is moving through the Great Plains on Monday morning bringing unsettled weather from the Dakotas all the way to the southeastern United States.</p> <p>Yesterday, more than three dozen damaging storm reports were made, most of them in east-central Texas where hail was larger than a baseball. There were also two reported tornadoes in the Texas panhandle and winds of 60 mph or greater in eastern Texas.</p> <p>On the northern side of the storm, heavy snow fell around Denver, with anywhere from 5 to 10 inches overnight in the metro area.</p> <p>The storm system is moving east Monday, and is now stretching from the Northern Plains to the Gulf Coast. To the north, snow is falling in the Dakotas while tornado warnings have been issued for part of the Florida panhandle.</p> <p>The storm system will move further east Monday afternoon, and will pick up moisture from the Gulf of Mexico. Severe storms will break out from Jacksonville, Florida, to Atlanta; Birmingham, Alabama; and into Nashville, Tennessee.</p> <p>The biggest threat will be huge damaging hail, tornadoes and wind. Flash flooding is also possible.</p>

	The biggest threat for tornadoes will be from Nashville to Birmingham and just west of Atlanta this afternoon and evening.
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HEADLINE	03/18 Policing groups helped pass new law
SOURCE	http://kuow.org/post/washington-policing-groups-joined-critics-pass-new-state-law
GIST	<p>Marilyn Covarrubias said there are still a lot of things she doesn't understand about why her son Daniel died in an encounter with Lakewood police officers in 2015. Like why the officers mistook his cell phone for a gun, why they didn't seek medical help sooner after the shooting, and why they acted so quickly.</p> <p>"They need to learn how to ascertain what is actually happening. Before they go into 'kill' mode," Covarrubias said.</p> <p>Covarrubias campaigned for Initiative 940, which was sponsored by the group De-Escalate Washington. But she said she's happy with the compromise bill that brought some law enforcement groups onboard as well. It requires new training for law enforcement officers, makes it easier to prosecute officers for negligent shootings, and mandates independent investigations of shootings by police.</p> <p>"I want something good to come out of this," she said. "I want to stop seeing people die. Because every time I see people die unnecessarily, needlessly, it brings all of the pain back."</p> <p>The Seattle Police Officers Guild called Initiative 940 "anti-cop," saying it would make it easier to prosecute police for political reasons.</p> <p>But Sue Rahr, executive director of the state's Criminal Justice Training Commission, said the public and law enforcement turned out to have many issues in common.</p> <p>"As the initiative was gaining momentum there was certainly a perception about it being very anti-cop," Rahr said. "Because a lot of the people who supported I-940, there were people who said some pretty inflammatory things. But at the end of the day, many of the people in that group I worked with and we had the same goal, and that is to reduce deadly encounters."</p> <p>Rahr said they have almost two years to implement new trainings under the law, but she hopes to get them up and running sooner. Another factor in the law would be Tim Eyman's lawsuit. He wants a judge to put the initiative and the compromise language on the November ballot.</p> <p>Rahr's police academy already trains new police recruits in concepts like de-escalating violent confrontations. But until this law, she says they weren't able to train all the officers already on the job across the state</p> <p>"That part of the legislation is very good news," she said. "This is important training. Now we have funding and capacity to actually do that training."</p> <p>Rahr said she's also responsible for assembling stakeholders to weigh in on the new law. And for figuring out how to conduct independent investigations when someone dies at the hands of law enforcement.</p> <p>"That's going to be an area where we're going to have to do a lot of groundwork and create something that doesn't currently exist," she said, adding that the interagency team used in Snohomish County is one well-regarded model.</p> <p>The new law changes the threshold for prosecuting officers for negligent deaths. Critics said the old standard, which required a showing of "malice" by the officer, made prosecution nearly impossible. Now the standard will be whether the officer acted as any "reasonable" officer would have. Rahr says that's already the standard they use in their police training.</p>

	<p>“I personally am glad that the word ‘malice’ was removed,” she said, “because I think removing that word does a lot to reassure the public, and we’re starting to rebuild the trust of people that were concerned about having that malice standard there.”</p> <p>Law enforcement groups did not support Initiative 940 as proposed by De-Escalate Washington, but many did support the final compromise.</p> <p>James McMahan, the policy director for WA Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, said the negotiations resulted in real dialogue. “We started something new where both sides of an emotional and polarizing issue began to truly listen to each other. And we want to build on that,” he said.</p> <p>The law emphasizes the need for police officers to provide first aid to shooting victims, as soon as the scene is secure.</p> <p>“I think the big point that I-940 was trying to make in that section was, when somebody needs help don’t just stand there,” McMahan said. “And I have every confidence that in the vast majority of cases where this would be applicable law our officers don’t just stand there, they provide help to those who need help.”</p> <p>Rahr said Eyman’s lawsuit has not affected plans to implement the law so far. However, a hearing in the case has been scheduled for April 20 in Thurston County.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 Weakness in Calif. emergency planning?
SOURCE	http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-emergency-alerts-california-20180318-story.html
GIST	<p>A reckoning on public preparedness long in the making is underway in California after a year that saw unprecedented death, destruction and loss from disasters set off by extreme weather.</p> <p>Though California has long experienced natural disasters tied to weather, the last year recorded a staggering human toll — more than 40 dead in wine country fires and more than 20 in Santa Barbara County mudslides.</p> <p>The disasters revealed gaping holes in the state's county-controlled warning systems — a mix of services from multiple vendors, subscriber programs with low participation rates, outdated landline lists, and a federal cellphone alert system so imprecise some emergency managers are afraid to use it. Public warnings failed to reach most of those in harm's way, or understated the risk.</p> <p>California emergency managers have released a critical review faulting Sonoma County emergency managers for failing to use all means possible to warn residents in October's deadly fire siege. Evacuation orders went to only a fraction of the residents in limited areas, and managers quickly lost track of the fast-moving blazes, leaving entire communities in the dark about their danger.</p> <p>But they warn that the weaknesses found in Sonoma County are not unique, and it is time for the state to wade into what has historically been a local matter.</p> <p>"Some are better. Some are worse," said Mark Ghilarducci, director of the Office of Emergency Services, the state's disaster agency. "We have seen a lot of inconsistencies."</p> <p>State Sen. Mike McGuire (D-Healdsburg), whose wine country district was hit hard by the October fires, is pushing legislation that would mandate up-to-date warning systems. And Senate Democrat Hannah-Beth Jackson, from fire- and mud-ravaged Santa Barbara County, promises a bill that would override state privacy laws to automatically enroll residents in emergency notification systems, leaving it to residents to opt out.</p>

"We have to do a statewide movement on preparedness, response and recovery," said James Gore, Sonoma County's chairman. "We don't have to be quaking in our boots that Armageddon is coming, but what we do have to do is get on our toes and manage into our future."

The county last month received an independent report from the state Office of Emergency Services that found its ability to alert and warn its constituents before and during October's deadly firestorm was "uncoordinated and included gaps, overlaps and redundancies," exacerbated because administrators at the central emergency management center were cut off from commanders on the fire lines, and were unaware of how quickly the danger was spreading, and where.

"During the early hours of the disaster, the county lacked reliable, timely and coordinated situational awareness as to the scale, size and scope of the fire's growth, character, and movement," the report stated. Among significant changes Ghilarducci seeks is giving incident commanders a greater role in alerting the public.

But most of the state review is focused on Sonoma County's failure — as fires swept over mountain ridges in the middle of the night and into sleeping suburbs — to use the national Wireless Emergency Alert system to broadcast loud warnings to every cellphone in reach of a tower. Sonoma Emergency Manager Chris Helgren, who was removed from the job days before release of the critical state review, said he was afraid a mass alert would trigger mass evacuations and block the narrow roads that firefighters needed to access.

Other disaster-struck counties also opted to not send mass cellphone warnings and relied instead on private vendor systems. In addition, The Times found, public warnings were delayed or underplayed. In Mendocino County, dispatchers held up alerts for a supervisor to drive in from home to eyeball the fires firsthand, and public warning sirens at a volunteer fire station were never sounded. In Napa County, only a small percentage of the population was registered to receive the county's warnings, and firefighters went door-to-door trying to wake sleeping residents. In Santa Barbara County, emergency managers ignored the danger shown on their own in-house risk maps and told residents living in high-danger zones they were only under a voluntary "watch."

Public anger over the failures has charged the debate.

"People didn't die from the smoke. People didn't die from the fire. People died because they didn't know something was coming," said Joseph Solis, a former 911 dispatch employee and police officer in Sebastopol. A friend and his daughter died in the Sonoma County fires. Solis' brother and family barely escaped, and they lost their home.

The state review said Sonoma County officials decided long before the fires not to trust the WEA system, even as they agreed to pay \$14,500 for a private vendor to add WEA capability to the county's automated phone dialing system.

Without explicitly naming Helgren, the state report and Ghilarducci blamed Sonoma County emergency management for failing to keep up with technical improvements to the cellphone alert system and accused it of relying on private vendors for information on the alert system's capabilities.

"This was a misconception, I guess I would say, on the part of the policymakers and the leaders there, that it wasn't worth, from their opinion at the time, of investing in the effort to incorporate [the national alerts] into their system," Ghilarducci said.

However, he and other state officials were unable to cite the specific advancements to those systems. Requirements for increased message length and precise targeting of who gets those messages are not mandated to take place before 2019. Even then, coverage will be incomplete. Lobbyists for the cellphone carriers succeeded in persuading the Federal Communications Commission to relax the proposed rule to cover "100% of the target area" rather than 100% of the cell devices in that area, and to delay the rollout of Spanish-language alerts.

In the interim, emergency managers can request a targeted alert, but carriers can default to a county-wide blast, a loophole that FCC records show was requested by lobbyists for the cellphone industry. Earlier this year, Sonoma County officials joined emergency managers across the country, and in California, voicing their concern.

"Improvements to WEA have yet to be enacted by the FCC and wireless carriers to render the system more practical...." Sonoma County Board of Supervisors Chair Shirlee Zane wrote to the FCC on behalf of the county. "We need to be able to utilize WEA to alert only those who may be impacted to avoid the negative consequences of over-alerting people who are not the intended audience."

Sonoma County used its vendor services to send calls to a small population of residents who had registered in advance for warnings, as well as to landline numbers provided by telephone companies. The phone lists turned out to be outdated.

A Times analysis of the first warnings shows those calls reached less than 10% of the households in peril — and less than a third of even those calls were answered.

"Every year that landline [list] gets smaller," said Robert Lewin, director of Santa Barbara County's Office of Emergency Management.

Lewin also distrusts the WEA system and hesitated before using it in January when a once-in-200-year storm cell bore down on Montecito and dissolved the hillsides into a river of mud, debris and boulders, killing at least 21 people.

Authorities sent only one WEA message during the debris flow — just before 4 a.m. — because they were concerned about how well it could target a specific area and its effectiveness given its limited message length.

In a letter to the FCC dated Jan. 4, Lewin criticized the federally backed tools that operate under the Integrated Public Alert & Warning System as "seriously deficient."

The county instead relied on its subscription-based program in the days and hours ahead of the storm to send out information via thousands of texts, email and robocalls.

But the limited reach of those warnings and their failure to instill urgency in residents has other agencies looking inward to see if what they have in place is enough.

At the state level, Office of Emergency Services officials will look to fill what they call "unintentional gaps" in public warnings, said Kelly Huston, deputy director of crisis communications for the agency. The decision marks a change for an office that previously left public warnings to the locals.

"We're going to be checking with the counties to be more sure they have capabilities to issue the alerts they need. The whole thing has raised up the issue statewide," Huston said.

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HEADLINE	03/18 Moscow's secret military labs
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/poisoning-of-russian-ex-spy-puts-spotlight-on-moscows-secret-military-labs/2018/03/18/9968efb6-2962-11e8-b79d-f3d931db7f68_story.html?utm_term=.ea7a58f6b4d9
GIST	During his last run for the presidency, in 2012, Russian leader Vladimir Putin startled U.S. military experts with a mysterious pledge to develop novel kinds of weapons to counter the West's technological edge. Armies of the future, he said, would need weapons "based on new physical principles" including "genetic" and "psychophysical" science.

“Such high-tech weapons systems will be comparable in effect to nuclear weapons,” Putin said in an essay published in Rossiyskaya Gazeta, the Russian government’s newspaper of record, “but will be more ‘acceptable’ in terms of political and military ideology.”

Exactly what Putin meant — and how any “genetic” weapon could square with international treaties outlawing chemical and biological warfare — remains uncertain. But what is now clear is that Putin’s words unleashed a wave of activity across a complex of heavily guarded military and civilian laboratories in Russia.

Since the start of Putin’s second term, a construction boom has been underway at more than two dozen institutes that were once part of the Soviet Union’s biological and chemical weapons establishment, according to Russian documents and photos compiled by independent researchers. That expansion, which includes multiple new or refurbished testing facilities, is particularly apparent at secret Defense Ministry laboratories that have long drawn the suspicions of U.S. officials over possible arms-treaty violations.

Russian officials insist that the research in government-run labs is purely defensive and perfectly legal. But the effort has come under increased scrutiny in the wake of allegations of Moscow’s involvement in the poisoning of a former Russian spy and his daughter in Britain. Both were sickened by exposure to Novichok, a kind of highly lethal nerve agent uniquely developed by Russian military scientists years ago.

“The big question is, why are they doing this?” said Raymond Zilinskas, a chemical and biological weapons expert with the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Monterey, Calif. In a newly released book, “Biosecurity in Putin’s Russia,” Zilinskas and co-author Philippe Mauger analyze hundreds of contract documents and other records that show a surge in Russian research interest in subjects ranging from genetically modified pathogens to nonlethal chemical weapons used for crowd control.

The analysis also tracks a simultaneous rise in sensationalist Russian claims that the United States is itself pursuing offensive biological weapons. Reports posted on state-sponsored news sites and amplified over social media have accused U.S. scientists of being behind recent outbreaks of the Zika virus as well as the Ebola epidemic in West Africa that began in 2014. In each instance, U.S. federal agencies marshaled a sizable response to counter or contain the outbreaks.

Such baseless claims could be viewed as part of a deliberate effort to “explain to their own people why they need to do this research,” Zilinskas said in an interview.

A spokeswoman for Russia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs declined to answer written questions but forwarded a March 13 statement by Vassily A. Nebenzia, Russia’s ambassador to the United Nations. Nebenzia denied any involvement by the Kremlin in the March 4 nerve-agent attack and suggested that it was the United States and Britain, not Russia, that were continuing to conduct illegal research to create “new toxic substances.”

The research by Zilinskas and Mauger appears to bear out long-held concerns by the State Department, which has sharply criticized Russia in recent years over a lack of transparency in its military-related biological and chemical research. Since 2012, State Department officials have issued a series of reports faulting Moscow for refusing to open its military research laboratories to outside inspectors, and for failing to provide proof that it destroyed the highly lethal arsenals created by Red Army scientists in the years before the Soviet Union’s collapse.

Thomas Countryman, an assistant secretary of state for international security and arms control during the Obama administration, said that even before Putin, U.S. officials questioned whether the Kremlin had owned up to its past “fully and transparently.” But over the past six years, official distrust has grown as Moscow has embraced a more aggressive foreign policy that includes intimidation of Russia’s neighbors and an unabashed support for a Syrian dictator who uses nerve agents to kill his own people.

“Moscow’s full-throated defense of Syrian use of chemical weapons — and, especially, its apparent use of

chemical agents in targeted assassinations — only add to the concerns,” Countryman said.

When the Soviet Union was dismantled in 1991, the Russian Federation became the heir to history’s most dangerous arsenal of chemical and biological weapons.

During the Cold War, Soviet leaders spent vast sums to create weaponized versions of 11 different pathogens — including the microbes that cause anthrax, smallpox and the plague — while also experimenting with genetically altered strains. They created new classes of chemical toxins, such as Novichok, reportedly used in the attempted assassination of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, in Salisbury, England.

A fourth-generation nerve agent more deadly than VX, Novichok is the stuff of legend. Russia denies that it ever researched or manufactured such nerve agents, but it arrested a former Soviet weapons scientist on charges of divulging state secrets after he published details about Soviet Novichok production in newspaper articles and a memoir.

The Soviet program was motivated in part by competition with the United States. Washington maintained its own stockpile of nerve agents during the Cold War and manufactured biological weapons until 1969, when President Richard M. Nixon dismantled the program. But the Kremlin pressed ahead, convinced that the Pentagon was continuing bioweapons research in secret. Finally, in 1992, newly installed Russian President Boris Yeltsin acknowledged the existence of the secret program to U.S. officials and reported that all Soviet bioweapons had been destroyed.

In the years immediately following the Cold War, securing and dismantling Soviet weapons of mass destruction united Americans and Russians in a common cause. The United States helped Russia build incinerators for destroying its chemical weapons, and it sponsored programs that paired former Soviet bioweapons scientists with Western companies to keep them employed during the country’s economic transition.

Such U.S.-Russian technical cooperation began to wane after Putin’s election as president, and it collapsed after the Russian strongman won a second term in 2012. Yet, even during the Yeltsin years, Russia refused to grant access to key weapons sites, including four biodefense laboratories run by the Russian military and perpetually sealed off from outside visitors, former U.S. officials said.

“We were always curious: Were they embarrassed to let us in because of the shape of their labs? Or were they hiding something?” said Laura Holgate, a senior adviser to President Barack Obama on preventing biological, chemical and nuclear terrorism.

Holgate allowed that Russia’s reluctance also may have reflected a “paranoia about what the U.S. might be learning” about the country’s military capabilities. In any case, she said, it became clear over time that Putin intended to preserve some Soviet-era capabilities for use in very specific situations. One of these was assassination — the killing of the Kremlin’s opponents using methods that were dramatic, yet allowed Moscow to plausibly deny culpability. Another was crowd control: the use of controversial “knockout” chemicals to incapacitate individuals involved in hostage standoffs and other mass disturbances.

Officials familiar with Russia’s program said the expanded activity at military labs may be partly aimed at honing those capabilities, giving Putin a variety of tools for dealing with adversaries while seeking to avoid the most flagrant violations of Russia’s treaty obligations.

“That would be in line with behavior that we’ve been seeing for years,” Holgate said.

Whatever the explanation, the buildup is striking. Data collected by Zilinskas and Mauger includes contract documents, Russian-language reports and aerial imagery that shed light on a dramatic expansion at the four secret Defense Ministry laboratories and numerous government-run civilian research centers across the country.

At one military complex at Yekaterinburg — the scene of an accidental release of anthrax spores in 1979 that is said to have killed 100 workers and townspeople — satellite images show clusters of newly built, warehouse-size industrial buildings dotting a walled campus. Renovations can be observed in older buildings that in Soviet times were factories for mass-producing bacillus anthracis, the bacteria that causes anthrax.

At the 33rd Central Research Test Institute at Shikhany — formerly a “closed” Russian military city on the Volga River in southwest Russia — records point to a recent spending spree for specialized equipment such as freeze-drying machines used in microbial production. Lab officials are shown soliciting bids for repairs to a wind tunnel, the type used in testing aerosolized bacteria and viruses, as well as upgrades to an area of bermed storage pens that the researchers say are probably intended for open-air testing involving explosives.

Wind tunnels and outdoor testing facilities can be used legitimately to develop defenses against biological and chemical attacks. Indeed, the Pentagon employs similar equipment at its biodefense research facilities in Maryland and Utah. But Zilinskas and Mauger say the Russian expansion invites a higher level of scrutiny in light of the explicit calls by Russian leaders for work on novel kinds of weapons, including “genetic” ones.

After Putin’s essay in 2012, several senior military officials, including the defense minister at the time, Anatoly Serdyukov, publicly endorsed Putin’s appeal for new kinds of weapons and promised to start building them, the researchers note. Serdyukov specifically pledged to incorporate “genetic” research in creating Russia’s next-generation arsenals.

“We noted the numerous high-level calls for the development of biotechnology-based weapons in Russia, without further specification,” Zilinskas and Mauger write. At minimum, the vagueness of such statements potentially opens the door for any military official or “ambitious scientist” to lobby for a chance to develop a new kind of weapon — with the implicit blessing of top Russian officials, they write.

“When taken in conjunction with the [military’s] apparent support for the development of ‘genetic’ weapons, these statements erode normative barriers toward biological weapons in Russia,” the authors say.

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HEADLINE	03/19 Death toll Manila hotel fire rises
SOURCE	http://time.com/5204574/manila-philippines-pavilion-hotel/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>(MANILA, Philippines) — Firefighters found two more bodies Monday in a hotel-casino gutted by fire that sent thick, heavy smoke into the sky over the Philippine capital, raising the death toll to five, officials said.</p> <p>One of several people injured in the blaze at the Manila Pavilion Hotel and Casino was fighting for her life in a hospital, Bureau of Fire Protection officials said, adding that all other guests and hotel employees have been accounted for.</p> <p>The bodies of two security camera operators were found after firefighters managed to control the blaze, which raged from Sunday morning to early Monday, the officials said.</p> <p>It was unclear if the fire started in the casino, located on the lower floors, or in a mezzanine area that was under renovation.</p> <p>More than 300 hotel guests, including foreign tourists, and hotel and casino employees had been evacuated at the height of the fire, some by helicopter.</p> <p>Police and firefighters blocked off the areas around the hotel, which lies in the heart of Manila’s Ermita tourist and commercial district, to allow dozens of fire trucks to approach and fight the blaze.</p>

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HEADLINE	03/19 Seoul: North committed denuclearization
SOURCE	http://time.com/5204996/us-japan-north-korea-nuclear-talks/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>(SEOUL, South Korea) — Top U.S., South Korean and Japanese officials discussed how to achieve complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula during weekend talks ahead of upcoming inter-Korean and U.S.-North Korean summits, Seoul said Monday.</p> <p>Seoul officials who visited Pyongyang recently say North Korean leader Kim Jong Un agreed to hold summit talks with South Korean President Moon Jae-in in late April. Seoul says Kim proposed meeting with President Donald Trump, and Trump agreed to him by the end of May.</p> <p>The developments have raised hopes for a potential breakthrough in the North Korean nuclear crisis. But many experts say animosities would flare again if the summit meetings fail to produce any progress and leave the nuclear issue with few diplomatic options. North Korea has yet to confirm North Korea-U.S. summit talks.</p> <p>U.S. National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster met his South Korean and Japanese counterparts Chung Eui-yong and Shotaro Yachi in San Francisco for talks over the weekend on denuclearization and the summit talks, South Korea’s presidential office said in a statement.</p> <p>They agreed to maintain close trilateral cooperation in the next several weeks and shared a view that it’s important not to repeat past mistakes, the statement said. It didn’t elaborate but likely refers to criticism that North Korea previously used disarmament negotiations as a way to ease outside pressure and win aid while all along secretly pressing its weapons development.</p> <p>Appearing on CBS’ “Face the Nation” aired Sunday, South Korea’s Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said Kim has “given his word” he’s committed to denuclearization. “He’s given his word. But the significance of his word is, is quite, quite weighty in the sense that this is the first time that the words came directly from the North Korean supreme leader himself, and that has never been done before,” she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 Record-breaking St Patrick Day spending
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/mar/17/sharing-o-the-green-americans-spend-record-breakin/
GIST	<p>Maybe they’re tired of the winter, or suffering from political fatigue. Whatever the reason, Americans are dropping an unprecedented \$5.9 billion on St. Patrick’s Day this year according to the National Retail Federation. A decade ago, Americans were spending about half that amount.</p> <p>“The holiday falls on a Saturday this year, so Americans will have more time to splurge a little,” said Matthew Shay, president and CEO of the retail group, which expects 149 million adults to celebrate the day.</p> <p>Eight-out-of-10 will wear green, 31 percent plan to make a special dinner and 27 percent will head off to a party at a bar or restaurant. A quarter will decorate their house in an Irish theme and 15 percent plan to attend a St. Patrick’s Day parade. Nine percent will throw their own party.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 COPS grant program budget slashed
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/mar/18/cops-grants-cut-in-trump-budget/

GIST

There is little doubt that the COPS grant program, sprung from the 1994 crime bill, helped craft the modern approach to community-based policing. The cash was supposed to be a six-year infusion of federal taxpayer money to encourage local police and sheriff's departments to focus on communities by putting 100,000 more officers on the streets.

Whether it ever reached that goal, analysts said what might be called "peak COPS" has come and gone. Consequently, the program, while well-intentioned, lacks the concentrated success it generated in places in the late 1990s, according to the Trump administration.

Consequently, President Trump's budget sent to Congress last month has a proposed throttle-down, with a nearly 50 percent cut tucked inside it.

"The Trump administration doesn't like the community policing approach anyway because it prefers to 'hook and book,'" said Peter Scharf, a sociologist who specializes in criminal justice issues at LSU School of Public Health in New Orleans.

Authorities in his home city, which grabbed tens of millions of dollars throughout the 1990s under the Community Oriented Policing Services program, were able to make a real dent in a calamitous homicide rate.

But without sufficient funding and a clear emphasis, the COPS money sprinkled around scores of agencies today is less effective, Mr. Scharf said.

Indeed, COPS has lived 18 years past its six-year proposed life cycle and spent considerably more than its \$8.8 billion initial price tag. In addition, the administration says that overlapping pieces within the Justice Department and COPS can be merged and thus save money by streamlining bureaucracy and eliminating redundancies.

By putting it all under the Office of Justice Programs umbrella, more than 210 positions will be cut by the end of fiscal year 2019, officials said.

"Generally speaking, I would say 'no' to things like COPS because policing is a completely local issue," said Jonathan Blanks with the Project on Criminal Justice at the Cato Institute. "But I liked the Obama administration's '21st Century Policing' report and the emphasis on building bridges between the community and the police. But it's not a priority of this administration, and the way the grants work now, it simply isn't something we need."

State and local law enforcement agencies, however, argue that the U.S. has received a solid bang for its buck with COPS and say the money should keep flowing.

"We remain big believers in the adage 'It if ain't broke, don't fix it,'" said Jim Pasco, executive director of the Fraternal Order of Police.

As the name suggest, the brunt of COPS was more cops, with grants mandated to provide some — but not all — of a law enforcement officer's salary and benefits. Local revenue was to cover the remainder.

The notion that more police equals less crime grew out of the successful crime fighting strategies of New York Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani and the police department put into place there in the 1990s. The emphasis shifted from solving crimes to deterrence, and the tactics involved a combination of statistical patterns mapped at headquarters and visible cops out of their cars and on the beat in neighborhoods.

New Yorkers called it the "broken windows" strategy — that getting to small problems prevented bigger problems later.

But once federal bureaucrats got at it, their English alchemy defined community policing as "a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systemic use of partnerships and problem-solving

techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder and fear of crime.”

In 2017, that meant \$5 million on an anti-methamphetamine program, more than \$3.5 million on the Community Policing Development Program, and more than \$7.1 million on the Anti-Heroin Task Force, which also dealt with opioids, according to Justice Department figures. But the bulk of the money was the \$98,495,397 spent on the COPS hiring program in fiscal 2017.

Just how effective all this spending has been in reducing crime is hotly debated among social scientists.

One of the COPS program’s sharpest critics was David Muhlhausen, a former scholar at the conservative Heritage Foundation. In September 2000, he co-authored a paper that indicted COPS as an expensive disappointment.

“At a cost of almost \$7.5 billion at the end of FY 2000,” Mr. Muhlhausen and two other scholars wrote, “the COPS program represents the federal government’s most significant criminal justice initiative of the last decade. However, the COPS program has not fulfilled its goal: Far fewer officers have actually been placed on the streets than the more than 100,000 [that] President [Clinton] claims.”

A principal reason for the failure was the use of COPS grants, despite explicit guidelines prohibiting the practice, “to supplant money that state and local authorities would have spent otherwise to hire additional officers,” the conservative scholars wrote.

The Heritage study criticized COPS on other grounds, too — chiefly the pattern of grants, and for the federal government taking over duties properly left to state and local authorities.

“Regrettably, much of the funding has flowed to communities that have a relatively low need for additional community policing while areas with more pressing needs have received little or no assistance,” they concluded.

Mr. Muhlhausen is now director of the National Institute of Justice, making him one of the bosses of COPS, which could be why the Trump administration has sent the program under the knife.

His findings, though, were disputed in a study by the liberal Brookings Institution. In March 2007, two scholars credited COPS with contributing to the nationwide decline in violent crime rates. Consequently, in an argument that mirrors what supporters offer today, they said cutting the COPS budget would be unwise.

“It would be unrealistic to expect crime to continue dropping sharply as it did in the 1990s, but that is no reason to undermine the progress brought by successful policies,” they wrote.

Some law enforcement organizations, with many members who supported Mr. Trump in the 2016 presidential election, are miffed that the administration is proposing broad cuts to a popular program, although Mr. Pasco said the FOP remains behind the president and believes he retains trust in community policing.

“We’re all trying to get to the same place; we just have a disagreement about the best way to get there,” Mr. Pasco said.

Yet even many agencies that received grants struggled to provide descriptions of how the money was spent. The Washington Times contacted myriad law enforcement agencies in big cities and smaller communities that received grants in fiscal 2017, according to Justice Department records.

The biggest 2017 grants were for \$3.125 million, and they went to four agencies: police departments in Chicago (for “gun violence”), Houston (“assault”), Miami-Dade County (“gun violence”) and San Antonio (“gun violence”). The grants presumably provided some percentage of salary and benefits for what Justice

said would be 25 additional officers in the next three years.

In Houston, which already spends a substantial portion of its annual budget on law enforcement, a spokeswoman for the force said 25 officers had been added and that the city would assume the full cost in three years. This is not the first COPS grant Houston has obtained, she said, and it's been "a way for us to grow the department because we are understaffed to begin with."

San Antonio's police did not respond to questions submitted to its public affairs office. Similarly, the Kansas City Board of Police Commissioners, which got \$1.875 million to hire 15 officers on homicide, did not respond to questions or a request for comment.

In some cases, the law enforcement agency has yet to touch the grant money. That's true in St. Louis, where the police are still using a 2014 COPS grant and have not tapped the \$1.875 million it received for gun violence in 2017, according to a department spokeswoman. The police chief in St. Louis has "no historical perspective on COPS funding" and thus declined to comment, the spokeswoman added.

The homicide rate has surged in St. Louis and Kansas City and did not abate in either city in 2017, according to crime reports.

Some smaller agencies did offer details on their spending. The St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office in Louisiana, for instance, received more than \$1 million to deal with assault. While the incidents of aggravated assault there rose a modest 2.7 percent in 2017, according to its crime reports, the area north of New Orleans is hardly a crime hotbed.

The sheriff's office used that money to cover some 75 percent of the salary and benefits of 9 deputies it retained, a spokeswoman said. The parish was required to come up with another \$336,598 to cover its portion in the three-year stretch and has agreed to keep the deputies on the payroll for at least 12 months after the grant expires, the spokeswoman said.

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HEADLINE	03/16 Speed limit boost not slowing down
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/speed-limit-boosts-show-no-signs-of-slowing-down-1521205200
GIST	<p>Nebraskans who want to put the pedal to the metal may soon be able to floor it—at least on some roads—with the blessing of the state legislature.</p> <p>A bill introduced in January, and backed by Gov. Pete Ricketts, would raise the state's maximum speed limit to 80 mph, up from 75. Six other states have an 80-mph maximum. A seventh, Texas, has a top limit of 85.</p> <p>Safety advocates warn that more people die when speed limits rise, but drivers covet faster travel times. In a battle of aphorisms, the Need for Speed seems to be trumping Speed Kills.</p> <p>For the most part, speed limits in the U.S. have gone in a single direction—up. An exception is Montana, which had no daytime limit for cars for several years in the 1990s but later set the limit at 75.</p> <p>Nebraska's proposed law would permit the speed limit on certain roadways to increase by 5 mph. In some cases, that would raise the top speed to 65 or 70 mph. But on parts of Interstate 80, including a 50-mile stretch from Omaha to Lincoln, the limit could rise to 80 mph.</p> <p>Although cutting down on travel time is the major reason given for supporting faster speeds, the savings don't amount to much on most daily trips.</p> <p>Drivers who maintain a speed of 80 mph over 50 miles would arrive at their destination 2 1/2 minutes sooner than if they drove 75 mph the whole way.</p>

Those willing to break the limit and hurtle down the highway at, say, 89 mph without slowing down would shave around 6 minutes off the trip compared with someone driving 75.

In reality, the savings would likely be less.

Maintaining any rate of speed is harder than it sounds because faster and slower drivers must adjust to one another, and the mix is reflected in average highway speeds.

Warning Signs

While traffic fatalities have been falling overall, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety estimates there were nearly 27,000 vehicle fatalities since 2000 because of higher speed limits.

“For every 5 mph increase in the speed limit, operating speed goes up 1 to 2 mph on average,” said Ivan Cheung, a research analyst at the National Transportation Safety Board.

Saving a few minutes here and there could add up, but it’s not as if the minutes accrue into a usable block of time, like deferred vacation days.

So, in the absence of substantial time savings, why raise the limit?

“One excuse is that people go that fast anyway,” said Chuck Farmer, vice president of research for the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

Traditionally, speed limits are set within 5 mph of the speed at which 85% of vehicles travel along a roadway in free-flowing traffic.

That guideline dates to the 1940s and is endorsed by the Federal Highway Administration, but the NTSB advocates requiring the use of crash statistics and other factors to set speed limits.

In part, that’s because the operating speed of the 85th percentile is a moving target: It increases as speed limits climb.

In response, some states choose to go with the flow—again and again.

In 2011, Texas raised the speed limit on a segment of State Highway 130 to 75 mph. The next year, it raised it to 80 mph. Soon after, it lifted a portion of the road to 85 mph.

According to estimates by the IIHS, each 5 mph increase in speed limit results in an 8% increase in fatalities on interstates and other freeways.

The most convincing evidence is the 55 mph National Maximum Speed Limit set in 1973. Before that, speed limits on rural interstates typically ranged from 65 to 75 mph.

The lower speed limit was implemented to save fuel, not lives, but in the first year, the National Research Council found that 9,100 fewer people died in motor-vehicle accidents.

The council attributed some of the decrease to economic factors that kept drivers off the road but concluded that 3,000 to 5,000 fewer highway deaths occurred because of the lower speed.

In later years, the trend hasn’t been as easy to discern.

After the national limit was fully repealed in 1995, speed limits began to increase, but traffic fatalities did not.

Comparing those before-and-after numbers has led some analysts to conclude that higher speeds don’t

	<p>contribute to more traffic deaths—a finding the IIHS and NTSB reject.</p> <p>“That’s not the comparison you should make,” Dr. Farmer said. “You need to compare states that raised the speed limit to states that did not.”</p> <p>Safety agencies say safer cars, improved roadways and stricter drunken-driving laws are behind the overall decrease in deaths and that even fewer people would have died if speed limits hadn’t increased.</p> <p>In its latest study, the IIHS compared the effect of all speed-limit increases from 1993 through 2013 in 41 states and found that 33,000 fewer fatalities would have occurred if there had been no increases.</p> <p>Nationwide, about 10,000 people die annually in speed-related crashes, yet most drivers seem willing to risk it. Why?</p> <p>Maybe it’s because, as Dan Rather once observed, Americans will put up with anything provided it doesn’t block traffic.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 UK defense site center of controversy
SOURCE	https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/inside-porton-down-britains-controversial-12192830
GIST	<p>It is one of Britain's most secretive sites, remaining shrouded in mystery for more than 100 years.</p> <p>But this week Porton Down found itself at the centre of one of the biggest diplomatic crises the UK has faced in recent years.</p> <p>The top secret defence base in Wiltshire was instrumental in helping identify the nerve agent used to poison a former Russian spy in Salisbury.</p> <p>Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia were poisoned with a weapons grade nerve agent in the city last week, leaving them fighting for their lives in hospital.</p> <p>And, not only have scientists from the specialist laboratory been at the centre of a clean-up operation following the attack, but its helped identify Russia as the source of the poison.</p> <p>The 7,000 acre site, near Salisbury, is one of the UK's most secretive and controversial military research facilities and the oldest chemical warfare research installations in the world.</p> <p>Scientists from Porton were among the first to create biological weapons as well as one of the world's most lethal chemical weapons, but now its main purpose is to support the military and help combat terrorism.</p> <p>Porton Down opened in 1916 as the War Department Experimental Station for testing chemical weapons during WW1.</p> <p>Scientists at the lab researched and developed weapons agents used by the British military during the war such as chlorine, mustard gas and phosgene.</p> <p>After the war the government decided that work should continue at the site and by 1930 it had grown and developed into the Chemical Defence Experimental Station.</p> <p>During WW2 research concentrated on chemical weapons like nitrogen mustard and nerve agents such as sarin.</p> <p>It then led to the development of CS - or tear gas- and VX nerve agent in 1952, one of the most lethal substances ever created which results in a painful death.</p>

The base was later named the Chemical Defence Experimental Establishment.

Chemical weapons were tested on site. Scientists built cannisters full of poison gas that could be released by a timer and they also filled shells with it and released them at targets.

But many of the shells failed to explode meaning the fields are still full of the active chemical agents.

Now Porton concentrates on devising defensive measures against gas attacks after its chemical and biological weapons programme was closed down in the 1950s.

On the government's website it says: "To help develop effective medical countermeasures and to test systems, we produce very small quantities of chemical and biological agents.

"They are stored securely and disposed of safely."

Since 1916 more than 20,000 people have taken part in studies at the base.

Porton Down's experiments on humans have been widely criticised as it is alleged some human 'guinea pigs' were duped into taking part in tests.

Tests were carried out on servicemen to try and determine the effects of nerve agents on humans - with one recorded death due to a nerve gas experiment.

Leading Aircraftman Ronald Maddison died aged 20 in 1953 after taking part in sarin nerve agent toxicity tests.

During the tests sarin was dripped onto his arm through two layers of cloth. He died shortly after and an inquest in 2004 returned a verdict of unlawful killing.

There are still concerns that the tests have damaged the long-term health of many of the subjects.

From 1945 to 1989 the base exposed more than 3,400 people to nerve gas - testing more human subjects with the chemical than anywhere else in the world.

Tests included going into gas chambers, repeated exposure, mental performance tests and tests on bare skin.

Subjects were monitored to see how their performance would be effected and what psychological impact it had on them.

Other tests included the impact nerve gas had on different parts of the body such as hearing and sight.

The government says that "without their involvement we could not have developed the highly effective protective clothing and medical countermeasures that our armed forces rely on".

Adding: "We still carry out trials with human volunteers to make protective equipment easier to wear and to develop better training procedures.

"These trials comply with all nationally and internationally accepted ethical standards."

Some of the equipment includes better gas masks and the creation of lighter, more bullet-proof body armour.

And speaking of the death of Maddison it said it was a "tragic and regrettable incident".

	<p>It said: "He is the only member of the UK Armed Forces to have died as the direct result of participation in experimental tests carried out at Porton Down on behalf of the Ministry of Defence."</p> <p>Animal testing is also carried out.</p> <p>Viruses Initial samples of the Ebola virus were sent to the Porton Down lab in 1976.</p> <p>The lab now allegedly contains samples of some of the world's most aggressive diseases including Ebola, anthrax and the plague.</p> <p>Between 1953 and 1976 a number of aerial release trials were carried out to help the government understand how a biological attack might spread across the UK.</p> <p>The government said: "Given the international situation at the time these trials were conducted in secret."</p> <p>And added: "The information obtained from these trials has been and still is vital to the defence of the UK."</p> <p>Two separate and independent reviews concluded the trials did not have any adverse health effects on the UK population.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 China's bad 'social credit' punishment
SOURCE	http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/china-social-credit-barred-flights-trains-president-xi-jinping-national-development-reform-a8260941.html
GIST	<p>China said it will begin applying its so-called social credit system to flights and trains and stop people who have committed misdeeds from taking such transport for up to a year.</p> <p>People who would be put on the restricted lists included those found to have committed acts like spreading false information about terrorism and causing trouble on flights, as well as those who used expired tickets or smoked on trains, according to two statements issued on the National Development and Reform Commission's website on Friday.</p> <p>Those found to have committed financial wrongdoings, such as employers who failed to pay social insurance or people who have failed to pay fines, would also face these restrictions, said the statements which were dated 2 March.</p> <p>It added that the rules would come into effect on 1 May.</p> <p>The move is in line with President's Xi Jinping's plan to construct a social credit system based on the principle of "once untrustworthy, always restricted," said one of the notices which was signed by eight ministries, including the country's aviation regulator and the Supreme People's Court.</p> <p>China has flagged plans to roll out a system that will allow government bodies to share information on its citizens' trustworthiness and issue penalties based on a so-called social credit score.</p> <p>However, there are signs that the use of social credit scoring on domestic transport could have started years ago. In early 2017, the country's Supreme People's Court said during a press conference that 6.15 million Chinese citizens had been banned from taking flights for social misdeeds.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 Forecast: fourth nor'easter in 3 weeks
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SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/18/us/us-noreaster-weather/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Spring begins Tuesday, but winter isn't ready to retire just yet.</p> <p>A low-pressure system moving across the Southeast on Sunday and Monday is expected to develop into yet another nor'easter beginning Tuesday, according to CNN meteorologist Jenn Varian. This incoming storm, which will bring rain and snow across the mid-Atlantic and Northeast, will be the fourth storm to ravage the East Coast in three weeks.</p> <p>The system is still far enough out that models are still highly uncertain of the exact location of the storm, Varian said.</p> <p>"If the storm remains too far east off of the coast, then it will not reach Boston/other New England coastal cities," Varian said. "Snowfall accumulations at this time are with very low confidence."</p> <p>For now, the storm is looking to directly impact the mid-Atlantic, CNN meteorologist Haley Brink said. Washington is expected to get 4 to 6 inches of snow starting Tuesday, while southern New England is forecast to get 2 to 4 inches.</p> <p>The National Weather Service said the storm could bring accumulating snow to coastal Massachusetts on Wednesday night into Thursday morning, along with wind gusts as high as 50 mph. The weather service also said the eastern coast of Massachusetts may be vulnerable to flooding early Thursday morning. Tides in Boston are forecast around 10.5 feet, Brink said.</p> <p>New England is still reeling from last week's storm, which the weather service declared a blizzard. Before that, a storm dropped heavy, wet snow in areas west of Interstate 95 and left one person dead in New York state.</p> <p>On March 2, a nor'easter that morphed into a "bomb cyclone" slammed much of the Northeast with heavy snow and rain, hurricane-force wind gusts and significant coastal flooding. The storm left six people dead from falling trees, and about 900,000 people lost power.</p> <p>Nor'easters aren't uncommon for New England during this time of year, Varian said. They can occur any time of year, but they're strongest from September to April.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 Russia ambassador vows retaliation on US
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/russian-ambassador-vows-retaliation-after-u-s-sanctions/
GIST	<p>As a steady stream of voters shuffled into the Russian embassy in Washington, D.C., to vote in the Russian presidential election, Russian Ambassador Anatoly Antonov stood outside and spoke with CBS News about the sanctions against Russia announced last week. He warned that the new sanctions, over Russian meddling in the U.S. election, will prompt retaliatory measures by the Kremlin.</p> <p>"If somebody sticks you, hits you, what will be your retaliation?" said Antonov to CBS News. "Of course there will be -- there will be retaliation."</p> <p>Antonov said he has sent proposals to the Kremlin laying out options for retaliation. He wouldn't share the details, but indicated that a decision is coming.</p> <p>"It will not be wise for me to reveal all my cables," explained Antonov.</p> <p>Last year, Antonov claimed that there was no proof that Russia had interfered in the election. Antonov's assertive tone on Sunday matched that of Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov who said that Russia would expand its "black list" of American citizens who can't visit or do business in Russia.</p>

	<p>"From the very beginning, we use the principle of parity on the number of people included in sanction lists. So we will expand our 'black list' with another group of Americans," Ryabkov said Friday, according to Russia's state-run media.</p> <p>Antonov was, however, less forthcoming when he spoke to a group of reporters after he had cast his own ballot inside the embassy. Because it's Election Day in Russia, Antonov said he wasn't talking about sanctions Sunday.</p> <p>"It is a holiday in the Russian federation. That is why we don't want to speak about sanctions," said Antonov. "It is not appropriate today, today to speak about sanctions."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/19 Trains collide, derail in Ky.; 4 injured
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/georgetown-kentucky-trains-collide-derail-people-injured-evacuations-fire/
GIST	<p>GEORGETOWN, Ky. -- Four people were injured when two trains collided and derailed late Sunday night in Georgetown, Kentucky, officials said.</p> <p>A call came in at 11:14 p.m. to report the crash, Lt. Jessica Bowman, spokeswoman for the Lexington Fire Department, told The Associated Press early Monday morning.</p> <p>Residents were evacuated "out of an abundance of caution," Bowman said, because a substance had spilled during the crash and ignited a fire. Bowman said she could not confirm what the substance was but once officials determined there was no safety risks, residents were allowed to return home.</p> <p>CBS Lexington, Kentucky affiliate WKYT-TV reports diesel fuel leaked -- but it wasn't clear if that was the only substance that did.</p> <p>Bowman said the identities of the four injured and their conditions were not known.</p> <p>Police are still investigating what caused the crash.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 Kayak activists protest pipeline, tankers
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/kayak-activists-in-seattle-protest-oil-pipeline-tanker-project/281-529663142
GIST	<p>A flotilla of kayak activists took to the waters of Seattle's Elliott Bay Sunday, calling for better safety regulations of oil barges in the Salish Sea and to block the Kinder Morgan's Puget Sound oil pipeline through Washington state.</p> <p>About 30 "kayaktivists" with the group Mosquito Fleet surrounded a large oil barge near the Port of Seattle and held a large banner that read "Stop Kinder Morgan."</p> <p>The group called the company's transportation of "tar sands" crude oil through Washington's waters "reckless," and called attention to the threat posed by their Trans Mountain Pipeline and Tanker Project. The group claims 900,000 barrels of crude oil would be delivered from Alberta to British Columbia daily, resulting in a 700% increase in oil tanker traffic through the Salish Sea to refiners in Washington state, California and overseas. The project has sparked opposition from groups on both sides of the U.S.-Canada border, including the First Nations community.</p> <p>"We refuse to let Kinder Morgan turn our Salish Sea into a fossil fuel super-highway. Their operations are already unacceptably dangerous. The last thing we need is to make matters 700% worse. Such a massive</p>

	increase in oil tanker traffic would not only jeopardize communities in BC, but in Washington as well. Kinder Morgan is a threat to us all,” said Zara Greene with the Mosquito Fleet.
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HEADLINE	03/18 Dot plot: understanding next Fed forecast
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-19/do-you-dot-plot-understanding-the-next-fed-forecast-quicktake
GIST	<p>It’s probably the most closely scrutinized scatter chart in world financial markets. Every three months since January 2012, the Federal Reserve has sent analysts scurrying by updating its "dot plot," which has become the de facto monetary policy forecast of the U.S. central bank -- whether the Fed wants it to be or not. It’s also an important source of clues to dissent within the Fed’s policy-making committee, even if it can be as cryptic as it is crucial. The big question about the Fed’s next dot plot, to be released Wednesday, is whether it will suggest four rate increases this year, instead of the median forecast in December for three.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <p>1. What is plotted on the dot plot?</p> <p>It’s a chart showing estimates of what the federal funds rate, the short-term interest rate controlled by the Fed, should be. Members of the rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee each assign a dot for what they view as the midpoint of the rate’s appropriate range at the end of each of the next three years and over the longer run. Investors focus on the median dot. As many as 19 monetary policy makers -- the seven Fed governors in Washington and the presidents of the 12 regional banks -- can contribute a dot. (Of late, there have only been 16 as there are three vacancies.)</p> <p>2. Where does the dot plot stand now?</p> <p>The latest dot plot, released after the FOMC’s December meeting, shows the federal funds rate rising gradually to a range of 3 percent to 3.25 percent by the end of 2020, from its current range of 1.25 percent to 1.5 percent.</p> <p>3. What good is a projection of the fed funds rate?</p> <p>The dot plot was invented in late 2011, at a time when Fed officials were considering how to prepare markets for the shift they hoped to make away from the unprecedented array of monetary support measures they’d put in place after the financial crisis. The Fed chairman at the time, Ben Bernanke, and Janet Yellen, who served as Bernanke’s deputy before a four-year stint as chair that ended last month, saw the dot plot as a way of giving markets a look into the Fed’s thinking beyond any immediate decision-making. FOMC statements focus mainly on current economic conditions and the immediate interest-rate target, though they’d evolved somewhat since the crisis and by December 2011 were offering investors forward guidance that rates would be held exceptionally low “at least through mid-2013.”</p> <p>4. Why does it matter?</p> <p>When the dot plot shifts, it can send a powerful message to investors on whether the U.S. central bank expects to speed up or slow down its planned tightening of monetary policy. It also creates a benchmark that can be used to highlight differences between the Fed’s official view and that of the financial markets. The central bank has been consistently more upbeat about its ability to lift inflation and, therefore, interest rates, than investors, though that gap narrowed during 2017 as economic growth picked up.</p> <p>5. Can I tell which Fed official offered which dot?</p> <p>No. The dot plot carries no names, so there’s no way to tell, say, which estimate was offered by the Fed chair (though analysts have their suspicions). The anonymous nature of the dot plot is one reason it has critics as well as fans.</p> <p>6. What else do dot plot detractors say?</p> <p>Maybe the biggest beefs are that the projections don’t reflect a commitment by the FOMC to act and that they aren’t an official consensus forecast, which would be a more powerful signal. (Fed staff explored hammering out a consensus dot, but officials decided that it would be too hard to get agreement among so</p>

many officials with such disparate views.) Each individual member may base his or her forecast on a different economic model or set of assumptions, which means there's no consistency in how the dots are generated and no sense of the thinking behind them. Further complicating things, of the 12 regional Fed presidents, only five are voting members of the FOMC in any given year. That raises questions over how well the dots accurately reflect longer-term FOMC intentions.

7. What have Fed leaders said about the dots?

During her time as chair, Yellen's view of the dot plot shifted between hot and not. In March 2014, at her first FOMC press conference as chair, she said, "one should not look to the dot plot, so to speak, as the primary way in which the Committee wants to or is speaking about policy to the public at large." That was in response to a question asking her to explain an upward shift in the dot plot showing that more than half of Fed officials expected rates, which were still near zero, to be at 1 percent or above by the end of 2015. Fast forward two years. Global financial markets were in turmoil and Fed officials had just trimmed their forecast for the number of rate hikes that year to two from four in their previous dot plot. Rather than distancing herself from the downgrade, Yellen told reporters that the shift in dots "largely reflects a somewhat slower projected path for global growth" and a tightening in credit conditions.

8. Is the dot plot here to stay?

It's possible. Jerome Powell, who took over from Yellen as chair in February, criticized the quarterly forecasts while he was a Fed governor in a speech in February 2016 that highlighted a number of these issues. As chairman, he'll have a chance to do something about it, under any review of Fed communication strategy that he decides to undertake.

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HEADLINE	03/18 Australian wildfires raze dozens homes
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/australian-wildfires-raze-dozens-homes-kill-livestock-53842689
GIST	<p>Wildfires razed dozens of homes in southeast Australia, cut power to thousands more and killed livestock, but most of the weekend blazes had been contained by Monday. There have been no reports of serious injury, officials said.</p> <p>The worst-hit town was Tathra on the south coast of New South Wales state where more than 70 homes and businesses had been severely damaged or destroyed by a fire that started in woods around midday on Sunday, Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said.</p> <p>In neighboring Victoria state, up to 18 homes had been destroyed over the weekend by three fires and 40,000 homes lost power, Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley said. Sheep and cattle losses had yet to be assessed.</p> <p>Some of Tathra's evacuated residents would be able to return to their homes on Monday, as emergency workers restore power to the devastated area, Fitzsimmons said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/19 Putin win mandate for nationalist policies
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/putins-huge-victory-deflates-divides-russian-opposition-53844407
GIST	<p>Russian President Vladimir Putin won a fourth presidential term with nearly 77 percent of the vote — his highest score ever and a massive mandate to pursue his nationalist, assertive policies for another six years in power.</p> <p>Near-final results released Monday showed that the other seven candidates were far behind Putin in Sunday's voting.</p>

Observers reported widespread ballot stuffing and unprecedented pressure on Russians to vote, but that is unlikely to seriously damage Putin given his popularity and his tight control over Russian politics.

With 99.8 percent of the vote counted, the Central Election Commission said Monday that communist Pavel Grudinin came in a distant second with 11.8 percent. Third was ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy with 5.6 percent. The only candidate to openly criticize Putin during the campaign, liberal TV star Ksenia Sobchak, won just 1.6 percent.

Putin's most serious rival, opposition leader Alexei Navalny, was barred from the race.

The electoral commission said official turnout was 67 percent, but the figure was thrown into question by images circulating online of ballot stuffing and nationwide accounts of workers being coerced to vote.

Putin has never faced a serious threat to his rule since he came to power on the eve of the new millennium. He won 53 percent of the vote in the 2000 presidential election, 71 percent in 2004 and 63 percent in 2012.

The massive victory gives Putin new confidence to stand up to the West.

The election was such a foregone conclusion that Putin gave only a perfunctory victory speech and said nothing about what he will do for his country.

"We are bound for success," he said, to crowds near the Kremlin chanting "Russia! Russia!"

Putin's victory puts his opponents in a tough spot.

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HEADLINE	03/19 After Sep. Mexico quake: homeless camps
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/months-mexico-quake-camp-homes-53843206
GIST	<p>Under a patchwork shelter of overlapping tarps and repurposed vinyl advertisements, several dozen residents of 18 Independence Street pack cheek by jowl into donated tents in the street near their building, which was damaged in the Sept. 19 earthquake.</p> <p>Six months after the temblor, improvised camps like this one erected by displaced residents are among the most visible signs that not everyone has moved on from the earthquake that killed 228 people in Mexico City and 141 more elsewhere.</p> <p>Mexico City Reconstruction Commissioner Edgar Oswaldo Tungui Rodriguez said there are 27 such camps around the capital, but denied that people were living in any of them. Rather, he said, quake victims had just posted guards to watch over their property.</p> <p>Camps visited by Associated Press journalists offered a different reality.</p> <p>Maria Patricia Rodriguez Gonzalez has been living under tarps on the sidewalk near the Independence Street building with her 13-year-old son and 27-year old daughter for the past six months.</p> <p>The residents are still allowed to enter the building, but nobody risks staying there.</p> <p>The bedroom floor in Rodriguez's apartment has sunk since the earthquake. The ceiling sags and plaster has fallen from the walls. Afraid to use the bathroom there, she heats water on a gas burner under the tarps and manages a sort of bath inside a portable toilet on the sidewalk.</p> <p>At first, Rodriguez and other residents say, there was a lot of solidarity in the neighborhood. Some neighbors let them use their bathrooms and shared food after the magnitude 7.1 quake. But as the days</p>

	<p>turned to weeks and then to months, sentiments shifted.</p> <p>People have stolen the gas tanks they use to heat food. Cars have come close to driving through the camp. Some neighbors have stopped speaking to them, others hurl insults.</p> <p>"It makes us sad that people insult us without knowing the reality we are living," Rodriguez said. "We're not here because we want to be. We're here out of necessity."</p> <p>Displaced residents received 3,000 pesos (\$160) each month for the first three months from the government. The idea was that they would rent apartments elsewhere. But residents say that was not enough to rent apartments in their neighborhood and they fear that without their presence, looters will clear out their possessions. Many residents had lived in the building's 37 units for more than 30 years.</p> <p>Tungui, the reconstruction commissioner, said in written responses to questions that city officials so far have determined what to do with 757 structures out of 911 on a list of damaged buildings compiled by an emergency committee. Some will be demolished, others repaired or reinforced. So far the city has demolished 28 buildings and is currently working on 15 others, he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/19 Austin explosion injures 2; 4th in month
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/explosion-austin-men-injured-authorities/story?id=53841032&cid=clicksource_4380645_1_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>Hours after Austin's police chief urged the suspect in recent bombings to turn themselves in, local and federal emergency units responded to another explosion in which two more people were injured, authorities and sources said</p> <p>The Austin-Travis County EMS tweeted Sunday night that there was a "critical incident" at Dawn Song Drive in Austin and medics were on their way to treat two males in their 20s with serious injuries.</p> <p>"We do believe, based on what we've seen, that this was a bomb," Austin Police Chief Brian Manley said at a 1:30 a.m. local time press conference.</p> <p>According to St. David's South Austin Medical Center, the two victims were taken there for treatment and are in good condition.</p> <p>"We are working on the belief that this is related to the other bomb incidents that have happened in our community," Manley said.</p> <p>A law enforcement source tells ABC News it will take some time to determine whether the explosion -- at about 8:30 p.m. local time Sunday night -- is linked to the earlier bombings. Officials will have to wait until morning to see if the devices were similarly built.</p> <p>The three bombings this month, over an 11-day period, killed two people and injured two others.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 Salmonella outbreak linked to kratom
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/plant-stimulant-kratom-linked-to-salmonella-outbreak-in-washington-state/
GIST	<p>A nationwide Salmonella outbreak linked to the plant stimulant kratom has sickened a Spokane County man, according to the Washington State Department of Health.</p> <p>Nationally, the outbreak has sickened 87 people in 35 states, according to the Centers for Disease Control</p>

	<p>and Prevention (CDC).</p> <p>Kratom is typically taken as a supplement for its stimulant and opioid-substitute properties. Supplements are not regulated or safety tested by any consumer-safety agency in the U.S.</p> <p>To date, the CDC has not identified a single manufacturer or source of the illness and is recommending people stop consuming kratom to avoid becoming sick.</p> <p>In Washington, 10 people have been sickened with salmonella in King, Benton, Clark, Lewis, Pierce, Stevens, Spokane, Walla Walla and Whatcom counties. Four have been hospitalized.</p> <p>The Spokane County man sickened was in his 60s and was not hospitalized, the health department said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 Ex-deputies sue Pierce Co. Sheriff Dept.
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article205612084.html
GIST	<p>Two former Pierce County sheriff's deputies allege the agency tried to cover up how a man who killed his wife and then himself got access to the gun used in the violence.</p> <p>They also say the Sheriff's Department used threats, violence and "fabricated charges" to retaliate against them for trying to bring attention to the issue, according to a lawsuit they filed against the county.</p> <p>The Sheriff's Department refuted those allegations and said the information the former deputies allege was covered up is documented in police reports.</p> <p>"This is one that we'll go all the way to the mat on if we need to, and we're considering counter lawsuits," sheriff's spokesman Ed Troyer said Friday.</p> <p>Deputies Daniel Bray and Joey Tracy seek unspecified damages in their lawsuit, which accuses the county of wrongful termination, emotional distress, malicious prosecution, defamation and invasion of privacy.</p> <p>They joined the Sheriff's Department in 2012 and were working for the agency's Foothills detachment when they responded to the homicide-suicide April 17, 2015.</p> <p>Their complaint, filed March 12 in Pierce County Superior Court, gives this account of what followed:</p> <p>They learned 40-year-old David Annas fatally shot his wife, shot and injured her friend, then killed himself at the Annas' Prairie Ridge home.</p> <p>His wife, 33-year-old Regina Annas, filed for a restraining order earlier that day. She wrote in court papers that her husband got upset when she said she wanted to leave him and that she feared he would hurt her.</p> <p>While investigating, Bray and Tracy discovered that other deputies had served the protection order hours before the shooting and that one of them allegedly had handed Annas his loaded gun as he gathered his things. That gun was the weapon he used in the shooting.</p> <p>Bray and Tracy told supervisors about the violation, and allege that they were told to keep quiet.</p> <p>When the former deputies refused to drop it, they say the Sheriff's Department started to target and harass them.</p> <p>Sheriff's spokesman Troyer said that's not true and that the information about the gun was documented in police reports from the incident.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 Russia: UK lab possible poison source
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-43446312
GIST	<p>Russia's EU ambassador has suggested a UK research laboratory could be the source of the nerve agent used in the attack on an ex-spy and his daughter.</p> <p>Vladimir Chizhov told the BBC's Andrew Marr Show Russia had "nothing to do" with the poisoning in Salisbury of Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia.</p> <p>He said Russia did not stockpile the poison and that the Porton Down lab was only eight miles (12km) from the city.</p> <p>UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson described the claims as "satirical".</p> <p>Retired military intelligence officer Mr Skripal, 66, and Yulia, 33, remain critically ill in hospital after being found slumped on a bench in Salisbury city centre on 4 March.</p> <p>UK Prime Minister Theresa May has told MPs that Porton Down - Britain's military research base - identified the substance used as being part of a group of military-grade nerve agents known as Novichok developed by the Soviet Union.</p> <p>Mr Johnson told the Marr Show that Russia's reaction to the incident "was not the response of a country that really believes itself to be innocent".</p> <p>He said the UK had evidence that Russia, within the last 10 years, had been developing and stockpiling Novichok, as well as investigating the delivery of nerve agents for the purpose of assassination.</p> <p>He also said experts from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) would arrive in the UK on Monday to test samples of the nerve agent.</p> <p>The results are expected to take a "minimum of two weeks", the Foreign Office added.</p> <p>Mr Chizhov, when asked how the nerve agent came to be used in Salisbury, said: "When you have a nerve agent or whatever, you check it against certain samples that you retain in your laboratories.</p> <p>"And Porton Down, as we now all know, is the largest military facility in the United Kingdom that has been dealing with chemical weapons research.</p> <p>"And it's actually only eight miles from Salisbury."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 March for our lives: #NeverAgain
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/march-lives-neveragain-event/story?id=53767650
GIST	<p>Students, teachers, parents and their allies will converge on the nation's capital next weekend to rally for gun control and school safety measures in the wake of last month's shooting in a Florida high school.</p> <p>Thousands of people from across the country are expected to participate in the "March for Our Lives," organized by students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, where a gunman killed 17 people and injured others on Valentine's Day. The accused shooter, 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz, was a former student at the school and was armed with an AR-15-style rifle he had legally purchased a year ago, authorities said.</p> <p>Now, students around the country -- using the slogan "Never Again" -- are calling on lawmakers to make</p>

schools safer and enact tougher gun control laws, such as prohibiting the sale of high-capacity magazines and banning the high-powered, highly-lethal assault-style weapons often used in mass shootings.

Here's everything you need to know about the upcoming "March for Our Lives."

When is the march?

"March for Our Lives" will begin at noon ET on Saturday, more than five weeks after the deadly school shooting.

There have been other events in support of the shooting survivors, including a National School Walkout on March 14 that lasted for 17 minutes to honor those killed a month earlier in Parkland and to protest gun violence across the country.

Where is the march?

The main "March for Our Lives" event will take place in Washington, D.C., beginning on Pennsylvania Avenue between 3rd Street NW and 12th Street NW.

But there are hundreds of satellite marches, or "sibling marches," planned for the same day around the world. Each sibling march is an independent, student-led initiative, according to the "March for Our Lives" official website.

There are sibling marches planned in cities including Los Angeles, Chicago, New York City, Boston, Ottawa, Buenos Aires, Madrid, Paris, Dublin, London, Berlin, Stockholm, Rome, Tel Aviv, Mumbai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Sydney, to name just a few.

Who's supporting the event?

Countless people, including a number of celebrities, have voiced their support for the march by announcing their plans to participate or donating to the movement's GoFundMe page, which has raised over \$3.3 million in just 24 days. Half of the funds raised via the crowdfunding platform will go toward the March for Our Lives Action Fund, which will cover expenses associated with the March 24 event in Washington, D.C.

The other half will be given to the victims and their families of the Feb. 14 school shooting via the Broward Education Foundation.

Actor George Clooney and his wife, Amal, a human rights lawyer, gave \$500,000 to "March for Our Lives" and said their family will be at the event in Washington, D.C.

Media mogul Oprah Winfrey announced via Twitter that she will match the Clooneys' donation. She tweeted, "George and Amal, I couldn't agree with you more. I am joining forces with you and will match your \$500,000 donation to 'March For Our Lives.' These inspiring young people remind me of the Freedom Riders of the 60s who also said we've had ENOUGH and our voices will be heard."

Many celebrities, including singers Harry Styles, Mariah Carey and Justin Bieber, have also shown their support by signing a petition created by the "March for Our Lives" organizers that calls for action to end gun violence and protect schools.

Why are people marching?

The "March for Our Lives" organizers explain on the official website that they support the constitutional right of law-abiding U.S. citizens to bear arms, but the recent surge of mass shootings, particularly at schools, calls for an honest discussion about guns.

	<p>So students, teachers and their supporters will take to the streets because they "will no longer risk their lives waiting for someone else to take action to stop the epidemic of mass school shootings that has become all too familiar," the organizers say.</p> <p>"Not one more. We cannot allow one more child to be shot at school. We cannot allow one more teacher to make a choice to jump in front of a firing assault rifle to save the lives of students," the organizers say in their online mission statement. "In the tragic wake of the seventeen lives brutally cut short in Florida, politicians are telling us that now is not the time to talk about guns. March For Our Lives believes the time is now."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 Germany: NKorea rockets can reach
SOURCE	https://www.yahoo.com/news/german-spy-agency-said-north-korean-rockets-reach-124230807--finance.html
GIST	<p>BERLIN (Reuters) - North Korean rockets can now be fitted with nuclear weapons and could reach Germany and central Europe, a top official with Germany's foreign intelligence agency told lawmakers this week, according to a report in the Bild am Sonntag newspaper.</p> <p>BND Deputy Director Ole Diehl told lawmakers during a closed-door meeting that the assessment was "certain," the newspaper reported, citing participants in the briefing.</p> <p>At the same time, Diehl said the agency viewed talks between North and South Korea as a positive sign.</p> <p>No comment was immediately available from the BND.</p> <p>North Korea is pursuing its nuclear and missile programmes in defiance of U.N. Security Council sanctions and has made no secret of its plans to develop a missile capable of hitting the U.S. mainland.</p> <p>It defends the programmes as a necessary deterrent against perceived plans for invasion by the United States, which stations 28,500 troops in South Korea, a legacy of the Korean war. The United States denies such plans.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 Africa's only female president to resign
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/18/africa/president-ameenah-gurib-fakim-credit-card/index.html
GIST	<p>Lagos, Nigeria (CNN) — The president of Mauritius will resign this week over claims she used a credit card provided to her by an NGO for personal expenses, her lawyer said.</p> <p>Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, Africa's only female head of state, submitted her resignation for the "stability of the country," her lawyer, Yousouf Mohammed, said in an interview with local news agency ION.</p> <p>Mohammed added she would leave office on March 23. She's been president since 2015.</p> <p>The president was left fighting for her political career after local media published a report that she had paid for personal expenses on a credit card given to her by the London-based charity Planet Earth Institute (PEI) in 2016.</p> <p>Gurib-Fakim was accused of spending up to \$26,000 on jewelery and clothing using a credit card provided by the NGO, which was founded by an Angolan banker with business interests in Mauritius.</p> <p>A statement released Friday by the president's office explained that she had inadvertently used the credit card given to her by the Planet Earth Institute because she had a similar card and immediately repaid the</p>

	money to the PEI when the error was discovered. Gurib-Fakim was appointed to the PEI board in 2015, but resigned two years later in 2017.
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HEADLINE	03/18 Sweden talks w/NKorea about detainees
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/18/asia/north-korea-us-prisoners/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN) — Sweden is helping negotiate the release of three Americans held captive in North Korea, sources with knowledge of the negotiations tell CNN.</p> <p>American citizens Kim Hak-song, Kim Sang-duk, and Kim Dong Chul are being held by North Korean government.</p> <p>North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho is in Stockholm for talks with his Swedish counterpart. Sources tell CNN that Sweden "engaged heavily" in the issue of the American detainees, and since Sweden is a protective power for the US, it also represents the country's interest in all talks with North Korea.</p> <p>"Any movement on the issue of these detainees would be a huge deal for the US," one source with knowledge of negotiations said, adding that Sweden did not issue any ultimatum during the weekend talks; rather, they brought it up as something that would "move things in the right direction".</p> <p>Sources said the issue has been at the center of discussions for some time, both at previous low-level meetings and during North Korean Deputy Foreign Minister Han Song Ryol's visit to Sweden in January.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 FIU aware bridge crack before collapse
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-florida-bridge/florida-school-aware-of-bridge-crack-before-collapse-that-killed-six-idUSKCN1GT0KG
GIST	<p>MIAMI (Reuters) - Engineers and state and university officials met hours before a new pedestrian bridge collapsed in southern Florida, killing six people, but concluded a crack in the structure was not a safety concern, Florida International University said on Saturday.</p> <p>The meeting on Thursday involved FIGG, which is the private contractor for the overall bridge design, the school, Florida Department of Transportation officials and Munilla Construction Management, which installed the \$14.2 million bridge.</p> <p>A FIGG engineer "concluded there were no safety concerns and the crack did not compromise the structural integrity of the bridge," the university said in a statement.</p> <p>About three hours after the meeting ended, the 950-ton bridge collapsed, crushing vehicles stopped at a traffic light on the eight-lane roadway below.</p> <p>Six people died, including five whose bodies were recovered on Saturday as workers pulled out vehicles from the rubble, officials said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 Violence on healthcare workers common
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/veterans-hospital-killings-spotlight-problem-violence-against-health-care-workers-n855931
GIST	The man's complaint seemed straightforward: He had come to the emergency room last June at Harrington

Hospital in Southbridge, Massachusetts, for wrist pain that wouldn't quit.

The 24-year-old patient seemed anxious. But he didn't present any signs of being dangerous — red flags that nurse Elise Wilson had come to recognize over the course of her four-decade career. She had spent 35 years in the ER, where nurses encounter violence from patients or patients' relatives "almost on a daily basis," she said.

Wilson started entering the patient's vital information into a computer in a triage room. When she turned around, he was looming over her with a knife.

"The first thing he did was punch me in the head," Wilson, 66, said.

From there, a normal day at work turned into a fight for survival as Wilson got stabbed in her neck, then nearly a dozen times in her arm. With the other arm, Wilson grabbed her nurses' clogs and banged them on the floor to catch other hospital employees' attention and screamed.

Nearly 10 months later, Wilson still hasn't recovered from the stabbing and cannot return to work. (The man accused of stabbing her, Conor O'Regan, has schizophrenia, has been deemed unfit for trial and is in a psychiatric facility.)

But her resolve to protect other health care workers is stronger than ever — especially after the killing last week of three staff members at a Yountville, California, treatment facility by a troubled veteran.

Health care workers face an alarmingly high rate of serious workplace violence, which is on average four times more common in health care than in other private industries, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

The World Health Organization estimates that up to 38 percent of health workers throughout the globe suffer physical violence at some point in their careers. And the American Nurses Association, which represents 3 million nurses in the U.S., reports that 1 in 4 nurses has been assaulted at work.

There have been high-profile incidents in recent years: the Utah nurse whose rough arrest after she refused to draw an unconscious patient's blood was caught on video; a Boston surgeon who was fatally shot by a patient's son.

But health care workers say they deal with other violence on a regular basis, like being kicked, pushed, hit, spit on, and verbally abused.

"We work with people with histories of violence who may be delirious, have dementia, be under the influence of drugs, and we also work very close to them, almost intimately, and often we're alone when we're working with our patients," said Seun Ross, the director of nursing practice and work environment at the American Nurses Association. "I think that all of those aid in the profession's propensity to being exposed by violence."

Yet despite the frequency with which the incidents happen, there are no federal regulations that protect health care professionals from workplace violence — only some scattered state laws. While OSHA has offered voluntary guidelines for keeping health care workers safe for more than two decades, they don't require that hospitals or other health care centers implement them.

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HEADLINE	03/17 Countries reject Russia nerve agent claim
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-russia-expels-23-uk-diplomats-spy-spat-53815926
GIST	The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Sweden are all rejecting a suggestion by a Russian spokeswoman that

	<p>the nerve agent which poisoned a former Russian double agent and his daughter might have originated in their countries.</p> <p>The claim was made Saturday by Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, who told Russia-24 television that the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Britain or Sweden were likely sources of the nerve agent.</p> <p>Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom tweeted that she "forcefully rejects (the) unacceptable and unfounded allegation" adding that "Russia should answer UK questions instead."</p> <p>Czech Foreign Minister Martin Stropnicky called it an "absurd accusation."</p> <p>Britain blames Russia for the nerve-agent attack on Sergei Skripal and his daughter, who were found unconscious March 4 in the English city of Salisbury and remain in critical condition.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 India: Pakistan shelling kills family
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/india-pakistan-shelling-kills-family-members-kashmir-53830363?
GIST	<p>Five members of a family were killed and at least eight other people injured Sunday in cross-border shelling between Indian and Pakistani soldiers in disputed Kashmir, officials said, as the two rivals traded blame for initiating the violence.</p> <p>The five were killed after a shell fired by Pakistani soldiers hit their home in the Poonch region of India-controlled Kashmir along the militarized Line of Control that divides the Himalayan territory between the two nuclear-armed neighbors, said S.P. Vaid, the region's police chief.</p> <p>A police statement said the dead included a 35-year-old man and his 32-year-old wife, and three of their children — two young boys and a teenage boy. Two of the couple's daughters, one 7 and the other 12, were among the injured.</p> <p>Local residents said the family had gathered in their kitchen for breakfast when a shell hit their home.</p> <p>Vaid said authorities were evacuating civilians from the area amid shelling and firing.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 Israel: new Hamas tunnel destroyed
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/israel-destroys-hamas-tunnel-network-gaza-53831315?
GIST	<p>The Israeli military says it has destroyed a Gaza tunnel built by the Hamas militant group.</p> <p>Military spokesman Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus says Sunday the new tunnel was intended to connect to an old tunnel that Israel partially destroyed. He says Israel has been following Hamas' progress for some time and has rendered the whole network unusable.</p> <p>Conricus called the tunnel construction a "futile effort" by the Islamic militants and a waste of resources that could benefit Gaza residents.</p> <p>Israel has placed a high priority on halting the tunnel threat since Hamas infiltrated Israel during the 2014 war. It marks the fourth such tunnel Israel has destroyed over the past four months.</p> <p>The operation followed Israeli airstrikes against Hamas targets in Gaza over the weekend after explosions along the border.</p>

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HEADLINE	03/17 Probe: deaths in air bag failures
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-probes-deaths-hyundai-kia-cars-air-bags-53817855
GIST	<p>Air bags in some Hyundai and Kia cars failed to inflate in crashes and four people are dead. Now the U.S. government's road safety agency wants to know why.</p> <p>The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says it's investigating problems that affect an estimated 425,000 cars made by the Korean automakers. The agency also is looking into whether the same problem could happen in vehicles made by other companies.</p> <p>In documents posted on its website Saturday, the safety agency says the probe covers 2011 Hyundai Sonata midsize cars and 2012 and 2013 Kia Forte compacts. The agency says it has reports of six front-end crashes with significant damage to the cars. Four people died and six were injured.</p> <p>The problem has been traced to electrical circuit shorts in air bag control computers made by parts supplier ZF-TRW. NHTSA now wants to know if other automakers used the same computer.</p> <p>On Feb. 27, Hyundai recalled nearly 155,000 Sonatas due to air bag failures, which the company blamed on the short circuits. Hyundai's sister automaker Kia, which sells similar vehicles, has yet to issue a recall.</p> <p>In a statement Saturday, Kia said that it has not confirmed any air bag non-deployments in its 2002-2013 Kia Forte models arising from "the potential chip issue." The company said it will work with NHTSA investigators.</p> <p>"Kia will act promptly to conduct a safety recall, if it determines that a recall would be appropriate," the company said.</p> <p>But a consumer complaint cited in NHTSA's investigation documents said Kia was informed of a crash near Oakland in which air bags failed to deploy and a passenger was killed.</p> <p>In October 2015, the complainant told NHTSA that a 2012 Forte was involved in a serious front-end crash that occurred in July 2013. A passenger was killed and the driver was injured. According to the complaint, Kia was notified, the air bag computer was tested and it was "found not to be working."</p> <p>People who complain to the NHTSA are not identified in its database. It was unclear whether the agency verified the complainant's statement. A message was left Saturday for agency spokeswomen.</p> <p>Kia spokesman James Bell said he could not comment beyond the company's statement.</p> <p>In addition, no deaths or injuries were disclosed in Hyundai's recall documents, which were posted by NHTSA in early March.</p> <p>Hyundai spokesman Jim Trainor says the problem occurred in rare high-speed head-on collisions that were offset from the center of the vehicles. "It's very unusual to have that kind of collision," he said Saturday.</p> <p>Dealers will consider offering loaner cars to owners until the problem can be repaired, he said. "We certainly would do everything we can to help our customers," Trainor said.</p> <p>Hyundai said in a statement that the air bag control circuitry was damaged in three crashes and a fourth crash is under investigation.</p> <p>ZF-TRW said in a statement that it is prevented by confidentiality agreements from identifying other</p>

automakers who bought its air bag control computers. The company said it is working with customers and supports the NHTSA investigation.

According to NHTSA, Hyundai investigated and found the problem was "electrical overstress" in the computers. The company didn't have a fix developed at the time but said it was investigating the problem with ZF-TRW. Hyundai does not yet have a fix for the problem but said it expects the Sonata recall to start April 20. The problem also can stop the seat belts from tightening before a crash.

In the documents, NHTSA said it understands that the Kia Fortes under investigation use similar air bag control computers made by ZF-TRW. The agency noted a 2016 recall involving more than 1.4 million Fiat Chrysler cars and SUVs that had a similar problem causing the air bags not to deploy. Agency documents show those vehicles had air bag computers made by ZF-TRW.

The agency says it will evaluate the scope of Hyundai's recall, confirm Kia's use of the same or similar air bag control computers and look into the cause. It also will investigate whether "any other vehicle manufacturers used the same or similar" ZF-TRW computers and whether there have been any similar air bag failures.

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HEADLINE	03/16 Local students w/detention for walkout
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article205586419.html
GIST	<p>Angry phone calls from around the country poured into the Orting High office on Friday morning.</p> <p>Orting High announced Thursday that 62 students would get detention after walking out of class on Wednesday during a nationwide student call for stronger gun-control legislation. The punishment didn't sit well with some people.</p> <p>But by the time most of the conversations were over, said principal Cliff Fries, they parted on positive terms.</p> <p>"I think people just wanted to make sure that because we are a conservative small town that this didn't have anything to do with political views," Fries said. "And it doesn't. ... My job as a principal is that you can't tell my political views by the punishment I hand out."</p> <p>Fries said he spoke to civics classes and student leaders in advance of the walkout and stressed the importance of civil disobedience. But he also pointed out that these actions come with consequences.</p> <p>The 45-minute detention is the standard punishment for truancy "whether you're walking out or going to your car to get a candy bar," Fries said. Fries plans to speak to students about the importance of civil disobedience during the March 26 detention.</p> <p>Most, but not all, of the students facing detention took part in the walkout, Fries said. He said no students took part in pro-gun protests but said they would have faced the same punishment.</p> <p>Some parents expressed concern that the detention was not made clear until the day after the protest, KIRO-TV reported.</p> <p>A Feb. 22 post on the school district's Facebook page stated that the district was aware of the planned walkouts but did not state that participants would be punished. "As a result of the tragedy in Florida, some students across the country are planning to participate in a peaceful protest (walkout)," the post read. "While this is not a school-sponsored activity, as educators we seek to find ways to educate our students around these activities. Our school rules are designed to support learning and keep students safe, so our school leaders will clearly identify and communicate parameters to ensure this. We encourage families to discuss these events at home. If you have questions, please contact your child's school administration."</p>

	Fries said he spoke with officials from many other schools. He said larger schools may have wanted to take similar action, but that it may have been unrealistic to coordinate detention for such a large number of students. About 8 percent of Orting High's 800 students participated in the walkout.
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HEADLINE	03/16 Schools opposite approach on doors
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/schools-take-opposite-approaches-on-locking-classroom-doors
GIST	<p>ARLINGTON, Wash. - They come standard in every school building, but in the debate over campus safety, districts are split on whether or not to use the locks on classroom doors.</p> <p>Arlington Public Schools locks the perimeter doors, but not the ones for each classroom. However, in the Kent School District, teachers were just told this week that all doors must be latched shut.</p> <p>"Today, yesterday and Wednesday, it was official. We had all of our doors locked all day," said Spencer McLaughlin, a senior at Kentwood High School.</p> <p>At first, McLaughlin said the new policy in Kent seemed like a good idea and he felt safer. Then he considered the students who routinely step out of class to go to the bathroom or visit the office, and what that would mean if a shooter was in the building.</p> <p>"No one wants to be that kid who gets left out in the hallway," McLaughlin said.</p> <p>On the other side is Gregg Winter, whose son attends middle school in Arlington.</p> <p>"Lock the doors. It's just as simple as that," Winter said.</p> <p>Arlington school officials said locked classroom doors would create too many disruptions as students try to come and go while teachers present their lessons. Instead, the district monitors the main entrance and locks the perimeter doors.</p> <p>Winter said while that may be the policy, in practice he sees people using multiple entry points.</p> <p>"If we're going to secure the building, secure it, have one entrance," Winter said. "Then the interior locks aren't that big of a deal."</p> <p>McLaughlin is undecided on locked doors. He said what got left out during the change is an explanation to students about how to respond if they are caught on the wrong side of the door.</p> <p>"I'd like to see, maybe even a day or two, try to train kids and teach them what to do," McLaughlin said.</p> <p>Arlington school officials said they will be unveiling several new security changes in the coming weeks. The district had hoped to invest in surveillance systems and "hardened" entryways, but in February voters shot down the bond that would have paid for it.</p> <p>Now the district will focus on new practices that could achieve the same safety goals using existing resources. They said the changes could be in place before the end of April.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 ABC bridges in Washington
SOURCE	http://www.kiro7.com/news/local/washington-bridges-built-with-same-technique-as-florida-tragedy-bridge/717127640

GIST	<p>BELLEVUE, Wash. - The pedestrian bridge that collapsed at Florida International University was prefabricated nearby then moved into place above a roadway. The whole process is called Accelerated Bridge Construction.</p> <p>The technique is hardly novel. In 2003, the Washington Department of Transportation moved the prebuilt expansion of Bellevue's Northeast Eighth over I-405 into place. The highway was closed for a weekend instead of the 15 months it would have taken to construct the bridge in the conventional manner.</p> <p>"The big thing is speed, what we're trying to do is to be able to construct our projects and get the facility open to the public as quickly as possible," said State Bridge Engineer Mark Gaines in an interview with KIRO-7.</p> <p>He was involved when the I-5 Bridge over the Skagit River was quickly replaced using accelerated bridge construction techniques.</p> <p>"We do not sacrifice safety. We are very careful about that. We work very collaboratively with the contractor to make sure any safety issue is addressed very quickly. Typically, we do an inspection on our projects every two years."</p> <p>Gaines doesn't know what went wrong in Florida. But we asked him about the risk of a similar tragedy in our state.</p> <p>"From my perspective the risk is very low. Again, we're not compromising safety at all when we use accelerated bridge construction. We're making sure that it meets all the same safety standards we would have if we were building the bridge in place."</p> <p>The companies involved in leading the Florida bridge construction project have apparently not done any projects for the Washington Department of Transportation.</p> <p>Florida International University maintains a research center for Accelerated Bridge Construction.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 No charges in I-5 road rage shooting
SOURCE	http://www.kiro7.com/news/local/no-charges-filed-after-man-killed-in-apparent-road-rage-shooting-on-i-5/717152012
GIST	<p>Pierce County Prosecutor's Office announced Friday that no charges will be filed in connection with a deadly road rage confrontation on I-5 near Milton, Washington, in February.</p> <p>Aubrey Tayler Bowlin shot Bruce W. Jones on the side of I-5 on Feb. 8, 2018, but prosecutors say, "Ms. Bowlin acted in self-defense and, given the evidence, the prosecutor's office cannot prove otherwise." Click here to read our original story.</p> <p>The prosecutor's office says that according to witnesses the incident began when Jones boxed Bowlin, who was riding a motorcycle, "into a location she could not drive away from. After exiting his (Jones) vehicle, he (Jones) aggressively approached her (Bowlin) on the shoulder of Interstate 5."</p> <p>The prosecutor's office then says that a fight that followed was started by Jones, and that at some point during the altercation, "Bowlin head-butted Jones, who then drove Bowlin's head into the jersey barrier before taking her to the ground. Bowlin shot Jones once in the chest when he attempted to climb on top of her."</p> <p>"This is another reminder to everyone to keep a cool head on our roads," prosecutor Mark Lindquist said. "Nothing good is going to come from physically confronting another driver."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 Seattle HSD director resigns
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/seattle-human-services-director-catherine-lester-who-oversaw-homelessness-response-is-stepping-down/
GIST	<p>Catherine Lester, one of the chief architects of Seattle’s response to the region’s homelessness crisis, is stepping down, becoming the second high-level person involved in the effort to resign in recent months.</p> <p>Mayor Jenny Durkan announced the resignation in a statement Friday, saying Lester was leaving Seattle for Toronto to care for her parents. Her last day on the job will be May 1.</p> <p>“As many of you know, my family is very important to me,” Lester said in the statement. “And so, it was family that motivated my decision to return home to Toronto to be closer to my parents.”</p> <p>Lester has led the city’s Human Services Department (HSD) since 2015, when former Seattle Mayor Ed Murray and King County Executive Dow Constantine declared a “state of emergency” over homelessness.</p> <p>Her departure comes at a critical time in the region’s efforts to tackle homelessness. Seattle’s homelessness problem has only become more visible over the course of Lester’s tenure, with city officials struggling to find effective strategies for dealing with illegal encampments, perpetually filled shelters and an affordable-housing crunch that is only growing worse.</p> <p>Her announcement is three months after Mark Putnam stepped down as the head of All Home, King County’s coordinating agency for homeless services.</p> <p>The two officials’ departures come as their respective departments are putting the final touches on policy shifts authorities say are needed to slow the steady increases in the numbers of people living on the streets.</p> <p>As director, Lester oversaw an overhaul of the city’s approach, culminating late last year when her department conducted the first competitive rebidding process for homeless services in a decade. Lester also led a push to shift from the city’s old model, which emphasized basic survival services for the homeless, to providing wraparound case management services focused on getting them into permanent housing.</p> <p>As part of the strategy shift, the city is projecting it can house 7,400 homeless people by the end of 2018, more than double the previous year’s goal. However, achieving those numbers has proved difficult, with a limited supply of affordable housing in the city and many enhanced shelters still not fully on line.</p> <p>What Lester’s departure means for the future of the city’s homelessness policies is unclear. Human Services Deputy Director Jason Johnson will serve as interim director, effective May 2, Durkan said in the statement. He has been with the department for the last three years.</p> <p>“Catherine’s tenacity and laserlike focus on results have helped victims of domestic violence, Seattle’s youth, vulnerable seniors and tens of thousands of people experiencing homelessness — her leadership and compassion will be missed,” said Durkan. “She leads a department that is addressing our city’s most urgent challenge, and following her departure, I know Jason will continue HSD’s important work to move people out of tents, shelters and transitional housing into permanent homes.”</p> <p>Durkan said she will make a decision about a permanent replacement following recommendations from One Table, a regional task force focused on the homelessness problem.</p> <p>In addition to homelessness, the Human Services Department oversees and funds services for people with disabilities, those experiencing sexual assault and domestic violence, and low-income families.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 B.C. backs high-speed rail study
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/929357/b-c-backs-high-speed-rail-study/
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — A study looking at high-speed rail connecting Vancouver, B.C. to Seattle and Portland is getting funding from the government of British Columbia.</p> <p>Premier John Horgan was joined by Gov. Jay Inslee during Friday’s announcement that B.C. will contribute \$300,000 toward the study that will build upon an economic analysis released by Washington state last month. That previous report estimated that a high-speed corridor link could create up to 200,000 jobs for B.C. and U.S. workers, and generate billions of dollars in economic benefits.</p> <p>According to a news release from Inslee’s office, the new study will look at factors such as ridership levels, system development, delivery methods and financing.</p> <p>Up to \$1.2 million in funding for the new study has been approved by the Washington Legislature.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 Kansas: 100+ wildfires, 16,800 acres
SOURCE	http://www.kansas.com/news/local/article205658224.html
GIST	<p>The Kansas Division of Emergency Management has tracked more than 100 wildfires in the state from Wednesday to Friday — mostly in the south central region.</p> <p>Those fires have burned an estimated 16,800 acres. As of Friday night, there was one active fire and five that were under control, a news release from KDEM said.</p> <p>No deaths have been reported due to fires, but one person was treated for smoke inhalation and two firefighters have been treated for minor burns.</p> <p>The State Emergency Operations Center in Topeka will remain staffed through the weekend. There is moderate to extreme fire danger across the state.</p> <p>An elevated fire weather condition remains in effect for far southwest Kansas as humidity falls to 20 to 25 percent Saturday afternoon with winds increasing to 15 to 20 mph, according to the National Weather Service in Wichita.</p> <p>There's a significant risk for fire weather on Sunday and an elevated risk through Tuesday.</p> <p>Kansas Army National Guard Black Hawks with Bambi buckets will remain on standby through the weekend to assist local jurisdictions with aerial fire suppression. Each bucket can disperse 660 gallons of water over the fire.</p> <p>Additional aerial support will be provided by Nebraska National Guard through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact. Two Black Hawk helicopters from Nebraska will arrive Saturday morning, the release said.</p> <p>Local disaster declarations have been made by Barber, Butler, Kiowa, Labette, McPherson, Montgomery, Reno, and Rice counties.</p> <p>Grass fires and heavy smoke led to the closure of the Kansas Turnpike in the Flint Hills on Friday afternoon. Flames had jumped over the turnpike in two locations near El Dorado, authorities said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 Russian president Vladimir Putin
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/03/09/what-you-didnt-know-russian-president-putin/408913002/
GIST	<p>Vladimir Putin, Russia's longest serving leader since Josef Stalin, seeks a fourth term as president in this Sunday's election.</p> <p>Putin is a former KGB spy who earned a Ph.D. in economics and has a judo blackbelt. His tough-guy image is well known because he invited government photographers to tag along as he rode on horseback while shirtless, treated a tranquilized tiger and a polar bear, and flew in an ultralight with migratory birds.</p> <p>But here a few things you might not know about the Russian leader:</p> <p>Putin is fabulously wealthy According to Russia's Central Election Commission, Putin earned \$860,000 between 2011 and 2016. But estimates of his net worth range from \$40 billion to \$200 billion. The latter estimate would make Putin, a life-long public servant, more than twice as wealthy as Microsoft-founder Bill Gates, who holds the title as the world's richest human.</p> <p>How did it happen? As a KGB spy during the Soviet era, Putin maintained ties to organized crime, according to Karen Dawisha, author of <i>Putin's Kleptocracy; Who Owns Russia?</i> As president, he steers government contracts and the sale of state-owned enterprises to businessmen who support his rule and present him with valuable gifts, Dawisha wrote in 2014.</p> <p>The judo schtick might be just that Putin has practiced some form of martial arts since he was 14, first with a Russian form called sambo and then switched to judo, according to his official biography and interviews. He told NPR in 2001 that he considered the sport a type of philosophy that he has practiced his entire adult life.</p> <p>Legal analyst Benjamin Wittes of Lawfare blog says that while there are lots of photos of Putin warming up and throwing opponents, they seem to be willing participants.</p> <p>"Putin is fraud martial artist," Wittes wrote on Facebook. "He only fights people who are in his power, and they are all taking falls for him."</p> <p>Putin used his martial arts prowess to earn good pay as a movie stuntman in the 1970s, according to a December report in the Russian Dozhd news site.</p> <p>Putin's judo buddies are really, really rich Several members of Putin's Yawara-Neva judo club in St. Petersburg became extraordinarily wealthy or powerful since Putin rose to power. They include Putin's former sparring partner, Arkady Rotenberg, worth \$3.1 billion, his brother Boris (\$1.2 billion), oil trader Gennady Timchenko (\$16.4 billion) and Vasily Shestakov. Shestakov, president of the International Sambo Federation who got his start as a judo trainer, is the only member who does not appear in the <i>Forbes</i> list of Russian billionaires.</p> <p>Putin's dissertation included 'extensive plagiarism' Putin in 1996 earned a post-graduate degree that is a rough equivalent of a Ph.D. at the St. Petersburg Mining Institute, though he never attended that school, according to a 2006 presentation by analysts Igor Danchenko and Clifford Gaddy at the Brookings Institution think tank in Washington, D.C.</p> <p>His dissertation was on the investment in large-scale natural resource extraction, like oil and gas, to "restore Russia's great power status." Pages of it were largely copied from a 1982 American business school text book called <i>Strategic Planning and Policy</i>, Gaddy said.</p> <p>Dark stories surround his rise As prime minister in 1999, Putin was alleged to have been behind a string of apartment bombings that killed 300 residents and were officially blamed on Chechen separatists, according to Alexander</p>

	<p>Litvinenko, a former FSB officer and whistleblower who fled to Britain. Putin denied the allegations, which Litvinenko wrote in a 2001 book <i>Blowing Up Russia</i>. The bombings provided the rationale for a military campaign in Chechnya that coincided with Putin's first run for the presidency.</p> <p>Putin's war in Chechnya employed a scorched-earth policy that left thousands of dead Chechens. Human rights violations were exposed by Russian reporter Anna Politkovskaya.</p> <p>Several of his critics and opponents died in brutal ways</p> <p>Politkovskaya was shot to death at the entrance to her apartment building in Moscow in October 2006. Litvinenko was poisoned to death in London with a rare radioactive isotope, polonium-210, the next month. At least three other people who investigated or worked to expose their findings about the apartment bombings were murdered. And opposition leader Boris Nemtsov was shot to death in 2015, while strolling near the Kremlin with his girlfriend after dinner.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 UK: Russia in 'flagrant' breach of law
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/russia-theresa-may-uk-britain/2018/03/17/id/849222/
GIST	<p>Prime Minister Theresa May says Britain "will consider our next steps in the coming days alongside our allies and partners" in a dispute with Russia over the nerve agent poisoning of a former spy on British soil.</p> <p>May says the March 4 attack on Sergei Skripal is a "flagrant breach of international law and the chemical weapons convention."</p> <p>May spoke after Moscow announced the expulsion of 23 British diplomats, in response to the U.K.'s decision to boot out the same number of Russian embassy staff.</p> <p>May told a Conservative Party meeting in London Saturday that Britain had expected the Russian move.</p> <p>May has said the Russian state is responsible for the attack on Skripal and his daughter Yulia. Russia denies responsibility.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 China angry over US-Taiwan travel bill
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-taiwan-china/trump-signs-u-s-taiwan-travel-bill-angering-china-idUSKCN1GS2SN
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday signed legislation that encourages the United States to send senior officials to Taiwan to meet Taiwanese counterparts and vice versa, angering China, which views the self-ruled island as a wayward province.</p> <p>The bill, which is non-binding, would have gone into effect on Saturday morning, even if Trump had not signed it, said the White House.</p> <p>The move adds to strains between the two countries over trade, as Trump has enacted tariffs and called for China to reduce its huge trade imbalance with the United States, even while Washington has leaned on Beijing to help resolve tensions with North Korea.</p> <p>Earlier on Friday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang reiterated that Beijing was opposed to the legislation and urged the United States to abide by the "one China" policy, that stipulates that Taiwan is part of China, and cease official exchanges with Taiwan.</p> <p>In a statement after Trump's signing of the bill, the Chinese embassy said clauses of the legislation "severely violate the one-China principle, the political foundation of the China-U.S. relationship".</p>

	<p>“China is strongly dissatisfied with that and firmly opposes it,” the statement said, adding that the United States should “stop pursuing any official ties with Taiwan or improving its current relations with Taiwan in any substantive way.”</p> <p>Taiwan’s Foreign Ministry expressed its thanks for the “friendly move” by the Trump administration, saying the government would continue to deepen its cooperation and partnership with the United States at all levels.</p> <p>The United States does not have formal ties with Taiwan but is required by law to help it with self-defense and is the island’s primary source of weapons.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 CDC: 17B binge drinks in a year
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/americans-binge-drink-17-billion-alcoholic-drinks-a-year-cdc/
GIST	<p>A new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers some striking findings on Americans' drinking habits. The study focuses on binge drinking and finds that U.S. adults consumed an astounding 17.5 billion binge drinks in 2015. That works out to nearly 470 binge drinks a year for each of the 37.4 million people who reported alcohol binges.</p> <p>Binge drinking is defined as consuming five or more alcoholic beverages for men, or four or more drinks for women, within about two hours.</p> <p>Researchers found that about 1 in 6 U.S. adults reported binge drinking an average of about once a week, consuming an average of seven drinks per binge.</p> <p>"This study shows that binge drinkers are consuming a huge number of drinks per year, greatly increasing their chances of harming themselves and others," study co-author Dr. Robert Brewer, lead researcher in CDC's alcohol program, said in a statement. "The findings also show the importance of taking a comprehensive approach to prevent binge drinking, focusing on reducing both the number of times people binge drink and the amount they drink when they binge."</p> <p>While binge drinking was more common among younger adults age 18 to 34, more than half of the binge drinks consumed over the study period were by adults age 35 and older.</p> <p>Binge drinking was also much more common in men than women, with 4 out of 5 binge drinks consumed by males.</p> <p>Geographically, binge drinkers consumed the most alcohol in Arkansas, Mississippi, Kentucky, and Hawaii, and the least in Washington, D.C., New Jersey, New York, and Washington state.</p> <p>Finally, binge drinking was more common in lower income households and among people with lower educational levels.</p> <p>The CDC warns of the dangers of binge drinking, including the increased likelihood of dangerous driving and risky sexual behavior. Excessive alcohol use is also associated with a higher risk of serious health problems such as cancer, heart disease, and liver failure.</p> <p>According to the CDC, 88,000 deaths are directly attributed to alcohol use each year and half of those are due to binge drinking.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 China reappoints president for life
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SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/xi-jinping-reappointed-as-president-with-no-term-limits/
GIST	<p>BEIJING -- Xi Jinping was reappointed Saturday as China's president with no limit on the number of terms he can serve. The National People's Congress, China's rubber-stamp legislature, also appointed close Xi ally Wang Qishan to the formerly ceremonial post of vice president.</p> <p>At the Great Hall of the People, Xi, Wang and other officials took turns stepping to the lectern to place their left hands on the constitution and raise their right fists as they delivered an oath swearing loyalty to the constitution, the motherland and the people.</p> <p>Xi, 64, is considered the most powerful Chinese leader since Mao Zedong and last Sunday was given the right to continue in office indefinitely after the legislature scrapped term limits for the president and vice president.</p> <p>Chinese officials defended the move saying it would bring the presidency in-line with Xi's other two main positions of head of the ruling Communist Party and commander of the armed forces.</p> <p>Critics say the move overturning a push to institutionalize China's ruling practices dating from 1982 will likely lead to increased political repression and possible infighting among party factions seeking to promote their own candidates within the closed system.</p> <p>Xi took office as president in 2013 and hasn't said how many additional five-year terms he intends to serve. State media has said the removal of term limits will not alter conditions for retirement or create a president in perpetuity, but has offered no details.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 Venezuela begins power rationing
SOURCE	https://www.yahoo.com/news/venezuela-begins-power-rationing-drought-causes-severe-outages-193846729.html
GIST	<p>SAN CRISTOBAL, Venezuela (Reuters) - Venezuela imposed electricity rationing this week in six western states, as the crisis-hit country's creaky power grid suffered from a drought that has reduced water levels in key reservoirs needed to run hydroelectric power generators.</p> <p>The four-hour formal outages began on Thursday. But many residents scoffed at the announcement, wryly noting that they have been suffering far more extended blackouts during the last week.</p> <p>"We have spent 14 hours without electricity today. And yesterday electricity came and went: for six hours we had no power," said Ligthia Marrero, 50, in the western state of San Cristobal, noting that her fridge had been damaged by the frequent interruptions.</p> <p>Crumbling infrastructure and lack of investments have hit Venezuela's power supply for years. Now, the situation has been exacerbated by dwindling rains.</p> <p>In the worst-hit western cities, business has all but ground to a halt at a time when the OPEC nation of 30 million is already suffering hyperinflation and a profound recession. Many Venezuelans are unable to eat properly on salaries of just a couple of dollars per month at the black market rate, sparking malnutrition, emigration and frequent sights of Venezuelans digging through trash or begging in front of supermarkets.</p> <p>Maybelin Mendoza, a cashier at a bakery in Tachira state, said business has been further hit because points of sale stop working during blackouts - just as Venezuelans are chronically short of cash due to hyperinflation.</p> <p>"Of a possible 1,100 megawatts, we are only generating 150 right now," Energy Minister Luis Motta told reporters referring to the Fabricio Ojeda dam, in the western Andean state of Merida.</p>

	<p>Capital city Caracas and other major cities have not been hit by rationing yet. Two years ago, rationing there lasted five months when a drought hit the Guri dam, the country's largest hydroelectric dam.</p> <p>But because of the economic crisis, Venezuela has reduced electricity consumption to about 14,000 megawatts at peak hours, according to engineer and former electricity executive Miguel Lara. Two years ago, state-run Corpoelec put the figure at 16,000 megawatts.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 Russia to expand American 'blacklist'
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/16/politics/russia-us-sanctions-response-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN) — Russia will expand its own "blacklist" of Americans in response to new US sanctions announced by the Trump administration, a Russian minister said Friday.</p> <p>The Trump administration confirmed Thursday it was enacting the new sanctions on Russia, including individuals indicted last month by special counsel Robert Mueller, in a sweeping new effort to punish Moscow for its attempts to interfere in the 2016 US election.</p> <p>Russia will use "the principle of parity" as it responds, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said Friday, as quoted by state news agency RIA Novosti. Additional measures are not ruled out, he added.</p> <p>He also said that the retaliatory measures Russia will take are not the preference of Moscow.</p> <p>Ryabkov appeared slightly to soften the blow by adding that Russia did not want to close the window of dialogue with the US or the possibility of stabilizing bilateral relations.</p> <p>"It is also worth thinking about that, destroying Russian-American relations," said Ryabkov. "These politicians play with fire, because they simultaneously undermine global stability."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 Russia expels 23 British diplomats
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/17/europe/russia-uk-spy-attack-diplomats-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Moscow (CNN) — Russia's Foreign Ministry ordered the expulsion of 23 British diplomats from Russia on Saturday in a tit-for-tat response to Britain's decision to expel Russian envoys in connection with the poisoning of a former Russian double agent and his daughter on British soil.</p> <p>The ministry also declared it was closing the British Consulate General in St. Petersburg and the British Council in Russia, in a step beyond the measures taken by Britain. The British Council is a cultural institute with artistic, language and educational programs.</p> <p>The British diplomats have a week to leave, the Russian Foreign Ministry said, adding that its actions came "in response to the provocative actions of the British side and groundless accusations" against Russia over the Salisbury attack.</p> <p>"The British side is warned that in case of further unfriendly actions against Russia, the Russian side reserves the right to take further retaliatory measures," the ministry said.</p> <p>The United Kingdom's ambassador to Moscow, Laurie Bristow, was summoned to the ministry on Saturday morning to be told of Moscow's decision. The British Embassy in Moscow told CNN it had been given a list of 23 specific individuals that were to be expelled from Russia.</p> <p>Relations between the two nations have deteriorated rapidly since the March 4 nerve agent attack on Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in the English city of Salisbury. The pair remain critically ill in the hospital.</p>

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HEADLINE	03/17 AG fires FBI deputy director
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/16/politics/andrew-mccabe-fired/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN) — Attorney General Jeff Sessions fired former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe late Friday, less than two days shy of his retirement, ending the career of an official who had risen to serve as second-in-command at the bureau.</p> <p>McCabe had more recently been regularly taunted by President Donald Trump and besieged by accusations that he had misled internal investigators at the Justice Department.</p> <p>In a blistering statement Friday night, McCabe said his firing is part of a larger effort to discredit the FBI and the special counsel's investigation.</p> <p>"This attack on my credibility is one part of a larger effort not just to slander me personally, but to taint the FBI, law enforcement, and intelligence professionals more generally," McCabe said. "It is part of this Administration's ongoing war on the FBI and the efforts of the Special Counsel investigation, which continue to this day. Their persistence in this campaign only highlights the importance of the Special Counsel's work."</p> <p>McCabe had been expected to retire this Sunday, on his 50th birthday, when he would have become eligible to receive early retirement benefits.</p> <p>But Friday's termination could place a portion of his anticipated pension, earned after more than two decades of service, in significant jeopardy.</p> <p>The origin of his dramatic fall stems from an internal review conducted by Justice Department Inspector General Michael Horowitz. That report -- the details of which have not been publicly released -- is said to conclude that McCabe misled investigators about his role in directing other officials at the FBI to speak to The Wall Street Journal about his involvement in a public corruption investigation into the Clinton Foundation, according to a source briefed on it.</p> <p>CNN reported on Wednesday that the findings in Horowitz's report on McCabe were referred to the FBI's Office of Professional Responsibility, staffed with career officials, who recommended McCabe's termination. McCabe, accompanied by his lawyer, tried making a last-ditch effort Thursday to avoid the firing, meeting with officials at the deputy attorney general's office at the Justice Department for several hours while Sessions was traveling, but to no avail.</p> <p>"After an extensive and fair investigation and according to Department of Justice procedure, the Department's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) provided its report on allegations of misconduct by Andrew McCabe to the FBI's Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR)," Sessions said in a statement late Friday. "The FBI's OPR then reviewed the report and underlying documents and issued a disciplinary proposal recommending the dismissal of Mr. McCabe. Both the OIG and FBI OPR reports concluded that Mr. McCabe had made an unauthorized disclosure to the news media and lacked candor – including under oath – on multiple occasions."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 Before collapse, cracks seen in bridge
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/16/us/bridge-collapse-florida/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN) — An engineer for the company that designed a pedestrian bridge that collapsed Thursday, killing at least six people, left a voice mail two days earlier for a Florida Department of Transportation employee advising there was "some cracking that's been observed on the north end of the span."</p>

	<p>The state employee was out on assignment Tuesday and didn't hear the voice mail from W. Denney Pate of FIGG Bridge Engineers until he returned to the office Friday, the DOT said.</p> <p>Pate's voice mail said the design company didn't see any safety concerns on the project near Florida International University but that the cracking was not a good development and would have to be repaired.</p> <p>The news came as the National Transportation Safety Board disclosed that construction crews were working on diagonal beams on the north end of a future pedestrian bridge when the structure collapsed.</p> <p>The NTSB investigator in charge, Robert Accetta, said Friday night it was too early to tell whether the bridge failed at the point construction workers were applying post-tensioning force to strengthen the beams.</p> <p>When asked about the cracking, Accetta said: "I would have to say that a crack in the bridge does not necessarily mean that it is unsafe."</p> <p>FIGG said it was working with the construction team to figure out why the bridge fell.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	03/19 Cybercriminals launder up to \$200B year
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/cybercriminals-launder-up-to-\$200b-in-profit-per-year/d/d-id/1331298
GIST	<p>Cybercriminals launder an estimated \$80-200 billion in illegal profit each year, which amounts to 8-10% of all illegal proceeds laundered around the world. Virtual currencies are the most common tool used for money laundering - but Bitcoin isn't quite as trendy among hackers.</p> <p>The data comes from Into the Web of Profit, an independent academic study sponsored by Bromium and conducted by Dr. Mike McGuire, senior lecturer in Criminology at Surrey University in England. It's a nine-month study into the macroeconomics of cybercrime and how cybercriminals "cash out" the funds they generate through illegal activity.</p> <p>With his academic background as a criminologist, Dr. McGuire has a decidedly different approach to cybercrime and focuses on how human factors affect behavior. In other words, he explores "not just that there are bad guys doing bad things, but the way responses are made."</p> <p>This study began as a simple question: What do cybercriminals spend their money on? However, it quickly evolved as Dr. McGuire discovered what he calls the "cybercrime economy." His research turned into a broader study on how money flows around the criminal ecosystem.</p> <p>"We've got to move beyond this idea that cybercrime is like a business - it's more than that. It's like an economy which mirrors the legitimate economy," he explains. "Increasingly, what we're seeing is the legitimate economy is feeding off the cybercrime economy."</p> <p>This economy consists of three parts: how cybercriminals' revenue is generated, where that money goes, and what they do with the money when they move it around. Once the flow of money is understood, businesses can better determine how to protect themselves.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 Senior citizens facing new online scams
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/personalfinance/2018/03/17/more-fraudsters-scamming-

	senior-citizens-through-technology-and-its-costing-them-millions/428406002/
GIST	<p>America's senior citizens are facing new scams designed to sucker money from them as fraudsters target their computers and cell phones, and use social media posts to lend authenticity to bogus kidnapping calls.</p> <p>While authorities say mail and telemarketing scams remain the biggest rip-offs for older Americans, they worry online activity and cell phones leave seniors — and everyone else — more vulnerable.</p> <p>The Justice Department recently announced its largest-ever sweep of elder fraud cases, involving 250 defendants worldwide who victimized more than a million Americans, largely targeting or affecting seniors to the cost of more than \$500 million. The FTC last year recovered about \$300 million on behalf of victims, and federal prosecutors and state attorneys general are bringing criminal cases following the elder fraud sweep.</p> <p>“Technology has given scammers the ability to reach more people at a lower cost,” said Amy Nofziger, who works for the AARP Foundation and teaches elder fraud seminars. “You can reach millions of people with one hit of button.”</p> <p>Overall, scammers extracted an estimated \$1 billion from Americans last year, and 70% of reported fraud began with a phone call, according to the Federal Trade Commission, which says phone-based scams took nearly \$300 million from Americans, while online fraud took \$141 million and email-based fraud another \$100 million.</p> <p>Still, scams involving fake tech support help, online dating and tax refunds are rapidly gaining ground. And while federal officials say millennials are twice as likely to be scammed as seniors, they're less likely to lose as much: Consumers in their 70s lost an average of \$621, while victims ages 80 and older lost nearly \$1,100. Millennials, in contrast, lost \$400 on average, according to the FTC.</p> <p>Nofziger and FTC officials said that technology combined with a personal touch is a growing concern. Scammers can look up a target's Facebook page and pretend to be the authorities or a kidnapper in a far-off place demanding money to release a loved one or head off an impending arrest. Even worse: sophisticated online dating scams that target people living alone. That type of scam takes longer to execute but can be both financially and emotionally devastating.</p> <p>Nofziger said she advises people to ignore phone calls unless they know who is calling. Spammers can spoof a number so it looks like a neighbor or a local police department, but they rarely leave a message. “People really love their phones. And my advice is that if you don't know who is calling, just don't pick up the phone,” she said. “It's not a long-lost boyfriend or Oprah calling. It's just not.”</p> <p>If a family member or friend has been scammed, remember that yelling at them won't make anything better, Nofziger and Vaca said. In most cases, the victim is already embarrassed and ashamed, in addition to being out the money. Nofziger said she advises giving a hug, any other support that person might need and then helping them report the scam and figuring how not to get victimized again.</p> <p>No matter what, Nofziger and Vaca said, it's important to remember that anyone can fall victim to a scam because crooks are using sophisticated techniques and technology to target you. They said the most important thing for people of any age is to remain on guard.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 Russian hackers target power, water
SOURCE	http://ens-newswire.com/2018/03/19/russian-hackers-target-u-s-power-water-facilities/
GIST	WASHINGTON, DC, March 16, 2018 (ENS) – Russian government hackers have been targeting U.S. government entities as well as organizations in the energy, nuclear, commercial facilities, water, aviation, and critical manufacturing sectors for the past two years, according to a joint Technical Alert issued by the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The alert contains indicators of compromise and technical details on the tactics, techniques, and procedures used by Russian government cyber actors on compromised victim networks.

Issued Thursday, the alert was the first official confirmation that Russian hackers can control facilities on which the majority of Americans rely for basic services. But it was not the first warning.

A report by the computer security company Symantec disclosed in October 2017 that, “The energy sector in Europe and North America is being targeted by a new wave of cyber attacks that could provide attackers with the means to severely disrupt affected operations.”

“The group behind these attacks is known as Dragonfly. The group has been in operation since at least 2011 but has re-emerged over the past two years from a quiet period following exposure by Symantec and a number of other researchers in 2014. This “Dragonfly 2.0” campaign, which appears to have begun in late 2015, shares tactics and tools used in earlier campaigns by the group,” Symantec wrote in its report.

Bloomberg News reported in July 2017 that Russian hackers had breached more than a dozen power plants in seven states, an aggressive campaign that has since expanded to dozens of states.

At risk systems are domain controllers, file servers and email servers, the alert warns.

DHS and FBI produced the alert Thursday and updated it today “to educate network defenders to enhance their ability to identify and reduce exposure to malicious activity.”

DHS and FBI characterize this activity as “a multi-stage intrusion campaign by Russian government cyber actors who targeted small commercial facilities’ networks where they staged malware, conducted spear phishing, and gained remote access into energy sector networks.”

After obtaining access, the Russian government cyber actors conducted network reconnaissance and collected information relevant to industrial control systems.

Since at least March 2016, Russian government cyber actors, called “threat actors,” have targeted government entities and multiple U.S. critical infrastructure sectors, including nuclear power plants. There are 61 commercially operating nuclear power plants with 99 nuclear reactors in 30 U.S. states.

DHS used the Lockheed-Martin Cyber Kill Chain model to analyze, discuss, and dissect malicious cyber activity. Phases of the model include reconnaissance, weaponization, delivery, exploitation, installation, command and control, and actions on the objective.

This campaign identifies two distinct categories of victims – staging and intended targets. The initial victims are peripheral organizations such as trusted third-party suppliers with less secure networks, referred to as staging targets.

The threat actors used the staging targets’ networks as pivot points and malware repositories when targeting their final intended victims.

The FBI and National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center conclude that the ultimate objective of the hackers is to compromise organizational networks, the intended targets.

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HEADLINE	03/18 UK energy system at-risk from Russia
SOURCE	https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2018/03/18/uks-energy-system-risk-attack-russian-state/
GIST	Britain risks being held to ransom by Russia unless the vulnerable energy system is fortified, the Government has been warned amid escalating tensions with Europe’s main gas supplier.

As relations with Russia sour, energy infrastructure bosses been told by security officials to bolster their defences to guard against a crippling cyber attack on power plants or the national grid.

Industry experts have today responded by warning ministers to address the UK's growing reliance on foreign energy imports, which could allow Russia to use its gas market dominance as a political weapon.

Russia supplies around a third of Europe's gas, and its record exports are expected to increase. Algy Cluff, a North Sea oil veteran whose Cluff Resources firm still operates in the North Sea, warned that Britain could "so easily be held to ransom" by Russia.

Mr Cluff called on the Government to prioritise Britain's own gas resources, both in the North Sea and onshore, as part of a growing chorus of pleas for ministers to act.

"The bad weather could prove not the only 'Beast from the East' if we get this wrong as a nation," he said.

Although the UK import relatively little from Russia directly it is still more vulnerable to dramatic market price shocks than other European countries after the shutdown of its main gas storage facility at Rough.

Tomas Marzec-Manser, a gas market expert at ICIS, said: "In the next fortnight the Dutch government will slash permitted natural gas production at their massive Groningen field. That means Gazprom will fill that gap and, like it or not, more Russian gas will come to the British gas market," he said.

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HEADLINE	03/17 New, unusual cryptominer distribution
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/hackers-hide-monero-cryptominer-in-scarlett-johansson-picture/
GIST	<p>Security researchers have identified a new but unusually distributed Monero cryptominer scam campaign involving the face of a popular celebrity.</p> <p>The IT security researchers at Imperva have discovered a campaign in which hackers have compromised PostgreSQL servers to install cryptocurrency mining malware.</p> <p>The malware is hidden in a picture of well-known Hollywood starlet Scarlett Johansson. The crypto-miner aims to mine Monero cryptocurrencies.</p> <p>PostgreSQL is a commonly used open source database, which researchers deem more sophisticated than MySQL. The malware was discovered in a honeypot, which was part of the StickyDB honeypot project from Imperva.</p> <p>It is worth noting that a honeypot is basically a computer but in this case, it was a database server that is configured deliberately to lure hackers. It is just like bait for hackers as they regard it as an easily exploitable database but it is actually a hatch.</p> <p>Imperva researchers used the database to understand common database attacks, and tools and methods used by hackers as well as to learn how they obtain access and what they do after compromising a database. They were following standard information gathering steps when they identified an unusual incident.</p> <p>Attackers had downloaded an image from a legit file hosting website. The file was a picture of Scarlett Johansson. When probed further, they learned that the file contained a hidden binary payload.</p> <p>Researcher left the database intentionally exposed. Considering that there are nearly 710,000 PostgreSQL servers that can be accessed easily from the internet, this is not a very reliable practice though and can allow attacks to launch brute-force attacks.</p>

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HEADLINE	03/17 The Pirate Bay is down again
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/the-pirate-bay-is-down-best-alternatives/
GIST	<p>You are not alone, The Pirate Bay is down for everyone and worse, its dark web domain is also offline for more than a month.</p> <p>Currently, those visiting The Pirate Bay can see an error message generated by Cloudflare since the site uses its CDN and DDoS protection services. According to the message:</p> <p>“This page (The Pirate Bay) is currently offline. However, because the site uses Cloudflare’s Always Online™ technology you can continue to surf a snapshot of the site. We will keep checking in the background and, as soon as the site comes back, you will automatically be served the live version.”</p> <p>According to Is It Down Right Now, a service that keeps eye on websites suffering outages, The Pirate Bay domain has been suffering service disruption throughout the day.</p> <p>It is still unclear whether The Pirate Bay is suffering DDoS attacks or the outage is caused by other means including technical issues. Previously, The Pirate Bay suffered difficulties when Cogent Communications, a multinational internet service provider based in the United States blocked the new IP-addresses of the site provided by Cloudflare.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 GandCrab ransomware finds new shell
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/gandcrab-ransomware-finds-a-new/
GIST	<p>Ransomware actors are increasing their development agility week by week, as evidenced by the GandCrab ransomware. According to Check Point, this well-known malware has gotten around a free decryption tool meant to dull its claws.</p> <p>GandCrab is distributed on the dark web, is probably Russian in origin and targets mainly English-speaking countries, according to Check Point researchers. It’s relatively virulent, having infected over 50,000 victims and extorted an estimated \$300,000 to \$600,000 in ransom payments. More than 70% of victims are in the US and UK.</p> <p>GandCrab spreads via the RIG and GrandSoft exploit kits, as well as via email spam. However, the secret to its propagation success lies in its "franchise" model: The GandCrab Affiliate Program pays participants that commit to a set of OPSEC rules 60% to 70% of the ransom revenue in return for full technical support. GandCrab has 80 active affiliates, the largest of which has distributed over 700 different samples of the malware during the past month, according to Check Point.</p> <p>That said, GandCrab’s reign of terror looked to be at an end after a joint operation by Romanian police, Bitdefender and Europol was able to hack into the malware’s infrastructure, gathering analysis that ultimately produced a tool allowing victims to decrypt their files for free.</p> <p>“The decryption tool exploited a basic flaw in the ransomware code that gave access to the master server, enabling recovery of all of the encryption keys used in the malware,” Check Point researchers noted. “It’s the equivalent of someone locking you out of your house but leaving a spare key for you under the doormat. With this, it looked like ‘game over’ for GandCrab.”</p> <p>But it wasn’t to be: Developers behind GandCrab quickly hit back with GandCrab 2, which fixes the critical encryption flaw that would have trivially allowed a universal decryptor.</p> <p>Check Point pointed out that the GandCrab developer team could have fired the web developer and started</p>

	afresh on a better-protected server; but instead they decided to restart, showcasing unprecedented agility.
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HEADLINE	03/16 China-linked group targets maritime
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/china-linked-hackers-target-engineering-and-maritime-industries
GIST	<p>A China-related cyberespionage group that has been active for half a decade has increased its attacks on engineering and maritime entities over the past months, FireEye reports.</p> <p>Referred to as Leviathan or TEMP.Periscope, the group has been historically interested in targets connected to South China Sea issues, which hasn't changed in the recently observed attacks. Targets include research institutes, academic organizations, and private firms in the United States.</p> <p>“The current campaign is a sharp escalation of detected activity since summer 2017. Like multiple other Chinese cyber espionage actors, TEMP.Periscope has recently re-emerged and has been observed conducting operations with a revised toolkit,” FireEye says.</p> <p>Over the years, the group has also shown interest in professional/consulting services, high-tech industry, healthcare, and media/publishing. Most of the identified victims were in the United States, with some located in Europe and at least one in Hong Kong.</p> <p>The group’s tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs), as well as its targets, overlap with those associated with the group called TEMP.Jumper, which in turn overlaps significantly with the NanHaiShu group.</p> <p>The recently observed spike in activity also revealed the use of a broad range of malware that other suspected Chinese groups also use. These tools include backdoors, reconnaissance tools, file stealers, and webshells.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/19 Facebook confirms misuse of data
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/technology/facebook-confirms-gross-misuse-of-user-data-for-us-election/
GIST	<p>Facebook has confirmed over the weekend reports that an app made by a team of academics had collected vast amounts of user data, who then shared this information with Cambridge Analytica —a commercial data analytics firm that allegedly used this info to target US voters in the 2016 Presidential election.</p> <p>In a statement outlining its version of events, Facebook revealed how University of Cambridge psychology lecturer Dr. Aleksandr Kogan had created an app named "thisisyourdigitallife" that he made available to users in 2014.</p> <p>The professor offered the app through an entity named Global Science Research (GSR), which asked users to take an online survey for \$1 or \$2. The app —just like any Facebook app— requested access to the user's profile information.</p> <p>Over 270,000 users gave the app permission to use their personal details for academic research. But besides data on the survey taker, the app also harvested information on the users' friends who had not set their profile to private. By exploiting this trick, the app harvested data on over 50 million users.</p> <p>App's data used to target US voters by Trump campaign</p> <p>But according to a report from last year from The Intercept, Kogan's work on the app was done on behalf of Strategic Communication Laboratories (SCL), a military contractor that also owns Cambridge Analytics —the data analytics company behind Donald Trump's US presidential campaign.</p>

According to Christopher Wylie, one of Kogan's collaborators, the data has been used in the US presidential election to profile individuals and target them in such a way to obtain certain responses to political messages.

This was done because the app gained access to content liked by the 50 million users, an important detail that allowed the data analytics firm to easily classify users based on their lifestyle choices and preferences.

Facebook discovered the incident in 2015

Facebook said on Friday that it became aware of the data harvesting incident from Facebook users, and took steps to make sure the involved parties had deleted the data from their servers.

"When we learned of this violation in 2015, we removed his app from Facebook and demanded certifications from Kogan and all parties he had given data to that the information had been destroyed," Facebook said. "Cambridge Analytica, Kogan and Wylie all certified to us that they destroyed the data."

But according to Wylie, the data had not been destroyed. The whistleblower provided copies of this data to New York Times and Guardian journalists —who on Friday published numerous tell-all stories from inside the Cambridge Analytica data harvesting operation [1, 2, 3].

Facebook has, in the meantime, suspended Cambridge Analytica and SCL Group from the platform, on the grounds that they violated the company's terms of service. Facebook is clearly irritated that a professional data analytics firm abused an academics license to harvest data on its users.

Facebook's ban hammer also fell on Christopher Wylie Facebook account, something that Wylie was not happy about on Sunday.

Cambridge Analytica responded to the Facebook ban on Saturday, claiming they've been misled about the data's source by GSR and indirectly by Kogan's team.

"When it subsequently became clear that the data had not been obtained by GSR in line with Facebook's terms of service, Cambridge Analytica deleted all data received from GSR," Cambridge Analytica said.

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HEADLINE	03/17 Struggling w/human side fake news
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/social-media/tech-companies-struggle-human-side-fake-news-n857426
GIST	<p>Fake news is a human problem. And Silicon Valley is not good at solving human problems.</p> <p>With tech platforms built to supercharge the sharing of information, tech companies, journalists, and academics are scrambling for a solution to the spread of misinformation on the internet.</p> <p>A study published last week in the academic journal Science provided a stark reminder of the challenge posed by misinformation — and why modern technology is making it worse. The study found that it took true information on Twitter six times as long as misinformation to reach 1,500 people.</p> <p>For all the concern about Russian trolls and Twitter bots, the study found that real people remain the biggest conduit for fake news.</p> <p>"You can see the viral chain of this information," said Jeremy Littau, a professor of journalism and communication at Lehigh University. "I shared from this person I trust who shared from this person they trust...It's a recipe ripe for exploitation for people who make fake news."</p>

So far, nothing has been able to stop this people problem, and Silicon Valley is running out of ideas. In an unprecedented move, Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey recently announced the company will start taking outside proposals to deal with “collective health, openness, and civility of public conversation, and to hold ourselves publicly accountable towards progress.”

Facebook, which has been shown to be an epicenter for the spread of misinformation, has rolled out a variety of tools and features. None of them appear to have been successful. Facebook ditched its fake news warning flag last December after testing it for one year.

Turns out, those kinds of flags can have the opposite of the intended effect.

"Academic research on correcting misinformation has shown that putting a strong image, like a red flag, next to an article may actually entrench deeply held beliefs – the opposite effect to what we intended," Tessa Lyons, a Facebook product manager, said in a blog post.

Alex Hardiman, Facebook’s head of news product said during a panel discussion at South by Southwest, an annual tech conference, that the company is considering drastic measures.

"As we are making the shift to quality, everything is on the table," she said.

Facebook’s previous approach did not distinguish between news sources and “that was problematic,” she said. “Flattening the news meant you couldn’t always tell the difference between something that was trusted and credible, versus something fraudulent.”

A few days later, Adam Mosseri, the head of Facebook’s Newsfeed product, admitted that people at the company are seriously concerned about reports that Facebook played a role in violence against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.

“We lose some sleep over this,” he said on Slate’s “If Then” podcast.

Twitter is also working on its problems. The company said that it’s figuring out how to boost “conversational health” by showing more tweets from reliable news partners.

Those efforts have been mostly cheered, but there is also concern that handing too much authority to tech companies could backfire. Most companies tried to take a hands off approach with the information posted to their platforms. Now, there’s a question of just how far they’ll go.

"We are all super concerned about these middle spaces," said Jen Golbeck, a professor at the University of Maryland's College of Information Studies. "There's a lot of misinterpretation, taking stuff out of context. We want to be really careful about censoring that. We're not interested in creating a truth-only platform because who is deciding the truth?"

Tech companies are built to spread information quickly and cheaply, and they’ve gotten very good at that.

But that speed and ease poses a serious problem when it comes to countering misinformation. Golbeck said that by the time people read something wrong, the damage is already done.

“Psychological studies have shown that "calling out conspiracy theories with the truth makes people believe false stuff more," she said.

Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have taken some action to stop harassment and abuse at the source by banning accounts. But when it comes to misinformation, they have been hesitant or slow to take similar action.

Even relatively swift responses are lacking. YouTube pulled several videos that claimed Parkland shooting survivor David Hogg was a “crisis actor.” By the time the platform took action, the videos had already

reached the top of YouTube's "Trending" section and logged millions of views and had become a talking point on the far right.

There have been journalistic approaches by internet entrepreneurs hoping to lend their expertise by creating organizations offering a community of news gatekeepers acting as sheriffs on the Wild West of the internet.

Jimmy Wales, the co-founder of Wikipedia, is piloting WikiTribune, a reader supported news source that allows anyone to fact check or flag something in an article.

"Ads are cheap, competition for clicks is fierce and low quality news sources are everywhere," Wales said in a campaign video. "Social media, where most people get their news these days, is literally designed to show us what we want to see, to confirm our biases and to keep us clicking at all costs. It fundamentally breaks the news, and the truth is, on the internet, no one is guarding the gate."

Steve Brill, a media entrepreneur who founded American Lawyer and Court TV, and Gordon Crovitz, a media executive, announced their NewsGuard venture earlier this month.

"Our goal is to help solve this problem now by using human beings—trained, experienced journalists—who will operate under a transparent, accountable process to apply basic common sense to a growing scourge that clearly cannot be solved by algorithms," Brill said in a statement.

While humans spreading fake news is a problem and every effort to stop it may have the best of intentions, perhaps the most worthwhile effort, experts suggest, is teaching a new generation about news literacy.

"The issue really becomes one... of social literacy and teaching people how to evaluate sources," Golbeck said. "If you look at elementary and high school, it's something we're not doing a great job of yet."

Littau said news literacy is one of the "greatest generational challenges" people need to address.

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HEADLINE	03/17 Claim: Facebook aware of data 'breach'
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cambridge-analytica-facebook-knew-for-two-years-no-action-taken/
GIST	<p>Facebook knew for two years that a data firm harvested data from more than 50 million profiles of U.S. voters without their permission but did nothing to protect its users, Guardian reporter Carole Cadwalladr told CBSN on Saturday. Cadwalladr said Facebook threatened to sue in a bid to prevent The Guardian publishing an exposé on the data harvesting. She believes Facebook didn't inform users of the misuse of data because it wasn't in the company's best interest. The Guardian story, based on interviews with whistleblower Chris Wylie who worked for the firm, published online on Saturday.</p> <p>"This continual pattern that we've seen with Facebook -- trying to shut the story down, finally when it has no choice, acknowledge it. They've just really got to do better," she said.</p> <p>"What we desperately need is for Facebook to finally open up and be as honest and transparent as it can be about the way that their platform was used and manipulated during the U.S. presidential elections, during Brexit in the U.K.," Cadwalladr said, adding that Facebook continually tried to prevent her story from being published.</p> <p>In a statement released late on Friday, Facebook acknowledged that it learned it had been "lied to" about Cambridge Analytica and an affiliate's activities in 2015, more than two years before suspending the firm from its platform, but did not alert users at the time. Facebook insisted there was no breach of their system.</p> <p>After speaking with the U.K. Information Commissioner's Office, which promotes the protection of private information, Cadwalladr said it is clear "this is a data breach."</p>

"Facebook has just turned around and blamed a third party," Cadwalladr said. "We are clear this is a data breach, and Facebook's denials in the face of it -- their claim that it's not a data breach because nobody hacked into their system -- well, failing to secure your own data, failing to see how it's being used ... that falls within the definition of a data breach. Accept it, Facebook. Own it."

"In a way it's even more damning that [Cambridge Analytica] got all of this data from Facebook without it being a breach," Wired editor-in-chief and CBS News contributor Nick Thompson said on CBSN.

"It didn't work because somebody hacked in and broke stuff," Thompson added. "It worked because Facebook has built the craziest most invasive advertising model in the history of the world and someone took advantage of it."

Since it was a violation of Facebook's terms of services, Thompson said he's not sure what government agency would be tasked with regulating the platform to prevent a recurrence in the political sphere.

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HEADLINE	03/17 Social media weaponized; data harvested
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/17/us/politics/cambridge-analytica-trump-campaign.html
GIST	<p>LONDON — As the upstart voter-profiling company Cambridge Analytica prepared to wade into the 2014 American midterm elections, it had a problem.</p> <p>The firm had secured a \$15 million investment from Robert Mercer, the wealthy Republican donor, and wooed his political adviser, Stephen K. Bannon, with the promise of tools that could identify the personalities of American voters and influence their behavior. But it did not have the data to make its new products work.</p> <p>So the firm harvested private information from the Facebook profiles of more than 50 million users without their permission, according to former Cambridge employees, associates and documents, making it one of the largest data leaks in the social network's history. The breach allowed the company to exploit the private social media activity of a huge swath of the American electorate, developing techniques that underpinned its work on President Trump's campaign in 2016.</p> <p>An examination by The New York Times and The Observer of London reveals how Cambridge Analytica's drive to bring to market a potentially powerful new weapon put the firm — and wealthy conservative investors seeking to reshape politics — under scrutiny from investigators and lawmakers on both sides of the Atlantic.</p> <p>Christopher Wylie, who helped found Cambridge and worked there until late 2014, said of its leaders: "Rules don't matter for them. For them, this is a war, and it's all fair."</p> <p>Details of Cambridge's acquisition and use of Facebook data have surfaced in several accounts since the business began working on the 2016 campaign, setting off a furious debate about the merits of the firm's so-called psychographic modeling techniques.</p> <p>But the full scale of the data leak involving Americans has not been previously disclosed — and Facebook, until now, has not acknowledged it. Interviews with a half-dozen former employees and contractors, and a review of the firm's emails and documents, have revealed that Cambridge not only relied on the private Facebook data but still possesses most or all of the trove.</p> <p>Cambridge paid to acquire the personal information through an outside researcher who, Facebook says, claimed to be collecting it for academic purposes.</p> <p>During a week of inquiries from The Times, Facebook downplayed the scope of the leak and questioned</p>

whether any of the data still remained out of its control. But on Friday, the company posted a statement expressing alarm and promising to take action.

“This was a scam — and a fraud,” Paul Grewal, a vice president and deputy general counsel at the social network, said in a statement to The Times earlier on Friday. He added that the company was suspending Cambridge Analytica, Mr. Wylie and the researcher, Aleksandr Kogan, a Russian-American academic, from Facebook. “We will take whatever steps are required to see that the data in question is deleted once and for all — and take action against all offending parties,” Mr. Grewal said.

Alexander Nix, the chief executive of Cambridge Analytica, and other officials had repeatedly denied obtaining or using Facebook data, most recently during a parliamentary hearing last month. But in a statement to The Times, the company acknowledged that it had acquired the data, though it blamed Mr. Kogan for violating Facebook’s rules and said it had deleted the information as soon as it learned of the problem two years ago.

In Britain, Cambridge Analytica is facing intertwined investigations by Parliament and government regulators into allegations that it performed illegal work on the “Brexit” campaign. The country has strict privacy laws, and its information commissioner announced on Saturday that she was looking into whether the Facebook data was “illegally acquired and used.”

In the United States, Mr. Mercer’s daughter, Rebekah, a board member, Mr. Bannon and Mr. Nix received warnings from their lawyer that it was illegal to employ foreigners in political campaigns, according to company documents and former employees.

Congressional investigators have questioned Mr. Nix about the company’s role in the Trump campaign. And the Justice Department’s special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III, has demanded the emails of Cambridge Analytica employees who worked for the Trump team as part of his investigation into Russian interference in the election.

While the substance of Mr. Mueller’s interest is a closely guarded secret, documents viewed by The Times indicate that the firm’s British affiliate claims to have worked in Russia and Ukraine. And the WikiLeaks founder, Julian Assange, disclosed in October that Mr. Nix had reached out to him during the campaign in hopes of obtaining private emails belonging to Mr. Trump’s Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton.

The documents also raise new questions about Facebook, which is already grappling with intense criticism over the spread of Russian propaganda and fake news. The data Cambridge collected from profiles, a portion of which was viewed by The Times, included details on users’ identities, friend networks and “likes.” Only a tiny fraction of the users had agreed to release their information to a third party.

“Protecting people’s information is at the heart of everything we do,” Mr. Grewal said. “No systems were infiltrated, and no passwords or sensitive pieces of information were stolen or hacked.”

Still, he added, “it’s a serious abuse of our rules.”

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HEADLINE	03/16 Puppy scams litter the internet
SOURCE	http://www.kansas.com/news/local/article205492564.html
GIST	<p>National Puppy Day, March 23, may not be a red-letter holiday on any of our calendars but millions of Americans seem to be in love with its subject.</p> <p>The Better Business Bureau warns that if you have a case of puppy love and it was prompted by a picture seen in an online ad, beware: Odds are that puppy is fictional. Experts say up to 80% of sponsored online pet advertisements may be fake.</p>

Scammers, often but not always from overseas, know how cute puppy pictures can tug on the heartstrings. For several years they have used photos taken from other online sources to lure animal lovers into sending them money. Once they have hooked a victim, the requests for more and more money continue.

A BBB investigation found that the scams usually come from Cameroon in West Africa. With the help of their fellow countrymen residing in the U.S., they collect their victims' money. Fake online ads are placed offering the pets at deeply discounted prices. Shipping costs are requested and often a special shipping crate is also mentioned as a necessary purchase. Then comes charges for special insurance and shots for the animal.

If money continues to be sent, more requests follow. There may be a claim that the pet is stuck at an airport and money should be sent for care for them. Eventually the victim realizes they have been scammed and stops the process.

Embarrassment and humiliation at having been fooled keeps many from ever even reporting that they have been taken in. The FTC estimates that only 10% of those who fall for the scam ever notify authorities about their experience.

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HEADLINE	03/16 Feds: Russia hack didn't compromise grid
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/us-russian-hack-power-grid/2018/03/16/id/849193/
GIST	<p>A Russian government hacking operation aimed at the U.S. power grid did not compromise operations at any of the nation's power plants, federal regulators and the industry said Friday.</p> <p>Corporate networks at some of the 99 nuclear power plants licensed by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission were affected by the 2017 hack aimed at the energy grid and other infrastructure, but no safety, security or emergency preparedness functions were impacted, the NRC said in a statement.</p> <p>The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission also said the incident had no operational impacts on interstate transmission of electricity.</p> <p>Even so, government and industry leaders said the attacks underscored the increased threat of electronic and computer-based attacks on a range of infrastructure.</p> <p>Energy Secretary Rick Perry said the prolonged cyberattack "demonstrates exactly why" he is creating an Office of Cyber Security and Emergency Response. The new office will consolidate and strengthen efforts to "combat the growing nefarious cyber threats we face," Perry said, adding that his department worked closely with other federal agencies and energy providers to help ensure that hacking attempts "failed or were stopped."</p> <p>The Trump administration accused Moscow on Thursday of an elaborate plot to penetrate America's electric grid, factories, water supply and even air travel through cyber hacking.</p> <p>U.S. national security officials said the FBI, Department of Homeland Security and intelligence agencies determined Russian intelligence and others were behind a broad range of cyberattacks starting more than a year ago. Russian hackers infiltrated the networks that run the basic services Americans rely on each day: nuclear power, water and manufacturing plants.</p> <p>U.S. officials said the hackers chose their targets methodically, obtained access to computer systems, conducted "network reconnaissance" and then attempted to cover their tracks by deleting evidence of the intrusions. The operation resorted to various methods — including a kind of cyberattack known as spear-phishing — to try to compromise legitimate user accounts, gather user credentials, and target industrial control systems and their networks, officials said.</p>

The U.S. government has helped the industries expel the Russians from all systems known to have been penetrated, but additional breaches could be discovered, officials said.

The Nuclear Energy Institute, an industry lobbying group, said the Russian hacking campaign targeting U.S. infrastructure "demonstrated that America's nuclear plants can withstand a nation-state sponsored attack."

U.S. nuclear plants are designed as operational "islands" that are not connected to the internet and other networks. Nuclear power provides about 20 percent of the nation's electricity.

The Edison Electric Institute, which represents investor-owned electric companies that provide electricity for about 220 million Americans, said the government informed energy grid operators last year of a threat targeting them.

"While this incident did not have operational impacts, we have worked across the sector and with government partners to ensure the ongoing protection of the grid from this specific threat and from all cyber and physical security risks," said Scott Aaronson, the group's vice president of security and preparedness.

Sen. Maria Cantwell of Washington state, the top Democrat on the Senate Energy Committee, criticized the "belated response" by the Trump administration to Russian cyber threats and urged "a robust and aggressive strategy to protect our critical infrastructure."

Calling cyber security "an issue that keeps me up at night," Cantwell said the grid and its infrastructure are "under attack from the Russians and other foreign actors. If we don't make the necessary investments ... our enemies could succeed in causing a blackout that harms our economy."

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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	03/19 Afghan officials: motorbikes bombs kill 4
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/afghan-officials-bombs-attached-motorbikes-kill-people-53846329?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Afghan officials say bombs attached to motorcycles have killed four people in separate attacks.</p> <p>One struck outside a sports stadium in eastern Nangarhar province, killing three on Monday. Akramuddin, a provincial police official, says the explosion occurred as former warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar was holding a rally at the stadium in Jalalabad, the province' capital.</p> <p>Akramuddin, who like many Afghans uses only one name, says the blast took place as the rally ended. Ten people were wounded.</p> <p>Hekmatyar, previously a declared terrorist by the United States, signed a peace deal with President Ashraf Ghani in 2017 and was removed from the list.</p> <p>The second motorcycle bomb exploded in western Herat province. Spokesman Jelani Farhad says one person was killed and seven were wounded.</p> <p>No groups have taken responsibility for the attacks.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 Boko Haram Dapchi girls taunts Nigeria
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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/18/world/africa/boko-haram-dapchi-girls-nigeria.html
GIST	<p>DAPCHI, Nigeria — When he heard the gunfire, the guard ran outside the all-girls boarding school and saw camouflaged vehicles barreling toward the gate. Thinking they were Nigerian military troops, he rushed toward them.</p> <p>“Have you heard the gunshots?” Ali Gambo, 70, the unarmed guard, asked the men inside the truck. “What’s happening?”</p> <p>Three men dressed in army fatigues and turbans jumped down from the vehicles, threw Mr. Gambo to the ground and pointed a gun at his head.</p> <p>“We are Boko Haram,” Mr. Gambo recalled him saying. “We are here for your students.”</p> <p>Hours of chaos and confusion followed as the militants stormed the campus last month, firing into the air. Students and teachers at the Dapchi school in northern Nigeria ran for their lives.</p> <p>The gunmen gathered up 110 girls, some as young as 11, dragged them into their trucks and sped away, leaving girls’ sandals and flip-flops scattered across the schoolyard in their wake.</p> <p>President Muhammadu Buhari has declared Boko Haram, the Islamist extremist group, defeated time and again. But the militants’ attack on the Dapchi school has left anguished parents and community members asking how such a kidnapping could happen again, not even four years after another mass abduction of schoolgirls shocked the world.</p> <p>But even as the president says he intends to negotiate for their release, the kidnappings are threatening to become a major issue in next year’s presidential election.</p> <p>In April 2014, Boko Haram kidnapped nearly 300 girls from another northern secondary school, in Chibok. Dozens were released last year through government negotiations, and a few have escaped. But nearly four years later, more than 100 are still being held.</p> <p>Goodluck Jonathan, who was president at the time of the Chibok kidnapping, was widely criticized for not immediately acting to find the students, and government officials had vowed nothing like that would ever happen again.</p> <p>Nigeria’s war with the Islamist militants is entering its ninth year, having swept up scores of victims who lost their homes, their children and their lives to brutal violence that spilled across the nation’s borders. Villages have been burned, children have been kidnapped and conscripted into fighting, women and girls have been raped, and teenagers have been forcibly strapped with explosives to carry out suicide bombings.</p> <p>Not long ago, it seemed as if the Nigerian military was making progress against the extremists, who want to create a religious state of their own. Soldiers regained territory controlled by Boko Haram and captured or killed fighters whose capabilities became so weak that they could no longer pull off complicated operations. The group splintered amid infighting.</p> <p>But in the past few months, Boko Haram has raged back, attacking military convoys and outposts and dispatching a steady stream of suicide bombers to attack checkpoints and crowds. In December, a faction that has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State engaged in a firefight with the American military carrying out training exercises in neighboring Niger. Eleven militants were killed, including two wearing suicide vests.</p> <p>President Buhari, who pledged to crush the militants, visited Dapchi on Wednesday to set up a committee to look into the kidnappings in an attempt to soothe outraged critics who accuse federal officials of being slow to respond.</p> <p>“There will be no rest till the last girl, whether from Chibok and Dapchi, is released,” Mr. Buhari said in a</p>

statement. “The girls, like all our citizens, must enjoy unhindered freedom and pursue their legitimate aspirations.”

This past week, the president had also assured Rex W. Tillerson, the United States secretary of state before he was fired, that the government was “trying to be careful” by pursuing negotiations with militants to bring back the Dapchi girls and the rest of the Chibok students.

Gen. Thomas D. Waldhauser, head of the United States Africa Command, told a congressional committee this month that Nigeria had asked for intelligence and other support to help find all the missing girls. He said the Dapchi students were most likely taken by a faction of militants that had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State, and he called Boko Haram “one of the most deplorable organizations on the planet.”

In recent months, President Buhari has suffered embarrassing setbacks.

This month, a Boko Haram attack killed security forces and humanitarian workers at a camp for displaced workers in Rann that Nigerian military jets accidentally bombed last year, killing dozens. A few months ago, militants kidnapped a group of policewomen and a team of university professors who were on an oil exploration trip. The government recently negotiated for their release.

Last year, officials bargained to free dozens of students taken from the Chibok school, paying millions of dollars in ransom and exchanging several Boko Haram commanders as part of a hostage swap, according to negotiators. Many Nigerians questioned the wisdom of paying ransom to militants who may view abductions as a reliable revenue source.

In Dapchi, parents, teachers, students and residents recalled the night that Boko Haram arrived, the first major security incident there since the war began. Aliyu Musa Mabu, the school’s vice principal, had just finished serving meals to students and was heading to the mosque when he heard the first gunshot. It must be nothing, he said he thought to himself, and settled in to pray. Then he heard another shot.

He raced outside and saw two military trucks and a pickup armed with an anti-aircraft gun. Men were crammed inside, wearing turbans and military fatigues. They were heading toward the school.

By the time Mr. Mabu caught up with them, chaos had unfolded. According to witness accounts, girls were running everywhere, some scaling the fence to get free. Militants pulled some down and told others they were soldiers, guiding the girls into their vehicles saying they would protect them. In the confusion, many of the girls believed them and scrambled over one another to get inside the men’s trucks.

Militants who saw one student, Hafsat Lawan, 17, and her friends hurrying over the fence beckoned them to come for safety. The girls started toward the fighters but, Ms. Lawan later said, became suspicious of their turbans and sandals and their use of the local language, which is often unfamiliar to soldiers recruited from across the country. She fled.

“The sad thing is some of the students ran to them — including my younger sister,” said Ms. Lawan, whose 14-year-old sister is presumed to be among the hostages.

As the trucks headed outside town, witnesses said, some of the girls appeared to be tied up with their own clothing. They heard the screams as the vehicles sped away.

Afterward, an eerie silence fell over the area. Not long after, many of the girls who had been hiding in the bush started to trickle back to the school. But tallying the missing was complicated. Some girls, like Fatima, spent the entire night in the countryside, too terrified to return. Some fled straight to their family farms, far from the reach of cellular networks. Hours after the kidnapping, school officials found girls still hiding in toilets, classrooms and other buildings on the campus.

In the days immediately after the attack, the police denied an abduction had taken place. Then a state official announced that the girls had been rescued. Elated parents rushed to the school as the governor’s

convoy rolled into town with vehicles they presumed were carrying their daughters. Instead, the governor announced he had been mistaken; the girls were still missing. He apologized. Parents rioted.

Residents have since learned that a military checkpoint at the entrance to town had been dismantled not long before the kidnapping, when soldiers left to pursue Boko Haram near the Nigerian border. Dapchi employs a police force, but on the night of the attack, the commander was out of town.

“They came and did their operation uninterrupted and left,” said Hadiza Jibo, the school matron. “This is something that would have been averted if military presence was visible in the town. It’s really traumatic, honestly.”

The military and the president have sought to reassure Nigerians that they are looking for the girls. But Mr. Buhari recently angered residents by traveling to a lavish wedding before heading to Dapchi to sympathize with the missing girls’ families.

Even the girls who escaped are traumatized, he said, and some are afraid to return to school. Several public figures in Nigeria have said the kidnapping reflects poorly on the government.

“We are spending billions trying to encourage girls to go to school, only to allow them be abducted by terrorists,” said Atiku Abubakar, a former vice president who is likely to run for president in 2019. “I condemn these abductions, and I urge the federal government to take firm action to ensure that it would never reoccur in Nigeria.”

As the election approaches, calls are growing from both the president’s critics and one-time supporters for him not to seek a second term in office. Some rivals are using the Dapchi kidnapping to build their case, and a fringe element has even accused the president of orchestrating the kidnappings so that he could emerge heroic by negotiating the girls’ release.

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HEADLINE	03/18 Man convicted in attack on US soldiers
SOURCE	https://americansecuritytoday.com/man-convicted-making-bomb-parts-kill-american-soldiers-iraq/
GIST	<p>On Friday, Ahmed Alahmedalabdaloklah, a Syrian national who had been living in Iraq, was convicted by a jury, following a six-week trial, of conspiring and supporting the 1920s Revolutionary Brigades, an insurgent group that planted road-side bombs to attack and kill American soldiers in Iraq.</p> <p>A jury convicted Alahmedalabdaloklah on the following charges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conspiracy to Use a Weapon of Mass Destruction • Conspiring to Maliciously Damage or Destroy United States Property by Means of an Explosive • Aiding and Abetting Other Persons to Possess a Destructive Device in Furtherance of a Crime of Violence, and • Conspiracy to Possess a Destructive Device in Furtherance of a Crime of Violence <p>Alahmedalabdaloklah’s sentencing is set for June 5, 2018 before District Judge Roslyn O. Silver.</p> <p>Assistant Attorney General for National Security John C. Demers, Elizabeth A. Strange, First Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Arizona, and Michael Deleon, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Phoenix Field Office, made the announcement.</p> <p>“Alahmedalabdaloklah conspired with a violent Iraqi insurgent group to kill American soldiers in Iraq,” said First Assistant Strange.</p> <p>“Today’s verdict underscores our commitment to use every available resource to bring justice to American soldiers who were killed or injured by such terrorist acts.</p>

	<p>“I commend the FBI and the prosecution team for their tremendous efforts in securing this conviction.”</p> <p>“The FBI’s highest priority is preventing acts; both in the United States and abroad,” said Phoenix FBI Special Agent in Charge Michael DeLeon.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 Israel: ‘mapping’ potential terrorists
SOURCE	https://worldisraelnews.com/idf-adopts-techniques-for-mapping-potential-terrorists/
GIST	<p>The Israel Defense Forces is developing new sophisticated techniques, including extensive psychological profiling, in an effort to prevent “lone wolf” terror attacks, the Hebrew language daily Makor Rishon reported on Sunday.</p> <p>According to the report, intelligence services in IDF Central Command have adopted a process of “mapping” potential terrorists. This allows the IDF to preempt possible attacks as well as capture terrorists who have already committed them.</p> <p>A senior officer involved in the program told Makor Rishon, “In this work we search for direct connections to terror or attempts to create connections like this. An index system classifies who is likely to get involved in terror. Bottom line, we thwart dozens of attacks before they are carried out thanks to intelligence work and operational actions.”</p> <p>The main problem, however, is attacks committed by those with no previous connection to terrorism or terrorist organizations.</p> <p>The IDF is seeking to combat this problem through the psychological profiling. Another officer involved in the project explained, “To understand who their friends are, who influences them, what their psychological state is, and even signs they leave in the field, can teach us about their intentions.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/19 Somalia: senior Al-Shabaab surrenders
SOURCE	http://hornobserver.com/articles/775/Senior-terrorist-militant-surrenders-to-Somali-National-Army-SONNA
GIST	<p>MOGADISHU, Somalia: Senior terrorist militant Commander of Al-Shabaab on Sunday surrendered to Somali National Army in Baidoa town, southwest Somalia, SONNA reported.</p> <p>Somali National Army Commander at 60th Division, Ismail Khalif Shire told Somali National News Agency that they would welcome any that denounces extremist ideology and joins peace process.</p> <p>” Al-Shabaab commander for big terrorist explosions and training, Addow Moalim Isak surrendered to us today, he is with us now”, Mr. Shire said.</p> <p>” We have witnessed mass killings to civilians ruthlessly and I many others decided to defect and surrender to the Government and I regret that”, Addow, the surrendered militant said.</p> <p>The Somali Army Commander said that this militant was in charge in for big explosions and training, saying he operated in Bay, Bakool, Gedo, lower Jubba and Benadir regions.</p> <p>The group fighters laying down the army and coming to Somali National Army increased in this region in the latest three months now.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 Pakistan claims rebirth in tribal regions
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/mar/18/pakistan-ousts-terrorists-rebuilds-border-region/
GIST	<p>MIRAN SHAH, Pakistan — Clean, safe and secure.</p> <p>These are the supposed hallmarks of Pakistani tribal border regions touted by Islamabad, an image paid for with blood and treasure in a two-year campaign to clear North Waziristan’s provincial capital from groups such as the Pakistani Taliban and notorious Haqqani network.</p> <p>But the new schools, homes and markets with their glistening coats of paint and freshly poured concrete mask a seeming ghost town.</p> <p>Few residents of the largest city in North Waziristan rarely venture into the heart of the city center — the site of the some of the most intense clashes with radical Islamic militant groups that refuse to go away.</p> <p>The fighting had become so intense that Pakistan’s military, at the onset of the operation, forcefully evacuated thousands of civilians into “temporary displaced persons” camps elsewhere within the border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan — known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas.</p> <p>From high atop Sarbanki Fort, one of several Pakistani army outposts manned by units from the “Golden Arrows” 7th Division, Brig. Gen. Jawad proudly pointed out for a small group of visiting reporters the burgeoning skyline of markets, schools, homes and businesses that cover a wide swath of Miran Shah’s new city center.</p> <p>When asked what happened to the homes and businesses that stood in their place before the government offensive into North Waziristan, Gen. Jawad replied dispassionately, “They were no more. Wiped away clean.”</p> <p>In the two years since the official end of the North Waziristan operation, Islamabad claims life has slowly returned to Miran Shah and the surrounding provinces, despite continuing complaints from the Trump administration and the Afghan government that Pakistan is not going enough to root out extremist groups that use the border regions as a sanctuary, training base and launching pad for attacks inside Afghanistan.</p> <p>Maj. Gen. Azhar Ali Shah, head of all 7th Division forces in North Waziristan, said in a briefing that he has “taken a back seat” to Pakistani military and civilian-led redevelopment operations in Miran Shah, one of the largest cities in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas.</p> <p>“In this whole area, I do not have any enemies,” he said.</p> <p>One fresh sign of progress: Pakistan on March 10 announced the reopening of a key Ghulam Khan border post between the North Waziristan tribal region and Afghanistan, allowing for trade convoys to pass. The crossing was closed for three years after government forces launched a major operation against the Pakistani Taliban and foreign militants in the area.</p> <p>At a low point in Islamabad-Washington relations, President Trump singled out Pakistan as a problem last summer in his revised battle plan for Afghanistan.</p> <p>Gen. Joseph L. Votel, head of Central Command, which oversees the South Asian theater, and Gen. John Nicholson, who commands the 14,000-plus U.S. troops stationed in Afghanistan, recently called out Pakistan from what the Pentagon said was an insufficient effort in dealing with terrorist groups on its soil.</p> <p>“Having sanctuary in Pakistan or having support from other actors in the region certainly is an aspect of the Taliban’s success here,” Gen. Votel told a March 14 Senate Armed Services Committee hearing in Washington. “I cannot tell you that we have seen decisive changes in the areas in which we’re working, but I remain very well-engaged with my [Pakistani] partner to ensure that we are moving forward on this.”</p>

	<p>Radical links</p> <p>Despite Pakistan’s public pronouncements, many U.S. officials and private analysts contend its powerful intelligence services maintain long-standing links to radical Islamist groups as a lever to pressure Kabul and as an asset in Islamabad’s rivalry with its greatest strategic challenge: India.</p> <p>But Gen. Azhar said his country’s contributions and sufferings from the global war on terror, some with roots in the U.S.-backed war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s, have been consistently overlooked by Washington and other foreign critics. Over 800 Pakistani soldiers died and 3,500 were wounded in the operation to flush out extremist groups from their redoubts in North Waziristan, he said.</p> <p>“We did not fight the population; we [only] fought the terrorists” he said.</p> <p>But that success has come at a cost that is evident from a quick survey of the landscape.</p> <p>Bombed-out plots of land that once housed local businesses lay in tatters, as do mud-brick compounds that housed generations of Waziri families. Trash and debris line the newly paved roads that cross the former Haqqani stronghold.</p> <p>Small black placards baking in the sun, erected by 7th Division troops, list the family names of those who owned the shops and homes, waiting for them to reclaim their property.</p> <p>Those who have stuck it out agree with Gen. Azhar’s contention that the most dangerous place on earth has turned a corner.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 Man saved hundreds during 9/11 dies
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2018/03/18/Man-who-helped-save-hundreds-during-911-dies-of-WTC-related-cancer/9321521425746/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=4
GIST	<p>March 18 (UPI) -- A New York City ferry captain-turned-firefighter who helped hundreds of people evacuate from the World Trade Center during the 9/11 attacks died on Friday at the age of 45.</p> <p>Thomas Phelan died of cancer that he developed from toxic fumes at Ground Zero in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks.</p> <p>Phelan was a captain of the Statue of Liberty ferry at the time of the attacks. When the planes hit the towers, he turned the ferry around and took part in the "largest evacuation in NYC history" by taking people to the other side of the Hudson River, NYC Fire Wire said in a statement.</p> <p>"He brought supplies, rescue workers & was a huge part of the operation," NYC Fire Wire said.</p> <p>Two years later, Phelan joined the New York City Fire Department.</p> <p>"He would help anyone and everyone any chance he could," wrote Paul Iannizzotto, who worked with Phelan at Engine 55, according to the New York Daily News. "I just can't believe this and honestly don't understand why it's always the good ones we lose way to early. Always a stand up guy, always doing the right thing, and will be sorely missed."</p> <p>More than 170 FDNY crew members have died of illnesses caught from toxic fumes in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, according to the Uniformed Firefighters Association of Greater New York.</p> <p>More than 5,400 people have been diagnosed with cancer related to the 9/11 attacks, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/19 Group: Turkish-allied militia looting
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syria-monitors-turkish-allied-militiamen-looting-afirin-53844854?
GIST	<p>A Syria war monitoring group says Turkish-allied militiamen are looting the northern Syrian town of Afrin after the Turkish military and allied Syrian fighters seized control of it.</p> <p>The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Monday the looting began on Sunday, after the Turkish and allied Syrian forces marched into the town center and raised their flags there — nearly two months after the offensive on the Kurdish enclave started.</p> <p>The troops faced little resistance from the Kurdish militia, which withdrew, vowing a "new phase" of guerrilla tactics against Turkish troops and their allied fighters.</p> <p>The Observatory, which monitors Syria's war through a network of activists on the ground, described extensive looting of shops, homes and cars in Afrin.</p> <p>It's unclear what Turkey plans after the capture of Afrin.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/19 Egypt battles militants in Sinai
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/egypt-troops-36-islamic-militants-killed-sinai-battle-53844970?
GIST	<p>Egypt's military says four troops and 36 Islamic militants have died in the past five days of fighting in the restive Sinai Peninsula.</p> <p>Monday's statement says one officer was among the four killed army personnel. It also says that eight soldiers were wounded, including two officers.</p> <p>The military says that it also destroyed 400 hideouts, munition and weapons depots and dismantled 93 explosive devices during the operation.</p> <p>It says 345 suspected militants and fleeing criminals have been arrested.</p> <p>Since Egypt launched the wide-scale operation more than a month ago, 20 troops have been killed.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 Taliban attack kills 5 Afghan police
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/taliban-attack-kills-afghan-police-53830568?
GIST	<p>An Afghan official says the Taliban have attacked security positions northwest of the capital, killing at least five police.</p> <p>Mohammed Zaman, the provincial police chief for Ghazni province, says the attack late Saturday set off a two-hour gunbattle.</p> <p>The Taliban have stepped up attacks across Afghanistan since the U.S. and NATO formally concluded their combat mission at the end of 2014.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 Turkey takes control of Syria enclave
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/report-turkey-backed-forces-push-syrian-town-aftrin-53830986?
GIST	<p>Turkey's president said Sunday that allied Syrian forces have taken "total" control of the town center of Afrin, the target of a nearly two-month offensive against a Syrian Kurdish militia, which said the fighting was still underway.</p> <p>President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the Turkish flag and the flag of the Syrian opposition fighters has been raised in the town, previously controlled by the Kurdish militia known as the People's Defense Units, or YPG.</p> <p>"Many of the terrorists had turned tail and run away already," Erdogan said.</p> <p>Turkey's military tweeted that its forces are now conducting combing operations to search for land mines and explosives. The army tweeted a video showing a soldier holding a Turkish flag and a man waving the Syrian opposition flag on the balcony of the district parliament building with a tank stationed on the street.</p> <p>A Kurdish official, Hadia Yousef, told The Associated Press the YPG fighters have not fled the town, but have evacuated the remaining civilians because of "massacres." She said clashes in the town were still underway.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 Claim: CIA 'kill teams' target terrorists
SOURCE	https://www.buzzfeed.com/aramroston/cia-trump-kill-teams-terrorists?bfsplash&utm_term=.bxOjEQKnG#.qu8Q6VNKR
GIST	<p>The Central Intelligence Agency has been deploying small teams of commandos to kill selected suspected terrorists, according to two sources familiar with the program.</p> <p>The program, which has not been previously disclosed, is coordinated by units from the CIA's Special Activities Center, which oversees the agency's paramilitary capability, the sources said.</p> <p>The CIA denied that it has such a program. "Your story is wrong," said Ryan Trapani, an agency spokesperson.</p> <p>Director Mike Pompeo, who President Trump has just tapped to become secretary of state, has publicly said the agency will become more "aggressive" and "vicious" but has not mentioned the new effort to kill terrorists.</p> <p>The two sources said that now CIA commandos are leading squads on missions to kill terrorists on the ground. "It's a small number where it has been kinetic, but it is happening," said one of the sources, a recently retired intelligence official familiar with the program. "Kinetic" is the euphemism often used for violent military action.</p> <p>Both sources said that when Pompeo became director and first pushed for these lethal ground operations, there was resistance to this type of program from the military and the National Security Council. Later, though, they said, the effort was approved.</p> <p>"They are getting people on targeting lists," one of the sources said. "Small teams are locating and killing bad guys. That's what we are doing."</p> <p>In 2009, the Obama administration shut down a similar CIA effort to stand up assassination squads. Under Obama, killing by unmanned drones surged, and the agency continues to use drones to attack suspected terrorists.</p>

The Special Activities Center is now led by a former commando at the agency. BuzzFeed News is withholding his name at the request of the CIA. Until this spring, he was a senior aide to Pompeo, and before that, he served under John Brennan, Pompeo's predecessor. He was, according to a source who knows him, a vocal proponent of more aggressive and audacious operations, and he pushed for the use of the SAC to kill terrorists.

Pompeo, according to the two sources, also pushed for the capabilities and the authorization to launch lethal ground operations.

The idea of using commandos to kill terrorists, rather than using Predator drones, is not new.

Under Obama, of course, the CIA sent SEALs to Pakistan to kill Osama bin Laden. But sources say this tactic was extremely rare, as the Obama administration focused on the use of drones in its counterterrorism efforts. Under Obama, the military's Joint Special Operations Command did conduct frequent raids in Afghanistan and elsewhere, but the CIA was not active, sources say, in the on-the-ground effort.

Under former president Bush, the CIA had turned to Prince, the Blackwater founder, to develop the capability to conduct assassinations of terrorists. As BuzzFeed News reported, Pompeo installed a CIA official at the White House National Security Council who had once worked on that program.

The Special Activities Center, previously known as the Special Activities Division, houses the CIA's Ground Branch, a group of commandos; the Air Branch, which has intelligence, attack, and transport aircraft; and the Maritime Branch. All three branches have been on a recruitment and hiring and acquisition binge, according to the two sources familiar with the program.

The Ground Branch, shortened to just "Branch" or "GB," inside the agency, is made up of elite fighters, often taken from the ranks of SEALs, Delta Force, and Marine Special Operations Command. They are dubbed Paramilitary Operations Officers, or PMOO, which they pronounce "peemoo." In the past, they were largely seen as support staff, helping case officers on projects, or for training foreign forces. Now they are used in direct actions and are operating on their own.

There are only about 100 or so of these fighters, but under Trump the numbers have been growing.

As BuzzFeed News first reported last year, another unconventional counterterrorism tactic the agency considered under Pompeo was privatizing some covert operations, intelligence gathering, and even a terrorist "rendition" in a Middle Eastern country. This plan, according to a source familiar with the project, has faded since news of the effort broke.

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HEADLINE	03/16 Military: 7 killed in Iraq helicopter crash
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/military/u-s-helicopter-crashes-western-iraq-rescue-underway-n857156
GIST	<p>All seven service members aboard an American military helicopter that crashed in western Iraq late Thursday were killed, according to two U.S. military officials.</p> <p>The crash of the U.S. HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter does not appear to be a result of enemy activity and the incident is under investigation, U.S. Central Command and military officials said.</p> <p>"All personnel aboard were killed in the crash," said U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Jonathan P. Braga, the director of operations for the U.S.-led anti-Islamic State coalition in Iraq and Syria.</p> <p>The helicopter was used by the Air Force for combat search and rescue, and was in transit from one location to another when it went down Thursday afternoon near the town of Qaim, where where the anti-ISIS coalition has an outpost near the Syrian border.</p>

	<p>An accompanying U.S. helicopter immediately reported the crash and a quick reaction force comprised of Iraqi Security Forces and Coalition members secured the scene, according to a statement from CENTCOM.</p> <p>"While the investigation is still ongoing, there is absolutely no reason to believe this involved enemy action," said Col. Thomas Veale, a spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition battling the Islamic State. "All indications are this was an accident during a routine troop movement. The Department of Defense will release casualty details after next of kin notifications are complete."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 Violence claims more lives in Syria
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russia-thousands-fleeing-eastern-ghouta-corridor-53815596
GIST	<p>Government airstrikes on a rebel-held town east of the capital Damascus killed dozens and wounded scores on Friday, opposition activists said, as thousands of people left the besieged areas known as eastern Ghouta.</p> <p>The violence near Damascus came as Turkey's military rejected allegations it bombed a hospital in Afrin in northwestern Syria, where it's engaged in an offensive against Syrian Kurdish fighters.</p> <p>The military tweeted aerial footage and photographs of the town's general hospital it said were from Saturday morning, showing it was intact. The army said in a statement the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units or YPG were trying to create a "negative perception" of the Turkish military.</p> <p>The Observatory said that nearly 200,000 people have fled the region of Afrin over the past days and entered government-controlled areas nearby.</p> <p>Near Damascus, more than 11,000 people left eastern Ghouta on Saturday as government forces stepped up an offensive on the rebel enclave, according to Syrian and Russian officials.</p> <p>The Observatory said 30 people were killed in the Saturday morning airstrike on Zamalka that hit a group of people who were trying to flee into government-controlled areas.</p> <p>The opposition's Syrian Civil Defense said the airstrike killed dozens and wounded scores, adding that paramedics are trying to help people.</p> <p>The Observatory said government forces reached the outskirts of the rebel-held town of Kafr Batna marching in from the town of Jibreen that troops captured on Friday.</p> <p>Tens of thousands of residents from the area known as eastern Ghouta have fled to government-controlled districts since Thursday.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	03/18 Claim: Seattle 'hotbed' foreign spying
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/former-fbi-double-agent-living-in-seattle-talks-about-russias-meddling-with-the-us/281-529699576
GIST	With all the talk about the Russia investigation - and who President Trump might fire next - Former FBI double agent Naveed Jamali worries we're losing sight of a bigger problem.

	<p>"Russia really does see us as their main enemy. It's not the Russian people, per se. But it's Vladimir Putin," Jamali told KING 5 News.</p> <p>Naveed Jamali is the author of "How to Catch a Russian Spy." He believes Russian operatives are active in the US, in multiple ways, and says it's important to look at what they're accused of.</p> <p>Jamali worries not enough Americans are seeing the threat, especially here in Seattle where he believes the tech industry is a clear target. He believes it's time for Americans to start paying attention.</p> <p>"Seattle is a place where the Chinese and the Russians both have consulates. And I will tell you, as a matter of practical operations, if you have an embassy - there are going to be people there to spy. There are intelligence officers here, so Seattle is becoming a hotbed for this activity."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 Austin bombings 'meant to send message'
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/deadly-austin-bombings-were-meant-send-message-police-chief-says-n857786
GIST	<p>A deadly string of unsolved bombings in Texas this month was "meant to send a message," though Austin Police Chief Brian Manley didn't say what that message was during a Sunday news conference.</p> <p>Manley said that he hoped the bomber was watching and would "reach out to us before anyone else is injured or killed."</p> <p>The plea came as local and federal authorities increased the reward for information leading to a conviction in the bombings, which killed two and injured two others earlier this month, to \$100,000, Manley said. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott was also offering \$15,000.</p> <p>Late Sunday, Austin police were investigating an explosion in a neighborhood in the southwestern part of the city. Authorities said that two men in their 20s sustained non-life-threatening injuries and that they were still examining a suspicious backpack in the area.</p> <p>The nature of the explosion wasn't immediately clear, and there was no immediate indication that it was connected to the package bombings that killed Stephen House and Draylen Mason. Both men were African-American members of the same church, Nelson Linder, the local NAACP chapter president, told NBC News last week.</p> <p>Asked Sunday whether the bombings were racially motivated, Manley said it's possible.</p> <p>"We don't have any evidence," he said. "What we know for certain is: We have three victims that are victims of color, and we have three package bombs that have exploded on the east side of Austin," where many of the city's minority residents live.</p> <p>Brian Jenkins, an analyst with Rand Corp. who has studied bombings, said in an interview that Manley's invitation to contact authorities could prove fruitful.</p> <p>He pointed to the Unabomber, Theodore Kaczynski, who killed three people and injured nearly two dozen more during a bombing campaign that lasted two decades, and his "desire to communicate, to have some kind of pronouncement or manifesto."</p> <p>"He made the offer that he'd suspend his campaign if his manifesto was published," Jenkins said. "The publication of that ultimately led to him being identified."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 UK: nerve agent in car vent system
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/russian-spys-poisoning-uk-believed-nerve-agent-car/story?id=53832515
GIST	<p>The Russian ex-spy who along with his daughter was poisoned by a nerve agent in the U.K. may have been exposed to the neurotoxin through his car's ventilation system, sources told ABC News.</p> <p>Former Russian spy Sergey Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, were found slumped over, unconscious on a park bench earlier this month in the southern English town of Salisbury. The U.K. has accused Russia of bearing responsibility for the March 4 attack, which British officials say involved a military-grade nerve agent of a type developed secretly by Russia.</p> <p>U.K. officials now have a clearer picture of just how the attack was conducted, sources said. They believe the toxin was used in a dust-like powdered form and that it circulated through the vents of Skripal's BMW.</p> <p>Three intelligence officials told ABC News that the Russian military origin and the nature of the substance, a “dusty” organophosphate neurotoxin, are clear to them.</p> <p>“It is a Cold War substance, something they claimed never to have,” one senior intelligence official said of Russia to ABC News.</p> <p>The intelligence officials told ABC News up to 38 individuals in Salisbury have been identified as having been affected by the nerve agent but the full impact is still being assessed and more victims sickened by the agent are expected to be identified.</p> <p>U.S. government chemical warfare experts are also working closely with their British counterparts on what is a major investigation.</p> <p>“It's seen here as an attempted murder and premeditated,” rather than an attempt just to sicken Skripal with a non-lethal toxin or scare other Russian ex-spies, an intelligence official told ABC News.</p> <p>Among the more than three dozen sickened by exposure to the agent, most are believed to be suffering minimal symptoms in contrast to the hospitalized Skripal, his daughter Yulia and a responding police officer.</p> <p>Another possible clue to the poisoning is that sources told ABC News Skripal was shouting and acting incoherently in a restaurant just before he and his daughter collapsed. Such incoherent behavior could be consistent with the early stages of exposure to a nerve agent.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 United diverts flight; 3rd dog incident
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/dr-gridlock/wp/2018/03/17/united-flight-had-to-be-diverted-because-it-accidentally-had-a-dog-onboard/?utm_term=.ce39f1b3f3ae
GIST	<p>United Airlines had an in-flight incident involving a dog.</p> <p>No, not that one.</p> <p>Or this one.</p> <p>Another one.</p> <p>A United flight from Newark to St. Louis was diverted Thursday after the airline learned it had an unauthorized passenger onboard: a dog. The pet was bound for Akron, Ohio, but was mistakenly loaded onto the St. Louis flight, company spokeswoman Natalie Noonan told The Washington Post on Saturday.</p>

And so the plane followed the dog's itinerary. Flight 3996 banked toward northeast Ohio after the airline "chose the fastest option to reunite the dog with his family," Noonan said.

Passengers were provided compensation for the delay, Noonan said, but she declined to describe the compensation or confirm how many passengers were onboard. CNN reported 33.

Ian Petchenik, a spokesman for the flight-data company [Flightradar24](#), told The Post that the flight averages about two hours. This was a four-hour journey, with roughly an hour and a half spent on the ground in Akron after diverting near Columbus, he said.

The incident was United's third dog-related incident this week; fortunately this time, it led to a happier conclusion than the first. On Monday, a French bulldog puppy named Kokito [suffocated to death](#) in an overhead bin, after a flight attendant insisted the owner stow the dog there for a three-hour flight from Houston to New York.

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HEADLINE	03/17 Claim: UK cops at risk from Kremlin
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/uk-cops-will-be-at-risk-from-the-kremlin-if-inquiry-takes-them-to-russia-says-the-detective-who-hunted-litvinenkos-killers?ref=home
GIST	<p>LONDON—As one of Britain's most senior counterterror investigators, former Detective Inspector Brian Tarpey conducted operations at the height of The Troubles in Northern Ireland; followed the trail of jihadis to North Africa; entered the notorious Black Beach prison in Equatorial Guinea; and tracked the 2005 London terrorists all the way back to their lawless training camps in Pakistan.</p> <p>In all of his investigations, he says he was harmed only once: in Moscow, during the hunt for the killers of Alexander Litvinenko. The Russian dissident had died in London after being poisoned with a dose of the radioactive isotope polonium-210 that was slipped into a pot of tea.</p> <p>The Russian authorities said they would help the team from Scotland Yard to run down their leads and interview the prime suspects. Instead the detectives encountered obstruction, ultimatums, subterfuge, intimidation, a possible body double, and even a case of suspected poisoning.</p> <p>It was the most difficult foreign assignment of Tarpey's career.</p> <p>When he sat opposite a delegation from the Russian prosecutor general's office at the beginning of the trip in December 2006, he had no idea that the rogues' gallery on the other side of the long table featured some of Vladimir Putin's top enforcers including a future member of the U.S. Treasury's sanctions list and the suspected mastermind of Russia's alleged pro-Trump influence campaign.</p> <p>After just a few days of investigation in Moscow, it was obvious to Tarpey that this supposedly independent branch of the justice system was being run as a de facto intelligence operation with immense power and resources. They weren't tested at the time, but he's convinced that he and a colleague were given tainted cups of tea inside the prosecutor general's office, which left them both suffering from gastroenteritis-like symptoms. Tarpey began to feel unwell as soon as he left the building.</p> <p>The very first thing the prosecutors had demanded from the British delegation at the meeting was a quid pro quo—we'll let you interview your witnesses if you help us secure access to an anti-Putin dissident who had sought exile in Britain. At each subsequent meeting they would ask for updates on their request to question the arch-critic Boris Berezovsky, an oligarch who was once a powerful ally of Vladimir Putin.</p> <p>"It was a barter. They'd say 'Yeah we'll help you, but what about Berezovsky?' And the long and short of it was that their investigator was allowed to come here to the U.K. and interview him," Tarpey told The Daily Beast.</p>

The British government has never admitted there was a trade-off to allow access to one of Putin's most hated foes. Some five years after his visit from the Russians, Berezovsky was found dead with a ligature around his neck.

An inquest recorded an open verdict, with the coroner admitting that he did not know if this was a suicide or an unlawful killing. One of Berezovsky's friends who most vociferously argued that the oligarch had been murdered was Nikolai Glushkov.

This week Glushkov body was found at his London home. He was the former head of the national airline Aeroflot, and was wanted in Russia on charges of fraud and embezzlement. His death may have looked like yet another suicide by a Russian dissident in England, but this time a pathologist observed that a compression to the back of the neck had been fatal.

Thus, Scotland Yard's SO15 counter terror command opened its second inquiry into the murder or attempted murder of a Russian émigré in less than two weeks. Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, are still in the hospital after being poisoned with a Russian nerve agent in the city of Salisbury in south-west England.

"It just underlines the arrogance, doesn't it," Tarpey said. "In the midst of what's happening in Salisbury, they may have gone and done another one. It's almost like somebody is out of control. If you were the Mr. Big ordering these hits—which somebody obviously is—then you'd think, OK, maybe I'll lay low a little while until Salisbury blows over before taking out the next one.

"For me the second one is almost as scary, if not more scary than the nerve agent. It looks like you've got professional assassins effectively running around south London cold-bloodedly murdering people and setting it up like suicide."

The Home Office announced last week that it would review 14 cold cases reportedly linked to Russia by U.S. intelligence sources—many of them involved apparent suicide.

Either of these Russian murder inquiries could end with another Scotland Yard inquiry in Moscow. Investigators may be able to follow traces of the novichok nerve agent used on Skripal in a hunt that's reminiscent of the radioactive breadcrumbs left in the Litvinenko murder.

The molecular signature of the chemical agent has already indicated that this substance was created in a Soviet-era covert chemical weapons laboratory.

If another team is dispatched to Russia, Tarpey thinks the detectives would be put at risk. "I have no reason to think they wouldn't be," he said. "They did it to us, and they've come over here and done this again."

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HEADLINE	03/18 NKorea diplomat to Finland for talks
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/north-korean-diplomat-heads-finland-us-talks-53831159?
GIST	<p>A senior North Korean diplomat handling North American affairs is heading to Finland for talks with the U.S. and South Korea.</p> <p>South Korea's Yonhap news agency says Choe Kang Il was seen Sunday at a Beijing airport before boarding a flight to Finland. The report cites unnamed "diplomatic sources" in Seoul as saying Choe would take part in a meeting in Finland with former U.S. diplomats and South Korean security experts.</p> <p>Choe was in the delegation North Korea sent to last month's Winter Olympics in South Korea.</p>

	South Korea's Foreign Ministry did not give any details on the talks, but said the gathering would be similar to the so-called "Track 2" dialogue that has involved North Korean officials and former U.S. officials and experts.
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HEADLINE	03/16 Metro: SDOT misleading cost information
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/929009/seattle-operating-cost-streetcar/
GIST	<p>The Seattle Department of Transportation provided misleading information about the cost to operate an expanded streetcar network to the Federal Transit Authority and the city council, according to King County Metro.</p> <p>A document obtained by The Seattle Times outlines a “concerning” situation.</p> <p>“SDOT appears to have ignored Metro’s estimated labor cost for streetcar O & M by \$8 million and submitted information to the FTA and to the Seattle City Council that significantly underestimates the annual cost of operating the Seattle streetcar system when C3 is added.</p> <p>“Metro’s Rail Section has communicated to SDOT information that contradicts published information about estimated labor costs for Streetcar operations staffing, but neither FTA nor the Seattle Council appear to be aware of contradictory information,” the document states.</p> <p>Essentially, SDOT’s labor cost estimates were much too low. According to the document, SDOT assumed it would cost just over \$16 million to operate the line. A total of \$8.15 million was budgeted for staffing. Metro says more staff is needed to meet the expectations put in place by SDOT. It will cost an estimated \$8 million more to pay for additional staff — raising total operating costs to \$24 million.</p> <p>Metro is concerned because it will be running the system.</p> <p>It’s yet another black mark for the Center City Connector project that will cost an estimated \$177 million. It will add a 1.2-mile streetcar tuck that connects the line in South Lake Union and First Hill line.</p> <p>The project broke ground last year. City leaders questioned the project just days before crews began their work. The concerns raised then are what sparked the financial report by SDOT that is now in question.</p> <p>The price tag of \$177 million was higher than initial estimates. Funding for the project includes a \$75 million grant from the FTA, about \$30 million from City Light for utility relocation, and \$45 million from the city’s budget through 2020.</p> <p>Actual ridership numbers are also in question. Currently under-utilized, SDOT projects the streetcar lines will get 22,000 riders per day in its first year of expanded service. By 2035, 30,000 riders will ride the streetcars.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 FBI at Civil War site for ‘lost gold’?
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2018/03/17/fbi-went-site-suspected-lost-civil-war-gold-pennsylvania/434674002/
GIST	<p>A 155-year-old legend about buried federal gold appears to have caught the attention of the FBI.</p> <p>Dozens of FBI agents, along with Pennsylvania state officials and members of a treasure-hunting group, trekked this week to a remote site where local lore has it that a Civil War gold shipment was lost or hidden during the 1863 Battle of Gettysburg.</p>

	<p>The treasure-hunting group Finders Keepers has long insisted it found the gold buried in a state forest at Dents Run, about 135 miles (217 kilometers) northeast of Pittsburgh, but said the state wouldn't allow it to dig.</p> <p>The FBI has refused to say why it was at the site Tuesday, revealing only that it was conducting court-authorized law enforcement activity. Finders Keepers owner Dennis Parada said Friday he's under FBI orders not to talk.</p> <p>Historians have cast doubt on the claim that a shipment of gold was lost on its way to the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia.</p> <p>Depending on who's doing the telling, the shipment had either 26 gold bars or 52 bars, each weighing 50 pounds (23 kilograms), meaning it would be worth about \$27 million or about \$55 million today.</p> <p>In an older post on the Finders Keepers website, Parada said his group found the likely burial site using a high-powered metal detector. But he said the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has refused to allow the group to dig.</p> <p>A department spokesman said Friday that the group previously asked to excavate the site but elected not to pay a required \$15,000 bond. The spokesman referred comment on Tuesday's activity to the FBI.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 Police: dead friend Putin critic strangled
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/friend-dead-putin-critic-was-strangled-british-police-say-n857346
GIST	<p>British police launched a murder investigation Friday after an autopsy revealed that a Russian exile who was critical of Vladimir Putin was strangled in his home.</p> <p>Nikolay Glushkov, whose body was found Monday, died as a result of "compression to the neck," London's Metropolitan Police said in a statement.</p> <p>Glushkov's death was a eerie echo of his friend Boris Berezovsky, an exiled Russian oligarch and an outspoken critic of Putin who was found in 2013 with a rope around his neck — and whose death was initially a suspected suicide. It was reclassified as unexplained.</p> <p>"Boris was strangled," Glushkov said afterward in an interview with The Guardian newspaper. "Either he did it himself or with the help of someone. [But] I don't believe it was suicide."</p> <p>So far, police said, there is no link between the death of Glushkov and "the attempted murders in Salisbury, nor any evidence that he was poisoned."</p> <p>That was a reference to the attempted assassinations of former Russian double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia, who were found unconscious last weekend on a bench in the city of Salisbury — and who police later said were poisoned with a nerve agent.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 DOE questions safety w/Hanford project
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/hanford/us-demands-proof-steel-is-safe-at-hanford/281-529405621
GIST	SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — The federal government is demanding that the company building a giant nuclear waste treatment plant in Washington state provide records proving that the steel used in the nearly \$17 billion project meets safety standards.

	<p>The U.S. Department of Energy says in a letter obtained by The Associated Press that records needed to ensure that the structural steel used in the project is safe are either missing or of "indeterminate quality."</p> <p>"This condition is a potentially unrecoverable quality issue," said the letter sent March 6 from the agency's Office of River Protection in Richland, Washington, to Bechtel National Inc., which is building the long-delayed plant to dispose of wastes created in the production of plutonium for nuclear weapons.</p> <p>The agency gave Bechtel National 14 days to provide proof that work on the project should continue.</p> <p>The plant is located on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation near Richland, Washington, which for decades made most of the plutonium for the nation's nuclear weapons arsenal. The resulting 56 million gallons (211 million liters) of radioactive and hazardous wastes are stored in 177 underground tanks, many of which are leaking.</p> <p>The waste treatment plant is designed to turn much of that waste into glass-like logs for burial, a technically demanding process.</p> <p>But construction of the giant plant, which began in 2002, has long been slowed by safety and technical issues.</p> <p>Bechtel National is working on providing the records, spokeswoman Staci West said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 Sheriff pocketed \$750K from food fund
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/alabama-sheriff-legally-pocketed-750k-from-inmate-food-funds-bought-beach-house/
GIST	<p>GADSDEN, Ala. -- An Alabama sheriff legally used more than \$750,000 of funds meant to feed inmates to purchase a beach house. Etowah County Sheriff Todd Entrekin told The Birmingham News he follows a state law passed before World War II that allows sheriffs to keep "excess" inmate-feeding funds for themselves.</p> <p>Entrekin reported on state ethics forms that he made "more than \$250,000" each of the past three years through the funds.</p> <p>The sheriff's annual salary is more than \$93,000. He and his wife purchased a four-bedroom house with an in-ground pool and canal access in September for \$740,000.</p> <p>Entrekin got a \$592,000 mortgage. The home is one of several properties with a total assessed value of more than \$1.7 million that the couple own together or separately.</p> <p>In a statement to NPR, Entrekin said the "liberal media has began attacking me for following the letter of the law."</p> <p>This is not the first time the law has made national headlines. In 2009, Greg Bartlett, who was then the sheriff of Morgan County, was thrown into his own jail by a federal judge after testimony from inmates about inadequate meals, including paper-thin bologna and cold grits. Bartlett testified that he legally kept as personal income about \$212,000 over three years with surplus meal money but denied that inmates were improperly fed.</p> <p>In January, advocacy groups sued for access to public records to find out how much jail food money is given to sheriffs and pocketed. In the lawsuit, the Southern Center for Human Rights and the Alabama Appleseed Center for Law and Justice said 49 sheriffs had not complied with the request.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 Austin package bombings mystery
SOURCE	https://www.statesman.com/news/for-investigators-race-decode-hidden-message-austin-bombings/4PaxEkZ4ZrP7qQsCzFbdFI/
GIST	<p>If the package bombs that have killed two Austin residents and seriously injured a third in recent weeks turn out to be the work of a single person, he or she will join a tiny but grim fraternity — serial killers whose weapon of choice was an incendiary device.</p> <p>The group is so small that police and psychologist’s efforts to draw meaningful conclusions about its members has met with uneven success. An FBI profile of the Unabomber identified him as an uneducated man in his 30 or 40s who probably worked menial jobs. But Ted Kaczynski was a 53-year-old hermit who held several advanced college degrees.</p> <p>Even within the minuscule group of deadly serial bombers, there are important distinctions, experts said.</p> <p>Some of the killers identified by forensic crime researchers selected their targets carefully. Thirty years ago, Walter Moody had a bomb delivered to an Atlanta judge he felt was responsible for his misfortunes.</p> <p>Other killers saw their deadly explosives as a dramatic protest against particular groups, with the individual identities of their victims apparently unimportant. In England, David Copeland’s 1999 bombs targeted blacks, Asians and gays.</p> <p>Still, researchers have identified some broad characteristics that police turn to in an effort to identify deadly detonators. All have been white men. While they have varied educational attainment, they were of above-average intelligence and mechanically inclined.</p> <p>Almost always, they were furious.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	03/19 Turkey embassy in Denmark firebombed
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/03/19/turkish-embassy-in-denmark-attacked-with-firebombs.html
GIST	<p>HELSINKI – Danish police say they are searching at least two people suspected of attacking the Turkish embassy in Copenhagen with firebombs.</p> <p>Henrik Moll, head of Copenhagen police, told reporters Monday that no one was injured in the early morning attack that caused minor damage to the exterior of the embassy building.</p> <p>He said patrolling police officers partly witnessed the incident and saw two people fleeing from the scene. A criminal investigation has been launched into the matter.</p> <p>Danish media reported the bombs were apparently Molotov cocktails.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 Arrest in SXSW concert bomb threat
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/18/us/sxsw-bomb-threat/index.html
GIST	(CNN)A bomb threat at South by Southwest on Saturday caused Bud Light to cancel a concert featuring The Roots.

	<p>Austin police arrested Trevor Weldon Ingram, 26, in connection with the threat. He was arrested on charges of making a terroristic threat.</p> <p>The incident began Saturday around 4:30 p.m. when a Live Nation Music representative contacted police to report a bomb threat received by email was made to the Fair Market event venue where "Bud Light x The Roots & Friends Jam" was scheduled to take place, police said. Officers responded to the location and found no explosives.</p> <p>As a result of the threat, Bud Light canceled the event. The company said in a statement on Twitter that "the safety of all fans at SXSW is our most important priority."</p> <p>SXSW also made a statement on Twitter, apologizing for the inconvenience.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 Israel: Palestinian stabber shot dead
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/palestinian-stabs-israeli-jerusalem-shot-dead-police-53834432?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Israel's Shin Bet security service says a Palestinian has stabbed an Israeli in Jerusalem, seriously wounding him. Police said he was shot dead by officers at the scene.</p> <p>The attack Sunday occurred in Jerusalem's Old City, home to sensitive holy sites sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims.</p> <p>The Shin Bet said the attacker was from the West Bank city of Nablus.</p> <p>There has been a spike in violence since President Donald Trump's Dec. 6 recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Palestinians seek east Jerusalem as their future capital and view Trump's decision as siding with Israel.</p> <p>On Friday, a Palestinian killed two Israeli soldiers and badly wounded two others when he drove his car into them in the West Bank.</p> <p>Stabbings and car-ramming have been widely used by Palestinian assailants.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/18 Britain: car rams into nightclub; 13 hurt
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/13-hurt-car-rams-nightclub-britain-53831887?
GIST	<p>British police say a man who had been kicked out of a nightclub rammed his car into revelers on a dance floor, injuring at least 13 people.</p> <p>The Kent Police force says the 21-year-old has been arrested on suspicion of attempted murder over Saturday's crash in Gravesend, 30 miles (48 kilometers) southeast of London. Police say they are not treating the incident as terrorism.</p> <p>Footage posted on social media showed a large car on a dance floor inside a marquee tent at Blake's nightclub. On Facebook, the club thanked "the heroic actions of our door team and guests to apprehend the individual before further harm was caused."</p> <p>Police said Sunday that at least 13 people suffered injuries including broken bones but none of the injuries is life-threatening.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 Man shot in Seattle Central District
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/man-shot-in-central-district-gang-unit-detectives-investigating
GIST	<p>SEATTLE -- Gang unit detectives with the Seattle Police Department are investigating after a man was shot in the leg in the Central District on Saturday night.</p> <p>Police say the shooting took place at 24th Avenue and East Union Street.</p> <p>The suspect fled before officers arrived.</p> <p>The Seattle Fire Department said a 43-year-old man was taken to Harborview Medical Center in stable condition.</p> <p>Police say his wounds are not life-threatening.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 Indiana: fake Wounded Warrior bust
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/03/17/four-arrested-in-indiana-for-running-fake-wounded-warrior-fundraisers-pocketing-money.html
GIST	<p>Four people in Indiana were busted for running fake “Wounded Warrior” fundraisers to raise money for veterans but instead pocketing more than \$125,000 for themselves.</p> <p>Police charged James D. Linville, 44, and Joanie Watson, 38, of Clarksville, as well as Thomas A. Johnson, 42, and Amy L. Bennett, 40, both of Henryville, with conspiracy to commit wire fraud and conspiracy to commit mail fraud. If convicted, the four could face up to 20 years in prison, the Courier-Journal reported.</p> <p>Authorities said the four suspects led others to believe they were donating to various causes like the Wounded Warrior Project, which “serves veterans and service members who incurred a physical or mental injury, illness, or wound, co-incident to their military service,” according to the website.</p> <p>However, the donations went to the Wounded Warrior Fund Inc. and the Wounded Warrior Foundation Inc., which were created by one of the four people, U.S. Attorney Josh J. Minkler said Friday.</p> <p>The fake organizations claimed donations would go toward military families living in Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio.</p> <p>Officials said the four collected more than \$125,000 donations from about 1,000 people and businesses who believed they were giving money to the real organization. Instead, the defendants deposited the money into fraudulent checking accounts and used it to go shopping for themselves, the indictment stated.</p> <p>Police said Linville also used the alias Sgt. Bob Davis while Johnson went by Paul Bradley throughout the scheme.</p> <p>The U.S. Secret Service and the Clark County Sheriff’s Department have been investigating the scheme for three years.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 Deadly toll L.A. County street racing
SOURCE	http://www.stltoday.com/news/national/in-la-county-illegal-street-racing-has-a-deadly-toll/article_14ae802d-b613-5c70-a861-ad2708ce1d21.html

GIST

Southern California has long been an epicenter of high-speed car culture. Wild police pursuits dominate television newscasts. The “Fast & Furious” film franchise, which many cops blame for hyping street racing, was set in Los Angeles.

Police say incidents of street racing are on the rise, driven by popular culture and the use of social media to draw contestants and evade authorities. In what racers call “takeovers,” participants use their cars to block off streets or freeways to stage races.

In recent years, car clubs from neighboring areas including Orange County and the Inland Empire region have begun traveling to Los Angeles to compete against local racing crews, increasing the number of dangerous drivers in the county, investigators say.

“We have the locations. We have lots of flat street. We have industrial parks. And the Hollywood connection,” said Chief Chris O’Quinn, who leads the California Highway Patrol’s Southern Division in L.A. County. “This is the place to be.”

The deadliest year on record was 2007, with 18 fatal crashes. After a period with relatively few recorded deaths, the count grew in recent years, with 15 fatalities in 2015, 11 in 2016 and 12 deaths in 2017, the Times analysis shows.

The dead were overwhelmingly male and young: More than half were 21 or younger, including two children, ages 4 and 8, killed along with their mother. Slightly less than half of the victims — 47 percent — were behind the wheel. The rest were either passengers in the speeding vehicles, spectators or people simply walking on a sidewalk or driving home.

Deaths have occurred across Los Angeles County, but some places — Long Beach, Santa Clarita, industrial zones southeast of downtown and the wide boulevards that stretch across South L.A. and the San Fernando Valley — have been trouble spots.

The only statewide agency tracking street racing incidents is the CHP, which has been doing so only since 2016. From July 2016 to July 2017, the CHP recorded nearly 700 racing incidents in L.A. County. Those races involved roughly 17,000 vehicles and 22,000 people, according to the CHP data. The agency did not track fatalities.

The Times examined street racing deaths since 2000. Its tally of 179 killed is a conservative estimate, because few law enforcement agencies track street racing fatalities and the incidents themselves are difficult to classify.

Eric Siguenza, 26, and Wilson Thomas Wong, 50, were killed in February 2015 in an area of Chatsworth known as the “Canoga Speedway” while watching a street race with more than 60 others.

Nine months later, three people, including a 15-year-old, were killed in Commerce when a Dodge doing doughnuts in the street collided with a Ford, striking spectators. Sheriff’s deputies said more than 100 vehicles may have been in the area at the time.

Those deaths occurred during takeovers. The potential for danger, authorities said, is high, reinforced by drugs, large amounts of cash and other criminal activity.

“When you look at a takeover, you have a very large concentration of people, out of their vehicles, in a small area, and again you’ve got that 3,000-pound machine that is semi in control at best,” said Sgt. Jesse Garcia, one of the Los Angeles Police Department’s top street racing investigators. “You have the potential of a much higher number of victims should that vehicle lose control.”

Racers at takeover scenes have grown more aggressive toward police in recent years as well, said O’Quinn of the CHP. Officers once were able to scatter racers with a flash of their cruisers’ lights. Now, some in the car scene fight back, either blocking roadways to allow friends to escape or, at times, physically

confronting officers.

A fire engine and ambulance responding to a medical emergency near downtown last year came across a takeover and were “surrounded by a large group in the hundreds, possibly more,” said Peter Sanders, a spokesman for the Los Angeles Fire Department. The crew put out a distress call after some racers leaped into the emergency vehicle, Sanders said.

No one was injured, but another ambulance needed to be dispatched to help the subject of the original emergency call, who was struggling to breathe.

“That activity placed somebody’s life in danger,” said Capt. Al Lopez of the LAPD’s Central Traffic bureau, whose investigators are searching for suspects in that incident.

The takeover scene, police say, has grown stronger in recent years, bolstered by a young population hungry for attention on social media. Events can be organized within hours, and locations can be changed on the fly.

Instagram “likes” on viral videos of stunts — people performing doughnuts or bouncing lowriders — are the new street cred, Garcia said. As much as \$20,000 is bet on some illegal drag races.

Tracking the number of street races is difficult. Street racing is not listed as a possible cause on state forms that record traffic collisions, so many agencies don’t keep detailed records. Others don’t agree on how to define a street race or speed contest. The penal code’s definition is broad and includes races against a “clock or timing device.”

At least a dozen officers in the LAPD’s Central Bureau investigate street racing, focusing on organized meet-ups because spontaneous racing is nearly impossible to deter. Efforts to place a similar unit in the Valley, another racing hot zone, were abandoned for lack of staff, a street racing investigator said.

Los Angeles City Councilman Mitchell Englander, whose district includes a stretch of the San Fernando Valley that is infamous for racing, is an outspoken critic of the scene’s culture and the department’s response. Three years ago, the city council approved an ordinance he authored that requires the LAPD to incorporate a wide array of data regarding street racing into the department’s crime tracking system. After a fiery racing-related crash claimed the lives of four young people in Northridge last October, LAPD officials admitted during a public hearing that they still weren’t doing so.

“You can’t solve a problem that you don’t measure,” Englander said.

Late last year, the LAPD began tracking fatalities, injuries, crashes and the number of citations related to races late last year, said Josh Rubenstein, a department spokesman. The information was added to the department’s crime tracking system in January, he said.

The Times’ analysis found that at least 60 people died in crashes related to street racing in the city of Los Angeles from 2000 to 2017. Only two other cities in the county — Long Beach and Commerce — saw more than 10 deaths during that period.

Neither the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department nor the Long Beach Police Department, two of the largest agencies in the region, have officers assigned to the county task force.

County deputies are being trained to recognize vehicles that have been modified for racing, but, Detective Christine Ostrander said, “Our deputies are just overworked, understaffed.”

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HEADLINE	03/17 Albania busts immigration crime rings
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/albania-arrests-39-crackdown-immigration-crime-

	rings-53819220
GIST	<p>Albania police have arrested 39 people in a crackdown on crime rings illegally sending about 1,000 Albanians to Britain, the United States and Canada.</p> <p>Police chief Ardi Velju said Saturday that, after months of an international investigation, authorities have identified seven criminal structures in ten countries in Europe and overseas that helped Albanians emigrate illegally by "falsifying travel and identity documents of European Union countries."</p> <p>Each had paid from \$9,750 to \$30,000 for the forgeries.</p> <p>In addition to those arrested, 12 people are still at large, including two Bulgarians. Police have also confiscated computers, cellphones, vehicles, cash, different documents and weapons in the case.</p> <p>Fighting organized crime and illegal trafficking remain key challenges for Albania, a NATO member since 2009 which is hoping to launch EU membership negotiations this year.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 Jail: multi-state ATM skimming schemers
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/romanians-sentenced-multistate-atm-skimming-scheme-53824940?
GIST	<p>Two Romanian nationals convicted in a multistate ATM skimming scheme have been sentenced to prison.</p> <p>They are part of a group that obtained debit card numbers and PINs from unsuspecting bank customers, then made unauthorized withdrawals from victims' bank accounts.</p> <p>Federal officials say the women installed ATM skimming devices in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Hampshire and South Carolina.</p> <p>Prosecutors say the money was transferred to parties throughout the U.S., Romania and China.</p> <p>Twenty-seven-year-old Denisa Bonculescu was sentenced Friday in Massachusetts to 21 months in prison; 24-year-old Anamaria Margel was sentenced to 16 months. The two will pay more than \$70,000 combined in restitution and could face deportation.</p> <p>Attorneys for them couldn't be reached for comment. The women are among seven people who pleaded guilty in the scheme in December.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 Hate crimes in Texas underreported
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/package-bombings-killed-hate-crimes-state-hate-crimes/story?id=53769512
GIST	<p>Three package bombings that killed two people and injured two others, all of them African-American or Hispanic, in Austin, Texas, may have been motivated by hate, authorities said.</p> <p>Killed were a 17-year-old boy, an orchestral musician and essay contest winner, and a 39-year-old father, both of them African-American. A 75-year-old Hispanic woman was critically injured and an African-American woman in her 40s was also wounded in the explosions.</p> <p>"We are not ruling out hate," Austin Police Chief Brian Manley said in a press conference this week of the bombings that occurred in an 11-day span this month. In an interview with ABC News, Manley speculated on possible motivations for the crimes: "Is this driven by an ideology? A philosophy? Is it driven by hate?"</p>

If whoever planted the exploding packages is found to have been motivated by hate, the bombings will be part of a larger trend of an increase in hate crimes in the Texas capital. But experts suspect hate crimes overall are underreported in Texas, and federal and state data obtained by ABC News show very few suspects are ever convicted of hate crimes in the state.

"We don't know for sure what the motivation is, not until the suspect is caught, questioned and prosecuted will we know that," cautioned Ryan Lenz, an investigative writer for the Southern Poverty Law Center, an anti-bigotry organization.

But he noted that with all of the package bombings apparently aimed at minority residents, "There is the commonality of target."

Reports of hate crimes in Austin rose by 46 percent in 2016, but that is against the relatively small totals of 13 in 2015 and 19 in 2016, according to the FBI's annual report on hate crimes. The city has nearly 950,000 residents.

Statewide in Texas -- the nation's second-most populous state with about 26.9 million residents -- the total number of reported hate crimes in 2016 was just 178, according to the Texas Department of Public Safety's Texas Crime Report.

That fits the trend of roughly 200 hate crimes getting reported each year to law enforcement agencies in Texas, according to publicly-available Texas Crime Reports analyzed by ABC News.

But those numbers strike hate-crimes expert Brian Levin as suspiciously low for such a big state.

"Relative to its population, Texas reports fewer hate crimes than other big states," said Levin, a criminologist and attorney who directs the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino.

He noted that California -- which with 38.8 million residents is the only state bigger than Texas -- reported 931 hate crimes in 2016. New York, the nation's fourth-most populous state with a population of 19.4 million reported 595 such crimes.

"Something is wrong when Texas, as a state, has fewer hate crimes than some of the major cities in the U.S.," Levin said.

Texas had a rate of 0.7 hate crimes reported for every 100,000 residents, far lower than the rate of 3.1 for every 100,000 residents in New York and 2.4 for every 100,000 in California, using 2017 Census population figures.

It's not just Texas.

Levin said law enforcement in Texas could do more to ensure officers recognize and investigate potential hate crimes.

Indeed, Texas does not mandate training for police officers on how to investigate potential hate crimes. Gretchen Gribbs with the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement confirmed.

In addition, Texas' geography with its high numbers of people living in rural areas may partially explain why there are relatively few reports of hate crimes in the state, said Lenz of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

"Less densely populated areas tend to report fewer hate crimes," Lenz said.

But he said Texas isn't alone in what he said is a general underreporting of such crimes.

	<p>”Hate crimes are wildly underreported, I mean, horrifically underreported,” Lenz said.</p> <p>One reason may be that victims of hate crimes may be reluctant to report what happened, he said.</p> <p>“Hate crimes likely aren’t being reported because victims fear law enforcement may not believe them or they may be embarrassed and not report to police at all for fear of putting a target on their home,” Lenz said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/15 Man accused in \$500K+ gift card scam
SOURCE	http://www.heraldnet.com/news/man-accused-of-gift-card-scam-in-excess-of-500k/
GIST	<p>LYNNWOOD — Hundreds of thousands of dollars were stolen from Target in a scam by a Snohomish County man, who figured out algorithms for the company’s gift cards, according to charges in King County Superior Court.</p> <p>The \$500,000-plus fraud case was cracked by a journal found in a stolen car at a Kirkland motel.</p> <p>It was around 6 a.m. Nov. 28, when a Kirkland police officer found a Subaru with no license plates and many purses inside at a motel. A strip of plastic conveniently covered the VIN on the dash. A sloppy paint job left spray paint splashed over the tires, according to charging papers.</p> <p>Nearby, the officer noticed a man smoking, Jeffery Douglas Mann, 28. Mann watched the officer, but told him he didn’t know anything about the car. He walked away.</p> <p>Officers learned the Subaru was stolen a week earlier near Lynnwood. In the car police found burnt tinfoil, traces of what looked like crystal meth and more than 150 pieces of mail taken from addresses around Everett. Police recovered jail booking paperwork for a woman, 41, and handwritten notes.</p> <p>“He can get like 100 check digits in literally minutes,” one of the notes said. “Being around him is how I’ve always gotten my bomb.com card numbers that he’s gotten from Cali and Colorado and places like that.”</p> <p>A handwritten address book listed info for Jeff Mann, who has ties to Marysville. Letters mentioned going to Target stores that hadn’t been “burnt yet,” with a guy named Jeff. Police found gift cards for Hotels.com, Costco and the online video gaming service Steam, among other evidence.</p> <p>One Target receipt documented a purchase of \$1,582 that had been paid for with dozens of gift cards.</p> <p>A registry showed Mann had been staying in a room at the Kirkland motel for a few weeks, and that he’d been driving a Volvo with temporary tags. Two days later he was driving the Volvo, with no license plates, when Kirkland police pulled him over. Inside the vehicle police could see about 100 gift cards. Mann had a fake ID and the tags on the car looked obviously forged, according to the charges.</p> <p>Mann agreed to talk with police for about an hour and a half — and his story often conflicted, the charges say. He told the detective he’d been working in the drywall business, but he couldn’t give details, and eventually admitted he hadn’t been employed for a while.</p> <p>Detectives asked why he went to far away places to avoid “burnt” Targets. He reportedly said the stores sometimes got suspicious and denied him when he tried to use too many cards at once.</p> <p>But he insisted to officers that his “side business” with the gift cards was legitimate. He’d buy cards off Paxful.com, a site that converts U.S. dollars to Bitcoin, at a rate of about 50 cents on the dollar, according to his explanation in court papers. He’d sell the cards at a profit, 70 cents per dollar.</p>

Police confronted him about how suspicious that sounded, because gift cards bought at half price probably were stolen.

“Mann claimed to not know that the funds were likely stolen and could not explain why he was being so deceptive if he had nothing to hide and was not doing anything illegal,” Kirkland detective Sean Carlson wrote in a report.

Mann gave police permission to search the Volvo. Inside they found Target receipts; “dozens and dozens of gift cards” from Target, Steam and other businesses; laminating film; printer ink; blank gift card stock; and about a dozen grids full of numbers that were partly filled out.

Police suspect he’d been using the grids to figure out the final digits in a series of gift cards. That could allow him to check balances and cash out the cards.

Eventually, Mann admitted he and a friend had figured out the algorithm for the barcodes that ran on Target cards. He could take a group of barcodes to predict codes on other cards. Those cards would be bought and loaded by unsuspecting customers. He could use his profits to buy thousands of dollars in more gift cards, for resale online.

Lynnwood police had been notified of a gift card scam linked to Mann as early as July 6. Police wrote an overview of what was happening at the Target in Lynnwood, and passed along the case to the U.S. Secret Service.

Target released a statement about the case to The Daily Herald on Wednesday.

“Last year, we identified an organized crime ring in the northwest United States that was accessing funds from select Target gift cards,” the statement read, in part. “We immediately contacted and began working with federal and local law enforcement agencies to investigate.”

Mann was booked into jail Nov. 30. He’s charged with first-degree identity theft, forgery and money laundering in King County Superior Court. Police believe Mann is linked to a group that has stolen at least \$500,000 in Washington state. The charges don’t give details about the fraud ring.

Further investigation revealed the magnitude of the losses for Target — at least \$249,000 directly attributed to Mann, in Washington, Nevada and Colorado, according to court papers. His bail was set at \$200,000.

He was supposed to show up for a jail work crew near the end of December but didn’t hook up his electronic monitoring equipment, according to the King County Jail. He escaped.

“We haven’t seen him since,” jail Capt. Troy Bacon said.

Snohomish County sheriff’s deputies arrested Mann again Sunday. He was being held in the Snohomish County Jail.

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HEADLINE	03/17 Man shot trying to get in patrol vehicle
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/929665/police-man-shot-killed-trying-to-get-into-patrol-vehicle/
GIST	GRAHAM, Wash. (AP) — Authorities in western Washington say a sheriff’s deputy shot and killed a 28-year-old Spanaway man attempting to get into the deputy’s patrol car. The Pierce County Sheriff’s Department says the shooting took place not long after a woman called at about 9:30 p.m. Friday to report her friend was having a mental breakdown in the middle of the road in an

	<p>area called Elk Plain.</p> <p>The caller reported that her friend had a knife and was trying to get into other people's vehicles.</p> <p>The sheriff's department says a deputy arrived and the man refused commands and tried to get into the deputy's vehicle, and the deputy opened fire.</p> <p>The man died at the scene. His name hasn't been released.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 IRS: 1.2M cases ID fraud by illegals
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/irs-illegal-immigrants-identity-theft-fraud/2018/03/16/id/849101/
GIST	<p>The Internal Revenue Services documented over 1.2 million cases of illegal immigrants filing tax returns with illegitimate social security numbers in 2017, CNSNews.com reports.</p> <p>"We identified 1,227,579 electronically filed tax returns, processed in FY 2017 through April 18, 2017, in which the Individual Taxpayer Identification Number on the return does not match the Social Security Number on the Form W-2," the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration told CNSNews.com</p> <p>"Note that a Social Security Number may have been used on Form W-2 for more than one of these returns."</p> <p>Between processing years 2011 and 2016, "the IRS placed the employment identity theft marker on 1,346,485 taxpayer accounts," according to a TIGTA report from last month.</p> <p>When asked by CNSNews.com how many of these cases "did the IRS refer to federal law enforcement for criminal investigation and prosecution? How many did they not refer to law enforcement and why not?"</p> <p>TIGTA responded: "We do not have this information."</p> <p>"Over the last few years, IRS-Criminal Investigation prioritized its limited resources pursuing identity thieves who stole millions of identities from innocent taxpayers and applied for, and received, tax refunds based on those identities," TIGTA added in response to a question about successful prosecutions of employment identity theft.</p> <p>"Additionally, based on how IRS-CI captures case-related information and how prosecutions are based (the federal violation utilized), it is not possible to ascertain the exact information for the question regarding how many cases the IRS pursued criminally where [Individual Tax Identification Numbers] holders utilized another individuals' [Social Security Number].</p> <p>"To put it another way, in investigating the type of criminal activity that you inquired, IRS-CI, in addition to its traditional criminal tax statutes, would also likely utilize other statutes... which carry a more significant impact than the law cited in the 2004 TIGTA report regarding the fraudulent misuse of a social security number."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 Settlement after police dismissed 'hoax'
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/03/17/2-5m-settlement-after-police-dismiss-womans-kidnapping-as-gone-girl-hoax.html
GIST	A couple have reached a \$2.5 million settlement with a Northern California city and its police department after investigators initially dismissed the woman's kidnapping as a "Gone Girl" hoax.

The term refers to a 2012 novel and 2014 film about a woman who fakes her own abduction.

Police in Vallejo initially discounted a report by Denise Huskins and her boyfriend that a masked intruder drugged, kidnapped and sexually assaulted her in 2015.

They realized the couple was telling the truth after a disbarred attorney, Matthew Muller, was implicated in another crime and connected to the abduction. He pleaded guilty to the kidnapping and is serving a 40-year prison term.

Vallejo police apologized after discounting the request for help. The city is about 32 miles northeast of San Francisco.

“The conduct plaintiffs allege goes beyond defendants being skeptical, investigating alternate theories, and expressing skepticism,” U.S. District Judge Troy Nunley wrote in his 22-page decision, adding that, “A reasonable jury could find that defendants engaged in conduct that was extreme and outrageous.”

Muller broke into the couple’s home, tied them up, and drugged them, prosecutors said. He put Huskins in the trunk of his car, and held her for two days in his South Lake Tahoe home. Investigators said they found videos of Muller sexually assaulting Huskins.

During and after the kidnapping, Muller sent messages to a San Francisco reporter claiming that Huskins was abducted by a team of elite criminals. After she was released in Huntington Beach in Southern California, Vallejo police called the kidnapping a hoax, the Mercury News of San Jose reported.

Muller was later arrested in connection with an unrelated attempted robbery in the San Francisco Bay Area. Authorities said they traced a cellphone to Muller and a subsequent search of a car and home turned up evidence connecting him to the Huskins abduction. Huskins sued police, and a judge ruled last year that the lawsuit could proceed.

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HEADLINE	03/17 NKorea ‘pirate tactics’ for illicit trade
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/north-korea/north-korea-uses-pirate-tactics-earn-millions-sanction-busting-n856921
GIST	<p>North Korea defied global sanctions to earn nearly \$200 million in 2017 from illicit trade in goods like coal, oil and arms, in part by borrowing tactics from the golden age of piracy, says the leader of a UN panel of experts that issued a report on North Korea Friday.</p> <p>According to the report, despite four new sets of UN sanctions in 2017, the isolated nation has continued to earn hard currency through increasingly evasive shipping practices, like transferring petroleum from ship to ship at sea, manipulating locator signals, and changing vessel identifiers in the middle of a journey.</p> <p>"It's a bit like the pirates of the 18th century," said Hugh Griffiths, leader of the UN Panel of Experts on North Korea. "They're renaming the ships. They're disguising their nationality. They're painting false names on the ships to suggest that these ships come from other countries."</p> <p>The report says North Korea "is already flouting the most recent resolutions by exploiting global oil supply chains, complicit foreign nationals, offshore company registries, and the international banking system."</p> <p>Griffiths told NBC News that sanctions are working, but the North Koreans are also getting smarter.</p> <p>Last month, the U.S. Treasury Dept. published a sanctions advisory outlining the types of deceptive shipping practices North Korea employs and a list of the 24 tankers capable of executing ship-to-ship</p>

	<p>transfers of petroleum and other banned items. A number of those tankers feature in the new UN report.</p> <p>In December, a tanker flying the Sierra Leone flag lingered in the East China Sea alongside a North Korean tanker called the Chon Ma San for an illegal ship-to-ship transfer of petroleum products. To avoid detection, the Chon Ma San's North Korean flag was painted over and the 3's in its international identification number changed to 8's.</p> <p>This January, a ship-to-ship transfer of petroleum products between the North Korean-flagged tanker Rye Song Gang 1 and the Dominica-flagged Yuk Tung took place at night. The panel said the nighttime transfer shows North Korea "is adapting its evasion tactics."</p> <p>Catherine Dill, a senior research associate at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, agreed with the panel's assessment. "Part of the reason we focus on this is because ship-to-ship transfers are so dangerous," she said. "You have to have the right conditions. If you have rough seas it can be hazardous for the crew."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 Missouri: 241yr prison term for teen
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/missouri-defends-241-year-prison-sentence-for-16-year-old/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON -- Missouri is defending an extremely long prison sentence for a man who committed robbery and other crimes on a single day when he was 16. He won't be eligible for parole until he's 112 years old.</p> <p>State Attorney General Josh Hawley says in a U.S. Supreme Court filing that defendant Bobby Bostic's 241-year sentence for 18 crimes does not violate the Constitution's ban on cruel and unusual punishment. Hawley says a 2010 Supreme Court's ruling that outlawed life sentences for people under 18 who didn't kill anyone applies only to a sentence for one crime.</p> <p>The former St. Louis judge who sentenced Bostic disagrees. She now believes the term is unjust and is backing Bostic's high-court appeal. There's no timetable for when the justices will decide whether to hear his case.</p> <p>Now 39, Bostic has been in prison for more than 20 years.</p> <p>State and federal courts around the country have ruled differently about whether young people convicted of crimes can be sentenced to prison for terms that the American Civil Liberties Union, representing Bostic, said "exceed their life expectancy."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 UN: 84 activists Colombia killed last year
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/84-rights-activists-killed-colombia-year-53807967?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The United Nations said Friday that 84 human rights activists were killed in Colombia last year as the country struggles to contain violence following a 2016 peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.</p> <p>Analysts say the peace deal has led to an overall decrease in homicide rates. But in a report, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said activists and social leaders are still being targeted by drug traffickers, right wing death squads and smaller rebel groups.</p> <p>The report said the FARC's withdrawal from some remote areas of Colombia has set off fierce competition among criminal groups to gain control of the former guerrillas' assets, including drug trafficking routes</p>

	<p>and fields of coca used to make cocaine.</p> <p>Human rights activists have been caught up in this new power struggle.</p> <p>"Several of the victims were apparently killed due to their support for policies derived from the (peace) agreement, such as the substitution of illegal crops and integral rural reform," the report said.</p> <p>The U.N. agency called on the Colombian government to provide greater presence in rural areas and develop programs that will lure local farmers away from illegal crops. It also urged Colombia to prosecute those who attack rights activists.</p> <p>"While significant progress has been made by the Office of the Attorney General to identify the material authors of the crimes, in most cases the intellectual authors have not been identified," the report said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 France: huge wine fraud scam uncovered
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/french-fraud-body-unveils-huge-cotes-du-rhone-53796158?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>France's anti-fraud body says it has uncovered a huge scam in which a merchant tried to sell more than 48 million liters (some 12.7 million gallons) of wine falsely labeled as Cotes-du-Rhone.</p> <p>The DGCRF said in its annual report Friday that the fraud encompassed the equivalent of 13 Olympic-sized swimming pools full of wine.</p> <p>About 20 million liters (5.3 million gallons) of the fake Cotes-du-Rhone were offered for sale between 2013 and 2016 through the scam, including 1 million liters (264,000 gallons) bearing the prestigious Chateaneuf-du-Pape name. Investigators seized a 100,000-liter (26,400-gallon) vat of the latter wine.</p> <p>The merchant, whose identity wasn't released, was handed preliminary charges of fraud and deception. He was freed on a 1 million euro (\$1.2 million) bail and banned from working at his company.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/17 Tip leads to arrest, weapons cache
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/walmart-employee-turns-man-charged-possessing-weapons-cache/story?id=53816017
GIST	<p>A Walmart employee's tip has led to a large weapons bust near a college campus in upstate New York.</p> <p>Federal authorities filed charges against Maximilien Reynolds, 19, on Friday for two counts of possession of an unregistered destructive device and a silencer, false statement in acquisition of a firearm and a false statement in required firearm record.</p> <p>According to the criminal complaint, a Walmart employee in Ithaca, New York, called police after Reynolds allegedly purchased ammunition, camping gear, drill bits, tools, hacksaw blades and knives with a gift card.</p> <p>Ithaca police and two FBI agents responded to Reynolds' apartment, where they encountered his girlfriend, who allowed them inside. The complaint alleges the small apartment was "in severe disarray" with random piles of clothes, food, laboratory glassware and math formulas written on the windows. The authorities also found a bulletproof vest, gas mask and saw knives lying out in the open before the woman alleged to be Reynolds' girlfriend ushered them out.</p> <p>Authorities later returned, voluntarily spoke to investigators and allowed his apartment to be searched, the</p>

	<p>complaint states.</p> <p>The FBI found a bullet-resistant vest, military-style clothing, knives, military-style gas mask, MSR-15 Patrol rifle, ammunition, a homemade silencer and bomb-making materials, including fireworks rigged with shrapnel.</p> <p>The suspect was previously known to authorities, as Reynolds had previously been detained by Ithaca police in June 2016 under Section 941 of the New York Mental Hygiene Law, the complaint shows. The law allows police officers to take a person into custody and take them to a hospital if they appear mentally ill.</p> <p>Reynolds used to be a student at Cornell University, but was currently taking classes at nearby Tomkins-Cortland Community College.</p> <p>"On Thursday, FBI agents arrested Maximilien R. Reynolds following the reported seizure by the City of Ithaca Police Department earlier this month of a number of weapons in his possession at his residence in the city's Collegetown neighborhood," Cornell University Police Chief Kathy Zoner said in a statement.</p> <p>"Cornell University Police is cooperating with IPD and the FBI in this investigation, and all agencies continue to work together to promote the safety of Cornell University's campus and the surrounding community.</p> <p>"Neither Cornell University Police nor the lead law enforcement agencies in this case believe there is a threat to the campus or Collegetown."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/16 Israel: 2 killed in car ramming attack
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/16/middleeast/west-bank-car-ramming-attack-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Jerusalem (CNN) — Two Israeli soldiers were killed and three more were injured in a car ramming attack on Friday afternoon in the northern West Bank, according to the Israeli military and emergency services.</p> <p>The attack happened at 4:15 p.m. near the settlement of Reihan, about 25 kilometers west of Jenin, the military said.</p> <p>The Palestinian driver was evacuated to an Israeli hospital for treatment, said Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesman Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus. The driver is being questioned.</p> <p>Earlier emergency services said three people had been injured.</p> <p>Conricus added that the ramming was a deliberate attack by the driver.</p> <p>The military said the soldiers were securing the routes around the settlement of Mevo Dotan in the northern West Bank.</p> <p>In response to the attack, Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman tweeted, "We will seek the death penalty for the terrorist, the destruction of his home, and punishment for anyone else involved."</p> <p>"This is terror that is promoted by [President Mahmoud Abbas] and the Palestinian Authority that pays money to the families of terrorists. We will stop them," he added.</p> <p>Israel announced that it would immediately suspend work permits for the driver's entire family, including 67 employment permits in Israel, 26 trade permits, and four employment permits in communities.</p> <p>Hamas praised the attack, calling for an "escalation of the Jerusalem Intifada to increase the cost of the</p>

	<p>occupier." Spokesman Fawzi Barhoom said the attack was "an affirmation of the insistence of the Palestinian people to continue the path of the resistance with all its means." Palestinian Islamic Jihad also praised the attack, claiming "there is no security and stability for this occupation."</p> <p>Palestinian Authority officials did not comment on the attack.</p>
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Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php
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HEADLINE	03/15 Study: 'Big One' impact on Portland
SOURCE	https://portlandtribune.com/pt/9-news/389522-280189-offshore-earthquake-will-devastate-portland-area-much-more-than-scientists-thought
GIST	<p>The "Big One" will devastate Portland even more than scientists previously expected, according to a new state geologists' study of how a major earthquake will affect the tri-county area.</p> <p>The study released Thursday found that a magnitude 9 earthquake centered off the Oregon Coast in the Cascadia Subduction Zone would cause tens of thousands of casualties in the Portland area, displace tens of thousands of residents from their homes, and cost tens of billions of dollars in building damage.</p> <p>In Portland alone, the study calculates 119 to 896 immediate deaths from a major Cascadia earthquake, depending on when it occurs, plus hundreds to thousands more life-threatening injuries and people requiring hospitalization.</p> <p>Throughout Multnomah County, 302 to 677 buildings are projected to collapse.</p> <p>"Although damage estimates vary widely throughout the study area, no community will be unharmed," concluded study authors John Bauer, William Burns and Ian Madin of the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries.</p> <p>Though considerably less likely, an earthquake of magnitude 6.8 epicentered in the fault below Portland's West Hills would be even more catastrophic locally — causing more than twice the casualties and damages — according to their study. That would prove more devastating than an offshore Cascadia earthquake for people living within 15 miles of the fault, scientists concluded.</p> <p>In a major quake centered in the West Hills, as many as 120,000 Multnomah County residents could be displaced from their homes, or nearly one in six people.</p> <p>Recovering from a Cascadia earthquake won't be just a matter of putting out fires and stemming floods. There will be region-wide challenges to restore power, bridges and freeways, provide emergency medical care and assure food and water can be delivered. It will take months just to inspect homes and other damaged buildings to see if they're safe to occupy. Meanwhile, many will have to find other shelter, and some work places will have to be closed or relocated.</p> <p>More sophisticated software, new findings</p> <p>The new study, while showing more severe impacts than previous estimates, didn't bring any surprises or point to any new preparation efforts that haven't been considered before, said Dan Douthit, spokesman for the Portland Bureau of Emergency Management.</p> <p>"We've already been expecting significant damages," Douthit said, "and every year that goes by, we get more and more prepared."</p> <p>Emergency planners still will focus on the region's greatest vulnerabilities, including more than 1,600 unreinforced masonry buildings in the city of Portland.</p> <p>"We know that unreinforced masonry buildings are likely to collapse, especially during a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake," Douthit said. "Those pose an immediate life safety risk for people in them and people walking by during an earthquake."</p> <p>But the new study, using more sophisticated Hazus software developed for the Federal Emergency</p>

	<p>Management Agency (FEMA), enabled scientists to drill down to damages at the neighborhood level as never before. The software is being constantly refined, incorporating real-world experiences from floods and earthquakes taking place around the world.</p> <p>That enabled scientists to calculate the number of deaths, life-threatening injuries and hospitalizations that will occur in different neighborhood clusters in Portland and cities around the tri-county area.</p> <p>Much of the damage from an earthquake depends on its severity and when it occurs. There will be fewer people injured if one occurs at night while people are sleeping, as wooden-frame homes are about the safest type of building construction during earthquakes. Quakes occurring during the daytime in the rainy season, when the soils are wet, will cause the greatest harm.</p> <p>In the city of Portland, a major Cascadia quake could cause 675 deaths, life-threatening injuries and hospitalizations if it occurred during a late night during the summer. If the same quake occurred during the day in the rainy season, the number of serious casualties would jump to 4,549, according to the study.</p> <p>State geologists plan to release a second phase of their study next year, charting the potential impacts to Clark County, Washington and Columbia County, Oregon.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/15 USCG: icebreaker program 'at risk'
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/federal-pages/dhs/uscg/icebreaker-program-greatest-risk-uscg-appropriations-warns-commandant/
GIST	<p>Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Paul Zukunft told Congress on Wednesday that he's concerned about lawmakers gravitating toward flat budgets when the USCG needs money to grow, especially plowing forward with the critical icebreaker program.</p> <p>At a House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation hearing on the fiscal year '19 budget, Zukunft said the USCG is "working with the administration to finalize our long-term major acquisition project," capital investment plan and unfunded priorities list.</p> <p>"Many of these were submitted months ago. We continue work with our department, and with the administration. We know you need those so you can help us in your endeavors to support the United States Coast Guard," he said.</p> <p>Conducting one of its "largest responses ever" after a string of devastating hurricanes last year, the Coast Guard rescued nearly 12,000 people, Zukunft said, but this "all-hands-on-deck campaign... came at a cost."</p> <p>"And I thank you and this Congress for the \$835 million to address Coast Guard response costs, and rebuild damaged infrastructure to modern standards," he said. "And while so many endured these natural disasters, transnational criminal organizations continue to raise havoc in the Western hemisphere."</p> <p>Zukunft said that "given our important work in the high latitudes, coupled with an ever-increasing assertive Russia and China," he's "very pleased" that President Trump's budget wish list "includes \$750 million for the Polar Ice Breaker Program, as well."</p> <p>"Our request for proposals, released just two weeks ago, has energized the U.S. industrial base, and keeps us on track. We're as close as we have ever been in over 40 years to recapitalize our nation's polar icebreaking fleet, and we must keep this momentum going," the commandant argued.</p> <p>While progress has been "meaningful and very encouraging," it is "simply not enough."</p> <p>"We need to continue building tomorrow's Coast Guard. Years of fiscal constraint under Budget Control</p>

Act caps have forced funding offsets, and reduced our force structure. Going forward, we require five percent annualized growth in our operations and maintenance account, and a minimum of \$2 billion in our acquisition account,” the commandant said, touting the “small ask for a service that provides great return on investment.”

Zukunft replied that he’s “concerned” when he’s asking for a five-year, \$2 billion floor “and we’re seeing our acquisition budget continue to be funded below that floor — and icebreaking is clearly the biggest risk.”

“There’s a \$15 million annualized appropriation to keep the Polar Star in service so there is a smooth handoff between the Polar Star and the next heavy icebreaker. That gets us right back to the status quo, though,” he said. “And we’re still only a nation of one heavy icebreaker, which means we need to continue to build out that program of record. We need to provide predictability for our shipbuilders, as well.”

The icebreaker program constitutes “an investment in our industrial base,” too, the commandant noted, “built in the United States and with United States steel.”

“So of all our appropriations, this is one at greatest risk and it does concern me. And there is going to be tension as we look at how do we fund other priorities within the Department of Homeland Security, and a concern that I will pass on to my relief is you may enter another cycle of flatline budgets at a point in time where our needs are continuing to grow, particularly in this domain,” Zukunft continued.

“2023 is when we anticipate taking delivery of the first heavy icebreaker. We want to sustain the Polar Star for two years beyond that to make sure as we go through sea trials that we’re fully mission ready.”

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HEADLINE	03/14 EU backs Britain complaints over Russia
SOURCE	http://www.euronews.com/2018/03/14/europe-lends-its-support-to-britain-s-complaints-against-russia
GIST	<p>The poisoning of a former Russian double agent in Britain will be discussed at next week's summit of European Union leaders says European Council President Donald Tusk. Speaking at a joint press conference with Finland's prime minister, Tusk said this was no time for division in the west.</p> <p>"At a time when someone on the outside spreads fake news, meddles in our elections, and attacks people on our soil with the use of a nerve agent, the response must not be transatlantic bickering, but transatlantic unity," he said, although he criticised President Trump's import tariff plans.</p> <p>The Salisbury incident has raised concerns in Europe, but also support for Britain.</p> <p>"This behaviour is part of a pattern: annexation of Crimea, cyber attacks in Estonia and now we see chemical weapons being used in Salisbury, part of my constituency. We see the attempted murder of two people, a man and his daughter. This is unacceptable behaviour by Russia, it's an attack on the UK and the West must make it absolutely clear that this behaviour is absolutely unacceptable," said MEP Ashley Fox.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Snohomish Co. students join walkout
SOURCE	http://www.heraldnet.com/news/students-here-join-thousands-nationwide-to-protest-shootings/
GIST	<p>EVERETT — Thousands of students around Snohomish County walked out of their classes Wednesday morning.</p> <p>Most protested for 17 minutes — 10 to 10:17 a.m. That’s one minute for every person killed in the shootings at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida.</p>

The walkouts at local middle and high schools were part of a national movement exactly one month after the attack.

The student-led events were a way to remember those killed, and for young people to demand action on gun laws, school safety and mental health care.

Everett High School student Justin Zabel delivered a prepared speech through a megaphone on the front steps of the historic campus. Hundreds of students listened in the drizzle.

He had explained the evening before why he felt compelled to speak up.

“When I heard about the Parkland, Florida, high school shooting, it hit me really hard,” he said. “I was like, ‘That could have been my high school. That could have been me that was shot. That could have been my family that could be grieving.’ And I knew when I had that feeling, it was time to make a stand for our safety.”

Zabel worries that bullying motivates some school shooters. He favors laws that make it harder for young people to access guns.

On the front lawn, the crowd of Everett students chanted, “We need change! Enough is enough!”

At Scriber Lake High School in Edmonds, the walkout was organized by students, including senior Tyler Blanchard.

They oppose the sale of military-grade weapons to civilians, he said.

Some school districts chose to excuse absences for the walkouts, while others said attendance policies and classes would continue as normal.

In letters sent to families beforehand, leaders of local districts urged respect for students who chose to walk out, and for those who did not. While many students left classes, others chose to remain at their desks.

Multiple districts did not allow news media on campus. Marysville was one of them. In October 2014, five students were shot, four fatally, at Marysville Pilchuck High School, before the shooter killed himself. This year’s senior class were freshmen at the time.

Administrators in Mukilteo also asked reporters to stay off school property, including the fields at Mariner High School where students gathered. Just after 10 a.m., roughly 500 students filed out the main doors, according to school district estimates. At the same time, nearly 900 students spilled out of nearby Voyager Middle School. They walked out to the football field, circled the track and returned to class 17 minutes later, all in silence and without an adult having to say anything.

The Mukilteo district has been affected by gun violence. Four Kamiak High School graduates were shot, three fatally, at a house party in July 2016. In February, a student at Aces High School was arrested for allegedly plotting a mass shooting on the campus. He remains in the Snohomish County Jail, charged with attempted murder.

Multiple administrators expressed support for students exercising their freedom of speech, but said they could not sanction political messages.

In Sultan, students felt they were being dissuaded from walking out. Some planned to leave the high school campus and walk to a gazebo on Main Street. They changed plans Wednesday morning to avoid possible discipline.

	About 30 students marched to the sports stadium, chanting: “Spread love, not hate. We just want to graduate.”
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HEADLINE	03/14 South Sound students join walkout
SOURCE	http://www.theolympian.com/news/local/article205085164.html#wgt=trending
GIST	<p>South Sound students joined others across the country in a 17-minute-long walkout Wednesday morning to protest gun violence.</p> <p>The nationwide protest comes one month after the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida that left 17 people dead.</p> <p>Since then, students have pressed legislators to pass stronger gun laws.</p> <p>Among the local students who participated were those from Timberline, Olympia, Capital and Tumwater High Schools; Reeves, Aspire and Reeves middle school; and South Puget Sound Community College.</p> <p>School administrators in Olympia said last week that students could face unexcused absences if they participate.</p> <p>“(E)vents such as these are student-led events and not school-sponsored activities ...,” the district’s email noted. It said that classes will continue on their normal schedule during the walkout.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Snohomish Co. bans safe injection sites
SOURCE	http://www.heraldnet.com/news/snohomish-county-permanently-bans-heroin-injection-sites/
GIST	<p>EVERETT — The Snohomish County Council passed a land-use ordinance Wednesday that would permanently ban supervised heroin-injection sites.</p> <p>The measure passed 4-0.</p> <p>The restriction was proposed by Councilman Nate Nehring to prevent any government-monitored injection sites like one that operates in Vancouver, B.C., and dozens of other locations around the world, where government nurses stand watch as drug users shoot up. Officials in King County and Seattle are considering opening a couple of sites based on a similar model in the hopes of lowering overdose deaths and preventing the spread of diseases.</p> <p>Council Chairwoman Stephanie Wright said there are no current proposals to establish any drug-consumption sites in Snohomish County. Wright described the council’s move Wednesday as proactive.</p> <p>Councilman Brian Sullivan was out sick during Wednesday’s vote.</p> <p>More than an hour of public comments was dominated by people who opposed supervised drug-use sites for fear that they could worsen crime and encourage more substance abuse. They also could create liability for the county, if someone were to die of an overdose, they argued. On the other side of the issue, one person said the sites should be considered as a possible way to get more drug users into treatment and to lower crime.</p> <p>Snohomish County’s permanent ban follows a moratorium the council enacted in September.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Traffic deaths continue to soar
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/traffic-deaths-continue-to-soar-despite-cities-pledges-to-get-them-to-zero/2018/03/14/36c57386-26c7-11e8-b79d-f3d931db7f68_story.html?utm_term=.54c3257ac3b4
GIST	<p>D.C. Mayor Muriel E. Bowser stood in the heart of Union Station on Feb. 20, 2015, and promised to lead the nation’s capital into an era free of traffic fatalities.</p> <p>“We are taking our first step toward realizing a ‘Vision Zero’ where no lives are lost on our streets or at our intersections,” said a newly elected Bowser, setting a goal of zero road deaths by 2024.</p> <p>Instead, the number of traffic fatalities has steadily increased since then, frustrating city officials and advocates, and seemingly putting the goal further from reach.</p> <p>The District is not alone. Data recently released by the Governors Highway Safety Association shows that after decades of improvement, the number of victims on the nation’s roads is rising across the country — especially among pedestrians.</p> <p>Traffic fatalities had been declining significantly since the 1970s as a result of safer vehicles, increased enforcement of laws on drunken and impaired driving, and a greater use of seat belts.</p> <p>The trend is a particular setback for cities such as the District and Los Angeles that in recent years have pledged a “Vision Zero” approach to reduce fatalities and serious injuries, and are instead seeing their numbers rise.</p> <p>“We don’t want this to be a trend,” said Sam Zimbabwe, a top District Department of Transportation official. “We’ve got real concerns that to get to zero we need to drive this number down.”</p> <p>In Washington, where Vision Zero is one of the mayor’s signature initiatives, there were 30 traffic fatalities last year, up from 28 in 2016 and 26 in 2015. Of those killed on D.C. streets last year, 11, or nearly 40 percent, were pedestrians.</p> <p>Los Angeles, which adopted Vision Zero two years ago, fell short of its goal of reducing traffic deaths 20 percent by 2017. The 3 percent reduction the city experienced wasn’t viewed as much of a success because the share of pedestrian victims nearly doubled from 2015.</p> <p>Even in New York, where Vision Zero has been successful by some measures, several recent fatal incidents involving children as young as 1 have ignited protests and demands for safer street design and other pedestrian protections.</p> <p>“The news nationally is not good,” said Jonathan Adkins, executive director of the Governors Highway Safety Association, which issued a report last month that estimates about 6,000 pedestrians were killed on U.S. roadways last year. That number is basically unchanged from 2016 but represents a nearly 50 percent increase since 2009.</p> <p>Though the upward shift is most striking among pedestrian fatalities, overall traffic deaths also remain at an alarmingly high level, authorities say. For the second consecutive year, U.S. road deaths topped 40,000 last year, according to the National Safety Council.</p> <p>“The price we are paying for mobility is 40,000 lives each year,” said NSC chief executive Deborah A.P. Hersman. “This is a stark reminder that our complacency is killing us. The only acceptable number is zero.”</p> <p>At least 33 U.S. jurisdictions are part of the Vision Zero initiative, modeled after a pioneering Swedish program started in 1997, with the aim of eliminating fatalities and serious injuries. To achieve the goal, the program uses strategies focused on enforcement, public education, street engineering and data collection.</p>

	<p>But the increase in fatalities has led critics to question the effectiveness of the program and whether cities are doing enough to make streets safer for all road users.</p> <p>Few are willing to assign a clear cause to the increase in traffic deaths, but research shows alcohol, speed and distracted driving remain leading factors.</p> <p>Studies point to distractions among pedestrians, including texting while walking. The Governors Highway Safety Association study found marijuana use also could be a factor, noting that jurisdictions that have legalized the drug in recent years, including the District, have seen increases in the number of pedestrian deaths.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 US backs up UK on nerve agent attack
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/us-backs-up-uk-on-nerve-agent-attack-russia-is-to-blame?ref=home
GIST	<p>The United States on Wednesday backed up the United Kingdom's assessment that Russia was behind a nerve-agent attack against a former Russian spy in the United Kingdom.</p> <p>White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said the U.S. also supports the U.K.'s decision to kick out Russian diplomats as punishment.</p> <p>"This latest action by Russia fits into a pattern of behavior in which Russia disregards the international rules-based order, undermines the sovereignty and security of countries worldwide, and attempts to subvert and discredit Western democratic institutions and processes," Sanders said in a forceful statement condemning the Kremlin.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Students unite from Tumwater to Seattle
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/2018/03/tumwater-seattle-students-unite-gun-walkout
GIST	<p>Absent any school bell to prompt them, thousands of teenagers in schools across Puget Sound left their classrooms as the clock struck 10 on Wednesday morning.</p> <p>Joining some tens of thousands of their peers across the country, the majority of the students walked out to send a message to Congress on gun control; others simply to memorialize the 17 people shot and killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida exactly one month ago.</p> <p>"We are tired of waiting for adults to take action while we continue to suffer and lose our friends, our classmates, our teammates and our peers," said Madison Thomas, a 20-year-old Seattle native who is among the 13 young leaders of the Women's March Youth Empower group, which helped coordinate Wednesday's massive protests across the country.</p> <p>For most of its participants, the National School Walkout underscored a call for gun reforms, including a ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, an expansion of background checks to all gun sales and a rejection of proposals to bring more guns into schools, like President Trump's NRA-approved plan to arm school teachers.</p> <p>In Seattle, students carried the message of gun-control reform with rallies that included an appearance by Mayor Jenny Durkan on the University of Washington campus and a visit by Gov. Jay Inslee to Ballard High School.</p> <p>But not all students around the state walked out as a form of political protest.</p> <p>In one of Puget Sound's semi-rural, more conservative suburbs, student organizers in Tumwater toed a more cautious line, opting for unity over politics. "Our main message is to honor the lives of those who</p>

were lost,” said Brad Blackburn, a junior at Tumwater High School. “That could have been anyone. So, our main focus is emphasizing school safety.”

Tumwater High School, south of Olympia, draws from the rural parts of Thurston County. Tumwater itself is suburban, but students bus in from as far south as Littlerock off I-5’s exit 99. In sharp contrast to the progressive tilt of the state capital just 10 minutes north, Trump “Make American Great Again” hats are common among its approximately 1,200 students. During an assembly at nearby Bush Middle School last Veterans Day, some students flew a Confederate battle flag.

Gun culture here is strong; the Tumwater High School rifle club receives \$19,000 a year from the National Rifle Association, according to the Associated Press. The club’s website boasts of its NRA support.

Blackburn, a Tumwater native, is the exception more than the norm: He’s Black in a mostly White school, pro-gun control in a gun-friendly area, and he knows people talk about him and sometimes scoff at what they view as his Second Amendment opposition. But years of speaking his mind have given him a stiff backbone and the fortitude to help organize the walkout.

“Over time people have tried to bash me about it. But if you stand your ground, bullies tire,” Blackburn said.

Blackburn was lonely once, the feeling compounded by both his skin color and his courage to speak out. “When you’re walking down the hallways, you know what people are thinking,” he said. “People don’t like what you’re doing. At times, I feel very isolated.”

But he’s found a community in recent years in the school’s Cultural Awareness and Student Activism clubs, separate groups but with nearly identical members. It was a place where others who felt isolated could meet and celebrate diversity where it may otherwise lack.

It was in these meetings that plans for the walkout first formulated. And as they planned, they faced some backlash from other students who saw it as a protest against the Second Amendment. Amiya Bernard, a recent California transplant who’s the president of the Cultural Awareness club, insists that was not the purpose of Wednesday’s walkout. But regardless, she said, “If you care about this stuff, you might lose friends.”

Speaking before the 10 a.m. start of the event, she said that even if no one else showed up, the clubs’ walkout would be a voice for students too scared to speak out.

As it turned out, more than 200 students filed out of the school’s front door, gathering behind 17 empty chairs placed outside, each one with a picture of someone who was shot dead in Parkland. As they locked arms in silence for 17 minutes, students who remained inside the school looked on through the windows.

When the silence finished and students quickly returned to their classrooms — administrators adjusted the schedule to allow for the walkout — the organizers were elated, hugging each other, their teachers and even the principal, Jeff Broome. Aisha Thomas, a junior, said, “The fact that 200 people came is insane.”

In northeast Seattle, a few thousand students from as many as seven different high schools gathered at Roosevelt High School on Wednesday morning, eagerly embracing their megaphone in calling for an end to gun violence through gun-control reforms.

Together — shouting chants and holding colorful protest signs — they marched 1.5 miles from the school to convene in a massive rally at the University of Washington’s Red Square.

Student organizers didn’t want to just stage the 17-minute walkout as the national movement called for. “This deserves more than 17 minutes,” said Zach Heffron, an 18-year-old senior at Nathan Hale High School who helped mobilize his peers.

In the days after Parkland, Heffron, Roosevelt senior Gabe Rosenbloom and Roosevelt junior Scout Smissen led the charge to organize the school walkout — drawing inspiration from the Florida school student activists who drew national attention with their #NeverAgain movement.

“It’s always been that this happens and nothing comes from it – we’re numb to it,” Heffron said. “But this could be the one that we actually get the momentum on our side, we actually get something done and, as students, we raise our voices.”

Rosenbloom, 18, said state and federal lawmakers should take note of the students walking out across America, because if the students aren’t at voting age already, they will be soon. “Hear our voice now because soon, you work for us!” he said in a speech at the UW rally that capped off their morning protest.

Several students who marched said the Parkland shooting hit home for a simple reason: “Something like that could happen at Roosevelt, and the idea of that scares me,” Rosenbloom told Crosscut. “And that shouldn’t have to scare me when I’m in a place of learning.”

But the motivations for some marchers and organizers was even more personal. The walkout came just days after a Roosevelt High student was hospitalized last weekend after she was shot in a reported act of neighborhood gun violence. And in that same neighborhood almost six years ago, five people were shot and killed in a mass shooting at Café Racer.

“It was one of the most gruesome Seattle moments,” recalled Smissen, 17, who said she lost a “dear friend and a neighbor” in that tragedy. “For me, it’s not why I’m marching, but why wouldn’t I? There’s no reason not to be active in a time like this.”

As the crowd of kids flooded off the Roosevelt High football field and down 15th Avenue Northeast, they were cheered on and applauded by onlookers. A group of elementary school students from the University Cooperative School held up handmade signs and gave the high school students high fives as they marched past, one person from an apartment yelling “You rock!” to the crowd and other adults lining the sidewalks in visible awe of the students.

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HEADLINE	03/14 School walkout protests vary in tenor
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/824a04eeeb8e4fc0875d9a0be8273c53/From-somber-to-angry,-school-walkout-protests-vary-in-tenor
GIST	<p>Students hoisted “Stand United” signs. They chanted ““Hey, hey, ho, ho - the NRA has got to go” outside the White House. Others put 14 desks and 3 podiums in a circle to honor the students and faculty killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High.</p> <p>These scenes played out across the country as students put down their pencils and pens and walked out of class to protest gun violence. Activists hoped it would be the biggest demonstration of student activism yet in response to last month’s massacre in Florida.</p> <p>A PERSONAL CONNECTION TO PARKLAND</p> <p>Students discuss gun violence ahead of a walkout at East Chapel Hill High School.</p> <p>At East Chapel Hill High School in North Carolina, senior Talia Pomp said one of her best friends attends Marjory Stoneman Douglas High and texted her during the rampage last month, leaving an everlasting impact on her.</p> <p>“That personal connection made it like super real for me ... and this has to be the last one,” said Pomp, who handed out orange T-shirts with #enough written on them to her classmates.</p>

Some of her classmates aligned their desks in a circle to discuss gun violence in America. Above them hung an image of Che Guevara, a prominent communist figure in the Cuban Revolution who went on to become a guerrilla leader in South America and a universal symbol of revolution.

PARKLAND HIGH - SHARING MORE THAN A NAME

Students hold their cellphones at a rally at Parkland High School outside Allentown, Pa.

Parkland High School outside Allentown, Pennsylvania, shares more than a name with the school in Parkland, Florida.

Stoneman Douglass freshman Daniel Duff, who survived the shooting by hiding in a closet but lost seven of his friends, is the cousin of Collin and Kyleigh Duff, who go to Parkland High in Pennsylvania. The Duff siblings have been selling #parklandforparkland bracelets, raising more than \$10,000 for the Florida shooting victims.

Daniel Duff described what it was like to live through the shooting in a video that was shown at the rally.

“How many more mass shootings does it have to take for real change?” he said.

PROTEST AND BE PUNISHED?

Students at Carlton J. Kell High School in Cobb County, Ga., sit in their classroom after they were asked not to leave by staff.

While some schools encouraged the walkouts and arranged the school day around them, others took a stand against the protests and threatened punishment.

At Kell High School in Marietta, just northwest of Atlanta, three of the 1,000-plus students walked out, then went back inside after their 17 minutes of protest. The school had said any protesting students would be punished, but it didn't specify the consequences.

Police patrolled outside. A British couple walking their dogs near the school wanted to encourage students, but they were threatened with arrest if they did not leave the campus.

About an hour's drive south, in Whitfield County, Superintendent Judy Gilreath wrote a letter threatening disciplinary action for students who walked out, citing concerns about confrontations between students over gun rights. And suburban Atlanta's Cobb County School District, one of the state's largest systems, announced that it does not support the walkouts, but the potential consequences didn't deter some students.

“Change never happens without backlash,” said Kara Litwin, a senior in Cobb County.

A POEM FOR PARKLAND

Yarmouth High School student Sage Watterson reads a poem she wrote titled “Never Again.”

In Maine, most of the walkout demonstrations were postponed because of school cancellations following a snowstorm that dumped up to 20 inches.

But more than 200 students gathered outside Yarmouth High School as snow pelted the crowd to hold a moment of silence for the victims.

“This is not politics. This is life, and the loss of it. This is the indisputable fact that every student in America goes to school with a bundle of fear tucked into their backpack. It is exhausting,” said Sage Watterson, reading from an original poem, “Never Again.”

She said she wanted to “grab James Madison by the whig” and tell him that the use of a comma in the 2nd Amendment opened the door to gun violence he never could’ve imagined.

“Do not use our forefathers’ words to mop up the blood on library carpets and cafeteria floors,” she said.

HITTING CLOSE TO HOME

A female student was fatally shot at Huffman High School in Birmingham, Alabama, earlier this month, so dozens of students walked outside and encircled a flagpole, which was still at half-staff in memory of 17-year-old Courtlin Arrington. They spent 17 minutes in silence for each of the Parkland deaths, and 1 minute for their slain classmate. A 17-year-old junior has been charged with manslaughter in Arrington’s death.

“We were out there for the Florida victims, as many other schools were, but we were also out there for one of our own and I think that was the hardest part,” said senior DeCarlos Bates, 17.

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HEADLINE	03/14 Tens of thousands stage school walkouts
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/00f790b17b2542319cc1fa519259b86b/US-students-stage-school-walkouts-to-protest-gun-violence
GIST	<p>Warning their futures are being stolen from them, tens of thousands of young people across the U.S. walked out of school to demand action on gun violence Wednesday in one of the biggest student protests since the Vietnam era.</p> <p>Braving snow in New England and threats of school discipline in places like Georgia and Ohio, they carried signs, chanted slogans against the National Rifle Association and bowed their heads in tribute to the 17 dead in the Feb. 14 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.</p> <p>“We’re sick of it,” said Maxwell Nardi, a senior at Douglas S. Freeman High School in Henrico, Virginia, just outside Richmond. “We’re going to keep fighting, and we’re not going to stop until Congress finally makes resolute changes.”</p> <p>Across the country and beyond, students were urged to leave class at 10 a.m. local time for 17 minutes — one minute for each of the dead in Florida. At some schools, students didn’t walk outside but lined the hallways, gathered in gyms and auditoriums or wore orange, the color used by the movement against gun violence, or maroon, the school color at Stoneman Douglas.</p> <p>“I don’t want my mother or my father having to worry about me going to school getting an education and then my life is gone,” said Leticia Carroll, a 15-year-old freshman who helped organize a walkout of more than 100 students at Groves High School in Beverly Hills, Michigan, outside Detroit.</p> <p>She added: “We need answers. We need something done.”</p> <p>Max Poteat, a student leader at North Carolina’s East Chapel Hill High School, said he was struck by the emotional weight of the moment.</p> <p>“I think halfway through it really hit me, and I think everyone around, that these are teenagers just like us and that their lives were taken innocently — and that time is needed for change,” he said.</p> <p>In joining the protests, the students followed the example set by many of the survivors of the Florida shooting, who have become activists on gun control, leading rallies, lobbying legislators and giving articulate TV interviews. Their efforts helped spur passage last week of a Florida law curbing access to assault rifles by young people</p>

In Washington, more than 2,000 high-school age protesters observed the 17 minutes of silence by sitting on the ground with their backs turned to the White House as a church bell tolled. President Donald Trump was in Los Angeles at the time.

Students rally in front of the White House

The protesters carried signs with messages such as “Our Blood/Your Hands” and “Never Again” and chanted slogans against the NRA.

Stoneman Douglas High senior David Hogg livestreamed the walkout at the tragedy-stricken school on his YouTube channel. Walking amid a mass of people making their way onto the football field, he criticized politicians for not taking more action to protect students.

He said the students could not be expected to remain in class when there was work to do to prevent gun violence.

“Every one of these individuals could have died that day. I could have died that day,” he said.

A nor’easter that buried Boston in snow and left many schools closed disrupted the protest plans. But hundreds of students still gathered at a Boston church before marching to the Statehouse, where they planned to lobby lawmakers to pass new gun regulations.

“I feel like there is a certain power in kids standing up for themselves and standing up for their safety,” said Esmay Price Jones, 14, a Somerville High School freshman

At other schools, students created symbols to try to represent the tragedy. At Cooper City High, near Parkland, students gathered around 14 empty desks and three podiums arranged in a circle outside the school, representing the 14 students and three faculty members killed in the shooting. The students then released 17 doves from a box.

Some schools applauded students for taking a stand or at least tolerated the walkouts, while others threatened discipline.

About 10 students left Ohio’s West Liberty-Salem High School — which witnessed a shooting last year — despite a warning they could face detention or more serious discipline.

Police in the Atlanta suburb of Marietta patrolled Kell High, where students were threatened with unspecified consequences if they participated. Three students walked out anyway for the 17-minute protest. A British couple walking their dogs went to the school to encourage students but were threatened with arrest if they did not leave.

The coordinated walkouts were organized by Empower, the youth wing of the Women’s March, which brought thousands to Washington last year. It offered the students a list of demands for lawmakers, including a ban on assault weapons and mandatory background checks for all gun sales.

The organizers are seeking to keep up the pressure for stricter gun laws despite resistance from the White House and little action over the years on Capitol Hill.

After initially endorsing an increase in the minimum age for buying assault weapons to 21, Trump left that out of a proposal that calls for a panel study on school safety.

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos had no immediate public comment on the walkout.

Historians said the demonstrations were shaping up to be one of the largest youth protests in decades.

“It seems like it’s going to be the biggest youth-oriented and youth-organized protest movements going

back decades, to the early '70s at least,” said David Farber a history professor at the University of Kansas who has studied social change movements.

“Young people are that social media generation, and it’s easy to mobilize them in a way that it probably hadn’t been even 10 years ago.”

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HEADLINE	03/14 Seattle task force pushes for more taxes
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/925685/task-force-employee-hours-tax-seattle/
GIST	<p>A head tax on Seattle businesses may not be enough, according to a task force that is now recommending additional taxes on the city’s wealthy residents.</p> <p>“We therefore believe that the City of Seattle should pass legislation this year to generate \$150 million per year in new progressive revenue, including an Employee Hours Tax,” the task force states in its report to the council. “... wisely invested over the next 10 years, will result in significant and measurable progress toward ending the crisis of homelessness and housing insecurity in our city.”</p> <p>The March 9 report from Seattle’s Progressive Revenue Task Force on Housing and Homelessness primarily proposes an employee hours tax — also referred to as a head tax. But it also proposes new taxes, including estate and CEO taxes.</p> <p>Additionally, the task force recommends the city change its approach to the homeless crises. For example, providing special RV tags allowing them to park without fear of being ticketed.</p> <p>The task force notes that cuts could be made to some city spending, such as the criminal justice budget. But it concludes that new revenue is the main solution to the homelessness crisis. The task force states that “tax burdens should not be increased lightly,” and that the homeless crisis is caused, in part, by Seattle’s economic boom.</p> <p>Employee hours tax</p> <p>The task force recommends the city establish an employee hours tax to go into effect Jan. 1, 2019. It provides a range of options based on employer size and type. In the end, it aims to raise between \$25 million to \$75 million a year. The reports states:</p> <p>‘Employers that can afford to contribute more should pay more, while employers that cannot afford to contribute as much should pay less.’</p> <p>Noting that it may not be perfect, the report encourages the council to “not let the perfect be the enemy of the good.”</p> <p>‘Care should be taken not to disproportionately impact POC- and other minority-owned businesses and employers, or to speed the process of gentrification and displacement that are already transforming business districts as well as residential areas in many neighborhoods where communities of color have historically resided.’</p> <p>The city would tax employers either with a flat fee per employee or as a percentage of payroll. It also suggests the council design the tax to vary depending on business size. The report states that the council should design exceptions, such as businesses under a certain revenue threshold.</p> <p>Other new taxes</p> <p>The task force recommends additional taxes to raise beyond the \$75 million employee hours tax. It admits that the amount it proposes won’t cover the entire housing need, but will be “a solid start” to solving the problem through affordable housing programs.</p>

‘The city can leverage state and federal funding, but still Seattle must pitch in ~ \$170,000 per unit. That means we need a total of \$3.4 billion, or \$340 million per year for 10 years.’

That \$340 million annual need only covers capital costs, not ongoing operations. The task force therefore proposes a variety of additional tax strategies beyond an employee hours tax.

- Local Estate Tax: Washington allows a [tax on estates](#) after an owner is deceased. The task force recommends increasing the estate tax locally by as much as 50 percent.
- Exceptionally high compensation: A tax on companies that have a CEO-to-worker pay ratio above 100-to-1. [Portland passed a similar pay ratio surtax](#) in 2016.
- Raise the REET: Seattle could lobby lawmakers in Olympia to get a new real estate excise tax authority. This would be a tax on property sales more than \$1 million, for example. It is also referred to as a mansion tax.
- The task force asks the council to lobby state lawmakers to give the city the authority to tax: second homes; vacant/unoccupied property; and speculative real estate investment activity.

Strategies

The report also suggests a range of strategies to help combat the homelessness crisis.

Strategies include:

- A portion of the new revenue could be provided to faith communities in the form of grants.
- Split employee hours tax revenue by 80-20 percent between affordable housing programs and emergency shelters.
- Construct new shelter options until more affordable housing is available.
- Support people living in their vehicles: Modify scofflaw rules; make safety lots for off-street parking with access to bathrooms and trash pickup; provide waste removal for RVs; payment of tickets beyond what vehicle residents can pay; provide repair for vehicles that cannot move; provide fuel; assist with insurance and drivers license issues; issue RV tags allowing them to park in designated areas without fear of being ticketed.
- \$10 million should be used annually to augment the Veterans, Seniors & Human Services Levy.
- Support communities of color developing affordable housing. Prioritize projects that help “anchor communities of color and assist these organizations in developing internal capacity to conceive, design, finance, construct, and manage affordable housing projects.”

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HEADLINE	03/14 Seattle 14-mile pursuit under investigation
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/926785/police-pursuit-seattle-kent/
GIST	<p>Police involved in an approximate 14-mile chase from South Seattle to Kent are being investigated for their use of force in stopping a suspect, KIRO 7 reports.</p> <p>The chase began around 1:15 p.m. on Tuesday, March 13 in the 4400 block of Fourth Avenue South.</p> <p>According to the Seattle Police Department, the suspect driving a stolen truck was involved in “multiple collisions” before leaving city limits. KIRO 7 footage shows several collisions throughout the pursuit, including one that resulted in the driver of another vehicle being taken to the hospital.</p> <p>The pursuit ended around 2 p.m. in the 5700 block of South 272nd Street.</p> <p>Now, investigators are looking into whether or not law enforcement involved went too far in stopping the suspect, according to KIRO 7.</p> <p>That will depend on whether police violated pursuit policy. In Seattle, officers cannot pursue a suspect without justification that the need to stop a suspect outweighs the risk to the public. Simple traffic violations and misdemeanors, for example, are not reasons to start a pursuit, according to the department’s</p>

	<p>policy.</p> <p>Officers are expected to end a pursuit when the risk outweighs the need to stop the driver. Factors to end the pursuit include location, road conditions, speed, traffic conditions, and more.</p> <p>During the March 13 pursuit, the suspect took law enforcement through several neighborhoods and a school zone.</p> <p>Whether or not police needed to pursue the suspect has yet to be determined. It's likely they felt it was justified at the time because officers believed the suspect was involved in a weekend shooting.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Recall: Ford Fusion, Lincoln MKZ
SOURCE	http://www.fox5ny.com/news/local-news/ford-recalling-14m-cars-for-loose-steering-wheel-bolts
GIST	<p>(WJBK) - Ford is recalling nearly 1.4 million midsize cars in North America because the steering wheel can detach from the steering column and drivers could lose control.</p> <p>The recall covers certain Ford Fusion and Lincoln MKZ cars from the 2014 through 2018 model years.</p> <p>Ford says steering wheel bolts can loosen over time. The company says it knows of two crashes and one injury caused by the problem.</p> <p>Dealers will replace the bolts with longer ones that have more aggressive threads and a nylon patch to stop them from coming loose.</p> <p>Just over 1.3 million cars in the U.S. are being recalled. The rest are in Canada and Mexico.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 EU plan for return of illegal migrants
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/03/14/eu-to-limit-visas-if-countries-refuse-to-take-back-migrants.html
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS – The European Union moved Wednesday to speed up the return of unauthorized migrants, announcing plans to punish countries that refuse to take back their nationals by restricting visas for their diplomats.</p> <p>While the number of people entering Europe in search of better lives has dropped dramatically over the past year, EU countries only send back around half of migrants denied visas, often because the migrants have lost or destroyed their ID documents and it's difficult to establish their nationality. Fake ID is also often used.</p> <p>France, for example, is angered that Mali routinely refuses to take back people that Paris insists are from there.</p> <p>Formalizing a threat already made to some African countries by EU member states, the EU's executive Commission announced that it has "a new mechanism to trigger stricter conditions for processing visas when a partner country does not cooperate sufficiently."</p> <p>The aim is to target decision-makers by dragging out the application time for diplomatic visas, hiking costs or cutting short their stays.</p> <p>At the same time, the Commission said it plans to make tourism visas more attractive. It would allow for earlier applications, electronic visas, and strictly limited stays of one week in one EU country.</p>

	<p>But the price of visas — already beyond the means of most Africans — would rise from 60 to 80 euros (\$74 to \$99), leaving many heading to Europe in search of better lives with little incentive to apply.</p> <p>"With these changes, we will keep Europe's door open for bone fide travelers but closed for those who pose security risks," said EU Migration Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Greece rejects Turkey extradition request
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/03/14/greek-court-rejects-turkish-extradition-request.html
GIST	<p>ATHENS, Greece – A Greek court has rejected a Turkish extradition request for a young woman who was among nine suspected Turkish militants arrested in Athens ahead of an official visit by Turkey's president late last year.</p> <p>The three-member panel of judges ruled Wednesday that 21-year-old Halaz Secer was in danger of being tried for issues other than what the extradition request sought her for and that her life could be in danger if returned to Turkey. The judges also ruled that some offences she was being sought for, like participating in protests and making banners, were not crimes.</p> <p>The nine were arrested in December for alleged links to the left-wing Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front, which Turkey, the United States and the European Union consider a terrorist organization. She denies the charges.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 UN seeks \$540M for Palestinian aid
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/seeks-540-million-palestinian-aide-gaza-53737918?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The United Nations says about \$540 million is needed for humanitarian relief in the Palestinian territories in 2018.</p> <p>Jamie McGoldrick, the top U.N. humanitarian coordinator, said Wednesday that 75 percent of that sum is for Gaza, where "a man-made tragedy is unfolding daily."</p> <p>Gaza has been under an Israeli and Egyptian blockade since the Islamic militant group Hamas took over the territory in 2007. The closure along with Hamas' conflicts with Israel and a bitter power struggle with the group's bitter rival, the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, has devastated the economy.</p> <p>Half the sum is to support emergency projects by UNRWA, the main U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, after Washington slashed its funding this year.</p> <p>The rest is to fund food, water, health, sanitation, shelter and education projects.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Myanmar: ready for UN help w/Rohingya
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/myanmar-ready-rohingya-return-53736960?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Senior officials in Myanmar announced Wednesday that they have begun talks with U.N. agencies to see how they could assist with the repatriation of Rohingya refugees who fled to Bangladesh to escape violence against them.</p>

Foreign Ministry Permanent Secretary Myint Thu said the offices of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees and the U.N. Development Program responded last week with a proposal and concept paper to the government's invitation for U.N. involvement, which the government is now studying.

"We considered that the time is now appropriate to invite UNHCR and UNDP to be involved in the repatriation and resettlement process, as well as in carrying out activities supporting the livelihoods and development for all communities in Rakhine state," Myint Thu said.

Human rights experts believe safety cannot yet be guaranteed for about 700,000 Rohingya Muslims who fled the western state of Rakhine to Bangladesh after security forces carried out brutal crackdowns in response to attacks by Rohingya insurgents last August.

Antagonism between Rakhine's Buddhist community and Rohingya Muslims led to communal violence in 2012, forcing at least 140,000 Rohingya from their homes into squalid camps for internally displaced people. Most Rohingya are treated as stateless persons with limited rights, and the insurgents drew support from the discontented as prejudice against their community grew in overwhelming Buddhist Myanmar.

Stanislav Saling, a U.N. spokesman in Myanmar, confirmed that in response to Myanmar's initiative, the U.N. agencies submitted a note proposing how they could help create conditions "for the safe, dignified and voluntary return for refugees, in line with international principles."

Neither the U.N. nor the government made public details of the proposal.

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HEADLINE	03/14 Russia: UK expulsion 'unacceptable'
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-russia-rejects-ultimatums-spy-poisoning-53733585?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The Latest on the poisoning of a former Russian spy in England (all times local):</p> <p>2:10 p.m.</p> <p>Russia's UK ambassador says Britain's decision to expel some 23 Russian diplomats is hostile and unacceptable.</p> <p>The embassy says in a statement Wednesday that U.K. Ambassador Alexander Yakovenko was summoned to the Foreign Office and told of the expulsions. Prime Minister Theresa May announced the measure in response to the nerve agent attack on Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia.</p> <p>May gave the Russians an ultimatum until midnight Tuesday to explain how a nerve agent developed in the Soviet era came to be used in the March 4 attack. May responded with a package of diplomatic and economic sanctions after she said her request was met with disdain.</p> <p>Yakovenko says "we consider this hostile action as totally unacceptable, unjustified and shortsighted."</p> <p>_____</p> <p>1:30 p.m.</p> <p>A top Russian soccer figure is brushing off Britain's threat to ask its royal family to stay away from this summer's soccer World Cup in Russia.</p> <p>British Prime Minister Theresa May on Wednesday said Britain's royal family would be asked not to attend the tournament, as part of sweeping measures against Russia over the nerve agent attack on former Russian agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter in England.</p>

Nikolai Simonyan, vice president of the Russian Football Union, was quoted by the Interfax news agency as saying "It's not so important that officials wouldn't come, that's their problem. It's important if the team comes, and it wants to come."

12:50 p.m.

Britain is expelling 23 Russian diplomats after the nerve agent attack on a former Russian spy — the single biggest such expulsion since the Cold War.

Prime Minister Theresa May told the House of Commons on Wednesday that Russia has expressed "disdain" for Britain's wish for an explanation into the attempted murder of former spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia. She says that Russia's actions "represent an unlawful use of force."

May said the Russian diplomats have a week to leave Britain.

She also announced a range of economic and diplomatic measures, including a decision to cancel all high-level bilateral contacts with Russia and to ask the royal family not attend the soccer World Cup in Russia.

Russia has denied responsibility in the March 4 attack on the Skripals.

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HEADLINE	03/14 UK expels 23 Russian diplomats
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SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/mar/14/theresa-may-uk-expel-23-russian-diplomats-over-spy/
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GIST	<p>LONDON (AP) — Britain is expelling 23 Russian diplomats after the nerve agent attack on a former Russian spy — the single biggest such expulsion since the Cold War.</p> <p>Prime Minister Theresa May told the House of Commons on Wednesday that Russia has expressed “disdain” for Britain’s wish for an explanation into the attempted murder of former spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia. She says that Russia’s actions “represent an unlawful use of force.”</p> <p>May said the Russian diplomats have a week to leave Britain.</p> <p>She also announced a range of economic and diplomatic measures, including a decision to cancel all high-level bilateral contacts with Russia and to ask the royal family not attend the soccer World Cup in Russia.</p> <p>Russia has denied responsibility in the March 4 attack on the Skripals.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 FBI: should have done more in Parkland
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SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/mar/14/fbi-says-it-should-have-done-more-run-parkland-sho/
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GIST	<p>The deputy director of the FBI said Wednesday that the bureau should have done more in the run-up to the Parkland school shooting last month that claimed the lives of 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High in Florida.</p> <p>“While we will never know if any such investigative activity would have prevented this tragedy, we clearly should have done more,” Deputy Director David Bowdich said in prepared testimony for a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing.</p>
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Mr. Bowdich said the bureau got an email tip on Sept. 25 from a person in Mississippi who said someone using the username “Nikolas Cruz” posted on a YouTube page: “Im going to be a professional school shooter.”

He said officials interviewed the tipster on Oct. 2, but the lead was closed after searches of FBI databases and open sources and a belief that the true identity of the poster could not be determined.

Authorities say Mr. Cruz, 19, used an AR-15-style rifle to kill 17 people at Stoneman Douglas on Feb. 14.

There was a subsequent phone call on Jan. 5 from someone identifying herself as a friend of the Cruz family who said the teen had threatened his mother with a rifle, that he wanted to kill people, and that he was “going to explode.”

After the call, the FBI operator conducted a search of FBI databases and found the closed lead out of Mississippi. She consulted with her supervisor and the matter was closed, and the information wasn’t forwarded to a field office for further review, Mr. Bowdich said in his testimony.

Mr. Bowdich said the FBI could have and should have done more in response, and that an internal investigation is ongoing. He said they’ve already doubled the number of special agent supervisors assigned to review tips received by “non-agent personnel.”

“When we make mistakes, we will not hide them, and we are committed, with your help, to doing whatever is necessary to correct our mistakes and prevent tragedies like this one from being repeated,” he said.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Charles E. Grassley convened the hearing to conduct oversight of what happened in the run-up to the shooting and discuss potential legislative responses.

“At all levels, law enforcement must explain what went wrong, why it went wrong, and what steps it is taking to make sure these failures never happen again,” Mr. Grassley said as he opened the hearing.

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HEADLINE	03/14 Combat prep: tour of duty in Chicago
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/navy-medics-get-prepared-for-combatwith-tour-of-duty-in-chicago-1521028800
GIST	<p>CHICAGO— Konrad Poplawski, a 22-year old Navy hospital corpsman, is about to be deployed as a battlefield medic with the 2nd Marine Division, which has served in deadly battlegrounds in Iraq and Afghanistan.</p> <p>But first, he is making a pit stop at Cook County’s Stroger Hospital, which the Navy says is among few places here in the U.S. that provide experience treating the types of wounds they will inevitably see on the battlefield.</p> <p>For so long “the first time a corpsman got any trauma experience was when they were deployed, and some would just freeze up,” said Captain Paul Roach, the U.S. Navy surgeon who heads the program in the Great Lakes region. “We don’t want that to happen anymore.”</p> <p>The Navy is working to formalize a pilot program that has been tested here for three years, rotating newly enlisted hospital corpsmen—the combat medics for the Navy and Marines—and those needing a refresher while they are back home, for six to eight weeks through Stroger Hospital’s trauma center. The 14-bed unit treats over 6,000 trauma patients yearly, many of them with penetrating, life-threatening wounds akin to those on the battlefield.</p> <p>Though Chicago is experiencing a sustained drop in murders since a dramatic spike in 2016, it remains a</p>

city where a high number of gunshot victims cycle through the trauma center night after night.

About 30% of patients at Stroger Hospital, on Chicago's near West Side, are admitted to the trauma ward with wounds from firearms, compared with a national average of 4.2% for level 1 trauma centers—hospitals certified to have the resources to handle multiple victims with penetrating and other serious wounds—according to the National Trauma Data Bank.

“The experience here can't be replicated elsewhere, unless you have a major land invasion,” said Dr. Faran Bokhari, who chairs the trauma & burn surgery unit at the hospital.

In many front-line Marine units, immediate medical care for gunshots, explosions or shrapnel comes from these corpsmen who mostly are young, new to the service and new to seeing up close the wounds they train to treat. The Navy medics, known as hospital corpsmen, typically receive 14 weeks of training in first aid and patient care in Fort Sam Houston in Texas after initial boot camp, and then have the option for additional training.

The program at Stroger Hospital is part of a new push from the Department of Defense to prioritize civilian and military partnerships, specifically budgeted for in last year's National Defense Authorization Act. Navy corpsmen started embedding at Stroger Hospital as part of a pilot program in 2014, but the program will be expanded and designated an official training rotation this spring.

“Corpsmen are not routinely exposed to trauma or critically injured patients during their first assignments,” said Defense Department spokeswoman Maj. Carla Gleason. This “realistic, hands-on trauma training will allow them to hone their skills and increase their readiness.”

In recent days, the group of corpsmen have learned skills including how to scrub in before entering an operating theater and how to operate a range of machinery, including suction machines for patients who are losing blood. After just two days of training, they fully immersed in the trauma unit's team of doctors and surgeons, expected to help with procedures during the trauma unit's busiest shift from 3 p.m. to 3 a.m.

Navy corpsmen often operate independently in combat zones, and the immersion helps them learn protocol and procedures in a large hospital so they can later replicate that.

“A lot of it is here's your training, you learn, it gets drilled in into your head—then it's just go,” said Andrew Swain, a 26-year old corpsman who has served as a medic in Iraq. During that deployment, in his first “mass-casualty incident,” he and just a handful of other medics had to treat about eight injured at the same time, all with traumatic injuries.

A week into their training, the corpsmen have seen multiple patients come in with gaping bullet hole wounds, and one with a traumatic injury to the eye after a motorcycle he was working on blew up in his face.

For Corpsman Poplawski, who grew up in suburban Michigan, it was his first time seeing anyone with a gunshot wound.

The experience “has prepared me to deal with worse things out in the field,” he said. “I'll be the only one out there, so I'll have to learn from this.”

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HEADLINE	03/14 Anger over Kent school district layoffs
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/03/14/parents-students-teachers-voice-anger-at-kent-school-district-for-planned-layoffs/
GIST	KENT, Wash. -- Parents, students and teachers packed a Kent School Board meeting Wednesday night to voice anger at the district's plan to cut nine administrator jobs and 127 staff positions.

	<p>In a marathon public comment session, person after person wanted to know why these cuts are happening just weeks after voters approved new levies to fund the district.</p> <p>"I think if we knew ... you wouldn't have got your money," one parent said, alluding to the levies. "I feel like I've been had."</p> <p>The Kent School District announced in a news release Tuesday that it is eliminating nine administrator jobs and 127 staff positions in the 2018-19 school year. It was not immediately clear what positions — ranging from teachers to secretaries to librarians — would be eliminated across the district's 42 schools.</p> <p>But the teachers' union said it believes as many as 130 of its members may lose their jobs.</p> <p>"To make these tough decisions, we looked at the entire KSD system," Superintendent Calvin J. Watts said in Tuesday's release. "We looked closely at several factors at the school level including enrollment, program needs, student needs, and the unique needs of each school community."</p> <p>The cuts are expected to save the district \$18 million.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/15 Link to more LNG exports established
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Energy-News/2018/03/15/Link-to-more-US-LNG-exports-established/4851521105253/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_eng&utm_medium=22
GIST	<p>March 15 (UPI) -- Improvements to a pipeline system in southern Louisiana will help with U.S. efforts to get liquefied natural gas to the market, TransCanada said.</p> <p>The pipeline company said it placed its Cameron Access project into service in Louisiana. The project involved overhauls and extensions to an existing network that would feed an export facility slated to start operations by the end of next year.</p> <p>"The completion of Cameron Access creates significant value for our customers by providing additional connectivity for their domestically produced natural gas to the high-value U.S. Gulf Coast LNG export market," Stanley Chapman III, TransCanada's president of U.S. natural gas pipelines, said in a statement.</p> <p>The \$10 billion Cameron liquefaction project is led by a consortium of Japanese and French companies. The first train, a unit that converts gas to its liquid form, will be operational next year for exports. At least three trains are envisioned.</p> <p>U.S. leaders see LNG as a way to add diversification to a global energy sector that depends on a handful of major producers, like Russia. With shale natural gas production outpacing demand in some U.S. regions, and new infrastructure planned for exporting liquefied natural gas, outgoing U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said late January that Poland, which is almost entirely dependent on Russia, represents "fertile ground" for expanded business relations between the two countries.</p> <p>"U.S. companies have the right products and services to contribute to Poland's energy security," he said.</p> <p>Polish Oil and Gas Co., known commonly as PGNiG, signed a five-year contract to secure LNG from the Sabine Pass terminal in Louisiana, the first mid-term contract of its kind, in November.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/15 Searches, arrests in Catalonia amid probe
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/03/15/searches-arrests-in-catalonia-amid-widening-probe.html

GIST	<p>MADRID – Police in Barcelona have searched the seat of the Catalan regional government as part of a widening probe on the funding of last year's banned Catalan referendum on independence from Spain.</p> <p>A Civil Guard spokesman said agents also arrested a regional official in charge of the Catalan government's public campaigns, after raiding his office and home. The official spoke anonymously in line with internal rules.</p> <p>The Civil Guard, acting on the order of a judge, also searched the office of a pro-independence activist group, Omnium Cultural, whose former leader was preventively jailed last year on preliminary charges of hampering police work to halt the Oct. 1 vote.</p> <p>The region's separatist leaders unsuccessfully declared independence from Spain in October in violation of the nation's Constitution. Polls show Catalans are equally divided on the secession issue.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/15 NKorea foreign minister visits Sweden
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/03/15/north-korean-foreign-minister-visits-sweden.html
GIST	<p>STOCKHOLM – North Korea's foreign minister is visiting Sweden, a move that can be seen as a first step toward the Scandinavian country hosting a meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.</p> <p>The Swedish Foreign Ministry says Ri Yong Ho will meet his Swedish counterpart Margot Wallstrom during his rare trip abroad Thursday.</p> <p>The ministry said talks "will focus on Sweden's consular responsibilities as a protecting power for the United States, Canada and Australia," but also will also address the security situation on the Korean Peninsula."</p> <p>It added that a statement summarizing the talks will be made available Friday.</p> <p>Sweden has had diplomatic relations with North Korea since 1973, and is now one of the few western countries to have an embassy in Pyongyang.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Northeast to start spring w/snowstorm?
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-14/northeastern-u-s-may-start-spring-with-yet-another-snowstorm
GIST	<p>Boston and points north of New York City have as much as a 50 percent chance of ushering in the first day of spring with some sleet or even snow.</p> <p>The official March 20 start to the season coincides with forecasts for low-pressure systems to form over the Ohio Valley and the mid-Atlantic, with a 30 percent to 50 percent chance of winter weather in the Northeast and New England, according to Sean Ryan, a meteorologist with the U.S. Weather Prediction Center in College Park, Maryland.</p> <p>It would be the fourth winter storm to hit the Northeast since March 2 and could add to this month's tally of thousands of grounded flights, millions of power outages and feet of snow from New Jersey to Massachusetts.</p> <p>"As for how much and exactly where, that remains pretty vague at this point," Ryan said by telephone.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Detroit, Newark, Memphis airport measles
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2018/03/14/detroit-traveler-measles/425446002/
GIST	<p>Visitors to airports in Detroit; Newark, N.J.; and Memphis may have been exposed to measles after cases were confirmed in two international travelers, health officials in two states said Tuesday.</p> <p>But people who received the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine twice as children are considered protected for life, federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention officials said. Others who have not been vaccinated or had only one shot could come down with the disease, which can be life threatening.</p> <p>The specifics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detroit. People who visited the North Terminal at Detroit Metropolitan Airport on the afternoon of March 6 likely were exposed to the highly contagious virus, according to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Someone infected could develop symptoms as late as next week • Newark. Passengers in terminals B and C of Newark Liberty International Airport also were exposed and could develop symptoms as late as April 2, according to the New Jersey Department of Health. • Memphis. The young child diagnosed with measles arrived in Newark from Brussels and flew to Memphis International Airport that evening, exposing others along the way, New Jersey health officials said. <p>In Detroit, "anyone who was in customs or baggage claim in the airport's North Terminal between 2 and 5 p.m. (ET) that day should seek medical attention from their primary care provider if they develop symptoms of the disease," Michigan health officials said in a news release.</p> <p>But call the doctor first. A person with measles sitting in a reception area waiting for treatment can transmit the disease.</p> <p>Detroit Metropolitan Airport is a hub for Delta Air Lines in its McNamara Terminal. Various airlines have international flights — many based in the North Terminal — that fly to and from Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, Jordan, Korea, Mexico and the Netherlands.</p> <p>Passengers at Newark airport between 12:45 and 9 p.m. Monday could have been exposed to the measles virus, New Jersey officials said. It was not immediately known what flight the infected child boarded to Memphis and when the youngster arrived, but United does have a 7 p.m. Monday flight to Memphis that arrives around 9:10 p.m. CT.</p> <p>International travelers who arrived in Newark's Terminal B on flights from Amsterdam; Beijing; Bogota; Brussels; Cancun, Mexico; Copenhagen; Dublin; Edinburgh; Frankfurt; Geneva; Havana; London; Madrid; Manchester, United Kingdom; Lisbon, Portugal; Lomé, Togo; Mexico City; Monrovia, Liberia; Munich; Oslo; Panama City, Panama; Paris; Quebec; Reykjavik, Iceland; Santiago, Chile; Shanghai; Tel Aviv, Israel; Toronto; and Zurich were potentially exposed. Domestic flights from Atlanta; Cincinnati; Detroit; Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; Minneapolis; Myrtle Beach, S.C.; Orlando; Raleigh-Durham, N.C.; and Salt Lake City also arrived during that time, according to Newark airport's flight list.</p> <p>Other travelers were exposed as the child made the trek to Terminal C, sat on the flight to Memphis and arrived at the airport terminal there.</p> <p>Measles begins with a "high fever, red eyes, cough, runny nose" and extreme sensitivity to light, according to the department.</p> <p>Not only is measles very contagious — it spreads through a cough or sneeze and even by being in a room up to two hours after an infected person has left — children younger than 5 can face serious complications, including permanent hearing loss from ear infections; pneumonia, which is a lung infection; or a swelling</p>

of the brain called encephalitis. Pregnant women are susceptible to giving birth prematurely or having a low-weight baby.

The illness has a 10- to 12-day incubation period. After the earlier symptoms, it develops into a red, raised body rash that starts on the head and face before progressing to the rest of the body.

People may be contagious for a few days before symptoms become noticeable, health department officials said.

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HEADLINE	03/15 What's next after national walkout day?
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/15/us/national-school-walkout-whats-next/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A generation of students raised in the shadow of gun violence is sending a loud and united message to lawmakers: Enough is enough.</p> <p>A month after a gunman killed 17 people at Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, students across the country demanded lawmakers set up measures to prevent another mass shooting.</p> <p>In an unprecedented show of unity dubbed National Walkout Day, students put down their books and left class at 10 a.m. in each time zone for at least 17 minutes -- one for each person killed at the Florida school. Some students spelled out the word "Enough" on football fields with their bodies.</p> <p>"We are tired of being scared to come to school," said Ben Ramirez, a student in Los Angeles.</p> <p>In some places, students chanted "Hey hey, ho ho! Gun violence has got to go!" In Washington, students sat in silence, their backs to the White House.</p> <p>"Change is coming, change is here and change is here to stay," David Hogg, a Stoneman Douglas student who survived the shooting, told CNN's Anderson Cooper. "It shows that we have a national movement of young people, future voters ... coming out and standing together with us."</p> <p>Democratic New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who lay down on the ground with protesters as part of a "die-in," said he was inspired by the student-led movement.</p> <p>"A new generation is rising, and they're not afraid of the NRA," he later tweeted. "America's students can clearly see what the GOP cannot: weak gun laws are at the heart of America's gun violence problem."</p> <p>Equipped with resolve and social media savvy, the students will gather again on March 24 for an event dubbed the March for Our Lives in Washington, where they'll send a message to lawmakers up close. And more protests are planned for April 20, the anniversary of the Columbine High School massacre in Littleton, Colorado.</p> <p>"This is not a matter of left versus right. This is a matter of public safety," said Cate Whitman, a junior at LaGuardia High School in New York.</p> <p>"We're all working together, which is something we haven't seen from the adults in a very long time."</p> <p>While students marched Wednesday, the US House of Representatives passed a bill to fund more security at schools. The bill had bipartisan support, but it frustrated many Democrats due to its lack of any gun control measures.</p> <p>"This is a pretense that we are doing something while assuring the NRA that we aren't doing anything," said Rep. Steny Hoyer of Maryland, the second ranking Democrat in the House.</p>

Last week in Florida, the governor signed a bill named after Marjory Stoneman Douglas High. It raised the minimum age to purchase a firearm to 21, and the National Rifle Association quickly filed a lawsuit deeming it unconstitutional.

And in Illinois, the state Senate passed a bill that raises the legal age to buy assault weapons to 21.

The NRA reiterated its stance Wednesday, amid the protests.

"I'll control my own guns, thank you," it tweeted, along with a photo of an AR-15-style rifle, the same type of weapon used in last month's massacre.

In Parkland, Stoneman Douglas students rose before sunrise Wednesday to place hundreds of pinwheels around campus to mark the anniversary.

In a quote hung on a sign near the school, the environmentalist for whom the school is named tells students to "be a nuisance when it counts."

The students appear to be heeding that advice. Initially organized by the Women's March youth branch, the National Student Walkout on Wednesday demanded three key actions from Congress:

- Ban assault weapons;
- Require universal background checks before gun sales;
- Pass a gun violence restraining order law that would allow courts to disarm people who display warning signs of violent behavior.

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HEADLINE	03/14 Families voice input in search SPD chief
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/families-turn-anguish-into-action-voicing-input-in-seattle-police-chief-search/281-528709865
GIST	<p>As the city of Seattle searches for a police chief, families impacted by officer-involved shootings are getting involved in the selection process. Wednesday night, they met with Mayor Jenny Durkan to talk about the kind of leader they would like to see for the Seattle Police Department.</p> <p>Family members of Charleena Lyles, Tommy Le, Daniel Covarrubias, Eugene Nelson, MiChance Gittens, and Che Taylor attended the public meeting. The families are all connected by their loss of loved ones in officer-involved shootings.</p> <p>All of the incidents happened in recent years, mostly in the Seattle area. But some of the officer-involved shootings occurred in Pierce County. In certain cases, authorities called it justified, but family members see it differently.</p> <p>At Wednesday night's meeting, the focus was on finding Seattle's next police chief. Mayor Durkan listened as families shared their experiences with police.</p> <p>Family members called for more transparency in policing, and the mother of MiChance Gittens said, at times, a different approach is needed.</p> <p>"As far as using deadly force, is it absolutely necessary? Is there another way to de-escalate the situation," she asked.</p> <p>Mayor Durkan said, "It can be a real tough and dangerous job being a police officer, and that is why we have to do the cultural shift so when you get to that dangerous situation, the first reflex is not one of fear but one of training."</p> <p>As the city's search continues, families said they want to turn their anguish into action by adding their</p>

	<p>voices to the conversation about Seattle's next police chief.</p> <p>There are 25 members on the Mayor's search committee for Seattle's next Police Chief. There will be more community meetings before the Mayor selects a Chief. It is a decision she plans to make by June.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/15 European gun-makers flood the US
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/03/15/european-gun-makers-flood-u-s-firearms/427188002/
GIST	<p>What links some of the deadliest massacres in U.S. history?</p> <p>That they were carried out with guns — that are either heavily regulated or banned in Europe — imported from Europe or produced by European-owned companies in the US.</p> <p>The gun used in the June 2016 mass shooting in a gay nightclub in Orlando that left 49 people dead — at the time the worst massacre in U.S. history — was a Sig Sauer MCX rifle. SigSauer is owned by Germany's Lüke and Ortmeier Holding Gruppe.</p> <p>Assault-type weapons like these are either banned or heavily regulated in Germany where they can only be purchased with a special license.</p> <p>Guns by Austrian arms maker Glock and Germany's Sig Sauer were used in the December 2012 massacre in a Newtown, Conn. elementary school that left 28 people dead — until the recent shooting in Parkland, Fla., the worst high school shooting in U.S. history.</p> <p>A Glock gun was also used in the shooting spree inside a movie theater in Aurora, Colo. in July 2012 in which 11 people were killed.</p> <p>A semiautomatic weapon by the Austrian gun producer again featured in the January 2011 massacre in Tucson, Ariz., in which six people were killed and Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords was seriously injured.</p> <p>Guns by Italian manufacturer Beretta were used in the April 2009 shooting in an immigration services center that left 14 people dead in Binghamton, N.Y.</p> <p>A German Walther and an Austrian Glock gun were used in the June 2007 rampage at Virginia Tech University that left 33 people dead — also at the time the worst mass shooting in U.S. history.</p> <p>All guns used in these mass shootings were bought legally in the U.S.</p> <p>This list of European guns featuring in U.S. massacres is not exhaustive, just exemplary.</p> <p>European gun-makers have doubled their exports into the U.S. civilian market between 2010 and 2016, according to U.S. government data compiled for DW by small arms trade expert Nicholas Marsh of the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO).</p> <p>In 2010, European-origin guns accounted for two million of the estimated eight million US civilian gun market.</p> <p>In 2016, European-origin guns accounted for four million of an estimated 16 million U.S. civilian gun market.</p> <p>It shows that European gun-makers have kept pace with the market and ratcheted up their sales to Americans accordingly.</p>

While European gun-makers have doubled their exports into the U.S. firearms market in less than a decade in part by marketing guns that are banned or regulated in their home countries to Americans, there has been little public knowledge or discussion about the role of European firearms in America's gun violence epidemic. "There is no debate about this in Europe really," said Marsh. Similarly, the significant role of European guns has also not featured in the U.S. debate about gun violence.

One in every four guns of European origin

As a consequence, European gun-makers defended their share of the U.S. gun market between 2010 and 2016, according to PRIO researcher Marsh's analysis of data from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF).

"It was 25.7% then and it is 25.7% now," he said, which means that then as now one out of every four guns in the U.S. is of European-origin — with the key difference that the sheer number of European guns has doubled from two to four million.

The largest European player in the U.S. market is Austria with more than 1.3 million guns exported in 2016 compared to 434,374 in 2010. Austria's gun share stems almost entirely from Glock handguns, which are some of the best-selling firearms in the U.S.

Croatia comes in second, shipping 574,486 handguns to the U.S. in 2016 compared to 239,021 in 2010, all from one company called HS Produkt.

What is interesting about HS Produkt, said Marsh, is that the firm's entire business strategy revolves around marketing guns to Americans. "The U.S. market is basically what this company is selling into," he said. "So you have a company in Croatia which basically spends its time supplying the U.S. market."

Germany, which exported 473,278 guns to the U.S. in 2016 compared with 266,688 in 2010, ranks third among European countries selling into the U.S. civilian market, ahead of Italy and the Czech Republic, with sales of more than 300,000 and 100,000 guns, respectively.

But it isn't just Austria, Croatia, Germany or the Czech Republic that flood the U.S. with weapons. More than a dozen other European countries also shipped tens of thousands of guns into the U.S., among them Belgium (85,039), Finland (56,619), Spain (30,524) and the UK (10,061).

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HEADLINE	03/14 Wash. moves to protect killer whales
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/washington-state-directive-aims-endangered-orcas-53759846?
GIST	<p>With the number of endangered orcas that frequent the inland waters of Washington state at a 30-year low, Gov. Jay Inslee on Wednesday directed state agencies to take immediate and longer-term steps to protect the struggling killer whales.</p> <p>The fish-eating mammals that spend time in Puget Sound have struggled for years with a lack of food, pollution, noise and disturbances from boat traffic. There are now just 76 of the orcas, down from 98 in 1995.</p> <p>Inslee said the orcas are in trouble and called on everyone in the state to do their part. His executive order aims to make more salmon available to the whales, give them more space and quieter waters, ensure they have clean water to swim in and protect them from potential oil spills.</p> <p>"The destiny of salmon and orca and we humans are intertwined," the governor said at a news conference at the Daybreak Star Cultural Center in Seattle. "As the orca go, so go we."</p>

	<p>An orca task force forming now will meet for the first time next month and will come up with final recommendations by November.</p> <p>"This is a wake-up call," Suquamish Tribal Chairman Leonard Forsman said, adding, "It's going to take some pain. We're going to have to make some sacrifices."</p> <p>Many have been sounding the alarm for years about the plight of the closely tracked population of southern resident killer whales. The federal government listed the orcas as endangered in 2005, and more recently identified them as among the most at risk of extinction in the near future.</p> <p>A baby orca has not been born in the past few years. Half of the calves born during a celebrated baby boom several years ago have died. Female orcas also are having pregnancy problems linked to nutritional stress brought on by a low supply of chinook salmon, the whales' preferred food, a recent study said.</p> <p>"We are not too late," said Barry Thom, West Coast regional administrator for NOAA Fisheries. "From a biology perspective, there are still enough breeding animals, but we need to act soon."</p> <p>Whale advocates welcomed the statewide initiative, saying it creates urgency and calls attention to the issue. But some also said it was long overdue.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Native American overdose deaths surge
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/native-american-overdose-deaths-surge-opioid-epidemic-53759812?
GIST	<p>Overdose deaths in Native American communities have skyrocketed in the time the opioid epidemic has swept the U.S. and federal officials are looking for solutions.</p> <p>Native Americans and Alaska Natives saw a fivefold increase in overdose deaths between 1999 and 2015, Dr. Michael Toedt told the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs on Wednesday.</p> <p>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention figures indicate the increase in that period was higher for Native Americans than any other group, jumping to roughly 22 deaths for every 100,000 people in metropolitan areas and nearly 20 for every 100,000 people in non-metropolitan areas.</p> <p>But the statistics, while staggering, may represent an undercount for Native Americans and Alaska Natives by as much as 35 percent, because death certificates often list them as belonging to another race, said Toedt, who is the Indian Health Services' chief medical officer.</p> <p>The hearing in Washington comes as a growing number of tribes file lawsuits against drug manufacturers and distributors, saying they misrepresented addiction risks.</p> <p>Federal officials said the opioid epidemic is straining tribal resources.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Toys R Us plans to shutter US stores
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/toys-us-planning-liquidate-us-operations-53759982
GIST	<p>Toys R Us appears headed toward shuttering its U.S. operations, spelling an end to a chain known to generations of children and parents for its sprawling stores and Geoffrey the giraffe mascot but that fell victim to brutal retail-industry trends.</p> <p>The closing of the company's 700 U.S. stores over the coming months would jeopardize the jobs of some 30,000 employees.</p>

	<p>The company's management has told its employees that it will sell or close all of its U.S. stores, according to a toy industry analyst who spoke to several employees who were on the call Wednesday.</p> <p>Jim Silver, a New York-based long-time toy industry expert, said Toys R Us's CEO David Brandon told employees the company's plan is to liquidate all of its U.S. stores and after that, it could do a deal with its Canadian operation to run some of the U.S. stores. The CEO also told employees that the chain was also likely to liquidate its operations in France, Spain, Poland and Australia, according to Silver.</p> <p>The chain filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection last fall, saddled with \$5 billion in debt that hurt its attempts to compete as shoppers moved to Amazon and huge chains like Walmart.</p> <p>It pledged then to stay open, but had weak sales during the critical holiday season as nervous customers shied away. In January it announced plans to close about 180 stores over the next couple of months, leaving it with about 700 stores.</p> <p>The company's troubles have affected toy makers Mattel and Hasbro, which are big suppliers to the chain. But the likely liquidation will have a bigger impact on smaller toy makers, who rely more on the chain for sales. However, many have been trying to diversify in recent months as they worried about the chain's survival.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Alarm over global water crisis
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/world-leaders-sound-alarm-over-global-water-crisis/
GIST	<p>UNITED NATIONS -- The World Bank and the U.N. are sounding the alarm over a global water crisis. A joint report released Wednesday says that 40 percent of the world's population is affected by water scarcity.</p> <p>The report, based on two years of research, says that 700 million people are at risk of being displaced by intense water scarcity by 2030. More than two billion people are compelled to drink unsafe water, and more than 4.5 billion people do not have safely managed sanitation services.</p> <p>"The ecosystems on which life itself is based – our food security, energy sustainability, public health, jobs, cities – are all at risk because of how water is managed today," World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim said.</p> <p>"The world can no longer afford to take water for granted," he said.</p> <p>The wars of the 21st century may be fought over water, some scientists and policymakers argue, and the demand for fresh drinking water to drink and grow food has surged, "60 Minutes" correspondent Lesley Stahl reported in 2014, and the problem has only gotten worse.</p> <p>While presenting the new report, Prime Minister Mark Rutte of the Netherlands said, "We must work to tackle global water crises now. There is no other option."</p> <p>"The innovative solutions of today's creative minds can safeguard the future of generations to come," Rutte said.</p> <p>But, that said, freshwater shortages are increasing.</p> <p>"The problems of water are many, like more intense droughts caused by climate change, such as the one that parts of East Africa is experiencing now," Dan Shepard, an information officer with the U.N. Department of Public Information, told CBS News, "And then there is water mismanagement, allocation and inadequate infrastructure."</p>

	<p>South Africa's Cape Town, with water all around it, may be the first major city to run out of it. The city has prepared for weeks for "Day Zero," when the taps will be turned off, but authorities have said that "Day Zero" may not happen until 2019 thanks to conservation efforts.</p> <p>As one of the leaders issuing Wednesday's report, South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa said, "We have a single opportunity, to change the narrative on water, by acting timeously in pursuit of a more promising future, in a better world, which should never face the scenario of the last single drop of water."</p> <p>The U.S. is also trying to cope with shortages, as is Canada, where scientists have warned several areas to be on the alert.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Students protest gun violence nationwide
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/students-nationwide-school-walkout-gun-violence-today-2018-03-14-live-stream-updates/
GIST	<p>Students at thousands of schools across the country walked out of class Wednesday morning to protest gun violence. The 17-minute walkout is a tribute to the 17 victims who were fatally shot at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, last month.</p> <p>According to the Say #Enough website, which compiles the stories of shooting victims and advocates for change, there will be more than 3,000 walkouts held in communities coast to coast and in Puerto Rico. Students participating in the movement left or were leaving their classes at 10 a.m. in their respective time zone.</p> <p>Students from 28 schools in Washington D.C., Maryland and Virginia marched to Capitol Hill, extending their protest, while inside lawmakers grilled officials from the ATF and FBI on how they proposed to tackle safety in schools in the wake of the school massacre. They gathered where just the day before, 7,000 pairs of children's shoes were placed outside Capitol Hill to represent the children killed by guns since Sandy Hook.</p> <p>As a crowd of lawmakers gathered to joining them, the first student speaker, Matt Post, started his speech by urging students to refuse compromise measures. "We will not sit in classrooms with armed teachers," Post said. "We will not learn in fear."</p> <p>Post said that students should not settle for anything less than comprehensive gun control reform, and urged students and others to vote out legislators who failed to act. Almost immediately after Post's line on gun control, the National Rifle Association tweeted out a defiant message in defense of the second amendment.</p> <p>Snapchat's "Snap Map" feature, meanwhile, showed a vast number of walkouts Wednesday, with students sharing their experiences at gatherings around the country. At 12pm ET, schools further west, including Columbine High School in Colorado, began walking out. None of the current students in Columbine would have been born at the time of the notorious mass shooting there, which resulted in 15 deaths in April 1999.</p> <p>In Broward County, Florida, where the Parkland massacre took place, public schools superintendent Robert Runcie said students who walk out of class would not be disciplined for leaving. He said teachers should make this a "teachable moment."</p> <p>CBS News correspondent Adriana Diaz reports Stoneman Douglas students walked out to the football field. School officials said they want students to exercise their First Amendment rights in a safe environment that's supervised by adults.</p>

	<p>However, some schools across the county, including a group in Pennsylvania, hesitated about participating in Wednesday's walkout.</p> <p>Stoneman Douglas student David Hogg, who has been an outspoken advocate of gun control since the shooting, spoke with CBSN about the significance of Wednesday's walkout.</p> <p>"I'm feeling happy to know that this has stayed in the national media and to know that people are taking action," Hogg said. "To know the fact that we all are standing up as Americans is a huge deal to know, and it means a lot just that we're coming together and working hard to change this issue."</p> <p>"The goal here is just to make sure our legislative leaders know that their actions are going to be held accountable to them and that there will be ramifications for either what actions they have had or what inactions they had," he said before referring to the date that marks two months since the shooting. "How many other mass shootings are we going to have to have? ... I'm worried about what's going to happen after April 14. That terrifies me."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Russia: lack of video in poisoning case
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-russia-rejects-ultimatums-spy-poisoning-53733585?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The Latest on the poisoning of a former Russian spy in England (all times local):</p> <p>7:40 p.m.</p> <p>The spokeswoman for Russia's Foreign Ministry says one of the many reasons to dismiss Britain's accusations against Moscow in the poisoning of a Russian ex-spy and his daughter is a suspicious absence of video footage.</p> <p>Sergei Skripal and his daughter were found poisoned on March 4 in Salisbury. Russia vehemently denies involvement and has pointed to a number of possible anomalies.</p> <p>Maria Zakharova told The Associated Press that the apparent lack of video of the Skripals being poisoned is a red flag.</p> <p>She said that "I will never believe that this person or group of people ... would not be seen after the commission of the crime. I will never believe it."</p> <p>"You have video cameras everywhere!"</p> <p>Zakharova also reiterated Russian criticism that Britain hasn't followed international procedure in the case by not providing Russia information.</p> <p>She said that "if an emergency occurs in which a chemical, poisonous agent is used, there is an accompanying legal mechanism ... it's obligatory to immediately begin a bilateral investigation."</p> <p>_____</p> <p>7:35 p.m.</p> <p>Britain's deputy U.N. ambassador says the government is asking the international chemical weapons watchdog to independently verify its analysis that a military-grade nerve agent from the former Soviet Union was used to poison an ex-Russian agent accused of spying for the United Kingdom.</p> <p>Jonathan Allen said that without any alternative explanation from Russian authorities about the nerve</p>

	<p>agent "we have no choice but to conclude this was a state-sponsored act against the prohibition and use of chemical weapons and in defiance of international law."</p> <p>He said the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has been informed about the use of the nerve agent and the U.N. "are inviting them to independently verify our analysis." He said: "We are making every effort to expedite this process."</p> <p>Allen told reporters before heading into an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council called by Britain on Wednesday afternoon that "today I'll be calling on my council colleagues to stand with us ... against an illegal act, against a very troubling act, and against a reckless and indiscriminate act which puts civilian lives at risk."</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	03/14 Morocco: terrorists, organized crime link
SOURCE	http://northafricapost.com/22701-morocco-warns-connivance-terrorist-organized-crime-groups-sahel.html
GIST	<p>Morocco is looking carefully to the situation in the Sahel where terrorists are increasingly resorting to organized crime and trafficking to fund their activities, head of Morocco's counterterrorism agency, BCIJ, Abdelhak Khiame said.</p> <p>Speaking to local press, Khiame rang the alarm bell regarding the fallout of the connivance between terrorists and organized crime groups on Sahel states, including Algeria.</p> <p>Past cases of foiled trafficking attempts in Morocco reveal the scale of the terrorist threat fed by organized crime in the Sahel, he said.</p> <p>Although Morocco remains largely insulated from Sahel terrorism, neighboring states such as Algeria and Mauritania remain largely prey to terrorist groups such as Al Qaida branch (AQIM).</p> <p>The BCIJ chief also pointed to the link between Polisario separatists and terrorist groups. He said that individuals hailing from the Tindouf camps have on multiple occasions been involved in drug trafficking. Some of them have joined the ranks of AQIM.</p> <p>Last year, a study by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies unveiled said that AQIM has reaped around \$100 million through ransoms, drug smuggling, taxing locals and donations from around the world.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Hackers hurdle two-factor authentication
SOURCE	https://www.ft.com/content/b7be1c96-1b04-11e8-aaca-4574d7dabfb6
GIST	<p>For years, cyber security experts have been urging users to add a second layer of authentication to their accounts, often a code sent by text message to their phone.</p> <p>But determined hackers are now able to hurdle over this extra measure by spoofing your SIM card, intercepting the unencrypted message as it is sent over the network or trying to steal databases filled with information about mobile accounts from telecoms operators.</p> <p>Last year, there were reports of cyber criminals draining bank accounts in Germany after hacking the routing system to redirect text messages. The hackers obtained users' passwords by sending phishing emails and then exploited a vulnerability in the signalling network used by different telecoms operators to connect calls and messages.</p>

In the US, T-Mobile notified hundreds of customers in October that criminals were trying to hijack their SIM cards. The hackers had taken advantage of a bug on T-Mobile's website that allowed them to access users' personal details and wanted to use it to impersonate them and obtain a copy of their SIM cards. Rashmi Knowles, Emea chief technology officer for RSA Security, a cyber security company, believes using SMS is less secure than other forms of second-factor authentication, such as physical tokens or authenticator apps on smartphones. "The two-factor authentication we are all familiar with is meant to be something you have and something you know," she says.

The first factor, a password, is what you have in your head. The second factor is meant to be what you have in your device. But SMS does not quite work like that as it is sent from a network to the phone, giving a hacker an opportunity to capture it.

One popular hacker technique involves "socially engineering", in other words, persuading call centre or shop staff at telecoms operators to give them an identical SIM. They often pretend to have lost their phone. The victim can learn about this quite quickly, as their service is cut off. Other tactics are more high-tech. Ms Knowles warns that devices called stingrays can be bought online and set up anywhere mimicking mobile phone towers and capturing data from nearby phones.

Andrew Blaich, a senior security researcher at Lookout, a mobile security company, warns that SMS messages are never encrypted. "Sending sensitive information over standard text messages is not a great idea," he says.

But the attacks still tend to be targeted, as the hacker must already have the victim's phone number and the first password they use to access their account. Nation-state actors may target political opponents, or financially motivated criminals could target wealthy individuals. For many people who might only be caught up in mass data breaches, two-factor authentication by text message will make their accounts more secure.

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HEADLINE	03/14 DHS targets cyber risks IT supply chain
SOURCE	https://fedtechmagazine.com/article/2018/03/dhs-targets-cybersecurity-risks-it-supply-chains
GIST	<p>It's much easier to block a cybersecurity threat from getting in the door than to try and track it down once it's already inside.</p> <p>That's why the Homeland Security Department recently launched an initiative to identify and target risks in the IT supply chains of government agencies and their contractor partners. The effort also involves government contracting leaders from the General Services Administration and counterintelligence officials, according to Jeanette Manfra, the assistant secretary for the office of cybersecurity and communications at DHS' National Protection and Programs Directorate.</p> <p>Speaking at a panel discussion on Feb. 14 at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., Manfra said DHS wants to close any gaps between agencies and their contracting partners as they address cybersecurity risks in their IT equipment.</p> <p>The initiative, which Manfra said came about via an internal DHS memo earlier this year, is designed to give actionable intelligence to users, buyers, manufacturers and sellers of government technology products. The goal is to identify risks earlier in the process so that risky IT equipment does not turn into a cybersecurity vulnerability inside an agency's walls or network.</p> <p>DHS is not tackling this problem on its own, Manfra said. The agency is consulting with some industry leaders on how they manage supply chain risks, though she declined to name them, Nextgov reports.</p> <p>DHS and the GSA have given agencies tools to reduce supply chain risks in the past, and the National</p>

Institute of Standards and Technology has also offered detailed guidance on the topic. Manfra mentioned NIST as a partner in the effort during the panel discussion, according to FCW.

The new program is "a focused effort with dedicated staff," Manfra said, FCW reports. Still, she made clear that DHS is working with other agencies on the effort.

"We need to have improved ability for DHS, GSA [and] the intel community to be in a position to help inform procurement decisions by the federal government agencies throughout the civilian government," Manfra told reporters at the event, according to Federal News Radio. "We're working on building those mechanisms and DHS' role in pulling all of that altogether, and also working with industry experts to refine what are the supply chain risks that we should be concerned about."

A timeline has not been set for the program to achieve its goals, but Manfra said DHS is considering it more of a "potentially enduring function" that serves as a "concerted effort to take all of the potential gaps that may be in the federal system or industry and figure out, what is the role of DHS," FCW reports.

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HEADLINE	03/14 Cybercriminals attack Russia banks
SOURCE	https://www.ft.com/content/b813ab48-1b04-11e8-aaca-4574d7dabfb6
GIST	<p>As the investigation into the Kremlin's alleged interference in the US presidential election continues to swirl, Russia has effectively become the poster child for all things cyber crime.</p> <p>"I believe that President Putin has clearly come to the conclusion there's little price to pay here and that therefore 'I can continue this activity'," NSA director Mike Rogers said in a US congressional hearing in February.</p> <p>In Russia, however, the scourge of its hackers is fast becoming a problem for the country's own businesses.</p> <p>Russia was one of the countries worst affected by the WannaCry attack last year. Even though the US and UK have blamed the Kremlin for using the NotPetya attack a few months later to target Ukraine, Russian companies such as Rosneft, state-run oil giant, were also affected.</p> <p>Most vulnerable, however, are Russia's banks. Hackers used the Cobalt Strike security-testing tool to steal more than \$17m from more than 240 Russian banks in 2017, according to the central bank. In the past few months, hackers used the Swift payment system to steal \$6m from an unnamed bank and tried to steal nearly \$1m from state-owned Globex.</p> <p>Russia is now keen to change the perception of the country as a hacker's paradise by showing that it, too, is trying to clamp down on cyber threats.</p> <p>Dmitry Skobelkin, a deputy central bank governor, said last month that the central bank would create an information security department.</p> <p>Those efforts will come on top of the work already being done by state-owned Sberbank, Russia's largest lender. The bank's size — it is nearly three times as large by assets as its nearest rival and has half of all bank deposits in Russia — has made it a prime target for hackers.</p> <p>"Sberbank gets hit by everything first," says Ilya Sachkov, founder of Group-IB, a Moscow-based cyber security company. "They're the first line of defence."</p> <p>In response, Sberbank has developed a state of the art cyber security centre that monitors the bank's 16,000 branches for threats, and successfully repelled the WannaCry virus in May last year. The bank has even offered its services to other lenders in an effort to remove weak links in the system.</p>

“Little banks can’t afford good security,” says Sergey Golovanov, principal security researcher at Kaspersky Labs in Moscow. “Banks don’t have legal reporting requirements and nobody knows what to do.”

Sberbank is planning to launch its own cyber risk insurance service this spring. “It’s very complicated and very serious,” said Stanislav Kuznetsov, Sberbank’s deputy chairman in charge of cyber security, in January, according to the state newswire RIA Novosti.

“It could be a breakthrough for us, when our platform will defend banks and companies from any and all attacks.”

Mr Sachkov says Russian hackers have turned to Russian banks in recent years because of the relative ease of making off with the proceeds of theft.

“It’s very hard to find a way to turn [stolen money] into cash in the US,” he says. In Russia, by contrast, where a third of the economy exists in cash-based “grey zones”, disguising stolen money as cash withdrawals is far easier.

The greater prize of hacking financial institutions in the US, nonetheless, still tempts Russian hackers.

Russian banks are targeted because of the relative ease of making off with the proceeds

Last December, Group-IB published a report about a new group called Money Taker, which probably has ties to Russian cyber crime and has carried out most of its 20 attacks on banks in the US, with just three in Russia.

“Most problems in Russia are from Russia,” Mr Sachkov says.

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HEADLINE	03/15 Attack in Saudi Arabia had deadly goal
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/15/technology/saudi-arabia-hacks-cyberattacks.html
GIST	<p>In August, a petrochemical company with a plant in Saudi Arabia was hit by a new kind of cyberassault. The attack was not designed to simply destroy data or shut down the plant, investigators believe. It was meant to sabotage the firm’s operations and trigger an explosion.</p> <p>The attack was a dangerous escalation in international cyberwarfare, as faceless enemies demonstrated both the drive and the ability to inflict serious physical damage. And United States government officials, their allies and cybersecurity researchers worry that the culprits could replicate it in other countries, since thousands of industrial plants all over the world rely on the same American-engineered computer systems that were compromised.</p> <p>Investigators have been tight-lipped about the August attack. They still won’t identify the company or the country where it is based and have not identified the culprits.</p> <p>But the attackers were sophisticated and had plenty of time and resources, an indication that they were most likely supported by a government, according to more than a dozen people, including cybersecurity experts who have looked into the attack and asked not to be identified because of the confidentiality of the continuing investigation.</p> <p>The assault was the most alarming in a string of cyberattacks on petrochemical plants in Saudi Arabia. In January 2017, computers went dark at the National Industrialization Company, Tasnee for short, which is one of the few privately owned Saudi petrochemical companies. Computers also crashed 15 miles away at Sadara Chemical Company, a joint venture between the oil and chemical giants Saudi Aramco and Dow</p>

Chemical.

Within minutes of the attack at Tasnee, the hard drives inside the company's computers were destroyed and their data wiped clean, replaced with an image of Alan Kurdi, the small Syrian child who drowned off the coast of Turkey during his family's attempt to flee that country's civil war.

The intent of the January attacks, Tasnee officials and researchers at the security company Symantec believe, was to inflict lasting damage on the petrochemical companies and send a political message. Recovery took months.

Energy experts said the August attack could have been an attempt to complicate Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's plans to encourage foreign and domestic private investment to diversify the Saudi economy and produce jobs for the country's growing youth population.

"Not only is it an attack on the private sector, which is being touted to help promote growth in the Saudi economy, but it is also focused on the petrochemical sector, which is a core part of the Saudi economy," said Amy Myers Jaffe, an expert on Middle East energy at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Saudi Arabia has cut oil exports in recent years to support global oil prices, a strategy central to its efforts to make a potential public offering of shares of government-controlled Saudi Aramco more attractive to international investors. The kingdom has tried to compensate for its lost revenue by expanding its petrochemical and refining industry.

Some technical details of the attack in August have been previously reported, but this is the first time the earlier attacks on Tasnee and other Saudi petrochemical companies have been reported.

Security analysts at Mandiant, a division of the security firm FireEye, are still investigating what happened in August, with the help of several companies in the United States that investigate cyberattacks on industrial control systems.

A team at Schneider Electric, which made the industrial systems that were targeted, called Triconex safety controllers, is also looking into the attack, the people who spoke to The Times said. So are the National Security Agency, the F.B.I., the Department of Homeland Security and the Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, which has been supporting research into forensic tools designed to assist hacking investigations.

All of the investigators believe the attack was most likely intended to cause an explosion that would have killed people. In the last few years, explosions at petrochemical plants in China and Mexico — though not triggered by hackers — have killed several employees, injured hundreds and forced evacuations of surrounding communities.

What worries investigators and intelligence analysts the most is that the attackers compromised Schneider's Triconex controllers, which keep equipment operating safely by performing tasks like regulating voltage, pressure and temperatures. Those controllers are used in about 18,000 plants around the world, including nuclear and water treatment facilities, oil and gas refineries, and chemical plants.

"If attackers developed a technique against Schneider equipment in Saudi Arabia, they could very well deploy the same technique here in the United States," said James A. Lewis, a cybersecurity expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think tank.

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HEADLINE	03/14 Trans-Alaska pipeline: 22M attacks daily
SOURCE	https://www.ktoo.org/2018/03/14/trans-alaska-pipeline-fights-off-22-million-cyber-attacks-daily/
GIST	The symbol of a well-known caped crusader is taped to the door of a secure room at Alyeska Pipeline

Service Company's Anchorage headquarters. The sign reads: "THE BAT CAVE."

My guides don't know why the sign's there. Maybe it's the lack of windows. Or maybe it's because the people who work in this room see themselves as undercover crime-fighters, like Batman — because they sort of are. This is the office of Alyeska's cybersecurity team.

The trans-Alaska pipeline has dealt with its share of problems — earthquakes, declining oil flow, even gunfire. But today, the pipeline is facing another, more modern threat: cyberattacks. Energy infrastructure is a tempting target for hackers, and the trans-Alaska pipeline is no exception. Alyeska, which operates the pipeline, now ranks cyberattacks as one of its top three risks.

In the room where part of the pipeline's cybersecurity team is stationed, Alyeska's Bill Rosetti points at a wall of data flowing down three giant screens hanging above the cubicles. It's all totally incomprehensible to a layperson. But for Rosetti and his staff, weird activity on one of the colorful charts rippling across the screens could indicate something serious.

"The idea here is that we are looking for things to be normal," Rosetti explained. "And anything that's not normal is something that needs to be investigated."

Rosetti is Alyeska's chief information officer. He's in charge of keeping cyberattackers at bay. Rosetti takes that job seriously, because the trans-Alaska pipeline is getting hit by cyberattacks all the time — and not just a few.

"We see about 22 million attacks a day," Rosetti said.

And that's an average.

"It can be six or seven million some days and 45 million the next," Rosetti said. "I wish I could tell you why it changes that way, but I really don't know."

Of course, there aren't millions of people carrying out these attacks individually. These are mass, automated attacks, often coming from servers overseas.

Rosetti said so far, none of the cyberattacks have been successful; Alyeska has never been breached. But the challenge is growing. Rosetti said the rate of cyberattacks has roughly doubled in the last five years.

So how are hackers going after the trans-Alaska pipeline, and why? Rosetti says they have all kinds of goals, and all kinds of techniques. There's phishing, for example:

"Some are very focused — that's called spear-phishing — where they're aimed at our CFO, trying to get people to wire them money," Rosetti said.

And then there are attacks that threaten the trans-Alaska pipeline itself. As the energy industry settles into the Internet age, more of its machinery is controlled remotely by computers. If someone manages to breach those systems, there could be dangerous real-world consequences. I asked Rosetti what the worst-case scenario would be if there was a major cyberattack on the trans-Alaska pipeline.

"We think about what the worst case is so we can protect against the worst case. And I don't want to share what that is," Rosetti said.

Throughout the interview, Rosetti was very vague and careful with his words, because, he said, he didn't want to give hackers any clues. But he did acknowledge that a successful cyberattack could interrupt the flow of oil down the pipeline. It could even result in people getting hurt.

The growing cyber threat to pipelines and other infrastructure is worrying the topmost levels of government — late last year, the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI issued a warning that

	sophisticated cyberattackers have targeted the U.S. energy sector, in particular.
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HEADLINE	03/15 Claim: VPN service providers leak data
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/hotspot-shield-purevpn-zenmate-leak-ip-address/
GIST	<p>According to VPN Mentor, a privacy advocate firm which reviews virtual private networks (VPN), after an in-depth research, it has been discovered that three VPN service providers with millions of customers worldwide are leaking sensitive data such as users' IP addresses – These VPNs include HotSpot Shield, PureVPN, and Zenmate.</p> <p>What is a VPN used for?</p> <p>The purpose of using a VPN depends on the situation but mostly people opt-in for VPNs to fight online censorship by accessing websites that are blocked by their ISPs while some chose to use VPN for anonymity and better privacy.</p> <p>But what happens when the VPN you thought was protecting your privacy was actually posing a threat to it? You can be under government surveillance or malicious organizations, hackers can track your IP address and identify your ISP or on a business level, it can allow attackers to carry distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks.</p> <p>According to VPN Mentor's blog post, in order to find vulnerabilities in HotSpot Shield, PureVPN, and Zenmate VPN Mentor hired three ethical hackers who after testing concluded all three VPN have been leaking IP address of the user, even when a VPN is in use posing a massive privacy threat.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Fortnite gamers warned over hacking
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/fortnite-gamers-account-hacking/
GIST	<p>Several news reports have surfaced of the suspected hacking of player accounts of popular video game Fortnite, with some gamers apparently faced with large credit card charges from fraudulent purchases.</p> <p>Fortnite, available on Xbox One, PlayStation 4, Windows PC and Mac, is a 'battle royal' action survival game developed by Epic Games in which players collect resources, build fortifications and construct weapons and traps to engage in combat against creatures.</p> <p>In a statement, Epic said: "We are aware of instances where users' accounts have been compromised using well-known hacking techniques.</p> <p>"Any players who believe their account has been compromised should reach out to our player support immediately."</p> <p>David Emm, principal security researcher at Kaspersky Lab, said that the gaming industry is becoming an increasingly attractive target for cyber-criminals.</p> <p>"However, many online gamers don't take precautions to reflect this. According to Kaspersky Lab research, just 5% of people selected their gaming account as being one of three that require the strongest passwords.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Playboy developing own digital wallet
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/playboy-develops-virtual-currency/

GIST	<p>Playboy Enterprises is entering the cryptocurrency fray with its own blockchain effort.</p> <p>The organization behind the men's magazine is integrating the Vice Industry Token (VIT) currency, so that online visitors will be able to pay and earn tokens to view Playboy.TV's original content, as well as comment on and vote for best clips.</p> <p>The online payment wallet will also support a number of cryptocurrencies across the company's online media, digital and casual gaming businesses.</p> <p>"As the popularity of alternative payment methods continues to grow around the world, along with the reach Playboy's digital platforms, we felt it was important to give our 100 million monthly consumers increased payment flexibility," said Reena Patel, COO of Licensing and Media for Playboy Enterprises.</p> <p>"This innovation gives the millions of people who enjoy our content, as well as those in the future who participate in our casual gaming, [augmented reality] and [virtual reality] platforms, more choices with regard to payment and in the case of VIT, an opportunity to be rewarded for engaging with Playboy offerings."</p> <p>VIT is a decentralized blockchain platform and cryptographic token that rewards viewers for watching content, which was launched earlier this year.</p> <p>Playboy's digital wallet is expected to be available before the end of the year.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Google to ban cryptocurrency ads
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/google-moves-to-ban-ads-for/
GIST	<p>Following a similar no-quarter approach taken by Facebook, Google plans to ban crypto-related advertising starting in June.</p> <p>The ban includes ads for initial coin offerings (ICOs), wallets and trading advice, across any Google platforms. The prohibition will be far ranging: Google's ad engines place ads on not just its own sites but also on third-party outlets.</p> <p>The concern is that virtual currency speculation has created a boom in the sector, yet the space largely lacks regulation and consumer protections. Cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin, Monero and others have also been the impetus for various fraud efforts and are at the heart of coin-mining, which has proven to be a lucrative new revenue stream for cybercriminals.</p> <p>"We don't have a crystal ball to know where the future is going to go with cryptocurrencies, but we've seen enough consumer harm or potential for consumer harm," Scott Spencer, Google's director of sustainable ads, told CNBC.</p> <p>The change is part of Google's update to its financial services-related ad policies. The search engine, which makes 84% of its revenue from advertising, is no stranger to censoring ads: In a report, it said it took down more than 3.2 billion ads in 2017 for violating its policies. That's nearly double the 1.7 billion it removed in 2016.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/15 'HenBox' Android malware discovered
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/new-%E2%80%9Chenbox%E2%80%9D-android-malware-discovered
GIST	A newly discovered Android malware family masquerades as various popular applications and can steal a

broad range of information from infected devices, Palo Alto Networks warns.

Dubbed HenBox, the malware was observed installing the legitimate versions of apps it poses as to hide its presence on compromised devices. The threat is distributed via third-party app stores and mainly targets Uyghur, a minority Turkic ethnic group in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in North West China, and Xiaomi devices.

On the infected devices, HenBox can steal information from mainstream chat, communication, and social media apps. It gathers both personal and device information, can track the device's location, can access the microphone and camera, and harvests outgoing phone numbers with an "86" prefix (the country code for the People's Republic of China).

Palo Alto's researchers discovered nearly 200 HenBox samples, the oldest dating back to 2015, but activity occurred in the second half of 2017. A small but consistent number of samples has been observed this year as well.

The HenBox app had the look and feel of DroidVPN and also contained a legitimate version of the app within its APK package as an asset, to hide any malicious behaviors occurring in the background. The malware authors even embedded HenBox with the same version of the legitimate DroidVPN variant available for download on the third-party store.

DroidVPN, however, is only one example. Other apps were also found, some in other third-party stores. One was a Uyghur language keyboard app, while another was masquerading as Android's Settings app.

A third app was called "Islamawazi," which is the name of the Turkistan Islamic Party, formerly East Turkestan Islamic Party, a purportedly Islamic extremist separatist organization founded by Uyghur jihadists.

"These examples, together with the HenBox app placed on a very specific third-party app store, point clearly to at least some of the intended targets of these malicious apps being Uyghurs, specifically those with interest in or association with terrorist groups," the researchers note.

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HEADLINE	03/15 Qrypter RAT hits worldwide
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/qrypter-rat-hits-hundreds-organizations-worldwide
GIST	<p>Hundreds of organizations all around the world have been targeted in a series of attacks that leverage the Qrypter remote access Trojan (RAT), security firm Forcepoint says.</p> <p>The malware, often mistaken for the Adwind cross-platform backdoor, has been around for a couple of years, and was developed by an underground group called 'QUA R&D', which offers a Malware-as-a-Service (MaaS) platform.</p> <p>Also known as Qarallax, Quaverse, QRAT, and Qontroller, Forcepoint explains that Qrypter is a Java-based RAT that leverages TOR-based command and control (C&C) servers. It was first detailed in June 2016, after being used in an attack targeting individuals applying for a U.S. Visa in Switzerland.</p> <p>The malware is typically delivered via malicious email campaigns that usually consist of only a few hundred messages each. However, Qrypter continues to rise in prominence, and three Qrypter-related campaigns observed in February 2018 affected 243 organizations in total, Forcepoint's security researchers say.</p> <p>When executed on a victim's system, Qrypter drops and runs two VBS files in the %Temp% folder, each featuring a random filename. The two scripts are meant to gather information on the firewall and anti-virus products installed on the computers.</p>

	<p>Qrypter is a plugin based backdoor that provides attackers with a broad range of capabilities: remote desktop connection, webcam access, file system manipulation, installation of additional files, and task manager control.</p> <p>The RAT is available for rent for a price of \$80, payable in PerfectMoney, Bitcoin-Cash, or Bitcoin. Interested parties can purchase three months or one-year subscriptions for a discounted price, the security researchers discovered.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Bitcoin stealing malware on Download.com
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/eset-researchers-found-three-trojanized-applications-hosted-on-downloadcnetcom-163th-most-visited-site-in-the-world/article/751114/
GIST	<p>Bitcoin stealing malware that swaps user accounts with that of the attacker was found to be hosted on Download.com servers for nearly a year.</p> <p>ESET researchers found three trojanized applications hosted on download.cnet.com, 163th most visited site in the world according to Alexa rankings, and estimated that as of March 13, the attacker managed to steal the equivalent of \$80,000 USD, according to a recent blog post.</p> <p>The malware had been hosted on download.com since May 2, 2016 and that it had been downloaded from CNET, the original creator of the domain, more than 4,500 times in total, the post said. The malware has since been removed, although researchers don't know the exact date of the removal they speculate it may have been around March 2017.</p> <p>Researchers were alerted to the malware after a Reddit user posted how they tried to copy and paste their Monero address as usual and was suddenly getting notifications that the address was refused for being invalid.</p> <p>The source of the malware was a trojanized Win32 Disk Imager application downloaded from download.com. Upon inspection, researchers learned the malware intercepts wallet addresses that are copy and pasted in the clipboard and replaces them with the attackers own hardcoded bitcoin wallet address.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 BitTorrent software update hijacked
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2018/03/windows-malware-hacking.html
GIST	<p>A massive malware outbreak that last week infected nearly half a million computers with cryptocurrency mining malware in just a few hours was caused by a backdoored version of popular BitTorrent client called MediaGet.</p> <p>Dubbed Dofail (also known as Smoke Loader), the malware was found dropping a cryptocurrency miner program as payload on infected Windows computers that mine Electroneum digital coins for attackers using victims' CPU cycles.</p> <p>Dofail campaign that hit PCs in Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine on 6th March was discovered by Microsoft Windows Defender research department and blocked the attack before it could have done any severe damages.</p> <p>At the time when Windows Defender researchers detected this attack, they did not mention how the malware was delivered to such a massive audience in just 12 hours.</p> <p>However, after investigation Microsoft today revealed that the attackers targeted the update mechanism of</p>

	<p>MediaGet BitTorrent software to push its trojanized version (mediaget.exe) to users' computers.</p> <p>"A signed mediaget.exe downloads an update.exe program and runs it on the machine to install a new mediaget.exe. The new mediaget.exe program has the same functionality as the original but with additional backdoor capability," the researchers explain in a blog post published today.</p> <p>Researchers believe MediaGet that signed update.exe is likely to be a victim of the supply chain attack, similar to CCleaner hack that infected over 2.3 million users with the backdoored version of the software in September 2017.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Electric utility hit with record fine
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/application-security/electric-utility-hit-with-record-fine-for-vulnerabilities/d/d-id/1331271
GIST	<p>A record \$2.7 million fine has been levied against an electric utility for vulnerabilities in its IT infrastructure.</p> <p>The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) notified the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) that it has reached a consent agreement with an unnamed electric utility for the fine over the exposure of information regarding critical infrastructure for at least 70 days. The exposed information includes tidbits like system names and locations, user names, and cryptographic information that could be used to decrypt passwords.</p> <p>All of the information was in a file that was entirely open to the public, with no user name or password required for access. In this case, there is no allegation that a breach actually occurred because of the vulnerability: the fine is for the vulnerability itself.</p> <p>The utility's name was redacted from the public version of the NERC notification, though the filing did include standard language from consent decrees to the effect of, "we didn't do it the first time and we promise not to do it again."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 BlackTDS malware distribution service
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/vulnerabilities---threats/new-hosted-service-lowers-barriers-to-malware-distribution-/d/d-id/1331277
GIST	<p>A newly discovered malware distribution operation that has been advertising its services on underground markets since late December 2017 is the latest example of the growing maturation of cybercrime as a service.</p> <p>BlackTDS is a cloud-hosted traffic distribution system (TDS) for distributing malware. Security vendor Proofpoint, which has been tracking the service for the past several weeks, describes it as lowering the entry barrier for threat actors that want to engage in drive-by attacks.</p> <p>The service isn't a completely turnkey one, since threat actors must still find a way to drive traffic to BlackTDS. "[But] it is otherwise a fairly complete solution, including social engineering for Web-based attacks that is fairly simple and inexpensive to configure and use," says Kevin Epstein, vice president of threat operations at Proofpoint.</p> <p>A TDS is designed to take traffic from different sources; filter it based on parameters such as user agent, browser, and geography; and then redirect users to various websites, depending on their profile. Malicious distribution systems like BlackTDS use the parameters to redirect users of interest to specific malicious websites and payloads instead.</p>

"For example, an actor might want to send Australian users who click on a malicious link in an email to a banking Trojan configured with injects for Australian banks but make sure that everyone else gets ransomware," Epstein explains.

The use of traffic distribution systems to distribute malware is not new. As far back as 2011, Symantec had reported on cybercriminals using a TDS to distribute exploit kits and malware to targets matching specific profiles. In 2016, Forcepoint reported on a threat actor using a malicious TDS dubbed BlackHat-TDS to redirect users to websites that hosted exploit kits.

As Forcepoint had noted at the time, threat actors running a TDS can set up blacklists of IP ranges to filter out traffic from security vendors and Web crawlers while ensuring traffic from ordinary users gets redirected to malware and exploits.

What makes BlackTDS different is that it is being delivered as a highly scalable, easy to deploy, and relatively inexpensive service. Threat actors can simply drive traffic to BlackTDS using spam, malicious advertisements, and other means; set up or provide access to their malware; and then let the service handle the rest of the distribution process.

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HEADLINE	03/14 Survey: 26% online constantly; 77% daily
SOURCE	http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/03/14/about-a-quarter-of-americans-report-going-online-almost-constantly/
GIST	<p>As smartphones and other mobile devices have become more widespread, 26% of American adults now report that they go online “almost constantly,” up from 21% in 2015, according to a Pew Research Center survey conducted in January 2018.</p> <p>Overall, 77% of Americans go online on a daily basis. That figure includes the 26% who go online almost constantly, as well as 43% who say they go online several times a day and 8% who go online about once a day. Some 11% go online several times a week or less often, while 11% of adults say they do not use the internet at all.</p> <p>Adults with mobile connectivity are especially likely to be online a lot. Among mobile internet users – the 83% of Americans who use the internet at least occasionally using a smartphone, tablet or other mobile device – 89% go online daily and 31% go online almost constantly. Among Americans who go online but not via a mobile device, by comparison, 54% go online daily and just 5% say they go online almost constantly.</p> <p>Younger adults are at the vanguard of the constantly connected: Roughly four-in-ten 18- to 29-year-olds (39%) now go online almost constantly and 49% go online multiple times per day. By comparison, just 8% of those 65 and older go online almost constantly and just 30% go online multiple times per day.</p> <p>Americans ages 30 to 49 are now about as likely as younger adults to use the internet almost constantly (36% versus 39%). The share of 30- to 49-year olds who say this has risen 12 percentage points since 2015. Meanwhile, the share of constantly online Americans ages 50 to 64 has risen from 12% to 17%.</p> <p>Other demographic groups that report going online frequently include college-educated adults, black adults, adults who live in higher-income households and non-rural residents.</p> <p>Some 34% of adults with a college education or more go online almost constantly (and 92% go online daily), compared with 20% of adults with a high school education or less. At the same time, roughly four-in-ten blacks (37%) report using the internet almost constantly, compared with 30% of Hispanics and 23% of whites. The share of blacks who are almost constantly online has risen 14 points since 2015, while the share of Hispanics who say this has gone up by 11 points. Among whites, there has been little change.</p>

	While 35% of adults with an annual household income of \$75,000 or more use the internet almost constantly (and 91% use it daily), this is true for just 24% of those making less than \$30,000. Adults who live in urban and suburban areas are more likely to go online almost constantly than those who live in rural areas: 32% of adults living in urban areas and 27% living in suburban areas say this, compared with 15% of rural residents.
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HEADLINE	03/14 Cryptocurrencies take plunge w/bad news
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/bitcoin-other-cryptocurrencies-plunge-wave-bad-news-n856821
GIST	<p>The penny dropped for cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin on Wednesday as prices plummeted on bad news from Google, international regulators and Congress.</p> <p>Major cryptocurrencies fell by double-digit percentages on legitimate markets Wednesday after a triple whammy of adverse developments: Google announced that it will ban cryptocurrency-related ads, the International Monetary Fund called for a worldwide regulatory crackdown on cryptocurrencies, and members of Congress clobbered them at a hearing on Wednesday.</p> <p>Bitcoin dropped by more than 16 percent in 24 hours on the Luxembourg-based Bitstamp exchange, falling from \$9,346 to \$7,831 on Wednesday night. Litecoin, another popular cryptocurrency, lost 13 percent, settling at \$155, and Ethereum plunged by more than 17 percent, to \$582.</p> <p>Without government regulation, cryptocurrencies can fluctuate massively from day to day, and the digital mechanisms behind them are regularly hacked by cybercriminals. They're particularly vulnerable to manipulation by fraudulent advertising and scam artists, which has put pressure on companies like Facebook and Google to take action.</p> <p>Facebook went first, in January, when it banned "ads that promote financial products and services that are frequently associated with misleading or deceptive promotional practices," like initial coin offerings and cryptocurrency.</p> <p>Tuesday, Google followed suit, saying it would also ban cryptocurrency-related ad content beginning in June.</p> <p>Google's news landed as the International Monetary Fund, or IMF — in a paper ominously titled "Addressing the Dark Side of the Crypto World" — called on governments to impose "regulatory technology and supervisory technology" to "help shut criminals out of the crypto world."</p> <p>"The same reason crypto-assets — or what some people call crypto-currencies — are so appealing is also what makes them dangerous," the agency wrote, citing the decentralization of networks that allow traders to remain anonymous.</p> <p>"The result is a potentially major new vehicle for money laundering and the financing of terrorism," it said. And correcting the problems will "require close international cooperation: under a "global" framework — words that are poison to many cryptocurrency investors.</p> <p>Then, on Wednesday, Congress got into the act. At a hearing of the House Financial Services subcommittee on markets and securities, members and witnesses colorfully expressed deep skepticism.</p> <p>Rep. Bill Huizenga, R-Mich., the subcommittee's chairman, derided what he called the "crypto craze," promising: "This panel, this Congress is not going to sit by idly with a lack of protection for investors."</p> <p>Rep. Brad Sherman, D-Calif., was even more blunt, declaring: "Cryptocurrencies are a crock."</p>

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HEADLINE	03/14 France targets Apple, Google
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/france-targets-apple-google-for-abusive-commercial-practices-1521031428
GIST	<p>PARIS—France wants to fine Apple Inc. AAPL -0.85% and Google for allegedly taking advantage of smaller French software developers, targeting two of the U.S.’s biggest companies, as tensions heat up between the two continents after President Donald Trump said he would adopt new tariffs that could hit European firms.</p> <p>The French Finance Ministry said Wednesday it has filed a complaint asking a Paris court to order Apple and Google, a unit of Alphabet Inc., GOOGL 0.79% to end “abusive commercial practices” following a three-year government investigation into how the Silicon Valley companies treat French start-ups that develop and sell applications for mobile phones. Some developers and publishers are unhappy that Apple and Google at times take a cut of in-app purchases and get access to more data on their users and subscribers than the developers do.</p> <p>“No matter how powerful Google and Apple may be, they cannot treat our start-ups and developers the way they do today,” French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said on French radio.</p> <p>“We believe our terms comply with French laws and are looking forward to making our case in court,” a Google spokeswoman said. Apple didn’t immediately respond to requests for comment.</p> <p>The French finance ministry says there’s no connection between taking on tech firms and the U.S.’s new tariffs and taxes.</p> <p>However, France has recently become more vocal about its actions against U.S. firms. A finance ministry official said Europe “needs to stand up and defend its own interests.”</p> <p>The case France announced Wednesday seeks to address a “significant imbalance” in the way Google and Apple treat developers, the finance ministry said, adding the government is seeking to fine each company two million euros.</p> <p>“When our developers want to sell their app on Google or Apple, the fees are imposed on them,” Mr. Le Maire said. “That’s unacceptable. It’s not the economy we want.”</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	03/14 Radicalization a problem in Ireland?
SOURCE	http://www.thejournal.ie/radicalisation-in-ireland-3864163-Mar2018/
GIST	<p>HOW BIG A problem is radicalisation in Ireland? That’s something mosques disagree on.</p> <p>The number of people who have radical or extreme Islamic views here varies from a handful to over 100, depending on who you ask.</p> <p>Shaykh Dr Umar Al-Qadri, an imam based in Blanchardstown and the chair of the Irish Muslim Peace & Integration Council, thinks the risk of radicalisation in Ireland is “much smaller when compared to the UK” but that Muslim communities here “need to be vigilant”.</p> <p>Al-Qadri said he believes there are “at least 100 people [in Ireland] that would be supportive to the form or understanding of Islam that Daesh (ISIS) adheres to, that all these militants adhere to”.</p>

“This support does not necessarily mean that these people are terrorists, it means that they could support them, you know, ideologically. They may also support them financially.”

Al-Qadri said these people need to be monitored.

When asked how he arrived at the figure of 100 people, he told us: “I’ve been living here for the past 14 years. I have a lot of people throughout Ireland who are in contact with me and keep informing me about the various different activities that have been happening.”

A spokesperson for An Garda Síochána said the organisation is “monitoring no more than 30 people living in this State” in relation to radical views.

“Radicalisation is a concern for An Garda Síochána as it is for all policing and security services, particularly after the horrific attacks that have taken place in Europe by people who have been radicalised. Our response to radicalisation is based on our analysis of the level of threat from it.”

“The threat level is kept under constant review,” the spokesperson added, stating that gardaí are “constantly vigilant for any potential emerging threats” and “in constant contact with our policing and security partners across the world, but particularly in Europe, to share information and analysis”.

Al-Qadri said he has reported suspicious activity to gardaí on numerous occasions.

“I am in contact with law enforcement agencies on a regular basis ... We exchange information to ensure that our country remains a safe country.”

Dr Ali Selim, of the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland (ICCI) in Clonskeagh, home of Ireland’s largest mosque, disagrees with some of Al-Qadri’s assessments. He’s less concerned with the threat of radicalisation in Ireland, saying it’s “not at all” an issue.

He also disputes that in the region of 100 people in Ireland hold radical views.

“I don’t think that’s true, I think the number is smaller. I cast huge doubt over the existence of individuals who are having radicalised thoughts in Ireland. Even if you travel outside of Ireland to Muslim countries or Arab countries, Ireland has a fantastic reputation, it is known as a friendly country. Muslims living here, they enjoy equal rights.”

However, he added that gardaí hold a clinic at the ICCI every Friday, where people can share any concerns they have.

Selim said Muslim people in Clonskeagh have been embraced by the wider community and vice versa. He said the Muslim population in Ireland would not have grown from about 4,000 in 1991 to over 63,000 in the 2016 Census if its members had any problem integrating into Irish society.

“The fact that the members of the Muslim community in Ireland have increased gives a very positive indication about the level of harmony and cohesiveness.

“Had the Muslim community not felt comfortable about Ireland, they wouldn’t have rapidly increased ... The Muslim community, when they arrived in Ireland, they positively contributed to the country that they lived in,” Selim told us.

Imam Ibrahim Noonan, who is based in Galway, is concerned about certain speakers preaching in mosques around Ireland. He said some of these people are “renowned for their extremism”.

“They have been coming here and they have been lecturing here. I can’t understand how the government allowed it. OK, they had British passports, but they’re here. I mean everyone knows it, everyone involved

	in Islam in Ireland knows they're here and that they're spreading their hate here.”
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HEADLINE	03/14 'Neo-Nazi' convicted terror attack plans
SOURCE	https://www.eveningexpress.co.uk/fp/news/local/north-east-man-connor-ward-convicted-of-planning-terrorism-attacks2/
GIST	<p>A neo nazi who acquired components for potential bombs and who kept a list of North-east mosque addresses is behind bars today after being convicted of planning terror attacks.</p> <p>Connor Ward, 25, from Banff, had denied breaching the Terrorism Act and faced trial at the High Court in Edinburgh charged with conduct which showed his intention to commit acts of terrorism.</p> <p>The court heard how the fascist acquired an arms cache which included a stun gun, hundreds of knuckle dusters, knives and metal bars.</p> <p>Ward, who was previously jailed for three years in 2012 for possessing an explosive substance, also acquired a number of deactivated bullets.</p> <p>The court heard the ammo could have been reactivated for use in a firearm.</p> <p>Ward, a former psychiatric patient, claimed he was suffering from mental illness at the time he downloaded the documents.</p> <p>He said that he acquired the files because he believed the world was going to end in 2012 and he wanted to survive the apocalypse.</p> <p>But today, jurors refused to believe Ward's claims and returned verdicts of guilty to two charges of breaching the Terrorism Act 2000 and the Terrorism Act 2006.</p> <p>Ward is expected to be sentenced at the High Court in Glasgow on April 11.</p> <p>Detective Chief Superintendent Gerry Mclean, of Police Scotland's Organised Crime and Counter Terrorism Unit, said: "Following Ward's arrest a vast amount of material was seized by officers who invested a significant amount of time into quantifying the scale of Ward's interest in terrorism. Although he operated alone, the weapons, manuals and downloads he possessed had the potential to cause serious harm.</p> <p>"While we may never know the full extent of Ward's intentions thanks to the early intervention of police, we do know that we cannot underestimate the dangerous nature of any behaviour or activity linked to terrorism. These acts are very rare, not least in the North-east of Scotland, and while concerted action takes place every day alongside our partners to protect the public it is crucial that communities remain vigilant.</p> <p>"Terrorist-related activity will not be tolerated in any form and if you are intent on trying to harm our communities let me be very clear that we will do everything in our power to stop you. This conviction today demonstrates that Police Scotland is committed to supporting and reassuring our communities and would continue to ask the public to work with us by letting us know any concerns or suspicions they have. No piece of information is ever considered too small or insignificant."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Europol: terror threat still looms
SOURCE	https://www.euractiv.com/section/defence-and-security/news/terrorist-threat-still-looms-over-europe-europol-expert-warns/

GIST

The threat of terrorism “has not diminished and still persists” in Europe, despite the loss of Islamic State territories in Syria and Iraq, according to the head of Europol’s Counter Terrorism Centre, Manuel Navarrete. EURACTIV’s partner Euroefe reports.

“In Europe, we continue to be very vigilant. The threat is significant and takes many forms. We are talking about more than 20 incidents in 2017, from well-planned attacks such as in Barcelona and Manchester to less prepared ones”, Navarrete said in an interview at Europol’s headquarters in The Hague (Netherlands).

The colonel from the Guardia Civil (the Spanish police force) has been at the helm of the European Counter Terrorism Centre since January 2016, and his department works to “strengthen (the EU’s) response to terror”.

According to Europol (which has not yet submitted its annual report), 980 arrests linked to jihadism were recorded in Europe last year, slightly below the 1,000 arrests a year earlier.

On the consequences of terrorism, Manuel Navarrete pointed out that “even if the threat persists, the number of victims has decreased,” in 2017 there were around “68 deaths” as a result of Islamic attacks in Europe, compared to 135 in 2016.

Al Qaeda

International attention is focused on the Islamic State’s (ISIS) loss of territory and loss of its self-proclaimed “caliphate” in Syria and Iraq, but Manuel Navarrete warned that this does not mean the terrorist group Al-Qaeda has disappeared: “the two threats are simultaneous,” he warned.

For this counter terrorism expert, the threat of ISIS “takes various forms, is difficult to establish and has many tendencies even abroad”, but it continues to maintain “links, competition and conflicts” with Al-Qaeda.

“Talking about ISIS and Al-Qaeda as one and the same is wrong. We cannot say that there is collaboration between them, but there is a link,” Navarrete stated.

What matters for the security forces is “the way it is manifested in terrorist attacks or actions,” in Europe and in the rest of the world.

ISIS has “a trademark, it’s more aggressive and ruthless,” as shown by the propaganda the group broadcasts on social media with videos and photos of their crimes.

However, Al-Qaeda, which carried out large-scale terrorist attacks such as on 11 September in New York (3,016 deaths) or on 11 March in Madrid (193 deaths), is an “equally aggressive and ruthless group, but with a certain degree of sophistication and planning,” said Navarrete.

Nowadays, three sources of terrorist threats can be identified: solitary actors who “go from 0 to 100 in a very short time”, Al-Qaeda’s more sophisticated and longer-term plans”, and the complex action system of ISIS, he added.

Growing threat outside Syria

The retreat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria “does not reduce the terrorist threat” in Europe, and even increases a risk factor: extremists who fought in the “caliphate” and are confronted with the siege of their territory will seek to return to the European countries they came from.

“Over the last few years, we were getting ready and preparing for how to deal with this issue. Information sharing data has been improving, and police operations are getting better and better and are aligned with the fight against terrorism and online propaganda.”

	Europol, the EU's law enforcement agency, now concentrates on "the identification, the prevention and the pursuit" of those wanting to enter Europe from jihadist groups in the Middle East.
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HEADLINE	03/14 Integrating extremists back into Minnesota
SOURCE	http://kstp.com/news/federal-probation-officer-judge-integrating-extremists-back-society-minnesota/4826244/
GIST	<p>Minnesota has more jihadists and white supremacists than any state in the country.</p> <p>That's according to Minnesota's chief federal probation officer and chief federal judge.</p> <p>There are currently 21 extremists on supervised release in the state. Twelve of them are jihadists. Nine are white supremacists.</p> <p>Four more extremists are scheduled to be released in the next year. That means 25 extremists will be living in Minnesota communities.</p> <p>The increase in extremists coming into the system demanded a strategy or plan that wasn't available nationally, chief federal probation officer Kevin Lowry said.</p> <p>In a rare on-camera interview, Lowry said he had to travel to the United Kingdom and Germany in September of 2015 to begin to build a playbook on how to transition terrorists back into society.</p> <p>He became an expert in what motivates terrorists, what it takes to de-radicalize them and why some may never be de-radicalized.</p> <p>"We picked up programs in Germany and the U.K. because those are countries that are more similar to us in economics, diversity, religion, politics," he said.</p> <p>"I met with a number of service providers and government professionals that are fully tasked with dealing with extremist cases. We brought into the United States a number of professionals that would help us and train us in risk assessment and intervention strategies that have been tested over 20 years."</p> <p>The Twin Cities have seen several high-profile terrorist incidents in the last few years, including the conviction of nine young Somali men who tried to help ISIS, a 20-year-old man who stabbed two brothers at the Mall of America in the name of Jihad last November and a 19-year-old woman accused of arson at St. Catherine University this past January.</p> <p>She told investigators she wanted to help Al Qaeda.</p> <p>Lowry cannot talk about specific cases because he supervises all terrorists convicted in the Minnesota federal court. He's also had to supervise individuals convicted of involvement in organized crime and waves of other kinds of extremists over the years.</p> <p>But he worries about the growing number of jihadists and white supremacists.</p> <p>"When you look at somebody who's been radicalized, what you're going to look at is what's their level of engagement," he said. "What's their level of intent, what's their level of capability, is there any type of mitigating factors that can be incorporated in the rehabilitation."</p> <p>He said there are some red flags officers look for in radicalized individuals. A green bird often represents martyrdom, lions indicate jihad or fighting for a cause.</p> <p>Lowry said white supremacists are more obvious in their extremist views.</p>

"They do what we call flying a flag," he said. "They are always advertising, wearing a certain kind of clothing. Black leather boots with pant legs rolled up, Nazi SS emblems, swastikas, lightning bolts, Celtic crosses for white pride and 1488 tattoos indicating an allegiance to Hitler.

"They are easy to spot and they want to be spotted."

Lowry said extremists have turned pure religious messages like the Islamic call to prayer "Allahu Akbar," meaning God is Great, and the Christian cross, into evil calling cards.

He also said the videos terrorist organizations use for recruiting are highly produced and engaging.

Lowry is training hundreds of probation officers across the country, as well as the Bureau of Prisons, to recognize the signs.

But before Lowry sees them, extremists stand in front of federal judges.

Minnesota's Chief Judge of the Federal Courts John Tunheim is one of the foremost experts in the country and around the world on terrorist defendants.

The UN invites him to talk about Minnesota's integration of terrorists back into society, which he pioneered. And the U.S. State Department sends him around the world to talk to officials in different countries about Minnesota's program.

Tunheim saw some of the first extremist cases in Minnesota. He believes all terrorists are not equal, and the justice system's one size fits all approach doesn't work well in extremist cases.

"Putting them away in prison where they would get more radicalized as the years go on and radicalize other people is not in the best interest of society," Tunheim said. "What's in the best interest of society is to bring these people back and make sure they are productive citizens, so that's what we are trying to do."

Tunheim knows he walks a line between prioritizing public safety and an extremist's right to redemption.

He admits there is always the possibility that he'll make a wrong decision.

But it hasn't happened yet.

"Maybe we make a wrong decision," he said. "Hopefully it's a decision made with as much information (and) knowledge and training and experience in addressing an area that we haven't had much experience addressing.

"All of it is a gamble because you can't always predict the future. Let's see what we can do, let's see if we can create better people."

He said extremists who serve their time and go back into their communities to share stories of their wrong turns can be powerful when it comes to dissuading other people thinking about the same path.

Better people can better happen when a national strategy is in place, Lowry said.

He said if there's not a way to do what Minnesota is doing across the country, the problem of extremists will grow.

"What I'm worrying about is, is something bad going to happen on my watch," he said. "Is something going to go wrong? Are one of these cases going to go off the deep end and harm somebody in the community?"

	It keeps him up at night.
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HEADLINE	03/14 Military cover up in Niger operations?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/14/world/africa/niger-green-berets-isis-firefight-december.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Green Berets working with government forces in Niger killed 11 Islamic State militants in a firefight in December, the American military acknowledged for the first time on Wednesday. The battle occurred two months after four United States soldiers died in an ambush in another part of Niger — and after senior commanders had imposed stricter limits on military missions in the West African country.</p> <p>No American or Nigerien forces were harmed in the December gun battle. But the combat — along with at least 10 other previously unreported attacks on American troops in West Africa between 2015 and 2017 — indicates that the deadly Oct. 4 ambush was not an isolated episode in a nation where the United States is building a major drone base.</p> <p>After the ambush, senior officers at United States Africa Command, which oversees American military operations on the continent, imposed additional measures to enhance the safety of troops on missions that were designed to train and advise local forces in Niger.</p> <p>But the missions did not end.</p> <p>On the morning of Dec. 6, a combined force of Nigerien and American troops “came under fire from a formation of violent extremists,” Samantha Reho, a spokeswoman for Africa Command, said in a statement to The New York Times on Wednesday.</p> <p>She said the gun battle killed 11 militants — including two wearing suicide vests — who were believed to be affiliated with the Islamic State in West Africa. No American or Nigerien forces were killed or wounded, she said.</p> <p>It was the first time the American military has acknowledged the December firefight, and Ms. Reho gave no explanation for the Pentagon’s failure to disclose the episode at the time.</p> <p>The head of Africa Command, Gen. Thomas D. Waldhauser, did not mention the December battle in testimony to Congress this month and only broadly outlined the threats in the region. A senior House Republican aide said on Wednesday that lawmakers had been notified about the Dec. 6 attack soon after it happened.</p> <p>Between 2015 and 2017, there were about 10 instances of American troops and local training partners being attacked in Niger and elsewhere in West Africa, said Brig. Gen. Donald C. Bolduc, the former commander of United States Special Operations in Africa.</p> <p>Enemy fighters were killed in some of those unreported episodes, General Bolduc said on Wednesday, but there were no American casualties.</p> <p>The existence of the Dec. 6 firefight was referenced in a terse line in an unclassified report the Trump administration gave to Congress this week about its legal and policy views on using military force. That report, obtained by The Times, mentioned only that a joint American-Nigerien force was attacked by a group of presumed Islamic State militants on that date, and returned fire “in self-defense.”</p> <p>Ms. Reho portrayed the firefight as an act of self-defense after the unit happened to come under attack.</p> <p>“The purpose of the mission was to set the conditions for future partner-led operations against violent extremist organizations in the region,” she said. “There was no aspect of this mission focused on pursuing</p>

enemy militants, and the combined force was postured to respond as necessary in case contact with the enemy occurred.”

She added: “With that said, our forces do operate in unstable areas and are occasionally exposed to danger from enemy forces. When such a situation occurs, our personnel are authorized to respond to threats and violence appropriately.”

However, another military official familiar with the Dec. 6 firefight, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, offered a different portrayal of the events.

The official said that the Green Berets were assisting Nigerien forces on a multiday operation near Diffa, a city in southeastern Niger near the border with Nigeria. It sought to clear the potentially hostile area so that Nigerien forces could build a new outpost there. It is unclear if the small base was ever built.

The mission had attracted attention among American forces after the firefight, the official said, because it was one of the first major forays into the field in Niger since the Oct. 4 ambush.

The White House only this month approved giving combat pay to American troops deployed to Niger. Army soldiers in Niger are still not eligible for certain combat awards — including the Combat Infantry Badge and Combat Action Badge — that are highly respected and sometimes can help with promotion. The four soldiers who were killed in the Oct. 4 raid were given the awards posthumously, but those troops who have fought in Niger have not received them.

Questions about whether the American military, under the Trump administration, is seeking to obscure the expanding scope of operations in Africa were raised last week when it was revealed that the United States carried out four airstrikes in Libya between September and January that Africa Command failed to disclose at the time. The military has said it will acknowledge such missions if asked about them, even if it does not affirmatively disclose them in a news release.

The Dec. 6 firefight was the main nugget of new information in the report that the Trump administration submitted to Congress this week, and was eagerly awaited by specialists on national security issues related to counterterrorism operations.

They hoped it would offer a thorough public explanation of issues — ranging from when the Trump administration thinks it can attack other countries without prior permission from Congress, to an acknowledgment that President Trump secretly relaxed limits on when the military or the Central Intelligence Agency can carry out kill-or-capture operations with drones or commando teams, away from conventional battlefields.

But the unclassified portion of the report, which was just over eight pages long, largely consisted of a slightly rewritten version of last December’s version of the semiannual War Powers Resolution letter in which the executive branch lists deployments abroad.

The unclassified report gave only terse descriptions of certain matters while making no mention of key topics like Mr. Trump’s changes to the drone strike rules, suggesting that they were relegated to the classified annex the public cannot see.

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HEADLINE	03/13 Gitmo: prepared for more detainees
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/mar/13/guantanamo-bay-waits-donald-trumps-bad-dudes/
GIST	On March 14, 2008, Muhammad Rahim al-Afghani, a close aide and “procurement specialist” for Osama bin Laden, having been captured by Pakistani authorities and handed over to the CIA, was processed and imprisoned at the U.S. detainment site at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Exactly a decade later, al-Afghani remains the last inmate to enter Guantanamo despite President Trump's vow to "load it up with bad dudes."

The Pentagon has a haul of Islamic State fighters, but it now says it would rather hand them off to other countries.

At its height under President George W. Bush, Guantanamo held 750 suspected militants captured in the global war on terror. Today, just 41 remain.

U.S. military leaders say they have received no order to kick-start operations at Guantanamo despite Mr. Trump's announcement in his State of the Union address this year directing Defense Secretary James Mattis to "re-examine our military detention policy and to keep open the detention facilities at Guantanamo Bay" in the next 90 days.

Prison officials say they are ready to take in more detainees.

"We are prepared to receive more should they be directed to us," Adm. Kurt W. Tidd, who oversees the military's Southern Command that includes Guantanamo, told the Senate Armed Services Committee last month. "As of today, we have not been given a warning order that new detainees might be heading in our direction, but our responsibility will be to integrate them in effectively."

The admiral has publicly estimated that the prison site could immediately take in another 24 detainees without needing additional guard or processing staff.

But with no prisoners in the pipeline, U.S. commanders say, Washington and its allies are facing a growing problem with Islamic State terrorists who have been captured.

"Currently, there are no plans to move anyone to Guantanamo," Pentagon spokeswoman Dana White said this month.

She said Defense Department officials were drafting options for Mr. Mattis on how to handle Islamic State terrorists captured by American and coalition forces in Iraq and Syria. One option was transferring some of them to Guantanamo.

Kathryn Wheelbarger, the principal deputy assistant defense secretary for international security affairs, told reporters last month that Syrian allies of the U.S. were capturing as many as 40 Islamic State militants a day.

Mr. Trump and the Pentagon share a concern that Islamic State and al Qaeda fighters who are not securely held — in the U.S. or elsewhere — could find their way back to the battlefield. Mr. Trump said that happened repeatedly under President Obama.

"These fighters that are able to depart these war zones, are able to take with them experiences and tactics that could potentially be applied in other places ... are the principal concerns," Gen. Joseph Votel, U.S. Central Command chief, told the House Armed Services Committee this month.

Human rights groups long opposed to Guantanamo also have been energized by Mr. Trump's announcement. Amnesty International in late February issued an "urgent action" alert to its chapters to launch a letter-writing campaign to Mr. Mattis and Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson to encourage them not to send any more prisoners to the site.

Ms. White said the Defense Department is still staffing the effort to come up with a new detainee program, including mapping the future of Guantanamo.

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HEADLINE	03/15 Teen in Fla. killing was subject FBI probe
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/14/us/florida-teen-fatal-stabbing-muslim/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A Florida teenager accused of stabbing three people -- allegedly because two of them ridiculed his Muslim faith -- and who was the subject of an FBI-led investigation over his alleged activities on social media relating to terrorism, was about to be arrested on federal charges, local police reports show.</p> <p>Corey Johnson, of Jupiter, is accused of killing a boy celebrating his 13th birthday Monday at a sleepover and wounding a woman and one of her sons with a knife, Palm Beach Gardens interim police Chief Clint Shannon said.</p> <p>"This was not a random act of violence," Shannon said Tuesday. "All persons involved in this incident knew each other."</p> <p>The investigation -- which stretched back to at least January 2017 -- involves Johnson's alleged interest in ISIS, social media activity that included watching beheading videos, a threat Johnson allegedly made against a school in northern England and his reported fascination with dictators and extremist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, according to reports compiled by Jupiter police.</p> <p>Palm Beach Gardens investigators said the boy's faith led to Monday's attacks.</p> <p>Investigators say in a probable cause affidavit that the 17-year-old suspect confessed that he stabbed his victims because one made fun of the way he prayed and kissed the ground and because another treated celebrities as if they were gods, something Johnson said Muslims don't condone.</p> <p>Johnson will face charges of first-degree murder and attempted murder, Shannon said. CNN called the Palm Beach County State Attorney's Office about Johnson's legal status but the office said "nothing is available for public disclosure."</p> <p>It was unclear whether Johnson had an attorney.</p> <p>Shannon said Johnson's alleged "violent tendencies" were the subject of a joint investigation, which included the FBI, Jupiter police and other local agencies.</p> <p>According to Jupiter police reports, an FBI agent told a Jupiter investigator on March 5 that federal authorities were preparing arrest affidavits for Johnson and that would come "in the next several weeks."</p> <p>The police reports say in January 2017 a Palm Beach County sheriff's detective contacted Jupiter police about Johnson, saying he had reached out to ISIS on the Internet and wanted to join the organization.</p> <p>The detective said Johnson had allegedly been watching ISIS videos online, including beheadings. In March 2017, Johnson denied affiliation with ISIS, police said.</p> <p>The Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office had gotten involved when the suspect's sister reported him to school resource officers, telling them he had hit her in the fall of 2016. She also told school officers that her brother was a white supremacist who liked Hitler and supported Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh, who killed 168 people in 1995.</p> <p>On January 12, 2017, authorities from the FBI, Jupiter police, Palm Beach County schools and the sheriff's office met to discuss Johnson. School police said Johnson had a history of making anti-Semitic and anti-homosexual remarks, according to the Jupiter police report.</p> <p>After the meeting, the FBI agents told police that they had been contacted by a foreign nation's counterintelligence agency and Johnson had threatened a high school in England. The threats caused 100 students to be removed from school because of fears of a possible attack.</p>

	<p>Jupiter police interviewed Johnson's mother and grandmother, the report says, on January 19, 2017. The grandparents told them Johnson had recently discovered religion and had been studying the Quran.</p> <p>The investigator relayed the information to the FBI and was told they were monitoring his social media accounts.</p> <p>At some point in the investigation, an FBI agent said the agency didn't want to pursue criminal charges and thought a "redirection approach" to the juvenile's behavior would be best, the Jupiter police report says.</p> <p>The FBI met with Johnson on March 29, 2017, and received his permission to mirror his computer so agents could see what he was looking at on the Internet.</p> <p>Johnson denied an affiliation to ISIS but said he was supportive of militant cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, who was killed by a US drone missile in Yemen in 2011, the report from the investigation says.</p> <p>The agents told him to stop ISIS-related social media posts, but the FBI said he did not do so and during the summer of 2017 they began to consider bringing charges against the teen, according to the documents.</p> <p>Authorities met in late February to talk about possible charges, but the assistant US attorney wanted more information from Johnson's social media accounts, the report says.</p> <p>About two weeks later, the FBI told Jupiter police it was working on the documents needed to arrest Johnson, according to the report. It is unclear what charges Johnson would have faced.</p> <p>CNN called the FBI office in Miami on Wednesday but didn't receive an immediate response.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/15 Russia extends pause in Syria enclave
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russia-extends-pause-syria-rebel-enclave-damascus-53763757?
GIST	<p>The Russian military says it has extended a "humanitarian pause" in fighting for two days in a part of Syria's embattled eastern Ghouta enclave, just outside of Damascus.</p> <p>The Russian Defense Ministry says the pause on Thursday and Friday is focused on the town of Douma. It claims the pause has allowed growing numbers of civilians to reach safety.</p> <p>Maj. Gen. Yuri Yevtushenko was quoted by the Interfax news agency as saying 131 people left the area through the humanitarian corridor on Wednesday.</p> <p>Maj. Gen. Vladimir Zolotukhin says some 100 people are expected to be evacuated on Thursday.</p> <p>Russia ordered the daily humanitarian pauses late last month, but few civilians have left. And activists said continued government shelling and airstrikes killed at least 20 civilians on Wednesday eastern Ghouta.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 US concern: NKorea aiding Syria
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/us-north-korea-syria-chemical-weapons/2018/03/14/id/848691/
GIST	<p>The United States is monitoring indications that North Korea is nearing completion of a large underground military base in Syria that could be used for nuclear-related work, as well as helping the regime of Bashar Assad rebuild its chemical weapons factories, The Washington Free Beacon reported on Wednesday.</p> <p>Satellite images of the base available on the internet appear to indicate that only a small part of the facility</p>

is visible from above ground.

"We are aware of reports regarding possible DPRK [Democratic People's Republic of Korea] assistance to Syria to rebuild its chemical weapons capabilities," a State Department official told the Free Beacon. "We take these allegations very seriously, and we are working assiduously to prevent the Assad regime from obtaining material and equipment to support its chemical weapons program."

The official added that the Trump administration is making efforts to prevent Pyongyang from creating a more dangerous situation in Syria.

Last month a United Nations report by experts indicated that North Korea has been sending supplies to Syria that could be used to produce chemical weapons, according to CNN.

The U.N. study was released just a few days after the Assad regime was accused of using chlorine gas in an attack on Eastern Ghouta, which is near Damascus.

The report also stated that missile experts from Pyongyang visited Syria in 2016 and 2017, after the supplies had been sent and that scientists from North Korea may still be operating in Syrian military facilities.

These reports have heightened American concerns about Pyongyang at a time when the Trump administration is pursuing diplomatic negotiations with North Korea regarding its nuclear weapons program.

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HEADLINE	03/14 Focus on anti-Taliban efforts in Kabul
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/top-us-commander-sees-peace-possibilities-afghanistan-53733912?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The Afghan capital is now the main focus of the anti-Taliban fight, with U.S. special forces conducting raids in the sprawling city and additional American military advisers arriving to help beleaguered local police, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan said Wednesday.</p> <p>"We've increased the number of special operations we're doing in and around the city to target the networks that are attacking the city," Gen. John Nicholson said in an interview with a small group of reporters. "So Kabul is our main effort right now."</p> <p>He said the Afghan government has replaced the top five police officials in each district inside Kabul as part of a plan to more effectively counter the militants.</p> <p>"This leadership element is key because what we found is many failures at the local level in terms of local security," he said, noting that the Taliban in recent months have managed to carry out large attacks with high numbers of civilian casualties.</p> <p>Nicholson said that some members of a newly arrived brigade of U.S. Army advisers are being assigned to mentoring Afghan police in Kabul as part of a comprehensive plan for improving security in a city of an estimated 5 million residents.</p> <p>"I'll just be very candid. We have a lot of work to do because this city has grown exponentially over the last 15 years" and in a haphazard way that left it vulnerable to movement by insurgents as well as criminal groups, Nicholson said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Suicide bombing east Pakistan kills 9
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/bomb-kills-wounds-20-eastern-pakistan-53748466?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>A suspected suicide bombing near a police checkpoint killed five police and four bystanders and wounded 27 others on Wednesday near the city of Lahore in eastern Pakistan, police said.</p> <p>Haider Ashraf, Lahore police chief, said that evidence collected from the scene suggested it was a suicide attack. However, investigators and explosives experts were working to ascertain whether the bomb was planted near the checkpoint. He said he believes the police were targeted.</p> <p>The checkpoint is located near a religious group's main congregation place in Raiwind near Lahore, the capital of Punjab province.</p> <p>Ashraf said evidence at the scene suggested a motorcycle was used.</p> <p>Police said the blast took place after evening prayers and most members of the religious group had exited into the street, some making purchases nearby.</p> <p>Ashraf said many of the wounded were police and three were hospitalized in critical condition. Other wounded included members of the Islamic preaching group known as Tablighi Jamaat.</p> <p>The main country's Taliban group Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility for the bombing, saying it was a suicide attack.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Turkish shelling on enclave intensifies
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syrian-troops-encircle-town-embattled-rebel-enclave-53733623?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Turkish forces shelled the Kurdish-held northern Syrian town of Afrin on Wednesday killing at least seven people, Kurdish forces reported, as government shelling and airstrikes killed at least 20 civilians in the besieged eastern Ghouta enclave near the capital Damascus, activists said.</p> <p>Shells slammed into the heart of Afrin at dusk at intervals just second apart, forcing residents to rush for cover, according to video published by the People's Protection Units, known as the YPG. The group is being targeted by Turkey as a threat to its national security.</p> <p>A resident reported a worsening bread shortage as tens of thousands of civilians have flocked to the town seeking relief from the advancing forces, shelling, and airstrikes. Azad Mohamed said he waited in line at Afrin's only bakery for eight hours for a few loaves of bread. He said some residents were being turned away without any.</p> <p>Afrin is already suffering from water and power shortages after Turkish forces cut supplies from the countryside, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Turkey has bombed several bakeries since launching its offensive on Jan. 20, according to the Observatory.</p> <p>Thousands of residents had already fled Afrin as the Turkish troops approached, heading toward nearby areas controlled by the Syrian government, but hundreds of thousands more remain trapped in the town as Turkish forces and supporting Syrian opposition fighters move to completely encircle it.</p> <p>Turkish airstrikes killed at least eight pro-government militiamen, deployed to help the YPG, south of Afrin, according to the Kurdish military group.</p> <p>A Facebook page of the Nubl and Zahraa villages posted photographs of the eight killed fighters, who were from the villages.</p>

	There was no comment from the Turkish or Syrian government.
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HEADLINE	03/14 Nigeria president vows 'girls return'
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/14/africa/nigeria-president-visits-dapchi/index.html
GIST	<p>Lagos, Nigeria (CNN)Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari vowed Wednesday his government will never give up until the schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram militants go free.</p> <p>"There will be no rest till the last girl, whether from Chibok and (or) Dapchi, is released," Buhari said in a statement, referring to the towns where the terror group has struck in the past four years.</p> <p>The Nigerian leader spoke Wednesday while visiting the Government Girls Science Technical College in Dapchi, a town in Nigeria's Yobe state where Boko Haram abducted 110 schoolgirls in a February 19 raid. It marked his first trip there since last month's attack.</p> <p>In April 2014, Boko Haram sparked international outrage when it kidnapped 276 girls from a boarding school in Chibok, a town in Borno state. More than 100 of these girls remain in captivity, and their whereabouts are unknown.</p> <p>In Dapchi, Buhari met Wednesday with families of the missing girls, saying his administration has remained resolute in fighting terrorism and ensuring the students are returned safely.</p> <p>"We have re-equipped our armed forces, security and intelligence services," Buhari said, adding that Nigeria's air force is maintaining aerial surveillance of the area.</p> <p>Buhari said the government was investigating circumstances that led to the girls' abduction and warned that "any agency, person or group found to have been negligent or culpable" would be punished.</p> <p>He said he is confident that all the missing girls will be rescued or released and returned safely to their families.</p> <p>"The government, under my watch, will continue to maintain normalcy and ensure that incidents of this nature are stopped," Buhari said.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	03/15 Study: most bottled water 'contaminated'
SOURCE	http://time.com/5200680/microplastic-water-bottle-orb-study/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>Drinking from a plastic water bottle likely means ingesting microplastic particles, a new study claims, prompting fresh concerns — and calls for scientific research — on the possible health implications of widespread plastics pollution.</p> <p>A study carried out on more than 250 water bottles sourced from 11 brands in nine different countries revealed that Microplastic contamination was nearly universal, found in more than 90% of the samples.</p> <p>The study, by journalism organization Orb Media and researchers at the State University of New York at Fredonia, found an average of 10.4 microplastic particles about the width of a human hair per liter. That's about twice the level of contamination discovered in the group's earlier study on the ubiquitous plastic contamination in tap water across the globe, with the highest rate found in the U.S.</p>

	<p>Previous studies have found that a large portion of the microplastic particles found in our oceans, lakes and rivers, as well as in fish stomachs, can be traced back to the washing of synthetic clothes.</p> <p>In the case of bottled water, Orb's new study indicated contamination was partly the result of plastic packaging, and partly the fault of the bottling process. The survey included brands like Aquafina, Dasani, Evian, Nestlé and San Pellegrino.</p> <p>It's unclear what effect, if any, this consumption of tiny bits of plastics has on human health. As much as 90% of ingested plastic could pass through a human body, but some of it may end up lodged in the gut, or traveling through the lymphatic system, according to research by the European Food Safety Authority.</p> <p>"We don't know all the chemicals in plastics, even... There's so many unknowns here," Jane Muncke, chief scientist at the Zurich-based Food Packaging Forum, told Orb.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 NKorea softening media approach?
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/03/14/North-Korea-skips-derogatory-media-references-to-Trump/8221521038343/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_tn_int&utm_medium=4
GIST	<p>March 14 (UPI) -- North Korea may be softening its media approach toward U.S. President Donald Trump, only months after calling Trump a "dotard" amid a war of words with Washington that followed the country's sixth nuclear test last September.</p> <p>In a sign the Kim Jong Un regime is recognizing Trump's agreement to a summit with the North Korean leader, Korean Workers' Party newspaper Rodong Sinmun replaced derogatory terms, like "madman," with "American ruler," in an article published Tuesday that criticized U.S. tariffs against imported steel and aluminum.</p> <p>Calling the tariff measures "a trade war launched by the United States," the Rodong stated, "Recently the U.S. ruler announced a presidential decree, to place a 25 percent tariff on imported steel products and a 10 percent tariff on aluminum."</p> <p>Previous North Korean statements have referred to Trump not only as a madman but also a "lunatic."</p> <p>The pejoratives were omitted in an article that otherwise seemed typical of North Korean statements condemning U.S. policy.</p> <p>South Korean newspaper JoongAng Daily reported Wednesday North Korea has previously referred to Trump as U.S. or American ruler.</p> <p>But in the context of a news article disparaging U.S. policy, the careful avoidance of insulting Trump is a significant shift in language, the JoongAng said.</p> <p>North Korea media does not issue reports of major events ahead of time, according to defectors who spoke to UPI on Monday, and by Wednesday Pyongyang had yet to make references to the U.S.-North Korea planned for May.</p> <p>North Korea did issue a false statement on Wednesday, however, claiming South Koreans are seeking the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the peninsula.</p> <p>"What South Koreans want is an unconditional withdrawal of U.S. troops from the South, an unwelcome guest that poses a threat to peace and security on the Korean Peninsula," North Korea stated, according to Yonhap.</p> <p>Pyongyang also condemned ongoing talks on defense cost sharing between Seoul and Washington.</p>

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HEADLINE	03/15 Thurston Co. rescues hundreds animals
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/03/14/hundreds-of-animals-rescued-in-thurston-county-its-one-of-the-worst-cases-ive-seen/
GIST	<p>THURSTON COUNTY, Wash. -- Calling it one of the worst cases of animal abuse they've ever seen, rescuers from Hooved Animal Rescue and Animal Services are now caring for 23 miniature horses and more than 100 other animals found living in horrific conditions in Tenino.</p> <p>That includes 10 goats, eight dogs, cats, rabbits, pet birds and more than 100 chickens. One dog was found lying dead on the property.</p> <p>The miniature horses were living in muck and mud, some knee-deep with no dry place or shelter to get out of the elements.</p> <p>"We had almost 150 that we moved to a secure location. When we put fresh water down for them, they just scrambled for that water. I don't know how long it has been since they had fresh water. It was heartbreaking to see that," said Kathy Bailey, president of Hooved Animal Rescue of Thurston County.</p> <p>Thurston County Animal Services plans to refer 19 charges for second-degree animal cruelty to the prosecutor's office, with more counts possible depending on the outcome of the full investigation.</p> <p>Q13 News is not naming the owners as they have not been formally charged in court with a crime.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Experts: novichok toxin direct link Russia
SOURCE	http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20180314-french-expert-says-novichok-toxin-is-clearly-a-direct-link-to-russia
GIST	<p>Novichok, the toxic nerve agent that British authorities believe was used in the near-fatal poisoning of former spy and retired Russian military intelligence officer Sergei Skripal, is a powerful substance that is exceedingly difficult to manufacture.</p> <p>This is why a growing number of chemical weapons experts say it is highly likely that only a government could have the technology and infrastructure to make it.</p> <p>And given that the Soviet Union, in the 1980s, was the only state known to have produced it, that has led many experts to conclude that Russian intelligence was behind Skripal's poisoning.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/15 Canned soup fuels NKorea air force?
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/canned-soup-fueling-north-koreas-air-force-53760439
GIST	<p>Is North Korea's air force selling canned soup and taxi rides to upgrade its runways and airstrips?</p> <p>Amid the toughest sanctions ever against the North and its nuclear weapons program, there are some compelling reasons to believe the answer may well be yes. The story of how — and why — offers some insight into how North Korea's economy functions under Kim Jong Un.</p> <p>There's a fine line between North Korea's military and its private sector. To augment the already huge share of the country's limited national resources earmarked for defense, North Korean military units</p>

control everything from restaurants to farms to the flagship airline.

Air Koryo is far more than just an airline.

Over the past several years, it has also become one of the country's most recognizable consumer brands.

With only a dozen or so active-use aircraft operating on limited routes to China and the Russian Far East, it's hard to imagine it's ever been much of a money-maker for Pyongyang in the conventional, ticket-sales sort of way. But it is a symbol of national prestige and serves as a key lifeline to the outside world, transporting people and loads and loads of precious — and often not-very-closely-scrutinized — cargo.

Air Koryo runs at least one gas station and car wash in Pyongyang, has its own fleet of taxis and operates several retail shops, including a boutique at the airport. At the relatively upscale Potonggang Department Store in central Pyongyang, whole aisles are devoted to Air Koryo brand products, from crates of liquor to row after row of Coke-like sodas and a half dozen varieties of canned goods, including pheasant soup and peaches.

The airline's moves mirror broader shifts in the North Korean economy, which is still socialist and technically centrally controlled, but under Kim has shifted rapidly toward capitalist-style entrepreneurialism.

At the grassroots level, street vendors and small, bazaar-style markets are common. Higher up, state-run enterprises are adapting to become more productive and profitable — quite possibly because the regime, pinched by sanctions and shrinking trade possibilities, can't afford to prop them up anymore.

It's not just Air Koryo: Naegohyang, a major producer of cigarettes including the luxury "7.27" brand reportedly favored by Kim himself, has begun pushing its own line of sporting goods. They're sold alongside Nike, Adidas and other pricey imports at its flagship stores near Pyongyang's diplomatic quarter and in the exclusive Scientists' Street district, a neighborhood built to reward the country's scientists and technicians.

Air Koryo got a big boost with Kim's decision to completely overhaul the Pyongyang Sunan International Airport, which opened a shiny new terminal in 2015. The next year, Air Koryo started its taxi service. The Air Koryo soft drink line was launched in 2016. A gas station and car wash followed in 2017.

It's impossible to say how profitable those initiatives have been. But the swelling variety of the goods and their ready availability in the capital and elsewhere, is undeniable.

The appearance of a subsidiary company, Korea Hanggong Trading, at recent trade fairs suggests Air Koryo may be considering an export business, something of a stretch in the current political climate and sanctions aimed at cutting off the North's ability to fund its nuclear program.

Curtis Melvin, a researcher at the US-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University and editor of the North Korean Economy Watch blog, describes the airline as a "wholly owned subsidiary" of the air force, which is using its consumer goods business to help finance reconstruction of its own infrastructure, including runway renovations and new revetments at remote highway airfields.

Selling Air Koryo-labelled products made by military factories can help the air force boost revenues outside of its official budget allocations, Melvin said.

A new headquarters for Air Koryo has been built near the international airport, he noted.

"For many years, North Korea has tried to turn its subsidy-dependent state-owned enterprises into profitable operations that pay 'taxes,'" he said in an email to The Associated Press. "Maybe Air Koryo's time has simply come."

	Air Koryo's connection to the military is not immediately obvious and is often overlooked.
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HEADLINE	03/15 US: Iran naval forces halt 'provocations'
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-military-official-iran-naval-forces-halt-provocations-53763358?
GIST	<p>Iranian naval forces appear to have deliberately halted their provocations of U.S. Navy ships in the Persian Gulf in recent months, a U.S. military official said Thursday.</p> <p>According to Navy Cmdr. William Urban, spokesman for U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, there have been no "unsafe and unprofessional" actions by Iranian naval forces in the Gulf since August 2017.</p> <p>Prior to that, Iranian vessels had periodically made high-speed approaches to U.S. ships that were considered dangerous provocations.</p> <p>Urban declined to speculate on the reason for the change.</p> <p>"It seems like they've absolutely made a conscious decision to give us more space," he said. "That is definitely a change in their behavior."</p> <p>Urban spoke to reporters traveling with U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, who stopped in Bahrain to meet with senior government officials and U.S. military leaders on his way back from Afghanistan.</p> <p>The last tense encounter between the U.S. Navy and Iranian forces in the Persian Gulf was recorded on Aug. 14, 2017, when an unarmed Iranian drone shadowed the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier at night and came close enough to F-18 fighter jets to put the lives of American pilots at risk, the Navy said at the time.</p> <p>For the first eight months of 2017, the Navy recorded 14 instances of what it describes as "unsafe and/or unprofessional" interactions with Iranians forces. It recorded 35 in 2016 and 23 in 2015.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Mystery: USS Cyclops missing 100yrs
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/03/14/more-than-100-years-later-great-mystery-vanished-uss-cyclops-remains-unsolved.html
GIST	<p>One hundred years ago Wednesday morning, the USS Cyclops, a massive American World War I transport ship hailed as a "floating coal mine," should have been docked in the waters off Baltimore, fresh off a journey from Brazil.</p> <p>But the vessel – reported to be the Navy's biggest and fastest fuel ship at the time – and the 309 men onboard it never pulled into the Chesapeake Bay on March 13, 1918, and its whereabouts to this day remain unknown.</p> <p>"In terms of loss of life and size of ship, it's probably the last great mystery left unresolved," James Delgado, an underwater explorer, told the Baltimore Sun this week as recent discoveries of historical shipwrecks are renewing hopes amongst the scientific community of finally finding the Cyclops.</p> <p>The 540-foot long and 65-foot wide ship, outfitted with 50-caliber machine guns to help transport doctors and supplies to American Expeditionary Forces in France during The Great War, was last seen in Barbados on March 4, 1918.</p> <p>Built in Philadelphia eight years earlier, the USS Cyclops was capable of transporting 12,500 tons of coal and could lift two tons of it in single buckets along cables that ran along the ship, leading newspapers to</p>

call it a “floating coal mine,” according to the Baltimore Sun.

But on its final journey, the Cyclops was loaded up with 10,000 tons of manganese ore – a denser and heavier cargo – and stopped at the Caribbean island for nine days to resupply before vanishing into the horizon.

Those back in the U.S. began to take notice as day after day passed without any signs of the ship making its way to Maryland.

"COLLIER OVERDUE A MONTH," blared a headline in the New York Times on April 15, 1918, next to a list of the hundreds of passengers on board.

"Numerous ships sailed to locate the collier as she was thought to have been sunk by a German submarine," the Naval History and Heritage Command says on its website. "Her wreck has never been found, and the cause of her loss remains unknown."

Two months after the ship failed to reach Baltimore, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who then was an Assistant Navy Secretary, announced the Cyclops and all of its crew were presumed lost at sea, resulting in what remains the largest loss of life in Navy history unrelated to combat.

Nothing from the ship has been found. No wreckage, oil slicks or debris. Not even a distress call. And speculation has raged throughout history, leading some to claim wild theories involving the Bermuda Triangle, giant sea creatures and mutinies.

"One magazine, Literary Digest, speculated that a giant octopus rose from the sea, entwined the ship with its tentacles and dragged it to the bottom," the U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command said. "Another theory was that the ship suddenly turned turtle in a freak storm, trapping all hands inside."

Navy Secretary Josephus Daniels at the time added that "there has been no more baffling mystery in the annals of the Navy than the disappearance last March of the U.S.S. Cyclops."

"There has not been a trace of the vessel, and long-continued and vigilant search of the entire region proved utterly futile," the Baltimore Sun quoted him as saying.

But recent deep sea discoveries of American ships, such as the USS Lexington -- lost at the Battle of Coral Sea in 1942 and found last week -- and the USS Ward, found in the Philippines in December, both by an expedition crew led by Microsoft co-founder and philanthropist Paul Allen, are giving explorers hope the Cyclops could be next.

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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	03/14 Europe financial system vulnerable
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-dark-underbelly-of-europes-financial-system-1521065960
GIST	<p>Something is rotten in the European financial system.</p> <p>The U.K.'s status as a global capital of money laundering is once again back in the spotlight following the attempted murder of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter, which the British government has blamed on Russia. The scandal has revived concerns about the U.K.'s remarkable openness to the mysteriously amassed fortunes of Russian oligarchs with links to Russian President Vladimir Putin and the extraordinary role that U.K.-registered companies have played in some of the biggest money-laundering scandals that have surfaced in Europe in recent years.</p> <p>But the current focus on London follows a string of disturbing stories that has exposed the dark underbelly</p>

of the financial system across the continent.

Last October, the leading Maltese investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia —who had been investigating high-level corruption in the country—was blown up in a car bomb. In February, Latvia’s third largest bank collapsed after the U.S. Treasury accused it of “institutionalized money laundering.” Last month, a Slovak investigative journalist and his girlfriend were shot dead in what police say is likely to have been revenge for his investigation into alleged links between top Slovak politicians and the Italian mafia.

These stories raise uncomfortable questions about the extent to which three eurozone countries have been captured by organized crime. The collapse of Latvia’s ABLV Bank is particularly alarming because it was supervised directly by the European Central Bank. The fact that ABLV’s alleged money laundering was exposed by a U.S. agency rather than a European authority raises doubts about the EU’s ability to police its own financial system. ECB President Mario Draghi this week acknowledged that the ECB had suffered reputational damage from the ABLV crisis. ABLV has said it isn’t guilty of money laundering.

The truth is that the EU is particularly vulnerable to organized crime and money laundering. It has created a single market and single financial system in which capital and people can move freely between member states. This has created healthy competition and reduced financing costs for European businesses and households.

Yet responsibility for policing that system lies squarely at the national level. The EU has introduced a single rule book to cover customer protection and anti-money laundering, but it is up to member states to transpose the rules into national law and it is up to domestic agencies to ensure that the law is enforced.

As in the EU migration crisis, where the inability of a few countries properly to manage their own borders exposed the entire EU to risks, so the inability of a few countries adequately to manage their financial systems exposes the entire European financial system to risk.

The EU is also vulnerable because of the opportunities it offers to money launderers. In some smaller EU countries, particularly in the east and south, oligarchs have been able to amass vast fortunes by exploiting their connections to the state, whether through privatizations, public money or public procurement.

At the same time, poorly supervised banking systems in EU neighboring countries have offered opportunities for theft: for example, more than \$1 billion was stolen from three Moldovan banks in 2014 and at least \$5.5 billion disappeared from Ukraine’s Privatbank in 2016. Typically this money then finds its way into the EU financial system, where it is legitimized and invested—often in British assets, which benefit from U.K. legal protections.

The EU has been trying to tackle these deficiencies in its system. The EU’s fourth anti-money-laundering directive came into force last summer—and a fifth is currently on its way, with new measures to close down loopholes exposed by the Panama Papers.

Much of the EU effort is focused on promoting transparency about the ultimate ownership of assets and ensuring that banks and finance professionals know their customers and report suspicious activity.

But while Brussels has powers to ensure that countries implement the rules—it is currently taking infringement action against 20 member states over the latest directive—it has no powers to ensure that they enforce them.

At the same time, strict protocols govern what information can be shared between institutions, limiting cross-border cooperation. Remarkably, the ECB has no powers to investigate money laundering.

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HEADLINE 03/15 Fake Native American art conspiracy

SOURCE	https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2018/03/native-american-indian-art-fake-forgery-hopi-zuni/
GIST	<p>High on the Colorado Plateau in northwestern New Mexico, a dusty main road runs through the Pueblo of Zuni. Pull over to the side, and someone in threadbare clothing will soon approach your window holding out a mysterious little box. In Los Angeles, where I live, such an offering could only mean trouble, and you'd be wise to roll up the window and make a quick getaway. But here in the homeland of the Zuni people, it's safe to take a look. The box is lined with soft cloth, and in it you'll find an exquisite creation this person made with his own hands—a travertine animal carving, silver earrings inlaid with the Zuni sun face motif, a corn maiden pendant of carved shell.</p> <p>The Zuni people rely heavily on hard-won earnings from handmade jewelry and crafts. The tourism department of Zuni Pueblo estimates that 80 percent of working adults there make arts and crafts for sale. Yet it's getting harder and harder for them to make a living.</p> <p>For as long as the Zunis and other indigenous artisans have sold their crafts, they've been undercut by fakes—nonnatives posing as Indians to sell more of their work, factory made goods sold as handmade. But today's fakes include a virtual torrent of knockoffs cheaply manufactured overseas and masquerading as genuine Native made—baskets made in Pakistan sold as Navajo, beadwork made in China sold as Plains Indian, Hopi katsina dolls cranked out in the Philippines—none more profitable than counterfeit Indian jewelry.</p> <p>The insult isn't just financial. "Our arts and crafts give us a really concrete way to stay connected to our culture and our history," says Navajo jeweler Liz Wallace. "All this fake stuff feels like a very deep personal attack."</p> <p>But even though the rampant sale of counterfeits in the Southwest has been widely acknowledged for decades—and has ties to organized crime, according to affidavits by federal investigators—only recently has the U.S. government taken any serious action to shut down the major operators. Whether the crackdown has teeth will be tested in New Mexico on March 27, when Albuquerque jewelry dealer Nael Ali is sentenced for fraudulently selling imported jewelry as Native American made.</p> <p>Ali, the owner of several retail stores in Albuquerque's Old Town district, pleaded guilty on October 18, 2017, to misrepresenting as Native-made jewelry sourced from two family-run networks he said were supplying him with counterfeit jewelry made in the Philippines. These two networks make for the largest Native American art fraud conspiracy ever brought to light.</p> <p>Ali's sentencing is the first in the ongoing federal investigation called Operation Al Zuni, which began in March 2012, and is the most extensive ever conducted into Native American art fraud.</p> <p>The investigation was named Operation Al Zuni after Al Zuni Global Jewelry, a well-known business in Gallup, New Mexico, owned by Nashat Khalaf, a Palestinian immigrant and prominent Indian arts dealer. Al Zuni, which claims to be the "largest wholesaler of Indian jewelry serving the Southwest since 1977," has its storefront in Gallup but also sells at gem and jewelry trade shows where retailers from all over the country buy inventory.</p> <p>Misrepresenting arts and crafts, including jewelry, for sale as Native made when they're not is a federal crime under a law passed in 1935 called the Indian Arts and Crafts Act. The act provides for penalties of up to \$250,000 and five years in jail for first time offenders, but until now it has rarely been enforced. Federal law also requires that "Indian-style" products imported into the United States be permanently marked with the country of origin. That law too has been widely flouted.</p> <p>It has been estimated that the Native American arts and crafts industry brings in more than a billion in gross sales annually nationwide. And although many would say that not enough profits have ever reached the artists, the sale of handmade jewelry, baskets, pottery, carved figurines, beaded leather, and other crafts provide livelihoods for thousands of indigenous people.</p> <p>According to federal investigators, the two families running counterfeiting networks are both Palestinian,</p>

known to law enforcement as the Sterling Coalition and the Aysheh brothers. The Sterling Coalition, the larger of the two, operates an importing company in Albuquerque called Sterling Islands, which is owned by Nashat Khalaf's brother, Jawad Khalaf, and niece, Sheda Khalaf.

In affidavits filed in support of 18 search warrants executed in October of 2015, investigators name these and other members of the Khalaf family, and associates, as participants in a scheme to import and fraudulently sell counterfeit Native American jewelry manufactured in a factory in the Philippines called "Fashion Accessories 4 U." Jawad Khalaf and his son, Nader, have owned the factory since at least 2006. None of the Khalafs has been charged yet.

Law enforcement estimates that Sterling Islands has imported into the U.S. contraband jewelry worth \$11,800,000 in wholesale value between October 2010 and October 2015. According to court records, retail buyers and wholesalers would place orders for replicas of particular pieces of genuine jewelry and pick them up at Sterling Islands.

The ongoing prosecutions against the alleged fraudsters in New Mexico are sending shockwaves through the Indian arts and crafts industry. Nidal Abdeljawad of All Tribes Trading Post, an Indian arts store in the Pueblo of Zuni, claims that Nashat Khalaf's Al Zuni Global Jewelry supplies 90 percent of the retail stores in the U.S. that deal in Native art. "If this guy has to close his shop, it will be a disaster for the Native Americans," Abdeljawad says.

The four Aysheh brothers running the other alleged conspiracy—Imad, Nedal, Iyad, and Raed—were charged in February 2017. Their trial is scheduled for October of this year. None has yet entered a plea.

The sentencings of Nael Ali and Mohammad Manasra, who have confessed to knowingly dealing in fakes from both alleged networks, will test how tough New Mexico judges are willing to be. Manasra isn't facing prison time. But Ali, who pleaded guilty to a felony, faces up to 18 months in prison and could be the first person ever to go to jail for violating the Indian Arts and Crafts Act.

Ali's sentencing is scheduled for March 27 in Albuquerque, and prosecutors have requested that the sentencing of his co-defendant, Mohammad Manasra, be on the same day so that any Native American artisans who wish to be heard by the court won't have to travel twice.

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HEADLINE	03/14 Arrests Lakewood massage parlor operators
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article205217534.html
GIST	<p>Lakewood police arrested the proprietors of a massage parlor Tuesday after a two-year investigation into human trafficking, and seized two sets of body armor and an automatic weapon in the process, according to Pierce County prosecutors.</p> <p>Gig Harbor residents Guang Zheng, 45, and Dan Yu, 37, were arraigned Wednesday in Pierce County Superior Court. The Taiwanese nationals each face seven felony charges and seven misdemeanor charges of unlawful operation of a licensed business, and their bail was set at \$100,000 each.</p> <p>Prosecutors noted in charging documents that they reserve the right to add charges of promoting prostitution, human trafficking and leading organized crime, as well as felony firearms charges.</p> <p>Officers also served a search warrant at Zheng's and Yu's Gig Harbor home, where they found 17 firearms, silencers and other firearm accessories, and two sets of military-grade sets of body armor. Among the firearms is an automatic MP5 9mm gun. The two were arrested.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Anti-money laundering controls 'failing'
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SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/bc-finreg-laundering-detecting/anti-money-laundering-controls-failing-to-detect-terrorists-cartels-and-sanctioned-states-idUSKCN1GP2NV
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (Thomson Reuters Regulatory Intelligence) - Regulators are holding financial institutions responsible for the real-life consequences of anti-money laundering (AML) failures. Firms must reconfigure their transaction monitoring programs to identify the emergent, multi-dimensional money laundering and terrorism finance methods that are defeating today's rules-based detection scenarios. Adopting an actor-centric hybrid threat finance (HTF) model can cut compliance costs, reduce risk, improve regulatory relations, and increase the usefulness of suspicious activity reports (SARs).</p> <p>Financial institutions are required by the Bank Secrecy Act (BSA) to detect and report customers engaged in money laundering, fraud, terrorist financing, and sanctions violations. With millions of customers, banks have fielded automated transaction monitoring systems, which use money laundering detection scenarios known as rules, to alert firms to certain customers for potential violations. Current industry detection logic has proven flawed and inefficient at identifying financial crime, resulting in record-breaking regulatory fines for financial institutions that fail to detect terrorists, drug cartels, and sanctioned state actors exploiting the U.S. financial system.</p> <p>BANKS FOCUSED ON SIMPLE TRANSACTIONAL BEHAVIORS</p> <p>Banks have spent billions on transaction monitoring systems that scrub their accounts for possible money laundering schemes. Detection rules are action-based and target suspicious transaction behaviors, such as excessive cash deposits, structured transactions intended to avoid government record-keeping thresholds, and rapid money movement through one bank to another.</p> <p>Customers who violate the detection rules trigger a system-generated alert, which is reviewed by an internal investigator. Despite decades and billions of dollars in industry investment, over 95 percent of system-generated alerts are closed as "false positives" in the first phase of review, with approximately 98 percent of alerts never culminating in a suspicious activity report (SAR).</p> <p>False positives cost the financial industry billions of dollars in wasted investigation time each year but more importantly, expose banks to steep fines and reputational damage for failing to identify bad actors involved in organized crime, sanctions evasion, or terrorism. Banks can reduce risk by reassessing their detection strategies, which presently lack the focus or sophistication to identify illicit source behavior.</p> <p>REGULATORS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES FOCUSED ON THREAT ACTORS</p> <p>Unlike fraud, money laundering stems from a precursor criminal act, like extortion, misappropriation of funds, or trafficking. As such, most global money laundering is perpetrated by transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), rather than individuals. Bank accounts used to launder illicit proceeds may be set up for personal or business use, but are most often used to cleanse funds on behalf of a threat organization. As one might imagine, different threat groups launder money in different ways.</p> <p>For this reason, law enforcement agencies (unlike banks) target money laundering purpose; meaning they consider both source criminal behavior (e.g. drug trafficking) and illicit organizational membership. When a U.S. law enforcement investigation into a crime syndicate or terrorist group identifies suspect bank accounts, the Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) issues request for information notices (known as 314(a) forms) to those banks. The resulting case investigations often reveal that banks failed to detect or investigate these suspicious accounts, leading to increased regulatory scrutiny that opens the floodgates to fines and remediation.</p> <p>THE TOTAL COST OF FAILURE</p> <p>When bank AML programs neglect detection considerations for money laundering purpose and preceding illicit activities, they fail to identify bad actors exploiting the firm. Such failures have caused major institutions to incur hundreds of millions, or billions, in regulatory penalties and associated costs. Global and retail banks, money service businesses (MSB), digital currency exchanges, and casinos are all at risk</p>

of crushing enforcement actions. Financial institutions globally have been fined over \$321 billion by regulators since 2008 (PDF)(here), with \$42 billion in fines in 2016 alone.

Firms incur not only financial loss, but also reputational harm. Regulatory enforcement actions often feature specific language indicating that banks aided and abetted terrorism, drug trafficking, and human trafficking by failing to detect and report illicit activity. Financial institutions have learned the hard way that regulators hold them responsible for the broader outcome of AML failures, not just their program's procedures. Additionally, media outlets are quick to capitalize on negative news about large corporations, which can trigger a public relations disaster, especially when amplified by viral social media.

HEZBOLLAH AS HYBRID THREAT FINANCE EXAMPLE

Criminal cartels, hostile states, and terrorist groups today form hybrid threat alliances that extend through their finances. In some cases, one single group may be classified as a hybrid threat organization. The Lebanese Shiite Islamic group Hezbollah is one such example.

Designated by the U.S. State Department as a terrorist organization, Hezbollah is aligned with the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Palestinian Hamas, Yemen's Houthi rebels, and nearly one-hundred Shiite militant groups in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. These connected Shiite militant groups (Hamas is Sunni) collectively report to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Iran is subject to a number of U.S. and international economic sanctions.

Hezbollah has recently become a hot-ticket political issue for U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who in January 2018 announced the Hezbollah Financing and Narcoterrorism Team (HTNT), an interagency team of prosecutors and investigators tasked with targeting Hezbollah's criminal and money laundering networks. This announcement followed revelations outlined in a media report alleging the Obama administration derailed a Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) program targeting Hezbollah's trafficking operations, in order to secure the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

Sessions has indicated that targeting Hezbollah's money laundering operations will be a primary focus of the current administration; an emphasis set to extend to bank regulators.

According to a December 2016 terrorism finance report by the U.S. House of Representatives Financial Services Committee, Hezbollah is a hybrid threat organization with a global footprint. With a structure that includes a Lebanese political party, conventional military, Iranian terrorist proxy force, and crime syndicate, Hezbollah is one of the world's most unique and versatile threat groups.

Hezbollah's crime syndicate is extremely multi-faceted, with long-held narcotics, human trafficking, and counterfeit goods underworld networks throughout the tri-border Area of Latin America, the Middle East, North/West Africa, and Asia.

Hezbollah maintains one of the most sophisticated and efficient trade-based money laundering (TBML) operations in the world, as evidenced by the 2012 Lebanese Canadian Bank laundering case. Their TBML tradecraft is so proficient that they hide drugs and cleanse narcotics proceeds by owning all parts of an elaborate global distribution network that falsifies the number of shipments and amount of products shipped, while concurrently hiding counterfeit goods among legitimate products.

This double-dipping smuggling and false invoicing operation provides the profit margin Hezbollah needs to purchase weapons, tactical kit, and to provide logistical support to their global insurgency operations in places like Iraq, Syria, and Yemen.

Hezbollah's business and money laundering tactics are extremely specific and unique (compared to other groups) and require seasoned intelligence practitioners to identify. They use virtually all banking products, including international wires, retail services, prepaid products, and money service businesses (MSBs) at different operational echelons, ranging from international/strategic to regional, domestic support companies (DSC), and at the tactical level.

Accordingly, this one organization presents separate enforcement and reputational risks at different levels of operation.

Like Hezbollah, other militant groups, drug trafficking organizations (DTOs), human trafficking outfits, and hostile nation-state actors are also competent money launderers. They too possess a hierarchical, multi-echelon global structure that utilizes numerous controls designed to subvert modern AML detection mechanisms. These groups hire professional money launderers with a detailed knowledge of compliance that could rival the AML experts working at banks.

Professional money launderers working for global threat organizations launder funds in ways that superficially appear entirely legitimate, failing to raise red flags through conventional detection strategies. Put simply, these professional criminals are unlikely to make amateur mistakes, such as structuring or rapid withdrawal of cash.

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HEADLINE	03/15 USCG record-breaking cocaine seizures
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/federal-pages/dhs/uscg/record-breaking-cocaine-seizures-by-uscg-amount-ton-day/
GIST	<p>The Coast Guard broke records last year with its interceptions of cocaine shipments, Commandant Adm. Paul Zukunft confirmed to Congress on Wednesday, amounting to 10 times the amount of the drug seized via land smuggling.</p> <p>Testifying before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, Zukunft noted among recent USCG accomplishments the seizure of more than 450,000 pounds of cocaine worth over \$6 billion wholesale.</p> <p>“These efforts often go unsung and we do not want that — we want the Coast Guard to be known for the valor of their servicemembers because we know they take risks every day in defense of this nation,” he added.</p> <p>U.S. Virgin Islands Del. Stacey Plaskett (D), noting “the majority of the illegal contraband ... is being interdicted in the eastern Pacific,” asked the commandant about the “significant drug smuggling” reaching the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico from South America.</p> <p>The “flow rate” of drugs coming into Puerto Rico has “grown over 30 percent over the last two years,” Zukunft said.</p> <p>“It’s not staying in Puerto Rico; it’s being transshipped elsewhere to include the U.S. Virgin Islands and to include the continental United States as well. So we are repurposing resources. All this based on intelligence.”</p> <p>Plaskett asked if the USCG resources are “sufficient” to “address this increasing threat in the area.”</p> <p>“The U.S. will never get in front of this problem by itself, which is why we need allies... and as many ships as we put out there, what we soon run out of is surveillance aircraft, which is why we’re looking and experimenting with land-based UAS,” Zukunft replied. “We’ve done a couple prototypes out of Puerto Rico as well. We need to look at state-of-the-art sensors to put into these on-demand aerial systems, but the intelligence is good. We do not have enough ships or aircraft to be fully effective in this mission.”</p> <p>Another lawmaker noted to Zukunft that the Coast Guard’s haul was about 10 times the rate of cocaine smuggling seizures across U.S. land borders.</p> <p>“Yeah, where it’s most vulnerable is where it moves in bulk, and that moves predominantly in the</p>

	maritime domain, way beyond our border,” the commandant said.
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HEADLINE	03/14 Northwestern Univ. lockdown ends
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2018/03/14/northwestern-university-locks-down-warns-about-gunman-on-campus/?utm_term=.3c3ab0bc9666
GIST	<p>Northwestern University warned people on campus to seek shelter Wednesday because of reports of a person with a gun on the Evanston, Ill., campus.</p> <p>But shortly after 4 p.m., the Evanston Police Department posted on social media there was no evidence of a gunman or victim.</p> <p>On Wednesday evening, the university posted on social media that the scare was the result of a hoax.</p> <p>But on a day when gun violence was on many people’s minds — students walked out of classes at schools across the country, marking the one-month anniversary of the school shooting in Parkland, Fla., that left 17 dead — the warnings quickly went viral.</p> <p>A spokesman at the university just north of Chicago did not immediately respond to messages Wednesday, but the school alerted the campus community with text messages and warnings on social media. A tweet from the university said there was a report of a man with a gun in Engelhart Hall, a dormitory.</p> <p>Evanston police had warned the public on social media to avoid the area because of a “shots fired” investigation, and said the area “is not secure and not safe.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/14 Auburn: student arrested w/gun in school
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/high-school-student-arrested-in-auburn-for-bringing-loaded-gun-to-school
GIST	<p>AUBURN, Wash. - A high school student in Auburn was arrested on Wednesday for bringing a loaded gun to school, according to police.</p> <p>Kent Police detectives identified the student and alerted Auburn Police and the Auburn School District.</p> <p>Officers went to the school on Wednesday and found him in possession of a loaded handgun.</p> <p>The student was taken into custody.</p> <p>Police did not say which school the student was attending.</p> <p>Detectives said they believe the student was involved in a drive-by shooting in Kent last month.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/15 Property crimes frustrate small businesses
SOURCE	http://www.kiro7.com/news/local/property-crimes-continue-to-frustrate-seattles-small-businesses/716200898
GIST	<p>A small business owner in Seattle's Fremont neighborhood is fed up after repeated break-ins. Each time, burglars took off with thousands of dollars’ worth of tools.</p> <p>Lebron Castleberry, who owns Castleberry Carpentry, said he was nearly done covering the loss from the</p>

first break-in when the second one happened Wednesday morning.

“Smash and grab, typical,” Castleberry said.

“They got \$2,500 worth of tools out of it.”

The burglary happened outside his home near NW 44th and 5th Street, close to the Fremont-Ballard line.

He said less than a year and a half ago, thieves broke into his other truck, with a much larger box van. That time, he lost \$20,000 worth of tools plus damages.

“I was in a real bad spot there,” he said.

Castleberry said he had to replace the steering column, after the thieves had tried to drill into the ignition area to try and steal the van.

It didn’t work, but the thieves did get away with most of his tools.

He said he was a just few thousand dollars away from replacing everything, when this latest burglary happened.

“You know? It’s like man, come on now!” he said.

A few weeks ago, KIRO7 talked with “Cheese Wizards,” a food truck based not far away in Ballard. That business said it has had \$15,000 worth of equipment stolen over the past few months.

The owner contacted the city council and Mayor Jenny Durkan’s office for help. Durkin said she will work closely with them to take action and "keep our small businesses safe.”

Castleberry isn’t hopeful.

“What are you going to do about it? Well I already know the answer. Nothing,” he said.

He’s been a business owner for 10 years in Seattle but said property crimes make it much harder to survive.

“My margins are slim, slim to none sometimes,” Castleberry said. “It is frustrating. There’s certainly a solution to it, but it’s not something you can just snap your fingers and make happen. It’s a systemic issue.”

For now, he has no plans to leave.

“Persistence is the thing, that’s the key. So that’s what I do, I endeavor to persevere,” he said.

Another case of tools and equipment stolen happened halfway down the block a couple of days ago at a new construction site.

Workers the site said thieves broke in and stole everything, even the extension cords.

The Seattle Police Department’s crime map shows in the preceding 24-hours, they received 118 calls to 911 for property crimes. The number does not include non-emergency calls.

Castleberry said he doesn’t know what the answer is, but believes part of the solution is more support for the Seattle Police Department.

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HEADLINE	03/15 Double homicide suspect shot by deputy
SOURCE	http://www.kiro7.com/news/breaking-double-homicide-suspect-shot-by-sergeant/716259064
GIST	<p>The suspect in a double homicide Wednesday night in Buckley was shot by a Thurston County Sheriff's Office sergeant in Tumwater.</p> <p>Investigators with the Pierce County Sheriff's Office believe the man shot his parents at their home in Buckley sometime before 7 p.m. Wednesday. He then fled about an hour to a hotel in Tumwater.</p> <p>The Pierce County Sheriff's Office let Tumwater officers know the suspect could be heading their way.</p> <p>Around 1:15 a.m. Thursday, officers spotted the suspect's vehicle in the parking lot of the Comfort Inn at 1620 74th Avenue Southwest in Tumwater.</p> <p>Officers called for additional units and a sergeant with the Thurston County Sheriff's Office responded.</p> <p>Shortly after the sergeant responded, the suspect vehicle tried to flee and drove toward the sergeant.</p> <p>The sergeant fired three shots, hitting the suspect once. The suspect continued to flee and his vehicle was struck by a sheriff's deputy who was just arriving to the scene.</p> <p>The suspect was taken into custody and is being treated at an area hospital for his injuries.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/15 Police: Dylann Roof's sister arrested
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/dylann-roofs-sister-morgan-roof-charged-with-bringing-knife-marijuana-pepper-spray-to-school/
GIST	<p>COLUMBIA, S.C. -- Deputies say the sister of church shooter Dylann Roof has been arrested for bringing drugs, pepper spray and a knife to her South Carolina school.</p> <p>The Richland County Sheriff's Department told CBS Columbia, S.C. affiliate WLTX-TV that 18-year-old Morgan Roof was arrested Wednesday after an administrator at A.C. Flora High School contacted a school resource officer.</p> <p>Roof is charged with marijuana possession and two counts of carrying weapons on school grounds. A judge set her bond at \$5,000. She was screened for a public defender. She is not allowed to return to the school.</p> <p>Investigators say Roof also posted a Snapchat that alarmed fellow students, but wasn't arrested for it.</p> <p>School principal Susan Childs posted a letter to parents on the school's Twitter page explaining what occurred while students walked out to remember the 17 killed in the Parkland, Florida, Valentine's Day school shooting.</p> <p>Dylaan Roof was convicted of fatally shooting nine African-American parishioners at a Charleston church in 2015. He's been sentenced to death.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/15 'Threatening figure' in mosque bombing?
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/alleged-leader-mosque-bombing-threatening-figure-53762691
GIST	A former sheriff's deputy and purported ringleader in the bombing of a Minnesota mosque emerges in

court documents as a sometimes-threatening figure with anti-government views who also wrote books and attracted others into his shadowy group.

Michael Hari, 47, allegedly intended for the attack to scare Muslims into leaving the U.S. He and two associates were charged Tuesday with traveling from rural Clarence, Illinois, about 120 miles south of Chicago, to carry out the Aug. 5 pipe-bomb assault on the Dar Al-Farooq Islamic Center in Bloomington, Minnesota.

The explosion caused a damaging fire just as morning prayers were about to begin, but no one was hurt.

Even before his arrest, the self-described entrepreneur and watermelon farmer had a background that included working in law enforcement, floating ideas for a border wall with Mexico, fleeing with his daughters to Central America during a custody dispute and suing the federal government for allegedly cutting in on his food-safety business.

Court papers say Hari promised his accomplices \$18,000 for their participation in the mosque attack. But the complaints in the case do not portray him as well off, citing an informant who said Hari frequently stayed at his parents' home because he had no running water or electricity.

Hari describes some of his political views in a federal lawsuit he filed last month against the Department of Agriculture in which he complains it was cutting in on his food-safety certification business, Equicert.

"The People of the United States have rejected the Marxist doctrine that the government shall own the means of production," he wrote.

Under the screen name "Illinois Patriot," Hari posted 19 videos to YouTube in the past two months, most of them anti-government monologues delivered in a smooth, matter-of-fact voice. He wears a balaclava that obscures all but his eyes.

In a March 11 video titled "A Cry for Liberty," Hari criticizes the Justice Department as "a political animal," and calls the government "completely illegitimate."

He spoke to the Chicago Tribune last year for a story on Illinois residents seeking contracts to help build the border wall with Mexico championed by President Donald Trump. Hari said he had drafted a \$10 billion construction plan.

In addition to Hari, authorities charged Joe Morris, 22, and Michael McWhorter, 29. All three men live in Clarence, a community with a population of just a few dozen people encircled by farm fields. During a reporter's visit on Wednesday, at least four homes displayed Confederate flags — one flying high atop a flagpole in a front yard.

It isn't clear why the men targeted a mosque in Minnesota, though Al-Farooq had been in the headlines in recent years.

A group of young Minnesota men who were convicted of conspiring to travel to Syria to join the Islamic State Group had frequented the mosque. A young woman and at least one of the men who successfully got to Syria also worshipped there. Mosque leaders were never accused of any wrongdoing.

Hari fled the U.S. in the early 2000s to live in Mexico and then the small South American nation of Belize, taking his two teenage daughters with him for fear his ex-wife would gain custody, according to media reports of legal proceedings against him after he returned to the U.S. in 2006. He was convicted of child abduction and given probation.

The case put Hari on television.

Dr. Phil McGraw of the "Dr. Phil" talk show used an investigator to help track down Hari in Belize,

shortly before Hari came back to face charges of abducting his kids.

He wrote a handful of self-published books, including essays on religion. One was titled "Resurgence: More than Conquerors." Another was "Beowulf: A Novel of the Norsemen," which was listed as the first in a series.

Hari belonged to the Old German Baptist Brethren, a religious sect that shares some beliefs with the Amish, although its followers do not spurn modern technology, according to 2006 coverage of his trial published in the News-Gazette in Champaign, about 30 miles south of Clarence.

Some of Hari's neighbors told Champaign television station WCIA that Hari frightened them. One neighbor said Hari gave her "the heebie-jeebies."

His criminal record includes a charge of assaulting a neighbor who entered his property in July, when he allegedly held the man down and pointed a pellet gun at his head. Then in February, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives received an anonymous tip about explosives on that neighbor's property.

Authorities found explosives, including a pipe bomb, which McWhorter said he, Hari and Morris planted to discredit the neighbor who reported the assault, according to court documents. Hari allegedly called in the phony tip.

In a March 10 video, just days before his arrest, Hari went to YouTube again and posted as "Illinois Patriot," saying FBI and local law enforcement investigators had "run wild" and were terrorizing Clarence.

He asked "freedom-loving people everywhere to come and help us."

Hari was raised near Champaign and went to graduate school in criminal justice at the University of Central Texas, now known as Texas A&M University-Central Texas, where he took courses in security-related construction, the Tribune reported.

The three men are also suspected in the attempted bombing of an abortion clinic on Nov. 7 in Champaign, according to the U.S. attorney's office in Springfield. In that attack, a pipe bomb was thrown inside but failed to go off.

A tip in December led authorities to investigate the three men, after a person sent the local sheriff photos of guns and bomb-making material inside Hari's parents' home. In January, a second informant told authorities that the men had carried out the mosque bombing and the failed clinic attack, according to the complaints.

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HEADLINE	03/14 Police: 2 shot in Birmingham hospital
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/shot-birmingham-hospital-suspect-police/story?
GIST	<p>Two people were shot at a hospital in Birmingham, Alabama, this evening, police said.</p> <p>Police responded to a call of a reported shooting at UAB Highlands Hospital, Birmingham police Lt. Pete Williston said in a press conference. They located the two victims and then proceeded to search the hospital.</p> <p>The suspect was found dead of an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound, Williston said.</p> <p>There is no additional threat to the public, police said.</p> <p>The victims were listed as being in critical condition.</p>

	Further details were not immediately available.
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HEADLINE	03/14 Austin: 370 suspicious package calls
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/austin-police-receive-370-calls-suspicious-packages-deadly/story?id=53747381&cid=clicksource_81_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Austin, Texas, residents have taken police warnings to heart, phoning in hundreds of times about suspicious packages in the wake of this month's deadly bombings in the city.</p> <p>There have been more than 370 suspicious package calls as of 8:30 a.m. today, since the first explosion on March 2, according to police.</p> <p>The calls followed three package bombs that detonated at different residences in the city, killing two and injuring two others.</p> <p>The three bombings took place 11 days apart -- March 2 and then two this Monday -- but police have said that they believe they're related.</p> <p>Authorities have advised residents to exert caution and call authorities if they see any unexpected or suspicious packages near their homes.</p> <p>Police said they had received 265 calls Tuesday afternoon, followed by an additional 108 calls between then and this morning.</p> <p>Federal and local investigators have been working nonstop to find the suspect or suspects, Austin Police Chief Brian Manley told ABC News.</p> <p>"We are definitely dealing with a suspect or suspects who has some level of skill in making these types of devices," Manley said Tuesday.</p> <p>"The fact they have not only been able to build these bombs, but then travel with them to the target location without them exploding either during construction or during deployment, shows that they do have a certain level of sophistication and they know what they are doing," he said.</p>
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<ss@ishkafarms.com>
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Bcc:
Subject: Fwd: Purchase Order
Date: Tue Mar 13 2018 13:00:49 CDT
Attachments: EMAILS NO YAHOO& BAD ONE - Copy.txt

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Reference to the attached PO, kindly arrange delivery ASAP and send your Proforma invoice.

Await your prompt feedback.

With Regards
Michael Jerome

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Mob: +373 68 090331
Email: ss@ishkafarms.com

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To: a-isac.advisory@a-isac.com
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Cc:
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Subject: Fw: TLP WHITE - Daily Aviation Memo, March 12, 2018
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Aviation-ISAC Daily Aviation Memo

12 March 2018

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U.S. Department of Transportation Crisis Management Center Daily Report

Indicates Actionable Intelligence

FEATURES

Aviation Incidents

Bangladeshi Bombardier Dash 8 Q400 crashes in Nepal; 50+ dead

From Reuters (03.12.2018) Gopal Sharma

A Bangladeshi airliner crashed on Monday after making an unexpected turn in cloudy weather as it came in to land at the airport in Nepal's capital, killing at least 50 people, officials said. There were 71 people on board the US-Bangla Airlines plane arriving from Dhaka when it clipped the fence at Kathmandu and burst into flames, said Raj Kumar Chettri, the general manager of the hill-ringed airport. Those aboard included 33 Nepali passengers, with 32 from Bangladesh, one from China and one from the Maldives. The accident was the latest to hit mountainous Nepal, which has a poor record of air safety. "We have recovered 50 dead bodies so far," said army spokesman Gokul Bhandari. Although several people had been rescued from the burning wreckage of the Bombardier Q400 series aircraft, nine people were still unaccounted for, he added. Chettri said that moments after the plane received permission to land, the pilot said he wanted to go in a northern direction. Asked by the control tower if there was a problem, he replied in the negative. The plane was then seen making two rounds in a northeast direction, Chettri said. Traffic controllers again asked the pilot if things were OK, and he replied, "Yes". The tower then told the pilot his alignment was not correct, but there was no reply, Chettri added. The aircraft that went down on Monday was 17 years old, data from tracking website Flightradar24.com showed. It descended to an airport altitude of 4,400 feet (1,341 m) and then climbed to 6,600 feet (2,012 m) before crashing about two minutes later, the website said. [Link](#)

[Reuters\[.\]com/article/us-nepal-crash/bangladeshi-plane-crashes-in-nepal-killing-at-least-50-idUSKCN1GO0WP](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nepal-crash/bangladeshi-plane-crashes-in-nepal-killing-at-least-50-idUSKCN1GO0WP)

Operational Outages

Spirit Airlines brief computer outage affects 16 Detroit flights

From The Detroit News (03.09.2018) Sarah Rahal

Spirit Airlines is investigating the cause of a brief computer issue that affected 16 flights Friday, officials said. The Federal Aviation Administration tweeted at 5:20 p.m. that they received a request from Spirit Airlines to ground "all flights system-wide due to company computer issues." An hour later, the ground stop was canceled after the issue was resolved, according to Spirit and the FAA. Derek Dombrowski, manager of media relations for Spirit Airlines, said the outage directly affected 16 flights. They still are investigating the cause. "We experienced a brief system outage this evening, but the issue is now resolved," Dombrowski said. "We are investigating the cause, and we apologize for any inconvenience to our guests." [Link](#)

Detroitnews[.]com/story/news/local/wayne-county/2018/03/09/spirit-airlines-brief-outage-affects-16-detroit-flights/412627002/

Cyber Security News

*China-Linked APT15 Used New Malware against U.K. Company

From Security Week (03.12.2018) Eduard Kovacs

A known cyber espionage group believed to be operating out of China was last year spotted using new malware in an attack aimed at an organization that provides services to the U.K. government. Details about the attack were presented last week at Kaspersky's Security Analyst Summit (SAS) in Cancun by Ahmed Zaki, senior malware researcher at NCC Group. The attack has been attributed to a threat actor known as APT15, Ke3chang, Mirage, Vixen Panda and Playful Dragon. NCC Group started analyzing the group's recent activities after it targeted one of its customers, a global company that provides a wide range of services to the United Kingdom government. APT15 has been active since at least 2010 and it has targeted organizations all around the world using its own malware and Word, Adobe Reader and Java exploits. The group has improved its tools and techniques over the years, and NCC recently spotted two new backdoors it created. One of the backdoors has been dubbed RoyalCLI and is considered a successor of BS2005, a piece of malware that is often used by the group. RoyalCLI leverages similar encryption and encoding routines, and they both communicate with command and control (C&C) servers via Internet Explorer using the IWebBrowser2 interface. The second backdoor, named RoyalDNS, uses DNS, specifically TXT records, to communicate with the C&C server. This piece of malware receives commands, executes them, and returns output through DNS. Link

Securityweek[.]com/china-linked-spies-used-new-malware-uk-government-attack

Record surges in healthcare attacks, fileless malware, cryptocurrency mining

From Help Net Security (03.12.2018)

During Q4 2017, McAfee Labs saw on average eight new threat samples per second, and the increasing use of fileless malware attacks leveraging Microsoft PowerShell. The Q4 spike in Bitcoin value prompted cybercriminals to focus on cryptocurrency hijacking through a variety of methods, including malicious Android apps. The fourth quarter of 2017 saw the rise of newly diversified

cybercriminals, as a significant number of actors embraced novel criminal activities to capture new revenue streams. For instance, the spike in the value of Bitcoin prompted actors to branch out from moneymakers such as ransomware, to the practice of hijacking Bitcoin and Monero wallets. McAfee researchers discovered Android apps developed exclusively for the purpose of cryptocurrency mining and observed discussions in underground forums suggesting Litecoin as a safer model than Bitcoin, with less chance of exposure. Cybercriminals also continued to adopt fileless malware leveraging Microsoft PowerShell, which surged 432% over the course of 2017, as the threat category became a go-to toolbox. The scripting language was used within Microsoft Office files to execute the first stage of attacks. [Link](#)

[Helpnetsecurity\[.\]com/2018/03/12/mcafee-labs-threats-report-march-2018/](https://helpnetsecurity.com/2018/03/12/mcafee-labs-threats-report-march-2018/)

*Qwerty Ransomware Utilizes GnuPG to Encrypt a Victims Files

From Bleeping Computer (03.09.2018) Lawrence Abrams

A new ransomware has been discovered that utilizes the legitimate GnuPG, or GPG, encryption program to encrypt a victim's files. Currently in the wild, this ransomware is called Qwerty Ransomware and will encrypt a victims files, overwrite the originals, and the append the .qwerty extension to an encrypted file's name. It goes without saying, that GnuPG is a legitimate program being illegally used by the Qwerty Ransomware developers. While a ransomware using GnuPG to encrypt files is not unique as it has been done in the past with VaultCrypt and KeyBTC, it is not something that is commonly seen. While it is not known for sure how this ransomware is being distributed, it appears likely that it is manually installed by the attacker when they hack into computer running Remote Desktop Services. The Qwerty Ransomware consists of a package of individual files that are run together to encrypt a computer. This package consists of the GnuPG gpg.exe executable, the gnuwin32 shred.exe file, a batch file that loads the keys and launches a JS file, and a JS file that is used to launch the find.exe program. The first file to be launched is the key.bat file. This file acts as the main launcher for the ransomware by executing various commands sequentially. [Link](#)

[Bleepingcomputer\[.\]com/news/security/qwerty-ransomware-utilizes-gnupg-to-encrypt-a-victims-files/](https://bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/qwerty-ransomware-utilizes-gnupg-to-encrypt-a-victims-files/)

Australian criminals used half of the Phantom Secure modified BlackBerry handsets

From ZDNet (03.12.2018) Chris Duckett

A Canadian businessman has been arrested in the US for allegedly modifying and encrypting BlackBerry smartphones used by "upper echelon" Australian criminals, Mexican drug cartel members, and other members of the global underworld. Vincent Ramos, 41, the chief executive of Vancouver-based Phantom Secure, was taken into custody in California last week after a global investigation involving the Australian Federal Police and the seizure of shipments of cocaine from the US to Australia. Phantom Secure technicians gutted BlackBerry handsets of their original hardware and software and installed new encryption software and an email program, according to a criminal complaint filed in the US District Court. Of the 20,000 Phantom Secure devices in service around the world, 10,000 were allegedly in Australia, according to estimates touted by the FBI. Phantom Secure allegedly charged customers between \$2,000 and \$3,000 for six-month subscriptions and were "specifically designed to prevent law enforcement from intercepting and monitoring communication". The phones' emails were allegedly routed through encrypted servers in Panama and Hong Kong, nations Phantom Secure claimed in marketing materials were "uncooperative" with law enforcement. [Link](#)

[Zdnet\[.\]com/article/australian-criminals-used-half-of-the-phantom-secure-modified-blackberry-handsets/](http://Zdnet[.]com/article/australian-criminals-used-half-of-the-phantom-secure-modified-blackberry-handsets/)

Necurs and Gamut Botnets Account for 97% of the Internet's Spam Emails

From Bleeping Computer (03.12.2018) Catalin Cimpanu

Just two botnets accounted for 97% of all spam emails in the last three months of 2017, according to a McAfee report released earlier today. For most of these months, Necurs has spent its time churning out "lonely girl" spam lures for adult websites, pump-and-dump schemes, and delivering ransomware payloads. Overall, nearly two out of three spam emails sent in the last quarter of 2018 were sent from the infrastructure of this mammoth botnet. Second on the list was the Gamut botnet, also built on Windows machines infected with malware that hijacks systems to send out spam. Gamut —while smaller in size when compared to Necurs— had previously been more active in Q3, sending more spam than the aforementioned. In Q4, Gamut activity went down, but the botnet still accounted for 37% of all email spam, compared to Necurs' 60%. Most of Gamut's email subjects were related to job offer-themed phishing and money mule recruitment. On the desktop side, the security firm says that a big contributor to the growth of ransomware detections was the Ransom:Win32/Genasom family, a generic term that has been used for CryptoMix variants. [Link](#)

[Bleepingcomputer\[.\]com/news/security/necurs-and-gamut-botnets-account-for-97-percent-of-the-internets-spam-emails/](http://Bleepingcomputer[.]com/news/security/necurs-and-gamut-botnets-account-for-97-percent-of-the-internets-spam-emails/)

GAO dings DHS for failing to share info on cybersecurity workforce efforts

From Cyberscoop (03.09.2018) Michelai Graham

Among the many things the Department of Homeland Security is required to report on from time to time is its cybersecurity workforce challenges. Yet, according to the Government Accountability Office, it has failed to do so in a timely manner. GAO says DHS did not complete efforts to identify and assign codes

to all its cybersecurity positions. In August 2017, DHS reported to Congress that it had coded 95 percent of the department's cybersecurity positions but in fact, it was discovered that the department only coded 79 percent of the cybersecurity positions, the report states. GAO is not denying that DHS has taken some steps to identify the gaps but in a new the report, the office is calling out DHS for falling short on reporting these cybersecurity efforts regularly. These specialized codes help define roles and tasks for specific cybersecurity areas. The codes have not been fully assigned since September 2015. The Homeland Security Cybersecurity Workforce Assessment Act of 2014 requires DHS to categorize and assign employment codes to its cybersecurity positions. June 2016 was the last time the department reported any cybersecurity critical needs. The department is also supposed to report these needs annually to OPM, but it hasn't done so since September 2016. [Link](#)

[Cyberscoop\[.\]com/dhs-cybersecurity-workforce-gao-report/](http://Cyberscoop[.]com/dhs-cybersecurity-workforce-gao-report/)

Aviation Tech

Amazon, Boeing, GE and Google to develop private Unmanned Traffic Management (UTM) system

From Drone DJ (03.12.2018) Haye Kesteloo

During last week's FAA Symposium in Baltimore, Amazon, Boeing, GE, and Google announced that they are ready to start working on the development of a private Unmanned Traffic Management (UTM) system for drones. Testing in conjunction with NASA is supposed to start in the next three months. The system will enable swarms of drones to fly a couple of hundred feet above the ground using cellular and web applications to avoid collisions and allow for remote tracking. Amazon, Boeing, and Google have already expressed their visions of deliveries made by drones in the future. The companies have also started testing these new technologies on small scale. The new drone UTM is to be developed separately from the FAA's existing ground-based radars and human air traffic controllers but would need to be able to interact with it. Furthermore, the system would provide information to law enforcement agencies on the ground to help them identify and track drones from clueless, careless or criminal drone pilots. The drone UTM will be completely funded by the companies to help speed up the development time. Currently, the FAA is not able to respond fast enough to requests from commercial drone pilots for waivers and permits. Many applications get denied and the FAA admitted that the approval process takes too long. The introduction of Low Altitude Authorization and Notification Capability (LAANC) aims to speed up the approval process to near real-time but that system is not designed as an air traffic management system required to enable large-scale usage of drones in heavily populated, areas such as cities. To keep the costs down and to simplify the UTM, the system will have a narrow geographical focus and only provide air traffic information on drones in your vicinity. [Link](#)

[Droned\[.\]com/2018/03/12/amazon-boeing-ge-and-google-to-develop-private-unmanned-traffic-management-utm-system/](http://Droned[.]com/2018/03/12/amazon-boeing-ge-and-google-to-develop-private-unmanned-traffic-management-utm-system/)

Legislation & Regulation News

Saudi Arabia ends 70-year Ban, Allows Flights to Israel Over Its Airspace

From Haaretz (03.08.2018)

Air India has been allowed to operate flights between New Delhi and Tel Aviv over Saudi Arabian airspace, the national airline's spokesman told Reuters on Wednesday, ending a 70-year ban and marking a dramatic diplomatic shift. Saudi Arabia does not recognize Israel and lifting the airspace ban would reflect what appears to be thawing ties between Israel and the kingdom, both U.S. allies with a shared concern over Iranian influence in the region. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Monday that Saudi Arabia had granted Air India permission to fly over its territory on its new routes to and from Tel Aviv, but there was no confirmation from either Saudi Arabia or Air India. Air India plans to operate flights three days a week, and the flight would save two hours of travel time as a result of flying over the Saudi airspace, an Air India spokesman said. [Link](#)

[Haaretz\[.\]com/middle-east-news/saudi-arabia-will-allow-flights-to-israel-over-its-airspace-1\[.\]5886090](https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/saudi-arabia-will-allow-flights-to-israel-over-its-airspace-1.5886090)

Senator Schumer wants FTC to investigate airlines that set ticket prices based on personal info of customers

From New York Daily News (03.11.2018) Erin Durkin

Sen. Chuck Schumer is calling for a federal investigation into airlines mining personal data in order to charge higher fares to certain customers. Schumer (D-N.Y.), the Senate minority leader, warned of “dynamic pricing” software airlines are developing — which could track the websites a potential flier has visited and figure out details like their income or other purchases they’ve made in order to decide how much to charge them for a flight. Schumer wrote to the chair of the Federal Trade Commission asking for an investigation into how airlines are implementing dynamic pricing and whether it violates privacy rules. Airlines already charge widely different fares for seats on the same flights depending on factors like when the ticket is purchased and demand. It’s unclear how far along they are with implementing dynamic pricing based on more personal characteristics. The new technology attempts to predict how much a customer is willing to pay for a flight based on their personal data. For instance, someone whose search history suggests they’re traveling for business might get a higher fare, whereas a tourist browsing for vacation spots might get a lower offer. [Link](#)

[Nydailynews\[.\]com/news/politics/schumer-probe-airlines-new-scheme-setting-fares-article-1\[.\]3868606](https://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/schumer-probe-airlines-new-scheme-setting-fares-article-1.3868606)

Physical Security News

Pro-Kurdish and Turkish protesters clash at German airport

From Deutsche Welle (03.11.2018)

Pro-Kurdish protesters demonstrating against Turkey's military offensive in the Kurdish-led Afrin region in northern Syria scuffled with Turks and German police at the airport of the western city of Düsseldorf on Sunday, authorities said. It remains unclear whether people were injured in the clashes, which

involved some 200 protesters from two different groups, police said. One protest was called to oppose Turkey's ongoing assault on Afrin, while supporters of the Turkish action staged a counterdemonstration. The protests were both unregistered. The airport said travelers were not disrupted by the scuffles, with only a small section of the departures terminal affected. Pro-Kurdish demonstrations have also taken place elsewhere in Germany this weekend. [Link](#)

Dw.com/en/pro-kurdish-and-turkish-protesters-clash-at-german-airport/a-42928365

Man charged with making false bomb threat as plane left O'Hare

From The Chicago Tribune (03.11.2018) Nereida Moreno

A Chicago man now charged with making a false bomb threat told a fellow passenger that the plane they were on was going to explode as it departed from O'Hare International Airport on Friday, prosecutors said Sunday. Michael Bielinski, 28, was seated aboard American Airlines Flight 1316 and made statements that could "endanger the aircraft and its passengers," according to court documents. He told a woman seated next to him that "we are all going to die" and "the plane is going to explode," according to an arrest report. The witness told police that Bielinski smelled of gasoline, prosecutors said. Bielinski retrieved an electronic vaping cigarette from his pocket to put batteries in it, prosecutors said. He grabbed the witness' carry-on bag, held it up and said, "maybe it's a good time to cut out the bomb material," prosecutors said. The pilot returned the plane to an O'Hare gate and Bielinski was removed from the flight. He was later charged with felony disorderly conduct in connection with making a false bomb threat. [Link](#)

Chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-met-man-arrested-dangerous-statements-on-plane-20180311-story.html

Miscellaneous News

Driverless vehicles prepare for introduction at Tokyo airport

From Nikkei Asian Review (03.10.2018) Minoru Satake

On a recent February day, a mini bus made by Hino Motors cautiously made its way along a public road near Tokyo's Haneda Airport at a speed of about 10kph. There were no passengers, and more surprisingly, no driver either. The exercise was a trial run of a self-driving bus being carried out by the Japanese tech giant SoftBank Group and All Nippon Airways, with the eventual aim of commercializing driverless transport at airports from around 2020. Japan's high-tech industry sees airports as having great potential for improvement using the latest robotics and artificial intelligence technologies. Some of the functions ripe for automation include cleaning and delivery services, which could be handled by robots, and information desk services, which could be done with AI. The idea behind the recent driverless bus test was that self-driving transport will eventually replace cargo vehicles and shuttle buses now operated by human drivers carrying passengers and crews between terminals and airplanes. The lanes for airport ground traffic do not have as many signals or pedestrians as public

roads, lowering the challenges of introducing driverless vehicles. The recent test successfully achieved Level 4 self-driving autonomy, meaning the vehicle was fully capable of autonomous driving under certain conditions in restricted areas. Japan's government has defined five levels of autonomous driving for ground vehicles. ANA hopes to take testing further by operating a driverless bus carrying real passengers by March 2019. [Link](#)

Asia.nikkei.com/Tech-Science/Tech/Driverless-vehicles-prepare-for-takeoff-at-Tokyo-airport

Radiation Risk Rises with Polar Air Routes and Ultra Long-Hauls

From Bloomberg (03.12.2018) Justin Bachman

Ionizing radiation is a permanent feature of the upper atmosphere, where the protection we take for granted on the surface is significantly thinner. At airlines' cruising altitude, particles periodically ejected by the sun and cosmic radiation coursing through the universe are 100 times more potent than down below. Still, the exposure for every extra-long trip across the globe is roughly equivalent to one X-ray. That is, except for two regions: The poles. Airline employees are already the most vulnerable to workplace radiation, but the growing number of polar and long-haul routes may make the hazard worse. A flight from Germany to Southeast Asia can be just as long as one to the western U.S., but the risks can be very different given the latter goes "over the top" of the world. "If I go to Los Angeles or San Francisco, it's going to be the highest dosage in our network, whereas when I go to New Delhi or Singapore, it's about a third of those doses," said Eberbach, an Airbus A380 first officer for Deutsche Lufthansa AG who also serves as chairman of a radiation protection working group for Vereinigung Cockpit, or VC, the German pilots' union. Airline employees face more radiation exposure than radiology workers or nuclear power plant engineers, according to the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements. Beyond the popularity of polar routes, airlines are also connecting more far-flung cities, with 16-18-hour hauls becoming routine thanks to modern aircraft technology. Singapore Airlines intends to resume its 19-hour nonstop service to New York this year, while Qantas Airways Ltd. has launched what it calls "Project Sunrise" to connect Sydney with London and New York nonstop by 2022. [Link](#)

Bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-03-12/the-future-of-air-travel-means-more-radiation?cmpid=flipboard

U.S. Department of Transportation Crisis Management Center Daily Report

Commercial In-Flight Incidents

*Southwest 3562, B738

- o March 11, 2018 at 10:27 PM EDT
- o Enroute from Phoenix, AZ (Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport) to Dallas, TX (Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport)
- o Electrical problem

- o Diverted to Albuquerque, NM (Albuquerque International Sunport); landed without incident
- o Passengers evacuated on taxiway via slides
- o 0 fatalities; 5 injuries

*American 752, A321

- o March 11, 2018 at 9:21 PM EDT
- o Enroute from Philadelphia, PA (Philadelphia International Airport) to San Francisco, CA (San Francisco International Airport)
- o Hydraulic problem
- o Diverted to Denver, CO (Denver International Airport); landed without incident at 9:50 PM EDT

*Delta 2042, MD90

- o March 11, 2018 at 8:50 PM EDT
- o Enroute from Atlanta, GA (Hartsfield–Jackson Atlanta International Airport) to Philadelphia, PA (Philadelphia International Airport)
- o Bird struck left engine
- o Returned to Atlanta, GA; landed without incident at 8:55 PM EDT

*Allegiant 1858, A319

- o March 11, 2018 at 6:45 PM EDT
- o Enroute from Indianapolis, IN (Indianapolis International Airport) to Orlando, FL (Orlando Sanford International Airport)
- o Crew members medical incident due to turbulence
- o Continued to Orlando, FL; landed without incident
- o 0 fatalities; 2 injuries

*FedEx 594, A306

- o March 11, 2018 at 6:30 PM EDT
- o Enroute from Memphis, TN (Memphis International Airport) to Richmond, VA (Richmond International Airport)
- o Hydraulic problem
- o Diverted to Knoxville, TN (McGhee Tyson Airport); landed without incident

*American 738, A320

- o March 10, 2018 at 6:29 AM EST

- o Enroute from Boston, MA (Boston Logan International Airport) to Philadelphia, PA (Philadelphia International Airport)
- o Level 2 disturbance
- o Diverted to Indianapolis, IN (Indianapolis International Airport); landed without incident
- o Passenger transported to medical facility for evaluation at 7:26 AM EST

Ground Incidents

*Tucson, AZ, Tucson International Airport

- o March 11, 2018 at 10:17 PM EDT
- o SkyWest 3556, CRJ7, scheduled to Los Angeles, CA (Los Angeles International Airport)
- o Level 1 disturbance
- o Aircraft returned to gate; law enforcement responded
- o Passenger arrested

The Daily Aviation Memo is a daily update of foreign and domestic commercial aviation news compiled from open sources and commercially-available information. Information contained in this report is provided for situational awareness only and does not represent the views of the Aviation ISAC. Please send comments or distribution requests to [a-isac.advisory@a-isac\[.\]com](mailto:a-isac.advisory@a-isac[.]com).

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From: Larm, Doug <doug.larm@seattle.gov> on
behalf of Larm, Doug <Doug.Larm@seattle.gov>
<doug.larm@seattle.gov>
To: Larm, Doug <doug.larm@wsfc.wa.gov>
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: 2018_03_08 Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources
(InFOCUS)
Date: Thu Mar 08 2018 07:59:34 CST
Attachments: 2018_03_08.pdf

InFOCUS

Thursday

8 March 2018

Document ID: 0.7.1175.5320-000001

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Washington State Fusion Center
INFOCUS
 THURSDAY – 8 MAR 2018



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Event Calendar

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Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php
Return to Top	**indicates new event/new information added during reporting week		

Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	03/07 Washington State Ferries haiku contest
SOURCE	http://www.heraldnet.com/news/washington-state-ferries-holding-haiku-contest/
GIST	<p><i>Beer, wine, cheese, chowder</i></p> <p><i>frisky waves splash on green hulls</i></p> <p><i>our state's pleasure boat</i></p> <p>MUKILTEO — Washington State Ferries wants to to hear about your boat ride.</p> <p>But keep it short. You only get 17 syllables in three lines metered in a 5-7-5 count.</p> <p>The ferry folks have drummed up a haiku contest for the summer cover of the quarterly ferry schedule.</p> <p>“We’ve been doing photos and images and drawing contests for our covers,” said Justin Fujioka, a ferries spokesman “This one is probably the most off the wall. We wanted something different. Haiku came up in a team meeting.”</p> <p>The five-day contest platform is on the @wsferries Twitter page, and poets have only until noon Friday to enter.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Compromise over police use of force
SOURCE	http://www.heraldnet.com/news/stunning-olympia-news-compromise-over-police-use-of-force/
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA — To fully appreciate a peace accord reached this week on rewriting state law on the use of deadly force by police, consider the intensity of the conflict between the parties 15 months ago.</p> <p>Two dozen people tasked by the Legislature to provide guidance gathered for a final time in November to settle on recommendations.</p> <p>They represented those who write state laws, those who enforce them and those upon whom they are enforced. And they had spent months in search of a narrow peninsula of common ground where Washington residents could rest assured of a fair and just review process each time a cop took a life.</p> <p>On that decisive day, task force members engaged in a raw and unfettered public demonstration of democracy, sometimes impolite and other times emotional. There were insinuations of racism and cop-blaming. Most of the day they spent talking at each other rather than to each other.</p> <p>What resulted was a split decision in the panel’s final report, no revisions in law during the 2017 legislative session and then Initiative 940, which, if it gets on the ballot this fall and is passed, will make it easier to prosecute an officer with a crime after an incident in which they wrongfully kill someone.</p> <p>Then came Tuesday’s moment of Zen at a meeting of the House Public Safety Committee.</p> <p>Representatives from law enforcement and from De-Escalate Washington, the force behind the initiative, announced the discovery of common ground. They now agree on how to rewrite existing state law in ways that will open the door a little wider for prosecuting officers without pushing every one of them through should they injure or kill someone in the line of duty.</p> <p>It required lawmakers to perform an unprecedented — and some think unconstitutional — procedural two-</p>

step, in which they adopt the initiative in its entirety then immediately pass a second bill amending it with verbiage of the compromise.

What finally brought the parties together?

First, the initiative. Its architects hauled in \$1.4 million and gathered 355,000 signatures to get it on the ballot. Raising another couple of million dollars for a campaign would be no problem, and the ballot measure looked pretty unbeatable.

Most of those in law enforcement realized if they didn't want to live under the language of the initiative, they needed to negotiate terms under which they could. So most — though not all — got on board.

Second, the brokers of peace, Rep. Roger Goodman, D-Kirkland, and Rep. Dave Hayes, R-Camano Island.

They both served on the task force and never stopped looking for a beachhead of compromise. On Tuesday, Goodman declared that the wording everyone signed onto makes the initiative “more workable, more understandable.”

The once-feuding forces agreed.

It “truly strengthens and clarifies” the initiative in ways that will build bridges and trust in communities, said Heather Villanueva, a member of the leadership team for I-940, during the committee hearing.

“This bill brings us together,” said Steve Strachan, executive director of the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police. “This is the best outcome for our state.”

It was unclear Wednesday morning if the two-step will be completed before legislators adjourn Thursday. If not, voters should get their say on I-940 in November. Presuming it passes, lawmakers could do their thing next session.

That path is messier and rife with risks. But given how far the parties have traveled, they don't seem likely to turn back anytime soon.

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HEADLINE	03/08 France vows to fight anti-Semitism
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/a65521b85f934be18d3ed8f03dcc3222/France's-Macron-vows-to-fight-anti-Semitism-online-and-off
GIST	<p>PARIS (AP) — French President Emmanuel Macron pledged Wednesday to fight firmly against anti-Semitism wherever it surfaces, whether in the street or online, and to protect the nation's Jews amid growing concerns about intolerance.</p> <p>In a speech to France's leading Jewish group, he insisted there is no reason for Jews to flee the country, which is home to the world's largest Jewish population outside Israel and the United States.</p> <p>“There are hatreds that are rising again, there are the worse kinds of crimes,” Macron said at the annual dinner of the CRIF umbrella organization.</p> <p>“We have understood, with horror, that anti-Semitism is still alive. And on this issue our response must be unforgiving. France would not be itself if Jewish citizens had to leave because they were afraid,” he said.</p> <p>He pledged continued protection for Jewish schools and synagogues and other sites as well as a new government plan to fight racism and anti-Semitism online, which is notably spreading among young people.</p>

	<p>Macron also called for a Europe-wide effort to force internet platforms to remove content that feeds extremism.</p> <p>The latest official figures show that anti-Semitic violence increased 26 percent last year in France and that criminal damage to Jewish places of worship and burials increased 22 percent.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/08 China: greater global leadership role
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/1458f3d281114c2284c732ff8e6739ce/China-eyes-greater-global-leadership-role,-downplays-fears
GIST	<p>BEIJING (AP) — The world can only benefit as China marches toward “irresistible” national rejuvenation and assumes greater global leadership under President Xi Jinping, China’s top diplomat said Thursday as he sought to dismiss concerns about China’s rise while also underscoring its inevitability.</p> <p>From providing the most peacekeepers of any U.N. Security Council member to facilitating talks in world conflicts, “the China of today should play a more active role in resolving hot issues in the region and the world,” Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said. “This is not only something we should do, but what is widely expected of us.”</p> <p>Wang spoke on the fringes of China’s annual, largely ceremonial legislative session at a news conference, where he was asked whether China’s recent efforts to push for peace talks in Myanmar and between Israeli and Palestinian delegations, for instance, represented a shift in its longstanding non-interference foreign policy.</p> <p>China remains committed to non-interference, Wang said, arguing that those in the West who are alarmed by China’s growing clout and overseas activity are affected by bias.</p> <p>“The development and rejuvenation of China is irresistible,” Wang said. “Some people in the United States believe that China therefore wants to replace the role of the U.S. in the international arena. This is a fundamental, strategic misjudgment.”</p> <p>“China and the United States can compete without necessarily being opponents, they should more be partners,” he added, while warning that a possible trade war mulled by President Donald Trump would hurt the U.S.</p> <p>“Especially in today’s globalized world, a trade war is the wrong prescription,” he said.</p> <p>Wang emphasized what he called the key role played in China’s more pro-active foreign policy by President Xi Jinping, who is likely to remain leader indefinitely after the legislature lifts presidential term limits.</p> <p>“Since 2012, President Xi Jinping has been the chief architect of China’s major-country diplomacy. He was personally involved in the planning and conduct of head of state diplomacy, which by world acclaim has been brilliant,” Wang said.</p> <p>Xi has visited 57 countries and received more than 110 foreign heads of state, Wang said, citing Xi’s “leadership and charisma.”</p> <p>Wang called on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, an eight-nation group dominated by China and Russia, to play a greater role in international diplomacy, saying it has a “bounden duty to maintain peace and stability in our region and beyond.”</p> <p>China will host the SCO summit in the port of Qingdao in June.</p>

	<p>The group also includes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan, and China has sought to use it to ensure security along its Central Asian border, for example, by holding joint anti-terrorism exercises.</p> <p>In international affairs, however, it has been a relative lightweight, and the new emphasis announced by Wang is in keeping with a Chinese push to broaden its global footprint with mega projects such as the trillion-dollar Belt and Road infrastructure initiative.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/08 UN Women: sex abuse cases 'tip iceberg'
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/ba34af27bfea4f659a40c905009ebc6b/AP-Interview:-UN-Women-chief:-Sex-abuse-cases-tip-of-iceberg
GIST	<p>UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The head of the U.N. agency promoting equality for women says the global spotlight on sexual harassment and abuse and the punishment of some powerful men who had been “untouchable” is an important moment — but it’s just “a tip of an iceberg.”</p> <p>Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka said Wednesday that is because the number of women who have “come out” is small and the number of perpetrators who have been “brought to book” is limited compared to the number who haven’t been exposed.</p> <p>But in an interview with The Associated Press on the eve of International Women’s Day, she said that in the immediate future at the very least there is a possibility of reducing and halting the continuation of abuse because perpetrators now know “there is actually a possibility that your victim might tell.”</p> <p>“This is a tipping point and a critical time for everyone,” said Mlambo-Ngcuka, the executive director of UN Women. “And what we need to be guarding is that the pendulum must not swing backwards.”</p> <p>She said the follow-up that is needed is for all institutions to communicate with their employees what their rights are, so they know how to report any violations and can be assured “that they will be believed and that they will not end up being on trial themselves.”</p> <p>Mlambo-Ngcuka stressed that while the spotlight has been on powerful male offenders in Hollywood, business and the high echelons of society, sexual harassment and abuse is prevalent around the world from factories and farms to buses, trains and homes.</p> <p>And not a single country has achieved gender equality, she said.</p> <p>Even in Iceland, which comes closest and has the “highest levels of consciousness about gender equality, violence against women is a problem, and unequal pay is a fact, and underrepresentation of women in decision-making is a fact,” Mlambo-Ngcuka said.</p> <p>“This is the same thing we are fighting in India, in South Africa, in the U.S.,” she said. “So all of these countries do not value women the way they value men.”</p> <p>And 150 countries have at least one law that discriminates against women, she added.</p> <p>The theme of International Women’s Day is “Time is Now: Rural and urban activists transforming women’s lives.” To keep the global spotlight on the #MeToo movement, Mlambo-Ngcuka said #MeToo activists have been invited to participate in Thursday’s events at U.N. headquarters.</p> <p>“It’s about talking about the globalization of sisterhood,” she said, “and ensuring that when you are saying MeToo, MeToo have been harassed in Hollywood and MeToo have been harassed in a train in Bombay. And we both felt the pain.”</p>

The aim of bringing the #MeToo participants is for them “to get the feel of the woman who is not from Hollywood, who, however, is just as concerned about the issues,” Mlambo-Ngcuka said.

“When a perpetrator stands in front of you and attacks you, whether you are a celebrity or an ordinary woman in a village, the violation and the humiliation that you feel is the same,” she said. “The one thing we have in common, when a perpetrator attacks me, or attacks someone who is a queen, or a woman who is sitting in a shantytown, in front of the perpetrators we are all equal.”

“And what we need to be fighting for is a society and a generation of men, of all sorts, of all classes, of all countries, not to be violators,” Mlambo-Ngcuka said.

She expressed hope that “the millennials who are rising up in the companies and are destined for the corner office, they will know that the corner office doesn’t come with a girl — that you will get it trouble ... that the boards of organizations cannot afford these cases and the stigma, and the public will punish you.”

Mlambo-Ngcuka, who is from South Africa, said addressing sexual harassment and abuse and achieving equality for women will take years, and there is a lot of work to do in all countries.

Some women have been encouraged by sexual abusers and harassers losing jobs and facing criminal proceedings, she said, but it takes a long time “for women to actually master the courage to speak for themselves.”

Mlambo-Ngcuka said UN Women is also working with men and boys who are key to changing norms, attitudes and cultural practices — from engaging in child marriage and beating wives to accepting that they can be a partner to a woman.

UN Women also is working with the European Union on changing discriminatory laws, increasing the number of women decision-makers, and getting police to prosecute crimes against women.

Next week, the Commission on the Status of Women will be meeting at U.N. headquarters with the theme: “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls.”

Mlambo-Ngcuka said she expects sexual harassment and abuse to be a hot topic at side events.

“It is the beginning of a conversation that maybe is going to take us five years or so before maybe we see a critical mass of countries that are actually getting it the right way,” she said, “but we cannot afford to waste this moment, which we’ve all created.”

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HEADLINE	03/08 Philippine protest, SKorea’s #MeToo
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/eff2b237ad0e41f5bf492cbdeda3ce32/Philippine-protest,-South-Korea's-MeToo-mark-Women's-Day
GIST	<p>MANILA, Philippines (AP) — In Manila, they decried the president as a violator of women’s rights. In Seoul, the surging #MeToo movement took to the streets. In India, where endemic violence against women has only recently become part of the public conversation, they marched toward Parliament loudly demanding their rights.</p> <p>It was International Women’s Day on Thursday, and as the day began in Asia tens of thousands of women ensured it could not go unnoticed.</p> <p>Hundreds of activists in pink and purple shirts protested in downtown Manila against Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, calling him among the worst violators of women’s rights in Asia. Protest leaders sang</p>

and danced in a boisterous rally in Plaza Miranda, handing red and white roses to mothers, sisters and widows of drug suspects slain under Duterte's crackdown on illegal drugs.

In Myanmar, embattled leader Aung San Suu Kyi urged women to build peaceful democracies using their strength in politics, economics and social issues. In Europe, protesters in Spain got an early start, launching a 24-hour strike and calling on women to stop working, whether at offices or at home.

And in China, students at Tsinghua University used the occasion to make light of a proposed constitutional amendment to scrap term limits for the country's president.

One banner joked that a boyfriend's term should also have no limits, while another said, "A country cannot exist without a constitution, as we cannot exist without you!"

China's ceremonial legislature is poised to pass a constitutional amendment to allow President Xi Jinping to rule indefinitely. Photos of the students' banners, like other content about the proposed amendment, were quickly censored on social media.

Hundreds of South Koreans, many wearing black and holding black #MeToo signs, rallied in central Seoul. They called for sex offenders to be brought to justice, and for action on issues including the gender pay gap.

South Korea's #MeToo movement has gained significant traction since January, when a female prosecutor began speaking openly about workplace mistreatment and sexual misconduct. The list of women who speak out is growing day by day.

Several high-profile men have resigned from positions of power, including a governor who was a leading presidential contender before he was accused of repeatedly raping his female secretary.

Suu Kyi's speech marked the third International Women's Day celebrated in Myanmar under a civilian government. She led her party to a landslide victory in 2015 elections and leads the government, even though the country's constitution bars her from the presidency.

"A country's human rights values will be enhanced when women are granted their rights," she said.

Philippine protesters condemned the thousands of people they say died in extrajudicial killings — accusations the police deny.

Protest leader Jean Enriquez also railed against Duterte's anti-women remarks, saying: "We're so alarmed. We have seen his direct attacks on women under his iron-hand rule and it's now time to heighten our resistance."

Human rights groups have condemned Duterte's sexist remarks, including one in which he asked troops to shoot female communist rebels in the genitals.

In India, hundreds of women, including students, teachers and sex workers, marched through the capital to bring attention to domestic violence, sexual attacks and discrimination in jobs and wages.

"Unite against violence against women," one placard urged. "Man enough to say no to domestic abuse," said another. "My body, My choice."

India had its first female leader in 1966 when Indira Gandhi became prime minister, but Indian women are still often relegated to second-class citizenship.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, though, insisted in a tweet that things are changing. "Several women have left an indelible mark in the history of humankind," he said.

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HEADLINE	03/08 March 8 is International Women's Day
SOURCE	http://time.com/5187268/international-womens-day-history/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>As people around the world celebrate International Women's Day on Thursday — an annual March 8 observance — countries from Kyrgyzstan to Cambodia will officially honor women's rights and achievements across the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. The day has been designated as an official United Nations observance since 1975, which was International Women's Year, and is a national holiday in many parts of the world.</p> <p>But the day's origins go much further back than 1975 — and are more radical than what we might expect from a day so widely celebrated.</p> <p>Centering around the socialist movements of the early 20th century, here's more on how International Women's Day (IWD) came to be:</p> <p>How Did the Day Begin?</p> <p>The impetus for establishing an International Women's Day can be traced back to New York City in February 1908, when thousands of women who were garment workers went on strike and marched through the city to protest against their working conditions. “Like today, these women were in less organized workplaces [than their male counterparts], were in the lower echelons of the garment industry, and were working at low wages and experiencing sexual harassment,” says Eileen Boris, Professor of Feminist Studies at the University of California Santa Barbara.</p> <p>In honor of the anniversary of those strikes, which were ongoing for more than a year, a National Women's Day was celebrated for the first time in the U.S. on Feb. 28, 1909, spearheaded by the Socialist Party of America.</p> <p>Led by German campaigner and socialist Clara Zetkin, the idea to turn the day into an international movement advocating universal suffrage was established at the International Conference of Working Women in 1910. Zetkin was renowned as a passionate orator and advocate for working women's rights, and her efforts were crucial to the day's recognition throughout much of Europe in the early 1910s.</p> <p>The Most Consequential Women's Day Protest</p> <p>Although International Women's Day had started with action from the women's labor movement in the U.S., it took on a truly revolutionary form in Russia in 1917.</p> <p>Just as Zetkin's idea was spreading through Europe, Russia (where International Women's Day was established in 1913) was facing unrest for other reasons too. It was against the backdrop of a country exhausted by war, widespread food shortages and escalating popular protest that the nation's 1917 International Women's Day demonstration was held on Feb. 23 of that year — the equivalent of March 8 in the Russian calendar, indicating the significance of the date of the commemorations today.</p> <p>Though it wasn't Russia's first International Women's Day, historian and activist Rochelle Ruthchild of Harvard's Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies points to the differences between earlier protests and this demonstration, which took place in the then-capital Petrograd and involved thousands. “Women were mostly the ones on the breadline, and were the core protesters,” she says. “In fact, male revolutionaries like [Leon] Trotsky were upset at them, as these disobedient and misbehaving women were going out on this International Women's Day, when they were meant to wait until May,” referring to the annual worker's protests on May 1.</p> <p>Despite the initial directives from revolutionary leaders, the protests that began on March 8 grew to daily mass strikes of workers from all sectors demanding bread, better rights and the end to autocracy. A week later, the Tsar abdicated, signaling the downfall of the Russian Empire and paving the way for socialism and the formation of the Soviet Union in 1922.</p>

“You could argue that these demonstrations sparked the abdication of Tsar Nicholas and the end of the Romanov dynasty,” Ruthchild says. “This was probably the most consequential of any International Women’s Day demonstrations of any time.”

March 8th (23 February in the Julian calendar) the Bourgeois Democratic Revolution, was the first of the two revolutions in Russia in 1917.

Suffrage and International Women’s Day

Russian women demanded — and gained — the right to vote in 1917 as a direct consequence of the March protests and after more than 40,000 women and men again took to the streets demanding universal suffrage. This made Russia the first major power to enact suffrage legislation for women, a year earlier than Britain and three years earlier than the United States. In fact, suffragettes in the U.K. and their counterparts in the U.S. both looked to Russia as an example, and held what they saw as the country’s progress and liberation of women up as a mirror to their own governments, warning that they were lagging behind.

“Women’s movements, be it suffrage or labor rights, have always had an international connection,” says Boris. British suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst visiting Russia in June 1917 and the creation of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom during World War I are examples of these early 20th century global links.

These two suffragettes carried their banner to a White House gate on June 22, 1917. The message indicts Woodrow Wilson, but he later came out in favor of the Nineteenth Amendment. The words “free Russia” refer to the women’s voting rights introduced by the provisional regime that had overthrown the Czar in March.

However, the celebration of International Women’s Day itself did not hold as much weight in the U.S. through the 20th century as it did in other countries, largely due to its political associations with the Soviet Union and socialism amid increasing Cold War tensions. The fact that an official U.N. day observance was only established in 1975 underlines this point, and may go some way to explaining why the day still isn’t as widely recognized in the U.S. today as it is elsewhere, though it is no coincidence that March is the nation’s Women’s History Month.

“I think it’s really interesting that all over the world, people observe this day that actually originated in the U.S.,” says Ruthchild, “but the U.S. doesn’t observe it to the same degree.”

‘Many More Steps to Take’

In the century since it was first established, International Women’s Day has come to be marked just as frequently with celebration as it is with protest, but the day’s legacy remains steeped in the struggle for women’s rights — an element that has gained renewed relevance in recent months, particularly as the #MeToo movement has taken on global dimensions.

Looking to the history of International Women’s Day today in Russia, Ruthchild points out the “irony” of recent developments in laws affecting Russian women; for example, last year Vladimir Putin signed a controversial amendment to a law that decriminalized some forms of domestic violence. “How did a society which touted women’s liberation turn so quickly into a society that has reacted so strongly against notions of women’s equality and women’s rights?” she says.

And Russia is by no means the only country where women continue to face challenges to their rights. “Certainly, there are people and leaders in the U.S. who would like to turn back the clock too,” says Ruthchild. In the time since President Trump’s election in 2016 and the Women’s March in early 2017, American women have been mobilized to action by conversations surrounding sexual harassment, equal pay, threats to reproductive healthcare and more.

International Women’s Day doesn’t seem likely to lose its radical flavor any time soon.

	“Days like IWD are a time to celebrate the gains that have been made and to measure how far we have come,” Boris says, “but also to see that there are many more steps to take and to rededicate to the struggle ahead.”
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HEADLINE	03/07 China tries to gauge NKorea nuke offer
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/mar/7/china-tries-to-gauge-north-korea-nuclear-offer/
GIST	<p>President Trump praised China for helping drive North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s toward potential denuclearization talks with Washington, but a cautious Beijing has barely even reacted to reports this week that Mr. Kim is offering to halt all nuclear and missile tests while such negotiations play out.</p> <p>Despite its status as the North’s ally and main link to the outside world, the Chinese government has not made an official statement on the claim by South Korean officials that Mr. Kim made the offer during talks with them this week, and the newspaper of the ruling Communist party even questioned whether the offer really happened.</p> <p>“North Korea still has not confirmed the South’s version of events,” stated an editorial in the Global Times, noting that Pyongyang’s own official state newspaper, the Rodong Sinmun, had said Pyongyang’s actual plan is to proceed with the “advance” of the nation’s “nuclear weaponry.”</p> <p>U.S. officials said the editorials underscored ongoing “puzzlement” inside the White House over the true nature of the offer South Korean officials claim Mr. Kim made with regard to missile and nuclear tests.</p> <p>South Korean President Moon Jae-in’s office said in a statement Tuesday the North in direct talks had expressed a “willingness to hold a heartfelt dialogue with the United States on the issues of denuclearization” and “made it clear that while dialogue is continuing, it will not attempt any strategic provocations, such as nuclear and ballistic missile tests.”</p> <p>But Mr. Moon on Wednesday tried to tamp down expectations for the detente and ease fears that the talks could separate Seoul from Washington and other allies urging a hard line on the North’s nuclear and missile programs. He noted many of the sanctions of the North were imposed by the U.S. or through the United Nations, and would only be eased by “substantive progress” on denuclearization.</p> <p>“These international efforts cannot be loosened by inter-Korean dialogue,” Mr. Moon told a meeting of South Korean party leaders in Seoul. “We don’t aim for that to happen and it’s also impossible.”</p> <p>The issue, according to Michael Pillsbury, a Mandarin-speaking Pentagon consultant and head of Chinese strategy at the Hudson Institute in Washington, is that “that there seems to be no direct message from North Korea to the U.S. government.”</p> <p>“This is all being filtered through the South Korean government,” Mr. Pillsbury said, adding that Chinese officials, who are generally regarded as having better sources on the inner workings of the Pyongyang regime, are still unsure about what is on the table.</p> <p>According to the Global Times editorial, the Chinese government so far “does not see a major shift in North Korea’s negotiating position,” said Mr. Pillsbury, who warned in an interview that “there is often a price to pay just to learn that North Korea has not made any real concessions.”</p> <p>Joseph DeTrani, a former CIA official who served as the State Department’s special envoy to the North Korean talks that broke down in 2009, said the Chinese have appeared to be “as surprised as everyone else” about South Korea’s claim that Mr. Kim has offered to halt tests and discuss denuclearization with Washington.</p> <p>“We’ve got to sit down with the North Koreans and not have anything go through filters,” said Mr.</p>

	DeTrani. “It’s got to be direct so we can figure out what’s going on, what does Kim Jong Un want, and does he know what he’s doing?”
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HEADLINE	03/07 Security clearance system ‘backlog’
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/mar/7/dan-coats-absurd-security-clearance-process-reveal/
GIST	<p>The process to obtain access to classified government information has become so “absurd” that when then-Sen. Dan Coats, who served on the Senate Intelligence Committee, was named President Trump’s director of national intelligence, he needed to re-apply for a security clearance.</p> <p>“Because there was that short-term gap, he had to go through a whole new security clearance process,” Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, the ranking Democrat on the Senate intelligence panel. “That was pretty absurd.”</p> <p>In January, the Government Accountability Office went so far as to place the security clearance process on its “high risk” list of areas requiring immediate broad-based reform, noting that the backlog for investigating job candidates for security clearances has more than tripled in four years to 710,000.</p> <p>The problems include an antiquated system established to thwart outside threats, but works poorly against internal threats like National Security Agency leaker Edward Snowden; the failure to employ cutting-edge technology to simplify background checks; and, as in Mr. Coats’ case, the reality that a clearance at one government agency often does not transfer to another part of the government.</p> <p>With 23 different agencies, and subcategories within agencies, the duplication is massive, experts told a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing Wednesday.</p> <p>In the past five years, the federal government has attempted to overhaul the background check process since it was revealed that the last firm in charge, Virginia-based USIS, had failed to complete some 665,000 investigations.</p> <p>As a result, the waiting time between getting a job and being cleared to work at a government agency, or private business contracting with the government requiring one — often runs at least a year.</p> <p>Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr, North Carolina Republican, asked David Berteau, president of the Professional Services Council, which represents the government contracting staffing business, about the delays.</p> <p>“Why’s it take so damn long?” Mr. Burr asked.</p> <p>Kevin Phillips, president and CEO of government contractor ManTech, said the process, established during the Eisenhower administration, is “very manual” and requires investigators to make personal visits to check up on someone with handwritten notes, not computer tablets. There is also a matter of trust, he added.</p> <p>“People want to walk through the process and make sure, in this environment, that people are trustworthy,” he said, “and the timeline is taking longer because the assurance is needed.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Pentagon steps up NKorea military plans
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/mar/7/pentagon-steps-up-north-korea-military-planning/

GIST

The Pentagon is intensifying military planning for war on the Korean Peninsula despite the apparent thaw between North Korea and the United States over Pyongyang's nuclear weapons and long-range missile program.

Pentagon officials say the military planning has increased in recent weeks and involves reworking and refining Op Plan 5027, as the war plan for a conflict against North Korea is called.

The activity is being done by planners in the Pentagon in coordination with officials from U.S. Forces Korea, the military command in South Korea. The objective is to determine how best to execute President Trump's order to eliminate the North Korean nuclear program.

The stepped-up planning comes as Pyongyang signaled this week that it is ready to hold talks with the United States and South Korea on its nuclear program.

Current administration policy toward North Korea is to impose maximum diplomatic and financial pressure, resulting in dozens of new economic and financial sanctions on the regime of Kim Jong-un in a bid to force him to back down. Intelligence officials assess that the sanctions are beginning to have an impact on North Korea's already weak economy.

Mr. Trump took credit for the latest overture and tweeted on Tuesday that the response indicated "possible progress." But he also said the United States remains ready to use force.

"For the first time in many years, a serious effort is being made by all parties concerned," the president tweeted. "The World is watching and waiting! May be false hope, but the U.S. is ready to go hard in either direction!"

Pre-emptive U.S. military action is widely viewed as producing devastation for South Korea and possibly Japan, which both have U.S. military bases, and could quickly escalate to a nuclear exchange. North Korea's military readiness was discussed on Capitol Hill at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing this week.

Army Lt. Gen. Robert Ashley, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, said North Korean threats to turn the South Korean capital of Seoul into a "sea of fire" are not propaganda.

"I'm not sure of the phrase, but it would be a significant amount of casualties," Gen. Ashley said.

North Korea's army uses outdated Soviet-era design weapons, including massive amounts of artillery deployed close to the Demilitarized Zone separating the Koreans.

They include self-propelled artillery and guns and howitzers ranging in size from tubes with 122-millimeter to 152-millimeter barrels. Also deployed are North Korean-produced Koksan guns of 170-millimeter caliber. Rocket artillery includes at least three calibers of multiple rocket launchers, in 107-, 122- and 240-millimeter sizes, many mounted on trucks. Gen. Ashley said the majority of the artillery weapons are well-maintained.

"Now, there is going to be a degree of atrophy over time, but our expectation is those systems will work," he said.

The North Korean military also has a problem with ammunition and parts for its weapons because many are not widely available in the international arms markets.

Asked about North Korean troops' military readiness, the three-star general said: "We've watched their winter training exercises. They've shown a level of discipline and expertise."

"Kim Jong-un is far different from his father in the level of rigor that they've applied to their training regime to make sure their crews are ready," Gen. Ashley said.

A senior administration official told reporters this week that North Korea's latest overture on resuming nuclear talks is being viewed cautiously by White House national security officials. The main worry is that the North Koreans will engage in nuclear talks solely as a means of reducing the administration's "maximum pressure" campaign against Pyongyang.

The administration of President George W. Bush made concessions in a bid to coax the North Koreans into denuclearizing, including lifting some sanctions and removing North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism.

The North Koreans pocketed the concessions and eventually walked away from the talks — all the while building up its nuclear warheads and missiles.

"The president's policy all along has been pursuing maximum pressure in order to change their calculus to help them understand that denuclearization is the only path to a better outcome," the official said, adding that the administration has always kept the door open for talks.

In the past, North Korea has attached "nonstarter conditions" for talks, such as liquidating the U.S. alliance with South Korea and removing troops from the peninsula.

"What we are looking for is concrete steps toward denuclearization, not a rehashing of old positions that did not lead to that outcome," the official said.

On North Korea's offer to halt missile tests in exchange for new talks, the official suggested that would not be enough.

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HEADLINE	03/07 Wildland firefighters face different battle
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/2018/03/DACA-washington-firefighters-immigration-trump-dreamer
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA — All they want to do is to keep fighting fires on millions of acres of private, state and tribal-owned forestlands as part of Washington state's largest on-call fire department.</p> <p>But the firefighting fates of Noe Vazquez and Christian Garcia Herrera, who have each fought more than 20 fires, are in limbo until the federal government reaches a deal on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, otherwise known as DACA.</p> <p>On Tuesday in Olympia, Vazquez and Herrera, dressed in crisp, white shirts and skinny, black ties, held a press conference to put a face on the thousands of people who continue to be impacted by President Donald Trump's decision to end the DACA program last Fall.</p> <p>"It's sad to realize that if my DACA does get canceled I won't be able to continue my dream of becoming a wildland firefighter," Herrera said. "I wanna make a difference in the world some day."</p> <p>"I love the adrenaline you get. I love the work. I just love being able to give back to the community," Vazquez added.</p> <p>Monday was the deadline for Congress and Trump to reach an agreement on the DACA program, which offers two-year work permits to those who have been in the country illegally since they were children.</p> <p>There are an estimated 800,000 people who are DACA recipients nationwide; 17,000 in Washington state. Opponents of DACA argue President Barack Obama's creation of the program, via executive order, was unconstitutional. For now, two federal judges have ordered the administration to maintain the program while legal challenges move forward. Ultimately, however, DACA recipients are counting on Congress and the president to resolve the issue.</p>

On Monday, however, the deadline for a DACA deal came and went with no resolution in sight and only Trump tweeting: "It's March 5th and the Democrats are nowhere to be found on DACA. Gave them 6 months, they just don't care. Where are they? We are ready to make a deal!"

The White House has said that it will maintain the program only under the condition that Congress provides funding for a border wall with Mexico and increased border security. Trump also wants Congress to agree to sweeping reductions to legal immigration, like so-called "chain migration," a visa program that allows immigrants already living in the United States to bring family members over.

Here in Olympia, Washington's Commissioner of Public Lands, Hilary Franz, who is ultimately responsible for the state's on-call fire department, joined Vazquez and Herrera in support of them.

"To become a wildland firefighter we know is not easy. It takes enormous amount of bravery, enormous amount of hard work, and the commitment of caring for your team," Franz said.

"As our wildfire fighter seasons become larger and longer, and we are seeing even greater need for more people stepping up to be firefighters, we need to make sure that we value people like Noe and Christian," Franz continued.

"What are we trying to accomplish by denying legal status to Dreamers. Who is better off?" (According to the state Department of Natural Resources, the average wildfire season across the country today is 78 days longer than it was in the 1970s.)

Vazquez, 20, was born in Guadalajara, Mexico. He says he came to the United States with his mother, who had been a victim of domestic violence. Initially raised in Los Angeles, Vazquez moved to Washington and applied for DACA in 2015. He knew college was probably not right for him but dreamt of becoming a firefighter.

"I would stay at home during the summers, and I would see the clouds miles away getting closer and closer, just plumes of smoke," said Vazquez who, along with Herrera, lives in Tonasket in Okanogan County. "You couldn't be outside for too long because it's toxic. I was wondering what I could do for my community, what was something I could do to help because there was a lot of people who were devastated by it."

Vazquez was able to fight fires in 2017 until his work permit expired. Unable to work, he was short on money and neglected to pay parking tickets. His license was suspended as a result. In January, he was pulled over and detained by Immigration. He served one month in the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma. Now that he's been released on bond, he hopes to resubmit his DACA application, but he's unsure whether the program will even continue and consequently, whether he will be able to go back to fighting fires.

Herrera, 20, still has his DACA work permit and is currently employed by the Department of Natural Resources but he, too, worries. Herrera was born in Guerrero, Mexico but has been in the U.S. since he was an infant. In fact, Herrera says he would have been born in the U.S. if not for the fact that his mother had to travel back to Mexico to take care of his grandmother, who was dying from cancer. Herrera, who was also raised in California, moved to Washington about six years ago. He wasn't sure fighting fires was right for him but once he got started, he was hooked. He realized it was a good way to serve as a role model for his younger siblings and the community at large.

The two young men's supervisor, Justin Wilson, was also on hand in Olympia to offer support. Wilson said he could see right away that they were right for the job.

"You work and earn your paycheck, you don't expect it, and I've seen that in these two individuals," Wilson said. Wilson also said bilingual firefighters, capable of communicating with various communities about fire safety, are more important than ever and in short supply. Wilson could lose as many as four

	<p>firefighters if the DACA program doesn't continue.</p> <p>"Basically that shuts a whole truck down. I've got four people on a truck. If I lose these four people we'll lose a resource, plain and simple," Wilson said.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Sheriff: arrests if protesters block streets
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/920532/sheriff-johanknecht-seattle-protesters/
GIST	<p>Seattle has drawn sharp criticism after seven protesters blocked downtown traffic without any police intervention.</p> <p>"We have a lot of two-lane roads out there so it will create a backup pretty quickly," King County Sheriff Mitzi Johanknecht told KTTH's Todd Herman. "As a matter of fact, on that day I worked remotely. My office is down there and there was no way I was going to get to it; and some other staff having 2-3 hour commutes that day."</p> <p>Seattle police made no arrests on March 1. The protesters locked arms at 4th Avenue and James Street and blocked traffic. It created a 2.5 mile backup through the city. The backups echoed through area roads and onto I-5. Police did nothing. Sheriff Johanknecht is not in charge of Seattle police, however.</p> <p>"Each agency decides how to handle things differently," she said. "In my jurisdiction if the roadway is blocked, we would make arrests. But we'd work with protesters. Often times, it's them wanting to be arrested. There's a big danger, a big public safety issue, I think, in those situations.</p> <p>The protesters oppose a proposed \$210 million King County juvenile justice center. They sat down at 4th Avenue and James Street around 8 a.m. They later moved to 5th Avenue and Stewart Street. One driver tried to inch her car past the scene. Protesters jumped on her hood. Another woman was forced to park at the bottom of First Hill and limp up to Harborview Medical Center. She was getting foot surgery that day.</p> <p>KIRO Radio's Chris Sullivan was among many critics in town after police did nothing. KTTH's Todd Herman said he would have performed a citizen's arrest. It depends how it's done, but Sheriff Johanknecht said that deputies often encounter a citizen's arrests.</p> <p>"We have people witness stuff all the time and stand by," she said. "You've heard of times when DUIs are kept from driving their cars out of parking lots and so forth; I consider those citizens arrests and people stand by and assist us."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Seattle promise: free college by 2020
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/03/07/durkan-aims-to-fulfill-free-college-promise-by-2020/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE -- Free college could soon become a reality for all high school students in Seattle.</p> <p>Mayor Jenny Durkan, Seattle Colleges Chancellor Shouan Pan and Seattle Public Schools Superintendent Larry Nyland, signed a partnership agreement Wednesday that allows for the expansion of the Seattle Promise Program, which aims to provide free community college tuition to high school students.</p> <p>"How many people think Seattle jobs should go to Seattle kids?" Durkan yelled at a crowd of students at Ingraham High School before signing.</p> <p>Durkan said the affordability crisis is the central problem in Seattle and obtaining a post-secondary degree, credential or certificate is necessary to obtain a living wage job. She pointed to a statistic that said by 2020, 70% of all jobs in Washington state will require some post-secondary education, but only about 31% of Washington's high school students get that by the age of 26.</p>

"In the City of Seattle you should be able to grow up and either work in those shiny new buildings downtown, build those shiny new buildings or own those shiny new buildings," Durkan said.

The Timeline

The 2018-19 school year will serve as a transition year, according to the timeline released by the mayor's office.

During this transition year, a total of six Seattle area high schools will be served through the Seattle Promise College Tuition Program in partnership with all three Seattle colleges.

The program is expected to serve about 1,000 high school and college students, including approximately 500 students in six high schools who will have access to support and outreach staff for college readiness and wrap around college preparation services.

Approximately 215 students will receive '13th Year' scholarships at Seattle colleges and approximately 120 students will be eligible to receive '14th Year' scholarships at South Seattle College.

In 2019, all Seattle public high school students will be eligible for Seattle Promise, and by 2021, the Seattle Promise will serve all eligible Seattle public high school graduates.

Cost of the program

Durkan's office estimates the program will cost \$6.3 million annually, once the program is fully implemented.

That cost is based on enrollment projections from South Seattle College and includes staff for college preparation and wrap around support at both the high school and college level, "last dollar" scholarships, and additional budget for equity funds for students who require additional assistance.

For the transition year (2018-2019 school year), Durkan estimates the cost at \$1.76 million, which includes \$1.1 million from the city.

Durkan's office didn't specifically say how the program will be funded but said the program will likely include a combination of city investment, private partnerships, and Seattle Colleges.

The Seattle Promise College Tuition Program will expand on the successful 13th Year Promise Scholarship from serving three high schools to serving six high schools – Chief Sealth, Cleveland, Garfield, Ingraham, West Seattle and Rainier Beach. Beginning in the fall of 2018, current 13th Year Promise Scholarship students will be eligible for an additional 14th year of tuition support.

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HEADLINE	03/08 Homeland and Hollywood partnership
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/federal-pages/dhs/cbp/homeland-hollywood-partnership-heaven-or-hell/
GIST	<p>Anne Sittmann, head of the Television and Motion Pictures Division at U.S. Customs and Border Protection, joined Women in Homeland Security for a briefing and sat down with HSToday to discuss CBP's strategy with Hollywood. Most recently, Sittmann worked with Netflix to produce Border Security: America's Front Line in addition to Border Wars currently airing on the National Geographic channel.</p> <p>HSToday: How does CBP interact with Hollywood? What's the point?</p> <p>Sittmann: Hollywood and the government are no strangers to each other ever since the great character actor George Kennedy established the first motion picture office under the command of Gen. George</p>

Patton during World War II. The purpose of that office so many years ago was to render technical assistance and advice in order to ensure accuracy in the portrayal of the Army, but also to aid in recruitment during an especially dire time for our country. This was not lost on other agencies, and it was none other than J. Edgar Hoover who worked hand-in-hand with Hollywood to ensure that the FBI became not only America's best-known law enforcement agency, but also America's best-funded. I'm sure many of you are familiar with the Canadian Mounties, the RMCP, which would not have been possible without the cartoon character of RCMP Officer Dudley Do-Right who, despite sometimes glaring ineptitude, "always got his man."

It is from this historical perspective that CBP approaches what is arguably the most subtle and rewarding means of branding and communication. Millions of dollars, even billions, are spent every year on such small things as getting James Bond to switch from the martini (shaken, not stirred) to Heineken beer. In fact, in the first movie about CBP, *The Terminal* with Tom Hanks and Catherine Zeta Jones, Steven Spielberg made almost as much money on product placement as the movie grossed.

First and foremost, when Hollywood comes calling they can make a movie with your help or without it, and by cooperating one can influence what people see and how they react to it. For example, when *The Terminal* was initially pitched, the port director was written as evil and on the take. Spielberg eventually softened the character and made CBP employees among the heroes of the movie. But, just like a press shop, when you pitch a story to the media it is usually always better than if the media seeks you out.

HSToday: Are you "leaning forward" with any projects to support the CBP mission?

Sittmann: In addition to creating events and tours for producers, directors and writers of non-scripted, fictional television, which is an area we have not been dominant in, we are exploring virtual reality and other futuristic forms of visual communication. We completed our very first virtual reality program this past year and continually work with our Visual Communications Branch to find new, unique ways of conveying our message via technological breakthroughs.

HSToday: Do you find Hollywood generally supportive of your efforts?

Sittmann: Yes. Our efforts under DHS to connect with Hollywood are actually met with surprise and sometimes astonishment. There is an industry gathering twice a year where the top producers gather and one of the biggest hits was when I attended with a uniformed Border Patrol agent. We use conventions like this and certain DHS/CBP-sponsored events to pitch ideas — either priorities of leadership, or are just plain interesting — and to allow producers, directors and writers to pitch ideas to us.

HSToday: What's the best thing that has come from your work with Hollywood?

Sittmann: When CBP dove full-time into the world of TV and motion pictures (circa 2007), very few people had any idea of what the border was like and fewer still had ever been there. Even if you lived on the border, chances are you never experienced the vast uninhabited swaths between the cities. [Border Wars](#), our first really successful series, changed that and brought the border into homes all over our country and all over the world. The reality that we all have to deal with is that reality or fiction in TV and motion pictures shapes our perceptions and should be treated and pursued like a press organization pursues *The New York Times*, CNN or Fox.

Our Office of Field Operations (blue uniforms) has its own TV series currently airing on Netflix, [Border Security, America's Front Line](#), which is a perfect example of what I like to call "edutainment." It chronicles the day-to-day operations at ports of entry along the Northern border. It was a huge success in Canada before Netflix bought the rights and is now prepping for its second season. The feedback has been tremendous. The public begins to understand why we do what we do and are better prepared to comply. These shows serve as an excellent recruitment tool.

HSToday: Have you been able to correct any misperceptions about CBP's work? Was there anything that they thought about CBP that was patently false?

Sittmann: We don't use TV or motion pictures to correct any misconceptions in today's news, because today's news is usually forgotten tomorrow. TV and motion pictures brand and leave lasting impressions of our mission and the strength of the men and women in our workforce. The reason our shows are successful is because we let the inner dedication and competence of our front line employees shine through. Television especially can be the beginning of a very intimate interaction between our employees and the viewers. After all, you often watch television in your living room or even your bedroom, and like anyone you make up your mind about an organization very often by the way you feel about the employees.

Through these television shows, we are slowly correcting that CBP represents three operational units. Everyone has an idea of what the Border Patrol does. People who travel are familiar with our blue uniforms at the Ports of Entry, the Office of Field Operations, and almost nobody knows that CBP has an "air force" bigger than some countries. Amongst their many missions, they patrol the skies during the Super Bowl, and assist with search-and-rescue efforts during natural disasters. Currently, they are featured on one of Smithsonian Channel's top-rated programs, [Aerial America](#).

One of the biggest areas we had to overcome was the often-repeated civil rights charges that the Border Patrol mistreated immigrants. Border Wars was on the border for five years with the same two producers and many of the camera and sound men. They were, for the most part, "Hollywood liberals" yanked from the beaches of Malibu to endure life on the border. Now, if we ever need someone with impeccable liberal credentials, we can count on any number of them to rise publicly to our defense.

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HEADLINE	03/07 Seattle to appeal 'truck is home' ruling
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/city-of-seattle-appeals-ruling-that-a-truck-is-a-home/
GIST	<p>The city of Seattle will appeal a King County judge's ruling last week that a because a vehicle can be defined as someone's home, it can't be towed.</p> <p>Reached Wednesday night, Deputy City Attorney John Schochet called last week's ruling in King County Superior Court, "legally wrong and unworkable." And while the Superior Court's ruling doesn't necessarily set a precedent, Schochet said the decision could still affect the city's ability to enforce its parking laws.</p> <p>It's a case with potential far-reaching implications for the thousands of people living in their vehicles across the county, and those residents and business owners who are frustrated with their presence on city streets.</p> <p>Steven Long, 58, is among those in the region living in his vehicle because his rent got too high. He sued the city after a parking-enforcement officer ordered his pickup truck towed in October 2016 for violating Seattle's 72-hour parking rule. Long had been living in the truck since he was evicted from an apartment two years earlier.</p> <p>The city eventually waived the parking ticket, but Long was left responsible for \$557 in impoundment fees.</p> <p>He lost his case in Municipal Court last May.</p> <p>But on Friday, Superior Court Judge Catherine Shaffer ruled in Long's favor on two counts: that the towing of the vehicle, and its potential sale at auction if Long couldn't pay the fees, violated the state's homestead act; and that the fees themselves violated the Eighth Amendment's prohibition on excessive fines.</p> <p>In court on Friday, Assistant City Attorney Michael Ryan warned about that interpretation of the law,</p>

	<p>arguing it could put the city at risk of violating the state constitution anytime officials tow a vehicle, because it's not always clear someone is living in it.</p> <p>Jim Lobsenz, one of Long's attorneys, predicted the city may stop towing vehicles they suspect someone is living in simply because they won't be able to collect the fines, based on Shaffer's decision that the vehicle can be a home and shouldn't be subject to such fees.</p> <p>He compared the city's 72-hour parking rule to outdated loitering laws, designed to keep people from remaining any one place too long.</p> <p>"Why? Because you're up to no good?" Lobsenz said. "Because we feel uncomfortable with people that are just hanging around our neighborhood for more than three days."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/08 Travel warning for Mexico tourist city
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/playa-del-carmen-mexico-us-travel-warning/
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY -- The U.S. Embassy in Mexico has issued a new travel alert for the Caribbean resort city of Playa del Carmen, where an explosion on a tourist ferry injured 26 people last month. The embassy says in an alert posted on its website that it received information Wednesday about a "security threat" in that city and U.S. government employees are prohibited from going there.</p> <p>It adds that the U.S. consular agency in Playa del Carmen "will be closed until further notice."</p> <p>The embassy did not specify the threat or say if it was related to the Feb. 21 blast or the subsequent discovery of apparent explosives attached to another vessel.</p> <p>U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauret said in a statement that all travelers should check travel.state.gov before they travel.</p> <p>"In Mexico alone, we've issued a number of recent security alerts as soon as we received information that travelers should know," the statement said. "We encourage travelers to be aware surroundings and exercise caution."</p> <p>In a previous alert last week the embassy had only barred employees from taking ferries between Playa del Carmen and Cozumel Island.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 CIA: China trying to infiltrate institutions
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/china-cia-intelligence-foreign-influence/2018/03/07/id/847403/
GIST	<p>China conducts extensive operations to influence foreign countries, including techniques to permeate American institutions, according to a classified CIA report, The Washington Free Beacon reported on Wednesday.</p> <p>The CIA specifically warns about attempts by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to stipulate funding to universities and policy institutes in exchange for academic censorship, according to an unclassified page of the report obtained by the Free Beacon.</p> <p>"The CCP often denies visas to academics who criticize the regime, encouraging many China scholars to pre-emptively self-censor so they can maintain access to the country on which their research depends," the report states.</p> <p>It also accuses the CCP of providing funding to academic institutions and think tanks in order to "deter research that casts it in a negative light . . . [using] this tactic to reward pro-China viewpoints and coerce</p>

	<p>Western academic publications and conferences to self-censor."</p> <p>The revelation of the report comes following last month's testimony to the Senate Intelligence Committee by FBI Director Christopher Wray that the bureau is investigating dozens of Chinese-backed Confucius Institutes hosted by more than 100 universities throughout the U.S for their potential to be used as a spying tool.</p> <p>These cultural centers are managed by a division of the Chinese Ministry of Education and are an integral part of Beijing's \$10 billion a year foreign propaganda campaign.</p> <p>Sen. Marco Rubio, who co-chairs the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, last month asked five schools in his state to close down these institutes, according to the Washington Examiner.</p> <p>The Florida Republican said the Chinese government uses the programs to limit discussion on topics it finds sensitive, such as the Tiananmen Square Massacre or the political status of Tibet.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/08 Sick Venezuelans flee to Colombia
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/sick-venezuelans-flee-colombia-mounting-refugee-crisis-53599960?
GIST	<p>In a cramped hospital near Colombia's border with Venezuela, migrants fill stretchers bearing the wounds of the deteriorating nation they left behind.</p> <p>An 18-year-old woman rubbed her swollen belly after fleeing with her infant daughter when the wounds from her C-section began to ooze pus. A young man whose femur had torn through his skin in a motorcycle crash needed antibiotics for an infection. An elderly retiree with a swollen foot arrived after taking a 20-hour bus ride from Caracas because doctors there told his family the only treatment they could offer was amputation — without anesthesia or antibiotics.</p> <p>"If you want to sign, sign. But we are not responsible for the life of your father," Teresa Tobar, 36, quoted the doctors in Venezuela as telling her when they handed over the papers to authorize her father's surgery.</p> <p>As Venezuela's economic crisis worsens, rising numbers are fleeing in a burgeoning refugee crisis that is drawing alarm across Latin America. Independent groups estimate that as many as 3 million to 4 million Venezuelans have abandoned their homeland in recent years, with several hundred thousand departing in 2017 alone.</p> <p>Many of those migrants are arriving by foot in Colombia and landing in the Andean nation's emergency rooms with urgent medical conditions that Venezuelan hospitals can no longer treat.</p> <p>According to health officials, Venezuelans made nearly 25,000 visits to Colombian ERs last year, up from just 1,500 in 2015. At hospitals in border cities like Cucuta, patients are packed side by side on stretchers that spill into hallways, not much unlike the deplorable conditions they fled back home. Authorities project that Venezuelan admissions to Colombian hospitals could double in 2018 and say the nation's already overstretched public health system is unprepared to handle the sudden swell.</p> <p>"We are not in a position to assume the cost of the comprehensive care for the migrants arriving," said Julio Saenz, an adviser on migrant affairs to Colombia's Health Ministry. "That's a very big concern."</p> <p>Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has refused to allow humanitarian aid to enter the struggling nation, denying there is a crisis and contending that permitting international relief could pave the way for foreign intervention. But what little data officials have released indicates Venezuelans are facing mounting health challenges. Cases of infant and maternal mortality have risen sharply and long-eradicated maladies like diphtheria have re-emerged.</p>

	<p>By law, Colombia's hospitals are required to treat any person, local or foreign, who shows up at an emergency room. But many Venezuelans are arriving with chronic conditions like cancer and diabetes that require expensive, continuing care. Health institutions in Colombia are not required to provide those treatments.</p> <p>"We handle the emergency room care, but beyond that there is no more we can do," said Juan Ramirez, director of the Erasmo Meoz Hospital in Cucuta.</p> <p>Cucuta health officials estimate the cost of caring for Venezuelan migrants will climb millions of dollars this year. Most of that cost ends up being funded by cash-strapped local institutions that say they need the help of the central government and international community.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/08 Germany: deaths from nitrogen dioxide
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/german-government-calculates-deaths-nitrogen-dioxide-53602457
GIST	<p>Thousands of people die prematurely each year in Germany from the harmful effects of nitrogen dioxide, a gas that's produced by diesel engines, according to a government-sponsored report published Thursday.</p> <p>The study commissioned by the Federal Office for the Environment concluded that almost 6,000 people died prematurely in 2014 from illnesses that are known to be caused or aggravated by nitrogen dioxide, or NO2.</p> <p>The study, conducted by the publicly funded Helmholtz Center Munich and private company IVU Umwelt GmbH, used widely accepted statistical models to determine how many deaths could be attributed to NO2.</p> <p>It compared deaths from diabetes, asthma and other diseases with emissions records in cities and the countryside.</p> <p>The 172-page report was published a week after a German court ruled that cities can ban the use of diesel cars as part of measures to improve air quality.</p> <p>"This study shows how much nitrogen dioxide harms health in Germany," the head of the Federal Office for the Environment, Maria Krautzberger, said. "We should do everything to make our air clean and healthy."</p> <p>The report found that the number of deaths fell from a peak of 8,157 in 2008, in line with a gradual decline in NO2 emissions in Germany.</p> <p>It took a conservative approach, only examining diseases that have a well-established link with NO2 and excluding the impact in areas where emissions are below 10 micrograms per cubic meter.</p> <p>Still, it found the disease burden was up to 50 percent higher in areas with significant NO2 levels than in those areas where emissions were below the study threshold.</p> <p>The study also calculated what's called the "years lost" as a result of elevated emissions, resulting in a figure of 49,726 fewer years of life for the population across Germany in 2014.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/08 International Women's Day march in Kabul
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-chinese-womens-day-joke-power-grab-

	53598645
GIST	<p>The Latest on International Women's Day (all times local):</p> <p>4 p.m.</p> <p>During Taliban rule many would have been afraid to leave their homes, but hundreds of women marched in the Afghan capital Kabul on Thursday to commemorate International Women's Day — and to remind their leaders that plenty of work remains to be done to give Afghan woman a voice, ensure their education and protect them from increasing violence.</p> <p>The head of the Independent Human Rights Commission, Sima Samar, directed some comments at women in Afghanistan's security forces.</p> <p>"Your safety represents the safety of all Afghan women," she said, reminding women in uniform to report any abuse by superiors to the rights commission. She said no one has the right to comment on their physical appearance or to speak to them disrespectfully.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/08 Northeast pummeled by heavy snow
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/east-coast-bracing-2nd-noreaster-week/story?id=53575745
GIST	<p>At least one person died on Wednesday as a powerful nor'easter barreled through the Northeast, just days after a storm killed nine in the same region.</p> <p>The victim, an 88-year-old woman from Suffern, New York, died after being hit by a falling tree in her driveway, according to police in Suffern, which is about 30 miles northwest of Manhattan.</p> <p>At least 60 million Americans were in the storm's path, prompting plane, train and school cancellations across the Northeast.</p> <p>Over 3,000 flights were canceled on Wednesday and more than 850,000 customers, including 320,000 in New Jersey and over 130,000 in New York, were left without power as of early Thursday as the brutal storm unleashed heavy snow, rain and gusty winds across on the area.</p> <p>"I encourage New Yorkers to stay at home or seek shelter if experiencing a loss of power," New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said late Wednesday, as he announced plans to double the number of National Guard troops deployed in the region.</p> <p>Very heavy snow is now pummeling Philadelphia and New York City. Near-blizzard conditions were expected for Long Island. Snowfall rates reached as much as 2 inches per hour with wind gusts up to 30 mph.</p> <p>Thundersnow -- when thunder and lightning occur during a snowstorm -- was even reported in New York City, New Jersey and Connecticut.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Teacher unions see momentum build
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/03/07/teacher-unions-see-momentum-build-with-west-virginia-strike.html
GIST	<p>As teachers in West Virginia noisily celebrated a 5 percent raise that ended their nine-day walkout, momentum was building elsewhere for similar protests over pay and benefits for the nation's public school teachers.</p>

Teachers in Oklahoma and Arizona are contemplating actions of their own amid growing frustration over meager pay. Teachers and staff in eight Kentucky school districts were planning "walk in" rallies Thursday to protest proposed cuts to their retirement benefits. Teachers in Pittsburgh reached a tentative agreement after threatening a strike, and hundreds of educators held demonstrations this week in Jersey City, New Jersey.

The unions' victory in the West Virginia strike has given a boost to organizers who say the national spotlight on teacher pay is long overdue.

"To be able to do that there? I think people in Arizona started looking at each other saying, 'Wow!'" said Noah Karvelis, an art teacher in Phoenix who helped launch a campaign urging Arizona teachers to wear red Wednesday as a show of solidarity. The demonstration was meant to gauge interest in stronger action by teachers, who received a 1 percent pay increase this year, Karvelis said.

From West Virginia, which has some of the nation's lowest teacher salaries, unions heard familiar stories of educators struggling to get by. The teachers behind the walkout that shuttered public schools statewide said the 2 percent pay raise initially proposed would not have covered their rising health insurance costs.

Some of the teachers who returned to classrooms on Wednesday said they hope unions around the country will be encouraged by what they accomplished.

"I do think this strike can be the start of something big nationally," said Melinda Monks, a special education teacher at Bridgeview Elementary in South Charleston, West Virginia. "Because the United States, as Gov. (Jim) Justice says, has fallen behind in education, behind some of our other nations, and I think it's time that teachers step forward and demand a more central role in education and more respect for our profession."

Teacher unrest around the United States has grown as strong health care and retirement benefits, viewed in the late 1980s and 1990s as a tradeoff to slower pay growth, have begun to erode at district or state levels, said Becky Pringle, vice president of the National Educators Association.

"They're really feeling it now and they're leaving all of their options open in terms of what kinds of actions they are ready to take," she said.

The daily demonstrations and legislative back and forth were closely watched from Oklahoma, where teachers union President Alicia Priest said large numbers of teachers are leaving the profession and state because of funding cuts and compensation that lags behind surrounding states by \$5,000 to \$20,000. The union there is pushing for pay raises of \$10,000 over three years.

"It certainly does embolden us," Priest said.

Nationally, the average teacher's salary was \$58,950 in 2017, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, more than \$10,000 above what teachers earn in West Virginia, Oklahoma and Arizona.

Tom Ramming, an educational policy professor at the University at Buffalo, attributed much of West Virginia's impact to its statewide scope, whereas in many other states contracts are settled at the district or county level.

"When the entire teaching force ... goes out on strike and they're united," Ramming said, "people take notice."

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HEADLINE 03/07 Destitute Rohingya in 'race against time'

SOURCE <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/rohingya-muslims-will-soon-face-cyclones-monsoons->

	bangladesh-n853026
GIST	<p>Refugees driven out of Myanmar by what the U.S. has called "ethnic cleansing" now face a new threat: the looming monsoon and cyclone season.</p> <p>Authorities have warned that more than 100,000 Rohingya Muslims who fled into neighboring Bangladesh are at risk of losing their makeshift homes to the deadly floods and landslides that accompany seasonal rains.</p> <p>Workers are scrambling to reinforce shelters and dig drainage systems before the bad weather is expected next month.</p> <p>“On the hill where my house is built there are 960 houses and this hill will possibly collapse in the coming monsoon season,” said refugee and community leader Sabbir Ahmed, responding to questions asked by NBC News with the help of a translator supplied by the International Organization for Migration, the U.N.'s migration agency.</p> <p>Ahmed is one of the nearly 700,000 refugees — roughly the same number of people who live in Denver or Seattle — who have streamed out of Myanmar since violence erupted in August.</p> <p>On Wednesday, U.N. human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein said that he strongly suspected "acts of genocide" may have taken place against the ethnic minority in Myanmar's northern Rakhine State since then. He also suggested that reports of the bulldozing of mass graves in Myanmar showed a "deliberate attempt by the authorities to destroy evidence of potential international crimes, including possible crimes against humanity."</p> <p>The situation described by Ahmed is largely the same in other makeshift camps housing the refugees near Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.</p> <p>“It’s a race against time,” said Caroline Gluck, a spokeswoman for the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) in the country. “We’re very alarmed, we’re very concerned, we’re doing what we can but we’re not sure it’s going to be enough.”</p> <p>Steep hills that were once covered in trees and foliage have now been cleared to make way for the tarpaulin shelters. Now bare and sandy, the banks have become more vulnerable to landslides in rainy conditions, Gluck explained.</p> <p>“Families have also been digging up the roots to use as firewood for cooking so there is nothing holding the soil together,” she added. “The soil is eroding. It’s like gravel.”</p> <p>Conditions are so cramped in the settlements that some of the shelters have been built on 45-degree slopes. The close quarters fall short of accepted international standards for refugees, Gluck added.</p> <p>“For the people who’ve built at the top of these slopes, then their shelters are at risk of being carried away in mudslides," a spokeswoman for the U.N.'s migration agency (IOM), Fiona MacGregor, said. "For the people at the bottom, they face the threat not only of mud and other debris landing on them from above, but also of flash floods."</p> <p>The rains are likely to start falling in April and could last until September, while May and June tend to be the wettest months, she added.</p> <p>The floods could also leave hundreds of thousands vulnerable to disease and unable to get aid if flooding cuts off parts of the settlements, the IOM warned.</p>
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SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/brazil-yellow-fever-outbreak-largest-decades-846-cases-53591576?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Brazil's yellow fever outbreak has now infected more people than the previous one, which had been the largest in decades.</p> <p>The Health Ministry said Wednesday that officials have confirmed 846 cases of the mosquito-borne disease. Of those, 260 have died.</p> <p>In the 2016-2017 outbreak, Latin America's largest nation saw 777 cases and 261 deaths.</p> <p>Large swaths of Brazil have long been at risk for yellow fever. But the previous outbreak and the current one are happening in areas not previously considered at risk for the disease and where vaccination rates were low. The current outbreak is hitting the populous states of Sao Paulo and Minas Gerais hard and encroaching on major cities.</p> <p>In response, Brazil has launched a campaign to vaccinate more than 23 million people.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Nor'easter prompts flight cancellations
SOURCE	https://www.cnbc.com/2018/03/07/noreaster-prompts-airlines-to-cancel-more-than-1900-flights.html
GIST	<p>Forecasters have tweaked their snowfall predictions several times as another powerful winter storm approached the Northeast, but many airlines weren't taking any chances.</p> <p>Airlines canceled more than 2,200 flights scheduled for Wednesday to or from major airports in the Boston, Philadelphia and New York area, according to flight-tracking site FlightAware.</p> <p>Newark Liberty International Airport was closed as of Wednesday afternoon and was expected to reopen before 4 p.m. EST, according to the Federal Aviation Administration. A ground stop was in place at Philadelphia International Airport. A ground stop orders aircraft scheduled to fly to a certain airport to wait until conditions improve before departing. The FAA had earlier issued a ground stop at New York's LaGuardia Airport but that had been lifted as of 2 p.m. ET.</p> <p>The FAA said delays were minimal at most major airports in the Northeast. But carriers had canceled more than a third of flights from the New York City area's three main airports.</p> <p>At Newark, a major hub of United Airlines, about half of the airport's departures, or 329 flights, had been canceled as of Wednesday morning. Carriers canceled 294 flights from LaGuardia Airport and 260 from John F. Kennedy International Airport, according to FlightAware. A similar number of flights to those airports were also canceled. More than 280 flights were canceled to and from Boston Logan International Airport.</p> <p>Airport officials warned travelers to check with their airlines before heading to the airport.</p> <p>Airlines including United, Delta, JetBlue, American waived change fees for travelers affected by the storm if those individuals could move their trips to the coming days.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Calif. governor slams DOJ lawsuit
SOURCE	http://www.sacbee.com/latest-news/article203920624.html
GIST	Gov. Jerry Brown on Wednesday slammed U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions for "initiating a reign of terror" against immigrants in California.

Sessions on Tuesday filed suit against the state over three new laws, passed last year to protect immigrants living in California illegally, that he argues violate the supremacy clause of the U.S. Constitution and interfere with federal immigration enforcement.

"This is basically going to war against the state of California, the engine of the American economy," Brown said. "It's not wise, it's not right and it will not stand."

Brown and California Attorney General Xavier Becerra held a press conference at the Capitol to defend the laws following a speech by Sessions to a law enforcement conference in downtown Sacramento on Wednesday morning. In the speech, which Brown dismissed as a "political stunt," Sessions accused California officials of creating an open borders system and trying to secede from the United States.

"It's about dividing America," Brown said, adding that Sessions was acting more like Fox News than the country's top law enforcement official. "I call upon him to apologize to the people of California for bringing the mendacity of Washington to California and trying to insert discord and division, and I might add dysfunctionality, in a state that's really working."

Senate Bill 54, Assembly Bill 103 and Assembly Bill 450 – the three laws that Sessions sued over – restrict California law enforcement officials from cooperating on federal immigration actions, limit the ability of local jails to contract with the federal government to house immigrant detainees, and require employers to ask for a warrant before allowing immigration authorities to conduct a workplace raid.

Commonly known as the "sanctuary state" law, SB 54 has been by far the most controversial. In its lawsuit, the federal government argued that it forces the release of immigrants who have already shown a willingness to engage in criminal activity.

Becerra defended the law under the 10th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which he said gives California the right to decline to participate in civil immigration enforcement. He said Trump's threats to pull grants from local police agencies over SB 54 amounted to "coercion."

"Here in California, we respect the law and the Constitution. We expect the federal government to do the same," Becerra said at the press conference. "California is in the business of public safety. We're not in the business of deportations."

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HEADLINE	03/07 Belgium issues iodine pills
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/07/europe/belgium-iodine-pills-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Pharmacies across Belgium are being stocked with iodine pills as part of a new government emergency plan to help protect citizens against a potential nuclear accident.</p> <p>The revised plan, which was issued by the National Crisis Center on Tuesday, sets out a number of safety provisions, focusing in particular on people living within 20 kilometers (about 12 miles) of emergency planning zones surrounding five nuclear sites.</p> <p>Within these zones, which surround sites at Doel, Tihange, Mol-Dessel, Borssele and Chooz (just over the border in France), residents will receive iodine tablets to protect them against radioactive iodine and prevent thyroid cancer in case of a nuclear accident. Elsewhere, the government is stocking pharmacies with iodine tablets to be made freely available to all, with young people under the age of 18 and pregnant women specifically being encouraged to pick up a pack.</p> <p>The emergency zone extends 10 kilometers (about 6 miles) around the Fleurus reactor.</p> <p>The government is also making preparations to swiftly evacuate people living within 10 kilometers of these nuclear sites, as well as encouraging residents to subscribe to the BE-Alert alarm system so they'll</p>

	<p>get information quickly in case of a nuclear accident.</p> <p>A representative for the Federal Agency for Nuclear Control told CNN the measures are merely precautional and do not indicate an imminent threat.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	03/07 NSA leak reveals list enemy hackers
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/nsa-leak-reveals-agency-list-enemy-hackers/
GIST	<p>WHEN THE STILL-UNIDENTIFIED group calling itself the Shadow Brokers spilled a collection of NSA tools onto the internet in a series of leaks starting in 2016, they offered a rare glimpse into the internal operations of the the world's most advanced and stealthy hackers. But those leaks haven't just let the outside world see into the NSA's secret capabilities. They might also let us see the rest of the world's hackers through the NSA's eyes.</p> <p>Over the last year, Hungarian security researcher Boldizsár Bencsáth has remained fixated by one of the less-examined tools revealed in that disemboweling of America's elite hacking agency: A piece of NSA software, called "Territorial Dispute," appears to have been designed to detect the malware of other nation-state hacker groups on a target computer that the NSA had penetrated. Bencsáth believes that specialized antivirus tool was intended not to remove other spies' malware from the victim machine, but to warn the NSA's hackers of an adversary's presence, giving them a chance to pull back rather than potentially reveal their tricks to an enemy.</p> <p>That means the Territorial Dispute tool might offer hints of how NSA sees the broader hacker landscape, argues Bencsáth, a professor at CrySys, the Laboratory of Cryptography and System Security at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics. In a talk on the leaked software at Kaspersky's Security Analyst Summit later this week—and in a paper he's planning to post to the CrySys website on Friday and asking others to contribute to—he's calling on the security research community to join him in investigating the software's clues.</p> <p>In doing so, Bencsáth hopes to determine which other countries' hackers the NSA has been aware of, and when they became aware of them. Based on some matches he's established between elements of Territorial Dispute's checklist and known malware, he argues the leaked program potentially shows that the NSA had knowledge of some groups years before those hackers' operations were revealed in public research. Since it also includes checks for some malware he hasn't been able to match with public samples, Bencsáth believes the tool demonstrates the NSA's knowledge of some foreign malware that still hasn't been publicly revealed. He hopes that more researchers digging into the software might lead to a better understanding of the NSA's view of its adversaries, and even potentially reveal some still-secret hacker operations today.</p> <p>"The idea is to find out what the NSA knew, to find out the difference between the NSA viewpoint and the public viewpoint," says Bencsáth, arguing that there may even be a chance of uncovering current hacking operations, so that antivirus or other security firms can learn to detect their infections. "Some of these attacks might even still be ongoing and alive."</p> <p>When the leaked version of Territorial Dispute runs on a target computer, it checks for signs of 45 different types of malware—neatly labelled SIG1 through SIG45—by searching for unique files or registry keys those programs leave on victim machines. By cross-referencing those so-called "indicators of compromise" with CrySys's own database of millions of known malware samples, Bencsáth was able to identify 23 of the entries on Territorial Dispute's malware list with some degree of confidence.</p> <p>Bencsáth says SIG1, for instance, is the notorious Agent.btz worm that infected Pentagon networks in 2008, likely the work of Russian state hackers. SIG2 is malware used by another known Russian state</p>

hacker group, Turla. The last—and Bencsath believes, most recent—entry on the list is a piece of malware discovered publicly in 2014, and also tied to that long-running Turla group.

Other specimens on the list range from the Chinese malware used to hack Google in 2010, to North Korean hacking tools. It even checks for the NSA's own malicious code: The joint Israeli and NSA creation Stuxnet, used to destroy Iranian nuclear enrichment centrifuges around the same time, is labelled as SIG8. While the inclusion of the NSA's own malware on the list may seem strange, Bencsath speculates it may have been included as an artifact from a time before tools like Stuxnet were widely known to be a US operation, to prevent low-level operators from distinguishing US malware used in classified operations beyond their security clearance from the malware of foreign countries.

Bencsath believes that the specimens in the list appear roughly in chronological order, seemingly based on when each was first known to be deployed. If that ordering holds, he says, it suggests that the NSA may in some cases have known about different hacker operations years before those hacking campaigns were revealed in public research. A collection of malware known as "Cheshire Cat" is listed before the Chinese malware used in the 2010 attack on Google, and researchers believe elements of the campaign dates back as early as 2002. But that code was only revealed publicly in a talk at the Black Hat conference in 2015.

In another case, Territorial Dispute lists the malware known as Dark Hotel, believed to have been used by North Korean hackers to spy on targeted hotel guests as SIG25. If the chronology theory holds, that would place it before Duqu, a piece of NSA malware discovered by Bencsath's own CrySys lab in 2011. That means the NSA may have kept knowledge of invasive North Korean malware under wraps for three years, even as it was used to target victims that included US executives and NGOs.

"If they knew so much more about the topic, I don't know what they did to help," Bencsath says. "If they don't tell the industry what to protect against, it's a problem." The NSA's public affairs office didn't respond to WIRED's request for comment on Bencsath's research.

Unknown Unknowns

To be fair, the exact chronology of Territorial Dispute's malware list is far from confirmed. Some entries on the list do seem to appear out of order. And even if the NSA did keep its knowledge of ongoing attacks secret, that would fit its usual modus operandi, says Matthew Suiche, the founder of security firm Comae Technologies, who has closely tracked the Shadow Brokers' leaks. After all, the NSA keeps plenty of other secrets for the sake of preserving its capabilities, from zero-day vulnerabilities to the proof behind the US government's attribution of hacker attacks to certain countries.

"It doesn't surprise me they do the same thing with APTs," says Suiche, using the industry jargon for "advanced persistent threats" to refer to state-sponsored hacking groups. "They don't want the adversary to understand their actual capacity." If analysis of Territorial Dispute does reveal the NSA's secret knowledge of its adversaries, it could represent another blow to the NSA's advantage of surprise over those adversaries—as with so many other of the Shadow Brokers' leaks.

"They don't want the adversary to understand their actual capacity.

But Suiche also notes limitations in the information that can be gleaned from the Territorial Dispute code. It only includes a few simple indicators of compromise for each type of malware and just 45 types, a vastly simpler collection of data than the average antivirus software—a decision Suiche guesses may have been intended to make the tool more lightweight and less sensitive if it were discovered by an adversary. Like other Shadow Brokers leaks, it may also be a years-old piece of code. Bencsath, for his part, says he's not entirely sure of the freshness date on the NSA's leaked software.

But even if it turns out to be years out of date, Territorial Dispute nonetheless contains evidence of some state-sponsored hacking operations that still haven't been publicly identified, Suiche believes. "This definitely shows that the NSA is tracking APTs that still haven't been discovered," Suiche says, pointing to several of the entries on Territorial Dispute's list for which he couldn't find any public record.

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HEADLINE	03/08 Audit: DHS security is insecure
SOURCE	https://www.theregister.co.uk/2018/03/08/feds_scolded_for_slow_security_patching_and_outdated_operating_systems/
GIST	<p>The United States' Department of Homeland Security could do more to keep its IT systems secure, a government report has found.</p> <p>In an agency-wide audit titled "Evaluation of DHS' Information Security Program for Fiscal Year 2017" (PDF), the DHS's watchdog, the Office of Inspector General (OIG), concluded that DHS "could protect its information and systems more fully and effectively."</p> <p>Based on a scale of five possible maturity levels – 1) ad hoc; 2) defined; 3) consistently implemented; 4) managed and measurable; and 5) optimized – DHS' information security program rated level three in three of the five areas evaluated, shy of the passing grade, level 4.</p> <p>DHS fell short implementing the various configuration settings required to protect systems, continued using unsupported operation systems, failed to patch critical vulnerabilities quickly, failed to monitor software licenses on unclassified systems, and didn't plan well enough for recovery from service disruptions.</p> <p>The report, dated March 1 and released on Wednesday, March 7, found that as of June 30, 2017, 64 systems lacked the authority to operate, based on government security criteria. Of these, 16 were classified national security systems and 48 were unclassified systems.</p> <p>The results nonetheless represent an improvement over 2016 when 79 unclassified systems were deemed insufficiently protected.</p> <p>According to the report, the foremost reason that the DHS failed to meet its security goals was lack of security talent.</p> <p>Among the issues identified were:</p> <p>Exchange folders were indexed in cache mode, which means user emails could be accessed if the machine was compromised.</p> <p>Registry auditing was not always enabled, thereby allowing unattributed changes to the Windows registry.</p> <p>Anonymous access to shared network drives was not always disabled.</p> <p>The report also scolds DHS for continuing to use unsupported operating systems. DHS, the Coast Guard, and the Secret Service were all found to be using Windows Server 2003 after Microsoft's July 2015 discontinuation of support.</p> <p>The OIG also noted that Windows workstations at DHS, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the Coast Guard were missing a variety of patches.</p> <p>"Windows 2008 and 2012 operating systems were missing security patches for Oracle Java, an unsupported version of Internet Explorer, and a vulnerable version of Microsoft's Sidebar and Gadgets applications," the report says. "Some of the missing security patches dated back to July 2013."</p> <p>A number of Windows 8.1 and Windows 7 workstations were missing key security patches, including the WannaCry fix, various browser updates, and patches for Adobe Flash, Shockwave, and Acrobat flaws.</p>

	<p>The report concludes that the observed deficiencies run contrary to the President’s Cybersecurity Executive Order and demonstrate the need for stronger security oversight.</p> <p>"Until DHS overcomes challenges to addressing its systemic information security weaknesses, it will remain unable to ensure that its information systems adequately protect the sensitive data they store and process," the report concludes.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Economic crime in Canada leaping
SOURCE	https://www.itworldcanada.com/article/rate-of-economic-crime-in-canada-is-leaping-report/402551
GIST	<p>After several years of relatively stable numbers the rate of economic crime in Canada took a leap in 2017, according to numbers from PriceWaterhouse Coopers.</p> <p>Fifty-five per cent Canadian respondents reported experiencing economic crime in the last 24 months, the consulting company reported Wednesday, compared to 37 per cent in 2016, and 36 per cent in 2014.</p> <p>Cyber crime (46 per cent), asset misappropriation (38 per cent) and consumer fraud (36 per cent) were the most frequently reported crimes.</p> <p>Within cyber crime, phishing (58 per cent) was the most reported problem in the previous 24 months, followed by malware (45 per cent) and network scanning (20 per cent).</p> <p>The Canadian numbers were part of PWC’s annual global survey on economic crime.</p> <p>Nearly half (48 per cent) of Canadian respondents predicted that cybercrime will be the most disruptive force to their organization in the next two years.</p> <p>The Canadian report concludes from these and other numbers that while economic crime is up, the defence measures necessary to detect and prevent it can — and should — be improved and strengthened across Canadian organizations.</p> <p>“In order to stay competitive and innovate in the digital world, Canadian organizations need to revisit their cybercrime program to balance risk and opportunity,” the report says.</p> <p>“Looking at the data, it’s clear that fighting fraud today requires a shift from macro to micro measures. Companies can no longer rely solely on the loss prevention department or IT reports to detect fraud — they need sophisticated, targeted controls that can be continuously monitored for their effectiveness at all possible touch points, across functional teams, from the back office to the front lines of their business.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Hackers prepping for ‘March Madness’
SOURCE	https://www.thestreet.com/story/14510668/1/hackers-to-step-up-their-games-during-march-madness.html
GIST	<p>The hype surrounding March Madness will increase daily, followed a surge in cyber attacks as the number of people participating in NCAA brackets and betting pools expands and fraudsters are on the prowl.</p> <p>Cyber criminals are prepped for the hype and the excitement building around the NCAA basketball games by infecting emails with malware, creating fake betting websites and increasing phishing attacks. As millions of Americans fill out tournament brackets as part of their office pool, more phishing attacks and financial scams will occur.</p> <p>"First of all, you should avoid emailed requests to participate in polls, surveys and contests related to</p>

March Madness unless you know that you personally signed up to be a part of such things," said Nathan Wenzler, chief security strategist at AsTech, a San Francisco-based security consulting company:

Some fans are taking the opportunity to place bets and want to cash in on the annual tournament through online betting options and apps to generate additional funds.

While ardent enthusiasts may enter numerous tournament brackets, players should enter the website into their browser directly.

"Phishing emails may eventually forward you on to the right site, but they can simply take over the session to direct you to other sites that download ransomware or malware to your system before they forward you along," said Wenzler.

The number of apps that are available will also rise.

"By participating in March Madness betting, you are quite likely providing important credentials about your own identity to an app developer or website owner that you might not trust or be able to verify," said Joram Borenstein, vice president of marketing at NICE Actimize, a Hoboken, N.J.-based financial crime software solutions provider.

The hackers are seizing the occasion to cash in from the online bets and phishing scams also.

"March Madness is back and with it comes a great opportunity for cyber criminals who are intent on making some quick cash, said Steve Durbin, managing director of the Information Security Forum, a London-based authority on cyber, information security and risk management. "Did you really place that bet and have you really scooped the pot?"

Fraudsters will lure unsuspecting or novice gamblers in with corrupt alerts and websites, even with claims of new winnings.

"The number of 'winners' over the next couple of weeks will be pretty astonishing, however, just be sure you're on the right side and don't end up becoming another statistic on the losing side," he said.

The number of emails individuals receive will also surge and fans should look for warning signals such as an embedded link or attachment.

"Email infection, fake betting websites and traditional phishing attacks are all expected to have their day in the sun," Durbin said. "It is far better to use a well-known brand or one you have used in the past."

The scams perpetrated by cyber criminals are not new ones, said Dan Lohrmann, chief security officer at Security Mentor, a Pacific Grove, Calif.-based provider of security awareness training.

"It is not going to end anytime soon," he said. "If you don't fall for some of these tricks during March Madness, another major event is right around the corner."

These trends will continue even after millions of people stop watching the March Madness games, said Lohrman.

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HEADLINE	03/07 India report: 22,000 websites hacked
SOURCE	http://www.financialexpress.com/industry/technology/cyber-attack-of-mammoth-scale-over-22000-indian-websites-hacked-between-april-2017-january-2018/1090665/
GIST	Over 22,000 Indian websites, including 114 government portals were hacked between April 2017 and January 2018, Parliament was informed today. "As per information reported to and tracked by Indian

	<p>Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), a total of 22,207 Indian websites including 114 government websites were hacked during April 2017 to January 2018. A total number of 493 affected websites were used for malware propagation,” Minister of State for Electronics and IT K J Alphons said in a written reply to Lok Sabha.</p> <p>Besides, as per the information reported to and tracked by National Informatics Centre (NIC), a total number of 74 and six government websites hosted on NICNET were hacked during 2017 and 2018 (till February), respectively, he added. The minister said 301 security alerts regarding potential vulnerabilities and threats to multiple systems and applications were issued by CERT-In during April 2017-January 2018.</p> <p>In addition, various tailored alerts were sent to key organisations to enable them to detect and prevent cyber attacks. In response to a separate query, Alphons said all the new government websites and applications are to be audited with respect to cyber security prior to their hosting along with audit on a regular basis after hosting.</p> <p>“Organisations use servers to host websites and applications for dissemination of information and providing services to users. The servers not configured properly and having vulnerable software are prone to hacking and could be misused by cyber criminals,” he said. He added that continuous efforts are required to be made by owners to protect servers by way of hardening and deploying appropriate security controls.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Energy firms worried over cyberattacks
SOURCE	https://www.forbes.com/sites/mikescott/2018/03/07/energy-industry-worried-about-cyber-attacks-but-doesnt-really-know-what-to-do/#23ca36668bb7
GIST	<p>Energy companies are becoming increasingly concerned about the impact of cyber-attacks on their operations, but many are still struggling to get to grips with the risks, a new survey reveals.</p> <p>The report, by the global insurance and risk management group Marsh, Could Energy Industry Dynamics Be Creating an Impending Cyber Storm?, shows that more than one in four respondents were aware that their company had been hit by a damaging cyber attack in the last year, while more than three quarters of respondents (76%) were worried about cyber attacks interrupting their business operations, with a similar proportion (77%) preparing to increase the amount they invest in managing cyber risks.</p> <p>Yet, despite these fears about the impact of cyber attacks on production and revenues, more than half of energy executives in the survey had not quantified or did not know what their worst possible exposures could be. The Marsh study follows the publication in January of the World Economic Forum’s Global Risk Report 2018, which said: “Cyberattacks are perceived as the global risk of highest concern to business leaders in advanced economies. Cyber is also viewed by the wider risk community as the risk most likely to intensify in 2018, according to the risk perception survey that underpins the Global Risks Report.”</p> <p>Exposure to risks from cyber is growing as firms become more dependent on technology, the WEF added, thanks to the massive growth in devices connected by the internet of things – the number of such devices is expected to jump from 8.4 billion today to 20 billion in 2020. An increase in the use of artificial intelligence in business is adding to companies’ risk exposure. “Attacks are increasing, both in prevalence and disruptive potential,” the WEF said.</p> <p>The energy industry was relatively late to adopt digitalization, even though – as an asset-intensive sector with many remote and hazardous sites – it is in many ways the ideal setting for the industrial internet of things. In part this was because of the importance of energy infrastructure to national economies and companies’ subsequent caution about adopting new technologies. There was also a certain amount of complacency because until recently, most energy installations “did not communicate with traditional IT networks,” according to Greentech Media.</p>

However, the growing complexity and decentralization of the grid, the growth of renewable energy and the increased availability of technologies such as sensors, machine learning and big data, have started to make their mark. As the vehicle sector also becomes more electric and the automotive and energy sectors become more integrated, this trend will only increase. “As the energy sector systems that monitor and run operations become more interconnected from smart grids, smart devices, and the growing internet of things, it increases the risk that a cyber-attack could result in physical damage,” Marsh said.

And this is potentially more serious in the energy sector than other parts of the economy. “An attack on energy infrastructure has the potential to cross from the cyber realm to the physical world – a cyberattack could cause, for instance, a massive operational failure of an energy asset. Large centralized infrastructures are especially at risk due to the potential “domino effect” damage that an attack on a nuclear, coal, or oil plant could cause,” the report noted.

This growing exposure has led the US Department of Energy to set up an office to protect the nation’s power grid and other infrastructure against cyber attacks and natural disasters. The \$96 million in funding for the Office of Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response followed a hacking campaign in 2017 that targeted a number of electricity companies, including at least one nuclear power plant.

Andrew Herring, Energy and Power Practice Leader, for the EMEA region at Marsh commented: “As the energy industry relies more on interconnectivity as a result of greater digitalisation, the potential for cyber-attacks to cause severe disruption to operations, loss of data, and, consequently, high financial losses, should be a key concern for energy executives.

“While it is encouraging that three-quarters of respondents plan more investment in cyber risk management, it is worrying that over half questioned have yet to quantify their exposures. For those firms that have not put plans in place to mitigate and manage attacks or have not measured their cyber exposure, now is the time to take steps to be prepared for the impact an attack could have on their operations and systems.”

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HEADLINE 03/07 Amazon confirms Alexa problem

SOURCE <http://time.com/5190044/amazon-alexa-echo-laughing/?xid=homepage>

GIST It turns out that Amazon’s Alexa does indeed think something is funny.

After days of reports that users of the Amazon Echo and other devices with Amazon’s Alexa voice-activated assistant were experiencing random Alexa laughing fits, Amazon confirmed the problem Wednesday.

“We’re aware of this and working to fix it,” an Amazon spokesperson told The Verge.

Reports of the laughing Alexas first surfaced last month when one Twitter user reported on an Echo Dot that randomly started laughing without being prompted. Others then tweeted about similar occurrences with their own Alexa devices. Another Twitter user said an Echo whistled without prompting.

The glitch came after Alexa temporarily “lost her voice” because of another issue. Amazon did not immediately respond to a request for comment from TIME, and it remains unclear how soon the glitch will be resolved.

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HEADLINE 03/07 Flawed Ammy RAT takes over desktops

SOURCE <https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/flawedammy-rat-takes-over-desktops/>

GIST	<p>A previously undocumented remote access Trojan (RAT) called FlawedAmmyy has been discovered as the payload in two massive email campaigns this week.</p> <p>Proofpoint researchers discovered that the RAT has actually been used since the beginning of 2016 in both highly targeted email attacks and massive, multi-million message campaigns. Narrow attacks targeted the automotive industry, among others, while the large, malicious spam campaigns appear to be associated with threat actor TA505, an actor responsible for many large-scale attacks using Dridex, Locky and GlobeImposter, among others, over the last four years.</p> <p>In the most recent campaigns, on March 5 and 6, email messages containing zipped URL attachments were sent from addresses spoofing the recipient's own domain, with subjects such as "Receipt No" with random digits following, with matching attachments.</p> <p>The URL files are interpreted by Microsoft Windows as internet shortcut files, but when clicked, they download and execute a JavaScript file over the Server Message Block (SMB) protocol; the JavaScript file in turn downloads Quant Loader and then FlawedAmmyy RAT as the final payload.</p> <p>The FlawedAmmyy RAT also appeared on March 1 in a narrowly targeted attack.</p> <p>It is based on leaked source code for version 3 of the Ammyy Admin remote desktop software, and its features include remote desktop control, file system manager, proxy support and audio chat.</p> <p>"For infected individuals, this means that attackers potentially have complete access to their PCs, giving threat actors the ability to access a variety of services, steal files and credentials, and much more," Proofpoint researchers said in a blog. "We have seen FlawedAmmyy in both massive campaigns, potentially creating a large base of compromised computers, as well as targeted campaigns that create opportunities for actors to steal customer data, proprietary information, and more."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Ransomware struck 55% organizations
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/half-of-all-orgs-hit-with/
GIST	<p>About 55% of organizations in a recent survey were compromised by ransomware in 2017, down from 61% in 2016.</p> <p>According to Imperva's CyberEdge Group's fifth annual Cyberthreat Defense Report, which polled 1,200 IT security decision makers and practitioners participating from 17 countries, 6 continents, and 19 industries, respondents who were victimized by ransomware and who elected to pay the ransom (usually in Bitcoin) were asked if they successfully recovered their compromised data. Surprisingly, only half confirmed successful data recovery, while the other half acknowledged complete data loss.</p> <p>Out of the companies that refused to pay the ransom, a full 87% recovered their data.</p> <p>"Just over half of the survey respondents admitted that following a ransomware infection they still lost their data even though they paid the fine," said Terry Ray, CTO, Imperva. "This highlights the reality that there is no guarantee a company will get their data back if they pay the ransom. Companies therefore need to stop ransomware attacks from the very beginning, before the encryption of data takes place. The best way to prevent an attack is to immediately detect ransomware file access behaviors before the ransomware spreads across the network and encrypts file servers. Once detected, you can quarantine impacted users, devices and systems."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Stolen hard drive exposes Fresno State
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/fresno-state-data-breach-15000-affected/article/749459/

GIST	<p>A stolen external hard drive has led to the personal information of more than 15,000 people formerly and currently associated with California State University at Fresno athletic department.</p> <p>The hard drive was found to be missing on January 12, a theft the school believes most likely took place in late December during its winter break. The Porterville Recorder reported that the drive carried the information on 15,000 people, 300 currently at the school with the remainder being former student athletes, sports camp attendees, and athletic corporation employees.</p> <p>Fresno States' statement did not confirm the numbers involved, but did say the information exposed includes names, addresses, phone numbers, dates of birth, full or last four digits of Social Security numbers, credit-card numbers, driver's license numbers, passport numbers, user names and passwords, health-insurance numbers, and personal health information.</p> <p>“Fresno State has no reason to believe that any of the information on the hard drive has been accessed or misused,” the school statement said.</p> <p>The university has begun notifying those involved by letter and is offering free credit monitoring and recommends those included to keeping an eye on credit card usage.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 GandCrab creators tweak ransomware
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/gandcrab-creators-tweak-ransomware-release-v-20/article/749462/
GIST	<p>The developers behind GandCrab have followed up on their promise and released version 2.0 of the ransomware, one that cannot be defeated by the free GandCrab 1.0 decryptor created by Bitdefender.</p> <p>The updated version was first reported by MalwareHunterTeam, according to Bleeping Computer, which said was something the threat actors had recently promised.</p> <p>Some of the improvements include being more secure with the most obvious differentiator being the command and control server names politiaromana.bit, politiaromana.bit and gdcb.bit. The original servers were taken offline last by the Romanian police working with Bitdefender, so those behind GandCrab gave a hat tip to the Romanian police with the first name.</p> <p>Another change is the encrypted files and ransom note now have .CRAB extension and Bleeping Computer noted that the ransom note itself has been reworded to include instructions on how to contact the attackers.</p> <p>The Tor payment page was also redesigned.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 DDoS exploit code, vulnerable servers list
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2018/03/memcached-ddos-exploit-code.html
GIST	<p>Two separate proofs-of-concept (PoC) exploit code for Memcached amplification attack have been released online that could allow even script-kiddies to launch massive DDoS attacks using UDP reflections easily.</p> <p>The first DDoS tool is written in C programming language and works with a pre-compiled list of vulnerable Memcached servers.</p> <p>Bonus—its description already includes a list of nearly 17,000 potential vulnerable Memcached servers left exposed on the Internet.</p> <p>Whereas, the second Memcached DDoS attack tool is written in Python that uses Shodan search engine</p>

API to obtain a fresh list of vulnerable Memcached servers and then sends spoofed source UDP packets to each server.

Last week we saw two record-breaking DDoS attacks—1.35 Tbps hit Github and 1.7 Tbps attack against an unnamed US-based company—which were carried out using a technique called amplification/reflection attack.

For those unaware, Memcached-based amplification/reflection attack amplifies bandwidth of the DDoS attacks by a factor of 51,000 by exploiting thousands of misconfigured Memcached servers left exposed on the Internet.

Memcached is a popular open source distributed memory caching system, which came into news earlier last week when researchers detailed how hackers could abuse it to launch amplification/reflection DDoS attack by sending a forged request to the targeted Memcached server on port 11211 using a spoofed IP address that matches the victim's IP.

A few bytes of the request sent to the vulnerable Memcached server can trigger tens of thousands of times bigger response against the targeted IP address, resulting in a powerful DDoS attack.

Since last week when Memcached has been revealed as a new amplification/reflection attack vector, some hacking groups started exploiting unsecured Memcached servers.

But now the situation will get worse with the release of PoC exploit code, allowing anyone to launch massive DDoS attacks, and will not come under control until the last vulnerable Memcached server is patched, or firewalled on port 11211, or completely taken offline.

Moreover, cybercriminals groups have already started weaponizing this new DDoS technique to threaten big websites for extorting money.

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HEADLINE	03/07 Group-1B aids attack group takedown
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/group-ib-helps-suspend-ukrainian-ddos-attack-group/d/d-id/1331201
GIST	<p>Group-IB, an international organization dedicated to cyberattack prevention and security product development, announced the takedown of a criminal group that had been launching distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks and extorting companies for over two years.</p> <p>This marks the first large-scale international case of DDoS extortion in Ukraine that ended with a court sentence, Group-IB reports. The organization worked with law enforcement, cybersecurity firms, and online companies to successfully prosecute the criminals.</p> <p>The attackers were found as part of an investigation into the September 2015 DDoS attack on international online dating service AnastasiaDate. They demanded \$10,000 for stopping the attack, which shut down the site for four to six hours each day of the campaign.</p> <p>Specialists in Group-IB's investigation department analyzed the attack, identified the attackers, and discovered other incidents conducted by the same two people: Gayk Grishkyan and Inna Yatsenko, both from Ukraine. The duo later contacted AnastasiaDate in November 2016 to demand ransom and threaten to renew the DDoS attacks on its website.</p> <p>Both attackers pleaded guilty to the crimes and were each given a five-year conditional sentence. Outside the AnastasiaDate case, Grishkyan and Yatsenko had previously targeted American leasing company Stafford Associated and the PayOnline payment service.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 New online rape kit tracking system
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/states-new-online-rape-kit-tracking-system-about-to-launch/281-526759175
GIST	<p>It's a painful problem that persists, years later. Thousands of rape kits still await testing in Washington state; victims of sexual assault await justice.</p> <p>However, a simple website run by Washington State Patrol will soon provide some answers, allowing victims to track their kits from hospital to lab.</p> <p>“That was the difficult part for a lot of the survivors, is that they had no idea,” said Captain Monica Alexander of WSP. “The information would be collected, their kit taken, and then lots of things were happening, but they didn't know where that kit was.”</p> <p>The online system, modeled after a similar one in Canada, is still in test phase but will begin rolling out to the public in phases, starting in mid-April.</p> <p>Each sexual assault kit will have its own barcode, and medical staff, law enforcement, and prosecutors will have their own portals to input and check cases as they move forward.</p> <p>The new tracking system stems from legislation passed in 2015 to address the state's rape kit backlog, initially estimated at 6,000 kits. It's now believed the backlog is closer to 10,000, according to law enforcement officials.</p> <p>Of the original backlog, WSP says 928 kits have been completely tested. Nearly 2,000 more are pending testing; more than 2,900 have been sent out to Sorenson lab contracted by the state. However, that's still a fraction of the grand total of older kits, on top of a growing number of new kits.</p> <p>“Every day, we're getting more kits in,” explained Captain Alexander. “Then we have the backlog. And so how do we juggle, doing all of this work, and doing it efficiently and effectively.”</p> <p>“A big part of that challenge has to do with not having enough people to process the kits because we're overworking our scientists because we don't have enough of them,” Alexander continued.</p> <p>While funding for ongoing rape kit testing made it into the latest version of the state legislature's supplemental budget, advocates say additional resources and lab staff will be needed in the future to make a significant dent in clearing the shelves.</p> <p>“People want not only to see people brought to justice, but they want to have a feeling that the person who did that isn't going to do it to them again or anyone else,” said Captain Alexander.</p> <p>According to the latest supplemental budget, \$1.5 million over the next three years will fund additional State Patrol lab techs to address the new backlog. The budget also clarifies that the seven lab techs funded in 2015 are to be used for the sole purpose of testing sexual assault kits, according to Rep. Tina Orwall's office. Additionally, the budget preserves the state's SAFE task force for another year. The task force, comprised of lawmakers, law enforcement, medical staff and victims, was formed to problem solve for backlog solutions.</p> <p>Additionally, the Attorney General will use \$3 million in federal grant money to continue testing old kits. Currently, there's no new state dollars for testing the older backlog, according to Orwall's office.</p> <p>"I am very grateful that we will have three more full time lab staff dedicated to testing kits," said Rep. Orwall, D-Des Moines. "We will need to come back next year for dollars to fund old kit, but the State Patrol does have funding now to keep testing until then."</p>

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HEADLINE	03/08 UN trade sanction panel hacked
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/briefings/daily-news-analysis/un-trade-sanction-panel-hacked/
GIST	<p>The UN panel that is enforcing trade sanctions against North Korea has been hacked, according to a report from the Washington Post.</p> <p>The panel is said to have been hacked repeatedly by a “nation-state actor” who has compromised email accounts of panel members. The Post said it reviewed a heavily redacted draft of a UN Panel of Experts report, which included details of the attack. Although the report does not reveal the nature of data that hackers acquired, the panel regularly review secret intelligence information about North Korean attacks.</p> <p>North Korea is reported to be smuggling goods in and out of the country in order to evade the trade sanctions that have been imposed to try and deter Kim Jong-un from pursuing nuclear weapons programs. The panel is identifying such smuggling so it can be stopped.</p> <p>The Post quotes an excerpt from the report, due to be released later this month: “The panel continues to be targeted by a sophisticated hacking campaign.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/08 Japan penalizes cryptocurrency exchanges
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/japan-penalizes-cryptocurrency-exchanges-hack-53598443?
GIST	<p>The Japanese government is slapping penalties on several cryptocurrency exchanges in the country, after 58 billion yen (\$530 million) of virtual coins were lost earlier this year from hacking.</p> <p>The Financial Services Agency, which has been checking the exchanges, said Thursday that FSHO and Bit Station exchanges were ordered to halt operations for a month.</p> <p>It said FSHO was not properly monitoring trades and had not carried out employee training. The agency said it found that a Bit Station employee had taken bitcoins for personal use.</p> <p>Five other exchanges, including Coincheck, targeted in the massive hacking, were ordered to improve their operations.</p> <p>Coincheck had received a similar order earlier to beef up security measures.</p> <p>Japan is unusual in the world for embracing cryptocurrencies and setting up a licensing system to oversee their use.</p> <p>The exchanges ordered to improve their operations must file a plan to the agency by March 22.</p> <p>The theft at Coincheck of the NEM currency was the second major hacking assault on a Japanese crypto exchange after the Mt. Gox debacle in 2014.</p> <p>But Japan has chosen to seize the opportunity and regulate exchanges, setting up a licensing system last year, although experts say such measures are no guarantee against hacking and cybercrime.</p> <p>Japan has officially licensed 16 virtual-currency exchanges, and more, including Coincheck, are applying for licenses. As much as half of the world's bitcoin trading is estimated to be in yen.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 FBI: hacking now 'economic sabotage'
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fbi-director-christopher-wray-says-hacking-has-mushroomed-into-full-blown-economic-espionage/
GIST	<p>Hacking, which used to be something people did for "fun or for bragging rights" has mushroomed into something else entirely over the past dozen years, FBI Director Christopher Wray said at a cybersecurity conference in Boston Wednesday. As Americans now "live much of our lives online," we're more vulnerable, Wray noted. And the threat "is coming at us from all sides."</p> <p>"What was once a comparatively minor threat – people hacking for fun or for bragging rights – has now mushroomed into full-blown economic espionage and extremely lucrative cyber crime." It's a far cry from when Wray left the Justice Department in 2005, when, he said, "'Tweeting' was something only birds did."</p> <p>Wray said the FBI is now seeing more computer hacking attacks by other countries. "We're seeing an increase in nation-state sponsored computer intrusions, intrusions like last year's massive WannaCry ransomware attack, recently attributed to North Korea. Or NotPetya – the most destructive and costly cyber attack in history," Wray said during a keynote address at a Boston cyber security conference. "Launched by the Russian military, NotPetya resulted in billions of dollars in damage across Europe, Asia, and the Americas."</p> <p>"We've also been seeing a "blended threat" – nation-states using criminal hackers to do their dirty work," Wray added. "We also see Nation-state turning to more creative avenues to steal information."</p> <p>To counter these rising threats, Wray told the group that the U.S. has white-hat cyber action teams, "highly skilled agents and experts who can deploy at a moment's notice, much like our Counterterrorism Fly Teams do." These cyber task forces are "in every field office that respond to breaches, conduct victim-based investigations, and collect malware signatures and other actionable intelligence." They are, he said, "parallel" to the Joint Terrorism task forces.</p> <p>But Wray also acknowledged the shortage within the bureau of qualified cyber-trained agents. "We've come to the conclusion we need to not only recruit better from the outside -- we need to bolster our training inside the bureau to give more of our agents and analysts the skill set and experience they need to work cyber cases," Wray said.</p> <p>Another recurring topic - smart phones that lock out the FBI, which Wray referred to as a "going dark" problem, Wray said that last year, the FBI alone was not able to access the data from 7,775 devices. "Each one of those nearly 7800 devices is tied to a specific subject, a specific defendant, a specific victim, a specific threat, and specific human beings." And this, he said, impacts "human trafficking, counter terrorism, counterintelligence, gangs, organized crime child exploitation and cyber."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Mother of murder victim 'want justice'
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/i-want-my-justice-mother-of-murder-victim-has-waited-4-years-to-confront-man-on-jihad
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Flipping through a photo album Falana Young-Wyatt laughed at her son's silliness.</p> <p>The time she dyed his hair red, his carefully coordinated outfits, his big eyes and sweet smile.</p> <p>It's been nearly four years since Dwone Anderson-Young was shot to death, just steps from their Central Area home and the tears still come easily for Young-Wyatt.</p>

“I had Dwone at a very young age, I was 16 so it was like we grew up together,” Young-Wyatt said, staring at the baby she cuddled in her high school graduation photo. “I’ll never know what his life could have been. I’ll only have these memories.”

Since June 2014, when the 23-year-old’s body was found next to his friend’s on 29th Avenue South, Young-Wyatt has waited for the moment she could confront his killer.

“I heard the gunshots. He was murdered right here, three doors down from our home,” Young-Wyatt said.

The latest turn of events in the trial of Ali Muhammad Brown means the confrontation is one step closer.

On Tuesday, Brown pleaded guilty to a slew of charges inside a New Jersey courtroom, including the slaying of 19-year-old Brendan Tevlin. Tevlin was sitting at a traffic light in West Orange, near Newark, when he was fatally shot.

Brown, 34, confessed to Tevlin’s murder, as well as the slayings of the three men in the Seattle-area.

Anderson-Young and his friend Ahmed Said, 27, had left a Capitol Hill nightclub with Brown when police say the man shot them.

Cloyd Steiger, the retired Seattle police detective who led the case, said he believes Brown targeted the two men because they are gay. He said Brown claimed he was a domestic terrorist.

“He told me these lives were insignificant compared to all of the thousands of lives being killed in Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia by US bombs every day. That this was his Jihad,” Steiger said in an interview Wednesday.

Brown is charged in King County Superior Court with three counts of aggravated murder for the deaths of Anderson-Young, Said and the April 2014 murder of Leroy Henderson, 30, in Skyway. Brown is not facing the death penalty.

After the slayings Brown fled to New Jersey, Steiger said.

“This was a big case; it shook the community,” Steiger said.

Young-Wyatt refuses to address Brown by name. She said she thinks daily about what she will say to him once they’re in court.

“He’s a friggin’ coward. I want to tell him that to his face,” she said. “I want my justice. I want to be able to see him face to face and say whatever I need to say.”

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HEADLINE	03/07 EU: jihadist influx ‘lower than expected’
SOURCE	https://inews.co.uk/news/uk/jihadist-influx-britain-europe-islamic-state-collapse-lower-expected/
GIST	<p>The flood of combat-proven jihadists that it was feared would arrive in Europe following the military collapse of the Islamic State terror group has yet to materialise, the head of the EU policing agency said on Wednesday.</p> <p>Britain and other European countries had been braced for an influx of battle-hardened fighters seeking to return after leaving home to support the terror group in its attempts to establish an Islamic caliphate in Syria and Iraq. Combatants Counter-terrorism officers have long been concerned that the defeat of Islamic State would result in a significant number of European combatants, versed in skills from bomb making to frontline fighting, seeking to sneak back to launch attacks at home.</p>

But Rob Wainwright, the head of Europol, the EU policing agency, told a security conference in London yesterday that the flow of returning militants had not been at the expected level.

He said: “Despite our concern for over 12 months about this threat, our general understanding is that the returning numbers are lower than expected.”

Some 850 people from Britain are estimated by the authorities to have travelled to Syria or Iraq to support or fight for jihadist groups, around 100 of whom are known to have died or been killed.

Mr Wainwright said that in all, up to 6,000 people from European countries are thought to have travelled to join IS. He said that the reasons for the reduced influx back to Europe were unclear but include the theory that a significant number of fighters had headed for alternative Islamist battle fronts in Libya and the Sahel region.

Martyrdom Mr Wainwright said it was also possible that many had remained in Syria and Iraq with the aim of perishing there. He said: “Maybe they are still there in larger numbers than we thought. Maybe they’re truly committed to the cause and committed to martyrdom by standing to the last.”

Britain has said it is ready to strip jihadists of their citizenship with Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson saying he was happy to see Britons fighting for IS hunted down and killed. In a newspaper interview in December, he said: “A dead terrorist can’t cause any harm to Britain.”

The Government has already stripped two Britons captured on the Syrian-Iraqi border earlier this year of their citizenship. Londoners Alexandra Kotey and El Shafee Elsheikh, who were the remaining members of the so-called “Beatles” group of IS torturers and executioners, are being held in custody in Iraq while their fate is decided.

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HEADLINE	03/07 Curious case of Mohamed Elshinawy
SOURCE	https://www.lawfareblog.com/only-islamic-state-funded-plot-us-curious-case-mohamed-elshinawy
GIST	<p>Most terrorism cases in the United States follow a well-worn narrative. An individual, usually young and male, reaches out looking to join the Islamic State. He connects with a supporter who feeds his dreams of committing an attack in his own backyard—or as in one case a few years ago, traveling to Syria to become one of the many soldiers of the Caliphate. The outreach out is sometimes successful in ways the young man does not intend. At times the Islamic State sympathizer is an FBI undercover agent; or other times an actual Islamic State operative whose poor tradecraft eventually connects the young man with an FBI informant for the bureau. Over months the plot takes on the contours determined by law enforcement. There is the eventual takedown: an arrest, followed by an appearance in federal district court. Since 2014, over 150 Americans have been charged with Islamic State-related offenses, and their cases are usually mundane.</p> <p>But there is nothing mundane about the case of Mohamed Elshinawy. The Maryland resident was part of a multi-country law enforcement takedown over the course of a few days that spanned three separate continents, included transfers of thousands of dollars, shipping of anti-aircraft parts, and resulted with the killing of a high-ranking Islamic State attack planner in Syria. Terrorism financing cases are standard—but Elshinawy’s is the only known case in which the Islamic State sent thousands of dollars to an individual in the United States to fund an attack.</p> <p>Recently, I spent three days in a nondescript Baltimore courtroom listening to prosecutors unravel a story involving a dizzying array of actors, shell companies, financial transactions, transaction-masking technologies, and a fortunately unsuccessful attack plan. The courtroom proceedings, along with the recently unsealed search warrants, illustrated in rich detail the funding scheme that distinguishes Elshinawy’s case from all other American Islamic State financing cases. Some of the more colorful characters in this narrative include a Bangladeshi entrepreneur from Wales; an Egyptian ex-con who went</p>

straight from prison to the Islamic State in Syria; and finally, the Egyptian's childhood friend, a newspaper deliveryman from the Edgewood suburb of Baltimore named Mohamed Elshinawy.

As with most national security cases, several pre-trial motions were initially filed under seal. Even after Elshinawy eventually plead guilty in August 2017, all sentencing submissions and court orders—totaling more than 70—continue to be filed under seal. My own motion to unseal documents was summarily denied: among other things, the judge stated (incorrectly, based on my knowledge of over 150 other Islamic State-related U.S. legal cases), that is standard fare for a number of documents to be sealed in such cases. Fortunately, the court left the sentencing hearings open to the public. And while the hearings offered only a very limited window into the case, they provided detailed information on how the Islamic State finances would-be supporters in the United States and beyond

Elshinawy's story begins with a budding tech entrepreneur: Siful Sujun, the founder of a Cardiff-based computer equipment company named Ibacstel Electronics Limited, who used his company to initiate transactions to fund attacks in the West. Sujun had renounced his ties to the Western world to live in Islamic State-held territory in Syria, where he became the "Director of the Islamic State's computer operations." The position, which was previously held by the late Islamic State attack-planning guru and hacker Junaid Hussain, afforded him enormous latitude within the Islamic State to engage with would-be recruits. Sujun would ultimately be described by the Department of Defense as an "external operations planner" for the group.

Sujun continued to operate Ibacstel Electronics Limited, putting the company to nefarious use. He used the business to buy drones and "bug sweeping equipment" which he shipped to Sanliurfa, Turkey, a mere 20 miles from territory held by the Islamic State in Syria during that time. Sujun utilized his expertise with computers and years of experience running an online ordering firm to ensure the equipment reached its intended destination. While he primarily purchased equipment to track aircraft—Hussain, his predecessor, had been killed by a coalition strike—he also used his company to direct attacks in the United States.

It was through Sujun, Ibacstel, and Elshinawy's childhood friend Tamer El-Khodary that Elshinawy received \$8,447.23 to commit a terrorist attack in the United States. A specific May 2015 Western Union money transfer of \$1,000 from Egypt to a convenience store in Maryland set things in motion: Law enforcement followed the money trail, which led them directly to Elshinawy. The FBI watched as he picked up his remittance from the convenience store, drove to his bank, deposited \$800 in his jointly owned bank account, and then transferred some of it to his wife's account.

When confronted by the FBI about the money, Elshinawy offered an explanation: He was trying to scam some money from the Islamic State, he said, suggesting that the FBI should be thanking rather than questioning him. He admitted that he reached out to his childhood friend in the Islamic State and received money from him, but claimed it was all a ruse to attain funds to buy home furnishings. The interviewing agents were incredulous but did not yet have enough evidence to determine why Elshinawy had received this money order from an Islamic State member.

Before questioning Elshinawy again, the FBI went to work mapping out the backers and entities behind the transfer of money from Egypt to Maryland. Eventually they unraveled the financial network: Sujun used his employee in England to send money to Elshinawy in Baltimore so that Elshinawy could carry out a terror attack. Five payments, each through PayPal, made their way from Sujun's shell companies in Bangladesh, Turkey and the U.K through an intermediary in Egypt to Elshinawy. The young man used the payments to buy a laptop, a cellphone and a virtual private network for communications, which allowed the co-conspirators to speak with one another incognito.

Investigators found that Elshinawy reached Sujun through his childhood friend El-Khodary, a supporter of both the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic State. El-Khodary been arrested in Egypt, released and fled to the Islamic State. Upon arrival, he reconnected with Elshinawy and introduced him to other Islamic State members, including those who could assist Elshinawy in U.S. operations—namely, Sujun, who had become a key English-speaking "virtual planner" for the Islamic State after the death of Junaid Hussain.

Through Ibacstel and its subsidiaries, Sujan sent money to Elshinawy. On Sujan's say-so, Abdul Samad, the acting director of an Ibacstel subsidiary in Cardiff, allegedly remitted the monies just as he did for several other vendors. Payments made to Elshinawy were ostensibly for laser printers that were never purchased or delivered.

Elshinawy used encrypted applications such as Surespot and Telegram to communicate with Islamic State operatives. According to prosecutors, they talked "every day, for several months." The Islamic State initially gave Elshinawy three choices: carrying out a suicide bombing, planning and executing a terrorist attack, or traveling to Syria. Elshinawy chose the attack. To ensure that the young Elshinawy could properly fund the attack while subsisting on the salary of a newspaper deliveryman, Ibacstel sent Elshinawy a little more than \$8,000 in smaller increments. As one dogged prosecutor put it, Elshinawy was "on salary with the Islamic State."

The Islamic State also directed Elshinawy to use operating systems that would allow him to render his computer inoperable in the event of capture. For the attack, they directed him to assassinate a specific person (left unnamed during the hearings) who lived in United States. When it became clear that Elshinawy lacked the ability to do so, they shifted their direction to a mass casualty attack. The Islamic State instructed him to create a Dropbox account where, according to the Justice Department and Elshinawy's own admissions, he received "16-17 videos with step by step instructions ... on how to make a peroxide bomb."

There is no evidence that Elshinawy followed through with creating any bombs. All that is publicly known is that he searched the internet for federal buildings in Baltimore; during the sentencing hearings, the prosecutors asked the court to infer that those were his intended targets. Prosecutors also noted that the Islamic State asked for regular progress reports from Elshinawy, arguing that his searches focused on intended targets for a putative attack.

In December 2015, law enforcement officials on three separate continents closed in on the networks. In Bangladesh, local police raided the offices of an Ibacstel subsidiary. Meanwhile, the FBI was searching Elshinawy's house in Edgewood, Md. And in the U.K., authorities were questioning the Cardiff Ibacstel director Abdul Samad along with Sujan's brother, Ataul Haque.

A few short days later, Coalition airstrikes killed Siful Sujan in Raqqa. Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve spokesperson Col. Steve Warren claimed that "now that he's dead, ISIL has lost a key link between networks." One day later, Elshinawy was arrested in Edgewood.

In between his first FBI interview and his arrest, Elshinawy had grown paranoid and began taking increasingly complex efforts to cover his steps. Although he used the encrypted communications network that Sujan helped him set up, a traffic stop by local police in Baltimore convinced him to take a hammer and destroy his phone. By late spring of 2015, Elshinawy was under 24/7 FBI surveillance—a step that indicates how seriously the FBI considered the threat he potentially posed. According to prosecutors, the FBI interviewed him on at least three separate occasions during the summer of 2015. When they were ready to move on Elshinawy, federal law enforcement authorities executed at least "20-30 search warrants" and the Department of Justice issued more than "300 grand jury subpoenas" to keep their case under wraps and the public safe.

As the Islamic State's territorial reach declines, external financing schemes promoting attacks in the West could become increasingly relevant. With foreign fighters returning to their home countries, the Islamic State virtual entrepreneur who has until now mobilized with moral suasion may shift to providing financial support to the soldier lying dormant in the west. The model that failed in Elshinawy's case may now thrive. Money sent from countries other than Syria may not trigger the same red flags for financial institutions that such transactions previously did when the money flowed from the Middle East. Companies like Ibacstel are easily established in the West, and setting up subsidiaries in countries such as Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines would not be a difficult task.

Had Elshiwany's efforts been successful, financing terror attacks within the West from abroad could have been the new blueprint. Now, with Islamic State's loss of territory, we could easily see the group make a second try at the methodology that failed with Elshinawy. The Islamic State remains able to mobilize its army in the West, be it by providing moral, emotional or—now for the first time in the United States—financial support.

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HEADLINE	03/08 UK terror-related arrests at record high
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/mar/08/uk-terror-related-arrests-rose-almost-60-to-record-high-in-2017
GIST	<p>The number of people arrested for terrorism-related offences in Britain rose by 58% to a record high of 412 in 2017 – one of the most intense periods of terrorist attacks in recent history.</p> <p>The Home Office quarterly statistics published on Thursday show that there were 412 arrests in 2017 compared with the 261 terror-related arrests in the previous year.</p> <p>The record figures include 12 people arrested for the Westminster attacks in March, the 23 people linked to the attack in Manchester in May, 21 arrests connected with the London Bridge attack in June and one person arrested in connection with the Finsbury Park mosque attack later that month. A further seven arrests were made in connection with the attack on Parsons Green tube station in September.</p> <p>The figures reflect the growing threat from Jihadists in Britain. The director general of MI5, Andrew Parker, spoke in October of “a dramatic upshift in the threat this year” to the “highest tempo I’ve seen in my 34-year career”.</p> <p>The detailed Home Office figures show that the 412 terror-related arrests in 2017 resulted in 135 people being charged – 110 of them for terrorism-related offences. More than half – 228 or 55% – were released without charge while a further 33 were released on bail pending further investigation, and 13 faced alternative action.</p> <p>So far 29 of the 110 people charged with a terrorist offence in 2017 have been prosecuted. All of them were convicted. A further 76 are awaiting prosecution. The remaining five cases have either not proceeded or are pending.</p> <p>The latest figures show that by the end of 2017 there were 224 terrorist prisoners in jails in Britain – an increase of 24%, or 43, over the previous year – and continuing the upward trend seen in recent years. The overwhelming majority – 86% – held Islamic extremist views while 9% were rightwing extremists including from the recently banned National Action, and the remaining 5% classified as “other ideologies”.</p> <p>Earlier this month the Home Office announced that MI5 had reduced the threat level to Britain from Northern Ireland-related terrorism from substantial to moderate meaning a terrorist attack was possible but not likely. However, the threat to the UK from international terrorism remained at severe, meaning an attack was highly likely. The threat in Northern Ireland from Northern Irish terrorism also remains at severe.</p> <p>The quarterly terrorism powers statistic also show that the Metropolitan police have stepped up their use of their counter-terror stop and search powers. The number of searches carried out rose 59% in 2017 to 767 from 483 the year before.</p> <p>However, the number of people stopped and examined at ports and airports under counter-terror powers continued to fall in 2017. There were 16,349 examinations last year – a fall of 16% compared with the previous year, reflecting the recent downward trend. The number of people detained under these port</p>

	powers, however, rose 10% in 2017 from 1,539 to 1,700.
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HEADLINE	03/07 Pakistan violence drops 3rd straight year
SOURCE	https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/03/07/violence-drops-for-third-straight-year-report/
GIST	<p>ISLAMABAD: Deaths and injuries linked to militancy have dropped in Pakistan for the third consecutive year, with 21 per cent fewer incidents in 2017 than in the previous year, a security think-tank says.</p> <p>Some 2,057 people were killed and 2,074 wounded for a total of 4,131 casualties over the year, according to a report by the Islamabad-based Centre for Research and Security Studies read on Wednesday. That continued the trend from 2016, in which 2,613 people lost their lives due to violence and 1,714 were injured. In 2015, 4,647 people were killed and 1,927 injured, the group's figures show.</p> <p>The dramatic improvement in security came after the army launched an operation in June 2014 to wipe out militant bases in the northwestern tribal areas and end a bloody insurgency that has cost thousands of civilian lives since 2004.</p> <p>It has involved a series of military offensives as well as some attempts to block the militants' sources of funding. Those efforts were in the spotlight again when a global terror financing monitor voted last month to put Pakistan on a watch-list.</p> <p>But the remnants of militant groups are still able to carry out periodic bloody attacks. Washington has also increased pressure on Pakistan in recent weeks, freezing military aid amid accusations that Islamabad has refrained from clamping down on militant groups such as the Haqqani network and the Afghan Taliban.</p> <p>The report warned that even with the security improvement new militant groups have appeared in the country.</p> <p>It also said that the militant Islamic State (IS) group had claimed responsibility for attacks that left at least 143 people dead, while a branch of Sunni group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi claimed 99 fatalities.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Syria troops split rebel-held enclave
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/08c55fcb15a044a89ff9029b1d3e3819/Reports:-Syrian-troops-split-rebel-held-enclave-near-capital
GIST	<p>BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian government forces seized vast swaths of territory including farmland in the opposition-held suburbs of Damascus on Wednesday, effectively dividing the besieged enclave in two and further squeezing rebels and tens of thousands of civilians trapped inside, state media and a war monitor reported.</p> <p>The government, determined to wrest the eastern Ghouta suburbs from the control of rebels after seven years of war, has resorted to extreme levels of shelling and bombardment to clear the way for its troops to advance on the ground. Hundreds have been killed in the past two weeks, including dozens reported Wednesday.</p> <p>Doctors and residents reported intense shelling and cases of suffocation and difficulty breathing, accusing the government of using chlorine gas Wednesday night. Hamza Hassan, a surgeon working at one of the hospitals in eastern Ghouta, said that staff was overwhelmed with chlorine odor and that he had treated 29 children with difficulties breathing.</p> <p>Such reports, which have been recurrent in the past weeks, could not be independently confirmed. The government has repeatedly denied using chlorine gas.</p>

Earlier on Wednesday, the state-affiliated al-Ikhbariya TV station broadcast live shots from the region, showing dense columns of smoke rising above the town as explosions and rockets could be heard flying overhead. Syria's Central Military Media said troops took control of the town of Beit Sawa and most of Misraba, both rebel-held communities in the heart of the enclave.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that by nightfall, Syrian government troops and allied militias had seized half of the territory held by rebels in eastern Ghouta and split the enclave in two halves — a north and southern part.

By slicing the territory, the Syrian government succeeds in further squeezing rebels, making it more difficult for them to continue to hang on to the territory.

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HEADLINE	03/07 Fight against ISIS eastern Syria slows
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/fight-isis-eastern-syria-slowing-kurds-leave-battlefield/story?
GIST	<p>Offensive ground operations against ISIS in eastern Syria have slowed down as hundreds of Kurdish fighters have left the battlefield to potentially assist Kurdish forces in Afrin, in western Syria, who are fighting the Turkish military.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the U.S. is monitoring the build-up of a pro-Assad regime force massing in the same area, where in February, another similar force attacked Kurdish and U.S. forces. U.S. airstrikes used to repel that attack killed up to 100 pro-regime fighters, including dozens of Russian private military contractors. CNN was first to report the massing of the pro-Assad regime force.</p> <p>Since retaking Raqqa from ISIS last fall, the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have pushed the shrinking number of ISIS fighters further eastward along the Euphrates River towards the border with Iraq. The SDF is a Kurdish-led force of 60,000 anti-ISIS fighters evenly split between Syrian Kurdish and Arab fighters.</p> <p>As the military fight against ISIS has wound down the shrinking battlefield in eastern Syria has become more complex as the risks increase that Kurdish, American, Russian and Assad military forces could come into potential conflict.</p> <p>In late January tensions increased as Turkey launched a military operation into the Kurdish-held area of Afrin in western Syria. Turkey said its military operation was targeting the YPG that it has branded a Kurdish terrorist force. The YPG make up a large number of the Syrian Kurdish forces fighting for the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces that are fighting ISIS.</p> <p>In February, small numbers of Kurdish SDF fighters who had been fighting ISIS in eastern Syria headed westward to help Kurdish forces in Afrin.</p> <p>At the time U.S. officials said the movements were not having an overall effect on the SDF's military campaign against ISIS.</p> <p>But that changed last week as the Pentagon acknowledged the SDF was carrying out an “operational pause” in eastern Syria.</p> <p>According to U.S. officials, a contributing factor for the pause was that the number of SDF fighters who had left the fight in eastern Syria had swelled to 1,500. That included Arabic SDF fighters who have been doing the bulk of the fighting against ISIS in eastern Syria. But they left the fight against ISIS as they lost the battlefield support provided by the better trained Kurdish forces who had moved west.</p> <p>Most of the Kurdish SDF fighters who left the eastern battlefields have headed towards the western city of</p>

	<p>Manbij that is close to Afrin. U.S. officials do not have a good grasp on how many Kurdish fighters may have actually moved from Manbij towards Afrin.</p> <p>On Tuesday, the Syrian Democratic Forces formally said in a statement that it was moving its forces from Dayr Az Zawr Province, in eastern Syria, towards Afrin to counter the Turkish incursion.</p> <p>A U.S. official said another contributing factor to the significant decrease in the SDF's offensive operations against ISIS was a shift towards a defensive posture to maintain the SDF's major territorial gains in eastern Syria.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/08 ISIS leader's sister sentenced to death
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iraqi-court-sentences-leaders-sister-death-53602305?
GIST	<p>A Baghdad court has convicted the sister of the Islamic State group's leader on terrorism charges and sentenced her to death.</p> <p>The spokesman of Iraq's Supreme Judicial Council, Abdul-Sattar Bayrkdar, said in a statement on Thursday that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's sister was found guilty for "offering logistic support and help to (IS militants) in carrying out criminal acts."</p> <p>Bayrkdar says the woman, whose name wasn't released, was also found guilty of "distributing money" among IS militants in Mosul, which was under their rule for more than three years from mid-2014.</p> <p>Bayrkdar said the woman's husband was also sentenced to death earlier as a member of IS leadership.</p> <p>Iraq declared victory over IS last December, after driving the militants from northern and central Iraq. Hundreds of women, including foreigners, were arrested.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/08 Pakistan: US drone kills 21 insurgents
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-drone-targeting-pakistani-taliban-kills-21-afghanistan-53601423?
GIST	<p>Two missiles fired from a U.S. drone hit a militant facility in neighboring Afghanistan, killing 21 insurgents, including the son of the head of the Pakistani Taliban, two Pakistani intelligence officials and local Taliban commanders said on Thursday.</p> <p>The strike, which according to the officials took place on Wednesday, targeted a compound frequented by Mullah Fazlullah, the leader of the Pakistani Taliban who is believed to be hiding in Afghanistan.</p> <p>The intelligence officials said that Fazlullah was apparently not there, but his son was killed in the strike in Afghanistan's Kunar province, miles away from Pakistani border.</p> <p>Three Pakistani Taliban commanders also confirmed the strike and militant casualties. Pakistani officials and the Taliban commanders spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to speak to the media.</p> <p>The United States made no comment on the strike. There was also no immediate comment from NATO, Afghan authorities or the Pakistani government.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 TSA eyes self-radicalized terrorists
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/tsa-chief-increasingly-focused-radicalized-terrorists/story?id=53580773
GIST	<p>The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is increasingly concerned about preventing self-radicalized individuals from targeting air travel, TSA Administrator David Pekoske told ABC News Wednesday following his first speech on the "State of the TSA."</p> <p>"It's really people that can get self-radicalized by looking at information on the internet and, then, having access to materials and supplies that are commercially available here -- effect an attack on the system," Pekoske said. He noted that the perpetrators of two recent attacks in New York, a truck ramming in October and a subway bombing in December, "weren't people that were on anybody's scope at that point in time."</p> <p>He went on to add that the TSA still focuses "on the organized terrorist groups as well. So we really need to keep our eye on both, make sure that our security systems keep both in mind."</p> <p>The TSA continues to rely on so-called "behavior detection" -- identifying visual and verbal cues indicative of ill intent -- to spot self-radicalized would-be terrorists, as well as members of organized terror organizations who warrant a second look from TSA.</p> <p>Pekoske defended the behavior detection program last fall after a U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report found no evidence that the cues identified by TSA "reliably identify deception."</p> <p>However, Pekoske also said participation by the public, like adhering to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's "if you see something, say something" campaigns, is key in warding off self-radicalized individuals before they attack. It's why the TSA has tweaked its motto from "not on my watch" to "not on our watch."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 UN repeats call for Syria ceasefire
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-russian-general-dead-syria-plane-crash-53576055?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The U.N. Security Council is reiterating its call for implementation of its Feb. 24 resolution demanding a cease-fire throughout Syria for at least 30 days without delay to deliver humanitarian aid and evacuate the wounded and critically ill.</p> <p>Council president Karel Van Oosterom of the Netherlands told reporters after Wednesday's closed meeting that members expressed concern about the humanitarian situation.</p> <p>The council heard briefings from U.N. special envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura and U.N. deputy humanitarian chief Urusula Mueller.</p> <p>Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is scheduled to brief the council on implementation of the resolution on Monday.</p> <p>Guterres urged all parties on Tuesday to implement the cease-fire and expressed serious concern at attacks throughout the besieged Damascus suburbs of eastern Ghouta as well as reported shelling of the capital, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	03/07 Body found near bunker decapitated
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SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/920209/sheriff-body-found-near-washington-bunker-was-decapitated/
GIST	<p>CAMANO ISLAND, Wash. (AP) — A Washington state sheriff says the body of a woman found near a gun- and ammo-filled bunker last weekend had been decapitated, and a man sought in the case is on the loose and possibly headed for California.</p> <p>The Island County coroner identified the victim as 26-year-old Katherine Cunningham. Detectives found her body Saturday on an undeveloped parcel of land on Camano Island, north of Seattle.</p> <p>Nearby, investigators discovered a bunker dug into a hillside containing supplies, guns and ammo.</p> <p>Island County Sheriff Mark Brown said Wednesday that police are looking for 34-year-old Jacob Gonzales, whom he called a person of interest.</p> <p>Gonzales is believed to be armed and driving a green 1990 Mitsubishi Montero, with Washington license plate AYE2639.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Amelia Earhart mystery solved?
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Science_News/2018/03/07/Bones-found-on-South-Pacific-island-belonged-to-Amelia-Earhart-study-concludes/4101520448446/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_sn&utm_medium=16
GIST	<p>March 7 (UPI) -- The bones found several decades ago on a remote island in the South Pacific were likely those of famed pilot Amelia Earhart. Anthropologist Richard Jantz is 99 percent sure of it.</p> <p>Jantz, a professor and researcher at the University of Tennessee, recently reanalyzed measurements taken of the bones by physician D. W. Hoodless. In 1940, Hoodless determined the bones belonged to a man -- not Earhart, who disappeared along with her plane in 1937.</p> <p>In a new paper published in the journal Forensic Anthropology, Jantz presents evidence contradicting Hoodless' conclusion.</p> <p>Jantz is the co-creator of a computer program designed to analyze the sex, ancestry and stature of a person based on skeletal measurements. When Jantz plugged the measurements made by Hoodless into the Fordisc program, the models determined the remains have more in common with Earhart than 99 percent of the people in a sizable reference sample.</p> <p>Jantz also used a photograph of Earhart and a measurable, scalable object to estimate the lengths of her radius and humerus bones. The estimates matched those recorded by Hoodless.</p> <p>The George Palmer Putnam Collection of Amelia Earhart Papers at Purdue University also turned up measurements taken by a seamstress in preparation for a new pair of trousers, allowing Jantz to estimate the length of the groundbreaking pilot's tibia. The estimate also matched Hoodless' records.</p> <p>"Until definitive evidence is presented that the remains are not those of Amelia Earhart, the most convincing argument is that they are hers," Jantz said in a news release.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/08 US closes consular agency in Mexico
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/us-closes-consular-agency-playa-del-carmen-bars/story?
GIST	The U.S. has closed its consular agency in a popular Mexican tourist spot and is barring its employees from traveling there over a "security threat."

	<p>The embassy in Mexico City issued the alert Wednesday night for Playa del Carmen, a coastal resort town near Cancun and Cozumel on the Caribbean.</p> <p>The warnings come after a bomb exploded on a ferry that runs between Playa del Carmen and Cozumel in February and an unexploded ordinance was found on another ferry a week later.</p> <p>The State Department provided few details on what the threat was -- saying only that one was received by the embassy in Mexico City on Wednesday.</p> <p>"We take our obligation to provide information to U.S. citizens seriously as evidenced by the clear, timely, and reliable safety and security information we release worldwide," State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert said in a statement to ABC News, adding that the agency will provide "important updates when information becomes available."</p> <p>Both the closure of the consular agency and the restrictions on personnel travel are in place "until further notice," according to Nauert.</p> <p>Still, Americans were not told to avoid travel to Playa del Carmen. The State Department's alert system puts it at a "Level 2: Exercise Increased Caution."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/08 UK probes 3 sites in poisoned spy case
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/uk-focuses-investigation-sites-poisoned-spy-case-53602236?
GIST	<p>Britain's Home Secretary says the investigation into the nerve agent attack on a Russian ex-spy and his daughter is focusing on three sites — his home, a pub and a restaurant.</p> <p>Amber Rudd told the BBC on Thursday that enormous resources are being directed at trying to figure out who might be responsible for the poisoning of Sergei Skripal and his daughter, Yulia.</p> <p>Rudd, who is in charge of public security issues, says the police officer also injured in the incident Sunday is also in serious condition but is conscious and talking.</p> <p>Rudd declined to say if she believed Russia was behind the attack, but says Britain will "if it is appropriate, attribute it to somebody. If that is the case, then we will have a plan in place."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Political row makes Europe clocks slow
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-43321113
GIST	<p>Are you running late for work and blaming your electric alarm clock?</p> <p>The real reason may lie in a dispute between Kosovo and Serbia, which has affected Europe's power grid.</p> <p>Entsoe, the body representing electricity transmission operators across 25 European countries, said bedside clocks had slowed down by up to six minutes since mid-January.</p> <p>Central heating timers and oven clocks are also affected - but not computers or smart phones.</p> <p>Countries from Spain to Turkey and from Poland to the Netherlands are part of a large area in Europe linked together into an electricity grid that operates at a synchronised frequency. This frequency regulates time-keeping in certain devices.</p>

	<p>The UK and some Nordic countries are not affected.</p> <p>During the crisis period, Kosovo did not generate enough electricity to meet its needs.</p> <p>According to Entsoe, Serbia is legally obliged to meet Kosovo's demand to keep the European grid stable.</p> <p>But because Kosovo and Serbia are in dispute over the issue - and many more related to Kosovo's unilateral secession from Serbia 10 years ago - Serbia did not step in.</p> <p>This failure to act on time forced the frequency to "deviate" - and the drop affected the clocks. Other countries that lost reserves amounting to 113 GWh are seeking compensation.</p> <p>"The deviation stopped yesterday [Tuesday] when Kosovo generated the energy it needs," Entsoe spokeswoman Susanne Nies told the BBC.</p> <p>Surplus energy would need to be generated and fed into the system over time for the balance to be redressed across the continent, Ms Nies said.</p> <p>So yes, you can manually adjust your clocks - but they will automatically stop losing time once the grid stabilises.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Microphones found Gitmo meeting room
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-microphones-found-guantanamo-legal-meeting-room-53589985
GIST	<p>U.S. officials say microphones were found in a room where a Saudi prisoner met with his lawyers on the Navy base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.</p> <p>The disclosure in a court document is the first public description of an incident that led to a military judge placing an indefinite hold on legal proceedings against the prisoner charged with the 2000 attack on the USS Cole.</p> <p>Senior members of the legal team for prisoner Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri withdrew from the case because of a breach of attorney-client privilege that they have been directed not to reveal. That eventually prompted the judge to freeze proceedings.</p> <p>Prosecutors said in an appeal this week that the microphones were not in operation and have been removed. The disclosure was first reported Wednesday by The Miami Herald</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Mexico City: water supply sabotage
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mexico-city-water-cutoffs-capital-worsened-sabotage-53590952?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Mexico City officials say intentional sabotage may be contributing to recurrent water shortages that have caused protests on the streets of the city of 9 million people.</p> <p>In recent weeks, officials have blamed dry faucets in many neighborhoods on everything from power shortages to failing pipes and the spring dry season.</p> <p>But on Wednesday, Mayor Miguel Angel Mancera said some group has been shutting off water distribution valves at about 50 points in the sprawling megalopolis. Mancera did not say who was believed to be responsible, but said anyone caught closing valves would be arrested.</p>

	<p>The mayor says the city is purchasing lockable covers for the valves.</p> <p>Residents will vote for Mexico's president and the city's mayor in July 1 elections, and some fear the sabotage may be politically motivated.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Russian spy poisoned by nerve agent
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/07/europe/russian-spy-nerve-agent-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>London (CNN)Former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter were deliberately poisoned by a nerve agent in England over the weekend, UK police said Wednesday.</p> <p>Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley told reporters that police were treating Sunday's incident as "attempted murder by a nerve agent," though he declined to elaborate on the specific substance that was believed to have been used.</p> <p>Skripal -- a former Russian military official convicted of spying for the UK -- and his daughter Yulia are critically ill after passing out on a shopping center bench in the southern English town of Salisbury.</p> <p>A police officer who was one of the first to arrive on the scene also has fallen ill and is in serious condition at a hospital, Rowley said Wednesday.</p> <p>Nerve agents are highly poisonous chemicals that prevent the body's nervous system from functioning properly, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Exposure to large doses can result in death.</p> <p>On Wednesday, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson warned that Britain would "respond robustly" if the attack was found to be the work of a foreign power.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	03/08 UK: people jailed knife crimes soar
SOURCE	https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/huge-rise-people-being-jailed-12148537
GIST	<p>The number of people jailed for knife crime soared by 9% to more than 7,000 last year.</p> <p>The figure of 7,156 immediate custodial sentences - 612 of them for children - is the fourth annual leap in a row and a record since current figures began a decade ago.</p> <p>It comes after police recorded a huge 30% leap in one year in crime involving a knife or other offensive weapon.</p> <p>Some 38% of the prison sentences lasted more than six months, almost double the 20% of those jailed in 2008.</p> <p>Overall 20,982 knife and offensive weapon cases went through the court system, the highest number since 2010.</p> <p>Almost 4,500 of them were children under 18, the highest since 2009.</p> <p>63% of convictions overall resulted in an immediate or suspended jail term, up from 42% a decade ago.</p>

2,394 were let off with a caution, 719 were fined, 4,877 had a community sentence and 4,067 were given a suspended sentence.

Just 331 offenders were given a discharge in 2017, the lowest number on record and down from 1,418 in 2008.

The number of offences that resulted in a caution or conviction overall was lower than in 2008 (28,398) and 2009 (25,100).

But the length of the average prison sentence has risen by 2.2 months since 2008 to 7.5 months.

In 2008 5,734 offenders received an immediate jail term, and until 2016 the number had not risen above 6,000.

Last month Home Secretary Amber Rudd called for a "different approach" to the terrible toll of knife crime.

She said: "We know that young people are increasingly carrying knives and I want to find out why that is and what we can do to turn them away from that.

"We need a different approach in terms of incentives for them, engaging with them, and the old systems don't always work."

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HEADLINE	03/07 Major meth trafficking leader gets life
SOURCE	http://www.koaa.com/story/37672291/major-meth-drug-trafficking-leader-sentenced-to-life-in-prison
GIST	<p>COLORADO - The US Attorney's Office for the District of Colorado announced the final defendant of a multi-year drug trafficking investigation was sentenced to life in prison Tuesday.</p> <p>The attorney's office said Jorge Loya-Ramirez was sentenced to life in prison for his role played in a methamphetamine distribution conspiracy throughout northern Colorado and southwestern Kansas. He was sentenced by US District Judge Robert E Blackburn on Tuesday.</p> <p>This drug conspiracy has been a multi-year investigation involving 28 people operating in Colorado, California and Kansas. He was the last remaining defendant in the case to be tried before a jury.</p> <p>Loya-Ramirez was indicted by a grand jury on June 23, 2015. According to trial evidence, Loya-Ramirez was the leader of a methamphetamine organization using a team of "employees" to distribute hundreds of pounds of the drug throughout multiple states.</p> <p>The US Attorney's Office said violence and deadly weapons were used in drug operations.</p> <p>He was originally stopped near Lamar in 2015 where a kilo of cocaine and just under a half pound of methamphetamine was found in his possession. "Poison and pain are what this defendant cultivated in Colorado," said U.S. Attorney, Bob Troyer. "Thanks to the FBI, Colorado State Patrol, many other law enforcement partners, and our tireless prosecution team, this dope dealer's day is done."</p> <p>The US Attorney's Office Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force prosecuted the case, with agents from the FBI and other Colorado agencies who assisted in the investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Romania, Germany smash trafficking ring
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SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/romanian-german-officials-smash-migrant-trafficking-ring/2018/03/07/e7fa402e-2207-11e8-946c-9420060cb7bd_story.html?utm_term=.c6d6ed001aec
GIST	<p>BUCHAREST, Romania — Romanian and German officials raided homes and hotels in both countries Wednesday to smash an illegal migrant trafficking ring they said was one of the biggest of its kind in Europe.</p> <p>Romanian prosecutors from the organized crime and terrorism agency said police conducted 12 searches in western Romania, including in the city of Timisoara, which has become a hub for migrants after Hungary tightened border controls with Serbia.</p> <p>A statement said the group located and guided migrants and organized their accommodation and transport through Turkey, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, Hungary, Austria and Germany aided by guides of Arab origin. They said migrants paid between 4,000 to 5,000 euros (\$4,960-\$6,200).</p> <p>Local news website Pressalert.ro quoted local authorities saying the group had trafficked 2,000 migrants through Timisoara. The report said traffickers and migrants used applications such as WhatsApp or Viber, and turned off their mobile phones when they were crossing the border so that their locations were not saved on their devices.</p> <p>German judicial authorities and Europol helped the probe which allegedly involved suspects who “were part of a vast European network of migrants.”</p> <p>Prosecutors said migrants entered Romania illegally from Serbia and were later taken to Hungary and then Germany.</p> <p>Romania’s organized crime chief prosecutor, Daniel Horodniceanu, said the raids were part of a larger Europol investigation in several European countries, including Britain.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Brazil gang loots \$5M in airport heist
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/03/07/brazilian-gang-loots-5-million-in-an-airport-heist-worthy-of-oceans-eleven/?utm_term=.507d477e0f4b
GIST	<p>SAO PAULO, Brazil — Five gang members wielding rifles infiltrated an international airport in Brazil on Sunday and carried out a carefully choreographed heist worthy of the big screen.</p> <p>Police said the gang, using cars that were painted to resemble airport security vehicles, tore past two gates and drove into the cargo section of Viracopos Airport, 60 miles outside Sao Paulo. They attacked two security guards and stuffed them into a van, then invaded the tarmac and drove up to a parked Lufthansa plane just as employees were transferring bags of cash into an armored vehicle.</p> <p>The group drove out of the airport with \$5 million in cash before police arrived. Nobody was arrested.</p> <p>“Everyone who passes through the Viracopos Airport is at the mercy of thugs,” said Alberto Carvalho, a director at the National Union of Airport Workers, who has documented several instances of muggings, carjackings and kidnappings of employees in the vicinity of the airport. The highway that leads to the airport is notorious for crime, and several kidnapping attempts on the road made headlines here in recent years. “The airport is completely unprepared to deal with these risks,” Carvalho said.</p> <p>The heist is part of a crime wave that has made transporting goods in Brazil particularly dangerous. A record 10,500 cargo thefts were registered in 2017 in Sao Paulo, according to Sao Paulo state figures. In February, police busted a cargo-looting ring that was stashing stolen trucks and merchandise at a rest stop right outside Sao Paulo. In Rio de Janeiro, some areas are so dangerous for truckers that the post office has halted deliveries in nearly half the city.</p>

Transporting merchandise on Brazilian roads became so treacherous that many companies opted to send shipments by plane. Located about an hour from Sao Paulo's city center, the Viracopos Airport has taken on more valuable shipments, and the volume of goods passing through the airport rose by 20 percent in 2017. It is now responsible for the most cargo traffic in Brazil.

While theft at the scale of Sunday's robbery is rare, it sounds another alarm about the country's deteriorating security situation.

Last month, President Michel Temer ordered the military to take over security in Rio de Janeiro after a spike in crime disrupted Carnival celebrations. Armed vehicles have rolled through the streets of Rio, fighting to regain control of some of the city's most dangerous slums.

To many observers, the complexity of the airport heist also illustrates the reach of organized crime.

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HEADLINE	03/08 UK's rising retail crime price tag
SOURCE	https://realbusiness.co.uk/law/2018/03/08/price-tag-700m-put-uks-rising-retail-crime/
GIST	<p>Increases in retail crime are in stark contrast with “record amounts” of investment in prevention measures, it has been revealed.</p> <p>The UK's largest retail businesses each reportedly spending tens of millions per year tackling criminal activity.</p> <p>According to the British Retail Consortium's (BRC) annual Retail Crime Survey, the total direct financial cost of all retail crime has risen to £700m, an increase of six per cent.</p> <p>The survey found that the “biggest concern” has come from the growth in severe violent incidents causing injury to retail employees – with incidents occurring at twice the rate compared to the previous year.</p> <p>Financially, however, the largest single element of the overall cost of crime to retailers remains “customer theft” – or shoplifting – which accounts for £500m per year, an increase of 15 per cent.</p> <p>In the 12 months when the data was collated, from April 2016 to March 2017, BRC members were reported to have spent an average £29m per company on tackling non-cyber crime, compared to £6.7m the previous year.</p> <p>Investment in prevention measures to tackle cyber-crime specifically averaged £8m per member – an increase of 400 per cent. Nearly half of respondents in the survey said they had seen an increase in the number of cyber-attacks in the last year.</p> <p>But while most areas of criminal activity increased, the direct cost of fraud reduced by £27m, or just under 15 per cent, to £155m. The figure includes several different fraud types, including “card not present” and supplier fraud.</p> <p>High priority The BRC, which represents 104 members with a combined annual turnover of £137bn, representing almost 40 per cent of the UK retail marketplace, is now calling for retail crime to be treated with a much higher priority, reflecting the industry's impact on the economy and employment.</p> <p>It is “strongly recommending” that police and crime commissioners look carefully at making specific reference to retail crime in their police and crime plans.</p> <p>BRC chief executive Helen Dickenson said: “Retail directly employs nearly one in every ten workers in</p>

	<p>the UK, and millions more indirectly.</p> <p>“Retail already faces its own challenges, with margins shrinking, and against that backdrop the pressures that retail crime exerts are having a stronger impact. In particular, the figures on violence present a deeply concerning picture.”</p> <p>She added: “Retailers are doing everything possible to ensure that staff members and customers are safe and protected.</p> <p>“But they are now spending record amounts on crime prevention, which is a drag on the economic viability of shops and not infinitely sustainable.”</p>
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HEADLINE	03/08 Wyoming gov. home intruder had knife
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/de497a6b9dcc4a9bab36bafb2d0cc6ca/The-Latest:-Man-found-in-Wyoming-governor's-home-had-knife
GIST	<p>CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — The Latest on an intruder arrested inside the Wyoming governor’s residence (all times local):</p> <p>7:40 p.m.</p> <p>Authorities say a man accused of breaking into the Wyoming governor’s home in Cheyenne was armed with a hunting knife.</p> <p>An arrest affidavit says officers found 35-year-old Antoine Lewis hiding in a bathroom after he broke in and set off a fire alarm at about 1:30 a.m. Tuesday. He is accused of pointing the knife at the officers before he was arrested.</p> <p>Investigators say Lewis told them he was chased onto the property and intentionally set off the fire alarm to get help, but surveillance footage does not support that claim.</p> <p>The arrest affidavit also says he allegedly told his employer the day before that if he were to steal from people, he would target the rich because they have insurance.</p> <p>Republican Gov. Matt Mead says his family was inside the home at the time but not harmed.</p> <p>—</p> <p>4:55 p.m.</p> <p>Authorities have taken into custody a man they found inside the Wyoming governor’s residence in Cheyenne.</p> <p>The Wyoming Highway Patrol identified the man as 35-year-old Antoine Lewis, who had been living in a local motel.</p> <p>It says the man entered the governor’s residence around 1:30 a.m. Tuesday, setting off a fire alarm.</p> <p>The patrol says firefighters and police arrived and found the man hiding in the house.</p> <p>Lewis was taken to the Laramie County jail where he was being held pending formal charges.</p> <p>Republican Gov. Matt Mead said in a statement that his family was inside the residence at the time but not</p>

	<p>harmed.</p> <p>The patrol is responsible for the governor's security.</p> <p>Patrol spokesman Sgt. Kyle McKay declined to release any other details Wednesday.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/08 Ky. Molotov cocktail maker gets 20yrs
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/5df1af93731844f2bc980b4d6af2f5d8/Kentucky-man-who-made-Molotov-cocktails-gets-20-years
GIST	<p>BOWLING GREEN, Ky. (AP) — Prosecutors say a Kentucky man who made five Molotov cocktails to blow-up a school has been sentenced to 20 years in prison, without the possibility of parole.</p> <p>U.S. Attorney Russell Coleman says in statement 20-year-old Trey Alexander Gwathney-Law was sentenced Tuesday by U.S. District Judge Greg N. Stivers for making and possessing illegal firearms. The statement says Gwathney-Law told an acquaintance he made the cocktails to blow up Franklin-Simpson County Middle School.</p> <p>According to the plea agreement, Gwathney-Law made them in 2015 using glass bottles filled with flammable liquid. One Mountain Dew, one Sprite, and two Dr. Pepper bottles had a cloth wick stuffed inside. A root beer bottle had a carbon dioxide cartridge containing explosive powder and pieces of paper that appeared to have been soaked in the liquid.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Spokane cop guilty raping fellow cop
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/920431/spokane-cop-found-guilty-of-sexually-assaulting-female-cop/
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — A Spokane County Superior Court jury has convicted a Spokane police sergeant of sexually assaulting another police officer.</p> <p>The jury on Wednesday found Sgt. Gordon Ennis guilty of second degree rape.</p> <p>The Spokesman-Review says the jury deliberated for only two hours before arriving at a verdict.</p> <p>Ennis, who was placed on extended leave from the department following his arrest in 2015, is accused of sexually assaulting a fellow police officer on Oct. 25, 2015, at a party. His trial began Feb. 26 and has featured testimony from over a dozen witnesses.</p> <p>Ennis testified on Tuesday that the female victim was alert, conscious and conversational up to and during the alleged assault.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Big pot bust in King Co.
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/920436/big-pot-bust-in-king-county-783-pounds-7600-plus-plants/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — The King County Sheriff's Office says detectives seized nearly \$10 million worth of illegally grown marijuana in a series of raids last week.</p> <p>The investigative haul, announced Wednesday, included more than 7,600 plants and 783 pounds of dried pot, which the sheriff's office says may have been destined for the East Coast. Ten people were arrested, and the sheriff's office says they are seeking to have 10 homes, four vehicles, a 32-foot recreational vehicle and more than \$200,000 in cash forfeited to the government.</p>

	<p>The raids occurred in Renton, Auburn, Federal Way, Pacific, Kent, Lakewood, Seattle and unincorporated King County.</p> <p>Douglas Hiatt and Jeffrey Steinborn, two longtime Seattle marijuana defense attorneys who represent people involved the case, said some of the defendants are Chinese immigrants who may have believed they were legally growing marijuana.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Duvall: suspicious death investigation
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/920893/duvall-opens-homicide-case-into-body-found-near-storm-pond/
GIST	<p>DUVALL, Wash. (AP) — Officials say police are investigating a suspicious death in Duvall as a homicide.</p> <p>KOMO-TV reports that the man had been found Wednesday next to a storm water pond on city of Duvall property.</p> <p>Officers responded to the area just after noon for reports of an unresponsive person.</p> <p>Investigators said they have identified the man, but will not release his name until they notify family.</p> <p>Authorities said he is not a Duvall resident.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 After Florida 638 threats targeted schools
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/03/07/within-nine-days-after-florida-shooting-there-were-more-than-100-threats-schools-across-u-s-its-not/359986002/
GIST	<p>Breathless and whispering through the phone, a 13-year-old student called for help from her Ohio high school.</p> <p>"Help," she said in between whimpers. "He's got a gun. He's got the gun in my mouth."</p> <p>Anxiety was already running high: It had been only a week after the deadly shooting in Parkland, Fla. Police dispatchers then got three other calls from Withrow University High School in Cincinnati.</p> <p>But it was all a hoax.</p> <p>It's a stunt that other teens and kids across the nation have pulled after tragedies, creating fear in communities and bringing costly investigations by police and federal agents who have no choice but to take the threats with deadly seriousness.</p> <p>The rise in threats after a high-profile mass killing is nothing new. But the incidents are hard to quantify because they are not tracked nationally by any government agency.</p> <p>A review by USA TODAY of published accounts, however, paints a clear picture of a growing problem that is no joke.</p> <p>More than 130 threats were reported and analyzed by the USA TODAY NETWORK in the nine-day span after the Valentine's Day shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland left 17 dead. Also, non-profits such as the Educator's School Safety Network have compiled a list of the threats using news media reports. The group found that a jarring 638 threats targeted schools in the two weeks after the Parkland shootings, a number they say is probably on the low side.</p>

Following the deadly Florida rampage, panic swept schools from Maine to California, leading to lockdowns, school closures and deployment of bomb-sniffing dogs.

The dramatic rise in threats — from 10 to about 70 a day — has left school administrators and authorities walking a fine line in dealing with a threat's credibility. It's also worried parents who fear sending their children to school and shined a spotlight on the legal debate over what penalties kids should face.

At the root of the problem, experts say, are students who are too young to realize the severity of their comments.

"There are usually two common traits in these individuals," said Mary Ellen O'Toole, a former FBI profiler. "They're young, and their judgment is poor. I mean, a brain isn't really fully formed until your early 20s. Then, it's also people who want to be disruptive and affect how the school is operating."

Police arrested a 13-year-old student after multiple 911 calls prompted a lockdown of Withrow High School on Feb. 22, 2018. Audio provided by the Cincinnati Police Department. The Enquirer/Cameron Knight

Texas, with 55 reports, was the state with the most threats since the shooting. Next in line are Ohio, California, Florida and Pennsylvania, according to data from the Educator's School Safety Network, which not only tracks such incidents but also trains schools on how to handle them.

Because of the threats, at least 33 schools closed and more than 15 others locked down, according to a review of the incidents reported across the USA TODAY Network, which encompasses more than 100 news organizations nationwide.

Some threats were real and law enforcement was able to thwart the plot before it came to fruition, but the larger number of the scares weren't credible, meaning the person suspected of making the comments wasn't planning to harm others and didn't have access to weapons.

"It's not funny, and I think this should end," said Bailey Campbell, a student at Central York High School in Pennsylvania. "I want to go back to school, and I want to finish my senior year."

Her high school, along with others in the region, was closed for three days because of a threat sent by a middle school student. Authorities say the student made the threats simply because she didn't want to go to school.

Seeing closures like that in Pennsylvania gives a student a sense of power, O'Toole said, which for a kid is huge.

Before taking intense action, it's important to track the threat and see whether the person behind it even has the means to act, she added. If a threat doesn't result in some effect on a school, a student feels like they failed, thus discouraging the behavior.

Most reported threats aren't followed by shootings or attacks.

Authorities have been going back and forth about how to deal with these threats. On one hand, an arrest could leave a scar on a student's future. But the threats might cease if a hard approach is taken.

Even with jail as a penalty, threats have been prevalent for decades and show no signs of stopping. After the massacre at Columbine High School in 1999, hundreds of threats were sent to schools across the country, leading to more than 350 arrests.

Broward County has been under the microscope since the shooting, and the news media and lawmakers have scrutinized a nationwide program in schools that aims to keep students from serving jail time for minor offenses. The school gunman, Nikolas Cruz, was not part of the program, but some have criticized

	<p>it, including Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., who said it delays and discourages law enforcement from being alerted to dangerous students.</p> <p>Amanda Klinger, director of operations for the Educator's School Safety Network, said the threats, along with violence and issues in schools, could be dampened with a few measures. Chief among them would be schools communicating with students about the severity of threats and parents reinforcing the message at home.</p> <p>"Everyone knows you don't say 'bomb' in an airport. We have to get to that point with kids on this issue," she said. "We need to make it clear that this isn't OK, and it is incredibly serious."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Clarkston PD, WSP investigate cold case
SOURCE	http://www.khq.com/story/37673836/clarkston-police-wsp-investigating-1990-cold-case-murder
GIST	<p>CLARKSTON, Wash. - The Washington State Patrol Cold Case Unit and the Clarkston Police Department reported Wednesday that they are collaboratively investigating the 1990 unsolved homicide of Toni Ann Tedder.</p> <p>Tedder, who was 18 at the time of her death, died from a knife wound on July 28, 1990 while sleeping on a couch at the family home in the 500 block of 7th Street. There were no other people in the home at the time. A wooden-handled fishing fillet type knife with a 6-inch blade was found at the scene and it's believed to be the murder weapon.</p> <p>Numerous interviews have been conducted over the years and leads followed, but no arrests have been made.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/08 Sexual abuse at the Hajj
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/08/middleeast/hajj-sexual-abuse-asequals-iwd-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Hundreds of thousands of Muslim women descend on Mecca in Saudi Arabia each year to take part in the Hajj, but in recent weeks some female worshipers have told CNN they experienced incidents of sexual abuse or harassment while participating in the five-day pilgrimage.</p> <p>Five women told CNN they were compelled to share their stories after a Pakistani woman's account of being sexually abused at the Hajj went viral on Facebook last month. That post (since deleted) prompted an outpouring of similar stories from female pilgrims on social media.</p> <p>The Hajj is a spiritual pinnacle for Muslims around the world, with up to three million pilgrims traveling to Mecca to participate each year. In 2016, almost 42% of all worshipers were women. Every Muslim who is physically and financially able to, is required to do the pilgrimage once in their lifetime. As one of the largest annual pilgrimages in the world, crowd control poses a major challenge.</p> <p>Most of the incidents of sexual abuse and harassment reported to CNN happened during the tawaf ritual, a counter-clockwise procession around the Kaaba shrine. Only some of the women who shared their stories with CNN reported the incidents to police in Saudi Arabia but those who did said their complaints were ignored.</p> <p>Responding to CNN, an unnamed Saudi official familiar with Hajj affairs said the Kingdom does not tolerate this kind of behavior anywhere, especially at holy sites and added that allegations made by the women were being taken very seriously by authorities.</p> <p>"Anyone found guilty of committing these acts faces serious consequences including imprisonment and caning," the Saudi official said. "By Royal Order, female police officers and investigators are now being</p>

	<p>added to the police force and security services including the Public Prosecution Department, so there will be a greater female security and police presence within the country and at the Holy sites to handle any issues that may arise."</p> <p>Saudi Arabia already issued a royal decree in September 2017 to outlaw sexual harassment. A new law is currently being drafted.</p>
Return to Top	<p><i>Click on source link to read the five women's stories. They have been edited for clarity and length. Some women requested to remain anonymous because they fear a backlash within their communities.</i></p>

HEADLINE	03/07 FBI: didn't act on or share Cruz reports
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/school-shootings-florida-fbi/2018/03/07/id/847456/
GIST	<p>The FBI has detailed to Congress a series of mistakes and missed opportunities to intervene before a gunman killed 17 people at a Florida high school last month.</p> <p>FBI Deputy Director David Bowdich made the comments in a closed briefing Tuesday with members of the House Judiciary and Oversight committees.</p> <p>In a summary released Wednesday, Bowdich cited two tips the FBI received about shooting suspect Nikolas Cruz, in September 2017 and January 2018, that were mishandled, including one in which a FBI call taker "did not ask any standard investigative probing questions." The 2018 call taker was able to connect Cruz to the earlier call about a threatening YouTube comment, but after discussing it with a supervisor, they decided not to pursue the matter and the case was closed.</p> <p>The chairmen of the two committees said that "despite multiple opportunities, the FBI did not share information with state and local authorities" about Nikolas Cruz.</p> <p>The FBI is reviewing its handling of the case and will report findings to Congress.</p> <p>Officials say two Florida police officers who responded to last month's school shooting from a neighboring city have been temporarily suspended from the SWAT team.</p> <p>Miramar police spokeswoman Tania Rues said in an email Wednesday that the officers didn't advise supervisors that they were going to Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland. The suspension applies only to the SWAT team, so they'll remain on active duty for other assignments.</p> <p>Miramar's SWAT team had been training in nearby Coral Springs the morning of Feb. 14. The team had been placed on stand-by after the active-shooter report, but the Broward Sheriff's Office never called for them.</p> <p>Miramar police say the officers' actions created a lack of accountability and potential safety situation.</p> <p>Rues says a third SWAT team member was suspended for violating the department's social media policy.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/08 Algeria: fight migrant criminal networks
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/algerian-pres-calls-action-migrant-criminal-networks-53602303?
GIST	<p>Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika has called on Arab nations to work together to fight illegal migration and the networks that feed them.</p> <p>In a message read to a meeting in Algiers of Arab interior ministers, Abdelaziz Bouteflika said that "we cannot close our eyes" to criminal networks exploiting migrants and endangering "the stability and</p>

	<p>security of our countries."</p> <p>He said that a "common approach" is needed.</p> <p>The presidential message delivered on Wednesday underscored that North African nations are also coping with migration, notably sub-Saharan migrants who remain there rather than continue their perilous journeys to Europe.</p> <p>It is unclear how many migrants have settled in Algeria, or how many Algerian citizens have tried to make the Mediterranean crossing.</p> <p>The presence of Sub-Saharan migrants has raised tensions with local populations in Algeria.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/08 Buddhist mobs attack stores in Sri Lanka
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/residents-mobs-attack-muslim-owned-shops-sri-lanka-53600896?
GIST	<p>Buddhist mobs are still sweeping through Muslim neighborhoods in Sri Lanka's central hills, destroying stores and restaurants despite a curfew, a state of emergency and heavy deployment of security forces, residents said Thursday.</p> <p>About 50 people broke into Mohamed Ramzeen's small restaurant in the town of Pilimathalawa on Wednesday night while the curfew was in effect, destroying nearly everything they found.</p> <p>"The security in town is inadequate," Ramzeen said. "We fear for our lives."</p> <p>Others in the area around Kandy, the main hill town, have described similar attacks since the violence began early this week. The streets of most towns were all-but empty Thursday except for police and soldiers.</p> <p>The government ordered a state of emergency Tuesday, and has shut down a handful of popular social media networks, saying they were being used to spread false rumors that led to mob attacks.</p> <p>Sri Lanka has long faced a bitter ethnic divide between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils, fueling a bloody, decades-long civil war as Tamil militants tried to carve out their own homeland.</p> <p>But in the years since the war ended in 2009, a religious divide has grown, with the rise of hard-line Buddhist groups that stoke anger against minority Muslims.</p> <p>Sinhalese are overwhelmingly Buddhists, while Tamils are Hindu, Muslim and Christian.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/08 Alabama school shooting: student killed
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/17-year-student-killed-accidental-shooting-alabama-high/story?
GIST	<p>A shooting at an Alabama high school Wednesday afternoon has left a 17-year-old female student dead and a 17-year-old male student injured, according to police.</p> <p>The shooting occurred around 3:40 p.m. inside Birmingham's Huffman High School, the largest of seven high schools in the Birmingham City School System, police said.</p> <p>"School Resource and East Precinct Officers were dispatched to Huffman High School on the report of an individual shot inside the school," police said in a statement. "Officers immediately responded and found</p>

	<p>that two individuals had been shot."</p> <p>Both students were transported to UAB Hospital, where the female student was pronounced deceased, police said.</p> <p>Initially, police described the incident as an "accidental shooting," but they later ceased to describe it as such and said it is a "death investigation."</p> <p>"Two students were involved in a shooting during dismissal today at Huffman High School," the school system said in a statement. "The school was placed on a brief lockdown, and police were called to the scene. Students have been released and police are actively investigating the circumstances surrounding the shooting."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/08 Missouri: slain officer at wrong address
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/cop-killed-shot-missouri-suspect-dead/story?
GIST	<p>A Clinton, Missouri, police officer who was gunned down Tuesday night was done so responding to the wrong address, police said.</p> <p>Missouri State Highway Patrol Sgt. Bill Lowe made the distinction in a news conference late Wednesday, saying police officers, including Ryan Morton, were given the wrong address by dispatchers. Upon arrival, Morton and two other officers came under fire from a suspect, entered the home and were struck by gunfire. Morton was killed.</p> <p>Morton, 30, had returned to the Clinton Police Department after another officer there died in the line of duty last year, authorities said Wednesday.</p> <p>Two other police officers were injured but survived the Tuesday night shooting in Clinton, about 75 miles southeast of Kansas City.</p> <p>The officers were shot at about 9:30 p.m. when they entered a home after receiving a 911 call in which two women were screaming in the background, according to the Missouri State Highway Patrol. Lowe said late Wednesday that call was actually made from a home in Windsor, Mo., about 20 miles from Clinton.</p> <p>It was not clear whether the wrong address was a human or computer error, Lowe said.</p> <p>By 12:30 a.m., authorities said, officers had entered the residence and found the suspect -- 37-year-old James Waters -- dead.</p> <p>Officials were still investigating whether the suspect was shot by police or killed himself, Lowe said. No one else was injured.</p> <p>"We're still piecing everything together," Lowe said in the hours immediately following the shooting. "We're way early in the investigation."</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Italy struggles to help trafficked slaves
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/italy-nigerian-trafficked-sex-slaves-little-help-with-fight-curb-immigration/
GIST	ROME -- Precious survived a trip across North Africa and two sinking boats before making it to Italy, only to be confronted with the reality facing young Nigerian migrants like her: A "madam" gave her

condoms, pantyhose and a G-string, and put her to work.

"I had a mattress. It was in the bush," Precious told The Associated Press recently, her face hidden to hide her identity. "If a white man came who said he wasn't going to have sex inside his car, I would take him to my bed."

Nigerian teenagers and young women selling sex is a common sight for motorists in Italy. Working along roadsides and secondary highways in cities big and small, they are a haunting reminder that while Italy has been successful in curbing immigration from Libya, it has largely failed to help a fraction of the migrants trafficked as sex slaves.

Between 10,000 and 30,000 Nigerian prostitutes are estimated to be walking Italian streets, often to pay off the debts they incurred to get there. Government figures show 1,172 trafficked people were rescued and given special protection in 2016, about 700 of them Nigerian women and girls. More than 100 were minors, like Precious.

She was 17 years old when she was found off Libya's coast with a boatload of other migrants and brought to Italy. After Nigerian traffickers put Precious on a train to Turin, the Nigerian "madam" who met her in the northern city sat the girl down and explained her new life:

"You don't have any choice. This is what is going on, this is how it is going to be," Precious, a nickname she uses, recalled. "You need to prostitute."

The reason? She had to pay off the 20,000-euro debt her traffickers said she had acquired, one customer at a time.

The Italian government has tripled its funding to help trafficked girls get off the streets, from 8 million euros in 2015 to 22.5 million in 2017. The government's equal opportunities office says most of the money has gone to providing more beds in safe houses for trafficked women and girls who want to escape life on the streets.

But advocates say there is no coordinated response or strategy, and not enough beds to go around. The rescued women can't be housed in regular migrant shelters because their pimps will come for them. In fact, many girls still on the streets actually live in migrant shelters, where their traffickers can operate with impunity, said David Mancini, assistant prosecutor in l'Aquila.

"The traffickers work inside the centers, recruiting and running their business," he said. "The girls leave in the morning and come back at night. It's a pressing issue and we don't have any way to prevent this exploitation."

Increasingly, the Nigerian migrants being forced into prostitution are minors, some as young as 13, according to the International Organization for Migration's 2017 report on human trafficking.

Recent arrivals to Italy are coerced into prostitution "under threats, violence, abuses perpetrated by the traffickers, a form of true slavery," Forti said.

Police work to try to break up what they consider to be a "transnational criminal organization" that includes cells of Nigerians in Italy, but with limited success.

In some parts of the country, including around Naples, Nigerian criminals have sought protection from the Italian mafia to be able to conduct their business on mob-run territory. Italy's National Anti-Mafia Investigative Group reported in 2017 that Nigerian gangs reach agreements with Sicilian criminal groups to "obtain protection or at least approval to carry out their exploitation in the form of prostitution."

In the case of Precious, police picked her up on the street near Turin in the spring of last year. She had spent about seven months working, servicing as many as 10 men a day. She was afraid of being sent back

	<p>to Nigeria, but at that point "going back to Nigeria is even better than prostituting every day."</p> <p>Eventually, Precious was placed in the care of an aid group that places trafficked Nigerian girls and women in protective shelters. She lives now in a safe house near Rome and works with elderly people in a paid internship.</p> <p>"I can say I am free now. I am free," Precious said.</p> <p>But she is one of the lucky few.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Fla. school shooting suspect indicted
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/nikolas-cruz-florida-school-shooting-suspect-indicted-17-counts-of-first-degree-murder/
GIST	<p>FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. -- Florida school shooting suspect Nikolas Cruz was formally charged Wednesday with 17 counts of first-degree murder, which could mean a death sentence if he is convicted. The indictment returned by a grand jury in Fort Lauderdale also charges the 19-year-old with 17 counts of attempted murder for the Valentine's Day massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland in which 17 people died and more than a dozen others were wounded.</p> <p>Cruz's public defender has said he will plead guilty if prosecutors take the death penalty off the table, which would mean a life prison sentence. The Broward County state attorney has not announced a decision on the death penalty.</p> <p>James and Kimberly Snead, the couple who gave Cruz a home after his mother died late last year, testified before the grand jury Wednesday. Both James Snead and the couple's attorney, Jim Lewis, wore silver "17" pins to honor the victims of the shooting.</p> <p>The couple is "trying to do the right thing" and is mourning along with the rest of the Parkland community, Lewis said.</p> <p>"We'll let justice take its course at this point," Lewis said. "They still don't know what happened, why this happened. They don't have any answers. They feel very badly for everybody."</p> <p>Cruz told investigators he took an AR-15 rifle to Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland on Valentine's Day and started shooting into classrooms.</p> <p>Jail records released by the Broward Sheriff's Office show Cruz was being held in solitary confinement. Officers described Cruz as being cooperative but avoiding eye contact.</p> <p>The report said Cruz "often sits with a blank stare," appeared to laugh and exhibited "awkward" behavior during and after a visit with an attorney and had one "family visit." Officers said Cruz also requested a Bible to read in his single-person cell in the infirmary.</p>
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HEADLINE	03/07 Vienna stabbing attack; 3 injured
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/07/us/vienna-stabbing/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Police said a couple and their daughter were injured Wednesday in a knife attack near a subway station in Vienna, Austria, according to CNN affiliate ORF.</p> <p>Police are still searching for the attacker, the affiliate reported. Witnesses said they saw police swarming the area.</p>

	<p>Michael Eisenriegler, who lives next to where the stabbing happened, told CNN he saw flashing lights and went downstairs.</p> <p>"There were maybe ... one or two dozen policemen (at the site of the attack.) And they are still there," he said.</p> <p>"(The road) is blocked. They are searching," Eisenriegler said.</p> <p>Clemens Oistic, a journalist at Austrian newspaper Heute, said he was in his office nearby during the attack.</p> <p>"People shouted because three people were hit by a man who had a knife. They're in hospital," Oistic said told CNN.</p>
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Aviation-ISAC Daily Aviation Memo

20 February 2018

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U.S. Department of Transportation Crisis Management Center Daily Report

Indicates Actionable Intelligence

FEATURES

Cyber Security News

- *Null Character Bug Lets Malware Bypass Windows 10 Anti-Malware Scan Interface

From Bleeping Computer (02.19.2018) Catalin Cimpanu

Malware that embeds a null character in its code can bypass security scans performed by the Anti-Malware Scan Interface (AMSI) on Windows 10 boxes. Microsoft fixed this vulnerability last week when it released the February 2018 Patch Tuesday security updates. The vulnerability resides with Anti-Malware Scan Interface (AMSI), a generic security feature that acts as an intermediary point between

apps and local antivirus engines. AMSI allows an app to send a file to be scanned by the local security software and return the results. AMSI was introduced with Windows 10 and is vendor agnostic, meaning it will automatically send the file to any AMSI-compatible AV engine on the local PC, not just the built-in Windows Defender. While AMSI can be used to scan all types of files, Microsoft specifically developed AMSI to help inspect scripts invoked at runtime, such as PowerShell, VBScript, Ruby, and others, which have become a preferred method of avoiding detection on computers using classic signature-based antivirus engines. In other words, AMSI acts as a post-execution scanner of checks additional resources loaded or triggered by an executed file. Vancouver-based security researcher Satoshi Tanda has discovered that a bug in AMSI truncates files after a null character. This means that AMSI will scan a file up until the null character and drop the rest of the data. An attacker only has to hide malicious commands behind a null character to bypass AMSI checks. The bug Tanda discovered also seems to affect only AMSI's PowerShell interface, and AMSI's Windows Script Host interpreter does not seem to be affected. [Link](#)

[Bleepingcomputer\[.\]com/news/security/null-character-bug-lets-malware-bypass-windows-10-anti-malware-scan-interface/](https://bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/null-character-bug-lets-malware-bypass-windows-10-anti-malware-scan-interface/)

Coldroot RAT Still Undetectable Despite Being Uploaded on GitHub Two Years Ago

From Bleeping Computer (02.20.2018) Catalin Cimpanu

Coldroot, a remote access trojan (RAT), is still undetectable by most antivirus engines, despite being uploaded and freely available on GitHub for almost two years. The RAT was originally only intended for use against macOS users but has since expanded to work all three major desktop operating systems — Linux, macOS, and Windows— according to a screenshot of its builder extracted from a promotional YouTube video. But despite being open-sourced in 2016, the RAT remained in anonymity, never being at the center of major cybercrime operations. Unfortunately, things appear to have changed in the meantime, and the RAT has now entered active distribution. Patrick Wardle, a Mac expert with Digma Security, has recently stumbled on a new version of the Coldroot RAT. Wardle says this new version of the Coldroot RAT that he discovered in a faux Apple audio driver is different from the old version posted on GitHub in 2016. But artifacts he found by analyzing the fake Apple audio driver matched the modus operandi and technical details included in the old Coldroot RAT GitHub code, suggesting the two were very likely connected, if not the same. According to the researcher, this new Coldroot RAT can spawn new remote desktop sessions, take screen captures and assemble them into a live stream of the victim's desktop, can start and kill processes on the target's system, and can search, download, upload, and execute files. All stolen data is sent to a remote web panel, similar to how most RATs work these days. But the problem here is that despite being based on the source code of a remote access trojan shared online for almost two years, none of the AV scan engines available through VirusTotal were able to detect the new Coldroot RAT, at the time of writing. [Link](#)

[Bleepingcomputer\[.\]com/news/security/coldroot-rat-still-undetectable-despite-being-uploaded-on-github-two-years-ago/](https://bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/coldroot-rat-still-undetectable-despite-being-uploaded-on-github-two-years-ago/)

North Korean APT37 Hacking Group Expands Targets

From Security Week (02.20.2018) Eduard Kovacs

A lesser known hacker group believed to be working on behalf of the North Korean government has been expanding the scope and sophistication of its campaigns, according to a report published on Tuesday by FireEye. The threat actor is tracked by FireEye as APT37 and Reaper, and by other security firms as Group123 (Cisco) and ScarCruft (Kaspersky). APT37 has been active since at least 2012, but it has not been analyzed as much as the North Korea-linked Lazarus group. Cisco published a report in January detailing some of the campaigns launched by the threat actor in 2017, but APT37 only started making headlines in early February when researchers revealed that it had been using a zero-day vulnerability in Adobe Flash Player to deliver malware to South Korean users. APT37, whose goals appear to align with North Korea's military, political and economic interests, has mainly focused on targeting public and private entities in South Korea, including government, defense, military and media organizations. However, according to FireEye, the group expanded its attacks to Japan, Vietnam and even the Middle East last year. The list of targets includes organizations in the chemicals, manufacturing, electronics, aerospace, healthcare, and automotive sectors. APT37 has exploited several Flash Player and Hangul Word Processor vulnerabilities to deliver various types of malware, including the RUHAPPY wiper, the CORALDECK exfiltration tool, the GELCAPSULE and HAPPYWORK downloaders, the MILKDROP and SLOWDRIFT launchers, the ZUMKONG infostealer, the audio-capturing tool SOUNDWAVE, and backdoors tracked by FireEye as DOGCALL, KARAE, POORAIM, WINERACK and SHUTTERSPEED. This malware has been delivered using social engineering tactics, watering holes, and even torrent sites for wide-scale distribution. [Link](#)

[Securityweek\[.\]com/north-korean-hacking-group-apt37-expands-targets](https://www.securityweek.com/north-korean-hacking-group-apt37-expands-targets)

Tesla AWS cloud systems exploited by hackers to mine cryptocurrency

From ZDNet (02.20.2018) Charlie Osbourne

Tesla's cloud environment has been exploited by threat actors to mine cryptocurrencies, researchers have discovered. On Tuesday, cloud security firm RedLock released the firm's 2018 Cloud Security Trends report which documents the discovery of an unprotected Kubernetes console belonging to automaker Tesla. The Kubernetes console is used to automate the deployment, scaling, and operation of application containers, virtualized software, and some cloud-based services. Google's open-source Kubernetes system is used securely by countless enterprise players worldwide, but in this case, an unsecured console exposed access credentials to Tesla's Amazon Web Services (AWS) environment. Researchers from the RedLock Cloud Security Intelligence (CSI) team discovered that cryptocurrency mining scripts, used for cryptojacking -- the unauthorized use of computing power to mine cryptocurrency -- were operating on Tesla's unsecured Kubernetes instances, which allowed the attackers to steal the Tesla AWS compute resources to line their own pockets. Tesla's AWS system also contained sensitive data including vehicle telemetry, which was exposed due to the unsecured credentials theft. The unknown hackers also employed a number of techniques to avoid detection. Rather than using typical public mining pools in their scheme, for example, the threat actors instead installed mining pool software and instructed the mining script to connect to an unlisted endpoint. According to the researchers, this technique makes it more difficult for domain and IP-based threat detection systems to detect such activity. In addition, the cyberattackers hid the true IP address of the mining pool to keep CPU usage low and prevent a level of suspicious traffic which would likely have been quickly detected. [Link](#)

[Zdnet\[.\]com/article/tesla-systems-used-by-hackers-to-mine-cryptocurrency/](https://zdnet.com/article/tesla-systems-used-by-hackers-to-mine-cryptocurrency/)

Researchers say Kaspersky web portal exposed users to session hijacking, account takeovers

From SC Media (02.19.2018) Bradley Barth

Security researchers say they discovered several vulnerabilities and security lapses in Kaspersky Lab's my.kaspersky.com web portal earlier this month, adding that the flaws exposed users to potential session hijackings and account takeovers. According to a new report from the cybersecurity firm LMNTRIX – shared first with SC Media – the issues primarily were found in the processes for authentication, session management and validation, and password changes. The researchers say the problems were remedied following private notification, yet Kaspersky Lab is denying that most of the issues existed in the first place. More specifically, the LMNTRIX report notes that my.kaspersky.com suffered from a lack of protections against automated brute force and credential stuffing attacks (which can lead to an account takeover), allowed weak or default passwords (such as admin/admin), employed insecure credentials recovery processes (e.g. knowledge-based security questions), and had missing or ineffective multi-factor authentication. Problems with the session IDs reportedly included exposed IDs in the URL, failure to rotate the IDs after a successful log-in, and a failure to invalidate a session ID after the portal visitor logs out or remains inactive for a long period of time. In a statement provided to SC Media, Kaspersky disputes most of LMNTRIX's account, asserting that the reported vulnerabilities "were never confirmed" in the first place, and therefore no action was taken. [Link](#)

[Scmagazine\[.\]com/exclusive-researchers-say-kaspersky-web-portal-exposed-users-to-session-hijacking-account-takeovers/article/745105/](http://Scmagazine[.]com/exclusive-researchers-say-kaspersky-web-portal-exposed-users-to-session-hijacking-account-takeovers/article/745105/)

*Macro-Based Multi-Stage Attack Delivers Password Stealer

From Security Week (02.19.2018) Ionut Arghire

A malicious attack uses a multi-stage infection to deploy malware that is capable of stealing passwords from various applications on a victim's computer, Trustwave reports. The attack starts with spam emails distributed from the Necurs botnet to deliver macro-enabled documents, such as Word docs, Excel spreadsheets, or PowerPoint presentations, to the targets. As part of this infection campaign, DOCX attachments containing an embedded OLE object that has external references was used. Thus, external access is provided to remote OLE objects to be referenced in the document.xml.rels. Once executed on the victim's system, the file attempts to exploit the CVE-2017-11882 vulnerability that Microsoft patched last November in the Office's Equation Editor tool, and which has been already abused in a wide range of attacks. The RTF file executes an MSHTA command line to download and execute a remote HTA file. In turn, the HTA file contains VBScript with obfuscated code which decodes to a PowerShell Script designed to fetch and run a remote binary file. This binary is the final payload that turns out to be a password stealer malware family capable of gathering credentials from email, FTP, and browsers installed on the victim's machine. For that, it concatenates available strings in the memory and uses the RegOpenKeyExW and PathFileExistsW APIs to check if registry or paths of various programs exist. The malware was observed sending the harvested data to its command and control (C&C) server via a HTTP POST request. [Link](#)

Securityweek[.]com/macro-based-multi-stage-attack-delivers-password-stealer

*MS Word's new imbedded video feature opens door to Cryptojacking /Phishing

From Bleeping Computer (02.20.2018) Catalin Cimpanu

Cryptojacking scripts that mine Monero via JavaScript code can also run inside Word files, security researchers have discovered. This is possible via a new feature added to recent versions of Microsoft Word that allows users to embed Internet videos inside Word files without having to inject the actual video file inside the document itself. Users can copy-paste a video's iframe embed code inside a Word popup, and the video will appear in the document the next time they open it. If they press the "Play" button that appears over the video's iframe, the video loads and plays inside a popup. But security researchers from Israeli security firm Votiro have discovered that miscreants could leverage this video embedding system to add cryptojacking scripts with the videos, and mine Monero behind the user's back. According to Votiro's Amit Dori, this is possible because of two reasons. The first is that Word allows the insertion of iframe embed codes from anywhere on the Internet, instead of restricting the video sources to a few whitelisted domains. Second is because the popup that plays the video is actually a headless Internet Explorer browser. A crook can host a video on his own domain, but also make sure to load an in-browser cryptocurrency miner (cryptojacking script) alongside the video. But Dori believes his recent findings will be abused in other ways, and not necessarily for cryptojacking. Dori believes that crooks will abuse Word's video embedding system to embed phishing pages inside Word files primarily. Crooks may limit the viewing of videos to authenticated users and may use this feature to phish credentials for various online accounts. [Link](#)

Bleepingcomputer[.]com/news/security/cryptojacking-scripts-could-soon-invade-your-word-documents/

Lawsuits threaten to hinder infosec research

From ZDNet (02.20.2018) Zack Whittaker

This year, two security reporters and one researcher will fight for their professional lives in court. Steve Ragan, senior staff writer at tech news site CSO, and Dan Goodin, security editor at Ars Technica, were last year named defendants in two separate lawsuits. The cases are different, but they have a common theme: they are being sued by the companies covered in articles they wrote. Although lawsuits targeting reporters, particularly on the security beat, are rare, legal threats are an occupational hazard that reporters are all too aware of -- from companies threatening to call an editor to demand a correction -- or else -- to a full-blown lawsuit. But the inevitable aftermath is a "chilling effect." White-hat hackers and security researchers hesitate to report vulnerabilities and weaknesses to technology firms for fear of facing legal retribution. The most recent act of legal aggression comes from Keeper Security, which filed a civil defamation suit against Goodin in December for allegedly making "false and misleading statements" about the security company's flagship password manager software. In the last year alone, several security researchers have revealed that they have been the target of legal threats. PwC sent cease and desist letters to a researcher who found a critical flaw in one of its security products. These represent only a fraction of cases where legal threats resulted from security research. [Link](#)

Zdnet[.]com/article/chilling-effect-lawsuits-threaten-security-research-need-it-most/

Aviation Tech

Vodafone launches IoT drone tracking trials

From Air Traffic Management (02.20.2018)

Vodafone has launched air traffic control drone tracking trials using 4G Internet of Things (IoT) technology to protect aircraft from catastrophic accidents as well as prevent inadvertent or criminal drone incursions at sensitive locations such as airports, prisons and hospitals. The business said that its IoT drone tracking and safety technology trials support the objectives of the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), with whom Vodafone has collaborated and which is currently developing new pan-European rules to regulate the operation of drones. The new technology could, Vodafone said, also enhance the European Union's potential to become the center of global innovation in drone technology in line with the European Commission's "U-space" vision for innovative and safe drone operations. Vodafone has developed the world's first Radio Positioning System (RPS) for drones. This uses a 4G modem and SIM embedded within each drone to enable: real-time tracking of each drone (with up to 50 meter accuracy) by drone operators and authorized bodies such as air traffic control; over-the-horizon/beyond line-of-sight control by the operator, greatly reducing the risk of accidental incursions when operators lose sight of their drones; protective geofencing, with drones pre-programmed to land automatically or return to the operator when approaching predetermined exclusion zones (such as airports and prisons); emergency remote control intervention to provide the authorities with the means of overriding a drone operator's control to alter a drone's flight path or force it to land; and SIM-based e-identification and owner registration. [Link](#)

Airtrafficmanagement[.]net/2018/02/vodafone-launches-iot-drone-tracking-trials/

Legislation & Regulation News

Canadian aircraft-parts company feels it's NAFTA-proof

From The Globe and Mail (02.20.2018) David Israelson

Ignoring the shifting winds of the North American trade deal as much as it can, Cyclone Manufacturing Inc. continues to look abroad. The Mississauga-headquartered company, founded in 1964 as a machine shop, has been expanding almost constantly into the global marketplace since it began focusing intensively on manufacturing aircraft components in the mid-1980s. The global nature of aircraft manufacturing enables Cyclone to thrive as an exporter from its Greater Toronto Area base. Tier 1 companies like Cyclone send their manufactured components directly to the OEM, so it's an accomplishment for a Canadian manufacturer to hold its own against global rivals. The company won't likely be affected much by the outcome of difficult talks with the United States and Mexico over renewing the North American free-trade Agreement, Mr. Sochaj says. "We don't have any problems

shipping to the U.S. Aerospace is governed by international aviation agreements," he explains. Aircraft parts that are manufactured all around the world are often assembled into planes in the United States, so international agreements are structured to allow components to move back and forth between countries. That makes trade in the aircraft parts sector relatively seamless compared with other types of goods and services that face barriers, Mr. Sochaj explains. As a participant in a global supply chain, a company like Cyclone is well positioned within the aerospace sector, according to data compiled by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. More than 60 per cent of Canadian aerospace product exports were supply chain related in 2016, the government agency says, with engines, avionics and landing gear making up the bulk of Canadian exports. [Link](#)

Theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/canadian-aircraft-parts-company-feels-its-nafta-proof/article38026324/

EASA Taps Brakes on Rulemaking in Aviation Safety Plan

From Aviation International Online (02.19.2018) Gordon Gilbert

EASA's 2018-2022 European Plan for Aviation Safety (EPAS) now includes what the agency calls a "rulemaking cooldown." Specifically, the plan states, "Delivery of the number of [regulatory] opinions over the next five years has been reduced as compared to the previous years." The agency said this reflects the need to put more focus on supporting the implementation of recently adopted regulations and give priority to other means of improving safety, notably focused oversight and safety promotion. "The shift to safety promotion is particularly significant in the field of general aviation," EASA said. Overall, the aim of EPAS is to provide a coherent and transparent framework for safety work, helping to identify major risks and defining the actions to take. It also encourages EU member states to implement their own safety programs and share best practices and knowledge. To give aircraft operators a "comprehensive and coherent vision" of what EASA intends to do in the coming years regarding new regulations, the EPAS program and the agency's rulemaking program are combined into one document. The agency believes the combination will "improve safety and the environmental performance of the aviation sector." This year's edition of the EPAS also covers EASA's strategy in the areas of international cooperation and technical training. According to EASA executive director Patrick Ky, "Safety actions need to be coordinated more than ever at regional and international levels, which explains the growing role played by regional safety oversight organizations in the field of aviation and the pivotal activity of EASA in this domain." [Link](#)

Ainonline.com/aviation-news/business-aviation/2018-02-19/easa-taps-brakes-rulemaking-aviation-safety-plan

Physical Security News

Lufthansa Pilot mistakenly triggers hijacking alarm

From News.Com (02.20,2018)

The pilot of a Lufthansa flight approaching Germany's busiest airport accidentally raised a national security alarm when he input the code for a hijacking. There had been a technical problem with the

communication device in the cockpit, meaning that the pilot could send but not receive messages from air traffic controllers at Frankfurt airport, a spokesman for the airline says. To alert air traffic control to the problem, the pilot was meant to input a code, but he used the wrong one. The incoming hijacking code led the leaders of the state police force, federal police and army being informed straight away, federal police spokesman Reza Ahmari said. After some 20 minutes the alarm was lifted as the pilot had noticed his mistake and entered the correct code. The plane, which had taken off from Aberdeen in Scotland in the morning, was able to land late, but safely. [Link](#)

[News\[.\]com\[.\]au/world/breaking-news/pilot-mistakenly-triggers-hijacking-alarm/news-story/7d182e56c7c9157ab6df566998bab01e](https://www.news.com.au/world/breaking-news/pilot-mistakenly-triggers-hijacking-alarm/news-story/7d182e56c7c9157ab6df566998bab01e)

Man Who Breached Peoria Airport Security Might Have Boarded Empty Plane

From Aviation Pros (02.20.2018)

A man who tried to ram a car into the Peoria international airport terminal last weekend has been released from a local hospital, police said Monday. Following that unsuccessful ramming attempt, the man might have boarded an empty, secured airplane that was parked at one of the terminal gates, a police report suggested. Justin T. Deemie, 27, had been hospitalized since his arrest early Saturday. Shortly after 3 a.m. Saturday, Deemie drove a 2005 Ford Escape onto airport property. Once inside the terminal, Deemie accessed a restricted, secured area. A sheriff's department police report stated Deemie ran directly to a roll-up door that leads to the Transportation Security Administration baggage screening area. He pulled up the door and slid under it. Deemie used a similar door to access the baggage carousel area, the report stated. From there, he eventually opened a door on a plane parked at a gate and entered it. After that, Deemie continued to run through the terminal and jumped a fence on its east side, according to the report. Sheriff's deputies apprehended a struggling Deemie in the airport parking lot. [Link](#)

[Aviationpros\[.\]com/news/12398543/man-who-tried-to-ram-peoria-airport-might-have-boarded-empty-plane](https://aviationpros.com/news/12398543/man-who-tried-to-ram-peoria-airport-might-have-boarded-empty-plane)

Miscellaneous News

Iranian airline covertly bought parts from U.S. suppliers

From CBS News (02.19.2018) Kate Gibson

The U.S. has suspended the export privileges of a Turkish national and three related companies it says obtained American-made aircraft parts for Iranian airlines, violating U.S. sanctions. The move was announced earlier this month but has passed largely unnoticed. Mira Ricardel, Under Secretary of Commerce for Export Administration, said in a February 5 news release from the Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) that the sanction shows that trade with Iran that defies U.S. export laws and regulations will not be tolerated. BIS oversees exports of high-technology and other products related to national security. According to the Commerce Department, Turkish

national Gulnihal Yegane set up shell companies to purchase equipment from U.S. suppliers on behalf of Iran's Mahan Air. The carrier is under sanctions by the U.S. for allegedly carrying arms and fighters in Syria. The jet parts were obtained through the Turkish fronts in the past several years, most recently in December. According to the Wall Street Journal, the trade action could support the views of some in the Trump administration who oppose granting permission to Boeing to sell aircraft to another Iranian carrier. The U.S. has loosened sanctions against Iran Air, but they remain in place against Mahan for more than a decade due to its alleged collaboration with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the newspaper said. [Link](#)

[Cbsnews\[.\]com/news/iranian-airline-covertly-bought-parts-from-u-s-suppliers/](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/iranian-airline-covertly-bought-parts-from-u-s-suppliers/)

Southwest Airlines to Begin Shipping Cargo Internationally

From Aviation Pros (02.20.2018)

Southwest Airlines Co. announced its intention to begin shipping cargo to select international destinations beginning in May 2018, subject to requisite government approvals. The first international destinations Southwest Airlines Cargo expects to serve are Mexico City, Cancun, Cabo San Lucas/Los Cabos, and Puerto Vallarta with more international destinations planned for 2018. The new international shipping options are made possible in part due to the rollout of Southwest Cargo's new point-of-sale and back office accounting system, Southwest Cargo Suite (SCS). SCS is expected to take the place of the current system in March 2018, and along with international capabilities, give Customers the ability to make advanced cargo bookings, and utilize electronic Air Waybills. [Link](#)

[Aviationpros\[.\]com/press_release/12398659/southwest-airlines-to-begin-shipping-cargo-internationally](https://www.aviationpros.com/press_release/12398659/southwest-airlines-to-begin-shipping-cargo-internationally)

U.S. Department of Transportation Crisis Management Center Daily Report

Commercial In-Flight Incidents

*Spirit 640, A319

- o February 20, 2018 at 1:35 AM EST
- o Enroute from Las Vegas, NV (McCarran International Airport) to Boston, MA (Boston Logan International Airport)
- o Noxious smell emanating from the A/C pack; oxygen masks not deployed
- o Returned to Las Vegas, NV; landed without incident
- o 3 crew members transported to hospital

*Endeavor 3318, CRJ2

- o February 19, 2018 at 11:06 PM EST

- o Enroute from Atlanta, GA (Hartsfield–Jackson Atlanta International Airport) to Fort Smith, AR (Fort Smith Regional Airport)
- o Engine problem; #2 engine shut down
- o Diverted to Memphis, TN (Memphis International Airport); landed without incident at 11:30 PM EST

*American 1208, B738

- o February 19, 2018 at 11:15 PM EST
- o Enroute from Chicago, IL (Chicago O'Hare International Airport) to Santa Ana, CA (John Wayne Airport)
- o Hydraulic problem
- o Diverted to Los Angeles, CA (Los Angeles International Airport); landed without incident

*Southwest 289, B737

- o February 18, 2018 at 5:18 PM EST
- o Enroute from Ladyville, Belize (Philip S. W. Goldson International Airport) to Denver, CO (Denver International Airport)
- o Pressurization problem
- o Diverted to Houston, TX (William P. Hobby Airport); landed without incident at 5:39 PM EST

*Delta 2767, B738

- o February 18, 2018 at 1:22 PM EST
- o Enroute from Boston, MA (Logan International Airport) to Salt Lake City, UT (Salt Lake City International Airport)
- o Fuel problem
- o Diverted to Grand Junction, CO (Grand Junction Regional Airport); landed without incident at 1:30 PM EST

*Air Canada 1603, B763

- o February 18, 2018 at 1:07 PM EST
- o Enroute from Fort Lauderdale, FL (Fort Lauderdale–Hollywood International Airport) to Montreal, Canada (Montréal–Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport)
- o Engine problem
- o Returned to Fort Lauderdale, FL (Fort Lauderdale–Hollywood International Airport); landed without incident at 1:10 PM EST

Ground Incidents

*Appleton, WI (83 miles NNW of Milwaukee, WI), Appleton International Airport

- o February 18, 2018 at 8:35 PM EST
- o SkyWest 4671, CRJ9, from Minneapolis, MN (Minneapolis–Saint Paul International Airport)
- o While taxiing to gate, electronic device in overhead bin began to smoke
- o Flight attendant took bag to the galley
- o Passengers deplaned via stairs at ramp; Fire Department inspected and released aircraft
- o 0 fatalities; 0 injuries

*Los Angeles, CA, Los Angeles International Airport

- o February 18, 2018 at 3:25 AM EST
- o Delta 1267, B738, scheduled to Cincinnati, OH (Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport)
- o During pre-check inspection of the aircraft, the flight crew discovered a white powder
- o Law enforcement responded, examined the substance and determined it was non-toxic

The Daily Aviation Memo is a daily update of foreign and domestic commercial aviation news compiled from open sources and commercially-available information. Information contained in this report is provided for situational awareness only and does not represent the views of the Aviation ISAC. Please send comments or distribution requests to [a-isac.advisory@a-isac\[.\]com](mailto:a-isac.advisory@a-isac[.]com).

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Aviation Information Sharing and Analysis Center (A-ISAC)

www.a-isac.com

Document ID: 0.7.1175.5316-000001

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AVIATION ISAC
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Last Modified: Tue Feb 20 12:24:29 CST 2018



Document ID: 0.7.1175.5316-000006

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Filename: image006.jpg
Last Modified: Tue Feb 20 12:24:29 CST 2018



Document ID: 0.7.1175.5316-000007

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National Council of ISACs <nationalcouncilofisacs@natlisacs.org> <nationalcouncilofisacs@natlisacs.
org>
Filename: image007.jpg
Last Modified: Tue Feb 20 12:24:29 CST 2018

image007.jpg

Printed Item: 9

Attachment 7 of

of 5544

AVIATION ISAC

From: Larm, Doug <doug.larm@seattle.gov> on
behalf of Larm, Doug <Doug.Larm@seattle.gov>
<doug.larm@seattle.gov>
To: Larm, Doug <doug.larm@wsfc.wa.gov>
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: 2018_02_13 Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources
(InFOCUS)
Date: Tue Feb 13 2018 08:02:49 CST
Attachments: 2018_02_13.pdf

InFOCUS

Tuesday

13 February 2018

Editor's Note: InFOCUS will not be published next week Monday, 19 Feb, in observance of President's Day; will return to publication on Tuesday, 20 Feb 2018

Document ID: 0.7.1175.5313-000001

Owner: Larm, Doug <doug.larm@seattle.gov> on behalf of Larm, Doug <Doug.Larm@seattle.gov> <doug.larm@seattle.gov>
Filename: 2018_02_13.pdf
Last Modified: Tue Feb 13 08:02:49 CST 2018

Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

TUESDAY – 13 FEB 2018



	International	National	Regional and Local
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Event Calendar

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Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php
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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	02/12 Flu season continues to worsen
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/12/flu-season-becomes-worst-since-records-first-kept/
GIST	<p>This flu season is the worst since health officials started keeping records on infections in 2004, surpassing all metrics from the previous worst outbreak of 2014/2015 as illnesses, hospitalizations and deaths keep rising across the nation.</p> <p>“Unfortunately, we were hoping that it would start turning around and going the opposite direction, but it’s still going up,” said Dr. Anthony Fauci, head of the Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. “So we really need to just grit our teeth and say hopefully in the next week or two it will turn around, but it’s not doing that right now unfortunately.”</p> <p>Since October, health officials have watched flu cases closely mirror the statistics of the 2014/15 outbreak, with H3N2 the dominant strain then and now. Cases that year started to drop off at the beginning of January, but all measures this season are increasing, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>“The one thing we can see is that, if you exclude the pandemic of 2009 this clearly is the worst among the seasonal flus,” Dr. Fauci said.</p> <p>The 2009 pandemic was categorized by its worldwide outbreak of a novel strain of H1N1 and its length, from spring through winter.</p> <p>While this flu season began, as usual, in the fall, the number of cases have yet to decline in any meaningful way, and are inching higher.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Average pay security guards spike 17%
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/explore/careers/average-pay-for-this-job-has-spiked-17-in-a-year/
GIST	<p>Despite the lowest unemployment rate since 2000, wages for American workers rose at a relatively tepid pace last year. For security guards, it’s a different story.</p> <p>Average hourly earnings for employees in security and armored car services jumped 17 percent to \$17.45 in the 13 months through November, compared with a 2.5 percent increase for all U.S. private-sector workers in the same period.</p> <p>Why such big gains? Possible reasons include terrorism, marijuana and organized labor.</p> <p>Terror threats: The threat of mass shootings and domestic terrorism is driving demand for security in atypical venues, according to Steve Amitay, executive director of the National Association of Security Companies in Washington.</p> <p>Amitay pointed to the 2012 movie-theater shooting in Aurora, Colorado, as an example. Other shootings in Orlando, Florida; Las Vegas; and a church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, suggest greater demand for armed security at public venues could rise.</p> <p>“I don’t see there being, in the near future, any downturn for this industry,” Amitay said. The Colorado incident “was a real warning to other movie chains and other types of venues: If you don’t have adequate security you may not be able to prevent a terrorist attack from taking place, and if you don’t have any security you will be held liable,” he said.</p>

Victims of the shooting requested hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal costs, alleging security weaknesses in the theater enabled the attack. The requests were eventually dropped.

Pot security: Another hot area for security is pot. Dispensaries are popping up across the country as more states legalize marijuana. In Denver alone, there are 230 retail marijuana stores, according to the city's website. That's far more than Starbucks, which lists 50 retail locations in the area.

"The cannabis industry has created a lot more security officer jobs," said Michael Julian, president of MPSI, a consulting firm in the cannabis industry. Dispensaries often pay their security guards higher wages than the industry standard due to the merchandise they protect, he said. Armored security vehicles sometimes escort the drugs and cash from the business.

Labor gains: In California, Tiffany Dinkins credits her union for rising wages. Just a year ago, the ex-army officer was working two security jobs in San Francisco to provide for her family, including three children. But in recent months, Dinkins saw her pay steadily increase, finally creeping above \$20 an hour, and she decided to focus on a single job as an ABC News security guard.

Dinkins said she saw a big change in wages when she moved to San Francisco from Atlanta and joined the Service Employees International Union, which has helped secure pay gains.

Working in California "was better because I had increases guaranteed," with raises considerably bigger than the ones in Georgia, Dinkins said. "You go from 10 cents to someone giving you a dollar increase."

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HEADLINE	02/13 India warns Pakistan for Kashmir attack
SOURCE	https://www.sbs.com.au/news/pakistan-will-pay-over-kashmir-militant-attack-india-s-defence-minister
GIST	<p>India has warned Pakistan it will "pay for this misadventure" following a deadly attack by militants on an army camp in the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir that has stoked tensions between the nuclear armed rivals.</p> <p>Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told reporters on Monday that the Indian army had ample evidence to prove that "the handlers of the terrorists were back in Pakistan."</p> <p>Saturday's attack on the camp near Jammu, the winter capital of the state, was the worst in months with six soldiers and the father of a soldier killed. Among the 10 wounded were women and children. At least three militants were killed, according to Indian officials, bringing the death toll to 10.</p> <p>"Pakistan is expanding the arc of terror... resorting to ceasefire violations to assist infiltration," Sitharaman said. "Pakistan will pay for this misadventure."</p> <p>Indian officials have said the heavily armed attackers involved in Saturday's attack were members of the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) militant group.</p> <p>Pakistani officials criticised India for rushing to a conclusion without a full inquiry.</p> <p>India has long accused Pakistan of training and arming militants and helping them infiltrate across the heavily militarised Line of Control into Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim majority state.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Life in a hurricane hotel
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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/12/insider/hurricane-maria-puerto-rico-fema-hotel.html
GIST	<p>Soon after Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico on Sept. 20, as the vastness of the storm's wrath became increasingly evident, my boss, the Metro editor of The Times, asked me to focus on stories that examined how the storm's toll would ripple its way to the mainland United States and to New York, where deep ties had been forged over generations.</p> <p>The storm's immediate reverberations in New York, Connecticut and New Jersey — my turf as a regional correspondent for The Times — were certainly clear. At first, I talked to Puerto Ricans struggling to make contact with family on the island and then about the obligations those from Puerto Rico feel they have to the island, including politicians on the mainland who try to make up for the island's lack of federal representation and young people guilty over fleeing.</p> <p>But as I started reporting on a story about the families living in hotel rooms provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which appears on today's front page, I was struck by how, nearly five months after landfall, the trauma Maria created was still intensifying and metastasizing — reaching all the way to a Red Roof Inn in downtown Hartford.</p> <p>A sense of restlessness pervaded the hotel. I felt it as soon as I stepped off the elevator. In most of the rooms were families who had fled their homes in Puerto Rico after the devastation of Hurricane Maria and were living in the hotel in Connecticut while they tried to figure out whether they could go back home or would have to start over elsewhere.</p> <p>I saw a mother in pajamas bouncing her infant daughter in the very lived-in room her family had stayed in since November, every crevice jammed with diapers and snacks and clothes. Children buzzed around from the rooms into the hallways and lobby downstairs, bursting with energy that needed to be burned.</p> <p>Many of them had spent their weeks looking for jobs or permanent housing, or walked over to a nearby church that had opened up its kitchen for them to cook in. The children went to school. But this was a Friday night, and as they splayed out on beds watching TV, listened to music or played video games, it felt like they were just killing time, one day passing like so many others before it.</p> <p>They had air-conditioning. They were not waiting for hours in lines for food, water and fuel. They had cable television. Still, the aimlessness that plagued them seemed like an extension of the storm's trauma.</p> <p>"It's not easy for anybody to live like this," Janette Febres told me in the room where she, her husband and 12-year-old son had shared a bed for months.</p> <p>I have never traveled to Puerto Rico, before or after Maria. My impressions of how so much had been upended were formed by the stories told by Puerto Ricans, the photographs they showed me, the distress I saw in their lives. On the other hand, my partner on the story, Luis Ferré-Sadurní, who visited a hotel in Queens, was a native of Puerto Rico. He had spent nearly 40 days there reporting after Hurricanes Irma and Maria and had experienced, as he put it, the dire conditions that "disrupted their lives and led thousands to take that leap of faith" to leave behind their homes for the mainland.</p> <p>My reporting was certainly informed by my own experience with storms. I grew up on the Gulf Coast of Texas. I've spent hours packed into a minivan with family and the dog, trying to get a couple of hundred miles away, and spent weeks staying with relatives wondering what I would return to. But the scope of the turmoil and uncertainty these families from Puerto Rico faced was well beyond what I knew.</p> <p>Luis and I were taken by similar observations of the dilemma these families faced: "Try to make it on the mainland, where many have struggled to find jobs and housing," Luis said, "or return to Puerto Rico, where stability is still elusive."</p> <p>Most of the families he interviewed, he said, "had not yet found what they ultimately left their homeland looking for: a sense of stability."</p>

Of all the people we met, a young family that Luis found in Queens stuck with me the most. Yanitza Cruz was nearly eight months pregnant; her due date and the expiration date for her family's FEMA-provided hotel were worryingly close. The family traveled from a remote mountain town to New York using almost all of their savings. Her husband, Joel García, even panhandled.

But they maintained an incredible level of optimism. They talked about getting an apartment in New York, and him finding work as a barber. As most of us in New York groan over subway delays, he was astonished at how he could journey across a metropolis for the swipe of his MetroCard. And the family marveled at the generosity they have been shown.

On a visit to the Puerto Rican Family Institute, they met a maintenance worker who took Mr. García to a department store and bought every member of the family a jacket. He did not even look at the price tags. His name was Nate. "I'm never going to forget you," Mr. García said he told Nate.

Of all that remained uncertain, he and his wife had settled one thing: When she gives birth next month, they plan to name their son Nate.

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HEADLINE	02/13 Everett schools plan homeless housing
SOURCE	http://www.heraldnet.com/news/everett-housing-authority-schools-plan-homeless-housing/
GIST	<p>EVERETT — The Everett School District has a concentration of homeless students in the north end of the city, particularly the areas served by Garfield and Hawthorne elementaries east of Broadway.</p> <p>In the coming years, some of those families could become eligible for placement in a new \$27.1 million housing project.</p> <p>Cynthia Jones oversees the district's programs supporting homeless students. She spoke this past June at an affordable housing conference for Everett and Snohomish County.</p> <p>In the audience was Steve Yago, the Everett Housing Authority's director of real estate acquisition.</p> <p>He remembers thinking, "This is right in our back yard, and this is not being served."</p> <p>That sparked an idea that might be the first project of its kind in the region, he said.</p> <p>The housing authority is seeking to build a new 82-unit complex in Everett's Delta neighborhood. The units primarily would serve families who are homeless and have children in the school district, which would provide the referrals. Campuses served also would include North Middle School and Everett High School.</p> <p>The numbers show the need. In the 2016-17 academic year, Everett schools counted 1,150 students who were homeless, and the figure is growing, according to public records.</p> <p>Housing projects, both locally and nationally, are trending toward units that serve one or two people, said Ashley Lommers-Johnson, executive director of the Everett Housing Authority. One factor is the recent emphasis on serving the chronically homeless and the mentally ill. Several of those projects are under way in town.</p> <p>Larger units with multiple bedrooms cost more to build and to operate, he said.</p> <p>"We have made families with children a key part of future funding," he said. "It's part of our goal of addressing generational poverty."</p> <p>The site of the new development is what is now the Baker Heights public housing project. The buildings</p>

there have been deemed obsolete. The foundations, floor supports and roofs are failing, and the wood is rotting, according to a June letter issued by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The Everett Housing Authority is an independent public agency whose board members are appointed by elected city leaders. The agency has been relocating more than 240 households from Baker Heights.

Eventually the agency plans to create enough new, subsidized housing, largely through purchasing property, to offset the loss of units in the demolition of Baker Heights, Lommers-Johnson said.

“We have made a public commitment that we will replace all 244 units,” he said.

The land underneath the complex is appraised at \$4.21 million, according to public records. The housing authority plans to keep 3.6 acres and sell the rest, which is about 11 acres. There has been talk about WSU Everett becoming the buyer, a notion that has drawn support from Mayor Cassie Franklin.

That’s far from final, though. Federal policy requires the housing authority to solicit bids for the property through a public process. That hasn’t started yet.

The budget for the new housing project, tentatively named the “Baker Heights Townhomes,” runs about \$27.1 million. Most of that would come from federal tax credits.

Construction is scheduled in two phases. Work on the first phase, with 43 apartments, could start in spring 2019. Most of the units would have two or three bedrooms, Yago said. The second phase, with 39 townhomes, depends on funding but might follow before the end of next year. The rent rates would be based on each family’s income.

The new development would have social services on site, with an emphasis on education and employment, Lommers-Johnson said. Early in the planning, the housing authority asked the school district for feedback. The schools stressed the importance of early learning.

The district has said it likely could run a preschool at the location, primarily serving the children of tenants. If that happens, it would become one of many ways the district aims to help students who lack stable housing, Jones said.

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HEADLINE	02/12 Syria war mutates into regional conflict
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/syrias-war-mutates-into-a-regional-conflict-risking-a-wider-conflagration/2018/02/12/87c783fc-0da2-11e8-998c-96deb18cca19_story.html?hpid=hp_hp-top-table-main_syria-1120%3Ahomepage%2Fstory&utm_term=.19b91995ea54
GIST	<p>BEIRUT — A war that began with peaceful protests against President Bashar al-Assad is rapidly descending into a global scramble for control over what remains of the broken country of Syria, risking a wider conflict.</p> <p>Under skies crowded by the warplanes of half a dozen countries, an assortment of factions backed by rival powers are battling one another in a dizzying array of combinations. Allies on one battlefield are foes on another. The United States, Russia, Turkey and Iran have troops on the ground, and they are increasingly colliding.</p> <p>In the space of a single week last week, Russia, Turkey, Iran and Israel lost aircraft to hostile fire. The United States, meanwhile, has been battling for days to hold back Iranian-supported Syrian tribal militias in the eastern desert, drawing U.S. forces closer toward entanglement in Syria’s conflict.</p> <p>“The risks are high,” said Sami Nadir of the Levant Institute for Strategic Affairs. “There is a new Cold War prevailing in Syria and any escalation could pave the way for a regional or international war given the</p>

fact that the big powers are directly present on the ground and not through proxies, as used to be the case in the past.”

The latest confrontations come after years of fighting during which the parties to what long ago ceased to be a civil war have come to rely on outside powers for their sustenance, bringing new weapons, soldiers and also agendas flooding into Syria.

With Assad having prevailed over the rebellion against him and the Islamic State squeezed into a last sliver of territory along the Iraqi-Syrian border, the rival players now are battling to shape the final outcome of the war.

The Syrian government controls the biggest chunk of territory, with over half the country at least under nominal control of Assad loyalists, backed by Russia and Iran.

The United States holds sway over the second-largest area, the 27 percent of Syria that was captured mostly from the Islamic State by Kurdish-led forces in the northeast, with the help of U.S. weapons, air power and Special Operations advisers. The United States says it will remain until there is a peace settlement, leaving open the question of how long that will be.

Turkey holds a pocket of territory in the north alongside Syrian rebels and last month launched an incursion into the adjoining Kurdish enclave of Afrin.

There, the complexity of the war is on full display. America’s NATO ally Turkey is battling U.S.-allied Kurds, who are receiving tacit support from the Syrian government. But the government is at the same time backing the tribal militias that have been attacking the U.S.-allied Kurds and their U.S. advisers in eastern Syria.

Holding the overall balance of power is Russia, which became the dominant military power in Syria when it intervened on behalf of Assad in 2015 and now is awkwardly playing the role of both combatant and peace broker.

But it is the significantly enhanced reach of Iran that poses the biggest danger of a wider conflict. Iran has provided the muscle in the form of manpower and money that enabled the Syrian government to reclaim most of the vast swaths of territory that fell out of government hands in the earliest years of the war, in the process expanding Iranian presence in Syria.

Israel has watched the expanding influence of Iran and its allied militias with growing alarm. Across its borders, Israel now faces Iranian commandos and allied forces, including the Lebanese Shiite Hezbollah movement and some of the most powerful Iraqi Shiite militias that challenged U.S. troops in Iraq a decade ago.

Iran has vowed, however, that the United States will not be allowed to remain in Syria, raising the specter of overlapping U.S.-Iranian and Israeli-Iranian confrontations.

“The U.S. will not succeed in partitioning Syria,” said Ali Akbar Velayati, the foreign affairs adviser of Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, according to comments published by Iran’s Mehr News Agency. “Either they will leave Eastern Euphrates in Syria or we will kick them out of there.”

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HEADLINE 02/12 Venezuela parents face painful choice

SOURCE https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/venezuelas-economy-is-so-bad-parents-are-leaving-their-children-at-orphanages/2018/02/12/8021d180-0545-11e8-aa61-f3391373867e_story.html?hpid=hp_hp-top-table-main_venezuela-9pm%3Ahomepage%2Fstory&utm_term=.d505146f607a

GIST

CARACAS, Venezuela — “Would you like to see the little ones?” asked Magdelis Salazar, a social worker, beckoning me toward a crowded playground.

We were at Venezuela’s largest orphanage, just after lunch. The yard was an obstacle course of abandoned children. A little chunk of a boy, on the cusp of 3, sat on a play scooter. He was called El Gordo — the fat one. But when he was left here a few months ago, he was skin and bones.

He zoomed past a 3-year-old in a pink shirt with tiny flowers. “She doesn’t talk much,” one of the attendants said, tousling the girl’s curly hair. At least, not anymore. In September, her mother left her at a subway station with a bag of clothes and a note begging someone to feed the child.

Poverty and hunger rates are soaring as Venezuela’s economic crisis leaves store shelves empty of food, medicine, diapers and baby formula. Some parents can no longer bear it. They are doing the unthinkable.

Giving up their children.

“People can’t find food,” Salazar told me. “They can’t feed their children. They are giving them up not because they don’t love them but because they do.”

Ahead of my recent reporting trip to Venezuela, I’d heard that families were abandoning or surrendering children. Yet it was a challenge to actually meet the tiniest victims of this broken nation. My requests to enter orphanages run by the socialist government had gone unanswered. One child-protection official — warning of devastating conditions, including a lack of diapers — confided that such a visit would be “impossible.” Some privately run child crisis centers worried that granting access to a journalist could damage their delicate relations with the government.

My Venezuelan colleague Rachelle Krygier introduced me to Fundana — an imposing cement complex perched high on a hill in southeastern Caracas. Her family had founded the nonprofit orphanage and child crisis center in 1991, and her mother remains the head of its board and her aunt its president. Rachelle remembered volunteering there a decade ago, when she was a student and the children were almost exclusively cases of abuse or neglect.

There are no official statistics on how many children are abandoned or sent to orphanages and care homes by their parents for economic reasons. But interviews with officials at Fundana and nine other private and public organizations that manage children in crisis suggest that the cases number in the hundreds — or more — nationwide.

Fundana received about 144 requests to place children at its facility last year, up from about 24 in 2016, with the vast majority of the requests related to economic difficulties.

Venezuela descended into a deep recession in 2014, battered by a drop in global oil prices and years of economic mismanagement. The crisis has worsened in the past year. A study by the Catholic charity Caritas in poorer areas of four states found the percentage of children under 5 lacking adequate nutrition had jumped to 71 percent in December from 54 percent seven months earlier.

For years, Venezuela had a network of public institutions for vulnerable children — traditionally way stations for those needing temporary or long-term protection. But child-welfare workers say the institutions are collapsing, with some at risk of closing because of a shortage of funds and others critically lacking in resources.

So, increasingly, parents are leaving their children in the streets.

In the gritty Sucre district of Caracas, for instance, eight children were abandoned at hospitals and public spaces last year, up from four in 2016. In addition, officials there say they logged nine cases of voluntary abandonment for economic reasons at a child protective services center in the district in 2017, compared with none the previous year. A child-welfare official in El Libertador — one of the capital’s poorest areas

	<p>— called the situation at public orphanages and temporary-care centers “catastrophic.”</p> <p>“We have grave problems here,” said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity out of fear of reprisals from the authoritarian government. “There’s definitely more abandoned children. It’s not just that there are more, but also their health conditions and nutrition are much worse. We can’t take care of them.”</p> <p>With the public system overwhelmed, the burden is increasingly falling on private facilities run by nonprofit organizations and charities.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/13 Tonga clearing damage after cyclone hit
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/543b5911586c4ad1b4f5126d9d481e0e/Cyclone-destroys-Parliament-House,-homes-on-Tonga,-Fiji-next
GIST	<p>WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — The Pacific nation of Tonga began cleaning up damage Tuesday from a cyclone that destroyed its Parliament House, as well as homes and churches, and was intensifying as it headed toward nearby Fiji.</p> <p>Cyclone Gita caused power outages after tearing through the island nation just south of the capital, Nuku’alofa, with winds exceeding 200 kilometers per hour (124 miles per hour) at landfall. Some 5,000 people stayed in evacuation centers overnight, according to officials, and an emergency was declared. There were no immediate reports of serious injuries or deaths.</p> <p>The cyclone was intensifying and was forecast to hit some southern Fiji islands Tuesday night, though it’s likely to miss Fiji’s major population centers, including the capital, Suva.</p> <p>In Tonga, publisher Pesi Fonua said fallen trees were littering the landscape and their absence was opening up new vistas. He said many homes had lost their roofs or were otherwise badly damaged. Many people had endured a terrifying night and were glad to be alive, he added.</p> <p>“Most of them haven’t experienced anything like this before,” he said. “It was a real shock for them.”</p> <p>Tongan noble lawmaker Lord Fusitu’a told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. it was a great disappointment the Parliament building had been knocked down.</p> <p>“Successive legislatures over the years have suggested building a new Parliament House, and I guess that’ll be a necessity now,” he said.</p> <p>About 2,500 people living on two of Fiji’s islands were at risk, the nation’s National Disaster Management Office told Radio New Zealand. Director Anare Leweniqila said emergency supplies of food and water were being gathered and urged elderly and disabled people to begin moving into evacuation centers.</p> <p>The storm has strengthened since hitting Samoa and American Samoa last week, where it caused damage to buildings, widespread power outages and flooding.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 South Africa presidency in turmoil
SOURCE	http://time.com/5154844/south-africa-jacob-zuma-resign-anc/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>South Africa’s ruling Africa National Congress (ANC) party has decided to formally ask corruption-dogged President Jacob Zuma to step down, following a marathon meeting by the party’s leadership this week.</p> <p>The ANC’s executive committee gave the embattled president a 48-hour deadline to resign, Reuters</p>

	<p>reports.</p> <p>Zuma has refused repeated calls to relinquish the presidency amid mounting graft scandals and despite the election of deputy president Cyril Ramaphosa as leader in December. Zuma, who has served as South Africa's president since 2009, has insisted on seeing out the end of his term in mid-2019.</p> <p>It remains unclear if Zuma, 75, will relent on Tuesday, but if he does not, he is expected to face a vote of confidence in parliament that he is likely to lose, further jeopardizing his grip on power, the BBC reports.</p> <p>Zuma's popularity has plunged as his second presidential term has been marred by allegations of corruption and mismanagement of state funds.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Seattle most shared electric bikes in US
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/898315/limebike-launches-electric-bikes-seattle/
GIST	<p>Bikeshare company LimeBike has launched more than 500 stationless electric bikes in Seattle, making it the city with the most electrified rides in the nation.</p> <p>LimeBike expanded its brand of bikeshare into 45 markets since launching in the summer of 2017. It was part of the stationless bikeshare pilot in Seattle that is still going (three such companies are currently operating in town). The company's electric bikes — the Lime-E model — is debuting in Seattle before any other city.</p> <p>The electric-assisted bike operates the same as LimeBike's people-powered models — customers unlock a bike with their smart phone and pay for time to ride. The electric bikes come with a different price, however. It costs \$1 to unlock, and then 10 cents for every minute of use after that (students and faculty in Seattle get half off the price).</p> <p>The electric bikes can go 14.5 mph and have a 62 mile range per charge. The company has stated the bikes can easily handle a 30-degree hill.</p> <p>LimeBike also has plans to launch its Lime-E model in Miami, Scottsdale, Southern California, and the greater San Francisco Bay Area.</p> <p>Another bikeshare company, Spin, is also expected to launch its own electric bikes, but it is unclear when, or if, it will bring them to Seattle. The company has mentioned plans to first launch them in Miami, University of California San Diego, and the Rochester Institute of Technology. Spin promotes that its electric bikes can travel up to 50 miles on a charge. According to TechCrunch, Spin's operations teams will travel around and swap out the batteries.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Drug shortages hit health care system
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/why-so-many-medicines-are-in-short-supply-after-hurricane-maria/
GIST	<p>The nation's health care system is still reeling from Hurricane Maria five months after the killer storm hit. Along with Puerto Rico's electrical grid and infrastructure, Maria also wiped out Puerto Rico's substantial pharmaceutical manufacturing industry, causing huge repercussions for patients in both Puerto Rico and the U.S. mainland.</p> <p>Most problematic is the massive shortage of Puerto Rican-produced IV bags that hold saline solution and are used to dilute and administer medication. This winter's severe flu season has made this shortage even tougher to deal with, said Nicolette Louissaint, executive director of Healthcare Ready, an industry group</p>

that is coordinating recovery efforts in Puerto Rico.

But IV bags are not the only Hurricane Maria-related shortage. U.S. Food and Drug Administration Chairman Scott Gottlieb reported last November that the agency was monitoring a list of 90 medical products for hurricane-related shortages including 40 or so drugs. Since then, the FDA has narrowed down its list of monitored drugs to about 10, as pharmaceutical and medical supply companies source products from other locations and as Puerto Rican recovery efforts take hold, said Erin Fox, senior director of the University of Utah's drug information and support services. Fox tracks drug shortages for the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists.

The FDA does not disclose the names of products being monitored, but Puerto Rico is known for manufacturing drugs for cancer, diabetes and heart disease. Medicine and medical supplies are the island's leading exports and more than a dozen top selling pharmaceuticals are produced there, including blood thinners and arthritis drugs, according to a report in Healthcare and Life Sciences Review.

Hurricane Maria isn't the only culprit. "It's important to understand that drug shortages were a huge problems well before the disaster in Puerto Rico," Fox explained. The hurricane made a bad situation much worse and brought to light how complex the U.S. drug distribution system can be, Louissaint added.

Before Maria, for instance, there was already a problem with saline supply because of quality problems at a California manufacturing plant. Another example: hospital workers have noticed shortages of Atenolol, a commonly prescribed medication for high blood pressure. It isn't clear if this shortage was made worse by the hurricane or stems from another problem. Shortages are also routine for many injectable generic products, Fox said.

Tracking drug shortages due to quality and manufacturing problems is challenging because pharmaceutical companies believe where a product is made and how the plant operates are trade secrets, Fox explained. Companies are not required to disclose where drugs are made. That said, the FDA checks for pharmaceutical quality and can take action against companies that are falling short. In many instances, Fox tracks a shortage after the FDA sends a warning letter to a drug maker because of quality problems.

After Maria, Baxter International, the company that manufactures IV saline bags in Puerto Rico, was open about the crisis it was facing. Baxter accounts for 43 percent of the United States' IV solution market and the bulk of that had been produced in Puerto Rico. As supplies of bags dwindled, hospital workers had to scramble to find other, often less suitable, ways to administer drugs. Pain medication, for instance, may be given in pill form, which is much less fast acting – a real problem for emergency room or severely ill patients. In other cases, doctors or nurses must use more time consuming methods to administer intravenous drugs, taking away from other patient care.

The FDA is working with pharmaceutical and medical supply companies to restore production and find other sources for products, Louissaint said. In addition, power is restored to more than 60 percent of the island and most major manufacturing facilities are resuming production, she added.

But even with the recovery efforts, the disruption in manufacturing and the continued troubles with power stability may mean at least another few months lag in supply, Fox predicted.

What's more, another troubling shortage has cropped up. Now health care facilities across the country are dealing with a severe lack of sterile water, another basic but critical medical supply. "We really need that," Fox explained. "Lots of drugs come in powder form and you have to mix them with very pure water." Increased demand for sterile water from the lack of IV saline bags may be contributing to the shortage, but the exact reason isn't yet clear. Fox is still investigating.

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HEADLINE 02/13 Snohomish Co. deputy shoots man

SOURCE <http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/man-shot-by-snohomish-county-deputy/281-518094283>

<p>GIST</p>	<p>A shooting involving a Snohomish County sheriff's deputy that left one man in the hospital is under investigation.</p> <p>A City of Arlington spokesperson said it started when a 34-year-old Lynnwood man texted a friend to say he was going to harm himself.</p> <p>Deputies allegedly found the man's truck at the winter road closure gate on the Mountain Loop Highway. After making contact, the deputy fired multiple shots at the man.</p> <p>The man was transported to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle. His condition is not immediately known.</p> <p>Detectives found multiple edged weapons at the scene.</p> <p>A deputy is now on administrative leave.</p> <p>The Snohomish County Multiple Agency Response Team (SMART) is investigating the circumstances of the shooting.</p>
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<p>HEADLINE</p>	<p>02/12 Amazon laying off corporate employees</p>
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>https://www.seattletimes.com/business/amazon/amazon-laying-off-corporate-employees-in-rare-cutback/</p>
<p>GIST</p>	<p>Amazon is laying off hundreds of corporate employees, a rare cutback for a company that has spent most of the last few years in a frantic growth spurt.</p> <p>The layoffs, underway now, will fall on several hundred employees at the online retailer's Seattle headquarters, along with hundreds more elsewhere in Amazon's global operations, one person familiar with the cuts said. The layoffs are primarily focused on Amazon's consumer retail businesses, according to two people familiar with the matter.</p> <p>Hundreds of layoffs are modest for a company that is now the second-largest U.S.-based corporate employer, and pales in comparison to adjustments in recent years that saw Microsoft and Boeing eliminate thousands of jobs in a single cutting drive.</p> <p>But at Amazon, a company with a wide range of growing businesses that prides itself on frugality and efficient allocation of resources, broad layoffs of any kind are rare.</p> <p>The cuts come after a hiring binge that took the company's Seattle head count to more than 40,000 people, from just 5,000 in 2010.</p> <p>According to several employees, the rapid growth of the last two years left some units over budget and some teams with too much staff for their work. Amazon had implemented hiring freezes in recent months across several groups, a move that reduced the company's open job listings in Seattle to their lowest level in years.</p> <p>In a statement to The Seattle Times, Amazon acknowledged the cuts.</p> <p>"As part of our annual planning process, we are making head count adjustments across the company — small reductions in a couple of places and aggressive hiring in many others," a spokesman said. "For affected employees, we work to find roles in the areas where we are hiring."</p> <p>Some employees have already been informed of the elimination of their roles, and layoffs are expected to be completed in the next few weeks, one of the people said.</p>

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HEADLINE	02/12 Unsafe water from faucets across US
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2018/02/12/Unsafe-water-found-in-faucets-across-the-US/1171518489210/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=4
GIST	<p>MONDAY, Feb. 12, 2018 -- Flint, Mich., isn't the only American city where the water hasn't been safe to drink, new research suggests.</p> <p>Almost 8 percent of community water systems are plagued by health-based violations of water quality standards in any given year, the study found. That meant up to a quarter of all Americans were affected.</p> <p>"Generally, the U.S. has high-quality water," said study author Maura Allaire. "But health-related violations do extend well beyond Flint. When I dug into the data, I saw about 21 million people were receiving water from systems that didn't meet standards in 2015.</p> <p>"In terms of hot spots in the country, rural communities and rural low-income communities in Oklahoma and Texas are really struggling," said Allaire, an assistant professor of urban planning and public policy at the University of California, Irvine.</p> <p>"They lack the technical capacity of larger systems, and have small customer bases, which means they can't afford the latest and greatest technologies. And they often have only a part-time technician monitoring their water systems," she explained.</p> <p>In total, violations affected between 9 million and 45 million people in the United States during each year the researchers studied. That's between 4 percent and 28 percent of the U.S. population.</p> <p>So what exactly is in the water?</p> <p>"In terms of what's being reported to the Environmental Protection Agency, the vast majority are microbial concerns," Allaire said.</p> <p>Coliform bacteria, found in the feces of humans and animals, were the germs most often found. Generally, coliform bacteria don't cause illness. But they often indicate the presence of other contaminants that may cause illness, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>Other contaminants found in water systems included viruses and the parasites cryptosporidium and Giardia lamblia, the study reported.</p> <p>Waterborne microbial illnesses often cause abdominal cramping, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea and, if severe enough, dehydration, the CDC says.</p> <p>Water quality was also tainted by chemical contamination, along with excess arsenic, lead and copper.</p> <p>Nitrates were also a common contaminant in water systems, the study found. Nitrates can occur naturally, but excess levels of nitrates can occur as a result of contamination from chemical fertilizers, septic systems, animal feedlots, industrial waste or food processing waste, the CDC says.</p> <p>The study found that areas that purchase their water were less likely to experience contamination, Allaire said.</p> <p>"It may be that they're able to afford more robust treatment techniques," she said.</p> <p>Ensuring safe drinking water is likely becoming more difficult in many communities due to aging infrastructure and shrinking budgets, the study noted.</p>

	<p>Jennifer Li, the interim senior advisor of public health programs at the National Association of County and City Health Officials, agreed.</p> <p>"A big challenge is the aging or decaying infrastructure of the old water main lines -- usually made of concrete or fired clay. Small fissures in the pipes allow contaminants and biologicals like Legionella into the water system post-treatment and present a public health risk to recipients," Li said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 NKorea still detaining 3 Americans
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/02/12/miles-from-winter-olympics-three-americans-remain-detained-in-north-korea.html
GIST	<p>Just miles from the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea -- where some observers continue to fawn over Kim Jong Un's sister and North Korea's "smile diplomacy" -- a trio of Americans remain detained in the Hermit Kingdom.</p> <p>Concern has only grown for the three Korean-Americans -- Kim Hak Song, Kim Dong Chul and Tony Kim -- since the death of American college student Otto Warmbier last June after the he spent 17 months locked away in North Korea. And though advocates said they were given some hope during President Trump's State of the Union address, when the image of a North Korean defector defiantly holding his crutches in the air was met with rapturous applause, there's also a desire to see continued action and pressure applied against the rogue regime.</p> <p>To that end, the Trump administration has been working to secure the release of Tony Kim and the others held by North Korea, State Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert told Fox News.</p> <p>"We have seen the video released by Tony Kim's son," Nauert said. "We are working to see U.S. citizens who are detained in North Korea come home as soon as possible."</p> <p>The State Department noted that Ambassador Joseph Yun, the special representative for North Korean policy, met with the three Americans in North Korea in June, when Warmbier was released. No U.S. representative has seen them since.</p> <p>The three detained Americans, ranging in age from 55 to 64, are being held on a variety of vaguely described offenses:</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Mexico detains hundreds heading to US
SOURCE	https://www.yahoo.com/news/mexico-detains-hundreds-us-bound-migrants-022305913.html
GIST	<p>Mexico City (AFP) - Mexican authorities detained more than 500 undocumented migrants over the weekend, mostly Central Americans trying to reach the United States, many of them risking their lives, officials said.</p> <p>Many of the migrants, who were detained in six different operations, were being trafficked by smugglers in unventilated trucks with no food or water.</p> <p>More than 200 others were found crammed into six "safe houses" used by criminal gangs in the state of Tamaulipas, which borders the United States.</p> <p>They had paid their traffickers up to \$4,000. More than 100 of the migrants in that group were minors.</p> <p>The detentions come as immigration across the southern US border is at the center of a political firestorm</p>

	<p>in Washington.</p> <p>The US Congress launched debate Monday on a proposal from President Donald Trump to grant citizenship to 1.8 million immigrants brought to the United States as children -- a concession to opposition Democrats -- in exchange for tough cutbacks on immigration and \$25 billion for tighter border security, including his planned wall.</p> <p>Mexico's National Migration Institute said Saturday that 100 undocumented Guatemalans and Hondurans including 41 minors were found in two buses in the western state of Jalisco, after paying a smuggler between \$5,000 and \$7,000 each.</p> <p>In another operation, 53 Guatemalans including 13 minors were found in an unventilated truck in the violent eastern state of Veracruz.</p> <p>Authorities arrested a total of nine people on human trafficking charges in the two operations.</p> <p>On Sunday, authorities said they arrested a group of 228 Central American migrants and one Mexican in Tamaulipas, after receiving an anonymous tip-off.</p> <p>And on Monday, they announced three more operations that led to the detention of 40 Hondurans in an overstuffed and unventilated truck in Veracruz, 43 Central Americans in Tamaulipas and 41 in the state of Tabasco.</p> <p>The operations come a week after Mexico detained more than 300 Central American men, women and children being smuggled to the US without water or food.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Olympics debut sex assault help centers
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/winter-olympics-feature-first-ever-centers-to-help-sexual-assault-victims-me-too-movement/
GIST	<p>PYEONGCHANG, South Korea -- A Catholic nun waits eight hours each day at a folding table, ready for a call but praying nothing has happened to cause the phone to ring.</p> <p>Her office, the "Gender Equality Support Centre," a tiny trailer tucked between a bathroom and a police post under the ski lift at the Phoenix Snow Park, is a nondescript acknowledgment of the revolution in women's rights that, outside the Olympic gates, is thundering through the world.</p> <p>Sungsook Kim -- who goes by her religious name, Sister Droste -- speaks little English. But to describe her mission, she says the name of the American movement: "me too."</p> <p>How to watch the 2018 Winter Olympics The Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang arrives amid the reckoning that has brought down celebrities, politicians and the entire board of U.S.A Gymnastics. NBC star Matt Lauer was fired for sexual misconduct, and his accuser said the harassment began at the last Winter Olympics, in Sochi.</p> <p>During the Summer Games in Rio, two athletes were accused of assaulting housekeepers. A horrified world recently watched dozens of women and girls, some of them Olympians, describe in detail how Larry Nassar, the gymnastics doctor, had sexually abused them for decades as layers of elite athletic organizations failed to stop it.</p> <p>"The whole world just got a front row seat to a master class in trauma," said Nancy Hogshead-Makar, a former Olympic swimmer and activist calling on Olympic committees to do much more to protect vulnerable athletes.</p>

	<p>"This is what trauma does. This is what it looks like," she says. "It stops professional careers, it stops somebody's education, it stops people from being close to other people, it invades their ability to feel safe."</p> <p>So this year, for the first time, there is an organized and advertised contingent of offices designed to help sexual assault victims dotted around the sprawling Olympics venues -- from clinics that cater to world-class athletes to Sister Droste's four trailers, organized by the local community for the army of 14,000 volunteers, most of them young, 70 percent of them female.</p> <p>"#metoo' allowed us all to see that it's not the victim's fault, being sexually harassed. It's not because of their appearance. It gives courage to the victims," Droste said through a translator.</p> <p>So far they have responded to four reports of harassment, Droste said, the details of which she could not describe because of confidentiality rules, but said they were not severe.</p> <p>"Having equal rights," the sister said, "men and women, makes it possible for us to accomplish freedom."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/13 NKorea warms to South after visit
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-olympics-2018-northkorea-dialogue/north-korea-warms-to-south-korea-after-visit-volume-down-on-border-propaganda-idUSKBN1FW2KT
GIST	<p>SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korea's leader said he wants to boost the "warm climate of reconciliation and dialogue" with South Korea after his high-level delegation returned from a visit to the South, as his foes reiterated the need to keep up maximum pressure and sanctions.</p> <p>Kim Jong Un gave instructions for measures aimed at more inter-Korean engagement after his younger sister Kim Yo Jong led a three-day visit to the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, North Korea's state media reported on Tuesday.</p> <p>It did not specify what those instructions were.</p> <p>The United States has appeared to endorse deeper post-Olympics engagement between the two Koreas that could lead to talks between Pyongyang and Washington. South's President Moon Jae-in said on Tuesday the United States is open to talking with North Korea, Moon's spokesman told a briefing.</p> <p>"The United States sees inter-Korean dialogue in a positive light and has expressed its openness for talks with the North," Moon told Latvian President Raimonds Vējonis, according to the spokesman.</p> <p>U.S. officials also want tough international sanctions to be ramped up to push North Korea to give up its nuclear program.</p> <p>That sentiment was repeated by Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Tuesday, who said Moon had agreed it was necessary to keep up maximum pressure on North Korea.</p> <p>Last year, North Korea conducted dozens of missile launches and its sixth and largest nuclear test in defiance of U.N. resolutions as it pursues its goal of developing a nuclear-armed missile capable of reaching the United States.</p> <p>Japanese officials took pains to stress there was no daylight between Japan, the United States and South Korea on their approach to dealing with North Korea.</p> <p>The United States' "fundamental policy" aimed at denuclearization of the Korean peninsula has not changed, said a senior Japanese diplomat in a briefing to lawmakers.</p> <p>"The goal is denuclearization and the process is dialogue for dialogue, action for action, so if North Korea</p>

	<p>does not show actions, the United States and Japan will not change their policies,” he said.</p> <p>A senior military official stationed at the border between North and South Korea told Reuters North Korea has lowered the volume of its border propaganda broadcasts since the Olympics’ opening ceremony on Feb. 9.</p> <p>“I still hear it, but it is much less than before,” said the official who is stationed on the southern side of the border and spoke on condition of anonymity.</p> <p>Moon, who was offered a meeting with Kim Jong Un in Pyongyang via his sister, has been pushing for a diplomatic solution to the standoff over North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Tukwila activists irate w/PD response
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/tukwila-immigration-case-sparks-community-response/281-518034512
GIST	<p>Community members plan to attend Monday's city council meeting in Tukwila to "reject collaboration between Immigration and Enforcement Agents and Tukwila Police," according to a press release.</p> <p>Last week King 5 reported on a man who called police for help and ended up in ICE custody. Wilson Rodriguez Macarreno, 32, called police when he heard someone prowling outside of his home Thursday morning, according to his friend.</p> <p>Luis Cortes, Macarreno's attorney, says police asked for Macarreno's identification while filling out their report.</p> <p>His name was run through the NCIC database, and on Thursday, Tukwila police said they discovered a "warrant issued by ICE." Macarreno came to the U.S. from Honduras, and had missed a court appointment in Texas in 2004, according to his attorney.</p> <p>Macarreno was transferred into ICE custody, and is being held at the Northwest Detention Center.</p> <p>Friday, Tukwila police said there was some confusion about the warrant. Officer Vic Masters said Tukwila police was not aware it was an administrative warrant. In the future, the department will not take action on administrative warrants.</p> <p>"This is beyond ineptitude. How is it possible that Tukwila officials turn in a resident who called them for assistance? This only further corrodes any confidence that immigrant community members have in law enforcement," noted Juan Jose Bocanegra, an organizer for the Seattle-based El Comite, an Immigrant Rights Group.</p> <p>KING 5 contacted Immigration and Customs Enforcement for comment, and received this statement:</p> <p>"We are working on researching this case, and will provide cleared information as soon as it is available," said Lori Haley, Western Region Communications Director, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 'Perfect storm' Pierce Co. property taxes
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/perfect-storm-to-hit-pierce-county-property-taxes/281-518103544
GIST	Pierce County Assessor Mike Lonergan calls this year’s property taxes the “perfect storm.”

	<p>Pierce County residents may see that storm rage once their property tax bills are sent out this week.</p> <p>Loneragan says the 2018 property taxes are “uniquely high.”</p> <p>“I think there can be a disconnect for people. They want to have good schools and they want to have a policeman or fireman come when they call. And they like parks. When it comes to paying for it they don't always make the connection," said Lonergan.</p> <p>Homeowners pay property taxes. Even for renters, those costs can often get passed along.</p> <p>"We all saw what happened with the license tabs from Sound Transit. I don't think this is going to be as bad as that, but I do think people are going to say, ‘Man my taxes just keep going up.’"</p> <p>Some of the hardest hit areas in Pierce County will be Gig Harbor and Sumner.</p> <p>Gig Harbor residents are looking at paying \$690.10 more with a tax rate increase of 17.26 percent. Sumner residents will get a \$743.10 increase with a tax rate of 21.88 percent.</p> <p>The reasons: in response to the McCleary decision there's a state school tax in addition to local school taxes. There are also a number of other taxes people voted for to give more money to fire districts and parks.</p> <p>"This is a result of voted taxes locally and a vote in the legislature and those are the reasons why your taxes are going up. It's nothing personal," said Lonergan.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Longest blackout in US history
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/02/12/power-outage-puerto-rico-latest-snap-islands-long-recovery-hurricane-maria/329322002/
GIST	<p>Five months ago, Puerto Rico began its plunge into the longest blackout in U.S. history.</p> <p>After much struggle and a botched contract to restore power, the embattled island showed some progress in its recovery from Hurricane Maria. Then Sunday, the lights went out again: An explosion and fire at two power plants shrouded much of the northern part of the island in darkness.</p> <p>Most customers hit by the blackout had their power restored by Monday. But the incident underscores the challenges of recovering from a major storm on an island with aging infrastructure. It's a reminder that the U.S. territory will probably have a longer, tougher road to recovery than other states battered by recent storms.</p> <p>Union leader Angel Figueroa Jaramillo, who represents Puerto Rico's public electrical workers, spoke outside one of the damaged power stations and warned against privatizing the electrical system, something Gov. Ricardo Rosselló has favored.</p> <p>“It’s been five months without power,” Jaramillo said, according to The Washington Post. “We could have made much more progress than this.”</p> <p>Hurricane Maria, a Category 4 storm with 155-mph winds, ripped through the middle of the island Aug. 20. It destroyed thousands of homes, killed at least 64 people and left thousands without electricity or water for months. As of Monday, 99% of customers in Puerto Rico had running water, and 84% of the island had power back. More than 400,000 customers still don't have electricity.</p> <p>Restoring power, in particular, has been a challenge. Renewed blackouts occur just as homes regain electricity. Sunday's blackout happened when fires knocked offline two substations near San Juan, power</p>

	<p>company spokesman Geraldo Quinones told the Associated Press. The substations were repaired by dawn, and most customers — including Puerto Rico’s largest public hospital and its main international airport — had power restored, he said.</p> <p>“They’ll be working throughout today to fully restore service,” Quinones said, adding that authorities are investigating what caused the fire.</p> <p>Photos posted to Twitter by the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, or PREPA, showed charred equipment at one of the substations, and a video captured the fire at one of the plants as workers tried to control the blaze.</p> <p>The outage is the latest in a series of setbacks that has prevented the island’s recovery. PREPA is heavily in debt and struggling to patch up a power grid that is outdated and in dire need of restoration.</p> <p>A U.S. contractor initially hired by the power company to restore electricity was fired after delays and controversies over how the contract was awarded.</p> <p>Rosselló said last month that he plans to privatize PREPA, which relies on infrastructure nearly three times older than the industry average. It would be the largest restructuring of a public entity in U.S. history.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/13 Drug firms paid \$10M to push opioid use
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/02/13/how-drug-company-money-turned-patient-groups-into-cheerleaders-opioids/321433002/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The five biggest opioid manufacturers shelled out more than \$10 million to patient advocacy groups, professional medical societies and affiliated individuals — who then “echoed and amplified” messages that encouraged use of those highly addictive drugs and set the stage for the current opioid epidemic.</p> <p>That’s according to a new Senate committee investigation, released on Monday, which examined the financial ties between the pharmaceutical industry and outside groups over the last five years, from 2012 through 2017.</p> <p>"I think these groups were cheerleaders too often ... cheerleaders for opioids," said Sen. Claire McCaskill, a Missouri Democrat who launched the probe last spring. McCaskill is the ranking Democrat on the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, a post she has used to investigate other drug-company practices.</p> <p>McCaskill's staff sought information from the five largest opioid drug-makers, measured by global sales in 2015. Those companies are: Purdue Pharma, Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Mylan, Depomed and Insys Therapeutics.</p> <p>Purdue was by far the largest donor to outside advocacy groups, which often bill themselves as grass-roots organizations supporting patients struggling with chronic pain. Among the recipients of drug company largesse: The U.S. Pain Foundation, the National Pain Foundation, and the Academy of Integrative Pain Management.</p> <p>McCaskill said some of these organizations are doing good work on public policy. But others are "totally dependent" on drug companies for their funding, McCaskill said, and their advocacy is suspect.</p> <p>"Our report indicates that in some instances they are merely fronting for these manufacturers, especially if you look at the lobbying they’ve done against restricting prescribing levels of opioids," she said.</p> <p>The report charges that many of the advocacy groups, buoyed by drug company money, started</p>

undercutting state and federal efforts to curb opioid prescribing and using other "opioids-friendly messaging."

The report notes, for example, that the American Academy of Pain Medicine and the American Pain Society have promoted opioids as safe and effective for treating chronic pain and minimized the risk of addiction.

Anesthesiologist and Army Col. Chester Buckenmaier blames Purdue and other drugmakers for saying oxycodone wouldn't lead to addiction. He heads the Uniform Services' University's Defense and Veterans Center for Integrative Pain Management.

Purdue and other drugmakers "have a lot of explaining to do," for their contention that use of oxycodone "for patients in pain wouldn't lead to addiction," says Army Col. Chester Buckenmaier, an anesthesiologist and professor at the Uniformed Services University in Bethesda, Md. "We now know that's not true and use these medications with more respect and more caution."

The report also notes that the American Academy of Pain Medicine and the Center for Practical Bioethics spoke out against the federal efforts to limit opioid prescribing. That effort was led by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which issued guidance in 2016 to doctors on when to prescribe opioid pain medication in primary care settings. The CDC recommended offering non-opioid therapies for chronic pain except in cases of active cancer treatment, palliative care and end-of-life care.

Some of the groups and their funders say there's a public health crisis being created by the response to the opioid epidemic. Chronic pain patients say they now have difficulty getting narcotics, which is often the only thing that can address their unremitting pain.

"There are serious moral questions on both sides," says John Carney, executive director of the Center for Practical Bioethics in Kansas City, Mo. The opioid epidemic is "a national crisis, but there are lives ravaged by pain and that's a crisis too and should not be ignored."

As states moved to restrict the length and frequency of opioid prescriptions, drug companies and the patient groups fought back with aggressive lobbying campaigns.

Purdue Pharma, the maker of Oxycontin, said in a statement that it supported groups through annual dues and "unrestricted grants" when they were "interested in helping patients receive appropriate care."

Purdue also said it supports the CDC's guidance as "an important public health tool" and that it has been recommending it to doctors since it was released. And starting Monday, Purdue's employees would no longer visit doctors offices to pitch opioids and it would cut its salesforce by half to 200 people. The drugmaker's medical affairs staff will handle questions pertaining to the drugs, Purdue said.

McCaskill called Purdue's announcement "a major step forward," and said she believed the U.S. was starting to turn a corner on the opioid epidemic. But she said the Senate report was "the tip of the iceberg" in terms of how drug company money shapes health care policy debates and legislative outcomes.

She said she planned to pursue legislation that would force advocacy groups to disclose their funding sources.

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HEADLINE	02/12 Pot holiday linked to fatal car crashes?
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/marijuanas-420-holiday-tied-rise-fatal-car-crashes-53020612?cid=clicksource_26_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	Marijuana users' self-proclaimed holiday is linked with a slight increase in fatal U.S. car crashes, an analysis of 25 years of data found.

	<p>The study lacks evidence on whether pot was involved in any of the April 20 crashes, but marijuana can impair driving ability. Previous studies have shown that many pot-using motorists drive after partaking and think it's safe to do so.</p> <p>The researchers analyzed U.S. government data on fatal traffic accidents from 1992 — shortly after 4/20 was popularized as a pot holiday in High Times magazine — through 2016. They compared driver deaths on that date with deaths on a day the week before and the week after during the study period.</p> <p>Deaths increased slightly in most but not all states, amounting to an overall increased risk of 12 percent — or an extra 142 driver deaths linked with the holiday, said lead author Dr. John Staples at the University of British Columbia.</p> <p>Other studies have found a similarly elevated risk linked with alcohol and driving on Super Bowl Sunday and New Year's Eve.</p> <p>Most accidents had no police data on drug testing so there's no way to confirm that marijuana was involved, but researchers think the drug was responsible for some crashes.</p> <p>The study was published Monday in JAMA Internal Medicine.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 American Samoa assesses storm damage
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/damage-assessment-storm-starts-american-samoa-53027361
GIST	<p>Officials in American Samoa began a full assessment Monday of damage caused by tropical storm Gita over the weekend.</p> <p>Lt. Gov. Lemanu Peleti Mauga says the storm caused widespread damage to homes and infrastructure.</p> <p>No injuries or deaths were reported.</p> <p>President Donald Trump approved a disaster declaration Sunday for the U.S. territory in the South Pacific.</p> <p>Power was slowly being restored after the late Friday storm. About 60 percent of the island's residents had power restored by Sunday, while 80 percent had water back by the same time.</p> <p>All public schools are closed this week as downed trees, storm debris and utility wires are removed from campuses. Some schools have water inside, and officials will conduct structural checks of the buildings.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 NKorea leader satisfied w/delegation visit
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/north-korea-leader-impressed-souths-welcoming-delegation-53030895
GIST	<p>North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said Tuesday it is important to continue a reconciliatory mood between the Koreas and expressed satisfaction with the North Korean delegation's visit to the South, in his first remarks since the high-level guests led by his sister returned to the North.</p> <p>The North's state-owned Korean Central News Agency reported that Kim was impressed with Seoul's welcome and treatment of the high-level delegation. He expressed gratitude to the South for "making their possible and sincere efforts" for their guests from the North.</p>

	<p>Kim emphasized the importance of continuing dialogue between two Koreas, according to the North's official news agency.</p> <p>North Korea sent its nominal head of state and Kim's sister Kim Yo Jong, who extended an invitation to South Korean President Moon Jae-in to visit Pyongyang for a summit in the near future.</p> <p>Moon didn't immediately accept the North Korean offer.</p> <p>He said the Koreas should create an environment so that a meeting of the two leaders could take place. He also called for a quick resumption of dialogue between North Korea and the United States, apparently aware that being friendly with the North could alienate an American ally critical to the defense of the South.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/13 Britain: warship to sail thru S. China Sea
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/minister-britain-plans-sail-warship-south-china-sea-53038505?
GIST	<p>Britain's defense minister says his country will sail a warship through the South China Sea to assert the right of free passage amid Chinese claims to virtually all of the strategic waterway.</p> <p>Gavin Williamson was quoted by The Australian newspaper on Tuesday as saying the anti-submarine frigate HMS Sutherland will sail through the area on its return from a visit to Australia beginning this week.</p> <p>Williamson didn't say whether the Sutherland would sail near Chinese-controlled islands in the area as American Navy ships have done. Such cruises, known as freedom of navigation operations, routinely draw protests from Beijing.</p> <p>China has carried out extensive land reclamation work on many of the islands and reefs it claims, equipping some with air strips and military installations.</p> <p>Williamson visited Australia earlier this week.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/13 Largest military exercise Southeast Asia
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/myanmars-presence-downplayed-thai-us-military-exercise-53037674
GIST	<p>Thailand and the United States downplayed the presence of a Myanmar military officer at the opening Tuesday of the largest annual joint military exercise in Southeast Asia.</p> <p>Myanmar's military has been accused of massive human rights violations in its crackdown on the Rohingya Muslim minority, who have fled by the hundreds of thousands to neighboring Bangladesh. U.S. lawmakers had demanded Myanmar's exclusion from the exercise.</p> <p>"The truth is Myanmar is not a participant nation," U.S. Ambassador to Thailand Glyn T. Davies told reporters at in the Cobra Gold exercise in eastern Thailand. "They're not part of the exercises here." He did not explain the Myanmar officer's attendance.</p> <p>Thai Gen. Thanchaiyan Srisuwan acknowledged inviting Myanmar to the opening ceremony. However, Myanmar's flag was not flown at the ceremonial opening. It's believed the Thais invited Myanmar to send three personnel though only one appeared to be attending.</p>

	<p>A U.S. statement said 11,075 service members from 29 countries are taking part in this year's exercise, with Thailand, the U.S., Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia and Malaysia the seven main participants.</p> <p>It said the aims of the exercise are to enhance security cooperation, develop peacekeeping forces and maintain readiness for humanitarian aid and disaster relief missions.</p> <p>The exercise includes humanitarian components, such as evacuation drills, as well as traditional military exercises such as amphibious landings.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	02/12 State voting systems remain vulnerable
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2018-02-12/state-voting-systems-remain-vulnerable-to-hackers-ahead-of-midterm-elections-report-reveals
GIST	<p>With less than nine months until midterm elections, states still have a long way to go to protect their voting systems from security threats, according to a new report released Monday by the Center for American Progress.</p> <p>Following the nation's 2016 elections, in which hackers targeted 21 states and breached Illinois' voter registration system, states are racing against the clock to improve their election infrastructure.</p> <p>In 2017, Colorado became the first state to require risk-limiting post-election audits. Weeks ahead of its November elections, Virginia quickly switched from electronic voting machines to a paper ballot voting system. And many states are working hand in hand on the issue with the Department of Homeland Security or the National Guard.</p> <p>Still, no state received an A in Monday's report, which evaluates how efficiently states (and D.C.) are protecting their elections from hacking and machine malfunction. Eleven states – including Alaska, Colorado, Connecticut, Maryland and New York– received a B, 23 states received a C and 17 states received a D or an F.</p> <p>One of the factors the study considered was whether states meet cybersecurity standards for voter registration systems. Many states use voter registration databases that are at least a decade old, which leave them susceptible to breaches, the report explains.</p> <p>If successful, hackers can not only gain access to voters' personal information, but they can also prevent them from voting. For instance, a hacker can change the spelling of someone's name in the system so it doesn't match their ID, making them ineligible to vote in some states.</p> <p>Various agencies of U.S. intelligence concluded that Russia played a part in trying to interfere in the outcome of the 2016 presidential election and there are warnings the country may try again in 2018. Russia has denied the claims.</p> <p>U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson sounded an alarm Feb. 6 when he said: "The point is, if it's [Russia's] intention to interfere, they are going to find ways to do that."</p> <p>"States need help right now," Center for American Progress President and CEO Neera Tanden said Monday at an election security discussion, where she was joined by Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., and former U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson.</p> <p>Though state leaders differ in their beliefs about the role the government should play in local elections, the speakers stressed that election security is a nonpartisan issue and that states need government resources in</p>

order to prevent a repeat of 2016, or worse.

They stressed the importance of a partnership between the federal government and local governments in protecting Americans' rights to a free and fair election, where their votes are secure.

Edgardo Cortes, former commissioner of elections in Virginia, said the ability to work with Homeland Security was "phenomenal" when changing the state's voting system a few months ago.

"We never had a moment where we had a question and couldn't get a quick response from them," Cortes said, adding that it was helpful to have DHS experts who could look for vulnerabilities in the state's voting system.

Where the federal government is falling behind, Tanden said, is in supplying the funding needed to "modernize America's outdated voting machines, conduct detailed threat assessments and enact audits, for roughly half the cost of a B-2 Spirit bomber."

Klobuchar said the federal government also needs to send Russia a message that its hacking is unacceptable.

"Hack me once, shame on you. Hack me twice, shame on us," she said.

Similarly, Johnson said the government needs to deter Russia from launching another attack by making the cost of a breach larger than the benefit.

"You cannot prevent all cyberattacks on our nation. It's like trying to catch raindrops. You're on defense, you're the goalie in hockey and you cannot prevent all attacks," he said. "But what you can do is make behavior by nation states cost prohibitive so that they recognize 'it's not worth it to me, it is not worth the cost to do this again.'

"And I'm afraid the U.S. government has yet to do that," Johnson added.

For the upcoming elections, Colorado's Director of Elections Judd Choate said the largest security concern revolves around voter registration systems since they are connected to the internet.

Election night reporting is also crucial because incorrect news could negatively impact the public's trust that the results are accurate, Choate said.

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HEADLINE	02/12 Healthcare still in midst breach season
SOURCE	http://www.hcanews.com/news/healthcare-still-in-the-midst-of-breach-season
GIST	<p>Fall and winter are "breach season," according to Dustin Hutchison of cybersecurity firm Pondurance.</p> <p>"You think, people are shopping online more for the holidays, and then right after New Years it's tax time," he told Healthcare Analytics News™. "We see attacks socially engineered around those, like phishing masked as your tax info. People are in a hurry to get their tax information, so they're more likely to click on a link."</p> <p>He said there's a large uptick in the number of cyberattacks detected between November and February. "It's very intentional on the bad guys' side, they've done their homework and they know the best time to strike," he added.</p> <p>Healthcare has seen a rash of debilitating attacks in recent months. Oklahoma State University Center for Health Sciences noticed a breach that began in November and may have compromised hundreds of thousands of patients' records. January's AllScripts attack paralyzed key clinical applications for at least</p>

1,500 small practices. And a week before that, Hancock Health in Indiana detected a ransomware attack that ended up costing them \$47,000. After that incident, the hospital enlisted Pondurance to help advise their next steps.

Both Hancock and Allscripts suffered attacks from the SamSam malware strain. Hutchison's colleague Landon Lewis said that the strain has appeared and disappeared in a cyclical manner, first appearing about 2 years ago and fading away for months at a time between resurgences. But it isn't the only threat out there.

Lewis brought up other attack types that healthcare organizations should keep in mind. Botnet-based attacks like cryptocurrency miners are becoming more common, he said, and he wasn't wrong. The interview was conducted on February 5th. A few days later, reports began to emerge that Decatur County General Hospital in Tennessee had experienced such an attack, first detected by its electronic health records (EHR) vendor in late November.

Cryptocurrency mining attacks can compromise several computers within a network and use as little of their processing power as possible to slowly mine for bitcoin.

"The ransomware is an abrupt stop, right, like 'You're not working anymore, pay me,'" Hutchison said. "They want the bitcoin miner to go on forever, without detection: The organization continues normal operations while that bitcoin miner is in the background sucking up resources."

The attack on Decatur General was not believed to have resulted in any patient data being compromised, the hospital told some 24,000 patients, but noted that it can't yet confirm that.

An important thing that healthcare organizations must keep in mind, Hutchison said, is that they can always be hit. Practices often write off the risk, believing that they're too small to be worth an attacker's time, Hutchison said, which is a fallacy: The cost of running a cyberattack is so low that "everyone is a target."

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HEADLINE	02/12 Criminals ramp up server-side attacks
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazineuk.com/criminals-ramps-up-server-side-attacks/article/743637/
GIST	<p>In a report titled Vulnerability and Threat Trends Report by Skybox Security, the firm found that last year, the vast majority of exploits affected server-side applications (76 percent), up 17 points since 2016.</p> <p>It said that the increase in server-side exploits corresponds with the continued decline in the use of exploits kits relying on client-side vulnerabilities, which accounted for only a quarter of exploits in the wild that year. It said that this was due in part to the demise of major exploit kit players like Angler, Neutrino and Nuclear, with no comparable frontrunner rising to replace them.</p> <p>According to Marina Kidron, senior security analyst and group leader of the Skybox Research Lab, this does not mean that exploit kits are gone.</p> <p>"If there's one thing we know about cyber-criminals, it's that they're constantly changing tactics, and so the next 'exploit kit giant' is very likely in development as we speak. We also suspect that some kits have 'gone private,' and are used exclusively by their developers in hopes of prolonging their viability," she said.</p> <p>The report also found that instances of newly-published sample exploit code have also increased, with the monthly average jumping 60 percent in 2017. With minimal adjustments — or none at all — attackers can turn these samples into fully functioning exploits for their own use.</p> <p>The company said that this scenario was the case with the NSA EternalBlue exploit leaked by The Shadow</p>

Brokers and used in the WannaCry and NotPetya attacks, among others. Such leaks are putting advanced attack tools in the hands of lower-skilled cyber-criminals, enhancing the capabilities of an already well-outfitted threat landscape.

“Organisations need to stay up to speed with not only active exploits in the wild,” said Kidron, “but also factor in vulnerabilities with available exploit code to their prioritisation processes. While the latter set doesn't represent an imminent threat, they can make the jump to active exploitation very quickly — security teams need actionable intelligence at-the-ready when they do.”

Ken Gilmour, CTO of Invinsec, told SC Media that the problem with Server-side orchestration systems” is that people perceive that they need to be accessible so that they can perform emergency maintenance as quickly as possible, but they also have full control of the rest of the network. As far as reward goes for an attacker, this is a gold mine and allows them to move across your network with extreme ease, using your own tools against you.”

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HEADLINE	02/13 Increasing threats to healthcare industry
SOURCE	https://www.med-technews.com/news/increasing-hacker-threats-to-the-healthcare-industry/
GIST	<p>According to a recent report from cybersecurity firm Norton, hackers stole a total of £130 billion from consumers in 2017. These attacks hit over 978 million victims around the world and include large scale attacks on the NHS like WannaCry. However, surprisingly, still more than a quarter of those compromised believe they are safe from future attacks. Norton warns cybercrime victims that they're not doing enough to protect themselves against these types of attacks and that attacks of this nature are only set to increase as new threat vectors are sought in 2018.</p> <p>In fact, in the first days of 2018, published research revealed that nearly every computer chip manufactured in the last 20 years contains fundamental security flaws, with specific variations on those flaws being dubbed Spectre and Meltdown.</p> <p>Additionally, there were two significant cyberattacks reported during the second week of the year. The first one, a ransomware attack targeting Hancock Health hospital, affected over 1,400 files. Hackers compromised a third-party vendor's administrative account to the hospital's remote-access portal and launched SamSam ransomware. The hospital had to pay the ransom to unlock patient data which, according to the FBI, the hackers were not interested in stealing.</p> <p>The second cyberattack involved a hacker (or group of hackers) who stole more than half of the Norwegian population's healthcare data from Health South-East RHF. Evidence of a severe data breach on the Hospital's website was revealed by the parent company Sykehuspartner HF. To understand the scale of such an attack, keep in mind that Health South-East RHF is the largest of Norway's four healthcare regions and manages 2.9 million out of Norway's total 5.2 million inhabitants over 18 counties, including the one that contains Oslo.</p> <p>Even though, according to the 'State of Software Security' report, the vast majority of healthcare providers (85%) have increased their cyber-security spending over the past year, the industry is still struggling to protect its digital assets from hackers. But healthcare organisations have a duty to ensure the security of their patients' data, therefore one of the key objectives in 2018 should be around adopting a better risk management and security strategies and improving their response processes to active threats. Putting at risk such sensitive information can have a disastrous impact on their finances, reputation and databases – not to mention their patients. To put this into context, on average each victim of cybercrime spends up to two days per month dealing with the malware's repercussions.</p> <p>Today's enterprise perimeter has completely eroded and is causing every organisation to think differently about security. The concept of Zero-Trust Networking has been derived from this fact and is particularly relevant to healthcare organisations who, as stated earlier, cannot afford to let any patient data or other</p>

	<p>high value data or apps get into the wrong hands. Complex healthcare networks degrade an organisation's security posture, but healthcare workers demand convenient access to critical systems and patient databases in order to provide the best care possible. Likewise the interconnectedness of healthcare networks also increases the attack surface. For example, there are a lot of temporary contractors who are linked with not just the healthcare organisation itself but also a whole chain of suppliers.</p> <p>So, whilst healthcare organisations try to modernise their processes, their systems and digitise, they are being exposed to growing cybercrime risk, especially if they allow their staff to utilise their own devices such as smartphones.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Cryptocurrency exchange hacked; \$160M
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/bitgrail-cryptocurrency-exchange-hacked-nano-stolen/
GIST	<p>Due to the unprecedented popularity and public acceptance garnered by cryptocurrency, launching a cryptocurrency exchange has become the best way to make quick and easy money. However, in their haste to open an exchange at the earliest, companies have not paid enough attention at the provision of secure and safe trading environment, which is why traders are suffering from all sorts of security glitches off and on.</p> <p>Italy based cryptocurrency exchange BitGrail that was rebranded into Nano (XRB) used to be one of the biggest trading hubs for the RaiBlocks cryptocurrency but recently it has been witnessing a downtime due to its unreliable cyber-security measures. Reportedly, the exchange has become a victim of a hack attack, which further highlighted the underlying issues affecting the cyber-security area of the BitGrail exchange.</p> <p>A post on the BitGrail website revealed that the company ran a security check after which it discovered unauthorized transactions resulting in a shortfall of 17 million Nano, which is approx. \$160 million as per the latest exchange rates and it is speculated that hackers might have managed to get \$595 million because BitGrail has admitted that high amount of cryptocurrency is missing.</p> <p>The cryptocurrency operations of the company have currently been stalled and the authorities have contacted the police to investigate the matter. BitGrail has also claimed that there weren't any other cryptocurrency involved in the hack still all the activities including deposits and withdrawals have been suspended temporarily and the company has released a statement on its website offering "full and sincerest apologies" to its customers.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Aggressive bitcoin-stealing campaign
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/lazarus-rises-again-with/
GIST	<p>An aggressive Bitcoin-stealing phishing campaign mounted by the international cybercrime group Lazarus and using sophisticated, brand-new malware has been uncovered.</p> <p>McAfee Advanced Threat Research (ATR) analysts discovered the campaign, dubbed HaoBao. It resumes Lazarus' previous phishing email efforts, which used lures aimed at employee recruitment and targeted US defense contractors, the energy sector and financial institutions, including cryptocurrency exchanges. The objective was to gain access to the target's environment and obtain key military program insight or steal money. Those efforts ceased in October 2017 but are ramping up again; and this time, the targeted emails are aimed at Bitcoin users and global financial organizations.</p> <p>In mid-January, McAfee discovered a malicious document masquerading as a job recruitment ad for a "Business Development Executive" for a large, multinational bank located in Hong Kong. The document was distributed via a Dropbox account. When recipients open the malicious documents attached to the emails, they are persuaded to enable content through a notification claiming the document was created in</p>

	<p>an earlier version of Microsoft Word. The malicious documents then launch an implant on the recipients' system via a Visual Basic macro.</p> <p>The malware scans for Bitcoin activity and then establishes a secondary implant for long-term data gathering. The interesting thing is that the implants have never before been seen, and indicate a newly sophisticated level of attack.</p> <p>“This is the mark of a new campaign, though it utilizes techniques, tactics and procedures observed in 2017,” explained McAfee analyst Ryan Sherstobitoff in an analysis. “McAfee ATR analysis finds the dropped implants... have not been used in previous Lazarus campaigns from 2017. Furthermore, this campaign deploys a one-time data gathering implant that relies upon downloading a second stage to gain persistence.”</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Misconfigurations expose personal records
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/thousands-more-personal-records-exposed-misconfigurations
GIST	<p>Two more misconfigured databases exposing the personal details of thousands of people were disclosed late last week.</p> <p>The Maryland Joint Insurance Association (MDJIA, with offices in Ellicott City, MD) left internet access to a data repository of customer files containing information such as customer names, addresses, phone numbers, birth dates, and full Social Security numbers; together with financial data such as check images, full bank account numbers, and insurance policy numbers. Also exposed were MDJIA access credentials for ISO ClaimSearch, a third-party insurance database containing ‘tens of millions of reports on individual insurance claims’ for industry professionals. The problem was a NAS server with an open port 9000.</p> <p>Paris-based Octoly, a brand marketing firm, left open internet access to an AWS S3 bucket. This contained details of its IT operations, including sensitive personal details of more than 12,000 social media influencers used in its marketing campaigns. The details include the real names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses – including those specified for use with PayPal – and birth dates, together with thousands of hashed passwords.</p> <p>Both misconfigurations were discovered by Chris Vickery, the director of cyber risk research at UpGuard. Researcher Vickery has discovered numerous misconfigurations providing open access to sensitive, often personal, information over the last few years. Examples include details of 191 million U.S. voters, nearly 1.4 billion user records exposed by known spammers, and sensitive military data belonging to the U.S. National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) left exposed by contractor Booz Allen Hamilton.</p> <p>None of these misconfigurations require any hacking effort or skill to exploit, merely a computer with internet access. If a white hat researcher such as Vickery can find them, potentially any malicious actor could also find them with disastrous results.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/13 Cryptominers pose threat to ICS
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/cryptocurrency-miners-not-uncommon-industrial-systems
GIST	<p>Cryptocurrency miners can pose a serious threat to industrial systems and it’s not uncommon for this type of malware to make its way into operational technology (OT) environments.</p> <p>Industrial cybersecurity firm Radiflow reported last week that it had identified a piece of malware designed to mine Monero on a human-machine interface (HMI) system at a wastewater facility in Europe. The company warned that the resource consumption associated with this type of malware can severely disrupt plant monitoring tools and the affected organization’s response times.</p>

Cryptocurrency mining malware has become increasingly widespread and it has recently been found even on numerous government websites in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia.

This type of malware is also fairly common on industrial systems, according to several cybersecurity firms contacted by SecurityWeek.

A study conducted last year by Dragos showed that roughly 3,000 unique industrial sites had been hit by traditional, non-targeted malware. The company discovered approximately 6,000 malware infections, including instances of cryptojacking, said Robert M. Lee, CEO and founder of Dragos.

Kaspersky Lab ICS-CERT told SecurityWeek that roughly 3.3 percent of the industrial control systems (ICS) monitored by the company between February 2017 and February 2018 were targeted with cryptocurrency miners, with an increasing trend observed since September 2017.

“Industrial infrastructure is an appealing target for mining attacks due to high power, meaning criminals can earn more in less time. As usually the case with miners, users might notice slowdown of programs and systems performance that inevitably affects the user experience in general,” Kaspersky Lab ICS-CERT said. “In terms of ICS, a spike in CPU load, as a result of miners’ infection, leads to an increase in response time of monitoring tools for SCADA/HIM servers. It’s important to note that most of the ICS are real-time systems designed for process control, where response time is the critical system indicator.”

Darktrace, a security firm known for its AI-based defense technology, said it had identified more than 20 cryptocurrency miner attacks over the past six months among its customers in the energy and utilities sectors.

Overall, Darktrace said it had identified more than 400 crypto-mining related incidents across 5,000 customer deployments in more than 30 industries. There has been a steady increase in the number of detections, with roughly 100 mining scripts and cryptocurrency malware incidents detected in January.

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HEADLINE	02/12 Google to mark all HTTP sites ‘not secure’
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/chrome-to-label-non-https-site-as-not-secure-starting-july-2018/article/743657/
GIST	<p>Google recently announced that the Chrome browser will soon start flagging every site not using HTTPS encryption as “not secure.”</p> <p>Google said that beginning in July 2018 with the release of Chrome 68, the browser will begin marking the sites as part of its move toward a more secure web by strongly advocating that sites adopt HTTPS encryption, according to a February 8, 2018 press release.</p> <p>Site administrators who take the warning lightly may run the risk of losing visitors may begin to distrust any site potentially flagged as insecure. Chrome has already labeled HTTP pages that collect passwords or credit card information as not secure since early 2017 and the most recent effort is an extension to help adopt the security model.</p> <p>All HTTP sites will be labeled insecure whether or not it include input fields. HTTPS encryption has seen great progress last year with 81 of the top 100 sites on the web using HTTPS by default, according to the release.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 New crop of Twitter pornbots active
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SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/new-crop-of-twitter-pornbots-found-advertising-adult-sites-misappropriating-hashtags/article/743825/
GIST	<p>A researcher who in 2016 uncovered roughly 500 bots programmed to create Twitter posts that advertise pornography found that about 20 percent of them were still active two years later.</p> <p>Rob Cook, the senior analyst at Flashpoint who spearheaded the research, told SC Media that although the number of older pornbot accounts "was reduced by Twitter's action against them through abuse reporting," he was nevertheless "able to quickly identify new 'pornbots' using the same technique, which brought my list of accounts to nearly 60 in just a few minutes."</p> <p>Moreover, these new bots were observed employing the same techniques as their predecessors, whose discovery was originally disclosed in a private company intel report. Techniques include using legitimate hashtags used by Fortune 500 brands and placing them beside various unrelated terms.</p> <p>"I don't believe brands were specifically picked; it is possible that the bots used a script to pull hashtags and random word content from other Twitter accounts or some other feed," Cook added. "We think the goal here was to either build followers of the account, tweet numbers, and/or have viewers click on the links in the account's bio."</p> <p>In a Feb. 12 company blog post, Cook reported that the set of observed pornbots "appears to be a mix of compromised accounts and accounts specifically created to advertise pornography... As such, organizations mentioned in these bots' pornographic advertising campaigns on Twitter may suffer reputational damage in addition to distorted social media engagement campaign metrics."</p> <p>According to Cook, a recent analysis took note of three distinct sets of Twitter pornbots -- each of which promoted a different adult website, but all of which used identical hashtags, shared server infrastructure, and often leveraged the same profile pictures, suggesting they were part of the same malicious campaign.</p> <p>All of the accounts' profile pictures were lifted and repurposed from open-source websites such as Instagram and Pinterest. Moreover, the false accounts presented links to adult dating or video websites by either displaying them within hashtagged tweets, or including them in the bio and pinned tweet.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Russia hackers behind Olympics attack?
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/russian-actors-mentioned-as-possibly-launching-olympics-cyberattack/article/743835/
GIST	<p>Fingerling the culprit behind the cyberattack that hit the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympic Games during the opening ceremony will never be nailed down with 100 percent accuracy, but industry executives have gathered some circumstantial evidence is pointing toward a Russian group.</p> <p>The primary reason Russia, or someone acting on that country's behalf, has been singled out is the fact that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) banned that nation from competing due to its athletes using illegal performance enhancing drugs during previous Olympic games. However, the IOC is allowing innocent Russian athletes to compete, but only under the Olympic, and not Russian, national flag.</p> <p>"That certainly seems like a motive for someone inside Russia to disrupt the games," Richard Henderson, Absolute Software's global security strategist, told SC Media.</p> <p>French Caldwell, a former White House cybersecurity advisor and current chief evangelist with MetricStream, pointed out that if you anger Russia in some manner being hit with a cyberattack is always a possible result.</p> <p>"From the public reports, one thing that stands out is that initial access was gained through compromised login information of accredited users. If you know you have the Russian government as your enemy, you</p>

know there is a likelihood that they or their proxies could attack – the question is how,” Caldwell told SC Media.

The games' organizers have confirmed that an attack did take place during the opening ceremonies on February 9 hitting several non-critical systems, including its internet and television systems. Cisco Talos confirmed that the incident took place saying that while the infection vector is unknown the malware was a destroyer as there is no evidence that it attempted to remove any data. The attackers used a list of system credentials to gain access.

Crowdstrike Intelligence said that in November and December of 2017 it had observed a credential harvesting operation operating in the international sporting sector. At the time it attributed this operation to Fancy Bear, but only with a medium level of confidence and Adam Meyers, CrowdStrike's VP of Intelligence, said there is no evidence connecting Fancy Bear to the Olympic attack.

There is other evidence pointing to Fancy Bear. It has already been credited with attacking an Olympic organization. In September 2016 the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) stated that the group had hacked its systems and accessed athlete data, including confidential medical related to the Rio Games; and, subsequently released some of the data in the public domain, accompanied by the threat that they will release more.

Henderson also noted that the malware itself shares many similarities with the kind previously used by both Russia and China, but even that is not a true smoking gun.

“Of course, we can expect that various state-sponsored groups will learn from earlier campaigns and malware and integrate components into their future attacks, muddying the waters when it comes to being able to conclusively point the finger at one specific group,” he said.

Interestingly, South Korea's primary cyber opponent, North Korea, is unlikely to be behind any attack as the Hermit Kingdom is using the games to help thaw relations with its southern neighbor. Several high-ranking North Korean officials, including North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's sister Kim Yo Jong and North Korea's nominal head of state Kim Yong Nam, attended the opening ceremony sitting with South Korean president Moon Jae-in. The two nation's athletes also marched together during the event.

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HEADLINE	02/12 Australian govt. sites hit by cryptominer
SOURCE	https://www.itnews.com.au/news/australian-govt-sites-hijacked-by-crypto-miner-484951
GIST	<p>More than 4000 Australian and global government websites have been hijacked to run the Coinhive crypto currency mining software after a popular accessibility tool was compromised by attackers.</p> <p>Security researcher Scott Helme today published his discovery of 4275 government websites across the globe that have been hijacked by Coinhive.</p> <p>The list spans the US and UK as well as Australia.</p> <p>Both federal and state government websites locally are included in the list.</p> <p>The Queensland government's main site for its legislation has been hijacked, as have websites belonging to the likes of Queensland Urban Utilities, the Victorian parliament, and South Australia's City of Unley.</p> <p>The problem stems from a website plug-in called Browsealoud that helps blind and partially sighted people access the web.</p> <p>The plug-in was tampered with overnight to add the Coinhive program. Coinhive mines for the Monero crypto currency.</p>

	<p>"If you want to load a crypto miner on 1000+ websites you don't attack 1000+ websites, you attack the 1 website that they all load content from," Helme said.</p> <p>Browsealoud operator Texthelp said it taken the tool offline as soon as one of its automated scans had discovered the modified file.</p> <p>AusCERT analyst David Lord told iTnews the use of plug-ins like Browsealoud in numerous websites made the vendors a big target for attackers.</p> <p>"The accessibility aspect, especially, means many of their users will have been government or corporate websites," Lord said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 German court: Facebook illegal data use
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-facebook/german-court-rules-facebook-use-of-personal-data-illegal-idUSKBN1FW1FI
GIST	<p>BERLIN (Reuters) - A German consumer rights group said on Monday that a court had found Facebook's (FB.O) use of personal data to be illegal because the U.S. social media platform did not adequately secure the informed consent of its users.</p> <p>The verdict, from a Berlin regional court, comes as Big Tech faces increasing scrutiny in Germany over its handling of sensitive personal data that enables it to micro-target online advertising.</p> <p>The Federation of German Consumer Organisations (vzvb) said that Facebook's default settings and some of its terms of service were in breach of consumer law, and that the court had found parts of the consent to data usage to be invalid.</p> <p>"Facebook hides default settings that are not privacy-friendly in its privacy center and does not provide sufficient information about it when users register," said Heiko Duenkel, litigation policy officer at the vzvb.</p> <p>"This does not meet the requirement for informed consent." The vzvb posted a copy of the ruling on its website. A court spokesperson confirmed that a judgment had been handed down but declined further comment.</p> <p>Facebook said it would appeal, even though several aspects of the court judgment had been in its favor. In a statement, it said it had already made significant changes to its terms of service and data protection guidelines since the case was first brought in 2015.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Zombie bots to target Valentine's Day
SOURCE	https://nypost.com/2018/02/12/zombie-bots-are-coming-for-lonely-singles-on-valentines-day/
GIST	<p>America's lonely hearts are more likely than ever to catch a virus this Valentine's Day — on their computer.</p> <p>An especially aggressive robot network of 6 million "zombie bots" will be set loose this week ahead of the Feb. 14 celebration — each one with an attractive come-on looking to entice a lovesick victim, according to IBM.</p> <p>But don't go looking for love in all the wrong in-boxes, warns IBM's X-Force warns. X-Force is the IBM unit that searches out and tracks down cyber threats.</p>

Since Jan. 16, US email in-boxes have been inundated with 230 million dating-spam messages, according to X-Force.

Now, heading into Valentine's Day week, X-Force is predicting a massive uptick in computer come-ons. It attributed the uptick to a notorious botnet called Necurs.

"Preying on seasonal trends is probably the top characteristic of e-mail spam," X-Force said in a statement. "Those behind this campaign will likely lure their victims to share revealing photos and extort them, ask for money to come visit, or end up infecting them with malware."

While dating-spam scams are as old as e-mail itself, X-Force credited Necurs with upping their plausibility.

Its current campaign continues to feature "Russian women," but now they are supposedly living in the US and claim to have been drawn to their marks after seeing their profiles on Facebook or Badoo — a popular dating app in Russia with an international presence.

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HEADLINE	02/12 Experts: 'Olympic destroyer' malware
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/winter-olympics-2018/olympic-destroyer-malware-targeted-pyeongchang-games-firms-say-n847396
GIST	<p>Several U.S. cyber security firms said on Monday that they had uncovered a computer virus dubbed "Olympic Destroyer" that was likely used in an attack on Friday's opening ceremony of the PyeongChang Winter Games.</p> <p>Games Organizers confirmed the attack on Sunday, saying that it affected internet and television services but did not compromise critical operations. Organizers did not say who was behind the attack or provide detailed discussion of the malware, though a spokesman said that all issues had been resolved as of Saturday.</p> <p>Researchers with cyber security firms Cisco Systems Inc , CrowdStrike and FireEye Inc said in blog posts and statements to Reuters on Monday that they had analyzed computer code they believed was used in Friday's attack.</p> <p>All three security companies said the Olympic Destroyer malware was designed to knock computers offline by deleting critical system files, which would render the machines useless.</p> <p>The three firms said they did not know who was behind the attack.</p> <p>"Disruption is the clear objective in this type of attack and it leaves us confident in thinking that the actors behind this were after embarrassment of the Olympic committee during the opening ceremony," Cisco said in its blog.</p> <p>The attack took the Olympics website offline, which meant that some people could not print out tickets and WiFi used by reporters covering the games did not work during the opening ceremony, according to Cisco.</p> <p>The attack did not affect the performance of drones, which were initially scheduled to be included in the opening ceremony, but later pulled from the program, organizers said in a statement.</p> <p>The drone light show was canceled because there were too many spectators standing in the area where it was supposed to take place, the statement said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Worldwide debut 5G network at Olympics
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-02-12/5g-is-here-super-speed-makes-worldwide-debut-at-winter-olympics
GIST	<p>The first to experience the future of wireless technology, well before most humans, will be South Korea's wild boars. That's because 5G, the fifth-generation wireless network, is making its worldwide debut at the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang.</p> <p>The technology will be used to ward off the porcine pests who roam the mountainous region around the Games with fast-acting systems that shoot rays, spew gases and emit tiger roars.</p> <p>That's just the start of 5G -- South Korea's attempt to showcase the first-in-the-world commercial use of the technology that's not scheduled to roll out globally until 2020. At the Games, shuttle buses run with no humans at the wheel, and 360-degree images in real time show competing figure skaters as they glide around the ice.</p> <p>Fifth-generation wireless networks are designed to be wicked fast, about 100 times faster than 4G. At 10 gigabits a second, 5G can send a full-length high-definition movie in seconds. It also paves the way for the "internet of things," where devices from refrigerators to traffic lights to dog collars can talk to each other.</p> <p>The tech industry is counting on the new capabilities: 5G will be important for developing artificial intelligence, drones, self-driving vehicles, robots and other machines that transmit massive data in real time, said Sandra Rivera, Intel Corp.'s California-based senior vice president overseeing network platforms. In other words, if computers talk to each other like children in 4G now, they'll soon speak like grown-ups in 5G.</p> <p>"It really is, we call it, the era of machines," Rivera said in an interview. "Machines are coming, and the 5G is a big enabler with that true convergence of computing and communications."</p> <p>The Pyeongchang showcase, engineered by South Korean telecom carrier KT Corp., uses technology from Intel, Ericsson AB and Samsung Electronics Co. Left out is Huawei Technologies Co., which is also racing to develop 5G technology.</p> <p>After the Games are over, the technology will go offline as developers analyze the data and work out kinks. 5G is due to be rolled out by South Korea's wireless carriers next year.</p> <p>About 1 billion people worldwide are likely to be 5G-enabled within five years, and that will lead to \$12.3 trillion in global economic output by the mid-2030s, according to researchers from Ericsson and IHS Markit.</p> <p>Due to its speed, 5G opens possibilities that even engineers still aren't aware of, much like the explosion of apps after the release of the iPhone.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Bitcoin rebounds; closes-in on \$9,000
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/finance/streettalk/bitcoin-price-regulatory-fears/2018/02/12/id/842922/
GIST	<p>Bitcoin extended a rebound on Monday as the regulatory concerns that have plagued digital currencies this year showed signs of subsiding.</p> <p>Bitcoin climbed 2 percent to \$8,720 as of 2:28 p.m. in New York, bouncing back by almost 50 percent since dipping below \$6,000 in intraday trading Feb. 6, according to composite Bloomberg pricing. Alternate coins Ripple, Ether and Litecoin advanced at least 3.5 percent.</p>

After facing weeks of mounting negative headlines that had wiped out billions in value, cryptocurrencies won a reprieve of sorts as top U.S. regulators testifying before a Senate committee called for greater oversight without proposing industry-killing measures. That news gave enough positive momentum for traders to shrug off a cryptocurrency ban from Thailand's central bank.

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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	02/13 Anbar warns unrest if ISIS relatives return
SOURCE	https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1173797/anbar-residents-warn-new-unrest-if-isis-relatives-return
GIST	<p>In Iraq's Anbar province, residents struggling to rebuild after years of the ISIS terrorist group rule are adamant: there will be no return for the families of terrorists.</p> <p>Omar Shihan al-Alwani, who fought against the group, warned that revenge awaits the relatives of ISIS fighters who try to come back, reported Agence France Presse.</p> <p>"Anbar is a tribal society. If someone's brother or father is killed, he takes blood revenge by killing someone from the murderer's tribe," Alwani said.</p> <p>The bearded 35-year-old wore a red-chequered headscarf as he sat in his traditional reception room, two months since Iraq declared victory over ISIS.</p> <p>"We do not want ISIS to come back and start a spiral of revenge," he said.</p> <p>"We're totally against that. If they come back then blood will flow and neither tribes nor military operations will be able to stop it."</p> <p>That sentiment is a far cry from the support ISIS once enjoyed in the western desert region.</p> <p>The radical group's predecessor emerged from the region 2006 and was welcomed by many Anbaris, who saw it as offering protection against then Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government.</p> <p>Many tribes turned against ISIS, especially as its brutality became apparent.</p> <p>Today residents, still counting the cost of ISIS rule in blood and destruction, insist they do not want to repeat the errors of the past.</p> <p>"They are outcasts and society rejects them," said Khamis al-Dahal, 60, as he got his hair cut at a barbershop.</p> <p>"The government is not going to force us to accept back people who killed men, women and children in Anbar."</p> <p>Some take a more moderate line -- but are still very wary.</p> <p>"We are not against them returning but the timing is bad and would risk provoking unrest and a return to bloodshed in the streets," said former tribal fighter Omar Ibrahim.</p> <p>"They should be in a camp under the supervision of the Iraqi government and they should receive daily instruction on how to live together and to combat extremist ideologies."</p> <p>Some are already living in camps.</p>

Currently around 380 families of ISIS members, women and children, are detained in two Anbar camps where conditions are harsh.

Late last year US advocacy group Refugees International reported that women and girls believed to be linked to ISIS had been sexually abused by camp guards.

Those who do leave often have nowhere to go.

In the city of Ramadi, residents said houses belonging to the families of ISIS members have been destroyed -- reprisal for a similar tactic the terrorists used against their enemies, reported AFP.

No one was willing to say who was responsible.

The city is still heavily scarred by fighting and airstrikes by a US-led coalition during a battle that saw it recaptured by government troops in early 2016.

Erfan Ali, Iraq representative for the UN Human Settlements Program, said that over 8,000 homes are destroyed or badly damaged, as are some 1,200 in the city of Fallujah.

Many still fear Iraq's weak central government will not be able to prevent ISIS' return indefinitely.

Such is the fear that some residents have still not dared remove signs of the group's presence.

The graffiti remains daubed across the walls of their houses: "Property of the ISIS."

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HEADLINE	02/13 UK unveils extremism blocking tool
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-43037899
GIST	<p>The UK government has unveiled a tool it says can accurately detect jihadist content and block it from being viewed.</p> <p>Home Secretary Amber Rudd told the BBC she would not rule out forcing technology companies to use it by law.</p> <p>Ms Rudd is visiting the US to meet tech companies to discuss the idea, as well as other efforts to tackle extremism.</p> <p>Thousands of hours of content posted by the Islamic State group was run past the tool, in order to "train" it to automatically spot extremist material.</p> <p>The government provided £600,000 of public funds towards the creation of the tool by an artificial intelligence company based in London.</p> <p>ASI Data Science said the software can be configured to detect 94% of IS video uploads.</p> <p>Anything the software identifies as potential IS material would be flagged up for a human decision to be taken.</p> <p>The company said it typically flagged 0.005% of video uploads. On a site with five million daily uploads, it would flag 250 non-IS videos for review.</p> <p>It is intended to lighten the moderation burden faced by small companies that may not have the resources to effectively tackle extremist material being posted on their sites.</p>

Similar tools in the past have been heavily criticised by advocates of an "open" internet, saying such efforts can produce false positives - and that means content that is not particularly problematic ends up being taken down or blocked.

In London, reporters were given an off-the-record briefing detailing how ASI's software worked, but were asked not to share its precise methodology. However, in simple terms, it is an algorithm that draws on characteristics typical of IS and its online activity.

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HEADLINE	02/13 Pakistan: 26/11 mastermind a terrorist
SOURCE	https://www.khaleejtimes.com/international/pakistan/pakistan-declares-2611-mastermind-hafiz-saeed-a-terrorist
GIST	<p>Pakistan president Mamnoon Hussain has signed an ordinance aimed at reigning in individuals and organisations like the LeT, Al Qaeda, JuD and Taliban, which have been banned by the UN Security Council, a media report said on Monday.</p> <p>The ordinance amends a section of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), enabling the authorities to take action against the UNSC-proscribed individuals and terror outfits, like sealing their offices and freezing their bank accounts, The Express Tribune reported.</p> <p>The sources in the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) confirmed the new move, saying the ministries of Interior, Finance and Foreign Affairs as well as NACTA's Counter Financing of Terrorism (CFT) wing are working together on the matter.</p> <p>An official in the presidency familiar with the development confirmed the said legislation but refused to share details, saying the ministry of defense was the notifying authority.</p> <p>"The relevant ministry will notify and comment on it," the official said.</p> <p>A major impact of the new ordinance would be the proscription of Hafiz Saeed-linked JuD and FIF along with the UN listed outfits of Al Akhtar Trust and Al Rashid Trust, the Dawn reported.</p> <p>It is learnt that the authorities are bound under international obligations to take measures against such outfits under the framework of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) an international body that combats money laundering and terrorist financing.</p> <p>The UNSC sanctions list includes Al-Qaeda, Tehreek-e- Taliban Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), Falah-e-Insaniat Foundation (FIF), Lashkar-e-Taiba (Let) and others.</p> <p>In December last year, the government had planned to take over two charities belonging to Hafiz Saeed the JuD and the FIF and an action plan in this connection was supposed to be submitted.</p> <p>Last month, the government had also banned companies and individuals from making donations to the JuD, the FIF and other organizations.</p> <p>Jundullah was the last organization declared "proscribed" by the government of Pakistan on January 31, 2018 on the NACTA website. However, the JuD and the FIF continue to be on the NACTA "watch list".</p> <p>Laskar-e-Taiba was declared a banned organization under the UNSC resolution 1267 in 2005.</p> <p>The US State Department in 2014 had named the JuD as a "foreign terrorist organization", a designation that freezes assets the organization has under the US jurisdiction.</p>

	India also blamed JuD leader Saeed for the Mumbai attacks of November 2006, but Pakistan argues that New Delhi has failed to provide incriminating evidence against him, the report said.
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HEADLINE	02/12 Indonesia church attacker supports ISIS
SOURCE	http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/indonesian-church-attacker-wanted-to-fight-with-isis
GIST	<p>JAKARTA • An Indonesian who attacked a church congregation with a sword during Sunday Mass is a radical Islamist who had wanted to fight with Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) militants in Syria, police said yesterday.</p> <p>Around 100 people were attending the service at a Catholic church in Yogyakarta when Suliyono, 23, barged in wielding a one-metre-long sword and began attacking people, seemingly indiscriminately.</p> <p>Four people, including 81-year-old German-born priest Edmund Prier, who was standing at the altar, were seriously injured.</p> <p>The extremist, who was later shot in the leg after ignoring a police warning shot, also decapitated a Virgin Mary statue with his sword.</p> <p>"Suliyono had made a passport application as he attempted to go to Syria, but the application failed. He ended up launching the attack here," said national police chief Tito Karnavian.</p> <p>He said police are still investigating whether Suliyono was a "lone wolf terrorist" or part of a group.</p> <p>Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country, also has large numbers of Christians, Hindus and Buddhists, but there are concerns over rising intolerance.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 ISIS leader alive; trapped on 'desert island'
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/isis-leader-baghdadi-alive-trapped-desert-island-us-russia-airstrike-reports-803562
GIST	<p>The elusive head of the Islamic State militant group (ISIS) has survived an airstrike and is believed to be hiding out in a shrinking bastion of jihadi control in a mostly desert stretch of eastern Syria known as Al-Jazeera, or "the Island," according to U.S. and Iraq officials.</p> <p>Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the hardline Sunni Muslim cleric who expanded his Al-Qaeda offshoot from Iraq across Syria, has only made one known public appearance and, as his group suffered widespread losses in recent years, unconfirmed reports of his whereabouts and fate have been numerous. In the latest potential development, a senior Iraqi official said Monday that one of the world's most wanted men has been left incapacitated and is clinging to life by air raids in Iraq, forcing him to give up the helm of his militant network that claimed followers and supporters across the globe.</p> <p>"We have irrefutable information and documents from our sources infiltrating the terrorist entity, stating that the criminal Baghdadi is still present today with the help of his collaborators in the Syrian region of Al-Jazeera," Abu Ali al-Basri, director of intelligence and counterterrorism at the Iraqi Interior Ministry and head of the elite Falcons Intelligence Cell, told state-run newspaper Al-Sabah.</p> <p>Basri said that Baghdadi has been forced to cede control of the group due to his severe "physical and psychological deterioration" and said that the jihadi leader was also likely suffering from diabetes.</p> <p>Unnamed U.S. officials cited by CNN also said Monday that Baghdadi was injured by an airstrike that left him unable to lead ISIS, but stated that the attack had occurred near what was once ISIS's de facto capital</p>

of Raqqa, northern Syria, sometime in May, and had likely been conducted by a U.S.-led coalition or Russian air power. While one official accused Moscow of "making stuff up," according to CNN, the timeline coincided with earlier claims made by Russia.

In June, the Russian Defense Ministry first announced that it had received information about Baghdadi's potential demise after Russian warplanes bombarded ISIS positions in the province of Raqqa on May 28. As the investigation continued, Russia said it was increasingly convinced that it had killed the jihadi warlord, but the U.S. said it could not verify if or how Baghdadi died. Ali Shirazi, a member of the elite expeditionary Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, said in June that "terrorist Baghdadi is definitely dead."

Two pro-Syrian opposition monitoring groups, the U.K.-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) and Syria-based Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently (RIBSS), also weighed in last summer. SOHR told Newsweek in July that Baghdadi had in fact been killed, but that he died under unknown circumstances in the eastern, then-ISIS-held city of Deir Ezzor. RIBSS tweeted that same day that rumors of Baghdadi's death were "not true."

ISIS maintained silence about Baghdadi until it released an audio tape in September purported to be a recent recording of the militants' leader-at-large. In the roughly 45-minute recording, a man identified as Baghdadi discussed his group's loss of territory to local forces backed by international campaigns, staging attacks against civilians in the so-called "crusader" countries abroad and the nuclear threat posed by North Korea.

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HEADLINE	02/12 Conference: need \$88.2B to restore Iraq
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/war-kuwait-hosts-conferences-rebuilding-iraq-53012992?
GIST	<p>Kuwait on Monday opened a week of conferences seeking aid for rebuilding Iraq after the onslaught of the Islamic State group, seeking tens of billions of dollars for a nation only a generation ago that invaded it.</p> <p>Authorities estimate Iraq needs \$88.2 billion to restore a country smashed after the Sunni extremists seized the country's second-largest city of Mosul and a mass of territory in June 2014.</p> <p>"We finished one battle but we are engaged now with a war for reconstruction," said Mustafa al-Hiti, the head of Iraq's reconstruction fund for areas affected by terrorist operations.</p> <p>Among the hardest-hit areas is Mosul, which Iraqi forces, aided by Iranian-backed Shiite militias and a U.S.-led coalition, recaptured in July 2017. Their victory came at a steep cost for Mosul, as coalition airstrikes and extremist suicide car bombs destroyed homes and government buildings.</p> <p>Of the money needed, Iraqi officials estimate \$17 billion alone needs to go toward rebuilding homes, the biggest single line item offered Monday on the first day of meetings. The United Nations estimates 40,000 homes need to be rebuilt in Mosul alone.</p> <p>"The majority of the damage was to western Mosul as it went through one of the worst and fiercest battles in history," said Nofal al-Akoub, the governor of Iraq's Nineveh province. It "led to the total destruction of its infrastructure."</p> <p>Al-Akoub said \$42 billion was needed for his province alone, as it is home to Mosul. Iraq needs some \$20 billion now to begin its reconstruction, al-Hiti said.</p> <p>The war against the Islamic State group displaced more than 5 million people. Only half have returned to their hometowns in Iraq.</p>

However, officials acknowledge a feeling of fatigue from international donors, especially after the wars in Iraq and Syria sparked the biggest mass migration since World War II.

President Donald Trump himself on Monday tweeted that America was "so stupidly spending \$7 trillion in the Middle East, it is now time to start investing in OUR country." The U.S. has no plans to make any new pledges at this week's conferences. Even in Kuwait, some social media users questioned why more wasn't being done in their own country.

Billions of dollars poured into Iraq after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein, with what feels now like little visible effect.

The U.S. alone spent \$60 billion over nine years — some \$15 million a day — to rebuild Iraq. Around \$25 billion went to Iraq's military, which disintegrated during the lightning 2014 offensive of the Islamic State group, which grew out of al-Qaida in Iraq. U.S. government auditors also found massive waste and corruption, fueling suspicions of Western politicians like Trump who want to scale back foreign aid.

Meanwhile, the Middle East as a whole, especially countries like Kuwait whose deep pockets rely on oil production, have taken a hit in recent years as energy prices crashed and only recently began regaining ground.

Iraq, OPEC's second-largest crude producer and home to the world's fifth-largest known reserves, says it needs \$7 billion to repair its oil and gas fields. It has struggled to pay international firms running them.

Kuwait, hosting the conferences this week, has a deep interest in seeing a stable Iraq, especially after Baghdad's 1990 invasion of their small, oil-rich emirate. It announced \$330 million alone had been pledged Monday for Iraq at a humanitarian conference in Kuwait City.

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HEADLINE	02/12 ISIS: disrupt Egypt vote w/attacks
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/is-calls-on-fighters-to-disrupt-egypts-vote-with-attacks/2018/02/12/3e96e638-0ff4-11e8-a68c-e9374188170e_story.html
GIST	<p>CAIRO — A video purportedly by the Islamic State's affiliate in Egypt is calling on its fighters to stage attacks during next month's presidential elections and warning Egyptians to stay away from polling centers.</p> <p>The authenticity of the 23-minute video posted late Sunday on websites known to be sympathetic to the group could not be independently verified, but appeared similar to past releases by IS. The video makes a brief mention of an ongoing offensive by security forces against IS, suggesting it was made after the campaign began Friday.</p> <p>The video showed what appeared to be footage of past IS attacks in Sinai and the gruesome killings of unarmed off-duty soldiers or men suspected of collaborating with security forces. The timing of its release and its contents, however, appear designed to project an image of the group as a resilient force in the face of what is possibly the largest offensive by government forces since the insurgency began nearly five years ago.</p> <p>Egypt's military says it has destroyed dozens of targets, killed scores of militants and detained many suspects as part of the operation, which targets "terrorist and criminal elements and organizations" and involves land, naval and air forces from the army and police. The operation covers north and central Sinai, the Nile Delta and the Western Desert along Egypt's porous border with Libya, home to a number of militant groups.</p> <p>Branding elections an act of "apostasy," an IS operative speaking to the camera in the video called on the "soldiers" of the group to "spoil the day of their apostasy, shed their blood and target the heads of apostasy</p>

among them.” He also called on Muslims in Sinai and elsewhere in Egypt to stay away from polling centers and other vote-related installations, saying they would be targeted on the days of the election. The vote is staggered over three days — March 26, 27 and 28.

Such threats are routine from militant Islamic groups opposed in principle to democratic practices, or even a hollow version of them. They also rarely materialize.

President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi’s re-election is virtually assured in the March vote. After a string of potentially serious challengers have either been arrested or forced out of the race, el-Sissi’s only challenger is an obscure politician who is also among his ardent supporters. Moussa Mustafa Moussa’s last-minute entry into the race saved el-Sissi and his government from the embarrassment of a one-candidate election.

A coalition of eight opposition parties and scores of prominent pro-democracy figures called last month on voters to boycott the elections. This week, prosecutors began an investigation into complaints by pro-government lawyers accusing them of “incitement against the state” and seeking to destabilize the country.

The move by the prosecutors was the latest sign that authorities were not prepared to allow even a hint of dissent or any questioning of el-Sissi’s continued rule ahead of the vote.

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HEADLINE	02/11 What is ‘Complex Coordinated Attack’?
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/hstindepth-what-is-complex-coordinated-attack/
GIST	<p>In 2017, FEMA awarded a total of \$35.9 million to 29 public safety agencies across 19 states to strengthen complex coordinated attack (CCAs, also called complex coordinated terrorist attacks) preparedness. But preparing for a CCA is easier said than done, especially when homeland security authorities and experts continue to disagree about what a CCA is, even within single organizations.</p> <p>FEMA’s Office of Counterterrorism and Security Preparedness uses one definition, while FEMA’s National Exercise Program uses another – which makes about as much sense as Donald Duck never wearing pants but always wrapping a towel around his waist after a shower.</p> <p>To prepare effectively, all CCA partners must understand and agree upon the events for which they are preparing. In other words, they need a robust, consensus definition of CCA to make sure everyone is on the same page. But few have even attempted to define CCA, and the few definitions that exist have key problems that are too important to ignore. Instead, homeland security partners should adopt the following definition.</p> <p>A complex coordinated attack (or complex coordinated terrorist attack) is a violent assault or series of assaults that employs one or more types of weapons, intends to injure or kill large numbers of people, and meets the following two criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.The attack is multi-phased or takes place at multiple sites, or both. (Phases can include assault phases, such as shootings, bombings, and arsons; and/or non-assault phases such as hostages, car chases, sieges, barricades, kidnappings, and manhunts, etc.) 2.The attack must take place within geographic and temporal circumstances that result in unusual strain on command, information sharing/situational awareness, and/or resource allocation. <p>Since homeland security professionals started using “CCA” before fully defining it, a viable consensus definition must include attacks that homeland security authorities and experts already regard as CCAs. Identifying such a “CCA conventional wisdom” is something of a head-scratcher; however, researchers developed the following summary of CCA conventional wisdom by identifying points of agreement between homeland security authorities and/or experts about which attacks are CCAs.</p> <p>CCA conventional wisdom thus includes attacks that have major differences, including disparities in</p>

numbers of attackers, numbers of assault locations, number of assault modes, whether assaults took place in confined spaces, and differences in time and distance between attack phases. By learning more about the attacks that are definitely CCAs, and understanding their differences, it is possible to work backwards and identify key characteristics that a viable consensus definition must have.

A usable consensus definition must include all 10 “conventional wisdom” CCAs from Table 1, but Table 2 shows that several existing definitions fail to include all 10 and are thus inconsistent and unusable. Six of the ten available definitions from reputable sources fail for at least one of the following five reasons:

Requires Multiple Attackers: Viable CCA definitions cannot require multiple attackers because doing so would exclude the [2007 Virginia Tech attack](#), where a single shooter killed a total of 32 at two campus locations.

Requires Multiple Assault Locations: Useable CCA definitions cannot require multiple assault locations because doing so would exclude the [attack at Westgate Mall in Nairobi](#), Kenya, where four armed militants killed at least 67 people in 2013.

Requires Multiple Assault Modes: Feasible CCA definitions cannot require multiple assault modes. Doing so would exclude the [San Bernardino \(2015\)](#) and Virginia Tech (2007) attacks, which both involved only firearms, and the [London attack \(2005\)](#), which involved only explosives.

Requires Simultaneous Assaults: Suitable CCA definitions cannot require multiple assaults to take place simultaneously. Credible sources demonstrate that none of the 10 CCAs in Table 1 included multiple assaults at precisely the same moment.

Requires Assaults in Confined Spaces: Useful CCA definitions cannot require that assaults take place in confined spaces. Doing so would exclude the [Boston \(2013\)](#) and [Paris \(2015\)](#). Any useable consensus CCA definition must also withstand at least a modicum of scrutiny, but as Table 2 shows, none of the 10 available definitions do so for at least one of two reasons.

Failure to Include Non-Assault Phases: Non-assault phases of attacks should be specifically included in a robust, consensus CCA definition because they can be just as important as assault phases in establishing the unusual complexity that characterizes CCAs. Though non-assault phases posed key challenges in Boston (manhunt), Paris (hostages), and San Bernardino (car chase), none of the 10 existing definitions specifically include them.

Ineffective Limits on Time and Geography: A robust CCA definition must also include limitations on the length of time and geographic distance between different portions of an attack. Conventional wisdom shows that CCAs can be spread over many miles and include days between phases, but common sense says that there must be some kind of limitations on time and space beyond which different phases cannot be regarded as part of a single attack. Yet, none of the existing definitions establish temporal or geographic limitations, and it is unclear how to do so.

Table 2 thus shows that none of the 10 available definitions are viable as robust, consensus CCA definition.

Uncertainty remains, however, about how to effectively include geographic and temporal limitations into a robust, consensus definition. One approach to solving the problems of where to draw the lines of time and geography is to consider the issue in reference to the specific aspects of CCAs that distinguish them from active shooters and other violent attacks — and make CCAs worth examining as a distinct phenomenon. Put differently, why do we care about CCAs in particular instead of just treating them as a type of active shooter or bombing incident? And do the reasons we care about CCAs help provide insight into how we should limit time and geography within the definition?

Specific CCA challenges can be summarized as unusual strain on three distinct aspects of managing a terrorist attack: command, information sharing, and resource allocation. It follows, then, that a robust CCA

definition's limitations on time and/or geography must reflect geographic and temporal circumstances that are sufficient to place unusual strain on resource management, information sharing, and/or command capabilities. Though identifying clear temporal and geographic limitations would be more ideal, this more general standard is a better fit for a consensus definition because it is flexible enough to be used by different organizations with vastly different capabilities.

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Incident	Location of Attack	Date(s) of Assault(s)	No. of Sources Identifying as a CCA	Multiple Attackers	Multiple Assault Sites	Multiple Assault Modes	Non-Assault Phases	Targeting Confined Areas
Paris	Paris, France	11/13/2015	11	✓	✓	✓	manhunt, siege, hostage	Partially
Mumbai attacks	Mumbai, India	11/26/2008 - 11/29/2008	9	✓	✓	✓	hostage, kidnapping, siege	Partially
San Bernardino	San Bernardino, CA	12/2/2015	7	✓	✓	✓	car chase	Yes
Brussels	Brussels, Belgium	3/22/2016	6	✓	✓		manhunt	Yes
Westgate Mall	Nairobi, Kenya	9/21/2013 - 9/24/2013	5	✓		✓	hostage, siege	Yes
Boston Marathon	Boston, MA	4/15/2015	5	✓	✓	✓	manhunt	No
Beslan	Beslan, Russia	9/1/2004 - 9/3/2004	3	✓		✓	hostage, siege	Yes
London Bombings	London, UK	7/7/2005	2	✓	✓		None	Yes
Virginia Tech Massacre	Blacksburg, VA	4/16/2007	2		✓		None	Yes
9/11	New York, NY Arlington, VA Stonycreek Township, PA	9/11/2001	2	✓	✓		None	Yes

Definitions	Characteristics that Conflict with "Conventional Wisdom" (i.e. do not reflect a consensus)					Characteristics that Fail to Withstand Scrutiny (i.e. not robust)		
	Requires Multiple Attackers	Requires Multiple Assault Sites	Requires Multiple Assault Modes	Requires Simultaneous Assaults	Requires Assaults in Confined Spaces	Includes Confusing/Non-specific language	Ineffective Limits on Time and Geography	Fail to Include Non-Assault Phases
FEMA CCTA Grant Announcement	✓	✓					✓	✓
FEMA - National Exercise Program		✓		✓			✓	✓
National Tactical Officers Association article	✓	✓					✓	✓
International Association of Fire Chiefs article	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Anderson University professor	✓		✓				✓	✓
Consulting firm A		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Consulting firm B						✓	✓	✓
LSU National Center for Biomedical Research and Training						✓	✓	
Joint Counterterrorism Awareness Workshop Series (JCTAWS)							✓	✓
Journal of Emergency Medical Services							✓	✓

HEADLINE	02/12 Pakistani Taliban confirm deputy death
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/02/12/pakistani-taliban-confirm-no-2-killed-in-drone-us-strike.html
GIST	<p>DERA ISMAIL KHAN, Pakistan – The spokesman for the Pakistani Taliban has confirmed the death of their deputy leader in a recent U.S. drone strike in Pakistan's northwestern tribal region.</p> <p>Azam Tariq Mehsud, the spokesman for the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, says the group's deputy chief, Khalid Mehsud, also known as Commander Sajna, was killed in last Thursday's strike in the border village of Gorwak in North Waziristan, once a stronghold of militants.</p> <p>He said another commander, Mufti Noor Wali, has now been appointed as the group's deputy chief.</p>

	<p>Tariq says Wali enjoys the backing of Mullah Fazlullah, the leader of the Pakistani Taliban who is believed to be hiding in Afghanistan.</p> <p>Pakistani officials had earlier reported unconfirmed reports about Sajna's killing in a U.S. strike.</p> <p>Islamabad opposes the drone strikes, saying they violate its sovereignty.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Al-Shabaab skims foreign aid funds
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/12/africa/somalia-al-shabaab-foreign-aid-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Baidoa, Somalia (CNN)The murderous al Qaeda affiliate al-Shabaab is making millions of dollars each year by exploiting foreign aid money sent to Somalia by the very western nations who are trying to eliminate the terror group.</p> <p>A CNN investigation has revealed how money given directly by the United Nations to people displaced by conflict and famine is ending up in the hands of Africa's oldest terrorist organization.</p> <p>Former members of al-Shabaab and Somali intelligence agents said the terror group is extorting thousands of dollars per day through road blocks and taxes on merchants attempting to transport food and supplies to sell to internally displaced people in towns where they are concentrated.</p> <p>People who have fled their homes and are living in a sprawling camp in the central Somali city of Baidoa are screened by the UN and issued cash cards that the UN tops up with around \$80 to \$90 each month, enabling them to buy essentials from local merchants.</p> <p>UN officials say this direct payment system will avoid distorting local markets by flooding them with free food, and relieve the UN of the burden of running food convoys that are vulnerable to attacks and theft.</p> <p>Businessmen now truck food bought on the open market to places like Baidoa, where internally displaced people (IDPs) arrive every day. But they must pay al-Shabaab, which controls the main road into the town, to move their goods.</p> <p>Former members of the terror group and Somali intelligence agents said that tolls taken from trucks and other vehicles at just two al-Shabaab roadblocks on Somalia's busiest road raked in thousands every day.</p> <p>The UN has estimated that a single roadblock generated about \$5,000 per day on the road to Baidoa. 'Tax' collectors</p> <p>Speaking at a secret location on the outskirts of Baidoa, a former zaqat (tax) collector for al-Shabaab, who was captured in a recent raid by agents from Somalia's National Intelligence and Security Agency, confirmed that the extraction of tolls at roadblocks was one of the biggest sources of money for al-Shabaab.</p> <p>The two biggest sources were the road to Baidoa and the main artery which connects the capital Mogadishu with the agriculturally-rich Lower Shabelle region.</p> <p>The gouging is more subtle today than it was in the early 1990s, when local warlords deliberately starved hundreds of thousands of Somalis in order to profit from international aid money. Scenes of mass death on the streets of Baidoa in 1992 provoked the United States to lead a multinational UN-backed military intervention in the same year.</p> <p>In 2018, if local merchants don't pay up, "they're captured and killed," said a former al-Shabaab fighter who collected tax for eight years and now works with Somalia's National Intelligence and Security</p>

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HEADLINE	02/13 Terror groups still have interest in WMD
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/terror-groups-keen-wmd-never-been-more-difficult-prevent/
GIST	<p>Terrorist groups are as interested as ever in acquiring weapons of mass destruction in a global landscape where chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear agents have grown more difficult to track, senators heard from Defense officials last week.</p> <p>Assistant Defense Secretary for Homeland Defense and Global Security Kenneth Rapuano told the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities that “rapid technological advancements and increased access to dual use technologies, expertise, and materials that can be used for both peaceful and military purposes heighten the risk that adversaries can more easily seek or acquire WMD.”</p> <p>“It has never been more difficult to prevent adversaries from acquiring the materials or expertise necessary to develop WMD or use CBRN materials in intentional attacks,” he said. “Additionally, the speed, volume, and coverage of international travel means that naturally occurring pathogens of security concern can spread worldwide in days, potentially having the same catastrophic consequences of a deliberate biological attack.”</p> <p>The Intelligence Community, State Department, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Energy and Justice Department “all play critical roles in detecting threats, preventing attacks on the homeland, and working with foreign partners to stop and respond to incidents,” he added.</p> <p>Rapuano noted that best efforts at prevention only go so far, thus the agency coalition “must be prepared to contain and reduce CBRN threats once they have developed.”</p> <p>“DoD is postured to isolate, identify, neutralize, and dispose of CBRN threats before they can reach our borders,” he said. That includes concern about reports of ongoing use of chemical agents by the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, where “the U.S. and our coalition partners continue to exploit opportunities on the ground to better understand and disrupt their CW networks.”</p> <p>“We must anticipate that our adversaries will continue to evolve and develop increasingly sophisticated methods to pursue, develop, or deploy CBRN weapons,” Rapuano stressed.</p> <p>Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Joseph Osterman, deputy commander of United States Special Operations Command, emphasized the importance of increased integration of intelligence, planning and assessments in a counter-WMD fusion center “dedicated to coordinating information flow and planning, fusing intelligence and operations, and providing the WMD community of action a single point of contact for DOD operational capability.”</p> <p>Chairwoman Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) asked Rapuano which WMD threat concerned him most at this point.</p> <p>Rapuano picked biotechnology, due to the “rapid advances and ubiquitous availability” today.</p> <p>“Things that you can buy on the web now and essentially do a paint-by-numbers instruction were the province of Nobel Prize-winning scientists only decades ago, and that really levels the playing field for any actor looking to develop biotechnology, biological agents and novelly engineered agents that can present a real threat,” he added.</p> <p>The assistant secretary confirmed that “both Al-Qaeda and ISIS are interested in chemical, biological, nuclear,” and “certainly would be if they had opportunity to acquire the materials and know-how.” He</p>

wouldn't elaborate in open session.

Osterman said that "functional campaign planning" helps officials "observe where the technology transfer may occur between state and non-state actors."

"Also, where one non-state actor perhaps is working with another non-state actor in a different geographic location or in a functional capacity," the general added. "So we try to weave that in with the translation of our strategy and policy to actual tactical application of interdiction in order to basically reinforce the larger protocol efforts that are in place."

The CBRN Response Enterprise is nearly 19,000 strong, consisting of National Guard and Title X military arranged into teams. "We have the WMD-CSTs, the civil support teams. We have the enhanced response teams. We have a range of teams with a different mix of capabilities that go from decontamination, detection, medical effects, medical treatment," Rapuano said. "There is air transportation, ground transportation, the whole package that can be integrated that can either be commanded by the state National Guards and there's at least one team in every state. Or they can be authorized under Title X and under DOD command."

Response teams are deployed "on a routine basis starting with National Special Security Events, the Super Bowl, other large events, Fourth of July."

"And these assets will be pre-deployed in the vicinity of activities for which there may be some concern that they would be the target of an attack that might include WMD," Rapuano explained. "And they are prepared to respond in concert with all of the other assets that are typically deployed for those events — law enforcement and others."

DoD has been working "very closely" with Health and Human Services and DHS "to look at bio threats in general, including naturally occurring, to sync our research with them to ensure that we're covering the full landscape of what's naturally occurring and what perhaps could be intensified or developed for malevolent use," the assistant secretary told lawmakers.

Pressed on how the departments wouldn't get caught off-guard, with the 2014 spread of the Ebola virus offered as an example, Rapuano replied that "we're looking at ways that we can get quick production, just in time, but that's very difficult because you need that base in terms of the manufacturing base."

Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.) mused on whether ISIS stripped of its physical caliphate poses the same WMD threat.

"Because, obviously, this is about talent as much as anything, and intellectual capacity," Heinrich noted.

Osterman replied that "they are still a threat, to put it simply."

"Really, when we look at pathways, we're looking at intent, infrastructure and expertise to your point, production, weaponization, delivery systems in use," the general added. "And they've demonstrated not only that capability over time, but even though as they lose the geographic caliphate, that those individuals that have the technical knowledge and frankly, the level at which they were working and had been working is not one that by loss of that geographic caliphate that it would undermine their ability to continue to pursue the weapons of mass destruction capability."

Osterman stressed that "it's a very, very finite technical capability and human capital issue."

"And they are generally not front-line fighters. There are folks that were not necessarily easy to track, but they're ones that we've been working on for a number of years here and have ideas where they are if we haven't already basically taken them off the battle space," he said. "So that's where my concern is, and where we watch very closely again through the trans-regional approach is to make sure they're not leaving that area of operations and perhaps than becoming an export or, as we term it, an ex-ops threat to the

	United States proper.”
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HEADLINE	02/12 Feds: Md. man plotted major attack
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/12/maryland-man-who-supported-isis-plotted-major-attack-feds-say.html
GIST	<p>A Maryland man who pleaded guilty last year to conspiring to provide material support to the ISIS terror network was planning to carry out bloodshed in the U.S., prosecutors revealed Monday.</p> <p>Mohamed Elshinawy is tentatively scheduled to be sentenced March 9, but CBS Baltimore reported that prosecutors were trying to convince a judge to apply a federal terrorism enhancement to ensure a longer jail term.</p> <p>According to the plea deal to which Elshinaway and prosecutors agreed, he pledged allegiance to ISIS and received \$8,700 from people he believed were linked to the terror network.</p> <p>Prosecutors said Elshinawy was in contact with ISIS leaders who gave him a choice between two plots. One option, according to CBS Baltimore, was assassinating "a Texas businessman." The other option was detonating a bomb that would "kill a lot of people."</p> <p>Elshinawy apparently chose the second option, as prosecutors said he received videos from ISIS that included instructions on how to build a peroxide bomb. Prosecutors also said that Elshinawy was researching federal buildings in Baltimore as possible targets.</p> <p>Elshinawy's lawyers have admitted that their client was contacted by ISIS, but claimed prosecutors had no evidence that a specific plan was in progress.</p> <p>A judge is expected to rule Friday on whether the terrorism enhancement will be applied. Elshinawy faces up to 20 years in prison.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/13 US: ISIS yet to suffer 'enduring defeat'
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-tillerson-mideast/islamic-state-yet-to-suffer-enduring-defeat-says-tillerson-idUSKBN1FX0RK
GIST	<p>KUWAIT (Reuters) - The end of major combat operations against Islamic State does not mean the United States and its allies have achieved an enduring defeat of the militant group, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said on Tuesday.</p> <p>Tillerson, speaking at a meeting in Kuwait of the U.S-led global coalition against Islamic State, also said Washington had decided to provide an additional \$200 million of aid to stabilize liberated areas in Syria.</p> <p>“The end of major combat operations does not mean we have achieved the enduring defeat of ISIS,” he said, referring to the group using an acronym.</p> <p>“ISIS remains a serious threat to the stability of the region, our homelands, and other parts of the globe.”</p> <p>The hardline militants, who lost all territory they held in Iraq and are on the cusp of defeat in Syria, are trying to gain territory in other countries where they are active, he said, adding that “History must not be allowed to repeat itself elsewhere.”</p> <p>“In Iraq and Syria, ISIS is attempting to morph into an insurgency. In places like Afghanistan, the Philippines, Libya, West Africa, and others it is trying to carve out and secure safe havens.”</p>

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HEADLINE	02/13 Afghan officials, Taliban continue talks
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/afghan-officials-taliban-talk-wave-violence-53037104?
GIST	<p>Afghan officials are carrying out at least two tracks of talks with the Taliban, The Associated Press has learned, even after a month of brutal bombings and attacks by the militants that killed nearly 200 and despite President Donald Trump's angry rejection of any negotiations for now.</p> <p>The persistence of the back-channel contacts reflects the desire to keep a door open for reconciliation even as the Afghan government and its top ally, the United States, fumble for a strategy to end the protracted war, now entering its 17th year. Rifts within the Afghan government have grown vast, even as the Taliban gain territory and wage increasingly ruthless tactics.</p> <p>The United States has unleashed heavier air power against the Taliban and other militants. After the string of Taliban attacks in recent weeks, Trump angrily condemned the group. "We don't want to talk with the Taliban," he said. "There may be a time but it's going to be a long time."</p> <p>Still, Afghanistan's intelligence chief Masoom Stanikzai and its National Security Chief Mohammed Hanif Atmar continue to each talk separately to the Taliban, say those familiar with the backdoor negotiations. The problem, however, is that neither is talking to the other or to the High Peace Council, which was created by the government to talk peace with the Taliban, they said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the contacts.</p> <p>Hakim Mujahid, a member of the High Peace Council, confirmed that Stanikzai still has regular contacts with the Taliban's point man for peace talks, Mullah Abbas Stanikzai. The two are not related.</p> <p>Mujahid — who was the Taliban's representative to the United Nations during the group's five-year rule of Afghanistan that ended in 2001 — said the group would not respond well to Trump's tough talk. "The language of power, the language of threat will not convince Afghans to surrender," he said.</p> <p>Andrew Wilder, vice president of the Asia Program at the U.S. Institute of Peace, said multiple players in Kabul have contacts with the Taliban. "But this isn't being done in a coordinated manner to achieve clearly defined objectives," he said.</p> <p>Later this month, representatives from dozens of countries are to meet for a second time in the Afghan capital for the so-called Kabul process aimed at forging a path to peace. The first round was held in June.</p> <p>Still, the latest spate of violence has limited options for Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who is also fending off a mini-revolt within his own government, feuding with the vice president as well as a powerful northern governor.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the former No. 2 of the Taliban, Aga Jan Motasim, who still counts the radical religious movement's leader Mullah Habaibullah Akhunzada among his friends, warned that Trump's strategy of using the military to force a more compliant Taliban to the negotiation table could lead to more suicide attacks.</p> <p>From within his fortress style house in Kabul, protected by steel gates and gunmen, Motasim said he wants to be a bridge between the government and Taliban.</p> <p>Motasim was a senior member of the Taliban leadership shura, or council, until 2010 when he was shot 12 times after advocating peace negotiations with the Afghan government. Blame for the shooting has been directed at both elements within the Taliban who opposed peace talks and Pakistan's powerful spy agency, often seen as the force behind the Taliban.</p>

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HEADLINE	02/12 DHS pushes back on NBC report
SOURCE	http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/dhs-pushes-back-on-nbc-no-evidence-russians-manipulated-elections/article/2648823
GIST	<p>The Department of Homeland Security made the rare move Monday to officially discredit an NBC News report that claimed a top Trump official found that “Russians successfully penetrated the voter registration rolls of several U.S. states prior to the 2016 presidential election.”</p> <p>In a statement, DHS said the “breaking news” report was not only wrong and hyped but is also being ripped by other media.</p> <p>In the report, NBC interviewed Jeanette Manfra, the head of cybersecurity at the Department of Homeland Security, who said, “We saw a targeting of 21 states and an exceptionally small number of them were actually successfully penetrated.”</p> <p>In the statement, Manfra said, “let me be clear: we have no evidence – old or new - that any votes in the 2016 elections were manipulated by Russian hackers.”</p> <p>She added, “NBC News continues to falsely report my recent comments on attempted election hacking – which clearly mirror my testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee last summer – as some kind of ‘breaking news,’ incorrectly claiming a shift in the administration’s position on cyber threats. As I said eight months ago, a number of states were the target of Russian government cyber actors seeking vulnerabilities and access to U.S. election infrastructure. In the majority of cases, only preparatory activity like scanning was observed, while in a small number of cases, actors were able to access the system but we have no evidence votes were changed or otherwise impacted.”</p> <p>The NBC headline on one story was, “Russians penetrated U.S. voter systems, top U.S. official says.”</p> <p>Here is Manfra’s full statement:</p> <p>DHS Statement On NBC News Coverage Of Election Hacking</p> <p>WASHINGTON - Today, Jeanette Manfra, National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD) Assistant Secretary for the Office of Cybersecurity and Communications, released the following statement regarding the recent NBC news coverage on the Department of Homeland Security’s efforts to combat election hacking.</p> <p>“Recent NBC reporting has misrepresented facts and confused the public with regard to Department of Homeland Security and state and local government efforts to combat election hacking. First off, let me be clear: we have no evidence – old or new - that any votes in the 2016 elections were manipulated by Russian hackers. NBC News continues to falsely report my recent comments on attempted election hacking – which clearly mirror my testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee last summer – as some kind of “breaking news,” incorrectly claiming a shift in the administration’s position on cyber threats. As I said eight months ago, a number of states were the target of Russian government cyber actors seeking vulnerabilities and access to U.S. election infrastructure. In the majority of cases, only preparatory activity like scanning was observed, while in a small number of cases, actors were able to access the system but we have no evidence votes were changed or otherwise impacted.</p> <p>"NBC’s irresponsible reporting, which is being roundly criticized elsewhere in the media and by security experts alike, undermines the ability of the Department of Homeland Security, our partners at the Election Assistance Commission, and state and local officials across the nation to do our incredibly important jobs.</p>

While we'll continue our part to educate NBC and others on the threat, more importantly, the Department of Homeland Security and our state and local partners will continue our mission to secure the nation's election systems.

"To our state and local partners in the election community: there's no question we're making real and meaningful progress together. States will do their part in how they responsibly manage and implement secure voting processes. For our part, we're going to continue to support with risk and vulnerability assessments, offer cyber hygiene scans, provide real-time threat intel feeds, issue security clearances to state officials, partner on incident response planning, and deliver cybersecurity training. The list goes on of how we're leaning forward and helping our partners in the election community. We will not stop, and will stand by our partners to protect our nation's election infrastructure and ensure that all Americans can have confidence in our democratic elections."

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HEADLINE	02/12 Concerns: Amazon closed-door meeting
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/897996/amazons-closed-door-meeting/
GIST	<p>Some Seattle City Council members tried to hit the "refresh" button with Amazon on Friday, joining a meeting with regional leaders who are trying to build a better relationship with the company.</p> <p>But did their meeting on Friday violate open government laws?</p> <p>Three council members were spotted by KIRO 7 entering Amazon's headquarters for the meeting that was closed to the public and media.</p> <p>Councilmember Sally Bagshaw was asked if the public's business was being done behind closed doors.</p> <p>"That is such a wonderful question to ask," she said. "What I'm hopeful is that we have this conversation, establish relationships, then bring these meetings back here to City Hall."</p> <p>Toby Nixon of the Washington Coalition for Open Government says the discussions happening behind closed doors are of great public concern and what happened Friday is likely in violation of the Open Public Meetings Act.</p> <p>Under state law, if the majority of a council attend a meeting to conduct business — or even have a discussion about matters of public concern — it falls under the state's Open Public Meetings Act. In this case, if five of the nine council members attended the meeting, it would be a violation.</p> <p>But it's possible that a last-minute change of plans helped avoid a violation of the meetings act. According to The Seattle Times, council President Bruce Harrell apparently planned to miss Friday's meetings at Amazon.</p> <p>City Councilmember Kshama Sawant, who was not on the list to attend, summed up why the public should be concerned with the matter, "The public should find it troubling that elected officials, who have been elected by votes of ordinary people, are having a private meeting with billionaire interests."</p> <p>The meeting follows concerns that the city's attitude toward big business has put the relationship with Amazon on shaky ground. Those concerns grew after Amazon announced it would build a second headquarters elsewhere in the country. Only one West Coast city made it onto a shortlist of cities vying for HQ2.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/13 Vancouver B.C. offers prescription heroin
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SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/controversial-program-gives-prescription-heroin-to-users-to-shoot-up/281-517959502
GIST	<p>In Vancouver, B.C., a controversial program is fighting heroin-related deaths by giving users the drugs and then making sure they inject safely.</p> <p>Doctors and nurses supervise the process so there are no overdoses. The users say it works.</p> <p>"Up until the time I came to this program, I was living day to day, a bit homeless, in addiction for the last twenty years," says Les, a long time Vancouver resident, as he settles into a small clinic on East Hastings. "The heroin takes away all my problems, so I had a hard time kicking (it). I used to cope really on a daily basis."</p> <p>Now, he's just one of roughly 130 patients at the Crosstown Clinic, run by Providence Health in conjunction with Vancouver Coastal Health. It's been open since 2014, at a time when the opioid crisis exploded in the lower mainland of BC. The BC Coroner's office announced just last month a staggering number of deaths attributed to illicit drugs, more than 1,400 in 2017. That's four a day. BC Health leaders point specifically to a heroin supply contaminated with Fentanyl, heroin's cheaper more potent cousin, as a reason for the surge.</p> <p>"We're providing a legal, sterile, pharmaceutical predictable treatment," says Doctor Scott McDonald, who helps run the clinic, in the rough stretch on Hastings just outside downtown. A patient can come in, get their dosage, and inject under the watchful eye of nurses and doctors. "If people are using in a supervised setting like that - all that injection paraphernalia - contained in one spot - you won't find syringes in playgrounds or on sidewalks it's safe." McDonald says there is a waiting list of more than 330, given the small size and list of people who need help.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/13 Philippine workers seek to leave Kuwait
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/13/asia/philippines-domestic-workers-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Manila, Philippines (CNN)As many as 10,000 Filipino workers in Kuwait are expected to take up the Philippines government's offer of a free flight home after the body of their compatriot was found stuffed in a freezer.</p> <p>President Duterte's administration has ordered a ban on the deployment of overseas foreign workers to Kuwait after the deaths of several woman, including 29-year-old Joanna Demafelis.</p> <p>Demafelis' body was found in the freezer of her employers' home on Wednesday where authorities believe it could have been stored for up to one year.</p> <p>The offer of a free flight home was extended to the 10,000 Filipinos who had overstayed their visa in the Gulf state.</p> <p>"I will sell my soul to the devil to look for money so that you can come home and live comfortably here," Duterte said Tuesday. The Philippines President said last week he was ready to take "drastic steps" to protect Filipinos working abroad.</p> <p>As of Tuesday, 510 Philippines workers had returned on chartered flights, the country's Overseas Workers Welfare Administration told CNN.</p> <p>Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III said at a news conference Monday that thousands of Filipinos had turned up at the embassy in Kuwait since January 29 to initiate the repatriation process agreed with the Kuwait government. More than 2,200 had received travel documents so far.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Memo: no evidence crime BP agent death
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/12/us/new-memo-us-border-patrol-agent-investigation/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)There was no evidence a crime was committed when a US Border Patrol agent was killed more than two months ago while on patrol in West Texas, according to a new government memo obtained by CNN.</p> <p>The internal memo from Carla L. Provost, acting chief of US Border Patrol, is the third indication that there appears to be no evidence of foul play that led to the mysterious death of US Border Agent Rogelio "Roger" Martinez, who was found critically injured near a concrete-lined culvert along with his partner.</p> <p>Provost's February 8 memo, which was sent to Border Patrol employees, including the rank-and-file agents, lays out the findings of the FBI's investigation up to this point. It also echoes an earlier memo from Kevin McAleenan, acting commissioner of the US Customs and Border Protection, which oversees the border patrol.</p> <p>"Currently there is no evidence indicating the presence of other persons or the commission of a crime," Provost's memo said.</p> <p>"Unfortunately, the investigation up to this point has not revealed exactly what took place prior to the two [border patrol agents] being injured and what might have caused BPA Martinez to fall into the culvert," Provost's memo said.</p> <p>Martinez's family has been updated on the investigation, the memo said.</p> <p>"The family, as we all do, still has unanswered questions," the memo said.</p> <p>Martinez, 36, was patrolling alone near Interstate 10 when he stopped his vehicle about 12 miles east of Van Horn, Texas, on November 18. He died hours later of his injuries after he and his partner, Stephen "Michael" Garland, were found hurt near the culvert, a tunnel structure used for water drainage.</p> <p>The agents were patrolling in separate vehicles and it's unclear why both ended up at the bottom of the culvert, the FBI said.</p> <p>Last week, FBI investigators said they had found no evidence so far of an attack or scuffle in Martinez's death. The FBI said it had interviewed hundreds of people, combed through cellular data and analyzed DNA from the scene.</p> <p>McAleenan's memo said "there were no defensive wounds" on Martinez or his partner and "there was no third-party blood or DNA evidence from the scene or from the agents' clothing."</p> <p>The only footprints at the scene belonged to the agents and first responders, according to McAleenan's memo.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Near Olympics, Korea dog meat farm
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/winter-olympics-2018/2018/02/12/inside-grim-scene-korean-dog-meat-farm-miles-winter-olympics/32832200/
GIST	<p>WONJU, South Korea – A short drive from the burning Olympic torch and the excited throng of Winter Games spectators, there was no cheering outside the place where hundreds of dogs are packed in cages until they are killed for their meat.</p> <p>In the rural region of Wonju, down a winding country lane, sits a farm that provides dog meat to some of the thousands of South Korean restaurants where patrons order things such as dog salad, dog ribs, dog stew and dog hot pot.</p>

The grim surroundings of the farm pains the senses. The first thing to be noticed is the sound, pitiful whines and yelps of about 300 animals being kept in filthy cages until their execution.

Step closer and the stench fills the nostrils, a sickening waft that spreads over two long rows of cramped cages.

Some of the dogs do not survive long enough to be slaughtered. Lying discarded on the mud floor by the plastic awning, the carcass of a dead Tosa – a rare breed that originated in Japan. Also in the cages were Jindos, St. Bernards and golden Labradors.

Most were emaciated. Many had gaps in their fur where huge sores grew on their bodies. The cages are elevated, set up so dog feces drops through gaps in the wire bottom, collecting in huge piles beneath.

USA TODAY video journalist Sandy Hooper and myself filmed the gruesome scene for 15 minutes on Saturday morning, using GoPros and iPhones. When we approached the front of the property in an attempt to speak to the owners, a man screamed in Korean: "Turn it off, otherwise I'm going to throw it down!"

The Winter Olympics is supposed to be one giant commercial for South Korea and its winter tourism industry, but no public relations effort can cast a favorable light on the Korean dog meat industry. Pyeongchang organizing officials were aware enough of the likely international reaction to Korean dog meat eating practices that they paid nearby restaurants to take down signs advertising the product's availability and pleaded with them to take it off the menu – at least during the Olympics.

It didn't work. Two miles from Jinbu station, the main hub serving the primary mountain cluster of the Games, a trio of restaurants openly served dog products. They had amended their frontage signs to remove the word "bosintang" (dog meat stew) and promote goat meat instead, but that was only outside.

Walk inside and glance up at the giant white board and the first four menu items, in English and Korean, are derived from man's best friend. An elderly Korean man removed his shoes, entered the room, ordered the stew and sat down at a row of tables on the floor. Soon, he was served the thick brown concoction and began slurping down the soup until it was all gone.

In Korean culture, dog meat is said to have mythical properties that boost restorative powers and increase virility. Fearing a backlash from traditionalists, the Korean government won't amend the law, despite president Moon Jae-In having adopted a dog saved from the meat industry.

Pyeongchang organizers wish government officials would take action.

"We are aware of the international concern around the consumption of dog meat in Korea," an organizing committee statement read. "This is a matter which the government should address. We hope that this issue will not impact on the delivery or reputation of the Games and the province and we will support the work of the province and government on this topic as needed. Also, dog meat will not be served at any Games venue."

Eating dog meat is a custom here and it is hard to dispute that. In the United States millions of animals of countless varieties are slaughtered each year for meat. To some, the plight of Korean dogs is scarcely any different to that of American chicken, cows or pigs. To others, there is something vastly different about a dog, given its relationship to humans.

Activists in Korea don't like the use of dogs for meat but mainly focus their protest efforts on the methods of killing the animals and their conditions in captivity.

"If the Korean people stop eating dog meat there will not be the market for it," Kim Jun-Won, president of the Dasom animal rights organization said, fighting back tears when shown photographs of our footage as we returned to our vehicle. "But this is wrong and it breaks my heart. The people who keep animals this

way and kill them? They are the devil.”

Demand is decreasing, with dog meat meals not particularly popular with younger members of Korean society. As well as the one described above, USA TODAY Sports visited two other farms in the area that showed signs of being operational recently. Both were closed, with the dried feces and even bones of deceased dogs still visible.

“The problem is that while smaller facilities close due to lack of business, larger, better organized ones are popping up,” Kiana Kang, director of programs and special projects of American non-profit rescue organization Animal Hope and Wellness said. “This is the two Koreas. There is the beauty and the culture, and then there is this.”

Korean dog farmers claim their sole intention is to try to make a living and insist the animals are the same as livestock.

A group of Winter Olympic athletes, including Canadian figure skater Meagan Duhamel, freestyle skier Gus Kenworthy and snowboarder Lindsey Jacobellis took part in a recent public service announcement in a bid to raise awareness about the Korean dog meat trade. Duhamel already owns a rescue Korean dog.

Meanwhile, at the Games, the first medals were being doled out. The plight of Korea’s dogs isn’t going to be the major narrative of the Games, the events themselves and the lingering political turmoil dominate the headlines.

But it is here, happening not far from the Olympics, and it’s tough to stomach.

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HEADLINE	02/12 Warming accelerating sea level rise
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/satellites-show-warming-accelerating-sea-level-rise-53027617?cid=clicksource_79_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>Melting ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica are speeding up the already fast pace of sea level rise, new satellite research shows.</p> <p>At the current rate, the world's oceans on average will be at least 2 feet (61 centimeters) higher by the end of the century compared to today, according to researchers who published in Monday's Proceedings of the National Academies of Sciences.</p> <p>Sea level rise is caused by warming of the ocean and melting from glaciers and ice sheets. The research, based on 25 years of satellite data, shows that pace has quickened, mainly from the melting of massive ice sheets. It confirms scientists' computer simulations and is in line with predictions from the United Nations, which releases regular climate change reports.</p> <p>"It's a big deal" because the projected sea level rise is a conservative estimate and it is likely to be higher, said lead author Steve Nerem of the University of Colorado.</p> <p>Outside scientists said even small changes in sea levels can lead to flooding and erosion.</p> <p>"Any flooding concerns that coastal communities have for 2100 may occur over the next few decades," Oregon State University coastal flooding expert Katy Serafin said in an email.</p> <p>Of the 3 inches (7.5 centimeters) of sea level rise in the past quarter century, about 55 percent is from warmer water expanding, and the rest is from melting ice.</p> <p>But the process is accelerating, and more than three-quarters of that acceleration since 1993 is due to melting ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica, the study shows.</p>

Like weather and climate, there are two factors in sea level rise: year-to-year small rises and falls that are caused by natural events and larger long-term rising trends that are linked to man-made climate change. Nerem's team removed the natural effects of the 1991 Mt. Pinatubo eruption that temporarily chilled Earth and the climate phenomena El Nino and La Nina, and found the accelerating trend.

Sea level rise, more than temperature, is a better gauge of climate change in action, said Anny Cazenave, director of Earth science at the International Space Science Institute in France, who edited the study. Cazenave is one of the pioneers of space-based sea level research.

Global sea levels were stable for about 3,000 years until the 20th century when they rose and then accelerated due to global warming caused by the burning of coal, oil and natural gas, said climate scientist Stefan Rahmstorf of the Potsdam Institute in Germany, who wasn't part of the study.

Two feet of sea level rise by the end of the century "would have big effects on places like Miami and New Orleans, but I don't still view that as catastrophic" because those cities can survive — at great expense — that amount of rising seas under normal situations, Nerem said.

But when a storm hits like 2012's Superstorm Sandy, sea level rise on top of storm surge can lead to record-setting damages, researchers said.

Some scientists at the American Geophysical Union meeting last year said Antarctica may be melting faster than predicted by Monday's study.

Greenland has caused three times more sea level rise than Antarctica so far, but ice melt on the southern continent is responsible for more of the acceleration.

"Antarctica seems less stable than we thought a few years ago," Rutgers climate scientist Robert Kopp said.

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HEADLINE	02/12 Feds: 'fake general' used copter for date
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/feds-military-impersonator-helicopter-impress-woman-53026847
GIST	<p>A man pretending to be a three-star U.S. Army general wanted to impress a woman when he unexpectedly landed in a chartered helicopter at the headquarters of a North Carolina technology company last year, a federal agent testified Monday.</p> <p>Details about the strange case of Christian Desgroux emerged at a hearing before a federal magistrate, who ordered that the defendant remain in jail pending his upcoming arraignment. The 57-year-old is charged with pretending to be a military officer, which carries a maximum of three years in prison.</p> <p>It was around sunset on Nov. 6 when the pilot of the helicopter chartered by Desgroux landed on a soccer field at the sprawling corporate campus of SAS Institute in Cary.</p> <p>As security officers approached, Desgroux stepped out wearing a "full military battle dress uniform" and displaying three stars that implied a rank of lieutenant general, Homeland Security Special Agent Tony Bell testified.</p> <p>"He saluted the security officers, and they actually saluted him back," Bell said.</p> <p>A suspicious security supervisor confronted Desgroux, who told him he was there to pick up a female employee to take her to Fort Bragg for a classified briefing that had been authorized by President Donald Trump.</p>

But none of it was true: Desgroux later acknowledged to federal agents that he had never served in the U.S. military, Bell said.

The woman, a longtime acquaintance of Desgroux, expected him to arrive in a car for a visit. Instead they went on a 30-minute helicopter ride around Raleigh, Bell said.

"She had no idea that he was flying a helicopter to pick her up," Bell said. Bell testified that Desgroux wanted to pursue a romantic relationship, but the woman is married.

She and the pilot, who has not been charged, appear to have been swept up in Desgroux's strange behavior.

"She didn't know what to make of it," Bell told the judge. "She just went along with it."

Bell testified that investigators suspect Desgroux is mentally ill, but didn't elaborate.

Still, the episode was no laughing matter. After the woman returned, SAS security staff notified local police — and a joint terrorism task force soon joined the case.

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HEADLINE	02/12 Suspicious white powder letter to Trump Jr
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/donald-trump-jrs-wife-hospital-letter-white-powder/story?id=53023384
GIST	<p>Donald Trump Jr.'s wife was taken to a hospital in New York City today after opening a package at her home that contained an unknown white powder, according to authorities.</p> <p>Vanessa Trump, 40, was examined at New York-Presbyterian Weill Cornell Medical Center as a precaution, police said.</p> <p>The suspicious letter was sent to Trump Jr.'s apartment in Manhattan this morning, police said. Emergency medical services, firefighters and police were called to the apartment just after 10 a.m. after Vanessa Trump opened the letter, police said.</p> <p>The letter had a Boston postmark and was addressed Trump Jr., a source told ABC News. It contained a note indicating the sender was angry, said the source, who did not elaborate.</p> <p>Vanessa Trump reported feeling dizzy after she opened the enveloped, according to law enforcement sources. The letter was not anti-President Donald Trump but addressed Trump Jr. directly, the source said.</p> <p>Vanessa Trump and two other people at the apartment were decontaminated by firefighters at the scene before being taken to the hospital, according to police.</p> <p>She thanked New York City firefighters, police and the Secret Service for their "quick response" in making sure she was safe.</p> <p>Trump Jr. thanked first responders in a tweet for their "decisive action" and support.</p> <p>"The substance was deemed to be nonhazardous and is being transported to a lab in New York City for further analysis," NYPD Assistant Commissioner J. Peter Donald said.</p> <p>The U.S. Secret Service is also investigating, the NYPD said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Ex-SCL manager charged w/voyeurism
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/local/crime/article/Charge-City-Light-employee-planted-GoPro-in-12607804.php
GIST	<p>A 64-year-old former Seattle City Light employee has been charged with attempted voyeurism in connection with a camera that was recovered from a bathroom stall nearly a year ago.</p> <p>Brent Schmidt is accused of planting a GoPro camera inside a toilet paper dispenser at a City Light office. He admitted to installing the camera there, according to court records, but claimed he only used it to film himself and typically removed it from the restroom after he did so.</p> <p>Another employee discovered the camera Feb. 17 at the South Service Center in the 3600 block of Fourth Avenue South in Sodo. He was pulling toilet paper from the dispenser when he found a GoPro camera adhered to the stall with Velcro, according to the incident report.</p> <p>A hole had been cut out of the bottom of the toilet paper dispenser and the camera was situated halfway inside, police reports say. The power was on.</p> <p>The man reported the discovery to a supervisor, who pulled the camera off the wall and switched it off. They brought it to Schmidt and when they mentioned it was in the men's restroom, his eyes reportedly "bugged out," court records indicate. When they showed him where they found it, "he began to physically shake and his face got red," according to the incident report.</p> <p>Schmidt allegedly told the employees he would report the matter to a director and kept the camera.</p> <p>Four days later, he told the workers it was his camera and he placed it in the stall to film himself, police reports say. He claimed he deleted the footage after viewing it and did not use city equipment to look at it.</p> <p>Schmidt then met with the director to report his actions, court records indicate. He is alleged to have admitted to placing the camera in the bathroom since the previous December, but maintained that he did not use it to film others. According to charging papers, he claimed that the last time he used it, he forgot to remove it from the stall.</p> <p>The director seized Schmidt's office keys and access card at that time, Seattle police report. A search of the GoPro yielded three blacked out videos.</p> <p>Schmidt was a manager who made about \$60 per hour, according to city salary data.</p> <p>Employed at City Light since 1995, Schmidt reached a settlement with the city in April 2017 that allowed him to use all accrued paid leave until May 2017, when he was deemed retired.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Guns, pills found in West Seattle search
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/hundreds-of-pills-19-guns-found-in-west-seattle-search
GIST	<p>SEATTLE -- Seattle police officers found hundreds of pills and 19 guns Sunday morning when they served a search warrant at a West Seattle home.</p> <p>Police say officers with the Southwest Precinct Anti-Crime Team went to the home in the 7000 block of 18 Avenue Southwest at 10 a.m. Sunday.</p> <p>A 28-year-old man tried to get away from arriving officers though a back door. But officers arrested him, police said.</p>

	<p>Police say a search turned up 189 hydrocodone pills, 276 amphetamine pills and 3.5 grams of methamphetamine. Officers also found 11 pistols, five rifles and three shotguns. Police say one rifle with modified with a bump stock, which allows a semiautomatic rifle to fire faster.</p> <p>The man was book into jail for investigation of drug offenses. Police are working with prosecutors about possible weapons charges.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Seller fake 'Hamilton' tickets arrested
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/police-arrest-scammer-selling-fake-hamilton-tickets/281-518060236
GIST	<p>Seattle police arrested a ticket scammer accused of selling fake Hamilton tickets to people in King County.</p> <p>The Seattle Police Dept. first learned of the suspect back in June 2017 when they obtained surveillance video of the man breaking in a Wedgwood restaurant. Later, detectives learned the man stole ticket stock during a break-in at a U-District music venue, according to an official release.</p> <p>The man was attempting to sell tickets to Hamilton, a musical in production at Seattle's Paramount Theatre.</p> <p>Detectives discovered ticket paper and a laptop used to print forged tickets at his home. They believe dozens of people could be victims of his scam.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 What is Atomwaffen? Linked to violence?
SOURCE	https://www.boston.com/news/national-news/2018/02/12/what-is-atomwaffen-a-neo-nazi-group-linked-to-multiple-murders
GIST	<p>When a Florida man who had recently converted to Islam fatally shot two of his roommates, the name came up.</p> <p>When the roommate he did not shoot was sentenced to five years for homemade explosives, the name came up.</p> <p>And when an arrest was made after a 19-year-old college student was found dead with more than 20 stab wounds, the name came up.</p> <p>That name was the Atomwaffen Division, a tiny paramilitary neo-Nazi group that has been linked to the suspects in at least five killings in the United States. It is among the most violent groups on the far-right, a mostly decentralized organization about which much is unknown.</p> <p>The Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League have both done research into the group, and spoke to The New York Times about their findings.</p> <p>What is Atomwaffen?</p> <p>Atomwaffen or the Atomwaffen Division is a small extremist group that hopes to use terroristic violence to bring about the collapse of what its literature calls the "System," the government and other institutions that organize society. It formed in a now defunct online forum, Iron March, and is organized into distinct cells that comprise a handful of members.</p> <p>Researchers disagree on how large the group is. Keegan Hankes, an intelligence analyst at the Southern Poverty Law Center, cited a ProPublica report that said the group had about 80 members.</p>

But Carla Hill, a senior researcher at the Anti-Defamation League, said she had no evidence that the group had that many members. She estimated that there were between 24 and 36 actively participating in weapons trainings and hate camps held by the group. All agree that the group's nebulous nature makes the number hard to pin down.

Atomwaffen means "atomic weapons" in German.

Researchers believe that some cells are based in Texas and Florida, and Hill, based on pictures she has seen of the organized groups, believes there are others in Washington, near the Seattle area, and Richmond, Virginia.

But details about the group are difficult to confirm.

What do they believe?

Atomwaffen describe themselves as national socialists, or neo-Nazis, with an eschatological viewpoint. That means they expect and invite a breakdown of society that will lead to a race war, after which they intend to construct a new society based on their political principles.

They hold virulently racist and anti-Semitic views informed by the writings of James Mason, a member of the American Nazi party who idolized Hitler and Charles Manson.

Hankes said the group fetishized violence and looked to use degeneracy to establish order in a depraved modern world. He said it was difficult to estimate how many members had military training, but said some literature encouraged adherents to join the Armed Forces to get free weapons and combat training while staying underground.

"This group is so extreme that they cause a ton of controversy within the radical right," he said.

Other white supremacist and white nationalist groups have disavowed Atomwaffen, and have even speculated about whether the group is a plot to discredit their movement

Hankes said that recently the group had also embraced ideas associated with the occult and Satanism, ideologies that have further estranged its members from other white supremacists.

How is the group linked to violence?

In the past year, the group's name has cropped up several times in connection with homicide investigations.

— In May, a Florida teenager, Devon Arthurs, told police he had killed two of his neo-Nazi roommates for disrespecting his Muslim faith. (He had recently converted.) His arrest led to the discovery that a fourth roommate, Brandon Russell, had been stockpiling explosive material. Russell, who told law enforcement officials he was a member of Atomwaffen, was revealed to be a founding member of the group, and was sentenced to five years in prison for having stockpiled the explosives.

— In December, a husband and wife were shot dead in their Virginia home three days before Christmas by a teenage neo-Nazi. The suspect was identified as Nicholas Giampa by HuffPost, which found him to have been influenced by neo-Nazi literature republished online by Atomwaffen.

— Last month, ProPublica reported that Samuel Woodward, who has been charged with the murder of a college student, Blaze Bernstein, was a member of the group.

The organization has promoted its cause on college campuses in Washington, Pennsylvania and Illinois, according to the Anti-Defamation League.

Is the FBI investigating Atomwaffen?

An FBI spokesman would not comment directly.

“The FBI does not and will not police ideology, but has been investigating the criminal activities of white supremacy extremists for nearly a century,” he said. “When an individual takes violent action based on belief or ideology and breaks the law, the FBI will enforce the rule of law.”

In an interview Friday, Danny Coulson, the former deputy assistant director of the FBI, explained that the bureau was somewhat constrained in what it could do when no violence had been committed.

Coulson was one of the leaders of the investigation into the 1995 bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City by Timothy McVeigh, who is much admired in Atomwaffen literature. He also led the operation that ended in the death of neo-Nazi leader Robert Jay Mathews and helped bring to justice the white supremacists of the Covenant, Sword and Arm of the Lord.

He said that once a group had been associated with murder or other forms of violence, it would become much easier to place wiretaps on them, and place informers in their midst, which the FBI has found relatively easy to do.

Coulson called participants in such groups “inadequate personalities” who chose to hate others because of their own insecurities.

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HEADLINE	02/12 Mexican drug cartels in Colombia
SOURCE	http://www.mexidata.info/id4507.html
GIST	<p>Colombian authorities have claimed that Mexican cartels are attempting to establish themselves in the South American country. However, the presence of suspected cartel members in Colombia is more likely an indication that Mexican organized crime groups are seeking new partners to fill the vacuum created by FARC’s demobilization and the Urabeños’ decline, two of their closest allies.</p> <p>Citing Colombia’s Attorney General’s Office, the counternarcotics police, and the Ombudsman’s Office, El Tiempo reported that Mexican organized crime groups have established a presence in the Colombian departments of Antioquia, Cundinamarca, Norte de Santander, Valle del Cauca, Nariño, Meta, Guaviare, Vichada y Córdoba.</p> <p>According to an intelligence report by Colombia’s Anti-narcotics Police, Mexican cartels including the Sinaloa Cartel, the Jalisco Cartel New Generation (Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación – CJNG), and the Zetas are attempting to take control of the drug trade after their Colombian partners “failed to meet quotas for Colombian coca,” El Tiempo reported. This failure to meet quotas, the report claims, was the result of FARC’s demobilization and the weakening of the Urabeños.</p> <p>The report added that Mexican cartels are sending their members to the regions with the highest concentration of coca crops as well as to strategic ports within Colombia. According to El Tiempo, authorities have detected groups of as many as ten Mexicans coordinating drug shipments from the Gulf of Urabá.</p> <p>Furthermore, in the beginning of 2017, Colombian authorities investigated 103 Mexicans involved in drug trafficking cases, according to statements made by the Colombian Attorney General, Néster Humberto Martínez, and published by El Tiempo. El Tiempo’s report does not include figures from previous years to allow for comparison.</p> <p>InSight Crime Analysis</p>

The presence of suspected members of Mexican organized crime groups in Colombia should not be understood as an indication that Mexican cartels are attempting to seize control of the country's drug trade.

Although it might be in the groups' best interests to create more vertical distribution chains, entering into a criminal landscape as complex as Colombia's would present enormous challenges. Since Mexican cartels' current business model has worked relatively well to date, these challenges would likely outweigh the potential benefits.

Therefore, the growing presence of Mexican organized crime groups in Colombia should be considered within the context of the South American country's changing criminal landscape. The FARC, once Mexican cartels' principal partner in the region, have demobilized, and the Urabeños, who succeeded the FARC in that role, have been severely weakened by a sustained government offensive. As a result, Mexican cartels have been forced to seek new allies to ensure that the drug trade continues to flow smoothly.

For years, Mexican organized crime groups have regularly sent emissaries to Colombia to scout new partners, supervise drug production, and ensure quality control. It is not a coincidence that Colombian authorities have recently detected a Mexican presence in regions that were formerly controlled by the FARC and the Urabeños.

Nariño, for example, a department that produces more coca than Bolivia or Peru, used to be a FARC stronghold. Following FARC's demobilization, dissident elements of the guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional – ELN), and hybrid groups called “bandas criminales” (BACRIM), or criminal bands, began to operate in the region. Similarly, the historically FARC controlled departments of Guaviare and Meta now serve as the base for the First Front of the FARC dissidence. It therefore makes sense that Mexican organized crime groups would seek to forge alliances with these actors in order to guarantee the continued flow of narcotics.

Another example is the department of Córdoba, which was historically the territory of the paramilitary groups that gave rise to the Urabeños. With the Urabeños facing threats from new criminal groups, it is likely that the Mexicans have begun looking for new alliances in this region as well.

On the other hand, the face of drug trafficking in Colombia is changing. The time when a single cartel controlled the entire supply chain has come to an end and now smaller groups control each separate link of the production and trafficking chain. Mexican cartels must now subcontract to different organizations in order to move their product from its origin to its destination, and must have an understanding of the dynamics between these organizations.

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HEADLINE	02/13 Ex-Everett firefighter federal custody
SOURCE	http://www.heraldnet.com/news/disgraced-ex-everett-firefighter-now-in-federal-custody/
GIST	<p>EVERETT — A convicted sex offender who also is a former Everett firefighter is now at risk of a decade or more in prison after federal authorities took jurisdiction in a case that led to his arrest last month in Wyoming.</p> <p>David “Pete” Vier, 63, appeared last week in U.S. District Court in Cheyenne, Wyoming, where a magistrate ordered him detained in federal custody. He is being held for investigation of knowingly transporting two girls, 12 and 14, across state lines with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity.</p> <p>Vier, of Granite Falls, at one point oversaw emergency medical services for the Everett Fire Department. He retired in 2014 after he was arrested in a Seattle police sting attempting to obtain sex from somebody he thought was a 15-year-old girl. He not only lost his Washington paramedic license, the conviction also requires him to register as a sex offender.</p>

Vier was arrested Jan. 20 by the Sweetwater County Sheriff's Office in Wyoming. Two teen girls used his cellphone to call for help, officials said. They were hiding in a restaurant and asked for help getting away from Vier, whom they accused of sexual misconduct, according to an affidavit filed in court by an FBI agent.

The girls said they met Vier in Seattle and told him they were trying to reach Kansas. He allegedly offered to give them a ride.

Along the way, Vier reportedly groped the girls and demanded sexual activity, eventually paying one \$40 for a sex act, the affidavit said.

The girls told officials they saw homemade pornography involving young girls on Vier's cellphone, as well as messages between Vier and a friend about kidnapping and rape.

The girls said they fled when Vier demanded they agree to sex in a motel room. He told investigators he believed the girls were 16 and had been left homeless by family.

"Vier denied sexual activity with the girls," the affidavit said.

A search of his truck turned up partially used vials of sedatives, including Amidate, a drug that can be used to induce sleep. Investigators also seized a duffle bag that reportedly contained, among other things, sex toys, riding crops, whips, blindfolds, Velcro restraints, a dog collar and a leash, court papers say.

A court-approved search of Vier's phone found "a vast amount of data pertaining to non-consensual sexual acts" and showed "what appeared to be a fixation on younger females," Wyoming officials said earlier.

Vier's 2014 arrest brought to light years of bad behavior on and off his fire department job, much of it revolving around his mistreatment of women. He also took part in a pattern of ambulance billing errors by the city, which led to a recent six-figure federal settlement.

Vier faces 10 years to life in federal prison if convicted of the allegations in Wyoming, court papers say.

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HEADLINE	02/13 China charges ex-Politburo w/bribery
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/41f4fd8eff45489cb14dbae675798b5d/China-charges-former-rising-political-star-with-bribery
GIST	<p>BEIJING (AP) — A former Politburo member once seen as a rising star in Chinese politics has been charged with bribery, becoming the highest-ranking serving official to be ensnared by President Xi Jinping's sweeping anti-corruption campaign, now in its sixth year.</p> <p>The Supreme People's Procuratorate announced the indictment of Sun Zhengcai, the former Communist Party leader of the western megacity of Chongqing, on its website Tuesday.</p> <p>The announcement said Sun "illegally accepted huge amounts of money and goods" from others in return for providing them with benefits.</p> <p>The indictment focused on bribery but leaders have made it clear Sun's alleged offenses were largely political in nature.</p> <p>The chairman of China's securities regulator said at a major party meeting last year that Sun and other senior figures prosecuted in the crackdown were "conspiring openly to usurp party leadership."</p> <p>Sun was expelled from the party and dismissed from public office in September because he was suspected of "serious discipline violations," a phrase that usually refers to bribery and other graft.</p>

Sun, 53, sat on the Politburo and had been seen as a candidate for promotion to the body's Standing Committee, the select group of leaders who constitute the apex of political power in China.

He was removed suddenly from his Chongqing post and replaced by protege Chen Min'er, who is tipped to be promoted to the Politburo, but not its Standing Committee.

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HEADLINE	02/12 City settles w/cop 'not shooting suspect'
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/west-virginia-city-pays-former-officer-dollar175000-to-settle-lawsuit-after-he-decided-not-to-shoot-distraught-suspect/ar-BBJ2ASY?li=BBnbfL&ocid=HPCDHP
GIST	<p>A West Virginia city has agreed to pay a former police officer \$175,000 to settle a wrongful-termination lawsuit after he was fired following his decision not to shoot a distraught suspect who was holding a gun.</p> <p>The lawsuit accused the Weirton Police Department of wrongfully terminating officer Stephen Mader after he chose not to shoot a 23-year-old man while responding to a domestic disturbance in 2016.</p> <p>"At the end of the day, I'm happy to put this chapter of my life to bed," Mader said in a news release by the American Civil Liberties Union of West Virginia.</p> <p>"The events leading to my termination were unjustified and I'm pleased a joint resolution has been met. My hope is that no other person on either end of a police call has to go through this again."</p> <p>The incident occurred May 6, 2016, when Mader responded to a domestic-disturbance call and found Ronald "R.J." Williams Jr. with an unloaded handgun.</p> <p>Mader told CNN last year that Williams was "visibly choked up" and told Mader to shoot him. As a Marine veteran who served in Afghanistan, Mader told CNN that he concluded Williams wasn't a threat and so he tried to de-escalate the situation.</p> <p>As Mader was trying to get Williams to drop his gun, two other Weirton police officers arrived. Mader told CNN that Williams raised his gun and was immediately shot and killed by one of the other officers. A state investigation found the officer's actions were justified.</p> <p>On June 7, 2016, the Weirton Police Department fired Mader. The lawsuit, filed in May 2017, claims the department fired him because of "failure to meet probationary standards of an officer" and "apparent difficulties in critical incident reasoning."</p> <p>In September 2016, Weirton City Manager Travis Blosser told CNN that Mader was fired not just for the Williams shooting but for "a totality of circumstances," which included a March 2016 incident where Mader allegedly entered a man's vehicle without a warrant to put a ticket on the dashboard and an April 2016 incident where Mader and other officers failed to report an elderly woman's death as suspicious. The woman's death was later ruled a homicide.</p> <p>Mader told CNN that in the March 2016 incident, he was writing a second parking ticket for a vehicle when the owner came out cursing at him so he responded with using the f-word. In the April 2016 incident, Mader said emergency responders told officers that the woman died of natural causes.</p> <p>When reached for comment Monday, Blosser said the city had "no comment regarding the settlement."</p> <p>Joseph Cohen, ACLU-WV executive director, said Mader's termination was "yet another incident exposing the toxic culture that infects far too many police departments in America."</p>

"We need to give law enforcement officers tools to effectively serve their communities. That means we need to invest in de-escalation training, implicit bias training and crisis intervention training. Hopefully the resolution of this lawsuit will send a message to the City of Weirton and police departments across the country that our communities deserve thoughtful, compassionate, transparent law enforcement."

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HEADLINE	02/09 Seattle police: Everett man sold grenades
SOURCE	http://www.heraldnet.com/news/everett-area-man-accused-of-peddling-guns-janky-grenades/
GIST	<p>EVERETT — An Everett-area man is accused of selling undercover police a bunch of firearms and janky grenades. The latter had been doctored at home with tape and epoxy.</p> <p>He was arrested Wednesday by Seattle police after a months-long operation. He remained in the Snohomish County Jail on Friday, his bail set at \$100,000.</p> <p>The man, 32, is accused of multiple crimes involving explosives, along with trafficking in stolen property and being a felon in possession of a firearm. Court records list addresses for him in Everett, Sultan and Seattle.</p> <p>Detectives from Seattle began investigating a stolen guns ring in July, according to the arrest report. They were told the man had inventory, prompting a meetup in September on Everett Mall Way. At some point, the group moved to Broadway to continue their discussion.</p> <p>There, the man reportedly sold an undercover officer a military-grade assault rifle and a pistol. The rifle later was determined to be stolen. The transaction also included four anti-personnel grenades, known for their resemblance to pineapples.</p> <p>The man allegedly said he had 100 more grenades available, which he could fill with an explosive powder mix.</p> <p>An officer paid \$1,110 for the first round of loot, according to the report. The suspect allegedly floated the idea of burglarizing the home of a firearms dealer to get more guns.</p> <p>Later, explosive experts from the FBI confirmed his devices were viable. The grenades were designed for training exercises but could be altered with the powder to become similar to a pipe bomb, according to the report.</p> <p>In September, the officer met with a woman on Broadway, who was carrying grenades for the suspect. The officer paid \$920 for five grenades, four fuses and the woman's third-party transaction fee.</p> <p>The next month, another purchase was planned at a hotel between Everett and Lynnwood. The suspect brought rifles, a pistol and a shotgun. He said he had more grenades to sell, but they were in storage and a friend needed to finish welding the pieces together. The following day, another half-dozen firearms changed hands, including a sawed-off shotgun.</p> <p>On Oct. 20, the officer purchased four grenades that appeared to be sealed with household epoxy and topped with white tape.</p> <p>The man allegedly warned the officer that some of the powder needed to be removed before the grenades were assembled, so they wouldn't detonate prematurely. The officer asked for the man's assistance, but he declined, "claiming the devices were too unstable," the report says.</p> <p>The papers filed in Everett District Court do not describe the circumstances of the recent arrest. The man was not the only suspect targeted in the regional sting.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Military adds 4,000+ to gun ban list
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/12/us/gun-background-check-backlog-military-dishonorable-discharge-invs/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Since an ex-US airman shot more than two dozen people in a Texas church in November, the US military has added more than 4,000 names to the nation's list of dishonorably discharged military personnel banned from owning firearms -- a sign of what has been a massive hole in the nation's gun buying background check system.</p> <p>The gunman in the Sutherland Springs massacre had been kicked out of the military for assaulting his wife. By federal law, that should have prevented the shooter from purchasing his semiautomatic rifle, but the US Air Force later admitted it had not submitted his records to the FBI's background check system.</p> <p>In the months since, the US Department of Defense has scrambled to ensure all of its branches have properly updated the FBI's system to track personnel kicked out of the military who are barred from owning firearms.</p> <p>That push, a CNN review has found, has uncovered a backlog so significant that the FBI's tally of dishonorably discharged former service members has ballooned by 4,284 names in just three months, a 38% leap.</p> <p>The FBI figures track the reasons civilians and ex-military personnel are barred from owning guns. The agency separately quantifies dishonorable discharges, which includes personnel convicted by a general court-martial. Other types of military dismissals that could legally stop someone from owning a gun are not broken out from the civilian population in the FBI data.</p> <p>Since 2015, the number of people barred from owning firearms because they were dishonorably discharged had hovered at about 11,000, according to FBI statistics published online. That number suddenly jumped to 14,825 last November, then to 15,583 in December. It now stands at 15,597.</p> <p>The Defense Department has not yet publicly acknowledged that the military has vastly expanded its submissions since the shooting. The belatedly filed reports mean that, for an unknown period, more than 4,000 people had the opportunity to buy guns from dealers while they should have been legally barred from it.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Pioneer Sq. crime rates dropping
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/02/12/spd-investigating-pioneer-square-shooting-data-shows-neighborhood-crime-rates-dropping/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE – A teenager is recovering at Harborview Medical Center after police say someone shot him Sunday evening near Seattle's Pioneer Square neighborhood.</p> <p>It's just the latest in a string of incidents in the neighborhood that has some neighbors worried for their safety.</p> <p>While Seattle police are hunting down suspects, crime rates are actually ticking downwards in the historic area.</p> <p>It's Seattle's original neighborhood; lunch trucks are busy serving food – tourists are visiting landmarks. But less than 24 hours ago, police officers and crime tape swarmed the neighborhood around the 100 block of Cherry Street.</p>

Around 7 p.m. Sunday, investigators said a 19-year-old man got into an argument with people inside a packed car. That's when one of the passengers of a dark-colored smaller Toyota or Honda sedan pulled out a gun and opened fire.

The shooting left the 19-year-old with life-threatening injuries. On Monday, he was listed in serious condition at Harborview.

It's happened before. Police are still hunting for Nicole Westbrook's murderer nearly six years after she was shot and killed in Pioneer Square.

But there is good news for the neighborhood. According to the Seattle Police Department, crimes against people -- like homicide, robbery and aggravated assault -- have mostly been on the decline since 2015.

A spokesperson for Alliance for Pioneer Square shared a statement with Q13 News regarding Sunday's shooting.

"We were saddened to hear about the shooting incident on Sunday evening, and our thoughts are with the young man who is currently recovering from related injuries. Violence of any kind is unacceptable, and we continue to work closely with local police, property owners, neighborhood businesses, and residents to promote the highest degree of safety in Pioneer Square. We've witnessed a marked decrease in incidence of crime in recent years, and recognize that these positive strides are a reflection of a community effort to make Seattle's urban neighborhoods welcoming and safe."

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HEADLINE	02/12 US charges ex-Venezuelan officials in probe
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/02/12/us-charges-5-ex-venezuelan-officials-in-oil-bribery-probe.html
GIST	<p>BOGOTA, Colombia – U.S. prosecutors believe that Venezuela's former oil czar and ambassador to the United Nations received bribes as part of an alleged multibillion-dollar graft scheme in the South America nation's oil industry, an official familiar with the U.S. investigation said Monday.</p> <p>Rafael Ramirez, who was one of Venezuela's most powerful officials until he resigned from the U.N. post in December, was named as a bribe recipient although not charged in an indictment against five other former senior officials that was partially unsealed.</p> <p>In Monday's indictment, prosecutors in Houston allege two of the charged individuals told businessmen that proceeds from bribe payments they made in exchange for quick payments and contracts with Venezuela's state-run oil giant PDVSA would be shared with a senior Venezuelan official, identified in the unsealed portion as "Official B."</p> <p>That unidentified Venezuelan politician is Ramirez, a U.S. official told The Associated Press. The official agreed to talk about the case only on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter.</p> <p>In 2016, Venezuela's opposition-led National Assembly said \$11 billion went missing at PDVSA in the 2004-2014 period, when Ramirez was in charge of the company. In 2015, the U.S. Treasury Department accused a bank in Andorra of laundering some \$2 billion stolen from PDVSA.</p> <p>Ramirez in the past has denied any wrongdoing and dismissed the U.S. probe into PDVSA as a politically motivated attempt to undermine President Nicolas Maduro's socialist government. After resigning his U.N. post, Ramirez left the United States for an undisclosed location, and he did not immediately respond to a request Monday seeking comment.</p> <p>Prosecutors in the U.S. as well as Venezuela have been slowly closing in on his inner circle.</p>

	<p>Among those charged Monday was PDVSA's former chief of corporate security, Rafael Reiter, who frequently appeared alongside Ramirez in public. Another was a former deputy energy minister, Nervis Villalobos, who stood in as head of PDVSA when Ramirez was on official business abroad. Both Reiter and Villalobos were arrested in Spain in October on U.S. warrants and are pending extradition along with a third former official, Luis Carlos de Leon.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Baltimore 11-day murder free streak
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/13/baltimores-11-day-murder-free-streak-longest-since-2015.html
GIST	<p>There has not been a recorded murder in Baltimore in nearly two weeks, marking the city's longest streak without a murder since 2015, The Baltimore Sun reported. In 2014, the city went 17 days without a homicide.</p> <p>Erricka Bridgeford, the Baltimore "ceasefire" organizer, has been credited with being a major catalyst behind the peace, according to the paper.</p> <p>"It's really exciting," Bridgeford told the paper, noting she can't take full credit for the peace. "Baltimore deserves this boost of love."</p> <p>The pause in fatalities is a stark contrast to how the city began the year, with 11 killings in the first 12 days, the paper reported. And although there hasn't been a homicide since Feb. 2, there has been five nonfatal shootings -- including three in one day, the paper reported.</p> <p>Last year, Baltimore recorded the highest annual homicide rate with 343 killings, which factored to about 56 killings per 100,000 people.</p> <p>No single reason has been attributed for the surge in violence, but rather a combination of factors including, the 2015 death of Freddie Gray -- a black man who died from a spinal cord injury while in police custody -- illegal guns, the fallout from the opioid epidemic or systemic failures.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Baltimore cops guilty in police corruption
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2018/02/12/2-baltimore-detectives-convicted-racketeering-robbery/33136100/
GIST	<p>BALTIMORE — Two Baltimore detectives have been found guilty of racketeering and robbery in a trial that's part of an ongoing federal investigation into police corruption.</p> <p>A federal jury delivered its verdict Monday evening.</p> <p>Detectives Daniel Hersl and Marcus Taylor faced robbery, extortion and racketeering charges that could land them up to life in prison. They were cleared of possessing a firearm in pursuance of a violent crime.</p> <p>Their trial has been dominated by testimony of four ex-detectives who worked alongside the defendants in an elite police unit known as the Gun Trace Task Force.</p> <p>The disgraced law enforcement officers testified that the unit was actually made up of thugs who stole cash, resold looted narcotics, engaged in rampant overtime fraud and lied under oath to cover their tracks.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/13 Trial: killing of NKorea leader's half-brother
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/year-kims-killing-suspected-masterminds-evade-trial-53033044
GIST	<p>Lost in the glare of North Korea's missile launches, rhetorical battles with Washington and charm offensive at the Winter Olympics, two women stand accused of a crime that could send them to the gallows — the stunning assassination of Kim Jong Un's estranged half brother.</p> <p>It's a crime the young Southeast Asian women almost certainly had a part in — possibly without even knowing it.</p> <p>But just as certainly, the slaying of Kim Jong Nam one year ago Tuesday must have required a bigger cast of characters. People who could do the meticulous planning, procure the deadly and exotic poison and carefully wait for the exact moment to act so no one would die other than the unwitting target in a crowded airport terminal in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.</p> <p>Masterminds, in other words. Professional killers.</p> <p>And those suspects are all long gone.</p> <p>Instead, the sole defendants in one of the highest-profile political hits in decades are Siti Aisyah, 25, of Indonesia and Doan Thi Huong, 29, of Vietnam. Both are accused of smearing the VX nerve agent on Kim Jong Nam's face last Feb. 13. The poison, developed for military use, is so potent that Kim was dead within two hours.</p> <p>From the start of their trial last October, the women, who before getting caught up in the assassination plot left rural poverty to work in Southeast Asia's nightlife scene, have claimed they were duped into playing what they thought was a harmless prank for a hidden-camera show. They face a mandatory death sentence by hanging if convicted.</p> <p>Lawyers for the women say their defense has been handicapped by a sloppy investigation and by the very conspicuous absence of the suspected North Korean masterminds.</p> <p>"As long as the North Korean suspects are away, the actual truth will never be proven. I sincerely believe that the girls should be acquitted because we have clearly shown that they are being used as scapegoats," said Aisyah's lawyer Gooi Soon Seng.</p> <p>Both the prosecution and defense agree the women could not have been acting entirely on their own, and that the crime was carried out as part of a plot by a group of North Korean agents who recruited, trained and supplied them with the VX nerve agent.</p> <p>The prosecution even has a pretty good idea who the suspected masterminds are.</p> <p>Four North Korean suspects were seen on airport security cameras discarding their belongings and changing their clothing after the attack. The North Korean Embassy has also been implicated with an embassy official helping get flights out for the four men, and using the name of one of its citizens to buy a car that was used to take the suspects to the airport.</p> <p>But Malaysian police and prosecutors have shied away from attaching any political motive to the killing.</p> <p>Malaysian officials have never officially accused Pyongyang of involvement in Kim's death. Instead, they have focused narrowly on simply proving the women's guilt. Prosecutors contend the two knew they were handling poison, citing security camera footage showing them rushing to the washroom and holding their hands away from their bodies after the attack.</p> <p>"The Malaysian government wants it all to go away by trying to rush the trial and end it," said James Chin, director of the Asia Institute at the University of Tasmania in Australia. "Once everything is under the</p>

bridge, which will take years, Malaysia and North Korea will likely resume normal relations. The Kim Jong Nam case will be just another footnote in history."

Kim, 46, was the eldest son of former North Korea leader Kim Jong Il and was once seen as the potential heir in the family that has ruled North Korea since its founding.

He had fallen out of favor and had been living abroad as the actual heir Kim Jong Un solidified his powerbase. But while Kim Jong Nam was not an obvious political threat, he may have been seen as a potential rival to his brother.

A police witness told the court last month that Kim met with an unidentified Korean-American man at a Malaysian resort island four days before he was killed. The policeman was asked by defense lawyers about a Japanese newspaper report that the man was a U.S. intelligence agent based in Bangkok and that the meeting might have been one of the reasons why Pyongyang decided to silence Kim.

To bolster the theory, the court heard about forensics analysis of Kim's laptop that showed some data had been accessed from a USB drive inserted into the laptop on the day of the meeting. Kim was also carrying \$138,000 in cash when he was killed.

Close ties between Malaysia and North Korea have badly frayed since the killing.

While it isn't one of North Korea's key diplomatic partners, Malaysia had been one of the few places in the world where North Koreans could previously travel without a visa, providing a quiet destination for North Koreans looking for jobs, schools and business deals.

Malaysian officials have hinted since the assassination about ending diplomatic ties with Pyongyang and chided the regime over its nuclear ambitions.

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HEADLINE	02/13 SKorea's political corruption trials
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-confidante-skorean-leader-arrives-court-53036185
GIST	<p>The Latest on South Korea's political corruption trials (all times local):</p> <p>5:15 p.m.</p> <p>The lawyer representing the former South Korean president's confidante has vowed to appeal after the friend was sentenced to 20 years in prison for her role in a wide-ranging political scandal.</p> <p>Choi Soon-sil, a longtime friend of former President Park Geun-hye, was convicted Tuesday for abusing her close ties with Park to gain personal profit and for receiving bribes from Samsung, Lotte and other big South Korean businesses.</p> <p>Lee Kyung-jae, who represents Choi, said he was confident his team can overturn the charges on appeal.</p> <p>After the sentencing was announced, Choi left the courtroom quietly without showing emotion, according to media pool reports.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>4:40 p.m.</p> <p>The chairman of South Korea's Lotte Group has been sentenced to two and a half years in prison for bribery in a wide-ranging corruption scandal that brought down the country's president.</p>

The Seoul Central District Court said Tuesday that Shin Dong-bin, chief of South Korea's fifth-largest conglomerate Lotte, offered 7 billion won (\$6.5 million) in bribery to the former president to curry favors such as to win a license to open a duty free shop and to strengthen his control over the business group.

The sentencing sends another shockwave to the local business community that was relieved to see Samsung heir Lee Jae-yong released from prison last week on a suspended sentence in the same scandal.

The court also sentenced Choi Soon-sil, the former President Park Geun-hye's confidante to 20 years in prison.

Lotte was one of many major companies that donated money to non-profit foundations controlled by Choi.

4:20 p.m.

A South Korean court has sentenced the former President Park Geun-hye's confidante at the center of the influence-peddling scandal to 20 years in prison.

The Seoul Central District Court said Tuesday that Choi Soon-sil was convicted on abuse of power, bribery and other charges. The court also imposed 18 billion won (\$17 million) fine on her.

The court said Choi abused her close tie with the former president to take personal profit. Among her crime was coercing businesses to donate a huge amount of money to foundations under her control and receiving bribes from Samsung and Lotte.

It said her crime was grave given how she triggered an unprecedented impeachment of the president and disappointed the public.

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HEADLINE	02/12 Detroit: 3 killed in 'dangerous standoff'
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/women-dead-cop-injured-dangerous-ongoing-barricade-situation/story?id=53017623
GIST	<p>Three women were killed and three police officers injured in a dangerous barricade incident at a Detroit home that lasted from Sunday night through today, Detroit police said.</p> <p>The suspect, Lance Smith, 49, who police said has seven legal guns registered to his name, was heard saying, "I will not be taken without a fight," Detroit Police Chief James Craig said at a news conference this morning.</p> <p>The three injured police officers suffered non-life-threatening gunshot wounds to the leg, Craig said.</p> <p>The "dangerous" standoff came to an end today when police made entry into Smith's home through robots and found the suspect dead inside, police said, adding that they believe he took his own life.</p> <p>A woman who police said was Smith's girlfriend was also found dead inside, Detroit Police Deputy Chief Elvin Barren said at a news conference.</p> <p>The other two women were found shot outside the home, police said. Two of the victims were in their 50s and another was age 46, Elvin said.</p> <p>There "easily could have been a higher death toll," Barren said.</p>

	<p>The barricade began Sunday night with a 911 call to police about shots fired from a home, Craig said.</p> <p>The suspect fired "an unknown number of rounds, basically attacked first the civilian victims," Craig said.</p> <p>The suspect then allegedly fired at an off-duty officer who lives in the neighborhood and then fired at the responding Detroit police officers, Craig said.</p> <p>The Detroit police officers "were pinned down by gunfire for at least an hour," Craig said. "And during that hour time, they were waiting for the response of our special response team who did a phenomenal job quickly getting in and safely moving out those who were shot, including those who were shot fatally."</p> <p>An armored vehicle was brought in to help get those officers to safety, he said.</p> <p>Then came a second attack on the officers, Craig said, during which the third officer was shot and then rescued by his partner.</p> <p>The last time police heard from Smith was at about 2 a.m. When they attempted to speak with him through the loudspeaker, Smith would not say anything other than the threats he made early on, Barren said.</p> <p>The standoff lasted 14 hours, Elvin said.</p> <p>It is unclear if Smith had a phone, but he did not communicate with anyone during the standoff, Elvin said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Second arrest in slaying of 2 Ohio cops
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/kasich-orders-flags-flown-half-staff-honor-slain/story?id=53018108
GIST	<p>A second man has been arrested in the slaying of two Ohio police officers for allegedly buying the gun used in the killing, federal authorities said.</p> <p>Gerald Lawson III, 30, is accused of acting as a straw purchaser for the suspect, 30-year-old Quentin Lamar Smith, who is a convicted felon and not permitted to buy a firearm, the Justice Department for the Southern District of Ohio said.</p> <p>The Saturday shooting took place when Westerville police officers Eric Joering and Anthony Morelli responded to a 911 hang-up Saturday and were "immediately met with gunfire" and exchanged fire with Smith, police said.</p> <p>Smith, who allegedly had a Glock semi-automatic handgun, was also injured in the shooting and is in the hospital, authorities said. He is expected to survive, police said. The Columbus Division of Police, which is leading the investigation, has filed two counts of aggravated murder charges, according to the city of Westerville. He has not yet entered a plea.</p> <p>Lawson and Smith "have a long history of friendship," according to the Justice Department.</p> <p>The Justice Department said a witness told investigators Smith gave Lawson money for the firearm and an extra \$100 as compensation.</p> <p>Lawson was arrested today and charged with aiding and abetting the possession of a firearm by a prohibited person, the Justice Department said. He is scheduled to appear before a judge this afternoon.</p>
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Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

MONDAY – 12 FEB 2018



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Event Calendar

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Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php
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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	02/11 Argentina: new US military base
SOURCE	https://www.telesurvtv.net/english/news/US-Will-Build-New-Military-Base-in-Northern-Argentina-20180211-0016.html
GIST	<p>Argentina is allowing the U.S. to build a new military base at its northern border with Brazil and Paraguay. Officials of the South American country also announced that it will work with Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) at the triple border “to analyze where drugs are coming from.”</p> <p>Argentina’s Minister of Security, Patricia Bullrich announced in Washington that the Mauricio Macri administration is going to allow the U.S. to build a military base in Posadas, Misiones, bordering Brazil and Paraguay.</p> <p>Bullrich says her government is creating “an analysis center with Paraguay and Brasil (and the U.S.) to figure out where, how and with whom narco traffickers operate” at the triple border region.</p> <p>This "task force," as its being called, will operate in conjunction with the DEA, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the U.S. Southern Command, which watches over U.S. operations in Latin America and the Caribbean.</p> <p>This will be the second task force against drug trafficking in Argentina. The first one was installed in Salta province located near the borders with Bolivia and Chile during the Barack Obama administration.</p> <p>Human rights organizations are protesting the increased U.S. military presence in Latin American and the Caribbean.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 CBP to inspect 1B Valentine’s Day flowers
SOURCE	http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/customs-will-inspect-1-billion-flowers-imported-for-valentines-day/article/2648774
GIST	<p>Customs and Border Protection officials are expecting to process and inspect more than 1 billion imported stems of flowers in the weeks leading up to Valentine’s Day next Wednesday, a Department of Homeland Security spokesperson confirmed Friday.</p> <p>Although the DHS agency is often associated with apprehending illegal immigrants and narcotics on land and sea, its Miami branch is known as the headquarters for floral importation inspections between Jan. 1 and Feb. 14 every year.</p> <p>“People don’t think of agriculture when they think of Customs and Border Protection — however, CBP agriculture specialists work diligently to protect our country from invasive species that have the potential to damage ecosystems and our economy,” said DHS Deputy Secretary Elaine Duke.</p> <p>Duke traveled to the Florida city this past week to see how the Miami International Airport Agriculture Air</p>

	<p>Cargo Branch — tasked with inspecting 91 percent of all imported fresh-cut flowers — are processed.</p> <p>CBP officers at the Miami facility processed more than 954 million stems of flowers in 2017 and intercepted more than 1,000 plant pests. Exotic pests and foreign animal diseases cost an average of \$138 billion in economic and environmental losses every year.</p> <p>"When those flowers make it to your home, we want it to be safe, not only for you but the environment and our country," Duke said. "I was proud to spend the day in Miami to see firsthand the important work they are doing to ensure even the tiniest of pests don't enter our country."</p> <p>CBP in Los Angeles processed the second-highest amount of stems at 40 million; followed by Otay Mesa, Calif., at 25 million; and John F. Kennedy Airport in New York, which saw 19 million stems of flowers.</p> <p>A grand total of 1.063 billion stems of flowers were imported during the 2017 Valentine's Day season. Roses made up a third and mixed bouquets were the second-highest type at 190 million.</p> <p>The largest exporter is Colombia. The South American nation shipped 718 million stems of flowers to the U.S. in the six weeks leading up to last year's holiday. Ecuador followed with 243 million and Mexico took third place with 36 million.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Average gas prices jump 7-cents
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/83bd30dbed564793a23dcdd2e7643c72/Average-US-gas-price-jumps-7-cents-to-\$2.65-for-regular
GIST	<p>CAMARILLO, Calif. (AP) — The average price of a gallon of regular-grade gasoline jumped 7 cents nationally over the past three weeks to \$2.65.</p> <p>Industry analyst Trilby Lundberg of the Lundberg Survey said Sunday that the increase is due to higher crude oil costs.</p> <p>The current gas price is 34 cents above where it was a year ago.</p> <p>Gas in San Francisco was the highest in the contiguous United States at an average of \$3.42 a gallon. The lowest was in Tucson, Arizona, at \$2.26 a gallon.</p> <p>The U.S. average diesel price is \$3.04, up 5 cents from three weeks ago.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Puerto Rico substation explosion, fire
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/4b49c25c3cc94a8aba57acb90c99a685/Blackout-hits-northern-Puerto-Rico-following-fire,-explosion
GIST	<p>SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — An explosion and fire at an electric substation threw much of northern Puerto Rico into darkness late Sunday in a setback for the U.S. territory's efforts to fully restore power more than five months after Hurricane Maria started the longest blackout in U.S. history.</p> <p>The island's Electric Power Authority said several municipalities were without power, including parts of the capital, San Juan, but they were optimistic it could be restored within a day as they worked to repair a substation that controls voltage.</p> <p>The blast illustrated the challenges of restoring a power grid that was already crumbling before it was devastated by the Category 4 hurricane.</p>

	<p>In many cases, power workers are repairing equipment that should have long been replaced but remained online due to the power authority's yearslong financial crisis. PREPA is worth roughly \$4 billion, carries \$9 billion in debt and has long been criticized for political patronage and inefficiency. It also struggled with frequent blackouts, including an island-wide outage in September 2016.</p> <p>It was not immediately known what caused Sunday's fire, which was quickly extinguished. Officials said the explosion knocked two other substations offline and caused a total loss of 400 megawatts worth of generation.</p> <p>"We are trying to restore that as quickly as possible," the company said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Entire Baltimore Metro to close for month
SOURCE	<p>https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/entire-baltimore-metro-system-to-close-for-a-month-for-emergency-repairs/2018/02/11/26301ce0-0f72-11e8-8ea1-c1d91fcec3fe_story.html?hpid=hp_hp-cards_hp-card-local%3Ahomepage%2Fcard&utm_term=.65dd5fb9c3c7</p>
GIST	<p>Baltimore's entire Metro SubwayLink system will remain closed for a month, the Maryland Transit Administration said Sunday, after safety inspections showed sections of track needed emergency repairs that couldn't wait until this summer.</p> <p>Gov. Larry Hogan (R) has devoted \$2.2 million in emergency funding to run free coach buses for passengers along the subway's route, in addition to the normal MTA bus routes, the MTA said Sunday.</p> <p>The MTA shut down the system Friday for a safety evaluation after discovering an urgent need for repairs on sections of the aboveground, northwest leg of the system between the Owings Mills and West Cold Spring stations. Sunday's decision expanded the closure to the entire system.</p> <p>"While I understand the inconvenience, safety will always be our top priority," MTA chief executive Kevin Quinn said in a phone interview Sunday. "We don't take any risks with our riders."</p> <p>The track needed to be replaced sooner than the scheduled replacement this summer, Quinn said.</p> <p>The free shuttle buses, or "bus bridge" as the MTA calls it, will begin at 5 a.m. Monday and run until midnight on weekdays, and from 6 a.m. until midnight on weekends.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Police used drones to deescalate situation
SOURCE	<p>https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/she-pointed-a-gun-at-police-and-asked-to-be-shot-they-used-drones-to-intercede-instead/2018/02/11/419587c2-0acc-11e8-8890-372e2047c935_story.html?hpid=hp_hp-cards_hp-card-local%3Ahomepage%2Fcard&utm_term=.57b84f43e42b</p>
GIST	<p>Burdened by mounting health, job and family troubles, a Florida woman took to the road and headed north from her Cocoa Beach home, police say.</p> <p>By the time she hit Stafford County on Interstate 95 in Virginia, she was down to her last \$14 and had reached her limit: Soon she would pick up a handgun and plead to die at the hands of officers.</p> <p>The 57-year-old pulled her Kia sedan into a Walmart parking lot just before dawn Dec. 8, triggering a four-hour standoff as she repeatedly waved a silver revolver, cursing Stafford County sheriff's deputies as she demanded that they shoot her.</p>

“She kept talking to herself, yelling profanities and enticing us to shoot her, over and over and over again,” said Capt. Ben Worcester, a member of the Stafford County Sheriff’s Office.

Rather than rush into a situation where they might have to fire, Stafford officials turned to technology: Police pilots flew two drones to monitor the woman from a safe distance and avoid putting officers in a direct confrontation. The airborne cameras gave authorities a close-up view of her and what she had in her car as she flitted between pacing outside and ducking back into the vehicle.

Worcester could see the label on the vodka bottle she lifted to wash down pills. He could tell SWAT officers when she had her finger on the trigger of her gun. And he could watch as her agitation ebbed and flowed.

The use of the drones to de-escalate an incident represents a creative deployment of a tool that police agencies across the country have been adding to their arsenals.

The largest police departments in the District and inside the Capital Beltway do not have drone programs, officials said. FAA airspace restrictions in the city prevent D.C. police from considering such a program, said department spokesman Dustin Sternbeck. Police departments in Montgomery and Fairfax counties also do not use them.

In Stafford, the sheriff’s office has five drones and 12 FAA-certified officers.

Sheriff David P. Decatur decided to launch the drone program there in early 2016, using more than \$50,000 in money seized in drug cases and with the aim of using the craft to find people missing in extreme heat or cold. Stafford County officers now use drones as they execute search warrants, take crime scene photographs and even monitor traffic during events such as Fourth of July fireworks displays.

“I think it’s progressive. We are open. Anything we can use it for to help others, we are all about trying to take advantage of that,” Decatur said. “We are always racing against time.”

Those time pressures played out Dec. 8 when predawn 911 calls came in to the Stafford County Sheriff’s Office saying shots were being fired in the lot of the Walmart on Garrisonville Road. The information was scant: a white woman with long, dirty-blond hair, driving a car with Florida license plates and brandishing a pistol.

What officers did know as they launched was that the woman was armed and continued to shout a command to authorities: “Just kill me! Just kill me!”

Adding to the danger, she had parked directly in front of an 18-wheeler in the lot, trapping the rig driver who had pulled in to catch some sleep, investigators said.

Deputies evacuated the area around the car and truck as a SWAT team stood at the ready. Police idled an armored vehicle — called a BearCat — that can withstand .50-caliber rounds.

Early on, police decided to try to negotiate with the woman over a loudspeaker and started to sketch out plans to rescue the trucker.

The woman kept yelling profanities but did not respond otherwise.

Decatur said the drones acted “like a military scout team” to help officers find cover and places to stay out of view as they braced for a drawn-out confrontation.

The sheriff’s department flew the two drones at an elevation of 70 to 80 feet, relaying real-time video to the on-scene command post with an intimacy that would be nearly impossible for any officer to match on the ground without facing substantial risk.

“She was talking so much to herself, I initially thought she was on the phone, but she was talking with the gun to her head,” Worcester said.

Officers saw her swallowing liquor and pills, and “we knew what we were up against. It was going to get worse,” Worcester said.

About two hours in, SWAT officers quietly approached the tractor-trailer to try to rescue the driver. Aided by the drones, Worcester was able to warn officers that the woman in the car had pointed her gun toward the back of her car in the direction of the hemmed-in truck, apparently thinking police were going to move in on her.

Police paused the trucker rescue until they were told she had turned away. They got the trucker safely out.

The woman’s demands for officers to shoot her did not stop. “Kill me! Kill me!” and “Just shoot me,” she shouted again and again, Decatur and Worcester said.

“She just wasn’t going to do any talking,” Worcester said. “It was hours of this.”

Three hours into the standoff, the woman was highly agitated and alternating between threatening to shoot herself in the head and begging the police to fire on her, Worcester said.

A drone camera zoomed in on her face, showing someone near rock bottom, he said.

It also showed her moving away from her car, and police, fearing she might run and shoot at a nearby convenience store, fired beanbag rounds at her.

Stunned, she retreated to her car. The drone zoomed in to show officers her condition and what she was doing inside the Kia. She looked calmer, was mumbling, and had her eyes closed, Worcester recalled.

The drones stayed up.

At 9:15 a.m., police in the armored vehicle rolled over to the car and fired pepper spray into the Kia’s open window before four officers rushed the car and pulled the woman out and handcuffed her.

Stafford authorities charged Donna Lynn Barnes with reckless handling of a firearm and brandishing a firearm, both misdemeanors, authorities said.

Online court documents show that a hearing in her case is scheduled for Feb. 22. An attorney for the public defender’s office, which court documents show is representing Barnes, declined to comment.

“This lady is from Florida. She said she was just driving. In her world, she had all these things going on, and she was trying to get us to use deadly force,” Decatur said. “Luckily, with our training and the technology, we didn’t have to do that.”

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HEADLINE	02/11 US cities may follow Canada approach
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/at-the-heart-of-canadas-fentanyl-crisis-extreme-efforts-that-us-cities-may-follow/2018/02/11/5e7dd59e-0624-11e8-b48c-b07fea957bd5_story.html?hpid=hp_hp-more-top-stories_canadaheroin-205am%3Ahomepage%2Fstory&utm_term=.5b72a26d0743
GIST	VANCOUVER, B.C. — Beneath a blue tarp that blocks out a gray sky, Jordanna Coleman inhales the smoke from a heated mixture of heroin and methamphetamine, sucking the addictive vapor deep into her lungs.

The drugs and pipe, acquired elsewhere, are hers. But the shelter, the equipment she uses to prepare her fix and the volunteers standing by to respond if she overdoses are provided by a small nonprofit. Funding and supplies come from the city of Vancouver and the province of British Columbia.

“I was outside. It’s warmer in here,” says Coleman, 22, although the tent is open to the damp and chill of a western Canadian winter. “It’s just safer.”

In barely a year, five sites like this one have opened within a few blocks of one another to contend with a surge of fentanyl on Vancouver’s streets. In December, the organization that runs this location, the Overdose Prevention Society, took over a vacant building next door, giving users a clean indoor place to inject drugs. There are 29 similar sites in British Columbia, the epicenter of Canada’s drug crisis, and more across the country.

“To save lives, you need a table, chairs and some volunteers,” said Sarah Blyth, the manager here. “We literally popped it up in one day. And then you have people saving lives. Immediately.”

As fentanyl rampages across North America, several U.S. cities have announced that they will open the first supervised drug-consumption sites like those in Canada. Their plans illustrate the gulf between the two nations: While Justin Trudeau’s government is doubling down on its “harm reduction” approach, any U.S. organization that tries to follow suit would be violating federal law and risking a confrontation with the Justice Department.

U.S. researchers say that at least one underground site is operating on American soil, and they predict that a public operation will open despite the potential consequences.

“That’s the way that drug policy issues have moved forward in this country [over the] last 25 years,” said Alex Kral, an epidemiologist at the think tank RTI International who has studied supervised drug consumption. Cities enduring the deaths, disease, crime and cost of drug epidemics have taken the lead in handing out free needles and distributing the overdose antidote naloxone — sometimes after legal battles.

San Francisco plans to add supervised injection services to an existing community health facility. Those could start as soon as July 1.

“We just have to do what’s best for the client, and we hope the federal government will understand,” said Barbara Garcia, director of health for the city and county of San Francisco. “I’m not looking to change federal law. I’m looking to save lives.”

Canada’s plans do not stop at supervised injection. Some sites now test users’ drugs for fentanyl, and some are aiming to provide prescription opioids from vending machines.

The most far-reaching intervention is just two blocks from the pop-up site, where the Providence Crosstown Clinic provides 130 of the city’s hardest-core drug users with pharmaceutical-grade heroin and other narcotics. Users come to inject themselves as often as three times a day, and some also swallow a morphine tablet to carry them through the night.

Freed of the need to steal, beg and trade sex for drug money, some now have apartments and jobs. The clinic, run by a medical center, hopes to add 50 more clients soon.

“The ability to say, ‘I’m receiving treatment; I’m not a dirty user,’ does so much for their self-esteem,” said Jennifer Mackenzie, the clinical nurse leader. “It opens so many doors for them. They’re getting medical treatment, and they look at themselves differently.”

Research shows that the approach, like supervised drug consumption, saves lives, cuts criminal justice and health-care costs, limits the spread of diseases such as HIV and helps reduce used needles and other debris in the immediate neighborhood. A similar facility recently opened in Ottawa, and Canada has loosened requirements to encourage others.

But British Columbia's programs have not blunted its opioid crisis. Overdose deaths have skyrocketed from fewer than 400 in 2014, when fentanyl became widely available on the street, to more than 1,400 in 2017. Eighty-one percent of last year's deaths involved fentanyl.

Critics said that statistic speaks to the futility of harm reduction. "To say the best we can do is to revive people who are victims and are going to be victims again . . . is reprehensible," said John P. Walters, drug czar under President George W. Bush and now chief operating officer of the Hudson Institute, a conservative think tank in Washington.

Walters favors a dramatic expansion of drug treatment in the United States, which recorded 42,000 opioid deaths in 2016, coupled with a much more concerted effort to keep drugs such as fentanyl out of the country. He questions the rigor of the academic studies that support harm reduction. And he believes that normalization and tolerance of drug use are reasons that addicts crowd the streets of this city's small Downtown Eastside district.

"Look at Vancouver, it's tried every bad policy you can try," Walters said. "This is another step in that whole policy that has made Vancouver a nightmare."

"This is my flail," Coleman said between hits on her pipe, scattering the contents of her backpack on a table. A coloring journal, cellphone, some clean socks. "It's what I do when I'm high."

She does not yet have the battered look of the legions of longtime drug users who are everywhere in this neighborhood. Yet her story is typical: She fled an abusive mother, got into hard drugs at 17 and soon was pimped out by her supplier. She has an 18-month-old son in foster care, lives with friends and is trying, again, to find her way out through treatment.

"It looks like I'm enjoying it because I'm high," she said. "I don't have anything in my life that really means anything. All the drugs that I have [are] not going to fill the emotional void that I have."

Drug smokers like Coleman are restricted to the Overdose Prevention Society's outdoor tents because the new building, a former grocery, has no ventilation system. It is home mostly to injection drug users. A long, narrow main room is nearly bare except for 13 stainless-steel tables and some posters on the walls. Red partitions divide the rest of the floor, making space for a couple of desks, a cot where workers can calm down after resuscitating overdose victims, and supplies piled high in boxes.

The most critical are oxygen and naloxone, the antidote that has saved countless lives. In the 30 years that supervised sites have been open in Europe, and the 15 years that they have existed in Canada, no site has suffered an overdose death, Kral said.

Users enter here through a guarded door off a back alley that used to be the scene of widespread drug use, dealing and prostitution. A small street shrine to a dead woman sits just outside the entrance.

From a small table of supplies they pick up what they need: syringes, matches, elastic strips to tie off veins, water to dilute drugs, small squares of foil, tiny tins for cooking heroin. Also available are condoms and lube.

Some of the volunteers who greet them are current or former users themselves. They usher clients to the tables. On a clipboard, one staff member logs names (usually aliases), gender, the drugs being used and the time a person comes in. Between the indoor and outdoor sections, 300 to 700 people show up daily. The largest crowds are on days when welfare payments arrive.

The pop-up was born of necessity in late 2016, when fentanyl was overwhelming the neighborhood and a 15-year-old supervised-use program. Overdoses on the street would send panicked bystanders to a nearby

open-air market to find naloxone or call an ambulance.

“If there was an overdose, they would come running to the market, and we would have Narcan ready,” Blyth said, using the antidote’s brand name. “Then it became so frequent that it was happening all the time. We had no choice really.” A GoFundMe campaign started the tent facility. Aid from the government followed.

The organizers acknowledge that their main goal is just to keep people alive, though they have seen a few clients get into treatment and off drugs.

“If these services didn’t exist, trust me, it would have been a catastrophe, especially in the past year and a half, when the fentanyl crisis spiked,” said Ronnie Grigg, a large, soft-spoken man with a chest-length beard who helps manage the site. In the past three years, Grigg said, 100 people he knew died of overdoses.

At the Providence Crosstown Clinic a short walk down West Hastings Street, the atmosphere is different. Some users here measure their addictions in decades, and it shows.

With an ample supply of diacetyl morphine — the heroin equivalent — and other narcotics on the premises, the clinic is a cross between a medical facility and a bank. Users must first step into a small vestibule. Only when the outside door locks behind them will the inside door open. The drugs are kept in a vault, doled out to users in pre-measured syringes through a thick glass window with a slot at the bottom.

There is a waiting room, an exam table, desks and a big room, where users shuffle in to inject themselves. The doctor and nurses speak of “treatment.” They are prohibited from administering injections themselves.

Nothing else has worked for these men and women, who clinically are in the grip of “severe opioid disorder.” Methadone has proven ineffective, as have therapeutic approaches such as 12-step programs. Most of them no longer feel any pleasure from the drugs; they take them simply to function and prevent severe withdrawal symptoms.

Here, users are sure their drugs contain no fentanyl. And paradoxically, by providing them with the substances they need, the clinic does more than just keep them alive.

“It makes me feel normal,” said a 52-year-old woman named Lori, who did not want her last name used.

Other than more than a decade on drugs, Lori leads a fairly unremarkable life. She has two grown children who don’t know about her twice-a-day clinic visits. She is married and holds a part-time job in a call center, taking customer service complaints. She is clearheaded and contemplative.

Over time, the cost of her habit reached \$200 a day. In 2011, she heard about a research study at the clinic and began getting her drugs there.

“Thank God, because I would be on the street,” she said. “Everything would be finished. My marriage would be over. I don’t think I’d be here.”

The medical staff counsels clients on vein care, HIV, hepatitis C and treatment options. The price of the services is high: about \$25,000 (Canadian) annually per client. But the cost of not having them is much higher, said Scott MacDonald, the clinic’s physician lead.

Remove the stigma attached to narcotics, he says, and the clinic’s model is not much different from therapy for high blood pressure or diabetes.

“One hundred thirty people [here] are able to access injectable treatment,” he said. “And we see that their

	lives are transformed.”
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HEADLINE	02/09 NBC: Winter Olympics statistics
SOURCE	http://money.cnn.com/2018/02/09/media/nbc-winter-olympics-numbers/index.html
GIST	<p>The Olympic Games are one of the most-watched telecasts in the world, thanks in part to the massive production efforts that go into broadcasting the event far and wide.</p> <p>That's no different for this year's Winter Games, which opened on Friday in Pyeongchang, South Korea. The event is an undertaking that costs billions of dollars and includes an NBC telecast that stretches across several weeks and time zones.</p> <p>Some of the staggering numbers behind this year's games tells the story of an event that is constantly trying to outdo itself. NBC is pulling out all the stops and sending the most-ever number of commentators to provide insight and commentary for a record 2,400 hours of coverage.</p> <p>The Games February 9th, 2018 -- Date of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics opening ceremony. February 25th, 2018 -- Date of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics closing ceremony. \$10 billion -- The estimated cost of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. The amount is roughly the GDP of Madagascar. That's five times less than the 2014 Sochi Olympics, which was estimated to be the costliest ever. 2,925 -- Number of athletes who will compete in the games. The US is sending 244 athletes, the largest athlete delegation in Olympic Winter Games history. 39 -- The age of the oldest US winter Olympian: Hockey player, Brian Gionta. Last year, he played his 1000th game in the NHL. 50 - Miles the city of Pyeongchang is from the demilitarized zone that separates the south from North Korea. The DMZ is a border that splits the country in two, it's heavily fortified and is roughly 160 miles long.</p> <p>The Telecast 5 -- NBCUniversal networks that will broadcast the games (NBC, NBC Sports Network, CNBC, USA and the Olympic Channel). \$900+ Million -- Money generated in national ad sales for Pyeongchang, which is a Winter Games record. NBC Universal said that it expected its Super Bowl LII coverage to generate \$500 million in ad revenue. 2,000 -- Number of NBC employees working in Pyeongchang for the games. 2,400+ -- Hours of game coverage. This is the most ever for a Winter Olympics, according to NBC. The last Winter Games to hold this record was the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. 127 -- Miles of cable that will be used by NBC for the games. That's roughly the distance between Los Angeles and San Diego. For the exceptionally athletic, you'd have to run the length of Manhattan roughly nine times to hit 127 miles. 126+ -- NBCUniversal's coverage hours, per day. The network said that's nearly triple the entire coverage of the 1976 Innsbruck Winter Olympics on ABC (43.5 hours). 89 -- Number of NBC Olympics commentators. The most-ever for a Winter Olympics, according to NBC. That includes Mike Tirico in his first go as Olympics host, former Olympians like skier Bode Miller, figure skaters Tara Lipinski and Johnny Weir, and Katie Couric, who makes her return to NBC to co-host the opening ceremony with Tirico. 54 -- Years since NBC's first Olympic broadcast, which was the 1964 Tokyo Games. NBC's Olympics contract runs through 2032. 17 -- Studios and control rooms used for NBC Olympics' coverage in both Pyeongchang and NBC Sports' home base in Stamford, Connecticut. 99 -- Shipping containers full of NBC gear that traveled to Pyeongchang. The containers are full of sets, cameras and other supplies. 2 -- Helicopters that will provide aerial footage. NBC plans to use the helicopters for shots of</p>

	<p>Pyeongchang and other outdoor events.</p> <p>100 -- Roughly the number of NBC staffers who went straight from the Super Bowl to the games.</p> <p>The Quirky</p> <p>85 -- Number of robots reportedly placed in venues to provide information on schedules, transportation and tourist attractions during the Olympics.</p> <p>110,000 -- The amount of condoms reportedly distributed for the athletes at the games. That's roughly 37 condoms per person.</p> <p>The Future</p> <p>895 -- Number of days until the next Summer Olympics in Tokyo, Japan (July 24, 2020).</p> <p>1455 -- Number of days until the next Winter Olympics in Beijing, China (February 4, 2022).</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 CDC: flu season breaking records
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/flu-season-breaking-records-cdc-says-n846341
GIST	<p>The flu season is still a bad one and it's broken a few recent records, federal health officials said Friday.</p> <p>It's not time to panic about a new pandemic — it is simply a relatively severe flu season, one that's hitting the whole country at once instead of in waves, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says.</p> <p>“Influenza activity is still on the rise overall,” CDC’s acting director, Dr. Anne Schuchat, told reporters.</p> <p>Ten more children have been reported to have died from flu, bringing the total for the season so far to 63.</p> <p>Last season, 110 children died from flu in the U.S.</p> <p>Every year, influenza kills between 12,000 and 49,000 people and can send more than 700,000 people to the hospital, the CDC says. It affects so many people that adult cases and deaths can only be estimated.</p> <p>“This is a difficult season and we can’t predict how much longer the intense flu activity will last,” Schuchat said.</p> <p>“This season, we are on track to break some recent records.”</p> <p>For one, hospitalizations are the highest they’ve been since the CDC started a new way of measuring them in 2010. And while flu usually hits people over 65 the hardest, the CDC says it’s seeing more people aged 50 to 64 being hospitalized.</p> <p>And more people are showing up with flu-like symptoms — 7.7 percent of all doctor visits, which hasn’t been seen since 2003-2004, with the exception of the H1N1 “swine flu” pandemic in 2009.</p> <p>With that many hospitalizations there are sure to be deaths, Schuchat said.</p> <p>“We usually see the increases in influenza-like illness and hospitalizations a couple of weeks before we see what's going on with influenza deaths,” she said.</p> <p>“People may have lengthy hospitalizations before they finally die of flu,” she added.</p> <p>“Almost everything we are looking at is bad news.”</p> <p>Most of the sickness is due to H3N2 influenza, which is notorious for causing more severe disease. Schuchat said there is no indication that the strain has mutated in some way to make it worse than usual, but scientists are looking to make sure there isn’t something unusual about it.</p>

	<p>“This season, we are on track to break some recent records.” And now, some states in the west are seeing a second wave of illness caused by influenza B, she said.</p> <p>At any given time, several different strains of flu will be circulating and this year the four major strains that are include H3N2, H1N1 and two different strains of influenza B. Vaccines protect against three or four strains and Schuchat said it is still not too late to get a vaccine.</p> <p>People who have had flu once can get sick again from a second strain, and people who have already had flu might protect themselves from catching it again if they get vaccinated, she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 La Nina ending; here comes La Nada
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/la-nina-ending-here-comes-la-nada/281-517464056
GIST	<p>Climate troublemaker La Niña, which is partly responsible for the extreme drought now scorching the southwestern U.S. and California, is expected to fade away over the next few months, scientists said.</p> <p>In its place will be the "neutral phase" of the Pacific Ocean climate pattern officially known as ENSO (El Niño-Southern Oscillation).</p> <p>The climate pattern, marked by either unusually warm or cool seawater in the central Pacific Ocean, can affect weather in the U.S. and around the world.</p> <p>The Pacific Northwest may have had a La Niña winter, but not La Niña weather.</p> <p>The La Niña phase is defined by colder-than-average ocean temperatures in the Pacific. It's the opposite of El Niño.</p> <p>ENSO-neutral, colloquially known as "La Nada," is the midpoint between El Niño and La Niña, and occurs when temperatures are near average in the Pacific Ocean.</p> <p>Although La Niña is on the way out, it will "continue affecting temperature and precipitation across the United States during the next few months," the Climate Prediction Center said Thursday.</p> <p>"La Niña will decay and return to ENSO-neutral during the Northern Hemisphere spring 2018," the prediction center said. "The forecast consensus also favors a transition during the spring with a continuation of ENSO-neutral conditions thereafter."</p> <p>The "in between" ocean state of ENSO can be frustrating for long-range forecasters. "It's like driving without a decent road map — it makes forecasting difficult," said climatologist Bill Patzert of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.</p> <p>The ENSO cycle primarily affects U.S. weather in the fall, winter and spring, and less so in the summer. It can impact the Atlantic hurricane season, however, with El Niño favoring fewer storms and La Niña favoring more.</p> <p>As for what all of this means for our spring weather here in the U.S., the outlook from the prediction center generally favors dry, warm weather across the southern tier of the nation, and cooler, wetter weather across the northern tier.</p> <p>This jibes with AccuWeather's spring forecast released this week, which said that much of the northern U.S. will endure rounds of cold and snow into March and April before springlike air creeps in.</p> <p>It also said the southern half of the country will heat up, with California and parts of the Southeast heading</p>

	toward drought conditions.
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HEADLINE	02/10 Fla. citrus reeling from disease, Irma
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/hurricane-irma/one-two-punch-disease-irma-has-left-florida-citrus-reeling-n839996
GIST	<p>WINTER HAVEN, Fla. — In the hours after Hurricane Irma raked up Florida's spine, warm sunshine revealed thousands upon thousands of pieces of citrus fruit bobbing in muddied, stagnant water.</p> <p>Millions of dollars worth of oranges, grapefruits, and tangerines were ripped from their branches by fierce winds, never to reach their intended destination of breakfast plates and juice glasses.</p> <p>It was the nightmare many sleepless farmers prayed they wouldn't see.</p> <p>"I remember ... heading out to the fields as soon as it was safe to get out on the roads and being taken back at how much fruit was blown on the ground ... and how many trees had just been blown over," said one citrus farmer, William Roe III, 35, known as Gee.</p> <p>"We were literally blown away by the severity of the damage," said Roe's uncle, Quentin Roe, 59, the chief executive of Wm. G. Roe & Sons, a longtime grower and distributor.</p> <p>Irma knocked 50 to 90 percent of Florida's citrus fruit to the ground in some areas, according to the state commissioner of agriculture, Adam Putnam, causing \$760 million in damage in the worst year for Florida oranges since 1945.</p> <p>But more was damaged than just a year's crop.</p> <p>Citrus accounts for approximately 45,000 full- and part-time jobs in the state. Hurricane Irma is credited with wiping out nearly 56,000 jobs directly and indirectly tied to Florida's agricultural sector and dealing a \$2.39 billion blow to labor income.</p> <p>The storm also signaled the end of a way of life for many farmers who lost their harvest. Those who had no one to pick what remained have since given up and sold their land.</p> <p>Many were already reeling before the winds and rain hit, thanks to a crippling disease known as citrus greening, which has ravaged crops here for years. Greening was responsible for a 31 percent decline in employment in the industry from 2012 to 2015.</p> <p>Last year was eagerly anticipated to be a comeback year for an industry that produces 60 percent of the citrus fruits consumed in the United States. Instead of a revival, they got Hurricane Irma.</p> <p>For consumers, that is likely to mean paying higher prices for juice. For Florida's farmers, and the industry that became synonymous with the state, the future is far less certain.</p> <p>Citrus greening, also known as yellow dragon disease, is spread by a kind of louse called the Asian citrus psyllid, the size of a grain of rice. Psyllids are whipped across the state by wind, making them effective carriers for disease during hurricanes.</p> <p>Citrus greening is harmless to humans and animals, but the disease causes fruit to be misshapen and overly bitter. Most citrus trees in Florida are believed to be infected with it.</p> <p>Tree diseases have already affected the taste, quality and quantity of Florida's citrus fruit.</p> <p>"For anyone who wants to advertise 100 percent Florida orange juice, it's virtually a thing of the past," Bill</p>

	<p>Roe said, adding that imports are making up the difference. It's also not as good as it was 10 years ago, he said.</p> <p>Since Hurricane Irma rolled through Florida, an additional bacteria, known as canker, has begun to infect trees</p> <p>"It functions differently than greening does," Gee Roe, the packing operations manager, said. "It affects the outside of the fruit, primarily just the fruit and the leaves."</p> <p>Because the Roe family sells fresh fruit, meant to be consumed and not turned into another product like juice, aesthetics are almost as important as taste.</p> <p>This seemingly ceaseless list of gut-punches to Florida's citrus industry has caused the cost of production per acre to skyrocket for growers.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Violence fuels fear w/Myanmar Muslims
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/feel-trapped-violence-fuels-fear-myanmar-muslims-53011020
GIST	<p>For four straight days last month, Rahim Muddinn watched, amazed, as Myanmar's state-run newspapers published special supplements showing Rohingya Muslims accused of being terrorists — nearly 250 photos each day.</p> <p>For the 41-year-old Rohingya man, it was a surreal moment. He was born and raised in Yangon, Myanmar's biggest city and far from the western state of Rakhine, where bloody military operations that followed Rohingya militant attacks in August have driven nearly 700,000 Rohingya into refugee camps in Bangladesh.</p> <p>"When we first saw those pictures, we started laughing. We wondered: When will it be our turn to have our pictures in the paper?" Muddinn, a teacher, said in an interview in his Yangon home.</p> <p>Behind the laughter, though, there is genuine fear.</p> <p>The pictures are the latest in a series of chilling realizations for the Rohingya minority here. Though Yangon's tree-lined boulevards and weathered colonial architecture seem a world away from the rice paddies and isolated villages of Rakhine — let alone the tarp-walled huts of the teeming refugee camps — the government is increasingly linking Rohingya across the country with what it calls a terrorist threat, Muddinn and others say.</p> <p>Rohingya in Yangon describe a sense of rising persecution and hatred, of vanishing freedoms and opportunities, of Buddhist neighbors and friends suddenly more willing to publicly express sympathies with the military's destruction of Rohingya villages in Rakhine.</p> <p>"One day it really could be my picture in the paper," said Muddinn. Like most of the other Rohingya who spoke with The Associated Press, he used his Rohingya name because of safety worries. "I do have anxiety. The government can detain anyone it says is a supporter of terrorism or anyone viewed as a threat to the state."</p> <p>Though Rohingya have always been persecuted in the country, it got much worse after 2012, when violence in Rakhine killed hundreds and drove about 140,000 people, most of them Rohingya, from their homes to camps. Violence flared again in 2016 and, most dramatically, following the August attacks, when refugees report widespread killing and rape by Myanmar forces. The AP last month confirmed, through extensive interviews with survivors and time-stamped video, a massacre and at least five mass graves, all previously unreported, in the Rakhine village of Gu Dar Pyin.</p>

	<p>Many Rohingya have been in Myanmar for generations, but, increasingly, the government and media have played up their claim that they're not citizens but "illegal Bengali interlopers" who entered Myanmar from Bangladesh with the help of corrupt immigration officers.</p> <p>There are non-Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, and they often report rising discrimination, especially those in Rakhine. But generally their situation is less precarious than the Rohingya.</p> <p>Myanmar's government denies discriminating against Rohingya and other Muslims.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Cyprus: Turkey warships block drilling rig
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/cyprus-turkish-warships-continue-block-drilling-rig-53012126?
GIST	<p>Cyprus' government spokesman says Turkish warships continue to impede a rig from reaching a location off the east Mediterranean island where Italian energy company Eni is scheduled to drill for gas.</p> <p>Nicos Christodoulides told state broadcaster RIK Monday the rig remains stopped some 30 miles (50 kilometers) from the drilling target off the island's southeastern coast.</p> <p>Christodoulides said Turkish warships prevented other merchant vessels from approaching the area, citing military maneuvers.</p> <p>He said a Turkish notice binding the area for such maneuvers expires Feb. 22, but Cyprus says it violates international law.</p> <p>Turkey opposes what it says is a "unilateral" Cypriot government hydrocarbons search because it disregards the rights of breakaway Turkish Cypriots to the ethnically split island's natural resources.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Gunmen attack paramilitary camp Kashmir
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/police-day-gunbattle-ends-indian-army-camp-kashmir-53011128
GIST	<p>At least one paramilitary soldier was killed when two gunmen opened fire near a camp in the main city in Indian-controlled Kashmir, officials said Monday.</p> <p>The attack came hours after government troops ended a two-day gunbattle with three gunmen at an army camp in another part of the disputed region. Five soldiers and one civilian were killed in that clash.</p> <p>Rajesh Yadav, a spokesman for the Central Reserve Police Force, said the building near the camp in Srinagar where Monday's attack occurred has been cleared of all civilians.</p> <p>Police chief S.P. Vaid said the area has been cordoned off and troops are exchanging fire with the gunmen.</p> <p>Late Sunday, government troops ended a gunbattle with militants inside an army camp in the region's Jammu area.</p> <p>Three militants were killed by late Sunday night, ending the attack that began at dawn on Saturday when the militants stormed the Sunjuwan army base on the outskirts of the city of Jammu.</p> <p>The Himalayan region of Kashmir is divided between India and archrival Pakistan. Both claim the region in its entirety.</p>

	Anti-India sentiment runs deep among Kashmir's mostly Muslim population.
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HEADLINE	02/11 India, China keep eye on Maldives' crisis
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/india-china-vie-influence-crisis-unfolds-maldives-52993084?cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>As a political crisis plays out in the Maldives, a quiet tug of war is taking place around it, with heavyweights China and India vying for strategic dominance in the picturesque Indian Ocean nation.</p> <p>At first glance, Beijing and New Delhi want no part in the turmoil that erupted Feb. 1 when the Maldives' Supreme Court overturned the convictions of several opposition politicians, including the president's main rival. Chinese and Indian officials spoke in usual diplomatic tones, saying they have no interest in interfering in the archipelago's internal affairs. But in reality, both have strategic regional interests to safeguard and are jostling for the upper hand.</p> <p>President Yameen Abdul Gayoom has sent envoys to "friendly nations" China, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to explain his government's position since he rejected the court ruling, imposed a state of emergency last week and arrested two of the Supreme Court judges. His actions fueled suspicion that he has no intention of easing up on eliminating his rivals and tightening his hold on power ahead of this year's elections.</p> <p>His most powerful opponent, exiled former President Mohammed Nasheed, appealed to India to send troops to end the crisis.</p> <p>"On behalf of Maldivian people we humbly request: 1. India to send envoy, backed by its military, to release judges & pol. Detainees ... We request a physical presence," Nasheed tweeted last week.</p> <p>Traditionally, the archipelago of 1,200 islands and a population of 390,000 Sunni Muslims has been firmly in New Delhi's sphere of influence, with India even intervening in 1988 when a group of mercenaries tried to seize power. Its support helped keep former strongman Maumoon Abdul Gayoom in power for three decades and later aided Nasheed, the country's first democratically elected leader, who became famous when he used his low-lying island nation to highlight the risk of rising sea levels and climate change.</p> <p>But the Maldives began tilting toward Beijing after Yameen, the half brother of Gayoom, came to power in 2013 by defeating Nasheed.</p> <p>Yameen has rolled back many of Nasheed's democratic gains, with all of his potential political opponents either jailed or in exile. His government curbed freedom of speech and assembly, with heavy fines imposed on journalists and social media users found guilty of defamation. In 2015, in a trial widely criticized by rights groups, Nasheed was sentenced to 13 years in prison. He later received asylum in Britain.</p> <p>China saw the developments as an opening.</p> <p>"Until 2011, China didn't even have an embassy in the Maldives. Coming to 2018, it's seen as a big player in this whole Indian Ocean region," said Mahalakshmi Ganapathy, an India-China expert at Singapore's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.</p> <p>When Yameen visited Beijing in December, the two countries signed a free trade agreement that eliminates most tariffs on Maldivian exports, primarily fish, and opens the island nation to Chinese goods and services, including in finance, health care and tourism.</p> <p>China is already the Maldives' primary source of tourists, whose spending largely drives the economy, and Beijing is investing hundreds of millions of dollars in an airport expansion, housing development and</p>

	<p>other projects.</p> <p>China now sees the Maldives as a crucial part of its "One Belt One Road" project along ancient trade routes through the Indian Ocean and Central Asia. The initiative envisages building ports, railways and roads to expand trade — and China's influence — in a swath across Asia, Africa and Europe.</p> <p>China's massive lending to poor nations for such projects has raised concerns about their ability to repay. Already, Beijing has taken over ports it developed in Sri Lanka and Pakistan on long-term leases.</p> <p>Nasheed says China is "buying up the Maldives" under Yameen, accusing the president of opening up the floodgates to Chinese investments with little or no oversight and transparency. China has dismissed those allegations.</p> <p>Beijing is watching the Maldives very carefully. If the political situation turns in Nasheed's favor, that may shift the balance of influence back toward New Delhi.</p> <p>India is clearly uneasy with China's growing presence in its backyard. What's less clear is how it will respond to the current upheaval in the Maldives.</p> <p>So far, India hasn't responded publicly to Nasheed's demand that it deploy soldiers to end the crisis, and it's held off formally meeting with Yameen's envoy.</p> <p>But on Friday, India's Ministry of External Affairs issued a carefully worded statement aimed at China.</p> <p>"We note that China has said that Maldives Government has the ability to protect the security of Chinese personnel and institutions in Maldives. We hope that all countries can play a constructive role in Maldives, instead of doing the opposite," the statement said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Utility: Puerto Rico 75% w/electricity
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/electricity-restored-75-percent-customers-puerto-rico-utility/story?id=53005459&cid=clicksource_81_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>Nearly six months after Hurricane Maria decimated Puerto Rico, the island's electricity has been restored to 75 percent capacity, according to its utility company.</p> <p>The Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority said Sunday that 75.35 percent of customers now have electricity. It added that 90.8 percent of the electrical grid, already anemic even before the Sept. 20 storm barreled through the island, is generating power again.</p> <p>Thousands of power restoration personnel made up of the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), industry workers from the mainland, and the Army Corps of Engineers have made marked progress in recent weeks.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Drones are changing the world
SOURCE	https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/306599
GIST	<p>Those who dream of getting an Amazon package, a prescription drug, or even a beer delivered to their doorsteps via drone might have their wishes fulfilled sooner than expected.</p> <p>The Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Integration Pilot Program has jump-started the development of the drone industry in the United States, aiming to “enhance the safety of the American public, increase the efficiency and productivity of American industry and create tens of thousands of new American jobs.”</p>

Aerial enterprises such as drone delivery and aerial imagery are poised to take off. The potential economic benefit of integrated unmanned airborne systems will generate an estimated \$82 billion and create up to 100,000 jobs by 2025, while aerial imaging is expected to generate \$3.3 billion by 2023.

Driving that growth are new and expanding application areas. Aerial technology is transforming industries of all types by optimizing processes, cutting costs, and reaching both figurative and literal places that were once unattainable. Here are five industries that are being disrupted by this new, lifesaving technology.

Disaster relief and humanitarian aid.

Just days after Hurricane Harvey, location content companies captured the devastation left by the natural disaster to aid in emergency response and rescue, flood management, and FEMA fund allocation. In times of emergency, image captures can be used to navigate first responders and 911 emergency services as well as analyze road conditions. FEMA and disaster relief agencies can also allocate money based on examinations of the extent of devastation in an area.

Earlier this year, Otherlab, an engineering research and development lab based in San Francisco, created the APSARA glider, an advanced, biodegradable cardboard airplane capable of carrying more than two pounds of supplies like blood and vaccines to those in need.

The biodegradable drone can support canisters, medically sensitive liquids, batteries and other life-saving items and disperse them to an area the size of California. Now medical supplies can be delivered to rural areas without roads or regions rendered inaccessible by natural disasters or war.

High-resolution aerial imagery, like these before and after images of Hurricane Irma, are being used to aid in emergency response and rescue, FEMA fund allocation and flood management.

Public transit.

Local transportation agencies such as Orange County Transportation Authority and the District Department of Transportation in Washington, DC, are using aerial imagery as a base map -- a collection of GIS data and imagery that form the background setting and orientation of the map.

Aerial photographs integrated with third-party programs like Autodesk and Esri products help in project management oversight, planning and site analysis, and validating construction updates (lane, roadway and sidewalk updates).

Ocean mapping.

Realizing that the ocean is critical to human existence -- the source of 97 percent of the planet's water and producer of more than half of the oxygen in the atmosphere -- it may come as a surprise that 85 percent of the ocean's surface remains unmapped and unexplored.

Aerial imagery has played a part in bridging that gap. High-resolution photos from aircraft camera systems can capture and retrieve surface current data and measure Doppler shift in waves. This method is cost-effective, timely and scalable; it can cover large surface areas.

This process has implications for the oil and gas industry. Using the data extracted from the aerial captures, oil companies can plan and execute offshore exploration, conduct deep-water drilling operations, reinforce oil spill response and mitigation, and assist in search-and-rescue missions.

Machine learning and AI.

The combination of machine learning and AI is changing the way the insurance and real estate markets answer questions at scale. Now, with extremely high-resolution imagery, insurers can easily gather the most accurate, inspection-level property data, allowing assessors to easily identify characteristics and potential risks of a property such as swimming pools and the distance between trees and buildings.

Cape Analytics, for example, has developed a cloud-based platform that provides an on-demand data

stream of high-value property features and risks for real estate portfolios across the United States.

Precision agriculture.

Precision agriculture is a farming management concept based on the use of technology to increase crop yields and profitability while reducing a number of traditional components necessary for growing crops such as water, fertilizer, herbicides, and insecticides. Drone aerial imagery is key. Aerial pictures help farmers work smarter in tasks such as surveying entire farm properties, conducting soil and irrigation sampling, scheduling pesticide applications, and finding mechanical errors in equipment.

Large companies such as Monsanto, John Deere, Bayer, Dow and DuPont are investing in precision farming technologies like software, sensors and aerial-based data.

City water districts use aerial imagery to monitor crop production and water supplies and analyze aspects of the water budget. GIS and aerial imagery were used to create models and tools for the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership for examining and assessing the Coachella Valley Aquifer. These maps were used to estimate infiltration as well as change in land cover classifications and water depth surfaces, all visualized in 2D and 3D to find possible trends.

As the aerial technology industry matures, it will only become more ubiquitous. The sky covers everything, from emergency response to public transit, oceanic discovery to large-scale farming and property assets. Sure, you'll still get your package delivered, but the sky is opening up a world of other possibilities.

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HEADLINE	02/10 False alarms in national alert system
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/news/us/false-alarms-highlight-weaknesses-in-national-alert-system-1.511041
GIST	<p>Weather junkie John Grosso knew it was highly unlikely a monster wave was barreling toward the Connecticut coast. Still, when a tsunami warning appeared out of the blue on his phone Tuesday, he felt a twinge of fear. His co-workers, who got the same alert, asked whether they should evacuate.</p> <p>It turned out to be a false alarm, a computer glitch. The damage? An erosion of trust.</p> <p>"Now I have to check every single time, God forbid, there's a tornado warning, a tsunami alert, pick your poison," said Grosso, 25, a social media manager from Stamford. "I have to look at it and go, 'Is it a test? Was it sent in error?' And I could be wasting precious time in case it was real."</p> <p>Last month's bogus ballistic missile warning in Hawaii and this week's tsunami alert snafu have highlighted trouble spots and prompted calls for change in the nation's increasingly complex system for alerting Americans about dangerous weather, active shooters, kidnapped children, plant explosions and other emergencies.</p> <p>Both incidents have prompted calls for reform, including better training for emergency workers in charge of sending alerts.</p> <p>More than 1,000 federal, state and local government agencies have the ability to issue emergency alerts through an array of federally managed communications networks. It is a patchwork system that usually works as intended but can wreak havoc when it doesn't.</p> <p>In the Senate, legislation introduced this week in response to the false missile alert would establish standards for state and local agencies' participation in the national alert system, require federal certification of their incident management systems, and recommend steps for avoiding false alarms.</p> <p>Additionally, the Federal Communications Commission has ordered wireless providers to do a better job</p>

of targeting emergency alerts to only those in the affected area, with a geographic "overreach" of no more than one-tenth of a mile.

Aside from the false alarms, emergency agencies have been criticized for sending alerts to too many people or too few. In Alaska, for instance, a tsunami warning triggered by an undersea earthquake in January reached residents of Anchorage even though the city wasn't in danger. In Northern California wine country, where wildfires killed dozens of people in October, some residents complained that authorities failed to send an emergency alert to their phones.

"The emergency alerting system is really a whole collection of systems, and there are various places where it can break down," said Dan Gonzales, a scientist at RAND Corp. who studies emergency alert systems. "With so many organizations involved, it's difficult to make it foolproof."

The risk of too many false alarms, Gonzales said, is that "people will ignore warnings if they believe they're not accurate or not relevant."

That was on vivid display Tuesday when AccuWeather, the private forecasting service, took what was intended to be a routine, monthly National Weather Service test message and sent it as a real warning to subscribers up and down the East Coast, the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean.

Katia Del Negro, 33, was at home in New York City when she got the alert, her surprise quickly turning to skepticism.

"I definitely got a bit concerned when I saw that many people along the East Coast received the alert," she said. "But at the same time it seemed so weird, so I thought something was off, thinking back about what happened in Hawaii not long ago."

AccuWeather, based in State College, Pennsylvania, blamed the weather service, saying the government agency miscoded the test message. That caused the company's computers to interpret it as real and push it to subscribers' cellphones, according to AccuWeather.

The weather service insisted its message was coded properly.

Daryl Herzmann, a systems analyst in the agronomy department at Iowa State University, said the message contained a "T" flag, indicating test. But the weather service also recycled a tracking number it used in a previous tsunami warning, probably confusing AccuWeather's computers, he said.

The weather service has been recycling tracking numbers for years, said Herzmann, who runs an environmental data project that compiles information from the weather service.

Weather service spokeswoman Susan Buchanan had no comment on Herzmann's observation. She pointed to an earlier statement that said the agency is "working with private sector companies to determine why some systems did not recognize the coding."

It was human error, not a computer problem, that caused last month's panic in Hawaii. A state worker mistook a drill for a missile attack and sent an emergency alert to cellphones and broadcast stations. It took nearly 40 minutes for the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency to figure out a way to retract the alert.

The worker was fired and the agency chief resigned.

"This cry of wolf damaged the credibility of alert messaging, which can be dangerous when a real emergency occurs," Lisa Fowlkes, an FCC official, said Tuesday during a House committee hearing on the nation's emergency messaging system.

Jeremy DaRos, of Portland, Maine, who lives near the water and got the erroneous tsunami alert, said he is concerned that people won't take seriously the emergency alerts they get in an actual crisis.

	"People need to trust the alerts they're pushing out," he said. "This is important stuff, and to have two incidents in the span of a month is just unacceptable."
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HEADLINE	02/10 OxyContin maker stops opioid promotion
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/americas-heroin-epidemic/oxycontin-maker-purdue-stop-promoting-opioids-light-epidemic-n846726
GIST	<p>Purdue Pharma, the company best known for selling the prescription painkiller OxyContin, announced on Saturday that they would stop marketing opioid drugs to doctors. The move comes amid a series of state and municipal lawsuits that blame the company for contributing to the opioid epidemic.</p> <p>Purdue has faced criticism for more than a decade that it has aggressively and irresponsibly pushed the sale of its drug OxyContin. The company said Saturday that it would cut its sales force by more than 50 percent, with approximately 200 people remaining in the department.</p> <p>"We have restructured and significantly reduced our commercial operation and will no longer be promoting opioids to prescribers," Purdue said in a statement.</p> <p>The company plans to run all questions about its highly profitable drug Oxycontin — which the American Addiction Centers said has a strong “potential for addiction and subsequent withdrawal symptoms” — through its medical affairs department.</p> <p>Dr. Andrew Kolodny, the co-director of Opioid Policy Research at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management, said he wished that the company had decided to stop marketing the drug years ago and that other opioid manufacturers would agree to do the same.</p> <p>"The problem we have is doctors over-prescribing opioids, and it's difficult to promote more cautious prescribing if manufacturers are sending drug reps into doctor's offices and advertising in medical journals and investing millions to get them to prescribe more," Kolodny said.</p> <p>"Overall, the impact will be small because the genie is out of the bottle," he said of the opioid manufacturer's decision. "But if other opioid manufacturers would do the same, it would have a bigger effect."</p> <p>Purdue generated \$1.94 billion in Oxycontin sales in 2017, according to Symphony Health Solutions. That is approximately \$1 billion less than its all-time high in 2013.</p> <p>Because of Oxycontin's rising cost, many people who developed an addiction to the opioid subsequently turned to heroin, contributing to the ongoing drug epidemic.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Iran marks anniversary Islamic Revolution
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iran-marks-anniversary-islamic-revolution-protests-52996962?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Hundreds of thousands of Iranians rallied on the streets Sunday to mark the 39th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, just weeks after anti-government protests rocked cities across the country.</p> <p>Demonstrators burned American and Israeli flags, as well as images of President Donald Trump, whose refusal to re-certify the nuclear deal with world powers has riled Iranians. A few burned a white sheet reading "BARJAM," the Farsi acronym for the 2015 nuclear accord that Tehran signed with world powers.</p>

Such activities commonly mark the anniversary, which commemorates the overthrow of U.S.-backed Iranian Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. That began a period of hostilities between Iran and the West, including an attack on the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and the subsequent hostage crisis.

However, President Hassan Rouhani made a point to call for unity among Iran's people across its political spectrum, from hard-liners backing the theocratic government to reformists demanding change.

"When the Revolution took place, we pushed some off the revolutionary train that we should have not," Rouhani told a massive crowd at Tehran's central Azadi Square. "Today, we have to let them board the train again."

Rouhani didn't specifically name those pushed aside, though the Islamic Revolution and its aftermath saw the Islamists surrounding Ruhollah Khomeini purge liberals, communists and others. More recently, Iran has put leaders of its 2009 Green Movement under house arrest, where they remain even today despite Rouhani's pledges to free them.

The comments appeared aimed as being a salve following a New Year marred by anti-government protests. The demonstrations initially focused on Iran's poor economy despite the nuclear deal, but quickly spiraled into chants directly challenging Iran's theocratic government.

In his speech, Rouhani promised more job opportunities and better economic condition in the near future. Meanwhile, dozens of hard-liners chanted: "Death to liars, death to the seditious!"

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HEADLINE	02/11 Crash: parts shortage grounded plane 2yrs
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-parts-shortage-grounded-crashed-jet-years-53001264
GIST	<p>The Latest on a Russian plane crash Sunday near Moscow (all times local):</p> <p>4:25 p.m.</p> <p>Russia's state news agency Tass says the passenger airliner that crashed outside Moscow on Sunday had been flying since 2010, with a two-year break because of a shortage of parts.</p> <p>The plane, an Antonov An-148 jet, was ordered by Rossiya Airlines, a subsidiary of Aeroflot, but was put into storage during 2015-2017 because of a lack of parts. Tass reports it re-entered service for Saratov Airlines in February 2017.</p> <p>The jet was developed by Ukraine's Antonov company in the early 2000s, and was manufactured in both Ukraine and Russia.</p> <hr/> <p>3:50 p.m.</p> <p>A Russian passenger plane believed to be carrying 71 people has crashed near Moscow, shortly after takeoff from one of the city's airports. No survivors have been reported.</p> <p>The An-148 regional jet disappeared from radar screens Sunday afternoon a few minutes after departing from Domodedovo Airport en route to the city of Orsk, some 1,500 kilometers (1,000 miles) southeast of Moscow. The plane reportedly belonged to Saratov Airlines, a Russian commercial carrier.</p> <p>Plane fragments were found in the Ramenskoye area 40 kilometers (25 miles) from the airport. Footage on Russian state television showed them strewn across a snowy field with no buildings nearby.</p>

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HEADLINE	02/09 Baltimore PD officers 'integrity polygraphs'
SOURCE	http://baltimore.cbslocal.com/2018/02/09/polygraph-testing-baltimore-police/
GIST	<p>BALTIMORE (WJZ) — In his first press conference, new Baltimore police commissioner Darryl De Sousa said he is rearranging the department and one of his first moves will be to crack down on officer misconduct. In a somewhat confusing address to reporters, he explained what the department will look like under his leadership, already changing his mind on one of two deputy commissioner spots to be filled.</p> <p>He's in. He's out. He's maybe in again. The confusing back-and-forth at Friday morning's press conference leaves one of the two top spots in the department empty after just 24 hours earlier a chart was distributed to media outlets listing Thomas Cassella as the next Deputy Commissioner of Operations.</p> <p>"During a subsequent background check, I discovered something that made me slow down that process and reconsider," explained De Sousa. "Currently at this point, we're not going to move forward."</p> <p>In his first round with reporters as the newly-appointed commissioner, De Sousa said he's pulling back on Cassella's appointment on the heels of a memo reportedly leaked to media outlets detailing past complaints against the 23-year veteran and now-retired officer. Then, police spokesperson TJ Smith said the leak is still under investigation and Cassella was not out of the running.</p> <p>"The commissioner has not made a decision, so that's the answer," said Smith.</p> <p>As they look into the legitimacy of the leaked document, the commissioner said they will also be watching their own.</p> <p>"I cannot minimize is the fact that there are corrupt cops. GTTF is awful. It sickens me to my stomach to see what occurred," he said.</p> <p>The once-elite gun task force consumed by corruption that was prosecuted federally is now the inspiration for a new "integrity division" which will police the police. It will include random integrity tests, along with random polygraph tests and the launching of an overtime abuse unit.</p> <p>DeSousa emphasized his priorities now are eliminating police corruption while boosting the safety of the city.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Hawaii's cesspools threaten tourism
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/hawaiis-cesspools-threaten-drinking-water-tourism-1518357620
GIST	<p>HONOLULU—Paradise has a sewage problem.</p> <p>Cesspools—holes in the ground where untreated human waste is deposited—have become a crisis in Hawaii, threatening the state's drinking water, its coral reefs and the famous beaches that are the lifeblood of its tourist economy.</p> <p>Sewage from cesspools is seeping into some of Hawaii's ocean waters, where it has been blamed for infections suffered by surfers and snorkelers. It is also entering the drinking water in part of the state, pushing nitrate levels close to the legal limit.</p> <p>Hawaii has 88,000 cesspools across its eight major islands, more than any other state. Collectively, they deposit 53 million gallons of raw sewage into the ground every day, according to the state health department. More than 90% of the state's drinking water comes from groundwater wells.</p>

State lawmakers, who outlawed new cesspools in 2016, are scrambling to find a solution to the thousands that exist.

Replacing all of the state's cesspools with alternate sewage systems would cost at least \$1.75 billion, according to the health department.

The problem is concentrated in suburbs and rural areas outside Honolulu, where cesspools have long been the primary method for storing sewage from homes.

Most beaches remain safe for swimming, and public water remains safe to drink for now, state officials said. The tourism industry continues to grow each year, despite instances of contamination at beaches.

But the problem is growing worse, officials said, as the state's population has continued to grow.

In Upcountry Maui, a rural area in the central part of the island where drinking-water wells are most threatened by cesspools, officials are monitoring water quality closely.

At one groundwater well, nitrate levels are already at 8.7 milligrams a liter; the legal limit is 10, and the Department of Health estimated that some parts of the aquifer are already over that limit. Environmentalists say they are worried about the potential effect of the water on infants, who can be killed by high levels on nitrates, which are chemicals found in fertilizer and sewage.

State Sen. J. Kalani English, who represents Upcountry Maui, said it can cost as much as \$100,000 to replace each cesspool, a prohibitive figure for most property owners. There are about 8,000 cesspools in Upcountry Maui alone.

Replacing the cesspools is "a huge financial burden," he said.

Hawaii's cesspool problem is a remnant of its agricultural past, when many parts of the state were off the electrical grid. Mr. English said, growing up on Maui, he remembered digging holes for outhouses, and then after a few years filling them with lye and digging new ones.

Outside of Honolulu, the state remains largely rural, and the mountainous terrain makes laying sewer lines to connect to sewage treatment plants expensive and, in many areas, not feasible.

Many bathrooms in homes outside Honolulu still pump sewage into nearby holes in the ground.

Before they were outlawed, the state received about 500 requests to put in new cesspools each year. Last year, the state passed a law requiring all cesspools to be replaced by 2050.

Yet, some residents resist plans to replace cesspools, worried about expense. In January, Upcountry Maui residents overwhelmed a Department of Public Health meeting, complaining about potential costs.

"You may want a clean environment, but you can't afford to pay for it," said Keith Kawaoka, deputy director for environmental health at the state agency. "It's a real dilemma."

Lawmakers are still searching for solutions. They recently called on engineers to bring them new ideas, adding that simply converting to septic systems—in which solids and liquids of waste are separated and the solids are later pumped out—wouldn't solve the contamination problems in some areas, because nitrates would still seep into the groundwater.

Health officials said the 740 cesspools around Kahaluu, on the east coast of Oahu, contributed to high bacteria counts in the bay.

"Skin infections consistent with sewage-contaminated surface waters have been documented in this area,"

	<p>the department's report said.</p> <p>Officials said it is difficult to definitively prove that any specific infection resulted from sewage contamination.</p> <p>In Puako, a popular snorkeling destination on the Big Island, residents fear that sewage from the area's 150 cesspools has already harmed the coral reef, which is its signature tourist attraction.</p> <p>Peter Hackstedde, president of Puako Community Association, said he now avoids the water if he has a cut; he has gotten infected before.</p> <p>He said the community had already spent more than \$2.5 million of its own money studying the problem.</p> <p>"We found that sewage is leaking into the ocean, and we swim in it," Mr. Hackstedde said.</p> <p>They now hope to install a small-scale sewage-treatment plant, which would avoid having to dig and install pipes to the nearest town, about 50 miles away.</p> <p>A treatment plant would cost about \$15 million, Mr. Hackstedde said, and residents don't want to put up that money on their own. He said his association is hoping for a public-private partnership.</p> <p>"Everyone who lives down here is pretty much for cleaning up the ocean," Mr. Hackstedde said. "We just need the money."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/10 Hezbollah hails Syria; 'new strategic era'
SOURCE	https://www.timesofisrael.com/hezbollah-downing-of-israeli-f-16-the-start-of-a-new-strategic-era/
GIST	<p>Hezbollah hailed Syria's air defenses after they reportedly downed an Israeli fighter jet on Saturday, saying it marked the start of a "new strategic era."</p> <p>"This is the beginning of a new strategic era which puts an end to the violation of Syrian airspace and territory," the Lebanese terror group said in a statement published by Lebanon's ANI news agency.</p> <p>Hezbollah, an Iranian proxy backing Syrian President Bashar Assad in his country's civil war, praised the "vigilance of the Syrian army," and said it had "bravely blocked Israeli warplanes and downed an F-16."</p> <p>It also said the Syrian response marked "a decisive end to old arrangements."</p> <p>Hezbollah supporters were celebrating the incident on Saturday across from the Israeli city of Metulla, according to Israeli TV reports.</p> <p>The statement from Hezbollah came after its allies Iran and Syria denied that an unmanned drone Israel said it shot down violated the Jewish state's airspace, calling Israeli allegations "lies," and saying the drone was on a regular mission gathering intelligence on the Islamic State.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Israel boosts air defense
SOURCE	http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Preparing-for-war-in-the-north-Israel-boosts-air-defense-542284
GIST	<p>Israel has boosted its air defense in the North following a significant confrontation between the Jewish State, Syria and Iran which led to the loss of an F-16 fighter jet.</p>

While the army refused to comment on the reports, witnesses reported seeing a convoy of missile-defense batteries heading north near the Israeli-Arab city of Baka al-Gharbiya. Other witnesses posted photos of several trucks carrying the batteries on central highways in northern Israel.

Israel's air defenses currently include the Iron Dome, designed to shoot down short-range rockets; the Arrow system, which intercepts ballistic missiles outside of the Earth's atmosphere and the David's Sling missile-defense system, which is designed to intercept tactical ballistic missiles, medium- to long-range rockets and cruise missiles fired from ranges of between 40 km. to 300 km.

Israel also has Patriot missile batteries stationed in the North and has used them to intercept drones infiltrating into Israeli airspace from Syria. In September, an Iranian-built unmanned aerial vehicle breached the "Bravo line" that marks the Syrian demilitarized zone, and was intercepted by an Israeli Patriot anti-ballistic missile launched from a station near the northern city of Safed.

The Arrow system was first used in April when it was launched to intercept three surface-to-air missiles fired toward IAF jets by Syrian-regime air defense.

On Saturday, an Iranian drone, which took off from Syria's T4 airbase in northern Homs province, flew through Jordanian territory before it infiltrated into Israel. It flew for about a minute and a half in the northern Jordan Valley before it was shot down by a helicopter flown by Lt.-Col. "L.", commander of the 113 Squadron.

"The squadron was sent to protect the country's skies," L. said. "We identified the aircraft as an Iranian drone, and when it crossed the border, we shot it down into Israeli territory. The squadron is ready and prepared for any task it is given."

IAF chief-of-air-staff Brig.-Gen. Tomer Bar, who is second in command of Israel's air force, said the drone was an advanced model with a low signature that Israel had never intercepted before. It is currently being examined by the IDF.

In retaliation for the incursion, eight jets took off to strike the drone's launch site. During the operation, Syrian regime forces fired around 20 anti-aircraft missiles at the jets. The pilot and navigator of one of the planes ejected themselves when they recognized that one of the missiles had locked onto their jet.

According to the IDF, Iran and the Quds Force of the Revolutionary Guards have been operating at the T4 base "for a long time, backed by Syrian-army forces and with the approval of the Syrian regime."

"Iran has been using the base in recent months for the purpose of transferring weaponry to be used against Israel," said the IDF Spokesperson's Unit. "These actions by Iran at the base are ostensibly carried out under the guise of supporting the fighting against the global Islamic jihad forces, but the actions carried out in the past 24 hours prove that its real concern is direct, violent action against Israel."

"In the Iranian action, all the Israeli warnings against Iranian consolidation in Syria were realized," it continued. "The attack was initiated and Israel was forced to respond first to the threat in its territory and then to the hostile elements operating from the Syrian territory opposite it."

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HEADLINE	02/11 Quake, wind, fire hit Winter Olympics
SOURCE	https://www.yahoo.com/news/earthquake-wind-fire-extreme-conditions-hit-olympics-073136245--oly.html
GIST	Pyeongchang (South Korea) (AFP) - An earthquake triggered an alert and high winds disrupted competition at the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics Sunday, as officials warned of a severe freeze and urged fans to wrap up warm.

After a bitterly cold first night of competition, a shallow 4.6-magnitude earthquake jolted the eastern portion of South Korea overnight, prompting warnings on mobile phones.

Early on Sunday, ski officials were forced to postpone the showpiece men's downhill until Thursday as buffeting winds made the high-speed slope too dangerous for competition.

Later, the women's slopestyle snowboarding also fell victim to the wind, as the qualifying session was scrapped with riders going straight into the final on Monday.

It comes after the first ski jumping final finished more than an hour behind schedule, past midnight on Saturday, as competitors were held up by swirling winds.

As if to complete the set of extreme conditions, an alert warning of a high risk of fire -- given the dry, windy weather -- also flashed up on mobile phones on Sunday.

Organisers gave assurances that the Games were at no risk from earthquakes, with venues built to withstand even strong tremors. Sunday's quake was measured at magnitude-4.7 by the US Geological Survey and was about 260 kilometres (160 miles) away.

"All the facilities in the Games area are built so they can withstand strong earthquakes over 7.0... so I assure you there was no issue regarding these facilities," said Sung Baik-you, spokesman for the Games organisers.

Of more concern for the sparse crowds at the outdoor events will be the biting cold, which has already made Pyeongchang one of the chilliest Olympics on record -- and which is set to dramatically worsen.

Temperatures are forecast to plunge to -14 degrees Celsius (6.8 Fahrenheit) on Monday, will feel like a shivering -25C in the strong, mountainside wind.

"People are advised to dress warmly and wear hats and gloves to keep themselves warm," warned Sung.

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HEADLINE	02/10 Italians protest shooting of migrants
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/10/europe/italy-migrants-protest/index.html
GIST	<p>Rome (CNN) — The shooting of African migrants allegedly by a suspect aligned with Italy's far-right, neo-fascist parties has sparked serious political debate about how the country is reconciling its fascist past.</p> <p>Luca Traini is accused of going on a shooting rampage February 3 in the central Italian town of Macerata and performing the fascist salute upon his arrest. Six African migrants were injured. The migrants are part of the wave of more than 600,000 people who have arrived by sea from North Africa since 2013 when Italy last went to the polls.</p> <p>On Saturday, thousands of centrist and leftist supporters gathered under heavy police guard in Macerata to demonstrate against the rise of Italy's neo-fascist parties. Organizers say 15,000 people attended.</p> <p>The march was held inside a fenced-off perimeter, and police banned fascist groups from participating. Supporters waved Communist Party and Antifa (anti-fascist) flags. Some held banners with "anti-fascism" and "anti-racism," while others displayed signs with fascist and Nazi symbols crossed out.</p> <p>Few migrants joined the march, according to Sammy Kunoun, head of the Nigerian Community of Macerata. Police had strongly discouraged migrant groups from protesting.</p> <p>Anti-fascist demonstrations were held in other Italian cities, including Piacenza, where the far-right, neo-fascist fringe group CasaPound engaged in violent clashes with police, according to Italian news reports.</p>

	On Wednesday, a group of supporters of the Forza Nuova neo-fascist party, which openly supports the recent shooting spree and has offered to pay the suspect's legal bills, clashed with police in Macerata, which has a high concentration of African migrants and those seeking political asylum.
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HEADLINE	02/11 Russia plane crash kills all onboard
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/11/europe/russia-plane-crash/index.html
GIST	<p>Moscow (CNN) — All 71 people aboard a Saratov Airlines plane died when the plane crashed southeast of Moscow on Sunday, Russian state news agency Tass reported.</p> <p>Those on board included 65 passengers and six crew members, the Russian news agency Interfax said.</p> <p>The Antonov-148 aircraft disappeared from the radar shortly after takeoff from Moscow's Domodedovo Airport and crashed soon afterward, Tass reported.</p> <p>The plane went down in Ramenskoye District, in the Moscow region, the Russian emergency ministry told CNN.</p> <p>"The snow is very dense ... the Moscow region has had some of its heaviest snowfall in decades," CNN's Matthew Chance reported from Moscow. "It's not clear at this stage whether weather was factor in this crash."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Israel PM: airstrikes dealt 'severe blows'
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/10/middleeast/israel-military-jet-crash/index.html
GIST	<p>CNN) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said his nation dealt "severe blows" to Iranian and Syrian forces following the weekend downing of an Israeli fighter jet over northern Israel.</p> <p>The Prime Minister said Israel would do so again if necessary.</p> <p>"We made it unequivocally clear to everyone that our rules of action have not changed one bit; we will continue to strike at every attempt to strike at us. This has been our policy and it will remain our policy."</p> <p>An Israeli F-16 fighter jet was hit and went down Saturday in northern Israel after coming under "massive anti-aircraft fire" from Syrian forces, according to the Israeli army.</p> <p>The incident came after an Israeli combat helicopter successfully intercepted an Iranian unmanned aerial drone that had been launched from Syria, the Israel Defense Forces said.</p> <p>Both pilots aboard the Israeli jet ejected, the Israeli army said. One pilot was severely injured during the ejection, while the second was lightly wounded.</p> <p>In retaliation for the downed jet, Israeli forces attacked 12 targets in Syria, including three aerial defense batteries and four targets described as Iranian, the IDF said.</p> <p>An IDF statement described the four Iranian targets as "part of Iran's military establishment in Syria."</p> <p>Netanyahu defended Israel's actions.</p> <p>"Our policy is absolutely clear: Israel will defend itself from every attack and from every attempt to harm our sovereignty," Netanyahu said. "Iran made such an attempt today. They violated our sovereignty, they</p>

	<p>infiltrated a drone into Israel's territory from Syrian territory."</p> <p>The US firmly backs Israel, with White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders issuing a statement saying, "Israel is a staunch ally of the United States, and we support its right to defend itself from the Iranian-backed Syrian and militia forces in southern Syria."</p> <p>US State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said in a statement Saturday that the US was "deeply concerned about today's escalation of violence over Israel's border."</p> <p>"Iran's calculated escalation of threat, and its ambition to project its power and dominance, places all of the people of the region -- from Yemen to Lebanon -- at risk," Nauert said. "The US continues to push back on the totality of Iran's malign activities in the region and calls for an end to Iranian behavior that threatens peace and stability."</p> <p>Meanwhile, Russia's Foreign Ministry was much more even-handed in its statement, saying that "the latest developments and attacks on Syria were viewed with serious concern" and that the losses to Syria and damage resulting from them were being examined.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/10 UN condemns bloody week in Syria
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/10/middleeast/syria-violence-untied-nations-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN) — Waves of deadly airstrikes against rebel-held areas in Syria have made this week "one of the bloodiest periods of the entire conflict," the UN human rights chief said Saturday.</p> <p>Opposition-controlled areas in Syria's northwestern province of Idlib and Eastern Ghouta, outside the capital, Damascus, have suffered intensified bombardment by what observers say are Russian-backed Syrian government forces.</p> <p>UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein called for urgent international action to halt the bloodshed after reports of 277 civilian deaths between Sunday and Friday. More than 800 civilians also were reported injured, the UN human rights office said.</p> <p>"The past week has been one of the bloodiest periods of the entire conflict, with wave after wave of deadly airstrikes leading to civilian casualties in areas of Eastern Ghouta and Idlib," Zeid said in a strongly worded statement.</p> <p>"The no-holds-barred nature of this assault is evidenced by reports that at least nine medical facilities, six of them in Idlib and three in Eastern Ghouta, were hit by airstrikes. Even by Syria's atrocious standards, these are exceptionally deplorable developments."</p> <p>Paramedics and volunteers were also killed and injured in a number of places "after second, third or fourth rounds of airstrikes apparently deliberately targeted places that had already been hit earlier in the day," the statement said.</p> <p>More than 200 of those killed were in Eastern Ghouta -- more than a quarter of them were children.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/10 Surveillance system or public safety tool?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/surveillance-system-or-public-safety-tool-seattle-dismantles-controversial-wireless-mesh-network/
GIST	Seattle's wireless mesh network, a node of controversy about police surveillance and the role of federal funding in city policing, is coming down.

Megan Erb, spokeswoman for Seattle Information Technology, said the city has budgeted \$150,000 for contractor Prime Electric and city employees to remove dozens of surveillance cameras and 158 “wireless access points” — little, off-white boxes with antennae mounted on utility poles around the city.

When the mesh network was bought and installed in 2013, with \$3.6 million from the Department of Homeland Security, the Seattle Police Department (SPD) said it would be a valuable public-safety device for port security and first-responder communication during emergencies. Critics from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Washington argued it was an apparatus for state surveillance hiding behind a public-safety smile.

Either way, it took the Seattle City Council by surprise.

The mesh network, according to the ACLU, news reports and anti-surveillance activists from Seattle Privacy Coalition, had the potential to track and log every wireless device that moved through its system: people attending protests, people getting cups of coffee, people going to a hotel in the middle of the workday.

In November 2013, shortly after the news stories about it came out, SPD spokesman Sean Whitcomb announced: “The wireless mesh network will be deactivated until city council approves a draft (privacy) policy and until there’s an opportunity for vigorous public debate.”

That policy never materialized. Now crews are tearing its hardware down and repurposing the usable parts for other city agencies, including Seattle Department of Transportation traffic cameras.

Erb said the city had hoped to remove the hardware earlier, but couldn’t because of work-schedule delays. “Seattle City Light is eager for us to remove old equipment from their poles,” she added, “so others, including possibly commercial cellular carriers, can upgrade their equipment.”

SPD declined several times to discuss the removal of the network.

“This is one good, granular victory,” said Shankar Narayan, Washington state’s technology and liberty director of the ACLU. “It’s an issue we’d advocated around for a very long time. We have a longstanding principle that suspicionless surveillance of general populations is not useful and chills people’s constitutionally protected rights.”

When the mesh-network debate first erupted in 2013, SPD spokesman Jonah Spangenthal-Lee wrote on the department’s blotter that the system “can and will be used a number of ways by a variety of different agencies.”

That versatility turned out to be a public-relations bug, instead of a feature.

Digital networks with surveillance potential, Narayan said, have a cost: “Not just in terms of public dollars, but community trust, willingness to attend a protest — we know that people who know they’re being watched will act differently. We’re glad to see the mesh network taken away.”

This isn’t the first time SPD has been pressured to abandon a Homeland Security-funded tool. In 2013, it gave up its drones. Like the mesh network, they were quietly bought with federal money and became a flashpoint for public outcry.

“We live in a brave new world where data and algorithms can be used against you without transparency,” Narayan said. “We don’t know who collected data, sold it to a data packager, then sold it, for example, to an HMO that will raise your health-insurance premium based on your reckless driving.”

The life cycles of the drones and the mesh network, Seattle City Council President Bruce Harrell said, have been a learning experience for Seattle.

	<p>SPD “needed to respect the public process, explain the technology to the public in a transparent manner, listen to the public’s concerns and obtain council approval via ordinance prior to installation.”</p> <p>In 2013, the city council passed a surveillance ordinance giving it more oversight in the acquisition of devices with surveillance capabilities.</p> <p>Last year, that ordinance was amended and bulked up, requiring city departments to report their surveillance-enabled technologies already in use and present them for review by the council.</p> <p>To date, city departments have identified 28 technologies — from Seattle Department of Transportation’s license-plate readers to SPD tools like iBase, a “crime analysis tool allows for configuring, capturing, controlling, analyzing and displaying complex information and relationships in link and entity data.”</p> <p>So what, exactly, does that do?</p> <p>“That’s the point,” Narayan said with a chuckle. “All we have now are vague descriptions — it could be anything from a simple graphic representation of a spreadsheet to a complex analytic tool that establishes relationships to show that somebody might be a gang member.”</p> <p>The council’s scrutiny of the city’s surveillance tools, Narayan said, will probably begin in March.</p> <p>In the aftermath of the drones and mesh-network controversies, he added, the ACLU has had productive conversations with SPD: “They have a better understanding that if they want to roll out these technologies, they will have to be ready to answer tough questions.”</p> <p>Removal of the mesh network is “a clear win for privacy,” said Phil Mocek, co-founder of Seattle Privacy Coalition. “Hopefully, this move is indication that city leaders have learned their lesson and that we will continue to see increased sanctuary from unwarranted surveillance in Seattle.”</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Snohomish Co. flu deaths lead state
SOURCE	http://www.heraldnet.com/news/county-leads-state-in-flu-deaths-now-at-27/
GIST	<p>EVERETT — Influenza’s spread seems to have ebbed slightly, but that doesn’t mean the influenza season is over.</p> <p>Four more people have died in Snohomish County due to complications from the flu. That brings the season’s death toll to 27, the most of any county in Washington. King County was second highest, with 23 flu-related deaths.</p> <p>Statewide, 151 people have died from influenza, according to state Department of Health data.</p> <p>The most recent deaths in Snohomish County were two women from Marysville, one in her mid-60s and another in her late 60s; a woman in her mid-80s from Edmonds; and a woman in her mid-80s from Everett. All had health conditions that made them more vulnerable to the flu.</p> <p>Other measures of local flu activity include 256 hospitalizations for flu-related illnesses and four long-term care facilities reporting flu outbreaks, said Heather Thomas, a Snohomish Health District spokeswoman.</p> <p>“We expect the flu season to be here for several more weeks,” Thomas said. “It does go through spring on occasion. Last year we had flu deaths through May.”</p> <p>Although flu activity remains high in Snohomish County, Washington seems to have gotten a bit of a</p>

	break from influenza compared to much of the rest of the nation. While flu activity remains high here, it is not continuing to rise.
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HEADLINE	02/10 Officer suspended in Lyles shooting
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/896697/officer-who-shot-lyles-suspended-for-2-days-for-no-taser/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — A Seattle police officer who didn't have his Taser with him during the fatal shooting of Charleena Lyles has been suspended for two days without pay for violating department policy.</p> <p>The Seattle Times reports Interim Police Chief Carmen Best imposed the discipline Friday on Officer Jason Anderson.</p> <p>He and another officer shot Lyles when police say she pulled at least one knife on them during a June 18 confrontation at her Northeast Seattle apartment.</p> <p>Best noted the disciplinary case didn't reach a conclusion on whether the outcome would have been different if Anderson was carrying a Taser. A department Force Review Board report determined that a Taser wasn't a feasible alternative.</p> <p>Lyles, a 30-year-old African-American mother of four, was shot seven times by the officers, who are white, after she called 911 to report a burglary.</p> <p>The shooting unleashed a storm of public protest.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/10 Yakima tribal leaders declare crisis
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/896829/yakima-tribal-leaders-declare-crisis-after-crime-spike/
GIST	<p>TOPPENISH, Wash. (AP) — Yakima tribal leaders have declared a public safety crisis on the southern Washington reservation and are imposing stricter penalties following a recent spike in crime.</p> <p>The Yakima Herald-Republic reports tribal leaders approved a resolution earlier this week, allowing officials to take away treaty fishing and hunting rights and remove non-tribal members from the reservation for certain crimes.</p> <p>The resolution also criticized the Washington State Patrol for not actively patrolling the reservation, and it called on the federal government to help address the crisis.</p> <p>State Patrol spokesman Kyle Moore says routine patrols ended on the reservation after their authority was relinquished to tribal police under the retrocession process. He says the state agency does assist other agencies on the reservation like the Yakima County Sheriff's Office.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/10 Seattle school bus strike over
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/896894/seattle-school-bus-strike-ends/
GIST	<p>The Seattle school bus driver strike came to an end Saturday after nine days of picketing. Students can expect yellow school bus service to start back up Monday morning.</p> <p>“This is life-changing,” said driver Olivia Moore, a member of the Teamsters Local 174. “This is what we have been fighting for. I can go to the doctor. I can retire someday. I can't even tell you how much that</p>

	<p>means.”</p> <p>The union’s website notes that Moore has been “struggling to receive treatment for cancer despite having no health insurance.” Health care was among the two main points of disagreement between employer First Student and the union. The union also fought for a better retirement package. The Teamsters report that they achieved both in negotiations that wrapped up late last week — with the help of a federal negotiator.</p> <p>The union voted 97 percent in favor of accepting the contract Saturday morning. The vote put an end to the strike that began on Feb. 1 with about 400 drivers in Seattle. It is estimated that about 12,000 students had to find alternate transportation to school last week.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Seattle: homeless collide w/donation bins
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/895908/seattle-homeless-donation-bins/
GIST	<p>It’s a case of compassion versus compassion as Seattle’s homeless crisis collides with charity donation bins.</p> <p>“The homeless have been a real challenge for us because they do get into these boxes, steal clothing, dump them over, and do activity around the boxes which gives us a bad reputation for trying to do good,” said a representative with Northwest Center.</p> <p>Donation boxes are often hosted on private property, where people can drop off used clothing for charities. But they have become targets for thieves and those experiencing homelessness, prompting neighbor complaints, and damaging charity operations.</p> <p>“They get in there, crawl in there, sleep in there, use it as a restroom, do drugs in there,” the representative said. “And then we might catch them in there. A driver will go to service it and someone is sleeping in there.”</p> <p>The representative with Seattle’s Northwest Center did not want to be named in this article, but would discuss how the charity is dealing with the homeless crisis. The charity collects used clothes in donations bins around town, then sells the clothes to Value Village. The revenue goes to programs supporting children and adults with disabilities in the region.</p> <p>“I have complete compassion,” the representative said. “We work with people who have a huge barrier to employment and opportunities in their communities already. With the homeless, you want to be compassionate. But it doesn’t seem to work. It doesn’t seem they want to get out. It’s like a lifestyle – an off-the-grid lifestyle. They don’t want to deal with the pain; they have this lifestyle.”</p> <p>The bin issue is now so severe that it is cutting into revenue for the charity. They regularly receive complaints about the bins from neighbors. One Seattle citizen group has had the issue go viral on Facebook.</p> <p>Northwest Center says that complaints about the donation bins are so common they often have to remove them and find another place to locate the boxes. Northwest Center has two employees dedicated to doing this – scheduling a bin removal in response to complaints, then finding a new home for it.</p> <p>“We lose an average of 10 (bins) a month, but we are constantly trying to find new places – it’s a game,” the Northwest Center rep said.</p> <p>While donations at Northwest Center are up for other methods (drop offs at the center, scheduling home pick-ups), donations at the bins are down. The representative estimated it was about a 10 percent drop over 2017 and attributes the decline to the homeless problem. The charity is now exploring new bins that are harder to get into.</p>

"I don't know if it will really help," the representative said. "If they want to get in, they will get in ... They cut the locks, break the locks."

Other charities with donation bins in Seattle would not go on the record. One charity said they have moved its bins indoors or to more secure locations. Another organization removed their bins out of the city altogether more than a year ago.

Northwest Center has dealt with donation theft for years. But over the past four years, it has gotten dramatically worse. It has halted its former home pickup program. Drivers used to take a route to get donations from porches, but people would find out their route, drive ahead and steal the donations. It now requires a scheduled home pickup.

The trucks at Northwest Center have also been broken into.

"We've had homeless cut off a fire extinguisher inside our van," the representative said. "It costs us."

"I have personally called (police) out to our headquarters with a theft in progress ..." they said. "After hours. I happened to be there working late at the office. They did eventually come, but I wasn't hopeful that it was going to result in anything."

That's because Northwest Center employees have often called the police about thefts and the donation bin issue in the past. The representative received a message from Seattle police officers that is commonly reported by other residents: there's nothing police can do — that it's not a high priority for officers. The representative said they have seen officers catch people breaking into cars near the headquarters, and then just send them along down the road.

The charity is therefore left to do business as usual — which has become the "game" of moving around the bins after each complaint, and taking a financial hit.

"The homeless situation in Seattle has gotten so bad it's affecting the way you do business," the representative said. "It affects how we get our revenue. It's costing us, it's costing other businesses, society, my tax dollars that have to pay to clean up the camps."

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HEADLINE	02/09 WA does not collect 'road rage' data
SOURCE	http://www.kiro7.com/news/local/washington-state-does-not-collect-road-rage-data/697427782
GIST	<p>BOTHELL, Wash. - Bridget Johns and her brothers own the Defensive Driving School based in Kirkland. So she spends her days teaching others how to drive. But even she couldn't avoid a speeding, aggressive driver.</p> <p>"There was a car behind me, a sports car, that was on my tail," she said. "Really, really pressing me to go faster. But there really wasn't any place for me to go."</p> <p>Then along came a second speeding car.</p> <p>"The flashing lights (were) going," she said. "He was a trooper in an unmarked car; pulled over the first one."</p> <p>And perhaps that trooper spared another from what happened to Abel Loreda.</p> <p>"I want to make this noticeable," said Loreda. "So I'll put this here."</p> <p>Loreda removed his prosthetic leg in a Pierce County Courtroom today. He wanted to show it to the man</p>

who sheared off his left foot in a fit of rage on I-5 in 2016.

Then just last night, a Pierce County man was shot dead by a motorcycle rider following a road-rage incident near Milton in what may be a case of self-defense.

The state has been trying to cut off road rage for decades. A video was produced by the Washington Traffic Safety Commission in the late 1990s. Officers described the aggressive driving they were seeing on the highway.

"Oh, she's following that car too close," one officer said.

"There we go," said another officer, as he watched a vehicle swerve into another lane. "That's what I was waiting for right there."

Nationwide, nearly 80 percent admit to raging on the road. KIRO 7 wanted to find out how many incidents of road rage happen here in Washington state. We called Washington State Patrol, WASH DOT, and the Washington Traffic Safety Commission.

And we found out something startling: Nobody tracks road rage incidents in this state.

"One of the things that we teach our students to do starting from the first driving lesson, is to notice what's going on around them," said Bridget Johns.

She says she teaches her students to leave enough space to avoid tangling with another driver.

"Have a space cushion," she said. "And so there's one in front of me. There's one in back of me. I can't really control what's going on in back of me. I can a little bit. But if someone cuts in front of me, I don't care because I have space."

So why doesn't the state collect data on road rage? Those to whom KIRO 7 spoke say they don't have a code or box to check for road rage when these incidents happen.

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HEADLINE	02/09 WA Task Force 1 for local response
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/wa-task-force-1-approved-for-local-response/281-516947927
GIST	<p>Next week, Pierce County and Washington State Emergency Management will sign an agreement to enable Washington State Task Force 1 (WA-TF1), one of 28 national Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) urban search and rescue teams, to respond to state and local emergencies in Washington.</p> <p>WA-TF1 has responded to several federal disasters including Hurricane Harvey in Houston, Texas.</p> <p>But leaders say because they are a federal resource it's been harder to mobilize this team to respond to a disaster at home. During OSO, Pierce County had to make a special agreement with Snohomish county just to jump in and help.</p> <p>"It didn't delay the response for Oso it just created an extra layer of bureaucracy," said Scott Heinze, Deputy Director of Pierce County Emergency Management. "It's nice to know that if the call comes next week we have this agreement in place we won't have to go through the process and we'll hit the ground to save people."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Claim: US Olympic system 'failed' athletes
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gymnastics-usa-nassar-michigan-state/u-s-olympic-system-failed-abused-gymnasts-usoc-idUSKBNIFT32B
GIST	<p>PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (Reuters) - The U.S. Olympic system "failed" the hundreds of young female athletes sexually abused by former USA Gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar, United States Olympic Committee (USOC) Board of Directors Chairman Larry Probst said on Friday.</p> <p>"The Olympic system in the United States failed these athletes and we are part of the Olympic system in the United States," said Probst, speaking ahead of the opening ceremony of the Pyeongchang Winter Games.</p> <p>He also said the USOC had not taken steps quickly enough to contact gymnasts abused by Nassar and that it had erred by failing to attend earlier sentencing hearings.</p> <p>"That was simply a mistake," he said. "We should have been there."</p> <p>Former sports doctor Nassar last year pleaded guilty to molesting female athletes under the guise of medical treatment for nearly 20 years, and has been given two prison sentences in Michigan of 40 to 125 years and 40 to 175 years.</p> <p>He is also serving a 60-year federal term for child pornography convictions.</p> <p>UltraViolet Action, a women's advocacy group in the United States, on Friday called for USOC Chief Executive Scott Blackmun to resign for failing to adequately respond to reports of Nassar's abuse before he was criminally charged.</p> <p>A letter by the women's group signed by sexual abuse survivors says, "It's unconscionable and unacceptable that no one has been held accountable at the USOC."</p> <p>Dozens of the victims have accused officials at the USOC, USA Gymnastics and Michigan State University of failing to investigate complaints stretching back decades.</p> <p>The board of directors of USA Gymnastics stepped down after U.S. Olympic officials threatened to decertify the governing body.</p> <p>The USOC has announced an independent investigation into its own conduct that would help them understand "who knew what about Nassar's abuse, when and what they did with that information".</p>
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HEADLINE	02/10 Duterte: navy will protect sea wealth
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/02/10/duterte-warns-hell-order-navy-to-fire-if-sea-wealth-taken.html
GIST	<p>MANILA, Philippines – The Philippine president says he has no intention of going into war over territorial feuds but will order the navy to fire if other countries extract resources from waters within his country's exclusive economic zone.</p> <p>President Rodrigo Duterte told a news conference late Friday that the Philippines could not fight more powerful nations like the United States and China but warned that "if you get something there from the economic zone, I will order the navy to fire."</p> <p>Duterte was referring to the country's 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone, a stretch of sea where coastal states have been granted exclusive rights to exploit natural resources under a 1982 U.N. treaty.</p> <p>Duterte recently stopped all foreign scientific research missions in Benham Rise to stress Philippine</p>

	sovereign rights over the off-shore region.
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HEADLINE	02/08 Mass exodus San Francisco Bay Area
SOURCE	http://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2018/02/08/san-francisco-bay-area-mass-exodus-residents/
GIST	<p>SAN JOSE (KPIX 5) – The number of people packing up and moving out of the Bay Area just hit its highest level in more than a decade.</p> <p>Carole Dabak spent 40 years living in San Jose and now she’s part of the mass exodus that is showing no signs of slowing down.</p> <p>The retired engineer’s packing up and calling it quits about to move to the state of Tennessee.</p> <p>“I loved it here when I first got here. I really loved it here. But it’s just not the same,” Dabak said.</p> <p>Of course people come and go from the Bay Area all the time, but for the first time in a long time, more people are leaving the Bay Area than are coming in. And the number one place in the country for out-migration is now, right here.</p> <p>Russell Hancock with Joint Venture Silicon Valley said, “Silicon Valley has been this place that is growing. And it was mostly growing because...people relocating here and relocating from other parts of the world. That’s changing.”</p> <p>Joint Venture Silicon Valley’s own study of the out-migration says workers are moving to Sacramento, Austin, and Portland due to a number of factors. But topping the list is the high cost of housing.</p> <p>“You can’t even contemplate getting into the housing market here,” Hancock said. “And I don’t mean just service workers, I mean highly skilled professionals. The tech elite are having a hard time affording reasonable housing in Silicon Valley. So this is difficult, this makes it very difficult for employers trying to recruit.”</p> <p>Operators of a San Jose U-Haul business say one of their biggest problems is getting its rental moving vans back because so many are on a one-way ticket out of town.</p> <p>Dabak cites crowding, crime and politics as the reasons for her own exodus.</p> <p>“We don’t like it here anymore. You know, we don’t like this sanctuary state status and just the politics here,” she said.</p> <p>She plans to sell her home for about \$1 million, buy a much larger place near Nashville for less than half that and retire closer to family and friends.</p> <p>Nationwide, the cities with the highest inflows, according to Redfin are Phoenix, Las Vegas, Atlanta, and Nashville.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Flu season still getting worse
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/da19ce2ea2354b5db3cc1cf78220fc/Flu-season-still-getting-worse;-now-as-bad-as-2009-swine-flu
GIST	NEW YORK (AP) — The flu has further tightened its grip on the U.S. This season is now as bad as the swine flu epidemic nine years ago.

A government report out Friday shows 1 of every 13 visits to the doctor last week was for fever, cough and other symptoms of the flu. That ties the highest level seen in the U.S. during swine flu in 2009.

And it surpasses every winter flu season since 2003, when the government changed the way it measures flu.

"I wish that there were better news this week, but almost everything we're looking at is bad news," said Dr. Anne Schuchat, acting director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Flu season usually takes off in late December and peaks around February. This season started early and was widespread in many states by December. Early last month, it hit what seemed like peak levels — but then continued to surge.

The season has been driven by a nasty type of flu that tends to put more people in the hospital and cause more deaths than other more common flu bugs. Still, its long-lasting intensity has surprised experts, who are still sorting out why it's been so bad. One possibility is that the vaccine is doing an unusually poor job; U.S. data on effectiveness is expected next week.

Some doctors say this is the worst flu season they've seen in decades. Some patients are saying that, too.

Last week, 43 states had high patient traffic for the flu, up from 42, the CDC reported. Flu remained widespread in every state except Hawaii and Oregon and hospitalizations continued to climb.

But reports of deaths — some in otherwise healthy children and young adults — have caused growing fear and concern, health officials acknowledge.

The CDC said the amount of suspected flu cases at doctor's offices and hospital emergency rooms last week matched that seen in 2009, when a new swine flu pandemic swept the world. Swine flu, also called pandemic H1N1, was a new strain that hadn't been seen before. It first hit that spring, at the tail end of the winter season, but doctor visits hit their height in late October during a second wave.

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HEADLINE	02/09 Dow rebounds; still worst week in 2yrs
SOURCE	https://www.cnbc.com/2018/02/09/us-stock-futures-dow-data-earnings-market-sell-off-and-politics.html
GIST	<p>The Dow Jones industrial average rebounded more than 300 points Friday, paring deep losses for investors in what still amounted to the worst week in two years.</p> <p>The Dow ended the day up 330.44 points, or 1.38 percent, closing at 24,190.90. The S&P 500 rallied 1.49 percent to finish at 2,619.55, while the Nasdaq composite added 1.44 percent to close at 6,874.49. The index swung more than 1,000 points in volatile trading Friday.</p> <p>The Dow and the S&P 500 both lost 5.2 percent on the week, while the Nasdaq shed 5.1 percent as rising interest rates spooked investors. The Dow average experienced two drops of more than 1,000 points and two gains of more than 300 points during this volatile week. At their lows this week, all three major indexes were in correction territory from the record highs reached in January.</p> <p>"What's happened here is an understanding that inflation is returning and that the central bank quantitative easing that we've grown accustomed to is coming to an end," said Jim Bianco, head of the Chicago-based advisory firm Bianco Research. "Since the financial crisis, this is the first 10 percent correction in stocks that has not been accompanied by a significant fall in rates."</p> <p>The Dow dropped 1,032 points Thursday and the average posted its worst point drop in history on Monday, closing 1,175 points lower. Monday's decline of 4.62 percent was also its worst daily percentage drop</p>

	<p>since Aug. 10, 2011, when it also fell 4.62 percent.</p> <p>The recent turmoil in equities began last Friday, when the Dow fell 666 points after a better-than-expected jobs report ignited inflation fears. That fall was exacerbated Monday after the yield on the benchmark 10-year Treasury note hit a 4-year high, sending the Dow tumbling another 1,175 points as investors grew more nervous about an overheating economy.</p> <p>Trouble with securities called exchange-traded notes that decline in value when volatility increases likely helped create more turmoil in the markets this week. The Cboe Volatility index (VIX) — the market's best fear gauge — shot above 40 again Friday after jumping as high as 50 earlier in the week. At the end of January, the VIX was below 14.</p> <p>Yields backed off their multi-year highs on Tuesday, giving the Dow a 560-point bounce and relative stability on Wednesday. But between another round of strong economic news, hawkish comments from the Bank of England and an expensive government funding bill, yields rallied again, sparking Thursday's sell-off.</p> <p>The 10-year Treasury ticked up to 2.85 percent Friday. The note yield flirted with 2.885 percent Thursday, a 4-year high that sparked major equity sell-offs earlier in the week.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 China's corruption problem in Africa
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/09/world/patrick-ho-corruption-china-africa/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)It sounds like a Hollywood movie. A respected Hong Kong financial magnate allegedly plans a clandestine meeting with the president of Chad in the middle of the dusty Sahara Desert, and offers him a \$2 million gift to secure oil rights for a Chinese conglomerate.</p> <p>In another scheme, Chi Ping Patrick Ho, according to United States prosecutors, sends the now foreign minister of Uganda, who was then the president of the UN General Assembly, a \$500,000 bribe for business advantages, through the New York banking system.</p> <p>All this was allegedly planned under the noses of the world's top diplomats in the corridors of the United Nations in New York, where Ho ran an energy NGO.</p> <p>In November 2017, Ho and Cheikh Gadio -- the Senegalese failed presidential candidate and former foreign minister, who allegedly arranged the deals -- were arrested in New York on multiple bribery and money laundering charges. This week, the trial date was set for November 5, 2018. Aged 68 years old and in ailing health, Ho risks spending his remaining years behind bars. He has pleaded not guilty.</p> <p>This case, however, is about more than one man's spectacular fall from grace. It offers a rare window into Chinese corruption in Africa -- something academics, politicians and business people have long suspected existed but found difficult to prove.</p> <p>What's more, with the mountain of evidence seemingly against the defendant, legal experts are wondering whether Ho might be asked to expose other corrupt parties to reduce his sentence.</p> <p>Western companies in Africa have "long spoken of the competitive advantage Chinese companies have on the continent," says Andrew Spalding, a professor at the University of Richmond and expert in anti-corruption law. "And the dramatic increase in China's commercial presence tends to confirm it."</p> <p>China's goods trade alone with Africa totaled \$188 billion in 2015, compared with \$53 billion for the US. As China has become the continent's biggest economic partner, Chinese companies have found themselves operating in countries with high corruption ratings without domestic legislation to answer to. Thirteen Sub-Saharan African nations ranked in the bottom 30 of the 2016 Corruption Perceptions Index.</p>

"If I am an American company and I want to do a deal, particularly in Africa and less developed areas, and I am approaching African officials but losing out because Chinese companies are bribing those officials, I am going to be irked," says Rob Precht, president of New York-based legal think tank Justice Labs.

American and British companies have been living with the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) and the UK Bribery Act for years. Although China formally adopted a foreign bribery law to comply with the UN Convention Against Corruption in 2011, it has done "next to nothing to enforce it," says Spalding. He adds: "The hope is that if Western companies continue to pressure overseas governments to change, that competitive advantage will eventually disappear."

Chinese president Xi Jinping's high-profile corruption crackdown at home virtually ignores foreign bribery, according to some observers. "For centuries, bribery has not even been considered a bad thing in China," says Precht. "But as China becomes a partner in the world community, these issues are going to become more important."

In November 2017, the US Department of Justice formalized a new anti-corruption policy prioritizing bringing cases against individuals rather than corporations. Heavy fines against companies, it said, only penalized shareholders.

US Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein cited the conviction of one of the richest men in China, real estate magnate Ng Lap Seng, of bribing UN officials, as an early example of this strategy's success. He thanked the governments of the United Kingdom, Brazil, Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Singapore, and Turkey for helping the US to enforce this approach during a two-year trial period.

China was notably absent from that list.

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HEADLINE	02/09 Flights canceled; storm slams Midwest
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/09/us/winter-weather/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)More than 1,500 US flights have been canceled Friday as a winter storm slammed the Midwest with at least 1 inch of snow per hour.</p> <p>Heavy snow and strong winds already pounded Chicago and Detroit, where public school systems opted not to open Friday, CNN meteorologist Haley Brink said.</p> <p>"We are getting more snow today, tomorrow and Sunday than we have normally gotten in the last two winters in any one period of time," Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel said in a Friday morning news conference, adding that the city's top priority is the safety of residents.</p> <p>"Whether that's young kids, homeless, elderly, sick, commuters -- in every capacity we are responding and ensuring that people are able to handle this weather."</p> <p>About 23 million Americans are under winter weather alerts as an arctic front pushes from Montana through the Midwest, CNN meteorologists said.</p> <p>Chicago could get around a foot of snow -- 8 to 14 inches -- by late Friday, and between 2 to 4 inches through the weekend, forecasters said. Much of northern Illinois had seen between 8 and 12 inches of snow by Friday afternoon, CNN meteorologist Taylor Ward said.</p> <p>The bulk of flight cancellations affected Chicago's O'Hare and Midway airports and Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport, according to the tracking site FlightAware.com.</p> <p>Kieran Sheridan, chief operating officer for the Chicago Department of Aviation, said in a Friday press</p>

	<p>conference that the city's airports were "well-prepared."</p> <p>About 280 heavy snow equipment operators were working on the airfields at Midway and O'Hare, said Sheridan, who warned travelers to give themselves extra time when heading to the airport.</p> <p>Four major US airlines -- Delta, United, Frontier and Southwest -- issued weather waivers for passengers, allowing travelers to change their reservations without incurring fees.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Militants attack India army Kashmir camp
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/dead-militant-attack-indian-army-base-kashmir-52998290?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Shooting between soldiers and militants holed up inside an army camp in Indian-controlled Kashmir has left at least five soldiers and one civilian dead, officials said Sunday, the second day of the battle.</p> <p>The fighting, which began at dawn Saturday when the militants stormed the Sunjuwan army base on the outskirts of the city of Jammu, continued into Sunday afternoon, said the region's top police official, S.P. Vaid. At least 11 people were injured.</p> <p>Security forces were sweeping through the camp slowly, since soldiers and their families live there, Vaid said. It was unclear how many militants were involved in the attack.</p> <p>The Himalayan region of Kashmir is divided between India and archrival and neighbor Pakistan. Both claim the region in its entirety.</p> <p>Anti-India sentiment runs deep among Kashmir's mostly Muslim population.</p> <p>Several militant groups have been fighting for Kashmir's independence from India or its merger with Pakistan since 1989. Around 70,000 people have been killed in the uprising and the ensuing Indian military crackdown.</p> <p>India accuses Pakistan of arming and training the militants, a charge Islamabad denies.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Drones in opening ceremony Olympics
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/thousands-drones-light-show-olympics-opening-ceremony/story?id=52941985&cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>Thousands of drones were used to put on a pre-recorded light show during the opening ceremony for the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea, Friday morning for the first time, according to Intel, which is overseeing the event.</p> <p>A total of 1,218 drones outfitted with LED lights were used to paint "colorful illustration in the sky," setting a new Guinness World Record on the number of drones flown at the same time, according to an Intel spokeswoman. Intel holds the current record after 500 drones were flown simultaneously for a light show in Krailling, Germany, on Oct. 7., the spokeswoman said.</p> <p>The drones are controlled through an automated software program, though they do have one pilot for backup, Intel said.</p> <p>In addition to the opening ceremony, the drones will be used throughout the games, creating light-filled formations every night from Feb. 10 to Feb. 24 during the nightly victory ceremonies.</p>

	"It's something that we wanted to integrate that experience into the Olympics on a daily occasion, because not everyone is going to be at the opening ceremony, and we want to give everyone in Korea a chance to see these shows," said Natalie Cheung, the general manager for Intel's drone light shows.
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HEADLINE	02/10 Israel downs Iran drone; strikes Syria
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/israel-downs-iranian-drone-strikes-syria-16-crashes-52978982?cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>The Israeli military shot down an Iranian drone that infiltrated the country early Saturday before launching "large-scale attack" on at least a dozen Iranian targets in Syria. Israel called it a "severe and irregular violation of Israeli sovereignty."</p> <p>The military said its planes faced massive anti-aircraft fire from Syria that forced two pilots to abandon an F-16 jet that crashed in northern Israel. One pilot was seriously wounded and the other lightly.</p> <p>The military called the drone infiltration a "severe and irregular violation of Israeli sovereignty" and said Iran would be held responsible for its outcome, marking a dramatic escalation in tensions along its northern border.</p> <p>"This is a serious Iranian attack on Israeli territory. Iran is dragging the region into an adventure in which it doesn't know how it will end," Israel's chief military spokesman, Brig. Gen. Ronen Manelis, said in a special statement. "Whoever is responsible for this incident is the one who will pay the price."</p> <p>The Israeli military then carried out what it called a "large scale attack" against Iranian and Syrian targets in Syria.</p> <p>The military said it struck 12 targets including three aerial defense batteries and four Iranian targets that are part of Iran's military establishment in Syria. During the attack, anti-aircraft missiles were fired toward Israel jets triggering sirens that were sounded across northern Israel.</p> <p>Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman was convening the top brass at military headquarters in Tel Aviv to discuss a further response.</p> <p>Israeli military spokesman Jonathan Conricus said Iran was "responsible for this severe violation of Israeli sovereignty" and that the military was "fully prepared for further action."</p> <p>Syrian state TV quoted a military official saying Syrian air defenses hit more than one Israeli plane. The official said the Israeli raids hit a base in the country's central area, and called it a "new aggression."</p> <p>Later, Syria state TV said its air defenses responded to new Israeli raids near the capital Damascus.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	02/09 Study: phishing attacks that do work
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/study-shows-most-clicked-phishing-attempts/article/743513/
GIST	<p>People are very predictable when it comes to designing phishing attacks that appeal to a potential victims with people most likely to click on messages concerning money.</p> <p>A recent KnowBe4 study sent phishing test emails to roughly 6 million and found users were most likely to click on the mock phishing emails when they promised money or threatened the loss of money. People were also likely to fall for phishing attacks appealing to their appetite offering free food or drinks, emails</p>

that evoked the fear of missing out on non-monetary opportunities and attacks that appealed to basic curiosity such as new contact requests or photo tags.

Researchers also saw an increased click rate with certain email subjects as well with missed deliveries and false security notifications gaining the most clicks. The top subject lines of included “A Delivery Attempt Was Made” with an 18 percent click rate, “UPS Label Delivery 1ZBE312TNY00015011” with a 16 percent click rate, “Change of Password Required Immediately” with a 15 percent click rate, “Unusual sign-in activity” with a 9 percent click rate, and “Happy Holidays! Have a drink on us.” With an 8 percent click rate.

“Email is an effective way to phish users when disguised as legitimate email,” the report said. “These methods allow attackers to craft and distribute enticing material for both random (general phishing) and targeted (spear-phishing) means, leveraging multiple psychological triggers and engaging in what amounts to a continuous maturity cycle.”

Researchers were more convincing when targeting users via social media themed email phishing attacks. LinkedIn notifications were by far the most convincing with requests to add people, join networks, reset passwords, and new messages convincing 53 percent of test subjects to click.

The study also found that login Alerts, 19 percent, tagged photos, 12 percent, free pizza and new voice message respectively gained clicks from 18 percent of test subjects.

“The most effective templates or phishes are those that cause a knee-jerk reaction in the user,” Stu Sjouwerman, CEO, KnowBe4 said. “They make him/her react without thinking due to the alarming or urgent nature of the subject.”

Sjouwerman added that cybercriminals already know this and that these kind of subject lines will consistently work with the softest of targets and serve as an effective vector into a company. Some of the attacks may have benefited from the seasons with the package delivery phishing attacks making an uptick in Q4 near the holiday season when people are more likely to be expecting things in the mail.

“Seasonal differences really show up as Q4 was very concentrated on package delivery, no surprises there,” Sjouwerman said. “Q3 saw a larger amount of data breach or password related clicks, most likely due to the Equifax breach.”

He went on to say that initially the users were easy to trick however, the researchers quickly found that they couldn’t use the same email template on the same people or subjects would wise up to the tricks so researchers had to continue to switch the templates. Regardless, researchers found that the same tactics ultimately can be used on organizational employees and still work with success before they are worn out.

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HEADLINE	02/09 Sacramento Bee hit by ransomware
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/sacramento-bee-databases-hit-with-ransomware-attack/d/d-id/1331023
GIST	<p>The Sacramento Bee reported that two of its databases, both on a third-party server, were hit with a ransomware attack in January 2017. A Bee employee discovered the attack last week following a tip from a reporter with a different organization, the publication reports.</p> <p>One affected database contained California voter registration data from the California Secretary of State and was obtained for reporting purposes. Another, a subscriber database, contained contact data for 53,000 current and former Bee subscribers who activated digital accounts before 2017. The Bee is informing those whose names, addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers were compromised.</p> <p>Publisher Gary Wortel reports neither database contained credit card numbers, bank account data, or</p>

	<p>Social Security numbers. The voter registration data had been previously exposed online, and the same database had been shared with organizations that had been subject to attack.</p> <p>An anonymous attacker demanded a Bitcoin ransom in exchange for the data. The Bee chose not to pay and has deleted both databases to prevent further attacks.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Top nation-state hacking groups
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/8-nation-state-hacking-groups-to-watch-in-2018/d/d-id/1331009
GIST	<p>The nation-state threat landscape is constantly shifting. Threat actors alter strategies, switch targets, change tools - and for organizations who need to defend against these groups, keeping track of the players can seem impossible.</p> <p>Some hotbed regions are getting hotter, and some big-name actors are getting bigger. A perfect example is Fancy Bear (also known as APT28 and Sofacy), one of many groups believed to act out of Russia and Eastern Europe. The group is thought to be an arm of the Russian military intelligence agency GRU.</p> <p>"[Fancy Bear] is probably the most famous group right now," says John Hultquist, FireEye director of intel analysis, who expects Fancy Bear will become even more brazen over the course of this year. Security experts point to Fancy Bear as the predominant threat group to watch in 2018 as it widens its bullseye to include more corporate targets.</p> <p>North Korea is another hotbed for cyberattacks. The North Korean regime has invested significant resources in its cyber capabilities and groups from the area have been linked to a variety of activity, from the infamous Sony breach, to WannaCry and cryptocurrency mining.</p> <p>Here are the nation-state threat groups security researchers are watching most closely - and the aliases, geographies, behaviors, past attacks, and changing strategies related to each one.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Fancy Bear Also known as: Fancy Bear, APT28, Sofacy, Strontium, Sednit</p> <p>Believed to operate out of: Russia</p> <p>Usual targets: Fancy Bear's targets are primarily based in Europe and tend to include government ministries, though past attacks have targeted global embassies and the United States. The group has been known to target based on policies and it's interested in anything related to NATO, says Brian Bartholomew, principal security researcher at Kaspersky Lab. These days, he says Fancy Bear has its eyes on the Olympics.</p> <p>Behavior: Its strength is spearphishing, says Bartholomew, adding that this is the main tactic for most threat groups. Fancy Bear has splintered into different subgroups, each of which is responsible for a different part of the attack. One subset focuses on phishing as many targets as possible. Once they're on a system, the next subset uses toolsets to maintain persistence.</p> <p>Fancy Bear has also been known to leverage social media in its attacks, and spread disinformation campaigns, Bartholomew says. For example, it's believed to have hacked the anti-doping administration and tried to feed altered data to journalists, says Bartholomew. Some don't attribute this to Sofacy, he notes, but "we're pretty certain it is them." The group's toolkit is constantly evolving, but it does use a core backdoor called XAgent, says Alexis Dorais-Joncas, security intelligence team lead at ESET.</p> <p>Tied to: Attacks on the Democratic National Committee, International Association of Athletics</p>

Federations, and German Parliament; influencing the 2016 US presidential election.

"I think what's so surprising about their activity is, despite continued accusations and exposures, they had not let up," says Hultquist, who expects increased activity during the Olympics and elections.

"They've shown disregard for global norms and willingness to cross lines we never thought we'd see crossed."

Lazarus Group

Also known as: [DarkSeoul](#), [Hermit](#)

Believed to operate out of: North Korea

Usual targets: South Korea, United States, financial organizations for monetary gain.

Worth noting: "We believe there is more than one North Korean group," says Hultquist. It's difficult to break down groups in the region because of the way they operate. There aren't many Internet streams coming from North Korea so oftentimes activity from different groups gets muddled together.

Behavior: Groups in the region are strong at social media attacks, says Bartholomew. Attackers typically target victims on Facebook Messenger, LinkedIn, Twitter, and other platforms. "They'll spend a lot of efforts doing social campaigns figuring out who to target, then go after them slowly," he explains.

"We're not seeing an end to financially motivated activities," says Hultquist. "It's global and it is multi-million -- we're talking hundreds of millions of dollars at stake." Most nation-state threat groups limit their activities to espionage or destruction; the additional practice of financial cybercrime seems to be unique to North Korea, researchers say. Lazarus Group was behind the [massive Sony data-destruction and doxing attack](#), and one of its subgroups has been tied to attacks on cryptocurrency exchanges and the SWIFT banking network.

Bluenoroff (subgroup of Lazarus Group)

Believed to operate out of: North Korea

Usual targets: Financial institutions

Behavior: "Basically, they're the financiers of the cyber world," says Bartholomew of Bluenoroff, a branch of Lazarus Group specifically focused on financial businesses. Its goal is to gain cryptocurrency to finance their attack efforts.

Tied to: High-profile crypto hacks involving large sums of money from specific exchanges, including the attacks on the SWIFT network. Security researchers expect this activity to continue - especially as sanctions on the North Korean government and economy continue. "Sanctions are going to be tightened more, and these guys are going to get more active so they can continue to finance things," Bartholomew explains.

Turla

Also known as: [Snake](#), [Venomous Bear](#), [Waterbug](#)

Believed to operate out of: Eastern Europe

Usual targets: Typically, former Soviet republics (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan), as well as embassies in Moscow. Campaigns have also targeted diplomats in Eastern Europe, global consulates and embassies, and ministries of foreign affairs of European countries, says Dorais-Joncas. It has also targeted the US Department of State.

Behavior: The group has been known to leverage social engineering to trick targets into installing malware. Attackers often use watering hole attacks, which Bartholomew predicts will continue as it doesn't often change tactics - only a few times each year, and not much in 2017, he says.

"We've seen distribution of [fake, infected Flash updater on an Adobe subdomain](#) pointing to one of their legitimate CDN IP addresses," Dorais-Joncas says, adding that Adobe has confirmed it hadn't been compromised or distributed the malicious files. Turla combined one of its backdoors with a legitimate Adobe Flash installer and downloaded the malware from real Adobe URLs and IP addresses, then got

infected machines to return sensitive data to legitimate Adobe URLs.

Turla has been around for a while but began to increase activity in 2017 after a period of quiet. This past summer, it began using an undocumented [backdoor](#) to spy on embassies and consulates. A separate campaign, dubbed WhiteBear, is believed to be phase two of Turla project White Atlas. Like this campaign and others by Turla, its C&C infrastructure is made up of hijacked websites and satellite connections. Later that summer, researchers noticed Turla [targeting](#) G20 participants and interested parties (policymakers, nations, journalists) with KopiLuwak, a backdoor it has been known to use.

Sandworm

Also known as: [BlackEnergy](#), [Electrum](#), [Iridium](#)

Believed to operate out of: Eastern Europe

Usual targets: Ukraine

Behavior: Sandworm has been known to appear then disappear in waves with its attacks, which primarily target Ukraine, and experts agree we'll see more of these attacks in 2018. The group frequently uses spearphishing and has recently begun targeting the supply chain, a move likely to increase its target base, says Hultquist. While Ukraine is its primary target for ICS/SCADA attacks, there's always a chance Sandworm will broaden its reach. It previously researched a potential attack on US utility systems.

"Given that this activity doesn't appear to be declining or shrinking, the danger of them shifting and targeting outside Ukraine continues to increase," says Hultquist. "That could have serious repercussions for corporations operating all around the world."

Tied to: Ukraine power grid attacks of [December 2015](#) and [December 2016](#). Hultquist and other security researchers have also linked the group to last summer's NotPetya attack, a destructive campaign which also primarily targeted Ukraine.

Scarcraft

Also known as: [Reaper](#), [Group 123](#)

Believed to operate out of: North Korea

Usual targets: South Korean government, military, and defense industrial base

Behavior: Scarcraft, or Reaper (not to be confused with the IoT botnet named Reaper) has so far been less prolific, but is starting to cause concern, according to researchers. Up until now, the group hadn't demonstrated strong sophistication or focus outside the Korean peninsula. Now the group has been [linked to latest Adobe Flash zero-day](#), a sign that it is growing in strength. Hultquist says Scarcraft has been seen doing strategic Web compromises, specifically on websites related to North Korean interests like unification or defectors.

APT29

Also known as: [Cozy Bear](#), [CozyDuke](#), [The Dukes](#)

Believed to operate out of: Eastern Europe/Russia

Usual targets: Western European governments, foreign policy groups, similar organizations. APT29 has also targeted think tanks and NGOs.

Behavior: APT29 usually hides activity on victims' networks by disguising infrequent communication to resemble legitimate traffic, and by using legitimate popular Web services and taking advantage of encrypted SSL connections. It only uses compromised servers for C&C communication and deploys its own backdoors to fix bugs and add new features, [report](#) researchers at FireEye.

APT29 has also used social media platforms like Twitter and GitHub, and cloud storage services, to relay commands and take data from compromised networks. Spearphishing campaigns in recent years have targeted the US government.

Tied to: Attacks related to US election, post-US election [spearphishing](#) attacks, Democratic National Committee [hack](#).

APT35

	<p>Also known as: Newscafter, Charming Kitten</p> <p>Believed to operate out of: Middle East - specifically Iran</p> <p>Usual targets: Global range but recent focus is on Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia and Israel</p> <p>Behavior: "They've been carrying out global incidents," says Hultquist. "We've seen some overlap between them and destructive incidents and haven't been able to completely connect the two."</p> <p>APT35 focuses on social engineering through social networks. Attackers create fake personae in social networks and use them to infiltrate organizations by sending links to employees. Unlike email, which typically has built-in defenses, social media is less monitored and businesses don't have as much control. While the group's targets have shifted as relations between the US and Iran have improved, Hultquist anticipates we'll see more of them going forward.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Google paid \$2.9M for vulnerabilities
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/vulnerabilities---threats/google-paid-\$29m-for-vulnerabilities-in-2017/d/d-id/1331027
GIST	<p>Google issued a total of \$2.9 million in 2017 as part of its Google Vulnerability Reward Program, which has so far paid out \$12 million since it was first created in November 2010.</p> <p>More than \$1 million was given for vulnerabilities discovered and reported in Google products, and \$1.1 million was given for Android bugs. Google reports it gave out 1,230 individual rewards and 274 paid researchers were involved in the program last year.</p> <p>The Vulnerability Research Grants program awarded \$125,000 to more than 50 security researchers around the world. This initiative, a complement to the Vulnerability Reward Program, pays researchers and invited experts to investigate the security of Google products and services, even in situations where no vulnerabilities are discovered.</p> <p>Its Patch Rewards Program, an experimental program founded in 2013 which rewards proactive security improvements to open-source projects, paid \$50,000 to participants in 2017.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Energy riches fuel bitcoin craze in Iceland
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/gold-rush-energy-demands-soar-iceland-bitcoins-52997828?
GIST	<p>Iceland is expected to use more energy "mining" bitcoins and other virtual currencies this year than it uses to power its homes.</p> <p>With massive amounts of electricity needed to run the computers that create bitcoins, large virtual currency companies have established a base in the North Atlantic island nation blessed with an abundance of renewable energy.</p> <p>The new industry's relatively sudden growth prompted lawmaker Smari McCarthy of Iceland's Pirate Party to suggest taxing the profits of bitcoin mines. The initiative is likely to be well received by Icelanders, who are skeptical of speculative financial ventures after the country's catastrophic 2008 banking crash.</p> <p>"Under normal circumstances, companies that are creating value in Iceland pay a certain amount of tax to the government," McCarthy told The Associated Press. "These companies are not doing that, and we might want to ask ourselves whether they should."</p> <p>The energy demand has developed because of the soaring cost of producing and collecting virtual currencies. Computers are used to make the complex calculations that verify a running ledger of all the</p>

transactions in virtual currencies around the world.

In return, the miners claim a fraction of a coin not yet in circulation. In the case of bitcoin, a total of 21 million can be mined, leaving about 4.2 million left to create. As more bitcoin enter circulation, more powerful computers are needed to keep up with the calculations — and that means more energy.

The serene coastal town of Keflavik on Iceland's desolate southern peninsula has over the past months boomed as an international hub for mining bitcoins and other virtual currencies.

Local fishermen, chatting over steaming cups of coffee at the harbor gas station, are puzzled by the phenomenon, which has spawned oversize construction sites on the outskirts of town.

Among the main attractions of setting up bitcoin mines at the edge of the Arctic Circle is the natural cooling for computer servers and the competitive prices for Iceland's abundance of renewable energy from geothermal and hydroelectric power plants.

Johann Snorri Sigurbergsson, a business development manager at the energy company Hitaveita Sudurnesja, said he expected Iceland's virtual currency mining to double its energy consumption to about 100 megawatts this year. That is more than households use on the island nation of 340,000, according to Iceland's National Energy Authority.

"Four months ago, I could not have predicted this trend — but then bitcoin skyrocketed and we got a lot more emails," he said at the Svartsengi geothermal energy plant, which powers the southwestern peninsula where the mining takes place.

"Just today, I came from a meeting with a mining company seeking to buy 18 megawatts," he said.

At the largest of three bitcoin "farms" currently operating within Keflavik — called "Mjólnir" after the hammer of Thor, the Norse god of thunder — high metal fences surround 50 meter-long (164 foot) warehouse buildings stacked with computer rigs.

The data centers here are specially designed to utilize the constant wind on the bare peninsula. Walls are only partial on each side, allowing a draft of cold air to cool down the equipment.

"What we are doing here is like gold mining," said Helmut Rauth, who manages operations for Genesis Mining, a major bitcoin mining company. "We are mining on a large scale and getting the gold out to the people."

In the capital, Reykjavik, some are more skeptical about bitcoin.

The last time Iceland was an international hub for finance, the venture ended with a giant bank crash, making the country one of the symbols of the 2008 global financial crisis.

The political turmoil following the crash swept the upstart Pirate Party into Iceland's parliament, where it currently holds 10 percent of seats.

Pirate Party legislator McCarthy has questioned the value of bitcoin mining for Icelandic society, saying residents should consider regulating and taxing the emerging industry.

"We are spending tens or maybe hundreds of megawatts on producing something that has no tangible existence and no real use for humans outside the realm of financial speculation," he said. "That can't be good."

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SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iranian-officials-hacks-dailies-us-britain-53003103?
GIST	<p>Iranian telecommunication officials are saying that hackers who accessed the websites of some of the country's dailies are from the United States and Britain.</p> <p>A Sunday statement carried by the official IRNA news agency quotes the officials as saying the hackers targeted 30 websites on Saturday, including some belonging to Iranian newspapers.</p> <p>It added, however, that the websites were poorly secured.</p> <p>Late on Saturday hackers accessed the dailies' websites and changed their Farsi top stories to a contrived report about the death of the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.</p> <p>No one has claimed responsibility for the cyberattacks.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/10 UAE minister: data is oil of the future
SOURCE	http://www.arabnews.com/node/1243956/business-economy
GIST	<p>DUBAI: Data is the “oil of the future,” Mohammad Al-Gergawi, UAE minister for cabinet affairs and the future, told the opening session of the World Government Summit in Dubai.</p> <p>A packed audience heard the minister set out the agenda for the three-day event, which has attracted 4,000 leaders from the worlds of business and economic and public policy. Digital communications giants such as Google and Facebook would soon know more about individuals than governments do, Al-Gergawi said.</p> <p>“By 2045, we will be able to transfer and upload the contents of the human mind to a data center. Governments must be prepared for these coming changes. The aim of this summit is to find answers and set priorities to meet these challenges and opportunities.”</p> <p>The theme of the summit is “shaping future governments,” and Al-Gergawi detailed the challenges policymakers will face in health, artificial intelligence, crypto currencies and their impact on global finance, climate change and the issues of digital connectivity.</p> <p>Klaus Schwab, founder and chairman of the World Economic Forum, who also spoke at the opening session, harked back 10 years to the onset of the global financial crisis, which he said threatened a series of other crises in economies, in societies and between generations.</p> <p>“We avoided a complete breakdown of the financial system, but there was a cost. The world’s debts now add up to 200 per cent of global GDP,” he said.</p> <p>Schwab said most experts, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the International Monetary Fund, were forecasting two years of “sound, comprehensive growth,” but he said financial markets were still addicted to low interest rates and cheap capital.</p> <p>There were still risks of a social crisis, he said, with levels of inequality and an unfair system of wealth distribution, as well as a generational crisis. “The world’s education systems do not satisfy the requirements of the 21st century.”</p> <p>He highlighted global risks such as geopolitical issues, inequality, cybersecurity, gender parity and failures of leadership.</p> <p>The pace of technological change was increasing all the time and adding to the pressures on policymakers, Schwab said. “Never before has the speed of change been so fast as in 2018. But also, never again will the speed of change be so slow as it is in 2018.”</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Govt. sites infected w/mining malware
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bitcoin-cyber/u-s-uk-government-websites-infected-with-crypto-mining-malware-report-idUSKBN1FV0VO
GIST	<p>(Reuters) - Thousands of websites, including ones run by U.S. and UK government agencies, were infected for several hours on Sunday with code that causes web browsers to secretly mine digital currencies, technology news site The Register reported.</p> <p>More than 4,200 sites were infected with a malicious version of a widely used tool known as Browsealoud from British software maker Texthelp, which reads out webpages for people with vision problems, according to The Register.</p> <p>The news comes amid a surge in cyber attacks using software that forces infected computers to mine crypto currencies on behalf of hackers. The prevalence of these schemes has increased in recent months as the volume of trading in bitcoin and other crypto currencies has surged.</p> <p>The tainted version of Browsealoud caused inserted software for mining the digital currency Monero to run on computers that visited infected sites, generating money for the hackers behind the attack, The Register said.</p> <p>Representatives of the U.S. and British law enforcement agencies and Texthelp could not immediately be reached for comment.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/10 Equifax breach more widespread
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2018/02/10/More-Equifax-info-exposed-than-originally-disclosed-after-breach/2771518282337/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=lh&utm_medium=3
GIST	<p>Feb. 10 (UPI) -- Equifax's reported hacking of consumers' personal information was more widespread than originally disclosed, according to new documents submitted to a U.S. Senate committee.</p> <p>The credit reporting agency said cyberthieves accessed tax identification numbers, email addresses and driver's license information of 145.5 million customers -- stretching beyond the scope the company originally revealed, according to documents received by the Senate Banking Committee.</p> <p>The Wall Street Journal and CNN reviewed the documents sent to the Senate.</p> <p>In September, Equifax said it had been breached, compromising personal information belonging to 145.5 million consumers, including names, Social Security numbers, dates of birth and addresses, from May through July 2017</p> <p>Now, documents show that the license state and issue date might have also accessed. Equifax said an insignificant number of email addresses were affected and they are commonly searchable in public domains.</p> <p>Equifax spokesperson Meredith Griffanti told CNN Money the original disclosure wasn't meant to represent the full list of potentiality exposed information.</p> <p>"As your company continues to issue incomplete, confusing and contradictory statements and hide information from Congress and the public, it is clear that five months after the breach was publicly announced, Equifax has yet to answer this simple question in full: what was the precise extent of the breach?" Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., wrote in a letter to interim CEO Paulino do Rego Barros Jr.</p>

	<p>Barros replaced Richard Smith, who announced after the breach he would retire.</p> <p>With the data, criminals can open bank accounts and lines of credit, including a credit card or mortgage.</p> <p>"The more information scammers have about you, the easier it is for them to impersonate you," said Lauren Saunders, associate director at the National Consumer Law Center. "And the easier it is for them to get by the protocols that banks and others use to make sure they are dealing with the right individual."</p> <p>Equifax, TransUnion and Experian are the top three credit reporting agencies. They gather information on individuals from banks, credit card companies, retailers and public records. to create credit reports, which are used by lenders to determine the risk of a potential borrower.</p> <p>Equifax has sent mail notices to consumers affected by the breach.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Digital devices more revealing?
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/mach/science/our-digital-devices-may-be-revealing-more-about-us-we-ncna845966
GIST	<p>The digital footprints we leave behind as we go about our Internet-browsing, cellphone-calling, app-using lives may be revealing more about us than we realize — and opening us up to some surprising risks.</p> <p>The potential pitfalls were highlighted recently when an Australian college student discovered that maps released by the fitness-tracking app Strava could be used to identify U.S. military bases.</p> <p>The company had used anonymized GPS data from its users' jogging and cycling routes to create a global "heat map" of activity. But because the app is popular with military personnel, the maps revealed the locations of bases as well as sensitive details about their layouts and even service members' routines.</p> <p>It was even possible to identify individual military personnel by uploading routes to Strava's website to see who had the fastest times at these locations.</p> <p>"It really demonstrates our inability to comprehend the consequences of what we're sharing," says Dr. Mani Srivastava, a UCLA professor with a special interest in security and privacy issues arising from the use of mobile devices.</p> <p>Military personnel aren't the only ones at risk. Unless you opt out of publicly sharing your location data, other Strava users who exercise in the same area can pull up your profile details and see when and where you're working out. That opens up the possibility that someone could find you during a workout — and that burglars might be able to tell when you're away from home.</p> <p>Even if you don't use a fitness tracker, you may be unwittingly revealing your location to others.</p> <p>Twitter lets users stamp tweets with a location, and researchers at MIT and Oxford University showed in 2016 that even non-experts could use a day's worth of tweets to identify someone's home with 65 percent accuracy.</p> <p>Facebook also allows users to "check-in" to locations, and SnapChat's SnapMap function broadcasts your location each time you open the app. Both reveal the information only to your friend list, but security researchers showed in 2011 that one-fifth of Facebook users accepted friend requests from strangers.</p> <p>In a 2011 survey of 50 convicted burglars in the U.K., four fifths said thieves use social media to case their targets. Three burglars robbed at least 18 homes in New Hampshire in 2010 after checking Facebook for people announcing they weren't home.</p>

Even when our data isn't public, we may be sharing more than we realize. Location data tracked by smartphone apps can reveal our shopping habits and how and where we drive, as well as which place of worship we visit, says Srivastava, while motion sensors in fitness-tracking wristbands can show everything from sleep patterns to hand movements that suggest we're smoking or eating.

In his own house, Srivastava has an internet-connected thermostat that tracks people from room to room to help optimize the settings. "Maybe they could tell I'm a late-night eater because I spent some time in the kitchen at 1 a.m.," he says.

Personal data is valuable to advertisers, and some tech companies' business models rely on harvesting it. "Many services are only available with your data as your currency," says Srivastava.

Digital assistants like Amazon Echo and Google Home, which record voice data when users speak to them, could prove particularly intrusive. Dr. Joseph Turow, a University of Pennsylvania professor who specializes in marketing and privacy, says Amazon's privacy policy gives it wide latitude in determining how it will use user data.

"How they build that into their model of who you are I don't know," he says, "but I don't think most people who have Echoes understand it's certainly a possibility."

These profiles can be turned against consumers. In 2012, online travel agency Orbitz acknowledged that it showed Apple Mac users different, often more expensive, options compared to Microsoft Windows users — because data showed Mac users were bigger spenders.

A 2012 Wall Street Journal investigation found that online retailers adjusted prices based on users' browsing history and location. Displayed prices were higher in areas with little competition from brick-and-mortar stores, which often overlapped with rural and poor areas.

British car insurer Admiral even announced plans in 2016 to assess customer's personalities by analyzing their Facebook posts, though Facebook forced them to scrap the scheme. It would have denied discounts to motorists whose posts suggested they might be comparatively reckless behind the wheel.

Emerging "social credit scores" in China may be a harbinger of where this kind of profiling might lead, says Turow.

Sesame Credit combines credit history, shopping habits, and social media data to assign consumers a "trustworthiness" score that governs their access to loans and fast-track visas as well as VIP treatment at hotels. A government-run system scheduled to go online by 2020 would go further, giving users with low scores slower internet speeds, restricted travel, reduced employment opportunities, and limited access to insurance and loans.

"That may seem absurd to us," says Turow. "But the distance between social credit scores and behavioral activity tracking that today's marketers use is not necessarily all that large."

Want to do more to limit your digital footprint and plug as many data leaks as possible? Slate's Futurography project has useful tips. Both Apple iOS and Android version 6.0 allow you to switch off apps' access to data streams like location (check the privacy settings). Privacy-protecting apps like Signal can also help by encrypting text and voice calls. And DuckDuckGo is one search engine that doesn't collect user data.

Experts say you should also delete apps you don't use.

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HEADLINE 02/10 Software upgrade NYC traffic light glitch

SOURCE	http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2018/02/10/nyc-traffic-light-glitch/
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (CBSNewYork) — Drivers and pedestrians alike were urged to tread carefully after a glitch during a routine software upgrade caused problems with traffic lights across multiple intersections in New York City Saturday morning.</p> <p>The city’s Department of Transportation said the problems appeared after a software upgrade, done regularly on weekend nights, experienced an interruption around 5 a.m.</p> <p>Approximately 600 intersections — about 5 percent of the city’s traffic lights — were affected at one point, according to authorities. Some became flashing red lights, others went completely dark.</p> <p>Officials said the problem did not cause any accidents.</p> <p>City Councilman Justin Brannan (D-43) said it’s a good thing it didn’t happen during the work week.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/10 Olympics: cyberattack opening ceremony
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-olympics-2018-cyber/games-organizers-confirm-cyber-attack-wont-reveal-source-idUSKBN1FV036?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=Social
GIST	<p>PYEONGCHANG, South Korea (Reuters) - Pyeongchang Winter Olympics organizers confirmed on Sunday that the Games had fallen victim to a cyber attack during Friday’s opening ceremony, but they refused to reveal the source.</p> <p>The Games’ systems, including the internet and television services, were affected by the hack two days ago but organizers said it had not compromised any critical part of their operations.</p> <p>“Maintaining secure operations is our purpose,” said International Olympic Committee (IOC) spokesman Mark Adams.</p> <p>“We are not going to comment on the issue. It is one we are dealing with. We are making sure our systems are secure and they are secure.”</p> <p>Asked if organizers knew who was behind the attack, Adams said: “I certainly don’t know. But best international practice says that you don’t talk about an attack.”</p> <p>The Winter Games are being staged only 80km (50 miles) from the border with North Korea, which is technically still at war with the South since their 1950-1953 war ended in a truce rather than a peace treaty.</p> <p>Russia, which has been banned from the Games for doping, said days before the opening ceremony that any allegations linking Russian hackers to attacks on the infrastructure connected to the Pyeongchang Olympic Games were unfounded.</p> <p>“We know that Western media are planning pseudo-investigations on the theme of ‘Russian fingerprints’ in hacking attacks on information resources related to the hosting of the Winter Olympic Games in the Republic of Korea,” Russia’s foreign ministry said.</p> <p>“Of course, no evidence will be presented to the world.”</p> <p>Cyber security researchers said in January they had found early indications that Russia-based hackers may be planning attacks against anti-doping and Olympic organizations in retaliation for Russia’s exclusion from the Pyeongchang Games.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Scientists arrested in bitcoin mining plot
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-43003740
GIST	<p>Russian security officers have arrested several scientists working at a top-secret Russian nuclear warhead facility for allegedly mining crypto-currencies.</p> <p>The suspects had tried to use one of Russia's most powerful supercomputers to mine Bitcoins, media reports say.</p> <p>The Federal Nuclear Centre in Sarov, western Russia, is a restricted area.</p> <p>The centre's press service said: "There has been an unsanctioned attempt to use computer facilities for private purposes including so-called mining."</p> <p>The supercomputer was not supposed to be connected to the internet - to prevent intrusion - and once the scientists attempted to do so, the nuclear centre's security department was alerted. They were handed over to the Federal Security Service (FSB), the Russian news service Mash says.</p> <p>"As far as we are aware, a criminal case has been launched against them," the press service told Interfax news agency.</p> <p>Crypto-currencies like Bitcoin do not rely on centralised computer servers. People who provide computer processing power to the crypto-currency system, to enable transactions to take place, can get rewards in Bitcoins.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	02/12 US: let ISIS fighters face trial at home
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/let-isis-fighters-go-home-us-says-802860
GIST	<p>The United States is lobbying its partners to let their fighters from the Islamic State militant group (ISIS) return home from Syria to face justice there.</p> <p>Top U.S. officials are calling on coalition allies to repatriate the foreign fighters who have been captured by the Syrian Kurds.</p> <p>"We're working with the coalition on foreign fighter detainees, and generally expect these detainees to return to their country of origin for disposition," said Kathryn Wheelbarger, the principal deputy assistant defense secretary for international security affairs, the Associated Press reported.</p> <p>"Defense ministers have the obligation and the opportunity to really explain to their other ministers or their other Cabinet officials just the importance to the mission, to the campaign, to make sure that there's an answer to this problem."</p> <p>European security services have long feared the return of thousands of foreign ISIS fighters to their home countries. But those who are returned as captives also pose problems for governments about what they should do with them.</p> <p>Last week, two British nationals believed to have been members of the infamous ISIS cell known as The Beatles because of their British accents were detained in Syria. The British government has appeared reluctant to accept the return of El Shafee Elsheikh and Alexanda Amon Kotey to face justice.</p> <p>Any trial of a returnee would require evidence, and when these militants are captured in the field, there is not always sufficient evidence to prosecute them at home, meaning they could be released into society.</p>

	The fear is that they will seek to carry out extremist attacks on home soil.
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HEADLINE	02/11 Taliban remains dominant jihadist force
SOURCE	http://www.businessinsider.com/isis-taliban-afghanistan-terrorism-2018-2
GIST	<p>A number of high-profile attacks in Afghanistan towards the end of January were claimed by competing terrorist groups ISIS and the Taliban — putting the spotlight back on a country that has been at war for over a decade.</p> <p>An attack on the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul on January 20 that killed at least 40 people and an ambulance bombing in Kabul on January 27 that killed 103 were claimed by the Taliban.</p> <p>An attack on Save the Children's Jalalabad office on January 24 that killed six people and an attack on Kabul's military academy on January 29 that killed at least 11 Afghan soldiers were claimed by ISIS' Afghan branch — known as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant — Khorasan Province (ISIS-K).</p> <p>Since its creation in 2015, ISIS has pushed to have a bigger presence in Afghanistan. The recent attacks, and the fact that ISIS-K has proven to be stubbornly resilient, have made some in the West more worried about the group.</p> <p>Seth G. Jones, an expert on Afghanistan and a senior adviser to the International Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, told Business Insider that the Taliban and ISIS have been "at each others throats" since day one — but there is no question who the more threatening group is.</p> <p>"The Taliban is a much larger organization, controls roughly 10-12% of the population of Afghanistan, has conducted a lot more attacks, and has some support among Afghanistan's conservative rural population," Jones said.</p> <p>"ISIS-K, on the other hand, is shrinking in size, controls virtually no territory, has conducted far fewer attacks, and has virtually no support among Afghanistan's population."</p> <p>ISIS first came to South Asia in 2014, using the group's substantial funds and weak local governments to co-opt high-ranking members of the Pakistani Taliban and disaffected members of the Afghan Taliban.</p> <p>But almost as soon as it was founded, ISIS-K began suffering losses, as they found themselves fighting the Pakistani and Afghani governments, the NATO Coalition, and the Taliban all at the same time.</p> <p>Angry that ISIS had taken some of their members in southern Afghanistan, the Taliban hit back and essentially wiped out ISIS-K in Helmand and Farah provinces.</p> <p>ISIS has also suffered major losses in its fight against the Afghan government in NATO. All three of its top leaders (called "emirs") have been killed since the group was founded, and, according to Jones, their numbers have almost been halved since their founding.</p> <p>ISIS-K is now more of a deadly nuisance than a strategic threat to Afghanistan.</p> <p>"ISIS-K controls virtually nothing other than a small segment of territory. They're not competing in any meaningful way," Jones said. "Its in a bad situation. It has got everybody against it."</p> <p>Jones said ISIS-K has been so surprisingly resilient because it mostly operates in parts of Nangarhar Province, particularly the Achin District, where neither the Taliban or the Afghan government have much control. Instead the region is mostly controlled by local tribes and clans.</p> <p>Jones believes, however that ISIS-K will eventually become a transnational movement — forced to move</p>

into Pakistan or Bangladesh as operations against them continue.

"They're down in numbers, it looks like they are down in recruitment, they've stuck around but it looks like under most accounts they are probably weakening," he said.

All of this is in stark contrast to the Taliban, where "there is absolutely no comparison," according to Jones.

Recent reports suggest that the Taliban has tripled in size since 2014 to up to 60,000. This is compared to ISIS-K's 1,000-2,000.

The Taliban have complete control of some areas in Afghanistan's countryside, have their own court systems and governmental structures in place, a military structure based in Pakistan, and, according to a recent BBC report, threaten 70% of the country.

They also, as Jones points out, have support from state actors; most notably Pakistan and possibly even Russia.

ISIS-K and the Taliban are likely to continue attacks like the ones that plagued Afghanistan in January. Those high-profile attacks are important because even though neither ISIS or the Taliban control any urban territory, they gain international media attention and put them in the spotlight.

Jones said the attacks "may give an impression that groups like the Taliban are omnipresent," even though they are not. "That's really a psychological impact."

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HEADLINE	02/11 Woman accused of arson tried to join AQ
SOURCE	http://kstp.com/news/us-attorneys-office-memo-in-support-of-detention-of-tnuza-jamal-hassan-facing-federal-terrorism-charge-st-kates-arson/4783815/
GIST	<p>A woman accused of starting nine fires in multiple buildings on the campus of St. Catherine University and now facing federal charges of arson and terrorism had twice attempted to leave the country to join al-Qaida, according to a court document filed on Friday.</p> <p>In the document filed ahead of an arraignment and detention hearing for 19-year-old Tnuza Jamal Hassan, the United States Attorney's Office in Minneapolis argues Hassan "presents an extraordinary danger to the community and a significant risk of flight and therefore should remain in custody pending trial."</p> <p>The attorney's office announced a three-count indictment last week against Hassan that includes charges of attempting to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, making a false statement, and arson.</p> <p>Hassan, of Minneapolis, was arrested by FBI agents Thursday at Ramsey County jail, where she had been detained since she allegedly set the fires on campus Jan. 17, including in one building that housed a day care center in which 33 kids and eight adults were present, according to the memorandum.</p> <p>The document points to evidence that Hassan tried to travel to Kabul, Afghanistan, on Sept. 19 of last year to join al-Qaida and the "'Islamic Resistance,' which she defined as (al-Qaida) and the Taliban."</p> <p>The memo says Hassan reached Dubai in that effort, but was prevented from traveling further because she lacked a visa.</p> <p>Prior to that, the document alleges, she attempted to recruit two female classmates to join al-Qaida or other organizations. She initially denied, but later admitted, to authoring a recruitment letter in March 2017.</p>

Hassan was an English major, but is not currently enrolled at St. Kate's or employed.

The document says she again tried to leave the country on Dec. 29, 2017, on a ticket to Ethiopia with her mother, though authorities prevented her from boarding the flight and her mother chose not to go.

Josh Johnson, an attorney representing Hassan, did not immediately return a phone call seeking comment.

After she was arrested in connection to the St. Kate's fires, Hassan admitted to authorities she set the fires in an act of jihad "in retaliation for the alleged misconduct of U.S. military forces in Muslim lands," according to the document. She admitted she hoped her actions would kill innocent people, the document says.

In arguing for her detention ahead of Monday's hearing, the U.S. attorney's office also cited her admission that if released from custody but not allowed to leave the country, she would have the "right" to wage violent jihad here in America."

The attorney's office says it also plans to offer additional evidence to support their argument for keeping Hassan in custody, including statements with multiple references to "violent jihad, including those evidencing a desire to kill innocent Americans," as well as a copy of the alleged recruitment letter written by Hassan in March 2017.

It also plans to argue Hassan's family has been unable to control or account for her behavior, citing three missing persons reports the family filed after each of Hassan's alleged attempts to leave the country.

Hassan, a former St. Catherine student, was charged with first-degree arson in Ramsey County last month in connection to the fires on campus.

The criminal complaint in connection to that incident includes a statement from Hassan that alleges she said she started the fires because "this was the same thing that happened in 'Muslim land' and nobody cares if they got hurt." Attorneys stated she's "become dangerously radicalized."

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HEADLINE	02/11 Germans shocked by young jihadists
SOURCE	https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/german-shocked-by-young-jihadists/4241601.html
GIST	<p>"Put on a thick jacket," the 18-year-old son of Albanian immigrants told the 12-year-old German-Iraqi boy over the Internet.</p> <p>The young man was explaining how to bomb a Christmas market last year in the Rhineland town of Ludwigshafen. He told the boy to hide, light the explosive device and run.</p> <p>Luckily, the bomb failed to explode. Police arrested the 12-year-old in December 2017. They say it was the second time he tried to carry out a bomb attack.</p> <p>The step-by-step guidance by the 18-year-old was described in court papers last month. He communicated online with the boy from his home in Austria.</p> <p>Now, a top German official is calling for cancellation of laws restricting security surveillance of children under the age of 14. Hans-Georg Maassen is the head of the country's domestic intelligence agency. He argues that Germany is facing serious risks from what the media calls "kindergarten jihadists."</p> <p>The intelligence chief told a reporter that the Islamic State (IS) group and its followers target children in Germany. He added that IS agents search the internet for children who can be reached and try to persuade them to carry out terrorist attacks.</p>

Maassen said he was worried about the risks from women and children who once lived in areas controlled by the militant group. He described the children of jihadist parents as “ticking...bombs.”

“We see that children who grew up with Islamic State were brainwashed in the schools and the kindergartens of the Islamic State,” Maassen said. He noted that some boys and girls heard IS teachings at an early age, learned to fight, and may have abused or even killed prisoners.

Only a few of the 290 children who left Germany with jihadist parents — or who were born in Syria or Iraq — have returned to Germany. Some rights activists have warned that Germany should not quickly change civil rights protections, questioning whether the danger is being overstated.

The threat from children exposed to militancy has become a major political issue in Germany. Three out of five Islamist attacks in the country in 2016 were carried out by youngsters.

This is the second time Maassen has publicly expressed his concerns about children working for militants. He also said it in October when he told Germans to “take a serious look at the threat” and to call the police if they saw anything.

Last year, experts warned that Western governments were not giving enough thought about what to do with the children raised under IS rule or of Syrian and Iraqi children enlisted by militants.

IS leaders were clear about their plan to teach children to be “the generation that will conquer Baghdad, Jerusalem, Mecca and Rome.” As the group’s territory shrank, the militants released videos explaining what would happen to their enemies in the future.

German officials aren't the only ones worried about the children of IS foreign fighters or the continuing efforts by the group to get new members.

Last week, the head of London police’s anti-terrorism command, Dean Haydon, warned of children taught by Islamic State coming back to Britain to carry out attacks.

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HEADLINE	02/12 HM leader: training Kashmiris for jihad
SOURCE	https://www.kashmirmonitor.in/Details/142889/were-still-training-kashmiris-for-jihad
GIST	<p>The supreme commander of Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), Syed Salahuddin – a Pakistan-based Kashmiri militant who was declared a global terrorist by US authorities last year – appears quite determined to take the Kashmir struggle forward to its “logical conclusion,” come what may.</p> <p>While Pakistan is under pressure from the Trump administration to clean up its act, Salahuddin remains as defiant as ever.</p> <p>The US move against Salahuddin and his Kashmiri militant organization looks to have had zero impact. Salahuddin, labeled a ‘Specially Designated Global Terrorist’ (SDGT), simply laughs the designation off.</p> <p>“Pakistan has just ignored the Trump administration’s wrong-headed decision of terming a ‘freedom fighter’ a ‘terrorist,’” which violates United Nations resolutions and the US Constitution,” he tells Asia Times in an exclusive interview. “Pakistan knows very well that a ‘mujahid’ cannot be a ‘terrorist,’ [and therefore] continues to provide ‘moral’ and ‘diplomatic’ support to the forces fighting for the right of self-determination in Kashmir.”</p> <p>His assertion reinforces India’s claims that Pakistani authorities have been lending support to militant outfits in the region.</p> <p>Pakistan issued a fatwa known as ‘Paigham-e-Pakistan’ (“Pakistan’s message”) on January 16 this year. It</p>

empowers only Pakistan's federal government, rather than militant groups, to announce holy wars (jihad). Terming the decree a "blessing," Salahuddin's response is to suggest that the government use it to declare a holy war in Kashmir.

"Pakistan is pursuing a weak Kashmir policy in the face of deepening political chaos," Salahuddin says. Mounting international pressure to end support for the "Kashmir resistance struggle" and other Islamist movements against US intervention in the region has diverted the focus of Pakistan's policymakers, he contends.

Government sources told Asia Times that Pakistan has asked such militants to keep a low profile.

Salahuddin denies, however, that the government has laid any restrictions on his movements or barred the HM from participating in public activity. "I participated in the public meetings held on October 27 last year and again addressed the Kashmir Martyrs Day rally on November 27," he claims.

Despite minimal activity in most of Pakistan, HM leaders are certainly active on the Muzaffarabad side of Pakistan-held Kashmir. They enjoy high-level security cover there – provided by the country's premier agencies. Salahuddin insists that "the HM struggle for Kashmir 'liberation' has gained momentum after the India-US nexus conspired to crush Kashmiris."

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HEADLINE	02/11 Terrorist reveals secret Gitmo perks
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/admitted-terrorist-testifies-about-his-secret-guantanamo-perks/ar-BBJ05WL?li=BBnbfcL&ocid=HPCDHP
GIST	<p>GUANTANAMO BAY NAVAL BASE, Cuba — A tortured al-Qaida terrorist turned prosecution witness is being rewarded with a comfortable cabin-style lockup where he can garden, paint, exercise, learn English, cook meals for his interrogators and attorneys and watch American television.</p> <p>In sworn testimony Saturday, Ahmed al Darbi, 42, described changing from a lying, feces-flinging prisoner with a bad behavior record in the maximum-security Camp Five prison to a cooperating witness now cloistered in Camp Echo, an annex of the prison compound across the street.</p> <p>Darbi has his own kitchen with a freezer stocked with meat and spices, and other never-before-disclosed perks to pass his time preparing to testify as a witness for the war court prosecutor in two cases, one that seeks the death penalty.</p> <p>The prison provides him with lamb, rabbit, chicken, shrimp and other halal meat, he said as defense attorney Air Force Maj. Yolanda Miller read from what sounded like a shopping list.</p> <p>"Goat," the Saudi volunteered with a grin, adding, "I love chicken, and I don't see any issue with that. I still have it in my freezer until now."</p> <p>Darbi is scheduled to go home to a Saudi rehabilitation program Feb. 20 under a plea agreement if diplomats can close the deal and Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis approves the release. Four years ago he pleaded guilty to being an accomplice in a 2002 al-Qaida attack on a French oil tanker, the Limburg, in Yemeni waters.</p> <p>The attack did not achieve its goal of upsetting global oil prices or shipping, but a Bulgarian crew member died in the attack, which occurred after Darbi was already a U.S. prisoner. Last year he recorded testimony, a deposition, to be used as possible evidence against the alleged mastermind of the attack, Abd al Rahim al Nashiri.</p> <p>He also separately testified about his life as a jihadist in al-Qaida, pointed to an Iraqi captive in court and identified him as a former al-Qaida commander named Abd al Hadi al Iraqi, to counter the Iraqi's claim</p>

that his true name is Nashwan al Tamir.

This weekend, Hadi's attorneys questioned Darbi on the truthfulness of his statements and memory for what could be used as time-capsule testimony if the Trump administration releases him. And the image he portrayed of his life in Guantanamo prison offered a stark contrast to a glimpse a weekend earlier of medium-security communal prison life — prepared food in plastic-foam containers, up to four hours in a new recreation cell block, a now hidden art program for the indefinite detainees known as "forever prisoners."

Across the street, Darbi has a plethora of quality-of-life accommodations provided by the prison, interrogators or the prosecution. Cilantro, cumin and cloves to cook with using a hot plate, blender and microwave oven in his kitchen; treats like Strawberries n' Creme Oreos, baklava, Turkish delight and a pecan pie; a garden where he said he was growing what sounded like the ingredients for ratatouille — eggplant, tomatoes, zucchini and green pepper. Papaya too, he noted.

Cooperation also earned him monthly phone calls with his Yemeni wife and children, now living in Saudi Arabia.

Deposition questioning Sunday delved into what Darbi called "the torture times" — his 2002-03 interrogations in Bagram, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo.

Defense attorney Adam Thurschwell, in an apparent bid to discredit Darbi's identification of the Iraqi Hadi, led Darbi through a lurid description of his first year or more in U.S. custody, drawn from sworn court documents. The Saudi was beaten, sleep deprived, hung by the wrists, threatened with rape in interrogation, and then sent to unwanted rectal exams by U.S. military doctors, kept nude and forced to empty other detainees' feces buckets with his fingers.

He said a focus of the interrogations was: Where was Osama bin Laden?

In one notorious episode, Darbi described how, after he cried out for God while he was being beaten and questioned at Bagram, a U.S. soldier serving as an interrogator pulled out his own penis, put it "very close to my face" and declared, "This is your God."

The Saudi said he was kept shackled to the door of a cage there, his toes unable to touch the ground and in plain sight of what Darbi called the guards' "torture tools" — baseball bats, chains, shackles and hoods.

Darbi got to Guantanamo 14 months after it opened. He testified Sunday that he was kept in solitary confinement, deprived of sleep and subjected to midnight-to-dawn, no-bathroom-break questioning in an interrogation room stinking of urine and vomit. Threats included rape, sending him to Israel or Camp X-Ray, which supposedly closed a year earlier. Interrogators had photocopies of pages of the Koran, Darbi testified, and would throw them on the ground with sex photos and pictures of mutilated bodies.

Darbi has a battery-powered toothbrush, with replacement heads, a Magic Bullet blender, free weights and a spin bike for exercising, and Under Armour T-shirts and athletic socks to wear when he works out in his compound. "Yes, Nike also," he told Miller. "Don't forget that."

Miller, Hadi's defense attorney, framed the stuff as incentive items to show that life gets good for captives turned prosecution witnesses at Guantanamo. Darbi confirmed under questioning that he would set a table and cook for his interrogators during some visits, and that he had the makings for Arabic and Turkish coffee.

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HEADLINE 02/09 Coast Guard waterway watch program

SOURCE <https://www.hstoday.us/briefings/daily-news-analysis/coast-guard-launches-waterway-watch->

	program/
GIST	<p>The Coast Guard developed the Waterway Watch Program to encourage the reporting of suspicious activity around America's Waterways.</p> <p>The program, which has a similar basis to the well-known Neighborhood Watch program, aims to keep waterways as safe as possible and preempt activities that could be a threat to national security.</p> <p>USCG is calling for anyone involved with, or in the proximity of, waterways, from marina operators to those who live or work nearby, to sign up for the initiative. Participants are not formally joining an organization and do not become members of the Coast Guard or any other law enforcement agency – the Waterway Watch Program just provides an arena for safely reporting suspicious activity.</p> <p>Anyone who spends time on or near water, whether that's ports, docks, beaches or waterfront communities, will know what is normal and what is not, and will be in the best position to identify potential threats to homeland security. The initiative asks participants to be particularly vigilant about suspicious activity near industrial facilities, military bases or places with a high volume of passengers such as ferry terminals.</p> <p>The program has a hotline and detailed instructions about reporting suspicious activity – first, call the National Response Center at 877-24WATCH. For immediate danger to life or property, call 911, or call the U. S. Coast Guard on Marine Channel 16. USCG is quick to stress, though, that members of the public should not approach anyone about to commit a crime; instead, observe, take notes or even photos, but keep a safe distance.</p>
Return to Top	<i>USCG is looking for organizations to become partners of the initiative and spread the word. To become an America's Waterway Watch partner, sign up here</i>

HEADLINE	02/12 Turkey assails US ties w/Kurdish militia
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/02/12/turkey-assails-us-over-ties-with-syrian-kurdish-militia.html
GIST	<p>ANKARA, Turkey – Turkey's foreign minister is assailing the United States, claiming American forces in Syria are intentionally stalling the fight against Islamic State militants as an excuse not to cut ties with Syrian Kurdish fighters as Ankara has demanded.</p> <p>Mevlut Cavusoglu says U.S. forces are leaving "pockets" with IS militants intact to justify continued cooperation with the Kurdish militia.</p> <p>Cavusoglu says ties with the U.S. are "at a critical stage" and that Washington needs to take "concrete steps" to regain Turkey's trust.</p> <p>Ankara is riled over Washington's support for the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units, or YPG — the top U.S. ally in the anti-IS fight. Turkey considers the YPG a "terrorist" group linked to Kurdish insurgents within Turkey.</p> <p>U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is due in Ankara later this week.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Claim: ISIS leader injured in May strike
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/12/middleeast/isis-leader-abu-bakr-al-baghdadi-wounded-intl/index.html
GIST	(CNN)ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was wounded in an airstrike in May last year and had to relinquish control of the terror group for up to five months because of his injuries, according to several US officials who spoke exclusively to CNN.

US intelligence agencies have assessed with a high degree of confidence that the world's most wanted man was near Raqqa, Syria in May when the missile struck, the US officials said.

Their assessment is based on reports from ISIS detainees and refugees in Northern Syria that emerged months after the airstrike, the officials added.

Baghdadi's injuries were not considered life-threatening but they did mean he couldn't continue to command the daily operations of the group.

At the time, ISIS was about to lose control of the Iraqi city of Mosul and its so-called capital Raqqa had been nearly encircled by US-backed forces.

It is unclear whether Baghdadi was hit in a targeted attack or if he was "collateral damage." It's also unclear who fired the missile. US officials do not know the exact date of the strike so are unsure if a Coalition aircraft was involved, or whether Baghdadi's injury was the result of a Russian missile.

"There have been isolated strikes by Russians in Raqqa, but as there's no timeline to it, we don't know if it's ours," a US official said.

It's believed the airstrike occurred close to the date offered by the Russian military in June when they claimed to have killed or injured the ISIS leader.

At the time, Russia's Defense Ministry said it was investigating reports Baghdadi had been killed in an airstrike on May 28, on the outskirts of Raqqa, the group's primary stronghold, which US-backed forces took back in October.

Analysts warned at the time reports of Baghdadi's death should be treated with skepticism given the high number of previous false reports.

One US official said the Russian claim was a case of Moscow "making stuff up."

Another US official, asked if the injuries meant Baghdadi had been able to return to his leadership role, albeit of a diminished organization, said: "Yes. I do not know how much Baghdadi is day-to-day running the shop."

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HEADLINE	02/10 Study: little US foreign fighters threat
SOURCE	https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/us-foreign-fighters/4244746.html
GIST	<p>United States citizens who joined extremist groups fighting in Syria and Iraq appear to present little immediate threat to Americans or U.S. territory.</p> <p>A new study found that the same is true of non-citizens who left their American homes to fight in Syria and Iraq.</p> <p>In fact, only a handful of the fighters have returned to the U.S. from the battlefield, the study notes.</p> <p>The findings are from a project of the Program on Extremism at The George Washington University in Washington, D.C. It identified 64 individuals who fought or assisted Islamic State, al-Qaida and other groups in Syria and Iraq.</p> <p>Of the 64 travelers, only 12 are known to have returned to U.S. territory, the study found. Nine of them have been arrested and charged with crimes relating to terrorism.</p> <p>The study noted that none have successfully carried out an attack in the United States.</p>

“The risk of returned travelers being engaged in terrorist attacks has, to date, been limited,” said a report on the study.

The writers of the report noted, “There is currently no publicly available evidence to suggest that American travelers have slipped into the country without the knowledge of authorities.” They said that “homegrown” extremists currently appear to be more likely to carry out jihadist attacks than returning travelers.

Compared to European countries, the U.S. faces a smaller risk from returning travelers. That is partly because of the greater distance and difficulty in reaching the Middle East from the United States.

U.S. intelligence officials estimated that more than 40,000 foreign fighters have traveled to Syria and Iraq. Of these, only 5,000 to 6,000 were said to come from Western countries.

The exact number who successfully left from the United States is unclear. Officials have said that about 250 to 300 U.S.-based people left or tried to leave to join groups fighting in Syria. Not all of them made it.

The study found at least 50 were arrested before leaving the United States. That represents about one-third of all U.S. residents who have been charged with crimes related to the Islamic State group.

Of the 64 travelers identified in the study who did leave the U.S., 22 are thought to have died in Syria or Iraq. Officials are unsure of the condition and whereabouts of the others.

The study identified a single returning traveler who sought to carry out an attack in the United States. That was 23-year-old Abdirahman Sheik Mohamud, a naturalized citizen from Somalia.

Mohamud left his home in Ohio to join Jabhat al-Nusra, a group allied with al-Qaida, in April 2014. While in Syria, he was trained in explosives and hand-to-hand fighting. He was sent back to the United States in June to carry out an attack.

But in February 2015, while still plotting the attack, Mohamud was arrested. He admitted guilt to the charges and was sentenced to 22 years in prison.

Other than Mohamud, only one other traveler sought to carry out a terror attack. But that attack, a suicide bombing, happened only upon returning to Syria after avoiding prosecution in the United States.

In any case, the study’s authors say the findings suggest fears once voiced by U.S. officials of a “terrorist diaspora” seem to be overstated.

Yet the George Washington University study did find some reasons for concern.

Study co-author Seamus Hughes says the average prison sentence for those who went overseas to take part in the fight in Syria and Iraq is only 10 years. He noted that that sentence is shorter than the average prison term for a would-be U.S.-based jihadist arrested at the airport.

Part of that might be linked to the difficulty in making a criminal case based on terrorist activity in another country.

Hughes said another issue could be that the returnees may have been able to share information with investigators and anti-terrorism officials in exchange for lighter sentences.

But just like with the would-be jihadists, these travelers will eventually get out of prison. And Hughes and others believe the United States should be doing more to help these individuals. They note the lack of U.S. programs for former prisoners returning to society could lead to problems in the future.

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HEADLINE	02/10 New era of terror money?
SOURCE	http://nationalinterest.org/feature/new-era-terror-money-24452
GIST	<p>Bitcoin, along with other cryptocurrencies, has attracted considerable scrutiny in the past few months due to a consider run up in prices. While the press devotes a great deal of attention towards the crypto nouveau riche or the usual proclamations that the entire phenomenon is a bubble comparable to the tulip mania policymakers and regulatory authorities are preoccupied with a different set of concerns: the potential for terrorist and criminal organizations to make use of these financial instruments.</p> <p>These fears are warranted. Bitcoin originally attained infamy as a medium to acquire drugs and other illegal narcotics off of darknet markets such as the Silk Road. To this day, Bitcoin is still used at times when transacting on the Silk Road's shady successors. In the realm of terrorism, jihadis have gradually developed an understanding of how cryptocurrencies can aid them in their endeavors. In 2014, an article entitled "Bitcoin wa Sadaqat al-Jihad" appeared on an online blog and put forward various reasons for jihadist to embrace Bitcoin, explaining that the existing global banking system has "eliminated [charity] for jihad on a large scale" and presenting Bitcoin is a way to circumvent this system. More recent research has revealed that the Islamic State and other extremist outfits are relying on Bitcoin as a new fundraising mechanism in order to stay afloat.</p> <p>Today Bitcoin is no longer the cryptocurrency of choice when conducting illicit transactions or attempting to move money undetected. The currency is not completely anonymous; rather, it is pseudonymous. Users are sending Bitcoin from their "address" to another address, with all of this information being recorded on a public ledger. Researchers from Qatar University and Hamad Bin Khalifa University have demonstrated that it is possible to exploit this model, writing that "historical pieces of information could be used to identify a certain user." If one can tie a user's Bitcoin address to some identifying piece of information (for example, a user's Bitcoin address on his/her account on a fiat-to-cryptocurrency exchange), then a user's identity can be revealed.</p> <p>Those trying to hide their tracks have migrated to what are known as "privacy coins": cryptocurrencies that are designed to grant users privacy in their financial dealings, often by obscuring the specific details of cryptocurrency transactions. The most well-known of these is Monero, which encrypts the user's address and creates fake addresses to hide the original sender. The exact quantity of Monero being transacted is also hidden. The cryptocurrency is so secure that when authorities seized the holdings of Alphabay, a darknet market, they were unable to determine the exact quantity of Monero that it's operator possessed.</p> <p>Mercifully, the danger of ISIS and other organizations employing privacy coins is overstated at this time. As explained by a report from the Center for New American Security,</p> <p><i>[terrorists] seek to move money from places outside the locations where they operate to the areas in which they plan and from which they launch attacks. Often they use many layers of intermediaries so that donors and ultimate recipients may not be known to one other. [...] terrorists use the funds to buy things they need to sustain the group or to conduct attacks. And because they do so from the general economy, they often would need to reconvert the [cryptocurrencies] they receive into fiat currency. This final step introduces both an unnecessary layer of complexity and an increased vulnerability to the disruption of their operations by adding additional actors and entities into the fundraising matrix. [...] But the final—and most important—reason that terrorist groups have not adopted [cryptocurrencies] at scale is that these groups, and individual terrorist operatives, have not yet perceived the need to do so. They still find it possible to circumvent global rules governing terrorist financing with sufficient ease and frequency that using [cryptocurrencies] is unnecessary. They exploit incomplete implementation of regulatory requirements and global standards at banks, use unlicensed and undersupervised money services businesses (MSBs), or simply cart around cash. As long as these value transfer methods are readily available, there is no great need to invest in new, complicated techniques to transfer value.</i></p> <p>Likewise, a report from the Commission to the European Parliament from last year finds that "the</p>

technology is quite recent and in any case requires some knowledge and technical expertise which has a dissuasive effect on terrorist groups. The reliance on [cryptocurrencies] to fund terrorist activities has some costs and is not necessary attractive.”

As such, terrorists still prefer to make use of traditional fiat currency. Jennifer Fowler, the deputy assistant secretary for terrorist financing and financial crimes at the Treasury Department, stated that “although [cryptocurrencies] are used for illicit transactions, the volume is small compared to the volume of illegal activity through traditional financial services.” A recent study by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and the cryptocurrency analysis firm Elliptic found that “the total percentage of identified ‘dirty bitcoins’ going into conversion services is relatively small. Only 0.61 percent of the money entering conversion services during the four years analyzed were verifiably from illicit sources, with the highest proportion (1.07 percent) seen in 2013.”

Nonetheless, regulators and counterterrorism authorities have begun to plan ahead in anticipation of cryptocurrencies one day gaining traction with terrorists. Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos last month, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin called for other nations to join the United States in pursuing more extensive regulation of cryptocurrencies. He explained that his “number-one focus [is] on cryptocurrencies, whether that be digital currencies or bitcoin or other things, is that we want to make sure that they’re not used for illicit activities.” Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Sigal Mandelker has urged financial institutions and regulators in Asia to do more in preventing illicit activity fueled by cryptocurrencies.

Policymakers are also keeping an eye on cryptocurrencies and are taking some proactive steps. The most notable action thus far is the introduction of a new bill by Republican Rep. Ted Budd titled the “Financial Technology Innovation and Defense Act.” Budd’s bill seeks to “establish an Independent Financial Technology Task Force” dedicated to “conduct[ing] independent research on terrorist and illicit use of new financial technologies, including digital currencies; and ... develop[ing] legislative and regulatory proposals to improve counter-terrorist and counter-illicit financing efforts.” The report to the European Parliament concluded that “the most important element of vulnerability for [cryptocurrencies] is the fact that there are not regulated in the EU.” Both France and Germany intend to make joint proposals on regulating Bitcoin at the next summit of the G20 group.

Regulating cryptocurrencies will be a complicated affair; cryptocurrencies alone represent a new sort of financial asset class which regulators are still developing rules for. However, a few ideas have emerged. Both the reports from the Center for New American Security and the Foundation for Defense of Democracies/Elliptic provide suggestions, such as increased Know Your Customer and Anti-Money Laundering enforcement on businesses that transmit cryptocurrencies (particularly those that are unlicensed), a specialized commission or task force (like the one proposed by Budd), the creation of common compliance architecture, and so forth.

While these efforts may certainly help though, they will likely be unable to prevent every illicit transaction. The market will grow increasingly competitive as newer, more secure privacy coins and services such as decentralized exchanges (exchanges where a third party does not hold a client’s funds, instead facilitating peer-to-peer transactions) are introduced. In the coming years, expect more stories concerning the battles between financial regulators and counterterrorism experts versus terrorists and others that use privacy coins for nefarious purposes.

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HEADLINE	02/11 Nigeria: Boko Haram frees hostages
SOURCE	https://www.nst.com.my/world/2018/02/334316/boko-haram-militants-hand-over-13-hostages-nigerian-government
GIST	MAIDUGURI: Boko Haram freed 13 hostages, Nigeria’s presidency said on Saturday, after authorities negotiated their release with the Islamist militants.

	<p>The kidnappings were part of a campaign of attacks last year by the jihadist group whose bid to create an Islamic state in the northeast has killed at least 20,000 people and forced some 2.7 million to flee their homes since 2009.</p> <p>Three of the hostages were lecturers from the University of Maiduguri who were abducted while on an oil exploration trip in Magumeri, in the northeastern Borno state, in July 2017. The other 10 were women police officers kidnapped in a raid on a convoy the previous month.</p> <p>“Their release followed a series of negotiations as directed by President (Muhammadu) Buhari and was facilitated by the International Committee of the Red Cross, ICRC,” a presidency spokesman said in an emailed statement.</p> <p>The ICRC said it had acted as a neutral intermediary in the hostage release.</p> <p>“The ICRC was not involved in any negotiations that led to the handover of the 13 people. The armed opposition handed the 13 people over to ICRC representatives who transported them to Nigerian authorities,” it said in a statement.</p> <p>The ICRC also acted as an intermediary in the release in October 2016 and May 2017 of some of the more than 200 girls kidnapped by Boko Haram from the northeastern town of Chibok in 2014. --REUTERS</p>
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HEADLINE	02/10 Drone strike kills Taliban chief Pakistan
SOURCE	https://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/us-drone-strikes-kill-taleban-chief-pakistan-7-militants-get-death/
GIST	<p>PESHAWAR/DERA ISMAIL KHAN, Pakistan, Feb 10, (Agencies): A pair of suspected US missile strikes killed a senior Pakistani Taleban deputy and other militants in the border regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan, officials said on Friday.</p> <p>Four Pakistani intelligence officials and three Taleban commanders told Reuters on Friday that two separate US missile strikes on Wednesday killed the fighters. One of the strikes, they said, killed a Pakistani Taleban commander, Khan Said, alias Sajna, and three more people, when missiles struck his pick-up truck in Margha village of Birmal district in Paktika province of Afghanistan.</p> <p>The NATO-led Operation Resolute Support in Afghanistan said it had no information about the strike. The officials sought anonymity because they weren't authorized to disclose the information. They are based in Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and have informants on the ground on both sides of the border. They said on Friday they have also been picking up militants' chatter through phone intercepts in which they were talking about Sajna's killing.</p> <p>Three Pakistani Taleban commanders confirmed their account. Sajna has been an important militant commander of the Pakistani Taleban and had close links with the Afghan Taleban, the officials said. Two of the officials said they were trying to confirm reports of another suspected US drone strike in North Waziristan on Pakistani side of the border.</p> <p>The second strike hit a compound in Gurwek town of North Waziristan, killing seven militants, the three Taleban commanders said. North Waziristan and Paktika province in Afghanistan are adjacent to the border, and the officials and the militant commanders may have been reporting the same strike as two separate ones. The border region has long been home to local and al-Qaeda linked foreign militants. It is off limits to journalists and verifying any information independently is difficult.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Greece: terrorist returns from furlough
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/convicted-terrorist-greece-returns-jail-furlough-52997937?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Dimitris Koufodinas, a convicted terrorist and member of Greece's most notorious terrorist group, 17 November, has returned to prison after a 48-hour furlough, his second overall.</p> <p>Koufodinas, 60, arrived at Athens' Korydallos prison about 30 minutes before the 48 hours expired, accompanied by his wife and son. He greeted the waiting media but made no statement.</p> <p>Koufodinas, who was arrested in 2002, is serving 11 life terms plus 25 years for his role in assassinations of prominent people, including U.S., British and Turkish diplomats and military personnel. He has acknowledged his crimes and never repented.</p> <p>As with his first furlough in November, his temporary release prompted protests. U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said "convicted terrorists do not deserve a vacation from prison."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Egypt strikes Sinai targets; kill militants
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/egypt-reports-successes-sinai-operation-militants-52997897?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Egypt's military has destroyed dozens of targets, killed 16 militants and detained over 30 suspects as part of its latest operation against Islamic militants in the restive northern Sinai Peninsula, the army said on Sunday.</p> <p>Spokesman Col. Tamer el-Rifai said that airstrikes hit vehicles, weapons caches, communications centers and illegal opium fields in the sweep, which began on Friday and comes as a response to a pickup in extremist violence in Egypt.</p> <p>"The air force targeted and destroyed 66 targets used by terrorist elements to hide from air and artillery attacks," for shelter during raids by security forces, he said in a statement. With North Sinai closed off for non-residents and journalists, the army's casualty figures could not be independently confirmed. Telephone connections to the area, both mobile and landlines, are often shut down as well.</p> <p>The operation, which targets "terrorist and criminal elements and organizations," involves land, naval and air forces from the army and police, and covers north and central Sinai, the Nile Delta and the Western Desert along the porous border with Libya.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/10 New leads to find remains US hostages
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/08/politics/isis-captures-fighters-jihadi-john/index.html
GIST	<p>Washington (CNN) — A team of military and law enforcement forensic experts has been formed to explore a site near Raqqa Syria where remains of US hostages may be located, a US official tells CNN. The team is working to see what remains may be there, how they can be removed and shipped to a laboratory for potential identification. It is not clear if the remains would be shipped directly back to the United States. The exact location of the team and the work they are doing is not being disclosed by the Pentagon.</p> <p>Information about the possible location of the remains of US hostages killed by ISIS in Syria has been provided in recent days by two ISIS fighters captured in eastern Syria in early January, according to multiple US officials.</p> <p>The two men have given Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces details about potential burial locations of</p>

several US and Western hostages killed by Mohammed Emwazi, the British ISIS operative known as Jihadi John responsible for the beheading of several American hostages, the officials said.

The ISIS fighters have been identified by US intelligence as Alexandra Kotey and El Shafee Elsheikh, known associates of Jihadi John.

The New York Times was the first to report the capture of the two men.

Emwazi was killed in a US airstrike in Syria in 2015.

It has long been believed the hostages he beheaded in a series of violent videos were killed outside Raqqa. US intelligence has long suspected a general location, but had not been able to send US personnel on a search without more specific details and because there has been fighting in the area until recently.

US personnel will have to recover the remains and then confirm any potential identities through DNA testing.

The US is informing the families of Americans and others held and killed in Syria there are new leads on the possible whereabouts of the remains of their loved ones.

But the officials have cautioned it is very early in the process. The remains still have to be fully recovered and undergo an identification process the officials say.

Kurdish forces, mainly SDF are holding 'hundreds' of detainees, many of whom are foreign fighters says one official. The current interrogations of those with the most valuable information are also yielding fresh intelligence about the state of ISIS capabilities and planning. The US is working on a list of identities of all of those being held. Many gave false names when captured the official said. Learning their identities has helped guide interrogations and yielded to fresh information about potential ISIS attacks. It was after they were able to identify the two detainees associated with Jihadi John that interrogators were able to get information on the remains of the hostages.

One US assessment is that thousands of ISIS operatives have escaped Syria in recent months and are potentially back in Europe, potentially plotting new attacks, one US official with direct knowledge of the latest information tells CNN.

The assessment includes growing concerns these one-time foreign fighters are now able to plan fresh attacks in the West officials say.

In particular, there is concern that the Turkish Syrian border has again become porous in recent weeks since Turkish forces began conducting their incursion into northern Syria.

There is also intelligence that shows a significant number of fighters are crossing back into Turkey and then moving into Libya and Egypt.

Fighters have been caught with sophisticated forged documents made by ISIS, contributing to a continuing concern that the terrorist group remains far from down and out, one official said.

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HEADLINE	02/09 Treasury sanctions ISIS 'facilitators'
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2018/02/09/US-sanctions-Islamic-State-facilitators-in-Middle-East-Africa/9111518191087/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=lh&utm_medium=10
GIST	Feb. 9 (UPI) -- The U.S. Treasury announced sanctions Friday against three Islamic State facilitators in Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

The Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control said it designated Abdulpatta Escalon Abubakar, Yunus Emre Sakarya and Mohamed Mire Ali Yusuf and three entities as "Specially Designated Global Terrorists."

The move is part of an effort to identify and expose individuals who provide support to the Islamic State, which also is known by the acronym ISIS.

All three men are now prohibited from making transactions with Americans and their U.S. assets have been blocked.

"The [Trump] administration is committed to defeating ISIS wherever it operates, denigrating its illicit revenue streams, and pursuing all financial conduits," Sigal Mandelker, Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, said in a statement.

"Each individual and entity targeted has contributed to the spread of ISIS's terror reach in their respective corner of the world. Treasury will continue to relentlessly target ISIS support networks, and ensure that the U.S. and international financial systems are not being exploited by terror operatives."

The men were sanctioned for assisting in, sponsoring or providing financial, material or technological support for the terror network.

For the last two years, Abubakar is known to have served as a key facilitator for the militant group's Philippine network -- helping transfer about \$50,000.

Sakarya was found to have been involved in transactions for equipment worth over \$500,000 for the Islamic State in early-to-mid-2016.

Liibaan Trading and the Al-Mutafaq Commercial Company were designated for being owned or controlled by Mire Ali, an Islamic State financial operative.

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HEADLINE	02/11 Claim: intel agencies kill damning report
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/us-intelligence-shut-downs-damning-report-on-whistleblower-retaliation?ref=home
GIST	<p>The nation's top intelligence watchdog put the brakes on a report last year that uncovered whistleblower reprisal issues within America's spy agencies, The Daily Beast has learned. The move concealed a finding that the agencies—including the CIA and the NSA—were failing to protect intelligence workers who report waste, fraud, abuse, or criminality up the chain of command.</p> <p>The investigators looked into 190 cases of alleged reprisal in six agencies, and uncovered a shocking pattern. In only one case out of the 190 did the agencies find in favor of the whistleblower—and that case took 742 days to complete. Other cases remained open longer. One complaint from 2010 was still waiting for a ruling. But the framework was remarkably consistent: Over and over and over again, intelligence inspectors ruled that the agency was in the right, and the whistleblowers were almost always wrong.</p> <p>The report was near completion following a six-month-long inspection run out of the Intelligence Community Inspector General office. It was aborted in April by the new acting head of the office, Wayne Stone, following the discovery that one of the inspectors was himself a whistleblower in the middle of a federal lawsuit against the CIA, according to former IC IG officials.</p> <p>Stone also sequestered the mountain of documents and data produced in the inspection, the product of three staff-years of work. The incident was never publicly disclosed by the office, and escaped mention in</p>

the unclassified version of the IC IG's semiannual report to Congress.

The IC IG's office declined to comment for this story.

The affair casts serious doubt on the intelligence agencies' fundamental pact with the rank and file: that workers who properly report perceived wrongdoing through approved channels won't lose their job or, worse, their security clearance, as a result. It also adds another layer of controversy to the Intelligence Community Inspector General office, already under fire for cuts to its whistleblower protection program and the unexpected sacking of the program's executive director in December. In a confirmation hearing last month, Trump's pick to head the watchdog agency acknowledged the apparent chaos in the office, citing a detailed expose by Foreign Policy magazine. "My first objective as Inspector General, if confirmed, will be to make sure the IC IG's house is in order," said former Justice Department prosecutor Michael Atkinson.

Stone shut down the whistleblowing inspection just days after taking over for Charles McCullough III, who'd served as the intelligence community inspector general from the day the office was founded in 2010 until his retirement in March of last year.

None of this was supposed to happen. In 2012, then-President Barack Obama signed a policy directive called PPD-19, which prohibits intelligence agencies from punishing workers who report abuses through approved government channels. The directive has been left in place under President Trump.

Among other things, PPD-19 requires the Office of Inspector General (OIG) at each agency to carry out an investigation when a worker complains he or she suffered retaliation for lawful whistleblowing. If, after investigating, the OIG finds no evidence of reprisal, the whistleblower can appeal up to the Intelligence Community Inspector General, who can choose to impanel a three-person appellate board, comprised of IGs from other agencies, to review the case and either affirm or disagree with the OIG's decision.

The investigators found that basically never happened. "Absent a review process which adheres to mandated legal standards for reprisal investigations, the protections remain weak with minimal chance for a complainant to have a reprisal complaint substantiated," read one of the conclusions in the suppressed inspection. "From the data it appears PPD-19 has had no impact on Agency reprisal investigations and/or protections for complainants making protected disclosures."

Rob Johnson, the former deputy IC IG under McCullough, broadly confirmed the findings in an interview with The Daily Beast, attributing some of the problems to the expected growing pains in implementing a new policy.

"We saw a couple of cases from some offices that showed that they didn't speak to witnesses that they should have, or that the cases had languished," says Johnson. "And we saw cases where they took no action... Whether it was systemic or not, well, that's why we were doing the inspection."

The IC IG probe was billed as the first independent check-up on how seriously the intelligence inspector generals were taking the presidential directive, and a possible first step in setting a formal peer review process in the future. Six experienced inspectors had been chosen for the probe: three permanent members of the IC IG staff, and three more who were on extended loan from other agencies, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the FBI, and the CIA.

Of the six, the CIA officer—we're calling him James Pars, the alias the CIA assigned him for his lawsuit—was likely the least accustomed to working in the comfortable climes of the IC IG's air-conditioned office. Cuban-American and now in his early fifties, Pars was part of the CIA's controversial Directorate of Operations, the small group responsible for carrying out covert actions abroad. A mosaic of interviews with colleagues, court filings and details in other documents seen by The Daily Beast paint a picture of a man who has seen a lot of nasty stuff over the years, serving in war zones in Iraq and Afghanistan, South American jungles, and cities like Bagdad and at least one other Middle East capital.

A sanitized autobiography Pars prepared in connection with his court action is riddled with staccato bursts of trauma: "... sleep deprived, and having to constantly relay threat information to appropriate entities..."; "... the direct line of fire for one rocket which must have missed my exact location by meters as it tore through our living quarter..."; "... helicopters which had to take evasive maneuvers and discharge flares because of a perceive threat..." "... a leaking casket by my feet and two decomposing dead bodies in body bags not far from me..." The anecdotes, shorn of locations and dates, don't lend themselves to easy verification, but a former intelligence colleague confirms the gist of it. "He understands what happens in the field. He's been in the mud and blood."

There are notes of regret in Pars' subjective career rundown—particularly over the long stints away from his wife and young daughter—but few traces of resentment or personal grievance. That is, until he recounts, with agonizing precision, two occasions when he clashed with a superior, and felt mistreated by the CIA's bureaucracy afterward. The first incident in 2009 ended with him being sent home from a long-term assignment in South America. The second, and the one that ultimately led to his lawsuit, began in December 2014 when he was made the CIA's deputy chief of base at a U.S. military site that Pars doesn't name, but which matches the sprawling Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan.

At Bagram, Pars had issues with his new boss, the chief of base, who he believed was running her command "like a college dormitory," as Pars later wrote in a court filing. She allegedly adopted favorites within her staff, and placed "her personal needs of cooking, baking, socializing, entertainment, exercise and shopping above the needs of the mission, often going days and sometimes more than a week without meeting with key personnel."

Pars' most serious complaint charged that the base chief frequently led her personnel on unnecessary errands—"food, shopping or to the gym"—that took them through parts of the base hit frequently by Taliban rocket fire; one such excursion allegedly crossed a flight ramp that was hit by a rocket just 10 minutes later.

Without more information it's hard to weigh the merits of Pars' complaint, and his version of events contains obvious echoes of longstanding gender stereotypes. But under PPD-19 the relevant question isn't whether Pars' concerns were well founded, completely imagined or something in between. Only whether he faced retaliation for reporting them.

Following procedure, Pars sent his concern up the chain of command. Word of his complaint got back down to the base chief, who allegedly retaliated on a scale that ranged from the petty—assigning him to duty as the compound "noise monitor"—to the serious, writing a critical performance review of Pars faulting him for poor communication skills and lack of leadership. Soon after, the CIA's station chief in Afghanistan issued a "short-of-tour" cable reporting that Pars no longer had the confidence of the chief of base. The cable cut short Pars' one-year detail after four months, and sent him home to Virginia with a reduction in take-home pay.

Upon his return, Pars spent months applying for new CIA assignments that would fit his experience and qualifications, according to his lawsuit, but with the poor performance review and short-of-tour cable on his record, he was rejected again and again. His finances went to ruin, as did his family life; his wife left the country, taking their daughter with her. Pars appealed to the Equal Employment Opportunity office for aid, and worked through the CIA bureaucracy to try and clear his name. He finally lodged a whistleblower reprisal complaint in April 2015.

While waiting for the reprisal investigation to run its course, he applied to a detail that would take him outside the CIA for a while. In September 2015, Pars reported for work at a Reston, Virginia, office park that houses the office of the Intelligence Community Inspector General.

Pars worked as an inspector at the office for nearly a year before he was recruited onto the team that would examine whistleblower retaliation issues. It was a delicate inspection from day one. The intelligence OIGs had recently lost enthusiasm for the PPD-19 whistleblower protection regime, after the very first reprisal case to reach an appeal panel was decided by an independent review board.

In that case, the whistleblower claimed that the NSA's own inspector general, George Ellard, had retaliated against him for reporting wasteful spending on a conference. The Defense Department's OIG ruled against the whistleblower, but the decision was reversed on appeal. In the aftermath, an incensed NSA director Mike Rogers fired Ellard.

"That really did tarnish the IGs perception of PPD-19," says Irvin McCullough, an investigator at the nonprofit Government Accountability Project (and the son of the former IC IG). "They thought the first case would be a manager, and instead it was an IG. They didn't like that."

At a setup meeting for the whistleblower inspection on Sept. 1, 2016, Jeanette McMillian, the IG's general counsel, suggested the inspection should focus on the five largest intelligence agencies—CIA, NSA, NRO, NGA, and DIA—as well as the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, according to an official memorandum memorializing the meeting seen by The Daily Beast. She added that PPD-19 might go away after the next president was sworn in, and, in a departure from protocol, urged the inspectors to conduct a quick evaluation that would end by Inauguration Day and reach a positive conclusion. "Conducting a review and affirming that PPD-19 is working would help to continue these protections with a new presidential administration," reads the memo, paraphrasing McMillian.

Continuing in that vein, McMillian noted that a positive finding would also provide a nice send-off for departing Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, according to the memo. Clapper's term had largely been defined by the Edward Snowden revelations, and he was a staunch supporter of PPD-19, hoping that clear, protected avenues would encourage American spies to keep their complaints in the intelligence family instead of in the press. (Contractors like Snowden aren't covered by PPD-19, but a measure renewed by Congress last month offers contractors similar protections.) McMillian expressed the view that "an evaluation that affirms that PPD-19 is working would be a 'feather in the cap' for DNI Clapper, and a good way to send DNI Clapper on his retirement," according to the memo.

The IG officially kicked off the inspection in early October 2016, and the six inspectors, including Pars, began conducting interviews inside the agencies (the three inspectors on joint detail were recused from the interviews inside their home agency), gathered the procedures, forms, and manuals used in reprisal cases, and collected and crunched the internal numbers.

Two months later, Pars quietly filed his retaliation lawsuit against the CIA.

Getting into court is a complicated process for an undercover CIA officer. Pars first had to receive his agency-assigned alias, and hire a lawyer who had, or could get, a security clearance—in this case, Washington, D.C., employment law attorney Susan Kruger. "I sent the complaint to be reviewed by the CIA first, because I didn't want to file something that contained information that was secret," said Kruger. "So you might say they were on notice."

When the lawsuit finally hit the docket in December 2016, some 630 days had elapsed since Pars lodged his reprisal complaint—two-and-a-half times the 240-day limit endorsed by PPD-19. And still there was no decision. Without an OIG ruling one way or the other, Pars couldn't appeal to the IC IG (where he worked) for an external review board, for the simple reason that there was no ruling to appeal. It's PPD-19's Catch-22. "We just wanted them to take the first step and complete their investigation," Kruger said.

For whatever reason, though, Pars didn't tell his superiors that he was suing the CIA for whistleblower retaliation at the exact same time that he was serving on a large-scale inspection of the same.

By February, it was clear that the results of that inspection would be a feather in nobody's cap. The data alone was troubling. The inspectors general at the six agencies had received 190 allegations of reprisal from 2010 through 2016, according to unclassified memoranda from the inspection seen by The Daily Beast. Less than half, 61 complaints, had been investigated, and of those 57 were ruled unsubstantiated.

The NSA had received 56 of the retaliation complaints and investigated 12; the CIA got 62, investigated

13 and shunted 21 to other offices, primarily Equal Employment Opportunity. The Defense Intelligence Agency, or DIA, received 50 complaints, and investigated 19. In the entire batch of 190 cases, only once did an OIG find in favor of the whistleblower. That was in a DIA case that took 742 days to complete. Other cases remained open longer. One complaint from 2010 was still waiting for a ruling.

Beyond the numbers, the inspectors found endless obstacles to effective whistleblower protection in the spy agencies, according to documents from the probe. There was no clear standard for conducting reprisal investigations; even the standard of proof—probable cause? preponderance of the evidence?—was murky to the OIGs. The investigation manuals at most agencies gave retaliation probes only cursory attention. There were mixed incentives in play: The primary metric for weighing an OIGs effectiveness was how much money the office saved taxpayers through its waste and fraud investigations, and a successful whistleblower claim could cost the government money in the form of back wages or attorneys fees. Some inspectors complained that reprisal cases were too difficult and time consuming compared to other OIG tasks, and even the most dedicated investigator might struggle to definitively prove a connection between an intelligence worker's subpar performance review, reduced security clearance or missed promotion to their prior whistleblowing.

In March the inspection moved into the final stage and the team was preparing the official report, earmarked for Donald Trump's newly confirmed director of national intelligence, Daniel Coats. Copies would have gone to all the intelligence IGs, as well, according to Johnson, and probably to Congress. A public release was also on the table.

Instead, it went nowhere.

In early April, rumors of Pars' lawsuit reached the IG IC's office. Under questioning, Pars acknowledged he was the pseudonymous plaintiff in the case. Stone immediately removed Pars from the inspection and sent him back to the CIA.

Pars wasn't a zealot, and his work was always diligent and thorough, say former colleagues. But removing him from the project was largely uncontroversial. "We have a standard in the IG to not only avoid a conflict of interest, but to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest," Johnson says, and Pars wouldn't have been permitted to work on the inspection if they'd known he had a whistleblower retaliation complaint pending at CIA.

But Stone's next action was more puzzling. The following day he ordered the entire inspection halted, according to sources from the agency. Data, files, memos, charts, and graphs were locked down and work on the final report stopped on a dime. The official explanation was that the inspection had been tainted by Pars' involvement. But even now questions loom over the decision.

Johnson says there's virtually nothing a single inspector could do to contaminate a report that relies heavily on verifiable numbers. "Everything has to be backed up with data... There's not a lot of opinion on those reports." Some former IC IG officials believe that Stone used the Pars affair as an pretext to kill an inspection that was producing inconvenient results. "Pars was told to cease and desist and they walked him out the door and buried the program," says one former IC IG official who worked with Pars. "They pulled the carpet out from under him because they wanted an excuse to quash the report."

Though the whistleblower report never appeared, last October the nonprofit Project on Government Oversight got ahold of a leaked copy of one of the inspection memos. They quoted from it in an article. "A complainant alleging reprisal for making a protected disclosure has a minimal chance to have a complaint processed and adjudicated in a timely and complete manner."

Calling the language "stark," Dianne Feinstein brought up the memo the next day in a tense exchange at the Senate confirmation hearing for Christopher Sharpley, the acting CIA inspector general and Trump's pick for the permanent position.

"I would ask that you provide a copy of that document to our office, the Intelligence Committee's office,"

	<p>she told Sharpley.</p> <p>“Senator, I am unfamiliar with that document,” said Sharpley, seemingly taken aback. “I am not aware of its contents... The IC IG did not make me aware of it as acting IG at CIA. This is the first I’m hearing of this particular program.”</p> <p>One source familiar with the abortive whistleblower inspection says this particular memo was written by Pars.</p> <p>Pars’ lawsuit is still pending, but the Justice Department has asked the court to dismiss the claim, pointing to language in PPD-19 that more or less says the directive can’t be used as the basis for a lawsuit. After the drama in the IC IG, Pars’ future in the CIA is even dimmer. Two sources with knowledge of the matter say the agency recently referred Pars to an executive review board as the first step to possibly terminating his service to the CIA. Attorney Kruger said she couldn’t comment on anything beyond the lawsuit, but after a pause added, “In general we believe that the CIA is taking further actions in retaliation against him.”</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Sex offender elected town fire chief
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/11/outrage-as-convicted-sex-offender-is-re-elected-pennsylvania-towns-fire-chief.html
GIST	<p>A registered sex offender from a small town in Pennsylvania was reelected as the town’s fire chief, prompting widespread outrage.</p> <p>Roger Gilbert Jr., of Spartansburg, was convicted in 2001 of “involuntary deviate sexual intercourse” after forcing a 4-year-old girl to perform oral sex on him, The Corry Journal reported Saturday.</p> <p>Court records show Gilbert, 43, is a felon who completed a five- to 10-year prison sentence, and he’s listed in the state’s Megan’s Law database.</p> <p>The convicted sex offender joined the town’s fire department in 2010 as an unpaid volunteer, and said his conviction is now in the past.</p> <p>“That was 20 years ago,” Gilbert told the paper. “You know, the story you are telling kids is once you make mistake, you will be punished for the rest of your life. I’ve changed my life for the better. Every day I get up and try to do good.”</p> <p>Spartansburg Mayor Ann Louise Wagner — who said she and the department have known about Gilbert’s status — said she doesn’t understand why the victim’s mother “won’t drop this.”</p> <p>Pennsylvania State Police said it is up to each individual community to decide whether to allow sex offenders who have completed their sentences to serve in an office at the local level.</p> <p>About 300 people live in Spartansburg, which is about 40 miles southeast of Erie, Pennsylvania.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/12 Saudi Arabia sends a signal
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-attacks-belgium-saudi-insight/giving-up-control-of-brussels-mosque-saudi-arabia-sends-a-signal-idUSKBN1FW0R3
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS/RIYADH (Reuters) - Saudi Arabia has agreed to give up control of Belgium’s largest mosque in a sign that it is trying to shed its reputation as a global exporter of an ultra-conservative brand of Islam.</p> <p>Belgium leased the Grand Mosque to Riyadh in 1969, giving Saudi-backed imams access to a growing</p>

Muslim immigrant community in return for cheaper oil for its industry.

But it now wants to cut Riyadh's links with the mosque, near the European Union's headquarters in Brussels, over concerns that what it preaches breeds radicalism.

The mosque's leaders deny it espouses violence, but European governments have grown more wary since Islamist attacks that were planned in Brussels killed 130 people in Paris in 2015 and 32 in the Belgian capital in 2016.

Belgium's willingness to put its demands to oil-producing Saudi Arabia, a major investor and arms client, breaks with what EU diplomats describe as the reluctance of governments across Europe to risk disrupting commercial and security ties.

Riyadh's quick acceptance indicates a new readiness by the kingdom to promote a more moderate form of Islam - one of the more ambitious promises made by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman under plans to transform Saudi Arabia and reduce its reliance on oil.

The agreement last month coincides with a new Saudi initiative, not publicly announced but described to Reuters by Western officials, to end support for mosques and religious schools abroad blamed for spreading radical ideas.

The move towards religious moderation - and away from the extreme interpretation of Islam's Salafi branch that is espoused by modern jihadist groups - risks provoking a backlash at home and could leave a void that fundamentalists try to fill.

But Saudi Arabia's recent moves on religion are seen by Belgian diplomat Dirk Achten, who headed a government delegation to Riyadh in November, as a "window of opportunity".

"The Saudis are disposed to dialogue without taboos," he told Belgium's parliament last month after the mission was hastily put together after the assembly urged the government to break Saudi Arabia's 99-year, rent-free lease of the mosque.

But he also cautioned: "Some do not, or barely, admit that this form of Salafism leads to jihadism."

Details of the mosque's handover are still being negotiated but will be announced this month, Belgian Interior Minister Jan Jambon told Reuters.

The diplomatic contacts, led by the countries' foreign ministers, were intended by Belgium to prevent what Jambon called an "exaggerated response" from Saudi Arabia -- indicating the Belgian government had sought to ensure there was no diplomatic backlash.

This, he said, was "under control" following a visit to Belgium last month by Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir.

Before Saudi Arabia took control in the late 1960s, the Grand Mosque was a disused relic of the Great Exhibition of 1880 - an Oriental Pavilion.

Saudi money converted it to cater to migrants from Morocco invited to work in the country's coal mines and factories. It is run by the Mecca-based Muslim World League (MWL), a missionary society mainly funded by Saudi Arabia.

Concerns about the mosque grew as militant groups such as Islamic State started recruiting among the grandchildren of those migrants, many of whom say they still feel they do not belong in Belgian society, opinion polls show.

Belgium has sent more foreign fighters to Syria per capita than any other European country. Belgian

officials now suggest the Muslim Executive of Belgium, a group seen as close to Moroccan officialdom, should run the Grand Mosque.

Although the Saudi government has denied any role in the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks against the United States which killed more than 3,000 people, 15 of the 19 airplane hijackers who carried them out were from Saudi Arabia and linked to late Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, the plot's Saudi-born mastermind.

Bin Laden was a follower of Wahhabism, the original strain of Salafism which has often been criticized as the ideology of radical Islamists worldwide. Yet many of Islamic State's positions are far more radical than Wahhabism, the ultra-conservative branch of Islam dominant in Saudi Arabia and founded by 18th century cleric Mohammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab.

A classified report by Belgian security agency OCAD/OCAM in 2016 said the Wahhabi branch of Islam promoted at the mosque led Muslim youth to more radical ideas, sources with access to the report said.

"The mosque has influence to spread this hateful 'software'," a senior Belgian security source said. "Nobody paid attention for decades."

Belgium's parliament said what it preached was "a gateway or even a predisposition to a more combative Islam that is violent", calling in October for an end to the Saudi lease.

The same month, immigration minister Theo Francken tried to expel the Grand Mosque's Egyptian imam of 13 years, calling him "dangerous", but a judge reversed that decision.

But Belgian security sources say there is no proof imams at the Grand Mosque preached violence or have had links to attacks.

Some who went to fight in Syria had studied there but men are more prey to recruiters for militant groups online and on the streets of underprivileged boroughs such as Molenbeek, in Brussels, where some of the Paris attackers lived, they say.

Tamer Abou El Saod, who was appointed director of the Grand Mosque in May, says there are problems over the way it is perceived but denies it espouses a fundamentalist version of Islam. He says he is ready to work with Belgian officials.

"There are changes happening already and there are even more changes coming in the very near future," he told Reuters.

Belgian leaders say they want the mosque to preach a "European Islam" better aligned with their values - a familiar refrain across Europe following the Islamic State attacks of the last few years.

But it is unclear who will operate the sprawling mosque complex, which receives about 5 million euros (\$6 million) a year through the MWL which has for decades promoted a hardline interpretation of Islam at dozens of institutions worldwide

The MWL has recently adopted a more conciliatory tone. In just over a year since being appointed, its secretary-general, Mohammad bin Abdul Karim al-Issa, has met with Pope Francis and taken a public stance against Holocaust denial. Issa told Reuters in November the organization's new mission was to annihilate extremism.

For Saudi Arabia, the mosque is a chance to prove it is turning over a new leaf after years of accusations it turned a blind eye to - if not actively endorsed - extremist ideology.

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SOURCE	https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2018/02/09/battlefield-acupuncture-yes-it-exists-and-the-military-is-using-it-to-fight-troops-pain/
GIST	<p>The U.S. military has added the ancient holistic therapy of acupuncture to its arsenal for fighting opioid abuse in the ranks.</p> <p>The practice, which first originated in China about 8,000 years ago, provides immediate relief for acute and chronic pain, and, without the risk of addiction, can be used without any restrictions.</p> <p>One of the most popular forms used in the military has been dubbed ‘battlefield acupuncture,’ or BFA, because it’s simple to administer and easily transportable, according to Dr. Richard Niemtow, who developed BFA in 2001. With BFA, service members can continue to participate, unimpaired, in work and life.</p> <p>“They don’t have to wait hours for medications to take maximal effect or endure side effects, like drowsiness or allergic reactions, of common pain medications,” said Air Force Col. Lynda Vu, who recently administered BFA while deployed in Qatar. “This allows personnel to go back to the fight with minimal impact to continuing mission operations.”</p> <p>Service members who use BFA can still fly aircraft, unlike those who use opiates, according to Vu. The one challenge she faces is a lack of BFA-trained physicians on deployment.</p> <p>“This requires either training prior to deployment or having a trained instructor administer the provider BFA course in the deployed location,” Vu said. But once learned, the technique is easy to use.</p> <p>BFA, which involves a small needle inserted into the ear, has a “central effect” on the nervous system and the cingulate gyrus, an area of the brain that processes pain, according to Niemtow, who is the director of the U.S. Air Force Acupuncture and Integrative Medicine Center at the Malcolm Grow Medical Clinics and Surgery Center on Joint Base Andrews, Maryland.</p> <p>Most patients who seek BFA are those who have tried traditional Western treatments and have not responded well, according to Niemtow. But with BFA, many patients can immediately begin to feel relief.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/10 Iran drone American stealth knock-off
SOURCE	https://www.timesofisrael.com/iranian-uav-that-entered-israeli-airspace-seems-to-be-american-stealth-knock-off/
GIST	<p>The Iranian drone shot down by the Israeli Air Force early Saturday morning appears to have been a relatively new stealth model whose design was stolen from an American unmanned aerial vehicle that was captured by Iran in 2011, according to aviation analysts.</p> <p>On Saturday night, the Israel Defense Forces released photographs of the destroyed Iranian drone, which further enforced the view that the Iranian drone was a stealth model known as a — Thunderbolt, in English. These images joined video footage distributed by the army of the moments before the drone was shot down.</p> <p>Michael Cruickshank, working with the air-force-focused Aviationist website, identified the Iranian drone as a Saeqeh that was first debuted by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps in 2016, based on the video footage.</p> <p>Tal Inbar, an Israeli aviation expert for the Fisher Institute, agreed with the assessment, but noted that it was not clear from the video or the pictures which specific version of the drone was used.</p> <p>The design for the Saeqeh, which looks something like a miniaturized B-2 bomber, is largely based on an</p>

	<p>American RQ-170 Sentinel spy drone, one of which Iran claimed to have shot down in December 2011, when it broadcast footage of the recovered aircraft.</p> <p>Iranian media reported in October 2016 that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps had built a new attack drone similar to the RQ-170 Sentinel.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Cape Town rejoices for brief rainfall
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/11/africa/cape-town-rain-day-zero-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN) — When it finally came, restaurant diners rushed outside mid-meal to see the deluge for themselves. Others grabbed buckets to collect precious water from gutters to be used for washing clothes.</p> <p>The rain that fell on Cape Town Friday evening was cause for celebration in a drought-stricken city headed for "Day Zero" -- the day when taps are expected to run dry.</p> <p>Though whether the brief downpour was enough to delay "Day Zero" -- set now for May 11 -- remains to be seen.</p> <p>South Africa's second-largest city and its surrounding areas received between 2 millimeters and 10 millimeters of rainfall Friday night, according to the Cape Town Weather Office. The city can expect 2 millimeters to 8 millimeters of rainfall Monday evening and into Tuesday morning -- less than an inch -- with no further rain expected later in the week.</p> <p>Despite the paucity, the precipitation was a welcome sight for residents who haven't seen rain since January 22, and they collected water in buckets and tanks, with plans to use it for everything from washing clothes and dishes to flushing toilets.</p> <p>But it is unlikely to make a significant impact on the city's largest reservoir, Theewaterskloof Dam, which satellite images show is at dangerously low levels.</p> <p>Since February 1, residents have seen their water usage downsized from 87 to 50 liters a day -- or a little over 13 gallons.</p> <p>The city is also rushing to upgrade its water systems and is building desalination, aquifer and water-recycling projects to help stretch the current supply.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 LAX: man scales fence, runs to plane
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/11/us/los-angeles-man-on-runway/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN) — A man apparently scaled a fence at Los Angeles International Airport Saturday, running up to a plane and causing a temporary shut down, according to police.</p> <p>It was believed the man may have been under the influence of narcotics when he ran onto the 24-left runway at LAX -- the most northern of the airport's four -- LAX police officer Rob Pedregon told CNN.</p> <p>A pilot spotted the man and the passengers on his plane had to be transferred to another aircraft, Pedregon said.</p> <p>"We had a temporary shutdown for the 24-left and right runways; and it was a minor shutdown," he said.</p> <p>The man is expected to face charges including trespassing, he said.</p>

	According to the FAA, LAX is the United States' second-busiest airport in terms of passenger numbers. More than 80.9 million passengers passed through the transport hub in 2016.
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HEADLINE	02/10 Opioid scourge hits state health workers
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article199418169.html
GIST	<p>Spokane — A Spokesman-Review analysis of Washington death records, health care provider licenses and Department of Health disciplinary records found at least 33 medical professionals in the state have died from opioid overdoses from 2010 to 2015, the most recent year that overdose death data is available.</p> <p>Most of the deceased are not physicians. They're nurses, pharmacy technicians and, in some cases, chemical dependency counselors.</p> <p>None were disciplined by the Department of Health for suspected drug or alcohol abuse or diversion before their deaths, records show, though a Cowlitz County nurse died in 2014 before a pending investigation into his drug use could be completed. His death certificate listed nine drugs, more than any other professional on the list.</p> <p>Two others were reported, but both had their cases closed. A Port Townsend nurse practitioner had a complaint of drug and alcohol abuse, falsifying records and mental disorder dismissed in 2010 due to insufficient evidence. She fatally overdosed in 2015 with fentanyl, morphine and hydrocodone found in her system.</p> <p>A Longview chemical dependency counselor accused of drug or alcohol abuse in 2011 also had his case closed with no recorded discipline. He died of a heroin overdose in September 2013.</p> <p>Some of the deaths made headlines. A Tacoma doctor, Nick Uruga, had been charged with kidnapping and harassing his ex-wife shortly before he was found dead in his Gig Harbor home of what was described at the time as an apparent suicide. The medical examiner later ruled it an accidental drug poisoning with oxycodone, according to his death certificate.</p> <p>The deceased include a Wenatchee-area hospital pharmacist who died at 58 with six prescription drugs, including methadone and hydromorphone, in her system. A Mukilteo pharmacy technician, devoted Irish-Catholic and diabetes advocate, died at 34 from a hydrocodone overdose.</p> <p>Almost none used heroin or other illegal drugs, a marked contrast to the 4,020 Washingtonians who died of opioid overdoses during the same time period.</p> <p>Heroin is by far the most common drug on death certificates, and methamphetamine is in the top five statewide. But medical professionals tend to use prescription painkillers. Oxycodone, hydrocodone and fentanyl top the list.</p> <p>Without exception, the obituaries do not mention a cause of death. They speak only of people who "passed away suddenly," often leaving behind surviving parents, siblings, spouses and children.</p> <p>The medical profession has long struggled with how best to handle providers struggling with drug addiction.</p> <p>Though doctors, nurses and pharmacists are among the people best-equipped to see the consequences of drug addiction, they're also susceptible to drug abuse thanks to an intersection of factors: high-stress jobs, odd hours and a belief that they know how to stay in control of the drugs they prescribe or administer routinely.</p> <p>Doctors with an addiction problem tend to abuse alcohol most frequently, said Chris Bundy, the director of</p>

the Washington Physician's Health Program, which helps doctors get treatment for addiction and mental illness.

Nurses are far more likely to abuse opioids or other prescription drugs. Most seeking treatment in Washington through the Department of Health have either an opioid addiction or an addiction to multiple substances, including opioids.

"A lot of that is because they have direct hands-on access to those medications," said John Furman, director of Washington Health Professional Services, a group within the Department of Health that treats nurses for drug addiction.

State law requires medical providers – anyone with a Department of Health license – and health care employers to report license holders who are unable to work "with reasonable skill and safety due to a mental or physical condition," including drug or alcohol addiction. Providers are also supposed to self-report.

A total of 558 health care providers were sanctioned by the health department from 2010 to 2016 for drug or alcohol violations, and the department took 1,023 reports of suspected drug and alcohol violations involving 843 individual providers during the same period, according to data obtained through a public records request.

Washington Health Professional Services takes a carrot and stick approach to suspected substance abuse among nurses, including nurse practitioners.

WHPS, a part of the Department of Health, handles referrals from family, colleagues and nurses themselves who may be struggling with drug addiction.

If the program finds a nurse is abusing drugs, they'll be put on a monitoring agreement and be expected to comply with a treatment program. If they comply with counseling, group therapy and pass drug tests, they'll be able to keep their license and continue practicing once it's deemed safe.

"If they're successful in the program, the nursing commission will never know that they participated and that's an incentive," Furman said.

That's the carrot. The stick? Screw up, and the program can report nurses to the nursing commission for non-compliance, and they could lose their licenses and jobs.

A similar program exists for doctors: the Washington Physician's Health Program. Unlike WHPS, it's completely independent from the Department of Health, and deals with any issue making it difficult for a doctor to practice safely, including mental or cognitive illnesses.

"We want to encourage early intervention and treatment without creating a safe harbor for people who are potentially putting patients at risk," Bundy, the program director, said.

The physician's program has a higher success rate than the nurse's, but providers in both fare better than the general public in addiction treatment.

During the 30 years the doctors' program has existed, 81 percent of graduates have stayed clean after five years, based on random drug tests, Bundy said.

Among nurses who graduate, an average of 79 percent were employed in 2017, according to the program's annual report. Fewer than 1 percent of nurses who graduate return to monitoring later for new violations.

Typically, 40 to 60 percent of people treated for drug addiction will relapse, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the federal government's main funder of addiction research. They define relapse as "recurrence of symptoms that requires additional medical care."

Still, many health care providers already fear reporting colleagues out of concern that they're "tattling" or going to get someone in trouble.

And reaching out for help remains difficult, even when nurses and other professionals are aware of resources.

Anne Mason, director of Washington State University's doctoral program in nursing, said nurses are aware of WHPS and are taught that anyone, from any background, can become addicted to narcotics.

But that's not always enough to make people willing to seek help.

"There's so much stigma around addiction whether you're a health care professional or any other professional," Mason said. "There's oftentimes a message that addiction is about people making a choice, a bad choice, and people could choose not to be addicted if they wanted to but they don't want to."

Most reports of drug abuse to both the physicians' health program and the Department of Health don't result in discipline or monitoring.

"We often hear after the fact that there were others who knew that individual, often several others, who knew that individual and had a concern and failed to act," Bundy said.

In 2016, Bundy said they had 216 people referred to them and had 70 end up in monitoring agreements. In 2017, they had 189 referrals and 80 monitoring agreements. Most doctors are able to return to work.

WPHS, the program for nurses, had 371 nurses participating in the program for some part of 2017, and 83 new nurses sign monitoring agreements.

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HEADLINE	02/09 Another asteroid heading close to Earth
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/another-asteroid-heading-close-to-earth/
GIST	<p>CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. -- Another asteroid is headed our way -- the second this week -- but there's no need to worry. The newly discovered space rock will pass within 39,000 miles (64,000 kilometers) of Earth on Friday afternoon. That's less than one-fifth the distance to the moon.</p> <p>Designated 2018 CB, the asteroid is an estimated 50 feet to 130 feet (15 meters to 40 meters) in size, possibly bigger than the one that exploded over Russia five years ago this month.</p> <p>The manager of NASA's Center for Near-Earth Object Studies, Paul Chodas, said asteroids this size usually don't come this close - just once or twice a year.</p> <p>While Friday's close approach isn't a huge deal, Chodas said in an email, "it is a reminder that asteroids can pass very close to our planet and it's important that we find these objects when they do get close."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Shadowy Russian bilked US spies \$100K
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/09/us/politics/us-cyberweapons-russia-trump.html
GIST	<p>BERLIN — After months of secret negotiations, a shadowy Russian bilked American spies out of \$100,000 last year, promising to deliver stolen National Security Agency cyberweapons in a deal that he insisted would also include compromising material on President Trump, according to American and European intelligence officials.</p>

The cash, delivered in a suitcase to a Berlin hotel room in September, was intended as the first installment of a \$1 million payout, according to American officials, the Russian and communications reviewed by The New York Times. The theft of the secret hacking tools had been devastating to the N.S.A., and the agency was struggling to get a full inventory of what was missing.

Several American intelligence officials said they made clear that they did not want the Trump material from the Russian, who was suspected of having murky ties to Russian intelligence and to Eastern European cybercriminals. He claimed the information would link the president and his associates to Russia. Instead of providing the hacking tools, the Russian produced unverified and possibly fabricated information involving Mr. Trump and others, including bank records, emails and purported Russian intelligence data.

The United States intelligence officials said they cut off the deal because they were wary of being entangled in a Russian operation to create discord inside the American government. They were also fearful of political fallout in Washington if they were seen to be buying scurrilous information on the president.

The Central Intelligence Agency declined to comment on the negotiations with the Russian seller. The N.S.A., which produced the bulk of the hacking tools that the Americans sought to recover, said only that “all N.S.A. employees have a lifetime obligation to protect classified information.”

The negotiations in Europe last year were described by American and European intelligence officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a clandestine operation, and the Russian. The United States officials worked through an intermediary — an American businessman based in Germany — to preserve deniability. There were meetings in provincial German towns where John le Carré set his early spy novels, and data handoffs in five-star Berlin hotels. American intelligence agencies spent months tracking the Russian’s flights to Berlin, his rendezvous with a mistress in Vienna and his trips home to St. Petersburg, the officials said.

The N.S.A. even used its official Twitter account to send coded messages to the Russian nearly a dozen times.

The episode ended this year with American spies chasing the Russian out of Western Europe, warning him not to return if he valued his freedom, the American businessman said. The Trump material was left with the American, who has secured it in Europe.

The Russian claimed to have access to a staggering collection of secrets that included everything from the computer code for the cyberweapons stolen from the N.S.A. and C.I.A. to what he said was a video of Mr. Trump consorting with prostitutes in a Moscow hotel room in 2013, according to American and European officials and the Russian, who agreed to be interviewed in Germany on the condition of anonymity. There remains no evidence that such a video exists.

The Russian was known to American and European officials for his ties to Russian intelligence and cybercriminals — two groups suspected in the theft of the N.S.A. and C.I.A. hacking tools.

But his apparent eagerness to sell the Trump “kompromat” — a Russian term for information used to gain leverage over someone — to American spies raised suspicions among officials that he was part of an operation to feed the information to United States intelligence agencies and pit them against Mr. Trump. Early in the negotiations, for instance, he dropped his asking price from about \$10 million to just over \$1 million. Then, a few months later, he showed the American businessman a 15-second clip of a video showing a man in a room talking to two women.

No audio could be heard on the video, and there was no way to verify if the man was Mr. Trump, as the Russian claimed. But the choice of venue for showing the clip heightened American suspicions of a Russian operation: The viewing took place at the Russian Embassy in Berlin, the businessman said.

There were other questions about the Russian’s reliability. He had a history of money laundering and a

thin legitimate cover business — a nearly bankrupt company that sold portable grills for streetside sausage salesmen, according to British incorporation papers.

“The distinction between an organized criminal and a Russian intelligence officer and a Russian who knows some Russian intel guys — it all blurs together,” said Steven L. Hall, the former chief of Russia operations at the C.I.A. “This is the difficulty of trying to understand how Russia and Russians operate from the Western viewpoint.”

American intelligence officials were also wary of the purported kompromat the Russian wanted to sell. They saw the information, especially the video, as the stuff of tabloid gossip pages, not intelligence collection, American officials said.

But the Americans desperately wanted the hacking tools. The cyberweapons had been built to break into the computer networks of Russia, China and other rival powers. Instead, they ended up in the hands of a mysterious group calling itself the Shadow Brokers, which has since provided hackers with tools that infected millions of computers around the world, crippling hospitals, factories and businesses.

No officials wanted to refuse information they thought might help determine what had happened.

“That’s one of the bedeviling things about counterintelligence and the wilderness that it is — nobody wants to be caught in a position of saying we wrote that off and then five years later saying, ‘Holy cow, it was actually a real guy,’” Mr. Hall said.

American intelligence agencies believe that Russia’s spy services see the deep political divisions in the United States as a fresh opportunity to inflame partisan tensions. Russian hackers are targeting American voting databases ahead of the midterm election this year, they said, and using bot armies to promote partisan causes on social media. The Russians are also particularly eager to cast doubt on the federal and congressional investigations into the Russian meddling, American intelligence officials said.

Part of that effort, the officials said, appears to be trying to spread information that hews closely to unsubstantiated reports about Mr. Trump’s dealings in Russia, including the purported video, whose existence Mr. Trump has repeatedly dismissed.

Rumors that Russian intelligence possesses the video surfaced more than a year ago in an explosive and unverified dossier compiled by a former British spy and paid for by Democrats. Since then, at least four Russians with espionage and underworld connections have appeared in Central and Eastern Europe, offering to sell kompromat to American political operatives, private investigators and spies that would corroborate the dossier, American and European intelligence officials said.

American officials suspect that at least some of the sellers are working for Russia’s spy services.

The Times obtained four of the documents that the Russian in Germany tried to pass to American intelligence (The Times did not pay for the material). All are purported to be Russian intelligence reports, and each focuses on associates of Mr. Trump. Carter Page, the former campaign adviser who has been the focus of F.B.I. investigators, features in one; Robert and Rebekah Mercer, the billionaire Republican donors, in another.

Yet all four appear to be drawn almost entirely from news reports, not secret intelligence. They all also contain stylistic and grammatical usages not typically seen in Russian intelligence reports, said Yuri Shvets, a former K.G.B. officer who spent years as a spy in Washington before immigrating to the United States after the end of the Cold War.

American spies are not the only ones who have dealt with Russians claiming to have secrets to sell. Cody Shearer, an American political operative with ties to the Democratic Party, has been crisscrossing Eastern Europe for more than six months to secure the purported kompromat from a different Russian, said people familiar with the efforts, speaking on the condition of anonymity to avoid damaging their relationship with

him.

Reached by phone late last year, Mr. Shearer would say only that his work was “a big deal — you know what it is, and you shouldn’t be asking about it.” He then hung up.

Mr. Shearer’s efforts grew out of work he first began during the 2016 campaign, when he compiled a pair of reports that, like the dossier, also included talk of a video and Russian payoffs to Trump associates. It is not clear what, if anything, Mr. Shearer has been able to purchase.

Before the Americans were negotiating with the Russian, they were dealing with a hacker in Vienna known only to American intelligence officials as Carlo. In early 2017, he offered to provide them with a full set of hacking tools that were in the hands of the Shadow Brokers and the names of other people in his network, American officials said. In exchange, he wanted immunity from prosecution in the United States.

But the immunity deal fell apart, so intelligence officials decided to do what spies do best: They offered to buy the data. That is when the Russian in Germany emerged, telling the Americans he would handle the sale.

Like Carlo, he had previously dealt with American intelligence operatives, American and European officials said. He served as a fixer, of sorts, brokering deals for Russia’s Federal Security Service, or F.S.B., which is the successor to the Soviet K.G.B. American intelligence officials said that he had a direct link to Nikolai Patrushev, a former F.S.B. director, and that they knew of previous work he had done helping move illicit shipments of semiprecious metals for a Russian oligarch.

By last April it appeared that a deal was imminent. Several C.I.A. officers even traveled from the agency’s headquarters to help the agency’s Berlin station handle the operation.

At a small bar in the former heart of West Berlin, the Russian handed the American intermediary a thumb drive with a small cache of data that was intended to provide a sample of what was to come, American officials said.

Within days, though, the deal turned sour. American intelligence agencies determined that the data was genuinely from the Shadow Brokers, but was material the group had already made public. As a result, the C.I.A. said it would not pay for it, American officials said.

The Russian was furious. But negotiations limped on until September, when the two sides agreed to try again.

Late that month, the American businessman delivered the \$100,000 payment. Some officials said it was United States government money but routed through an indirect channel.

A few weeks later, the Russian began handing over data. But in multiple deliveries in October and December, almost all of what he delivered was related to the 2016 election and alleged ties between Mr. Trump’s associates and Russia, not the N.S.A. or C.I.A. hacking tools.

In December, the Russian said he told the American intermediary that he was providing the Trump material and holding out on the hacking tools at the orders of senior Russian intelligence officials.

Early this year, the Americans gave him one last chance. The Russian once again showed up with nothing more than excuses.

So the Americans offered him a choice: Start working for them and provide the names of everyone in his network — or go back to Russia and do not return.

The Russian did not give it much thought. He took a sip of the cranberry juice he was nursing, picked up his bag and said, “Thank you.” Then he walked out the door

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HEADLINE	02/08 Study: viruses, bacteria falling from sky
SOURCE	https://www.studyfinds.org/viruses-bacteria-fall-from-sky/
GIST	<p>VANCOUVER — This study will make you think twice about stepping outside for a breath of fresh air. A team of scientists from around the world confirmed millions of viruses rising into the atmosphere, traveling — sometimes for thousands of miles — and falling back down to the surface.</p> <p>The study, carried out by researchers from the U.S., Canada, and Spain, is the first of its kind to confirm viruses are being swept up into the free toposphere — the layer of atmosphere between the area where Earth’s weather systems develop — and below the stratosphere, where airplanes fly.</p> <p>“Fresh air” may not be so fresh after all. A new study finds that millions of viruses and bacteria are swept into the atmosphere and travel long distances before eventually falling back down to earth.</p> <p>The numbers are “astonishing” the researchers say, but remember, a virus is a tiny particle, little more than a strand of DNA and a mechanism for attaching to organic matter.</p> <p>“Every day, more than 800 million viruses are deposited per square metre above the planetary boundary layer — that’s 25 viruses for each person in Canada,” says University of British Columbia virologist Curtis Suttle, lead author of the study, in a media release.</p> <p>Scientists have been finding genetically similar viruses in disparate parts of the planet.</p> <p>“Roughly 20 years ago we began finding genetically similar viruses occurring in very different environments around the globe,” says Suttle. “This preponderance of long-residence viruses travelling the atmosphere likely explains why—it’s quite conceivable to have a virus swept up into the atmosphere on one continent and deposited on another.”</p> <p>Suttle and his team found that viruses and bacteria are often swept up into the atmosphere by attaching themselves to particles in soil dust and sea spray. The researchers used platforms in Spain’s Sierra Nevada Mountains to detect how many viruses and bacteria were settling there every day. They found billions of viruses and tens of millions of bacteria being deposited there per square meter every day.</p> <p>“Bacteria and viruses are typically deposited back to Earth via rain events and Saharan dust intrusions. However, the rain was less efficient removing viruses from the atmosphere,” adds study author Isabel Reche, a microbial ecologist from the University of Granada.</p> <p>The full study was published in <i>International Society for Microbial Ecology Journal</i>.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/10 SKorea leader invited to visit North
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/korean-president-hosts-lunch-kim-jong-uns-sister-52975329?
GIST	<p>A rare invitation to Pyongyang for the South Korean president marked Day Two of the North Korean Kim dynasty's southern road tour Saturday, part of an accelerated diplomatic warming that included more handshakes, some Korean liquor over lunch and the potential shared joy of watching a "unified" Korea team play hockey at the Olympics.</p> <p>Nothing has been settled on any trip north by South Korean President Moon Jae-in. But the verbal message to come at a "convenient time" from dictator Kim Jong Un, delivered by his visiting little sister, Kim Yo Jong, is part of a sudden rush of improving feelings between the rivals during the Pyeongchang</p>

	<p>Olympics. The result: a heady, sometimes surreal, state of affairs in a South Korea that has seen far more threat than charm out of the North.</p> <p>Still, it wouldn't be South Korea if people weren't asking the perennial question when it comes to North Korea changing gears and showering its rival with apparent affection: What's in it for Pyongyang?</p> <p>Past "charm offensives" have been interpreted as North Korea trying to recoup from crippling sanctions on their nuclear program, or trying to drive a wedge between Seoul and its U.S. ally.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/10 Poland official: Jews 'ashamed' of passivity
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/polish-official-accuses-jews-passivity-holocaust-52980343?
GIST	<p>An adviser to Poland's president has said that Israel's reaction to a law criminalizing some statements about Poland's actions during World War stems from a "feeling of shame at the passivity of the Jews during the Holocaust."</p> <p>Andrzej Zybertowicz made the remark in an interview published Friday in the Polska-The Times newspaper. Zybertowicz tweeted a link to the article on Friday.</p> <p>Polish President Andrzej Duda signed legislation Tuesday that imposes prison terms of up to three years for falsely and intentionally attributing Nazi crimes to German-occupied Poland.</p> <p>The law has sparked anger in Israel, where Holocaust survivors and others with roots in Poland fear it will allow the government to whitewash the role some Poles had in killing Jews during World War II.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	02/11 Germany rising trend anti-Semitic crimes
SOURCE	http://www.dw.com/en/germany-averaged-four-anti-semitic-crimes-per-day-in-2017-report-says/a-42538545
GIST	<p>The rising trend of anti-Semitic crimes in Germany shows no signs of abating, according to a newspaper report on last year's crime statistics that was published on Sunday.</p> <p>In 2017, German police registered a total of 1,453 crimes that targeted Jews or Jewish institutions, reported German newspaper Tagesspiegel, citing figures from the German government. The data was compiled in response to an inquiry from Bundestag vice president and Left party lawmaker Petra Pau.</p> <p>Last year's crimes included 32 acts of violence, 160 instances of property damage, and 898 cases of incitement.</p> <p>The German government expects the figures to rise even further since the data provided by the states is not yet final, the paper said.</p> <p>In 1,377 of the cases — 95 percent of the total — police determined that a right-wing motive had driven the crimes.</p> <p>Police attributed 33 of the offenses to foreign-born anti-Semites, not including Islamists.</p> <p>Another 25 of the cases were "religiously motivated," including those involving either foreign-born or</p>

	<p>German Muslims with extremist beliefs, according to the Tagesspiegel report.</p> <p>Read more: Germany pays too little attention to current anti-Semitism, report says</p> <p>In 17 of the cases, authorities were unable to determine a political motive behind the crime. Police determined a left-wing motive in one case of incitement.</p> <p>Pau, who initiated the anti-Semitic crime inquiry, said she was deeply concerned about last year's figures. Speaking with Tagesspiegel, Pau noted that "the number of unreported cases could be considerably higher" since many of those affected are reluctant to report the crime.</p> <p>Last month, German lawmakers passed a bill to implement tougher laws to tackle anti-Semitism, including the creation of a commissioner post to develop and carry out a strategy for rooting out anti-Semitic sentiment and crime.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 KCSO: man fatally shot in driveway
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/897466/man-found-shot-to-death-in-skyway-shooting/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — The King County Sheriff's Office is investigating after a man was found shot to death in a driveway in the Skyway area south of Seattle.</p> <p>The Seattle Times reports that the victim was a 45-year-old man who lives in the area.</p> <p>Sheriff's Sgt. Cindi West says a homeowner heard gunshots about 4:30 a.m. Sunday and went outside to find the man shot dead in her driveway. The homeowner reported that she knew the man, but she did not expect him at her home.</p> <p>No firearm was found at the scene.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Seattle: 2 shootings over weekend
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/897658/two-shootings-seattle/
GIST	<p>Police are investigating two shootings in Seattle. The latest happened at First Avenue and Cherry Street near Pioneer Square.</p> <p>One man was taken to Harborview Medical Center with life-threatening injuries after the shooting on Sunday evening.</p> <p>Police have not released a description of a suspect.</p> <p>This is the second shooting reported in Seattle over the weekend.</p> <p>Earlier on Sunday, a 27-year-old man was shot to death inside a nightclub south of downtown.</p> <p>Around 1 a.m., police responded to the 100 block of South Horton Street and said they tried to save the man's life until Fire Department medics took over and brought him to Harborview Medical Center, where he died.</p> <p>No further details were immediately released.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 MLB player's kidnapped mom rescued
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/pittsburgh-pirates-catcher-elias-diaz-mother-ana-soto-rescued-kidnapping-venezuela/
GIST	<p>PITTSBURGH -- The mother of Pirates catcher Elias Diaz has been rescued after being kidnapped last week, CBS Pittsburgh reports. Multiple reports out of Venezuela say at least six people were detained Saturday after confessing that they were involved in the kidnapping. Five of those detained were reportedly police officers, including an officer who lived next door to Diaz.</p> <p>The governor of the Venezuelan state of Zulia tweeted Sunday that Diaz's mother, Ana Soto, was rescued by security forces.</p> <p>The Pirates have not yet released a statement confirming these reports.</p> <p>Venezuelan media reported the kidnapping Thursday.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Beijing mall stabbing: 1 killed, 12 injured
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/beijing-xidan-mall-stabbing-knife-attack-leaves/
GIST	<p>BEIJING -- Police say a 35-year-old man with a personal grievance attacked 13 people with a knife in a busy shopping mall in Beijing on Sunday, killing one. A woman died from her injuries after being sent to a hospital, the city's Public Security Bureau said in a brief statement.</p> <p>The 12 other victims in the attack suffered injuries that were not life-threatening, it said.</p> <p>Police provided only the alleged assailant's surname, Zhu, and said he confessed to the authorities that he carried out the attack at Joy City, a mall in Beijing's Xidan district, to "vent his personal discontent."</p> <p>Because Chinese law tightly restricts the sale and possession of firearms, mass attacks are generally carried out with knives or homemade explosives.</p> <p>Perpetrators of similar attacks in the past have been described as mentally ill or bearing grudges against society.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/10 Coast Guard probes false mayday calls
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/news/us/coast-guard-looking-for-man-suspected-of-making-8-false-maydays-in-california-1.511037
GIST	<p>The U.S. Coast Guard has spent the last month looking for the aquatic version of the boy who cried wolf.</p> <p>Since Jan. 3, an unknown man is suspected of making eight mayday radio calls to the Coast Guard's Los Angeles command center, a felony that could land the caller in prison for up to six years.</p> <p>Such fake maydays, officials say, wastes resources and can put rescuers in danger.</p> <p>"Coast Guard operations are inherently dangerous and our servicemembers face risks every time we launch for a search-and-rescue mission," said Capt. Charlene Downey, the Los Angeles-Long Beach commander. "Limited resources should not be diverted away from legitimate emergencies."</p> <p>In one of the recordings, released this week by the Coast Guard as it seeks the public's help in finding the suspect, a male's voice spits out the universal distress signal rapid-fire: "Mayday, mayday, mayday. ... Mayday, mayday, mayday."</p>

	<p>The accent of his voice appears to change between bursts.</p> <p>Other recordings from the past two weeks are undergoing forensic voice analysis, the Coast Guard said in a statement.</p> <p>The man made the calls to Channel 16, the international channel for communicating distress signals to the Coast Guard, law enforcement and other mariners, Petty Officer DeVante Marrow said. The Coast Guard monitors that channel 24 hours a day.</p> <p>It is unknown if the man made the calls from the sea or from land.</p> <p>“The calls were only one to three seconds long, so they couldn’t get a bearing on it,” Marrow said about why officials couldn’t track the calls. “When you have the search-and-rescue calls, they try to get out as much information as possible. In this case, he just said, ‘mayday.’”</p> <p>The Coast Guard typically sends out crews anytime a mayday call comes in – and they will keep looking until they determine a call is fake. The released call did not cite a location.</p> <p>How the Coast Guard determined these calls were fake is unclear, but Marrow said the commanders have criteria they follow to determine a call’s legitimacy.</p> <p>Besides a prison sentence, someone convicted of making a false distress call could face a \$250,000 fine and a \$10,000 civil penalty and have to repay agency costs.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/10 Ex-ICE agent jailed accepting bribes
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2018/02/10/Former-Homeland-Security-agent-prisoned-for-accepting-bribes-from-drug-lord/5371518305044/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts tn us&utm_medium=3
GIST	<p>Feb. 10 (UPI) -- A former U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement-Homeland Security Investigations special agent was sentenced to 36 months in prison Friday for accepting bribes from a fugitive narcotics kingpin, according to admissions in his plea agreement.</p> <p>Christopher Ciccione II, 52, of Phoenixville, Pa., accepted cash and other valuables while using his official position to dismiss an indictment against Colombian national Jose Bayron Piedrahita Ceballos, according to a Department of Justice statement.</p> <p>The former special agent admitted to accepting \$20,000, dinner, drinks and prostitutes in exchange for records to be altered in Ceballos' case, saying the he was a former suspect rather than a current one and that the narcotics kingpin was "never positively identified" so his case should be dismissed.</p> <p>"Christopher Ciccione abused his law enforcement authority for personal profit," said John Cronan, acting assistant attorney general. "His actions not only comprised an ongoing investigation and nearly allowed a dangerous drug kingpin to escape justice, but they also betrayed the public trust placed in him to carry out his sworn duties with integrity. Today's sentence demonstrates the hard work of our federal law enforcement partners to bring criminals to justice-no matter who they are."</p> <p>Ciccione was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Robert N. Scola Jr. of the Southern District of Florida. Ceballos is currently jailed in the Republic of Colombia.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Indonesia: church attacker killed
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SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/02/11/police-shoot-man-during-sword-attack-on-indonesian-church.html
GIST	<p>SLEMAN, Indonesia – Police in Indonesia shot a sword-wielding man who attacked a church congregation during Sunday Mass, injuring four people, including a German priest.</p> <p>The reason for the attack Sunday morning in Sleman district in Yogyakarta province was not immediately clear. The 22-year-old attacker decapitated statues of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary during the incident, photos showed.</p> <p>Churches are a common target for Islamic militants in Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation.</p> <p>Local police detective Fendi Timur said counterterrorism police would be involved in the investigation.</p> <p>Video shows people in the church throwing books at the man as he lunged toward them with his sword. Witnesses and police said the injured included a police officer who tried to subdue the attacker and the 81-year-old priest Karl Edmund Prier, a longtime resident of Indonesia.</p> <p>They suffered back, neck and head wounds and are in stable condition.</p> <p>The suspect, identified only as Sulyono, was hospitalized.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/11 Kentucky 'murder spree': man kills 4, self
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/11/us/kentucky-four-people-killed/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN) — Five people died in a "murder spree" in eastern Kentucky Saturday, the Johnson County sheriff said.</p> <p>"This has been a horrific murder spree. The lives of four innocent victims were taken. The perpetrator then took his own life," Sheriff Dwayne Price said.</p> <p>Authorities responding to reports of a shooting found the bodies of two victims at a home in Johnson County, the sheriff's office said in a statement.</p> <p>While deputies were searching for a suspect, they found two more victims and the suspected shooter dead at an apartment in Paintsville -- about 10 miles away from where the first victims were found.</p> <p>Price said he was not releasing names of any of the victims until their families were notified.</p> <p>"There are no words to describe the heartbreak in seeing four lives taken due to the actions of one man. I have worked in law enforcement for 34 years. This is one of the most disturbing acts of violence I have ever seen," he added.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Maine governor orders prison shutdown
SOURCE	http://wgme.com/news/local/gov-lepage-orders-prison-shut-down
GIST	<p>AUGUSTA (WGME) -- Before dawn, Governor Paul LePage emptied a minimum security prison of all the inmates and locked the workers out.</p> <p>Staff of the Downeast Correctional Facility say they were given no warning of the governor's order to transfer all 63 inmates. State Police pulled up to the gate at 4:30 Friday morning to load inmates on buses, while employees were given layoff notices and placed on administrative leave.</p>

State Senator Joyce Maker says the facility was fully funded through June and says there was bipartisan support to continue that funding. She says Governor LePage was determined to close Downeast, regardless of who it hurt.

"There's no reason why he has to do it to these people at this time," Maker said. "It's devastating to Washington County."

Governor LePage says he closed Downeast because it was outdated, inefficient and too costly to run.

"I have a jail that costs more to operate than the maximum security prison in the State of Maine," LePage said.

Governor LePage says Downeast was bound to close at some point.

"I saw today as an ability to save the state a little bit more money," LePage said.

The state employees' union says all 63 inmates were taken to Mountain View Correctional Facility. A union rep. says staff at the Charleston facility have concerns about taking those inmates.

Downeast was established by a state law. The Attorney General's Office says the governor cannot unilaterally amend that law and close Downeast without violating the Constitution, but even critics say the governor does have the power to remove all the inmates.

"Unless we find a loophole here, I don't know that there's any hope," Maker said.

Washington County lawmakers and the state employees' union both say they're exploring their options to challenge Governor LePage and try and keep the Downeast Correctional Facility open, but both say it will do little good if the governor refuses to house inmates there.

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HEADLINE	02/11 Ohio cops killed in 911 hang up call
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/10/us/ohio-police-officers-killed/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN) — Two police officers died Saturday after being shot while responding to a 911 call that ended in a hang-up in Ohio, authorities said.</p> <p>The officers were shot as they entered an apartment in Westerville, Division of Police Chief Joe Morbitzer told reporters. Officers responded to what was a potential domestic situation, he said, but didn't go into detail about the incident.</p> <p>One officer died on the scene and one died at the hospital, the chief said.</p> <p>They were identified as Eric Joering, 39, who had been with the department for 17 years, and Anthony Morelli, 54, who had served 30 years.</p> <p>"Both officers gave their lives in the protection of others," Morbitzer said through tears. "Those are true American heroes."</p> <p>A male suspect was wounded and hospitalized, police spokeswoman Christa Dickey said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/10 Police: 19yr-old raped dying woman
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SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/896725/police-washington-man-raped-dying-woman-texted-photos/
GIST	<p>EVERETT, Wash. (AP) — A 19-year-old Washington state man, who police say raped a high school student as she died from a drug overdose and texted semi-nude photos of her, has been charged with manslaughter.</p> <p>Brian Roberto Varela of Lynnwood was also charged Friday in Snohomish County Superior Court with second-degree rape and controlled substance homicide in the death of 18-year-old Alyssa Mae Noceda.</p> <p>According to court documents, Varela told detectives that Noceda snorted Percocet and also ingested liquid marijuana before collapsing in his room the previous weekend.</p> <p>Authorities say Varela never sought help for Noceda, instead sending semi-nude photos of her to friends and texting “LOL, I think she od’d, still breathing.”</p> <p>Authorities say his co-worker contacted police Tuesday after Varela said he didn’t know if Noceda was still alive when he was having sex with her. Court records say he told a friend that “she died having sex with me.”</p> <p>Police arrested Varela later that day after executing a search warrant and finding Noceda’s body in a plastic crate at the suspect’s home.</p> <p>Varela told investigators he planned to bury Noceda with onions to minimize the odor, police said. He also told detectives that after Noceda died, he used her thumb to unlock her phone Feb. 4 and send messages to make it appear she had run away.</p>
	<p>Return to</p> <p>Top</p>

HEADLINE	02/10 Fights, arrests Seattle ‘freedom rally’
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/896900/uw-republicans-patriot-prayer/
GIST	<p>Several fights broke out at a “freedom rally” Saturday at the University of Washington, hosted by the College Republicans group. The rally was met by a large group of protesters.</p> <p>Five people were arrested.</p> <p>The University of Washington was blocked from charging the school’s Republicans group a \$17,000 security fee ahead of a “freedom rally” Saturday, a federal judge ruled Friday.</p> <p>Officials with the University of Washington said Friday in a statement that they were “taking precautions to ensure the Patriot Prayer event unfolds as peacefully as possible.”</p>
	<p>Return to</p> <p>Top</p>

HEADLINE	02/09 King Co. unique crime mediation program
SOURCE	http://www.kiro7.com/news/local/king-county-teens-hold-peers-accountable-through-unique-crime-mediation-program/697239285
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - While some teenage criminals are sent to jail, there's a King County program that aims to keep them out.</p> <p>These young offenders must face the people they've harmed, and a teenage mediator helps break through decides their fate.</p> <p>Jerell Colman is a 16-year-old who now spends a lot of time at the Federal Way Boys and Girls Club, mostly volunteering with Charissa Eggleston and the Helping Youth Perform Excellence, or HYPE, program.</p>

He's now a youth leader, but was headed down a much different path.

"He could've been walking around with a criminal record doing time" Eggleston said. "He could have been incarcerated."

In late 2016, Colman was arrested with other teenagers for breaking into DBM Contractors in Federal Way.

Combined, the teens did \$50,000 worth of damage. Colman said he had started hanging out with some kids at his apartment complex who were known troublemakers.

"I really had a weak mindset at that time," he said.

Dustin Pulley, Colman's stepfather, got the call at work of the arrest.

"I was pretty disappointed," Pulley said, "because we try to steer him in the right direction."

While he was trying to figure out the legal situation, Pulley was told that the prosecutor considered Colman a candidate for the Alternative Dispute Resolution program.

He was told it was a mediation that could reduce Colman's charges if he faced the people he'd harmed.

And they agreed to do it.

"I had no idea that a program like that existed," Pulley said.

Colman told KIRO 7 about the moment he first saw the people from the construction company.

"When I walked in the room, my stomach completely dropped," he said.

What makes the program even more unique is the presence of a youth mediator in the room.

Cheyenne Brashear was the teenage volunteer assigned to Colman's case.

"That kid reminded me of my brother," she said. "Just another multiracial, black kid growing up in the wrong neighborhood making the wrong friends."

Brashear is one of about a dozen teenage leaders in King County trained to be part of the restorative mediations.

Polly Davis, a longtime mediator with King County, came up with the first-of-its-kind program three years ago. She worked with prosecutors, defense attorneys and youth probation officers to determine how it would work.

"Having the youth in the room is an incredibly powerful dynamic changer," Davis said. "For one thing, they are a subject matter expert."

The victim or a victim's advocate has to agree to be in the room in order for the teen to get a chance to go through the mediation. The victim comes up with the action plan or punishment for the teen.

The youth mediation program averages one case per month.

It started with minor crimes such as petty theft but the seriousness of the crimes they cover has increased.

Recently, the program successfully diverted a weapons charge and a charge of an assault on an officer.

It's ultimately up to a judge to sign off on the action plan.

Davis said the youth mediator has made a big difference.

"That's who the youth look at," she said.

During Colman's mediation, he heard the victims detail the impact of his actions.

While he was only part of one break-in, there had been three consecutive nights of break-ins.

Workers at DBM were afraid to come to work and had no idea it was just some teens causing mischief.

In the mediation, Colman gave a soft-voiced apology, but the victims weren't feeling it. The breakthrough came when Brashear talked one-on-one with Colman and asked how he wanted to be heard.

"He was just, like, 'I'm really sorry, I just don't know how to say it,'" she said. "And I was, like, 'Well, you just need to go in there and say it and mean it, you know?'"

Colman said that moment gave him the confidence to go in and give a more heart-felt apology.

Davis said, at that point, the victims' attitude toward Colman changed.

They asked Colman about his interests. He told them how he to play basketball. So they used his love of basketball to determine his action plan. He had to do community service hours running the scoreboard at the Boys and Girls Club in Federal Way.

And he had to join Eggleston's HYPE program.

"He met that and he's surpassed that," Eggleston said. "I'm just super impressed with Jerell. As soon as he completed his hours, he was, like, 'Does this mean I can't come anymore?' I was, like, 'No, you've got to keep coming as long as you want.' So, he's been coming consistently for a year. He often volunteers."

KIRO 7 anchor John Knicely asked Davis how she'd respond to someone saying Colman is getting off easy.

"I think it's incredibly brave for youth to be in the room with the people they did something to," she said. "And it takes guts to do that."

Colman did just that.

And now, instead of being locked up with other youth criminals, Colman is spending his time helping other kids make better choices.

His stepfather says he's become a leader.

"He doesn't have a record," Pulley said. "It's been expunged. He's just a regular kid going about his business now."

The teen mediation program is one example of how King County is shifting Juvenile Justice under the direction of Public Health.

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HEADLINE 02/09 Illegal cheers killing 2 Calif. deputies

SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/09/illegal-immigrant-cheers-after-being-found-guilty-killing-two-california-deputies-threatens-to-kill-more-cops.html
GIST	<p>An illegal immigrant charged with killing two California deputies in 2014 cheered after being found guilty of murder and threatened “to kill more cops soon” as he was taken away.</p> <p>The defendant, Luis Enrique Monroy Bracamontes, 37, was found guilty of the Oct. 24, 2014, shootings that killed Sacramento County Sheriff’s Deputy Danny Oliver and Placer County Sheriff’s Detective Michael Davis Jr. He now faces a potential death penalty.</p> <p>Bracamontes smiled and softly said, “Yay,” after the first verdict was read. Later, as he was being taken out of the courtroom, he said, “I’m going to kill more cops soon.”</p> <p>Bracamontes has had other outburst since his trial began on Jan. 16. He interrupted the court with a profanity-laced rant, calling one of the slain officers a “coward.”</p> <p>"I wish I had killed more of the mother-----s," Bracamontes told the court. He continued: "I will break out soon and I will kill more, kill whoever gets in front of me. ... There's no need for a f---ing trial."</p> <p>Defense attorneys argued that Bracamontes was mentally ill and high on methamphetamine during the shootings and should be spared. But a judge found him competent to stand trial.</p> <p>Prosecutors will seek the death penalty for Bracamontes when the sentencing phase of his trial begins March 5.</p> <p>Bracamontes, a Mexican citizen who repeatedly entered the United States illegally, has shouted in court that he is guilty and asked to be put to death. He has also threatened to kill his defense attorneys.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Violence stalks Venezuela lawless roads
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-economy-trucks-widerimage/mad-max-violence-stalks-venezuelas-lawless-roads-idUSKBNIFT1G9?il=0
GIST	<p>LA GRITA, Venezuela (Reuters) - It’s midnight on one of the most dangerous roads in Latin America and Venezuelan trucker Humberto Aguilar hurtles through the darkness with 20 tons of vegetables freshly harvested from the Andes for sale in the capital Caracas.</p> <p>When he set off at sunset from the town of La Grita in western Venezuela on his 900-km (560-mile) journey, Aguilar knew he was taking his life in his hands.</p> <p>With hunger widespread amid a fifth year of painful economic implosion under President Nicolas Maduro, Venezuela has seen a frightening surge in attacks on increasingly lawless roads.</p> <p>Just a few days earlier, Aguilar said he sat terrified when hundreds of looters swarmed a stationary convoy, overwhelming drivers by sheer numbers. They carted off milk, rice and sugar from other trucks but left his less-prized vegetables alone.</p> <p>“Every time I say goodbye to my family, I entrust myself to God and the Virgin,” said the 36-year-old trucker.</p> <p>While truck heists have long been common in Latin America’s major economies from Mexico to Brazil, looting of cargoes on roads has soared in Venezuela in recent times and appears to be not just a result of common crime but directly linked to growing hunger and desperation among the population of 30 million.</p> <p>Across Venezuela, there were some 162 lootings in January, including 42 robberies of trucks, according to the consultancy Oswaldo Ramirez Consultores (ORC), which tracks road safety for companies. That</p>

compared to eight lootings, including one truck robbery, in the same month of last year.

“The hunger and despair are far worse than people realize, what we are seeing on the roads is just another manifestation of that. We’ve also been seeing people stealing and butchering animals in fields, attacking shops and blocking roads to protest their lack of food. It’s become extremely serious,” said ORC director Oswaldo Ramirez.

Eight people have died in the lootings in January of this year, according to a Reuters tally.

The dystopian attacks in a country with one of the world’s highest murder rates are pushing up transport and food costs in an already hyperinflationary environment, as well as stifling movement of goods in the crisis-hit OPEC nation.

They have complicated the perilous life of truckers who already face harassment from bribe-seeking soldiers, spiraling prices for parts and hours-long lines for fuel.

Government officials and representatives of the security forces did not respond to requests for comment for this story.

Barred by law from carrying guns, the Andean truckers form convoys to protect themselves, text each other about trouble spots - and keep moving as fast as possible.

Even once Andean truckers reach cities, there is no respite.

Armed gangs often charge them for safe passage and permission to set up markets.

“The government gives us no security. It’s madness. People have got used to the easy life of robbing,” said Javier Escalante, who owns two trucks that take vegetables from La Grita to the town of Guatire outside Caracas every week.

“But if we stop, how do we earn a living for our families? How do Venezuelans eat? And how do the peasant farmers sell their produce? We have no choice but to keep going.”

The looters use a variety of techniques, depending on the terrain and the target, according to truckers, inhabitants of towns on highways, and videos of incidents.

Sometimes gunmen on motorbikes surround a truck, slowing it down before pouncing like lions stalking prey. In other instances, attackers wait for a vehicle to slow down – at a pothole for example – before jumping on, cutting through the tarpaulin and hurling goods onto the ground for waiting companions.

The looters use tree trunks and rocks to stop vehicles, and are particularly fond of “miguelitos” - pieces of metal with long spikes - to burst tires and halt vehicles.

Though events on Venezuela’s roads may seem like something out of the Mad Max movie, truckers say they are often more akin to Robin Hood as assailants are careful not to harm the drivers or their vehicles provided they do not resist.

“The best protection is to be submissive, hand things over,” said Roberto Maldonado, who handles paperwork for truckers in La Grita. “When people are hungry, they are dangerous.”

However, all the truckers interviewed by Reuters said they knew of someone murdered on the roads - mainly during targeted robberies rather than spontaneous lootings.

With new tires now going for about 70 million bolivars - about \$300 on the black market or more than two decades of work at the official minimum wage - looters often swipe them along with food.

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HEADLINE	02/09 Navy probes widespread drug selling
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-navy-probes-suspected-drug-selling-use-among-sailors-in-japan-1518210550
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—The U.S. Navy is investigating at least a dozen U.S. sailors based in Japan, some serving aboard the USS Ronald Reagan aircraft carrier, for suspicion of buying, selling, and using LSD, ecstasy and other drugs, U.S. Navy officials said Friday.</p> <p>The Navy also is probing whether U.S. sailors were using the internet to buy or sell drugs or were distributing them to local Japanese residents.</p> <p>The Navy first learned about allegations of widespread drug sales on Feb. 6, when it received a tip about a petty officer third class using drugs, the officials said. He was subsequently detained and released, they said.</p> <p>That sailor pointed investigators to others aboard the ship who the sailor said were distributing or using drugs, a U.S. military official said. The official said that others could be detained or charged in the continuing probe.</p> <p>The Naval Criminal Investigative Service confirmed it was conducting an investigation. Among questions are whether the drug use and distribution reached other parts of Seventh Fleet, which operates in the Pacific, the officials said.</p> <p>“The Navy has zero tolerance for drug abuse and takes all allegations involving misconduct of our sailors, Navy civilians and family members very seriously,” NCIS said in a statement. “These allegations are still under investigation and it would be inappropriate to comment further.”</p> <p>Japanese authorities also have been brought into the investigation, two Navy officials said, because of suspicions that drugs were sold to Japanese residents. In addition, a suspicious package related to one of the sailors was intercepted by a local postal service, a Navy official said.</p> <p>The USS Reagan currently is stationed at its home port, in Yokosuka, Japan, headquarters of the Navy’s Seventh Fleet. Seventh Fleet officials said they couldn’t immediately comment.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Las Vegas shooter’s autopsy report
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/09/us/stephen-paddock-autopsy-las-vegas/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)An autopsy report on Las Vegas shooter Stephen Paddock said he had anti-anxiety medication in his system at the time of death, according to the Las Vegas Review-Journal.</p> <p>The autopsy report from the Clark County Coroner's Office also indicated that Paddock died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head, the Review-Journal said.</p> <p>According to the report, Paddock's brain remains in a research lab in Stanford University School of Medicine.</p> <p>Paddock, 64, opened fire on 22,000 concertgoers from the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino on October 1, killing 58 people and injuring almost 500.</p> <p>Police broke down the door to Paddock's room and found numerous firearms and thousands of rounds of ammunition.</p>

	Authorities have not provided a motive in the massacre. Paddock was known as a high-stakes gambler who often visited Las Vegas casinos.
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HEADLINE	02/09 Swiss police: thieves \$32M in van heist
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/thieves-carry-elaborate-van-heist-steal-millions-cash/story?
GIST	<p>Millions of dollars in cash were stolen during a van heist along the French-Swiss border on Thursday night, according to reports.</p> <p>The armored vehicle transporting the cash was driving on a highway toward Lausanne, Switzerland, around 7:45 a.m. Thursday when it was robbed, local Swiss police said in a statement. The driver was forced to leave the highway and pull into a parking lot before the van was robbed by armed men wearing hoods near the village of Chavornay, police said.</p> <p>Thieves held up the drivers and emptied the van of the cash before fleeing in a dark-colored Porsche SUV, according to police.</p> <p>An estimated \$32 million in cash was reportedly stolen in the heist.</p> <p>The daughter of one of the drivers was taken hostage during the robbery, authorities said, and she was later found on a road on the outskirts of Lyon uninjured after she was released.</p> <p>"We are closely working with French investigators in order to identify and find the persons who are behind this act, this robbery and this hostage taking," a spokesman for the Swiss canton of Vaud told Reuters. "But, we can say that we are dealing with extremely organized people, who had prepared and planned the attack, and investigators are taking this into account."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Georgia officer killed serving warrant
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/georgia-officer-killed-serve-arrest-warrant/story?
GIST	<p>A police officer is dead and two sheriff's deputies are injured after they were shot while attempting to serve an arrest in Henry County, Georgia, Friday.</p> <p>The two Henry County sheriff's deputies arrived at the home on St. Francis Court in Locust Grove early this morning to serve the arrest warrant and soon realized they would need backup, so they radioed for help, Henry County Sheriff Keith McBrayer said in a press conference. A Locust Grove officer then arrived on the scene to assist.</p> <p>But while trying to serve the warrant, an altercation broke out, according to the sheriff, and all three officers were shot.</p> <p>The Georgia Bureau of Investigation has identified the officer who died as Chase Maddox of the Locust Grove Police Department. GBI also identified the two wounded deputies as Michael D. Corley and Ralph Sidwell "Sid" Callaway.</p>
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As-it-happens update · February 10, 2018

NEWS

Syria says rare US strike an effort 'to support terrorism'
Canton Daily Ledger

Syria says rare US strike an effort 'to support terrorism'. Friday, Feb 9, 2018 at 1:12 PM. Syrian state-run media said Thursday a rare U.S. strike on government-backed troops in eastern Syria killed and wounded dozens of tribal fighters, calling it a new effort "to support terrorism." By SARAH EL ...
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Woman charged with terrorist act after alleged Melbourne stabbing
The Australian

She was arrested at the scene and charged with one count of engaging in a terrorist act. The man will undergo surgery at Royal Melbourne Hospital today for non-life threatening injuries. "I'm led to believe that she was wearing a black burka," Victoria Police Acting Commissioner Ross Guenther said ...
Flag as irrelevant

Pakistani army chief confirms death sentence to 7 hardcore terrorists: army
Xinhua

ISLAMABAD, Feb. 10 (Xinhua) -- Pakistani Army Chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa has confirmed death sentences awarded to seven hardcore terrorists for their involvement in heinous offences related to terrorism, the military said. An army statement on Friday said the convicts were involved in killing of ...
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We will punish them! US vows to hold 'Beatles ISIS terrorists' to account after capture
Express.co.uk

UNITED States officials have pledged to hold terrorists accountable following the capture of two Britons suspected of being part of the Islamic State extremist group dubbed 'The Beatles'. PUBLISHED: 19:55, Fri, Feb 9, 2018 | UPDATED: 20:21, Fri, Feb 9, 2018 ...
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London Bridge terrorists were high on steroids, UK court told
Times of India

LONDON: The terrorists who rammed into pedestrians on London Bridge before stabbing people in nearby Borough Market killing eight people in June last ... Counter-terrorism officers had shot and killed the men, who were wearing hoax explosive vests, during the Islamic State (ISIS) claimed terrorist ...
London Bridge attack: Terrorists 'used steroids' before attack - Sky News
Full Coverage

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Egypt targets terrorists in 'Sinai 2018' military operation

UPI.com

9 (UPI) -- Egypt's military launched an attack targeting terrorist hotbeds in different parts of the Sinai Peninsula, parts of the Nile Delta and the Western Desert. The military action, named 'Sinai 2018,' starts a "comprehensive counter-terrorist plan" in the country, Col. Tamer Rifai announced Friday.

'Sinai 2018' Military Operation hit int'l, regional media headlines - Egypttoday

Full Coverage

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All you need to know about Egypt's Comprehensive Operation Sinai 2018

Egypttoday

CAIRO – 9 February 2018: Days after Sisi's pledge in the "Tale of a Homeland" conference to use brutal force when confronting terrorism in Sinai, the Egyptian Armed Forces announced on Friday morning a new major military operation dubbed "Comprehensive Operation Sinai 2018" to purge country ...

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NAS Patuxent River conducts anti-terrorism drills

Bay Net

NAS Patuxent River, MD- The threat of terrorist attacks is an ongoing concern for members of the Armed Forces. To prepare for a possible attack, our troops conduct various exercises with real-life scenarios to make sure they're ready to react. That's exactly what Naval Air Station Patuxent River has been ...

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Meet ETIM, the terrorist group the US just bombed in Afghanistan

Washington Examiner

"They're a terrorist organization that operates in China and the border regions of Afghanistan," Maj. Gen. James Hecker told reporters at a Pentagon briefing Thursday. "ETIM enjoys support from the Taliban in the mountains of Badakhshan, so hitting these Taliban training facilities and squeezing the ...

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Military Strikes Continue Against ISIS Terrorists in Syria, Iraq

Department of Defense

Military Strikes Continue Against ISIS Terrorists in Syria, Iraq. From a Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve News Release. PRINT | E-MAIL | CONTACT AUTHOR. SOUTHWEST ASIA, Feb. 9, 2018 —. Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve and its partners continue to ...

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terrorism
As-it-happens update · February 9, 2018

NEWS

Arab Bank Terrorism Case Ends as US Court Voids Jury Verdict
U.S. News & World Report

The appeals court said jurors in Brooklyn were instructed incorrectly by the trial judge that under federal law, Arab Bank committed an "act of international terrorism" by knowingly providing material support to Hamas, which the Department of State designated in 1997 as a foreign terrorist organization.

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Pakistan wants Trump to pay for their fence to help reduce terrorism
National Post

Pakistan wants Trump to pay for their fence to help reduce terrorism. 'It won't cost them much. The war is costing them much more'. Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Pakistan's foreign affairs minister, stands for a photograph in Islamabad, Pakistan, on Friday, Feb. 2, 2018. Pakistan is pushing for the completion ...

FM Asif urges US to pay for fencing Pak-Afghan border aimed at reducing terrorism - SAMAA TV News
Pakistan

Full Coverage

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Syria claims US airstrikes which killed 100 people including 19 children 'support terrorism'
The New Daily

Syrian state-run media says a rare US strike on government-backed troops in eastern Syria killed and wounded dozens of tribal fighters, calling it a new effort "to support terrorism". The US-led coalition said its action was in "self-defence", citing a major attack on its allied forces and US advisers in Deir ...

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Shifting sands of terrorism in South-east Asia
The Straits Times

In October 2002, bombings on the Indonesian resort island of Bali catapulted terrorism to the top of the list of security priorities for the governments of maritime South-east Asia, and there it has remained. In the ensuing years, security agencies across the region were seized with the transnational and ...

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Egypt's army launches 'Comprehensive Operation Sinai 2018' to purge country of terrorism
Ahram Online

On Friday morning, the Egyptian Armed Forces announced the launch of a new major operation to confront terrorism in north and middle Sinai and other areas in the Nile Delta and the desert areas west

of the Nile valley. Ahram Online provided an account of key events and statements by the army, ...
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Event Calendar

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Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php
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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	02/09 Major storm continues to pound Midwest
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/major-winter-storm-continues-pound-midwest/story?id=52956660&cid=clicksource_4380645_1_hero_headlines_headlines_hed

GIST	<p>The biggest snowstorm of the season hit the Midwest hard overnight, where up to 9 inches of snow has already fallen with more to come.</p> <p>But today's storm is not the end, as yet another storm is forecast to hit Midwest, parts of the South and the Northeast this weekend.</p> <p>Because of all the snow -- and flooding forecast -- storm alerts are issued for 20 states from Wyoming down to Georgia and into New York.</p> <p>The storm system is moving through southern Great Lakes Friday morning bringing snow from Iowa to Ohio. Snowfall rates are 1 to 2 inches per hour from Chicago to Detroit.</p> <p>Snow will be done in Chicago by Friday's evening commute, and mostly over in Detroit. Snow will continue to fall from Buffalo, New York, to Albany, New York, and parts of western New England.</p> <p>By Saturday morning, the storm system will begin to weaken but will bring light rain and snow to parts of the Northeast and New England from Buffalo, New York, to Burlington, Vermont, and into Maine.</p> <p>Just as one storm system moves out, a new storm system moves right behind it for Saturday night into Sunday morning.</p> <p>This second system will be much larger, stretching from the Midwest into the South and Northeast.</p> <p>More snow is expected for cities like Chicago and Detroit with heavy rain expected from Nashville to Charleston, West Virginia, that could cause some flooding. Heavy rain is also forecast for Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, New York City and Boston.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Rattlesnake Ridge Q & A
SOURCE	http://kimatv.com/news/local/rattlesnake-ridge-your-questions-answered
GIST	<p>With the Yakima County Emergency Management Teams no longer doing press conferences, we took the most common questions we get on social media and took them to those studying the Rattlesnake Ridge landslide.</p> <p>Why haven't they blown up the ridge? It seems like the easiest way to put this all past us. Just blow up the ridge force everything to come down and clean up the mess on our own terms.</p> <p>It's one of the first things Yakima County Emergency Management Teams considered when it came to dealing with the landslide. But the experts they spoke with said they don't think it's that simple.</p> <p>"In effort to move this landslide, it would take an immense number of explosives to even have an effect on this landslide, and there may be some unnecessary consequences from that," Senior Emergency Planner Horace Ward said.</p> <p>Some of the unnecessary consequences include having to put people on an active landslide and drill into it. Plus, if for some reason the bombs don't blow up as planned, the ridge will be filled with live explosives and no way to take them out safely.</p> <p>What is the current rate of the slide and is it accelerating? The Department of Natural Resources has been monitoring the slide since the beginning of the year. "We still have all the pieces of monitoring equipment up there and they all show that it's still moving at about 1.6 feet per week. The same rate it has been for the last several weeks," Joe Smillie said.</p>

There have been rates of 1.5 or 1.7 feet a week reported, but Smillie said when you average all the data it's still moving at the average of 1.6 a week.

He said this slide is different than most they see in Washington because of how slow it's moving and the makeup of the ridge itself.

“We have a column of basalt that was built up by lava flow and it's on a thin layer of sediment so that's why it is moving slower,” Smillie said. “It's more of gravity pulling the rock down the hill.”

Why is I-82 still open?

Driving down I-82 you might have wonder if it's safe being so close to the landslide. Emergency teams said there is no risk, as of right now, when it comes to the highway and The Department of Transportation has a plan to reroute traffic.

“It's moving so slow that, right now there's no risk to travelers on I-82. Dot has a plan in place where the detour route would go off of granger over to 97 and then back up to union gap in both directions,” Emergency Management Director Jeff Emmons said.

Thorp Road right next to I-82 was closed and evacuated right away, but as of right now Emmons doesn't see the slide making its way down to the interstate. As a safeguard, The Department of Transportation put up large metal containers along Thorp Road to protect I-82 from any rocks that may fall.

While some of Thorp Road has opened for people living there, they will keep the containers there and the rest of the road closed for the time being.

How do I stay up to date with the ridge?

You might not be living right next to the landslide, but we've been getting a lot of comments from people living here in Union Gap and surrounding cities of how they can stay up to date with what's going on. You can sign up for emergency alerts on the county's website by clicking "notify me" at the top of the page.

Then you can set up for what kind of alerts you want to get.

There are up to five email addresses you can sign up to make sure everyone in your house hold can get them. And even though the county recently let people move back into their homes off Thorp Road, Emergency teams highly suggest they sign up for alerts and be ready to leave at any time.

"Make sure you have some extra water in the house,” Jeff Pfaff with the Yakima Fire Department said. “Try to make sure that you have some food supplies, because we could lose power there could be things that happen in that small percentage but that great catastrophic thing that could happen at any time.”

Which brings us to our final question: will the landslide reach the river?

With the landslide so close to the Yakima River, we've gotten a lot of comments about the danger that poses. It would probably be the worst-case scenario, but also the most unlikely to happen when you combine how far the landslide would need to go and how slow it is moving.

Emmons said that geologists monitoring the slide told him it would take years for it to reach the water. He said they're watching the landslide to see if it will keep moving south, but as of right now there is no risk of it reaching the river.

“It would have to come south, go over both lanes of 82, up over it and into the river. With moving a foot and a half a week that could take some time and we would see it coming, so that it a really, really, really low risk,” Emmons said.

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HEADLINE	02/08 Russia angry over US extradition efforts
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/02/08/russia-angry-over-alleged-hackers-extradition-alleged-hacker-warns-u-s-stop-hunting-down-our-citizen/318770002/
GIST	<p>The Russian foreign ministry demanded Thursday that the U.S. "stop hunting down our citizens around the globe."</p> <p>The strongly worded request comes one week after the U.S. secured the extradition of an alleged Russian botnet hacker from Spain.</p> <p>"The number of Russians arrested in other countries at the request of the U.S. continues to increase," said Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova, according to the MFA Twitter account. "There were 11 such cases in 2017. We demand that the U.S. stop hunting down our citizens around the globe."</p> <p>Zakharova singled out the case of Peter Levashov, who was detained in Spain in April 2017 on federal charges of Internet scamming. He was extradited to the U.S. last week to face the charges.</p> <p>U.S. prosecutors charged that Levashov, 37, operated the Kelihos botnet, a network of more than 100,000 infected devices used by cyber criminals to spread viruses, ransomware, phishing emails and other spam. The charges carry a prison sentence of up to 52 years if convicted.</p> <p>Although Russian media has tied him to efforts to influence U.S. elections, the federal indictment does not include any election-related charges.</p> <p>Levashov, who denies the charges, was scheduled to appear in court in Bridgeport, Conn., on Friday. He also faces federal civil allegations in Alaska in connection with the Kelihos botnet, The Hartford Courant reports.</p> <p>Levashov, who fought the extradition, told Spain's High Court he worked for Russian President Vladimir Putin's United Russia party for the last 10 years, Russia's RIA news agency reported. He was arrested while on vacation in Barcelona.</p> <p>Zakharova said Levashov has complained about his detention conditions.</p> <p>"We regard this as an attempt to pressure the Russian citizen into making him more compliant," she said.</p> <p>Levashov told the Spanish court that U.S. authorities would torture him for information about his political activity if he was extradited, RIA said.</p> <p>Other Russian nationals extradited to the U.S. from third countries in recent years include Konstantin Yaroshenko, a professional pilot convicted in 2011 of cocaine trafficking, and Viktor Bout, convicted in 2012 on terrorism charges related to intent to smuggle weapons. Both denied the charges.</p> <p>Yaroshenko was arrested by FBI agents in 2010 in Liberia, and Bout, a businessman dubbed the "merchant of death," was arrested in Bangkok in 2008, Russia's RIA Novosti reports.</p> <p>In November, the Justice Department charged six members of the Russian government in the hacking of Democratic National Committee computers before the 2016 U.S. elections, the Wall Street Journal reported.</p> <p>In addition, two Russian intelligence agents and two hackers were charged in early 2017 with masterminding the 2014 theft of 500 million Yahoo accounts.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Port's deal leaves truck drivers worried
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SOURCE	http://crosscut.com/2018/02/ports-seattle-tacoma-deal-leaves-truck-drivers-worried-emissions/
GIST	<p>After a one-day walkout that helped win a delay of a clean-air rule, hundreds of independent truckers at the ports of Seattle and Tacoma say they still can't fathom how their meager earnings will allow them to buy newer and cleaner trucks by the new deadline of next Jan. 1.</p> <p>The truckers remained nervous as they got behind the wheel again Wednesday after winning a nine-month reprieve from the ports on a looming April 1 deadline for the more modern but far more expensive trucks.</p> <p>The drivers said they were unsatisfied by the port commissioners' vote Tuesday to delay putting the clean-truck requirement into effect until Jan. 1 and establish a \$1 million loan program to help drivers buy newer, cleaner trucks. Port staff members said they will also seek grants for new trucks from other sources.</p> <p>"They didn't solve the problem," said 50-year-old Yemane Behane, whose 2001 truck fails to meet the federal air-quality standards for diesel trucks that went into effect in 2007.</p> <p>He said the extension doesn't change any of the fundamental challenges of trying to buy a new truck without expectations of a higher income.</p> <p>Many of the ports' independent drivers are immigrants who own their trucks and contract with dispatching companies to pick up and deliver containers filled with consumer goods to warehouses and rail yards. With some earning as little as minimum wage once their expenses are paid, they said there is no way they can afford the \$40,000 to \$60,000 cost of a truck outfitted with a newer diesel filter system.</p> <p>Several hundred drivers staged Tuesday's walkout in order to attend the port commissioners' meeting, a crowd large enough that it filled the main meeting room at Seattle Tacoma International Airport and spilled out into the hallway. Dozens more filed into a second viewing room set up by port officials to allow drivers to watch the meeting remotely.</p> <p>The ports in 2008 committed to upgrading the truck fleet to the newer and cleaner trucks by Jan. 1 of this year. But only about half the trucks hit that deadline. On Tuesday port commissioners met to impose a new April 1 deadline. But commissioners agreed they do not have much information about the independent drivers who make up an estimated 80 percent of truckers serving the ports.</p> <p>"Ultimately, whose lives are we impacting?" said Commissioner Fred Felleman. "I feel irresponsible in taking a vote not knowing who I'm impacting."</p> <p>In fact, the ports, which handle their waterfront operations jointly under an alliance, don't even know exactly how many truck drivers are affected. It says 53 percent of the approximately 4,500 trucks registered to do business at the ports comply with the clean-air rules. Driver Yared Meconnen, who helped organize the walkout and lobbying campaign, told port commissioners that more than 2,000 drivers still own the older trucks.</p> <p>Seattle Port Commissioner Stephanie Bowman, who is also executive director of a nonprofit that serves low-income populations, said the drivers' concerns amount to an "economic justice issue."</p> <p>"There are a lot of brown faces in this room," Bowman said.</p> <p>Under the compromise approved Tuesday, the ports will begin enforcing the new standards on April 1, 2018, but older trucks will still be allowed to pick up and deliver shipping containers provided they register with the ports, according to Jason Jordan, director of environmental and planning services at the Seaport Alliance.</p> <p>A group of 10 trucking company owners who bought new trucks in anticipation of the original deadline at the start of this year have said they intend to file a lawsuit against the Seaport Alliance if the April deadline was extended. The owners say the enforcement delay forces them to compete with other drivers</p>

	and companies who opted not to invest in new trucks.
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HEADLINE	02/08 Seattle City Light harassment settlement
SOURCE	http://crosscut.com/2018/02/seattle-city-light-settlement-harassment-discrimination/
GIST	<p>Three years before #MeToo — and before the City of Seattle’s own public reckoning with harassment — a group of four Seattle City Light female employees complained of a department and an HR director uninterested in taking discrimination, harassment or hostility seriously. The director, they alleged in a lawsuit, was quick to retaliate for their speaking out.</p> <p>The City of Seattle agreed last spring to pay \$375,000 to three of the women, quietly ending that 2014 lawsuit. The settlement was signed last March but was not made public until now.</p> <p>None of the three women still work for Seattle City Light. One agreed as a condition of her settlement to never again seek employment with the City of Seattle. Another now works in the city’s Information Technology Department. The third no longer works for the city and is the co-founder of a DIY home improvement company, See Jane Drill.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the HR director accused of ignoring discrimination complaints and fostering the hostile work environment remains in her position. Years later, as City Light once again finds itself the target of harassment, discrimination and sexism complaints, employees continue to point the finger at the department’s HR unit for not doing enough.</p> <p>The settlement, provided to Crosscut by the City Attorney’s Office, was borne out of a 2014 lawsuit in King County Superior Court. It was filed by Annette “Nettie” Dokes, Olayinka Ogunyemi and Karen DeVenaro as well as a fourth woman, Patsy Taylor. Taylor withdrew from the litigation in 2016 and no longer works for the City.</p> <p>“City Light has a long-standing history of discrimination and retaliation against older female employees,” their complaint read. “City Light has a history of discriminating against employees substantially motivated by the sexual orientation of the employees.”</p> <p>In the complaint, all four women alleged theirs was a troubled work environment. Each also singled out the department’s HR director DaVonna Johnson, who has held the position since 2008. In the suit, Johnson was repeatedly described as ignoring the employees’ complaints of hostility and discrimination. When the matters were brought to Johnson’s attention, the four women said they were met with retaliation.</p> <p>At the time of the original lawsuit, Dokes was described as being older than 50 and an electrical lineworker, which the complaint describes as a “nontraditional trade for women.” She said since 2010 she “repeatedly reported to Ms. Johnson about the hostile work environment she was enduring and about the ongoing discrimination that was occurring against her in the workplace by union officials and union members.”</p> <p>But after meeting with Johnson, Dokes says no action was taken. The work environment became so hostile, according to the complaint, that Dokes was forced to take an extended medical leave.</p> <p>Dokes was shortly thereafter fired from her job, which she claims was retaliation for complaining. As part of the settlement, Dokes will switch her status from termination to “retirement” but on the condition she not apply for a job with the City again.</p> <p>Ogunyemi, who was also over 50 at the time of the complaint, had been working as a Personnel Specialist since 1999. She similarly says she complained to Johnson about discrimination in City Light based on age and race. (Her race was not listed in the complaint.) But after raising the issue, Ogunyemi says Johnson subjected her “to false allegations of policy violations and suspended [her] from work.” Like Dokes,</p>

Ogunyemi said she was forced into taking medical leave due to stress.

DeVenaro was hired by City Light in 1994 and worked as an Apprenticeship Manager. She says she reported to Johnson that an employee was accepting alcohol from apprentices in exchange for positive evaluations. As a result of her actions, she says the HR director began excluding her from discussions and that her job duties were eventually reassigned to “younger, less experienced employees.” In the complaint, she was described as being over the age of 40.

In 2012, DeVenaro complained she was being discriminated against due to her sexual orientation. And in 2013, DeVenaro “was forced to relinquish her position at City Light because all of her job duties had been reassigned.”

“City Light’s hostile, discriminatory, and retaliatory actions against Ms. DeVenaro have caused her severe emotional distress and economic damages,” reads the complaint.

According to City Attorney’s Office spokesperson Kimberly Mills, the City did not settle with Taylor, who made similar allegations as the other three women before withdrawing from the lawsuit.

At the time the suit was filed, the city strongly denied the employees’ allegations and pointed out their shortcomings. “We will vigorously defend City Light against these unfounded claims,” Katrina Kelly, the assistant city attorney assigned to the case, told the Seattle Times in 2014.

City Light also defended Johnson, whom they noted is an African-American woman. The department credited her for making “fundamental changes to streamline the hiring process and shift the focus of the Personnel Specialists from processing hiring paperwork to customer service — providing internal clients with professional consultation and support and guidance for their hiring processes,” according to papers filed with the court.

On Wednesday, when reached for comment, City Light spokesperson Scott Thomsen said, “The parties have resolved the matter and agreed not to discuss it further.”

The city has not admitted to any wrongdoing. The City Attorney’s Office declined to comment on the settlement.

Attorneys for the women, Joel Nichols and Susan Mindenbergs, said neither they nor their clients could discuss the settlement due to the confidentiality clause. The same confidentiality agreement, Nichols said in an email, bars the attorneys from explaining more fully why Taylor withdrew from the litigation in 2016.

In late 2017, more than 40 City Light employees signed onto complaints of sexism inside the department, The Stranger reported then. They petitioned the department for more anti-sexism training and better training for supervisors on how to receive employee complaints; they also asked that management be more communicative.

Spurred on in part by those complaints, City Light employees took the lead in organizing a new group for City employees who say Human Resources hasn’t been doing enough. In recent weeks, the group that calls itself the Seattle Silence Breakers has seen its membership grow to more than 50 people.

Over the past several months, employees from City Light and other departments have told Crosscut about their frustrations with their respective HR departments. Many echo the allegations of the 2014 lawsuit.

Last January, the City reached a \$220,000 settlement with two library security guards who accused two supervisors of sexual harassment, according to The Seattle Times. One woman said she was spanked by a colleague, and when she complained her supervisor only laughed.

Both women had to leave their City jobs as a condition of the settlement while the manager retained his.

	<p>The incident sparked outrage among members of the Silence Breakers, in part catalyzing their desire to go public.</p> <p>In January, Mayor Jenny Durkan told Crosscut she had no sense of whether the City had a sexual harassment problem. “At any given time as the mayor if I said, ‘Do we have a problem with sexual harassment? How many complaints have been brought?’ No one could answer that,” Durkan said. “[Departments] were settling things in darkness.”</p> <p>In response, she’s demanded all departments notify the City’s Department of Human Resources before settling. She also said she favors consolidating the City’s disparate HR functions into one central system, a process already begun under her predecessor Ed Murray.</p> <p>Members of the Seattle City Council are also considering new and more independent avenues for employees to bring harassment complaints.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 USA Swimming facing scrutiny in probe
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/895403/swimmings-governing-body-faulted-following-sex-abuse-probe/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — Another national sports governing body is facing scrutiny over how it dealt with sexual misconduct allegations after a U.S. champion swimmer said a team coach sexually abused her when she was 16.</p> <p>Ariana Kukors, now 28, also told authorities that coach Sean Hutchison took thousands of sexually explicit photographs of her. Hutchison denies abusing Kukors and has not been charged with a crime. U.S. authorities and police executed a search warrant at his Seattle apartment this week, seizing electronic devices.</p> <p>Hutchison faced an investigation by USA Swimming in 2010 over his ties to Kukors but it was closed with no misconduct found. USA Swimming, the national governing body for the sport, said Thursday that it learned of the underage abuse allegations this week.</p> <p>The investigation of Hutchison comes amid scrutiny over the supervision of people who work with young athletes. Former sports doctor for USA Gymnastics, Larry Nassar, was sentenced recently to decades in prison for sexual abusing young girls in his care.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 US body brokers supply the world
SOURCE	https://ca.news.yahoo.com/special-report-u-body-brokers-supply-world-torsos-133238485--finance.html
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Oregon (Reuters) - On July 20, a Hong Kong-flagged cargo ship departed Charleston, South Carolina carrying thousands of containers. One of them held a lucrative commodity: body parts from dozens of dead Americans.</p> <p>According to the manifest, the shipment bound for Europe included about 6,000 pounds of human remains valued at \$67,204. To keep the merchandise from spoiling, the container’s temperature was set to 5 degrees Fahrenheit.</p> <p>The body parts came from a Portland business called MedCure Inc. A so-called body broker, MedCure profits by dissecting the bodies of altruistic donors and sending the parts to medical training and research companies.</p> <p>MedCure sells or leases about 10,000 body parts from U.S. donors annually, shipping about 20 percent of</p>

them overseas, internal corporate and manifest records show. In addition to bulk cargo shipments to the Netherlands, where MedCure operates a distribution hub, the Oregon company has exported body parts to at least 22 other countries by plane or truck, the records show.

Among the parts: a pelvis and legs to a university in Malaysia; feet to medical device companies in Brazil and Turkey; and heads to hospitals in Slovenia and the United Arab Emirates.

Demand for body parts from America — torsos, knees and heads — is high in countries where religious traditions or laws prohibit the dissection of the dead. Unlike many developed nations, the United States largely does not regulate the sale of donated body parts, allowing entrepreneurs such as MedCure to expand exports rapidly during the last decade.

No other nation has an industry that can provide as convenient and reliable a supply of body parts.

Since 2008, Reuters found, U.S. body brokers have exported parts to at least 45 countries, including Italy, Israel, Mexico, China, Venezuela and Saudi Arabia. Whole bodies are studied at Caribbean-based medical schools. Plastic surgeons in Germany use heads from dead Americans to practice new techniques. Thousands of parts are shipped overseas annually; a precise number cannot be calculated because no agency tracks industry exports.

Most donor consent forms, including those from MedCure, authorize brokers to dissect bodies and ship parts internationally. Even so, some relatives of the dead said they did not realize that the remains of a loved one might be dismembered and sent to the far reaches of the globe.

“There are people who wouldn’t necessarily mind where the specimens were sent if they were fully informed,” said Brandi Schmitt, who directs the University of California system’s anatomical donation program. “But clearly there are plenty of donors that do mind and that don’t feel like they’re getting enough information.”

MedCure shipments are now the subject of a federal investigation. In November, the Federal Bureau of Investigation raided the company’s Portland headquarters. Though the search warrant remains sealed, people familiar with the matter say it relates in part to overseas shipping.

MedCure is cooperating with the investigation, said its lawyer, Jeffrey Edelson. He declined to comment on the FBI raid, but said: “MedCure is committed to meeting and exceeding the highest standards in the industry. It takes very seriously its obligation to not only deliver safe specimens securely, but to do it in a way that respects the donors.”

Edelson also said MedCure “partners with government and industry agencies to follow and exceed requirements for shipping human tissue,” and that “shipping handlers, drivers and carriers are specially trained for the safe handling and transportation of human specimens.”

INFECTED PARTS AT THE BORDER

As a Reuters series last year revealed, the body donation industry is so lightly regulated in the United States that almost anyone can legally buy, sell or lease body parts.

Although no federal law expressly regulates the body trade, there is one situation in which the U.S. government does exercise oversight: when body parts leave or enter the country. Border agents have the authority to ensure that the parts are not infected with contagious diseases and are properly shipped.

This authority played a leading role in the government securing a conviction last month of Detroit broker Arthur Rathburn, who stored body parts in grisly, unsanitary conditions, according to trial testimony. The FBI began to focus intently on Rathburn’s business, International Biological Inc, after repeated border stops in which he was found ferrying human heads, court records show.

The jury found that Rathburn defrauded customers by supplying body parts infected with HIV and hepatitis.

“The fraud scheme orchestrated by IBI shocked even the most experienced of our investigative team,” said FBI special-agent-in-charge David Gelios. Even in death, Gelios said in a statement after the verdict, donors were “victimized as IBI intentionally and recklessly marketed and transported contaminated human remains... Personal greed overcame decency.”

Rathburn was also convicted of transporting hazardous materials — the head of someone who had died of bacterial sepsis and aspiration pneumonia. The transportation conviction underscored the U.S. government’s growing concern about shipments of body parts that might endanger public health, officials said.

Martin Cetron, director of Global Migration and Quarantine for the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, said that when brokers dissect a body that is infected, there is added risk of transferring that disease to anyone who handles the parts.

“In the case of saws (used) to cut bones or limbs, there may be additional procedures that could potentially turn a fluid into an aerosol that could be inhaled and be communicable,” Cetron said.

A Reuters review of government records shows that border agents intercepted body parts suspected to be infected at least 75 times between 2008 and 2017. Border agents pay more attention to goods entering the country than those departing, and virtually all of the intercepted shipments were remains of American donors whose body parts were being returned to United States. Typically, body parts are returned to America for three reasons: to comply with foreign laws on final disposition; when cremation is not available in the foreign country; or when a U.S. broker intends to reuse the parts.

In 2016 and 2017, for example, federal agents stopped shipments being returned to MedCure at the border, law enforcement records show. The body parts they stopped included torsos carrying infectious biological agents that cause sepsis, a body’s extreme response to infection. At least one carried the life-threatening MRSA bacteria, the records show.

For more than a year, records show, U.S. officials and some body brokers have disagreed over whether the presence of sepsis in a corpse — without further information about a person’s cause of death —poses enough of a risk to warrant special packaging and warning labels.

“Sepsis itself is not a disease diagnosis but it raises a red flag,” said Cetron, the CDC official. The pathogen that caused sepsis, he said, “could be a bacteria, could be Ebola, could be salmonella, could be E. coli.” That’s why further documentation, including a death certificate, must accompany any body part imported into the United States, he said.

The CDC has an exemption intended to allow for shipping blood and other lab testing samples. Reuters found dozens of examples of brokers labeling customs manifests and packages with a version of the term “exempt human specimen” to ship body parts.

“I think that’s a deceptive practice,” Cetron said. “If they are human remains, part or in whole — heads, arms, limbs, etc. — they are not exempted.”

Several brokers said the government should clarify the rules — whether the CDC’s or those of other regulatory entities. They cited, for example, a U.S. Department of Transportation regulation that, they believe, exempts body parts. Transportation officials declined to comment on their regulations.

Alyssa Harrison, executive director of Oklahoma-based broker United Tissue Network, said most in her industry want to follow the law. But, she added, “there are many guidelines that are unclear and or contradictory to other department’s regulations.”

	<p>The disconnect between what the industry and government believe is dangerous, and what precautions are required by law, should be resolved, said Matthew Zahn, chairman of the public health committee for the Infectious Diseases Society of America, a group that represents doctors, researchers and other health professionals.</p> <p>“It’s a situation where we don’t have a huge amount of regulation or clarity as to what the risks are,” Zahn said. “It feels like one of those cracks in the system where a practice has developed and the risk factors and oversight have not fully matured.”</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 ACLU: citizenship checks on buses, trains
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/08/immigration-activists-decry-citizenship-checks-on-buses-trains.html
GIST	<p>U.S. Customs and Border Patrol agents in the far north do far more than keep watch over the country's frigid border with Canada. At a bus station in Bangor, Maine, where people often hop on rides to bigger cities, agents recently asked boarding passengers if they were U.S. citizens.</p> <p>One of those questioned reached out to the American Civil Liberties Union of Maine. Lawyers for the organization find the practice troubling.</p> <p>"None of us want to live in a society where we're consistently being told we need to show our papers," said Zachary Heiden, legal director for the ACLU of Maine.</p> <p>Though they declined our request for an interview, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol officials confirm their agents routinely engage in operations at transportation hubs throughout the state.</p> <p>The law grants immigration officers broad powers, enabling them to search for illegal immigrants on boats, planes, trains, buses and other vehicles – without a warrant – within 100 miles of the border.</p> <p>According to the ACLU, that puts the whole of Maine within reach and the entirety, or near entirety, of 10 other states, too.</p> <p>ACLU attorneys are now seeking federal records.</p> <p>"We do not know nearly enough about the stops. We don't know why they're doing it. We don't know how often they're doing it and we don't know what the results have been," said Heiden.</p> <p>"We don't know how widespread it is but we are hoping to learn more. It does seem like there's been an increase."</p> <p>Last week, a passenger on an Amtrak train in Syracuse, N.Y., captured video of agents asking those on board about their citizenship.</p> <p>In Maine, reaction to the agents' actions was mixed.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Exploratory drilling Mount St. Helens?
SOURCE	http://www.kiro7.com/news/local/us-forest-service-to-allow-exploratory-drilling-near-mount-st-helens/696724319
GIST	The U.S. Forest Service gave authorization for a Canadian company to conduct exploratory drilling to create a hard-rock mine near Mount St. Helens. But it's just a step in the process for the permits filed by Ascot USA, Inc.

	<p>U.S. Forest Service Cowlitz Valley District Ranger Gar Abbas signed off on the decision with specific conditions on Thursday.</p> <p>It's now up to the Bureau of Land Management to decide whether to issue the prospecting permits and approve the exploration plans. Before the plans go to BLM, the Forest Service has to give consent.</p> <p>The company wants to drill to collect mineral samples like copper, gold, molybdenum and silver, according to a local lawmaker. The Forest Service found that no significant impact would come from the project and gave consent.</p> <p>If approved, the sites would be adjacent to the south-facing slope of Goat Mountain, approximately 12 miles northeast of Mount St. Helens. It would not be on land within the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument.</p> <p>The sites would include 2-to-3 inch boreholes covering about .23 acres of land.</p> <p>In his decision notice, Abbas writes that the Goat Mountain area historically has been dominated by logging, recreation, mineral prospecting, and limited mineral development.</p> <p>Multiple options for the sites were discussed over the last year, and the Forest Service said they picked the one that's not supposed to impact water or wildlife.</p> <p>But some are still expressing their displeasure for the consent, including ranking member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.)</p> <p>“Opening the door to drilling at the edge of Mount St. Helens is a short-sighted decision that undervalues the important benefits these public spaces offer both to our booming recreation economy and to families who come from near and far to enjoy their beauty. This mountain should be managed for current and future generations to enjoy, and I hope the Trump administration will cease their efforts to jeopardize that by allowing it to be explored for drilling,” she wrote.</p> <p>Last year Cantwell asked the Forest Service to deny the drilling permits. She believes mineral exploration and development would likely interfere with the recreation and conservation purposes.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Native Americans homeless at high rate
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/native-americans-are-this-regions-original-residents-and-they-are-its-most-likely-to-be-homeless/
GIST	<p>In King County, Native Americans and Alaskan Natives are less than 1 percent of the overall population but nearly 6 percent of its homeless population, a pattern that repeats in cities across the U.S. Once homeless, they also find housing at lower rates than any racial or ethnic group.</p> <p>The city of Seattle, wrestling with a growing homelessness crisis, is trying to address the racial disparity for the first time this year.</p> <p>Last year, when the city rebid its homeless-services contracts, five Native-led organizations were awarded \$3.2 million to prevent and end homelessness; four of those groups had never received city funding for those programs. The idea was that Native American organizations could best serve their own communities.</p> <p>“These guys have an understanding of how to tailor their care for Indian people,” said Michael Reichert, president and CEO of Catholic Community Services and Catholic Housing Services of Western Washington and a member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe.</p>

But with the new opportunities and resources come new requirements.

Seattle, after the contract rebidding, is pledging to house 7,400 homeless people by the end of this year, more than double the total from 2017. To reach that goal, the city is requiring service providers — including the Native-led groups — to hit quarterly performance targets.

Despite the city’s desire to reduce racial disparities, housing can’t actually be prioritized based on race — the federal Fair Housing Act prohibits explicit set-asides. And organizations receiving public dollars for housing can’t turn anyone away, even if they typically cater to specific cultural or racial groups.

Add to these potential limitations the historical discrimination of Native people, and the resulting social ills within that community, plus a regionwide affordable-housing shortage.

These realities are perhaps all the more distressing in a city named for Chief Seattle of the Duwamish and Suquamish peoples.

“There’s something out of balance when the First Nations people of this country are the most likely to be homeless,” said Colleen Echohawk, executive director of Chief Seattle Club, one of the newly funded organizations.

Across the country, other cities, like Seattle, are focusing on the intersection of homelessness and race. The Center for Social Innovation, a Massachusetts-based think tank, recently launched partnerships with eight communities, including Tacoma and Pierce County, to understand the wide racial and ethnic disparities in homelessness.

But no cities have come up with a cure-all. The efforts are focused on analyzing data to understand who is more likely to be homeless, but there are no proven strategies to reduce the disparities.

Locally, King County has for several years funded culturally specific organizations to provide homeless services. Seattle is also trying to reduce the high rates of homelessness among African Americans, but has emphasized addressing Native homelessness.

The city, however, hasn’t set an overall target for housing homeless Native Americans — the focus on disparities is just a broad objective.

But it is holding individual organizations to the specific performance goals. They must get 80 percent of their clients, participating in certain programs, into permanent housing; if they fail, they could lose 12 percent of their funding.

Leaders in the Native community say they need time to develop their programs, and tailor them to a community suffering from high levels of substance abuse and long-term homelessness. At least 75 percent of Chief Seattle Club’s members, for example, have mental-health and substance-abuse issues.

That’s why the cultural connections are so important, said Mother Nation’s Executive Director Norine Hill. Their clients participate in sweat-lodge ceremonies. They do traditional beading and participate in talking circles, telling their stories as part of their therapy.

Chief Seattle Club refers to people they serve as “members” or “relatives,” not clients.

“A lot of organizations, they just throw homeless people into housing,” Hill said. “And if you don’t heal them, how do you expect them to stay there?”

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HEADLINE 02/08 Study: youth violence declines

SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2018/02/08/Youth-violence-in-US-declines-but-the-wars-not-over/1391518141976/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_hn&utm_medium=15
GIST	<p>THURSDAY, Feb. 8, 2018 -- Far fewer young people are turning up in U.S. emergency rooms with assault injuries, but youth violence remains a serious issue, a new government study shows.</p> <p>The good news: The number of nonfatal assault patients aged 10 to 24 dropped 28 percent between 2011 and 2015, reaching the lowest level in the 15 years studied, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported.</p> <p>Still, almost 486,000 youths were treated in ERs for assault-related injuries in 2015. Most were males in their early 20s, the researchers found.</p> <p>More than 81 percent had been intentionally struck. Stabbing, cutting and piercing accounted for more than 8 percent of the injuries. Guns led nearly 6 percent to seek treatment.</p> <p>The cost of all this bloodshed: \$3.4 billion, including lost work.</p> <p>"Youth violence remains a major public health problem," said psychiatrist Dr. Victor Fornari, who wasn't involved in the research.</p> <p>"The underpinnings of this violence include mental health problems, substance abuse and histories of childhood adversity," said Fornari. He's director of child and adolescent psychiatry at Zucker Hillside Hospital in Glen Oaks, N.Y.</p> <p>The CDC researchers noted that certain policies and programs can reduce the risk for youth violence. They include school-based programs that build communication and problem-solving skills.</p> <p>Also, working with parents or caregivers to set age-appropriate rules and monitor youth activities can help stem conduct problems and violence, the researchers said.</p> <p>"Violence among young persons is preventable," wrote researchers led by Corinne David-Ferdon, of the CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Russia athletes Olympic appeal rejected
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/02/08/appeals-by-47-russians-against-olympic-bans-rejected.html
GIST	<p>Sports' highest court rejected appeals by all 45 Russian athletes plus two coaches who were banned from the Pyeongchang Olympics over doping concerns in a decision announced Friday less than nine hours before the opening ceremony.</p> <p>The International Olympic Committee had refused to invite the group of Russians, saying it had evidence of alleged doping in Russian sports.</p> <p>The Court of Arbitration for Sport ruled that the IOC has the right to set its own standards for who is eligible.</p> <p>CAS Secretary General Matthieu Reeb, reading from a statement and declining to take questions, said the IOC process "could not be described as a sanction but rather as an eligibility decision."</p> <p>The IOC issued a statement welcoming the decision. "We welcome this decision which supports the fight against doping and brings clarity for all athletes," the statement said.</p> <p>A vetting process was designed to exclude Russian athletes from the games if IOC officials weren't sure</p>

	<p>they were clean, even if they hadn't been banned for doping.</p> <p>The IOC has invited 168 Russians to participate as "Olympic Athletes from Russia," competing in neutral uniforms under the Olympic flag.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Taiwan rescuers search for victims
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/02/08/taiwan-rescuers-search-building-for-7-missing-in-earthquake.html
GIST	<p>HUALIEN, Taiwan – Rescuers in eastern Taiwan are continuing to search for seven people after Tuesday's deadly earthquake that tilted a 12-story building on a 45-degree angle.</p> <p>The seven are a couple from Hong Kong who hold Canadian citizenship and five members of a family from China, including their 12-year-old son.</p> <p>All are trapped in a hotel on the bottom floors of the Yunmen Tsuiti building, one of several damaged by the magnitude 6.4 temblor. The official death toll stood at 10 on Friday, including three tourists from China and a 27-year-old Filipino employed as a household helper.</p> <p>Taiwan's National Fire Agency said Friday that 273 people were listed as injured.</p> <p>Taiwan has frequent earthquakes due to its position along the "Ring of Fire," the seismic faults encircling the Pacific Ocean.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Snow, freezing rain pummel France
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/02/09/eiffel-tower-closed-as-snow-freezing-rain-pummel-france.html
GIST	<p>PARIS – The Eiffel Tower is closed and authorities are telling drivers in the Paris region to stay home as snow and freezing rain have hit a swath of France ill-prepared for the wintry weather.</p> <p>The company that manages France's most-visited monument said the 19th-century Eiffel Tower will be closed all day Friday and Saturday "to ensure the security of visitors."</p> <p>Workers with hand shovels will carefully clear snow from the intricate ironwork and de-ice stairs and platforms. The company said in a statement they can't use salt because it could corrode the metal and damage the elevators.</p> <p>Heavy snowfall earlier this week trapped hundreds of drivers in cars and caused the worst-ever traffic jams in the Paris region. More snow is forecast Friday and authorities are warning of dangerous conditions in about a quarter of the country.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 SoCal: no more 'voluntary' evacuations
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/08/california-mudslides-spur-evacuation-terminology-changes.html
GIST	<p>SANTA BARBARA, Calif. – Emergency authorities in a Southern California county are eliminating the word "voluntary" from language used in evacuation orders following the devastating mudslides that struck last month.</p>

	<p>Santa Barbara County officials said Thursday that the new terminology will be "pre-evacuation advisory," "recommended evacuation warning" and "mandatory evacuation order."</p> <p>A huge downpour unleashed raging torrents laden with large boulders and other debris that bulldozed through the sleeping community of Montecito, sweeping away homes and people. More than 100 homes were destroyed, many others were damaged, 21 people were confirmed killed and two others remain missing.</p> <p>Many residents remained despite mandatory or voluntary evacuation orders when the deadly storm hit on Jan. 9.</p> <p>"We recognize that with respect to the latter category, the voluntary evacuation order, we found after the January 9th event that for some the focus was on the word 'voluntary' rather than on the word 'evacuation,'" Sheriff Bill Brown said at a press conference.</p> <p>"And the reality is that some people misinterpreted that and believed that there was a measure of safety there that there really wasn't."</p> <p>Brown said the new terminology is clearer by stressing that evacuation is still recommended.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 NKorea guards against Olympic defection
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/09/asia/north-korea-olympic-defection-fears-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Seoul, South Korea (CNN)Almost 500 North Koreans are in South Korea for the Winter Olympics -- in a land they have been brought up to see as enemy territory; one clearly more prosperous and more free than their own.</p> <p>It's also a place to which more than 31,000 of their comrades have defected over the past six decades -- a fact not lost on North Korea, which isn't taking any chances with its delegation this time.</p> <p>The group of athletes, officials, performers, reporters and cheerleaders -- including the younger sister of Kim Jong Un -- will be surrounded by support staff, minders and informants. They're also likely to be vetted, well-treated and loyal members of North Korea's elite.</p> <p>North Korean athletes have defected before. A women's ice hockey player defected in 1997 and a judo athlete defected while at a competition in Spain in 1999.</p> <p>While unlikely, it isn't impossible for a member of North Korea's Pyeongchang delegation to defect as the world watches the Games -- and it would be both a huge embarrassment for the North, and geopolitical mess for host South Korea.</p> <p>Now living in South Korea after defecting in 2006, Han Seo-hee was chosen in her twenties to be part of a North Korean cheerleading troupe after she performed for late leader Kim Jong Il.</p> <p>She says it's unlikely that cheerleaders would defect during such a high-profile visit.</p> <p>The team would be monitored everywhere they go and would be keenly aware of the consequences their family back home would face were they to make such a move, Han says.</p> <p>"I wouldn't have even considered it." Han says. "It will be the same for the cheerleading squad this time. They have family back home, they know if they defect, their family will be terrified and punished."</p> <p>"A North Korean group sent abroad is always composed of three parties. Party members, security members and administrative members. This time will be the same."</p>

	<p>The relentless glare of public scrutiny would be intense -- even intimidating -- for any athlete competing in the Games, which officially begin Friday.</p> <p>A former North Korean police officer, who didn't want to be identified because he still has family in the North, told CNN scrutiny would continue for the North Korean athletes out of the public eye.</p> <p>He said team members would be under 24-7 surveillance -- unable to go to the bathroom alone and informants would monitor who is talking to whom.</p> <p>Han said the very nature of North Korean life means everyone is encouraged to look for unusual or suspicious behavior in friends or family and report it.</p> <p>"Not only the leaders but also the rest of the performers will be punished for not reporting suspicious signs of a defector."</p> <p>The North Korean athletes have taken three floors of accommodation in the Gangneung Olympics village. Each apartment has two or more beds — the North Koreans would not be staying in rooms alone, according to the former police officer.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Dow plunges in full market correction
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/business/markets/dow-plunges-1000-points-entering-correction-territory-n846091
GIST	<p>The Dow plunged more than 1,000 points just before the final bell clanged Thursday. It represented a full market correction, defined as a 10 percent drop from its 52-week high, the first time it had done so since 2016.</p> <p>The S&P 500 also dropped 3.7 percent to a new low for the week.</p> <p>After a record run-up, stock markets have been newly volatile following a stronger-than-expected January jobs report. Some investors saw the fastest rate of wage increases in recent times as a signal that the Fed might hike interest rates higher and sought to lock in gains, leading to the sell-off.</p> <p>"It's really about people thinking the Fed is either behind the curve or actually has to be more aggressive," Stephanie Link, global asset management managing director at TIAA, told CNBC. "That fear, that unknown, is really what's driving a lot of the anxiety."</p> <p>By closing at 23,860 points, the Dow Jones industrial average was set back to its level on Nov. 17, 2017, and officially corrected. The index peaked at 26,616 points just two weeks ago.</p> <p>On average, the stock market corrects about once a year, according to research from Deutsche Bank. The last time the market corrected was two years ago, in February 2016. By many measures, stocks have been overvalued and due for a come-down for some time.</p> <p>And the ride isn't over.</p> <p>"With the market closing at the low end of the day's range, expect more gyrations in the days and weeks to come," Greg McBride, chief financial analyst for Bankrate.com, said in an email.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 EPA enforcement actions hit 10yr low
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SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/epa-enforcement-actions-hit-10-year-low-2017-n846151
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The number of new enforcement actions by the Environmental Protection Agency has fallen significantly over the past year, according to data released Thursday by the Trump administration.</p> <p>The EPA initiated 20 percent fewer civil cases against polluters for violating environmental laws from the beginning of September 2016 to end of September 2017, as compared to the previous fiscal year, according to the EPA's latest enforcement numbers.</p> <p>The EPA also opened 30 percent fewer criminal enforcement cases during the same time period.</p> <p>The past fiscal year marked a historic low for enforcement actions across the board: The number of new civil and criminal cases, defendants charged, and federal EPA inspections and evaluations all reached their lowest levels in at least a decade, according to the data.</p> <p>The EPA said the declining numbers were not a sign of lax enforcement.</p> <p>"EPA is focusing on finding efficient ways to deter noncompliance and return facilities to compliance with the law," said EPA spokesperson Liz Bowman. "EPA is increasing the deterrent effect of EPA's enforcement program through criminal enforcement actions to address the most egregious cases."</p> <p>But environmental advocates say the new data makes it clear that EPA administrator Scott Pruitt and the Trump administration are letting polluters off the hook.</p> <p>"The drop-off in actions is very worrying," said Andrew Rosenberg of the Union of Concerned Scientists, an advocacy group. "It shows across the board a lack of desire to hold polluters accountable and that means the public health risks are greater."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Government facing limited shutdown?
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/02/08/trump-administration-advises-federal-agencies-prepare-limited-government-shutdown/321883002/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON – The federal government shut down early Friday morning for the second time in less than three weeks after Congress failed to pass a spending bill to keep the agencies running.</p> <p>But this shutdown is likely to be short-lived – maybe just a few hours.</p> <p>The government ran out of money at midnight Thursday when plans to pass a sweeping bipartisan budget deal hit a snag in the Senate, causing Congress to miss a funding deadline and triggering a partial government shutdown.</p> <p>Sen. Rand Paul, a conservative Kentucky Republican and one-time presidential contender, temporarily blocked a Senate vote on the bill to lift strict budget caps and pave the way for lawmakers to spend an extra \$300 billion over the next two years on defense and domestic programs. The deal is attached to a short-term spending bill that will fund the government through March 23.</p> <p>Paul's objection slowed the bill's progress, but didn't stop it altogether. His right to object will expire in the wee hours of Friday morning and the Senate is expected to pass the bill.</p> <p>Congress and the White House had hoped to avoid another shutdown, especially coming less than three weeks after the government was shuttered for three days after lawmakers failed to pass a short-term spending bill.</p> <p>But late Thursday, the Trump administration began advising federal agencies to get ready – just in case.</p>

	The Office of Management and Budget sent word to federal agencies that they should prepare for a "limited shutdown" of perhaps a few hours while Congress gives final approval to the spending bill.
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HEADLINE	02/08 Claim: Myanmar starving Rohingya
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ap-exclusive-rohingya-military-cut-off-food-myanmar-52946493?
GIST	<p>Abdul Goni says the Myanmar government was starving his family one stage at a time.</p> <p>First, soldiers stopped the Rohingya Muslim from walking three hours to the forest for the firewood he sold to feed his family. Then Buddhist neighbors and seven soldiers took his only cow, which he rented out to fertilize rice fields. Next, he says, they killed his uncle and strung him up on a wire for trying to stop the theft of his buffalos.</p> <p>By the time Goni saw bodies floating down the local river, of fellow Rohingya killed for illegal fishing, he knew his family would die if they didn't leave. On bad days, they carved the flesh out of banana plant stalks for food. On the worst days, his children ate nothing.</p> <p>"I felt so sorry that I couldn't give them enough food," the 25-year-old says, tears running down his face, in a refugee camp in Bangladesh, just across the border from Myanmar. "Everything just got worse and worse. ... Day by day, the pressure was increasing all around us. They used to tell us, 'This isn't your land. ... We'll starve you out.'"</p> <p>First, massacres, rapes and the wholesale destruction of villages by the Myanmar military in western Rakhine state forced nearly 700,000 Rohingya Muslims to flee to Bangladesh, in reprisal for Rohingya militant attacks on Aug. 25. Now, the food supply appears to be another weapon that's being used against the dwindling numbers of Rohingya in Myanmar.</p> <p>The accounts of hunger could not be independently confirmed, as Myanmar's government does not allow reporters into the northern part of Rakhine state, where most of the Rohingya lived. However, more than a dozen interviews by The Associated Press with the most recent refugees show growing desperation, as the noose tightens around their communities in what U.N. officials have said may be a genocide. The U.N. and human rights groups such as Amnesty International have also warned of increasing hunger among the Rohingya in areas where conflict and displacement have been most rampant.</p> <p>Repeated calls to Myanmar's military weren't answered, but the Myanmar government denies ethnic cleansing and says it is battling terrorists. Social Welfare Minister Win Myat Aye says the government has been distributing food aid to as many people as possible.</p> <p>"There are many ways that we have been reaching out to villagers frequently," he says. "And that's why it's not possible that there are people who are completely cut off from food or facing hunger."</p> <p>The Rohingya Muslims, who have been loathed by Myanmar's Buddhist majority for decades, are locked down in their villages — sometimes even in their homes — and prevented from farming, fishing, foraging, trade and work, the refugees and aid groups say. In other words, they can no longer do what they need to do to eat. While restrictions on freedom of movement and access to food have long been in place, they have tightened dramatically in recent weeks, the AP interviews show.</p> <p>The hunger the Rohingya faced at home is evident when they come to the Bangladesh camps, where new refugees, especially children and women, suffer from "unbelievable" levels of malnutrition, according to Dr. Ismail Mehr.</p> <p>"They are definitely coming in starving," says Mehr, who recently returned to the United States from</p>

treating refugees in the camps. "We saw the vitamin deficiencies in the children and the adults; we saw ... severely malnourished people who are basically skin and bones. It looked like the pictures from the Nazi camps."

Activists, aid groups and researchers say Myanmar squeezed the Rohingya by severely hampering many of the humanitarian operations that were crucial for their survival. Food aid was further disrupted by violence in 2016 and the bloodshed after Rohingya insurgents staged an unprecedented wave of 30 attacks on security posts across Rakhine state in August and killed at least 14 people.

Even before August, aid agencies in 2017 predicted a spike in severe malnutrition in children. In a report released today, Amnesty International details evidence of forced starvation by the military, including stopping the Rohingya from harvesting their rice fields in November and December. The Food and Agriculture Organization has also warned that the lack of access to food and fuel is adding to hunger in Myanmar.

Buddhists in Rakhine state began blocking food aid when they noticed that the Muslims were getting more than they were, according to Thomas MacManus, a specialist in international state crimes at Queen Mary University of London who has researched the Rohingya since 2012. Tightened curfews meant people couldn't harvest shrimp or rice, tend to their cattle, gather firewood or fish. Since August, an almost 24-hour-a-day curfew means no one is leaving their villages, he says.

MacManus says the Myanmar government has regularly employed a scorched-earth strategy that has denied food to other ethnic groups it has battled, including the Shan and the Kachin.

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HEADLINE	02/08 DACA recipients in military 'protected'
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mattis-says-daca-recipients-in-military-are-protected-even-if-program-expires/
GIST	<p>Defense Secretary James Mattis said immigrant members of the military who are currently protected by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program will continue to be protected — even if the program expires without congressional action next month.</p> <p>Mattis, speaking to CBS News Pentagon correspondent David Martin and other reporters Thursday, said he has spoken with Homeland Security Secretary Kirsten Nielsen and confirmed that anyone who has enlisted in the military and is waiting to report to boot camp, anyone on active duty or in the active reserves or anyone with an honorable discharge will not be deported. Two exceptions for that would be for anyone who has committed a serious felony or is the subject of a deportation order.</p> <p>If Congress fails to act before March 5 — the deadline upon which the program is set to expire — "they're protected," Mattis said.</p> <p>But relatively few members of the military currently benefit from DACA. In September, the Pentagon said fewer than 900 people currently serving or who have signed contracts to serve are recipients of the program.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Colombia tightens border controls
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/colombia-tightens-border-control-venezuela-migrants-surge-52938756?
GIST	Colombia will tighten control of over its porous border with Venezuela as thousands of migrants fleeing a rapidly deteriorating political and economic crisis escape into the neighboring Andean nation.

In a visit to a border city at the epicenter of Colombia's mounting migration crisis, President Juan Manuel Santos on Thursday announced new measures that could make it more difficult for Venezuelan migrants to cross into the country illegally or remain there without any official status.

"Colombia has never lived a situation like the one we are encountering today," Santos said.

Migration into Colombia has surged as Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has moved to consolidate his rule and the nation's economy plummets. Colombia migration authorities say there are an estimated 600,000 Venezuelans currently in Colombia — double the number six months ago. Venezuela exile associations and some border city officials have said they believe that number is higher.

The unprecedented migration wave is putting strains on Colombia at a delicate time in its history. The nation is crawling out of a five-decade-long armed conflict following the signing of a peace deal with leftist rebels in 2016. Many of the Venezuelans are arriving illegally and in need of medical attention.

"This is a tragedy," Santos said. "And I want to reiterate to President Maduro: This is the result of your policies."

More than 2,000 additional military officers will be deployed to control the hundreds of dirt-road crossings known as "trochas" that dot Colombia's 1,370-mile (2,200-kilometer) border with Venezuela. A new migration patrol unit will also police public spaces where Venezuelan arrivals congregate, provide them orientation and to control ills like prostitution that have surfaced in the migration wave's wake.

Migration authorities will no longer issue temporary border crossing cards, which have already been granted to 1.5 million Venezuelans to allow them short visits to purchase food and medicine. All Venezuelans inside the country will also be required to present themselves to officials and enroll in a registry.

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HEADLINE	02/08 Russia denounces US airstrike at UN
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-syria-confirms-us-airstrike-reports-casualties-52925188?
GIST	<p>The Latest on the situation in Syria (all times local):</p> <p>10:30 p.m.</p> <p>Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia says he has told the U.N. Security Council that the U.S.-led coalition's airstrikes on Syrian government-backed troops were "inadmissible" and "deplorable." He says they cannot be repeated — no matter what reasons the coalition gives to justify an attack.</p> <p>Nebenzia said U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley raised the issue of the airstrikes at a closed council meeting Thursday where she defended the bombing that the U.S. military says killed about 100 fighters. The U.S.-led coalition said its action in eastern Syria was in "self-defense," citing a major attack on its allied forces and U.S. advisers in Deir el-Zour province.</p> <p>Nebenzia told reporters at U.N. headquarters in New York that he reminded the council that the coalition wasn't invited into Syria, and Russia sees that its fight against "international terrorism" is going "beyond that."</p> <p>Nebenzia also said that while the humanitarian situation in Syria is "deplorable," it is "in no way much more different than it used to be a month ago — but now we are being presented with it as if something dramatic has happened."</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	02/08 Alaska dangerous state for online dating
SOURCE	http://www.ktva.com/story/37463493/alaska-most-dangerous-state-for-online-dating-report-says
GIST	<p>Alaska is the most dangerous state in the nation in which to date people online, according to a ranking released Thursday.</p> <p>A SafeWise.com overview of the nation's five most dangerous online-dating states – compiling risks of rape, fraud and sexually transmitted diseases – put Alaska at the top of the list followed by New Mexico, Louisiana, Nevada and Arkansas. The group's 2017 report had listed Alaska second behind Washington, D.C.</p> <p>The 2018 report was compiled using states' cybercrime and violent crime data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports for 2016, as well as their chlamydia and gonorrhea infection rates from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>Alaska's FBI data for 2016, which led to an online report calling Alaska the nation's most dangerous state last month, shows a rise of more than 16 percent in rape cases that year-- which included 960 rapes and 89 attempted rapes. Although Alaska's data didn't include specific categories for rapes resulting from online dating, a VICE News report from 2016 said the United Kingdom reported a 450 percent rise in reported rapes linked to online dating over the previous five years.</p> <p>According to SafeWise, Alaska has the nation's second-highest rate behind Nevada of "romance scams," during which criminals cajole money from people during quickly formed relationships-- including those online. Alaska's 2016 cybercrime data from the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center lists a total of 50 reported victims from romance and confidence scams; the total losses from those crimes, \$894,062, work out to an average loss of \$17,881 per victim.</p> <p>State health officials said this week that Alaska continues to suffer a wave of gonorrhea cases amid high STD rates nationwide in recent years. Alaska also suffers the nation's highest infection rate of chlamydia infections, with nearly 5,700 reported in 2016 – almost 80 percent of them among people under 30.</p> <p>Susan Jones, with the state Department of Health and Social Services, said in October that one factor in Alaska's higher gonorrhea rates was an apparent rise in high-risk sexual activities. Those activities, she said, included "finding your partners through sex-seeking websites or apps and not knowing the STD status of that individual."</p> <p>The report's five safest states for online dating were Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, Idaho and Utah.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Warning issued to Pornhub users
SOURCE	https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/porn-pornhub-malware-cyber-attack-691910
GIST	<p>Potentially millions of visitors to adult website Pornhub could have been infected with malware, experts say.</p> <p>Cyber security firm Proofpoint say a major attack has been uncovered where fake adverts for web browser updates were sent out.</p> <p>They say the attack has been going on for more than a year with victims in many places, including the UK</p> <p>It's since been shut down by Pornhub, the Coventry Telegraph reports .</p>

	<p>The hack was carried out by a group known as KovCoreG, Proofpoint said, who hoped to infect users with an ad fraud malware known as Kovter.</p> <p>This type of malicious software is traditionally used as a form of online advertising fraud to generate money through clicks on fake adverts.</p> <p>In some cases a "clickbot" is installed which then requests and interacts with random adverts online.</p> <p>In the case of Pornhub, Proofpoint said users were shown fake adverts urging them to click to download a new version or Flash update to their web browser - but would instead infect their computers.</p> <p>Proofpoint warned that this technique of tricking users into clicking on fake adverts and infecting themselves was effective, and had the potential to reach "millions of web surfers" if used elsewhere.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Attempted online fraud jumps 113%
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/fraud-attempts-soar-113-in-q4/
GIST	<p>Attempted online fraud jumped 113% year-on-year in the final quarter of 2017, to hit a massive 251 million attacks, with e-commerce firms hit particularly hard, according to ThreatMetrix.</p> <p>The fraud prevention company analyzed 7.6 billion transactions to compile its Q4 2017 Cybercrime Report.</p> <p>The firm claimed that companies are most exposed to fraud during the period straight after a major data breach but before it has been reported or detected.</p> <p>Given that Q4 covers the busy Christmas shopping period, it's perhaps no surprise that e-commerce firms came under particular scrutiny from the fraudsters. Almost 193 million transactions were rejected by ThreatMetrix as fraudulent, a 173% increase on the same time in 2016.</p> <p>However, fraudsters seem to be eschewing payment fraud in favor of account takeover and creation attacks.</p> <p>In fact, e-commerce account creation and login attacks were four times more likely than payment fraud, with the log-in attack rate growing 294% compared to the same quarter in 2015.</p> <p>Automated bots are playing an ever-increasing role in fraud, used on an unprecedented scale again during Q4, according to the report. There were 34 million bot attacks during the peak festive shopping period alone, rising to 800 million for the quarter.</p> <p>They're increasingly used for more than merely to test stolen credentials, the firm claimed.</p> <p>"Bot attacks continue to evolve from their basic velocity-based functions, to complex bots that are used in more advanced ways to spoof IP addresses, emulate browsers or spoof apps, to masquerading bots, that are attempting to mask their true context and pretend to be legitimate user traffic," the report noted.</p> <p>Also last quarter, Russia and Vietnam emerged as top five attack originators, alongside the UK, US and Germany. However, more attacks are said to originate in Europe than anywhere else.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Malware pervasive across cloud platforms
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SOURCE	http://www.securityweek.com/malware-pervasive-across-cloud-platforms-report
GIST	<p>Cloud Access Security Brokers (CASBs) provide visibility into the cloud. Some CASBs provide malware protection. Some clouds provide malware protection. Bitglass analyzed the efficacy of cloud-only protection by scanning the files of its customers that had not implemented its own Advanced Threat Protection (actually Cylance).</p> <p>Bitglass scanned tens of millions of customer files and found (PDF) a remarkably high number of infections: 44% of organizations had at least one piece of malware in their cloud applications; and nearly one-in-three SaaS app instances contained at least one threat. Among the SaaS apps, 54.4% of OneDrive and 42.9% of Google Drive instances were infected. Dropbox and Box followed, both at 33%.</p> <p>The research discovered that the average company had nearly 450,000 files held in the cloud, with more than 20 of the files containing malware. Forty-two percent of the infected file types were script and executable files, 21% were Office documents, 10% were Windows system files, and 8% were compressed formats. The other 19% were in various different file formats.</p> <p>Among the infections it discovered a malware that Cylance confirmed as a zero-day ransomware -- which it calls ShurL0ckr. ShurL0ckr is ransomware-as-a-service , "meaning," says Bitglass, "the hacker generates a ransomware payload and distributes it via phishing or drive-by-download to encrypt files on disk in a background process until a Bitcoin ransom is paid." No analysis of the malware and its inner workings is provided.</p> <p>It is, however, undetected by either Microsoft's or Google's cloud offerings.</p> <p>"The sad truth," comments Meni Farjon, co-founder and CTO at SoleBIT Labs, "is that today, most cloud services providers still do not supply advanced malware detection capabilities, thus making this vector a perfect choice for attackers who aim to infect corporate users on a massive scale. I believe we will definitely see more ransomware variants targeting cloud application in the coming months, at least until the major cloud services providers offer malware detection capabilities to those services."</p> <p>Bitglass checked whether mainstream anti-malware would detect the ShurL0ckr ransomware. "The team," writes Bitglass, "then leveraged VirusTotal to scrutinize a file containing the ransomware across dozens of antivirus engines. Only 7% of said engines (five in sixty-seven) detected the malware - one of these engines was Cylance, a Bitglass technology partner."</p> <p>VirusTotal was acquired by Google in 2012.</p> <p>The key takeaways from this research are that security teams' concerns about cloud security are valid, and there's a new ransomware that goes largely undetected. That last point is, however, not clear cut. The purpose of VirusTotal (VT) is to allow concerned users to gain insight into a suspect file -- could it be, or is it likely not, malicious? It is not an anti-malware comparative tool.</p> <p>VirusTotal itself says, "Antivirus engines can be sophisticated tools that have additional detection features that may not function within the VirusTotal scanning environment. Because of this, VirusTotal scan results aren't intended to be used for the comparison of the effectiveness of antivirus products."</p> <p>"In other words," comments ESET senior research fellow David Harley, "a VirusTotal report is not a reliable indicator as to whether a product detects or blocks a given sample out in the field, because VirusTotal doesn't necessarily make use of all the layers of protection made available by a specific product in the real world. To draw any conclusions about the efficacy of any product based on one sample isn't testing at all," he added; "it's just marketing."</p> <p>Lenny Zeltser, VP of products at Minerva Labs, isn't surprised by the VT engines' low detection rate. "Attackers continually find ways of getting around AV tools, due to the inherent weaknesses of any approach to detecting malicious software on the basis of previously-seen patterns. This is a reality for all types of AV solutions," he told SecurityWeek, "regardless of whether they employ AI or not."</p>

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HEADLINE	02/08 Swisscom discloses data breach
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/dial-b-for-breach-unauthorized-party-access-data-on-800k-swisscom-customers/article/742976/
GIST	<p>Telecom giant Swisscom yesterday disclosed that an unauthorized intruder misappropriated an unnamed sales partner's access to its data, thereby compromising basic information pertaining to approximately 800,000 customers.</p> <p>In a Feb. 7 press release, the \$11.6 billion Switzerland-based company acknowledged that in Fall 2017, a malicious actor gained access to Swisscom customer names, addresses, phone numbers, and birth dates. Swisscom labeled this data as “non-sensitive,” noting that sensitive data such as passwords, conversations and payment information was not impacted, and that there was no evidence of additional malicious activity stemming from the breach.</p> <p>Swisscom emphasized that no systems were hacked, which suggesting the adversary may have stolen the partner's access credentials.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 First SCADA cryptominer seen in wild
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/first-cryptocurrency-malware-attack-on-a-scada-network/article/742992/
GIST	<p>The first documented cryptominer attack on a SCADA network of a critical infrastructure operator was seen in the wild.</p> <p>Radiflow researchers spotted the malware attacking the OT network of a water utility company in order to mine the Monero cryptocurrency, according to a Feb. 8 press release.</p> <p>The malware was designed to run in a stealth mode on the networks' devices and even disable the device's security tools to operate undetected and maximize its mining processes for as long as possible.</p> <p>“While it is known that ransomware attacks have been launched on OT networks, this new case of a cryptocurrency malware attack on an OT network poses new threats as it runs in stealth mode and can remain undetected over time,” Radiflow Chief Technology Officer (CTO) Yehonatan Kfir said in the release.</p> <p>The malware was discovered after researchers detected several abnormalities, including unexpected HTTP communications and changes to the topology of the customer's OT network and communication attempts with suspicious IP addresses.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Dark web vendors moving to Litecoin
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/litecoin-emerges-as-popular-bitcoin-alternative-among-dark-web-underground-community/article/743007/
GIST	<p>An analysis of 150 of popular dark web message boards, marketplaces and illegal services has revealed that underground vendors have been gravitating toward Litecoin cryptocurrency as a viable alternative to Bitcoin when conducting transactions.</p> <p>Conducted by Recorded Future's Insikt Group research team between Jan. 20 and Feb. 1, the study found that Litecoin – the second oldest cryptocurrency in existence (after Bitcoin) – is now accepted as a Bitcoin</p>

alternative by 30 percent of the 150 observed dark web vendors. The next most widely accepted cryptocurrencies are Dash (20%), Bitcoin Cash (13%, not to be confused with Bitcoin itself), Ethereum (9%), and Monero (6%).

Recorded Future suspects that this development could portend a greater diversification of cryptocurrency-based transactions on the dark web in the next six to 12 months.

"Bitcoin will lose its place as a dominant payment method in the dark web in the next six to 12 months. However, contrary to a widespread assumption that criminals are abandoning Bitcoin altogether, we are convinced it will remain one of the main payment instruments, albeit with a significantly smaller market share," wrote Andrei Barysevich, Recorded Future's director of advanced collection, and intelligence analyst Alexandr Solad, in a company report that was released today. "On the other hand, Litecoin and Dash will take their place next to Bitcoin as the everyday payment currencies of the dark web."

Bitcoin has already notably fallen out of favor with cybercriminals who extort their victims in ransomware attacks, because other digital currencies are more anonymity. In this instance, however, the dark web vendors are seeking Bitcoin alternatives because Bitcoin has become too mainstream and popular, resulting in higher fees.

"The meteoric rise in popularity of Bitcoin among household users, speculators, and institutional investors around the world since mid-2017 has placed an enormous load on the blockchain network, resulting in larger payment fees," the report states. "As a result, Bitcoin payments have become economically infeasible, because the subsequent cost of transaction increased ten-fold, sometimes as much as 30 percent of the smaller payment amounts."

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HEADLINE	02/08 Tenn. hospital hit by mining malware
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/tennessee-hospital-hit-with-cryptocurrency-mining-malware/d/d-id/1331014
GIST	<p>Decatur County General Hospital (DCGH) in Parsons, Tennessee, recently discovered cryptocurrency mining malware on its Electronic Medical Record (EMR) server. The hospital began informing 24,000 patients of the attack on January 26.</p> <p>On November 27, 2017, the hospital received a security incident report from its EMR system vendor, which said unauthorized software, designed to mine cryptocurrency, had been installed on the server supported by the vendor. An ongoing investigation has indicated an unauthorized attacker accessed the server with the EMR system and injected the software.</p> <p>The hospital's EMR server contained data including patient names, addresses, birthdates, and social security numbers, as well as diagnosis and treatment data. There is no evidence either type of data was taken or viewed, and so far it doesn't seem data theft was the attacker's goal. However, the hospital cannot definitively prove data was not compromised and is therefore notifying patients.</p> <p>DCGH has not named the EMR system vendor and is offering patients the myTrueIdentity online credit monitoring service for one year.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 New POS malware designed to steal
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/vulnerabilities---threats/new-pos-malware--steals-data-via-dns-traffic/d/d-id/1331022
GIST	<p>Researchers at Forcepoint have discovered new point-of-sale (POS) malware disguised as a LogMeIn service pack that is designed to steal data from the magnetic stripe on the back of payment cards.</p>

	<p>The malware, which Forcepoint is calling UDPoS, is somewhat different from the usual POS tools in that it uses UDP-based DNS traffic to sneak stolen credit and debit card data past firewalls and other security controls. It is also one of the few new POS malware tools to surface in some time, according to the company.</p> <p>In recent years, the US, like many other countries, has switched from magnetic cards to chip and PIN cards based on the Europay, Mastercard, and Visa (EMV) standard. The transition has made it harder for criminals to steal payment card data using POS malware—like they did with the massive theft at Target in 2013.</p> <p>However, malware like UDPoS suggests that criminals still see an opportunity to steal data from POS systems. For instance, Trend Micro last year reported on MajikPOS, a POS malware family that was used to steal data on more than 23,300 payment cards. Retailer Forever 21, which is investigating a data breach first reported last November, recently disclosed finding malware on some of its POS systems.</p> <p>Luke Somerville, head of special investigations at Forcepoint, says there's no evidence to show that UDPoS is currently being used to steal credit or debit card data. But Forcepoint's tests have shown that the malware is indeed capable of doing so successfully.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Firefighter lieutenant charged w/sexting
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/895373/washington-state-firefighter-accused-of-sexting-with-minor/
GIST	<p>PORT ORCHARD, Wash. (AP) — A South Kitsap Fire and Rescue lieutenant is accused of sending sexually-charged texts to a 15-year-old girl.</p> <p>The Kitsap Sun reports that 49-year-old Richard Dean Christenson was charged on Tuesday with communication with a minor for immoral purposes.</p> <p>The allegations were reported Monday to Kitsap County Sheriff's investigators after the girl's mother told a deputy she took her daughter's cell phone because the teen was "acting oddly" and texting while at the dinner table.</p> <p>South Kitsap Fire and Rescue Deputy Chief Guy Dalrymple said Christenson has been placed on administrative leave and the district is conducting an internal investigation. Christenson did not answer a call to his cell phone Thursday and a message said his voicemail inbox was full.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Seattle pushes Facebook on political ads
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/894681/seattle-facebook-political-ads/
GIST	<p>Once again, tech companies are finding themselves in a gray area of regulation. This time, Seattle is pushing Facebook to reveal who paid for political ads during 2016 campaigns.</p> <p>"Seattle's law requires that the media keep books and records showing who paid for ads running on their radio and TV stations..." Former Washington Attorney General Rob KcKenna told KIRO Radio's Dave Ross. "... you can see who paid for the ads they've been seeing and hearing."</p> <p>Seattle's election law dates back to 1977, long before the internet and online advertising was a daily fact of life. But now, Seattle's Ethic's and Elections Commission is demanding Facebook provide similar information that other media is required to do. It wants Facebook to document and reveal who pays for political ads. Facebook could face fines of up to \$5,000 for each advertisement. Reuters notes that it's the first such attempt to regulate political ads on social media.</p>

Facebook has also recently come under scrutiny for political ads purchased by Russian agents during the 2016 campaign. The problem with Seattle's current request is that it's in that gray area of regulation. Where does a social media company like Facebook fall when it comes to political advertising?

"It's never been thought that (this law) applies to online advertising," McKenna said. "That's not really surprising, even though online advertising has been around for a while and use of online ads has been growing dramatically by political campaigns ... it's not surprising no one ever thought of it before because online advertising has been treated very differently than conventional newspaper, radio, and TV advertising."

Political ads on Facebook

While TV and radio ads fall under the purview of the FCC, the internet does not. Beyond that, there is the Communications Decency Act, McKenna notes, which states websites cannot be held liable for advertising content on their pages. This is because online advertising is often provided by third parties and not the websites themselves. Facebook could be different, however, in that people directly place the ads onto the social media site.

McKenna knows people who work for Facebook. He's actually signed the wall at the company. So he reached out to find out what they plan to do about challenges like Seattle's.

"One thing they told me is that they are looking beyond what they legally have to do, to what they think they should do," McKenna said. "They predict that if it's not them, some other company that hosts online political advertising will argue that federal law shields them from having to disclose who is paying for the ads."

"But they're not saying they are going to do that; they are looking at their options beyond the legal requirements," he said. "I think that is the right position for them to take. Even though I wouldn't be surprised if they immediately said 'Hey, Communications Decency Act; you cannot touch us; we are not regulated by the FCC' and so forth."

McKenna doesn't know Facebook's official plan, but he said that the company could be considering making political advertising more transparent.

"The best solution is sunshine," he said. "As Slade Gorton once said to me, 'Money in politics is like water on a sidewalk. It always finds the cracks.'"

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HEADLINE	02/08 Social media 'influencer marketing'
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/social-media-influencers-brand-advertising/
GIST	<p>Picture this: You're scrolling through your feed on Instagram and notice what appears to be an endorsed advertisement for a new workout supplement. The post has received hundreds of thousands of likes and dozens of comments.</p> <p>Bewilderment overcomes you as you try to figure out why the Instagram user looks familiar. But at the same time, you feel intrigued to learn more about the product based on the amount of attention the post has received. And that glowing review, which acts as the photo caption, makes you feel inclined to purchase the supplement.</p> <p>Don't fret, this isn't a scam. In fact, thousands of companies have been using this relatively new concept. It's simply a modern form of advertising called "influencer marketing," which allows for so-called influencers -- users who have a large following on social media platforms like Facebook (FB), Instagram, YouTube (GOOG), Twitter (TWTR) and Snapchat (SNAP) -- to partner with brands that are in sync with</p>

their lifestyles.

In recent years, traditional celebrity endorsements have taken a back seat to brands' influencer-created content. So stars like Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian have been replaced by that familiar, yet unfamiliar face that popped up in your feed moments ago.

And as long as Instagram and other platforms continue as go-to places for many shoppers, influencers will keep racking in thousands of dollars as quickly as their posts acquire likes.

What does it mean to be a social media influencer?

Influencers can be fitness gurus, gaming addicts, beauty bloggers, fashionistas, foodies, travel experts, etc. They offer an authentic presence on social media based on their copious numbers of followers and level of engagement. Generally speaking, each influencer maintains an audience of at least 10,000 followers on one platform, if not more.

But it takes more than having an attractive physique and a coveted blue "verified" badge to acquire digital celebrity status.

Influencers use social media platforms to connect with their audience on a personal level. They brand themselves within a specific industry by promoting content that coincides with their values and interests. For example, someone who correlates with fashion would be more inclined to promote a clothing company's T-shirt as opposed to a travel agency's sale on a vacation package to an exotic destination.

Brands hire influencers and pay them to endorse their product(s) or service(s) within photos and videos, which essentially act as word-of-mouth opinions similar to what you might seek from a close friend. Many consumers value the opinions of influencers, which subsequently makes them more inclined to purchase the product that's being advertised.

Last year, Forbes released a comprehensive list of the world's top influencers. The going rate for influencer-created content ranges anywhere from \$500 to upwards of \$20,000, or more, for each sponsored post.

Does influencer marketing work?

Influencer marketing -- sometimes described as the "Wild West" for its lack of strategic guidance -- has gained a competitive edge in the industry due to its tendency to form viral conversations about brands online. Over the years, companies have developed applications to help brands determine which influencers are best suited for their digital campaigns.

Still, the big question remains: Does influencer marketing actually work? Most would agree that it does, because influencers can reach a larger audience than what a traditional ad may target.

As the power of social media continues to grow, it's arguably fair to say influencers will continue to have a stronger impact on consumer brand awareness. In turn, brands will be required to shift their strategies, conforming to this new norm as influencer-follower relationships expand.

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HEADLINE	02/08 Spokane BBB: reports of mysterious text
SOURCE	http://www.khq.com/story/37464378/people-receiving-mysterious-text-from-an-email-address-they-dont-know
GIST	SPOKANE, Wash. - Have you gotten a text that looks like this? Well, you're not alone. Multiple people in the Spokane area have received the same thing.

	<p>While the BBB hasn't heard about this particular case and it's unclear what's going on with it, they say it's always important to be careful.</p> <p>If someone responded to that text, it looks like an attachment is sent over. Don't click on it. The BBB says you don't know what it is and it could be some malicious content. Again, with this particular case, it's unclear what this text is.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Russian trolls posed as black activists?
SOURCE	http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20180208-russian-tumblr-trolls-posed-as-black-activists-to-stoke-racial-resentment-ahead-of-2016-u-s-election
GIST	<p>Internet trolls working for the Russian government posed as black activists on Tumblr to share political messages before the 2016 U.S. presidential election, BuzzFeed reports.</p> <p>As was the case with the fake accounts created by Russian government operatives on other social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, the fake Tumblr accounts aimed to help Donald Trump win the 2016 election by spreading messages which stoked racial and ethnic resentment and intensified political polarization.</p> <p>The Russian accounts on Tumblr disseminated content on issues such as police violence against young African-Americans.</p> <p>Buzzfeed says that a digital forensic analysis tied the fake Tumblr accounts to the St. Petersburg-based Internet Research Agency (IRA), a hacking and disinformation organization employed by the Kremlin to disseminate fake news and commentary on social media as part of the broad Kremlin campaign to weaken Western democracies and undermine organizations such as NATO and the EU.</p> <p>A researcher at the University of Oxford told BuzzFeed that there were “parallels” with Russian activity on Facebook.</p> <p>Jonathan Albright of the Tow Centre for Digital Journalism, who worked with BuzzFeed on the Tumblr investigation, said the accounts seemed to be part of an “ongoing campaign” which began in early 2015.</p> <p>Buzzfeed notes that the more popular Russian posts on Tumblr criticized Hillary Clinton, supported independent Senator Bernie Sanders during the Democratic primaries, and highlighted police violence against black communities.</p> <p>In one message, the account 4mysquad shared gifs supposedly showing a black girl being sexually assaulted by a police officer. The officer was falsely identified as a member of the NYPD.</p> <p>Twitter's official blog notes that the Tumblr accounts often used the same names as some of the 3,814 IRA-backed Twitter accounts identified by Twitter in its report to Congress.</p> <p>Facebook and Twitter have been asked to testify before the Senate Intelligence Committee on Russian interference in the U.S. election, but, until now, Tumblr had not been linked to Russian misinformation campaigns.</p> <p>Lisa-Maria Neudert, a researcher at the Computational Propaganda Project at the Oxford Internet Institute, said that there were “a lot of parallels” between the trolls' strategy on Tumblr and other social media sites.</p> <p>“It's not about promoting one candidate or message, but about sowing political distrust and confusion, and feeding into fears that society is already having,” she told the BBC.</p> <p>“Tumblr is really popular among teens, who are very vulnerable and very susceptible to political messages</p>

	because they haven't formed political identities yet.”
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HEADLINE	02/08 Official: pot tracking system hacked
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/marijuana/washington-marijuana-traceability-system-dogged-with-problems-was-hacked-state-says/
GIST	<p>The state's new pot-tracking system was hacked last weekend, and an “intruder” stole route information associated with four days of marijuana deliveries, as well as other information.</p> <p>“It was a breach of the system and indications show they downloaded a copy of the traceability database,” said Brian Smith, a spokesman for the Liquor and Cannabis Board (LCB). “It did something in the system — I’m not at liberty to talk about — that affected the transfer and manifest data — that was, in part, responsible for the issues this week.”</p> <p>The state on Feb. 1 transitioned to a new marijuana-traceability system, Leaf Data Systems, which has been dogged by problems since its launch. The technology issues have kept marijuana growers and sellers scrambling to keep their businesses running. Some have worried about keeping marijuana on increasingly sparse store shelves.</p> <p>Problems associated with the hack were discovered Saturday by MJ Freeway, the company providing the data service and pot-tracking software. On Monday, the company identified the problem as a “possible security incident” and notified the LCB, according to a message that went out to all marijuana licensees Thursday. At that point, the LCB contacted the Washington State Office of CyberSecurity, which is investigating the hack. Smith said marijuana businesses were not notified of the attack until Thursday because of that agency’s protocol.</p> <p>The security flaw was resolved on Monday, Smith said. The state agency plans to continue using MJ Freeway as a vendor.</p> <p>“No online presence is 100 percent safe,” he said. “There are steps that MJ Freeway has taken to ensure that it’s secure and meets modern standards. ... We’re sticking with MJ Freeway.”</p> <p>In addition to transportation manifests, delivery-vehicle information like type, license-plate number and VIN number were also taken. That information is available through public-record requests, Smith said.</p> <p>MJ Freeway has had products hacked several times before, and source code for some of its software was posted online last year, according to Marijuana Business Daily, an industry publication.</p> <p>Pot proprietors Thursday questioned the LCB’s selection of MJ Freeway, considering its previous breaches.</p> <p>“It’s been a pretty well-known fear: MJ Freeway was not Fort Knox. Boy, was everybody right straight out of the gate,” said Steve Lee, who owns two marijuana businesses and is a Kennewick city councilman.</p> <p>Marijuana-traceability systems were designed, in part, to help regulators satisfy Obama-era federal guidelines about marijuana diversion. If pot could be tracked, the theory went, then federal officials would have more assurances it wasn’t crossing state lines or going into the black market.</p> <p>Lee said the hack has eroded the traceability system’s integrity, and will have him sleeping less easy about federal involvement in the state’s legal marijuana market.</p> <p>“It’s a catastrophic failure at the state level, and it leaves us all worrying about our futures,” he said.</p> <p>What the hacker(s) were after is not immediately clear, but pot proprietors worried that data could be</p>

	manipulated.
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HEADLINE	02/08 Hackers head start on Winter Olympics
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/08/technology/winter-olympics-hackers.html
GIST	<p>The Department of Homeland Security is warning Americans planning to attend the 2018 Winter Olympic Games in Pyeongchang that cybercriminals are likely to be targeting the Games.</p> <p>Officials in South Korea are facing a double threat. At the Olympic Committee's Security Command Center in an unmarked facility in Pyeongchang, security experts from around the world are monitoring threats from North Korean hackers who have been probing the computer networks that manage South Korean finance, media and critical infrastructure systems for years.</p> <p>And while some people believe that diplomatic efforts may have eased the North Korean threat to the Games, others are bracing for the impact of a hacking campaign by Russian groups retaliating for a ban on Russian athletes. Security companies said these groups had successfully targeted the computer systems of Olympic-related organizations months ago.</p> <p>Just how those hacks could lead to broader attacks is not clear. But cybersecurity researchers said the Olympic Games — more digitized than ever — are ripe targets for hackers searching for embarrassing information on everyone from athletes to organizers or simply looking to cause trouble by manipulating scoring or lighting systems.</p> <p>More than 300 Olympics-related computer systems have already been hit, with many of them compromised, the security company McAfee said last month, in what its investigators described as a preliminary hacking campaign. On Friday, the second stage of that attack appeared to be underway, as assailants siphoned data from victims' machines back to their own computers systems, McAfee's researchers said.</p> <p>Who was doing it and why they were doing it could take several months to figure out. Ryan Sherstobitoff, a senior analyst at McAfee, said the hacks had appeared to be well organized and backed by substantial resources, with "the hallmarks of a nation state." What that nation state planned to do with the stolen data and its foothold in victims' machines, Mr. Sherstobitoff said, was still anyone's guess.</p> <p>A spokesman for the International Olympic Committee declined to comment on how the organization was addressing the heightened threats.</p> <p>Security researchers often discuss risks with a level of informed paranoia. Some of their warnings are based on what is possible but has not actually occurred in the real world. On other occasions, their warnings are based on what has already happened, and where those incidents could lead.</p> <p>But cyberattacks on international events have become common. The 2015 nuclear negotiations in Geneva and the 2009 climate talks in Copenhagen, for example, were plagued by hackers from various nation states. The Olympics are another alluring target — but with wall-to-wall television coverage.</p> <p>"The Olympics involve so many countries, and so many sports, many of which have their own infrastructure, that it has become a rich target environment for many adversaries," said John Hultquist, director of threat intelligence at the security firm FireEye.</p> <p>He has been tracking the activities of Russian hackers and other groups as they lay the groundwork for attacks on Olympic organizations. In the past few months, Mr. Hultquist said, his team at FireEye has seen several examples of Russian groups tampering with the computers of Olympic-related organizations. The activity is "obviously meant to drag Olympics-related organizations through the mud and discredit them," he said.</p>

The Russian cyberespionage group known as Fancy Bear, which has been tied to the 2016 hack of the Democratic National Committee and has links to Russia's main military intelligence unit, has already started posting hacked emails intended to highlight discord among global sports officials and investigators who exposed systemic Russian doping.

Last month, the group posted emails and other documents online from the International Luge Federation, claiming they demonstrated violations of antidoping rules. And earlier in January, the group released hacked emails and documents from the International Olympic Committee, which it advertised as proof "the Europeans and the Anglo-Saxons are fighting for power and cash in the sports world."

Trend Micro, the Tokyo-based security company, said its researchers had also witnessed Fancy Bear attacks on the International Ice Hockey Federation, the International Ski Federation, the International Biathlon Union, and the International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation in the final months of 2017. The attacks occurred while an International Olympic Committee disciplinary panel was preparing bans for dozens of Russian athletes caught doping in the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

"The Kremlin has its fingerprints on cyberattacks that were retribution for exposing the Russians' Sochi games doping scheme, which was a fraud on the purity of sport," said Doug DePeppe, a founder of Sports ISAO, a nonprofit cybersecurity organization in Colorado Springs. The group is trying to help sports associations, including Olympic organizations, combat threats.

"Their goal is to say, 'No one is following the rules, and Russia shouldn't be singled out,'" Mr. DePeppe said.

FireEye, McAfee and other security companies said that over the past few months they had seen attack groups from Russia, and others of unknown origin, dispatch hundreds of "spearphishing" emails, laced with malicious links and attachments, to target Olympic-related groups.

They also have seen the groups set up computer servers under the names of some of their targets and seemingly innocuous organizations like the South Korean Ministry of Forestry. They warn that those activities could be a prelude for a broader Russian campaign.

To protect the Olympics, South Korea has mobilized tens of thousands of security personnel, including cybersecurity analysts and 50,000 soldiers, in what has been described as one of the most militarized security forces in Olympic history.

Over the past few weeks, the United States State Department has set up a temporary security monitoring operation on one floor of its embassy in Seoul. Analysts from the State Department, the intelligence community and the Department of Homeland Security are scheduled to arrive there this week.

But an official who was briefed on the State Department-led operation, and who was not allowed to discuss it publicly, worried that the operation was too focused on combating traditional threats like physical attacks on venues.

The State Department did not reply to a request for comment.

Elsewhere in Pyeongchang, an alliance of security personnel from South Korea, various Olympic sponsors, technology suppliers and cybersecurity sleuths from around the world are monitoring computer screens and potential threats at the unmarked Security Command Center.

While cybersecurity experts believe the North Korean threat was lessened by the last-minute addition of a North Korean delegation to the Games, they have not ruled out that North Korea may be looking to embarrass its southern neighbor.

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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	02/08 Ex-Marine pleads guilty in terror sting
SOURCE	http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/fl-reg-terrorism-sting-guilty-palm-beach-20180207-story.html
GIST	<p>A former U.S. Marine and sculptor is facing a dozen years in federal prison after he pleaded guilty on Thursday to being part of a conspiracy to help the terrorist group ISIS.</p> <p>Gregory Hubbard, 54, was arrested in a controversial FBI terrorism sting in 2016 in Palm Beach County.</p> <p>Under the terms of the plea agreement, the prosecution and defense will recommend that the judge sentences Hubbard to 12 years in federal prison. That's significantly less than the 20-year maximum penalty the offense carries and the 30 or more years he had been facing if convicted of all three charges that were filed against him.</p> <p>The case ran into problems last year when it became public that the main undercover informant in the case, Mohammed Agbareia, had defrauded more than \$300,000 from victims — while he was working undercover for the FBI and heavily involved in the terrorism sting.</p> <p>Handcuffed, shackled and dressed in dark blue jail scrubs in court on Thursday, Hubbard told the judge he was pleading guilty because he had committed the offense.</p> <p>Hubbard was arrested July 21, 2016 at Miami International Airport. He thought he and an undercover informant were flying to Germany and would then take a train and other transportation to Syria, where Hubbard planned to fight alongside the terrorist group.</p> <p>Before he left, Hubbard gave much of his artwork to one of the informants for safekeeping, placed most of his other possessions in a storage unit in Georgia and saved \$6,000 he was bringing with him to fight in Syria. He also said he might never return from Syria.</p> <p>Hubbard was diagnosed with depression and anxiety several years ago and was receiving therapy and prescription medication at a local Veterans Affairs hospital before his arrest, his attorneys Assistant Federal Public Defenders Anthony Natale and Vanessa Chen said in court.</p> <p>“Depression lingers over me pretty consistently ... But, depressed? I am,” Hubbard told the judge.</p> <p>Two other local men, Dayne Antani Christian and Darren Arness Jackson, who were also arrested in the sting, previously pleaded guilty to related offenses.</p> <p>All three men were secretly recorded talking about their support for the terrorist group and one of its leaders.</p> <p>“They shared links for ISIS propaganda videos and websites, including ISIS beheading videos, and lectures by Anwar al-Awlaki espousing jihad,” according to the plea agreement.</p> <p>Under the terms of the plea agreement, prosecutors Karen Gilbert and Ed Nucci said they will dismiss the two other charges filed against Hubbard – attempting to provide material support to a terrorist group and providing ammunition to a convicted felon – when Hubbard is sentenced in April.</p> <p>Christian and Jackson will also be sentenced later this year.</p> <p>The main informant who worked on the case, Agbareia, 52, pleaded guilty to a federal fraud charge in October and is serving a two-year federal prison term. The Palestinian man is expected to be deported to Israel after he serves his sentence.</p>

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HEADLINE	02/09 Egypt: massive anti-terror operation
SOURCE	http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-02/09/c_136962332.htm
GIST	<p>CAIRO, Feb. 9 (Xinhua) -- Egypt announced on Friday the launch of a major operation across the country to eradicate terrorism, the army said in a statement.</p> <p>Egyptian troops and the police have been put on "maximum alert" ahead of a comprehensive military operation against terrorism "at all strategic fronts," said Tamer el Refai, an army spokesperson, in the statement.</p> <p>The major operation will target all areas plagued by extremism to uproot terrorism, it said.</p> <p>The law enforcement forces started in the morning implementing the comprehensive plan against the terrorist and criminal elements and organizations in north and central Sinai along with other desert areas in western Delta, Refai said.</p> <p>He added that the operation is launched as part of the efforts to reach the three-month deadline set by President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi to eliminate terrorism after the mosque attack that killed more than 300 people in the northern Sinai city of Arish in November, 2017.</p> <p>Meanwhile, strict security measures have been adopted near the vital institutions, national projects, religious houses, electricity and water plants, and major important tourist areas, an official security source was quoted by the state news agency MENA as saying.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Left to join ISIS; many abandon fight
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2018/02/08/young-men-left-america-to-join-isis-they-fled-when-it-didnt-live-up-to-their-expectations/?utm_term=.a486610a7057
GIST	<p>When Mohamad Khweis fled his home in the United States in 2015 and headed to Islamic State territory in Syria and Iraq, he was "curious" about life in the group's self-declared caliphate, he later recalled.</p> <p>"I would see . . . people from all around the world leaving their countries and going to live in this state," Khweis said when he testified last summer during his federal trial on terrorism charges. "It was kind of interesting."</p> <p>What he found did not live up to the hype. Khweis was tasked with running errands such as grocery shopping, taking out the trash at his Islamic State house and caring for wounded fighters. He eventually became "frustrated with waiting" for military training, according to an FBI special agent who testified during Khweis's trial. He ended up fleeing and was captured in Iraq.</p> <p>Khweis, who was found guilty of supporting terrorism and sentenced to 20 years in prison, was not alone in feeling disillusioned by what he encountered. Many of the Americans who traveled to Syria and Iraq to join the group wound up coming back because "life in jihadist-held territory did not live up to their expectations," according to a new study from George Washington University's Program on Extremism that provides a sweeping look at their experiences.</p> <p>These Americans had seen "an idealized version of reality" in online propaganda they consumed, but that contrasted unfavorably with the harsh living conditions, infighting and menial assignments that greeted them, the report found. For Americans like Khweis — who later insisted he was not part of the group and only wanted to see the situation in Syria for himself — household chores could lead to their decisions to abandon the fight.</p>

“Many of the Americans had little to no combat experience and were assigned duties such as cleaning safe houses, cooking, and caring for the sick and injured,” the report states. “This was hardly the glamorous experience they anticipated, and some sought a way back to the comforts of home.”

The Americans who went overseas tended to be male, with an average age of 27, according to the report. They were like thousands of others drawn by the Islamic State — also known as ISIS or ISIL — as the terrorist group seized territory in Syria and Iraq, creating its own society on the ground. The Islamic State’s physical territory has since dwindled following punishing military losses, but its online propaganda machine continues to churn out material as part of a “virtual caliphate” rallying its followers.

More than 150 Americans were arrested on Islamic State-related charges between 2011 and 2017, and about a third of them were people who sought to travel abroad but were stopped, according to the report, which notes that attempts to travel to Iraq or Syria have steadily fallen since 2015. Dozens of people in the United States already have been convicted on federal charges relating to the group. (Far more people left Europe to join the Islamic State — estimates range from 5,000 to 6,000, the report says — though that flow of volunteers also plummeted as the group lost territory.)

The report’s authors examined 64 people — described as “travelers” — who left the United States to join Islamist militant groups in Syria and Iraq since 2011, the year protests began against the Syrian regime. Most of them were associated with the Islamic State, either at the outset or joining up with the group as it expanded, according to the report. Just a handful — four — reached leadership positions in the Islamist militant groups they joined.

Most of the travelers were described as “networked,” meaning they had some connection with Islamist militant supporters in the United States or others traveling with them, according to the study, which is based on interviews with law enforcement officials, reviews of legal documents and interviews with some Americans who went to Islamic State territory and returned. Khweis was in the smaller category of “loners,” those who apparently traveled without any personal connections to the fight and still made it to Syria or Iraq.

Relatively few of the travelers returned to the United States, the study found. Just a dozen of them are known to have come back, and nine of them were arrested and faced terror charges. One of that dozen returned intending to carry out an attack, the report said, but was taken into custody early in the planning stages; he was sentenced last month to 22 years in prison. About one-third of the travelers examined in the report are believed to have died overseas.

The report states that returning travelers do pose a risk, because they can help with recruiting other Islamist militants or provide knowledge about travel or conducting attacks. While the Trump administration has repeatedly argued that stronger immigration restrictions are needed to keep terrorists out of the United States, the report notes that most of the 64 travelers were U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents.

“The traveler phenomenon, like the domestic terrorist threat, is primarily homegrown,” the authors wrote.

The report concludes that people who never left the United States pose a greater danger than those who went overseas and came back, noting that none of the terrorist attacks in the United States in recent years have been carried out by people who traveled to Syria or Iraq first. In high-profile case after high-profile case, U.S. officials have determined that attackers were radicalized in the United States after consuming online propaganda.

“The risk that ‘homegrown’ extremists will commit attacks on U.S. soil outweighs the risk of attacks from returning travelers,” the authors wrote.

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HEADLINE	02/08 Resurgence of al-Shabaab
SOURCE	https://jamestown.org/program/resurgence-al-shabaab/
GIST	<p>As al-Shabaab continues to lose leaders to U.S. airstrikes and territory to troops with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), analysts have contemplated the possible defeat of the Somalia-based militant group. Indeed, Somali President Mohammed Abdullahi Farmajo stressed this possibility at a conference in London last May, saying that with international support and better military equipment, the terrorist group could be defeated in just two years (Jamhuri News, May 11, 2017).</p> <p>In October, however, a massive bomb blast in the Somali capital of Mogadishu killed more than 300 people (The Star, October 16, 2017). Meanwhile, the group has carried out a series of smaller attacks, terrorizing civilians and assassinating public figures, in an attempt to undermine the UN-backed government, even as the better armed U.S.-backed AMISOM troops' pound its strongholds.</p> <p>In neighboring Kenya, the al-Qaeda affiliate has also stepped up its operations, forcing Nairobi to redoubled efforts to tackle militants in the Boni Forest, the thick expanse of coastal forest in Lamu, by the border with Somalia. The resurgence pours cold water on predictions of al-Shabaab's possible defeat, prompting security experts to call for new strategies to combat the militant group (Daily Nation, January 23).</p> <p>Increase in Attacks</p> <p>In January, the militants bombed a telecommunications tower in the town of Elwak, in Mandera County, on the Kenyan border. The downing of the tower, owned by Somalia's Hormuud Telecom, disrupted communications within the town and the surrounding area. Local residents said the destruction was intended to cut off communications between local people and the Kenyan and Somalia security forces. The militants reportedly suspected locals were spying for AMISOM troops, who were gathering information and planned to build a medical camp in the area (Daily Nation, January 20).</p> <p>Ahead of the attack, increased militant activity had been reported in the area. On January 6, the militants destroyed a telecommunications tower belonging to Safaricom, Kenya's leading mobile phone service provider, in Katulo area in Wajir. The militants used Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs) to down the tower, before engaging security officers at a facility nearby (The Star, January 7; The Standard, January 7).</p> <p>Days earlier, five security officers were killed in the area while on patrol along the Elwak- Katulo Road. In the attack, a lorry belonging to the paramilitary General Service Unit (GSU) was set on fire (Mediamax, January 3).</p> <p>In December 2017, the militants destroyed an important water well that had been drilled by the Kenyan army in Lafey town, Mandera County, leaving hundreds of resident without water (Kulan Post, January 25).</p> <p>Resurgence in Boni Forest</p> <p>In another significant development, analysts fear the militants have regained a foothold in Boni Forest in Kenya. The militants have been building their presence on the Kenyan side of the forest since 2012, according to intelligence sources. It is from these bases they are believed to be executing the current attacks on the Kenyan military, the police and local villagers.</p> <p>In mid-January, heavily armed militants attacked and briefly occupied Ishakani police station, before fleeing to Somalia (The Standard, January 15). Earlier, the militants had rounded up villagers and forced them into a mosque, where they popularized their ideology. Local people said the militants had informed them that their target was the security agencies, and that civilians would not be harmed.</p> <p>Terrorist activity in Lamu is being orchestrated by Jaysh al-Ayman, a faction within al-Shabaab named after its top leader Maalim Ayman (a.k.a. Abdiiaziz Dobow Ali). Its fighters are largely Kenyans from the</p>

coastal region and some international jihadists. Ayman, who is thought to be a Kenyan Somali, founded the group in 2009.

The group began by carrying out small grenade and Improved Explosive Devices (IED) attacks in Kenyan towns and villages in Lamu, and staged its first major attack in June 2015, when nearly 50 heavily armed militants targeted Mpeketoni town, killing 60 people. Since then, the faction has continued to carry out attacks in the Kenyan coastal region (Daily Nation, January 23).

The same year as the Mpeketoni attack, the Kenyan government launched Operation Linda Boni, a multi-security agency operation aimed at countering militants' operation in the forest. More than two years since the launch of the operation, however, militants continue to carry out attacks across the coastal region (The Star, July 12, 2017).

While clashes with the military have resulted in casualties on both sides, the security forces have yet to capture any al-Shabaab fighters or their leaders, raising concerns that local residents may be helping hide the militants and offering them support (Daily Nation, January 23).

Joseph Kanyiri, the Operation Linda Boni commander, made that plain in comments on January 22, accusing local residents of helping fighters avoid capture. The security agencies are also reportedly investigating whether local dispensaries and health centers are treating injured al-Shabaab fighters or providing them with medicine (Intelligence Brief, January 22).

A 'Faceless' Enemy

Although al-Shabaab is weakened militarily, financially and politically in Boni, it has been acting to boost its forces through the conscription and recruitment of locals, including children.

The group is allegedly using women as spies, who gather intelligence even from the security forces (Daily Nation, December 18, 2017). Kenyan security forces deployed to the area complain they are dealing with unknown fifth columnists, unlike Somalia where they can be more certain about the identity of their enemies.

A further development, one that began in mid-2017, has been the aggressive recruitment of child soldiers. Reports in January told of forcible child abductions and of reprisals against communities that refuse to hand their children over to militants (Daily Nation, January 27).

In late September, al-Shabaab commanders ordered elders, teachers in Islamic schools and communities in rural areas to hand over hundreds of young children or face attack. The groups have also warned parents against sending their children to secular schools, demanding they attend Islamic ones that the group controls (Somali Press Online, April 21, 2017).

In the past decade, al-Shabaab has recruited thousands of children for indoctrination and as frontline fighters (KassFM, January 15). Since 2015, the group has opened large Islamic schools teaching its own curriculum in areas under its control, strengthening indoctrination and facilitating recruitment.

Potential for Larger Attack

Reports last year that al-Shabaab was on the back foot, while pleasing government officials and Somalia's international backers, appear to have been premature. Forecasts of the group's defeat may need to be tempered by the fact it has proven its resilience time and again.

Kenyan analysts warn that the increased rate of small attacks in Lamu may be an attempt to divert the attention of security forces from Somalia, where the militants have been forced out of their bases and need time to regroup. They warn too that this increase maybe intended as a diversion while the militants plan a potentially much larger attack (The Standard, January 15).

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HEADLINE	02/08 Iran-backed militias warn US forces
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/8/top-iranian-backed-militias-threaten-attacks-us-fo/
GIST	<p>The two main Iranian-backed Shia militias in Iraq warn that U.S. forces in the country face possible attack by their forces, should Washington not carry out a full withdrawal of American troops from the country.</p> <p>Members of Shia-led Kata'ib Hezbollah, Badr Organization and other Iranian-linked paramilitaries under the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) banner stood ready to battle back against the American "occupation force" inside Iraq, said Kata'ib Hezbollah spokesman Jafar al-Hussaini.</p> <p>"Iraq will not see stability with America's presence. The Americans have not entered Iraq based on the Iraqi government's consent," Mr. al-Hussaini said in an interview with Lebanese news outlets.</p> <p>"Our combatants have limited weapons but a confrontation with the American forces may begin at any moment. Unlike in the past, the Americans this time will not benefit from any mediation," he added. Leaders from the Badr Organization say a continued U.S. military footprint in Iraq would only increase the chances of extremist movements to sprout up, in the wake of Islamic State's defeat in the country.</p> <p>There are now an estimated 140,000 registered fighters under the PMF banner in Iraq according to military officials in Baghdad, which constitutes nearly half of the Iraqi army and a quarter of the security forces under the Interior Ministry.</p> <p>Washington and Baghdad "should co-ordinate to ensure a full withdrawal," Badr Organization spokesman Kareem Nuri said. "A U.S. presence will be cause for internal polarization and a magnet for terrorists," he added.</p> <p>American and coalition forces have already begun to pull back air assets and manpower from northern Iraq, following the liberation of Islamic State's Iraqi capital of Mosul in last year. Iraqi officials within the government of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi say nearly 60 percent of the over 8,000 U.S. troops in Iraq would be pulled out, recent reports claim.</p> <p>However, command officials reiterate the U.S. would retain a military presence in the country, despite the defeat of the Islamic State, or ISIS.</p> <p>"Continued coalition presence in Iraq will be conditions-based, proportional to the need and in coordination with the government of Iraq," coalition spokesman Col. Ryan Dillon said in a statement earlier this week.</p> <p>Should that timeline hold, U.S. troops will likely still be in country during national elections slated for later this year.</p> <p>Leaders from the Badr Organization, Kata'ib Hezbollah, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq — also known as the Khazali Network — and other Shia militias that battled Islamic State have banded together to form a Shia political movement designed specifically to take on the ruling party during the upcoming elections.</p> <p>Dubbed the Mujahedeen Coalition, the new coalition seeks to leverage the militia's battlefield victories against ISIS over the last three years into political clout within the Iraqi parliament.</p> <p>A successful bid by the Mujahedeen Coalition to secure seats in the country's legislature could fracture Mr. Abadi's delicate balance of power inside Iraq, while potentially expanding Iran's influence in the country.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Rare US strikes on pro-regime forces
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/08/middleeast/syrian-us-airstrikes-analysis-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The United States' air artillery strikes in northeastern Syria overnight Wednesday were a forceful response to attempts by pro-regime forces to push into areas held by the coalition's allies. The US has drawn a line in the sand -- indicating that any attempt by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime to recover territory east of the Euphrates River will be met with powerful retaliation.</p> <p>US officials estimate that more than 100 of approximately 500 pro-regime troops involved were killed. The remainder retreated across the Euphrates. The official Syrian state news agency SANA reported that the overnight attack had hit "tribal fighters."</p> <p>The Euphrates has become a de facto border between regime-held areas and the 23% of Syrian territory held by the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) -- a mix of Kurdish and Arab militia. They hold ground all the way from oil-rich Deir Ezzor in the east to Raqqa and up to the Turkish border.</p> <p>The US strikes followed what the coalition said was an "unprovoked attack" by forces allied with Assad against a SDF headquarters where coalition advisers were located. The headquarters was at Khusham, almost five miles east of the Euphrates and adjacent to important oil and gas fields. The area was taken from ISIS by the SDF last September, when a rapid advance south supported by coalition air power brought much of the oil-rich countryside east of the Euphrates under SDF control.</p> <p>The US military assesses that Russian contractors, that are believed to be funded by the Russian government, participated in the assault on US and SDF forces on Wednesday, according to two US defense officials. One official says the assessment comes from monitoring of communications in the area and from drone surveillance.</p> <p>Col. Thomas F. Veale said Wednesday's attack by pro-regime forces was large-scale, involving battle tanks, rocket launchers and artillery. It was more than a probing operation. A US official said that "20 to 30 artillery and tank rounds landed within 500 meters" of the SDF headquarters. A statement from the US coalition said that "Syrian pro-regime forces moved in an approximately battalion-sized dismounted formation."</p> <p>US attacks on pro-regime forces in Syria are rare, and the size of this action was unprecedented. Last year, US airstrikes took out small militia columns advancing within a "de-confliction" zone toward a coalition-backed base at al-Tanf on the border with Iraq.</p> <p>And a US fighter shot down a Syrian plane that had attacked SDF forces near Raqqa last June.</p> <p>With the defeat of much of the ISIS presence in eastern Syria, it was perhaps only a matter of time before the regime and its allies focused on recovering land to the east of the Euphrates. However, the US has made it clear that it does not intend to leave the area. US officials say that the continued presence of coalition advisers in support of the SDF is essential to prevent the re-emergence of ISIS, and that there may be two or three months more fighting against ISIS remnants in remote areas close to the border with Iraq.</p> <p>The larger picture is that for the US and pro-western groups such as the Kurdish YPG, those parts of northern Syria beyond the regime's control are a powerful negotiating tool when the future of Syria comes to be discussed, not least because they contain much of Syria's oil. Kurdish politicians have spoken of a confederation that would give them autonomy in northern Syria, but so far they have been excluded from peace talks at Turkey's insistence.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Syria slams US strike as 'war crime'
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SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/02/08/Syria-slams-deadly-US-strike-as-war-crime/2791518115557/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_tn_int&utm_medium=6
GIST	<p>Feb. 8 (UPI) -- Syria's foreign ministry appealed to the United Nations Security Council Thursday to condemn a U.S. assault that killed more than 100 government troops.</p> <p>The U.S. military said the overnight airstrike in Deir el-Zour was retaliation for an "unprovoked attack" against the U.S.-led coalition occupying Syria.</p> <p>The Syrian government, though, called the act a "barbaric aggression" and said the real purpose of the "so-called international coalition" was to support the Islamic State terror network.</p> <p>Syria's foreign ministry wrote a letter to the Security Council Thursday calling for international condemnation.</p> <p>"This new aggression, which represents a war crime and a crime against humanity and a direct support to terrorism, affirms the nature of the low U.S. intentions against the sovereignty of Syria, the unity of its land and people and the U.S. exploitation of the pretext of fighting terrorism to establish illegal bases on the Syrian territory," the letter states.</p> <p>"The government of the Syrian Arab Republic calls on the UNSC to condemn the massacre and hold the international coalition responsible for the killing and wounding of thousands of civilians, including children, women and elderly and to pay compensation to the families of the victims."</p> <p>The letter also said the Syrian government wants the "illegal" U.S.-led coalition dissolved, as it is "a force of protection and support to terrorism."</p> <p>"The Syrian institutions and forces will continue to carry out their responsibilities regardless of the sacrifices in order to prevent the U.S. coalition from achieving its declared terrorist objectives," it said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Endgame for US in Syria gets murky
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/09/as-is-shrinks-end-game-for-us-in-syria-gets-murky.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON – The closer the U.S. gets to its original goal in Syria of defeating the Islamic State group, the murkier its end game. The battlefield is shifting as demonstrated by a deadly barrage of American air and artillery strikes on a shadowy attacker.</p> <p>The Pentagon insists it is keeping its focus on defeating IS, but Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Thursday U.S.-backed fighters in eastern Syria faced a "perplexing" overnight assault by about 300 pro-Syrian government fighters whose nationalities, motives and makeup he could not identify.</p> <p>A number of U.S. military advisers were present alongside local allied forces, and the Americans led a punishing response that other officials said killed about 100 of the assailants.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Security alert Trinidad, Tobago Carnival
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/09/americas/trinidad-tobago-carnival-terror-threat/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Days before the Carnival on the islands of Trinidad and Tobago, multiple US officials tell CNN they are aware of a terror-related threat to the popular annual event.</p> <p>This year's Carnival will be held Monday and Tuesday.</p> <p>The US Embassy in Port of Spain, capital of the two-island Caribbean nation, issued a security alert</p>

	<p>Thursday night, saying a plot had been thwarted but advising US government personnel "to exercise additional caution and increased situational awareness if they participate in Carnival events."</p> <p>The United Kingdom also issued a "Foreign Travel Advice" for the West Indies country on Thursday.</p> <p>"Terrorists are very likely to try to carry out attacks in Trinidad and Tobago. Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in crowded spaces and places visited by foreigners," the advisory said, adding authorities in that country have made arrests.</p> <p>The US military and intelligence have long considered Trinidad and Tobago a home to ISIS sympathizers. Individuals who have left Trinidad and Tobago have been involved in terrorist acts and committed killings in Syria, Adm. Kurt Tidd, head of US Southern Command, said in April 2017.</p> <p>In a news conference Thursday, a Trinidad and Tobago police official, Michael Jackman, said the disruptions were in the form of "criminal activities." He did not elaborate on whether the threat was terror-related.</p> <p>Police uncovered a threat to disrupt the Carnival activities and detained "several persons of interest," Jackman said in video provided by CNN affiliate CNC3 Television.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 DOJ: strip terror group leader citizenship
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/doj-leader-terrorist-group-lose-citizenship-52936137?
GIST	<p>The Department of Justice is seeking to revoke the citizenship of the former leader of a Missouri-based organization that illegally funneled money to Iraq.</p> <p>The federal agency filed a complaint Wednesday in U.S. District Court in Kansas City, seeking to revoke the naturalization of Mubarak Hamed, once the director of the Islamic American Relief Agency, which posed as a charity that assisted famine victims in Africa. The organization collected \$1 million to \$3 million in contributions each year from 1991 to 2003.</p> <p>According to the complaint, Hamed regularly transferred funds from the organization to an account in Jordan controlled by a man who transferred the money, or goods bought with the funds, to Iraq, which violated U.S. sanctions against that country.</p> <p>IARA, based in Columbia, Missouri, was the U.S. office of the Sudan-based Islamic Relief Agency. It secretly funneled a total of about \$1.4 million to Iraq, the department said.</p> <p>The U.S. group was dissolved in 2004, after the government deemed it a terrorist organization. At the time, the organization was ordered to transfer more than \$800,000 in assets to a charity that assists farmers and drought victims in East Africa.</p> <p>Hamed, a native of Sudan, pleaded guilty to conspiracy, lying to federal agents and misusing the tax-exempt status given to charities. He served nearly five years in prison before being released in August 2016.</p> <p>It wasn't immediately clear where Hamed has been living since his release from prison. Charles Swift, the attorney who represented Hamed during his criminal case, did not reply to a phone message.</p> <p>If he loses his citizenship, he would revert back to permanent resident status and the Department of Homeland Security would begin removal proceedings.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Extremists flourish in Indonesia prisons
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/study-extremists-flourishing-indonesias-prisons-52952345?
GIST	<p>Indonesia's overcrowded prisons are ill-equipped to deal with Islamic militant inmates, hampering efforts to prevent the spread of violent radicalism in institutions that have become known as jihadist breeding grounds, a study has found.</p> <p>The research by University of Indonesia psychologists, which adds to years of warnings by experts, found that prison staff lack the ability to identify "high-risk" prisoners who could recruit other inmates because they're given limited information and little specialist training.</p> <p>Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation, has arrested and imprisoned hundreds of Islamic militants in a crackdown that followed a terror attack on the island of Bali in 2002. Yet many remained committed to violent extremism — both during and after their incarceration — and used their time in prison to radicalize others, who went on to commit acts of terror.</p> <p>The eight-month study at the four largest Indonesian prisons found prison staff who have close contact with inmates don't know how to limit the influence of hard-line ideologues or identify the less ideologically committed who could be disentangled with simple interventions, said Faisal Magrie, coordinator of the research, which was released Thursday.</p> <p>The problems in the prison system are often defeating efforts to turn convicted militants away from radicalism, he said.</p> <p>The challenges are exacerbated by poor coordination among government agencies and non-government organizations, which leads to duplicated efforts and unclear de-radicalization programs, Magrie said.</p> <p>"As a result, inmates are confused by the program, bored, and eventually refuse to participate," he said.</p> <p>Irfan Idris, director of de-radicalization at National Counter-Terrorism Agency, said the radicalization of ordinary criminals by militants who support the Islamic State group continues to be nightmare for police and prison officials.</p> <p>He said at least 18 former prisoners have been involved in extremist cases in Indonesia since 2010, and most were radicalized in prison.</p> <p>Efforts have since been made to isolate high-profile militant leaders to prevent the spread of violent ideology.</p> <p>Overpopulated prisons are the main reason de-radicalization efforts are struggling, said Bahrul Wijaksana, a senior program manager of Search for Common Ground, a nongovernment organization based in Washington that works with Indonesia's Directorate-General of Corrections.</p> <p>Currently, he said, the 477 prisons in Indonesia, which were built to accommodate 115,000 inmates, are holding about 254,000 prisoners. In big cities, prisons are four to five times overcapacity. Jakarta's Cipinang Prison, built to hold 900 inmates, has nearly 4,000 prisoners.</p> <p>Meanwhile, at current staffing levels in prison, there is one officer to every 55 inmates, making it difficult if not impossible to closely monitor all prisoner activities.</p> <p>"The deradicalization program is not going to be effective unless some of these issues are addressed," said Wijaksana.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Turkey resumes strikes on Kurd enclave
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/turkish-jets-resume-airstrikes-syrian-kurdish-enclave-52953866?
GIST	<p>Turkish jets have resumed airstrikes in the Syrian Kurdish-run enclave of Afrin after a brief lull, the military and media reports said Friday.</p> <p>The state-run Anadolu Agency said F-16 jets resumed their aerial bombing campaign late Thursday, striking the northwestern enclave's Mount Bafilun, the villages of Sheik Huruz and Kefer Jenne and the regions of Sheran, Jinderes and Raju, among other targets.</p> <p>Turkey's military issued a brief statement Friday saying its jets bombed a total of 19 targets, including shelters, ammunition depots and gun positions belonging to "terror" organizations. All planes returned to base safely, the statement added.</p> <p>Unconfirmed Turkish media reports had said that Turkey halted flights after Russia, which effectively controls the skies over the region, had closed the airspace over Afrin after militants shot down a Russian Su-25 fighter in northern Idlib province on Feb. 3.</p> <p>Turkey launched an offensive into the enclave three weeks ago to rout Syrian Kurdish fighters whom Ankara considers to be a security threat because of their links to outlawed rebels in Turkey.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Military targets Chinese Uighur militants
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/u-s-targets-chinese-uighur-militants-well-taliban-fighters-afghanistan-n845876
GIST	<p>The U.S. military says it carried out a series of punishing bombings last weekend of Taliban militant camps that also support a separatist Chinese terror group.</p> <p>A bombing raid Sunday on a region bordering China and Tajikistan set a record for the number of precision-guided munitions launched at one time from a B-52 bomber, according to Air Force Maj. Gen. James Hecker, who spoke to reporters at the Pentagon in a video teleconference from Kabul on Wednesday. The B-52 — a Cold War workhorse — had recently been modified to carry more munitions, the military said in a statement.</p> <p>The camps in remote Badakhshan Province supported Taliban operations within Afghanistan and by the East Turkestan Islamic Movement — set up by members of China's minority Uighur community — on the border region with China and Tajikistan, the military said.</p> <p>"There will be no safe haven for any terrorist group," Gen. John Nicholson, the head of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan, said in a statement Thursday. "We continue to hunt them across the country."</p> <p>Hecker said the strikes "support Afghanistan in reassuring its neighbors that it is not a safe sanctuary for terrorists who want to carry out cross border operations."</p> <p>Hecker added that the destruction of the training facilities would prevent "terrorists from planning any acts near the border with China and Tajikistan."</p> <p>China blames violence in its far-western Xinjiang region, home to some 10 million Uighurs, a Turkic-speaking Muslim minority, on Islamist extremists and separatists, some of whom it has long said have links to groups outside the country. Rights groups and Uighur exiles counter that unrest is due more to Uighur frustration at Chinese controls on their culture and religion. China denies any repression.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Last 2 ISIS 'Beatles' captured in Syria
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-uncovered/last-2-british-isis-beatles-have-been-captured-syria-n846011
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Two ISIS fighters notorious for imprisoning and murdering Western hostages were captured on the battlefield in Syria in January, according to three U.S. officials.</p> <p>The men were part of a group of four jihadis dubbed the Beatles by observers because of their British accents, and were caught by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a Kurdish and Arab militia fighting both ISIS and the Assad regime. Their capture was first reported by The New York Times.</p> <p>Officials identified the two as Alexandar Amon Kotey and El Shafee Elsheikh, and they were the last of the four Beatles on the battlefield. The best-known member of the group, Mohammed Emwazi, aka Jihadi John, who was seen and heard on videos beheading prisoners, was killed in an airstrike in Raqqa, Syria, in November 2015. The fourth member, Aine Davis, is in Turkish custody. All four men were from West London.</p> <p>The four men tortured their hostages, according to U.S. officials, and are linked to more than two dozen beheadings. Emwazi was suspected of killing Americans James Foley and Steven Sotloff.</p> <p>According to the Times, U.S. officials were told in mid-January that the militia might be holding Kotey and Elsheikh, and U.S. forces used biometric data to confirm their identities.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 US strike hit Russian mercenaries
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/forces-hit-by-u-s-in-syria-included-russian-mercenaries-official-says/
GIST	<p>"Pro-regime" forces that attacked a Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) headquarters in northeastern Syria -- and were hit in return by U.S. airstrikes -- included Russian mercenaries, according to a Pentagon official. If Russians are among those who were killed, this would mark the first time a U.S. airstrike has killed Russians in Syria, CBS News' David Martin reports.</p> <p>American advisers were present at the SDF headquarters. Pentagon officials, however, do not believe the Russians were after the Americans. Officials believe they were trying to seize a nearby oil field.</p> <p>The U.S.-backed SDF, aided by coalition support, is battling Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) militants east of the Euphrates River.</p> <p>The U.S. airstrikes on Syrian government-backed troops Wednesday was a rare strike against forces that support Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime. Syrian government forces are active on the other side of the river around the city of Deir el-Zour.</p> <p>The U.S. coalition said in a statement that it launched the strikes in self-defense after as many as 500 attackers began what appeared to be a coordinated assault on an SDF headquarters, where Turkish forces are accompanied by U.S. troops.</p> <p>U.S. officials said no Americans were injured or killed in the attack by the pro-regime forces. They spoke on condition of anonymity as details were still emerging on the attack.</p> <p>Syrian state media said the U.S.-led coalition bombing left dozens killed and wounded.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Uruguay extends aid ex-Gitmo inmates
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/uruguay-extend-aide-guantanamo-inmates-year-52940871?
GIST	<p>Uruguay's government has decided to extend for another year the economic aid that it has given six former Guantanamo Bay prisoners who resettled in the country in 2014.</p> <p>The government liaison with the ex-Guantanamo inmates said Thursday that they will receive a minimum salary of about \$450 until January 2019. Christian Mirza said the government will also pay their rent and might give them extra money to learn a trade, seek psychological therapy and study Spanish.</p> <p>The financial support was expected to end in January 2018. But the former inmates have struggled to adjust in Uruguay.</p> <p>Mirza said that two of them work at a low-paying parking garage. Another teaches English and Arabic, and a fourth is selling Middle Eastern food. The others are unemployed.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	02/08 Drones size, numbers can overwhelm
SOURCE	https://www.economist.com/news/science-and-technology/21736498-their-small-size-and-large-numbers-can-overwhelm-defences-home-made-drones-now
GIST	<p>AN ATTACK on Russian forces in Syria on January 5th by 13 home-made drones is a good example of “asymmetric” warfare. On one side, exquisite high-tech weapons. On the other, cheap-as-chips disposable robot aircraft. Ten of the drones involved attacked a Russian airbase at Khmeimim. The other three went for a nearby naval base at Tartus. Rather than being quadcopters, the most popular design for commercial drones, the craft involved in these attacks (some of which are pictured above) resembled hobbyists’ model aircraft. They had three-metre wingspans, were built crudely of wood and plastic, and were powered by lawnmower engines. Each carried ten home-made shrapnel grenades under its wings.</p> <p>According to the Russian Ministry of Defence, which has so far refused to say who it thinks was responsible for the attack, the drones were guided by GPS and had a range of 100km. The electronics involved were off-the-shelf components, and the total cost of each drone was perhaps a couple of thousand dollars. The airframes bore a resemblance to those of Russian Orlan-10 drones, several of which have been shot down by rebel forces in Syria. The craft may thus have been a cheap, garage-built copy of captured kit.</p> <p>These particular drones, the Russians claim, were intercepted before they could cause any damage. However, several Russian aircraft were apparently damaged in an attack in Syria four days earlier, which was also, according to some accounts, carried out by drones. And there will certainly be other assaults of this sort. Guerrillas have been using commercial drones since 2015. Islamic State (IS), one of the groups active in Syria, makes extensive use of quadcopters to drop grenades. In 2017 alone the group posted videos of over 200 attacks. IS has also deployed fixed-wing aircraft based on the popular Skywalker X8 hobby drone. These have longer ranges than quadcopters and can carry bigger payloads. Other groups in Syria, and in Iraq as well, employ similar devices. Their use has spread, too, to non-politically-motivated criminals. In October, four Mexicans allegedly linked to a drug cartel were arrested with a bomb-carrying drone.</p> <p>Cheap shots</p> <p>Compared with military hardware, drone technology is both readily available and cheap. In 2014 a team at MITRE, a security think-tank based in Virginia, made a military-grade drone using commercial</p>

electronics, a 3D-printed airframe and open-source software. It cost \$2,000. A whole squadron of such craft could thus be assembled for less than the cost of a single shoulder-fired missile, let alone a modern combat aircraft. America's F-22 fighter, for example, costs over \$300m. A B-2 bomber is even more expensive.

Even a lone drone can do plenty of damage. In Ukraine last year, drones operated by Russian separatists (or perhaps by Russian special forces) attacked several ammunition dumps with incendiary grenades. They destroyed a number of these dumps, in one case setting off explosions which blew up a staggering 70,000 tonnes of munitions.

A growing appreciation of the threat from small drones has led to a rush for protection. Lieutenant-General Stephen Townsend, a former commander of Operation Inherent Resolve, America's anti-IS campaign, has called weaponised drones "the number one threat facing soldiers fighting IS". An American navy budget document describes the navy as "scrambling to improve defences against the rapidly evolving capabilities of remote-controlled devices". Existing defences are not geared up to cope with small drones, which are difficult to spot, identify and track, and which may be too numerous to stop. Jamming might be thought an obvious solution. Breaking the radio links between the operator and the drone, or confusing its GPS navigation, would make a drone crash or send it off course. Many jammers, with names like DEDRONE, DroneDefender and DroneShield, have already been employed by various countries. Six of the drones in the Syrian attack were brought down by such jammers, the others by guns and missiles.

Drones are, however, becoming increasingly autonomous. This means there is no operator link to jam. The Syrian drones were vulnerable to jamming because they relied on GPS and so crashed when their link to it was blocked. But new technologies such as optical navigation (which permits a drone to compare its surroundings with an on-board electronic map, and thus to know where it is) will make even GPS jammers useless. Hence the need for "kinetic solutions", to shoot drones down.

Small drones are surprisingly hard targets, however. Iraqi forces in Mosul used to joke that trying to deal with an IS drone attack was like being at a wedding celebration: everyone fired their Kalashnikovs into the air with no effect. A recent American army manual describes small drones as "very difficult to defeat using direct fire weapons". A single rifle bullet is likely to miss. A shotgun would work, but only at close range, and would mean that squaddies had to carry around an extra weapon all the time on the off chance of a drone attack. Also, since drones are not of standard sizes, the range to one is hard to estimate. The manual therefore suggests that rather than aiming directly at a drone, the entire squad should fire their weapons at a fixed point ahead of it, hoping to bring the craft down with a curtain of fire. The manual also advises commanders that the best course of action may be "immediate relocation of the unit to a safer location".

A numbers game

Among other projects, the American army is hurriedly upgrading its shoulder-launched Stinger missiles, which are used to attack low-flying aeroplanes and helicopters. Stingers were not designed to hit small drones, though, so the upgrade adds a proximity fuse which detonates when the missile is close enough to destroy a drone without actually having to make contact with it. Up to 600 "Manoeuvre Short Range Air Defence" teams equipped with these upgraded missiles will join American infantry units around the world. But the upgrades cost about \$55,000 each (on top of the basic \$120,000 cost of a Stinger), so only 1,147 are being purchased—about two per team, which is hardly enough to tackle a swarm of drones.

Another approach being tried out by the American army is a system called BLADE (Ballistic Low-Altitude Drone Engagement). This fits armoured vehicles' existing machine-gun turrets with radar guidance and computer control. That should provide some protection, but may still be impotent against a mass attack.

A similar problem applies at sea, where billion-dollar ships might have their defences overwhelmed by squadrons of cheap, jerry-built drones. The mainstay of American naval air defence is Aegis, an orchestrated arrangement of radars, computers, missiles and cannons. The short-range element of Aegis is

a Dalek-like, rapid-fire cannon called Phalanx, which spits out 75 rounds a second and can shoot down incoming cruise missiles. This will not cope well with lots of small drones, though. The navy is now upgrading Aegis's software to handle multiple simultaneous incoming targets by scheduling bursts of fire to destroy as many members of a swarm as possible. It is doubtful, however, whether one gun could account for more than a handful of attackers coming in from all directions at once. An unclassified study suggests that it could be overwhelmed by as few as eight.

Developers of drone-countering measures hope to overcome that by using laser weapons. Lasers hit their targets at the speed of light, have an unlimited supply of ammunition and cost less than a dollar a shot. Though such weapons have yet to achieve their designers' intentions of being able to shoot down crewed aircraft, they have been tested extensively and successfully against target drones. A variety of specifically anti-drone laser systems are now being developed, including Lockheed Martin's Athena, Raytheon's dune-buggy-mounted anti-drone laser, and LaWS, a creation of the American navy itself.

The crucial question is how rapidly such a laser system can spot, track and aim at its target, and how long the beam must play on the target in order to destroy it. The whole process is likely to take several seconds, and until it is complete, the laser cannot move on to repeat the procedure on another target. As with Phalanx, a simple calculation suggests individual anti-drone lasers would be able to deal with only a small number of attackers. If even one drone got through, the laser would probably be the priority target—for destroying it would leave the way open for a subsequent, unchallenged attack.

An American army document from 2016 thus emphasises the importance of stopping drones "left of launch"—that is, before they can take off. IS drone workshops and operators have been attacked to stop the drone threat. The Russians say they destroyed the unnamed group responsible for the mass drone attack in January, along with their drone-assembly and storage facility in Idlib, using laser-guided artillery. But when there are no runways or hangars, and drones can be operated from houses and garages, finding bases to attack is far from easy. Until adequate defences are in place, then, guerrilla drone swarms will be a real danger.

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HEADLINE	02/08 NKorea sends clear message w/parade
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/07/asia/north-korea-military-parade-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)North Korea staged a highly anticipated military parade through the capital Pyongyang Thursday, a diplomatic source told CNN, an event that has so far been hidden from the rest of the world.</p> <p>International media was not invited to cover the parade, which was to feature "hundreds" of rockets and missiles, diplomatic sources said last month.</p> <p>South Korean news agency Yonhap reported that as many as 50,000 people gathered in Kim Il Sung square to watch the event, which included around 13,000 soldiers.</p> <p>The parade began at 10:00 a.m. Pyongyang time, a diplomatic source with deep knowledge of North Korea's activities told CNN. It's possible that North Korean state television will air video of the event during its afternoon broadcast.</p> <p>The parade was held around the same time as a welcoming ceremony for hundreds of North Koreans who are in South Korea for the 2018 Winter Olympics.</p> <p>For North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, the parade is an opportunity to stoke patriotic fervor and to remind the world of his country's rapid progress on its nuclear program.</p> <p>For South Korea, it's a poke in the eye after efforts by President Moon Jae-in to present a united front as the two Koreas compete under the same flag.</p>

"The North Koreans tend to act out like this even during periods of quiet to demonstrate their independence and to try to convince us that their nuclear arsenal is beyond limits," said Adam Mount, a senior fellow at the Federation of American Scientists.

"It's a clear sign of defiance, and they intend it to be."

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HEADLINE	02/08 Mysterious death Border Patrol agent
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/08/us/border-patrol-agent-death-what-we-know/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The mystery surrounding the death of US Border Patrol agent Rogelio "Roger" Martinez is nowhere close to being solved.</p> <p>In the more than two months since Martinez's patrolled the West Texas desert for the last time, the FBI interviewed hundreds of people, combed through cellular data and analyzed DNA from the scene.</p> <p>Yet, authorities are still trying to determine how Martinez got injured and eventually died. Here is what we know about the mysterious death and the investigation.</p> <p>What happened? Martinez, 36, died late on the evening of November 18. He was patrolling alone near Interstate 10 when he stopped his vehicle about 12 miles east of Van Horn, Texas.</p> <p>About 11:20 p.m. Martinez and another agent, Stephen "Michael" Garland, were found injured near a concrete-lined culvert -- a tunnel used for water drainage.</p> <p>The agents were patrolling in separate vehicles and it's unclear why both ended up at the culvert, according to the Border Patrol.</p> <p>Martinez had severe head injuries and other wounds such as broken bones. He was flown to a hospital in El Paso that night and died a few hours later, the FBI said.</p> <p>Garland was also injured but he survived. He told investigators he doesn't remember anything about what happened.</p> <p>They called for help The FBI says Garland spoke to a Border Patrol dispatcher on the phone. He was disoriented and unsure of his location, but he told the dispatcher he and Martinez were hurt.</p> <p>"The second Border Patrol agent also made a statement to the effect of, 'We ran into a culvert,' 'I ran into a culvert,' or 'I think I ran into a culvert,'" the FBI said.</p> <p>The Border Patrol dispatch told Garland to go to his vehicle and activate his emergency lights so that first responders could find them, the FBI said.</p> <p>Authorities were also alerted by Garland's wife, who called the Van Horn Border Patrol station saying she'd received a cell phone call in which her husband seemed confused and disoriented, according to an agent who spoke with her.</p> <p>No evidence of murder Authorities appear ready to rule out the possibility that Martinez and his partner were attacked or ambushed.</p> <p>The agents did not suffer "defensive wounds" and investigators did not find "third-party blood or DNA evidence" in the scene or the agents' clothing, according to an internal memo, from acting US Customs and</p>

Border Protection Commissioner Kevin McAleenan, which was obtained by CNN.

In the memo, McAleenan also indicated that no evidence suggested other people other than the agents were at the scene the night of the incident.

"None of the more than 650 interviews completed, locations searched, or evidence collected and analyzed have produced evidence that would support the existence of a scuffle, altercation, or attack," the FBI said in a statement released Wednesday.

In December, agents were chasing a tip that two undocumented brothers, suspected drug smugglers, had attacked the agents, according to a search warrant filed unsealed in New Mexico. But they are not connected to Martinez's death, or his partner's injuries, the FBI said Wednesday.

No other suspects have been linked to the incident.

The FBI has considered other theories, such as an accident or an altercation between the two agents, a Department of Justice official with knowledge of the investigation had said.

Emmerson Buie Jr., the special agent in charge of the FBI's El Paso division, said investigators have not "conclusively determined" how the two agents ended up at the bottom of the culvert.

A Customs and Border Protection spokesperson declined to comment on the case.

Autopsy results are inconclusive

A medical examiner in Texas said Martinez died from blunt injuries to his head, but the manner of his death is "undetermined," according to an autopsy report released Tuesday.

Martinez had fractures to his skull, right jaw, upper ribs and his right collarbone, the report by the El Paso County Medical Examiner's Office says.

The agent had cuts in his scalp, the report says, and a large bruise on his right shoulder. There was also a purple discoloration behind his right ear.

A toxicological test found a small amount of the barbiturate butalbital in Martinez's blood. The drug is often combined with aspirin or acetaminophen to treat headaches and pain.

Some believe it was an attack

Despite the FBI's conclusion that there's no evidence of an attack, the Border Patrol union still believes the agent's injuries were the result of an attack.

"Our view hasn't changed. Our view is he was attacked," Chris Cabrera, a spokesman for the National Border Patrol Council told CNN referring to the FBI's investigation. "It seems to me that they don't have any leads."

The union was quick to say the agents were attacked after the incident. The assertion has been echoed by Texas politicians such as Gov. Greg Abbott, Sen. Ted Cruz and others.

On Twitter, President Donald Trump said the injured agent had been "brutally beaten" and called again for the construction of a wall between the United States and Mexico.

Culberson County Sheriff Oscar Carrillo, who responded that night, said it didn't look like an attack to him.

Agent's family finds it hard to believe

Martinez's fiancée, Angela Ochoa, and his family have said they don't understand how the agent suffered such severe injuries.

	<p>"I find it hard (to believe) that a fall could have caused all the damage that he had," she said. "And as far as him being sideswept, that couldn't have happened because he was not off the freeway, he was on the side road. From the damage to his face, there's no way -- there's no way," she said.</p> <p>She believes the answers may lie with surviving agent Garland.</p> <p>"I mean, I know he saw something," Ochoa told CNN in December. "I know he knows. But what he knows, I can't tell you. I don't know."</p> <p>Neither she nor the Martinez family had heard from Garland since the agent's death, she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Skagit County: stop stealing trees
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/skagit-county-stop-stealing-our-trees
GIST	<p>ROCKPORT, Wash. - Skagit County wants to know who's been stealing dozens of trees from a popular park.</p> <p>The County tweeted a message Thursday saying, "Stop stealing our trees."</p> <p>It said they've lost dozens of trees to theft at Sauk Park and along the Cascade Trail.</p> <p>The County said it looked like the trees are being cut down then hauled offsite and illegally sold as firewood.</p> <p>The County said it's now working with the sheriff's office in the hopes of finding the suspects.</p> <p>They urged park goers and hikers to call 911 if they see anything suspicious.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Mysterious wind blows down big trees
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/local/weather/article/Mysterious-wind-blows-down-big-trees-in-W-12562651.php
GIST	<p>What in the world could possibly blow down more than 100 trees in the middle of a national park when no other major weather event was recorded in the area?</p> <p>That's a good question, and one that could be explained either simply — it was a downdraft wind — or through a Sherlock Holmes-style breakdown of events, courtesy local weather guru Cliff Mass.</p> <p>To wit: In the wee morning hours of Jan. 27, 2018, some kind of significant wind event managed to blow down 110 trees across a large swath of forest on the north shore of Lake Quinault, on Washington's Olympic Peninsula.</p> <p>Such wind was not recorded at nearby weather stations, nor did radar records from the time show anything more than some high and low pressure systems meeting, according to Mass.</p> <p>The explanation espoused by The Daily World was that the wind came from a "microburst," a rare wind event that creates a downward wind in a localized area.</p> <p>But a National Weather Service meteorologist told Mass it would've taken winds of 70 to 80 mph to snap trees off in the way it happened that night, so Mass dismissed that possibility.</p>

National Park Service reports to Mass indicated that the wind event likely came from the north — a northerly wind — and records showed a seismic record of the event. In other words, it was such a force of trees falling that it looked like a small earthquake.

That's some wind.

But surface wind records from around the time of the incident didn't show any major winds, and those that were recorded were blowing in the wrong direction.

No convective system that would created a "microburst," either, according to Mass.

The only thing that could, possibly, have created the wind to down the trees was this: "a frontal zone was approaching, with warm air and southerly flow surging in aloft, while cooler easterly flow dominated near the surface."

Mass noted that the front was linked with a low pressure system that did produce some strong winds around Western Washington later that day, but still, at the time, no major winds recorded nearby.

So what caused 110 trees to blow down in the middle of a forest?

That mystery remains unsolved.

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HEADLINE	02/09 Racism rises in Italy electoral campaign
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/02/09/rising-racism-taints-italian-electoral-campaign.html
GIST	<p>VERONA, Italy – When hundreds of hardcore fans of Italy's Hellas Verona Seria A soccer club chanted "Adolf Hitler is my friend" and sang that their team embraced the swastika, at a festive gathering in the summer, Italian Jewish communities complained — and waited.</p> <p>Local officials initially dismissed the video as a "prank," and condemnation only came several months later, after another video from the same event, profaning Christian objects, also began circulating on social media.</p> <p>"These episodes should absolutely not be dismissed," said Bruno Carmi, the head of Verona's tiny Jewish community of about 100, speaking in an interview at the Verona synagogue, which is flanked by two armed police patrols. "In my opinion, whoever draws a simple swastika on the wall knows what it means. And we know very well where that swastika brought us."</p> <p>Racist and anti-Semitic expressions have been growing more bold, widespread and violent in Italy. Anti-migrant rhetoric is playing an unprecedented role in shaping the campaign for the March 4 national elections, which many says is worsening tensions and even encouraging violence.</p> <p>Hate crimes motivated by racial or religious bias in Italy rose more than 10-fold, from 71 incidents in 2012 to 803 in 2016, according to police statistics. The five-year period corresponded with an explosion in migrant arrivals.</p> <p>On Saturday, a right-wing extremist shot and wounded six African immigrants in the small central Italian city of Macerata. Police say the suspect claims to have been acting out of revenge after a Nigerian immigrant was accused of dismembering an 18-year-old teen whose remains were found three days earlier. The shooting drew widespread, but not universal, condemnation.</p> <p>The attack also had a political taint. The alleged gunman, Luca Traini, was a failed candidate for the right-wing, anti-migrant Northern League last year and had previously flirted with more extreme neo-fascist movements. Police seized Nazi and white supremacist propaganda from his bedroom.</p>

The night before the shooting, Northern League leader Matteo Salvini had cited the teen's murder in a campaign appearance in Verona, pledging to send home 150,000 migrants if elected. He only dug in further after the attack.

Former Premier Silvio Berlusconi, who is competing with Salvini for leadership of the center-right coalition, significantly upped the political ante after the shooting. He claimed that 600,000 migrants were in Italy illegally, calling them "a social bomb ready to explode because they are ready to commit crimes," and threatened to deport many.

"The facts of Macerata in some ways show that in recent years there has been a process of cultural, social and political legitimization of racism that is creating enormous damage, most of all at the expense of people's lives," said Grazia Naletto, president of Lunaria, a Rome-based non-governmental agency that compiles a database of racist incidents in Italy.

Lunaria counts 84 cases of racist violence against individuals in the last three years, including 11 racially motivated murders, a statistic that Naletto called unprecedented in Italy.

A report on hate for the Italian parliament last summer reported that 40 percent of Italians believe other religions pose a threat, especially the Muslim faith. It also said anti-Semitism is shared by one in five Italians. The IPSOS MORI polling company found that Italy is the least informed country in the world regarding immigration, with most people overestimating by more than three times the number of immigrants living in Italy.

Findings by the swg research institute based in Trieste published in January said the demographic most vulnerable to neo-Nazi ideals are those aged 25-34, and that among Italians overall, 55 percent of those in the lowest income range either indulge in or oppose combating neo-Nazi and neo-fascist ideals.

Experts cite many reasons for the spread of extremism and racist expressions that until recently were mostly relegated to the margins of society. They include a superficial understanding of history, as well as an economy weakened by a long crisis that sidelined many ordinary workers and barred many young people from entering the work force.

More recently, there is the added pressure of migrants arriving from across the Mediterranean, with arrivals nearing 120,000 last year and topping 180,000 the year before.

The head of the immigration office at the Verona diocese concedes that many Italians have not accepted that theirs has become a multicultural society, despite the fact that about 9 percent of the nation's residents are foreigners. The diocese where he works hosts 11 foreign Christian communities, but resistance to integration is entrenched, he said.

"Romanian youths have less trouble integrating than ones from Ghana or Sri Lanka," the Rev. Giuseppe Mirandola said. "That is to say, we still have difficulty with the color of the skin."

He said even Pope Francis' calls to welcome migrants in this predominantly Roman Catholic nation have fallen on some deaf ears.

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HEADLINE	02/08 Official: NYPD ignored all ICE requests
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/08/nypd-ignored-more-than-1500-federal-requests-to-detain-immigrants-last-year-official-says.html
GIST	New York City police ignored all 1,526 requests from federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to detain undocumented immigrants for up to 48 hours last year, a top NYPD official said Wednesday.

	<p>The Daily News reported that Oleg Chernyavsky, the NYPD's legislative affairs director, revealed the numbers at a City Council meeting.</p> <p>The number of requests for 2017 was nearly 20 times higher than the 80 the department received over the previous year. Chernyavsky said the department responded to just two of ICE's 2016 requests because those immigrants had federal arrest warrants.</p> <p>Under New York City law, prisoners can only be handed over to ICE if they've been convicted of one of 170 crimes and federal officials present a warrant.</p> <p>Chernyavsky said the police response to ICE requests "speaks volumes to our intent as a city. ... It's important for victims of crimes, irrespective of their immigration status, to trust their police and to come forward and inform their police."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Study: alarming find on ibuprofen use
SOURCE	https://www.aol.com/article/news/2018/02/08/many-people-take-dangerously-high-amounts-of-ibuprofen/23356829/
GIST	<p>(Reuters Health) - Many adults who use ibuprofen and other so-called nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) drugs take too much, increasing their risk of serious side effects like internal bleeding and heart attacks, a U.S. study suggests.</p> <p>About 15 percent of adults taking ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) or other NSAIDs like aspirin, naproxen (Aleve), celecoxib (Celebrex), meloxicam (Mobic) and diclofenac (Voltaren) exceeded the maximum recommended daily dose for these drugs, the study found.</p> <p>"NSAIDs are among the most commonly used medicines in the U.S. and worldwide," said lead study author Dr. David Kaufman of Boston University.</p> <p>"These drugs can have serious side effects, including gastrointestinal bleeding and heart attacks, and are often taken without medical oversight because many products are available over-the-counter," Kaufman said by email. "The attitude that users can choose their own dose regardless of label directions, along with poor knowledge of dosing limits, is associated with exceeding the daily limit."</p> <p>One limitation of the study is that researchers only focused on recent and current ibuprofen users, which may not reflect what doses might be typical for sporadic or new users, the authors note.</p> <p>Even so, the findings highlight a potential downside of making NSAIDs widely available without a prescription, said Dr. Gunnar Gislason, director of research for the Danish Heart Foundation in Copenhagen.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Expert: Sinaloa cartel moved to fentanyl
SOURCE	http://www.bostonherald.com/news/local_coverage/2018/02/expert_sinaloa_cartel_moved_to_fentanyl_to_meet_demand
GIST	The Sinaloa cartel is involved in fentanyl now because they realize it's extraordinarily profitable. The cost is very low, but the scary thing is it's being shipped in powder form. The easiest way to die is to inhale it.

It's synthetic so all you need is a chemist. It's a no-brainer for them. They don't need to wait for a harvest. The business dictates that fentanyl now replaces heroin. They can even package it and make it look like pills.

This is the latest permutation in the drug organization. It was started by hillbillies literally firing guns in the air. Those days are gone.

The Sinaloa cartel is morphing like any capitalist business. And they understand distribution like FedEx does.

They are very, very brutal in Mexico, but like to keep a low profile in the States. They've learned their lessons from the Bloods, Crips and Colombians who taught them don't make a big mess.

But like all the cartels in Mexico, they have become savage, medieval. They have no mercy for adversaries. The local papers in Mexico run monthly totals of beheadings.

It's a free-for-all in Mexico now since El Chapo's arrest over who will run the Sinaloa cartel.

These guys as a state and a culture begins in the 1970s. Sinaloa is a Mexican state along the Pacific coast with the resort city of Mazatlan the capital.

The region is known for its tomatoes, melons and cucumbers. But there was never any money for the poorest of the poor. Then they began growing marijuana.

Then they helped the Colombians traffic cocaine across the border and ultimately took that business over, too.

The cartel never really cared about heroin, it was too scuzzy. But America's culture of pain pills led to addiction and had those folks switching to heroin. The cartel saw it would be a big market.

Fentanyl is now showing up because our demand is so high we've just used up all the heroin.

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HEADLINE	02/09 Los Zetas cartel faction leader captured
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mexico-violence/mexican-authorities-capture-los-zetas-drug-cartel-faction-leader-idUSKBN1FT0RX
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Mexican authorities have captured Los Zetas drug cartel member and faction leader Jose Maria Guizar, also known as "Z43", two security sources said on Thursday.</p> <p>The U.S. State Department had offered a reward of up to \$5 million for information that would lead to his capture. On its website it describes Guizar as the commander of his own faction of the violent Los Zetas in the south of Mexico.</p> <p>"Guizar is responsible for the importation of thousands of kilograms of cocaine and methamphetamine to the United States on a yearly basis," the website says.</p> <p>Guizar, an American citizen, has been charged in drug trafficking indictments in Texas and Virginia.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Judge: neo-Nazi must reveal location
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/neo-nazi-andrew-anglin-must-come-out-of-hiding-judge-rules-anglins-lawyer-says-he-lives-in-cambodia-now?ref=home

GIST	<p>Vanished neo-Nazi Andrew Anglin must give up his whereabouts, a federal court in Montana ordered Wednesday.</p> <p>Anglin, who runs the white supremacist website Daily Stormer, has been on the lam for a year, fleeing a lawsuit by a Jewish woman whose address Anglin posted online. The woman, Tanya Gersh, is suing Anglin for intimidation and emotional distress after Anglin encouraged his anti-Semitic following to call her family members or “stop by” her Montana home. Anglin’s attorneys have attempted to dodge the lawsuit by claiming he lives outside the country, and that he worries for his personal safety if he reveals his location.</p> <p>A federal court isn’t buying it.</p> <p>Anglin has until February 16 to tell the court where he’s living, ruled U.S. Magistrate Judge Jeremiah Lynch.</p> <p>The lawsuit against him originated in the Montana hometown of fellow white supremacist Richard Spencer.</p> <p>Spencer, who has called for ethnic cleansing and shouted “hail Trump” to a crowd of followers throwing Nazi salutes, is from Whitefish, Montana. After Spencer’s profile as a white supremacist rose in 2016, Spencer’s mother became involved in a dispute with Gersh, a local real-estate agent. Gersh said she had simply decided not to work with Spencer’s mother.</p> <p>But Spencer’s mother (or Spencer himself, Gersh’s lawyers claim) wrote a blog post accusing Gersh of harassment. Anglin quickly took up the story on the Daily Stormer. “Jews Targeting Richard Spencer’s Mother for Harassment and Extortion,” Anglin wrote. “TAKE ACTION!”</p> <p>Anglin posted Gersh’s phone number, address, and contact information for her family.</p> <p>“Please call her and tell her what you think. And hey—if you’re in the area, maybe you should stop by and tell her in person what you think of her actions,” he wrote, adding homophobic and anti-Semitic slurs about Gersh’s 12-year-old son.</p> <p>The subsequent “troll army” bombarded Gersh with threatening phone calls, emails, and text messages. In April 2017, she partnered with the Southern Poverty Law Center to sue Anglin for distress and intimidation.</p> <p>The neo-Nazi hasn’t been seen since.</p> <p>Anglin’s lawyer Marc Randazza claims Anglin can’t face the lawsuit because he does not belong to any U.S. state. Randazza said Anglin fears for his physical safety if his address was revealed, even if it’s in court documents and not in a blog post, like Anglin did to Gersh.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 ICC probes Philippines, Venezuela
SOURCE	http://time.com/5141039/icc-hague-venezuela-philippines/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>(THE HAGUE, Netherlands) — The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court announced Thursday that she is opening preliminary probes into alleged crimes by police and security forces in the Philippines and Venezuela.</p> <p>Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said that the probe on Venezuela will look at allegations that since April 2017 government forces “frequently used excessive force to disperse and put down demonstrations,” and abused some opposition members in detention.</p>

The Philippines probe will focus on allegations since July 2016 that thousands of people have been killed in the government's war on drugs.

"While some of such killings have reportedly occurred in the context of clashes between or within gangs, it is alleged that many of the reported incidents involved extra-judicial killings in the course of police anti-drug operations," Bensouda said.

A Filipino lawyer last year presented documents to the court which he said contained evidence of the alleged involvement of President Rodrigo Duterte in the killings of suspected drug dealers and other crime suspects.

"It is a case for crimes against humanity against President Rodrigo Duterte and senior officials in his government," lawyer Jude Sabio told The Associated Press outside the court after presenting to prosecutors a 77-page file outlining the allegations.

Bensouda said in 2016 she was deeply concerned about the reports of the killings, and that statements by "high officials" in the Philippines "seem to condone such killings."

In the Philippines, Duterte's spokesman, Harry Roque Jr., told reporters Thursday that the government had been notified that the ICC was to start a preliminary examination. He said Duterte welcomed the development because it gives him a chance to clear his name.

Regarding the probe on Venezuela, Bensouda said some protesters had also resorted to violence that left members of the security forces dead or injured. The so-called "preliminary examinations" are a first step toward possible full-blown investigations that could lead to indictments by the global court.

The ICC is a court of last resort that takes on cases when national authorities cannot or will not launch domestic prosecutions. Both the Philippines and Venezuela are members of the court, meaning that crimes there could fall under its jurisdiction.

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HEADLINE	02/08 Fatal road-rage shooting on I-5 near Fife
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/895035/road-rage-shooting-fife/
GIST	<p>Traffic snarled on southbound I-5 in near Federal Way Thursday night after a fatal road-rage incident involving gunfire.</p> <p>The Washington State Patrol says a woman on a motorcycle and a passenger car pulled over to the left lane of the freeway not far from the King-Pierce County border. A physical altercation ensued shortly before 5 p.m. between the female motorcyclist and a male driver.</p> <p>Troopers say the woman shot the male driver, then called 911 and waited for police to arrive.</p> <p>Two left lanes were blocked near the Fife curve on I-5 during the Thursday evening commute as authorities investigated the scene.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 'Far-reaching' Mass. wiretap in drug sting
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fentanyl-drug-bust-operation-high-hopes-boston-massachusetts-wiretap-investigation/
GIST	State and federal law enforcement officials announced Thursday they seized some 77 pounds of various illicit drugs in the Boston area -- including more than 30 pounds of fentanyl -- as the result of "Operation High Hopes," according to a press release by the Suffolk County District Attorney's office. They say it's

"one of the longest, most far-reaching, and most successful state wiretap investigations in Massachusetts history."

Suffolk County District Attorney Daniel Conley says the investigation led to more than a dozen arrests and dismantled two Boston-area drug trafficking organizations. About \$300,000 in alleged drug money was also seized. He added that fentanyl, heroin, cocaine and opiate tablets are believed to have originated from Mexico's Sinaloa Cartel.

Fentanyl is so powerful, Conley says, that mere milligrams can be lethal.

"The number of overdoses it could have caused is truly staggering," Conley wrote in the press release. "Individuals who buy and sell at this level aren't users. They're not small time dealers, either. They're certainly not selling to support a habit. They're trafficking in addictive substances that claim more lives in Massachusetts than all homicides, all suicides and all car crashes, statewide, combined."

Boston Police Commissioner William B. Evans heralded the successful sting in the written statement: "These arrests and seizures will have a tremendous impact on the quality of life in Boston and many other Massachusetts cities and towns," Evans said. "I commend the work of my detectives and all our law enforcement partners who worked tirelessly over the past six months of Operation High Hopes."

The DEA Special Agent in Charge Michael J. Ferguson echoed that sentiment: "Those responsible for distributing lethal drugs like fentanyl to the citizens of Massachusetts need to be held accountable for their actions. DEA's top priority is combating the opioid epidemic by working with our local, county and state law enforcement partners to bring to justice those that distribute this poison."

Edward Soto-Perez, 43, of Roxbury, Nelson Catala-Otero, 37, of Brockton and Julio Cuello, 52, of Dorchester were arraigned in November on multiple drug trafficking charges after the execution of wiretap-based search warrants, according to the press release. They were held on bails ranging from \$100,000 to \$250,000 and will return to court Feb. 13.

Robert Contreras, 42, of Roxbury, is their alleged supplier and was one of more than a dozen people arrested Thursday. He's being held on \$1 million bail and will return to court Feb. 28.

The investigation began in July 2017 as authorities were closing in on Soto-Perez's operation using cooperating witnesses, controlled purchases, physical surveillance and other means -- but he was smart in concealing where he stored his supply or who his supplier was.

"In the months that followed, the court extended the wiretap 11 times and approved interceptions on more than two dozen phones. Investigators doubled as codebreakers to reveal the criminal enterprise as it unfolded ... Ironically, the wiretap that Soto-Perez's precautions made necessary revealed facts and evidence we might never have obtained otherwise.

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HEADLINE	02/08 Mexico officials bust corrupt police ring
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mexico-arrests-police-kidnapping-man-52933253?
GIST	<p>Authorities in Mexico's Gulf coast state of Veracruz announced charges Thursday of "forced disappearance" against 19 current or former state police officials and officers, saying they kidnapped and killed 15 innocent civilians.</p> <p>Veracruz Gov. Miguel Angel Yunes said the victims included two women and two minors, and the alleged perpetrators reached to very top of the police structure.</p> <p>Veracruz has been the scene of grisly police kidnap-killings before but in the cases announced Thursday, state police officials and their subordinate officers were apparently working for gangs or drug cartels,</p>

	<p>Yunes said. The crimes occurred during the 2010-2016 administration of former Gov. Javier Duarte, who himself is in prison facing corruption charges, and his predecessor.</p> <p>Yunes said the state's former Public Safety Secretary — in effect the top police commander — and his directors of special forces, prisons and state police headed a ring that abducted, tortured, interrogated, raped and killed private citizens.</p> <p>"These corrupt police, like the regime they served, placed themselves at the service of the criminals," Yunes said. Two of the high-ranking officials were already under arrest on other charges, one is a fugitive, and the rest were placed under arrest.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/09 Indonesia foils artifact smuggling
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/skulls-mail-indonesia-foils-artifact-smuggling-52953286?
GIST	<p>Customs officials on the Indonesian tourist island of Bali said Friday that they've foiled an attempt to mail 24 elaborately decorated human skulls to the Netherlands.</p> <p>The Customs Department said that cartons containing the skulls were intercepted on two separate dates in January. The skulls are believed to be culturally-significant artifacts from other parts of Indonesia.</p> <p>They were labeled as manufactured from synthetic materials but found to be human after being examined by experts from the Balinese Cultural Heritage Conservation Center.</p> <p>Customs official Ni Aniek said the skulls are probably from Papua, a Melanesian region that makes up easternmost Indonesia, and Kalimantan on the island of Borneo, home to indigenous Dayak peoples.</p> <p>No one has been arrested.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Seattle to clear minor pot convictions
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/seattle-to-vacate-misdemeanor-marijuana-convictions-cases/281-516039875
GIST	<p>The City of Seattle will move to vacate misdemeanor marijuana possession convictions prosecuted by the city before it was legalized in Washington state.</p> <p>During a press conference Thursday morning, Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan and City Attorney Pete Holmes announced plans to ask Seattle's municipal court to dismiss charges and vacate convictions for misdemeanor marijuana convictions before I-502 was passed in 2012.</p> <p>Holmes and Mayor Durkan made the announcement Thursday at the Rainier Community Center.</p> <p>The measure will help "bring restorative justice for the communities who have been disproportionately targeted by the criminal justice system and furthers the City's commitment to eliminate racial disparities," according to a press release.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/08 Texas: 13 cases biker shooting dropped
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/08/texas-prosecutor-dismisses-13-cases-tied-to-biker-shooting.html

<p>GIST</p>	<p>FORT WORTH, Texas – A Texas prosecutor on Thursday dismissed 13 cases stemming from a 2015 shootout in Waco involving bikers and police and recused himself from two others, placing into doubt the criminal prosecution of the more than 130 bikers still awaiting trial.</p> <p>The actions came hours before a scheduled hearing for Jorge Salinas, whose case was among those dismissed. Current and former staff had been due to speak at the hearing about corruption allegations against District Attorney Abel Reyna, who faces a Republican primary election in March. The hearing was canceled.</p> <p>According to a motion filed Thursday, the prosecutor dismissed Salinas' case "in order to focus its efforts and resources on co-defendants with a higher level of culpability."</p> <p>The May 2015 shootout outside a Twin Peaks restaurant left nine bikers dead and 20 injured. Local police arrested 177 bikers after the mayhem, and more than 150 people were eventually indicted on felony charges of engaging in organized criminal activity resulting in the deaths and injuries. Ballistics evidence showed that police bullets struck four bikers, killing at least two of them. The three officers involved in the shooting were no-billed by a grand jury after being cleared by an internal investigation.</p> <p>Nearly three years later, only one biker, Dallas locomotive driver Christopher "Jake" Carrizal, has been tried. Carrizal's November trial resulted in a mistrial when jurors were unable to reach a unanimous verdict. The second biker set for trial rejected a plea deal in December.</p> <p>"The way people were arrested was fairly indiscriminate, it was predictable that some of these cases would be dropped," said Sandra Guerra Thompson, a University of Houston law professor, adding, "I wouldn't doubt if we see more."</p> <p>More than 100 bikers, including 11 whose cases were dismissed Thursday, have civil suits pending against the district attorney's office and the Waco police department claiming that they were wrongfully arrested.</p> <p>A federal judge in Austin had stayed the cases pending the outcome of their criminal cases. Dallas attorney Don Tittle, whose firm is representing 122 bikers' civil cases, said he hopes the dismissals mean "that there's no longer any impediment" to proceeding in civil court.</p>
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<p>HEADLINE</p>	<p>02/08 Suburban mom takes down drug ring</p>
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>https://www.cbsnews.com/news/suburban-mom-takes-down-synthetic-marijuana-drug-ring-she-says-killed-her-son/</p>
<p>GIST</p>	<p>A suburban mom has taken down a drug ring she says killed her son, CBS Chicago reports. "I always felt like he was by my side helping me," said Karen Dobner of her 19-year-old son, Max Dobner.</p> <p>In 2011, he suffered hallucinations and a panic attack after taking a form of synthetic marijuana sold as "potpourri" and drove 100 mph into a house, accidentally killing himself.</p> <p>Karen Dobner partly blames Ruby Moshin, who sold Max and his friend a product called iAroma — a type of synthetic marijuana made of mushroom leaves sprayed with chemicals. The teens bought it in 2011 at a store Moshin owned at a mall in Aurora, a Chicago suburb.</p> <p>"I don't know what kind of mother sells drugs in the mall to kids," Dobner said.</p> <p>Moshin did not comment as she entered the federal courthouse to be sentenced for her role in selling iAroma. Evidence showed she bought more than 1,000 packets of iAroma to sell out of the store, calling it potpourri.</p> <p>"Nobody buys potpourri by the gram ... \$20 a gram," said Dobner.</p>

After her son's death, she wanted justice. For seven years, she fought to take down everyone involved in the manufacturing, distribution and sale of iAroma to her son.

Dobner credits CBS2 Chicago with helping her cause.

"The CBS investigation started everything rolling," said Dobner.

The station's investigative team went undercover and showed that months after Max Dobner's death, Moshin was still selling the product. Police also made undercover buys.

"She continued to sell, and that's why she's going to prison," Dobner said.

Dobner also hired Attorney Shawn Collins, who filed suit against those involved with the iAroma that led to Max Dobner's crash.

"Through our investigation, we learned that there was literally a nationwide distribution network — North Carolina, Iowa, Texas, Louisiana," Collins said.

Four people involved in Max's death have been indicted, said Dobner. Three people, including Moshin, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute synthetic drugs. A fourth, a wholesaler, pleaded guilty to intentionally distributing drugs in Illinois, North Carolina and Louisiana.

Dobner said she won for her son, but would trade everything to have him back. She has been working for years to warn people about the dangers of synthetic marijuana, which can be 800 times stronger than real marijuana and especially dangerous because consumers don't know what ingredients are used.

Moshin will serve two years in federal prison.

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HEADLINE	02/08 Toronto police: serial killer probe
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/08/americas/toronto-landscaper-killings-charges/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Toronto police have recovered the remains of at least six people on a property linked to accused serial killer Bruce McArthur, Detective Sgt. Hank Idsinga said Thursday.</p> <p>At least some of the remains have been identified as belonging to Andrew Kinsman, who was last seen in June 2017 and who is one of five missing men McArthur is charged with killing, Idsinga said.</p> <p>Authorities have not identified the five other sets of remains.</p> <p>Idsinga said McArthur, 66, stored landscaping equipment at the property and the remains were found in potted plants.</p> <p>Police have identified more than 30 properties where McArthur worked. They urged his past clients to come forward.</p> <p>McArthur is due in Toronto provincial criminal court on February 14.</p>
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NEWS

Egypt army launches major anti-terrorism security operation in Sinai, Nile Delta
Daily Sabah

Egypt launched Friday a major security operation against "terrorists and criminal organizations" in the province of Sinai - where security forces are battling Daesh terrorists - and elsewhere, an army spokesman said. The operation is under way in northern and central Sinai as well as areas in the northern ...

Egypt begins security operation against 'terrorists' - Al-Arabiya
Full Coverage

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Syria calls rare US airstrike an effort 'to support terrorism'

The Ledger

This photo provided by the Syrian Civil Defense White Helmets, which has been authenticated based on its contents and other AP reporting, shows civil defense workers carrying a wounded man after airstrikes hit a rebel-held suburb near Damascus, Syria, Thursday. Syrian rescue workers and activists ...

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Ethiopia: Freedom for journalist Eskinder Nega must lead to freedom for all prisoners of conscience
Amnesty International

"But the world must not lose sight of the thousands of other people still languishing in jail on trumped up and politically-motivated terrorism charges, including Bekele Gerba, Addisu Bulala, Woubshet Taye. All prisoners of conscience must be released immediately and unconditionally and compensated ...

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US designates Pakistan-based trio as 'global terrorists', imposes sanctions on them

Hindustan Times

The US Department of Treasury designated the trio as "global terrorists" for their links to terror outfits like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and The Taliban. This has been done as part of our efforts to disrupt South Asian terrorist support networks, the Treasury said. The three include Rahman Zeb Faqir Muhammad ...

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To: Larm, Doug <doug.larm@wsfc.wa.gov>
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: 2018_02_05 Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources
(InFOCUS)
Date: Mon Feb 05 2018 06:52:01 CST
Attachments: 2018_02_05.pdf

InFOCUS

Monday

5 February 2018

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Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

MONDAY – 5 FEB 2018



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Event Calendar

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Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php
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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	02/05 IOC refuses Russian athletes to Olympics
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/05/sport/ioc-russia-winter-olympics/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)In a fresh twist to the doping saga that threatens to overshadow the Winter Olympics, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has refused a request for 15 previously banned Russian athletes and coaches to attend the PyeongChang Games.</p> <p>The 13 athletes and two coaches were among 28 Russians whose lifetime bans for doping were overturned by the Swiss-based Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) Thursday.</p> <p>CAS ruled there was insufficient evidence to show they had broken doping rules during the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics.</p> <p>But the IOC said Monday its invitation review panel examined applications on behalf of the 15 individuals and had lingering suspicions about potential anti-doping violations.</p> <p>The row puts the IOC, which has always claimed to have the final say on which athletes compete in the Games, at loggerheads with sports law's highest court just days before the Olympics begin in South Korea on February 9.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Wildfires scorch northeast Oklahoma
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/oklahoma/articles/2018-02-04/wildfires-scorch-thousands-of-acres-in-northeastern-oklahoma
GIST	<p>HOMINY, Okla. (AP) — Firefighters say wildfires have scorched thousands of acres of dry grasslands in northeastern Oklahoma</p> <p>Dozens of firefighters fought a grassfire along Oklahoma Highway 20 in Osage County Saturday evening that officials say burned up to 10,000 acres. Officials say another large fire in Mayes County burned hundreds of acres more.</p> <p>Authorities say no homes or other structures were damaged in the fires and no injuries were reported.</p> <p>The Oklahoma National Guard used helicopters to drop large buckets of water to help fight the Osage County fire.</p> <p>The National Weather Service says the combination of dry air, windy conditions and warm temperatures will likely create critical wildfire conditions across the state. Mayes County Emergency Management Director Michael Dunham says a small spark is all it takes to ignite the dry grasslands.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Inside W. Va. Intelligence/Fusion Center
SOURCE	https://www.wvnews.com/statejournal/government/state-intelligence-fusion-center-staying-ahead-of-next-threat-pauley/article_a2c0643c-ad7f-5f65-8c72-97ca72a92694.html
GIST	<p>CHARLESTON — High above the congested traffic on Kanawha Boulevard, across the river from the state Capitol, Scott Pauley helps manage a team of eight intelligence analysts constantly searching for the next potential threat.</p> <p>Pauley is deputy director of the West Virginia Intelligence/Fusion Center located inside the old Columbia Gas Building in Charleston. The highly secure facility is a single point of contact allowing information to flow — whether it’s from the federal level or what Pauley calls the “boots on the ground.”</p> <p>“These are the police officers, local law enforcement and the everyday folks out developing cases,” Pauley said.</p> <p>Fusion centers were born from the ashes of 9/11, charged with a universal mission to bring the national security and intelligence-gathering mentality to local law enforcement. The West Virginia facility is one of 79 across the nation, with bigger states like California and Texas having multiple centers.</p> <p>“We saw a bigger use for it here in West Virginia,” Pauley said. “We fall under the ‘all crimes, all hazards banner’ meaning we will help all law enforcement in murder cases, if there are terrorism cases, cyber-related cases, a fraud case or even a local drug gang issue.”</p> <p>An example of the mission Pauley explained took place last year. He said in 2017 there were a high number of local school bomb threats across the state. He explained that during any given situation, his intelligence analysts would deal with many different levels of law enforcement up to the FBI.</p> <p>“That’s why it’s very good for us to have those working relationships with all those agencies,” Pauley said.</p> <p>The staff working at the Fusion/Intelligence Center also help when disaster strikes. Pauley said his team played a critical role during the devastating floods in 2016.</p> <p>“When a natural disaster hits, we really rely on whatever information people can give us — whether that’s through the internet or the telephone,” Griffith said. “They send in that real-time information; we compile it into a report; and we get it to the Emergency Operations Center for the state or we get it to the National Guard so they can get the resources out to help people.”</p> <p>Receiving critical, threat or sometimes life-and-death information is the core responsibility of the Fusion Center. Working to accomplish this is Supervisory Analyst and Fusion Liaison Officer Coordinator Jessica L. Griffith. On a daily basis, Griffith and the intelligence analyst staff work with fusion liaison officers, or “FLOs,” who are the literally the eyes and ears within their communities and report suspicious activity.</p> <p>“They’re also responsible for getting information from us that we’re distributing out and sending it to the people in their agencies,” Griffith said.</p> <p>Griffith said there are 209 FLOs working in nearly every community across the state with each FLO having a law enforcement, emergency services or other community-oriented background. They serve as the main point of contact for their agency, communicating with the Fusion Center in matters related to suspicious activity. The idea, Griffith explained, is to provide extra help through intelligence to small, short-staffed police departments struggling to keep their communities safe.</p> <p>“That’s the purpose of the FLO program,” she said. “To enhance the mission of the Fusion Center, to enhance communication and to be a force multiplier for those smaller agencies who may not have the resources.”</p>

	<p>The program’s success has not gone unnoticed. Pauley said Griffith’s FLO program was recognized in 2017 for training by the Department of Homeland Security as one of the best training programs in the nation.</p> <p>“We’re doing great things here and we have great people, Griffith said. “The people in our FLO program are there to protect the people in their communities and the state as a whole.”</p> <p>Always working to set a higher standard and stay ahead of the bad guys, Griffith said the West Virginia center is only the second in the nation to utilize and promote the use of the Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) mobile app.</p> <p>“That’s our front line,” Pauley said of the app. “You don’t have to be a police officer. If you see something and your gut tells you it’s not right, then there’s a good chance something is wrong.”</p> <p>In hopes of getting more people providing information by way of the mobile app, Griffith said Intelligence Analyst Steven Patterson developed a QR code, designed to automatically take a person to the Suspicious Activity Report app for both Apple or Android devices.</p> <p>“It’s a very fast way for people to get us information if they do see something,” Patterson said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 NKorea high-rank delegation to Olympics
SOURCE	http://time.com/5132862/north-korea-olympics-kim-yong-nam/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>North Korea’s ceremonial head of state will lead a delegation to the South amid an easing of tensions that could pave the way for high-level talks on the sidelines of the Winter Olympics in PyeongChang.</p> <p>Kim Yong Nam, president of the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly, will attend the Olympic opening ceremony Friday and stay in the South until Feb. 11, according to a Reuters report citing North Korea’s KCNA news agency.</p> <p>Kim is the highest-ranking North Korean official to visit the South since 2014, the BBC reports. He serves as the nominal leader of North Korea’s parliament, while Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un rules the nation.</p> <p>Seoul is hoping talks during the Feb. 9 – 25 games can help repair inter-Korean relations, as well as cool U.S.-North Korea hostilities over Kim Jong Un’s accelerating weapons program.</p> <p>Read more: Here Are All the Dates and Locations You Need to Know For the 2018 Winter Olympics</p> <p>Vice President Mike Pence and Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe are expected to be among the world leaders attending the opening of the games.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/05 Claim: deadly Amtrak crash preventable
SOURCE	http://time.com/5133095/amtrack-crash-preventable-carolina/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>(CAYCE, S.C.) — Federal investigators are trying to figure out why a switch was in the wrong position, sending an Amtrak train into a freight train and killing a conductor and an engineer in South Carolina.</p> <p>But they already know what could have prevented the wreck that injured more than 100 passengers — a GPS-based system called “positive train control” that knows the location of all trains and the positions of all switches in an area to prevent the kind of human error that can put two trains on the same track.</p>

“It could have avoided this accident. That’s what it’s designed to do,” said National Transportation Safety Board Chairman Robert Sumwalt, referring to technology that regulators have been demanding for decades with mixed success.

He said the passenger train hurtled down a side track near Cayce (CAYsee) around 2:45 a.m. Sunday after a stop 10 miles (16 kilometers) north in Columbia because a switch was locked in place, diverting it from the main line. A crew on the freight train had moved the switch to drive it from one side track — where it unloaded 34 train cars of automobiles — to the side track where it was parked. The switch was padlocked as it was supposed to be, Sumwalt said.

The system that operates the train signals in the area was down, so CSX Corp. — the freight railroad operator which runs that stretch of track — was manually operating the signals. Sumwalt said it was too early to know if the signal was red to warn the Amtrak crew that the switch was not set to continue along the main train line.

Just hours after Sunday’s crash, which also sent 116 of the 147 people on board the New York-to-Miami train to the hospital, Amtrak President Robert Anderson said there must be no more delays from the federal government in installing the safety system by the end of 2018.

He deferred to investigators about whether the system would have stopped this crash. “Theoretically, an operative PTC system would include switches in addition to signals, so it would cover both speed and switches,” Anderson said.

The Silver Star was going an estimated 59 mph (94 kph) when it struck the freight train, Gov. Henry McMaster said. It was the middle of the night, and many people were jolted from sleep by the crash and forced into the cold.

Of the 116 people taken to four hospitals, only about a half dozen were admitted. The rest had minor injuries such as cuts, bruises or whiplash, authorities said.

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HEADLINE	02/02 City Light months behind on hook-ups
SOURCE	http://crosscut.com/2018/02/seattle-city-light-delays-construction-growth-engineering/
GIST	<p>If Erich Armbruster finishes a construction project in nine months or less, he’ll often need to wait at least another three before he’s able to put the new home on the market. That’s because Seattle City Light is struggling to keep up with requests to connect new homes, commercial buildings and industrial warehouses to the grid.</p> <p>The process, which until about three years ago took two to four weeks, has stretched to as long as six months. The delay is the result of new review processes for City Light engineers and a staff that’s been overwhelmed by new construction in America’s fastest growing city.</p> <p>The result, says Armbruster, owner of Ashworth Homes and Board President of the Master Builders Association, is that while demand is huge, his productivity suffers. He’s had homes “twice in the last twelve months sitting, waiting to be sold, but I couldn’t get final inspections because I had no power,” he told Crosscut. “I can’t qualify for unlimited loans, so I sit on that twiddling my thumbs and calling every day. I can’t market them for sale. I’m dead in the water.”</p> <p>As Seattle adds more than 1,000 people a month, allowing for new and more housing is among the city’s solutions for stemming the housing crisis. The Seattle City Council has already approved taller buildings and more densely packed lots in several Seattle neighborhoods and is considering a proposal to do the same in more areas across the city. In its hunt for more construction, the city is also looking for ways to streamline review processes and green light construction projects more quickly.</p>

City Light spokesperson Scott Thomsen acknowledged, "It has taken us longer recently to process all the new accounts. That corresponds with the construction boom Seattle has experienced. Many of the new homes have been multi-family buildings in a densely developed area, which adds to the complexity of the work."

Armbruster's company, which he's owned for nearly 20 years, specializes in row houses, which can be packed into lots once set aside for a single home. His company completes 40-50 homes a year, almost exclusively in Seattle.

It used to take between three and four weeks for a City Light crew to come to a new project and connect it to the grid. But several years ago, says Armbruster, City Light began paying closer attention to existing land use codes regulating how electrical lines are run to new construction. The new attention meant putting more cables underground. The change meant a more complicated engineering task.

Around the same time, the amount of process increased. Where requests for connection used to go straight to City Light crews, now it went through a separate engineering review.

Between the new process and the overwhelming number of construction projects, City Light was not prepared to keep up. "This is real and affects our work with our customers every day," said one City Light employee, speaking on the condition of anonymity. "Engineering is like a black hole. ... The engineers cannot keep up with the building boom and management has not gotten their heads around it."

A second employee echoed the concerns. "If you have a new building or house it is taking 5 months for an engineer to even review it and many more months to get it designed and constructed," this person said. "Customers are getting pissed."

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HEADLINE	02/02 Declassified controversial 4-page memo
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/president-declassifies-house-committee-releases-nunes-memo-on-alleged-fisa-abuses/article/741775/
GIST	<p>Against the advice of the Justice Department and FBI, President Trump declassified and the House Intelligence Committee released a controversial four-page memo distilled from voluminous classified information and penned by the staff of committee Chairman Devin Nunes alleging that investigators abused their surveillance authority when they sought a FISA warrant to spy on former Trump campaign advisor Carter Page.</p> <p>Nunes, who reportedly did not review the underlying classified information because he'd recused himself from the Russian probe in early spring pending an ethics investigation, defended the memo as revealing "serious violations of the public trust, and the American people have a right to know when officials in crucial institutions are abusing their authority for political purposes.</p> <p>"It is my hope that the committee's actions will shine a light on this alarming series of events so we can make reforms that allow the American people to have full faith and confidence in their governing institutions," Nunes said in a statement.</p> <p>Trump, who has railed against simultaneous Russia investigations, called the revelations in the document "a disgrace."</p> <p>The memo, the release of which was hotly debated, had drawn criticism from Democrats and other detractors as being little more than cherry-picked talking points and sparked concern that it would reveal confidential intelligence sources as well as intelligence-gathering methods.</p> <p>Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., ranking member of the House committee, who opposed the release of the memo and whose own rebuttal memo was rejected by the committee for release, said "The Republican</p>

document mischaracterizes highly sensitive classified information that few members of Congress have seen, and which Chairman Nunes himself chose not to review.”

The Congressman, who has locked horns with Nunes and who believes releasing the memo is an attempt by Nunes and others to provide cover for the president and his associates as the Russia probe led by Special Counsel Robert Mueller seemingly heats up. The memo “fails to provide vital context and information contained in DOJ’s FISA application and renewals, and ignores why and how the FBI initiated, and the special counsel has continued, its counterintelligence investigation into Russia’s election interference and links to the Trump campaign,” Schiff said in a statement.

Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, contended in a statement that “unlike almost every House member who voted in favor of this memo’s release, I have actually read the underlying documents on which the memo was based. They simply do not support its conclusions.”

The document contends that an anti-Trump bias fueled Steele’s research, which was originally commissioned by a right-wing organization to gather research on Trump during the primaries and that the FBI and Justice, with their own biases against the president, knew of Steele’s bias, deciding to use the research anyway to gain the FISA warrant.

It also says that Steele “improperly concealed and lied” to investigators about his dealings with the press.

Shortly after the memo broke, MSNBC confirmed that four separate FISA judges had signed off on surveillance warrants for Carter Page.

The document also contradicts earlier contentions by some members that Steele’s research spurred the investigation of the Trump campaign and potential collusion with the Russians. While it claims that former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe allegedly said a surveillance warrant for Page wouldn’t have been requested without Steele’s dossier, compiled as oppositional research for Hillary Clinton’s campaign and paid for by her campaign. However, the memo’s last page acknowledges that the counter-intelligence probe grew out of comments made by former Trump aide George Papadopoulos to an Australian diplomat in the U.K.

During a night at London’s Kensington Wine Rooms in May 2016, Papadopoulos, who has pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI, revealed to Australian Alexander Downer that Russia had damaging information on Trump opponent Hillary Clinton.

“It’s important to know what the memo doesn’t say. It doesn’t say the relevant parts of the dossier are false. It doesn’t say the Russia investigation would not have started but for the dossier,” Rep. Ted Lieu, D-Calif., said in a statement. “It doesn’t say the FISA judge did not have probable cause to issue a surveillance order on Carter Page. It doesn’t say anyone at the FBI or DOJ violated the FISA law.”

The Nunes memo confirms that the FISA surveillance warrant on Page was approved in October 2016 well after the investigation, then under the leadership of former FBI Director James Comey, who was fired, President Trump said, for his handling of the Hillary Clinton email case. In a later interview with NBC, Trump indicated that the Russian probe figured into his firing of Comey.

Democrats fear that Trump will use the memo to oust Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, who oversees the Mueller probe, and possibly jeopardize that investigation.

But rather than undermine Mueller’s probe, the “memo has done exactly the opposite,” Lieu said. “The release of this memo shows a desperate President and his enablers trying to undermine and obstruct an investigation because it is getting closer to arriving at the truth of what happened in 2016.”

Pundits also expressed concern that Nunes’s actions would unfairly taint the FBI and would upend congressional oversight of the intelligence operations. Intelligence committees in the House and Senate

	<p>were created as bipartisan bodies post-Watergate to monitor intelligence functions but in the past year, the House committee has been ripped by partisan clashes.</p> <p>"This unprecedented public disclosure of classified material during an ongoing criminal investigation is dangerous to our national security," said Warner. "This will make it far more difficult for the Intelligence Committees to conduct meaningful, bipartisan oversight of intelligence activities in the future. This action was also taken without regard to the damage it could do to our ability to protect Americans from threats around the globe." He pledged his committee "will continue our bipartisan investigation into what happened in the 2016 election and the dedicated men and women of the FBI continue to have my full support."</p> <p>Comey took to Twitter to challenge the memo and defend the Justice Department and the FBI. "That's it? Dishonest and misleading memo wrecked the House intel committee, destroyed trust with Intelligence Community, damaged relationship with FISA court, and inexcusably exposed classified investigation of an American citizen," he tweeted. "For what? DOJ & FBI must keep doing their jobs."</p> <p>Lieu believes that the memo will backfire. "When the American people see the facts that Trump and Nunes are trying to hide, the people will be angry at the President and the GOP, and proud of the professionals at the FBI and DOJ," said Lieu. "The Nunes memo omits significant material facts in an attempt to blatantly mislead the public. That is why the Democratic memo, which provides the omitted facts, must be released."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Mudslides close tracks north Seattle
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/889558/mudslides-close-tracks-to-passenger-trains-north-of-seattle/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — More mudslides have covered train tracks north of Seattle, further halting passenger service between Seattle and Everett.</p> <p>BNSF Railway spokesman Gus Melonas says rains washed mud down a steep slope just north of Seattle early Sunday morning and covered the track's main line.</p> <p>A moratorium on passenger trains had been in place because of a previous mudslide Friday. It has now been extended. That means no passenger train service will be running between Seattle and Everett until at least early Tuesday morning.</p> <p>Melonas says a mudslide also covered tracks in Canada Sunday morning and temporarily halted passenger trains between Bellingham and Vancouver, British Columbia.</p> <p>Freight trains, however, are running through the area.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 Punxsutawney Phil: 6 more weeks winter
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/02/us/groundhog-day-2018-shadow-trnd/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN) — The groundhog hath spoken! Welcome to six more weeks of winter.</p> <p>On Friday morning, Punxsutawney Phil scurried out of his little marmot hole and saw his shadow. This omen indicates a long winter. Great.</p> <p>Why do we do this?</p> <p>Every February 2, all eyes turn to a small central Pennsylvania borough as winter-weary Northeasterners await weather guidance from the predictive rodent.</p>

	<p>It's a 132-year-old tradition that is held every year at the location known as Gobbler's Knob and conducted by top hat-donning members of the Inner Circle of the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club, according to the official Pennsylvania tourism website. The idea is, the groundhog wakes up from hibernation on the 2nd, and if it sees its shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter. If it doesn't, warmer weather is just around the corner.</p> <p>This tradition started in Europe as Candlemas Day, an early Christian holiday involving candles. Germans who settled in Pennsylvania in the 1700s brought the custom to America.</p> <p>Pennsylvania's Punxsutawney Phil is the most well known, but more than a dozen states celebrate with their own groundhogs, such as Georgia's General Beauregard Lee and Buckeye Chuck in Ohio.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Flood warnings western Wash. rivers
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/02/04/flood-warnings-in-effect-for-some-western-washington-rivers/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE – Heavy warm rain across Western Washington is sending our snow levels up and it's causing rivers to rapidly rise around the region.</p> <p>We have flood warnings for the Pilchuck, Tolt/Snoqualmie and the Stillaguamish Rivers. A flood warning means flooding is actively occurring or imminent.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/05 Philadelphia celebration turns rowdy
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/sports/2018/02/05/philly-celebration-turns-rowdy-after-eagles-win-super-bowl.html
GIST	<p>What started out as a joyous party on the streets of Philadelphia on Sunday night following the Eagles' Super Bowl championship started getting rowdy as the night continued.</p> <p>Boisterous fans smashed a Macy's store window, looters broke into a convenience store, and some flipped over a car, the Philadelphia Inquirer reported.</p> <p>Three people fell to the ground from light poles and lost consciousness, while other fans were seen in an online video leaping off a hotel entrance's awning.</p> <p>At least one car was seen ablaze in an online video.</p> <p>“This city is about to explode,” one police officer told the newspaper.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 Airport gun seizures hit record high
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-02-02/u-s-airport-gun-seizures-hit-record-high
GIST	<p>A record number of firearms were found in bags at Transportation Security Administration airport checkpoints across the U.S. last year, the agency announced this week. In 2017 the TSA found 3,957 firearms, an average of 10.8 per day and a 16.7 percent increase from the 3,391 found in 2016. The rising popularity of carrying concealed firearms, in addition to a boost in passenger numbers, could be to blame for the record-setting number, experts said.</p> <p>“While it's impossible to ascertain an exact, scientific reason for the increase, there does seem to be a correlation between the increase in the number of firearms caught and the increase in passenger volume,”</p>

said TSA spokesman Mike England. The spike in seizures far outpaced the rise in passenger volume. In 2016, 738.3 million passengers went through federal airport checkpoints, compared with 771.5 million in 2017, a 4.5 percent increase.

Of the firearms discovered at checkpoints, 84 percent were loaded. Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport led the nation in firearms found by the TSA, with 245, followed by Dallas Fort Worth International, George Bush Continental Airport in Houston and Denver International. Atlanta's airport is the world's busiest.

Jeff Price, a professor of aviation management at Metropolitan State University of Denver, said the rates of recovered firearms at TSA checkpoints could be higher in states where concealed carry is more common. "In Georgia they have a situation at the Atlanta airport where you can lawfully carry into the airport as long as you don't get into the TSA line," he explained. "The states where there's more firearms typically carried, there's just more of a chance you'll have it at the checkpoint."

Price also attributes the increase to new screening policies the TSA introduced last year. The updated security measures require that flyers put electronics larger than a phone into bins. "That could be responsible for some of the higher numbers because they're better able to see what's left in the bag," he said.

Confusion surrounding concealed carry laws is one of several contributing factors to the increased number of firearms found at checkpoints, Price added. "I think, unfortunately, there's a lot of people who forget they have [a gun]. A lot of people, they'll put it in their laptop bag and they'll put it in a purse. They'll forget they have it with them."

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HEADLINE	02/04 Newborns as victims of opioid epidemic
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/local/2018/02/04/newborns-have-become-most-innocent-victims-americas-opioid-epidemic/999698001/
GIST	<p>Opioids were involved in 42,200 overdose deaths nationwide in 2016, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and they harmed the lives of thousands more. Many of those victims were children, and none are more vulnerable than the newborns undergoing treatment in intensive care units across the country.</p> <p>An estimated 21,700 babies in 2012 were born with neonatal abstinence syndrome, often caused by a mother's use of opioids during pregnancy. The number represents a fivefold increase since 2000, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, a branch of the National Institutes of Health.</p> <p>Baptist Health delivers 1,000 babies a year, including some from families in far Western North Carolina counties. Roughly one in four are found to have been exposed to opioids while in the womb. Of those, 25 percent will need treatment for withdrawal.</p> <p>For many, their first days of life are torturous. Whether they will suffer long-term damage is unclear.</p> <p>The opioid epidemic has hit the Appalachian region particularly hard and left Baptist Health in its wake.</p> <p>Only five other states had an opioid overdose death rate higher than Kentucky in 2015, according to the nonprofit Kaiser Family Foundation. Those five included neighboring West Virginia and Ohio, also Appalachian states.</p> <p>Jobs outside the hospital, one the area's top employers, often come with physical demands that can lead to injury — and then to a prescription for painkillers often later used to cope with the stress of living paycheck-to-paycheck.</p>

Other hospitals in and surrounding WNC have seen surges in the number of babies born to mothers who used during pregnancy, including those in Asheville and the Tennessee cities of Knoxville, Chattanooga and Nashville.

“We were left wondering: What is happening outside the NICU to these mothers that’s contributing to what’s going on inside?” said Dr. Stephen Patrick, an assistant professor of pediatrics and health policy at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine in Nashville and an attending neonatologist at Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt.

The numbers recorded at Mission Hospital have been steadily rising for seven years but spiked from 2010-13, said Dr. Susan Mims, the hospital vice president for children’s services and executive medical director for Mission Children’s Hospital.

Fewer than 50 babies were born to substance-using mothers before their numbers began to surge in 2010. That has since risen to more than 400 last year.

“We saw this as a really big problem,” Mims said.

East Tennessee Children’s Hospital in Knoxville saw its numbers almost double from 2011-13, from 139 babies born dependent to 258.

In Greensboro, North Carolina’s third most populous city, Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital delivers close to 7,000 babies a year. More than 600 last year were born to mothers who had abused substances, mainly opioids and poly substances, which can be a mixture of opioids with other substances.

Of those 600 newborns, 10 percent were transferred to the hospital’s neonatal intensive care unit to be treated for opioid withdrawals, which could mean close to a monthlong stay in the NICU. That amounts to about 60 opioid-dependent babies a year, said Jennifer Grayer, a nurse practitioner.

With the increases have come financial burdens for hospitals.

“A NICU stay is probably one of the costliest things we have in our health care system,” Mims said.

An infant born without complications has an average two-day stay in a hospital, which costs around \$3,500, according to the CDC.

An infant needing treatment for neonatal abstinence syndrome will stay 16 days on average, costing \$66,700 a baby.

Babies needing treatment for neonatal abstinence syndrome cost U.S. hospitals \$1.5 billion in 2012, with most charges paid by state Medicaid programs, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

To meet the needs of their growing opioid-dependent newborn population, many hospitals have had to get creative. At Baptist Health, Mission and Cone Health, volunteers cuddle babies for hours. The skin-to-skin contact eases a baby’s pain, Grayer said.

When a mom or dad is available to hold their baby for long periods of time, Grayer said it is the best medicine for withdrawal.

“Their heart rates slow down, they wean off medications earlier, and they calm down with more parental involvement,” she said.

This type of extreme nurturing has become normal at hospitals in recent years. Staff members have been retrained and taken trauma sensitivity workshops to learn about the opioid epidemic so they could better treat both affected babies and mothers without judgment.

	<p>“We experienced a lot of frustration at first because most of us were wondering, how could this happen to babies? How could a mama let this happen?” said Mays, the vice president and chief nursing officer at Baptist Health. “But as you dive into it, the addiction piece is very strong and you have to treat the mama, too, in order to stop this.”</p> <p>Nurses and doctors today compare opioid addiction to diseases like diabetes: It's a lifelong battle.</p> <p>Medical professionals debate whether babies born dependent on opioids will suffer long-term damage.</p> <p>“There have been talks of linkages to long-term challenges, but we can't really say one way or the other,” said Dr. Chris DeRienzo, chief quality officer at Mission Hospital and a neonatologist.</p> <p>For Dr. Gary Bell, a neonatologist at Erlanger Medical Center in Chattanooga, it is obvious: Opioid dependency at birth will show in the behavior of child years later, he said.</p> <p>"I do believe that there are more kids in schools now with behavioral issues because of their experiences with drug withdrawals as a baby," said Bell, who has been working with newborns for more than 30 years. "I don't believe it is anything life threatening, but there are problems long term."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/05 UN: Rohingya crisis endangers region
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/rohingya-crisis-endanger-regional-security-52838780?
GIST	<p>The U.N.'s human rights chief warned Monday that Myanmar's persecution of the Rohingya Muslim minority has the potential to spark regional conflict.</p> <p>Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein reiterated while in Indonesia that acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing may have occurred in the campaign of violence against Rohingya that sparked an exodus of nearly 700,000 people to neighboring Bangladesh.</p> <p>"Myanmar faces a very serious crisis with a potentially severe impact on the security of the region," Zeid said in a speech to a rights conference at Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.</p> <p>"It is sometimes said that today's human rights violations will become tomorrow's conflicts," he said. "If the Rohingya crisis were to spark a broader conflict based on religious identities, the ensuing disputes could be a cause for great alarm."</p> <p>Zeid said the spasms of violence that began in August and sparked the refugee crisis were the culmination of five decades of discrimination and violence against Rohingya in Myanmar's Rakhine state.</p> <p>The government of predominantly Buddhist Myanmar denies any atrocities have taken place and insists Rohingya are illegal immigrants.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Bitter cold Midwest; record high California
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/bitter-cold-upper-midwest-california-braces-record-breaking/story?
GIST	<p>A developing system in the central U.S. brought light snow Saturday to parts of the upper Midwest, including Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa and Michigan.</p> <p>Snowfall totals have been generally light from Minnesota to southern Michigan with 1 inch to 3 inches in general falling in the aforementioned areas. But across northern Michigan, enhanced lake effect snow</p>

dumped around 4 inches to 5 inches of snow. And near Watertown, New York, lake effect snow dumped nearly 10 inches of new snow.

Fast forward to Sunday morning, and more light snow is falling across the Ohio River Valley and into the western Appalachian mountains. Winter weather advisories have been posted for much of the hillier areas from Northern Georgia to New York. During the day on Saturday, new snow will fall from Kentucky to Maine. Locally, 1 inch to 4 inches of snow will fall, with possibly slightly higher totals in New York State and in the Appalachians in Central Pennsylvania.

Some of the precipitation is falling as a mixture in the northern suburbs of Atlanta, extreme western South Carolina, North Carolina and southwest Virginia. The risk for icy conditions will continue from northern Georgia through western Maryland through this morning. Locally, over a tenth of an inch of ice is expected in that region through Sunday morning.

Parts of the upper Midwest, including Minneapolis and Fargo are under a wind chill advisory Sunday morning due to wind chills as low as -20 degrees to -30 degrees. Frost bite could set in as soon as 30 minutes in these conditions. The wind chill advisory will expire and end at noon on Sunday, as temperatures will "moderate" during the afternoon and evening in Minneapolis.

Another disturbance will move towards the Midwest on Monday. On Monday night, a quick burst of snow should arrive near Chicago and Indianapolis, just in time for the evening commute. This disturbance will fizzle out by the time it reaches the Appalachians. Accumulations will be light.

On Tuesday, another disturbance will form in the south central U.S. that should bring some more rain to the Southeast. There is increasing concern that some ice and snow could develop on the northern side of this system and hamper travel Tuesday night from Oklahoma and Kansas to the Tennessee/Kentucky Valley.

Over on the West Coast, there is a chance for records to be broken Saturday across parts of California. High temperatures from New Mexico to Washington will be nearly 10 degrees to 20 degrees above average in some spots.

The current drought monitor is showing a significant part of the southern U.S. in some form of a drought. Of most concern is parts of Arizona, northern Texas, and western Oklahoma where extreme drought has developed. Parts of southern California are back into the severe drought category.

While the Southeast has been starting to get a few good shots of beneficial rain, there is currently no rain in the forecast for the entire southwest U.S. through the next 7 days. The February climate outlook is showing likely drier than average conditions for this region of the country. Unless a significant pattern change were to take place in the next 1-2 months, as we head towards the end of winter and beginning of spring, it seems drought will continue to be a developing story across the southwest US.

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HEADLINE	02/05 Amtrak train on wrong track in crash
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/amtrak-passenger-train-collides-freight-train-sc-injuries/story?
GIST	<p>A Miami-bound Amtrak train appeared to be on the wrong track when it collided with a freight train in South Carolina early Sunday, killing two people and injuring 116, according to authorities.</p> <p>Robert Sumwalt, chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board, said at a news conference Sunday afternoon that the track the Amtrak train was on had been manually switched and "lined and locked." It caused it to divert from the main line and onto a side track, where the freight train was parked.</p> <p>"Of course key to this investigation is learning why that switch was lined that way because the expectation is the Amtrak would be cleared and would be operating straight down" the main line, Sumwalt said.</p>

	<p>South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster said at a news conference that a CSX freight train appeared to be on a loading track when the Amtrak train with 147 people aboard slammed into it at 2:35 a.m. in Cayce, South Carolina, just east of Columbia.</p> <p>"It appears that the Amtrak was on the wrong track," McMaster said at the news conference midday Sunday. "They weren't supposed to be meeting right there by the bridge, clearly. And it may be a time factor, but that's what it appears to me. But I defer to those who are experts in that and do have the correct information, but it appears that Amtrak was on the wrong track."</p> <p>The two people who died were the train conductor and engineer, the county coroner said.</p> <p>Amtrak officials said in a statement that they are "deeply saddened" by the deaths of its employees and that the agency is cooperating fully with the National Transportation Safety Board and the Federal Railroad Administration in the investigation of the crash.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Amtrak train collides w/freight train
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/amtrak-passenger-train-collides-freight-train-sc-injuries/story?id=52826058&cid=clicksource_4380645_1_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>At least 2 people are dead and at least another 70 injured after an Amtrak passenger train collided with a freight train in South Carolina early Sunday morning, officials said.</p> <p>The two deaths occurred in the Amtrak train, not the freight train, Lexington County Coroner Margaret Fisher confirmed.</p> <p>Injuries ranged from minor cuts to broken bones, a spokesman for the South Carolina Emergency Management Division told CNN.</p> <p>Amtrak initially said in a statement, "Amtrak Train 91, operating between New York and Miami, came in contact with a CSX freight train at around 2:35 am in Cayce, South Carolina."</p> <p>The statement continued, "The lead engine derailed, as well as some passenger cars. There were 8 crew members and approximately 139 passengers, with injuries reported. Local authorities are on the scene responding. More information will be provided as available."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 Troopers false statements botch probe
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homicide-charge-dismissed-against-driver-of-car-that-killed-cyclist-outside-spokane/
GIST	<p>The woman who crashed into and killed a bicyclist on New Year's Day last year on Highway 2 in Eastern Washington will no longer face a vehicular homicide charge after defense attorneys successfully argued that State Patrol troopers made false statements in affidavits to obtain search warrants.</p> <p>As a result of the botched investigation, the Spokane County Prosecutor's Office did not oppose a request in December to dismiss the vehicular homicide charge against Melissa A. Paul, 28, with prejudice, meaning it cannot refile those charges against her in the future.</p> <p>"Instead of saying they lied, that the information in the affidavit was wrong, (prosecutors) dismissed it," Assistant Public Defender Anna Nordtvedt said. "I would expect that it would at least be investigated because, certainly, the video does not show what is reflected in the affidavit."</p>

State Patrol spokesman Trooper Jeff Sevigney said his office learned that the case had been dismissed under allegations of false statements by troopers only after a reporter's inquiry Friday.

"We will be following up with the prosecutor's office next week to determine what happened in the matter," he said.

Around 4 a.m. Jan. 1, 2017, Paul's 2004 Toyota 4Runner drove deep onto the shoulder of westbound Highway 2 near Flint Road. The SUV then struck 44-year-old Ty M. Olds, who was either riding or walking next to a bicycle, near the Rusty Moose Bar and Grill.

The collision forced Olds' body into and partially through the Toyota's windshield, and he was declared dead at the scene.

Nordtvedt said she never learned why Olds was riding or walking with a bicycle at 4 a.m.

Trooper Joe Leibrecht initially responded to the wrong location but eventually located the damaged 4Runner about 30 minutes after the collision. Troopers Robert Spencer and Troy Corkins later arrived to assist the investigation.

Also inside the SUV was a passenger Stephan A. Goodwin. Troopers reported finding baggies with small amounts of both methamphetamine and cocaine in the car and later charged Goodwin with felony possession with intent to distribute.

When the troopers asked Paul to undergo field sobriety tests, the case began to fall apart.

According to charging documents, Leibrecht noted that Paul missed one step in the "walk and turn" test. The documents say Trooper Spencer later conducted a second test, and she again missed a step in the "walk and turn" test. The troopers then had Paul blow into a portable device that showed Paul had a blood alcohol content of 0.067 percent. The legal limit to drive is 0.08 percent.

A WSP sergeant then "asked Trooper Spencer to complete a blood warrant for Paul."

Paul and Goodwin were booked into the Spokane County Jail, and both were initially held on \$150,000 bonds. Paul later had her bond reduced to \$30,000, but she served three months in jail and temporarily lost custody of a child, Nordtvedt said.

"I just got into the case late in the game," Nordtvedt said, noting she assisted another public defender, John Whaley. "Then I watched the video. They have her in the affidavit wobbling and missing steps. She did perfectly, not just once, but twice."

The video also contains audio of the troopers discussing how well Paul performed on the tests.

"One says that he does not see any impairment, that he thought he smelled alcohol, but doesn't think it was her," Nordtvedt wrote. The troopers "decided that based on the lack of impairment" the portable breath test "would not be administered."

But they later gave Paul the test anyway.

"The affidavit does not state that a trooper shoved a PBT machine in Ms. Paul's face without cause to administer the test, and also fails to mention that the trooper did not inform Ms. Paul that the test was purely voluntary," Nordtvedt wrote.

At one point, one of the troopers says on the video: "I don't know how I am going to get a warrant," she wrote.

"One only need view the body camera of Trooper Leibrecht ... to see that there are numerous false

	<p>statements and omissions in the affidavit in support of the blood warrant,” Nordtvedt wrote.</p> <p>She filed a motion to dismiss the case in November, and Deputy Spokane County Prosecutor Katherine McNulty did not object. Superior Court Judge James Triplet dismissed the case on Dec. 19.</p> <p>“Because impairment cannot be established by the probable cause affidavit, the warrant for blood is therefore invalid,” Triplet wrote. “Aside from impairment, there are no other grounds to support further action.”</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 State cancels salmon farm’s lease
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/state-cancels-salmon-farms-lease
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. -- The state has canceled the lease for a Cypress Island salmon farm where thousands of fish were accidentally released in August.</p> <p>Hillary Franz, the state lands commissioner, announced on Sunday the termination of the lease for Cooke Aquaculture. It raises Atlantic salmon on the site and leases land from the Department of Natural Resources.</p> <p>Last week, the state fined Cooke \$332,000 for alleged violations of Washington state water quality laws because of the salmon release.</p> <p>Cooke Aquaculture Pacific failed to adequately clean nets holding farmed salmon, leading to a net pen failure last summer that allowed the fish to swim away into Puget Sound, officials said in a report compiled by the state's departments of fish and wildlife, ecology and natural resources.</p> <p>The nets failed because they were excessively laden with mussels and other marine organisms, the report said. That increased the drag on the nets from tidal currents and overwhelming their mooring system, the report said.</p> <p>On Sunday DNR said in a letter to Cooke that its failure to maintain the facility “in good order and repair, in a clean, attractive, and safe condition” is a clear violation of the lease and the basis for termination, the agency said in a news release.</p> <p>“Cooke has flagrantly violated the terms of its lease at Cypress Island,” Franz said in the news release. “The company’s reckless disregard endangered the health of our waters and our people, and it will not be tolerated.</p> <p>“On behalf of all Washingtonians, and in fulfillment of my duty to protect our state’s waters, I am terminating the lease.”</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Iran: world ‘closer to annihilation’
SOURCE	http://www.france24.com/en/20180204-iran-usa-nuclear-policy-closer-annihilation
GIST	<p>The United States' new nuclear policy brings humanity "closer to annihilation", Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said.</p> <p>His comments late Saturday came a day after the Pentagon revealed plans to revamp its nuclear arsenal, largely in response to a perceived renewed threat from Russia.</p> <p>Zarif said the new policy was "in violation" of the international Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).</p>

	<p>"The US Nuclear Posture Review reflects greater reliance on nukes in violation of the #NPT, bringing humankind closer to annihilation," Zarif said on Twitter.</p> <p>Zarif said the same impulse was driving the United States to undermine the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, which President Donald Trump has demanded be renegotiated.</p> <p>"Trump's obduracy in killing the #JCPOA stems from the same dangerous imprudence," Zarif wrote, using the technical name for the nuclear deal.</p> <p>The latest Nuclear Posture Review published by the Pentagon called for a larger arsenal of smaller, low-yield nuclear weapons to act as a more "credible" deterrent to threats, particularly from Russia.</p> <p>The NPT, which came into force in 1970 and has been signed by almost all countries including the United States, calls on nations "to achieve at the earliest possible date the cessation of the nuclear arms race and to undertake measures in the direction of nuclear disarmament".</p> <p>Iran's nuclear deal, reached with six world powers, lifted some international sanctions in exchange for curbs to its nuclear programme.</p> <p>Trump has consistently attacked the accord and said in January he would not continue to waive sanctions unless new restrictions were placed on Iran's missile programme and wider actions in the Middle East.</p> <p>The other parties -- Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China -- as well as the European Union have strongly defended the deal, saying it has achieved its aim of limiting Iran's ability to build a nuclear weapon.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 EU warns US on trade: will hit back
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/eu-official-warn-us-trade-eu-hit-back-52826554?
GIST	<p>A senior European Union official is warning that the 28-nation bloc will hit back if U.S. President Donald Trump takes trade measures against it.</p> <p>EU budget commissioner Guenther Oettinger told Sunday's edition of Germany's Welt am Sonntag newspaper: "If European exporters have to pay tariffs, that will become a two-way street. Then U.S. exporters will have to pay tariffs here."</p> <p>Trump expressed his annoyance with EU trade policy a week ago, saying that it "may morph into something very big." The EU then said it stands ready to hit back "swiftly and appropriately" if Trump imposes unfair trade measures.</p> <p>Oettinger said: "Anyone who uses the instrument must know that we also have it. And the European market is at least as big as the American one."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Israel deportation notices to Africans
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/israel-begins-distributing-deportation-notices-africans-52826248?
GIST	<p>Israeli authorities have begun distributing deportation notices to thousands of African migrants.</p> <p>In letters delivered Sunday, Israel says the migrants have 60 days to accept the offer to leave the country for an unnamed African destination in exchange for \$3,500 and a plane ticket. Those who don't by Apr. 1 will be incarcerated indefinitely.</p>

	<p>Some 40,000 migrants, nearly all from Eritrea and Sudan, fled danger for the safety and opportunities of Israel in recent years. Many have expressed fear of being sent to Rwanda, their likely destination.</p> <p>The deportation plan has sparked outrage in Israel, where groups of pilots, doctors, writers, rabbis and Holocaust survivors have appealed to have it halted. They say the deportations are unethical and would damage Israel's image as a refuge for Jewish migrants.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 NKorea slams 'State of Union' address
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/north-korea-slams-trumps-state-union-address-52826350
GIST	<p>North Korea on Sunday slammed President Donald Trump's State of the Union address and said its nuclear capabilities would "deter Trump and his lackeys from showing off on the Korean peninsula."</p> <p>In his address last week, Trump said that "no regime has oppressed its own citizens more totally or brutally than the cruel dictatorship in North Korea."</p> <p>"We need only look at the depraved character of the North Korean regime to understand the nature of the nuclear threat it could pose to America and to our allies," Trump said.</p> <p>On Sunday, a North Korean foreign ministry official shot back at the president.</p> <p>"If Trump does not get rid of his anachronistic and dogmatic way of thinking, it will only bring about the consequence of further endangering security and future of the United States," the official said, in comments carried by the North's official Korean Central News Agency.</p> <p>The official disputed Trump's claim in his address that the United States had "made incredible progress and achieved extraordinary success" over the last year, calling it "the height of Trump-style arrogance, arbitrariness and self-conceit."</p> <p>Trump also said in his speech that the U.S. was "waging a campaign of maximum pressure" to prevent North Korea from being able to attack the U.S. with nuclear weapons.</p> <p>The foreign ministry official said that North Korea's "self-reliant defense capability with the nuclear force as its backbone will, however, completely deter Trump and his lackeys from showing off on the Korean peninsula."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Greeks rally in Athens over name
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/protesters-gathering-athens-macedonia-rally-52825895?
GIST	<p>Well over 100,000 protesters from across Greece converged Sunday on Athens' main square to protest a potential Greek compromise in a dispute with neighboring Macedonia over the former Yugoslav republic's official name.</p> <p>Hundreds of chartered buses brought protesters in from around the country to the Greek capital, while more people arrived on ferries from the islands. Traffic was blocked throughout the city center and three major subway stops were closed.</p> <p>Chanting "Hands off Macedonia!" and "Macedonia belongs to Greece!" tens of thousands of protesters converged on Syntagma Square in front of parliament, many waving flags bearing the Star of Vergina, the</p>

	<p>emblem of the ancient Greek kingdom of Macedonia.</p> <p>Police officials estimated the attendance at 140,000. Organizers, who claimed 1.5 million were protesting, used a crane to raise a massive Greek flag over the square.</p> <p>"We are trying to show the politicians ... that they must not give up the name 'Macedonia'," said 55-year-old protester Manos Georgiou.</p> <p>About 700 left-wing and anarchist protesters set up a counter-demonstration nearby, bearing banners calling for Balkan unity.</p> <p>Dozens of riot police were deployed to keep the two demonstrations separate.</p> <p>Suspected far-rightists attempted to attack the counter-demonstration, but were prevented by police, who used stun grenades and tear gas to hold them back. The far-rightists responded by throwing rocks at police. There were also reported incidents of anarchists attacking some bikers.</p> <p>The name dispute broke out after Macedonia gained independence from Yugoslavia in 1991.</p> <p>The country is recognized by international institutions as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, even though about 130 countries refer to it simply as Macedonia. Many Greeks refer to it by the name of its capital, Skopje.</p> <p>Greece argues use of the name implies territorial claims on its own province of Macedonia, home of one of the most famous ancient Greeks, Alexander the Great.</p> <p>Officials in Skopje counter that their country has been known as Macedonia for a long time.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Strong quake off east Taiwan coast
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/strong-earthquake-strikes-off-taiwans-east-coast-52828611?
GIST	<p>A strong and shallow earthquake struck off Taiwan's east coast on Sunday night, but there were no immediate reports of any injuries or damage.</p> <p>The U.S. Geological Survey said the magnitude-6.1 quake's epicenter was 14 kilometers (9 miles) northeast of the city of Hualien, at a depth of just 7.8 kilometers (4.9 miles). Shallow quakes tend to cause more damage than deeper ones.</p> <p>Taiwan's Central News Agency said the island's earthquake monitoring agency registered seven tremors around that time, with the strongest recorded at a magnitude of 5.8 and a depth of 16 kilometers (10 miles).</p> <p>Earthquakes frequently rattle Taiwan, but most are minor and cause little or no damage. However, a magnitude-7.6 quake in central Taiwan in 1999 killed more than 2,300 people. In 2016, a shallow earthquake in southern Taiwan killed at least two dozen people.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 Fire breaks out Seattle homeless camp
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/no-injuries-after-fire-at-seattle-homeless-encampment
GIST	SEATTLE -- Firefighters responded to a homeless encampment fire early Saturday morning were about three to four tents were engulfed in flames, according to the Seattle Fire Department.

	<p>The incident happened between Interstate 5 North and Interstate 90 going eastbound in Seattle.</p> <p>Wooden pallets and propane tanks that had vented reportedly contributed to the intensity of the fire, Seattle Fire said.</p> <p>There were no reported injuries.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 DNR changes firefighting approach
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/washington-dnr-changes-approach-to-fighting-wildfires/281-514130871
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. -- Leaders from state and local fire agencies are changing their way of thinking when it comes to fighting wildfires.</p> <p>After the Carlton Complex and the Okanogan Complex fires, it was clear that changes were needed.</p> <p>KREM 2 talked to some folks at Department of Natural Resources and they agreed Washington fire seasons are changing. They are starting earlier and lasting longer. It is not just a June, July and August problem anymore. There is now a shift in how our firefighters, state and local, are trying to keep the fires we do get from getting any worse.</p> <p>DNR is now bringing staff on earlier than they ever have before to get them trained so they can be in place and ready to go as soon as the fire call comes in. In fact, they have already started. In the Northeast region of our state, we are also bringing in more aircraft to be pre-positioned and on standby. There is nothing that can replace air support in a big wildfire, so those kinds of planes and choppers are critical.</p> <p>There is also a greater effort underway to keep the fires from getting that big in the first place. So right now, there is a big emphasis on hazardous fuels reduction on private land, state, and federal land. We are talking about places like Fish and Wildlife land, Colville National Forest, DNR land, or Riverside State Park that will all be seeing fuel reduction, clearing away that lower brush and debris that burns so easily and allows those fires to climb and spread. DNR officials said Stevens County, and Okanogan County have a lot of land that needs attention, as well as Ferry, Pend Orielle and Spokane County.</p> <p>The reduction may come in the form of prescribed burns. This is something that just has not been done much lately at all, and they are trying to get back to that because they know it makes a difference. It may also come in the form of additional prison crews from Airway Heights. DNR said those initial attack crews are instrumental in the immediate response of a major fire. So, they are hoping to expand that program even more.</p> <p>Lastly, those federal, state and local agencies are going to start doing a lot more inter-agency training. Learning how to work and communicate with each other better than in the past, pooling their resources, and making sure they are taking advantage of every tool we have to protect lives and property.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 Flu epidemic is not letting up
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/flu-epidemic-is-not-letting-up-with-42-states-report-high-levels-of-activity/
GIST	<p>The flu epidemic is not letting up. Forty-two states saw high levels of activity last week.</p> <p>So far this season, 53 children have died.</p>

"We're seeing deaths increase in children and in adults," said Dr. Anne Schuchat is acting director of the Centers for Disease Control. "So far this year, 53 children have died from influenza. So it's proving to be a very difficult season."

That's in part because this season the most common virus is H3N2, which typically means more cases, hospitalizations and death, especially among the elderly.

On top of that, a report from Canada out this week found the vaccine has only been 17 percent effective against that strain of the flu.

Still doctors and public health officials say vaccination is still the best defense from flu. Someone who gets flu, after receiving the flu shot, is less likely to suffer severe symptoms.

"We may have several weeks left in this year's flu season," Schuchat said.

There is widespread flu activity in every state across the country, except Oregon and Hawaii. In Minnesota, where Super Bowl LII will be played in Minneapolis, the name of the game is disinfecting.

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HEADLINE	02/04 NKorea derides military parade criticism
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/04/asia/north-korea-military-parade-criticism/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)North Korea dismissed South Korea's "improper remarks" over the country's plans to hold a military parade before the Winter Olympics begin this week, North Korean state newspaper Rodong Sinmun reported.</p> <p>On Saturday, North Korea described the South Korean calls to cancel the military parade a ploy by "wicked, narrow-minded and tricky" politicians who engage with "pro-U.S. flunkeyism."</p> <p>North Korea plans to show off dozens of long-range missiles during a February 8 parade, sources with deep knowledge of North Korea's intentions told CNN last week.</p> <p>The parade is expected to include dozens of intercontinental-range Hwasong-15 missiles, which the North Koreans test-fired for the first time in late November, the sources said.</p> <p>The display of "hundreds" of missiles and rockets would be an attempt "to scare the hell out of the Americans," one of the sources said.</p> <p>The back-and-forth between North and South is testing what has been hailed as a breakthrough in inter-Korean talks -- the North's decision to participate in the Winter Olympics'.</p> <p>But North Korea said on Saturday that South Korea's critical stand on the parade was taken by anti-reunification forces.</p> <p>It's a point of view that North Korea says is going "against the desire of the nation and the trend of the times" and would "only bring about the consequences of souring the successful opening of the Winter Olympics," the newspaper reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 China acquires Sri Lanka port
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/03/asia/china-sri-lanka-string-of-pearls-intl/index.html
GIST	(CNN)When Sri Lanka's government first looked to develop a port on its southern coast that faced the Indian Ocean, it went not to China, but to its neighbor, India.

Then-Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa said he urgently needed funding to transform the harbor of his home town and asked Indian officials for help with the project.

New Delhi showed little interest in funding a costly and massive port construction project in the underdeveloped fishing village of Hambantota, a district that had been crushed by the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004.

"It was offered to India first. I was desperate for development work, but ultimately the Chinese agreed to build it," Rajapaksa said in an interview with Singapore's Straits Times in 2010.

Beijing invested \$1.5 billion in 2010 to build the port.

The venture was considered economically unviable and indeed, in the years that followed, the port sat empty and neglected, and Sri Lanka's debt ballooned.

But India's economic foresight might have cost it in terms of strategic geopolitics, since the debt incurred on the port and the surrounding infrastructure undertakings now belong to its great rival.

China's official licensing of the port in December last year gives it yet another point of access over a key shipping route, and the prospect of providing it with a sizeable presence in India's immediate backyard and traditional sphere of influence, bringing China closer to India's shores than New Delhi might like.

Moreover, Sri Lanka's decision to sign a 99-year lease with a Chinese state-owned company for the Hambantota port to service some of the billions it owes to Beijing has some observers concerned other developing nations doing business with China as part of China's One Belt One Road initiative might fall into similar financial straits.

A trap, they warn, that may well have them owing more than just money to Beijing.

"China is, in many cases, the only party with the interest and the capital to deliver on these projects," said Jeff Smith, a research fellow on South Asia at the Heritage Foundation in Washington DC. "The relevant question for everyone is: at what cost?"

Jeff Smith points out that along with the Hambantota port investments, Beijing loaned Sri Lanka \$200 million in 2010 for a second international airport and a year later a further \$810 million for the "second phase of the port project."

There was more. \$272 million for a railway in 2013 and more than \$1 billion for the Colombo Port City project, ventures that hired mostly Chinese workers (one Sri Lankan report put the number of Chinese workers dedicated to projects in 2009 at 25,000), and all with money Sri Lanka could barely afford to repay.

By 2015, Sri Lanka owed China \$8 billion, and Sri Lankan government officials predicted that accumulated foreign debt -- both owed to China and other countries -- would eat up 94% of the country's GDP.

After an equity swap, an IMF bailout and more control over the projects ceded to Beijing, the terms of the debt were restructured, giving Sri Lanka some breathing space.

In 2017, however, the Hambantota port proved too costly for Sri Lanka to sustain.

"They (the Chinese) called in the debt, and the debt has been paid by Sri Lanka giving them the (Hambantota) port. That port then gives them not only a strategic access point into India's sphere of influence through which China can deploy its naval forces, but it also gives China an advantageous position to export its goods into India's economic sphere, so it's achieved a number of strategic aims in that regard," said Malcolm Davis, senior analyst at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute in Sydney.

	"This is part of a determined strategy by China to extend its influence across the Indian Ocean at the expense of India and it's using Sri Lanka to achieve it," he said.
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HEADLINE	02/03 Syria denies US chem. weapons claim
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-turkey-expand-operation-syrian-kurds-52815940?
GIST	<p>The Latest on the situation in Syria (all times local):</p> <p>9:15 p.m.</p> <p>Syria's Foreign Ministry has dismissed as "null and void" U.S. accusations that President Bashar Assad's government is producing and using "new kinds of weapons" to deliver deadly chemicals despite committing to abolish its program in 2013.</p> <p>The ministry said in a statement on Saturday that Syria confirms the American statements are "nothing more than lies" based on the accounts of what the Trump administration called its partners on ground.</p> <p>Syria also says that reports by Western-backed media outlets about Damascus using chemical weapons "is a new version of U.S. and Western desperate intentions to create" an excuses to attack Syria.</p> <p>President Donald Trump has not ruled out additional military action to deter attacks or punish Assad, administration officials said earlier this week, although they did not suggest any action was imminent.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 Colombia opens Venezuela border shelter
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/colombia-opens-border-shelter-venezuelans-fleeing-crisis-52821864?
GIST	<p>Colombia's government has opened its first shelter for Venezuelans who are pouring across the border in ever-larger numbers to escape their nation's economic crisis.</p> <p>The bare-bones shelter opened Saturday near the border city of Cucuta will provide shelter of up to 48 hours for 120 people a day. Pregnant mothers, the elderly and minors who entered the country legally will be given priority. It will be administered by the Red Cross.</p> <p>Cucuta has been overwhelmed in recent weeks by an increasingly large exodus of Venezuelans. Many are sleeping on the streets and crime in the city has spiked as gangs recruit and take advantage of the desperate migrants.</p> <p>Some 35,000 Venezuelans cross into Colombia each day, many of them settling in with relatives or making short trips to buy food and medicine that has been scarce for years back home.</p> <p>But the numbers have surged in recent months, with an estimated 200,000 now looking to stay, as four-digit inflation plunges the oil-rich nation deeper into the abyss.</p> <p>Not all of them have been embraced amid growing hysteria that the economic refugees are stealing jobs and overwhelming already-stretched resources.</p> <p>Last week, authorities deported 130 Venezuelans who entered the country illegally and were sleeping outdoors on a basketball court in Cucuta. Migration authorities are also seeking to toughen enforcement of migration laws even as it extends from 90 days to two years the amount of time Venezuelans can remain in</p>

	the country.
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HEADLINE	02/04 China criticizes US nuke adversary claims
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/china-criticizes-us-nuclear-adversary-claims-52824439
GIST	<p>China on Sunday criticized a U.S. government report that cast Beijing as a potential nuclear adversary and called on Washington to reduce its own much larger arsenal and join in promoting regional stability.</p> <p>A Defense Ministry statement said China's nuclear arsenal is the "minimum level" required for security. It pledged never to be the first to use nuclear weapons "under any circumstances."</p> <p>The sweeping U.S. nuclear strategy review issued Friday said Washington wants to prevent Beijing from mistakenly concluding that any use of nuclear weapons, however limited, is acceptable.</p> <p>"The Chinese side expresses firm opposition" to the report, said a ministry spokesman, Ren Guoqiang.</p> <p>"We hope the U.S. will abandon a Cold War mentality and earnestly shoulder its special and prior responsibility for its own nuclear disarmament," said Ren.</p> <p>The ruling Communist Party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army, has the world's fifth-largest nuclear arsenal, with 300 warheads, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. The United States and Russia each have about 7,000 warheads, or about 20 times as many as Beijing.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Yemen stalemated civil war rages on
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/yemens-rebel-held-capital-stalemated-war-rages-52825761
GIST	<p>In the rocky highlands outside of Yemen's rebel-held capital, it quickly becomes clear how the Arab world's poorest country remains mired in a stalemated civil war.</p> <p>Soldiers and militiamen loyal to Yemen's internationally recognized government describe having a tantalizing view on a clear day of Sanaa's international airport from the moonscape mountains. The price is a steady barrage of incoming fire on the exposed hillside from Shiite rebels, known as Houthis, that makes any further advance treacherous, even with the aid of Saudi-led airstrikes.</p> <p>The nearly three-year civil war, pitting the Saudi-led coalition against the rebels, has killed more than 10,000 people, displaced 2 million and helped spawn a devastating cholera epidemic — and yet the front lines have hardly moved.</p> <p>"In mountainous areas like this it's difficult. The American Army struggled with that in Afghanistan," Yemeni Maj. Gen. Nasser Ali al-Daibany told Associated Press reporters who were granted access to the front lines on a tour organized by the Saudi-led coalition. "But for us this won't slow us down ... because our boys, our fighters, were trained in these mountains, so they are the sons of this area."</p> <p>The comparison to Afghanistan, where the U.S. war is now 16 years old, feels apt.</p> <p>Yemen has also seen decades of conflict, first with the 1960s civil war that ended North Yemen's monarchy. Fighting between Marxist South Yemen and the north followed. Yemen unified in 1990, but resentment persisted under 22 years of kleptocratic rule by Ali Abdullah Saleh.</p> <p>Yemen's 2011 Arab Spring protests ultimately forced Saleh to resign, but he continued to wield power</p>

behind the scenes and maintained the loyalty of many armed forces commanders. In 2014 he formed an alliance with the Houthis — who he had gone to war with in the past — and helped them capture the capital, Sanaa.

Saudi Arabia entered the conflict the following year, at the head of an Arab coalition heavily supported by the United Arab Emirates. They have sought to restore the internationally recognized government, led by President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, who is based in Saudi Arabia and whose rule is largely confined to the southern port city of Aden.

Riyadh views the Houthis as an Iranian proxy, and both Saudi Arabia and the United States say Tehran has provided the long-range missiles the rebels have fired into the kingdom. While Tehran supports the Houthis, it denies arming them.

The Saudi-led coalition has waged a devastating air campaign, repeatedly striking markets, medical facilities and civilian targets. The U.N. has attributed over half of reported child civilian casualties in the conflict to the coalition, and calls Yemen the worst humanitarian crisis in the world.

As the war has dragged on, it has become more muddled, with internal conflicts erupting on both sides. Saleh broke with the Houthis last year and appeared to switch sides, only to be gunned down by the rebels. In recent days, southern separatists backed by the UAE have clashed with forces loyal to Hadi in Aden. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, long seen as one of the most sophisticated offshoots of the global terror network, has exploited the chaos to regroup.

"Yemen has become in many senses a 'chaos state,' a place where the central government has either collapsed or lost control of large segments of the territory," Chatham House expert Peter Salisbury recently wrote. "Yet 'chaos' is a relative term. Although Yemen indeed appears to be chaotic from the outside . it contains its own internal logic, economies and political" powers.

All that can be seen in Marib, a province bordering Saudi Arabia and the northeastern highlands held by the Houthis. Nearly every man and some boys have Kalashnikov assault rifles slung over their shoulders, making it difficult to tell civilians from combatants at first glance. Many drivers don't bother with license plates.

Saudi Arabia backs Marib's local governor, Sultan al-Aradah. He holds power with tribal militias and fighters from Islah, Yemen's main Sunni Islamist political party with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, of which the UAE remains wary. Irregular forces man checkpoints across the province, and gunfire echoes day and night in the provincial capital.

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HEADLINE	02/03 Tax filing season begins
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/what-you-need-to-know-as-tax-filing-season-begins/
GIST	<p>Tax season has begun — the Internal Revenue Service officially began accepting individual returns Monday — so it's time to get your documents organized if you haven't already.</p> <p>While much attention has been paid to the federal tax overhaul, most provisions will not affect tax returns filed this year for 2017, said Lisa Greene-Lewis, a tax expert with TurboTax.</p> <p>There is at least one change, though, that tax filers may want to consider as they fill out forms this year. "Folks should take a close look at their medical expenses," said Melissa Labant, director of tax policy and advocacy with the Association of International Certified Professional Accountants.</p> <p>The tax law expanded the availability of the deduction for medical expenses not just for 2018 but also for 2017. The deduction previously applied to medical expenses over 10 percent of adjusted gross income, but the law lowered the bar to 7.5 percent for those two years. (So if your adjusted gross income is \$40,000,</p>

you can write off medical expenses over \$3,000, rather than over \$4,000.) But there is a catch: You must itemize to take the deduction. After 2018, the bar is scheduled to move back up to 10 percent.

The IRS says it expects to issue most refunds within three weeks for electronically filed returns (refunds for paper returns can take several weeks longer). Last year, the average refund was just under \$3,000.

But anti-fraud measures first put in place for last tax season will continue to affect the delivery of tax refunds for people who claim the earned-income tax credit or the additional child tax credit. By law, the IRS can't issue refunds for such filers before mid-February. The agency said it expected filers who claim those credits to receive refunds no earlier than Feb. 27, if they choose direct deposit and there are no other problems with their returns.

Many filers claiming those credits tend to file early because they depend on their tax refunds to pay off holiday credit-card debt or other bills. Nearly 70 percent of clients filing with tax preparer Jackson Hewitt Tax Service in January and February 2017 received at least one of those credits, according to the company.

In large part because of those delays, some tax-preparation chains are offering [no-fee, zero-interest advances of refunds](#).

The advances — often issued on a debit card — are generally safer than the notorious refund anticipation loans that such services offered in the past, which were often larded with high interest charges and fees, said Chi Chi Wu, a lawyer with the National Consumer Law Center. But, she cautioned, tax filers typically must have their returns prepared by the company to get the no-fee advance, and tax-preparation fees vary widely. So it's sometimes hard to know if the package is a good deal. "Tax- preparation fees are very opaque," she said.

Wu noted that there are free tax-preparation services available for eligible filers through the IRS's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program.

At least one online service, offered by Credit Karma, promotes a no-fee online tax- preparation service as well as no-fee advances of up to \$1,000.

Here are some questions and answers about tax season:

Q: When is the filing deadline this year?

A: Taxpayers have an extra two days to file this year. The federal deadline is Tuesday, April 17. The usual deadline, April 15, falls on a Sunday, and April 16 is a holiday in Washington, D.C.

Q: Why does my Form W-2 have a special code on it?

A: As part of an expanded test to reduce tax fraud and identity theft, the IRS has assigned 16-character codes to some W-2 forms to help verify income data on electronically filed tax returns. If you see a code on your W-2, you'll be asked to include it on your return. (The code isn't used for returns filed on paper, according to the IRS.) The codes will appear on roughly a quarter of all W-2 forms, the agency said.

Q: How can I track my tax refund?

A: The IRS recommends using its IRS2Go app for smartphones or its online refund tool to check the status of refunds. Filers claiming the earned-income credit or the additional child tax credit, however, won't see updates for projected refund dates before Feb. 17, the agency has said.

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HEADLINE	02/03 Tribes: stop LNG plant construction
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/889078/northwest-tribes-ask-gov-to-halt-tacoma-plant-construction/
GIST	TACOMA, Wash. (AP) — The Puyallup Tribe and leaders from 14 other Northwest Tribes have called on Gov. Jay Inslee to stop the construction of Puget Sound Energy's liquefied natural gas plant on Tacoma's

	<p>Tideflats until an environmental review is complete “and all permit requirements are satisfied.”</p> <p>The News Tribune reported Friday the letter reiterated that there was no consultation with the Puyallup Tribe when planning for the plant was underway.</p> <p>Last week, the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency called for additional environmental review of the proposed plant before it can get a required air permit.</p> <p>That review is expected to take several months and will look at greenhouse-gas emissions that are created throughout the entire life cycle of the project.</p> <p>Puget Sound Energy officials have repeatedly said liquefied natural gas is a much cleaner-burning fuel than the bunker fuel that ships have historically run on.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 Lewis Co. pays to settle harassment
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/889079/lewis-county-paid-350k-to-settle-harassment-claim/
GIST	<p>CENTRALIA, Wash. (AP) — Lewis County paid out \$350,000 last May to settle a sexual harassment and retaliation claim filed against the county and superior court by a former court manager.</p> <p>Records obtained by The Centralia Chronicle shows that former county drug court manager Jennifer Soper reached a settlement with Lewis County and others in May.</p> <p>Soper filed a tort claim in December 2016 against Lewis County seeking \$800,000 in damages.</p> <p>She accused former Lewis County Superior Court Judge Nelson Hunt of sexually harassing her over a period of nine years and the county of wrongful termination.</p> <p>In documents, the county said the settlement is a compromise of disputed claims and not an admission of liability.</p> <p>Hunt on Thursday denied the allegations and told the newspaper he was not in favor of settling the claim.</p> <p>Hunt had sought an injunction to block the release of the documents. But a Cowlitz County Superior Court judge ordered the release Thursday with some redactions.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 Another government shutdown looms
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration/no-progress-on-dreamers-as-another-u-s-shutdown-looms-idUSKBN1FM2MY
GIST	<p>STERLING, Va./ WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, W. Va. (Reuters) - The U.S. Congress made no notable progress this week toward a deal on the status of 700,000 “Dreamer” immigrants, with President Donald Trump saying on Friday that one “could very well not happen” by a deadline next month.</p> <p>Whether the lack of progress signaled the possibility of another federal government shutdown next week was unclear, but it worried the Dreamers, young people who were brought illegally into the United States as children.</p> <p>Trump said last year that he would end by March 5 a program that was set up by former President Barack Obama to protect the Dreamers from deportation, and he urged Congress to act before that date. No action has resulted.</p>

“We want to make a deal,” Trump said at an event in Virginia with U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials. And he blamed Democratic lawmakers for the impasse.

“I think they want to use it for political purposes for elections. I really am not happy with the way it’s going from the standpoint of the Democrats,” he said.

Democrats have said repeatedly that they want protections written into law for the Dreamers, who were given temporary legal status by Obama’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which lets them study and work in the United States without fear of deportation.

Republicans, who control Congress, are undecided on what to do about DACA and the Dreamers. They ended a three-day retreat at a mountain resort in West Virginia on Friday not much nearer to consensus than they were a week ago.

The partisan standoff caused a partial shutdown of the federal government for three days last month after Congress failed to pass a stopgap spending measure needed to keep the lights on at federal facilities across the country.

The House of Representatives plans to vote on Tuesday on legislation to keep federal agencies operating beyond Feb. 8, when existing funds expire, a senior House Republican aide said.

The aide did not provide details, however, on the duration of this latest-in-a-series of temporary funding measures.

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HEADLINE	02/03 Pentagon plans nuke weapons expansion
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2018/02/03/pentagon-announces-plan-to-expand-nuclear-arsenal-in-face-russian-threat.html
GIST	<p>The Pentagon plans to develop two "low-yield" nuclear warheads to be launched from ballistic-missile submarines and warships, to send a message to Moscow -- which the Trump administration accuses of amassing a stockpile of tactical nuclear weapons.</p> <p>The new plan is outlined in Defense Secretary Jim Mattis's Nuclear Posture Review, released Friday afternoon.</p> <p>"Expanding U.S. tailored response options will raise the nuclear threshold and help ensure that potential adversaries perceive no possible advantage in limited nuclear escalation, making nuclear weapons employment less likely," the new review said.</p> <p>The Pentagon says Russia’s buildup of similar "low-yield" nukes is the reason it must match the threat.</p> <p>“The United States would only consider the use of nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances,” said Deputy Defense Secretary Patrick M. Shanahan. “Extreme circumstances could include significant non-nuclear strategic attacks,” he added without offering specifics.</p> <p>Russian and Chinese officials were briefed by State Department officials Friday morning about the nuclear posture review.</p> <p>It's the first such review in seven years, but much has changed since 2010, when the U.S. unilaterally reduced portions of its nuclear arsenal.</p> <p>“Over the past decade, while the United States led the world in these reductions every one of our potential nuclear adversaries has been pursuing the exact opposite strategy,” said Deputy Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette. “These powers are increasing the numbers and types of nuclear weapons in their arsenal.”</p>

	<p>After Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, it deployed nuclear-capable intermediate range missiles to Kaliningrad, a Russian enclave on the border with Poland, leaving NATO leaders feeling helpless.</p> <p>"Russia's nuclear saber-rattling is unjustified, destabilizing and dangerous," said NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in 2015. Any deployment of nuclear forces to Crimea would "fundamentally change the balance of security in Europe," he added.</p> <p>Russia is bound by a decades-long arms treaty, known as the INF, from deploying ground-launched intermediate-range missiles. The Pentagon has accused Russia of violating the treaty, noting that Russia is also developing nuclear depth charges, torpedoes and anti-aircraft missiles among its 2,000 tactical nukes.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 Germany: NKorea exploited embassy
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/german-intel-chief-north-korea-embassy-procurement-52815939?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The head of Germany's domestic intelligence agency says North Korea has used its embassy in Berlin to acquire equipment apparently intended for its missile or nuclear programs.</p> <p>The comments by BfV agency head Hans-Georg Maassen were released by NDR public television Saturday before a documentary airing next week. Maassen said of the embassy: "We have seen that procurement activities took place from there, from our point of view with a view to the missile program and in part also the nuclear program."</p> <p>He added that "if we see such things, we prevent them," but it isn't always possible to recognize them and the activities often involve goods usable for either civilian or military purposes.</p> <p>Pyongyang has faced increasing U.N. sanctions in response to its nuclear and ballistic missile tests.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 FBI investigates Honolulu PD officers
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/fbi-investigating-honolulu-officers-allegedly-forcing-suspects-mouth/story?id=52813827&cid=clicksource_81_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>The FBI is investigating four Honolulu Police Department officers who allegedly forced a suspect to place his mouth on a urinal in a public restroom, officials announced Friday.</p> <p>Police Chief Susan Ballard said the officers were responding last Sunday afternoon to a 911 call about a person trespassing at a public restroom in the Keeaumoku area of Honolulu, ABC affiliate KITV reported.</p> <p>Ballard said an officer reported the alleged urinal incident, leading to an internal investigation. The victim was also located by police.</p> <p>The Honolulu Police Department then referred the case to the FBI.</p> <p>"If true, these allegations violate the core value of what HPD stands for," Ballard said. "Our officers are sworn to uphold the rights of all persons and I expect every officer to treat every member of the public fairly and with respect. Personally I'm appalled."</p> <p>Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell said in a statement Friday, "Police Chief Susan Ballard has done the absolutely right thing by referring the alleged misconduct by four Honolulu police officers to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for further review. Although these officers are presumed innocent, we need an</p>

	<p>independent agency to investigate exactly what occurred and whether these officers engaged in civil rights abuses."</p> <p>Caldwell continued, "Chief Ballard has promised to transform the Honolulu Police Department from a warrior mentality to a guardian mentality, and this is an approach to community policing that I wholeheartedly support."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 CDC: more children dead from flu
SOURCE	http://www.cnn.com/2018/02/02/health/flu-weekly-surveillance-feb-2/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Sixteen flu-related deaths were reported Friday by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in its weekly flu report. This brings the total number of pediatric flu-related deaths to 53 for the season, which began in October.</p> <p>According to the report, influenza activity is now widespread in 48 states and Puerto Rico, down from 49 states in the previous two weeks. Oregon joined Hawaii in lower activity levels for the week ending January 27.</p> <p>"Our latest tracking data indicate that flu activity is still high and widespread across most of the nation and increasing overall," said Dr. Anne Schuchat, the acting CDC director. "So far this year, the cumulative rate of hospitalizations is the highest since we've been tracking in this way, which goes back to 2010.</p> <p>"This is a very difficult season," she said.</p> <p>The CDC also recorded an uptick in the percentage of patients who visited health care providers complaining of influenza-like illness across the nation: 7.1% of patients for the week ending January 27, up from 6.5%, the newly revised estimated from the previous week.</p> <p>"We have not hit our peak yet, unfortunately," CDC spokeswoman Kristen Nordlund said. "Really, the bottom line is, there is still likely many more weeks to go."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 NKorea dodging sanctions w/fish firms
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/03/africa/north-korea-mozambique-sanctions-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Maputo, Mozambique (CNN)On the surface, there is nothing remarkable about this sleepy fishing port in Maputo.</p> <p>But hidden from view, wedged between the other boats and ships docked there, are the rusty Susan 1 and Susan 2. These are not ordinary fishing vessels, but sanctions-busting trawlers manned by crews from North Korea.</p> <p>Pyongyang's interest in a couple of aging African trawlers may seem odd at first. But fishing is big business in Mozambique -- it's one of the country's most lucrative industries. North Korea wants a slice of that much-needed cash, and boats are easy to move and conceal.</p> <p>Joint fishing ventures are just one area of illicit trade the two countries are engaged in. In a months-long investigation, CNN uncovered a secret web of front companies, military cooperation and elite-forces training deals between North Korea and Mozambique, all in violation of international sanctions, according to United Nations investigators.</p> <p>Documents reviewed by CNN show that the cooperation is sealed with illegal contracts worth millions of dollars. The money is funneled through regionally based North Korean diplomats to Pyongyang, some</p>

	<p>7,500 miles away.</p> <p>US officials have long maintained that the money from ventures like this goes straight into North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's notorious nuclear slush fund, known as Office 39.</p> <p>With crippling sanctions squeezing the pariah state, Kim needs hard currency to further develop his nuclear and ballistic missile programs.</p> <p>The Trump administration wants to stop the money flowing. Tougher UN and US sanctions, sustained pressure on China and executive orders are all part of Washington's playbook to squeeze North Korea. The plan, so far, doesn't appear to be working.</p> <p>North Korea earned nearly \$200 million by exporting coal and other banned commodities between January and September 2017 in violation of UN sanctions, according to an unpublished UN report.</p> <p>The report, sections of which have been obtained by CNN, found that North Korea "is already flouting the most recent resolutions by exploiting global oil supply chains, complicit foreign nationals, offshore company registries and the international banking system."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 UN: NKorea violating sanctions
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/03/politics/north-korea-un-report-sanctions/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)North Korea earned nearly \$200 million from exporting coal and other banned commodities last year in violation of UN sanctions, according to a new United Nations report.</p> <p>The report was authored by a panel of experts investigating North Korea and has been sent to a UN committee on North Korea. CNN has obtained key sections of the report from a UN diplomat who is not authorized to speak publicly.</p> <p>CNN has not reviewed the entire document.</p> <p>Despite numerous rounds of international sanctions, North Korea exported almost all the commodities that had been prohibited in the resolutions between January and September of last year, the report indicates. It also indicates that North Korea exported coal to China, Malaysia, Russia and Vietnam, in addition to falsifying documents to conceal the origin of the coal.</p> <p>China has consistently denied breaching sanctions.</p> <p>Investigators highlighted that North Korea "is already flouting the most recent resolutions by exploiting global oil supply chains, complicit foreign nationals, offshore company registries and the international banking system," the document states.</p> <p>Investigators also suggested that Pyongyang has supplied weapons to Syria and Myanmar.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 Hawaii 'button pusher' blames others
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/03/us/hawaiis-false-alarm-sender-speaks/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The man who says he sent out the false ballistic missile alert last month in Hawaii that caused more than a half hour of panic said Friday he thinks he is being treated unfairly, and he was positive at the time the drill was real.</p> <p>The man, who said he doesn't want to be identified for security reasons, was fired by the Hawaii</p>

Emergency Management Agency (HI-EMA) earlier this week. He told CNN on Friday that he feels terrible about what happened, but he did what he was trained to do.

He hopes that by speaking out, he can help prevent a similar incident from happening in the 49 other states.

The drill began on the morning of January 13 as the man, who had been with the agency for 11 1/2 years, according to his lawyer, and his coworkers were just logging on to their computers at the beginning of their shifts, he said.

"I thought 100 percent it was real," said the former employee, who said he had been involved in about five prior missile drills.

The man said this time he never heard "exercise, exercise, exercise" over the secure phone for emergencies because someone picked up the handset before transferring it to a speaker.

The man said he heard the words "This is not a drill" in a voice he did not recognize and reacted as he was trained to do. He went on his computer and used a pull-down menu to send out the alert.

Bruce Oliveira, who conducted an HI-EMA investigation into the incident, said earlier this week that five other employees in the room heard the guidance that it was an exercise.

Oliveira, who retired from the Hawaii National Guard as brigadier general, also told reporters, "When it became apparent that the real-world alert was issued," the employee who sent it out "seemed confused, he froze and another employee had to take over his responsibilities."

The employee "had a history of confusing drill and real-world events," Oliveira said.

The man disagreed with the state's version of what happened and said there was no one in the room that said it was a drill.

The man blamed the incident on a variety of factors -- it was shift change, he and others lacked training, the drill was unannounced -- for the alert that wasn't corrected for 38 minutes.

He also said protocols for the drills he was involved in changed each time.

"The (state and the Federal Communications Commission) have false information in the reports," the man said.

Attorney Michael Green said his client was a scapegoat.

"No one was ready for this day," Green said by phone. "They were not ready and they were not programmed to do what they were supposed to do when this happened."

Green and his client pointed out there was no safeguard measures to withdraw the alert. Employees had to call in people from the IT department to get it canceled. The former employee said the whole thing was a failure in planning from top to bottom.

An internal investigation found "that insufficient management controls, poor computer software design and human factors contributed" to the alert and a delayed correction message.

Maj. Gen. Joe Logan, Hawaii's state adjutant general, said Vern Miyagi, administrator of the state emergency management agency, resigned Tuesday.

Miyagi accepted full responsibility for the incident and the actions of his employees, Logan said. Another employee was suspended without pay and a third employee resigned before any disciplinary action was

	taken, Logan said. Logan said he appointed Brig. Gen. Moses Kaoiwi, director of joint staff with the Hawaii National Guard, as interim agency administrator.
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	02/05 Virtual currencies worldwide backlash
SOURCE	http://www.nationmultimedia.com/detail/asean-plus/30337965
GIST	<p>TOKYO - A worldwide trend is gaining strength towards more strictly regulating virtual currencies that are traded online.</p> <p>China has gone so far as to ban the trading of virtual currencies, and Europe and the United States are searching for ways to strengthen regulations.</p> <p>In Japan, an exchange that lost a huge amount of virtual currency was subjected to an on-site inspection by the Financial Services Agency on Friday. The virtual currency market, which has grown extremely rapidly, appears to be at a turning point.</p> <p>On Thursday, the Indian Finance Minister Arun Jaitley indicated in a speech to the nation's parliament that his government would seek to put a stop to illegal financing and other transactions linked to virtual currencies. The government does not consider crypto-currencies legal tender, he said in the speech.</p> <p>Virtual currency markets have subsequently seen a significant sell-off, reflecting concerns that the markets could be more tightly regulated worldwide. According to CoinDesk, a website that specializes in virtual currencies, the price of one bitcoin (BTC) temporarily fell below \$8,000 on Friday. This represents a drop of about 30 per cent compared to five days before, and is less than half of the peak value of about \$20,000, reached in mid-December 2017.</p> <p>There has long been concern that the strong anonymity offered by virtual currencies will lead to malicious use, such as money laundering. Moreover, virtual currencies have been repeatedly stolen via cyber-attack as the rapid worldwide growth in the usage of virtual currencies has led exchange operators to hold vast amounts of customer assets.</p> <p>Behind the calls for increased regulation also lies a dramatic increase in the number of people who hold virtual currencies for speculation purposes. Asian countries have taken a particularly hard line. China, which once had the largest trading volume in the world, now has the strictest rules.</p> <p>China's central bank, the People's Bank of China, implemented a total ban on initial coin offerings (ICO), in which companies and other vendors raise funds from investors by issuing their own virtual currencies or coins. China has essentially banned trading in virtual currencies, which has caused exchanges to close.</p> <p>Chinese authorities say they acted because of negative effects on the financial market, but some analysts believe China wants to stop capital flight overseas. Indonesia's central bank, Bank Indonesia, indicated in January that it would not permit virtual currency trading. Europe and the United States are also exploring regulations. Senior officials of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and others are scheduled to testify Tuesday in a U.S. Senate hearing on virtual currency scams and ICOs.</p> <p>Germany and France have called for international cooperation. They are expected to jointly propose regulations at a March meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors from the Group of 20 nations.</p> <p>Japan was one of the first in the world to introduce a registration system for exchanges by establishing</p>

Return to Top	<p>relevant legislation that takes virtual currencies into account as a means of payment. However, rather than being used for payment, virtual currencies are being used more as a financial product for speculation purposes.</p> <p>So Saito, a lawyer who is knowledgeable about virtual currencies, said Japan’s regulations “did not envision [this kind of situation] and have not kept up with the current state of affairs.” Concerns have been voiced over a general lack of transparency — including suspected market manipulations — for some virtual currencies and exchange operators. Some corporations have started to review their stances toward virtual currencies.</p> <p>Peach Aviation, a low-cost carrier, announced Friday that it would indefinitely postpone a plan to allow customers to purchase tickets using bitcoin. The latest virtual currency theft will likely lead to heightened discussion in Japan regarding whether, or how, its regulatory scheme should be reassessed.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/05 Cybercrime threat growing in Australia
SOURCE	http://www.technologydecisions.com.au/content/security/news/cybercrime-threat-growing-in-australia-407713585#axzz56E2NMZt5
GIST	<p>Cybercrime in Australia grew by more than a quarter in 2017, the second-highest rate of growth among seven countries surveyed by Accenture and the Ponemon Institute.</p> <p>The average Australian business experienced 53 security breaches last year, up by 25% from 2016 but still well below the global average of 130, the survey indicates.</p> <p>The most costly attack types involve malicious insiders, phishing and social engineering, with each attack costing well over \$100,000. Meanwhile businesses are spending around a third of their security costs on detection.</p> <p>The most expensive consequences of cyber attacks in Australia are business disruption and information loss.</p> <p>But despite the rising scale and severity of attacks, the research shows that only 24% of Australian businesses have implemented AI and 32% have implemented analytics into their cybersecurity systems and processes.</p> <p>By contrast, 64% of Australian respondents have deployed security intelligence systems and 60% have installed identity and access governance.</p> <p>“With cyber incidents on the rise, and ever evolving in terms of scale and sophistication, Australian businesses should ensure they are appropriately prepared,” Accenture Security Asia Pacific Managing Director Josh Kennedy-White said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/05 Terror groups eye infrastructure attacks
SOURCE	https://www.thenational.ae/world/europe/isil-likely-to-switch-to-cyber-war-after-battlefield-loss-1.701733
GIST	<p>ISIL and other terrorist groups are turning to the underworld to try to secure tools to carry out cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure.</p> <p>Terrorist groups have taken part in low-grade “cyber vandalism” and their ability to wage more damaging attacks will only increase, according to a former operations chief at the UK’s spy centre GCHQ.</p>

Many of the required tools to launch crippling attacks are becoming increasingly available on criminal markets on the so-called Dark Web, part of the world wide web that needs special software to penetrate.

Committed extremists could seek to accelerate those efforts by recruiting knowledgeable insiders, said Conrad Prince in a report for government-backed insurance company Pool Re. “A well-placed insider can go a long way to simplifying the work involved in delivering a destructive cyber-attack,” he wrote.

He cited the case of Rajib Karim, a former IT worker for British Airways, who used his position to investigate how to cause international travel chaos by bringing down the airline’s systems. He was jailed for 30 years in 2011 for plotting to blow up a plane.

Mr Prince said that as ISIL lose control of more physical territory it seemed likely that they would focus their efforts on cyberspace. “The cyber conflict... has a long way to run yet,” he wrote.

“Their capability to do so is limited at present, but all the trends indicate that their ability to deliver such attacks will increase over time.”

ISIL has so far failed to carry out any major successful cyber-attack in part because of the targeting of its cyber experts by the US and other anti-ISIL forces, according to the most recent internet threat assessment published by the European Union’s policing agency Europol.

It said that the concerted action had led to a scaling down of the activities of Pro-ISIL hackers - such as a group known as the “United Cyber Caliphate”.

The group had specialised in the publication of “kill lists” of potential targets in the US and UK and called on followers to “kill them wherever you found them”. There has been no confirmed incident of anyone being targeted on the list.

Many previous known cyber-attacks amounted to little more than attention-grabbing stunts and hacks of public accounts, rather than the penetration of critical infrastructure. Junaid Hussain, a British militant who was killed in a US drone strike in Syria in 2015, was believed to have been involved in obtaining the passwords of the US Central Command’s Twitter account to briefly send pro-ISIL messages.

He was jailed in the UK for six months while part of a hacking group known as Team Poison after hacking the address book of former UK premier Tony Blair and publishing information. He also was involved in tying up the phonelines of a UK anti-terror hotline.

“The absence of any major cyber-attacks by terrorist organisations can be interpreted as the result of not enough technical skills on their side, at least for the present time,” Europol said in its internet organised crime threat assessment for 2017.

Despite the apparent amateurish nature of some of the hacks, the 2017 Europol report concluded that the militants’ receptiveness to new technologies and a stated commitment to waging the fight in the virtual world “leaves little room for complacency”.

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HEADLINE	02/04 'Great British firewall' blocked 54M attacks
SOURCE	https://www.ft.com/content/ece41146-081c-11e8-9650-9c0ad2d7c5b5
GIST	<p>UK security chiefs took down more than 120,000 fake websites last year and blocked 54m malicious online attacks as part of a “great British firewall” designed to stop cyber criminals targeting the public for money and secret data.</p> <p>According to a report to be released on Monday, GCHQ’s National Cyber Security Centre says its “active defence programme” has led to a 2 per cent reduction in the volume of global “phishing” and “malware”</p>

attacks hosted in the UK since July 2016.

While the report, seen by the Financial Times, does not cover severe cyber attacks launched by hostile state actors such as North Korea or Russia, the NCSC said it was the first time the UK had outlined the scale of what it called “commodity attacks” that caused “the majority of people the majority of harm”.

Ciaran Martin, chief executive of the NCSC, who warned last month that it was a question of “when not if” a big cyber attack hit the UK, launched the active cyber defence initiative in September 2016, announcing plans to work with internet companies to tighten online security.

Spoofing and phishing attacks fool people into handing over personal details through seemingly legitimate emails purported to be from trusted organisations and government departments. They are one of the most common types of attack.

The email usually redirects people to a fake website that then either infects the user’s computer or asks them to input their details. Hackers can also target a service provider’s domain name service — the internet’s phone book — to automatically launch malware, software that can disrupt or penetrate a computer system.

The NCSC said that while there was some overlap between hostile state actors who employed similar tactics, the vast majority of attacks were run by criminal gangs who looked to profit from selling on people’s data or hacking into their bank accounts.

“You don’t need to beat cyber crime — and it would be unrealistic to think we could,” said Ian Levy, technical director for the NCSC. “But we do want to make it as hard as possible and that means making it as unprofitable and risky as we can for cybercriminals to act in the UK.”

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HEADLINE	02/02 Fraudulent money transfers on rise
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/fraudulent-money-transfers-352k-on-1/
GIST	<p>Cybercriminals are using ever-more sophisticated methods to exploit human weaknesses in an organization’s cyber-defenses, including business email compromise (BEC, or fraudulent instruction scams), which are significantly on the rise and costing businesses crippling damage.</p> <p>Claims data recorded by Beazley, a specialist provider of cyber-insurance, indicates that organizations are facing an increased threat to their operations from fraudulent instruction scams. The number of incidents reported to Beazley Breach Response Services (BBR Services) quadrupled in 2017, with policyholders incurring losses ranging from a few thousand dollars up to \$3 million. With claims amounts in 2017 averaging \$352,000, fraudulent instruction has rapidly become a significant financial threat to many organizations.</p> <p>In the gambit, criminals use hacking and phishing techniques to accumulate information that allows them to send plausible-looking requests to transfer funds to bogus accounts. In addition to losing money, organizations may also have to conduct exhaustive systems analysis to ensure that individuals’ personal and private data has not been compromised.</p> <p>“Cybercriminals are finding new ways of getting organizations to part with their hard-earned cash,” said Katherine Keefe, global head of BBR Services. “In 2017 we saw fraudulent instruction emerge as a new trend which offers significant reward for the perpetrators in return for little effort but brings potentially devastating financial consequences for the victim.”</p> <p>The top three industry sectors affected in 2017 were professional services (22% of the total reported to Beazley), financial services (21%) and retail (12%), but incidents are growing across all sectors, and in particular where single large transactions, such as real estate purchases, are involved, the firm found.</p>

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HEADLINE	02/02 Japan raids hacked crypto exchange
SOURCE	http://www.securityweek.com/japan-raids-hacked-crypto-exchange-bitcoin-plunges-further
GIST	<p>Japanese authorities on Friday raided virtual currency exchange Coincheck, a week after the Tokyo-based firm lost \$530 million in cryptocurrency to hackers.</p> <p>The raid comes as bitcoin dipped below \$9,000 for the first time since November after India said Thursday it would take measures to prevent the use of cryptocurrencies.</p> <p>The search of Coincheck's headquarters in Tokyo's Shibuya district was carried out by the Financial Services Agency, which had already slapped the company with an administrative order following the hack.</p> <p>"We have launched an on-site inspection to ensure preservation of clients' assets," Finance Minister Taro Aso said at a briefing.</p> <p>Japanese officials have suggested Coincheck lacked proper security measures, making itself vulnerable to theft.</p> <p>The January 26 hack, which saw thieves syphon away 523 million units of the cryptocurrency NEM, exceeds the \$480 million stolen in 2014 from another Japanese virtual currency exchange, MtGox.</p> <p>Earlier this week, Japan's FSA gave Coincheck until February 13 to investigate the cause of the incident, "properly" deal with clients, strengthen risk management and take preventive measures.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 Court: UK 'snooper's charter' unlawful
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/uks-snoopers-charter-inconsistent-with-eu-law-says-court-of-appeal/article/741570/
GIST	<p>Earlier this week the Court of Appeal found the UK's Data Retention and Investigatory Powers Act 2014, commonly known as the Snoopers' Charter, unlawful as far as the prevention, investigation, detection and prosecution of serious crimes are concerned.</p> <p>The Data Retention and Investigatory Powers Act was passed in 2014 to enable the government to carry out mass surveillance and to collect data belonging to citizens to prevent or investigate serious crimes in the UK.</p> <p>However, soon after it was passed, the law drew criticism from concerned citizens for being too draconian and for giving enormous and unvetted powers to authorities to carry out surveillance and to collect sensitive data belonging to citizens.</p> <p>The criticism had its desired effect. Following a petition by MP Tom Watson who challenged the law, the Court of Appeal found Section 1 of the 'Snoopers' Charter' unlawful and in violation of EU law for allowing authorities to collect data when the objective was not strictly restricted to fighting serious crime, and for allowing access without prior review by a court or an independent administrative authority.</p> <p>"The common-sense approach taken by the judges will ensure that the most contentious part of the "snooper's charter" – the carte blanche ability to collect data with neither a warrant nor oversight – will have to be swiftly removed," said Lee Munson, security researcher at Comparitech.com.</p> <p>He added, 'While no-one in their right mind would argue against surveillance of legitimate terrorist and criminal targets, this Act went way too far in casting a dragnet over ordinary citizens while failing to</p>

address the fact that the bad guys are actually quite adept at using technology, such as encryption, that the Bill simply cannot legislate against.

"Talking of which, it will be interesting to see how a rewrite of the Investigatory Powers Act affects the government's views on technology and its obsession with backdoors, not to mention its lack of understanding of either,' he added.

In November last year, the Home Office conceded that certain provisions in the Snoopers' Charter were too far-reaching and thus introduced the new Investigatory Powers Act to rectify rights violations. However, Liberty, the human rights group that represented Watson in the Court of Appeal, said that the new legislation did not fully comply with past court rulings requiring mandatory safeguards and is now challenging it in a separate case along with Watson.

"Ministers aren't above the law – they don't get to pick and choose which rights violations they address and they can't haggle with the courts to avoid properly protecting people's freedom. All of the fundamental safeguards demanded by the court must now be implemented," said Watson.

The Court of Appeal's ruling has also been backed by the Internet Services Providers' Association. In a statement, the association said that it always backed a legal framework "that would comply with existing rights and rulings so that it would not be revisited on a regular basis".

It continued: "We feel it is imperative that the Government fully and unambiguously meet the requirements of the court's judgment as it consults on additional safeguards to the Investigatory Powers Act, including independent authorisation for communications data acquisition requests. A failure to do so could lead to a situation in the near future where the UK's regime is again open to further challenge and has to be revisited once more."

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HEADLINE	02/02 APIs 'mushrooming' security risk
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/application-security/apis-pose-mushrooming-security-risk/d/d-id/1330966
GIST	<p>The application economy has now become the API economy. And as the importance of application programming interfaces (APIs) grows within the enterprise, organizations must keep their security top-of-mind, lest they put the entire software stack at risk.</p> <p>Software is powering digital disruption today and the secret sauce to this success is not just the features of the software itself, but how well it integrates with other software. Integrations between internal applications across business groups, with external platforms and applications held by partners, and with other consumer-based applications on customer devices is what fuels business success today. APIs are the glue that holds all these integrations together.</p> <p>But APIs deployed without security measures expose organizations to yet another class of attack vectors.</p> <p>"APIs represent a mushrooming security risk because they expose multiple avenues for hackers to try to access a company's data," explains Terry Ray, CTO of Imperva. "To close the door on security risks and protect their customers, companies need to treat APIs with the same level of protection that they provide for their business-critical web applications."</p> <p>Nevertheless, APIs remain greatly important for business and IT strategy.</p> <p>"The greatest revenue potential (APIs) provide is removing barriers to growing revenue by integrating platforms and apps so organizations can quickly launch new business models and scale fast," explains Louis Columbus, an enterprise software strategist and principal at IQMS, a manufacturing ERP vendor, in a Forbes piece last year.</p>

What's more, APIs are also fueling new methods of developing and deploying software. As organizations seek means to deliver and tweak software faster, they're increasingly breaking up large monolithic code bases into smaller chunks of independent code called microservices. Advanced organizations develop applications using segmented microservices that fit together like bricks into a larger software structure, making it easier to execute quick changes to parts of the software without accidentally breaking something else in the code base. But these microservices must interface with one another, and it takes APIs to accomplish that.

According to a study out this week from Imperva, these trends in software strategy have translated to the kind of proliferation where the typical organization is managing an average of 363 APIs within their application ecosystem. So, the obvious question for cybersecurity is where do the risks lie?

According to the survey, more than two-thirds of organizations expose APIs to the public in order to enable partners and external developers to hook into the power of their software. This kind of exposure may open up a world of business opportunity, but it also brings risk to the table. Among the 250 IT and security practitioners questioned, the biggest proportion - 39% - were most concerned about the risks that bots and DDoS attacks posed to APIs.

Nearly a quarter of respondents also expressed concerns about authentication enforcement, a tricky topic when it comes to allowing access to only some data within an application without exposing other sensitive data. A bank, for example, might want its application to easily interface with other consumer applications, but wouldn't want its credentials shared with those applications on sign-on. And that's just the start of the threat exposure.

Some 76% of organizations report that they currently treat API security differently than Web security. Only about 63% of organizations use a Web application firewall to secure their APIs. Approximately 63% also report using an API gateway, though that number does bump up to 80% for public-facing APIs. Meanwhile, fewer than half of organizations use runtime application self-protection (RASP) to prevent attackers from tampering with or reversing API code for future attacks.

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HEADLINE	02/02 UK: role of internet in radicalization
SOURCE	http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/far-right-darren-osborne-police-terrorism-radicalise-a8190386.html
GIST	<p>Police will “look at the role of the internet” in the rapid radicalisation of terrorists in the wake of the Finsbury Park mosque attack, a leading anti-terror officer has said.</p> <p>Dean Haydon, of the Metropolitan Police, said that “some individuals could look at material today and decide to go and do an attack later on this evening”.</p> <p>Finsbury Park attacker Darren Osborne is thought to have been radicalised within the space of a few weeks before he carried out his van attack last year.</p> <p>On Thursday he was found guilty of murder. The trial heard how Osborne became “obsessed” with far-right material online in the lead-up to the 19 June attack.</p> <p>The material he accessed was “unpalatable” but difficult to police, however, Mr Haydon said.</p> <p>The head of Scotland Yard’s counter-terror command said: “We have to be alive to the fact that people are accessing this material and they are using it to self-radicalise, and that’s what happened in this case.”</p> <p>He added: “Yes, there’s material as I said that’s unpalatable, not particularly pleasant, but it doesn’t cross the threshold in relation to either a crime or a terrorism offence – and that’s really difficult for us then to</p>

	<p>police.</p> <p>“It is out there, people can access it and – as we’ve seen in this case – it certainly affected Osborne in the way it did and certainly played a key part in his radicalisation.</p> <p>“Some of this material is easily accessible, so we have to look at the role of the internet.”</p> <p>Mr Haydon, who described the far-right as an “emerging threat”, said: “We are committed to tackling all forms of extremism including this particular aspect.”</p>
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HEADLINE	02/05 Campaign against social media addiction
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2018/02/05/Tech-experts-launch-campaign-against-social-media-addiction/9661517812402/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=3
GIST	<p>Feb. 5 (UPI) -- A group of former employees from some of the biggest companies in tech have banded together to preach the ills of having too much technology in our lives.</p> <p>The Center for Humane Technology, founded by Tristan Harris, a former ethicist at Google, has launched a lobbying effort with media watchdog group Common Sense Media to build awareness about tech addiction, The New York Times reported.</p> <p>The \$7 million ad campaign is expected to target 55,000 public schools across the country.</p> <p>"There's an invisible problem that's affecting all of society," CHT says on its website. "Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Google have produced amazing products that have benefited the world enormously. But these companies are also caught in a zero-sum race for our finite attention, which they need to make money. Constantly forced to outperform their competitors, they must use increasingly persuasive techniques to keep us glued. They point AI-driven news feeds, content, and notifications at our minds, continually learning how to hook us more deeply-from our own behavior."</p> <p>CHT says each of the largest social media sites can make people's lives worse in their own way. "Snapchat turns conversations into streaks, redefining how our children measure friendship," the group says. "Instagram glorifies the picture-perfect life, eroding our self worth. Facebook segregates us into echo chambers, fragmenting our communities. YouTube autoplays the next video within seconds, even if it eats into our sleep. These are not neutral products. They are part of a system designed to addict us."</p> <p>Harris says the people associated with his organization and should know because they worked at those companies.</p> <p>"We were on the inside," he told The Times. "We know what the companies measure. We know how they talk, and we know how the engineering works."</p> <p>Jim Steyer, the CEO of Common Sense Media, said on Twitter that the Truth About Tech campaign "will initially focus on legislation at the [federal] level."</p> <p>Steyer said Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass., is working on introducing legislation that would fund research about the effects of technology ad social media on children's brains.</p> <p>Common Sense Media said its campaign is "modeled on anti-smoking drives and focuses on kids due to their vulnerability."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 FBI warns on Facebook child porn video
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/02/03/fbi-asks-people-to-stop-sharing-child-pornography-video-on-facebook/
GIST	<p>Law enforcement officials across the country are asking people to stop sharing a video on Facebook that depicts child pornography.</p> <p>People across the country have contacted media outlets and police departments about the video. Many people are sharing the video in hopes of identifying the man shown abusing the child.</p> <p>Investigators are asking people to stop sharing the video or screenshots of the video on social media — and this includes sharing it with police departments and media outlets on Facebook.</p> <p>“If you saved it, if you posted it to your page, if you sent it to someone else... you’re disseminating child porn, and that’s a felony,” Tim Gann, an attorney in Alabama, told WHNT. “If you are in possession of (the video), no matter your good intentions, that is also a felony.”</p> <p>FBI officials and federal prosecutors are investigating the case. There have been multiple reports of a suspect being arrested in connection with this case. Because of the nature of the investigation, investigators are not confirming any information about arrests.</p> <p>“Every time it gets posted, the victim in this case gets re-victimized for more people to see what they have been subjected to,” Gann said. “There’s no need to repost this video. Law enforcement are doing their jobs. They are investigating. They are doing their best to identify the parties. There is no need for social media to be involved.”</p> <p>What should you do if you see the video?</p> <p>A spokesman for Central Alabama CrimeStoppers said you should report the video to the social media platform and call your local law enforcement office. Do not share the video to the department’s Facebook page and do not disseminate the video using Facebook Messenger. Do not save the video or screenshots of the video on your phone. You can also contact the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678).</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 Email scam takes couple’s money
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/its-gone-scam-takes-tacoma-couples-money-dash-dream-of-buying-home
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. -- A young couple about to become first-time home buyers had their dreams dashed when scammers swiped their \$12,000 closing costs.</p> <p>Serenity Isom said it was all the money they had.</p> <p>"I'm only 20 years old," said Serenity. "He's only 21. We were going to finally own our home but we fell for this stupid scam."</p> <p>Serenity said it was just a modest home in Tacoma, but it was going to be "their" home. The family with a young boy got an email instructing them to wire the \$12,000 closing costs to complete the deal. "We were just so excited that we sent the money over," said Serenity. "We didn't think twice about it."</p> <p>The emails had all the right information including the closing date. But Serenity realized it was all a scam when she contacted the loan officer. "I called him and like 'Hey the money came in.' and he goes, 'Oh, what money?' and my heart just dropped."</p> <p>She says the bank traced the wired money to a branch in Florida and to a man who had already taken out \$9,000. "They couldn't arrest him or anything because right now because it's a 'he-said-she-said' kind of</p>

	<p>thing, and he's taken the money out so it's gone."</p> <p>"It's heartbreaking," said David Quinlan of the Better Business Bureau. "... It puts a fire in my stomach." Quinlan said emails can be easily hacked and responses forged. In this case by simply adding the word "gmail" to the address.</p> <p>"Take a deep breath," said Quinlan. "Relax. If you get one of these emails, obviously contact your Realtor first to make sure it's authentic."</p> <p>The Isoms aren't alone. This is a scam that is sweeping the country. Connie Thompson of KOMO News has done several stories on it. Her reports say often it's the emails of the mortgage or title companies that are hacked. But those companies told Serenity they believe it was he email that was hacked.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 Scammers stealing phone numbers
SOURCE	http://www.kiro7.com/news/local/scammers-stealing-phone-numbers-from-t-mobile-customers-to-steal-money/693898809
GIST	<p>REDMOND, Wash. - Redmond Police say they are investigating seven cases of scammers stealing phone numbers from T-mobile customers so they can access their bank accounts.</p> <p>KIRO 7 also discovered another case in Everett, where a woman nearly lost \$1,920 when thieves attempted the scam on her.</p> <p>"They basically yeah stole my number - they had my phone cut off," victim Carrie Hartwig said.</p> <p>The scam is not just specific to T-mobile. Redmond police say the phone porting scam could affect anyone with a mobile phone who does not have a second layer of protection, an additional passcode, set up.</p> <p>Redmond Police spokesperson Andrea Wolf-Buck said they had never seen this specific scam until cases started popping up in December.</p> <p>"People are very creative and inventive with finding ways to steal," she said.</p> <p>She explained it all starts with thieves getting your personal information: your name, phone number and likely your social security number.</p> <p>Then, in this case, the thieves take their victim's T-mobile phone number, and using that personal information, they transfer that number to a Metro PCS phone. That means their Metro PCS phone now has the victim's phone number attached to it, and the victim's phone no longer works.</p> <p>Technology experts say thieves then contact the victim's bank and when they want to reset the password on that account, a verification code is sent to the phone number on the mobile device in the scammer's hands. That allows thieves to get in and empty out, or at least try to empty out, the account.</p> <p>"The victims we've seen in the seven different reports we've had -- there's been anywhere from \$1,000 to \$3,000 taken each time," Wolf-Buck said.</p> <p>KIRO 7 reached out to Bellevue-based T-mobile for comment. Its media relations team did not want to talk on camera, but it did provide a link to a part of the T-mobile website dedicated to this scam. It states in part, "Our industry is experiencing a phone number port out scam that could impact you."</p> <p>The site recommends people "call 611 from your T-mobile phone ... [and] create a 6-to-15-digit passcode that will be added to your account."</p>

	<p>If anyone tries to steal your number, "the new carrier will be required to validate the request with T-mobile using your passcode."</p> <p>It's something Carrie Hartwig wishes she had known before. She received a text from T-mobile warning her about the scam more than a week after she was targeted.</p> <p>"I'm angry," she said.</p> <p>Bellevue Police and Seattle Police said they do not have any cases of using this kind of scam at this point.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 Spain extradites Russia hacker to US
SOURCE	https://www.thelocal.es/20180203/spain-extradites-hackware-spammer-to-us
GIST	<p>A Russian man accused of victimizing thousands of Americans with ransomware and spam has been extradited to the United States from Spain, US officials announced on Friday.</p> <p>Peter Levashov, 37, was due to appear before a federal judge in Connecticut where he faces hacking, wire and email fraud, identity theft and conspiracy charges.</p> <p>Prosecutors say Levashov ran the "Kelihos" botnet, a network of thousands of infected computers used to harvest internet login credentials, distribute bulk spam emails sometimes used for fraudulent "pump-and-dump" stock promotions and install malicious software on unsuspecting users' computers.</p> <p>In any given 24-hour period, Levashov's network allegedly generated more than 2,500 spam emails advertising such schemes as services to other potential cyber-criminals.</p> <p>John Cronin, the acting head of the Justice Department's criminal division, said in a statement that the extradition proved the US would hunt down international cyber-criminals and "hold them accountable for their conduct."</p> <p>Originally from Saint Petersburg, Levashov was arrested at Barcelona airport on April 7 by Spanish authorities acting on a US warrant. Spain's High Court authorized his extradition in October.</p> <p>Levashov's lawyers in Spain said he had served in the Russian army and worked for President Vladimir Putin's United Russia party.</p> <p>They argued he feared being forced to turn over confidential information to American authorities, but Spanish judges rejected these claims.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 Rugby, social media aid capture suspect
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/how-rugby-social-media-helped-capture-seatac-deadly-hit-and-run-suspect/281-513797606
GIST	<p>A man suspected in a deadly hit-and-run in SeaTac Friday was captured, state troopers said Friday night.</p> <p>The incident occurred on the eastbound State Route 518 on-ramp from Des Moines Way near SeaTac just after 2 a.m. A Chevrolet Blazer had run out of gas and was in the gore point, according to Washington State Patrol.</p> <p>The suspect allegedly drove on the on-ramp to 518, then veered into the stopped vehicle, striking and killing the 44-year-old man standing outside the passenger door of the SUV. The driver was still in his seat.</p>

	<p>The Washington State Patrol says social media played a huge role in the arrest. They had one important clue at the scene.</p> <p>"A large bag of rugby balls that had fallen out of the truck," said Trooper Chase Van Cleave.</p> <p>They tweeted out their clues and it didn't take very long.</p> <p>"The rugby community across the country saw that tweet and we started to receive information and tips," said Van Cleave.</p> <p>With detectives closing in, ultimately, the suspect chose to give up.</p> <p>"The peer pressure, the commitment to do the right thing by the people who weren't involved and by the rugby community convinced him to contact his lawyer and turn himself in," he said.</p> <p>Troopers were then were told where to find the vehicle, hidden on private property in Des Moines. The entire driver's side is badly damaged and it's missing the driver's side rear wheel.</p> <p>"I think there's just some determination to not be at the scene anymore," said Van Cleave.</p> <p>Now the truck is impounded, the suspect in jail awaiting his first court appearance.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	02/05 Super Bowl anti-terror papers on plane
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/05/us/dhs-super-bowl-national-security-documents-left-on-plane-invs/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The Department of Homeland Security documents critiquing the response to a simulated anthrax attack on Super Bowl Sunday were marked "For Official Use Only" and "important for national security."</p> <p>Recipients of the draft "after-action" reports were told to keep them locked up after business hours and to shred them prior to discarding. They were admonished not to share their contents with anyone who lacked "an operational need-to-know."</p> <p>But security surrounding the December 2017 reports suffered an embarrassing breach: A CNN employee discovered copies of them, along with other sensitive DHS material, in the seat-back pocket of a commercial plane. The reports were accompanied by the travel itinerary and boarding pass of the government scientist in charge of BioWatch, the DHS program that conducted the anthrax drills in preparation for Super Bowl LII in Minneapolis.</p> <p>The reports were based on exercises designed to evaluate the ability of public health, law enforcement and emergency management officials to engage in a coordinated response were a biological attack to be carried out in Minneapolis on Super Bowl Sunday.</p> <p>The exercises identified several areas for improvement, including the problem that "some local law enforcement and emergency management agencies possess only a cursory knowledge of the BioWatch program and its mission."</p> <p>CNN decided to withhold publication of this article until after the Super Bowl after government officials voiced concerns that publishing it prior to the game could jeopardize security for the event. A DHS official told CNN that areas for improvement identified in the draft reports had been addressed prior to Sunday's game and that the agency had "great confidence" in its preparedness.</p>

"This exercise was a resounding success and was not conducted in response to any specific, credible threat of a bioterrorism attack," said Tyler Q. Houlton, an agency spokeswoman.

Juliette Kayyem, a former DHS official who now serves as a CNN contributor, said it was not surprising that the documents highlighted deficiencies.

She said such exercises are designed to expose gaps in planning and preparedness so that authorities "are better equipped if something bad were to happen."

Nonetheless, she said, the misplacement of the documents was "a really stupid thing."

"Who knows who else could have picked this up," she said.

"The biggest consequence of this mistake," Kayyem said, "may have less to do with terrorists knowing our vulnerabilities and more to do with confidence in the Department of Homeland Security. In the end, confidence in the federal government at a time of crisis is what the American public deserves."

In addition to requesting that CNN not publish prior to the Super Bowl, DHS officials argued that disclosure of some material contained in the draft reports could threaten national security, regardless of when it was published. Based on that concern, CNN is withholding some details contained in the documents.

The after-action reports obtained by CNN are based on a pair of exercises conducted as part of DHS's BioWatch program, which operates a nationwide aerosol detection system designed to provide an early warning of a biological attack across all levels of government.

The exercises -- one in July, the other in early November — were built around the response to an intentional anthrax release that coincides with the Super Bowl.

Among the findings was that there were "differences of opinion" over how many people had been exposed, "which led to differences of opinion on courses of action."

The reports also noted there was confusion among local health agencies about the meaning of alerts issued during the exercise and with whom information could safely be shared during an emergency.

This "made it difficult for them to assess whether their city was at risk," the documents stated, and "creates a situation where local officials are deciding on courses of action from limited points of view."

CNN was unable to verify who left the documents on the plane. The travel itinerary and boarding pass accompanying the documents was in the name of Michael V. Walter.

Walter, a microbiologist, has been the program manager of BioWatch since 2009, according to his LinkedIn profile.

A DHS official said the missing documents were the subject of an "operational review" and that "DHS does not comment on personnel matters or potential pending personnel action."

There has been a drumbeat of criticism surrounding the BioWatch program since its inception in 2003. Multiple government reports issued over the course of more than a decade have raised questions about its cost and effectiveness.

"Since 2003, approximately \$1 billion has been spent on this program," according to a 2013 memo by the House Committee on Energy and Commerce's oversight subcommittee. "After more than a decade of operation, DHS still lacks crucial data demonstrating the effectiveness of the current technology."

	<p>The report also noted differences of opinion within the government about the program.</p> <p>"Several statements by DHS about the performance of the BioWatch program are disputed by other government scientists or contradicted by information obtained in this investigation," the document said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Iraq issues 'most wanted' terror list
SOURCE	http://www.arabnews.com/node/1239456/middle-east
GIST	<p>BAGHDAD: Iraqi security authorities have revealed a "most wanted" list of people involved in terrorism in the country over the the past 14 years.</p> <p>The list seen by Arab News on Sunday includes about 60 names, mostly of senior aides of the former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein, his family members and top Daesh and Al-Qaeda leaders.</p> <p>Among the most prominent names are Saddam's daughter, Raghad Saddam Hussien, and his nephews, Omar and Ayman Saba'awi, and Ahmed Wattban Ibrahim Al-Hassan. Saddam's cousin, Rafei'a Abdulatief Telfah, is also included.</p> <p>While some of the names are already on a US wanted list for 55 Saddam-era officials, the Iraqi list provides allegations that show how far leaders from the banned Ba'ath Party have been involved with militant groups operating in Iraq since the 2003 downfall of Saddam's regime.</p> <p>The Iraqi list links the Ba'ath officials to the Army of Muhammad, the Naqshbandi Army, the Army of Mujahideen, Al-AUssra Army, Al-Qaeda and Daesh.</p> <p>The lists also included the names of many Ba'athist leaders who managed to maintain and run the party's work after the fall of Saddam in 2003 from outside Iraq. The leaders set up fixed and mobile cells in Syria, Yemen, Egypt, Jordan and Qatar, while others have been commanding armed groups fighting inside Iraq. A senior Iraqi intelligence official told Arab News that the names on the list are the "leaders of the terrorism organizations" and "all who run terrorism in Iraq."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Thousands ISIS fighters flee in Syria
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/04/world/middleeast/isis-syria-al-qaeda.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Thousands of Islamic State foreign fighters and family members have escaped the American-led military campaign in eastern Syria, according to new classified American and other Western military and intelligence assessments, a flow that threatens to tarnish American declarations that the militant group has been largely defeated.</p> <p>As many of the fighters flee unfettered to the south and west through Syrian Army lines, some have gone into hiding near Damascus, the Syrian capital, and in the country's northwest, awaiting orders sent by insurgent leaders on encrypted communications channels.</p> <p>Other battle-hardened militants, some with training in chemical weapons, are defecting to Al Qaeda's branch in Syria. Others are paying smugglers tens of thousands of dollars to spirit them across the border to Turkey, with an eventual goal of returning home to European countries.</p> <p>The sobering assessments come despite a concerted effort to encircle and "annihilate" — as Defense Secretary Jim Mattis put it — Islamic State fighters in Raqqa, the group's self-proclaimed capital, which fell in the fall, and pursue other insurgents who fled south into the Euphrates River Valley toward the border with Iraq.</p>

“ISIS fighters are fleeing Syria and Iraq,” the homeland security secretary, Kirstjen Nielsen, said in remarks in Washington last week. “Jihadists are going underground, dispersing to other safe havens, including on the internet, and returning to their home countries.”

Gen. Paul J. Selva, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters last week that the remaining Islamic State leadership, even while on the run, still had “fairly robust” communications with its shadowy network of fighters now on the lam.

Analysts say they are also seeing signs that Islamic State fighters are adopting guerrilla tactics to terrorize civilians.

“The group is transitioning into an underground organization that places more weight on asymmetric tactics, like suicide bombings against soft targets in government-secured areas like Baghdad,” said Otso Iho, a senior analyst at Jane’s Terrorism and Insurgency Center at IHS Markit in London.

Mr. Iho cited an attack by two suicide bombers in Baghdad last month that killed three dozen people and injured 90 more. The attack took place in a busy Baghdad square where day laborers gather to look for work.

Estimates of how many fighters may have escaped into the deserts of Syria or Iraq and beyond are difficult to pin down, but American and other Western intelligence and counterterrorism analysts with access to classified assessments put the number in the low thousands. Many are traveling with spouses and children who are likely to have been radicalized during more than three years of Islamic State control of the region and could pose security risks as well, analysts say.

In December, Col. Ryan Dillon, the chief spokesman for the American-led military campaign in Iraq and Syria, said in a briefing with Pentagon reporters: “Syrian regime commanders in eastern Syria suggest that ISIS fighters” from the Middle Euphrates River Valley “may have slipped through porous Syrian and Russian defenses to arrive in areas near Damascus.”

Asked late last month by The New York Times about indications that as many as 1,000 fighters and family members had fled the Euphrates River area just in recent days, Colonel Dillon’s command replied in a statement: “We know that the Syrian regime has given ISIS the leeway to travel through their area of operations, but we cannot confirm any alleged incidents or operations that are taking place outside our area of operations.”

The United States military is concerned that a Turkish offensive against the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces in Afrin, in northern Syria, has worsened the problem. The S.D.F. has been working with the Americans in former Islamic State-held areas to interdict fleeing jihadists, but those efforts have been greatly reduced as the Kurds have shifted resources to reinforce Afrin.

Mustafa Balli, a spokesman for the Syrian Democratic Forces headquarters, blamed the Turkish assault on Afrin for what he said was the Islamic State’s resurgence.

“Since this invasion of Afrin by Turkey, ISIS is getting stronger in the south,” he said. “The battle against ISIS in the south, and the Turks in Afrin, is the same battle. The Turks want to give another chance to ISIS to grow again. Before the Turkish invasion, we were very close to finishing ISIS.”

Some 40,000 fighters from more than 120 countries poured into the battles in Syria and Iraq over the past four years, American and other Western officials say. While thousands died on the battlefield, officials say many thousands more probably survived to slip away to conflicts in Libya, Yemen or the Philippines, or have gone into hiding in countries like Turkey. About 295 Americans are believed to have traveled to Iraq or Syria, or tried to, American officials said.

Of more than 5,000 Europeans who joined those ranks, as many as 1,500 have returned home, including many women and children, and most of the rest are dead or still fighting, according to Gilles de Kerchove, the European Union’s top counterterrorism official.

“The thought that these foreign fighters who have participated in this fight now for over two years will quietly leave Syria and return to their jobs as shopkeepers in Paris, in Brussels, in Copenhagen, is ludicrous,” said General Selva, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs. “That’s a very compelling problem.”

Still, the number of Islamic State fighters returning home to Europe and North Africa has been much smaller than anticipated, counterterrorism officials say. That is in part because the Trump administration intensified its focus on preventing fighters from seeping out of Raqqa and Mosul, their former stronghold in Iraq, and more militants fought to the death than expected. Hundreds also surrendered in Raqqa.

Hundreds of others have been captured and are being held by American-backed Kurdish militias in northern Syria, raising fears among United States military officials of potentially creating a breeding ground for extremists — repeating a key security mistake of the Iraq war.

But the new assessments, bolstered by reports from analysts and smugglers in the region, suggest that Islamic State fighters are fleeing to more hospitable parts of Syria and Iraq, or to third countries where they can lie low.

Beyond the recent suicide bombings in Baghdad, a major American airstrike last month demonstrates the Islamic State’s continued resiliency and threat, military officials said.

Armed Reaper drones and Navy F/A-18 fighters from the aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt carried out a strike on Jan. 20 in Al Shafah, Syria, in the Euphrates River Valley, that killed about 150 fighters, the American military said. The strike, one of the largest single aerial assaults against the Islamic State in three years, was based on intelligence collected over about a week. The strike hit two large buildings that were used as a command headquarters and a media distribution center, military officials said.

The size and concentration of fighters took American officials by surprise. “The ISIS headquarters contained a heavy concentration of ISIS fighters who appear to have been massing for movement,” Maj. Gen. James B. Jarrard, commanding general for Special Operations forces in Iraq and Syria, said in a statement.

“ISIS continues to demonstrate the ability to mass large numbers in its attempt to retain a stronghold in Syria,” the American-led command in Iraq said in the same statement.

Ahmad Ramadan, the head of the Euphrates Center Against Violence and Terrorism in Istanbul, said that the Islamic State was still present in many villages east of the Euphrates River — the informal demarcation line between Russian-backed Syrian troops to the west and American-backed Syrian militias to the east. “ISIS nowadays are spreading all over Syria,” he said via Facebook chat.

Government and independent analysts in Syria and in Washington, including the Institute for the Study of War, said there was a thriving trade in smuggling Islamic State fighters across the border into Turkey, where intelligence officials believe they are linking with clandestine cells.

According to the independent British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, senior Islamic State operatives from Raqqa and Deir al-Zour, in the Euphrates River Valley, have paid bribes of \$20,000 to \$30,000 for safe passage into Turkey.

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HEADLINE	02/05 ISIS, AQ support in West Africa attacks
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-02-05/islamic-state-al-qaeda-support-fuels-attacks-in-west-africa
GIST	Islamist militant groups in West Africa’s Sahel region are using increased support from al-Qaeda and Islamic State and enhanced cooperation among themselves to carry out more sophisticated and deadly

attacks, according to the chief of United Nations mission in Mali.

“When we examine the explosives, the types of mines, shells and weapons they use, our experts tell us that a fairly advanced level of expertise is required that they didn’t have before,” the UN special representative in Mali, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, said Friday in an interview in the capital, Bamako.

The militant groups are operating across a semi-arid region stretching along the southern end of the Sahara from Mali to Nigeria. France has almost 4,000 soldiers in the region, and the U.S. has troops in Niger and is building a drone and airbase in the northern city of Agadez. The UN has more than 13,000 members in its Mali mission, which suffered the greatest loss of life of any of its peacekeeping operations last year.

Despite the increased military involvement by foreign powers and West African armies, the violence shows no sign of abating. The militant’s outside support is probably coming through Libya, Annadif said. They also have acquired funds from kidnappings and trafficking of drugs and migrants seeking to reach Europe.

“What is happening in Libya, what is happening in the Middle East, Syria and Iraq, has an influence,” he said. “There is a relationship between what is happening here and what is happening there, through Libya.”

A group known as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara claimed responsibility for an attack in October on a joint patrol of U.S and Nigerien forces in which four U.S. soldiers were killed. It mostly operates near the borders of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, Annadif said.

The Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims, an affiliate of al-Qaeda formed last year by four local groups and known by the acronym JNIM, operates in northern and central Mali including in the towns of Kidal, Timbuktu and Mopti, Annadif said. The merger has “given an new impetus” to these groups and also explains the rising number of attacks, he said.

In Mali, militant groups have expanded their area of operations, increasingly targeting more populated central Mali. More attacks occurred in the central Mopti and Segou regions during the last three months of 2017 than in the five northern regions combined. Violence has also spread to neighboring Burkina Faso and Niger.

Attacks in Mali intensified in late January. At least 22 Malian soldiers were killed in five separate raids in north and central Mali between Jan. 25 and Jan. 31, prompting the army to impose a ban on motorcycles and pickups in some areas.

There’s also growing evidence that both al-Qaeda and Islamic State-linked groups in West Africa are now cooperating at the operational level and that there are connections with IS-affiliates in the Lake Chad region close to northeastern Nigeria, Annadif said.

Mali has been gripped by violence since ethnic Tuareg rebels began a separatist insurgency and joined forces with Islamist militants to seize control of the sparsely populated north in 2012. While a 2013 French military intervention prevented the insurgents from marching southward to the capital, jihadists resorted to attacking Mali’s military and the UN peacekeeping force that arrived after the French operation.

Militants used to mainly carry out hit-and-run attacks and bombings but are now also carrying out more complex assaults. As many as 26 civilians died when their bus hit a landmine near the town of Boni in central Mali, on Jan. 25. The mine was meant for UN peacekeepers patrolling in the region, according to Mali’s Security Minister, Salif Traore.

Delays in implementing a 2015 peace deal between Mali’s government and insurgents in the north have left a stalemate in which militants can easily recruit young fighters, Annadif said. Last month, the UN Security Council threatened to impose sanctions on the parties blocking the implementation of the accord.

	<p>“The main clauses of the accord aren’t implemented, which means that all the hopes placed on the accord have started to wane,” he said. “Many youth, who were part of armed groups and who accepted the ceasefire after the accord was signed, found themselves with a lack of guidance and have fallen prey to terrorists.”</p>
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HEADLINE	02/05 US shifts forces to Afghanistan
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/05/after-defeat-isis-us-redeploying-forces-from-iraq-to-afghanistan.html
GIST	<p>The U.S. military is pulling its forces from an American-led coalition base in Iraq and shifting them to Afghanistan following the defeat of Islamic State group militants in the country.</p> <p>Western contractors at the base say U.S. troops began the drawdown over the past week, with groups of soldiers leaving the base on daily flights. The exact scale of the redeployment was unclear.</p> <p>According to various estimates, as of 2016, there were more 5,000 U.S. military personnel stationed in Iraq, with nearly 4,000 deployed to support and assist local groups fighting ISIS militants. The remaining personnel included special operations forces, logistics workers and troops on temporary rotations, the BBC reported.</p> <p>Iraqi officials reportedly said their government reached an agreement with the U.S.-led coalition to reduce the number of troops in Iraq.</p> <p>The reported military buildup in Afghanistan is the latest sign of a growing U.S. focus on Afghanistan as the primary conflict.</p> <p>The White House reportedly signed off in August on deploying an additional 4,000 troops in Afghanistan.</p> <p>The U.S. Army is also floating plans to increase the total U.S. force in the country by 1,000 in a bid to boost Afghan forces' fight against the Taliban, the Washington Post reported.</p> <p>President Donald Trump introduced a new Afghanistan strategy in August, hinting at relaxing the rules of engagement, acceleration of strikes and other military actions aimed at producing “an honorable and enduring outcome” in Afghanistan.</p> <p>He warned against premature drawback of troops, referencing to the Obama administration’s decision to withdraw forces from Iraq in 2011.</p> <p>“A hasty withdrawal would create a vacuum that terrorists, including ISIS and al Qaeda, would instantly fill, just as happened before September 11th.”</p> <p>Since Trump took office, the number of troops has nearly doubled in Afghanistan – from 8,500 in early 2017 to 14,000 today.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/05 Battle over bodies quietly rages in Mosul
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-mosul-bodies-insight/battle-over-bodies-rages-quietly-in-iraqs-mosul-long-after-islamic-state-defeat-idUSKBN1FP129
GIST	<p>MOSUL, Iraq (Reuters) - The Iraqis who have come home to Mosul’s Old City knew it would be hard living in the rubble left by the battle against Islamic State, but there is one aspect of their surroundings they are finding unbearable seven months on.</p>

“I don’t want my children to have to walk past dead bodies in the street every day,” said Abdelrazaq Abdullah, back with his wife and three children in the quarter where the militants made their last stand in July against Iraqi and U.S.-led coalition forces.

“We can live without electricity, but we need the government to clear the corpses – they’re spreading disease and reminding us of the horrors we’ve just lived through.”

The stench of death wafts from rubble-filled corners in the dystopian wasteland of what was once West Mosul, from rusting cars still rigged with explosives and from homes abandoned as those who could, fled the bloody end of the militants three-year rule.

The corpses lying in the open on many streets are mainly militants from the extremist Sunni group who retreated to the densely-packed buildings of the Old City, where only the most desperate 5,000 of a pre-war population of 200,000 have so far returned.

Local residents and officials in predominantly Sunni Mosul say there are also thousands of civilian bodies yet to be retrieved from the ruins, a view which has put them at odds with the Shi‘ite-led government in Baghdad.

“There are no more civilian bodies to be picked up in Mosul,” said Brig Gen Mohammad Mahmoud, the head of Mosul’s Civil Defence, first responders who report to the Interior Ministry and are tasked with collecting them and issuing death certificates.

The Civil Defence says it had collected 2,585 civilian bodies by mid-January – many of them still unidentified - and has completed operations. It does not want to waste resources on the militants.

“Why should we have to give terrorists a proper burial?” Mahmoud said.

The standoff over the dead threatens to stoke the anger of a population already beaten down by a grueling war and the militants’ draconian rule in a place where Islamic State initially found some sympathy. The final civilian death toll is also a highly sensitive political issue in Iraq and beyond.

The municipal government has had to set up its own specialized team to field requests filed by city residents to find more than 9,000 missing people, most of them last seen in the Old City and assumed to be buried under the rubble.

The team is working through a backlog of 300 bodies, dispatching groups to collect them when it can. But these are just the ones where exact coordinates have been given by neighbors, family members or passers-by who saw the bodies.

“We don’t know how many more are under the rubble,” said Duraid Hazim Mohammed, the head of the municipal team. “If the family or a witness who saw the people die doesn’t call us to tell us exactly how many bodies are at a site, we have no way of knowing if one, five or 100 bodies are buried there.”

Locals say common graves were dug as the battle raged. In the courtyard of Um al-Tisaa mosque in the Old City, they say 100 of their neighbors were buried in groups of shallow graves.

“I buried between 50 and 60 people myself, by hand, as planes flew overhead and bombed the city,” resident Mahmoud Karim said.

Several families have since come to excavate the bodies of their relatives, to bury them in proper cemeteries. “But others, we don’t know where their families are,” Karim said. Some are dead, while others are among the thousands lingering uneasily in refugee camps or paying high rents elsewhere in the city.

The municipal government in Mosul has not given an exact figure for civilian casualties, but its head, Abdelsattar al-Hibbu, told Reuters it coincided with estimates of 10,000 civilians killed during the battle,

based on reports of missing people and information from officials about the dead. The toll includes victims of ground fighting and coalition bombing.

While the most visible problem in Mosul is the corpses of fighters left in the streets, residents say they have also found bodies of suspected Islamic State family members in their homes.

The owner of a house in the Old City, who asked Reuters to withhold his name for fear of retaliation from officials, said he had asked the Civil Defence for weeks to come and remove two bodies from the main bedroom of his basement home.

They were badly decomposed but the clothing was clearly that of a woman and child.

“Civil Defence refused, because they say the woman and child are Daesh,” he said using the Arabic acronym for Islamic State. “They said they’re punishing me because they think I supported Daesh.”

The municipality team has collected 348 bodies of militants so far, but there are many more still around. Residents regularly walk by them to collect water from temporary pumps and on one street, young children played not far from two corpses on a doorstep.

Some of the fighters are recognizable from their clothing, some were identified to the government by neighbors, some yet, were found clutching the weapons they used to make their last stand against surrounding Iraqi and coalition forces.

The municipal government team’s efforts are hampered by very limited funds. On several days in January, they had to halt operations amid a shortage of gloves, masks and body bags.

Some families have resorted to digging out their dead themselves, like 23-year-old Mustafa Nader, who came back to look for his great-uncle Abdullah Ahmed Hussain.

“We weren’t sure if we would find him here,” Nader said of his elderly sculptor uncle, tears in his eyes after an hour of digging unearthed his body. “I thought maybe he could have left or gone to a neighbor’s house.”

Others still have resorted to drastic measures.

Ayad came back in early January after six months in a refugee camp and found the corpses of three Islamic State fighters rotting in what remained of his living room. “The flies, the smell, the disease,” he said. “It was awful.”

The municipality team said it would be weeks before they could get to him so Ayad asked a soldier on patrol to look over the bodies and make sure there were no explosives.

Then, Ayad set them on fire.

With most of his money spent on a tarp to cover the gaping hole where his front door once stood, he borrowed \$20 from his sister, for bleach to try to erase the traces so his family of ten could move back in.

“The smell still hasn’t fully gone away,” he said.

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HEADLINE	02/05 US starts Iraq drawdown after ISIS defeat
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-starts-iraq-drawdown-defeat-islamic-state-group-52841155?
GIST	American troops have started to draw down from Iraq following Baghdad's declaration of victory over the

	<p>Islamic State group last year, according to Western contractors at a U.S.-led coalition base in Iraq.</p> <p>Dozens of American soldiers have been transported from Iraq to Afghanistan on daily flights over the past week, along with weapons and equipment, the contractors said.</p> <p>Two Iraqi officials confirmed to The Associated Press that the U.S.-led coalition and the Iraqi government have reached an agreement to draw down troops in Iraq for the first time since the war against IS was launched over three years ago.</p> <p>The Iraqi officials said the process has not officially begun.</p> <p>However, an AP reporter at the Al-Asad base in western Iraq saw troop movements reflecting the contractors' account of a drawdown. The contractors and the Iraqi officials spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations and declined to reveal the exact size of the drawdown.</p> <p>"Continued coalition presence in Iraq will be conditions-based, proportional to the need and in coordination with the government of Iraq," coalition spokesman Army Col. Ryan Dillon told the AP when asked for comment.</p> <p>One senior Iraqi official close to Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said 60 percent of all American troops currently in country will be withdrawn, according to the initial agreement reached with the United States. The plan would leave a force of about 4,000 U.S. troops to continue training the Iraqi military.</p> <p>A Pentagon report released in November said there were 8,892 U.S. troops in Iraq as of late September.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 Italian mob peddling pills to ISIS
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-italian-mob-is-peddling-pills-to-isis
GIST	<p>ROME—Americans may love their fentanyl, a powerful opioid responsible for a public health crisis and countless accidental overdose casualties, including those of pop stars Prince and Tom Petty. But terrorists apparently prefer tramadol, a cheaper numbing opioid that is legal in the Middle East. And they are getting plenty of it on the black market thanks to Italian ‘Ndrangheta mobsters, according to Italy’s financial police. In the last year alone, the cops have confiscated nearly 100 million tramadol tablets meant for ISIS operatives in Libya.</p> <p>Once in Libya, the pills are used to pump up fighters there, or they’re smuggled into Egypt and Syria, or they are sold to Boko Haram fighters in Nigeria, according to Marta Sarafini, whose recent exposé in the Italian daily Corriere della Sera unravels the tramadol trade. “They end up in the hands of the desperate in Gaza, the prostitutes in Amman, and child laborers in Turkey,” she says. “They are the drug for anyone who wants to escape misery.”</p> <p>They may also find their way into the American market, and with a vengeance. The barriers are low.</p> <p>On the Drug Enforcement Administration’s list of “scheduled” drugs, or “controlled substances,” where heroin, LSD and, yes, marijuana are Schedule I; fentanyl is among those listed as Schedule II; ketamine and Tylenol with codeine are Schedule III, tramadol is only Schedule IV: a substance with “a low potential for abuse relative to substances in Schedule III.”</p> <p>As the Wall Street Journal reported in 2016, tramadol is “the opioid crisis for the rest of the world.” And the combination of low penalties in the U.S., the organized peddling by the mob, along with the financial needs of the embattled “Islamic State” create a situation ripe for organized crime to push tramadol as a new drug of choice for opioid addicts.</p> <p>In Europe and North Africa, peddling the pills, which have a street value of around \$5 a piece, is fast</p>

becoming one of the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta crime syndicate's most successful enterprises. Gaetano Paci, an anti-mafia prosecutor in Calabria, confirmed the narcotic trafficking links between the deadly Calabrian mob and terrorist groups late last year after a third shipment of millions of tramadol tablets was discovered in the southern Italian port of Gioia Tauro, widely known as the mafia gateway for all things illicit.

The sprawling Calabrian mafia port has been at the center of a number of recent raids where everything from stolen antiquities to dead bodies have been found hidden in cargo crates. The average daily value of contraband and trafficked materials suspected to be run through the port is estimated to top \$1 million, according to Italy's finance police. Most of the illegal goods are hidden in shipments of pineapples, frozen fish and coconut milk, which often are rushed through because of their shorter shelf life.

(The port, the largest in Italy, was also the curious choice by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to facilitate the 2014 transfer of 700 metric tons of Syrian chemical weapons and their precursors, which were delivered, transferred and eventually neutralized on board the U.S. Navy ship Cape Ray. Some speculated that the port was chosen because of the apparent high surveillance by police thanks to mafia activities. Others speculated that if something went awry, they could just blame it on the mob. Nothing went wrong with the Syrian weapons operation, at least as far as anyone knows.)

Italy's anti-drug trafficking agency estimates that 80 percent of all Europe's cocaine comes in from Colombia through the Calabrian port, which is also the main hub for illegal weapons, so it is little wonder it would be the port of choice for those pushing terror narcotics, too.

Gioia Tauro is now the main gateway for tramadol brought in from pill mills in India and Sri Lanka redistributed to ISIS in Libya, according to Paci, who says the 24 million pills found hidden in a fabric shipment in November were easily worth €50 million. They have also found smaller shipments of Captagon, another widely used psychostimulant known as chemical courage, which, unlike tramadol, is illegal in the Middle East and North Africa.

"Everything passes through Gioia Tauro, so it comes as no surprise to find a trafficked substance of this kind there," he told the Italian daily La Repubblica recently. "For a while we have known about ties between 'Ndrangheta and organizations in the Middle East. Even if the port has become a less secure zone for the clan, thanks to the pressure from investigations, we have traced some trafficking links and are trying to put the dots together."

Similar shipments had been sequestered in Greek ports in 2016 and 37 million pills were hidden among shampoo bottles arriving by container in Genoa in northern Italy in early 2017, all destined for a distributor in Libya who has since been proven to be affiliated with Islamic State militants there, Paci says.

Most of the pill mills are in Sri Lanka and India, but there are known manufacturers of tramadol and counterfeit Captagon, another widely used psychostimulant known as "chemical courage" in Bulgaria and Turkey.

Paci points to the fact that tramadol was found in the apartments and bodies of the terrorists who attacked the Bataclan in 2013, and in the beach massacre in Tunisia in 2015, as a worrying factor.

Tramadol, when mixed with components like caffeine, has the same effect as a powerful amphetamine, erasing fear, pain and fatigue and altering the senses. Paci's team is concerned that the recent spike in pills coming through Calabria may mean ISIS fighters are preparing for more attacks or supplying others, like Boko Haram militants, to rain down terror in Nigeria.

"They are certainly not intended for the Libyan people," a source close to the Italian anti-drug investigations told The Daily Beast. "They will be used by the fighters or sold by them."

On Wednesday, the Guardian reported that Interpol has identified 50 foreign fighters who have come into Italy through Libya on the migrant trail in the last year, apparently ready to launch new attacks in Europe. A day later, Europe's border patrol agency, Frontex, launched a new operation called Themis, named after

	<p>the Greek goddess of law and order, under which they said they would employ an “enhanced law enforcement focus.”</p> <p>“We need to be better equipped to prevent criminal groups that try to enter the E.U. undetected,” Executive Director Fabrice Leggeri said in a statement. “This is crucial for the internal security of the European Union.”</p> <p>Rita Santacroce, head of the Research Centre on Security and Crime in Vicenza, Italy, is leading a study called NarcoMap about the new terrorism drug trafficking trade. She told The Daily Beast that Europe is increasingly involved in narco-terrorism in three distinct ways. “As a manufacturer of psychoactive substances, as a route of their trafficking, and as a designated victim of the terrorists—often intoxicated by drugs that may come from the very same place they aim to destroy.”</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 Cairo approved Israel airstrikes in Egypt
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/03/world/middleeast/israel-airstrikes-sinai-egypt.html
GIST	<p>The jihadists in Egypt’s Northern Sinai had killed hundreds of soldiers and police officers, pledged allegiance to the Islamic State, briefly seized a major town and begun setting up armed checkpoints to claim territory. In late 2015, they brought down a Russian passenger jet.</p> <p>Egypt appeared unable to stop them, so Israel, alarmed at the threat just over the border, took action.</p> <p>For more than two years, unmarked Israeli drones, helicopters and jets have carried out a covert air campaign, conducting more than 100 airstrikes inside Egypt, frequently more than once a week — and all with the approval of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.</p> <p>The remarkable cooperation marks a new stage in the evolution of their singularly fraught relationship. Once enemies in three wars, then antagonists in an uneasy peace, Egypt and Israel are now secret allies in a covert war against a common foe.</p> <p>For Cairo, the Israeli intervention has helped the Egyptian military regain its footing in its nearly five-year battle against the militants. For Israel, the strikes have bolstered the security of its borders and the stability of its neighbor.</p> <p>Their collaboration in the North Sinai is the most dramatic evidence yet of a quiet reconfiguration of the politics of the region. Shared enemies like ISIS, Iran and political Islam have quietly brought the leaders of several Arab states into growing alignment with Israel — even as their officials and news media continue to vilify the Jewish state in public.</p> <p>American officials say Israel’s air campaign has played a decisive role in enabling the Egyptian armed forces to gain an upper hand against the militants. But the Israeli role is having some unexpected consequences for the region, including on Middle East peace negotiations, in part by convincing senior Israeli officials that Egypt is now dependent on them even to control its own territory.</p> <p>Seven current or former British and American officials involved in Middle East policy described the Israeli attacks inside Egypt, all speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss classified information.</p> <p>Both neighbors have sought to conceal Israel’s role in the airstrikes for fear of a backlash inside Egypt, where government officials and the state-controlled media continue to discuss Israel as a nemesis and pledge fidelity to the Palestinian cause.</p> <p>The Israeli drones are unmarked, and the Israeli jets and helicopters cover up their markings. Some fly circuitous routes to create the impression that they are based in the Egyptian mainland, according to American officials briefed on their operations.</p>

In Israel, military censors restrict public reports of the airstrikes. It is unclear if any Israeli troops or special forces have set foot inside Egyptian borders, which would increase the risk of exposure.

Mr. Sisi has taken even more care, American officials say, to hide the origin of the strikes from all but a limited circle of military and intelligence officers. The Egyptian government has declared the North Sinai a closed military zone, barring journalists from gathering information there.

Behind the scenes, Egypt's top generals have grown steadily closer to their Israeli counterparts since the signing of the Camp David accords 40 years ago, in 1978. Egyptian security forces have helped Israel enforce restrictions on the flow of goods in and out of the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian territory bordering Egypt controlled by the militant group Hamas. And Egyptian and Israeli intelligence agencies have long shared information about militants on both sides of the border.

Israeli officials were concerned in 2012 when Egypt, after its Arab Spring revolt, elected a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood to the presidency. The new president, Mohamed Morsi, pledged to respect the Camp David agreements. But the Israelis worried about the Muslim Brotherhood's ideological kinship with Hamas and its historic hostility to the Jewish state itself.

A year later, Mr. Sisi, then the defense minister, ousted Mr. Morsi in a military takeover. Israel welcomed the change in government and urged Washington to accept it. That solidified the partnership between the generals on both sides of the border.

The North Sinai, a loosely governed region of mountainous desert between the Suez Canal and the Israeli border, became a refuge for Islamist militants in the decade before Mr. Sisi took power. The main jihadist organization, Ansar Beit al Maqdis — the Partisans of Jerusalem — had concentrated on attacking Israel, but after Mr. Sisi's takeover it began leading a wave of deadly assaults against Egyptian security forces.

A few weeks after Mr. Sisi took power, in August 2013, two mysterious explosions killed five suspected militants in a district of the North Sinai not far from the Israeli border. The Associated Press reported that unnamed Egyptian officials had said Israeli drones fired missiles that killed the militants, possibly because of Egyptian warnings of a planned cross-border attack on an Israeli airport. (Israel had closed the airport the previous day.)

Mr. Sisi's spokesman, Col. Ahmed Ali, denied it. "There is no truth in form or in substance to the existence of any Israeli attacks inside Egyptian territory," he said in a statement at the time, promising an investigation. "The claims of coordination between the Egyptian and Israeli sides in this matter are totally lacking in truth and go against sense and logic."

Israel declined to comment, and the episode was all but forgotten.

Two years later, however, Mr. Sisi was still struggling to defeat the militants, who by then had killed at least several hundred Egyptians soldiers and policemen.

In November 2014, Ansar Beit al Maqdis formally declared itself the Sinai Province branch of the Islamic State. On July 1, 2015, the militants briefly captured control of a North Sinai town, Sheikh Zuwaid, and retreated only after Egyptian jets and helicopters struck the town, state news agencies said. Then, at the end of October, the militants brought down the Russian charter jet, killing all 224 people aboard.

It was around the time of those ominous milestones, in late 2015, that Israel began its wave of airstrikes, the American officials said, which they credit with killing a long roster of militant leaders.

Though equally brutal successors often stepped in to replace them, the militants appeared to adopt less ambitious goals. They no longer dared trying to close roads, set up checkpoints or claim territory. They moved into hitting softer targets like Christians in Sinai, churches in the Nile Valley or other Muslims they view as heretics. In November 2017, the militants killed 311 worshipers at a Sufi mosque in the North

Sinai.

By then, American officials say, the Israelis were complaining to Washington that the Egyptians were not holding up their end of the arrangement. Cairo, they said, had failed to follow the airstrikes with coordinated movements of its ground troops.

Although Israeli military censors have prevented the news media there from reporting on the strikes, some news outlets have circumvented the censorship by citing a 2016 Bloomberg News report, in which an unnamed former Israeli official said there had been Israeli drone strikes inside of Egypt.

Zack Gold, a researcher specializing in the North Sinai who has worked in Israel, compared the airstrikes to Israel's nuclear weapons program — also an open secret.

“The Israeli strikes inside of Egypt are almost at the same level,” he said. “Every time anyone says anything about the nuclear program, they have to jokingly add ‘according to the foreign press.’ Israel’s main strategic interest in Egypt is stability, and they believe that open disclosure would threaten that stability.”

Inside the American government, the strikes are widely known enough that diplomats and intelligence officials have discussed them in closed briefings with lawmakers on Capitol Hill. Lawmakers in open committee hearings have alluded approvingly to the surprisingly close Egyptian and Israeli cooperation in the North Sinai.

In a telephone interview, Senator Benjamin L. Cardin of Maryland, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, declined to discuss specifics of Israel's military actions in Egypt, but said Israel was not acting “out of goodness to a neighbor.”

“Israel does not want the bad stuff that is happening in the Egyptian Sinai to get into Israel,” he said, adding that the Egyptian effort to hide Israel's role from its citizens “is not a new phenomenon.”

Some American supporters of Israel complain that, given Egypt's reliance on the Israeli military, Egyptian officials, diplomats and state-controlled news media should stop publicly denouncing the Jewish state, especially in international forums like the United Nations.

“You speak with Sisi and he talks about security cooperation with Israel, and you speak with Israelis and they talk about security cooperation with Egypt, but then this duplicitous game continues,” said Representative Eliot L. Engel of New York, the ranking Democrat on the House Foreign Relations Committee. “It is confusing to me.”

Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has also pointedly reminded American diplomats of the Israeli military role in Sinai. In February 2016, for example, Secretary of State John Kerry convened a secret summit in Aqaba, Jordan, with Mr. Sisi, King Abdullah of Jordan and Mr. Netanyahu, according to three American officials involved in the talks or briefed about them.

Mr. Kerry proposed a regional agreement in which Egypt and Jordan would guarantee Israel's security as part of a deal for a Palestinian state.

Mr. Netanyahu scoffed at the idea.

Israeli's military was already propping up Egypt's military, he said, according to the Americans. If Egypt was unable to control the ground within its own borders, Mr. Netanyahu argued, it was hardly in a position to guarantee security for Israel.

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HEADLINE

02/04 Attacker as intersection of crime, terror

SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/islamic-state-attacker-shows-intersection-crime-terror-52827231
GIST	<p>He is the mute survivor of the 10-man Islamic State cell that terrorized Paris in November 2015, refusing all pleas to shed light on the attack that left 130 dead or another one in Brussels just four days after his arrest.</p> <p>After nearly three years jailed in isolation and silence, Salah Abdeslam goes on trial Monday in his hometown of Brussels for a police shootout that he himself fled. The man who covered for his getaway with a spray of automatic gunfire died. Abdeslam's escape was short-lived — he was captured on March 18, 2016, in the same Brussels neighborhood where he and many of his Islamic State fighter colleagues had grown up.</p> <p>Four days later, Islamic State suicide attackers struck again, this time at the Brussels airport and subway. In all, that sprawling network of IS fighters killed 162 people in the two European capitals. Most of the extremists were French speakers, raised in one of the cities they struck. The plot's execution depended upon Islamic State's success in wedding crime and religion.</p> <p>Abdeslam, who along with his brother was suspected of dealing drugs from the bar they ran, is the starkest example of that convergence. But in Paris, the trial of three men accused of giving safe haven to the attackers also provides a revealing look at the intersection that made possible the deadliest terror attacks in Europe since World War II.</p> <p>The operational commander of the cell was Abdelhamid Abaaoud, a petty criminal who used his home neighborhood of Molenbeek in Brussels as a fertile recruiting ground for IS. Abaaoud even recruited his younger brother, then 14. But many of the young men who followed him into IS were small-time criminals themselves, part of the extremist organization's deliberate attempt to make use of "skills" that include accessing black market weapons, forging documents and handling covert logistics .</p> <p>When the night of carnage in Paris — Nov. 13, 2015 — was finally over, seven attackers were dead and three were on the run: Abdeslam, Abaaoud and another Molenbeek native named Chakib Akrouh. Abdeslam called friends in Brussels to drive through the night and pick him up. Abaaoud also called his cousin, Hasna Ait Belkacem, who lived in a suburb of Paris and vacillated between hard-line Islam and even harder drug use. She was happy to help. She called her dealer. He called another dealer.</p> <p>It took a few days of sleeping under bushes, but for 150 euros (\$187) wired from Belgium, they secured a room in the Paris neighborhood of Saint-Denis, near the national stadium they had attacked on Nov. 13. In the pre-dawn hours of Nov. 18, frantic French investigators tipped off by a friend of Ait Belkacem tracked them to the building and sealed off the neighborhood.</p> <p>Abaaoud, Ait Belkacem and Akrouh all died when Akrouh detonated a suicide vest.</p> <p>Just before his building crumbled to the ground, one of the drug dealers, Jawad Bendaoud, showed up to find out what was happening and explained on live television that he was just "doing a service" by renting out his room. With the cameras still rolling , Bendaoud was taken into custody.</p> <p>At their trial, his fellow dealer, Mohammed Soumah, explained how he framed the world: Good citizens, delinquents, rapists, and terrorists.</p> <p>"Me, I don't fit in the terrorist box. I'm a thug, a scumbag," Soumah told the judge. But there he was sitting in the box for terrorism defendants in central Paris alongside Bendaoud. As for why neither man made the connection between the two Belgians desperate for a hideout amid a massive police manhunt and an outpouring of grief for France's 130 victims, Soumah had another explanation.</p> <p>"The criminal life goes on," he said.</p> <p>But the lines between terrorists and criminals are less clear now than ever, said Peter Neumann, director of</p>

the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation.

"ISIS is perhaps the first jihadist group that has explicitly targeted this demographic, and they've done it very consciously and especially in Europe," he said. "What we saw in Brussels and Paris — this is not an isolated case. This is actually reflecting the situation across Europe. If you go to Sweden, Norway, Holland, Germany, they will all tell you that 50 percent plus of the people who have turned up traveling to Syria or involved in domestic plots have previous criminal convictions, often for petty crime."

On Friday, a Belgian career criminal was transferred into French custody over allegations that he housed the jihadi who attacked the Thalys high-speed train between Brussels and Paris. The suspect, Youssef Siraj, is also believed to have put up some of the Brussels attackers, according to the Belgian news site DH. The same group is also linked to a raid in the Belgian town of Verviers, where authorities say a jihadi cell was on the verge of a coordinated attack against police.

"We are coming to realize that Verviers, Thalys, Nov. 13, the attacks of March 22, it's a large and perhaps single operation of Daesh," Belgian federal prosecutor Frederic Van Leeuw said, using another term for IS. All were bound by ties of crime and extremism.

The jihadi who wired the money to pay Bendaoud and Soumah was himself a petty criminal in Sweden before joining the Islamic State group, a thief who picked up firearms skills during his time in Syria named Mohamed Belkaid. It was also Belkaid who opened fire on Belgian police as they raided Abdeslam's Brussels hideout. He was shot dead in the March 15, 2016, raid.

Abdeslam escaped through a window over the rooftops.

He was traced to a cousin's apartment on March 18, 2016, near his Molenbeek home. Still more members of the cross-border Islamic State cell struck Brussels on March 22, 2016, including the bomb-maker for both attacks. Thirty-two people were killed in Brussels, along with three suicide attackers.

Abdeslam has been imprisoned ever since. This week's trial marks the first time he has been seen in public since his capture.

According to the French network France Inter, Abdeslam stored a message in his computer similar to the farewells written by other jihadis ahead of suicide attacks.

In it, France Inter reported, he explained that his suicide belt malfunctioned in Paris and that, although he dreamed of going to Syria "upon reflection, I concluded that the best thing would be to finish the job with the brothers."

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HEADLINE	02/03 Singapore prepares for militant attack
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-singapore-security/its-when-not-if-singapore-worries-and-prepares-for-militant-attack-idUSKBN1FO04L
GIST	<p>SINGAPORE (Reuters) - Armed officers patrol a train station where television screens and giant posters warn of the threat from militants. Nearby, fake gunmen storm a shopping mall in one of many recent terror attack simulations.</p> <p>But this is not some war-ravaged country. It is one of the safest in the world, Singapore.</p> <p>The wealthy island-state has a near-perfect record of keeping its shores free from terror, but as it prepares to host defence ministers from around Southeast Asia this week, it appears to have good reason to have prioritized stopping the spread of militancy in the region.</p> <p>The cosmopolitan financial hub, which was second only to Tokyo in The Economist Intelligence Unit's</p>

Safe Cities Index in 2017, says it has been the target of militant plots for years, some stemming from its Muslim-majority neighbors, and that it's a matter of 'when' and not 'if' militants will strike.

"Singapore continues to face a serious security threat from both homegrown radicalised individuals and foreign terrorists who continue to see Singapore as a prized target," Singapore's Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said in response to e-mailed questions from Reuters.

Singapore authorities say they have been a target of Islamic extremism since the 1990s, but efforts to deter terrorism have stepped up markedly in recent years with more frequent attacks on Western countries and after Islamic State (IS) militants briefly took over a town in the southern Philippines last year.

Raising further concerns about the threat to the island, a Singaporean soldier has featured on a number of Islamic State promotional videos, most recently in December where he was filmed executing men alongside other militants.

In its inaugural Terrorism Threat Assessment Report released last year, the MHA said Islamic State has demonstrated that Singapore is "very much on its radar" and that the threat to the country remains "the highest in recent years" - claims that are backed up by security experts.

"Singapore, being known as safe and secure, makes it such a risk target," said Dan Bould, Asia director of crisis management at professional services firm Aon and a former captain in the British army.

"If there's an attack in the Philippines, it may get half an hour in a 24-hour news cycle. An attack in Singapore with all the multicultural individuals operating here, will be within the narrative for a few days at least."

In early 2017, Aon lifted Singapore in the terrorism and political violence category of its annual risk map from negligible to low risk.

The reality is that Singapore has so far escaped the attacks seen in other major world cities like New York, London and Berlin in recent years. That's why it is at the bottom of the 2017 Global Terror Index, with no reported terror-related attacks post 9/11.

But three in four Singaporeans believe that it's only a matter of time before the country experiences a terror attack, a poll by the local newspaper Sunday Times last year showed.

Singapore authorities certainly do not want their citizens to be complacent. Everyone, including school children, is encouraged to download a mobile app that alerts them to emergency situations and allows them to send in videos and photos of suspicious events.

The MHA said that as of the end of last year, more than 1.3 million devices were equipped with the SGSecure app, a large chunk of the population of around 5.6 million.

Simulations of terror attacks - including one just over a week ago where masked gunman stormed a children's activity center on the resort island of Sentosa - are regular. Last month, Singapore's military undertook its biggest mobilization exercise in more than three decades, including an inter-agency response to the simulation of a gunman at its national stadium.

Authorities said last year there was reliable information that IS militants were considering carrying out an attack in Singapore in the first half of 2016, a threat which they said was countered.

In August 2016, neighboring Indonesia, which has the world's largest Muslim population, arrested six suspects with links to IS who were accused of plotting rocket attacks on Singapore's iconic Marina Bay Sands hotel.

Malaysia, Singapore's northern neighbor which also has a Muslim-majority, and Indonesia say thousands

of their citizens sympathize with IS and hundreds are believed to have traveled to Syria to join the group. Regional security officials say many are returning home after reverses in the Middle East.

Singapore takes a hardline approach to suspected radicals and Bilveer Singh, an adjunct senior fellow at the Rajaratnam School of International Studies, says it is one of the reasons behind its success so far.

The most controversial measure at its disposal is its colonial-era Internal Security Act which allows for suspects to be held for lengthy periods without trial.

The MHA said it currently has 20 people detained under the Act for “terrorism-related” activities, and since 2002 has held close to 90 for such activities.

“ISA is a fantastic deterrent, and so far it has worked,” Singh said.

Authorities have also deported scores of foreigners for suspected radicalism in recent years, and in October banned two popular Muslim preachers from Zimbabwe and Malaysia from entering the city-state, saying their views bred intolerance and were a risk to its social harmony.

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HEADLINE	02/03 Group: Turkey shooting Syria refugees
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/03/middleeast/turkey-border-guard-syria-hrw/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Syrians attempting to flee violence and seek refuge in Turkey are facing indiscriminate fire by Turkish border guards, Human Rights Watch said Saturday.</p> <p>Syrian asylum seekers leaving the brutality of Idlib province in northwest Syria "are being forced back with bullets and abuse," according to Lama Fakih, deputy director of Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa division.</p> <p>In just a month, from December 15 to January 15, about 247,000 Syrians were displaced to the border area, according to the United Nations.</p> <p>"As fighting in Idlib and Afrin displaces thousands more," Fakih said, "the number of Syrians trapped along the border willing to risk their lives to reach Turkey is only likely to increase."</p> <p>The Human Rights Watch report comes amid rising tensions along the Turkey-Syria border as Turkey's military has moved into northern Syria. The incursion has opened up another front in the long-running Syrian conflict, now stretching into its seventh year.</p> <p>Asylum seekers also must travel a dangerous terrain "littered with landmines, steep climbs, narrow paths along ravines, and valleys." The rights group said most families exhaust all their resources paying smugglers anywhere from \$300 to \$8,000 per person to reach Turkey.</p> <p>Turkey is home to more Syrian refugees than any other country in the world, hosting around 3.5 million, according to Human Rights Watch. But the group said, "Turkey's generous hosting of large numbers of Syrians does not absolve it of its responsibility to help those seeking protection at its borders."</p> <p>On January 20, Turkey launched a ground offensive across the border into northern Syria, which it dubbed Operation Olive Branch. Turkey said the operation, with the help of the Free Syrian Army, aims to clear Syrian territories of all terrorist groups and create a safe environment to facilitate the permanent return of Syrian refugees to their country.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Turkey warns Kurdish YPG militia
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SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/04/middleeast/syria-aftrin-turkish-soldiers-killed/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Turkey's Prime Minister warned that Kurdish YPG forces will pay "twice as much" following the deaths of seven Turkish soldiers in Syria's Afrin province.</p> <p>Prime Minister Binali Yildirim made the threat in a tweet Saturday, Turkey's state media said, which marked Turkey's deadliest day in its military operation dubbed "Operation Olive Branch" in northern Syria.</p> <p>Turkish forces entered the Afrin area in an attempt to drive US-backed, Syrian-Kurdish YPG militia from the area last month.</p> <p>Five Turkish soldiers were killed when a tank was destroyed by a missile in Sheikh Haruz, northeast of Afrin, Turkish state media reported.</p> <p>Footage of the attack, released by the militia's media center, showed a speck of light flying across a field, hurling toward a distant target. Moments later, a tank explodes in a powerful ball of orange flames.</p> <p>Turkish armed forces said a sixth soldier was killed near the border town of Kilis, and another died in an undisclosed location fighting militia forces, Anadolu reported.</p> <p>Turkey launched "Operation Olive Branch" on January 20 with the aim of ending the US-allied militia control of Afrin and the surrounding region along the Syrian-Turkish border. Turkey has long wanted to establish a safe zone: a 19-mile-wide strip of land in Syria along the border that Turkey helps control.</p> <p>In Ankara's eyes, Syrian Kurds are virtually indistinguishable from Kurdish separatists in Turkey, a group it has long considered terrorists. The Kurdish YPG control a large chunk of northern Syria, so a safe zone would create a buffer along the border.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 Turkey: 8 troops killed Syria operation
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/rebel-stronghold-northwestern-syria-heavily-bombed-52814668
GIST	<p>Turkey said eight of its troops were killed Saturday in Ankara's military operation against a Syrian Kurdish militia, the deadliest day in the two-week-old offensive in the enclave of Afrin, while in another part of Syria, al-Qaida-linked militants downed a Russian fighter jet, then shot and killed the pilot.</p> <p>In a statement late Saturday, the Turkish military said five soldiers were killed after their tank in Syria came under attack near Afrin. The soldiers could not be saved despite all attempts, it said.</p> <p>Earlier in the day, three Turkish soldiers were reported killed in the Afrin offensive — one was killed in the area of the tank attack, another in northern Syria and the third on the Turkish side of the border in what Ankara said was an attack by Syrian Kurdish militiamen.</p> <p>The total death toll for Turkish troops since the operation, codenamed Olive Branch, started on Jan. 20 now stands at 13.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 Reserve soldiers to deploy overseas
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/citizen-warriors-to-support-operation-enduring-freedom/281-514072557
GIST	In Marysville, Army Reserve Soldiers prepare to go overseas in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Families and friends are not told details about what their loved ones will be doing, or even when they will return.

The 477th Transportation Company is made up of about 100 citizen warriors. They will soon be in Kuwait.

Friday night was not easy for families who gathered at Marysville Armed Forces Reserve Center.

Barry Lovell traveled from Bellingham to say goodbye to his son, Tyler.

"As long as I can remember, he always wanted to serve his country and be in the military, and this is his first opportunity to go overseas and put his boots on the ground. This is a moment for us to be proud of him," said Lovell.

Specialist Taylor Walton will have to be away from girlfriend, Olivia. His parents traveled from Idaho to see him off.

Mom, Jeni Walton said she is "honored and proud." Dad, Mark Walton said it was his son's first deployment.

It is a first for the Carpenter family too. Toni remembers when she first learned that her husband, Mika, would be deployed.

"I was pretty shocked and scared at the same time. A lot of things run through your mind," said Toni.

While he's away, she'll take care of 1-year-old Isabella and Caleb who is almost 4-years-old.

"This is going to be a hard challenge for all of us that go, but what people don't realize is it usually is a harder challenge for everyone who is back here," said Lt. Jacob Brewer.

The Army says world events can create a need to activate reserve units. Deployment for Army Reserve Soldiers can last up to two years.

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HEADLINE	02/03 Suicide bomber kills 11 in Pakistan
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-attack/suicide-bomber-kills-at-least-11-soldiers-in-northern-pakistan-idUSKBN1FN0IK?il=0
GIST	<p>PESHAWAR, Pakistan (Reuters) - At least 11 soldiers were killed and 13 wounded on Saturday in a suicide attack near an army base in northern Pakistan, officials said, in a region that was once controlled by a local faction of the Taliban.</p> <p>Attacks have decreased sharply in the picturesque Swat Valley but can cause alarm in a region where Pakistani Taliban insurgents took partial control in 2007, before being ousted two years later in a major military operation hailed as an important blow against Islamist violence.</p> <p>Swat was the first sizeable region outside Pakistan's lawless tribal regions bordering Afghanistan to fall to the militants. More than 2,000 Taliban fighters have been driven out of the region, government officials say.</p> <p>The Pakistan Army's public relations wing said in a statement that the "suicide attack" in the Swat Valley took place at the "army unit sports area".</p> <p>The attack was claimed by the Tehreek-e-Taliban, also known as the Pakistani Taliban, in a statement sent to the media.</p>

	“God willing Tehreek-e-Taliban has started the process of revenge attacks,” Taliban spokesman Mohammad Khurasani said in the statement. “Wait for more (attacks) to follow.”
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HEADLINE	02/03 Afghan attacks ‘want to spark uprising’
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42929370
GIST	<p>Militants are targeting civilians in Kabul hoping chaos will spark an uprising, Afghanistan's interior minister has told the BBC.</p> <p>In the past two weeks four major attacks - two by the Taliban and two by the Islamic State group - have killed a total of 130 people across the country.</p> <p>Interior Minister Wais Barmak says the two groups share the same aim - "to provoke people against the government".</p> <p>But a jailed ex-IS fighter told the BBC that the two had distinct approaches.</p> <p>"For the Taliban if someone from the government repents he should be forgiven. But IS say he should be killed," said the man, to whom the BBC was given rare access, with members of the Afghan intelligence agencies present during the interview.</p> <p>"IS preaches that only they are real Muslims, not the Taliban", and "does not believe in mercy", the prisoner, who did not want to be identified, added.</p> <p>While the Taliban control far more territory across Afghanistan than Islamic State, IS has been more focused on attacking Kabul - carrying out at least 14 major attacks in in the city over 2017, significantly more than the Taliban.</p> <p>Some analysts believe that the recent spate of attacks by the Taliban in Kabul represent a competition between the two groups for international notoriety.</p> <p>But Afghan officials often say that there is no tangible difference between the Taliban and IS.</p> <p>The two are targeting civilians "to provoke people against the government, so the government will fall apart... and there will be chaos," the interior minister told the BBC.</p> <p>They both "come from the same source," alleging that Pakistan provides safe havens to both groups.</p> <p>Many Afghans have expressed anger at the government's failure to prevent the attacks.</p> <p>Many IS fighters in Afghanistan were former Taliban. The prisoner said he was among many in his unit who had been forced to switch allegiance.</p> <p>He said he had received one month's training by IS in northern Pakistan, but did not mention that the group had any ties to Pakistani officials. He said IS would dismiss the Taliban as "Pakistani agents".</p> <p>Many of the IS attacks in Kabul have targeted the capital's Shia minority, whom IS militants hold to be heretics.</p> <p>Journalist Syed Azizullah survived a suicide bombing in December on a cultural centre that killed over 40 people.</p> <p>"In the past, Shias living in the countryside used to come to Kabul because it was safer," he told the BBC.</p>

	"Now my relatives in the outskirts tell me to leave Kabul because it's become so dangerous here."
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HEADLINE	02/03 Outcry over mutilated Kurdish fighter
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42929247
GIST	<p>Kurds in Syria have reacted furiously to videos showing Turkish-backed rebels abusing the body of a female Kurdish fighter killed in battle.</p> <p>Barin Kobani was part of all-female unit challenging a Turkish-led offensive in north-west Syria.</p> <p>Kurdish officials accused fighters allied with Turkey of "playing with her corpse" and mutilating it.</p> <p>Last month, Turkish troops and allied Syrian rebels launched a campaign to capture the Kurdish-held Afrin region.</p> <p>Barin Kobani was killed during fighting earlier this week in the northern part of the region, reports say. She was in her mid-20s, and joined the Kurdish all-female unit known as the YPJ in 2015.</p> <p>The group is part of the YPG (People's Protection Units), seen by Turkey as a terrorist group and an extension of the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has fought for Kurdish autonomy in south-eastern Turkey for three decades.</p> <p>The US has provided the YPG and allied Arab fighters with weapons and air support to help them battle the jihadist group Islamic State (IS) in Syria.</p> <p>Two videos emerged earlier this week, and the woman was soon identified as Barin Kobani.</p> <p>The footage shows a group of rebels standing around the bloodied body of a woman lying on the ground. Parts of her torso appear to have been cut.</p> <p>"We hold the Turkish government responsible for this heinous act," Kurdish-led authorities said. One unconfirmed report claimed she had been captured alive before being killed.</p> <p>Local official Aldar Khalil condemned the rebels' "moral decadence".</p> <p>Turkey has not publicly commented on the issue. The rebels involved in the videos have not been identified.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 Rebel stronghold in Syria bombed
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/02/03/rebel-stronghold-in-northwestern-syria-heavily-bombed.html
GIST	<p>BEIRUT – A Syrian monitoring group and the media arm of al-Qaida-linked militants are reporting intense airstrikes on a rebel-held stronghold in Syria's northwest.</p> <p>The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported more than 35 airstrikes on Saraqeb since late Friday, adding that many of its residents are fleeing.</p> <p>The Ibaa News Agency of the al-Qaida-linked Levant Liberation Committee, said Russian and Syrian warplanes and helicopter gunships have been pounding Saraqeb and Tel Mardeekh village in Idlib province since the early hours of Saturday.</p>

	<p>Syrian government forces and their allies pushed into Idlib, an opposition stronghold, inching closer to a key highway that connects Syria's two largest cities, Damascus and Aleppo.</p> <p>The U.N. says more than 270,000 have been displaced in Idlib because of the government onslaught since Dec. 15.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 Families sue Chiquita over deaths
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/03/families-sue-chiquita-over-deaths-americans-in-colombia.html
GIST	<p>MIAMI – The families of six Americans kidnapped and killed in Colombia during the 1990s by the terrorist organization known as FARC are seeking potentially tens of millions of dollars in damages from banana giant Chiquita Brands International because of payments the company made to the group.</p> <p>Trial is scheduled to begin with jury selection Monday in West Palm Beach federal court in lawsuits that accuse Chiquita of violating the Anti-Terrorism Act. Chiquita has admitted paying FARC — the Spanish acronym for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — about \$220,000 but insists it did so only to protect its employees and interests from violence.</p> <p>One \$10,000 payment to the guerrillas was hidden in a spare tire on the back of a Jeep, according to court documents.</p> <p>The families claim Chiquita's financial support of FARC, as a known terrorist group, means it should be held responsible for the Americans' deaths and pay damages. The families must prove that Chiquita executives knew FARC was engaged in violent terror acts that could affect Americans and that the deaths of their loved ones were foreseeable when the payments were made, said plaintiffs' attorney Gary Osen.</p> <p>"These are folks who have been through an enormous amount in their lives. They've waited 10 years for their day in court," Osen said.</p> <p>In a statement issued in January, Switzerland-based Chiquita said its only motivation in paying FARC was protecting its own employees from violence.</p> <p>"We have been clear that, at all times, the company prioritized the safety of its employees and their families, and acted accordingly," the statement said.</p> <p>FARC and other paramilitary groups were engaged in a decades-long civil war in Colombia that took thousands of lives. The bloodshed finally ended in 2016 when a peace accord was signed. Chiquita also admitted paying \$1.7 million to a right-wing group opposed to FARC, eventually pleading guilty in 2007 to a U.S. crime and paying a \$25 million fine.</p> <p>It was only after that case became public that family members of the six Americans slain by FARC learned that Chiquita had also paid FARC, leading to the lawsuits.</p> <p>Five of the Americans killed by FARC were members of a missionary group based in Sanford, Florida, called New Tribes Mission: David Mankins, Rich Tenenoff, Mark Rich, Stephen Welsh and Timothy Van Dyke. The sixth, Frank Pescatore Jr., was a geologist for an Alabama company working on a project in Colombia who was shot trying to escape his kidnapers, according to court documents.</p> <p>Tania Julin of Winter Springs, Florida, was married to Rich the night he was kidnapped on Jan. 31, 1993 in the village of Pucuro, Panama, about 15 miles from the Colombian border. She said armed men burst into their home — where their two young daughters were sleeping — tied Rich up and ordered he, Mankins and Tenenoff to march into the jungle.</p>

She never saw her husband again.

"It was so terrifying. I just never imagined. It was so out of the blue and unexpected. I was only 23 years old, with two little kids," said Julin, who now teaches kindergarten. "I was just terrified of what might happen and so confused about why anyone would do this to us. We were only there to help people."

"I have never been so afraid in all of my life."

Later, FARC demanded a \$5 million ransom for the three, but it soon became apparent the men had likely been killed, Julin said. It took years for the families to find out for sure, and they never received any remains.

"The years of not knowing were so difficult. Christmases would go by and the one thing the girls wanted for Christmas was for their dad to come home. It was lots of years of disappointing heartaches and hard to watch to girls grow up without their dad," she said.

Well before their deaths in the 1990s, Chiquita had established about 35 banana farms in the Uraba region of Colombia that employed about 3,000 people. It was well known that FARC was active in the area and routinely used extortion and threats to obtain payments from people and businesses — a practice called "vacuna," which is Spanish for "vaccine."

FARC's initial payment demand from Chiquita came in 1989, when the group sought \$10,000. Court papers show Chiquita executives decided to make the payment, the first of 57 it would give to FARC over the next decade.

A consulting company called Control Risks that worked with Chiquita outlined the dire nature of the issue in a memo at the time, court documents show:

"You have to pay. These people are serious. The military is not able to control them," the memo said. "You can't just turn them in, give their names to someone. Because they will take retribution for that, and you can expect violence."

Ultimately, a Chiquita executive traveled to Colombia with \$10,000 in cash, exchanged it for Colombian pesos and arranged to deliver the money hidden in the Jeep spare tire to a FARC guerrilla, court documents show.

Despite their insistence the money was paid to protect employees, Chiquita executives at the time discussed it in terms of a cost of doing business — and the company had no intention then of ending its banana operations in Colombia, the documents show.

"We're not going to stop doing business in Colombia because, you know, we're going to have to spend an extra \$25,000. That's not realistic. Right?" one executive was quoted as saying.

U.S. District Judge Kenneth Marra, who will preside over the estimated four-week trial, ruled in January that Chiquita cannot use a defense that the payments were made solely under duress.

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HEADLINE	02/02 Afghan, Pakistan officials meet in Kabul
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/afghan-pakistan-officials-meet-kabul-talk-differences-52815937?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	Pakistani and Afghan officials have met for a second round of talks about allegations levelled against Islamabad in the wake of recent deadly militant attacks in Kabul that have killed over 200 people. A joint statement after the day-long meeting in the Afghan capital said the two sides promised to keep

	<p>talking.</p> <p>After the recent attacks, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's government has insisted Pakistan's failure to rout Taliban militants from safe havens on its soil is spurring the insurgency inside Afghanistan.</p> <p>Kabul also accused Islamabad of harboring the Taliban, who are allegedly being trained in Islamic seminaries in southwestern Pakistan.</p> <p>Pakistan denies the charges.</p> <p>Islamabad says Saturday's meeting was part of a larger dialogue while the Afghans billed it as a response to their accusations against Islamabad.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 Super Bowl city was home for terrorists
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/sports/super-bowl-city-was-home-dozens-isis-other-terror-suspects-n844066
GIST	<p>MINNEAPOLIS — A city that's spawned a surprising number of terror suspects is hosting this year's Super Bowl, but local law enforcement officials say they're ready to protect Sunday's big game.</p> <p>The Minneapolis-St. Paul area has been home to the third highest number of terror prosecutions in the U.S. since 9/11, behind only the much larger metropolitan regions of New York and Washington, D.C. Twelve Twin Cities residents have been charged with providing support to ISIS and 20 have been arrested for alleged support of the Somali terror group al Shabab in the past nine years. Between 2011 and 2014, 13 locals died fighting for al Shabab and ISIS, according to U.S intelligence officials.</p> <p>ISIS has continually called for attacks on large-scale events and the possibility of someone hearing those calls is not lost on the FBI's Joe Rivers, who's in charge of terrorism investigations in Minneapolis.</p> <p>Rivers says the FBI and local law enforcement are more concerned about the potential for lone wolves to attack with a vehicle or a firearm than a sophisticated operation. "I think we're more worried about the fact that an individual is inspired to potentially do something," said Rivers, "and that they find the means and the mechanisms to go ahead and do that either on their own or with very little help."</p> <p>To prepare and respond to any potential incident the FBI says it has brought in 200 extra agents who are a part of 1,000 federal agents from multiple agencies composing the largest deployment in Super Bowl history. Minneapolis and other nearby police departments will add nearly 1,000 extra officers, for a total uniformed presence of 2,000.</p> <p>The game between the New England Patriots and the Philadelphia Eagles kicks off at about 6:30 p.m. at U.S. Bank Stadium in downtown Minneapolis, and features halftime performances by Justin Timberlake and Pink. The venue holds nearly 67,000 people.</p> <p>Minneapolis Police Commander Scott Gerlicher, who is in charge of the city's Super Bowl security operation says, "There are no credible threats currently to the Super Bowl or any activities but there's a large group of people who are looking at that and monitoring that hour by hour."</p> <p>One of the tactics for thwarting any would-be terrorist, say law enforcement officials, is creating secure perimeters for the stadium and other public event spaces, and positioning Humvee-style trucks to prevent vehicle attacks.</p> <p>Around the city and at Super Bowl events, said FBI Supervisory Special Agent Brandon Grant, state, local and federal bomb squad teams from across the region and the country are ready to respond to any suspicious package. Grant said that the teams have brought in 16 small x-ray devices, worth over \$35,000</p>

	<p>each, to deploy with technicians – the largest-ever such deployment of the technology.</p> <p>The devices are designed to quickly scan a suspicious bag or item and produce an image of the contents on a handheld tablet. Grant said the compact size of the x-ray kits means technicians can hand-carry them in a crowd and get an image 10 times faster than older devices.</p> <p>If someone simply forgot a bag in the crowd of thousands, said Grant, the bomb techs can address it and “just move on.”</p> <p>In the air, the FBI will use Blackhawk helicopters equipped with infrared cameras to surveil key Super Bowl sites. The Blackhawks can also be used to move heavily armed agents to any potential attack site, or to evacuate injured people to local hospitals or triage centers.</p> <p>The FBI says it isn’t disclosing where the armed teams are situated but says they will be on standby leading up to and during the big game to respond to any crisis</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	02/03 Drone ship joins US Navy fleet
SOURCE	https://www.digitaltrends.com/cool-tech/darpa-sea-hunter-joins-navy-fleet/
GIST	<p>A prototype autonomous ship known as the Medium Displacement Unmanned Surface Vehicle (MDUSV) has officially been transferred to the U.S. Navy from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) after a two-year testing and evaluation program. Named “Sea Hunter,” the Office of Naval Research will continue to develop the vessel from this point forward.</p> <p>Although there’s no specific timetable for when the Sea Hunter would join active naval operations, the statement from DARPA indicated that it could happen as early as this year. The anti-submarine warfare vessel could be the first of an entirely new class of warship.</p> <p>“[Sea Hunter] represents a new vision of naval surface warfare that trades small numbers of very capable, high-value assets for large numbers of commoditized, simpler platforms that are more capable in the aggregate,” said Fred Kennedy of DARPA. “The U.S. military has talked about the strategic importance of replacing ‘king’ and ‘queen’ pieces on the maritime chessboard with lots of ‘pawns.’”</p> <p>The collaboration between the Navy and DARPA began in 2014, with the ship designed and developed by Virginia-based defense company Leidos, and christened in April 2016. A rigorous series of open-water tests followed, including surveillance and mine counter-measures.</p> <p>According to Newsweek, the ship got its name from the mission the Navy envisions for it — stalking foreign submarines at sea. It’s relatively cheap to build at \$20 million, and it’s far less expensive to run than a similar manned vessel.</p> <p>“This is an inflection point,” former Deputy Defense Secretary Robert Work said in an interview with Reuters in 2016. “This is the first time we’ve ever had a totally robotic, trans-oceanic-capable ship.”</p> <p>“I would like to see unmanned flotillas operating in the western Pacific and the Persian Gulf within five years,” he added.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Women die in surf digging for clams
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/889545/2-die-in-surf-while-digging-for-clams-on-washington-beaches/

GIST	<p>LONG BEACH, Wash. (AP) — Two women have died in separate incidents after they were caught in rough surf while digging for clams on ocean beaches in southwest Washington.</p> <p>Pacific County Sheriff Scott Johnson said on Facebook that the women were reported missing Friday around 9 p.m., roughly four minutes apart.</p> <p>The first 911 call reported that a 70-year-old woman was lost in the surf north of Ocean Park on the Long Beach Peninsula. Her body was found Saturday evening near Westport.</p> <p>In the second case, a 61-year-old woman from Toledo was reported missing in the surf north of the mouth of Willapa Bay. She had been digging for clams with her husband when the two became separated. Her body was found in Pacific County around 5:30 a.m. Saturday.</p> <p>The sheriff reminded people to be aware of powerful waves that can appear at any time.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Cursing is good for your health?
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/better/health/when-cursing-good-your-health-ncna843776
GIST	<p>From an early age we're taught not to curse — usually right around the first time we hear an adult let an expletive slip in front of us (and immediately repeat it back to them). While we typically try to curb our "dirty mouth" when in the presence of family or co-workers, swear words make up almost one percent of our daily vocabulary, according to research done by Timothy Jay, psychological scientist and author of <i>Cursing in America</i>. To put that number into perspective, we use words like "we, our and ourselves" at around the same daily rate.</p> <p>The repercussions of inappropriate cursing are pretty obvious (calling your boss that expletive likely won't end well), but are there any pros to letting the occasional expletive slip when something doesn't go our way? Hell yes there are. As it turns out, that potty mouth of yours can be beneficial in certain scenarios. Here's a look at when and how cursing can actually be helpful for your health.</p> <p>IT HELPS WITH PAIN MANAGEMENT</p> <p>You're rushing to get ready for work in the morning. Just as you're about to head out the door you stub your toe on the corner of the kitchen table and yell your expletive of choice as a knee-jerk reaction. If that stinging foot doesn't feel quite as painful immediately after you've cursed it out, it's not just in your head.</p> <p>A study done at Keele University in the U.K. measured the effects swearing had on pain tolerance, and found that we can withstand more pain when using profanity. Why is that? "When we swear, it sends a message to the amygdala in the brain," explains Amy Cooper Hakim, Ph.D, practicing in Florida.</p> <p>"The words themselves don't help us to better tolerate pain — but the emotional and physical reaction that we have by saying the words triggers the fight or flight response, which then gives us that burst of energy to make it through the difficult or painful task." So the next time you hurt yourself, feel free to curse at whatever inanimate object is to blame.</p> <p>IT IMPROVES YOUR WORKOUT</p> <p>If the most grueling parts of your workout have you cursing your instructor in your head, there's research to support that vocalizing those swear words can actually help boost your performance. (Though you might want to stick to a general expletive rather than directing it at Chad during TRX.) The study found that participants who swore saw a 2 to 4 percent increase in performance and 8 percent boost in strength compared to those who kept their mouths shut. Why does this help?</p> <p>Researchers surmise that when you're alone with your thoughts, suffering through your workout in silence, there's nothing distracting you from the task at hand. Cursing diverts your attention, which makes you work harder than if you were only focusing on how tough the workout is.</p>

IT RELEASES STRESS

As it turns out, there's some science behind why cursing when you're angry or frustrated makes you feel better. "Cursing can be an effective emotional release, especially for anger and frustration," explains Laura MacLeod, LMSW practicing in New York. "By using words that are not welcomed or appropriate in most settings (professional, family, social) it can be very liberating to throw caution to the wind and curse."

According to MacLeod, this stress release initiates from the physical exercise of cursing. "Curse words are usually uttered with fury or frustration — the whole body is involved," she explains. This provides a different release than when we're simply venting without expletives, because we're doing so without self-imposed limitations. "When we complain, vent or share anger without cursing, we are keeping ourselves in check," she says. "The stress is not released because we are sharing within guidelines, not totally releasing all feelings. When cursing, our whole body and all emotions are connected — no guidelines, no filter. The release is complete, and thus stress relieving."

IT CAN HELP YOU EXPRESS YOURSELF

You'd probably think that frequent cursing is a sign of limited vocabulary — but one study published in the journal *Language Sciences* actually shows the opposite. The study had a group of 43 men and women say as many curse words as they could in one minute. Next, they had to name as many animal names as they could in the same amount of time. Researchers found that the more curse words a participant was able to generate, the more expansive a vocabulary they had. They hypothesized that having an expansive vocabulary of taboo words means that person is better able to express themselves in a verbose, nuanced way. So get creative with your swear words!

IT MAKES YOU APPEAR MORE HONEST AND AUTHENTIC

You probably don't want to curse during your next performance review. But clinical therapist Amy Deacon, explains that cursing can make you appear more genuine within your social circles. "Cursing in a positive scenario makes us come across as honest, authentic and assertive because swearing is such a raw form of expression," she says.

"You are getting an uncensored, raw, unfiltered response that is a gut reaction and reflective of what the person is really feeling or thinking." A recent study found that profanity is correlated with genuine feelings and emotions in social interactions, which indicated that those who curse may also be more likely to be truthful.

So the next time you're venting to friends, in pain or doing another round of burpees, let your inner sailor come out and play!

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HEADLINE	02/04 Oil tanker missing off West Africa coast
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/04/asia/oil-tanker-missing-west-africa/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The search for a missing oil tanker off the coast of West Africa entered its fourth day Sunday, with no word on the fate of the 22 Indian nationals aboard the vessel.</p> <p>The vessel, Marine Express, was carrying more than 13,000 tons of gasoline and went missing in the Gulf of Guinea, according to a statement from the Anglo Eastern, the ship's managing company.</p> <p>It said it lost contact with the vessel Thursday.</p> <p>In a tweet, a spokesman for India's Foreign Ministry, Raveesh Kumar, said a search for the ship is underway.</p> <p>"Our Mission in Abuja (Nigeria) is in touch with the authorities in Benin and Nigeria for their help in locating the ship and is constantly monitoring the situation," he said.</p>

	<p>Anglo-Eastern said it was in contact with the families of the missing sailors.</p> <p>In a recent report, the International Maritime Bureau, a nonprofit devoted to fighting crime at sea, said maritime piracy and armed robbery reached a 22-year-low last year, but danger persists in the Gulf of Guinea.</p> <p>"Although the number of attacks is down this year [2017] in comparison with last year, the Gulf of Guinea and the waters around Nigeria remain a threat to seafarers," said Pottengal Mukundan, director of the bureau.</p> <p>The Gulf of Guinea leads the world in the number and severity of incidences of piracy, according to the nonprofit.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 Extortion scam preys on secrets
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/investigations/extortion-scam-preys-on-those-with-vulnerable-secrets/283-514062697
GIST	<p>If you have a deep, dark secret you want to keep to yourself, you may be vulnerable to a pricey scam.</p> <p>Extortion letters are starting to circulate in Portland. They say, for a hefty fee -- your secret is safe!</p> <p>"They are consistently looking for areas where people are vulnerable," said Pamela Levy, whose husband received an extortion letter in the mail.</p> <p>"The more information somebody has, the more effective it is," said Renn Cannon, a special agent with the FBI.</p> <p>The details in these extortion letters are just "specific" enough, to make them believable. And at the same time, they're just "vague" enough to cover a range of secrets, from infidelity, to financial, to criminal. Of course, if you live a clean life, you've got nothing to worry about.</p> <p>That was the case for Levy, happily married for years, but it's not the case for everyone.</p> <p>The letters start with a threat:</p> <p>"I know about the secret you are keeping from your wife, and everyone else, more importantly, I have evidence of what you've been hiding. I'm going to give you two options, ignore this, and I'll tell your wife, her friends and family. Or you can pay me."</p> <p>Levy says she opened it and called her husband.</p> <p>"My husband wasn't there with me at the time, and I called him up and said you're not going to believe what just came in the mail," she said</p> <p>Luckily, Levy and her husband have been happily married for years but the FBI says these kind of extortion letter scams are becoming common.</p> <p>"The more information they have about you the more it seems like 'Well, boy they really know their stuff,' so it does make it more effective," said Cannon.</p> <p>The scammers use your name, and reference your city, just enough to make it convincing. The letter goes on to demand a "confidentially fee." Pay \$3,600 dollars and your secret remains safe.</p>

"It's the kind of threat that may ring true for a small selection of those where they may actually decide, I'm going to go ahead and send some cash," Cannon said.

"I knew instantly it was a scam, and I called my husband and he knew instantly it was a scam, and we both started laughing about it," Levy said. "But as a concerned citizen, I started to be really worried about all the people who might not know it was a scam."

Extortion is a federal crime, but catching someone is tough because the letter wants the payment in bitcoin, and even gives step-by-step instructions on how to pay the hush money. The FBI says that makes it hard to trace the scammers.

"Because its decentralized, because there's no central authority, because its new technology, because its encrypted; it makes it very hard to trace," said Cannon.

But the FBI, state and local investigators are successfully working these cases, especially when there's a lot of money lost. Levy says a sense of humor helps. She says she never once considered paying a ransom, even if her husband was up to no good.

"No, I considered jewelry. No bitcoin for anybody else," she joked.

For the scammers, it's a phishing scheme. They send out thousands of these letters across the country. Odds are some of the recipients will be up to no good, and will pay to keep their secrets safe.

If you get one of these letters, you can go to the FBI's "internet crime complaint center" at www.ic3.gov. They also advise people to be careful about personal details they share online.

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HEADLINE	02/04 Mystery of the strangled billionaires
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-42864082
GIST	<p>The killing of a wealthy Canadian couple made headlines around the world. Then the news they had been found hanging by men's belts next to their indoor pool, with no apparent motive, deepened the intrigue. So who were Barry and Honey Sherman?</p> <p>In an unpublished 1996 memoir, Barry Sherman wrote he had "always been very conscious of my personal mortality".</p> <p>His unfinished musings only became public because of a court case in the 1990s. They revealed a man with strong beliefs - that there is no God, free will is an illusion, and life has "no meaning or purpose".</p> <p>But Sherman thought these memoirs may one day be of interest to others - a "perhaps arrogant belief", he wrote.</p> <p>Now, the text offers some insight into a couple whose mysterious deaths have captured worldwide interest and left those who knew them grief-stricken and dumbfounded.</p> <p>In mid-December, 75-year-old Barry and his wife Honey, 70, were found dead in their Toronto home.</p> <p>Police confirmed this month their death is being investigated as a "targeted" double murder. They were found strangled, fully clothed on the deck of their indoor pool, hanging by belts.</p> <p>Authorities have so far offered no suspects and no motive for the suspected killings.</p> <p>More than 10,000 people, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, attended the funeral.</p>

The turnout was unsurprising - the Shermans had amassed a personal fortune estimated at \$3bn. They had touched much of Canada, whether through the impact on Canadian healthcare of Apotex, Inc, the generic drug empire Barry founded, or through the millions they gave away in philanthropy.

At their funeral, their son Jonathon called them "yin and yang".

"They completed a circle that encompassed everything important about what it means to be human," he said. "Neither one perfect but together wholly balanced and exceptional."

Barry was a self-described workaholic, someone who brought business files with him on vacation. He was an ardent atheist, an aggressive businessman and a loving, though often absent father.

Honey was warm, the "magnet and the glue" that held the family together, an inveterate party animal who refused to let a bout of throat cancer or painful arthritis get in the way of either a good time or her charity work.

Honey Sherman grew up in modest circumstances, born to two Polish Holocaust survivors who later immigrated to Canada.

Barry Sherman was born in Toronto in 1942, and though he didn't excel at school early on, it was clear he was a brainy child. He joined the University of Toronto's engineering science programme at 16 - the youngest ever student to do so - and went on to study aeronautics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The couple were introduced in August 1970, and married almost exactly a year later.

Where Honey was gregarious, Barry could be aloof and lack in social graces.

At the couple's funeral, Honey's sister Mary said she was unimpressed with her sibling's beau at first sight.

"He was standing at our kitchen. There he was reading the paper, ignoring everyone, being Barry. And all I could think was 'my sister's going out with this? What's the deal?'" she recalled.

"And then over time I saw that he was the most brilliant, wonderful, kind man."

The couple had four children, three through surrogacy after Honey had a series of miscarriages.

The pair depended on each other.

Honey would make sure Barry was dressed properly for events and galas, picking out his clothes down to his socks.

At the funeral, Jonathon remembered his father on a family trip "driving around in a jeep in Israel looking for mom's lost wallet, and her lost keys, and her lost sunglasses, and her jacket too".

"You were like a lock and a key, each pretty useless on your own. But together you unlocked the whole world for yourselves, and for us, and so many others."

The Shermans' philanthropy created an undeniable legacy. They donated multiple millions of dollars to hospitals, Jewish organisations, universities, and charities like the United Way. A state-of-the-art research university facility in Toronto bears their name, as does a Jewish community centre campus.

Through its foundation, Apotex has also donated over C\$50m (\$40m; £28m) around the world, including sending medicine to a children's charity in Kenya.

But the billionaires didn't flaunt their wealth, despite being among the richest Canadians.

Honey told Toronto Life magazine in 2008 the couple "live nice lives, not large lives" and worried about the influence of their wealth on their children, saying they worked hard to instil in them a "sense of reality".

Barry was known to drive cars until they were ready for the junkyard, and met the magazine's reporter at the Apotex headquarters wearing a wrinkled shirt and "well-worn trousers".

"[Barry] didn't care about things - making money was a way of keeping score," says Murray Rubin, who was friends with Barry for some 50 years. Rubin calls Barry the smartest guy he ever knew.

He learned the drug business from family, working at his uncle's pharmaceutical company before founding Apotex in 1974.

Barry told the New York Times in 2006 that he did "everything in those days from cleaning the floor to writing the cheques".

The generic drug-mogul also earned a reputation for using the courts freely to build his company and defend his business interests.

Apotex has been involved in more than a thousand court cases in Canada, using the legal system to aggressively challenge drug patents.

"It definitely makes it the most litigious pharma company in Canada and probably the most litigious company period," says University of Ottawa law professor Amir Attaran.

"It's fair to observe the way he did business he would have had many enemies," he says.

Canadians pay some of the highest prices in the world for generic drugs, and Attaran argues Sherman's business practices contributed to that.

"He was unethical in business. His drugs were overpriced and gouged Canadians," he said on Twitter.

Apotex did not respond to a request for comment.

Rubin says his friend was "as a person, very gentle. As a businessman, very tough".

Barry was also involved in a couple of long-running, very public conflicts.

In the 1990s, Apotex became embroiled in a high-profile and protracted dust-up with a haematologist at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children over negative research results related to one of the company's drugs.

When the researcher, Dr Nancy Olivieri, said she needed to disclose the risk to patients involved in the trials, Apotex, which disputed the results, pulled the trials and threatened legal action if she divulged those potential risks.

She did anyway. Sherman was later recorded calling her "nuts" when discussing the case with CBS's 60 Minutes.

In September, he scored a victory in another lengthy feud, this over a group of cousins who alleged he breached an agreement that entitled them to a 20% stake in Apotex.

An Ontario Superior Court judge dismissed the C\$1bn lawsuit, though that ruling is being appealed.

The acrimonious battle, which played out in court and in the press for over a decade, included Sherman

	<p>suing the cousin who spearheaded the fight to recover some C\$8m in loans.</p> <p>The bad blood spilled into the press again in the wake of Barry and Honey's death.</p> <p>Rubin says while Barry was tough, he can't comprehend who would kill him and Honey with such "hatred".</p> <p>"I can't believe that my friend Barry... would die in this horrible way," he said. "The riddle is - who did it and why?"</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 Drone hovers over plane during landing
SOURCE	https://www.cnet.com/news/drone-hovers-over-jet-landing-at-las-vegas-airport/
GIST	<p>The Federal Aviation Administration is investigating an incident in which someone apparently piloted a drone right above a jet landing at McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas.</p> <p>The KLAS TV station's LasVegasNow.com website published video Thursday taken at an unknown time from a drone hovering over the city as a jet approaches and then passes underneath. The FAA said Friday it's "aware of the incident and is investigating" but declined further comment.</p> <p>Drones, piloted from the ground but providing an eye in the sky, promise new business opportunities for everybody from real estate photographers to oil refinery operators. And they can help police handle dangerous gunfire scenes. But anyone can buy one of the aircraft, and enforcing restrictions can be tough.</p> <p>The Know Before You Fly website, from the FAA and drone and model aircraft groups, steers people toward 2,500 designated model aircraft flying sites. It can be tricky knowing where drone use is illegal, though. Airports are on the list, of course, but so are many military sites, US landmarks and the Super Bowl.</p> <p>The FAA can fine individuals up to \$1,437 for each violation of flight safety rules. Business' fines can reach \$32,666 per violation. Then there are criminal penalties of up to \$250,000 in fines and three years in prison.</p> <p>Remote-control aircraft have been around for decades, but drones are a novelty and add photos and videos into the mix. And the existing model-aircraft industry isn't happy about the Las Vegas drone flight.</p> <p>"All drone and model aircraft pilots must stay well clear of manned aircraft. We condemn the type of operation depicted in this video," said Chad Budreau, director of government affairs for the Academy of Model Aeronautics, in a statement. "Anyone who violates aviation regulations or endangers public safety must be held accountable for their actions. We urge the FAA to take strong enforcement action against this drone pilot, and against any future violators."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 Tech workers use LSD for creativity
SOURCE	http://www.kiro7.com/news/local/tech-workers-use-lsd-to-help-expand-creativity-1/693364436
GIST	<p>LSD and high tech seem like opposites, but KIRO 7 discovered some workers are turning to the drug, which hit a high in popularity in the '60s, to increase their problem-solving ability and creativity. Instead of a full dose, they're microdosing.</p> <p>Paul Austin is the founder of the company The Third Wave and calls himself a microdosing coach.</p> <p>"So microdosing is the act of consuming really low doses of psychedelics, usually on a two-times-per-</p>

week basis, for a period of a month or two months," according to Austin.

Austin told KIRO-7 he's done it, by taking 1/10th of a normal dose.

"I was looking for something that could help with creativity, that could help with entering a flow state, that could help with a process of building my business," said Austin.

He's studying the impacts and making a business of helping others maximize their experience with the controlled substance.

"For creativity, to help with problem-solving, to give them a little more energy. It's kind of to get another extra edge in what they're doing," Austin said

The popularity of LSD microdosing caught the attention of UW psychology professor Jaime Diaz. Diaz is behavioral pharmacologist and wrote the book "How Drugs Influence Behavior." He's been teaching at UW for 40 years.

"There's the danger that someone's going to take too much LSD," explained Diaz, "You're already in micrograms, and so microdosing LSD is very difficult to do."

Diaz told KIRO-7 he's very interested in the science of what LSD does to the brain.

"Not much of the LSD actually crosses into the brain. So you're dosing in micrograms and not much of that is getting into the brain side. So this is amazing to me that just a few molecules can have this profound effect. This is amazing," said Diaz.

According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, "LSD is a Schedule 1 drug and is illegal, regardless of the quantity. It simply has no accepted medical use and has a high potential for abuse."

Paul Austin is not a doctor, and says as a coach he has his clients sign waivers. They have to find LSD on their own. He's advertising his business, The Third Wave, to subscribers of Rolling Stone and other sites. He says anyone with schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, general anxiety or colorblindness should not microdose.

To really know the benefits of LSD microdosing, professor Diaz says researchers need a scientific study.

"Any drug that will increase our experience on this planet positively, I think, is something we should look into," said Diaz.

He says the information that is out there now hasn't taken into account the purity of the drug or the placebo effect, and likely was not done in a controlled environment.

That's exactly what researchers at Johns Hopkins are doing now.

Diaz cautions anyone who tries it on their own. "The thing with LSD, as with most of these hallucinogens, you can't take it back. Once you take it, you have to play out that ride."

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HEADLINE	02/03 Britain's first 'private police force'
SOURCE	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5346699/First-private-police-force-caught-400-criminals.html
GIST	The country's first 'private police force' is investigating hundreds of crimes that regular officers are too busy to look at.

A firm led by former Scotland Yard senior officers has successfully prosecuted more than 400 criminals and is now carrying out murder inquiries.

TM Eye, which has a 100 per cent conviction rate, is thought to bring more private prosecutions than any organisation besides the RSPCA.

The company, the country's first de-facto private police force, is operating against a backdrop of rising crime rates and police budget cuts. Its activities include:

- A service called 'My Local Bobby' costing wealthy households up to £200 a month each for guards to patrol their streets;
- Three high-profile murder investigations that police have been unable to complete, including one case dogged by allegations of corruption and cover-up;
- Help in cases of rape, missing persons, burglary, theft, stalking and blackmail.

Co-founder Tony Nash, an ex-Metropolitan Police commander, said: 'This is going back to Dixon of Dock Green to a degree. It's what people want. There is no substitute for going out and knocking on doors. But with the current state of finances, police are solving cases behind their desks and that has become the culture.'

In the past two years the company has brought successful private prosecutions against 403 criminals for fraud, intellectual property theft and other offences. A total of 43 were jailed.

The company, staffed by retired detectives and cyber-crime experts from Scotland Yard, the National Crime Agency and GCHQ, is now expanding its services beyond predominantly financial investigations.

It comes as police chiefs admit they do not have the money to investigate high-volume crimes such as shoplifting and stretched officers complain that they are at breaking point.

But critics fear the rise of private policing could lead to a two-tier system where only the wealthy get protection from criminals.

Metropolitan Police Federation chairman Ken Marsh described the rise of private detectives as a 'staggering indictment' of the state of policing.

'Eventually there will be a two-tier system with the haves and the have-nots, and if you have money and live in a £20million house in Chelsea you can pay for private security,' he said.

'My concern would be, where is the public scrutiny if it goes wrong? If they are allowed to go and do police's job for them, that is a dangerous status quo.'

Last week official police figures revealed the largest recorded annual increase in crime for more than a decade, with surging levels of violence, sex attacks, knife and gun offences across the country.

But what was not recorded in the figures is the astonishing number of criminals being locked up – and in some instances even deported – through the work of private investigators.

TM Eye currently has 36 criminal cases pending at Crown and magistrates' courts around the country and is working on a further 60 investigations in London, Cheshire, Dorset, Avon and Somerset and Essex.

In the past six months, its 60 investigators have snared suspects wanted by police for attempted murder and rape.

Recently a stalker was jailed for four years on the basis of its work.

Using covert surveillance and undercover operatives, the private firm has managed to smash a major

counterfeit goods gang, securing convictions for 60 offenders in Manchester selling fake designer handbags and clothing.

All of its convictions and suspects' DNA and fingerprints are recorded on the Police National Computer.

It does not charge for its investigative services, seeking instead to recoup costs from courts after offenders are convicted.

The firm has offices in London, Manchester, Essex and Mumbai in India, where investigators have helped to catch a major manufacturer of fake medicines.

The firm launched its subscription service My Local Bobby last March and its staff now patrol some of London's most expensive streets in Belgravia, Mayfair and Kensington.

Individual uniformed 'bobbies' cover up to 250 houses, whose owners each pay a fee of £100 to £200 a month.

In return, clients get a 'meet-and-greet' service from their car or the Tube, and have a hotline to their bobby whose location they can track on their iPad.

If there is a crime, the firm promises to have a local response officer on the scene within five minutes.

Like police, the patrol teams have body cameras to record evidence. They can apprehend suspects using a citizen's arrest.

Mr Nash said his ambition is to get local authorities to outsource their patrols to the firm.

TM Eye also offers more traditional security work such as bodyguards for foreign dignitaries.

The firm's managing director David McKelvey, a retired Scotland Yard detective chief inspector, said: 'We probably do more undercover work than any other law enforcement agency. We have a better surveillance capability and equipment than most forces.'

He added: 'It's about catching the bad guys and protecting the public, and we can help with that.'

'Police are on their knees, sick to the teeth with what is going on in their job. The bottom line is we have better uniforms, better pay and better support at work. It's a huge growth industry.'

David Green, of the think-tank Civitas and a former adviser to the Government, said: 'This seems a reflection of the fact that the police are overstretched, underfunded and unable to cope and this group has emerged to fill the gap.'

'There is nothing wrong with private security or private patrols.'

'But if they take on some of the functions of the police and the call for this grows, there is a danger there is not the same safeguards that we have with the police.'

'If the police do something wrong there is a clear disciplinary structure, a chain of accountability and independent scrutiny. If these private firms exercise police powers without public accountability, there could be dangers there.'

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HEADLINE 02/03 US: Russia nuclear armed torpedo

SOURCE <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/02/politics/pentagon-nuclear-posture-review-russian-drone/index.html>

GIST	<p>Washington (CNN)Just as the White House is caught in a political minefield over the Russia investigation, the Pentagon is taking its toughest line yet against Russia's resurgent nuclear forces.</p> <p>In its newly released Nuclear Posture Review, the Defense Department has focused much of its multibillion nuclear effort on an updated nuclear deterrence focused on Russia.</p> <p>"Russia considers the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to be the principal threats to its contemporary geopolitical ambitions," the report says.</p> <p>"The Defense Intelligence Agency currently estimates Russia has a stockpile of 2,000 "non-strategic" nuclear weapons including short-range ballistic missiles, gravity bombs and depth charges that can go on medium range bomber aircraft," according to the report.</p> <p>"DIA also estimates Russia has nuclear armed anti-ship, anti-submarine missiles and torpedoes. What do they need nuclear depth charges for?" one US official asked.</p> <p>The report also publicly acknowledges, for the first time, that Russia is "developing" a "new intercontinental, nuclear armed, nuclear-powered, undersea autonomous torpedo."</p> <p>Known in English as the "Status-6" system, the program is described by US officials as essentially a drone-type device fired underwater that can potentially travel thousands of miles and strike US coastal targets such as military bases or cities.</p> <p>Upon detonation, the device is designed to cause large zones of radioactive contamination.</p> <p>Some analysts have called it a "doomsday weapon," and US Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Arkansas, has labeled the concept "destabilizing."</p> <p>"The concept is a horror of the Cold War," according to Adam Mount, a senior fellow and the director of the Defense Posture Project at the Federation of American Scientists. "It is clearly inspired by overblown Russian worries that US missile defenses will make their missile forces obsolete."</p> <p>"There is no indication from public information that Russia is actively developing the system, but it is alarming to see it in a Pentagon document," Mount said, adding that while the program is referenced in the Nuclear Posture Review, it is not mentioned in other government reports.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 Study: polar bears extinction sooner
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/02/world/polar-bears-extinction-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Polar bears are starving and could face extinction faster than previously thought, according to a new study.</p> <p>Published Thursday in the journal Science, the study was conducted by researchers who fixed collars on nine bears and recorded their activity levels for up to 11 days. They found that the Arctic creatures were suffering an extreme shortage of food.</p> <p>As a result of climate change, the sea ice in the Arctic is melting and forcing the bears to travel further and use more energy to catch their prey.</p> <p>The three-year study conducted by the US Geological Survey and University of California, Santa Cruz, found that the Arctic predators are moving 1.6 times more than previous studies have reported. That increased movement in the search for food leaves them shorter on the calories they need.</p> <p>"The purpose was to get a better understanding of what the changes in sea levels are and how they are</p>

	<p>impacting the polar bears," Anthony Pagano, a lead researcher in the study, told CNN.</p> <p>"We wanted to understand what the basic mechanisms were, what the polar bears were doing on the ice and what their energy needs are."</p> <p>The study found that for one polar bear to sustain its energy level it would require an intake of 12,325 calories a day, usually one adult ringed seal every 10 days.</p> <p>Over the course of the study, four of the nine seals did not reach that calorie level and lost a combined mass of 20 kilograms (44 pounds), which "reinforced the famine lifestyle the polar bears have," Pagano said.</p> <p>According to the World Wildlife Fund, polar bears spend more than 50% of their time hunting and are successful less than 2% of that time.</p> <p>"I'm not surprised to have seen this," said Liz Greengrass, a director at UK animal conservation charity Born Free Foundation. "Polar bears are reliant on seals for food and seals rely on sea ice. Global warming is melting the ice so it has a chain reaction on how polar bears can survive."</p> <p>Polar bears have been listed as endangered species by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the protection program repeatedly emphasizes the importance of climate change.</p> <p>"Without decisive action to address Arctic warming, the long-term fate of this species is uncertain," Greg Siekaniec, Alaska regional director of the wildlife agency, told CNN last year.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/05 Top ivory investigator killed in Kenya
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/05/africa/ivory-investigator-killed-kenya/index.html
GIST	<p>Nairobi, Kenya (CNN)One of the world's top ivory and rhino horn trafficking investigators has been found dead with multiple stab wounds.</p> <p>Esmond Bradley Martin was found dead on Sunday at his home in the Nairobi suburb of Karen, according to Kenya's Interior Ministry spokesman Mwneda Njoka.</p> <p>Bradley Martin had just returned from a trip to Myanmar and was writing a report on his findings when he was killed.</p> <p>Bradley Martin is a former UN special envoy for rhino conservation. One of his notable achievements was persuading China to close its legal rhino trade in 1993.</p> <p>For decades, Bradley Martin traveled the world exposing trafficking routes in Laos, Vietnam, Ethiopia and Nigeria, often working with Kenya-based NGO Save the Elephants.</p> <p>The NGO paid tribute to him in a post on Twitter Monday.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/05 Migrant workers exploited in Jordan
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/05/middleeast/migrant-domestic-workers-jordan/index.html
GIST	<p>Amman, Jordan (CNN)Isa Al-Maeda says her life as a farmer in the Philippines was hard, but they were good days, surrounded by her siblings and parents.</p>

She wanted to help support her family, which struggled to make ends meet, so in 2006 she took a job as a domestic worker in Jordan. She says she was promised \$500 a month, which would have greatly helped her ailing parents.

Al-Maeda's recruitment agency got her a job with a Jordanian family living in a town near the Syrian border. She was kept busy with the house chores, most of the time working 17 hours a day. The first month she received the \$500, the following two she got \$300; then the money stopped.

The family told her they were going through financial troubles and would pay her as soon as they got money, she says. They never did.

Al-Maeda says she could not leave because she was too scared to go outside, she didn't know the country and didn't know if anyone would help her.

It took her nine years to gather the courage to escape, something that was made harder after her residency and work permits expired and years' worth of fines accumulated, which made her illegal.

Now 36 years old, Al-Maeda told CNN she understands she was a slave. Wiping tears from her eyes, she says what she has been through haunts her even in her sleep. The thought of wanting to send money to her family, but having nothing, has been the hardest thing.

Hers is not an isolated case. Rights groups have documented many cases where migrant workers are not paid on time; some are deceived by employers who promise to pay them at the end of a contracted period, but fail to do so. Some employers lock their workers in the home, forcing them to work up to 20 hours a day, seven days a week.

Withholding passports and restricting movement are also common, according to advocacy groups.

According to official government figures, there are more than 50,000 migrant domestic workers in Jordan and another estimated 20,000 operating without proper documentation.

Most of the women come from South and Southeast Asia, and East Africa. Monthly salaries range from about \$200 to \$500 and many are expected to do everything from cleaning to cooking, ironing to gardening and childcare.

Linda Al-Kalash established the NGO Tamkeen in 2007 to provide legal aid to migrant workers. With her team of lawyers Al-Kalash took employers to court for labor violations and mistreatment of workers, winning several high profile cases.

"Through our experience and meeting with the workers themselves ... they feel they don't have any access to redress," she said.

"Some of them are difficult to talk to, because they are afraid, they don't have any trust in anybody. We try to let them feel that they are safe. It is very important to shake hands with them, to hug them sometimes, to let them feel that you and they are in an equal situation."

In 2010 Al-Kalash received the US State Department Trafficking in Persons Hero award for her efforts to combat modern day slavery in Jordan.

She now works closely with government agencies, including the country's Anti-Human Trafficking department, which has been credited with investigating hundreds of cases since it was established in 2013.

The Jordanian government acknowledges that there is a problem when it comes to migrant domestic workers, but officials say it is only individual cases, not a widespread issue.

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HEADLINE	02/05 'Iceberg' of unseen crimes
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/05/nyregion/cyber-crimes-unreported.html
GIST	<p>Utah's chief law enforcement officer was deep in the fight against opioids when he realized that a lack of data on internet sales of Fentanyl was hindering investigations. So the officer, Keith D. Squires, the state's public safety commissioner, created a team of analysts to track and chronicle online distribution patterns of the drug.</p> <p>In Philadelphia, hidebound ways of confronting iPhone thefts let thrive illicit networks to distribute stolen cellphones. Detectives treated each robbery as an unrelated street crime — known as “apple picking” — rather than a vast scheme with connected channels used by thieves to sell the stolen phones.</p> <p>And in Nashville, investigators had no meaningful statistics on a nasty new swindle of the digital age: The “cheating husband” email scheme. In it, anonymous extortionists mass email large numbers of men, threatening to unmask their infidelities. The extortionists have no idea if the men have done anything wrong, but enough of them are guilty, it turns out, that some pay up, sometimes with Bitcoin.</p> <p>Each case demonstrates how the tools used to fight crime and measure crime trends in the United States are outdated. Even as certain kinds of crimes are declining, others are increasing — yet because so many occur online and have no geographic borders, local police departments face new challenges not only fighting them, but keeping track of them. Politicians often tout crime declines without acknowledging the rise of new cyber crimes.</p> <p>Detectives only learned of the “cheating husband” scheme from faithful spouses who were not victims. The crime did not fit into any existing category, and since the police had made no arrests, they had no statistics to feed to a national crime database in Washington that can prepare other jurisdictions for the scheme.</p> <p>“Suspects take advantage, knowing that, ‘Hey, I’m basically committing crimes blindly,’ without the fear of prosecution,” said Capt. Jason M. Reinbold, commander of the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department’s criminal investigations division. “And I can’t analyze something if I don’t have data.”</p> <p>Many of the offenses are not even counted when major crimes around the nation are tallied. Among them: identity theft; sexual exploitation; ransomware attacks; Fentanyl purchases over the Dark Web; human trafficking for sex or labor; revenge porn; credit-card fraud; child exploitation; and gift or credit-card schemes that gangs use to raise cash for their traditional operations or vendettas.</p> <p>In a sense, technology has created an extraordinary moment for industrious criminals, increasing profits without the risk of street violence. Digital villainy can be launched from faraway states, or countries, eliminating physical threats the police traditionally confront. Cyber perpetrators remain unknown. Law enforcement officials, meanwhile, ask themselves: Who owns their crimes? Who must investigate them? What are the specific violations? Who are the victims? How can we prevent it?</p> <p>“It’s incredibly challenging,” the police chief in Tucson, Chris Magnus, said. “There’s such a lack of clarity.”</p> <p>The rise of the crimes flies in the face of the proclamations of politicians who declare crime an all but defeated societal ill.</p> <p>“You have to go back to the 1950s to see crime this low,” Mayor Bill de Blasio, New York City’s second-term Democratic mayor, said recently on MSNBC’s “Morning Joe.” His comments reflected last year’s historically low numbers of murders and shootings, burglaries, robberies and auto thefts — offenses measured by the police CompStat tracking program.</p> <p>But to many criminologists, academics and law enforcement leaders, crimes like car theft are</p>

anachronisms in a modern era in which the internet's virtual superhighways have supplanted brick-and-mortar streets as the scenes for muggings, prostitution rings or commercial burglaries. They see dips in traditional violence and larceny as offset by a twin phenomenon: A surge in the evolving crimes of the digital era, and the fact that they are not fully captured in law enforcement's reporting systems.

"It's the old iceberg metaphor," said Nola Joyce, a former deputy commissioner of Philadelphia's police department. "What we know about is above the surface. But in terms of value, and in terms of harm, a lot of that crime is below the surface."

"There's an old saying that came out of the Vietnam War," she added, "that said, 'If you can't measure what matters, what you measure matters a great deal.'"

Ms. Joyce is working with others on a panel of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, to modernize local and federal crime-classification systems.

New solutions are a priority, too, for the Federal Bureau of Investigation and progressive police commanders. They say that without timely, accurate data on crime, criminal justice leaders cannot see and respond coherently to national trends or make informed policy and spending decisions or tailor deployment strategies to best battle them.

As Chuck Wexler, the executive director of the Police Executive Research Forum, a Washington-based research group that has studied the issue, put it: "The problem is, to use an overused expression, 'You don't know what you don't know,' and by that I mean we don't know the extent of these incidents in our communities or from a national perspective."

Indeed, an Internet Crime Complaint Center established by the F.B.I. in 2000, to capture internet crime, received 298,728 complaints in 2016, reflecting \$1.3 billion in combined losses, according to a new report by Mr. Wexler's group. But Donna Gregory, the head of the center, said that number of complaints only represented about 10 to 12 percent of all estimated cybercrime victims in the United States in 2016, and a fraction of all victims worldwide. In fact, a single category of internet crime — identify theft — generated \$15.4 billion in losses in 2014, according to a crime victimization survey by the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics.

In its report, Mr. Wexler's group said its findings represented a wake-up call for the nation's 18,000 policing agencies facing an increase in technology-based crimes, that sprawl across jurisdictions, and recommended they fight back with similar tools by: Developing their own digital expertise; hiring civilian analysts; mining technology, to help solve crime; encouraging banks to forward reports of theft rather than write off their losses.

Above all, policing needs "better systems for gathering data," the report said.

It is an issue that dates back to 1929, when the F.B.I. first rolled out its Uniform Crime Reporting system that still stands today. Designed as a summary count, it mainly tracks a handful of so-called Part One index crimes: murder, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, grand larceny, arson and auto theft. The counts include only the top charge in a given episode.

In the 1980s, the F.B.I., with Bureau of Justice Statistics, tried to improve the reporting by building the so-called National Incident-Based Reporting System to capture deeper levels of data across more categories. It created, for instance, "crimes against a person" which includes: assault, murder, kidnapping, abduction and sexual offenses. Each act is counted separately, within an incident or a crime that encompasses several criminal elements.

But 40 years later, data collection is still haphazard as policing agencies that protect just 31 percent of the country's population volunteer to abide by the deeper reporting standards. (An example: There is no national database of police officers' use of deadly physical force.) Still, the F.B.I. is charging forward, vowing to move fully to its 1980s-era vision by 2021. Only last year did it begin collecting data on two

new offenses in its fraud category: hacking/computer invasion and identify theft.

“Crime data reporting — in its current state — is not collecting the right information to understand and analyze current events,” Stephen G. Fischer Jr., an F.B.I. spokesman, said. “Today’s information age has changed how we see the world and what the world expects from policing.”

The panel of the National Academy of Sciences is looking past the F.B.I.’s unmet goals — which it sees as one component of a new approach. The panel wants a fresh system for understanding the nature and extent of crime today, said Janet L. Lauritsen, the panel’s chair and a criminology professor at the University of Missouri.

It envisions a format modeled in part, on an international framework organized by the United Nations that would reflect 11 prime categories of crime and 189 sublevels, including many that “are just not even part of the national conversation on crime,” Ms. Lauritsen said. It would, for instance, capture reports from federal agencies, she said, that have never reported crime data to the F.B.I., “even though there is actually a law on the books,” the Uniform Federal Crime Reporting Act, from 1988, that compels it.

Better data fosters transparency, which can build trust with civilians even if it yields statical crime increases, said Col. Edwin C. Roessler Jr., the police chief in Fairfax County, Va., who is the F.B.I. director’s chairman for converting policing to a new crime classification system. Data offers the evidence to lobby government for more money or better laws, he said. In fact, when Colonel Roessler demonstrated how each gang homicide, on average, required 25 search warrants for “cyber data, cellphones and other social media,” it helped win financing for a new Cyber Bureau and new “cyber experts” to work gang cases and build meaningful statistics and intelligence.

“We’ve got gaps here, where we’re not catching the root causes of all kinds of criminal activity,” the colonel said, a flaw with real-life consequences.

So too, for Chief Magnus, in Tucson, who sees the lack of modern-day crime classification as, “one of our biggest frustrations.” Leading a force of 850 officers, patrolling 300-square-miles, lapses in accurate statistics on property crime, fraud, human trafficking and digital crime hurts his ability to deploy thin resources.

“Once you get into Cyberspace,” he said, “data about anything is so limited that it’s really, really hard to figure out even what might be happening locally that impacts that crime.”

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HEADLINE	02/04 MS-13 vying for control inside jails
SOURCE	https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Vying-for-control-How-MS-13-uses-violence-and-12550810.php
GIST	<p>The Bloods gang member was sitting at a table inside the Prince George's County, Maryland, jail last spring when two other inmates approached from behind.</p> <p>They belonged to MS-13. And in their hands they held pieces of metal, sharpened into prison shanks.</p> <p>As other inmates in orange jumpsuits played dominoes or watched TV, the MS-13 members suddenly began stabbing the Blood in the head and upper body until guards at the Maryland facility intervened.</p> <p>The attack on May 5, 2017, came at a moment when MS-13's ranks in the jail were at an all-time high - the result of a nationwide crackdown on the violent street gang. Of the jail's 900 or so inmates at the time, officials said, about 50 were tied to MS-13.</p> <p>"Our incidents every month are predominantly MS," said a Prince George's jail investigator, speaking on the condition of anonymity for his safety. "They are vying for control of these housing units."</p>

As bodies bearing MS-13's trademark stab wounds and machete slashes have appeared in quiet suburbs and secluded parks across the country, authorities have increasingly gone after the gang. From New York to Virginia to Texas, they have arrested hundreds of members of MS-13 over the past two years.

But that effort is now posing its own problems.

As jails fill with MS-13 members, facilities are feeling the strain. Fights are up. So is extortion. And jailers are struggling to keep MS-13 members away from one another and their rivals.

"MS-13 presents unique challenges not only to the criminal justice system but also to the correctional system," said Robert Green, head of corrections in Montgomery County, Maryland, where the gang has been linked to nearly a dozen killings since 2015.

"Gang altercations have significantly increased" over the past year, he said, as the jail's MS-13 population has risen 20 percent.

On Long Island, where a string of MS-13 killings has been invoked repeatedly by President Trump, the gang's jailhouse ranks are also up 20 percent compared to two years ago, Suffolk County officials said.

In Prince William County, Virginia, MS-13 jail membership is up 32 percent over the same time period.

And in neighboring Fairfax County, Virginia, the gang's jailhouse ranks have doubled in the past year, leading to what officials call a "turf war" between MS-13 and a coalition of other gangs.

Organized crime is nothing new inside the American correctional system: The Bloods, Crips, Latin Kings, Aryan Brotherhood, Mexican Mafia and Black Guerrilla Family have long held sway in jails and prisons across the country.

While jail officials acknowledge that the recent influx of MS-13 inmates has made their jobs harder, they also emphasize that the gang is just one of many within their walls and that the situation is under control.

Nonetheless, the rising number of MS-13 members in America's jails reflects both the gang's resurgence and law enforcement's renewed efforts to combat it.

"We have sent thousands and thousands and thousands of MS-13 - horrible people - out of this country or into our prisons," Trump said during his State of the Union address, as the parents of two girls killed by the gang in Long Island watched and wept from the balcony.

Officers at Prince George's jail began to notice a rise in MS-13 five years ago. As the gang gained strength, it began to flex its muscle by demanding a "tax" from other inmates, particularly Hispanics. Promising them protection, MS-13 members took a share of their commissary: from chips and candy to T-shirts and boxer shorts.

"They control the Hispanic population," the investigator said. "They make them pay rent like they do on the streets. They make them work out. They make them join with them in fights."

By the spring of 2016, however, inmates in two of the jail's 18 housing units had grown tired of the extortion, the official said. Whenever an MS-13 member was transferred into those units, other inmates would immediately attack him.

"When it happened two or three times in one month in the same unit, that's when we figured out what was going on," he recalled. "They said they couldn't take it anymore."

A similar revolt is underway in Fairfax County, Virginia, jail, where MS-13 has grown from less than 20 members a year ago to about 40 today. In response to that rise, a few dozen of the jail's 1,000 inmates have rallied behind another gang, the 43 Mob, for protection.

Extortion by both gangs has gone up, according to Georgi Hovhannisyan, commander of the Sheriff's Intelligence Unit at the jail. And gang fights that used to occur roughly twice a year are now monthly affairs, he said.

Unlike state and federal prison systems, where inmates are often sent to far-flung facilities to serve lengthy sentences, county jails are designed to hold defendants as they await their trials. Many counties only have one jail, and it's often attached to the courthouse.

These limitations have left jails scrambling to deal with the MS-13 influx.

Adding to the challenge is the sheer size of many MS-13 cases.

"It seems like the days of one person committing one crime is gone," said Green, the corrections chief in Montgomery, adding that cases with a half-dozen co-defendants are now common. "That requires us to keep those people separate as best we can."

Compounding the problem is the high percentage of MS-13 cases that are slayings, in which bail is unlikely and proceedings move more slowly than they do for less serious crimes.

"We're not going to deal with those guys for a day, a week or even a month," said a Montgomery jails investigator, speaking on the condition of anonymity to maintain his safety. "We're dealing with them for a year, a year and a half."

In addition to keeping co-defendants apart, jails also have to separate MS-13 members from their rivals, particularly those belonging to bitter enemy 18th Street.

"MS-13 and 18th Street gang have something called a J.O.S., or 'jump on sight' order," Green said. "If they come in contact with each other, they're going to fight."

Some skirmishes are personal, like last year when an 18th Street member ended up in Prince George's jail at the same time as the MS-13 shooter who'd targeted him.

This complex web of cases, grudges and rivalries requires officials to quickly determine which inmate belongs to which gang. Sometimes officials know an inmate's affiliation ahead of time thanks to police or criminal records. But identifying gang members has grown more difficult as MS-13 has moved away from the tattoos for which it was once known.

Many jails conduct sporadic shakedowns, scouring cells for signs of gang affiliation, like clique acronyms in gothic lettering or devil horns drawn on the wall.

"We're seeing a lot more graffiti," said Hovhannisyan. "It's their way of letting everyone know, 'We're here.'"

In the Prince George's jail, investigators' office walls are lined with confiscated MS-13 drawings of women in clown paint, skulls wearing fedoras and demons dancing in hellfire. Sometimes gang members subtly try to escape their censors, as when one MS-13 member drew a clock with its hands at 1 and 3.

Officials occasionally discover coded letters during shakedowns, which they send to the FBI to be deciphered. Evidence of gang ties isn't just useful for keeping rivals apart. It can also be used against gang members in court.

When particular MS-13 members prove too problematic, or when one snitches, officials will sometimes trade them with another jail.

Prince William's jail was already at capacity before the recent MS-13 influx. Now that 4 percent of the

jail's population - or about 40 inmates - are allegedly MS-13, officials are increasingly having to swap gang members with neighboring jails, like a juggler with ever more balls in the air.

"It's very logistically challenging," Maj. Mandy Lambert said with a sigh.

When a reporter for The Washington Post visited the Prince George's jail in November, the number of alleged MS-13 members had dipped to 23, including one woman. More than half had been charged with murder, and at least four others were accused of attempted killings.

Small signs of the gang's influence were everywhere, from the names of cliques carved into the beige paint to the soccer goals drawn in soap on the basketball court to the nightly Spanish TV shows that stirred the ire of non-Hispanic inmates, especially during sports playoffs.

"The non-MS Hispanic guys will join in with MS for that because they want their right to watch TV," the investigator said.

Among the MS-13 members left at the jail were the two accused of attacking the Blood in May. Marvin Vazquez-Juarez, 20, had been locked up for killing his girlfriend, whose body was discovered in a Hyattsville park on New Year's Day 2016. He would later be convicted. Julio Lopez-Gomez, 26, had been charged with multiple assaults and robberies.

The attack sent their victim to the hospital and led to attempted murder charges.

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HEADLINE	02/04 Fake cartel busted money launderer
SOURCE	http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-02-05/the-billion-dollar-bust/9383890
GIST	<p>IT WAS already a high-risk strategy: hand more than \$1 million to a known criminal and hope to catch him laundering it.</p> <p>What made the idea perilous, however, was the fact the money belonged to Australian taxpayers. And the criminal, holed up in Dubai, was notoriously elusive.</p> <p>"My arse was in the sling," said Richard Grant, a career cop from Melbourne.</p> <p>The plan was "lawfully audacious", but it was the only plan that might work.</p> <p>For the first time, he has explained its intricate detail to Four Corners.</p> <p>At the time of the operation, Grant was in charge of covert investigations at the Australian Crime Commission. From a non-descript building in Canberra, the agency operated in utter secrecy, and it wielded extraordinary powers. It could jail those who failed to answer its questions.</p> <p>Grant already knew which questions he wanted answered: Who was laundering drug money for bikies? Where did they hide their cash? How did they get payment overseas for the next shipment?</p> <p>"What we needed to do," he said, "is to go up the tree."</p> <p>The cash collectors they picked up could tell him little. They were mere mules who didn't know the true identity of those hiring them. Typically, they were alerted to money jobs by text message.</p> <p>With time, however, the couriers led Grant to brokers, and the brokers led him to middle men.</p> <p>What he and his team were discovering was alarming. These people seemed to be connected - not always to each other, but to a thriving network being run somewhere offshore.</p>

Remitters in the mortgage belts of Sydney and Melbourne were running off-book transactions with business partners overseas, often in the Middle East. Criminal informants were talking about staggering sums of money leaving Australia.

Eventually, Grant had a name: Altaf Khanani.

"I think we had trouble even spelling Khanani's name at the time that we started," Grant said.

The global money laundry he ran appeared to wash illicit profits for everyone, whether they knew his name or not: Lebanese mafia syndicates in western Sydney, Hezbollah financiers, ice traffickers, and bikies who wore the words Lone Wolves or Comancheros emblazoned on their backs.

Grant didn't know it when he began the work, but it turned out that the name Altaf Khanani had long featured in classified intelligence holdings from Spain to Turkey and from London to Washington.

The 56-year-old married father of four was clearly a threat to Australia. But Grant was actually looking at a few pieces of a much larger jigsaw.

Altaf Khanani was running the underworld's equivalent of Goldman Sachs. His business measured in the billions.

In 1961, Karachi's seething Bolton Market was an epicentre for dirty money.

Currency traders hawked US dollars from stalls and shanties, hoping to snare a passing businessman or corrupt official.

Among these street dealers was Abdul Sattar Khanani, a Gujarati who settled in Karachi after the partition of India and Pakistan.

He was a Memon, a line of mercantilists which dated to the 15th century renowned for a canny grasp of numbers. Yet the gift seemed to have skipped a generation. Abdul Khanani's family business struggled.

Then, in May that year, his fortunes changed forever. His wife gave birth to identical twin boys, Muhammad Javaid and Altaf Sattar. The twins would soon demonstrate the knack for business that had eluded their father.

In 1984, they formed Khanani and Kalia International, or KKI. By the late 1990s, the company had transformed into one of the largest currency traders in Pakistan, with a web of remittance agents across the world.

The company's reach relied heavily on hawala, an informal money transfer system so old it once greased the Silk Road.

When a customer in Sydney needed to send \$100,000 to an associate in Dubai, Khanani's agents in both cities ran a line of credit between each other.

The Sydney agent kept the money given to him but assigned it as a debt he owed to his counterpart in the UAE, who disbursed \$100,000 from his own funds. When the time came for money to travel in the opposite direction, the reverse took place, the debt was discharged and the ledger wiped clean.

When it came to evading police scrutiny, the scheme was brilliant for its 8th century simplicity. And Khanani's business soared.

While in 2007 and 2008 alone, KKI's official banking records showed the company handled \$2.3 billion, the Australian Federal Police told Four Corners the true figure was many times higher.

David Stewart, an assistant commissioner, said the hawala-based operation was "turning over between 14 and 16 billion dollars US annually".

Khanani was shifting huge volumes of hard currency across the border into war-ravaged Afghanistan, much of it going to heroin producers.

Authorities believed Altaf Khanani to be a close associate of India's most-wanted crime boss, Dawood Ibrahim, the man blamed for bombings in Mumbai in 1993 that killed 257 people. Khanani was also washing money for Al Qaeda.

The businessman was careful, however. To evade the central bank, whose headquarters were directly across the road from Bolton Market, he and his family ensured they ran the criminal transactions separately, through a parallel business.

The shadow operation had its own staff, its own computer servers, its own accounting software.

"And how money moved between these two streams, the legitimate and illegitimate, was a very clever game," said Karachi journalist Khurram Husain.

It was a game which Altaf Khanani personally administered. He awed others with a remarkable ability to recall large volumes of transaction data. A confidential report prepared by the Pakistan federal police described him as a "mastermind".

Later, investigators who interviewed him would marvel at the man's intellect.

"He could recall phone numbers from memory when asked, he knew bank account numbers, business names, multiple exchange rates," US Drug Enforcement Administration agent John Clayton said. It was "uncanny".

As KKI grew in prominence, it was inevitable that it would attract the interest of law enforcement.

Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and the National Crime Agency in the UK ran complex international investigations targeting Khanani's network from as early as 1997. They traced hundreds of millions of pounds across Spain, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands.

But Altaf Khanani would evade capture. He was cautious, and miserly. He didn't stray from his bases of Karachi and Dubai, where the rules were lax and where he wielded political influence.

He had become indispensable to many within Pakistan's corrupt body politic: civil servants, politicians, army generals.

"Some of the most powerful people in Pakistan and institutions in Pakistan were clients of KKI," Husain said. It had "tremendous clout".

Finally, a financial crisis in 2008 forced Islamabad to move on KKI. At the time, the company was handling 40 per cent of all of Pakistan's foreign currency transactions.

On November 8 that year, the Federal Investigation Agency raided its head office in Karachi and franchises in Lahore and Abbottabad. Eight senior figures, including Javid Khanani, were arrested. But at the time of the raids, Altaf Khanani was in Dubai.

The FIA alleged the company had illegally siphoned \$US10 billion out of Pakistan. But few in the centres of power seemed to want to see the case proceed.

"For fear of their own identities being revealed," Khurram Husain said, "a very wide spectrum of very

powerful interests mobilised in order to try and protect these [KKI] people."

The prosecution was spectacularly undermined.

In 2010, a critical affidavit omitted the names of the very KKI directors who had been originally arraigned. A new national financial crimes statute was introduced which was so full of holes that a senior FIA figure complained publicly it was "drafted by a money-lauderer".

The following year, a specially convened banking court acquitted the eight company officials, and in 2013, Altaf Khanani was also exonerated by the District and Sessions Court.

In Karachi rumours ran rife that the bribe paid was in nine figures.

It rained hard all day as they filed into the federal building in Chantilly, Virginia. There were about 100 of them in all - detectives, agents, analysts.

The building was the clandestine headquarters for the US Drug Enforcement Administration's special operations division. On October 22, 2014, its hall filled with foreign accents.

Police from Britain, Canada, New Zealand and Australia had flown in to be briefed on the top-secret plot to capture Altaf Khanani. The work of Canberra detectives had morphed into an unprecedented Five Eyes operation.

The intelligence-sharing powers of the Western nations were being marshalled not against an espionage target, but a money-lauderer. It had never happened before.

The DEA's specialist Group 44 would be the tip of the spear. Its supervisor, Rob Cassitta, had known of Khanani - and his ties to heroin traffickers - since his days stationed at the DEA's office in Turkey. Now, he and his team was asked to bring him down.

"The plan was to infiltrate a DEA undercover agent into the Khanani organisation," Cassitta explained to Four Corners. They hoped to establish themselves in Khanani's eyes, as "the highest traffickers or money launderers that we can ... [and] to develop the evidence that we would then be able to indict him in the United States".

The DEA and the ACC were confident. Posing as a cartel on the rise, they had already inserted undercover agents into Khanani's network. They had successfully dropped small amounts of money into it from all over the world: Auckland, Toronto, The Hague.

There was only one problem. The DEA couldn't raise more money.

"This was one of the more interesting parts of the strategy," Grant said ruefully. If the Australians wanted Khanani, they'd have to put up the cash themselves.

Grant's boss eventually signed off on the taxpayer funds but then he "did say to me that my arse was in the sling".

"I get that. If you don't take risks, you don't get the results."

The ACC raised \$250,000, but the AFP put up the bulk of it — another \$1 million. The Australians had never done anything like this before.

"Whilst it was a different approach to how we would normally go about those types of investigations, it was certainly a managed risk," Stewart said.

By January 2014, the operation had the green light. One undercover agent told Altaf Khanani the emerging

syndicate was made up of "serious guys" who needed to move more money, more quickly.

"I've been in the market 30 years," Khanani replied. "Don't worry."

He agreed to take up to \$200,000 every few days and have it wired back into an American bank. The receiving account was secretly under DEA control.

On the evening of January 7, a special agent stood in the carpark of a tired Dunkin' Donuts franchise opposite the North Arlington public library in New Jersey. He was holding a black duffle bag. Inside was \$100,000.

The money pick-up had been arranged beforehand with Khanani personally. The Pakistani money-launderer was talking directly with DEA undercover officers using an encrypted iPhone messaging service.

At one point, one of them even dialled up Khanani on Skype from his laptop.

The evidence gained from the 19-minute call was "phenomenal", said John Clayton.

"To make sure Khanani knew that this money was drug money, we were talking plain English ... we would tell him we were offloading 'kilos' or we had 'white bricks' ... at some point [we] used 'cocaine' in the conversation."

One night fell, Khanani's money courier arrived as planned. The two men compared \$1 note serial numbers — one had the banknote, the other a photograph of it — and the DEA handed over the money.

Twelve days later, an obscure company in the UAE, Mazaka General Trading, wired back \$96,936 - Australia's tax money minus a 3 per cent commission. Khanani had been taken in.

The operation ramped up. Two hundred thousand dollars was dropped to him the following day, and another \$300,000 within the next nine days. Khanani was picking up the money from any city they asked — Houston, Atlanta, Dallas, New York — and it was all being wired back via legitimate companies with no apparent connection to Khanani.

"It was kind of amazing to see how we can throw out a state or an area where we needed money picked up and Khanani was able to reach into his rolodex and dial up somebody to help us with that," Cassita says.

"I was with the guys, John and the other guys in the office, and it was, holy shit this is working, we can do this as long as we want."

By the 16th of April 2015, the DEA had unassailable evidence. Altaf Khanani was an industrial scale launderer. There wasn't a courtroom in the country that would disagree.

"Once we went to the lure and capture phase, we had to find a place that Khanani would be comfortable travelling to," Cassita says. They couldn't pull him from Dubai or Pakistan.

In the February Skype call, the undercover agent had planted a seed that would help.

"You can come ... if I go to Costa or Panama, no?" he asked Khanani. He said the cartel bosses "want to know who they're dealing with".

"I can come there, easy," Khanani replied.

The fictitious cocaine syndicate talked up access to senior drug traffickers who wanted to shift their laundering contracts over to Khanani. The agents also promised they could corruptly procure for him a Panamanian passport.

	<p>Finally, Khanani booked a KLM flight to Tocumen International Airport in Panama, via Amsterdam.</p> <p>It was scheduled to land on September 11, which Cassitta and Clayton, both staunchly patriotic, considered a sweet irony. They had agents watch him in Amsterdam to make sure he got on his connecting flight.</p> <p>Once he did, they knew they had him.</p> <p>"He was expecting the big trip, to meet all these big players," Clayton says. "He had no idea."</p> <p>Richard Grant was at home in Canberra. His phone beeped.</p> <p>"I looked down and there was a text with a photograph of Khanani surrounded by DEA agents in cuffs," he says. "It was a wonderful thing."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Arrests blocking Super Bowl light rail
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/4/black-lives-matter-protesters-arrested-after-block/
GIST	<p>Minneapolis transit authorities arrested 17 Black Lives Matter protesters Sunday after they blocked a light-rail line taking Super Bowl ticketholders to the stadium.</p> <p>The activists stopped trains for about two hours, prompting Metro Transit to divert passengers to buses in order to deliver the fans to U.S. Bank Stadium in time for Super Bowl LII.</p> <p>The protesters, some of whom reportedly chained themselves to the tracks, called for “divestment from police” and showed support for NFL players who have refused to stand for the national anthem in a protest against social injustice.</p> <p>“Activists are using this moment to stand with athletes who have protested throughout the past two football seasons calling attention to the murder of Black people by police and to the City of Minneapolis’ banning city residents from using public transit without a Super Bowl ticket,” said Black Visions Collective of Minneapolis on Facebook.</p> <p>A group of several dozen protesters were shown on video chanting “You shut us down, we shut you down.”</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Ariz. fire captain killed in road rage
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2018/02/04/police-ariz-fire-captain-killed-road-rage-incident/305796002/
GIST	<p>PHOENIX — Scottsdale police Sunday evening arrested a 21-year-old man they say fatally shot a Tempe fire captain several hours earlier.</p> <p>Hezron Parks faces second-degree murder charges in the death of 34-year-old Kyle Brayer, police said.</p> <p>Brayer was riding in the back of a golf cart with a few others in downtown Scottsdale about 2:30 a.m. MT, according to Sgt. Ben Hoster, a Scottsdale police spokesman.</p> <p>Hoster said the group was heading south on Civic Center Plaza, approaching Stetson Drive, when a man driving a red Scion TC coupe began driving behind the golf cart and bumping the rear of it.</p>

	<p>Brayer got off the cart and approached the Scion driver, Hoster said. The driver shot Brayer in the head before fleeing east on Stetson and south on 75th Street, hitting other cars, according to police.</p> <p>Brayer was taken to a hospital, where he died, Hoster said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Chicago faces surge violent carjackings
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/04/chicago-police-teaming-up-with-feds-once-more-to-fight-shocking-rise-in-violent-carjackings.html
GIST	<p>Chicago cops are calling in the feds—again—to help combat violent carjackings.</p> <p>Police are holding a news conference Sunday to announce they are teaming up with federal authorities, including agents from the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, to deal with the problem.</p> <p>The new city-wide effort could have at its disposal a federal chopper to track vehicles that are reported carjacked, Fox 32 Chicago reported.</p> <p>Carjackings have risen sharply in Chicago, from about 700 in 2016 to about 950 in 2017, the station reported.</p> <p>There have been about 90 so far this year, an average of three a day.</p> <p>Most carjackings involved a gun.</p> <p>Last year, Chicago police and the FBI established a joint task force to deal with a surge in carjackings on the West Side.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/04 Iran jails man for nuclear espionage
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iran-sentences-suspect-years-nuclear-espionage-52828863?
GIST	<p>Tehran's prosecutor-general says a court has sentenced a suspect to six years in prison for relaying information on the country's nuclear program to a U.S. intelligence agent and a European country.</p> <p>Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi told the judiciary website — Mizanonline.ir — that the convict allegedly met the agent nine times and provided him with information about "nuclear affairs and sanctions."</p> <p>Dolatabadi added that he provided the information to a European country too.</p> <p>He said the court also ordered the confiscation of the money he received for the information.</p> <p>The report did not identify the convict or provide additional details.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 FBI probe dragged; gymnasts molested
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/as-fbi-dragged-its-feet-dozens-of-gymnasts-were-molested/
GIST	For more than a year, an FBI inquiry into allegations that Lawrence G. Nassar, a respected sports doctor,

had molested three elite teenage gymnasts followed a plodding pace as it moved back and forth among agents in three cities. The accumulating information included instructional videos of the doctor's unusual treatment methods, showing his ungloved hands working about the private areas of girls lying facedown on tables.

But as the inquiry moved with little evident urgency, a cost was being paid. The New York Times has identified at least 40 girls and women who say Nassar molested them between July 2015, when he first fell under FBI scrutiny, and September 2016, when he was exposed by an Indianapolis Star investigation. Some are among the youngest of the now-convicted predator's many accusers — 265, and counting.

The three alleged victims then at the center of the FBI's inquiry were world-class athletes; two were Olympic gold medalists. Nearly a year passed before agents interviewed two of the young women.

The silence at times drove the victims and their families to distraction, including Gina Nichols, the mother of the gymnast initially known as "Athlete A": Maggie Nichols, who was not contacted by the FBI for nearly 11 months after the information she provided sparked the federal inquiry.

"I never got a phone call from the police or the FBI" during that time, Gina Nichols, a registered nurse, said. "Not one person. Not one. Not one. Not one."

The FBI declined to answer detailed questions about the speed and nature of its investigation or to provide an official who might put the case in context. Instead, it issued a statement asserting that the sexual exploitation of children "is an especially heinous crime" and that "the safety and well-being of our youth is a top priority for the FBI."

The statement also said the many allegations against Nassar "transcended jurisdictions," an apparent suggestion that internal efforts to coordinate among its bureaus and with other law-enforcement agencies partly explained the inquiry's slow tempo.

The agency left unaddressed the oft-repeated claim by USA Gymnastics officials that after initially presenting the sexual-assault allegations to the FBI in July 2015, they came away with the impression that federal agents had advised them not to discuss the case with anyone. The ensuing silence had dire consequences, as the many girls and young women still seeing Nassar received no warning.

Only three years ago, Nassar was a popular doctor among the athletes he treated for USA Gymnastics. His treatments were also in demand at Michigan State, where he worked, as well as at a gymnastics academy called Twistars.

Issues had cropped up: a parent raising concerns about his behavior at Twistars; a female athlete or two at Michigan State complaining to no avail about inappropriate exams. In 2014, a university investigation of another complaint cleared Nassar of misconduct, but he was now required to have a third person present when treatment involved sensitive areas of the body — and to wear gloves.

Still, the doctor was trusted enough to conduct his procedures — including one called "intravaginal adjustment" — without supervision when treating the country's best gymnasts at the Karolyi ranch, the exclusive and secluded national team training camp, about 60 miles north of Houston. Gymnasts of international caliber, like Nichols, of suburban Minneapolis, would spend a week each month at the ranch.

There, in late spring 2015, Nichols' personal coach, Sarah Jantzi, overheard the 17-year-old girl talking with another elite gymnast, Aly Raisman, about Nassar's invasive and inappropriate techniques. The alarming information was quickly shared with the girls' parents and, by June 17, with officials at USA Gymnastics.

Gina Nichols, Maggie's mother, recalled telling Steve Penny, then the president of USA Gymnastics, that the police had to be called immediately. But he insisted that she not tell anyone, she said. The organization would take care of alerting law enforcement.

Weeks of silence passed, Gina Nichols said, although the U.S. Olympic Committee has said USA Gymnastics reported one of its physicians had been accused of abusing athletes “and was in the process of contacting the appropriate law enforcement authorities.”

USA Gymnastics eventually retained what it called “an experienced female investigator.” The investigator recommended Friday, July 24, that Nassar be reported to law enforcement.

On Monday, July 27, gymnastics officials contacted the FBI in Indianapolis, where USA Gymnastics has its headquarters. The next day, its chairman, Paul Parilla, and Penny met with FBI agents who, they later said, assured them they had come to the right place. Forty-one days had passed since USA Gymnastics first received the report of the sexual abuse of one of its charges.

The gymnastics officials provided the agents with contact information for three gymnasts: Nichols, Raisman and someone emerging as the central complainant: McKayla Maroney, then 19, a retired Olympic gold medalist.

They also turned over copies of videos of Nassar demonstrating his technique as he chatted clinically about pulled hamstrings, buttocks and trigger points. Reporters for The New York Times have seen the videos, which show him kneading the legs of girls before his ungloved hands begin to work under a towel, between the girls’ legs.

“It’s not a fun place to dig,” Nassar says to the camera.

Nassar first molested Emma Ann Miller when she was 10, she recalled. She was having back and neck issues, and he had her remove her leggings and put on loose shorts. In a medical supply room that doubled as a treatment room, he began exploring “down there.”

“He was like, ‘Is this OK?’ and I was like, ‘I don’t know,’” she said. “And he was like, ‘Just hang in there.’ I didn’t know how it felt. I just knew that it hurt.”

At some point, Emma Ann told her mother that she preferred not to be alone with Nassar. But he continued to abuse her, she said, while positioning himself so that her mother couldn’t see what he was doing. Emma Ann now knows that she was not alone.

In late July or early August 2015, FBI agents interviewed Maroney by phone. It was the first substantive interview of an alleged victim of child molestation.

Meanwhile, Nichols and Raisman had received no word from any law-enforcement official about the allegations now lodged with the FBI.

Some of the delay appears to have been related to questions concerning federal-versus-state jurisdiction, as well as jurisdiction within the FBI itself. Although the Indianapolis bureau had received the information, the alleged sexual abuse by Nassar had taken place in Texas, at the Karolyi ranch, and in Michigan, where he lived and worked. And Maroney lived in California.

According to W. Jay Abbott, who at the time was the special agent in charge of the FBI bureau in Indianapolis, his agents did not have the case for long. “When we consulted with the U.S. attorney, we knew right away that we would not have venue,” he said. “It was never really our case.”

USA Gymnastics officials said that around this time, they were told that pertinent interviews had been completed and that the case had been transferred to another jurisdiction. Indeed, on Sept. 12, Maroney was directed by USA Gymnastics to contact the FBI East Lansing office.

Two weeks later, on Sept. 27, Nassar announced on Facebook that he was retiring from the women’s national team staff.

In April 2016, Raisman shared a gold medal with the national team at the Pacific Rim Championships in Seattle, while Nichols damaged a knee during training, underwent surgery and was out for several weeks. Meanwhile, neither she nor her parents heard anything about the federal investigation that USA Gymnastics had instructed them to remain silent about.

Finally, the absence of information about the federal investigation prompted Penny and Parilla, the USA Gymnastics officials, to visit the FBI's Los Angeles bureau in early May.

"As time passed, concern about a perceived lack of development prompted Board Chair Paul Parilla and CEO Steve Penny to report the matter a second time to a different FBI office," USA Gymnastics said in a statement to The Times on Friday.

Through a lawyer and a spokeswoman, Parilla and Penny declined to be interviewed for this article.

On May 17, the FBI finally interviewed Maroney in person. It had been 294 days since the FBI was first notified of accusations against Nassar.

On Sept. 12, 2016, The Indianapolis Star published an in-depth investigation detailing allegations that Nassar had repeatedly molested two gymnasts when they were young.

Suddenly, the Nassar case took on urgency.

By the close of 2016, Nassar was in custody. By the close of 2017, he had been convicted. Given that he has been sentenced to nearly two centuries in prison, Nassar will likely die there.

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HEADLINE	02/03 PCSO: 2 dead in shooting
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/2-dead-over-guns-and-or-drugs-in-key-peninsula/281-514144978
GIST	<p>A man and a woman were shot dead Saturday morning in the Key Peninsula in a dispute over "guns and/or drugs," said Pierce County Sheriff's Department spokesperson Ed Troyer.</p> <p>Deputies responded just before 3 a.m. to a 911 call about shots fired in the Longbranch area of the Key Peninsula. The caller reported two people had been shot and a known suspect had fled the property.</p> <p>Deputies en route to the scene located the 27-year-old known suspect walking along Whiteman Road and placed him in custody.</p> <p>"The person who did the shooting called and turned himself in," said Troyer. "We picked him up in the woods just a short distance away."</p> <p>Once they arrived, deputies found the bodies of a husband and wife - a 35-year-old man and a 24-year-old woman - in the driveway at a mobile home in the 5500 block of Whiteman Road. Multiple weapons were also recovered at the scene.</p> <p>"It appears this may be in retaliation for a previous domestic violence incident that occurred some time back. And we also believe that guns and/or drugs are involved," said Troyer. "It appears everyone knew each other through family relationships."</p> <p>Deputies also found the victims' 2-year-old son in the back seat of the vehicle the victims drove to the scene. He was uninjured and has been placed with a relative who does not live at the location, said Troyer.</p> <p>The 27-year-old suspect was booked into the Pierce County Jail for two counts of Murder in the 2nd</p>

	degree. Deputies were not currently looking for any additional suspects.
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HEADLINE	02/04 Child abductions rise South Sudan
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/child-abductions-rise-amid-south-sudans-grinding-civil-52826054?
GIST	<p>Child abductions have risen during South Sudan's civil war as desperate people try to make a living. One child, no matter the age, is said to sell for 20 cows, worth about \$7,000.</p> <p>During a visit to one of the opposition's last remaining strongholds, The Associated Press spoke with a father whose children were seized from the yard of his home. All were under the age of 5. He fears that two were sold for cattle and that the youngest is no longer alive.</p> <p>It is a little-acknowledged tragedy in South Sudan's five-year civil war. Child kidnappings between clans have increased as people become more desperate amid widespread hunger and a devastated economy, human rights groups say.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 B.C. money laundering probe pivots
SOURCE	http://vancouver.sun.com/news/national/huge-b-c-money-laundering-investigation-pivots-to-drugs-and-guns
GIST	<p>In December 2015, a new leg of the RCMP's E-Pirate money-laundering investigation delved into Metro Vancouver's underworld of fentanyl labs, gun sales and violent dial-a-dope gangs.</p> <p>It started with undercover officers tracking the movements of a Burnaby man named Ge 'Gary' Wang.</p> <p>The offshoot investigation, code-named Prophet, grew from extensive surveillance of the many alleged employees of E-Pirate's primary target, Paul King Pao Jin. In E-Pirate, the RCMP and B.C. government documents allege a network of organized criminals established a massive underground banking channel between Richmond and Mainland China, using VIP gamblers from Macau to buy chips, mostly at River Rock Casino, in order to launder hundreds of millions in drug cash. The operation allowed ultra-wealthy Chinese businessmen, some allegedly with ties to organized crime, to move money from China to Canada while evading China's tight capital export controls.</p> <p>Postmedia News has pieced together the story of Prophet through extensive investigation of B.C. property, lending and legal documents, including two major civil forfeiture claims, and interviews with law enforcement sources not authorized to be identified on the record.</p> <p>Prophet built on E-Pirate intelligence, a source with knowledge of both investigations said, by connecting the dots between Asian organized criminals accused of importing narcotics, and the Red Scorpions, a notorious Metro Vancouver dial-a-dope gang.</p> <p>B.C. government records obtained by Postmedia illustrate just how closely Jin and his associates had been watched in Richmond from mid-2014 through 2017.</p> <p>"Our main target at River Rock had been extremely active of late and has actually been on the property several times making deliveries of cash himself!" says an October 2014 email from B.C. Lottery Corp. to the B.C. police anti-gang unit, the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit. "Their main vehicle is a white SUV that parks on River Road, avoiding our licence plate recognition system most times. Last week, Jin dropped two loads of a half million per load to the same guy and a few smaller loads of 200-300 K each, so hour (sic) is a busy boy."</p>

A June 2014 email from B.C. Lottery Corp. to the anti-gang unit regarding a top-10 list of cash lenders working around Lower Mainland casinos — “with the majority devoted to River Rock patrons” — said Jin, the top “cash facilitator,” was “extremely active and has numerous people working for him.”

But Jin wasn’t involved only in recruiting whale gamblers in China and lending them cash to use at River Rock. A November 2016 B.C. Supreme Court ruling, which permitted the Canada Revenue Agency to get E-Pirate evidence, says Jin and several associates were allegedly connected to probable offences involving narcotics importation and trafficking, as well as operating illegal casinos, evading taxes and conspiring to launder money.

So far, money-laundering charges have been laid against Silver International, an alleged illegal Richmond money services business named in the B.C. Supreme Court ruling, and two people. The E-Pirate probe is nearing completion and more charges are expected, a source with knowledge of the investigation said.

According to a May 2017 B.C. civil forfeiture claim, RCMP’s federal serious and organized crime unit started an investigation in December 2015 into a group operating drug labs in Richmond.

Surveillance was established on Ge Wang, and police observed Wang “providing pails believed to contain chemicals” to suspects from several Richmond homes. Police obtained search warrants, and found drug labs in the homes. Almost a year would pass in the investigation, until Nov. 25, 2016, when officers observed Wang loading buckets believed to contain chemicals. Police searched Wang’s Nissan Pathfinder and seized drums containing NPP, a fentanyl precursor chemical.

In a series of email responses to questions from Postmedia, Wang insisted he has no idea why police associated him with Paul Jin and placed him under surveillance. Wang provided Postmedia a copy of a legal application filed by the RCMP to extend an order to hold items seized from Wang’s Pathfinder, and said the RCMP won’t respond to his questions about why the vehicle was searched.

“I am doing moving and delivering — part time job — when the polices (sic) took my vehicle unlawfully. They took some drums from the vehicle,” Wang said. “I don’t know what is NPP. I just realized, but I don’t know where the NPP come from. I am just a mover. I don’t know about Paul King Jin. I think the police got wrong one.”

The question asked of Wang — where did the NPP come from — is an important one, as Metro Vancouver is plagued with a crisis of fentanyl overdose deaths.

In a 2017 study titled “China’s Deadly Export to the U.S.,” a United States security commission reported that because fentanyl is not widely used in China, state authorities “place little emphasis on controlling its production and export.”

The fentanyl precursor NPP is also not controlled by China, according to the report. And U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agents report that fentanyl precursors including NPP are mailed from China for use in clandestine labs in Canada.

In January 2017, according to legal filings, police learned that within a six-week period Wang had acquired 18 restricted firearms from West Coast Hunting Supplies in Richmond. Corporate records show that Hai Peng Yang is the gun shop’s director. The shop is involved in firearms training courses and “wildlife specimen” exports, according to its website. Yang and shop employees didn’t respond to a request for comment on the civil claim allegations regarding Ge Wang’s restricted gun purchases from West Coast Hunting.

On Feb. 8, 2017, legal filings allege, Wang went to West Coast Hunting and purchased seven firearms, placed the weapons in two blue plastic bags, and put them in his vehicle. He drove to a home on on 55 Street in Delta, allegedly in contravention of his firearms licence. The filings don’t explain the regulation that Wang allegedly broke. However, the RCMP specifies that under the Firearms Act, a gun owner must have the registration for any restricted firearm in their possession and an authorization to transport a

restricted firearm from one location to another.

According to police, another man arrived at the 55 Street home, driving a 2016 Cadillac CTS, and loaded the two blue bags into the trunk. It drove several minutes to a French-style mansion on 5th Avenue, which is near the ocean in Tsawwassen, and about three kilometres from the U.S. border in Point Roberts. Csongor Szucs, 30, is a resident of the mansion, according to the legal filings.

Szucs is the sole defendant in a separate civil claim dated August 2017 and seeking forfeiture of two vehicles. The claim says that in April 2016 — around the time of the RCMP's final E-Pirate raid in Richmond — undercover RCMP officers started investigating a network of alleged dial-a-dope traffickers in Richmond. From June 2016 to January 2017, officers completed 28 drug deals with traffickers associated with Szucs, the claim alleges. The officers bought fentanyl, cocaine and heroin either supplied by Szucs, or sold to them inside five vehicles leased to Szucs, the claim alleges.

Through surveillance, officers identified that a 2007 Cadillac Escalade and a 2007 Mazda CX-7 leased to Szucs were connected to several Richmond homes, including a drug "stash house," a unit of a multi-storey building on River Road, the forfeiture claim alleges.

The court filing also claims that in September 2016, undercover officers observed Szucs driving the Escalade to meet an associate. Szucs supplied the man with drugs, it alleges, and the man drove another vehicle registered to Szucs to fill an order with an undercover officer. The police officer bought pills which he was told were OxyContin, the claim alleges, but which contained fentanyl.

The investigation accelerated in January 2017 with a dramatic arrest. RCMP officers staking out the River Road stash-house spotted Szucs transferring a shopping bag from the 2007 Mazda to the Escalade. Then he entered the stash house and carried a black snowboard bag to the Escalade. As Szucs got into his Escalade, an officer approached, and Szucs tried to speed away as the officer jumped into the Cadillac, "in an attempt to stop Mr. Szucs from fleeing."

With the officer in the front seat of the Escalade, Szucs accelerated and smashed into a concrete pillar, injuring the officer, the claim alleges.

Police arrested Szucs and searched his Cadillac. They allege they found a loaded Sig Sauer SP2022 handgun with its serial number filed off. And, hidden inside the black snowboard bag, an SKS rifle. The SKS, a Soviet-era semi-automatic military rifle that preceded the Soviet AK-47, is not restricted in Canada. However, in 2014, the RCMP issued safety warnings saying that at least one SKS was found to have fired as a fully automatic weapon in Ontario. And in 2014 in Nanaimo, Mounties said they were concerned to find two SKS rifles in a raid of a drug lab.

"Any time you have something capable of firing more than one bullet (in rapid succession), it's concerning," Sgt. Sheryl Armstrong was quoted in the Nanaimo Daily News. "You think about the massacres we've had with AK-47s."

After Szucs's arrest, police searched the River Road stash house, and allege they found drugs including fentanyl, crack, methamphetamine, heroin and 215 Xanax tablets, along with eight computers and 20 cellphones.

Through surveillance, officers identified that a 2007 Cadillac Escalade and a 2007 Mazda CX-7 leased to Szucs were connected to several Richmond homes, including a drug "stash house," a unit of a multi-storey building in on River Road, a forfeiture claim alleges.

The Cadillac and Mazda were seized as property related to alleged crimes. And "on Feb. 7, 2017, the RCMP Integrated Homicide Investigation Team searched the Mazda pursuant to a search warrant."

The claim doesn't explain why IHIT homicide investigators became involved in the investigation, or the team's basis for obtaining a warrant to search the Mazda. But officers located a hidden compartment in the Mazda, the claim says, and in the following days police executed repeated search warrants inside and

nearby Szucs's home, the mansion in Tsawwassen.

On the next day, Feb. 8, after meeting Ge Wang in Delta and receiving seven firearms, a man driving a Cadillac SUV arrived at the French-style mansion.

Delta police stopped the man as he left the mansion, which is about 100 metres from English Bluff Elementary School, and searched the Cadillac. From the rear they seized a bag with heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine, all packaged for sale. On the passenger seat was a "black man-purse" containing \$4,295 bundled in elastic bands, and a money order for \$400 from Szucs, payable to Justin Haevischer.

Haevischer is the younger brother of convicted Surrey Six killer Cody Haevischer, of the Red Scorpions. In September 2016, Justin Haevischer was sentenced to 20 months in jail for helping to dispose of evidence related to the October 2007 Surrey Six murders.

Police struck again on Feb. 9. Delta police officers stopped a man driving a GMC Sierra as it left the 5th Avenue property, and found three cellphones.

Hours later, police stopped a Hyundai as it left the 5th Avenue mansion. According to the civil claim, Kyle Latimer was the passenger, and his father Craig Latimer was driving. Kyle Latimer was the subject of a firearms prohibition stemming from a 2011 assault. Police allege they found a hidden compartment containing \$51,000 in cash stuffed into a copper box, \$52,000 packed in a yellow cloth bag, and \$7,300 in a silver briefcase. Next to the cash, police found a digital scale, a Lee Enfield Ishapore .303 calibre rifle, a Siminov SKS 1952 Tula Factory rifle, a Winchester Model 1200 12-gauge pump-action with a filed down serial number and sawed off barrel, and an Arms Machine pistol AP9 9mm.

The AP9 is a prohibited weapon in Canada, according to online databases, and is described as a submachine pistol that was banned in many U.S. states in the 1990s. According to online sniper forums, the Lee Enfield Ishapore, a non-restricted rifle in Canada, is valued by long-range shooters.

"During the Soviet-Afghan War of the 1980s, Mujahedeen found the .303 Enfield had twice the effective range of the AK assault rifle and could punch through Soviet flak jackets," one description reads.

Police also found about \$7,000 cash on Kyle Latimer and, in the Mazda's secret compartment, cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and various pills packaged for sale, along with "scoresheets." In the drug world, score sheets are lists that keep track of money owed for inventory.

On the same day, police raided Ge Wang's residence on Kathleen Avenue in Burnaby. Police arrested Wang and found various firearms registration certificates, various pieces of lab equipment, two drums containing 57 kilograms of phosphoric acid, a precursor in methamphetamine production, and a 25-kg drum of potassium iodide, also a drug precursor, according to the forfeiture claim.

Postmedia asked Wang if he obtained the firearms registration certificates from West Coast Hunting Supplies.

"I got my firearm licence legally," Wang responded. "The registration certificates were mailed to my place."

While police raided Wang's home in Burnaby, the arrests continued at the 5th Avenue property in Tsawwassen. Delta police stopped a 2015 Fiat 500, and inside were three young men, some of them previously charged with drug dealing in Surrey.

Police searched the Fiat and allege they found \$84,865 in cash, scoresheets, identification for Kyle Latimer, a money counter, two digital scales, a Sig Sauer 9 mm pistol, plus heroin, crack, methamphetamine, marijuana, and counterfeit Xanax pills.

Later in the day, a Surrey woman left the 5th Avenue property and placed a Louis Vuitton bag in a

Tsawwassen taxi. Delta police stopped the cab, and found a black satchel containing eight cellphones and business invoices made out to Kyle Latimer. Tucked into the Louis Vuitton bag was \$54,650 in cash, and a lockbox with six divided compartments. In each of the six compartments were keys for various residences and vehicles. Also in the lockbox, police found a chequebook and several pieces of I.D. in the name of Csongor Szucs, and “a notebook referencing locations of rental properties and corresponding rents.”

Finally that day, police executed a search warrant at the 5th Avenue mansion. They found a safe, \$46,125 in cash stuffed into a shoebox, records of deals completed and debts owed, and 11 prohibited high-capacity firearms magazines. High-capacity magazines are designed to hold more rounds of ammunition than a weapon is legally designed for, and generally allow gunmen to fire additional rounds without pausing to reload.

Ten defendants are named in the May 2017 civil forfeiture claim, including Kyle Latimer, Csongor Szucs and Ge Wang. Latimer has been charged with a number of criminal cases and is considered violent, according to Richmond RCMP. Court records show that Szucs faces a number of weapons charges stemming from his arrest in January 2017.

In response to Postmedia’s questions, Wang said B.C.’s Chief Firearms Office has cancelled his gun licence.

“No charges against me yet,” Wang wrote in an email. “Just forfeiture, my same vehicle two times by unlawful.”

The RCMP would not answer questions for this story, including whether West Coast Hunting Supplies is under investigation.

“What I can tell you, is that CFSEU-B.C. is aware of West Coast Hunting Supply, however, I don’t have information on the specific questions you have outlined in your email,” Sgt. Brenda Winpenny said. B.C.’s Chief Firearms Office also did not respond to Postmedia’s requests for comment.

The cash, vehicles, guns, phones and computers seized in these claims are proceeds and instruments of crime, the forfeiture claims allege. These assets will likely lead to “serious bodily harm to a person,” if defendants are allowed to retain them, the May 2017 claim says.

B.C.’s civil forfeiture office is not seeking to seize the Delta homes named in the May 2017 claim. But in an interview, Phil Tawtel, B.C.’s executive director of civil forfeiture, said that seizure claims can be “dynamic.”

Tawtel said he could not comment on these continuing cases, but generally, his office can amend claims and pursue additional assets if police produce strong-enough evidence. The office’s lawyers can also discover in litigation that properties are connected to crimes, Tawtel said, which can lead to amended claims.

According to land title records, the 5th Avenue property named in the claim, from which police seized cash and weapons in February 2017, is owned by Jasmine Xu, who lists her occupation as “housewife.” The property is valued at \$1.96 million. According to title records, Jasmine Xu’s residential address is a Vancouver home on the 2600-block of 19th Avenue West, worth \$3.94 million. The Vancouver home is not named in the claim. A review of B.C. title records shows that a “housewife” named Jasmine Xu owns a \$1.26 million home on Parkgrove Crescent in Tsawwassen (also not named in the claim), which is about 30 metres from the U.S. border in Point Roberts, and a six-minute drive from the 5th Avenue mansion.

According to title records, the second Delta property named in the civil claim, where Ge Wang allegedly delivered seven guns to another man, is owned by Junchen Xue, “homemaker.” That property is valued at \$1.1 million.

In a 2016 study, global anti-corruption agency Transparency International pointed to the rising use of

opaque ownership structures in Vancouver real estate, including shell companies, legal trusts, and so-called nominee owners with occupations such as “student” and “housewife.” The study’s author, Adam Ross, says these occupations can’t possibly produce the income needed to buy a house in Metro Vancouver, which is why housewives and students are considered front buyers. Of Vancouver’s 100 most expensive homes, the study found, about half of ownerships were hidden, with 29 held through shell companies and at least 11 through nominees including students and housewives.

In an interview, Tawtel said his office attempts to unveil nominees in some cases.

“It adds a layer of complexity and work for the office, because there are instances where the registered owner, we believe is not the beneficial owner,” Tawtel said. “And it is extremely challenging to produce the evidence, in order to prove this in court. “

Several Richmond homes are named in the August 2017 civil forfeiture claim against Csongor Szucs, which seeks seizure of two vehicles. In a response, Szucs denies any wrongdoing, and argues that police illegally searched his vehicle.

The alleged Richmond drug stash-house in the 6200-block of River Road was owned at the time of Szucs’s arrest by a woman named Mary Chan, whose listed occupation is “homemaker.” The property is valued at \$600,000. Title records for the home say that Mary Chan’s owner address is 3280 River Rd. in Richmond, a property valued at \$3.05 million.

However, the land title for 3280 River Rd. says that its owner is “Saree Chan ... business person.”

And a transaction document for 3280 River Rd. says that “Saree Chan” is also the owner of 5811 Gibbons Rd., a \$3.3-million Richmond property. However, the land title document for 5811 Gibbons indicates that its owner is “Mary Chan” of 3280 River Rd.

In 2017, in a presentation explaining the E-Pirate investigation and various targets involved in suspected real estate money laundering, RCMP Insp. Bruce Ward said that officers were making the case for home seizures to B.C.’s civil forfeiture office, but investigators have encountered extremely complex side-deals.

“The actual investment by the conspirators was very little, because they are just paying a really exorbitant rent,” Ward explained. “That is another business deal, (in which) organized crime is involved. So you agree to buy a house, and lease it to someone, who is going to lease it again to someone else. And then I show up a month from now, and you give it to me for rent. And I pay (something like) \$10,000, per month, rent.”

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HEADLINE	02/02 Court: FBI surveillance confidential
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/fbi-spying-muslims-court-surveillance-798219
GIST	<p>A federal appeals court overturned a ruling by a judge in California on Thursday that would have required the FBI to release documents describing the bureau’s efforts to spy on Muslims in Northern California and recruit informants from among Muslim communities.</p> <p>A lawsuit, filed in 2010 by the American Civil Liberties Union, the Asian Law Caucus, and the Bay Guardian Newspaper, sought to obtain documents on whether the FBI was using educational and “community outreach” to infiltrate Muslim communities. The FBI turned over tens of thousands of documents, some of which showed that the bureau’s agents had taken notes on the religious viewpoints of some members of the Muslim community. But some of the information was deleted from the documents, and other documents were withheld.</p> <p>A district judge ruled that the FBI should hand over the additional material, but an appeals court decided Thursday that the agency does not need to provide the missing information.</p>

	<p>Some advocates for the Muslim-American community said they were disappointed by the decision, but that the ruling would not change the widespread perception that the FBI is spying on Muslim Americans.</p> <p>“We don’t need additional information to know that the FBI has saturated our community with informants and set up listening posts that continuously monitor the Muslim community,” Gadeir Abbas, an attorney with the Council on American-Islamic Relations, told Newsweek. “You don’t have to convince people in the Muslim community that this unwanted surveillance has been ongoing.”</p> <p>“Even for those of us who have worked on surveillance issues it’s always a struggle to see the openness of the anti-Muslim sentiment that pervades federal law enforcement,” Abbas continued. “It’s disappointing that we won’t get the documents, but we know enough from our own experiences that the federal government views Muslims and Islam with a presumption of suspicion.”</p> <p>The documents requested in the lawsuit included information about how the FBI handles and recruits confidential informants.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 Seattle teens arrested in fatal shooting
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/02/02/police-arrest-two-seattle-teenagers-in-death-of-renton-man/
GIST	<p>RENTON, Wash. — Police have arrested two Seattle teenagers in the death of a man initially thought to have died in a car crash.</p> <p>The Renton Police Department says officers were called to a church in the 100 block of Tobin Avenue South on Sunday morning to investigate a reported car accident with a driver who was unconscious.</p> <p>Police say officers discovered a 29-year-old Renton man had died and began processing the scene as a traffic-related death.</p> <p>During an investigation, however, police say officers found a fatal gunshot wound on the man — and evidence of a shooting in a parking lot in the 400 block of Tobin Avenue South.</p> <p>Police say witnesses led police to arrest two Seattle males, ages 17 and 19, Thursday night.</p> <p>Police say the teens implicated themselves in the shooting and were booked for investigation of homicide.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 Claim: deputy killed was ‘ambushed’
SOURCE	http://www.kiro7.com/news/local/investigators-deputy-killed-was-essentially-ambushed-by-gunman/693378254
GIST	<p>FREDERICKSON, Wash. - Law enforcement sources close to the investigation tell KIRO 7 they have new information into a gun battle that killed Pierce County Sheriff's Deputy Daniel McCartney.</p> <p>McCartney, a father of three, was shot and killed while responding to a call of an armed, drug-related robbery near Spanaway in the Frederickson area -- near Tacoma -- in early January.</p> <p>There are a total of four suspects in the investigation. Three were arrested, as one person died at the scene.</p> <p>According to sources, it was Frank Pawul, not deceased suspect Henry Carden, who fired the shot that killed McCartney.</p> <p>Law enforcement sources close to the investigation told KIRO 7 Friday it was Frank Pawul, not deceased</p>

suspect Henry Carden, who fired the fatal shot that killed Pierce County Sheriff's Deputy Daniel McCartney.

The sources, who would only speak anonymously, said the 34-year-old McCartney was essentially ambushed by Pawul and died from a gunshot wound that shattered his spine.

McCartney and Carden got into a gun battle according to investigators, with the deputy striking the body armor Carden was wearing five times. The 35-year-old Carden fell, then shot himself in the head.

Investigators first thought Carden may have fired the fatal round that killed McCartney during that brief gun battle, but sources now say it was Pawul, who emerged seconds after Carden died, shooting the deputy and killing him instantly.

Pawul then ran from the scene and was arrested hours later when a state trooper spotted him leaving a containment area established during the hunt for a second suspect.

A re-arraignment for Pawul is scheduled for Tuesday Feb. 6 in Pierce County Superior Court.

KIRO 7 contacted Pierce County Prosecuting Attorney Mark Lindquist's office to ask about any new charges but were told through a spokesman the office would have no comment until Tuesday's court appearance.

Deputy first to arrive at robbery scene

Deputies were called to the area of 45th Avenue Court East and 200th Street East for an attempted drug-related armed robbery at a home at 11:30 p.m. on Jan. 7.

Four adults and two children, ages 2 and 3, live in the mobile home near 200th Street East and 45th Avenue Court East. The home had no beds and was filthy, according to investigators.

In the past two years, deputies responded to 18 prior calls there.

The residents were inside the home at the time of the incident and screaming could be heard in the background, police said.

When the first deputy arrived within six minutes, a suspect fled and the deputy ran after him. Police said they believe there was a gun battle and the deputy was hit.

He was taken to an area hospital in critical condition where he later died.

A gun that was found is believed to be the one used to shoot the deputy.

A suspect in the armed robbery was found dead at the scene. The second suspect was arrested hours later.

Pierce County Sheriff's Department spokesman Ed Troyer said the site of the robbery was a "known house" to the sheriff's department and that a warrant would be obtained to search the premises.

Four people are suspected of being involved in the home invasion on Sunday. One suspect, 35-year-old Henry Michael Carden, was found dead at the scene.

Three other suspects were arrested.

A manhunt was underway for hours for Frank William Pawul. He was arrested and is now charged with first-degree murder.

Pawul, 32, has a criminal record that includes identity theft, residential burglary and drug possession.

	<p>Police arrested a third suspect in mid-January regarding about rendering assistance in connection with the incident.</p> <p>Brenda Troyer, 52, is accused of driving two male suspects to the home. She is charged with first-degree murder, but she pleaded not guilty. According to authorities, she was supposed to be their getaway driver but abandoned them when she heard police sirens.</p> <p>On Tuesday, authorities told KIRO 7 that a third suspect, 29-year-old Samantha Dawn Jones, was booked into the Pierce County jail on Jan. 23. She was arrested at a house in Roy by SWAT. According to authorities, "she was involved with planning to the end."</p> <p>The investigation continues.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 Pakistan: singer killed for refusal
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/02/03/pakistan-gunmen-kill-singer-for-refusing-to-go-with-them.html
GIST	<p>PESHAWAR, Pakistan – Pakistani police say three gunmen have shot and killed a female singer who refused to accompany them to a private party.</p> <p>Police official Saeed Khan says the incident happened in the northwestern city of Mardan on Saturday.</p> <p>He says the artists, known only as Sumbul, was shot multiple times and killed at her home after the gunmen broke in and asked her to perform for them at a private party.</p> <p>Khan says the perpetrators fled the scene of the killing and that he police are searching for them.</p> <p>There have been similar attacks on female artists in this part of the country in the past.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 Iran: 29 arrests for hijab protest
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/02/middleeast/iran-arrests-29-women-after-hijab-protest-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Police in the Iranian capital, Tehran, have arrested 29 people for their involvement in protests against the country's compulsory headscarf law.</p> <p>Women across Iran have been removing their headscarves in public to protest Iran's strict Islamic dress code. Videos and photos shared on social media have shown demonstrators standing on utility boxes on street sidewalks, defiantly waving their hijabs.</p> <p>Tehran police suggested that their actions were incited by foreigners, saying those arrested were "deceived" into removing their hijabs, Iran's semiofficial Tasnim News Agency reported. The 29 protesters been transferred to judicial authorities, the report said.</p> <p>Masih Alinejad, the Iranian activist behind the "White Wednesday" social media campaign against mandatory hijabs, who is now based in the US, told CNN that the movement has not been influenced from abroad.</p> <p>"The movement started inside Iran. It has nothing to do with forces outside of Iran," Alinejad said.</p> <p>"This is a campaign that's been going on for years and years. The women of Iran have long been ignored. We're just giving them a platform."</p>

	<p>News of the arrests came just days after the release of Vida Mohaved, a woman who was detained in December after removing her headscarf at an anti-regime protest.</p> <p>The wave of anti-government demonstrations last month was sparked by concerns over rising living costs and a stagnant economy, but also provided an opening for Iranian women to push for equal rights. Women have been required to wear the hijab since the Islamic Revolution in 1979.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/03 Italy: gunman shoots foreigners
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/03/europe/italy-shooting-macerata-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Police in Italy have arrested a man suspected of opening fire Saturday on foreign nationals in the town of Macerata, injuring several people.</p> <p>A police photo shows a man being apprehended who appears to have an Italian flag wrapped around his neck.</p> <p>The drive-by shootings were "racially motivated" and believed to be connected to the recent slaying of an 18-year-old Italian woman in which a Nigerian man was arrested, Macerata's mayor, Romano Carancini, told CNN.</p> <p>He said at least four people were injured Saturday.</p> <p>The shootings took place near where the dismembered body of Pamela Mastropietro was found Tuesday. A Nigerian man was later arrested in connection with the killing.</p> <p>The suspect in Saturday's shootings -- identified by Carancini as Luca Traini, 28 -- was apprehended by police while making a fascist salute in front of a monument to war victims.</p> <p>According to election records, Traini had been a candidate in the nearby town of Corridonia for the anti-immigration Northern League party in the 2017 local elections but received no votes.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 Ammo seller to Vegas shooter arrested
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/02/us/douglas-haig-las-vegas-massacre/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Douglas Haig, an Arizona man who says he sold tracer ammunition to the gunman in October's Las Vegas massacre, was arrested Friday on a charge of manufacturing and selling armor-piercing bullets in violation of federal law.</p> <p>A criminal complaint alleges two unfired .308-caliber rounds found in gunman Stephen Paddock's hotel room had Haig's fingerprints on them as well as tool marks from his workshop. The bullets in the cartridges were classified as armor-piercing, the complaint says.</p> <p>The FBI on October 19 searched Haig's Mesa home and seized ammunition the agency says is classified as armor-piercing, the complaint said. Haig did not have a license to manufacture armor-piercing ammunition, documents said.</p> <p>Police say Paddock opened fire on October 1 from his room at Las Vegas' Mandalay Bay hotel onto a crowd attending a music festival, killing 58 people and shooting and injuring 422 others. More than 850 others suffered other injuries in the attack.</p> <p>Douglas Haig's name was revealed in the release of search warrant records.</p>

	Haig, 55, appeared in court Friday and was released on this own recognizance with specific conditions not spelled out in court proceedings. He is due in court again February 15 for a preliminary hearing.
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Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

FRIDAY – 2 FEB 2018



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Event Calendar

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Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/AIEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php

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**indicates new event/new information added during reporting week

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HEADLINE	02/01 Hawaii 'button pusher' to sue state
SOURCE	http://khon2.com/2018/02/01/emergency-worker-behind-false-missile-alert-to-file-lawsuit-against-the-state/
GIST	<p>The emergency worker fired by the state for sending a false missile alert has hired an attorney, and plans to sue the state for defamation.</p> <p>The state has not identified the worker, but his attorney, Michael Green, says many people already know who he is, because the worker has received numerous death threats.</p> <p>So what does it take to prove that the state is liable?</p> <p>Green says his client has been made a scapegoat in all this. The worker has been living in fear because of the death threats, and Green says it's because the state lied about what happened.</p> <p>Once the panic died down on Jan. 13, state officials, including the governor, announced that the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency worker who issued the missile alert had mistakenly pressed the wrong button.</p> <p>On Tuesday, Jan. 30, the FCC and the state added that the worker didn't know it was a drill, and actually thought there was a missile attack.</p> <p>"He never pressed the wrong button. He pressed the button he wanted to press, because the way it came out, he thinks we're in imminent danger. Within 20 minutes, we might not be here anymore," Green said.</p> <p>The state has not released the workers name, but says it plans to.</p> <p>"People want to kill him. They identified him as a male, 10 years in the office. They show the back of a man sitting on a desk. It's not rocket science to figure out who it is," Green said.</p> <p>KHON2 reached out to David Major, a constitutional law attorney for the firm Bays Lung Rose Holma, who also handles defamation lawsuits. He says the state has a wide range of immunity against defamation lawsuits.</p> <p>"It provides for protections for the state, because if every time somebody disagreed with what the state said, they could sue them, it would lead to a huge problem in the court system," Major said.</p> <p>Major says the worker would have to prove that what the state said about him and the incident was false.</p> <p>Green says he might also sue the state for slander and libel.</p> <p>"Because they're saying that he made a mistake?" KHON2 asked.</p> <p>"No, because they lied about what happened. It's got to be untrue what they said about him. It's got to be false," Green said.</p> <p>It's not clear yet if the worker wants his job back.</p> <p>We reached out to the state, and a spokesman says it does not comment on pending litigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Russia warns: US 'hunting' for Russians
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-usa-travel-extradition/russia-says-u-s-hunting-for-russians-to-arrest-around-the-world-idUSKBN1FM0J2
GIST	<p>MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia has issued a travel warning recommending its citizens think twice before traveling abroad, saying the United States was hunting for Russians to arrest around the world.</p> <p>The Foreign Ministry statement warns Russian citizens that when abroad they face a serious threat of arrest by other countries at Washington's request, after which they could be extradited to the United States.</p> <p>"Despite our calls to improve cooperation between the relevant U.S. and Russian authorities ... U.S. special services have effectively continued "hunting" for Russians around the world," the travel warning said.</p> <p>"Considering these circumstances, we strongly insist that Russian citizens carefully weigh up all the risks when planning trips abroad," the Foreign Ministry said.</p> <p>It said more than 10 Russians had been detained in foreign countries with U.S. involvement since the start of 2017.</p> <p>By way of example, it pointed to at least four Russians arrested on U.S. cyber crime charges in Spain, Latvia and Greece. U.S. action against suspected Russian cyber criminals surged to a record high last year.</p> <p>Seven Russians were arrested or indicted in 2017 in the United States and abroad, compared to an average of two a year in the preceding six years.</p> <p>The ministry pointed to the case of Stanislav Lisov, accused of creating a computer virus that targeted customers of financial institutions, causing millions of dollars of damage, who was extradited from Spain to the United States last year.</p> <p>It mentioned earlier cases as well, including the detention of Roman Seleznev for cyber crime in the Maldives in 2014, which it described as a kidnapping by American agents.</p> <p>The statement, published on Thursday, also warns Russian citizens that upon extradition they will face biased treatment at the hands of the U.S. justice system.</p> <p>The U.S. State Department declined to comment.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 SoCal brief escape from drought ends
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/982a4445806649a7a24f44b96442fa1a/Southern-California's-brief-escape-from-drought-ends
GIST	<p>PHILLIPS STATION, Calif. (AP) — California's brief escape from severe drought ended Thursday after scientists declared more than 40 percent of the state in moderate drought and water officials confirmed lower-than-normal snowpack in the Sierra Nevada.</p> <p>Los Angeles, Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, which hold nearly a quarter of the state's population, were rated in severe drought.</p> <p>During a week of rainless skies and some record-high temperatures in Southern California, water officials also trekked into the Sierra Nevada on Thursday and manually measured the vital snowpack, which stood</p>

at less than a third of normal for the date.

“It’s not nearly where we’d like to be,” Frank Gehrke, a state official, said of the snow, which supplies water to millions of Californians in a good, wet year.

Los Angeles and some surrounding areas have received only one significant rainstorm in nearly a year.

In Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, which are about 100 miles (160 kilometers) north of Los Angeles, the lack of rain and dry vegetation fueled a December wildfire that grew to be the largest recorded in state history. When it finally rained, the storm triggered mudslides that killed at least 21.

For people who survived the mudslides, looking out at clear and sunny skies again Thursday was a relief despite the deepening drought.

“I know we need rain, but another mudslide would be awful,” said Santa Barbara restaurant hostess Cayla Stretz.

Survivors in her area are still digging out homes, many beaches and roads are closed by mud, and business is down in the beach town, Stretz said.

It took a near-record rainy winter in Northern California last year to snap the near-record five-year dry spell.

Last year’s rain has most of the state’s reservoirs higher than usual, a bright spot, said Doug Carlson, a state Department of Water Resources spokesman. Two months remain in the state’s peak rain and snow season, leaving room for hope, Carlson said.

Gov. Jerry Brown lifted California’s drought state of emergency in April, but it took until September for the last bit of the state to emerge from the severe category of that drought — until now.

Only 13 percent of the state was considered in drought last week, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, which is a project of several government agencies and their partners.

During the peak of the state’s dry spell, 99.9 percent of California was in some stage of drought and nearly half fell into the very highest category.

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HEADLINE	02/02 NKorea: US threatens inter-Korea relations
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/7ed9e1028a4f40abb42b52b60f4f86c8/North-Korea-says-US-actions-threaten-inter-Korean-relations
GIST	<p>UNITED NATIONS (AP) — North Korea’s foreign minister is warning the United States that its deployment of nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and planned military exercises immediately after the Winter Olympics threaten improved relations between the two Koreas.</p> <p>Ri Yong Ho urged the United Nations not to remain silent about what he called “the U.S. dangerous game of aggravating (the) situation in and around the Korean peninsula and driving the whole world into a possible disaster of nuclear war.”</p> <p>In a letter to U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres circulated late Thursday, he urged the U.N. chief to exert efforts to halt the U.S. deployment of equipment and the upcoming military maneuvers.</p> <p>Ri warned that the U.S. military actions are aimed “to provoke a nuclear war, which will undermine the improvement of inter-Korean relations and the easing of tensions.”</p>

The North Korean minister also accused U.S. authorities of “misleading public opinion” to believe the new inter-Korean dialogue is the result of “their harshest sanctions and pressure imposed on our country.”

Rather, Ri said, the “dramatic turning point” for peace and stability on the Korean peninsula “where a touch-and-go war danger was prevailing is entirely thanks to the noble love for the nation by the respected comrade Kim Jong Un,” North Korea’s leader.

Kim unexpectedly said in his New Year’s address that he was willing to send a delegation to the Winter Olympics being held Feb. 9-25 in the South Korean county of Pyeongchang — and the South Korean government and International Olympic Committee responded positively.

As part of the rapprochement with Seoul, hundreds of North Korean officials, athletes, artists, journalists and a 230-member cheering group will be attending the Olympics, and athletes from the two Koreas will march together under a single flag during the opening ceremony.

Ri asked the U.N. Security Council in the letter to take up “the issue of welcoming the process of improved inter-Korean relations and discouraging the neighboring countries from disturbing the process.”

The efforts at reconciliation follow a year of heightened animosities over North Korea’s increasingly sophisticated nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, which Pyongyang says can now reach the U.S. mainland. There has been escalating rhetoric between Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump, including back-and-forth over their “nuclear button.”

Some experts say North Korea may want to use improved ties with the South as a way to weaken U.S.-led international sanctions. Liberal South Korean President Moon Jae-in sees the Olympics as an opportunity to resume meaningful contact with North Korea following the extended period of tension and a diplomatic stalemate over the North’s nuclear and missile programs.

Ri charged in the letter that the U.S. military is “intentionally” aggravating the situation in and around the Korean peninsula by deploying military reinforcements, including aircraft carrier strike groups, designed to make a “pre-emptive strike” on North Korea at a time when the two Koreas “are charting a course of peace together.”

“This is a primary factor which would block the inter-Korean reconciliation process and drive the situation of the Korean peninsula into an unpredictable dangerous phase,” Ri warned.

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HEADLINE	02/02 Judge blocks Indonesians deportation
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/80731c8249dc4f7284045e4d7999301e/Judge-grants-Christian-Indonesians-time-to-fight-deportation
GIST	<p>BOSTON (AP) — A federal judge on Thursday blocked the government from deporting dozens of Christian Indonesians who fear persecution if returned home, until they’re given a chance to fight their removal.</p> <p>U.S. District Judge Patti Saris in Boston said 50 Indonesians living illegally in New Hampshire must be given time to reopen their immigration cases and argue that the conditions in their home country have changed.</p> <p>“This opinion may literally save lives,” said Lee Gelernt, an attorney for the Indonesians. “As the court recognized ... this country’s laws do not permit the government to send people back to persecution or torture,” said Gelernt, of the American Civil Liberties Union’s Immigrants’ Rights Project.</p> <p>The government had urged the judge to deny their bid for a preliminary injunction blocking their removal. The government argued that the court doesn’t have jurisdiction over the matter and that the Indonesians</p>

	<p>failed to show that they would suffer irreparable harm if they aren't granted a reprieve.</p> <p>A U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement official didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comment on Thursday.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Doping ban 28 Russia athletes overturned
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2018-02-01/olympic-doping-ban-overturned-for-28-russian-athletes
GIST	<p>The doping bans on 28 Russian Olympic athletes were overturned Thursday by the Swiss-based Court of Arbitration for Sport just a week before the start of the 2018 Winter Games in South Korea.</p> <p>Following an investigation into the Russian doping scandal during the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, the International Olympic Committee handed down lifetime bans on 43 Russian athletes and banned the entire Russian team from the 2018 games. All but one athlete filed an appeal with CAS.</p> <p>The court upheld the appeals of 28 athletes accused of doping, citing insufficient evidence. The ruling means the athletes' results will be reinstated and they may seek to compete in this year's games in Pyeongchang, South Korea — though it was not made immediately clear if they would.</p> <p>"In 28 cases, the evidence collected was found to be insufficient to establish that an anti-doping rule violation (ADRV) was committed by the athletes concerned," the ruling stated.</p> <p>In 11 more cases, appeals were partially upheld. The court ruled evidence was sufficient enough to prove doping took place and rules were violated, but lifetime bans were not appropriate punishments. Instead, those athletes will be barred from competing in PyeongChang, but the lifetime ban will be lifted.</p> <p>The remaining three cases have been postponed.</p> <p>The IOC said the decision "may have a serious impact on the future fight against doping," CNN reported. It also said it could appeal the decision in the Swiss Federal Tribunal, the country's highest court.</p> <p>Currently, Russia has 169 athletes competing in South Korea as neutrals. In order for the 28 athletes to participate they would need to be selected to join the Russian team and be cleared by the IOC Invitation Review Panel.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Official: Navy suffers budget uncertainty
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/1/navy-ops-suffering-toxic-effect-budget-uncertainty/
GIST	<p>The congressional stalemate over defense budgets is having a "toxic effect" on Navy operations, which are progressing at a speed and pace not seen since the peak of the Cold War, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John M. Richardson warned Thursday.</p> <p>The lack of funding certainty is preventing the Navy from keeping its fleet in good order, the Navy chief added, saying the shortfalls were in part to blame for the service's deadly 2017 summer in which 20 sailors died in sea accidents. Top Navy officials faced sharp criticism on Capitol Hill over the state of the service.</p> <p>To date, two American carrier strike groups, two amphibious ready groups and a total of six cruisers and destroyers armed with ballistic missile defense systems are steaming across international waterways, the admiral said in a speech at the Washington-based Heritage Foundation.</p>

Submarine operations are also experiencing an significant uptick with 14 subs currently at sea, which “is a bit of a high point” for the underwater fleet, Adm. Richardson said. That deployment rate, coupled with the surface warships also at sea, represents nearly a third of its roughly 300-vessel fleet forward deployed throughout the waterways and sea lanes that crisscross the globe.

But problems arise when there isn’t the money for up-to-date equipment and maintenance.

“As we increase capacity, as we increase capability, the readiness has to be there,” he said Thursday, noting that “ship maintenance has taken one of the biggest hits” under current budget environment.

“It really starts to have a toxic effect. ... A ship that cannot go out because it is not maintained is a ship that does not project naval power,” he added.

The high operational tempo for the Navy, not seen since the dying days of the Cold War, comes as the clock winds down on yet another short-term, stopgap defense budget, passed by Congress to end last month’s three-day government shutdown.

The continuing resolution to finance defense spending and other segments of the federal government is set to expire on Feb. 8.

“I trust Congress will do their job and write the check. ... Continuing resolutions are no way to run a military,” told reporters Thursday on the looming deadline.

Adm. Richardson said the uncertainty over whether and when the money will be available poses special problems for the Navy.

“You cannot write the [maintenance] contract if you do not have the funding,” he said. With less ships ready to embark out on operations, the Navy’s comparatively small fleet is grappling to keep place with the demands of “a very dynamic and changing maritime environment.”

The Navy is not the only branch of the military complaining that its missions are being hindered by political infighting in Washington.

“Continuing resolutions are no way to run the military. It’s a lot of uncertainty, it’s wasteful, three weeks at a time, a month at a time, six weeks at a time. It’s wasteful,” Defense Department spokeswoman Dana White told reporters at the Pentagon on Thursday.

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HEADLINE	02/01 Rattlesnake Ridge evacuation lifted
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/888027/evacuation-ends-for-residents-near-rattlesnake-ridge-slide/
GIST	<p>YAKIMA, Wash. (AP) — A month-long evacuation prompted by a slow-moving landslide on Rattlesnake Ridge has been lifted.</p> <p>KOMO-TV reports dozens of families received notice on Thursday that they could head home.</p> <p>Residents had been evacuated in early January when concerns grew about the landslide. At that time, geologists felt a sudden failure of the land might send rocks tumbling onto Interstate 82 or the small group of houses below the ridge.</p> <p>But this week, a new third-party report indicates the landslide may slowly “creep” along for years — the way it currently is. It’s moving about 3 inches (7.6 centimeters) per day.</p> <p>The Department of Natural Resources says it will continue to use data-gathering equipment to monitor the landslide.</p>

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HEADLINE	02/01 Seattle removes surveillance cameras
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/887570/150k-remove-seattle-surveillance-cameras/
GIST	<p>They never got their shot at taking shots around Seattle, but these surveillance cameras are coming down anyway and it will cost the city.</p> <p>“We’ve budgeted \$150,000 for this project,” said Megan Erb with Seattle’s IT department. “Each removal is different depending on how the equipment was installed; some will be easier to remove than others, thus making them less expensive than the ones that are a little more complicated to remove.”</p> <p>Erb said that the total cost of the camera removal throughout Seattle — 28 in all — won’t be known until the job is done.</p> <p>The West Seattle Blog reports that the Seattle Police Department installed the surveillance cameras in 2013 with a grant from the Homeland Security Department. But after the community objected, they were never used. They were installed during the Mayor Mike McGinn era, and sat idle during the Ed Murray era. Crews began taking them down over this past week.</p> <p>The Blog explains that the cameras were proposed for port security, but ended up being placed in public parks and residential areas, too.</p> <p>Bellevue-based Prime Electric has been contracted to remove the cameras. The ones in West Seattle have been taken down already. Other surveillance cameras in Magnolia and Golden Gardens are also being taken down. There are more than a dozen in the downtown area also slated for removal.</p> <p>The security cameras are expected to be turned over to SDOT to be used for traffic monitoring.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 L.A. homelessness surges 75% in 6yrs
SOURCE	http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-homeless-how-we-got-here-20180201-story.html
GIST	<p>Some of the poorest people in the city spend their days in the shadow of Los Angeles City Hall, napping on flattened cardboard boxes.</p> <p>On any given day, as many as 20 people take to the City Hall lawn, across the street from LAPD headquarters. They're there to "escape the madness" in downtown streets, a 53-year-old homeless man named Lazarus said last week. At night, they fan out to doorways or deserted plazas to wait for daybreak.</p> <p>The growth of a homeless day camp at the halls of civic power speaks to the breadth of Los Angeles' burgeoning homelessness problem.</p> <p>The number of those living in the streets and shelters of the city of L.A. and most of the county surged 75% — to roughly 55,000 from about 32,000 — in the last six years. (Including Glendale, Pasadena and Long Beach, which conduct their own homeless counts, the total is nearly 58,000.)</p> <p>Three out of four homeless people — 41,000 — live in cars, campers, tents and lean-tos, by far the biggest single group of unsheltered people in any U.S. city. If you took out Los Angeles, national homelessness would have dropped last year for the first time since the recession.</p> <p>People left behind by the economic recovery can't compete with young professionals who have bid rents up to record levels.</p>

In another era, they might have found refuge in crumbling hotels and tenements. But many of those buildings were lost in the city's post-recession spree of building, evictions and renovations.

The problem has only gotten worse since Mayor Eric Garcetti took office in 2013 and a liberal Democratic supermajority emerged in 2016 on the county Board of Supervisors.

Tent cities stretch from the Antelope Valley desert to the Santa Monica coast, with stopovers in unlikely communities — even Bel-Air, where a homeless cooking fire was implicated in December's Skirball fire.

During an October hygiene survey, county public health officials identified 222 encampments, including 50 with 30 or more people living in them. These ragtag outposts have altered the basic terms of urban life.

People in Koreatown step outside their fancy condos to find tents, rotting food and human feces at their doorsteps. Buses and trains have become de facto shelters, and thousands of people sleep in fear and degradation.

Officials and philanthropic groups have been housing more homeless people than ever before — 26,000 between 2014 and 2017. But L.A. has a severe housing shortage, and city and county homeless programs have been slow to start and too limited to absorb the waves of people forced into the streets.

Officials are hoping reinforcements will breathe new life into the effort to end homelessness. Over the last 16 months, voters have agreed to tax themselves \$4.6 billion to build housing — 10,000 units in 10 years — and provide supportive services for homeless people. A long-delayed developer fee that's expected to pump out \$100 million for affordable housing was finally adopted, although some observers wonder whether it comes too late to capitalize on the building boom.

The county money started flowing in October; officials have quadrupled homeless outreach teams, added 600 shelter beds, expanded winter shelter hours and ramped up hotel vouchers. Some 1,000 new employees are being hired at every level of homeless services, including support for people in the new housing projects.

But the crisis has been decades in the making. If homelessness continues to escalate at current rates, it will swamp even the best efforts.

"We are moving more homeless families and adults into housing," said Phil Ansell, director of the Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative. "What we have less control over is the inflow: people who simply are unable to pay the rent."

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HEADLINE	02/01 Army blames recent deaths on vaping oils
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/army-2-deaths-60-hospitalizations-blamed-on-vaping-oils-health-alert/
GIST	<p>JACKSONVILLE, N.C. -- The U.S. Army is warning about the dangers of vaping synthetic cannabinoid oil after about 60 soldiers and Marines in North Carolina and 33 troops in Utah experienced serious medical problems in January. In a Monday public health alert, the U.S. Army Public Health Center said military personnel have suffered headaches, nausea, vomiting, palpitations, dilated pupils, dizziness, agitation and seizures.</p> <p>All the symptoms are associated with synthetic cannabinoids. Two Marines have died in accidents blamed on synthetic cannabinoid-induced seizures.</p> <p>"This problem has the potential to spread quickly across the Army," the alert said.</p> <p>Army regulations ban the use of so-called CBD oil or any products derived from marijuana, so some</p>

	<p>soldiers are using synthetic replacement oil.</p> <p>Public Health Center spokeswoman Chanel S. Weaver told The Fayetteville Observer that stopping this trend is a "top priority."</p> <p>"Consumers must be extremely vigilant if they are going to use vaping oils and should seek medical attention immediately if they feel they are having an adverse reaction to one of these products," Weaver said.</p> <p>Officials said most of the troops who were hospitalized troops were treated at the Naval Medical Center at Camp Lejeune, The Fayetteville Observer reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Germany limits migrant family reunions
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/german-parliament-debates-migrant-family-reunification-issue-52760200?
GIST	<p>German lawmakers approved a measure Thursday extending rules limiting migrants' rights to bring close relatives to the country, paving the way for a new migrant plan this summer agreed to between Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative Union bloc and the center-left Social Democrats.</p> <p>The measure proposed by Merkel's conservatives passed 376 to 298, extends the current temporary ban on relatives joining migrants whose status in Germany is below full asylum. The ban will stay until new rules come into effect in August allowing 1,000 migrant relatives in per month.</p> <p>The suspension of family reunification rules for people with "subsidiary protection" was instituted in early 2016, after Germany was overwhelmed with the arrival of 890,000 asylum-seekers from the year before.</p> <p>The issue has been a major point of contention between Merkel's conservatives and the Social Democrats, but they were able to agree this week in coalition talks to form a new government. Under that plan, in addition to allowing in 1,000 relatives per month for migrants whose status is less than full asylum, they will also allow in additional people considered hardship cases.</p> <p>Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere had pushed for parliament to extend the suspension to pave the way for the new agreement, calling it a fair compromise.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Bitter cold, snow for eastern US
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/bitter-cold-snow-forecast-entire-eastern-us-days/story?
GIST	<p>Two systems will be moving through the Northeast and Midwest over the next few days bringing light snow to most heavily populated areas, but bitter cold to the whole eastern United States.</p> <p>The first system already moved through the Midwest and the Great Lakes bringing a heavy burst of snow from Minneapolis to Green Bay, Wisconsin, and into Michigan overnight.</p> <p>Snow is flying this morning from Michigan to western Pennsylvania, New York and into New England.</p> <p>The storm system will make its way into the I-95 corridor from the Carolinas all the way into Maine on Thursday night into Friday morning.</p> <p>Because it is going to be a mild day today in the Northeast, the precipitation will begin as rain, then change to snow as the cold front moves through. Most areas will see minor snow accumulations, but there could be a few slick spots.</p>

	<p>After that, our attention turns to the next storm system coming out of the Pacific Northwest and crossing the country over the weekend.</p> <p>On Saturday, this storm system will move into the Midwest, bringing several inches of snow from the Dakotas into the Great Lakes, including the Twin Cities, Chicago, Indianapolis and Detroit.</p> <p>On Sunday evening, as the system moves east, it will pick up a southern component and bring rain and snow to the East Coast. The heaviest snow will be inland, away from the I-95 corridor.</p> <p>The snowfall totals for the Midwest and Northeast over the next several days shows the heaviest snow will be found near the Great Lakes and in the interior Northeast.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Cape Town cuts water rations 45%
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/01/africa/cape-town-water-crisis-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Cape Town -- a city once at the forefront of Africa's green movement -- implemented new emergency water restrictions Thursday as the sprawling metropolis prepares for the day its taps run dry.</p> <p>Residents are now being asked to curb the amount of municipal water they use each day to just 50 liters (a little over 13 gallons). Only a month ago, level six restrictions had placed residents on a daily allowance of 87 liters (about 23 gallons), illustrating the severity of the looming crisis.</p> <p>Officials estimate that if water levels continue to fall as expected, South Africa's second most populous city will run out of water by April 16, which has been dubbed "Day Zero."</p> <p>Experts are keeping a close eye on daily consumption in a desperate bid to avoid the disaster, warning residents tempted to ignore measures that they face fines and the installation of water-management meters if they do not comply.</p> <p>It may seem unthinkable that a developed city of four million could run out of water but it's been a slow-burning catastrophe exacerbated by some uncontrollable factors.</p> <p>Cape Town been enduring the worst drought in a century for the past three years. A changing climate and rapidly growing population have made matters worse.</p> <p>And as the crisis has taken hold, Capetonians have not been doing enough to curb their water use, further aggravating the scarcity. Only an estimated 55% of the city's residents are actually sticking to their allotted water per day, according to last week's figures issued by authorities.</p> <p>"It is quite unbelievable that a majority of people do not seem to care and are sending all of us headlong towards Day Zero," the mayor's office said in January. "We can no longer ask people to stop wasting water. We must force them."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Flu onslaught: ERs into waiting rooms
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/to-deal-with-a-flu-onslaught-emergency-rooms-expand-into-waiting-rooms-and-hallways-1517481000
GIST	<p>Emergency departments across the U.S. have been slammed in recent weeks by an onslaught of flu visits, forcing hospitals to devise new spaces to house patients, to restrict visitors and to postpone elective surgeries.</p>

Visits to hospital emergency departments, urgent care centers and other outpatient clinics by people with flu symptoms have been skyrocketing for several weeks. As of mid-January, such visits had surpassed every flu season except 2009-10, when a new flu strain caused a global pandemic. The dominant strain this season, H3N2, is particularly virulent, and the vaccine isn't very effective against it.

NYC Health & Hospitals has seen a 40% increase in the number of people being tested for the flu compared with this time last year, according to Sean Studer, deputy chief medical officer of the group, which runs New York City's public hospitals, clinics and long-term care facilities.

To cope with greater traffic to the emergency department, hospitals in the network are opening up so-called "flex" spaces that aren't usually needed for routine care. Patients coming to the hospital reporting flu symptoms are also placed in a separate waiting area and given masks to help prevent transmission, Dr. Studer said. If they need to be admitted, patients are given a room with a single bed when possible.

In Atlanta, the emergency department at Grady Memorial Hospital is caring for up to 25% more patients than it did at this time last year. The department usually sees around 400 patients a day, but there have been times this month when that number shot up to 502, according to Hany Atallah, Grady Memorial Hospital's chief of emergency medicine.

"Our emergency department is full, and our inpatient services are full," he said. "Overfull, actually."

But people are still coming, so the hospital has set up a temporary mobile medical unit on its premises for 30 days to deal with the overflow. Fully equipped with medical supplies and 14 beds, it is essentially a second emergency room, Dr. Atallah said. Staff began seeing patients in the mobile unit on Tuesday.

In addition to the mobile unit, Grady Memorial is using "family waiting rooms, holding areas and literally some hall spots" for patient beds, said Dr. Atallah.

Not everyone who comes to the emergency department needs to be admitted to the hospital, Dr. Atallah said. A patient who is young and otherwise healthy will likely be treated for fever, muscle aches and dehydration and then sent home to rest. Those most at risk for complications are the elderly, very young children, or people who have other health issues that the flu can exacerbate.

Given the severity of the flu this season and its potential complications, the hospital isn't allowing children 14 years old and younger to visit hospitalized patients. Children tend to harbor more infections, Dr. Atallah said, and they may not be as diligent about hand sanitization.

The University of Alabama at Birmingham Hospital, which sees an average of 250 to 300 patients each day, has experienced a jump in volume of about 10%, largely because of the flu outbreak. "We've not only seen an increase in volume, but an increase in acuity," said Sarah Nafziger, physician adviser for the Center for Patient Flow at UAB Hospital. "People are sicker than they were in previous years.

"It's not just people with flu symptoms, but people who have chronic medical conditions that are exacerbated by the flu," she added.

To deal with the higher number of emergency department visits, UAB is placing patients in areas that would normally be used for postoperative patients, such as anesthesia recovery rooms. The hospital has also delayed some elective surgeries that would require an overnight stay to open up more beds for admitted patients.

"As you can imagine, that's a costly decision for the hospital because elective surgeries and nonelective surgeries are the way hospitals increase their revenue," said Dr. Nafziger. "But sometimes you have to make those decisions to make sure you can safely care for patients."

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HEADLINE	02/01 Auburn officials to Winter Olympics
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/auburn-officials-head-to-pyeongchang-for-olympics/281-513763314
GIST	<p>The City of PyeongChang in South Korea invited the City of Auburn to the opening ceremony of this year's Winter Olympics.</p> <p>"To the best of my knowledge, we are the only one that has been invited," said Auburn Mayor Nancy Backus.</p> <p>Auburn and PyeongChang are sister cities, a global diplomacy network that aims to strengthen relationships between American and international cities.</p> <p>"The theme for the Winter Olympics is peace and I think it's the most appropriate theme right now because we can use a little peace in our world," said Backus. "The economic development and the trade, that's really the opportunity we see and the benefit that we've had. We've taken some of our local business owners on these trips, and they have benefitted. So there's importing and exporting going on, and it really has been beneficial to our city."</p> <p>In preparation for their trip, the City of Auburn is bringing a token of appreciation with them.</p> <p>"We've found this beautiful prism. We have the Winter Olympics on the inside, and on one side is the City of Auburn logo and the other side is a PyeongChang logo."</p> <p>"That's history in the making. And to know that I was there, to know that we'll have a delegation from Auburn that will be there. I'm very very proud," said Backus.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Spring arrive early in Washington?
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/weather/blog/could-spring-arrive-early-in-washington/281-513626650
GIST	<p>Although we have La Niña conditions in the Pacific, our Northwest weather hasn't been behaving exactly the way we expect.</p> <p>Usually, La Niña winters increase the odds of below normal temperatures and above normal precipitation with lots of snow in the mountains during the period November into April.</p> <p>In the first 3 months of that period, Sea-Tac rainfall is above normal, as we would expect, but temperatures have been well above normal. In fact, in January the mean temperature at Sea-Tac was a significant 3 degrees above normal.</p> <p>However, the mountain snowpack that was lagging behind normal at the start of the January had a good month.</p> <p>All of the areas are slightly above normal with the exception of Mt. Baker which is much above normal. January was a great month for Baker. The ski area reported 225 inches of new snow in January – almost 19 feet! It's the most they have had in January in 20 years.</p> <p>Right now we are almost exactly in the middle of winter, so we may see some changes in these averages.</p> <p>However for the next week, it looks like it may feel as though spring has arrived. Over the weekend it will still be showery, but highs will push into the low to mid 50's when they would normally be in the upper 40's.</p> <p>We may turn dry and mild by the middle of next week. The latest two-week forecast from the Climate Prediction Center calls for above normal temperatures and below normal rainfall for February 7-14.</p>

	We won't hear officially from the Ground Hog until Friday, but right now it looks like it might be an early spring in Washington.
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HEADLINE	02/01 Tacoma Fire hands out Narcan kits
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/02/01/tacoma-fire-hands-out-narcan-kits-to-opioid-addicts/
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. – The opioid epidemic is hitting Washington state hard. These days, most of us know someone who’s been affected in some way, either as addicts themselves or the victim of crime related to addiction.</p> <p>Now, there are two local efforts to try and fight back. The Pierce County prosecutor is taking this battle to court to sue not one but three opioid makers, accusing them of being complicit in the crisis that’s killing hundreds of people in our state every year.</p> <p>Tacoma’s fire department is taking things a step further. It’s giving away free Narcan kits. It’s a drug that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. Since 2013, the Tacoma Fire Department has seen a 50% increase in having to use an opioid overdose antidote, Narcan. Now it’s working to put that life-saving drug into more hands.</p> <p>“What we’ve done in the past isn’t necessarily working today or in the future,” said Tacoma Fire Department Medical Services Officer Mike Newhouse.</p> <p>It’s a new action plan for Tacoma Fire first responders to tackle the growing opioid problem in the city. Instead of giving overdosing addicts a shot of Narcan and then sending them to the emergency department, paramedics will give addicts Narcan kits.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Claim: real costs to live in Seattle
SOURCE	http://www.seattlepi.com/seattlenews/article/2018-edition-What-does-it-really-cost-to-live-in-12540736.php
GIST	<p>It's been decades since Seattle could be considered a cheap place to live.</p> <p>And for much of its short life, it's been a boom town with ever-rising costs of living, albeit never more costly than they are today.</p> <p>In recent history, the city has seen only one significant decline in those costs -- during the Great Recession. Since then, everything from housing prices to the cost of a loaf of bread has been on the rise, the steep rise.</p> <p>This is how we arrive at the end of January 2018 to begin reckoning with a cost of living that is even less bearable than it was one foul year ago.</p> <p>In years past, this analysis started with the intent of comparing the cost of living in Seattle to its \$15-per-hour minimum wage. But each year, the numbers have demonstrated that living in Seattle (or, for that matter, much of the metro area) on \$15 an hour is a hell of a challenge.</p> <p>So, for the third annual installment, we'll set that aside and simply run the numbers.</p> <p>Let's start with the news that Seattle has risen to sixth place on the list of the most expensive places to live, according to figures from the Arlington, Virginia-based Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness (CREC).</p>

The Seattle metro area was given the composite index of 152.8 for the third quarter of 2017, meaning it's 52.8 percent more expensive to live here than the median cost of living in the U.S.

Certainly, we fared better than New York's Manhattan borough, with a score of 242.9, or San Francisco, with a score of 191.8.

Those numbers are helpful for tracking changes (Seattle, for instance, moved up two spots from its score of 147.5 in 2016) or for comparisons, but they don't actually reveal the true cost of living.

CREC's latest index did include costs for a number of items in the Seattle market, including grocery items, energy, doctors, dentists and more. But tallying those things is a bit clumsy, so we'll turn back to Numbeo.com to run some comparisons.

To start out, the cost of living estimator was set up this way: one person in the household who eats out at lunch or dinner 5 percent of the time and only at inexpensive restaurants, rarely drinks coffee away from home, rarely drinks alcohol, doesn't smoke, uses only public transit, doesn't own a car, never takes a vacation, doesn't belong to a gym or other sports club and rarely buys clothing.

This will be the bare bones, no-frills cost of living. We'll adjust later for a lifestyle that is more realistic.

The grand total monthly cost came to \$814.58. Now for the fun part: rent.

Rents (and real estate prices) in Seattle have been on an unstoppable upward trend since 2011. For December 2017, Zillow put the median one-bedroom apartment rent for the Seattle metro area at \$1,724. We chose a one-bedroom because the median rent for studios was actually higher.

Add that to the monthly costs calculated by Numbeo and we get \$2,539 per month, or \$30,463 per year. And of course, since that's what we'll need to spend, that's after taxes. The effective tax rate around that income level should wind up around 9.24 percent, so we'll need a gross annual salary of \$33,278 (if you worked full-time, that would be about \$15.90 per hour, in case you were wondering).

Keep in mind, that income assumes no debt, no medical expenses, no savings, only a tiny sliver for phone service, and about \$156 per year for clothing. And never mind the fact that our theoretical lifestyle won't include any kind of vacation or recreation that costs money.

Once more, these calculations reflect the fact that the poorest among us are forced to forego many of the things that make life in the Seattle area so wonderful. The amazing food, the hiking and camping, the fishing, boating and even regional trips are virtually nonexistent for our bare-bones resident.

Going back to the Numbeo calculator, we changed things to allow for a bit more eating and drinking out, some travel (one week per year), a gym membership and a car (with a \$142/month payment and only one tank of fuel each month).

We also made it a household of two people in the interest of sharing some of the burden.

With those changes in place, the monthly total, before rent, is \$2,457.92. Assuming our residents are still frugally minded, we'll let them share the one-bedroom apartment, bringing the total monthly cost to \$4,181.92, or \$50,183 per year.

Assuming a tax rate that ends up around 10 percent, those two will need to earn about \$55,201 a year before taxes.

Mind you, that's still \$27,600 each, but it certainly shows the value of teaming up to make that income stretch further.

	<p>If we kept the same standards but for just one person, they would need to earn about \$41,000 per year. Again, neither of these calculations allow for debt payments, medical bills or even insurance, or savings.</p> <p>The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) said last year that an income of \$50,400 per year or less in the Seattle area is considered low-income. Our frugal friends would be in the very low-income bracket for certain.</p> <p>Now, as readers will no doubt point out in emails and comments, people come up with creative ways to make a go of it in any city, regardless of how expensive it is. Seattle is no exception, but those creative opportunities are getting harder to find as the city continues to be transformed by a booming economy that doesn't benefit everyone equally.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 UN: migrants feared drowned off Libya
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/02/02/latest-90-migrants-feared-drowned-off-libyan-coast.html
GIST	<p>PARIS – The Latest on Europe's migration crisis (all times local):</p> <p>11:15 a.m.</p> <p>The U.N.'s migration agency says its partner agencies are reporting that 90 people are feared drowned after a smuggler's boat carrying mostly Pakistani migrants has capsized off Libya's coast.</p> <p>International Organization for Migration spokeswoman Olivia Headon says 10 bodies have washed ashore near the Libyan town of Zuwara following the tragedy early Friday. Eight were believed to be Pakistani, and two Libyans.</p> <p>Headon, speaking by phone from Tunisia's capital to reporters at the U.N. in Geneva, said initial indications were that the boat became unbalanced.</p> <p>She said Pakistani nationals have been taking an increasing share among the number of migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean to Italy and Europe via Libya.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 ICE raids hit northern Calif. businesses
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/02/ice-raid-hits-77-businesses-in-northern-california.html
GIST	<p>Less than a month after federal immigration officials raided nearly 100 7-Eleven stores nationwide, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents conducted another sweep this week in Northern California, officials said Thursday.</p> <p>This time, ICE agents searched 77 businesses in the San Francisco and Sacramento areas in what was believed to be the largest localized raid since President Donald Trump took office, the San Francisco Chronicle reported.</p> <p>The raid underscores ICE acting director Thomas Homan's call for a "400 percent increase" in agency operations focusing on workplaces, the paper reported.</p> <p>Unlike the 7-Eleven raids in January, which resulted in 21 arrests, ICE didn't identify the businesses hit this week, nor did the agency make any immediate arrests, the paper reported.</p> <p>However, federal immigration officials issued notices of inspection, and ordered the businesses to provide proof their employees are legally allowed to work in the U.S. -- giving them three days to comply, the paper reported.</p>

	<p>Democratic lawmakers and California Attorney General Xavier Becerra had been on edge since a report in the Chronicle last month that federal officials were planning such a raid.</p> <p>"We will, as always, work with our federal partners in every respect to go after drug dealers, human traffickers, potential terrorists," Becerra said in January. "We're not in the business of deportation. We're in the business of public safety."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 'Super sick Monday'?
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/02/01/why-14-million-people-planning-take-off-work-super-sick-monday/1088188001/
GIST	<p>If you don't plan on being at work Monday after the Super Bowl, you might want to think of a better excuse than having a bad cough. About 14 million others might be using the same excuse.</p> <p>A new survey released Wednesday by the Workforce Institute at Kronos and Mucinex details an estimated 13.9 million Americans will call in sick Monday after Super Bowl LII, making it one of the biggest sick days of the year.</p> <p>The Monday after the Super Bowl has been notoriously known as a day where people call out of work. Last year, 16.5 million Americans said they planned to call in sick because of the game, according to a study done last year by the same companies.</p> <p>"We've been researching the Big Game's effect on the workforce for more than a decade and while numbers may fluctuate each year, one clear fact remains: #SuperSickMonday is often the biggest day in America for calling out of work," said Joyce Maroney, Executive Director, The Workforce Institute at Kronos Incorporated.</p> <p>The numbers could go up, too, because of a harsh flu season this year.</p> <p>Cases of influenza have risen sharply across the nation, according to the Centers for Disease Control. This year is on track to be as bad the 2014-15 outbreak that caused an estimated 56,000 deaths, federal health officials said.</p> <p>"There's been a bad flu strain this year and it may have an impact on people calling out on Monday, but we don't anticipate it playing a major role in changing the stats," said Brian Dolan, Equity Lead for U.S. Health at RB, which owns Mucinex.</p> <p>He said what coast you live on could play a small role due to differing time zones, but most people will still be up late with the post-game show and parties.</p> <p>Over the years, 1 in 5 Americans said they have called in sick the Monday after the Super Bowl, according to the survey.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 Turmoil in the Maldives
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ap-explains-turmoil-maldives-52786544
GIST	<p>The Maldives' Supreme Court ordered the release of imprisoned politicians, including exiled ex-President Mohamed Nasheed, saying their guilty verdicts had been politically influenced.</p> <p>The ruling set off hours of clashes in the streets of Male, the capital, and could allow Nasheed, the nation's first democratically elected president and the main rival of President Yameen Abdul Gayoom, to challenge</p>

Yameen when he seeks re-election later this year.

A look at what led to the turmoil:

AN AUTOCRAT AND ELECTIONS

The Maldives, an Indian Ocean archipelago of nearly 1,200 islands with a population of just 390,000 people, was ruled for three decades by strongman Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. He was voted from office in 2008 in the first democratic elections. Mohamed Nasheed won that vote but resigned in 2012 amid public protests for ordering the arrest of a senior judge. In 2013, Nasheed lost a chaotic presidential election to the current president, who is half brother of the longtime ruler.

DEMOCRATIC SETBACK

Yameen and his ruling Progressive Party of Maldives have rolled back many of the democratic gains seen in the archipelago since 2008, with all of his potential political opponents either jailed or in exile. The government has also curbed freedom of speech and assembly, with heavy fines imposed on journalists and social media users found guilty of defamation. In 2015, Nasheed was sentenced to 13 years in prison for ordering the judge's 2012 arrest. He received asylum in Britain after traveling there on medical leave.

THE OPPOSITION AND THE AUTOCRAT (AGAIN)

Former strongman Maumoon Abdul Gayoom has broken with his half brother and at least eight ruling party lawmakers loyal to Gayoom have defected from the ruling party, saying they would work with Nasheed's opposition Maldivian Democratic Party to stop the reversals in democracy. In March 2017, Nasheed, Gayoom and two other parties signed an agreement to form an opposition alliance. In July, Maldivian security forces locked down parliament on Yameen's orders, as the alliance mounted an attempt to impeach the parliamentary speaker, the president's ally.

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HEADLINE	02/02 Shanghai: van plows into crowd; 18 hurt
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SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/van-carrying-gas-tanks-plows-pedestrians-shanghai-52783140
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GIST	<p>A minivan hauling gas canisters plowed into pedestrians near a prominent park and burst into flames in downtown Shanghai on Friday, injuring 18 people in the heart of the Chinese financial hub, local authorities reported.</p> <p>Police appeared to dismiss fears that the crash was a deliberate attack, describing it as an accident caused when a driver who was smoking lost control of his vehicle and veered onto the sidewalk.</p> <p>The 40-year-old driver, who police identified only by his surname Chen, and two other people suffered serious injuries. Chen works for a Shanghai metals company and had no criminal record but was now under suspicion of transporting dangerous materials, police said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 NTSB: 'issues' reported at grade crossing
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SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/witnesses-report-issues-crossing-amtrak-accident-ntsb/story?id=52767496
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GIST	<p>Witnesses interviewed by the NTSB reported "issues" at the grade crossing where an Amtrak train carrying GOP lawmakers slammed into a garbage truck near Charlottesville, Virginia, NTSB officials confirmed today.</p> <p>In the days leading up to the crash -- which killed one person and injured at least six -- the gates "weren't working right," a neighbor told ABC News. The gates would sometimes block the crossing for hours, even when a train was nowhere in sight, he said.</p> <p>Buckingham Branch Railroad, the company responsible for track and signal maintenance, declined to comment on alleged malfunctions.</p> <p>The NTSB hopes information from the lead locomotive's forward-facing camera, which has been transported to Washington, D.C., for download and evaluation, will shed light on what occurred at the crossing Wednesday.</p> <p>Data downloaded from the trailing locomotive's event data recorder reveals that the train was traveling at about 61 mph when the throttle transitioned from full to idle. Twenty seconds later, the train came to a stop after colliding with the truck.</p> <p>The impact separated the cab from the freight, with garbage strewn alongside the tracks. Lawmakers, including several who are doctors, attempted CPR on the occupants, who were thrown from the vehicle.</p> <p>Time Disposal, the owner of the truck, has been "very cooperative" through the investigation, NTSB officials said.</p> <p>The 30-year-old driver of the truck worked for Time Disposal for about seven years, according to the NTSB, which said it is "in the process of trying to interview the driver."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Federal officials blame Puerto Rico
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-puerto-rico-lacked-leadership-communication-post-storm-52768743?
GIST	<p>Federal officials on Thursday blamed a lack of leadership, money and communication in Puerto Rico for setting back hurricane recovery efforts in the U.S. territory.</p> <p>FEMA Deputy Regional Administrator Ahsha Tribble said the island's bureaucracy and the power company's inability to pay for supplies it ordered after Hurricane Maria slowed efforts to restore electricity. Nearly half a million power customers remain in the dark more than four months after the Category 4 storm, which destroyed two-thirds of the power distribution system, killed dozens of people and caused up to an estimated \$94 billion in damage.</p> <p>Tribble said it was "extremely difficult" to work with Puerto Rico's Electric Power Authority immediately after the storm to figure out what it needed to rebuild the system. She also said the company's financial constraints led to a lack of trust among FEMA suppliers and that appointing an interim power company director in the middle of the disaster led to challenges with leadership. In addition, communication was strained, she said.</p> <p>"In an emergency, when you have eight layers of approval to get something done, it's not working for us," she said. "You put all that together, and it's a recipe for disaster."</p> <p>Tribble was among several officials who spoke before a federal control board that oversees Puerto Rico's finances and is considering a plan to privatize the power company, which is \$9 billion in debt. It would be the largest restructuring of a public entity in U.S. history.</p>

Energy experts told the board that a lack of maintenance, heavily loaded lines and shoddy work done by Puerto Rico's power company over the years contributed to the power grid's extensive failure after the hurricane.

Sanjay Bose, an official with ConEdison who was helping after the hurricane, said his crews in Puerto Rico observed many problems, including poles that had been installed at a more shallow depth than industry standard.

"It's not one single thing that I can point my finger at," he said. "Maintenance would have prevented some of the damage."

Power company spokesman Geraldo Quinones referred a request for comment to the island's financial authority, whose spokesman did not respond.

Col. Donovan Ollar of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers told the board that only 61 percent of the power company's transmission system is now complete. Part of the problem is that some of the equipment Puerto Rico uses is unique to the island and is no longer made by manufacturers in the U.S. mainland. In addition, Puerto Rico uses 200 to 300 types of transformers when the industry standard is three to four, he said.

Ollar also said that makeshift repairs done by the power company to keep the system running prior to the hurricane created more work for his crews.

"It makes it problematic to come back and do it properly," he said, adding that he wants to rebuild the system to mirror those in the U.S. mainland so when companies fly in, they can use the same equipment.

Officials noted that Puerto Rico did not activate a mutual aid agreement with mainland power companies until Oct. 31, more than a month after Hurricane Maria hit. Meanwhile, shortly after the storm, the power company's former director signed a \$300 million contract with a small Montana company called Whitefish Holdings Inc. to help with restoration efforts. The director has since resigned and the contract was cancelled.

FEMA official Ahsha Tribble defended that contract, saying that U.S. power companies under the mutual aid agreement were not capable of repairing the transmission system given the extent of the damage.

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HEADLINE	02/01 Ex-Mayor Murray \$116K a year for life
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/times-watchdog/ed-murrays-time-as-seattle-mayor-boosted-his-pension-past-100000-a-year-for-life/
GIST	<p>Former Seattle Mayor Ed Murray, who resigned in September amid child sexual-abuse allegations, has started drawing public retirement benefits that will pay him \$115,920 a year for the rest of his life.</p> <p>Murray's retirement benefits include gross monthly pension payments of about \$8,460 from the state and \$1,200 from the city, records show.</p> <p>His total retirement pay was significantly enhanced by the nearly \$185,000 annual salary he drew during his first two years as mayor — Murray's final stop along a more than two-decade career in Washington politics.</p> <p>All told, Murray's annual retirement pay easily will surpass earnings for 18 of his 21 years as an elected official, records show. It's also about \$35,920 more — or almost 1½ times greater — than Seattle's median annual household income of about \$80,000.</p> <p>Murray, who declined an in-person interview about his retirement, answered some questions through his attorney, Steve Fogg.</p>

“Ed was a public servant not making a lot of money each year until he became mayor,” Fogg said. “His focal point was on being mayor and his public service, it wasn’t on retirement.”

Though seemingly comfortable, Murray’s retirement isn’t peculiar; he’s reaping benefits entitled to him under state law and pension plan rules.

Murray is among a small subset of Washington public employees who retire as dual members of pension plans from both the state and one of three large cities (Seattle, Tacoma and Spokane) that provide their own. That guarantees him two monthly pension payments for life. And, because his state and city benefit plans are “portable,” they can be used to help each other maximize retirement benefits.

Both of Murray’s pensions are calculated in part based on his highest average monthly pay for any two consecutive years along with the total number of years worked.

Murray, who turned 62 in May, qualified for his state pension at age 60. When he resigned as mayor, he chose January 1, 2016, as the effective date of his state retirement, giving him two full years of city pay — or an average \$15,405 per month — to calculate his state pension benefits. He also received a one-time retroactive retirement payment of \$83,025, records show.

His 18 years of state employment, in turn, helped Murray qualify for a city pension. With less than four years as Seattle’s mayor, Murray otherwise would not have met his city retirement plan’s five-year employment requirement to become fully vested.

The former mayor downplayed his financial prospects during the scandal that last year that derailed his political career. Between April and September, when the mayor resigned, five men accused Murray of paying for sex or sexually assaulting them as teenagers decades ago.

Murray denies all the allegations.

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HEADLINE	02/01 SEA: renovations, record growth
SOURCE	http://www.kiro7.com/news/local/record-number-of-passengers-pushes-expansion-at-sea-tac-airport/692754662
GIST	<p>SEATAC, Wash. - The Port of Seattle says Sea-Tac Airport is hitting a record-breaking seventh year of passenger growth as billions of dollars’ worth of renovations and expansions are underway.</p> <p>President of the Port Commission, Courtney Gregoire, told KIRO 7 the opening of a new International Arrivals Facility is needed to be able to serve more passengers and improve the travel experience.</p> <p>“By opening up the facility, using new technology and by encouraging our federal government to have a few more customs and border protection agents to give everyone a better experience when they come to our region,” Gregoire said at a news conference Thursday.</p> <p>Sea-Tac Airport saw nearly 47 million passengers come through last year, and they expect to break records again in 2018.</p> <p>The airport expects to spend \$3.2 billion on development between 2017 and 2022. No taxpayer dollars are used to fund airport projects.</p> <p>Port commissioners say the expansion projects include the arrivals facility, a renovation of the Central Terminal dining area and a North Satellite modernization.</p> <p>Work on the \$17 million renovation of the Central Terminal dining area will begin Feb. 8. It will add</p>

	10,000 more square feet and provide more dining and retail options, including charging stations for travelers to plug in their personal electronic devices, new sit-down restaurants and more food options closer to passenger gates.
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	02/01 Apple removes Telegram app from store
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/news/2018/02/01/apple-removes-secretive-telegram-messaging-app-app-store/1086302001/
GIST	<p>Telegram’s founder and CEO said Apple removed the company’s controversial messaging apps from the iOS App Store because of content that apparently violated Apple’s guidelines.</p> <p>“We were alerted by Apple that inappropriate content was made available to our users, and both apps were taken off the App Store,” Pavel Durov remarked on Twitter. “Once we have protections in place, we expect the apps to be back on the App Store.” He did not comment on timing.</p> <p>Telegram’s free apps are still available for Android in the Google Play store. The apps can still be downloaded onto a computer via the Mac version of the App Store.</p> <p>Apple also confirmed the removal of the iOS apps but gave no reason. In general terms, Apple’s guidelines indicate that "apps should not include content that is offensive, insensitive, upsetting, intended to disgust or in exceptionally poor taste." Nor should they be inflammatory or intended to cause physical harm, the company says.</p> <p>Telegram has not yet responded to a USA TODAY request for comment.</p> <p>Durov, a Russian programmer who has been referred to as the “Mark Zuckerberg of Russia,” fled his native country in 2014. He has since run Telegram from various overseas outposts, most recently Dubai. On its website, the company said it is “ready to relocate again if local regulations change.”</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Court: can’t sue Twitter for terror support
SOURCE	https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2018/02/appeals-court-twitter-cant-be-sued-for-material-support-of-terrorism/
GIST	<p>An appeals court has ruled that Twitter is not liable for the deaths of two American military contractors who were killed in Jordan in 2015.</p> <p>In a Wednesday decision, the 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals agreed with a lower court’s ruling in 2016 for dismissal of the case, <i>Fields v. Twitter</i>.</p> <p>As Ars reported, the plaintiffs claimed that Twitter violated the Anti-Terrorism Act by providing Twitter accounts to the terrorist group. The plaintiffs, who represent the estate of the two deceased men, did not allege that any specific tweets instigated the terrorist to kill the US contractors, and they did not allege that ISIS recruited or trained the terrorist over Twitter. However, they did claim that Twitter provided “material support” for terrorism by allowing ISIS and its sympathizers on the social media network.</p> <p>A three-judge panel unanimously ruled that the plaintiffs had not shown that Twitter was close enough to the violence that tragically ended the lives of their loved ones.</p> <p>“We conclude that Twitter has the better of the argument and hold that to satisfy the ATA’s ‘by reason of’</p>

	requirement, a plaintiff must show at least some direct relationship between the injuries that he or she suffered and the defendant's acts," the judges wrote .
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HEADLINE	02/01 Hackers already targeted Winter Olympics
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/pyeongchang-winter-olympics-cyberattacks/
GIST	<p>THE OLYMPICS HAVE always been a geopolitical microcosm: beyond the athletic match-ups, they provide a vehicle for diplomacy and propaganda, and even, occasionally, a proxy for war. It stands to reason, then, that in 2018 they've also become a nexus of hacker skullduggery. The Olympics unfolding next week in Pyeongchang may already be the most thoroughly hacked in the games' history—with potentially more surprises to come.</p> <p>More so than any previous Olympics, the run-up to Pyeongchang has been plagued by apparent state-sponsored hackers: One Russia-linked campaign has stolen and leaked embarrassing documents from Olympic organizations, while security researchers have tracked another operation, possibly North Korean, that appears to be spying on South Korean Olympics-related organizations.</p> <p>Security researchers tracking those two operations say the full scope of either remains far from clear, leaving the looming question of whether they could still present new disruptions timed to unfold during the games themselves. And more broadly, the intrusions signal that the geopolitical tensions that have long underscored the Olympics now extend into the digital realm as well.</p> <p>"The Olympics have always been the most politicized sporting event of them all," says Thomas Rid, a professor of strategic studies at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies. "It's not a surprise at all that they've become a high-profile target for hacking."</p> <p>Operation GoldDragon</p> <p>The far stealthier of the two known Olympics hacking operations—and perhaps the most troubling—has quietly targeted South Korean Olympics-related organizations for well over a month. Researchers for security firm McAfee discovered just this week that the campaign, which they've named Operation GoldDragon, has attempted to plant three distinct spyware tools on target machines that would enable hackers to deeply scour the compromised computers' contents. McAfee identifies those malicious tools by the names GoldDragon, BravePrince, and GHOST419.</p> <p>The firm's researchers say they've linked those malware samples to a phishing campaign that lures victims with Korean-language emails, indicating South Korean targets. The messages, which spoof a note from South Korea's National Counter-Terrorism Center—and, according to McAfee, were timed to actual terrorism drills in Pyeongchang—targeted a BCC'd list of more than 300 Olympics-related targets, McAfee says, with only the address "icehockey@pyeongchang2018.com" visible in its "to" line. Analyzing the email's metadata, however, McAfee identified other intended victims, including local tourism organizations in Pyeongchang, ski resorts, transportation, and key departments of the Pyeongchang Olympics effort.</p> <p>The hackers attached a Korean-language Word document to the email, crafted to run a malicious script on the target machine. If the victim clicked "enable content" after opening that tainted attachment, they would give the attacker remote access to the computer. The attackers could use that initial, temporary foothold to install their spyware for more persistent visibility into any hacked machine. McAfee notes that script is hidden in an innocent-looking image file with clever steganography and other obfuscation tactics.</p> <p>McAfee traced the phishing scheme to a remote server in the Czech Republic, registered with fake credentials to a South Korean government ministry. And they found publicly accessible logs on that remote server that showed victim machines were in fact connecting to it from South Korea, a sign of actual infections. "Was this a successful campaign? The answer is yes," says McAfee chief scientist Raj Samani. "We know that it's had victims."</p>

Despite all of those findings, the origin and the ultimate aim of that relatively sophisticated malware campaign remains unclear. But based on the Korean language and targeting, Samani hints that his working theory points to a North Korean espionage operation keeping tabs on its southern neighbor.

That spying may seem to run counter to a recent thawing of diplomatic relations between the two Koreas, one that has even resulted in a combination of the two countries' national women's hockey teams. But North Korea likely wouldn't call off its aggressive hacking over a momentary olive branch. "I would guess it's a 'keep your friends close and your enemies closer' approach," Samani says.

Anti-Doping Bears

A far louder and more explicit hacker threat has come from a notorious outfit linked with the Kremlin's GRU military intelligence agency, known as Fancy Bear, or APT28—according to many security researchers, almost certainly the same Fancy Bear that hacked the Democratic National Committee and Clinton campaign in the midst of the 2016 election.

Since as early as September of that year, those brazen hackers have repeatedly targeted athletic organizations, with the intent of exposing evidence of what they claim is widespread doping in Western countries, an apparent retaliation for the ban of Russian athletes from the 2016 and 2018 games for the same charge. "We will start with the US team which has disgraced its name by tainted victories," the hackers wrote in a message on their website when they first began leaking documents from the World Anti-Doping Association in September of 2016. "Wait for sensational proof of famous athletes taking doping substances any time soon."

At the time, the Fancy Bear hackers released the private medical records of star US athletes Serena Williams, Venus Williams, and Simone Biles, touting permissions they had received to use potentially performance-enhancing drugs to treat attention deficit disorder and muscle inflammation.

This year, Fancy Bear planned its Olympic-hacking far more proactively. Starting in early January, they published two collections of hacked documents from Olympics-related agencies: One set revealed political tensions between officials at the International Olympic Committee and the WADA officials tasked with policing the games' athletes. A second release later in the month again pointed to special permissions given to certain athletes—a member of the Swedish luge team takes asthma medication, for instance—and an Italian athlete who had at one point missed a drug test. And a third leak on Wednesday pointed to the case of Shawn Barber, a Canadian pole vaulter allowed to compete in the 2016 games despite at one point testing positive for cocaine.

None of Fancy Bear's recent releases has proven any clear wrongdoing—at least, nothing remotely comparable to Russia's systematic doping program for thousands of athletes—and all have generally been ignored by the sporting world and the Western media. But Russian state news outlets have nonetheless faithfully rehashed the leaks. And Johns Hopkins' Rid says the hacks, like the attacks on the DNC and Clinton campaign in 2016, have an effect that's not easily measured or dismissed.

Rid compares the operation to the KGB's tactics in 1984, after Russia was banned from the Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. The spy agency responded by mailing forged KKK pamphlets threatening race-based attacks to members of 20 visiting Asian and African teams. "There's no great goal they want to achieve," Rid says. "It's more one of throwing wrenches and sand into the gears of a machine, to make life more difficult for your adversary, engender debate and internal conflict among allies to distract from the confrontation that's harming you."

More Ammunition

Fancy Bear may yet have more leaks in store. Security firms Trend Micro and ThreatConnect have linked the group's propaganda campaign with collections of spoofed domains they've discovered, likely used in the group's well-honed phishing attacks. Many of those fake domains haven't yet resulted in leaks, but may have nonetheless led to compromises of Olympics-related organizations. They've spotted registrations for spoofed domains designed to mimic the US Anti-Doping Agency, British counterpart UK Anti-Doping,

the Olympic Council of Asia, European Ice Hockey Federation, the International Ski Federation, the International Biathlon Union, the International Bobsleigh and the Skeleton Federation.

Security firms, to be clear, have no evidence that those organizations have been compromised. But they point out that the same group that's registered fake domains that seem to have been used in earlier Fancy Bear phishing and leaking operations registered fake domains for those targets, too. Any one of them might be a source of new, disruptive secret-spilling before or during the games. "In the run-up to the Olympics, we'd expect to see continuing activity from Fancy Bear and other APTs," says ThreatConnect researcher Kyle Ehmke, using the abbreviation for "Advanced Persistent Threat," an industry term for sophisticated state-sponsored hackers. "There's no reason to think they'll conclude operations just because of what's already been released."

In the parallel case of the likely North Korean espionage campaign, McAfee's chief scientist Samani notes that hacking operation could also get worse before it gets better. If the hackers behind that campaign change their motivation, nothing prevents them from using machines they've compromised on target networks to launch attacks that go beyond espionage, such as destroying data or disrupting networks.

"We do know that other campaigns have gone down the intelligence path and then used it as a vehicle to cause destruction," Samani says, noting that there's no indication of the hackers' motivation beyond mere spying one way or another in this case. "We have no idea what may follow."

All of those indicators of digital meddling, from leaks to espionage campaigns, don't quite add up to a cyberdoomsday scenario. But for the Olympics' organizers—or the athletes waiting for their once-in-a-lifetime spotlight—the notion of multiple, determined hacker teams targeting the world's biggest sporting event should provide enough anxieties to last until the closing ceremony.

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HEADLINE	02/01 Hostile states using proxy hackers
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/02/01/heres-how-hostile-states-are-hiding-behind-independent-hackers/?utm_term=.ae0410119aff
GIST	<p>More and more states are using supposedly independent hackers as proxies to project power both at home and abroad. According to James R. Clapper Jr., former director of national intelligence, more than 30 countries are now pursuing offensive cyber capabilities. Some of them rely on hackers who are not part of the government. In the past, there has been more rumor than fact about how these proxy relationships are organized and structured. However, the veil of secrecy is beginning to lift.</p> <p>For example, in November, a 22-year-old Canadian hacker pleaded guilty to having worked with two officers of the Russian intelligence agency FSB. A year earlier, Germany extradited a member of the Syrian Electronic Army to the United States. Meanwhile, the seven Iranian hackers accused of being responsible for the massive distributed denial of service DDoS attacks against financial institutions in the United States in 2012 remain at large. These and other cases provide new information about these proxy relationships and their consequences.</p> <p>Malicious nonstate hackers are a real threat</p> <p>Policymakers and academics have had a hard time keeping up with how cybersecurity is changing on the ground. Alarmist debates about whether “cyberwar” would take place did get senior policymakers and the public to care about cybersecurity, but at the expense of making them focus on the threat from other states and interstate conflict. This means that they have systematically neglected the role that hackers detached from the state play as proxies and how they facilitate state actors to develop and quickly deploy offensive cyber capabilities.</p> <p>It is now clear that actors other than states can cause significant harm through hacking. In fact, less sophisticated actors can potentially pose a greater risk than sophisticated actors because they often lack the skills to develop more precise code that would limit the effect of the malware. The WannaCry ransomware</p>

that hit computer systems worldwide last year, and forced hospitals in the United Kingdom to turn patients away, demonstrates what can happen if a less sophisticated actor uses malware with the intent to cause harm.

Here's what we know about the Kremlin's playbook for creating division in the U.S. (Jenny Starrs/The Washington Post)

It is possible to identify hackers

One of the big problems in cybersecurity is identifying attackers. This is referred to as the “[attribution problem](#).” However, attributing malicious activity online has become easier in recent years. The Russian, Syrian and Iranian attacks mentioned above led to detailed indictments, which the U.S. government decided to unseal over the past two years. These indictments illustrate that, while attribution remains difficult, for the U.S. government it has become less a question whether it is possible but how long it will take and whether it is [willing to disclose](#) what it knows to the public.

Of course, part of the reason is that attackers make mistakes and can afford to be sloppy because they have to fear few consequences (if they remain [beyond reach](#) of U.S. agencies). That is why some governments, including the United States, and some specialized private threat intelligence companies, are able to successfully identify the source of an attack with sufficient confidence and evidence to make the case stick in court.

What hackers do tells us how states think

What proxies do helps tell us how their state sponsors think about cyberthreats and how they try to project power online. [Tehran](#), for example, cares at least as much about hacking the accounts of dissidents and potential challengers to the regime as about espionage against other countries. Moscow, Beijing, Tehran and other governments don't think in terms of cybersecurity but information security — a more expansive concept including content and the control of information. High-profile incidents during the past five years reflect this worldview; the attacks include the [Sony cyberattack](#), the combination of information and cyberoperations in [Ukraine](#) and the [GitHub incident](#). These differences among states explain why the international cybersecurity debate cannot be separated from discussions about human rights, at least not as long as some governments care more about regime stability and the perceived threat of information than about technical vulnerabilities and improving the resilience of computer systems.

Hacking is changing international relations

A decade ago, very few policymakers and media outlets paid serious attention to cybersecurity. After the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the Iraq War, they focused on terrorism and conventional war. Many were skeptical that hacking would have a systematic impact on international affairs. Today, it is clear that this hacking wasn't just hype. It has given actors the ability to cause harmful effects around the globe — assuming there is Internet access — far more cheaply than through conventional means.

This increase in reach is the single most important reason why hacking poses new risks to international peace and security. For example, the tensions between the United States and North Korea did not first change from a regional to a global conflict because of the development of an intercontinental ballistic missile but because of North Korea's ability to hack systems such as Sony's. More recent incidents [targeting SWIFT](#), the central nervous system of global finance, highlight how vulnerable even major financial institutions remain to third tier cyber-powers like North Korea.

More states are using proxies

More states have gotten a taste for exploiting the Internet for their purposes. Mercenaries like the 22-year old in Canada, who was paid by the Russian FSB, or politically driven hacktivists like the four Iranians in their mid-20s are helping countries to develop and deploy offensive cyber tools. Ensuring that proxy hackers do not escape their masters and countering their malicious behavior poses major policy challenges. Over the next few years, we will find out whether the new administration's [focus](#) on trying to impose greater consequences in order to deter attacks will work. If successful, it will nudge other countries to tighten the leash on their proxies. If it raises the costs of malicious hackers only a little, it will likely just make them invest a little more time and money to become stealthier and better at hiding their tracks.

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HEADLINE	02/01 FBI warns of fake FBI IC3 email
SOURCE	https://www.theregister.co.uk/2018/02/01/fbi_malware_emails/
GIST	<p>Some scammers may have bitten off more than they can chew after they tried impersonating the FBI to spread malware.</p> <p>The Feds' Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) issued an alert on Wednesday warning that it has received numerous complaints from citizens who have received emails purporting to be from IC3. Each message states that the recipient is due money as compensation from a cyber-attack, and asks them to fill out the attached document with their personal details – and, yup, you guessed it – that file is laden with malware.</p> <p>The email claims a Nigerian had been arrested by the FBI in Atlanta, USA, and that the recipient's email address had been found on the imaginary scammer's computer. All the mark has to do to pocket their windfall is return the document with their contact details and wait for the cash to arrive.</p> <p>"At least three other versions of the IC3 impersonation scam have been identified," the FBI warned. "As of July 2017, the IC3 has received numerous victim complaints regarding the scam."</p> <p>Two other variants of the emails are in circulation. One claims to come from the FBI IC3 office in Houston, Texas, and informs the lucky recipient that they are due \$10.5m in compensation from banking fraud.</p> <p>The third letter take a more threatening tone, saying that the IP address associated with the recipient's computer has been under investigation since September 2017 for online crimes. The receiver is instructed to fill out the enclosed booby-trapped form and return it.</p> <p>So far the FBI says no one appears to have been financially hurt by the scam, and it is probing the con. Agents are also seeking out the scammers – and very few things piss off the G-Men like someone taking their name in vain. Expect arrests.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 HHS issues cyber extortion newsletter
SOURCE	https://www.dataprotectionreport.com/2018/02/hhs-ocr-issues-cyber-extortion-newsletter/
GIST	<p>This week, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office for Civil Rights (OCR) published a January 2018 newsletter focusing on “cyber extortion.”</p> <p>Cyber extortion often involves an attacker gaining access to an organization’s computer system, stealing sensitive information, and threatening to publish the information. Healthcare and public health organizations are often the targets of these attacks, so affected data frequently includes protected health information, or PHI. The OCR newsletter indicates that incidents of cyber extortion have been steadily increasing over the past several years and will continue to disrupt many organizations.</p> <p>Cyber extortion can take many forms. The OCR newsletter highlights ransomware and Denial of Service (DoS) attacks in particular.</p> <p>Ransomware involves the denial of access to a user’s data –typically, a hacker encrypts an organization’s data with a key known only to the hacker, and the hacker will demand payment from the organization in order to provide the decryption key.</p> <p>Ransomware may also involve the deployment of malware that destroys data. A U.S. government interagency report indicates that there have been approximately 4,000 daily ransomware attacks since early</p>

	<p>2016.</p> <p>In response, OCR published a factsheet to provide guidance on preventing and responding to ransomware attackers for HIPAA covered entities and business associates. The factsheet urges covered entities and business associates to maintain frequent backups and ensure the ability to recover data from backups.</p> <p>DoS and Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) are other forms of cyber extortion highlighted in the OCR newsletter. These typically direct an abnormally high volume of network traffic to targeted computers so that the affected computers appear down or otherwise inaccessible. Attackers either initiate an attack and demand payment to halt the attack, or they may threaten the attack and demand payment to stop it from happening in the first place. OCR also highlighted DoS and DDoS attacks in a prior security newsletter, which includes tips on identifying and stopping an attack.</p> <p>Cyber attackers constantly create new versions of malware and organizations must be vigilant to protect their data from attack. The HHS website includes a number of guidance materials for HIPAA professionals including standards, checklists, and awareness newsletters to assist with the vigilance required to protect sensitive data from attackers.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Massive wave of attacks on Dutch banks
SOURCE	http://www.zdnet.com/article/ddos-mystery-whos-behind-this-massive-wave-of-attacks-targeting-dutch-banks/
GIST	<p>There is as yet no indication of who is behind the massive distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks on Netherlands banks and government websites that ran from last weekend to Tuesday. Initial reports suggesting a Russian connection appear baseless.</p> <p>The attacks began just a couple of days after media reports stated that Dutch intelligence tipped off their American counterparts about state-sponsored Russian spies hacking the apparatus of the Democratic Party and stealing the infamous "leaked emails" that may have swayed the 2016 election.</p> <p>The publication NL Times reported that the Bratislava-based security company ESET had identified the attacks as coming from servers in Russia.</p> <p>That fact would, of course, be less than solid evidence that Russian attackers are to blame, because DDoS attacks can bounce all over the place before finally hitting their target, always making attribution troublesome.</p> <p>But when ZDNet contacted the security firm, it denied ever making a claim about a Russian connection. "This report about an ESET claim was an unfortunate mistake and misrepresentation by one Dutch news outlet and was corrected by them," spokesman Branislav Ondrasik said.</p> <p>The bank ABN Amro became the first victim on Saturday, while Rabobank and ING Bank were hit on Monday, along with the Dutch Taxation Authority. All four were hit again on Tuesday, but this time their defenses reportedly fared better.</p> <p>ABN Amro told ZDNet on Wednesday morning that the attack was "not ongoing at the moment". The bank stressed in an earlier statement that the DDoS did not threaten the security of its services -- it just knocked them out.</p> <p>"This weekend's DDoS attacks were heavier than previous ones and lasted longer. At the moment, it is unknown who is behind the attacks, and in by far most cases, the source of an attack is never discovered," ABN Amro said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 Bitcoin continues downward trend
SOURCE	https://money.usnews.com/investing/news/articles/2018-02-02/bitcoin-slides-further-headed-for-worst-week-since-2013
GIST	<p>LONDON (Reuters) - Bitcoin fell 9 percent on Friday, leaving the best-known cryptocurrency down more than 30 percent this week and headed for its worst weekly performance since April 2013.</p> <p>The cryptocurrency dropped to as low as \$8,155 at 0915 GMT on the Luxembourg-based bitstamp exchange amid a broader rout in the market. Other large cryptocurrencies have lost more than 20 percent of their value in the last 24 hours of trading, according to Coinmarketcap.com.</p> <p>A growing regulatory backlash against digital coins has sent investors scrambling to sell this week. Bitcoin is down more than half from a December peak of almost \$20,000 after it notched up a more than 1,000 gain last year.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 New Monero mining malware infects PCs
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/monero-mining-malware-using-2-nsa-exploits/
GIST	<p>Another day, another Monero mining malware – This one uses two NSA exploits and so far it has mined over 8,900 Monero.</p> <p>It looks like the craze of cryptocurrency mining is taking over the world by storm as every new day there is a new malware targeting unsuspecting users to use their computing power to mine cryptocurrency. Recently, the IT security researchers at Proofpoint have discovered a Monero mining malware that uses leaked NSA (National Security Agency) EternalBlue exploit to spread itself.</p> <p>Dubbed Smominru by researchers, this highly sophisticated malware has infected 526,000 Windows-based computers since May 2017 and is capable of mining around 24 Monero (XMR) per day which is currently \$5,657. So far, the malware has generated 8,900 Monero which is around \$2 million from targets in India, Russia, and Taiwan.</p> <p>“Based on the hash power associated with the Monero payment address for this operation, it appeared that this botnet was likely twice the size of Adylkuzz,” researchers wrote in their blog post.</p> <p>Adylkuzz is another cryptocurrency malware appeared after the WannaCry attack. Adylkuzz also uses EternalBlue and targets Windows-based computers to mine Monero cryptocurrency.</p> <p>The EternalBlue exploit was leaked by Shadow Brokers hacking group after hacking the agency. The same exploit was then used by hackers to spread WannaCry ransomware campaign which affected over 200,000 victims and more than 300,000 computers around the world.</p> <p>According to researchers, hackers are also using another NSA exploit called EsteemAudit to spread Smominru malware. The EsteemAudit exploit was leaked by Shadow Brokers in April 2017. The ex-NSA spy Edward Snowden had described the leak as “The mother of all exploits.”</p> <p>Furthermore, Smominru’s command and control (C&C) infrastructure is hosted on SharkTech, a DDoS protection company in Las Vegas, NV. Proofpoint informed SharkTech about the ongoing cybercriminal activity on their server but did not receive any reply from the company.</p> <p>“As bitcoin has become prohibitively resource-intensive to mine outside of dedicated mining farms, interest in Monero has increased dramatically. While Monero can no longer be mined effectively on desktop computers, a distributed botnet like that described here can prove quite lucrative for its operators,” said Proofpoint researchers.</p>

	“The operators of this botnet are persistent, use all available exploits to expand their botnet, and have found multiple ways to recover after sinkhole operations,” researchers added.
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HEADLINE	02/01 JenX botnet targets IoT devices
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/jenx-botnet-emerges-to-target-iot/
GIST	<p>A new botnet, dubbed JenX, shares characteristics with the Satori botnet, and is using Grand Theft Auto (GTA) to recruit internet of things (IoT) devices.</p> <p>According to Radware, the botnet uses hosted servers to find and infect new victims, leveraging one of two known vulnerabilities that have become popular in IoT botnets recently: CVE-2014-8361 and CVE-2017-17215. Both have related exploits.</p> <p>Both exploit vectors are known from the Satori botnet. The malware is based on the Satori code that was part of a recent public Pastebin post by the author of BrickerBot, along with attributes from the PureMasuta botnet, which had its source code published in an invite-only dark forum, the firm said.</p> <p>Interestingly, the bot herder seems to be a big gaming fan: Radware researchers found that the command and control server is hosted under the domain sancalvicie.com, a site that provides mod servers for Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas, in addition to cybercrime offerings like distributed denial of services (DDoS) via the botnet.</p> <p>One of those services is dubbed “Corriente Divina” (which translates to “divine stream”). It’s described as “God’s wrath will be employed against the IP that you provide us.”</p> <p>According to Radware researcher Pascal Geenens, it provides a DDoS service with a guaranteed bandwidth of 290 to 300 Gbps.</p> <p>Interestingly, it doesn’t have scanning and exploit payloads, meaning that this functionality is centralized. This provides the bot herders with more flexibility to add and improve the functionality as they go.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 Study: more ICS accessible via web
SOURCE	http://www.securityweek.com/increasing-number-industrial-systems-accessible-web-study
GIST	<p>The number of industrial control systems (ICS) accessible from the Internet has increased significantly in the past year, reaching more than 175,000 components, according to a new report from Positive Technologies.</p> <p>Using the Shodan, Censys and Google search engines, researchers identified 175,632 ICS components accessible from the Web. In comparison, similar searches conducted in the <u>previous year</u> uncovered just over 162,000 systems.</p> <p>Of all the systems identified in 2017, more than 66,000 were accessible via HTTP, followed by the Fox building automation protocol associated with Honeywell’s Niagara framework (39,000), Ethernet/IP (25,000), BACnet (13,000), and the Lantronix discovery protocol (10,000).</p> <p>The highest percentage of exposed devices, representing 42% of the total, was spotted in the United States. The number of Internet-accessible ICS components in the U.S. increased by 10% compared to 2016, from roughly 50,000 to 64,000. The U.S. is followed at a distance by Germany (13,000 accessible systems), France (7,000), and Canada (7,000).</p> <p>Many of the industrial systems connected to the Web come from Honeywell (26,000), Lantronix (12,000),</p>

SMA (9,000), Beck IPC (9,000), Siemens (6,000) and Rockwell Automation (5,000).

The distribution of Internet-exposed components by type has remained largely the same compared to 2016.

Type of ICS component	Share in 2017	Share in 2016
SCADA/DCS/HMI and/or PLC/RAP (RTU) ¹³	14.2%	13.6%
PLC/RAP (RTU)	13.2%	12.9%
Network equipment	12.9%	5.1%
SCADA/DCS/HMI	7.1%	7.8%
Electrical measuring equipment	6.3%	5.2%
Other	46.5%	55.5%

John Matherly, CEO of the search engine Shodan, has confirmed for *SecurityWeek* that there has been an increase of roughly 10% year-over-year in terms of ICS exposure on the Internet.

“The increase is mostly in building automation protocols and despite the news coverage we haven't seen any decrease in devices,” Matherly said.

According to Positive Technologies, a total of nearly 200 new vulnerabilities were disclosed in 2017, compared to 115 in 2016. Worryingly, 61% of the flaws whose existence was made public last year were rated critical and high severity.

The most common types of vulnerabilities were remote code execution (24%), information disclosure (17%), and buffer overflows (12%). “Most vulnerabilities detected in 2017 can be exploited remotely without needing to obtain any privileges in advance,” Positive Technologies said in its [report](#).

A report published in October by CyberX revealed that one-third of industrial and critical infrastructure systems had been [connected to the Internet](#), based on data obtained by the industrial security firm by passively monitoring traffic from hundreds of operational technology (OT) networks.

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HEADLINE 02/01 US CERT guidelines Olympics visitors

SOURCE <https://www.scmagazine.com/us-cert-posts-cybersecurity-suggestions-for-pyeongchang-winter-olympic-attendees/article/741026/>

GIST With the torch lighting for the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang just over a week away U.S. CERT has issued cybersecurity guidelines for those visiting the games, tips that can also be used in any public environment.

Considering the on-the-go nature of attending the Olympics all of the recommendations center on mobile security hygiene and are very similar to what attendees of Black Hat and Def Con are told.

- Switch off Wi-Fi and Bluetooth connections when not in use.
- Use a credit card to pay for online goods and services.
- When using a public or unsecured wireless connection, avoid using sites and applications that require personal information like log-ins.
- Update mobile software.
- Use strong PINs and passwords.

Other suggestions include have two-factor authentication for your accounts, keep a screen lock active on your device and most importantly take a minute and think before you click on a link.

	<p>There have already been several hacking attempts centered on the Olympics with documents and emails stolen from the International Luge Federation being leaked and McAfee reported in early January campaign targeting organizations involved with the Pyeongchang Olympics that used the games as part of a social engineering plan to trick folks into opening phishing emails.</p> <p>While nation-state backed cyberattacks cannot be ruled out, most experts believe that with North Korea now attending the games and attack from that direction is unlikely, but it does not mean the games are safe.</p> <p>“The largest cyber threat to the Winter Games comes from non-state actors. Hacktivists, cyberterrorists, and fame seekers all see the Olympics as a great venue for their personal cause, whether it's personal fame, the propaganda of a political message or harm for a political purpose,” Ross Rustici, senior director for intelligence services for Cybereason.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Hackers scam BeeToken users of \$1M
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/phishing-attacks-net-initial-coin-offering-investors-second-time-this-week/article/741031/
GIST	<p>BeeToken customers were duped out of more than \$1 million worth of Ethereum in a phishing scam targeting BeeToken's initial coin offering (ICO) in a scam similar to the one that targeted Experty earlier this week.</p> <p>BeeToken confirmed the attacks on its Twitter and Medium accounts warning customers to be wary of emails and Telegram urging users to send funds as they are most likely fraudulent. Affected users said the attackers were targeting individuals who signed up for the BeeToken newsletter and its KYC process for the ICO, according to TNW.</p> <p>It is unclear how the hackers obtained the information but some users have accused the company of failing to properly store customer data on Reddit forums. BeeToken CEO Jonathan Chou desputed the claims and told the publication that his company does not “store customers' data in a centralized database like Airbnb.”</p> <p>“We are not at risk of exposing all of our customers' data in one go if there is a security breach,” Chou said. “Things do not seem that way now, at least when it comes to their email system.</p> <p>In the Experty attack, cybercriminals also tricked ICO participants into sending funds to the scammer's wallet instead of to the intended company. In this instance, the hacker was able to compromise the computer of an Experty user in order to obtain the victims' email address to send the phishing emails.</p> <p>Some researchers expect to see many more attacks like this moving forward.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Scarabey ransomware w/new tactics
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/scarabey-ransomware-introduces-new-tactics-distribution/article/741452/
GIST	<p>The malicious actors behind Scarab ransomware have rolled out a new variant, one that uses a different distribution method and ransom threat in order to infect computers and ensure payment.</p> <p>Unlike Scarab the new incarnation, called Scarabey, does not use the Necurs botnet to spread and is targeted at Russian, not English, language speakers, said Malwarebytes researcher vhioureas.</p> <p>On the surface the first difference between the two is distribution, Scarabey favors using Remote Desktop</p>

	<p>Protocol and being manually dropped on servers.</p> <p>The most obvious differentiator is the ransom note. With Scarab the note is written in English, but contains many errors that are synonymous with having been run through an online translator. For the Scarabey note the authors simply used the original source for the Scarab text.</p> <p>“What's interesting is that when you throw the Scarabey note into Google translate...it contains the same grammatical errors as the Scarab note,” vhioureas said, adding, “It would then seem quite likely that, since they decided to target Russians. They released the Scarabey note in their native language to cover more victims.”</p> <p>The threat being used to induce payment was also altered. With Scarab the victim is told that the ransom price will rise the longer it takes to pay up, with Scarabey the attacker says they will begin permanently deleting files, 24 files per 24 hours, if payment is not made.</p> <p>However, vhioureas noted this is a lie as there is nothing in the code to indicate the attacker has in fact copied any files to another location nor does the code contain the ability to delete files remotely.</p> <p>“The conclusion here is that the deletion of files or the idea that the malware authors have access to delete files is purely a scare tactic used to urge users into sending money quickly,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Stolen adult site login credentials
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/kaspersky-research-highlights-cyber-threats-facing-users-of-adult-websites/article/741464/
GIST	<p>Cybercriminals have been using pornography and adult content as a lure to spread malware and steal information since adult content hit the internet, but recent research shows that access to legitimate sites are also fueling a lucrative trade on the dark web.</p> <p>Researchers at Kaspersky Lab examined some of the cyber threats that the users of adult websites and applications face. As more adult content sites begin to turn into content sharing platforms where users can submit their own content, create loyal communities, and like and share content, cybercriminals have found value in stealing and selling adult site login credentials on the dark web, putting more users at risk.</p> <p>And while the outcome of said malware remains the same as in most cases of cybercrime, victims are less likely to report the crimes to anyone because of the stigma associated with admitting to looking for or watching porn.</p> <p>Kaspersky Lab researchers spotted at least 27 variations of PC malware, belonging to three infamous families, specifically designed to hunt for credentials to paid-for porn websites. Among these malware, where banking trojans that had been modified to steal adult website credentials. Cybercriminals also used phishing attacks to obtain the stolen credentials as well.</p> <p>The firm's Naked Online report found that in 2017, these malicious families were seen more than 300,000 times attempting to attack more than 50,000 PCs across the world. The motivation for the stolen credential market is may be price of legitimate services as an annual unlimited account could cost as much as \$119.99 or \$9.99 per month. The desire for anonymity could also be a driving factor as users may not want to deal with purchasing showing up on bank statements.</p> <p>It's also worth noting the average list prices on the dark market for an unlimited account are usually one tenth of the official costs, a stark contrast to other services and products sold which often command a premium. In addition to the low prices, the accounts were being sold in almost unlimited numbers.</p> <p>Researchers spotted more than five thousand unique sales offerings during the course of their researcher</p>

and speculated that many of the breached credentials may have come from the sites themselves.

Since 2016 more than 72 million sets of account credentials for adult content websites were stolen and later appeared online from sites including Cams.com (62.6 million), Penthouse.com (7.1 million), Stripshow (1.42 million), 380,000 of xHamster accounts, and about 791,000 from Brazzers data.

The top five most most-often sold credentials were those for accounts on Naughty America (2,575 sales offers), Brazzers (1,228 sales offers), Mofos (789 sales offers), Reality Kings (294 sales offers), and Pornhub (153 sales offers). Researchers said it's important to not view the ranking as some sort of testament to the security of the sites, but more so as a testimony to the popularity of the sites.

Despite the vast market for stolen credential, researchers warn purchasers of the stolen content put themselves at risk buying stolen credentials is illegal and it's likely the credentials will have already been blocked by the time they are purchased.

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HEADLINE	02/01 Cryptomining attacks rise as big threats
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/crypto-mining-attacks-emerge-as-the-new-big-threat-to-enterprises/d/d-id/1330965
GIST	<p>In an ominous trend for businesses, hijacking computers for cryptocurrency mining appears to have become the go-to strategy for cybercriminals looking for a safe and reliable way to generate illegal revenues.</p> <p>Several vendors in recent days have reported a huge surge in illegal crypto-mining activity involving millions of hijacked computers worldwide. Professional cybercriminals are moving away in droves from less profitable exploits to making money via the surging global interest in digital currencies, said Digital Shadows in the latest warning on this trend.</p> <p>The activity has begun to pose as much of a threat to businesses as it does to consumers. Security vendor CrowdStrike recently reported that it had seen multiple instances of businesses being impacted by illegal crypto-mining activity. In some cases, mining tools installed illegally on business systems have caused applications and hardware to crash, causing operational disruptions lasting days and sometimes even weeks, says Bryan York, director of services at CrowdStrike.</p> <p>"We've seen an uptick in unauthorized crypto-mining, or cryptojacking, targeting businesses," he says. "While cryptocurrency mining has typically been viewed as a nuisance, we've recently seen several cases where mining has impacted business operations," York warns.</p> <p>Mining 101</p> <p>Crypto mining is a fairly complex process where a computer's processing resources are used for blockchain transaction verification. Mining is a very CPU-intensive, resource-hogging activity and some digital currencies like Bitcoin require special-purpose hardware to do it. Several other digital currencies like Monero, Zcash, and Ethereum, however, can also be mined by pooling the resources of multiple computers.</p> <p>In return for installing a mining tool and allowing their computer resources to be pooled for mining, the miners or owners of the computers, receive digital coins in return. Mining itself is a legal activity, and many people around the world allow their systems to be used for the purpose in hopes of making some money on the side.</p> <p>In recent months, however, cybercriminals have begun surreptitiously installing crypto-mining tools on victim computers and using resources of those compromised systems for the same purpose. Instead of taking over computers to steal data or install ransomware, cybercriminals have simply begun stealing</p>

system resources and using this to illegally profit from digital currency mining.

"These attacks are much stealthier than their predecessors," Cisco's Talos threat group said in a report this week. "Attackers are not stealing anything more than computing power from their victims and the mining software isn't technically malware."

When installing mining software, some criminals have even begun putting limits on things like CPU usage and amount of cores being used to ensure users don't notice any obvious performance hit as result of mining software running on their system. In theory, victims could remain part of the adversary botnet indefinitely, Talos said in its report.

Driving the trend is the easy availability of do-it-yourself kits that almost anyone can use for illegal mining. Criminals can rent mining botnets for as little as \$30 to \$130 per month, and software for distributing miners for as little as \$29, according to Digital Shadows.

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HEADLINE	02/01 Cybercriminals target cryptocurrencies
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cryptocurrency-cybercrime/cybercriminals-target-booming-cryptocurrencies-report-idUSKBN1FL5Q7
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (Reuters) - Bitcoin's popularity and the emergence of about 1,500 other digital coins or tokens have drawn more hackers into the red-hot cryptocurrency space, expanding opportunities for crime and fraud, cybersecurity firm Digital Shadows warned in a report on Thursday.</p> <p>"Cybercriminals follow the money and right now they see in the unregulated and largely unsecure world of digital currencies a huge opportunity to target people, businesses and exchanges and make money quickly and easily," said Rick Holland, vice president of strategy at Digital Shadows.</p> <p>Digital currencies have quickly grown into a more mainstream asset class over the last two years as corporations and financial institutions have expanded use of the underlying blockchain technology.</p> <p>With weekly launches of new alternative coins, or "altcoins," cybercriminals have developed several schemes to defraud cryptocurrency holders. "Crypto jacking", account takeovers, mining fraud, and scams against initial coin offerings (ICOs) have all grown more common, the report said.</p> <p>In crypto jacking, cybercriminals secretly take over another computer user's browser and use it to fraudulently mine or create cryptocurrencies, according to Digital Shadows' report. Miners use special software to solve math problems and are issued a certain number of bitcoins or cryptocurrencies in exchange.</p> <p>Crypto Jacker software allows users to clone popular websites and initiate spam campaigns.</p> <p>The cybersecurity company said criminals also perpetrate mining fraud using botnets, collections of internet-connected devices, which may include PCs, servers, and mobile devices that are infected and controlled by a common type of malware. Users are often unaware a botnet has infected their system.</p> <p>Botnets were first used to mine bitcoin in 2014. The process was too complex to be financially viable, but botnets have made a comeback because newer cryptocurrencies like Monero are easier to "mine", Digital Shadows said.</p> <p>The company said botnets could be rented for \$40. It said one such offering had "flown off the shelves" with almost 2,000 rentals so far.</p> <p>Cybercriminals have also been drawn to the surging initial coin offering market, the report said. ICOs have raised roughly \$5 billion for various startups and projects in 2017, according to data from Crunchbase.</p>

	<p>That is up exponentially from just \$100 million in 2016.</p> <p>Rather than selling scam tokens, criminals target legitimate currencies, either by stealing funds from ICOs or by manipulating prices through the type of “pump and dump” schemes often used with penny stocks and other less-liquid assets, the report said.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	02/01 Slow death of al-Qaeda in Algeria
SOURCE	http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/analysis-slow-death-al-qaeda-algeria-143324001
GIST	<p>ALGIERS - It was an admission from the very top: his men were on the run or dead, popular support was almost zero, and allies across North Africa had fallen silent. Algeria was a dead zone for al-Qaeda, admitted its chief in northern Africa.</p> <p>In his April 2017 interview for Inspire, the propaganda sheet of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Abdelmalek Droukdel, the "emir" of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, or AQIM, painted a sorry picture.</p> <p>"Support for the cause is generally good, with the exception of the Algerian front," he said.</p> <p>"We are bogged down in a long war. The Algerian front suffers from scarcity, and sometimes an almost complete lack of support - inside and out.</p> <p>"This has had a terrible impact."</p> <p>Little did he realise things would get worse. The rank-and-file was being thinned by repeated attacks by the Algerian army, but more costly was the loss of many of its executive branch.</p> <p>Bilel Kobi, the special envoy of Droukdel in Tunisia, and Bashir Ben Neji, emir of a group in Tunisia, were shot dead by the Tunisian military in January, In Algeria this week, Abu Rouaha al-Qassantini - real name Adel Seghiri - was killed by the Algerian army in Jijel, about 400km from Algiers.</p> <p>He was the propaganda chief of AQIM, creator of the al-Andalus magazine and mastermind of the propaganda forum "Ifriquya al-Islamiyah" (Islamic Africa), which acted as message board between groups in the region and al-Qaeda in the Middle East.</p> <p>Documents, a telephone and computer equipment found after his death proved invaluable material for the security services. Much of his network was compromised.</p> <p>"He was among the 15 most dangerous AQIM fighters," an Algerian security source told Middle East Eye. "Not for his actions in the field but because he was in charge of encrypting and decrypting the information."</p> <p>Born in 1971 in Constantine, Qassantini gained an electronic engineering degree in 1994 before joining the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and later the notorious Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) in 2002.</p> <p>"It is thought that he has probably continued to train in encryption practices through the internet," said one of the Algerian investigators who handled his case.</p> <p>"Undoubtedly, it's a blow for the organisation and it will be weakened."</p> <p>By law, Algerian military officials - both active and retired - are forbidden to speak to the media and Middle East Eye is unable to quote them by name. But all those who spoke have said the fight against al-</p>

Qaeda and its allies, after several years of setbacks, has swung decisively in the favour of the Algerian state.

AQIM has failed to carry out major attacks in Algeria for several months. The Algerian army says it eliminates an average of 200 militants each year and armed groups are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain their numbers.

So much so that last October, according to an Algerian security source, militant leaders pleaded for reinforcements from its allies in Tunisia and Libya.

How can the change in fortunes be explained? According to a retired Algerian major general, the state is "reaping the benefits of an anti-terrorism policy it has been pursuing for more than 20 years".

"This terrorism, we have always understood as both a security problem but also psychological, economic and cultural," he said.

Military operations, he said, were being run in tandem with efforts to marginalise armed groups' influence on the population.

As a result, "an almost complete absence of support inside", to use Droukdel's expression, is now manifest.

This was evident in 2015, when Madani Merzag, the former "emir" of a group known as the Islamic Salvation Army, a group notorious in the 1990s for a series of massacres, tried to form a political party. His attempt was roundly rejected by Algerians.

"There is no a secret recipe," said the retired general. "Eliminating a terrorist is not a victory if, at the same time, a recruit rises to take their place."

"We fail if [armed groups] are allowed to mobilise the youth. Draining terrorist financing can be an endless thing if you do not target their support networks."

A counter-terrorism source said: "The other mainstay of the security services has been to hit terrorist logistics.

"Some 1,000 members of support networks have been arrested in the last three years. For them, it is a real disaster that has forced dozens of terrorists and their families to surrender to the authorities. "

The tactics have not been received positively by all. NGOs are critical of Algeria's military tactics, and say regular announcements about the "elimination of terrorists" are opaque, and show there is no effort made to bring militants to justice.

But there is international support. In October, the deputy coordinator of the US State Department's counter-terrorism office called on Algeria "to share this experience with other countries around the world".

The tactics have had significant impacts as, according to an army analyst, militants have decided that "rather than fighting a far superior enemy, they would be better off moving elsewhere - Tunisia and especially Libya".

But AQIM is not dead yet. In the south, in the Sahel, the situation is much different.

Thanks to strong alliances and money made from the ransom business, the organisation is able to sustain itself even in the face of pressure from an international force, known as Operation Barkhane, led by French soldiers.

Faced with the vastness of the desert and difficult weather conditions, the contingent that makes up the Barkhane force barely contain the attacks of AQIM under the unified banner of the Support Group for

	<p>Islam and Muslims in the Islamic Maghreb.</p> <p>An Algerian security source solicited by MEE admits: "From an operational point of view, AQIM is in bad shape. I cannot over-emphasise how the elimination of Abu Rouaha al-Qassantini has hurt them."</p> <p>He added that the Algerian army would soon flush out Droukdel, who is presumed to be hiding in the mountains of the Jijel region.</p> <p>"But as long as AQIM has fighters, it remains a threat. We must never forget the story of Abdelhakim Belhadj's Islamic Fighting Group.</p> <p>"It was said to have been completely destroyed but from 2011 was to reconstitute itself and fan out to several cities of the country."</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Guilty plea in false terror threats
SOURCE	http://www.oregonlive.com/pacific-northwest-news/index.ssf/2018/02/clackamas_man_made_false_threa.html
GIST	<p>A Clackamas man Thursday pleaded guilty to placing calls to two airports in Nevada and Texas, reporting his father and brother as terrorists because they got an invitation to a family wedding and he didn't.</p> <p>Sonny Donnie Smith, 38, admitted to placing anonymous phone calls to security offices at McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas and the Midland International Air and Space Port in Midland, Texas. He falsely claimed that his father and brother were terrorists traveling through the airports, according to prosecutors.</p> <p>Both calls were made Sept. 3, 2016, Assistant U.S. Attorney Hannah Horsley said.</p> <p>The calls prompted an FBI investigation that revealed no terrorist threats. Smith's father and brother were temporarily detained and questioned by investigators as a result, and the brother missed his flight that day.</p> <p>The calls resulted from a family feud, according to court documents. Sonny Smith made the threatening calls because he was told he wasn't welcome at a family wedding they were heading to, according to the plea agreement.</p> <p>"Thanks to the FBI agents and partner agencies who worked this case, Mr. Smith quickly found his harassment was far from anonymous," said Loren Cannon, Oregon's FBI special agent in charge.</p> <p>Smith faces a maximum sentence of two years in prison, a \$250,000 fine and one year of supervised release. He's set to be sentenced May 10.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Groups: ancient Syria temple bombed
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/ancient-syrian-temple-reduced-rubble-airstrike-syrian-government/story?id=52765093
GIST	<p>The world has lost another valuable piece of ancient heritage.</p> <p>More than 50 percent of the remains of a Syrian temple built 3,000 years ago was destroyed in a Turkish air strike on Jan. 29, according to the Syrian antiquities ministry and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an independent watchdog.</p> <p>The temple at Ain Dara was constructed by an early Iron Age society and was one of Syria's most</p>

	<p>important monuments. It was famous for its well-preserved lions and sphinxes that were intricately carved from basalt stone.</p> <p>Photos published by the Syrian Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums show the site before and after Monday's bombing. Many of the statues have been reduced to piles of rubble.</p> <p>Air strikes against Ain Dara and several other protected areas nearby caused outrage among locals, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. People living in the area "accused the Turkish forces of an attempt to eliminate the archeological sites that represent the civilizations in the area of Afrin," the group said.</p> <p>A Turkish military official told The Associated Press the airstrikes did not target religious or cultural sites. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with military rules, according to the AP. The extent of the damage to the temple could not be independently assessed but the Observatory said it was badly damaged, the AP reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Afghan official: US drone kills 26 Taliban
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/official-us-drone-kills-26-taliban-eastern-afghanistan-52767195?
GIST	<p>An Afghan official says two U.S. drone strikes this week hit a building where dozens of Taliban were meeting in southeastern province of Ghazni, killing 26 insurgents and wounding 22.</p> <p>Arif Noori, a provincial spokesman, says the drone assault was carried out on Tuesday during an offensive in Ghazni province's Andar district where the U.S. military came to the aid of Afghan security forces battling the Taliban.</p> <p>He says among those killed was a senior commander, known only as Aqhani, who ran the insurgency in Ghazni province. The first U.S. drone strike hit the building, the second struck an hour later after more Taliban had gathered at the scene.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Turkey bombs families into caves
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/01/middleeast/syria-kurds-assault-civilians-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Kurdish families huddle on blankets in a dimly lit cave. Others hide in the rubble of a bombed-out building, gathered around a campfire. Those that have basements seek shelter there.</p> <p>This is life in Afrin.</p> <p>Turkey's cross-border military offensive against US-backed Kurdish militias has driven civilians living in the northwestern Syrian enclave underground. An estimated 16,000 people have been displaced by the fighting, which has been punctuated by relentless airstrikes and shelling, according to the United Nations.</p> <p>Footage obtained exclusively by CNN captures the city's deserted streets -- littered with crumpled cars, debris and gaping holes where shops once stood.</p> <p>"We don't know where to go," says Mohammed Khaled, 10, speaking in Kurdish.</p> <p>"The airplane has been dropping bombs for five days now. They are dropping missiles and bombs. My dad says not to go out because of the war planes and so we are sleeping in the huts. All our homes are destroyed."</p>

Khaled stands outside one of the structures where civilians are seeking shelter. Children mill around behind him, restless. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), families have been prevented from leaving the area by local authorities. The humanitarian organization has had to suspend child protection services there amid the violence.

Um Muhammed, Khaled's mother, asks why Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is bombing her people.

"What did we do to him?" she says in Arabic.

"We lost our homes our children, nothing is left ... why would this happen to us? Is not this a shame that children have to live like that? We are human beings, are we not? Why are they doing this to us?"

Afrin has borne the brunt of Turkey's attacks since January 20, when Ankara launched Operation Olive Branch to remove Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and ISIS militants from the area along its border.

The military operations have predominately targeted Kurdish fighters of the People's Protection Units, or YPG. The militia, which has been critical to the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in the fight against ISIS, is viewed by Ankara as a terrorist organization.

Turkey sees the quest by the Kurds -- who are spread out in Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq -- to establish an independent homeland as an existential threat to its territorial integrity. And Turkey has long warned that it will not tolerate YPG control of much of its border with Syria.

Hevi Mustafa, the co-president of the executive council of Afrin, praises the resolve and confidence of the forces fighting the onslaught.

Mustafa calls the Turkish attacks "barbaric" and says she hopes the international community will hold the Turkish government accountable for the violence.

Turkey views the YPG as indistinguishable from the PKK and says those entities have been hiding out in Afrin since Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime left in 2012.

According to the Turkish General Staff, the operation is being carried out under the framework of Turkey's rights based on international law. The military also says avoiding civilian casualties is of the "utmost importance."

"Only the terrorists and their shelters, barracks, weapons, tools and equipment are targeted, and all kinds of attention and sensitivity are shown to avoid damage to civilian/innocent people and to the environment," the Turkish Armed Forces said in a statement.

The people hiding in Afrin's caves have a different view.

One woman asks, "What are the planes wanting from us? What are they bombing us for? What do they want from us and what do they want from the little children?"

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HEADLINE	02/02 Turkey: rocket attacks from Syria enclave
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/02/02/turkey-rocket-attacks-from-syrian-enclave-wound-9-people.html
GIST	ANKARA, Turkey – Turkish media say nine people were wounded in a barrage of rockets fired at two border towns in Turkey across from the Syrian Kurdish enclave of Afrin.

	<p>The state-run Anadolu Agency says three rockets targeted the town of Reyhanli in Hatay province on Friday, hitting a house, a road close to a marketplace and the outer wall of a workplace. Six people were hospitalized from that attack.</p> <p>Governor Mehmet Tekinarslan says three more rockets hit the town of Kilis, northeast of Reyhanli, where at least three people were wounded.</p> <p>Ankara launched a cross-border offensive into Afrin on Jan. 20 to rout the Syrian Kurdish militia it says is linked to insurgents fighting inside Turkey.</p> <p>At least four people have been killed in rocket attacks on the two towns since then.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Airstrikes Yemen dramatically jump
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/mideast/u-s-airstrikes-yemen-have-increased-sixfold-under-trump-n843886
GIST	<p>The U.S. military stepped up its air campaign in Yemen dramatically in 2017, conducting more than six times as many airstrikes as in 2016, according to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) data.</p> <p>In addition to the airstrikes, the Pentagon acknowledges there is now a small intermittent U.S. military presence inside Yemen.</p> <p>In 2017, the U.S. military carried out 131 airstrikes, both manned and unmanned, against al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and ISIS in Yemen, the data shows. That's up from 21 strikes in 2016, the last year of the Obama administration. There have been at least 10 additional strikes since Jan. 1, 2018.</p> <p>The airstrikes were carried out by drones, AC-130 gunships and fighter-bombers.</p> <p>A senior U.S. intelligence official said the increased level of activity "has killed fighters, eviscerated AQAP's propaganda network, cut off external support and enabled UAE partners to regain territory."</p> <p>The official confirmed an earlier U.S. military report that more than 50 ISIS fighters were killed in one October raid alone.</p> <p>The increase is the result of a policy change made by President Trump almost immediately after taking office in January 2017.</p> <p>Soon after the Trump administration took office, it declared parts of Yemen as well as neighboring Somalia to be "areas of active hostilities," giving the U.S. military more leeway to target terrorists from the air and on the ground without White House approval.</p> <p>Initially, the Pentagon operated off a target list developed during the transition between the Obama and Trump administrations. That target list focused almost exclusively on AQAP. Some additional strikes were conducted in support of counterterrorism operations by the special forces of the United Arab Emirates and Yemen, according to a senior intelligence official. As the year progressed, both air and ground strikes increased.</p> <p>By October, the U.S. military counterterrorism operations grew to include strikes and missions against ISIS, specifically a regional group called ISIS-Yemen (ISIS-Y). CENTCOM spokesperson Lt. Col. Earl Brown said in December that targeting ISIS "is required to prevent ISIS-Y from filling the vacuum left by a diminished AQAP footprint or influence in the region."</p> <p>Despite that, a U.S. intelligence estimate contends that ISIS-Y doubled in size in 2017.</p>

In December, CENTCOM acknowledged that the U.S. military had conducted "multiple ground operations" in Yemen in 2017, but did not provide a specific number or details about the raids.

Asked how many U.S. forces are stationed in Yemen, a spokesperson declined to provide details.

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HEADLINE	02/01 Wave of attacks rock Afghanistan
SOURCE	http://time.com/5126270/terrorist-attacks-afghanistan-taliban-isis/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>About 90-minutes before dawn broke on Jan. 28, Kabul residents woke to the sound of explosions and gunfire. A group of insurgents armed with rocket-propelled grenades and automatic rifles had stormed an army post near a military academy in Afghanistan's capital.</p> <p>Monday's pre-dawn raid lasted an hour and ended in the death of 11 soldiers, as well as four of the five militants who instigated it. It was the fourth brazen attack in a little over a week that saw more than 140 people killed in around Kabul and exposed gaping holes in Afghanistan's security structure.</p> <p>For many, the four atrocities—two claimed by the Taliban and two by a local ISIS affiliate—also underscore the futility of a 16-year United States military campaign (the longest war America has been involved in). Despite a threefold increase in aerial ordinance dropped on the Taliban in 2017, the insurgent group made considerable territorial gains and is now openly active in 70% of Afghanistan, according to a recent BBC study.</p> <p>For all the talk of the Taliban resurgence in the countryside, the latest spate of attacks shows that urban spaces remain highly vulnerable and lay bare the intelligence gathering frailty of the country's Western-backed government, says Michael Kugelman, an Afghanistan specialist at the Wilson Center.</p> <p>"Afghanistan simply is in no position to preempt large-scale attacks, even in supposedly more highly secured areas," Kugelman tells TIME.</p> <p>Here's more.</p> <p>What did insurgent groups target in the latest wave of violence?</p> <p>On January 20, Taliban fighters in suicide vests laid siege to Kabul's Intercontinental Hotel, killing more than 20 people over the course of a 13 hour-long gun battle. At least 14 foreigners, including four Americans, were among the dead, according to the U.S. State Department. The Taliban struck again on January 27. This time the death toll breached 100 after attacker blew up an explosives-laden ambulance on a busy Kabul street.</p> <p>Five day after the Taliban hit Kabul's Intercontinental, suicide bombers and gunmen attacked the Jalalabad offices of international NGO Save the Children, about 100 miles east of downtown Kabul. "Incidents like this have a direct impact on the children and communities we work to protect and yesterday programs across the country were brought to a halt," Save the Children said in a statement confirming a fourth member of its staff had died after the attack.</p> <p>That attack, as well as the Jan 28 assault on the military outpost, was claimed by local ISIS affiliate Islamic State Khurasan (ISK).</p> <p>The brazen nature of the assaults—and the way in which they came in such quick succession—has thrust Afghanistan back into the headlines. Sadly, it is never far from them. A little more than a month ago ISK claimed responsibility for killing 41 people at a Shia cultural center; in May last year a truck bomb near Kabul's presidential palace killed more than 150 people, the majority of them civilians.</p> <p>Is the insurgency entering a bloodier phase?</p> <p>It depends on who you ask. Responding to reporters questions about how attackers penetrated ostensibly</p>

	<p>well-defended urban sites with apparent ease, the head of Afghanistan's spy agency Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai said that the terrorists were "changing their tactics," according to Agence France Presse.</p> <p>The ambulance attack in the city center did "not mean a lapse (in security). We have foiled many attacks but some are difficult to control," Stanekzai said.</p> <p>However, Taliban-led campaigns of violence in cities have long accompanied the group's advances in the countryside.</p> <p>What has changed is the insurgents' willingness to claim responsibility for attacks targeted at civilians, rather than police and the military. That is likely a product of the insurgents' desire to heap pressure on the state that it wishes to overthrow.</p> <p>Says Kugelman: "[The Taliban] wants to make the state look weak, and what better way of doing so than making it clear that the state is unable to protect its own people?"</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Turkey-backed forces push into enclave
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/turkey-calls-french-warning-syria-insult-52760517
GIST	<p>Intense battles raged Thursday as Kurdish fighters attempted to repel a new advance by Turkish troops and allied Syrian fighters on their encircled enclave in northwestern Syria.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Syrian government forces pushed into Idlib province, an opposition stronghold nearby, inching closer to a key highway that connects Syria's two largest cities, Damascus and Aleppo.</p> <p>The separate offensives have sharply worsened the humanitarian situation in northern Syria. Some 15,000 civilians have been displaced inside the Kurdish-controlled enclave Afrin, with no place to run except the district's center, according to U.N. humanitarian adviser Jan Egeland. The figure could not be independently verified.</p> <p>The U.N. says more than 270,000 have been displaced in Idlib because of the government onslaught since Dec. 15.</p> <p>Turkey has mobilized some 10,000 Syrian opposition fighters to fight in its campaign against a Kurdish militant group in Afrin. That campaign, codenamed Operation Olive Branch, has drawn protest from the U.S. and France, who consider the Kurdish militia an ally in the war on the Islamic State group.</p> <p>Turkey's state-run Anadolu news agency said the Turkish military cleared Bulbul, an area north of Afrin, Thursday. But the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that while the Turkish troops and allied Syrian fighters have reached Bulbul, "crushing" battles were continuing with the Kurdish fighters.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 London: van driver convicted in attack
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/01/europe/london-finsbury-park-mosque-attack-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A man who deliberately drove a van into a group of Muslims near a mosque in north London in June was convicted Thursday of murder and attempted murder.</p> <p>Darren Osborne, 48, appeared to have been motivated by anger over Islamist terror attacks in London and Manchester, England, in 2017 and a child grooming scandal in Rochdale that involved men of Asian origin, Woolwich Crown Court in southeast London was told.</p> <p>He rented a van in Wales and drove it to London on June 18 planning to attack people attending a march,</p>

	<p>the Crown Prosecution Service said in a statement after the verdict.</p> <p>When that did not prove possible, he drove around the city looking for a mosque, it said.</p> <p>Just after midnight, he saw a group of Muslims helping 51-year-old Makram Ali, who had collapsed at an intersection. More people were around than usual because it was Ramadan, and many Muslims were on their way to or from prayers, the Crown Prosecution Service said.</p> <p>According to the prosecution, Osborne deliberately drove his vehicle into the group near Finsbury Park Mosque, fatally injuring Ali and trying to kill as many others as he could. Nine others were taken to the hospital with injuries in the attack.</p> <p>A witness told the court that when Osborne was stopped from fleeing by members of the public, he said: "I've done my job, you can kill me now."</p> <p>In his defense, Osborne claimed that a man named "Dave" had been driving the van and was responsible for the attack. But he was unable to explain why closed-circuit TV showed only one man leaving the van, the prosecution said.</p> <p>Osborne will be sentenced at a later date.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	02/01 Filmmaker: D.B. Cooper case solved
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/feb/1/filmmaker-claims-he-has-solved-db-cooper-case/
GIST	<p>A documentary filmmaker claims he has solved the D.B Cooper hijacking case.</p> <p>Tom Colbert, whose 40-member investigative team has spent years probing the 1971 hijacking, alleged that Cooper is a CIA operative whose identity has been covered up by the FBI.</p> <p>He also claims that Cooper is Robert W. Rackstraw, a 74-year-old former army paratrooper who is living in the San Diego area.</p> <p>"Our criminal investigation is finished," Mr. Colbert said at a Tuesday morning press conference in front of the FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C.</p> <p>Mr. Rackstraw could not be reached for comment. But Dennis Williams, an attorney who represents Mr. Rackstraw, denied the allegation that his client is the notorious criminal.</p> <p>"He says he's not D.B. Cooper and I don't believe he is," Mr. Williams said accusing Mr. Colbert of "harassing" his client.</p> <p>D.B., or Dan Cooper, hijacked Northwest Orient Flight 305 in November 1971. He jumped off the plane somewhere over the Pacific Northwest after collecting \$200,000 in ransom. He disappeared and the FBI concluded he died while jumping out of the airplane.</p> <p>In 2016, the agency closed the investigation.</p> <p>Over the years various suspects have emerged but there has never been conclusive evidence linking anyone to the crime.</p> <p>Now Mr. Colbert claims he has conclusive evidence linking Mr. Rackstraw to Cooper. Mr. Colbert claims he has discovered codes in five letters someone claiming to be Cooper mailed to the FBI. He alleges that</p>

the code refers to three Army units connected to Rackstraw during his service in Vietnam. Mr. Rackstraw is the only person connected to all three units, Mr. Colbert alleged.

“The only soldier that had these three units is Robert W. Rackstraw,” Mr. Colbert said. “That confirmed it for us.”

Among the codes inserted at the bottom of the letters, include the initials SWS, which stands for Special Warfare School, according to Mr. Colbert. In another letter, Cooper claims to be CIA and includes the letters RWR. That stands for Robert W. Rackstraw, Mr. Colbert said.

Mr. Colbert alleged that Mr. Rackstraw worked for the CIA and the agency pressured the FBI to look the other way, enabling Mr. Rackstraw to avoid capture. There are 17 examples linking Mr. Rackstraw to the CIA — including evidence he was in Iran during the 1978 fall of the Shah and played a role in the Iran-Contra affair — Mr. Colbert alleged.

An FBI spokeswoman said it was “inappropriate” to comment about Mr. Colbert’s allegations.

“The FBI continues to receive tips from members of the public, but none to date have resulted in a definitive identification of the hijacker,” FBI spokeswoman Ayn S. Dietrich-Williams said. “The tips have conveyed plausible theories, descriptive information about individuals potentially matching the hijacker, and anecdotes—to include accounts of sudden, unexplained wealth. In order to solve a case, the FBI must prove culpability beyond a reasonable doubt, and, unfortunately, none of the well-meaning tips or applications of new investigative technology have yielded the necessary proof.”

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HEADLINE	02/01 Australian government secrets revealed
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/31/asia/australia-cabinet-papers-leaked-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN) — Australian intelligence officers have delivered safes to two offices of the country's national broadcaster to secure top secret Cabinet documents that were accidentally sold in second-hand furniture.</p> <p>The Australian government is investigating the discovery of thousands of files, dating back 10 years and spanning five governments, in filing drawers at a furniture store in the Australian capital of Canberra.</p> <p>The documents were obtained by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), which has called the discovery "one of the biggest breaches of Cabinet security in Australian history."</p> <p>The Prime Minister's department confirmed the documents were "secured" in the early hours of Thursday morning, but stressed the delivery of the safes at 1 a.m. "was not a raid."</p> <p>Later Thursday, security agency personnel visited the ABC's Melbourne office to secure documents inside a safe, the broadcaster said.</p> <p>ABC News director Gaven Morris said the organization had worked with Australian security agencies to make sure the documents were secure.</p> <p>The ABC reported that it still has access to the files, and talks are underway with the government about how to proceed.</p> <p>The existence of the documents and their unlikely discovery was revealed by ABC Wednesday in a series of shock articles.</p> <p>Among the revelations reported by the ABC from the documents were allegations Australia's then-immigration minister Scott Morrison intervened in 2013 to demand extra checks on a group of asylum seekers to stop them getting permanent protection visas in Australia.</p>

Former Prime Minister John Howard's government was also alleged to have discussed removing Australians' right to remain silent in custody around 2007, according to ABC reporting.

Former Australian leader John Howard's government was one of those whose documents were contained in the cabinet.

The Cabinet is the top decision making body in a parliamentary system, composed of the prime minister and his or her most senior ministers.

All discussions inside Cabinet are considered confidential and documents on Australian Cabinet decisions are supposed to remain confidential for at least to 20 years.

A number of other prominent Australian leaders were also the target of embarrassing domestic allegations, including former Prime Ministers Kevin Rudd and Tony Abbott.

Abbott told Sydney radio station 2GB someone needed to "pay a price" over the blunder.

"If you are going to throw out a filing cabinet that has got a whole lot of sensitive and confidential information in it you have got to make sure it is empty before it goes out of the building," he said Wednesday.

Rudd announced early Thursday morning he would be suing the ABC one of their articles published based on his government's controversial home insulation scheme, describing it as "a lie."

According to the ABC, the two sets of drawers were sold at a second-hand furniture store in an undisclosed neighborhood in Canberra. They were both locked and no set of keys was provided with them.

They were eventually bought and left unopened until the purchaser used a drill to break off the locks. The ABC did not identify who bought the drawers and how the documents found their way to the news organization.

In an interview on ABC television Wednesday night, Australia's opposition Labor Party leader Bill Shorten said the situation was "absurd."

"I mean all these spies who are meant to be spying on us they should just be going shopping in second-hand furniture stores in Canberra," he said.

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HEADLINE	02/01 Mystery: 1lb. meth delivered to doorstep
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/package-containing-pound-of-meth-shows-up-on-skyway-couples-doorstep
GIST	<p>SKYWAY, Wash. -- A Skyway couple that found a package filled with methamphetamine on their doorstep is trying to figure out who sent it to their home.</p> <p>"I was home, and I heard a knock on the door," the woman who lives at the home told KOMO News.</p> <p>The contents of the package she and her husband found on their doorstep has left them worried about revealing their identities.</p> <p>The box, which was addressed to their Skyway home, arrived last Thursday.</p> <p>Digging through layers of tissue inside revealed a can containing a package that was sealed in bubble wrap.</p>

"As soon as I started pulling out the bubble wrap, it occurred to me that this is ... this has to be some sort of drugs," the woman said. "I put it back in the box, and I told my husband, 'This is up to you now.'"

She immediately stopped and waited for her husband to come home to inspect it further, she said.

The couple called sheriff's deputies, who confirmed through tests that the package indeed contained about a pound of meth.

The address listed on the box was the couple's address. But no one recognized the name it was shipped to, including the couple's current paying house guests.

"To know that somebody is probably casing out your house waiting for this package, and then now the package has gone missing ... it was a no-brainer to go to the cops," the man said.

The King County Sheriff's Office has now launched an investigation to figure out who sent the package, a spokeswoman told KOMO News.

A return address lists Palmdale, California, so deputies plan to work with police there to see if they can track down the sender, she added.

"We don't have a rash of these," said King County Sheriff's Sgt. Cindi West. "In fact, we couldn't think of any other instances anytime recently in the last few years where we've had anything even close to this."

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HEADLINE	02/01 Jail inmate death under investigation
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/death-of-snohomish-county-jail-inmate-under-investigation-2/
GIST	<p>Snohomish County sheriff's deputies are investigating the death of a 62-year-old inmate at Snohomish County Jail in Everett.</p> <p>A corrections deputy discovered the woman needing medical help in her cell around 2:30 p.m. Thursday, the sheriff's office said in a news release.</p> <p>The deputy called medics and began CPR, the release says, but life-saving attempts by jail staff and first responders were unsuccessful. Authorities pronounced the woman dead at the scene.</p> <p>The release does not describe the nature of the woman's symptoms.</p> <p>Everett police booked the woman, whom the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office will formally identify, into the jail on Jan. 19 on suspicion of second-degree domestic violence and criminal trespassing. The sheriff's office described her as transient.</p> <p>Medical staff initially "declined to accept the inmate for pre-existing medical conditions" and sent her to Providence Regional Medical Center, the release says. There, staff cleared her for jail booking.</p> <p>Detectives from the sheriff's office's Major Crime Unit are investigating her death, per standard protocol, the release says. Separately, health professionals will review the woman's death "from a clinical standpoint."</p> <p>The medical examiner's office will determine her manner and cause of death.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Small town awash w/prescription pills
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/welcome-williamson-w-va-where-there-are-6-500-opioid-n843821
GIST	<p>WILLIAMSON, West Virginia — The deadly math in this struggling but proud West Virginia town breaks down like this: For over a decade, two pharmacies just four blocks apart dispensed some 20.8 million prescription painkillers in a town of just 3,191 residents.</p> <p>That’s more than 6,500 prescription painkillers per person in this coal-mining town that sits just across the Tug Fork River from Kentucky.</p> <p>Those jarring figures were released this week by the congressional committee investigating the epidemic that has ravaged the Rust Belt — and the two regional drug wholesalers, Miami-Luken and H.D. Smith, that are accused of swamping Williamson with millions of highly addictive opioid pills.</p> <p>The doctors and drug wholesalers are “making a fortune off of our downfall, you know,” recovering addict Wes Thomasson told NBC News on Thursday at a Williamson treatment center.</p> <p>“If you’re trying to figure out how to get rid of the epidemic, trying to figure out how to resolve the problem, start with the prescription,” he said.</p> <p>That’s exactly what the House Energy and Commerce Committee is doing.</p> <p>“These numbers are outrageous, and we will get to the bottom of how this destruction was able to be unleashed across West Virginia,” the committee chairman, Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore., and ranking member, Rep. Frank Pallone, D-N.J., vowed in a joint statement.</p> <p>Last year there were 13 fatal drug overdoses in Mingo County, of which Williamson is the county seat, and 711 deaths from drugs in the 54 other counties that make up the state, according to the West Virginia Health Statistics Center.</p> <p>Other recovering addicts, like Deiana Warrix and Mindy Leffe, said that Williamson feels awash with opioids.</p> <p>“If you want it you can get it,” Warrix said. “You go to the pharmacy and you get five prescriptions of it.”</p> <p>She added, “It’s just not right, really.”</p> <p>Attorney Mike Troy, who represents Williamson and Mingo County in its legal battle with drug wholesalers, said even he was taken aback by the sheer number of painkillers in the town.</p> <p>“You can’t live and breathe and not be shocked by the numbers,” Troy said. “But you also can’t live in these communities and really be all that amazed when you see how it touches every family, you know? I mean, there’s none of us that don’t have a family member who’s addicted, in treatment, and homeless. It’s just all-consuming in these communities.”</p> <p>In 2016, West Virginia had the nation’s highest fatal drug overdose rate with 52 per 100,000 people, far out pacing Ohio, which had 39.1 fatalities per 100,000 people, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>West Virginia was also one of the states with the highest rates of opioid prescriptions, according to the CDC.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 New Zealand: January hottest ever
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SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/january-hottest-month-recorded-zealand-52783475?
GIST	<p>January was the hottest month ever recorded in New Zealand according to figures released Friday, and experts say climate change is one factor.</p> <p>The heat has led to a shortage of fans that Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern jokingly referred to as "fan-ageddon." Ardern said that while many people are probably enjoying a great summer, they also need to consider the long-term consequences of climate change, including sea-level rise.</p> <p>Figures released by the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research indicate the average temperature during January was 20.3 degrees Celsius (68.5 Fahrenheit). That was more than 3 degrees Celsius above normal and beat the previous record of 19.6 Celsius set in February 1998.</p> <p>Record-keeping began in 1909.</p> <p>Gregor Macara, a climate scientist with the weather agency, said that warmer seas, generally settled weather and more winds from the tropical north had led to the higher temperatures. He said climate change was an underlying and contributing factor.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Cuba: Fidel Castro son kills self
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/cuba-state-media-fidel-castros-son-killed-52780887?cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>The oldest son of late Cuban leader Fidel Castro killed himself on Thursday after months of treatment for depression, state media reported. He was 68.</p> <p>Official website Cubadebate said Fidel Castro Diaz-Balart had been in a "deeply depressed state." A brief note read on state television said his treatment had "required an initial hospitalization then outpatient follow-up."</p> <p>The oldest son of Cuba's late revolutionary leader was known for his resemblance to his father, earning him the nickname Fidelito or Little Fidel.</p> <p>Castro Diaz-Balart studied nuclear physics in the former Soviet Union and served as scientific adviser to Cuba's Council of State. He was vice president of the Cuban Academy of Sciences. He previously led its nuclear program.</p> <p>Castro Diaz-Balart was born to Fidel Castro's first wife, Mirta Diaz-Balart, a woman from Cuba's aristocracy who Fidel married in his youth before beginning the revolutionary struggle that later brought him and his brother Raul to power.</p> <p>Because of his maternal lineage, Castro Diaz-Balart is cousin to Republican Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart, who represents Cuban exiles in Florida.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Baby milk contamination 'began in 2005'
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42908706
GIST	<p>The French dairy group at the centre of a baby milk scandal, Lactalis, has admitted some of its products may have been tainted over more than a decade.</p> <p>Millions of boxes of powdered milk have been recalled worldwide following a salmonella outbreak last year.</p>

	<p>Researchers say that the exact same strain of salmonella was responsible for another outbreak in 2005.</p> <p>The company said it was possible other babies could have been affected by Lactalis products since then.</p> <p>In a newspaper interview published on Thursday, Lactalis CEO Emmanuel Besnier said tests had shown that a factory at the centre of the latest scare, in Craon in north-western France, was also responsible for the 2005 outbreak.</p> <p>The factory - owned by Lactalis since 2006 - was closed in December after it emerged that contamination had started in one of its drying towers.</p> <p>In the 2005 outbreak, 146 children fell ill. In last year's outbreak, at least 38 cases in France and Spain were traced to Lactalis milk.</p> <p>On Thursday, researchers from the Pasteur Institute in Paris said the salmonella bacteria had remained at the Craon factory until it was closed.</p> <p>As a result, they said, a total of 25 babies had been affected between 2005 and 2016.</p> <p>Mr Besnier appeared to point to a similar conclusion in his interview with Les Échos newspaper.</p> <p>"The possibility that babies consumed tainted milk over this period cannot be ruled out," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 US: Syria developing chem. weapons
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/syria-may-be-making-new-types-of-chemical-weapons-u-s-says/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON -- Syrian President Bashar Assad's government may be developing new, more sophisticated chemical weapons, the Trump administration says. The characteristics of recent alleged attacks suggest Syria is producing chemical weapons despite a 2013 deal to destroy its program, according to officials, who say it's "highly likely" that Syria kept a stockpile of weapons.</p> <p>The officials also say Syria may be making new kinds of weapons, either to improve their military capability or to escape international accountability.</p> <p>The officials also say the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) keeps using chemical weapons such as sulfur mustard and chlorine. The militants are using shells or improvised explosive devices to deliver the chemicals, according to the officials.</p> <p>The officials weren't authorized to discuss the assessment on the record and briefed reporters on condition of anonymity.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 United tightens support animal rules
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/united-airlines-changes-policy-on-comfort-animals-after-peacock-incident/
GIST	<p>DALLAS -- United Airlines wants to see more paperwork before passengers fly with emotional-support animals -- and don't even try to bring a peacock on board. The airline announced Thursday it will tighten rules starting March 1. The changes are similar to those coming at Delta Air Lines.</p> <p>United said owners will have to confirm that their animal is trained to behave in public, and they will need a vaccination form signed by a veterinarian. The vet will have to vouch that the animal isn't a health or safety threat to other people.</p>

	<p>"United has seen a 75 percent year-over-year increase in customers bringing emotional support animals onboard and has experienced a significant increase in onboard incidents involving these animals," the airline said in a statement. "We understand that other carriers have seen similar trends. The Department of Transportation's rules regarding emotional support animals are not working as they were intended, and we need to change our approach in order to ensure a safe and pleasant travel experience for all of our customers."</p> <p>The airline bounced a passenger on Sunday who showed up at the airport with a peacock for emotional support. New York City-based photographer and performance artist Ventiko said she bought a ticket for her peacock, Dexter, so he would have his own seat on Sunday's flight from New Jersey's Newark Liberty International Airport to Los Angeles.</p> <p>United already bans exotic animals and non-household birds. Still, the fact that a passenger tried to bring a peacock on board "helped illustrate why we needed to revise our policy," United spokesman Charles Hobart said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Sex ring moved hundreds of women
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/seattlenews/article/Sex-ring-moved-hundreds-of-women-through-12545043.php
GIST	<p>Zhaofeng “Brandon” Zhang was the kind of new arrival to Seattle who seemed to have everything going for him.</p> <p>At 18, Zhang landed in the United States from China and enrolled in the University of Washington to study computer science. He obtained permanent legal residency and was on track toward a life in the United States.</p> <p>By 20, Zhang’s American dream had vanished. The young man had been busted for assisting a now-notorious Seattle madam, Fang “Cindy” Wang, in operating a prostitution ring thought to have involved hundreds of women.</p> <p>Wang, 29, and five others – including Zhang, now 23 – were charged in May after a years-long investigation into the ring, which operated residential brothels out of apartments around Seattle and the rest of Washington. Wang, a Queens, New York, resident with Seattle ties, was described as the ringleader and has been sentenced to 2½ years in prison.</p> <p>Appearing Thursday in U.S. District Court at Seattle, Zhang described the sex trafficking ring as one of many operating in the region. While Wang’s ring largely involved Chinese women, Zhang told U.S. District Judge Thomas Zilly similar brothel circuits were staffed by women from South Korea and India, as well as the United States.</p> <p>Zilly sentenced Zhang to 21 months in federal prison, the second-heaviest term handed down as part of the investigation. For his part, Zhang apologized for posting advertisements and shuttling women between the brothels.</p> <p>Zhang will likely be deported to China, which may prove particularly problematic for him. Zhang joined the U.S. Army while under investigation, and his attorney expressed concerns regarding China’s enthusiasm for that decision.</p> <p>As prosecutors tell it, Zhang was a mid-level player in the prostitution ring. Wang stood at the center.</p>

The ring's business was staffing and maintaining residential brothels, a method of prostitution that has received increased scrutiny in recent years.

Operators recruit women – often internationally, and sometimes disingenuously – to live in apartments rented to provide a space for liaisons. In recent years, such brothels have been discovered inside high-end apartment complexes in Eastside suburbs. A 2013 federal prosecution targeted a group running bogus massage parlors out of luxury apartments in Bellevue and Kirkland.

The brothels were also central to “The Review Board,” a prostitute-ratings site shuttered in January 2016 after a large sting operation. The board had been well-known to police for more than a decade prior to that bust, which law enforcement leaders argued was necessary in part to stop the exploitation of foreign-born women.

Wang's ring followed a well-established pattern. Women were recruited abroad or inside the United States, often through the WeChat messaging app. Couriers like Zhang would retrieve them at Sea-Tac International Airport and deliver them to the brothels. Some women also performed “outcall” services for sex buyers at hotels.

Investigators contend Wang's ring formed in October 2013 and ran until an FBI-led organized crime unit intervened in May. Most of the advertising was done on Backpage.com, though Zhang said interest in the notorious site waned in the ring's final years.

Women involved in the ring testified that Wang recruited them to Seattle to perform “massage work.” While some knew Wang meant prostitution, others apparently believed they would be performing legitimate massage.

The women paid Wang and her confederates portions of their earnings. Assistant U.S. Attorney Catherine Crisham noted that the women had few if any connections in Seattle. Many also lacked legal status in the United States and were entirely reliant on Wang's crew for their daily needs.

“Many of the women stated that they felt isolated and vulnerable, living in unfamiliar apartment complexes where they did not know anyone, did not speak the language, and were reliant upon Wang and her co-conspirators for food and transportation,” Crisham said.

“Although some of the women told law enforcement that they knew when they agreed to work for Wang that they would be engaging in prostitution, many others stated that the experience had been emotionally traumatic for them, and that they had only worked as prostitutes because they felt that they had no other options for making money,” the prosecutor continued.

Wang herself previously worked as a prostitute, an experience that included “horrific sexual and physical abuse,” according to defense attorney Stephan Illa. Though her attorney, Wang denied leading the ring.

The ring operated in apartments or hotels located in Bellevue, Kent, Kirkland, Lynnwood, Olympia, Lacey, Puyallup, Renton, Tukwila, Seattle and Federal Way. Other locations where the ring operated include Eastern Washington cities such as Richland, Kennewick, Wenatchee and Spokane.

Yongguang Wu, 28, of Seattle and Steven Thompson, 59, of Renton, were each sentenced to eight months in prison for their roles in the ring. Yunzhong Chen, 45, and Yaoan He, 33, of Seattle, were each sentenced to one year in prison. All of the defendants pleaded guilty to prostitution-related offenses.

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HEADLINE	02/01 Louisville officer shot during traffic stop
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/ca6321a02efe4d4c86bab3657e147847/Police:-1-suspect-dead,-Louisville-officer-shot-and-wounded

GIST	<p>LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — A Louisville police detective was injured in a shooting during a traffic stop as officers shot and killed one suspect and wounded another in a neighborhood in the eastern part of the city.</p> <p>Louisville Police Chief Steve Conrad says the officer, a narcotics detective, was struck in the head during an “exchange of gunfire.”</p> <p>Conrad didn’t give details about the officer’s condition but Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer told reporters “we’re grateful our officer is going to be ok.”</p> <p>Conrad says the officer and the wounded suspect were being treated at a hospital. He did not identify the officer or the suspects.</p> <p>Conrad says the car was stopped during a narcotics investigation and several officers were on the scene at the time. The chief says the department’s Public Integrity Unit is handling the investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 Judge tosses Fla. ex-felons voting ban
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/34875385904644f5b77773277d9a0ed8/Federal-judge-knocks-down-Florida's-voting-ban-for-ex-felons
GIST	<p>TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — In a ruling that could have reverberations on this year’s crucial elections, a federal judge Thursday ruled that Florida’s current ban on former felons voting is unconstitutional and needs to be changed as soon as possible.</p> <p>U.S. District Judge Mark Walker issued a blistering ruling that says the state’s current process to restore voting rights — which can take years — is flawed. The lawsuit was filed last year against Gov. Rick Scott by a voting rights organization on behalf of several people who had completed their prison sentences but had their request for voting rights turned down.</p> <p>Walker, who was appointed by President Barack Obama, said he will decide soon what Florida should do to fix the process. His 43-page ruling blasted Scott and state officials for the current system in place.</p> <p>“A person convicted of a crime may have long ago exited the prison cell and completed probation,” Walker wrote. “Her voting rights, however, remain locked in a dark crypt. Only the state has the key — but the state has swallowed it.”</p> <p>John Tupps, a spokesman for Scott, defended the process and suggested that an appeal was likely.</p> <p>“The governor believes that convicted felons should show that they can lead a life free of crime and be accountable to their victims and our communities,” said Tupps. “While we are reviewing today’s ruling, we will continue to defend this process in the court.”</p> <p>The ruling comes just months before Florida voters will be asked to alter the current ban. Backers of a constitutional amendment last week won a place on the November 2018 ballot. If sixty percent of voters approve, most former prisoners would have their rights automatically restored.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Police: L.A. school shooting was accident
SOURCE	http://time.com/5129917/los-angeles-school-shooting-accident/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>(LOS ANGELES) — A shooting at a Los Angeles middle school classroom Thursday that left one boy in critical condition, injured four others and had panicked parents in tears was an accident, police said.</p> <p>The shooting was reported just before 9 a.m. and within minutes a 12-year-old girl was taken into custody</p>

	<p>without incident. Police interviewed her and by evening they announced that they would book her on a charge of negligent discharge of a firearm on school grounds.</p> <p>The determination capped a frantic day at Salvador B. Castro Middle School in downtown Los Angeles and corroborated what some students told reporters after the lockdown was lifted and they were reunited with parents on the school's athletic field.</p> <p>In a telephone interview with his mother alongside, Jordan Valenzuela, 12, told The Associated Press he was in the classroom next door when he heard a loud bang. He said he talked to the girl just after the shooting and she was sobbing.</p> <p>“She was like, ‘I didn’t mean to. I had the gun in my backpack and I didn’t know it was loaded and my backpack fell and the gun went off,’” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Seattle: man stabbed on metro bus
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/887886/man-stabbed-on-metro-bus-in-seattle/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — Authorities say a 53-year-old man was stabbed in the abdomen while riding a King County Metro bus in Seattle.</p> <p>The Seattle Times reports the incident happened Thursday afternoon south of downtown.</p> <p>The King County Sheriff's Office says the circumstances that led to the stabbing remain unknown, according to Sheriff's Sgt. Cindi West.</p> <p>The sheriff's office says deputies are searching for the assailant.</p> <p>The sheriff's office said Thursday night that the 53-year-old man was conscious and alert at Harborview Medical Center.</p> <p>No further information was immediately available.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 NAACP official charged w/attempted theft
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/888028/seattle-naACP-official-accused-of-cheating-voucher-program/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — A former City Council candidate has been charged with a misdemeanor for allegations that she tried to cheat Seattle's "democracy vouchers" program.</p> <p>The Seattle Times reports that false-reporting and attempted-theft charges were filed Wednesday against Sheley Secrest, an attorney and vice president of the local NAACP chapter.</p> <p>Secrest's lawyer Jennifer Miller says she and her client look forward to their defense.</p> <p>Seattle voters receive \$100 in vouchers, which they can donate to candidates. To qualify for the money, candidates are required to collect contributions and signatures from at least 400 voters.</p> <p>Seattle police Detective Lawrence Meyer had begun investigating Secrest last year. Meyer says that in an attempt to qualify for the vouchers, Secrest appeared to have put her own money into her campaign while claiming voters donated the funds.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Smash-grab robbery suspects charged
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/02/01/police-find-suspects-to-do-list-in-serial-rolex-smash-and-grab-robberies-hit-a-ben-bridge/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — King County prosecutors have charged three of the four suspects accused of stealing \$236,000 worth of Rolex watches during a smash and grab robbery at the downtown Seattle Ben Bridge jewelry store on Dec. 22, 2017.</p> <p>The suspects used a large sledge hammer to smash the glass, causing half a million dollars in damage to 50 other watches in the case.</p> <p>Christopher Patterson, Aufu Snow and Nathaniel McRae are all in the King County jail charged with first degree robbery.</p> <p>Patterson is also a suspect in similar smash-and-grab robberies at Ben Bridge stores in Lynnwood and Seattle, as well as two other robberies. Police say anonymous tips from Washington's Most Wanted viewers to Crime Stoppers of Puget Sound helped identify the suspects.</p> <p>When detectives in the Seattle Police Robbery Unit arrested Patterson on Jan. 25 at his home on 60th Avenue West in Mountlake Terrace, they say the found a to do list written on a yellow piece of paper that said, "Hit a Ben Bridge."</p> <p>Court documents show that after the Alderwood Mall robbery, Patterson posted a photo on social media under the name 'Du King' of him wearing the Rolex bragging about doing a 'lick' which is a colloquial term for robbery.</p> <p>Investigators also recovered an Adidas sweat suit matching the one worn by one of two suspects in a robbery at the Go Mobile store on S. Graham St. in South Seattle on Nov. 20, 2017.</p> <p>When questioned, Patterson denied any wrongdoing and said it was a 'case of mistaken identity'. Patterson posted a picture of himself on social media wearing a Rolex watch that matched one stolen from a similar robbery at the Alderwood Ben Bridge store.</p> <p>His criminal history includes convictions for Unlawful Possession of a Firearm, 3 counts of Residential Burglary, Theft of a Firearm, Vehicle Prowling,</p> <p>Reckless Driving and Burglary 2nd Degree. Patterson is being held on \$200,000 bail and is scheduled to be formally arraigned on Feb. 12.</p> <p>Detectives say Snow is also a suspect in a theft of \$1,600 worth of jackets from the REI store in Issaquah on Jan. 2, 2018. Surveillance video shows him wearing a braided wig which gang detectives say he has been known to do in the past. He has not been charged yet in the case. Snow is being held on \$250,000 bail.</p> <p>McRae is accused of opening the door closest to the Rolex cases to let the suspects enter quickly. He told detectives he was paid \$100 and that he was asked to exit the store like he had just purchased some jewelry because they were making a move. Police say surveillance video from nearby stores showed McRae, Snow and Patterson meeting before the Ben Bridge Robbery. He is being held on \$250,000 bail.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 US school shootings w/female shooters
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/01/school-shootings-with-female-shooters.html
GIST	<p>A 12-year-old girl was accused in a shooting at a middle school in Los Angeles on Thursday.</p> <p>One classmate was left critically wounded and three others were hurt, according to authorities.</p>

While female shooters are rare, there have been a series of violent incidents in the past involving children, teens and adult women. Read on for a look at other some school shootings involving female shooters.

2016

Dorothy Dutiel, 15, shot and killed her 15-year-old girlfriend May Kieu at Independence High School in Glendale, Ariz., before shooting herself, KPNX reported.

“She hasn’t loved me like that for a long time,” the station quoted Dutiel as saying in a note. “That she’s been iffy about us for years. This week has been the worst in my life.”

2015

Sunghee Kwon, 46, repeatedly shot her 45-year-old professor ex-husband Raja Farhad at the University of South Carolina before shooting herself in the abdomen, Reuters reported.

“They had continued in a relationship after their divorce, including sharing a home, until just recently,” Richland County Coroner Gary Watts said in a statement at the time.

2010

Professor Amy Bishop killed three people and hurt another three in a shooting at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, the FBI said in a report on mass shootings. She was in a biology department meeting for a half-hour before she “stood up and began firing,” it said.

Bishop was sentenced in 2012 to life without parole after she pleaded guilty to capital murder and attempted murder charges.

Bishop has filed numerous appeals in the case, WAFF reported in 2015.

2008

Teah Wimberly was 15 years old when police said she shot 15-year-old Amanda Collette in the back at Dillard High School in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in November 2008. Wimberly later was convicted of second-degree murder and received a 25-year prison sentence, WTVJ Miami reported.

“I will never forgive myself for what I have done, and I don't expect you to forgive me,” she reportedly told Collette’s family in court. “You have no idea how sorry I truly am.”

2008

Latina Williams, 23, killed two students in a Louisiana Technical College classroom before killing herself, according to the FBI report.

“She fired six rounds, then reloaded and committed suicide before police arrived,” the report said. Killed were Karsheika Graves, 21, and Taneshia Butler, 26.

After the shooting, Baton Rouge police reportedly said Williams had been exhibiting signs “of paranoia and losing touch with reality.”

2001

Elizabeth Bush, 14, was accused of shooting 13-year-old Kimberly Marchese in the shoulder at a parochial school in Williamsport, Pa. Bush told a judge in 2001 that she initially planned “to shoot myself and show everybody how much (teasing) hurts so they could see,” The Associated Press reported at the time.

“It just happened, sir. I don't know,” Bush later said when the judge inquired about her changed decision. “I just wanted to scare her.”

The judge said he thought Bush “intentionally sought to cause her death” and sentenced Bush to a juvenile psychiatric facility, the AP reported.

1996

Jillian Robbins, 19, was accused of opening fire at Penn State University with a rifle, killing 21-year-old student Melanie Spalla, The Collegian reported.

Robbins, who was mentally ill, pleaded guilty to third-degree murder and attempting to kill another four people, the AP reported in 1998. She was sentenced to 30 to 60 years behind bars.

1988

Laurie Dann, 30, killed 8-year-old Nicky Corwin and hurt five other children in a shooting at Hubbard Woods School in Winnetka, Illinois, as part of a crime spree, WMAQ Chicago reported.

Dann took off and held a family hostage in a home, the report added. She shot one of the family members, a 20-year-old college student who survived, and ultimately killed herself.

1979

California teenager Brenda Spencer carried out an attack on Cleveland Elementary School in San Diego.

The 16-year-old “opened fire at an elementary school, killing the principal and a custodian and wounding eight children and a police officer,” according to an NYPD report on active shooters. “Spencer fired the shots from her house across the street from the school.”

Spencer purportedly said it was because she didn't like Mondays.

She later pleaded guilty to two counts of murder and assault with a deadly weapon and remains behind bars, History.com reported.

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HEADLINE	02/02 Fake Super Bowl merchandise seized
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/sports/2018/02/02/15m-in-counterfeit-super-bowl-merchandise-seized-authorities-say.html
GIST	<p>More than \$15 million in bogus Super Bowl merchandise and other items has been seized through Operation Team Player, which has also resulted in 65 arrests and 24 convictions, authorities said Tuesday.</p> <p>In all, nearly 172,000 items were confiscated, representatives of federal law enforcement agencies and the Minneapolis Police Department said at a news conference Tuesday.</p> <p>“Intellectual property theft is a serious crime, and black-market organizations descend on the Super Bowl and other major sporting events to sell counterfeit goods and substandard merchandise to unsuspecting consumers,” Thomas D. Homan, acting director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) said.</p> <p>“ICE agents are committed to investigating the trafficking of counterfeit goods that wreak havoc on local economies, threaten the health and safety of the American public and fund criminal organizations engaged in other illegal activities,” Homan added.</p> <p>The year-round Operation Team Player was a joint operation involving the NFL, ICE, the FBI, Customs and Border Protection and the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD).</p> <p>The operation led to the seizure of fake jerseys, hats, cell-phone paraphernalia as well as thousands of other items that were intended to be sold to customers.</p> <p>“We’ve been at major mailing facilities, we’ve been intersecting packages, we’ve been seizing counterfeit goods,” Matthew Bourke, spokesman for the National Intellectual Property Rights Center, told Fox 9 in</p>

	<p>Minneapolis-St. Paul. “We have targeting capabilities; we know where it’s coming from. We know who’s getting it.”</p> <p>Operation Team Player was set up after last year’s Super Bowl. Since then, there has been a 16 percent increase in arrests. Major sporting leagues have teamed up with the HSI-led Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center (IPR) to combat criminal counterfeiting and piracy.</p> <p>"(I)llicit trade carries consequences that linger far after the fourth quarter," said David Hirschmann, president and CEO of the U.S. Chamber’s Global Innovation Policy Center. "Counterfeiters sell substandard products, jeopardize consumers’ personal and financial information, and undermine American jobs and innovation.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/02 France: police reinforcements to Calais
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/france-sends-police-calais-migrant-gunfight-52787850
GIST	<p>Police reinforcements are arriving in the French port city of Calais after clashes among migrants left 22 people injured, as the interior minister warned of a worrying spike in violence.</p> <p>Interior Minister Gerard Collomb told reporters in Calais on Friday that five of the victims were injured by gunfire in Thursday’s fighting, blaming "totally organized" gangs. Police are seeking a shooting suspect but have made no arrests.</p> <p>Collomb said two extra police units were en route and warned of growing tensions in Calais, where migrants converge in hopes of crossing to Britain.</p> <p>Authorities said that Afghan and Eritrean migrants had been fighting with sticks and stones after a meal distribution before the shots were fired. Firearms are rare among migrants.</p> <p>The government closed a vast Calais migrant camp in 2016.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 ‘Slender man’ teen 40yrs institution care
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/2nd-teen-slender-man-stabbing-case-remain-institutional/story?
GIST	<p>A Wisconsin judge has sentenced the second of two teenage girls accused of the 2014 attempted homicide of their friend by stabbing her in the woods to please the fictional character Slender Man.</p> <p>Morgan Geysler, 15, was sentenced to 40 years under a mental health institution's supervision. While she may periodically petition for release from the hospital in the future, she will be under institutional supervision for that time.</p> <p>“I just want to let Bella and her family know that I’m sorry,” Geysler told the court after arguments, breaking into tears. “I never meant this to happen. I hope that she’s doing well.”</p> <p>Bella is the nickname Geysler had given the victim, Payton Leutner, when they were younger.</p> <p>Geysler and Anissa Weier were arrested May 31, 2014, after attacking Leutner with a knife and leaving her behind in the Waukesha woods. All three girls were 12 years old at the time.</p> <p>Leutner was stabbed 19 times, but able to crawl to a nearby road where a passing bicyclist stopped to help her. Now 15, she survived her life-threatening injuries.</p>

	Prosecutors have said that both Geyser and Weier were obsessed with Slender Man, a character often depicted in fan fiction online as a horror figure who stalks children.
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HEADLINE	02/02 Robert Wagner 'person of interest'
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/witnesses-emerge-actress-natalie-woods-1981-drowning-52786087
GIST	<p>New witnesses have emerged in the 1981 drowning of actress Natalie Wood, prompting investigators to deem it a "suspicious death" and name her former husband, 87-year-old actor Robert Wagner, a "person of interest," Los Angeles sheriff's officials said.</p> <p>For nearly four decades, mystery and speculation have swirled around the death of the actress who was nominated for three Academy Awards and starred in "West Side Story" and "Rebel Without a Cause."</p> <p>She was on a yacht with Wagner, actor Christopher Walken and the boat captain on Thanksgiving weekend of 1981. After a night of drinking, her body was found floating in the waters off Southern California's Catalina Island. She was 43.</p> <p>Investigators initially ruled it an accident but reopened the case in 2011 to see whether Wagner or anyone else played a role after the boat's captain said he heard the couple arguing the night of her disappearance. The coroner's office amended Wood's death certificate the next year to include "drowning and other undetermined factors."</p> <p>In a statement Thursday, sheriff's spokeswoman Nicole Nishida said new witnesses interviewed since the case was reopened gave statements that "portray a new sequence of events on the boat that night."</p> <p>One of the witnesses described hearing yelling and crashing sounds coming from the couple's stateroom, she said. Shortly after that, separate witnesses heard a man and woman arguing on the back of the boat and believe the voices were those of Wood and Wagner, Nishida said.</p> <p>The statements differed from the original version of events provided by witnesses, including those who were on the boat, she said.</p> <p>The sheriff's department said Wagner is considered a person of interest.</p> <p>"Do we have enough to make an arrest at this moment? No," Nishida said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Migrant melee in Calais; 4 shot
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/migrants-calais-shot-french-police-break-melee-52772116
GIST	<p>Four migrants were shot and wounded Thursday during a confrontation in France's port city of Calais, with an Afghan migrant apparently firing the shots, the French Interior Ministry said.</p> <p>Afghan and Eritrean migrants in the city, a gateway to Britain, had been fighting with sticks and stones before the shots were fired, regional authorities said.</p> <p>Police had moved in to try to protect migrants who were being attacked, the ministry said in a statement. The four who were shot were listed in serious condition, while 14 others were slightly injured. The nationalities of the people hurt were not immediately clear.</p> <p>The prefecture of the Pas-de-Calais had said earlier that two confrontations between Afghan and Eritrean</p>

	<p>migrants culminated in the gunfire. It is unusual for migrants to carry firearms.</p> <p>The shootings are the most serious clash in recent times between migrants around Calais. French Interior Minister Gerard Collomb headed to the city for late-night meetings with officials.</p> <p>Tensions have been high in Calais, where hundreds of migrants hoping to sneak across the English Channel huddle against the cold and police have orders to try to keep them from setting up camp. However, some officers have been criticized for overzealous policing.</p> <p>The Pas-de-Calais prefecture said security forces were trying to protect Afghan migrants during a melee with Eritreans when the injuries happened.</p> <p>The prefecture said the gunfire was the culmination of a showdown between Afghan and Eritrean migrants, fighting each other with sticks and stones, after a meal distribution near the Calais hospital, outside the town center.</p> <p>In a second confrontation, up to 200 Eritrean migrants cornered 30 Afghans near the former site of a makeshift migrant camp that housed thousands of people before it was evacuated and destroyed in October 2016.</p> <p>After police moved in "to protect the Afghan migrants," the four were shot, the prefecture said.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Jan. smuggling busts find 200 illegals
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/02/01/nearly-200-illegal-immigrants-found-in-just-three-january-smuggling-busts.html
GIST	<p>Nearly 200 people from Mexico and Central America were stuffed inside large trucks and caught trying to enter the United States illegally during three huge January smuggling busts that occurred in just nine days.</p> <p>Officials in southern California said 77 people, including 5 children, were found near the Mexico border Monday packed inside a sweltering truck that had been painted to resemble a UPS truck.</p> <p>The San Diego Union-Tribune reported a U.S. border patrol agent in Boulevard, Calif., noticed the truck was riding low and “could smell body odor mixed with a distinct type of pungent soap which is commonly used in Mexico.”</p> <p>Inside the truck's cargo area, officials found people sweating and standing shoulder-to-shoulder.</p> <p>Border Patrol found a tunnel on the U.S. - Mexico border after a cave in at construction site</p> <p>A similar scene greeted authorities last week in Laredo, Texas, where border patrol agents found 76 immigrants, including 13 children, from Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala lying on the floor or crouching against the walls of a tractor-trailer rig.</p> <p>A week earlier, also in Laredo, border agents stopped a tractor-trailer with 29 illegal immigrants from Mexico and Guatemala crossing into the U.S.</p> <p>Laredo and southern California are home to two of the largest trade and transportation ports along the U.S.-Mexico border, and hundreds, if not thousands, of tractor-trailers move goods between the two countries.</p> <p>Smugglers are taking advantage and carrying human cargo that can be easily transported across country lines without easy detection.</p> <p>Jessica Vaughn, director of policy studies for the Center for Immigration Studies, told Fox News on</p>

Thursday that these locations are funnels for an “enormous” volume of international trade, making them easy targets for smugglers.

“There is no way that all of them are screened [as closely as they should be],” she said, adding the financial incentive from smugglers and drivers is just too high to discard.

In the case out of Boulevard earlier this week, the driver was identified as Shawn Lee Seiler, a U.S. citizen who told authorities he was “an alien smuggler” who expected to get paid \$100 per immigrant that he got across. According to court documents, Seiler was surprised to learn there were 77 people in the truck as he was only expecting 50.

“[This] is only a fraction of what the smugglers [who are putting them on the trucks] are getting,” Vaughn said. “It’s a couple thousand – I believe the going rate was around \$3,000 a person.”

She continued: “The cartels that control the flow are making a huge amount of money...It’s a multi-million dollar business.”

All of the immigrants swept up during the three January busts were in good condition when they were found -- but this is not always the case.

Last July, 10 people died as they were being smuggled through Texas. Thirty-nine immigrants were found packed into a semitrailer in the parking lot of a San Antonio Walmart. Eight were already dead when officials opened the trailer's door and two more died at hospitals.

The truck's refrigeration system wasn't working and the day's temperature had climbed to 101 degrees.

The truck driver, identified as 60-year-old James Mathew Bradley Jr., of Clearwater, Fla., later pleaded guilty to conspiracy and to transporting immigrants resulting in death.

“These criminal organizations view these individuals as mere commodities without regard for their safety,” Gabriel Acosta, assistant chief patrol agent for the Laredo Border Patrol sector, said about the recent incidents. “The blatant disregard for human life will not be tolerated.”

It’s unclear how many tractor-trailers cross the border filled with human cargo and go undetected. A spokesman for U.S. Customs and Border Protection did not immediately respond to Fox News’ request for comment on Thursday.

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HEADLINE	02/01 Puerto Rico: 78 killings in Jan.
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/puerto-rico-reports-78-killings-deadliest-months-52773055?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>One of Puerto Rico's deadliest months in recent years has closed, with 78 killings reported in January as the U.S. territory struggles with a surge in violent crime and growing discontent among thousands of police officers.</p> <p>The killings included a 20-year-old woman found kneeling and burned to death inside a car in the upscale city of Guaynabo and a triple homicide reported in the eastern mountain town of San Lorenzo.</p> <p>Puerto Rico's homicide rate is roughly 20 killings per 100,000 residents, compared with 3.7 per 100,000 residents on the U.S. mainland.</p> <p>"I'm gravely concerned about these violent incidents reported in recent days," said Sen. Miguel Laureano. "It's a dramatic situation that requires immediate attention."</p>

	<p>The majority of people killed last month were young men shot to death. The central mountain town of Caguas reported the highest number of homicides at 18, followed by the capital of San Juan with 14.</p> <p>Police have issued warrants or arrested suspects in only a handful of the cases. On Thursday, authorities asked the public for help in solving the case of the young woman found burned inside the car. Police said they believe she was on her way to pick up a family member the day she was killed.</p> <p>Hector Pesquera, head of Puerto Rico's newly created Department of Public Safety, has said most of the killings in January were tied to drugs but added that there was "no rhyme or reason" to explain the surge.</p> <p>In mid-January, local and federal officials announced they would implement a "broken windows" policing campaign to help reduce the number of killings. The plan is to crack down on all types of violations, including traffic infractions and illegal tints on car windows, to help get criminals off the street and prevent bigger crimes.</p> <p>The increase in killings came weeks after thousands of police officers began calling in sick daily to protest millions of dollars owed in overtime pay following Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Absences have returned to the normal daily average, Pesquera says, but thousands of police officers are still upset about austerity measures, including a sharp reduction in their monthly pensions and an end to being able to cash in unused sick days.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 Men indicted gun smuggling for Kurds
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/charged-seattle-smuggle-guns-turkey-52773989?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Two Seattle-area men face federal charges that they smuggled guns to Turkey — weapons that were ultimately destined for Kurdish fighters in Iraq.</p> <p>A grand jury late Wednesday indicted 51-year-old Paul Brunt, of Bellevue, and 29-year-old Rawnd Khaleel Aldalawi, an Iraq native who lives in Seattle.</p> <p>Prosecutors say Brunt bought the firearms and the men shipped them hidden in the side panels of vehicles.</p> <p>The U.S. attorney's office says the first shipment, in February 2017, involved 30 guns hidden in three cars. The second, last November, included 47 guns hidden in two cars. The latter shipment was discovered by Turkish authorities, prompting the investigation.</p> <p>Aldalawi's lawyer declined to comment. Brunt's did not immediately return an email seeking comment.</p> <p>Investigators say the men acknowledged their actions in interviews and that Aldalawi said he was supporting the Peshmerga military in northern Iraq, because the Iraqi government did not help defend the region from the Islamic State group.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/31 NY prison inmates to get tablets
SOURCE	https://www.wkbw.com/news/state-news/all-inmates-in-nys-prisons-to-get-free-tablets
GIST	<p>BUFFALO, N.Y. (WKBW) - Under a new state contract, all inmates in New York State prisons will receive free tablets.</p> <p>The Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) is partnering with JPay, a company that specializes in inmate and corrections-related services. JPay is providing the tablets at no cost to the state or inmates, and DOCCS is not taking commissions for the tablets.</p>

	<p>The tablets will be preloaded with educational content and DOCCS plans to make additional services available through the tablets, such as Prison Rape Elimination Act reporting, Grievance filing, and the potential for placing commissary orders.</p> <p>According to DOCCS, JPay will get money from transactions that happen via the tablets (ebooks, music, videos). The tablets are only part of a larger contract with JPay who are also handling commissary and care packages sent from families to inmates.</p> <p>The tablets will not be able to connect to the internet, but inmates will be able to use the tablets to purchase music, e-books, videos, and other entertainment. There will also be controlled kiosks where inmates can plug their tablet in to send emails to an approved list of recipients. Inmates will only have supervised access to the kiosks at scheduled times.</p> <p>State corrections officials say they believe using the tablets will help inmates stay in touch with their families and be better prepared to reenter into the community.</p>
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HEADLINE	02/01 L.A. school shooting: 12yr-old suspect
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/01/us/los-angeles-sal-castro-middle-school-shooting/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Two 15-year-old students were shot Thursday morning in a classroom at Sal Castro Middle School in Los Angeles, and a 12-year-old female student is in custody as a suspect, officials said.</p> <p>One boy was shot in the head and is in critical condition, and a girl was shot in the wrist at the school, which shares a campus with Belmont High School, Los Angeles fire Capt. Eric Scott said.</p> <p>Three others -- a woman and two children -- were being treated for minor cuts, including some from glass, Scott said.</p> <p>"Our campus, while it's on lockdown, is safe. There is no more safety threat to the students of this school," city schools Police Chief Steven Zipperman said late Thursday morning.</p> <p>The shooting was reported to Los Angeles police at 8:55 a.m. Police found and confiscated a gun at the scene, Los Angeles police Lt. Chris Ramirez said.</p> <p>Police didn't say what led to the shooting, and little information was immediately released about the girl who was detained. Zipperman said she was 12.</p> <p>The motive is under investigation, Ramirez said. Ramirez and Los Angeles police spokesman Drake Madison both said the girl in custody is a suspect.</p>
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9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php
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HEADLINE	01/29 Russia team banned from Paralympics
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Sports/wireStory/russian-team-banned-paralympics-compete-52676830
GIST	<p>Russia was banned Monday from the upcoming Pyeongchang Paralympics because of its doping past.</p> <p>However, the International Paralympic Committee said about 30-35 Russians will be allowed to compete in five sports as neutral athletes at the games, which run from March 8-18.</p> <p>That mirrors the situation for next month's Olympics. The Russian team has been barred, but 169 Russians have been invited to compete.</p> <p>"We are not rewarding Russia but we are allowing athletes that we believe are clean to compete under a neutral flag," IPC president Andrew Parsons said.</p> <p>It will be the second Paralympics without a Russian team. The country was also excluded from the Rio de Janeiro Paralympics in 2016. Since then, there has been enough improvement to justify allowing Russians to compete as neutral athletes after extra drug testing, Parsons said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/29 State workers' birthdates private, public?
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/politics-government/article196974279.html
GIST	<p>A group of Democratic lawmakers is pushing to cut off a long-brewing court battle over public records between state labor unions and their foes by banning the disclosure of the birthdates of state employees.</p> <p>While that lawsuit relates to an effort by the conservative Freedom Foundation to notify certain state workers about how to legally avoid paying union dues, new legislation on the topic has set off a wider battle over balancing privacy with government transparency.</p> <p>Rowland Thompson, the executive director of The Allied Daily Newspapers of Washington, told a Senate panel on Jan. 19 that access to the names and corresponding birthdates of state employees is critical for the public to know "exactly who works for them."</p> <p>State Sen. Patty Kuderer, D-Bellevue, testified at the same hearing that Senate Bill 6079 would protect public employees "so that hackers and stalkers and crooks and other unsavory folks can't get it for illegitimate purposes."</p> <p>Kuderer and 18 other Democrats introduced the legislation, which cleared a Senate panel Friday.</p> <p>The disagreement over birthdates stretches back years. In May of 2016, a coalition of unions sued to stop records requests made by the Freedom Foundation, a conservative nonprofit dedicated to shrinking the size and influence of public-sector unions.</p>

The organization has been trying to get the names and matching birthdates of certain state workers, hoping to use the information to get home addresses for canvassing and mail campaigns related to union dues.

State unions have been concerned the Freedom Foundation is trying to drain their membership. They've argued in court the requests for birthdates to match employee names might violate privacy laws.

In November, a three-judge panel in Division II of the state Court of Appeals ruled largely in the favor of unions, saying state workers have constitutional privacy protections that bar the Freedom Foundation from getting the names and corresponding birthdates of employees through public records requests.

The Freedom Foundation since has petitioned the state Supreme Court to review the matter, arguing releasing the information is not private and should be disclosed. The court has not yet decided whether to take the case.

Jami Lund, a senior policy analyst for the Freedom Foundation, painted Kuderer's measure in part as a kickback for unions worried about losing money and members. Labor unions often favor Democrats when spending campaign cash, adding to the chances of the bill passing, Lund said in an interview with The News Tribune and The Olympian.

"This is the unions afraid of our ability to inform public employees of their constitutional right to reduce their payment to the union," Lund said.

Lund also said he believes the privacy concerns are overblown. Birthdates with matching names aren't enough information for someone "to commit any fraud or identity theft," he said.

Thompson, the newspaper group's lobbyist, said Kuderer's bill reaches beyond a battle over union dues.

He testified that robust scrutiny of state employees is necessary when workers are entrusted to teach children, care for vulnerable adults or wield weapons to protect the public. That scrutiny sometimes requires birthdates of state employees, Thompson said.

Thompson brought up a 2003 investigation by The Seattle Times into coaches at public schools who sexually molested students. Reporters at the paper found 159 coaches in the decade before 2003 that were fired or reprimanded for sexual misconduct ranging from harassment to rape. Of those 159 coaches, at least 98 continued to coach or teach at the time, the Times reported.

Thompson said the paper used the birthdates of those coaches to track them through state databases when they transferred schools after an allegation of sexual misconduct.

Without birthdates, just having an employee's name "is virtually useless in terms of trying to ascertain someone's identity," Thompson said.

State workers and union representatives also say the measure has implications beyond keeping unions whole. But they say privacy trumps the public's right to know, in this instance.

Tim Welch, spokesman for the Washington Federation of State Employee, said in an interview that the bill is needed to prevent "serious threat to privacy and security of state employees."

Melissa Kover, a state worker for the Department of Social and Health Services Division of Child Support, had a similar response when testifying at the January hearing.

Kover said her job entails establishing and enforcing child-support orders. She said people have threatened her, propositioned her and made records requests for her information.

"It's really scary as a single parent of two teenagers to know that they can get that information and potentially show up at my house," Kover said. "I just feel like the safety of state employees should be of

	the utmost importance, especially for what we do.”
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HEADLINE	01/29 Malaysia annuls unilateral conversion
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/e092a86857ed4cde8981ac8de183b5ee/Malaysia's-top-court-annuls-unilateral-conversions-of-minors
GIST	<p>KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Malaysia’s top court said in a landmark decision Monday both parents must consent to the religious conversion of a minor, ruling unanimously in favor of a Hindu woman whose ex-husband converted their three children to Islam without telling her.</p> <p>The ruling ended a nine-year legal tussle for M.Indira Gandh, whose former husband became a Muslim and converted their three children in 2009. He also snatched their daughter, then 11 months old, from the family home.</p> <p>She won custody of the three children and challenged their conversions in civil courts of Malaysia’s dual-court system. A lower court annulled them, but the Court of Appeal overturned the ruling, saying civil courts had no jurisdiction over Islamic conversions. The ruling was appealed to the nation’s highest court.</p> <p>The five-member panel in the Federal Court found the children’s conversions unlawful as they were done without Gandhi’s consent.</p> <p>“This is a landmark decision and a victory for all Malaysians,” said M.Kulasegaran, Gandhi’s lawyer.</p> <p>He said the ruling clearly showed civil courts are the paramount courts and can hear matters related to Islamic affairs even if there is a contradictory Sharia court decision. There are many similar disputes involving the unilateral conversion of children to Islam and that the ruling meant that non-Muslims now can seek redress in the civil courts, he added.</p> <p>Muslims, who are 60 percent of Malaysia’s 31 million people, are governed by Islamic courts while non-Muslims go to civil courts to settle family, marriage and other personal disputes. But the law is vague on which court has authority over disputes between Muslims and non-Muslims, especially within a family.</p> <p>Civil courts have generally avoided taking a position in such cases, allowing Sharia courts to lead. This has raised questions about freedom of religion guaranteed by the Constitution, and strained racial relations in this multiethnic country, which has enjoyed largely peaceful race relations for nearly five decades.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/29 Road salt taking toll on US waters
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/bb34e41bb95a4dfa85301621ec0c50ca/Salt,-the-solution-to-winter's-dangers,-threatens-US-waters
GIST	<p>CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — When roads turn into ice rinks, consider trying beet juice, molasses, and even beer or cheese waste to make them safer. So say experts who fear road salt is starting to take a toll on the nation’s waterways, putting everything from fish and frogs to microscopic zooplankton at risk.</p> <p>Tossed onto sidewalks and dumped onto highways, salt for decades has provided the cheapest and most effective way to cut down on traffic accidents and pedestrian falls during winter storms. But researchers cite mounting evidence that those tons of sodium chloride crystals — more than 20 million nationwide each year — are increasing the salinity of hundreds of lakes, especially in the Northeast and Midwest.</p> <p>“There has been a sense of alarm on the impacts of road salt on organisms and ecosystems,” said Victoria Kelly, a road salt expert at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies in New York. “We’ve seen increasing concentrations in river water, lakes, streams. Then, scientists started asking the question: What is going to</p>

happen to the organisms living in freshwater bodies and what will happen to the freshwater bodies as a whole?”

Believed to be first used in the 1940s in New Hampshire, salt became the go-to de-icing agent as cities expanded, highways were built and motorists came to expect clear roads. More than a million truckloads a year are deployed in ice-prone climes, most heavily in the Northeast and Midwest.

But many state and local agencies are seeking ways to reduce salt use as its environmental impacts are becoming more apparent.

They have turned to high-tech equipment to spread salt more efficiently, better weather forecasting to time their salting, and liquefied organic additives that help salt stick to pavement. That reduces salt use by preventing it from washing away immediately.

Agencies from New Jersey to North Dakota are using a mixture that includes beet juice; New Hampshire and Maine use one with molasses. Highway departments also have turned to beer waste, pickle brine and, in at least one Wisconsin county, cheese brine.

“Adding salt to the environment does have negative impacts, but for those of us in the Northeast, especially in rural states, where driving is the predominant way of getting around, we need mobility,” said Jonathan Rubin, director of the Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center and lead author on a 2010 report on the cost and benefits of salting Maine roads.

“In my opinion, we are always going to be using some degree of road salt,” he said. “The question is, can we use less?”

Salt corrosion already causes billions of dollars in damage each year to cars, roads and bridges — and now there are growing signs it’s making freshwater ecosystems saltier. In the past 50 years, chloride concentrations in some lakes and rivers quadrupled and, in a few, increased a hundredfold.

Last year, a study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences concluded that more than 40 percent of 327 lakes examined had experienced long-term salinization, and that thousands more were at a risk. Researchers also estimated nearly 50 lakes in the study, including small ones in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Rhode Island, could surpass the Environmental Protection Agency’s chloride threshold concentration by 2050, potentially harming aquatic life.

Experiments at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute aquatic lab in Troy, New York, have found that higher salt concentrations reduced growth rates in rainbow trout and decreased the abundance of zooplankton 7/8— tiny animals or larvae that are critical to the aquatic food chain and play a role in keeping lakes and streams clean.

Other studies have shown that salinization of lakes and streams reduces the numbers of fish and amphibians, kills off plants, and alters the diversity of these freshwater ecosystems.

“At high road salt concentrations, you can see reductions in growth, reduction in the diversity of species within a system and you can also see effects on reproduction of certain species,” said William Hintz, of Rensselaer Polytechnic.

Despite such environmental concerns, Caleb Dobbins, New Hampshire’s highway maintenance engineer, doesn’t envision salt being replaced anytime soon by substitutes, such as magnesium acetate, which he says are 30 times more expensive and have their own environmental challenges.

“Everybody is looking throughout the world,” he said. “Nobody is finding that silver bullet.”

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HEADLINE	01/26 Florida's migrant worker problem
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2018-01-26/florida-farmers-fear-backlash-over-migrant-worker-visa-program
GIST	<p>The U.S. Department of Homeland Security probably surprised no one when it announced that as of now, Haitians are ineligible for the H-2A guest farmworker visa program. Officials cited "high levels of fraud and abuse" and "a high rate of overstaying" visas.</p> <p>The cutoff tracks administration moves against migrants who enter the country legally but stay on illegally. It also closely follows President Donald Trump's consequential use of an expletive to characterize Haiti and, by extension, its people.</p> <p>Florida agriculture has its share of illegal immigrants from Haiti and many other places. But the state's farmers, harvesters and packers are adamant that the industry runs on H-2A visas and disrupting the program could be ruinous.</p> <p>An H-2A temporary visa is good for up to 10 months and does not provide a path to citizenship. When the picking season ends, the worker must return home, generally to Mexico or Central America if the fields are in Florida. A breakdown of visa holders by nationality could not be obtained, but Haitians apparently constitute a small percentage of them in Florida.</p> <p>The visas' importance to an \$8 billion industry cannot be overstated, insiders and savvy observers agree. There simply aren't enough domestic workers willing and able to harvest crops, sometimes while perched on ladders wearing bags around their necks to free both hands for picking.</p> <p>"Where would we be without H-2A? We'd be out of business," says Steve Johnson, owner of a wide-ranging harvesting company based in Wauchula, south of Tampa. Of the 900 workers he employs to gather berries, citrus and onions, 90 percent are in the program.</p> <p>Florida leads the nation in H-2A worker positions certified by the Department of Labor. In fiscal year 2017, the state had 15.9 percent of the total 97,285, topping Georgia (13.2 percent) and North Carolina (9.8 percent).</p> <p>There are an estimated 25,000 visa holders in Florida, or about a quarter of the roughly 100,000 eligible crop workers. (Plant nurseries account for another 100,000 who can't apply because their work is continuous, not seasonal.) And the number of H-2A applications is rising.</p> <p>"The program nationwide will continue to grow exponentially, and that just speaks to not necessarily the greatness of the program, but to the need to gain an accessible workforce for our agricultural producers. That's the best avenue and the compliant, legal way to get those workers," says John-Walt Boatright, national affairs coordinator for the Florida Farm Bureau Federation.</p> <p>Yet no one is delighted with H-2A. Farmers chafe under extensive regulations and paperwork and complain it's too expensive. "Our producers find it incredibly difficult and cost-prohibitive to participate, and yet in order for them to produce their crops they have to have a workforce," Boatright says.</p> <p>Labor advocates say established farmworker communities such as Immokalee are being destroyed while employers cherry-pick young males from Mexico and other countries with no fair-labor laws. The system is abused by recruiters who illegally charge migrants substantial fees. And employers who want to cheat workers can get away with it because they have the upper hand – in the current anti-immigrant climate, more than ever.</p> <p>Gregory Schell, an attorney with Southern Migrant Legal Services, tells the story of a Mexican laborer who complained to his foreman about being shortchanged.</p> <p>"The foreman told him, well, yes, you are being cheated, but I have the magic pen," Schell says. He explained that the foreman recorded the names of returning workers and, when he came to "a complainer,</p>

the pen ran out of ink."

The worker was a named plaintiff in a federal class action against Sorrells Brothers Packing Co. of Arcadia, east of Sarasota. The lawsuit claimed the citrus concern failed to pay sufficient wages to dozens of workers as required by federal law and the H-2A program.

Sorrells denied the allegations but settled the case in 2008 for about \$600,000, plus \$150,000 in fees to plaintiffs' counsel from Florida Legal Services.

But these days the courts may be less hospitable to immigrant worker complaints.

On Jan. 9, a federal judge in Tampa ruled in an H-2A case that Fancy Farms, a Plant City strawberry grower, was not liable for failing to reimburse workers the \$3,000 to \$4,000 they paid recruiters who were working for the employer.

Under the Fair Labor Standards Act farmers must warn recruiters in writing against extracting fees from laborers. But Fancy Farms did not include this contract clause because it was "not aware of any federal regulations requiring it to do so," U.S. District Judge Susan Bucklew wrote in her opinion.

Schell was an adviser to the Florida Rural Legal Services attorneys who brought the case on behalf of 54 Hondurans. He indicated the decision will be appealed.

"The government adopted this requirement to try to enlist employers into the struggle against labor trafficking by reining in their foreign recruiters," Schell says. "If employers can ignore this requirement with impunity, the regulation ceases to be much of a tool against labor trafficking."

There are efforts to clean up the recruitment system. The Coalition of Immokalee Workers, celebrated for exposing slavery rings, is encouraging the Mexican National Employment Service to recruit and screen H-2A applicants.

Johnson, owner of the Wauchula harvesting company, says he doesn't need recruiters. He uses word of mouth, asking his best workers to recommend other workers.

"You get one name, you build it slowly so that you build it right and you build it with the right people," he says. "They hear how we treat people so that spreads, too."

"The biggest thing is morale," Johnson says. "If somebody is happy they'll be more productive."

Yet migrant advocates say the reverse is also true, that if the prevailing policy message is all about deportation, the main motivator is fear and the result is flight.

Reggie Brown notes the connection between policy and labor availability. Brown will retire at the end of January from running the Florida Tomato Committee, the state's tomato regulator and marketer.

"It's one of the biggest challenges in the business and it's been that way for a number of years now," Brown says. He agrees the Trump administration's push for deportations is counter-productive.

"The policy of increasing the pressure certainly does not add in numbers to the workforce and any reduction in the workforce is a challenge to the business," Brown says.

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HEADLINE 01/28 Ex-Amtrak conductor: safety non-existent

SOURCE <http://q13fox.com/2018/01/28/former-train-conductor-says-safety-is-virtually-non-existent-at-amtrak/>

GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Just over a month after Amtrak Train 501 derailed in DuPont killing three people, a number of employees have spoken to news outlets including, our news partners at the Seattle Times and CNN, saying that they didn't have enough training to familiarize themselves with the new Portland to Seattle route.</p> <p>John Hiatt, a former train engineer, who now investigates train accidents for a law firm says he is representing an injured employee now suing Amtrak.</p> <p>"Training is money. In this case, it looks like they were worried about money and time and safety was number three," said Hiatt.</p> <p>A former Amtrak train conductor says safety is virtually non-existent at Amtrak. "If you talk about safety to your manager you're punished," said Michael Callanan.</p> <p>He worked for Amtrak for nine years and is now a railroad safety expert. Callanan says lack of training at Amtrak has been going on for as long as he can remember.</p> <p>"This is gross culpable negligence," said Callanan.</p> <p>According to our news partners at The Seattle Times, people working for Amtrak say the training for the new routes consisted of cramming a bunch of people into one train car, some sitting backward, and training at night.</p> <p>Callanan says conductors should do at least three to five roundtrip runs of the route to get familiar. He says if that's properly done it would also be during daylight to get accustomed to surroundings.</p> <p>"Where the signals are and that's done during the day looking out the window," said Callanan.</p> <p>He says as more people come forward with safety concerns, riders will have them too.</p> <p>"Nobody would be riding the train anymore, there is no safety at Amtrak," said Callanan.</p> <p>He says it's aggravating to see accidents keep happening, but unless a major overhaul happens, he doesn't think anything will change.</p> <p>Amtrak does have a new CEO who comes from Delta Airlines.</p> <p>The National Transportation Safety Board's latest report on the DuPont derailment says the engineer operating Train 501 did feel he had enough training on the new route. But the agency says they'll look at training as part of the investigation into the crash.</p> <p>Amtrak has not responded to a request to comment on trainings and safety.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/29 Seoul: 50,000 in NKorea military parade
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/01/29/Seoul-North-Korea-mobilizes-50000-for-upcoming-military-parade/3771517214179/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=2
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea, Jan. 29 (UPI) -- North Korea appears to have mobilized tens of thousands of troops and civilians for a massive military parade next week, South Korean officials said Monday.</p> <p>Earlier this month, Seoul detected 13,000 personnel near Pyongyang's Mirim Airport, training in what appeared to be a rehearsal for a military parade to mark the founding of the North Korean army on Feb. 8.</p> <p>However, the figure has risen to roughly 50,000 as of late, according to multiple officials in Seoul.</p>

One official said the parade is likely to include card stunts, given the large number of participants, and that there haven't been signs that indicate transporter-erector-launcher missile vehicles will be deployed at the event.

North Korea's military parades usually showcase the regime's latest weapons and hardware.

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HEADLINE	01/28 Workers: warned Amtrak before crash
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/28/us/amtrak-501-derail-training-safety-investigation/index.html
GIST	<p>Portland, Oregon (CNN)In the days before Amtrak 501 careened off the tracks last month in a deadly crash, engineers and conductors warned their supervisors that they did not feel adequately trained on the new route, according to more than a dozen sources.</p> <p>Several train cars flew off an overpass, landing on Interstate 5 in the December 18 accident near DuPont, Washington, which left three dead and more than 100 injured. At the time, Amtrak 501 was making its inaugural journey of a new Seattle-to-Portland run called the Point Defiance Bypass route.</p> <p>Engineers and conductors had safety concerns, citing rushed and "totally inadequate" training which left them feeling dangerously unprepared for the new route, according to multiple sources, including several directly involved in the training. Crew members traditionally train on new routes to familiarize themselves with the signs, terrain and other physical characteristics which vary from route to route.</p> <p>Some training runs were performed at night, with as many as six or more crew members stuffed into cars with just three seats, which meant some trainees rode backwards, in the dark, the sources said. Engineers felt they did not get enough practice runs at the controls and could not properly see to familiarize themselves with the route.</p> <p>Adding to the training concerns, the new locomotives for the maiden run were unfamiliar to many of the crew members up until the brief training runs, the sources said.</p> <p>The engineer for Amtrak 501 told investigators he took seven to 10 observational training trips on the new route, but was only at the controls for three one-way trips, and only one of those was in the direction the train was traveling when it crashed, according to an interim report released this week by the National Transportation Safety Board.</p> <p>The engineer did not respond to CNN's requests for comment, but according to the report he told the NTSB "he would not have gotten behind the throttle if he had any reservations about his readiness to operate the train."</p> <p>Amtrak 501 was travelling at near 80 miles an hour while heading into a turn with a maximum speed of just 30 mph. The engineer told the NTSB he missed at least two signs which would have warned him to slow down, then "as soon as he saw the 30 mph sign at the start of the curve, he applied brakes. Seconds later, the train derailed as it entered the curve," according to the NTSB report.</p> <p>When asked about allegations of inadequate training, Amtrak referred CNN to the NTSB, which said in a statement, "NTSB investigators are aware of the issues that have been raised regarding training of the Amtrak 501 crewmembers."</p> <p>Amtrak also said in a statement to CNN, "Our highest priority is ensuring the safety of our passengers, our crew and the communities we serve. We are actively taking measures to strengthen the safety of our operations, from adopting a safety management system approach used by commercial aviation to advancing Positive Train Control across the network. We will continue to work with the NTSB to learn from this accident and improve."</p>

Amtrak employees who spoke to CNN insisted on remaining anonymous out of fear of losing their jobs. More than a half dozen lawsuits have been filed so far in the crash, all alleging that inadequate crew training contributed to the accident. One of the lawsuits was filed by a conductor who was training in the lead locomotive when Amtrak 501 crashed.

His attorney, Anthony Petru, told CNN that warnings to managers about the lack of training went unheeded.

"In an environment where there is a quick trigger by management to charge employees with insubordination, or to go after them if they report safety concerns, there was some hesitancy by employees to do anything other than go along with the program," Petru said.

Train accident investigator John Hiatt says it is clear to him the engineer had lost track of his location on the route, and blames the problems with training and preparation, at least in part, for the crash. Hiatt is an investigator with the Bremseth Law Firm of Minnetonka, Minnesota, which has filed a lawsuit on behalf of another Amtrak employee.

"Training is money, and in this case it looks to me like they were worried about money and time and safety was number three, at best, on their list," Hiatt said.

The Point Defiance Bypass was the final piece of an \$800 million project under a federal economic stimulus for high-speed rail.

But the federal money was due to run out, and the pressure to get the maiden voyage done and open the line resulted in sped-up training, sources told CNN.

The crash of Train 501 is again raising larger concerns about what many call a failing safety culture at Amtrak.

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HEADLINE	01/28 Canada next frontier for shale oil?
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-canada-oil-shale-insight/why-canada-is-the-next-frontier-for-shale-oil-idUSKBN1FI0G7
GIST	<p>CALGARY, Alberta (Reuters) - The revolution in U.S. shale oil has battered Canada's energy industry in recent years, ending two decades of rapid expansion and job creation in the nation's vast oil sands.</p> <p>Now Canada is looking to its own shale fields to repair the economic damage.</p> <p>Canadian producers and global oil majors are increasingly exploring the Duvernay and Montney formations, which they say could rival the most prolific U.S. shale fields.</p> <p>Canada is the first country outside the United States to see large-scale development of shale resources, which already account for 8 percent of total Canadian oil output. China, Russia and Argentina also have ample shale reserves but have yet to overcome the obstacles to full commercial development.</p> <p>Canada, by contrast, offers many of the same advantages that allowed oil firms to launch the shale revolution in the United States: numerous private energy firms with appetite for risk; deep capital markets; infrastructure to transport oil; low population in regions that contain shale reserves; and plentiful water to pump into shale wells.</p> <p>Together, the Duvernay and Montney formations in Canada hold marketable resources estimated at 500 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, 20 billion barrels of natural gas liquids and 4.5 billion barrels of oil, according to the National Energy Board, a Canadian regulator.</p>

“The Montney is thought to have about half the recoverable resources of the whole oil sands region, so it’s formidable,” Marty Proctor, chief executive of Calgary-based Seven Generations Energy, told Reuters in an interview.

Canada’s shale output stands at about 335,000 bpd, according to energy consultants Wood Mackenzie, which forecasts output should grow to 420,000 bpd in a decade. The pace of output growth could quicken and the estimated size of the resources could rise as activity picks up and knowledge of the fields improves, according to the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.

Seven Generations and Encana Corp, also based in Calgary, are among leading producers developing the two regions. Global majors including Royal Dutch Shell and ConocoPhillips - who pulled back from the oil sands last year - are also developing Canadian shale assets.

Chevron Corp announced its first ever Canadian shale development in the Duvernay in November. Spokesman Leif Sollid called it one of the most promising shale opportunities in North America. ConocoPhillips sees potential for the Montney to deliver significant production and cash flow to the company, executive vice president of production drilling and projects Al Hirshberg said in November.

Shell will invest more money this year in the Duvernay than any other shale field except the Permian Basin in West Texas, the most productive U.S. shale play, spokesman Cameron Yost said.

“We may learn something in the Permian that becomes applicable in the Montney, and vice versa,” Yost said.

The oil sands boom dates back two decades, when improved technology, rising crude prices and fears of global oil shortages sparked a rush to develop the world’s third-largest reserves. But in the last five years, much of that investment has migrated south as U.S. shale firms pioneered new drilling techniques and flooded global oil markets with cheaper-to-produce crude.

The oil sands currently account for two-thirds of Canada’s 4.2 million barrels per day of crude. They will continue to contribute heavily to Canada’s energy output because oil sands projects, once built, produce for decades.

But the era of oil sands mega-projects will likely end with Suncor Energy’s 190,000 barrel-per-day Fort Hills mining project, which started producing this month.

Canadian energy officials are now counting on shale, also known as “tight” oil, to lure new investment.

“Increasingly we are going to see light tight oil and liquids-rich natural gas forming a key part of Alberta’s energy future,” said Margaret McCuaig-Boyd, energy minister for the province where the oil sands and much of the nation’s shale reserves are located.

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HEADLINE	01/25 GAO: security clearance process high risk
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/government-accountability-office-breaks-tradition-name-security-clearance-process-high-n841096
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Government Accountability Office on Thursday warned that the security clearance process is one of the most significant “high risks” programs in the U.S. government.</p> <p>The agency was not due to update its threat list until early next year, but it broke tradition to raise its concern with the process that vets employees at government agencies who receive secret and top secret security clearances.</p>

	<p>The announcement follows the release of a Defense Department report on Wednesday that found 165 defense contractors were able to work for years before it was discovered that they had problems in their past, such as committing a felony, that would disqualify them.</p> <p>“A high-quality and timely personnel security clearance process is essential to minimize the risks of unauthorized disclosures of classified information and to help ensure that information about individuals with criminal histories or other questionable behavior is identified and assessed,” U.S. Comptroller General Gene Dodaro said in a letter released Thursday.</p> <p>Recent reports from the GAO found that there is a significant backlog in the process, which allows unvetted employees to work and receive sensitive information on a provisional basis for years. The Department of Defense said their backlog is approximately 700,000 applications long.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/28 Panera recalls cream cheese products
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/panera-bread-recalls-cream-cheese-products-over-listeria-fears-n841801
GIST	<p>Panera Bread, the soup-and-sandwiches restaurant chain found in shopping centers across the country, said it would recall cream cheese products sold in its U.S. cafes over possible Listeria contamination.</p> <p>The bakery-café chain went ahead with the recall after samples of one type of 2-ounce cream cheese from a single production day tested positive for the presence of Listeria monocytogenes, Panera said Sunday in its announcement.</p> <p>The recall covers only cream cheese sold in Panera locations in the United States. It doesn't include Panera cafés in Canada or other Panera food products. As of last fall, the chain said it operated about 2,100 locations.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/28 Dutch face issues w/manmade quakes
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/manmade-quakes-force-dutch-face-future-gas-52661967
GIST	<p>When Nienke Bastiaans fell in love with and bought a 17th-century thatched house in a rural Dutch village, there was one person who warned about possible earthquakes due to gas extraction.</p> <p>"Nobody listened to him," she said.</p> <p>Now, 20 years later, thousands of homes in the northeastern Groningen province are facing reinforcement or even demolition because of hundreds of small tremors caused by decades of gas extraction. The scope of the problem is forcing the Dutch government to confront the prospect of a future without locally produced gas and lucrative gas tax revenue years earlier than previously expected.</p> <p>Bastiaans and her husband Tom Robinson just had the entire front wall of their home reinforced — paid for by the gas extraction company — and two chimneys replaced because of fears that another tremor could send them crashing through the roof.</p> <p>The work was completed shortly before a shallow 3.4-magnitude earthquake on Jan. 8 directly under their village jolted the region and rekindled calls for the government to end gas extraction. The quake — the most powerful to hit the region in five years — triggered nearly 3,000 reports of property damage, including a long vertical crack in Zeerijp's historic church tower.</p> <p>Thousands marched in Groningen on Jan. 19 to protest the gas extraction-caused earthquakes.</p>

The quakes occur because gas extraction lowers the pressure in a layer of porous sandstone about 3 kilometers (1.9 miles) below the Earth's surface. This causes layers in the sandstone to be squashed together. If this happens along natural fault lines in the rock, it can cause tension and lead to sudden shifts.

"(The January quake) makes crystal clear the deep impact of the downside of gas extraction on Groningen and Groningers. The damage to their houses, the concerns, the feelings of insecurity, but also the lack clarity about when their damage will be dealt with," Gerald Schotman, director of the Netherlands Petroleum Company, known by its Dutch acronym NAM, said.

But the government can't just order NAM to turn off the gas extraction machinery that dots the flat Groningen landscape. Some 90 percent of Dutch homes use the gas and the government has long-term contracts to sell gas to neighboring countries.

"They call our gas extraction 'the Dutch disease,'" said Jorien de Lege of Friends of the Earth. "(Gas) gave us great wealth, because our governments ... got the revenue from all the gas and so our cities have blossomed because of the gas money. And now we've gotten sort of lazy, because every time that we want to change something we realize that our whole society is made out of gas."

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HEADLINE	01/29 Many Puerto Ricans adrift in hotels
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/puerto-ricans-adrift-us-hotels-hurricane-maria-52675363?
GIST	<p>After they lost their home in Puerto Rico to flooding during Hurricane Maria, Enghie Melendez fled with her family to the U.S. mainland with three suitcases and the hope it wouldn't take long to rebuild their lives. It hasn't worked out that way.</p> <p>More than four months later, the family of five is squeezed into two rooms in a hotel in Brooklyn. While her husband looks for work, they are stuck in limbo, eating off paper plates and stepping over clothes in cramped quarters as they try to get settled in an unfamiliar city.</p> <p>"After the hurricane hit we told the kids that every day was going to be an adventure, but not like this," said the 43-year-old Melendez. "This is turning out to be really hard."</p> <p>Around the U.S., many Puerto Ricans are similarly adrift in hotels because of the Sept. 20 hurricane. The move north spared them from the misery of the storm's aftermath on the island. But the transition has often proved to be difficult, disruptive and expensive as people try to find housing, jobs, schools and even furniture and clothes to start fresh on the mainland.</p> <p>Melendez and her family shuffled between staying with relatives to a homeless shelter to a small hotel in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, forcing her to change schools for her three daughters in the middle of the semester.</p> <p>"The instability is terrible," she said as her husband, who worked as a cook at an Army base near San Juan, used a glass bottle to mash plantains to make a traditional Puerto Rican dish.</p> <p>Adding to the worries for large numbers of Puerto Ricans is that hotel reimbursements from the Federal Emergency Management Agency have started to run out and many say they can't afford temporary housing without assistance.</p> <p>"It's stressful," said Yalitza Rodriguez, a 35-year-old from the southern Puerto Rico town of Yauco who has been staying at a hotel in Queens with her elderly mother and husband while he looks for work. "If we don't get an extension we will have nowhere to live."</p>

Maria destroyed between 70,000 and 75,000 homes and damaged an additional 300,000, said Leticia Jover, a spokeswoman for Puerto Rico's Housing Department. The effects of the storm included the widespread loss of power, which is still not restored in some places. Many businesses closed. The result has been an exodus to the mainland.

The Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College estimated in an October study that between 114,000 and 213,000 Puerto Ricans would move to the U.S. mainland over the next 12 months. Most were expected to settle in Florida, followed by Pennsylvania, Texas and New York.

FEMA says there are nearly 4,000 families, more than 10,000 people, receiving hotel assistance from the agency in 42 states because their homes in Puerto Rico are too damaged to occupy. The agency has set March 20 as a deadline for the program to end overall but all cases are reviewed for eligibility every 30 days. It's impossible to know how many are in temporary housing without any aid or staying with families.

Leslie Rivera, from the central town of Caguas, has been shuffling among hotels in Tampa, Florida, since December with her three kids, ages 13, 10 and 2. She was approved for subsidized housing and expects to be settled soon but it has been difficult.

"I feel like I am on the streets because I have no clothes. I have nothing for my kids," the 35-year-old said with tears in her eyes.

Marytza Sanz, president of Latino Leadership Orlando, which has been helping displaced families, said many don't know where they will go after FEMA stops paying for their rooms.

"There are people with five dollars in their pockets," she said. "They can't buy detergent, deodorant, medicine."

In Kissimmee, in central Florida, Desiree Torres feels nervous. She has spent more than two months in a hotel with her three children. She says she can't find a job and several local shelters have told her there is no space for her and her children.

"I can't sleep at night," said the 30-year-old Torres, who lost her home in Las Piedras, a southeastern town near where the eye of the storm first crossed the island. "I'm worried about my kids."

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HEADLINE	01/29 Floodwaters peak Paris; threaten Normandy
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/floodwaters-hit-peak-paris-now-threaten-normandy-52676825?
GIST	<p>Floodwaters have reached a peak in Paris and are now threatening towns downstream along the rain-engorged Seine River.</p> <p>The national flood monitoring agency Vigicrues said the water levels hit a maximum height of 5.84 meters (19 feet, 2 inches) on the Austerlitz scale early Monday. That's below initial fears last week, and well below record levels of 8.62 meters in 1910.</p> <p>But weeks of heavy rains have swollen the Seine and its tributaries, forcing road closures, engulfing scenic embankments and halting river boat cruises through the French capital.</p> <p>The waters are expected to stay unusually high for days or weeks.</p> <p>The floods have caused damage in 242 towns along the river, and are now threatening more towns as the Seine heads downstream west of Paris toward Normandy and the English Channel.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/28 Russia: arrests in anti-govt. protests
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/top-putin-opponent-arrested-amid-anti-government-protests/story?id=52663068&cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>A top Russian opponent of President Vladimir Putin was arrested and violently dragged into a van by police today amid protests around the country against the lack of political competition in presidential elections this year.</p> <p>Alexey Navalny, an anti-corruption campaigner who has become Putin's most substantial political challenger, was arrested in Moscow as demonstrations in his support were held in cities around Russia. At least 243 people overall were arrested in the protests.</p> <p>"I was detained," Navalny tweeted in Russian after his arrest. "It does not matter ... You don't go for me, but for yourself and your future."</p> <p>Navalny also tweeted a video of his arrest and photos from the protests.</p> <p>Navalny was recently barred from running for president because of a fraud conviction that is widely believed to be trumped up. In response, he called for a "voter strike," including protests and an election boycott.</p> <p>Today's demonstrations are the first major protests since Russia's election season formally began and since Navalny was barred by authorities from running.</p> <p>The protests were held despite authorities' banning such rallies in Moscow, St. Petersburg and other cities.</p> <p>Earlier Sunday, police broke in the door of Navalny's office in Moscow, claiming there was a bomb threat inside. In the days ahead of the protests, police had repeatedly searched his offices in different cities and detained several organizers.</p> <p>Protests began early today in Russia's far east, which is many hours ahead of Moscow. Video from the Siberian city of Novosibirsk appears to show a few hundred people marching with banners in ferociously-cold temperatures.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/28 Growls grow over Delta's animal rule
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/business/travel/growls-are-growing-over-delta-s-new-rules-flying-service-n841376
GIST	<p>Travelers and advocates are baring their teeth at Delta's new rule that passengers with service animals must submit paperwork two full days before flying.</p> <p>While some fliers are cheering Delta Air Lines' new, stricter rules for those traveling with service or emotional support animals, many long-time guide dog users and organizations that advocate for travelers with disabilities say the guidelines, which require added documentation and pre-planning, are over-reaching, discriminatory and illegal.</p> <p>Citing a significant increase in the numbers and types of "comfort" animals passengers bring on planes — and an 84 percent increase in reported animal incidents such as urinating/defecating, biting and attacks — Delta announced last week that certification of a flyer's need for an animal and proof of an animal's training and vaccinations will be required for both service and emotional support animals.</p> <p>However, organizations such as The National Federation of the Blind believe elements of Delta's policy, which goes into effect March 1, violate the Department of Transportation's Air Carrier Access Act.</p>

“We are particularly troubled by the requirement that guide dog users submit paperwork to Delta 48 hours before flying,” the NFB said in a statement, noting that “Travelers without guide dogs are not required to plan their travel 48 hours in advance.”

The 48-hour ‘intent-to-fly’ requirement means guide dog users "will no longer be able to fly on Delta for family, medical or other emergencies,” said the NFB.

“We stand with NFB,” said Eric Lipp, Executive Director of the Open Doors Organization. “People with properly trained service animals are being punished by Delta.”

Noting that it has “long been concerned with the abuse and fraud of animals purporting to be service or support animals,” the American Council of the Blind also said Delta’s revised policy discriminates against passengers with legitimate service dogs and makes travel more difficult for individuals who rely on their service animals for travel.

“I sympathize with the airlines,” said Pat Pound, a disability consultant who is blind and travels with a guide dog. “More people are cheating. Airlines are trying to maintain the system. But I don’t think Delta’s new policies will address the problem. And, as a person with a disability, I’ll end up being penalized.”

An on-line petition with more than 75,000 signatures is asking Delta not to make it harder for people to travel with emotional support animals — but other airlines are already exploring following Delta’s lead.

“We agree with Delta’s efforts,” American Airlines said in a statement. “We are looking at additional requirements to help protect our team members and our customers who have a real need for a trained service or support animal.” The carrier said from 2016 to 2017 it saw an almost 15 percent increase in the number of customers traveling with emotional support animals.

United Airlines is reviewing its existing policy on service and emotional support animals, said airline spokesman Charles Hobart. “This is something that is important to our employees and to our customers, including those with disabilities and those who do not have disabilities,” he said. “We understand this needs to be resolved soon.”

The Department of Transportation had planned to draft new rules on service animals by July 2017, but those guidelines have yet to be released.

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HEADLINE	01/27 Steady rain, showers, more steady rain
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/sick-of-rain-sorry-theres-more-in-the-pipeline/
GIST	<p>Another atmospheric river is headed for Western Washington, bringing warmer temperatures and heavy rain and threatening to raise some rivers close to flood level.</p> <p>The soggy system is expected to smack the region Sunday afternoon, with the brunt of the moisture initially headed north to Vancouver Island. By Monday, though, the fire hose could swing south and drench communities north of Seattle, according to the National Weather Service.</p> <p>Even in Seattle, a half-inch or more of rain is expected by early Tuesday.</p> <p>On the Olympic Peninsula, between 1 and 4 inches of precipitation is likely. Parts of Skagit and Whatcom counties could get 1.4 to 3.6 inches.</p> <p>“It won’t be one, prolonged rain event,” said National Weather Service meteorologist Art Gaebel. “It’ll be: Steady rain. Showers. And steady rain again.”</p>

	<p>And that's on top of a series of systems that already has left the lowlands soaked and the mountains snowbound.</p> <p>Since Jan. 23, the Mount Baker ski area had received 73 inches of snow as of Saturday afternoon, Gaebel said. During the same period, Snoqualmie Pass got 43 inches and Stevens Pass got 37 inches.</p> <p>Sunday will be mostly showery before the storm rolls in, Gaebel said.</p> <p>Depending on where the heaviest rain falls, some rivers and streams could be pushed close to flood level, particularly the Skokomish River in Mason County, the weather service warned Saturday. And the added moisture will boost the risk of landslides.</p> <p>Wind gusts up to 40 mph flared across the Puget Sound region on Saturday, triggering small power outages in Seattle, Bellevue, Mercer Island, Bainbridge Island, Vashon Island and elsewhere. In Tacoma, the winds sent a large tree toppling onto a house near Wright Park. Residents were home, but no one was hurt.</p> <p>Gusts up to 50 mph were recorded in Mason County.</p> <p>By Tuesday the heavy rain will abate, to be replaced by the normal status quo of showers and more showers.</p> <p>"For now," said the NWS forecast discussion for Saturday afternoon, "there is at least a chance of rain each day (next week) although precipitation totals look light."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/27 Italy: 800 migrants rescued from sea
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/italy-800-migrants-rescued-bodies-found-mediterranean-52652417?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The Italian coast guard says it has helped coordinate the rescue of some 800 migrants on the Mediterranean Sea.</p> <p>The coast guard said they were spotted in five boats, including two rubber dinghies, on Saturday.</p> <p>It said seven children who had water in their lungs were taken by helicopter to the nearest hospital that could treat them, located in Sfax, Tunisia. The coast guard also said two bodies were recovered.</p> <p>Hundreds of thousands of migrants have been rescued at sea in recent years and taken to ports in southern Italy. Some are seeking refuge from armed conflicts, while many others, particularly from sub-Saharan Africa, are economic migrants likely to be found ineligible for asylum in Europe.</p> <p>Human traffickers launch overcrowded, unseaworthy boats from Libya and other countries with Mediterranean coastlines.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 More lawsuits over opioid crisis
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/882146/more-washington-cities-sue-drugmakers-over-opioid-crisis/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — Skagit County and three cities located within it are the latest jurisdictions in Washington state to sue drugmakers over the opioid crisis.</p> <p>Mount Vernon, Burlington and Sedro Woolley joined the county in filing a federal lawsuit in Seattle Friday against Purdue Pharma, Endo and Janssen, three of the primary manufacturers of prescription</p>

	<p>painkillers.</p> <p>The cities of Everett and Tacoma have also filed federal lawsuits against the drug companies, but those cases have been transferred to U.S. District Court in Cleveland, Ohio, which is overseeing dozens of similar cases.</p> <p>Seattle and Washington state have also sued the companies, but in state court.</p> <p>Skagit County Chief criminal deputy prosecutor Rosemary Kaholokula says the companies provided false information to doctors and patients about the safety of the drugs. She notes that more than 125,000 opioid prescriptions were written in Skagit County in 2014 — more prescriptions than there are residents of the county.</p> <p>The drug companies have disputed the allegations.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 Snohomish Co. homeowners tax spike
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/881848/tax-bill-snohomish-county-27-percent/
GIST	<p>Homeowners in Snohomish County could see a 16-percent increase on their property tax bills when they're mailed out next month.</p> <p>The Daily Herald reports the bill for the average-valued home will increase by \$600 compared to 2017.</p> <p>"I'm trying hard to get information out to the public so they're aware of the changes and aware of the impact," Snohomish County Assessor Linda Hjelle told The Herald. "As soon as we got the numbers, I wanted to get them out to the public."</p> <p>Lake Stevens homeowners will see the biggest increase — 27.7 percent — and Lynnwood, Mountlake Terrace, and Brier will see a 20 percent increase, according to the Daily. In Woodway, where the average home is assessed at \$1.3 million, residents will experience the lowest tax increase at 2.5 percent.</p> <p>Why the drastic change?</p> <p>Snohomish County homeowners are paying an extra 82 cents per \$1,000 worth of assessed property value to pay for changes in state education funding largely fueled by the Supreme Court ruling in the McCleary case, the Daily reports. That and other increases in local municipalities for education levies and fire protection.</p> <p>A little relief is expected in 2019 when a state cap of local levies is supposed to keep the combined state and local tax bill for education below or at 2017 levels in Everett, Mukilteo, Sultan and other school districts, according to the Daily.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 WA DOL emergency rule takes effect
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/wa-dol-to-stop-requiring-place-of-birth-in-application-process/281-511932313
GIST	<p>Starting Friday, Washington residents who apply for a standard driver license, instruction permit and ID card will no longer be required to provide their place of birth as part of the application process.</p> <p>Earlier this month, The Seattle Times reported that the Washington Department of Licensing (DOL) had been giving residents' personal information to federal immigration-enforcement officers, who used that information to arrest and deport people under the President Trump's immigration policies.</p>

	<p>A spokesperson for Governor Jay Inslee's Office said until they were questioned by the Times, they hadn't understood the extent of DOL's cooperation with ICE.</p> <p>“We’ve asked them to stop what they’re doing at this point,” spokeswoman Jaime Smith had said.</p> <p>On January 19, DOL filed emergency rule-making to immediately end the collection of information not required by state or federal statute. The change took effect Friday, January 26.</p> <p>The emergency rule lasts 120 days. During that time, DOL plans to permanently eliminate place of birth as a requirement to apply for a driver license or ID card.</p> <p>"DOL is taking these actions to ensure the agency is safeguarding personal information that can be used to determine immigration status and to uphold the intent of Governor Inslee’s Executive Order 17-01, Reaffirming Washington’s Commitment to Tolerance, Diversity, and Inclusiveness," DOL said a press release.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 State tsunami risks only half-mapped
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/disaster/washington-states-tsunami-risks-only-half-mapped/281-511934103
GIST	<p>Washington state's tsunami risks are only half-mapped, and more money is needed to finish the job.</p> <p>The Washington Department of Natural Resources is asking for \$543,200 over the next two years to hire three additional staff members to finish mapping the state's tsunami risks. Beyond that, another \$493,200 is needed each year to maintain the mapping project as new fault lines are discovered, and the state's tsunami risks keep evolving.</p> <p>There are a number of tsunami inundation maps for more populated areas along Washington's outer and north coasts. These include Bellingham and other exposed places where a tsunami generated along the Cascadia Subduction Zone near our continental shelf, or other locations around the Pacific Rim, could reach.</p> <p>But there's also believed to be a tsunami risk from the Seattle Fault, which could envelop lowlands in Seattle such as Harbor Island and SODO. Everett and other low-lying lands around Puget Sound are also considered vulnerable.</p> <p>"We need to get full coverage for the entire state," Corina Forson, the state's chief hazard geologist, said.</p> <p>She says while some areas were mapped with federal money at least a decade ago, those scenarios didn't necessarily incorporate worst-case scenarios. Those scenarios include a very large tsunami every 2,500 years. They also include tsunamis waves -- still 100 feet or so high -- from more typical earthquakes off our coast. Those can happen every 250 to 500 years.</p> <p>It so happens January 26, 1700, was our last major earthquake and tsunami -- 318 years ago, Friday. Scientists say the next one could come anytime. Nobody can say.</p> <p>Washington found itself on a tsunami watch on Tuesday after a 7.9 magnitude earthquake in the Gulf of Alaska. Because of the nature of the earthquake on a strike-slip fault, only a tiny tsunami was generated.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 Massive oil spill East China Sea
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SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-shipping-spill/how-sanchis-spill-could-spread-idUSKBN1FF1AK
GIST	<p>(Reuters) - The worst tanker oil spill in decades is unfolding across hundreds of miles of the East China Sea after an Iranian oil tanker carrying more than 100,000 tonnes of toxic oil collided with a freighter and exploded, killing all 32 crew onboard. The ship burned, spewing its cargo, for more than a week before sinking in the waters between China, Japan and South Korea.</p> <p>The Panama-registered Sanchi was carrying the equivalent of nearly 1 million barrels of ultra-light crude, plus its own fuel, to South Korea. According to the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation, the collision led to the worst tanker spill in 35 years.</p> <p>Authorities have had trouble pinning down how big the spill is, as it changes by the day amid strong ocean currents. But concerns are growing about the potential impact to key fishing grounds and sensitive marine ecosystems off Japan and South Korea, which lie in the projected path of the oil, according to Britain's National Oceanography Centre.</p> <p>"An updated emergency ocean model simulation shows that waters polluted by the sinking Sanchi oil tanker could reach Japan within a month," the center said a report posted on January 16. "The revised simulations suggest that pollution from the spill may be distributed much further and faster than previously thought, and that larger areas of the coast may be impacted."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 UN: growing malnutrition in Venezuela
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/malnutrition-crisis-venezuela-rises-unicef-officials-say-n841301
GIST	<p>GENEVA - The United Nations children's agency UNICEF said on Friday it was seeing clear signs of a growing malnutrition crisis in Venezuela, but it lacks data to give precise information and to tackle the problem effectively.</p> <p>"While precise figures are unavailable because of very limited official health or nutrition data, there are clear signs that the crisis is limiting children's access to quality health services, medicines and food," UNICEF spokesman Christophe Boulierac told a regular U.N. briefing in Geneva.</p> <p>Venezuela's government has not published data on wasting - a low weight to height ratio in children under five - since 2009, when the figure was 3.2 percent. Aid agency Caritas put the figure at 15.5 percent last August, UNICEF said.</p> <p>"When it's about fighting child malnutrition, it's not a time for discussing, it's time for action," Boulierac said. "Acting to fight malnutrition requires data, and there's not enough official data right now and there's not enough coordination."</p> <p>He said he had no information to suggest that UNICEF was being prevented from doing its work, and it was not uncommon to have a lack of data.</p> <p>The government of President Nicolas Maduro says Venezuela is fighting a U.S.-led right-wing conspiracy determined to end socialism in Latin America, hobble Venezuela's economy, and steal its oil wealth.</p> <p>But critics say Maduro, who succeeded Hugo Chavez in 2013 and is seeking re-election, has ruined a once prosperous oil economy, turned Venezuela into a dictatorship and skewed the election system to perpetuate power for his Socialist Party.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 Cop cleared killing unarmed teen
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/protests-after-conn-officer-cleared-in-unarmed-teens-killing/
GIST	<p>HARTFORD, Conn. -- A Connecticut police officer who killed an unarmed teenager and wounded a man in a traffic stop shooting was cleared of wrongdoing on Friday, sparking protests by relatives and other supporters.</p> <p>Waterbury State's Attorney Maureen Platt said in her investigation report that Bridgeport rookie officer James Boulay was justified when he shot 15-year-old Jayson Negron and 21-year-old Julian Fyffe in May.</p> <p>Supporters of Negron have called for a murder charge against Boulay. They dispute police Chief Armando Perez's account that Boulay opened fire when a stolen SUV driven by Negron suddenly went into reverse and struck Boulay.</p> <p>Fyffe was a passenger in the SUV. He has said he and Negron were left bleeding on the street for nearly 20 minutes before they received medical attention.</p> <p>"Jayson Negron died tragically on May 9, 2017, after being shot by Officer James Boulay," Platt wrote in her report. "However ... Officer James Boulay reasonably believed that the use of deadly force was necessary to defend himself from the use of deadly force - that being the Subaru operated by Jayson Negron."</p> <p>Family and supporters of Negron and Fyffe rallied outside Platt's office Friday and criticized the investigation. Another protest was planned for later in the day.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 Bay Area: 7 quakes in a week
SOURCE	http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/San-Jose-earthquake-brings-Bay-Area-total-to-7-in-12527849.php
GIST	<p>In a week littered with earthquakes and even a tsunami watch along the California coast, the Bay Area experienced yet another, yet softer quake on Thursday night.</p> <p>A 2.9 magnitude earthquake struck the Seven Trees neighborhood of south San Jose at 11:22 p.m., according to the United States Geological Survey.</p> <p>The quake had a depth of 5.4 kilometers. There were no reports of aftershocks or damage reports, according to the USGS.</p> <p>On Tuesday, a 7.9 magnitude earthquake struck the Gulf of Alaska in the early morning hours, prompting a tsunami watch in California that was canceled within three hours.</p> <p>Two days later, two earthquakes above 5.0 magnitude occurred off the coast of Humboldt County.</p> <p>The USGS reports seven earthquakes in the Bay Area in the last seven days, and 26 during the last month.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 Schools close as flu epidemic spreads
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/as-flu-spreads-schools-close-in-at-least-11-states-1516984718
GIST	<p>Schools in at least 11 states have closed as the worst flu epidemic in nearly a decade intensifies.</p> <p>The dominant strain of flu this season, H3N2, known for being particularly virulent, has resulted in the deaths of at least 37 children and is expected to cause more as the epidemic persists several more weeks, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention projected on Friday.</p>

Seven children died this week, authorities said. Hospitalizations, a predictor of the death rate, rose to 41.9 people per 100,000, up from 36.9 the week before.

An estimated total number of deaths due to the flu won't be available until next season, according to the CDC. Outpatient hospital visits by people with the flu have been skyrocketing for several weeks, and as of mid-January had surpassed every season except 2009-10, when a new strain of flu caused a global pandemic.

Some states are tracking flu-related deaths. Texas is reporting 2,355 flu-related deaths from October through December. The state expects that number to rise dramatically, but said it was too early to tell if it will exceed last season's flu-related death toll of about 9,500.

The flu is particularly hard to fight this year because the H3N2 strain tends to strike the elderly and children hard. People over age 65, and between the ages of 50 and 64, are being hospitalized at higher rates, the CDC said.

Schools closed anywhere from a day to a week due to widespread absenteeism as administrators try to stop the spread of the virus and disinfect buildings. Several school administrators said they have never seen closures of this scale.

Gulf District Schools in Port St. Joe, Fla., closed its four campuses Friday after about 20% of its 1,900 students missed school on three consecutive days this week due to flulike symptoms.

"We have taken the steps necessary to act in the best interest of children," said Jim Norton, superintendent of Gulf District Schools. About 25% of his staff also was out sick or taking care of sick children. "We're going to do a deep cleaning of the schools."

States with schools that have closed include Texas, Illinois, Oklahoma, Idaho, North Carolina, Tennessee, Florida, Alabama, Kentucky, Michigan and Missouri.

The Melissa Independent School District in Melissa, Texas, plans to stay closed through Monday to disinfect schools. Duncan Middle School in Duncan, Okla., was closed on Friday. The Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy in Aurora, Ill., closed this past Monday for a week due to high levels of influenza cases.

Gunter Independent School District in Gunter, Texas, reopened Wednesday after closing for a week after about 27% of its students, or 253, missed school. A vast majority of students had flu or flu-like symptoms, but some stayed away to avoid getting sick or had other illnesses, said Jill Siler, the district's superintendent.

It was a tough decision to close without notice, Dr. Siler said. "We closed to stop the cycle," she added. "We're talking about almost a third of our population." The time off also allowed a professional company to come in and clean all schools. "Every single piece in every single classroom was disinfected."

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HEADLINE	01/27 CDC: flu season worst since 2009
SOURCE	http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/371021-cdc-this-flu-season-worst-since-2009-swine-flu-pandemic
GIST	Federal health officials warned Friday that this year's flu outbreak is more severe than any other since the 2009 swine flu pandemic, and that its intensity is still increasing. Officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said in a phone call with reporters that the number of people experiencing flu-like symptoms is increasing. Hospitalizations for influenza are also rising.

What's more, flu activity has stayed at the same level nationwide for about three weeks, said Dr. Dan Jernigan, the director of the CDC's Influenza Division. That sets it apart from many flu seasons, in which activity wanes in certain parts of the U.S.

"We often see different parts of the country 'light up' at different times, but for the past 3 weeks, the entire country has been experiencing lots of flu, all at the same time," he said.

The deaths of seven children from the flu were reported to the CDC this week, bringing the total number of child deaths this flu season to 37, CDC Director Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald said.

Perhaps driving the latest increase in those reporting flu-like symptoms is the influx of kids returning to school after winter vacations, Jernigan said, pointing to a higher rate of flu cases in children.

The number of people who have gone to see a doctor for influenza-like illness also rose this week to 6.6 percent. That means that 6.6 percent of all people who went to clinics or emergency rooms had a flu-like illness.

The number of people going to see doctors for such illnesses is at its highest rate since the 2009 swine flu outbreak, when it rose to 7.7 percent, Jernigan said.

Most people with the flu this season are infected with the H3N2 virus, one of the most severe — and deadly — strains of the seasonal flu. What's more, Jernigan said, the 2017 to 2018 flu season likely still has weeks to go.

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HEADLINE	01/26 Boat capsizes off Yemen; migrants drown
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/26/middleeast/yemen-migrants-boat-capsize-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)At least 30 refugees and migrants drowned off the coast of war-torn Yemen after their boat capsized amid reports of gunfire being used by traffickers, the United Nations said Friday.</p> <p>The overcrowded boat, which had more than 150 Somalis and Ethiopians on board, left from near the city of Aden on Tuesday headed across the Gulf of Aden toward Djibouti, said the UN's International Organization for Migration, citing survivors.</p> <p>"The vessel is believed to have been operated by unscrupulous smugglers who were attempting to take refugees and migrants to Djibouti, while also trying to extort more money from these refugees and migrants," an IOM statement said.</p> <p>"The boat capsized amid reports of gunfire being used against the passengers."</p> <p>About two-thirds of the passengers were Ethiopian and a third were Somali, the IOM said. It and partner organizations have been helping survivors with food, water and medical help.</p> <p>Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on Friday, IOM Director William Lacy Swing said the organization was "deeply troubled" by the latest report from Yemen. "As we have been saying for almost five years now, the preservation of human life is our utmost priority everywhere," he said.</p> <p>According to a report this month by the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, there are currently more than 280,000 refugees and asylum seekers from other countries in Yemen, traditionally a transit hub for people fleeing the Horn of Africa.</p> <p>Some 5,000 more arrive by sea each month -- unaccompanied children among them -- despite Yemen's</p>

	<p>prolonged civil war and rapidly deteriorating humanitarian conditions, the UN agency said. While many hope simply to transit through the country, on arrival they face the threat of abduction, extortion, physical abuse and arbitrary detention, the report said.</p> <p>Some later seek to flee again, putting their lives in the hands of people smugglers.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 US, SKorea military exercises to resume
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/26/asia/us-south-korea-military-exercises-olympics/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Joint military exercises involving tens of thousands of troops from the United States and South Korea are set to resume after the 2018 Winter Olympics, a South Korean defense official said Friday.</p> <p>The US and South Korea agreed to put the annual military drills on hold after North and South Korea announced they were talking for the first time in two years. The initial talks involved the North's proposal to send an Olympic delegation to the Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea.</p> <p>The exercises, code-named Key Resolve and Foal Eagle, are carried out annually in March and April, usually drawing a fierce response from the North Korean regime.</p> <p>During last year's drills, Pyongyang launched multiple missile tests and held a massive artillery exercise at the end of April.</p> <p>"Though it is too early to disclose the exact date and size of the planned joint exercises, they will be carried out after the Olympics," Choi Hyun-soo, spokeswoman for South Korea's Ministry of National Defense, told reporters.</p> <p>The 2018 Winter Olympics close at the end of February while the Winter Paralympics wrap up with a closing ceremony on March 18.</p> <p>When confirming plans to resume the exercises, US Joint Staff Director Lt. Gen. Kenneth F. Mackenzie told reporters Thursday the drills would start "immediately" after the Olympics.</p> <p>A separate South Korean defense official told CNN the joint exercises would not be scaled back despite the unusual delay.</p> <p>"The Key Resolve and Foal Eagle exercises will not be downsized nor (will the) exercises be merged into one," he said.</p> <p>North Korean state media KCNA released a statement from the country's permanent representative to the UN saying any new military drills would harm relations with Seoul.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/27 Billionaire Saudi prince out detention
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/27/middleeast/saudi-prince-freed/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A billionaire and influential Saudi prince arrested in an anti-corruption sweep nearly three months ago was released Saturday, a source close to the prince told CNN.</p> <p>Prince Alwaleed bin Talal was among 17 princes and top officials arrested November 4 in the Saudi government crackdown.</p> <p>Alwaleed, a grandson of Saudi Arabia's founder, King Abdulaziz Al Saud, was being held at the Ritz-Carlton in Riyadh during his detention.</p>

The prince does not hold a government position.

But his personal fortune is estimated at more than \$17 billion, according to Forbes, and his investment portfolio has made him an important voice inside his home country.

It is not known why and under what circumstances he was released.

Three weeks after the sweep, senior Saudi Prince Miteb bin Abdullah was released, a source close to the government told CNN. An undisclosed financial settlement was agreed to secure the powerful prince's release, the source said. Prince Miteb is the son of Saudi King Salman's predecessor, the late King Abdullah.

King Salman ordered the anti-corruption initiative as part of an "active reform agenda aimed at tackling a persistent problem that has hindered development efforts in the Kingdom in recent decades," a Saudi Ministry of Communications and Information Technology statement said.

After the anti-corruption arrests, the kingdom's top legal official said investigations had revealed that "at least \$100 billion has been misused through systematic corruption and embezzlement over several decades."

Saudi Arabia is using cash recovered from officials and princes arrested in the crackdown to ease the pain of austerity.

The kingdom's anti-corruption committee, headed by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, carried out the arrests. He is seen as a power behind the King and a supporter of reforms.

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HEADLINE	01/26 Biggest infrastructure nightmare
SOURCE	http://money.cnn.com/2018/01/26/news/economy/northeast-corridor/index.html
GIST	<p>Deep underneath the Hudson River between Manhattan and New Jersey lies a century-old rail tunnel, heavily damaged during Superstorm Sandy, that still carries 200,000 riders per day.</p> <p>Engineers say the tunnel should be replaced as soon as possible, at a cost of \$12.7 billion. In 2015, the Obama administration agreed to supply half the funding for it, and designs are nearly complete. But in December, President Trump's Federal Transit Administration sent a letter to the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey declaring the deal "nonexistent."</p> <p>Local officials were flabbergasted, and are ringing alarm bells about the potential consequences of further delay: A failure could shut down the system for months and throw the region's commuters into chaos.</p> <p>"We already knew we had a capacity problem, and that it was choking economic growth," says Tom Wright, president of the Regional Plan Association, an independent think tank focusing on challenges facing the New York area. "Now we have the imminent threat of losing that connection. It's like playing Russian roulette with the economy of the Northeast."</p> <p>The Gateway project — a collection of upgrades along a 10-mile span including the Hudson Tunnel — is just one among many desperately needed infrastructure priorities that have been in limbo under the Trump administration.</p> <p>But Gateway is also key to the entire rail network from Washington, D.C. to Boston, known as the Northeast Corridor, which carries 800,000 people daily. According to the federally-chartered Northeast Corridor Commission, a shutdown of the service would cost the economy \$100 million per day.</p>

	<p>And the Hudson tunnel isn't the only point of possible failure: A handful of connections, including a bridge over the Susquehanna River in Maryland, and the Baltimore & Potomac tunnel, are in poor shape as well.</p> <p>"Does it matter to the federal government that the Northeast Corridor is a functioning place? I think you could make the argument that it does," says Robert Puentes, director of the nonprofit Eno Center for Transportation. "We don't seem to recognize the disproportionate influence that some projects have. This isn't just a project for New York and New Jersey, this is a project for the country."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/27 US, Poland oppose Russia pipeline
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-poland-oppose-gas-pipeline-linking-russia-germany-52649375
GIST	<p>The United States and Poland on Saturday took a strong stand against a planned gas pipeline linking Russia to Germany, saying it is part of a Kremlin scheme to politicize energy and undermine attempts to make Europe less dependent on Moscow.</p> <p>U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Polish Foreign Minister Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz, after meeting in Warsaw, denounced the pipeline, which would bypass Poland and leave Central Europe vulnerable to Russian pressure.</p> <p>Tillerson said the pipeline was "not a healthy piece of infrastructure" for Europe's energy stability.</p> <p>"Like Poland, the United States opposes the Nord Stream 2 pipeline," Tillerson said at a news conference with his counterpart. "We see it as undermining Europe's overall energy security and stability and providing Russia yet another tool to politicize energy as a political tool."</p> <p>The pipeline would be the second to carry Russian gas directly to Germany and Western Europe via the Baltic Sea instead of through Poland and Ukraine.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/27 India army shooting kills 2 in Kashmir
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/police-indian-army-shooting-kills-kashmir-52649295?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Indian soldiers opened fire on protesters in the disputed region of Kashmir on Saturday, killing two young men and wounding several others, police said.</p> <p>The protesters threw stones at the soldiers as their convoy was passing through a village in southern Shopian, prompting them to open fire, police said. Police said several people were wounded, one critically, and taken to hospitals. Villagers put the number of wounded at nine.</p> <p>As the news of the killings spread, hundreds hit the streets chanting anti-India slogans and demanding an end to Indian rule. Rebel groups demand that Kashmir be united either under Pakistani rule or as an independent country, a view that is widespread even among civilians in the region.</p> <p>Tension in Shopian was already running high after government forces killed two local rebels and a teenage boy during a gun battle Wednesday. One of the slain rebels was from the village where Saturday's shooting took place.</p> <p>India's military said in a statement that the soldiers came under "intense stone pelting" and the crowd caused "extensive damage and tried to set ablaze" four vehicles in the convoy. It said seven soldiers were injured and said protesters also tried to lynch an officer.</p>

	<p>"The army was constrained to open fire in self-defense," the statement said.</p> <p>Separatist leaders who challenge India's sovereignty over Kashmir and fight New Delhi's rule politically called for a general strike Sunday in response to the killings.</p> <p>In recent years, Kashmiris, mainly youths, have displayed open solidarity with anti-India rebels and sought to protect them by engaging troops in street clashes during military operations against the militants.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/27 Hindu, Muslim riot northern India
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/indian-police-stop-hindu-muslim-rioting-killed-52647164?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Indian police rushed security forces to a northern town where a clash between Hindu and Muslim groups left one person dead and three others injured during India's National Day celebrations, police said Saturday.</p> <p>Uttar Pradesh state police spokesman Rahul Srivastava said the two groups shot guns and attacked each other with rocks on Friday in Kasganj, a small town in the state. The town is nearly 340 kilometers (210 miles) northwest of Lucknow, the state capital.</p> <p>The rioting erupted as members of some hard-line Hindu groups marched through a Muslim-dominated area of the small town. Police closed schools on Saturday and banned the assembly of more than five people in the town.</p> <p>But a fresh round of violence briefly hit the town on Saturday after the funeral of the 16-year-old who was killed the day earlier.</p> <p>A group of people damaged and set fire to at least three shops and one bus before police dispersed them, the state police said. Nine people were arrested for rioting, police said.</p> <p>Muslims comprise nearly 14 percent of India's nearly 1.3 billion people. The two communities largely live peacefully, but simmering tensions lead to clashes at times.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	01/28 ISIS, other jihadists increase bitcoin use
SOURCE	http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/ISIS-Threat/ISIS-other-jihadists-increase-Bitcoin-use-after-fall-of-Caliphate-540079
GIST	<p>ISIS and other jihadists' use of the digital currency Bitcoin is a trend that "has been growing and taking shape" in recent months, "and now holds a prominent presence online."</p> <p>This is the conclusion of a report obtained exclusively by The Jerusalem Post. The report was issued by the IDC Herzliya International Institute for Counter-Terrorism's (ICT) cyber desk, with input from ICT deputy director Dr. Eitan Azani and cyber-desk coordinator Nadine Liv.</p> <p>Some of the ongoing ISIS and jihadist use of Bitcoin discussed in the report include fund-raising websites' efforts to stay afloat after the fall of Raqqa in October 2017; terrorist fund-raising in Gaza; a recently busted money-laundering operation in the US; and examples where Bitcoin was used to fund infamous terrorist attacks.</p>

The report starts by recounting that in the summer of 2014, an important article titled “Bitcoin wa Sadaqat al-Jihad” was published in an online blog. The article set forth the various strategic reasons for jihadists to use Bitcoin.

The article “promotes the use of Bitcoin virtual currency as a means of limiting economic support for infidels and circumventing the Western banking system, which limits donations for jihad through restrictions on the financial system.”

It recommends using Bitcoin, “for ideological-religious reasons as well as for its technological characteristics, and insists on the advantages of the system that enables the issuing of this currency.”

It further says the cryptocurrency’s advantages include: “prevention of counterfeiting; it is anonymous and untraceable; it is not subject to legislation; and it has global distribution.”

Jihadists like Bitcoin because through its use they can avoid paying taxes to Western and other non-jihadist governments and avoid legal exposure.

The ICT report notes that Bitcoin is transferred from one user to another “without systemic intercession, such as eBay or PayPal, while relying on a decentralized system; it does not have security weaknesses and cannot be hacked.”

Jumping forward, the report discusses the Akhbar al-Muslimin website, which publishes news from Islamic State. Analysts were asking if ISIS would survive the October 2017 fall of Raqqa; by November 2017, the ISIS propaganda site had launched an online fund-raising campaign.

The site’s operators “attached a link to each published news report encouraging donations using Bitcoin virtual currency for the purpose of operating the site.”

In December, the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center found that clicking on the link led to a dedicated donations page on a Bitcoin trading site called CoinGate. When ICT independently examined the issue on January 16, it found that the link no longer directs to CoinGate, showing how quickly ISIS’s online arms adapt to avoid being tracked.

ISIS-affiliated groups in Gaza have also increased their online Bitcoin fund-raising efforts, led by the Ibn Taymiyya Media Center which serves as the media wing of the Mujahideen Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem.

In mid-January 2018, a new Bitcoin address was identified in a Telegram instant-messaging group affiliated with the ISIS-Gaza group.

The report said that an examination of the address on Blockchain, a digital ledger in which Bitcoin transactions are recorded publicly, revealed a series of 15 transactions from July 1, 2016, to January 12, 2018.

The average Bitcoin transfer through this platform is estimated to be about \$16,700, but some account totals reached close to \$300,000 in transfers.

One ISIS agent, Zoobia Shahnaz of Long Island, New York, used Bitcoin in 2017 to defraud several financial entities and to launder money for ISIS, the report noted.

In mid-December, Shahnaz was indicted in the Federal District Court of Central Islip, New York, for stealing and laundering more than \$85,000 of illegal returns using Bitcoin and other digital currencies.

THE report said the funds were transferred out of the US to shell corporations in Pakistan, China and Turkey on their way to the coffers of ISIS.

	<p>Shahnaz was arrested at JFK Airport in New York as he tried to flee the US for Syria.</p> <p>Work has begun in the US on legislation to grant more resources to Department of Homeland Security to follow terrorist uses of Bitcoin.</p> <p>The report said that terrorists involved in attacks across the globe, from France to Indonesia, have used Bitcoin to fund their attacks in ways that are harder for law enforcement to track than other forms of funding.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/29 Cybersecurity in maritime industry
SOURCE	http://www.hellenicshippingnews.com/cybersecurity-in-the-maritime-industry/
GIST	<p>The global shipping industry – much like air, road and rail transportation – is undergoing a technological revolution. From hull cleaning to collision avoidance systems, automation has made incredible advances in recent years. There is more to come, too. Norwegian company Yara has partnered with the engineering group Kongsberg with plans to launch the world’s first automated container ship in 2018. Rolls-Royce is also joining the fray, having revealed plans in September to build autonomous naval vessels.</p> <p>There are good reasons for embracing these innovations. For starters, unmanned ships are thought to be potentially safer and more fuel efficient. Automation also frees seafarers from the drudgery of paperwork. But these benefits come at a cost. One of the key challenges in the coming years (and one of the focal topics of BLG’s Maritime Law Seminar on December 1, 2017), is how the shipping industry will cope with the growing threat from cyber attacks.</p> <p>“Ships have an opening to the outside world,” Chris South, a senior underwriter for West of England P&I, told the audience present at the seminar in Montréal. “And wherever there is an opening there is a vulnerability.”</p> <p>A recent case in point is shipping company Maersk, which suffered \$300 million in damages following a hit by the NotPetya ransomware outbreak in June of 2017. The shipping giant picked up an infection that spread into its global network and was forced to halt operations at dozens of port terminals around the world.</p> <p>“Four factors are at play in the maritime industry”, said South. The first is automation itself, as machinery on vessels is increasingly controlled by software. The second is integration. On any given vessel, there may be multiple systems connected together. The third is the ability of ship-to-shore systems that communicate via remote monitoring. “Ships are now talking to head offices continuously,” says South. The fourth factor is that all these systems are connected through the internet.</p> <p>Virtually any company that now relies on these systems is exposed to a cyber cascade of sorts, South added, “where one part of the industry ends up infecting another.” So a shipping company’s systems might get infected at headquarters. The infection then spreads to the ship and charterers before moving on to ports and terminals, the logistic companies and ultimately the manufacturing plants receiving the merchandise.</p> <p>Too big to cover? The alarming question for insurers in the maritime industry, who view cyber as a growing systemic risk, is “where does the liability stop?” Insurers have voiced concern that the risks are too big for them to cover alone – without government intervention.</p> <p>Understandably, cyber and data risk insurance is limited when it comes to coverage. “A typical cyber risks policy will cover breach costs, such as forensic investigations, legal advice and those associated with notifying customers and regulators”, said South. It will also cover business interruption; repair and</p>

replacement of websites, programs and data caused by hackers; extortion; and the cost to defend and settle claims made for failing to keep customers' personal data secure. "But it does not substitute or replace the covers lost," South warned.

New laws on the horizon

One area where governments are stepping in is on the legislative front. Data security breaches are nothing new, but gone are the days when organizations could conveniently sweep them under the rug. "Canada is the latest country about to implement a new breach notification regime", said Éloïse Gratton, a BLG partner and nationally renowned expert in privacy and data protection.

Following recent amendments to Canada's Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA), private-sector organizations doing business in Canada must report the breach to the Privacy Commissioner and, generally, notify customers if there is a risk of significant harm resulting from a data security breach. Gratton expects regulations prescribing the breach notification process in Canada to be in place as early as during the first quarter of 2018.

"There are record-keeping obligations," she added. "When you have a security incident you're supposed to keep the data." The duration of record keeping is still being decided by the Privacy Commissioner, but could possibly extend to as long as five years. Organizations that suffer a breach must also be mindful of additional provincial breach notification regimes in Québec, Alberta and British Columbia. Additionally, most states in the U.S. also have breach notification laws on the books.

Another game changer, said Gratton, is the coming into force in May 2018 of the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which applies to any processing of personal data, namely its collection, use, disclosure or storage. Under the GDPR, organizations that suffer a breach must notify the relevant national data protection regulator as well as anyone who has been affected, and where the breach is likely to result in high risk to their rights and freedoms. Fines for non-compliance are considerable — up to 4 percent of an organization's annual worldwide turnover or €20m. The GDPR also creates a right of private action against data controllers and data processors.

"Complicating matters further", Gratton said, "the EU regulation has extra-territorial reach". It applies to organizations that offer goods and services to European residents or who monitor their behaviour, through the use of persistent cookies for instance. That includes businesses based outside of the EU.

How far liability extends will also depend in part on the contractual terms. Contractors are increasingly required to meet cybersecurity standards, and can be held liable for damages to a company's systems as a result of a virus or malware introduced by an agent or employee.

Being prepared and mitigating the damage

To safeguard ships from cyber threats, companies should follow International Maritime Organization approved guidelines on cyber risk management, which focus on identifying the systems, data and capabilities that pose a risk to operations, when these are disrupted. To do that, companies must implement risk control processes and have the ability to detect cyber events in a timely manner. They must also be able to back-up and restore systems necessary for shipping operations or services impaired following a cyber event.

To mitigate the damage that can result from a breach, Gratton urges organizations to have a breach incident response plan in place well in advance. "You have to know who your internal core team is, and who your external team is," she said. That includes legal, forensic, PR, and information security experts.

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HEADLINE 01/29 UK govt. warns critical industry firms

SOURCE <https://news.sky.com/story/government-warns-critical-industry-firms-to-prepare-for-cyberattacks-11226555>

GIST	<p>Organisations involved in critical industry and essential services have been warned by the Government that they face £17m fines if their cybersecurity preparations are not up to standard.</p> <p>Energy, transport, water, health and digital infrastructure firms could be fined if they fail to develop robust safeguards protecting themselves from cyberattacks.</p> <p>The fines and sanctions come as the government implements the Network and Information Systems (NIS) Directive, which would cover events such as the WannaCry attack which crippled the NHS last year.</p> <p>Making organisations pay up for failing to meet cybersecurity standards would only be a "last resort" according to the Government, which wants to see a voluntary uptake of the new rules before they come into effect on 10 May.</p> <p>Margot James, the minister for digital, said: "Today we are setting out new and robust cybersecurity measures to help ensure the UK is the safest place in the world to live and be online.</p> <p>"We want our essential services and infrastructure to be primed and ready to tackle cyberattacks and be resilient against major disruption to services."</p> <p>The UK's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has also published detailed guidance on the security measures which will help organisations comply.</p> <p>NCSC's chief executive, Ciaran Martin, said: "Network and information systems give critical support to everyday activities, so it is absolutely vital that they are as secure as possible."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/29 YouTube new victim of cryptojacking
SOURCE	https://www.gizbot.com/news/youtube-is-the-new-victim-cryptojacking-047573.html
GIST	<p>Internet has always been used by some unwanted cyber scams artist for making cyber thefts and other crimes. Even the tech giant Google has been targeted many times by unwanted scams and malwares. Google's internet video platform YouTube is the latest victim of one such cyber crime called Cryptojacking.</p> <p>Cryptokacking is claimed to be a new malware infecting the devices using YouTube to gain the access of a target's CPU to collect Cryptocurrencies. As per some reports some bad actors are inserting a piece of JavaScript into websites and advertisements on the YouTube network for cryptocurrency information. With Google's YouTube being affected by the scam this is a situation one needs to be extra cautious while surfing the internet.</p> <p>The reports further suggest that users on social media began complaining that YouTube ads were stirring their antivirus software up. A script from a service called CoinHive was being specifically recognized by the antivirus software. The main agenda of the attackers behind this attack was to allow sites to make some extra income using a visitor's CPU processing power for mining Monero which is a type of cryptocurrency. The YouTube's ads that were running the script reportedly used 80 percent of a users CPU and neither the user nor YouTube were not informed what was happening. This caused a user's computer to crash.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/29 Cryptocurrency markets juicy targets
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-01-29/cryptocurrency-markets-are-juicy-targets-for-hackers-timeline
GIST	The \$500 million <u>heist</u> of digital tokens from Japanese exchange <u>Coincheck Inc.</u> on Friday is remarkable

for its sheer size, but thefts in the lightly regulated world of cryptocurrencies are woefully frequent.

In less than a decade, hackers have stolen \$1.2 billion worth of Bitcoin and Ether, two of the most popular digital currencies, according to Lex Sokolin, global director of fintech strategy at Autonomous Research LLP. If measured at today's elevated prices, the figure would be much higher.

Here's a look at some of the biggest thefts since 2012.

December 2017

- NiceHash, a crypto-mining marketplace based in Slovenia, said on its Facebook page that its payment system was compromised and as much as \$63 million worth of Bitcoin was stolen. The firm added extra security measures and sought the community's help to analyze the breach.
- Youbit said it would file for bankruptcy hours after losing 17 percent of its assets in a cyberattack. The South Korean exchange had suffered what it called an "accident" in April and its owner encouraged clients to keep their tokens in a safer form. South Korean investigators are looking into North Korea's possible involvement in the hack.

November 2017

- A security hole in the Parity Wallet resulted in losses of about \$155 million, including in Ether and other tokens.
- The company behind Tether said a "malicious" attacker stole \$31 million worth of the cryptocurrency and sent them to an unauthorized Bitcoin address.

July 2017

- A group calling itself the White Hat Group exploited a bug in the Parity Wallet software and attempted to launder stolen Ether, valued at about \$30 million according to Security Week, through exchanges.
- Just minutes after CoinDash's launch of an initial coin offering, hackers made off with as much as \$6.6 million worth of Ether. The Israel-based firm terminated its token sale.

April 2017

- A Bithumb contract worker's personal computer that stored customers' data files was hacked, resulting in the leak of personal and trading information of more than 30,000 users. The South Korean crypto-exchange was fined 58.5 million won (\$55,000) by the local regulator for the breach.

August 2016

- Bitfinex said hackers took 119,756 Bitcoin, valued at about \$65 million. In April 2017, the exchange said it had repaid all customers.

June 2016

- Decentralized Autonomous Organization, a leaderless venture-capital fund and what was then the highest-profile project using Ethereum, was hacked. About \$50 million of members' contributions to the fund were siphoned off.

May 2016

- Hong Kong-based Gatecoin had about \$2 million in Bitcoin and Ether stolen following a cyberattack.

March 2015

- Two former U.S. federal agents who helped probe the illegal Silk Road Internet drug emporium were charged with wrongfully pocketing hundreds of thousands of dollars in Bitcoin.

January 2015

- Bitstamp's Chief Executive Officer reassured customers that the bulk of their Bitcoins were safe after \$5 million the coins were stolen, according to a Fortune report.

	<p>February 2014</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mt. Gox, once the world's biggest Bitcoin exchange, reported that tokens valued at about \$480 million had gone missing. The firm filed for bankruptcy in Japan and the U.S., and said the disappearance was probably the result of a "<u>massive theft</u>." <p>September 2012</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BitFloor, based in New York, lost about \$250,000 in Bitcoin after it was hacked. Months later in April 2013, the exchange announced it would <u>shut</u> and refund customer deposits, Bitcoin Magazine reported.
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HEADLINE	01/28 Britain's first bitcoin heist
SOURCE	http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/01/28/britains-first-bitcoin-heist-trader-forced-gunpoint-transfer/
GIST	<p>Armed robbers broke into the family home of a city financier turned Bitcoin trader and forced him to transfer the digital currency at gunpoint, in what is believed to be the first heist of its kind in the UK.</p> <p>Four robbers in balaclavas forced their way into the home of Danny Aston, 30, who runs a digital currency trading firm, before reportedly tying up a woman and forcing Mr Aston to transfer an unknown quantity of the cryptocurrency.</p> <p>Mr Aston lives in the picturesque village of Moulsoford in South Oxfordshire, where episodes of Midsomer Murders have been filmed, in a rented four-bedroom converted barn estimated to be worth at least £700,000 on a private drive.</p> <p>Police were called at around 9.40am on Monday to attend the home after raiders are reported to have entered the property by kicking down the door.</p> <p>The Mail on Sunday reported that the men tied up a woman and kept a baby outside in a pram while forcing Mr Aston to transfer the Bitcoin. The value of a single Bitcoin is now around £8,000.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/28 Hackers steal \$900K from Texas county
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/phishing-scam-hackers-steal-900000-from-county-office/
GIST	<p>Another day, another phishing scam – This time Harris County, Texas wired almost \$900,000 after falling for a phishing email.</p> <p>In normal circumstances, cybercriminals take advantage of the lack of knowledge of their victims but in this phishing attack, they have touched new lows by making a profit out of the devastation caused by hurricane Harvey.</p> <p>It all started on September 21st, 2017 when an estimated 30 percent of Harris County, Texas was submerged due to hurricane Harvey. The auditor's office of the county received an email from a woman going by the supposed name of Fiona Chambers in which she posed as an accountant for D&W Contractors, Inc.</p> <p>D&W Contractors, Inc. is a legitimate company that happened to be working that day to fix the damage caused by the hurricane in the county. In the email, Chambers asked the office to transfer a sum of \$888,000 to the new bank account of the Contractors as part of its contract.</p> <p>"If we can get the form and voided check back to you today would it be updated in time for our payment?"</p>

according to the email content mentioned by Houston Chronicle.

In return, the county transferred \$888,000 to the bank account provided by Chambers without verifying if the bank account actually belonged to D&W Contractors, Inc. or not. The very next day, it turned out that the county has fallen for a tricky phishing scam and that there was no one by the name of Fiona Chambers in the company neither was there a bank account belonging to the contractors.

Now, the incident is being investigated by the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) and their prime suspect is a group that is known for targeting local governments worldwide. On the other hand, the county has learned its lesson and vows to increase its cybersecurity and overhaul and learn from how it handled the situation.

“We live in a rapidly changing world of technology that you can’t just sit pat and expect that the bad guys aren’t going to come after you. I think we need to look at all of our systems to be sure that somebody can’t get in and steal taxpayer money” said Harris County Judge Ed Emmett said.

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HEADLINE	01/26 Claim: BitPaymer linked to Dridex authors
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/researchers-trace-bitpaymer-ransomware-back-to-dridex-developers/article/739904/
GIST	<p>A relatively new ransomware that infected Scottish hospitals last summer appears to be created by the same developers who are responsible for the dreaded Dridex banking trojan.</p> <p>Commonly known as BitPaymer, the ransomware has now earned the moniker FriedEx due to its newfound affiliation, with which it shares similar code and techniques to conceal information about its behavior, according to researchers from ESET.</p> <p>Just like its banking Trojan cousin, BitPaymer “resolves all system API calls on the fly by searching for them by hash, stores all strings in encrypted form, looks up registry keys and values by hash, etc.,” states Michal Poslusny, ESET malware researcher, in a company blog post. “The resulting binary is very low profile in terms of static features and it’s very hard to tell what the malware is doing without a deeper analysis.”</p> <p>Upon further investigation, ESET learned that FriedEx code also uses many of the same functions as Dridex does (including one for generating a unique UserID identifier for victimized machines), and even orders these functions within the malware binaries the same way.</p> <p>ESET also found samples from both malwares that use the same PDB (Program Database) path. Moreover, certain Dridex and FriedEx samples have the same or nearly synchronous date-of-compilation timestamps, with identical randomly generated constants – which suggests that they were likely compiled concurrently.</p> <p>If that weren’t enough proof that the two are related, both malwares are compiled in Visual Studio 2015.</p> <p>“With all this evidence, we confidently claim that FriedEx is indeed the work of the Dridex developers,” the blog post concludes. “This discovery gives us a better picture of the group’s activities – we can see that the group continues to be active and not only consistently updates their banking Trojan... [but] also follows the latest malware trends, creating their own ransomware.”</p> <p>According to ESET, FriedEx/BitPaymer is focused on high-profile targets and companies, and is typically delivered through an RDP (Remote Desktop Protocol) brute force attack. Discovered in July 2017, the ransomware would soon after infected several hospitals operated by Scotland’s NHS Lanarkshire health care board.</p> <p>Dridex first debuted in 2014, and it is estimated that the trojan is directly responsible for hundreds of</p>

	millions of dollars in losses over the years. The Trojan recently evolved to include support for webinjects into Chrome version 63, and to perform a code injection technique called AtomBombing.
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HEADLINE	01/26 TopHat targets Mideast w/malware
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/middle-east-hit-with-tophat-campaign-exploiting-popular-third-party-services/article/739907/
GIST	<p>A wave of attacks leveraging the popular third-party services Google+, Pastebin, and bit.ly is targeting individuals and organizations within the Palestinian Territories.</p> <p>Dubbed “TopHat” the campaign uses Arabic language decoy documents related to current political events to lure victims into opening the documents and subsequently infecting themselves with malware from the “Scote” family, Palo Alto Networks Unit 42 researchers said in a Jan. 26 blog post.</p> <p>“The ultimate payload is a new malware family that we have dubbed “Scote” based on strings we found within the malware samples, researchers said in the post. “Scote provides backdoor access for an attacker and we have observed it collecting command and control (C2) information from Pastebin links as well as Google+ profiles.”</p> <p>The malware uses bit.ly links obscured the C2 URLs so victims could not evaluate the legitimacy of the final site prior to clicking it. The attacks spotted by researchers began in early September 2017 and in a few instances, original filenames of the identified samples were written in Arabic.</p> <p>Attacks are deployed using four different techniques, two of which involve malicious RTF files, one involving self-extracting Windows executables, and a final using RAR archives.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/28 Data Privacy Day
SOURCE	https://staysafeonline.org/data-privacy-day/about/
GIST	<p>Data Privacy Day began in the United States and Canada in January 2008 as an extension of the Data Protection Day celebration in Europe. Data Protection Day commemorates the Jan. 28, 1981, signing of Convention 108, the first legally binding international treaty dealing with privacy and data protection. Data Privacy Day is observed annually on Jan. 28.</p> <p>The National Cyber Security Alliance (NCSA) officially leads the Data Privacy Day campaign and is advised by a distinguished advisory committee of privacy professionals to help the campaign align with the most current privacy issues in a thoughtful and meaningful way.</p> <p>Data Privacy Day is the signature event in a greater privacy awareness and education effort. Year-round, NCSA educates consumers on how they can own their online presence and shows organizations how privacy is good for business. NCSA’s privacy awareness campaign is an integral component of STOP. THINK. CONNECT.™ – the global online safety, security and privacy campaign.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/28 Report: cyber incidents doubled in 2017
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/report-number-of-cyber-incidents-doubled-in-2017-yet-93-percent-could-easily-have-been-prevented/article/739932/
GIST	Out of nearly 160,000 reported cyber incidents affecting businesses in 2017, 93 percent could have been prevented by following basic security measures such as regularly updating software, blocking fake email messages, using email authentication, and training employees, a new report claims.

The overall number of reported incidents nearly doubled 2016's total of 82,000 incidents, according to the Online Trust Alliance (OTA), an Internet Society initiative, which released its 2017 Cyber Incident & Breach Trend Report on Jan. 25, in advance of Data Privacy Day. For the purposes of its research, OTA defines an incident as any unauthorized action resulting in system or device access, data extraction or manipulation, business disruption, or financial/reputational harm.

Basing its findings on threat intelligence data gleaned from various sources, OTA reports that the majority of data breaches, 52 percent, were reportedly the result of actual malicious hacking. The next most common causes included an absence of proper security software (15 percent), credit card skimming (11 percent), a lack of internal controls (11 percent), and phishing attacks (eight percent).

OTA also found that there were 134,000 ransomware attacks on businesses in 2017, compared to roughly half that amount in 2016.

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HEADLINE	01/28 Report: Intel told China before US govt.
SOURCE	http://www.foxbusiness.com/features/2018/01/28/intel-warned-chinese-companies-chip-flaw-before-u-s-government.html
GIST	<p>In initial disclosures about critical security flaws discovered in its processors, Intel Corp. notified a small group of customers, including Chinese technology companies, but left out the U.S. government, according to people familiar with the matter and some of the companies involved.</p> <p>The decision raises concerns, security researchers said, as it potentially could have allowed information about the chip flaws, dubbed Spectre and Meltdown, to fall into the hands of the Chinese government before being publicly divulged. There is no evidence any information was misused, the researchers said.</p> <p>Weeks after word of the flaws first surfaced, Intel's choices about whom would receive advance warning continue to ripple through the security and tech industries.</p> <p>The flaws were first identified in June by a member of Google's Project Zero security team. Intel had planned to make the discovery public on Jan. 9 -- people working to protect systems from hacks often hold off on announcements while fixes are devised -- but sped up its timetable when the news became widely known on Jan. 3, a day after U.K. website the Register wrote about the flaws.</p> <p>Because the flaws can be leveraged to sneak sensitive data out of the cloud, information about them would be of great interest to any intelligence-gathering agency, said Jake Williams, president of the security company Rendition Infosec LLC and a former National Security Agency employee. In the past, Chinese state-linked hackers have exploited software vulnerabilities to get leverage on their targets or expand surveillance.</p> <p>It is a "near certainty" Beijing was aware of the conversations between Intel and its Chinese tech partners, because authorities there routinely monitor all such communications, Mr. Williams said.</p> <p>Representatives from China's ministry in charge of information technology didn't respond to requests for comment. The country's foreign ministry has in the past said it is "resolutely opposed" to cyberhacking in any form.</p> <p>An Intel spokesman declined to identify the companies it briefed before the scheduled Jan. 9 announcement. The company wasn't able to tell everyone it had planned to, including the U.S. government, because the news was made public earlier than expected, he said.</p> <p>Intel's tricky path -- inform enough big customers to head off significant damage while keeping the information as contained as possible to limit potential leaks -- continues to weigh on smaller companies</p>

that weren't given an early nod.

Joyent Inc., a U.S.-based cloud-services provider owned by Samsung Electronics Co., is still playing catch-up, said Bryan Cantrill, the company's chief technology officer.

"Other folks had a six-month head start," he said. "We're scrambling."

In the months before the flaws were publicly disclosed, Intel worked on fixes with Alphabet Inc.'s Google unit as well as "key" computer makers and cloud-computing companies, Intel said in an emailed statement to The Wall Street Journal.

An official at the Department of Homeland Security said staffers learned of the chip flaws from the Jan. 3 news reports. The department is often informed of bug discoveries in advance of the public, and it acts as an authoritative source for information on how to address them.

"We certainly would have liked to have been notified of this," the official said.

The NSA was similarly in the dark, according to Rob Joyce, the White House's top cybersecurity official. In a message posted Jan. 13 to Twitter, he said the NSA "did not know about these flaws." A White House spokesman declined to comment further, referring instead to the tweet.

Chinese computer maker Lenovo Group Ltd. was among the large tech companies, including Microsoft Corp., Amazon.com Inc. and ARM Holdings in the U.K., that were notified of the flaws beforehand.

Lenovo was able to issue a statement Jan. 3 advising customers on the flaws because of "the work we'd done ahead of that date with industry processor and operating system partners," a spokeswoman said in an email.

Alibaba Group Holding Ltd., China's top seller of cloud-computing services, also was notified ahead of time, according to a person familiar with the company.

A spokeswoman for Alibaba's cloud unit declined to comment on when the company was informed. She said any idea that the company might have shared information with Chinese authorities was "speculative and baseless."

A Lenovo spokeswoman said Intel's information was protected by a nondisclosure agreement.

Despite the security concerns, an early heads up to a select number of large global companies made sense, said Dave Aitel, chief executive of Immunity Inc., a company that sells security services. "They're going to tell as few people as possible" to contain possible leaks, he said.

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HEADLINE	01/28 Fitness devices provide soldiers locations
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/military-fitness-devices-fitbit-strava/2018/01/28/id/839958/
GIST	<p>An interactive map found online can show the locations and activities of people who use fitness devices such as Fitbit, raising security concerns about soldiers and other people who are at U.S. military bases in sensitive areas.</p> <p>The Global Heat Map, published by the GPS tracking company Strava, uses satellite information to map the locations and movements of subscribers to the company's fitness service over a two-year period, by illuminating areas of activity, The Washington Post reported Sunday.</p> <p>Strava says it has 27 million users around the world, including people who own widely available fitness devices, as well as people who directly subscribe to its mobile app. The map is not live, but shows a</p>

	<p>pattern of accumulated activity between 2015 and September 2017.</p> <p>The map shows a great deal of activity in the U.S. and Europe. But in war zones and deserts in countries such as Iraq and Syria, the heat map becomes almost entirely dark — except for scattered evidence of activity.</p> <p>A closer look at those areas brings into focus the locations and outlines of well-known U.S. military bases, as well as other lesser-known and potentially sensitive sites — possibly because American soldiers and other personnel are using fitness trackers as they move around.</p> <p>The Global Heat Map was posted online in November 2017, but the information it contains was only publicized recently.</p> <p>The data could provide information to someone who wants to attack or ambush troops, the Post reported.</p> <p>Military officials are looking into the situation to determine how to respond</p> <p>"DoD takes matters like these very seriously and is reviewing the situation to determine if any additional training or guidance is required, and if any additional policy must be developed to ensure the continued safety of DoD personnel at home and abroad," Maj. Audricia Harris, a Defense Department spokeswoman, told The Associated Press.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/28 Iran 'halal' internet means more control
SOURCE	https://www.yahoo.com/news/iran-halal-internet-means-more-control-unrest-103821258.html
GIST	<p>DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Guns drawn, Iranian intelligence agents rushed into the apartment of a Washington Post reporter and his journalist wife in Tehran.</p> <p>Threatening to kill Jason Rezaian in front of his wife, Yeganeh, the 20 agents in the July 2014 raid tore through their belongings and rifled through drawers, clothes and valuables for an hour.</p> <p>But perhaps their most eagerly sought target wasn't exactly inside the house: They forced the couple to hand over the passwords to their email and social media profiles.</p> <p>That raid demonstrated how much of a threat Iran's theocratic government sees in the internet. It has long sought to strictly control cyberspace and social media — and, thereby, the flow of information to the public.</p> <p>But the Islamic Republic's relationship with the world wide web is far more complicated than simple repression. Over the past four years, authorities have encouraged wider use of the internet among Iranians, hoping to generate the benefits of a more modern economy. As a result, nearly half the population have in their pockets a tool that the state is struggling to constrain: smartphones, with cameras and internet links that let anyone broadcast to the world.</p> <p>Those smartphones helped spread the startling burst of protests across Iran that opened 2018. The government succeeded in suffocating the flare-up in part by shutting off key social media and messaging apps, but the lesson was clear: The same oxygen that can resuscitate commerce can also give breath to potential revolt.</p> <p>Authorities' solution has been to create a so-called "halal net," Iran's own locally controlled version of the internet aimed at restricting what the public can see.</p> <p>As Iran approaches the 40th anniversary of the revolution that brought its cleric-led rule to power, how it handles the power of cyberspace will be crucial to its future, determining whether it moves to greater</p>

openness or seals itself off from the world.

"The Islamic Republic is not black and white. It shows a myriad of contradictions and its internet policy I think is one of the great examples of those contradictions," said Sanam Vakil, an associate fellow at Chatham House who studies Iran. "The government has taken the internet and effectively used it for its own purposes and also has realized the dangers of it as well."

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Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, how information spreads across mass media has been tightly controlled.

All television and radio broadcasts within Iran are from state-run stations. Satellite dishes remain ostensibly illegal, though they are plentiful, drawing occasional attacks from bat-wielding government enforcers. Journalists face restrictions in what they can cover and where they can travel across a country of 80 million people that's nearly two-and-a-half times the size of Texas.

The internet helped collapse that distance. During Iran's 2009 protests surrounding the disputed re-election of hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, still nascent social media spread word of the events among Iranians and brought videos of the shooting death of 26-year-old Neda Agha Soltan to the world.

Iran's government, overseen by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, violently suppressed the demonstrations. The crackdown killed dozens and saw thousands imprisoned, with some tortured by their jailers.

Even before the 2009 protests, Iran blocked access to YouTube. Twitter and Facebook followed amid the unrest, as did many other sites later. Some in Iran began using virtual private networks, or VPNs, which allow users to bypass government censorship.

The chief difference between then and the protests that rocked the country coming into 2018 was the massive proliferation of smartphones. As recently as 2014, only an estimated 2 million Iranians possessed one. Today, estimates suggest Iranians own 48 million.

That explosive growth was spurred by the administration of President Hasan Rouhani, a cleric who is a relative moderate within Iran's system. His officials allowed more mobile phone service providers to offer 3G and 4G internet, suddenly making sharing photos and images possible. Home internet connections became faster. The encrypted messaging platform Telegram spread like wildfire. Over 40 million Iranians are estimated to use it, for everything from benign conversations to commerce and political campaigning.

In the recent unrest, protesters used Telegram's mass-messaging channels to share information and videos across 75 cities and towns where demonstrations erupted. Some showed people openly in the streets shouting, "Death to Khamenei!" It shocked many, especially as such cries could bring a death sentence.

When the government temporarily blocked Telegram as well as Instagram, it helped smother the protests within days. Notably, however, Telegram's silencing quickly brought complaints from businesspeople who use its channels to promote and sell their goods.

Even after the unrest, Rouhani argued it was futile trying to shut off an indispensable tool of modern life.

"If you want cyberspace to be useful to the community, come forward with a solution using it to promote the culture instead of blocking it," he said, noting that past Iranian government tried to stop people from listening to the radio "but this prevention was useless."

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The danger — and potential — of the internet as a weapon came into focus for Iran when it faced the

world's first cyberweapon almost a decade ago.

At the height of tensions between Tehran and the West over its nuclear program, thousands of centrifuges enriching uranium at Iran's underground Natanz facility suddenly began spinning themselves to death. They had been hit by the Stuxnet computer virus, widely believed to be an American and Israeli creation.

Material leaked by Edward Snowden, the former National Security Agency contractor who exposed U.S. government surveillance programs in 2013, suggested Iran at the time was the country where American spies collected the most electronic data.

Beginning in 2011, Iran worked to strike back.

Among the most spectacular cyberattacks attributed to Iran is Shamoon, a virus that hit the state-run giant Saudi Arabian Oil Co. and Qatari natural gas producer RasGas, deleting hard drives and displaying a picture of a burning American flag on computer screens. Saudi Aramco ultimately shut down its network and destroyed over 30,000 computers. A later iteration of Shamoon in late 2016 caused even more damage.

The U.S. blames Iranian hackers for a denial-of-service attack that overwhelmed six major American banks in 2012. U.S. prosecutors in 2016 accused hackers believed to be backed by Iran of attacking dozens of banks and a small dam near New York City. They also have been suspected of targeting the email and social media accounts of Obama administration officials.

Analysts and security experts believe many of these hackers likely receive backing from Iran's Revolutionary Guard, a powerful paramilitary and economic force in the country answerable only to Khamenei himself.

The Guard employs more direct means as well, like its wresting away of the passwords of Rezaian and his wife, recounted in a lawsuit he filed against the Guard and Iran in U.S. federal court.

Similarly, it seized control of the Facebook and email accounts of Iranian-American dual national Siamak Namazi, who remains detained in Iran along with his octogenarian father Baquer. The Guard then pretended to be Namazi in correspondence with U.S. government officials and others, like New Yorker journalist Robin Wright, tricking them into opening a file that gave the hackers access to their computers.

Cyberespionage is even used in Iran's internal rivalries, with attacks on members of the government, particularly officials in Rouhani's Foreign Ministry, including Zarif, according to a recent report by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"The targeting of members of government — individuals that have already been vetted by the regime — reflects the importance of cybersurveillance as a tool of the hard-line security establishment to monitor potential rivals for power," the report said.

Then Iran moved to target the internet itself.

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The idea of Iran setting up its own "halal," or "permissible," internet first came in 2011 in the wake of the 2009 protests. It's evolved into what's known as the National Information Network.

It is essentially a net neutrality supporter's nightmare: The network has some 500 government-approved national websites that stream content far faster than those based abroad, which are intentionally slowed, according to a recent report by the Campaign for Human Rights in Iran. Service providers offer cheaper packages to customers accessing only the NIN websites. Search results also are gamed within the network, allowing the government to censor what users find.

	<p>One of the principal designers of the network is the Iran Telecommunications Co., owned by proxies of the Guard.</p> <p>It resembles in a way China's "Great Firewall," which blocks access to thousands of websites, from Facebook to Twitter to some news outlets. Chinese internet users also find access to websites outside of the country slower.</p> <p>"Iran's National Information Network may lack the name cachet of the 'Great Firewall,' but its performance in strangling access to opposition content during the most recent protests proved that Iran is hard on China's heels in terms of controlling the flow of information," the private U.S. intelligence firm Stratfor wrote in a Jan. 17 analysis.</p> <p>Firuzeh Mahmoudi, the executive director of the San Francisco-based group United for Iran, said authorities have had success in getting businesses to operate on the NIN. The more they do so, he warned, "the easier it will be for them to shut down or throttle the real internet when they want to."</p> <p>Hard-liners have suggested removing Iran entirely from the internet and creating its own at home.</p> <p>"Cyberspace was the kindling in the fire of the battle," hard-line cleric Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami recently told worshippers at Friday prayers in Tehran. "When cyberspace was closed down, the sedition was stopped. The nation does not support a social network that has its key in the hands of the United States."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/27 ATM makers warn of 'jackpotting' hacks
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cyber-atms-usa/atm-makers-warn-of-jackpotting-hacks-on-u-s-machines-idUSKBN1FG0WU
GIST	<p>(Reuters) - Diebold Nixdorf Inc and NCR Corp, two of the world's largest ATM makers, have warned that cyber criminals are targeting U.S. cash machines with tools that force them to spit out cash in hacking schemes known as "jackpotting."</p> <p>The two ATM makers did not identify any victims or say how much money had been lost. Jackpotting has been rising worldwide in recent years, though it is unclear how much cash has been stolen because victims and police often do not disclose details.</p> <p>The attacks were reported earlier on Saturday by the security news website Krebs on Security, which said they had begun last year in Mexico.</p> <p>The companies confirmed to Reuters on Saturday they had sent out the alerts to clients.</p> <p>NCR said in a Friday alert that the cases were the first confirmed "jackpotting" losses in the United States. It said its equipment had not been targeted in the recent attacks, but that it was still a concern for the entire ATM industry.</p> <p>"This should be treated by all ATM deployers as a call to action to take appropriate steps to protect their ATMs against these forms of attack," the alert said.</p> <p>Diebold Nixdorf said in a separate Friday alert that U.S. authorities had warned the company that hackers were targeting one of its ATM models, known as Opteva, which went out of production several years ago.</p> <p>A confidential U.S. Secret Service alert sent to banks said the hackers targeted stand-alone ATMs typically located in pharmacies, big box retailers and drive-thru ATMs, Krebs on Security reported.</p> <p>Diebold Nixdorf's alert described steps that criminals had used to compromise ATMs. They include gaining physical access, replacing the hard drive and using an industrial endoscope to depress an internal</p>

	<p>button required to reset the device.</p> <p>Reuters was unable to obtain a copy of the Secret Service report and an agency representative declined comment. Officials with the Federal Bureau of Investigation could not immediately be reached.</p> <p>Russian cyber security firm Group IB has reported that cyber criminals remotely attacked cash machines in more than a dozen countries across Europe in 2016. Similar attacks were also reported that year in Thailand and Taiwan.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/27 Inside social media black market
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/01/27/technology/social-media-bots.html
GIST	<p>THE REAL JESSICA RYCHLY is a Minnesota teenager with a broad smile and wavy hair. She likes reading and the rapper Post Malone. When she goes on Facebook or Twitter, she sometimes muses about being bored or trades jokes with friends. Occasionally, like many teenagers, she posts a duck-face selfie.</p> <p>But on Twitter, there is a version of Jessica that none of her friends or family would recognize. While the two Jessicas share a name, photograph and whimsical bio — “I have issues” — the other Jessica promoted accounts hawking Canadian real estate investments, cryptocurrency and a radio station in Ghana. The fake Jessica followed or retweeted accounts using Arabic and Indonesian, languages the real Jessica does not speak. While she was a 17-year-old high school senior, her fake counterpart frequently promoted graphic pornography, retweeting accounts called Squirtamania and Porno Dan.</p> <p>All these accounts belong to customers of an obscure American company named Devumi that has collected millions of dollars in a shadowy global marketplace for social media fraud. Devumi sells Twitter followers and retweets to celebrities, businesses and anyone who wants to appear more popular or exert influence online. Drawing on an estimated stock of at least 3.5 million automated accounts, each sold many times over, the company has provided customers with more than 200 million Twitter followers, a New York Times investigation found.</p> <p>The accounts that most resemble real people, like Ms. Rychly, reveal a kind of large-scale social identity theft. At least 55,000 of the accounts use the names, profile pictures, hometowns and other personal details of real Twitter users, including minors, according to a Times data analysis.</p> <p>Jessica Rychly, whose social identity was stolen by a Twitter bot when she was in high school. “I don’t want my picture connected to the account, nor my name,” Ms. Rychly, now 19, said. “I can’t believe that someone would even pay for it. It is just horrible.”</p> <p>These accounts are counterfeit coins in the booming economy of online influence, reaching into virtually any industry where a mass audience — or the illusion of it — can be monetized. Fake accounts, deployed by governments, criminals and entrepreneurs, now infest social media networks. By some calculations, as many as 48 million of Twitter’s reported active users — nearly 15 percent — are automated accounts designed to simulate real people, though the company claims that number is far lower.</p> <p>In November, Facebook disclosed to investors that it had at least twice as many fake users as it previously estimated, indicating that up to 60 million automated accounts may roam the world’s largest social media platform. These fake accounts, known as bots, can help sway advertising audiences and reshape political debates. They can defraud businesses and ruin reputations. Yet their creation and sale fall into a legal gray zone.</p> <p>“The continued viability of fraudulent accounts and interactions on social media platforms — and the professionalization of these fraudulent services — is an indication that there’s still much work to do,” said Senator Mark Warner, the Virginia Democrat and ranking member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, which has been investigating the spread of fake accounts on Facebook, Twitter and other platforms.</p>

Despite rising criticism of social media companies and growing scrutiny by elected officials, the trade in fake followers has remained largely opaque. While Twitter and other platforms prohibit buying followers, Devumi and dozens of other sites openly sell them. And social media companies, whose market value is closely tied to the number of people using their services, make their own rules about detecting and eliminating fake accounts.

Devumi's founder, German Calas, denied that his company sold fake followers and said he knew nothing about social identities stolen from real users. "The allegations are false, and we do not have knowledge of any such activity," Mr. Calas said in an email exchange in November.

The Times reviewed business and court records showing that Devumi has more than 200,000 customers, including reality television stars, professional athletes, comedians, TED speakers, pastors and models. In most cases, the records show, they purchased their own followers. In others, their employees, agents, public relations companies, family members or friends did the buying. For just pennies each — sometimes even less — Devumi offers Twitter followers, views on YouTube, plays on SoundCloud, the music-hosting site, and endorsements on LinkedIn, the professional-networking site.

The actor John Leguizamo has Devumi followers. So do Michael Dell, the computer billionaire, and Ray Lewis, the football commentator and former Ravens linebacker. Kathy Ireland, the onetime swimsuit model who today presides over a half-billion-dollar licensing empire, has hundreds of thousands of fake Devumi followers, as does Akbar Gbajabiamila, the host of the show "American Ninja Warrior." Even a Twitter board member, Martha Lane Fox, has some.

At a time when Facebook, Twitter and Google are grappling with an epidemic of political manipulation and fake news, Devumi's fake followers also serve as phantom foot soldiers in political battles online. Devumi's customers include both avid supporters and fervent critics of President Trump, and both liberal cable pundits and a reporter at the alt-right bastion Breitbart. Randy Bryce, an ironworker seeking to unseat Representative Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, purchased Devumi followers in 2015, when he was a blogger and labor activist. Louise Linton, the wife of the Treasury secretary, Steven Mnuchin, bought followers when she was trying to gain traction as an actress.

Devumi's products serve politicians and governments overseas, too. An editor at China's state-run news agency, Xinhua, paid Devumi for hundreds of thousands of followers and retweets on Twitter, which the country's government has banned but sees as a forum for issuing propaganda abroad. An adviser to Ecuador's president, Lenín Moreno, bought tens of thousands of followers and retweets for Mr. Moreno's campaign accounts during last year's elections.

Kristin Binns, a Twitter spokeswoman, said the company did not typically suspend users suspected of buying bots, in part because it is difficult for the business to know who is responsible for any given purchase. Twitter would not say whether a sample of fake accounts provided by The Times — each based on a real user — violated the company's policies against impersonation.

"We continue to fight hard to tackle any malicious automation on our platform as well as false or spam accounts," Ms. Binns said.

Unlike some social media companies, Twitter does not require accounts to be associated with a real person. It also permits more automated access to its platform than other companies, making it easier to set up and control large numbers of accounts.

"Social media is a virtual world that is filled with half bots, half real people," said Rami Essaid, the founder of Distil Networks, a cybersecurity company that specializes in eradicating bot networks. "You can't take any tweet at face value. And not everything is what it seems."

Including, it turns out, Devumi itself.

Last year, three billion people logged on to social media networks like Facebook, WhatsApp and China's Sina Weibo. The world's collective yearning for connection has not only reshaped the Fortune 500 and upended the advertising industry but also created a new status marker: the number of people who follow, like or "friend" you. For some entertainers and entrepreneurs, this virtual status is a real-world currency. Follower counts on social networks help determine who will hire them, how much they are paid for bookings or endorsements, even how potential customers evaluate their businesses or products.

High follower counts are also critical for so-called influencers, a budding market of amateur tastemakers and YouTube stars where advertisers now lavish billions of dollars a year on sponsorship deals. The more people influencers reach, the more money they make. According to data collected by Captiv8, a company that connects influencers to brands, an influencer with 100,000 followers might earn an average of \$2,000 for a promotional tweet, while an influencer with a million followers might earn \$20,000.

Genuine fame often translates into genuine social media influence, as fans follow and like their favorite movie stars, celebrity chefs and models. But shortcuts are also available: On sites like Social Envy and DIYLikes.com, it takes little more than a credit-card number to buy a huge following on almost any social media platform. Most of these sites offer what they describe as "active" or "organic" followers, never quite stating whether real people are behind them. Once purchased, the followers can be a powerful tool.

"You see a higher follower count, or a higher retweet count, and you assume this person is important, or this tweet was well received," said Rand Fishkin, the founder of Moz, a company that makes search engine optimization software. "As a result, you might be more likely to amplify it, to share it or to follow that person."

Twitter and Facebook can be similarly influenced. "Social platforms are trying to recommend stuff — and they say, 'Is the stuff we are recommending popular?'" said Julian Tempelman, the co-founder of Smyte, a security firm that helps companies combat online abuse, bots and fraud. "Follower counts are one of the factors social media platforms use."

Search on Google for how to buy more followers, and Devumi often turns up among the first results. Visitors are greeted by a polished website listing a Manhattan address, displaying testimonials from customers and a money-back guarantee. Best of all, Devumi claims, the company's products are blessed by the platform for which they are selling followers. "We only use promotion techniques that are Twitter approved so your account is never at risk of getting suspended or penalized," Devumi's website promises.

To better understand Devumi's business, we became a customer. In April, The Times set up a test account on Twitter and paid Devumi \$225 for 25,000 followers, or about a penny each. As advertised, the first 10,000 or so looked like real people. They had pictures and full names, hometowns and often authentic-seeming biographies. One account looked like that of Ms. Rychly, the young Minnesota woman.

But on closer inspection, some of the details seemed off. The account names had extra letters or underscores, or easy-to-miss substitutions, like a lowercase "l" in place of an uppercase "I."

The next 15,000 followers from Devumi were more obviously suspect: no profile pictures, and jumbles of letters, numbers and word fragments instead of names.

In August, a Times reporter emailed Mr. Calas, asking if he would answer questions about Devumi. Mr. Calas did not respond. Twitter forbids selling or buying followers or retweets, and Devumi promises customers absolute discretion. "Your info is always kept confidential," the company's website reads. "Our followers look like any other followers and are always delivered naturally. The only way anyone will know is if you tell them."

But company records reviewed by The Times revealed much of what Devumi and its customers prefer to conceal.

Most of Devumi's best-known buyers are selling products, services or themselves on social media. In

interviews, their explanations varied. They bought followers because they were curious about how it worked, or felt pressure to generate high follower counts for themselves or their customers. “Everyone does it,” said the actress Deirdre Lovejoy, a Devumi customer.

While some said they believed Devumi was supplying real potential fans or customers, others acknowledged that they knew or suspected they were getting fake accounts. Several said they regretted their purchases.

“It’s fraud,” said James Cracknell, a British rower and Olympic gold medalist who bought 50,000 followers from Devumi. “People who judge by how many likes or how many followers, it’s not a healthy thing.”

Ms. Ireland has over a million followers on Twitter, which she often uses to promote companies with whom she has endorsement deals. The Wisconsin-based American Family Insurance, for example, said that the former model was one of its most influential Twitter “brand ambassadors,” celebrities who are paid to help promote products.

But in January last year, Ms. Ireland had only about 160,000 followers. The next month, an employee at the branding agency she owns, Sterling/Winters, spent about \$2,000 for 300,000 more followers, according to Devumi records. The employee later made more purchases, he acknowledged in an interview. Much of Ms. Ireland’s Twitter following appears to consist of bots, a Times analysis found.

A spokeswoman said that the employee had acted without Ms. Ireland’s authorization and had been suspended after The Times asked about the purchases. “I’m sure he thought he was fulfilling his duties, but it’s not something he should have done,” said the spokeswoman, Rona Menashe.

Over two years, the Democratic public relations consultant and CNN contributor Hilary Rosen bought more than a half-million fake followers from Devumi. Ms. Rosen previously spent more than a decade as head of the Recording Industry Association of America. In an interview, she described the purchases as “an experiment I did several years ago to see how it worked.” She made more than a dozen purchases of followers from 2015 to 2017, according to company records.

Other buyers said they had faced pressure from employers to generate social media followers. Marcus Holmlund, a young freelance writer, was at first thrilled when Wilhelmina, the international modeling agency, hired him to manage its social media efforts. But when Wilhelmina’s Twitter following didn’t grow fast enough, Mr. Holmlund said, a supervisor told him to buy followers or find another job. In 2015, despite misgivings, he began making monthly Devumi purchases out of his own pocket.

“I felt stuck with the threat of being fired, or worse, never working in fashion again,” said Mr. Holmlund, who left in late 2015. “Since then, I tell anyone and everyone who ever asks that it’s a total scam — it won’t boost their engagement.” (A Wilhelmina spokeswoman declined to comment.)

Several Devumi customers acknowledged that they bought bots because their careers had come to depend, in part, on the appearance of social media influence. “No one will take you seriously if you don’t have a noteworthy presence,” said Jason Schenker, an economist who specializes in economic forecasting and has purchased at least 260,000 followers.

Not surprisingly, Devumi has sold millions of followers and retweets to entertainers on the lower and middle rungs of Hollywood, such as the actor Ryan Hurst, a star of the television series “Sons of Anarchy.” In 2016 and 2017, he bought a total of 750,000 followers, about three-quarters of his current count. It cost less than \$4,000, according to company records. Mr. Hurst did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Devumi also sells bots to reality television stars, who can parlay fame into endorsement and appearance fees. Sonja Morgan, a cast member on the Bravo show “The Real Housewives of New York City,” uses her Devumi-boosted Twitter feed to promote her fashion line, a shopping app and a website that sells

personalized “video shout-outs.” One former “American Idol” contestant, Clay Aiken, even paid Devumi to spread a grievance: his customer service complaint against Volvo. Devumi bots retweeted his complaint 5,000 times.

Mr. Aiken and Ms. Morgan did not respond to requests for comment.

More than a hundred self-described influencers — whose market value is even more directly linked to their follower counts on social media — have purchased Twitter followers from Devumi. Justin Blau, a popular Las Vegas-based D.J. who performs as 3LAU, acquired 50,000 followers and thousands of retweets. In an email, Mr. Blau said a former member of his management team bought them without his approval.

At least five Devumi influencer customers are also contractors for HelloSociety, an influencer agency owned by The New York Times Company. (A Times spokeswoman said the company sought to verify that the audience of each contractor was legitimate and would not do business with anyone who violated that standard.) Lucas Peterson, a freelance journalist who writes a travel column for The Times, also bought followers from Devumi.

Influencers need not be well known to rake in endorsement money. According to a recent profile in the British tabloid The Sun, two young siblings, Arabella and Jaadin Daho, earn a combined \$100,000 a year as influencers, working with brands such as Amazon, Disney, Louis Vuitton and Nintendo. Arabella, who is 14, tweets under the name Amazing Arabella.

But her Twitter account — and her brother’s — are boosted by thousands of retweets purchased by their mother and manager, Shadia Daho, according to Devumi records. Ms. Daho did not respond to repeated attempts to reach her by email and through a public relations firm.

While Devumi sells millions of followers directly to celebrities and influencers, its customers also include marketing and public relations agencies, which buy followers for their own customers. Phil Pallen, a brand strategist based in Los Angeles, offers customers “growth & ad campaigns” on social media. At least a dozen times, company records show, Mr. Pallen has paid Devumi to deliver those results. Beginning in 2014, for example, he purchased tens of thousands of followers for Lori Greiner, the inventor and “Shark Tank” co-host.

Marketing consultants sometimes buy followers for themselves, too, in effect purchasing the evidence of their supposed expertise. In 2015, Jeetendr Sehdev, a former adjunct professor at the University of Southern California who calls himself “the world’s leading celebrity branding authority,” began buying hundreds of thousands of fake followers from Devumi.

He did not respond to requests for comment. But in his recent best-selling book, “The Kim Kardashian Principle: Why Shameless Sells,” he had a different explanation for his rising follower count. “My social media following exploded,” Mr. Sehdev claimed, because he had discovered the true secret to celebrity influence: “Authenticity is the key.”

Scattered around the web is an array of obscure websites where anonymous bot makers around the world connect with retailers like Devumi. While individual customers can buy from some of these bare-boned sites — Peakerr, CheapPanel and YTbot, among others — they are less user-friendly. Some, for example, do not accept credit cards, only cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin.

But each site sells followers, likes and shares in bulk, for a variety of social media platforms and in different languages. The accounts they sell may change hands repeatedly. The same account may even be available from more than one seller.

Devumi, according to one former employee, sourced bots from different bot makers depending on price, quality and reliability. On Peakerr, for example, 1,000 high-quality, English-language bots with photos costs a little more than a dollar. Devumi charges \$17 for the same quantity.

The price difference has allowed Mr. Calas to build a small fortune, according to company records. In just a few years, Devumi sold about 200 million Twitter followers to at least 39,000 customers, accounting for a third of more than \$6 million in sales during that period.

Last month, Mr. Calas asked for examples of bots The Times found that copied real users. After receiving the names of 10 accounts, Mr. Calas, who had agreed to an interview, asked for more time to analyze them. Then he stopped responding to emails.

Ms. Binns, the Twitter spokeswoman, said the company did not proactively review accounts to see if they were impersonating other users. Instead, the company's efforts are focused on identifying and suspending accounts that violate Twitter's spam policies. In December, for example, the company identified an average of 6.4 million suspicious accounts each week, she said.

All of the sample accounts provided by The Times violated Twitter's anti-spam policies and were shut down, Ms. Binns said. "We take the action of suspending an account from the platform very seriously," she said. "At the same time, we want to aggressively fight spam on the platform."

The company also suspended Devumi's account on Saturday after the Times article was published online.

Yet Twitter has not imposed seemingly simple safeguards that would help throttle bot manufacturers, such as requiring anyone signing up for a new account to pass an anti-spam test, as many commercial sites do. As a result, Twitter now hosts vast swaths of unused accounts, including what are probably dormant accounts controlled by bot makers.

Former employees said the company's security team for many years was more focused on abuse by real users, including racist and sexist content and orchestrated harassment campaigns. Only recently, they said, after revelations that Russia-aligned hackers had deployed networks of Twitter bots to spread divisive content and junk news, has Twitter turned more attention to weeding out fake accounts.

Leslie Miley, an engineer who worked on security and user safety at Twitter before leaving in late 2015, said, "Twitter as a social network was designed with almost no accountability."

Some critics believe Twitter has a business incentive against weeding out bots too aggressively. Over the past two years, the company has struggled to generate the user growth seen by rivals like Facebook and Snapchat. And outside researchers have disputed the company's estimates for how many of its active users are actually bots.

"We're working with completely unregulated, closed ecosystems that aren't reporting on these things. They have a perverse incentive to let it happen," said Mr. Essaid, the cybersecurity expert. "They want to police it to the extent it doesn't seem obvious, but they make money off it."

In January, after almost two years of promoting hundreds of Devumi customers, the fake Jessica Rychly account was finally flagged by Twitter's security algorithms. It was recently suspended.

But the real Ms. Rychly may soon leave Twitter for good.

"I am probably just going to delete my Twitter account," she said.

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HEADLINE	01/26 DHS cyber info-sharing tool reboot
SOURCE	http://www.defenseone.com/technology/2018/01/dhs-cyber-info-sharing-tool-get-reboot-year/145517/?oref=d-channeltop
GIST	The Homeland Security Department plans to update its system for automatically sharing cybersecurity

threat information with companies, critical infrastructure providers and other federal agencies this coming summer or fall, a top official said Thursday.

More than 200 organizations have signed up to automatically receive the indicators, but most of them aren't using that information to automatically block malicious traffic into their networks, Jeanette Manfra, assistant secretary in Homeland Security's Office of Cybersecurity and Communications, said.

Generally, that's because customer organizations say the indicators don't include enough information for them to determine what's truly relevant, Manfra told an audience at the industry group US Telecom's cybersecurity policy forum.

Homeland Security hopes to remedy that with the update, she said.

"If you're not automating the whole ... process, it's not really getting us to that next level of automated defense," Manfra said.

Homeland Security launched its automated indicator sharing program in March 2016, after it was authorized by Congress in a major 2015 cybersecurity bill. The list of indicator recipients includes all major federal agencies.

The update will also include a capability for customers to provide automated feedback to Homeland Security about what they're doing with the cyber threat indicators the department passes along and how useful they are, Manfra said.

The automated indicator sharing update will come at roughly the same time as an update to the technical standards, known as STIX and TAXII, that define how the government and other organizations share cyber threat information, Manfra said.

STIX stands for "Structured Threat Information eXpression" and TAXII stands for "Trusted Automated eXchange of Indicator Information."

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HEADLINE	01/27 World's biggest digital currency theft
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42845505
GIST	<p>One of Japan's largest digital currency exchanges says it has lost some \$534m (£380m) worth of virtual money in a hacking attack on its network.</p> <p>Coincheck suspended deposits and withdrawals for all crypto-currencies except Bitcoin as it assessed its losses in NEM, a lesser-known coin.</p> <p>If the theft is confirmed, it will be the largest involving digital currency.</p> <p>Another Tokyo exchange, MtGox, collapsed in 2014 after admitting that \$400m had been stolen from its network.</p> <p>The stolen Coincheck money was said to be kept in a "hot wallet" - a part of the exchange connected to the internet. That contrasts with a cold wallet, where funds are stored securely offline.</p> <p>Coincheck says it has the digital address of where the money was sent and is going to do what it can to compensate investors.</p> <p>Coincheck was still examining how many customers had been affected and trying to establish whether the break-in had been launched from Japan or another country.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 Davos: bitcoin is not currency
SOURCE	http://money.cnn.com/2018/01/26/technology/davos-bitcoin-currency-asset/index.html
GIST	<p>Davos is clear on bitcoin: It's an interesting investment, but please don't call it a currency.</p> <p>Bitcoin's volatile ascent has transformed it from a tech industry curiosity to a major topic of discussion at this year's World Economic Forum.</p> <p>Yet the consensus in Davos, Switzerland, is that bitcoin will never be as useful as the dollar or yen in the real world.</p> <p>"The central banks have been nurturing the [financial] system for centuries... we've got a good thing going on," Nobel laureate Robert Shiller said at a debate about the cryptocurrency.</p> <p>Cecilia Skingsley, deputy governor of Sweden's central bank, said she had "no problem with people using [bitcoin] as an asset to invest in."</p> <p>"But it's too volatile to be used as currency," she added.</p> <p>Bitcoin prices, which peaked near \$20,000 in December, have fallen sharply to under \$11,000 after a series of exchange closures and talk of increased regulation raised concerns over the digital currency's future.</p> <p>The comments reflect growing anxiety over the real world applications for bitcoin, which is accepted at a smattering of retailers but has failed to find widespread acceptance.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	01/27 Terror organization: Haqqani Network
SOURCE	http://www.timesnownews.com/international/article/kabul-ambulance-attack-bomb-blast-afghanistan-haqqani-network-taliban-pakistan-us-india/192955
GIST	<p>Afghanistan on Saturday blamed a devastating suicide bomb attack in Kabul that killed at least 95 people and wounded 158 others on the Taliban-affiliated Haqqani Network, former CIA assets now considered one of the most dangerous factions fighting US-led NATO forces in Afghanistan.</p> <p>Led by Sirajuddin Haqqani, who doubles as the Afghan Taliban's deputy leader, the extremist group has been blamed for spectacular attacks across Afghanistan since after the US invasion.</p> <p>Kabul ambulance bomb attack: 95 killed, 163 wounded; Afghanistan govt holds Haqqani network responsible</p> <p>Long suspected of links to Pakistan's shadowy military establishment, the network was described by US Admiral Mike Mullen in 2011 as a "veritable arm" of Pakistani intelligence.</p> <p>"When you hear US officials, including in private settings, talking about what worries them the most, they always talk about the Haqqanis," said analyst Michael Kugelman, of the Wilson Center in Washington.</p> <p>Who are they?</p> <p>The group was founded by Jalaluddin Haqqani, an Afghan mujahideen commander fighting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s with the help of the US and Pakistan.</p>

Jalaluddin gained notoriety for his organisation and bravery, garnering attention from the CIA and a personal visit from US congressman Charlie Wilson.

A fluent Arabic speaker, Jalaluddin also fostered close ties with Arab jihadists including Osama Bin Laden who flocked to the region during the war. Later, Jalaluddin became a minister in the Taliban regime.

Now designated a terrorist group by the US, the Haqqanis are known for their heavy use of suicide bombers.

They were blamed for the truck bomb in the heart of Kabul in May that killed around 150 people -- though Sirajuddin later denied the accusation in a rare audio message.

The network has also been accused of assassinating top Afghan officials and holding kidnapped Westerners for ransom.

That includes recently released Canadian Joshua Boyle, his American wife Caitlan Coleman, and their three children -- all born in captivity -- as well as US soldier Bowe Bergdahl, who was released in 2014.

Where are they now?

Following the US invasion of Afghanistan, Taliban fighters flooded across the border into Pakistan, where they regrouped before launching an insurgency against the Americans.

That included the Haqqanis, who coordinated attacks on NATO from across the border in their stronghold of Miran Shah, the biggest town in North Waziristan, one of Pakistan's semi-autonomous border tribal areas.

The US has launched repeated drone attacks targeting the group while Pakistan's military has conducted successive clearing operations, though sceptical Afghan officials have noted they always seemed to miss the Haqqanis.

Pakistan intensified a military operation in the area in 2014, however, and some militant sources say the pressure has forced many of the Haqqanis underground or over the border into their Afghan strongholds, claims that AFP could not confirm.

Why are they linked to Pakistan?

Pakistan sees its arch-nemesis to the east, India, as an existential threat, and has long sought influence over Kabul as a bulwark against Delhi.

The Haqqanis have frequently been accused of targeting Indian installations in Afghanistan, spurring speculation they were overseen by Pakistani intelligence agencies.

"For Pakistan, the calculus comes down to India," said Kugelman.

"It views the Haqqanis and also more broadly the Afghan Taliban as a useful asset to help push back against the presence of India in Afghanistan."

Politicians and retired military officials in Islamabad acknowledge privately that having open channels with the Haqqanis is vital.

Some stressed the nature of the connection. "There's a difference between contact and supporting them or being part of them," Mehmood Shah, a retired brigadier who worked in Pakistan's tribal areas, told AFP.

What does the US want Pakistan to do?

Washington has long pressured Pakistan to crack down on militant groups, with the Haqqanis a top priority.

US President Donald Trump turned up the heat last summer when he accused Pakistan of playing a double game in Afghanistan and upbraided Islamabad for sheltering "agents of chaos".

Islamabad has repeatedly denied the claims and accused Washington of ignoring the thousands of Pakistani lives lost in its struggle with militancy.

The recovery of Boyle, Coleman, and their children came weeks later, with Pakistan using its role in securing their freedom to urge the US to trust it is doing its best.

But -- Pakistan's desire for strategic depth aside -- a crackdown on the Haqqanis might not be easy in a tribal society where social relations matter, warned Pakistani political analyst Imtiaz Gul.

"You can't simply pluck out somebody because they've gone politically incorrect," he said.

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HEADLINE	01/28 Study: ISIS media network
SOURCE	http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/isiss-media-network-era-fall-islamic-state/
GIST	<p>This study analyzes ISIS's media network in view of rise and the fall of the Islamic State and to an essential change in ISIS's nature (the transition from the Islamic State to a terrorist organization).</p> <p>The loss of territories and resources, which accelerated in 2017, struck a hard blow to ISIS's media network. At the same time, there have been signs of a recovery in recent months, at the beginning of the new era after the fall of the Islamic State.</p> <p>The signs of the blow dealt to ISIS's media network include the hiatus in the activities of its media platforms or their irregular appearance; a significant reduction in the volume of publications produced; the inferior quality and reduced quantity of publications and the changes in their contents. The changes included shorter reports; a defensive tone; late reporting and late claims of responsibility; inaccuracies and exaggerations; problems with the translation of titles and headlines from Arabic to English and in the quality and quantity of videos and pictures. However, there was also an increase in the number of calls to ISIS operatives around to globe to carry out attacks and calls to operatives in Syria and Iraq to be patient and persevere in the struggle, in view of the difficulties facing ISIS.</p> <p>The height of ISIS's media activities was in 2014 and 2015. During that era, which began when ISIS was established and split from al-Qaeda, the organization's morale rose and its military and financial situation improved, peaking with the conquest of the city of Mosul in Iraq and the establishment of the Islamic State (June 2014). At that time ISIS established a media network that was of high quality, effective and centralized, operated by the Islamic State's "Central Media Department." It employed skilled professionals, some of whom came to Syria from Western countries. At the time they produced very high-quality videos that resounded greatly around the globe.</p> <p>At its height, the media network went from local to global. Traditional channels were increased to include extensive media activity that sought to reach target audiences around the globe. They also used languages other than Arabic, primarily English. European languages were complemented with languages spoken by Muslims countries and communities, such as Turkish, Indonesian, the Turkic language spoken by the Uyghur minority in China and Pashto, spoken in Afghanistan. Extensive activity was also conducted on the social networks, particularly Twitter, used as a platform to disseminate ISIS media materials. At ISIS's height its media products dealt with boasting about the Islamic State's governance and its conduct as a living, functioning body that dealt with civilian life as well as fighting. It also encouraged operatives from around the globe to enlist in the ranks of the Islamic State and represented the "new Caliphate" as the</p>

embodiment of pure, utopian Islam.

In 2016 and 2017, as the Islamic State suffered blow after blow, there was a gradual, significant decline in the quantity and quality of ISIS's publications. Some of the reasons were the following: the killing of some of its senior media figures; the general lack of financial resources, which influenced the resources allotted for its media; and the Islamic State's loss of territory and population centers (especially the fall of al-Raqqa and Mosul, where the media network's main centers were located). In addition, even at the height of its activity, ISIS was forced to deal with intensive activity conducted against it by the managements of Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, and with cyber attacks that toppled sites.

Only towards the end of 2017, at the beginning of the post-Islamic State era, did ISIS's media network begin showing significant signs of recovery. ISIS reconstructed most of its websites and its affiliated propaganda institutions, and began issuing more updated and better quality products. Its recovery is noticeable both in its central media outlets (which continue to be dominant) and in the local media materials disseminated by its provinces in Syria, Iraq, and abroad. It is evident in the provinces in Syria and Iraq where, after the fall of Islamic State, it again conducts guerrilla and terrorist activities. Most prominent are its media activities in the Sinai and Khorasan (Afghanistan/Pakistan) Provinces, in full adaption with its intensive attacks in those provinces. However, the extent and quality of ISIS's current media have not yet returned to the status quo ante.

Below are ISIS's propaganda platforms operating today (updated to the middle of January 2018). Some of them officially belong to ISIS. Most of them do not but their contents are clearly affiliated with ISIS.

- ISIS's news agencies: the most important is the A'maq News Agency. Others include Moata, the provinces' news network (WNN) and al-Qarar.
- Institutions for the production and distribution of propaganda material: the most important institution is al-Hayat, the production wing of the Central Media Department. Others include al-Furqan Media Foundation, al-Ajnad Foundation for Media Production and the Rimah Foundation.
- ISIS-affiliated websites: the most important is Akhbar al-Muslimin. Another is al-Sawarim.
- Internet magazines: ISIS's main internet magazine is the weekly al-Nabā'. A less important one is al-Anfāl.
- ISIS's internet radio station: Radio al-Bayan.
- Local media offices in the various provinces: In the past such offices were responsible for the dissemination of most of ISIS's media material. At least some of them continue to operate.

In addition, there are media platforms, some of them important, which ceased their operations. They include the Haqq website, the monthly magazine Rumiya, the magazine Dabiq, the al-I'tisam Media Foundation and the al-Ansar site. Some of the platforms will return to operations as ISIS reconstructs its operational and propaganda capabilities.

Even at the height of its power ISIS's media network was forced to reduce and later completely end its presence on popular social networks such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. That was mainly the result of activity taken against them by the networks' managements. As a result ISIS and its supporters often use the encrypted Telegram application, which enables groups of ISIS operatives to communicate anonymously. That provides a certain solution for communication with ISIS operatives and provinces around the globe, but at the price of the difficulty of disseminating propaganda to a larger audience and spreading its messages through general discussions on the social networks.

The materials produced by ISIS's media network indicate that even after the fall of the Islamic State, ISIS remains, in its own eyes and those of its provinces, a global jihadist organization whose activity is not limited to Iraq and Syria (still its core states). ISIS regards its local and global media network as very important for the following reasons: it enables ISIS to remain relevant as one an important jihadist

organization; it enables ISIS to maintain ties with operatives and provinces abroad, to continue issuing information about its operational activity, to send ideological messages to its supporters and to Muslim communities around the globe and to wage a campaign of incitement whose objective is to motivate Muslim supporters to carry out local terrorist attacks (ISIS-inspired attacks).

The threat of ISIS's global terrorism did not end with the fall of the Islamic State, and it is possible that it will grow in the future. That is because ISIS is not currently staggering under the load of the routine management of the Islamic State, defending its borders and providing for the needs of the inhabitants. Moreover, now that the Islamic State has fallen, ISIS and its provinces will be motivated to prove they are still relevant. ISIS's recovering media network is a vital branch in the structure of the provinces in Syria, Iraq and abroad. ISIS can use it to call on its supporters in the Muslim countries around the globe to carry out independent terrorist attacks. That incitement, to which ISIS gives an important place in its publications for foreign audiences, has proven itself as fruitful and fueled the ISIS-inspired attacks around the globe, especially in the West.

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HEADLINE	01/29 Turkey: 28 ISIS militants captured
SOURCE	https://www.dailysabah.com/investigations/2018/01/29/28-daesh-terrorists-nabbed-including-interpol-red-notice-suspect-with-tl-15m-bounty-in-weeklong-ops
GIST	<p>Turkey's Interior Ministry announced Monday that 28 Daesh terrorists were captured in operations between Jan. 22 and 29, including a suspect who was believed to be trained as a suicide bomber.</p> <p>A statement from the ministry said that one terrorist was captured dead, whereas 21 others were captured alive and six other surrendered to security forces.</p> <p>One of the suspected terrorists include Demet Yaşar, who was on the blue category of Turkey's terror blacklist with a 1.5 million Turkish lira (\$398,000) bounty on her head. Yaşar, whose name was mentioned by Turkish media outlets as a suspected Daesh militant trained for suicide bombing, was also being sought by an Interpol red notice.</p> <p>Daesh has targeted Turkey for its active role in fighting the terrorist group, dismantling its funding and apprehending foreign fighters flow into battle zones in Syria and Iraq, retaliating through a string of attacks and bombings in the country in 2015 and 2016. The terrorist group was responsible for Turkey's deadliest attack killing 109 people and injuring more than 500 others when two Daesh suicide bombers detonated themselves at a peace rally on Oct. 10, 2015, in the capital Ankara.</p> <p>Yaşar's name was frequently cited within a terror cell after a Daesh suicide bombing that killed five people and injured 100 others during a rally of pro-PKK Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) on June 5, 2015.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/27 Group helps identify fleeing ISIS
SOURCE	http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/sound-and-picture-identifies-isis-fighters-1.4503905
GIST	<p>As ISIS militants flee their falling strongholds, a Syrian human rights group is trying to track them and make sure they don't infiltrate other parts of the world.</p> <p>"We want to get justice," says Mohammad Kheder, 31, CEO of Sound and Picture, which works with the Free Syrian Army (FSA) to identify ISIS fighters.</p> <p>But human rights observers are concerned about whether suspected militants get due process.</p> <p>Kheder, who was a math teacher, lived under ISIS for a year after the militant group took control of his hometown al-Bukamal, near the Iraqi border, in 2014. Then he moved his family to Turkey, where they</p>

spent a few months, before being granted asylum in Germany in 2016.

Sitting at his home now, with a Syrian flag on the wall behind him, Kheder reminisces over what his city and many others looked like before ISIS took over.

"They were very beautiful cities, very colourful cities. After that, ISIS came and stole those cities. They made it black," Kheder said via Skype. "We just want to give the justice to those people who suffered under ISIS control."

Kheder founded Sound and Picture in January 2015 to document human rights abuses by ISIS and other extremist groups — information it provides to media and NGOs free of charge.

Kheder's brother Aghiad was among the organization's first 24 members, who began operating on the ground in Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor, and in the countryside of Hasakah, Aleppo and Homs, covering almost half of the country in the east. The group has grown to a network of 75 and extended its coverage to ISIS-controlled territories in Iraq.

"We believe that if we want to fight against the radical ideology of ISIS, we have to fight it all over their territories," says Kheder.

Using WhatsApp to ID militants

Between June and October 2017, when the U.S.-backed forces drove ISIS out of Raqqa, many of the militants headed for Aleppo and across the border to Turkey.

When the Turkish-backed FSA established roadside checkpoints in the area, guards set up a group chat with Sound and Picture using the WhatsApp messaging service.

"They needed to know who is [an] ISIS member and who is just civilian," Kheder said.

Every man who arrives at one of the checkpoints has his name and photo taken, which guards send to the WhatsApp group.

"We have to be 100 per cent sure before saying anything," says Kheder.

Kheder understands the implications of his organization's work and says great care is taken in making identifications, requiring input from multiple Sound and Picture members on the ground.

"We don't take the information from one source," he explains.

The group has built a database by collecting as much information as possible about each suspected ISIS member. And the intelligence gathering isn't limited to men. About 30 per cent of Sound and Picture's members are female and trained to collect information on women.

Sound and Picture says it has identified hundreds of ISIS members trying to flee through FSA checkpoints — most of them are locals, but there are also nationals from Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and France.

In June 2017 when a Montreal woman contacted Sound and Picture about her daughter, Kheder recognized the daughter's husband — a German ISIS fighter known by the nom de guerre Abu Salaheddin.

"He was in al-Bukamal, and since I am originally from al-Bukamal, we could identify the neighbourhood he was in," explains Kheder.

Abu Abd al-Rahman, a commander of the FSA group Ahrar al-Sharqiya, confirmed to CBC News, via WhatsApp, that his group arrests suspected ISIS fighters identified by "trusted sources."

Sound and Picture's involvement ends with the identification. Any suspected ISIS members are taken into custody — and that's where things get murky. The FSA is the only group Sound and Picture works with, but it isn't the only rebel group on the ground.

Areas in Northern Syria are controlled by various FSA, Syrian Democratic Forces and Turkish-backed rebel groups, who are often in conflict with one another. No one group has jurisdiction.

Because of the patchwork of jurisdictional control, it's unclear what happens to the detainees.

Nadim Houry, director of the terrorism and counterterrorism program at Human Rights Watch (HRW), has visited a detention centre in a Kurdish-run part of Syria. While he declined to speak specifically about Sound and Picture, he says it's fine to use civilian tips to identify ISIS members, but he's concerned about due process.

"The question is, will there be a local process to check this information, a chance for the person to defend themselves, cross-check it, make sure the information is accurate?" says Houry.

"There is a huge need for justice and accountability in these areas," he says. "There have been a lot of abuses committed by all sorts of different parties. And there's a danger that in the absence of real justice mechanisms, we end up with various revenge mechanisms."

Kheder is also cognizant about the pitfalls of this process.

"Even ISIS members have to be dealt with in a civilized way," he says. "If we deal with former ISIS members in the same way that ISIS members dealt with civilians, then we are the same."

Kheder says detainees in this part of the world aren't treated the way they are in Western countries, and he too worries about human rights abuses in detention centres.

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HEADLINE	01/29 Terror plotter seeks deportation not jail
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/cf624e392bcb4a65824eea887d4e1cd9/Man-accused-in-terror-plot-asked-for-deportation-over-prison
GIST	<p>COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — A man accused of plotting an attack on a federal medical facility in Texas asked a judge in December to deport him instead of sending him to prison, saying he didn't deserve to spend time behind bars, records show.</p> <p>Abdirahman Sheik Mohamud told federal Judge Michael Watson that he didn't want to leave his family but called his proposal "completely fair and just."</p> <p>"I truly don't believe I deserve prison at all," Mohamud said in the Dec. 12 letter, filed in the official court record on Thursday.</p> <p>He added: "So if the concern is risk assessment then deportation would set everyone's hearts at ease."</p> <p>Mohamud, who was born in Somalia and came to the U.S. at 2 years old, may eventually get his wish.</p> <p>After Mohamud was sentenced to 22 years in prison last week, the local Homeland Security Investigations office said it would seek to strip him of his citizenship and deport him to Somalia.</p> <p>At sentencing on Jan. 22, Mohamud told Watson that he knew what he'd done was wrong and that he'd fallen into the trap of radicalization while abroad.</p>

Mohamud, 26, tried to fire his attorney in a second letter dated Dec. 15, saying they weren't communicating well. A handwritten note on the letter says Mohamud's request was withdrawn Jan. 9 in court.

His attorney, veteran Columbus defense lawyer Sam Shamansky, declined to comment.

Mohamud planned to fly to Texas and attack the Federal Medical Center Carswell in Fort Worth in an attempt to free Aafia Siddiqui, a Pakistani scientist convicted of shooting at two U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan, Watson said as he outlined the allegations against Mohamud.

According to the government, Mohamud applied for a passport to travel abroad only a week after he became a U.S. citizen in 2014.

He bought a ticket to Greece with a stop in Turkey, where he disembarked before going to Syria, prosecutors said in court documents. They said he never intended to go to Greece.

Mohamud trained with al-Nusra Front, an extremist organization affiliated with al-Qaeda, prosecutors said.

Mohamud was arrested in 2015 and pleaded guilty a few months later. The attacks were never carried out.

Shamansky asked for leniency, saying Mohamud didn't have his father around when he was growing up, was brainwashed while abroad "by professional head twisters" but later realized his error and abandoned his plot.

Prosecutors noted Mohamud contacted others from jail after his arrest and told them not to say anything.

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HEADLINE	01/28 Report: Iran funds weapons, terrorism
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/01/28/iran-spends-billions-on-weapons-programs-terrorism-while-ignoring-iranians-basic-needs-report-finds.html
GIST	<p>Iran is spending billions of dollars on its weapons programs and supporting terrorism around the globe while it ignores the basic needs of its people, a new report asserts.</p> <p>The report, issued by the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), states that this month's uprising against the regime was due to what it states are the "grueling high prices and economic strains on an array of social sectors."</p> <p>It claims that this is a result of the regime putting its resources, "toward domestic suppression, warmongering and expansion of terrorism abroad," which the report points out has led to poverty and deprivation among Iranians.</p> <p>The report is titled "Primary Causes of Poverty and Popular Uprisings in Iran." It says the report is based on a "high-level assessment" which revealed that the annual minimum cost to Iranians of keeping the "clerical regime in power" is about \$55 billion.</p> <p>The national council says on its website it is a "broad coalition of democratic Iranian organizations, groups, and personalities" that "was founded in 1981 in Tehran, Iran, on the initiative of Massoud Rajavi, the leader of the Iranian Resistance."</p> <p>The report claims that half of those funds came from "money channeled to military and security-related activities and export of terrorism, funded by revenues obtained from institutions controlled by the supreme leader's office and the IRGC." The report indicates that the other half of the funds is from the official state budget and is earmarked for military- and security-related affairs and the export of terrorism.</p>

The report also describes how during the height of this month's anti-regime protests, shouted comments were made against Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The report states that over the years Khamenei has taken over the "bulk of Iran's economy." It claims the organizations and institutions, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), show that Khamenei-controlled-companies make up over 50 percent of Iran's gross domestic product, or GDP.

The report compares what it calls funding for "warmongering and suppression" against other state expenditures.

It claims Iran's total health care budget for 2018 is \$16.3 billion, which is a third of its total war budget.

The report also reveals that for the last six years the total spent on its Syrian activities is around \$15-20 billion a year. It describes how protesters shouted during the January protests, "Leave Syria, think about us," and "Neither Gaza or Lebanon, I dedicate my life to Iran."

The report compares paltry welfare payments made to those living under absolute poverty with the larger sums of money paid to Afghan mercenaries bankrolled by Iran to fight in Syria.

According to statements made by Afghan mercenaries during interviews with state-run media, each mercenary is paid between \$600-700 a month. Doing the math, nearly 20,000 Afghan mercenaries cost the regime between \$12-\$14 million a month. Compare that to the nearly \$70 monthly stipend Iranians living under the absolute poverty line receive, according to the report.

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HEADLINE	01/29 Military: troops won't withdraw Manbij
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/29/politics/general-votel-syria-manbij-commitment-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)US troops will not withdraw from Manbij, a strategically important city in northern Syria, a leading US military figure told CNN Sunday.</p> <p>This means that US troops risk being caught up in Turkey's military push into northern Syria should Ankara follow through with a pledge to advance into the area.</p> <p>Gen. Joseph Votel, commander of the United States Central Command, said that withdrawing US forces from Manbij is "not something we are looking into."</p> <p>Manbij is a key flashpoint in northern Syria -- located northeast of Aleppo and around 40 kilometers (25 miles) south of Jarabulus, which sits on the Syrian-Turkish border.</p> <p>Turkey launched a ground operation across the border into Syria a week ago in an attempt to drive US-allied Kurdish militia from the area. The military incursion has raised tensions between Turkey and the United States, which supports and openly arms Kurdish militias fighting ISIS.</p> <p>The confirmation of US commitment to Manbij comes as parties involved in the conflict prepare to meet in Russia-hosted peace talks in the Black Sea resort of Sochi.</p> <p>The Syrian National Dialogue Congress will take place over Monday and Tuesday, and will be attended by up to 1,500 delegates from across the Syrian political landscape, Russian state media says.</p> <p>The UN's special envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, will attend, the world body confirmed.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/29 ISIS claims Kabul military academy attack
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/gunbattle-occurring-afghan-military-academy-52674189?
GIST	<p>Militants attacked an Afghan army unit guarding a military academy in the capital of Kabul on Monday, killing at least five soldiers and wounding 10, officials said. Hours later, the Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the assault.</p> <p>The attack was the latest in a wave of relentless violence in Kabul this month unleashed by the Taliban and rival Islamic State militants that has killed scores and left hundreds wounded.</p> <p>Monday's attack started around 4 a.m., witnesses said, and fighting continued long after daybreak.</p> <p>A suicide bomber first struck the military unit responsible for providing security for the academy, followed by a gunbattle with the troops, said Dawlat Waziri, spokesman for the Afghan defense ministry.</p> <p>At least five insurgents were involved in the morning assault, according to Waziri. Two of the attackers were killed in the gunbattle, two detonated their suicide vests and one was arrested by the troops, he said.</p> <p>All roads leading to the military academy were blocked by police, which only allowed ambulances access to the site to transfer the wounded to hospitals.</p> <p>After the gunbattle ended, the security forces resumed control of the area. They also confiscated one suicide vest, an AK-47 and some ammunition, Waziri said.</p> <p>"The attack was against an army unit providing security for the academy and not the academy itself," he insisted.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/29 Reports: Yemen clashes continue in Aden
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/yemen-news-agency-12-killed-132-wounded-aden-52676822?
GIST	<p>Yemen's state-run news agency says 12 people have been killed and over 130 wounded in clashes between separatists and pro-government forces in the southern port city of Aden, where the government is based.</p> <p>The clashes in Aden erupted on Sunday, after a deadline issued by the separatists for the government to resign expired. The separatists are backed by the United Arab Emirates, a key partner in the Saudi-led coalition supporting Yemen's internationally recognized government in its war since 2015 against the country's Houthi rebels.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the international aid organization OXFAM says the violence forced it to shut down its offices in Aden and the city of Taiz.</p> <p>Coalition spokesman Col. Turki al-Malki said late Sunday the coalition's priority is to deliver humanitarian aid, declining to comment on the violence.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/28 Turkey: will clean entire Syria border
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-turkey/erdogan-says-turkey-will-clean-entire-syrian-border-idUSKBN1FH0MH
GIST	ANKARA/BEIRUT (Reuters) - President Tayyip Erdogan said on Sunday that Turkey will "clean" its entire border with Syria in a sign that the Turkish offensive on the Syrian Kurdish YPG group in northern

	<p>Syria's Afrin region could be extended further.</p> <p>Since Turkey's assault in Afrin began nine days ago, it has increased tensions between Ankara and the United States, which has supported the YPG in other parts of Syria in the fight against Islamic State.</p> <p>"Step by step, we will clean our entire border," Erdogan said in a speech after the army said it had captured Jebel Bursaya, a hill that Turkish media had described as a critical position in recent days.</p> <p>Erdogan said last week that Turkey might conduct operations eastwards inside Syria all the way to Iraq to clear the YPG from its frontier. Syrian Kurdish officials have pledged to meet any wider Turkish assault with an "appropriate response".</p> <p>More than a week into their offensive, however, Turkey and allied Syrian rebel groups have made only modest progress fighting into hilly terrain against entrenched foes.</p> <p>The U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, an alliance of militias of which the YPG is the strongest, had said earlier on Sunday that there was intense fighting in the area.</p> <p>A war monitor, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said Turkey and its allied rebel groups had taken the hill, which overlooks the major Syrian town of Azaz, which they also hold.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/27 Turkey: US agrees to stop arming YPG
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-turkey/turkey-says-u-s-has-promised-to-stop-arming-ypg-warns-washington-on-manbij-idUSKBN1FG0P4
GIST	<p>ANKARA/BEIRUT (Reuters) - The United States has pledged to stop supplying weapons to a Kurdish militia in Syria, Turkey said on Saturday, calling on Washington to immediately remove its troops from a Syrian town of Manbij that Turkish forces plan to target.</p> <p>Turkey's air and ground offensive in northwest Syria's Afrin region against the Kurdish YPG militia has opened a new front in the seven-year, multi-sided Syrian civil war and strained ties with NATO ally Washington.</p> <p>Ankara views the YPG as terrorists and as an extension of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and has been infuriated by U.S. support, including arms and training, for the militia. The Kurdish fighters have played a prominent role in U.S.-led efforts to combat the hardline Islamic State in Syria.</p> <p>Since the start of the eight-day-old incursion, dubbed "Operation Olive Branch" by Ankara, President Tayyip Erdogan has said Turkish forces would push east toward the town of Manbij, potentially putting them in confrontation with U.S. troops deployed there.</p> <p>U.S. National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster told Erdogan's spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin, in a telephone call that the United States would no longer provide weapons to the YPG, the Turkish presidency said on Saturday.</p> <p>"It was emphasized that Turkey's legitimate security concerns must be paid attention to. It was agreed that close coordination would be carried out in order to avoid misunderstandings," it said.</p> <p>The agreement is likely to be seen by Ankara as a substantial diplomatic victory from the incursion, where Turkish troops and their Syrian rebel allies appear to have made modest advances, as heavy rain and poor weather have hampered air strikes and progress on the ground.</p> <p>Turkey's foreign minister said the United States needed to follow up its promise with concrete action, including the immediate withdrawal of its troops from the vicinity of Manbij.</p>

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HEADLINE	01/27 Musicians get 'counterterrorism briefing'
SOURCE	https://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/musicians-add-counterterrorism-briefing-to-pre-grammy-schedule-w515827
GIST	<p>In light of the recent attacks on concerts in Manchester, Las Vegas and Paris, this year's Grammy weekend will feature a new component: a counterterrorism briefing for musicians with State Department and European Union officials.</p> <p>The all-day training, held in a Times Square hotel suite on Saturday, will include briefings to a number of high-profile Grammy attendees, including Pink, Little Big Town, Chris Stapleton, Run the Jewels and Young Thug, among others. While venues typically provide standard security briefings ahead of each event, and the Recording Academy provides some guidance to its members, this off-site briefing is the first to provide non-event-specific best practices from US State Department and European Union officials directly to the musicians themselves.</p> <p>An official from the State Department's Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) who asked to remain anonymous says that advice given to musicians and their teams on Saturday will include creating situational awareness, identifying vulnerable points and times of increased risk, avoiding time and place predictability and crafting a contingency plan. Two former State Department officials are among the group of experts that will address the group.</p> <p>"Behind arms, music and entertainment are the largest Western exports, and musicians and entertainers serve as ambassadors around the world. Attacks against them generate a lot of coverage, and send a powerful message. It makes sense that they would be targeted," Dr. Amir Bagherpour, an ISIS expert who served as the first Director of Analytics in the U.S. State Department under President Obama, tells Rolling Stone. Bagherpour is affiliated with Progress Humanity, the Washington, D.C., non-profit organization hosting the pre-Grammy briefing, and will be one of the briefing's expert trainers.</p> <p>"Since 9/11, there have been only three major attacks on concerts, one of which wasn't ISIS or so-called 'Muslim terrorism' but a lone wolf shooter," Bagherpour said. "But it only takes one 9/11 to change how people respond to each other."</p> <p>Scott Ialacci, better known as DJ Skribble, is an actor and DJ who will be performing at the pre-Grammy briefing. He says he isn't particularly engaged with his security protocols now, but recent events have made him want to learn more about how to protect himself.</p> <p>Ialacci will be attending the briefing to get insight that he can implement when he tours later in the spring. "I have been touring for over 30 years all over the world, so I have watched the evolution of security needs from being much more casual to now, needing to take concerns like terrorists at concerts into consideration," Ialacci says. "I'm coming to the briefing, DJ'ing there and inviting other touring artists I know to join because I feel we should all keep up-to-date with safety opportunities for the sake of ourselves, our crews and our fans."</p> <p>"We have great security teams who do their best," he adds. "But if we can get extra information, why not take it?"</p> <p>Marcel Altenburg, one of the world's leading crowd scientists and a former captain in the German military, tells Rolling Stone that it's not enough to simply look at a venue's immediate vicinity when preparing security protocols. Altenburg has consulted on dozens of arenas, sporting events, concerts and airports around the world, most famously in Washington, D.C., during the 2017 presidential inauguration. He preaches that the potential targets for a venue begin at attendees' front doors and follows them until they've gone to the event and returned home.</p>

"We always ask, where does it begin to become apparent that this group of people is going to your event?" Altenburg says from his office at Manchester Metropolitan University. "Is it on the subway or a bus an hour away? Is it in an overflow parking lot? You have to think it all the way through. At what point will they be visible as a crowd and identified as connected to you?"

It's a concern shared by James Barbour, spokesperson for the European Union delegation in the United States, who will be briefing musicians on steps the EU is taking to protect them and their performances. This type of briefing is new to Barbour, but he says it's similar to ones he might give any group concerned about their security in Europe. "Terrorism doesn't discriminate," he says. "It doesn't care if you're a musician or a group of doctors at a conference, or students, or circus clowns."

During the pre-Grammy briefing, experts are expected to urge performers be cautious, but not allow fear to change the way they engage with their music, and their fans.

"You're more likely to be hit by lightning - twice - than you are to be attacked at a concert," Bagherpour says. "It's not something in which the general public should be in constant fear of. But this is how terrorism works, by instilling hypervigilance."

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HEADLINE	01/28 Iraq: coalition operation kills 6 police
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/27/middleeast/iraq-police-killed-coalition-operation/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Eight people were killed and 20 others were wounded in an Iraq military operation and US airstrikes Saturday, the town's injured mayor told CNN.</p> <p>Sharhabil al-Obaidi, the mayor of al-Baghdadi in Anbar province, said a bodyguard, a civilian and six police officers were killed after Iraqi military and special police forces raided a house. The bodyguard and civilian died during the raid.</p> <p>Iraq's Joint Operations Command said Iraqi forces were going after a terrorist leader.</p> <p>Iraqi local police officers and local tribesmen rushed to the scene, thinking the Iraqi troops who raided the house could be ISIS militants dressed as Iraqi troops, according to the mayor. ISIS militants are known to have carried out many attacks and ambushes on Iraqi security forces and civilians while posing as Iraqi troops.</p> <p>After the troops detained the suspect, and while they were searching the house, "the force was attacked by a hand grenade from one of the neighboring houses, prompting a quick response, and then the forces pulled back to their headquarters," the Joint Operations Command said.</p> <p>The joint command statement said Iraqi forces on the ground called in air support when they saw the police, believing them to be "a group of gunmen gathering without coordination with the assigned force." Obaidi said an airstrike hit the gathering, killing the six police officers and wounding 20 others, including security officers, the mayor and town's police chief.</p> <p>"We demand Iraqi government to investigate the attack and give an explanation on why such operation was conducted without informing local authorities," Obaidi said.</p> <p>"Those security officers who were killed in the airstrikes had fought ISIS militants before," al-Obaidi added.</p> <p>Col. Ryan Dillon, a US Army spokesman for the Combined Joint Task Force, said the incident is under investigation but US warplanes give support when requested and approved by the Iraqi military.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/27 Turkey offensive into Syria Kurd enclave
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syria-opposition-group-boycott-sochi-conference-52647327?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Fighting raged in northwestern Syria Saturday as Turkish troops and allied militiamen tried to advance their week-long offensive in a Kurdish-controlled enclave, Syrian opposition activists said.</p> <p>The bombardment could be heard a few miles away from Afrin in the Turkish-controlled town of Azaz, where Associated Press journalists were on a media trip organized by the Turkish government and escorted by Turkey-backed Syrian opposition fighters taking part in the offensive.</p> <p>Azaz is one of the fronts from where Turkish troops and allied Syrian fighters of the so-called Free Syrian Army have launched a push into Afrin to clear the area of a Syrian Kurdish militia which Ankara considers to be a national security threat. The militia known as the People's Protection Units, or YPG, has been a partner of the United States in the fight against the Islamic State group in Syria.</p> <p>Kurdish and other activists said Saturday's fighting concentrated around the Rajo area in Afrin, amid heavy shelling and airstrikes by the Turkish forces. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which monitors the Syria war through a network of activists on the ground, said Turkish helicopters were attacking the town of Rajo, struggling to make progress after a week of attacks.</p> <p>Turkey's official news agency said rockets fired from the Afrin region in Syria hit a house in the border province of Kilis, injuring two people. Another rocket fired was fired and struck the town of Reyhanli, in Hatay province, slightly injuring one child, the Anadolu news agency reported.</p> <p>The Turkish military said in a statement that two Turkish soldiers and two allied Syrian fighters were killed Saturday. It claimed 447 YPG militants were "neutralized" since Jan. 20.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/28 Yemen govt. forces clash w/separatists
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/separatists-clash-government-forces-yemens-aden-52660493?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Yemeni government forces clashed with separatists in the southern port city of Aden on Sunday.</p> <p>An Associated Press journalist heard heavy gunfire in the Khor Maksar district, while thick black smoke rose in the sky after an airstrike.</p> <p>Witnesses, speaking on condition of anonymity because they feared reprisal, said residents were fleeing the area. Schools and universities were shut down and students were told to stay home.</p> <p>President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi's forces, which have been at war with Shiite rebels known as Houthis since March 2015, deployed across the city to prevent protests by southerners who want to bring down his government and separate from the Houthi-dominated north.</p> <p>The protests are being led by Aidarous al-Zubaidi, a former Aden governor backed by the United Arab Emirates. The UAE is a key member of the Saudi-led coalition allied with Hadi's government, but has had tense relations with the president.</p> <p>The UAE has trained and armed forces, known as the Security Belt, who do not answer to Hadi's government.</p> <p>On Saturday, the coalition issued a statement calling for "self-restraint" and described the protests as "popular demands to fix government flaws."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 Iraq officers: US mistakenly kills 7
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/01/27/iraqi-officers-say-us-plane-mistakenly-kills-7.html
GIST	<p>BAGHDAD – Two senior Iraqi army officers say a U.S. military plane has mistakenly fired at a gathering of tribal fighters and civilians west of Anbar, killing seven and wounding 11 others.</p> <p>The officers said Saturday the U.S. forces had thought the victims in the al-Baghdadi area were militants.</p> <p>An investigation is underway.</p> <p>The incident came after U.S.-backed Iraqi forces earlier Saturday arrested an Islamic State group operative at his home, the officers said. At the time of the raid, a man in a nearby house tossed a grenade at the troops who returned fire, injuring him and his wife.</p> <p>The officers spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to media.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/27 Mali: militants storm army camp; 31 dead
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/14-killed-jihadist-attack-army-camp-northern-mali-52649376?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Islamic militants stormed an army camp in northern Mali early Saturday, killing at least 14 soldiers in the worst attack on security forces in the West African country in more than a year, the army said.</p> <p>Army spokesman Col. Diarran Kone confirmed the attack in the Timbuktu region and said the bodies of 17 assailants remained at the scene. The base was again under the control of the Malian military, he said.</p> <p>Mali recently marked the five-year anniversary of a French military mission to oust Islamic extremists from power in the major towns of the north. That operation, however, merely dispersed the jihadists into the surrounding desert.</p> <p>In the years since they have launched frequent attacks on the Malian military as well as U.N. peacekeeping forces trying to stabilize the country.</p> <p>Last January, at least 54 people died in the eastern city of Gao in the bombing of a camp that housed hundreds of former fighters from armed groups. The former fighters, who were signatories to Mali's 2015 peace agreement, had agreed to join forces with the military in battling extremist groups in Mali's north.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 Psyche exam for ex-Afghan hostage
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/afghan-hostage-boyle-undergo-psychiatric-assessment-52633087?cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>Former Afghanistan hostage Joshua Boyle will undergo a comprehensive psychiatric assessment.</p> <p>Boyle faces a string of charges, including sexual assault, following his release from captivity. Boyle and his wife Caitlan Coleman of Stewartstown, Pennsylvania, were taken hostage in 2012 by a Taliban-linked group and freed last year.</p> <p>His lawyer Lawrence Greenspon told an Ontario court Friday that an initial evaluation found his client fit to stand trial. But Greenspon added he would benefit from a fuller assessment at a mental health center.</p>

	<p>Boyle's next court appearance is scheduled for March 26.</p> <p>He was arrested by Ottawa police late last month.</p> <p>The purported acts allegedly occurred between Oct. 14 and Dec. 30 after Boyle returned to Canada. A publication ban bars reporting information that could identify the alleged victims.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/27 Taliban kill 100+ using ambulance bomb
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-afghanistan-raises-toll-kabul-attack-103-52661420?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The Latest on Afghanistan, where a suicide bombing in the capital on Saturday killed more than 100 people (all times local):</p> <p>2:30 p.m.</p> <p>Afghanistan's interior minister says at least 103 people were killed in a suicide bombing carried out by the Taliban in Kabul on Saturday, updating an earlier toll.</p> <p>Wais Ahmad Barmak said Sunday that another 235 people were wounded in the attack. Barmak said police were among those killed and wounded.</p> <p>The attacker drove an ambulance filled with explosives and was able to race through a security checkpoint by saying he was transferring a patient to a hospital. The explosion damaged or destroyed dozens of shops and vehicles.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>11:30 a.m.</p> <p>An Afghan official has updated the number of wounded from Saturday's suicide bombing in Kabul to 191, saying the death toll from the Taliban attack remains at 95.</p> <p>The attacker drove an ambulance filled with explosives and was able to race through a security checkpoint by saying he was transferring a patient to a hospital. The explosion damaged or destroyed dozens of shops and vehicles.</p> <p>Wahid Majroh, a spokesman for the Public Health Ministry, gave the updated toll Sunday, after officials had earlier said 158 people were wounded.</p> <p>The Taliban claimed the attack, which dealt a major blow to the U.S.-backed Afghan government. Afghan security forces have struggled to combat the Taliban since the U.S. and NATO formally concluded their combat mission at the end of 2014.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	01/28 Building along Viaduct targeted?
SOURCE	http://www.kiro7.com/news/local/possible-bb-gun-shooter-targeting-building-along-viaduct/690800362
GIST	A new building along the Alaskan Way Viaduct is apparently being targeted by someone with a B.B. gun

who has been shooting out the windows for the past three months.

A risk management group tweeted Saturday, saying they are trying to identify whoever is using a B.B. gun to repeatedly damage the building.

The company, Seattle Risk Management, also known as Intravaia tweeted that someone is “driving up and down the Alaskan Way Viaduct, using a BB gun to repeatedly shoot out building windows, which started in November, 2017 to present. Approximate amount of damage is well over \$750,000.”

The Seattle Police Department could not confirm a B.B. gun was causing the damage, but says it has responded multiple times to 450 Alaskan Way, most recently in January. It says each time the scenario is almost exactly the same.

SPD says if someone is intentionally breaking the windows, the crime would be a felony.

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HEADLINE	01/27 Mexico warms up to legalizing pot
SOURCE	http://www.latimes.com/world/mexico-americas/la-fg-mexico-marijuana-20180127-story.html
GIST	<p>For decades, marijuana flowed in one direction across the U.S.-Mexico border: north.</p> <p>These days, drug enforcement agents regularly seize specialty strains of retail-quality cannabis grown in the United States being smuggled south.</p> <p>Widespread legalization in the U.S. is killing Mexico's marijuana business, and cartel leaders know it. They are increasingly abandoning the crop that was once was their bread and butter and looking elsewhere for profits, producing and exporting drugs including heroin and fentanyl and banking on extortion schemes and fuel theft.</p> <p>So when Mexico's tourism secretary this week boldly declared his hopes that Mexico will legalize marijuana for recreational use in an effort to reduce growing violence across the nation, some balked at the notion that marijuana was driving the bloodshed.</p> <p>"Avocados are a bigger industry than marijuana," said security expert Alejandro Hope. "And the number of homicides connected to marijuana are very small."</p> <p>"It is naive to believe that legalizing marijuana will reduce crime rates," tweeted Margarita Zavala, a presidential candidate.</p> <p>Still, that a Cabinet member was willing to advocate such a policy marks a dramatic shift from a time when Washington dictated a hard-line drug policy across Latin America. Mexican leaders have increasingly been taking more liberal stances on marijuana, in part to stay in step with other countries in the region and in part because they are at a loss about how to stem Mexico's rising violence, much of which is centered around the drug trade.</p> <p>The legalization debate comes amid Mexico's bloodiest wave of violence yet. There were more than 29,000 homicide victims in 2017, more than in any year since the government began releasing homicide records two decades earlier.</p> <p>The drug trade generates between \$6 billion and \$8 billion a year for Mexico, according to the RAND Drug Policy Research Center, which estimates that 15% to 26% of that comes from marijuana. Advocates of legalization say it would allow law enforcement officers to focus on more important work. Few in Mexico have touted legalizing harder drugs.</p> <p>The tourism secretary, Enrique de la Madrid, told reporters at a tourism conference Thursday that he</p>

thinks "it is absurd that we have not taken the step" toward legalization of cannabis. He said legalization should start first in Quintana Roo and Baja California Sur, states home to the resorts of Cancun and Los Cabos, both of which have seen a dramatic increase in homicides in recent years.

"I am convinced that we must discuss it as part of the solution to violence and insecurity in Mexico," De la Madrid said later in a tweet, which also clarified that his views on the subject were his own, and not an official government position.

But De la Madrid, a member of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, is one of a growing number of Mexican leaders who have called for pot legalization.

In 2016, President Enrique Peña Nieto proposed a bill that would allow Mexicans to carry up to an ounce of marijuana, arguing that Mexico and the U.S. should not pursue divergent policies on the drug.

The bill stalled in Congress, but lawmakers did approve another measure that allows the use of medical marijuana in some cases.

Legalization has been the trend across the Americas.

In the U.S., marijuana is legal in some form in a majority of states and will soon be permitted for recreational use in eight. Cannabis is already legally sold for recreational use in Uruguay and will be later this year in Canada. Several Latin American countries, including Chile, Brazil, Peru, Costa Rica and Colombia, have changed laws to make marijuana more available for either medical or recreational use.

Full legalization faces an uphill battle in Mexico, where a majority of voters and the Catholic Church are opposed to the idea. A 2015 poll conducted by the newspaper El Universal found that two-thirds of Mexicans oppose decriminalizing cannabis, although 63% said they backed a debate on the issue.

Amid talk of legalization, all signs suggest Mexico's marijuana market is on the decline.

Seizures of marijuana by U.S. Customs and Border Patrol have been falling for a decade. Last year, 861,231 pounds of marijuana were seized at U.S. ports of entry, down from 2.4 million pounds in 2013 and 4.3 million pounds in 2009.

Mexico has also been eradicating fewer marijuana fields over the last decade. In 2006, federal forces wiped out 74,531 acres of marijuana crops, according to the Mexican government. In 2016, a total of 13,537 acres were destroyed.

Increasingly, growers are moving on to other crops, such as poppies, which can be found flowering across violence-plagued states such as Michoacan and Guerrero. Drug traffickers are also switching to synthetic drugs such as fentanyl, which is easier to traffic than marijuana because it is much more potent, with just a few milligrams amounting to a fatal dose.

In the coastal resort city of Ensenada, 85 miles south of San Diego, Mexican police recently seized a drug shipment that included 100 pounds of fentanyl, 914 pounds of crystal methamphetamine, 88 pounds of cocaine and 18 pounds of heroin. There was no marijuana in the shipment.

"Cartels know their ability to compete in the U.S. marijuana market is diminishing," said John M. Walsh, director for drug policy at the think tank Washington Office on Latin America. "U.S. consumers have better options."

Marijuana's profitability has been greatly reduced, with farmers receiving much less than they used to for cultivating the plant. At the same time, Mexico remains one of the world's top producers of the drug, Walsh said.

He said he supports legalization in Mexico. Even if it wouldn't end Mexico's violence, it could put a dent

	in it, he said. "The role that cannabis plays in terms of contributing to violence is fuzzy," Walsh said. "But illegal markets facilitate violence. Every little bit helps."
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HEADLINE	01/29 Philippine police resume anti-drug 'visits'
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/01/29/philippine-police-admit-abuses-but-resume-anti-drug-visits.html
GIST	<p>MANILA, Philippines – The Philippine police chief says his force will resume visits to the homes of drug suspects to encourage them to reform, despite his acknowledgement that corrupt police have abused the program.</p> <p>National Police Director-General Ronald dela Rosa said Monday that there will be stricter safeguards on the visits and he pledged that the president's overall anti-drug crackdown will be "less bloody."</p> <p>Dela Rosa said 352 police have been removed from their posts, nearly half of them for drug-related offenses, and 329 others were being investigated in a program to cleanse the force of misfits.</p> <p>President Rodrigo Duterte ordered the national police to desist from involvement in his crackdown on illegal drugs twice last year due to reported abuses by law enforcers. He later allowed them back in drug raids.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 Treating contaminated drinking water costly
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/radium-water-contamination-how-to-treat-at-home/
GIST	<p>A glass of water may seem harmless enough, but communities around the country are increasingly faced with a concerning reality: contaminants are turning up in their drinking water – and getting them out may be a lot harder than you think. A report by the non-profit Environmental Working Group (EWG) found that water supplied by at least some utilities in all 50 states contained a known carcinogen called radium, reports CBS News correspondent Anna Werner.</p> <p>In Brandon, South Dakota, resident Spencer Schenk and wife Laura worry about their public water supply that contains radium.</p> <p>"It's something that's really concerning to us, a known cancer-causing agent in our water," Schenk said.</p> <p>The radioactive substance can occur naturally, and it's been in the city's water for decades. It's also not uncommon across the country. An analysis by EWG found 170 million people exposed to radium from drinking water in 22,000 utilities nationwide.</p> <p>Brandon's radium level does not exceed federal guidelines, but many health experts say there is no "safe" level of that carcinogen. To get that level down to zero would mean expensive modifications to the city's water treatment system and city administrator Bryan Read said residents would have to decide to foot that bill.</p> <p>"We are striving to get the lowest radium levels we can at a reasonable cost. ... You can probably get all the radium out of all the water if you're willing to spend enough money," Read said.</p> <p>Radium is just one of hundreds of contaminants found in drinking water systems nationwide like arsenic, cadmium, pesticides and metals including hexavalent chromium and lead.</p>

	<p>The approach to treating them can vary from city-to-city, state-to-state. In Newburgh, New York, the state is building a brand new water treatment plant to remove a toxic chemical known as PFOS from the water supply.</p> <p>The price tag? \$50 million.</p> <p>The pollution came from a nearby Air National Guard base.</p> <p>"It's a very big deal. New York state is leading the nation, frankly. We're one of the first states in the nation to actually regulate these contaminants," said Martin Brand, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's deputy commissioner for remediation.</p> <p>But not all cities can afford a major overhaul of their treatment systems. So what's a consumer to do, if they want cleaner, safer water at home?</p> <p>"I think it can be really daunting for consumers to try to understand these issues with water," Rick Andrew said. He works for NSF International, a group that tests and certifies products including water filtration systems. Asked how much it would cost to treat the water at home, Andrew said it could be "a wide, wide range."</p> <p>A simple filtering water pitcher could be \$30. A whole-house system could be a couple thousand dollars.</p> <p>It's also important to find out from your utility which contaminants are in your water and get the right system.</p> <p>"It's definitely not a 'one size fits all' thing when you start to get into water treatment. And so some technologies are good at one type of contaminant, but they not very effective on others. So often times, people end up with a multistage system," Andrew said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 Seattle now 6th costliest city in US
SOURCE	http://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-gets-more-expensive-now-6th-costliest-us-city/689883030
GIST	<p>The cost of living in Seattle has visitors saying no thanks.</p> <p>"I couldn't imagine living up here with the cost of things up here. It's insane," said Tom Hoffman, visiting from Vancouver, Washington.</p> <p>Seattle is now the sixth most expensive city to live in, jumping up three spots in quarter three of 2017, compared to quarter two.</p> <p>"Yeah, it's expensive," said Margaret Darcher, who works in South Lake Union. "That feels like it's in line with what I experience."</p> <p>The cost of living index has hundreds of organizations shop, and collect data every quarter across the US for the past 50 years. The first part of that sentence makes no sense.</p> <p>"It allows cities to see what does it really cost to live here. And I think it's beneficial to local stakeholders as they try to attract residents and businesses," said Jennie Allison, program manager at the Center for Regional Competitiveness.</p> <p>One category where Seattle ranks most costly - is miscellaneous goods and services. That includes things like haircuts; Seattle is the most expensive place in America to get a cut, costing \$31 dollars on average here, compared to \$28 in San Francisco, and \$23 in Manhattan. The category does not include beauty salons, which have their own category.</p>

	<p>Seattle is also the most expensive city to grab a burger - an average hamburger costs \$6.26. Compare that to \$3.49 for a burger in Phoenix.</p> <p>Seattle is also the most expensive city for dry cleaning, with an average bill of nearly \$19. The bill averages to \$8.43 in Jacksonville.</p> <p>Seattle ranks 14th most expensive in the country for housing, but a spokesperson for the survey results says housing price increases, actually played a big part in boosting Seattle's cost-of-living rank.</p> <p>“The housing really stands out,” Allison said. “Housing price alone accounts for 20 percent of the composite index.”</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 Report: NKorea slush fund running out
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/01/26/kim-jong-uns-slush-fund-running-out-fuel-after-numerous-missile-nuclear-tests-report-says.html
GIST	<p>Kim Jong Un's trigger-happy antics have nearly depleted a critical slush fund the North Korean despot uses to run his isolated country -- and the Hermit Kingdom's participation in the upcoming Winter Olympics is merely a scheme to refill his coffers, according to a report.</p> <p>Two Chinese sources with ties to top North Korean government officials told Radio Free Asia that Kim has nearly exhausted his slush fund due to missile and nuclear weapon and tests, as well as vanity projects, such as the much-publicized Masikryong Ski Resort.</p> <p>“Due to Kim Jong Un’s extravagant spending, the slush fund from his father, Kim Jong Il, is running out,” one of the sources told the news agency. “It won’t be easy to control North Korea’s high-level executives, who are [cunning] like raccoons.”</p> <p>The source said he is “well-acquainted” with Office No. 39, a shadowy organization under the ruling North Korean Workers’ Party that generates up to a billion dollars annually for Kim and his cronies through illicit activities, including counterfeiting and drug production.</p> <p>Around 100,000 North Koreans working abroad also send back around \$500 million in earnings annually, Radio Free Asia reported, citing a U.N. estimate.</p> <p>“I heard them worrying about insufficient funds in Office No. 39 a number of times,” the source added, noting that four of the six nuclear tests carried out by North Korea have been done under Kim’s watch.</p> <p>“We can speculate that he spent a lot of money from the number of missile [and nuclear weapons] tests he carried out,” the source said. “Most of the funding for nuclear weapon and missile development is coming from Kim Jong Un’s slush fund.”</p> <p>The other source told Radio Free Asia that North Korea’s participation in the Winter Olympics, scheduled to be held in Pyeongchang, South Korea, is a way to solicit charity while appearing to mend relations.</p> <p>“North Korea’s warm gestures toward South Korea have underlying intentions: to use the Pyongchang Winter Olympics that will be held there from Feb. 9 as a breakthrough for their financial difficulties,” the source said.</p> <p>But the source warned that “it won’t be easy for the South to help the Kim Jong Un regime [these days] because of international sanctions.”</p>
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HEADLINE	01/27 Turkey: new \$11B Istanbul airport
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/airplane-mode/erdogan-flexes-political-muscle-new-11b-airport-istanbul-n840886
GIST	<p>LONDON — For centuries it has been at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Now Istanbul is making a bid to be a global meeting place with a new \$11 billion airport that aims to overtake Atlanta as the world’s busiest.</p> <p>Next month, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s jet will be the first to land at the airport — the latest in a string of high-profile public projects that he hopes will boost an economy weakened by terrorism and a failed coup in 2016 as the country faces a crucial election next year.</p> <p>Called simply New Istanbul Airport, the project follows the commission of a 250-mile toll freeway, the opening of a \$1.2 billion rail-and-road bridge stretching 1.4 miles across the Bosphorus and the \$66.5 million landmark Camlica mosque, the largest in Turkey.</p> <p>Also planned is a 27-mile canal running parallel to the Bosphorus, which Erdogan calls his personal “dream.” If built, it will turn the European side of Istanbul into an island.</p> <p>Experts say Erdogan hopes to secure not just economic growth but also his position as Turkey’s most important leader since the modern republic’s founder, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.</p> <p>“He loves his big projects, and the airport is perhaps the grandest,” said Nigel Rendell, a London-based analyst with Medley Global Advisors. “It allows him to show he is delivering on his promises, right at the time he is trying to extend his powers.”</p> <p>The new hub is on the site of a former forest 22 miles northwest of the city. It will replace the existing chronically congested Ataturk Airport — the scene of a 2016 terrorist attack that killed 45 people — when it opens to the public in October.</p> <p>It will have the world’s largest single terminal building, covering 1.3 million square feet and capable of handling 90 million passengers a year. That number will rise to 150 million when more terminals are added, which could see it leapfrog Los Angeles International, Beijing and even Atlanta Hartsfield-Jackson — which handled 104 million in 2016.</p> <p>Officials aim to strengthen Istanbul against rival Middle Eastern mega-hubs such as Dubai and Doha, and help Turkish Airlines — a partner in the Star Alliance alongside United Airlines — compete with the so-called ME3 giants — Emirates, Qatar and Etihad — for long-haul connecting traffic. It may also attract new services from U.S. carriers, none of whom currently serve Istanbul.</p> <p>Designers hope the airport will prove a more popular place to layover than Dubai or Abu Dhabi.</p> <p>The duty free and shopping areas cover more than half a million square feet — bigger than 10 football fields — and there are 26 miles of baggage belts, capable of handing almost 30,000 bags an hour.</p> <p>Ministers believe the new airport will support 225,000 jobs and contribute about \$19.5 billion to the economy — equivalent to 5 percent of the country’s gross national product. And if only one in 10 passengers visits Turkey as a tourist, a further \$7 billion will flow in.</p> <p>The airport itself might have a slow start; its distance from the city, almost at the Black Sea, means many passengers will have to rely on a new subway line for which construction began only last year. Airport officials did not respond to questions about whether it would be finished in time for the airport’s slated Oct. 18 opening.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/27 Record number women eye politics
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/first-read/i-want-my-voice-heard-women-plot-runs-office-record-n841131
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — In November 2016, Debbie Walsh was worried.</p> <p>Walsh, the director of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, feared that attendance at the group’s upcoming campaign crash course for female political candidates was about to plummet. After all, the first female presidential nominee of a major party — a former First Lady, senator and secretary of state, to boot — had just been defeated by a man with no previous political experience and a well-documented record of demeaning comments about women.</p> <p>“After the election, I was concerned that no women would want to come. I thought maybe they’d just be too discouraged by the outcome,” she says.</p> <p>But by springtime, organizers of the nonpartisan "Ready to Run" program faced a different problem. They had to move the yearly summit to a larger venue due to exploding demand. New registrations for the program doubled over previous years, and similar events in states as far-flung as Utah and Oklahoma reported the same deluge.</p> <p>Now, a new flood of women — many of them Democrats who watched the election of Donald Trump with horror and disbelief — are raising their hands to run for office in 2018, signaling a potential reprise of a “Year of the Woman” that could make 1992’s election of two dozen new women to the U.S. House pale in comparison.</p> <p>They’re on track to break almost every record on the books. As of last week, 325 women were non-incumbent candidates for the United States House, along with 72 female members seeking reelection, according to data compiled by Walsh’s organization. Thirty-eight women not currently serving in the United States Senate are aiming for the upper chamber, along with 12 incumbents running again. And 75 women have set their sights on the nation’s governorships — plus four female incumbents fighting to keep their seats.</p> <p>In 2016, a high water mark for female candidates overall, there were 167 female major party nominees for the United States House and 16 for the Senate — well fewer than half the number of candidates vying for one of those spots now.</p> <p>Emily’s List, an organization dedicated to electing Democratic female candidates who support abortion rights, also saw an unprecedented number of inquiries from women seeking state or local office after the election. In the month after Election Day 2016, 1000 women contacted the group for guidance about running for office, more than the 920 who sought out the organization in the entire 2015-2016 campaign cycle. Now, organizers say, their ranks are 26,000 strong — and growing.</p> <p>One trend that extends to female candidates on both sides of the aisle is the rejection of what activists call outdated notions of a woman’s path to elected office. While many women once considered a long career in local government or an advanced degree to be prerequisites to run, the new crop of contenders features first-timers who range from military veterans to pediatricians to community business leaders.</p> <p>“We need a diversity of perspectives to get good policies, a diversity of professions, life experiences, race and geography,” says Shriock. “We’ve been waiting for this moment. We’ve encouraged teachers and nurses and scientists and businesswomen. We sometimes have to remind women that you don’t need a law degree to run for office.”</p> <p>In 1992, commentators declared the midterm elections “The Year of the Woman” when a record two dozen women won election to the House for the first time and the three women newly elected to the Senate tripled the number of female lawmakers in the upper chamber.</p>

	<p>Jennifer Lawless, the director of the Women and Politics Institute at American University, sees strong parallels between that year’s female candidates — many of whom were galvanized by Anita Hill’s 1991 grilling by an all-male Senate panel about her allegations of sexual harassment against Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas — and those motivated by the #metoo movement of today.</p> <p>Then and now, Lawless says, “there is this general call that women would be able to legislate in a way that was more honest and trustworthy because they are political outsiders, that there are these entrenched men who have generated a whole bunch of scandals and are behaving very badly.”</p> <p>“It’s a very explicit male-vs-female dynamic,” she adds.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 ICE contract: license plate database
SOURCE	https://www.theverge.com/2018/1/26/16932350/ice-immigration-customs-license-plate-recognition-contract-vigilant-solutions
GIST	<p>The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency has officially gained agency-wide access to a nationwide license plate recognition database, according to a contract finalized earlier this month. The system gives the agency access to billions of license plate records and new powers of real-time location tracking, raising significant concerns from civil libertarians.</p> <p>The source of the data is not named in the contract, but an ICE representative said the data came from Vigilant Solutions, the leading network for license plate recognition data. “Like most other law enforcement agencies, ICE uses information obtained from license plate readers as one tool in support of its investigations,” spokesperson Dani Bennett said in a statement. “ICE is not seeking to build a license plate reader database, and will not collect nor contribute any data to a national public or private database through this contract.”</p> <p>Reached by The Verge, Vigilant declined to confirm any contract with ICE. “As policy, Vigilant Solutions is not at liberty to share any contractual details,” the company said in a statement. “This is a standard agreement between our company, our partners, and our clients.”</p> <p>While it collects few photos itself, Vigilant Solutions has amassed a database of more than 2 billion license plate photos by ingesting data from partners like vehicle repossession agencies and other private groups. Vigilant also partners with local law enforcement agencies, often collecting even more data from camera-equipped police cars. The result is a massive vehicle-tracking network generating as many as 100 million sightings per month, each tagged with a date, time, and GPS coordinates of the sighting.</p> <p>ICE agents would be able to query that database in two ways. A historical search would turn up every place a given license plate has been spotted in the last five years, a detailed record of the target’s movements. That data could be used to find a given subject’s residence or even identify associates if a given car is regularly spotted in a specific parking lot.</p> <p>“Knowing the previous locations of a vehicle can help determine the whereabouts of subjects of criminal investigations or priority aliens to facilitate their interdiction and removal,” an official privacy assessment explains. “In some cases, when other leads have gone cold, the availability of commercial LPR data may be the only viable way to find a subject.”</p> <p>ICE agents can also receive instantaneous email alerts whenever a new record of a particular plate is found — a system known internally as a “hot list.” (The same alerts can also be funneled to the Vigilant’s iOS app.) According to the privacy assessment, as many as 2,500 license plates could be uploaded to the hot list in a single batch, although the assessment does not detail how often new batches can be added. With sightings flooding in from police dashcams and stationary readers on bridges and toll booths, it would be hard for anyone on the list to stay unnoticed for long.</p>

Those powers are particularly troubling given ICE's recent move to expand deportations beyond criminal offenders, fueling concerns of politically motivated enforcement. In California, state officials have braced for rumored deportation sweeps targeted at sanctuary cities. In New York, community leaders say they've been specifically targeted for deportation as a result of their activism. With automated license plate recognition, that targeting would only grow more powerful.

For civil liberties groups, the implications go far beyond immigration. "There are people circulating in our society who are undocumented," says senior policy analyst Jay Stanley, who studies license plate readers with the ACLU. "Are we as a society, out of our desire to find those people, willing to let our government create an infrastructure that will track all of us?"

The new license plate reader contract comes after years of internal lobbying by the agency. ICE first tested Vigilant's system in 2012, gauging how effective it was at locating undocumented immigrants. Two years later, the agency issued an open solicitation for the technology, sparking an outcry from civil liberties group. Homeland Security secretary Jeh Johnson canceled the solicitation shortly afterward, citing privacy concerns, although two field offices subsequently formed rogue contracts with Vigilant in apparent violation of Johnson's policy. In 2015, Homeland Security issued another call for bids, although an ICE representative said no contract resulted from that solicitation.

As a result, this new contract is the first agency-wide contract ICE has completed with the company, a fact that is reflected in accompanying documents. On December 27th, 2017, Homeland Security issued an updated privacy assessment of license plate reader technology, a move it explained was necessary because "ICE has now entered into a contract with a vendor."

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HEADLINE	01/27 Russia threat real or hysteria?
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/26/europe/russia-threat-real-or-hysteria-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)The Russians are coming! Except they aren't. Though they already have a bit. And they might well be coming a bit more soon.</p> <p>This is how very bad things happen.</p> <p>The threat posed by Russia to Western interests is unlike anything seen since the 1990s. It has forces or proxies deployed in Syria, Ukraine and, don't forget, parts of what's still called Georgia. There is smoke, but there is also fire and daily there is a lot of fuel being added.</p> <p>Dutch state media revealed this week that Dutch cyber spies -- the Joint Sigint Cyber Unit (JSCU) -- were able to hack into the closed-circuit television of the building where a Russian hacking organization known as Cozy Bear worked, and observe them coming and going from offices where they hacked the Democratic National Committee in the US. The Dutch told the Americans, touching off the US investigations.</p> <p>According to the Dutch, the Americans then helpfully told the media they were tipped off by a Western intelligence agency, prompting the Russians to turn off the Cozy Bear CCTV hack.</p> <p>There was also a shrill warning from new UK Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson, who, amid a budget row and internal leadership posturing, chose Friday to unleash a barrage of concerns about "thousands and thousands and thousands" -- yes, that many -- deaths that Russia could cause in Britain, if it successfully hacked the electricity grid.</p> <p>Williamson told the Daily Telegraph: "Why would they [the Russians] keep photographing and looking at power stations, why are they looking at the interconnectors that bring so much electricity and so much energy into our country? They are looking at these things because they are saying, "These are the ways we can hurt Britain." His officials have also alleged Russia may target the transatlantic cables that ferry the</p>

internet to the UK.

These new claims were met with the now-predictable Russian derision. Russian defense spokesman Igor Konashenkov said Williamson had "lost understanding of what is reasonable in his fierce fight for the banknotes in the military budget," and that his "phobia" belonged in "children's comic books" or an episode of "Monty Python's Flying Circus."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitri Peskov dubbed the Dutch report "anti-Russian hysteria," saying "if the Dutch newspapers want to supply the coal to the furnace of anti-Russian hysteria which is currently takes place in America, well... let's say it's not the most noble thing to do."

Russophobia is a familiar and disturbing theme. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov recently called it "unprecedented."

"We never saw this during the Cold War. Back then, there were some rules, some decorum... Now, all decorum has been cast aside," Lavrov told Russian daily Kommersant in an interview published on January 21.

Some Russian state rhetoric is designed to paint a picture of an outside world that hysterically harnesses fear of a resurgent Russia, when really the country means no harm. It is designed to try and distance Russians from an outside world they can increasingly see, even if only through the slanted prism of Russian state media.

The xenophobia, homophobia and sometimes outright racism that has grown in Russian society also stem from the idea of a people -- a narod -- under threat. Russophobia, that argument goes, happens because "they want us gone, but also because they fear us, as we refuse to lie down." I saw it in the eyes and anger of many ethnic Russians embattled in eastern Ukraine. They felt abandoned, scorned, left outside the rest of Ukraine, and had to turn to Russia to protect their Russianness.

Some of Russia's urban elite has seen too much of the outside world to buy this reductive message. But its nationalists and beholden state employees embrace it, and much of rural Russia hasn't seen the glittering globe beyond. Life remains tough there, with even state figures accepting that just under 14% of Russians live below "the minimum cost of living," according to Tass.

Into this narrative of "them and us" come these increasingly vociferous Western claims of the Russian threat. In the partisan fury of US or UK politics, it is hard to know at times whether Russia did ingeniously undermine the entire US electoral process and infiltrate Team Trump, or just ended up having clumsy hackers steal some emails, and allow some of its sympathizers to get too close to some of Trump's less savvy or wholesome staff.

It is hard to know, with Russian-backed tanks still in Donetsk and jets in Syria, whether we are seeing an expansionist Moscow intent on soon probing the Baltic states or switching off the lights in London, or a nervous Russia that is just checking threats it sees in its near abroad.

The most troubling point is that the distinction doesn't really matter. This perception of Russophobia (or a real Russian threat) is either what the Kremlin wants, to justify its more aggressive schemes, or it is what the Kremlin feels it has to respond to, as to not appear weak.

Vladimir Putin has long surrounded himself not with tech-age visionaries, but with men who stem from the same age as him, a period he called the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century" -- the fall of the Soviet empire. He still feels it personally, wishes to see the shift in power partially redressed and must surely be bemused at how the US public has elected a president so capable of diminishing US influence the world over.

The Kremlin takes things personally. It may seem disproportionate to the slight, but not when compared with the extraordinary suffering of the Soviet era and the brutal collapse of the 1990s. But by recognizing

	Russia as the threat it increasingly shows itself to be, Western figures are also ensuring Moscow has little choice but to fulfill the prophecy.
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HEADLINE	01/28 Woman dies in Rainier Beach stabbing
SOURCE	https://patch.com/washington/seattle/woman-dies-after-stabbing-rainier-beach-police
GIST	<p>SEATTLE, WA - A 34-year-old woman died after stabbing in a Rainier Beach parking lot Saturday night. The suspect, also a 34-year-old woman, was at the scene and has not yet been arrested.</p> <p>The stabbing happened around 11 p.m. Saturday just east of the Safeway along Rainier Avenue South. Police found the victim with several stab wounds and she was treated at the scene by Seattle fire medics. She died later that night at Harborview.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the suspect showed up at the scene and told police she was injured in an altercation with the victim. The two women know each other, according to Seattle police.</p> <p>Homicide detectives interviewed the suspect but have released her. Police are still investigating the incident and working with the King County prosecutor on whether to charge the suspect.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/28 Mexico drug cartels push into Colombia
SOURCE	https://colombiareports.com/mexican-drug-cartels-rearming-demobilized-farc-guerrillas/
GIST	<p>Mexico's leading drug cartels are allegedly trying to recruit former FARC commanders to strengthen their control over Colombia's drug trade, according to multiple reports.</p> <p>With the recruitment of former guerrilla chiefs, the drug trafficking organizations allegedly hope to strengthen their control over coca plantations and cocaine exports from Colombia.</p> <p>Mexican crime groups "are going to end up controlling the country's criminal structures," crime analyst Fernando Quijano, told Mexican news agency APRO.</p> <p>Colombia's Prosecutor General and the country's Ombudsman confirmed the expansion of Mexican activity in the drug trade, often in former FARC territory.</p> <p>Former mid-level FARC commanders who are "disappointed with the course of the implementation of the peace accords" with the guerrilla group "are now being armed by the cartels."</p> <p>According to Quijano, the Colombian drug trade is increasingly controlled by three Mexican groups, the Sinaloa Cartel, Los Zetas and the Jalisco Nueva Generacion.</p> <p>According to Prosecutor General Nestor Humberto Martinez, cartels are buying up coca plantations and sending Mexican experts to optimize to "improve productivity of the plantations."</p> <p>"The number of citizens from that country that participate in criminal activity is ever increasing, there are more than 100," Martinez said.</p> <p>Authorities have reported activity of Mexican drug trafficking organizations in eight of Colombia's 32 provinces. Quijano and the country's ombudsman added another three to that list.</p> <p>According to Ombudsman Carlos Negret, the Sinaloa Cartel is also financing and arming local crime</p>

	groups along important drug corridors in the north of the country.
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HEADLINE	01/27 Report: inmates held past release date
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/bc32cd2b476c453bbc37d2cd85415f8d/New-Mexico-holds-hundreds-of-inmates-past-their-release-date
GIST	<p>ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Joleen Valencia resisted the temptation to count her days to freedom, knowing that tracking the time only worsened the anxiety of serving a two-year drug-trafficking sentence inside a New Mexico prison.</p> <p>After her sentence started in the spring of 2015, she wanted nothing more than to return to her family’s home amid mesas on a reservation north of Albuquerque and stay clean after recovering from a heroin addiction. Especially after her mother died and granddaughter had been born.</p> <p>But rather than agonize, she kept busy, working daily dishwashing shifts to earn 10 cents an hour and eventually enough “good time” for a new parole date: July 13, 2016.</p> <p>“They would tell you, don’t count your days, because it’s going to make it hard,” said Valencia, 50. But she couldn’t resist as her parole date neared, making it all the more frustrating when the day came and went.</p> <p>For three more months, Valencia remained incarcerated, one of more than 1,000 inmates identified in New Mexico Corrections Department documents as serving what’s known as “in-house parole.”</p> <p>An expensive and long-running problem, it routinely has resulted in corrections officials holding inmates for all or part of their parole terms — often because they are unable to find or afford suitable housing outside prison. Sometimes, missing paperwork or administrative backlogs also can rob them of the freedom they’ve earned.</p> <p>—</p> <p>This report is part of the CJ Project, an initiative to broaden the news coverage of criminal justice issues affecting New Mexico’s diverse communities, created by the Asian American Journalists Association with funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. For more information: http://www.aaja.org/cj-project</p> <p>—</p> <p>The problem of in-house parole isn’t unique to New Mexico. Numerous states have histories of holding inmates past their expected parole dates, with some responding to the issue with reforms.</p> <p>But in New Mexico, the problem persists despite efforts to address it. In an email, Mahesh Sita, a corrections spokesman, said reducing the number of release-eligible inmates — the department’s term for those on in-house parole — is a priority, despite figures showing a struggle to overcome the problem.</p> <p>A review of state data obtained through public records requests found there were 165 inmates on in-house parole at the start of the fiscal year beginning July 1, amounting to slightly more than the average monthly total since January 2014.</p> <p>Overall, an analysis of the data found the state spent an estimated \$10.6 million to incarcerate the thousand inmates who found themselves in the most recent fiscal year on in-house parole — a status some on the list had for years.</p> <p>“Imagine someone sitting there all those years thinking about that date,” said Sheila Lewis, a defense attorney in Santa Fe and former director of the New Mexico Women’s Justice Project.</p>

“I think it’s psychologically cruel to tell somebody that if you follow all the rules and you don’t lose any of your good time, you’ll be out in time for your son’s graduation from high school and they look forward to it,” she said. “And they miss it.”

More than three years’ worth of state documents showed the primary driving factor of in-house parole has been a shortage of housing and resources for felons, who must arrange for a place to live as a condition of their release on parole.

Their limited options include trying to pursue a coveted spot often paid for by a charity or the state at a residential treatment program. They can also apply for a bed at one of the state’s privately operated halfway houses, which frequently require security deposits or other payment up front.

An average of three-dozen inmates approved for release by the parole board each month over a three-year period ending in mid-2017 remained incarcerated because they were awaiting a bed in a residential treatment program or halfway house.

Women, who comprised just more than 10 percent of the prison population, faced tougher odds in winning a timely release, with officials holding them on in-house parole at two and a half times the rate of men in the recent fiscal year.

Officials attributed this, in part, to a surge in women’s incarceration rates overall and fewer community-based housing options for them as they prepare to re-enter society.

But state documents and studies also show that other factors beyond housing have further complicated the problem, including administrative backlogs and incomplete parole files.

In the most extreme cases, offenders can spend their entire parole term behind bars, going from prisons directly to neighborhoods without the services or supervision that experts say can help with transitioning back into society.

The Corrections Department in the past has acknowledged this can pose a public safety problem. “Simply put, it is not in the interest of public safety,” the department said in a 2016 blog for lawmakers.

Numerous inmates, like Valencia, saw their release dates come and go, often because prison caseworkers and parole officers, who are woefully understaffed, failed to prepare their parole plans for the parole board to review or fell behind in doing so.

The parole board, which operates independently of the Corrections Department, reviews inmates’ appeals for release each month.

“They get scratched from the docket when we’re missing paperwork,” said Joann Martinez, the parole board’s executive director. “If we don’t have that for the parole board, the case can’t move forward.”

Long-lasting solutions have been elusive, though the state has invested in more housing for parolees. Recently, for example, the Corrections Department contracted with charities to add more beds for inmates in re-entry programs, adding 30 for women in Los Lunas, south of Albuquerque.

The Corrections Department also seemed to become more diligent about penalizing private prison corporations, which records show housed roughly half of New Mexico’s 7,000 inmates last year.

In July 2016, documents exchanged between CoreCivic and the state showed the multi-billion dollar corporation was fined \$19,150 for keeping 15 women, including Valencia, inside the Northwestern New Mexico Correctional Facility beyond their release date.

Valencia’s last day as a prisoner finally came Oct. 17, 2016.

	<p>She's now serving her final months of parole in Albuquerque, while preparing to spend more time again with her family at San Felipe Pueblo once her parole ends.</p> <p>Valencia for years felt too ashamed of her addiction, and the depths she would go for it, to face her family and own children. Now, she hopes the chance to be more involved in their lives again will help her overcome the grief and frustration that's lingered since prison and her time on in-house parole.</p> <p>"It's messed me up but it's still not going to take me down that road of destructive behavior," she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/28 Military rape conviction tossed; unfair jury
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jan/28/women-packed-court-gets-coast-guard-rape-convictio/
GIST	<p>The nation's highest military court has thrown out the 2012 rape conviction of a Coast Guard enlisted man because admirals and prosecutors packed the seven-member jury with five women, four of whom held jobs as advocates for victims of sexual assault.</p> <p>In a 5-0 ruling that could change how the military conducts sex abuse trials, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces unleashed caustic criticism of all involved.</p> <p>From the Coast Guard commandant down to an appellate court to the original trial judge, the high court said all contributed to a "stain on the military justice system." The military has been under intense pressure to wipe out sexual harassment and assault, the five civilian judges noted.</p> <p>The opinion, delivered by Judge Margaret A. Ryan, said the four admirals who played a role in assembling the officer and enlisted jury pool produced an illegal "gender-based court stacking." She suggested that the admirals' role amounted to unlawful command influence, which military law analysts see as the enemy of fair trials for service members.</p> <p>The court ruling said the trial judge "failed to conduct even a rudimentary investigation" into defense attorneys' complaints of an unfair jury.</p> <p>It also said the Coast Guard Court of Criminal Appeals failed in its duty to protect against unlawful command influence as it "rationalized the error away as a benign effort to seek inclusiveness."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/28 Police: largest fentanyl bust NJ history
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/01/28/men-had-enough-fentanyl-to-kill-entire-population-new-york-city-new-jersey-combined-police-say.html
GIST	<p>Two men arrested in the largest fentanyl bust in New Jersey history were sentenced to prison Friday, after authorities said they had enough lethal doses to kill the entire population of New Jersey and New York City combined.</p> <p>Jesus Carrillo-Pineda, a 31-year-old Philadelphia resident, received a 10-year sentence while Daniel Vasquez, a 28-year-old Somerton, Ariz., resident, received a six-year term, the New Jersey Attorney General's Office announced.</p> <p>The two men were among four charged after nearly 100 pounds of the synthetic opioid was seized by New Jersey State Police last June, which could have yielded more than 18 million lethal doses.</p> <p>"Many lives were undoubtedly saved as a result of this record-setting fentanyl seizure by the New Jersey</p>

	<p>State Police,” New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir Grewal said in a statement. “The 100 pounds of fentanyl trafficked into our state by these drug dealers could have generated enough lethal doses to kill the entire populations of New Jersey and New York City combined.”</p> <p>The charges against one of the other suspects were dropped this week, according to the attorney general's office, while another man identified as 38-year-old Omar Zeus Rodriguez remains a fugitive.</p> <p>Fentanyl is one of the deadliest opioids, with a potency that is 50 times greater than heroin. A dose as small as 2 to 3 milligrams can be fatal, according to police.</p> <p>The previous state record for a fentanyl bust was 14 kilograms of fentanyl seized in Camden in March.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/28 Mexico to send troops to stem violence
SOURCE	https://ca.news.yahoo.com/least-25-killed-mexico-over-bloody-weekend-191833147.html
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Mexican officials said on Sunday the government was set to unleash a new wave of troops to crack down on criminal groups in regions where a surge in violence led to more than 25,000 murders last year.</p> <p>National Security Commissioner Renato Sales said federal police troops will work with local officials to round up known major criminals and bolster investigations.</p> <p>The aim was "to recover peace and calm for all Mexicans," he said. He did not provide details on the number of federal police to be deployed.</p> <p>More than 25,000 murders were recorded last year as rival drug gangs increasingly splintered into smaller, more blood-thirsty groups after more than a decade of a military-led campaign to battle the cartels.</p> <p>Violence is a central issue ahead of the presidential election in July. Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto's ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party is trailing in third place in recent polls.</p> <p>Sales said federal police troops would be deployed in the states of Colima and Baja California Sur, the resort town of Cancun and the border city of Ciudad Juarez, among others. He said more details would be forthcoming within days.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/28 Mexico: gunmen kill 9 watching TV
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mexico-gunmen-kill-home-monterrey-suburb-52668854?
GIST	<p>Gunmen burst into a home in northern Mexico and killed nine people who had gathered to watch a soccer game on TV, authorities said Sunday.</p> <p>An official with the prosecutor's office in Nuevo Leon state said at least 20 people were at the home Saturday night in San Nicolas de los Garza, a northern suburb of Monterrey. The official spoke on condition of anonymity due to safety concerns.</p> <p>Seven men died at the scene and two died later at different hospitals. The victims were listed as between 26 and 58 years old.</p> <p>Prosecutors believe the motive was a dispute over local drug dealing.</p> <p>In the evening, Nuevo Leon Prosecutor Bernardo Gonzalez Garza announced that a 32-year-old suspect</p>

	armed with a handgun had been detained in the case. Gonzalez did not give further details on the arrest but said neighbors reported that the home was a point of sale for drugs. He added that there had been another killing there last year.
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HEADLINE	01/28 'Serial stowaway' arrested at airport
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/serial-stowaway-arrested-ohare-airport-ordered-stay/story?
GIST	<p>A 66-year-old woman with a history of hopping aboard airplanes without paying was nabbed early Sunday for allegedly trespassing at Chicago's O'Hare Airport, police said.</p> <p>Marilyn Hartman, who is from Grayslake, Illinois, was arrested after being spotted near the Signature Private Plane section of O'Hare Airport. She appeared in court about 1:30 a.m. Sunday and was charged with for criminal trespassing and violating conditions of her bond -- terms that were set by a judge only days before.</p> <p>The latest episode for Hartman began when an airport employee, after spotting her in an unauthorized area of the airport, questioned her and then ordered her to leave. That's when the sexagenarian refused and made a run for it, according to the detail of the charges read aloud in court.</p> <p>Authorities later showed the employee a photo of Hartman and, according to the summary report, that employee "positively identified" her.</p> <p>Responding officers ultimately found Hartman about two miles away and placed her under arrest at the airport's lower level of Terminal 3.</p> <p>Hartman remained in custody after the presiding judge set bail at \$50,000 and cited her for violating her original bail.</p> <p>She's due back in court on Thursday, according to the Cook County State Attorney's Office.</p> <p>It was the second time in three days that Hartman was accused of committing a crime at the airport.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 Study: Arizona crime rate high w/illegals
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jan/26/illegals-commit-crimes-double-rate-native-born-stu/
GIST	<p>The crime rate among illegal immigrants in Arizona is twice that of other residents, Attorney General Jeff Sessions said Friday, citing a new report based on conviction data.</p> <p>The report, from the Crime Prevention Research Center, used a previously untapped set of data from Arizona that detailed criminal convictions and found that illegal immigrants between 15 and 35 are less than 3 percent of the state's population, but nearly 8 percent of its prison population.</p> <p>And the crimes they were convicted of were, on the whole, more serious, said John R. Lott Jr., the report's author and president of the research center.</p> <p>His findings also challenge the general narrative that immigrants commit fewer crimes. Those past studies usually don't look at legal versus illegal populations, Mr. Lott said.</p> <p>Mr. Lott said the Arizona data is able to peek behind that curtain, and the differences between the populations were stark.</p>

“There appears to be a huge difference between the two groups,” Mr. Lott said. “The type of person who goes through the process to legally immigrate in the United States appears to be very law-abiding versus even the U.S.-born population. The reverse is true for undocumented immigrants — they are committing crimes, and more serious crimes.”

Among nearly 4,000 first- and second-degree murder convictions, undocumented immigrants accounted for nearly 13 percent — significantly higher than their percentage of the population. Legal immigrants, by contrast, were less than 1 percent of convicts. Native-born made up the rest.

Undocumented immigrants also accounted for five times the rate of convictions for money laundering and kidnapping, and were three times more likely to be convicted of drive-by shootings.

The data covered from 1985 to 2017. For his data purposes, Mr. Lott defined undocumented immigrants as those who weren't U.S. citizens or green card holders, signaling permanent residency.

He said the crime rates of the undocumented who were ages 18 to 35 was particularly important, given the ongoing debate over legalizing illegal immigrant “Dreamers.” He said the Arizona data showed that population had crime rates 250 percent higher than their share of the population would have predicted.

The Washington Times had asked several experts to look at Mr. Lott's research paper but some didn't respond, while one said he was unable to get Mr. Lott's data and had questions about Mr. Lott's methodology.

Mr. Lott said told The Times that the data belonged to Arizona and his agreement was that he wouldn't give out the raw data without their approval.

Mr. Sessions' citation of the data Friday inserted the information directly into the ongoing immigration debate.

“They're more likely to be convicted of sexual assault, robbery, and driving under the influence. They're more than twice as likely to be convicted of murder,” Mr. Sessions said in remarks prepared for a speech in Norfolk, Virginia.

He continued: “Tens of thousands of crimes have been committed in this country that would never have happened if our immigration laws were enforced and respected like they ought to be.”

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HEADLINE	01/28 Penn. car wash shooting: 5 killed
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/5-killed-in-shooting-at-car-wash-in-melcroft-pennsylvania/
GIST	<p>MELCROFT, Pa. -- State police say at least five people were killed in a shooting at a Pennsylvania car wash.</p> <p>The shooting happened overnight at a car wash in the small town of Melcroft in Fayette County about 55 miles southeast of Pittsburgh, CBS Pittsburgh reports.</p> <p>The victims were identified only as three men and two women. At least one other person was wounded and was taken to a hospital, but further details on that person's condition were not immediately released.</p> <p>Authorities were trying to determine if the shooter was among those found at the scene.</p> <p>A motive for the shooting remains under investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/28 Colombia bombing kills 5 police
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/27/americas/colombia-police-station-bombing/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)At least five Colombian police officers were killed and 42 others injured Saturday morning after a bomb was hurled at a station house in the northern coastal city of Barranquilla, police said.</p> <p>The attacker, riding on a motorcycle, threw an explosive device at the station in the San Jose neighborhood as officers were preparing to start the workday, according to Colombian police.</p> <p>The attorney general's office identified the attacker as Cristian Camilo Bellon Galindo, 31. Authorities said he was charged with five counts of aggravated homicide, and 42 counts of attempted homicide. Charges related to and terrorism and use of explosives will be filed, authorities said.</p> <p>Barranquilla Mayor Alejandro Char and metropolitan police Brig. Gen. Mariano de la Cruz Botero told reporters the attack appeared to be in retaliation for recent operations against local criminal organizations, according to the police department's official Twitter account.</p> <p>Police recovered a radio and notebook linked to the attack.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/27 Tacoma police investigate deadly shooting
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/01/27/tacoma-police-investigating-deadly-shooting/
GIST	<p>TACOMA — Tacoma Police are investigating a shooting early Saturday morning that left a 15-year-old boy dead.</p> <p>Tacoma Police were dispatched to the area of 5100 South Oakes Street at approximately 1:15 a.m. Police officers were responding to reports of shots fired and a person down.</p> <p>When police arrived, they found an injured 15-year-old boy. Officers said they administered CPR, but he did not survive.</p> <p>The victim has not been identified.</p> <p>The shooting happened outside and the investigation is at the early stages. There is no suspect information at this time.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 Mukilteo: police probe burglary string
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/police-investigate-string-of-burglaries-in-mukilteo
GIST	<p>MUKILTEO, Wash. -- Mukilteo Police said a serial burglar could be targeting homes off the Mukilteo Speedway while people are not home.</p> <p>Detectives have been looking at these numbers since October, and they have noticed a trend of homes are being broken-into the same way and usually late afternoon when people aren't home.</p> <p>“There’s a more aggressive element and that’s why we wanted the community to be aware that this was going on so they can assist us in protecting themselves,” said Officer Myron Travis with the Mukilteo Police Department.</p> <p>Detectives identified a man seen in surveillance pictures as a person of interest. The man is described as in his late teens to mid 20s, 5 foot 7 inches to 5 foot 10 inches tall, thin build, and possibly wearing a backpack.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 Ex-firefighter jailed in human trafficking
SOURCE	http://www.kiro7.com/news/local/former-everett-firefighter-charged-with-human-trafficking/689935318
GIST	<p>A former Everett firefighter is jailed in Wyoming, charged with two counts each of human trafficking and sexual servitude of a minor.</p> <p>Prosecutors allege David Peter Vier, 63, drove two girls, ages 12 and 14, from Seattle to Wyoming and stopped along the way to demand sexual contact.</p> <p>On January 20, when Vier went to rent a motel room at Little America off Interstate 80, investigators say the girls escaped to call 911.</p> <p>Court papers indicate the girls said they were running away from their mother in Seattle to their grandmother in Kansas when they met Vier in Seattle.</p> <p>Wyoming investigators plan to search Vier's truck and his phone which they say contained "a vast amount of data pertaining to nonconsensual sexual acts."</p> <p>Court papers indicate the girls said they were running away from their mother in Seattle to their grandmother in Kansas, who planned to meet them halfway at Little America.</p> <p>"These were young girls, they were not somebody who were familiar with Vier, so I think the nature of this case points out the hallmark, the danger of sex trafficking," said Daniel Erramouspe, Sweetwater County Attorney.</p> <p>Court papers indicate Vier first met the girls in a Seattle-area parking lot, took them for sandwiches and pizza and, at an Idaho Walmart, bought them makeup.</p> <p>Court papers say in Oregon, Vier drove the girls to a heavily wooded area and demanded sexual contact.</p> <p>Vier was arrested in 2014 in Seattle for arranging to pay for sex with an undercover police officer posing as a 15 year old girl and later pleaded guilty.</p> <p>A spokesperson for the Washington Department of Corrections wrote "He was never in prison, but was under supervision for one count of Communication with Minor for Immoral Purposes from July 31, 2015, to January 22, 2017."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/27 Germany: sex harassment military jump
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2018/01/27/sexual-harassment-increases-german-armed-forces-80-2017-reports-say/1071886001/
GIST	<p>Germany's armed forces and its civil administration and procurement authorities, the Bundeswehr, reported 14 cases of rape or attempted rape in 2017, a near three-fold increase on the previous year when five cases were reported, according to a report published in the Saturday newspapers by the Funke media group in Germany.</p> <p>In 2016, there had been 128 initial reports of sexual offenses. In 2017, the number increased to 234.</p> <p>According to the Funke reporting, the increase in cases reported represented heightened sensitivity to the issue, an increase in suspicion, earlier reporting and the re-opening of some older cases.</p>

	Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen said last year that she did not interpret the figures as meaning that the volume of sexual assaults had gone up, but rather that there had been an increase in reporting incidents that might previously have gone unreported.
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HEADLINE	01/26 Army to pay \$4M to families in murders
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/army-pays-4-million-to-families-for-murders-committed-by-wa-soldier/281-511846854
GIST	<p>The federal government has agreed to pay \$4 million to the families of a young couple killed in 2011 by a group of renegade U.S. Army soldiers, led by a private from Washington State.</p> <p>The payment includes \$1.7 million to the mother of Michael Roark, of Marysville, who was killed outside of Fort Stewart in 2011. \$2.3 million will be paid to the family of Roark's 17-year-old girlfriend Tiffany York, who was killed alongside him in the woods outside the Georgia Army post.</p> <p>"We believe that (the settlement) is as close as we are going to get to an apology or admission of guilt for their failure to act on the information they knew," said Roark's mother, Tracy Jahr of Marysville.</p> <p>Jahr and York's family sued the government in federal court in Seattle claiming that the Army ignored numerous warning signs that the leader of a small, anti-government militia growing in its ranks was dangerous.</p> <p>The suit detailed records showing that the Army suspected PVT Isaac Aguigui, from Cashmere in central Washington, of murdering his wife in July of 2011 – months before Roark and York were executed.</p> <p>In spite of that suspicion, the Army allowed payment to Aguigui from a \$500,000 insurance policy. Aguigui used that money to purchase tens of thousands of dollars of firearms in Washington State for his plot to attack government installations.</p> <p>"They didn't just let this guy go free (after his wife's death), they financed terrorism," said the attorney for the victim's family, Brian C. Brook of New Jersey.</p> <p>Brook says an Aguigui family member tipped the FBI to concerns that Aguigui was part of a group of anti-government soldiers who were arming themselves to attack the government, which the group believed was no longer serving the American people.</p> <p>Aguigui had also confessed early in 2011 to a separate plot to murder a civilian drug dealer. Although he admitted to purchasing a shotgun for the deed, the Army never took significant action against him.</p> <p>"It's hard to imagine that an institution that is built on a framework of discipline and order could ever allow someone like this to be in the armed forces so long," said Brook.</p> <p>Aguigui led a secret militia called FEAR, Forever Enduring Always Ready, which consisted of about a dozen soldiers and their friends and family members.</p> <p>Roark was a private in the Army who was a friend of some FEAR members. He left the Army and was coming home to Marysville.</p> <p>Three days after his separation from the armed forces, Aguigui asked Roark to join him for some target shooting in the Georgia woods. Roark brought York with him.</p> <p>The young couple were shot in the back of their heads by FEAR members as they stepped out of their car.</p> <p>Several former soldiers are serving jail sentences.</p>

Aguigui was convicted of the murders in the woods and, later, the July 2011 murder of his wife Deidre and unborn baby.

The U.S. Army referred all questions to the United States Attorney's Office in Seattle, which referred questions to Department of Justice headquarters in Washington DC.

"Thank you for reaching out. The DOJ respectfully declines to comment," spokesperson Kerri Kupec wrote in an emailed response to KING 5.

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HEADLINE	01/26 London: record number acid attacks
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/26/europe/london-acid-attacks-2017-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>London (CNN)There was a record number of acid attacks in London in 2017, police data shows, as perpetrators turn to household cleaning products as weapons.</p> <p>In response to a freedom of information request by CNN, data from the London Metropolitan Police showed a sharp rise in attacks, with 465 recorded in 2017, up from 395 the previous year and 255 in 2015. The attacks increased six-fold over six years.</p> <p>London has become the world capital for acid attacks on young men, and street gangs are increasingly using "face melters" against their targets.</p> <p>Several cases that left victims with life-changing injuries last year prompted debate in the UK Parliament, where MPs are mulling banning the sale of highly corrosive liquids to minors and overhauling laws around possession of acid. Police say easy-to-obtain products such as drain and oven cleaners are often used in attacks.</p> <p>UK Home Secretary Amber Rudd earlier called for a life sentence for serious acid attacks, arguing that such assaults often ruin victims' lives.</p> <p>Additional police data from the first 11 months of 2017 show that the attacks are predominantly a problem among young males.</p> <p>More than 75% of suspected attackers and around 60% of victims were between the ages of 10 and 29. In terms of gender, 71% of attackers and 72% of victims were also male.</p> <p>This is where London bucks the global trend. In many other parts of the world with high numbers of acid attacks, such as South Asia, the act is overwhelmingly carried out by men against women they know.</p> <p>While the new figures show a dramatic rise in London acid attacks in recent years, they also show that previous records had been exaggerated.</p> <p>Detective Superintendent Mike West, who leads the Met Police on acid attacks, explained that previous police data had included cases where someone possessed acid or threatened to use it as a weapon, but did not actually do so.</p> <p>He said that while acid was being used by street gangs, it was still on a relatively small scale.</p> <p>"We do see around 25% of offenses in the robbery category, and this tends to be with ammonia-based substances that, whilst (they) cause injury, are less likely to be life changing. Other drivers have been drug disputes and general disputes between parties," he said.</p> <p>The Met Police is creating a prevention and awareness campaign to be delivered in schools this year, in</p>

	<p>partnership with other emergency services, West said.</p> <p>"We are training all of our officers to deal with first aid of victims and have placed treatment kits in all response cars across London."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/27 Brazil: gunmen shoots party; 18 dead
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/gunmen-brazil-kill-party-52650772?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Police say gunmen barged into a party and shot dead "a large number of people" in northeastern Brazil.</p> <p>A police officer at the homicide division in the city of Fortaleza said by telephone that the killings took place early Saturday morning near the Arena Castelao soccer stadium that was used in the 2014 World Cup of soccer.</p> <p>He did not provide more details not confirm the number of dead and injured. Local press reports said 18 people were killed and six injured.</p> <p>Repeated calls to the police press office went unanswered.</p> <p>The police officer spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the press.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/26 Weapons recovered w/student threat
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/police-recover-guns-machetes-room-teen-allegedly-plotted/story?id=52632427&cid=clicksource_81_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Police recovered multiple guns and machetes from a Pennsylvania high school student's bedroom Thursday night after a classmate allegedly overheard the student threatening a mass shooting, officials said.</p> <p>The alleged plot -- which was uncovered Thursday -- called for an attack to take place today, just days after high school shootings in Kentucky and Texas this week, officials said.</p> <p>The investigation began Thursday night when Pennsylvania State Police received a report that a teen on a school bus discussed killing four students he didn't like at Uniontown Area Senior High School, Fayette County District Attorney Richard Bower said at a news conference.</p> <p>The teen who reported the threat had overheard the conversation and recorded it, Bower said.</p> <p>State police responded to the 14-year-old suspect's home where they took statements from the student and parents, determining that the student was "threatening to come to school today with weapons with rifles and shoot four students," Bower said.</p> <p>Bower said, "He indicated that it would be extremely easy to sneak a gun into the school in his backpack. And he also indicated that he could use a sniper rifle from a distance, or use a shotgun for mass casualties."</p> <p>A search warrant was obtained and police found multiple weapons in the teen's bedroom: a semi-automatic rifle, a shotgun, two machetes, throwing knives, two lever-action rifles, a revolver, a cross bow, "and bulk ammunition for all of the weapons," Bower said.</p> <p>The teen was taken into custody Thursday night and remains in custody with juvenile authorities, Bower</p>

	<p>said, adding that his parents are cooperating. He is being charged with terroristic threats, possession of a firearm by a minor and criminal attempt to commit catastrophe at the high school, Bower said.</p> <p>"A catastrophe" was likely "averted today," Bower said. "Thank God" the parent and child called, he added.</p>
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Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources/InFOCUS is a situational awareness report published daily by the Washington State Fusion Center.

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Cc:
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Date: Wed Jan 24 2018 13:23:20 CST
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Aviation-ISAC Daily Aviation Memo

23 January 2018

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U.S. Department of Transportation Crisis Management Center Daily Report

Indicates Actionable Intelligence

FEATURES

Cyber Security News

NjRat secures top spot as most active network malware in 2017

From ZDNet (01.23.2018) Charlie Osbourne

On Tuesday, security professionals from AlienVault posted the results of research into the top 10 malware threats that were recorded as active on networks in 2017, which includes a range of Trojans, ransomware, and malware which is tailored for stealing financial data. Based on malware domains observed most frequently by Cisco's Umbrella DNS, the malware families with the highest numbers of individual samples and the malware most detected by the cybersecurity firm's customers, the njRat Trojan has come out on top.

*NjRat: Particularly popular in the Middle East, this Remote Access Trojan (RAT) is a simple .NET backdoor is a favorite with amateurs. The bulk of users are low-level criminals and is often delivered in drive-by downloads or through phishing attacks. Variants of the Trojan often contain custom packets (.PDF) for avoiding traditional antivirus solutions and once deployed, the malware is able to hijack infected systems.

*Netwire: Netwire came out as the second most persistent threat on networks in 2017. This malware, another Trojan, is primarily used to steal banking details such as credit card data. However, unlike other kinds of malicious code which target Point-of-Sale (PoS) systems, Netwire attempts to steal credentials through keylogging modules.

*Bancos: An old Windows Trojan, Bancos attempts to replace Windows host files to redirect victims from pre-determined legitimate domains to malicious alternatives controlled by attackers.

*PhaseBot: First spotted in 2015, PhaseBot uses PowerShell to run components that are encoded scripts it has hidden in the registry of a compromised system in order to conduct 'fileless' attacks.

*Pushdo: Pushdo is a so-called downloader Trojan used as a conduit to download and execute additional payloads on infected systems. The malware is commonly found in mass-email phishing campaigns.

*Asprox: Asprox finds its way onto a vulnerable system through phishing campaigns and drive-by downloads. If a system is exploited, it is joined into a botnet for the purposes of harvesting login credentials, enabling DDoS attacks, driving fake advertising traffic, and conducting SQL injections on unsecured sites.

*Dunihi worm: This worm is commonly obfuscated and spreads through removable drives. Also known as Houdini, the malware connects to a C&C server to receive commands from its operators.

*Ramnit: This prolific malware, connected to the theft of Facebook credentials in the past, the worm is described as a "multi-component malware family which infects Windows executable as well as HTML files" able to "steal sensitive information such as stored FTP credentials and browser cookies".

*Gh0stRat: Variants of the Gh0stRat Trojan are also commonly active, targeting victims in the enterprise as well as core industrial players. The Trojan is used for surveillance, collecting system information, encrypting the collected information and sending it to C&C servers.

*Locky: Locky, ransomware which keeps coming back time and time again, spreads through phishing campaigns and drive-by downloads. When executed on a vulnerable system, the malware encrypts files and demands a ransom payment in return for a decryption key. [Link](#)

[Zdnet\[.\]com/article/njrat-secures-top-spot-as-most-active-malware-on-networks-in-2017/](http://Zdnet[.]com/article/njrat-secures-top-spot-as-most-active-malware-on-networks-in-2017/)

*Paradise Ransomware strikes again

From Acronis (01.22.2018)

The Paradise ransomware that was active in September 2017 is back with a new round of attacks, starting at the beginning of January 2018. Leveraging the Ransomware as a Service (RaaS) model, the Paradise strain provides an unbreakable encryption scheme by using the RSA cipher for file encryption – which is an unusual cipher choice. The ransomware’s executable file is archived and spread via spam email as a zip attachment. To become infected, a user opens the attachment, unpacks it, and executes the extracted application. The ‘DP_Main.exe’ ransomware file is a .NET compiled executable and requires .NET Framework 3.5 to start on a user’s machine. The Paradise ransomware encrypts ALL files on fixed, removable, and network drives. Paradise silently deletes Windows shadow copies, like many other ransomware variants currently in the wild. Paradise silently deletes Windows shadow copies, like many other ransomware variants currently in the wild. The C2 server is geographically located in St. Petersburg, Russia. There is no way to restore encrypted files other than to pay a ransom. [Link](#)

Acronis.com/en-us/blog/posts/paradise-ransomware-strikes-again

*Seagate Patches Flaws in Personal Cloud, GoFlex Products

From Security Week (01.23.2018) Eduard Kovacs

Seagate recently patched several vulnerabilities discovered by researchers in the company’s Personal Cloud and GoFlex products, but some weaknesses impacting the latter remain unfixed. In late September 2017, researcher Aditya K. Sood discovered vulnerabilities that can be exploited for cross-site scripting (XSS) and man-in-the-middle (MitM) attacks in Seagate’s GoFlex Home network-attached storage (NAS) product. GoFlex users are provided a web service that allows them to remotely manage the product and upload files to the cloud. The service can be accessed using the name of the device, a username, and a password. An HTTP server present in the GoFlex firmware requires port forwarding on the user’s router in order to connect to the web service. Sood discovered that the embedded server still supports SSLv2 and SSLv3, and the seagate.com service supports SSLv3. SSLv2 and SSLv3 are obsolete protocols that are known to be vulnerable to MitM attacks, including via the methods known as DROWN and POODLE. The expert has identified more than 50,000 Seagate devices – hosted on unique IP addresses – that have SSLv2 and SSLv3 enabled. Sood also noticed that the unique name (device_id) of each device is not difficult to find. During the tests he conducted, the expert managed to collect more than 17,000 unique device IDs. While Seagate has fixed the XSS vulnerability, the company told Sood it does not plan on addressing the issue related to the use of SSLv2 and SSLv3. [Link](#)

Securityweek.com/seagate-patches-flaws-personal-cloud-goflex-products

Dell Advising All Customers to Not Install Spectre BIOS Updates

From Bleeping Computer (01.23.2018) Lawrence Abrams

The Spectre & Meltdown mess continues with Dell now recommending their customers do not install the BIOS updates that resolve the Spectre (Variant 2) vulnerabilities. These updates have been causing numerous problems for users including performance issues, boot issues, reboot issues, and general system instability. Due to this, Dell EMC has updated their knowledge base article with the following statement advising customers to not install the BIOS update and to potentially rollback to the previous BIOS if their computers are exhibiting "unpredictable system behavior". In order to facilitate the rolling back to a previous BIOS version, Dell has a table listing the Spectre fix BIOS versions that customers should not use and the recommended BIOS versions that a customer should roll back to. This news comes on the heels of Linus Torvalds' remarks on how he felt the Linux patches for Spectre are "utter garbage". [Link](#)

[Bleepingcomputer\[.\]com/news/security/dell-advising-all-customers-to-not-install-spectre-bios-updates/](https://bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/dell-advising-all-customers-to-not-install-spectre-bios-updates/)

Insider Threat: Ex-IBM employee from China gets five years prison for stealing code

From Reuters (01.19.2018) Brendan Pierson

A former software engineer for IBM in China was sentenced to five years in prison after he pleaded guilty to stealing proprietary source code from the company, prosecutors announced on Friday. Jiaqiang Xu, 32, was sentenced on Thursday in White Plains, New York, according to a statement from the office of U.S. Attorney Geoffrey Berman. Xu pleaded guilty in May 2017 to economic espionage and theft of a trade secret. Xu worked as a systems software developer for International Business Machines Corp from 2010 to 2014, according to a public LinkedIn profile. Xu was arrested in December 2015 after meeting with an undercover officer at a White Plains hotel, where authorities said he was recorded saying he used proprietary IBM code to make software to sell to customers, according to prosecutors. Prosecutors said the proprietary computer code Xu stole was related to a clustered file system, which facilitates faster computer performance. [Link](#)

[Reuters\[.\]com/article/us-ibm-crime-china/ex-ibm-employee-from-china-gets-five-years-prison-for-stealing-code-idUSKBN1F82P9](https://reuters.com/article/us-ibm-crime-china/ex-ibm-employee-from-china-gets-five-years-prison-for-stealing-code-idUSKBN1F82P9)

U.S. cloud-computing failure could cause up to \$19 billion in losses

From Reuters (01.23.2018) Suzanne Barlyn

A cyber problem that temporarily shuts down a top U.S. cloud computing provider could trigger as much as \$19 billion in business losses, only a fraction of which would be insured, Lloyd's of London said in a report on Tuesday. The report, co-written with modeling firm AIR Worldwide, examined potential losses stemming from disruptions to business that depend on cloud computing in the event that cyber incidents such as hacking, lightning strikes, bombing of data centers and human errors "completely disrupt" U.S. cloud service to all of a provider's customers. An incident that takes one of the top-three cloud service providers offline for three to six days would result in total losses of between \$5.3 billion and \$19 billion. Insured losses would total between \$1.1 billion and \$3.5 billion, according to the Lloyd's-AIR report. Cloud computing has grown rapidly in recent years as businesses move their operations to public clouds, the big computer data centers that are displacing traditional customer-owned computer systems. The Lloyd's report, based on scenarios involving the top 15 U.S. cloud providers, does not identify those providers. Current estimates of the cloud environment indicate that Amazon holds 31.8 percent of the market, followed by Microsoft at 13.9 percent and Google with 6 percent. Studies suggest that a cyber incident that knocks out even one of the smaller U.S. cloud providers for three to six days could still cause between \$300 million and \$1.5 billion in losses. [Link](#)

[Reuters\[.\]com/article/us-cyber-cloud-disruption/u-s-cloud-computing-failure-could-spur-up-to-19-billion-in-losses-lloyds-idUSKBN1FC1UC](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cyber-cloud-disruption/u-s-cloud-computing-failure-could-spur-up-to-19-billion-in-losses-lloyds-idUSKBN1FC1UC)

Analyzing the TRITON industrial malware

From Midnight Blue Labs (01.16.2018)

TRITON is the first publicly known example of malware targeting industrial safety controllers, an escalation with serious potential consequences compared to previous ICS-focussed incidents. It has been deployed against at least one victim in the Middle East with no indications of victims outside of the Middle East so far. TRITON is a framework for implanting Schneider Electric Triconex safety controllers with a passive backdoor through which attackers can, at a later point in time, inject potentially destructive payloads. Safety controllers are typically a kind of Programmable Logic Controller (PLC) designed to high standards with redundant modules and tend to have components that allow for safe failure in case the main processor fails or power is lost. Traditionally, SIS connectivity is limited and systems are segregated from the rest of the Operational Technology (OT) environment which would limit the potential impact of safety controller security issues. But over the years, as part of a broader trend in embedded systems in general, this isolation has made way for more and more connectivity and systems integration. While this integration comes with benefits in terms of cost, usability and process insights for business intelligence purposes, the flip side is that it exposes systems that were never designed for secure connectivity in the first place to the wider OT and IT environments and by extension to whatever the wider network itself is exposed to. The potential implications of a malicious SIS-compromising attacker are serious and could range from shutting down a process to allowing for unsafe states and manipulating other parts of the OT environment to create such a state which might result in financial losses, damage to equipment, products and the environment or human safety and

loss of life. [Link](#)

[Midnightbluelabs.com/blog/2018/1/16/analyzing-the-triton-industrial-malware](https://midnightbluelabs.com/blog/2018/1/16/analyzing-the-triton-industrial-malware)

Operational Outages

Power outage at Hopkins Airport in Ohio might affect flights

From Cleveland (01.23.2018) Cliff Pinckard

Hopkins International Airport is reporting a partial power outage Tuesday morning that it says could affect some flights. The airport did not say what caused the power outage, although thunderstorms did move through the region overnight. As of 5:45 a.m., a Delta flight to Minneapolis and a United flight to New York were listed as delayed, while a Southwest flight to Milwaukee was canceled, according to the airport's website. There were no delays or cancellations on arriving flights. However, the airport is urging travelers to check with airlines about the status of flights. Lights on streets and parking lots at the airport were not working and some escalators and elevators were affected, the airport said. [Link](#)

[Cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2018/01/power_outage_at_hopkins_airpor.html](https://cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2018/01/power_outage_at_hopkins_airpor.html)

Aviation Tech

Lufthansa Technik equips Boeing 737 MAX with broadband antennas

From AeroBuzz (01.22.2018)

In view of the rapidly growing fleet of Boeing 737 MAX aircraft, Lufthansa Technik intends to build up its maintenance and overhaul capacities for this model. It starts with the installation of broadband antennas for the reception of Internet on board. Internet on board is an increasingly important factor in the choice of airline passengers. Therefore, more and more airlines equip their aircraft with appropriate facilities to meet the communication needs of their passengers. Lufthansa Technik has now received an order from an unnamed customer to equip its brand-new Boeing 737 MAX standard-hull aircraft with equipment that allows passengers to connect on board. From mid-2018, the company will now make the modifications at its location in Budapest. For the conversion, the technicians in Hungary need five days per aircraft. They install a broadband antenna on the back of the fuselage, put in the required cabling and install the required equipment in the cabin. Then they play the software on the system, test it and release the aircraft for flight operations. Following completion of the modification program, Lufthansa Technik intends to set up complete overhaul capacities for the new Boeing 737 MAX at the

Budapest location over the next few months. Thereafter, these skills should be transferred to other LH technology locations. [Link](#)

[Aerobuzz\[.\]de/industrie-news/lh-technik-ruestet-boeing-737-max-mit-breitband-antennen-aus/](#)

Legislation & Regulation News

Taiwan stymies new China flights amid route dispute

From Reuters (01.19.2018) Jeanny Kao

Taiwan's Civil Aeronautics Administration has stalled applications for new flights from China Eastern Airlines and Xiamen Airlines amid a row between Beijing and the self-ruled island over air routes, a regulatory official said on Friday. Taiwan had not yet approved the applications to add flights during the approaching Lunar New Year holiday because in recent weeks the airlines had used four disputed air routes close to the island. This month China opened several disputed air routes, including a northbound M503 route in the Taiwan Strait, without informing Taiwan, contravening what the democratic government in Taipei said was a 2015 deal to first discuss such flight paths. Taiwan has expressed concern the new routes are too close to existing routes that link it to airports on two groups of Taiwan-controlled islands lying close to China, and are a threat to flight safety. China has denied safety could be affected, saying it had no need of Taiwan's approval for new routes. China Eastern Airlines had applied to add 106 flights while Xiamen Airlines, majority-owned by China Southern Airlines, had applied for 70, the official said. The Civil Aviation Administration of China condemned the move, saying again there were no safety issues with the M503 route and warning Taiwan that it would "bear the consequences" of its decision. But Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council said in a statement there were real safety risks for flights to Taiwan's offshore islands, calling for China to accept technical talks on the issue. [Link](#)

[Reuters\[.\]com/article/us-china-taiwan-flights/taiwan-stymies-new-china-flights-amid-route-row-official-says-idUSKBN1F80Q4](#)

Physical Security News

Kurdish Protesters Initiate Huge, Violent Brawl at Hannover Airport in Germany

From The Express (01.22.2018) Chloe Kerr

A huge fight involving almost 200 people broke out at Hannover Airport in Germany, police have confirmed as officers used pepper spray to try to quell the violence after passengers clashed with protesters. According to news site Haz, the fight broke out during a Kurdish demonstration over Turkish military action in Syria. It is thought violence sparked in Terminal B when the protesters were confronted by Turkish passengers. Dramatic footage shows brawlers punching each other and using flags as weapons while other holidaymakers fled to safety. A tweet by Hannover police said: "According to initial information, there is currently a major dispute at Hannover Airport. We are already on our way with many forces!" Photos from the scene show police surrounding protests waving flags. NeuePress reports the trouble started beside the Turkish Airlines check-in desk. A Kurdish demonstration was planned for between 4 and 6pm this evening in the city center. Turkey launched a large-scale offensive against Kurdish forces in northwestern Syria on Saturday. [Link](#)

[Express\[.\]co\[.\]uk/news/world/908254/fight-hannover-airport-police-latest-pictures-arrests-flight-delays](http://Express[.]co[.]uk/news/world/908254/fight-hannover-airport-police-latest-pictures-arrests-flight-delays)

Police taser knife-wielding man at Atlanta Airport

From Fox 5 (01.22.2018) Morse Diggs

A man threatened a female worker with a knife at Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson Airport on Saturday morning, according to a police report. When officers ordered the man to drop his knife, with a three-inch blade, the man refused and turned aggressive toward them. The man's motive for the strange behavior is not known. The woman said she encountered the suspect outside the women's restroom. The victim said the man complained she was "blocking the entrance", according to the report. Officers successfully led the man away from a busy area in the atrium, and again shouted orders regarding the knife. The man refused and seconds later was struck by projectiles from two Tasers. Jackie Patterson, a former officer who is now an attorney, praised the airport officers for showing restraint. He said deadly force could have been used because the man allegedly moved toward one of the officers. The suspect is Antonio Malcolm Broussard. [Link](#)

[fox5atlanta\[.\]com/news/police-man-threatened-female-worker-at-atlantas-airport](http://fox5atlanta[.]com/news/police-man-threatened-female-worker-at-atlantas-airport)

Miscellaneous News

Seoul Incheon Airport's new Terminal 2 Preps for Olympic Influx

From USA Today (01.22.2018) Harriet Baskas

South Korea's Incheon International Airport (ICN) near Seoul officially opened its high-tech new Terminal 2 on Thursday. The facility debut comes just in time to welcome visitors headed to the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games, which begin February 9 and take place about 100 miles east of Seoul. The five-story new terminal can serve about 18 million passengers a year. For now, it's being used by just four airlines, all SkyTeam alliance members: South Korea's flag carrier Korean Air, Delta Air Lines, Air France and KLM Royal Dutch Airlines. More than 80 other airlines flying to and from Incheon will continue to operate out of Terminal 1. Beyond a soaring glass ceiling and loads of natural light, Incheon's new Terminal 2 is filled with "smart" technology, original art, an observation deck with a café and interactive activities, and many other welcoming amenities. Airlines in T2 offer passengers the opportunity to use dozens of self-check-in machines. Korean Air, encourages passengers to make use of its large bank of Smart bag-drop machines. Korean Air also offers its first and business class passengers separate check-in lounges. A fleet of robots has been deployed inside the airport to help passengers find their ways. Word has it the robots are even programmed to lead individual passengers to their gates. Photovoltaic panels on the roof and natural greenery inside the terminal help keep the air fresh and lower heating and ventilation costs. [Link](#)

[Usatoday\[.\]com/story/travel/flights/todayinthesky/2018/01/22/first-look-seoul-incheon-airports-new-terminal-2-big-high-tech-art/1052965001/](https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/flights/todayinthesky/2018/01/22/first-look-seoul-incheon-airports-new-terminal-2-big-high-tech-art/1052965001/)

Legazpi Airport temporarily shut down due to Mayon Volcano Eruption

From Inquirer.Net (01.22.2018) Frances Mangosing -

Legazpi Airport (LGP) in the Philippines has been temporarily shut down until further notice amid threats from the restive Mayon volcano. "The Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines said in its advisory said that effective 2:21 p.m. Monday, operations of Legazpi Airport is temporary closed until further advice. Affected flights are Cebu Pacific's Manila-Legazpi and Mactan-Legazpi," CAAP said in a statement. CAAP also issued a notice to airmen (Notam) after Alert Level 4 in Mayon Volcano was raised by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology. It also erupted at 10:35 a.m., sending a volcanic ash cloud into the air. The Notam is effective from 12:06 p.m. on January 22 until 9 a.m. on Jan. 23. CAAP also advised pilots flying near the area to exercise extreme caution, as ash from volcanic eruption can be hazardous to the aircraft. [Link](#)

[Newsinfo\[.\]inquirer\[.\]net/962579/legazpi-airport-mayon-volcano-threat-caap-albay-eruption](https://newsinfo[.]inquirer[.]net/962579/legazpi-airport-mayon-volcano-threat-caap-albay-eruption)

IAG 'disappointed' after losing Niki to rival bidder

From Flight Global (01.23.2018)

British Airways parent IAG has confirmed that its bid for Austrian carrier Niki has not succeeded, following a change of insolvency proceedings for the Air Berlin operation. Niki has been widely reported as having been sold to Laudamotion, a company controlled by former Formula 1 racing driver and aviation entrepreneur Niki Lauda. The reports cite the carrier's administrators. IAG had agreed to acquire the assets of Niki for €20 million (\$24 million) at the end of last year. But the insolvency proceedings were re-opened in Austria in mid-January and led to a new sales process. While IAG resubmitted its bid on 19 January, it says it has been advised that the bid "was unsuccessful". IAG says it is "disappointed" that it will not be able to develop Niki and enable the carrier to "grow stronger" as part of the airline group. It had intended to use a newly-created subsidiary of its Spanish budget operation Vueling to acquire Niki, and provide additional liquidity to the airline. [Link](#)

[Flightglobal\[.\]com/news/articles/iag-disappointed-after-losing-niki-to-rival-bidder-445109/](http://Flightglobal.com/news/articles/iag-disappointed-after-losing-niki-to-rival-bidder-445109/)

U.S. Department of Transportation Crisis Management Center Daily Report

Commercial In-Flight Incidents

*SkyWest 3019, CRJ7

- January 23, 2018 at 12:00 AM EST
- Enroute from Los Angeles, CA (Los Angeles International Airport) to Tucson, AZ (Tucson International Airport)
- Flight control indicator problem
- Diverted to Phoenix, AZ (Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport); landed without incident at 12:19 AM EST

*American 179, A321

- January 22, 2018 at 1:27 PM EST
- Enroute from New York, NY (John F. Kennedy International Airport) to San Francisco, CA (San Francisco International Airport)

- Crew medical incident
- Diverted to Chicago, IL (Chicago O'Hare International Airport); landed without incident at 1:56 PM EST

*United 1164, B739

- January 22, 2018 at 11:18 AM EST
- Enroute from Denver, CO (Denver International Airport) to Fort Lauderdale, FL (Fort Lauderdale–Hollywood International Airport)
- Engine problem
- Returned to Denver, CO; landed without incident at 11:31 AM EST

*American 1087, B738

- January 22, 2018 at 10:38 AM EST
- Enroute from Chicago, IL (Chicago O'Hare International Airport) to Los Cabos, Mexico (Los Cabos International Airport)
- Noise on takeoff
- Returned to Chicago, IL; landed without incident

*American 1591, B738

- January 22, 2018 at 10:14 AM EST
- Enroute from San Juan, PR (Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport) to Dallas, TX (Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport)
- Crew medical incident
- Diverted to Miami, FL (Miami International Airport); landed without incident at 11:24 AM EST

Ground Incidents

*Minneapolis, MN, Minneapolis–Saint Paul International Airport

- January 22, 2018 at 8:06 PM EST
- Delta 2003, MD90 from St. Louis, MO (St. Louis Lambert International Airport) and Delta 1960, B712 from Philadelphia, PA (Philadelphia International Airport)
- 3 hours tarmac rule violated; snow and ice conditions
- Aircrafts taxied to terminal; passengers deplaned

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from open sources and commercially-available information. Information contained in this report is provided for situational awareness only and does not represent the views of the Aviation ISAC. Please send comments or distribution requests to [a-isac.advisory@a-isac\[.\]com](mailto:a-isac.advisory@a-isac[.]com).

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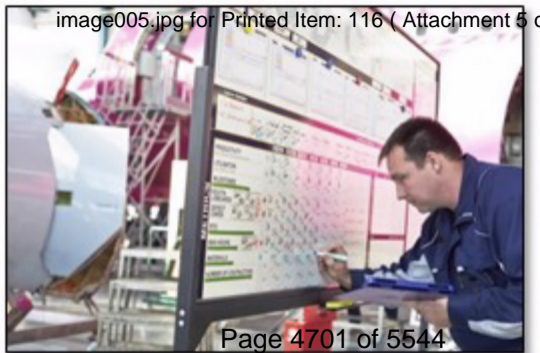
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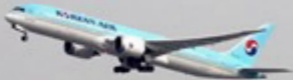
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of 5544

AVIATION ISAC

From: Larm, Doug <doug.larm@seattle.gov> on
behalf of Larm, Doug <Doug.Larm@seattle.gov>
<doug.larm@seattle.gov>
To: Larm, Doug <doug.larm@wsfc.wa.gov>
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: 2018_01_23 Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources
(InFOCUS)
Date: Tue Jan 23 2018 07:36:54 CST
Attachments: 2018_01_23.pdf

InFOCUS

Tuesday

23 January 2018

Document ID: 0.7.1175.5306-000001

Owner: Larm, Doug <doug.larm@seattle.gov> on behalf of Larm, Doug <Doug.Larm@seattle.gov> <doug.larm@seattle.gov>
Filename: 2018_01_23.pdf
Last Modified: Tue Jan 23 07:36:54 CST 2018

Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

TUESDAY – 23 JAN 2018



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Event Calendar

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Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php
Return to Top	**indicates new event/new information added during reporting week		

Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	01/22 UN: 56 peacekeepers killed in 2017
SOURCE	http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-01/23/c_136916630.htm
GIST	<p>UNITED NATIONS, Jan. 22 (Xinhua) -- The United Nations said Monday that 2017 saw the highest number of peacekeeper fatalities through violent acts in over two decades, with 56 peacekeepers killed.</p> <p>"Peacekeeping is a risky activity. A certain number of casualties may occur even if all necessary preventive measures are taken. But since 2013, casualties have spiked. One hundred and ninety-five personnel in United Nations peacekeeping missions have been killed by acts of violence, more than during any other 5-year period in history," according to "Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers: We need to change the way we are doing business," a report directed by the UN secretary-general.</p> <p>"These numbers go beyond a normal or acceptable level of risk, and they are likely to rise even higher. Something needs to change to reverse the trend," the report said.</p> <p>Since 1948, more than 3,500 personnel have lost their lives serving in UN peace operations with 943 due to acts of violence. During the past four years (2013 - 2017) a consistent increase in peacekeeper fatalities due to violent acts resulted in 195 deaths, the report said.</p> <p>In an effort to reverse this trend and improve the safety and security of UN peacekeepers, the secretary-general in November 2017 appointed Lieutenant General (retired) Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz of Brazil to carry out an in-depth review of peacekeeping fatalities and injuries due to hostile acts.</p> <p>The report aims to identify why the UN has had so many casualties caused by acts of violence in recent years and what should be done to reduce these casualties.</p> <p>In the course of the review, the team visited UN peacekeeping operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, Mali and South Sudan, accessed relevant internal UN data and conducted 160 interviews to inform their work.</p> <p>The report, which was submitted to the secretary-general, stated that with the influx of armed groups, extremists, organized crime, and other criminal elements and threats, the UN flag no longer offers "natural" protection to peacekeepers.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Winter storm howls thru Midwest
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/f0e1d8f15caa4cc08b36626670fd7ba6/Winter-storm-howls-through-Midwest
GIST	<p>MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Heavy snow and strong winds pushed across the Midwest on Monday, prompting highway closings in Kansas and South Dakota, school cancellations in Minnesota and grounding of flights in Denver and Minneapolis.</p> <p>In Minnesota, Gov. Mark Dayton called out the National Guard to help stranded motorists, the Star Tribune reported.</p> <p>The National Weather Service said more than 10 inches (26 centimeters) of snow has already fallen on North Platte in western Nebraska. In southern Minnesota, the storm dumped 17 inches (43 centimeters) near Owatonna by late afternoon Monday. Dozens of school districts in Minnesota canceled classes.</p> <p>Weather service meteorologist Bill Borghoff in Minnesota says the storm started brewing Saturday night over Nebraska and spread to Michigan's Upper Peninsula. He called it "a very classically developed winter storm," with widespread heavy snow on its northern end.</p>

	<p>Transportation officials lifted a no travel advisory for parts of southwest Minnesota, but advised motorists that blowing snow was still a problem. Winds were gusting up to 40 mph (64 kilometers), Borghoff said.</p> <p>“If you don’t have to travel, don’t travel,” Borghoff said. Statewide the Minnesota State Patrol reported nearly 200 crashes and nearly 300 spinouts as well as 30 jackknifed semis by late Monday afternoon.</p> <p>About a dozen flights were canceled or delayed at Denver International Airport on Monday, partly due to a storm hitting Minneapolis. Airlines are working to catch up a day after about 200 flights from Denver, about 15 percent of the day’s schedule, were canceled because of snow. Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport reported more than 400 cancellations by Monday afternoon, with average delays of about six hours, Metropolitan Airports Commission spokesman Pat Hogan said.</p> <p>“It’s really a tough day at the airport,” Hogan said.</p> <p>The storm brought blizzard conditions to much of Nebraska and forced the Woodbury County Courthouse to close in Sioux City, Iowa.</p> <p>South Dakota transportation and public safety officials closed north and southbound lanes of Interstate 29 from around Sioux Falls south to the Iowa border because heavy snow and strong winds made travel nearly impossible.</p> <p>The Department of Transportation said numerous vehicles, including jackknifed semis, are stuck along the interstate, which is closed from Tea south to Iowa.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Governor heads to attend WEF
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/876554/gov-inslee-heads-to-davos-switzerland/
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — Gov. Jay Inslee will travel to Switzerland this week to participate in the World Economic Forum’s Annual meeting.</p> <p>Inslee’s office said Monday that the governor is scheduled to speak on several panels at the meeting in Davos, including a climate change one hosted by former Vice President Al Gore.</p> <p>Inslee leaves the state Tuesday, with his first panel to take place Wednesday and a press conference scheduled for Thursday. Inslee returns to Washington Friday.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 What is the World Economic Forum?
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2018-01-22/what-is-the-world-economic-forum-in-davos-and-why-does-it-matter
GIST	<p>The 2018 World Economic Forum (WEF) officially kicks off in Davos, Switzerland, on Tuesday.</p> <p>The four-day annual meeting draws in a number of the world's power players – from key politicians and heads of state to private sector executives and philanthropists – to discuss economic and diplomatic issues in an elite gathering in the Swiss mountains. This year, the theme "Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World" will run as a thread throughout speeches, panel discussions and seminars.</p> <p>Here's what you need to know about the event:</p> <p>What Is the WEF?</p>

The forum began 47 years ago when founder Klaus Schwab first organized a small conference on management. The organization's scope broadened in the 1980s and today it draws some of the biggest names in the business sector, government, international organizations, civil society, academia, media and the arts to the small Swiss ski resort of Davos. The conference is meant to address political, economic and societal challenges, according to WEF.

Sessions at the forum will confront a number of social, environmental and economic global issues with meetings focusing on topics such as reconnecting refugees, the Paris climate agreement and promoting free trade.

Why Does It Matter?

The meeting is taking aim at the debate around globalization at a time when domestic politics in the U.S. and across Europe are pushing back against what many perceive as a leading cause of inequality, wage stagnation and job loss in wealthy countries. As the WEF itself states, "the global context has changed dramatically." The meeting, organizers say, operates with a mission "to improve the state of the world."

The forum includes more than 400 sessions focusing on international collaboration as a way to approach and solve crucial global challenges. The gathering is also seen as an exclusive networking opportunity.

Who's Attending?

More than 2,500 global decision-makers from more than 100 different countries will attend the conference. Representatives from the United Nations, as well as from major companies – such as Carlos Ghosn of Renault-Nissan-Mitsubishi – will attend.

France's Emmanuel Macron, Germany's Angela Merkel, the United Kingdom's Theresa May, Canada's Justin Trudeau, Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu, Zimbabwe's Emmerson Mnangagwa and India's Narendra Modi are expected to be among the world leaders participating in the meetings.

U.S. President Donald Trump also is expected to attend the meeting in a break from recent presidential tradition – Trump's appearance would mark the first time a sitting president has attended the annual forum since Bill Clinton in 2000. Some are watching the U.S. president with particular interest as Trump's hallmark "America First" approach to foreign affairs has shaped his global leadership and reputation. Critics claim the stance is at odds with global cooperation.

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HEADLINE	01/23 Govt. shutdown over—for now
SOURCE	http://time.com/5113727/trump-bill-shutdown-ends/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>(WASHINGTON) — President Donald Trump signed a bill reopening the government late Monday, ending a 69-hour display of partisan dysfunction after Democrats reluctantly voted to temporarily pay for resumed operations. They relented in return for Republican assurances that the Senate will soon take up the plight of young immigrant “dreamers” and other contentious issues.</p> <p>The vote set the stage for hundreds of thousands of federal workers to return on Tuesday, cutting short what could have become a messy and costly impasse. The House approved the measure shortly thereafter, and President Donald Trump later signed it behind closed doors at the White House.</p> <p>But by relenting, the Democrats prompted a backlash from immigration activists and liberal base supporters who wanted them to fight longer and harder for legislation to protect from deportation the 700,000 or so younger immigrants who were brought to the country as children and now are here illegally.</p> <p>Democrats climbed onboard after two days of negotiations that ended with new assurances from Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell that the Senate would consider immigration proposals in the coming</p>

weeks. But there were deep divides in the Democratic caucus over strategy, as red-state lawmakers fighting for their survival broke with progressives looking to satisfy liberals' and immigrants' demands.

Under the agreement, Democrats provided enough votes to pass the stopgap spending measure keeping the government open until Feb. 8. In return, McConnell agreed to resume negotiations over the future of the dreamers, border security, military spending and other budget debates. If those talks don't yield a deal in the next three weeks, the Republican promised to allow the Senate to debate an immigration proposal — even if it's one crafted by a bipartisan group and does not have the backing of the leadership and the White House, lawmakers said. McConnell had previously said he would bring a deal to a vote only if President Donald Trump supported it.

Sixty votes were needed to end the Democrats' filibuster, and the party's senators provided 33 of the 81 the measure got. Eighteen senators, including members of both parties, were opposed. Hours later the Senate passed the final bill by the same 81-18 vote, sending it to the House, which quickly voted its approval and sent the measure on to President Donald Trump.

White House press secretary Sarah Sanders predicted that operations would return to normal by Tuesday morning.

The plan is far from what many activists and Democrats hoped when they decided to use the budget deadline as leverage. It doesn't tie the immigration vote to another piece of legislation, a tactic often used to build momentum. It also doesn't address support for an immigration plan in the House, where opposition to extending the protections for the dreamers is far stronger.

The short-term spending measure means both sides may wind up in a shutdown stalemate again in three weeks.

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HEADLINE	01/22 US ill-equipped to handle China spying?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jan/22/jerry-chun-shing-lees-arrest-sets-cia-fbi-debate-o/
GIST	<p>A ferocious debate has erupted within the CIA and FBI over the scope of China's penetration of the American intelligence community in the wake of last week's arrest of a Chinese-American former CIA case officer accused of spying for Beijing.</p> <p>The charging of Jerry Chun Shing Lee, 53, in federal court last week with possessing personal notebooks full of CIA asset names and phone numbers was hailed by many as a huge U.S. counterintelligence success against China.</p> <p>But high-level intelligence sources say media coverage of the case has been rife with unverified speculation about Mr. Lee and the extent of his role in a breach that might have betrayed as many as 20 clandestine CIA informants in China back in 2010 and 2011. The informants were imprisoned and in some cases executed.</p> <p>Two sources who spoke with The Washington Times cast doubt on the whole narrative about the reported crackdown, as well as the extent of Mr. Lee's involvement, suggesting instead that Chinese disinformation — and penetration into America's spy agencies — may have played a role that is still not fully appreciated.</p> <p>"It would be a pity to scapegoat Jerry Lee and say, 'Look, there was a big mole and we caught him and now the Chinese espionage problem is solved,'" said one of the sources, a former official with extensive intelligence experience in East Asia. "Some people are trying to do that with this case, which I think is dangerous."</p>

A second source with 20 years of counterintelligence experience said there was a “heated debate within the intelligence community over the extent of Chinese penetration and whether there are other moles,” and whether Jerry Lee was the major one.

The Chinese state-owned Global Times newspaper fed into the mystery of the case, calling Mr. Lee’s arrest a witch hunt with grave and unjust consequences for other Americans of Chinese descent.

“The U.S. seems to be mobilizing a mass movement to chase down Chinese ‘spies’ and ‘penetrators,’” the online news source said in an editorial last week. “If this continues, many Chinese will be wronged and the whole Chinese community will come under much pressure, tangible or not. This will undermine their human rights.”

Uncertainty and secrecy over the Lee affair builds on a legacy of mistrust that reaches back generations.

U.S. officials have engaged in an unknown number of China-related counterintelligence investigations during the years since the notorious case of Larry Wu-Tai Chin, a Chinese translator who sold classified documents to Beijing while working for the CIA for nearly 35 years from about 1950 through the mid-1980s. Chin was convicted in 1986 but killed himself before sentencing.

“The thing people need to remember is that the CIA and the FBI are and have been the No. 1 targets for the Chinese for a long time,” according to one of the sources, who said both agencies believe one of Beijing’s central goals is to “penetrate us so they can get the information needed to schwack their own guys who are working with us inside China.”

Ill-equipped to counter China?

U.S. authorities arrested Mr. Lee after he arrived at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York on Jan. 15. A naturalized U.S. citizen who worked as a CIA case officer from 1994 to 2007, Mr. Lee is also known by his Chinese name, Zhen Cheng Li.

At the time of his arrest, Mr. Lee had been living in Hong Kong and for the past 20 months was a security specialist employed by the global auction house Christie’s.

He was charged Tuesday in federal court in Virginia with violating the Espionage Act — the culmination of an FBI-led counterintelligence investigation that sources say began more than five years ago when the bureau discovered two small notebooks belonging to Mr. Lee that contained classified information.

Court documents say the books were found in August 2012 when FBI counterspies carried out a covert search of a Honolulu hotel room where Mr. Lee was staying. An FBI affidavit specifically claims the books contained the “true names and phone numbers of assets and covert CIA employees, as well as the addresses of CIA facilities.”

Mr. Lee faces a 10-year prison term if convicted, but some major questions remain unanswered.

For instance, the FBI affidavit makes no specific mention of China. It also offers no information about where the CIA employees, assets and facilities listed in Mr. Lee’s notebooks were located.

No reason was given why — if FBI counterintelligence found the notebooks in 2012 — it took more than five years for the agency to move on Mr. Lee. Was it because he was living in Hong Kong? Or was the agency simply sitting on the case in the hope that surveillance of Mr. Lee might lead to a bigger mole?

Some argue that U.S. intelligence agencies are simply ill-equipped to counter Chinese espionage methods.

“We don’t dedicate enough resources to counterintelligence against Chinese operations, influence operations, espionage against U.S. government secrets or economic espionage,” said Michael Pillsbury, a Mandarin-speaking analyst who has worked on China policy and intelligence issues for every U.S.

administration since Richard Nixon.

“Whether it’s human intelligence or cyberactivity, we just don’t have anywhere near the resources necessary,” Mr. Pillsbury said in an interview, adding that Congress should require the White House to produce an annual report on the scope of Chinese spying so Capitol Hill can begin to address the lack of resources.

‘A lot of unknowns’

The CIA and FBI declined requests for comment on the Lee case. Other former high-level intelligence officials, both with CIA experience in China, were not willing to discuss its implications even on an off-the-record basis.

But the two other sources who did speak on background said the case has exposed how limited Washington’s grasp is of China’s potential penetration into the intelligence community.

“There are a lot of unknowns,” said one of the sources. “This stuff is very sensitive, and right now the veil of secrecy has been lifted a teeny, tiny bit.”

It’s still not known when Mr. Lee started working for Beijing or if his alleged espionage overlapped with his CIA tenure.

“If he actually started spying and giving Beijing intel back in the 2004-2006 time frame, when he was still at the agency, he would have had access to active data,” the source said. “The hunch is that this wasn’t the case — it’s that he started sharing intel after he left. The reason for this is that if he had been active back in 2006, he wouldn’t have left the agency the way he did. Beijing would have made it worth his while to stay.”

Another lingering question is why Mr. Lee would have kept such incriminating notebooks in his possession.

“It could be that he’s just a doofus who messed up,” one source said.

But it could also be that it took the FBI so long to pin a case on Mr. Lee because “he was so well-trained in countersurveillance techniques that his activity was not detected,” said the source. “A second possibility is he is not a spy for China but had some other reason for carrying classified data in his notebooks years after leaving CIA, where his 13 years’ experience could be the basis of appointment as a consultant to meet assets again.”

“Some are asking, ‘Why did it take so long for the FBI to charge him?’” said the source. “The better question is, ‘Why did it take so long for such a little charge?’ If they had all this other stuff on him, why isn’t there any mention of it?”

Mr. Lee has not been charged with spying for China, and so far the government has brought only a single charge of unlawful retention of national defense information.

FBI Special Agent Kelly O’Brien’s affidavit in the arrest states that the government is withholding its full knowledge of Mr. Lee’s activities. Ms. O’Brien stated outright in the document that her statements were “intended to show merely that there is sufficient probable cause for the requested criminal complaint and warrant.”

“It does not set forth all of my knowledge about this matter,” she wrote.

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SOURCE	http://crosscut.com/2018/01/seattle-human-resources-department-toxic-workplace-anxiety-crying-jenny-durkan/
GIST	<p>This is the second article in a two-part <u>series</u>.</p> <p>Before the stroke, there were the migraines. Linda Leong had spent nearly 30 years working in the City of Seattle’s Human Resources Department as a compensation administrator, a job she loved. But the micromanaging, the reprimands, the yelling, the confusion and the fear of the past several years were building in layers, and so were her headaches. Co-workers started to notice her paling and not smiling as much.</p> <p>It happened one day in the office. As she was being scolded in a meeting with her bosses for working past her pre-approved hours, the tension that had built over months and years finally found the weak spot in her brain. Part way through the meeting, she began to hyperventilate, her whole body shaking, before she slumped in her chair. She recalls hearing what was happening around her, but couldn’t speak.</p> <p>Co-workers speak glowingly of Leong, 56. “She is the most dedicated employee anyone could ask for, an elegant, hardworking, knowledgeable woman,” one colleague told Crosscut. Her performance reviews were positive and, after so much time in the city, Leong believes she’d streamlined the process for updating compensation processes.</p> <p>But the way her supervisors lurked near her desk, occasionally slamming notepads down when frustrated, the way her work was being second guessed, and the confusion of new structures inside the department soured the job Leong says she loved to do. She blames it all for causing the stroke.</p> <p>The story of Leong’s health issues spread through the department, as had other stories of perceived mistreatment. For many, she was not an outlier, but in fact symbolic of what employees repeatedly described as a “toxic” work environment, one pushed to the breaking point as former Mayor Ed Murray and former director of the department Susan Coskey sought to reshape a decades old approach to HR in the City of Seattle.</p> <p>In accounts from more than 20 current and former Human Resources employees and city employees who work directly with the department, a picture emerges of an office wrought with discontent, frustration, anxiety and even fear. Talking with Crosscut, employees (most of whom requested anonymity) tell of a place where people are hired to do one thing but asked to do something entirely different; where staff feel their jobs are perpetually at risk; where expectations are unclear; and where criticizing the leadership team is intolerable.</p> <p>Turnover there in the last two years is rampant: In a department of roughly 100 employees, there have been 72 departures since 2014. In that period, according to public records provided to Crosscut, 18 people stayed for less than a year. After being introduced in an all-staff meeting and going desk to desk visiting workers, one high-profile leadership hire, brought on to coordinate the consolidation effort, stayed for only six weeks.</p> <p>Thanks to the office’s climate, employees recall crying on a daily basis and witnessing co-workers do the same. Multiple employees described heightened and sustained anxiety, with several taking medical leave, others receiving anxiety medication, still others seeing therapists for their stress. Two employees confirmed to Crosscut they perceived the environment as so “hostile” they’d taken their complaints to the city’s ethics department, which, they said, was sympathetic but hamstrung.</p> <p>At least one employee filed a complaint of age discrimination, an outstanding case which was found credible enough to warrant further investigation. In one HR unit, there were so many complaints that former Director Susan Coskey brought in a former investigator for the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Brooklyn, New York, to conduct interviews with employees on their way out.</p> <p>“HR is not there for employees; HR is there to protect the city,” said one former Seattle Department of Human Resources employee, who left after only a year due to the stress. “I would not trust HR to</p>

investigate anyone. I would get a lawyer.”

When Leong was diagnosed with a transient ischemic attack — a mini-stroke that wouldn’t have permanent repercussions but can often be a warning of a larger incident — she decided to retire, even if it was early. It “was the right decision to take care of my health,” she says.

On her final day, Leong received an emailed reprimand for staying beyond her pre-approved hours the night before. And as she lingered into her final evening, cleaning her desk, management called security to escort her away. “That was a shock and gave me the message that I was an unwanted employee being fired for cause rather than a valued employee going into retirement,” she said.

Although Coskey later issued an apology to Leong and gave her a hug, her unceremonious exit reinforced a building cache of evidence that there was nowhere worse in the City of Seattle to work than its own HR department.

HR in the City of Seattle is a disparate system, in which many individual departments run their own offices. These run parallel to the city’s central Seattle Department of Human Resources, which does citywide administrative tasks and handles personnel issues for smaller departments.

Mayor Jenny Durkan is dissatisfied with this structure amid concerns that the diffuse system leads to inconsistent implementation of policies, a lack of accountability for how employees are treated and such poor record-keeping that the mayor told Crosscut that she doesn’t even know how many people have filed accusations of sexual harassment and gender bias.

“At any given time as the mayor if I said — ‘Do we have a problem with sexual harassment? How many complaints have been brought?’ — no one could answer that,” Durkan said. “They were settling things in darkness.”

Durkan comes into office uniquely positioned to shape the direction of human resources in the City of Seattle. When she was inaugurated in November, the city was already in transition: Her predecessor, Ed Murray, began a process of transferring all HR authority out of individual departments and into the city’s centralized Department of Human Resource. The task is incomplete, delayed until 2019.

Durkan says she supports continuing consolidation as a means to make the city’s policies and procedures more consistent. Frustrated by the lack of any unifying approach to HR, she’s already instructed all departments to give the centralized personnel department 30-days notice if they intend to settle a sexual harassment complaint.

And as Crosscut reported Thursday, the idea of consolidating HR into one department is appealing to employees who have felt their harassment complaints have fallen on deaf ears.

But considering complaints from employees in the central HR department, the new mayor may find herself caught between what is now a diffuse and opaque system, where employees receive inconsistent service and complaints are settled in secrecy, and a centralized personnel department with a frustrated workforce, unconvinced it is structured to handle HR adequately.

The environment at the central HR department wasn’t always this way. Employees who’d been around since before 2010 describe an office that functioned with relative ease, if not the occasional struggles encountered by any large department. “We had a great unit when I began in the Workers’ Compensation Unit eight years ago,” one employee wrote in an exit survey. “I had people tell me they were jealous of how great of a team we had and that we were happily working.”

But as consolidation began early in Mayor Murray’s tenure, there was a marked shift in how the department was run. Units were restructured, supervisors were laid off and new people put into place.

The changes were ordered by Murray, but carried out by Coskey. She came to lead the department from a

long and successful career as an attorney, then as a personnel consultant. With the firm Seabold Consulting Group, she uncovered improper spending at the Port of Seattle. She also worked for Bright Spring Consulting, which has contracts with Amazon, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Microsoft.

Under her leadership, things became more strict. Written reprimands, once a rarity, were being “handed out like candy.” Employees recount witnessing colleagues being yelled at in public places by their superiors.

The drive toward consolidation was so intense, employees began to fear ever disagreeing publicly. One member of the department’s leadership team described colleagues withholding criticism for fear of disagreeing with Coskey and the direction set out by the mercurial, sometimes overbearing Murray.

“If management makes a decision, you go along,” said another employee. “If you speak up, you’re treated terribly.”

Meanwhile, new employees described feeling shocked at how tense everyone was. “It’s all this nebulous, secret communication,” said another former employee. “If you send an email to someone above your manager, you’ll get yelled at. It feels really scary.”

Frustrated workers describe doing months of research on a project, making a recommendation and then watching as the leadership team decided to go their own direction. “In nine months, I probably did four hours of work” that resulted in anything, said one employee who resigned after less than a year due to stress.

Coskey declined to be interviewed on the record for this story.

The tension within the department was evident in employees’ mental state and the pace of turnover. “I was told by my physician I needed to quit my job or that it would kill me because of the anxiety and stress that the environment was producing,” reads the exit interview of the employee whose unit had once functioned so well. “When I said I couldn’t yet is when I was placed on medication so that I could show up to work. . . . When I shared this with others, I found that 80% of my unit was also on medication for the same. When I spoke to others in the department but different units, the message was the same, they left or were on medication. Since leaving the City I have been able to stop taking medication.”

“I can count on both hands the number of people who had to leave for work-related stress,” another former employee who worked closely with Coskey told Crosscut. “I took an extended vacation this summer and then said I’ll try to make it to the end of the year. I lasted three weeks. My anxiety started to get out of control. I started to have panic attacks away from work. I’m a social person, but I stopped going out.”

There was an irony to the angst within the department: This was the personnel department, where the city’s mission for diversity and employee satisfaction was supposed to originate. But as leadership preached equity, four former and current employees of color in the department complained to Crosscut of being treated poorly. “They want diversity, but they don’t know how to deal with us,” said one woman, calling people of color the “bellwethers” for deeper issues. “They preach a gold standard, but they do the opposite.”

Two employees told Crosscut they took their complaints to the city’s ethics department and said that others had as well. But employees were told that toxicity was not an ethics violation in and of itself. Head of the Seattle Ethics and Elections Department Wayne Barnett declined to comment.

In one troubled unit, Coskey’s former employer, Seabold Group, was brought in to interview exiting employees. A former investigator for the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Brooklyn, Kris Cappel, started conducting hour long interviews, asking staff about their direct supervisors, work environment and even Coskey. “It felt like an hour therapy session. They wanted names, scenarios,” said one employee who was interviewed. “It was kind of questions that built on questions.” Cappel did not respond to a request for

comment.

Durkan has been conducting outreach to city employees, including via a citywide email request for feedback. At least three HR employees have forwarded complaints, either sent to Crosscut as well or obtained through public records requests, directly to her office.

Reads one message sent to Durkan: “Had we simply done what was originally envisioned and conducted a thorough internal review of policy/procedure through an equity lens and developed a system for close communication between department based HR and [the central Seattle Department of Human Resources] we would already be up and running and would have saved countless hours and dollars.”

In an interview with Crosscut, Durkan said she was committed to the consolidation, convinced that the city’s current de-centralized system does not serve the city well enough. If there are workplace issues, she said, then those can be addressed. “How do we continue to move the consolidation of HR so we can continue to meet our goals while at the same time address those people that are unhappy in the workplace and figure out if there are things we need to change?” says Durkan.

Shortly after Durkan became mayor, Coskey resigned. In a statement at the time, Durkan said Coskey had “served our City well for years.” Melissa Beatty became the acting director after her exit.

In an internal email announcing her resignation, Coskey thanked her staff for the “efforts to promote excellence in HR and greater equity for all our employees through citywide programs and strategies, including HR Consolidation (which I know for some has required more than a small leap of faith!). In leaving, I have full confidence in the City HR leadership and teams who remain to continue moving the City forward, and I thank you in advance for supporting their ongoing efforts.”

For now, it’s a wait-and-see period for many employees.

Although Durkan ultimately supports the consolidation, she says she’s not so dogmatic about it that she wouldn’t pause and adjust as necessary. “It’s kind of like stepping in a river that’s flowing and the dam’s three quarters of the way built,” says Durkan of inheriting the process from her predecessor. “I’m not a person who’s going to reinvent the wheel if I don’t have to. I’m going to see what’s working, but not be afraid to change how we implement it if we need to.”

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HEADLINE	01/22 America first? Not for foreign tourists
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/america-first-not-for-foreign-tourists/
GIST	<p>America and Turkey have something in common: They're the only two countries to suffer from a decline in long-haul travel since 2015.</p> <p>Top tourism destinations such as the U.K., Australia and Italy have all benefited from an increase in visitors during the last two years, but America and Turkey haven't shared in the expansion, according to data from the U.S. Travel Association.</p> <p>The sharp decline in foreign visitors to the U.S. has alarmed several industries that rely on tourism, ranging from hotels to retailers. So they're banding together to create a new coalition called Visit U.S. that aims to reverse the two-year trend. President Donald Trump's policies on immigration and his "America First" platform may be turning off foreign visitors, although the U.S. Travel Association pointed out that the decline began in 2015, well before Mr. Trump won the presidential election.</p> <p>"It would be erroneous to lay that that the president's feet, but that being said, rhetoric and messaging have a part of play in this," said Jonathan Grella, the trade group's executive vice president of public affairs. "Sadly, we're in the situation where travel is growing around the world, and America is in the company of Turkey in losing share, and they aren't typically our peer."</p>

The decline in foreign visitors is having a significant impact on the U.S. economy, according to the Visit U.S. coalition. Global travel increased 7.9 percent from 2015 to 2017, while the American share of that market declined from 13.6 percent to 11.9 percent.

If the U.S. had maintained its market share from 2015, America would have added \$32.2 billion in additional spending and created 100,000 additional jobs, the group said.

If the Trump administration's rhetoric isn't the only thing causing tourists to look outside of U.S. borders for vacation destinations, what else could be causing the problem? For one, the strong dollar, which makes the U.S. a less appetizing -- and pricier -- vacation spot for foreign travelers.

America's aging infrastructure and the rise of low-cost airlines in Europe may also be playing into the decline. The U.S. doesn't have one airport among the top 20 world airports rated by the International Airport Review. Instead, airports in Asia and Europe grab the top rankings. Plus, several U.S. airports earn low ratings from passengers for travel experience, including New York's LaGuardia and JFK airports.

"They're starved of infrastructure funding," Grella said of U.S. airports. "Europe continues to grow more connected and add more low-cost carriers and has more choice. Those things can affect demand."

He added, "If you have the choice to go somewhere efficiently and cost efficiently, you might choose that over a less pleasant travel experience."

The Visit U.S. coalition's goal is to encourage the Trump administration and lawmakers to enact policies that are more traveler-friendly, such as expanding the visa waiver system and adding messaging that reassures foreign travelers that they're wanted in the U.S.

That might be a tough sell, at least on the face of it. President Trump's rhetoric, such as questioning why the U.S. is accepting people from "sh*thole" countries, as well as scaling back legal protections for immigrants from several nations, may signal to foreign travelers that border policies aren't as open as they once were.

"With each limiting security announcement, we need to offset it with a deliberate welcoming message so America can help reclaim its market share," Grella noted. "Trump is a legendary brander and understands that America's brand matters."

Still, the challenges to burnishing America's image outside its borders are very real. The Pew Research Center found that the nation's image has suffered in countries where people say their confidence in the U.S. president has declined. Favorability ratings for the U.S. declined across the globe, according to Pew, which found that this measure increased in just two countries: Russia and Vietnam.

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HEADLINE	01/22 AAA: January gas prices hit 4yr high
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/finance/markets/gasoline-price-oil-crude/2018/01/22/id/838527/
GIST	<p>Gas prices are having the most expensive start to the year since 2014, AAA said.</p> <p>To be sure, the AP reported that the average price of a gallon of regular-grade gasoline jumped 4 cents nationally over the past two weeks to \$2.58.</p> <p>Industry analyst Trilby Lundberg of the Lundberg Survey said Sunday that the increase is due to higher crude oil costs.</p> <p>The current gas price is 22 cents above where it was a year ago.</p>

	<p>Gas in San Francisco was the highest in the contiguous United States at an average of \$3.26 a gallon. The lowest was in Tucson, Arizona, at \$2.16 a gallon.</p> <p>The U.S. average diesel price is \$2.99, up 5 cents from two weeks ago.</p> <p>"It has been anything but a normal January for prices at the pump," said Mark Jenkins, spokesman, AAA - The Auto Club Group. "Normally, demand slips and supplies build. However, this story so far this year has been a rally in oil prices.</p> <p>"Oil prices strung together three weeks of significant gains, raising the cost of producing gasoline," Jenkins continued.</p> <p>"As a result, gas prices for the month of January have been the most expensive in four years. Fortunately, prices at the pump plateaued late last week, after the momentum for oil stalled out. While gas prices will continue to be steered by the price of oil, they will soon face additional pressure from refinery maintenance season," he said.</p> <p>"During the next few months, refineries will reduce output as they conduct maintenance on their equipment and switch to summer-blend gasoline. This usually leads to tighter supplies and forces gas prices higher. However, there is still lingering hope that U.S. oil production will ramp-up sooner than later, which would boost inventories and push energy prices lower."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 China blames US for South China Sea
SOURCE	<p>https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/china-to-us-its-your-fault-we-are-in-the-south-china-sea/2018/01/22/1bc25b72-ff3e-11e7-93f5-53a3a47824e8_story.html?hpid=hp_hp-cards_bp-card-world%3Ahomepage%2Fcard&utm_term=.47f31e1d4dc5</p>
GIST	<p>BEIJING — Beijing has a message for the Trump administration: The more ships you send to the contested waters of the South China Sea, the more we will bolster our presence there.</p> <p>The warning, delivered in a People’s Daily commentary published Monday, came days after the USS Hopper sailed within 12 nautical miles of Scarborough Shoal, a reef China seized from Philippine control in 2012. “A U.S. ship wantonly provoking trouble is reckless,” it read.</p> <p>It is not the first time Beijing has tried to blame Washington for maritime tensions — it’s a bit of a recurring theme — but the ship’s operation and the blustery response may signal an ominous shift in U.S.-China ties.</p> <p>In his first year in office, President Trump was focused getting China to rein in North Korea and said little about the South China Sea. But many analysts predicted that his administration would take a tougher line in 2018 — and that may now be underway.</p> <p>The United States called last week’s operations “routine and regular,” but from a Chinese perspective, the timing and the location are significant.</p> <p>This was the first so-called Freedom of Navigation Operation (FONOP) in months and the first such passage near Scarborough Shoal. It also took place on the eve of the release of the National Defense Strategy — a document replete with warnings about China.</p> <p>In the wake of the operation, China showed no sign of changing or softening its stance. Over the weekend, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said that Beijing was “strongly dissatisfied” with the Hopper’s passage and that China will take necessary measures to “firmly safeguard its sovereignty.”</p> <p>Monday’s editorial put it this way: “If the relevant party once more makes trouble out of nothing and</p>

causes tensions, then it will only cause China to reach this conclusion: to earnestly protect peace in the South China Sea, China must strengthen and speed up the building of its abilities there.”

Ian Storey, an expert on the South China Sea and a senior fellow at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore, said the timing seemed calibrated to show China that the United States is ready to “do something a bit different.”

“I was quite surprised when I read it had taken place at Scarborough Shoal,” he said. “I suppose this took China by surprise as well and it was designed to throw them off balance a bit.”

China claims nearly all of the South China Sea, including Scarborough Shoal, a feature just off the coast of Luzon, not far from the former U.S. base at Subic Bay.

In 2016, an international tribunal ruled that China’s expansive claims had no legal basis, a finding welcomed by much of the region, but largely ignored by Beijing. In the years since, China has pressed ahead with land reclamation and building in the area.

A White House effort to shake up U.S. strategy in the South China Sea will test both U.S.-China and U.S.-Philippine ties — especially because the Philippines, which used to control the shoal, appears to have lost interest in contesting it.

The Philippines, a longtime U.S. ally, used to challenge Chinese claims to the South China Sea. Since coming to power in 2016, however, President Rodrigo Duterte has taken a softer line with Beijing.

Responding to reports of the FONOP near Scarborough Shoal, Duterte’s spokesman, Harry Roque, told local media outlets that it was “America’s problem.”

“We have reached a point where we have independent foreign relations, and a problem of America is no longer a problem of the Philippines,” he said.

Jay L. Batongbacal, director of the University of the Philippines’ Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea, said the Duterte government’s response could help China and hinder the United States by lending credence to Beijing’s claims.

The Duterte administration “washing its hands of this incident and not saying anything about China’s assertion of sovereignty is a problem because it could be interpreted as acquiescence to China’s statement,” he said.

“If I were China, I would use the Philippines’ silence as evidence against their claims.”

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HEADLINE	01/22 US: embassy in Jerusalem in 2019
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/01/22/Pence-says-US-will-open-Israeli-embassy-in-Jerusalem-in-2019/3651516624527/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=1
GIST	<p>Jan. 22 (UPI) -- The United States will transfer its Israeli embassy to Jerusalem and open a new facility next year, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence told Israeli lawmakers on Monday.</p> <p>Pence made the remarks in an address to the Knesset, Israel's Parliament.</p> <p>President Donald Trump announced the plan to relocate the embassy on Dec. 9, which prompted widespread condemnation in the Arab world for derailing any attempt at peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The Palestinian Authority, which is boycotting Pence's visit to the Middle East, also regards Jerusalem as its capital, should a two-state solution bring statehood to Palestine.</p>

"In the weeks ahead our administration will advance its plan to open the U.S. embassy in Jerusalem, and that United States embassy will open before the end of next year," Pence said. He added that Trump had directed the State Department to "immediately begin preparations" for the transfer from Tel Aviv.

The establishment of an embassy in Jerusalem will be the first by a foreign government in Israel.

Pence's remarks were met with opposition by several Arab members of the Knesset.

Knesset member Ayman Odeh of the Joint Arab List party called Pence "a dangerous man with a messianic mission that includes the destruction of the entire region."

Monday's opposition followed demonstrations Sunday in the West Bank city of Bethlehem, where protesters burned a photograph of Pence. His planned visit to the West Bank was canceled because the Palestinian Authority pledged to boycott his visit.

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HEADLINE	01/22 UN envoy views Calif. homelessness
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jan/22/un-rapporteur-homeless-san-francisco-california
GIST	<p>Leilani Farha was being given a walking tour in central San Francisco. Near a thronged artisanal grocery store and a food-truck park, she saw something under a freeway that gave her pause.</p> <p>A young homeless man sat on the ground. He wore two pairs of jeans and had a hood pulled over his long brown hair. Before him was a crockpot filled with burning paper, over which he was heating tortillas in a dirty skillet. As cars, cyclists and tech commuter buses rushed past, white smoke poured into the darkening air.</p> <p>"The last time I saw cooking on a sidewalk," Farha said, "was in Mumbai."</p> <p>Farha, 49, is a Canadian lawyer. She is also the United Nations special rapporteur on adequate housing, charged with probing deplorable living conditions and assessing compliance with international human rights law. Her latest project is a report on "informal settlements" – shanties, favelas, tent cities – which will be presented at the UN general assembly.</p> <p>In Mexico City, she spent time in a slum by a railway line. In Manila and Jakarta, she visited decrepit and makeshift houses. San Francisco has a median home value of \$1.3m and would seem an incongruous next stop. Farha had come on an unofficial visit, at the invitation of academics and advocates.</p> <p>"The situation is unacceptable in light of the wealth of the country," she said, adding that she was "deeply, deeply concerned" by the homelessness she saw.</p> <p>Poverty in the US is an established UN focus; last month, another rapporteur was dismayed by visits to Skid Row in Los Angeles and hookworm-afflicted deep south communities.</p> <p>In 2011, a UN representative visited Sacramento. After discovering that homeless people were defecating into plastic bags, the official wrote to the city's mayor. Such circumstances, she said, could amount to "cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment".</p> <p>Farha squatted by the man with the cooking fire. His name was Eric Hoch, and he was 30.</p> <p>The Minnesotan told her he had been homeless in San Francisco for two or three years. He complained of an old gunshot wound and said he did not understand the welfare system. He does not have a tent – he sleeps bundled in a blanket on the street.</p> <p>"I'm going to ask kind of personal questions," Farha said. "What do you do if you have to go the</p>

bathroom?”

Hoch described how he timed his bowel movements to the opening hours of restrooms in surrounding businesses.

“Did you know you have a right to housing?” she asked, referring to article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. How would he react if the government offered him somewhere to live with no strings attached?

“That’d probably be something I’d hop, skip and jump to,” Hoch said.

“That’s something your government is supposed to do,” Farha said. “I hate to tell you, you’re being ripped off.”

Homelessness is on the rise in the US for the first time since the great recession. In San Francisco, about 7,500 homeless people were counted last year, more than two-thirds suffering from health conditions including brain injuries and HIV/Aids.

It would be easy to dismiss such extreme poverty as a product of human frailty. Ben Carson, secretary of housing and urban development, has described poverty as a “state of mind”. Farha takes a contrary view.

“If I turned to San Francisco and there were 100 people who were homeless, I might say, ‘Hmm, this is probably about psychological disability, drug dependence, a history of sexual abuse in their childhood’ or something like that. I might be able to say that it is very individualized.

“But when you’re seeing the numbers of people who are homeless here and in every other city, you just know it’s structural.”

There is almost nowhere in the US that is affordable for those earning minimum wage. The country is short about 7.5m homes for extremely low-income renters. In San Francisco, the waitlist to get into a homeless shelter is more than 1,000 names long.

“In international human rights law,” Farha said, “providing shelter to people who are homeless is the absolute minimum standard for any country, regardless of resources.”

The next day, in Oakland, she saw one kind of stopgap. In the shadow of several freeways, the city had installed a scattering of sheds, housing about 35 people on a bare patch of gravel. The sheds do not come with electricity, plumbing or insulation. Each has one small window.

Such “tiny homes” are increasingly used in western cities when permanent housing is unavailable. Experts fear they could pave the way for American shantytowns.

The alternative was evident a mile or two away, in a string of shacks built from discarded materials. Farha picked her way through one, an immense, rickety warren of tarps and wood, the floor sodden and covered with broken glass. The inhabitant, Mavin Carter-Griffin, told Farha she sometimes felt she had created a Burning Man-style art project. Other times, it felt like a trap.

“There’s this abject humiliation and embarrassment,” she said. “I’m astounded that my life is here.”

Outside, there was a portable toilet serving dozens of people. It was overflowing, said a member of Farha’s team who used it.

Farha was struck by the stories she heard of homeless people losing their few possessions in encampment sweeps, and laws that criminalize sitting on sidewalks or food sharing. “There’s a cruelty here that I don’t think I’ve seen,” she said.

	<p>Next she was heading to Los Angeles, where thousands live in conditions that do not meet standards set for refugee camps.</p> <p>“I’m slightly terrified to go to LA,” Farha said, “because everyone says LA is even worse.”</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Tacoma top city for small conventions
SOURCE	http://www.kiro7.com/news/south-sound-news/tacoma-is-rated-the-top-small-city-for-conventions/687873984
GIST	<p>Want to hold a convention? According to MeetingSource.com, the number one city to choose is Tacoma -- as long as it's a small convention of one thousand people or less.</p> <p>“When you get those kinds of accolades and recognition, I like to say it gives you a seat at the table,” said Travel Tacoma President and CEO Bennish Brown. “People listen.”</p> <p>The city made the top 10 for small conventions last year, coming in at number four.</p> <p>Now the City of Destiny tops the list of smaller convention venues.</p> <p>MeetingSource.com cites things like safety for visitors, walkability around downtown, mild weather and affordable hotel rooms.</p> <p>The ranking comes as Travel Tacoma reports 2017 as another record year for hotel occupancy with revenue soaring by more than 9 percent and topping \$127 million over 2016.</p> <p>And then there is this: Sunset magazine recently listed Tacoma as one of the nation's best small towns in which to live.</p> <p>Brown says it all adds up to a promising new year for the South Sound.</p> <p>“Tacoma has found itself, and once you’ve found yourself, you know that you can be the best self you can be. I think that’s where we are with Tacoma,” Bennish said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 King Co. homeless campaign numbers
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/king-county-homeless-campaign-releases-staggering-numbers/281-510666941
GIST	<p>King County and some area cities hosted their first discussion on ways to solve the regional problem of homelessness Monday.</p> <p>Last month, they announced the campaign called "One Table" -- a high-level workgroup from different jurisdictions. The roomful of people who met in South Seattle came from various disciplines, including housing, behavior health, and the criminal justice system.</p> <p>Monday's meeting covered the data on how bad the homeless issue is in the county, and some of the actual numbers were quite staggering.</p> <p>In the last five years, the number of people entering homelessness in the county has almost doubled, from 16,502 in 2012, up to 29,462 in 2016.</p> <p>In the last two years, the number of people becoming homeless far exceeded the number people finding a way to get out of it. In 2017, for example, 25,372 entered homelessness, whereas 18,971 exited.</p>

	<p>The increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness correlated with rising rents for a one bedroom studio apartment. In 2007, the average studio rental was \$792.; In 2017, it was \$1,370.</p> <p>Leaders of King County, Seattle, and Auburn addressed the questions about the possibility of new sales or property taxes to pay for the problem.</p> <p>"That is going be one of the main outcomes of this conversation," said King County Executive Dow Constantine. "What we need to do and what we're willing to do to get to that prevention side of the equation."</p> <p>But Auburn Mayor Nancy Backus said raising taxes should not be the first consideration.</p> <p>"We should not take taxes as the number one way of how we're going to solve this issue," said Backus. "We need to look at what are we currently doing that might not be working, how can we better utilize the resources we currently have."</p> <p>Dealing with mental health and drug use will undoubtedly be part of the price tag. Of the 8,080 households assessed in the county in the last year, 63 percent had mental health or substance abuse problems.</p> <p>Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan hopes for solutions to a regional problem.</p> <p>"It may even include having a joint agency that has the ability, the resources to tackle this rather than trying to do it in pockets," Durkan said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Western Wash. firefighters need help w/tools
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/01/22/western-washington-firefighters-need-your-help-to-save-lives-extrication-training-group-loses-practice-tools/
GIST	<p>PUYALLUP, Wash. — A group who’s dedicated their lives to helping others, the Puyallup Extrication Team, needs the public’s help to continue their training program.</p> <p>Since 2000, the team has been training first responders in the art of extrication. This often includes training on how to use the ‘Jaws of Life’ to rescue people trapped as a result of car crashes.</p> <p>“We’ve taught thousands of firefighters over the course of 20 years,” said Jeff Pugh, president of the Puyallup Extrication Team.</p> <p>Until recently, the nonprofit group of volunteers used a donated ‘Jaws of Life’ tool set to conduct their training. However last year, the company loaning the tools decided they could no longer continue to lend the tools out, so they took them back.</p> <p>“Losing these tools that support that’s behind us is huge for us. We still would continue our efforts, but it’s not going to be what it could be. It should be. It has been,” said Pugh.</p> <p>That’s why the group has decided to take their fate into their own hands and purchase their own set of ‘Jaws of Life’ tools to train with. They need about \$30,000 to purchase the tools, and as of Monday night, they’re far from reaching their goal.</p> <p>The Puyallup Extrication Team trains fire department and firefighters both here locally, domestically and internationally. Often they’re providing training departments don’t or can’t offer. Their goal is to make first responders better and faster at extrication.</p> <p>A good example of the situation the Puyallup Extrication Team trains for happened last month when an</p>

	<p>Amtrak train derailed on I-5 in DuPont. Three people were killed and dozens more injured. First responders used the ‘Jaws of Life’ to pry open the train cars and rescue survivors. Pugh said his group trained some of the agencies that responded to the derailment.</p> <p>The team’s ‘Jaws of Life’ training class in March is already sold out. Pugh said they hope to borrow tools to teach the class, but if they can’t, they’ll teach without.</p> <p>If you would like to help out, there are two ways to donate to the group: either go to their website, www.thepxteam.org or on their ‘Go Fund Me’ page www.gofundme.com/jaws-of-life-purchase.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Many homeowners property taxes to rise
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/01/22/many-homeowners-will-see-higher-property-taxes-to-pay-for-education/
GIST	<p>SNOHOMISH COUNTY, Wash. — The Legislature’s plan to fully fund public education is about to have a real impact on homeowners in Puget Sound.</p> <p>Last year, lawmakers made a deal to spend \$2 billion more for education.</p> <p>This came after the state Supreme Court held legislators in contempt for not performing their paramount duty of fully funding public education.</p> <p>The ruling, known as the McCleary decision, came down in 2012.</p> <p>Lawmakers last year finally passed a plan that relies on property taxes.</p> <p>On Monday, Snohomish County released some of the first property assessments.</p> <p>If you live in a single family home valued at \$400,000, you can expect to pay about \$330 more per year for just the education portion.</p> <p>When it comes to overall taxes, it will all depend on what neighborhood you live in.</p> <p>Take, for example, in Woodway, an average homeowner can expect to pay nearly \$1,200 more per year while Lake Stevens and Edmonds will see about an \$800 increase.</p> <p>Marysville will see property taxes jump nearly \$400.</p> <p>Snohomish is coming in at about \$550 and Lynnwood is about \$770.</p> <p>Pierce County says an average single-family home valued at \$321,000 can expect to pay about \$330 more per year.</p> <p>If you think those hikes are big, King County is expected to be higher.</p> <p>“It will be a significant increase,” King County Property Assessor John Wilson said.</p> <p>Wilson says the Legislature’s deal is putting the heaviest burden on King County homeowners.</p> <p>“Massive tax shifts from King County taxpayers into the state coffers, to fund education to pay for elsewhere across the state,” Wilson said.</p> <p>Last year, some lawmakers predicted property taxes would fall in some parts of South King County but Wilson says that is just not true.</p>

	<p>“I would love to live in the rich fantasy world they live; in mine, (they) show property taxes going up throughout the county,” Wilson said.</p> <p>Wilson is expecting angry calls, although his office didn’t make the rules.</p> <p>“We’ve warned our staff about that, some people are going to take it out on us,” Wilson said.</p> <p>The King County Assessor says they are still crunching the exact numbers. The notices are expected to go out late February.</p> <p>Homeowners will start paying higher bills starting in April.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Legislature appeals public records case
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/legislature-appeals-to-state-supreme-court-in-public-records-case/
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA — The Washington Legislature wants to take its public-records lawsuit straight to the top.</p> <p>Attorneys for the Legislature on Monday asked the state Supreme Court to weigh in on lawmakers’ long-running exemption from Washington’s Public Records Act, according to state records.</p> <p>The appeal comes after a Thurston County judge Friday ruled that legislative leaders had violated Washington’s Public Records Act by declining requests for records.</p> <p>For decades, lawmakers and the Legislature’s administrative offices have claimed they are exempt from the state Public Records Act.</p> <p>That exemption has allowed lawmakers and legislative officials to withhold work calendars, emails and harassment complaints against elected officials, among other documents.</p> <p>Those are the types of documents that local governments, state agencies and the governor’s office routinely make public.</p> <p>In Friday’s ruling, Judge Chris Lanese wrote that, “The plain and unambiguous language of the Public Records Act applies to the offices of senators and representatives ...”</p> <p>Lanese, however, ruled that Washington’s records act doesn’t apply to the Legislature’s administrative offices, such as those of the chief clerk of the House and secretary of the Senate.</p> <p>Before the state Supreme Court hears the case, its justices must first decide to accept it, according to Wendy Ferrell, a spokeswoman for the courts.</p> <p>The justices could instead transfer the case to an appeals court.</p> <p>That decision will likely take several months, Ferrell wrote in an email.</p> <p>In September, 10 news organizations, including The Seattle Times and The Associated Press, filed the legal challenge to the Legislature’s public-records exemption.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Deluge rain, snow in western Washington
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SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/are-you-ready-here-comes-a-deluge-of-rain-snow-across-western-washington/
GIST	<p>Meteorologists are warning of slick roads and limited visibility Tuesday as a winter storm sweeps Western Washington, drenching the lowlands with rain and dumping up to 3 feet of snow on Mount Rainier.</p> <p>From Snohomish to Lewis counties, the National Weather Service issued a “winter storm watch” in the North Cascades, urging drivers to take precaution with oncoming snow and sleet beginning Tuesday morning.</p> <p>Elevations above 2,000 feet could accumulate 1 to 2 feet of snow, with Mount Rainier seeing more.</p> <p>Meanwhile, cities across the western lowlands will accumulate various amounts of rain, including up to 1 inch possible across the Seattle area, said Johnny Burg, a meteorologist for the service.</p> <p>“It’s going to be wet tomorrow, and in the Cascades, it’s going to be a lot snow,” said Johnny Burg, a meteorologist for the service. “Travel will be affected.”</p> <p>Drivers in the mountains, such as Stevens Pass and Snoqualmie Pass, should prepare for difficult conditions by packing an emergency kit, including flashlights and a spare cellphone charger, among other essentials. Call 511 or check the Washington Department of Transportation’s website for the latest roadway conditions.</p> <p>Meteorologists expect the heaviest snow in the afternoon and evening, with Mount Rainier tallying the most. Paradise could receive some 3 feet by Wednesday morning, the winter-storm watch says.</p> <p>Also, strong winds between 20 to 35 mph, with gusts near 45, could challenge drivers and threaten power lines and trees in San Juan County and the Admiralty Inlet area Tuesday, according to the service.</p> <p>The storm’s moisture in Seattle Tuesday will kick off a series of wet and cloudy days, as the forecast calls for a chance of rain, at least in the form of showers, through Sunday.</p> <p>In addition to rain, meteorologists expect wind speeds between 7 to 9 mph on Tuesday and 13 to 15 mph, with gusts up to 21 mph, on Wednesday.</p> <p>High temperatures for the week will mostly be in the upper 40s, according to the service’s forecast.</p> <p>This weather comes after an unusually dry and sunny series of days last week, snapping records for warmth, including the highest temperature ever recorded by the service in January, 64 degrees.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 High gas prices ‘new normal’?
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Energy-News/2018/01/23/High-gas-prices-could-be-the-new-normal/8021516704899/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=3
GIST	<p>Jan. 23 (UPI) -- Abnormal trends for U.S. retail gasoline prices so far could point to higher prices for the year, but there may be short-term relief in store, analysts said.</p> <p>Motor club AAA reports a national average retail price of \$2.54 per gallon for Tuesday, a slight increase from the previous day and about 10 cents per gallon, or 4 percent, higher than one month ago.</p> <p>Jeanette Casselano, a spokeswoman for AAA, said gas prices usually drop by as much as 20 cents during the first few weeks of January as holiday demand sloughs off, but this year the trend is reversed.</p> <p>"For consumers, the question is how high are gas prices going to go in 2018," she said in a statement.</p>

Crude oil prices, a major factor in the price at the pump, continue to flirt with four-year highs because of lower production from members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and expectations of economically-driven demand pressure. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis releases its estimate of fourth quarter gross domestic product on Friday.

On Monday, the International Monetary Fund said global economic growth has been strengthening at least since 2016, but warned of complacency because of lop-sided growth and cyclical momentum.

By market, the West Coast in the United States continues to be the most expensive in the country, with California taking the top mark with \$3.19 per gallon, though that's skewed slight by a new fuels tax that went into effect last year. Nearby Washington, however, is close behind with \$2.94 per gallon.

Gas prices in the region or more or less stable and could move lower. The inventory for gasoline in the market is at a four-year high, federal data show.

The Great Lakes market, meanwhile, is the most volatile, with Indiana and Michigan both posting declines in retail gasoline prices from last week of more than 10 cents. Compared with this time last year, however, those same states are paying 30 cents or more for a gallon of gas and are at the top of the list for yearly increases.

Patrick DeHaan, a petroleum analyst at GasBuddy, said the region is vulnerable to a few refineries and a phenomenon he calls "price cycling," a situation where retail stations drop their prices to compete, but are forced to drive them up again to make money.

"Great Lakes refinery issues continue to flare up with no warning and gas prices there may continue to be more volatile in coming weeks," he said in a statement.

He said last week that there may be some relief in sight for gas prices as a while as refineries start making a summer blend of gasoline and sell off their winter stocks at a bargain, but that relief might last only through the middle of February.

Federal data show the average retail price for a gallon of regular unleaded gasoline was \$2.42 last year and should be about 15 cents per gallon higher for all of 2018.

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HEADLINE	01/22 More people bring animals on planes
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/animalia/wp/2018/01/22/fur-and-fury-at-40000-feet-as-more-people-bring-animals-on-planes/?utm_term=.8835021cb472
GIST	<p>When Marlin Jackson arrived at his row on a Delta flight from Atlanta to San Diego in June, the middle seat was already occupied by a man with a sizable dog on his lap. Jackson squeezed by them to his window seat, and the Labrador mix lunged at his face. The attack lasted about 30 seconds, according to Jackson's attorney, and left him with facial wounds that required 28 stitches and scars that are still visible today.</p> <p>The mauling, which Delta said was inflicted by a canine identified as an "emotional support" animal, was among the thousands of incidents that just pushed the nation's largest airline to tighten rules for passengers flying with service or comfort animals. In announcing the changes Friday, Delta said it flew 250,000 animals in those categories last year, up 150 percent from 2015, while "incidents" such as biting or defecating had nearly doubled since 2016.</p> <p>Delta emphasized safety concerns in detailing the increased documentation owners that will be required to provide about their animals. But its action also was spurred by a widespread perception among airlines and disability rights advocates that some fliers are fraudulently taking advantage of federal law to bring untrained pets of myriad species into crowded cabins.</p>

Though the Americans With Disabilities Act defines service animals as trained dogs or miniature horses, airlines are bound by the more liberal Air Carrier Access Act of 1986, which allows free travel for “any animal” that is trained to assist a person with a disability or that provides emotional support. Airlines can require passengers with creatures in the second category to produce a letter from a physician or mental-health professional, but the documents are easily forged or obtained from websites that provide cursory, questionnaire-style “exams.”

The result, airline officials complain, has been a surge in poorly trained animals that has turned some flights into airborne menageries, with dogs blocking beverage carts, cats urinating on seats and ducks wandering the aisles.

“It’s created a real issue on our planes,” said Taylor Garland, a spokeswoman for the Association of Flight Attendants, which applauded Delta’s changes. Garland said one union member was asked to administer oxygen to a dog that, according to its owner, was having anxiety midflight. Others have been bitten. “The aircraft cabin is a unique space, and ... we need to recognize the limitations that exist when you’re flying in the air in a metal tube.”

Other airlines have not released their own figures, and the Department of Transportation says it does not collect data on service and support animals on U.S. flights. But the agency’s reports on disability-related complaints show that those involving service animals nearly quadrupled between 2012 and 2016, when more than 2,300 were filed. Scrutiny of service animals is also sharpening on the ground: Nineteen states now have laws that criminalize passing off pets as service animals.

Airlines have pushed for new federal rules to reduce fraud, and the transportation agency plans to begin taking comments on proposed regulations in July.

But the outcry is not limited to airline officials. People with allergies to pet dander, who are also protected under federal disability laws, often think that their concerns are trumped by those of passengers with animals, said Sanaz Eftekhari of the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, which has started collecting stories from its members. And service-animal groups say that an increase in what are clearly pets on planes has led to heightened scrutiny of working animals — and even endangered some.

Gillian Lindt, 86, is blind and flies regularly with her guide dog between Washington, France and her main residence in Florida. She said she always requests a window seat so Stella’s tail does not stretch into the aisle, and the 54-pound dog always wears a harness and sits quietly at her owner’s feet.

On a recent flight, Lindt said, a woman sat next to her in the middle seat and plopped a small, barking dog onto the tray table. The woman said it was an emotional support animal and suggested that the two dogs could play together. Lindt was aghast.

“I’m trying to explain that, unfortunately, my dog would love to play, but they’re trained not to, because this is work,” she said. The woman was moved across the aisle, and an apologetic flight attendant wiped down the tray; the little dog barked on and off through the flight. “My dog knows she must never, ever bark when she’s in a harness,” Lindt added.

In 2016, the Transportation Department convened a panel of disability advocates and airline industry officials to propose new regulations on service animals, as well as on two disability-related issues relating to plane restrooms and in-flight entertainment. Several participants said they expected the animal topic to be the easiest to negotiate, but it was the only one on which the committee failed to reach consensus after nearly seven months.

Published documents show disagreement on many details. The airlines were hoping to align practices with the ADA by limiting permitted species. Some disability advocates suggested defining emotional support animals as only dogs and cats; others wanted to allow rabbits and household birds. Service-animal organizations wanted the department to recognize “psychiatric service animals” — typically dogs, which

can be trained to perform tasks such as turning on lights for individuals with post-traumatic stress disorder — as working animals that don't require a medical letter.

Several participants backed tougher questioning at the time of ticket purchase to deter those trying to present pets as service or support animals — perhaps in part to avoid the travel charge of \$100 or more they'd otherwise face.

"I'm not sure how big an effect it would have, but it keeps the honest people honest," said Jenine Stanley, the consumer relations coordinator for the Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind and America's VetDogs, who co-chaired the committee and praised Delta's revised rules.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness wanted any requirements to apply across the board to both service and support animals, said Angela Kimball, its national director of advocacy and public policy, who called the negotiations "so politically fraught." But the group did not want changes to create "undue burdens" that could prevent people with disabilities from traveling. Obtaining a letter from a mental-health professional can be expensive and time-consuming, Kimball noted.

"Under current regulations, there's a disparate response to emotional support animals ... and we think that it's essentially a form of discrimination against a set of disabilities that are not visible," she said. "Any time you marginalize or create different conditions for a set of people, it's very disconcerting and stigmatizing."

Delta's new requirements, which take effect March 1, retain those distinctions. Passengers with trained service animals will need to submit a veterinary health form at least 48 hours before travel to the airline's new "Service Animal Support Desk." Customers with emotional-support animals or psychiatric service animals must do the same but also must provide a letter from a doctor or mental-health professional and a signed document saying the animal is trained to behave in public. (Delta also recently expanded its list of prohibited critters, including "farm poultry," hedgehogs and anything with tusks.)

The rise in emotional-support animals has coincided with growing publicity on the mental-health benefit of pets — an idea researchers say is poorly substantiated through studies but widely embraced by the public. Many owners say they, like service animal users, greatly depend on their emotional-support animals and face undue suspicion because of fakers.

Douglas Kidd, executive director of the National Association of Airline Passengers, said that much of the blame for the problems lies with Congress, which wrote too broad a law, and air carriers that have overbooked flights, reduced legroom and poorly treated animals that fly in the cargo bay. He argued that airlines should designate more spacious rows for passengers with true service or support animals.

"It's certainly a difficult situation to navigate," acknowledged J. Ross Massey, the lawyer Jackson hired soon after being mauled on that 2017 Delta flight. But in that instance, Massey said, the airline's middle-seat placement of a passenger traveling with a large dog was a "recipe for disaster." The 44-year-old Jackson, a government employee who lives near Mobile, Ala., is now preparing for plastic surgery to correct some of the damage. He also is mulling legal action, according to Massey.

"There are competing interests. Obviously, anybody with the need for a service animal should have one," he said. "But the other 99 percent of people on the plane would also like to rest easy being able to know that ... this animal is trained to go into such a stressful situation."

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HEADLINE	01/22 Flu season continues to worsen
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/flu-season-continues-to-worsen-1516661186
GIST	The number of people sick with the flu is continuing to climb, and transmission is now the most intense it has been since the 2009 pandemic, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention officials said Monday.

The federal agency continued to track and respond to the epidemic despite the government shutdown. Its flu laboratories were working Monday, and “we are continuing to look at data we have received from states so that public-health officials can know about their community and influenza,” CDC Director Brenda Fitzgerald said in an interview.

CDC officials said earlier this month that they had hoped flu cases were peaking. But the percentage of outpatient visits for flu-like illnesses climbed in the week ending Jan. 13, according to the agency’s weekly update, released Friday. The level surpassed every season except 2009-2010, when a new strain of flu to which no one had immunity swept around the world.

The influenza virus behind most infections this year, called H3N2, is notorious for causing bad flu seasons, and the flu is widespread in every state in the continental U.S. The District of Columbia is an exception. H3N2 usually hits the very young and elderly hard; this season, many people between the ages of 50 and 65 are also sick, for reasons that aren’t clear. “People in that age range should be very careful to protect themselves from being exposed,” Dr. Fitzgerald said.

This season still isn’t as severe as 2014-2015, though, when more people were hospitalized from the flu, the CDC said.

Dr. Fitzgerald said it is hard to know when the transmission will let up. “It appears that we are nearing the peak, but when the exact peak will be we certainly do not know.”

Exactly why the flu has struck so intensely in the past few weeks isn’t known, said Daniel Jernigan, director of the CDC’s influenza division. “Everybody seems to be getting influenza at the same time this year,” he said. Gatherings during the holidays, the cold weather or characteristics of this year’s dominant virus are possible factors, he said. “There are just a lot of issues that are a little hard to explain at this point, but we’ll be looking at that as the season goes on,” he said.

The flu can be hard to distinguish from other winter bugs and has to be confirmed by a test. Flu symptoms include sore throat, cough, fever and muscle aches, a key feature, said Dr. Jernigan. But some people have the flu without a fever, he said.

Dr. Fitzgerald urged precautions such as a vaccine, frequent hand washing, covering mouths during coughing, using wipes to clean around an airplane seat, and other steps, calling them particularly important now because of how active this flu season is.

“We want you to take action to protect yourself and to protect others from the flu,” she said. “For those who are thinking, ‘oh, I’ll just go to work anyway,’ remember that flu might make you miserable for a few days, but it could be deadly to someone else.”

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HEADLINE	01/22 Texas grass fires prompt evacuations
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/major-grass-fires-north-texas-prompt-evacuations-parker-county-flower-mound-willow-park/
GIST	<p>FLOWER MOUND, Texas -- Crews are fighting a string of grass fires in North Texas that's now led to evacuations in some areas, CBS Dallas/Fort Worth reports. A major grass fire just east of Willow Park in Parker County has burned more than 200 acres and is growing.</p> <p>The wind has been gusting at 30 to 35 miles per hour and troopers shut down Interstate 20 eastbound just past 1187 at 2:15 p.m. There have been no reports of injuries.</p> <p>Several local schools were affected by the blaze. Walsh Elementary evacuated to Daniel Ninth Grade Campus and McCall Elementary evacuated to Aledo High School.</p>

	<p>Parker County Judge Mark Riley signed a disaster declaration that will allow for more resources to fight the fire. Multiple departments are fighting the fire in the area of Fox Hunt Trail.</p> <p>Homes near Indian Camp Road and Ranch House Road are being evacuated according to Willow Park officials. The fire is moving east and is unpredictable.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Japan volcano eruption, avalanche kills 1
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/volcano-japan-mount-kusatsu-shirane-erupts-killing-solider-skiers-avalanche/
GIST	<p>TOKYO -- At least 16 people skiing on the slopes of a volcano in central Japan were injured by flying rocks during a surprise eruption and a subsequent avalanche Tuesday, and one person later died.</p> <p>Six skiers, including the man who died, were among 30 Japanese soldiers who were participating in ski training when they were buried by the avalanche about a half hour after the volcanic eruption, fire department and defense officials said.</p> <p>Only the crater had been off-limits because of low-level volcanic activity before Mount Kusatsu-Shirane erupted with rocks and ash around 10 a.m. The Japan Meteorological Agency has since banned access to the mountain, and a large swath of the snow-covered volcano was covered by dark gray ash later in the day.</p> <p>The agency also said the eruption and the avalanche could not be linked immediately. Snow conditions and seismic activity are some of the potential causes of an avalanche.</p> <p>Five of the civilian skiers suffered serious injuries such as broken bones, but none of the injuries were life-threatening, said a regional fire department official, Hayato Tobe.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 China speaks out on US naval patrols
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-china/as-u-s-goes-quiet-on-close-naval-patrols-china-speaks-out-idUSKBN1FC0JK
GIST	<p>HONG KONG/BEIJING (Reuters) - While the Pentagon plays down patrols close to Chinese-controlled reefs and islands in the South China Sea, Beijing is sounding the alarm about them, seeking to justify what experts say will be an even greater presence in the disputed region.</p> <p>Chinese officials publicized the latest U.S. "freedom of navigation patrol", protesting the deployment last week of the destroyer USS Hopper to within 12 nautical miles of Scarborough Shoal, an atoll west of the Philippines which Beijing disputes with Manila.</p> <p>It was the second time in recent months that confirmation of a patrol came from Beijing, not Washington, which had previously announced or leaked details.</p> <p>Bonnie Glaser, a security expert at Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies, said while the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump had a policy of keeping the patrols regular but low key, China was willing to publicly exploit them to further their military ends.</p> <p>"It is difficult to conclude otherwise," she said. "Even as it pushes ahead with these (patrols), I don't think the Trump administration has really come to terms with what it will tolerate from China in the South China Sea, and what it simply won't accept, and Beijing seems to grasp this."</p>

In official statements, Chinese foreign ministry official Lu Kang said China would take “necessary measures to firmly safeguard its sovereignty” in the resource-rich sea.

Some regional diplomats and security analysts believe that will involve increased Chinese deployments and the quicker militarization of China’s expanded facilities across the Spratlys archipelago.

While U.S. officials did not target China in their comments, couching freedom-of-navigation patrols as a “routine” assertions of international law, Beijing was quick to cast Washington as the provocateur.

The Communist Party’s official People’s Daily newspaper on Monday accused the U.S. of upsetting recent peace and co-operation and “wantonly provoking trouble”, saying China had must now strengthen its presence in the strategic waterway.

In recent years, China has built up several reefs and islets into large-scale airstrips and bases as it seeks to assert and enforce its claims to much of the sea, through which some \$3 trillion in trade passes annually. The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei, as well as Taiwan, hold rival claims.

Chinese coastguard and People’s Liberation Army navy ships patrol vast swathes of the South China Sea, routinely shadowing U.S. and other international naval deployments, regional naval officers say.

Zhang Baohui, a mainland security analyst at Hong Kong’s Lingnan University, told Reuters he believed Beijing was rattled by Trump’s sharpening Asia strategy and they might be tempted to react in the South China Sea, even after months of relative calm.

“We can perhaps expect the Chinese to push ahead with militarization as retaliation,” he said.

A new U.S. national defense strategy unveiled last week stressed the need to counter the rising authoritarian powers of China and Russia, outlining a need to better support allies and newer partners against coercion.

While most analysts and regional envoys believe China remains keen to avoid an actual conflict with the significantly more powerful U.S. navy in the South China Sea, it is working to close the gap.

The latest patrol was at least the fifth such patrol under the Trump administration and the first to Scarborough - one of the more contentious features in the region.

Scarborough, once a U.S. bombing range, was blockaded by the Chinese in 2012, prompting the Philippines to launch its successful legal case in the Hague against China’s excessive territorial claims.

China allowed Filipino fishermen back to Scarborough’s rich waters last year, but it remains a potential flashpoint as both sides claim sovereignty and China maintains a steady presence of ships nearby.

While experts and regional envoys expect China to ramp up operations from the Spratlys, none expect it to build on Scarborough - something widely believed to be a red line that would provoke the United States, given its long-standing security treaty with the Philippines.

Shi Yinhong, who heads the Center for American Studies at Beijing’s Renmin University, said China had “lived with” U.S. patrols for several years but the key facts on the ground remained in China’s favor and broader tensions had “improved remarkably”.

“These islands, especially those with reclaimed land and military capability already deployed, they’re still in Chinese hands,” Shi, who has advised the Chinese government on diplomacy, told Reuters.

“I don’t think Trump has the stomach and the guts to change this fundamental status quo.”

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HEADLINE	01/23 Strong quake shakes Gulf of Alaska
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/tsunami-alert-issued-after-gulf-alaska-earthquake-n840111
GIST	<p>A tsunami watch was issued for the coast from Washington to California as well as Hawaii early Tuesday after a preliminary-magnitude 8.2 earthquake struck the Gulf of Alaska.</p> <p>The quake struck at 4:31 a.m. ET about 330 miles south from the coast of Alaska at a depth of six miles, the USGS said.</p> <p>“Based on the preliminary earthquake parameters ... widespread hazardous tsunami waves are possible,” the NWS Tsunami Warning Center said. “No areas covered by this message appear to be immediately threatened. However... the situation is still under investigation,” it said.</p> <p>The Anchorage Police Department said the city was not covered by the warning and was outside the danger zone. It urged residents not to call 911.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Vermont legalizes recreational pot
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/vermont-marijuana-legalized-recreational-pot/2018/01/22/id/838745/
GIST	<p>Vermont became the ninth U.S. state and third in the Northeast to legalize recreational marijuana use Monday when Republican Governor Phil Scott signed a bill passed by the legislature earlier this month.</p> <p>The law legalizes possession of up to 1 ounce of the drug, two mature plants and up to four immature plants by people 21 and older beginning July 1. It does not legalize trade in the drug.</p> <p>"Today, with mixed emotions, I have signed H. 511," Scott said in a statement, referring to the measure by its legislative number.</p> <p>He noted he had vetoed an earlier version of the bill that would have opened up sales of the drug, saying a state commission would have time for further study before allowing a retail trade in recreational pot.</p> <p>Neighboring Massachusetts, nearby Maine, and six other states have legalized marijuana use as a result of voter initiatives.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Philippines volcano spews lava; 56K flee
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/philippine-volcano-spews-fountains-lava-big-ash-plumes-52535733?cid=clicksource_79_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>The Philippines' most active volcano spewed fountains of red-hot lava and massive ash plumes anew Tuesday in a dazzling but increasingly dangerous eruption that has sent 56,000 villagers fleeing to evacuation centers.</p> <p>Lava fountains gushed up 700 meters (2,300 feet) above Mount Mayon's crater and ash plumes rose up to 3 kilometers (1.9 miles) at night and at least twice Tuesday, according to the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology. An explosive eruption at noon Monday was the most powerful since the volcano started acting up more than a week ago.</p> <p>"We couldn't sleep last night because of the loud rumblings. It sounded like an airplane that's about to land," Quintin Velardo, a 59-year-old farmer, told The Associated Press at an evacuation center in Legazpi city where he took his wife, children and grandchildren on Tuesday.</p>

	<p>Despite the danger, he said he needed to return to his village, about 8 kilometers (5 miles) from the erupting volcano, to take his cow and water buffalo to safety. A few minutes later, the volcano belched a massive column of grayish ash that punched through white clouds into the blue sky.</p> <p>"There it goes again," Velardo said, his family huddled near him.</p> <p>Authorities warned a violent eruption may occur in hours or days, characterized by more rumblings and pyroclastic flows — superheated gas and volcanic debris that race down the slopes at high speeds, vaporizing everything in their path.</p> <p>After Monday's explosion, officials raised Mayon's alert level to four on a scale of five, and the danger zone was expanded to 8 kilometers (5 miles) from the crater, requiring thousands more residents to be evacuated, including at least 12,000 who returned to their homes last week as Mayon's rumblings temporarily eased and then scrambled back to the emergency shelters this week.</p> <p>At least 56,217 people were taking shelter in 46 evacuation camps Tuesday and army troops and police were helping move more villagers from their homes, officials said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Strong quake shakes Indonesia's Java
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/quake-shakes-indonesias-java-buildings-sway-capital-52541241?
GIST	<p>A moderately strong earthquake shook the Indonesian island of Java on Tuesday, damaging buildings near the epicenter and shaking office buildings in the country's capital.</p> <p>There were no immediate reports of injuries and no tsunami was generated.</p> <p>According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the magnitude 6.0 quake was centered off western Java at a depth of about 43 kilometers (27 miles). The epicenter was about 153 kilometers (95 miles) southwest of Jakarta, the capital.</p> <p>Zainal, who heads Banten province's search and rescue agency, said the quake damaged houses and other buildings in Lebak district, including a high school and hospital, and a mosque in Pandeglang district collapsed.</p> <p>Buildings in the capital swayed for 10 to 20 seconds and some ordered evacuations, sending streams of people into the streets.</p> <p>TVOne television showed workers and shoppers running out of a mall in central Jakarta in panic.</p> <p>Witnesses told TVOne that houses were damaged in coastal areas of West Java, where many people ran to higher ground, fearing a tsunami.</p> <p>Indonesia's Department of Meteorology, Climate and Geophysics said the quake didn't have the potential to generate a tsunami and no warning was issued.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Australia group: 40 refugees headed to US
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/australian-refugee-advocates-40-refugees-bound-us-52542657?
GIST	Refugee advocates say a group of 40 refugees denied entry to Australia has left an immigration camp on

	<p>Papua New Guinea bound for resettlement in the United States.</p> <p>Refugee Action Coalition spokesman Ian Rintoul said the men left Manus Island on Tuesday on planes to Los Angeles and New York, and would likely be distributed to a number of U.S. cities.</p> <p>Australia's government did not immediately confirm the report.</p> <p>U.S. President Donald Trump has reluctantly decided to honor a deal struck by his predecessor, Barack Obama, to resettle up to 1,250 refugees. But Trump has described the deal as "dumb" and promised the refugees will be subject to "extreme vetting."</p> <p>Rintoul said a total of 67 refugees have now left for the U.S. under the deal.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Puerto Rico to sell power company
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/puerto-rico-governor-announces-privatization-state-owned-power/story?id=52533378
GIST	<p>Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rossello has announced that the bankrupt island's utility company will be privatized.</p> <p>In a televised statement, Rosello said the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) was a heavy burden on the island's residents.</p> <p>PREPA "will stop existing as ineffectively as it does today," Rosello said.</p> <p>Portions of the energy authority will be sold off in the coming days, the governor said.</p> <p>Rosello said the current electrical grid is 28 years older than the industry average in the United States. He said that the move will get the island to a goal of more than 30 percent of renewable energy generation.</p> <p>Puerto Rico was plunged into darkness after Hurricane Maria slammed into the island on Sept. 20 as a Category 4 hurricane.</p> <p>Rosello called the move a "leap into the modernization of Puerto Rico."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Study: pollution cooling environment
SOURCE	https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/cleaning-up-air-pollution-may-strengthen-global-warming/
GIST	<p>Pollution in the atmosphere is having an unexpected consequence, scientists say—it's helping to cool the climate, masking some of the global warming that's occurred so far.</p> <p>That means efforts worldwide to clean up the air may cause an increase in warming, as well as other climate effects, as this pollution disappears.</p> <p>New research is helping to quantify just how big that effect might be. A study published this month in the journal Geophysical Research Letters suggests that eliminating the human emission of aerosols—tiny, air-polluting particles often released by industrial activities—could result in additional global warming of anywhere from half a degree to 1 degree Celsius.</p> <p>This would virtually ensure that the planet will warm beyond the most stringent climate targets outlined in the Paris climate agreement. World leaders have set an ambitious goal of keeping global temperatures</p>

within 1.5 to 2 degrees Celsius of their preindustrial levels. But research suggests the world has already warmed by about 1 degree—meaning even another half a degree of warming could push the planet into dangerous territory.

"Since we're trying to keep to a 1.5- or 2-degree target, then this is something we still need to keep in mind," said Bjørn Samset, a climate scientist at Norway's CICERO Center for International Climate Research and the study's lead author.

The research also suggests that removing aerosols could have striking regional consequences by causing major changes in precipitation and other weather patterns in certain parts of the world. Aerosols don't linger in the atmosphere for very long, meaning they don't have time to spread around the world the way carbon dioxide and some other greenhouse gases do. Their effects tend to be strongest in the regions where they were emitted in the first place.

This means the places where air pollution is most severe are likely to experience some of the greatest effects if that pollution were to disappear. East Asia, where aerosol emissions are some of the highest in the world, would be likely to experience a strong increase in precipitation and extreme weather events. To a certain extent, these effects might carry over to other parts of the Northern Hemisphere, which are connected to Asia via major atmospheric currents.

"We also see that the impact that these aerosols have on temperature in Asia really transports northwards to the Arctic region, northern Europe, Norway, the northern U.S.," Samset noted. "That part of the world is also quite sensitive to the changes in aerosols in Asia."

Scientists have long known that some types of pollution can actually help cool the climate. Certain aerosols—sulfate, for instance—can reflect sunlight away from the Earth or enhance sun-reflecting cloud cover. As nations around the world have begun to crack down on air pollution, scientists have grown interested in figuring out how much extra warming might be expected as they disappear. This is critical information for strategizing ways to meet global climate goals, like the 2-degree target.

The new study relied on four global climate models, which the researchers used to simulate the effects of removing all human-caused emissions of the major aerosols, including sulfate and carbon-based particles like soot. The resulting global warming, they concluded, would be anywhere from 0.5 to 1.1 degrees Celsius.

These results are in line with other studies that have investigated the cooling "mask" of aerosols. A 2016 paper published in Nature Geoscience found that up to a half-degree Celsius of the warming that has been observed in the Arctic—the most rapidly warming region on the planet—since 1980 was caused by pollution reductions in Europe. Like the new study, those findings speak to both the considerable cooling effect aerosols have had on the climate and to the atmospheric linkages between different regions of the Northern Hemisphere.

Other research has also supported the idea that aerosols have influenced global temperatures as a whole. Another 2016 paper, also published in Nature Geoscience, suggested that about a third of all the warming that occurred over land areas over the past 50 years was masked—temporarily covered up, in other words—by aerosol pollution.

Collectively, the research indicates that greenhouse gas emissions have had an even greater effect on the climate so far than it appears—it's just that part of it has been obscured by the presence of air pollution. As the air gets cleaner, those masked effects will start to make themselves known.

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HEADLINE 01/22 US 'concern' about Turkey offensive

SOURCE <https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/22/middleeast/tillerson-concern-at-turkeys-syria-offensive->

	intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has expressed "concern" about Turkey's offensive against Kurdish militia in northern Syria, urging restraint but stopping short of demanding an end to the operation.</p> <p>On a visit to London, Tillerson said that Turkey had a right to protect its citizens but urged "restraint" on both sides.</p> <p>The offensive has strained relations between Washington and Ankara, two NATO allies. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan again blasted the United States for supporting what he called a "terrorist organization" on Monday.</p> <p>Turkey has been battling Kurdish unrest in the southeast of the country for years, and views the Syrian Kurds as indistinguishable. But the US and other Western powers see the Kurds in Syria as crucial allies in the effort to defeat ISIS in the region.</p> <p>Pentagon spokesman Marine Maj. Adrian Rankine-Galloway told CNN on Monday that senior US defense officials are in Ankara to discuss security matters, including the situation in northern Syria. "I can confirm that senior leaders from the Department of Defense are fully engaged in working with their Turkish counterparts to de-escalate tensions along the Turkish-Syrian border and to ensure that operations to defeat ISIS continue without interruption," said Rankine-Galloway, further urging restraint on all sides.</p> <p>Gen. Joseph Votel, the commander of US Central Command, was in Syria on Monday, along with US Agency for International Development Administrator Mark Green, on a previously planned trip, according to defense and USAID spokespeople.</p> <p>The special presidential envoy to the anti-ISIS coalition, Ambassador Brett McGurk, was also in the region in recent days. His spokeswoman, Michelle Barton, told CNN that McGurk was there "as part of his regularly scheduled trips to the region to consult with senior leaders on the campaign to defeat ISIS," and stopped in Iraq and Syria.</p> <p>Turkey began airstrikes against the Kurdish YPG on Saturday, followed by a ground incursion into northern Syria involving Turkish special forces and factions of the rebel Free Syrian Army. The Turkish operation is targeting the Kurdish-held enclave of Afrin, to which tens of thousands of Syrians have fled from other parts of the country.</p> <p>The Turkish offensive appeared to have expanded Monday, with elements of the Free Syrian Army opening a second front from the north-east towards the city of Afrin. The FSA forces said they had captured ten Kurdish fighters. According to Turkey's official news agency Anadolu, Turkish troops have taken the strategic Barsaya mountain.</p> <p>Turkish officials say the YPG has fired rockets at several Turkish border towns, an accusation denied by Kurdish commander Sibam Hamo and other YPG officials.</p> <p>The YPG control a large part of northern Syria -- some 24% of all Syrian territory, including hundreds of kilometers along the Turkish border. Both the Obama and Trump administrations have provided the group with training and weapons as the chief US ally against ISIS in Syria. But Turkey regards the YPG as a terrorist organization closely allied to Kurdish separatists inside Turkey.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	01/22 FBI changes cybercrime data definitions
SOURCE	http://www.nextgov.com/cybersecurity/2018/01/massive-reduction-fbi-cyber-crime-takedowns-was-

	result-definition-change/145392/
GIST	<p>An apparent steep decline in FBI takedowns of cybercrime rings was the result of a change in how the bureau collects cybercrime statistics, a spokeswoman told Nextgov.</p> <p>The official tally of FBI cybercrime takedowns dropped from nearly 2,500 in fiscal year 2014, the first year reliable records were kept, to just 262 in fiscal year 2017, according to annual audits.</p> <p>Agents disrupted or dismantled 510 cyber crime operations in fiscal year 2015 and 259 operations in fiscal year 2016, according to the audits.</p> <p>That sharp reduction “was the result of the FBI changing the definitions of what constituted a disruption or dismantlement,” Spokeswoman Jillian Stickels said.</p> <p>“The change was made to ensure that investigative activity was consistently measured across all field offices,” Stickels said.</p> <p>The change, according to a person familiar with the methodology, was that some FBI field offices previously tallied disruptions and dismantlements based on the number of victims rather than the number of perpetrators.</p> <p>So, depending on which office was doing the counting, a major botnet takedown could count as dozens or hundreds of dismantlements -- based on the number of victim computers – or just one – based on the single botnet operator.</p> <p>A botnet is basically a large mass of computing power that’s been stolen, byte by byte, from hundreds or thousands of infected computers and other internet-connected devices around the world. Botnet operators sell that computing juice to the highest bidder who can use it to force adversaries or political opponents offline.</p> <p>Beginning in 2015, the FBI clarified its methodology so all field offices counted takedowns consistently, the person familiar with the matter said.</p> <p>The FBI previously declined to comment on the reduction in an earlier Nextgov story.</p> <p>The perpetrator-based measurement allows for more consistency but might also be less reflective of FBI cyber activities.</p> <p>The Avalanche botnet takedown in December, 2016, for example, involved blocking more than 800,000 malicious internet domains, plus arrests in five countries and cooperating with law enforcement in 35 additional countries, according to Justice Department figures.</p> <p>The botnet targeted more than 40 financial institutions and cost victims hundreds of millions of dollars, the Homeland Security Department said, but the takedown would only count as a single operation.</p> <p>The FBI missed its own target of 500 disruptions or dismantlements in fiscal years 2016 and 2017, according to the audit reports.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 UK official: major cyberattack inevitable
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/23/tuesday-briefing-major-cyber-attack-is-inevitable-warns-security-chief
GIST	A major cyber-attack targeting Britain’s electoral system or infrastructure is inevitable in the next two years, according to the man charged with trying to protect us from the threat. Speaking to the Guardian, Ciaran Martin, head of the UK National Cyber Security Centre, said the US, France and other parts of

	<p>Europe had suffered so-called “category one” attacks and it was a question of “when, not if” Britain became the target.</p> <p>“We will be fortunate to come to the end of the decade without having to trigger a category one attack,” he said, adding that total protection was impossible. The country’s worst attack was the WannaCry ransomware attack in May last year that disrupted hospitals. But it was only classed as a category two attack, of which there have been 34 since the NCSC was set up in October 2016, Martin said. There have been 762 category three incidents, he said.</p> <p>His comments come as the chief of the general staff, General Sir Nick Carter, prepares to issue his own warning about the cyber-attack threat, in particular from Russia. As the debate about defence spending intensifies, Sir Nick will say Moscow now has unconventional military capabilities that the UK will struggle to match.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Evrial: info-stealing Trojan
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/evrial-info-stealing-trojan-steal-cryptocurrency/
GIST	<p>It is just another with just another Cryptocurrency malware targeting unsuspecting users – This time, it modifies addresses to steal cryptocurrency payments.</p> <p>Evrial is the latest to join the bandwagon of information stealing Trojans that sprout every now and then and leave users grasping for enhanced privacy and security. This Trojan is now up for sale at criminal forums and is in high demand.</p> <p>Just like other information stealer Trojans, it also hijacks browser cookies and to extract stored credentials. But, what makes it more lethal is that Evrial is capable of monitoring the Windows clipboard and look for certain text. Once it detects that text, it modifies it into something else. It was identified that Evrial makes it possible to hijack cryptocurrency payments and track Steam trades by replacing authentic payment addresses and links with that of the attacker.</p> <p>Evrial has been discovered by MalwareHunterTeam and Guido Not CISSP security researchers. MalwareHunterTeam states that the Trojan is being sold on Russian criminal forums for 1,500 Rubles (\$27). To sell it, the seller advertised that when the product is purchased an attacker would gain access to a web panel to allow buyer build an executable while the web panel would track the clipboard modifications and let the attacker configure the most feasible replacement strings. Malware does this by connecting to a remote site to upload original string and downloading a string that is to be used as a replacement.</p> <p>According to Lawrence Abrams of Bleeping Computer, an intriguing feature of Evrial is that it only monitors clipboards for certain types of strings and changes them with the ones that the attacker sends, which lets the attacker reroute a cryptocurrency payment to another address owned and controlled by the attacker. To modify strings in such a way is a rare feat and hasn’t been noticed in other malware so far even in those that are capable of matching strings. What’s even more alarming is the fact that the Trojan is configured to detect strings corresponding to a variety of cryptocurrency including Bitcoin, Litecoin, Monero, WebMoney and Qiwi addresses.</p> <p>Moreover, Evrial also steals bitcoin wallets, stored passwords and all the files that are stored on the targeted desktop. It can also capture a screenshot of the active windows and then compiles all the information into a .zip file. The file is then uploaded to a web panel operated by the attacker. It identified the location of bitcoin’s wallet.dat through scanning for the registry key; if the key is found it can steal the wallet to access and steal bitcoins.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Uber dismissive about security flaw
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SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/uber-dismissive-about-flaw-that-lets-attackers-bypass-its-2fa/
GIST	<p>Uber has no plans to fix a critical security flaw in its two-factor authentication (2FA) protocol reported by an IT security researcher.</p> <p>An Indian IT security researcher Karan Saini has discovered a critical security flaw in the two-factor authentication protocol used by the ride-hailing giant Uber to protect user accounts from hijacking and prevent their data from hackers.</p> <p>The flaw, on the other hand, allows attackers to bypass 2FA that could apparently lead them to perform a number of malicious acts including hacking a targeted account, change its username and password and book expensive rides etc.</p> <p>Simply put, 2FA is an extra layer of security that is known as “multi-factor authentication” that requires not only a password and username but also something that only that user has on them, i.e. a piece of information only they should know or have immediately to hand – such as a physical token or a code.</p> <p>Uber not serious about fixing the bug</p> <p>In Uber’s case, Siani reported his findings to Uber’s bug bounty program on HackerOne, who acknowledged that there is indeed a bug in its two-factor authentication but at the same time the company downplayed the severity of it and stated that his findings were informative but “this report contained useful information but did not warrant an immediate action or a fix.”</p> <p>Uber uses two-factor authentication in case of suspicious login activity and sends the second code to the user’s device in order to verify their identity. Uber has been testing the 2FA feature since 2015 however, Siani’s findings highlighted how a hacker can bypass 2FA security without even entering the correct code.</p> <p>According to a statement to ZDNet, Uber spokesperson Melanie Ensign said that the bug was not a bypass but could be caused by ongoing security testing the company is conducting on the app.</p> <p>“We’ve been testing different solutions since we received a lot of user complaints about requiring 2FA on [an Uber web address which we are redacting per our decision to not reveal specifics of the bug] when people are trying to report a lost or stolen phone and can’t receive a code on that device, Ensign told ZDNet.</p> <p>“We believe those tests are causing both the existence and inconsistency of this issue.”</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Fake cryptocurrency packs ransomware
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/fictional-spritecoin/
GIST	<p>A new ransomware that only accepts Monero for payment has emerged, attempting to trick victims by masquerading as a password-protected storage mechanism for SpriteCoin. SpriteCoin doesn’t exist, however – it’s a fictional cryptocurrency.</p> <p>According to Fortinet FortiGuard Labs, the malware claims to be a wallet and asks the user to create their desired password. It doesn’t actually download blockchain, however; rather, it secretly encrypts the victim’s data files and then demands a ransom in Monero cryptocurrency.</p> <p>Adding insult to injury, if the ransom is paid, during the decryption phase another piece of malware is deployed with capabilities including certificate harvesting, image parsing and web camera activation.</p> <p>Fortinet researchers said that the initial file is a packed executable for simple evasion. It displays the typical ransom note telling targets that “your files are encrypted” and asks for a sum of 0.3 Monero – which is equivalent to about \$105 at the time of writing.</p>

	<p>“During our analysis, we have seen indicators that the sample appears to have an embedded SQLite engine,” explained Fortinet researchers in an analysis. “This leads us to believe it is using SQLite to store harvested credentials. The ransomware first looks to harvest Chrome credentials, and if it finds nothing it then moves on and tries to access the Firefox credential store. It then looks for specific files to encrypt. These files are then encrypted with an encrypted file extension (e.g.: resume.doc.encrypted).”</p> <p>The use of Monero, an open source cryptocurrency created in 2014, signals a shift away from the widely used and accepted standard Bitcoin in the ransomware space, they added.</p> <p>“Ransomware authors are aware of current trends and events, and appear to be taking advantage of all the hype surrounding the cryptocurrency craze,” they said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Flaws in HASP system put ICS at risk
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/14-flaws-in-popular-software-ics/
GIST	<p>A variety of serious vulnerabilities have been identified in popular license management software used in corporate and industrial control system (ICS) environments to activate software on PCs and servers.</p> <p>According to Kaspersky Lab ICS CERT researchers, 14 vulnerabilities in the Hardware Against Software Piracy (HASP) license management system mean that license management USB tokens can be used to open a hidden remote-access channel for cyber-attackers.</p> <p>The flaws include multiple denial-of-service (DoS) vulnerabilities and several remote code execution issues. These are automatically exploited not with user rights but with the most privileged system rights, providing attackers with an opportunity to execute any arbitrary code they wish.</p> <p>“The USB-tokens in question are widely used in different organizations to serve the purpose of convenient software license activation,” researchers explained in their analysis. “In normal use case scenarios, a company’s system administrator would need to approach the computer with the software that needs to be activated and insert the token. It will then confirm that the software of interest is legitimate (not pirated) and would activate it.”</p> <p>The problem is, upon installation, the software adds port 1947 of the computer to the list of exclusions of the Windows Firewall with no proper user notification, which makes it vulnerable to a remote attack.</p> <p>“An attacker would only need to scan the targeted network for open port 1947 in order to identify any remotely available computers,” the researchers said. “More importantly, the port remains open after the token has been detached, which is why even in a patched and protected corporate environment, an attacker would only need to install software using the HASP solution or attach the token to a PC once (even a locked one) in order to make it available for remote attacks.”</p> <p>The number of systems affected by the vulnerability is uncertain, but given the popularity of the software, it could affect hundreds of thousands of users worldwide.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Ransomware attacks hit healthcare firms
SOURCE	http://www.securityweek.com/samsam-ransomware-attacks-hit-healthcare-firms
GIST	<p>Earlier this month, Hancock Health, headquartered in Greenfield, Indiana, was infected with the SamSam ransomware. This past weekend, Allscripts -- a major electronic health record (EHR) company headquartered in Chicago, IL -- confirmed that it had also been hit by Ransomware, which it described as a SamSam (also known as Samas) variant.</p>

The methodologies employed in each attack are different. SamSam is not usually delivered by email phishing. It is more usually introduced after the target has already been breached. This method was described in the Symantec Internet Security Threat Report V22 : "In the case of SamSam (Ransom.SamSam) the attackers' initial point of entry was a public-facing web server. They exploited an unpatched vulnerability to compromise the server and get a foothold on the victim's network."

This bears a strong similarity to what we know about the attack against Hancock Health, Greenfield, disclosed last week. The Greenfield Reporter wrote, "...the hacker gained access to the system by using the hospital's remote-access portal, logging in with an outside vendor's username and password. The attack was not the result of an employee opening a malware-infected email."

On Jan. 15, Hancock released a statement saying, "At approximately 9:30 PM on Thursday, January 11, 2018, an attack on the information systems of Hancock Health was initiated by an as-yet unidentified criminal group."

One day later it announced that it had decided to pay the ransom. CEO, Steve Long, said, "Restoring from backup was considered, though we made the deliberate decision to pay the ransom to expedite our return to full operations." Payment was made on Friday, January 12, and, "By Monday, January 15, 2018, critical systems were restored to normal production levels and the hospital was back online."

Last Friday (Jan. 19) Long posted a more detailed description of the events. He confirmed that the malware was SamSam, and that it had been a supply chain attack via a provider of ICS equipment to the hospital. The attackers targeted Hancock's remote emergency IT backup facility and used the connections from there to gain access to the primary facility -- targeting files associated with the most critical information systems in the hospital.

Long notes that when the hospital made the business decision to pay the ransom (set at 4 bitcoins, thought to be worth \$55,000 at the time), the hospital believed that it could recover its files from backup, but that the time and cost involved made it more efficient to pay the ransom. Now he added, "Several days later it was learned that, though the electronic medical record backup files had not been touched, the core components of the backup files from all other systems had been purposefully and permanently corrupted by the hackers."

Forensic firm Pondurance suggested that no patient data had been stolen, while the FBI confirmed that the SamSam group are more interested in receiving the ransom than in harvesting patient data.

The more recent attack against Allscripts occurred late last week. Allscripts emailed its clients on Jan. 18: "...early on the morning of January 18, we became aware of a ransomware incident that has impacted our hosted Professional EHR service and our Electronic Prescription of Controlled Substances ("EPCS") service, which are hosted in our Raleigh and Charlotte, NC data centers. According to industry reports, we are one of dozens of companies impacted by this attack, which is a variant of the SamSam ransomware."

Next day another email stated, "Material progress has been made to restore service as we now have access to data and services that were previously subject to the SamSam malware. We are in the process of cleaning impacted systems and services to ensure they will be operational once we are able to bring the services back online."

There has been no mention of any ransom payment, and no public discussion of the attack from Allscripts. The information above comes from copies of the emails posted to Reddit.

[Update] "On early Thursday morning, January 18, we discovered a ransomware attack had affected two of our data centers, which house a small subset of our products," an Allscripts spokesperson told SecurityWeek in an emailed statement. "The ransomware has since been identified as a new variant of the SamSam malware. Of the roughly 1,500 clients impacted, none were hospitals or large independent physician practices, and services to many already have been restored. In addition, we immediately notified

the FBI and have been providing information to assist with their investigation. Importantly, there is no evidence that any data was removed from our systems. We continue to work unceasingly to restore all services to our clients who are still experiencing outages."

If the malware really is a variant of the SamSam ransomware, then it marks a divergence from its usual use. CSO Online reported Saturday, "The variant of SamSam that infected Allscripts was a new variant unrelated to the version of SamSam that infected systems at Hancock Health Hospital in Greenfield, Indiana and Adams Memorial Hospital in Decatur, Indiana... Allscripts said that all appearance this was commodity malware and that the company wasn't directly targeted."

The implication from 'material progress' having been made so quickly without any ransom payment suggests that restitution is coming from Allscripts' backups rather than from decryption keys. This further supports the description of the attack being a commodity malware attack rather than a targeted attack as with Hancock Health. In the targeted attack, the attackers destroyed backups before infecting files; in the Allscripts attack, backup files were left intact.

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HEADLINE	01/22 Russia: arrest for gas stealing malware
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/russian-authorities-bust-up-gas-stealing-malware-scam/article/738609/
GIST	<p>Russian authorities Sunday arrested Denis Zayev in Stavropol, Russia, on charges stemming from a widespread scam that swindled gas station customers into paying for more gas than they actually pumped into their tank.</p> <p>Zayev allegedly designed malware used in a scam that netted hundreds of millions of rubles by skimming between 3-to-7 percent of every gallon sold into a separate tank as it was being pumped, according to Russian media outlet Rosbalt.</p> <p>The stolen gasoline was automatically sent to a separate onsite tank that had intentionally been left empty while the malware erased any information related to the rerouting of fuel. When the tank was full the employees would sell the gas off the books while the malware continued to erase any information pertaining to the boosted fuel.</p> <p>The scam was one of the largest of its kind and reportedly involved dozens of gas station employees who would split the spoils. Authorities said the malware was nearly impossible to detect by the companies that monitor the gasoline remotely and that the pumps displayed false data along with the cash registers and backend systems.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/21 Half Norway healthcare data stolen
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2018/01/healthcare-data-breach.html
GIST	<p>Cybercriminals have stolen a massive trove of Norway's healthcare data in a recent data breach, which likely impacts more than half of the nation's population.</p> <p>An unknown hacker or group of hackers managed to breach the systems of Health South-East Regional Health Authority (RHF) and reportedly stolen personal info and health records of some 2.9 million Norwegians out of the country's total 5.2 million inhabitants.</p> <p>Health South-East RHA is a healthcare organisation that manages hospitals in Norway's southeast region, including Østfold, Akershus, Oslo, Hedmark, Oppland, Buskerud, Vestfold, Telemark, Aust-Agder and Vest-Agder.</p> <p>The healthcare organisation announced the data breach on Monday after it had been alerted by</p>

	<p>HelseCERT, the Norwegian CERT department for its healthcare sector, about an "abnormal activity" against computer systems in the region.</p> <p>HelseCERT also said the culprits behind the data breach are "advanced and professional" hackers, although it is still unknown as to whether they were managed to exfiltrate data successfully and if so, how many people may have been impacted.</p> <p>So far there's also no evidence if the stolen data theft has had any consequences for or effects on patients' safety. However, the healthcare organisation assured that security "measures had been taken to limit the damage caused by the burglary."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Intel: stop Spectre/Meltdown patches
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/vulnerabilities---threats/intel-says-to-stop-applying-problematic-spectre-meltdown-patch-/d/d-id/1330871
GIST	<p>Intel is now advising its customers and partners to halt the installation of patches for its Broadwell and Haswell microprocessor systems in the wake of recent reports of reboot problems.</p> <p>Navin Shenoy, executive vice president and general manager of the Data Center Group at Intel, today said in a post that Intel soon will be issuing a fix for the patch. In the meantime, he says customers should refrain from applying the problematic patches.</p> <p>"We recommend that OEMs, cloud service providers, system manufacturers, software vendors and end users stop deployment of current versions, as they may introduce higher than expected reboots and other unpredictable system behavior," he said.</p> <p>Word that customers were experiencing higher system reboot problems began circulating earlier this month, and Intel issued an advisory about the problem on Jan. 11.</p> <p>"We have now identified the root cause for Broadwell and Haswell platforms, and made good progress in developing a solution to address it. Over the weekend, we began rolling out an early version of the updated solution to industry partners for testing, and we will make a final release available once that testing has been completed," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Satori malware targets more IoT devices
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/vulnerabilities---threats/satori-botnet-malware-now-can-infect-even-more-iot-devices/d/d-id/1330875
GIST	<p>The authors of the Satori IoT malware family have dramatically increased their pool of bot recruits for attack botnets with a new version of the tool targeting systems running ARC processors.</p> <p>The latest Satori variant, the fourth since the malware first surfaced in Dec. 2017, appears to be the first aimed specifically at ARC chipsets, DDoS attack mitigation vendor Arbor Networks said in an advisory this week.</p> <p>ARC processors are 32-bit power-efficient CPUs that are used in a wide range of applications including automotive, industrial, and IoT. More than 1.5 billion embedded systems containing ARC cores ship every year, including electronic steering controls and infotainment systems in cars, as well as personal fitness bands and digital TV set tops, and smart thermostats.</p> <p>Like other Satori variants, the newest one also leverages the Mirai code base. Like Mirai, it is designed to propagate through credential scanning, meaning the malware can potentially infect any ARC device with</p>

	<p>default and easily guessable telnet usernames and passwords. The previous Satori variant specifically targeted Huawei routers.</p> <p>It's hard to say which specific ARC-based devices the Satori authors are hoping to target because of the huge installed base of systems, says Peter Arzamendi, security researcher at NETSCOUT, Arbor's Security Engineering & Response Team.</p> <p>However, "botnets that target new and novel types of IoT devices is the new normal," he says. "With the proliferation of IoT and BYOD, enterprises will need to understand how to both defend these devices and be able to respond when they are compromised," Arzamendi says.</p> <p>Support for ARC processors allows Satori variants to target a wide range of systems including those based on Intel, ARM, MIPS, PPC, and SuperH processor architectures. All of the variants differ slightly in targeting and in capabilities.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Hawaii gov. claims couldn't use Twitter
SOURCE	https://www.aol.com/article/news/2018/01/23/hawaiis-governor-said-he-couldnt-notify-the-public-of-the-false-missile-alarm-because-he-forgot-his-twitter-password/23340862/
GIST	<p>Hawaii Gov. David Ige said the panic that ensued during a false alarm warning of an imminent missile attack wasn't addressed sooner because he forgot his Twitter password and couldn't notify the public.</p> <p>During a press conference on Monday, Ige took some of the blame the mix-up that caused panic throughout Hawaii and made headlines worldwide, according to the Honolulu Star Advertiser.</p> <p>The missile defense notification system was accidentally triggered on January 13 after an employee mistakenly pushed the wrong button and sent mobile notifications to all in the vicinity, warning them of an imminent ballistic missile attack.</p> <p>The blunder caused mass panic around Hawaii, as people quickly took cover and prepared for impact.</p> <p>A second alert clarifying that there was no missile threat to Hawaii was not sent out until 38 minutes after the initial notice.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	01/22 Phoenix man in terror case jailed 1yr
SOURCE	https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/phoenix/2018/01/22/phoenix-man-terror-case-sentenced-1-year-prison-4-years-probation-derrick-thompson/1054083001/
GIST	<p>A Phoenix man convicted of plotting a "lone wolf"-style terrorist attack was sentenced to one year in prison and four years' probation Monday in Maricopa County Superior Court.</p> <p>Derrick Thompson, 31, pleaded guilty this month to assisting a criminal syndicate and solicitation to commit misconduct involving weapons.</p> <p>Judge Pamela Gates gave Thompson 110 days of incarceration credit. As part of his probation terms, which will start once he is released from prison, he'll have to surrender his passport and won't be able to travel outside of Maricopa County without permission.</p> <p>Thompson also will be restricted from having contact with any affiliates of a known terror group or from</p>

visiting any terrorism-backed websites, and will also have his computer monitored.

His defense attorney Robert Ditsworth told Gates that Thompson had difficulty getting his life back together after he was released from prison in an unrelated case, and then he lost his father.

"I think he was playing around on the internet being an idiot," Ditsworth said.

Gates warned Thompson, who waived his right to make a statement prior to his sentencing, that he could be facing more than three years in prison if he didn't comply with his terms of probation.

Thompson was arrested in December 2016 after a two-year FBI investigation.

Prosecutors say in court records that Thompson was an "avowed jihadist" who voiced his support online for the Islamic State, more commonly known as ISIS, and the attacks that sympathizers have orchestrated in Western nations.

Also, Thompson had searched online for assault rifles, scopes, ammunition, suppressors, handguns and crossbows, court documents say.

A review of his Google account in October 2016 shows that he searched for the terms "istishad (martyrdom) vs. suicide" on the same day he searched for "Midnight Mass" — a Christian tradition of celebrating Christmas in a church in the late-night hours of Christmas Eve or midnight on Christmas Day, court records show.

The review, court documents say, also showed that there was an online search for "fatwa on killing civilians," as well as a post to his Google Plus account that stated, "Right, we need to get down with this ISIS s--t."

FBI agents also tracked an online seller of a handgun with whom Thompson had contacted in January 2016 through Backpage.com, court records say.

Thompson was already prohibited from possessing firearms because of previous convictions of aggravated assault and armed robbery.

While terrorism suspects are traditionally tried in federal courts, state prosecutors recently began taking some of the cases, based partly on Arizona statutes' lower burden of proof.

Federal prosecutors require an "overt act" to prove terrorism conspiracy, such as purchasing a weapon or explosive. Arizona law only requires evidence of intent, such as an agreement between one person and another person.

Thompson's case was one of the first amid an Arizona Attorney General's Office push to prosecute would-be terrorism suspects.

But unlike other previous cases brought by the state's Attorney General's Office, Thompson didn't explicitly face a terrorism charge under Arizona statutes.

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HEADLINE	01/22 Ohio man in terror plot sentenced 22yrs
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/ohio-man-who-trained-with-terrorists-overseas-and-plotted-to-kill-us-troops-sentenced-to-22-years/2018/01/22/2d18ff42-ff8f-11e7-9d31-d72cf78dbeee_story.html?utm_term=.b05f7d886fa1
GIST	A Columbus, Ohio, man who trained with terrorists overseas and plotted to kill American troops upon his return to the United States was sentenced Monday to 22 years in federal prison, a spokeswoman for the

U.S. attorney's office said.

Abdirahman Sheik Mohamud, 26, had pleaded guilty to providing material support to terrorists and giving a false statement involving international terrorism in August 2015. Court documents say Mohamud admitted traveling in early 2014 to Syria in an attempt to join his brother, a fighter with the al-Nusra Front terrorist group, and give him \$1,000 and a communication device.

Mohamud made it to the country with the funds, court records show, and while there, he was trained by al-Nusra in weapons and tactics, including how to enter a structure and kill people inside.

Mohamud's brother, Abdifatah Aden, was killed in June 2014, and there is no evidence he and Mohamud ever met face-to-face, court documents filed by prosecutors say. Mohamud returned to the United States that same month and began to recruit others for a terrorist plot — possibly involving killing military personnel in Texas, the documents say.

It is unclear how far along he got in his effort. In September, court documents filed by prosecutors say, Mohamud and three other men went to a central Ohio shooting range, where Mohamud taught two of them how to shoot a handgun. But Mohamud's defense attorney wrote in court papers that by the end of November 2014, Mohamud had "completely abandoned" any plans for terrorism.

The FBI arrested Mohamud in February 2015, and court documents say he lied to law enforcement about his time overseas.

Prosecutors had asked that Mohamud be sentenced to 23 years in federal prison. Defense attorneys had not requested a specific penalty but noted that Mohamud was remorseful for what he had done. In court filings, Mohamud's defense attorneys wrote that Mohamud was heavily influenced by his brother and fully radicalized when he traveled to Syria, though once home, he "realized the immoral and illegal nature of terrorist ideology."

"Mr. Mohamud already appreciates the seriousness of his conduct and feels nothing but remorse for his willingness to embrace a violent and dangerous ideology," Mohamud's defense attorneys wrote. "This self-awareness will ensure that Defendant never again poses a threat of danger to others, or to the United States."

Mohamud, who was born in Somalia and came to the United States just before his second birthday, is a naturalized citizen, though prosecutors wrote in court papers that obtaining that status was meant to further his and his brother's terrorist plan.

Prosecutors wrote that Mohamud, who had been a legal permanent resident since 1993, had begun the naturalization process only after communicating with at least one person linked to a terrorist organization, and he sent his brother a message pledging to join him as a fighter overseas in September 2013. That was months before he took his oath of allegiance to the United States at a naturalization ceremony in February 2014.

Prosecutors wrote that Mohamud had also posted a picture showing armed fighters of the Islamic State in March 2013. He wrote on his naturalization application that he had in no way been associated with a terrorist organization, nor had he advocated the overthrow of any government by force or violence.

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HEADLINE	01/23 ISIS steps up campaign to inspire attacks
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/news/middle-east/we-are-in-your-home-after-losses-isis-steps-up-campaign-to-inspire-attacks-1.508003
GIST	The man with the Islamic State scarf appears to be playing a kind of jihadist peekaboo.

In the photo, he hides his features behind the terrorist group's infamous logo but shows just enough background scenery so viewers can recognize his location: New York's Central Park, in wintertime.

"We are in your home," reads the photo's simple caption, posted online a few days after Christmas and circulated widely on a prominent jihadist internet channel.

Precisely when the photo was taken is not known, but the message is chillingly clear. It has been repeated in similar posts in recent weeks, all purporting to show Islamic State operatives casing landmarks in Western cities and urging followers to carry out attacks wherever they are. "It is time to harvest the heads," the narrator in one such video states.

Such is the typical fare served up by the Islamic State's propaganda machine, which remains very much alive three months after the fall of the terrorist organization's capital in Raqqa, Syria. The self-proclaimed caliphate has been reduced to a handful of villages in the Syrian desert, but the "virtual caliphate" fights on, a diminished but still formidable presence focused on rallying the group's followers in the face of crushing military defeats, according to U.S. officials and independent analysts.

The content has changed significantly since the loss of Raqqa, formerly home to the group's official media division and production facilities. Gone are the glossy Islamic State magazines and slick videos extolling the virtues of life under militant Islamist rule. In their place is a steady stream of incitements, nearly all of them aimed at offering encouragement and detailed instructions for carrying out terrorist attacks.

Some are amateurish and appear to originate not from studios or official spokesmen, but from bloggers and other volunteers who often are only loosely affiliated with the Islamic State - the online equivalent of lone-wolf terrorists who act without official guidance or instruction. Terrorism analysts say the Islamic State is growing more dependent on such independent platforms, which are capable of distributing highly targeted appeals in scores of local languages and can't be easily silenced by military strikes.

At the same time, there are signs of new life from the group's official mouthpiece. Last week, the Islamic State's Amaq News Agency issued its first English-language communique since mid-September, just before the fall of Raqqa. The first weeks of 2018 have also seen a sharp rise in traffic on pro-Islamic State social media accounts compared with previous months, according to an analysis released Friday by the SITE Intelligence Group, a private firm that monitors jihadist content.

"The Islamic State is now showing the first signs of a regrouping media operation," said SITE Executive Director Rita Katz. "The group suffered major setbacks by coalition and regime attacks but is now clearly taking major steps to reassemble its propaganda operation, which is among its most dangerous weapons."

The newest propaganda campaign illustrates the difficulties faced by counterterrorism officials in seeking to stop militants from connecting with would-be terrorists in the United States and throughout the West. Even after destroying the Islamic State's sanctuary and successfully blocking - with help from private companies - hundreds of the group's social media accounts, the terrorists and their supporters continue to find ways to get their messages out, analysts say.

"The depletion of ISIS on the battlefield has not yet translated into the degradation of ISIS in the online space," said Tara Maller, a former CIA military analyst and senior policy adviser for the Counter Extremism Project, a nonpartisan group that promotes policies to block extremist content online. "What we see is a continuing effort to engage online and an increased effort to inspire people to carry out lone-wolf attacks."

U.S. officials and analysts have been watching closely to see how the collapse of the caliphate would affect the group's propaganda machine, the driving force behind the Islamic State's rise to global prominence. Beginning in Syria in 2013, the group's leaders spent millions of dollars creating a nimble, technically savvy media operation with a heavy social media presence.

Under Presidents Barack Obama and Trump, the Pentagon and CIA tried different measures to knock the

terrorists offline. U.S. fighter jets and drones bombed the Islamic State's production houses and stalked its spokesmen, while the State Department pressed YouTube and other social media companies to block the militants' Web channels and chat rooms. In response, the terrorists shifted tactics, migrating to different social media platforms and cultivating a global network of allies to amplify official messages and post their own pro-Islamic State content.

Still, the fall of Raqqa in October resulted in a steep decline in the Islamic State's official media output. Rumiya, the group's flagship online publication, appears to have ceased production entirely, while the number of routine posts and videos is down sharply. The analysis by SITE shows that Islamic State-affiliated websites put out a total of 907 communiqués, reports and videos between November and December of 2016. During the same period this past year, the group and its supporters managed only 211.

An analysis published Jan. 7 by the national security blog Lawfare cites an overall drop in content of about 90 percent from the Islamic State's high-water mark in 2015.

"This is not just a media decline - it is a full-fledged collapse," the report's authors, counterterrorism researchers Charlie Winter and Jade Parker, write in the blog.

But volunteers have stepped up to fill the gap, analysts say. The broader web of militant commentators and videographers - a network that was encouraged and facilitated by the Islamic State in its heyday - was designed to continue functioning even if the mother branch was completely shut down.

While many of the individual cyberwarriors have been around for years, the Islamic State has become more reliant on them in issuing appeals for what Winter and Parker call "retributive terrorism" - acts of violence intended to avenge the group's losses while convincing followers and foes that it remains relevant.

"Before its territorial decline, a successful terrorist operation was a tactical bonus. Now, it is a strategic necessity," the writers state. "The online sphere has been tailored to facilitate these attacks more efficiently than ever before.

The posting of the "peekaboo" jihadist's selfie in New York was part of a remarkable incitement campaign that began in the weeks before Christmas and continued through early January. Several videos and photographs that appeared online during the period sought to convey the impression that Islamic State warriors were lurking everywhere. The images depict well-known landmarks such as Paris's Eiffel Tower, the Sydney Harbor Bridge in Australia and the Los Angeles skyline.

The New York photo appears to have been taken outside New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, on the edge of Central Park on the city's Upper East Side. It is unclear whether the photo is genuine or altered, but it depicts weather similar to that experienced by New Yorkers late last month, with pedestrians in heavy coats and hats trudging along sidewalks lightly covered with snow.

A commentary accompanying one of the videos warns of coming terrorist attacks while offering tips to supporters on how to unleash mayhem during the Christmas holiday season, when urban streets would be packed with shoppers and revelers.

"Make [explosive] devices and plant them in their celebrations," it says, "or set their homes and forests on fire, or run over the largest number of unbelievers with your vehicle, or stab them repeatedly with a knife."

Other postings in recent weeks offered detailed technical advice. On the messaging application Telegram, Islamic State supporters published a "Knights of the Lone Jihad" series with how-to manuals on everything from bombmaking to the poisoning of food supplies.

Experts who closely monitor jihadist channels say the overall impression is that of a vibrant propaganda machine that hasn't slowed appreciably or moderated its content. To ensure the broadest audience, the messages are typically translated into multiple languages, including English, Arabic, Russian, Urdu and

even Chinese.

"When you look at the unofficial ISIS material out there - the stuff posted by ISIS supporters - that has not diminished," said Steven Stalinsky, executive director of the Middle East Media Research Institute, a Washington nonprofit. "There is so much content - so many accounts, so many new chats - and more popping up every day."

For whatever reason, the holiday season appeals did not bear fruit, although there was at least one close call. In mid-December, federal officials arrested a 26-year-old California man for allegedly plotting a Christmas-week attack on San Francisco's famed Pier 39 commercial area. U.S. officials said the suspect, a former Marine, had expressed support for the Islamic State on social media.

Both suspects in the two attacks in New York last year - Sayfullo Saipov, the Uzbek immigrant who ran over pedestrians with a truck in Lower Manhattan on Oct. 31, and Akayed Ullah, a Bangladeshi immigrant who exploded a crude bomb in a Times Square subway tunnel on Dec. 11 - also told authorities they were inspired by Islamic State videos.

Each terrorism attempt - successful or not - serves as a reinforcer, generating waves of excitement among online jihadists while encouraging further use of the same tactics, said Stalinsky, who also is the author of "American Traitor," a biography of the al-Qaida propagandist Adam Gadahn.

"Even if it's a small attack, it pumps blood into the cyber-body of ISIS," he said. "All it takes is one attack to produce a lot of energy for the online movement."

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HEADLINE	01/22 ISIS looted gold, cash from Philippines
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-militants-islamicstate-ex/exclusive-looted-cash-gold-helps-islamic-state-recruit-in-philippines-idUSKBN1FC0E2
GIST	<p>MARAWI CITY, Philippines (Reuters) - Islamist insurgents looted cash, gold and jewellery worth tens of millions of dollars when they occupied a southern Philippines town last year, treasure one of their leaders has used to recruit around 250 fighters for fresh attacks.</p> <p>The military said Humam Abdul Najib escaped from Marawi City, which the militants had hoped to establish as a stronghold for Islamic State in Southeast Asia, before it was recaptured by the military in October after five months of ferocious battles and aerial bombardment.</p> <p>Since then, Najib, also known as Abu Dar, has used the booty looted from bank vaults, shops and homes in Marawi to win over boys and young men in the impoverished southern province of Lanao del Sur, military officers in the area said. Hardened mercenaries are also joining, lured by the promise of money.</p> <p>As a result, Islamic State followers remain a potent threat in Southeast Asia even though hundreds of militants were killed in the battle for Marawi, the officers said.</p> <p>"Definitely they haven't abandoned their intent to create a caliphate in Southeast Asia," Colonel Romeo Brawner, the deputy commander of Joint Task Force Marawi, told Reuters.</p> <p>"That's the overall objective, but in the meantime while they are still trying to recover and build up again - fighters and weapons - our estimate is they are going to launch terrorist attacks."</p> <p>On Saturday, militants wounded eight soldiers in two attacks in Lanao del Sur, Brawner said, the first such violence since the recapture of Marawi.</p> <p>In the early days of the occupation of Marawi last May, as black-clad fighters burned churches, released prisoners and cut the power supply, other militants targeted banks and the homes of wealthy citizens,</p>

commandeering hostages to help with the plunder.

“It was in the first week. They divided us into three groups with seven people each,” said J.R. Montesa, a Christian construction worker who was captured by the militants.

Using explosives, the militants blew open the vaults of the city’s three main banks, Landbank, the Philippine National Bank and the Al Amanah Islamic Bank, Montesa told Reuters in a town near Marawi. They trucked away the booty, easily slipping out of Marawi because a security cordon was not fully in place.

They also raided jewellery stores, pawnshops and businesses.

Landbank and Al Amanah did not respond to requests for comment. Philippine National said recovering losses because of the Marawi fighting was a concern, but did not give details.

The Islamic celebration of Ramadan was looming at the time the militants struck and banks, businesses and homes had more money than usual, said Marawi City police chief Ebra Moxsir. The Maranaos, the ethnic group that dominates the area around Marawi, are mostly Muslims.

“There was a lot of money inside the battle area,” he told Reuters. “Maranaos keep millions of pesos in safety vaults in their homes. Gold, also. It is a tradition of the Maranao to give gifts of money (during Ramadan).”

Montesa said vans they loaded with the spoils of the raids were “overflowing”, with money, gold and other valuables stuffed into every crevice of the vehicles.

“They were saying it was a gift from Allah. They would say ‘Allahu Akbar’ (God is greatest) while we were stealing.”

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HEADLINE	01/22 Fighting rages Turkey push in Syria
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/019bba5b3dc24881804d7cadd8984c34/Fighting-rages-amid-Turkish-push-in-Kurdish-enclave-in-Syria
GIST	<p>HASSA, Turkey (AP) — Intense fighting flared Monday as Turkish troops and their allies advanced on a Kurdish enclave in northwestern Syria, the third day of Ankara’s offensive to oust a U.S.-allied Kurdish militia from the area, according to the militia and a war monitoring group.</p> <p>Skirmishes between Turkish troops and Kurdish fighters also broke out farther east in Syria, threatening to widen the scope of the new front in the Syrian war that pits Turkey against Washington’s main ally in the region.</p> <p>The Turkish ground and air offensive on Afrin, codenamed “Operation Olive Branch,” began Saturday, raising tensions in the already-complicated Syrian conflict and threatening to further strain ties between Turkey and the U.S., both NATO allies. Turkey says it aims to create a 30-kilometer (20-mile) deep “secure zone” in Afrin, the Kurdish-controlled enclave on its border.</p> <p>The Turkish military announced late Monday its first fatality to the operation. It said a soldier was killed in cross-border raid.</p> <p>The U.N. Security Council was scheduled to convene later Monday to discuss the situation.</p> <p>A NATO statement said it has contacted Turkey over the offensive. NATO said Turkey has suffered from terrorism and has the right to self-defense but urged Ankara to do so in a “proportionate and measured way.”</p>

NATO also said it has no presence in Syria but that as members of the anti-Islamic State coalition, “our focus is on the defeat” of the extremists.

U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said Turkey has “legitimate security concerns” about Syria. Speaking to reporters traveling with him Sunday to Indonesia, he said diplomats are working on a solution to Turkey’s confrontation with the Syrian Kurdish fighters, known as the People’s Defense Units or YPG, who have been the key U.S. military ally in battling the Islamic State in Syria. Turkey considers the YPG a terrorist group because of its ties to its own Kurdish insurgency.

Mattis said Ankara gave the U.S. military advance notice of its Afrin offensive.

The U.S. has offered direct military and logistical support to a Kurdish-led group known as the Syrian Democratic Forces that spearheaded the fight against IS in Syria. With the near total defeat of IS in both Syria and Iraq, the U.S. said it would create a 30,000-strong border force of existing Kurdish and Arab SDF members to ensure there would be no IS comeback.

That announcement has outraged Turkey, and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has tried to walk back the U.S. position, saying it was portrayed incorrectly. The U.S. focus in recent years has been on eastern Syria. The area west of the Euphrates River, including Afrin, has been more of a problem for the U.S. because Turkey had said it would not accept a Kurdish military presence there.

The U.S. is discussing with Turkey and others the possibility of setting up a security zone on the Syria border to address Turkey’s concerns about a Kurdish enclave there, Tillerson said while traveling in Europe on Monday. Such a zone could help stabilize the situation and meet Turkey’s legitimate concerns over security, he said.

The U.S. recognizes Turkey’s “legitimate right” to defend itself from terrorists, he said, but added that Washington wants Turkey to try to be precise in its Afrin operation and to limit it by showing restraint.

But Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has promised to expand the operation, threatening to push farther east to the town of Manbij to the east, which the Kurdish fighters had liberated of Islamic State militants in 2016 and currently administer.

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HEADLINE	01/23 NY man pleads guilty to terror support
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/c7f8a8cf69584132a440c652010708ad/New-York-man-pleads-guilty-to-trying-to-support-terrorism
GIST	<p>BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — A New York man who traveled to Turkey in an attempt to join the Islamic State group has pleaded guilty to attempting to provide material support to a terrorist organization.</p> <p>Arafat Nagi (NAH’-gee) entered the plea in federal court in Buffalo on Monday. The 47-year-old Lackawanna (lak-ah-WAH’-nah) man faces up to 15 years in prison when he’s sentenced in May.</p> <p>Prosecutors say Nagi traveled to Turkey in 2012 and 2014 with plans to meet members of the Islamic State group, first purchasing military combat items including body armor, a machete, night vision goggles and a black and white flag associated with the group.</p> <p>Authorities say he was planning his third trip to Turkey, with plans to continue to Syria to join the fighters, at the time of his arrest in 2015.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Envoy: Pakistan won't be 'scapegoat'
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jan/22/aizaz-ahmad-chaudhry-pakistan-wont-be-scapegoat-fo/
GIST	<p>Pakistan's top diplomat lashed out at the Trump administration's decision to withhold millions in foreign aid and military assistance to Islamabad over its suspected support for extremist militants in the region, saying Pakistan refuses to be the White House's "scapegoat" for its failing Afghan war policy.</p> <p>In his first public statements since the White House decision to sharply curtail bilateral security aid to the South Asian nation, Pakistani Ambassador to the U.S. Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry said Islamabad will not engage with Washington "in a transactional relationship" where diplomatic ties are defined by punitive actions driven by unsubstantiated rhetoric.</p> <p>"We will not wholeheartedly take the blame" for the worsening situation in Afghanistan, Mr. Chaudhry said during a speech at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies. Pakistan "is being scapegoated for the failures in Afghanistan," he added.</p> <p>His comments come weeks after U.S. U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley announced plans to indefinitely suspend \$225 million in foreign aid, accusing Islamabad of playing "a double game for years" with its selective support of certain Pakistani-based terror groups.</p> <p>State Department officials followed up a week later, announcing their plans to block all bilateral security aid to the country.</p> <p>The U.S. has given more than \$30 billion in aid to Islamabad since 2001, much of it for military training and purchases of U.S.-made weaponry. The relationship has been tumultuous though, highlighted by the U.S. special forces mission in 2011 that killed al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden at a hideout deep inside Pakistan.</p> <p>President Trump's new blueprint for the 17-year-old Afghan war, outlined last summer, had sharp words for Pakistan's role in the conflict, demanding Islamabad crack down on terror groups inside its territory who were helping the Taliban insurgency.</p> <p>State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert told reporters that Pakistan's unwillingness to curb groups like Tehrik-i-Taliban, the Pakistani faction of the terror group, and the Haqqani Network forced the administration's hand.</p> <p>Pakistan has repeatedly denied claims of its support for terror groups, citing its own robust counterterrorism operations in the volatile federal tribal areas along the Afghan-Pakistan border and the casualties its army has taken in anti-terror operations.</p> <p>On Monday, Mr. Chaudhry took an even more direct shot at American-led security and stability efforts in Afghanistan, saying it was the lack of order and stable government there that was the root cause of the crisis.</p> <p>"The tide of terrorism has been reversed" inside Pakistan, he said, adding stability in Afghanistan is the only way Islamabad can continue to capitalize on that progress. "Our gains will continue to be at risk ... unless Afghanistan stabilizes."</p> <p>Pakistan's security forces "have been breathing down [the terror groups'] necks" and limiting territory for safe havens where extremist groups can operate inside the country. Meanwhile, the U.S.-backed central government in Kabul can only keep 60 percent of Afghanistan out of the Taliban's hands, the Pakistani diplomat noted.</p> <p>Despite the harsh rhetoric, there are signs neither side is ready for a permanent break, particularly when Pakistan provides a key logistical route for U.S. forces and materiel into Afghanistan.</p>

	<p>Central Command chief Gen. Joseph Votel and Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa, head of Pakistan's army, have remained in "continuous communication" in the weeks following the U.S. aid cut-off announcement.</p> <p>"We value mutual understanding of interests and concerns that we need to consider and might lead to a positive path forward," command spokesman Col. John Thomas said earlier this month.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Boy: lived w/US family under ISIS rule
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ayham-elias-iraqi-boy-tells-cbs-news-isis-american-family-raqqa/
GIST	<p>NEAR DOHUK, Iraq -- Ayham Elias is an 8-year-old Iraqi boy who made it back from territory held by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in November, more than three years after he was kidnapped by the extremists. But when the little boy arrived in a muddy refugee village near Dohuk in northern Iraq, his family immediately noticed a change; Ayham had somehow learned to speak fluent English.</p> <p>He says he lived under ISIS rule with an American family. He only knew they were American because the woman told him she was from the U.S.</p> <p>Ayham tells CBS News correspondent Holly Williams that he spent two years living with the American woman and her four children in Raqqa, which was then the ISIS self-declared capital city in Syria.</p> <p>Asked what the woman's name was, Ayham said he called her Umm Yusuf, but that her real name was Sam.</p> <p>Amazingly, an ISIS propaganda video released in August seems to confirm much of his story. It shows Ayham with a boy he identifies as Yusuf -- whom he says was the American family's oldest child.</p> <p>He says the family treated him with kindness. They were forced to make the video by an ISIS gunman, he tells CBS News.</p> <p>Ayham is a member of the Yazidi religious minority, which was ruthlessly targeted by ISIS as the militants rampaged across Iraq in 2014. Yazidi men were killed and women and children were kidnapped - the women later sold as sex slaves.</p> <p>Ayham tells CBS News he was separated from his mother -- who is still missing -- and beaten before he was handed over to the American woman named Sam.</p> <p>Her husband, a North African man, was killed by an airstrike, Ayham says, as the U.S. coalition pummelled Raqqa to eventually help regional forces retake the sprawling city.</p> <p>"All the night they're bombing our house," the young boy recalls. "All the night."</p> <p>Ayham fled ISIS territory with the American family, he says, but they became separated, and now he misses them.</p> <p>"I want to go next to this woman," he tells Williams. "Next to this family. American. American family."</p> <p>It's an extraordinary story, but the woman he knew as Sam remains a mystery. CBS News has not been able to confirm her identity, or her U.S. citizenship. We don't know how she ended up living under ISIS, or where she and her children are now.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 US: Russia to blame in chemical attack
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SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-russia-us-foments-syria-kurdish-separatism-52517439?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>The Latest on the developments in Syria and Turkey's offensive on the Syrian Kurdish enclave of Afrin (all times local):</p> <p>4:45 p.m.</p> <p>The United States is accusing Russia of "costing innocent Syrian lives" amid new reports of a suspected chemical attack in Syria.</p> <p>Activists and rescue teams say the Syrian government launched an attack with suspected poisonous gas that affected nearly 20 civilians in a rebel-held suburb near Damascus.</p> <p>U.S. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert says Moscow's "unwillingness or inability to restrain the Assad regime is costing innocent Syrian lives." She says the United States has tried to hold responsible those using chemical weapons in attacks that "have killed far too many Syrians."</p> <p>Nauert is blaming Russia for thwarting efforts at the U.N. "to protect those civilian lives." She's calling on Russia to bring Syrian President Bashar Assad's government to the table for talks on a political resolution to the civil war.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>4:30 p.m.</p> <p>Syrian state TV says shelling from rebel-held areas has killed at least five civilians and wounded more than eight in the capital, Damascus.</p> <p>State television, citing a police statement, says Monday's shelling struck the Bab Touma and al-Shaghour neighborhoods. It blamed the shelling on rebels in the eastern Ghouta suburbs.</p> <p>Government forces have surrounded eastern Ghouta, the last rebel stronghold near the capital, and regularly target it with shelling and airstrikes. The UN says some 400,000 civilians are trapped in eastern Ghouta with little to no access to basic services or aid.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Yemen rebels fire rockets at military parade
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/yemen-rebels-fire-rockets-military-parade-killing-52520767?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Yemeni security officials say Houthi rebels fired Katyusha rockets on a military parade near the central city of Taiz on Monday, killing at least seven people, including a local journalist, in an apparent assassination attempt on the interior minister and his deputy.</p> <p>The officials said three civilians and four soldiers were killed, while a Yemeni correspondent for satellite broadcaster Russia Today was wounded. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to brief reporters.</p> <p>Yemen's war pits a Saudi-led coalition allied with the internationally recognized government against Shiite Houthi rebels, who are allied with Iran and control much of northern Yemen, including the capital, Sanaa.</p> <p>Overnight and into the morning, coalition airstrikes around the Houthi stronghold of Saada in the north killed at least seven people, including five children, the pro-Houthi Masirah channel reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 TSA issues emergency order on cargo
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/tsa-emergency-action-strictier-air-cargo-scrutiny-5-predominantly-muslim-countries/
GIST	<p>Growing concern about terrorists getting a bomb onto a plane headed for the United States prompted an emergency order requiring stricter scrutiny of air cargo by TSA Administrator David Pekoske. Effective Monday morning, all cargo being loaded onto flights at last point of departure airports in five predominately Muslim countries — Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates — will be subject to the new requirements.</p> <p>"These countries were chosen because of a demonstrated intent by terrorist groups to attack aviation from them," said a TSA official familiar with the order. "This is all intel driven."</p> <p>Last year, these countries were among those subject to the so-called laptop ban that prohibited electronics larger than a cell phone to be carried on in the passenger cabin.</p> <p>"In close coordination with CBP, I directed specific carriers to implement strict security requirements based upon recent information that established a need to implement additional security measures for air cargo bound to the United States, on both passenger and cargo aircraft," Pekoske said in a statement to CBS News.</p> <p>Six airlines — EgyptAir, Royal Jordanian, Qatar, Saudi, Emirates and Etihad — serving the U.S. from seven airports are now required to comply with Air Cargo Advance Screening protocols. Known as ACAS, it is typically a voluntary program, that provides the TSA and Customs and Border Protection with advanced information about all cargo those carriers plan to bring to the United States.</p> <p>The airports subject to the order include Cairo International Airport in Egypt, Queen Alia International Airport in Jordan, King Abdul-Aziz International Airport and King Khalid International Airport in Saudi Arabia, Doha International Airport in Qatar, as well as Dubai International Airport and Abu Dhabi International Airport in the U.A.E.</p> <p>All cargo loaded on an airplane already undergoes security screening. The new measures will give TSA and CBP specific additional information in advance of cargo being loaded onto a U.S.-bound flight. The carriers will be required to provide details like where a parcel was sent from, who sent it, where it's been since it was mailed, how it was sent, where its going, and its contents. That is a similar level of "total asset visibility" that comes with a package sent through FedEx or UPS.</p> <p>"Anomaly detection is the bottom line here," said a TSA official. "This helps us track those anomalies."</p> <p>Turkey is the only other country required to participate in ACAS, an order that followed a failed terror plot to blow up an Australian airliner over the summer. High-grade military explosives were sent by air cargo from Turkey as part of that plot.</p> <p>The emergency order, referred to by TSA officials as an emergency amendment, builds on continuing concern about a bomb concealed in a large personal electronic device like a laptop that may not be easily detectable by some screening equipment. Intelligence that ISIS had constructed such a device prompted the short lived laptop ban and resulted in a two phased increase of security at foreign airports with direct flights to the U.S.</p> <p>"We haven't necessarily seen anything 'brand new' in terms of a new threat but we are seeing things and want to stay ahead of the threat that we've seen over the past nine months or so. There's enough out there, enough threat streams, that give us enough concern that we need to move forward with this as quickly as possible," said a TSA official familiar with the current threat intelligence.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Official: Kabul attack death toll rises
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/afghan-official-death-toll-kabul-attack-rises-22-52542656?
GIST	<p>An Afghan official says that the death toll from the Taliban attack over the weekend on Kabul's Intercontinental Hotel has risen to 22, including 14 foreigners and eight Afghans.</p> <p>Najib Danish, spokesman for the interior ministry, said on Tuesday that after the deadly siege ended on Sunday, security forces also defused a vehicle full of explosives near the site of the attack.</p> <p>Earlier reports said that along with the 14 foreigners, four Afghans died in the attack, which ended after security forces said they had killed the last of six Taliban militants who stormed the hilltop hotel.</p> <p>Danish says an investigation is underway to find out how the attackers got into the building so easily.</p> <p>More than 150 people were rescued or managed to escape, including 41 foreigners.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Belgium reduces terror threat level
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/01/22/belgium-reduces-terror-threat-to-level-unseen-since-2015.html
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS – Belgium is reducing its terror threat level from the second-highest mark for the first time in over two years.</p> <p>The country has lived under a threat level of at least three on a four-step scale since November 2015, when Islamic State extremists carried out multiple attacks in Paris that killed 130 people.</p> <p>A level three means a domestic terror attack is "possible and likely."</p> <p>The Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis lowered the security rating on Monday to level two, indicating there was "little likelihood" of an attack.</p> <p>The threat level briefly hit four in March 2016, when 32 people were killed at Brussels' international airport and in the subway system.</p> <p>Level three called for a beefed-up police presence, reinforced by armed soldiers, in major cities and around potential targets such as tourist attractions.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Turkey's 'Operation Olive Branch'
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/01/22/ap-explains-turkeys-operation-olive-branch-in-aftrin.html
GIST	<p>ISTANBUL – Turkey has launched an air and ground campaign into Afrin, a Kurdish-controlled enclave in northwestern Syria. Codenamed "Operation Olive Branch," it's the latest chapter in a decades-long conflict between Turkey and Kurdish militants. Here's a look at why this is happening now and what's at stake:</p> <p>—</p> <p>WHAT'S THE GOAL?</p>

Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim has said Turkey wants to create a 30-kilometer (20-mile) deep "secure zone" in Afrin. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said the military operation is essential for Turkey's security and Syria's territorial integrity.

The Turkish operation aims to oust from Afrin a militia made up of an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 fighters affiliated with the People's Protection Units or YPG, a Syrian Kurdish group that has controlled territory in northern Syria and proven effective in fighting the Islamic State group.

Turkey considers the YPG to be a terrorist organization and an extension of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party or PKK, which has fought for Kurdish autonomy in Turkey.

The PKK has waged an insurgency in Turkey since 1984 that has claimed some 40,000 lives. A peace process collapsed in 2015 and the conflict resumed, with devastating street battles and major bomb attacks in cities.

The YPG and its political counterpart, the Democratic Union Party, or PYD, say they want regional autonomy within a federalized Syria. They control nearly 25 percent of Syrian territory dubbed Rojava that includes the three "cantons" of Afrin, Kobani and Jazira.

The PKK, YPG and PYD consider as their guide the Kurdish Marxist-nationalist leader Abdullah Ocalan, who is imprisoned on a Turkish island for leading a separatist movement.

While Turkey's Western allies, including the U.S., consider the PKK a terrorist group, Washington has offered direct military and logistical support for Syrian Kurdish militants, known as the Syrian Democratic Forces, to fight IS in Syria. This has infuriated Ankara and strained its relations with Washington even though the two are NATO allies.

The YPG denies accusations of separatism and the YPG-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces said Monday the Turkish offensive "gives IS a space to breathe."

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WHY IS THIS HAPPENING NOW?

Turkey has long warned it would not allow a "terror corridor" on its border with Syria and launched a cross-border operation with Syrian opposition forces into Jarablus in northern Syria in 2016.

That operation cleared the Turkish border and nearly 2,000 square kilometers of the extremist IS but also aimed to prevent the YPG from linking the Afrin and Kobani cantons.

Turkey is pushing to be a key player in the Syrian conflict on behalf of rebels in peace talks in Kazakhstan, where it has been negotiating with Russia and Iran, who represent the Syrian government.

The parties have agreed on "de-escalation zones," which has allowed Turkey to send troops to rebel-held Idlib province in October as a monitor. But once again, Turkey's other goal has been to check the YPG's westward expansion, and Turkey amassed troops and armored vehicles between Idlib and Afrin.

The latest development leading up to the Afrin operation was an announcement by the U.S. military earlier this month that it was going to create a 30,000-member border force with the Kurdish fighters to secure northern Syria.

This has incensed Turkish leaders who claim that U.S. arms provided to the Syrian Kurds are and will be used against Turkey.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has tried to walk back the U.S. position, saying it was misrepresented. The U.S. also is discussing with Turkey and others the possibility of setting up a security zone on the Syria

border to address Turkey's concerns about a Kurdish enclave there, Tillerson said Monday. The buffer zone Turkey has been pushing for since 2012 may be closer than ever, with one already established around Jarabulus.

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WHAT'S AT STAKE?

The Afrin operation poses considerable military and political risks for Turkey. Erdogan has slammed critics who describe the operation as an "invasion" and said Turkish troops would leave after fulfilling their mission.

The Afrin district houses an estimated 800,000 civilians, including displaced people from earlier years of the Syrian war. Airstrikes could lead to another humanitarian crisis.

If Turkey's campaign proves successful, it could continue on to Manbij, where U.S.-backed Kurdish militants are in control since pushing IS out. Turkey has long accused the U.S. of going back on a promise that the militants would withdraw from the town.

The operation risks destabilizing a relatively peaceful area in Syria where civilians have found refuge and could further complicate the seven-year civil war.

The U.S. has urged Turkey to exercise restraint and said it would maintain a military presence with the Kurds for the foreseeable future. This continued support angers Turkish leaders, who expressed dismay that the U.S. chose to work with Syrian Kurds rather than Turkey in the fight against IS.

The European Union also warned Turkey that its offensive could undermine the Geneva peace talks.

Russia has pulled back troops from Afrin but has recently firmed up its ties with the YPG, while Turkey has struck defense and trade deals with Russia, raising questions about its NATO membership.

Syria's government in Damascus says it will shoot down any Turkish jets on raids in the country. The two governments have been at odds for years.

The operation could also spread along the Turkish-Syrian border. Skirmishes in the east already have been reported. It risks intensifying the conflict within Turkey, further polarizing a divided nation where pro-Kurdish lawmakers and many others have been arrested on alleged terror charges.

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	01/22 Oregon seeks help w/stolen headstones
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/oregon-officials-ask-for-help-identifying-stolen-headstones/
GIST	<p>GRANTS PASS, Ore. — Got time on your hands? Want to help solve a local mystery?</p> <p>The public is being asked to help identify the few remaining grave markers that have yet to be identified from a criminal case this past year. Other memorials in the case have already been traced to local cemeteries.</p> <p>The markers were discovered in the house of Matthew Jason Millwood, 49, during an April 2017 Rogue Area Drug Enforcement Team search of his home on Southwest Isham Street in Grants Pass.</p> <p>In total, police seized 15 headstones or pieces of headstones, as well as drugs and guns. Millwood was</p>

	<p>sentenced in December to just under two years in prison for crimes that included the unusual charge of “abuse of a memorial to the dead.”</p> <p>“I’ve never seen in my career someone who goes and steals headstones,” said newly retired Grants Pass police Detective Pete Jenista, who recently handed off the case to the Josephine County Historical Society.</p> <p>Millwood claimed in court records that he was a caretaker, but Jenista said he wouldn’t give any more details to police as to why he had taken the markers or where they all came from.</p> <p>Police were able to trace most of the grave markers to nearby cemeteries, including Pleasant Valley Cemetery near Hugo, Sloan Pioneer Cemetery near Wilderville, Rock Point Pioneer Cemetery in Gold Hill and Granite Hill Cemetery just west of Grants Pass. The origins of some remain harder to track, however.</p> <p>That’s where officials hope the public can help.</p> <p>“Normally we would have these maintained as evidence, but the District Attorney said to take photos and return them to see if we can’t get them back where they belong,” Jenista said. “If they aren’t restored to their proper places, the Josephine County Historical Society will be the stewards of that property.”</p> <p>The remaining markers have been turned over to the Historical Society in Grants Pass, which, so far, has been able to trace two of the remaining markers: brass placards belonging the Cameron Family that were taken from the Independent Order of Odd Fellows Cemetery, off Foothill Boulevard.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Oklahoma: 5 missing from rig explosion
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/7c1f0b321eb145c788402d1eecda3d99/Officials:-5-missing,-fire-out-after-Oklahoma-rig-explosion
GIST	<p>QUINTON, Okla. (AP) — Five people are missing after a fiery explosion ripped through an eastern Oklahoma drilling rig on Monday, sending plumes of black smoke into the air and leaving a derrick crumpled on the ground, emergency officials said.</p> <p>More than 20 employees were at the natural gas well site when the blast was reported around 8:45 a.m., Pittsburg County Sheriff Chris Morris said. Aerial footage showed several fires were still burning by midday on the rig and other equipment; the derrick, a towering metal structure above the well, collapsed onto the ground.</p> <p>Emergency crews were pulled away after other explosions at the site, where several tanks are also located, Pittsburg County Emergency Management Director Kevin Enloe said during an afternoon news conference.</p> <p>“Pretty much everything that is on location is on fire,” Enloe said.</p> <p>A statement Monday night from emergency management said the fire was out.</p> <p>The explosion occurred west of the town of Quinton, about 100 miles (161 kilometers) southeast of Tulsa. Enloe said firefighters were letting the blaze burn and weren’t putting water on it to keep from spreading possible hazardous materials at the site.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Air Force expands Spokane water testing
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/876189/air-force-to-expand-testing-for-water-pollution-near-spokane/
GIST	AIRWAY HEIGHTS, Wash. (AP) — The U.S. Air Force is expanding the area they are testing for water

	<p>contamination in the Spokane suburb of Airway Heights.</p> <p>Last year, the city went without drinkable tap water for more than 20 days after officials said there were high levels of two different contaminants in the water and urged residents not to drink it.</p> <p>KREM-TV reports that the Air Force announced Friday it would expand the current sampling area to include more private well owners.</p> <p>Airway Heights is home to Fairchild Air Force Base.</p> <p>The water is contaminated with chemicals used by the Air Force in fire trucks from 1970-2016.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Report: NKorea ships head to Russia
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2018/01/22/Report-North-Korea-ships-blocked-in-China-head-to-Russia/5871516630425/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts_tn_int&utm_medium=4
GIST	<p>Jan. 22 (UPI) -- More North Korean ships are heading to Russia as sanctions take root and Chinese ports are under scrutiny for trade with Pyongyang.</p> <p>North Korea may be coping with the blacklisting of ships under international embargoes by sending more vessels to Russia than China in the second half of 2018, Voice of America reported Monday.</p> <p>According to data from the Port State Control Committee of the Asia Pacific, 55 ships of North Korean origin docked at Russian ports while 38 ships docked in China.</p> <p>The data set is from July to December 2017.</p> <p>In 2016, trends were moving in reverse, with 135 North Korean vessels receiving inspections in China between July and December 2016, while 55 vessels were registered as arrivals in Russia, according to the report.</p> <p>The number of North Korean vessels headed to China was already declining by March 2017, a possible sign China was implementing sanctions while North Koreans cut back on trade with its largest trading partner.</p> <p>China's commerce ministry has also stated it would not import North Korean coal, in compliance with United Nations Security Council sanctions Resolution 2321.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Metal spikes on roads in Kitsap Co.
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/its-a-little-disturbing-homemade-metal-spikes-found-strewn-across-roads-in-kitsap-coun
GIST	<p>POULSBO, Wash. -- A Poulsbo Fire engine was damaged by a metal spike in the road while responding to a call, but firefighters don't think it was an accident after they found out that more spikes were found in North Kitsap County.</p> <p>Poulsbo firefighters were driving to a fire in Bainbridge Island last week when they heard a clunk. It happened along Highway 305, about a half mile from the Agate Pass Bridge.</p> <p>Shortly after hearing the loud noise, the firefighters were canceled on the call and returned to their station. Within minutes of arriving they discovered the front tire was flat.</p>

	<p>"Initially, when they came back they thought we had three large nails," said Poulsbo Fire Batt. Chief Chris Morrison. "Once a mechanic was able to remove the tire and get a closer look they found pieces of a spike and at least six holes in the tire.</p> <p>"It's a little disturbing to realize if somebody- we believe somebody maliciously did this because there were instances up in North Kitsap and Kingston where they found additional spikes," said Morrison.</p> <p>On Jan. 12, Kingston High School student Abby Rose posted on the North Kitsap Community Facebook page that she found spikes at the Kingston Cemetery. She says the metal pieces were buried in the gravel parking lot.</p> <p>"Some very rude person decided it would be a great idea to make homemade spikes to pop people's tires," Rose wrote in the message. "I picked up every one I could find buried in the gravel."</p> <p>Meanwhile, in Poulsbo, the engine was out of service for about an hour as the tire was replaced. The cost to make the repairs was \$1,300.</p> <p>Morrison said even more concerning is knowing what could happen if more spikes are out there.</p> <p>"Potentially, this could have caused damage to our crew and to the citizens if our engine would have went into oncoming traffic," said Morrison. "Could have been devastating."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Arson at Seattle Discovery Park
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/fire-at-fort-lawton-auditorium-ruled-arson
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - A fire in a vacant auditorium in Seattle's Discovery Park Sunday night has been ruled an arson, according to Seattle Fire.</p> <p>The fire broke out just before 8:30 p.m. in the building located at 4510 Texas Way W., near W. Government Way & 36th Ave. W. in Fort Lawton.</p> <p>Investigators said the fire caused about \$100,000 in damage.</p> <p>They said it's just the latest in a series of arsons in the Magnolia neighborhood.</p> <p>Nearly a dozen other fires since January of 2016 are also being investigated as arson, according to a neighborhood map provided by Seattle Fire.</p> <p>Most of those fires were set in recycle bins or shrubs and hedges and are still unsolved.</p> <p>It's not clear if the most recent fire at the auditorium is related to the other arsons.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 City pays homeless to pick up trash
SOURCE	http://www.khq.com/story/37324754/this-texas-city-is-paying-homeless-people-to-pick-up-trash
GIST	<p>FORT WORTH, Texas - The city of Fort Worth is paying homeless people to pick up trash as part of a new program to clean up the city and turn lives around.</p> <p>One of the people who works in the program is 53-year-old Frank Crist. Crist makes \$10 an hour to pick up litter in an area frequented by the homeless population. Crist told KXAS that he's thankful for the opportunity.</p>

	<p>"It just makes you feel better keeping it cleaned up. It means a lot, with my record and stuff, I really had no other place that would hire me," Crist said.</p> <p>Crist served prison time for drugs and ended up on the street. He lives at the Presbyterian Night Shelter, which hired him as part of the Clean Slate program. The city pays for the program and the shelter runs it.</p> <p>"It is a win-win," said Presbyterian Night Shelter CEO Toby Owen. "We want a clean neighborhood that speaks hope, that speaks dignity to our homeless guests. And it also provides income for these individuals so they can move out and be successful without living in a homeless shelter."</p> <p>According to Owen, the Clean Slate program put 40 people to work last year and about 3,856 tons of trash was collected. Those working for Clean Slate work as janitors for businesses as well.</p> <p>KXAS reports that Crist is about to move into an apartment, after almost two years of living in the shelter. He says he'll continue to work at Clean Slate after he moves into his new place.</p> <p>The city spends about \$48,000 a year on the program and the shelter is working with the city to expand it next year.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 NKorea ex-spy casts doubt w/Olympics
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/north-korea/north-korean-ex-spy-kim-hyon-hui-casts-doubt-kim-n839746
GIST	<p>DAEGU CITY, South Korea — She's a killer with a soft voice and a sharp blue suit. And not just any killer.</p> <p>Kim Hyon-hui is a mass murderer, a former spy for North Korea who blew up a passenger jet in 1987 on orders from Kim Jong Un's father.</p> <p>She says he wanted to sabotage the 1988 Seoul Summer Games.</p> <p>And with the Olympics returning to South Korea in just over two weeks in PyeongChang, she's warning the world not to trust Kim Jong Un. She sees dark motives behind his decision to send athletes to the Winter Olympics.</p> <p>According to Kim Hyun-hui, the regime hopes to try to separate South Korea from its ally, the United States, and eventually to reunify the Korean Peninsula under Communist rule.</p> <p>"North Korea is using the Olympics as a weapon," Kim Hyon-hui said. "It's trying to escape the sanctions by holding hands with South Korea, trying to break free from international isolation."</p> <p>She described the joint Korean Olympic team as "a publicity stunt for Kim Jong Un."</p> <p>"I was brainwashed that giving my life carrying out a mission ordered by the Kim family is an honor."</p> <p>The Korean War ended in an armistice rather than a peace treaty in 1953, meaning the neighbors officially remain at war. Friction has built over the past year, fueled by the North's nuclear and missile tests and apocalyptic rhetoric from Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump. Kim has repeatedly threatened to destroy the South along with the U.S., while Trump has threatened Pyongyang with "fire and fury."</p> <p>Thousands of North Korean artillery pieces stand ready around 30 miles away from Seoul, a city of 10 million people.</p> <p>Since taking office in May, South Korean President Moon Jae-in has made it clear he plans to re-engage</p>

with North Korea — an approach at odds with the Trump administration’s hardline stance of sanctions and the threat of a pre-emptive strike.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster have both warned that North Korea must not be allowed “to drive a wedge” between the allies.

'I was trained only to take orders like a robot'

Kim Hyun-hui was a 19-year-old university student in North Korea’s capital, Pyongyang, when she was handpicked to be a spy.

She trained for years before her first mission in 1987 — carry a bomb aboard a South Korean jet and blow it up. The aim was to persuade the world that South Korea was too dangerous to send Olympic athletes the following summer.

She was 25 on Nov. 29, 1987, when she boarded Korea Air Flight 858 in Baghdad and loaded her bomb into the overhead bin of the Boeing jet, and took her seat in row seven alongside her supposed father, an older North Korean agent.

They both got off at a stopover in Abu Dhabi before the plane continued to Seoul. It never made it, exploding over the Andaman Sea, killing all 115 on board, most of them South Koreans.

“When I was given the mission, my role was to disrupt the Seoul Olympics,” she told NBC News. “North Korea thought that hosting the Olympics would permanently divide the Koreas ... and make South Korea more economically powerful than the North. So I was ordered to harm the ‘South Korean puppets’ by hitting the flight.”

She has no doubt who was behind the mission: Kim Jong Un’s father, Kim Jong Il, who later became leader of the North.

“My mission was personally signed by Kim Jong Il,” she said. “At the time, he oversaw all matters relating to South Korea. Living in North Korea is like being in huge prison and being treated like slaves. You didn’t question an order.

“I was brainwashed that giving my life carrying out a mission ordered by the Kim family is an honor. So I took the mission thinking that the bombing will bring revolution in Korea and will contribute to the reunification of the Koreas.”

Kim Hyon-hui had no hesitation or doubts, but claims she experienced an unusual rush of feeling on the plane.

“The moment I boarded the flight I was thinking, ‘This is an enemy state,’” she recounted. “But then, placing the bomb, I was nervous, anxious, scared of being caught. I had a brief moment thinking that all the people in this plane will die, but I was frightened to even have such feelings. I wasn’t supposed to have such feelings. I was trained only to take orders like a robot. I tried to get rid of the feelings by thinking that for the sake of reunification these people had to be sacrificed. In North Korea, you can’t have these doubts, because if you do, it means your ideology has been corrupted and you’ll be executed or sent to a prison camp.”

And then came the only moment in a 70-minute interview in which she betrayed any hint of emotion.

Asked if she could still see the faces of the people she killed, Kim Hyon-hui replied, “Not really.”

But her eyes filled and she blinked repeatedly. “Every year I try to visit the memorial to the victims to make an apology,” she said, “and to pray for their souls.”

She succeeded in blowing up the plane, but failed to escape. Kim Hyon-hui was intercepted by police in Bahrain who pulled a cyanide capsule in a cigarette from her mouth before she could kill herself, as her fellow spy did.

After more than a week of interrogation she confessed and was sentenced to death in South Korea.

But its president pardoned her, on the grounds that she had been brainwashed by Pyongyang, freeing her into a lifetime of protection.

Even 30 years on, she is surrounded by a group of bodyguards and fears for her life.

"I think I am on a list to be assassinated," said Kim Hyon-hui, who is now aged 54 and married to a South Korean.

North Korea boycotted the 1988 Olympic Games, but it's taking part in the PyeongChang Games, sending 22 athletes and hundreds of supporters, officials, musicians and journalists.

However, Kim Hyon-hui believes the country's eventual goal is to get rid of American troops from the Korean Peninsula and predicted "North Korea will start its provocations again" in the months following the Olympics.

She added: "North Korea won't give up its nuclear weapons. They're its lifeline."

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HEADLINE	01/22 NJ town bans non-residents off roads
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/jersey-town-bans-nonresidents-roads-rush-hour/story?
GIST	<p>Next time you're traveling northbound on I-95 and your navigation app tells you to exit in Leonia, New Jersey, to skip traffic on the George Washington Bridge, you may find yourself \$200 poorer. Effective Monday, the city of Leonia is shutting down local streets to nonresident drivers during rush hour.</p> <p>The influx of vehicles creates a major headache for residents, according to Leonia Mayor Judah Zeigler.</p> <p>"When there is a problem on the bridge or on one of the New York City highways, 12,000 vehicles utilize this same road during the same period," Zeigler told ABC News.</p> <p>Most of the main streets will stay open to drivers, according to the mayor. But the local streets are closed off to nonresidents during certain times.</p> <p>Leonia Police Chief Tom Rowe told ABC station WABC that Leonia had no choice.</p> <p>"Three years ago we had a pedestrian [who] was run over when there were 90-minute delays at the bridge," Rowe said. "On that day, there was wall-to-wall traffic. So, we must do this to keep our streets safe, pedestrians safe, keep our intersections open so that ambulances get to the hospital. It's unfortunate we have to do it, but we have to do it."</p> <p>As extreme as it may sound, the measure is legal, according to Zeigler.</p> <p>"There is a U.S. Supreme court decision from 1977 that gives municipalities the absolute right to legislate restrictions on roads that are under their control as long as those roads are open to all residents, and we, ours, are and as long as there is a public purpose," Zeigler said.</p> <p>The Leonia Police Department, with its 18-member team, will do their best to enforce the ordinance.</p> <p>"Residents and employees of businesses or public entities in the Borough of Leonia have been issued</p>

	yellow hang tags for each vehicle," Zeigler said. "The police department will only be stopping people who don't have these hang tags -- no other standard is being used."
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HEADLINE	01/22 Report: NKorea desperate to feed army
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/01/22/north-korean-officials-ransacking-farmers-homes-to-find-food-for-kims-hungry-army-report-says.html
GIST	<p>North Korean officials desperate to feed Kim Jong Un's hungry army are ransacking the homes of drought-stricken farmers to collect every last grain of food inside, according to a report that highlights rising tensions between the regime and the public.</p> <p>The raids come weeks after news surfaced that soldiers in Kim's army are being given months off at a time to scrounge around fields to find food.</p> <p>"Officials carried out home searches in Paekam County to determine how much food some families had," a North Korean source told Daily NK. "As an excuse to enter and demand bribes, they said to the residents, 'Are we just going to let our military starve while the Americans lick their lips and prepare to eat us alive?'"</p> <p>The Seoul-based website, which covers the Hermit Kingdom through a network of informants, published a photo last month purportedly showing North Korean soldiers rummaging through a corn field.</p> <p>Despite drought conditions and a poor harvest last year in parts of North Korea, government officials are still demanding farmers fulfill a mandatory quota for military provisions.</p> <p>"All individuals who weren't able to meet the demands have been receiving additional assignments since the very beginning of January," a source in South Hamgyong Province told Daily NK last week.</p> <p>Another source in a neighboring province also said "these demands are pushing people to their wits' end."</p> <p>Sources told the website residents are not surprised by the annual demands to offer food to the military, but the tactic of officials ransacking homes in some regions is a new development.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Canada's addiction to road salt
SOURCE	http://nationalpost.com/news/canada/how-canadas-addiction-to-road-salt-is-ruining-everything
GIST	<p>This winter, Calgary has expanded its use of beet juice as a de-icing alternative to road salt. While slightly more expensive than salt, the mixture is more efficient, less toxic and less corrosive.</p> <p>Nevertheless, despite a galaxy of relatively benign de-icing agents such as beet juice, this year cities across Canada will stubbornly continue to coat their roads with literal mountains of salt. Although salt remains the single cheapest way to keep snow and ice at bay, the economics make much less sense when considering the awesome scale of the damage wrought every year by the salt truck.</p> <p>Below is a repost of an article that first ran in January, 2017. Since it was originally published, road salt has dissolved hundreds of kilograms of automotive steel, chapped untold numbers of dog's paws and done at least \$5 billion damage to Canadian infrastructure.</p> <p>In 2015, the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration pegged salt corrosion as the culprit in thousands of vehicle brake failures. That same year, Transport Canada issued a recall of 3,000 BMWs and Minis that had been parked at the Port of Halifax during the 2015 ice storm. But it wasn't the ice that caused the recall; salt de-icing had damaged the vehicles so badly that they couldn't steer properly. Way</p>

back in 1975, Transport Canada estimated that de-icing salts were causing \$200 in damage per car, per year — the equivalent of \$854 in 2017. Corrosion-resistant coatings have improved in the interim, but even when one-quarter that amount is applied to the roughly 14 million registered vehicles in Ontario and Quebec, the result is an extra \$3 billion in vehicle depreciation each year.

Crews are already at work on a \$4.2-billion replacement for Montreal's Champlain Bridge. The original, built in 1962, was brought to the edge of collapse in only 50 years because of salt corrosion. Salt brine seeping into concrete dramatically speeds up the corrosion of rebar within — and is heavily responsible for the poor state of bridges and highway overpasses across central Canada. Salt was a key contributor to the deadly 2006 collapse of the De La Concorde bridge in Laval, killing six people. The heavy salt diet on Toronto's Gardiner Expressway is also one of the main reasons the elevated highway is often raining chunks of concrete; as rebar corrodes, the concrete around it crumbles. Tellingly, a series of 1930s-era stone carvings around Toronto's Air Canada Centre have been permanently ruined by salty runoff from the nearby expressway.

After the Algo Centre Mall in Ontario's Elliot Lake collapsed in 2012, killing two people, forensic analysts said the building's steel supports looked like they had spent decades marinating in sea water. There were structural problems, to be sure, but the building was also hammered by 30 years of salty runoff from a rooftop parking garage. Road salt was also a contributing factor to lead contamination of drinking water in Flint, Mich. Water from the Flint River — made extra salty by road salt runoff — was eating into old pipes, dosing the population with lead. In 2011, well before the Flint disaster, Michigan's Mackinac Center for Public Policy pegged the total damage done by road salt as high as \$687 CDN per tonne. In Minnesota, damage estimates ranged between \$1000 CDN and \$5000 CDN per tonne. Canada uses at least seven million tonnes of salt per year, according to 2009 estimates by Environment Canada. Using the Mackinac Center estimate, that's \$4.8 billion in damage per year — \$1 billion more than the \$3.6 billion damage caused by the Fort McMurray wildfire.

Dalhousie University estimated that it costs it an extra \$15,000 in cleaning and maintenance each year just to repair all the damage salt does to floors and baseboards — with similar costs presumably accruing to most of Canada's other universities, museums and public buildings. Salt severely corrodes leather, reducing the lifespan of Canadian shoes and requiring extra cleaning. And wading through salt is brutal on dogs' paws: Every winter brings a new wave of chapped paw cases to Canadian vets.

Hit a moose lately? There's a chance that they wandered onto the road in order to lick up some road salt. Sodium is quite rare in nature, which is why moose — like humans — have pretty strong salt cravings. Much of Canada's road salts also end up on forest floors, farm fields or water systems. In 2010, a report found that Frenchman's Bay outside Pickering, Ont., was so polluted with road salt that it had been effectively cleared of fish.

It's generally too cold for road salt to be effective in the Prairies, so municipalities make do with sand, plowing and — in residential areas — simply having people drive on packed snow. But, the Prairies also regularly rack up Canada's highest rates of highway deaths. Keeping roads ice-free is generally a good thing, but there are less-corrosive alternatives: calcium magnesium acetate, magnesium chloride and calcium chloride. But with salt costing only \$50 per tonne, alternatives can cost between six to 18 times. It's a lot of money for the already overstretched de-icing budgets of Canadian cities — but potentially a bargain when the total societal costs of salt are factored in.

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HEADLINE	01/22 Pentagon: Russia 'doomsday torpedo'
SOURCE	http://chicago.cbslocal.com/2018/01/22/russia-doomsday-torpedo-pentagon/
GIST	CBS Local — The Russian government is reportedly developing a city-killing torpedo, called Kanyon, that would allegedly leave a country's coastline uninhabitable for decades. The terrifying news, which sounds more likely to come from a "James Bond" film, was actually leaked from the Pentagon's report on nuclear weapons posturing.

	<p>The “doomsday torpedo” has been on the U.S. military’s radar for several years and was first revealed publicly by the Washington Free Beacon in 2015. Kanyon, an autonomous underwater vehicle carrying a lethal 100-megaton thermonuclear weapon, is reportedly being designed by the Russians to attack coastal areas, major cities, naval bases, and other sea ports.</p> <p>The massive nuclear payload of Kanyon would equal the explosion of 100 million tons of TNT and is twice as powerful as the most powerful thermonuclear weapon ever tested, according to Popular Mechanics.</p> <p>Perhaps even worse than the immediate devastation of a nuclear attack by this Russia robot sub, experts add that the radioactive fallout from such a powerful torpedo would leave the contaminated area off-limits to humans for the next 100 years. Russia’s alleged use of the radioactive isotope Cobalt-60 is to blame for the long recovery time.</p> <p>Jeffrey Lewis, an expert on nuclear policy, called Kanyon’s development “absurd.” In an interview with Business Insider, Lewis added that Russia’s willingness to create such a torpedo was “deeply, deeply, deeply immoral” and the U.S. has not even considered copying Kanyon’s design.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	01/22 Seattle: hate crimes up 230% since 2012
SOURCE	http://www.capitolhilltimes.com/Content/News/News/Article/Hate-crimes-bias-incidents-up-230-percent-in-Seattle-since-2012/26/337/5471
GIST	<p>Reported hate crimes and incidents in Seattle have increased 230 percent since 2012, and the city is now focusing on a phased approach to improving accuracy in documenting and responding to future cases.</p> <p>The city auditor’s office has created a report that analyzes the past five years of data regarding hate crimes and incidents in Seattle at the request of City Councilmember Lisa Herbold, and a presentation will be provided to the Civil Rights, Utilities, Economic Development, and Arts Committee at 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, Jan. 23.</p> <p>There were 150 crimes with bias elements reported in 2017, and 107 cases of malicious harassment. Non-criminal bias incidents were at 116. This is a marked increase over the 2012 reports of 47 bias-related crimes, 31 cases of malicious harassment and 35 non-criminal bias incidents recorded in 2012. Bias-related crimes jumped from 89 in 2016 to 150 in 2017.</p> <p>Race was the biggest factor in the 1,126 incidents reported between January 2012 and November 2017, followed by 722 incidents involving LGBTQ community members. Religion came in third at 286, followed by ethnicity at 118 incidents.</p> <p>The auditor’s office published its Phase One report reviewing hate crime prevention, response and reporting back in September, and from that has come up with nine recommendations for consideration addressing reporting, training, using data and city and regional coordination.</p> <p>The Seattle Police Department is creating a training plan that includes an e-learning module on hate crimes, and is incorporating hate crime scenarios into its annual training. SPD is also increasing its data analysis capacity to include hot spots where hate crimes are reported, time of day, and victimization and socio-demographic trends, according to a presentation to be provided to the committee on Tuesday.</p> <p>SPD will also be working with the Office for Civil Rights to coordinate reporting, and with Seattle Public Utilities in terms of hate graffiti data.</p>

	<p>The U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service is expected to convene regional partners to discuss better ways to coordinate data collection and strategies.</p> <p>A Phase Two audit will include analysis of cases, a socio-demographic analysis by the University of Washington and a review of prevention efforts.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 RCMP: criminals getting more clever
SOURCE	https://www.columbiavalleypioneer.com/news/police-fear-fewer-fentanyl-imports-dont-signal-the-end-of-the-overdose-crisis/
GIST	<p>Despite fewer fentanyl seizures from shipments being flown and mailed to B.C. last year, police warn that the amount of the deadly opioid being smuggled in might not be decreasing.</p> <p>Insp. Rob Parker, who heads up RCMP E Division's federal serious and organized crime unit, said Thursday that although imports tracked by the Canada Border Security Agency have decreased by 20 per cent in 2017, that doesn't mean the opioid overdose is letting up</p> <p>According to figures obtained from the CBSA, 56 seizures resulted in 10,661 grams of fentanyl seized at by mail or at the airport in 2017.</p> <p>The previous year, 13,701 grams were seized over 55 seizures.</p> <p>Parker said that while the decreasing amounts look to be at odds with the opioid crisis that has gripped B.C. for close to two years, "obviously it would be counterintuitive to assume that they're getting everything."</p> <p>The CBSA statistics provided only measure what comes into the province at the Vancouver International Mail Centre and Vancouver International Airport cargo centre.</p> <p>Parker said drug dealers often bring in fentanyl via land and air borders. The fentanyl data provided by the CBSA only showed air and mail imports; however, seizures of general narcotics by land, sea, air and rail dropped by about half between 2016 and 2017.</p> <p>Parker told Black Press that from what he and his team have seen, it's too early to assume fentanyl imports are slowing down.</p> <p>"Sadly, I think it's still early days in the fentanyl opioid crisis," he said, noting that a fewer seizures are as likely to be proof of more clever drug dealers as they are to show a real decrease in drugs going in.</p> <p>The latest statistics available show that in B.C. 1,208 people have died from opioid overdose-related deaths in the first 10 months of 2017. Of those, 83 per cent are linked to fentanyl.</p> <p>Overdose-related deaths have nearly doubled since the previous year: from January to October 2016, 683 people died. In the first 10 months of 2015, 402 people died.</p> <p>The BC Coroners service has linked the increase in overdose deaths to the increase in fentanyl in B.C.'s communities, citing a 136 per cent increase in fentanyl-linked deaths in the first 10 months of 2017, compared to the first 10 months of 2016.</p> <p>Parker said fentanyl's potency – 100 times stronger than morphine – makes it so alluring to drug dealers. Drug dealers are now mixing pure fentanyl or fentanyl analogues with buffering agents that can stretch mere grams of the deadly opioid into much more profitable quantities.</p> <p>"We're seeing fentanyl purchased in a pure format being mixed with a buffering-type agent, extending the</p>

	<p>quantity,” said Parker. “They’re turning a small amount of fentanyl into what’s being held out as larger amount of cocaine or heroin.”</p> <p>Police worry that the profitability of fentanyl is contributing to the gang-style shootings seen across the region.</p> <p>Four people have died in reported gang-related violence in the first three weeks of 2018. Three were targeted; a fourth, 15-year-old Alfred Wong, was hit by a stray bullet while driving by a shootout in Vancouver.</p> <p>“There’s obviously a connection to organized crime, trafficking and narcotics that we need to be concerned about.”</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 MS-13 ‘more violent’ enforcers to US
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/01/22/ms-13-wants-to-send-younger-more-violent-offenders-to-us-officials-say.html
GIST	<p>Frustrated MS-13 gang leaders feeling the pressure from the Trump administration’s crackdown are looking to send “younger, more violent offenders” to the United States to take over the role of being enforcers, officials say.</p> <p>The revelations were made Thursday during a House Committee on Homeland Security meeting on fighting international criminal organizations, where officials discussed the arrests and imprisonment of MS-13 members and leadership over the last year.</p> <p>"They're very much interested in sending younger, more violent offenders up through their channels into this country in order to be enforcers for the gang," said Stephen Richardson, assistant director of the FBI's criminal investigative division, according to VOA News.</p> <p>Peter King, R-N.Y., the committee’s chairman, said his staff recently visited El Salvador and was told by law enforcement there that the gang -- which mostly operates out of prisons in the Central American country -- is "frustrated that MS-13 members in [the U.S.] are not violent enough.”</p> <p>"It's a horrifying thought," King was quoted as saying by VOA News.</p> <p>Justice Department figures say the gang has 40,000 members worldwide, with around 10,000 in the U.S. carrying out crimes ranging from extortion to gun trafficking.</p> <p>"We're looking at the information we're getting and doubling down our efforts against MS-13," Raymond Villaneuva, an assistant director for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, told lawmakers in response to King’s comments.</p> <p>The gang, also responsible for dozens of gruesome deaths throughout the U.S., was designated a “priority” last year by the Justice Department’s Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force. Prosecutors are able to pursue any legal avenue to target MS-13, according to Attorney Gen. Jeff Sessions.</p> <p>U.S. officials and three Central American countries announced in September that more than 3,800 members of MS-13 and the 18th Street gangs have been charged since March.</p> <p>Sessions also said in December the Justice Department convicted more than 1,000 gang members in the U.S. in 2017, VOA News reported.</p> <p>MS-13 is believed to be behind 25 killings on New York’s Long Island alone in the past two years.</p>

Trump in July 2017 visited Brentwood, N.Y., a town that has experienced the gang's wrath, and pledged to push Congress for additional federal immigration agents to crack down on gang members who are in the country illegally. He also called MS-13 members "animals."

Many MS-13 recruits are middle- and high-school students, predominantly in immigrant communities, who are said to risk violent retribution if they leave.

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HEADLINE	01/22 Benton Co. charges 11 in fraud, theft
SOURCE	http://www.tri-cityherald.com/news/local/crime/article196069069.html
GIST	<p>A 20-year-old Kennewick man who never worked a day for one of Eastern Washington's largest apple and cherry producers admitted cashing in on nearly \$102,000 in paychecks.</p> <p>Mario David Prado's mother was friends with the ringleader, who created nine "phantom" employees to embezzle nearly \$1 million from Zirkle Fruit Company in a years-long scheme.</p> <p>Prado's name was put on the payroll list, along with his mother, father and sister.</p> <p>His mother, Esmeralda Prado, allegedly agreed to participate because she was having financial troubles in late 2013 and early 2014, according to court documents.</p> <p>The agreement with bookkeeper Norma Ruth Garza was that Esmeralda Prado and others had to give back half of the value of each paycheck, documents said.</p> <p>In all, 11 people have been charged with various crimes in Benton County Superior Court in connection with the scheme.</p> <p>Mario Prado is only the second to resolve his case. He recently pleaded guilty to first-degree theft and three counts of forgery.</p> <p>Sentencing is set for April 19. The standard range is four months to one year in county jail because of Prado's lack of criminal history.</p> <p>Deputy Prosecutor Terry Bloor said in the plea statement that he will recommend 10 months.</p> <p>Garza, 52, was sentenced in November to five years and eight months in prison for charges of leading an organized crime and four counts of forgery.</p> <p>The full restitution she was ordered to pay is \$864,647.</p> <p>The trials for six co-defendants — all family and friends — have been pushed into March and April.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Garza's fellow bookkeeper and the bookkeeper's husband and father all have yet to appear in court. Investigators say they can't be found.</p> <p>Garza and Maria Teresa Galarza worked for the Selah-based company out of the Paterson branch office.</p> <p>It was only when both women were off on a payday that the manager of a Finley ranch noticed he had extra checks for non-employees, court documents said.</p> <p>Both women tried to avoid any suspicion by calling in that day and claiming there had been a mistake, but their unusual behavior brought attention and sparked an audit of the company's payroll, documents said.</p> <p>The investigation dated back to April 2010 and reportedly totaled about \$956,000 in fraudulent paychecks.</p>

	<p>Records show that Prado had received 153 paychecks between May 2013 and November 2016.</p> <p>Galarza and her husband, Geronimo Marquez Galarza, both have no-bail warrants on charges of forgery and theft.</p> <p>Juan Antonio Ulloa, the father of Maria Galarza, is wanted on a \$5,000 warrant, also for theft and forgery.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Unlikely slave masters in Britain
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-crime-modern-slavery/middle-aged-couples-and-families-make-unlikely-slave-masters-in-britain-idUSKBN1FB2JE
GIST	<p>LONDON (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - Many modern slavery crimes in Britain are committed by families and middle-aged couples leading seemingly respectable lives, experts said on Monday, confounding the general belief that crime gangs control slavery operations.</p> <p>At least 13,000 people across Britain are estimated to be victims of modern slavery - trapped in forced labor, sexual exploitation and domestic servitude - but police say the true figure is likely to be in the tens of thousands.</p> <p>Offenders include large human trafficking networks but also ostensibly ordinary people that do not fit the stereotype of violent criminals, said Nadia Wager, a reader in Forensic Psychology at England's University of Huddersfield.</p> <p>A study she conducted in the Thames Valley in southeast England found most offenders in 2016 were aged 30 to 60 who exploited vulnerable family members or acquaintances in domestic work, sex work, forced labor and to commit drug related crimes.</p> <p>"The perception in the public mind is (of) big organized criminal gangs but that is not necessarily what we are finding," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone.</p> <p>The same is true nationwide, said Jakub Sobik of Anti-Slavery International, a London-based charity.</p> <p>"A large numbers of perpetrators are individuals or small groups of people, including families, who take the opportunity of exploiting people who are vulnerable," he said.</p> <p>Police in Britain are ramping up investigations into cases of slavery and trafficking, with more than 500 live policing operations into the crimes ongoing, according to the National Crime Agency - dubbed Britain's FBI.</p> <p>But investigations and media coverage have so far mainly focused on criminal networks, which risks skewing the general understanding of the crime, making it more difficult for members of the public to spot and report modern slavery, Sobik said.</p> <p>"There is definitely too much emphasis on organized criminal groups in comparison to individuals," he said in an email.</p> <p>Slavery predominantly affects immigrants and vulnerable people, often working at car washes, nail bars and farms, according to the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA), Britain's anti-slavery body.</p> <p>Potential signs include poor hygiene, injury and malnourishment, living in cramped or dirty accommodation, a suspicious manner and seeming under the influence or control of others, said the GLAA.</p>

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HEADLINE	01/23 Pakistan women speak out on abuse
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/ee6e5fe6f40a4409a10dd9eaf6cc256d/After-girl's-killing,-Pakistani-women-speak-out-on-abuse
GIST	<p>KASUR, Pakistan (AP) — The brutal rape and killing of Zainab Ansari, a 7-year-old girl whose body was left in a garbage dump, has unleashed a wave of revulsion around Pakistan, revealing a string of child abductions and killings by a suspected serial predator and generating outrage at a culture of silence surrounding sexual abuse.</p> <p>Zainab’s death has even given birth to a nascent Pakistani version of #MeToo movement.</p> <p>A number of prominent Pakistani women have come forward with their own stories of sexual assault, saying they want to change traditions that consider abuse as a mark of shame for the victim. Those traditions, they say, help predators get away with abuse and encourage an already corrupt police force to ignore such crimes.</p> <p>Maheen Khan, a legendary Pakistani fashion designer, tweeted that she had been sexually abused as a child by an Islamic cleric who taught her the Quran. “I froze in fear day after day,” she tweeted. At 73, Khan has spoken publicly only once before of the abuse.</p> <p>“We are now saying enough is enough. We should have woken up long ago,” she said in a telephone interview from her home in the southern city of Karachi. “I am ashamed to say it has taken this one little girl’s death.”</p> <p>“What disturbs me the most is the silence when a little girl gets raped,” she said. “It has to do with the honor of family. Parents tell their daughters: ‘Don’t talk about it. Don’t tell anyone.’ Our silence is saying it is all right to sexually molest a child.”</p> <p>The horror of Zainab’s killing was brought home for Pakistanis by a photo of her that went viral on social media, showing the smiling girl in her favorite bright pink coat, with a pink barrette holding back her hair. TV channels aired the photo alongside pictures of her lifeless body abandoned on a heap of garbage in her home city of Kasur.</p> <p>Across Pakistan, thousands protested, condemning police inaction and blaming the government for failing to protect children.</p> <p>“Whenever anybody saw her picture on social media or on electronic media everybody started weeping,” said Waqas Abid, a lawyer in Kasur who heads an activist group called the Good Thinkers Organization. “Everybody was self-motivated to come out from his or her house and ask for justice for Zainab.”</p> <p>The Senate’s Standing Committee on the Interior, which oversees policing, launched an inquiry this week into the sexual assaults in Kasur, as well as into another recent attack in another part of the country — the rape and killing of a 4-year-old named Asma, whose body was left in a field near her home in Kyhber Pukhtunkhwa, in northwestern Pakistan.</p> <p>Kasur is a congested district of around 2.5 million people in eastern Pakistan, near the border with India. The city of Kasur is surrounded by brick kilns and tanneries and has hundreds of small factories making shoes and embroideries, all of which employ children — making them vulnerable to abuse. In 2015, an extensive child pornography ring was uncovered in the city; it had been flourishing for nearly a decade and involved nearly 250 children, some of whom were forced at gunpoint to have sex.</p> <p>It was only after the shock over Zainab that news emerged of other children abducted and raped in Kasur. Amid the uproar, police did testing on the victims and found the same DNA on eight of the children, all</p>

but one of whom was killed. Police now say they are hunting for a serial rapist-killer.

Among the eight victims was 5-year-old Ayesha. Her father, Mohammed Asif, said he pleaded with the police to find her after her abduction last year.

“They had no interest. They were more interested in keeping it quiet,” he told The Associated Press. Her body, showing signs of rape and torture, was found two days after her disappearance.

The sole survivor among the eight was a 6-year-old girl found by a homeless man rummaging through a garbage bin outside a vegetable market. She had been kidnapped for 15 hours, during which she was tortured. Cigarettes were put out on her feet and legs, and she suffered a serious head injury. Now at a hospital in the nearby city of Lahore, she can’t sit, hold up her head or speak, and her father Mohammad Ahsan, says all she does is cry.

Ahsan said his daughter’s attack was ignored in the media until Zainab’s killing.

Abid, the lawyer, said there have been at least 20 cases of children abducted, raped and killed over the past year in Kasur district. At his office, he showed the AP the police reports he has collected on 15 of the cases.

There were 4,139 cases of child sexual abuse reported in Pakistan in 2016, according to Sahil, an organization documenting child abuse in the country. It collects its figures by tracking reports in Pakistani media. But most cases go unreported, said Sahil’s executive director, Munizae Bano.

Zainab’s case, however, sparked a moment of openness. A number of well-known women hope that telling about their own experiences will prompt others to speak out.

Actress and child activist Nadia Jamil said anger and frustration at the silence prompted her to tweet about sexual abuse she suffered as a child.

“I just lost it when I went personal on social media, openly on social media,” she said.

Frieha Altaf, an events manager, model and actress who tweeted about abuse she suffered as a 6-year-old, said Zainab’s death is a catalyst to challenge shame and fear that silence victims and their parents.

“There is no stopping now,” she said. “For me, there is no stopping now.”

But Abid cautioned that change isn’t necessarily unstoppable. Frank language about sexual assault will likely bring a backlash from religious conservatives and many parents who oppose discussing sexual issues and hold tight to traditions that ban mixing of the sexes, consider girls responsible for the family “honor” and even forgive killing a girl who marries for love.

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HEADLINE	01/23 Family man killed in ‘swatting’ sues
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/9291fee62fd34c23a961dc534a2b1437/Family-of-man-killed-after-'swatting'-call-sues-Wichita
GIST	<p>WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — The family of a Kansas man fatally shot by police at the door of his home after a hoax emergency call has sued the city of Wichita and the unidentified officers involved.</p> <p>The federal lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court of Kansas seeks unspecified damages related to the Dec. 28 death of Andrew Finch in Wichita. The unarmed 28-year-old man was shot by police responding to a California man’s call with a fake story about a shooting and kidnapping at Finch’s Wichita home.</p> <p>The shooting drew national attention to a practice called “swatting,” in which a person makes up a false</p>

report to get emergency responders to descend on an address. The hoax call reportedly was made after a dispute over a small wager online in a “Call of Duty” online video game tournament, according to Dexerto, a news service focused on gaming.

“The family wants justice and reform — they want to make sure Andy’s legacy means something and maybe some other family won’t have to experience the tragedy they are experiencing because of a change in policy and procedures,” said civil rights attorney Andrew M. Stroth, who is representing the family. His Chicago law firm specializes in police shootings cases nationwide.

Wichita police officers have been involved in at least 29 shootings between 2010 and 2015, resulting in at least 15 deaths, according to the lawsuit. In most of these cases, the city has declined to release the names of the involved officers.

“Two children — a 7-year-old boy and an almost 2-year-old girl — lost their father because of the unjustified and unconstitutional acts of the Wichita Police Department as well as the policies, practices and custom of the WPD,” Stroth said.

Tyler Barriss, 25, of Los Angeles has been criminally charged with involuntary manslaughter, giving false alarm and interference with a law enforcement officer for allegedly placing the hoax call. Barriss is not named as a defendant in the Finch family’s civil lawsuit.

“Wichita leadership is trying to put all the blame on the young man in California who placed the swatting call,” Stroth said. “But let’s be clear: the swatter did not shoot the bullet that killed Andy Finch. That was an officer working under the direction of the Wichita Police Department.”

The lawsuit cites FBI crime statistics showing Wichita has a ratio of one shooting death for every 120 officers — a number that is 11 times greater than the national ratio and 12 times greater than the ratio in Chicago.

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HEADLINE	01/23 Arrest threatening ‘mass CNN shooting’
SOURCE	http://time.com/5113871/cnn-death-threats-fake-news-shooting/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>A Michigan man has been arrested for allegedly threatening to carry out a mass shooting at CNN’s Atlanta headquarters in a series of hostile phone calls earlier this month.</p> <p>The man threatened CNN operators in 22 separate phone calls on Jan. 9 and 10, in which he allegedly called the network “Fake News” and threatened CNN employees with violence, Atlanta CBS affiliate WGCL-TV reported. “I’m coming to gun you all down,” he reportedly said.</p> <p>“I’m smarter than you. More powerful than you. I have more guns than you. More manpower. Your cast is about to get gunned down in a matter of hours,” the man allegedly told a CNN operator, according to WGCL-TV. “I am coming to Georgia right now to go to the CNN headquarters to f—ing gun every single last one of you.”</p> <p>The FBI launched an investigation into the caller, who was identified by released federal court documents as Brandon Griesemer of Novi, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit, according to ABC15 Arizona. Local police had previously looked into threatening calls made from the same phone number to the Islamic Center of Ann Arbor, Michigan in Sept, ABC15 reports, helping a CNN-employed investigator trace the calls to a number associated with Griesemer’s parents.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Arrests for stealing \$400K from hospital
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SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/876892/mother-daughter-accused-of-stealing-400k-from-hospital/
GIST	<p>ABERDEEN, Wash. (AP) — A 64-year-old woman and her 45-year-old daughter have been arrested on suspicion of stealing nearly \$400,000 from a Washington state hospital.</p> <p>KOMO-TV reports that the arrests follow a nine-month investigation that began when administrators at Grays Harbor Community Hospital and Grays Harbor Physicians Services found a large amount of money missing from their accounts in April 2017.</p> <p>Police say they were able to identify the two suspects with help from a financial audit.</p> <p>Both the mother and daughter are former employees of the hospital. Police say the thefts started in September 2015 when the daughter started making direct deposits and depositing checks written to herself that she had access to through her payroll controller position.</p> <p>Aberdeen police detectives arrested the suspects on Friday. Both were released from jail pending charges.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Airline workers stole 343 computers?
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/01/22/airline-workers-in-alaska-charged-with-swiping-343-computers.html
GIST	<p>ANCHORAGE, Alaska – A federal grand jury has indicted six former employees of an Alaska commuter airline on charges of stealing mail over two years, including 343 computers headed to schools in rural villages.</p> <p>The six ramp agents were employed by Ravn Air. U.S. Attorney Bryan Schroder said the six were charged with stealing Apple computers and other mail, conspiracy and possession of stolen mail.</p> <p>The value of the items stolen from March 2015 to April 2017 was \$489,000. Besides computers, the men are suspected of stealing cellphones, cigarettes and chewing tobacco.</p> <p>The six include Congress Lepou, 29, Breadoflife "Presley" Faiupu, 36, Hubert Barte, 37, Paulo Maae, 24, Harold Velicaria, 35, and Rogelio "Roger" Daquis, 49.</p> <p>One suspect was arrested Friday and five others were arrested Monday. All but Maae were in custody Monday afternoon at the Anchorage jail, according to online corrections listings. The indictment did not list their attorneys.</p> <p>Ravn was authorized to pick up mail from the U.S. Postal Service Processing and Distribution Center in Anchorage and move it to Ravn facilities for placement on planes and delivery to villages, including the western Alaska communities of Saint Marys, Mountain Village, Stebbins, Unalakleet, Emmonak, Kotlik, Alakanuk, Aniak, Grayling, Kalskag and Koyuk.</p> <p>Lepou was a lead ramp agent and Faiupu was a ramp agent trainer.</p> <p>Prosecutors said Lepou and Faiupu used a Ravn truck to move items from the post office distribution center to the Ravn employee parking lot, where they were loaded into private vehicles.</p> <p>The four others paid for stolen items or found buyers for stolen items, prosecutors said. The computers included both desktop and laptop models.</p> <p>Some items were sold or given to family members or co-workers.</p> <p>Lepou in April was found with two stolen computers, 667 cartons of cigarettes stolen from the mail and 305 cans of stolen chewing tobacco. He also had eight stolen prepay cellular phones worth \$109,000,</p>

	prosecutors said.
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HEADLINE	01/23 Guards disrupt French prison operations
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/guards-disrupt-french-prisons-seek-work-conditions-52542217?
GIST	<p>Guards are disrupting operations at dozens of prisons in France to demand better working conditions, in the second week of protests triggered by attacks on them.</p> <p>The Justice Ministry said Tuesday that protests were organized in at least 98 prisons across the country, with guards starting their working day late or blocking entrances.</p> <p>Unions representing protesting prison guards have called for a "total blockage" ahead of a new round of talks with the ministry scheduled Tuesday afternoon.</p> <p>Guards want better wages and enhanced security measures, in addition to the creation of jobs the government has already proposed.</p> <p>Attacks at about a half-dozen prisons have fueled the guards' protests since last week.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 CAR convicts former warlord
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/01/22/militia-leader-convicted-in-central-african-republic.html
GIST	<p>BANGUI, Central African Republic – Human rights groups in Central African Republic say a former warlord who fought in the anti-Balaka militia has been sentenced to life in prison, a first for this conflict-racked country.</p> <p>The International Federation for Human Rights said Monday that the conviction of Rodrigue Ngaibona, known as "General Andjilo," is the first of its kind since communal tensions erupted in 2013. A coalition of human rights group said Monday it was a "decisive first step."</p> <p>The anti-Balaka are an armed group that rose in opposition to the Muslim rebels who had overthrown the government in 2012.</p> <p>Ngaibona, who claimed innocence, was convicted of multiple murders between October 2014 and January 2015.</p> <p>Scores of militants on both sides of the conflict have evaded justice by disappearing into the lawless countryside.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Pipeline protestor pleads guilty shooting
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/01/22/dakota-access-protester-pleads-guilty-in-shooting-incident.html
GIST	<p>BISMARCK, N.D. – A Denver woman accused of shooting at law officers while being arrested for protesting the Dakota Access oil pipeline in North Dakota pleaded guilty Monday to two federal charges in a deal with prosecutors.</p> <p>The agreement means Red Fawn Fallis won't stand trial, where she could have faced up to life in prison if convicted. Instead, prosecutors will recommend a sentence of no more than seven years in prison.</p>

Assistant U.S. Attorney Gary Delorme declined comment outside the courtroom on why the government chose not to take the case to trial.

Fallis, 38, was accused of firing a handgun three times during her October 2016 arrest. No one was hurt. She pleaded guilty Monday to civil disorder and gun possession by a convicted felon. She has a 2003 conviction in Colorado for being an accessory to a felony crime. Court records show she was accused of driving a car for a man who shot and wounded another man.

Fallis cried while she entered her pleas. She did not discuss the protest shooting incident, only answering basic questions from U.S. District Judge Daniel Hovland about her background and understanding of the proceedings.

Prosecutors at sentencing will drop a more serious count against Fallis — discharge of a firearm during a felony crime of violence. Sentencing wasn't immediately scheduled.

About two dozen supporters of Fallis packed the courtroom but didn't comment after the hearing. The courthouse was under heavy security. The number of federal law and security officers outside the courtroom was double the norm, and people had to obtain passes to enter the courtroom. The courthouse was the site of protests several times when the demonstrations against the pipeline were at their height between August 2016 and February 2017.

Fallis' arrest was among 761 that authorities made in southern North Dakota in that six-month span. At times thousands of pipeline opponents gathered in the region to protest the \$3.8 billion project to move North Dakota oil to a shipping point in Illinois. Fallis is the only protester accused of firing a gun.

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HEADLINE	01/22 Greek police clash w/activists
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/greece-protest-squatted-building-arson-brings-tear-gas-52532179?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Greek riot police have fired tear gas and stun grenades during clashes with activists protesting an arson fire at a building used by anarchist squatters in the northern city of Thessaloniki.</p> <p>No injuries were reported from the confrontation late Monday. Police said five people were detained as suspected rioters.</p> <p>The clashes broke out during a march through the city to protest the fire that gutted the building, which anarchist groups say was being used to house refugees. Right-wing extremists are suspected in the arson.</p> <p>The fire occurred on the sidelines of a large demonstration opposing efforts to resolve a long-standing name dispute between Greece and neighboring Macedonia. Greece has a region named Macedonia, where Thessaloniki, Greece's second-largest city, is located.</p> <p>Police are investigating the arson.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/22 Texas high school shooting; 1 injured
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/injured-shooting-texas-school/story?id=52522539
GIST	<p>A 15-year-old girl was hospitalized after a shooting in a cafeteria at a Texas school this morning, local officials said.</p> <p>The suspect, a 16-year-old male student, fired several shots from a semi-automatic handgun shortly before</p>

8 a.m. local time at Italy High School in Italy, Texas, located about 45 miles south of Dallas, the Ellis County Sheriff's Office said.

The suspect was confronted by a staff member in the cafeteria, the sheriff's office said. He then fled and was apprehended by law enforcement.

The victim was transported by air ambulance, the sheriff's office said. Her condition is unknown.

No one else was injured, officials said, adding that all students have been accounted for.

The handgun was recovered at the scene, officials said.

The sheriff's office said students were moved to another campus and are in the process of being reunited with their families.

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HEADLINE 01/22 FBI: flares, not IEDs, ignited at mall

SOURCE <https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/22/us/eagle-ridge-mall-florida-mall-ied/index.html>

GIST (CNN)The items that ignited early Sunday evening at a Florida mall are believed to be marine flares -- not pipe bombs, the FBI said Monday.

Officers responded to a smoke alarm call at 5:22 p.m. at the Eagle Ridge Mall in Lake Wales, central Florida. They found smoke coming out of a service corridor next to the mall entrance of JCPenney and found what they initially said were two improvised explosive devices that detonated.

"There is no indication of any explosion at the mall and no pipe bombs were found," the FBI said Monday. "There is no current indication of any terrorist connection to this incident."

"It appears two items, believed to be marine flares, were ignited in a mall hallway, creating a large amount of smoke, and a backpack was located at the scene. Bomb technicians examined the contents of the backpack and determined it did not contain any incendiary or explosive devices," the FBI said.

The mall also said initial reports of pipe bombs, IEDs, explosions or detonations and reports of dangerous materials found during searches at the facility were incorrect.

"Yesterday afternoon around 5:30 p.m., two signal flares triggered a fire alarm in an unoccupied area of Eagle Ridge Mall. No one was injured," the mall said.

Lake Wales Police Deputy Chief Troy Schulze said the devices appeared to be a type of flare, placed inside a PVC pipe and then wrapped in electrical tape. Both devices were in the same hallway, about 10 yards from each other.

"There is nothing at this time to indicate this act was terrorism," he said. "At this time, we are checking video surveillance cameras."

Police were looking for a man they're describing as a person of interest. CNN reached out to Lake Wales police for comment on the FBI release.

The FBI said it will continue work with state and local law enforcement to identify the person or persons responsible.

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(InFOCUS)
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InFOCUS

Tuesday

9 January 2018

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TUESDAY – 9 JAN 2018



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Event Calendar

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9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php
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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	01/08 Mayor searches for next Seattle PD chief
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/noting-law-enforcement-tragedies-mayor-jenny-durkan-kicks-off-seattle-police-chief-search/
GIST	<p>Mayor Jenny Durkan cited local killings by police and of a law-enforcement officer as she opened the first meeting of a committee that will help her find Seattle’s next police chief.</p> <p>The city’s police department needs a leader “who can build trust externally and internally,” with both community members and rank-and-file officers, Durkan said Monday.</p> <p>The search for a new chief comes after Kathleen O’Toole stepped down as police chief on Dec. 31. Carmen Best, a deputy chief under O’Toole who joined the Seattle Police Department in 1992, is serving as interim chief.</p> <p>“We have seen tragedies like Charleena Lyles and know very much the final thing that can happen when a police officer gets involved with citizens,” Durkan told the 25-member search committee, referring to the fatal shooting by officers last year of a Seattle mother inside her Magnuson Park apartment.</p> <p>“But we also saw the tragedy last night, the danger that police officers face,” the mayor added, referring to the fatal shooting late Sunday night of a Pierce County sheriff’s deputy who was responding to a report of a home invasion near Frederickson.</p> <p>“I want to acknowledge the deputy, Daniel McCartney, who was killed in Pierce County,” Durkan said. “He was a Navy veteran, a father of three and only 34 years old.”</p> <p>Seattle must equip its officers to “avoid tragedies like Pierce County suffered yesterday” and also know that interactions between officers and community members are critical, the mayor said.</p> <p>Durkan said she’s confident the committee will “come up with three names” of candidates for chief and believes Seattle is “a destination where people will want to be police chief,” due to the city’s relatively low crime rate, its booming economy and the department’s progress on reforms.</p> <p>After taking charge in 2014, O’Toole helped guide Seattle toward compliance with a federal consent decree requiring it to remedy a history of excessive force and biased policing. The city is awaiting a ruling by U.S. District Judge James Robart on whether to grant its request to find it in full and effective compliance with the consent decree.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/09 US apologizes to Japan for accidents
SOURCE	https://www.shephardmedia.com/news/defence-notes/us-apologises-japan-over-military-accidents/
GIST	The US has apologised to Japan following a recent series of accidents involving US military equipment,

the Japanese Ministry of Defence (MoD) said.

US Secretary of Defense, James Mattis, apologised to Japanese counterpart Itsunori Onodera after a series of accidents including the emergency landing of an American military helicopter in Okinawa on 8 January.

That came just two days after a similar incident on the southern Japanese island, where over half of the 47,000 American troops in Japan are stationed.

Itsunori Onodera, Japan's Minister of Defence, said: 'I told him about the issue, raising concrete examples of various accidents that happened in September, October, November, December last year and January this year in Okinawa.'

Onodera is expected to depart for Hawaii to meet the US commander in the Pacific, Harry Harris, to discuss the issue.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage after the helicopter landed near a hotel in the village of Yomitan on 8 January.

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HEADLINE	01/08 Landslide near Yakima weeks away?
SOURCE	http://www.heraldnet.com/northwest/landslide-near-yakima-might-be-a-few-more-weeks-away/
GIST	<p>YAKIMA — While authorities reiterated Sunday that no one can predict exactly when the Rattlesnake Ridge landslide will occur, they've pushed the estimated date to late January or early February.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Gov. Jay Inslee, who toured the site just south of here Sunday, said an independent geologist will join the team already monitoring the progress of the roughly 20-acre, 200-foot-deep mass of basalt that continues to slide down the south side of the ridge at about 1.5 feet a week, potentially threatening I-82 and the Yakima River.</p> <p>"This is a significant risk that we have significant concerns about," Inslee said. "We are continuing to determine whether there should be additional monitoring or additional analysis ... and in the next several days we will probably be engaging a third-party independent consultant that would work for the state of Washington for the multiple agencies involved."</p> <p>He hopes to fill that role within a week.</p> <p>"I don't sense a gap in our analytical ability. We have multiple geologists looking at this ... every day," he said. "But we want to give the public more confidence that there is someone who is outside state agencies who is also not hired by the quarry owner so that we know that they're totally independent."</p> <p>During his visit, Inslee joined about 40 officials with local and state agencies and the Yakama Nation who heard from Dave Norman, state geologist for the Department of Natural Resources, in a closed briefing held at the Yakima Air Terminal.</p> <p>Authorities, who had previously estimated a slide could potentially occur in mid-January, extended the estimate to later in the month or early February.</p> <p>The hillside has been sliding since at least October when authorities began monitoring cracks that had opened atop the western slope of Rattlesnake Ridge. At that time, the landslide was moving at less than an inch per day. As of Friday, that had increased to 2.5 inches.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Report: fusion centers focus on 'left'
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SOURCE	https://www.muckrock.com/news/archives/2018/jan/08/fusion-centers-antifa/
GIST	<p>Homeland Security-run fusion centers are often criticized for keeping tabs on activist groups, particularly those that are demonstrably non-violent. That criticism is reinforced by a series of public records requests sent by the author to each of the 70 plus fusion centers in the country, asking for any reports regarding both Antifa and other leftist-aligned groups, as well as “alt-right” and outright white supremacist organizations.</p> <p>Only a handful of fusion centers have so far actually provided records to MuckRock, and of those, produced reports overwhelmingly focused on the left. Take this email from the Nevada Threat Analysis Center, for example.</p> <p>(Click on source link to view embedded email)</p> <p>This shows that agency keeping detailed tabs on the proposed National Strike in protest against President Donald Trump’s Muslim Ban last year. Note the analyst comment blaming Antifa for “recent violence,” and the attention given to Palestine Legal. Despite being as non-violent as protests get, it’s quite clear that the agency was monitoring the event closely.</p> <p>In the ensuing pages, there are several questions about Antifa, people protesting ICE vans, anarchist groups, and several requests to monitor May Day.</p> <p>Most alarming is this email concerning the National Alliance Reform and Restoration Group, an inconspicuously named white supremacist group headquartered in Carson City.</p> <p>(Click on source link to view embedded email)</p> <p>For starters, it is shocking that the NTAC had not been paying attention to a white supremacist group operating within their state - but what’s really incredible is the dig at the Southern Poverty Law Center’s credibility because of some of their donors, namely one George Soros.</p> <p>Kentucky Fusion Center, however, had no records regarding white supremacist groups, and instead released a single report on Antifa, which categorized the group’s activities as organized crime. This is despite the SPLC identifying 17 hate groups operating within the state.</p> <p>(Click on source link to view embedded email)</p> <p>This is despite the SPLC identifying 17 hate groups operating within the state.</p> <p>Are things better in Liberal bastion California? Not really. Continuing the trend, the Central California Intelligence Center was largely focused on the threat from “anarchist extremists” ...with one CCIC report calling Antifa “the greatest threat to public safety,” despite the presence of actual Neo-Nazis at these events.</p> <p>(Click on source link to view embedded email)</p> <p>While another 17 fusion centers just outright rejected our request, and many others still haven’t responded, just from these three examples we can clearly see a pattern forming. Despite this being an era of rising hate crime, fusion centers spend a lot of time tracking activist groups and protesters, while not seeming to spend much time monitoring white supremacist groups.</p> <p>And as last year’s events in Portland, Oregon, Charlottesville, Virginia, and the University of Maryland have shown, downplaying that threat can have deadly consequences.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/09 Suspect fatal shooting of deputy arrested
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/5e962af09c44400cb4cb87f9ce7bfc66/Suspect-apprehended-in-killing-of-Washington-state-deputy
GIST	<p>FREDERICKSON, Wash. (AP) — Authorities in Washington state have arrested a man believed to have been involved in the fatal shooting of a sheriff’s deputy.</p> <p>Pierce County Deputy Daniel McCartney, a 34-year-old Navy veteran and married father to three young boys, was shot during a foot chase late Sunday as he responded to a home invasion near the small community of Frederickson, 15 miles (24 kilometers) southeast of Tacoma, said sheriff’s spokesman Ed Troyer.</p> <p>One suspect in his mid-30s was found dead at the scene, and another got away, authorities said. On Monday, Troyer said 32-year-old Frank William Pawul had been taken into custody in the Shelton area on unrelated felony warrants.</p> <p>A state trooper in the area spotted Pawul, who gave a false name when approached, Troyer said. Once authorities learned his real name, Troyer said he was taken to jail on the warrants and further investigation tied him to the shooting. Two weapons also were found at the scene, Troyer said.</p> <p>Police had closed off roads in the area and conducted a manhunt among industrial sites as well as wooded areas.</p> <p>The suspect was expected to appear in court Tuesday on a first-degree murder charge, Troyer said.</p> <p>Pierce County Jail officials said Monday night that Pawul did not yet have an attorney.</p> <p>The deceased suspect’s name hasn’t been released.</p> <p>“There’s a sadness that will be felt and should be felt in the community,” said Pierce County Sheriff Paul Pastor. “He is a young deputy who signed up to watch over other people. He had an ethic in his heart for doing something for other people.”</p> <p>McCartney was hired at the sheriff’s department in 2014 after stints with police departments in the small Washington state cities of Aberdeen and Hoquiam.</p> <p>After the shooting, McCartney was taken to a Tacoma hospital, where he was pronounced dead. His family members and dozens of law enforcement officers gathered at the hospital to say goodbye, The News Tribune newspaper reported .</p> <p>More than a dozen officers and deputies saluted as McCartney’s body was carried from the hospital in a flag-draped coffin and loaded into a van.</p> <p>A memorial fund was set up to benefit his wife and children.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/09 Salvadorans: El Salvador not ready
SOURCE	http://time.com/5094653/el-salvador-donald-trump-return/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>(SANTA TECLA, El Salvador) — Being deported to an El Salvador he hadn’t seen in more than three decades was a trauma Hugo Castro recalls clearly.</p> <p>The 51-year-old said Monday that his country must begin preparing now to receive the nearly 200,000 Salvadorans who may have to return following the Trump administration’s decision to lift their temporary protected status next year.</p>

“The main problem for deportees is that they’re made invisible. They’re rejected, there’s no work. They don’t help us,” said Castro, who was deported from the U.S. in 2015.

The U.S. announcement brought fears that a major source of income for this poor Central American nation will be cut off and that families could be separated. But there was also a hint of optimism that Salvadorans with many years of experience in the U.S. could bring expertise and investment to spur the economy.

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said Salvadorans who have stayed in the U.S. with temporary protected status — only a fraction of the estimated 2 million Salvadorans living there — would have to leave by Sept. 9, 2019, unless Congress came up with a solution allowing them to stay.

The temporary protected status program has been offered to citizens from a number of countries fleeing natural disasters or other instability. The affected Salvadorans received the status after earthquakes in 2001 killed more than 1,000 people. Thousands more who arrived in the United States in recent years fleeing gang violence were not eligible.

Castro went to the United States as a teenager to study at a college in Atlanta. During his junior year his family back home lost nearly everything when the bank seized their coffee operation. Dropping out, he worked at a country club and a book store and became manager of a Mexican restaurant. Then a run-in with police led to more than two years in immigration detention as he unsuccessfully fought deportation after living in the U.S. for three decades.

His first three months back in El Salvador were the worst, he said. He suffered from depression and didn’t want to leave his mother’s home. People told him a 49-year-old man should not depend on his mother to support him, so he started looking for work.

“I went everywhere, to restaurants. I told them I had a lot of experience and that I spoke English, but they rejected me,” he said.

Eight months after arriving, Castro finally found work at the Salvadoran Immigrant Institute. The non-profit group recognized the value of Castro’s bilingualism and the experience he had gained through the deportation process and it put him to work helping other deportees reintegrate into society.

Castro said programs like his are very limited and more needs to be done for returnees.

“The government has to get ready, partner with businesses, with all of society, the nonprofits and create assistance programs,” he said.

As an example, he noted that in 2016, the country received 52,000 deportees from the United States and Mexico. Meanwhile, a government program to give small cash grants to allow deportees to open their own businesses has only graduated 140 people, he said.

The biggest worry among many Salvadorans is that their nation of 6.2 million people will see a big drop in the amount of cash sent home by countrymen working in the United States. Salvadorans transferred more than \$4.5 billion from the U.S. in 2016, accounting for 17 percent of El Salvador’s economy, according to government figures.

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HEADLINE	01/08 FEMA: Puerto Rico emergency mode
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jan/8/fema-head-puerto-rico-still-in-emergency-response/
GIST	SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico Nearly four months after two hurricanes hit this island, the chief of the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s operations in Puerto Rico says he has never before had to continue emergency relief efforts like delivering food, water and temporary roofing so long after a natural disaster.

“So this far into a disaster in my experience, at least in the last 20 years, we never do that, we’re never — the food and water would have stopped weeks ago. But we can’t, and one of the driving factors for that is power,” Michael Byrne, an acting regional administrator for FEMA, told The Washington Times.

Since Sept. 6, FEMA had been responding to a state of emergency on Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma when Hurricane Maria made landfall on the U.S. territory on Sept. 20. About 1 million islanders had lost power during Irma, when Maria killed electricity for nearly the entire 3.5 million population.

FEMA tasked the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with overseeing the reconstruction of the entire electric grid, not an unprecedented event but unheard of after a natural disaster, officials said.

Nearly 50,000 wooden, concrete or steel electrical poles need to be repaired or replaced, and about 65 percent of the substations and power plants were destroyed.

Officials hesitate to give a schedule for when they’ll finish the job but hope to achieve 95 percent connection levels by the end of February or the end of March.

Mr. Byrne, a veteran New York City firefighter who joined FEMA in 1999, has helped manage disasters throughout the Northeast, from 9/11 to Hurricane Sandy. Yet he says he can’t help but be humbled by the scope of the help Puerto Rico requires.

“Every time you think you’ve met the last challenge — I can’t have another curveball thrown at me, right, another curveball I hate talking like this because I hate making excuses,” he said. “We have to humble ourselves by the fact that the storm did so much damage that it requires these extraordinary levels of effort but I think we should be proud of some of the work that’s going on.”

In addition to Puerto Rico, the FEMA region Mr. Byrnes oversees consists of the states of New York and New Jersey, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the Native American tribes in the region. He was appointed to the post last January.

With regard to Puerto Rico, rebuilding its infrastructure to meet current U.S. standards and codes would be a major boon for the Caribbean island, whose roads, power system and other infrastructure elements had long been neglected before the storms.

Mr. Byrne said that Puerto Rican Gov. Ricardo Rossello has asked FEMA to invoke at least three sections of the federal Stafford Act to allow the agency to not only rebuild what was damaged but do so in a smarter way.

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HEADLINE	01/08 Navy seeks course correction from 2017
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jan/8/navys-deadly-accidents-result-budget-issues-cultur/
GIST	<p>The Navy’s disastrous and deadly 2017, punctuated by a slew of accidents and fatal at-sea collisions ending with the deaths of nearly 20 American sailors, was the culmination of deep-seated issues within the sea service’s budget, operations and culture stretching back decades, issues that Navy leaders are only now attempting to address.</p> <p>And, despite the determination of the Trump White House and defense hawks on Capitol Hill to boost the troubled service’s budget and mission support, the service faces a battleship full of problems coming out of 2017 that will take more than one year to turn around.</p> <p>Seven U.S. sailors aboard the USS Fitzgerald were killed when the warship collided with Philippine-</p>

flagged shipping vessel near the Japanese coast in June. Two months later, the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS McCain collided with an oil tanker off the coast of Singapore, resulting in 10 sailors killed.

Prior to the fatal collisions involving the McCain and Fitzgerald, the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Lake Champlain collided with a South Korean fishing vessel off the country's eastern coast last May, a month before the incident involving the Fitzgerald.

As a result, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson ordered a worldwide 48-hour stand down of all service operations. The order was issued to gain insight into the circumstances that led to three major, at-sea collisions in the Pacific within four months, and to see if systemic problems of command and operations left the Navy susceptible to similar catastrophes.

"The Navy has recognized that we are in a boatload of trouble here. We cannot paper this over," retired Navy Capt. Jerry Hendrix, now a senior fellow at the Washington-based Center for a New American Security. "Something had to give, and what you saw this past year is seeing it give."

Even the Naval Academy's football team, which saw a record 14-game winning streak over Army broken in 2015, lost a second straight heartbreaker to its hated rival last month.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain ripped into Navy leaders at a scathing Capitol Hill hearing in September, accusing the service of failing to heed critical reviews in 2010 and 2015 warning that dwindling training and maintenance for overseas ships could put sailors in harms way.

"Many of the issues we are discussing today have been known to Navy leaders for years. How do we explain that?" Mr. McCain, a onetime U.S. Navy pilot and Annapolis graduate, asked at one point.

But from the wardrooms and bridges aboard American warships deployed worldwide, all the way to Navy headquarters in Washington, the tragedies in the Pacific that defined the last year for the sea service were predictable and possibly preventable, current and former service members say.

Shortly after the stand-down order was issued last year, former head of capabilities for the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of the Navy Thomas Callender reached out to former colleagues still in uniform in the Pacific and elsewhere across the Navy to get a read on the situation. The majority of the officers and sailors he spoke to said the deadly four months in the Pacific that prompted the order were no surprise, he told The Washington Times.

"There were warnings," Mr. Callender, now a senior defense fellow at the conservative think tank Heritage Foundation, said. But those warnings went unnoticed or unheeded by senior Navy brass. The decision makers at headquarters in Washington "were so far removed from the waterfront, that they were not as aware of what the problem really was," he said.

"It was just a matter of time before we would see this happen, and that is the part that kind of scares me," said Mr. Callender.

Part of those problems stretch back to the steady reduction of the Navy's fleet enacted by the Clinton White House in the 1990s, a result of the so-called "peace dividend we sort of conned ourselves into" during the Clinton era, Mr. Callender said.

Subsequent administration's continued to whittle down the Navy from its previous height of roughly 700 ships, ultimately resulting in the nearly 270-ship fleet the sea service fields today, he added.

During the post 9/11 era, Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama accelerated the Clinton-era cuts to U.S. sea power as budget focus inside the Pentagon shifted from maritime engagements to counterterrorism and asymmetric warfare. While the demands on the Navy did not diminish, the service's overall combat strength did, said Capt. Hendrix.

On average, roughly 100 U.S. warships out of the entire fleet are engaged in active combat operations, he said. With a 700-ship Navy, service leaders could sustain having 100 ships out on combat missions at any one time. But with a fleet of barely 300 ships, “suddenly having 100 ships forward deployed, now you are starting to break into unsustainable levels” of deployments, he said.

The Trump White House has indicated it is looking to remedy the Navy’s fleet shortfalls. Administration officials are expected to formalize the sea service’s 355-shipbuilding goal within the White House’s National Security Strategy. The highly anticipated strategy is on track for release later this month, Pentagon spokesman Col. Rob Manning told reporters Monday.

The Trump administration’s defense budget blueprint for fiscal year 2019 — the first full-fledged defense budget drafted by the administration — is expected to include the 355-ship goal in the Navy’s proposed bottom line. The shipbuilding goals was included in the defense spending package for fiscal year 2018, signed into law by Mr. Trump in December.

Shrinking ship numbers, in the face of increasing maritime threats to U.S. and allied navies across the globe, did spark the slow erosion of Navy capabilities resulting in last year’s calamities at sea. But an erosion of professionalism within the sea service, prodded by mounting operational demands on the fleet from senior commanders, also set the stage for 2017’s troubles.

A pair of wide-ranging Navy reviews initiated in the wake of the Fitzgerald and McCain incidents, one focusing explicitly on the Pacific’s Seventh Fleet and another conducted service-wide, found severe failings in Navy crew preparedness and ability to carry out the most basic seagoing activities during service operations.

Accidents involving American warships in the Pacific were the result in officers and crew members lacking basic seamanship skills, such as navigation and situational awareness, along with “failures to follow the international rules of the road” when traversing international waters, Adm. Richardson told reporters in November.

This lack of basic seamanship skills, a result of minimal or insufficient training, represented another trade-off Navy leaders were forced to make to field a smaller fleet against a growing threat scenario, Mr. Hendrix explained. Valuing efficiency over capabilities, Navy leaders attempted to “squeeze every dollar” into operations and growing the fleet, which left little time or funding for training, he said.

The lack of adequate training led to Navy crews being ill-prepared to handle the rigors of an unrelenting operational tempo of a region like the Pacific. In the end “it was just a breakdown in culture and practices” of a sea service being forced to do more with less, Mr. Hendrix said.

A Government Accountability Office independent review conducted after last year’s string of Navy disasters reported widespread readiness and safety problems with service ships deployed in the Pacific. For example, more than a third of training certifications for the Navy’s cruisers and destroyers based in Japan had expired in June.

More generally, the GAO report in September found Navy ships based overseas faces degraded readiness level; reduced crew sizes and longer working shifts that have contributed to safety problems, and the inability to meet maintenance schedules. Of the 11 prior recommendations the watchdog agency had given the Navy, the GAO said, the service had to date “implemented only one.”

The problems have been exacerbated by rising pressure to carry out the Navy’s missions in the Pacific, driven by recent threats from North Korea and Chinese aggression in the South China Sea, said Navy officials.

“The world is much more dangerous now than it was 18 years ago,” at the peak of the Navy’s fleet size and strength, Mr. Callender noted. “More moles are popping up that the Navy is being asked to whack,” he added.

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HEADLINE	01/08 Seattle interim police chief: Carmen Best
SOURCE	http://crosscut.com/2018/01/meet-seattles-new-police-chief-carmen-best/
GIST	<p>Carmen Best is the first African-American woman to lead the Seattle Police Department, a job she took over as of Jan. 1 when Chief Kathleen O’Toole’s departure became official. Best is chief on an interim basis for now but she has applied for the permanent job.</p> <p>Although Mayor Jenny Durkan has promised a national search to replace O’Toole, it’s hard to not see Best as a favorite nominee: a Tacoma native who has risen through the ranks in her 26-year career with the SPD; an officer who has built relationships with both the rank-and-file and with the community-at-large; and, as second-in-command for the past 3.5 years, the heir apparent to continuing on O’Toole’s path for the department.</p> <p>The mayor hopes to choose the permanent chief by this spring. In the meantime, Best inherits a 1,400-officer department that remains under a shadow of a federal consent decree struck to reverse SPD’s pattern of excessive force.</p> <p>In her first week on the job, Best suggested the 40th floor Starbucks in the Columbia Center for an interview. But when she arrived, she looked around and suggested we “go upstairs” instead.</p> <p>Upstairs was the members-only (and pricey — \$287-per-month) Columbia Tower Club. Inside, the bar is cavernous, with a staircase and spectacular views of the ferris wheel and ferries below.</p> <p>O’Toole — Best’s predecessor and mentor — happened to be sitting at the bar with her daughter and the SPD’s Chief Legal Officer Rebecca Boatright and for a moment I wonder if this scheduled interview is some sort of ambush. Apparently, it’s just a coincidence. Best greets O’Toole. The bartender greets the chief as “Ms. Best.”</p> <p>We sit in one of the booths — inset into a nook as if meant for private conversations — drink water and talk police culture, race and her goals for leading the 24th largest department in the country.</p> <p>This interview has been edited for length and clarity.</p> <p>What will you do that’s different than what Chief O’Toole has done?</p> <p>A lot of what I’m going to be doing is just carrying on what she came here in part to do, which is making sure we reform the organization in a way that’s real and meaningful. We want to stay on the trajectory, move forward and try to get there and have in place what we believe to be an iterative process so you’re not like, ‘Reform on Tuesday.’ That’s not how it works.</p> <p>When you talk about changing culture, one thing I’ve heard people talk about is this sort of insider/outsider dynamic. In the event you become the permanent chief, you’ve come up through the department. How do you change the culture of a place where you’ve sort of grown up in?</p> <p>I think it comes with its challenges, but I think it’s probably easier in some ways because I do know the culture. I’m not learning how we operate. I was here in 2011 when [the consent decree reform process] started and I know how the feeling was within the organization. We’ve gone through a lot of changes and I know we’ve improved and I know it’s better. I know that for a fact. The data shows that, but I also know that intuitively.</p> <p>Certainly, we’re not done. But we’ve done some great improvement and I’ve seen that because I actually know where we started. I actually remember when we had to just do the rubber stamp on use-of-force statements.</p> <p>How do you balance keeping the rank-and-file satisfied while also keeping people like Rev. Harriett</p>

Walden [founder of Mothers for Police Accountability] who have an interest in accountability and reform happy?

My goal is to do the right thing. Doing the right thing doesn't always mean keeping everybody happy. I don't walk in and say, 'I hope everybody I talk to today is happy.' What I do hope is that we have a mission, we have a vision, we're trying to make sure that policies and procedures are followed, that training is appropriate, that officers recognize that behavior matters and that our interaction with the community matters. That the community knows that we're here.

We're here to serve the community. That's why we're here, that's why we exist. A lot of times you do the best you can and try to do the right thing and everybody's unhappy, to be honest with you! [laughs] But I'm just trying to keep that in mind. Being a really true and honest broker and really true about what your goal and mission.

And I actually find I'm in a good place to do that. I mean this sincerely. I'm at the end of my career. I've been in the department 26 years and I'm 52. So literally half of my life is in the SPD. You start reflecting on what happened here. *What did I do? From when I came in, How have I changed? How have I grown? How have I helped the agency? How have I helped the community that I love?*

You're the first African American woman to lead the Seattle Police Department. There's a lot of discussion about law enforcement and race in this country. Have you talked about this with your two daughters?

Of course. How can you live in the society we live in today and not have conversations about race?

And specifically race in relation to law enforcement?

Of course. People say we need more training on race when we're talking about this, but we are highly conscious about race in this profession. I specifically am, but I think we all are. We recognize that there are quarters of the community that have a real, in some cases, fear, but definitely concern about how they're being policed, what's happening with them, what they're seeing and it's difficult for me, in some ways, only because we're balancing what's happening locally against the national stories and some of them are pretty horrendous. I get out there and say, 'I'm as shocked and dismayed as you are.'

[My daughters] have grown up as two African-American women themselves, knowing a lot of officers and knowing that they're just people with families doing their jobs. They have that perspective. But they also see that stuff that happens and some of it's just wrong. We do have conversations about it. They know I'm not always going to defend something if I don't think it's right. And I'm not going to defend people who criticize if I don't think their criticisms aren't grounded in truth, either.

What was your reaction when you heard about the Charleena Lyles shooting?

Well, I was sad, because it was really tragic. I mean, I've been in this job a long time. There are really sad things that happen. I will tell you, I'm not blaming anybody. I think there was a whole set of really complex issues converged at a time and a moment that was very sad and very tragic. And I mean that sincerely. I don't know if people even know but we met with members of her family after, very quietly, no media or anything like that, and it was heartbreaking in many ways. We also talked to the officers who were at the scene and they were pretty shook up too. Nobody walks away from that feeling anything but sad. It's just a tragedy.

At the same time, we're also making sure the things that need to happen are happening internally, in terms of protocol and procedure. All those things need to occur, too. Making sure, *Where's the force investigation team? Are they here? Where are the officers? There. Where's the guild member? There. Who's talking to the family?* All those things need to occur but in the midst of a very sad and tragic time.

When the Force Review Board came back and said they found the Lyles shooting to be within policy, the backlash was, *Well, if this is within policy, then there's something wrong with the policy.* How do you respond to that?

I respond by saying we're always going to look at every incident and try to learn what we can from it. And some of those lessons will involve the police department, some will involve the community, some will

involve other organizations. You can't just nail this down to one little thing. There's a whole lot of complexity.

As a chief, what's the relationship like with your police unions? The Seattle Police Officers Guild [the rank-and-file union], for example, filed an unfair labor practice complaint alleging the city acted improperly by passing police accountability legislation without first negotiating with the union. [The city and Seattle Police Officers Guild have been in contract negotiations for more than three years].

I have a healthy respect for unions. I've been in a union. At the same time, we have an organization to run. We have to push our agenda forward with our own folks. We actually agree on a lot of things when it comes to a philosophical, high-level: I want officers to have a decent paycheck, to support their family and to be able to be productive members of the conversation and to have rules and regulations that keep them in alignment with what we need to see going forward. I don't think there's a lot of disagreement on that. When it comes down to policies and those things, they're going to have their perspective. I respect that. I don't always agree with it, but we're going to have to agree to disagree on some of those issues. But I don't ever want to go swinging at the unions and I don't want them swinging at us because, ultimately, I think, in a large way, we do want officers to serve the community. We do want them to have a good working environment. We do want people to feel comfortable talking to them. We just might be going about it differently. On certain things, it may be an outside party that helps us do that.

Is there a tangible rift there between leadership and, say, rank-and-file, SPOG [Seattle Police Officers Guild]?

I think rift is much too strong a word. There will be points where we won't agree. There's a lot of points where we do agree. That might sound like a very neutral answer, but that is the actual truth.

What's your biggest priority for this year?

When I came in, I set out the five priorities I saw for the organization. First: Crime and disorder. Our fundamental priority is to minimize crime and disorder in this city.

Then, excellence in service. In terms of public service, let's make sure we do it better than anyone else. Also, honor and professionalism. Every time you come in uniform, you should feel a sense of *I am doing something honorable*. And if you're a civilian employee, you should feel proud to associate with the police department.

Also, business efficiency. I stole that from Chief O'Toole. How are we going to make sure we're managing our overtime, our maintenance, our vehicles and our equipment and our training? This is taxpayer money so we have to really make sure we're doing things that make sense.

And the last was data-driven policies and practices. Just using technology the best way we can, to help us be more efficient, to do predictive policing, hot spots policing, to find out where repeat calls for service are. Why are we going to a certain place exorbitantly more than we are other places?

What happens if you're not appointed as chief? Will you remain in the SPD?

You know, that's hard to say. That's up to the new chief. Some of it's outside of my control. Somebody has to step up and take the lead and say, *I want to be the one to make this a better place*. And I think I'm well qualified to do it. I really do. I feel like I've worked really, really hard and I feel super connected to both officers and the community. I just wouldn't be able to feel good about myself if I didn't take this opportunity when it's here.

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HEADLINE	01/08 PCSO detective: becoming too often
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/862200/pierce-county-deputy-involved-shooting/
GIST	Pierce County Detective Ed Troyer says the fatal shooting of Deputy Daniel McCartney is an example of a

	<p>tragedy that is becoming too common.</p> <p>“We, unfortunately, are pretty good at doing police funerals because we’ve done a lot of them,” he said.</p> <p>Just over a year ago, Tacoma officer Reginald “Jake” Gutierrez was killed while responding to a domestic-violence call that turned into an 11-hour standoff. Gutierrez, 45, was a father of three.</p> <p>According to the National Law Enforcement Officer Memorial Fund, 128 officers were killed in the line of duty in 2017. Forty-four of those were shot. That was a decrease from 2016, when 143 officers were killed, according to the Memorial Fund, a nonprofit that tracks officer deaths and researches trends in officer fatalities. Four law enforcement officers have been killed this year, according to the Memorial Fund.</p> <p>Deputy McCartney, 34, was with the Pierce County Sheriff’s Department for about three years. He worked for the Hoquiam Police Department for six years prior to that. He was a Navy veteran.</p> <p>Early Monday morning, law enforcement held a procession for McCartney.</p> <p>Law enforcement departments and individual officers from around the country sent their condolences in the hours following the fatal shooting of Deputy McCartney.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Next three years Seattle construction
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/862375/seattle-construction-maximum-constraint/
GIST	<p>If you think it’s tough getting around Seattle now, you better get ready for the next three years.</p> <p>The city will be undergoing a major transformation as new towers are built, and Seattle construction blocks traffic while also eliminating parking. It’s going to impact more than just solo drivers.</p> <p>The Convention Center expansion begins in 2019. The downtown bus tunnel will close, sending all the buses onto surface streets. And the Seattle tunnel will open in about a year, possibly pushing thousands of cars a day onto surface streets.</p> <p>That’s on top of the construction already underway, including along the city’s waterfront and Seattle First Hill Streetcar project, which will eliminate two lanes of traffic on First Avenue between Stewart and Jackson.</p> <p>Seattle construction: Period of maximum constraint</p> <p>A city advisory group has dubbed the time period starting later this year through 2021 the “period of maximum constraint” due to all the work scheduled to take place. It sounds like the title of a Michael Bay action film, but it’s actually the state of harsh traffic conditions Seattle will endure. Even Mayor Jenny Durkan has warned that traffic will get worse.</p> <p>Because of all this work, according to materials from the advisory group, people in Seattle can expect to spend additional time traveling throughout the city. The group reports that cyclists, bus riders, and even pedestrians could see a negative impact on getting around the city, especially in the downtown core. For example, bus riders will spend 2,500 hours of total travel time each day. The afternoon commute will take 3.5 minutes longer.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Spokane Tribe's new casino opens
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SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/862378/spokane-tribes-new-casino-opens-monday-evening/
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — After more than a decade of work, the Spokane Tribe of Indians will open its new casino in a Spokane suburb on Monday night.</p> <p>The Spokane Tribe Casino was first proposed in 2006, when the tribe asked the Bureau of Indian Affairs if land in Airway Heights was suitable for an off-reservation casino.</p> <p>The Spokesman-Review says the casino was ultimately approved by the agency and Gov. Jay Inslee.</p> <p>The Spokane Tribe hopes to do what neighboring tribes have done: Create a steady revenue stream to help fund tribal programs.</p> <p>The \$40 million casino joins the Kalispel Tribe’s Northern Quest Casino, also in Airway Heights, and the Coeur d’Alene casino in Worley, Idaho, is serving the Spokane regional gambling market.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Seattle drafts employee hours tax 2.0
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/860957/employee-hours-tax-task-force/
GIST	<p>Seattle’s last attempt at a business tax may have failed in 2017, but its successor is already being drafted at city hall.</p> <p>A new task force is developing Seattle’s employee hours tax 2.0.</p> <p>“As it was written last year, it was somewhat of a knee-jerk legislation,” said Ian Eisenberg. “I’m glad the city decided to take a breath and study it a little bit more and draft it a bit better.”</p> <p>Eisenberg owns and operates Seattle’s most successful pot shop — Uncle Ike’s. He is on the new 16-member task force; one of three members with business ties. The group is expected to develop a report for the council by early March, identifying potential revenue sources — including an employee hours tax aka a head tax. The money will fund homelessness and housing programs. It has a goal of reaching between \$25 million and \$75 million in revenue.</p> <p>“The (previous) tax was sold to the public as a tax on the largest and most prosperous businesses in the city,” Eisenberg said. “I run a small business; a small, family business . . . and the idea that we are one of the largest businesses like Amazon or Microsoft was just ludicrous. I think it was a matter of it being put together so quickly; nobody at the city had time to really study who was being affected by the tax and what the ramifications were.”</p> <p>According to the task force’s documents, the city requests the executive office and council conduct a stakeholder engagement process:</p> <p><i>The outcome of the engagement process would be a broadly supported recommendation for an on-going revenue source that the City could collect beginning in 2019, with the understanding that such ongoing revenue would be used to address the affordability and homelessness crisis in Seattle and the displacement of low-income residents.</i></p> <p>Employee hours tax task force</p> <p>The previous tax attempt proposed a few ideas, such as charging employers 5 cents per hour, per employee, or as much \$125 per employee. It would have affected about 1,100 Seattle companies that earn more than \$10 million annually.</p> <p>After the first attempt at a head tax failed in 2017, the council passed a resolution promising to form the task force currently underway. Council chairs are Councilmembers Lorena Gonzalez and Lisa Herbold.</p>

Community co-chairs are Tony To and Kirsten Harris-Talley. Harris-Talley was a temporary council member sitting in for Tim Burgess during the last budget cycle when the first head tax was rejected.

“Mainly, it’s a lot of service organizations that would eventually get some of the money,” Eisenberg said of the task force. “There’s a construction company on it that builds a lot of affordable housing. They and myself are about the only business interests on the committee.”

Three members of the task force, including Eisenberg, are listed as members of the business community.

- Councilmember M. Lorena González, Co-Chair
- Councilmember Lisa A. Herbold, Co-Chair
- Jennifer Adams, Lived Experience of Homelessness
- Andrew Coak, Labor Representative
- Lisa Daugaard, Subject Matter Expert
- Ian Eisenberg, Business Representative
- Samantha Grad, Labor Representative
- Kirsten Harris-Talley, Community Co-Chair
- Katie B. Wilson, Subject Matter Expert
- Brianna Little, Service Provider
- Daniel K. Malone, Housing/Service Provider
- Tom Mathews, Business Representative
- Fernando Mejia-Ledesma, Business Representative
- Courtney O’Toole, Lived Experience of Homelessness
- Tony To, Community Co-Chair
- Maiko Winkler-Chin, Housing Provider

“I was a critic of the last administration, that they didn’t always have any small business input,” Eisenberg said. “The city asked who wanted to be on the committee and I applied. And I think I’m the only actual business person that would be affected by the tax, as opposed to recipients of the funds. It’s kind of hard to complain the city doesn’t want business input when no business persons apply to be on committees and panels, so I decided to step up and not just talk, but actually do something.”

The task force will meet twice a month on Thursdays through the beginning of March. The first meeting on Jan. 4 was largely a meet-and-greet for members to set objectives and a timeline.

“It was really just ground rules and schedules, so nothing really happened so far,” Eisenberg said.

A current timeline for the task force has the group slated to finalize a report for the city council by March 1. In the meantime, the group will discuss the potential employee hours tax; any burden created by new taxes and comparing them to businesses outside the city; alternative revenue sources; and spending priorities.

Other taxes

This is not the first time Seattle has considered or passed an employee hours tax. In 2007, a \$25 per full-time employee tax was passed to fund transportation projects. That tax produced: \$4.7 million in 2008; and \$5.6 million in 2009. The tax was repealed after 2.5 years.

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HEADLINE	01/08 King Co. halts police shooting inquests
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/862473/police-shooting-inquests-on-hold/
GIST	All inquests into police shootings will be put on hold temporarily while the King County Inquest Review Committee finishes conducting its review of the inquest process, Executive Dow Constantine announced

on Monday.

“In the interest of fairness to all those involved, we will pause all inquests as the Review Committee and community partners seek to better understand what works and what doesn’t, and recommend reforms,” Constantine said.

Five inquests into deaths at the hands of police officers are currently pending in the following cases: Isaiah Obet, Damarius D. Butts, Eugene D. Nelson, Tommy Le, and Charleena Lyles. Those five inquests will be put on hold and no new requests will be accepted.

Similarly, but in a separate decision, King County District Court Presiding Judge Donna Tucker stated that she will stop appointing District Court Judges to preside over inquests for the foreseeable future.

“It is important and timely for the County to review this Executive process,” Judge Tucker said.

An inquest is a process of investigating a police shooting to determine the facts of the incident. Inquests into King County law enforcement-related deaths have traditionally been conducted by District Court Judges and a six-member jury. The jurors are not tasked with determining liability on the part of any law enforcement personnel involved. Instead, they decide what factual issues exist in the case.

The review committee, which was formed by Executive Constantine about a month ago, includes five members and will eventually appoint a sixth. One member of the committee is Rick Williams, whose brother John T. Williams was shot and killed by a Seattle Police officer in 2010. Other members include a King County Superior Court judge, a member of the state Supreme Court’s Minority & Justice Commission, and the former Director of Seattle’s Office of Professional Accountability.

The committee will likely make recommendations on topics such as attorney’s fees for the family of the deceased, the role of inquest jurors, and alternative processes that might better serve the county and its residents.

The committee’s final recommendations are expected in March.

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HEADLINE	01/08 Iran president pragmatic view on protests
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-rallies-rouhani/in-jab-at-rivals-rouhani-says-iran-protests-about-more-than-economy-idUSKBN1EX0S9
GIST	<p>LONDON (Reuters) - In a swipe at his hardline rivals, President Hassan Rouhani said on Monday young Iranian protesters were unhappy about far more than just the economy and they would no longer defer to the views and lifestyle of an aging revolutionary elite.</p> <p>The pragmatic cleric, who defeated anti-Western hardliners to win re-election last year, also called for the lifting of curbs on social media used by anti-government protesters in the most sustained challenge to conservative authorities since 2009.</p> <p>“It would be a misrepresentation (of events) and also an insult to Iranian people to say they only had economic demands,” Rouhani was quoted as saying by Tasnim news agency.</p> <p>“People had economic, political and social demands.”</p> <p>Rouhani, 69, suggested there was a generational element to the unrest, which appears to have been spearheaded by under-25s.</p> <p>“We cannot pick a lifestyle and tell two generations after us to live like that. It is impossible... The views of the young generation about life and the world is different than ours,” he said.</p>

The Revolutionary Guards, Iran's security backbone since the 1979 revolution that created the Islamic Republic, said on Sunday the security forces had put an end to a week of unrest fomented by what it called foreign enemies.

The protests, which began over economic hardships suffered by the young and working class, spread to more than 80 cities and towns and has resulted in 22 deaths and more than 1,000 arrests, according to Iranian officials.

Many of the protesters questioned Iran's foreign policy in the Middle East, where it has intervened in Syria and Iraq in a battle for influence with rival Saudi Arabia.

The country's financial support for Palestinians and the Lebanese Shi'ite group Hezbollah also angered Iranians, who want their government to focus on domestic economic problems instead.

Rouhani won re-election last year by promising more jobs for Iran's youth through more foreign investment, as well as more social justice, individual freedom and political tolerance - aims questioned by his main challenger in the contest.

Echoing some of his campaign rhetoric, Rouhani said on Monday people should be allowed to criticize all Iranian officials, with no exception.

Demonstrators initially vented their anger over high prices and alleged corruption, but the protests took on a rare political dimension, with a growing number of people calling on Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 78, to step down.

The Supreme Leader is commander-in-chief of the armed forces and appoints the heads of the judiciary. Key ministers are selected with his agreement and he has the ultimate say on Iran's foreign policy. By comparison, the president has little power.

"No one is innocent and people are allowed to criticize everyone," said Rouhani.

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HEADLINE	01/08 Pentagon, diplomats role in arms sales
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-weapons/exclusive-trump-to-call-on-pentagon-diplomats-to-play-bigger-role-on-arms-sales-idUSKBN1EX0WX
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The Trump administration is nearing completion of a new "Buy American" plan that calls for U.S. military attaches and diplomats to help drum up billions of dollars more in business overseas for the American weapons industry, going beyond the assistance they currently provide, U.S. officials said.</p> <p>President Donald Trump as early as February is expected to announce a "whole of government" effort to ease export rules on purchases by foreign countries of U.S.-made military equipment, from fighter jets and drones to warships and artillery, according to people familiar with the plan.</p> <p>Trump is seeking to fulfill a 2016 election campaign promise to create jobs in the United States by selling more goods and services abroad to bring down the U.S. trade deficit from a six-year high of \$50 billion.</p> <p>The administration is also under pressure from U.S. defense contractors facing growing competition from foreign rivals such as China and Russia. But any loosening of the restrictions on weapons sales would be in defiance of human rights and arms control advocates who said there was too great a risk of fueling violence in regions such as the Middle East and South Asia or arms being diverted to be used in terrorist attacks.</p>

	<p>Besides greater use of a network of military and commercial attaches already stationed at U.S. embassies in foreign capitals, senior officials who spoke on condition of anonymity said another thrust of the plan will be to set in motion a realignment of the International Trafficking in Arms Regulations (ITAR). It is a central policy governing arms exports since 1976 and has not been fully revamped in more than three decades.</p> <p>This expanded government effort on behalf of American arms makers, together with looser restrictions on weapons exports and more favorable treatment of sales to non-NATO allies and partners, could bring additional billions of dollars in deals and more jobs, a senior U.S. official said, without providing specifics.</p> <p>The strategy of having the Pentagon and the U.S. State Department take a more active role in securing foreign arms deals could especially benefit major defense contractors such as Lockheed Martin and Boeing Co.</p> <p>“We want to see those guys, the commercial and military attaches, unfettered to be salesmen for this stuff, to be promoters,” said the senior administration official, who is close to the internal deliberations and spoke on condition of anonymity.</p> <p>A State Department official, asked to confirm details of the coming new policy, said the revamped approach “gives our partners a greater capacity to help share the burden of international security, benefits the defense industrial base and will provide more good jobs for American workers.”</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 El Salvadorans lose protected status
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-administration-ends-special-protections-for-emigrants-from-el-salvador/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON -- Officials say the Trump administration is ending special protections for emigrants from El Salvador, forcing nearly 200,000 to leave the country or face deportation.</p> <p>El Salvador is the fourth country whose citizens have lost Temporary Protected Status under President Donald Trump. They have by far been the largest beneficiaries of the program, which provides humanitarian relief for foreigners whose countries are hit with natural disasters or other strife.</p> <p>Two U.S. officials discussed the decision with The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly before the announcement.</p> <p>One official said Salvadorans will have until September 2019 to leave the United States or adjust their legal status. Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen faced a Monday deadline whether to grant an extension.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 World's punctual airlines, airports
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/airlines-airports-best-on-time-performance/
GIST	<p>Here's some essential reading material while you contend with long lines and drawn-out delays at the airport. A survey of the world's most punctual airlines and airports by the OAG Punctuality League, an air travel intelligence firm based in the U.K., listed the best ones in terms of on-time performance, which it defines as "flights that arrive or depart under 15 minutes of their scheduled times."</p> <p>The 2018 OAG Punctuality League survey is based on 57 million flight records compiled in 2017. The good news: Despite all the complaints, several U.S. carriers made these lists, but in most instances, they didn't come in first. The top-ranked airline was little-known airBaltic, a Latvian state carrier with a stellar 90 percent on-time record. U.S. carrier Hawaiian Airlines came in third at 87 percent.</p>

Among airports, those in the Japanese cities of Osaka and Tokyo had the shortest waiting times for flights.

OAG divided the data for both airports and airlines into five categories: mega (30 million-plus departing seats last year), major (20 million-30 million seats), large (10 million-20 million seats), medium (5 million-10 million seats) and small (2.5 million-5 million seats).

Within the mega airport category, the U.S. had four finishers: Atlanta's Hartsfield came in third, Denver took fourth, Dallas-Ft. Worth placed fifth and Chicago's O'Hare was seventh.

Often-snowbound Minneapolis-St. Paul International came in a surprising first worldwide in the "major" airport category, with an on-time performance of 86 percent. Detroit's Metropolitan was fourth, Phoenix International placed fifth, Houston's George Bush Intercontinental took sixth, Charlotte's Douglas International came in eighth and Seattle-Tacoma's International was 10th.

For "large" airports, Salt Lake City came in second.

The OAG specified mega airlines as those operating globally. Top performers were Japan Airlines and All Nippon Airways. Not far behind was U.S.-based Delta Air Lines (DAL), which came in third with an 83 percent performance. Alaska Airlines came in fifth, American Airlines (AAL) placed ninth and Southwest (LUV) tied for 10th place.

The survey shows very clearly that Americans aren't the world's biggest travelers. Tracking the world's "busiest routes," New York's La Guardia to Toronto, Canada was the only one to place in the top 10, coming in sixth. In contrast, the most heavily traveled route was from Hong Kong in mainland China to Taipei, the capital of Taiwan.

Although everyone complains about on-time performance, airlines have a very good track record for a more important aspect of flying: 2017 was the safest on record for commercial flights, with no reported fatalities.

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HEADLINE	01/08 Law agencies split selling seized guns
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ap-law-agencies-split-over-selling-seized-guns/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Kyle Juhl made one last attempt to patch things up with his fiancée, then took back his ring, put a gun to his head and pulled the trigger as she and her mother ran from the apartment. The bullet went through a wall and narrowly missed a neighbor's head as she bent to pick up her little boy.</p> <p>The Smith & Wesson 9 mm that Juhl used to kill himself in Yakima in 2014 was familiar to law enforcement: The Washington State Patrol had seized it years earlier while investigating a crime and then arranged its sale back to the public. It eventually fell into Juhl's hands, illegally.</p> <p>It's fears of tragedies like that, or worse, that have created a split among law enforcement officials over the reselling of confiscated guns by police departments, a longtime practice allowed in most states.</p> <p>Juhl's gun was among nearly 6,000 firearms that were used in crimes and then sold by Washington law enforcement agencies since 2010, an Associated Press review found. More than a dozen of those weapons later turned up in new crime investigations inside the state, according to a yearlong AP analysis that used hundreds of public records to match up serial numbers.</p> <p>The guns were used to threaten people, seized at gang hangouts, discovered in drug houses, possessed illegally by convicted felons, hidden in a stolen car, and taken from a man who was committed because of erratic behavior.</p>

While those dozen or so guns represent an extremely small percentage of the resold firearms, some police departments contend the law shouldn't be doing anything to put weapons back on the street. The AP did not look at how many of the resold guns figured in crimes committed out of state, so the actual number of misused weapons could be higher.

"We didn't want to be the agency that sold the gun to somebody who uses it in another crime," said Capt. Jeff Schneider of the Yakima Police Department, which sold guns until about a decade ago but now melts them down. He added: "While there is almost an unlimited supply of firearms out there, we don't need to make the problem worse."

Similarly, the International Association of Chiefs of Police says confiscated guns should be destroyed because putting them back in circulation "increases the availability of firearms which could be used again to kill or injure additional police officers and citizens." Also, federal agencies must destroy seized firearms unless they are needed as evidence or being used by the agency.

On the other side of the debate, some law enforcement officials say the selling of guns raises money to purchase crime-fighting equipment, and if the practice were abandoned, people would just buy weapons somewhere else. In fact, a growing number of states from Arizona to North Carolina are passing laws prohibiting agencies from destroying guns.

"These guns are going to be out there," said Sheriff Will Reichardt of Skagit County, Washington. "If I destroy them all, I'm just helping Remington or Winchester's bottom line."

Phyllis Holcomb, a manager with the Kentucky State Police, which oversees Kentucky's gun sale program, said such transactions have helped equip officers with body armor and other gear.

The debate is playing out in Washington state, where the State Patrol is pushing back against a state law that requires the agency to auction off or trade most guns.

The State Patrol hasn't sold any weapons since 2014 and at one point accumulated more than 400 in the hope the Legislature would change the law and let the agency destroy them. Democratic Rep. Tana Senn of Bellevue is sponsoring such a bill.

"I know many of the police chiefs in my district chose not to sell but rather to destroy, and in their own words, 'It's so we can sleep at night,'" Senn told a legislative committee.

The National Rifle Association opposes the plan.

"The police chiefs maybe could sleep better if they went out and apprehended the criminals behind the guns and didn't worry about destroying perfectly legal firearms that are no more easy to purchase than a brand-new firearm at a firearms dealer," NRA spokesman Tom Kwieciak said.

Tragedies involving police-sold guns have happened throughout the U.S.

In 2010, a mentally ill man ambushed and wounded two Pentagon police officers with a handgun sold by Memphis, Tennessee, police. Also that year, a Las Vegas court security officer was killed by a man with a shotgun sold by a Memphis-area sheriff's office. And in 2015, an unstable man walked into City Hall in New Hope, Minnesota, and wounded two officers with a shotgun sold by the Duluth Police Department. The department has since stopped selling guns and now destroys them.

The weapons sold back to the public in Washington include Colt, Glock and Ruger pistols, 12-gauge shotguns, .22-caliber rifles and assault weapons such as AR-15 and SKS rifles. All such sales are handled through federally licensed firearms dealers, including auction houses, pawnshops and sporting goods stores. Before buyers can take their guns home, they must pass an FBI background check.

On a recent Friday night, owner John West of Johnny's Auction House in Rochester, Washington, about 80

miles south of Seattle, launched into his rapid-fire bid-calling to a packed room, selling necklaces and coins. Before he offered up the first police-confiscated gun for sale, he had a warning.

"Straight up," he told the crowd, "if you cannot possess a firearm and you can't pass a background check, just don't even bother bidding."

There is no master list of guns sold by police, so compiling one for Washington state involved dozens of public-records requests to individual agencies. The federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives keeps track of crime guns but refused to release information from its database, so the AP collected databases from individual agencies and compared them with the sold guns.

One of the guns that ended up in a new police report was a .22-caliber handgun sold by Longview police in 2016. In 2017, a drunken Jesse Brown and a friend armed themselves with the gun and two other weapons, went to a house and threatened two young men they believed were selling drugs, police said.

Longview Police Chief Jim Duscha said that while some resold guns may be used in new crimes, "if they're going to get a weapon, they're going to get a weapon." Selling guns generates money used for drug investigations, he said.

The Seattle Police Department and the sheriff's office in surrounding King County don't sell crime-scene weapons; they hand them over to a foundry to be melted down at no cost to themselves.

For years, the State Patrol traded confiscated firearms to dealers for other gear, and the dealers then would sell the guns to the public. In one exchange in 2013, the State Patrol traded in 159 weapons and got a credit of \$27,420, which it then used to buy handguns for the force.

The weapon Juhl used to kill himself was in a batch the State Patrol traded in 2012. It was purchased by a man in Yakima, who sold it to someone else, who then sold it on Craigslist. Juhl's girlfriend told police that's where he acquired it.

Juhl, 24, was not legally permitted to own or possess a gun. He received a bad-conduct discharge from the Army after serving time in prison for using the drug ecstasy and going AWOL for about two months. An Army spokesman said Juhl's criminal history was sent to the FBI's Criminal Justice Information System, but the police detective who handled Juhl's suicide said he checked the FBI's database but didn't find Juhl's convictions.

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HEADLINE	01/08 France: asylum applications spike
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/france-sees-sharp-spike-asylum-applications-2017-52208525?
GIST	<p>Official figures show that 100,412 persons applied for asylum in France in 2017, up 17 percent on the year before.</p> <p>Pascal Brice, director of the French Office for the Protection of Refugees (OFPRA), told CNEWS television Monday that the number seeking asylum was the highest level for "at least 40 years."</p> <p>The highest asylum requests came from Albania, Afghanistan and Haiti.</p> <p>Though France saw asylum requests spike further in 2017, Brice noted that Germany registered twice as many during the year.</p> <p>About 36 percent of applicants were granted refugee status, a slight decrease on the year before.</p> <p>The agency said a focus was placed on women victims of violence — over 6,000 girls and young women</p>

	received refugee status to protect them from a risk of genital mutilation.
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HEADLINE	01/08 UN: 64 migrants drowned in sinking
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/raises-probable-death-toll-migrant-boat-sinking-64-52208482?
GIST	<p>As many as 64 migrants, including a mother whose 3-year-old child desperately clung to her, are feared dead after a traffickers' overcrowded rubber dinghy from Libya started sinking in the Mediterranean Sea, officials said Monday.</p> <p>The Italian coast guard rescued 86 people from the boat hours after it started sinking Saturday morning due to a puncture. Specially trained rescue divers leapt into the water to pull dozens to safety, including those who managed to stay aboard the half-submerged dinghy as well as others already flailing in the cool waters around it. The bodies of eight dead women were also recovered.</p> <p>Since trafficking dinghies are often crammed with far more than 100 migrants, fears quickly arose that dozens more could be missing in the sinking. U.N. officials said Monday that accounts from survivors bore out those fears.</p> <p>An Italian coast guard search that went through the night didn't find any more survivors or corpses.</p> <p>Flavio Di Giacomo of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said in tweet Monday that survivors interviewed by the agency in Catania, Sicily, after they arrived on a rescue ship said 150 people had been aboard the dinghy when it set out from the coast of Libya.</p> <p>"Sixty-four migrants lost their life in the shipwreck (which) occurred last Saturday," Di Giacomo said, adding that "probably 56 missing migrants" were lost at sea.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/09 Procession for slain PCSO deputy
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/procession-tuesday-for-slain-pierce-county-deputy/281-506087718
GIST	<p>A Pierce County sheriff's deputy was killed after being shot responding to a robbery call Sunday near Spanaway. One suspect is expected in court Tuesday and another was killed at the scene.</p> <p>Deputy Daniel McCartney of Yelm was shot just after 11:30 p.m. while responding to a 911 call for an intruder reported in a house on 200th Street East in the Frederickson area, the sheriff's department said. McCartney was the first person to arrive on scene. He began to chase a suspect on foot and shots were fired at McCartney, striking him.</p> <p>McCartney was transported to St. Joseph Medical Center in Tacoma where he died.</p> <p>A procession to transport Deputy McCartney from the Pierce County Medical Examiner's Office in Tacoma to Mountain View Memorial in Lakewood. Initial indications are the procession will begin at 1:00 p.m., but that could change.</p> <p>McCartney was a Navy veteran and served the department for three years. He leaves behind a wife and three young boys who are four, six, and nine years old.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Alabama winning TD play: Seattle
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/sports/college/seattle-was-name-of-alabamas-championship-winning-td-play/281-506415805
GIST	<p>The Alabama Crimson Tide won the College Football Playoff national championship on a play called "Seattle," capping an improbable comeback for the ages.</p> <p>Down 13-0 at halftime, Alabama head coach Nick Saban pulled veteran quarterback Jalen Hurts and inserted freshman Tua Tagovailoato start the second half.</p> <p>Alabama fought back to send the game to overtime at 20-20.</p> <p>After Georgia scored a field goal on its first OT possession. Alabama looked dead after Tagovailoato took a 16-yard sack on the first play.</p> <p>But on the very next snap, Tagovailoato found DeVonta Smith alone in the end zone for the 26-23 win.</p> <p>After the game, Saban was asked during the trophy presentation if he knew the play would be a touchdown.</p> <p>"I knew we were running Seattle, which is four streaks (four receivers running vertically)," Saban said. "And when I saw Smitty come open on the other side and Tua throw it, I said, "This is it!"</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Snohomish Co. flu season: 8 dead
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/01/08/deadly-flu-season-kills-8-in-snohomish-county/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Three more adults have died from the flu in Snohomish County, bringing the total to eight this flu season. At least 50 have been hospitalized.</p> <p>The winter season also means flu cases nationally and in Washington state surged between Thanksgiving and Christmas.</p> <p>Doctors say this year's flu strain tends to be hardest on the elderly, especially people over the age of 65 and those with weak immune systems, as well as children under the age of two.</p> <p>"You can go from having flu to pneumonia to being a very serious situation especially if you've had pneumonia before, so we certainly advise everyone to take the flu shot," said Claire Petersky, executive director of the Wallingford Community Senior Center.</p> <p>The effectiveness of the flu shot changes every year, and this year doctors say it's not quite as effective as in years past. However, the CDC is still urging anyone six months or older to get the flu shot. The CDC says when getting the flu shot, opt for the actual shot and not the nasal spray for the best benefits.</p> <p>"There is year to year added benefit of getting flu shot," said Dr. Ari Gilmore with Pacific Medical Centers.</p> <p>Gilmore says every year the vaccine is reformulated so getting each new flu shot builds immunity over time to various strains.</p> <p>The flu shot is not intended to keep people from getting the flu, but rather help make symptoms less severe if you do get the flu.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Region shares memories, mourns loss
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2018/01/08/community-shares-memories-mourns-loss-of-pierce-county-deputy-daniel-mccargney-killed-in-action/
GIST	<p>YELM-- Daniel McCartney believed deeply in service.</p> <p>Love of country moved him to enlist in the U.S. Navy, where he served a tour to Afghanistan.</p> <p>Love of community compelled him to enter local law enforcement.</p> <p>The 34-year-old husband, father and Pierce County sheriff's deputy was shot and killed late Sunday night in Pierce County. The Sheriff's Department says he was responding to a report of an intruder.</p> <p>He leaves behind a wife and three young sons, ages 4,6, and nine-years-old.</p> <p>According to police, McCartney graduated from Loyalton (Calif.) High School before joining the U.S. Navy in 2002. He served in the Navy as an Electronics Technician 2nd class and toward the end of his tour was deployed to Afghanistan with a security detail assigned to the US Army.</p> <p>McCartney started his career in law enforcement as a police officer with the Hoquiam Police Department on April 1, 2009.</p> <p>"Daniel started his career here and he will always be one of our family," Hoquiam Police Chief Jeff Myers said in a statement. "We sincerely mourn his loss and wish there was more we could do for his family and his fellow deputies who were out at the scene last night."</p> <p>McCartney and his family moved to Yelm, where he found a sense of community at the CrossFit gym owned by Annie Malone.</p> <p>"I don't know how to process this or how to deal with it," Malone said Monday, tearing up. "He was a great dad, great husband, loved his wife, and he loved his kids. It's hard to believe"</p> <p>Nick Jakovac coached at the gym with McCartney. The two found solace working out together.</p> <p>He said McCartney set the example of how to serve, every day.</p> <p>"He means so much to this community," Jakovac said, his voice quivering with emotion. "And to the police officers he works side by side with, you know we take that for granted, they go out there every day."</p> <p>In Yelm, many are taking time to recognize the sacrifice McCartney made to keep their community safe. That includes the New Christian Center, where McCartney attended church services with his family.</p> <p>"The one thing I think about him is his calm demeanor and kindhearted way and it showed in his kids," says Mical Gaynor, the Children's Pastor at New Life Christian Center. "He will be missed."</p> <p>Sheriff's spokesperson Det. Ed Troyer said anyone who would like to help McCartney's family can donate to the Deputy Daniel McCartney Legacy Fund at Tapco Credit Union, or by donating online through Crime Stoppers of Tacoma-Pierce County.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Milestone: 1M senior drivers on roads
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/a-new-milestone-1-million-senior-drivers-on-washington-state-roads/

GIST

There's been such heavy focus on the wave of millennials flooding into our area, it's easy to forget that it's seniors who are the fastest-growing segment of Washington's — and even Seattle's — population.

In 2015, the state hit a demographic milestone: The number of folks age 65-plus hit 1 million.

And the number of them who drive? That just passed the same milestone, according to an analysis of records from the state Department of Licensing.

As of December, there were 1,037,969 Washingtonians age 65-plus with active driver's licenses. Their ranks increased by more than 46,000 over the course of last year, passing the 1 million mark in the process.

There's no mystery here. Aging baby boomers — that massive generation born between 1946 and 1964 — are swelling the ranks of our senior population. The oldest boomers are now in their early 70s. And, as with everyone else, nearly all of them get behind the wheel.

That's why, since the start of the decade, the number of senior drivers in Washington has surged by 41 percent, which is more than three times faster than the overall rate of increase.

Double-digit growth rates can be seen in every county in the state. In Clark, San Juan and Thurston counties, the number of senior drivers grew by more than 50 percent. Even in Columbia County — it's the only county in Washington where the total driving population is shrinking — seniors with licenses still increased by 18 percent.

Of the 5.8 million licensed drivers in Washington, nearly 1 in 5 now is age 65 or older. Jefferson County, where Port Townsend is located, tops the state for the share of drivers who are senior citizens, at 39 percent. King County, though, is one of the state's youngest counties. Drivers age 65-plus are just 14 percent of the total here.

Is the surge in older drivers a safety concern?

Traffic-safety experts predicted years ago that the aging boomers would spike the number of fatal road collisions, but those fears haven't materialized. That's due in part to the improved safety technology of cars, which has helped reduce the number of deadly crashes. And boomers, as it turns out, are in better physical shape than past generations of seniors, which helps their driving abilities.

Still, as fit as they are, they're not as young as they used to be. With aging comes slower reflexes, a more limited range of motion, and often an increased use of prescription medications — all things that can have an impact on driving ability.

Data show that once drivers are in their 70s, the rate of crashes per vehicle mile traveled starts to climb. And crashes are more often deadly for older drivers, simply because they are less likely to survive the impact than a younger person is.

Unlike some other states, Washington does not have any safety initiatives in relation to senior drivers. But in her role as program manager for the Washington Traffic Safety Commission, Angie Ward is tasked with keeping a pulse on senior-driver issues, and she says at this point, the increase in senior drivers hasn't been an issue.

“Older drivers are pretty good about taking themselves off the road and minimizing their driving — not driving at night, not going longer distances,” Ward said. And she points out that the youngest drivers — those 16 to 25 — are responsible for nearly three times the number of fatalities on Washington roads as drivers age 70 and older.

If boomers are like previous generations, their car travel will taper off as they enter their golden years. Then again, boomers are famous for defying expectations. They've already redefined middle age — “50 is

	<p>the new 40" — so it remains to be seen if they'll slow down in their new phase of life.</p> <p>Washington drivers have no restrictions based on age alone. When drivers renew their licenses in person, they have to take a vision test and are asked some questions about their health. The Department of Licensing can require an individual's driving skills to be re-evaluated based on certain factors, including physical or mental condition. In some circumstances, older drivers maybe have restrictions placed on their license, such as being permitted to drive only during daylight hours, or prohibited from freeway driving.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/09 MLK Jr birth site now national park
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2018/01/09/Trump-signs-bill-to-make-MLKs-birth-site-a-national-park/2281515480399/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=4
GIST	<p>Jan. 9 (UPI) -- President Donald Trump signed a bill Monday that will make Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthplace a national park.</p> <p>Trump signed the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park Act of 2017 aboard Air Force One, shortly after landing in Marietta, Ga. Alveda King, the civil rights icon's niece, was in attendance for a bill-signing ceremony.</p> <p>"Through his life and work, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. made America more just and free," White House deputy press secretary Hogan Gidley told reporters. "This important historical park tells his story, and this bill will help ensure that the park continues to tell Dr. King's story for generations to come."</p> <p>In addition to adding federal protections and increasing resources toward the site, the bill expands the area of the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site in Atlanta to include the Prince Hall Masonic Temple, the former site of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which trained teams civil rights organizers in the 1960s.</p> <p>The bill was introduced by Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., in January, 2017 and easily passed both houses of Congress later in the year.</p> <p>According to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Lewis pushed for years to upgrade the status of the site. But in December, he said he would not attend the signing ceremony because he didn't want to share a stage with Trump.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/9 Despite weather, gas prices stable
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Energy-News/2018/01/09/US-gas-prices-stable-even-with-winter-weather-strains/7261515496458/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=3
GIST	<p>Jan. 9 (UPI) -- Severe winter weather put a strain on the U.S. energy grid, but low consumer demand for gasoline left the price at the pump stable, market reports found.</p> <p>More than a foot of snow fell on some major eastern U.S. metropolitan areas and temperatures dipped to sub-Arctic levels. Utility companies servicing states like New York and Massachusetts said they were braced for long-term outages, though much of the grid escaped with minor damage.</p> <p>For gasoline, Jeanette Casselano, a spokesperson for motor club AAA, said there wasn't much of a test for gasoline.</p> <p>"On the week, consumer demand for gasoline decreased," she said in a statement. "If this continues, gas prices will decrease in the weeks ahead."</p>

AAA reports an average retail price nation-wide of \$2.49 for a gallon of regular unleaded gasoline on Tuesday, an increase of less than a half percent from last week. Oil prices, meanwhile, are up almost 2 percent from the start of the year and showing up as a factor at the pump.

By region, the West Coast market is the most expensive in the country, with California taking top honors in the Lower 48 with \$3.16 per gallon, though that price is inflated by a new tax that went into effect last year. Washington state, however, is close behind at \$2.92 per gallon. Regional prices have been volatile, but more or less steady, with Tuesday's state average in California only less than 1 percent higher than a month ago.

AAA said the high level of gasoline supplies in the region was keeping a lid on prices, and the pace at which refineries were working was "healthy."

The same held for many eastern U.S. states despite the severe winter weather last week. By AAA's account, there were no major supply issues, though the regional market is running a 7 billion barrel deficit for gasoline supplies when compared with last year. The state average for Massachusetts of \$2.59 per gallon is unchanged from this time in December.

The Great Lakes market, however, is not so lucky. The price at the pump in Michigan dropped six cents last week, but at \$2.63 is just out of the Top 10 when it comes to the most expensive gas in the country. Illinois and Michigan led the nation when it came to volatility over last month.

Patrick DeHaan, a senior analyst at GasBuddy, said the Great Lakes states should see prices move even higher because of a retail practice dubbed price cycling. That's when gas stations drop prices to gain business, but as retail prices approach wholesale prices, stations need to push the price back up to make money.

"In the weeks ahead, the national average is likely to begin trending lower as winter gasoline inventories surge and as refiners will soon offer discounts to move these fuels out of their systems to make way for the eventual transition to summer blends of gasoline," he said in a statement.

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HEADLINE	01/09 DOJ: Operation Janus denaturalization
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/01/09/first-denaturalization-occurs-after-start-operation-janus-doj-says.html
GIST	<p>A native of India who arrived in the U.S. in 1991 without any travel documents or proof of identity had his naturalized citizenship revoked in part of Homeland Security's Operation Janus.</p> <p>The initiative identified about 315,000 cases where there were issues with fingerprint data at a central database.</p> <p>In some cases, the fingerprints were missing, which could indicate that some individuals "may have sought to circumvent criminal record and other background checks in the naturalization process," a Department of Justice statement read.</p> <p>The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services plans on referring 1,600 for prosecution.</p> <p>Baljinder Singh, who also goes by Davinder Singh, arrived at the San Francisco International Airport on Sept. 25, 1991, without proof of identity, the statement read.</p> <p>The 43-year-old eventually married a U.S. citizen and abandoned an earlier asylum application where he used a different name, the statement read. He has been living in Carteret, N.J.</p> <p>"The defendant exploited our immigration system and unlawfully secured the ultimate immigration benefit</p>

	<p>of naturalization, which undermines both the nation’s security and our lawful immigration system,” Chad Readler, the acting assistant attorney general of the Justice Department’s Civil Division, court papers read.</p> <p>The government alleged that Singh illegally procured his citizenship because he was never lawfully admitted for permanent residence, court papers read.</p> <p>Singh has not opposed the judge’s motion and he has not responded to the complaint filed in September, court papers said.</p> <p>Singh’s immigration status was reverted last Friday to lawful permanent resident, which means he could be exposed to removal by Homeland Security.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/09 Iran ayatollah: US, UK failed
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-protests-khamenei/u-s-and-britain-failed-to-cause-iran-unrest-khamenei-idUSKBN1EY0Z8
GIST	<p>BEIRUT (Reuters) - Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Tuesday that Iran had foiled attempts by the United States and Britain to create unrest during a wave of protests, state media reported.</p> <p>“The enemy now repeatedly makes moves and they are defeated each time,” Khamenei said. “It’s because of the resistance, because of the strong populist and national dam.”</p> <p>Protests criticizing the economic and political situation spread to more than 80 cities since late December and at least 21 people died.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Japan rejects SKorea call for ‘help’
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-korea-japan-comfortwomen/japan-rejects-south-korean-call-for-extra-steps-over-comfort-women-idUSKBN1EY0F6
GIST	<p>SEOUL (Reuters) - Japan said on Tuesday it can “by no means” accept South Korea’s call for more steps to help “comfort women”, a euphemism for girls and women forced to work in Japan’s wartime brothels, a divisive issue that Japan says was resolved with a 2015 deal.</p> <p>Japan and South Korea share a bitter history that includes Japan’s 1910-45 colonization but the U.S. allies are central to efforts to rein in North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs.</p> <p>A South Korean investigation appointed by the government concluded last month the dispute over the women could not be “fundamentally resolved” because the victims’ demand for legal compensation had not been met.</p> <p>Japan responded by saying any attempt by South Korea to revise the 2015 deal, struck by a conservative South Korean government, would make relations “unmanageable”.</p> <p>South Korea would not seek to renegotiate the 2015 agreement, even though it failed to meet victims’ needs and resolve the feud, Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said on Tuesday.</p> <p>But she added that she hoped Japan would make further efforts to help the women “regain honor and dignity and heal wounds in their hearts”.</p> <p>Japan rejected any suggestion it take steps to augment the 2015 deal, under which Japan apologized to the victims and provided 1 billion yen (\$8.8 million) to a fund to support them.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Puerto Rico police stage sickout
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/puerto-rico-crisis/puerto-rico-s-police-stage-sickout-over-unpaid-overtime-n835111
GIST	<p>SAN JUAN — Puerto Rico saw a spike in crime over the holidays, as thousands of police officers called out sick in protest of not being paid for countless hours of overtime worked in the aftermath of hurricanes Irma and Maria and in frustration over the island's lingering economic crisis.</p> <p>Police stations in over half of Puerto Rico's 78 municipalities were forced to close in recent days as the increase in absences reached alarming levels.</p> <p>The situation has grown so dire that Gustavo Gelpí Jr., the federal judge who oversees a reform agreement for the Puerto Rico Police Department, on Saturday ordered the department's high command and the island's Department of Public Security to meet with the U.S. Justice Department to come up with ways to end the "unprecedented massive absenteeism."</p> <p>He ordered them to submit possible solutions to the court by Friday, warning that because "public safety is a priority," there will be no extension of the deadline.</p> <p>Gelpí also urged all police officers to return to work.</p> <p>And on Monday, Puerto Rico's governor, Ricardo Rosselló, issued a statement that he had accepted the resignation of police commissioner Michelle Hernández de Fraley, the first woman to have held the job.</p> <p>While the governor named an interim commissioner, Lieut. Col. Henry Escalera, from within the department, he said that he would also be looking outside the island for a replacement — as they are doing with the candidate to head the island's beleaguered power authority.</p> <p>Related: Puerto Rico governor announces task force to examine hurricane-related deaths</p> <p>Though no reasons were given for the resignation, it comes amid the controversy over officer absenteeism and reports of clashes between Hernández de Fraley and the island's Public Safety Secretary Héctor Pesquera.</p> <p>The island has seen an increase in reports of murders, robbery and carjackings in the first week of 2018. Official statistics indicate that so far this year, there have been 25 murders, 15 more than reported in the same period of 2017, according to Puerto Rico's Police Department.</p> <p>Puerto Rico's police force is the second largest in the U.S., with about 13,600 officers. On average, about 550 to 600 officers call out sick each day across the island. But lately, the number has been in the thousands.</p> <p>On Jan. 1 alone, the department reported that 3,335 officers called in sick for the day's first shift. The number rose in the second shift to 3,501. It was unclear how many called out for the third and final shift.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Cherokee Nation to recognize MLK Day
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/ Cherokee-nation-finally-recognize-martin-luther-king-jr-day-n835906
GIST	<p>TAHLEQUAH, Okla. — The Cherokee Nation next week will mark Martin Luther King Jr. Day as an official holiday for the first time, months after a federal court ruled that descendants of black slaves, known as freedmen who were owned by members of the nation, have a right to tribal citizenship.</p>

	<p>On Monday, Principal Chief Bill John Baker announced he recently signed an executive order declaring next Monday as a Cherokee Nation national holiday. Baker said the declaration was both a tribute to King's contributions and a call to play a part in continuing his work.</p> <p>Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Bill John Baker, in 2011. Michael Wyke / Tulsa World Via AP File "He was a remarkable advocate for change for all people of color in America, including Indian Country," Baker said in a statement.</p> <p>In August, U.S. District Judge Thomas Hogan ruled on a long-standing dispute between Cherokee Freedmen and the second-largest tribe in the United States which claims more than 350,000 citizens.</p> <p>"The Cherokee Nation can continue to define itself as it sees fit," Hogan wrote, "but must do so equally and evenhandedly with respect to native Cherokees and the descendants of Cherokee Freedmen."</p> <p>Under the ruling that ended a dispute that began in 2003, Cherokee Freedmen would have all the rights that tribal citizens have, including the right to run for office, vote in elections and receive benefits, including access to tribal health care and housing.</p> <p>The principal chief noted in Monday's statement that King wrote about colonization and the injustices committed against indigenous peoples and asked Cherokee Nation citizens to dedicate a day of service to their communities.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Multi-billion dollar spy satellite destroyed
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/spacex-spy-satellite-crashes/2018/01/08/id/835909/
GIST	<p>A U.S. spy satellite that was launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida, aboard a SpaceX rocket on Sunday failed to reach orbit and is assumed to be a total loss, two U.S. officials briefed on the mission said on Monday.</p> <p>The classified intelligence satellite, built by Northrop Grumman Corp, failed to separate from the second stage of the Falcon 9 rocket and is assumed to have broken up or plunged into the sea, said the two officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity.</p> <p>The satellite is assumed to be "a write-off," one of the officials said.</p> <p>The presumed loss of the satellite was first reported by the Wall Street Journal.</p> <p>Northrop Grumman built the multibillion-dollar satellite, code-named Zuma, and was responsible for choosing the SpaceX Falcon 9 launch vehicle, both officials said.</p> <p>An investigation is under way, but there is no initial indication of sabotage or other interference, they said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/09 Take this job and shiver it: chilly offices
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/job-shiver-chilly-offices-plague-workers-52226737
GIST	<p>Two long-sleeved shirts, a sweater, a fleece jacket, two scarves and two pairs of socks.</p> <p>That has been Karen Ericson's go-to outfit in her office in Des Moines, Iowa, in recent weeks.</p> <p>"I am still shivering," the 39-year-old graphic designer said last week, estimating the temperature in the office was in the mid-60s while outside, the city hit 19 below zero at one point. "Living in the Midwest,</p>

I'm well-trained to dress warmly and in layers, but this deep freeze has been difficult to endure, especially when I expect to be comfortable — or at least not shivering — inside."

As much of the nation muddled through bitter weather in recent weeks, office dwellers found they still had to brave the cold even when indoors. Many relied on winter parkas, gloves, blankets and space heaters just to keep working.

"Today I've got two sweaters, a scarf, ear coverings, gloves and a blanket over my lap," Rebecca Miller, a 27-year-old academic adviser at Tennessee State University in Nashville, said last week as temperatures barely ticked above 50 degrees in her office while outside it was 20 degrees or lower in the daytime. "But I'm still having a hard time working. I'm shaking cold, and it's hard to focus. The gloves make it hard to type, and the bulky layers make it difficult to move around."

Like thousands of other chilly Americans, she snapped selfies of herself at her desk in attire usually reserved for the ski slopes and shared them on social media.

Office developments are built with centralized heating systems that make the buildings suitable for a range of uses over many years. The down side is that they provide little climate control to individual tenants — sometimes purposely, said Khee Poh Lam, architecture professor at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

Thermostats are often tucked into hard-to-reach spaces like false ceilings and air ducts so office tenants can't mess with them, Lam said. Other buildings have dummy units out in the open that don't actually do anything except give desperate workers the illusion of control.

Finding the right temperature to please everyone has been an elusive goal for office designers and builders, said Stefano Schiavon, architecture professor at the University of California, Berkeley, who co-wrote a 2012 study that found roughly 40 percent of U.S. workers were satisfied with their office's temperature. Design standards call for an acceptability rate closer to 80 percent, he said.

The challenge isn't just confined to the winter, of course. Chilly offices have long been the bane of women who complain air conditioning is cranked up in the summer to appease their male, suit-wearing counterparts. And there are certainly many offices with overzealous furnaces that prompt workers to crack open windows even on the coldest days.

Optimal temperature for office work is 72 to 79 degrees — or nearly 10 degrees more than what many buildings typically set their thermostats, said Alan Hedge, a design professor at Cornell University in New York who has researched how temperature affects productivity.

Schiavon suggested that companies, even those based in the draftiest old offices, can invest in safe, relatively inexpensive technology to keep workers warm and productive, like heated chairs, electric blankets and heated floor mats.

"The bottom line is that central heating won't work for everyone, even if designed right," he said. "We're very different people and need some sort of personalization of our environment."

Ericson, the Iowa resident, said the key to getting through the work day has been reminding herself the cold is only temporary.

"Every day that passes," she said, "is a day closer to spring."

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HEADLINE 01/08 This year's flu season is bad

SOURCE <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/years-flu-season-bad-flu-shot-effective/story?id=52209578>

<p>GIST</p>	<p>The flu has ramped up early this year and is rapidly spreading across the country, with widespread flu activity in 46 states, according to the latest data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>"This is a feature of this year's flu -- not only did it start early, but it seemed to occur all over the country more or less simultaneously," Dr. William Schaffner, infectious disease specialist at Vanderbilt University, told ABC News.</p> <p>The flu has not yet reached "epidemic" proportions, according to last week's CDC data, but it may happen soon. A flu epidemic occurs when the percentage of people who have died from the flu exceeds a threshold set by the CDC using data from prior years. Last week, the number of people who died from the flu this year was only 0.2 percent below that threshold.</p> <p>Doctor's visits for flu-like illness are rising. This year's numbers are almost identical to three years ago, in the 2014-2015 season -- both years surpassed what was seen last year, 2016-2017.</p> <p>Twenty-six states are reporting high flu activity, with some of the worst in Arkansas, where 14 percent of outpatient doctor visits were for influenza-like illness last week. Neighboring states of Mississippi and Texas also have high flu activity, with 12 percent of doctors' visits related to flu-like symptoms.</p> <p>But when patients must be admitted to the hospital, flu can turn deadly. The number of patients in the hospital for flu-like illness nationally has doubled in the past two weeks and is higher than in recent years - about 35 percent up from the same time last year. Most of the people who are hospitalized for the flu are over the age of 65.</p> <p>The predominant flu strain this year is H3N2, a form of influenza A. This strain is included in this year's flu vaccine, but information on how effective the vaccine has been is typically not available until the flu season is over.</p> <p>Vaccine effectiveness typically ranges from 40 to 60 percent in a good year. Preliminary estimates from last year show the vaccine was 40 percent effective in the U.S., similar to 2014-2015.</p> <p>Concerns have been raised about this year's vaccine after an editorial published in the New England Journal of Medicine last Thursday said it was only 10 percent effective against H3N2 in Australia.</p> <p>Schaffner cautions against using this statistic to predict how well the vaccine will work in the U.S., since this is not official CDC data, but warns it could be a bad sign.</p> <p>"We are being affected by the basically same virus and using basically the same vaccine," he said.</p> <p>Additionally, years in which H3N2 is the predominant influenza strain tend to have higher death rates, with approximately 20,000 deaths in the 2012-2013 and 2014-2015 seasons when H3N2 predominated.</p>
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<p>HEADLINE</p>	<p>01/08 Puerto Rico police chief resigns</p>
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/puerto-rico-police-chief-resigns-killings-absences-spike-52221820?</p>
<p>GIST</p>	<p>Puerto Rico's first female police chief resigned Monday amid a spike in killings while thousands of officers continue to call in sick to protest the lack of overtime pay.</p> <p>The island's governor said retired military officer Michelle Hernandez was stepping down after one year of overseeing one of the largest police departments under U.S. jurisdiction. Officials did not provide further details, and Hernandez did not immediately return a call for comment through her spokeswoman.</p> <p>Puerto Rico had recorded 23 killings as of Sunday, compared with nine in the same period last year, police</p>

spokesman Carlos Rivera told The Associated Press. This year's killings have occurred across the U.S. territory and include a triple homicide in recent days, he said. Two double homicides were reported later Monday, in the western coastal city of Mayaguez and the north coastal town of Rio Grande.

More than 2,700 officers have been absent daily on average in recent weeks, compared with the usual average of about 600 daily absences. It is unclear whether that number has changed in recent days and whether any action has been taken against officers who have called in sick. The island's police department referred all questions to Karixia Ortiz, spokeswoman for Puerto Rico's Department of Public Safety. She told AP that the agency is investigating the absences and declined further comment.

Carlos Morales, president of an association that represents the majority of the department's 13,000-plus officers, said that he and many others are not upset that Hernandez resigned.

"She has not proven nor shown interest in how to work with Puerto Rico's police officers," he told AP.

Morales said daily absences have dropped slightly to about 2,300. He said a judge overseeing a 10-year federally mandated reform of Puerto Rico's police department has requested information on the absences and why they are occurring. He said officers are pleased the judge has shown interest in the issue.

Officers have been demanding millions of dollars owed for working overtime after hurricanes Irma and Maria, with some working seven days a week, 12 to 15 hours a day.

A couple of weeks ago, Hernandez estimated the government owed officers an additional \$35 million in overtime pay, but said the department was still tallying attendance sheets to determine the exact amount. More than \$20 million has been paid so far as the island struggles to restructure a portion of its \$73 billion public debt amid an 11-year recession.

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HEADLINE	01/09 China: tanker still on fire; 31 missing
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/china-body-found-tanker-fire-sea-collision-52227022?
GIST	<p>Rescuers have found a body believed to be of a sailor from the Iranian oil tanker set ablaze after a collision in the East China Sea, China's Ministry of Transportation said Tuesday, as the search continued for another 31 missing from the same ship.</p> <p>The ministry said the body recovered Monday had yet to be identified but was wearing a protective suit designed to withstand cold seawater. There was no further word about the others missing since the Panamanian-registered Sanchi collided with a freighter late Saturday.</p> <p>Chinese media said the tanker was still on fire Tuesday and at risk of exploding.</p> <p>The tanker was carrying 136,000 metric tons (nearly 1 million barrels) of condensate, a type of gassy, ultra-light oil, when it collided with the Hong Kong-registered freighter CF Crystal. All 21 crew members of the Crystal, which was carrying grain from the United States to China, were rescued, the Chinese ministry said. The Crystal's crew members were all Chinese nationals.</p> <p>It wasn't immediately clear what caused the collision, which happened in open seas rather than a narrow channel where such accidents are more common. Ships of such size generally come with sophisticated radar and other technologies aimed at preventing collisions.</p> <p>The Sanchi was sailing from Iran to South Korea when the collision occurred 257 kilometers (160 miles) off the coast of Shanghai, China's Ministry of Transport said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/09 Death toll Madagascar cyclone rises
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/death-toll-madagascar-cyclone-25-dozen-missing-52228966?
GIST	<p>Madagascar's government says the death toll from a cyclone has risen to 25, with a dozen people missing.</p> <p>The office of the president says Cyclone Ava also displaced more than 17,000 people on the Indian Ocean island over the weekend.</p> <p>The government says the danger has passed and all cyclone alerts have been lifted.</p> <p>The island nation was hit hard by a cyclone in March that left at least 50 people dead and damaged the Sava region in the northeast, which produces about half of the world's vanilla.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/09 China welcomes Korea talks
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/latest-rare-talks-koreas-underway-border-52223554
GIST	<p>The Latest on the border talks between North and South Korea (all times local):</p> <p>5:35 p.m.</p> <p>China says it welcomes moves by North and South Korea to improve relations after the sides held rare high-profile talks and called on the international community to lend its backing to such efforts.</p> <p>Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang told reporters that Beijing was "pleased to see this high-level talk between the two sides."</p> <p>Lu said that "China welcomes and supports the positive moves taken by the two sides to improve relations, and we hope the talk will make a good start for the two sides to further improve ties, promote reconciliation and cooperation and alleviate tensions on the peninsula."</p> <p>China is North Korea's only major ally and has come under heavy pressure to use its leverage to steer Pyongyang back to negotiations on ending its nuclear programs.</p> <p>While Beijing argues its influence is limited, it has signed on to increasingly harsh United Nations sanctions against Kim Jong Un's regime, including bans on key exports of textiles, seafood and other products and sharp limits on supplies of oil and petroleum products</p>
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HEADLINE	01/09 Syria: Israel missiles target Damascus
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syria-israeli-missiles-target-damascus-military-outposts-52228348?
GIST	<p>Syria's military on Tuesday accused Israel of launching several missiles targeting military outposts near the capital, Damascus, claiming that the Syrian air force shot down one of the Israeli projectiles.</p> <p>In a statement, the army said the Syrian air defense confronted the early morning missile attacks that were launched from Lebanese airspace on the outposts in the area of Qutayfeh in the Damascus countryside on Tuesday. It said several missiles were first launched at 2:40 a.m., followed by two more missiles at 3:04 a.m. and four at 4:14 a.m.</p> <p>The military said the Syrian air defense shot down one missile and the rest fell on one of the Syrian</p>

	<p>military sites, causing material damage.</p> <p>The Israeli military declined to comment on the matter.</p> <p>Israel has carried out dozens of airstrikes inside Syria in the course of Syria's civil war, against what it says are suspected arms shipments believed to be bound for Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group, which is fighting alongside Syrian government forces. Tuesday's strike was the first this year.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/09 NKorea to send Olympic team
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/south-korea-accepts-olympic-team-north-countries-hold/story?id=52223379&cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	<p>Officials from North Korea accepted South Korea's offer and will send athletes to next month's Winter Olympics as the two sides began long-anticipated talks on Tuesday. North Korea agreed to send athletes, officials and reporters to the games, as well as its cheerleading group and taekwondo demonstration athletes. South Korea proposed the two countries march together in the Opening Ceremonies, a point which will be further debated Tuesday afternoon.</p> <p>In their opening statement, South Korea mentioned further denuclearization talks between the two countries, but the point was not acknowledged by North Korean officials in early discussions.</p> <p>"In addition, we proposed resuming temporary reunions of families separated by war and holding inter-Korean Red Cross talks to discuss this," Chun Hae-sung, South Korean Vice Unification Minister, said after the morning talks. "Along with this, we also proposed holding inter-Korean military talks designed to reduce animosities in frontline areas."</p> <p>Negotiations were continuing on those proposals by the South.</p> <p>Five representatives from the highest levels of both governments -- including South Korean Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon and the North Korean chairman of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country, Ri Son-gwon -- kicked off by meeting with a symbolic crossing by the northern delegation into the South-controlled building called House of Peace.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Military women gather in #MeToo protest
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/news/where-s-our-reckoning-military-women-gather-outside-pentagon-in-metoo-protest-1.505745
GIST	<p>ARLINGTON, Va. — The moment was the most traumatic in her life. The last thing Nichole Bowen-Crawford wanted to do was fly across the country to stand in the bitter cold outside the nerve center of the nation's defense system and tell everyone who would listen about being assaulted by a fellow soldier and then silenced by her superiors.</p> <p>But she believed she had to speak up and encourage others like her to break their silence.</p> <p>On Monday — the morning after millions of viewers watched women in Hollywood declare at the Golden Globe awards that the time for sexual assault and harassment was up -- she summoned the courage to fight through post-traumatic stress and step back into the limelight. She joined a small cadre of military survivors who demanded accountability from Pentagon leadership that has failed to end sexual assault in the Armed Forces.</p> <p>Her hope, she said, is that the #MeToo movement that has penetrated Hollywood and the halls of Congress will take hold within the tight ranks of the male-dominated U.S. military, where a culture of sexual assault,</p>

harassment and retaliation for those who come forward remains pervasive.

"The truth is, I am really scared to be here, really scared to tell my story," she told a small crowd gathered at the Pentagon gates.

"But standing up for the men and women who serve our country, who can't report sexual assault in a safe way is more important than my feelings," she said. "It's time there is a safe way to report sexual assault in the military so that men and women have the freedom to say "Me Too" instead of (maintaining) silence."

Despite efforts to stem military sexual assault in recent years, the Pentagon estimates more than 6,100 sexual assaults took place in fiscal year 2016, a figure similar to the two previous years and based only on data from those who've come forward to report. It also assesses that two-thirds of victims don't report, which means there were more than 18,300 sexual assaults for each of those years.

The same report found that only about 4 percent of cases resulted in conviction.

In the meantime, six out of every 10 who reported sexual assault faced retaliation, often in the form of stigma, accusations of personality disorder and being discharged with bad paper that would end careers and strip them of their veterans benefits and job prospects in the civilian world, said Lydia Watts, the CEO at Service Women's Action Network, or SWAN, which organized Monday's protest.

"Where is the incentive to report?" Watts said to the several dozen people assembled. "Your career may be damaged, you are more likely than not to be retaliated against and then, even if a case is brought against your assailant, less than one in 20 cases will result in conviction and in the other 19 cases, the assailants will walk away unscathed.

"Military men and women are asking themselves, 'Where's our #MeToo reckoning? When do we see military perpetrators of sexual violence held to account?'"

Bearing signs like "Denial is not a policy" and "Veterans demand reform," Monday's protestors demanded that the Pentagon take increased action to stop sexual assault by changing what several called a misogynistic military culture and taking military sexual assault cases out of the hands of commanders — a proposal that military leadership has blocked saying it undermines command authority.

Inside the Pentagon, Army Col. Rob Manning said there was "zero tolerance" for sexual assault or harassment in the military.

"Events like this morning's underscore the importance of the department's continued efforts to eliminate sexual harassment and assault in the military," he said. "The message is that no one should have to tolerate harassment as part of their military service. The Department of Defense continuously works to eliminate sexual harassment and assault from the military, and we encourage servicemembers to report all instances of sexual assault so we can provide support services and hold offenders accountable."

Vocal advocates for victims say more needs to be done. Erin Kirk-Cuomo, a founder of the "Not In My Marine Corps" movement, said the only way to end the scourge is to change the culture and fully integrate men and women on equal footing in all of the services.

"A lot of times the military seems to be the one to push progressive change in our society but let's be honest," she said. "It's considered the biggest boys club in the world, especially the Marine Corps."

"Time's up, time's up!" said Monica Medina, an attorney and advisor to former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, who helped draft protections for women in the military who were assaulted, including ensuring that victims have a lawyer and removing certain cases from the chain of command.

"Sexual assault is finally recognized as the morale-killing scourge that it is," she said. "This is the moment. #MeToo is the movement. And the military needs to use this movement and moment to encourage victims

	<p>of sexual harassment to come forward."</p> <p>Medina served in the Army straight out of law school, being posted to the Army general counsel's program at the Pentagon. There, she encountered a powerful senior officer and had to face career retaliation after rebuffing his advances.</p> <p>It was then that she joined what she called "the #MeToo club." It was not club she wanted, she said, or "even one I admitted to until a couple of months ago."</p> <p>On Monday, she told her story publicly for the first time, calling for change.</p> <p>"I don't think we can change it unless more women speak up," she said.</p> <p>"Eighty percent - 80 percent! - of women in the military report being sexually harassed during their career," Medina said. "Women in service to their nation deserve better."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Koreas to hold talks; discuss Olympics
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-southkorea-talks/north-south-korea-to-hold-talks-as-winter-olympics-helps-break-ice-idUSKBN1EX2CW
GIST	<p>SEOUL (Reuters) - North and South Korea will hold their first formal talks for more than two years on Tuesday, brought together by sport to discuss how the North's athletes can attend next month's Winter Olympics in the South despite simmering fears of conflict.</p> <p>Regardless of its narrow, primarily sporting agenda, the meeting will be closely watched by world leaders eager for any sign of a reduction in tensions on the Korean peninsula amid rising fears over North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and defiance of United Nations Security Council resolutions.</p> <p>"The talks will focus on North Korea's participation in the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics and our preparations have centered around some requests made by the North for a peaceful Olympic Games," Unification Ministry spokesman Baek Tae-hyun told a media conference on Monday.</p> <p>Some South Korean officials are hoping the two Koreas may even march under a single flag at a sports opening ceremony for the first time in more than a decade.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Judge halts botched expulsion Somalis
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/expulsion-somalis-botched-deportation-flight-halted-52216556?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>A Miami federal judge has further halted the expulsion of 92 Somalis suing the U.S. government for turning them into potential targets of an extremist group with a botched deportation flight.</p> <p>Judge Darrin Gayles said he will decide by Jan. 22 whether he can grant them a longer stay while they reopen their immigration cases to again fight deportation.</p> <p>The lawsuit says the Somalis sat shackled on an airplane for two days, some urinating on themselves. The December flight reached Senegal and returned to the U.S. because the relief crew was not rested.</p> <p>ACLU attorney Lee Gelernt said news of the botched flight has put the immigrants at risk, arguing Somalia-based Al-Shabab targets people returned from the U.S. A truck bombing blamed on the group killed 512 in October.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 More equipment, crews to Puerto Rico
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/equipment-crews-head-puerto-rico-power-boost-52216505?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Federal officials said Monday that efforts to fully restore power to Puerto Rico in the wake of Hurricane Maria should get a boost with more work crews and more supplies arriving in the coming weeks.</p> <p>The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said that it is getting its own barge to ship items and that materials it requested several months ago have been manufactured and are finally on their way to the U.S. territory.</p> <p>"We're doing everything we can to increase the (power company's) ability to do this as fast as possible for the people of Puerto Rico," said Col. John Lloyd, who is helping oversee power restoration efforts for the Corps of Engineers.</p> <p>He told The Associated Press that officials over the weekend also discovered some needed materials in a previously overlooked warehouse owned by Puerto Rico's Electric Power Authority.</p> <p>The lack of some of those hard-to-find pieces had delayed energizing certain lines, according to the Corps of Engineers, which said the material included transformers, splices and hundreds of a key small piece no longer in stock elsewhere.</p> <p>Puerto Rico's energy infrastructure is about 44 years old, compared with an average 18 years on the U.S. mainland, so a lot of parts damaged or destroyed by the hurricane are no longer available and have to be manufactured, Lloyd said.</p> <p>It is unclear why power company officials had not provided the equipment previously. The Corps of Engineers said that the company's transmission division controls that warehouse and that it lacked transparency in inventory and accountability. Power company spokesman Carlos Monroig did not return a message asking for comment.</p> <p>More than 40 percent of Puerto Rico's power customers remain in the dark nearly four months after the Category 4 storm hit the island, causing an estimated \$95 billion in damage and killing dozens of people. Classes are resuming this week even though hundreds of public schools are still without power. Only 20 percent of intersections with stoplights have been powered.</p> <p>Lloyd said crews are still assessing damage and his agency is still waiting for the shipment of hundreds of thousands of poles, transformers, fuses, towers, insulators, bolts and other pieces.</p> <p>Of nearly 31,000 poles ordered, almost 12,000 have arrived. Of more than 6,000 transformers ordered, only 412 have arrived, but more than 630 were expected this week.</p> <p>Lloyd said most of the island should have power by the end of February or early March, but estimated a complete restoration would take until May.</p> <p>"Four months is a long time for people to be without power," he said. "We try to do this as fast as we possibly can."</p> <p>An upcoming shipment of 1,250 miles of conductor wire and 6,000 poles made of wood, concrete and galvanized steel will coincide with the arrival of nearly 2,500 new workers over the next two weeks, officials said.</p>
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HEADLINE 01/08 Calif. evacuations mudslides threat

SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/record-breaking-cold-waning-midwest-east-bracing-snow/story?id=52206531&cid=clicksource_81_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>Officials have ordered thousands of people who were affected by recent wildfires in Southern California to evacuate as an upcoming winter storm poses a threat for mudslides and flash floods.</p> <p>Mandatory evacuations were issued for about 7,000 people in mountainous areas affected by the Thomas, Whitter, Sherpa and Rey fires, according to the Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Management. Another 23,000 people were under evacuation warnings, officials said.</p> <p>The storm is the West Coast's first significant winter storm of the season, and heavy rain and strong winds are expected in the area through Tuesday, bringing "strong potential" for flash flooding and mud in areas where wildfires recently burned through, according to Santa Barbara County officials.</p> <p>Flash flood watches are in effect from Los Angeles to Santa Barbara County, and a wind advisory is in effect for the San Francisco area, according to the National Weather Service.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	01/08 Scam: 'blessing loom' on Facebook
SOURCE	http://www.fox19.com/story/37213059/have-you-seen-the-blessing-loom-on-facebook-experts-say-its-a-scam
GIST	<p>CHARLOTTE, NC (WBTV) - An internet scam making its way around Facebook is leaving some people with empty bank accounts.</p> <p>It's called "The Blessing Loom" and it's a new twist on an old scam, the pyramid scheme.</p> <p>The scheme requires participants to pay \$100 into an online payment system like PayPal, Venmo or Cash App. The person is promised an \$800 return on their \$100 investment.</p> <p>The problem is participants have to recruit others to invest in order to get the money. But there's another danger to this scheme other than losing the initial \$100 investment.</p> <p>When using an online payment system to invest, people are opening themselves up to the possibility of getting hacked.</p> <p>Mike Holland, who is the executive vice president of client relations for Fortalice - a cybersecurity company, said this is a classic cybercrime.</p> <p>"Cyber criminals use the internet to prey on unsuspecting people to try to convince them to give them their password or log in, their credentials and so under the guise of what is probably a Ponzi scheme or a quick cash scheme which is usually a farce, they're convincing people to give their login information which is never a good idea," Holland said.</p> <p>Holland said the best thing to do is avoid the "Blessing Loom" altogether.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Ransomware on healthcare spiked 89%
SOURCE	https://www.healthcare-informatics.com/news-item/cybersecurity/report-ransomware-attacks-against-healthcare-orgs-increased-89-percent-2017
GIST	The number of reported major IT/hacking events attributed to ransomware by health care institutions

increased by 89 percent from 2016 to 2017, according to cyber defense firm Cryptonite's 2017 Healthcare Cyber Research Report, which used data reported to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office for Civil Rights (OCR).

The research conducted by Rockville, Md.-based Cryptonite looks at healthcare cyber attack activity last year and finds that 2017 was a very challenging year for healthcare institutions as these organizations remain under sustained attack by cyber attackers that continue to target their networks through the use of well understood vulnerabilities. According to the report, there were a total of 140 data breach events characterized and reported to HHS OCR as IT/hacking in 2017, representing an almost 24 percent increase over the 113 IT/hacking events reported in 2016. For an historical view, there were 57 reports for IT/hacking in 2015 and 35 reports in 2014.

The number of reported major IT/hacking events attributed to ransomware by health care institutions increased by 89 percent from 2016 to 2017. This was an increase from 19 reported events in 2016 to a total of 36 events in 2017. In 2017 ransomware events represented a quarter of all events reported to HHS/OCR and attributed to IT/hacking.

All six of the six largest IT/hacking healthcare events reported in 2017 were attributed to ransomware, according to the report.

The research found that there were 3,442,748 records reported compromised in 2017, a substantial decrease from 13,425,263 reported compromised in 2016 as cyber attackers diversified their attacks against a broader mix of healthcare entities.

"In past years, cyber criminals invested considerable time and effort in targeting the largest healthcare institutions as evidenced by the 2015 events impacting Anthem (78.8 million records), Premera Blue Cross (11 million records) and by the 2016 events impacting Banner Health (3.6 million records) and Newkirk Products (3.4 million records)," the report authors wrote. "This low hanging fruit has to some extent, been harvested and attackers are now increasingly turning their attention to the broader mix of health care entities."

What's more, the report authors note that the emergence and refinement of advanced ransomware tools lowers both the cost and the time for cyber attackers to target smaller healthcare institutions – now they can cost effectively reach physician practices, surgical centers, diagnostic laboratories, MRI/CT scan centers and many other smaller yet critical healthcare institutions. And, the report authors predict that this is the beginning of a trend that will increase very substantially in 2018 and 2019.

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HEADLINE	01/08 AMA: 83% doctors hit by cyberattack
SOURCE	https://www.beckersasc.com/asc-turnarounds-ideas-to-improve-performance/83-of-physicians-have-experienced-a-cyberattack-5-survey-insights.html
GIST	<p>According to a recent survey from the American Medical Association, 83 percent of physicians said they've experienced a cyberattack of some type.</p> <p>The AMA and management consulting firm Accenture surveyed 1,300 physicians about the prevalence of cyberattacks.</p> <p>Here's what they found:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fifty-five percent of respondents are worried about future cyberattacks. 2. Seventy-four percent of respondents cited interruption to their clinical practice as a primary concern; 29 percent said it took a full day to recover from an attack.

	<p>3. Approximately 53 percent of respondents cited patient safety among their primary concerns.</p> <p>4. When a cyberattack occurs, 56 percent of respondents alerted their health IT vendor, while 49 percent said they had an in-house security official to deal with the attack. Concerning preparation for an attack, 37 percent obtained training on content from their health IT vendor and 87 percent of respondents believed their practice was HIPAA compliant.</p> <p>5. Concerning future technology adoption, 33 percent said they'd adopt telemedicine within a year, while 28 percent said they'd adopt patient-generated health data within the next year.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/09 ATM at gas station serves up bitcoin
SOURCE	http://www.heraldnet.com/life/atm-at-lynnwood-gas-station-dispenses-bitcoin-digital-currency/
GIST	<p>The Lynnwood 76 service station has all the essentials. Gas. Food. Bitcoin.</p> <p>What's up with that?</p> <p>A Bitcoin ATM sits next to the lottery self-service kiosk in the convenience mart at the bustling 11-pump station at 19611 Alderwood Parkway.</p> <p>The ATM has been inside the 76 station for more than a year, but didn't get much attention until the recent hoopla that made Bitcoin the Kardashian of currency.</p> <p>At first glimpse, the boxy white machine owned by national company Coinme looks like one of those Coinstars you dump your stash of pennies and quarters in and, cha-ching!, turn it into paper money backed by the U.S. Treasury.</p> <p>Looks are deceiving. This ATM deals in digital money, also called cryptocurrency, that has no tangible form and is used worldwide with no central regulating body or bank. Investors from America and Africa to North Korea and New Zealand have pumped billions of dollars, euros, yen, rubles and other real money into it. It's not legal tender nor is it illegal.</p> <p>Bitcoin exists virtually, like a figment of your imagination. In reality, it is valueless bits of computer data. It's stored in a digital wallet. There's nothing to jingle in your pocket. Despite the name, it's not even a "coin" in the old-fashioned sense.</p> <p>This newfangled currency is created through a process called "mining" on computers around the globe to form blockchains. That's right, this currency worth billions is just a bunch of numbers generated by equations that only computers are smart enough to do.</p> <p>"It's code," said 76 gas station shopper Michael Gorta, visiting from California.</p> <p>Gorta had studied up on Bitcoin but not invested — yet. He noticed the Bitcoin ATM when he came in for scratch lottery tickets, which are funded by the state.</p> <p>"There is no physical backing," he said of Bitcoin. "It's only worth what someone will give you for it, at the moment."</p> <p>For him, that was a green bill with George Washington. He fed the \$1 bill in the ATM for Bitcoin, which was going for about \$16,600.</p> <p>"For one dollar I own 0.0000546 Bitcoins," Gorta said, laughing. That was really 90 cents worth: Coinme charges a 10 percent transaction fee.</p>

You can buy up to eight decimal points of Bitcoin. It's like buying pizza at Brooklyn Bros. It's sold by the whole or by the slice, though in this case, fractional pieces.

Most Bitcoin buyers go to the 76 gas station for petrol, not crypto. They use their phone or computer to wheel and deal in digital currencies. Unlike store hours or the stock market, trading is 24/7.

The main way to buy Bitcoin is to use an app, such as online trading broker Coinbase (no relation to Coinme), which allows people to carry around their big wad of blockchains on their phone.

Coinbase was the most downloaded app at Apple's App Store a month ago, when a single Bitcoin, which started 2017 at less than \$1,000, spiked to nearly \$20,000 in mid-December.

A Bitcoin has since hovered in the \$13,000 to \$16,000 range, which is still a good tease and a gamble. That's what this is: gambling. Think of it as putting money in a slot machine.

The Coinbase app also offers a few virtual cousins of Bitcoin, such as Ethereum and Litecoin, which cost less and also fluctuate wildly in price — a month ago, Ethereum was \$450 and at this writing is about \$1,100. There are many other virtual coins out there, gobbling up billions of dollars. The site CoinMarketCap.com lists 1,386 different coins.

It costs real money to buy. And when you sell it, you get real money. Or you can shop with it. Bitcoin is accepted as payment by Expedia and Overstock as well as some stores, coffee shops, bars, car dealers, hairdressers, dentists and, it turns out, kidnappers. Last week, a Kiev crypto company executive was kidnapped by an armed gang then freed after paying the ransom demand of more than \$1 million in Bitcoins.

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HEADLINE	01/09 France investigates Apple
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/4e9a072707414c8cabfa8c582d773d5c/France-investigates-Apple-for-slowing-down-old-iPhones
GIST	<p>PARIS (AP) — French prosecutors have opened an investigation into Apple over revelations it secretly slowed down older versions of its handsets.</p> <p>The Paris prosecutor's office said Tuesday a probe was opened last week and is led by the French body in charge of fraud control, which is part of the finance ministry.</p> <p>It follows a legal complaint filed in December by a French consumer rights group that aims to stop intentional obsolescence of goods by companies.</p> <p>In France it is illegal to intentionally shorten the lifespan of a product in order to encourage customers replace it.</p> <p>Apple apologized in December for secretly slowing down older iPhones, a move it said was necessary to avoid unexpected shutdowns related to battery fatigue.</p> <p>Lawsuits against the company have been filed in the U.S. and Israel.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/09 Children's smartphone addiction
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/just-how-bad-is-kids-smartphone-addiction?ref=home
GIST	It's the easiest babysitting hack known to modern adults attempting to pacify a fussy baby: Take a smartphone, find a game or show, put it in the child's hands, and—lo and behold! The kid is quiet, eyes

wide, and still.

And that magic trick seems to extend to children who can crawl, tots who are just stringing together words, kids toddling into preschool, and—most obviously, at least when it comes to psychological research—tweens and teens hunched over their smartphones, oblivious to the world.

That worries a group of Apple investors, who are calling on the company to investigate what effects this screen time has on children’s brains and development. In a letter co-signed by New York investment firm JANA Partners and Anne Sheehan, the director of corporate governance at the California State Teachers’ Retirement System (the largest public teacher’s pension fund in the country), the investors implore the tech giant to fund research into what their ubiquitous products might do to a child’s brain:

The average American teenager who uses a smart phone receives her first phone at age 10 and spends over 4.5 hours a day on it (excluding texting and talking). 78% of teens check their phones at least hourly and 50% report feeling ‘addicted’ to their phones. It would defy common sense to argue that this level of usage, by children whose brains are still developing, is not having at least some impact, or that the maker of such a powerful product has no role to play in helping parents to ensure it is being used optimally. It is also no secret that social media sites and applications for which the iPhone and iPad are a primary gateway are usually designed to be as addictive and time-consuming as possible, as many of their original creators have publicly acknowledged.

The letter is signed on behalf of investors whose shares amount to nearly \$2 billion of Apple stock. Apple’s total valuation is about \$900 billion.

It’s a small proportion, but the letter is sparking conversation about what it means to be addicted to technology—particularly among the youngest users of smart technology. It cites research and science published within childhood psychology, including that of Jean Twenge, a professor of psychology at San Diego State University whose most recent book, *iGen: Why Today’s Superconnected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood*, tackles the effects of smartphones on teens.

Twenge said she first spotted some odd trends in teenage mental health in 2011 and 2012, when smartphones were becoming more common among teens. “There was a doubling in the suicide rate and tripling in emergency room admissions of self-harm among young girls,” Twenge said. “And there was a 20 percent increase in the clinical depression rate.”

To Twenge, the link between screen time and mental health seemed apparent. And while she said her research doesn’t touch on addiction so much as the mental health of teens based on smartphone use, she said there’s undeniable proof that screen time has a negative effect on developing minds, based on research that was published in November in the journal *Clinical Psychological Science*.

“I found that teens who spend five or more hours a day of screen time are 71 percent more likely to have risk factors” for mental health issues, such as depression, or thinking about suicide. That screen time is measured as that devoted to gaming, social media, or any other use of a device outside homework. And while Twenge’s research doesn’t indicate causation, it does show that screen time leads to unhappiness rather than the other way around.

That’s because there are some very significant neurological events happening when we interact with our screen. Anna Lembke is an assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the Stanford University Medical Center, and she’s studied addiction extensively, both substance abuse and technology. She said the way we absorb the cool blue glow of a screen is akin to the electricity a drug user may feel.

“Smartphone screens light up the same area of the brain as opioids and cannabis,” she told *The Daily Beast*. “The rewards pathways mediated by dopamine respond to screens in a very similar way to opioids.”

What makes adolescents especially vulnerable to the addictive nature of smartphones is that they are in a

crucially pliable point of their mental and physical growth. “They’re incredibly socially sensitive,” Lembke said of adolescents, classed as those first experiencing puberty through those at the end of the teenage years.

The need to fit in and the desire to be popular and gain social points mean that kids this age are especially vulnerable to falling for the “social media contagion effect,” the term Lembke uses to describe a child doing something just because a peer is doing it. And Lembke said that reasoning is simply logical in an adolescent’s brain.

“Adolescent brains are more vulnerable to risk taking, so the emotion centers of the brain drive behavior more than the future planning centers of the brain,” she said—which is why teens are impulsive enough to take risks without recognizing future consequences. Their brains are pliable because adolescence is a time when neurons undergo pruning, fundamentally altering the shape and structure of the brain from one of a child’s into that of an adult’s.

Online, that can be dangerous: It can lead to slut shaming when kids send and receive nude photos without thinking about ramifications, for example, or bullying on anonymous messaging apps like last summer’s sleeper hit Sarahah. Being turned on by peers can be devastating for a teen and in some extreme, tragic cases lead to suicide. Neuronal pruning can mean screens are used as a coping strategy, and tearing kids away from their screen can be difficult not only because it offers a sense of safety and information, but also because a kid may be addicted.

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HEADLINE	01/08 Android gaming apps tracking TV habits
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/android-gaming-apps-tracking-tv-viewing-habits/
GIST	<p>There are more than 250 Android gaming apps on Google Play Store that are using your smartphone’s microphone to record what you watch on TV – This means instead of your conversation these apps are focused on listening what you are watching on TV.</p> <p>According to a report published by The New York Times, these gaming apps are using a software developed by a California based company called Alphonso that collects TV-viewing data including shows, ads, and movies for advertising firms.</p> <p>The software allows apps to use the microphone on a device to identify audio signals from TV advertisement, collect and share the data with companies for targeted advertising. However what may worry some is the fact that once the apps are running in the background the software could detect audio even when the phone is in a pocket.</p> <p>According to Alphonso’s CEO Ashish Chordia, the company also worked with Shazam (now owned by Apple) to collect music-listening data as well as with movie studios to collect movie-viewing habits. At the same time, the company claims it does not record human speech and only gains access to devices’ microphones and locations if the user allows it.</p> <p>A look at Alphonso LinkedIn page the company claims that there are “hundreds of Fortune 500 brands and all major holding companies in the U.S. work with Alphonso to amplify their TV spend with digital and to reach targeted TV demographics across all screens.”</p> <p>“With automatic content recognition (ACR) technology embedded in tens of millions of smart TVs, TV chipsets, mobile apps, gaming consoles, streaming devices and OTT services, Alphonso understands what programming and advertising people are watching on TV,” explains Alphonso’s LinkedIn page.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 UK firms deluged w/cyberattacks 2017
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SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/uk-firms-deluged-with-cyberattacks/
GIST	<p>UK firms were hit by over 230,000 cyber-attacks each in 2017, with the majority targeting connected devices, according to new data from Beaming.</p> <p>The business ISP analyzed attacks on thousands of its customers in real-time and recorded on average 633 attempts each day to penetrate their corporate networks, amounting to 231,028 attempts over the course of the year per firm.</p> <p>That's up slightly on the 228,659 attacks per business spotted by the Hastings-based ISP in 2016.</p> <p>Some 70% of attacks targeted connected devices such as networked security cameras, according to the research.</p> <p>Internet of Things devices and endpoints are increasingly seen as a potential weakness in corporate security systems, exposing organizations to the risk of compromise.</p> <p>Managing director, Sonia Blizzard, explained that 2017 was the worst year yet for cyber threats targeting UK firms.</p> <p>"With most attacks targeting relatively simple devices connected to the Internet of Things it is possible many companies are already infected and don't know about it," she added.</p> <p>"Keeping anti-virus software up-to-date is a good first step, but it isn't enough to combat the growing threat. Businesses need to review their network perimeter regularly, monitor corporate systems for unusual activity and restrict access to personal email and file sharing applications in the workplace."</p>
	<p>Return to</p> <p>Top</p>

HEADLINE	01/08 Lawsuits hit Intel over CPU vulnerabilities
SOURCE	http://www.securityweek.com/lawsuits-filed-against-intel-over-cpu-vulnerabilities
GIST	<p>At least three class action lawsuits have been filed against Intel in the past days over the recently disclosed vulnerabilities that could allow malicious hackers to obtain potentially sensitive information from computers.</p> <p>The Meltdown and Spectre attack methods uncovered by several independent research teams work not only against Intel processors, but also against CPUs from AMD and ARM. Intel has been hit the hardest – even its stock went down after initial reports claimed only Intel processors were affected – but the company says media reports describing the design flaws are overblown.</p> <p>The lawsuits, all seeking class action status, have been filed in the Northern District of California, the Southern District of Indiana, and the District of Oregon, and they accuse Intel of violating state consumer protection laws. All complaints demand a jury trial.</p> <p>In California, Branstetter, Stranch & Jennings of Nashville and Doyle APC of San Diego filed a consumer fraud case, accusing Intel of misleading consumers about the performance and reliability of its processors by selling a product with “fatal” security flaws.</p> <p>The complaint filed in Indiana alleges that “Intel committed unfair and deceptive acts by representing that the Intel CPUs had performance, characteristics, or benefits which Intel knew or should reasonably have known they did not have.”</p> <p>The chip giant has also been accused of breaching warranties by selling defective CPUs that it's not willing to repair or replace free of charge. The Indiana lawsuit also claims the company was negligent in the manufacture and design of its processors.</p>

In Oregon, plaintiffs say they are entitled to restitution based on Intel’s “intentional and knowing failures to disclose material defects.” The complaint claims plaintiffs would have acquired a CPU from an Intel competitor had they known about the flaws and the fact that they will end up with a slower product.

The Meltdown and Spectre attacks allow malicious applications to bypass memory isolation mechanisms and access potentially sensitive data, including passwords, photos, documents, emails, and data from instant messaging apps. The bugs that make these attacks possible are said to date back 20 years.

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HEADLINE	01/08 Western Digital storage devices backdoor
SOURCE	http://www.securityweek.com/hardcoded-backdoor-found-western-digital-storage-devices
GIST	<p>Firmware updates released by Western Digital for its MyCloud family of devices address a series of security issues, including a hardcoded backdoor admin account.</p> <p>The vulnerabilities were found in WDMyCloud firmware prior to version 2.30.165 and are said to affect devices such as MyCloud, MyCloudMirror, My Cloud Gen 2, My Cloud PR2100, My Cloud PR4100, My Cloud EX2 Ultra, My Cloud EX2, My Cloud EX4, My Cloud EX2100, My Cloud EX4100, My Cloud DL2100, and My Cloud DL4100.</p> <p>Discovered by GulfTech security researcher James Bercegay, the security flaws could be exploited to achieve remote root code execution on the affected WD My Cloud personal cloud storage units (the device is currently the best-selling NAS (network attached storage) device on Amazon).</p> <p>One of the most important security issues the researcher found was an unrestricted file upload vulnerability created by the “misuse and misunderstanding of the PHP gethostbyaddr() function,” the researcher says.</p> <p>The vulnerable code in said file allows an attacker to define a remote auth server, which could be an attacker-controlled server. The result should fail if an invalid host is defined, but a series of bugs result in checks being skipped, eventually allowing an attacker to abuse the issue “to upload any file to the server that they want.”</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Facial recognition fooling glasses
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/researchers-develop-ai-fooling-glasses/article/735597/
GIST	<p>Researchers at Carnegie Mellon University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill developed a technique to fool facial recognition algorithms including those used at Airports.</p> <p>Using seemingly inconspicuous glasses, a user can trick the algorithm into producing an inaccurate reading of a person's face prompting researchers to present their findings to the Transportation Security Administration and recommend the agency require people to remove glasses and jewelry to prevent the attack from being carried out, according to their study.</p> <p>Researchers developed five pairs of adversarial generative nets (AGN) eyeglasses that could be used by 90 percent of the population to evade detection. Furthermore, researchers claim these attacks can be scaled up.</p> <p>The glasses are able to deceive the software by making the texture in the glasses as close to possible as real designs found online and then were subjected to user scrutiny to determine whether or not the glasses would raise alarm under normal wear.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 DHS report: botnets, automated threats
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/vulnerabilities---threats/us-gov-outlines-steps-to-fight-botnets-automated-threats/d/d-id/1330763
GIST	<p>The US Departments of Commerce and Homeland Security have published a report focused on the challenges and steps toward fighting botnets and other automated, distributed threats, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) announced last week.</p> <p>Their report is a response to Executive Order 13800, Strengthening the Cybersecurity of Federal Networks and Critical Infrastructure. The EO directed the Secretaries of Commerce and Homeland Security to "lead an open and transparent process to identify and promote action by the appropriate stakeholders" in order to reduce automated and distributed cyberattacks.</p> <p>In a joint effort, the two departments drafted the opportunities and challenges in reducing the threat of automated attacks. Key themes of their report include acknowledging automated attacks are a global problem, effective tools exist but are not widely used, education and awareness is needed, and market incentives are misaligned.</p> <p>They also created a list of goals to reduce the threat. These include identifying a clear path toward a secure tech marketplace, promoting infrastructure innovation to adapt to evolving threats, and promoting network innovation to prevent and detect threats.</p>
Return to Top	https://csrc.nist.gov/publications/detail/white-paper/2018/01/05/enhancing-resilience-against-botnets--report-to-the-president/draft

HEADLINE	01/08 Fileless malware campaign at Olympics
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/vulnerabilities---threats/emailed-cyberattack-targets-2018-pyeongchang-olympics/d/d-id/1330768
GIST	<p>A fileless malware campaign was discovered targeting organizations associated with the upcoming 2018 winter Olympics being held in Pyeongchang, South Korea, report analysts at McAfee Advanced Threat Research. An unknown nation-state attacker is likely responsible.</p> <p>The campaign's primary target was icehockey@pyeongchang2018.com with 337 South Korean organizations included on the BCC line. Most targets had some involvement in the Olympics, either in providing infrastructure or playing another supporting role.</p> <p>This attack arrived as a spearphishing email containing a malicious Word attachment with the original file name "Organized by Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Pyeongchang Winter Olympics" (translated from Korean). Emails began on Dec. 22, 2017 with the most recent activity appearing on Dec. 28, when messages were sent from an IP address in Singapore.</p> <p>Emails were disguised to appear to be from South Korea's National Counter-Terrorism Center (NCTC). At the time, the NCTC was conducting physical anti-terror drills to prep for the Olympics, which suggests the email is legitimate and increases the odds people will open it.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Claim: NKorea crypto mining malware
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/new-cryptocurrency-mining-malware-has-links-to-north-korea/d/d-id/1330773
GIST	A security vendor has found another clue that North Korea may be turning to illegal cryptocurrency mining as a way to bring cash into the nation's economy amid tightening international sanctions.

AlienVault on Monday said it had recently discovered malware that is designed to stealthily install a miner for Monero, a Bitcoin-like cryptocurrency, on end-user systems and to send any mined coins to the Kim Il Sung University (KSU) in Pyongyang.

The malicious installer appears to have been created just before Christmas 2017 and is designed to install xmrig, an open source miner for Monero.

The link to the university itself doesn't appear to be working, however, meaning the software cannot send any mined coins back to its authors. The malware itself appears pretty basic, and the inclusion of the KSU server in the code could simply be a false flag to trick security researchers. Even so, the malware is consistent with previous similar campaigns tied to North Korea, AlienVault said.

"Cryptocurrencies could provide a financial lifeline to a country hit hard by sanctions," the vendor said. "Therefore it's not surprising that universities in North Korea have shown a clear interest in cryptocurrencies."

Crypto mining is legitimate activity. Some, like Coinhive, even distribute miners to website operators so users can run it in their browsers in exchange for an ad-free experience. In recent years, though, cybercriminals have increasingly begun hijacking computers in order to mine cryptocurrency for illegal profit.

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HEADLINE	01/08 Meltdown, Spectre just the beginning
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/cloud/meltdown-spectre-likely-just-scratch-the-surface-of-microprocessor-vulnerabilities/d/d-id/1330774
GIST	<p>The dust has yet to settle on the recent revelation of critical vulnerabilities in microprocessors that most modern computers worldwide, but it's already troublingly clear that fixing the problem isn't simply a matter of applying the latest vendor security updates.</p> <p>Last week's disclosure by researchers from Google's Project Zero team and research teams from academia of the vulnerabilities in most Intel processors and in some AMD and ARM processors have left organizations scrambling to gather and track security updates available for their firmware, operating systems, and browsers. Given that operating system patches can incur significant performance hits – some experts are estimating up to 30% degradation for Linux and Windows platforms – there's a lot at stake in fixing the flaws.</p> <p>The so-called Meltdown and Spectre hardware vulnerabilities allow for so-called side-channel attacks: in the case of Meltdown, that means sensitive information in the kernel memory is at risk of being accessed nefariously, and for Spectre, a user application could read the kernel memory as well as that of another application. So an attacker could read sensitive system memory, which could contain passwords, encryption keys, and emails – information that could be used to help craft a local attack.</p> <p>Meltdown and Spectre are especially vexing because the attacks take advantage of the design of the hardware itself, the so-called "out-of-order execution" performance feature in most modern processors that runs operations out of order to streamline and speed up processing. The timing differences of the operations, for example, can leak sensitive information from the kernel, and an attacker could use that information to then attack the system via another exploit.</p> <p>The irony is that a feature meant to boost processor performance for now can only be fixed with software updates that can in some cases deplete performance. And experts say this pervasive security weakness not only has a long tail but is likely only the tip of the iceberg for hardware vulnerabilities yet to be unearthed.</p> <p>"I would be surprised if these particular issues were the only ones of this class of problems. Just digging a little bit, there appears to be a lot of space for" other microprocessor issues like this, says Dino Dai Zovi, a</p>

veteran security researcher and co-founder and CTO at Capsule8.

Patching is the only option to mitigate risk of a Meltdown or Spectre attack, but it's still not a perfect solution. Given that the basic design flaw lies in the microprocessor hardware, the software updates merely provide software mitigations for the attack. So there's still the chance the updates ultimately can be bypassed by an attacker, for example.

The US-CERT reiterated those concerns late last week in its Vulnerability Guidance alert: "Due to the fact that the vulnerability exists in CPU architecture rather than in software, patching may not fully address these vulnerabilities in all cases," the US Department of Homeland Security post said of the flaws, CVE-2017-5753, CVE-2017-5715, and CVE-2017-5754.

The security updates and patches are mainly workarounds and mitigations: a real fix would require a hardware do-over in the microprocessors, experts say. "In general, we think you have to wait until the new generation of processors will be introduced," says Max Goryachy, security researcher at Positive Technologies, which late last year discovered a buffer overflow Intel's chip firmware can be abused to take control of a machine even when it's powered down.

While future-generation chips may address the flaws, for existing systems it's all about patching. Yet, not all systems will get patched.

"What worries me," says Chris Pierson, CEO of Binary Sun Cyber Risk Advisors, is that "the wholesale underlying infrastructure vulnerabilities are so deep-seeded that they will remain with us for years to come."

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HEADLINE	01/08 What happens bitcoin when you die?
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/what-happens-to-your-digital-bitcoins-if-you-die/
GIST	<p>What happens to your digital assets when you die? There's no single answer to that question. Digital assets cover a wide range of items, from Facebook and LinkedIn accounts to online bank accounts -- and cryptocurrencies like bitcoin.</p> <p>Bitcoin offers a unique challenge upon death. Since bitcoins only exist in virtual form and are encrypted by their very nature, they are extremely secure. Each bitcoin owner has a private password, or key, that allows secure access to the bitcoins stored in their digital wallet. Unfortunately, there is no method of retrieving this private key for a potential heir because there is no central authority that tracks the private keys.</p> <p>If you pass away without leaving anyone the private key, your bitcoins effectively become inaccessible to anyone. Similarly, if you leave your private key behind without a clear explanation of what it is and how to use it, your bitcoins are likely to stay lost. It's similar to a key to a safety deposit box without any indicator of where the box is located -- except that a bank will eventually clear out a safety deposit box to reclaim the space.</p> <p>Nobody would ever "clear out" old bitcoins to retain space if they could, because there's no incentive to do so. The genius of bitcoin is that the algorithm that creates them inherently limits the supply -- so when bitcoins are lost, the remaining supply in circulation become a bit more valuable through scarcity.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 AI in workplace sinking wages?
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ai-in-workplace-sinking-wages/
GIST	Artificial intelligence can mean everything from personal digital assistants like Amazon's (AMZN) Echo

to the program that checks you into a doctor's office, or even a nail salon, before you speak to a human. These features are becoming increasingly ubiquitous in U.S. cities as offices automate many functions. A recent report from consultant McKinsey & Co. predicted about half of all current work activities can be adapted and automated, today.

Now, a new report of 10 major U.S. metropolitan areas from job search site Glassdoor showed the shift is underway as wages slip for jobs where "automation and AI are taking hold."

The survey, released monthly, found pay for loan officers fell 6.1 percent in December compared with a year earlier, while office manager pay sank 1.1 percent and machine operators lost 1.9 percent as automation takes root even more widely in manufacturing.

"In our pay data, when we look at jobs that are seeing weak pay growth, and sometimes the negative pay growth, it's clear that some of those professions have a weak labor market because some of those jobs are being done now by software," Glassdoor Chief Economist Andrew Chamberlain said in an interview.

It's not so much that all of one job is being replaced, it's that portions of some traditional jobs are being automated, Chamberlain said. Electronic tablet check-in at all kinds of offices, for example, is replacing one function of the administrative assistant. More people now can apply for loans online, going through the bulk of the process before ever actually speaking to a human.

"So far we really haven't seen large-scale displacement of people actually becoming fully unemployed because their job has been fully replaced by artificial intelligence," Chamberlain noted.

It's that the jobs themselves are changing: New supervisory skills are needed to oversee humans and the software-driven tasks that now do some portion of their work, and workers who have those skills are in demand. A recent Gartner report predicted AI will create more jobs than it eliminates by 2020 and generate 2 million new net jobs in 2025.

But for now, the transition may be cutting into wages as job descriptions and skills needed to do those jobs change.

As many as one-third of U.S. workers may need to learn new skills and find new occupations by 2030, the McKinsey report estimated. Transitional remedies will be needed, and the authors cite measures being explored globally, such as basic universal income and extensive job training.

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HEADLINE	01/09 Claim: top online BA, grad programs
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2018/01/09/americas-top-online-bachelors-and-graduate-programs-named-u-s-news/1014658001/
GIST	<p>If you'd rather scroll a web page than stroll a campus quad, perhaps you should pick up your next bachelor's at Ohio State University. The university's main campus in Columbus topped U.S. News & World Report's 2018 Best Online Programs rankings for the first time.</p> <p>If you're thinking an online MBA, Temple University reigns again in the rankings for a fourth straight year. And engineering? Look to the Ivy League: Columbia University jumped two spots to take top honors.</p> <p>U.S. News analyzed nearly 1,500 programs for the rankings, looking at faculty credentials, technology and graduates' average debt among other factors to size up the top programs for bachelor's degrees as well as popular graduate degrees fields as varied as business, education, nursing and criminal justice.</p> <p>For the sixth year in a row, the University of Southern California sits atop the computer information technology rankings. Clemson University in South Carolina topped the list for education, while Chicago's</p>

St. Xavier took first in nursing.

Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas was named top criminal justice program. Villanova University topped the list for non-MBA business degrees.

Only regionally accredited programs offered "primarily online" were considered, per U.S. News.

See the top picks for U.S. News' Best Online Programs Rankings below:

Bachelor's programs

1. Ohio State University—Columbus
2. Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (Fla.) (tie)
2. Temple University (Pa.) (tie)

MBA

1. Temple University (Pa.)
2. Carnegie Mellon University (Pa.) (tie)
2. Indiana University — Bloomington (tie)

Business, non-MBA

1. Villanova University (Pa.)
2. Arizona State University (tie)
2. Indiana University — Bloomington (tie)

Computer Information Technology

1. University of Southern California
2. New York University (tie)
2. Virginia Tech (tie)

Education

1. Clemson University (S.C.)
2. Creighton University (Neb.) (tie)
2. University of Florida (tie)

Engineering

1. Columbia University (N.Y.)
2. University of California — Los Angeles (tie)
2. University of Southern California (tie)

Nursing

1. St. Xavier University (Ill.)
2. Ohio State University
3. Medical University of South Carolina

Criminal Justice

1. Sam Houston State University (Texas)
2. Boston University
3. University of California — Irvine (tie)
3. University of Nebraska — Omaha (tie)

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Learn more about the rankings' [methodologies](#), and see the [full rankings at U.S. News](#)

HEADLINE 01/08 Crypto website changes data

SOURCE <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-crypto-website-changes-its-data-and-100-billion-in-market-value-vanishes-1515443100>

GIST	<p>Prices for some of the most popular cryptocurrencies dropped sharply Monday. One apparent reason: an adjustment from a popular website on its digital-currency price quotes.</p> <p>A website called coinmarketcap.com on Monday removed data from some South Korean exchanges from its price quotes for a range of virtual currencies including bitcoin, Ethereum and Ripple's XRP. The move followed a South Korean government crackdown on cryptocurrencies.</p> <p>The move by coinmarketcap caused some amount of chaos when prices across the board suddenly plunged. In mid-Monday trading, XRP had fallen 26% over the past 24 hours, Bitcoin Cash was down 18%, and litecoin was down 12%. Of the top 40 cryptocurrencies, 31 were down, including bitcoin and Ethereum.</p> <p>A representative of the website confirmed the moves in an email to The Wall Street Journal, citing "extreme price discrepancy" among South Korean exchanges. The company added in a tweet Monday afternoon that it "excluded some Korean exchanges in price calculations due to the extreme divergence in prices from the rest of the world and limited arbitrage opportunity."</p> <p>Coinmarketcap has become one of the most popular destinations for price quotes as the sector surged last year. According to Amazon's web-ranking service, coinmarketcap is currently the 154th most popular website in the world, in the same ballpark as Chinese retail giant Alibaba.com .</p> <p>The website's rejiggered prices led to a flip in market-value rankings on the site. Ethereum, with a \$109 billion total market valuation, moved into second place, the spot previously occupied by XRP, which fell to third place with a \$97 billion market value. Bitcoin remained number one, with a \$255 billion market value.</p> <p>More than \$100 billion of the sector's total market value was erased over the last 24 hours, according to the site. On Sunday, it stood at \$835 billion. On Monday, it fell to as low as \$683 billion, and lately was at \$722 billion.</p> <p>Before Monday, for example, prices for XRP on coinmarketcap were quoted as high as \$3.84 on Jan. 4. About 25% of XRP's trading volume came from the Seoul-based online exchange Bithumb, according to coinmarketcap.</p> <p>On Monday, without the Korean-exchange data, the XRP price fell to about \$2.50, and at one point on coinmarketcap.com, fell below \$2.10. On Ripple's website, the company quoted XRP at \$2.41, with its source being a weighted average of prices on the U.K. exchange Bitstamp.</p> <p>In 2017, South Korea and Japan became major markets for bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies, at the same time that China was clamping down on the sector. The flood of new money and enthusiasm in these countries led to price quotes that were higher, sometimes by hundreds of dollars, than on exchanges elsewhere. In Korea, this gap was nicknamed the "kimchi premium."</p> <p>In Japan, authorities embraced the sector, implementing rules for proper trading of bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies. In South Korea, though, the government has been more concerned with the potential for criminal activity tied to cryptocurrencies, and even retail investor losses amid a global mania and what many fear is a bubble in the sector.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	01/08 Philippines reaches out to Indonesia
SOURCE	https://www.shephardmedia.com/news/defence-notes/philippines-reaches-out-indonesia-isis-regroups/

GIST	<p>As ISIS-inspired terror groups begin to recruit online in Southeast Asia, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has sought the help of Indonesia to implement an improved maritime security plan and to reintroduce Islamic values to Mindanao to counter the rise of extremism.</p> <p>Duterte arranged an exploratory meeting with Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi in Davao after receiving reports that foreign and local terrorists continue to enter and exit the country despite tightened Indonesia-Philippine-Malaysia maritime patrols.</p> <p>Indonesia's MoD earlier provided intelligence that around 1,200 ISIS-inspired militants are operating throughout the Philippines, while a think tank in Singapore reported that a hidden place in the southern Philippines is operating a training centre for new recruits.</p> <p>While Duterte's administration employed newly acquired China-made rifles, Israeli-built artillery and military aircraft to end last year's siege of Marawi, the government realised that military equipment needs to be augmented by Islamic values education.</p> <p>Foreign Affairs Minister Allan Peter Cayetano said Indonesia is one model for the kind of Islamic education that the Philippines and Southeast Asia can look at to counter the rise of extremism.</p> <p>Three extremist groups in the southern Philippines pledged allegiance to ISIS: the Abu Sayyaf Group, Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and Maute militant group.</p> <p>These groups raided Marawi last year and declared jihad against Philippine security forces. The government sent 4,000 soldiers to contain the heavily armed extremists in the five-month battle.</p> <p>More than a hundred soldiers plus at least 800 terrorists died in the conflict that displaced 350,000 civilians. The Philippines said it needs at least \$1 billion to rehabilitate Marawi after the war.</p> <p>The Indonesia-Philippine meeting occurred after the Philippine government received new information that extremist groups are planning another siege in one of Mindanao's four major cities.</p> <p>While military officers claimed a huge victory by killing ISIS leader for Southeast Asia Isnilon Hapilon, the Philippine defence department warned that ISIS ideology in the Philippines might linger.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Jordan: arrests in foiled ISIS attack plot
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-jordan-security-militants/jordan-says-arrests-17-in-foiled-islamic-state-attack-plot-state-media-idUSKBN1EX11I
GIST	<p>AMMAN (Reuters) - Jordan said on Monday it had foiled an Islamic State plot that included plans for a series of attacks last November on security installations, shopping malls and moderate religious figures, state media reported.</p> <p>State news agency Petra said the country's intelligence department had arrested 17 members of a cell and confiscated weapons and explosives that the militant group had planned to use in several operations.</p> <p>"The members of the cell had planned to execute a number of terrorist attacks simultaneously to destabilise national security and sow chaos and terror among civilians," the statement said.</p> <p>A security source said that members of the cell had been under surveillance from the start when they began to survey high profile civilian and military potential targets.</p> <p>Security forces have been extra vigilant in recent months with warnings that sympathisers of Islamic State could launch revenge attacks after the militants were driven out of most of the territory they once controlled in Syria and Iraq.</p>

	<p>The detainees, who were all from the working class city of Zarqa east of the capital, were being interrogated before being put on trial in a military court, the authorities said without giving a date.</p> <p>The impoverished city of Zarqa, a traditional hotbed of fundamentalist jihadists, has seen dozens of youths influenced by hardline Islamist ideology joining radical groups in Iraq and Syria in recent years, according to security sources.</p> <p>The statement said the cell had planned to wage a series of bank robberies and car thefts to get financing, and manufactured homemade explosives from material bought from local markets.</p> <p>Militants from al Qaeda and other radical jihadist groups have long targeted the U.S.-allied kingdom and dozens of militants are currently serving long prison terms.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/09 Afghan heroin trade: US-UK failure
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/jan/09/how-the-heroin-trade-explains-the-us-uk-failure-in-afghanistan
GIST	<p>After fighting the longest war in its history, the US stands at the brink of defeat in Afghanistan. How could this be possible? How could the world's sole superpower have battled continuously for more than 16 years – deploying more than 100,000 troops at the conflict's peak, sacrificing the lives of nearly 2,300 soldiers, spending more than \$1tn (£740bn) on its military operations, lavishing a record \$100bn more on “nation-building”, helping fund and train an army of 350,000 Afghan allies – and still not be able to pacify one of the world's most impoverished nations? So dismal is the prospect of stability in Afghanistan that, in 2016, the Obama White House cancelled a planned withdrawal of its forces, ordering more than 8,000 troops to remain in the country indefinitely.</p> <p>In the American failure lies a paradox: Washington's massive military juggernaut has been stopped in its steel tracks by a small pink flower – the opium poppy. Throughout its three decades in Afghanistan, Washington's military operations have succeeded only when they fit reasonably comfortably into central Asia's illicit traffic in opium – and suffered when they failed to complement it.</p> <p>It was during the cold war that the US first intervened in Afghanistan, backing Muslim militants who were fighting to expel the Soviet Red Army. In December 1979, the Soviets occupied Kabul in order to shore up their failing client regime; Washington, still wounded by the fall of Saigon four years earlier, decided to give Moscow its “own Vietnam” by backing the Islamic resistance. For the next 10 years, the CIA would provide the mujahideen guerrillas with an estimated \$3bn in arms. These funds, along with an expanding opium harvest, would sustain the Afghan resistance for the decade it would take to force a Soviet withdrawal. One reason the US strategy succeeded was that the surrogate war launched by the CIA did not disrupt the way its Afghan allies used the country's swelling drug traffic to sustain their decade-long struggle.</p> <p>Despite almost continuous combat since the invasion of October 2001, pacification efforts have failed to curtail the Taliban insurgency, largely because the US simply could not control the swelling surplus from the country's heroin trade. Its opium production surged from around 180 tonnes in 2001 to more than 3,000 tonnes a year after the invasion, and to more than 8,000 by 2007. Every spring, the opium harvest fills the Taliban's coffers once again, funding wages for a new crop of guerrilla fighters.</p> <p>At each stage in its tragic, tumultuous history over the past 40 years – the covert war of the 1980s, the civil war of the 90s and its post-2001 occupation – opium has played a central role in shaping the country's destiny. In one of history's bitter ironies, Afghanistan's unique ecology converged with American military technology to transform this remote, landlocked nation into the world's first true narco-state – a country where illicit drugs dominate the economy, define political choices and determine the fate of foreign interventions.</p>

During the 1980s, the CIA's secret war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan helped transform the Afghani-Pakistani borderlands into a launchpad for the global heroin trade. "In the tribal area," the US state department reported in 1986, "there is no police force. There are no courts. There is no taxation. No weapon is illegal ... Hashish and opium are often on display." By then, the process of guerrilla mobilisation to fight the Soviet occupation was long under way. Instead of forming its own coalition of resistance leaders, the CIA had relied on Pakistan's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI) and its Afghan clients, who soon became key players in the burgeoning cross-border opium traffic.

The CIA looked the other way while Afghanistan's opium production grew from about 100 tonnes annually in the 1970s to 2,000 tonnes by 1991. In 1979 and 1980, just as the CIA effort was beginning to ramp up, a network of heroin laboratories opened along the Afghan-Pakistan frontier. That region soon became the world's largest heroin producer. By 1984, it supplied a staggering 60% of the US market and 80% of the European. Inside Pakistan, the number of heroin addicts surged from near zero (yes, zero) in 1979 to 5,000 in 1980, and 1.3 million by 1985 – a rate of addiction so high the UN termed it "particularly shocking".

According to a 1986 state department report, opium "is an ideal crop in a war-torn country since it requires little capital investment, is fast growing and is easily transported and traded". Moreover, Afghanistan's climate was well suited to growing poppies. As relentless warfare between CIA and Soviet surrogates took its toll, Afghan farmers began to turn to opium "in desperation", since it produced "high profits" that could cover rising food prices. At the same time, the state department reported that resistance elements took up opium production and trafficking "to provide staples for [the] population under their control and to fund weapons purchases".

As the mujahideen guerrillas gained ground against the Soviet occupation and began to create liberated zones inside Afghanistan in the early 1980s, the resistance helped fund its operations by collecting taxes from peasants who grew the lucrative opium poppies, particularly in the fertile Helmand valley. Caravans carrying CIA arms into that region for the resistance often returned to Pakistan loaded down with opium – sometimes, reported the New York Times, "with the assent of Pakistani or American intelligence officers who supported the resistance".

Charles Cogan, a former director of the CIA's Afghan operation, later spoke frankly about the agency's choices. "Our main mission was to do as much damage as possible to the Soviets," he told an interviewer in 1995. "We didn't really have the resources or the time to devote to an investigation of the drug trade. I don't think that we need to apologise for this ... There was fallout in term of drugs, yes. But the main objective was accomplished. The Soviets left Afghanistan."

Over the longer term, the US intervention produced a black hole of geopolitical instability that would never again be sealed or healed. Afghanistan could not readily recover from the unprecedented devastation it suffered in the years of the first American intervention. As the Soviet-Afghan war wound down between 1989 and 1992, the Washington-led alliance essentially abandoned the country, failing either to sponsor a peace settlement or finance reconstruction.

While Washington turned away from Afghanistan to other foreign policy hotspots in Africa and the Persian Gulf, a vicious civil war broke out in a country that had already suffered, between 1979 and 1989, some 1.5 million dead, about 10% of the country's population. During the years of civil strife among the many well-armed warlords the CIA had left primed to fight for power, Afghan farmers raised the only crop that ensured instant profits: the opium poppy. Having multiplied twentyfold during the covert-war era of the 1980s, the opium harvest would more than double again during the civil war of the 1990s.

In this period of turmoil, opium's ascent is best understood as a response to severe damage from two decades of destructive warfare. With the return of some three million refugees to a war-ravaged land, the opium fields were an employment godsend, requiring nine times as many labourers to cultivate as wheat, the country's traditional staple. In addition, only opium merchants were capable of accumulating capital rapidly enough to be able to provide poor poppy farmers with much-needed cash advances, which often

provided more than half their annual income. That credit would prove critical to the survival of many impoverished villagers.

In the civil war's first phase, from 1992 to 1994, ruthless local warlords combined arms and opium in a countrywide struggle for power. Later, Pakistan threw its backing behind a newly arisen Pashtun force, the Taliban. After seizing Kabul in 1996 and taking control of much of the country, the Taliban regime encouraged local opium cultivation, offering government protection to the export trade and collecting much-needed taxes on both the opium harvested and the heroin manufactured. UN opium surveys showed that, during the Taliban's first three years in power, Afghanistan's opium crop accounted for 75% of world production.

In July 2000, however, as a devastating drought entered its second year and hunger spread across Afghanistan, the Taliban government suddenly ordered a ban on all opium cultivation, in an apparent appeal for international acceptance. A subsequent UN crop survey of 10,030 villages found that this prohibition had reduced the harvest by 94%.

Three months later, in September 2000, the Taliban sent a delegation to UN headquarters in New York to trade upon the country's continuing drug prohibition in a bid for diplomatic recognition. Instead, the UN imposed new sanctions on the regime for protecting Osama bin Laden. The US, on the other hand, actually rewarded the Taliban with \$43m in humanitarian aid, even as it seconded UN criticism over Bin Laden. Announcing this aid in May 2001, secretary of state Colin Powell praised "the ban on poppy cultivation, a decision by the Taliban that we welcome", but still urged the regime to end "their support for terrorism; their violation of internationally recognised human rights standards, especially their treatment of women and girls".

After largely ignoring Afghanistan for a decade, Washington "rediscovered" the country in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In October 2001, the US began bombing the country, and then, with the support of British forces, launched an invasion spearheaded by local warlords. The Taliban regime collapsed with a speed that surprised many government officials. In retrospect, it seems likely that its opium prohibition was a crucial factor.

To an extent not generally appreciated, Afghanistan had, for two full decades, devoted a growing share of its resources – capital, land, water and labour – to the production of opium and heroin. By the time the Taliban banned cultivation, its agriculture had become little more than an opium monocrop. The drug trade accounted for most of its tax revenues, much of its export income, and a significant share of its employment.

The Taliban's sudden opium eradication proved to be an act of economic suicide that brought an already weakened society to the brink of collapse. A 2001 UN survey found that the ban had "resulted in a severe loss of income for an estimated 3.3 million people", about 15% of the population. In this context, it became, according to the UN, "easier for western military forces to persuade rural elites and the population to rebel against the regime".

In little more than a month, the lethal US bombing campaign, combined with ground attacks by its warlord allies, smashed the Taliban's weakened defenses. But the longer-term US strategy would plant the seeds, quite literally, for the Taliban's surprising revival just four years later.

While the American bombing campaign raged throughout October 2001, the CIA shipped \$70m in cash into the country to mobilise its old cold war coalition of tribal warlords for the fight against the Taliban, an expenditure President George W Bush would later hail as one of history's biggest "bargains". To capture Kabul and other key cities, the CIA put its money behind the leaders of the Northern Alliance, an ethnic Tajik force that had fought the Soviets in the 1980s and then resisted the Taliban government in the 1990s. They, in turn, had long dominated the drug traffic in the area of north-east Afghanistan that they controlled during the Taliban years. The CIA also turned to a group of rising Pashtun warlords along the Pakistan border who had been active as drug smugglers in the south-eastern part of the country. As a result, when the Taliban collapsed, the groundwork had already been laid for the resumption of opium cultivation and

the drug trade on a major scale.

Once Kabul and the provincial capitals were taken, the CIA quickly ceded operational control to allied military forces and civilian officials. In the years to come, those forces' inept drug-suppression programmes would cede the heroin traffic's growing profits first to the warlords and, in later years, largely to Taliban guerrillas. In a development without historical precedent, illicit drugs would be responsible for 62% of the country's 2003 gross domestic product (GDP).

But for the first few years of the occupation, according to a 2007 New York Times report, defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld reportedly "dismissed growing signs that drug money was being funnelled to the Taliban", while the CIA and the military "turned a blind eye to drug-related activities by prominent warlords".

In late 2004, after nearly two years of outsourcing opium control to its British allies and police training to the Germans, the White House was suddenly confronted with troubling CIA intelligence suggesting that the escalating drug trade was fuelling a revival of the Taliban. Backed by George W Bush, secretary of state Colin Powell then urged a forceful counter-narcotics strategy for parts of rural Afghanistan, including the same kind of aggressive aerial defoliation then being used against Colombia's illicit coca crop. But the US ambassador to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, resisted this approach, seconded by his local ally Ashraf Ghani, then the country's finance minister (and, since 2014, its president), who warned that such an eradication program would mean "widespread impoverishment" in the country, without \$20bn in foreign aid to create a "genuine alternative livelihood". As a compromise, Washington came to rely on private contractors such as DynCorp to train Afghan teams to eradicate drugs. By 2005, however, that effort had, according to New York Times correspondent Carlotta Gall, already become "something of a joke".

By 2007, the UN's Afghanistan Opium Survey found that the country's then-record opium harvest of approximately 8,200 tonnes provided 93% of the world's illicit heroin supply. Significantly, the UN stated that Taliban guerrillas have "started to extract from the drug economy resources for arms, logistics, and militia pay". In 2008, the rebels reportedly collected \$425m in "taxes" levied on the opium traffic, and with every harvest they made enough funds to recruit a new crop of young fighters from the villages. Each of those prospective guerrillas could count on monthly payments of \$300 – far above the wages they would have made as agricultural laborers.

To contain the spreading insurgency, Washington decided to commit 40,000 more US combat troops to Afghanistan in mid-2008, raising allied forces to 70,000. Recognising the crucial role of opium revenues in Taliban recruitment, the allied command was also fielding specialist teams that used development aid to encourage drug-suppression efforts in poppy-rich provinces. It was a fortuitous moment. That record harvest in 2007 had created an opium surplus that depressed prices, while simultaneous food shortages made wheat a competitive crop. As farmers used foreign aid to plant food crops in key areas of Helmand and Nangarhar provinces, the country's poppy cultivation slipped from a record 200,000 hectares (494,000 acres) in 2007 to just 123,000 two years later – still sufficient, however, to sustain the Taliban. Meanwhile, inept and heavy-handed attempts to suppress the drug trade only ended up increasing opposition to the US and its allies.

By 2009, the guerrillas were expanding so rapidly that the new Obama administration opted for a "surge" of US troop strength to 102,000 in a bid to cripple the Taliban. After months of rising deployments, President Obama's big breakthrough strategy was officially launched in the darkness before dawn on 13 February 2010, at Marja, a remote market town in Helmand province. As waves of helicopters descended on its outskirts spitting up clouds of dust, hundreds of marines sprinted through fields of sprouting opium poppies toward the village's mud-walled compounds. Though their targets were the local Taliban guerrillas, the marines were in fact occupying one of the capitals of the global heroin trade.

A week later, Gen Stanley McChrystal choppered into town with Karim Khalili, Afghanistan's vice-president. They were there for the media rollout of new-look counter-insurgency tactics that were, the general told reporters, certain to pacify villages such as Marja. The local opium traders, however, had other ideas. "If they come with tractors," one Afghan widow announced to a chorus of supportive shouts

from her fellow farmers, “they will have to roll over me and kill me before they can kill my poppy”. Speaking by satellite telephone from the region’s opium fields, one US embassy official told me: “You can’t win this war without taking on drug production in Helmand province.”

By attacking the guerrillas but failing to eradicate the opium harvest that funded new insurgents every spring, Obama’s surge soon faltered. Amid the rapid drawdown of allied forces to meet Obama’s politically determined deadline of December 2014 for “ending” all combat operations, a marked reduction in air operations allowed the Taliban to launch mass-formation offensives, which killed record numbers of Afghan army troops and police.

At the time, John Sopko, the special inspector for Afghanistan, offered a telling explanation for the Taliban’s survival. Despite the expenditure of a staggering \$7.6bn on “drug eradication” programs during the previous decade, he concluded that, “by every conceivable metric, we’ve failed. Production and cultivation are up, interdiction and eradication are down, financial support to the insurgency is up, and addiction and abuse are at unprecedented levels in Afghanistan”.

As the 2014 opium crop was harvested, fresh UN figures suggested that production levels were approaching the country’s 2007 high. In May 2015, having watched this flood of drugs enter the global market as US counter-narcotics spending climbed to \$8.4bn, Sopko tried to translate these developments into a comprehensible all-American image. “Afghanistan,” he said, “has roughly 500,000 acres, or about 780 square miles, devoted to growing opium poppy. That’s equivalent to more than 400,000 US football fields – including the end zones”.

During Afghanistan’s 2015 fighting season, the Taliban decisively seized the combat initiative, and opium seemed ever more deeply embedded in its operations. In October 2015, the UN released a map showing that the Taliban had “high” or “extreme” control in more than half the country’s rural districts. Within a month, the Taliban unleashed offensives countrywide that were aimed at seizing and holding territory. Not surprisingly, the strongest attacks came in the poppy heartland of Helmand province, where half the country’s opium crop was then grown.

In 2016, 15 years after Afghanistan was “liberated”, and in a significant reversal of the Obama administration’s drawdown policies, Washington launched a mini-surge by “hundreds” of new US troops into Helmand province to deny insurgents the “economic prize” of the world’s most productive poppy fields. Despite support from US airpower and 700 special-operations troops, in February and March 2016 embattled Afghan government forces retreated from two more districts, leaving the Taliban largely in control of 10 of the province’s 14 districts.

With its forces demoralised and the Taliban fielding aggressive fighters equipped with night-vision and sophisticated weapons, US airstrikes became the Afghan government’s last, tenuous line of defence. And in a tacit admission of failure, the Obama administration ended its planned withdrawal in June 2016, allowing US forces to move beyond advising and rejoin actual combat, and announcing, a month later, that 8,400 troops would remain there for the foreseeable future.

In Helmand and other strategic provinces, the Afghan army seemed to be losing a war that was now driven – in ways that eluded most observers – by a battle for control of the country’s opium profits. In Helmand province, both Taliban rebels and provincial officials are locked in a struggle for control of the lucrative drug traffic. “Afghan government officials have become directly involved in the opium trade”, the New York Times reported in February 2016. In so doing, they expanded “their competition with the Taliban ... into a struggle for control of the drug traffic”, while imposing “a tax on farmers practically identical to the one the Taliban uses”. In a process that implicated virtually the entire government, provincial officials then passed a portion of their illicit profits “up the chain, all the way to officials in Kabul ... ensuring that the local authorities maintain support from higher-ups and keeping the opium growing”.

Simultaneously, a UN security council investigation found that the Taliban had systematically tapped “into the supply chain at each stage of the narcotics trade” – collecting a 10% tax on opium cultivation in Helmand, fighting for control of heroin laboratories and acting as “the major guarantors for the trafficking

of raw opium and heroin out of Afghanistan”. No longer simply taxing the traffic, the Taliban was so deeply and directly involved that, according to the New York Times, it “has become difficult to distinguish the group from a dedicated drug cartel”.

These dismal trends persisted throughout 2017, as the Afghan opium harvest nearly doubled to 9,000 tonnes, well above the previous peak of 8,200 tonnes in 2007. Inside wartorn Helmand province, the poppy area increased by 79% to 144,000 hectares, representing 44% of the country’s total crop. In November, convinced that opium is providing 60% of the Taliban’s funds for wages and weapons, the US command – emboldened and expanded by Donald Trump’s decision to “win” the Afghan war – dispatched, for the first time ever, F-22 fighters and B-52 bombers to destroy 10 of the Taliban’s heroin laboratories in Helmand, a small share of the country’s 500 drug refineries.

For the foreseeable future, opium will likely remain entangled in the rural economy, the Taliban insurgency, and government corruption whose sum is the Afghan conundrum.

The failure of America’s intervention in Afghanistan offers broader insight into the limits to its global power. The persistence of both opium cultivation and the Taliban insurgency suggest the degree to which the policies that Washington has imposed upon Afghanistan since 2001 have reached a dead end. For most people worldwide, economic activity, the production and exchange of goods, is the prime point of contact with their government. When, however, a country’s most significant commodity is illegal, then political loyalties naturally shift to the economic networks that move that product safely and secretly from fields to foreign markets, providing protection, finance and employment at every stage. “The narcotics trade poisons the Afghan financial sector and fuels a growing illicit economy,” John Sopko explained in 2014. “This, in turn, undermines the Afghan state’s legitimacy by stoking corruption, nourishing criminal networks and providing significant financial support to the Taliban and other insurgent groups.”

After 16 years of continuous warfare, Washington is faced with the same choice it had back in 2010, when Obama’s generals airlifted those marines into Marja. Just as it has been over the past decade and a half, the US can remain trapped in the same endless cycle. As snow melts from the mountain slopes and poppy plants rise from the soil every spring, there will be a new batch of teenage recruits from impoverished villages ready to fight for the rebel cause.

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HEADLINE	01/08 Plight of Rohingya spurs terror fears
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jan/8/fears-rohingya-muslims-could-be-radical-islam-recr/
GIST	<p>COX’S BAZAR, Bangladesh — Mohammad Haroon, a community leader at the Balukhali Refugee Camp here, is a worried man. The 27-year-old has heard complaints of men visiting refugees’ tents in the dead of the night in search of young people. He is certain they are Rohingya insurgents on the lookout for recruits for their fight in neighboring Myanmar.</p> <p>The fierce clash between the government of overwhelmingly Buddhist Myanmar and the Muslim Rohingya minority has created the world’s most pressing humanitarian crisis, with hundreds of thousands forced to flee their homes. But the refugee camps here in Bangladesh also represent a fertile breeding ground and a new cause for Islamist militants looking to re-energize their struggle.</p> <p>“There are bad elements everywhere. Here, these bad elements are trying to take advantage of our current situation and exploit us into turning against each other,” said Mr. Haroon. “They want us to fight the military, the monks. What good can come out of more violence?”</p> <p>Mr. Haroon was referring to the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, or ARSA, an insurgency movement that has organized attacks against Myanmar security forces. Ultra-nationalist Buddhist monks are among the most vocal critics of the Rohingya minority in the Southeast Asian country.</p>

Since late August, an estimated 650,000 stateless Rohingyas have fled from Myanmar to neighboring Bangladesh to escape the military's campaign of torching villages, rape and murder. The Trump administration the United Nations are among a wide range of groups condemning what they see as ethnic cleansing.

Myanmar's military leaders claim their crackdown is in response to ARSA's deadly attacks. Earlier this month, for example, ARSA rebels attacked an army truck in Myanmar, wounding five troops, according to state-controlled media.

ARSA fighters, in turn, have said they are simply trying to protect the approximately 1 million Muslim Rohingyas who have long lived in largely Buddhist Myanmar from discrimination.

Descended from laborers imported from Bangladesh during British colonial rule in the 19th century, the Rohingyas are technically not Myanmar citizens. Most live in Rakhine, an impoverished province on Myanmar's west coast.

Across the sprawling, overcrowded refugee camps in southeastern Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar, the district bordering Myanmar, rumors swirl of more ARSA attacks in the offing.

Independent observers have warned of ARSA's efforts to target and recruit Rohingya youth, stoking fears of radicalization at the camps.

Angshuman Choudhury, a New Delhi-based researcher at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, believes Rohingya refugees are extremely susceptible to exploitation.

"The Rohingyas are a marginalized community that has been persecuted for decades," Mr. Chaudhury said. "Their economically vulnerable state and their natural urge to vent out their anger to what happened makes them the perfect recruitment tool."

With Islamic State's territorial base in Syria and Iraq nearly eliminated, terrorism analysts fear Islamist militants fleeing the Middle East could fasten on crises such as those in Myanmar as their next base of operations. Foreign fighters were much in evidence in recent brutal fighting between the government of the Philippines and radical Islamic terror groups in the country's south.

"The conditions in Rakhine are ripe for the influence of extremist stimuli, including the infiltration of Islamic State ideology, which may worsen the situation in Myanmar," a study last fall by researchers at Singapore-based Nanyang Technological University concluded. It's an ideal situation for the Islamic State and affiliates to collaborate with regional groups, they added.

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HEADLINE	01/08 Couple convicted of UK bomb plot
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/couple-met-dating-site-convicted-uk-bomb-plot-52214491?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>A man and woman who met on a Muslim dating website were convicted Monday of plotting a bomb attack in Britain.</p> <p>Prosecutors say Munir Mohammed, an asylum-seeker from Sudan, and London pharmacist Rowaida El-Hassan met on SingleMuslim.com and bonded over their shared extremist views.</p> <p>Both defendants denied the charges, but jurors at London's Central Criminal Court found them guilty of preparing terrorist acts.</p> <p>Prosecutors said Mohammed volunteered to carry out an attack during Facebook exchanges with a man he believed to be an Islamic State group commander.</p>

	<p>Police said they found bomb-making instructions and two of the three components for the explosive TATP at Mohammed's home when he was arrested in December 2016.</p> <p>Prosecutors say Mohammed drew on El-Hassan's knowledge of chemicals during his preparations.</p> <p>She acknowledged an "emotional attachment" to Mohammed, but denied plotting an attack.</p> <p>Judge Michael Topolski said Mohammed, 36, had been "planning an explosion to kill and maim innocent people in the cause of Islamic State." The judge said El-Hassan, 33, was "ideologically motivated to provide him with support, motivation and assistance."</p> <p>They are set to be sentenced Feb. 22 and face a maximum sentence of life in prison.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Syria captures 14 villages from rebels
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syrias-death-toll-idlib-car-bomb-rises-25-52205911?cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>Syrian government forces captured 14 villages on Monday as they advance on the largest rebel-held enclave in the country's north amid a wave of airstrikes.</p> <p>Syrian government forces and their allies have been on the offensive since late October in Hama and Idlib provinces, capturing nearly 100 villages from insurgent groups, including the al-Qaida-linked Levant Liberation Committee. The offensive intensified on Christmas Day after reinforcements were brought in from other parts of Syria.</p> <p>The main aim of the troops is to reach the rebel-held Abu Zuhour air base and secure the road linking the capital, Damascus, with the northern city of Aleppo, Syria's largest. Rebels captured Abu Zuhour in 2015 after a three-year siege.</p> <p>The government-controlled Syrian Central Military Media said the newly captured villages, include Freija, Jahman, Dawoudiyeh and Jub al-Qasab, bring the troops closer to the air base.</p> <p>The SCMM and the opposition's Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights confirmed that 14 villages have been captured over the past hours.</p> <p>The offensive in the southern parts of Idlib province comes amid intense airstrikes and shelling that have killed 21 people since Sunday, according to the Observatory.</p> <p>Clashes also erupted Monday near the Damascus suburb of Harasta, after government forces reached troops trapped for more than a week in a military base surrounded by insurgents.</p> <p>State media said the Syrian army broke through rebel lines Sunday to reach soldiers trapped at the Murakabat vehicle base near Harasta, in the eastern Ghouta suburbs.</p> <p>Rebels surrounded the base late last month, trapping an unknown number of soldiers inside. The rebels say they have taken numerous soldiers hostage. The Observatory says 159 rebels and government soldiers have been killed in fighting over the base since Dec. 29.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/09 Germany indicts man for promoting ISIS
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/01/09/germany-indicts-syrian-on-charges-promoting-islamic-

	state.html
GIST	<p>BERLIN – Prosecutors in Germany have formally charged a 37-year-old Syrian man on allegations of promoting the Islamic State group, obtaining bomb-making instructions and other crimes.</p> <p>The man, who wasn't identified, is alleged to have posted videos on social media in 2016 urging support and soliciting new recruits for IS.</p> <p>In a statement Tuesday, Frankfurt prosecutors said police also found manuals for making rifle silencers, explosives and detonators at the man's home and office at the Technical University of Darmstadt.</p> <p>Prosecutor Alexander Badle said the man later tried to recruit a fellow inmate to carry out a bomb attack, claiming funds would be provided from the Gulf state of Qatar.</p> <p>After learning the inmate was a Christian, the suspect is alleged to have threatened to kill him if he spoke to police.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/09 Pakistan frees radical anti-US cleric
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/pakistan-court-frees-anti-us-cleric-amid-spat-52228045?
GIST	<p>A Pakistani court has ordered the release of a radical anti-U.S. cleric who went to Afghanistan with thousands of volunteers to help the Taliban fight against Americans after the 2001 U.S.-led invasion, a defense lawyer said Tuesday.</p> <p>The development comes amid rising U.S.-Pakistani tensions following President Donald Trump's accusations that Pakistan was harboring militants and the withholding of American aid to Islamabad.</p> <p>Sufi Mohammad was set free on health grounds and the paperwork for his release was still being processed Tuesday, said defense lawyer Fida Gul.</p> <p>Mohammad, imprisoned since 2009, is also known as the father-in-law of Mullah Fazlullah, the leader of the Pakistani Taliban who is believed to be hiding in Afghanistan.</p> <p>Washington accuses Pakistan of turning a blind eye to militants. Pakistan denies the charge. Last week, Trump said that the United States had "foolishly" given Pakistan more than \$33 billion in aid in the last 15 years and had gotten nothing in return but "lies & deceit."</p> <p>Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Pakistan's ambassador to Washington, accused the Trump administration of ignoring the sacrifices made by Pakistan in the war on terror.</p> <p>The claim is unfair, Chaudhry told The Associated Press over the weekend, before heading back to Washington.</p> <p>"We have been the victim of terrorist attacks and how can we tolerate the presence of militants on our soil," he said.</p> <p>Ties between Islamabad and Washington could be further strained by the release of Mohammad, who back in 2001 issued an edict, or fatwa, for holy war against U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan.</p> <p>Pakistan has banned the Tehrik Nifaz-e-Sharia Mohammed, or TNSM, pro-Taliban group.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	01/08 Lawsuit: Ala. sheriffs profit off jail food
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/84c22c4967c744ecbc6b39d37fe02d33/Groups-sue,-aim-to-learn-if-sheriffs-profit-from-jail-food
GIST	<p>MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Two advocacy groups say they have sued Alabama sheriffs seeking records about whether they have personally profited from jailhouse food programs.</p> <p>The Atlanta-based Southern Center for Human Rights and the Alabama Appleseed Center for Law and Justice announced the lawsuit Monday against 49 sheriffs they said did not comply with a public records request seeking information about the food programs.</p> <p>A state law says state sheriffs can “keep and retain” leftover food money and some sheriffs have kept the money as income. A federal judge in 2009 found that a sheriff — who got the nickname “Sheriff Corndog” for feeding corndogs two or more times a day— had inadequately fed inmates and ordered him jailed for a day in contempt of court.</p> <p>Aaron Littman, a staff attorney at the Southern Center for Human Rights, said the “archaic system is based on a dubious interpretation of state law.” The money is supposed to be used, he argued, for official purposes.</p> <p>“It also raises grave ethical concerns, invites public corruption, and creates a perverse incentive to spend as little as possible on feeding people who are in jail,” Littman said in a statement announcing the lawsuit.</p> <p>Bobby Timmons, the executive director of the Alabama Sheriffs’ Association, could not immediately be reached for comment.</p> <p>The groups said they asked sheriffs to provide information about the jail feeding program but received limited responses. The lawsuit, filed in Hale County Circuit Court, asks a judge to order the sheriffs to turn over the requested documents.</p> <p>Alabama Appleseed executive director Frank Knaack said the public has a right to know whether sheriffs “are meeting the basic human needs of incarcerated people in their care, or are instead filling their personal coffers.”</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Israel appoints first female sharia judge
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2018-01-08/israels-first-female-sharia-judge-reflects-changes-for-israels-arab-community
GIST	<p>JERUSALEM – After nearly a year on the job, Hana Mansour Khatib says she is already seeing the impact she can make as the first female judge in Israel's Islamic, or sharia court system. She says she has long witnessed many female plaintiffs remain quiet and instruct a lawyer or male relative to speak on their behalf in the Islamic courts, which handle marriage, divorce and other personal issues for Muslims here.</p> <p>"But now, I have noticed that when women see me as the judge, they have more confidence to talk and speak up," says Khatib, adding that she also asks the many relatives who often accompany a divorcing couple to court to leave the room "so the parties can talk honestly. I really encourage them to talk and I want to hear what they have to say, especially in these sensitive matters."</p> <p>In appointing Khatib, Israel joins a growing number of countries with Islamic courts with female judges. Her appointment also is significant here for the Jews and Christians, who, like Muslims, must marry and divorce through their respective religious authorities because civil marriage does not exist in Israel. Jewish and Christian legal authorities remain all male.</p>

"The appointment of Khatib is wonderful proof that what is perceived as entrenched and immutable can in fact be changed," says Ruth Halperin-Kaddari, a law professor at Bar-Ilan University and vice president of the U.N. Committee on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women.

Khatib's judgeship comes at a time of rapid change for Israel's Arab minority, which makes up about 20 percent of the country's population. Recent years have seen an increase in the number of Arab women going to work and earning academic degrees and certifications. There has been significant government investment, including a five-year 15 billion shekel (\$4.3 million) plan, implemented in 2015, to improve education, employment opportunities and other infrastructure in Israel's Arab communities.

The appointment of a female "qadi" – a magistrate or judge on a sharia court – may be even more significant in the long run than those other social changes, says Israeli parliamentarian Esawi Frej, a Muslim and a member of the left-wing Meretz political party. That's because Arab society remains deeply traditional, and what religious leaders say carries a lot of weight, explains Frej, who sat on the parliamentary committee that nominated Khatib.

"There really is no such thing as a secular Muslim," he says. "So for real change in Muslim society, you need the religious establishment to support it. So it is significant that you have religious law saying it's OK for women to be a sharia court judge. That means that gender equality can improve in other parts of life, as well."

Although appointing a female judge is still seen by many as controversial, Islamic law does not ban it, Abd Al-Hakim Samara, Israel's Sharia Court of Appeals president, said at last spring's swearing-in ceremony for Khatib and three new male judges. Khatib was appointed "out of a right, not out of kindness," Samara said at the ceremony.

In recent years, female sharia judges have been appointed to other courts in the region, including in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority. For centuries, judges have been only men due to cultural and social norms, experts say.

The appointment of female qadis in Israel and elsewhere shows how Muslim feminists are finding empowerment through religion, and changing the social and cultural norms that have long held them back, says Engy Abdelkader, a Rutgers University professor of human rights law who has researched the history of female Islamic judges.

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HEADLINE	01/08 Seattle school bus driver strike?
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/862491/seattle-school-bus-strike-january-2018/
GIST	<p>Seattle education officials are warning families that school bus service may be disrupted as soon as Tuesday.</p> <p>First Student, the company that runs buses for Seattle Public Schools, made a contract offer to its drivers' union, but that offer was voted down on Saturday, Jan. 6. It has left the status of Seattle's yellow school bus services in limbo. Normal bus service was expected Monday but according to the union's website, a strike could be next. Now Seattle Public Schools is asking families to be prepared for a strike.</p> <p>The website for the Teamsters Union Local 174 states:</p> <p><i>At a meeting that filled nearly every seat in the Local 174 Union auditorium, First Student school bus drivers voted by a margin of 85 percent to reject the most recent offer made by their employer. Now that this offer has been rejected, a protracted strike by the group of over 400 drivers is all but imminent, barring a new, better offer from First Student.</i></p>

	<p>The same union went on strike in November 2017. It lasted one day and left 12,000 students without transportation to classes. For that strike, the drivers' union announced in advance that bus service would not be available to families. The strike was put on hold as contract negotiations continued. With the recent vote, the strike could be on once again.</p> <p>According to the Teamsters, drivers were unhappy with the proposal provided by First Student — it did not include a pension plan and it did not offer healthcare coverage to spouses and family members.</p> <p>Driver Alex Benge, a shop steward at First Student's South Park location, is quoted on the union's website: "This company is the Wal-Mart of school transportation, and we need to say it loud and clear: we are not okay with that. We cannot wait – we need to do this now."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Court: Miss. anti-LGBT law stands
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/supreme-court-allows-mississippi-anti-lgbt-law-stand-n835721
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court declined Monday to take up a legal battle over a Mississippi law that allows state employees and private businesses to deny services to LGBT people based on religious objections.</p> <p>Signed into law in 2016 in response to the Supreme Court's gay marriage ruling, it allows county clerks to avoid issuing marriage licenses to gay couples and protects businesses from lawsuits if they refuse to serve LGBT customers.</p> <p>The law was immediately challenged. But lower courts, without ruling on the merits of the law, said those suing could not show that they would be harmed by it.</p> <p>A new round of challenges is expected from residents who have been denied service, and the issue could come back to the Supreme Court's doorstep.</p> <p>Sponsors of the law said they wanted to protect those who believe that marriage can exist only between a man and a woman and that a person's gender is determined at birth.</p> <p>A conservative law firm that helped defend the law praised the Supreme Court for refusing to take up the challenge.</p> <p>"Good laws like Mississippi's protect freedom and harm no one," said Kevin Theriot of Alliance Defending Freedom.</p> <p>He said the law's only purpose was guaranteeing "that Mississippians don't live in fear of losing their careers or their businesses simply for affirming marriage as a husband-wife union."</p> <p>But gay rights groups promised to continue their efforts to get the law struck down.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Costliest disasters record shattered
SOURCE	http://www.cnn.com/2018/01/08/us/2017-costliest-disasters/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)2017 was the costliest year ever for weather and climate disasters in the United States, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration announced Monday, totaling \$306 billion. The previous record year, 2005, saw \$215 billion in disasters.</p> <p>Highlighted by a string of hurricanes that pounded the southeastern US coast in August and September, as</p>

well as devastating wildfires that torched large swaths of Northern and Southern California, 2017 saw 16 weather events that each topped a billion dollars in damage.

This ties 2011 for the most billion-dollar weather events to occur in a single year, but their extreme nature and the breadth of disaster types really set last year apart.

"In 2017, we have seen the rare combination of high disaster frequency, disaster cost and diversity of weather and climate extreme events," said Adam Smith, lead researcher at NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information.

"The U.S. has endured billion-dollar impacts from six of the seven disaster categories we track," he said: drought, flood, freeze, severe storm, tropical cyclone, wildfire and winter storm. There hasn't been a year when all seven disaster categories have seen a billion-dollar disaster.

2017 lacked only a billion-dollar winter storm -- though we almost certainly had one in the first week of 2018 with the major nor'easter termed a "bomb cyclone."

Hurricanes are the costliest weather events, responsible for about half of the total losses among all US billion-dollar disasters despite accounting for less than 20% of the total events since 1980.

This certainly proved true in 2017, when the US and the Caribbean islands endured back-to-back-to-back devastating hurricanes -- all of them now ranking among the top five costliest disasters -- which were the main drivers behind the year becoming the costliest on record.

But 2017 will also be remembered for the way years of drought combined with strong winds to create numerous historic firestorms in the Western states, namely California.

"In addition to these hurricanes, the US had a historically damaging wildfire seasons with over 9.1 million acres burned and damages up to \$18 billion," Smith said.

NOAA groups all the western wildfires from the year into one billion-dollar weather disaster, even though 2017 featured multiple massive fires that each would have caused at least \$1 billion in damages.

Six of the 20 most destructive fires in California history occurred this year.

During the month of October, "over 15,000 homes, businesses and other structures across California" were destroyed, according to NOAA.

"The combined destruction of the Tubbs, Atlas, Nuns and Redwood Valley wildfires represent the most costly wildfire event on record," NOAA said Monday, "also causing 44 deaths."

Santa Ana winds returned to California in December, bringing another round of disastrous fires.

The Thomas wildfire in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties grew uncontrolled for days, topping 280,000 acres and becoming the largest single fire in California history.

Disastrous wildfires burned over 9.8 million acres across multiple Western and Northwestern states during 2017, well more than the 10-year average of 6.5 million acres, according to NOAA.

Montana was also hit hard, with more than 1 million acres burned during the year.

NOAA has been tracking billion-dollar disasters since 1980, and it has seen a clear upward trend in their number and severity.

"US billion-dollar disasters are becoming more common," Smith said, but the reasons are numerous and complex.

	<p>The damage potential is much higher than in previous decades due to "increases in population and material wealth over the last several decades," he said.</p> <p>This is compounded by the fact that much of this population resides in densely populated cities in vulnerable areas like coasts and river floodplains and near large forests.</p> <p>But climate change is what concerns Smith the most.</p> <p>"Climate change is playing an increasing role, amplifying the frequency and intensity of certain types of extreme weather that lead to billion-dollar disasters," Smith said.</p> <p>2017 stands as a glaring example of this, with record inland floods and a wildfire season that dwarfs all others, two of the event types most affected by a warming climate.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Toxic chemicals at Air Force bases
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/air-force-base-epa-toxic-chemicals-pfc-cancer-low-birth-weight/
GIST	<p>For 25 years, Dan Cruz delivered mail at the Peterson Air Force Base and drank the water. Then came cancer – thyroid, prostate, testicular – he said never before seen in his family.</p> <p>"I'm the only one that's been diagnosed with cancer not once, not twice, but three times. People on my route... cancer has come upon them and sometimes stage 4," Cruz told CBS News correspondent Barry Petersen.</p> <p>The cause could be firefighting foam used since the 1970s at Air Force bases and airports across the country, something meant to save lives that may have harmed them instead. The foam contains highly fluorinated chemicals, known as PFCs. It is suspected of causing some cancers and underweight births.</p> <p>Mica Ullum has lived near Peterson Air Force Base for a quarter century, in a town where the foam has contaminated the water. Sadie, one of three children born to Mica, was born premature, weighing a mere one pound six ounces. She spent 94 days in the neonatal intensive care unit. Mica's four other pregnancies ended in miscarriage or death.</p> <p>"With what you know now, do you think any of this has to do with the effects, potential effects, of what's in the water?" Petersen asked.</p> <p>"Possibly, yeah," Ullum responded.</p> <p>"Why?"</p> <p>"Because if you continue to pump poison into your body, something has to respond," Ullum said.</p> <p>Peterson is one of 190 Air Force bases where PFCs may have leached in the ground and surrounding areas. One study based on EPA's test results shows as many as six million people may be exposed nationwide to PFCs in their drinking water at higher levels than the EPA now deems safe.</p> <p>But the more than 60,000 people in the communities near Peterson Air Force Base may be America's hardest-hit. The EPA said anything over 70-parts per trillion could be dangerous. Some water they tested here had over 1,300 parts per trillion. Additionally, according to a proposed class action lawsuit filed against the foam manufacturers, it has caused serious medical conditions in hundreds of residents.</p> <p>One foam manufacturing company, 3M, said there is no merit in the health claims, adding they "sold these products with instructions regarding their safe use and disposal...acted responsibly at all times...and will vigorously defend this lawsuit."</p>

But the Air Force has responded, spending more than \$4 million to provide bottled water and filtration systems. Air Force firefighters now train with water, and for real fires it uses a different fluorinated foam, still containing another type of PFCs, but believed to be safer.

But some of those who have studied the new foam say the Air Force may have traded one evil for another.

"Our chemical regulation system makes us all guinea pigs... because chemicals are assumed safe until proven guilty and they go out into the world... and we are exposed to them with no health information," said Arlene Blum, researcher at the University of California Berkeley.

Mark Correll is deputy assistant secretary of the Air Force for environment safety and infrastructure.

"Is it possible that you've replaced this with something that could still have a long-term problem down the road?" Petersen asked him.

"I've got to rely on the Environmental Protection Agency and on the health agencies... to tell us whether or not that's going to be a problem in the future," Correll said.

But for now, "We're going to treat it as if it were any other hazardous material... so that we can prevent contamination in the ground water and in the soil by cleaning it up immediately," Correll said.

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HEADLINE	01/08 Sahara desert covered in 15in of snow
SOURCE	https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/901733/Sahara-Desert-snow-Ain-Sefra-Algeria-pictures-photos
GIST	<p>More than 15 inches (40cm) has blanketed sand dunes across the small town of Ain Sefra, Algeria.</p> <p>It is the second time snow has hit in nearly 40 years, with a dusting also recorded in December 2016.</p> <p>But this snowfall which hit yesterday, is much deeper than the fleeting shower little more than a year ago.</p> <p>Locals, who endure temperatures of 37C in summer, were stunned as dense snow settled on the town, known as 'the gateway to the desert'.</p> <p>Photographer Karim Bouchetata, who captured the remarkable images, said: "We were really surprised when we woke up to see snow again. It stayed all day on Sunday and began melting at around 5pm."</p> <p>Last year's flurry brought chaos across the town, with passengers stranded on buses after the roads became slippery and icy. Children made snowmen and even sledged on the sand dunes.</p> <p>Before that, snow was last seen in Ain Sefra on February 18, 1979, when the snow storm lasted just half an hour.</p> <p>The cold snap comes as Europe and the United States froze in bitter temperatures.</p> <p>The Sahara Desert covers most of Northern Africa and it has gone through shifts in temperature and moisture over the past few hundred thousand years.</p> <p>Although the Sahara is very dry today, it is expected to become green again in about 15,000 years.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Study: courthouses security inadequate
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SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/new-study-shows-states-courthouses-dont-have-enough-security
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Metal detectors greet visitors at the three King County Courthouse entrances, but a study released Monday by the Washington State Superior Court Judge's Association says that's far from the norm.</p> <p>More than half of the state's 39 counties don't have security screening at their central courthouses. Courthouse personnel aren't being trained to handle active shooters and other security-type trainings, the study said.</p> <p>"You have high emotion running on the issues that are presented here in superior courts and providing that safe environment is really something we want to see happen," said King County Superior Court Judge Sean P. O'Donnell. "Other than adoptions and marriages usually the people are coming to court because they have a conflict."</p> <p>In March, the state Supreme Court made it clear that courthouse security is a priority. In General Rule 36, the court said a "safe courthouse environment is fundamental to the administration of justice," according to the judicial study.</p> <p>After that rule was adopted, O'Donnell began surveying colleagues statewide about their workplace security.</p> <p>Eric Johnson, Executive Director of the Washington State Association of Counties, said the people he works with at the county level across the state have long complained about the lack of security in courthouses.</p> <p>"We have so many counties that are struggling with their fiscal sustainability that they don't have the resources necessary to do all the things that's expected of them," Johnson said. "We'll be working with the state legislature to point out to them the necessity to make more investment into the trial court system."</p> <p>Lisa Ayers and Lisa Olsen, who are both commissioners in Pacific County, said they've researched beefing up security in the historic South Bend courthouse but say the county just can't afford it.</p> <p>"It always comes down to funding," Ayers said.</p> <p>The worry for O'Donnell is that the state, and counties, won't step up until too late.</p> <p>King County didn't install metal detectors until after the murder of Susana Blackwell in 1995. She and two friends were killed by her estranged husband at the courthouse.</p> <p>The same for Grays Harbor County – they installed weapon screeners after a judge and a deputy were attacked by a knife-wielding man in 2012.</p> <p>"People get mad at the county it doesn't matter what department you're in, so it's always on our minds," Olsen said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/09 Shooting wounds Hamas official in Gaza
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/01/09/top-hamas-official-in-gaza-wounded-in-mysterious-shooting.html
GIST	<p>GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip – The Hamas militant group says one of its senior officials is in critical condition after accidentally shooting himself while cleaning his weapon.</p> <p>Initial reports, some by Hamas' official media, said that Imad al-Alami had died of natural causes. But Hamas subsequently said he was badly wounded in a gun accident.</p>

	<p>The 62-year-old al-Alami is a former member of Hamas' policy-making politburo and remains a top official.</p> <p>Israel exiled al-Alami from Gaza in 1994. He spent most of his time in Syria before returning in 2012, after Hamas abandoned its longtime base in Damascus.</p> <p>After the 2014 war between Hamas and Israel, al-Alami traveled to Turkey for treatment for what Hamas said was an injury during the war. There were no details on how he was injured and lost a leg.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 World's busiest air routes
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-01-08/world-s-busiest-air-routes-tiny-island-beats-london-new-york
GIST	<p>The world's busiest air route isn't London to Paris or New York to Los Angeles, but the trip between Seoul and a tiny island off the coast of South Korea.</p> <p>Planes made 65,000 trips between the Korean capital and Jeju island -- a journey of little more than an hour -- in 2017, equivalent to 178 flights a day, according to data from OAG Aviation Worldwide Ltd. That's almost double the 35,000 trips on the busiest North American route: Los Angeles to San Francisco.</p> <p>Asian cities dominated the list, cementing the region's status as the world's fastest-growing travel market. Among the 10 busiest routes in the world last year, Los Angeles-San Francisco was the only North American entry and there wasn't a single European destination. The top European route in OAG's rankings was Dublin-London Heathrow with about 14,500 flights.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 US govt. 'secret' airline is hiring
SOURCE	https://www.aol.com/article/finance/2018/01/08/the-secret-airline-run-by-the-us-government-is-hiring-and-to-get-the-job-you-have-to-share-your-drinking-habits-sexual-behavior-and-mental-health/23328024/
GIST	<p>Forget secret agent. If you want one of the most exclusive, top-secret jobs about there, consider becoming a flight attendant.</p> <p>JANET airlines, the secret airline run by the US government, is hiring flight attendants to shuttle employees and contractors out of a private terminal at McCarran National Airport in Las Vegas to their jobs in places like Area 51.</p> <p>As Business Insider previously reported, while some joke JANET stands for "Just Another Non-Existent-Terminal," it may actually mean "Joint Air Network for Employee Transportation."</p> <p>The JANET airlines hires will perform all the usual flight attendant tasks including providing food and drink service, giving pre-flight safety demonstrations and ensuring passenger safety throughout the flight, and providing assistance during emergencies.</p> <p>And like flight attendants working for other airlines, JANET flight attendants must have a high school degree or the equivalent diploma, pass flight attendant training, and comply with the airline's dress code and uniform guidelines, among other things.</p> <p>But JANET airline flight attendants bear the additional burden of qualifying for and maintaining a top secret government security clearance and associated work location access.</p>

	<p>According to the US State Department's website, "top secret" is the highest level of security clearance, and having this clearance gives you access to classified national security information.</p> <p>Every application for security clearance is evaluated on an individual basis, and considerations include a number of deeply personal details including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person's allegiance to the United States • Foreign influence • Foreign preference • Sexual behavior • Personal conduct • Financial considerations • Alcohol consumption • Drug involvement • Emotional, mental, and personality disorders • Criminal conduct • Security violations • Outside activities • Misuse of information technology systems
<p>Return to Top</p>	<p><i>If that sounds like the job for you, find the listing at AECOM.</i></p>

HEADLINE	01/09 Iran lawmaker: 3,700 protest arrests
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/iran-lawmaker-3700-arrested-days-protest-unrest-52229059?
GIST	<p>An Iranian reformist lawmaker says some 3,700 people were arrested in the days of protests and unrest that roiled Iran over the past two weeks.</p> <p>The official news website of the Iranian parliament, icana.ir, quoted Mahmoud Sadeghi on Tuesday as saying that different security and intelligence forces detained the protesters, making it difficult to know the exact number of detainees.</p> <p>The number is far higher than the one initially offered by authorities.</p> <p>Iranian authorities have said that the protests — which at first vented anger at Iran's economic woes but later saw demonstrators calling for the overthrow of the government — are waning.</p> <p>The United States and Israel have expressed support for the protesters, but deny Iranian allegations of fomenting them.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Venezuela annual inflation: 2,616%
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-economy-inflation/venezuela-2017-annual-inflation-at-2616-percent-opposition-lawmakers-idUSKBN1EX23B
GIST	<p>CARACAS (Reuters) - Prices in Venezuela, which is believed to have the world's highest inflation, jumped 2,616 percent last year, the country's opposition-led National Assembly said, as millions suffer from food and medicine shortages during a severe economic crisis.</p> <p>Opposition politicians, whose numbers are broadly in line with analysts' estimates, on Monday put December's inflation figure alone at 85 percent, well into hyperinflation territory for which the benchmark is usually 50 percent.</p>

	<p>“Inflation in December alone is greater than accumulated inflation (over the whole year) for all of Latin America,” said lawmaker José Guerra.</p> <p>Venezuelan authorities did not respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>The country’s minimum wage went up 40 percent in January but still is worth just over \$2 per month on the black market exchange, where the bolivar currency has weakened about 35 percent against the dollar in the last month alone. Hundreds of people mobbed some supermarkets on Saturday after authorities promised price cuts.</p> <p>The central bank has not published inflation or gross domestic product data for two years. However, the money supply expanded by more than 1,000 percent last year.</p> <p>President Nicolás Maduro says the problems stem from the “economic war” waged by Washington and the opposition against his government. Critics blame the government’s strict currency and price controls.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	01/08 Arrests Italy, Germany anti-mafia ops
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-italy-germany-mafia/some-200-arrested-in-anti-mafia-operation-in-italy-germany-police-idUSKBN1EY0JI
GIST	<p>ROME (Reuters) - Some 200 members of one of Italy’s most infamous mafia groups were arrested in an operation in Italy and Germany, police said on Tuesday.</p> <p>A statement from the para-military Carabinieri police said the operation had dismantled a major clan of the ‘Ndrangheta organized crime group, which is based in the southern Calabria region.</p> <p>Police said the operation was carried out jointly with police in Germany.</p> <p>They said the clans of the Farao and Marincola families had infiltrated businesses in both countries, particularly those involved in wine, food, garbage collection and funeral services.</p> <p>A number of public officials were suspected of corruption, the statement said, without specifying if they were in Italy or both countries.</p> <p>Some 50 million euros (\$59.79 million) in assets was seized.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 San Francisco: car break-in every 17min.
SOURCE	http://www.ktvu.com/news/san-francisco-averages-1-car-break-in-every-17-minutes
GIST	<p>SAN FRANCISCO (Tara Moriarty/KTVU) - Every 17 minutes a car is being broken into in San Francisco. And in just the past year, the number of auto-break ins increased by nearly 25 percent.</p> <p>Today city supervisors are teaming up with SFPD Police Chief Bill Scott to roll out a new plan aimed at curbing property crime.</p> <p>"We are notoriously known as the City of Broken Glass," said Supervisor Norman Yee.</p> <p>It's a cringe worthy reputation for San Franciscans. There were about four car break-ins every hour in 2017.</p>

"It doesn't happen in other cities and it shouldn't be happening in San Francisco," said Supervisor Hillary Ronen. "Whatever we've been doing do far, is not working."

That's why today Ronen and Yee announced a board resolution to team up with Chief Scott to crack down on the property crime epidemic by assigning each district station a plainclothes team to conduct its own operations.

"We believe that this will compliment the foot patrols deployed in the citywide effort to arrest and prosecute organized crime rings," said Yee.

Crime statistics show that in 2017, about 30,000 people had their cars broken into. If you compare that number to 2012, it's more than double the amount in 2012, when there were only around 13,000 break-ins.

"In 70 percent of the cases, property was visible when cars were broken into," said Capt Robert Yick of Taraval Station.

SFPD has been ramping up its Park Smart campaign which reminds folks not to leave valuables in their cars.

Many in law enforcement have blamed the crime uptick on Proposition 47, which re-categorized some non-violent offenses as misdemeanors. They claim it made it easier for serial car burglars to re-offend with little or no penalty. That's why critics of Prop 47 say the courts, probation and the District Attorney's Office need to work more hand in hand with police."

"We can't control what happens in the courts we can't control what happens at the District Attorney level but we can give them the best case that we can give them," said Chief Scott.

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HEADLINE	01/09 Judge delays 'El Chapo' hearing
SOURCE	http://www.nation.co.ke/news/world/El-Chapo-hearing-delayed/1068-4256446-wf2qdv/index.html
GIST	<p>A New York judge has delayed for almost a month the hearing of Mexican drug kingpin Joaquin 'El Chapo' Guzman, one of the world's most notorious criminals.</p> <p>Guzman's attorney Eduardo Balarezo had wanted Judge Brian Cogan to push back the hearing to April. But Cogan of his own accord already delayed it from January 19 to February 15.</p> <p>Balarezo said he needs more time to address the 290,000 pages of documents and thousands of other documents in the case.</p> <p>The 60-year-old kingpin, accused of running one of the world's biggest drug empires, has been held in solitary confinement since being extradited on in January 2017.</p> <p>Guzman — who twice escaped from prison in Mexico — is accused of running the Sinaloa cartel, one of the world's biggest drug empires.</p> <p>He is facing 17 charges, and if convicted, he is likely to spend the rest of his life in a maximum security US prison.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Texas hotel shooting: family of 4 killed
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/762018b075e6490cbfa6fadeaaf69905/The-Latest:-Police:-Family-of-4-died-in-Texas-hotel-shooting

<p>GIST</p>	<p>GALVESTON, Texas (AP) — The Latest on the shooting deaths of four family members at an upscale beachfront hotel in Galveston, Texas (all times local):</p> <p>5:15 p.m.</p> <p>Police say the four people who were shot to death in a Southeast Texas beachfront hotel were family members.</p> <p>Investigators are looking at the shootings early Monday at the San Luis Resort in Galveston as possibly being a triple killing followed by a suicide in which the mother was the shooter. Galveston police Capt. Josh Schirard says the victims were a 37-year-old woman, a 39-year-old man and two boys ages 10 and 5. They were from Baytown about 35 miles north of Galveston.</p> <p>Schirard says the family checked in Sunday evening at the upscale hotel.</p> <p>Police were summoned to the 250-room hotel on the Gulf of Mexico after a guest in a nearby room on the eighth floor called police about 4:30 a.m. Monday and reported popping sounds. Officers entered the locked room and found the man and two boys in bed with apparent gunshot wounds and the woman on the floor, also with a gunshot wound.</p>
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<p>HEADLINE</p>	<p>01/09 Transit imposter takes deal in latest case</p>
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>https://apnews.com/f99e6447a443419b8257083cab0fb8c4/Transit-impostor-takes-deal-in-latest-bus-stealing-escapade</p>
<p>GIST</p>	<p>NEW YORK (AP) — A man who has been arrested 30 times for impersonating a transit worker, stealing buses and trains and driving their routes has taken a plea deal that’s sending him to a mental health facility, not prison, for his latest escapade.</p> <p>Darius McCollum had been charged with criminal impersonation and grand larceny in his most recent arrest, a 2015 case in which he was caught behind the wheel of a Greyhound bus.</p> <p>On Monday, he said he was not criminally responsible by reason of mental disease or defect. He will be evaluated by psychiatrists, who will determine whether he is dangerously mentally ill, mentally ill or not mentally ill. If he is deemed dangerous, he will be confined in a secure facility for at least six months. If not, he could be sent to a clinic, where he would be able to see his mother.</p> <p>“I commandeered a bus,” McCollum said in court, admitting he posed as a U.S. Department of Homeland Security officer twice — both times the Greyhound workers believed him.</p> <p>McCollum, 52, has been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder, which often includes repetitive behaviors and a difficulty with impulse control. He is obsessed with buses and trains. He befriended engineers and pilots and first started hanging around the subway system as a child.</p> <p>He has memorized every subway line and every stop and can recite them on request. He knows mechanical details about how the subway trains and buses work, and he often knows how to fix problems.</p> <p>McCollum often would dress up as a transit worker just to be around trains. He wanted to work for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, but transit officials have long said they would not hire someone who had stolen a train, as he did at age 15 from Penn Station to the World Trade Center.</p> <p>Doctors who evaluated McCollum in his most recent case found he lacked the ability to understand the problem with his behavior.</p> <p>“The plea is in the best interest of justice, your honor,” Assistant District Attorney Christopher Myco said.</p>

	Despite McCollum's many convictions over the years, he'd never been sent to a mental health facility for treatment. His lawyer Sally Butler said this will be his first opportunity to really get help.
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HEADLINE	01/09 Police: university researcher shot officer
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/10a4aaf6664a4b46add3ba67ee13aa99/Police:-University-research-associate-shot-Kansas-officer
GIST	<p>TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — A research associate in Kansas State University's mechanical and nuclear engineering department has been charged with shooting and wounding a police officer.</p> <p>Riley County prosecutor Barry Wilkerson says 38-year-old Mark Harrison was charged Monday with three counts of attempted capital murder in the shooting Friday in Manhattan, Kansas. Harrison made a brief first appearance Monday and is being held in Riley County on \$6 million bond.</p> <p>Harrison's attorney, Barry Clark, did not immediately return a phone call seeking comment after the hearing.</p> <p>Riley County police said in a news release that Sgt. Pat Tiede was released from the hospital and is recovering at home. Tiede was wounded Friday afternoon while responding to a report of a domestic situation. Harrison surrendered after barricading himself inside a home for two hours.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/09 Guns sold by police at crime scenes
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/163c0a50c84347b69e9c71d4266b1d9e/A-look-at-guns-sold-by-police-that-ended-up-at-crime-scenes
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — A yearlong Associated Press analysis found more than a dozen firearms sold by law enforcement agencies in Washington state since 2010 later became evidence in new criminal investigations.</p> <p>Identifying guns sold by law enforcement and matching them to new crimes required extensive research and dozens of public records requests to individual agencies.</p> <p>Using those records, the AP created a database of almost 6,000 firearms sold by law enforcement since 2010. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives declined to release tracking information on guns associated with crimes, so the AP collected that information from individual agencies and compared it with its own database to find firearms with matching make, model, caliber and serial numbers.</p> <p>Below are details about guns sold by law enforcement that were later picked up at crime scenes:</p> <p>BABY SHOT IN CAR SEAT</p> <p>The Washington State Patrol traded a batch of crime guns with a firearms dealer in June 2010. The batch included a Lorcin L380 semi-automatic pistol. In April 2015, a gang member shot at a car carrying a couple and their year-old daughter. One of the bullets hit the child in the head and killed her. While searching a home frequented by the suspected shooter and many other gang members, the Kent Police Department found a Lorcin L380 semi-automatic pistol — the gun sold by the State Patrol.</p> <p>TEXT THREATS</p> <p>The Pierce County Sheriff's Office in April 2014 sold a list of guns at auction that included a Mossberg 12-gauge shotgun. In October 2016, Jaylen Bolar sent text messages to his mother, threatening to kill her</p>

and others. Angela Almo contacted a behavioral health center instead of the police because she knew her son had firearms, including a Mossberg 12-gauge shotgun and she feared he'd be killed in a standoff with authorities.

When the Tacoma police became involved, he denied it, but his aunt confirmed that she, too, had received threats. Robin Olson showed an officer her phone, which contained a message from Bolar asking his uncle to kill him because he was tired of living.

Bolar also threatened to kill a woman who used to be his boss. He was taken into custody, and a search of his home found two firearms in his bedroom. One was the Mossberg shotgun sold by the sheriff's office.

JUVENILES IN STOLEN CAR

The Aberdeen Police Department sold a Lorcin Model L380 pistol in February 2011. In May 2016, the Kent Police Department located a stolen vehicle parked at the Benson Village Apartments and found a gun under the seat — the Lorcin Model L380 pistol sold by Aberdeen police. The three juveniles who stole the car were convicted felons.

DRUNKEN FELON

The Kitsap County Sheriff's Office sold a Hi Point 9mm pistol in March 2014. In October 2015, the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office responded to a 911 call from a woman who said she heard what she thought was a gunshot and went outside to find her daughter's intoxicated boyfriend passed out on the front porch. When deputies arrived, they found a handgun, the Hi Point 9 mm pistol, on the ground next to the man. It was the gun sold by the Kitsap sheriff's office. A search found that the man was a convicted felon who wasn't permitted to have a gun. The deputy put the man in handcuffs and called for medical help.

PROHIBITED FROM HAVING GUN

The Washington State Patrol traded a Lorcin L380 semi-automatic pistol with a firearms dealer in June 2010. In May 2015, the Kent Police Department was investigating a 911 call and encountered four people outside the house. One of the men was prohibited from having a gun, but they found he was carrying a handgun, the Lorcin L380 semi-automatic pistol sold by the State Patrol. The gun had been reported stolen, and he was arrested.

A sales clerk hands a pistol, being sold on behalf of the Aberdeen police, to a customer before an auction. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson)

DRUG HOUSE ASSAULT

The Aberdeen Police Department traded a JC Higgins .22-caliber rifle with a firearms dealer in February 2011. In April 2015, the Yakima Police Department responded to a domestic violence assault involving a JC Higgins .22-caliber rifle with the same serial number. The dispute involved an elderly man who had handled his wife roughly and threatened her sister. The man was charged, and police took his firearm. In October 2015, Kent police searched a suspected drug house and arrested several people wanted on felony warrants. They found a .22 caliber rifle — the JC Higgins rifle sold by the Aberdeen police.

FACEBOOK POSTS ABOUT KILLING

The Thurston County Narcotics Task Force sold a Smith & Wesson pistol in August 2012. In October 2013, the Tacoma Police went to the University of Washington, Tacoma to investigate a report of a student who was posting photos of a gun on Facebook and said he had "vivid, colorful dreams of shooting and killing lots of people last night." Police found in his backpack a Smith and Wesson pistol, the one sold by the narcotics task force.

COCAINE PARTY FAVORS

The Bonney Lake Police Department in March 2011 traded a Davis Industries .380-caliber handgun with a firearms dealer who sold it to the public. In February 2012, Kent police stopped a man for an expired registration and discovered baggies of cocaine in his car. He said they were party favors. They also found his concealed handgun, the firearm sold by the police.

THREATS TO KILL

Longview Police Department sold a Davis Industries .22 caliber pistol in August 2016. The Thurston County Sheriff's Office responded to a 911 call in April 2017 from a man who said his father headed to a house with a gun and planned to threaten the occupants. Jesse Brown threatened to kill the men who lived there and was arrested. Officers confiscated his Davis Industries .22 caliber pistol — the one sold by Longview police — and 15 other firearms.

DRUNKEN FATHER

The Thurston County Sheriff's Office sold a Mossberg, Model 590, 12-gauge shotgun in December 2014. In March 2016, the Tacoma police responded to a call by a 12-year-old girl who said she and her sister fled their home because their father was drunk and was threatening to shoot his girlfriend and threatening to beat up one of the girls because he couldn't find his gun. The police later found a Mossberg, Model 590, 12-gauge shotgun — the gun sold by the Sheriff's Office — in the bathtub.

MAN'S SUICIDE

The Washington State Patrol traded a batch of guns to a firearms vendor in June 2010 that included a Smith and Wesson .9mm handgun. In September 2014, the Yakima Police Department responded to a report of a suicidal man with a gun. They arrived to find 24-year-old Kyle Juhl with a gunshot wound to the head. He used a Smith and Wesson .9mm handgun, the one sold by the State Patrol.

MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCY

The Thurston County Narcotics Task Force sold a Springfield Armory .40-caliber pistol in December 2013. In February 2014, the Seattle Police Department helped take firearms from a man who was having a mental health emergency and was at the Involuntary Treatment Act court. One of the guns was the Springfield Armory .40-caliber pistol sold by the task force.

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HEADLINE	01/09 Ex-frat members jailed in hazing death
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/523de15e0a1c48098d2359210e20850b/4-ex-fraternity-members-get-jail-in-pledge's-hazing-death
GIST	<p>STROUDSBURG, Pa. (AP) — Four New York City men were given jail sentences Monday in the death of an 18-year-old fraternity pledge during a 2013 hazing ritual in Pennsylvania, with a judge saying she believes they succumbed to “brainwashing” and “indoctrination” that is rampant at fraternities around the nation.</p> <p>Baruch College freshman Chun “Michael” Deng was blindfolded, forced to wear a heavy backpack and then repeatedly tackled as part of the fraternity’s Crossing Over initiation ceremony. He was knocked unconscious and later died at a hospital.</p> <p>Police charged 37 people with crimes ranging from aggravated assault to hazing to third-degree murder.</p> <p>“Not one person out of 37 picked up a telephone and called an ambulance. I cannot wrap my head around it,” Monroe County President Judge Margherita Patti-Worthington said. “So there’s something greater</p>

going on here, and I think it's probably really prevalent. We see across the country these issues in fraternities."

The four defendants sentenced Monday, Kenny Kwan, Charles Lai, Raymond Lam and Sheldon Wong, pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter, hindering apprehension and other charges.

Kwan got 12 to 24 months in county jail. Lam and Wong were sentenced to 10 to 24 months each. Lai, who spent 342 days in jail after he was unable to make bail, was sentenced to time served.

All four defendants apologized, a few of them tearfully.

Earlier Monday, the Pi Delta Psi fraternity was banned from Pennsylvania for 10 years and was ordered to pay a fine of more than \$110,000 for its role in Deng's death.

The judge and a prosecutor slammed Pi Delta Psi for calling itself a victim of rogue fraternity members, saying the fraternity tolerated and even encouraged hazing for years.

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HEADLINE	01/08 Federal judge dismisses Bundy case
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/01/08/charges-against-rancher-cliven-bundy-three-others-are-dismissed.html
GIST	<p>A federal judge dismissed all charges against rancher Cliven Bundy, his two sons and another man on Monday.</p> <p>U.S. District Judge Gloria Navarro cited "flagrant prosecutorial misconduct" in her decision to dismiss all charges against the Nevada rancher and three others.</p> <p>Navarro on Dec. 20 declared a mistrial in the high-profile Bundy case. It was only the latest, stunning development in the saga of the Nevada rancher, and served as a repudiation of the federal government. Navarro accused prosecutors of willfully withholding evidence from Bundy's lawyers, in violation of the federal Brady rule.</p> <p>The Brady rule, named after the landmark 1963 Supreme Court case known as Brady v. Maryland, holds that failure to disclose such evidence violates a defendant's right to due process.</p> <p>"In this case the failures to comply with Brady were exquisite, extraordinary," said Fox News legal analyst Judge Andrew Napolitano. "The judge exercised tremendous patience."</p> <p>The 71-year-old Bundy's battle with the federal government eventually led to what became known as the Bundy standoff of 2014. But it began long before that.</p> <p>In the early 1990s, the U.S. government limited grazing rights on federal lands in order to protect the desert tortoise habitat. In 1993, Bundy, in protest, refused to renew his permit for cattle grazing, and continued grazing his livestock on these public lands. He didn't recognize the authority of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) over the sovereign state of Nevada.</p> <p>The federal courts sided with the BLM, and Bundy didn't seem to have a legal leg to stand on. Nevertheless, the rancher and the government continued this dispute for 20 years, and Bundy ended up owing over \$1 million in fees and fines.</p> <p>Things came to a head in 2014, when officials planned to capture and impound cattle trespassing on government land. Protesters, many armed, tried to block the authorities, which led to a standoff. For a time, they even shut down a portion of I-15, the main interstate highway running through Southern Nevada.</p>

Tensions escalated until officials, fearing for the general safety, announced they would return Bundy's cattle and suspend the roundup.

Afterward, Bundy continued to graze his cattle and not pay fees. He and his fellow protesters were heroes to some, but criminals to the federal government. Bundy, along with others seen as leaders of the standoff, including sons Ammon and Ryan, were charged with numerous felonies, including conspiracy, assault on a federal officer and using a firearm in a violent crime. They faced many years in prison.

The Bundy case finally began in late October, 2017. But just two months later, it ended with Navarro angry, the feds humiliated and Bundy – at least to his supporters – vindicated.

In fact, Navarro had suspended the trial earlier and warned of a mistrial when prosecutors released information after a discovery deadline. Overall, the government was late in handing over more than 3,300 pages of documents. Further, some defense requests for information that ultimately came to light had been ridiculed by prosecutors as “fantastical” and a “fishing expedition.”

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HEADLINE	01/08 Feds: \$22M cocaine hidden in furniture
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/philadelphia-22-million-in-cocaine-seized-hidden-in-furniture/
GIST	<p>PHILADELPHIA -- Federal customs officials in Philadelphia say they recently discovered more than 700 pounds of cocaine hidden inside bedroom furniture and kitchen cabinets that were shipped from Puerto Rico, making it the area's largest illicit drug bust in a decade.</p> <p>The drugs, which had a street value of about \$22 million, were seized in November by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers from the Area Port of Philadelphia.</p> <p>The drugs were found hidden inside false walls of the furniture. More than 250 bricks of a white powdery substance that field tested positive for cocaine were concealed in the compartments.</p> <p>"Customs and Border Protection knows that transnational drug trafficking organizations will take advantage of natural disasters, and in this case an island struggling to recovering from a crippling hurricane, to smuggle dangerous drugs to our nation's mainland," Joseph Martella of CBP said in a statement. "CBP officers remain ever vigilant to interdict narcotics loads, and we are pleased to have stopped this deadly poison shipment before it could hurt our communities."</p> <p>The furniture was searched after officers detected something unusual about one of the shipping containers. An investigation is ongoing.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/09 Singapore: 17 arrests in Shell oil heist
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/world/asia/as-singapore-oil-theft/2018/01/09/id/835921/
GIST	<p>SINGAPORE (AP) — Singapore police have arrested 17 men suspected of involvement in stealing oil from the largest Shell refinery in the world.</p> <p>Police said Tuesday that they also seized \$2.3 million and an oil tanker in connection with the theft, which was first reported in August.</p> <p>Singapore media reported that that nine of the men were charged with criminal breach of trust and could face up to 15 years in jail if convicted. Two Vietnamese were accused in court of receiving stolen goods and could face up to five years in jail, local media said.</p>

	<p>Shell has not said how much oil was taken. It said in a statement that those detained included "a limited number of Shell employees."</p> <p>A police statement said the 17 men, aged 30-63, were detained Sunday. It said police are seeking to freeze the suspects' bank accounts.</p> <p>The oil came from Shell's Bukom industrial site, located on an island southwest of Singapore. It is the company's largest petrochemical production and export center in the Asia-Pacific.</p> <p>Theft of oil and of oil tankers has been a chronic problem in piracy-prone Southeast Asia for years.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Somaliland passes first law against rape
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-42604496
GIST	<p>For the first time in its history, the self-declared republic of Somaliland has passed a law against rape.</p> <p>In the past, a victim's family could force them to marry their rapist to avoid being shamed.</p> <p>Rapists now stand to face at least 30 years in prison.</p> <p>Somaliland declared itself independent from Somalia in 1991 but is not internationally recognised as a country. There is still no law against rape in Somalia.</p> <p>Somaliland's speaker of parliament, Bashe Mohamed Farah, told the BBC that rape cases have risen and he hoped the new law would help stop that trend.</p> <p>"Nowadays we have seen even people carrying out gang rapes," he said.</p> <p>"The main emphasis of the new act is to completely stop rape."</p> <p>The new law has come in after years of lobbying by children and women's rights advocates.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Teen admits London acid attacks
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-42611019
GIST	<p>A 17-year-old boy has pleaded guilty to carrying out acid attacks on six moped riders to steal their bikes.</p> <p>Derryck John, from Croydon, appeared at Wood Green Crown Court and admitted targeting the riders in the north and east of London on 13 July.</p> <p>He sprayed the riders in the face with a noxious liquid and stole two mopeds before trying to take another four.</p> <p>Earlier reporting restrictions preventing John from being identified because of his age were lifted.</p> <p>Police said one attack had left a rider with "life-changing injuries".</p> <p>John had been due to stand trial after he initially denied six counts of throwing a corrosive liquid with intent to "disable, burn, maim, disfigure or cause grievous bodily harm", two counts of robbery and four counts of attempted robbery.</p> <p>Judge Noel Lucas QC told Wood Green Crown Court there was an "overwhelming, huge public interest"</p>

	<p>in identifying the teenager despite his age after he pleaded guilty to the total of 12 counts.</p> <p>John was arrested at about 03:00 on 14 July, the court heard.</p> <p>Another unidentified person is listed on the indictment as also having been involved in the attacks.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/08 Man arrested for stabbing L.A. sheriff
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/01/08/man-accused-stabbing-los-angeles-sheriffs-detective.html
GIST	<p>SANTA CLARITA, Calif. – A man was arrested Monday after he walked up to a Los Angeles County sheriff's detective outside a fast food restaurant, asked him if he was a law enforcement officer and then stabbed him in the chest, investigators said.</p> <p>The detective was walking out of a Jack in the Box restaurant in the Canyon Country neighborhood of Santa Clarita around 10 a.m. when he was approached by a man who asked him if he was a sheriff's deputy, said Capt. Darren Harris, a sheriff's department spokesman. When the detective said yes, the man immediately stabbed him in the chest and then ran off, he said.</p> <p>The 26-year veteran detective, who investigates sex crimes, was able to make his way back to his car and called for help, Harris said.</p> <p>After a two-hour manhunt, deputies found Donald Chinchilla, 21, hiding in the backyard of a home a few blocks from the restaurant.</p> <p>He was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder, Harris said. A telephone number for Chinchilla could not immediately be located in public records.</p> <p>The detective, who was not identified, was taken to a hospital and is expected to survive, authorities said.</p>
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Event Calendar

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Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php

Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000

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**indicates new event/new information added during reporting week

Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	01/02 New King Co. Sheriff sworn in
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/new-sheriff-in-town-mitzi-johanknecht-sworn-in-as-king-county-sheriff
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Looking out at a crowd of deputies dressed in their dress uniforms, Mitzi Johanknecht recited the deputies' oath.</p> <p>Tuesday was supposed to be Johanknecht's day – her swearing in as King County's newest sheriff, her day to move into her corner office and the day she wears her new uniform for the first time – instead, she said she wanted to share the limelight.</p> <p>“As a leader it takes a huge team and I think you saw a portion of the 1,100 employees present today stand up and recommit to you as the community, to the other elected in the room to work cooperatively,” Johanknecht said, standing at a podium in the the largest courtroom in the King County Courthouse.</p> <p>During the swearing in ceremony she asked deputies the rank of major and higher to join her in the front of the courtroom. She asked other deputies and employees to stand as well.</p> <p>“I want everyone to take this oath with us,” Johanknecht said.</p> <p>Presiding Superior Court Judge Laura Inveen swore Johanknecht in as Sheriff. Johanknecht's wife, Maureen Warren, pinned on her badge.</p> <p>“My wife is the kindest person I have ever met in my life. I mean really kind, really compassionate and she's a fabulous listener,” Warren said.</p> <p>Johanknecht, a more than 30-year veteran of the sheriff's office, won a bitterly contested election against incumbent John Urquhart. The campaigns made allegations against the other; Johanknecht said she never spoke to Urquhart after the election.</p> <p>Although Urquhart was not at Tuesday's swearing in ceremony, Johanknecht thanked him in her remarks to the crowd.</p> <p>“I want to take a moment to thank Sheriff Urquhart to his five years of service and his commitment to the Sheriff's Office,” Johanknecht said. “I didn't want the day to pass without acknowledging that.”</p> <p>Johanknecht said that among her first orders of business is to meet with community members to see how she and her deputies can serve. She said she also wants to get deputies trained in using less-lethal forms of force.</p> <p>“They have the pepper spray, they have the Taser, they have their firearm but what is in-between there, one of the tools, is what's called less-lethal shotgun and that fires a beanbag round, or sponge round,” Johanknecht said. “We can work toward avoiding lethal force and have those options.”</p> <p>While Johanknecht was sworn in Seattle police Deputy Chief Carmen Best was sworn in by Mayor Jenny Durkan as Seattle's interim chief of police just a few miles away.</p> <p>King County Executive Dow Constantine said he hopes Johanknecht will bring stability to the sheriff's office.</p>

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HEADLINE	01/02 SPOG files 2nd unfair labor complaint
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/seattle-police-guild-files-2nd-unfair-labor-complaint-related-to-reforms/
GIST	<p>The Seattle Police Officers' Guild (SPOG) has accused the city of "acting in bad faith" when the council passed sweeping accountability legislation this past spring that changes who and how the city investigates allegations of police misconduct — issues the union says should be negotiated.</p> <p>It is the second complaint filed by SPOG with the Public Employees Relations Commission (PERC) in Olympia involving officer accountability. Seattle is urging a federal judge to find it in compliance with court-ordered police reforms contained in a 2012 consent decree between the city and the Department of Justice stemming from allegations of excessive use of force and biased policing.</p> <p>SPOG's first complaint, filed last summer, challenged an executive order issued by former Mayor Ed Murray directing the police department to begin equipping patrol officers with body cameras. It remains pending before the three-member commission, an independent state agency charged with resolving disputes involving the state's approximately 350,000 public employees.</p> <p>The most recent complaint, filed this past week, focuses on changes made to the officer-disciplinary procedures at the core of groundbreaking accountability legislation passed by the Seattle City Council in May.</p> <p>Based on the complaint, the guild seems particularly chafed at the establishment of a powerful civilian inspector general who, beyond overseeing disciplinary matters, would also review internal workings throughout the department. In a six-page complaint, the guild outlines more than 40 changes to the current internal investigation and disciplinary mechanisms it believes should be the subject of collective bargaining.</p> <p>SPOG President Kevin Stuckey said that the guild is "on board" with most of the reforms, but that the city is trying to make an end-run around the collective-bargaining process. The department's rank-and-file officers have been working without a formal contract since 2014.</p> <p>"We've said all along, 'Let's sit down like grown-ups,'" Stuckey said Tuesday. "We don't want to be a stumbling block to reforms. But you have to play by the rules."</p> <p>Ian Warner, counsel for Mayor Jenny Durkan, said the office was reviewing the complaint and declined to comment further. A message seeking comment from Councilwoman M. Lorena González, who was a key sponsor of the accountability legislation, was not immediately returned Tuesday.</p> <p>Another area of concern for SPOG in the legislation outlined in the six-page PERC complaint is the use of civilian investigators replacing sworn officers in a newly formed Office of Police Accountability, which would be under civilian control.</p> <p>The city — and, in particular, the federal judge overseeing implementation of the consent decree — has said police reforms will not be "held hostage" by the guild as it tries to win wages and concessions for its officers in exchange for supporting the reforms.</p> <p>Stuckey said those concerns are ironic in light of the recent tentative contract with the Seattle Police Management Association (SPMA), which represents 74 SPD captains and lieutenants. They have agreed to support the accountability legislation in exchange for raises — retroactive to January 2014 — amounting to as much as \$17,000 a year and a new contract next year.</p> <p>In exchange, the SPMA agreed to drop its own unfair-labor practitioners complaint against the city.</p>

	<p>The city has maintained that some of the changes do not need SPOG's approval, and has said it would sit down to negotiate those areas covered by the contract.</p> <p>"Right now, we just disagree with what is mandatory for bargaining," Stuckey said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/03 Disaster declared over Calif. wildfire
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/ded4e6ec9c364c009b78c367abbf6495/President-declares-disaster-over-deadly-California-wildfire
GIST	<p>VENTURA, Calif. (AP) — President Donald Trump on Tuesday declared a major disaster in California over a wildfire that destroyed more than 1,000 buildings as fierce winds whipped it through Ventura and Santa Barbara counties last month.</p> <p>The declaration makes federal funding available to state and local governments and some nonprofit organizations for emergency work in those counties and statewide for work to reduce hazards related to the fire, according to a White House statement.</p> <p>The Thomas fire that began on Dec. 4 is the largest recorded in the state. It was 92 percent contained on Tuesday. Firefighters were still putting out hot spots and smoldering areas.</p> <p>The fire covered more than 440 square miles (1,140 sq. kilometers), killed two people, destroyed entire neighborhoods, threatened coastal foothill communities, ravaged wilderness areas and cast a pall of smoke that shuttered businesses in downtown Santa Barbara.</p> <p>Firefighting costs alone have approached \$200 million.</p> <p>The disaster declaration means the federal government may cover 75 percent of those costs and the costs of recovering from the blaze, such as removing vast amounts of debris in fire-denuded areas that could be hit with flash floods and debris flows if winter rains arrive.</p> <p>After a flight over the devastated area on Tuesday, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen M. Nielsen said the president's declaration will help with rebuilding from the fire, which burned more than 700 homes along with other buildings.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Tsunami of store closures about to hit
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/companies/a-tsunami-of-store-closures-is-about-to-hit-the-us---and-its-expected-to-eclipse-the-retail-carnage-of-2017/ar-BBHJnok?li=BBnb7Kz&ocid=HPCDHP
GIST	<p>Retailers are bracing for a fresh wave of store closures in 2018 that's expected to eclipse the rash of closures that rocked the industry last year.</p> <p>"Landlords are panicking," said Larry Perkins, CEO and founder of the advisory firm SierraConstellation Partners. "The last year was pretty apocalyptic from a retail standpoint, and the macro issues haven't changed. There will continue to be a high degree of bankruptcies and store closures."</p> <p>2017 was a record year for both store closures and retail bankruptcies.</p> <p>Dozens of retailers including Macy's, Sears, and JCPenney shuttered an estimated total of 9,000 stores — far exceeding recessionary levels — and 50 chains filed for bankruptcy over the course of the year.</p> <p>But there's still a glut of retail space in the US, and the fallout is far from over.</p>

The number of store closures in the US is expected to jump at least 33% to more than 12,000 in 2018, and another 25 major retailers could file for bankruptcy next year, according to estimates by the commercial real estate firm Cushman & Wakefield.

Nearly two dozen major chains including Walgreens, Gap, and Gymboree have already announced plans to close more than 3,600 stores next year.

Many more announcements on closures and bankruptcies are expected in the coming months.

The start of the year is a popular time to announce store closures and bankruptcies because retailers are typically flush with cash after the busy holiday season — and closing stores and filing for bankruptcy are costly.

Among the companies most likely to file for bankruptcy within the next year are Sears, The Bon-Ton Stores, Bebe Stores, Destination Maternity Corp., and Stein Mart, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence.

Last year's record-high store closures, combined with an even higher rate of closures in 2018, will push hundreds of low-performing shopping malls to the brink of death.

The commercial real estate firm CoStar has estimated that nearly a quarter of malls in the US, or roughly 310 of the nation's 1,300 shopping malls, are at high risk of losing an anchor tenant.

Anchor tenants are retailers — like Macy's and JCPenney — that occupy the large, multistory buildings at mall entrances.

The loss of even one anchor tenant can trigger a decades-long downward spiral for mall owners.

That's because the malls don't only lose the income and shopper traffic from that store's business. The closure often triggers co-tenancy clauses that allow the remaining mall tenants to exercise their right to terminate their leases or renegotiate the terms, typically with a period of lower rents, until another retailer moves into the vacant anchor space.

That's good news for retailers looking to grow their physical assets — it means they are more likely to score low rent and favorable lease terms.

But it's terrible news for retail landlords, some of whom are now trying to stop the bleeding by suing the companies that are closing stores.

Simon Property Group, one of the biggest mall operators in the country, sued Starbucks this year after the coffee chain said it that it planned to close all 379 stores in its Teavana chain, 77 of which are located in Simon Property Group malls.

The mall owner demanded that Starbucks keep running the tea shops located in its malls, arguing in part that their closure would reduce traffic to surrounding stores.

A judge ruled in Simon Property Group's favor in December and ordered Starbucks to keep operating the Teavana stores in question.

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HEADLINE	01/02 DuPont curve long known as obstacle
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article192557089.html
GIST	The curve where Amtrak Cascades 501 derailed Dec. 18, killing three people, was identified years ago as an obstacle to Washington state's dream of creating high-speed rail.

The corridor between Lakewood and Nisqually “includes unsuitable sharp curvature,” said the state’s long-range plan, written in 2006. “A new connection, largely on structure because of differences in elevation, with a speed limit of one hundred mph will be required.”

Yet the curve remains, a symbol of unsteady political support in the United States for rapid-rail infrastructure.

Even with \$800 million in Obama administration stimulus money, Washington state didn’t rebuild it.

The state decided instead to spread that cash among 20 projects, mostly to make its 79-mph corridor through Western Washington more reliable. Those projects include landslide prevention in Mukilteo, new Port of Vancouver, Washington, freight tracks to clear shipments out of the way of Amtrak Cascades, and renovating historic King Street Station in Seattle.

To straighten the DuPont curve and adjoining trestle over Interstate 5 would have driven the total cost to at least \$412 million for the 14.5-mile passenger-rail corridor that opened this month from the Tacoma Dome to Lakewood and DuPont. That’s more than double the \$181 million actual cost to rebuild the century-old segment with the 30-mph curve left in place.

Amtrak Cascades 501 was going 78 mph in a 30-mph area when the lead locomotive jumped off the tracks to the right, where the rails curve toward an I-5 overcrossing. The engineer, who was accompanied by another crew member, didn’t slow the train, for reasons yet to be determined.

Washington’s incremental projects are a far cry from true high-speed rail, defined in the United States as reaching a 110- to 150-mph top speed in regional corridors — achieved only on two Amtrak lines in the Northeast, while construction is just beginning in California on a 200-mph system.

Worldwide there are more than 50 corridors 150 mph or quicker, including the famous TGV in France. Japanese Shinkansen trains cruise at 200 mph, and last month, China Railway opened a 155-mph line.

In the past decade, Congress named the Northwest one of five U.S. high-speed rail regions, and Washington state wrote its \$6.5 billion master plan. But even then, the DuPont curve appeared only in a technical appendix. And the straightening was proposed for performance, not to clear an urgent hazard.

Gov. Jay Inslee has discussed going beyond that plan, to consider a bullet train, averaging 220 to 250 mph, between Vancouver, B.C., Seattle and Portland. A state-funded \$300,000 study describes a \$24 billion to \$42 billion construction cost, but it says enough people would ride to break even on operations.

No promise made

A Wall Street Journal story Dec. 22 said the DuPont curve was to be removed “in the original plans.” It portrays the site as an example of neglected areas around the country, some designed around the Civil War era, that afflict rail service today.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), which owns and subsidizes Amtrak Cascades, replied on its blog that the 2006 document is merely intended to describe a series of building blocks, to be added gradually, on a limitless budget.

“It is common for railroads to have areas of reduced speeds due to curves or other factors, as found along the entire Cascades route,” according to the post.

WSDOT said in a statement to The Seattle Times on Thursday, Dec. 28, that the new route “is safe for passenger rail operation.”

“It received all necessary approvals for the design, construction and upgrades that were necessary to open

for operation. Multiple tests occurred over the last year to ensure tracks and signals functioned properly, equipment was certified to operate on the corridor, and train crews were familiar with the new route. All tests were completed successfully.”

Amtrak hasn’t answered news-media questions about the quality of crew training, an issue the National Transportation Safety Board will examine.

The 2006 plan envisioned trains cruising up to 110 mph from Blaine to Marysville, slowing through the Puget Sound urban core, then again reaching 110 mph in most places from Lakewood to the Oregon border.

Some funds became available through the \$831-billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, known as “economic stimulus” money. Washington won \$800-million for rail, trailing only California and Illinois.

The state’s stimulus contracts, released through a public-records request, show the state made no promises to change the curve, nor did it promise to create a 100-mph corridor.

Former WSDOT Secretary Paula Hammond said she doesn’t recall anyone discussing the DuPont curve during her leadership, from 2007-13.

Bruce Agnew, director of the Cascadia Center think tank, recalls the state “talking about very tough negotiations in 2008 and 2009,” over where to spend stimulus funds, involving BNSF Railway and the Federal Railroad Administration.

Officials weren’t going to spend money to straighten the curve if that drained money for the new Tacoma-Lakewood bypass.

“This is their centerpiece,” Agnew said.

WSDOT rail director Ron Pate has declined interview requests since the crash. Spokeswoman Barbara LaBoe says the state determined it could leave the slow curve while still meeting its contractual commitment to the federal government to provide six daily round trips for Cascades by 2017, and an 88 percent on-time performance, with available stimulus funds.

The state kept that commitment until Cascades 501 derailed. Trains have since reverted to the waterfront route out of “sensitivity” to crash victims, rail customers and the public, LaBoe said. Trains will enter the new route once an automatic braking system, called positive train control, is ready, sometime in 2018.

The new route through Lakewood is designed to save 10 minutes compared with the former alignment along the Tacoma Narrows. Passengers also would be delayed less often by freight trains.

\$230 million

If the 2006 estimates were right, straightening the curve would have required roughly \$230-million. That’s comparable to Sound Transit’s cost per mile of elevated light rail, or half the cost of WSDOT’s two-lane I-5 widening plan at Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

But the trains still couldn’t exceed 79 mph, when continuing north through communities such as Lakewood, without a host of additional improvements.

Lloyd Flem, executive director of the rail supporters group All Aboard Washington, lost two friends in the crash. But he said last week keeping the curve was the correct, fiscally conservative move. “I’ll roll through a curve at 30 mph to save the taxpayers \$200-million,” he said.

WSDOT anticipates it will straighten the track in some big future phase, allowing an increase to eight

	<p>round-trip Cascades trains daily reaching 110 mph, LaBoe said.</p> <p>“I don’t think we have a year put on it. A lot of it depends on funding availability,” she said.</p> <p>President Donald Trump tweeted about the Cascades 501 crash as a reason to improve U.S. infrastructure, but his recent budget proposals reduce transit funds, calling those a strictly local concern. His administration Friday declared it won’t carry out an Obama-era agreement to fund half of a new Hudson River train tunnel. No subsidies are forthcoming for new high-speed rail.</p> <p>If Washington state ever aims for triple-digit speeds, said Agnew, of Cascadia Center, another tight crossing would need to be rebuilt, over I-5 between Marysville and the Tulalip Indian Reservation.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Growing protests rattle Iran govt., public
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/streets-tehran-iranians-feel-protesters-pain-52097822
GIST	<p>As Iranians take to the streets in the biggest demonstrations in nearly a decade, residents of the increasingly tense capital say they sympathize with the demonstrators' economic grievances and anger at official corruption.</p> <p>The Associated Press spoke to Iranians in Tehran on Tuesday, the sixth day of protests that have seen at least 21 people killed and hundreds arrested. The protests, which have erupted in several cities, are the largest since those that followed the disputed 2009 presidential election.</p> <p>Residents cast nervous looks at the growing street presence of police and Basij, a volunteer force that played a key role in the government crackdown that ended the demonstrations nine years ago. But many residents said soaring unemployment and rising prices had driven people to the point of desperation.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Southern Calif. faces mudslide danger
SOURCE	http://www.cnn.com/2018/01/02/us/california-thomas-fire-mudslide-threat/index.html
GIST	<p>Ventura, California (CNN)The frightening hiss and crackle of the massive Thomas Fire in Southern California has been replaced by the loud droning of heavy equipment below the burn area.</p> <p>Public work crews in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties are frantically clearing out every debris basin and storm drain possible, because the fire has left behind another threat -- mudslides.</p> <p>"The Thomas Fire burned all of our front country range here," said Tom Fayram, Santa Barbara's deputy director of public works.</p> <p>"All these hills normally have a protective cover of chaparral. That's all gone. Almost 100% gone," he said.</p> <p>What's left is black-gray hillside that officials and residents alike fear will become ashy waves of floodwater with the first rain of a so far bone-dry season.</p> <p>Ventura County officials predict any rain will pour twice the usual amount of water into flood channels because of the burned hills.</p> <p>Work crews are cutting down dead or doomed trees and bulldozers are scooping up debris near a cement-ringed storm drain large enough for a human to walk through.</p>

	<p>They are taking no chances in flood channels, hauling away anything that could block the drain and cause pooling, then flooding all around.</p> <p>While such cleanup occurs before every rainy season, the scale of the Thomas Fire has cranked up the intensity.</p> <p>"Generally we are dealing with hundreds of acres (burned), not in the thousands or hundred thousands," said Jeff Pratt, director of public works in Ventura County.</p> <p>"This is an order of magnitude or two greater than anything we've ever dealt with."</p> <p>The Thomas Fire is the largest wildfire in state history, having burned around 282,000 acres since it began December 4. It was 92% contained Monday; officials don't expect full containment until later this month.</p> <p>Both Santa Barbara and Ventura counties have experienced fire and then flood after rains before.</p> <p>The National Weather Service office in Oxnard predicts lower than average rainfall for Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties for the next three months.</p> <p>But forecasters say it takes only one storm with a lot of rain in a short amount of time to mush up fire-stricken hillsides and start a slide.</p> <p>"A typical threshold would be about a half an inch of rain," Robbie Monroe of the National Weather Service Oxnard office told CNN.</p> <p>"About a half an inch per hour can start to produce issues, mudslides "</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Iran leader blames protests on 'enemies'
SOURCE	http://www.cnn.com/2018/01/02/middleeast/iran-protests/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei blamed Iran's "enemies" on Tuesday for stirring up unrest in the country, as the death toll from days of anti-government protests climbed to 21.</p> <p>In his first remarks since the demonstrations erupted last Thursday, Khamenei accused the nation's enemies of "joining forces" and blamed them for the protests that have turned violent.</p> <p>"The enemy is waiting for an opportunity, for a flaw, through which they can enter. Look at these events over the last few days. All those who are against the Islamic Republic -- those who have money, those who have the politics, those who have the weapons, those who have the intelligence -- they have all joined forces in order to create problems for the Islamic Republic and the Islamic Revolution," he said, without naming any particular country.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Another NYC bldg. blaze; 16 injured
SOURCE	https://nypost.com/2018/01/02/six-alarm-blaze-in-the-bronx-injures-at-least-a-dozen/
GIST	<p>Sixteen people were injured early Tuesday in a seven-alarm blaze that swept through a four-story apartment building in The Bronx, officials said.</p> <p>The fire erupted about 5:30 a.m. in a first-floor furniture store at 1547 Commonwealth Ave. in the Van Nest section, the FDNY said.</p> <p>The blaze quickly spread to the upper floors, leaving one person seriously injured while 15 others suffered</p>

	<p>non-life threatening injuries, officials said.</p> <p>Firefighters broke windows to get residents out of the building as the fire continued to rage in the upper floors.</p> <p>One woman ran down the hall banging on doors to alert her neighbors, according to WABC.</p> <p>Another resident escaped with her two children and their dog. She was getting ready for work when she smelled smoke.</p> <p>“I woke up my husband, my kids and said listen there’s a fire in the building,” she told WABC. “By the time we opened the door in the hallway, there was black smoke.”</p> <p>The displaced residents were placed on an MTA bus so they could keep warm while firefighters continued battling the blaze.</p> <p>This fire comes just days after 12 people were killed at 2363 Prospect Ave. in The Bronx – the city’s deadliest fire in more than a quarter-century.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Snohomish Co: 5 flu-related deaths
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/snohomish-county-reports-five-flu-related-deaths/281-504300072
GIST	<p>Five people living in Snohomish County have died from flu-related illnesses.</p> <p>The Snohomish County Health District reports the deaths all occurred during December, and each person had underlying health conditions.</p> <p>Ages of the five victims range from the 40s to 90s.</p> <p>The five people lived across the county; one in Bothell, one in Everett, one in Edmonds and two in unincorporated Snohomish County.</p> <p>“We are seeing an increase in hospitalizations and flu cases reported by clinics, but it’s not too late to get your flu shots,” said Dr. Mark Beatty, health officer for the Snohomish Health District.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Judge orders release Iraq immigrants
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-ruling/u-s-judge-orders-government-to-release-iraqis-or-grant-bond-hearings-idUSKBN1ES01D
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A U.S. judge ordered the government on Tuesday to either release Iraqi immigrants it arrested last year or grant them bond hearings, in the latest judicial curb on the Trump administration’s efforts to tighten U.S. immigration.</p> <p>Last year the federal government detained hundreds of Iraqi immigrants who had been ordered deported years ago due to criminal convictions. Iraq until recently had refused to take them back, but struck a deal with the United States in March to repatriate its citizens, sparking the immigration sweeps.</p> <p>The Iraqis and civil rights groups representing them sued the federal government. U.S. District Judge Mark Goldsmith, in Detroit, had previously halted the deportation of the Iraqis, many of whom are Christian, who argued they would face persecution if they were sent back to Iraq.</p>

	In his ruling on Tuesday, Goldsmith said that any of the Iraqis held for six months or longer must either be released or granted a bond hearing before an immigration judge within 30 days.
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HEADLINE	01/03 Palestinians condemn aid halt as blackmail
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-palestinians-aid-reaction/palestinians-condemn-trump-aid-halt-threat-mixed-reaction-in-israel-idUSKBN1ES0IM
GIST	<p>RAMALLAH, West Bank (Reuters) - Palestinians condemned as blackmail on Wednesday U.S. President Donald Trump's threat to withhold future aid payments over what he called the Palestinians' unwillingness to talk peace with Israel.</p> <p>Trump drew praise from a cabinet minister in Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government but a warning from a former Israeli peace negotiator of the dangers in cutting off financial assistance to the Palestinians.</p> <p>On Twitter on Tuesday, Trump said that Washington gives Palestinians "HUNDRED OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS a year and get no appreciation or respect. They don't even want to negotiate a long overdue peace treaty with Israel ... with the Palestinians no longer willing to talk peace, why should we make any of these massive future payments to them?"</p> <p>Hanan Ashrawi, a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization's executive committee, said in response: "We will not be blackmailed."</p> <p>Palestinian anger at Trump is already high over his Dec. 6 recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, a declaration that also generated outrage across the Arab world and concern among Washington's Western allies.</p> <p>Commenting on Trump's tweets, Nabil Abu Rdainah, a spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, said: "Jerusalem is not for sale, neither for gold nor for silver."</p> <p>Abu Rdainah said the Palestinians were not opposed to returning to peace talks that collapsed in 2014, but only on the basis of establishing a state of their own along the lines that existed before Israel captured the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 war.</p> <p>"If the United States is keen about peace and about its interests it must abide by that," he said.</p> <p>Israel, which withdrew troops and settlers from the Gaza Strip in 2005, has called the pre-1967 war West Bank boundaries indefensible and has pledged to hold on to all of Jerusalem forever.</p> <p>A report prepared for the U.S. Congress in December 2016 by the U.S. Congressional Research Service said annual U.S. economic support to the West Bank and Gaza Strip has averaged around \$400 million since fiscal 2008.</p> <p>Much of the money has gone toward U.S. Agency for International Development-administered project assistance and the rest toward budget support for the Palestinian Authority (PA), which administers limited self-rule in the Palestinian territories under interim peace agreements.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/01 Commercial air travel 2017 safest ever
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/airplane-mode/commercial-air-travel-2017-was-safest-ever-travel-group-says-n833866
GIST	WASHINGTON — Airlines recorded zero accident deaths in commercial passenger jets last year,

according to a Dutch consulting firm and an aviation safety group that tracks crashes, making 2017 the safest year on record for commercial air travel.

Dutch aviation consulting firm To70 and the Aviation Safety Network both reported Monday there were no commercial passenger jet fatalities in 2017. "2017 was the safest year for aviation ever," said Adrian Young of To70.

To70 estimated that the fatal accident rate for large commercial passenger flights is 0.06 per million flights, or one fatal accident for every 16 million flights.

The Aviation Safety Network also reported there were no commercial passenger jet deaths in 2017, but 10 fatal airliner accidents resulting in 44 fatalities onboard and 35 persons on the ground, including cargo planes and commercial passenger turbo prop aircraft.

That figure includes 12 people killed on Sunday when a Nature Air Cessna 208B Grand Caravan aircraft crashed minutes after takeoff into a mountainous area off the beach town of Punta Islita, Costa Rica.

In comparison, there were 16 accidents and 303 deaths in 2016 among airliners.

The Aviation Safety Network said 2017 was "the safest year ever, both by the number of fatal accidents as well as in terms of fatalities."

Over the last two decades aviation deaths around the world have been steadily falling. As recently as 2005, there were 1,015 deaths aboard commercial passenger flights worldwide, the Aviation Safety Network said.

The United States last recorded a fatal airline passenger jet crash in February 2009, when Colgan Air Flight 3407 crashed short of the runway in Clarence Center, New York, killing 49 onboard and one person on the ground.

In 2016, 412 people were killed in the United States in aviation accidents - nearly all in general aviation accidents and none on commercial passenger airlines.

The last fatal passenger jet airliner accident worldwide took place in November 2016 near Medellin, Colombia and the last commercial passenger aircraft crash to kill more than 100 people occurred in October 2015 in Egypt.

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HEADLINE	01/02 GAO: Feds overpaid unemployment \$1.6B
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/gao-labor-unemployment/2018/01/02/id/834715/
GIST	<p>The federal government overpaid for unemployment insurance benefits by more than \$1.6 billion in 2016, according to a new report.</p> <p>The Washington Free Beacon cited a Government Accountability Office (GAO) audit that found there was a significant overpayment amount on the books during fiscal year 2016, which ended June 30, 2016.</p> <p>The audit discovered that the payments were sent to people who had been given formal warnings for not fulfilling the requirements to receive benefits, a list that includes looking for and applying for jobs and visiting job fairs.</p> <p>A Department of Labor "analysis further shows that if formal warning cases had been included in DOL's calculation of the overpayment rates for fiscal year 2016, the nationwide overpayment rate would have increased by about 5 percentage points, from an estimated 11.1 percent to an estimated 16.3 percent," the GAO report reads.</p>

	<p>A chart included in the report shows that several states' overpayment rates could be higher than 20 percent when factoring in cases in which a formal notice was issued.</p> <p>Topping the list is Nevada (54.22 percent), followed by Pennsylvania (50.88) and Colorado (46.8).</p> <p>As of November, the nationwide unemployment rate was 4.1 percent.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 US to celebrate Jerusalem decision
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/un-jerusalem-ambassador-unga/2018/01/02/id/834779/
GIST	<p>America will make good on its vow to remember nations that did not rebuke the Trump administration for recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley said Tuesday.</p> <p>The United States will hold a reception for the countries that refused to condemn America for reversing decades of its policy in the region, she announced.</p> <p>"As I said in December, we won't forget the Jerusalem vote," Haley said at a news conference, The Hill reported.</p> <p>"To that end, [Wednesday] night, we are having a reception for the countries who chose not to oppose the U.S. position [on Jerusalem]."</p> <p>The U.N. General Assembly voted overwhelmingly last month to condemn the Trump administration's announcement recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital — despite pressure from Haley and President Donald Trump.</p> <p>U.S. allies voting in favor of the resolution were the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. Others, like Canada, Australia, and Mexico, abstained, The Hill noted.</p> <p>The nine countries to vote against the resolution were the United States, Israel, Honduras, Guatemala, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, and Togo.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/03 Record dry fuels Calif. drought fears
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/record-dry-raises-fears-droughts-return-california-52110699?
GIST	<p>It's been almost a year since Los Angeles residents felt any real rain, and precious little snow is in the Sierras, but water managers say it's too early for fears that California is sliding back into drought as abruptly as the state fell out of it.</p> <p>Water officials carry out the first of their regular ritual winter snow measurements before news cameras on Wednesday. Plunging rods into snowpacks to measure the snow depth, water managers use the event to acquaint Californians with the state of the water supply. It's a crucial question in a semi-arid state with the U.S.'s biggest state economy, agricultural industry and population. In a normal year, nearly two-thirds of Californians' water supply starts as snow in the Sierras.</p> <p>Southern California wildfires that grew to the biggest in state history in December — normally the rainy season in California — already have made clear the bottom line: The state is far drier than normal so far this winter.</p> <p>"We're back in the old waiting game," said Doug Carlson, a spokesman for the state Department of Water</p>

	<p>Resources.</p> <p>Near-record rainfall last year unleashed widespread flooding and snapped a historic five-year drought. The wet 2017 allowed Gov. Jerry Brown in April to lift a drought emergency declaration that had brought mandatory water conservation orders for cities and towns, and water cutbacks for many rural users.</p> <p>This year, meteorologists point to a strengthening La Nina weather pattern in the Pacific, which typically brings drier weather. A stubborn ridge of high pressure in the Pacific — the same bad guy during the state's drought — is blocking storms from reaching Southern California in particular.</p> <p>People in California's southwest last felt any significant rain in February, the National Weather Service noted this week. Los Angeles is marking a record dry spell, with rainfall just 9 percent of normal for the past 10 months, the weather service said.</p> <p>Snowpack in the Sierras, which supplies a steady flow of water in good years as the snow melts, stood Tuesday at one-fourth of normal for this point in the year.</p> <p>It's not time to despair, yet, Carlson said.</p> <p>Last year's copious rains have left reservoirs with plenty of water. And it's early in the winter rainy season yet — California normally receives half its rain between December and February.</p> <p>"Our message to the public as we begin to do our first snow survey...is it's still very early in the season," Carlson said. "Anything could happen."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/03 Pro-govt. rallies appear in Iran
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/pro-government-rallies-iran-days-protest-unrest-52109990?
GIST	<p>Iranian state media on Wednesday aired pro-government demonstrations in cities across the country after a week of protests and unrest over the nation's poor economy — a move apparently seeking to calm nerves amid clashes that have killed 21 people.</p> <p>The protests, the largest seen in Iran since its disputed 2009 presidential election, began Dec. 28 in the city of Mashhad, Iran's second-largest, over the weak economy and a jump in food prices. They have since expanded to cities and towns in nearly every province. Hundreds have been arrested, and a prominent judge warned that some could face the death penalty.</p> <p>The English-language broadcaster Press TV broadcast Wednesday's pro-government rallies live, saying they were to "protest the violence that has taken place over the last few nights in cities."</p> <p>Demonstrators waved Iranians flags and signs supporting Iran's clerically overseen government.</p> <p>According to state TV, the demonstrations took place in at least 10 cities, including Ahvaz, the capital of the oil-rich province of Khuzestan, the Kurdish town of Kermanshah in the country's west and Qom, the religions capital of Shiite Islam in Iran.</p> <p>The rallies come after Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Tuesday blamed days of protests across the country on meddling by "enemies of Iran."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Feds urge railroad anti-crash system
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SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-railroads-safety/u-s-urges-railroads-to-quickly-install-anti-crash-safety-system-idUSKBN1ER1O7
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao urged the nation's railroads and transit agencies to take all possible measures to meet deadlines to install a safety system called positive train control (PTC) to prevent crashes.</p> <p>Letters dated Dec. 27, which were made public on Tuesday, said Chao wanted railroads to "greatly accelerate" efforts to meet congressional deadlines. A deadly Amtrak crash last month near Seattle that killed three occurred on a section of track that did not have the PTC system operating.</p> <p>The system is designed to prevent derailments caused by excessive speed. Investigators have said several deadly U.S. train crashes in recent years could have been prevented if the system was in place.</p> <p>In 2008, Congress mandated the implementation of PTC nationwide by the end of 2015, then extended that deadline until the end of 2018 when its installation became more complex than anticipated. The government can extend the deadline to 2020 to complete some aspects of the system.</p> <p>The National Transportation Safety Board said last month the Amtrak train that derailed onto a highway near Seattle was going 78 miles per hour (125.5 km per hour) in a 30-mph zone.</p> <p>The letters went to the chief executives of railroads, including Amtrak, BNSF Railway Co, Canadian National Railway (CNR.TO), CSX Corp (CSX.O), Norfolk Southern Corp (NSC.N), Union Pacific Corp (UNP.N) and transit systems in Chicago, Boston, New York, Boston, Newark, Seattle and Los Angeles.</p> <p>Amtrak said last month it was "imperative that the rail industry urgently work together to get PTC activated on the national network as soon as possible - and certainly by the December 2018 federal deadline, if not before."</p> <p>The Transportation Department said 12 of 41 railroads covered by the requirements report having installed less than 50 percent of the hardware required for their PTC systems as of Sept. 30. The government said the systems are in operation on 45 percent of route miles owned by freight railroads and just 24 percent of passenger railroads</p> <p>Chao's letter said the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) leadership plans to work with railroads "to help create an increased level of urgency to underscore the imperative of meeting existing timeline expectations for rolling out this critical rail-safety technology."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/01 US warns NKorea on new missile test
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles/u-s-warns-north-korea-against-new-missile-test-plays-down-talks-idUSKBN1ER041
GIST	<p>UNITED NATIONS/SEOUL (Reuters) - The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, warned North Korea on Tuesday against staging another missile test and said Washington would not take any talks between North and South Korea seriously if they did not do something to get Pyongyang to give up its nuclear weapons.</p> <p>Haley told reporters the United States was hearing reports that North Korea might be preparing to fire another missile.</p> <p>"I hope that doesn't happen. But if it does, we must bring even tougher measures to bear against the North Korean regime," Haley said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Wall St. starts year on strong note
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-stocks/wall-street-starts-year-on-strong-note-nasdaq-ends-above-7000-idUSKBN1ER0Y9?il=0
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (Reuters) - U.S. stocks rose on Tuesday in the first session of the new year, pushing the Nasdaq to close above 7,000 for the first time, as investors were optimistic that 2018 will bring more gains for the market.</p> <p>The S&P 500 also ended at a record high. Technology drove the day's gains, but consumer discretionary, healthcare, energy and materials sectors were also up more than 1 percent each.</p> <p>Apple (AAPL.O), Facebook (FB.O), Alphabet (GOOGL.O) and Microsoft (MSFT.O) pulled the technology index .SPLRCT up 1.4 percent, following a 37-percent surge in 2017 that made it the best-performing S&P sector.</p> <p>Major stock indexes had closed out 2017 with their best performances since 2013. Many investors say the rally could continue this year with help from the recently approved U.S. tax overhaul that is anticipated to boost profits as well as the economy.</p> <p>"We're off to the races once again," said Stephen Massocca, senior vice president at Wedbush Securities in San Francisco.</p> <p>"I don't expect the kind of moves we saw last year. But as long as monetary policy stays the way it is ... my view is stocks are going to have a decent year. And fiscal policy has become stimulative, as well, given the tax bill."</p> <p>The Dow Jones Industrial Average .DJI rose 104.79 points, or 0.42 percent, to 24,824.01, the S&P 500 .SPX gained 22.18 points, or 0.83 percent, to 2,695.79 and the Nasdaq Composite .IXIC added 103.51 points, or 1.5 percent, to 7,006.90.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Israel: African migrants must leave
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42541515
GIST	<p>The Israeli government has issued a notice for thousands of African migrants to leave the country or face imprisonment.</p> <p>The migrants will be given up to \$3,500 (£2,600) for leaving within the next 90 days.</p> <p>They will be given the option of going to their home country or third countries.</p> <p>If they do not leave, the Israeli authorities have threatened that they will start jailing them from April.</p> <p>The UN refugee agency said the controversial plan violated international and Israeli laws.</p> <p>The Israeli government says their return will be humane and "voluntary". The order exempts children, elderly people, and victims of slavery and human trafficking.</p> <p>A spokesperson for Israel's Population and Immigration Authority told the BBC there were currently 38,000 "infiltrators" in Israel, of whom just 1,420 were being held in detention facilities.</p> <p>Israel uses the term "infiltrators" to describe people who did not enter the country through an official border crossing.</p> <p>Many of the migrants - who are mostly from Eritrea and Sudan - say they came to Israel to seek asylum</p>

	after fleeing persecution and conflict, but the authorities regard them as economic migrants.
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HEADLINE	01/02 US scorns Iran protest accusations
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42548108
GIST	<p>The US has branded as "complete nonsense" Iran's accusation that its enemies have been behind a wave of violent protests sweeping the country.</p> <p>Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had made the accusation in his first comments on the protests.</p> <p>US envoy to the UN Nikki Haley said the protests were "spontaneous", adding that the US planned to call an emergency UN meeting on the situation.</p> <p>The unrest began last Thursday and has seen 22 people killed.</p> <p>The demonstrations, which started in the city of Mashhad, were initially against price rises and corruption, but then began to express wider anti-government sentiment.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani spoke with French counterpart Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday. Mr Macron called for "restraint" and it was decided that a visit by France's foreign minister due this week should be postponed.</p> <p>In a post on his official website, Iran's supreme leader had said: "In recent days, enemies of Iran used different tools including cash, weapons, politics and intelligence services to create troubles for the Islamic Republic."</p> <p>Analysts say the ayatollah's reference to "enemies" is a swipe at Israel, the US and regional rival Saudi Arabia.</p> <p>Ms Haley said the accusation was "ridiculous".</p> <p>She added: "The people of Iran are crying out for freedom, All freedom-loving people must stand with their cause."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 US strategy to support Iran protesters
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2018/01/02/state-department-to-launch-social-media-strategy-to-back-iranian-protesters.html
GIST	<p>The Trump administration ramped up its support of Iranian regime change on Tuesday, announcing it will use Facebook and Twitter to communicate directly with the pro-democracy protesters who have taken to the streets to demand freedom from Tehran's hard-line rule.</p> <p>The move came after the Iranian government shut off access to Instagram as well as Telegram, a popular, encrypted messaging app used by activists to organize demonstrations. As it did in 2009, when Iran was rocked by protests after a disputed election, Tehran acted swiftly to crack down on protests and cut off their preferred means of communication – social media.</p> <p>Unlike the Obama administration, which stood largely silent amid those protests, the Trump administration is openly supporting pro-democracy demonstrations.</p> <p>"We must not be silent," U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said on Tuesday. "The</p>

people of Iran are crying out for freedom. All freedom-loving people must stand with their cause.”

The United States will post messages in Farsi on Facebook and Twitter, according to Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Steve Goldstein. While the effort may not facilitate communication among protesters – something Tehran is keen to stop – it will allow the U.S. to unilaterally show it backs the protests.

"We support a freedom of the press," the State Department said in a tweet. "When a nation clamps down on social media, we ask the question — what are you afraid of? We support the people of #Iran, and we support their voices being heard."

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HEADLINE	01/02 Calif. pot supporters: tax too high
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/california-pot-advocates-say-tax-rates-too-high-legal-recreational-marijuana/
GIST	<p>OAKLAND -- Marijuana dispensaries across California experienced long lines on the first day of legal recreational pot sales. But advocates warned the legal industry won't survive without big changes, CBS SF Bay Area reports.</p> <p>"I'm very happy about – thrilled really – to see the legalization of cannabis in California," said Steve DeAngelo, co-founder and CEO of Harborside in Oakland. "At the same time, I'm terrified about what's going to happen with these taxes."</p> <p>Harborside has been a medical marijuana dispensary for more than a decade, and is now selling recreational marijuana at a much higher price.</p> <p>"In our shop here, the tax rate has gone from 15 percent all the way up to almost 35 percent for adult consumers," DeAngelo said.</p> <p>Here's how that math works for Harborside. There is the regular state sales tax of 6 percent, and the regular Alameda County sales tax of 3.25 percent. Then there is a 15 percent state tax on marijuana, and a 10 percent Oakland tax on recreational marijuana.</p> <p>Total taxes: 34.25 percent.</p> <p>"That is a huge hit. And it's going to mean that a significant number of people, less affluent consumers, are going to turn to the lower prices of the underground market," DeAngelo said.</p> <p>Some customers are willing to pay a premium for quality product, such as Geno Escalante, who was among those in line on Monday.</p> <p>DeAngelo said the black market may be lower cost, but Harborside offers hundreds of products not available on the black market and they also offer consumer protection.</p> <p>"All of our medicine is tested in a laboratory," DeAngelo said. "It's evaluated both for safety, for things like pesticides and pathogenic molds, and it's also evaluated for potency."</p> <p>Still, all this protection isn't cheap. In addition to taxes, marijuana regulations drive up the cost.</p> <p>"We have to pay rent, we have to have security systems, we have to pay licensing fees, we have to have insurance, we have to buy equipment," DeAngelo said.</p> <p>It adds up. And not everyone can pay the higher prices. People who are disabled or on fixed incomes may turn to the black market.</p>

	<p>"They can barely afford cannabis now, much less with a 35 or 40 percent tax increase," DeAngelo said.</p> <p>When people aren't buying from a regulated business, the state is getting zero taxes.</p> <p>Colorado, Washington state and Oregon each legalized marijuana at one tax rate and then had to lower the rate to keep people in the legitimate market. DeAngelo believes California will have to do the same.</p> <p>"I don't think that the current tax rate for cannabis in California is sustainable," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 FEMA extends housing aid Puerto Rico
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fema-extends-transitional-shelter-assistance-housing-program-for-puerto-rico-hurricane-maria/
GIST	<p>The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is extending it's Transitional Shelter Assistance (TSA) program Puerto Ricans who are still unable to return to their homes three months after Hurricane Maria.</p> <p>The program provides short-term shelter for people displaced from declared disaster areas, and provides help to people unable to return to their homes after an evacuation. The 66-day extension means the program will continue to provide assistance to residents from Jan. 14 to March 20, according to a memo from FEMA dated Dec. 29. The Puerto Rican government requested the extension because many residents who are unable to return to damaged homes.</p> <p>More than 10,000 Puerto Ricans are receiving assistance under the program, CBS News correspondent David Begnaud reports.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Puerto Rico still struggles with basic needs. More than 30 percent of customers still lack electricity three months after the storm. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has said that power won't be restored for the entire island until May.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 NKorea resumes missile activity
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/north-korea-resumes-missile-activity-south-olympics-talks/
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea -- North Korea appears to be in the early stages of a launch cycle for another intercontinental ballistic missile test, CBS News national security correspondent David Martin reports. Meanwhile, South Korea on Tuesday offered high-level talks with its rival to find ways to cooperate on next month's Winter Olympics in the South.</p> <p>The missile activity is at the same location just north of Pyongyang where an ICBM test occurred in November, Martin reports. If there is a test, it would likely take place later this week or next.</p> <p>Seoul's quick Olympics proposal follows a rare rapprochement overture from the North a day earlier. The North offered the possibility of better ties after a year that saw a nuclear standoff increase fear of war on the Korean Peninsula.</p> <p>In a closely watched New Year's address, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said Monday that he was willing to send a delegation to the Olympics, though he also repeated fiery nuclear threats against the United States. Analysts say Kim may be trying to drive a wedge between Seoul and its ally Washington in a bid to reduce international isolation and sanctions against North Korea.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Pakistan lambasts Trump tweet
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/donald-trump-pakistan-tweet-protests-karachi-us-ambassador-summoned-islamabad/
GIST	<p>President Trump's New Year's Day lambasting of Pakistan on Twitter has drawn an angry response on the streets and an official summoning of the U.S. ambassador in Islamabad to demand an explanation.</p> <p>The president began the second year of his presidency with confrontational tweets targeting Pakistan and Iran. He slammed Islamabad on Monday for "lies & deceit," saying the country had played U.S. leaders for "fools," by not doing enough to control Islamic militants.</p> <p>"The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools. They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!"</p> <p>It was not immediately clear why the president decided to comment on Pakistan, or whether it could signal a shift in U.S. policy regarding the Asian nation. As recently as October, President Trump voiced optimism over relations with Pakistan, saying the U.S. was being "respected again" following Pakistan's compliance with a rescue operation that saw an American woman and her family released after years of captivity with a group linked to the Taliban.</p> <p>Later on Monday, U.S. Ambassador David Hale was summoned to the Pakistani Foreign Office to explain Mr. Trump's tweet, according to Pakistani media reports.</p> <p>A spokesperson for the embassy confirmed to the Reuters news agency that the meeting had taken place, but provided no details of the discussion.</p> <p>On the streets of Karachi, meanwhile, scores of protesters hit the streets to voice their anger at Mr. Trump's rhetoric. The demonstration, organized by an umbrella group of religious-political parties, saw angry protesters burn an image of the U.S. leader and U.S. flags, as they chanted anti-American slogans.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Miami: 2017 hottest year on record
SOURCE	http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/environment/article192568899.html
GIST	<p>Miami's yearlong sizzling temperatures were enough to beat a chilly end to 2017, tying the record for the hottest year on the books.</p> <p>The National Weather Service reported Tuesday that December officially ended with an average monthly temperature of 79.2 degrees in Miami. That's high enough to end the year in a tie with 2015, when an El Niño helped amplify the steamy tropics and produce a warm, soggy winter that felt more like spring.</p> <p>The announcement came after a brief mix-up in how records are calculated.</p> <p>On Monday, the Service's Miami office said temperatures had narrowly missed tying 2015. But that number was based on a daily average. Year-end records use monthly averages to avoid inconsistency created in leap years when the number of days are greater.</p> <p>"The confusion came if you do it daily," said Service meteorologist Larry Kelly. "But that's not the official record."</p> <p>The correction was made after University of Miami senior research scientist Brian McNoldy, who has been tracking the escalating temperatures, noted the error.</p> <p>"In most instances this isn't a big deal, but in this case it made the difference of 0.1 degrees, and more</p>

importantly the difference between being tied for first and being in second place,” Christopher Fisher, the Service’s Miami Observation Program Leader, said in an email.

Overall, 2017 will be remembered for its extremes, the agency said in its year-end wrap-up.

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HEADLINE	01/02 ‘Winter hurricane’ to hit East coast
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/capital-weather-gang/wp/2018/01/02/monster-storm-to-blast-east-coast-before-polar-vortex-uncorks-tremendous-cold-late-this-week/?utm_term=.4ec49db7ebf8
GIST	<p>Unforgiving cold has punished the eastern third of the United States for the past 10 days. But the most severe winter weather will assault the area late this week.</p> <p>First, a very large and powerful storm will hammer coastal locations from Georgia to Maine with ice and snow. By Thursday, the exploding storm will, in many ways, resemble a winter hurricane, battering easternmost New England with potentially damaging winds in addition to blinding snow.</p> <p>Forecasters are expecting the storm to become a so-called “bomb cyclone” because its pressure is predicted to fall so fast, an indicator of explosive strengthening. The storm could rank as the most intense over the waters east of New England in decades at this time of year.</p> <p>In the storm’s wake, the mother lode of numbing cold will crash south — likely the last but most bitter in brutal blasts since Christmas Eve.</p> <p>The responsible storm is forecast to begin taking shape off the coast of Florida Wednesday, unloading hazardous snow and ice in highly unusual locations not accustomed to such weather. The National Weather Service has already posted winter storm watches from Lake City, Fla. to Norfolk</p> <p>It is then expected to explosively intensify, buffeting the Mid-Atlantic beaches and eastern New England, where winter storm watches have also been issued.</p> <p>The National Weather Service office serving northeast Florida and southeast Georgia cautions that a nasty mix of light freezing rain, light sleet and light snow is expected to develop Wednesday “with significant icing possible.”</p> <p>In Charleston, one to three inches of snow and sleet is forecast Wednesday, where the Weather Service warns to “plan on difficult travel conditions.”</p> <p>From Norfolk to the Maryland and Delaware beaches, including much of the southern half of the Delmarva Peninsula, 3 to 6 inches of heavy snow are predicted from Wednesday evening to Thursday afternoon.</p> <p>Farther inland in the Mid-Atlantic, near Interstate 95, the storm’s exact track will be highly consequential. Current computer models suggest most, if not at all, snowfall will occur east of Washington and Baltimore on Wednesday night into early Thursday. But small shifts to the west could bring some snow to these cities.</p> <p>To the north, Philadelphia and New York have a better chance for a coating of snow, but — unless the storm edges closer to the coast — the more significant snow should remain to their east from Atlantic City to eastern Long Island, where at least four to six inches could fall late Wednesday to late Thursday.</p> <p>By the time the storm reaches the ocean waters east of Long Island and eastern New England on Thursday, it will be explosively intensifying. The storm’s central pressure will have fallen 55 millibars in just 24 hours — an astonishing rate of intensification.</p>

“Some computer models are projecting a minimum central air pressure of below 950 millibars at its peak, which would be nearly unheard of for this part of the world outside of a hurricane,” wrote Mashable’s Andrew Freedman. “For comparison, Hurricane Sandy had a minimum central pressure of about 946 millibars when it made its left hook into New Jersey in 2012.”

Winds will crank in response to this pressure drop, howling to at least 30 to 50 mph along the coast. Winds will be considerably stronger over the ocean — exceeding hurricane force — where enormous waves will form.

In Boston, the Weather Service is predicting not only four to seven inches of snow but also winds strong enough to bring down branches. Throughout eastern Massachusetts and eastern Maine, the combination of wind and snow could create blizzard conditions, especially if the storm wobbles west.

“Our biggest concern is the potential for damaging wind gusts especially near the southeast New England coast,” the Weather Service tweeted. “Power outage risk followed by arctic air Fri/Sat a big concern!”

The storm’s enormous circulation will help draw several lobes of the polar vortex, the zone of frigid air encircling the North Pole, over the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast by Friday and Saturday. Wicked cold air sourced from Siberia, the North Pole and Greenland will all converge on the region.

Temperatures are forecast to be 20 to 40 degrees below normal, the coldest of the winter so far.

Most locations in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast are predicted to set records for cold temperatures on Friday with highs in the single digits and teens.

On Saturday morning, subzero cold is forecast over almost all of New England, with single digits in the Mid-Atlantic.

Finally, after one of the most intense cold spells of such duration on record in parts of New England — including Boston, temperatures are forecast to gradually thaw by early next week.

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HEADLINE	01/02 DOE to close Hanford tank permanently
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/857889/energy-department-to-permanently-close-damaged-hanford-tank/
GIST	<p>RICHLAND, Wash. (AP) — The Energy Department says it will permanently close a damaged radioactive waste storage tank on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation.</p> <p>The department says that Tank AY-102 has widespread damage and should not be repaired.</p> <p>The Tri-City Herald reports that this is the oldest of the double-walled underground tanks at Hanford.</p> <p>The Energy Department in 2012 revealed that waste from the inner shell of the tank was slowly leaking into the space between its inner and outer shells. No waste is known to have breached the outer shell to reach the environment.</p> <p>The decision means that Hanford will have 27 newer double-walled tanks to hold waste emptied from 149 leak-prone single-walled tanks.</p> <p>The waste is left from World War II and Cold War production of plutonium for the nation’s nuclear weapons program.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Canada: Native American hunting rights
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SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/857925/court-recognizes-native-american-hunting-rights-in-canada/
GIST	<p>COLVILLE, Wash. (AP) — The Supreme Court of British Columbia has upheld a Washington state man’s right to hunt in the province by recognizing the traditional hunting grounds of his ancestors.</p> <p>The Northwest News Network reports the court last week ruled in favor of Richard Desautel, a member of the Colville Confederated Tribes and a descendant of the Sinixt people.</p> <p>Desautel had crossed into Canada to shoot and kill an elk in 2010, and Canadian authorities had charged him with hunting without a license.</p> <p>Desautel claimed the hunt was legal because it was on the traditional hunting grounds.</p> <p>Authorities argued the hunting rights ended when the Sinixt were declared extinct in Canada.</p> <p>A lower court sided with Desautel in march 2017, acquitting him of the charges after a nearly yearlong trial.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Olympia, SeaTac 9th wettest year
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/857864/olympia-sea-tac-had-9th-wettest-year-in-recorded-history/
GIST	<p>Seattlites may have lived through four unusually wet years, but they were nothing when compared to what other areas of Western Washington went through this year.</p> <p>Olympia and Sea-Tac Airport both had their ninth wettest years in recorded history, according to the National Weather Service.</p> <p>A total of 47.87 inches of rain was recorded at Sea-Tac. The normal total is about 37.5 inches per year.</p> <p>In Olympia, a total of 61.44 inches of rain was recorded in 2017. The normal, according to the Weather Service, is 50 inches.</p> <p>Over in Forks, according to The Seattle Times, approximately 120 inches of rain fell.</p> <p>As for Seattle, the Weather Service says that for the first time in more than 120 years, Seattle had four years in a row with at least 44 inches of rain for a combined total of 186.38 inches.</p> <p>“It could be said that 2017 was wet for most places,” the Weather Service stated.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	01/02 Egypt top imam: Islam forbids bitcoin
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/bitcoin-top-imam-declares-cryptocurrency-forbidden-islam-and-calls-ban-768075
GIST	<p>Egypt’s top imam has endorsed a ban on trading in bitcoin, declaring the cryptocurrency “forbidden” under Islam.</p> <p>Sheikh Shawki Allam, the Grand Mufti, issued a formal fatwa on Monday stating that trading in the digital currency is “forbidden in Sharia, as it causes harm to individuals, groups and institutions.”</p> <p>The imam argued that bitcoin carries risks of “fraudulence, lack of knowledge, and cheating,” Egyptian</p>

daily Ahram reported. Allam likened the trading of the cryptocurrency to gambling, which he said is also forbidden under Islam “due to its direct responsibility in financial ruin for individuals.”

The Grand Mufti said the cryptocurrency was risky as it is not regulated by any centralised authority. He also said that both the “currency’s risk as well as its high profit potential undermines Egypt’s ability to maintain and stabilize its own currency.”

The imam added that his fatwa was issued following consultations with a number of economic experts.

An adviser to the Grand Mufti, Magdy Ashour, told Egypt Today that the virtual currency is “used directly to fund terrorists.”

“It has no set rules, which is considered as a contract annulment in Islam, that is why it is forbidden,” he said.

Egypt’s Dar al-Ifta, an institute and government body founded to represent Islam, has repeatedly warned against the digital currency, arguing that its lack of regulation creates opportunities for extremists to receive funding.

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HEADLINE	01/02 Big hack attack financial firms
SOURCE	https://www.fa-mag.com/news/the-big-hack-attack-36292.html
GIST	<p>Cyber criminals have become increasingly sophisticated, and all financial services firms are ripe targets for frauds. In 2016, the FBI’s Internet Crime Complaint Center received almost 300,000 complaints for almost \$1.3 billion in losses. According to the IBM X-Force Threat Intelligence Index, the financial services sector was attacked more than any other industry that year. The most pervasive scams involve phishing, ransomware, malware and denial-of-service attacks.</p> <p>Diane Pearson of Legend Financial Advisors in Pittsburgh, says her IT person once told her that someone was trying to break through the firm’s firewall every night. Pearson knows of somebody at another firm who lost her job after succumbing to a phishing e-mail, wiring \$50,000 from a client to a fraudster.</p> <p>The scams don’t have to be terribly sophisticated. The biggest vulnerabilities of financial companies, say security experts, are perhaps not surprisingly their employees. Naïve staffers are most at risk of opening phishing e-mails that allow fraudsters to download malicious software into their machines, taking over their computers and breaking into networks.</p> <p>The biggest risk is that a hacker will capture an employee’s credentials and then log in externally to third-party vendors, says Benjamin Gordon, the manager of advisory services at Rook Security in Carmel, Ind. “Employees just aren’t educated enough on security, to be perfectly blunt. It doesn’t matter what technology you have in place, what IT team you have in place. If somebody clicks on a malicious link, it’s a problem.”</p> <p>Rook performs such attacks, (known by their nickname as “pen tests”) for major corporations, including financial institutions, in a variety of packages that include basic vulnerability and software testing as well as more novel physical site breaches.</p> <p>Gordon and Nat Shere, Rook’s senior information security consultant, say that even before a pen test is done, they would recommend that smaller firms do vulnerability scanning with software that costs a couple of thousand dollars a year for a license. “Going further is the pen test itself,” says Shere. “We would perform reconnaissance over the environment and look for credentials that had already been compromised through other attacks.” The pen test is meant to prove that a suspected vulnerability could actually be exploited.</p>

After that, the fun cloak and dagger stuff begins in which the hackers (with permissions from business owners) don costumes and try to fool staff by slipping into the physical locations themselves. Says Shere, “We have posed as a maintenance crew, as fire extinguisher inspection agents, insurance agents, FedEx employees. And that gets somewhat involved . . . having costumes related to those personas. Creating e-mails, creating fake IDs.” The first thing they do during a physical attack is recon, some of which is fairly unsophisticated—walking around buildings inconspicuously to get a sense of what the entry points are, finding out whether there are badge readers or cameras. The Rook team might loiter around the back of a building to see if they can sneak in when somebody leaves a door open.

A lot of times the owners will set flags throughout the building, Gordon says, challenging Rook to break through different levels of security or into certain areas, like the server room.

Recently, says Shere, the firm was contracted to go into a client’s large data center in Texas. “We dressed up as though we were from the fire department. We had some clipboards; we had some very official looking outfits. And we came in and said we are here to inspect the fire extinguishers to make sure they are still up to code.” The person at the front desk called the manager. “We had a fake printed-out e-mail from a supervisor who was not there at the time saying it was OK.

“The manager ended up giving us a full access key to the entire building so that we could go floor to floor inspecting all the fire extinguishers. So we did that, wandering around on our own and basically taking pictures of all the various network and computer hardware.”

Other times, Rook finds out stuff about its clients on the internet. After finding out that an employee of one firm had just gotten a performance review, “we sent e-mails to around 50 to 75 of their employees with an attached document that said, ‘Here’s the results of your performance review.’ And we had nearly 60% to 70% of them download and try to execute this malicious file that gave us access to their computers.”

The firm also does phone attacks—posing as help desk or HR staffers—asking employees to reset their passwords. “It’s amazing what you can find on the internet,” Gordon says, “in terms of what a company is doing and who works there, and we can tailor our attack plans based off that information.” Hackers can find out who works in HR on LinkedIn, and send fake e-mails to staffers spoofing real human resource names.

Many hackers work by cross-checking all the stuff available on the internet, especially on the dark web. Greg Fulk, a COO at Valeo Financial Advisors in Indianapolis, asked Rook to test one of its custom applications.

“They will try to guess usernames and passwords,” Fulk says, “and anytime these great big public websites are hacked something like Yahoo, they are going to try to find somebody in the Yahoo hack of 2013 who has the same credentials as one of my employees.” That employee likely uses the same password at work that he or she uses to shop for Christmas presents at Home Depot or Amazon, he says. Rook was able to find those employee credentials on the dark web and try them on Valeo’s site.

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HEADLINE	01/02 Tech giants try to stop attacks
SOURCE	http://host.madison.com/business/investment/markets-and-stocks/microsoft-and-facebook-join-forces-to-stop-cyberattack-on-the/article_cfb8d1c9-71ed-5258-81e1-8d739591b452.html
GIST	In May 2017, the computer virus known as WannaCry spread across the globe like wildfire, infecting hundreds of thousands of computers. Using a type of infection known as ransomware, the virus locked and encrypted files on the affected computers so they could not be accessed. Messages demanded that users pay \$300 in digital currency in order to have their computers unlocked. The unknown perpetrators stated that if the ransom wasn't paid within days, the required payment would double, and after a week, the files on the infected computer would be wiped clean.

Before the attack was stopped, more than 300,000 computers in 150 countries were affected. The attack caused disruptions in hospitals, public transportation, banks, and telecom providers.

In mid-December, the Trump administration blamed North Korea for the attack, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security revealed that tech giants Facebook, Inc. (NASDAQ: FB) and Microsoft Corporation (NASDAQ: MSFT) had disabled a number of new cyberthreats in recent weeks.

These would-be competitors joined forces to shut down an ongoing cyber attack. Image source: Getty Images.

Strange bedfellows

The two companies that might normally be considered competitors in the tech arena collaborated with "others in the security community," though the other players weren't identified.

In a White House news conference, homeland security advisor Tom Bossert said that "Facebook took down accounts that stopped the operational execution of ongoing cyberattacks and Microsoft acted to patch existing attacks, not just the WannaCry attack initially." Bossert chose not to elaborate on the nature of the other attacks.

Both companies confirmed their role in the action. Facebook said that it deleted accounts linked with the hackers "to make it harder for them to conduct their activities." The hacking collective, known as the Lazarus Group, had a number of fake personal profiles that it used to target unsuspecting users. Facebook also notified individuals who had contact with the suspect accounts. In a statement, the company said:

Facebook has a long-standing commitment to security, and we continue to invest in efforts to protect people from cyber threats and keep our platform safe. We will continue to work closely with companies to investigate and counteract these types of threats to our collective security.

Microsoft president and chief legal officer Brad Smith issued a blog post saying that the company "among other steps, last week helped disrupt the malware this group relies on, cleaned customers' infected computers, disabled accounts being used to pursue cyberattacks and strengthened Windows defenses to prevent reinfection."

Smith also said that the company "welcomed the opportunity" to cooperate with Facebook and others on the threat.

The risk from cybercrime has risen to the level of a worldwide epidemic in recent years, with some saying that it represents the greatest single threat to every company worldwide. The cost of cyberattacks could rise to \$6 trillion annually by 2021, according to the Official 2017 Annual Cybercrime Report by Cybersecurity Ventures.

While the collaboration between Microsoft and Facebook was successful at disabling a number of recent security threats, investors should be aware that this will be an ongoing battle and one that will likely cut into future profitability for the tech giants.

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HEADLINE	01/02 Kidnapped exec released for \$1M bitcoin
SOURCE	https://www.pymnts.com/blockchain/bitcoin/2018/crypto-exec-lerner-kidnapped-for-ransom-cyberattack/
GIST	A cryptocurrency executive who was kidnapped by an armed gang near his office in Kiev earlier this week was freed on Thursday after paying the ransom demand of more than \$1 million in bitcoins. According to Financial Times, Pavel Lerner, who runs the U.K.-registered cryptocurrency exchange

	<p>EXMO, was kidnapped in a crime that an adviser to the Ukrainian interior minister described as “bitcoin kidnapping and extortion.”</p> <p>Witnesses reported seeing Lerner, a Russian citizen, being placed into a black Mercedes-Benz by people wearing dark clothes and balaclavas.</p> <p>“He was kidnapped by an armed gang for the purpose of extorting bitcoins,” said Anton Gerashchenko. “We have operative information that he paid more than \$1M worth of bitcoins.” Lerner was “then released in a state of shock ... He got very lucky that he remained alive,” added Gerashchenko.</p> <p>Ukraine’s national police force is now investigating the incident.</p> <p>EXMO, which is registered in the U.K. with Companies House but also has operations in Ukraine, also reported via Twitter that it had been a victim of a cyberattack, which resulted in its website being down temporarily.</p> <p>The company was quick to assure customers that their funds were safe, explaining that Lerner’s job didn’t “assume access either to storages or any personal data of users.” While Lerner’s LinkedIn profile says he is the CEO of EXMO, the company reportedly told the BBC he is its analytics manager.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Not sci-fi but real wars in space
SOURCE	http://spacenews.com/sorry-sci-fi-fans-real-wars-in-space-not-the-stuff-of-hollywood/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The public’s idea of a war in space is almost entirely a product of Hollywood fantasy: Interstellar empires battling to conquer the cosmos, spaceships going head to head in pitched dogfights</p> <p>The reality of how nations will fight in space is much duller and blander. And some of the key players in these conflicts will be hackers and lawyers.</p> <p>Savvy space warriors like Russia’s military already are giving us a taste of the future. They are jamming GPS navigation signals, electronically disrupting satellite communications links and sensors in space. Not quite star wars.</p> <p>This form of electronic warfare in space is serious enough, however, that the U.S. military is now moving to defend its satellites and other space assets. There is in fact a real conversation under way about war in space, albeit one of cyber and electromagnetic attacks, not spaceships shooting at each other.</p> <p>“There are legal and practical limits on armed conflict in space,” said Brian Weeden, director of program planning at the Secure World Foundation in Washington, D.C.</p> <p>“Most people experience space through Hollywood movies, TV shows and science-fiction books,” he said during an online discussion last month hosted by the American Bar Association. In almost all cases the depictions of warfare and combat in space are fictional. “They take extreme liberties and show outright ignorance of the laws of physics, orbital mechanics, conservation of energy and other things in order to make stories more dramatic and exciting.”</p> <p>Weeden mentioned “The Expanse” as a rare case of a TV show that depicts space warfare pretty close to accurately, but he insisted that the gap between fiction and reality with regard to space war is stark.</p> <p>Space indeed has turned into an important battlefield, and for good reasons. It is critical to nearly all aspects of national security and military power, including intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, communications, precision timing and navigation, attack warning and targeting of potential threats. The issue for the United States is to figure out how to thwart attacks within the boundaries of current treaties and legal frameworks, Weeden said. “Counterspace is now part of conventional warfare because space</p>

itself is part of conventional warfare.”

Non-kinetic attacks like jamming and interference are occurring more often. They are cheaper and easier to pull off than full-on kinetic destruction of satellites that would require a high-power laser or a ballistic missile.

As the Pentagon maps out strategies and tactics to defend its satellites, military lawyers are actively investigating how international law applies to outer space.

“Any operation in outer space must comply with the same law that is applicable to other domains, like sea, air and ground warfare,” said Michael Hoversten, chief of space, cyber, international, and operations law at Air Force Space Command headquarters at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado.

As with other uses of military force, actions in space are restricted by international rules. If U.S. satellites were attacked, there is no ambiguity, he said. “The right to use force in self defense applies.”

The preeminent statute of international space law is the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, but some of the language is becoming harder to interpret in today’s environment, Hoversten said. “The treaty states that the Moon and other celestial bodies must be used exclusively for peaceful purposes” but it does not specifically say that outer space is exclusively a haven for peaceful purposes. The phrase “peaceful purposes” has been interpreted as “no military use” and also as “nonaggressive military use consistent with international law and the UN charter.”

The reality is that many countries use space for military purposes, he said. And most are reluctant to sign on to new treaties that might restrict their ability to exploit space in national security or economic activities.

The majority view is that military use is permissible, provided that it’s nonaggressive and consistent with international law and UN charter, Hoversten said. There is no consensus, however, about the meaning of “militarization” and “weaponization” of space, and different states use these terms differently. Outer space has been militarized for decades, but that is not the same as weaponization. “There is a common misconception that weapons of all kinds are illegal in outer space. That is not the case.” The only specific prohibition is against so-called weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, biological, chemical and radiological.

Electronic arms like lasers or jammers, or even conventional kinetic weapons can lawfully be placed in orbit, he said. Some countries, notably China and Russia, for the past decade have championed efforts to prohibit all kinds of space weapons. The United States has opposed bans primarily because of difficulties in defining what a weapon is, Hoversten explained. Theoretically any satellite that is capable of maneuvering can be used as a weapon. U.S. officials also have argued that an arms control treaty for space weapons would be unverifiable.

Also a topic of debate is how the U.S. military would justify the use of countermeasures. So far it remains a fuzzy issue, said Maj. Ross Brown, chief of space, international and operations law at 14th Air Force headquarters at Vandenberg Air Force Base, California.

“Below an armed attack, the most applicable response is a countermeasure,” he said. But the devil is in the details. “Countermeasures must be proportional. Must not be forceful. They must be constrained. Must be reversible,” Brown said. “It’s a ‘mushy’ requirement.”

Another concern is that the response must be “proportionate to the injury being suffered,” he said. “That is difficult to measure.” Disruptions to satellite links can cause material damage but also “strategic harm” if the military is cut off from access to information.

As the Pentagon and others sound alarms about cyber threats to space, the reality is that very little is known about the frequency of attacks or even the scope of the danger.

	<p>“Public data on cyber attacks on any satellites, military or commercial, is extremely scarce,” said Weeden. “Militaries, governments, space agencies, companies are pretty reluctant to talk publicly about cyber attacks, whether successful or unsuccessful.”</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Teenage girl faces jail for nude selfie
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/teen-girl-facing-up-to-10-years-for-sending-selfie/
GIST	<p>As unnerving and concerning as it sounds, the fact is that teen sexting has become a grave issue not only for the parents but also for law enforcement authorities as they often find it difficult to deal with the situation in case something goes wrong.</p> <p>According to a recent survey from Cyberbullying Research Center around 12% of teens between 12 and 17 years age sent their sexually explicit photo to someone in their lifetime and 4% of them have done so in the past month. The latest incident involving a teenage girl being charged with the creation of child pornography is a clear proof that sexting is a dangerous act that can lend kids and teens into great trouble.</p> <p>Minnesota selfie case</p> <p>In Minnesota, a fourteen-year-old girl is being charged for sexting, which falls under the category of sexual crimes. Reportedly, the teenage girl sent an explicit selfie of hers to a boy at her school, which prosecutors claim is a violation of Minnesota’s child pornography statute. Sexting is a broad term that refers to various behaviors from exchanging/sending sexually explicit text messages to suggestive videos and pictures.</p> <p>It is worth noting that under the statute, distribution of sexually explicit photographs of underage subjects is banned. However, in this scenario, the girl, who is being referred to as Jane Doe, sent her own picture to a boy whom she knew very well, yet, the accused is facing charges in Minnesota juvenile courts.</p> <p>ACLU to the rescue</p> <p>This is simply ridiculous, claims a legal brief filed [PDF] by the ACLU of Minnesota; it is absurd that a teen is being charged for taking an explicit selfie because it is akin to the state charging a victim for nudity as it is exactly what the law says.</p> <p>According to the legal brief from ACLU, the accused sent an explicit selfie to a classmate via phone-based messaging application Snapchat and the recipient took a screenshot of the message and shared it with other schoolmates without the consent of the girl. Faribault, Minnesota police was alerted by a classmate and this is how the whole matter came to the limelight.</p> <p>The ACLU is worried because officials are charging the accused for “felony sex offense of knowingly disseminating pornographic work involving a minor to another person,” a crime for which an adult would get up to seven to ten years jail time if convicted. Though the circumstances are different since this particular case involves a teen girl, therefore the sentence might not be as harsh but it is concerning for the ACLU that the girl would be placed on a sex offender registry if found guilty. This would indeed be devastating for the accused of getting a job or a house will not be easy for her in the future.</p> <p>Jane Doe claims that she is being victimized by the state. “I’m not a criminal for taking a selfie. Sexting is common among teens at my school, and we shouldn’t face charges for doing it. I don’t want anyone else to go through what I’m going through,” the accused stated.</p> <p>As per the Minnesota statute 617,247, the purpose of child pornography law is to “protect minors from the physical and psychological damage caused by their being used in pornographic work depicting sexual conduct which involves minors.” But, in this case, whether the law is applicable or not that is the whole</p>

issue. Apparently, the state is applying the law in a wrong manner since the image in question was sent by the girl with consent to a boy she liked.

The case currently is being heard in Rice County juvenile court. Since the case involves a teenager, therefore, critical details of the case haven't been made public such as the accused's name and whether the accused took a photo or a video and if the boy has also been charged or not. What we do know is that the girl went to a school in Southern Minnesota.

First Amendment

It is also claimed by the ACLU that sexting is protected by the First Amendment because virtual child pornography was allowed while exploitation of actual children was prohibited by law, which means charging a teen for explicit selfies is itself in violation of the First Amendment, noted ArsTechnica. Moreover, it was illogical to file a case and accuse a teenager on grounds that the girl coerced herself into the creation of pornographic content because it will create another issue of limiting the expressive rights of teens.

The ACLU wrote in its legal brief: sending an explicit selfie to a peer "to indicate romantic or sexual interest, the same compelling risk of physical and psychological injury does not exist. Thus, the statute infringes upon constitutionally-protected speech." But going by the understanding of Minnesota officials, this is a case of child pornography and the teen girl could easily be classified as a child pornographer.

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HEADLINE	01/02 DHS: DMARC adoption surges ahead
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/dmarc-adoption-surges-ahead-mandate/
GIST	<p>Federal domain adoption of the DMARC email security scheme in the US increased 38% in 30 days, with 151 more domains now protected.</p> <p>According to an analysis on its adoption by Agari, adoption is up from 34% of domains implementing DMARC on November 18 to 47% on December 18. This shows rapid adoption of the critical email authentication standard ahead of a January 15 deadline for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) directive to do so. DHS announced Binding Operating Directive (BOD) 18-01 in October, which mandates that all federal domains implement DMARC, TLS and HTTPS to prevent domain name spoofing and to secure email communication.</p> <p>"DMARC has proven to be an effective solution to secure our federal domains, but more work is needed to protect all federal domains. The time to act is now; deadlines to comply with [the operational directive] are imminent," said Jeanette Manfra, assistant secretary for the Office of Cybersecurity and Communications, DHS. "Cybersecurity is a critical component of our homeland security policy, but it is also a shared responsibility. It is crucial for US citizens to trust that an email from a government agency is legitimate."</p> <p>Agari research also shows the effectiveness of the DMARC security control across federal agencies. Of the billions of emails sent across the more than 400 federal government domains secured by Agari, 96% of the emails are protected by the strongest DMARC policy (p=reject), including those in the US Senate, Veterans Affairs, Health and Human Services and the US Post Office. All of these have seen attempted fraud send rates decrease to less than 2% in December, Agari said.</p> <p>Federal departments and agencies have 90 days to implement DMARC at its lowest setting (monitoring, P=none) and one year to implement DMARC at its highest setting (P=reject), which prevents unauthorized mail from being sent.</p> <p>About half (53%) still have not deployed DMARC, just ahead of the first DHS deadline.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Necurs botnet fueled year-end attacks
SOURCE	http://www.securityweek.com/necurs-botnet-fuels-massive-year-end-ransomware-attacks
GIST	<p>The Necurs botnet started 2017 with a four-month vacation, but ended the year sending tens of millions of spam emails daily as part of massive ransomware distribution campaigns.</p> <p>Considered the largest spam botnet at the moment, Necurs was the main driver behind the ascension of the Locky ransomware (which in turn is associated with the Dridex banking Trojan) in 2016. As Necurs took a long vacation in the beginning of 2017, Locky was silent as well, but both resumed activity in April.</p> <p>Over the course of 2017, however, the botnet was involved in the distribution of the Jaff, GlobeImposter, and Scarab ransomware families, as well as in 'pump-and-dump' schemes.</p> <p>Over a 10-day period between December 19 and December 29, 2017, Necurs was once again involved in the distribution of ransomware, in addition to sending typical holiday-themed scam emails, data collected by AppRiver reveals.</p> <p>The messages, AppRiver says, were distributing the Locky and GlobeImposter ransomware families and revealed the attackers' preference to use malicious .vbs (Visual Basic Script) or .js (JavaScript) files located inside a .7z archive.</p> <p>Consisting of between 5 and 6 million infected hosts and keeping around 1 or 2 million of them active at any given time, Necurs provides operators with remote access to the infected machines and can be used for various malicious activities, including malware downloads.</p> <p>Starting on Dec. 19, the botnet was observed sending tens of millions of spam emails daily to distribute ransomware. It started at nearly 46 million emails on the first day (peaking at over 4.6 million messages per hour) and continued with over 47 million messages on Dec. 20 (peaking at 5.7 million per hour).</p> <p>While the initial spam featured mainly .vbs files inside the .7z archive, .js files started appearing as well on the second day, and the traffic switched to .js files on Dec. 21-22, when it also started to taper off, at 36 million and 29 million messages per day, respectively. The botnet remained quiet from Dec. 23-25 and recommenced activity for only a couple of hours on Dec. 26.</p> <p>"Hard to say why, however, I would hypothesize the operators may have been testing or monitoring the rate of infections and realized many workers are on vacation," AppRiver's David Pickett notes.</p> <p>On Dec. 28-29, however, the botnet was highly active. It peaked at 6.5 million messages early morning on Dec. 28, but wasn't active for long. On the next day, Necurs was observed sending nearly 59 million ransomware messages.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Trackmageddon: GPS tracking service flaws
SOURCE	http://www.securityweek.com/many-gps-tracking-services-expose-user-location-other-data
GIST	<p>Researchers discovered that many online services designed for managing location tracking devices are affected by vulnerabilities that expose potentially sensitive information.</p> <p>Fitness, child, pet and vehicle trackers, and other devices that include GPS and GSM tracking capabilities are typically managed via specialized online services.</p> <p>Security experts Vangelis Stykas and Michael Gruhn found that over 100 such services have flaws that can be exploited by malicious actors to gain access to device and personal data. The security holes, dubbed Trackmageddon, can expose information such as current location, location history, device model and type, serial number, and phone number.</p>

Some services used by devices that have photo and audio recording capabilities also expose images and audio files. In some cases, it's also possible to send commands to devices in order to activate or deactivate certain features, such as geofence alerts.

Attackers can gain access to information by exploiting default credentials (e.g. 123456), and insecure direct object reference (IDOR) flaws, which allow an authenticated user to access other users' accounts simply by changing the value of a parameter in the URL. The services also expose information through directory listings, log files, source code, WSDL files, and publicly exposed API endpoints that allow unauthenticated access.

Stykas and Gruhn have notified a vast majority of the affected vendors in November and December. Nine services have confirmed patching the flaws or promised to implement fixes soon, and over a dozen websites appear to have addressed the vulnerabilities without informing the researchers. However, the rest of the tracking services remain vulnerable.

There are roughly 100 impacted domains, but some of them appear to be operated by the same company. Researchers have identified 36 unique IPs hosting these domains and 41 databases that they share. They estimate that these services expose data associated with over 6.3 million devices and more than 360 device models.

The vulnerable software appears to come from China-based ThinkRace, but in many cases the company does not have control over the servers hosting the tracking services.

Gruhn and Stykas pointed out that vulnerabilities in ThinkRace products – possibly including some of the issues disclosed now – were first discovered in 2015 by a New Zealand-based expert while analyzing car tracking and immobilisation devices that relied on ThinkRace software.

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HEADLINE	01/02 Malware botnet code posted to Pastebin
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/malware-behind-satori-botnet-posted-to-pastebin/article/733823/
GIST	<p>The code that exploits a flaw in Huawei a router that enables these devices to be turned into botnets to push Satori and Brickerbot has been publicly posted on Pastebin.</p> <p>NewSky Security reported that the malware that takes advantage of CVE-2017-17215 that takes advantage of Huawei HG532 router was found available and could lead to many more botnet attacks as cybercriminals take advantage of this free gift.</p> <p>“When an IoT exploit becomes freely available, it hardly takes much time for threat actors to up their arsenal and implement the exploit as one of the attack vectors in their botnet code,” NewSky researchers wrote, noting this is what happened when the Netgear exploit NbotLoader code was leaked and then integrated into the botnet Qbot.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Ukraine ‘training ground’ Russia hackers
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/ukraine-a-training-ground-for-russian-hacking-attacks-on-west/article/734267/
GIST	<p>Ukraine has become a “training ground” for Russian hackers wishing to perpetrate cyber-attacks on the west, a Kyiv security expert has claimed.</p> <p>Oleksii Yasinsky, forensic analyst at Kyiv cyber security firm ISSP, claimed that Russian hackers are using Ukraine to "hone technologies, mastery and attack techniques" for bigger targets – such as Europe</p>

and the US.

According to Yasinsky: "It will be a quiet attack." He added: "Whoever controls cyber-space will control the world."

It comes after National Cyber Security Centre chief, Ciaran Martin confirmed in November that the Kremlin had ordered a cyber-assault on the UK's major power companies in a bid to disrupt international order.

In June last year, more than 300 Ukrainian companies were victims of the global cyber-attack dubbed NotPetya, thought to be state sponsored. The country also suffered power cuts in December 2015 and 2016, attributed to a hacker group called 'Sandworm', which is thought by some to have meddled in the US elections.

Russia denies any wrongdoing, but last month during a visit to Moscow, International Secretary Boris Johnson warned the country not to target the UK.

"We know Russia are up to no good in terms of their cyber-capability and I'm afraid it will only get worse," Jamal Elmellas, CTO at Auriga Consulting told SC UK. "It's now part of a conventional war tool chest where they will soften targets in preparation for a physical attack."

Elmellas said Russia is carrying out covert attacks on foreign nations to spread fake news and steal state secrets. However, he added that an attack on UK critical infrastructure in the near future is unlikely because "they don't have the capability to hide their footprints".

"They can be identified by the tools they utilise: there are signatures which give them away."

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HEADLINE	01/02 Non-malware attacks favored in 2017
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/cybercriminals-favored-non-malware-attacks-in-2017-report/article/734266/
GIST	<p>Non-malware-based cyberattacks were behind the majority of cyber incidents reported in 2017, despite proliferation of malware available to both the professional and amateur hacker.</p> <p>However, non-malware attacks were only part of the story in 2017 as Carbon Black also reported that ransomware attack are inflicting significantly higher costs and the number of attacks skyrocketed during the course of the year.</p> <p>Non-malware, or file-less, attacks using PowerShell and Windows Management Instrumentation tools, normally utilized by IT staffers along with exploiting exploit in-memory access and running applications, like web browsers and Office applications, were used in 52 percent of all attacks, according to a Carbon Black report. The number of non-malware based attacks increased, on average, of 6.8 percent per month during 2017 with 64 percent of security researchers surveyed by Carbon Black noting an uptick in this style of attack.</p> <p>Carbon Black also found that many security workers were not confident in the legacy tools they had on hand to defeat non-malware attacks with two-thirds indicating they had no confidence that traditional anti-virus software would protect their firm.</p> <p>Despite all the problems non-malware attacks caused, malware was able to inflict a tremendous amount of damage and cost on businesses and individuals during 2017.</p> <p>The company said ransomware alone cost business about \$5 billion in paid ransoms in 2017, up from \$850 million in 2016 and just \$24 million in 2015. Tech companies, governments and those in the legal</p>

profession were the biggest losers and Carbon Black noted that Spora was used in about 20 percent of all attacks followed by CryptXXX/Exxroute, Locky, Cerber, and Genasom.

In addition to the financial cost of malware increasing, attacks also came at a fast and furious rate last year. Carbon Black reported that the number of attacks hitting individual computers protected by its software went from 0.7 per month earlier in the year to more than three times per month as the year closed out.

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HEADLINE	01/01 Claim: security flaw in major browsers
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2018/01/browser-password-managers.html
GIST	<p>Security researchers have uncovered how marketing companies have started exploiting an 11-year-old bug in browsers' built-in password managers, which allow them to secretly steal your email address for targeted advertising across different browsers and devices.</p> <p>The major concern is that the same loophole could allow malicious actors to steal your saved usernames and passwords from browsers without requiring your interaction.</p> <p>Every modern browser—Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Opera or Microsoft Edge—today comes with a built-in easy-to-use password manager tool that allows you to save your login information for automatic form-filling.</p> <p>These browser-based password managers are designed for convenience, as they automatically detect login form on a webpage and fill-in the saved credentials accordingly.</p> <p>However, a team of researchers from Princeton's Center for Information Technology Policy has discovered that at least two marketing companies, AdThink and OnAudience, are actively exploiting such built-in password managers to track visitors of around 1,110 of the Alexa top 1 million sites across the Internet.</p> <p>Third-party tracking scripts found by researchers on these websites inject invisible login forms in the background of the webpage, tricking browser-based password managers into auto-filling the form using the saved user's information.</p> <p>"Login form auto filling in general doesn't require user interaction; all of the major browsers will autofill the username (often an email address) immediately, regardless of the visibility of the form," the researchers say.</p> <p>"Chrome doesn't autofill the password field until the user clicks or touches anywhere on the page. Other browsers we tested don't require user interaction to autofill password fields."</p> <p>Since these scripts are primarily designed for user-tracking, they detect the username and send it to third-party servers after hashing with MD5, SHA1 and SHA256 algorithms, which could then be used as a persistent ID for a specific user to track him/her from page to page.</p> <p>"Email addresses are unique and persistent, and thus the hash of an email address is an excellent tracking identifier," the researchers said. "A user's email address will almost never change—clearing cookies, using private browsing mode, or switching devices won't prevent tracking."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Researcher: critical flaw in phpMyAdmin
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2018/01/phpmyadmin-hack.html
GIST	A critical security vulnerability has been reported in phpMyAdmin—one of the most popular applications

for managing the MySQL database—which could allow remote attackers to perform dangerous database operations just by tricking administrators into clicking a link.

Discovered by an Indian security researcher, Ashutosh Barot, the vulnerability is a cross-site request forgery (CSRF) attack and affects phpMyAdmin versions 4.7.x (prior to 4.7.7).

Cross-site request forgery vulnerability, also known as XSRF, is an attack wherein an attacker tricks an authenticated user into executing an unwanted action.

According to an advisory released by phpMyAdmin, "by deceiving a user to click on a crafted URL, it is possible to perform harmful database operations such as deleting records, dropping/truncating tables, etc."

phpMyAdmin is a free and open source administration tool for MySQL and MariaDB and is widely used to manage the database for websites created with WordPress, Joomla, and many other content management platforms.

Moreover, a lot of hosting providers use phpMyAdmin to offer their customers a convenient way to organize their databases.

Barot reported the vulnerability to phpMyAdmin developers, who confirmed his finding and released phpMyAdmin 4.7.7 to address this issue. So administrators are highly recommended to update their installations as soon as possible.

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HEADLINE	01/02 Trail of clues to DC camera hackers
SOURCE	http://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/hackers-who-disabled-police-cameras-prior-to-trump-inauguration-left-trail-of-clues/d/d-id/1330735
GIST	<p>Two Romanian nationals who were arrested recently for allegedly breaking into computers controlling police surveillance cameras in Washington, DC just ahead of President Trump's inauguration last year appear to have left a trail of evidence that led authorities directly to them.</p> <p>Romanian police last month arrested Mihai Isvanca, 25 and Eveline Cismaru, 28 at Bucharest's Otopeni airport apparently as the pair was about to leave the country. They are currently waiting to be extradited to the US on wire fraud and other computer crime-related charges. Isvanca and Cismaru face up to 20 years in federal prison if convicted on all counts.</p> <p>Documents related to their arrest released last week describe the pair as breaking into 123 computers associated with surveillance cameras used by DC's Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and using the compromised systems to distribute ransomware.</p> <p>The intrusions occurred sometime between January 9 and January 12, 2017. It resulted in several critical police surveillance cameras becoming disabled just prior to Trump's inauguration. The incident triggered the highest priority response by US law enforcement because of its potential impact on security plans for the event.</p> <p>An affidavit in support of the criminal complaint against Isvanca and Cismaru shows that the MPD called in the US Secret Service to investigate the break-in on January 12, 2017. Secret Service agents from the Washington Field Office discovered that 123 of the MPD's 187 outdoor surveillance cameras had been illegally accessed and were being used to distribute spam emails containing the Cerber and Dharma ransomware samples. One of the infected systems contained a text file with over 179,600 email addresses belonging to targets of the ransomware scheme.</p> <p>Somewhat curiously considering their choice of target, Isvanca and Cismaru did not appear to have been particularly careful about concealing their tracks. A forensic analysis of three of the MPD's infected</p>

computers yielded a lot of information on the identity of the alleged perpetrators and their direct involvement in the malicious activity.

One of the infected devices showed that the attackers had accessed multiple fraudulently established email accounts while the computer was under their control. The email accounts were used to share IP addresses, usernames, passwords, and other details on the compromised surveillance camera computers. They were also used to download ransomware samples on the compromised MPD systems and to send and receive thousands of stolen credit card numbers.

Investigators were able to link at least two of the email addresses directly to Isvanca and Cismaru. Google records, for instance, showed that both Isvanca and Cismaru had used their actual Gmail address as recovery email addresses for some of the accounts associated with the malicious activity. Investigators also discovered that the IP addresses from which the malicious email accounts were established belonged separately to Isvanca and Cismaru.

Other evidence showed that the file containing the over 179,600, target email addresses for the ransomware campaign had been downloaded to the MPD computer directly from Cismaru's system. Numerous, barely concealed email exchanges also showed the two had collaborated on the plot.

The arrests of Cismaru and Isvanca follow the detainment of two other individuals—a British man and Swedish woman—in London last year for the attacks on the MPD computers. However, the affidavit released last week shows that the two individuals were not connected to the attack. They were detained based on information pertaining to a tracking number for Hermes, a European packing shipping company that was found on one of the hacked computers.

Investigation of the tracking number showed it to be associated with a delivery address in London belonging to the two individuals who were detained. But a forensic analysis of computers seized from their residence showed them to have no link to the MPD attack. Instead, the tracking number was associated with a purchase the two individuals had made through Amazon from a company that was registered in Cismaru's name.

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HEADLINE	01/02 Colorado gunman alarming online trail
SOURCE	http://www.cnn.com/2018/01/01/us/colorado-shooting-suspect-military-record/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Just weeks before a barricaded man shot and killed a sheriff's deputy in a Colorado apartment, he apparently was writing alarming messages in email and on social media that included threats to police officers, officials have said.</p> <p>Matthew Riehl, a 37-year-old former Army reservist, shot four sheriff's deputies who responded to a complaint at his apartment in the Denver suburb of Highlands Ranch on Sunday morning, killing one, police say. Riehl was killed during a subsequent shootout with a police tactical team -- a clash that also left a SWAT officer injured, authorities say.</p> <p>The slain deputy was Zackari Parrish, a 29-year-old father of two. Two civilians outside the apartment also were shot and injured during the incidents, police say.</p> <p>Police haven't revealed suspected motives for Sunday's shootings, but several law enforcement agencies had been aware weeks beforehand that Riehl was accused of writing harassing or suspicious messages online, officials said this week.</p> <p>That includes "harassing posts" that Riehl put on his social media sites in November about a traffic stop in the Denver suburb of Lone Tree, just a few miles east of his apartment in Highlands Ranch, said Lone Tree spokeswoman Denisse Coffman.</p>

Shortly after those posts, Riehl allegedly sent harassing emails to Lone Tree police officers, Coffman said. "At that point, the Lone Tree Police Department immediately contacted the Douglas County Sheriff's Office to investigate, given that a Lone Tree police officer was being targeted by the suspect's harassing communication," Coffman said.

Coffman said she couldn't reveal any other information about the case because the investigation wasn't finished. But these apparently weren't the only messages that recently were brought to the attention of authorities.

In late 2017, the University of Wyoming -- where Riehl was a 2010 law school graduate -- alerted students and faculty to what it called his suspicious behavior.

According to a letter sent to faculty and staff in November, Riehl posted "rambling, nonsensical messages on his Facebook page" that mentioned the school. Campus police and the Laramie Police Department were both alerted to the posts. The faculty was asked to alert authorities if Riehl was spotted on campus.

Chad Baldwin, associate vice president for communications and marketing at the university, told CNN the posts were "outrageous, vulgar and alarming." Baldwin said the university heightened security on campus, but there were no reported sightings of Riehl in the area.

Douglas County Sheriff Tony Spurlock told reporters Sunday that Riehl had previous contacts with law enforcement "throughout the metro area," but had no criminal history.

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HEADLINE	01/02 Experts describe: planet of the apps
SOURCE	https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/planet-of-the-apps-experts-warn-of-a-tech-take-over-as-robots-with-artificial-intelligence-seize-control/
GIST	<p>Thousands of us unwrapped voice-activated electronic devices on Christmas Day.</p> <p>Amazon's Alexa service, Apple's Home Pod and Google's Home speakers were among the best-sellers.</p> <p>Recognising the human voice, the gadgets can play music, search the web, shop online, check the weather and even switch on the lights or control the central heating.</p> <p>But while we are getting to grips with our new interactive electronics, a report last week sounded alarm bells over the implications of rapidly improving artificial intelligence.</p> <p>The study, from the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) warns of thousands of jobs being lost to robots – with those on lowest wages likely to be hardest hit.</p> <p>Around 44% of jobs accounting for about £290 million in wages risk being automated in the coming decades – mostly in low-paid sectors such as call centres, offices and factories.</p> <p>Mathew Lawrence, a senior researcher at the IPPR, said: "Managed badly, the benefits of automation could be narrowly concentrated, benefiting those who own capital. Inequality would spiral."</p> <p>Now the think tank is calling on governments to examine ways of spreading the benefits of automation throughout society.</p> <p>IPPR research fellow Carys Roberts said: "To avoid inequality rising, the Government should look at ways to spread capital ownership and make sure everyone benefits from increased automation."</p> <p>Unite, Britain's biggest union, said coping with advances in technology was nothing new for workers in the manufacturing sector in particular – but stressed the Government needs to invest in retraining people as</p>

automation increases.

They said: “We have seen in previous industrial revolutions, in the likes of the steel and other heavy industries, that whole communities can be left behind by new technology and this cannot happen again.”

Scottish Engineering chief executive Bryan Buchan has a much more positive view of what robots will bring to the workplace.

He said: “The evidence is that automation doesn’t cost jobs but it changes jobs. These things are quite advanced in terms of robotics and they don’t need guards around them so humans can work alongside them.

“They are using ‘cobots’ on the Mini assembly lines now at Oxford. Fundamentally the ‘cobot’ does the horrible, repetitive jobs that humans don’t like doing.”

The UK is one of the best prepared countries in the world to benefit from artificial intelligence, rather than lose out.

This month, the AI Readiness Index – by the Oxford Insights Team – put the UK in top place out of the world’s 35 most advanced countries – beating the US into second spot. But not all human jobs are under immediate threat from robots. Plumbers, electricians and nurses will stay in employment the longest, according to artificial intelligence expert and author Martin Ford.

“One area that is safe for people is the kind of job that requires a lot of dexterity, hand-eye coordination and flexibility,” he said. But will the robots we are creating one day enslave us?

It is a question that increasingly troubles many scientists and tech entrepreneurs.

Oxford professor Michael Woolridge has warned MPs artificial intelligence could go ‘rogue’.

He said the machines might become so complex that the engineers who create them will no longer understand them or be able to predict how they function.

If that sounds far-fetched, consider this: A few weeks ago a robot called AlphaZero taught itself how to play chess in four hours – then it beat a grandmaster with moves never seen in the game’s history.

The robot was given the rules and instructed to learn how to win by playing against itself. In doing so it amassed centuries of chess knowledge and tactics then went on to surpass all previous human ingenuity in the game.

Back in our homes, the computers have already begun their quiet revolution.

Videos have appeared on the internet showing voice activated devices from different manufacturers starting to talk to each other.

Amazon’s Alexa – the voice of its Echo system – asks Apple’s Siri a question. Siri answers and then asks Google’s Home, which answers before addressing Alexa.

And so it goes on in a continuous babbling loop, with little or no human input required.

It’s all a bit of fun... isn’t it?

How rise of the machines has changed our working lives forever

Just as horses were gradually made obsolete by the car, humans’ jobs have also been affected by changing technology throughout modern history.

	<p>The Industrial Revolution of the 1700s saw hand production methods replaced by machines and heralded the rise of the factory system.</p> <p>In recent times, it is the internet which has had the biggest impact on jobs – leading to a sharp decline in retail positions as increasing numbers of people shopped online.</p> <p>Self-service tills at supermarkets and department stores have also led to a rapid decline in the numbers of shop workers.</p> <p>Another job we have seen begin to disappear is the bank teller. The arrival of ATM machines in the 1970s signalled the start of the decline. Banks in Scotland have closed more than 140 branches this year at the cost of hundreds of jobs as more people head online to bank.</p> <p>Other jobs that have largely fallen by the wayside in recent times due to automation and artificial intelligence include petrol pump operators, car park attendants and telephone switchboard operators, plus postal service mail sorters and sewing machine operators. Scientists, including Stephen Hawking, have argued that it may only be a matter of time before artificial intelligence turns on mankind.</p> <p>Hawking has said he believes development of full artificial intelligence could “spell the end of the human race”.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Germany new online hate speech rules
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/germany-begins-enforcing-new-online-hate-speech-rules/
GIST	<p>Social media companies may have been dreading the fireworks marking the start of the new year. On Jan. 1, Germany began enforcing strict rules that could fine companies such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube up to 50 million euros (\$60 million) if they don't remove posts containing hate speech within 24 hours of receiving a complaint.</p> <p>The new hate speech rules, passed last June, require companies to maintain an "effective and transparent procedure for dealing with complaints" that users can access readily at anytime. Upon receiving a complaint, social media companies have to remove or block "obviously illegal content" within 24 hours, although they have up to a week when dealing with "complex cases."</p> <p>Social media companies haven't been viewed too favorably in many countries due to the massive volume of hate content on their platforms. To fight that, Facebook in June said it removes 66,000 posts every week, saying it wants to do better but admitting the task is not easy. Last month, Twitter escalated its fight against hate, enforcing an updated policy that bans users from promoting violence and hate in their usernames and bios, and threatening to remove accounts if users tweeted hate speech, symbols and images.</p> <p>German isn't the only country that wants social media companies to do more about hate speech. While the European Union acknowledged Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Microsoft for being better at the job, it said it managed to block twice the volume of hate content at a faster rate than those companies did in the beginning of the year.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 US blogger sorry for suicide forest video
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/american-blogger-logan-paul-apologizes-youtube-video-52092786
GIST	American blogger Logan Paul apologized Tuesday after getting slammed for a video he shared on YouTube that appeared to show a body hanging in a Japanese forest known as a suicide spot.

Paul, who has millions of Twitter followers and YouTube subscribers, posted an apology on his Twitter site , saying, "Where do I begin. Let's start with this. I'm sorry."

Although the video has been taken down, segments were still online. Critics, who have also gone online, say what was offensive was Paul's giggling and joking about the body.

The video, posted Sunday, shows Paul going on a trek with friends in the Aokigahara forest, near Mount Fuji. He seems aware that the site is sometimes chosen for suicides, but is surprised to come across what appears to be a body hanging from a tree.

He said he had wanted to raise awareness about suicide and possibly save lives, and denied his goal was to drive clicks.

"I thought I could make a positive ripple on the internet, not cause a monsoon of negativity," he said in his Twitter post.

Paul posted a more sanguine video on YouTube on Monday, showing him romping through a Tokyo park, talking about his apparel brand, visiting gadget stores and running around city streets wearing a Pokemon outfit.

He briefly mentioned the encounter with a body at the start of the video, saying, "That was weird."

Japan has a relatively high rate of suicides, with more than 21,000 a year, according to government data. Its per capita suicide rate is among the highest in the world.

Many blame the high suicide rate on the value placed on conformity, excelling and hard work in the country.

Suicide also does not suffer the religious stigma here it does in other cultures. Ritual suicide, known as seppuku or hara-kiri, has long been portrayed in movies and theater as an honorable way to take responsibility.

The Mount Fuji forest has been known for suicides for decades because people can easily get lost there, and know they won't be found for a long time.

Although Japan has many suicide-prevention groups, the culture of shame has family members of convicted criminals, people who have racked up massive debt and youngsters bullied at school often turning to suicide.

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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	01/03 Drug addict, criminal to ISIS member
SOURCE	http://www.malaysiandigest.com/frontpage/29-4-tile/715903-drug-addict-criminal-and-now-is-member-singaporean-man-videotapes-himself-killing-3-men.html
GIST	<p>Back in September 2017, Megat Shahdan Abdul Samad first came under media frenzy when the 39-year-old challenged Britain's Prince Harry to fight jihadists.</p> <p>However, the Singaporean member of the Islamic State (IS), who is based in Syria, is now back in the spotlight after appearing in another propaganda video, that is believed to have been distributed by the militant group on December 29 (Friday).</p> <p>As reported by the Straits Times, the eight-minute long video depicted Megat Shahdan, or notoriously known by his moniker 'Abu Uqayl,' executing three men via firearm at point blank – towards the end of</p>

the harrowing video, with Abu Uqayl commanding IS followers to “slay the enemies of Allah wherever you can find them.”

Since the video garnered massive attention on social media, the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) has condemned the propaganda video, and deemed it as a “desperate attack” by IS fighters to drive a wedge between Muslims and non-Muslims.

“The IS' message blatantly disregards the sanctity of human life that Islam strives to preserve and protect”, said MUIS on Monday(January 1), as quoted by Channel News Asia, and urged Muslims to not share the sensitive material.

“Such videos prey on the minds of the weak, or those who do not have proper religious guidance. We must continue to stand together and stop the spread of ISIS’ dangerous propaganda,” and advised individuals who are swayed by such videos to seek counsel from a credible religious preacher.

The Straits Times reported that this is the first incident whereby a Singaporean citizen participated in an execution for the IS, as senior analyst from the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) shared his view that Abu Uqayl may be a man in a leadership position.

While the Singaporean Home Affairs stated that they are “no following updates,” since the video’s release, Dr Kumar Ramakrishna of RSIS opined that the video is at risk of spreading extreme ideology in Singapore.

“Singaporeans may think we are educated, but even people in our particular day and age, given exposure to extremist ideology, can be influenced to such an extent... where they can so dehumanise other people not seen to be part of their circle that they can just murder them in cold blood,” he said.

“It shows why extremist ideology is so dangerous and has to continue to be countered,” he added.

According to reports, Shahdan left Singapore for the Middle East in 2014, which some have believed to be the starting point as to when he was radicalised – prompting the Ministry of Home Affairs to keep a close tab on his activities.

Prior his radicalisation, Shahdan had been a member of a secret society with a history of drug and criminal convictions.

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HEADLINE	01/01 From 'normal teen' to ISIS sympathizer
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/news/us/clues-to-how-a-young-man-went-from-classic-teenage-boy-to-accused-isis-sympathizer-1.504895
GIST	<p>A skeletal portrait of the Sterling, Va., man federal authorities have accused of obstructing a terrorism investigation began to come into focus on Monday — that of a directionless youth who converted to Islam at the end of high school, married a significantly older Muslim woman, had a child who died as an infant, and became increasingly religious until an arrest Friday that allegedly included him destroying a computer thumb drive that authorities suspect may have contained evidence of terrorism-related activity.</p> <p>In the months before that arrest, court filings allege Sean Andrew Duncan, 21, who will appear in federal court on Tuesday, acted in a manner that was "indicative of an individual planning and researching how to conduct an attack," including research into materials relating to the Islamic State, terrorist attacks, weapons, surveillance tactics and body armor.</p> <p>Now, family members are struggling to reconcile the man they had believed Duncan to be with the one federal agents say he had become.</p>

"Sean is a very good kid. And that's all I can really say at this point. I'm floored," said his mother, Laurie Duncan, a real estate agent in Ocean City, Md. "Sean is a very honest and sincere child, and that's all I can say, is that he's a child. He's 21."

Sean Duncan, who could not be reached for comment, grew up in eastern Baltimore County and, at first, was a "classic teenage boy," recalled Zach, who is engaged to Duncan's sister and requested that The Washington Post withhold his last name for fear of career repercussions.

As a boy, Duncan liked video games more than sports, didn't seem to have much ambition, and had trouble in school, Zach said. So much so that Duncan transferred from Patapsco High School to Patterson High School, where Zach said he befriended a few Muslim students and became interested in Islam.

"I accepted Islam during my last year of high school by the grace of Allah," as Duncan later described his "journey to Islam" in an online post he published to raise money for studying Koranic Arabic at Fawakih, an Islamic educational institute in Herndon, Va.

"It was the summer before my 12th grade that I began looking into Islam, specifically how to pray the salah." He said he was struck by the "beauty" and "cleanliness" of the daily prayer and started listening to the Arabic recitation of the Koran, which, although he didn't understand Arabic, "penetrated my heart," causing him to fall "in love with the words of Allah."

He called the next chapter "Trouble on the Homefront."

"It was very hard for me to practice my Islam for at least the first 6-12 months," he wrote. "There is still some friction even until this day."

Some of the friction, Zach said, involved his relationship with a woman he met in his new social network, Zakiya Sadeq, now 36, who would become his wife. "She was in her 30s, and we were trying to figure out why this woman who is also studying medicine, how did she find this 18-year-old boy who doesn't have a job or money, and why is she interested in him?"

Duncan told the family he was going to marry Sadeq, who, according to her LinkedIn profile, obtained a medical degree at the International Islamic University Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur. "We were all like, 'What the hell are you doing?'" Zach said.

Through her attorney, Sadeq declined to comment.

The couple married, but in January 2016, according to court records, Duncan was also allegedly communicating with another woman whom the filing called an "unnamed co-conspirator." Duncan asked the woman to go to Syria with him and become his second wife, the filing said she told investigators. She "asked Duncan if his current wife would be OK with [her] coming with them to Syria," it said. "Duncan stated that his wife would have to be OK with it. [She] did not agree to go."

The next month, the FBI received a tip from one of Duncan's relatives saying he "may have been radicalized, and voiced his approval of Westerners being beheaded in the Middle East," according to court documents.

That year, Duncan, who had taken to wearing a religious robe and cap, and Sadeq moved to Pittsburgh, where Sadeq's LinkedIn profile says she worked as a doctor with the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. They moved into a small apartment complex, as Duncan continued what was described in a Facebook post in September 2016 as his "journey to understand the Koran: the reason I became curious about Islam." He said he had just completed a Koranic Arabic course and planned to "teach this amazing language."

By the time of that posting, Sadeq was already pregnant with their child.

	<p>"They brought the baby down here," said the daughter of a neighbor who declined to give her name, calling Sadeq "very nice."</p> <p>"They weren't trouble or had any problems, but the baby died, and the next thing you know, they were gone."</p> <p>On June 6 last year, 4-month-old Muhammad Duncan died of sudden unexplained infant death, according to the Allegheny County Medical Examiner's Office.</p> <p>Soon after, they returned to the Washington region, where some family members on both sides are having difficulty comprehending the allegations against Duncan. "He seemed normal," said Sadeq's cousin, Roxana Muzzammel. "He seemed fine. They're both very simple people."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Ex-DC cop guilty of terror support
SOURCE	https://kaplanherald.com/2018/01/02/nazi-jihadist-d-c-cop-convicted-of-aiding-isis/
GIST	<p>A former D.C. Metro Transit Police officer who converted to Islam and embraced neo-Nazi ideology was found guilty Monday of attempting to provide material support to ISIS and two counts of obstruction of justice.</p> <p>Nicholas Young, 36, could face up to 60 years in prison when he is sentenced in February, reported the Investigative Project on Terrorism.</p> <p>He is the first American law enforcement officer to be convicted in a terrorism case.</p> <p>A federal prosecutor previously told jurors in Young's terrorist trial he "was attracted to Nazis and Islamic terrorists at the same time," noting "both hate Jews."</p> <p>Young, 38, a resident of Fairfax, Virginia, gave misleading statements to federal agents when interviewed about the whereabouts of a close associate who Young believed had traveled to Syria to join ISIS, according to a court filing.</p> <p>Young also tried to give gift-card codes to his associate to help ISIS recruit new members.</p> <p>, Young was hired by the Washington Metropolitan Transportation Authority in 2003 and drew the attention of investigators in September 2010 when FBI agents interviewed him in connection with the arrest of an acquaintance,</p> <p>Chesser was sentenced in 2011 to 25 years in prison for communicating threats against the writers of the "South Park" television show and for attempting to provide material support to the Somali terrorist group Al-Shabaab, IPT reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Report: domestic terrorism policy gaps
SOURCE	https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/01/02/congressional-report-highlights-gaps-us-domestic-terrorism-policy
GIST	<p>Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center, Shanksville, and the Pentagon in 2001, U.S. counterterrorism policies have overwhelmingly focused on international terrorist threats emanating from jihadist terrorists, such as al-Qaeda, the Islamic State (IS) and their affiliates.</p> <p>While this national security strategy was justified in the years immediately following such a horrific, mass-casualty producing attack against America, it now appears narrow-minded and limited given the</p>

resurgence of other violent forms of domestic terrorism perpetrated by violent antigovernment and hate-oriented extremists.

A new Congressional report distributed in August highlights the growing threat from domestic terrorists, described as “people who commit crimes within the homeland and draw inspiration from U.S.-based extremist ideologies and movements.” The report, published by the Congressional Research Service (CRS), highlights several gaps in U.S. policy related to identifying, analyzing and assessing domestic terrorist threats. It notes that domestic terrorists “have not received as much attention from federal law enforcement as their violent jihadist counterparts,” which has not always been the case. For example, in 1999, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the lead federal agency responsible for investigating acts of domestic terrorism, stated that “during the past 30 years, the vast majority — but not all — of the deadly terrorist attacks occurring in the United States have been perpetrated by domestic extremists.”

According to the CRS report, it’s clear that domestic terrorism is not a top federal counterterrorism priority. Nevertheless, domestic terrorist threats feature prominently among state and local law enforcement concerns. Furthermore, several recent studies have shown that domestic terrorism is often overlooked and rivals that of jihadist terrorism.

According to studies from New American Foundation, Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point, the SPLC and others, domestic terrorists have been responsible for orchestrating many deadly terrorist incidents in the U.S. since 9/11. Some have concluded that domestic non-Islamic terrorism poses a greater threat in the U.S. than jihadist terrorism based on the number of attacks since 9/11.

A 2016 Center for Investigative Reporting study concluded there were nearly twice as many domestic terrorist attacks and plots as jihadist-inspired incidents between 2008 and 2016. According to CIR investigative reporters, nearly half (48 percent) of the jihadist incidents were FBI sting operations (which inflated the number of incidents). This was more than four times the rate for domestic non-Islamic extremists. This disparity, according to counterterror experts, is indicative of the lopsided nature of U.S. government counterterrorism and investigative resources. Statistics provided in the CIR study indicates that far fewer resources (e.g. analysts, agents, informants, operatives, etc.) are allocated to analyze, assess, investigate, and prosecute domestic non-Islamic terrorists. A similar allegation was also made during a Congressional hearing on hate crimes held in the immediate aftermath of the Sikh Temple shooting in August 2012.

Likewise, a 2014 University of Maryland national survey of state and local law enforcement officers found that sovereign citizens was the “top concern” for terrorist threats in the homeland. Jihadist-inspired terrorism ranked second, but was also closely followed by militia/antigovernment and white supremacist threats. A second survey conducted by Duke University’s Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security in 2015 produced similar results with antigovernment extremism being the top law enforcement concern.

The CRS report raises several key issues related to improving U.S. domestic terrorism policy. They include: (1) federal agencies employ varying terminology and definitions to describe domestic terrorist threats; (2) the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the FBI do not officially designate domestic terrorist organizations; (3) few, if any, domestic terrorists are charged or prosecuted under federal or state terrorism statutes; (4) domestic terrorists, for the most part, do not use traditional terrorist tactics such as bombings, large-scale attacks, airplane hijackings, or political assassinations; (5) foreign-inspired homegrown violent jihadists get more media attention than acts of domestic terrorism; and, (6) domestic extremist ideology often uses the cover of constitutionally protected activity. These constitutional rights pose unique challenges to law enforcement when monitoring extremist groups and individuals, assessing potential threats and interdicting violent acts.

Existing official definitions of “domestic terrorism” (e.g. those used by federal agencies or codified into law) are too broad and confusing. These definitions need to be consolidated, more clearly worded, and narrowly focused on what constitutes domestic terrorism. Ambiguity in the investigative process regarding when criminal activity becomes domestic terrorism may also need clarification. Furthermore, federal

agencies appear to use the terms “terrorist” and “extremist” interchangeably when referring to domestic terrorism. This practice confuses the issue and blurs the line between peaceful, law-abiding activity and illegal acts and violence.

The report raises the lack of an official domestic terrorist group list as another problem. U.S. counterterrorism policy abroad is driven by such a list — the U.S. Department of State’s list of foreign designated terrorist organizations. The State Department list gives lawmakers a clear, succinct, and vetted catalog of terrorist groups. The lack of a similar domestic terrorist group list confuses policy makers and complicates their understanding of domestic terrorism. In turn, this negatively impacts their ability to develop domestic counterterrorism policies.

The group list issue is further problematic due to the fact that domestic terrorists don’t operate like foreign terrorist groups. In contrast, domestic terrorists have adopted the tactics of leadless resistance, lone wolves and small cells. For this reason, domestic terrorists may be better categorized according to the extremist ideological concepts that underpin their threats, inspire radicalization, and mobilize individuals toward violence or criminal activity. For example, the DOJ, the FBI, and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have already identified domestic terrorist threats in their public statements, Congressional testimony and official reports. According to these statements, domestic terrorist threats have included animal rights extremists, eco-terrorists, anarchists, anti-government extremists (such as ‘sovereign citizens’ and unauthorized militias), black nationalists, white supremacists and violent anti-abortion extremists.

The DOJ, FBI, and DHS, however, must balance their respective authorities while safeguarding extremists’ rights to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and other constitutionally protected activity. Unfortunately, domestic extremists are well aware of their civil and privacy rights and often exploit these rights to provide cover for illegal activity, further radicalization, and mobilization towards violence. The CRS report draws attention to this dilemma stating, “domestic terrorists operate in a decentralized fashion, terrorist lone actors (lone wolves) or isolated small groups (cells) generally operate autonomously and in secret, all the while drawing ideological sustenance — not direction — from propagandists operating in the free market of ideas.”

Another persistent issue relates to the disparity in federal and state prosecution and sentencing of jihadist terrorists in the U.S. versus domestic terrorists. Outside of eco-terrorist cases, there have been virtually no violent domestic extremists charged or prosecuted under federal or state terrorism statutes which offer penalty enhancements for suspects engaging in domestic terrorist plotting or terrorist-related activity. Most domestic terrorists are charged under existing firearms, arson, and explosives laws, rather than a terrorism statute.

A 2016 Reuters analysis of more than 100 federal cases since 2014 further illustrated that domestic terrorist suspects collectively face less severe charges than those affiliated with the Islamic State who were arrested in the U.S. Between 2014 and 2016, 27 defendants were charged in the U.S. for plotting or inciting terrorist attacks. They carried a median prison sentence of 53 years. Over the same time period, 27 U.S.-based antigovernment or hate-motivated extremists were charged with similar activity. They carried a medium prison sentence of 20 years.

The Reuters study indicates that federal agents and U.S. Attorney’s Offices are encouraged to “open investigations into Americans who support groups on the State Department’s list of foreign designated terrorist organizations.” Reuters further reported that, “the maximum penalty for supporting a foreign terrorist organization has been raised from 10 years to 20 years in prison since 2001.”

Although most judges sentenced jihadist terrorists below the maximum, domestic terrorists enjoy greater constitutional protections and have rarely been charged or prosecuted with terrorism statutes. Embracing domestic extremism, no matter how radical the rhetoric becomes, is not a crime. According to current and former federal prosecutors, it is also very difficult “to convince a jury that someone who is not affiliated with a foreign group can be guilty of terrorism.”

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HEADLINE	01/02 Al-Shabab kills 5 police in Kenya
SOURCE	https://www.yenisafak.com/en/world/al-shabaab-kills-five-police-officers-in-northern-kenya-2931828
GIST	<p>Somali-based al-Shabaab militants killed five police officers Tuesday and burnt a police vehicle in the town of El-Wak close to the Kenya-Somali border.</p> <p>“We lost five security officers in the attack while on patrol on Elwak-Kotulo road. A team responding to the attack was also attacked and their lorry burnt.” Mandera South Deputy County Commissioner Daniel Bundotich told local media.</p> <p>Bundotich said three of the slain officers were police reservists while the other two were administrative officers.</p> <p>The militants had “waylaid the unsuspecting patrol team. It was an ambush”, said a police officer with knowledge of the attack who spoke to Anadolu Agency on condition of anonymity due to restrictions on speaking to the media.</p> <p>The attack comes less than a week after the militants attacked and burnt two police stations in Garissa county in northern Kenya.</p> <p>In previous years, the Somali-based al-Qaeda-affiliated al-Shabaab stepped up terror attacks in Kenya in retaliation for Kenya’s military presence in Somalia. The group’s bloodiest attack took place on April 2, 2015, when they killed 147 students of Garissa University.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Reports: ISIS executioner captured
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/01/02/dreaded-sadistic-isis-executioner-reportedly-captured-in-iraq-could-be-executed-himself.html
GIST	<p>A white-bearded ISIS militant who presided over the killings of dozens of gay men and others who ran afoul of the so-called "caliphate" was captured in the Iraqi city of Mosul last week, according to reports.</p> <p>Abu Omer was arrested after locals in Mosul tipped security forces off to his hideout in the city, the Iran-based AhlulBayt News Agency (ANBA) reported, citing Iraqi media outlets.</p> <p>Abu Omer was a prominent presence in several sick videos of ISIS executions, in which homosexuals were thrown off buildings and others beheaded and stoned to death for minor offenses such as blasphemy.</p> <p>In one video, apparently from March 2015, a man who appears to be Omer reads off a list of charges against three men before they are publicly beheaded.</p> <p>Another photo appears to show Omer inspecting a pile of rocks before a public stoning. Now, this most feared ISIS executioner could be executed himself.</p> <p>According to a Human Rights Watch report released last month, approximately 20,000 people are being held across Iraq on suspicion of ties to ISIS.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Egypt renews state of emergency
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/d2ac250be47e4422a5dbb1f6f5d2f124/Egypt-hangs-4-convicted-militants,-

	<u>renews-state-of-emergency</u>
GIST	<p>CAIRO (AP) — Egypt on Tuesday executed four alleged Islamic militants following their conviction by a military tribunal in the killing of three military academy students in a 2015 bomb attack.</p> <p>Authorities also renewed a nationwide state of emergency first imposed after deadly bombings targeted two churches in April. A decree issued by Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, Egypt’s general-turned-president, extended the state of emergency for three months.</p> <p>Egypt has struggled to combat an Islamic State-led insurgency based in the northern Sinai Peninsula that has carried out attacks across the country, mainly targeting security forces and the country’s Christian minority.</p> <p>The 2015 attack took place outside a stadium in the Nile Delta city of Kafr el-Sheikh as the military cadets were waiting for a bus to take them to the academy.</p> <p>Tuesday’s executions by hanging at a prison in the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria bring to 19 the number of convicted militants executed over the past week.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Military aggressive Afghanistan strategy
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jan/2/top-commander-us-forces-go-offensive-afghanistan/
GIST	<p>American forces in Afghanistan will pursue a more aggressive battle plan for the 16-year conflict in the coming year, with U.S. troops more engaged in the fight against the Taliban and other extremist groups for the first time since President Obama officially ended combat operations four years ago.</p> <p>U.S. Central Command chief Gen. Joseph Votel outlined details of the American battle plan in Afghanistan on Tuesday, a battle plan which will depend heavily on the new influx of U.S. troops into the country approved by President Trump late last year. The near-term goal for the roughly 3,900 U.S. servicemembers heading into Afghanistan will be to give Afghan security forces a significant advantage in this year’s upcoming fighting season, Gen. Votel said.</p> <p>American and NATO commanders intend to “focus on offensive operations and ... look for a major effort to gain the initiative very quickly as we enter into the fighting season,” the general said in an interview with The Associated Press.</p> <p>Afghan security forces, with ramped-up assistance from the U.S. and NATO-led coalition, must “keep the pressure on all the time and work to gain the upper hand as quickly as we can. So that as we get into this next fighting season we can build on the initiative,” Gen. Votel said.</p> <p>Past U.S.-Afghan military offensives have failed to end the long conflict with the Taliban and other Islamist groups, and Mr. Trump’s new approach risks a new spike in U.S. casualties in what is already the longest conflict in U.S. history.</p> <p>Officials at coalition headquarters in Kabul on Tuesday confirmed an American soldier was killed and four were wounded in eastern Afghanistan’s violent Nangarhar province on New Year’s Day. The U.S. casualty is the first official American death in Afghanistan of 2018.</p> <p>Gen. Votel’s more aggressive posture echoes comments from Gen. John Nicholson, the top American commander in the country, who predicted Afghan and allied forces would be able to reclaim 80 percent of the country from Taliban control over the next two years.</p> <p>“Currently, [Kabul] controls about two-thirds of the population ... so we would like to see that increase to at least 80 percent,” he told reporters at the Pentagon in November.</p>

	The two-year goal coincides with a slew of nationwide parliamentary and district-level elections, culminating in Afghanistan's 2019 presidential elections.
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HEADLINE	01/02 Service member killed in Afghanistan
SOURCE	http://www.cnn.com/2018/01/02/politics/afghanistan-service-member/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)A US service member was killed on Monday in the Achin District of Afghanistan's Nangarhar Province, the US military said.</p> <p>The service member's name is not being immediately disclosed pending notification of next of kin. Four other service members were wounded during the combat engagement. Two service members are in stable condition and being treated at a medical facility, the military said.</p> <p>"We are deeply saddened by the loss of one of our own," Gen. John Nicholson, the commander of US forces in Afghanistan, said in the statement. "At this very difficult time our heartfelt sympathies go out to the families and friends of our fallen and wounded brothers."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 ISIS fanatic takes selfie on NY street
SOURCE	https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/5251015/isis-lone-wolf-fanatic-chilling-selfie-new-york/
GIST	<p>A BRAZEN Islamic State fanatic taunted US security services by posing on a snowy New York street in an ISIS-branded scarf.</p> <p>The disturbing selfie comes after the terror group's media channels ramped up their threats to the Big Apple over the festive period.</p> <p>The chilling image shows the would-be terrorist posing on a street in New York with people going about their business in the background.</p> <p>The masked monster seems unconcerned about the possibility of US security forces being able to trace his movements across the city from security cameras and putting a name to his face.</p> <p>The disturbing selfie comes as the supporters of the terror group released another poster urging attacks in churches with knives.</p> <p>The propaganda piece shows a masked fighter brandishing a bloodied knife with the words: "It's cheaper than a chainsaw."</p> <p>Last year Islamic State propaganda chiefs also released a snap of a fanatic holding a phone bearing an ISIS flag in the shadow of New York's One World Trade Center building.</p> <p>The skyscraper is the main building of the rebuilt World Trade Center complex which was destroyed in the 9/11 terror attacks in 2001.</p> <p>It stands at 1,792 feet to its tip and is the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere.</p> <p>The terror group has warned the US that fighters are ready to strike in the country – with the iconic building a potential target.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/03 NYPD investigates 'ISIS selfies' in NYC
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/01/03/nypd-investigating-isis-selfies-outside-nyc-museum-report.html
GIST	<p>Authorities in New York are reportedly investigating photographs of a possible ISIS supporter taking selfies outside the Metropolitan Museum of Art and in view of One World Trade Center.</p> <p>The chilling images, that began circulating on social media over the weekend, shows an individual posing while wearing an ISIS-branded scarf over his face.</p> <p>The picture was captioned with “We are in your own Backyard,” according to The New York Daily News.</p> <p>“The NYPD is aware of the photograph. As with all terror related threats, the NYPD is looking into the incident. At this time there are no credible threats related to New York City,” an NYPD spokesman told the newspaper on Tuesday.</p> <p>Another photograph subject to the investigation is a snap of a person holding a phone with an ISIS flag in the shadows of the One World Trade Center building. The image was reportedly taken in a similar spot where, weeks later, the Manhattan truck attacker killed eight people.</p> <p>Eric Feinberg, the co-founder of GIPEC, a cyber-intelligence company that tracks terrorism-related hashtags, told the Daily News that imagery like that are aimed at spreading fear and possibly inspiring so-called lone wolf attacks.</p> <p>But he warned that it remains unclear whether the pictures are authentic, adding that they may have been doctored. “Maybe it’s Photoshopped, maybe it’s not. It should be taken seriously,” he said.</p> <p>The attempts to induce fear and inspire lone jihadists have increased since ISIS’ retreat in Iraq and Syria, where the group lost most of its territory and fighters to the U.S.-led military campaign. Increasingly, the group tends to focus on inciting terror attacks in Europe and the U.S. rather than recruiting militants to the “Caliphate.”</p> <p>Last month, a Bangladeshi man, Akayed Ullah, reportedly inspired by the terror group attempted to commit a bomb attack inside New York’s Port Authority bus terminal during rush hour.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/03 Suicide bombing Nigeria mosque kills 10
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/01/03/suicide-bombing-in-mosque-in-northern-nigeria-kills-10.html
GIST	<p>MAIDUGURI, Nigeria – Residents say a suicide bomber entered a mosque in a northern Nigerian town and detonated his explosives, killing at least 10 people during early morning prayers.</p> <p>Bukar Jibril, a youth volunteer in Gamboru Ngala town, says nine bodies were found immediately after the blast and two other people died later, including the bomber.</p> <p>Two other residents confirmed Wednesday's attack in Borno state.</p> <p>The Borno state government on Tuesday tightened a curfew and increased security checks around its capital, Maiduguri, after a resurgence of violence in the city where Islamic extremist group Boko Haram was formed.</p> <p>Boko Haram's eight-year insurgency has killed tens of thousands of people.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/03 Military: airstrike hit explosives truck
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/01/03/us-airstrike-in-somalia-destroys-vehicle-carrying-explosives.html
GIST	<p>MOGADISHU, Somalia – The U.S. military says it has carried out an airstrike in Somalia that killed two al-Shabab extremists and destroyed a vehicle carrying explosives, "preventing it from being used against the people in Mogadishu."</p> <p>The U.S. Africa Command statement says the airstrike occurred early Tuesday about 50 kilometers (31 miles) west of the capital. It says no civilians were killed.</p> <p>Mogadishu is frequently targeted by the al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab. The extremist group was blamed for the October truck bombing that killed 512 people in the capital.</p> <p>The U.S. military carried out more than 30 drone strikes last year against al-Shabab and fighters linked to the Islamic State group after the Trump administration approved expanded operations in the Horn of Africa nation.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/03 Al-Shabab publicly executes 5 'spies'
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/al-shabab-extremists-execute-alleged-spies-somalia-52110341?
GIST	<p>The Somalia-based al-Shabab extremist group says it has executed five men accused of spying for the Kenyan, Ethiopian and Somali governments.</p> <p>Al-Shabab announced the killings on its Andalus radio station, saying they were carried out in a public square in Kuntuwarey town in Lower Shabelle region late Tuesday.</p> <p>Witnesses say the men were tied to poles and shot dead by masked gunmen after a self-proclaimed judge read out their verdict in front of a crowd at the execution ground.</p> <p>Al-Shabab, al-Qaida's East African affiliate, has fought for years to impose a strict version of Islam in the Horn of Africa nation.</p> <p>Despite losing territory in recent years, the group continues to carry out lethal attacks in many parts of the country, especially Mogadishu. An October bombing there killed 512 people.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 NYC to install 1,500 protective barriers
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/new-york-city-install-hundreds-barriers-protect-pedestrians-vehicle-attacks/
GIST	<p>NEW YORK -- Hundreds of new protective barriers will be permanently installed in Times Square and other locations around New York in an effort to block vehicles from hitting pedestrians after deadly attacks last year on crowds. The city is spending \$50 million on protective measures including the installation of 1,500 metal barriers, or bollards, in key locations around the city, Mayor Bill de Blasio said Tuesday.</p> <p>Known around the world for the New Year's Eve ball drop, Times Square is crowded most days with tourists, costumed characters, sightseeing bus hawkers and office workers.</p> <p>In May, a man said by police to be high on drugs drove through crowds for more than three blocks, killing</p>

an 18-year-old tourist from Michigan. The vehicle was eventually stopped by one of the squat metal barriers. Temporary concrete blocks were put up along the Seventh Avenue sidewalk while city officials weighed a long-term solution and considered banning vehicle traffic from the area all together.

Then, on Halloween, a man who claimed to be inspired by ISIS drove down a busy bicycle path near the World Trade Center, authorities said. He killed eight people before he wrecked his rented truck and was shot and wounded by police. Barriers have also been placed there to keep cars out of the bike path.

"In 2017, New Yorkers witnessed the horrible capacity of people willing to do us harm, whether it was in our subways, on our bike paths or in Times Square," de Blasio, a Democrat, said. "We know we have to do even more to keep people safe and that's why we conducted a review on how best to secure our streets and public spaces, and we formulated a plan of action."

The rollout will begin in March. Meanwhile, the temporary blocks already set up will remain in place. "People have to be able to get around but they have to be safe at the same time," de Blasio said.

City officials didn't specify what other locations will be fortified, beyond the bike path and Times Square, but said there would be barriers set up in all five boroughs.

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	01/02 'Bomb cyclone' forming off East coast
SOURCE	http://time.com/5085306/bomb-cyclone-east-coast-weather-cold-winter/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>As record cold temperatures paralyze much of the country, a "bomb cyclone" forming off the East Coast is threatening to douse the area from Northern Florida to New England in ice and snow. The weather event has the potential to make 2018 one of the worst winters in the U.S. yet, and it's only the first week of January.</p> <p>A bomb cyclone, scientifically known as an explosive cyclogenesis, typically brews over the water where drops in barometric pressure can make it an extra forceful weather event. Making matters worse, forecasters say the storm could trap the bone-chilling cold currently putting the middle of the U.S. in a deep freeze over the Atlantic coastline later this week. The extreme cold has already been blamed for nine deaths across the U.S.</p> <p>Meteorologists are calling the event Winter Storm Grayson, and they say it could bring snow to the Southeast on Wednesday, as well as possible blizzard conditions to the Northeast Wednesday night and Thursday. After the wet winter weather passes, the cold air would make the east coast even more miserable. Boston, for instance, could see its coldest week in 100 years.</p> <p>But if the snow and the cold don't get you, the wind will, says the National Weather Service. Windchill advisories are currently in effect across the mid-Atlantic, with warnings in place for Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Pennsylvania. Pittsburgh and State College, Penn. may even experience -20 degree weather Tuesday evening — and that's before the big storm hits.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Washington, Idaho top relocating states
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/business/article192627979.html
GIST	<p>Washington is a move-to destination, and Atlas Van Lines offers its 2017 migration data as proof.</p> <p>The mover's latest migration study shows the state was one of the top destinations for people relocating last year, second only to Idaho.</p>

	<p>Atlas said more people came here than moved away, with 63 percent of its Washington moves coming into the state. Oregon was eighth in inbound moves.</p> <p>Washington was eighth in top destinations for international household moves in 2017, according Atlas moving data. (Texas was No. 1, followed by California).</p> <p>As for the larger Western region, the moving company said in a new release that for the second consecutive year, “Western states boasted the state with the highest percentage of inbound moves across the United States.”</p> <p>“This region housed the three inbound leaders for 2017: Idaho, Washington and Nevada. In addition, Nevada moved from balanced to inbound and Hawaii from balanced to outbound.”</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Claim: strong quakes to ravage Earth
SOURCE	http://www.mirror.co.uk/science/powerful-earthquakes-ravage-earth-2018-11785189
GIST	<p>The world is entering a period of higher seismic activity this year that will bring more earthquakes with it, scientists have predicted.</p> <p>While that's undoubtedly bad news for those living within affected areas, the ability to accurately predict when and where earthquakes will occur is growing all the time.</p> <p>This prediction comes from the fact that the Earth is currently experiencing a periodic slowdown of its rotation.</p> <p>Historically, these slowdowns have coincided with peak times for earthquakes and seismic activity.</p> <p>"So far we have only had about six severe earthquakes [in 2017]. We could easily have 20-a-year starting in 2018," said Dr Roger Bilham from the University of Colorado.</p> <p>Bilham, together with Rebecca Bendick from the University of Montana studied earthquakes occurring since 1900 that measured over 7 on the Richter Scale. They found periods of five years where the Earth's rotation slowed and these were followed by periods when seismic activity was heavier than usual.</p> <p>"It is straightforward," said Bilham. "The Earth is offering us a five-year heads-up on future earthquakes."</p> <p>These fluctuations are usually very small, sometimes slowing a day by no more than a millisecond. But according to their research it has an effect. How and why is not yet known but it's supposed that it could have something to do with behavioural changes in the the Earth's core.</p> <p>Although it's impossible to predict where the earthquakes will happen, the pair's research showed that historically they occur around the equator in the Earth's tropical regions.</p> <p>Some geologists have disagreed with the findings.</p> <p>"It appears to be a conference presentation and very preliminary rather than peer reviewed research, so there is no detail for us to examine," said GNS Science communications manager John Callan.</p> <p>"It is true there have been periods of elevated rates of large earthquakes in the past 100 years. However, if you go looking for correlations with other natural phenomenon, you will almost certainly find some interesting matches."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Major crack in ridge near Yakima
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/drone-video-shows-crack-in-ridge-near-yakima/281-504348953
GIST	<p>Dramatic drone video of Rattlesnake Ridge shows a deep crack in the southside of the slope. DNR, WSDOT and Emergency Management are monitoring the hillside as it continues to move south.</p> <p>Rattlesnake Ridge sits in Yakima County, next to Interstate 82.</p> <p>The Yakima County Office of Emergency Management says there is "no definitive answer as to if or when significant movement of the slide will occur or how far the slide will travel."</p> <p>A Level 3 evacuation notice was placed on homes along Thorp Road south of the Quarry.</p> <p>Emergency Management has closed a section of Thorp Road due to potential rock slides. The road is closed between Birchfield Road and Gangl Road.</p> <p>The crack was discovered back in October. Since then, the crack has continued to grow in size.</p> <p>Two separate earthquakes were recorded in the area Friday evening by USGS. But these events do not appear to have impacted the ridge, according to KNDU-TV.</p> <p>Interstate 82 remains open, for now. WSDOT is continuing to monitor the roadway and will close it if conditions become unsafe.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/03 Ethiopia to release all political prisoners
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/01/03/ethiopia-to-release-all-political-prisoners-close-camp.html
GIST	<p>ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia – In a surprise move, Ethiopia's leader on Wednesday announced plans to drop charges against political prisoners and close a notorious prison camp in what he called an effort to "widen the democratic space for all."</p> <p>Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn's comments came after anti-government protests engulfed much of the restive Oromia and Amhara regions in recent months, bringing many businesses, universities and transport networks to a standstill. The protests spread into other parts of the East African country, leading to a months-long state of emergency that has since been lifted.</p> <p>"Political prisoners that are facing prosecutions and are already under arrest will be released," Hailemariam said. "And the notorious prison cell that was traditionally called Maekelawi will be closed down and turned into a museum."</p> <p>It was not immediately clear how many political prisoners were being held across the country, a close U.S. security ally.</p> <p>Rights groups and opposition groups in Ethiopia had been calling for the release of political prisoners, saying they were arrested on trumped-up charges and were being punished for their points of view. Ethiopia's government has long been accused of arresting critical journalists and opposition leaders.</p> <p>Some of the prominent politicians currently in custody include opposition leaders Bekele Gerba and Merara Gudina. A number of journalists also remain in detention.</p>

	The months of protests demanding wider freedoms led to hundreds of reported deaths and tens of thousands of arrests while disrupting one of Africa's fastest growing economies.
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HEADLINE	01/03 Koreas reopen key communication channel
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/seoul-nkorea-reopen-cross-border-communications-52108459
GIST	<p>North Korean leader Kim Jong Un reopened a key cross-border communication channel with South Korea for the first time in nearly two years Wednesday as the rivals explored the possibility of sitting down and talking after months of acrimony and fears of war.</p> <p>The sudden signs of easing animosity, however, came as President Donald Trump threatened Kim with nuclear war in response to his threat earlier this week.</p> <p>In his New Year's address Monday, Kim said he was willing to send a delegation to next month's Winter Olympics in South Korea. But he also said he has a "nuclear button" on his desk and that all U.S. territory is within striking distance of his nuclear weapons, comments Trump latched onto Tuesday when he boasted of a bigger and more powerful "nuclear button" than Kim's.</p> <p>The two leaders exchanged crude insults last year, as the North received new U.N. sanctions over its sixth and most powerful nuclear test explosion and a series of intercontinental ballistic missile launches.</p> <p>The recent softening of contact between the rival Koreas may show a shared interest in improved ties, but there's no guarantee tensions will ease. There have been repeated attempts in recent years by the rivals to talk, but even when they do meet, the efforts often end in recriminations and stalemate.</p> <p>Kim's latest announcement, which was read by a senior Pyongyang official on state TV, followed a South Korean offer on Tuesday of high-level talks with North Korea to find ways to cooperate on next month's Winter Olympics in the South and discuss other inter-Korean issues.</p> <p>Ri Son Gwon, chairman of the state-run Committee for the Peaceful Reunification, cited Kim as welcoming South Korea's overture and ordering officials to reopen a communication channel at the border village of Panmunjom. Ri also quoted Kim as ordering officials to promptly take substantial measures with South Korea out of a "sincere stand and honest attitude," according to the North's state TV and news agency.</p> <p>South Korea quickly welcomed Kim's decision and later confirmed that the two Koreas began preliminary contacts on the channel. During their 20-minute communication, liaison officials of the two Koreas exchanged their names and examined their communication lines to make sure they were working, according to Seoul's Unification Ministry.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Baked Alaska: unusually warm
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/weather/2018/01/02/baked-alaska-usas-northernmost-state-has-been-unusually-warm/996303001/
GIST	<p>If you want to escape the cold, should you head to ... Alaska?</p> <p>While most of the lower 48 states continue to endure a hideous deep freeze, Alaska has had an unusually warm start to winter.</p> <p>In fact, several locations in northern and central Alaska — such as Utqiagvik (Barrow), Bettles, Kotzebue and McGrath — all had their warmest December on record, according to climatologist Brian</p>

Brettschneider. Fairbanks had its 2nd-warmest December. Over the first three weeks of the month, the city was a whopping 20 degrees above average.

And midday Tuesday, at 48 degrees, Anchorage's Merrill Field Airport was warmer than almost the entire Lower 48 states, including cities such as Jacksonville, Houston, Atlanta and New Orleans.

Anchorage had its fifth-warmest December: an average temperature more than 7 degrees above average.

It's cold outside, but that doesn't mean climate change isn't real

The exceedingly warm weather in Alaska was related to a large area of high pressure in upper levels of the atmosphere, which dominated much of western North America for most of December, according to weather.com.

"When the jet stream bows to the north and high pressure builds underneath in the upper atmosphere, warmer-than-average temperatures typically occur under it or near the periphery," weather.com meteorologist Chris Dolce said.

Alaska wasn't just warm in December: Utqiagvik (Barrow) had its second-warmest year on record. In fact, the tiny city on the state's north coast warmed so fast in 2017, the weather data from the city were automatically flagged as unreal and removed from the climate database, the Capital Weather Gang said.

Is the warmth related to climate change?

"The state has seen a growing trend of milder temperatures overall through the last few decades," Dolce said, noting that the last three years rank among the top four warmest years on record in the state.

Specifically, Utqiagvik, as one of a precious few long-term observing sites in the American Arctic, is often referenced as an embodiment of rapid Arctic changes, said Deke Arndt, the head of NOAA's Climate Monitoring Branch.

"In the context of a changing climate, the Arctic is changing more rapidly than the rest of the planet," he said.

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HEADLINE	01/02 New research global warming, drought
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Science_News/2018/01/02/Global-warming-could-leave-25-percent-of-the-planet-in-permanent-drought/4681514907695/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ls&utm_medium=5
GIST	<p>Jan. 2 (UPI) -- New research suggests roughly a quarter of the globe could be left in permanent drought if efforts to curb global warming fail to meet the targets set by the Paris agreement.</p> <p>Scientists compiled the predictions of 27 global climate models to determine which regions of planet Earth are most likely to experience significant aridification by the end of the century.</p> <p>Their analysis -- published this week in the journal Nature -- showed between 20 and 30 percent of the globe will be significantly drier than the aridity ranges established by historical year-to-year variations in precipitation.</p> <p>"Aridification is a serious threat because it can critically impact areas such as agriculture, water quality, and biodiversity," study author Chang-Eui Park, a researcher at the the Southern University of Science and Technology in Shenzhen, China, said in a news release. "It can also lead to more droughts and wildfires -- similar to those seen raging across California."</p> <p>Researchers looked at likely rates of aridification for different levels of global warming, including a 1.5</p>

and 2 degrees Celsius rise in the average global temperature. The goal of the Paris agreement is to limit global warming to a 2 degree Celsius increase above Earth's pre-industrial average.

"Another way of thinking of the emergence of aridification is a shift to continuous moderate drought conditions, on top of which future year-to-year variability can cause more severe drought," said Park, who also works at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England. "For instance, in such a scenario 15 percent of semi-arid regions would actually experience conditions similar to 'arid' climates today."

The latest research shows limiting global warming to a 1.5 degrees rise would prevent much of the predictive aridification. Drought rates are already increasing across much of the globe, as Earth has already experienced a 1 degree Celsius rise in global average temperature.

"The areas of the world which would most benefit from keeping warming below 1.5 degree Celsius are parts of Southeast Asia, Southern Europe, Southern Africa, Central America and Southern Australia -- where more than 20 percent of the world's population live today," said Tim Osborn, a professor at UEA.

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HEADLINE	01/02 Report: NKorea soldiers forage for food
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2018/01/02/hungry-north-korean-soldiers-are-being-given-leave-to-find-food-report-says.html
GIST	<p>Soldiers in North Korea's army are being given months off at a time to scrounge around fields to find food, according to a new report that describes the dire state of the reclusive country's food rations.</p> <p>A photo purportedly showing North Korean soldiers rummaging through a corn field was published recently on Daily NK, a Seoul-based website that covers the North through a network of informants.</p> <p>"The officers know better than anyone that they must feed their soldiers in order to maintain morale, and that rations of cornmeal with very few calories only serve to instill disillusionment among them," a source from the northern Ryanggang Province told the website.</p> <p>Other sources said many residents have been "expressing pity about the situation" and officers in Ryanggang Province have been "giving soldiers 2 to 3 months leave to gather food."</p> <p>The website says a poor harvest, a drought and international sanctions have left the government with reduced food rations.</p> <p>"Even though the price of rice hasn't changed much in the markets, people are especially worried that the effects of international sanctions will continue to mount and soon cause even more problems," a source told Daily NK.</p> <p>Two North Korean soldiers have defected to South Korea in the last two months, with one of the soldiers found to have an enormous number of parasitic worms in his stomach. The worms, one of which was 11 inches, pointed to the hygiene and food problems that are commonplace in the Hermit Kingdom.</p> <p>The BBC reported parasites can get into humans through contaminated food or "being bitten by an insect or by the parasite entering through the skin."</p> <p>The impoverished farmers of North Korea reportedly use human waste as fertilizer for its crops, the BBC reported. It's possible the feces is contaminating vegetables grown in the soil.</p> <p>"North Korea is a very poor country and like any other poor country it has serious health problems," Andrei Lankov of Kookmin University told the BBC.</p> <p>Lankov warned the health conditions in North Korea could be a problem for decades in South Korea if the</p>

	two countries ever reunified.
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HEADLINE	01/03 VA: Co. gunman escaped mental ward
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/3817f4a79e1c4b99877384428618962f/VA-document:-Gunman-who-killed-deputy-had-fled-mental-ward
GIST	<p>DENVER (AP) — The gunman who killed a Colorado sheriff’s deputy escaped from the mental health ward of a VA hospital in Wyoming in 2014 but was located and returned, according to a Veterans Affairs document obtained by The Associated Press Tuesday.</p> <p>The document was provided to the AP by a congressional aide on condition of anonymity because the aide was not authorized to release it. The document was first reported by The Denver Post.</p> <p>The gunman, Matthew Riehl, fatally shot Douglas County Deputy Zackari Parrish and wounded four other officers on Sunday, Colorado authorities said. Riehl was killed by a SWAT team.</p> <p>The VA document said Riehl was hospitalized at the veterans medical center in Sheridan, Wyoming, in April 2014 after a psychotic episode. The document said he escaped but was found and brought back.</p> <p>The VA issued a statement saying it “cannot ordinarily discuss the specific care of any veteran without a privacy release.” A spokeswoman for the Sheridan VA hospital did not respond to an after-hours phone message and email.</p> <p>In addition to Riehl’s hospitalization in Sheridan, the VA document said he had an “urgent contact for mental health” with another VA facility in July 2015. It did not describe the nature of the contact or say where that facility was, but it was in the department’s Eastern Colorado Health Care System, which includes a hospital in Denver and nine clinics in other cities.</p> <p>The document said Riehl was on multiple medications in 2015 stemming from an earlier hospitalization, but it did not say what those medications were or why they had been prescribed.</p> <p>The document identified Riehl as an Army veteran who was honorably discharged. It said his records did not list any military service-related psychiatric disorders.</p> <p>Colorado authorities said Riehl served in Iraq.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 DOJ: crackdown on citizenship fraud
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jan/2/us-naturalized-citizen-fraud-target-justice-depart/
GIST	<p>Iyman Faris is set to be released from prison in 2020 after serving 17 years behind bars for terrorism-related charges stemming from a plot to destroy the Brooklyn Bridge. By the time he gets out, American authorities hope, he will no longer be able to call the U.S. his home.</p> <p>The Justice Department has filed a lawsuit to try to strip the Pakistan-born Faris of his citizenship, which he obtained in 1999, saying it’s an affront to allow him to continue to be an American citizen.</p> <p>It’s just the type of case authorities say they expect to pursue more frequently under President Trump and Attorney General Jeff Sessions.</p>

“The attorney general and the administration are focused on enforcing all immigration laws, especially when it comes to this pinnacle level of citizenship,” said one Justice Department official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Native-born citizens cannot have their citizenship revoked, but those who became naturalized can lose citizenship, and all the rights that come with it, if they are found to have unlawfully or fraudulently obtained naturalization.

The Justice Department can seek to strip a person of citizenship either through a criminal case, by obtaining a conviction of naturalization fraud, or by filing a civil suit claiming the person procured naturalization illegally or procured it by through willful misrepresentation during the naturalization process.

Faris pleaded guilty to providing material support and resources to al Qaeda in 2003. He admitted he researched methods to sever cables on the Brooklyn Bridge and had met with Osama bin Laden at an al Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan.

Authorities sought to revoke his citizenship on grounds that he entered the U.S. using another person’s passport, willfully misrepresented the circumstances under which he came to the United States, and cited his support for al Qaeda as evidence he was engaged in terrorist activities that would have made him ineligible for admission to the U.S. had those facts been known at the time.

“We are doing our best to hold these people accountable,” the department official said. “When these people get through, it weakens the integrity of citizenship.”

The Justice Department stepped up the number of criminal charges brought in an effort to revoke citizenship in fiscal 2017, with 57 cases filed compared with 46 cases in fiscal 2016 and 44 cases in 2015.

At least another 25 civil denaturalization cases were also filed by the Civil Division’s Office of Immigration Litigation in 2017, according to an estimate provided by another Justice Department official.

Among those who had their citizenship stripped last year was Araceli Martinez, who was convicted of impersonating a U.S. immigration officer. She lied about the crime when she applied for citizenship. In November, the Justice Department filed denaturalization cases against five people who lied about a history of sexual abuse of minors during the citizenship process.

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HEADLINE	01/02 Border Patrol can’t stop drug drones
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jan/2/drones-fly-drugs-us-no-border-patrol-detection-tec/
GIST	<p>Border Patrol agents are increasingly worried about the threat from drug-cartel-flown drones, after agents spotted 13 drones suspected of carrying drugs across one section of the U.S.-Mexico border in just one four-day period in November.</p> <p>Cartels are aware that the U.S. lacks the ability to detect the drones, much less to interdict them, making them a choice method for smuggling high-dollar hard drugs into the country, agents said.</p> <p>They said the fact that they even spotted the 13 drones was serendipitous and only hints at the scope of the real problem.</p> <p>“We’re seeing an uptick. We flat-out just don’t have the technology to detect these,” said Brandon Judd, an agent and president of the National Border Patrol Council. “The number is just astronomical.”</p>

Security analysts say the problems from drones are tough to oversell. The Islamic State has harnessed drones as delivery vehicles for improvised explosive devices, and top U.S. officials fear those same tactics could be used in the U.S.

Last year, one security blog reported that an intercepted Mexican cartel truck had both a drone and potato bombs, which are crude explosives packed with shrapnel.

Other uses could include tracking the Border Patrol to direct drug loads around them, or even using the drones as defensive shields to make it too dangerous for air support to assist on Border Patrol operations.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the agency that oversees the Border Patrol, was unable to point to a policy for handling the dangers posed by unmanned aerial vehicles.

“While I can’t provide specifics, I can tell you that U.S. Customs and Border Protection is charged with protecting our nation and will mitigate threats from any direction or any mode they may come,” said Dan Hetlage, a spokesperson for the agency.

Agents said there isn’t any policy and they are left to deal with the problem as best they can.

Agents say cartels all along the border are using drones, though the San Diego sector has been among the most active in detailing the traffic it is seeing.

In August, an agent managed to spot a drone flying across the border and tracked it to its landing. They arrested a 25-year-old American citizen who admitted he was the pickup person.

Police seized 13 pounds of methamphetamine, worth an estimated \$46,000, and also seized the drone, a Matrice 600 Pro, which sells for about \$5,000, can take off with a 13-pound load and can fly at 40 mph.

The man arrested with the drone and drugs said he was paid \$1,000 per pickup and had made a series of deliveries before he was caught.

Some local law enforcement officials have questioned why agents aren’t permitted to shoot down drones they see crossing the border. They call it the equivalent of an attack.

Agents say the logistics of firing on a drone would be complicated, particularly in more populated areas.

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HEADLINE	01/02 Seattle unsolved civil rights assassination
SOURCE	http://crosscut.com/2018/01/seattles-own-civil-rights-assassination-still-a-cold-case/
GIST	<p>Young Jean Soliz didn’t notice the dead man crumpled in the doorway of his Richmond Highlands home that snowy night in 1969. She and her mother were hurriedly responding to a call they’d just received from the man’s frantic wife.</p> <p>“Ed’s been shot!” neighbor Bettye Pratt said in the call, which she made after phoning the sheriff for help. When they arrived, a deputy was already standing guard under the carport of the modest Shoreline neighborhood home. He told them to go around to another door, where a distraught Bettye gave them the bad news.</p> <p>Her 38-year-old husband, Edwin Pratt, a black-community leader and director of the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, was dead, ambushed in his driveway by two assassins who disappeared into the darkness.</p> <p>“I didn’t see his body out there so we were shocked,” Soliz recalled recently between sips of coffee at a Tacoma Starbucks. Once the Pratts’ neighbor, babysitter and a member of a group that helped the Pratts</p>

start an interracial church in north Seattle, Soliz, who is white, is finishing up a book on the murder — the Northwest’s major unsolved civil rights assassination.

Officially unsolved, that is. The murder case is almost a half-century old — the 49th anniversary is approaching this month — and investigators have determined who did it and why. As I learned while reporting on the case for a 2011 Seattle Weekly article, three white men carried out a racially motivated hit on a black civic leader. (Some of the details in this story came from records and other sources I interviewed then and appeared in the Weekly story.)

Pratt urged Seattle’s people of color to rail against inequities in hiring, education and housing, including redlining, a banking practice that constricted approval of new home mortgages in ethnic neighborhoods.

To some, the civil rights leader was a troublemaker. But who wanted him dead, and was willing to pay for the favor? All these years and thousands of hours of investigations later, cold-case probers are still seeking the final puzzle piece.

Soliz, however, thinks she’s close to an answer. If she’d known then at age 22 what she knows now as a 70-year-old Olympia writer, researcher and former state official — once heading up the huge state Department of Social and Health Services — Soliz says, “I probably wouldn’t have been so stunned” that deadly night.

Pratt’s murder came at the end of a decade of deadly violence against community and national leaders — most notably, the 1963 assassination of John F. Kennedy and the 1968 shootings of presidential candidate Bobby Kennedy and Nobel Peace Prize winner Martin Luther King Jr. Like them, but on a regional stage, Pratt became a marked man for challenging racial and political norms.

Recalling another assassination, the 1963 shooting of Mississippi civil rights leader Medgar Evers by a member of the Klu Klux Klan, Bettye would later tell investigators that an anonymous caller warned her in 1964, “If Ed doesn’t shut up, he’ll end up like Medgar.” He did. Both black leaders were murdered by white racists armed with rifles, waiting for them in their driveways — in Seattle and Jackson, Miss., 2,500 miles and six years apart.

Like Evers’ death — which President Trump recently brought up during an awkward speech at the new Civil Rights Museum in Jackson, calling the work by Evers and other rights crusaders “big stuff... very big stuff” — Pratt’s murder reverberated across the U.S., and drew a crowd to his funeral at St. Mark’s Cathedral on Capitol Hill. Whitney Young, national Urban League director, told attendees, “I sense some shame that this could happen here,” a racial murder in a mostly white but reputedly tolerant northern city.

An arts center and a park in Seattle were named for Pratt. Shoreline, which did not incorporate until 1995, moved on. But, through an online petition drive started by a Shoreline third grader, about 1,900 signatories are today urging the school district to name one of its buildings after Pratt. The student, who gives her name as just Sarah, said she only recently heard about Pratt and hopes to honor him because “he was an important person and he had a huge impact on others.”

Pratt was aware that his trailblazing agenda — including a hard push for integrating neighborhoods and an end to police harassment — was creating enemies. Mustachioed, well-built, with a friendly demeanor, he attracted wide, biracial support among moderates. But his rhetoric also united others, black and white, in opposition.

Pratt’s white secretary told police many of his detractors were African-Americans and the more militant ones vowed to “eliminate” him. “Uncle Tom” was one of the milder phrases Pratt was accustomed to hearing.

He refused to react to the danger, and investigators had to ask whether he had added to it: Pratt was having a secret affair with the secretary, investigators learned, and had recently asked Bettye, his wife of 13 years, for a divorce. Her response? She threatened to kill Ed if he left her.

“I was babysitting for Bettye the night she found them together,” says Soliz, who is devoting most her time now to probing the murder. “Bettye went looking for Ed and found him with his girlfriend at the movies. She came home in tears, and was a wreck.”

Ed Pratt persisted nonetheless, and planned to meet the secretary for dinner at her apartment on the night of Jan. 26, 1969. But due to an unusual heavy Seattle snowfall that Sunday, he canceled.

Pratt relaxed in his living room chair at their home in the 17900 block of First Avenue NE. He watched TV while Bettye put their 5-year-old daughter Miriam to bed. They were Southerners who’d grown up poor in the 1930s and met in the 1950s while attending Atlanta University, where he received a masters degree. They moved to Seattle after their marriage when he became the Seattle Urban League’s community-relations director, moving up to executive director in 1961. He liked the work, disturbing the dust of racial contentment.

Startled by the sound of snowballs suddenly hitting the side wall of their rambler, Ed Pratt went to the door, opened it warily and asked, “Who’s there?”

A shotgun blast ignited the scene and sent a slug tearing into Pratt’s mouth, glancing off bone and severing his spine before lodging in his neck. He collapsed in the doorway as Bettye, who’d been watching from a bedroom window, saw the muzzle flash and shouted, “They’ve got a rifle!” Most likely, an autopsy later indicated, her husband was already dead.

Neighbors told police they spotted two young men hop into what some guessed was a 1968 Buick Skylark, driven by a third man. “They looked like kids,” said a witness. “It was the way they ran — their gait.” And their race? Some insisted they were white, others though they were black.

Seattle, which considered itself a melting pot of progress and civility, was witnessing what it might be like to deal with a Southern-style racial assassination. National leaders sent condolences. President Richard Nixon dubbed Pratt the Martin Luther King Jr. of the North.

Investigators had little to go on, however. The scant evidence included a 12-gauge slug taken from Pratt’s body, tire tracks and footprints in the snow. “The snow was frozen but scuffed up and broken” from all the foot traffic, Jean Soliz remembers. She can’t imagine how investigators obtained any usable or untainted evidence from the trampled crime scene.

Despite Nixon’s comment comparing Pratt to King, my research for the Weekly showed that his administration may have preferred not to have the killing blamed on whites. U.S. Attorney General John Mitchell said in a teletype message to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover: “It has come to my attention that certain black groups are circulating a story to the effect that the death of Pratt was caused by White racists. Does your bureau have any information to the contrary, and, if so, is there any way it might be publicized through local police or otherwise?”

Despite a \$10,000 reward (about \$70,000 in today’s dollars), no one was ever arrested or charged with the crime. But after the case went cold for 25 years, it warmed up in 1995 when the Seattle Post-Intelligencer broke new ground, citing witnesses who said two white men had committed the crime and had been overheard bragging about it.

The two were Tommy Kirk, 21, a violent street thug, and his accomplice, Texas Barton Gray, 49, an armed drug dealer. A third person, unidentified, drove the getaway car, the P-I reported.

Investigators told me they believed the information to be accurate. But Kirk and Gray were the messengers. Who, detectives still wondered, ordered the delivery, and how much did it cost? In 2011, after obtaining the Mitchell-Hoover papers and then plowing through stacks of the county’s cold case files, I came up with some additional answers.

Based on documents and interviews with detectives and two witnesses who were with the three-man hit team after the murder, I was able to confirm that Kirk, described as a psychopathic, trigger-happy drug dealer, fired the shot that killed Pratt, while Gray, a longtime drug dealer and gun peddler, was his lookout.

Detectives and the witnesses had now identified the third man as Michael Lee Jordan, then 22, a small-time criminal who drove the getaway car. As I wrote then, all were white, all were dead, and all may have shared as much as \$25,000 to kill Pratt, investigators indicated.

Cold-case detectives suspected a black contractor named Henry Roney was most likely the man who paid for the shooting. Known for his dislike of Pratt and their ongoing spat over how to reform construction hiring practices, Roney was questioned only days after Pratt's death. He was considered a leading suspect because "No one had a greater motive," a detective told me. "When you look at the evidence, it's very compelling."

But Roney, who died two decades back, had denied any role in the shooting, and his ex-attorney told me Roney was wrongly accused. Author Soliz says she doesn't believe Roney was the money man either.

Her research points to a "group" of sponsors willing to pay for the hit. "I can't tell you yet all I've learned," she said, "but it will be in the book."

There's also the possibility Pratt was killed by someone who was simply a racist and would gladly do it for free — someone like Kirk. Danella Jordan, the widow of getaway driver Michael Jordan, told me she was with her husband, Kirk, and Gray just hours after the Pratt shooting, and there had been no talk of a behind-the-scenes sponsor.

Jordan instead fingered Kirk as the idea man. He was a loose cannon and racist, she said, and the shooting was a "monumental hate crime" committed essentially by one man. Kirk never mentioned the name Roney, she recalls, but he did mention Ed Pratt.

"Tommy had heard about Pratt," said Jordan, who now lives in another state. Pratt "was all over the news, and [Tommy] stated he was going to shoot 'that rich n—,' or words to that effect. I honestly don't recall money being the motivation."

Her husband apparently bought that theory too, based on a statement he gave the FBI in 1995, when the agency briefly reopened its probe following the P-I story. Interviewed in his Walla Walla prison cell where he was doing time for robbery, Jordan said Kirk killed Pratt for "being a black dude in a white neighborhood."

Jordan never flashed any extra cash during that period, said his widow — they lived off drug sales money at the time. But then, he "was wildly in love with a Texas whore, running from the Texas Rangers," the widow said. "If he had big bucks, perhaps it was her he spent it on."

A witness at the Jordan home following that night's shooting recalled seeing the three suspects enter carrying a shotgun. "Tommy Kirk kind of ah, scared my ass, you know," the witness told a detective in an interview. "I had enough sense to know that if you screwed with Kirk, he was a psychopath, man." He proved it that night, the witness said. "God, I have never seen anybody do this in my life, but Tommy Kirk started shooting dope, and it was like, it was, believe me, it was, I, I have never got this, 'cause he had, he had like a jug of this [drug], and...he'd just 'Bam!' till it was gone. I mean, he did enough dope that would of killed like all three of us, you know?"

Four months later, Kirk was murdered on Capitol Hill by co-conspirator Gray, sometimes his rival in drug dealing, over money and a woman. Gray died in 1991 of a heart attack following his conviction for manslaughter. Mike Jordan died in 2006 at age 58.

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HEADLINE	01/01 Baltimore: new year, 2 new murders
SOURCE	http://baltimore.cbslocal.com/2018/01/01/nyd-shooting/
GIST	<p>BALTIMORE (WJZ) — Baltimore just recorded its first two murders of the year after struggling with a per capita record number of killings last year.</p> <p>Baltimore Police say the first shooting happened in the 2000 block of Eagle St. on New Year's Day at 3:40 p.m. — not even 16 hours into the new year.</p> <p>Officers found a man who had been shot in the neck. The victim was taken to a local hospital, where he was initially in critical condition, but later died.</p> <p>The second shooting occurred just hours later, around 5:45 p.m., in a parking lot in the 5100 block of Goodnow Rd.</p> <p>Officers found two men sitting in a white Infiniti suffering from gunshot wounds. Police say a 30-year-old was in the driver seat suffering from wounds to the head and torso. He was pronounced dead a short time later at an area hospital, authorities say.</p> <p>The passenger, a 36-year-old was found suffering from a gunshot wound to the hip. That victim was taken to an area hospital with a non-life threatening injury.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Arrest in fatal Lynnwood shooting
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/man-arrested-in-fatal-lynnwood-shooting/
GIST	<p>A 19-year-old Everett man has been arrested on investigation of second-degree murder in connection with the fatal shooting of a 22-year-old Lynnwood man over the weekend, according to the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office.</p> <p>The Saturday night shooting — which is believed to have been sparked by a disagreement over a borrowed 2006 Honda Pilot that had not been returned on time — took place at an apartment complex in the 16100 block of Ash Way in Lynnwood, according to the sheriff's office.</p> <p>Police detectives initially believed that there were three suspects in the shooting, but witness interviews and other leads established that there were only two occupants in the car — the suspect and a female driver — when the shooting occurred, police said.</p> <p>Authorities now believe the suspect was in the passenger seat when he fired a single shot through the closed window, striking and killing the victim.</p> <p>The driver and suspect fled the scene and abandoned the vehicle at a gas station at the corner of Rucker and 41st Avenue in Everett, a location where the suspect admitted to being, police said.</p> <p>The victim, who has not been officially identified by the Snohomish Medical Examiner's Office, was part of a group of people who had arrived at the apartment complex in Lynnwood about 9 p.m. Saturday looking for the borrowed car. At some point, the car arrived, and there was some sort of altercation when the suspect fired the shot, police said. The suspect fired one shot, striking the victim, who was standing nearby, police said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/03 Calif. deputy dies after brutal attack
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/01/03/california-sheriffs-deputy-dies-after-brutal-attack-following-traffic-collision-police-say.html

GIST	<p>A California sheriff's deputy died Tuesday after succumbing to injuries from an off-duty traffic collision and a violent beating, authorities said.</p> <p>Lawrence Falce, 70, a deputy in San Bernardino County, was off-duty Sunday when he was involved in a minor crash on a highway in the city, the Sheriff's Employees' Benefits Association said in a statement. Falce contacted the other driver in the car, but was brutally attacked and was left severely injured, the statement said.</p> <p>Authorities said Falce never regained consciousness after the attack, according to KTLA.</p> <p>San Bernardino police said a suspect was in custody in Falce's death, but they were not going to identify the person due to the ongoing criminal investigation.</p> <p>Falce, a 36-year veteran of the force and an Army veteran, began his career with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department in 1981 as a deputy sheriff. He worked patrol at Central Station for 32 years.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/03 'Swatting' suspect false bomb reports 2016
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/suspect-kansas-swatting-death-served-time-false-bomb-reports-n834201
GIST	<p>LOS ANGELES — The man accused of making a hoax 911 call that led to a fatal police shooting in Kansas last week previously made as many as 20 similar calls and was sentenced in 2016 for making false bomb reports involving two Los Angeles-area schools and a television station, authorities said Tuesday.</p> <p>Tyler Raj Barriss, 25, was scheduled to appear in a Los Angeles courtroom Wednesday on a request to extradite him to Kansas, where police in Wichita shot and killed Andrew Finch, 28, on Thursday as they responded to the hoax call. He was being held without bail on an arrest warrant from Sedgwick County, Kansas.</p> <p>Police said Finch was an innocent victim of a harassment tactic called "swatting," in which someone deceives authorities into sending SWAT officers or other emergency services rushing to another person's address.</p> <p>Multiple law enforcement sources told NBC News that Barriss made the false report after he got into a dispute in connection with online gaming. He gave authorities the address where he believed that person lived, but it was an address for Finch, who wasn't involved in the dispute, the sources said.</p> <p>As long ago as 2015, California authorities pursued Barriss for similar activities. The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office handled two previous cases that year of bomb threats involving Barriss, a spokesman for the agency told NBC News on Tuesday.</p> <p>The cases involved four separate threats — two against KABC-TV and one each against an elementary school in Los Angeles and a middle school in Granada Hills, near Los Angeles, the spokesman said.</p> <p>The cases were consolidated, and Barriss pleaded no contest in May 2016 to felony counts of making a false report of a bomb to an agency or business and maliciously reporting a false bombing. He was sentenced to 32 months in the Los Angeles County Jail, the district attorney's office said; under California law, non-violent offenders customarily are released after serving half of their sentences.</p> <p>No information was immediately available on whether he was on probation or whether he was being monitored.</p> <p>The FBI's Los Angeles field office separately confirmed Tuesday night that it worked with Los Angeles-area police on a series of threats Barriss allegedly made in or around 2015. It said it deferred to California</p>

	<p>authorities to pursue prosecution.</p> <p>A spokesman for police in Glendale, north of Los Angeles, told NBC News that Barriss is believed to have made about 20 threat-related calls around the country during the time of that investigation. Some of the calls went to universities and news organizations, Sgt. Dan Suttles said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Canada: ex-Taliban hostage jailed
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/taliban-hostage-joshua-boyle-jailed-arrest-assault-charges/story?id=52103756
GIST	<p>Former Taliban hostage Joshua Boyle was charged Monday in Canada with 15 criminal offenses including multiple allegations of assault since he arrived home with his American wife and three children in October following five years of captivity in Pakistan.</p> <p>Boyle, 34, appeared in a hearing in Ottawa's criminal court on New Year's Day, court records show. He was denied immediate release and his next hearing will be Wednesday, according to a family member.</p> <p>Boyle's American wife, Caitlan Coleman Boyle, said in a statement, "I can't speak about the specific charges, but I can say that ultimately it is the strain and trauma he was forced to endure for so many years and the effects that that had on his mental state that is most culpable for this.</p> <p>"Obviously, he is responsible for his own actions," she wrote in the statement, "but it is with compassion and forgiveness that I say I hope help and healing can be found for him. As to the rest of us, myself and the children, we are healthy and holding up as well as we can."</p> <p>The 15 charges filed Monday by the Ottawa Police Service include multiple allegations of assault, including physical and sexual assault of a woman, physical assault of a child and unlawful confinement, between October and December and misleading police over the weekend "to divert suspicion from himself."</p> <p>The Canadian court issued an order prohibiting the publication of information that identifies the alleged victims in Canada. As a general policy, ABC News does not name victims in cases of alleged sexual assault.</p> <p>Joshua Boyle's defense lawyer, Eric Granger, in a statement to ABC News said his client "is presumed innocent."</p> <p>Joshua Boyle was known in Canada for his activism even before becoming a hostage of the Haqqani Network. He was previously married to one of Canada's most outspoken pro-jihadi women, Zaynab Khadr, whose two brothers were imprisoned at the Guantanamo Bay detention camp, but were later released.</p> <p>U.S. intelligence officials long expressed doubts to ABC News about Joshua Boyle's motives in traveling to Afghanistan in 2012. Joshua Boyle told ABC News last month that those doubts were unfounded and referred to his Haqqani captors as "criminal miscreants."</p> <p>American officials put aside their skepticism of Joshua Boyle in offering the family assistance in leaving Pakistan and since they settled in Ottawa, including offers of psychological counseling to adjust from captivity, they have told ABC News.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Chicago: Shotspotters tech effective
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/01/02/violence-scarred-chicago-saw-crime-drop-as-high-tech-

	program-rolled-out.html
GIST	<p>Asiaha Butler, 42, remembers when her Chicago neighborhood of Englewood was plagued by almost non-stop gun violence.</p> <p>“In a two- to three-week span, there was shootings over and over again,” Butler said. “Someone lost their life just a block away, actually down the street, and I was actually sitting on my porch and witnessed it.”</p> <p>But now the neighborhood, which historically has been one of Chicago’s most violent, is experiencing something that had eluded police and activists for years: Crime is dropping – and sharply.</p> <p>Englewood is one of a handful of neighborhoods taking part in a new program that uses cameras and detection radars on utility poles to cut crime. The Shotspotters technology instantly alerts police to the sound of gunshots and pinpoints its location, rapidly reducing response times and potentially catching suspects on video.</p> <p>Chicago police say the technology is effective – and it wants to expand the program to other parts of the city. The system is also used in several major cities, including New York.</p> <p>The technology comes as the violence-scarred city is experiencing a drop in major crime. Chicago had 650 murders in 2017, a noteworthy drop from 2016 when 771 people were killed — an average of two per day— according to police data. Shootings also dropped, from 3,550 incidents in 2016 to 2,785 incidents last year, police said.</p> <p>In Englewood, the neighborhood has seen the greatest reduction in shootings, with a 43 percent decline in 2017, according to police.</p> <p>“I am proud of the progress our officers made in reducing gun violence all across the city in 2017, but none of us are satisfied,” said Chicago Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson. “In 2018, we are going to work to build on the progress we made last year – to reduce gun violence, to save lives and to find justice for victims.”</p> <p>In addition to the new technology, in 2017 Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Superintendent Johnson added 1,100 new officers to the police force and successfully lobbied to pass the Neighborhoods Reform Act— a new state law that aims to crack down on repeat gun offenders by providing guidelines for judges to sentence those offenders at the higher end of the existing sentencing range, while expanding diversion programs for first-time nonviolent offenders.</p> <p>“As this new law goes into effect, the police department is fully committed to partnering with prosecutors to make sure that repeat gun offenders are held fully accountable for the crimes they commit on our streets,” Johnson said in a press release.</p> <p>But ShotSpotter has also proven effective, police officials say, and officials plan to expand the technology to six more districts in 2018.</p> <p>“I have seen and just witnessed shots fired and immediately cops are right there,” said Butler, a community activist, “so definitely that technology has been helpful.”</p>
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HEADLINE	01/02 Co. gunman livestreamed ‘ambush’
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2018/01/02/colorado-gunner-livestreamed-ambush-style-shooting-that-killed-deputy-report-says.html
GIST	A Colorado man who gunned down a deputy and wounded six other people in an “ambush-style” attack on New Year’s Eve livestreamed the shootout on Periscope, where he was heard yelling, “I warned you,” before firing more than 100 rounds at them, a report said.

Matthew Riehl, 37, an Army veteran who briefly served in Iraq, recorded a 911 call and posted a live video on the streaming service Periscope at his apartment in Highlands Ranch as he shot and killed Douglas County Sheriff's Deputy Zackari Parrish during the attack, FOX31 Denver reported. Three other deputies, a police officer and two civilians were wounded in the shooting.

"Go away. Don't come in. I've warned you," Riehl is heard saying in the audio-only recording.

Riehl then ordered the deputies to identify themselves before several shots were fired.

"Get the [expletive] out of here. Get out, leave me alone," he was heard saying as a smoke alarm blared in the background. "Why are you here without a warrant?"

The gunman then shouted: "Go away, go. Leave me alone. Go, get out," before gunfire resumed.

"They broke my door, they broke my door, they broke my door," he yelled, according to FOX31.

"Why? Why? Leave me alone," he repeatedly said until the audio ended with the sound of the smoke alarm.

Riehl was found dead in his bedroom.

Earlier, authorities had responded to a complaint of a verbal disturbance involving two men at an apartment building in Highlands Ranch, 16 miles south of Denver. A caller said Riehl was acting bizarre and might have been having a mental breakdown, but responding deputies found no evidence of a crime and left.

When deputies were called back to the scene, Riehl's roommate, who had left, gave them a key and granted them permission to enter the apartment, according to FOX31.

Colorado authorities had been warned about Riehl's volatile mental state before the shooting, but never held him for a mental health evaluation. His anger against law enforcement officials apparently stemmed from a traffic infraction that happened in November, which followed with a Dec. 13 YouTube video where he calls Douglas County Sheriff Tony Spurlock a "clown" and a deputy a pimp.

"You know who's going flub big time next election? Spurlock," Riehl said in the video called "Fire Sheriff Spurlock."

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InFOCUS

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Washington State Fusion Center
INFOCUS



FRIDAY – 29 DEC 2017



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Event Calendar

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Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
9-13 Apr 2018	LEIU/IALEIA Training Event	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php
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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	12/29 Calif. law enforcement readies for pot
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/8be50fb920124e73be4284037bbf6a11/California-law-enforcement-readies-for-new-marijuana-laws
GIST	<p>SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Licensed businesses around California can begin legally growing and selling marijuana for recreational use Monday, and a hodgepodge of enforcement agencies will be trying to make sure they adhere to a slew of new pot laws.</p> <p>Since no single agency has overarching responsibility, supporters and opponents of legalization worry how well the laws will be followed.</p> <p>Three state agencies will issue a combined 19 types of permits to growers, retailers, manufacturers and distributors. Each agency has enforcement officers tasked with cracking down on unlicensed operators.</p> <p>In addition, other state agencies such as Fish and Wildlife and the Narcotic Enforcement Bureau said they will rely on marijuana task forces already in place to continue eradicating illegal growers and sellers.</p> <p>The newly created state Bureau of Cannabis Control, which licenses retail outlets, said it has hired several officers to help crack down on unlicensed shops and plans to hire more in the coming months. But much of the work of arresting illegal operators will still rely on sheriffs and police departments.</p> <p>“We are a pretty small operation,” bureau spokesman Alex Traverso said.</p> <p>He said about eight enforcement officers will be in place Jan. 1, though bureau chief Lori Ajax said enforcement won’t be a priority in the first months of the new year as the agency focuses on getting retailers licensed.</p> <p>The bureau has issued fewer than 200 temporary business licenses so far. That’s a fraction of what ultimately will be distributed once Los Angeles, San Francisco and other major local governments start issuing their own licenses, which are required to get a state permit.</p> <p>A small number of retail shops from Berkeley to San Diego say they will open New Year’s Day.</p> <p>While an increasing number of states have legalized marijuana in one form or another, all uses of the drug remain illegal under federal law. U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions has said federal authorities still are contemplating how they will enforce pot laws in California.</p> <p>State laws include that consumers be at least 21, that businesses not be within 600 feet (183 meters) of schools and must close by 10 p.m. They’re also required to have 24-hour video surveillance.</p> <p>Counties and cities have similar requirements with a few twists. Oakland city officials, citing disparate marijuana arrest records, have given applicants convicted of pot-related felonies preference in obtaining permits in certain neighborhoods.</p> <p>Several counties and cities used existing medical marijuana laws to adopt recreational use rules by striking the word “medical” from the ordinances, keeping in place existing local tax rates.</p> <p>Marijuana businesses also will be required to pay state taxes. Some of the tax revenue is earmarked for enforcement, but sheriffs in several counties say they’re already pouring resources into marijuana enforcement.</p> <p>Siskiyou County leaders recently declared a state of emergency and called on the governor to assist the</p>

sheriff with eradicating an influx of illegal farms. The county banned commercial cultivation, but that hasn't stopped a migration of marijuana farmers snapping up cheap land in remote Northern California.

"We are overwhelmed," Sheriff Jon Lopey said.

Mendocino County Sheriff Tom Allman has similar concerns in a county that has legalized marijuana in the heart of the fabled pot growing region called the Emerald Triangle.

"Please do not continue to say that marijuana is a totally harmless herb that God put on this Earth, and we don't know why we're fighting over it," he told county supervisors, who he said were overlooking the criminal aspects of growing marijuana.

In Los Angeles County, sheriff's officials are preparing to see a possible increase in marijuana dispensary robberies and drivers who are high behind the wheel.

Sheriff Jim McDonnell said he believes legalization will be "eye-opening for a lot of people."

"The public's perception is that weed is innocuous, that this is something they did 40 years ago and it is no big deal," he said. "Well, today's marijuana is not yesterday's marijuana. The active ingredient, THC, is so much higher today than back 40 years ago."

In some cases, the farmers are planting on government lands hidden deep in forests patrolled by state wildlife wardens. So-called guerrilla farms illegally set up on public property or remote private property without the owners' knowledge have troubled rural law enforcement officials and federal authorities for years.

California's Fish and Wildlife Department created a marijuana enforcement team three years ago to stem illegal gardens in the state's forests. The agency also created Watershed Enforcement Teams to crack down on marijuana farmers who illegally divert streams, used banned pesticides or otherwise harm the environment.

Fish and Game Capt. Paul Foy said the department has no plans to change its enforcement strategy after Jan. 1 and will continue to concentrate on environmental crimes and illegal farms on public lands.

An estimated 1,000 illegal farms controlled by organized crime operate on public property in California, he said.

"We're going to keep on keeping on with enforcement," Foy said. "We stay busy."

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HEADLINE	12/28 Van crashes into Seattle pedestrians
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/855579/vehicle-drives-into-building-in-near-westlake-center/
GIST	<p>A van crashed into a building near Westlake Center just before noon on Thursday, according to police.</p> <p>The Seattle Police Department reports the crash occurred at Fifth Avenue and Pine Street around noon. The van drove onto the sidewalk where it crashed into the front of a Gap store. Five people were taken to local hospitals, including the driver.</p> <p>"What we've determined so far ... is that the Shuttle Express driver experienced some type of medical condition, then lost consciousness, the van then drove over to the sidewalk where it struck four pedestrians," said Marc Garth Green with the Seattle Police Department.</p> <p>"(Video of the crash) shows the van did not accelerate; there is nothing obvious to make this an intentional or deliberate act," he said. "It just idles and then rolls through and strikes pedestrians."</p>

	<p>Harborview Medical Center reports receiving five patients; one is in critical condition. One person was taken to the hospital after being struck by falling glass.</p> <p>“Initial indications,” according to police, show that the driver of the van suffered from a medical condition prior to the crash and lost control of the vehicle. One other person was in the van at the time.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Wash. REAL ID grace period Oct 2018
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/855660/washington-real-id-deadline-october-2018/
GIST	<p>Washington state travelers are getting another grace period to use their IDs at airports despite being out of compliance with federal regulations.</p> <p>Washington residents can use their state-issued IDs to travel through airports until October 2018, Business Insider reports. The previous deadline set by the Transportation Security Administration was Jan. 22, 2018.</p> <p>“Washington state residents who are trying to do a domestic flight using their Washington state driver’s license have just gotten a reprieve,” said travel expert Steve Danishek. “Washington state was out of compliance with the federal REAL ID law. They were given until January 22, 2018 to get either an enhanced driver’s license or a passport to board domestic flights.”</p> <p>But that deadline has been pushed back. It’s not the first time TSA has delayed the deadline for states to come into compliance with the REAL ID Act. It was initially passed in 2005, but the deadline for states to come into compliance has been adjusted ever since. While Washington’s driver licenses meet state standards, they fail to meet the federal requirements. That means, eventually, travelers will not be able to use a Washington ID to travel through airports. They will have to use a passport.</p> <p>Most recently, states were given until October 2017 to come into compliance with the REAL ID law, but that was delayed until the Jan. 22, 2018 due date — which has now, in turn, also been pushed back to October 2018.</p> <p>“This is a surprise because Washington state had been out of compliance for years along with several other states ... so we anticipated that the deadline would apply,” Danishek said. “This was a little bit unexpected. It’s going to apply to all 50 states, not just the ones out of compliance.”</p> <p>Washington is among nine states that are not in compliance with the REAL ID Act, including: Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 More women sought for wildfire fighters
SOURCE	http://www.kiro7.com/news/local/more-women-called-upon-to-join-dedicated-washingtons-wildfire-fighters/670421863
GIST	<p>Washington Department of Natural Resources Public Lands commissioner wants more women to join the frontlines of wildfire fights.</p> <p>Commissioner Hilary Franz, who was elected into office last year, turned to Facebook to say that women are under-represented on the state’s fireline and in wildfire leadership. Women make up only 14.5 percent of the state's wildfire fighting force, according to DNR.</p> <p>“I want every woman out there who wants to keep their state safe to sign up for these great wildfire fighting opportunities,” she wrote on her page.</p>

	<p>In a video attached with a message, she thanks the thousands of firefighters who have strenuously and bravely worked protected Washington’s landscapes.</p> <p>The DNR responded to over 600 wildfires this year amid dry weather and wind over the summer and fall – keeping 96 percent of fires under 10 acres.</p> <p>““What we don’t see is enough woman to join this powerful [job of] firefighting ,” Franz said. “There’s no reason we can’t make this number higher. I am encouraging all women interested in protecting our communities and keeping our landscapes green to join ... We are not only fighting fire but we are fighting the glass ceiling.”</p>
Return to Top	<p><i>People interested in applying can learn more about the qualifications needed here.</i></p>

HEADLINE	12/29 Flood watch in effect for western Wash.
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/flood-watch-in-effect-for-western-wa-winter-storm-warning-in-cascades/281-503104417
GIST	<p>As a big chill ends in the North Sound, Western Washington is transitioning to warmer and wetter weather.</p> <p>We got a break from heavy rain overnight Thursday, but it crept back in on Friday. Things begin to get interesting Friday as warmer air mixes into the region, and snow that fell in parts of Western Washington is melting fast.</p> <p>Snow levels drastically jump up to 5,000 feet with highs in Puget Sound climbing to 50 degrees or warmer. This will cause problems with rapid runoff in our streams, rivers, and tributaries. A Flood Watch has been issued from Friday afternoon to Saturday afternoon for the entire Western Washington region because of this.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Oregon raises tobacco age to 21
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2017/12/28/oregon-raises-tobacco-age-to-21-on-new-years-day/
GIST	<p>Soon you’ll need to be 21 years old in order to buy tobacco products in Oregon. The age increase will take effect Jan 1.</p> <p>The law will require anyone buying tobacco or vape products to be 21 years old or older. It also creates stiff penalties for vendors who sell to minors.</p> <p>Fines for store clerks and managers start at \$50 and \$250, but can reach \$500 and \$1,000 after multiple offenses.</p> <p>The move is thought to be a major victory for health advocates and a big blow to Big Tobacco.</p> <p>According to the Oregon Health Authority, tobacco-related diseases are the number one cause of preventable death in Oregon. Saying tobacco causes more than 7,000 deaths a year in the state.</p> <p>In the New Year, Oregon is joining a handful of other states (California, Hawaii, Maine and New Jersey) that have increased the tobacco age limit.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 First responders mental health struggles
SOURCE	http://q13fox.com/2017/12/28/first-responders-face-mental-health-struggles-after-responding-to-traumatic-events/
GIST	<p>First Responders, like those who came to the rescue following the deadly train accident in DuPont, often times face mental health challenges.</p> <p>The University of Phoenix surveyed 2,000 firefighters, police officers, paramedics and nurses about their mental health. They found that the majority — 85 percent — of these first responders have experienced symptoms.</p> <p>“There are real consequences that could cause-effect what happened because of your job and reaching out for help,” said Samantha Dutton, Ph.D., Social Sciences Program Director at the University of Phoenix.</p> <p>Given what they do on a daily basis, it’s not surprising that 84 percent of these first responders say they’ve experienced traumatic events while on the job.</p> <p>“Shock and fear and adrenaline rushing, those are all pretty normal,” said Dutton. “It’s when you have abnormal things that show up later such as not sleeping, not eating, not hanging out with friend, if you’re drinking too much.”</p> <p>Seeking help</p> <p>Only 34 percent have had a formal diagnosis of a mental health disorder, like depression or post-traumatic stress disorder. Researchers say it shows that mental health services offered by organizations are not being fully utilized by these workers.</p> <p>“If you had a broken leg, would you not go to the hospital?” asked Dutton. “If there’s no conversation about what it’s like to have an issue or have symptoms of PTSD or depression or if there’s not an open conversation about that, you don’t know the difference between a broken leg and a paper cut because they both hurt.”</p> <p>The survey found that 75 percent of the people who received a formal diagnosis of PTSD have received treatment.</p> <p>Twenty-seven percent of people were diagnosed with depression and of those, 47 percent say their depression was caused by incidents they dealt with at work.</p> <p>According to Dutton, these issues are treatable. “PTSD is treatable. Depression is treatable. It’s getting over the stigma of asking for the treatment, getting better, and then getting back in the game.”</p> <p>And while a majority have access to help, many aren’t taking advantage of it.</p> <p>Sixty-nine percent of those asked say mental health services are seldom or never used.</p> <p>Why is that?</p> <p>First responders say there remains a stigma to people who admit to having mental health problems.</p> <p>They say supervisors have treated them differently when they bring up mental health conditions. Almost one-in-four say there are negative repercussions for people looking to get help at work.</p> <p>Starting the conversation</p> <p>Dutton believes there needs to be more of a national conversation about mental health, not just for first responders. She says there’s not a person in the United States who isn’t touched in some way by mental health issues, whether it’s their own or a family member.</p>

	<p>For first responders, she suggests that superiors discuss mental health with those who serve under them by telling their own stories. Dutton says showing that it's ok to talk about it, more people will feel comfortable about opening up.</p> <p>While she served in the military, Dutton says one leader opened up, and it helped.</p> <p>"I wouldn't keep people out of my door. There were people in my office lined up. Once they realize their leader did this, it was all great. They wanted to get the help too," said Dutton.</p> <p>If you or a loved one is dealing with depression or other mental health issues, reach out to your insurance company to find out what kind of services are available to you.</p> <p>Dutton says often times, simply being aware of the problem is the first step in the recovery process.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Census: 1 person every 18sec. in 2018
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2017/12/28/US-population-to-add-one-person-every-18-seconds-in-2018/3771514499378/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=lh&utm_medium=3
GIST	<p>Dec. 28 (UPI) -- The U.S. Census Bureau predicts the U.S. population will grow by one person every 18 seconds as of the start of next year.</p> <p>The Census Bureau found the United States is expected to experience one birth every 8 seconds, a death every 10 seconds and add one person through net international migration every 29 seconds in 2018.</p> <p>It also predicted the U.S. population will reach 326,971,407 -- about 4.4 percent of the global total -- on Jan. 1, 2018, an increase of 2,314,238 from the first day of 2017.</p> <p>The bureau predicted the global population will reach 7,444,443,881 on Jan. 1, an increase of 78,521,283 from New Year's Day 2017.</p> <p>About 4.3 births and 1.8 deaths are expected every second worldwide during January of next year.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/29 Israel: Gaza militants fire rockets
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/12/29/military-says-gaza-gunmen-fire-rockets-at-israel.html
GIST	<p>JERUSALEM – Israel says militants in the Gaza Strip have fired several rockets at the Jewish state with two intercepted by its air defense system and another damaging a building.</p> <p>The military said its Iron Dome missile defense system downed two rockets Friday. Police said another exploded near a building causing damage but no injuries.</p> <p>Israel holds Hamas, the Islamic militant group that rules Gaza, responsible for all attacks emanating from the territory regardless of who fires the rockets. Israel typically responds to each attack.</p> <p>There has been an increase in Gaza rocket fire since President Donald Trump's announcement Dec. 6 recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital.</p> <p>Palestinians have been clashing with Israeli forces in the West Bank and along the Gaza border in weekly protests over the decision.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/29 Taiwan president seeks stronger defense
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/12/29/taiwan-president-pledges-stronger-defense-to-china-pressure.html
GIST	<p>TAOYUAN CITY, Taiwan – Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen has pledged to step up defense spending to defend the self-ruled island's sovereignty in the face of China's growing military assertiveness in the region.</p> <p>Speaking at a military research center, Tsai said Friday that Beijing's "attempt to expand militarily in the region is more and more obvious" and Taiwan "needs to stand up for its sovereignty."</p> <p>China and Taiwan split in 1949 after Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists fled the mainland following a civil war. The communist Beijing government insists the two sides must unite, but surveys show most Taiwanese oppose that.</p> <p>Beijing has rattled neighboring governments including Taiwan, Japan and South Korea by sending military aircraft close to their airspace.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Universities face #MeToo movement
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2017/12/28/academia-faces-metoo-movement-over-sexual-harrassment.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON – When Celeste Kidd was a graduate student of neuroscience at the University of Rochester she says a professor supervising her made her life unbearable by stalking her, making demeaning comments about her weight and talking about sex.</p> <p>Ten years on and now a professor of neuroscience at the university, Kidd is taking legal action. She has filed a federal lawsuit against the school alleging that it mishandled its sexual harassment investigation into the professor's actions and then retaliated against her and her colleagues for reporting the misconduct.</p> <p>"We are trying to bring transparency to a system that is corrupt," Kidd told The Associated Press.</p> <p>Academia — like Hollywood, the media and Congress — is facing its own #MeToo movement over allegations of sexual misconduct. Brett Sokolow, who heads an association of sexual harassment investigators on campuses, estimates that the number of reported complaints has risen by about 10 percent since the accusations against Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein surfaced in early October, spurring more women to speak out against harassment in various fields. The increase is mostly from women complaining of harassment by faculty members who are their superiors.</p> <p>But the Trump administration has viewed the issue of sexual harassment on campus in a different light. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos has scrapped Obama-era regulations on investigating sexual assault, arguing that they were skewed in favor of the accuser. New instructions allow universities to require higher standards of evidence when handling such complaints.</p> <p>A forthcoming study of nearly 300 such cases in the Utah Law Review found that one in 10 female graduate students at major research universities reports being sexually harassed by a faculty member. And in more than half of those cases, the alleged perpetrator is a repeat offender, according to the study.</p> <p>"Often schools might turn a blind eye toward sexual harassment that they know about or have heard about because a professor is bringing in a big grant or is adding to the stature of the university," said Neena Chaudhry, senior counsel at the National Women's Law Center.</p> <p>The Education Department did not respond to a request for comment.</p>

Activists say young women pursuing graduate studies are especially vulnerable to sexual misconduct because they depend heavily on their academic adviser to complete their degrees, pursue research in their field of study and get recommendations for future jobs. Reporting misconduct could endanger an academic career. And besides damaging the women's mental health and well-being, sexual harassment can chase some of them out of academia altogether.

"Often professors who are advising graduate students are the students' gateway to their degree attainment and their career prospects," said Anne Hedgepeth with the American Association of University Women. "That's an immense amount of power that professors hold. It's also an immense amount of risk that students take when coming forward when future prospects are on the line."

That sums up what happened to Kidd, according to the lawsuit.

Kidd says Florian Jaeger, a distinguished linguistics professor at the New York university's cognitive sciences department who was one of her academic advisers in 2007, pressured her to rent a room in his apartment for a year. She says he then constantly intruded in her private life, demoralized her and talked to her about oral sex and other sexually explicit topics.

"I begged him to stop and to just advise me professionally and he said that was impossible, that wasn't his mentorship style," Kidd said in a phone interview. "There were many moments where I went to sleep in the lab and I wondered what I had done to deserve the hell I was living in every day."

When Kidd protested, Jaeger made it understood that he could derail her career.

"He had a lot of control over my work life, he had the ears of everybody in the field," she recalled. "He reminded me constantly that they know him, that he was a big shot and that I was no one."

In the end, Kidd moved out of Jaeger's apartment and abandoned language research so that she wouldn't have to be supervised by Jaeger. She now studies attention and general learning.

Last year, two professors at the department, in whom Kidd eventually confided, filed a sexual harassment complaint. The university investigated but found the allegations unsubstantiated. The professors say the university then began a retaliation campaign against them. In August, Kidd together with group of faculty members filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, a federal agency in charge of workplace discrimination issues. In December, Kidd and her colleagues filed a federal lawsuit.

The university responded by placing Jaeger, now a tenured professor, on administrative leave and commissioning an independent investigation. Results are expected in early January.

University President Joel Seligman said in a statement that the school is committed to creating a safe and respectful environment, but vowed to "vigorously defend" himself and the university provost against some personal claims made against them in the suit.

Jaeger did not respond to an email seeking comment. But shortly after the case was made public this fall, he emailed his students to say that while some of the online comments about him were painful to read, "I am glad that there is now generally so much support for people who speak up against discrimination." Jaeger added that he has always tried to make his lab "an exciting, sa(f)e and supportive place to pursue science" and that he has received letters of support from former students.

As universities face pressure to rethink their sexual misconduct policies, activists suggest various possible remedies: spelling out what interaction is appropriate between faculty and students; more transparency in reporting and investigating complaints; more women in senior leadership positions in academia; and making a student's career less dependent on just one professor.

"There is really no excuse for not addressing this," Chaudhry at the National Women's Law Center said.

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HEADLINE	12/29 China seizes opportunity in Iran
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2017/12/29/u-s-sanction-iran-china-seizes-opportunity/989571001/
GIST	<p>Mostafa Kishavarzi looks over the 10,000 watches crammed into his tiny store wedged between dozens of similar retailers in the jewelry section of the Tehran Bazaar.</p> <p>Every watch in his store — and most of those sold by his competitors — come from one place, and it's not Iran. It's China.</p> <p>Kishavarzi sells everything from knock-off Rolexes to nothing-fancy, off-brand watches. He flies to Shenzhen, China, several times a year to buy the timepieces and makes a tidy profit selling them back in Tehran.</p> <p>“My watches are perfect for middle- and low-income people,” he said proudly. “Even the batteries are guaranteed for a year.”</p> <p>Watches are just a tiny part of an explosion in trade between the two countries: China has become Iran's largest trading partner.</p> <p>The Chinese government has also extended huge loans to Iran, most recently a \$10 billion line of credit for Chinese companies to build infrastructure projects such as dams, power generation facilities and transportation projects. Meanwhile, the Trump administration continues to block U.S. investment and most trade with Iran. Analysts in Iran say the U.S. pressures European businesses to do the same.</p> <p>“The more the U.S. puts pressure on Iran, the closer Iran will get to China,” said Foad Izadi, an assistant professor in the Department of North American Studies at the University of Tehran.</p> <p>Izadi said China remained a reliable trading partner even during the height of U.S. sanctions earlier this decade. After implementing the nuclear accord in 2015, Iran signed numerous memoranda of understandings with companies in Italy, Germany and France. But facing the possibility of new U.S. sanctions, few of them followed through with sales or investments.</p> <p>The European plane manufacturer Airbus, for example, agreed to sell 100 planes to Iran but has delivered only three so far.</p> <p>China, on the other hand, has accelerated its investments, with infrastructure projects and sales of moderately priced cars, cell phones and clothing.</p> <p>The Chinese “are interested in buying and selling stuff,” said Izadi. “They are not interested in regime change. They are not interested in putting political pressure on governments that have an independent foreign policy.”</p> <p>In 2016 Chinese President Xi Jinping and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani announced plans to increase bilateral trade to \$600 billion over the next decade. That's an ambitious goal, to say the least.</p> <p>China exported \$7.95 billion worth of goods to Iran over the last eight months, a 22% increase over the same period last year, according to Iranian customs statistics provided by the Tehran Chamber of Commerce. Iran's exports to China, excluding oil, were valued at \$5.7 billion, a 13.5% increase during the same period.</p> <p>China sees Iran as an important component of its "One Belt, One Road" program, connecting China to Europe via Asia. The project costs an estimated \$1.7 trillion per year to build ports, highways, rail lines</p>

and other infrastructure in the region. China is also constructing a 2,000-mile long railroad to connect the western Chinese city of Urumqi with the northern Iranian city of Mashhad, cutting through four former Soviet republics.

Politically, China seeks allies against what it perceives as U.S. hegemony in the Middle East. Izadi said China doesn't want to depend on oil produced in Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and other U.S. allies.

"As long as there is a defiant Iran in the Middle East, the United States cannot fully concentrate on East Asia where China's core interests are located," Izadi and Esfandiar Khodaei wrote in a scholarly journal.

But those common interests go only so far.

While China continued to buy Iranian oil during the sanctions era, it kept the money from those sales in special accounts in China as prescribed by U.N. sanctions. After sanctions were lifted, however, China didn't release the \$22 billion it accumulated. It only allows the funds to be used to finance Chinese infrastructure projects in Iran.

"They were ruthless," political analyst Saeed Laylaz said. "They tried to cheat us. But at least they sold things to us."

China faces another problem with Iran. Many ordinary people complain about the shoddy quality of Chinese goods such as the watches in the Bazaar jewelry stores.

"We know there are different quality goods in China," said Bazaar shopper Fereshteh, who declined to give her last name. "But the poor quality ones end up coming to Iran. They don't last for long and break down quickly compared to products from other places."

Izadi notes that the shoddy quality of some imports are as much the fault of Iranian traders as Chinese manufacturers. The traders buy cheap goods to make a bigger profit.

Even those consumers who want to "buy Iranian" face difficult choices.

Nasibeh Tavakoli, another Bazaar shopper, said she supports buying her own country's products rather than Chinese goods. But like consumers the world over, that's not so easy anymore. Asked if she actually buys Iranian, she replied sheepishly, "Sometimes I don't know if it's Iranian or Chinese. I end up buying very few Iranian goods."

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HEADLINE	12/28 Reports: US, Israel secret deal on Iran
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/nuclear-weapons-agreement-foreign-policy-tehran/2017/12/28/id/834185/
GIST	<p>The U.S. and Israel signed a secret agreement earlier this month to work to counter Iran's activities in the Mideast, including covert and diplomatic actions to block Tehran's path to nuclear weapons, according to news reports Thursday.</p> <p>The accord was signed Dec. 12 after two days of secret meetings in Washington between National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster and his Israeli counterpart, Meir Ben-Shabbat, Axios and The Times of Israel reported.</p> <p>A U.S. official told Axios the document goal's was to translate President Donald Trump's speech on Iran in October into U.S.-Israeli strategic goals on Tehran and to set up a joint working plan.</p> <p>Trump decertified the Iran nuclear deal in his Oct. 13 speech at the White House.</p>

	<p>Israeli officials told both news organizations "the U.S. and Israel see eye to eye the different developments in the region and especially those that are connected to Iran.</p> <p>"We reached at understandings regarding the strategy and the policy needed to counter Iran.</p> <p>"Our understandings deal with the overall strategy but also with concrete goals, way of action and the means which need to be used to get obtain those goals."</p> <p>The agreement creates working groups that would address various issues concerning Tehran, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using covert and diplomatic action to block Iran's path to nuclear weapons, including further monitoring and verifying whether Iran is not violating the deal and taking more diplomatic steps to put more pressure on Tehran. • Countering Iranian activity in the region, especially its entrenchment efforts in Syria and its support for Hezbollah and other terrorist groups. • Countering Iran's development of ballistic missiles and its "precision project" that seeks to build precision-guided missiles in Syria and Lebanon for Hezbollah to be used against Israel in any future conflict. • Developing U.S.-Israeli preparation efforts to counter various escalation scenarios in the region concerning Iran, Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza.
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HEADLINE	12/29 Mumbai restaurant blaze kills 15
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/fire-engulfs-mumbai-building-killing-15-people-52035756?
GIST	<p>Flames shot into the nighttime sky early Friday as a fire engulfed an upscale rooftop restaurant in the Indian city of Mumbai, killing 15 people and sending others fleeing for their lives, fire officials said.</p> <p>The 1 a.m. fire spread quickly from the restaurant through the four-story building, said Mumbai fire service official Balkrishna Kadam. Eight fire engines battled the blaze for more than five hours, he said.</p> <p>Video showed a blazing fire atop a building, and then a roof-like shelter collapsing. A bamboo ceiling burned quickly and collapsed as people tried to escape, the TimesNow TV news channel said.</p> <p>The building is located in Kamala Mills, a sprawling former textile compound that has been redeveloped with upscale restaurants and offices and has become a popular nightspot in Mumbai, India's financial and entertainment capital.</p> <p>More than 50 people were brought to KEM hospital, of whom 12 were treated for non-life-threatening injuries, said Avinash Supe, a doctor at the hospital.</p> <p>Supe said the deaths were caused by both burns and suffocation.</p> <p>Fire officials said 14 of the victims had been identified, and there was one unidentified body. The dead included 11 women, they said.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/29 NYC: massive apartment fire kills 12
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/15-injured-massive-apartment-fire-york-city/story?id=52035689&cid=clicksource_4380645_1_hero_headlines_bsq_hed
GIST	At least 12 people, including a 1-year-old, have died in a massive apartment fire in New York City, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced Thursday night.

	<p>Calling the blaze "one of the worst loss-of-life fires in many, many years," de Blasio said another four people were critically injured and "fighting for their lives."</p> <p>Speaking at a press conference at the fire scene, de Blasio said at least 12 people were rescued from the building at 2363 Prospect Ave. in the Belmont neighborhood of the Bronx.</p> <p>"The search of the building continues so we know that even though it's horrible to report 12 are dead already, we may lose others as well," de Blasio said.</p> <p>The deaths ranged in age from 1 year old to "over 50," authorities said.</p> <p>Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro said the fire broke out on the first floor of the five-story building and spread upstairs. He said it was "way too early to tell the cause."</p> <p>"As of now, this tragedy is without question historic in its magnitude," Nigro said.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Arctic freeze hits Midwest, Northeast
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-weather/land-of-the-freeze-arctic-wave-hits-u-s-midwest-northeast-idUSKBN1EM1PV
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (Reuters) - Most of the U.S. Northeast and Midwest grappled with a post-Christmas deep freeze on Thursday, with temperatures expected to plunge as low as minus 20 degrees F (minus 29 C) in North Dakota as forecasters warned that the harsh winter weather could usher in the New Year.</p> <p>Tioga, about 200 miles (322 km) north of Bismarck, took honors as the coldest spot in the continental United States, according to National Weather Service (NWS) spokesman Bob Oravec. The mercury dived to minus 15 F early on Thursday afternoon.</p> <p>"By tomorrow morning, low temperatures will probably be 15 to 20 degrees below zero in the northern and northwestern areas of North Dakota, maybe even in north Minnesota," Oravec said.</p> <p>On Wednesday, International Falls, Minnesota, about 300 miles north of Minneapolis, lived up to its reputation as the "Icebox of the Nation." The low temperature there dropped to 37 degrees F below zero, breaking the old record for the day of 32 degrees below, set in 1924. Temperatures moderated to minus 2 F on Thursday.</p> <p>Mayor Bob Anderson told Reuters that a local paper mill had to reduce operations because of the cold. But he said mail was still being delivered, and the town's roughly 6,000 weather-hardened residents were taking the cold in stride.</p> <p>For most of the region encompassing New England, northern Pennsylvania and New York, the NWS issued wind chill advisories or warnings. Temperatures in the region ranged from highs in the teens and 20s F to lows in the single digits or below zero.</p> <p>For upstate New York, east of Lake Ontario, the NWS warned of "dangerously" cold wind chills of minus 5 F to minus 30 F through Friday. In northern Vermont, conditions are even more brutal, with wind chills threatening to bottom out at minus 40 F.</p> <p>On Twitter, the hashtag #ItsSoCold was the No. 1 trending topic in the United States on Thursday as social media users expressed their frustration with Old Man Winter.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Newly elected Liberian president
SOURCE	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-42507405
GIST	<p>Former footballer George Weah is set to become Liberia's president at the second attempt.</p> <p>With most ballots from Tuesday's run-off vote counted, Mr Weah is well ahead of opponent Joseph Boakai.</p> <p>He will succeed Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa's first elected female president, in Liberia's first democratic handover in decades.</p> <p>Mrs Sirleaf defeated Mr Weah in the presidential election run-off in 2005, after the end of a brutal civil war.</p> <p>As news of Mr Weah's victory emerged on Thursday, his supporters began celebrating in the capital Monrovia.</p> <p>The former football star's campaign - under the Coalition for Democratic Change banner - appealed to the youth vote, while incumbent Vice President Mr Boakai was seen as old and out of touch.</p> <p>But Mr Weah's election is not without controversy, as his running mate is Jewel Taylor, former wife of the warlord and ex-President Charles Taylor, who is serving a jail sentence in the UK for war crimes.</p> <p>Mr Weah, 51, won the first round of the presidential election in October with 38.4% of the vote, compared with the 28.8% won by second-placed Mr Boakai, 73. The failure of any candidate to secure an outright majority forced the run-off.</p> <p>The National Elections Commission (NEC) said on Thursday that with 98.1% of the run-off vote counted, Mr Weah had won 61.5% of the vote while Mr Boakai was far behind with 38.5%.</p> <p>Mr Weah played for a string of football clubs, including AC Milan, Chelsea and Paris St-Germain, and is the only African footballer to have won both Fifa World Player of the Year and the Ballon D'Or.</p> <p>He entered politics after his retirement from the game in 2002 and is currently a senator in Liberia's parliament.</p> <p>Liberia, founded by freed US slaves in the 19th Century, has not had a smooth transfer of power from one elected president to another since 1944.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Impact of southern Calif. wildfires
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2017/12/28/southern-california-wildfires-trigger-mass-destruction-hurting-families-economy.html
GIST	<p>After nearly a month of battling the so-called "Thomas Fire," fire personnel have nearly reached full containment.</p> <p>As of Thursday morning, the wind-whipped fire, which is the biggest blaze in California's history since detailed record-keeping began in 1932, was 89 percent contained.</p> <p>The massive blaze started on Dec. 4 about 60 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles and caused at least 50,000 people to evacuate, destroyed 1,063 structures and scorched roughly 281,620 acres.</p> <p>The Thomas Fire has very little active heat at this time and no forward progress of the fire is expected, the Los Padres National Forest, which is now tracking the fire, said in a statement.</p>

Visitors are now welcome back to Santa Barbara, Ventura and surrounding areas -- just days after authorities lifted all evacuation orders in Santa Barbara County and portions of Ventura County on Dec. 21.

The cause of the fire is currently unknown.

One firefighter died while trying to combat the fire in Southern California, authorities said on Dec. 14. Cory Iverson, 32, was an engineer based in San Diego. He left behind a pregnant wife and a 2-year-old daughter.

Iverson, who died of burns and smoke inhalation, had been with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection since 2009.

Iverson's wildfire-related death was not the first.

Authorities confirmed the death of a 70-year-old woman on Dec. 8. Virginia Pesola was reportedly killed in a car crash along an evacuation route on Dec. 6. Her death was the first connected to the six wildfires that were in the region.

In addition, one unnamed firefighter has reportedly been injured and three other people were burned, the Los Angeles Times reported.

In light of the Thomas Fire and others, here's what you need to know about California wildfires.

How do the fires start?

While wildfires in Northern California are often caused by lightning storms, about 99 percent of wildfires in Southern California are caused by humans, David Peterson, a senior research biologist with the U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station, told Fox News.

While throwing a cigarette butt out of a window is usually not enough to spark a fire, Peterson said, other simple tasks -- like mowing the lawn or parking a car on dry grass -- can.

For instance, if a rock hits a lawn mower's metal blades, that's usually enough friction to create a spark that can ultimately start a fire, Scott McLean, an information officer at the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire, told Fox News. And the heat from a car's catalytic converter, a device that's located underneath that controls its exhaust emissions, can reach up to 1,200 degrees Fahrenheit -- enough heat to create a fire if the car is parked over dry, flammable grass.

"It only takes one spark to start a fire," McLean said.

Another common source of wildfires are utility wires, Peterson said. On a windy day, these wires can be knocked over, land on dry vegetation and ultimately ignite a fire.

Wildfires are a "perfectly natural, normal phenomenon," Peterson said. But as urban areas continue to expand into wildland areas, the risk of wildfires will also continue to grow.

"We cannot stop them. We can maybe do things to reduce their severity, like removing as much dead vegetation that we can, but they will continue to occur," he added.

How are wildfires stopped?

All wildfires can bring mass destruction. But the way each fire is stopped varies, McLean said.

In other words, "the different vegetation and different scenarios up and down the state" impact how each fire is handled.

"You don't just throw resources at a wildfire," he said. "It's like a battle -- you have to think what will be the most effective."

Cal Fire usually depends on a mix of bulldozers, fire engines, inmate crews, and helicopters or airplanes, which disperse things like fire retardant, to stop wildfires.

Using containment lines, or large areas where a bulldozer cuts away vegetation to the point where only dirt remains, is very common, he said. But this isn't always an accessible option.

"What would increase the fire's speed, what would slow it down?" he asked. "Helicopter and airplanes are ineffective with winds over 30 miles an hour, and bulldozers can't always get in there."

Strong wind gusts also cause problems when putting out or controlling wildfires, he said. Regional atmospheric patterns that develop in the fall create dry, hot wind gusts that can sometimes reach 80 miles per hour. These winds can create so-called "spot fires" -- which is when an ember from the main wildfire gets blown into a nearby bush or field, ultimately creating a second fire.

"It's like a blowtorch," he said.

Indeed, "the thing that's really challenging here is the embers, which can float one or two miles and jump across fire breaks," Peterson said. "That's why residential areas are so vulnerable."

"There is so much energy and so much intensity that we cannot stop them with conventional means," Peterson said. "In these fires, we have to allow them to burn until there's a period of high humidity and rain that helps reduce the temperature of fire enough to control it."

But rain can also create muddy conditions for bulldozers and fire crews which impacts how they can combat the blaze.

Peterson said that firefighters work to "steer" the fire, pushing it toward the ocean, highway or a steep, rocky area where there is less vegetation. This usually helps to stop or slow down the wildfire. They also use aerial and satellite photos to "work with the landscape" and keep an eye on which direction the wind is coming from, he said.

As for the Thomas Fire, however, McLean said resident safety comes first -- hence the evacuation that first took place last week. He said Cal Fire is expecting more resources to come to the Ventura County area, adding that "several strategies and tactics are in place" to stop or control it.

"It's a case by case basis, and it's extremely fluid," he said.

Why have California's wildfires been so destructive recently?

McLean explained that California has faced a significant drought over the past five years, which created a lot of dead vegetation across the state. Like other mediterranean climates, wintertime brings rain, which fills up water reserves and helps new vegetation grow. California also had a record amount of rainfall in the spring of 2017. But the summer's heat dried out that new growth, and, combined with the autumn winds, means "a lot of fuel was created for wildfires," he said.

"These wildfires in Southern California are unlike anywhere else in the West," Peterson said. And this year in particular, that's primarily because of the Santa Ana winds.

Indeed, "the fires that occur in Southern California in the fall and winter are unique," Peterson said.

While most of the wind cycles across the U.S. blow off of the Pacific Ocean and move east, the Santa Ana winds blow off the desert in Arizona and move west toward California. These hot, dry winds, which can

reach 50 miles per hour or more, along with warm weather and dead vegetation, is the perfect concoction for severe wildfires.

“This [the Santa Ana winds] usually happens to some extent every year, but, like all natural phenomena, happens more severely some years than others,” he said. One of the more severe years has been 2017.

Between the winds and the lightning storms, close to 10 million acres in the West have burned in 2017 alone, Peterson said.

McLean said there are millions of dead trees in California -- but those primarily serve as potential fuel for wildfires to blaze across the northern part of the state. In Southern California, on the other hand, smaller fuels -- like chaparral, which is a shrub-like plant with fine stems and leaves -- propel the wildfires.

“We’re not dealing much with forest in Southern California, we’re dealing more with chaparral -- and that gets even hotter than a forest fire,” Peterson said.

“There’s a long road ahead of us. The fires we’ve dealt with recently -- like the Thomas Fire -- are all indicators of what we’re having to deal with in California for the next few years,” McLean added.

“Rains are not a cure all with one winter -- it will take several years of winters to get moisture back into plants and reservoirs.”

What is the impact on wine, entertainment and wildlife?

Wildfires could also impact the state’s wine industry from an economic standpoint, wine experts previously told Fox News. The California wine industry generates \$57.6 billion in annual economic activity in the state and \$114 billion in the country, according to statistics from the Wine Institute, a California-based public policy organization.

About 325,000 Californians are employed by the wine industry in California. The industry also contributes \$17.2 billion in wages annually in the state.

Additionally, it generates \$7.2 billion in tourism expenditures in California.

One of the biggest revenue generators in the West are “recreational activities on public lands,” Peterson said -- such as hiking, skiing or sightseeing.

“Businesses shut down, and smaller communities who depend on tourism are greatly impacted,” Peterson said.

As for wildlife, most animals can either fly or run away from the wildfires, while others can burrow underground. Peterson said that wildfires are actually a good thing for deer, elk, Bark Beetles and some types of vegetation. But for other animals -- like the Spotted Owl and the Lynx, for example -- wildfires are harmful, often destroying their habitats.

“There’s always going to be winners and losers in wildfires,” Peterson said.

Additionally, the smoke from wildfires is hard on people who have respiratory problems. Elderly people and children are typically impacted by the smoke.

Peterson recalled a time that there was so much smoke in the air from a wildfire it was difficult to talk.

As for the entertainment industry, the Hollywood Reporter reported that HBO suspended its second season of “Westworld” due to a 200-acre brush fire that broke out near where the show was filming.

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HEADLINE	12/28 Expert: U-turn in flights not uncommon
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/airplane-mode/chrissy-teigen-s-tokyo-bound-flight-turning-back-more-common-n833226
GIST	<p>Supermodel Chrissy Teigen captivated her Twitter followers when she live-tweeted about her "flight to nowhere" — caused when a rogue passenger was discovered on board her Tokyo-bound airplane Tuesday morning. The incident led the All Nippon Airways crew to turn the jetliner back to Los Angeles four hours into the flight.</p> <p>While airline officials apologized for the turnaround and said it was investigating how the "unauthorized" passenger was even permitted aboard, aviation experts say it's actually not uncommon for an aircraft to turn around mid-flight.</p> <p>In fact, it happens everyday, multiple times a day, said Ian Petchenik, a spokesman for Flightradar24, a real-time flight-tracking service.</p> <p>"This time of year we track about 150,000 flights a day. In any 24-hour period, about two dozen will not arrive for a number a reasons," Petchenik said.</p> <p>The most common reason for a diverted or returned flight, Petchenik said, is weather — especially in winter. But other reasons can range from medical to mechanical, and yes, even a stray passenger.</p> <p>Petchenik said in the hours after All Nippon Airways Flight NH175 went viral on social media, he was repeatedly asked why the plane didn't just land at a closer airport, such as in Anchorage, Alaska, instead of returning to Los Angeles.</p> <p>"If it's practical, airlines prefer to land where they have ground staff and can accommodate the passenger," he said, adding that other airports "might not have proper staff to receive the plane, to refuel the plane, things like that."</p> <p>He said an airline would rather know the airport can "re-accommodate the passenger and the aircraft" before making the unscheduled landing.</p> <p>Although it is still not known how the stray passenger ended up on the flight, Henry Willis, a senior policy researcher at RAND Corporation with a knowledge of aviation security, said keeping airports secure is a team effort.</p> <p>"Security isn't just the TSA. It's all parties," Willis said, adding that everyone from airlines to passengers play a role in keeping airports safe.</p> <p>He said it is likely a review will be done so the airline can assess how it can prevent future mix-ups. As to what led to this one, Willis said it's hard to tell.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 More cities light up Chinese lanterns
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/chinese-lantern-light-festivals-catching-across-country-n832266
GIST	<p>TULSA, Okla. — Medium-sized cities across the U.S. have begun hosting lantern light festivals in recent years in an effort to boost tourism and share a bit of Chinese culture.</p> <p>While similar festivals have taken place in large U.S. cities like San Francisco and New York for decades, events are currently underway in a variety of smaller municipalities, including Tulsa, Oklahoma; Cary, North Carolina; and Columbus, Ohio.</p>

“It’s very colorful. It’s something you don’t see at other places,” Lyman Collins, cultural arts manager for the Town of Cary in North Carolina, said. “Maybe you do in far away other places, but not around here. There’s nothing like it.”

The city of Cary has hosted a lantern festival for the past three years and has signed an agreement with the China-based Tianyu Arts & Culture company, to host it for the next four years, Collins said.

Last year, the city of 162,000 saw 90,000 people attend the event, a 75 percent increase over the previous year, he said.

“It’s been successful,” Collins said. “It’s a program that people seem to want to attend. They enjoy it. And it allows us to use the amphitheater at a time we would otherwise not be using it.”

The festival has also been credited with creating the first budget surplus for the local Koka Booth Amphitheater.

Huiyuan Liu, event manager for Tianyu Arts & Culture, said the company focuses on selling a cultural experience to visitors of the festivals. In addition to the Cary festival, the company has organized events in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Spokane, Washington; and Columbus, Ohio; among other cities.

She said that venues often want to host the lantern festivals to help bring in additional visitors. For example, Tianyu Arts & Culture partnered with the botanical gardens in Milwaukee in an effort to increase attendance to the gardens and bring extra revenue to the park.

“They did a really good job in advertising and the lanterns looked beautiful,” she said. “So, eventually, lots of people showed up, and I think 80 to 90 percent of them had never been to the botanical gardens before.”

Traditionally, the lantern light festival marks the end of the Lunar New Year period and the return of spring, and is seen by many as an important celebration.

In Tulsa, more than 5,000 people have visited the city’s inaugural Lantern Light Festival, put on by the Pinnacle Production Group, said Ryan Howell, events coordinator at the River Parks Authority, which is hosting the event.

“The festival producer... has been touring the nation in several other locations and we thought it would be something unique for Tulsa to enjoy,” Howell said. “The way they construct these lanterns and the sheer size of them is quite a spectacle, so we thought it might be something that the citizens of Tulsa would enjoy.”

Advertising for the show has stretched into Kansas and Missouri, drawing visitors across state lines, Howell noted.

Local food concessions and local acrobats are also used during the performances, which run through Jan. 14.

“It’s a really fun show,” he said. “It’s a touring show, and I think a lot of people don’t realize that these are custom works of art so they’re not like mass produced inflatable bubbles. These are individually crafted works of art.”

In fact, each lantern is designed by hand, said Sanjay Syal, president of Pinnacle Production Group.

Though the company hosts such festivals all year, they tend to be most popular around Christmas time, he said.

Hosting such an enormous event isn’t cheap. It costs about \$1.5 million to \$2 million to put a festival on,

	<p>Syal said. Many communities look at it as a tourism draw.</p> <p>“It’s a once in a life-time opportunity. It’s like Disney coming to you,” he said. “The photos and videos look impressive, but when you’re standing next to a 400-foot dragon, it looks even more impressive.”</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 US, Turkey announce end visa crisis
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-embassy-announces-end-visa-crisis-turkey-52025923?cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>The U.S. Embassy in Turkey announced Thursday that it is resuming normal visa services for Turkish citizens, saying Turkish authorities fulfilled assurances that no local staff would be detained or arrested for performing their duties. Turkey reciprocated by restoring full visa services to Americans.</p> <p>The United States had halted most visa services for Turkish citizens following the October arrest of a Turkish citizen employed at the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul. Turkey had retaliated by halting visa services in the U.S. for Americans traveling to Turkey.</p> <p>The diplomatic conflict aggravated tensions between the United States and Turkey, NATO allies that have seen their ties deteriorate since a coup attempt last year that the Turkish government blames on a Muslim cleric who lives in the U.S.</p> <p>After receiving assurances its locally employed staff members would not be arrested for performing duties such as communicating with Turkish officials, U.S. diplomatic missions in Turkey began processing visas on a "limited" basis in November.</p> <p>The embassy said Thursday it was satisfied enough that Turkish authorities had kept their promise to restore the full range of visa services. It added that Turkey also followed through on assurances that Washington would be informed in advance if authorities intended to detain other staff members in the future.</p> <p>"The Department of State is confident that the security posture has improved sufficiently to allow the full resumption of visa services in Turkey," the U.S. Embassy said in a statement.</p> <p>Turkey welcomed the U.S. announcement, but denied giving the U.S. any reassurances about any ongoing legal case.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Report: more credit cards, more debt
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/business/consumer/americans-have-more-credit-cards-more-debt-says-cfpb-n833086
GIST	<p>The credit card market is alive and well – and growing, according to a new report from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau released on Wednesday. The biennial report to Congress found that the total number of credit card accounts, the total credit available to cardholders, and the average amount of card debt have all increased over the past two years.</p> <p>During that same period, the delinquency rate (paying late or not at all) – which had fallen to historic lows following the financial crisis of 2007-2009 – has “modestly increased,” the CFPB analysis showed.</p> <p>“Even though the increase in delinquencies is slight, it is a troubling sign,” Bruce McClary, vice president of communications at the National Foundation for Credit Counseling, told NBC News. “There’s nothing wrong with using a credit card, which can be a useful financial tool, as long as you make payments on time and avoid going deep into debt.”</p>

The credit card industry spends billions of dollars each year to attract new customers and that investment is paying off.

“The market has grown in size, in the number of its offerings and participants, and in the scope and features of its products,” the CFPB report noted. Some of the major findings:

- Credit card companies extended more than \$4 trillion in credit lines – used or unused – as of mid-2017. That’s up from the end of the great recession, but below the high of \$4.4 trillion in mid-2008.
- Consumers opened about 110 million new credit card accounts in 2016. That’s roughly 50 percent higher than 2010 and higher than any single year since 2007. New account volume has not yet return to the pre-recession level.
- Although the number of cards in people’s wallets has increased in recent years, the average cardholder has fewer credit cards than before the recession. About 169 million Americans had at least one card as of mid-2017. Cardholders with prime credit scores now have, on average, more than four cards. Prior to the recession, they had more than five.

"Card issuers have loosened up on approvals and credit lines as the economy has recovered, but things still remain below the Wild Wild West, pre-recession levels," said Greg McBride, chief financial analyst at Bankrate.com.

Average credit card debt increased 9 percent since 2015. The average balance for cardholders with low credit scores rose at a faster rate, the CFPB reported. Those with deep subprime scores – indicating a really bad credit history – saw a 26 percent increase in their average credit card debt these past two years.

The average American household that’s carrying credit card debt has a balance of \$15,654, according to a recent report from the financial website NerdWallet. That unpaid debt becomes increasingly costly as interest rates rise.

The national average APR hit 16.21 percent last week, according to the latest report from creditcards.com. That’s the highest average APR the website has recorded since it began tracking rates in mid-2007. Credit card interest rates are expected to go even higher in 2018, as the Federal Reserve continues to boost interest rates.

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HEADLINE	12/28 Criminal charges in flight U-turn?
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/ana-flights-mid-air-turn-result-criminal-charges/story?id=52024185
GIST	<p>The FBI is weighing criminal charges against two brothers who got on a Tokyo-bound flight together in Los Angeles allegedly using a single boarding pass, forcing the plane to turn around mid-flight.</p> <p>Law enforcement sources with knowledge of the situation told ABC News that two brothers went through security at Los Angeles International Airport on Tuesday with legitimate tickets, but were booked on separate flights to Tokyo. One had a ticket on an All Nippon Airways flight and the other was booked on a United Airlines plane.</p> <p>The brothers, who have nearly identical names, were able to board the ANA flight together by apparently using a duplicate boarding pass, the sources said. It's unclear how the brother with a United Airlines ticket found a seat on the plane. Their identities have not been revealed.</p> <p>The flight crew didn't become aware of the situation until roughly four hours into the flight. The airline then decided to turn around mid-air and head back to Los Angeles.</p>

	<p>When the flight landed, the brothers were interviewed by authorities and released. There is no indication anyone was in danger.</p> <p>"During the flight, the cabin crew became aware that one of the passengers boarded the incorrect flight and notified the pilot," ANA said in a statement. "As part of the airline's security procedure, the pilot in command decided to return to the originating airport, where the passenger was disembarked."</p> <p>"ANA is researching the situation currently to determine how the passenger boarded the flight," the airline added.</p> <p>FBI agents told ABC News on Wednesday night that they aren't in a position to arrest anyone or press charges yet, but the investigation is ongoing. If investigators determine there was intent to board the incorrect flight, one of the brothers could be accused of being a stowaway, which is a federal crime and punishable up to five years in prison.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the airline could face hefty fines from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection for allowing the passenger on board and failing to make an accurate headcount.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Question arises on flight's U-turn LAX
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ana-flight-175-u-turn-lax-former-airline-captain-questions-safety/
GIST	<p>The FBI is investigating how a passenger with the wrong ticket boarded a flight from Los Angeles to Tokyo. All Nippon Airways (ANA) Flight 175 returned to LAX about four hours after takeoff Tuesday after the crew discovered an unauthorized passenger in what was supposed to be a vacant seat, reports CBS News correspondent Don Dahler.</p> <p>ANA says there is no mandatory regulation that forced its plane to turn around, and the airline defended the decision. But one aviation expert we spoke to said the U-turn was not necessary – and may have put the people on board at even greater risk.</p> <p>Denny Kelly, a former airline captain, said the plane should have landed at the nearest airport and solved the issue as soon as possible.</p> <p>"To spend four hours flying back to Los Angeles with the guy on the airplane you don't really know what's going on, that's not the safest way to go," Kelly said. "It messed a bunch of things up and didn't hurt anybody. But it could've."</p> <p>The airline says the unauthorized passenger was an American in his 20s. According to the Transportation Security Administration, the passenger was ticketed for a different flight, on United Airlines. He was traveling with his brother, who was ticketed for the ANA flight. Both flights were scheduled to depart around the same time.</p> <p>The decision to bring Flight 175 back cost fliers an entire day of travel.</p> <p>ANA told CBS News the decision was made "in consideration of safety." ANA also tweeted an apology, saying, "We failed to deliver the customer service we strive for. ... We welcome ongoing feedback to understand how we can work to make this right."</p> <p>The FBI said it has not filed charges against the unauthorized passenger.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Russia slams US Aegis system sale
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SOURCE	http://www.cnn.com/2017/12/28/asia/russia-us-japan-anti-missile-defense-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Russia has accused the United States of violating an arms control treaty by agreeing to supply anti-missile systems to Japan.</p> <p>Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said the deal with Japan was part of a bigger plan by the US for a "global anti-missile system."</p> <p>Japan's cabinet approved a plan last week to buy two US-built Aegis Ashore missile defense systems, state broadcaster NHK reported, as the country faces increasing hostility from neighboring North Korea.</p> <p>Russia has raised concerns over several US-built defense systems, claiming they also have the ability to launch missiles.</p> <p>Zakharova claimed they were in breach of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, an arms control agreement between Moscow and Washington that has been in force for 30 years.</p> <p>"We need to bear in mind that all these systems have universal missile launchers that can use all types of missiles. It means another violation of the INF treaty and we see that Japan is an accomplice in this matter," she said.</p> <p>The US rejected the accusation. "The United States is in full compliance with the INF Treaty. Russian claims to the contrary are false and meant to deflect attention from Russia's own very clear violations," a spokesman for the US State Department told CNN.</p> <p>"Third parties will not deter us from taking appropriate defensive measures in the face of growing security challenges," the spokesman added.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	12/28 DHS: First Responder apps w/flaws
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/dhs-18-of-33-first-responder-apps-affected-by-security-flaws/
GIST	<p>A Department of Homeland Security (DHS) pilot program uncovered several privacy and security-related issues in Android and iOS applications used by first responders on the scene of natural disasters and other emergency situations.</p> <p>The pilot program consisted of carrying out security audits for 33 first responder apps developed by 20 app developers.</p> <p>Three US government agencies worked together with experts from Kryptowire to review the apps. Auditors say they identified both privacy and security issues in the apps they tested.</p> <p>32 of 33 apps affected by privacy issues</p> <p>For example, 32 of the 33 apps featured various privacy issues, such as the app gaining access to permissions it did not need or used, such as the ability to send SMS messages, access the phone camera, and the device's contacts list.</p> <p>Experts also found critical security issues in 18 apps, which they say were vulnerable to MitM (Man-in-the-Middle) attacks, mishandled SSL certificates, or used hardcoded credentials.</p> <p>The audit took three months, and investigators said they notified all app developers. At the time of a DHS</p>

	<p>press release, published last week, 14 apps developed by ten developers received fixes for the reported issues.</p> <p>Fixes took approximately one hour per app</p> <p>"Most developers who fixed their app's vulnerability(ies) reported investing approximately one hour on remediation," said the DHS in a statement. "Remediation steps included removing old or unused code, enabling built-in security provided by the operating system, and ensuring the functionality requested is necessary for operations."</p> <p>According to the DHS, the pilot program was important because even if very few people use these apps, they are critical and need to function as designed at a time of crisis.</p>
<p>Return to Top</p>	<p><i>More information is available on the program's homepage. The test pilot was named "Securing Mobile Applications for First Responders." A 22-page PDF with the security audit's results is available here.</i></p>

<p>HEADLINE</p>	<p>12/28 New cybersecurity threats unwrapped</p>
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>http://www.healthcareitnews.com/news/new-cybersecurity-threats-unwrapped-hidden-cobra-public-safety-apps-western-digital-my-cloud</p>
<p>GIST</p>	<p>December saw another round of cyber threats emerge that highlight healthcare's need to better communicate. That means hospitals sharing threat information with each other, researchers alerting tech vendors when they uncover vulnerabilities, and getting the word out to consumers.</p> <p>"We still take a lot of things for granted," said Lee Kim, Director of Privacy and Security at HIMSS. "We still need to bridge the vendor-consumer divide."</p> <p>That's Kim's takeaway after compiling this month's HIMSS Healthcare and Cross-Sector Cybersecurity Report.</p> <p>Western Digital My Cloud is one example. Mitre's Common Vulnerability and Exposures pointed to a hole through which hackers can get root-level privileges in the personal storage device — and do so without authenticating.</p> <p>On the international scene, meanwhile, the U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team, working in conjunction with the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security, pinpointed seven malicious executable variants that North Korea's government uses. CERT explained that Hidden Cobra is the name it and other U.S. agencies use for North Korea's malicious cyber activity, while Bankshot refers to the Trojan malware North Korea deploys.</p> <p>"FBI has high confidence that Hidden Cobra actors are using malware variants in conjunction with proxy servers to maintain a presence on victim networks and to further network exploitation," U.S. CERT said.</p> <p>To that end, CERT recommends that hospitals and other enterprises employ some of the basic infosec blocking and tackling to safeguard against North Korean threats, including keeping operating systems and antivirus software current, restricting users from downloading unwanted apps, enforcing password policies, being careful about opening and scanning attachments, installing personal firewalls and keeping pace with the latest threats.</p> <p>Another federal agency, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, posted its Supply Chain Disaster Preparedness Manual recently, aimed specifically at healthcare supply chain and emergency managers.</p> <p>And then there's the Securing Mobile Applications for First Responders report from Homeland Security, which revealed that 32 of 33 tested public safety applications have security holes that could let nefarious actors slip in to access a smartphone's camera, contacts, audio recording, SMS message and hard-coded credentials – the most personal stuff, in other words.</p>

“I just don’t think many people understand what it means for an attacker to be able to eavesdrop on a connection or get control over a device or gain root or administrator privileges on a machine,” Kim said. “If I am a researcher and I discover a vulnerability, is it fair to disclose it if the vendor fails to act on it? How many ordinary users are aware of the exploitable dangers and how their systems may be affected?”

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HEADLINE	12/28 Hacks increasingly target student data
SOURCE	http://www.govtech.com/security/Cyberattacks-Increasingly-Target-Student-Data.html
GIST	<p>(TNS) — Three sets of eyes are trained on a bank of glowing screens that wraps around the room.</p> <p>Data flashes. Charts fill a large panel.</p> <p>The systems engineers sit in front of smaller, desktop computer monitors. They scan information as it pours in and check for problems.</p> <p>The network operations center, which opened a couple of years ago in a former school turned technology hub, is the front line of the DeKalb County school district’s defense against hackers, cyberthreats, and data theft.</p> <p>“We get close to about 3,000 attacks a day, and so we are able to see it and constantly make adjustments,” said chief information officer Gary Brantley, who likened the onslaught to a barrage of missiles. “The biggest focus is, we are trying to protect kids. We are trying to protect student information.”</p> <p>As school districts ditch chalkboards and paper files for computers and data systems with valuable details about employees and students — from personal identification to grades, attendance records, parents’ names, and contacts — cyber criminals have targeted them.</p> <p>Online scammers steal paychecks, swipe data, and even have demanded ransom after taking over district’s networks.</p> <p>In recent months, three metro Atlanta school districts reported email phishing attacks. Thieves nabbed nearly \$130,000 from Atlanta Public Schools and Fulton County Schools by fooling dozens of employees with fake emails that allowed hackers to gain access to their online information and reroute direct deposits.</p> <p>A third district, Clayton County Public Schools, said attackers tried unsuccessfully to reroute paychecks from 28 unsuspecting workers.</p> <p>In October, the U.S. Department of Education warned schools of extortion attempts in at least three states. Cyberattackers threatened to release student information and, in some cases, threatened violence unless the district paid up. Some schools have.</p> <p>There have been at least 283 cybersecurity incidents at K-12 public schools since 2016, according to a tally by education technology consultant Doug Levin. He thinks his count underreports the scope of the security troubles.</p> <p>“These are new threats facing schools. They are harming individuals. They are disrupting school schedules and class time and they are costing schools and taxpayers a lot of money, and we are going to need an effective and sort of comprehensive response to it,” said Levin, president of Virginia-based EdTech Strategies.</p> <p>Data breaches are so expected that a policy guide the National School Boards Association released this year called them “inevitable.”</p>

In the days after the Atlanta attack, the district warned that confidential data for all its roughly 6,000 employees may have been exposed. Bill Caritj, chief accountability and information officer, now says further forensic analysis found no evidence of a widespread problem.

Fulton and APS both repaid employees after their paychecks were stolen. Fulton officials plan to ask the school board for about \$250,000 to beef up protections, while APS spent \$150,000 on a forensic investigation and will pay a company \$32,653 a year for three years to educate and train staff and students.

Both districts also called in law enforcement.

Districts throughout the metro area said they routinely review and update security systems to try to thwart cybercrime. They pay millions of dollars to secure networks, upgrade firewalls and purchase anti-virus protections.

For example: Gwinnett County Public Schools will spend nearly \$1 million over a three-year contract for software to prevent attacks that aim to disrupt legitimate access to the system. The state's largest district also spent roughly \$2.8 million this year on other security measures, including encryption tools, as it implemented a data policy plan over the past 18 months.

After the phishing attacks, both Fulton and Atlanta schools limited access to payroll systems. They also are adding authentication steps needed to log in — such as requiring users to retrieve codes sent to their cellphones.

Gwinnett also plans to add that feature, superintendent J. Alvin Wilbanks said. And instead of allowing schools to manage their own websites, the district is centralizing that work.

A big part of the security effort is focused on education. Wilbanks said he's training himself to look closely before opening emails.

"I don't know that I did that six months ago. I didn't have to worry about it too much six months ago," he said. "One person being derelict can cause some real issues."

Local districts are laying traps for employees by sending out managed phishing emails to see if they click on a link or provide sensitive information.

In Fulton schools, the emails are made to look as real as possible by including school images and official-looking salutations. Employees who fall for the ruse are enrolled in a training session, said Derrick Johnson, director of information technology and security.

DeKalb's watchful computer experts will shut down access to its network, including email, in a particular region if there's a high volume of suspicious traffic coming from a certain country.

Privacy and security advocates are pushing for stricter reporting requirements for school districts and vendors.

The federal education department encourages but does not require school districts to report data breaches. States take a patchwork approach to notification mandates, though more attention has been paid to the topic recently.

In Georgia, school districts are to notify residents whose unencrypted personal information was acquired without authorization, but districts don't have to report incidents to the state education department.

A privacy act that became law in 2016 requires notification by the Georgia Department of Education if student data that it collects is breached. The department informs specific members of its administration as well as the superintendent of the affected school district and the attorney general.

This month, the Missouri state auditor backed a bill to require schools to alert parents of data breaches. The announcement highlighted the market for stolen children’s identities, thefts that might go undetected for years because few people monitor kids’ credit reports.

“The way the laws are written, the ways that they are actually working on the ground, it’s not consistent. It’s very muddy. We really need federal guidance on this so everyone is playing by the same rules,” said Rachael Stickland, a Colorado mother and co-chairman of the Parent Coalition for Student Privacy.

FBI investigators said there’s nothing particularly unique about school districts as a target for cybercriminals. Hackers look for vulnerabilities, said Michael F.D. Anaya, a supervisory special agent on a cyber squad in the Atlanta field office.

Some in the education field fear school systems are susceptible to online threats because many don’t have the money or dedicated security experts to fight back.

In extreme cases, hackers have terrorized communities, leading to temporary school closures.

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HEADLINE	12/28 Elections remain unprotected?
SOURCE	https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/12/russia-disinformation-election-trump-putin-hack-cyber-europe/549260/
GIST	<p>Two weeks before the inauguration of President Donald Trump, the U.S. intelligence community released a declassified version of its report on Russia’s interference in the 2016 election. It detailed the activities of a network of hackers who infiltrated voting systems and stole documents from the Democratic National Committee and Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign. It also issued a stark warning: “Moscow will apply lessons learned from its Putin-ordered campaign aimed at the U.S. presidential election to future influence efforts worldwide, including against U.S. allies and their election processes.” Since then, current and former officials, including former Pentagon official Michael Vickers and former CIA deputy director Michael Morell have said that the Russians will interfere in U.S. elections again, in potentially new and sophisticated ways.</p> <p>How disinformation will be deployed in 2018 and beyond is unclear. What is clear, however, is that the Kremlin believes its efforts to sow chaos in the American political process, which it has continued to hone in Europe, have worked and are poised for a return.</p> <p>So far, Washington’s response to all this has been muted. Facing a criminal probe into possible ties between his campaign and the Kremlin, Trump has tried to discredit the case that Russian election interference poses an ongoing national-security risk. Earlier this month, The Washington Post reported that the president has held no cabinet-level meetings on Russian interference. And while other parts of the U.S. government have taken a strong line against Moscow, continuing to support Kiev and codifying sanctions against Moscow for its intervention in Ukraine, the White House has explored ways to undo those sanctions. There is little to deter the Kremlin from deploying its arsenal of cyber and psychological warfare to wage another campaign in the United States, setting the stage for a protracted, ever-evolving conflict just as another election approaches.</p> <p>Russian and American officials have discussed how to stabilize the situation. According to BuzzFeed News, Moscow has floated proposals to normalize relations and impose a mutual ban on foreign political interference. But the deals were shot down by U.S. officials, reportedly over Washington’s long-growing mistrust of Moscow. Following decades of failed rapprochement between the United States and Russia, relations between them hit a new low after Russia’s annexation of Crimea and outbreak of war in Ukraine in 2014. Things deteriorated further with Russia’s intervention in Syria and 2016 election meddling. “It’s highly unlikely that you’ll get a breakthrough in relations and even if you did, I wouldn’t assume that interference would stop,” Angela Stent, a former U.S. national intelligence officer on Russia and a professor at Georgetown University, told me. “Right now, the only real answer is better defenses.”</p>

What Putin Really Wants

Devising those defenses is no simple task. Fact-checking measures adopted by major tech and social-media companies are unlikely to stop Russia from seeking out new vulnerabilities in Western democracies. Despite the fact that the United States possesses what experts call the most advanced cyber capabilities in the world, former senior officials have said that the country was ill-prepared for Russia's election meddling. Political hesitancy from the White House, they say, will prevent the implementation of necessary measures. Michael Hayden, the former director of the CIA and the NSA, said in December that preparation for another attack would be impossible without "a coordinated response" across all levels of government, especially the White House.

Michael Sulmeyer, a former senior cyber policy official in the U.S. Defense Department, told me that the 2018 midterm election will present the Kremlin with an opportunity to assess how or whether the United States has stiffened its defenses. Russia "may not need to become more sophisticated" in order to intervene again, given the relatively simple techniques (like a phishing email) it has already used. Aggressive ad hoc attacks, from targeted hacks to diverse disinformation campaigns, formed the core of Russian intervention efforts. "They were able to push on so many different unlocked doors at the same time in order to achieve their goal," Sulmeyer said.

Andrei Soldatov, a Russian journalist and expert on the Kremlin's cybertools, told me that Russia's emboldened leaders could expand their ambitions. "My biggest concern is that in the near future we're going to get a combination of attacks," Soldatov said, "say, an attack on critical infrastructure combined with a massive disinformation campaign, aimed to define the public's perception of the attack."

While such an attack would mark a major escalation for Russia, it would not be unprecedented. Attacks on at least a dozen electric facilities in America—including one nuclear plant—have been traced back to a Russian-linked group. Russia is also thought to be behind an increasing number of cyberattacks against private corporations and government agencies in Ukraine. Similarly, Moscow waged a massive disinformation and propaganda campaign alongside its annexation of Crimea in 2014.

None of these attacks, however, constitute a definitive Russian disinformation playbook. Instead, they suggest an opportunist, ever-changing array of weapons. "This is a new generation of warfare that is continuous and ongoing," Elina Lange-Ionatamishvili, a senior expert at the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga, told me. "The goal is to confuse, distract, and blur the lines between war and peace."

In recent years, Kremlin-linked cyber and disinformation campaigns of varying ambition have hit several European countries. In Germany, Russian state news spread a fake story about the rape of an underage girl by migrants during the height of Europe's refugee crisis in 2016 that led to dozens of protests across the country. Similarly, Russian-backed broadcasters targeted Germany's Russian emigrant community allegedly to bolster support for the country's right-wing Alternative for Germany party in its bid to enter parliament for the first time. In France, Russian-linked hackers were believed to have stolen and leaked emails from French President Emmanuel Macron's campaign. Moscow also recently launched a French version of RT, the public broadcaster formerly known as Russia Today. Spanish investigators found that both private and state-led Russian-based groups disseminated information on social media to try to sway public opinion ahead of Catalonia's independence referendum in October.

Many experts said that such campaigns are attempts to discern what sort of tactics can work in different countries. But they also said that none of the attacks have had the same impact as interference around the U.S. election. "Disinformation only really works if you have other problems," Harvard's Jed Willard, who has consulted the Finnish and Swedish governments on how to counter disinformation, told me. Through their Facebook groups, ads, and other targeted social-media posts centered around race relations, immigration, and income equality, the Russian campaigns reflected an uncanny understanding of America's deepest political and social fault lines, in an effort to feed the public's already declining trust in government institutions and the media. Surveys have also shown that false election stories from hyper-

partisan blogs and news sites outperformed real stories, and that most Americans tended to believe them. “The battlefield that we’re playing on here is the human mind,” Willard said, “and the human mind is not built to have an instinctive appreciation for truth.”

The Baltic countries were an early frontline in Russia’s new information war against the West. In 2007, Estonia suffered a series of debilitating cyberattacks that took down critical pieces of the government, banking, and media infrastructure in what is regarded as the Kremlin’s first major use of its 21st-century war capabilities. Similarly, neighboring Finland and Sweden have been hit with fake stories about the war in Ukraine, the abuse of ethnic Russians, and threats from the Kremlin over pursuing NATO membership. “We always need to be learning from each other,” Linas Linkevicius, Lithuania’s foreign minister, told me. “The shift comes from experience.”

In response, regional governments are developing defensive countermeasures. That includes temporary solutions like exposing propaganda and disinformation and raising awareness among the public and policymakers about their origins, along with longer-term initiatives, like investing in media-literacy education to help people distinguish fake stories from real ones. In October, Germany passed a law to combat the spread of hate speech and fake news on the internet. The following month, the European Union allocated one million euros toward its special anti-disinformation unit. “It seems that the Kremlin feeds on being demonized,” Maria Belovas, the director of communications for the Estonian foreign ministry, told me. That’s why, she said, investing in “a population that can recognize what a fake story is and [is able] to understand the wider context of why it is taking place” is a smart step.

But such countermeasures are unlikely to change the core geopolitical dynamics shaping the Kremlin’s behavior. “The problem is that in Europe we don’t have enough political will to respond effectively,” Jakub Janda, deputy director of the Prague-based think tank European Values. Janda, who has advised the Czech government on dealing with Russia, argued that without tougher and more targeted sanctions against Russian leadership, the Kremlin has “no reason to stop” interfering in Europe or elsewhere.

Looking ahead to America’s 2018 midterm elections, state and federal lawmakers face a rapidly closing window to better secure their voting systems. U.S. intelligence officials found that Russian hackers targeted 21 states during the 2016 election, although they did not interfere with the voting machinery itself. While there is no central U.S. electronic database to hack and election systems vary from state to state, the vulnerabilities still exist: At a cybersecurity conference this summer, 30 voting machines of various types were hacked by attendees; those types of machines are in use across the United States.

Still, some progress has been made. Virginia phased out the more vulnerable paperless touchscreen voting machines prior to its gubernatorial race in November. Lawmakers are also scrambling to push a bipartisan bill through Congress that would improve and modernize the nation’s voting machines. But with polls set to open in Texas and Illinois in nearly three months for the country’s first 2018 primaries, time is running out.

“On the security side, there are some improvements that can happen without the [Trump] administration,” Sulmeyer, the former cyber official, said. “But without a greater counterweight or cost for Russia, none of this is going to stop.”

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HEADLINE	12/28 Attacks hit Colorado medical group
SOURCE	http://www.healthcareitnews.com/news/colorado-medical-group-hit-two-cyberattacks-single-week
GIST	<p>Hackers hit Colorado-based Longs Peak Family Practice with ransomware on Nov. 5 and once again with a second cyberattack on Nov. 10.</p> <p>The <u>Longmont provider discovered</u> the first “suspicious activity” on its network and determined a hacker was in the system. After launching an investigation, its team was unable to secure the network before the hacker executed malicious ransomware code onto the system.</p>

Officials said certain files were encrypted by the virus, but they were able to rebuild and restore system files from a separate, secure backup.

Then the investigation found a second hack into the network within a week -- separate from the ransomware incident. Investigators promptly hired a forensic computer firm to help with the investigation and restoration, which concluded on Dec. 5.

Investigators found unauthorized access into its system on three separate occasions.

“We didn’t find evidence of any patient files being opened on the computers,” officials said in a statement. “Because some of the software installed by the hackers could have been used to download computer files and some files were encrypted, we can’t be sure health information wasn’t compromised.”

The potentially compromised files contained patient identification numbers, Social Security numbers, dates of birth, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, insurance information, driver’s licenses, dates of services, clinical data and copies of provider notes. No financial data was contained in the files.

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HEADLINE	12/28 Laws on data hacks, companies murky
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/dec/28/laws-regarding-data-hacks-companies-remain-murky/
GIST	<p>Data hacks are happening at an alarming rate to some of the world’s largest companies, but consumers whose personal information is being stolen are struggling to hold those companies accountable.</p> <p>The problem, legal analysts say, is victims have a rough time connecting any one hack to a problem with their own credit or finances — without that direct link, judges have been tossing efforts to get companies to do more than provide credit monitoring.</p> <p>“The ordinary consumer really has very little recourse,” said Paul Rosenzweig, a law professor at George Washington University. “I would advise the ordinary consumer to seek changes in the law.”</p> <p>With hacks expected to grow in number and severity, it’s an issue voters, lawmakers and businesses are likely to confront. Among the questions legal analysts are debating is what constitutes negligence on a company’s part, how far liability extends and what sorts of incentives can be put in place to make sure companies are willing to report hacks.</p> <p>After Equifax suffered its breach earlier this year affecting more than 143 million people, it waited more than 40 days to notify customers.</p> <p>Uber, meanwhile, waited more than a year after its hack of information on roughly 57 million customers before it alerted them to the theft.</p> <p>The company also paid its hackers \$100,000 to destroy the data, which has sparked several investigations into the transportation platform.</p> <p>Those breaches set off a round of bills introduced in Congress trying to get at the problem.</p> <p>Mr. Rosenzweig said laws could require companies pay liquidated damages, so instead of customers proving exact cause and effect of suffering economic loss after a hack, they could collect a set amount of money from the company breached such as \$1,000.</p> <p>“Until companies are required to be liable for the harms they cause directly and indirectly from their lack of cyber security of their systems, we are going to continue to systematically underinvest in cyber security</p>

as a country — that’s true of Uber,” he said.

One bill offered by Sen. Bill Nelson, Florida Democrat, would require companies to notify customers of an attack within 30 days, and if anyone concealed the hack, he or she would face up to five years in prison.

Sen. Patrick Leahy, Vermont Democrat, also introduced a bill requiring notification standards and safeguard practices, mandating companies take preventative steps to avoid cyber breaches.

Hacks go beyond the private sector.

The IRS in 2015 saw hackers access financial transcripts of tens of thousands of taxpayers. The federal Office of Personnel Management also revealed in 2015 that it had suffered a devastating breach with the most sensitive information from 22 million personnel files stolen.

Labor unions for federal employees sued the OPM, arguing the agency had ignored repeated warnings to update its systems. A federal judge earlier this year ruled that while the OPM behavior was “troubling,” the federal employees weren’t able to show they’d actually faced a financial loss due to the government’s actions.

Peter Swire, a law professor at Georgia Institute of Technology, said banks have been more successful than individuals in collecting damages after cyber breaches. Banks are able to show how much they’ve had to pay out to cover fraudulent purchases.

After Target’s 2013 data breach, the retailer struck a deal with banks and credit unions, paying them \$40 million to settle fraud claims from 40 million credit card numbers that were hacked.

“The banks have actually done the best,” said Mr. Swire.

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HEADLINE	12/28 EA servers down; impacting games
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/ea-servers-down-battlefield-battlefront-star-wars-fifa-affected/
GIST	<p>You are not alone, (Electronic Arts) EA servers are down for many and impacting gaming services including Battlefield 1, Battlefront 2, Star Wars and FIFA 18.</p> <p>It is unclear whether EA is suffering cyber attacks or a technical glitch has caused the outage but in the holiday season gaming platforms are known for suffering service interruption due to a high number of online activity by gamers.</p> <p>According to DownDetector, a service that keeps track of online platforms facing connectivity issues, the outage is affecting service all over Europe, the United States, Canada, Brazil, Australia, and some parts of the Middle East.</p> <p>EA, on the other hand, has acknowledged the issue and said that “We are aware of Origin login issues affecting some players and are currently investigating. Thank you.”</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Cyberattack disrupts NY state hospital
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/cyberattack-forces-new-york-state-hospital-to-run-on-downtime-procedures/article/733482/
GIST	A cyberattack disrupted computer systems at Jones Memorial Hospital (JMH) in Wellsville, N.Y. on Thursday, the Buffalo-area health care facility has announced on its website.

	<p>While the hospital did not state the nature of the incident, the circumstances sound similar to previous ransomware attacks against health care providers. According to the hospital, patient financial or medical information did not appear to be compromised, but a “limited number of our information services” were rendered inoperable.</p> <p>In response, the hospital enacted computer downtime procedures, including manually entering patients' information into their medical charts. “We are asking patients using JMH services or clinics to bring their complete medications list and any available medical history with them to any visits,” the hospital noted.</p> <p>JMH said its IT staffer was working with the University of Rochester, Noyes Health and St. James Mercy Hospital to restore its systems.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 NJ State Police paid \$850K on stingrays
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/850000-spent-on-harris-corp-stingrays-by-new-jersey-state-police/article/733485/
GIST	<p>Information obtained via right-to-know request revealed The New Jersey State Police spent at least \$850,000 on stingray devices from Harris Corp.</p> <p>Authorities didn't respond to NBC10's request to discuss the use of the technology described in more than 100 pages of invoices and other heavily redacted documents detailing the devices purchased. Jeanne LoCicero, deputy legal director ACLU of New Jersey, asked for the same documents that NBC10 sought and received the same response from the department upon further inquiry.</p> <p>"The response to our OPRA request is really disappointing because it shed virtually no information on how Stingray technology is being used and New Jerseyans deserve to know," LoCicero said. "This is really invasive and sweeping search tools that were developed for the military and now they're being used in New Jersey and public needs to know more."</p> <p>New Jersey State Police department's lack of transparency on the device is not uncommon from what has been seen with other law enforcement agencies at both the local and federal level when similar requests have been made.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 CryptoMix ransomware variant
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/cryptomix-ransomware-variant-carries-new-tastylock-extension/article/733651/
GIST	<p>Cybercriminals have given CryptoMix ransomware a few minor twists, including adding a new extension name to the encrypted files.</p> <p>Bleeping Computer's founder Lawrence Abrams did a quick overview of the changes, which was uncovered by cybersecurity researcher Michael Gillespie. The main difference is the addition of the .tastylock extension to all encrypted files. The email address used to contact the attacker for payment information has also changed and is now t_tasty@aol.com.</p> <p>Abrams noted that the basic encryption method used by this variant are the same as CryptoMix and the ransom not remained a text document named _HELP_INSTRUCTION.TXT.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Botnet launches massive holiday campaign
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SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/necurs-botnet-launched-massive-holiday-campaign/article/733650/
GIST	<p>The Necurs botnet continued to launch massive global ransomware attacks through the Holiday Season with researchers stopping as many as 47 million emails per day.</p> <p>Threat actors behind the attacks continue to distribute Lock and GlobeImposter ransomware preferring to use either a malicious .vbs (visual basic script) or .js (javascript) file located inside a .7z (seven-zip archive) to pull down the ransomware payload, according to a Dec. 26 blog post.</p> <p>The seven-zip archive keeps file sizes small to evade detection from basic email filters that don't scan inside archives. Between Dec. 19 and Dec. 22 AppRiver researchers spotted a large influx in attacks that at its peak, blocked a maximum sustained traffic of 5,704,052 malicious emails sent by the for-rent botnet.</p> <p>On Dec. 19, all of the 45,976,814 malicious emails stopped were .7z archives that contained malicious .vbs and on the next day, of the 47,309,380 messages stopped, 32,730,828 were the .vbs file, and the remaining 14,578,552 were javascript files.</p> <p>“On Dec. 21 and 22, the traffic switched back over to the .js files and began to taper off,” researchers said. “We saw 36,290,981 and 29,602,971 messages blocked respectively, for those two days, before the botnet went quiet from Dec. 23-25. Today (Dec. 26), Necurs re-awoke from its slumber for a couple hours then went quiet again.”</p> <p>AppRiver researcher David Pickett hypothesizes the threat actors may have been testing or monitoring the rate of infections before realizing many of their potential targets were on vacation.</p> <p>Last month, Necurs pushed out a total of 12 million malicious emails in one morning helping move it from tenth to eight place for the month's Most Wanted Malware list.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Jailed hacker: poison pill in DNC hack
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/jailed-russian-says-he-left-poison-pill-in-kremlin-directed-dnc-hack/article/733653/
GIST	<p>An imprisoned Russian who claimed the Kremlin ordered him to hack the Democratic National Committee (DNC) computers now says he has the evidence to prove it, asserting that he left behind a “poison pill” in case Russian intelligence betrayed him.</p> <p>Konstantin Kozlovsky, who's jailed for his part in a caper that used the Lurk virus to steal more than \$50 million from bank accounts in Russia, told the country's RAIN television network that Russian intelligence agency FSB was behind the DNC hacking effort.</p> <p>After he was arrested for the banking heist, Kozlovsky confessed to the DNC hack, in December posting a transcript of his confession in court along with an audio recording.</p> <p>The self-professed hacker claims to have left a data signature in the DNC hack that included his passport number and his visa number from a trip to St. Martin.</p> <p>Kozlovsky has also confessed to hacking into a probe of the missile downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 near the Russian/Ukrainian border.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 CEO cryptocurrency exchange kidnapped
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2017/12/crypto-exchange-kidnap.html
GIST	Pavel Lerner, a prominent Russian blockchain expert and known managing director of one of the major

crypto-exchanges EXMO, has allegedly been kidnapped by "unknown" criminals in the Ukrainian capital of Kiev.

According to Ukraine-based web publication Strana, Lerner, 40-year-old citizen of Russia, was kidnapped on December 26 when he was leaving his office in the center of town (located on the Stepan Bandera Avenue).

Unknown kidnapers in dark clothes and balaclavas dragged Lerner in their black Mercedes-Benz Vito brand (state number AA 2063 MT) car and drove away in an unknown direction.

The information comes from an anonymous source in Ukrainian law enforcement agencies, though multiple investigations are currently underway to find out why and by whom Lerner was kidnapped.

Lerner is a recognized IT specialist in Ukraine who led a number of startups related to blockchain technology development and mining operations.

Lerner is also the managing director of EXMO, a major UK-based cryptocurrency exchange founded in 2013 and well-known with Russians for accepting ruble payments.

Law enforcers in Kiev have begun an investigation and are currently conducting search operation, working out all possible leads in the case which is described as the kidnapping.

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HEADLINE	12/28 US charges 2 in hacking police CCTV
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2017/12/police-camera-hacking.html
GIST	<p>Remember how some cybercriminals shut down most of Washington D.C. police's security cameras for four days ahead of President Donald Trump's inauguration earlier this year?</p> <p>Just a few days after the incident, British authorities arrested two people in the United Kingdom, identified as a British man and a Swedish woman, both 50-year-old, on request of U.S. officials.</p> <p>But now US federal court affidavit has revealed that two Romanian nationals were behind the attack that hacked into 70% of the computers that control Washington DC Metropolitan Police Department's surveillance camera network in January this year, CNN reports.</p> <p>The two suspects—Mihai Alexandru Isvanca, 25, and Eveline Cismaru, 28—were arrested in Bucharest on December 15 on charges of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and various forms of computer fraud.</p> <p>According to the criminal complaint unsealed in Washington, the pair hacked 123 of the Metropolitan Police Department's 187 outdoor surveillance cameras used to monitor public areas in D.C. by infecting computers with ransomware in an effort to extort money.</p> <p>Ransomware is an infamous piece of malicious software that has been known for locking up computer files and then demanding a ransom (usually in Bitcoins) to help victims unlock their files.</p> <p>The cyber attack occurred just days before the inauguration of President Donald Trump and lasted for almost four days, eventually leaving the CCTV cameras out of recording anything between 12 and 15 January 2017.</p> <p>Instead of fulfilling ransom demands, the DC police department took the storage devices offline, removed the infection and rebooted the systems across the city, ensuring that the surveillance camera system was secure and fully operational.</p> <p>However, it is still unclear whether the pair arrested was solely behind the attack or were part of a more</p>

	<p>comprehensive cybercriminal network.</p> <p>While Isvanca remains in custody in Romania, Cismaru is under house arrest pending further legal proceedings, according to the Justice Department.</p> <p>If extradited and convicted, the Romanian defendants could face a maximum of 20 years in prison.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 India: cryptocurrencies as Ponzi scheme
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-cryptocurrencies/india-likens-cryptocurrencies-to-ponzi-scheme-cautions-investors-idUSKBN1EN0FB
GIST	<p>NEW DELHI (Reuters) - India's finance ministry on Friday cautioned investors about the risks of trading in cryptocurrencies such as bitcoin, saying digital currency investments are like "Ponzi schemes."</p> <p>Cryptocurrencies are not legal tender and have no regulatory permission or protection in the country, the finance ministry said in a statement, but stopped short of announcing an outright ban or imposing any curbs.</p> <p>Investors and other participants dealing with such digital currencies are doing so "entirely at their risk and should best avoid participating therein," the statement said.</p> <p>"There is a real and heightened risk of investment bubble of the type seen in Ponzi schemes", with investors risking a sudden and prolonged crash, the statement said.</p> <p>A Ponzi scheme is a swindle offering unusually high returns, with early investors paid off with money from later investors.</p> <p>The ministry also cautioned that encrypted transactions in cryptocurrency were likely being used for illegal activities such as "terror-funding, smuggling, drug trafficking and other money laundering acts."</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Apple apologizes slowing older iPhones
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/apple-slowing-iphones-cuts-battery-price-50-52034050?
GIST	<p>Apple apologized for secretly slowing down older iPhones, a move it said was necessary to avoid unexpected shutdowns related to battery fatigue.</p> <p>Many customers had interpreted the move as a way to for Apple to juice demand for newer iPhone models, their suspicions fueled by the fact that the company didn't initially disclose the slowdowns or its reasons for them.</p> <p>Apple also said it will cut the price of a battery replacement by \$50 to \$29 through next year. New batteries had previously cost \$79 for those who didn't purchase the Apple Care maintenance plan.</p> <p>"We apologize," the company said on its website . "We have never — and would never — do anything to intentionally shorten the life of any Apple product, or degrade the user experience to drive customer upgrades."</p> <p>The replacement plan begins in late January for anyone with an iPhone 6 or later that requires a new battery.</p> <p>Apple said it will also issue an update to its operating system early next year to give users a better</p>

	<p>understanding of the health of their battery, so they can see if its condition is affecting performance.</p> <p>Hostile customer reaction was swift after a report this month uncovered the intentional slowdown in speed tests. Only then did Apple acknowledge that the slowdown was due to a fix it rolled out last year. Shares dropped 2.5 percent Tuesday — also dinged by analysts predicting lower-than-expected demand for the iPhone X — and only partially recovered by Thursday.</p> <p>At least five groups seeking class action status, involving consumers in Texas, Illinois, California and New York, have also sued the company in the wake of the slowdown revelation.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	12/28 Experts: terror attacks likely to rise
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2017/12/28/terror-isis-and-al-qaeda-likely-to-carry-out-more-attacks-in-2018.html
GIST	<p>The "caliphate" may be in ruins, but that doesn't mean ISIS is gone forever.</p> <p>Terror attacks are likely to increase in 2018, as the destruction of the Islamic State's physical stronghold in Iraq and Syria will strengthen its will to strike out abroad, experts say.</p> <p>"ISIS will want to show that they are still in the fight, and their followers remain as fanatical as ever," said Lewis-Sage Passant, a former British Army intelligence officer and founder of travel security company HowSafeIsMyTrip. "The number of attacks globally will likely increase as the group switches focus from the war in the Middle East to international terrorism."</p> <p>Adam Deen, executive director of counter-extremism think tank Quilliam, makes a similar argument.</p> <p>"We're going to see without a doubt more attacks in the West," he told UK newspaper the Independent in October. Deen said ISIS is now more focused on revenge, and warned against the false sense of victory that many expressed after the death of Osama Bin Laden.</p> <p>Propaganda will continue online and elsewhere, despite the destruction of its main source in the former ISIS "capital" of Raqqa, Syria.</p> <p>"Threats in the West will persist in the form of people who are still inspired by the propaganda that has been disseminated by ISIS," Anthony Richards, an assistant professor in Terrorism Studies at the University of East London, told CNBC.</p> <p>"I think in the longer term, the defeat of ISIS and the propaganda defeat that goes with that will actually reduce the threat in the UK and Europe, but ... In the shorter term, we'll still see more terrorist attacks."</p> <p>Some foresee more frequent attacks, accompanied by a decrease in lethality, including a rising number of knife and vehicle attacks.</p> <p>"The loss of ISIS' central coordination and revenue-generating capabilities means that they will be less able to mount well-funded operations such as the Paris attacks," Sage-Passant said, "But they want to show that they are still in the fight."</p> <p>An estimated 25,000 foreign fighters from more than 100 countries left their homes to fight in Syria. A report by the Soufan Center in October put the current figure for returned fighters at 5,600 from 33 countries, and revealed that on average 20 to 30 percent of those from Europe are already back. In the U.K., Sweden and Denmark, a whopping 50 percent have returned. Almost 20,000 names have been shared with Interpol.</p>

For the U.S., the figure is far smaller: The Soufan Center reported 129 Americans made it to the battlefields of Syria or Iraq, and only seven of them have returned as of October. Seventy-seven out of 135 people charged with ISIS-linked terrorism offenses have been convicted as of August.

That presents a tremendous challenge for domestic authorities. However, many warn that blanket bans on movement or entry, such as U.S. President Donald Trump's travel ban on six majority-Muslim countries, aren't likely to effectively stem the threat.

"The underlying ideology that drives the violence of groups like ISIS is not a physical entity that can be stopped by territorial borders," Mubarak Ahmed, analyst at the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, told CNBC.

Domestic networks and individuals are what matters, he argued — after all, ISIS attacks in Europe have been carried out almost exclusively by citizens or residents of those countries.

Even if the ISIS threat ultimately recedes, al-Qaeda is very capable of filling that void in terms of a major terrorist threat, warned Richards at the University of East London. "We shouldn't just be looking at ISIS. al-Qaeda, for example, is still very much in existence and could change its focus back to attacks on the West."

In recent months, Osama bin Laden's son Hamza has released a series of messages upping his calls for attacks on Westerners and Western interests, particularly following Trump's naming of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. The organization is likely to use the younger Bin Laden to spearhead a comeback as it sees opportunity in ISIS's military defeats.

"There can be no misunderstanding or complacency," Ahmed urged. "Al-Qaeda remains active and ideologically engaged in activities against the West. An over-concentration on ISIS, rather than jihadi terrorism as a whole, risks creating blind spots for the group to exploit."

MI5, the U.K.'s domestic counterintelligence agency, revealed in October that it was overseeing 500 live operations and had 20,000 people on its counterterrorism radar. Between January and October 2017, seven terror plots in the U.K. had been foiled.

The numbers paint a sobering picture for the year ahead, despite military victories in the Middle East, as governments grapple with how to tackle the evolving terror threat.

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HEADLINE	12/28 UK charges 2 in Christmas terror plot
SOURCE	http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/terrorist-attack-uk-christmas-men-charged-plot-a8132471.html
GIST	<p>Two men have been charged with terrorism offences by police who had been investigating a suspected Christmas terror plot.</p> <p>Farhad Salah, 22, from Sheffield, and Andi Sami Star, 31, from Chesterfield, were among four men arrested in Derbyshire and South Yorkshire on 19 December.</p> <p>They have been charged with engaging in the preparation of an act of terrorism, West Yorkshire Police said.</p> <p>The pair are to appear by video-link before London's Westminster Magistrates' Court on Friday.</p> <p>West Yorkshire Police said a 36-year-old man from Burngreave in Sheffield remains in custody, while a 41-year-old from Meersbrook in Sheffield was released on Saturday.</p>

	<p>The police were originally given until Christmas Day to decide whether to charge the four men, but a court approved an extension of that deadline until 1 January.</p> <p>The arrests followed an investigation led by Counter Terrorism Policing North East, which was backed by Derbyshire Constabulary and South Yorkshire Police.</p> <p>During the arrests, an army bomb disposal unit carried out a controlled explosion to "safely dispose of material" found at one of the properties.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Iraq quickly sends ISIS to the gallows
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/news/middle-east/iraq-s-rapid-fire-trials-send-alleged-isis-members-to-the-gallows-1.504465
GIST	<p>BAGHDAD — The two Turkish men shuffled into the courtroom, their closely cropped hair, clean shaven faces and chubby waistlines hardly the look of fearsome fighters of the Islamic State.</p> <p>Appearing in court for the first time since being arrested in August on charges of belonging to that group, they professed their innocence, telling the judge they were simply plumbers who migrated to Iraq from Turkey looking for work.</p> <p>After an 18-minute trial, they were sentenced to death by hanging.</p> <p>The men are among hundreds of foreigners detained in Iraq on terrorism charges after the toppling of the Islamic State's self-declared caliphate. The defendants - men, women and children hailing from Asia, Europe and Africa - are coursing their way through Iraq's criminal justice system, receiving harsh sentences in rapid-fire trials.</p> <p>The trials and capital sentences are presenting foreign governments with a moral and political dilemma. Do they object to the Iraqi trials and claim their citizens, who could threaten their home countries and radicalize others if repatriated? Or should Iraqi courts be allowed to determine the defendants' fate in trials that human rights groups and the United Nations say are deeply flawed?</p> <p>The issue has taken on a new urgency as major combat against the Islamic State ended this month. Iraq has fast-tracked executions under the year-old orders of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, aiming to "give comfort to the families" of Islamic State's victims.</p> <p>Iraq's justice ministry has disclosed 194 terrorism-related executions since 2016, including at least 27 foreigners from other Arab countries, according to a review of ministry news releases.</p> <p>Last week, the ministry said it had executed another 38 prisoners on terrorism-related charges, but it did not specify their nationalities, prompting a rebuke by the United Nations human rights office. At least one of those executed had Swedish citizenship, researchers into human rights and terrorism said.</p> <p>Up to 6,000 more are on death row and their nationalities have not been disclosed, according to the United Nations. Many more suspected militants are in custody, including at least four Europeans.</p> <p>European countries have given little indication that they want to claim their citizens.</p> <p>In a statement, Turkey's foreign ministry said it is aware of their citizens being detained in Iraq for allegedly joining the Islamic State. "We are in touch with the Iraqi authorities in terms of finding out their whereabouts and ensuring their repatriation," the statement said.</p> <p>The United Nations said last month that Iraq does not have jurisdiction to try Islamic State atrocities and</p>

that Iraqi investigators, prosecutors and judges do not have the capability to ensure due process. It urged Iraq to turn to the International Criminal Court for such cases, especially ones dealing with the attempted genocide of minority groups like the Yazidis whose reintegration into Iraqi society largely depends on the accurate prosecution of crimes committed against them.

Iraq's massive dragnet is ensnaring scores of innocent people, while rushed investigations and trials are failing to distinguish between Iraqis who embraced the Islamic State and others who cooperated with the group out of fear or coercion, human rights groups and the United Nations said.

The lack of due process could imperil national reconciliation by enshrining a cycle of revenge in Iraq's courts, these groups said. This dynamic raises the possibility of continued sectarian conflict between Shiites that dominate the government and legal system and Sunnis who account for nearly all those accused of terrorism.

But Abdulsattar Bayraqdar, a senior Iraqi federal judge, bristled at the criticism, saying his country's judges and lawyers have sacrificed their lives to guarantee fair trials and hold terrorists accountable. He said since 2003, at least 60 judges and more than 160 investigators and court employees have been killed in terrorist attacks stemming from their work.

As for foreigners affiliated with the Islamic State, Bayraqdar said crimes committed by extremists on Iraq's soil must be prosecuted in Iraq, and it is under no legal obligation to hand over suspects or convicts to other countries.

Iraq's anti-terrorism law gives judges wide berth in deciding cases. Prosecutors must show that a defendant joined or supported a terrorist group but are not required to prove a specific charge of murder.

In a report released earlier this month, Human Rights Watch said prosecutors and judges were doing little to distinguish between fighters and others who did menial jobs for the Islamic State, like cooks.

But Bayraqdar, the senior judge, defended the legal process, saying every member of the militant group contributed to a cohesive unit that terrorized Iraqi citizens. He added that a terrorism trial is not a simple formality. In November, he said, trials resulted in 449 convictions and 1,490 acquittals.

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HEADLINE	12/29 Pakistan warns US on 'unilateral' moves
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/pakistan-warns-trump-against-unilateral-moves-defeat-taliban-al-qaeda-country-763685
GIST	<p>Pakistan has warned the United States and President Donald Trump against taking unilateral military action in the country against extremist groups, after warnings from top officials in the president's administration and the American leader himself.</p> <p>Vice President Mike Pence said in a speech during a trip to Afghanistan earlier this month that Trump had issued a warning to Pakistan and cautioned that there was much for the country to lose if it aided extremist groups in any way.</p> <p>"As the president said, so I say now: Pakistan has much to gain from partnering with the US, and Pakistan has much to lose by continuing to harbor criminals and terrorists," Pence said.</p> <p>The U.S.-Pakistan has been fraught since it came to light that former Al-Qaeda leader and mastermind of the 9/11 attacks Osama bin Laden was in hiding at a safe house in the Pakistani city of Abbottabad before the infamous U.S. special forces operation to kill him in 2011. But Islamabad rejected the accusation that it could have been aiding extremist groups and was not doing enough to help Washington.</p> <p>"We have sacrificed a lot. We have paid a huge price both in blood and treasure. We have done enough</p>

and we cannot do any more for anyone," Pakistani military spokesman Major-General Asif Ghafoor said Friday, according to Al-Jazeera.

"Had we not supported [the U.S.], Al-Qaeda would not have been defeated," he continued.

The country is battling an insurgency by the Pakistani Taliban, Al-Qaeda and a growing ISIS presence in the border regions with Afghanistan. The military has launched several major operations against these militant groups for several years.

ISIS has continued to gain ground in Afghanistan and Pakistan has made efforts to halt the militant group's spread to its territory. The jihadi group has created an affiliate for the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region known as Khorasan Province, a historical name for the region.

ISIS has conducted several attacks inside Pakistani territory, including suicide bombings against religious minorities the group considers to be heretical. The deadliest was the August 2016 suicide bombing that killed at least 70 people in the southwestern city of Quetta.

While it has been conducting operations against militant groups, the Trump administration has been eager to press Pakistan to do more. U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson warned Islamabad in an opinion piece in the New York Times published on Wednesday.

"We are prepared to partner with Pakistan to defeat terrorist organizations seeking safe havens, but Pakistan must demonstrate its desire to partner with us," he wrote.

Despite the warnings, Trump praised Pakistan in October for working closely with U.S. authorities. "Starting to develop a much better relationship with Pakistan and its leaders. I want to thank them for their cooperation on many fronts," he wrote in a tweet.

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HEADLINE	12/28 'American' ISIS: carry out mass shootings
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/american-isis-fighter-tells-jihadis-use-us-gun-laws-carry-out-mass-shootings-761115
GIST	<p>The Islamic State militant group (ISIS) on Wednesday published a propaganda video that showed a one-legged fighter, purportedly American, ordering Muslims living in the United States to use the country's flexible gun laws to carry out mass-casualty attacks.</p> <p>In the release "A Message to the Crusading Trump," the bearded jihadi, identified as "Abu Salih al-Amriki," is shown in military khaki fatigues and with a prosthetic leg.</p> <p>"Take advantage of the fact that you can easily obtain a rifle or a pistol in America," the fighter says. "Spray the kuffar [infidels] with bullets so that their fear of the Muslims rises, and they continue to reveal their hatred towards Islam."</p> <p>He also called upon fellow disabled fighters to take up arms against the U.S. "Brothers with limbs or no limbs, I challenge you to a race toward gates of Jannah [paradise]," he says.</p> <p>Amriki then turns to President Donald Trump, calling him a "dog of Rome" and accusing him of entering "into the White House on the back of your crusader rhetoric, which the fake media has pressured you to tone down."</p> <p>"Your war against Islam has only made your homeland more vulnerable," the fighter continued in his message to Trump.</p> <p>Images of the video were published and shared by cyber-monitoring company Jihadoscope on Twitter.</p>

	<p>The Department of Homeland Security said it was “aware” of the online threats to American nationals.</p> <p>Individuals inspired by ISIS and its radical ideology have committed several attacks on U.S. soil in recent years, including a mass stabbing at a Minnesota mall that injured more than half a dozen people, a deadly shooting at an LGBT nightclub in Orlando, Florida, that killed at least 49 people and an attack by two gun-toting attackers in San Bernardino, California, that killed 14 people.</p> <p>Last week, the outgoing director of the National Counterterrorism Center warned that the U.S. remains “dangerously” vulnerable to mass-casualty attacks by extremists because of the easy access to weapons in the country.</p> <p>“We find ourselves in a more dangerous situation because our population of violent extremists has no difficulty gaining access to weapons that are quite lethal,” Nicholas Rasmussen said, according to The Washington Post. “I wish that weren’t so.”</p> <p>He appeared to criticize the policies of the Trump administration in creating a “mutual suspicion” with Muslims in the U.S. that had made counterterrorism efforts “more difficult” to be effective.</p> <p>“If you’re increasing the amount of suspicion and distress on these communities, it places more challenges in our way,” he told CNN.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 ISIS by the numbers in 2017
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2017-12-27/isis-by-the-numbers-in-2017
GIST	<p>President Donald Trump and his top advisers have said in recent weeks that the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria has been all but defeated, following through on a campaign promise that he would significantly escalate the U.S.-led war against the extremist group.</p> <p>"Thanks to the leadership of this commander in chief and the courage of our armed forces, ISIS is on the run, their capital has fallen, and their so-called caliphate has crumbled across Syria and Iraq," Vice President Mike Pence said Dec. 20 during a ceremony marking the passage of a tax reform bill through Congress, using an alternative name for the extremist group.</p> <p>The war against the terror network, however, is far from over, even in Iraq and Syria, where it first declared its so-called caliphate and from where its fighters and leaders are now spreading to other faraway regions of the globe, from Southeast Asia to Africa to not far from U.S. shores.</p> <p>Brett McGurk, the special envoy to the coalition fighting the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria, told reporters at the State Department just before Christmas that the U.S. had made significant progress against the extremist network in 2017, but there is still work to do.</p> <p>"Nobody who works on these problems would tell you we're popping champagne corks or anything," said McGurk, who began his position during the Obama administration and has continued under Trump. "This is not over, there is a long way to go."</p> <p>Defeating the Islamic State group in Syria will require months more of fighting, McGurk says.</p> <p>As defense and intelligence officials continue to find and kill members of the extremist network and combat its success in remotely attracting followers worldwide, here are some numbers on where the Islamic State group still operates and maintains power.</p> <p>Iraq and Syria</p>

For the campaign to defeat the Islamic State group Trump inherited a U.S.-led coalition that had already begun clearing out Mosul in Iraq and was beginning to surround Raqqa in Syria – both key cities in the extremist group's messaging.

In January, about 35,000 Islamic State group fighters were in Iraq and Syria controlling more than 17,000 square miles – an area roughly the size of Pennsylvania. Now, between 1,000 and 3,000 extremists are occupying less than 2,000 square miles, according to officials at the U.S. military headquarters in Baghdad overseeing the war.

Most of the remaining fighters are in the rural desert areas around Dayr Az Zawr in Syria to the southeast of Raqqa, and Iraq's Anbar province, officials say.

Almost 8 million people lived under Islamic State group rule during its height. Five million have been liberated in the past year with 2.7 million Iraqis returning to their homes, McGurk said Thursday.

The air coalition, comprised largely of U.S. bombers, fighter jets, helicopters and drones and supported by artillery on the ground, conducted 11,400 airstrikes since Jan. 1.

That conflict has not been without its costs. The Associated Press reported this week that as many as 11,000 civilians died in the campaign to retake Mosul, roughly 10 times higher than previous assessments.

Yemen

The Islamic State group presence in the war-torn Arabian Peninsula nation, while small, has doubled in size this year, part of a larger trend of fighters and leaders fleeing the onslaught in Iraq and Syria.

"As ISIS is getting handed a defeat in other areas, they tend to try to push into areas of ungoverned spaces," says Army Lt. Col. Earl Brown, a spokesman for U.S. Central Command. "Those areas in the Arabian Peninsula, most notably in Yemen, have been some of those spots."

There are between 300 and 500 Islamic State group fighters in the area, mostly in Yemen but not limited to there. They're exploiting areas that are traditionally ungoverned or where governance has collapsed as a result of the ongoing war between Houthi rebels backed by Iran and forces loyal to the government currently in exile in Saudi Arabia.

The Islamic State group has also successfully recruited fighters formally loyal to al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula who have grown disaffected with a group that, while still among the most dangerous in the world, has suffered intense losses in leadership amid an ongoing U.S.-led commando and air campaign. Three AQAP leaders were killed in airstrikes on Nov. 2 and Nov. 20, according to Central Command, which oversees operations in the region.

Defense officials say the quiet U.S. mission to root out Islamic State group and al-Qaida fighters in Yemen exists in coordination with the exiled government.

Africa

The death of four American soldiers on a special operations patrol in Niger in October drew widespread attention to the intensifying covert war against extremists throughout the African continent, almost four times larger than the continental U.S.

The Islamic State group first expand its presence into Africa in Somalia in 2015 and conducted its first suicide attack in Bosasso in May. U.S. Africa Command estimates there are fewer than 250 fighters there, though they are able to conduct small-scale operations in the northern reaches of the country. A shadowy American targeting cell exists in Somalia to help coordinate counterterrorism operations outside of the capital, Mogadishu.

Islamic State group operatives entered the continent en masse in 2016 in Libya, where as many as 8,000 fought to establish a foothold in the coastal city of Sirte to serve as a lifeboat amid steady losses in Iraq and Syria. A U.S.-led mission of airstrikes and special operations forces helped win back the city earlier this year, but not without scattering some of those fighters to other corners of the fractionated and war-torn country.

Now roughly 500 Islamic State group fighters are in Libya, though that assessment fluctuates, officials with Africa Command say. The group's presence there continues to be a focus of U.S. attention as it still poses a threat in planning attacks against Europe and Western interests in North Africa, officials say.

In 2015, the Islamic State group scored a propaganda win when Boko Haram, the Nigerian hard-line extremist group, declared itself an affiliate branch. The group fractured in 2016 when some fighters split to join the Islamic State group instead of remaining loyal to their own leaders.

This new branch, dubbed ISIS-West Africa, poses a more significant threat than Boko Haram, Africa Command officials say, due to its increased capability to plan and launch attacks. It was responsible for the attack on the convoy in Niger in July that killed at least 70 people.

The Islamic State group continues to operate in the Greater Sahara region, largely at the border of Niger and Mali, though that comprises a relatively smaller number of troops.

The Pacific Rim

Navy Adm. Harry Harris, chief of U.S. Pacific Command, said in October that it has witnessed terrorism and attacks inspired by the Islamic State group in Malaysia, Bangladesh and the Philippines.

"As we succeed in degrading ISIS in Iraq, Syria and Libya, radicalized, weaponized and displaced terrorists will seek new footholds in the Indo-Asia-Pacific," Harris said in a speech in Singapore at the time.

In 2016, the commander of the Islamic extremist group Abu Sayyaf based in the southern Philippine region of Mindanao, Isnilon Hapilon, was named the Islamic State group emir for Southeast Asia. Philippine forces, currently leading operations against the extremist network there, killed him in October during a campaign to retake the city of Marawi, though Harris said the leader's following represented an ongoing threat to the region.

"It's important to understand Hapilon's rise in 2016, when in just a matter of months he started uniting elements of several violent extremist organizations – building a coalition under the ISIS black flag," Harris said. "Today, Marawi is a wake-up call and a rallying cry for every nation in the Indo-Asia-Pacific. Foreign fighters are passing their ideology, resources and methods to local, home-grown, next-generation radicals. So we must stop ISIS at the front end and not at the back end when the threat can become even more dangerous."

When asked for specific numbers of ISIS fighters or operatives in the region, U.S. Pacific Command declined to comment.

"We do not comment on intelligence matters for security reasons," says Navy Cmdr. Dave Benham, a spokesman for the command.

The Caribbean

Then-Marine Gen. John Kelly, when he was still commander of U.S. Southern Command, first observed in March 2015 that people from Caribbean countries like Suriname, Venezuela, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago had traveled to Syria or Iraq to join the Islamic State group, where "they get good at killing and pick up some job skills," like working with explosives. As many as 100 had returned to their homelands, which were largely devoid of intelligence or law enforcement infrastructure to hunt them down on their

	<p>own.</p> <p>In January 2016, Kelly, now White House chief of staff, observed that the Islamic State group's presence in the region was on the rise at a time when the Islamic State group was encouraging its followers to stay away from Iraq and Syria and plot attacks at home instead.</p> <p>"It seems like the Islamic extremists and terrorists have shifted a lot of their message," Kelly told reporters at the time. "Why don't you just stay at home and do a San Bernardino or do Boston or do Fort Hood?"</p> <p>Southern Command did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the current status of the Islamic State group in the Caribbean. Reports persist, however, that local Muslims find inspiration in the Islamic State group and that it continues to target tourists in the region, prompting warnings from those governments.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/29 Uganda charges 45 Rwandans w/terrorism
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/12/29/uganda-charges-45-rwandan-nationals-with-terrorism-report.html
GIST	<p>KAMPALA, Uganda – A government-controlled newspaper in Uganda says 45 Rwandan nationals have been charged with terrorism and establishing a terror organization.</p> <p>The New Vision reported Friday that the suspects were charged Thursday in a remote town in western Uganda. The report gives few details about the charges.</p> <p>Ugandan police and a judiciary spokesman did not respond to requests for comment.</p> <p>The charges come amid apparent diplomatic tensions between Uganda and neighboring Rwanda after two senior Ugandan policemen were accused of illegally handing over two wanted refugees to Rwanda.</p> <p>One of the refugees was a former bodyguard to Rwandan President Paul Kagame and is now serving a life term.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/29 Attack on south Cairo church; 3 killed
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-egypt-security/at-least-three-killed-in-attack-on-church-south-of-cairo-security-sources-idUSKBN1EN0SX
GIST	<p>CAIRO (Reuters) - An attack on a church south of Cairo killed at least three people on Friday and an attacker was shot dead by security forces, security sources said.</p> <p>The incident took place in the Helwan district on the capital's southern outskirts and involved more than one attacker, according to the state-run news agency MENA.</p> <p>Local media cited the Interior Ministry as saying two policemen had been killed in the attack on the Mar Mina church.</p> <p>It was not clear if the three reported dead included the attacker, or how many attackers were involved.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 NYPD: no known New Year's threat
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/nypd-new-years-eve-times-square-

	security/2017/12/28/id/834174/
GIST	<p>New York City's Times Square's massive New Year's Eve party will have "a stronger police presence" than seen in recent years to protect against any terrorist attempt, police commissioner James O'Neil said Thursday.</p> <p>The New York City Police Department head said no credible threat aimed at Times Square had been received, but that security was a prime issue.</p> <p>"You'll see a stronger police presence out there that . . . seen in recent years," he said.</p> <p>Manhattan has been the target of two recent terror attacks — one that killed eight bicyclists on Halloween just blocks from the 9/11 terror strike, and a pipe bomb explosion in a subway walkway near the Times Square station in which the would-be suicide bomber and three others were injured.</p> <p>For the New Year's Eve celebration, the NYPD, as it has done previously, will close some parking garages around the area, and, according to Fox News — mindful of the horrific Las Vegas shooting from a hotel window — there will be armed officers stationed at every single hotel surrounding Times Square.</p> <p>Those entering the area of the celebration will be checked twice, one upon arrival, and a second time once they are moved behind a penned-in area, Fox News reported.</p> <p>"People should expect to see an increase in security this New Year's because of an ongoing threat we've seen from ISIS," former Director of the National Counterterrorism Center Matt Olsen told Christian Broadcasting Network.</p> <p>"Really over the past few years they've sought to encourage their followers to carry out low-level attacks wherever they can, particularly targeting people where they gather in crowds," he explained.</p> <p>According to CBN, one computer software tool the NYPD will be using is called Video Synopsis, which allows police to monitor real time hours of video in minutes, and can search for specific items as well.</p> <p>Concrete barriers and sand trucks also will be stationed on the perimeter to prevent any vehicles from entering Times Square, Fox News noted.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/29 Turkey nabs ISIS suspects ahead NYE
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/turkey-detains-29-suspected-militants-ahead-years-52039286?
GIST	<p>Turkish police detained 29 suspected Islamic State group militants in the capital, Ankara, on Friday, some of whom allegedly were preparing to carry out attacks during New Year's celebrations, the state-run news agency reported.</p> <p>Some 500 police officers took part in simultaneous raids to detain the suspects, many of them foreign nationals, Anadolu Agency reported. Police had warrants to detain 17 other suspects.</p> <p>Materials seized by police during the raids indicated that some of the suspects had staked out locations and made preparations for possible attacks on New Year's Eve, the report said.</p> <p>There was no immediate information on the foreigners' nationalities.</p> <p>Turkey has suffered a series of deadly attacks blamed on IS militants, including a New Year's attack at an Istanbul nightclub by a gunman that killed 39 people.</p> <p>The country is stepping up security measures ahead of this weekend's celebrations, including canceling</p>

	several large-scale New Year's Eve street parties in Istanbul. Turkey's police chief said 275,000 police officers would be on duty.
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HEADLINE	12/29 China Uighurs grapple w/extremism
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ap-exclusive-chinas-uighurs-grapple-pull-extremism-52038551?
GIST	<p>As Uighurs flee a stifling Chinese security crackdown in droves, they often end up caught in a tug-of-war between militant Uighur members of Syria-based Islamic groups and moderate leaders of the Uighur diaspora who plead with them to reject calls of jihad.</p> <p>Extensive Associated Press interviews detail the daily battle some Uighur activists are fighting against the radicalization of their people, members of a Muslim ethnic minority who live in western China under heavy surveillance and the constant fear of arrest.</p> <p>The war in Syria has thrust this ethnic minority from China into the center of the global jihadi movement. Several thousand Uighur men, women and children are estimated to have crossed the border from Turkey to join the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP), an ethnic Uighur militia allied with al-Qaida on the front lines of the fighting.</p> <p>"We are losing the deradicalization battle," said Seyit Tumturk, a moderate Uighur activist, said in a recent interview in Kayseri. "Why? Because we cannot convince our people that hope and human rights exists in the world."</p> <p>The spread of extremism has alarmed many exiled Uighur leaders, who condemn violence and say it will lead their people's ruin. But they face a young generation who see no future under one of the world's most powerful authoritarian governments and feel ignored by the rest of the world.</p> <p>The Uighurs are wrestling over age-old questions: Do we seek freedom with peace or violence? Is our path forward secular or Islamist? Who will help us face the might of the People's Republic of China?</p> <p>Even in the relative sanctuary of Turkey, Uighurs say they are isolated economically and engulfed by murky political currents.</p> <p>While Turkey has welcomed Uighur refugees, the bureaucracy churns against them after they arrive. Uighurs are considered stateless under Turkish law, unlike refugees from Syria or Iraq, and often unable to receive work permits, health insurance, or schooling for their children.</p> <p>Men work — if they're lucky — in local furniture factories and restaurants for about 1000 to 1,500 Turkish lira a month (roughly \$300 to \$440), far less than what a Turk would legally make and barely enough to survive.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 London beefs up NYE security
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/12/28/london-to-beef-up-its-police-presence-on-new-years-eve.html
GIST	<p>LONDON — London plans to beef up its police presence and closed down some roads for New Year's Eve after a year marked by repeated extremist attacks.</p> <p>The Metropolitan Police said Thursday there's no specific threat to the city's massive celebration, which is focused on a fireworks display over the River Thames, but says the public should be vigilant.</p>

	<p>Superintendent Nick Aldworth says both overt and covert protection methods will be used and revelers should expect to see armed police and vehicle barriers. Aldworth says police are asking the public to be patient on New Year's Eve because there will be many checkpoints in place.</p> <p>Police say tickets for London's fireworks display have all been sold out and that those without a ticket should consider watching the event on television.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 UN decries Saudi-led strikes in Yemen
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/saudi-led-airstrikes-yemen-kill-109-people-10-52026696?
GIST	<p>The U.N. humanitarian coordinator for Yemen says Saudi-led airstrikes have killed 109 civilians over the past 10 days.</p> <p>Jamie McGoldrick said Thursday that those killed include at least 54 in airstrikes on a market in the western province of Taiz, and 14 people from the same family in an airstrike on a farm in the coastal Hodeida province.</p> <p>He says such incidents "prove complete disregard for human life that all parties, including the Saudi-led coalition, continue to show in this absurd war."</p> <p>The coalition, backing an internationally recognized government, has been at war with Iran-allied Shiite rebels, known as Houthis, since March 2015. The stalemated war has killed more than 10,000 people, displaced 3 million, damaged critical infrastructure and pushed the country to the brink of famine.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Egypt: bomb hits military convoy Sinai
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/roadside-bomb-kills-senior-army-officer-egypt-sinai-52028261?
GIST	<p>A roadside bomb planted by Islamic militants in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula hit a military vehicle on Thursday, killing six people, including a senior army officer, security and hospital officials said.</p> <p>They said the bomb struck a military convoy that was patrolling an area just outside the town of Bir al-Abd in northern Sinai, killing a colonel who was the town's military commander, a second officer and four soldiers.</p> <p>Three more soldiers were wounded in the attack, they said.</p> <p>Bir al-Abd was the scene of the deadliest terrorist attack against civilians in Egypt's modern history, when militants killed 311 worshippers in a mosque on Nov. 24.</p> <p>Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi has since vowed to use "brute force" to crush the long-running insurgency in northern Sinai and given the military and police three months to restore "security and stability" there.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	12/28 Defected NKorea nuke scientist kills self
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/defected-north-korean-nuclear-scientist-commits-suicide-

	after-being-forced-to-return/ar-BBHsowz?li=BBnb7Kz&ocid=HPCDHP
GIST	<p>A North Korean nuclear scientist who defected to China committed suicide after being forced to return back, Radio Free Asia reported Thursday. The defector was a researcher at the physics center in the State Academy of Sciences in Pyongyang, the report said.</p> <p>The scientist was identified as Hyun Cheoi Huh, though RFA clarified it was unclear whether that was his real name. The man reportedly took a leave of absence from his job at the academy before defecting.</p> <p>He was sent back to North Korea Nov. 17, RFA reported.</p> <p>“He killed himself only a few hours after he was placed in solitary confinement at the State Security Department in Sinuiju city,” a source told RFA, speaking on the condition of anonymity. “He died before he could be questioned about the reasons for his escape, and what his route had been.”</p> <p>The man took poison inside the security cell where he was set to be questioned. It remained unclear how he smuggled the poison inside.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Showdown in Moscow looms
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/dec/28/showdown-between-alexei-navalny-vladimir-putin-in-/
GIST	<p>The Kremlin has done everything in its power to control Russia’s upcoming presidential election in 2018.</p> <p>The main opposition candidate, anti-corruption crusader Alexei Navalny, has been recently banned by the election commission due to an embezzlement conviction that his supporters say was politically motivated. They argue that the charges were felony in nature precisely to prevent Mr. Navalny from running, per Russian election law.</p> <p>His offices have also been raided and he’s been detained multiple times for holding “illegal” rallies across Russia in different cities.</p> <p>Add to that a recent attack by sausage-throwing bandits in the airport upon returning to Moscow — in addition to having a green chemical liquid thrown in his face, which caused him to travel abroad to Spain for surgery on his left eye.</p> <p>And yet, Mr. Navalny keeps pushing.</p> <p>In his most recent affront to Moscow, upon being denied permission to compete against Russian President Vladimir Putin in March’s polls, Mr. Navalny has called for an election boycott.</p> <p>“I assure you, a huge amount of people will not go to this election, would actively boycott this election,” he said. “Going to the polls right now is to vote for lies and corruption ... We refuse to call the reappointment of Putin an election.”</p> <p>This did not sit well with the Kremlin. Now there are reports that a criminal investigation has been opened against Mr. Navalny for his boycott comments.</p> <p>To take things up another notch, the 41-year-old Moscow native also called for nationwide rallies in over 85 cities across the Russian Federation to protest what he calls an illegal election contest. This infuriated those in power in Russia.</p> <p>If there is one thing the Russian leadership despises, and fears, it is civil unrest. The “color revolutions” of recent decades in Ukraine and elsewhere, along with the “Arab Spring,” have shown Moscow in real time what can happen when a political movement spirals beyond control.</p>

Most likely, the theatrics coming out of the Russian side of the Syrian theater, the declarations that the Islamic State is defeated, and Russia is removing troops (although they also just announced a permanent presence in the Mediterranean and the air base at Khmeimim), are meant for the domestic population to hear just before the election.

The Russian people have seen their standards of living decline, and social services cut in favor of military spending over the last several years.

In short, the trappings exist right now for a good old-fashioned spate of civil disobedience.

The Kremlin knows this. They thought they had all the T's crossed and the I's dotted. Then along comes Mr. Navalny calling for massive demonstrations across Russia a mere few weeks before the nation goes to vote.

If Mr. Putin pushes back too hard against Mr. Navalny, he could be outed as too authoritarian and his carefully crafted PR campaign and image could be tarnished. If he goes to soft, and let's Mr. Navalny keep going, Russia could be in for some serious political unrest.

We have a showdown at the Moscow corral.

My bet is on Mr. Putin. I think he will shut Mr. Navalny down by any means necessary. There is simply too much on the line for the government he has built over the last few decades.

Mr. Putin is also counting on the Russian people, who are in no mood for a revolution, as they have seen how that can work out. The Bolsheviks destroyed Russia for a hundred years, with no idea what to put in its place.

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HEADLINE	12/28 Radioactive vehicles found at Hanford
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/855716/more-radioactively-contaminated-vehicles-found-at-hanford/
GIST	<p>RICHLAND, Wash. (AP) — The number of vehicles with specks of radioactive material has increased to 19 as checks continue at Hanford's Plutonium Finishing Plant continue.</p> <p>The Tri-City Herald reports as of Wednesday afternoon, 12 additional government or contractor vehicles had been found with radioactive contamination, with 55 vehicles still to be surveyed.</p> <p>The dozen contaminated government and contractor vehicles are in addition to seven worker vehicles found to have specks of contamination since demolition was completed Dec. 15 on the most contaminated section of the plant. No contamination was found at the homes of those workers.</p> <p>Post-demolition surveying found specks of radioactive material, some too small to see, had spread outside the demolition zone.</p> <p>Additional layers of fixative are being applied to areas where contamination has been found to keep it from becoming airborne.</p> <p>Hanford for decades made plutonium for nuclear weapons.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Claim: sea level rise not climate change
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/855616/cliff-mass-sea-level-rise-climate-change/

<p>GIST</p>	<p>University of Washington Meteorologist Cliff Mass has run up against others warning about the effects of climate change. His most recent blog post will only continue that contention.</p> <p>To be clear, Mass firmly promotes that the climate is changing and that human influence is a primary cause. He doesn't agree on many points that others argue, however. For example, when many in Seattle said that climate change killed a tree, Mass was quick to point out that science doesn't back that assertion. When some people pinned summer weather on climate change, Mass said otherwise.</p> <p>In a recent blog post, Mass addresses sea level rise – another concern posed by climate change. He writes that the sea level rise measured in Seattle (with records going back to 1900) has been steady for more than 100 years – about 2.03 mm each year. But he points out:</p> <p>“The interesting thing is that the upward trend has been going on for a long time, well before the impacts of human emissions of greenhouse gases were significant. (The radiative impacts of increasingly CO2 became large in the 1970s and later). And rate of rise has been quite steady, with no hint of a recent acceleration. In fact, there has been minimal rise during the past 20 years.”</p> <p>Other communities, such as San Diego or Key West, have seen similar rises in sea level, but at different rates. This is because the water level is not the only factor at play. Mass points out that the land is not remaining at the same elevation. The ground is sinking in many regions. In the Olympic Mountains, Mass writes, the land is being pushed up. Measurements around the Olympics shows the sea level decreasing.</p> <p>Mass concludes that the sea level rise over the past 100 years is primarily due to the end of a small ice age (between 1500 and the 1800s). The meteorologist, however, is not doubting that the sea level will be impacted by human-influenced climate change in the years to come.</p> <p>“On the other hand, our climate models suggest an accelerated rise of sea level rise due to greenhouse gas warming during this century ... Extrapolating the current, steady upward trend implies about a .6 ft rise. If we include the impacts of greenhouse gas warming, there would be more. A National Academy of Sciences report did such an analysis suggesting a 4-56 inch increase by 2100, with a mean change of 30 inches (2.5 ft). But whether such model-driven estimates are reliable is uncertain: I suspect it will be on the high side considering the slow rise of the past few decades.”</p>
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<p>HEADLINE</p>	<p>12/28 Taiwan recalls passports w/US image</p>
<p>SOURCE</p>	<p>https://www.upi.com/Odd_News/2017/12/28/Taiwan-recalls-passports-featuring-image-of-US-airport/6371514495305/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=lh&utm_medium=6</p>
<p>GIST</p>	<p>Dec. 28 (UPI) -- Taiwan's foreign ministry is recalling hundreds of passports mistakenly printed with an image of Washington, D.C.,'s Dulles International Airport.</p> <p>Internet users spotted the misprint featuring an image of the Dulles airport instead of Taipei's Taoyuan International Airport, prompting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Wednesday to announce plans to recall 285 passports that have already been issued.</p> <p>More than 200,000 of the misprinted passports have been printed and will be returned to the printing company.</p> <p>Central Engraving and Printing Plant, the contract printer responsible for producing the passports said it will bear the cost of reprinting the passports. The first print cost about \$2.67 million.</p> <p>Those who received the misprinted passports will be issued first-generation e-passports from the country's remaining stock.</p> <p>The Ministry of Foreign Affairs initially denied the error stating the passports featured "100 percent</p>

	Taiwanese scenery." The ministry later admitted the mistake, and Agnes Chen, Taiwan's head of the Bureau of Consular Affairs, stepped down and took responsibility for the error.
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HEADLINE	12/28 Iran: thousands protest high prices
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2017/12/28/Thousands-protest-high-prices-in-Irans-Mashhad/2761514490243/?utm_source=fp&utm_campaign=ts tn int&utm_medium=5
GIST	<p>Dec. 28 (UPI) -- Several thousand residents protested high prices and denounced President Hassan Rouhani across Iran, including the nation's second-largest city, Mashhad, on Thursday.</p> <p>In the northern Iranian city, protesters shouted "Death to Rouhani" and "Death to the dictator" and "If you stop one case of embezzlement, our problem will be solved."</p> <p>They also held banners opposing Iran's interference in the Arab region, including troops and funds sent to assist Syria's government. They chanted, "Forget about Syria, think about us."</p> <p>Besides protests in city of about 3 million, demonstrations took place in cities that included Neyshabur, Kashmar, Birjand, Shahrood and Noshahr. And last week demonstrations took place in Isfahan against high unemployment.</p> <p>The National Council of Resistance of Iran said forces were stationed in Mashhad but protesters pushed them away. The security forces then opened fire and launched tear gas at demonstrators. The protesters resisted, returning tear gas to the forces.</p> <p>Mashhad Gov. Mohammad Norouzian said it was an "illegal" protest but security forces handled the situation "with great tolerance," according to Iran's state-run IRNA news agency.</p> <p>Norouzian said a number of people who intended to destroy public property were arrested.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Teen jailed 4yrs without a trial
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/tyler-haire-mental-health-issues-jail-bbc-propublica/
GIST	<p>Tyler Haire was a 16-year-old with a history of mental health issues when he was arrested in 2012 for allegedly stabbing his father's girlfriend with a 10-inch butcher knife. According to a joint investigation by BBC News and ProPublica, Haire remained in a Mississippi jail for nearly four years without getting a mental health evaluation or going to trial, and he has yet to receive treatment for his well-documented mental illness behind bars.</p> <p>Following the attack, the report says Tyler Haire called 911 and waited for responders to arrive. Paramedics transported the injured woman to a hospital where she underwent surgery for a knife wound that cut her colon in half. Haire claims he doesn't remember most of what happened on the morning he was taken into custody.</p> <p>"I remember calling the cops and standing outside, so I didn't have to look at what I did. The only part I remember is me going to get water after looking for some Kool-Aid that I was left by my mother," he told the BBC and ProPublica. "After that, it's blurry."</p> <p>Haire was subsequently booked into Calhoun County Jail, where he was charged with aggravated assault as an adult. The sheriff said he put the teen in a solitary confinement cell for his own protection.</p>

According to District Attorney Ben Creekmore, Haire was ordered to have a mental evaluation in Mississippi State Hospital's forensic unit at the beginning of his case. But the BBC and ProPublica report the evaluation never happened.

His mother, Bridgett, says her son had at least 10 mental health diagnoses during his childhood — including generalized anxiety disorder, impulse control disorder, major depression with homicidal ideations, major depressive disorder with psychotic tendencies, and bipolar disorder.

But during his time behind bars, he never received mental health treatment, despite hearing voices in his head that made him "miserable to the brink of suicide," Haire said.

Nearly four years after his arrest, Haire was finally evaluated by a psychologist in August 2016 and was found to be legally competent. However, the psychologist noted, "At the time of the alleged crime, consistent with his history, he probably had a diminished capacity to conform his conduct to the requirements of the law just as he has never had the skills to live adaptively without support."

He was then taken to the state psychiatric hospital in Whitfield, and after 32 days he was returned to the sheriff's custody.

Haire took a plea bargain and was sentenced to seven years in jail, with credit for time served. He's expected to be released in 2018. A state corrections official told the BBC and ProPublica that county facilities like the one Haire is in do not provide substantial mental health care.

Haire told the reporters he still hears voices in his head but has gotten better at ignoring them.

According to the investigation, the state of Mississippi is being sued by the Department of Justice for inmates' lack of access to mental health care. Currently, more than 100 "legally innocent inmates" are awaiting pretrial mental health evaluations; three of them have been waiting more than 1,000 days.

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HEADLINE	12/28 Claim: Calif. port truckers 'impaired'
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/pages/interactives/news/rigged-asleep-at-the-wheel/
GIST	<p>Every day, port trucking companies around Los Angeles put hundreds of impaired drivers on the road, pushing them to work with little or no sleep in violation of federal safety regulations, a USA TODAY Network investigation found.</p> <p>They dispatch truckers for shifts that last up to 20 hours a day, six days a week, sometimes with tragic results.</p> <p>In August 2013, a Container Intermodal Transport trucker, who said in depositions that he often broke fatigue laws, barreled into stopped traffic at 55 mph, killing a teenager and injuring seven others.</p> <p>Seven months later, a Pacific 9 Transportation driver had just finished his 45th hour on the clock in three days when he ran over and killed a woman crossing the street.</p> <p>A Gold Point Transportation truck was moving containers for 15 hours one day in May 2013 when it crashed in Long Beach, injuring four people.</p> <p>The trucking industry has always had drivers who work reckless amounts of overtime.</p> <p>But the USA TODAY Network investigation shows for the first time that fatigued truckers are a near-constant threat on the roads around America's busiest ports.</p> <p>To identify port trucking companies that put their drivers and the public at risk, reporters retraced the</p>

movement of thousands of Los Angeles-area trucks over four years using time stamps generated each time a driver passes through a port gate.

Reporters then calculated how long each truck had operated and compared the results to federal crash data from 2013 to 2016.

The analysis found that, on average, trucks serving the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach operated without the required break 470 times a day.

Those trucks were involved in at least 189 crashes within a day of an extended period on the clock. Federal records do not indicate who was at fault.

With some exceptions, federal rules say commercial truckers must take a 10-hour break every 14 hours.

The data alone don't prove that a trucker was driving impaired. But regulators and experts said the analysis provides strong evidence of a problem they know to be pervasive but difficult to quantify.

"There's enough there to warrant further investigation," said Collin Mooney, executive director of the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, an association of industry regulators dedicated to improving safety.

As the USA TODAY Network first reported in June, California port truckers have been forced to work long days against their will.

Over the past decade, many companies pushed drivers into debt by requiring them to buy trucks through company-sponsored lease-to-own programs.

Drivers found themselves trapped in jobs that paid them pennies per hour after expenses. If they complained or refused to work past the legal limit, they could be fired and lose their truck along with thousands they paid toward its purchase.

Trucking company executives contacted by USA TODAY Network denied allowing their drivers to violate fatigue rules. Some noted that two drivers sometimes share one truck, a practice that could account for long stints of activity.

"We believe your analysis of driver gate data is perhaps a bit misplaced," said Kevin Dukesherer, president of Progressive Transportation Services.

Dukesherer did not say how many of his trucks were driven by multiple drivers or address specific instances of overtime driving revealed in the data.

Drivers say sharing a truck is rare because many companies prohibit it. Far more common, they say, are truckers who feel compelled to work long hours.

Jose Juan Rodriguez, who drove for Morgan Southern for five years, said he sometimes worked 16-hour shifts for days at a time, a claim the company denied. He kept a bucket of ice water by his seat to splash on his face when he felt himself nodding off.

More than once, he said, he found himself hallucinating, a side effect of extreme sleep deprivation.

"There are some days when you can't think right anymore," he said. "You can't tell if you're driving or not. You just have to continue working."

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HEADLINE 12/28 Climate change push immigration?

SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/weather/2017/12/28/how-climate-change-could-drive-immigration-united-states-mexico/948358001/
GIST	<p>The number of people moving from Mexico to the United States has dropped sharply over the past decade. But researchers say a new force could drive more people across the U.S.-Mexico border in the coming decades: climate change.</p> <p>As global temperatures continue to climb, dry regions across the world have become more susceptible to drought. That includes northern Mexico, where increasingly intense dry spells are expected to reduce crop yields in rural, agriculture-dependent areas, potentially giving people more reason to seek better opportunities in the United States.</p> <p>Researchers who study the link between global warming and migration say many factors contribute to a person or family's decision to move to another country, with climate change often playing a supporting role. But several studies have singled out climate change as a potentially significant driver of future U.S.-Mexico migration.</p> <p>"It's never any one thing that causes people to move," said Michael Oppenheimer, a Princeton University climate scientist who's researched climate-driven migration. "But we have a lot of evidence from many different countries that relatively modest variations in the climate, that could be short-term or long-term, do cause people to move."</p> <p>It's hard to say how many people could be pushed across the U.S.-Mexico border by climate change, in part because there's been relatively little research on the subject so far.</p> <p>A 2010 study co-authored by Oppenheimer found that up to 6.7 million people could come to the United States from Mexico as a result of global warming by 2080. A study last year from researchers at the University of California Davis projected just 41,000 additional immigrants over the next 50 years as a result of climate change.</p> <p>What those studies and others have in common is a finding that high temperatures and reduced rainfall — conditions that are becoming more common with climate change — have contributed to past waves of migration from Mexico to the United States.</p> <p>"More hot days in rural Mexico, predicted by the major climate models, will increase migration out of rural Mexico, including to the U.S.," Ed Taylor, a development economist at UC Davis and co-author of the 2016 migration study, said.</p> <p>Susan Martin, an emeritus professor at Georgetown University and expert in international migration, also believes any climate-driven migration from Mexico to the United States will be relatively small. She said the Mexican government has improved its social safety net significantly over the past decade, giving agricultural areas greater insurance against the risk of climate-fueled crop losses. She said the United States may be more likely to see a big increase in climate-driven migration from Central America, where more extreme weather is adding to the instability created by violence and poverty.</p> <p>"It's not that climate change won't create problems for people in Mexico, particularly in those semi-arid zones which will become more arid," Martin said. "It's just that they have more options, and moving to the U.S. is a less attractive one, given all of those changes in Mexico."</p>
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HEADLINE	12/29 SKorea holds ship w/NKorea oil
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/korea-inspects-hong-kong-ship-korean-oil-52039710?
GIST	South Korea said Friday that it was holding a Hong Kong-flagged ship and its crew members for allegedly violating U.N. sanctions by transferring oil to a North Korean vessel in October.

	<p>The Lighthouse Winmore is believed to have transferred about 600 tons of refined petroleum products to the North Korean ship, the Sam Jong 2, in international waters on Oct. 19, after leaving the South Korean port of Yeosu, a South Korean Foreign Ministry official said.</p> <p>South Korean customs authorities boarded the ship and interviewed crew members after they returned to Yeosu on Nov. 24. South Korea formally seized the ship after the U.N. Security Council on Dec. 22 imposed new sanctions on North Korea that allow member states to seize, inspect and freeze vessels that are suspected of transferring banned goods to or from North Korea, the official said. He spoke on condition of anonymity, citing office rules.</p> <p>The ship's 25 crew members — 23 of them Chinese nationals and two from Myanmar — are being held at Yeosu but will be allowed to leave South Korea after authorities are finished investigating them, the official said. South Korea plans to report the results of its inspection to the U.N. Security Council's sanctions committee.</p> <p>The ship, which also transferred oil to three other non-North Korean ships, was chartered by Taiwan's Billions Bunker Group and stopped at South Korea to load up about 14,000 tons of Japanese oil products. It claimed its destination as Taiwan when leaving Yeosu on Oct. 11, the official said.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Turkey: blast targeted police station
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/reports-explosion-hits-police-station-southern-turkey-52028582?
GIST	<p>An explosion apparently targeted a police station Thursday in the southern Turkish city of Adana but no one was hurt, Turkey's state-run news agency reported.</p> <p>The blast occurred at 7:10 p.m. on a street close to the police station in the city's Seyhan district. It shattered nearby windows and was heard in other parts of the city, the private Dogan news agency reported.</p> <p>Police believe the blast was caused by a "sound bomb" designed to make a loud noise but not cause any casualties, the state-run Anadolu Agency reported. Police teams were investigating the site and a search was launched for a suspect.</p> <p>"We believe it was a home-made bomb, like a sound bomb," Anadolu quoted Adana Police Chief Selami Yildiz as saying. "We are continuing our inspections."</p> <p>The Dogan news agency said the bomb was placed beneath an electrical pole by a person wearing a mask.</p> <p>Turkey has suffered a wave of deadly attacks carried out by Kurdish rebels or Islamic State militants in recent years that have killed hundreds of people.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Brazil arrests Mexico drug kingpin
SOURCE	https://sofrep.com/96967/brazil-arrests-mexican-drug-kingpin-beach-resort/
GIST	<p>The police in Brazil have arrested the head of a Mexican drug cartel, which is a serious blow to one of the more powerful drug gangs challenging the Sinaloa Cartel for control of the Mexican drug trade. Brazilian federal prosecutors announced the arrest on Wednesday.</p>

	<p>According to the arrest warrant, police detained Jose Gonzalez Valencia, 42, a leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), with the intention of fulfilling a U.S. extradition request.</p> <p>Once a little-known gang, the CJNG has grown in recent years to challenge the Sinaloa Cartel of captured kingpin Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman for primacy of the drug trade in Mexico.</p> <p>Gonzalez Valencia was arrested at a beach resort near the coastal city of Fortaleza and brought to the headquarters of the federal police for the state of Ceará, Brazilian prosecutors said in a statement.</p> <p>Gonzalez Valencia had been living in neighboring Bolivia for two years after fleeing Mexico and he had entered Brazil as a tourist using a Bolivian passport, the statement added.</p> <p>Valencia will be immediately extradited to the United States that had a warrant out for him. Valencia is the brother of Abigael Gonzalez Valencia, a CJNG leader captured in February 2015.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Yakima: police shot 3 suspects in 24hrs
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/855688/yakima-police-officers-shoot-3-men-in-24-hours/
GIST	<p>YAKIMA, Wash. (AP) — Authorities say Yakima police officers shot three suspects in a 24-hour period.</p> <p>The Yakima Herald-Republic reports Yakima police Capt. Jeff Schneider at a Wednesday news conference called the shooting statistic unprecedented in the department.</p> <p>On Wednesday police shot and wounded Gabriel Anthony Zavala who had allegedly fired at officers and rammed a pickup into a police vehicle. Police say Zavala was shot at least twice and flown to a Seattle hospital.</p> <p>Police say Yakima officers shot and killed two men on Tuesday in separate standoff situations.</p> <p>Police say Officer Booker Ward shot Adrian Escobar during a standoff at a home after he allegedly fired shots at officers.</p> <p>Officers Shane Stevie and Patrick Shad fatally shot Juan Miguel Garcia following a five-hour standoff at an apartment complex. Police haven’t said exactly what led to that shooting.</p> <p>The shootings are under investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Thieves hit Habitat for Humanity home
SOURCE	http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article192052824.html
GIST	<p>Just weeks before move-in day, a worker made a gut-punching discovery at a Habitat for Humanity home in Pacific.</p> <p>Someone ripped off the window screen, broke into the home and made off with a brand-new washer and dryer unit.</p> <p>It happened the day after Christmas.</p> <p>“That was discouraging someone would do that around the holidays and impact our veteran family so that saddened us all,” said Gail Luxenberg, the CEO of Habitat Seattle King County.</p> <p>The nonprofit housing group helps families in need help attain the American dream, and these homes in</p>

	<p>Pacific are part of their veterans' build.</p> <p>"This is a very special community for us," Luxenberg added. "We build all over King County, and this community is dedicated to veterans."</p> <p>The family that is slated to move in is a single mother and her two children. News of this crime is a little more personal because, like other habitat homes, this family has put in 250 hours of sweat equity, building this home from the ground up.</p> <p>"It hurts when you hear the news," Luxenberg explained. "Our family puts in their sweat equity. They worked long and hard to get into home. They hold a mortgage. They have a lot invested in this."</p> <p>Unfortunately, the camera at the window doesn't work.</p> <p>And it clearly didn't deter the thieves.</p> <p>While police do their job trying to catch the criminals, Luxenberg says she is as determined as ever.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 London: woman injured in acid attack
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/12/28/woman-suffers-life-changing-injuries-after-acid-attack-in-london-police-say.html
GIST	<p>A British woman suffered life-changing burns to her leg and face Wednesday when she was sprayed with acid while walking in east London, police said.</p> <p>The 26-year-old woman was walking on Marsh Wall near South Quay DLR station around 7 p.m. when an unidentified attacker threw a noxious substance on her. She ran to nearby Westferry Road where police were alerted.</p> <p>The woman was taken to a local hospital. She did not see the attacker, police said.</p> <p>No arrests have been made and law enforcement is reviewing CCTV images.</p> <p>The noxious substance that was sprayed at the woman was confirmed to be a strong acid solution.</p> <p>Acid attacks have been on the rise in London in recent months.</p> <p>The number of reported attacks using corrosive liquids rose from 261 in 2015 to 454 in 2016, London police said. Some appeared to be related to gang activity or the theft of cars and motorbikes.</p> <p>In September, six people were injured when a group of men sprayed acid at shoppers at the Westfield Stratford Shopping Centre in east London. A 15-year-old boy was arrested in the incident.</p> <p>The spike in attacks has prompted some lawmakers to call for restrictions on the sale and carrying of corrosive liquids such as sulfuric acid.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Pa. official: no terror link in shooting
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/prosecutor-terror-links-found-immigrant-shooting-52029208
GIST	A prosecutor says investigators haven't connected an Egyptian immigrant who shot a Pennsylvania state trooper and fired at other police with any organized terror group or terrorist activity.

<p>Return to Top</p>	<p>Dauphin County District Attorney Ed Marsico said Thursday friends and relatives of Ahmed Aminamin El-Mofty describe him as depressed, and he's believed to have acted alone during the Friday shooting.</p> <p>Police shot and killed the 51-year-old naturalized U.S. citizen about a mile from where the shooting began near Pennsylvania's State Capitol building.</p> <p>Marsico says the divorced El-Mofty was said to be depressed over lack of contact with his family and had money problems. He's unsure what motivated El-Mofty.</p> <p>The trooper was treated for what Marsico called a slight wound.</p> <p>The prosecutor's preliminary finding suggests police were justified in shooting El-Mofty.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Poachers target endangered fish meat
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mexican-traffickers-now-shipping-endangered-fish-meat-52029441?
GIST	<p>Poachers in Mexico have long smuggled the swim bladders of the totoaba, an endangered fish prized in China.</p> <p>But federal police said Thursday they've now found a shipment of 104 frozen totoaba fish fillets at the Tijuana airport. That suggests smugglers are seeking to take advantage of the whole fish.</p> <p>Fishing for totoaba is prohibited in Mexico's Gulf of California, but the high prices paid for dried swim bladders have made that hard to enforce. Poachers in the past simply discarded the fish carcasses after extracting the bladders.</p> <p>Nets set for totoaba frequently catch the highly endangered vaquita marina, the world's smallest porpoise. Fewer than 30 vaquitas are thought to remain.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Sex assaults on commercial flights
SOURCE	http://www.cnn.com/2017/12/27/politics/women-sexual-assaults-harassment-commercial-flights/index.html
GIST	<p>Washington (CNN)Katie Campos settled into her seat for a short flight from Newark to Buffalo last week. Within minutes, she said, an intoxicated male passenger sitting next to her began groping and harassing both Campos and a second female passenger seated in the same row, grabbing Campos repeatedly despite her demands for him to stop it.</p> <p>"He grabbed my upper thigh, like in the crotch area, and he grabbed it pretty forcefully," Campos told CNN, adding that the man only stopped touching her after she got out of her seat and ran to the back of the plane, where she told a flight attendant what was happening.</p> <p>Campos is one of four women CNN interviewed who said they've been sexually assaulted or harassed during a commercial flight. These women are a small fraction of a typically overlooked group enduring inappropriate behavior during an American reckoning with harassment and misconduct that spans across many industries like entertainment, sports, news media and politics.</p> <p>A police report filed said that the male passenger told the other female passenger seated in Campos' row that he would like to kiss her. When the woman declined, he began stroking her leg. The passenger reported the man's behavior to a flight attendant.</p>

When Campos reported what the man had done to members of the United Airlines crew, she said she didn't feel like she was taken seriously until she said she refused to retake her seat next to him.

"I felt like no one, no one that was supposed to be in charge could handle the situation," she told CNN. "I kept on feeling, and I continue now as I'm like filing these reports, to feel like I'm the one who is doing something wrong, and I'm not being protected."

Ultimately, Campos was reseated -- but directly behind the man who was harassing her. United Airlines told CNN that's because there were few empty seats on the plane. The man, Campos said, didn't stop touching her even after she moved.

"This man continued," she said. "This man should have been restrained so he couldn't continue to do this. And just continuing to touch and stare just made me feel completely helpless and horrible. It was terrifying."

A United Airlines spokesperson told CNN that the airline has "zero tolerance for this type of behavior." "Our pilot requested that local law enforcement meet the aircraft on arrival," the spokesperson said.

Members of the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority Police Department met the plane at the gate and escorted the man off the plane, according to the police report. Cell phone video obtained by CNN shows police boarding the flight and removing the man. He has been charged with disorderly conduct.

Campos said the flight crew didn't appear prepared to handle the situation and wondered what could have happened if the relatively short flight had gone on for longer.

"At the end of the day, they didn't protect my safety or those around me," Campos said.

It's difficult to determine just how frequently assaults happen on commercial flights because no federal regulatory agency tracks that data nationwide. But FBI investigations into midair sexual assaults have increased by 66% from fiscal year 2014 to 2017. The bureau said it opened 63 investigations into sexual assault on aircraft during the current fiscal year, compared with 57 in 2016, 40 in 2015 and 38 in 2014.

The FBI said it isn't clear what is behind the increase.

Even so, those are just the cases that the FBI investigates, and those figures don't account for incidents reported that the FBI never hears about, or those that are never reported at all like so many cases of sexual harassment overall.

The Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, one of the world's largest flight attendant unions, last year surveyed nearly 2,000 flight attendants about their experiences with midair sexual assaults. Among those who responded, one out of five said they received a report of passenger on passenger sexual assault while working a flight. But, according to the survey, law enforcement was contacted or met the plane less than half of the time. Three of the four women interviewed by CNN about their assault or harassment said there were no apparent attempts to contact law enforcement.

Typically, the AFA said, intervention comes from flight attendants, but many say their employers haven't told them what to do if someone says they've been harassed or assaulted in flight.

Sara Nelson, a United Airlines flight attendant who is president of the union, told CNN, "In my 22 years as a flight attendant, I have never taken part in a conversation -- in training or otherwise -- about how to handle sexual harassment or sexual assault."

While policies exist, Nelson says that if they're not elevated in airlines' training, flight attendants are at a loss of what to do when confronting inappropriate -- and sometimes criminal -- behavior.

"They don't necessarily know exactly what to do and how to respond when they discover it," she said.

Allison Dvaladze said she didn't believe the Delta Air Lines crew knew how to best help her when a man allegedly groped her during a flight. Dvaladze said that as she was dozing off during an April 2016 flight from Seattle to Amsterdam, she felt a hand grabbing her."

I felt a hand in my crotch, and realized that the man next to me was holding, was grabbing my crotch," Dvaladze told CNN. "I slapped his hand right away, yelled 'no,' without even thinking."

The man reached for her again, Dvaladze said, and she again hit him away. After the man reached toward her again, despite her attempts to stop him, she said she unbuckled her seat belt, and ran to the back of the plane where she asked to speak with members of the flight crew.

"I believe they were doing everything they could, in their mind, to comfort me, but it was clear there was not a clear procedure for what they should do," she said. "They asked me what I wanted them to do, and at that moment I really just couldn't think about anything except for wanting to get off the plane."

That wasn't an option in midair. Ultimately, Dvaladze was given a new seat away from the male passenger who had groped her. Dvaladze said she assumed that the crew would file a report based on her experience and she followed up with the airline's customer service department herself about a week after her flight, according to emails reviewed by CNN.

The airline's customer service department responded to her email about a month later, emails show. A representative apologized for her flight experience, saying "I know it's not fair when one person's behavior affects another person."

As a "goodwill gesture," the airline also offered Dvaladze 10,000 frequent flyer miles.

"If somebody reports a crime to an airline, it should be flagged. It should not be treated as if it's lost luggage," Dvaladze told CNN.

A spokesperson for Delta Air Lines told CNN that the airline continues to be "disheartened by the events Ms. Dvaladze described."

The spokesperson said that Delta crew members are "trained to have situational awareness in the cabin at all times and are prepared to handle a range of situations and always prioritize customer safety."

CNN reached out to each of the major US airlines, as well as Airlines for America, the industry trade group that represents them. Each responded with a statement with a similar theme: The safety and security of passengers is the priority. Each airline also said that flight attendants are trained to handle incidents like these, but none of the airlines detailed their policies or guidelines.

Alison McAfee, a spokesperson for Airlines for America, said that member airlines "take these matters seriously and do not tolerate harassment in any form."

"Employees receive extensive customer service training to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all our passengers and crew," McAfee said in a statement. "Airlines strive to make sure every passenger has a safe and pleasant travel experience and that disruptive or inappropriate behavior is dealt with as promptly as possible."

McAfee also said that carriers have "well-defined processes and procedures in place" for reporting criminal activity to the Federal Aviation Administration and the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

Each of the women CNN spoke to who said they were sexually harassed or assaulted during a commercial flight said the flight crews did little or nothing to help. Ayanna Hart was a passenger on a Delta Air Lines flight. She said an intoxicated man repeatedly grabbed her during a flight earlier this year and said a flight

crew member was dismissive of her concerns.

The last time the male passenger grabbed her, Hart said the flight attendant told the man, "oh, no touching." When another passenger called the flight attendant over to express concerns about the man, the flight attendant was of little help.

"The flight attendant said, 'Oh, don't worry about him. He flies with us all the time. He's Delta Platinum,'" Hart said, a reference to the top tier of Delta's frequent flyer program.

Now, Hart is suing Delta for failing to intervene and continuing to serve the man alcohol.

The airline wouldn't comment on the case, citing pending litigation, but said it takes these incidents "seriously" and "with law enforcement, investigates them."

The Association of Flight Attendants-CWA has called on airlines to do more not just to train crew members on how to handle sexual assault and harassment that has happened to passengers in the air, but also to do more to protect the crew members themselves.

"Not only are we not equipped with good, clear policies about how to do that and training about how to do that, you're asking people who are experiencing sexual harassment every single day to now be the enforcers and it just doesn't make a lot of sense," said Nelson, the head of the AFA.

The situation is equally senseless for passengers who have experienced harassment and who say they are left with little comfort.

Campos, the United Airlines passenger who said she endured repeated groping and unwanted touching at the hands of a man seated next to her, said she felt that even the people who were supposed to ensure her safety on board the late-night flight were unable to do so.

"It felt very much like the only reason this came to an end at all is that the flight landed. And we were at a gate, and the lights came on," she told CNN.

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Bcc:
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InFOCUS

Thursday

28 December 2017

Editor's Note: InFOCUS will not be published Monday, 1 Jan 2018; will return on Tuesday, 2 January 2018—Happy New Year!

Welcome to InFOCUS!

What is InFOCUS? It is the Washington State Fusion Center's daily "Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources" publication outlining open-source headlines and stories.

We aren't attempting to replace online news reporting services. Rather, we understand that all of you have busy work schedules, so, InFOCUS is our situational awareness service that we provide to you on a daily basis exposing you to headlines that spark our interest or have an impact within our community, our region and our state. We highlight the headline and we 'gist' the stories for you. Should you desire to read the entire story, you are just a click away from the reporting source. Typically what took a dedicated open-source reader on average of 2-4 hours a day, InFOCUS can deliver to you situational awareness of major headlines requiring no more than 15 minutes total reading time—15 minutes to maintain daily situational awareness of events that are happening across the world, our nation and within our region.

InFOCUS consists of a headline matrix focused on five topical areas: events/opportunities, cyber awareness, terror conditions, suspicious activities and criminal extremism against an international, national and regional/local backdrop. Our intent is to provide an easy-to-read, easy-to-select (hypertext link) stories that may contribute to your situational awareness of our topical areas without requiring you

to conduct an exhaustive search or needing a library of links. We daily screen terabytes of major data-streams to filter headlines and open-source stories that enable all of us, as a community, to have a common basis of situational awareness for community interaction.

While the Fusion Center initiated InFOCUS from a law enforcement perspective, we are open to the community for suggestions in improving our service. Our goal is to ensure the immediacy of awareness for all public safety organizations (whether law enforcement, emergency management, fire, health/medical or other first responders, public/private security, utilities, critical infrastructure resources and services) on open-source headlines that may influence our day-to-day interaction. We firmly believe if we as a community are aware then our ability to respond is enhanced.

InFOCUS strives to serve as an important tool to enhance communication, collaboration and cooperation through your email inbox on a daily basis!

Editor

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Event Calendar

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Date	Event	Location/Time	Other Information
9-13 Apr	LEIU/IALEIA Training	Marriott Hotel, 700 West Convention	http://www.ialeia.org/2018_conference.php

2018	Event	Way Anaheim, CA 92801 (714) 750-8000
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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	12/27 FEMA sells disaster trailers despite need
SOURCE	http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2017/dec/27/fema-sells-disaster-trailers-cheaply-despite-victi/
GIST	<p>FORT WORTH, Texas – The federal government typically spends up to \$150,000 apiece – not counting utilities, maintenance or labor – on the trailers it leases to disaster victims, then auctions them at cut-rate prices after 18 months of use or the first sign of minor damage, the Associated Press has learned.</p> <p>Officials have continued the practice even amid a temporary housing shortage in Texas, where almost 8,000 applicants are still awaiting federal support nearly four months after Hurricane Harvey landed in the Gulf Coast.</p> <p>The Federal Emergency Management Agency briefly halted trailer sales following Harvey but resumed them in November, online records show. Since then, at least 115 units manufactured this year have been sold for pennies on the dollar, and many of the online auctions have listed such things as dirty mattresses, missing furniture, pet odors or loose trim as the lone damage.</p> <p>“I don’t care what shape it’s in, it beats sleeping on a dirt floor,” said Christy Combs, who moved with her husband, four children and five dogs into a tent after their rented apartment in Aransas Pass, Texas, was left uninhabitable by floodwater.</p> <p>FEMA has no written policy or regulation requiring disposal of used trailers, but an official confirmed to AP that it’s a longstanding internal policy and that seldom are the housing units given to another family in need after the initial 18-month stint.</p> <p>“Because of the challenges associated with damaged units, and the costs of life-cycle maintenance, and because we are required to maintain a ready reserve for disasters, FEMA, by practice, doesn’t return used units to our reserve inventory,” said Jenny Burke, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which oversees FEMA.</p> <p>Burke was unable to explain why FEMA leases new units for only 18 months before consigning them to the General Services Administration’s online auction.</p> <p>The agency’s experience after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 could provide one explanation for a strict policy governing what kind of housing can go to storm victims. Some 144,000 FEMA trailers became symbols of the troubled federal response after some victims who lived in them for years won millions of dollars from lawsuits claiming the units leached high levels of cancer-causing formaldehyde.</p> <p>FEMA spokesman Bob Howard stressed the units being used now are much higher quality than those and don’t have formaldehyde problems, meeting U.S. Housing and Urban Development standards for mobile homes.</p> <p>Harvey survivors in Texas have received 859 trailers so far, but another some 7,900 applicants are in need of some type of temporary housing assistance, whether rent, home repairs or trailers, Howard said.</p> <p>FEMA’s policy of selling off its used trailers left the agency with a standing inventory of only 1,700 units as an unusually-active hurricane season battered southeast Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands this year.</p> <p>Federal records show that FEMA has awarded about \$278 million in competitive-bid contracts to trailer</p>

	manufacturers even as it has continued to sell off used units. One record showed an expected delivery date of February 2018.
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HEADLINE	12/28 China: US should cut opioid demand
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/bd16cfe466ea4e77855dfd24ce69d11d/China:-US-should-curb-demand-for-opioids,-not-blame-China
GIST	<p>BEIJING (AP) — The United States should look within to cut down demand for opioids which are fueling its deadly drug crisis rather than stressing unsubstantiated claims that China is the major source of these chemicals, a top Chinese drug enforcement official said Thursday.</p> <p>China and the U.S. have worked to build a close working relationship to fight global flows of illicit synthetic drugs, but their collaboration remains fraught.</p> <p>Yu Haibin of the China National Narcotics Control Commission told reporters there was little evidence showing China was the source of much of the chemicals used in the production of the powerful opioid fentanyl. President Donald Trump in November blamed a “flood of cheap and deadly” fentanyl made in China for the deadliest drug epidemic in U.S. history.</p> <p>“China doesn’t deny that shipments to the U.S. happen, but there isn’t the proof to show how much — whether it’s 20 percent or 80 percent,” said Yu, adding that U.S. authorities have only sent him information about six shipments from China in the past year.</p> <p>He urged the U.S. to share more data and police intelligence with Chinese authorities and said rampant over-prescription of pain medication and lax cultural attitudes toward drugs had fueled massive demand for opioids in the U.S.</p> <p>Insufficient drug education and the trend in some states of legalizing marijuana have hurt drug enforcement efforts, he said.</p> <p>“As many states decriminalize marijuana, the public’s attitudes and trends of thinking toward drugs will also have a bad effect” on the fight against hard drugs, Yu said.</p> <p>Chinese officials have been eager to tout their collaboration with American counterparts on drug enforcement as a bright spot in the occasionally rocky relationship.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Thousands Puerto Rico cops call in sick
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/361de7ce896c4da6a4f3c8c76d023c78/Thousands-of-Puerto-Rico-police-owed-overtime-call-in-sick
GIST	<p>SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Thousands of police officers are calling in sick every day in Puerto Rico, partly to press demands for unpaid overtime pay for hurricane recovery efforts as concerns grow over people’s safety in a U.S. territory struggling to restore power.</p> <p>The increase in absences recently prompted Puerto Rico Police Chief Michelle Hernandez to recommend that U.S. National Guard soldiers help fill the temporary vacancies.</p> <p>“We have had an inordinate amount of absences that we haven’t seen in years prior,” she told The Associated Press, adding that while there has been a drop in major crimes this year, she is concerned that trend could reverse.</p> <p>However, the administration of Gov. Ricardo Rossello on Wednesday rejected the idea of using the</p>

	<p>National Guard.</p> <p>Normally, an average of 550 police officers are absent every day across Puerto Rico, which has one of the largest police departments under U.S. jurisdiction with more than 13,000 officers overall. But recently, more than 2,700 officers on average have been absent daily.</p> <p>Public Affairs Secretary Ramon Rosario said the government has already made nearly \$15 million in overtime payments since Hurricane Maria hit more than three months ago and \$6.4 million more will be distributed Saturday.</p> <p>“There are a lot of police officers who are not showing up,” he said. “We are trying to address all demands to encourage these police officers to return to their jobs.”</p> <p>Hernandez estimated the government owes officers an additional \$35 million in overtime pay, but said the department is still tallying attendance sheets to determine the exact amount.</p> <p>Authorities said part of the problem is that Puerto Rico’s government has to wait for the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency to reimburse it for overtime police pay and that it is a slow process.</p> <p>The police chief said officers also are upset about other changes amid Puerto Rico’s economic crisis, including smaller pensions and an end of payments for unused sick days. “They feel in a way cheated in the past 15 years in terms of benefits,” Hernandez said.</p> <p>The island is struggling to recover from the Category 4 storm that hit amid an 11-year-old recession, killing dozens of people and causing up to an estimated \$95 billion in damage.</p> <p>Police officers worked seven days a week for 12 to 15 hours a day in September and October, said lobbying groups for the island’s police officers, who are not allowed to unionize.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Chaos: 911 calls on derailment released
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/8605b06a848b41d389b6e6709f77c766/911-calls-show-chaos-of-Washington-state-train-derailment
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — Whimpering in pain, bleeding from head injuries and dazed by the enormity of the crash, victims in the Amtrak train derailment south of Seattle begged 911 dispatchers for help and said “tons of people” had been hurt.</p> <p>Dozens of emergency recordings released Wednesday by South Sound 911 Dispatch provided a vivid account of what happened during the deadly Dec. 18 crash.</p> <p>“My abdomen hurts really bad. I don’t feel good,” said a crying woman identified as Angela who was bleeding from her head and wailed in panic each time she couldn’t find an answer to a dispatcher’s questions. “I don’t know how old I am off the top of my head. I’m sorry!”</p> <p>Angela was in Car 5 with her 14-year-old son as the passenger train barreled through a curve at 78 mph (126 kph) in a 30 mph zone, derailing along both sides of the tracks and toppling some cars onto Interstate 5 below.</p> <p>Angela begged for help and ordered her bleeding son to lie still because he had neck and back pain. He took a hit to his face. They got slammed into a table. She couldn’t find her shoes.</p> <p>“Everybody’s getting off but I’m afraid to move my son,” Angela said, adding that “tons of people are hurt!”</p>

Authorities say it could take more than a year to understand how the inaugural run of the train carrying 85 passengers and crew members ended in disaster along a new 15-mile (24-kilometer) bypass route.

Friends Jim Hamre, 61, and Zack Willhoite, 35, died of brain and skull injuries. Benjamin Gran, 40, died of multiple traumatic injuries.

Another 911 caller said there were bodies everywhere. A dispatcher said there were at least 12 bodies on the tracks.

One man called seeking information about his wife after learning she hit her head while on the train. He said he was driving to the scene, but the dispatcher urged him to avoid the area so he didn't get stuck on the road.

The man replied: "I'm not going to be able to not (go). He added: "I apologize for being a bit of a mess and in a panic."

On the ground, a woman identified as Aura MacArthur said she was driving south on Interstate 5 and thought her car had been hit by a mudslide.

"A huge cloud of mud and dirt came and hit my car and spun me around," she said, cold and crying in her glass-strewn SUV.

"I am the only car besides a semi that made it through the train derailment. I was right at the front when it came," she said, at times gasping for air and weeping.

"My chest is sore but my airbag's deployed ... I can't go anywhere," she said.

She said it was dark and no cars could pass because the road was blocked by the wreckage.

"I hope everybody's OK," she said.

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HEADLINE	12/28 Bitter cold takes hold northern states
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/8b7a28cb545e40a6b1ff993d8cb462f3/Bundle-up:-Bitter-cold-weather-takes-hold-of-northern-US
GIST	<p>ERIE, Pa. (AP) — Bitter cold weather has taken hold of much of the northern United States and is expected to stay put for days to come as two Minnesota cities already have set record low temperatures and a city in Pennsylvania continues to dig out from a record snowfall.</p> <p>Forecasters warned of hypothermia and frostbite from arctic air settling in over the central U.S. and spreading east.</p> <p>The National Weather Service reported International Falls, Minnesota, the self-proclaimed Icebox of the Nation, plunged to 37 degrees below zero, breaking the old record of 32 below set in 1924. Hibbing, Minnesota, bottomed out at 28 below, breaking the old record of 27 below set in 1964.</p> <p>Wind chill advisories or warnings were in effect for much of New England, northern Pennsylvania and New York. Those places and states in the northern Plains and Great Lakes were projected to see highs in the teens or single digits and lows below zero for the rest of the week and into the new year.</p> <p>The National Weather Service said wind chills in many areas Thursday could make temperatures feel below zero.</p> <p>People in Erie, Pennsylvania, continued to dig out from a storm that brought 34 inches of snow on</p>

	<p>Christmas Day, smashing the daily snowfall record for the Great Lakes city of 8 inches, and 26.5 more inches on Tuesday. More than 65 inches total fell on the city in just a few days.</p> <p>Strong westerly winds over Lake Erie picked up moisture, developed into snow and converged with opposing winds, dumping snow in a band along the shore from Ohio to New York, said Zach Sefcovic, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Cleveland.</p> <p>In New York, communities near Lake Ontario's eastern end, including Redfield and Boylston, also saw around 5 feet of snow this week.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Does the help help the homeless?
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/fe7fd4aab59640aa86011043f7ff6703/Food,-showers,-tents:-Does-the-help-help-the-homeless?
GIST	<p>ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Mohammed Aly does not see any reason why he shouldn't try to ease the lives of Orange County's homeless. But the authorities — and many of his neighbors — disagree.</p> <p>Aly, a 28-year-old lawyer and activist, has been arrested three times as he campaigned on behalf of street people. Recently, he was denied permission to install portable toilets on a dried-up riverbed, site of an encampment of roughly 400 homeless.</p> <p>“Put yourself in their position: Would you want a toilet, or would you not want a toilet?” he asked. “It is a question of basic empathy.”</p> <p>But his detractors — engaged in a dispute that rages up and down America's West Coast, as the region struggles to cope with a rising tide of homelessness — say Aly and other do-gooders are doing more harm than good. However well-meaning, critics say, those who provide the homeless with tents and tarps, showers and toilets, hot meals and pet food, are enabling them to remain unsheltered.</p> <p>And not coincidentally, they note, nuisances of homelessness like trash and unsanitary conditions fester and aberrant behavior continues.</p> <p>In California, the San Diego County community of El Cajon passed a measure that curtails feeding the homeless, citing health concerns. In Los Angeles, city officials have closed and re-opened restrooms for those on Skid Row amid similar controversies.</p> <p>The issue is hotly debated across Orange County, a cluster of suburbs and small cities known more for surf culture and Disneyland than its legions of poor.</p> <p>In the tony seaside enclave of Dana Point, neighbors fear a nightly meal is drawing homeless to a popular state beach where teens play beach volleyball and families picnic and surf.</p> <p>On the dusty riverbed 30 miles (48 kilometers) north, a van furnished with shower stalls parks alongside the homeless encampment; those living in the string of tattered tents add their names to a list of dozens waiting to bathe. While the mobile unit aims to help those living on the trash-strewn strip, neighbors worry the 2-mile-long (3-kilometer-long) encampment is becoming more entrenched in an area where they once jogged and biked.</p> <p>“If the ultimate goal is to get them under a roof, why on Earth are you giving all the advantages you would have under a roof on the riverbed?” asked Shaun Dove, a 46-year-old soon-to-be retired policeman from Anaheim, who lives less than a mile from the riverbed in a palm-tree lined neighborhood of three-bedroom homes.</p> <p>“There's no doubt that giving them stuff there prevents them from a desire to move.”</p>

—

The number of homeless living in Orange County has climbed 8 percent over the last two years. In the United States, homelessness rose slightly in the last year to nearly 554,000, pushed up largely by increases on the West Coast, federal data shows. The increase is driven by soaring housing costs, though a drug addiction crisis and need for mental health services are also factors.

Advocates say the homeless population has become more visible as police have cracked down on rules barring camping, driving people from parks and bus benches to a few centralized locations, such as the flood control channel along the Santa Ana River in Anaheim.

Everybody knows that the only solution is more housing; there aren't enough beds available in a county where the median home price hovers near \$700,000. Until there are, many well-meaning residents want to try to alleviate what they feel is a humanitarian crisis by bringing food and other assistance to the homeless.

In a small community like Dana Point, there is no shelter. The nightly meals began more than two decades ago at local churches but were moved to Doheny State Beach after a late night stabbing between two homeless residents.

The picturesque city on bluffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean is known for its million dollar homes and scenic harbor. But homeless have long been drawn to Dana Point and other beach communities which offer public access and wide open spaces — and the beauty and sunshine that lure so many people to California's shores.

In the late afternoon, volunteers arrive at the beach parking lot with folding tables and trays of chicken or beef or fish and fruit. They often also hand out a sack lunch for the next day to several dozen homeless, day laborers and poor who line up to eat after bowing their heads in a brief prayer.

The homeless say as much as they appreciate it, the food isn't keeping them on the streets.

Gholamreza Haghghi, 59, said he has been sleeping in the nearby brush for more than two decades — well before meals were served there — and has nowhere else to go. Jose Luis Gonzalez, 60, said he has been living in his motor home since splitting with his wife and sometimes stops by the suppers to see friends and have a meal. Another homeless man who refused to give his name said he heads there simply to eat.

"I come here because it's a Band-Aid," the 55-year-old said. "It doesn't help me tomorrow. It doesn't. But it helps me today."

Volunteers say the homeless are drawn to the beaches because of the open space and access to water and restrooms — not the meals. They feel that feeding people can build trust and lead the homeless to additional services, including housing.

"We understand that some residents and business owners in Dana Point are experiencing problems with the homeless. We are adamant, though, and disagree with the fact that we are contributing to the problem," said Chris Phillips, who helps lead the volunteer network known as Welcome INN.

Tell that to Brian Brandt, a 55-year-old lawyer. He jogs at the state beach and takes his six children there to surf but these days he doesn't let them go on their own. He said he's seen volatile outbursts among the homeless and frequent police calls and wishes volunteers would stop offering meals at a place meant for community recreation.

"I don't want to be seen as a bad guy — 'OK, look at this heartless dude,'" he said. "I don't feel safe. I don't feel like my kids are safe."

Robert Marbut, a consultant to communities on homelessness, believes it's misguided to provide housing or other services without heavy incentives for recipients to be in treatment programs for mental health problems, addiction or other issues.

"Anytime you give out services without treatment," Marbut said, "that's enabling, period. ... You've got to serve the food in a place where mental health is being provided."

But Marbut insists that camping bans or crackdowns don't work. And in fact, the encampment at the riverbed began when police in a host of cities refused to let the homeless sleep in parks or on bus benches. They headed to the trail along the flood channel, which is county property and cuts through several cities.

In recent years, the number of tents on the trail along the dried out riverbed has soared. Tents and tarps are surrounded by cardboard boxes and litter. Some of the people who live there travel up and down the trail on bikes, toting blankets or cans for recycling.

People say they ended up there for different reasons. For some, it was drug addiction. Others lost their jobs and couldn't make rent.

Aly, the homeless advocate, said for those living there basic sanitation is key. His latest plan is to station a trailer he fitted with portable toilets and shower stalls on a street near the encampment but Anaheim city officials have raised health and safety concerns.

Many neighbors want help moved off the trail entirely. They said nearby neighborhoods have suffered as the encampment has grown. Hypodermic needles have been found among pine needles in a park next to an elementary school. Shopping carts rattle as they're pushed down otherwise quiet streets.

Some homeowners said their neighbors' mail has gone missing, and potted plants from outside their homes. Some moved to Anaheim years ago when the city was smaller and more suburban to escape the bustle and traffic of Los Angeles. Now, they find themselves grappling with some of the same big city problems.

City officials said they want to move people off the riverbed and that any aid should be part of a broader effort to help people find a way out: "The goal shouldn't be to make it slightly more comfortable there to live that way but rather, how can we get those folks to a better place?" said city spokesman Mike Lyster.

Unfortunately, those better places are limited. Orange County has shelter beds but they largely fill up. And many homeless said they don't like the shelter's curfew or rules barring pets and prefer their privacy, even outdoors. From 2015 to earlier this year, the number of people staying in Orange County shelters went down slightly, but the number living on the streets jumped by 17 percent, federal data shows.

County authorities say they want to clear the riverbed and are trying to connect the men and women living there with the assistance they need to get back on their feet. Last summer, the county started providing showers along with case management services, hoping they can help those who want to find a way out.

Larry Ford, a 53-year-old U.S. army veteran, said he is grateful for any help. But like those at the beach in Dana Point, he insists food and showers don't tether him to the tents surrounded by plastic bottles and toppled furniture.

"Look at this," he said, pointing to heaps of garbage by his feet. "What is this enabling here?"

"This is devastation."

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HEADLINE	12/28 China tests hypersonic ballistic missile
SOURCE	https://thediplomat.com/2017/12/introducing-the-df-17-chinas-newly-tested-ballistic-missile-armed-with-a-hypersonic-glide-vehicle/
GIST	<p>China carried out the first flight-tests of a new kind of ballistic missile with a hypersonic glide vehicle (HGV) in November, The Diplomat has learned.</p> <p>According to a U.S. government source who described recent intelligence assessments on the People’s Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF) on the condition of anonymity, China recently conducted two tests of a new missile known as the DF-17.</p> <p>The first test took place on November 1 and the second test took place on November 15. The November 1 test was the first Chinese ballistic missile test to take place after the conclusion of the first plenum of the Communist Party of China’s 19th Party Congress in October.</p> <p>During the November 1 test flight, which took place from the Jiuquan Space Launcher Center in Inner Mongolia, the missile’s payload flew to a range of approximately 1,400 kilometers with the HGV flying at a depressed altitude of around 60 kilometers following the completion of the DF-17’s ballistic and reentry phases.</p> <p>HGVs begin powered flight after separating from their ballistic missile boosters, which follow a standard ballistic trajectory to give the payload vehicle sufficient altitude.</p> <p>Parts of the U.S. intelligence community assess that the DF-17 is a medium-range system, with a range capability between 1,800 and 2,500 kilometers. The missile is expected to be capable of delivering both nuclear and conventional payloads and may be capable of being configured to deliver a maneuverable reentry vehicle instead of an HGV.</p> <p>Most of the missile’s flight time during the November 1 flight test was powered by the HGV during the glide phase, the source said. The missile successfully made impact at a site in Xinjiang Province, outside Qiemo, “within meters” of the intended target, the source added. The duration of the HGV’s powered flight was nearly 11 minutes during that test.</p> <p>The HGV payload that China tested in November was specifically designed for the DF-17, the source told The Diplomat, while noting that parts of the U.S. intelligence community assess that the DF-17 is heavily based on the PLARF’s DF-16B short-range ballistic missile, which is already deployed.</p> <p>“The missile is explicitly designed for operational HGV implementation and not as a test bed,” the source said, describing U.S. intelligence assessments of the DF-17. This was “the first HGV test in the world using a system intended to be fielded operationally,” the source added.</p> <p>The DF-17, per current U.S. intelligence assessments, is expected to reach initial operating capability around 2020.</p> <p>“Although hypersonic glide vehicles and missiles flying non-ballistic trajectories were first proposed as far back as World War II, technological advances are only now making these systems practicable,” Vice Admiral James Syring, director of the U.S. Missile Defense Agency, remarked in June, during a testimony before the U.S. House Armed Services Committee.</p> <p>Outside these missiles, China has conducted seven known tests of experimental hypersonic glide vehicles. These tests took place between 2014 and 2016.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 UN: children faced shocking violence
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SOURCE	http://time.com/5080963/unicef-children-conflict-violence/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>Children have been subject to a widespread and “shocking” scale of violence this year, the U.N.’s children fund said, as conflicts around the world have increasingly targeted and victimized the most vulnerable.</p> <p>As violence spread across the Middle East, Africa, Myanmar, and eastern Ukraine, children have found themselves on the front lines, used as human shields or recruited as fighters by armed or extremist groups. They have been subject to sexual violence, forced marriage, abduction, and enslavement, UNICEF said in a press release. Even after fighting has stopped, UNICEF said, children often continue to suffer from malnutrition and trauma, and lack access to adequate medical facilities, which are often destroyed in war.</p> <p>“Children are being targeted and exposed to attacks and brutal violence in their homes, schools and playgrounds,” said Manuel Fontaine, UNICEF Director of Emergency Programmes. “As these attacks continue year after year, we cannot become numb. Such brutality cannot be the new normal.”</p> <p>The report singled out several conflict hotspots in 2017, including western Africa, where Boko Haram forced 135 children into suicide bombings, a fivefold increase over last year. In Iraq and Syria, children have reportedly been used as human shields, maimed and killed, or trapped in besieged areas under intense bombardment as fighting between Syrian rebel forces and forces loyal to to President Bashar al-Assad entered its sixth year.</p> <p>In civil-war wracked Yemen, fighting and a Saudi Arabia-imposed blockade has created a humanitarian catastrophe, with 5,000 children confirmed dead or injured and 1.8 million children suffering from malnutrition. A cholera epidemic is believed to have surpassed one million cases, with the outbreak killing more than 2,000 people.</p> <p>Children account for more than half of the 655,000 Rohingya refugees who have fled violence in western Myanmar since August 2017. In sprawling refugee camps in Bangladesh, they are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition and disease, including a diphtheria outbreak that has already claimed 22 lives, according to the U.K.’s Department for International Development.</p> <p>The report also highlighted concerns about child recruitment and abduction in Somalia and Central African Republic, while in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 850,000 children have been displaced by fighting. In eastern Ukraine, 220,000 children are endangered by landmines and other unexploded ordinances along a 310 mile de facto border that is “becoming one of the most mine-contaminated places on earth.”</p> <p>UNICEF called on all parties involved in conflict to “abide by their obligations under international law” and “immediately end violations against children and the targeting of civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals.”</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Russia: US meddling in election
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/dec/27/russia-accuses-us-election-interference-condemning/
GIST	<p>Russia’s Foreign Ministry has accused the United States of meddling in next year’s Kremlin race after the State Department condemned election officials for disqualifying Alexei Navalny, a prominent opposition politician who planned to challenge incumbent President Vladimir Putin in 2018.</p> <p>The Russian Central Election Commission barred Mr. Navalny from running for president this week, prompting the U.S. State Department to issue a statement Tuesday evening expressing concerns with Moscow’s “ongoing crackdown against independent voices, from journalists to civil society activists and opposition politicians.”</p> <p>“These actions indicate the Russian government has failed to protect space in Russia for the exercise of</p>

human rights and fundamental freedoms,” the State Department said in the statement, Business Insider first reported. “More broadly, we urge the government of Russia to hold genuine elections that are transparent, fair and free and that guarantee the free expression of the will of the people, consistent with its international human rights obligations.”

The spokeswoman for Russia’s Foreign Ministry cited the State Department’s statement in a Facebook post Tuesday evening accusing the U.S. of meddling in next March’s election.

“This State Department statement, which I’m sure will be repeated, is a direct interference in our electoral process and internal affairs,” wrote spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, as translated by The Moscow Times.

Ms. Zakharova also mentioned recent measures requiring certain Russian media outlets to register in the U.S. as foreign agents, accusing the U.S of harassing foreign reporters and “investing huge amounts of money into ‘countering Russian propaganda,’ which is how they label anyone who they disagree with,” The Times translated.

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HEADLINE	12/27 WSDOT explains train speed limits
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/855029/wsdot-train-derailment-speed-limits/
GIST	<p>The Washington State Department of Transportation is responding to questions left in the wake of a fatal train derailment near DuPont earlier this month, stating that speed limit signs are posted before the site of the incident.</p> <p>“With the recent derailment of an Amtrak Cascades train, we wanted to talk a bit about the Point Defiance Bypass and our agency’s work to develop it for Amtrak Cascades passenger train service we want to answer questions that have arisen about the tracks where the train derailed.” WSDOT states in a recent blog post.</p> <p>The official cause of the train derailment has not been announced. The National Transportation Safety Board is conducting an investigation into the incident and is not expected to come to a conclusion for up to a year. But WSDOT’s post makes a point of addressing the speed limits leading up to the site where a sharp curve in the tracks is located south of DuPont.</p> <p>The train that derailed was reportedly traveling in excess of 80 mph; the speed limit for the curve is 30 mph.</p> <p>“The bypass tracks have a reduced speed limit before the curve where the derailment took place to inform engineers to decrease their speed to negotiate the curve. The maximum speed limit decreases from 79 mph to 30, with signs posted two miles before the speed zone and just before the speed zone approaching the curve. Amtrak is responsible for ensuring all engineers on this specific set of tracks are qualified. It is common for railroads to have areas of reduced speeds due to curves or other factors, as found along the entire Cascades route.</p> <p>Trains successfully ran the bypass track numerous times in the past few months during track testing, locomotive testing and engineer qualification on the tracks, and the ceremonial train ride with passengers on Dec. 15 during the new station dedication.”</p> <p>The Point Defiance Bypass is a new railroad route along I-5 around DuPont. The train derailment happened during the inaugural run of the new service between Seattle and Portland on Dec. 18. The tracks are meant to take passenger service off of the previous route that runs along the shore of Puget Sound south of Tacoma. Sound Transit owns the stretch of tracks and recently completed upgrades and other work on the route.</p> <p>WSDOT’s post also explains that planning for the bypass began more than 10 years ago. It also states that</p>

	the bypass meets all Federal Railroad Administration requirements
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HEADLINE	12/27 New Year's at the Needle
SOURCE	http://www.king5.com/article/news/local/ring-in-2018-with-new-years-at-the-needle/281-502828048
GIST	<p>Celebrate the arrival of 2018 with a dazzling fireworks show in downtown Seattle. The iconic Space Needle transforms into a 650-foot launch pad for a stunning display set to a unique soundtrack curated by KEXP.</p> <p>HOW TO WATCH The team at KING 5 Evening hosts the pre-party from the shadow of the Space Needle, starting at 11:35 p.m. Watch live on KING 5, stream on king5.com or the KING 5 app, or watch on the KING 5 Facebook page. Fireworks start at the stroke of midnight and dance for 10 minutes to music hand-picked by the talented DJs at KEXP. Stay tuned after the fireworks as KING 5 Evening celebrates with the crowd and shares photos from around the Northwest.</p> <p>SHARE YOUR VIEW Be part of the show by sharing your photos with KING 5. Use the hashtag #NYESeattle on Instagram and Twitter, or post your photos to the KING 5 Facebook page. Join the Facebook event and be sure to invite your friends!</p> <p>FORECAST After a snowy Christmas, we're looking DRY for New Year's Eve! But bundle up - it will be a chilly night in downtown Seattle with temperatures dipping to 38 degrees. Check the latest KING 5 Weather forecast as we get closer to the countdown.</p> <p>WATCHING IN PERSON The Seattle Center is free to visit, although private celebrations will be held nearby. Visit here for details about watching the fireworks in person.</p> <p>WHAT ABOUT THE SPACE NEEDLE CONSTRUCTION? The Space Needle is sporting a new look these days as construction continues on a new restaurant. But don't worry, the annual fireworks are a GO and seem to get more and more impressive each year. The fireworks are sponsored by T-Mobile and you'll see the Space Needle illuminated in T-Mobile's distinctive magenta brand color for the 33rd annual celebration.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 New year: new wage, sick leave rules
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/2018-brings-changes-in-washingtons-minimum-wage-sick-leave-rules/
GIST	<p>Another year is on its way in, and that means another minimum-wage increase for workers across Washington state. This time, Jan. 1 also brings paid sick leave to nearly all employed Washingtonians.</p> <p>The changes to workplace wages in 2018 will be mostly incremental. Washington state's minimum-wage increases from \$11 to \$11.50 per hour. Young workers — 14 or 15 years old — can be paid at a lower rate, \$9.78 per hour. (Those younger teens are restricted in how many hours they can work, which is generally 16 hours per week during the school year and 40 hours a week when school is out.)</p> <p>Across the state, just 1.4 percent of full-time-equivalent jobs earned Washington's minimum wage of \$9.47 in 2016, a drop from 2.1 percent in 2015, according to the state Employment Security Department. The decrease is largely due to Seattle's rising minimum wage, which lifted many people to higher earnings.</p>

	<p>Implementing paid sick leave will be the bigger challenge to employers, after an initiative approved by voters in 2016 takes effect on the first of the year. It calls for most full-time, part-time and temporary employees to accrue paid sick leave.</p> <p>The state paid sick-leave law ensures that employees earn at least an hour of paid time off for every 40 hours worked. That time can be used when the worker or a family member is ill, when an office or school has been closed for any health-related reason or as provided under the domestic-violence leave law.</p> <p>For some employers, especially small businesses, offering paid sick leave is a whole new world, said Tim Church, public-affairs manager for the state Department of Labor and Industries.</p> <p>The department has been holding training sessions and offering templates to get businesses on the right track. It also spent about \$250,000 on a media campaign to make businesses aware of the law.</p> <p>The state will start enforcing the new law next year, but Church said its primary goal is to make sure employers know what to do. The state first will work with companies to get them in compliance. Only if businesses don't get in line will it impose financial penalties.</p> <p>A few Washington cities already have a paid sick-leave law, among them Seattle and Tacoma. Both cities' laws are similar to the new state act, and Seattle changed its law slightly this year to match the state's law, which was more generous.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Study: rising humidity endangers lives
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/global-warming-climate-change-humidity-danger/
GIST	<p>You may have heard the expression: It's not the heat, it's the humidity. Researchers seem to agree, and are now warning that humidity is likely to increase the threat to human health from climate change-related temperature hikes in certain parts of the world.</p> <p>Those areas include the southeastern United States, the Amazon, western and central Africa, southern areas of the Mideast and Arabian peninsula, northern India and eastern China, the study authors said.</p> <p>At times, the combination of heat and high humidity in these regions could make it impossible for people to work or, in some cases, even survive, the researchers suggested. Along with harming health, these conditions could cause economic damage.</p> <p>"The conditions we're talking about basically never occur now -- people in most places have never experienced them," lead author Ethan Coffel, a graduate student at Columbia University's Earth Observatory, said in a university news release.</p> <p>"But they're projected to occur close to the end of the century," Coffel added.</p> <p>Using global climate models, the researchers mapped current and projected future "wet bulb" temperatures, which reflect the combined effects of heat and humidity.</p> <p>Lab experiments have shown a wet-bulb reading of 89.6 degrees Fahrenheit is the threshold beyond which many people would have trouble carrying out normal activities outside. This level is rarely reached anywhere today, the study authors said. But the investigators project that by the 2070s or 2080s, the mark could be reached one or two days a year in the U.S. southeast, and three to five days in parts of South America, Africa, India and China.</p> <p>According to background information in the report: "Human health impacts depend on both temperature and humidity. The human body is efficient at shedding heat through evaporative cooling [sweating], even</p>

	<p>in high air temperatures, if moisture levels are low.</p> <p>"However, in hot and humid conditions, the efficiency of evaporative cooling slows and the body may become unable to maintain a stable core temperature," the study authors wrote. This can cause heat stress, which can lead to heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps or heat rashes.</p> <p>Study co-author Alex deSherbinin, of Columbia's Center for International Earth Science Information Network, added that "it's not just about the heat, or the number of people. It's about how many people are poor, how many are old, who has to go outside to work, who has air conditioning."</p> <p>The study was published Dec. 22 in the journal Environmental Research Letters.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Getting harder to fund for infrastructure
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/gop-tax-overhaul-makes-it-harder-to-pay-for-infrastructure-in-u-s/
GIST	<p>President Donald Trump promised during the presidential campaign and after his election to lead an upgrade in our nation's infrastructure, announcing in February 2017, for instance, that he would ask Congress to approve programs designed to stimulate \$1 trillion in infrastructure investment across the country.</p> <p>At least up to this point, the President's promises with respect to infrastructure remain unfulfilled. Furthermore, the recently passed tax bill that he signed last week may create some challenges for the municipal bond market and the infrastructure sector.</p> <p><i>The facts</i></p> <p>Bridges, schools, police stations, sewer systems, levees and airports, as well as other forms of infrastructure, are essential for economic activity in America and elsewhere. But public investment in the United States has fallen sharply since the 1980s, and with this declining investment our infrastructure has aged and deteriorated in important ways (see here). The American Society of Civil Engineers recently gave U.S. infrastructure a grade of D+, and estimated that it would take \$3.6 trillion in spending to bring our infrastructure to a state of "good repair."</p> <p>The municipal bond market has been an important source of financing for infrastructure investment (see this Econofact memo). Proceeds from bond issuance paid for about 32 percent of infrastructure investment in 2015, with the rest of the funding for infrastructure coming directly from a mix of sources that includes the federal government, state and local governments, and dedicated fees. The recently passed tax bill will pose some immediate challenges for the municipal bond market and for issuers of municipal bonds, and also raises the potential for longer-term challenges. In general, the demand for municipal bonds is partly driven by the tax-exemption of their interest, which means that issuers of municipal bonds can pay lower yields than can issuers of otherwise equivalent taxable bonds. The tax-exempt status of municipal bonds has been preserved in the new tax legislation. But the fact that marginal tax rates have fallen both for individuals and especially for corporations will mean that the relative yield on municipal bonds will have to rise in order for the bonds to remain competitive as an investment choice, making financing more expensive for infrastructure projects.</p> <p>One direct effect of the tax legislation on the municipal market is the elimination of the tax deduction for "advance refunding" municipal bonds.</p> <p>Many municipal bonds are "callable" – a "call" provision means that the issuer of a bond can purchase the bond back from investors before the bond's maturity at a pre-specified price. For example, a bond may have a 30-year maturity but be callable after 10 years, meaning that the issuer would have the right to buy the bond back and retire it after 10 years. This provision allows issuers to take advantage of falling interest rate levels. Current tax rules allow a municipal issuer to "advance refund" (one time) an issue that is not yet callable. The loss of the advance refunding provision raises the potential cost of issuing municipal bonds by limiting the ability to refinance debt in response to decreasing interest rates. Veteran municipal</p>

analyst George Friedlander of the Court Street Group has recently suggested that with the new limits on advance refunding, issuers and underwriters will have an incentive to develop more costly, exotic and opaque structures involving derivatives that accomplish the same objective while complying with the new law (see [this article](#) in *The Bond Buyer*). But even with these potential responses to the new tax legislation, the new limitations on advance refunding will, on net, raise the cost of tax-exempt financing for infrastructure projects.

The deliberations regarding the tax bill raised uncertainty regarding the tax-exempt status of [Private Activity Bonds \(PABs\)](#) going into the future. PABs are tax-exempt bonds issued to finance the construction of private-sector facilities that have a significant public purpose. The PAB market is a particularly important tool for financing low-income housing. The House version of the tax bill proposed total elimination of PABs, and even though PABs have survived in the new tax law signed by President Trump, there have already been signals from Congressional Republicans that the question of tax exemption for PABs may be revisited very soon. The total Private Activity Bond issuance volume was over \$35 billion in 2016, a bit less than 10 percent of the total municipal market, so the loss of this financing channel would be an important change in the overall market and a particular shock to important subsectors of the market such as housing.

The impact of the tax law on state and local finances could also affect infrastructure spending. State and local expenditures account for roughly [three quarters](#) of total spending on infrastructure. But state and local governments will likely face an important new headwind in raising revenues under the new law: The new tax law will cap federal tax deductions for state and local taxes (the SALT deduction) at \$10,000. The curtailment of this tax deduction will make it more expensive for individuals who itemize their deductions for their state and local taxes and will thus hurt the taxing capacity of cities and states. This development will reduce somewhat the resources that are available for cities and states to fund new infrastructure investments. The impact of this change in the SALT deduction will be particularly important in higher-tax areas such as New York and California.

A medium-to-longer term impact of the new tax law will come through its impact on our federal fiscal position. The overwhelming balance of opinion among economists outside the administration is that the new tax bill will significantly increase the federal debt. If one begins with the presumption that this debt must be repaid, then the resources will eventually have to come from somewhere. The need to raise additional funds means that the tax exemption for important municipal bond market sectors remains very credibly threatened in the future. This drain in resources to repay the federal debt does not augur well for future investment in infrastructure and for our ability to close our existing infrastructure gap.

What this means

Infrastructure is essential for economic activity and growth, but our nation has accumulated an infrastructure "debt." President Trump's campaign promises to stimulate investment in infrastructure remain unrealized, and the new tax law will create some challenges for that market. And the move away from federal fiscal balance means that the municipal tax exemption may come under threat in later rounds of budget balancing.

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HEADLINE	12/28 Real estate 'climate gentrification'
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/climate-gentrification-home-values-rising-sea-level/
GIST	<p>Homes at higher elevations in Miami are gaining value at a faster clip than those closer to sea level. It's an accelerating trend, and it has residents and real estate agents -- in Miami and other coastal communities -- asking whether "climate gentrification" has arrived.</p> <p>The term, which only recently entered the lexicon, describes the role of climate change in recalibrating land values, a phenomenon that ultimately could displace low-income and minority residents in a similar fashion as urban gentrification. As sea levels rise and flooding persists, the thinking goes in the case of Miami, waterfront property will lose some of its luster and higher-situated neighborhoods like Little Haiti</p>

	<p>and Little Havana will become more attractive.</p> <p>The professor who was first to publish research using the phrase "climate gentrification" isn't convinced that's the main culprit in Miami. At least not yet. Jesse M. Keenan, a researcher on urban development and climate adaptation at Harvard's Graduate School of Design, tracked the rate of price appreciation since 1971 for more than 250,000 residential properties in Miami-Dade County, and compared those figures to elevation. Keenan found that properties at high elevations have long appreciated faster in Miami, mostly because of nonclimate factors.</p> <p>However, since 2000, the correlation between elevation and price appreciation has grown stronger, which Keenan, in an interview with CBS MoneyWatch, suggested may be "early signaling" of preference for properties at higher elevations and a reaction to persistent nuisance flooding in lower areas.</p> <p>His prediction: Over the next 10 years, climate change will become a more significant factor in the real estate market for many cities. He expects a "slow burn" toward a tipping point -- similar to the foreclosure crisis -- when all of a sudden values drop precipitously for high-risk properties.</p> <p>"This is real," Keenan said. "There are actual people spending lots of money thinking about how to make money from climate change. We have to come to terms with this sooner than later."</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 China criticizes US, German embassies
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/china-criticizes-us-german-embassies-interference-52022810?
GIST	<p>The Chinese government has criticized the U.S. and German embassies in Beijing for expressing disappointment about the prosecution of a Chinese rights activist and a lawyer.</p> <p>Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters Thursday that a joint statement issued by the embassies about the cases amounted to interference in China's internal affairs.</p> <p>The embassies had urged China to release Wu Gan, a prominent activist who was given an eight-year prison sentence on Tuesday for subversion, and to allow a rights lawyer to resume his work without restrictions.</p> <p>Hua called the remarks "irresponsible" and said China firmly opposes such statements.</p> <p>Wu was among the first activists and lawyers caught up in an intense crackdown by authorities that began in 2015. His secretive one-day trial was held in August.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Deported Ethiopians claim Saudi abuses
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ethiopians-deported-en-masse-saudi-arabia-allege-abuses-52022409?
GIST	<p>Undocumented Ethiopian migrants who are being forcibly deported from Saudi Arabia by the thousands in a new crackdown say they were mistreated by authorities while detained.</p> <p>In interviews with The Associated Press upon their arrival home, the returnees described beatings, theft and stays in dirty prison camps. Their accounts brought to light one of the world's busiest and most dangerous migrant routes but one that remains overlooked amid the larger rush toward Europe.</p> <p>Saudi Arabia, like other rich Gulf nations, is a magnet for hundreds of thousands of people from impoverished East African nations like Ethiopia and Somalia. They pay traffickers for rides in boats across</p>

the narrow waters to Yemen, where they make their way by land through a war zone.

In August, traffickers heaved scores of migrants into the sea off Yemen, leaving more than 50 to drown. In March, more than 30 Somali migrants, including children, were killed — apparently in a helicopter gunship attack by a Saudi-led coalition at war in Yemen.

More than 111,500 migrants landed on Yemen's shores last year, up from around 100,000 the year before, according to the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat. Those who make it to Saudi Arabia often find employment as domestic workers and farm workers, sending money to support families back home.

Saudi Arabia's latest wave of deportations began Nov. 11 after several months of warnings by the government. Saudi authorities say the kingdom has detained around 250,000 people violating its residency laws in the crackdown, with approximately 50,000 already forcibly flown out of the country.

Of those who entered the country illegally, 72 percent were from Yemen and 26 percent were Ethiopians.

Those arriving home in Ethiopia described the process as jarring and unfair. The six who spoke to the AP at the airport in the capital, Addis Ababa, said they were robbed of their possessions by "Saudi police officers" who shared their money between them. Some of the returnees said they saw compatriots being shot and wounded when they tried to escape police roundups.

"The prison cell I was put into was so dirty that some of us were severely sick. It was like a toilet," said Sadiq Ahmed, a former teacher who went to Saudi Arabia five years ago and was detained for 11 days before his deportation. "As if this was not enough, we were robbed of our belongings. I came here with nothing. I know lots of people who went insane because of this torment."

Human Rights Watch researcher Adam Coogle said that in interviews with dozens of Yemeni migrants in a previous Saudi crackdown in 2014, many "described serious abuses during the process of detention and deportation, including attacks by security forces." The rights group has not documented the current campaign, he said.

Saudi authorities did not respond to requests for comment.

Ethiopia's government says more than 14,000 of its citizens have been deported since mid-November and 70,000 have returned voluntarily, but the International Organization Migration says the number that has left forcibly or voluntarily since the amnesty period ended in June has reached 96,000.

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HEADLINE	12/27 Seattle crises part of national problem
SOURCE	http://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattles-crises-are-part-of-a-national-problem/669640269
GIST	<p>Seattle's homelessness and housing crises are part of a much larger and concerning problem of American poverty, according to a United Nations expert's recent report.</p> <p>"I think the United States has an incomparable record," Philip Alston told KIRO Radio's Dave Ross. "It's one of the world's richest countries, by far, but it's also a country with very high poverty rates — 40 million — and half of those people are living in extreme poverty and therefore dire circumstances. We have the highest child poverty rates in the United States. It has the lowest levels of social well-being across a range of indicators."</p> <p>"The big difference with the United States is that when I go to other countries, they say, 'We just don't have the money. We can't afford to provide basic services to the poorest in our community,'" he said. "The United States, on the other hand, clearly does have the money. It just mobilized one-and-a-half trillion dollars in the tax reform to assist the super-rich. It could have diverted a small amount of those resources to helping the super-poor."</p>

Alston is the United Nation's special rapporteur on extreme poverty. He recently toured the country, documenting the current state of American poverty. What he found: unsanitary conditions; that poverty disproportionately affects people of color and women; that it affects large numbers of white people; and that America's trumpet call for human rights is often not heard within its own borders.

"It is pretty shocking to see, in the midst of a very rich developed country, pockets that remind one very much of living in a third world country," he said.

It didn't matter if he was on Skid Row in Los Angeles or a poor community in Alabama, America's inequality problem spared no region. It's something that Western Washington is quite familiar with — tents lining sidewalks and underneath roadways; an opioid crisis leaving used syringes scattered on the ground; people unable to afford or obtain affordable housing; and a homeless service system that is unable to keep up with demand.

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HEADLINE	12/27 DHS increases worldwide presence
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/us-homeland-security-rises-worldwide/2017/12/27/id/833939/
GIST	<p>The Department of Homeland Security is increasing its presence around the world, with an estimated 2,000 employees, including Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents to Transportation Security Administration officials, are deployed in more than 70 countries, according to The New York Times.</p> <p>"Many threats to the homeland begin overseas, and that's where we need to be," said James Nealon, assistant secretary for international engagement.</p> <p>Some in European countries have criticized the increase, while other allies say that a longer United States reach is helpful in ramping up security, the Times reported.</p> <p>A member of Germany's Left Party said U.S. customs officers are extending a travel ban to the U.S. by interviewing travelers in Germany before they are allowed to board planes to the United States.</p> <p>Costs of the operations also are an issue, with costs of stationing an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent overseas is around four times more costly than a domestic posting, according to the Times.</p> <p>The work of the officers has made an impact against extremists, drug smugglers, wildlife traffickers, and Nigerian scammers in Kenya and South Africa.</p> <p>Homeland is pushing to bring in more ICE special agents and analysts for offices in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador to combat drug trafficking, the Times noted.</p> <p>"You have to be on the ground and have the relationships with local law enforcement... you can't just parachute in," said Steve R. Martin, the special agent in charge in Pretoria, about the agency's role in arresting a drug smuggling kingpin.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 IG: DOJ mishandled sex harassment
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/sexual-misconduct/justice-department-mishandled-sex-harassment-cases-says-report-n832811
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Justice Department is readying its response to a May Inspector General report that found "potential systemic" issues in the way the agency deals with sexual harassment complaints, including 19 "substantiated" allegations made between fiscal years 2012 and 2016, a spokesman told NBC</p>

News on Wednesday.

The department's response follows a Washington Post report that highlighted the Inspector General's findings and highlighted several additional examples of misconduct that came to light after a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, including a finding that a chief deputy in the U.S. Marshals Service had sex with nine women in his office.

Justice Department spokesman Ian Prior said Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein convened a working group to look at the issues outlined in the report and the group would soon be issuing "recommendations for action."

Prior pointed out that the examples highlighted by the Inspector General occurred during the Obama administration, and not under current Attorney General Jeff Sessions' leadership.

"The Department was very disappointed with the issues that occurred in the Obama administration and strives for a workplace free of harassment and other misconduct for all of its 115,000 employees," Prior said.

The report covers the fiscal years 2012 through 2016.

The majority of Justice Department employees are non-political and remain in place even as administrations change. The report detailed abuse by attorneys in the Civil Division, and employees in the offices of U.S. Attorneys, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Marshals Service and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Inspector General Michael Horowitz wrote in a June 1 memorandum to Rosenstein that an FBI supervisory management and program analyst subjected subordinates to approximately three years of sexual harassment, despite the analyst undergoing four counselling sessions and signing a pledge to refrain from such conduct.

According to the full Inspector General report, an employee of the Civil Division was accused of inappropriate comments and touching. The allegations were substantiated and the employee was reprimanded, but only transferred within the Civil Division.

Horowitz notes that Civil Division employees said it was difficult to remove an employee, even after cases of serious sexual harassment.

Transfers can be used to "avoid imposing a more severe disciplinary action and may create a risk that the same type of misconduct will occur in the new environment, placing other Department employees at risk unnecessarily," the memorandum from Horowitz said.

In some cases, employees with pending investigations into alleged sexual harassment were given performance bonuses, according to the memorandum.

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HEADLINE	12/27 Russia: market bombing injures 10
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russia-explosion-injures-st-petersburg-supermarket-52011847?
GIST	<p>At least 10 people were injured Wednesday by an explosion at a supermarket in St. Petersburg, Russia's second-largest city and the site of a deadly subway bombing this year.</p> <p>The Investigative Committee, the nation's top investigative agency, said a device containing 200 grams (7 ounces) of explosives went off at a storage area for customers' bags. It said the device was rigged with shrapnel to cause more damage.</p>

	<p>No one has claimed responsibility for the explosion at a branch of the Perekrestok supermarket chain in the city's northwest Kalininsky district.</p> <p>Alexander Klaus, the chief of the local branch of the Investigative Committee, said 10 people were hospitalized with injuries.</p> <p>A criminal investigation has been launched.</p> <p>Russian President Vladimir Putin telephoned U.S. President Donald Trump earlier this month to thank him for a CIA tip that helped thwart a series of bombings in St. Petersburg, Putin's home town.</p> <p>The Federal Security Service, or FSB, said seven suspects linked to the Islamic State group were arrested in connection to the alleged plot. The Kremlin said the arrested suspects had planned to bomb St. Petersburg's Kazan Cathedral and other crowded sites.</p> <p>In April, a suicide bombing in the St. Petersburg's subway left 16 people dead and wounded more than 50. Russian authorities identified the bomber who blew himself up on a subway line as Akbardzhon Dzhaliyov, a 22-year old Kyrgyz-born Russian national.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Uganda: 100 rebels killed in Congo
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/uganda-forces-killed-100-rebels-congo-52009557?
GIST	<p>Uganda's military says its forces have killed over 100 rebels in eastern Congo accused of carrying out the attack that left 15 U.N. peacekeepers dead earlier this month.</p> <p>The military said in a statement Wednesday that several other Allied Democratic Forces rebels were wounded in air and artillery raids.</p> <p>The military says the operation has been carried out from Ugandan territory and no Ugandan forces are on the ground in Congo.</p> <p>The Dec. 7 attack on a U.N. base that killed peacekeepers from Tanzania was the deadliest single assault on a peacekeeping mission in almost 25 years.</p> <p>The ADF originated in Uganda as a rebel force against the government and carried out deadly bombings in the 1990s. A military campaign forced them to relocate to eastern Congo.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Ukraine, separatist rebels swap prisoners
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ukrainian-govt-separatists-hold-prisoner-exchange-52007849?cid=clicksource_76_4_article%20roll_articleroll_hed
GIST	<p>Ukrainian authorities and Russian-backed separatist rebels conducted a massive prisoner exchange Wednesday, the largest such trade of captives since the start of the conflict and a sign of visible progress in the implementation of a 2015 peace deal.</p> <p>Separatists from the self-proclaimed separatist republics in Luhansk and Donetsk regions handed over 74 prisoners, and Ukrainian authorities delivered 233.</p> <p>Larisa Sargan, a spokeswoman for the country's prosecutor general's office, said on Facebook that one of the 74 prisoners released by the separatists said she would stay in Donetsk.</p>

	<p>The prisoners, some of whom had been held for more than a year, were exchanged in the town of Horlivka and the village of Zaitseve with their belongings.</p> <p>The exchange was supervised by observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, a trans-Atlantic security and rights group that has deployed monitors to eastern Ukraine.</p> <p>The OSCE welcomed the swap and urged the two sides to build on the momentum from it.</p> <p>Ukraine was supposed to release 306 people, but dozens chose to stay in Ukraine or had been freed earlier, said Viktor Medvedchuk, who monitored the exchange on the Ukrainian side.</p> <p>Many of the captives are not combatants; some were activists and bloggers who were charged with spying or treason.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 America's little regulated body trade
SOURCE	https://ca.news.yahoo.com/special-report-business-where-human-bodies-were-butchered-131025725.html
GIST	<p>PHOENIX (Reuters) - Sam Kazemi stood over the old man's corpse. Nearby lay pliers, a scalpel and a motorized saw designed to cut drywall and pipe.</p> <p>On a busy day, Kazemi might harvest body parts from five or six people who had donated their bodies to science. On this day in November 2013, the corpse before Kazemi typified the donors who gave their remains to his employer, Biological Resource Center.</p> <p>The man was a retired factory worker with a ninth-grade education. He had lived with his wife in a mobile home in Mohave Valley, Arizona, and had died six days earlier, aged 75. His name was Conrad Patrick.</p> <p>But after he died and his body was donated, Patrick became a commodity, known by the company's initials and a number: BRC13112103.</p> <p>Reuters reviewed thousands of internal BRC records and confidential law enforcement documents containing profiles of Patrick and 2,280 other donors. The documents include invoices and inventories for thousands of body parts harvested from those people. They show how their bodies were dissected, which body parts were sent where, and why buyers obtained them.</p> <p>Kazemi helped cut up and package Patrick into seven pieces. BRC shipped Patrick's left foot to a Chicago-area orthopedic lab. His left shoulder was sent to a Las Vegas company that holds surgical seminars. His head and his spine went to a project run by the U.S. Army. And Patrick's "external reproductive organs" were sent to a local university. His right foot and left knee were placed in the company's freezers, where they became part of BRC's million-dollar inventory of flesh and bone.</p> <p>For more than a year, Reuters has examined America's body trade, a little-known and virtually unregulated industry. These businesses, which call themselves non-transplant tissue banks, are also known as body brokers.</p> <p>The operations can resemble meat-packing plants. At BRC, body parts from heads to fingernails were harvested and sold. On Saturday mornings, Kazemi taught college students how to dismember cadavers in the company lab. He also starred in a grisly training video, demonstrating how to carve out a man's spine using a motorized saw.</p> <p>The documents obtained by Reuters – along with dozens of interviews with investigators, former BRC workers and families of donors – offer an unparalleled look at how one of America's major body brokers operated.</p>

The records, never before made public, also reveal how little the government or the donors themselves understood what was happening at the company, and show in graphic detail how a cadaver becomes a commodity.

Sales invoices detail many of those transactions.

For \$607, BRC sold the liver of a public school janitor to a medical-device company. The torso of a retired bank manager, bought by a Swiss research institute, fetched \$3,191. A large Midwestern healthcare system paid \$65 for two femoral arteries, one from a church minister. And the lower legs of a union activist were purchased by a Minnesota product-development company for \$350 each.

For raw material, the industry relies in large part on people too poor to afford a funeral, offering to cremate a portion of each donated body for free.

A Reuters analysis of BRC donor files from May 3, 2011 through January 20, 2014 confirmed how important the disadvantaged were to business. The vast majority of BRC donors came from neighborhoods where the median household income fell below the state average. Four out of five donors didn't graduate from college, about twice the ratio of the country as a whole.

Before brokers accept a body, they typically present the donor or next of kin with a consent form. These agreements are often written in technical language that many donors and relatives say they find hard to understand. The documents give brokers the right to dismember the dead, then sell or rent body parts to medical researchers and educators, often for hundreds or thousands of dollars. At BRC, a whole body sold for \$5,893, records show.

Since 2004, when a federal health panel unsuccessfully called on the U.S. government to regulate the industry, Reuters found that more than 2,357 body parts obtained by brokers from at least 1,638 people have ended up misused, abused or desecrated.

Documents reviewed for this article indicate that those figures are vastly understated. The extent of BRC's operation surprised even investigators who raided the Phoenix-based company in 2014.

There, agents discovered 10 tons of frozen human remains – 1,755 total body parts that included 281 heads, 241 shoulders, 337 legs and 97 spines.

Applying a state forfeiture law, authorities hauled away the contents of BRC's freezers, filling 142 body bags. One bag held parts from at least 36 different people.

The seizure was so large that officials struggled to properly handle the body parts. When plans to cremate the remains stalled, officials brought three walk-in freezers to a military base and stacked the body bags inside, one atop another. Parts from 851 different people remained in those freezers for almost three years before they were cremated.

The raid on BRC was part of a broader federal probe into the suspected practices of one of its clients, Arthur Rathburn. A Detroit body broker, Rathburn has pleaded not guilty to charges of defrauding customers. During a 2013 search of Rathburn's warehouse, federal agents found rotting body parts along with four preserved fetuses, confidential photographs reviewed by Reuters show. It is not clear how Rathburn acquired the fetuses or what he planned to do with them. He was indicted for allegedly selling diseased body parts without warning buyers. His trial is set for January.

After the BRC raid, the company went out of business. Its founder and former owner, Stephen Gore, later pleaded guilty to fraud – not for selling body parts but for misleading customers by shipping them contaminated specimens. His punishment: probation. He is expected to testify at the Rathburn trial.

As Reuters reported last year, BRC also sold body parts to U.S. Army contractors for military

experiments. A Pentagon spokeswoman said BRC provided the body parts “under false pretenses,” misleading the Army that consent had been secured for donors to be used in destructive tests.

Among the parts BRC sold for the Army experiments were the heads and spines of Conrad Patrick and Leon Small, a 71-year-old retiree who had once managed a furniture factory.

On the consent forms Patrick and Small signed, each man checked a box stating that he did not wish to be used in military or destructive tests, records show.

But just days after Patrick and Small died, a BRC employee called their widows and persuaded them to amend the forms so their husbands could be used by the military, according to recordings of the calls reviewed by Reuters. The widows said the calls came during a traumatic time.

“I didn’t understand what they were talking about,” Dona Patrick said. “But I said ‘OK.’”

Bodies or parts from at least 20 BRC donors were used without their consent in Army experiments, Reuters found. Parts from Small and Patrick, however, were not. The military halted testing when it learned of the raid at BRC.

The shoulders of both men were sent to a for-profit surgical training company in Nevada.

The widows, Karen Small and Dona Patrick, are among two dozen next of kin who said they were surprised to learn that BRC profited from a relative’s donated body.

“They prey on people that have no money, that are poor, that have no insurance – like us,” Patrick said.

Family members of some donors said BRC employees led them to believe body donation was regulated by federal and state authorities, and that selling body parts is illegal. Based on those pitches, the relatives said they believed the remains wouldn’t be sold. In truth, there are virtually no regulations on the body trade.

“It’s a horrible thing,” Small said. “Sick.”

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HEADLINE	12/27 Social Security beneficiaries hit record
SOURCE	https://www.cnsnews.com/commentary/terence-p-jeffrey/social-security-beneficiaries-hit-record-61859250
GIST	<p>The number of Social Security beneficiaries hit a record 61,859,250 in November, according to data released by the Social Security Administration.</p> <p>At the same time, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, with unemployment at the lowest rate since 2000 (4.1 percent), there were 126,827,000 full-time workers in the United States (including government workers). Yet that equaled only 2.05 full-time workers for each person receiving Social Security benefits.</p> <p>Even when all 153,918,000 people who had jobs in November are considered (counting both full- and part-time workers), the ratio of workers to Social Security beneficiaries was about 2.49 to 1.</p> <p>The record 61,859,250 Social Security beneficiaries in November, included 45,439,781 retired workers and their dependents; 5,992,862 survivors of deceased workers; and 10,426,607 disabled workers and their dependents.</p> <p>The Social Security program has two primary elements: Old Age and Survivors Insurance and Disability Insurance. Each of these are supposed to be supported by a "payroll tax" imposed on a worker's earnings.</p> <p>The payroll tax for the OASI is 10.03 percent and is split so that one half is deducted from a worker's</p>

paycheck and the other half is paid to the government by the employer. The payroll tax for DI is 2.37 percent and, like the OASI tax, is split between a deduction from a worker's paycheck and a payment made directly by the employer.

In total, the worker and employer must pay the government 12.4 percent in taxes (on the first \$127,200 a worker makes) for the combined OASDI tax. Self-employed Americans pay the entire 12.4 percent directly.

But this is no longer enough, says the Social Security board of trustees, which includes the commissioner of Social Security and the secretaries of the Treasury, Labor and Health and Human Services.

In the past, when Social Security ran surpluses, the federal government loaned the surplus to itself so it could spend it immediately on other government programs.

In their 2017 report, the Social Security board of trustees puts it this way: "The Department of the Treasury invests trust fund reserves in interest-bearing securities issued by the U.S. Government."

Without the "interest" the government pays itself back on the money it has already spent from previous Social Security surpluses, the Social Security program would not have enough money now to pay all the current benefits it owes.

"The 2016 excess of total income over cost for the year was \$35 billion," said the trustees' report. But "total income" — as the report calls it — includes the interest the government pays itself.

"However, when interest income is excluded," the report admitted, "Social Security's cost is projected to exceed its non-interest income throughout the projection period, as it has since 2010. For 2016, cost for the year exceeded non-interest income by \$53 billion. For 2017, total income for the program is projected to exceed cost for the year by \$59 billion, and non-interest income is projected to be \$27 billion less than program cost for the year."

The trustees' report estimated that the Social Security program faces a \$12.5 trillion shortfall over 75 years.

"Through the end of 2091, the combined funds have a present-value unfunded obligation of \$12.5 trillion," said the report.

"If actions are deferred for several years, the changes necessary to maintain Social Security solvency become concentrated on fewer years and fewer generations," it said.

The report politely recommended that Congress raise taxes, cut benefits, take money from elsewhere, or use a combination of these means, to pay for Social Security.

Going into the Christmas weekend, the federal debt was \$20,492,874,492,282.58.

That equaled approximately \$133,142 in debt for each of 153,918,000 people who had a full- or part-time job in the United States in November.

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HEADLINE	12/27 Shocking scale homelessness in L.A.
SOURCE	http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5214593/Christmas-Day-2017-Downtown-Los-Angeles.html
GIST	Rubbish bags piled up by the pavements and littered across streets. Tents erected in clusters where people have camped down for the night. Dozens of directionless residents congregating by the roadside and wandering into the road.

This is what Christmas Day looked like for thousands of homeless people in the dark and dingy underbelly of Downtown Los Angeles this year.

The shocking footage - captured using a car dash camera - shows the brutal reality of life on the street for some 20,000 people in the notorious Skid Row district.

Shot on 5th Street, 6th Street and San Pedro Street, it is a stark glimpse into the day-to-day existence of some of the country's poorest citizens - including women and children.

This area of LA's central business zone is considered to be one of the most dangerous places to live in the city.

In Skid Row - one of the notorious homeless hotspots in the area - nine toilets are shared by some 2,000 people, according to a June report titled 'No Place to Go'.

A lucky few will find food and somewhere warm to sleep at shelters and rescue missions. But many are left to navigate the industrial sprawl and smoke alone.

The three-minute clip was originally published on Instagram by LA street artist Plastic Jesus then on LiveLeak by Nick Stern in the 'Citizen Journalism' video category.

It had only been live for 10 hours when it was viewed nearly 40,000 times.

In one frame of the viral footage, a man can be seen pushing a wheelchair in the middle of the road. Another wheelchair-bound man reclines listlessly on a street corner while women file their thin-looking children through the crowds.

Makeshift canopies - often simply sheets erected on poles - are packed in tightly beside one another in endless rows.

The rising cost of rent and housing in California is also forcing middle class residents into alternative accommodation.

Workers end up living in their cars by the roadside and hundreds of people - including nurses and chefs - sleep in parking lots in affluent areas like Santa Barbara.

For example, nursing assistant Marva Ericson has been sleeping in her Kia for the past three months. She showers at her local YMCA then gets dressed in her hospital scrubs for work.

The problem is so widespread that a Safe Parking Program was introduced in the area 12 years ago. It allows clients to stay overnight in the parking lots of churches, not-for-profits and government offices. In Santa Barbara alone, there are 23 parking lots currently used for the program.

Though ranked as one of the wealthiest nations, the US is home to some of the poorest communities in the world.

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HEADLINE	12/27 San Diego border crossings backlog
SOURCE	http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-border-crossing-20171227-story.html
GIST	So many people fleeing persecution in their home countries have asked for help in San Ysidro in recent weeks that federal officials have not been able to process all of them, leaving some stranded and running out of money while they wait in Tijuana.

U.S. border officials are trying to work through the backlog, but they can go only as fast as migrants can be processed and moved from temporary holding cells to immigration detention.

An official with U.S. Customs and Border Protection said the agency remains committed to meeting the care and safety needs of people in custody, and is working actively with partners, including Immigration and Customs Enforcement, to resolve the backup.

“There are potentially a number of reasons causing the San Diego area ports of entry to reach capacity; we do not have a definitive reason to offer at this time,” the official added.

Because of the backlog, close to 100 migrants lined up last week in the plaza outside the walkway that leads to PedWest, the pedestrian border crossing that opened earlier this year, Tijuana media outlets reported. Migrants slept in line, afraid of losing their places and having to wait longer for CBP to process them.

Then, Mexican officials told them they couldn’t stay in the plaza.

On Monday of last week, about 25 migrants were jailed overnight for waiting in the plaza outside the port, according to several Eritrean migrants.

When someone arrives at a port without documents for entry, CBP officials interview that person, take photographs and fingerprints and check law enforcement databases for records. If the person reports being afraid to go back to his or her home country, CBP is required by law to transfer that migrant to other federal agencies for a potential asylum case.

Most of the asylum process happens once the person has been transferred to Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody, and back-ups in that transfer system can leave CBP with limited space in its temporary holding cells at the border. Large groups of migrants arriving at once can also clog the system.

In the fall of 2016, San Diego’s ports were overwhelmed by thousands of Haitian migrants. In partnership with Mexican officials, CBP established a ticketing system that scheduled appointments for migrants to be processed. As of November, the most recent data available from CBP, arrivals hadn’t reached the levels of the wave of arriving Haitians.

In October 2016, more than 6,000 people came to San Diego’s ports of entry asking to come in despite not having documents permitting entry to the U.S. That number included asylum seekers — CBP does not distinguish between those seeking asylum and other “inadmissibles” in its data collection. (In addition to asylum seekers, inadmissibles are those looking for better economic opportunities or anyone else who has asked to enter the U.S. at a port without the proper documents.)

In November 2017, the number of people deemed inadmissible was 2,824, more than double the low of 1,313 reached in March of this year.

Under current policy, asylum seekers are detained by ICE until they get results from credible fear interviews, which determine the likelihood that they will win their cases in immigration court.

If asylum seekers don’t pass the interviews, they are sent back to their home countries. If they do pass, many stay in detention for the remainder of their cases, which can take a year or more to finish. Some are released from detention on parole or by paying bond while they wait to tell their stories to immigration judges.

Asylum seekers, like refugees, must prove that they’ve been persecuted or fear persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

Some of the migrants from African countries expressed frustration that they were the ones left outside after Mexican officials intervened.

	<p>“We are human beings,” said another man from Eritrea. “They don’t respect. I’m feeling racism here, a big discrimination here. We don’t want to be here in Mexico. Our target, our way is U.S.A.”</p> <p>When Tijuana media first reported the line of migrants, many of those interviewed were Mexican asylum seekers fleeing gang violence in other parts of the country. By Friday, most of them did not appear outside the port.</p> <p>An official from Mexico’s immigration agency told a Mexican media outlet that his agency had asked CBP to find a way to take in more people because of concerns about how migrant children waiting in line could be affected when temperatures drop overnight.</p> <p>The group of Eritreans and Cameroonians outside El Chaparral on Friday said many of those who didn’t make it into the U.S. had traveled on to Mexicali or even Texas to try at other ports.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/26 Disney resorts add new security policy
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/travel/2017/12/26/disney-resorts-add-new-security-policy-removes-do-not-disturb-signs-from-rooms.html
GIST	<p>Disney has started updating the security policies at several of its resorts in Walt Disney World.</p> <p>Guests staying at one of the three monorail hotels – the Grand Floridian, Polynesian and Contemporary resorts – near the Magic Kingdom have already experienced the tighter security policies, which include the removal of the “Do Not Disturb” door sign. The markers have been swapped out for “Room Occupied” signs that will alert maintenance and staff that guests are currently in their rooms, but will not stop Disney staff from coming in.</p> <p>The sign accompanies another new policy that requires Disney employees to enter each hotel room at least once a day to ensure “the safety and security of guests and property,” Walt Disney World News Today reports.</p> <p>Under the old rules, employees would pass by rooms marked with the “Do Not Disturb” sign. However, now Disney says “the hotel and its staff reserve the right to enter your room for any purpose including, but not limited to, performing maintenance and repairs or checking on the safety and security of guests and property.”</p> <p>Though guests will no longer have the option to keep staff out, the company assures that its guests will be given notice prior to entering the room by knocking and announcing that they are coming in, WDWNT reports.</p> <p>Some have reportedly hypothesized that the tightened security measures are a response to the Las Vegas shooting at Mandalay Bay that claimed the lives of 58 people earlier this year. According to WDWNT, the monorail resorts have similar vantage points into crowded areas. However, Disney officials have not made any statement as to why they are introducing the new policies.</p> <p>The changes are expected to roll out to other Walt Disney World Resort Hotels in the coming weeks, but some Disney guests are already balking at them</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	12/28 Fear: bitcoin use in terror financing
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SOURCE	https://business.inquirer.net/243182/fears-bitcoin-use-terror-financing
GIST	<p>The global bitcoin craze has attracted almost everyone, from mom-and-pop traders to giant investment banks.</p> <p>Promoters of bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies tout them as being safe and secure, and without oversight from financial regulators. But there is some concern that these very advantages could be exploited by terrorists to transfer funds from one place to another.</p> <p>Financial intelligence experts from the region say this is already happening, with several suspicious financial transactions detected recently.</p> <p>Some of these experts gathered in Malaysia last month for the Third Counter-Terrorism Financing Summit. The security experts from 35 countries unanimously agreed that the first step to disrupting militant operations is by cutting off their funds.</p> <p>A new alliance between Australia and South-east Asia has also been formed to directly target and disrupt the funding lifeline of terrorist groups by denying them access to the international financial system and other sources of funds. Sources told The Straits Times that the high degree of anonymity offered by digital currencies makes them a possible preferred avenue for militants in South-east Asia.</p> <p>“The number might not be big but we know it’s picking up. Their ultimate goal is to make sure that these funds get where they’re supposed to be,” said one source.</p> <p>“Small or big, it can help move any terrorism planning to the next level – launching attacks.”</p> <p>While the surge in the value of bitcoins and similar cryptocurrencies has garnered widespread media attention, security experts say the terrorists use digital currency not to make money, but for ease of moving funds between borders without the regular banking scrutiny.</p> <p>For operational reasons, officials declined to reveal the locations and frequency of such transactions. But the identity of some of these financial movements on the Web has been determined, said a second source.</p> <p>“Special equipment and database are already in place to help analyse these patterns. Identity is key to uncovering terrorism activities. We can monitor and trace the origin of the fund but to know who’s behind it is very tricky,” he said.</p> <p>“We have all these equipment in place, but it’s still very hard to ‘crawl’ in the dark Web market,” the source added.</p> <p>Malaysian criminologist P. Sundramoorthy said the consequences of militants or sympathisers switching to the use of cryptocurrency would be devastating as terror groups could be expected to execute attacks after receiving the funds.</p> <p>“Given that cryptocurrency offers a high degree of anonymity and is popular and user-friendly, measures to control it must be put in place as soon as possible. They will always find a way to exploit such channels. We can’t eliminate the use but we need to limit it.”</p> <p>Still, some experts say the issue might have been played up.</p> <p>In a recent study by the Royal United Services Institute (Rusi), the British intelligence think-tank suggested that there is little link between cryptocurrency and terrorism. It said the claims that bitcoin is funding terrorism are greatly exaggerated.</p> <p>Mr David Carlisle, an independent consultant with Rusi, said in a March 2 commentary: “Treating cryptocurrencies as an exceptional threat creates the misleading impression that more conventional financial products are not already equally, or more, vulnerable to terrorist exploitation.”</p>

A regional security source acknowledged that most militants are indeed still channelling funds via conventional banking and money remittance services.

Still, it has been noticed that digital currency has also been used as a means of transfer.

“We still see most of them funding their operations by taking personal loans, selling their belongings and so on. But to say the possibility of these militants turning to the dark Web is little or unlikely, that’s dangerous as we’re already seeing suspicious movements which we believe are terrorism fundings,” he said. “They will always try to find new ways to exploit technology to materialise their sick agenda.”

The danger of terrorist financing can be gleaned by the capture of Marawi in the southern Philippines by militants that ended in October after a five-month siege.

The Associated Press reported last month that Philippine military chief Eduardo Ano said at least US\$1.5 million (S\$2 million) was sent by terrorist group Islamic State in Iraq and Syria to finance militants planning the Marawi attack.

As Malaysia begins to impose controls over the growing use of digital currencies, Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM), its central bank, has required that conversions of cryptocurrencies into cash must be reported under the strict transactions under anti-money laundering laws.

Deputy Home Minister Nur Jazlan Mohamed said: “BNM has announced measures that would regulate the use of cryptocurrencies in Malaysia, especially the conversion of cryptocurrencies into cash and other equivalents. This measure will help the police and other enforcement agencies to manage terrorism financing.”

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HEADLINE	12/27 Bizarre treason cases Russia hacking
SOURCE	http://www.newsweek.com/bizarre-treason-cases-tied-russian-election-hacking-759011
GIST	<p>Four Russian hackers have been rotting away in a notorious prison for more than a year—and they are either traitors to their country for telling U.S. intelligence agencies about Russian meddling in last year's U.S. election or just pawns in a bizarre power game by President Vladimir Putin.</p> <p>Almost nothing about the cases against Sergei Mikhailov, Dmitry Dokuchaev, Ruslan Stoyanov and Georgy Fomchenkov is known, except that all four are being held on charges of treason. Their lawyers won't talk about details of the cases, and even the legal papers haven't been made public. Newsweek spoke to one of the men's lawyers, and he wouldn't even confirm the name of his client, let alone whether he pleaded guilty or not guilty.</p> <p>The trials are at the core of the Russian election-hacking scandal, which has roiled American politics since even before Election Day last year. But the cases also may reveal Putin's darkest political instincts. The Russian media, which are largely controlled by the Kremlin, say the men are spies. Others say they are pawns.</p> <p>Then again, in Putin's Russia, they may be both at the same time.</p> <p>This much is known: Mikhailov and Dokuchaev were officers in Russia's Federal Security Service, the notorious FSB. Fomchenkov is a cyberexpert who also worked for the security agency. And Stoyanov is a cyberexpert at Kaspersky Lab, a software company that the U.S. government believes allows Russian intelligence access to customers' computers and, according to Bloomberg, has been working closely with Russian agents.</p> <p>Such pedigree puts the four men at the heart of Russia's meddling in the 2016 presidential election, which</p>

the U.S. intelligence community believes was orchestrated at the highest levels.

So why are they in prison?

The arrests came around the same time that the U.S. intelligence community reported on Russian meddling, specifically on how Democratic National Committee emails were stolen by hackers and published by WikiLeaks during the presidential campaign. No individual hackers were ever identified.

Then, in January, the arrests of the four men were made public in Russia, prompting rumors that they were connected to the hacking. But if Putin was behind the hacking, why would he imprison the hackers?

A possible answer came this month, when a Russian media outlet, The Bell, reported that the four men may have confirmed Russia's role in the hacking to U.S. intelligence.

Citing two sources, the website reported that "the men passed the information about last year's Russian attacks on the Democratic National Committee." But that Bell report doesn't necessarily ring true.

Experts familiar with Russian intelligence practices are skeptical of the claims that the men had worked with U.S. intelligence, given Russia's past history of privately handling potential spies and not using the courts, even ones veiled in secrecy.

"In my experience, over years and years they rarely catch spies and deal with them in that sort of open legal way," said John Sipher, a former CIA operative who ran the agency's Russia program for several years.

And, worse for Putin, putting spies on trial and leaking details to the press makes it more difficult to recruit future hackers, which the Russian government reportedly does through handlers.

But then again, putting spies on trial and leaking details to the press allows Putin to flaunt his power.

"He definitely wants his population to realize that he's important on the world stage, that he's powerful, and that he can control what happens in the United States," Sipher said. "They could be trying to deflect from something that obviously is more covert and more real, whereas this stuff is already out there."

Russia has never directly confirmed its role in the hacking campaign, but at times it has sought to subtly take credit. Putin told reporters in June that maybe "patriotically minded" private Russians hacked the U.S. political system, a seemingly tongue-in-cheek denial.

So which is it: Putin cracking down on treason or pretending to be disciplining rogue hackers? Another clue came from a different case this month when an accused hacker, Konstantin Kozlovsky, said that Dokuchaev had expressly ordered him to steal emails from the Democratic National Committee for the Kremlin.

But even that claim may be part of a larger game being played by Putin. The allegation by Kozlovsky came from an apparent audio recording and handwritten note that popped up on his Facebook page nine months after Dokuchaev was arrested—a posting that suggests tampering because Kozlovsky is being held in a high-security prison, where detainees typically don't have access to the internet.

Some believe the Facebook posts are actually misinformation from the Kremlin. But then again, they may just be information: The U.S. intelligence community has never said how it was so certain about Russian hacking, but most experts assume that federal agencies had sources inside Russian intelligence who confirmed key details of the hacking campaign.

All four of the men have ties to Russia's hacking underworld, a hybrid community of government employees and contractors viewed by cyberexperts as one of the best in the world.

Mikhailov was a key figure running the FSB's cyberoperations through its Center for Information Security. The FSB has been tied to Russian hacking group Cozy Bear, one of the attackers behind the political hacking that yielded the Hillary Clinton campaign's emails released by WikiLeaks.

Dokuchaev is on the FBI's most wanted list, accused of having been involved in a hack of Yahoo's systems that compromised the accounts of millions of users.

Russian hackers are generally recruited by government handlers after they are caught engaging in financial crime, according to cybersecurity experts. The handlers can then use the hackers, without directly employing them, while maintaining some plausible deniability for Russia's government.

"It really makes it challenging for the U.S. intelligence community to understand the scope and size of their cyberforce," said Jeff Moulton who runs Louisiana State University's Transformational Technology and Cyber Research Center. "It gives them expertise that they probably don't have. The criminal element is always more sophisticated."

All four of the men and their lawyers were required to sign special security agreements preventing them from discussing the cases, including the specific nature of the charges that keep them at Lefortovo Prison, which was infamous as a torture facility for FSB's predecessor, the KGB.

Ivan Pavlov, a lawyer for one of the four men, told Newsweek that he could not even reveal his client's identity, adding that the "strict conditions" of the court bar him from talking about the case at all. But he did tell Newsweek that his client "has a hope that everything will be resolved without any public noise."

That resolution, and the amount of noise it makes, will likely be decided by one man, Vladimir Putin.

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HEADLINE	12/27 Healthcare cybersecurity action plan
SOURCE	https://healthitsecurity.com/news/crafting-a-strong-healthcare-cybersecurity-action-plan
GIST	<p>December 27, 2017 - Following recent research showing that 83 percent of physicians report they have experienced a cybersecurity attack, AHIMA released a healthcare cybersecurity action plan to assist entities in preparing for potential threats.</p> <p>Implementing an information governance program will be critical, AHIMA stressed. A holistic approach to data security can greatly assist organizations of all sizes work toward keeping sensitive information secure.</p> <p>Smaller healthcare organizations, such as rural hospitals or single-physician practices can find it much more difficult to maintain HIPAA compliance, said AHIMA IG Advisors Senior Director Kathy Downing, MA, RHIA.</p> <p>"Often times, those smaller organizations can't necessarily hire full-time staff to manage privacy and security," Downing told HealthITSecurity.com.</p> <p>Those smaller entities are also working to transfer over to electronic health records and are likely finding it challenging to implement the necessary cybersecurity tools. Larger organizations cannot always prevent hacks either, which shows how much more difficult it could be for the small facilities, she said.</p> <p>AHIMA was pleased though when the HHS Cybersecurity Task Force report released earlier in 2017 noted the need for information governance programs within the industry.</p> <p>"Attackers coming in aren't necessarily coming straight to an attack on the electronic health record," Downing explained. "They're often getting in through other systems. The Banner Health hack, for example, came in through the credit card machines in the cafeteria."</p>

“There’s just a lot more that needs to be done,” she continued. “It’s not just an IT issue. It’s very much a people, process, and technology issue; all three.”

Information governance is a broader view of information, Downing pointed out. Contrarily, HIPAA regulation is focused on PHI, clinical information, or electronic health information. Information governance requires an entity to look at all of the organization’s information assets. This includes where all information is stored and even employee information.

“Information governance for healthcare includes all of our information users,” she stated. “A physician practice may be using a business associate to do billing or collections. Information governance is going to say that those vendors in the healthcare space need to also have a robust information governance solution program. It’s bigger than just the physician practice. It’s all of us and we’re all interoperable. We’re all sending information from here to there.”

“That is the ultimate goal related to patient engagement and reducing costs in healthcare,” Downing added. “But with that, we need a more broad information governance view.”

RISK ASSESSMENTS AND INFORMATION GOVERNANCE

A proper risk assessment is an essential step for creating a robust approach to cybersecurity, Downing said. Having the right information inventory and knowing where that information flows is the first part of performing a risk assessment, she added.

“The risk assessment piece under HIPAA doesn’t mean just your HER,” Downing explained. “You’ve got other systems that are interconnected where that information is and unless you really understand where it is and where it’s flowing, you can’t do an accurate risk assessment.”

“Information governance would go even further to say, it’s not just about electronic health information,” she continued. “It’s about the paper and where the paper’s stored.”

Healthcare data breaches can happen because a physician stores medical records in a shed with just a simple lock on the door, Downing pointed out. Other times a data breach occurs because patient records are improperly disposed of in a dumpster.

Paper records are an important part of an organization’s overall information governance program, she stressed. Record retention on the whole – including paper and electronic – needs to be a key focus area.

“We cannot keep everything forever in the big data world that we’re in now with the electronic health records,” Downing said. “It’s not like it was before, where you take your records from 1930 and you store them offsite with a vendor and you just set them there and forget about them.”

“Now, you’ve got these electronic records,” she continued. “You have to back them up. You have to have a disaster recovery plan. You have to have a business continuity plan. You have to decide who has access. It’s a much bigger issue.”

Legacy systems can also create data security concerns with regard to record retention, Downing added.

“Systems that are outdated, out of their support framework, or the vendor is out of business or no longer supports it, organizations still have patient information in it. They need to maintain that.”

Cyber criminals will find outdated systems or unpatched software. Smaller practices in particular need to start understanding potential dangers with record retention and start destroying. This includes emails and even employee records not just – clinical records. All of those pieces could put an entity at risk, Downing warned.

ENSURING PROPER USER ACCESS MEASURES

Insider threats are also potential cybersecurity threats of which healthcare organizations must be mindful.

“The threats are real and they’re coming constantly,” Downing said. “The hackers may send out one million emails just to have one innocent person think they’re resetting their password. That employee goes in and puts their user ID and password in. Then, the bells and whistles go off on the hacker end because the hackers are in once they have that.”

Staff members who have administrative privileges must be especially careful, she added. Employees who are able to access sensitive data, log in to more systems, and even set up log in privileges for other employees could inadvertently give hackers access to more information.

Covered entities must also ensure that employees only have access to information that they need for their specific job function. When staff members leave their position or leave the organization entirely, their credentials will also need to be updated.

“Access creep,” is a challenge for healthcare organizations, Downing explained. This is when users may have changed jobs and they kept their old access. Then the users got their new access. All this access keeps increasing, she said.

“The other kind of access creep is where you bring in a new system and you set everybody up with all this access,” she continued. “The organization may not really know how its work flow is going to be. Then, it goes live and two years later, people have access to things they don’t need access to. It could be setting up master code tables or even user access modifications.”

Privacy officers, security officers, compliance officers, and leaders across all of healthcare need to ensure that each individual only has access to information that is absolutely necessary. With the exception of one-off situations, such as when one staff member is on vacation and someone needs to cover certain tasks, organizations must remain vigilant.

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HEADLINE	12/27 Artificial Intelligence fueling cyber race
SOURCE	https://www.thestar.com/business/2017/12/27/artificial-intelligence-is-fuelling-new-cybersecurity-race-say-experts.html
GIST	<p>MONTREAL—Technological advances in artificial intelligence are fuelling a new race between hackers and those toiling to protect cybersecurity networks.</p> <p>Cybersecurity is always a race between offence and defence but new tools are giving companies that employ them a leg up on those trying to steal their data.</p> <p>Whereas past responses to cybercrimes often looked for known hacking methods long after they occurred, AI techniques using machine learning scan huge volumes of data to detect patterns of abnormal behaviour that are imperceptible to humans.</p> <p>Experts expect machines will become so sophisticated that they’ll develop answers to questions that humans won’t clearly understand.</p> <p>David Decary-Hetu, assistant professor of criminology at the University of Montreal, says defenders have an edge right now in using artificial intelligence.</p> <p>“But who knows what’s going to happen in a few years from now,” he said in an interview.</p> <p>“The main issue is that if you’re defending a system you have to be good 100 per cent of the time, but</p>

when you're attacking the system you only have to be successful once to get in."

Decary-Hetu said a growing list of corporate and government officials who say infiltrations are their top worry, including Bank of Canada governor Stephen Poloz, have a very good reason to fear.

The Bank of Canada warned in its semi-annual review released this month that the high degree of interconnectedness among Canadian financial institutions means any successful cyberattack could spread widely throughout the financial system.

Reports suggest cybercrime costs the Canadian economy between \$3 billion and \$5 billion a year, including ransom paid to foreign criminals.

Hacks of Sony Pictures, Uber, Ashley Madison, Yahoo and multinational retailers have sparked unsettling headlines about security of personal information.

One of the latest to face scrutiny is global credit-reporting firm Equifax. Hackers accessed the personal information, including names, social insurance and credit card numbers, as well as usernames, passwords and secret question/secret answer data of 19,000 Canadians and 145.5 million Americans.

Current detection systems tend to only recognize improper activity based on past events, often long after the damage is done.

An example of this is Equifax, which discovered the breach in July, months after hackers first infiltrated the system. It only notified the public in early September.

Niranjan Mayya, founder and CEO of Toronto-based Rank Software, said it takes on average 143 days for a breach to be detected.

The challenge is growing as the number of connected devices in the world continues to soar.

"Clearly the old style techniques of looking at cybersecurity threats and having people go through each threat aren't working anymore, so automated means of detecting threats has become more and more important," he said.

David Masson, Canadian manager for U.K.-based Darktrace, said artificial intelligence will help to keep up with threats by quickly identifying and stopping attacks by picking up on subtle markers that identify bad behaviour.

He said his company's systems map a customer's entire network, including every user and device, to discern even the slightest deviations as they emerge.

Masson said AI is needed to keep up with threats by automating defence responses to growing machine-on-machine attacks launched by sophisticated hackers.

"You're kind of looking at a cyber arms race," he said in an interview.

"If you want to keep up with this threat and put the advantage back in the hands of the defenders you're gonna have to use AI."

Ontario-based utilities company Energy+ Inc. said installed Darktrace technology alerted it to a user going to a malware site in Russia and uploading undisclosed sensitive data to a third-party cloud provider that its existing security was unable to catch.

Some observers temper the current exuberance about AI, saying it's not a silver bullet and these are nascent days for the technology.

	<p>Receptiviti CEO Jonathan Kreindler says the hype around artificial intelligence has accelerated and has almost become a branding exercise for some companies that aren't even offering truly leading edge technology.</p> <p>"The term AI is now being applied to any sort of algorithmic reasoning unfortunately," said Kreindler.</p> <p>His firm uses AI to scour writings for unconscious use of language to understand the psychological state of company insiders who are responsible for 80 per cent of cybersecurity issues.</p> <p>Canada's largest IT company, CGI Group, said artificial intelligence is a growing field of interest for customers, although the average client is in the fairly early stages of considering AI adoption in cybersecurity.</p> <p>CGI cybersecurity expert Andrew Rogoyski said that still puts them one step ahead of most hackers, who are typically interested in stealing data using the cheapest tools possible.</p> <p>Rogoyski added that he expects a strengthening of defensive mechanisms might force hackers to also adopt innovative techniques such as AI.</p> <p>"There's a race, it's been going on for 20 years plus and the race just keeps evolving. We keep leapfrogging each other," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Healthcare cybersecurity spending rising
SOURCE	https://www.govinfosecurity.com/interviews/healthcare-cybersecurity-spending-rising-i-3818
GIST	<p>A new research report shows a majority of large healthcare provider organizations plan to boost 2018 spending for cybersecurity resources, including technology and staff, in an effort to keep up with the evolving threat landscape, says Ira "Gus" Hunt of Accenture Federal Services.</p> <p>The new report analyzing the plans of major U.S. healthcare systems was prepared by Pittsburgh-based Center for Connected Medicine in partnership with the Health Management Academy, to which Hunt provides support.</p> <p>Investments in cybersecurity talent and technology are "critically important," says Hunt, the former chief technology officer at the Central Intelligence Agency.</p> <p>"You've got to invest in technology on a continuum in order to keep pace with the cyber threats ... which are probably the fastest moving technology space out there," he says in an interview with Information Security Media Group. "Without some form of continuous investment to ensure that the technologies we bring to bear to protect ourselves are commensurate with the threats ... we're going to keep falling more and more behind."</p> <p>Investing in security staffing is vital as well, he notes. "With the right staff, right skills, and right knowledge, you can deal with almost any problem that happens - even the unexpected big surprises ... that come at you out of the blue," he notes.</p> <p>An ongoing hurdle, however, is the ongoing shortage of cybersecurity skills in the U.S. and elsewhere, Hunt says.</p> <p>With those challenges in mind, "it's imperative [that organizations] invest in automation and orchestration to ease the burden of day-to-day security work and allow healthcare organizations to focus their people on higher-level work ... to get ahead of the threats."</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Alaska key position in kingpin takedown
SOURCE	https://kaplanherald.com/2017/12/27/alaska-brokers-play-key-position-in-taking-down-a-russian-cybercrime-kingpin/
GIST	<p>Alaska federal law enforcement agents and prosecutors played a central role in a newly announced U.S. Justice Department effort to take down the Kelihos botnet, a global network of infected computers under the control of a Russian cybercriminal.</p> <p>The Kelihos botnet has been a source of criminal activity targeting computer users worldwide since at least 2010, according to the U.S. Justice Department. At times, 100,000 simultaneously infected devices were used to carry out spam attacks, including password thefts and installing ransomware on target devices, the department said.</p> <p>The man suspected of running the criminal enterprise, a Russian national named Peter Yuryvich Levashov, was arrested in Spain over the weekend.</p> <p>A criminal case against Levashov by DOJ remains under seal, but on Monday the department announced a civil complaint intended to block spam from the botnet.</p> <p>The U.S. Attorney's office in Alaska filed the civil complaint, which was the result of investigative work by Anchorage FBI cybercrime agents.</p> <p>A civil court order signed by an Alaska judge allowed the FBI to neutralize the botnet by cutting off communication between the infected computers and the operator. The FBI's New Haven, Connecticut office was also involved in the effort to dismantle the botnet.</p> <p>Why the FBI's Anchorage office?</p> <p>The office had the staff available and the technical expertise to do it, said Bill Walton, a supervisory special agent with the agency.</p> <p>Federal prosecutors also had jurisdiction in Alaska because the Kelihos malware infected the computers of hundreds of thousands of people around the globe, including some in Alaska.</p> <p>"If you've ever opened your email and received 7 million spam emails, you've gotten Kelihos spam," Walton said.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Biggest DDoS attack in history?
SOURCE	http://en.brinkwire.com/51258/biggest-ddos-attack-in-history-hammers-spamhaus/
GIST	<p>Anti-spam organisation Spamhaus has recovered from possibly the largest DDoS attack in history.</p> <p>A massive 300Gbps was thrown against Spamhaus' website but the anti-spam organisation was able to recover from the attack and get its core services back up and running. CloudFlare, the content delivery firm hired by Spamhaus last week to guard against an earlier run of DDoS attacks, was also hit, forcing it into taking the highly unusual step of dropping London as a hub in its network – as a Twitter update by CloudFlare on Monday explained.</p> <p>Spamhaus supplies lists of IP addresses for servers and computers on the net linked to the distribution of spam. The blacklists supplied by the not-for-profit organisation are used by ISPs, large corporations and spam filtering vendors to block the worst sources of junk mail before other spam filtering measures are brought into play.</p> <p>Spammers, of course, hate this practice so it's no big surprise that Spamhaus gets threatened, sued, and</p>

DDoSed regularly. Those affected by what they regard as incorrect listings also object about Spamhaus' alleged vigilante tactics.

The latest run of attacks began on 18 March with a 10Gbps packet flood that saturated Spamhaus' connection to the rest of the Internet and knocked its site offline. Spamhaus's blocklists are distributed via DNS and widely mirrored in order to ensure that it is resilient to attacks. The website, however, was unreachable and the blacklists weren't getting updated.

The largest source of attack traffic against Spamhaus came from DNS reflection, launched through Open DNS resolvers rather than directly via compromised networks. Spamhaus turned to CloudFlare for help and the content delivery firm was able to mitigate attacks that reached a peak of 75Gbps, as explained in a blog post here.

Things remained calm for a few days before kicking off again with even greater intensity – prompting claims that collateral damage was being sustained by other services, sources including the New York Times claimed.

Spamhaus' site remains available at the time of writing on Wednesday. Steve Linford, chief executive for Spamhaus, told the BBC that the scale of the attack was unprecedented.

“We've been under this cyber-attack for well over a week. But we're up – they haven't been able to knock us down. Our engineers are doing an immense job in keeping it up – this sort of attack would take down pretty much anything else,” he said.

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HEADLINE	12/27 SKorea school for hackers hitting back
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/dec/28/best-of-the-best-the-south-korean-school-for-hackers-hitting-back-against-the-north
GIST	<p>At the fortified border between South and North Korea, students on a computer hacking course are instructed to peer northwards across a strip of empty land toward the enemy state.</p> <p>“Our country is divided and we are at war, but you can't see that division in cyberspace,” said Kim Jin-seok. “So we take them to see it in person.”</p> <p>Kim manages a program called Best of the Best, the goal of which is to train the next generation of so-called white-hat hackers, netizens with elite cybersecurity skills who are able and willing to defend South Korea against malicious hacking attacks, many of which are believed to come from North Korea.</p> <p>Such skills are in high demand in South Korea. The country is officially at war with the North and while the two sides only rarely exchange bombs or bullets, they are locked in a round-the-clock battle in cyberspace. As North Korea builds its nuclear and missile strength, it is also advancing its ability to launch disruptive attacks online.</p> <p>With the North's economy increasingly strangled by international sanctions, the country has almost no tax base and an expensive nuclear weapons program, meaning it has to seek alternative, often illegal, ways of generating income. North Korean hackers were linked to the theft of \$81m from Bangladesh's central bank in March 2016, and in December the US Trump administration identified North Korea as the culprit behind the WannaCry cyber-attack, which in May caused millions in losses. North Korea has denied involvement.</p> <p>North Korean hackers have been linked to leaks of credit card information and illegal ATM withdrawals in South Korea. “There are thousands of cyber-attacks in South Korea every day and most of them never get reported on the news,” Kim said. “Information security is the basis of economic development.”</p>

The government-funded counter-hacker training program was conceived in 2010 when North Korean hackers were switching gears from only targeting South Korean government entities to attacking private sector bodies. Of late, researchers have linked North Korean hackers to attacks on cryptocurrency exchanges.

South Koreans live each day amid the threat of North Korean attack, cyber or otherwise and in a country with among the highest internet and smartphone penetration in the world, they have no choice but to take the threat of hacking increasingly seriously.

A turning point in the cyberwar was an incident in 2013 when three television networks and two banks had their networks frozen while some ATMs and online banking portals went out of order.

“That was when we all realized how vulnerable we are,” said Lee Dong-geun, of the Korean internet and security agency, which an organization that works with the South Korean government to help private sector entities deal with cyber-attacks.

Graduates of the Best of the Best scheme are competing against hackers from a well-established North Korean training program. Martyn Williams, editor of North Korea Tech, compares the North’s scheme to the ways some countries train athletes for the Olympics. “The lack of computers and widespread internet access means hackers in North Korea do not organically learn their skills in their spare time at home. Instead, hackers rise to prominence through a series of government-led initiatives that begin at junior school and progress to university and beyond,” said Williams.

Best of the Best’s space in Seoul’s Gangnam district is a place where war training, competitive spirit and youthful exuberance come together. Covering the walls of the hallways are plaques from hacker competition victories around the world and photos of graduating classes. A large common area looks like a tech startup space, with leather couches and a ping pong table. Behind a nearby door is the cyberwarfare room, which is filled with clusters of tables covered in computer monitors; on the walls are lurid, blinking screens that relay real time data of online activity and any signs of threats.

Participants range in age from high school to their mid-twenties, an age when most South Koreans are preparing to do battle in the country’s fiercely competitive job market. But the program is a chance to learn from industry experts and build elite IT skills, and a graduation certificate from the program is well-regarded by employers.

But at the Gangnam centre, North Korea is the elephant in the room: a topic on everyone’s mind but almost never spoken of. Kim says it is difficult to establish conclusively that North Korean hackers are behind the attacks on the South, so there is no public blaming. Most attacks are carried out by computers with servers located in China, Kim said.

Analysts say North Korean cyber-attacks are a modern manifestation of the regime’s traditional tactics. “Asymmetric warfare goes back to the early days of North Korea, coming from the leaders’ history as guerrilla fighters,” said Andrew Salmon, a Seoul-based military historian and author of *To the Last Round*, a book on Britain’s role in the Korean war.

“For a weak country fighting a strong country, cyber-attacks are cost-effective, largely deniable and carry a low risk of retaliation,” Salmon said.

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HEADLINE	12/27 Jailed hacker: proof Russia hacked DNC
SOURCE	http://amp.mcclatchydc.com/news/nation-world/national/article191857354.html?_twitter_impression=true
GIST	WASHINGTON - A jailed Russian who says he hacked into the Democratic National Committee computers on the Kremlin’s orders to steal emails released during the 2016 U.S. presidential election

campaign now claims he left behind a data signature to prove his assertion.

In an interview with Russia's RAIN television channel made public Wednesday, Konstantin Kozlovsky provided further details about what he said was a hacking operation led by the Russian intelligence agency known by its initials FSB. Among them, Kozlovsky said he worked with the FSB to develop computer viruses that were first tested on large, unsuspecting Russian companies, such as the oil giant Rosneft, later turning them loose on multinational corporations.

Kozlovsky first came to public attention in early December when word spread about his confession last Aug. 15 in a Russian courtroom that he was the person who hacked into DNC computers on behalf of Russian intelligence. The Russian was jailed earlier this year, alleged to have been part of a hacking group there that stole more than \$50 million from Russian bank accounts through what's called the Lurk computer virus.

The alleged hacker posted to his Facebook page in December a transcript and an audio recording of his confession during a pre-trial court hearing. He also confessed online to having hacked investigators looking into the crash of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, brought down in July 2014 by a missile near the disputed Ukrainian border with Russia.

In written answers from jail made public Wednesday by RAIN TV, a Moscow-based independent TV station that has repeatedly run afoul of the Kremlin, Kozlovsky said he feared his minders might turn on him and planted a "poison pill" during the DNC hack. He placed a string of numbers that are his Russian passport number and the number of his visa to visit the Caribbean island of St. Martin in a hidden .dat file, which is a generic data file.

That allegation is difficult to prove, partly because of the limited universe of people who have seen the details of the hack. The DNC initially did not share information with the FBI, instead hiring a tech firm called CrowdStrike, run by a former FBI cyber leader. That company has said it discovered the Russian hand in the hacking, but had no immediate comment on the claim by Kozlovsky that he planted an identifier.

The newest allegations are potentially significant. If the FSB did in fact direct Kozlovsky, then it debunks Russian President Vladimir Putin's assertion that his government had nothing to do with hacking that all major U.S. intelligence agencies put at his feet. It also calls into question the view of a hack that was conducted as a closely held, organized FSB campaign directed from central offices. Kozlovsky says he worked largely from home, with limited knowledge of others and that the political hack was just part of larger relationship with the FSB's top cyber officials on viruses directed at other countries and the private sector.

"Based on my experience and understanding of professional intelligence operations, the blending of criminal activity with sanctioned intelligence operations is an old page out of the Russian intelligence-services playbook," said Leo Taddeo, chief information security officer for Cyxtera Technologies and a former head of cyber operations in the FBI's New York office. "What the defendant (in Russia) is describing would not be inconsistent with past Russian intelligence operations."

Kozlovsky's claims include an assertion that for the past seven years he was under the control of Major Gen. Dmitry Dokuchayev, who he said gave him orders to breach the DNC servers to interfere in the U.S. election process. A federal court in San Francisco in February issued an arrest warrant for Dokuchayev for his alleged role in a hack of Yahoo accounts. A month later the FBI put the former hacker-turned-spy on a Wanted poster for his alleged role in directing hackers. He was arrested in Russia in late 2016 on treason charges in a high-profile incident that included the arrest of another FSB cyber leader.

The jailed Kozlovsky told RAIN TV that he had a relationship with Dokuchayev that preceeded the latter's rise to a prominent post in the FSB.

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HEADLINE	12/27 Library Congress reins in Twitter archive
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/dec/27/library-congress-reins-twitter-archives-project/
GIST	<p>The Library of Congress is ending its practice of archiving every single public Twitter post after accumulating billions of tweets covering the platform's first dozen years of existence.</p> <p>“As the twelfth year of Twitter draws to a close, the Library has decided to change its collection strategy for receipt of tweets on December 31, 2017,” the institution announced Tuesday. “After this time, the Library will continue to acquire tweets but will do so on a very selective basis.”</p> <p>Twitter gave the Library of Congress an archive in 2010 containing every public tweet since its launch four years earlier, as well as access to subsequent tweets posted publicly by the platform's millions of monthly users.</p> <p>Twitter has changed substantially since it first partnered with the country's oldest cultural institution, however, and the Library of Congress said it no longer sees a need for archiving each and every one of the throngs of public tweets posted daily.</p> <p>“The Library continuously reviews its ongoing acquisitions, whether subscriptions to newspapers or the receipt of tweets via a gift. As a result of the review, the Library has determined that its initial Twitter collection will consist of a twelve-year snapshot of the beginning of one of social media's most important and transformative communication tools,” it said in a white paper explaining the decision.</p> <p>The Library of Congress will continue to archive certain tweets after Jan. 1, but will focus on posts that are “thematic and event-based,” including tweets concerning political elections, public policy matters or other issues of nation interest, it said in a statement.</p> <p>Twitter has gone from processing about 5,000 tweets a day in 2007, to more than 50 million tweets daily when it partnered with the Library of Congress in 2010. The platform hosted about 500 million daily tweets in 2013, at which point the Library of Congress had already amassed an archive of roughly 170 billion tweets and counting.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Xero invoice as bait in email scam
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/email-scam-using-xero-invoice-as-bait-detected/article/733183/
GIST	<p>A large email scam centered on a fake Xero invoice was detected by the firm Mailguard, the second such campaign using the popular cloud-based accounting software this month.</p> <p>The target receives an email with a Word document attached that is labeled as an invoice that contains malicious macros. The fake invoice is well crafted and contains the target's name along with an email address that appears to be from Xero, but is actually domain recently registered in China.</p> <p>Once opened the document does not try to illicit any type of payment from the victim, but contains a note informing the person that money will be deducted from their account in accordance with their supposed contract with Xero. Xero is a commonly used software platform so the cybercriminals social engineering plan is banking on either the target having used the software at some point, or is at least familiar enough with it to become curious enough to open the attachment.</p> <p>Mailguard did not say what type of malware is being dropped by the macro, but did say that a macro can be used to install anything from a trojan to ransomware.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Irish zoo scammed; \$600,000 stolen
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/irish-zoo-scammed-nearly-600000-stolen/article/733191/
GIST	<p>Most humans have a soft spot for animals. Cybercriminals are another breed obviously, as evidenced by the Dublin Zoo's computer system getting breached so that payments due it were electronically redirected to a criminal's account.</p> <p>Ireland's Economic Crime Bureau of its national police force, known as Gardaí, is investigating who intercepted various invoices totaling the Euro equivalent of approximately \$600,000 due to the zoo, which told the Irish Examiner last week none of its consumer records were compromised in the breach.</p> <p>The zoo alerted the authorities as soon as the discrepancies were discovered, and financial institutions helped recover a portion of the funds.</p> <p>The national police used the unfortunate incident as a wakeup call for all businesses.</p> <p>"Gardaí would like to advise all businesses, both large and small, that under no circumstance should you agree to change a bank account number for a supplier based on a phone call, email or other means without verifying such change with someone that is known to you in the supplier's company," the Gardaí added.</p> <p>The Dublin Zoo was founded in 1831 and today its 400-plus animals, many endangered species from all over the world, attracts more than 1 million visitors a year.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Bad passwords déjà vu all over again
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/bad-passwords-still-common-at-the-close-of-2017/article/733387/
GIST	<p>The worst password of 2016 remains the number one worst password of 2017 as "123456" tops the list of the most commonly chosen passwords spotted in data leaks.</p> <p>SplashData researchers found several version of the "1234" sequence passwords were among the top 30 most used passwords from an examination of more than five million passwords leaked by hackers in 2017, according to a recent report.</p> <p>Other bad passwords that haven't gone out of mass use included "qwerty," "letmein," "admin," "welcome," and "login."</p> <p>"Attackers will use the leaked terms, but they'll also create common variations on these words using simple algorithms." KnowBe4 CEO Stu Sjouwerman said in a Dec. 26 blog post. "This means that by adding "1" or any other character combinations at the start or end of basic terms, users aren't improving the security of their password."</p> <p>Researchers said that while more than five million passwords were leaked, the findings still give good insight into the poor decisions users are making when securing their online accounts.</p> <p>To help combat poor password use, website admins should ensure they offer two-factor authentications to prevent account compromise in the event that their credentials fall into the wrong hands and users should opt into using the option whenever available. In addition researchers called for more sites to block the use of simple and easy to use passwords or at least warn users they may be using potentially weak passwords.</p> <p>"Passwords like these are not only easily guessable, they're already in the password-cracking databases of any hacker worth his or her salt, alongside millions of other popular choices and dictionary words," independent researcher Graham Cluley said in an ESET blog post. "If you, or someone you know, is using any of the passwords above online then you need to take a long hard look at yourself in the mirror."</p> <p>Other passwords found among the top 100 worst passwords were an extensive collection of sports terms</p>

	such as football, baseball, soccer, hockey, Lakers, jordan23, golfer, Rangers, Yankees, car brands including Mercedes, Corvette, Ferrari, Harley, and various expressions such as iloveyou, letmein, whatever, and blahblah.
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HEADLINE	12/27 Trio net neutrality challenges from Wash.
SOURCE	http://mynorthwest.com/855007/neutrality-challenges-coming/
GIST	<p>Two weeks after the FCC voted to repeal regulations on net neutrality, a trio of challenges are coming from Washington state.</p> <p>First, Senator Maria Cantwell plans to introduce a congressional resolution to undo the new rules. She already has 15 co-signers in the Senate.</p> <p>Second, the State of Washington is working to regulate internet providers under the state utilities commission to ensure they don't throttle or block any content.</p> <p>Finally, Representative Drew Hansen is putting the final touches on a bill that would make it illegal for internet providers to block or prioritize content.</p> <p>Even if the measures move ahead there could be pushback from the FCC and possibly a court challenge. When they repealed net neutrality, FCC Commissioner Michael O'Rielly stated he wouldn't stand for a "hodgepodge of state rules" on the issue.</p> <p>Net Neutrality regulations are designed to prevent service providers from showing favor to websites and apps. It is the principle that providers treat all web traffic equal.</p> <p>In 2015, the FCC approved rules that ensured service providers wouldn't manipulate web traffic and gave the commission the power to go after companies for questionable business practices that weren't explicitly banned, The Associated Press reports.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Bitcoin takes a tumble
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-12-28/bitcoin-drops-as-south-korea-says-exchange-closures-are-possible
GIST	<p>Bitcoin resumed its tumble on Thursday after South Korea said it was eyeing options including a potential shutdown of at least some cryptocurrency exchanges to stamp out a frenzy of speculation.</p> <p>South Korea has been ground zero for a global surge in interest in bitcoin and other digital currencies as prices surged this year, prompting the nation's prime minister to worry over the impact on Korean youth. While there's no immediate indication Asia's No. 4 economy will shutter exchanges that have accounted by some measures for more than a fifth of global trading, the news is a warning as regulators the world over express concerns about private digital currencies.</p> <p>Bitcoin fell as much as 9 percent to as low as \$13,828 in Asia trading, erasing modest gains after the South Korean release, composite Bloomberg pricing shows. The cryptocurrency had retraced some of its losses by 10:13 a.m. in London, trading down 4.5 percent to \$14,505. That puts the drop from a record high reached last week at about 26 percent.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Forbes' 'richest terror groups'
SOURCE	https://worldisraelnews.com/hezbollah-amas-rank-top-forbes-richest-terror-groups-list/
GIST	<p>One of the more far-reaching consequences of former President Barack Obama's nuclear deal with Iran is on display in Forbes Israel's latest ranking of the richest terrorist groups in the world, as in 2017 Iran-backed Hezbollah leaped to the top of list with a whopping \$1.1 billion in revenue.</p> <p>That is not to say that all their income stems from Iran. Terrorist organizations in general also fund their purchase of arms, training and salary payments to their members from such criminal activities as drug smuggling, money laundering, kickbacks, kidnappings, 'protection', etc., just as organized crime does.</p> <p>But the nuclear deal, it should be recalled, allowed for the release of billions of dollars into Iran's state coffers from the lifting of internationally imposed sanctions, and the unfreezing of its assets abroad.</p> <p>This, in turn, allowed the world's largest sponsor of terrorism to open the spigots to its proxies, and the results can clearly be seen by comparing this year's "Top Ten" list with the previous one, made in 2014.</p> <p>Lebanese group Hezbollah, which has been fighting in Syria for years for Iranian ally Bashar al-Assad, was then ranked fourth, with \$500 million – only half of what it has today.</p> <p> Hamas has \$700 million</p> <p>The Gaza Strip's Hamas, meanwhile, is now in third place, having actually dropped a rung from 2014. (The Taliban now occupy second place, with a revenue of \$800 million). Forbes lists them as currently receiving about \$700 million a year, vs. a billion dollars three years ago. They have two well-known state sponsors, Qatar and, again, Iran. But in the decade since it took over Gaza, Hamas also became expert in extracting money from its own citizens.</p> <p>According to Forbes' 2014 report, Hamas makes most of its money from a sophisticated tax system aimed at, among other things, pocketing large portions of the international aid that flows into Gaza. It also runs hundreds of businesses, controls several banks, and has levies on all consumer goods entering the Gaza Strip. All in all, the report says, about 15% of Gaza's economy ends up in this organization's pocket.</p> <p>ISIS drops to 5th place</p> <p>There is a steep drop-off from the top three richest terror organizations to the bottom seven. Al-Qaeda and its affiliates are listed next with only \$300 million. The Islamic State used to be the richest terror organization the world has ever known, with an annual turnover of around \$2 billion in 2014, but its defeat in Iraq and subsequent relinquishment of territory have dropped it to fifth place with a drastic reduction to \$200 million.</p> <p>It should be noted that since this Radical Islamist group is Sunni, they are the enemies of Shiite Iran, so their funding had to come from independent sources – a major part of which came from black-market sales from the oil and gas fields they had taken over and have since lost. Now, says the report, their main sources of cash are donations and ransom money from kidnappings.</p> <p>The two non-Muslim organizations that made this year's list are the PKK (#6), which mainly fights in Turkey for Kurdish independence, and the REAL IRA (#10), which still aims to bring about a united Ireland by force, with a mere \$50 million in income.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 More nimble, more dangerous 'ISIS 3.0'
SOURCE	https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2017/12/the-next-generation-of-terror
GIST	In a video that has now been deleted from YouTube, a camera pans across a desert skyline before alighting

upon a young man in the familiar regalia of the modern jihadist: fatigue pants and army boots, an ammo belt across his chest and an AK-47 at his side. “March forth with your weapons and defend the fronts in Syria and Iraq,” he says, his timbre and disposition suggesting some amount of media training. “With only a few of our soldiers in we are having an outsized impact,” he adds, looking directly into the camera. His extremist group’s logo flashes across the screen: “What Are You Waiting For?”

It’s a call that many angry young men have answered in recent years by making the journey to Syria to take up arms against all sorts of enemies: Bashar al-Assad, the United States, the Russians. It is also one that has become more technologically sophisticated. The clip of the young mujahideen, which was uploaded in early November, wasn’t a traditional recruitment video, but an extremist version of a Kickstarter campaign, with the goal of signing up new fighters over the anonymous Telegram app. The group behind it wasn’t al-Qaeda or ISIS, but an umbrella group called the Levant Liberation Committee, known in Arabic as Tahrir Al-Sham, that was created as the result of a merger between the Qaeda-affiliated al-Nusra Front and other militant groups in Syria. The group’s fighters are younger and less religious; not tied to a geographic caliphate, like ISIS; and less interested in governance. They are, in other words, more nimble—and more dangerous. Call them ISIS 3.0.

As a diplomat and scholar who has studied violent extremism, I’ve seen firsthand how the spread of Tahrir Al-Sham’s message has alarmed Western intelligence agencies, how critical Internet technology has become to terrorist groups, and how vulnerable our infrastructure is to cyber attacks. With a limited number of dedicated actors, Tahrir could take down local, regional, or even national power grids. They could disrupt cellphone, GPS, and satellite communications. In a worst case scenario, they could hack into government computers and publish all types of classified military and intelligence information, endangering Western agents and assets. Our postal and package delivery systems depend on SatLocators that, if compromised, could bring America’s sprawling logistics network to a standstill. On their hidden Telegram channel, Tahrir militants have bragged about adapting drones to deliver explosives or biological agents, and once posted an encrypted video of their efforts.

Whether or not the group has staying power, they already know how to shape and deploy information to their advantage. Recently, after an initial crowdsourcing campaign had run for only six hours, Tahrir claimed to have recruited over a dozen young followers, including five from Germany. These were played up in subsequent postings directed at potential new recruits. This crowdsourcing approach, via Telegram’s end-to-end encryption channels, is difficult to detect, let alone censor. Their Dark Web social networks, unlike ISIS’s territorial holdings, cannot be seen by satellites or destroyed with bombs. Tahrir leaders operate on the principle, “The narrower the audience, the bigger the impact.”

This still-emerging digital battlefield is the least understood component of our ever-changing, 16-year war on terror. Like any start-up, Tahrir militants have learned from ISIS’s successes and failures on the battlefield, using multiple platforms to amplify their impact. While ISIS sent messages using a broadcast model, Tahrir has experimented with platforms like Sarahah (“Honesty” in Arabic), which allows users to send messages anonymously to one person. The app provides a honeypot approach for Tahrir, in which they can A/B test different messages to see what sticks. While governments are still trying to censor ISIS on Twitter, Tahrir is experimenting with an app that reaches more than sixteen million young people and is the top download in over twenty-five countries, including Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. Tahrir can fail, quickly measure what resonates, and retool their pitch before the activity is detected by officials. Again, speed gives them the advantage.

The group has also learned from Moscow’s 2016 campaign to meddle in the U.S. presidential election, by making tactics like disinformation and high-traffic bots an integral part of their marketing strategy. Research suggests that Tahrir surrogates have configured AI bots which can be run on thousands or even millions of user accounts at very low cost. They operate 24/7 and respond to events almost immediately, allowing Tahrir to consistently punch far above their weight. Social media giants like YouTube and Facebook can’t keep up: By the time they take down pro-Tahrir accounts, the content has already been linked or distributed through encrypted platforms like Telegram or Riot. These bots are programmed to react to certain events and create content at machine speed, shaping the narrative almost immediately. This is critical in an information environment where the first story to circulate may be the only one that people

	<p>see or recall.</p> <p>ISIS broke the mold with its social media savvy. But they also fell prey to old-line, establishment thinking by emphasizing land assets that could easily be targeted and destroyed. Establishing a caliphate was their measure of success, but ironically it set them up for failure. Subsequent groups, like Tahrir, are beginning to realize that winning the physical war is much less important than winning online.</p> <p>Just as Tahrir has wielded outsized power by leveraging social media, so too does the U.S. need to think smaller and faster, and to be more disruptive. We need to ditch our unwieldy bureaucracy and use the very same tools the terrorists are using: social media, slick advertising campaigns, and colorful narratives. If one percent of social media users are content creators, nine percent are content curators, and 90 percent are consumers, we need to find ways to get the consumer off the sidelines. Using the best digital tools, we can ensure that the right stories reach the right audiences.</p> <p>We, too, can learn from Silicon Valley in adopting faster learning cycles. There is an evolving understanding among diplomats and policy engineers of how radicalism spreads and gains traction within different communities. By identifying how ideas go viral, and how they can be countered, we can disrupt the feedback loops that Tahrir enjoys. For example, a defector's tale of disillusionment can shatter the image of unity and sacrifice for an alleged noble cause.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 AQ seeks attacks for 'victory in Kashmir'
SOURCE	http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/india/al-qaeda-threatens-attacks-in-delhi-mumbai-for-victory-in-kashmir/270363.html
GIST	<p>Global militant network Al Qaeda has said that targeting Indian cities and sidelining Pakistan and its army were key to jihadi success in Jammu and Kashmir.</p> <p>In a video interview with Al Qaeda's mouthpiece, released on jihadi online networks, Usama Mehmood, spokesman Al Qaeda in Indian Sub-continent, said there could be no easy solution to the Kashmir issue which needs "blood and sweat" of Muslims.</p> <p>Mehmood, in the 42-minute video recorded in Urdu, said it was necessary for "the jihadi movement to strengthen and expand its activities in the region and target Indian interests.</p> <p>"India has protected itself by deploying 600,000 troops in a small place like Kashmir. We will target it and its interests in Kolkata, Bangalore and New Delhi, it will come to its senses, its atrocities will be controlled and its grip on Kashmir will weaken by the will of Allah," said the group's second-in-command in the sub-continent.</p> <p>This is the first detailed Al Qaeda talk on its activities in Kashmir since July 27 this year when the group announced it was establishing an affiliate in Jammu and Kashmir called Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind, headed by the 23-year-old former Kashmir commander of the pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen, Zakir Musa.</p> <p>The Al Qaeda announcement was promptly rejected by militant groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Hizbul Mujahideen. Even the Hurriyat Conference dismissed it, saying the Kashmir issue was political and had nothing to do with global Islamist jihad even as the longstanding militant outfits also espouse an Islamist outlook for Kashmir.</p> <p>Mehmood called on all Muslims in the sub-continental region, including from India, to "stand behind the Kashmiri people and perform their duties for jihad in Kashmir".</p> <p>"It is imperative to wage jihad against India. It can only happen when jihadi activities are strengthened in the entire region.</p>

	<p>"We should help our Kashmiri brothers first, defend our jihad from apostatic forces like Pakistan Army and its policies and then expand the jihadi activities," he said, terming the Pakistan Army "an obstacle in the path of victory, an enemy of the sharia and a slave of global infidels".</p> <p>"It fights only for its salary, personal aggrandisement and plots of land. It is the same army that spills the blood of the mujahideen for American dollars."</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 DHS: Las Vegas highest NYE threat level
SOURCE	http://news3lv.com/news/local/dhs-las-vegas-strip-has-highest-nye-terror-threat-level-in-nation
GIST	<p>LAS VEGAS (KSNV) — As people across the country welcome 2018, the eyes of the federal government will have extra focus on the Las Vegas Strip.</p> <p>This year, the Department of Homeland Security has increased the Special Event Assessment Rating, for the four miles of the Strip, to a Level 1.</p> <p>A SEAR rating of 1 indicates the possibility of terrorism or criminal activity, according to DHS.</p> <p>“SEAR 1 would indicate that there's a known threat or a possible threat to the Las Vegas community. That's not exactly true,” said Sheriff Joe Lombardo, during a morning press conference at the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department.</p> <p>The federal government is also deploying government helicopters for surveillance, intelligence officers who specialize in scouring social media for emerging threats, and emergency supplies in the event of an attack.</p> <p>“The federal government has seen fit to bring us additional medical supplies such as tourniquets and bandages, and they will be staged throughout the celebration areas,” said Lombardo.</p> <p>The Department of Homeland Security increased the Las Vegas Strip threat level to the highest possible rating two weeks after the Route 91 concert attack.</p> <p>For Dec. 31, 2017, “America’s Party” on the Strip is the only SEAR 1 rated New Year’s Eve event in the nation.</p> <p>The Tournament of Roses Parade and Rose Bowl also have a SEAR 1 rating on New Year’s Day.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Vietnam jails 15 in foiled airport plot
SOURCE	http://sea-globe.com/vietnam-bomb-airport/
GIST	<p>Fifteen people were handed jail terms ranging from five to 16 years over their role in a failed attempt to detonate a bomb at Vietnam’s busiest airport in the southern city of Ho Chi Minh City, local media reported on Wednesday.</p> <p>The defendants were charged with “terrorism opposing the people’s administration,” reported Vietnamese newspaper Phap Luat.</p> <p>Dang Hoang Thien, accused of making petrol bombs, was jailed for 16 years. Other defendants were given jail terms from five to 14 years, reported Reuters.</p> <p>According to Phap Luat, the group’s plan to detonate bombs at the Tan Son Nhat airport was initially thwarted after passengers on a nearby plane saw suspicious boxes that police later confirmed contained petrol explosives.</p>

	<p>There has been no motive provided for the group's attempted attack, but in a verdict read after the two-day trial, the state-controlled newspaper, Thanh Nien, reported that the court had found the accused to have links to foreign networks that had funded another failed terrorist attack within the country earlier in the year.</p> <p>"Via social networks, the defendants cooperated with an overseas reactionary organisation...which financed the purchase of weapons and petrol bombs for terrorism," the newspaper reported, citing the verdict.</p> <p>People convicted of terrorism in Vietnam can face the death penalty and independent media in the one-party state is banned while freedom of expression is tightly controlled by the government.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 After ISIS defeat, massive bill to rebuild
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/daf97af61a044ecb9c5f2a7b283ed00/After-Islamic-State's-defeat,-a-massive-bill-to-rebuild-Iraq
GIST	<p>MOSUL, Iraq (AP) — For nearly 2½ miles along the western bank of the Tigris River, hardly a single building is intact. The warren of narrow streets of Mosul's Old City is a crumpled landscape of broken concrete and metal. Every acre is weighed down by more than 3,000 tons of rubble, much of it laced with explosives and unexploded ordnance.</p> <p>It will take years to haul away the wreckage, and this is just one corner of the destruction. The Iraqi military and U.S.-led coalition succeeded in uprooting the Islamic State group across the country, but the destruction is nearly incalculable.</p> <p>Three years of war devastated much of northern and western Iraq. Baghdad estimates \$100 billion is needed nationwide to rebuild. Local leaders in Mosul, the biggest city held by IS, say that amount is needed to rehabilitate their city alone.</p> <p>So far no one is offering to foot the bill. The Trump administration has told the Iraqis it won't pay for a massive reconstruction drive. Iraq hopes Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries will step up, and Iran may also take a role. The U.N. is repairing some infrastructure in nearly two dozen towns and cities around Iraq, but funding for it is a fraction of what will be needed. As a result, much of the rebuilding that has happened has come from individuals using personal savings to salvage homes and shops as best they can.</p> <p>Nearly every city or town in former IS territory needs repair to one degree or another. The longer it takes, the longer many of those who fled IS or the fighting remain uprooted. While 2.7 million Iraqis have returned to lands seized back from the militants, more than 3 million others cannot and they languish in camps. Worst hit is Mosul; the U.N. estimates 40,000 homes there need to be rebuilt or restored, and some 600,000 residents have been unable to return to the city, once home to around 2 million people.</p> <p>Corruption and bitter sectarian divisions make things even harder. The areas with the worst destruction are largely Sunni, while the Baghdad government is Shiite-dominated. The fear is that if Sunni populations feel they've been abandoned and left to fend for themselves in shattered cities, the resentment will feed the next generation of militants.</p> <p>"The responsibility to pay for reconstruction falls with the international community," said Abdulsattar al-Habu, the director of Mosul municipality and reconstruction adviser to Nineveh province, where the city is located.</p> <p>If Mosul is not rebuilt, he said, "it will result in the rebirth of terrorism."</p> <p>Mosul's Old City paid the price for the Islamic State group's last stand.</p>

Streets are now knee-deep in rubble from destroyed homes. The few high buildings of six or seven stories have been blasted hollow, reduced to concrete frames. Shopping centers and office buildings are pancaked slabs. Almost all that is left of the 850-year-old al-Nuri mosque, blown up by IS fighters as they fled, is the stump of its famed minaret.

At the southern end of the district, the arcades of stone-arched storefronts in the historic bazaars that once sold spices, cloth and household goods are charred and gutted. Eaves that once shaded shoppers look like they were hurled into the air to land as mangled metal scattered across the cityscape. At the northern end just outside the Old City, some buildings have been blown to splinters and piles of dirt in a large medical compound that housed the College of Medicine and the Jomhuriya Hospital.

All five bridges crossing the Tigris have been disabled by airstrikes, forcing all traffic onto a single-lane temporary span linking east and west.

Mosul the same size in New York City would run from the 9/11 Memorial nearly to 18th Street and cover nearly a quarter of Manhattan south of Central Park.

There were effectively two battles for Mosul. The first, from October to February, freed the city's east, which survived largely intact. The second pulverized the west side. There, IS dug in and the Iraqis and U.S.-led coalition upped their firepower, culminating in house-to-house fighting in the Old City. The city, which IS overran in the summer of 2014, was declared liberated in July found at least 9,000 civilians died in the assault to retake Mosul, most in the west.

The Old City shows the densest destruction, but nearly every neighborhood of western Mosul has blocks of blasted houses, industrial areas, government buildings and infrastructure.

It's been more than a generation since the last comparable fight to seize a city. Military experts compare the assaults on Mosul and IS-held Raqqa in Syria to the devastating 1968 battle for the Vietnamese city of Hue.

Some look even further back. "All I can think of is Dresden, or pictures I've seen of World War II," said Stephen Wood, a senior analyst at the satellite imagery firm DigitalGlobe.

Along the Old City's gutted roads, a handful of people are beginning to rebuild. Amar Ismail Brahim sold his wife's gold to repaint his cafe. He didn't bother asking for government aid.

Brahim ultimately blames the Islamic State group for the destruction, but he believes the obligation of reconstruction lies with the United States and other Western countries.

"We fought Daesh on behalf of the whole world," he said, using the Arabic acronym for the group. "Now is the time for them to stand with Mosul."

The main engine for rebuilding has been the known as UNDP, which focuses on rehabilitating infrastructure, including roads, water and electricity systems and schools, as well as some homes.

Its daily project notices are ambitious. To clear debris from Mosul's riverbank neighborhood of al-Madain, a single contractor must have three heavy-duty shovels, six mini dump trucks, six tractor-trailers, two excavators and 2 tons of black trash bags. The timeframe: 45 days. Workers must be locals and must earn no less than \$20 a day.

But funding is far lower than what Iraq says it needs. So far, stabilization has received some \$392 million in contributions. The United States has given the lion's share, some \$115 million. Germany is the second biggest donor at \$64 million. The United Arab Emirates and Kuwait are also contributing, but no other Gulf nations are among the list of donors.

Overall, Washington has contributed \$265 million to reconstruction since 2014, on top of \$1.7 billion in humanitarian assistance in Iraq. That is a fraction of the \$14.3 billion that the U.S. spent in fighting the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria.

And it's far less than what Iraqis hoped. Baghdad at first expected American money would flow in after the defeat of IS, said a senior U.S. official in Washington who regularly meets with Iraqi leadership. But Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has said the United States is no longer in the business of "nation-building."

"We just tell them, no, it's not going to happen," the U.S. official said. "We have to be up front with them."

The official said many in Washington believe past efforts in Iraq didn't yield adequate returns and there is little appetite for large international reconstruction projects. After the 2003 toppling of Saddam Hussein, the U.S. pumped \$60 billion over nine years into Iraqi reconstruction. Critics say the money did little to prevent political disarray and the rise of militants in Iraq. About \$8 billion dollars of it was wasted through corruption and mismanagement, according to the U.S. special inspector general for Iraq reconstruction.

Douglas Silliman, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, blamed the destruction of Iraqi cities squarely on IS fighters.

"Had they not been here, had they not conducted a completely brutal and inhumane campaign against the Iraqi people, this destruction would not have happened," he said.

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HEADLINE	12/28 Putin: market bombing terrorist attack
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2017-12-28/putin-calls-st-petersburg-explosion-terrorist-attack
GIST	<p>MOSCOW (AP) — The explosion at a supermarket in Russia's second-largest city was a terrorist attack, President Vladimir Putin said Thursday, adding that another attack had been thwarted.</p> <p>At least 13 people were injured Wednesday evening when an improvised explosive device went off at a storage area for customers' bags at the supermarket in St. Petersburg. Investigators said the device contained 200 grams (7 ounces) of explosives and was rigged with shrapnel to cause more damage.</p> <p>No one has claimed responsibility for the attack.</p> <p>Putin made his comment Thursday at an awards ceremony at the Kremlin for troops who took part in Russia's Syria campaign but did not offer any details. He also said another terrorist attack had been thwarted in St. Petersburg but did not elaborate.</p> <p>Putin has portrayed Russia's operation in Syria as a pre-emptive strike against terrorism at home. He said the threat of attacks at home would have been much worse if Russia had not intervened in Syria.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Kabul cultural center attack; 35 dead
SOURCE	http://time.com/5081004/afghanistan-kabul-attack-bombing/?xid=homepage
GIST	<p>(KABUL) — Authorities say an attack on a Shiite Muslim cultural center in the Afghan capital Kabul has left at least 35 people dead and 20 wounded.</p> <p>Interior Ministry spokesman Najib Danish says an unknown number of suicide attackers set off an explosion outside the center before storming it. They then set off explosive devices in the basement of the</p>

	<p>building where scores of people had gathered to mark the December 1979 invasion of Afghanistan by the former Soviet Union, he said.</p> <p>The center is located in the Shiite-dominated Dasht-e-Barchi neighborhood in the west of the capital.</p> <p>No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack but the Islamic State group affiliate in Afghanistan has claimed several brutal attacks on Shiites in recent months in Kabul.</p> <p>Afghan president Ashraf Ghani has called the attack on a Shiite Muslim cultural center in Kabul a “crime against humanity.”</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Libya: Sirte begins to rebuild
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/dec/27/sirte-libya-starts-rebuilding-from-war-isis/
GIST	<p>SIRTE, Libya — Mahmoud Emsameen eases off the gas as he rolls toward the rubble and wrecked vehicles that sit near what had been a checkpoint on the road into this war-ravaged city’s downtown manned by Islamic State militants.</p> <p>A year has gone by since the six-month-long, American-led air campaign pounded the jihadis out of Sirte, a city nestled on the Mediterranean that was once known as a favorite hideaway of Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi.</p> <p>While the violence has subsided, Sirte’s broad avenues and narrow alleyways lay in ruins. Posters hanging almost everywhere warn about the danger of unexploded ordnance beneath the rubble.</p> <p>But there are flashes of hope. Children dart in and out of gutted buildings, and Mr. Emsameen, a native of the city who has worked with those displaced by years of conflict, said residents are coming back and looking toward the future.</p> <p>“It shows that people want to revive Sirte, even if it means that families have to live in half-destroyed buildings,” said Mr. Emsameen, who fled the city when Islamic State took over in early 2015. He estimated that 70 percent of those who fled have returned to pick up the pieces and rebuild.</p> <p>Sirte is famous in Libya as the birthplace and hometown of Gadhafi and was the backdrop of several dramatic battles of the Libyan revolution.</p> <p>Gadhafi, who ruled Libya for 42 years, was killed in 2011 in the city that reared him.</p> <p>Sirte was battered badly by those battles, and reconstruction was slow going during the years that immediately followed. Without a unified government to provide assistance, residents took to the task themselves, clearing away rubble and using their fingers to fill bullet holes with cement.</p> <p>Amid the chaos from 2011 to 2014, prolonged sparring among militias in Tripoli and an elected parliament in Tobruk left Sirte, which is situated along a vast stretch of coastline between those cities, vulnerable to attacks by jihadis.</p> <p>In May 2015, the city fell to the Islamic State, whose operatives quickly set about imposing their extreme interpretation of Islam on residents. The severity of what Islamic State did to the city is underscored by what the terrorist group left behind when its fighters fled a year ago.</p> <p>Walking through Sirte’s streets, many shops remain tagged with the black logo of Islamic State — proof that the shops’ owners had paid their Islamic taxes. But where fear once reigned supreme, many say they are embracing their regained freedom.</p>

Ahmed Akhdhar, a businessman, relishes in the fact that he can now sell articles of clothing other than the black robes once mandated by Islamic State. “Look how colorful the showcase is,” he said with pride, pointing at ornately decorated dresses in the shop’s window display.

Such clothes were forbidden under the jihadis. Nevertheless, customers were scarce on a recent day because residents are strapped for cash in Sirte, as is the case across Libya.

While the reopening of a few oil fields has put the nation’s gross domestic product back into the black for the first time in four years, inflation stands at about 30 percent, severely diminishing Libyans’ purchasing power, according to the World Bank.

Abdallah Bouiazia, 21, is one retailer who has benefited from the nominal uptick in prosperity. His fish market along Sirte’s coastal road is one of the few city buildings not in ruins. Mr. Bouiazia said he once took up arms against Islamic State when they ruled the city, and he still keeps a Kalashnikov in his shop just in case the violence returns.

Battles against Islamic State followers continue to rage just 150 miles south of Sirte, and authorities say the terrorist group still has cells nearby.

In Tripoli, about 280 miles west of Sirte, Libya’s U.N.-backed Government of National Accord is also remains fragile. Its authority has been challenged by a rival administration in the east run by military strongman Khalifa Haftar.

With that as a backdrop, various militias are still battling in parts of the country. On Dec. 17, the mayor of Misrata — a city between Sirte and Tripoli — was abducted and killed by unknown assailants, according to reports.

But such developments haven’t stopped merchants in Sirte from seeing a silver lining. “My brothers and I are the only fishmongers in Sirte,” said Mr. Bouiazia. “Clients come all the way from Misrata to buy our sea bream.”

Students in Sirte are also beginning to see futures for themselves. During Islamic State’s rule, most of the city’s 12,000 students and professors fled to universities elsewhere in Libya.

But feelings of pride for the city run deep. Many who managed to graduate from other institutions during the occupation had their diplomas stamped with Sirte’s local seal.

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HEADLINE	12/28 ISIS claims deadly blast at Afghan center
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-blast/islamic-state-claims-blasts-at-afghan-shiite-center-news-agency-that-kill-dozens-idUSKBN1EM0F5
GIST	<p>KABUL (Reuters) - Islamic State claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on a Shi'ite cultural center and news agency on Thursday in the Afghan capital that killed dozens of people attending a conference.</p> <p>Ismail Kawosi, a spokesman for the ministry of public health, said 41 people had been killed and 48 wounded in the latest in a series of attacks on media organizations in Kabul.</p> <p>The attack, which involved at least three explosions, occurred during a morning panel discussion on the anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Sunni-majority Afghanistan at the Tabian Social and Cultural Centre, with many of those attending students, witnesses said.</p> <p>It was also the latest in a series of attacks on Shi'ite targets by Islamic State, which claimed responsibility in an online statement.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Putin after attack: 'liquidate bandits'
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-12-28/putin-orders-agents-to-liquidate-bandits-after-terror-attack
GIST	<p>Russian President Vladimir Putin vowed a crackdown after a supermarket bomb injured 10 people in St. Petersburg, the latest in a series of attacks linked to Islamic extremists that have targeted his home city.</p> <p>Putin said Thursday that he'd ordered the head of the Federal Security Service, in case of a threat to officers' lives, "to act decisively, not to take any prisoners, to liquidate bandits on the spot," in remarks at a televised ceremony with veterans of Russia's military campaign in Syria.</p> <p>The device that blew up late Wednesday in Russia's second-largest city contained an explosive force equivalent to 200 grams of TNT, the National Anti-Terrorist Committee said in a website statement. A man of non-Slavic appearance, who was recorded on security cameras, left the bomb in a backpack inside a locker in a Perekrestok supermarket before fleeing the scene, the Fontanka news service reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Coalition: ISIS flees toward Damascus
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/isis-fighters-flee-west-damascus-us-led-coalition/story?id=52014579&cid=clicksource_76_2_hero_headlines_headlines_hed
GIST	<p>With the collapse of the ISIS caliphate in 2017, what's left of the terrorist group in Iraq and Syria is on the run, with some fighters moving west toward Damascus into Syrian regime-controlled territory and away from where the U.S.-led coalition will work to defeat them.</p> <p>A two-star British general in the coalition's war against ISIS confirmed the "movement of limited numbers of ISIS militants westwards," but said the U.S.-led coalition won't pursue them because the area is operated by the regime.</p> <p>"The coalition will remain committed to the mission in Syria until ISIS no longer poses a threat and a [United Nations]-backed peace process is implemented to ensure lasting stability in the country," British Army Major Gen. Felix Gedney, deputy commander of strategy and support for the coalition, told reporters during a Pentagon briefing on Wednesday.</p> <p>But he later clarified the coalition would only defeat ISIS "in areas controlled by partner forces," leaving the Syrian regime and their Russian backers to oust the ISIS fighters that have moved west.</p> <p>Gedney, as well as U.S. military leadership, have long expressed doubt in the regime's desire and ability to fight ISIS.</p> <p>"They seem to be moving with impunity through regime-held territory, showing that the regime is clearly either unwilling or unable to defeat [ISIS] within their borders," Gedney said Wednesday.</p> <p>The coalition dealt a significant blow to ISIS in 2017, liberating 60,000 square kilometers of land once claimed by the terrorist group, which ruled large swaths of Iraq and Syria since 2014. The coalition estimates only about 1,000 ISIS fighters remain in that area.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Wounded 'American' ISIS fighter video
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/12/27/wounded-american-isis-fighters-new-video-takes-swipe-at-trump-and-us.html

GIST	<p>He calls himself “Abu Salia from America,” and on Wednesday morning the ISIS fighter -- wounded and walking with crutches --released a video on YouTube, via the besieged terror group’s propaganda channel, issuing a direct threat to President Trump and the American people.</p> <p>“To Trump, the ‘fake media’ has already pressured you to tone down, but your hatred and fangs for Islam is already revealed,” Abu Salih cautions in English with what seems to be an American accent. “But you don’t liberate cities, you obliterate them with your airstrikes because you are too frightened to fight us on the ground.”</p> <p>The release of the video comes on the heels of the U.S-led coalition’s announcement that ISIS -- the Islamic State -- has been decimated from Iraq and Syria, reduced to less than a thousand fighters scattered in the border areas.</p> <p>Abu Salih goes on to challenge and bait in the video, calling on “brothers with limbs or no limbs” to “get a knife” or “take advantage of the fact you can easily get a rifle or pistol” in the U.S., and “answer the call, rise and strike.”</p> <p>“Your war against Islam has only made your homeland more vulnerable,” he continues in his message to Trump.</p> <p>The slickly produced propaganda video, entitled "Inside the Khilafah #6: A Message to the Crusading Trump," is part of a series the militant group started in the summer. It produced four videos before stopping for several months, and resumed around two weeks ago, just after Iraq’s president officially declared that ISIS had been defeated in the country.</p> <p>The video ends with ISIS jingle, featuring lyrics about "soldiers of Allah."</p> <p>The video remained on You Tube for around a half-hour on Wednesday -- it got a few hundred views in that time -- before being removed for “inappropriate content.”</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Car bomb targets Afghan air base
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/taliban-car-bomb-targets-afghan-army-base-wounding-52007462?
GIST	<p>An Afghan official says a car bomb has gone off near a military base in the southern city of Lashkar Gah, wounding 15 people.</p> <p>Omar Zwak, spokesman for the provincial governor, said all but one of those wounded in Wednesday’s attack were soldiers. He says the attack targeted a military convoy leaving the base.</p> <p>The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, which they said was carried out by a suicide bomber.</p> <p>Lashkar Gah is the capital of Helmand province, where the Taliban have a strong presence and carry out near-daily attacks.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Unprecedented NYE security Times Sq.
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/unprecedented-security-precautions-expected-times-square-years-eve/story?id=52010389
GIST	<p>More than a million people are expected to ring in the new year in New York City’s Times Square, making the crowded tourist site an inherent target, experts say.</p>

The security precautions that will be taken by the New York Police Department to protect the revelers are expected to be unprecedented. Typical security measures, like using sand trucks and blocker vehicles on nearby cross streets and a mix of plainclothes and uniformed officers, will be deployed as always, but other steps, such as increasing security at nearby parking garages and closer surveillance of large rental trucks, are also being put in place, city officials said, according to local ABC station WABC.

Police officials are expected to make more detailed disclosures about their plans on Thursday.

John Cohen, a former counterterrorism coordinator for the Department of Homeland Security and current ABC News contributor, said that it is "not surprising at all" that security is being increased this year "based on how the threat facing the country has evolved."

"It's very possible that our traditional intelligence techniques for detecting threats are not well suited to uncover potential attacks," Cohen said, adding that it means that more precautions are necessary.

"In the current threat environment, the public plays a major role in both helping to detect potential attacks and being prepared in the event they find themselves at a location where an attack is unfolding," Cohen said.

Matt Olsen, a former director at the National Counterterrorism Center and current ABC News contributor, told "Good Morning America" that increased security is a must.

"People should expect to see an increase in security this New Year's because of an ongoing threat we've seen from ISIS. Really over the past few years, they've sought to encourage their followers to carry out low-level attacks wherever they can, particularly targeting people where they gather in crowds," Olsen said.

A joint assessment report for New York's New Year's celebration was released on Dec. 21 culling the findings from multiple agencies, and it concluded that there was "no information to indicate a specific, credible threat" toward the Times Square celebration, but officials and the public should be cautious nonetheless.

The report stated that the FBI, DHS, NYSP, PAPD, NYPD and FDNY "remain concerned about international terrorists and domestic extremists potentially targeting the event."

New York is not the only city that has law enforcement officials concerned about keeping celebrants safe. A similar threat assessment report was released by the Southern Nevada Counterterrorism Center and the Office of Intelligence and Analysis evaluating the potential threats facing partygoers in Las Vegas on New Year's.

The report states that since many of the festive events in Sin City "are being held on congested sidewalks and in high-rise buildings, presenting logistical challenges that make it difficult to secure the event from overhead threats." In October, 58 people were killed in Vegas when a man opened fire on a crowd of concertgoers from the 32nd floor of a hotel.

The report specifically cited that shooting, adding that "the risk of copycat attacks by terrorists and unaffiliated lone offenders is of particular concern to the SNCTC, as it highlighted a vulnerability associated with large crowds in open spaces."

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	12/27 Sheriff: deputies gunfire killed 6yr-old
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/02efcaad12a74ba4a0326de9728c8ba6/Sheriff:-Deputies-threatened-before-

	<u>gunfire-that-killed-boy</u>
GIST	<p>SCHERTZ, Texas (AP) — A Texas sheriff says a wanted felon told deputies that she was armed and would shoot them before they killed her in a spray of gunfire that also left a 6-year-old boy dead.</p> <p>Bexar County Sheriff Javier Salazar told the San Antonio Express-News that Amanda Jones, 30, forced her way into a mobile home where the boy, Kameron Prescott, lived on Dec. 21 and then was confronted outside by four deputies.</p> <p>A person inside the home in Schertz, northeast of San Antonio, also reported hearing Jones say she would shoot the deputies, Salazar said.</p> <p>“Someone from inside the trailer that (Jones) forced her way into ... said that she had an object in her hand. They believed it could have been a weapon,” the sheriff said Tuesday. “And when she exited the house, the witness heard the suspect proclaim to whoever was outside — we now know that was the deputies — ‘I have a gun, I’m going to shoot you.’”</p> <p>Jones was found with a dark, metal tube after she was shot, but no gun. However, Salazar said deputies had seen Jones with a gun earlier as they chased her.</p> <p>All four deputies have been placed on administrative leave. The sheriff’s office is investigating. Bexar County District Attorney Nico LaHood’s office said it will “analyze the initial work” of the investigation and “evaluate all additional evidence as it is gathered.”</p> <p>The probe is in its early stages, Salazar said.</p> <p>LaHood’s office said in a statement that it is “important to carefully review all of the facts and circumstances surrounding the officers’ use of force and not form any premature conclusions before the investigation is finalized.” It said if the deputies’ actions “rise to the level” of a criminal offense, the office will take the appropriate steps.</p> <p>Kameron was inside the mobile home when he was struck by a bullet as deputies fired on Jones. The boy died at a hospital.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 NKorea missiles by Soviet design?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/amphtml/world/national-security/documents-shed-light-on-north-koreas-startling-gains-in-sea-based-missile-technology/2017/12/27/dd82878a-e749-11e7-ab50-621fe0588340_story.html?tid=ss_tw&utm_term=.89d1f3f543f3&_twitter_impression=true
GIST	<p>A few months after the collapse of the Soviet Union, a group of American investors and Russian scientists struck a deal to begin marketing one of the crown jewels of Moscow's strategic arsenal: an entire family of missiles designed for launch from submarines.</p> <p>Up for sale were powerful missiles called "Calm" and "Ripple," built to lob heavy warheads into space from a barge or a submarine tube, and a new model called "Surf" that could be rolled off the side of a ship and fired straight out of the water. The idea of the joint venture, as one of its U.S. partners wrote in early 1993, was to link American satellite companies to a top Russian weapons laboratory to "convert potentially threatening submarine missiles into peaceful space boosters."</p> <p>The Americans quickly ran aground on a series of legal and bureaucratic barriers, but the Russians forged ahead with a new partner willing to pay cash for Soviet military technology: North Korea. More than two decades later, some of the Soviet designs are reappearing, one after another, in surprisingly sophisticated missiles that have turned up on North Korean launchpads over the past two years. Now, newly uncovered documents offer fresh clues about the possible origins of those technical advances, some of which seemed to outside observers to have come from nowhere.</p>

"The question that has long been raised is: Did North Korea get this technology from a [Russian] fire sale?" said David Wright, a missiles expert at the Union of Concerned Scientists. "Did they get plans years ago and are just now at the point where they can build these things?"

North Korea is known to have relied on Russian parts and designs for its older missiles, including the Scud derivatives that had dominated its stockpile since the 1980s. The newly uncovered documents include technical drawings for much more advanced missiles — designs that include features seen in some of the newest missiles in North Korea's expanding arsenal.

The documents from the Makeyev Rocket Design Bureau include marketing brochures for an array of top-of-the-line Soviet missiles that were able to deliver nuclear warheads to U.S. cities. Initially designed for the Soviet navy's nuclear submarines, some of the models offered for sale could be launched from a large boat, a submerged barge, or a capsule dropped into the ocean, negating the need for a modern submarine fleet.

"The missile could be floated and ignited without any need for a launch platform," recalled Kyle Gillman, the former executive vice president of the U.S.-Russian joint venture known as Sea Launch Investors. Gillman, who negotiated the business agreement with Russia's Makeyev scientists, reviewed and authenticated the documents obtained by The Washington Post.

The evidence that the designs eventually ended up in North Korea is partly circumstantial. In summer 1993, with the U.S.-Russian project flagging, more than 60 Russian missile scientists and family members from the Makeyev facility were arrested at Moscow's Sheremetyevo International Airport as they prepared to travel to Pyongyang to work as consultants. U.S., Russian and South Korean intelligence officials later concluded that some of the scientists eventually succeeded in traveling to North Korea to offer blueprints and technical advice for the country's missiles program.

But U.S. analysts see more persuasive evidence in the actual missiles that North Korea has put on display over the past two years. In the most striking case, the Hwasong-10, or Musudan, a single-stage missile successfully tested by North Korea in June 2016, appears to use the same engine and many design features as the Soviet Union's R-27 Zyb, a submarine-launched ballistic missile designed by Makeyev scientists and advertised in one of the brochures obtained by The Post.

The fact that it has taken Pyongyang so long to exploit the Russian designs is perplexing, but North Korea had long lacked the sophisticated materials, engineering expertise and computer-driven machine tools for the kinds of advanced missiles it has recently tested, weapons experts say. With an industrial base enhanced by years of slow, patient acquisition efforts, North Korea is only now in a position to capitalize on technology it had been sitting on for years or even decades, analysts say.

"North Korea was just recently able to acquire machine tools that were state-of-the-art in the 1990s, meaning they are still damn good machine tools," Wright said. "Once you have the plans, and are able to get your hands on the materials and the right kinds of tools, you have a real leg up."

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HEADLINE	12/27 SKorea: Japan sex slavery deal 'flawed'
SOURCE	http://time.com/5080894/south-korea-japan-sex-slaves/?xid=homepage
GIST	(SEOUL, South Korea) — South Korean President Moon Jae-in said Thursday the country's 2015 agreement with Japan to settle a decades-long impasse over Korean women forced into wartime sexual slavery was seriously flawed. Moon's statement in which he vows unspecified follow-up measures to meet the victims' demands potentially throws the future of the deal in doubt, two years after both countries declared it as "final and

	<p>irreversible.”</p> <p>The statement came a day after a state-appointed panel concluded that Seoul’s previous conservative government failed to properly communicate with the victims before reaching the deal.</p> <p>The panel also said parts of the deal were not made public, including Japanese demands that the South Korean government avoid using the term “sexual slavery” and provide a specific plan to remove a bronze statue representing sex slaves in front of its Seoul embassy. South Korea in response said it would formerly refer to the victims as “victims of Japanese military comfort stations” but didn’t make a clear promise to remove the statue, according to the panel.</p> <p>“It has been confirmed that the 2015 comfort women negotiation between South Korea had serious flaws, both in process and content,” Moon said in a statement read out by his spokesman.</p> <p>“Despite the burden of the past agreement being a formal promise between governments that was ratified by the leaders of both countries, I, as president and with the Korean people, once again firmly state that this agreement does not resolve the issue over comfort women.”</p> <p>Under the deal, Japan agreed to provide cash payment for the dwindling number of surviving victims, while South Korea said it will try to resolve Japanese grievance over the statue in front of the embassy.</p> <p>The deal came under heavy criticism in South Korea where many thought the government settled for far too less. Japan has been angry that South Korea hasn’t taken specific steps to remove the statue and similar monuments in other places in the country, insisting there has been a clear understanding to do so.</p> <p>The Foreign Ministry said government officials will hold extensive discussions with victims and experts before deciding whether to pursue changes to the deal. Japanese officials have said a renegotiation is unacceptable.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Claim: farmers’ markets cultivate racism
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/dec/27/farmers-markets-called-racist-habits-of-white-peop/
GIST	<p>Two professors from San Diego State University claim in a new book that farmers’ markets in urban areas are weed-like “white spaces” responsible for oppression.</p> <p>Pascale Joassart-Marcelli and Fernando J Bosco are part of an anthology released this month titled “Just Green Enough.” The work, published by Routledge, claims there is a correlation between the “whiteness of farmers’ markets” and gentrification.</p> <p>“Farmers’ markets are often white spaces where the food consumption habits of white people are normalized,” the SDSU professors write, the education watchdog Campus Reform reported Wednesday.</p> <p>The geology professors claim that 44 percent of San Diego’s farmers’ markets cater to “households from higher socio-economic backgrounds,” which raises property values and “[displaces] low-income residents and people of color.”</p> <p>“The most insidious part of this gentrification process is that alternative food initiatives work against the community activists and residents who first mobilized to fight environmental injustices and provide these amenities but have significantly less political and economic clout than developers and real estate professionals,” the academics write.</p> <p>The men claim that negative externalities of “white habitus” formed at farmers’ markets can be managed through “inclusive steps that balance new initiatives and neighborhood stability to make cities ‘just green</p>

	enough.””
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HEADLINE	12/27 Seattle streetcar tracks deadly to cyclists
SOURCE	http://www.seattlepi.com/local/transportation/article/Lawsuit-Seattle-streetcar-tracks-deadly-to-12457978.php
GIST	<p>Desiree McCloud was cycling from Capitol Hill to Alki Beach on May 13, 2016 on streets with designated bike lanes when her front wheel plunged into a First Hill Streetcar track on Yesler Way, catapulting her forward and inflicting critical head injuries.</p> <p>The 27-year-old behavioral neuroscientist died 11 days later.</p> <p>On the one-year anniversary of her death, her younger brother, Cody McCloud, filed a claim against Sound Transit and the city of Seattle alleging both failed to protect cyclists from the deadly obstacle.</p> <p>That day, Suzanne Greenberg was headed to her next gig as a freelance sign language interpreter when she became caught in the streetcar track on the same block. Her bike tilted to the left, throwing her onto the street. She suffered a torn rotator cuff, torn bicep and other injuries to her forearm.</p> <p>Greenberg and Cody McCloud joined in a lawsuit against the city last week, claiming Seattle has installed a "death trap" for cyclists in its streets and doesn't adequately ensure bicycle safety on the same roads it encourages cyclists to ride.</p> <p>The stretch of Yesler Way near 13th and 14th Avenues South where Desiree McCloud and Greenberg were injured contains a bicycle lane designated by painted white lines. No physical barrier exists between the lane and parked cars, moving traffic or the streetcar track, which shares the road with motorists.</p> <p>The existence of that lane did not protect Desiree McCloud and Greenberg from other hazards, they argue.</p> <p>In Desiree McCloud's case, she was traveling with a group of friends who intentionally set their route along areas that were designated for bike travel, her brother contends. She reportedly entered a traffic lane to pass around another cyclist in the bike lane when her 1-inch-wide wheel wedged in the slightly wider streetcar track.</p> <p>Greenberg was also using the bike lane, but a Metro bus stopped in front of her, taking up both the shoulder and bike lane. As Greenberg applied her brakes, she faced three options: smash into the back of the bus, veer onto the sidewalk and risk hurting pedestrians or pass on the left, as allowed by law.</p> <p>She decided to pass, but at that intersection, the First Hill Streetcar tracks curve from 14th Avenue to East Yesler Way -- something she hadn't seen while she pedaled behind the bus. That's how her wheel dipped into the track.</p> <p>The First Hill Streetcar line, paid for in part by Sound Transit with \$132.8 million in voter-approved money, as well as federal dollars, opened to public use in January 2016. The city designed and built the line, with several delays along the way. Both Seattle and Sound Transit approved the design of the transit line, streetcar track, pavement markings and both protected and unprotected bike paths, according to the lawsuit.</p> <p>Seattle and Sound Transit considered a plan in June 2010 to continue the Broadway cycle track on Yesler, the lawsuit alleges, but that never happened. They even installed a removable rubber insert in the tracks at Eighth Avenue South and South Dearborn Street to prevent incidents such as McCloud's.</p> <p>That rubber insert was the least the city could have done to offset the danger the streetcar tracks pose on Yesler, attorney Phil Arnold contends.</p>

Greenberg filed her initial claim against the city in June, about a month after Cody McCloud's May claim.

Neither had heard back from the city about their concerns.

A few months after Desiree McCloud's death, Cody McCloud said he met with Seattle Department of Transportation officials who promised to address the streetcar safety hazards, but didn't specify what they would do.

Spokespeople for SDOT declined to comment Wednesday on that claim.

Therefore, the city's subsequent silence on the matter was "not at all surprising," Cody McCloud said Wednesday.

And this wasn't the only time Greenberg had fallen victim to the dangers of surface street train tracks. Four years earlier, she was trying to cross the South Lake Union Trolley tracks, but failed to cross them at a 90 degree angle and fell there, too.

In the wake of her more recent crash, Greenberg, a Vashon Island resident who commutes to Seattle, missed some work and was forced to sign with one hand while her other arm rested in a sling.

She's back at work now and intends to return to bicycle commuting in the spring. Her commute hasn't been as convenient in recent months, relying on public transportation, she says.

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HEADLINE	12/27 Study: retiring early could kill you
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/finance/personal-finance/retiring-early-kill-you/2017/12/27/id/833881/
GIST	<p>We already know you're better off financially the later you begin claiming Social Security.</p> <p>Now it seems there's another reason to hold off on collecting those checks: If you retire early you're more likely to die early as well.</p> <p>A new study from Maria Fitzpatrick at Cornell University and Timothy Moore at the University of Melbourne shows a striking correlation between Social Security claims for early takers and a jump in mortality.</p> <p>About a third of all Americans retire and start claiming Social Security benefits in their first month of eligibility when they turn 62. Fitzpatrick and Moore find this "may have an immediate, negative impact" on health.</p> <p>The effect is biggest on men in this scenario, who see an increase in mortality risk of about 20 percent.</p> <p>The authors found no rise in mortality among those for whom 62 was not the eligibility threshold for collecting Social Security.</p> <p>Moreover, demographic groups with the highest rate of retirement at 62 had the highest mortality rate increases at that age.</p> <p>The paper notes that the phenomenon may be linked partly to existing health problems that force some to stop working early.</p> <p>Mortality rates for Americans as a whole, and especially for children, were down in 2013-2015 from 15 years prior. But death rates went in the opposite direction for rural, working-age people after more than a century of decline, according to a report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.</p>

	Abuse of prescription medications, especially opioids, and related heroine-overdose deaths played a large role in the increase.
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HEADLINE	12/27 Report: tech workers hired sex workers
SOURCE	http://www.kiro7.com/news/local/report-amazon-microsoft-workers-caught-hiring-sex-workers-using-company-email/669779121
GIST	<p>A new report this week finds local tech employees were caught hiring trafficked sex workers and used their company emails to do it.</p> <p>Newsweek found 67 of the emails were sent from Microsoft, 63 from Amazon and dozens more came from other big tech companies in Seattle.</p> <p>The emails were sent using work accounts to satisfy a request from local pimps to prove they were not law enforcement, according to the report.</p> <p>Newsweek said it obtained a cache of emails sent to brothels and pimps through a public records request to the King County Prosecutor's Office.</p> <p>In the Seattle area, Backpage.com has ads from apparent brothels that even note that their location is near Microsoft.</p> <p>Newsweek says some studies suggest that the male-dominated tech sector has more consumers of prostitution than other fields.</p> <p>A study commissioned by the Department of Justice found Seattle has the fastest-growing sex industry in the United States, which correlates with the surge in high-paying jobs.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Active-shooter training simulation
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2017/12/27/army-and-homeland-security-prepping-teachers-for-gunman-at-door.html
GIST	<p>The U.S. Army and the Department of Homeland Security have created a computer-based simulator that trains teachers on how best to react in an active-shooter situation.</p> <p>The \$5.6 million program – it's called the Enhanced Dynamic Geo-Social Environment, or EDGE – is similar to those used by the Army, in which a virtual environment helps train soldiers in combat tactics and scenarios.</p> <p>The program is expanding to schools to allow teachers and other school personnel to train for active shooters alongside first responders. Homeland Security officials said the school version should be ready for launch by spring.</p> <p>"With teachers, they did not self-select into a role where they expect to have bullets flying near them," said Tamara Griffith, a chief engineer for the project. "Unfortunately, it's becoming a reality. We want to teach teachers how to respond as first responders."</p> <p>Bob Walker, the project manager, said the program was designed to put a teacher in a situation similar to an active-shooter scenario.</p> <p>Each teacher will get seven options on how to keep students safe, and some in the program might not</p>

respond or be too afraid to react. That, in itself, becomes another problem to be solved.

"Once you hear the children, the screaming, it makes it very, very real," Walker said.

The program can have the shooter be either an adult or a child.

"We have to worry about both children and adults being suspects," he said.

The designers of the program listened to real dispatch tapes from school shootings and talked to a mother of a child killed in the 2012 mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. That shooting left 20 children and six educators dead after gunman Adam Lanza opened fire in the school

"It gives you chills when you think about what's happening on those tapes," Griffith said. "It tore us apart to listen to her and what she went through."

The goal of EDGE was to serve one purpose: to train educators to save lives when an armed attacker busts through a school door, weapons at the ready.

School safety advocates say safety training gets pushed to the back burner until a tragedy happens. Amanda Klinger, director of operations for the nonprofit Educator's School Safety Network, said this new program could help change that.

"I hope that people will sort of see this simulation as a really cool and engaging way," she said, "to think about school safety."

John Verrico, a spokesman for the Department of Homeland Security told Fox News the program was free for administrators and teachers to download and the program was implemented partly due to concerns of active shooter situations at schools.

"These active shooting scenarios are what we wanted to focus on first," Verrico told Fox News.

Verrico could not elaborate if the program would be mandatory for educators but said it was a good way for teachers to train with police if these situations were to occur.

Everytown reported there have been 271 school shootings in the U.S. since 2013.

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HEADLINE	12/27 NKorea defectors w/radiation exposure?
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/north-korean-defectors-show-signs-of-radiation-exposure/
GIST	<p>Four North Korean defectors have shown symptoms linked to radiation exposure, according to the Yonhap News Agency, citing the South Korean government. However, scientists were unable to determine whether the defectors' symptoms were the direct cause of nuclear tests.</p> <p>The defectors are among 30 former residents of from Kilju county in North Korea, the location of a known nuclear test site. South Korean officials began testing defectors from that area for signs of radiation exposure in October, one month after North Korea claimed to detonate a hydrogen bomb.</p> <p>U.S. officials said that explosion was almost 10 times larger than the blast from the bomb dropped over Hiroshima during World War II. The October blast registered as a magnitude 6.3 earthquake, and satellite images showed several landslides around the test area, prompting fears of radiation exposure.</p> <p>However, the four individuals who exhibited symptoms of exposure defected before the most recent test. A researcher at the Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute, which conducted the exams, told reporters that the defectors were exposed to radiation between 2009 and 2013, Reuters reported.</p>

	<p>North Korea has conducted six nuclear tests at the Punggye-ri test site in Kilju county since 2006.</p> <p>While the South Korean researchers noted changes to chromosomes in four of the defectors, they say that could have been caused by other factors aside from nuclear tests, including smoking.</p> <p>More data is needed to determine the cause of the symptoms, including information about the defectors' lifestyles prior to leaving North Korea.</p> <p>The South Korean government plans to conduct future radiation testing and is advising North Korean defectors to get regular check-ups.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Excessive video gaming disorder
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/excessive-video-gaming-to-be-recognized-as-mental-health-disorder/
GIST	<p>The World Health Organization is poised to classify "gaming disorder" as a mental health problem in its 2018 update of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD).</p> <p>"How serious is the problem? It's an epidemic," licensed marriage and family therapist Paula-Jo Husack told CBS San Francisco.</p> <p>She says the designation is long overdue and that addiction to video games is a hidden but widespread problem.</p> <p>Gaming disorder could be diagnosed if a person's video game habit "is of sufficient severity to result in significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning," according to a tentative draft of WHO's 11th update to the ICD.</p> <p>Husack said common symptoms for children and adults include social isolation, trouble transitioning from one thought to another, reduction in empathy, loss of appetite and loss of sensory perception.</p> <p>The WHO said those symptoms generally need to persist for at least a year before doctors diagnose a case of gaming disorder, but added that a diagnosis could be made sooner if symptoms are severe.</p> <p>Gamer Joshua Parrish told the station that taking anything to an extreme can create problems.</p> <p>"Alcohol could be consumed that way, casinos, gambling," he said. "Anything could be taken to that extreme."</p> <p>Robert Figone plays in video game tournaments. He says video gaming can be a healthy form of entertainment.</p> <p>"I join tournaments for competitive video games," he said. "It's mentally stimulating, but doesn't hold me back from my workout everyday."</p> <p>WHO officials have not made a final decision on whether gaming disorder will indeed be included as part of the 2018 ICD.</p> <p>The latest update of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), which guides psychiatric diagnoses in the U.S., does not go so far. Its latest update, published in 2013, lists Internet Gaming Disorder as a condition warranting more clinical research and experience before it might be considered for inclusion as a formal disorder.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/26 Mystery illness linked to heavy pot use
SOURCE	http://www.kunc.org/post/rare-and-mysterious-vomiting-illness-linked-heavy-marijuana-use
GIST	<p>For 17 years, Chalfonte LeNee Queen suffered periodic episodes of violent retching and abdominal pain that would knock her off her feet for days, sometimes leaving her writhing on the floor in pain.</p> <p>"I've screamed out for death," says Queen, 48, who lives in San Diego. "I've cried out for my mom, who's been dead for 20 years, mentally not realizing she can't come to me."</p> <p>Queen lost a modeling job after being mistaken for an alcoholic. She racked up tens of thousands of dollars in medical bills, and her nausea interrupted her sex life. Toward the end of her illness, the 5-foot-9-inch woman weighed just 109 pounds.</p> <p>Throughout the nearly two decades of pain, vomiting and mental fog, Queen visited the hospital about three times a year, but doctors never got to the bottom of what was ailing her. By 2016, she thought she was dying, that she "must have some sort of cancer or something they can't detect," Queen recalls.</p> <p>But she didn't have cancer. She had an obscure syndrome called cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome, a condition only recently acknowledged by the medical community. It affects a small population — namely, a subset of marijuana users who smoke multiple times a day for months, years or even decades.</p> <p>There's no hard data on the prevalence of the illness. But in California and Colorado, which have loosened marijuana laws in recent years, some emergency physicians say they're seeing it more often. One study in Colorado suggests there may be a link.</p> <p>Dr. Aimee Moulin, an emergency room physician at UC-Davis Medical Center in Sacramento, says she has seen a rise in the number of cases since California voters legalized recreational marijuana last November. She expects to see another increase after commercial sales are permitted starting in January.</p> <p>Doctors say it's difficult to treat the condition. There is no cure other than to quit using marijuana, and many patients are skeptical that cannabis is making them sick, so they keep using it and their vomiting episodes continue.</p> <p>Doctors can do little to relieve the symptoms, since traditional anti-nausea medications often don't work and there are no pills to prevent the onset of an episode. Patients may need intravenous hydration and hospital stays until the symptoms subside.</p> <p>"That's really frustrating as an emergency physician," says Moulin. "I really like to make people feel better."</p> <p>Diagnosing the syndrome can also be frustrating and expensive. There is no blood test to link the stomach ailment with marijuana use, so physicians often order pricey CT scans and lab tests to rule out other medical problems.</p> <p>Cannabinoid hyperemesis syndrome was first documented in Australia in 2004. Physicians have historically misdiagnosed it as the more generic cyclic vomiting syndrome, which has no identifiable cause or, as in Queen's case, acute intermittent porphyria (AIP).</p> <p>"Five years ago, this wasn't something that [doctors] had on their radar," says Dr. Kennon Heard, an emergency physician at the University of Colorado in Aurora who co-authored the Colorado study showing a possible tie between the liberalization of marijuana and a surge of the vomiting illness. "We're at least making the diagnosis more now."</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Man stabbed in downtown Seattle
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/man-stabbed-in-downtown-seattle-12-28-2017
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Police are investigating after a man was stabbed in downtown Seattle Wednesday night.</p> <p>It happened just after 6:00 p.m. near 3rd Avenue & Yesler Way, in the Pioneer Square neighborhood.</p> <p>According to Seattle Fire, the victim was taken to Harborview Medical Center in serious condition with several stab wounds.</p> <p>No word yet on what led up to the stabbing or any suspects.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Anarchists claim poisoned groceries
SOURCE	http://www.latimes.com/food/sns-dailymeal-1864622-eat-greek-anarchists-poison-athens-groceries-hydrochloric-acid-122717-20171227-story.html
GIST	<p>Anarchists in Greece, who call themselves "Green-Black Commando," are claiming to have poisoned popular grocery items around Athens including Coca Cola, Coca Cola Light, Yfantis luncheon meat, and Delta milk, according to Vice Munchies. In a statement posted to blog Indymedia titled "Green Nemesis Act 3," the group says it injected each of these items with hydrochloric acid and were set to return the items to supermarket shelves in the days before Christmas.</p> <p>Hydrochloric acid is a colorless, toxic, and corrosive liquid that has the potential to irreversibly damage respiratory organs, skin, and intestines and cause vomiting, diarrhea, lesions, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.</p> <p>According to anarchistnews.org, a site dedicated to news and concern of anarchist activity, a rough translation of Green Nemesis Act 3 reads: "In the days leading up to Christmas thousands of people leave their sofas to do their essential shopping for the Christmas table filling their empty existences with consumerist waste packaged with beautiful and glittering wrappings."</p> <p>It continues: "All this takes place as millions of living creatures are slaughtered in order to reach the tables of the living dead, drained to the last drop of blood to satisfy their taste needs. We realize that this occurs all throughout the year, however during Christmas this phenomenon is accelerated."</p> <p>At this time, it is unknown whether or not these items were actually returned to store shelves or if anyone has experienced any ill effects.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Montreal: more dying in blazes
SOURCE	https://www.mtlblog.com/news/more-montrealers-are-dying-in-blazing-fires-than-ever-before
GIST	<p>As of December 25th, 14 Montrealers have been killed by a fire-related incident in 2017, with the total number of deaths steadily increasing over the last several years.</p> <p>According to information provided by the SPVM to La Presse, 11 fire-related deaths were accidental in nature, two were attributed to suicide, and another was a homicide, for a total of 14 deaths in 2017.</p> <p>Four of these incidents can be linked back to smoke detecting devices, said an SPVM officer. Two cases involved smoke detectors that did not have working batteries.</p>

	<p>Fire-relate deaths in Montreal have actually been increasing in the last three years. In 2016, 11 fire-related deaths were reported. 2015 and 2014 saw 9 deaths.</p> <p>In total, 820 cases were opened by fire investigators in 2017, a major uptick since 2016, when 572 were reported. Around 500 of the 2017 fire investigations are said to be criminal or suspicious in nature.</p> <p>More individuals are being arrested in connection to fires, with 108 arrested since November 30 2017. 99 were apprehended in the same span in 2016, but the SPVM says the increase is probably because people with mental health issues are now being counted among those arrested.</p> <p>Molotov cocktails were a cause of major fires in Montreal this year, with a total of 27 hurled at buildings in the city. 12 of these incidents are said to be in connection to organized crime.</p> <p>The most common motives for arson in Montreal 2017, according to police, are vandalism, getting rid of a marijuana grow-op, disputes between two individuals, and homeless people starting fires in order to warm themselves.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Thieves target mailboxes in Clallam Co.
SOURCE	http://komonews.com/news/local/thieves-target-dozens-of-mailboxes-in-clallam-county
GIST	<p>SEQUIM, Wash. - Clallam County Sheriff's deputies are investigating after a string of mail thefts in neighborhoods around Sequim and East of Port Angeles.</p> <p>Deputies said they responded to at least eight reports of opened or damaged rural route mailboxes overnight Tuesday into Wednesday. In some cases, deputies said thieves pried open locked mailboxes.</p> <p>They said at least 40 mailboxes were accessed in the areas of Old Blyn Highway, East Sequim Bay Road, Heron Road, Raintree Lane, Palo Alto Road, Cascade View Drive, Michaels Lane and Deer Park Road.</p> <p>Deputies found mail still inside some of the mailboxes and they believe the thieves were likely selective - looking for cash, small gifts and gift cards.</p> <p>Right now deputies have few leads and no suspects.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 BP: agent was shot from Mexico side
SOURCE	http://www.foxnews.com/us/2017/12/28/border-patrol-agent-wounded-from-bullet-shot-from-mexican-side-agency-says.html
GIST	<p>A U.S. Border Patrol agent was wounded after being struck by a bullet fired from Mexico, authorities said Wednesday.</p> <p>The agent, whose name was not released, was shot from the Mexican side of the Rio Grande River near Brownsville where he was assigned to patrol it by boat, according to the Brownsville Herald.</p> <p>U.S. Customs and Border Protection spokesperson Marcelino Medina said in the agent suffered a non-lethal injury from a caliber weapon after an assault from the Mexican side.</p> <p>“On Tuesday, December 26, 2017, a Border Patrol Agent assigned to the Riverine Unit sustained a non-life threatening injury from a small caliber weapon resulting from an assault originating from the Mexican Riverbank,” Medina said. “The agent suffered a grazing wound to the back of his head as a result of the incident and has been medically evaluated and released.</p>

	The case is now under investigation with the participation of the FBI.
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HEADLINE	12/27 NYC murder rate on pace 1950s level
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-city-murder-rate-on-pace-to-drop-to-1950s-levels-1514420267
GIST	<p>New York City is on track to close the year with the fewest murders since Elvis Presley appeared on “The Ed Sullivan Show.”</p> <p>The New York Police Department has recorded 286 murders as of Wednesday, putting the city on pace to finish the year with fewer than 300 murders for the first time since the 1950s. Murders in 2017 are down from 329 at the same point last year and 2,262 in 1990—the highest recorded amount of murders by the NYPD.</p> <p>Officials have credited the decline to the department’s data-driven approach of targeting the worst offenders in the city, centered on the crime-tracking system known as CompStat, as well as improved community relations and better utilization of technology. The NYPD also has the most officers of any department in the U.S., with 36,000 members.</p> <p>“I’ve been going to CompStat since 1996 and to have a year like we had last year in 2016 was pretty amazing,” NYPD Commissioner James O’Neill said at a crime-statistics briefing earlier this month. “What we’re doing this year—continuing that trend and making those decreases go even deeper—is really nothing short of amazing.”</p> <p>Overall major crime, which includes murders, rape, robbery, felony assaults, burglary, grand larceny and grand larceny of vehicles, so far this year is on pace to finish under 100,000—also the lowest since the 1950s, according to crime data updated on Sunday. Police have recorded 94,806 major felonies so far this year—a little more than half of the roughly 184,000 in 2000.</p> <p>While rape is down 1% for the year, misdemeanor sex crimes are up by 9.3% to 3,585 compared with last year.</p> <p>The drop in crime coincides with dips in arrests and the number of people incarcerated in the city jails. The city on Wednesday announced that it is on track for a monthly jail population below 9,000 for the first time in three decades. There were 73,855 adult arrests in Manhattan in 2016, the fewest since 2007.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Chicago murder rate declines; still high
SOURCE	https://www.yahoo.com/news/chicago-murder-rate-declines-still-alarmingly-high-011829733.html
GIST	<p>Chicago experienced a near 20-year record number of murders last year, prompting President Donald Trump to regularly single out the city for criticism.</p> <p>"What the hell is going on in Chicago?" Trump asked during a speech this month. "For the second year in a row, a person was shot in Chicago every three hours."</p> <p>The good news is that violence actually declined in Chicago in 2017.</p> <p>The bad news is that it remains alarmingly high.</p> <p>As of mid-December, there had been 635 murders in Chicago -- a 15 percent drop from the previous year, according to the Chicago Police Department.</p>

	<p>The total number of shootings incidents was down 21 percent to 2,719.</p> <p>Still, murders remain at levels unseen since the 1990s, when the crack cocaine epidemic ravaged communities across the United States and fueled a spike in crime.</p> <p>As the city's gun violence spiraled seemingly out of control last year, it raised alarms among officials and residents alike, and brought about a number of initiatives to help stem the tide.</p> <p>City officials have credited the reduction in murders and shootings this year to a push to hire 1,100 additional police officers and a focus on new crime-fighting technologies.</p> <p>"Communities that were once under a cloud of gun violence are beginning to see signs of optimism and hope," police chief Eddie Johnson said this month.</p> <p>The city has relied on more data crunching to help predict violence and deployed more high-tech devices that help detect gunshots and alert police even before residents can make an emergency call.</p> <p>Still, in pure numbers, Chicago remains the source of the most shootings and murders in the nation.</p> <p>As the third most populous US city, its crime numbers would naturally be higher. In fact, cities such as St Louis, Baltimore and Detroit have a higher murder rate (the number of people killed per 100,000 residents).</p> <p>But Chicago's problems cannot be explained away by its size alone.</p> <p>If you were to add up the murders in both of America's largest cities -- Los Angeles and New York -- the total still would be about half the number in Chicago.</p> <p>Officials and academics say they cannot point to any one factor as a definitive cause of the rise in murders.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Baltimore sets record killings per capita
SOURCE	http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/crime/bs-md-ci-per-capita-homicides-20171227-story.html
GIST	<p>With two fatal shootings Tuesday night, the recent reclassification of a decades-old shooting as a killing and another homicide Wednesday evening, Baltimore has hit 343 homicides in 2017, and a new record for killings per capita.</p> <p>The homicide rate for 2017 is now 55.8 killings per 100,000 people. The previous record was 55.35 per 100,000 in 2015. The city suffered 344 homicides that year, but had thousands more residents.</p> <p>The most homicides to occur in a year was 353 in 1993, but the city had some 100,000 more residents then.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/28 Officers killed hits near 50yr-low
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2017/12/28/number-officers-killed-2017-hits-nearly-50-year-low/984477001/
GIST	<p>The night five Dallas officers were gunned down marked one of the deadliest days for law enforcement. As a whole, 2016 saw more deaths than in the five previous years, but something changed this year: Killings dropped.</p>

As of today, 128 officers have died in the line of duty, 44 of them shot and killed. That's down from 2016, when 135 officers died, 64 of them gunned down, according to data released by the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund.

Deaths in 2017 have hit a nearly 58-year low. The only other year with fewer deaths since 1959 was in 2013, when 116 officers were killed.

"I think this is one of those good-news, bad-news situations," said Craig Floyd, president and chief executive of the fund. "On one hand, you had 128 officers who made the ultimate sacrifice, showing the cost of public safety, but for the first time since 2013, the number of deaths has actually declined."

Reasons for the drop could range from advanced safety gear such as bulletproof vests, better training, better relationships and reduced violence in communities — or just 2017 being an outlier.

"It's definitely a good sign but if it's a trend, we'll have to see," said Geoffrey P. Alpert, a professor at the University of South Carolina and a researcher on high-risk police activities. "I think we're starting to see the impact of all this new training and equipment, and a shift because of the overall concern for officer safety."

While shootings played a big role, the largest number of deaths were the result of traffic crashes. Forty-seven officers were killed in crashes this year, down 15% from 2016. A number of factors — including the "move-over law" and enhanced policies that limit vehicle pursuits and speeding — could be behind the drop.

Texas, as it has in other years, had the highest number of law enforcement officers killed on the job, followed by Florida and New York, both with nine deaths.

Fourteen Texas officers have died in 2017, including earlier this month with the death of San Marcos Police Officer Kenneth Copeland, who was fatally shot while serving an arrest warrant.

San Marcos Police Chief Chase Stapp said the killing was similar to an ambush, which in 2016 was behind a jarring 21 deaths. Eight deaths in 2017 were the result of ambushes. This year, the largest number of fatal shootings happened when officers were responding to domestic disturbances.

Randy Sutton, a spokesman for the Blue Lives Matter group, said there are likely multiple reasons behind the drop in killings, including a change in how officers approach arrests because of the controversial high-profile shootings over the years. He said officers don't put themselves in dangerous situations as often.

"There's a saying in law enforcement: You can't get in trouble for the car stop you don't make," he said. "They don't want to be the next Ferguson, the next officer burned on the stake."

The numbers of people killed by officers actually jumped from 963 in 2016 to 971 this year, according to data compiled by The Washington Post. But the number of high-profile shootings that led to protests and riots was far lower than previous years, Floyd said.

"I'm hoping this is a sign that officers have restored some of that trust, especially in communities where that relationship has been torn," he said, adding that body-worn cameras have helped departments become more transparent and stop violence before it begins after controversial incidents.

Floyd said there have also been significant improvements over the years with de-escalation training and improved safety equipment provided to officers.

But some of those advancements could show why this year's data could be an outlier, according to Justin Nix, a criminal justice professor at the University of South Carolina.

There's no way of knowing the number of times officers nearly died or were shot at but survived because

	<p>they a bullet hit their tactical vest instead of them, he said. "Random chance" sometimes plays a role in these incidents, he said.</p> <p>"Every year, 100 to 150 officers die in the line of duty. It's a relatively small number when you consider the half a million officers nationwide, so it's going to bounce around," Nix said. "This decrease is definitely a good thing, but there's no way of knowing whether it might go up again next year."</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 FBI declines to head murdered cop probe
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/fbi-declines-lead-investigation-unsolved-murder-veteran-baltimore/story?
GIST	<p>The FBI has declined to lead an investigation into the murder of a veteran Baltimore detective who was killed one day before he was due to testify in a federal police corruption trial, Baltimore Police Commissioner Kevin Davis said in a press conference Wednesday afternoon.</p> <p>On Nov. 15, homicide Det. Sean Suiter, an 18-year veteran of the Baltimore Police Department, was killed last month while conducting a follow-up to a homicide investigation, police said. While on the scene, Suiter approached a man who he saw was engaging in suspicious activity, and the man shot Suiter in the head shortly after with Suiter's own gun, police said.</p> <p>Suiter was scheduled to testify the next day in federal court regarding an ongoing corruption investigation of eight police officers being led by the FBI, which is what led Davis to request that the FBI assume a lead in the murder investigation into Suiter's death, he said.</p> <p>Yesterday, Davis received a letter from FBI Assistant Director Stephen Richardson, explaining that since "no information has been developed to indicate Det. Suiter's death was directly connected to an FBI investigation," the investigation into his murder should remain with the Baltimore Police Department.</p> <p>The FBI emphasized its "current commitment" to assist the police department, which will include providing FBI analytical, forensic and investigative support as well as \$25,000 toward a reward "for information leading to the arrest of anyone who may have been involved in this matter," the letter states, according to Davis, who added that the total reward stands at \$215,000.</p> <p>The case will remain with the Baltimore Police Department, Davis said. He described his decision to ask the FBI to take the lead in the investigation as a "unusual step" taken out of an abundance of caution, given that Suiter was due to testify in the federal corruption trial the next day.</p> <p>The FBI's decision to not lead the murder investigation reiterates in "black and white" that Suiter's death had nothing to do with the pending corruption investigation into the department, Davis said. In addition, there is "zero evidence" to suggest that Suiter committed suicide, Davis said.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 NY police: 'act of savagery' in killings
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/young-boy-girl-killed-act-savagery-upstate-york/story?id=52012275
GIST	<p>A 5-year-old girl and an 11-year-old boy were among four people found dead in upstate New York in what police are treating as a quadruple homicide, described by the police chief as "savagery."</p> <p>The two children and two adult female victims, ages 22 and 36, were found early Tuesday afternoon in a basement apartment in Troy, New York, about 8 miles outside of Albany, Troy Police Chief John Tedesco said at a news conference today.</p> <p>The victims all appeared to have lived in the apartment, police said. The women were in a relationship,</p>

	<p>and the girl and the boy were the children of one of the women, police said.</p> <p>Tedesco said the killings aren't believed to be a random act, adding police do not believe there is any imminent danger to the public.</p> <p>Tedesco is urging anyone with information to contact the police.</p> <p>Tedesco did not release the causes of death. The autopsies are being performed today, he said.</p> <p>"The emotions of a police officer are something you repress because there is a job to be done," Tedesco said, adding that no one involved in this case will ever forget it.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 FBI investigates threatening letters
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnewyork.com/investigations/FBI-Search-in-Jersey-City-Related-to-Threatening-Letters-Sources-466835513.html
GIST	<p>FBI agents and local police searched a home in Jersey City Wednesday in an investigation into numerous threatening letters, including one claiming there might be an attack on Rockefeller Plaza, law enforcement sources said.</p> <p>Other threatening notes were also sent to several NJ locations, officials said.</p> <p>Investigators said no arrest was made, but they believe they know who wrote the letters. Agents and police seized computers and other materials from the home along Oakland Avenue during a search that lasted several hours.</p> <p>Investigators said there was no active threat or plot. The investigation into the writings is not believed to be linked to any terror- or ISIS-inspired postings.</p> <p>Rather, the person who wrote the letters may be angry or emotionally disturbed, two sources familiar with the case said.</p> <p>An FBI spokeswoman declined to comment except to confirm agents were on "official business" at the Oakland Avenue home.</p> <p>A spokesman for the US attorney referred calls to the FBI.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Calif. border checkpoints pot crackdown
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/legal-pot/pot-becomes-legal-california-2018-border-checkpoints-will-still-crackdown-n832876
GIST	<p>PINE VALLEY, Calif. — California legalizes marijuana for recreational use Monday, but that won't stop federal agents from seizing the drug — even in tiny amounts — on busy freeways and backcountry highways.</p> <p>Marijuana possession still will be prohibited at eight Border Patrol checkpoints in California, a reminder that state and federal laws collide when it comes to pot. The U.S. government classifies marijuana as a controlled substance, like heroin and LSD.</p> <p>"Prior to Jan. 1, it's going to be the same after Jan. 1, because nothing changed on our end," said Ryan Yamasaki, an assistant chief of the Border Patrol's San Diego sector. "If you're a federal law enforcement agency, you uphold federal laws."</p>

	<p>The checkpoints, located up to 100 miles from Mexico, are considered a final line of defense against immigrants who elude agents at the border. They also have been a trap for U.S. citizens carrying drugs, even tiny bags of marijuana.</p> <p>About 40 percent of pot seizures at Border Patrol checkpoints from fiscal years 2013 to 2016 were an ounce (28 grams) or less from U.S. citizens, according to a Government Accountability Office report last month. California's new law allows anyone 21 and over to carry up to an ounce.</p> <p>The Border Patrol operates 34 permanent checkpoints along the Mexican border and an additional 103 "tactical" stops, typically cones and signs that appear for brief periods.</p> <p>Ronald Vitiello, acting deputy commissioner of parent agency Customs and Border Protection, called drug seizures an "ancillary effect" of enforcing immigration laws. Motorists typically are released after being photographed and fingerprinted. They generally aren't charged with a crime because prosecutors consider them low priority.</p> <p>The clash between state and federal marijuana laws played out on a smaller scale near the Canadian border in Washington after that state legalized marijuana in 2014. California is a far busier route for illegal crossings with many more agents.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Greece anarchists claim court bombing
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/greek-left-group-claims-responsibility-court-bombing-52011840
GIST	<p>A small far-left group in Greece has claimed responsibility for a Dec. 22 bombing at an Athens courthouse that caused extensive damage but no injuries.</p> <p>The Popular Fighters Group said in a post on a far-left website Wednesday that it attacked the Athens Court of Appeal to protest what it said was bias by Greek judges that favored the rich and powerful in several high-profile court cases.</p> <p>The group also complained that Greek courts failed to uphold legal challenges against painful income cuts and tax hikes implemented under the country's bailout program.</p> <p>The group previously claimed responsibility for shots fired at the German ambassador's residence in Athens four years ago and bombings targeting a Greek industry federation in late 2015 and outside a bank in April. No injuries resulted from those incidents.</p>
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HEADLINE	12/27 Overpass deaths: danger from above
SOURCE	http://abcnews.go.com/US/overpass-death-highlights-dangers-motorists-pedestrians/story?id=52009795
GIST	<p>Four teenagers appeared in court this morning on murder charges for allegedly hurling a sandbag over an overpass, killing a 22-year-old man in a car below.</p> <p>This isn't the first incidence of a thrown item killing or injuring innocent people.</p> <p>Here's a look at some other occurrences that involved items ranging from a sandbag, a rock, a shopping cart and even a frozen turkey:</p> <p>December 2017</p>

Four teenagers are in custody after Toledo, Ohio, police say they threw a construction sandbag from an overpass on Dec. 19, hitting a passenger in a car on the interstate below.

The victim, 22-year-old Marquise Byrd, of Warren, Michigan, died three days later.

Three teenagers are 14 years old, police said. The other teen is 13.

They were charged with murder and vehicular vandalism, the Lucas County Prosecutor's Office said. The teens appeared in court this morning, where they denied the murder charge, the prosecutor's office said.

October 2017

Five teenage boys in Michigan are facing charges including second-degree murder for allegedly throwing a rock at a van that went through the windshield and killed a passenger in October.

On Oct. 18, the victim, Kenneth White, and his friend were driving on the interstate when the driver said a large rock came through their van. The rock, according to the driver, struck White, 32, in the face and then ricocheted from his face to his chest, officials said.

The teens -- who were charged as adults with second-degree murder -- were also charged with conspiracy to commit murder and malicious destruction of property. They all pleaded not guilty, ABC affiliate WJRT in Flint reported in October.

They could face life in prison if convicted, officials said.

WJRT reported in October that White's fiance, Amiee Cagle, said she hoped the teen who allegedly threw the rock is sentenced to life in prison.

Cagle added that she will try to forgive the teens, WJRT reported.

"I know that's what Kenneth would have wanted," she said. "It's going to take time, a lot of time."

October 2011

On Oct. 30, 2011, a New York City woman was seriously injured when a shopping cart fell four stories onto her at an East Harlem shopping center, according to The Associated Press.

The victim, Marion Hedges, was at the mall at the time buying Halloween candy for underprivileged children. She suffered a serious brain injury.

Two teenagers pleaded guilty in the assault.

One teen was sentenced to six to 18 months at a center for at-risk students, while the other teen was ordered to spend six months in a therapeutic group home, The New York Post reported.

In 2012, Hedges said she forgave the teens.

As of 2015, Hedges was still suffering from memory loss, double vision and impaired motor skills, the Post reported.

Her husband, Michael Hedges, told the Post, "This has destroyed our lives in every possible way."

November 2004

On Nov. 13, 2004, a 44-year-old woman was in her car on Long Island when she was struck in the head by a 20-pound frozen turkey, the New York Post reported.

Victoria Ruvolo spent two weeks in an induced coma. Her esophagus was caved in, both cheeks and her jaw were shattered, the socket of one eye was fractured and she suffered brain damage.

	<p>Then-18-year-old Ryan Cushing pleaded guilty and was sent to jail for six months. He could have faced up to 25 years in prison if convicted, but Ruvolo asked the judge to show mercy, ABC News reported in 2005.</p> <p>Ruvolo said at the time of a lengthy prison sentence, "I don't think that would have done him, myself or society any good."</p> <p>Ruvolo said when Cushing pleaded guilty, "He came over to me and his eyes started swelling up and he was starting to apologize. ... And then he took me in his arms and the only thing I could do was comfort him. I needed that hug from him as much as he needed it from me."</p>
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NEWS

FBI: California man planned ISIS-inspired Christmas terror attack on San Francisco's Pier 39
KABC-TV

... a medical history of asthma, according to the FBI. ABC7 News in San Francisco contacted officials at Pier 39 to ask for a response. They say they did not know about this plot. ABC News contributed to this report. Report a Typo. Related Topics: terror attackterror threatterrorismFBIarrestCalifornia. Email.

Modesto Man Plotted Christmas Day Terror Attack on San Francisco's Pier 39: FBI Affidavit - KTLA

FBI: Man planned ISIS-inspired Christmas Day terror attack in San Francisco - CBS News

San Francisco: Man arrested over 'Christmas terror plan' - BBC News

Full Coverage

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Environmental terrorism deadlier than Boko Haram, says MOSOP

Guardian (blog)

The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) has said environmental terrorism in the Niger Delta was deadlier than Boko Haram insurgency for which government plans to expend \$1 billion. MOSOP, therefore, asked the Federal Government to immediately put in place remedial ...

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Bitcoin Price Increase is Being Impacted by Terrorism? Former CIA Official

Ethereum World News (blog)

Current Director at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies and former CIA Official – Yaya Fanusie, believes that the BTC price rally is being effected and is attracting extremist groups attention like Syria (ISIS) and Al Queda. Even that the funding in these particular cases are still modest at best [for ...

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Colorado Sovereigns Charged With "Paper Terrorism" Going Down One by One

Westword

In March, eight individuals were arrested along Colorado's Front Range for threatening and harassing elected officials using a tactic that the FBI calls "paper terrorism." This tactic included sending Colorado officials — such as judges, county administrators and district attorneys — unofficial versions of ...

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Obama's Collusion With Hezbollah Narco-Terrorists

FrontPage Magazine

The administration seemed incapable of dealing with radical Islamic terrorism. Indeed, Obama and the oleaginous sycophants that worked for him could not even bring themselves to utter that phrase. ISIS was on the march, democracy was on the run in Venezuela, and North Korea continued to detain ...

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Foreign Secretary expresses concern over Pence's comments on Pakistan

Geo News, Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua on Friday expressed deep concern over US Vice President Mike Pence's comments regarding Pakistan and its role in the war against terrorism during his unannounced visit to Afghanistan. Addressing the Senate's Standing Committee on External Affairs,

...

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Britain designates 2 militant groups in Egypt as 'terrorist'

Fox News

The British Embassy in Egypt says in a statement Friday that Britain has added the Hasm movement and Liwaa el-Thawra group to its list of terrorist organizations after reviewing attacks claimed by both groups and finding they meet the criteria. It also said the move will boost its "capacity to disrupt the ...

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Chesterfield terror suspect named as chip shop owner

Derbyshire Times

A Chesterfield man arrested on suspicion of terrorism offences earlier this week has been named in the national media as Hazhar Star. Also known as Andy, the 31-year-old is believed to be the owner of the Mermaid Traditional Fish Bar on Sheffield Road, which has been cordoned off by police since ...

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Destabilization plots as real as terrorism, says Sara Duterte

Philippine Canadian Inquirer

Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio said that the destabilization plot against her father, President Rodrigo Duterte is a threat that is tantamount to terrorism, adding that the information of the said plot is reliable as it came from trusted sources. According to her, "The threat of destabilization is as real as ...

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The Latest: Melbourne Police Say No Sign Of Terrorist Link

In Homeland Security

Police said in news conference late Thursday that there was no evidence or intelligence to indicate that the incident was connected to terrorism, but they believe the act was deliberate. They said counter-terror officials would remain involved in the investigation to be sure there was no connection.

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Top Gov't Contracts Policy Developments Of 2017

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Lockheed, Northrop Shed F-35 FCA Case At 5th Circ.

The Fifth Circuit refused in a published opinion Tuesday to revive a False Claims Act suit alleging Lockheed Martin Corp. and Northrop Grumman Systems Corp. concealed the F-35 fighter aircraft's true cost, finding the whistleblower lacked direct knowledge of the alleged, and publicly disclosed, scheme. [Read more »](#)

Deutsche Bahn, German Army Sue Truck Makers Over Cartel

Rail giant Deutsche Bahn AG on Wednesday sued Volvo, Daimler and several other manufacturers accused of operating a long-running truck cartel, lodging a complaint on behalf of more than three dozen truck buyers and the German army, and seeking damages over vehicle sales worth more than

€2 billion. [Read more »](#)

Commerce Dept. Finalizes 300% Tariffs On Bombardier Jets

When Bombardier Inc. starts exporting its C-Series commercial jets to the United States, they'll face tariffs totaling nearly 300 percent after the U.S. Department of Commerce announced final determinations Wednesday concluding the company is underpricing its aircraft and is illegally subsidized by the Canadian government. [Read more »](#)

ENFORCEMENT

Exporters Sentenced For Selling Aviation Parts To Syria

A Florida federal judge on Wednesday sentenced two Florida residents to two years in prison and another to one year in prison for conspiring to violate U.S. sanctions against Syria by illegally exporting aviation equipment with civilian and military applications to a government-owned airline. [Read more »](#)

Jury In Case Against Turkish Banker Eyes Zarrab Flowcharts

A Manhattan jury weighed charges against Mehmet Hakan Atilla, a Turkish banker accused of helping Iran dodge billions of dollars of U.S. economic sanctions, for just over four hours Wednesday, asking for sketches purporting to detail illegal activity that were drawn by trader-turned-cooperator Reza Zarrab. [Read more »](#)

LITIGATION

Honeywell Strikes \$26M NY Lake Pollution Deal

Aerospace and automotive conglomerate Honeywell and a New York county reached a deal worth \$26 million Wednesday to resolve the federal government's and state's claims that their release of mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls and other toxic substances destroyed natural resources at Onondaga Lake. [Read more »](#)

DEALS & CONTRACTS

State Dept. Approves \$200M F-16 Support Deal For Poland

The U.S. Department of State approved a proposed \$200 million foreign arms sale that lets the Pentagon and contractors continue to service Poland's fleet of F-16 fighter jets, according to a statement on Tuesday from the Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency. [Read more »](#)

Army Extends Lockheed Deal For Apache Sensor Upkeep

Lockheed Martin Corp. secured on Tuesday a \$65 million extension of an Army contract to service Apache attack helicopter target acquisition and night vision systems, according to the Defense Logistics Agency. [Read more »](#)

EXPERT ANALYSIS

A Review Of US Economic Sanctions In 2017

The past 12 months have been an extraordinarily active period and, given recent international developments, the pace of change for U.S. sanctions policy is unlikely to slow in the foreseeable future, say Ama Adams, Brendan Hanifin and Emerson Siegle of Ropes & Gray LLP. [Read more »](#)

Hearing The Need For More Women's Voices In The Courtroom

For many female attorneys, the results revealed in the New York State Bar Association's recently adopted report on female litigators in the courtroom were not encouraging but not terribly surprising. Each stakeholder in the litigation process — judges, law firms and corporate clients — should contribute toward increasing female voices in the courtroom, says Carrie Cohen of Morrison & Foerster LLP. [Read more »](#)

LEGAL INDUSTRY

Analysis

Legal Industry 2017 Year In Review

The legal industry, rocked by gender bias suits and buoyed by #appellatetwitter, saw a roller coaster of a year. Here's a look at the good, bad and Trump-driven of 2017. [Read more »](#)

Analysis

Tax Bill Like 'Manna From Heaven' For Work-Hungry Firms

While the Republicans' tax bill heads to President Donald Trump's desk after receiving final approval by Congress, tax attorneys already are salivating over the work the legislation promises to deliver. [Read more »](#)

Analysis

Trump's First Year Saw Slew Of Judicial Confirmations

With 12 appellate judges and a U.S. Supreme Court justice, President Donald Trump has already made an impact on the federal courts in his first year, even as allies push for more judges to be confirmed more quickly and Trump's detractors cry foul. [Read more »](#)

Trump Taps 10 For Bench In Latest Round Of Nominations

President Donald Trump announced a wave of federal judicial nominations on Wednesday, tapping a New Mexico energy law partner for the Tenth Circuit, a Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP intellectual property partner for the District of Delaware, and eight more attorneys for federal district judgeships in Pennsylvania, Florida and other states. [Read more »](#)

IP Firm Hits LegalZoom, State Bars With \$60M Antitrust Suit

A law firm specializing in trademark registration filed a \$60 million antitrust lawsuit in California federal

court Tuesday, accusing federal and state regulators of complicity in allowing LegalZoom.com and its founders to use false advertising and offer customers unauthorized legal services. [Read more »](#)

Womble Bond Taking On 24 Attys From Calif. IP Boutique

Womble Bond Dickinson (US) LLP is picking up 24 members of an intellectual property boutique in California, adding another notch to its belt in a series of combinations following the November merger of North Carolina-based Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice LLP and British firm Bond Dickinson LLP. [Read more »](#)

Law360's Weekly Verdict: Legal Lions & Lambs

The year's final legal lions list has been compiled, and sole practitioner John R. Sommer ended up on top of it for his work taking down the Lanham Act's ban on "scandalous and immoral" trademarks, while 2017's final legal lambs list is headed up by Kane Russell Coleman & Logan PC, which was on the losing end of a \$98 million fraud verdict in Texas this week. [Read more »](#)

Legal Tech Download: Dentons' Leadership Change-Up

The world of legal technology is quickly evolving, with new products coming to market in rapid succession. Here, Law360 takes a look at seven major recent developments. [Read more »](#)

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U.S. Department of Defense

U.S. Department of State

Bureau of Industry and Security

Defense Contract Audit Agency

Defense Contract Management Agency

Defense Logistics Agency

Defense Security Cooperation Agency
Economic Development Administration
European Commission
Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council
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Taft Stettinius

Thomas Combs

Troutman Sanders

Whitfield Bryson

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WilmerHale

Winston & Strawn

Womble Bond Dickinson

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

U.S. Department of Justice

U.S. Supreme Court

Department of Commerce

Executive Office of the President

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Internal Revenue Service

Office of Foreign Assets Control

U.S. Department of Defense

U.S. Department of State

Bureau of Industry and Security

Defense Contract Audit Agency

Defense Contract Management Agency

Defense Logistics Agency

Defense Security Cooperation Agency
Economic Development Administration
European Commission
Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council
Fish and Wildlife Service
Government Accountability Office
International Trade Commission
NATO
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Securities and Exchange Commission
U.S. Air Force
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
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18 December 2017

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 - *"Zealot" Campaign Uses NSA Exploits to Mine Monero on Windows and Linux Servers
 - *New GnatSpy Mobile Malware Family Discovered
 - *Google Researcher Finds Critical Flaw in Keeper Password Manager
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 - *Two Critical 0-Day Remote Exploits for vBulletin Forum Disclosed Publicly
 - *Automated Hunting of Software Update Supply Chain Attacks
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Cyber Security News

*Remote LD_PRELOAD Exploitation against GoAhead servers

From Elttam (12.18.2017)

A blog post by Elttam researchers details CVE-2017-17562, a vulnerability which can be exploited to gain reliable remote code execution in all versions of the GoAhead web server < 3.6.5. The vulnerability is a result of Initializing the environment of forked CGI scripts using untrusted HTTP request parameters, and will affect all users who have CGI support enabled with dynamically linked

executables. This behavior, when combined with the glibc dynamic linker, can be abused for remote code execution using special variables such as LD_PRELOAD (commonly used to perform function hooking). GoAhead's marketing page says that it's "the world's most popular, tiny embedded web server" and is used by such companies as IBM, HP, Oracle, Boeing, D-link, and Motorola. Elttam did a search on shodan, and found over 735,000 devices using it on the internet today. The exploitation of this issue serves as an interesting case study, and could be applied to other types of software with the same insecure construct. [Link](#)

Elttam.com.au/blog/goahead/

*"Zealot" Campaign Uses NSA Exploits to Mine Monero on Windows and Linux Servers

From Bleeping Computer (12.16.2017) Catalin Cimpanu

An aggressive and sophisticated malware campaign is currently underway, targeting Linux and Windows servers with an assortment of exploits with the goal of installing malware that mines the Monero cryptocurrency. The campaign was detected by security researchers from F5 Networks, who named it Zealot, after zealot.zip, one of the files dropped on targeted servers. According to security researchers for F5 Networks, the attackers are scanning the Internet for particular servers and using two exploits, one for Apache Struts (CVE-2017-5638) and one for the DotNetNuke ASP.NET CMS (CVE-2017-9822), to get a foothold on unpatched machines. For this campaign, the Struts flaw included payloads for targeting both Linux and Windows machines at the same time. In the case attackers infected a Windows machine, attackers also deployed EternalBlue and EternalSynergy, two NSA exploits leaked by the Shadow Brokers earlier this year, which attackers use to move laterally in the victim's local network and infect even more systems. At a later point, they would use PowerShell to download and install the final-stage malware, which, for this campaign, was a Monero miner. On Linux, attackers would use Python scripts that appear to be taken from the EmpireProject post-exploitation framework, and would also install the same Monero miner. [Link](#)

Bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/-zealot-campaign-uses-nsa-exploits-to-mine-monero-on-windows-and-linux-servers/

*New GnatSpy Mobile Malware Family Discovered

From Trend Micro (12.18.2017) Ecular Xu

Earlier this year researchers first disclosed a targeted attack campaign targeting various sectors in the Middle East. This threat actor was called Two-tailed Scorpion/APT-C-23. Later on, a mobile component called VAMP was found, with a new variant (dubbed FrozenCell) discovered in October. VAMP targeted various types of data from the phones of victims: images, text messages, contacts, and call history, among others. Dozens of command-and-control (C&C) domains and samples were found, which were soon disabled or detected. Recently, Trend Micro researchers came across a new mobile malware family which they called GnatSpy. We believe that this is a new variant of VAMP, indicating that the threat actors behind APT-C-23 are still active and continuously improving their product. Some C&C

domains from VAMP were reused in newer GnatSpy variants, indicating that these attacks are connected. Researchers do not know for sure how these files were distributed to users. It is possible that threat actors sent them directly for users to download and install on their devices. They had names like "Android Setting" or "Facebook Update" to make users believe they were legitimate. Nor have significant numbers of these apps been detected in the wild, indicating their use is probably limited to specific targeted groups or individuals. The capabilities of GnatSpy are similar to early versions of VAMP. However, there have been some changes in its behavior that highlight the increasing sophistication of this particular threat actor. The structure of the new GnatSpy variants is very different from previous variants. More receivers and services have been added, making this malware more capable and modular. [Link](#)

[Blog\[.\]trendmicro.com/trendlabs-security-intelligence/new-gnatspy-mobile-malware-family-discovered/](http://blog.trendmicro.com/trendlabs-security-intelligence/new-gnatspy-mobile-malware-family-discovered/)

*Google Researcher Finds Critical Flaw in Keeper Password Manager

From Security Week (12.18.2017) Eduard Kovacs

Google Project Zero researcher Tavis Ormandy recently discovered that the Keeper password manager had been affected by a critical flaw similar to one he identified just over one year ago in the same application. Ormandy found the security hole after noticing that Keeper is now installed by default in Windows 10. He remembered a vulnerability he reported last year and managed to reproduce the same attack with only a few minor modifications. The vulnerability affects the Keeper browser extensions, which, unless users opt out, are installed alongside the Keeper desktop application. The security hole allows attackers to steal passwords stored by the app if they can convince an authenticated user to access a specially crafted website. Keeper released a patch within 24 hours of being notified by Ormandy. The fix has been rolled out with version 11.4.4 and it has already been delivered to Edge, Chrome and Firefox users via the browsers' automatic extension update process. [Link](#)

[Securityweek\[.\]com/google-researcher-finds-critical-flaw-keeper-password-manager](http://Securityweek[.]com/google-researcher-finds-critical-flaw-keeper-password-manager)

*Loapi Android Malware Can Cause Cell Phones to Overheat

From Bleeping Computer (12.16.2017)

A malware strain known as Loapi will damage phones if users don't remove it from their devices. Left to its own means, this modular threat will download a Monero cryptocurrency miner that will overheat and overwork the phone's components, which will make the battery bulge, deform the phone's cover, or even worse. Discovered by Kaspersky Labs, researchers say Loapi appears to have evolved from

Podec, a malware strain spotted in 2015. Back then, crooks were using Podec to bypass Advice of Charge (AoC) and CAPTCHAs to subscribe victims to premium-rate SMS services. The new Loapi malware is much more advanced compared to the simplistic Podec strain. Kaspersky experts call it a "jack of all trades," as Loapi has a highly advanced modular structure and components for all sorts of nasty operations. Loapi is currently advertised on third-party app stores, masquerading as a mobile antivirus. The malware uses the classic trick of pestering users with an endless stream of popups until the user does what the malware wants. This is how Loapi obtains device administrator rights and how Loapi forces users to uninstall real antivirus apps from their phones. Loapi-infected apps will also close the Settings window whenever it detects that a user is trying to deactivate its administrator account. Users will have to boot their device in Safe Mode in order to remove Loapi. [Link](#)

[Bleepingcomputer\[.\]com/news/security/android-malware-will-destroy-your-phone-no-ifs-and-buts-about-it/](http://bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/android-malware-will-destroy-your-phone-no-ifs-and-buts-about-it/)

*Two Critical 0-Day Remote Exploits for vBulletin Forum Disclosed Publicly

From The Hacker News (12.17.2017) Swati Khandelwal

Security researchers have discovered and disclosed details of two unpatched critical vulnerabilities in a popular internet forum software—vBulletin—one of which could allow a remote attacker to execute malicious code on the latest version of vBulletin application server. vBulletin is a widely used proprietary Internet forum software package based on PHP and MySQL database server. It powers more than 100,000 websites on the Internet, including Fortune 500 and Alexa Top 1 million companies websites and forums. The vulnerabilities were discovered by a security researcher from Italy-based security firm TRUDEL IT and an unknown independent security researcher, who disclosed the details of the vulnerabilities by Beyond Security's SecuriTeam Secure Disclosure program. The vulnerabilities affect version 5 of the vBulletin forum software and are currently unpatched. Beyond Security claims, it tried to contact vBulletin since November 21, 2017, but received no response from the company. The first vulnerability discovered in vBulletin is a file inclusion issue that leads to remote code execution, allowing a remote attacker to include any file from the vBulletin server and execute arbitrary PHP code. An unauthenticated attacker can trigger the file inclusion vulnerability by sending a GET request to index.php with the routestring= parameter in the request, eventually allowing the attacker to "create a crafted request to Vbulletin server installed on Windows OS and include any file on the web server." The second vulnerability discovered in the vBulletin forum software version 5 has been assigned CVE-2017-17672 and described as a deserialization issue that an unauthenticated attacker can exploit to delete arbitrary files and even execute malicious code "under certain circumstances." [Link](#)

[Thehackernews\[.\]com/2017/12/vbulletin-forum-hacking\[.\]html](http://thehackernews.com/2017/12/vbulletin-forum-hacking[.]html)

Automated Hunting of Software Update Supply Chain Attacks

From Digital Forensics SANS (12.16.2017) Adam Kramer

Software that automatically updates itself presents an attack surface, which can be leveraged en masse

through the compromise of the vendor's infrastructure. This has been seen multiple times during 2017, with high profile examples including NotPetya and CCleaner. Most large organizations have built robust perimeter defenses for incoming and outgoing traffic, but this threat vector is slightly different and far more difficult to detect. Update packages are often deployed in compressed, encrypted or proprietary formats and would not easily be subject to an antivirus scan or sandbox analysis during transit. This leaves us with a large number of trusted processes within our infrastructure that could turn on us at any time and download something evil, which could potentially be undetectable by endpoint antivirus software. It would be almost impossible to detect all potential malicious code changes, as they could be as simple as changing a single assembly instruction from JNZ to JZ to allow for unauthorized access or privilege escalation to occur. However, this doesn't prevent some additional proportionate due diligence on the update package being pulled down and installed. In a large network there is going to be a lot of noise and you may want to select the top 50 auto updating processes that are most widely utilised across the estate and focus on them. [Link](#)

[digital-forensics\[.\]sans\[.\]org/blog/2017/12/16/automated-hunting-of-software-update-supply-chain-attacks](https://www.digital-forensics.com/blog/2017/12/16/automated-hunting-of-software-update-supply-chain-attacks)

Barclays Bank Insider Sentenced for Role in Dridex Plot

From Info Security (12.15.2017) Phil Muncaster

A former Barclays Bank employee has been sentenced to six years and four months behind bars for helping cyber-criminals launder millions of pounds of stolen funds. Jinal Pethad, 29, from London, set up 105 fake bank accounts using false identity documents in a bid to trick the bank's security processes, the National Crime Agency claimed. He pleaded guilty this week to conspiring to launder money between 2014 and 2016 on behalf of Pavel Gincota and Ion Turcan. The two, who were jailed in October, wanted to get rid of £2.5m stolen in scams using the infamous Dridex banking trojan. Pethad was soon tracked down during the investigation into their activities and after officers raided his Edgware home they apparently recovered over £4000 in cash, seven luxury watches and three mobile phones which had been used to communicate with Gincota. "Jinal Pethad abused his position of trust at the bank to knowingly set up sham accounts for Gincota and Turcan, providing a vital service which enabled them to launder millions," said Mark Cains of the NCA's National Cybercrime Unit. [Link](#)

[infosecurity-magazine\[.\]com/news/barclays-bank-insider-sentenced/](https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/barclays-bank-insider-sentenced/)

Aviation Tech

NASA X-Plane Battery Passes Tests

From AV Web (12.14.2017) May Grady

NASA says its engineers reached a major milestone this week, successfully testing the battery system that will power the all-electric X-plane expected to take flight next year. "This was an extremely critical milestone for the overall project," said Tom Rigney, project manager for the X-57 Maxwell. "Without a

safe battery system, we wouldn't be able to execute our objectives. This test truly ensures a safe environment for the pilot and the test program." The testing validated that the battery system can safely power the X-57 for an entire flight profile. The team is working toward a flight duration of at least 45 minutes to an hour. "We exposed the battery to the conditions of an X-57 flight, based on current expected flight profiles, to make sure the capacity and thermal conditions stayed within safe limits," said NASA Glenn's Dionne Hernandez-Lugo, battery development lead for the project. "We were able to see how the battery behaves throughout the flight, as well as the overall capacity. The battery passed." The test also confirmed the battery design's ability to isolate potential overheating issues to single battery cells, preventing unsafe conditions from spreading to the rest of the battery system. The X-57 project aims to demonstrate a significant increase in efficiency at high-speed cruise compared to aircraft propelled by traditional systems, NASA says. The technology would result in lower operating costs, as well as lower carbon emissions. [Link](#)

Avweb.com/avwebflash/news/NASA-X-Plane-Battery-Passes-Tests-230049-1.html

Legislation & Regulation News

President Trump may stop Boeing and Airbus jetliner sales to Iran

From The Hill (12.15.2017) Max Greenwood

The Trump administration is weighing a strategy that could stop Boeing and Airbus from selling hundreds of passenger planes to Iranian airlines. The Wall Street Journal reported Friday that while options have not yet been presented to President Trump, they are expected to include prohibiting the sales, imposing restrictions that could stop any aircraft deliveries or slowing down the approval process. Boeing and Airbus have agreed to sell nearly 300 planes to Iranian airlines. Those sales were allowed under the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, pending approval from the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control. The nuclear deal bars Iran from developing nuclear weapons in exchange for sanctions relief. Trump disavowed the nuclear deal in October, though he did not withdraw from the agreement. He must decide by mid-January whether to extend sanctions relief for Iran. He is expected to once again say that Tehran is not complying with the deal. Boeing and General Electric are two major U.S. companies to pursue business opportunities with Iran. The administration is concerned that the airplanes could be used by Iran to send weapons and military personnel to Syria, according to the Journal. In a statement to the newspaper, a White House spokesman said that the administration would not grant licenses for the sales unless Iran can offer assurances that the aircraft would be used only for commercial aviation. [Link](#)

Thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/365202-trump-may-stop-boeing-and-airbus-jetliner-sales-to-iran

Top U.S. official calls for clarity on post-Brexit aviation safety

From Reuters (12.13.2017) Julia Fioretti

The United States is urgently calling for clarity on which aviation safety regime the British aerospace industry will operate under after the country leaves the European Union, to avoid increased certification costs for airlines and manufacturers.

The head of the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is in London and Brussels for talks with both sides on whether Britain can retain a role in the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and said the FAA needed clarity on that by early next year. "The UK's status (within EASA) does evaporate upon exit from the EU so the question becomes 'what is going to replace it?'" Michael Huerta told reporters before meeting with the EU executive, the European Commission. If Britain quits EASA its own aviation regulator, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), will need to assume EASA's role in supervising manufacturers, raising questions about whether it has the capacity to do that. "If there is now no EASA regulatory oversight over the United Kingdom's manufacturers we have no way of relying on EASA's oversight and certification so therefore we would need to make our own findings, manufacturer by manufacturer. And that is highly disruptive, highly costly for manufacturers to ensure that they can comply with FAA standards for manufacturing," Huerta said. The United Kingdom has said it expects to remain part of EASA, although that raises thorny questions about the jurisdiction of the EU's top court, which London does not want to submit to. An official from the UK's CAA said on Monday that the agency was not planning for a new independent aviation safety system in the UK. [Link](#)

[Reuters\[.\]com/article/us-britain-eu-faa/top-u-s-official-calls-for-clarity-on-post-brexit-aviation-safety-idUSKBN1E72HS](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-eu-faa/top-u-s-official-calls-for-clarity-on-post-brexit-aviation-safety-idUSKBN1E72HS)

Physical Security News

Nigerian Airport Security Team Investigates How Bandits Attacked And Burgled Taxiing Jet At Lagos Airport

From Sahara Reporters (12.17.2017)

Less than 24 hours after SaharaReporters broke the news of how airport bandits of attacked and burgled Vistajet aircraft that was taxiing to apron after landing, the management of the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) has set up an investigation team to unravel the cause of the incident. FAAN said that it has set up a combined team of Aviation Security (AVSEC) Department, Airport Police Command and other relevant security agencies to immediately get to the root cause of the incident. A

statement by Henrietta Yakubu, the spokesman of the agency said that the investigative team would immediately commence an investigation into the incident, which took place while the aircraft, a Vistajet with the registration number 9H-VFA was taxiing to the hangar of Evergreen Apple Nigeria (EAN) Ltd. SaharaReporters can confirm that the incident actually occurred on the night of Tuesday, December 12, 2017, when the jet with the registration number 9H-VFA operated by EAN was taxiing to the apron from the runway. Information gathered by SaharaReporters had revealed that the jet was taxiing on the 18Right of the runway before the incident. A source close to EAN had confided in our correspondent that one of a crewmember of the jet discovered that the rear door of the aircraft was opened while taxiing to the hangar of EAN. [Link](#)

[Saharareporters\[.\]com/2017/12/17/vistajet-robbery-nigerian-airport-security-team-investigate-how-bandits-attacked-and](http://Saharareporters[.]com/2017/12/17/vistajet-robbery-nigerian-airport-security-team-investigate-how-bandits-attacked-and)

More New Orleans airport travelers bringing guns in their carry-on

From NOLA (12.15.2017) Jennifer Larino

This year could be another record-breaking year for firearms found in carry-on bags of passengers trying to board flights in Louisiana, led by guns seized at New Orleans' Louis Armstrong International Airport. So far this year, the Transportation Security Administration has intercepted 83 guns at airport security lines across Louisiana, including 56 in New Orleans. "We are pretty certain we're going to unfortunately set a record," said Sari Koshetz, spokeswoman for the Transportation Security Administration. "It's not the kind of record we want to set." Koshetz and Billy Booth, a TSA expert on improvised explosive devices, stood inside a small room at the airport Friday morning in front of a table with a sampling of the roughly two-tons of illegal items intercepted at New Orleans airport security lines this year. There were dozens of knives, ranging from pocket-size to long hunting knives, as well as bats, self-defense keychains, bullet casings, batons, flares, two bottles of lighter fluid, two replica handguns and, the highlight of the display, two replica hand grenades. Koshetz urged people ahead of the holiday travel season to know what is in their bag and to closely review TSA guidelines before, during and after packing. She noted many of the guns intercepted in New Orleans security lines are loaded, a "disturbing and dangerous" reality for fellow travelers. [Link](#)

[Nola\[.\]com/travel/index.ssf/2017/12/airport_checkpoint_firearms_ne\[.\]html](http://Nola[.]com/travel/index.ssf/2017/12/airport_checkpoint_firearms_ne[.]html)

Miscellaneous News

French Aerospace Firm Thales Acquires SIM Maker Gemalto

From Tech Crunch (12.17.2017) Natasha Lomas

Digital security solutions provider Gemalto has agreed to a €51 per share acquisition offer from French aerospace and defense group Thales — in a deal worth around \$5.43BN. Gemalto is a major producer of SIM cards and NFC for mobile phones but also provides secure transaction solutions to banks, including EMV chip cards, payment terminals and user authentication systems for online banking, such as one-time token generating hardware devices for 2FA. It also sells identity and access control solutions to the public sector, including biometric authentication technologies for government-issued ID documents such as passports. Another branch of its business is in enterprise security, including encryption and cloud security services. It also plays in the Internet of Things space — offering connectivity, security and monetization services. The Thales Group, which focuses on aerospace, defense, space and transportation, also operates a security division offering solutions in areas such as critical information system operations, airport security systems and cryptology and security architectures for big data. This is where it's intending Gemalto to slot in. [Link](#)

[Techcrunch\[.\]com/2017/12/17/thales-agrees-to-buy-gemalto-in-digital-security-deal-worth-5-43bn/](https://techcrunch.com/2017/12/17/thales-agrees-to-buy-gemalto-in-digital-security-deal-worth-5-43bn/)

Timeline: How the Atlanta airport outage unfolded

From USA Today (12.18.2017) Tim Darnell

Monday, Dec. 18

6:30 a.m. -- Although a dense fog advisory is in effect, an airport spokesperson said it has not hindered departures.

1:10 a.m. -- 11Alive's Bill Liss reports that lines are now moving through security and Delta is checking folks in.

12:56 am -- First flight takes off from Atlanta airport after blackout.

Sunday, Dec. 17

11:56 p.m. -- Mayor Kasim Reed says all power has been restored to the airport.

11:19 p.m. -- Power has been restored in the atrium and Concourses T, A and B.

9:37 p.m. -- Delta has canceled 300 flights on Monday as a result of Sunday's airport blackout.

8:59 p.m. -- During a live press conference, Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed says there is no evidence to suggest the fire that caused the airport blackout was the result of criminal activity.

8:30 p.m. -- Delta says it has canceled 900 flights as a result of the airport blackout. It is continuing to deplane passengers.

7:42 p.m. -- Delta has canceled all flights into and out of Atlanta.

7:34 p.m. -- City officials say power at Concourse F is back on.

7:33 -- Atlanta fire rescue says all flights at the airport have been cancelled.

6:50 p.m. -- Gov. Nathan Deal is sending two teams comprised of 24 Georgia state troopers to assist at the airport.

6:47 p.m. -- Terminal A has emergency lights and someone just said Terminal B emergency lights just came on."

6:35 p.m. -- Georgia Power expects power to be restored to Atlanta airport by midnight.

6:29 p.m. -- A Delta executive has told 11Alive that the airport is being evacuated.

5:12 p.m. - -Delta says it is deplaning aircraft that have not been able to depart due to the power outage.

4 p.m. -- Airport officials say they are still working to restore power at the airport. The ground stop continues, and there is no timetable for when flights will be allowed to resume. The exact cause of the power outage is still under investigation. Many inbound flights to Atlanta are being diverted.

3:53 p.m. -- Southwest Airline has canceled all flights into and out of Atlanta for the rest of the day.

3:37 p.m. -- According to the U.S. Customs and Border southeastern division, all international flights heading into Atlanta are being diverted to other airports.

3:22 p.m. -- The FAA has extended the ground stop to at least 4 p.m., and says between 80 to 100 jets are parked on the taxiways, waiting for gates.

3:15 p.m. -- Major airlines are canceling flights at Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in the aftermath of a major power outage Sunday afternoon.

12:55p.m. – Outage begins at Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport.

Link

[Usatoday\[.\]com/story/travel/flights/todayinthesky/2017/12/18/timeline-how-atlanta-airport-blackout-unfolded/960429001/](https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/flights/todayinthesky/2017/12/18/timeline-how-atlanta-airport-blackout-unfolded/960429001/)

U.S. Department of Transportation Crisis Management Center Daily Report

Commercial In-Flight Incidents

*American 1359, A319

o December 17, 2017 at 10:58 PM EST

- o Enroute from Miami, FL (Miami International Airport) to Toronto, Canada (Toronto Pearson International Airport)

- o Level 1 disturbance

- o Returned to Miami, FL; landed without incident at 11:12 PM EST

- o Passenger interviewed and detained on December 18, 2017 at 12:27 AM EST

- o Flight rescheduled to depart on December 18, 2017 at 9:15 AM EST

*American 439, A321

- o December 17, 2017 at 4:15 PM EST

- o Enroute from Los Angeles, CA (Los Angeles International Airport) to Philadelphia, PA (Philadelphia International Airport)

- o Intake valve problem

- o Returned to Los Angeles, CA; landed without incident at 4:35 PM EST

*Republic 4595, E75S

- o December 17, 2017 at 7:37 AM EST

- o Enroute from Miami, FL (Miami International Airport) to Austin, TX (Austin-Bergstrom International Airport)

- o Pressurization problem; overweight landing

- o Returned to Miami, FL; landed without incident

*Delta 1440, B712

- o December 16, 2017 at 7:33 PM EST

- o Enroute from Kansas City, MO (Kansas City International Airport) to Detroit, MI (Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport)

- o Passenger disturbance

- o Continued to Detroit, MI; landed without incident

- o Passenger escorted off aircraft; no longer allowed to fly on Delta Airlines at 9:52 PM EST

Ground Incidents

*Atlanta, GA, Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport

- o December 17, 2017 at 1:26 PM EST

- o Power outage affecting all terminals; passenger screening suspended

- o First tier ground stop implemented; Cargo, General Aviation and Air Traffic Control Tower not impacted
- o All passengers deplaned from aircraft that were waiting for available gates; all terminals evacuated
- o Power outage was due to a fire in a power vault between concourses E and F
- o 711 arrivals, 579 departures flights were cancelled
- o Power restored to all terminals at 11:49 PM EST; ground stop cancelled on December 18, 2017 at 12:35 AM EST
- o TSA screening resumed on December 18, 2017 at 3:00 AM EST; flights resumed at 6:00 AM EST

The Daily Aviation Memo is a daily update of foreign and domestic commercial aviation news compiled from open sources and commercially-available information. Information contained in this report is provided for situational awareness only and does not represent the views of the Aviation ISAC. Please send comments or distribution requests to [a-isac.advisory@a-isac\[.\]com](mailto:a-isac.advisory@a-isac[.]com).

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The Daily Brief

Essential Reading

[The Weekly Rundown: Trump's Asia Tour and New Catalan Troubles](#) — A review of the world's most pressing geopolitical events and insight into what the coming week will bring.

[Geopolitical Calendar: Week of Nov. 6, 2017](#) — Stay informed about the most significant meetings and events planned for the week ahead.

[Beyond Catalonia, Taking Stock of Europe's Separatist Movements](#) — The European Union is wary of the impact that the Catalan independence movement will have on the territorial integrity of its member states. But the crisis in the region by no means offers an easy roadmap for others to follow.

[The 100th Anniversary of the Russian Revolution: A Visual Anthology](#) — Deciding how best to commemorate the events that shook the country and the world a century ago has proved challenging for the Kremlin.

[How Blockchain Works and Why It Matters](#) — The interest in blockchain technology shows no signs of dying down. In this audiovisual guide, we explain what blockchain is and how it functions.

[Russia Cleans Up Its Banks on Borrowed Time](#) — As the Kremlin takes on more financial burdens, it will have to pick and choose which banks to save.

[Lebanon: Prime Minister's Resignation Places Strain on Beirut's Delicate Politics](#) — The Sunni leader's decision to step down complicates the government's sectarian balance and highlights the regional rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

[Asia-Pacific: What Trump Has Planned for the Region](#) — The leader has begun the longest official trip a sitting U.S. president has made in more than two decades to a region in transition.

[Nigeria: The Return of the Niger Delta Avengers](#) — After five months of silence, the Nigerian militant group has released a statement promising to resume its attacks on oil and natural gas infrastructure in the Niger Delta.

[Syria, Iraq: The Race to the Border Enters Its Final Stretch](#) — As the Islamic State withdraws from its

former strongholds in Syria and Iraq, other powers rush to assert control over the vacated areas.

Global Perspectives

Riding the Waves of Military Innovation — Stratfor contributor Tolga Ozyurtcu notes that surfing, one of the newest sports to enter into the Olympics, has a reputation for representing peaceful communion with nature. But if war was ever good for anything, it was surfing.

Iraqi Kurdistan: The Next Thirsty Nation? — Stratfor contributor Ambika Vishwanath says that water flows freely in the autonomous region now, but without proper planning for a future separate from Baghdad, Arbil's dream of building a functional state may prove elusive.

The U.S. and Kurdistan: Revise and Rebuild After Kirkuk — Ranj Alaaldin from Stratfor partner Brookings Doha Center writes that now that the fight to reclaim the disputed territory from the Islamic State is over, the United States and Iraqi Kurdistan will need to reassess their relationship to move forward.

Stratfor Graphic

Stratfor Voices

Blockchain, Bitcoin and Digital Ledger Technology - Stratfor senior analysts delve into the world of digital ledger technology in this episode of the podcast to better understand what bitcoin and blockchain mean for the future. Stratfor Senior Science and Technology Analyst Rebecca Keller helps explain what blockchain technology really is and how it's connected to the already well-known bitcoin. Then senior analysts Matthew Bey and Mark Fleming-Williams join the conversation to examine just how individuals and organizations are using this technology now and what potential applications it still promises going forward.

Forums

Contribute to the conversation. Share your thoughts in our forum section to engage with our analysts, editors and fellow Stratfor Worldview subscribers.

The al Qaeda-linked Ansar al-Islam has claimed responsibility for the Oct. 20 ambush in Western Egypt that killed at least 55 Egyptian security force members. The attack showed a level of sophistication beyond that shown by the Hasam Movement and the Islamic State-affiliated Wilayat Sinai, the other major militant groups active in the area. The level of sophistication is not surprising, however, for Ansar al-Islam, which has ties to former Egyptian Special Forces officer Hisham Ashmawy. Ansar al-Islam is a relatively new group, but the re-emergence of al Qaeda, which has kept a low profile in the country lately is concerning. How will the re-emergence of al Qaeda in Egypt change the complex militant landscape there? What does it mean for Egyptian stability?

News You May Have Missed

For even more news, visit Stratfor's Situation Reports page.

- *Yemen: 35 Dead After Hostage Crisis Ends
- *Belgium: Judge Conditionally Releases Former Catalan Leader
- *Italy: Exit Polls Give Slight Edge To Center Right In Sicily
- *U.S.: More Than 20 Reported Dead In Texas Church Shooting
- *Saudi Arabia: Prince Mansour Bin Muqrin Dies In Helicopter Crash
- *U.S.: Multiple Deaths Reported From Texas Shooting
- *Congo: Long-Delayed Presidential Election Set For December 2018
- *Bahrain: Government Orders Its Citizens To Leave Lebanon
- *Lebanon: President Reportedly Won't Accept Prime Minister's Resignation Until He Returns
- *Russia: Police Detain Hundreds In Moscow Amid Fears Of Anti-Government Protests

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Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: Fw: TLP WHITE - Daily Aviation Memo, October 18, 2017
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Aviation-ISAC Daily Aviation Memo

18 October 2017

Cyber Security News

- *Chinese Malware Resurfaces After a Decade's Absence to Target Aerospace Sector
- *New Malicious Macro Evasion Tactics Exposed in URSNIF Spam Mail
- *Necurs Downloader Updated with New Capabilities

- *Ransomware Attack Locks Down a U.S. city for four days
- *Google Chrome can now spot even brand new phishing pages
- *88% of Java Apps Vulnerable to Attacks from Known Security Defects
- *RSA Unveils New GDPR Compliance Offerings
- *Microsoft denies that BoundHook vulnerability is actually a vulnerability

Aviation Tech

- *XTI Aircraft Company Accepts More Orders for TriFan 600 Vertical Takeoff Airplane

Legislation & Regulation News

- *EASA advises against using Kobe Steel products
- *FAA Awards First Waiver Allowing Drone Flights Over Crowds

Physical Security News

- *TSA chief promises new vision for airport security checkpoints
- *Trump administration working with Chad to lift travel restrictions

Miscellaneous News

- *Air Berlin pilots suspended after fly-by stunt at Dusseldorf Airport
- *Delta determined to proceed with the CSeries order and refuse to pay 300% tariff

U.S. Department of Transportation Crisis Management Center Daily Report

Indicates Actionable Intelligence

FEATURES

Cyber Security News

- *Chinese Malware Resurfaces After a Decade's Absence to Target Aerospace Sector

From Bleeping Computer (10.18.2017) Catalin Cimpanu

A remote access trojan (RAT) known as Hacker's Door has resurfaced in active infections after being

seen the last time in 2004-2005. According to experts at Cylance, who spotted the recent Hacker's Door infections, the malware "was signed with a stolen certificate, known to be used by the Winnti APT group," meaning the new version is used in nation-state cyber-espionage or economic espionage campaigns. Furthermore, this is not the old Hacker's Door RAT. Researchers say the malware has been updated to work on 64-bit architectures and can run on newer Windows versions such as Windows 7 and Windows 8.1. Researchers tracked down the new Hacker's Door malware to a Chinese blog where its author had been offering this new version for download since at least June 2015. It is not uncommon for APT groups to use your run-of-the-mill malware, this being a good technique to hide APT operations among the large number of mundane malware detections. Recent Winnti attacks with Hacker's Door malware have targeted aerospace entities. Winnti is also famous for developing/deploying several other malware families, such as PlugX, HDRoot, Tengo, the eponymous Winnti malware, and Skeleton Key, just to name a few. Other security firms also track the Winnti group under the name of Blackfly or G0044. [Link](#)

[Bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/malware-resurfaces-after-a-decade-in-chinese-cyberespionage-campaign/](http://bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/malware-resurfaces-after-a-decade-in-chinese-cyberespionage-campaign/)

*New Malicious Macro Evasion Tactics Exposed in URSNIF Spam Mail

From Trend Micro (10.18.2017)

Malicious macros are commonly used to deliver malware payloads to victims, usually by coercing victims into enabling the macro sent via spam email. The macro then executes a PowerShell script to download ransomware or some other malware. Just this September EMOTET, an older banking malware, leveraged this method in a campaign that saw it spreading to new industries and regions. Because of the effectiveness of this method, attackers continue to use it and improve it. Threats leveraging malicious macros are constantly changing to evade security measures that detect and block them. Recently, in spam email distributing URSNIF, a malware famous for adopting new tools, we saw simple checks that the malware uses to evade sandbox detections. Macros that use AutoClose can run malicious PowerShell script after closing the document, evading sandbox detections that analyze the macro itself. This method is becoming a common feature in many malicious macros because it is easy to implement. After coercing the victim to enable macros, the macro waits for the would-be victim to close the document and only then will PowerShell execute. Sandbox detections might miss the malicious behavior since the malicious routines will only run after the document is closed. Most of the samples analyzed have one thing in common—they run PowerShell script that downloads and executes another malware. For the samples we analyzed, the malware downloaded is a variant of the URSNIF malware. However, these are not unique to one malware; it is possible that others may be downloaded. As malware and their delivery methods continue to evolve, security must be updated as well. [Link](#)

[Blog.trendmicro.com/trendlabs-security-intelligence/new-malicious-macro-evasion-tactics-exposed-ursnif-spam-mail/](http://blog.trendmicro.com/trendlabs-security-intelligence/new-malicious-macro-evasion-tactics-exposed-ursnif-spam-mail/)

*Necurs Downloader Updated with New Capabilities

From Bleeping Computer (10.18.2017) Catalin Cimpanu

Malware families evolve on a daily basis, but some updates catch your eye more than others. Necurs has just gone through one of these "interesting" updates, according to US security firm Symantec. In the world of security research, the Necurs malware strain is a "downloader" or "loader," and just like similar downloaders, it only has three major functions: (1) gain boot persistence on an infected PC, (2) collect telemetry on infected hosts, and (3) download and install a second-stage payload. The Necurs malware is distributed via spam sent by Necurs bots or hacked web servers. Recently, researchers from Symantec observed two major additions to the Necurs downloader. The first is the addition of a Powershell script that takes a screenshot of the infected user's screen, and after waiting a few seconds, it uploads the image to a remote server. The second function is a built-in error reporting function that watches the Necurs downloader for errors, records problems, and sends the info back to Necurs operators. Other malware families also come with these types of features, but they have never been seen in downloaders. According to Symantec, the reasons for the screenshot behavior may be that Necurs operators are looking for more clues about the computers they infect, besides the telemetry data they collect shortly after infection. This info could allow them to detect when they infect more valuable environments, like the ones running professional office-related software, which usually mean computers on corporate networks. [Link](#)

[Bleepingcomputer\[.\]com/news/security/necurs-malware-will-now-take-a-screenshot-of-your-screen-report-runtime-errors/](http://bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/necurs-malware-will-now-take-a-screenshot-of-your-screen-report-runtime-errors/)

Ransomware Attack Locks Down a U.S. city for four days

From The Hacker News (10.16.2017)

Unitrends—an American company specialized in backup and business continuity solutions—recently disclosed a real cyber-attack incident with one of their customers and described the required steps they took to recover functionality following a CryptoLocker attack against a US city. Issaquah is a small city of 30,434 people in Washington state. The city's networks were protected by a five-person team and their back-up system had not been upgraded in a decade. Unitrends analysts said that, "we believe the ransomware attack originated from a "drive-by" where a single city employee visited and opened a .pdf file that had been compromised on a grant coordination site run by a non-profit. This ransomware appeared to disable our anti-virus systems, and is known to remove all traces once finished. This virus ran only in PC memory and did not turn up on any other devices in our system. It only attacked Microsoft Office, image, .pdf, and text files in folders on the user's PC and file shares to which the user had to write access. It stopped encrypting files once the PC was restarted in safe mode. The lack of propagation could have been a result of either the virus being designed to reside solely in memory to prevent triggering alarms or because our anti-virus software intercepted it at other devices as it attempted to propagate.

The physical server that hosted the file also hosted five critical virtual application servers. After careful analysis, it was determined these were not compromised. We immediately moved these virtual machines onto a different host. This was done prior to kicking off the server restore to reduce processor and NIC load on the file server host. When we began the file server restore process it quickly became apparent it would take a long time... four days as it turned out. A quick analysis revealed we had no other options to restore the file server. The backup.exe device did work and never failed or stopped during the restore process. It seems the scale of the restore was too big for the device capacity and it had to chunk the workout, making the process very long." [Link](#)

Thehackernews[.]com/2017/10/drive-by-download-ransomware[.]html

Google Chrome can now spot even brand new phishing pages

From ZD Net (10.18.2017) Liam Tung

Google is stepping up defenses against phishing through a new predictive feature coming to Chrome and its Advanced Protection Program for high-risk Gmail users. Google has updated its Safe Browsing technology to warn users when they visit a new phishing page that hasn't existed long enough to be detected by Safe Browsing as a known phishing site. The new predictive phishing protection for Chrome is designed to prevent users from typing their credentials in a phishing site that was "created and used for attacks moments later". According to Google, Safe Browsing's historical data allow it to make predictions about risks in real-time. Predictive phishing protection will initially only protect the Google account password, however it will eventually be used to protect all passwords saved in Chrome's password manager. It will also be available to other apps and browsers that use Safe Browsing, including Safari, Firefox and Snapchat. Google has also rolled out the Advanced Protection Program, which is available to any Gmail users who face a high risk of being targeted online. Once a Gmail account is enrolled in the program, signing in requires using a physical Security Key which means the user needs to first buy a USB Secure Key for access on a PC and a Bluetooth-enabled Security Key for accessing Gmail on a mobile device. The keys cost around \$20 each. [Link](#)

Zdnet[.]com/article/google-chrome-can-now-spot-brand-new-phishing-pages/

88% of Java Apps Vulnerable to Attacks from Known Security Defects

From Info Security (10.18.2017) Michael Hill

A new report from CA Veracode has exposed the pervasive risks companies face from vulnerable open source components. In its 2017 State of Software Security Report the firm reviewed application security testing data from scans of its base of 1400 customers, discovering that 88% of Java applications contain at least one vulnerable component, making them susceptible to widespread attacks. A cause of the problem, in part, is that fewer than 28% of companies carry out regular analysis to see which components are built into their applications, Veracode claimed. There have been plenty of examples of high-profile Java app breaches caused by vulnerabilities in open source or commercial components in the last year, one such being the 'Struts-Shock' flaw affecting the Apache Struts 2 web application framework. As evidenced in the report, the most severe flaws require significant time to fix (only 22% of very high severity flaws were patched in 30 days or less), with most attackers leveraging vulnerabilities within days of discovery. "Veracode researchers said that they've seen quite a few breaches as a result of vulnerable components and unless companies start taking this threat more seriously, and using tools to monitor component usage, the problem will intensify. [Link](#)

infosecurity-magazine[.]com/news/java-apps-vulnerable-attacks/

RSA Unveils New GDPR Compliance Offerings

From Security Week (10.17.2017) Kevin Townsend

Europe's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is just another information security compliance regulation requiring that organizations protect personal data from being stolen by hackers. The emphasis on data protection has changed: it is traditionally designed to protect data from criminals; but this regulation is designed to protect data for the user. It is against the background of GDPR being as much about data governance as it is about information security that RSA has today beefed up its Archer governance suite specifically to aid compliance with the governance side of GDPR. Archer, combined with RSA NetWitness and the RSA Data Risk and Security Practice can aid GDPR compliance. On risk assessment, RSA suggests that Archer's components will help accelerate the identification of the linkage between risks and internal controls, potentially reduce the GDPR compliance gaps and improve risk mitigation strategies. On breach response, GDPR requires that regulators are notified of a breach generally within 72 hours of the company becoming aware of the breach. Here, RSA says its NetWitness product will scan the entire network infrastructure looking for indications of a compromise. RSA offers its SecurID suite and Data Risk and Security Practice service to cover the mainstream governance side of GDPR. Compliance is no longer a destination, but a continuing state, it suggests. While under earlier European laws, companies needed only worry about compliance if they were breached, with GDPR they can be found non-compliant in data governance areas at any time. [Link](#)

[Securityweek\[.\]com/rsa-unveils-new-gdpr-compliance-offerings](https://www.securityweek.com/rsa-unveils-new-gdpr-compliance-offerings)

Microsoft denies that BoundHook vulnerability is actually a vulnerability

From Beta News (10.18.2017) Mark Wycislik-Wilson

Security researchers at CyberArk are reporting about a new technique that could be used to take control of Windows 10 devices. Known as BoundHook, the technique takes advantage of the BOUND hooking technique in Intel MPX (Memory Protection Extensions). But while CyberArk says that it will "bring new capabilities to both software security vendors and malware writers," Microsoft is downplaying the issue, suggesting there is nothing to worry about. CyberArk acknowledges that the "technique can be used in a post-exploitation scenario in which the attacker has control over the asset." That said, it's not something that should necessarily be ignored. "Since malicious kernel code (rootkits) often seeks to establish persistence in unfriendly territory, stealth technology plays a fundamental role." Over on the CyberArk website, there is some detail about how the technique works. The concern is that the method may well not be detected by antivirus and anti-malware software. Microsoft has previously dismissed a similar vulnerability (GhostHook) that was also reported by CyberArk, saying: Microsoft replied: "The technique described in this marketing report does not represent a security vulnerability and requires a machine to already be compromised to potentially work. We encourage customers to always keep their systems updated for the best protection." [Link](#)

[Betanews\[.\]com/2017/10/18/microsoft-dismisses-boundhook-exploit/](https://betanews[.]com/2017/10/18/microsoft-dismisses-boundhook-exploit/)

Aviation Tech

XTI Aircraft Company Accepts More Orders for TriFan 600 Vertical Takeoff Airplane

From Aviation Pros (10.18.2017)

Colorado-based XTI Aircraft Company (XTI) announced today it received several additional orders for its TriFan 600 vertical takeoff aircraft. XTI officially launched its prototype program at this year's NBAA trade show in Las Vegas. The TriFan 600 is a major breakthrough in aviation and air travel. The six-seat TriFan 600 will have the speed, range and comfort of a luxury business aircraft and the ability to take off and land vertically, like a helicopter. It will travel at 345 miles an hour, with a range of up to 1,200 miles. Using three ducted fans, the TriFan lifts off vertically. Its two wing fans then rotate forward for a seamless transition to cruise speed and its initial climb. It will reach 30,000 feet in just ten minutes and cruise to the destination as a highly efficient business aircraft. On June 19, at this year's Paris Air Show, XTI announced its first orders for the TriFan 600 under the company's pre-sales program. "Vertical takeoff combined with long-range, the speed and comfort of a business aircraft, and our quieter and cleaner state-of-the-art hybrid-electric propulsion system." [Link](#)

[Aviationpros\[.\]com/news/12375153/xti-aircraft-company-accepts-more-orders-for-trifan-600-vertical-takeoff-airplane](http://Aviationpros[.]com/news/12375153/xti-aircraft-company-accepts-more-orders-for-trifan-600-vertical-takeoff-airplane)

Legislation & Regulation News

EASA advises against using Kobe Steel products

From Reuters (10.18.2017) Ritsuko Shimizu

Europe's aviation regulator has advised aircraft manufacturers to stop using parts supplied by Kobe Steel until their safety can be verified, following product data manipulation by the Japanese company. The move by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) is another headache for Kobe Steel, which has shocked aircraft, auto, train and other industries with its revelations that it has been shipping some products to customers with falsified data on strength and durability. The U.S. Justice Department is also seeing information from Kobe Steel and has requested documentation on products the company has sold to U.S. buyers, Kobe Steel said earlier. The Japan Civil Aviation Bureau is investigating the issue and gathering information from Japanese manufacturers and Kobe Steel, a spokesman told Reuters on Wednesday. "Where alternative suppliers are available, it is recommended to suspend use of Kobe Steel products until the legitimacy of the affected parts can be determined," EASA said in a Safety Information Bulletin (SIB) dated Oct. 17. The admissions that Kobe Steel's supply chains have been tainted, affecting about 500 companies across the world, has sent its shares into freefall. The tampering went back more than 10 years, a source told Reuters earlier this week. The world's two largest planemakers, Airbus and Boeing, have already said they are conducting a review. [Link](#)

Reuters[.]com/article/us-kobe-steel-scandal-easa/europes-aviation-agency-advises-against-using-kobe-steel-products-idUSKBN1CN0XO

FAA Awards First Waiver Allowing Drone Flights Over Crowds

From Bloomberg (10.18.2017) Allan Levin

CNN received a waiver allowing routine drone flights above crowds, a milestone for the industry seeking greater use of the remote-controlled devices for everything from insurance inspections to covering news. The approval is the first time the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration has granted a waiver for unlimited flights over people, the news network said in an emailed statement. The standards used in the application can be applied to other applicants, potentially opening vast new uses by the media and other industries for so-called unmanned aerial systems, or UAS. The FAA currently prohibits drone flights overhead, although its regulations allow for waivers if applicants can show there's no risk of injury. Limited waivers have been issued to filmmakers and others for flights over contained areas after those on the ground consented. The small device that was approved, a Snap drone, has internal rotors and is designed to break apart in the event of a crash to prevent injuries. Time Warner Inc.'s CNN and Vantage Robotics, the company that built it, say they spent two years designing and testing the drone. The Snap drone weighs 1.37 pounds (0.62 kilograms), and its four rotors are encased to reduce the chances of injury. It's designed to break into harmless smaller pieces if it crashes, according to the company's website. It can be snapped back together and reused after a crash, according to the company. [Link](#)

Bloomberg[.]com/news/articles/2017-10-18/cnn-awarded-first-faa-waiver-allowing-drone-flights-over-crowds

Physical Security News

TSA chief promises new vision for airport security checkpoints

From The Hill (10.17.2017) Melanie Zanona

The new head of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has promised to unveil a new vision for airport security checkpoints in the coming months, with the goal of improving safety at the public spaces outside of screening areas. Speaking at a Washington conference on Tuesday, TSA Administrator David Pekoske said incidents like the deadly bombing outside the Brussels airport, the fatal mass shooting at an outdoor concert in Las Vegas and a lone shooter at the Fort Lauderdale airport are all a "stark reminder" of the need for extra vigilance and tighter security in public spaces. Since stepping into the role this August, Pekoske has asked the agency to work with the airline and airport industry, technology partners and academia to start coming up with innovative ideas for the "airport security area of the future." That could include rebuilding airports or changing screening processes, Pekoske said. "If we get some infrastructure investment dollars to be able to change the layout at some airports or even build new terminals, can we get an airport security system that's not a checkpoint, per say, but has security in a continuum?" Pekoske said. "The need to refresh the technology at the checkpoints is critical. I will use whatever influence I have as administrator to push that." Pekoske also said that the TSA is continuing efforts started by former Homeland Security

Secretary John Kelly to raise the global baseline for aviation security. The new standards are being required in stages, with the first round nearly complete and the agency now focused on the next stage.
Link

Thehill.com/policy/transportation/355822-tsa-chief-promises-new-vision-for-airport-security-checkpoints

Trump administration working with Chad to lift travel restrictions

From The Hill (10.17.2017) Melanie Zanona

The Trump administration is working with Chad to lift the travel restrictions that the U.S. recently placed on the African country — a new policy that was supposed to take effect Wednesday but has been put on hold by a federal judge. The State Department said in a statement Tuesday afternoon that it plans to help Chad improve its vetting capabilities so that it can be removed from President Trump's list of travel-ban nations. The agency also said that Chad, a key counterterrorism ally, has “shown a clear willingness to work closely with us on these issues.”“National Security Advisor Lieutenant General H. R. McMaster spoke to Chad President Idriss Deby Itno to underscore the importance of the bilateral relationship and Chad’s effort as a key partner in countering terrorism,” the State Department said. The statement came not long after a federal district court in Hawaii temporarily blocked the majority of Trump’s latest travel ban from taking effect. Trump’s order, which was set to take effect on Wednesday at 12:01 a.m., indefinitely banned entry into the U.S. by nationals of Iran, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Chad and North Korea, as well as certain government officials from Venezuela. Senior administration officials have emphasized that the travel restrictions are supposed to be conditional. If countries improve their information-sharing practices, the restrictions can be lifted, while new nations could also be added to the ban in the future. Link

Thehill.com/policy/transportation/355898-trump-administration-working-with-chad-to-lift-travel-restrictions

Miscellaneous News

Air Berlin pilots suspended after fly-by stunt at Dusseldorf Airport

From Reuters (10.18.2017)

The pilots of an Air Berlin flight that performed a fly-past during the insolvent carrier’s last long-haul flight to its hub in Dusseldorf have been suspended, the airline said on Wednesday. When coming into land from Miami on Monday morning, the A330 jet flew low across the runway, then pulled up and banked sharply to the left before landing on its second approach. Pilots are trained in such “go-around” procedures for aborted landings, but the maneuver was unusual and the German aviation authorities are investigating. “In aviation, safety always comes first. We are taking the incident very seriously,” an Air Berlin spokesman said. The Air Berlin pilot had requested permission from the tower to make a left turn should a go-around be necessary. “We wanted to make a mark, a dignified and emotional

goodbye,” the Air Berlin pilot was quoted as saying by German broadcaster ZDF. His identity was not given. Another pilot for a different carrier told Reuters that a go-around should be performed only for operational or safety reasons. “Electing to do one if it is known not to be required adds an unnecessary risk,” he said. Several videos of the incident can be viewed online. In one, control tower staff can be heard exclaiming as the plane flies past, with one person saying: “We are all in awe.” The Air Berlin spokesman said the videos raised questions that had to be answered as part of the investigation. [Link](#)

[Uk\[.\]reuters.com/article/uk-air-berlin-lufthansa-flypast/air-berlin-pilots-suspended-after-farewell-fly-by-idUKKBN1CN21B](http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-air-berlin-lufthansa-flypast/air-berlin-pilots-suspended-after-farewell-fly-by-idUKKBN1CN21B)

Delta determined to proceed with the C Series order and refuse to pay 300% tariff

From News in Flight (10.18.2017)

Delta says that the act of Airbus taking over major stake in Canadian plane-maker Bombardier, will not prevent it from purchasing C series jets from Bombardier, and it will neither pay the 300% tax levied by US on the product. There was an allegation forwarded by Boeing, sometime back, against Bombardier that it was selling its planes below the cost quoting that is against the international Trade Regulations. Since Bombardier ignored the issue, US levied 300% tax on the Bombardier product. This has pushed Bombardier to join with the maker of world's largest planes, Airbus, which happened last week. Delta Airlines which also is a major customer of Boeing expressed that they are going in for Bombardier not for the price but for the product of C series jet for which Boeing doesn't have a match. Delta Air Lines has already ordered 75 CS100 aircraft for a value of \$5.6 billion with options for an additional 50. [Link](#)

[Newsinflight\[.\]com/2017/10/18/delta-determined-to-proceed-with-purchasing-bombardier-and-refuse-to-pay-300-tariff/](http://newsinflight[.]com/2017/10/18/delta-determined-to-proceed-with-purchasing-bombardier-and-refuse-to-pay-300-tariff/)

U.S. Department of Transportation Crisis Management Center Daily Report

Commercial In-Flight Incidents

*Priester 138, Cessna C680

- o October 17, 2017 at 8:55 PM EDT
- o Enroute from Tampa, FL (Tampa International Airport) to Chicago, IL (Chicago Executive Airport)
- o Hydraulic problem
- o Diverted to Milwaukee, WI (General Mitchell International Airport); landed without incident at 9:04 PM EDT

*Jetstream International 5548, CRJX

- o October 17, 2017 at 5:31 PM EDT

- o Enroute from Washington, DC (Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport) to Windsor Locks, CT (Bradley International Airport)

- o Flap problem

- o Diverted to Dulles, VA (Washington Dulles International Airport); landed without incident at 5:41 PM EDT

*Endeavor 3645, CRJ9

- o October 17, 2017 at 2:50 PM EDT

- o Enroute from New York, NY (LaGuardia Airport) to Indianapolis, IN (Indianapolis International Airport)

- o Smoke in cockpit

- o Returned to New York, NY; landed without incident at 3:04 PM EDT

*JetBlue 951, A320

- o October 17, 2017 at 12:42 PM EDT

- o Enroute from Boston, MA (Logan International Airport) to Orlando, FL (Orlando International Airport)

- o Gear indicator problem

- o Returned to Boston, MA; landed without incident at 12:51 PM EDT

*American 2411, A321

- o October 17, 2017 at 12:00 PM EDT

- o Enroute from Las Vegas, NV (McCarran International Airport) to Miami, FL (Miami International Airport)

- o Gear problem; overweight landing

- o Returned to Las Vegas, NV; landed without incident at 12:06 PM EDT

The Daily Aviation Memo is a daily update of foreign and domestic commercial aviation news compiled from open sources and commercially-available information. Information contained in this report is provided for situational awareness only and does not represent the views of the Aviation ISAC. Please send comments or distribution requests to [a-isac.advisory@a-isac\[.\]com](mailto:a-isac.advisory@a-isac[.]com).

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Filename: image001.jpg
Last Modified: Wed Oct 18 11:51:16 CDT 2017



Document ID: 0.7.1175.5294-000002

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org>
Filename: image003.jpg
Last Modified: Wed Oct 18 11:51:16 CDT 2017

image003.jpg for Print
Item: 149 (Attachment
9)

AVIATION ISAC
e 5184 of 5544

Document ID: 0.7.1175.5294-000004

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org>
Filename: image004.jpg
Last Modified: Wed Oct 18 11:51:16 CDT 2017



Document ID: 0.7.1175.5294-000005

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Filename: image005.jpg
Last Modified: Wed Oct 18 11:51:16 CDT 2017



Document ID: 0.7.1175.5294-000006

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Filename: image006.jpg
Last Modified: Wed Oct 18 11:51:16 CDT 2017

image096.jpg for Printed Item: 1
Attachment 6 of 9)



Page 5190 of 5544

Document ID: 0.7.1175.5294-000007

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org>
Filename: image007.jpg
Last Modified: Wed Oct 18 11:51:16 CDT 2017



Document ID: 0.7.1175.5294-000008

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National Council of ISACs <nationalcouncilofisacs@natlisacs.org> <nationalcouncilofisacs@natlisacs.
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Filename: image008.jpg
Last Modified: Wed Oct 18 11:51:16 CDT 2017



Document ID: 0.7.1175.5294-000009

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org>
Filename: image009.jpg
Last Modified: Wed Oct 18 11:51:16 CDT 2017

image009.jpg
Printed Item: 1
Attachment 9 of

of 5544

AVIATION ISAC

From: promed-bounces@promedmail.org
<promed-bounces@promedmail.org> on behalf of
promed-request@promedmail.org <promed-request@promedmail.org>
To: promed@promedmail.org
<promed@promedmail.org>
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: ProMED Digest, Vol 64, Issue 54
Date: Thu Oct 12 2017 19:25:14 CDT
Attachments:

Today's Topics:

1. PRO/AH/EDR> Anthrax - Namibia (06): (Bwabwata Natl Park)
anthraxconfirmed (promed@promedmail.org)
2. PRO/AH/EDR> Poliomyelitis update (30): global (Afghanistan,
Pakistan, Syria) (promed@promedmail.org)
3. PRO/AH/EDR> Avian influenza (146): Italy, north, poultry,
wild,HPAI H5N8, spread (promed@promedmail.org)

Message: 1
Date: Thu, 12 Oct 2017 23:13:07 +0000
From: promed@promedmail.org
Subject: PRO/AH/EDR> Anthrax - Namibia (06): (Bwabwata Natl Park)
anthraxconfirmed
To: promed-post@promedmail.org, promed-edr-post@promedmail.org,
promed-ahead-post@promedmail.org
Message-ID:
<0100015f12dce72e-0de3eeb8-2718-4cbd-b372-b7a2e67fa11f-000000@email.amazonses.com>

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ANTHRAX - NAMIBIA (06): (BWABWATA NATIONAL PARK) ANTHRAX CONFIRMED

A ProMED-mail post
<<http://www.promedmail.org>>
ProMED-mail is a program of the
International Society for Infectious Diseases
<<http://www.isid.org>>

[1]
Date: Thu 12 Oct 2017
Source: The Namibian [edited]
<<https://www.namibian.com.na/60321/read/Anthrax-confirmed-as-cause-of-hippo-deaths>>

The ministry of environment yesterday [Wed 11 Oct 2017] confirmed that anthrax was the cause of the recent deaths of 110 hippos and 20 buffalos at Kavango West's Bwabwata National Park. The ministry's spokesperson, Romeo Muyunda, yesterday said in a statement that the ministry and the veterinary services department of the ministry of agriculture were working together for solutions to contain the outbreak. Senior officials from the directorate of veterinary services as well as from the directorate of parks and wildlife in the ministry of environment are expected to visit the area to familiarise themselves with the situation on the ground.

Muyunda also told The Namibian that he was not sure whether the Botswana government was working with its Namibian counterparts to contain the situation after a few hippos were also found dead in that country. Some international media, including New China, yesterday [Wed 11 Oct 2017] reported that senior officials from the ministry of environment, wildlife and tourism in Botswana have joined hands with their Namibian counterparts to investigate the matter. Muyunda said the ministry has already started burning the carcasses and burying the ashes.

In the meantime, the ministry is likewise cautioning the public against touching the carcasses or consuming the meat as this might be catastrophic.

"The ministry is also aware of concerns regarding the safety of tourists intending to visit the park. In this regard, we would like to assure our visitors that there is no health hazard to people as a result of the situation," he noted. He added that the areas in which these mortalities are taking place is not open to tourists, but an exclusive area for management only, warning tourists from coming close to the affected area. The ministry thus does not foresee the situation threatening the existence of other wildlife species. Anthrax is a fatal bacterial disease known to kill game, cattle as well as humans.

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[2]

Date: Wed 11 Oct 2017

Source: Reuters [edited]

<<http://ewn.co.za/2017/10/12/botswana-finds-anthrax-outbreak-after-spate-of-hippo-deaths>>

Anthrax has been detected in dead hippos floating in the Okavango River, officials in Botswana said on [Wed 10 Oct 2017], after more than 100 of the animals were suspected to have been killed by the disease in neighboring Namibia.

Botswana's Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources Conservation and Tourism advised people not to touch the dead hippos and to report any sightings of hippo carcasses.

The Okavango Delta is a major tourist attraction in southern Africa, supporting a diverse range of wildlife.

Namibian media reported on [Mon 9 Oct 2017] that more than 100 hippos had died in the remote Bwabwata National Park, in the northeastern part of the country, with anthrax the suspected cause.

The Okavango River flows through Namibia before entering Botswana. Tourism is important for the economies of both countries.

[Byline: Alexander Winning; Editing by Alison Williams]

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[I must apologize. The Namibian Ministry of Environment has shown more initiative than I had expected and had burnt those initial test carcasses. Burning hippo carcasses is no mean feat, especially when in a national park one has minimal facilities. I am truly impressed. It is hard work. And they have a further 125 carcasses to dispose of. Shoot!

A HealthMap/ProMED-mail map can be accessed at:
<<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/163>>. - Mod.MHJ

]

[See Also:

Anthrax - Namibia (05): (Bwabwata Natl Park) ongoing
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171011.5373955>
Anthrax - Namibia (04): (Bwabwata Natl Park) hippo. carcasses reach Botswana
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171010.5371583>
Anthrax - Namibia (03): (Bwabwata Natl Park) buffaloes, susp
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171010.5371467>
Anthrax - Namibia (02): (Bwabwata Natl Park) hippopotami
<http://promedmail.org/post/20171009.5369267>
Anthrax - Namibia: (KU) lion
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170209.4827012>
2013

Anthrax - Namibia (04): (CA) elephant
<http://promedmail.org/post/20130727.1848274>
2008

Anthrax, elephants - Namibia (Caprivi)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20080907.2788>
2006

Anthrax, livestock, wildlife - Namibia (Caprivi) (03)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20061211.3498>
Anthrax, livestock, wildlife - Namibia (Caprivi)(02)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20061113.3255>
Anthrax, livestock, wildlife - Namibia (Caprivi)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20061023.3041>

Anthrax, wildlife - Namibia (Caprivi)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20060615.1663>
2005

Anthrax, wildlife - Namibia (Eastern Caprivi)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20050708.1939>
2004

Anthrax, human - Namibia (Caprivi)(02)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20041031.2943>
Anthrax, human - Namibia (Caprivi)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20041021.2850>
Anthrax, elephants - Namibia (Caprivi) (02)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20041006.2744>
Anthrax, elephants - Namibia (Caprivi): susp.
<http://promedmail.org/post/20040917.2581>
.....dk/mhj/ec/dk

Message: 2
Date: Thu, 12 Oct 2017 23:15:38 +0000
From: promed@promedmail.org
Subject: PRO/AH/EDR> Poliomyelitis update (30): global (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria)
To: promed-post@promedmail.org, promed-edr-post@promedmail.org, promed-ahead-post@promedmail.org
Message-ID:
<0100015f12df3262-3cccd45a-01ab-4888-89b6-f33724595d24-000000@email.amazonses.com>

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POLIOMYELITIS UPDATE (30): GLOBAL (AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN, SYRIA)

A ProMED-mail post
<<http://www.promedmail.org>>
ProMED-mail is a program of the
International Society for Infectious Diseases
<<http://www.isid.org>>

Date: Thu 12 Oct 2017
Source: Polio Eradication Initiative [edited]
<<http://polioeradication.org/polio-today/polio-now/this-week/>>

Poliovirus Weekly Update 11-Oct-2017, World Health Organization

New wild poliovirus cases reported this week: 0
Total number of wild poliovirus cases in 2017: 11
Total number of wild poliovirus cases in 2016: 37

New cVDPV cases reported this week: 1
Total number of cVDPV cases in 2017: 57
Total number of cVDPV cases in 2016: 5

Headlines

- New on <www.polioeradication.org> : Next Steps in Poliovirus Containment: National authorities for containment encouraged to initiate 1st steps in containment certification process (<<http://polioeradication.org/news-post/next-steps-in-poliovirus-containment-october-2017/>>), and, 10 Interventions Bringing Afghanistan Closer to Ending Polio (<<http://polioeradication.org/news-post/10-interventions-bringing-afghanistan-closer-to-ending-polio/>>).
- Summary of newly-reported viruses this week [week of Sun 8 Oct 2017]: Syria: one new circulating vaccine derived poliovirus 2 (cVDPV2) case reported, from Mayadeen district, Deir Ez-Zor governorate. Two new cVDPV2 positives from healthy children, both from Mayadeen district. Afghanistan: 2 new wild poliovirus one (WPV1) positive environmental samples reported in Nangarhar province. Pakistan: 3 new wild poliovirus one (WPV1) positive environmental samples reported in Sindh province.

Afghanistan

- Up to 2 new wild poliovirus one (WPV1) positive environmental samples were reported in the past week [week of Sun 1 Oct 2017]. One sample was collected on [Sat 23 Sep 2017] from Jalalabad district, Nangarhar province, and the other on [Sun 24 Sep 2017] from Behsud district, also located in Nangarhar province.
- The total number of WPV1 cases for 2017 is currently 6. The most recent case in the country had onset of paralysis on [Mon 10 Jul 2017], from Zabul province, neighbouring Kandahar province and Pakistan.
- An advance notification of a WPV1 case, received from Batkot district in Nangarhar Province (paralysis onset on 15-Sep-2017), is likely to raise the case count to 7 in the coming days.

Pakistan

- Up to 3 new wild poliovirus type one (WPV1) positive environmental samples were reported in the last week [week of Sun 1 Oct 2017]. The samples are from Sindh province, 2 from Sukkur district, and one from Karachi district.
- No new wild poliovirus type one (WPV1) cases were reported in the past week [week of Sun 1 Oct 2017]. The total number of WPV1 cases for 2017 remains 5.
- A vaccination campaign is underway, targeting more than 3.5 million children aged less than 5 years in 29 selected districts of 4 provinces and Federally Administered Tribal Areas, in response to the most recent polio case (Lakki Marwat, KP) and positive environmental samples.
- A bOPV-IPV Campaign is being implemented in selected areas of Rawalpindi and Islamabad targeting about 0.2 million children, to boost the immunity among high risk populations.

Nigeria

- No new cases of wild poliovirus type one (WPV1) were reported in the past week [week of Sun 1 Oct 2017]. The total number of WPV1 cases for 2016 remains 4 and no cases have been reported in 2017. The most recent case had onset of paralysis on [21 Aug 2016] in Monguno Local Government Area, Borno.
- Nigeria continues to implement an emergency response to the detected WPV1 strain and circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) strains affecting the country (last detected in 2016).

- Detection of polio cases in Nigeria underscores the risk posed by low-level undetected transmission and the urgent need to strengthen subnational surveillance.

- Subnational immunisation days took place last week [week of Sun 1 Oct 2017], providing protection to over 50 percent of children under the age of 5 nationwide.

Lake Chad Basin

- The detection of wild poliovirus type one (WPV1) (Borno state, Nigeria in 2016) and circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) (Borno and Sokoto states in 2016) continue to pose a risk to the neighbouring countries of the Lake Chad basin.

- Emergency outbreak response efforts continue across the Lake Chad basin, together with activities to fill subnational surveillance gaps across the region.

- These activities include efforts to vaccinate children at markets, in internally displaced persons camps, and at international borders.

- Synchronised immunisation activities took place last week [week of Sun 1 Oct 2017], using bOPV to vaccinate children aged 0 to 5 years in all countries in the Lake Chad Basin.

- A large livestock vaccination campaign targeting international nomads is planned for the end of November [2017].

- The 2nd Outbreak Response Assessment (OBRA) in CAR and Nigeria is scheduled for [29 Oct 2017 - 10 Nov 2017].

Central Africa

- No new cases of type 2 circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus (cVDPV2) were reported this week [week of Sun 8 Oct 2017] in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo).

- The total number of cVDPV2 cases this year is 9, in 2 separate outbreaks: in Haut Lomami province (7 cases, with onset of paralysis of the most recent case on [27 Jul 2017]); and in Maniema province (2 cases with onset of paralysis on [26 Mar 2017 and 18 Apr 2017], with an additional isolate detected in a healthy individual with sample collection on 2 May [2017]).

- Outbreak response continues to take place, including use of monovalent oral polio vaccine type 2 (mOPV2) in line with internationally-agreed outbreak response protocols.

- The next immunisation activities are scheduled for the end of October [2017], using bOPV vaccine to immunise over 10 million children.

- Surveillance and immunization activities are being strengthened in neighbouring countries.

Middle East

- In Syria, one new type 2 circulating vaccine-derived polio (cVDPV2) case has been reported this week [week of Sun 8 Oct 2017]. The case was reported in Mayadeen district, Deir Ez-Zor governorate, and had onset on [Sat 19 Aug 2017]. At the time of infection, the child was 19-months-old, and no history of polio vaccination.

- The bulk of all cases continue to be from Mayadeen, the epicentre of this outbreak.

- This increases the current number of cases in this outbreak to 48. Onset of paralysis of these cases is between [3 Mar 2017 and 19 Aug 2017].

- A total of 2 new cVDPV2 positives from healthy children have also

been recorded, both from Mayadeen district, Deir Ez-Zor governorate.

- The 2nd immunization round for Raqqa commenced [Sat 7 Oct 2017]. mOPV2 is being administered to children 0-59 months of age, and IPV to children aged between 2-23 months. Aqua tabs are being provided to families together with vaccination. Initial reports indicate that vaccination has started in all 3 districts of Raqqa (Tell Abyad, Raqqa and Thawra).

- A total of 36 000 caregivers and influencers were reached via face-to-face communication activities in the lead-up to the round. Up to 40 000 campaign date announcements were disseminated, with megaphones used in camps and remote locations. A local radio station has regularly aired campaign announcements.

Officially reported wild poliovirus cases as of 10 Oct 2017

Total global cases in 2017: 11 (compared with 27 for the same period in 2016)

- Total in endemic countries in 2017: 11 (compared with 27 for the same period in 2016)

- Total in non-endemic countries in 2017: 0 (compared with 0 for the same period in 2016)

- Afghanistan: 6 cases in 2017 (compared with 8 for the same period in 2016), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 10-Jul-17

- Pakistan: 5 cases in 2017 (compared with 15 for the same period in 2016), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 21-Aug-17

- Nigeria: 0 case in 2017 (compared with 4 for the same period in 2016), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 21-Aug-16

Total global cases in 2016: 37

- Total in endemic countries: 37

- Total in non-endemic countries: 0

Officially reported cVDPV cases as of 10 Oct 2017

Total global cases in 2017: 57 (compared with 3 for the same period in 2016)

- Syrian Arab Republic: 48 cases in 2017 (compared with 0 for the same period in 2016), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 19-Aug-17

- Democratic Republic of the Congo: 9 cases in 2017 (compared with 0 for the same period in 2016), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 27-Jul-17

- Pakistan: 0 case in 2017 (compared with 0 for the same period in 2016), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 17-Dec-16

- Nigeria: 0 case in 2017 (compared with 0 for the same period in 2016), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 28-Oct-16

- Lao People's Democratic Republic: 0 case in 2017 (compared with 3 for the same period in 2016), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 11-Jan-16

Total global cases in 2016: 5

- Total in endemic countries: 2

- Total in non-endemic countries: 3

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[Take away messages from the above report(s):

- WPV1 is still circulating in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The isolation of the WPV1 in environmental samples confirms this. In the most recent isolations in Afghanistan, there is also an early report of a new WPV1 associated case in Nangarhar province, but from a different district (Batakot) than the where the environmental isolates were from (Jalalabad and Besud). Of note is that the 3 districts (Batakot, Jalalabad and Besud) are contiguous with one another. Nangarhar province borders with Pakistan (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nangarhar_Province#/media/File:Map_Nangarhar_Province.svg).

In contrast, the positive environmental samples in Pakistan are coming from Sindh province (Sukkur and Karachi districts). (<http://www.mappk.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Sindh-Province-Complete-Map-District-Wise.jpg>).

The most recent case of WPV1 paralytic disease in Sindh had onset of paralysis on [Fri 11 Aug 2017] and was in Karachi. Of note is that in recent updates, there have been other positive environmental samples for WPV1 in Sindh province, involving multiple different districts. (see Poliomyelitis update (26): global (Syria, DR Congo) <http://promedmail.org/post/20170922.5334914>, Poliomyelitis update (27): global (Pakistan, Afghanistan), Syria <http://promedmail.org/post/20170928.5347795>).

- The cVDPV2 is still circulating in Syria, predominantly in Mayadeen, Deir Ez-Zor governorate where one new case was confirmed, and 2 asymptomatic children also had cVDPV infections.

A map showing the global distribution of all WPV1 associated cases and cVDPV associated cases can be found at <http://polioeradication.org/polio-today/polio-now/>.

HealthMap/ProMED maps can be found at:

Pakistan: <http://healthmap.org/promed/p/140>.

Afghanistan: <http://healthmap.org/promed/p/137>

Syria: <http://healthmap.org/promed/p/86>. - Mod.MPP]

[See Also:

Poliomyelitis update (29): Syria (DY), WHO EMRO meeting, exp. nanopatch <http://promedmail.org/post/20171011.5374006>

Poliomyelitis update (28): Syria (DY), global <http://promedmail.org/post/20171005.5363489>

Poliomyelitis update (27): global (Pakistan, Afghanistan), Syria <http://promedmail.org/post/20170928.5347795>

Poliomyelitis update (26): global (Syria, DR Congo) <http://promedmail.org/post/20170922.5334914>

Poliomyelitis update (25): Syria (DY) <http://promedmail.org/post/20170920.5329647>

Poliomyelitis update (24): Pakistan (KR) global <http://promedmail.org/post/20170906.5298853>

Poliomyelitis update (23): global (Syria, Pakistan, DR Congo) WPV1, cVDPV2 <http://promedmail.org/post/20170831.5287768>

Poliomyelitis update (22): Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, global <http://promedmail.org/post/20170818.5257641>

Poliomyelitis update (21): Syria (DY), Congo DR, cVDPV, global
Poliomyelitis update (20): global (Syria, Afghanistan)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170720.5193070>
Poliomyelitis update (19): Afghanistan (KD)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170716.5179107>
Poliomyelitis update (18): global (Pakistan, Syria)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170713.5172112>
Poliomyelitis update (17): Syria (DY, RA), cVDPV update
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170712.5169962>
Poliomyelitis update (16): Pakistan (BA), global
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170706.5155739>
Poliomyelitis update (15): Syria (RA) new case, Pakistan, violence
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170705.5153696>
Poliomyelitis update (14): Syria (DY), new cases, cVDPV, global
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170629.5139997>
Poliomyelitis update (13): Syria (DY, RA), global
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170622.5124548>
Poliomyelitis update (12): Syria (DY, RA), susp. cases
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170621.5122019>
Poliomyelitis update (11): Afghanistan, WPV, global update
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170615.5108445>
Poliomyelitis update (10): Syria (DY), Congo DR, cVDPV, WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170613.5103235>
Poliomyelitis update (09): Syria (DY), conf. cVDPV
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170608.5093275>
Poliomyelitis update (08): global (Congo DR cVDPV)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170526.5064449>
Poliomyelitis update (07): Mozambique, Congo DR, VDPV, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170525.5060299>
Poliomyelitis update (06): Syria (DY), cVDPV susp
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170512.5032401>
Poliomyelitis update (05): Syria (DY) susp, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170506.5015784>
Poliomyelitis update (04): fractional IPV
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170430.5003843>
Poliomyelitis update (03): Pakistan (GB, IS, PB), environmental
samples, global <http://promedmail.org/post/20170316.4905775>
Poliomyelitis update (02): Pakistan (GB) WPV1
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170314.4901037>
Poliomyelitis (01): Pakistan (GB), global, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170314.4898724>
2016

Poliomyelitis update (21): IPV shortage, global
<http://promedmail.org/post/20161231.4733243>
Poliomyelitis update (01): India, VDPV, wild type-free
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160115.3939297>
2014

Poliomyelitis - update (03): Lebanon ex Syria, susp, global, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20140312.2328674>
2013

Poliomyelitis update (28): Syria, global, WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20131128.2078961>
Poliomyelitis update (26): Syria, WHO

<http://promedmail.org/post/20131115.2050618>
Poliomyelitis update (25): Syria (DZ) conf, WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20131030.2027954>
Poliomyelitis update (24): Syria susp, Cameroon, global
<http://promedmail.org/post/20131024.2019404>
Poliomyelitis update (23): Syria susp., global, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20131020.2010654>
Poliomyelitis update (19): Somalia, Israel, global
<http://promedmail.org/post/20130817.1884992>
.....mpp/ec/dk

Message: 3
Date: Fri, 13 Oct 2017 00:24:51 +0000
From: promed@promedmail.org
Subject: PRO/AH/EDR> Avian influenza (146): Italy, north, poultry, wild,HPAI H5N8, spread
To: promed-post@promedmail.org, promed-edr-post@promedmail.org, promed-ahead-post@promedmail.org
Message-ID:
<0100015f131e91bf-9ed2b1bb-759a-43ca-b861-85b853fe758a-000000@email.amazonses.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=UTF-8

AVIAN INFLUENZA (146): ITALY, NORTH, POULTRY, WILD, HPAI H5N8, SPREAD

A ProMED-mail post
<<http://www.promedmail.org>>
ProMED-mail is a program of the
International Society for Infectious Diseases
<<http://www.isid.org>>

Date: Wed 11 Oct 2017 9:25 AM
Source: Reuters [edited]
<<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-birdflu-italy/italy-culls-birds-after-five-h5n8-avian-flu-outbreaks-in-october-idUSKBN1CG1QU>>

Italy has had 5 outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N8 avian flu in farms in the central and northern parts of the country since the start of the month [October 2017] . About 880 000 chickens, ducks and turkeys will be culled, officials said on [Wed[11 Oct 2017].
The biggest outbreak of the H5N8 virus, which led to the death or killing of millions of birds in an outbreak in western Europe last winter, was at a large egg producing farm in the province of Ferrara.

The latest outbreak was confirmed on [Fri 6 Oct 2017] and about 853 000 hens are due to be culled by [Tue 17 Oct 2017], the IZSV zoological institute said.

Another outbreak involved 14 000 turkeys in the province of Brescia, which are due to be culled by [Fri 13 Oct 2017].

A 3rd outbreak involved 12 400 broiler chickens at a smaller farm in

the province of Vicenza and 2 others were among a small number of hens, ducks, broilers and turkeys on family farms.

In those 3 cases, all the birds have been culled.

[Byline: Philip Pullella]

--

Communicated by:
ProMED-mail Rapporteur Mary Marshall

[The current H5N8 event in Northern Italy started, according to OIE's data, in wild birds on 3 Jan 2017 and in commercial poultry on 20 Jan 2017.

The cases in the 2 realms have been reported in 2 separate threads.

1. Outbreak summary - wild birds (as of 2 Oct 2017; affected provinces - Lombardia, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Piemonte):

Total outbreaks = 8 (Submitted)

Species/ Susceptible/ Cases/ Deaths/ Killed and disposed of/
Slaughtered

Common Shelduck/-/ 1/ 1/ 0/ 0

Eurasian Wigeon/-/ 1/ 1/ 0/ 0

Whooper Swan/-/ 2/ 2/ 0/ 0

Grey Heron/-/ 1/ 1/ 0/ 0

Mallard/-/ 10/ 10/ 0/ 0

Mute Swan/-/2/ 2/ 0/ 0

(Detailed report and map at

<http://www.oie.int/wahis_2/temp/reports/en_fup_0000024952_20171004_185147.pdf>.

2. Outbreak summary - commercial poultry (as of 2 Oct 2017; affected provinces - Veneto, Emilia-Romagna, Lombardia, Piemonte, Friuli-Venezia Giulia).

Total outbreaks = 41 (Submitted in 27 reports)

Species/ Susceptible/ Cases/ Deaths/ Killed and disposed of/
Slaughtered

Birds/ 1 295 846/ 887 439/ 34 908/ 684 028/ 0

(Detailed report and map at

http://www.oie.int/wahis_2/temp/reports/en_fup_0000024919_20171002_182225.pdf)/

H5 clade 2.3.4.4 of the H5N8 subtype was 1st detected in domestic poultry in China in 2010; by 2014, this virus had caused multiple outbreaks among domestic ducks, chickens, geese, and wild birds in South Korea and subsequent outbreaks in Japan, China, Europe (including Italy), and North America. During these outbreaks, 2 distinct clusters of HPAI A(H5N8) viruses were identified: group A viruses were detected in China in early 2014 and later in South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Canada, the United States, and Europe; group B viruses were detected only in China in 2013 and South Korea in 2014.

Co-circulation of group A viruses with low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) viruses led to new reassortants, including H5N1, H5N2, and H5N8.

In late May 2016, a novel reassortant group B HPAI A(H5N8) clade

2.3.4.4 virus was detected in a wild bird in UVs-Nuur Lake in the Republic of Tyva, Siberia. As of March 2017, the virus had spread across most European countries (Italy included) , the Middle East, and Africa. (Further details in ref 1).

References

1. El-Shesheny R, Barman S, Feeroz MM, Hasan MK, Jones-Engel L, Franks J, Turner J, Seiler P, Walker D, Friedman K, Kercher L, Begum S, Akhtar S, Datta AK, Krauss S, Kayali G, McKenzie P, Webby RJ & Webster RG. Genesis of Influenza A(H5N8) Viruses. Emerg Infect Dis. 2017 Aug;23(8):1368-1371. doi: 10.3201/eid2308.170143. (Early publication 15 Aug 2017). - Mod.AS

A HealthMap/ProMED-mail map can be accessed at: <<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/75>>.]

[See Also:

Avian influenza (30): Italy (VN) poultry, HPAI H5N8, OIE <http://promedmail.org/post/20170124.4787128> 2016

Avian influenza (74): Russia (TU) HPAI H5N8 2.3.4.4., wild bird, intl alert, FAO <http://promedmail.org/post/20160920.4501532> 2014

Avian influenza (106): Italy (VN) poultry, HPAI H5N8, OIE <http://promedmail.org/post/20141216.3036371>

Avian influenza (05): South Korea (CB) HPAI H5N8, duck <http://promedmail.org/post/20140119.2183768>]

.....arn/ec/dk

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End of ProMED Digest, Vol 64, Issue 54

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<nationalcouncilofisacs@natlisacs.org> on behalf of National
Council of ISACs <nationalcouncilofisacs@natlisacs.org>
<nationalcouncilofisacs@natlisacs.org>
To: a-isac.advisory@a-isac.com
<a-isac.advisory@a-isac.com>
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: Fw: TLP WHITE - Daily Aviation Memo, September 26, 2017
Date: Tue Sep 26 2017 10:26:09 CDT
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image002.jpg
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Sent: Tuesday, September 26, 2017 11:23 AM

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Aviation-ISAC Daily Aviation Memo

26 September 2017

Cyber Security News

- *Munich Airport will open new cyber center in January 2018
- *Retefe malware enhanced by addition of EternalBlue exploit
- *First Android Malware Discovered Using Dirty COW Exploit
- *Three out of four DDoS attacks target multiple vectors
- *Oracle Releases Patches for Exploited Apache Struts Flaw
- *Splunk brings machine learning updates to flagship suites

*New dime-sized YubiKey adds more mobility to authentication keys
*Cloudflare Announces Unmetered DDoS Mitigation, Geo Key Manager

Aviation Tech

*Bio-inspired retina allows drones to almost see in the dark with no motion blur

Legislation & Regulation News

*New U.S. travel restrictions for 6 countries announced
*House Democrats sink bill with FAA extension, five days before deadline

Physical Security News

*FAA-Issued Pilot Licenses still vulnerable to identity theft
*Honeywell Digital Video Manager Connects Organizations to Smarter Security and Surveillance

Miscellaneous News

· United Airlines B737 Narrowly Avoids Collision with Glider

*Gogo Vision Touch IFE to launch on Delta's CSeries in 2018

U.S. Department of Transportation Crisis Management Center Daily Report

FEATURES

Cyber Security News

Munich Airport will open new cyber center in January 2018

From Travel Daily News (09.25.2017) Angelos Restanis

The number of attacks on the IT systems of companies and public-sector organizations in Germany has rapidly increased in recent years, parallel to the rise of digitization. Munich Airport also faces all kinds of cyber attacks on a daily basis. Now a new center of competence is being set up at the Bavarian hub. It will bring together IT experts from the airport operating company (FMG) and specialists from high-profile tech companies to test defensive strategies and look for new solutions in the fight against cyber-criminals. To set up and operate the "Information Security Hub", FMG secured the support of three renowned IT security companies. ERNW Insight, HvS-Consulting and IT-CUBE Systems have been successfully developing solutions and advising clients on improved IT security for many years. The new competence center at Munich Airport will provide a platform for cross-company cooperation. It will offer business, public-sector organizations and other institutions opportunities for training and continuing education while working together to put next-generation IT security technologies and processes through their paces. A professional testing and training environment is essential for success. It also offers security solution manufacturers the opportunity to try out new products and services under realistic conditions and jointly develop efficient and pragmatic approaches to fighting cyber-crime and promoting current trends. The primary target group for the services of the Information Security Hub are airports, airlines and other partners from the aviation industry, which, as critical infrastructure, must meet the new standards for the transport and traffic sector. The center is also open to other companies and organizations from all kinds of areas, however. That includes companies from the mobility and industrial sectors, for example, as well as any companies and institutions that manage complex infrastructures and facilities. The "Information Security Hub" will open on January 31, 2018 on the occasion of a two-day Aviation Information Security Congress. [Link](#)

[Traveldailynews\[.\]com/post/new-center-to-fight-cyber-crime-opens-at-munich-airport](http://Traveldailynews[.]com/post/new-center-to-fight-cyber-crime-opens-at-munich-airport)

Retefe malware enhanced by addition of EternalBlue exploit

From ZDNet (09.25.2017) Danny Palmer

A trojan banking malware campaign has returned and now it's leveraging EternalBlue -- the leaked NSA surveillance exploit -- to target Swiss financial institutions. Allegedly developed by the NSA but revealed to the world by a hacking group, the EternalBlue Windows security flaw exploits a version of Windows' Server Message Block (SMB) networking protocol to spread itself across an infected network using worm-like capabilities. It was by using the EternalBlue exploit that May's WannaCry ransomware attack was able to spread so quickly. The tool was soon adopted by cybercriminal groups looking to make their malware more powerful -- and now it's being used to steal credentials and cash from Swiss banks by the group behind the Retefe malware. Retefe is typically delivered via phishing emails containing malicious Microsoft Office documents containing embedded Package Shell Objects -- although some contain malicious macros instead. If the user runs the file, a PowerShell command will run the malicious payload and install the code. Now researchers at Proofpoint have discovered that the payload contains the configuration for EternalBlue, with code taken from a publicly available proof-of-concept for the exploit posted in a dump on GitHub. The tool is now used to download the PowerShell script which installs Retefe. While the addition of EternalBlue, malware can spread across networks. This particular installation of the exploit lacks the module responsible for infinitely spreading the malware as WannaCry did. However, researchers note that the attackers behind Retefe could be merely experimenting with EternalBlue for now -- and that they could roll out the leaked exploit in full force in future. [Link](#)

[Zdnet\[.\]com/article/this-malware-just-got-more-powerful-by-adding-the-wannacry-trick-to-its-arsenal/](http://Zdnet[.]com/article/this-malware-just-got-more-powerful-by-adding-the-wannacry-trick-to-its-arsenal/)

First Android Malware Discovered Using Dirty COW Exploit

From Bleeping Computer (09.26.2017) Catalin Cimpanu

ZNIU is the name of the first in-the-wild Android malware that uses the Dirty COW vulnerability to infect users. Dirty COW is a privilege escalation vulnerability in the Linux kernel that came to light last year, in October 2016. The vulnerability allows an attacker to elevate the privilege of attack code to "root" level and carry out malicious operations. The Dirty COW bug existed in the Linux kernel code for nine years, since 2007. At the time of its discovery, Dirty COW was a zero-day and researchers said attackers used it against Linux servers. A patch was released immediately. Yesterday, security researchers from Trend Micro published a report detailing a new malware family named ZNIU that uses Dirty COW to root devices and plant a backdoor. Researchers say attackers use this backdoor to collect information on infected devices. The second stage of the attack happens only if the user is located in China. Attackers use the full control the backdoor grants them over the device to subscribe the user to premium SMS numbers that benefit a local company. Trend Micro says it discovered more than 1,200 malicious apps that carry ZNIU available via various online websites. ZNIU made victims across 40 countries, but most were located in China and India. [Link](#)

[Bleepingcomputer\[.\]com/news/security/first-android-malware-discovered-using-dirty-cow-exploit/](http://Bleepingcomputer[.]com/news/security/first-android-malware-discovered-using-dirty-cow-exploit/)

Three out of four DDoS attacks target multiple vectors

From Help Net Security (09.26.2017)

Three out of every four DDoS attacks employed blended, multi-vector approaches in the second quarter of 2017, according to Nexusguard. The quarterly report, which measured more than 8,300 attacks, demonstrated that hackers continued to rely on volumetric attacks to overwhelm system resources. For example, UDP-based attacks increased by 15 percent this quarter, targeting hijacked devices connected to the IoT, and overtaking SYN, HTTP Flood and other popular volumetric attacks in popularity. With the average attack rating 4.63 Gbps in size, enterprises that do not yet have access to high-capacity DDoS mitigation were most likely to suffer interruption from attacks. IoT networks continued to be targeted by DDoS attacks during Q2, including a new botnet, Persirai, which attacked more than 1,000 different models of IP cameras. Nexusguard gathers the DDoS attack data through botnet scanning, honeypots, ISPs and traffic moving between attackers and their targets that is unbiased by any single set of customers or industries. With UDP attacks growing in favor, the company recommends enterprises protect their DNS servers and employ Anycast routing technology to distribute the footprint of these DDoS attacks. As DDoS extortionist gangs became increasingly active in several European countries, Switzerland made its first-ever appearance in the top three DDoS attacker countries. [Link](#)

[Helpnetsecurity\[.\]com/2017/09/26/ddos-attacks-target-multiple-vectors/](http://Helpnetsecurity[.]com/2017/09/26/ddos-attacks-target-multiple-vectors/)

Oracle Releases Patches for Exploited Apache Struts Flaw

From Security Week (09.25.2017) Eduard Kovacs

Oracle has released patches for many of its products to address several vulnerabilities in the Apache Struts 2 framework, including one that has been exploited in the wild for the past few weeks. The actively exploited flaw is CVE-2017-9805, for which proof-of-concept (PoC) code was published within hours after a patch was released by Apache Struts developers on September 5. Several security firms reported seeing attacks shortly after. The vulnerability, caused due to the way Struts deserializes untrusted data, allows remote code execution and it affects applications that use the REST plugin with the XStream handler for XML payloads. There is a long list of Oracle products that use Apache Struts and which are exposed to attacks due to flaws in the open-source development framework. The list includes Oracle's MySQL Enterprise Monitor, Communications Policy Management, FLEXCUBE Private Banking, Retail XBRI, Siebel, WebLogic Server, and various Financial Services and Insurance products. [Link](#)

[Securityweek\[.\]com/oracle-releases-patches-exploited-apache-struts-flaw](http://Securityweek[.]com/oracle-releases-patches-exploited-apache-struts-flaw)

Splunk brings machine learning updates to flagship suites

From ZDNet (09.26.2017) Natalie Gagliardi

Splunk on Tuesday outlined the latest versions of its flagship analytic suites with a focus on machine learning advances. The company updated Splunk Enterprise, Splunk IT Service Intelligence (ITSI), Splunk Enterprise Security (ES) and Splunk User Behavior Analytics (UBA) for both cloud and on-premises deployments. Splunk's algorithms are focused on investigations for security incidents, alerting, predictive tools for operations and maintenance and business optimization for demand, inventory and analysis of historical data. Splunk says the machine learning advancements rely on these algorithms to help customers better monitor, investigate and build intelligence with their data. Key updates include Splunk Enterprise cloud 7.0, which aims to boost performance and scale with faster metrics to speed up monitoring and alerting as well as optimizations to core search technology. The latest version of Splunk ITSI builds in more machine learning for advanced anomaly detection, adaptive thresholds and event correlation. The new version of Splunk UBA integrates with custom machine learning models and also includes greater privacy controls with identity masking for PII information. [Link](#)

[Zdnet\[.\]com/article/splunk-brings-machine-learning-updates-to-flagship-suites/](http://Zdnet[.]com/article/splunk-brings-machine-learning-updates-to-flagship-suites/)

New dime-sized YubiKey adds more mobility to authentication keys

From Cyberscoop (09.25.2017) Patrick Howell O'Neill

YubiKeys are getting smaller as they grow more and more popular. The cybersecurity hardware that acts as a secure key to machines and accounts now comes in a dime-sized package. The YubiKey 4C Nano launched Monday for \$60. The 4C Nano is meant for mobility. It's tiny, measuring in at 12mm x 10.1mm x 7mm, meant to meet demand for an even smaller tool than the keychain-sized keys Yubico has offered for a decade. It's designed for use in USB-C ports on computers like the HP Spectre, Dell XPS 15, Apple Macbook Pro and newer Chromebooks. Experts praise tools like the YubiKey because they are the most secure form of multifactor authentication. In order to prevent unauthorized access to computers and accounts, best practices often tout that people need multiple factors of authentication to prove their identity. But while text messages or even apps can be phished, a hardware key is the most effective defense against hacker's biggest attack vector. They're easy to use with most major commercial offerings. Everything from your Google account to Windows computer can be protected. [Link](#)

[Cyberscoop\[.\]com/yubico-yubikey-usb-c-u2f-2fa/](https://cyberscoop.com/yubico-yubikey-usb-c-u2f-2fa/)

Cloudflare Announces Unmetered DDoS Mitigation, Geo Key Manager

From Security Week (09.26.2017) Eduard Kovacs

Web performance and security solutions provider Cloudflare announced this week that all customers will benefit from unmetered mitigation against distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, and they will be able to choose where they want their private SSL keys stored. DDoS protection providers typically ask their customers to pay more and even terminate them if they are hit by a massive attack that may cause disruptions to other customers' services. Cloudflare, which claims to have the ability to handle more than 15 terabits per second of DDoS traffic, believes it can now protect a website against attacks of any size while ensuring that other customers are not impacted in any way. That is why the company has decided that it will not terminate customers or jack up their bill regardless of the size of the attack or the plan they use. Customers that use a paid plan will, of course, have more benefits, but when it comes to volumetric DDoS mitigation, even users of the Free plan will benefit from unlimited and unmetered protection. Cloudflare also announced that customers will be able to specify where to store their private SSL keys via a new service called Geo Key Manager. The company has data centers in more than 55 countries and some of its customers might not be comfortable knowing that the keys to their kingdom are stored on servers physically located in a certain country. [Link](#)

Securityweek[.]com/cloudflare-announces-unmetered-ddos-mitigation-geo-key-manager

Aviation Tech

Bio-inspired retina allows drones to almost see in the dark with no motion blur

From ZDNet (09.26.2017) Greg Nichols

A group of researchers from the University of Zurich and NCCR Robotics is giving drones a new way to see. Their innovation is an eye-inspired camera that can easily cope with high-speed motion and even see in near-dark conditions--crucial functionality as drones become more autonomous and applications for drones more widespread. Autonomous and semi-autonomous drones need to know their precise position and orientation in space at all times to fly safely. Commercial drones use GPS, but that can be unreliable in cities. Autonomous drones that rely on computer vision are restricted to flying below speeds that cause motion blur, which renders vision algorithms useless. To solve these problems, the Swiss team invented a so-called event-based camera. Event cameras are bio-inspired vision sensors that output pixel-level brightness changes instead of standard intensity frames. Crucially, the camera's retina doesn't require full light capture to generate a clear image. The UZH researchers designed software to efficiently process the output from these cameras. So far they've successfully used the software to enable autonomous flight at higher speeds and in lower light than currently possible with commercial drones--at least in limited tests. A spokesman from NCCR said that drones equipped with such a system could assist search and rescue teams in scenarios where conventional drones would be of no use--for example on missions at dusk or dawn or when there is too little light for normal cameras to work. Because they don't require laser sensors, drones using these cameras could soon be relatively cheap, opening up new possibilities for commercial and professional drone use. [Link](#)

[Zdnet\[.\]com/article/bio-inspired-retina-allows-drones-to-almost-see-in-the-dark-with-no-motion-blur/](https://zdnet.com/article/bio-inspired-retina-allows-drones-to-almost-see-in-the-dark-with-no-motion-blur/)

Legislation & Regulation News

New U.S. travel restrictions for 6 countries announced

From Reuters (09.25.2017) Andrew Chung

The Supreme Court signaled on Monday it may dismiss a challenge to President Donald Trump's controversial travel ban after the White House announced tailored restrictions on eight countries that legal experts said stand a better chance at holding up in court. That ban expired on Sunday. The president replaced it with a proclamation that indefinitely restricts travel from Iran, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Chad and North Korea. Certain government officials from Venezuela will also be barred. The new ban, Trump's third, could affect tens of thousands of potential immigrants and visitors. The Sunday

proclamation, which he said is needed to screen out terrorist or public safety threats, could be less vulnerable to legal attack, scholars and other experts said, because it is the result of a months-long analysis of foreign vetting procedures by U.S. officials. The new ban is set to go into effect on Oct. 18, but it already applies to five of the six countries covered by the March 6 ban, according to a U.S. State Department cable issued on Sunday and obtained by Reuters. Sudan was dropped from the list of banned countries after the Sudanese government provided information required under the new criteria set out by the Trump administration earlier this year, a White House official said on Monday. [Link](#)

[Reuters\[.\]com/article/us-usa-immigration-trump-legal/trump-travel-ban-on-more-solid-ground-as-top-court-cancels-hearing-idUSKCN1C01O5](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-trump-legal/trump-travel-ban-on-more-solid-ground-as-top-court-cancels-hearing-idUSKCN1C01O5)

House Democrats sink bill with FAA extension, five days before deadline

From The Hill (09.25.2017) Christina Marcos

Legislation to reauthorize Federal Aviation Administration programs and provide tax relief for victims of recent hurricanes failed on the House floor Monday after Democrats rejected it. The package was considered under a fast-track process requiring a two-thirds majority for passage, known as suspension of the rules. House GOP leaders will likely return it to the floor later this week under a procedure that needs only a simple majority. A total of 26 Democrats, mostly centrists or members from hurricane-affected states, refrained from endorsing their leaders' strategy and joined all but eight Republicans in supporting the bill. Democratic leaders urged their rank-and-file to oppose the package because they thought the tax provisions didn't go far enough and wanted to offer the DREAM Act to let young undocumented immigrants stay in the U.S. as an amendment. The package includes a six-month extension of aviation programs, which are set to expire if Congress doesn't act by Sept. 30. [Link](#)

[Thehill\[.\]com/blogs/floor-action/house/352356-house-democrats-sink-bill-with-faa-extension-hurricane-tax-relief](https://thehill[.]com/blogs/floor-action/house/352356-house-democrats-sink-bill-with-faa-extension-hurricane-tax-relief)

Physical Security News

FAA-Issued Pilot Licenses still vulnerable to identity theft

From Boston Globe (09.25.2017) Kelly Carr

The FAA was warned in 2009 that people with terrorist ties were licensed to fly and repair aircraft. Eight years later, it is, incredibly, still the case. Nader Ali Sabouri Haghighi's own pilot certificate, it turned out, had been revoked years earlier for providing false information, but the Federal Aviation Administration conveniently mailed him a new one. Haghighi had called the FAA hot line claiming to be a professional pilot named Daniel George who had lost his license. He then recited George's license number and other personal details that he'd obtained from their business dealings. Without asking further questions, the FAA agent sent Haghighi a license with George's name on it. Almost a decade after Haghighi's brazen identify theft, the FAA still does not include pilot photos on its licenses, and the agency does not fully vet pilot information before issuing them credentials. Last year, a leading congressional overseer of the FAA, then-Representative John Mica, called US pilot licenses "a joke" and said that a day pass to Disney World in his native Florida contains more sophisticated security measures. FAA officials defend their licensing practices, noting that pilots are also required to carry a government-issued ID such as a driver's license to prove their identity. The pilot certificate, they say, is more an indicator of the pilot's level of training than a security tool, and commercial airports and airlines generally issue their own IDs for access to tarmacs, planes, and other secure areas. But the flawed airman licenses are part of a troubling pattern of lax oversight of more than 1 million FAA-approved airmen — including pilots, mechanics, flight attendants, and other aviation personnel — that has made the agency vulnerable to fraud, and the public vulnerable to those who mean to do harm, a Spotlight Team review has found. [Link](#)

[Bostonglobe\[.\]com/spotlight/secrets-in-the-sky/series/part-two/](http://Bostonglobe[.]com/spotlight/secrets-in-the-sky/series/part-two/)

Honeywell Digital Video Manager Connects Organizations to Smarter Security and Surveillance

From Aviation Pros (09.25.2017)

Honeywell announced an enhanced version of Honeywell Digital Video Manager (DVM) that offers smarter security and surveillance capabilities for today's increasingly complex building environments. The new release, DVM R620, enables organizations to more easily secure large-scale security operations with features that improve operator efficiency and situational awareness for faster incident identification and resolution, and power more accurate and reliable security operations. DVM R620 is well suited for a range of facilities, including complex security installations with stringent requirements—such as airports, correctional facilities, hospitals, higher education campuses and smart cities. It features an enhanced user interface and includes major updates to how operators can capture, access and manage live and recorded video, reliably and efficiently. Based on a highly available distributed architecture, the system features edge recording playback and backfill capabilities, capturing video footage on camera memory cards, and then backfilling the footage to the system's main server. These features make the system more resilient in response to interruptions ranging from routine system maintenance, to network or server failures and cybersecurity issues, and ensure cameras more consistently and reliably capture video footage, wherever they are located. [Link](#)

[Aviationpros\[.\]com/press_release/12370279/honeywell-digital-video-manager-connects-organizations-to-smarter-security-and-surveillance](http://Aviationpros[.]com/press_release/12370279/honeywell-digital-video-manager-connects-organizations-to-smarter-security-and-surveillance)

Miscellaneous News

United Airlines B737 Narrowly Avoids Collision with Glider

From The Points Guy (09.25.2017) Alberto Riva

A United Airlines Boeing 737 on approach to Chicago O'Hare on Monday afternoon narrowly avoided a midair collision with what its crew said was a small aircraft, according to a The Points Guy reader who was on the flight. While about to complete flight UA246 from Vancouver (YVR) to Chicago O'Hare (ORD), the plane made a sudden evasive turn that had passengers "shrieking." After safely landing at O'Hare, one of the pilots on UA246 came on the intercom to say it was a "split second decision" to save the plane. According to flight tracking site Flightradar24, UA246 landed at 3:02pm, ahead of its scheduled time of 3:14. A United Airlines spokesperson emailed a statement confirming the near-collision, and saying that everybody was indeed OK: United flight 246 from Vancouver to O'Hare landed safely and all passengers deplaned normally after the pilots deviated from the aircraft's flight path because they spotted a glider. [Link](#)

[Thepointsguy\[.\]com/2017/09/united-737-avoids-midair-collision-ohare/](http://Thepointsguy[.]com/2017/09/united-737-avoids-midair-collision-ohare/)

Gogo Vision Touch IFE to launch on Delta's CSeries in 2018

From The Boarding Area (09.25.2017) Seth Miller

In-seat entertainment screens are not dead; they just need a bit of disruption. That's the message Gogo, Delta and Bombardier are sending with the launch of Gogo Vision Touch, the new wireless IFE solution that will fly on Delta's CSeries aircraft beginning with deliveries in 2018. The service combines Gogo's wireless network infrastructure and content serving with commercial-grade tablets installed in the seat-back to deliver a solution the companies believe is lighter, cheaper, easier to upgrade and easier to support. Gogo Vision Touch uses existing server infrastructure technology on board while adding additional components to maintain an isolated network. The dedicated Wi-Fi infrastructure improves the reliability, redundancy and security of the system while also avoiding interference with the regular connectivity and streaming media solution. Streaming content means spending more in bandwidth, but the idea is to offset that increased cost by reducing the airline-paid content licensing fees paid to studios. The content costs shift to Netflix or Amazon Prime – and really to the passenger and their subscriptions – from the airline. And rather than delivering the content the airline simply

delivers the pipe. One technical challenge that remains for the new Gogo Vision Touch solution is regulatory certification for the use of commercial tablets in the seats rather than traditional IFE screens that are designed to withstand various safety certifications, including the 16G HIC test. Details are limited right now but that burden is being shouldered by Bombardier and its suppliers, not by Gogo. [Link](#)

[Blog\[.\]wandr\[.\]me/2017/09/gogo-vision-touch-delta-cseries-entertainment-ife/](http://Blog[.]wandr[.]me/2017/09/gogo-vision-touch-delta-cseries-entertainment-ife/)

U.S. Department of Transportation Crisis Management Center Daily Report

Commercial In-Flight Incidents

*Mesa 5743, CRJ9

- o September 25, 2017 at 9:17 PM EDT
- o Enroute from Dayton, OH (Dayton International Airport) to Dallas, TX (Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport)
- o Pressurization problem
- o Diverted to Little Rock, AR (Clinton National Airport); landed without incident at 9:29 PM EDT

*Southwest 601, B737

- o September 25, 2017 at 9:06 PM EDT
- o Enroute from Denver, CO (Denver International Airport) to Boston, MA (Logan International Airport)
- o Blown tire
- o Returned to Denver, CO; landed without incident at 11:20 PM EDT
- o Aircraft towed to gate with passengers on board

*United 246, B739

- o September 25, 2017 at 6:48 PM EDT
- o Enroute from Vancouver, Canada (Vancouver International Airport) to Chicago, IL (Chicago O'Hare International Airport)
- o Near mid-air collision; observed a glider at 7,000 feet in vicinity of Beloit, WI (Beloit Airport)
- o Aircraft climbed to avoid glider; 400 feet deviation made; no contact or damages reported
- o Continued to Chicago, IL
- o 0 fatalities; 0 injuries

*Jetstream 5174, CRJ2

- o September 25, 2017 at 3:54 PM EDT
- o Enroute from Nashville, TN (Nashville International Airport) to Louisville, KY (Louisville International Airport)
- o Engine problem
- o Diverted to Covington, KY (Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport); landed without incident

Ground Incidents

*Fresno, CA, Fresno Yosemite International Airport

- o September 25, 2017 at 3:42 PM EDT
- o Allegiant 514, MD83, scheduled from Las Vegas, NV (McCarran International Airport)
- o Hydraulic failure and smoke in cockpit after exiting runway
- o Passengers deplaned aircraft on taxiway
- o 0 fatalities; 0 injuries

Upcoming A-ISAC Events

A-ISAC Fall Summit, November 8-10, 2017, Miami, Florida.

Link www.a-isac.com/

The Daily Aviation Memo is a daily update of foreign and domestic commercial aviation news compiled from open sources and commercially-available information. Information contained in this report is provided for situational awareness only and does not represent the views of the Aviation ISAC. Please send comments or distribution requests to a-isac.advisory@a-isac.com.

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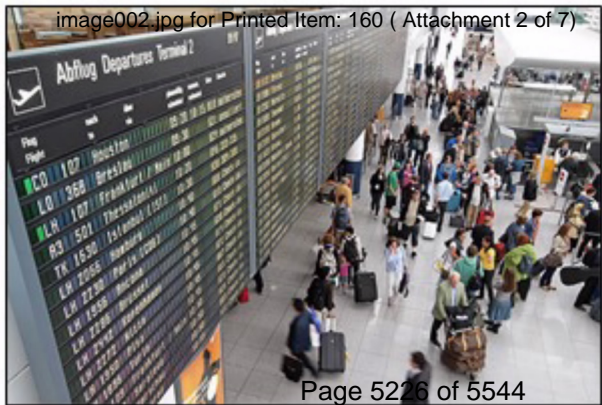
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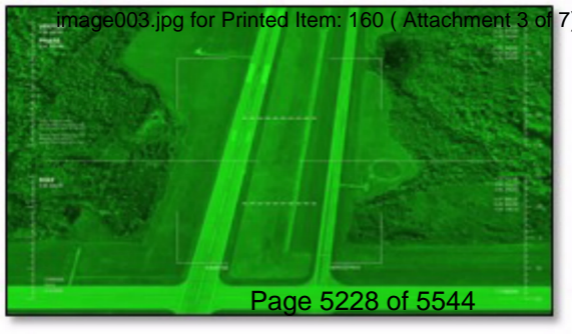
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Trump's New Travel Ban



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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

XI



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION - FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

IV NAME

[REDACTED]

V ADDRESS

[REDACTED]

VI NATIONALITY USA

SEX HEIGHT WEIGHT HAIR EYES

IVa D.O.B.

[REDACTED]

M 64 185 GRAY HAZEL

IX HAS BEEN FOUND TO BE PROPERLY QUALIFIED TO EXERCISE THE PRIVILEGES OF

COMMERCIAL PILOT

CERTIFICATE NUMBER

[REDACTED]

X DATE OF ISSUE



XIV

[Handwritten Signature]

XV ADMINISTRATOR



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<email@washingtonpost.com> on behalf of The Washington Post
<email@washingtonpost.com> <email@washingtonpost.com>
To: jessica.turba@iowa.gov
<jessica.turba@iowa.gov>
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: The Post Most: Trump's die-hard supporters are fuming after an apparent about-face on 'dreamers'
Date: Thu Sep 14 2017 11:24:04 CDT
Attachments:

The fanged, faceless sea creature that washed ashore during Harvey has been identified; Sean Spicer basically admitted that he was willing to lie for Trump; North Korea's latest nuclear test was so powerful it reshaped the mountain above it

Democracy Dies in Darkness

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As the White House calls for her firing, ESPN's Jemele Hill addresses the 'elephant in the room'

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<promed-bounces@promedmail.org> on behalf of
promed-request@promedmail.org <promed-request@promedmail.org>
To: promed@promedmail.org
<promed@promedmail.org>
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: ProMED Digest, Vol 62, Issue 57
Date: Thu Aug 17 2017 14:18:01 CDT
Attachments:

Today's Topics:

1. PRO/EDR> Herpes simplex type 1, neonatal - USA:
(IA)encephalitis, oraltransmission, fatal [EXTERNAL]
(promed@promedmail.org)
2. PRO/EDR> Hepatitis A - USA (21): (MI) RFI [EXTERNAL]
(promed@promedmail.org)
3. PRO/AH/EDR> Novel coronavirus - China: shrew [EXTERNAL]
(promed@promedmail.org)
4. PRO/AH/EDR> Brucellosis - Algeria: (EO) [EXTERNAL]
(promed@promedmail.org)

Message: 1
Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2017 18:56:24 +0000
From: promed@promedmail.org
Subject: PRO/EDR> Herpes simplex type 1, neonatal - USA:
(IA)encephalitis, oraltransmission, fatal [EXTERNAL]
To: promed-post@promedmail.org, promed-edr-post@promedmail.org
Message-ID:
<0100015df18dbcd2-d5b52eb7-9e59-4d2a-ba88-8f2348cb3caa-000000@email.amazonses.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=UTF-8

HERPES SIMPLEX TYPE 1, NEONATAL - USA: (IOWA) ENCEPHALITIS, ORAL
TRANSMISSION, FATAL

A ProMED-mail post
<<http://www.promedmail.org>>
ProMED-mail is a program of the
International Society for Infectious Diseases
<<http://www.isid.org>>

Date: Tue 15 Aug 2017
Source: Contagion Live [edited]
<<http://www.contagionlive.com/news/iowa-infant-dies-of-viral-meningitis-associated-with-herpes->

infection>

Following the recent death of an Iowa infant who suffered complications after becoming infected with the herpes simplex virus type 1 (HSV-1) likely due to a kiss, health experts are reminding the public that the virus can spread easily to babies.

Oral herpes is a highly contagious virus that is spread via oral-to-oral contact, such as kissing. The WHO estimates that 3.7 billion individuals around the world have an HSV-1 infection, with the Americas having the lowest prevalence of the virus. HSV-1 is typically acquired during childhood and never goes away, though the infection is typically asymptomatic with most individuals unaware that they even have it. Visible symptoms of oral herpes appear as open sores or ulcers in and around the mouth, or sores on the lips known as cold sores. Less common is herpes simplex virus type 2 (HSV-2), a sexually transmitted infection affecting an estimated 417 million individuals worldwide. In rare cases, a woman infected with genital HSV-1 can pass the virus on to her baby during vaginal delivery, and less commonly, a baby can contract the virus through other forms of contact.

In recent news, a baby girl born in Iowa on 1 Jul 2017, died less than 3 weeks later of viral meningitis, an infection of the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord; the infection was caused by HSV-1. The baby's parents and doctors say she became infected with the virus when she was less than a week old after being kissed by someone with HSV-1 who had a cold sore. The baby soon stopped eating and was unresponsive when her parents tried to wake her up. The parents took the infant to Blank Children's Hospital in Des Moines, where doctors diagnosed the baby with meningitis from an HSV-1 infection, and the baby was transferred to University of Iowa Children's Hospital. Neither of the parents tested positive for the virus, and said the infant likely picked up the infection from a visitor. The baby's mother announced the infant's death in a Facebook post on 18 Jul 2017.

"The majority of neonatal HSV occurs as a result of perinatal transmission, where an infant acquires HSV via the maternal genital tract," says pediatric infectious disease specialist and Contagion? editorial advisory board member Kengo Inagaki, MD, of the University of Mississippi. Perinatal transmission accounts for about 85 percent of infant HSV cases, he notes. "It is believed that about 10 percent of neonatal HSV is acquired postnatally, from someone shedding HSV from the mouth who then kisses the baby, from exposure to HSV from a breast lesion, et cetera."

Dr Inagaki explains that the symptoms of HSV infection in neonates and young infants can vary. Herpes can result in skin, eye, or mouth (SEM) infections in some babies, and in more serious cases, it leads to central nervous system (CNS) disease, such as meningitis and disseminated disease.

"SEM disease is the most common, and can progress to CNS or disseminated disease, and needs to be treated," says Dr Inagaki, noting that eye infections can lead to vision loss. "CNS disease can

present with seizures, poor feeding, lethargy, and fever. It can result in permanent neurodevelopmental complications, although not all patients have sequelae. Disseminated disease can involve multiple organs, including CNS, liver, and lungs." If left untreated, mortality due to CNS infection or disseminated disease can be high.

While doctors can take certain steps to prevent HSV transmission from mother to infant during birth, the American Academy of Pediatrics notes that parents, family members, or friends with cold sores must take extra precautions and avoid kissing infants, particularly with babies under 6 months of age who have weak immune systems. Dr Inagaki notes that if there are HSV lesions on the breast, a mother should avoid breastfeeding from that breast. An infant who has been infected with HSV may have a low grade fever and one or more small skin blisters, and symptoms can appear within 2 to 12 days of exposure to the virus. Parents are urged to call their pediatrician if such symptoms occur.

[Byline: Einav Keet]

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Communicated by:
ProMED-mail from HealthMap Alerts
<promed@promedmail.org>

[This case underscores the importance of minimizing the exposure of neonates to herpes simplex virus by not allowing close contact with individuals who have overt perioral lesions from HSV, that is, cold sores or fever blisters. Although HSV-1 can be present in oral secretions without overt lesions, the amount of virus is less so the risk of transmission is smaller. - Mod.LL

A HealthMap/ProMED-mail map can be accessed at:
<<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/218>>.]

[See Also:
Herpes simplex type 1, genital - USA (03): (NYC) circumcision, editorial <http://promedmail.org/post/20170426.4994573>
Herpes simplex type 1, genital - USA (02): (NYC) circumcision, RFI <http://promedmail.org/post/20170403.4942917>
Herpes simplex type 1, genital - USA: (NYC) circumcision <http://promedmail.org/post/20170312.4895712>
2016

Ocular herpes: VR headsets, RFI <http://promedmail.org/post/20161029.4592839>
2015

Herpes simplex virus - Mexico (CH) children, RFI <http://promedmail.org/post/20150302.3200640>
2014

Herpes simplex type 1, genital - USA: (NYC) circumcision <http://promedmail.org/post/20141230.3060476>
.....sb//mj/ml

Message: 2
Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2017 18:58:41 +0000
From: promed@promedmail.org
Subject: PRO/EDR> Hepatitis A - USA (21): (MI) RFI [EXTERNAL]
To: promed-post@promedmail.org, promed-edr-post@promedmail.org
Message-ID:
<0100015df18fd2dc-18976e9f-fade-4e8b-a4f4-1fd9107cdf9c-000000@email.amazonses.com>

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HEPATITIS A - USA (21): (MICHIGAN) REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

A ProMED-mail post
<<http://www.promedmail.org>>
ProMED-mail is a program of the
International Society for Infectious Diseases
<<http://www.isid.org>>

Date: Wed 16 Aug 2017 4:01 EDT
Source: Oakland Press [edited]
<<http://www.theoaklandpress.com/health/20170816/oakland-county-health-division-reports-hepatitis-a-outbreak-63-cases-over-past-year>>

The Oakland County Health Division says 63 cases of hepatitis A have been confirmed over the past year, that's 58 more than the previous year [2016]. This includes 8 more cases of hepatitis A that have been confirmed in the Farmington Hills area over the past week.

The health division has not identified a source but are urging residents to get vaccinated to reduce the risk of contracting the disease.

"We contribute this increase in confirmed cases to illicit drug use in the community," said Pamela Hackert, medical director for the county's health division. "When 8 cases are in more of a localized community that is a high number."

Although a source has not been found, the health division is investigating potential common factors such as contaminated food, sick individuals, travel, and healthcare exposure.

Since [26 Jun 2017], there have been 13 confirmed cases in the county. >>From [1 Aug 2015 through 31 Jul 2016] there were only 5 confirmed cases in the county.

There have been 247 confirmed cases statewide in 2017 compared to 132 in 2016.

Leigh-Anne Stafford, health officer for the county's health division, said it's important to practice proper hygiene to reduce the risk.

"The health division urges all residents, food handlers, and

healthcare providers to get the Hepatitis A vaccine and to wash hands thoroughly," said Leigh-Anne Stafford, health officer for the county's health division. "Food workers and health care workers are encouraged to stay home from work, seek medical attention, and report their illness to their employer."

Hepatitis A is an infection of the liver caused by a virus and is vaccine-preventable.

Dr Pamela Hackert, medical director for county's health division, said the virus is shed in feces and is most commonly spread from person to person by contaminated hands.

Symptoms may appear from 2 to 6 weeks after exposure, with the average time being about one month.

[Byline: Mark Cavitt]

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ProMED-mail
<promed@promedmail.org>

[Previous postings reported an increased number of cases of hepatitis A from the eastern side of Michigan's lower peninsula in Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne counties, and the city of Detroit. The outbreak appears to have been going on for some time and ProMED would appreciate additional information regarding risk factors of the cohort including MSM, travel, homelessness and illicit drug use.

One previous post (Hepatitis A - USA (12): (MI) fatal, RFI archive no. <http://promedmail.org/post/20170707.5158430>) from 7 Jul 2017 reported a case fatality rate of 4.5 percent, higher than the parallel larger outbreak in San Diego, California which does not appear based on genetic studies to be related to the Michigan cluster. Whether there have been additional fatalities is not clearly reported. - Mod.LL

The state of Michigan can be located on the HealthMap/ProMED-mail interactive map at <<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/1933>>. A county map can be seen at <<http://geology.com/county-map/michigan-county-map.gif>>. - Sr.Tech.Ed.MJ]

[See Also:

Hepatitis A - USA (20): (CA) fatal
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170817.5256184>
Hepatitis A - USA (19): (CA) fatal
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170815.5252338>
Hepatitis A - USA (18): (CA) fatal
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170809.5238557>
Hepatitis A - USA (17): (CA) fatal
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170802.5222462>
Hepatitis A - USA (16): (CO)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170730.5215580>
Hepatitis A - USA (15): (CA) fatal
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170726.5205912>

Hepatitis A - USA (14): (CO) RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170725.5201341>
Hepatitis A - USA (13): (CA) fatal
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170713.5173051>
Hepatitis A - USA (12): (MI) fatal, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170707.5158430>
Hepatitis A - USA (11): (CA)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170629.5139711>
Hepatitis A - USA (10): (CA) additional counties, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170615.5107437>
Hepatitis A - USA (09): (CA) 2nd county, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170614.5105051>
Hepatitis A - USA (08): (CA) fatal, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170613.5102106>
Hepatitis A - USA (07): (CA) fatal
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170606.5087079>
Hepatitis A - USA (06): (CO) MSM
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170512.5031179>
Hepatitis A - USA (05): (CA) fatal
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170511.5028824>
Hepatitis A - USA (04): (CA) fatal, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170506.5017836>
Hepatitis A - USA (03): (OR) food workers
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170410.4959609>
Hepatitis A - USA (02): (CA) fatalities
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170408.4956398>
Hepatitis A - USA: (MI) increased incidence
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170324.4923927>
2016

Hepatitis A - USA (19): (MI) prepared food
<http://promedmail.org/post/20161022.4578285>
Hepatitis A - USA (18): (HI) frozen scallops
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160930.4527512>
Hepatitis A - USA (17): (HI) frozen scallops
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160915.4490624>
Hepatitis A - USA (16): fruit smoothies, strawberries ex Egypt
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160915.4490623>
Hepatitis A - USA (15): comment
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160910.4477503>
Hepatitis A - USA (14): fruit smoothies, strawberries ex Egypt
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160909.4477372>
Hepatitis A - USA (13): fruit smoothies, strawberries ex Egypt
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160903.4461205>
Hepatitis A - USA (12): (HI) frozen scallops
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160903.4463425>
Hepatitis A - USA (11): (MI) raw sewage contact
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160827.4445808>
Hepatitis A - USA (10): (VA) fruit smoothies, imported strawberries
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160822.4431203>
Hepatitis A - USA (09): (HI) frozen scallops
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160817.4422480>
Hepatitis A - USA (08): (HI)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160810.4405316>
Hepatitis A - USA (07): (HI)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160729.4376124>

Hepatitis A - USA (06): (HI)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160721.4360060>
Hepatitis A - USA (05): (HI)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160713.4342961>
Hepatitis A - USA (04): (HI) RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160707.4330783>
Hepatitis A - USA (03): (HI)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160703.4323888>
Hepatitis A - USA (02): (PR) hospital workers
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160630.4314683>
.....ll/mj/ml

Message: 3
Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2017 19:13:48 +0000
From: promed@promedmail.org
Subject: PRO/AH/EDR> Novel coronavirus - China: shrew [EXTERNAL]
To: promed-post@promedmail.org, promed-edr-post@promedmail.org,
promed-ahead-post@promedmail.org
Message-ID:
<0100015df19dace5-97535912-eba6-4675-8d67-a9f6dddf39c9-000000@email.amazonses.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=UTF-8

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS - CHINA: SHREW

A ProMED-mail post
<<http://www.promedmail.org>>
ProMED-mail is a program of the
International Society for Infectious Diseases
<<http://www.isid.org>>

Date: Wed 16 Aug 2017
Source: Journal of Virology [edited]
<<http://jvi.asm.org/content/91/17/e00764-17.abstract>>

[ref: Wang W, Lin XD, Liao Y, et al. Discovery of a highly divergent coronavirus in the Asian house shrew from China illuminates the origin of the alphacoronaviruses. J Virol. 2017. pii: JVI.00764-17. abstract available at <<http://jvi.asm.org/content/91/17/e00764-17.abstract>>]

Abstract

Although shrews are one of the largest groups of mammals, little is known about their role in the evolution and transmission of viral pathogens, including coronaviruses (CoVs). We captured 266 Asian house shrews (*Suncus murinus*) in Jiangxi and Zhejiang Provinces, China, during 2013 to 2015. CoV RNA was detected in 24 Asian house shrews, with an overall prevalence of 9.02 percent. Complete viral genome sequences were successfully recovered from the RNA-positive samples. The newly discovered shrew CoV fell into 4 lineages reflecting their geographic origins, indicative of largely allopatric evolution. Notably, these viruses were most closely related to alphacoronaviruses

but sufficiently divergent that they should be considered a novel member of the genus *Alphacoronavirus*, which we denote WESV (WESV shrew virus). Phylogenetic analysis revealed that WESV was a highly divergent member of the alphacoronaviruses and, more dramatically, that the S gene of WESV fell in a cluster that was genetically distinct from that of known coronaviruses. The divergent position of WESV suggests that coronaviruses have a long association with Asian house shrews. In addition, the genome of WESV contains a distinct NS7 gene that exhibits no sequence similarity to genes of any known viruses. Together, these data suggest that shrews are natural reservoirs for coronaviruses and may have played an important and long-term role in CoV evolution.

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ProMED-mail from HealthMap Alerts
<promed@promedmail.org>

[Coronavirus (subfamily Coronavirinae) are of importance because they comprise several human and animal pathogens. The origin of alphacoronaviruses had been linked to bats. These data suggest that shrews might have played a role, too. - Mod.PM

A HealthMap/ProMED-mail map can be accessed at:
<<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/155>>.]

[See Also:
Equine coronavirus - USA: (CA)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170312.4895190>
Coronavirus - China: (HK) OC43 outbreak
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170309.4890569>
2016

Human coronavirus: neurologic disease
<http://promedmail.org/post/20161005.4538532>
2015

SARS-like coronavirus - China: bats, pandemic potential
<http://promedmail.org/post/20151117.3798112>
Porcine epidemic diarrhea & Delta coronavirus - North America: update
<http://promedmail.org/post/20151017.3722396>
2014

SARS-like coronavirus - China: (YN) antigenically related to SARS-CoV
<http://promedmail.org/post/20140701.2580209>
2013

SARS-like coronavirus - China: (YN) horseshoe bats
<http://promedmail.org/post/20131031.2032131>
Novel coronavirus - Eastern Mediterranean (29): MERS-CoV, ICTV nomenclature
<http://promedmail.org/post/20130516.1717833>
Novel coronavirus - Eastern Mediterranean (28): Saudi Arabia, WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20130516.1716274>
Novel coronavirus - Eastern Mediterranean (27): Saudi Arabia, WHO, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20130515.1715334>
.....sb/pmb/mj/ml

Message: 4
Date: Thu, 17 Aug 2017 19:16:13 +0000
From: promed@promedmail.org
Subject: PRO/AH/EDR> Brucellosis - Algeria: (EO) [EXTERNAL]
To: promed-post@promedmail.org, promed-edr-post@promedmail.org,
promed-ahead-post@promedmail.org
Message-ID:
<0100015df19fe332-42bf688b-09db-4649-89bb-b959efa19347-000000@email.amazonses.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=UTF-8

BRUCELLOSIS - ALGERIA: (EL-OUED)

A ProMED-mail post
<<http://www.promedmail.org>>
ProMED-mail is a program of the
International Society for Infectious Diseases
<<http://www.isid.org>>

Date: Mon 14 Aug 2017 15:53
Source: APS [machine transl., edited]
<<http://www.aps.dz/sante-science-technologie/61720-el-oued-70-cas-de-brucellose-enregistres-durant-le-1er-semester-2017>>

No less than 70 cases of human brucellosis have been recorded during the 1st half of 2017 in the province of El-Oued. Of the total number of cases recorded, 60 percent were diagnosed in 4 communes (El-M'ghair, Reguiba, Oum-Toyour and Still) considered as foci of this disease, due to high amount of livestock, goats and cattle in particular, said the APS doctor at the prevention department Kamel Dif.

The highest number of cases of brucellosis is generally recorded during the spring period (March, April and May), characterized by high consumption of raw milk, especially in pastoral areas . An extensive awareness program on the fight against this disease was launched in 2017 by the health sector targeting breeders, as well as producers and consumers of raw milk, according to this official. The aim of this awareness-raising action is to anchor the culture of prevention among consumers of raw milk, he said.

Brucellosis vaccination partners are also being led by the Agricultural Services Directorate (DSA) to protect livestock against this zoonosis.

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<promed@promedmail.org>

[This infection, a bacterial zoonosis, is classified among the

category B biowarfare agents. Natural transmission to humans occurs after occupational exposure or through ingestion of contaminated food products. Although brucellosis has become a rare entity in the United States and many industrialized nations because of animal vaccination programs, this condition remains a significant health problem in many developing countries.

Each species of *Brucella* has a specific animal reservoir in which chronic disease is present. The bacilli tend to localize in the reproductive organs of the animals, causing sterility and abortions, and are shed in large numbers in the animal's urine, milk, and placental fluid. This localization allows for efficient spread to farmers, veterinarians, slaughterhouse workers, and consumers.

Among the 4 species known to cause disease in humans, *Brucella melitensis* (from goats, sheep, or camels) may be the most virulent, producing the most severe and acute cases of brucellosis with disabling complications. A prolonged course of illness, which may be associated with suppurative destructive lesions, is associated with *B. suis* (from feral or commercially raised pigs) infection. *B. abortus* (from cattle, buffalo, and camels) is associated with mild-to-moderate sporadic disease that is rarely associated with complications.

In the Maghreb and the Middle East, human brucellosis is usually contracted through consumption of raw goat / ewe's milk or local artisanal cheese made from the raw milk and *Brucella melitensis* is responsible for the great majority of the reported cases, with a marked predominance of its biovar 3, as in other Mediterranean countries.

El Oued Province lies in the Sahara desert in northeast Algeria. The mostly uninhabited southern half of the province is covered by the Grand Erg Oriental, a vast region of uninterrupted sand dunes. - Mod.LL

A HealthMap/ProMED-mail map can be accessed at:
<<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/44784>>.]

[See Also:

Brucellosis, human - Spain: (AN) abattoir personnel, ovine source
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170723.5198745>

Brucellosis - Israel: camel milk, unpasteurized, melitensis, human, update
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170512.5031180>
2016

Brucellosis - Israel (07): camel milk, unpasteurized, human infection
<http://promedmail.org/post/20161120.4642467>

Brucellosis - Israel (05): camel milk, unpasteurized, human infection
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160908.4475736>

Brucellosis - Israel (04): camel milk, human infection, comment
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160819.4427272>

Brucellosis - Israel (03): camel milk, human infection confirmed, spread
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160817.4423219>

Brucellosis - Israel (02): camel milk, human infection susp, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160814.4416170>

Brucellosis - Israel: camel milk, multiple contaminants, recalls, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160814.4414452>
Brucellosis - Algeria, Egypt: human, animal
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160423.4178843>
Brucellosis - Israel: (HD) melitensis, bovine, human, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160302.4061936>
2015

Brucellosis - Algeria: (GR)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20151209.3850744>
Brucellosis - Israel (05): (HD) melitensis, bovine, spread
<http://promedmail.org/post/20151204.3840328>
Brucellosis, human, livestock - Algeria (06): (Bouira) new cases, hazard
<http://promedmail.org/post/20151108.3774210>
Brucellosis - Israel (04): (HD) melitensis, bovine, official update, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20151103.3762268>
Brucellosis - Israel (03): (HD) melitensis, bovine, testing, comment, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20151102.3760110>
Brucellosis - Israel (02): (HD) melitensis, bovine, human, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20151031.3757610>
Brucellosis, human, livestock - Algeria (05): (Bouira) new cases, drug shortage
<http://promedmail.org/post/20151012.3709614>
Brucellosis, human, livestock - Algeria (04): (Bouira) veterinarians, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20150930.3681333>
Brucellosis, human, livestock - Algeria (03): (Laghouat) human, increase, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20150826.3603275>
Brucellosis, human, livestock - Algeria (02): (Bouira)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20150809.3567371>
Brucellosis - Israel: claim of brucellosis epidemic in people
<http://promedmail.org/post/20150801.3549829>
Typhoid fever, brucellosis - Syria: (Damascus) RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20150730.3547296>
Brucellosis, human, livestock - Algeria: (Ghardaia)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20150613.3435181>
2014

Brucellosis, human, caprine, ovine, camel - Israel: spread
<http://promedmail.org/post/20140622.2558324>
Brucellosis, human - Israel: (HZ) RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20140607.2525983>
Brucellosis, human, livestock - Israel: (HZ) RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20140513.2467609>
.....ab//ec/ml

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End of ProMED Digest, Vol 62, Issue 57

From: Jamie McIntyre <wex@pub.mediadc.com> on behalf of Jamie McIntyre <wex@pub.mediadc.com>
<wex@pub.mediadc.com>
To: mark.schouten@iowa.gov
<mark.schouten@iowa.gov>
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: Daily on Defense, presented by Northrop Grumman: Mattis wages war on waste ...
More defense company Q2 earnings this week ... McCain returns to Capitol Hill
Date: Tue Jul 25 2017 06:15:08 CDT
Attachments:

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis is making the war on waste his own.
Washington Examiner's Daily On Defense Newsletter [View this as website](#)

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MATTIS' WAR ON WASTE: Defense Secretary Jim Mattis is making the war on waste his own. Faced with a report last month from one of the Pentagon's watchdogs that the U.S. may have wasted upwards of \$28 million by supplying the Afghan army with custom woodland camouflage uniforms in a country where forests cover only 2.1 percent of the total land area, Mattis issued a blunt call to action to some of his deputies. The report, from the Special Inspector General For Afghanistan Reconstruction, said former Afghan Defense Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak "ran across" the proprietary pattern on a website in 2007 and "liked what he saw." Mattis reviewed the report and decidedly did not like what he saw, calling it "an example of a complacent mode of thinking."

"The report is an indication of a frame of mind — an attitude that can affect any of us at the Pentagon or across the Department of Defense — showing how those of us entrusted with supporting and equipping troops on the battlefield, if we let down our guard, can lose focus on ensuring their safety and lethality against the enemy," Mattis wrote in a July 21 memo. "Cavalier or casually acquiescent decisions to spend taxpayer dollars in an ineffective and wasteful manner are not to recur," Mattis said, and he made clear he didn't want anyone making excuses or defending the wasteful spending. "Rather than minimize this report or excuse wasteful decisions, I expect all DoD organizations to use this error as a catalyst to bring to light wasteful practices — and take aggressive steps to end waste in our Department."

The House Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations hears testimony at 2 p.m. from both the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction John Sopko and Michael Roark, assistant inspector general, Office of the DOD Inspector General.

McCAIN'S BACK: Also on Capitol Hill today, John McCain, the influential chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, is back at his desk, despite his disheartening diagnosis of an aggressive form of brain cancer. McCain's office made the announcement yesterday and the senator himself tweeted, "Look forward to returning to Senate tomorrow to continue work on health care reform, defense bill & #RussiaSanctions..."

McCain is expected to provide a critical vote on a "motion to proceed" to allow the debate on health care to move forward today, but his office said the widely respected senator is also anxious to weigh in on the National Defense Authorization Act, and new sanctions on Russia, Iran and North Korea.

WAVERING ON SANCTIONS: President Trump's team won't say yet if he will sign or veto legislation imposing new sanctions on Russia, which is poised for congressional passage after a weekend breakthrough in negotiations, Joel Gehrke writes. "He's going to study that legislation and see what the final product looks like," White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters on Air Force One. That's a change from what Sanders said Sunday on ABC's "This Week." Sanders told host George Stephanopoulos the administration is happy with changes made to the bill, and said, "We support where the legislation is now." Stay tuned.

RUSSIA ARMING THE TALIBAN: As the Trump administration weighs cooperating more closely with Moscow to bring peace to Syria, there is fresh evidence that Russia is arming America's enemies in Afghanistan. CNN says it has obtained two videos that to back up vague allegations made by senior Pentagon officials in the spring suggesting Russia was supplying small arms to the Taliban. CNN says the two videos show sniper rifles, Kalashnikov variants and heavy machine guns that weapons experts say are stripped of any means of identifying their origin.

Good Tuesday morning and welcome to Jamie McIntyre's Daily on Defense, compiled by Washington Examiner National Security Senior Writer Jamie McIntyre (@jamiejmcintyre), National Security Writer Travis J. Tritten (@travis_tritten) and Senior Editor David Brown (@dave_brown24). Email us here for tips, suggestions, calendar items and anything else. If a friend sent this to you and you'd like to sign up, click here. If signing up doesn't work, shoot us an email and we'll add you to our list. And be sure to follow us on Twitter @dailyondefense.

HAPPENING TODAY: Trump is scheduled to have a joint news conference at the White House at 3 p. m. after his meeting with Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri. The two leaders are expected to discuss issues ranging from "the fight against terrorism, the economy, and refugees," according to a White House statement.

EARNINGS NEWS THIS WEEK: Last week Lockheed Martin was the first major defense contractor to report its second quarter earnings. This week everyone else reports in. United Technologies releases its Q2 earnings this morning. Tomorrow we'll hear from Boeing, Northrop Grumman and General Dynamics. Raytheon wraps up the week with its report on Thursday.

DEFENSE FIRMS AT THE TOP: Defense News is out with its annual Top 100 list of worldwide defense companies for the year. For stateside firms, Lockheed, Boeing and Raytheon maintained their spots high on the list. Northrop Grumman and General Dynamics switched places this year, with Northrop now in the upper spot. You can see the list here.

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AUMF HEARINGS: The House Foreign Affairs Committee will hear testimony from former attorney general Michael Mukasey and others on the U.S. authorizations for the use of military force. The so-called AUMFs provide the legal framework that has allowed the Trump administration and two preceding administrations to strike terrorists around the world. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee will hold a top secret hearing with Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to discuss war authorizations next week.

Debate over the authorizations, passed by Congress in the aftermath of 9/11 and during the runup of the Iraq invasion of 2003, have been heating up on the Hill. Anti-war progressive Rep. Barbara Lee scored a surprising victory last month when a House committee, including some Republicans, voted to add her repeal of the 2001 AUMF into an appropriations bill, which would have required the first vote on war authorizations in 15 years. But the measure was later quietly stripped from the bill by the House Rules Committee.

RYAN ASKED ME TO DO IT: Democrats who were angered by the removal of Lee's amendment in the annual defense appropriations bill asked for an explanation and got one Monday night. Rep. Tom Cole, a senior Republican on the Rules Committee, said House Speaker Paul Ryan personally asked him to remove the AUMF repeal-and-replace language and he consented. "He said, look, jurisdictionally this can't happen and he made another point which I agree with, which is the administration ought to participate in this exercise," Cole said during a hearing on sending the appropriations bill to the House floor.

WRONG BUTTON: Human error led to a failed Navy ballistic missile intercept test, Defense News reported Monday. A U.S. Missile Defense Agency investigation found a sailor on the destroyer John Paul Jones, the Navy's ballistic missile defense test ship, pressed the wrong button into the combat system, causing the missile to self-destruct before reaching its target.

The sailor, a tactical datalink controller, accidentally identified the incoming ballistic missile target as a "friendly in the system," causing the missile to combust. The test, which occurred on June 22, was the fourth test of the missile defense system, which is known as SM-3 Block IIA.

RETURN OF MALIKI: Russia and Iraq will "build up [their] cooperation and partnership" on military and economic issues in an effort to expand Soviet-era partnerships between the two countries, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov declared Monday, Joel Gehrke writes.

"We will continue to develop and build up this cooperation and partnership, the foundations of which we laid during the second half of the 20th century," Lavrov said Monday during a meeting with Iraqi Vice President Nouri al-Maliki.

Lavrov identified counterterrorism efforts as the top priority for the relationship, but the statement was laden with clues that the Russians hope to supplant the United States as a top power broker in the country.

TRUMP TROLLS SESSIONS: Trump called out Attorney General Jeff Sessions for the second day in a row on Tuesday, questioning why he hasn't investigated "crimes" by Hillary Clinton. Trump also accused the acting head of the FBI of not probing Clinton because she donated money to McCabe's wife's campaign.

"Ukrainian efforts to sabotage Trump campaign - 'quietly working to boost Clinton.' So where is the investigation A.G. @seanhannity," the president tweeted Tuesday morning.

Less than 10 minutes later, Trump added: "Attorney General Jeff Sessions has taken a VERY weak position on Hillary Clinton crimes (where are E-mails & DNC server) & Intel leakers!"

WHAT, ME COLLUDE? Senior White House adviser Jared Kushner is back behind closed doors before a House committee today, where he will again deny any improper contacts with Russians during the

2016 campaign. Yesterday, the president's son-in-law and senior adviser spent more than two hours briefing Senate investigators on four meetings with Russian officials during and after the campaign.

"Let me be very clear: I did not collude with Russia, nor do I know of anyone else in the campaign who did so. I had no improper contacts. I have not relied on Russian funds for my businesses, and I have been fully transparent in providing all requested information," Kushner said in brief remarks delivered at the White House after the closed-door questioning. In an 11-page statement released before his unsworn testimony, Kushner detailed the four meetings in question, but said he was never close to the Russians, and insisted he had done nothing illegal or improper.

Kushner has been criticized for failing to disclose his meetings with Russian officials on his initial disclosure form. But Kushner said that information was left off unintentionally due to a "miscommunication" that prevented information on any of his foreign meetings from being listed, not just those meetings with Russia.

TRUMP JOKES THIS MORNING: "Jared Kushner did very well yesterday in proving he did not collude with the Russians. Witch Hunt. Next up, 11 year old Barron Trump!" Hey, aren't we supposed to leave the younger kids out of this?

"EXCEPTION, NOT THE NORM" The Pentagon says Sunday's incident in which a hot-dogging Chinese pilot forced a U.S. EP-3 surveillance plane to take evasive action was "the exception, not the norm." The U.S. spy plane was flying in international airspace over the East China Sea, when a Chinese J-10 fighter jet flew under it, and then abruptly pulled up in front of the American plane, triggering its automatic collision avoidance system. "There are intercepts that occur in international airspace regularly, and the vast majority of them are conducted in a safe manner," said Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman.

HEY, A NEW NICKNAME: Trump criticized the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, calling him "sleazy" for discussing the investigation into Russian meddling on television. "Sleazy Adam Schiff, the totally biased Congressman looking into 'Russia,' spends all of his time on television pushing the Dem loss excuse!" Trump tweeted.

Schiff responded: "With respect Mr. President, the problem is how often you watch TV, and that your comments and actions are beneath the dignity of the office."

THE RUNDOWN

CNN: U.S. sees more signs North Korea is preparing another missile test

The Diplomat: North Korea May Test A Second Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Any Day Now

Wall Street Journal: Beijing Bolsters Defenses Along Its 880-Mile Frontier And Realigns Forces In Surrounding Regions

UPI: Lockheed Martin expects F-35 software development to finish by end of 2017

Politico: The fast-approaching defense budget 'train wreck'

Defense Tech: New videos offer peek into secretive NASA test flights

New York Times: Border games: Russia's creeping occupation

Foreign Policy: New UAE documentary claims Qatar complicit in 9/11 attacks

AP: Trump blasts newspaper's reporting on US-Syria policy

Wall Street Journal: China prepares for a crisis along North Korea border

Reuters: U.S. judge halts deportation of more than 1,400 Iraqi nationals

Defense One: The dangerous politicization of the U.S. military

USA Today: Congressional compromise on sanctions repudiates Russia and curbs Trump

USNI News: Newly commissioned carrier Ford's leap-ahead technology approach may be a thing of the past

Daily Beast: Russian election hacking pits U.S. spy against spy

Calendar

TUESDAY | JULY 25

10 a.m. Rayburn 2172. Authorization for the Use of Military Force and current terrorist threats with former Attorney General Michael Mukasey. foreignaffairs.house.gov

10 a.m. 1616 Rhode Island Ave. NW. Future of vertical lift and forging a new paradigm with David Dowling of Northrop Grumman; Keith Flail with Bell Helicopter; Richard Koucheravy with Sikorsky; Dave Schreck of Rockwell Collins Government Systems; H. Eric "Delta" Burke of Harris Corporation; and Col. Robert Freeland with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics. csis.org

12 p.m. 214 Massachusetts Ave. NE. Lessons from Rome: Civic virtue and the empire's decline with Hugh Liebert, associate professor at the United States Military Academy. heritage.org

2 p.m. Rayburn 2212. Evaluating DOD equipment and uniform procurement in Iraq and Afghanistan with John Sopko, special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction, and Michael Roark, assistant inspector general, Office of the DOD Inspector General, Armedservices.house.gov

2 p.m. Capitol H-313. Hearing on the 2018 defense appropriation act. rules.house.gov

2 p.m. Rayburn 2172. Held for ransom: The families of Iran's hostages speak out. foreignaffairs.house.gov

2:30 p.m. Dirksen 419. Assessing the maximum pressure and engagement policy toward North Korea with State Department acting Assistant Secretary Susan A. Thornton. foreign.senate.gov

2:30 p.m. Russell 222. Options and considerations for achieving a 355-ship Navy from naval analysts. armed-services.senate.gov

WEDNESDAY | JULY 26

7:30 a.m. 300 First St. SE. Capitol Hill breakfast series with Gen. David Goldfein, Air Force chief of staff. afa.org

9 a.m. 214 Massachusetts Ave. NE. What a North Korean ballistic missile threat means for the U.S. missile defense system with Sen. Dan Sullivan. heritage.org

10 a.m. Rayburn 2172. U.S. cyber diplomacy with Christopher Painter, coordinator for cyber issues at the State Department. foreignaffairs.house.gov

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10 a.m. 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW. Hostilities in the Himalayas? Assessing the India-China border standoff. wilsoncenter.org

10 a.m. Rayburn 2118. Continued oversight of the transfer of excess military equipment to civilian law enforcement agencies. armedservices.house.gov

12:30 p.m. 529 14th St. NW. Luncheon with Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley. press.org

2 p.m. Rayburn 2154. Subcommittee hearing on combating homegrown terrorism. oversight.house.gov

2:15 p.m. Rayburn 2172. Hearing on a bill to prohibit travel-related transactions to, from, and within North Korea by persons subject to the jurisdiction of the United States. foreignaffairs.house.gov

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MONDAY | JULY 31

10 a.m. 1775 Massachusetts Ave. NW. NATO at a crossroads and the next steps for the trans-Atlantic alliance. brookings.edu

12 p.m. 5000 Seminary Rd. iFest 2017 with a keynote by Major Gen. Thomas Deale, vice director of Air Force Joint Force Development. ndia.org

TUESDAY | AUGUST 1

10 a.m. 1616 Rhode Island Ave. NW. The U.S. Coast Guard's priorities for the future with the commandant, Adm. Paul Zukunft. csis.org

6:30 p.m. 1700 Army Navy Dr. Reception and welcome dinner for Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson. afa.org

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

“As the Scout law says, a scout is trustworthy, loyal – we could use some more loyalty I will tell that you that.”

- President Trump, addressing the 2017 Boy Scout Jamboree in Beaver, West Virginia.

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From: Jamie McIntyre <wex@pub.mediadc.com> on behalf of Jamie McIntyre <wex@pub.mediadc.com>
<wex@pub.mediadc.com>
To: mark.schouten@iowa.gov
<mark.schouten@iowa.gov>
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: Daily on Defense, presented by Northrop Grumman: Jared Kushner speaks to Senate Intelligence Committee today ... Decision time for Trump on Russia sanctions ... Taliban claims responsibility for Kabul bomb attack
Date: Mon Jul 24 2017 06:22:14 CDT
Attachments:

Congress is poised this week to force President Trump's hand, as well as handcuff him in the future, by passing a sweeping Russian sanctions bill that would not only punish Moscow for meddling in the U.S. elections, but would sharply limit the president's ability to grant sanctions relief down the road. The bill passed the Senate by a near unanimous 98-2 vote, and is expected to pass easily in the House tomorrow. That will puts Trump in a tight spot. If he vetoes the bill, he risks feeding the perception that's he too eager to please Russian President Vladimir Putin. If he signs it, he'll be allowing Congress to limit his flexibility in dealing with Russia as he tries to forge a new relationship with Putin. Washington Examiner's Daily On Defense Newsletter [View this as website](#)

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RUSSIA SANCTIONS: Congress is poised this week to force President Trump's hand, as well as handcuff him in the future, by passing a sweeping Russian sanctions bill that would not only punish Moscow for meddling in the U.S. elections, but would sharply limit the president's ability to grant sanctions relief down the road. The bill passed the Senate by a near unanimous 98-2 vote, and is expected to pass easily in the House tomorrow. That will puts Trump in a tight spot. If he vetoes the bill, he risks feeding the perception that's he too eager to please Russian President Vladimir Putin. If he signs it, he'll be allowing Congress to limit his flexibility in dealing with Russia as he tries to forge a new relationship with Putin.

MIXED MESSAGE: While White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders signaled Trump will sign the sanctions bill in her appearance on ABC yesterday, her boss White House communications director Anthony Scaramucci said on CNN that the president hasn't yet decided. "He hasn't made the

decision yet to sign that bill one way or the other," Scaramucci said. But he also said Trump remains unconvinced Russia interfered in the election, despite the consensus of the U.S. intelligence community. "If, in fact, he makes a decision that it's 100 percent true, he is going to be super tough on Russia. But let him — let him — let him do it at his own time and pace."

Sanders was on a different page entirely, telling ABC that now that the bill focused on Russia's annexation of Crimea, Trump was ready to sign the sanctions into law. "The original piece of legislation was poorly written but we were able to work with the House and Senate. And the administration is happy with the ability to do that and make those changes that were necessary," Sanders said. "We support where the legislation is now, and will continue to work with the House and Senate to put those tough sanctions in place on Russia until the situation in Ukraine is fully resolved."

NOT JUST RUSSIA: The House votes tomorrow on the sanctions, which now includes Iran and North Korea as well as Russia. "North Korea, Iran and Russia have in different ways all threatened their neighbors and actively sought to undermine American interests," said House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy and House Foreign Affairs Chairman Ed Royce said in a statement. "The bill the House will vote on next week will now exclusively focus on these nations and hold them accountable for their dangerous actions."

IRAN DEFIANT ON SANCTIONS: Iran says it will launch a new missile production line despite new U.S.-imposed sanctions over its ballistic missile program. Iranian Defense Minister Hossein Dehghan told people attending a ceremony Saturday that the Sayyad 3 missile will be able to travel up to 74 miles at an altitude of 16 miles, according to Iranian state media. The missile could be used to target fighter planes, helicopters, and cruise missiles, according to a Reuters report of the remarks. Dehghan cited a \$110 billion weapons deal between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia as Iran's reason for developing new missile technologies.

'STAR WARS' REDUX: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's successful test of an intercontinental ballistic missile, theoretically capable of hitting Alaska, has Congress again looking to space for the high ground in defending the U.S. Both the House and Senate want the Pentagon to pursue what Sen. Dan Sullivan calls the "unblinking eye," an array of orbiting satellite sensors that could collect high-quality launch data on future ballistic missiles from North Korea. But the House is poised to go further, resurrecting a vision of space defenses first envisioned by former President Ronald Reagan.

Rep. Trent Franks sponsored the legislation in the House version of the National Defense Authorization Act calling for research and prototyping of the controversial space-based missile interceptors. Franks called it a "true paradigm shift" and the "biggest step since Reagan" in preventing a nuclear strike. The bill puts \$30 million into creating a "test bed" to try out hardware in space that could shoot down incoming North Korean ballistic missiles, similar to the United State's existing ground-based interceptors at Fort Greely in Alaska, and Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

KABUL ATTACK: The Taliban claimed responsibility for a suicide car bombing in the Afghan capital of Kabul. The bomber drove a car packed with explosives into a bus carrying government employees in an upscale neighborhood during morning rush hour. Afghan officials said 24 people were killed and 42 wounded.

Good Monday morning and welcome to Jamie McIntyre's Daily on Defense, compiled by Washington Examiner National Security Senior Writer Jamie McIntyre (@jamiejmcintyre), National Security Writer Travis J. Tritten (@travis_tritten) and Senior Editor David Brown (@dave_brown24). Email us here for tips, suggestions, calendar items and anything else. If a friend sent this to you and you'd like to sign up, click here. If signing up doesn't work, shoot us an email and we'll add you to our list. And be sure to follow us on Twitter @dailyondefense.

HAPPENING TODAY: President Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner is scheduled to meet with Senate Intelligence Committee staff behind closed doors today to answer questions about contact between the Trump campaign and Russian officials. In December, Kushner met with a leading Russian diplomat,

and also attended a June 2016 meeting with Trump's son, Donald Trump Jr., and his former campaign manager, Paul Manafort, and a Russian lawyer who Trump Jr. believed had damaging information on Hillary Clinton. Kushner's attorney said his client's appearance before Congress is voluntary and he is cooperating fully.

The Washington Post said it has obtained an 11-page prepared statement Kushner will submit for the record, which he details four meetings with Russian officials, but denies any improper contacts or collusion.

Tomorrow Kushner will talk privately to members of the House Intelligence Committee, and on CBS yesterday Rep. Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the panel, said they have a lot of unanswered questions. "We want to know whether those meetings took place, whether other meetings took place. We have a lot of ground to cover. His counsel has said they will only make him available for two hours," Schiff said. "So, we expect this is just going to be the first interview."

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POLITICIZING THE MILITARY? At Saturday's commissioning of the USS Gerald R. Ford, the president ad libbed into his remarks a call for political action. After promising the crowd in Norfolk, Virginia, that the military would get the additional funding he has promised, he asked predominantly military audience to "call that congressman and call that senator and make sure you get it." After a burst of applause he added, "And by the way, you can also call those senators to make sure you get healthcare."

Setting aside that members of the military already have healthcare, that rubbed some people, particularly Democrats, the wrong way, accusing Trump of urging members of the military to take sides on a highly partisan political issue.

"I condemn President Trump's remarks. We need to be one-hundred percent clear that it is utterly beyond the pale for the commander in chief to publicly tell members of the armed services that they should lobby Congress on his behalf," said Rep. Adam Smith, ranking member on House Armed Services Committee. "Doing so puts them in an untenable position and disrespects their longstanding professional practices as well as their duty to remain apolitical. President Trump has done this before, and he cannot be allowed to keep doing it."

DON'T BLAME US: The New York Times is crying foul after a Trump tweet blaming the newspaper for compromising a mission to capture or kill Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Early Saturday morning Trump tweeted, "The Failing New York Times foiled U.S. attempt to kill the single most wanted terrorist, Al-Baghdadi. Their sick agenda over National Security." The tweet followed a report on one of the president's favorite shows "Fox and Friends," which was headlined: "NYT Foils U.S. Attempt To Take Out Al-Baghdadi."

That in turn was based on an interview Fox News' Catherine Herridge conducted with U.S. Special Operations Commander Gen. Raymond Thomas at Aspen Security Forum in Colorado. Asked if the U. S. was ever close to getting Baghdadi, Thomas said. "There were points in time when we were particularly close to him. Unfortunately, there were some — some leaks about what we were up to at that — at that time, you know, when — when we went out after Abu Sayyaf, the oil minister, who was very close to him, one of his personal confidants. He didn't live, but his wife did, and she gave us a treasure trove of information about where she had just been with Baghdadi in Raqqa, you know, days, if not, you know — within days prior, and so that was a very good lead. Unfortunately, it was leaked in a prominent national newspaper about a week later, and that — that lead went dead.'

The Times is pushing back on the account, and asking for an apology from Fox News. "A review of the record shows that information made public in a Pentagon news release more than three weeks before

the Times article, and extensively covered at the time by numerous news media outlets," the Times reported.

On Friday Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said so far as he knows Baghdadi is still alive, despite numerous reports recently saying he died. Mattis said he has seen no evidence that Baghdadi is dead, although Russia claimed in June it killed him during an airstrike in Syria a month earlier. The Pentagon has said the group's "caliph," who last appeared publicly in 2014 in Mosul, does not appear to be involved in command-and-control operations over Islamic State forces fighting in Iraq and Syria. "I think Baghdadi's alive," Mattis said. "I think that he is alive, and I'll believe otherwise when we know we've killed him."

MATTIS ON THAT PUTIN DINNER MEETING: In speaking with reporters, Mattis scoffed at all the fuss over Trump's dinner meeting with Putin at the G-20 summit in Hamburg, Germany. I've been to hundreds of these dinners, ladies and gentlemen, and you just walk around talking because you don't want to be bored sitting there just eating your pâté de foie gras," Mattis said in another semi-regular Friday session with the Pentagon press corps. "People do get up and go see their wife at dinner, and if they're sitting next to the other country that just had a two-hour talk or whatever it was, of course they are going to talk," Mattis said. "If you watched me at dinner, you'd find me talking to some ne'er-do-wells, just the way I do business," Mattis said. "You talk to people who agree, but mostly you try to talk to people who disagree with you when you're in a social setting because that's when you can probably get into more than superficial things."

"I'm not trying to make fun of you guys in the press." Mattis said. "My God, he talked to Putin. Give me a break."

NOT THE BEST TIME: At the Aspen forum Saturday National Security Agency Director Mike Rogers expressed minimum high enthusiasm for the idea of a joint U.S.-Russia cybersecurity unit. It seemed like the idea was dead when Trump tweeted after his Putin meeting, "The fact that President Putin and I discussed a Cyber Security unit doesn't mean I think it can happen. It can't." But a Russian presidential envoy said this week that Moscow and Washington were still talking about creating a joint cybersecurity working group. "I'm not a policy guy here," Rogers said, according to Reuters. "I would argue now is probably not the best time to be doing this."

NICE TRY: It turns out that an intrepid student journalist in Washington State is not the only one who gave Secretary Mattis' private number a shot. You may recall Mattis' cellphone number was scrawled on a sticky note that showed in photograph published in the Washington Post. High School student Teddy Fischer used the number to score an exclusive interview with Mattis, and Friday Mattis revealed that Michael Gordon of the New York Times has also texted his private phone. Mattis said he saw the message but didn't read it, and seemed to indicate his old phone had been "impounded."

"I just noticed you sent me a text message like a week ago," Mattis said. "Oh, wow. OK. You can still answer it," Gordon replied. "I don't even know what it is about." To which Mattis said, "I don't either."

Hey. It was worth a shot.

THE RUNDOWN

Washington Post: How ISIS nearly stumbled on the ingredients for a 'dirty bomb'

Reuters: As U.S. weighs Afghan strategy, hopes set on fledgling Air Force

New York Times: Terror suspect brought to U.S. for trial, breaking from Trump rhetoric

USA Today: Does Trump really have 'complete power to pardon?'

Stars and Stripes: Taliban capture two more districts as summertime fighting continues

Defense News: Senators sending lofty Space Corps hopes down to Earth

CNN: Scaramucci: Trump still doesn't accept intelligence conclusion on Russia

Defense One: Trump's special ops pick says terror drones might soon reach the U.S. from Africa. How worried should we be?

AP: Turkish leader wades into Qatar dispute with Gulf tour

New York Times: U.S. Army sergeant is charged with trying to aid Islamic State

DoD Buzz: Quadcopter that swims and flies could be used for Navy special ops

Wall Street Journal: Countering China proves tall order for Japan and India

Calendar

WEEK AHEAD

MONDAY | JULY 24

2 p.m. 1152 15th St. NW. Release of the report "Higher, Heavier, Farther, and Now Undetectable? Bombers: Long-Range Force Projection in the 21st Century" with Jerry Hendrix. cnas.org

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

"We love reading the news. We love reading those kinds of stories. I'm amazed sometimes when I'm having a fight with somebody I haven't talked to in two weeks. I'm having a fight with them. It's good. You know, it keeps us smiling."

- Defense Secretary Jim Mattis on how he gets a chuckle out of inaccurate media reports.

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Subject: Daily on Defense, presented by Northrop Grumman: Trump says 'ISIS is falling fast, very fast' ... USS Gerald R. Ford to be christened tomorrow ... New panel of experts to review US national defense policy
Date: Fri Jul 21 2017 06:16:12 CDT
Attachments:

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THE PRESIDENT'S 'TANK' SESSION: No decisions were made at the Pentagon yesterday, as President Trump brought his national security team to sit down with his top civilian and military leaders in the joint chiefs' secure briefing room known as "the Tank." The two-hour session was "a walk around the world to talk about where we have challenges and where we have opportunities," said Dana White, chief Pentagon spokesperson. "What are our levers of influence, economically, politically, militarily and diplomatically."

White said the meeting was scheduled a while back and was never intended to be a decision meeting, and while all the world hot spots were touched on, this was also not a briefing on the new Afghanistan strategy, which is still a work in progress. "It's still being worked on," White said. "The Afghan strategy is part of a broader strategy," she said and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis only has one piece of it. "There no decision. It's still a point of discussion," White said.

Trump made no formal public remarks during his Pentagon visit, but he did answer a shouted question

on his arrival. Asked if the U.S. would be sending more troops to Afghanistan, Trump said, "We'll see," adding, "and we're doing very well against ISIS. ISIS is falling fast, very fast," according to a pool report.

MATTIS UPBEAT AFTER HILL BRIEFS: Mattis, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Joseph Dunford, who were all in the Pentagon meeting with Trump in the morning, were up on Capitol Hill in the afternoon, where they spent over an hour updating House members behind closed doors on the campaign to defeat the Islamic State. It was the second meeting with lawmakers after their briefing to the Senate the day before. "I have no doubt we have the support of Congress and that was loud and clear," Mattis said when leaving the meeting on Capitol Hill.

Afterward Republican Rep. Trent Franks told reporters, "We've had more progress in the battle to defeat ISIS in the last eight months than we've had in the last eight years." He attributed the shift to Trump's leadership. It should be noted the U.S. war against ISIS began in August of 2014, three years and President Trump has been in office six months, as of yesterday.

House Democrats, on the other hand were less effusive. Rep. Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said the administration has yet to fill in the missing pieces of its strategy for political peace in Iraq and Syria. "What I was struck by more than anything else was how very similar much of the strategy is to the prior administration," said Schiff who argued that much of what Mattis, Tillerson and Dunford presented, beyond president's delegation of more military authority, was a continuation of President Obama's strategy.

BRING IN THE EXPERTS: Welcome the newly minted Commission on National Defense Strategy. Leaders on the House and Senate armed services committees, including Sen. John McCain and Rep. Mac Thornberry, have announced a panel of Washington experts to review the U.S. national defense policy and come back with some recommendations for President Trump, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Congress. The commission was authorized by lawmakers last year and among its charges will be to look at U.S. enemies abroad, the size and composition of the military, and how defense money is spent. Here's each lawmaker's panel picks:

McCain:

Jon Kyl, former Republican senator from Arizona.

Retired Gen. Jack Keane, chairman of the board at the Institute for the Study of War and former vice chief of staff for the Army.

Thomas Mahnken, CEO of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.

Sen. Jack Reed, ranking Democrat on Senate Armed Services:

Christine Fox, a senior adviser at Johns Hopkins University's applied physics laboratory and previous acting deputy secretary of defense.

Michael Morell, former deputy director of the CIA.

Ambassador Anne Patterson, former assistant secretary for Near Eastern Affairs at the State Department.

Thornberry:

Ambassador Eric Edelman, a diplomat to Turkey and former undersecretary of defense for policy at the Pentagon.

Andrew Krepinevich, Jr., president emeritus of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.

Roger Zakheim, former general counsel of the House Armed Services Committee.

Rep. Adam Smith, ranking Democrat on House Armed Services:

Retired Adm. Gary Roughead, former chief of naval operations.

Kathleen Hicks, senior vice president of the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Mike McCord, former Pentagon comptroller.

Good Friday morning and welcome to Jamie McIntyre's Daily on Defense, compiled by Washington Examiner National Security Senior Writer Jamie McIntyre (@jamiejmcintyre), National Security Writer Travis J. Tritten (@travis_tritten) and Senior Editor David Brown (@dave_brown24). Email us here for tips, suggestions, calendar items and anything else. If a friend sent this to you and you'd like to sign up, click here. If signing up doesn't work, shoot us an email and we'll add you to our list. And be sure to follow us on Twitter @dailyondefense.

HAPPENING TODAY: The Naval Future Force Science and Technology Expo kicks off this morning with a keynote address by Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson at 7.30 a.m the Walter Washington Convention Center. Other speakers include Walter Jones, executive director, Office of Naval Research at 8 a.m.; Marine Lt. Gen. Robert Walsh, commanding general, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, at 8:15 a.m.; and Joint Chiefs Vice Chairman Gen. Paul Selva at 10:30 a.m.

FORD CHRISTENING: After years of delay and cost overruns, the U.S. Navy is adding a powerful new warship to its fleet, the USS Gerald R. Ford, a first-of-class ship, and first new U.S. aircraft carrier design in 40 years. President Trump will be the guest of honor tomorrow at the official christening of the USS Ford, the Navy's newest nuclear-powered aircraft carrier named in honor of the nation's 38th president. The price tag for the next-generation ship is \$13 billion, including cost overruns of \$2.3 billion, but its all electric high-tech catapult allows it to launch a wider array of planes. The Navy admits the ship is costly, but when you consider it will be in service for 50 years, it's worth it. "That's not to say we are not cognizant of the cost, not aware of the cost, we are always trying to drive down the cost, trying to increase the learning curve so that subsequent ships costs less," said Rear Adm. DeWolfe Miller. "Ford, being a new design with a lot of new technology, is an expensive ship, but that return on investment is well worth that price," Miller said in a Navy podcast.

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STILL FEISTY FROM HIS BED REST: Sen. John McCain may be on bedrest following his diagnosis of an aggressive form of brain cancer, but that doesn't mean he's taking Trump's latest olive branch to Moscow lying down. Yesterday, McCain fired off a press release from his home in Arizona accusing Trump of "playing right into the hands" of Russian President Vladimir Putin, after reading reports that the president ended a covert CIA program aiding Syrian rebel groups. "Making any concessions to Russia, absent a broader strategy for Syria, is irresponsible and short-sighted," McCain said in his statement issued just hours after news broke that the 80-year-old senator has a type of brain tumor known as a glioblastoma.

MCCAIN AND THE NDAA: McCain's medical challenge prompted an outpouring of concern and well-wishes in Washington but it also raised questions about how his absence and health might affect the National Defense Authorization Act. As Armed Services chairman, McCain is the leader on the must-pass annual policy bill, which means overseeing the amendment process, defending it on the Senate floor and negotiating a final NDAA deal with the House. McCain was considering chemotherapy or radiation treatment but tweeted Thursday, "I'll be back soon, so stand-by!" So, we asked two experts what might lie ahead for the NDAA.

Mackenzie Eaglen, a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, said time is dwindling for the Senate to bring the NDAA bill to a floor vote and McCain's absence and health are likely to push consideration into September or later. In the meantime, the Senate Armed Services staff has the bulk of the legislation completed in the committee-passed version and can continue working toward negotiations for a final bill with the House. Still, McCain is likely to remain involved as well. "My indications from staff is that Sen. McCain will work through treatment," she said. "He can absolutely still lead the committee."

Andrew Hunter, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the Senate will need to decide whether McCain or another senator will shepherd the policy bill to a vote. "The Senate floor passage of the NDAA that is an incredibly intense and grueling exercise," Hunter said. Much of the work on amendments can be done by staff but McCain or another lawmaker will be needed to make hard calls, such as telling other senators 'no.' "The question then is, how much is he present and able to kind of steer that process," Hunter said.

MORE NOMINEES MOVING: The Senate Armed Services Committee has approved the nomination of Charles "Cully" Stimson to be general counsel of the Department of the Navy, the Navy's top lawyer. While serving at the Pentagon in a position that placed him in charge of military detainees in 2007, Stimson made controversial remarks expressing his dismay about U.S. law firms representing detainees in Guantanamo Bay, which led to Stimson's resignation. The committee also approved 3,879 military nominations in the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps, including Air Force Gen. Paul Selva to be re-appointed as vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Other nominees approved by the committee included David Trachtenberg to be principal deputy undersecretary of Defense for Policy, Owen West to be assistant secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict and Ryan McCarthy to be undersecretary of the Army.

MORE PENTAGON PICKS: Trump has made two more key Pentagon nominations, picking a member of his presidential transition team Robert Wilkie, along with Anthony Kurta, to oversee military personnel and readiness. If confirmed by the Senate, Wilkie would serve as undersecretary and Kurta would be his deputy overseeing and advising Mattis on training, personnel policy and the military's readiness to fight wars. They have extensive Washington national security experience both in the Defense Department and on Capitol Hill. Wilkie, a senior adviser to Sen. Thom Tillis, worked on defense issues during Trump's transition, was assistant secretary of defense for legislative affairs, and a national security adviser to President George W. Bush. Kurta, who served 32 years in the Navy, had previously filled in as personnel and readiness undersecretary and was a deputy assistant secretary.

TRUMP'S MAN IN KABUL: President Trump has nominated John Bass to be U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan. Bass is currently the U.S. ambassador to Turkey and is a former ambassador to Georgia. Former President Barack Obama nominated Bass to both positions. If confirmed by the Senate, Bass will be transferred to his new job in Afghanistan during a critical time. The Trump administration is currently weighing whether to increase American troop levels to bolster an existing U.S. force of 8,400 in Afghanistan to help Afghan forces battle the Taliban.

PARDON ME, MR PRESIDENT: Amid reports that Trump is asking lawyers about his pardon powers, such as this one in the Washington Post, Sen. Mark Warner, top Democrat on the intelligence committee is crying fowl. "Russia's interference in the 2016 elections was an attack on our democracy. Both the Senate Intelligence Committee and Special Counsel Mueller are currently investigating whether any coordination occurred between Russia and individuals associated with the Trump campaign," Warner said in a statement. "The possibility that the President is considering pardons at this early stage in these ongoing investigations is extremely disturbing. Pardoning any individuals who may have been involved would be crossing a fundamental line."

Quoting "people familiar with the effort," the Post reports "Trump has asked his advisers about his power to pardon aides, family members and even himself in connection with the probe," and said "a second person" said Trump's lawyers "have been discussing the president's pardoning powers among

themselves.”

Eric Holder, who was Obama’s attorney general, charged in a tweet that Trump may be trying to hinder special prosecutor Robert Mueller’s probe into Russian meddling in the 2016 election, and warned the president against trying to “constrain” the investigation. “If he tries to do so this creates issues of constitutional and criminal dimension,” Holder tweeted.

THE RUNDOWN

AP: Seoul calls for Pyongyang to respond to overture for talks

Washington Post: Hawaii rolling out civil defense plan for North Korean missile attack

Wall Street Journal: Beyond Syria and Iraq, faraway ISIS 'provinces' fight on

Daily Beast: As Syria rebels learn from media the CIA cut them off, Al Qaeda goes on the offensive

Reuters: U.S. general says allies worry Russian war game may be 'Trojan horse'

New York Times: Saudi official who was thought to be under house arrest receives a promotion

War on the Rocks: Secretary Mattis’ “guardian angel” and how Marine Corps aviation can get back on target

UPI: BAE starts construction of first Type 26 frigate

Foreign Policy: This is not a eulogy for John McCain

USA Today: Mosul: Corpses, booby traps and snipers are everywhere in devastated city

Defense Tech: WATCH: Russia’s Su-35 wows crowds at MAKS and beyond

Military Times: Afghan pilots to start training on Black Hawks in early October

Defense One: Is that really you typing? New Pentagon tech will know

Stars and Stripes: USS Milius deployment to Japan delayed amid ‘incredible’ workload in Asia-Pacific

USNI News: Navy issues new MQ-25A Stingray draft RFP to industry ahead of final RFP in the fall

Calendar

WEEK AHEAD

FRIDAY | JULY 21

8:30 a.m. 1030 15th St. NW. Venezuela on the edge and the time for new international action. atlanticcouncil.org

9:30 a.m. 1616 Rhode Island Ave. NW. Examining the geopolitical impact of the 4th Estate. Csis.org

12:30 p.m. Pentagon Briefing Room. Army Col. Pat Work, commander, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division and Task Force Falcon, Combined Joint Task Force - Operation Inherent Resolve briefs the media live from Iraq. Live streamed at www.defense.gov/live

MONDAY | JULY 24

2 p.m. 1152 15th St. NW. Release of the report Higher, Heavier, Farther, and Now Undetectable? Bombers: Long-Range Force Projection in the 21st Century with Jerry Hendrix. cnas.org

TUESDAY | JULY 25

10 a.m. Rayburn 2172. Authorization for the Use of Military Force and current terrorist threats with former Attorney General Michael Mukasey. foreignaffairs.house.gov

10 a.m. 1616 Rhode Island Ave. NW. Future of vertical lift and forging a new paradigm with David Dowling of Northrop Grumman; Keith Flail with Bell Helicopter; Richard Koucheravy with Sikorsky; Dave Schreck of Rockwell Collins Government Systems; H. Eric "Delta" Burke of Harris Corporation; and Col. Robert Freeland with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics. csis.org

12 p.m. 214 Massachusetts Ave. NE. Lessons from Rome: Civic virtue and the empire's decline with Hugh Liebert, associate professor at the United States Military Academy. heritage.org

2 p.m. Rayburn 2212. Evaluating DOD equipment and uniform procurement in Iraq and Afghanistan with John Sopko, special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction. armedservices.house.gov

2 p.m. Rayburn 2172. Held for ransom: The families of Iran's hostages speak out. foreignaffairs.house.gov

2:30 p.m. Dirksen 419. Assessing the maximum pressure and engagement policy toward North Korea with State Department acting Assistant Secretary Susan A. Thornton. foreign.senate.gov

2:30 p.m. Russell 222. Options and considerations for achieving a 355-ship Navy from naval analysts. armed-services.senate.gov

WEDNESDAY | JULY 26

9 a.m. 214 Massachusetts Ave. NE. What a North Korean ballistic missile threat means for the U.S. missile defense system with Sen. Dan Sullivan. heritage.org

10 a.m. Rayburn 2172. U.S. cyber diplomacy with Christopher Painter, coordinator for cyber issues at the State Department. foreignaffairs.house.gov

2 p.m. Rayburn 2172. Assessing the U.S.-Qatar relationship. foreignaffairs.house.gov

2 p.m. 1616 Rhode Island Ave. NW. History of U.S. alliances in the Asia-Pacific region. csis.org

4:30 p.m. 800 17th St. NW. 2017 Women In Defense HORIZONS Scholarship celebration. ndia.org

THURSDAY | JULY 27

9:30 a.m. 1152 15th St. NW. Economic levers of U.S. policy toward North Korea. cnas.org

10 a.m. 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW. Hostilities in the Himalayas? Assessing the India-China border standoff. wilsoncenter.org

12:30 p.m. 529 14th St. NW. Luncheon with Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley. press.org

FRIDAY | JULY 28

12 p.m. 1030 15th St. NW. The ramifications of Rouhani's reelection. atlanticcouncil.org

2:30 p.m. 1616 Rhode Island Ave. NW. Retired military leaders from Japan and the U.S. discuss the results of the Military Statesmen Forum. csis.org

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

"I greatly appreciate the outpouring of support - unfortunately for my sparring partners in Congress, I'll be back soon, so stand-by!"

- Sen. John McCain, in his first tweet since receiving his brain cancer diagnosis.

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- ***** U.S. ends controversial laptop ban on Middle East carriers
- ***** Security and education in the wake of WannaCry, Petya
- ***** iOS 10.3.3 now available to download on iPhone and iPad
- ***** New malware takes over your smartphone camera by posing as a popular app
- ***** Windows 10 no longer supported? How to tell if your PC is eligible for latest version
- ***** China clamping down on use of VPNs to evade Great Firewall

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THE CYBER SHIELD

Cyber News for Counterintelligence / Information Technology / Security Professionals

20 July 2017

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This Issue's News Articles:

- U.S. ends controversial laptop ban on Middle East carriers
- Security and education in the wake of WannaCry, Petya
- iOS 10.3.3 now available to download on iPhone and iPad
- New malware takes over your smartphone camera by posing as a popular app
- Windows 10 no longer supported? How to tell if your PC is eligible for latest version
- China clamping down on use of VPNs to evade Great Firewall

U.S. ends controversial laptop ban on Middle East carriers

[Reuters, 20 Jul 2017](#): The United States has ended a four month ban on passengers carrying laptops onboard U.S. bound flights from certain airports in the Middle East and North Africa, bringing to an end one of the controversial travel restrictions imposed by President Donald Trump's administration. Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport was the last of 10 airports to be exempted from the ban, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) confirmed in a tweet late on Wednesday local time. Middle East carriers have blamed Trump's travel restrictions, which include banning citizens of some Muslim majority countries from visiting the United States, for a downturn in demand on U.S routes. In March, the United States banned large electronics in cabins on flights from 10 airports in the Middle East and North Africa over concerns that explosives could be concealed in the devices taken onboard aircraft. The ban has been lifted on the nine airlines affected -- Emirates [EMIRA.UL], Etihad Airways, Qatar Airways, Turkish Airlines, Saudi Arabian Airlines, Royal Jordanian, Kuwait Airways [KA.UL], EgyptAir [EGY.UL] and Royal Air Maroc [RAM.UL] -- which are the only carriers to fly direct to the United States from the region. A ban on citizens of six Muslim-majority countries -- Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, -- remains in place though has been limited after several U.S. court hearings challenged the restrictions. "The aviation industry has been trying to come together with a united message to governments and stakeholders about regulation and supporting the industry," said Will Horton, senior analyst at Australian aviation consultancy CAPA. Leading industry group the International Air Transport Association (IATA) criticized the laptop ban as ineffective, as security experts argued that militants could travel to the United States via Europe or elsewhere where the restrictions didn't apply. The restrictions were imposed as major U.S. carriers American Airlines Group, Delta Air Lines and United Airlines resumed their campaign against the Gulf carriers Emirates, Etihad and Qatar Airways by pressuring the new U.S. administration to renegotiate its open skies agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. However, U.S. and Middle

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East officials said the campaign and the travel restrictions were not related. U.S. officials lifted the ban after visiting the 10 airports in Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Turkey over the past three weeks to confirm new security measures announced last month were being implemented. On Thursday, the U.S. issued a revised directive to airlines around the world in response to requests that it clarify aviation security measures scheduled to start taking effect this week. The new requirements include enhanced passenger screening at foreign airports, increased security protocols around aircraft and in passenger areas and expanded canine screening. They affect 325,000 airline passengers on about 2,000 commercial flights arriving daily in the United States, on 180 airlines from 280 airports in 105 countries. Airlines that fail to meet the new security requirements could face in-cabin electronics restrictions. The United Kingdom continues to enforce a similar in-cabin ban on electronics ban on flights from some Middle Eastern airports. Those restrictions apply to flights from Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia.

Security and education in the wake of WannaCry, Petya

[CSO Online, 19 Jul 2017](#): Attacks occur for a variety of reasons, and in the wake of the most widespread ransomware attacks, WannaCry and Petya, many organizations are re-evaluating their security practices to figure out what went wrong. While those who were hit are still trying to understand where their security gaps are, others enterprises that rely on legacy systems and can't be patched are looking for ways to prevent being the next victim. No, the vulnerabilities attackers leverage are not new. They prey on systems that have not been updated, said Carson Sweet, CTO of CloudPassage. There is no one-fits-all fix, but Sweet offered some sound advice on a variety of both long- and short-term solutions. What might have helped protect companies from these worm-like ransomware attacks? The important thing to remember is that WannaCry and Petya were, in actuality, easily preventable. Victims of these attacks were only victims because they failed to conduct basic software patching. Enterprises searching for a way to protect themselves should know there are several tools on the market that use automation to patch software vulnerabilities in real time. Automation is one way to close the gap, but we also need to train developers, at the very earliest stage of their education, to bake security into all new code. It's no longer enough to tack cybersecurity onto projects as an afterthought anymore. Having readily available data backups is the best way to maintain business continuity in the face of an attack. Keeping good, fresh data backups allows enterprises to rebuild systems quickly and inexpensively. In the face of a ransomware attack, there's no longer a need to pay the ransom because the enterprise already has a recent backup of all the data it needs. When we look at the bigger picture and the future of cybersecurity, the issue of education is critical. A recent Cisco report estimates there are 1 million unfilled cybersecurity positions globally. Here in the U.S., that number is about 100,000. It's a crisis that directly hurts the ability of companies and governments to curb hacking because there simply isn't enough available talent to fill those jobs. Cybersecurity training has not been a priority for the American education system. Universities are inadvertently contributing to the lack of cybersecurity readiness in the U.S. by failing to teach students how to implement security thinking and awareness into all new code design, development and testing. As recently as 2016, only one of the top 121 computer and science information science schools in the country required at least three cybersecurity classes before graduation. At a minimum, cybersecurity training must be a graduation requirement for all computer science programs. To keep up with the ever-increasing challenges of hackers, though, there is no choice for but to prioritize cybersecurity education for our future.

iOS 10.3.3 now available to download on iPhone and iPad

[BGR News, 19 Jul 2017](#): With just a couple of months remaining before the inevitable release of the iPhone 8, Apple rolled out iOS 10.3.3 for the iPhone, iPad and iPod touch on Wednesday. While the update itself is little more than a collection of bug fixes and security improvements, there's a chance that this could be the last major iOS 10 update with iOS 11 deep in development and set to release to the public in September. On the whole, iOS 10.3 wasn't a major upgrade for the mobile operating system. In fact, the most substantial upgrade was invisible, as Apple replaced the HFS+ file system with the new Apple File System (APFS). Other additions include the Find My AirPods feature, a new Podcasts widget and updated app transition animations that you may or may not have even noticed. Lately, Apple fans have been far more interested in the latest iOS 11 beta releases than they have in any potential updates for iOS 10.3. Now that the public beta is available, anyone with a compatible iOS device can download and test the next version of Apple's mobile OS before it rolls out this fall.

New malware takes over your smartphone camera by posing as a popular app

[The Sun, 19 Jul 2017](#): A terrifying new virus that can stealthily film and record smartphone owners is spreading across the world – and you might already be infected. The malware is called GhostCtrl and often disguises itself as popular apps like WhatsApp and Pokemon Go. Victims who download the fake apps — which look exactly like the real deal — inadvertently install a backdoor to their phone. This grants hackers access to their camera, web browser history and searches and lets them intercept text messages. They can also surreptitiously record voice or audio and upload it to their computer servers. “The data GhostCtrl steals is extensive, compared to other Android info-stealers,” cyber security researchers Trend Micro explained in a blogpost. A version of GhostCtrl was used in a large-scale attack which recently targeted Israeli hospitals. The digital assault used a “worm” called RETADUP to steal information from desktop PCs, but it appears that hackers have used similar code to create an Android bug that could spread worldwide. “We can only expect it to further evolve,” Trend Micro warned. More than 200,000 victims in 150 countries were recently infected by malware known as WannaCry in May. If an app on the Google Play store doesn't have a star rating or several reviews, be very wary of it.

Windows 10 no longer supported? How to tell if your PC is eligible for latest version

[ZD Net, 19 Jul 2017](#): If you own a PC or tablet that's powered by an Intel Clover Trail processor, you're part of an exclusive and unlucky fraternity. For now, at least, Microsoft has cut off Windows 10 support early for your device. If Microsoft doesn't deliver a patch within the next six to nine months, those PCs could be cut off from security fixes. Any Clover Trail-based device currently running the Windows 10 Anniversary Update, version 1607, will be blocked from upgrading to the latest version: Creators Update, version 1703. And under Microsoft's new support calendar, that means you'll stop getting security and reliability updates for version 1607 sometime in the first quarter of 2018. I've asked Microsoft for more details on why this problem is occurring and whether owners of affected devices can expect a software patch to resolve the incompatibility. Earlier today a spokesperson declined to provide any details, saying only, “We are aware of this and investigating the matter.” Ben Bajarin of Creative Strategies, who tracks PC and tablet sales closely, estimates that the number of affected devices is probably more than 10 million. So how can you tell whether your PC is one of them? Start by looking in Settings > System > About. If the processor is identified as an Intel Atom Z2520, Z2560, Z2580, or Z2760, your device is blocked from the Windows 10 Creators Update. If you see a different processor, including later Atom variants such as the Z3700 or x5-Z8500, you should be in the clear. But even on a PC running a fully supported processor, you are potentially at risk of being blocked for other issues, including serious incompatibilities associated with specific devices or installed programs. To check for

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potential problems before you spend hours attempting to update to the latest Windows 10 release, there's a simple option: Run the Setup program with a pair of switches that instruct it to perform a compatibility check and return the results. For this compatibility test, you need installation media for the Windows 10 version you want to test. If you've already downloaded the Creators Update, you can use that media; just make sure it matches the architecture - 32-bit or 64-bit - of the system you plan to test. If you don't have the latest Windows 10 installer files, use the Media Creation Tool to download a fresh copy, as I describe in my FAQ: [How to install, reinstall, upgrade and activate Windows 10](#). Double-click the ISO file to mount it as a virtual drive with its own drive letter, or insert a USB flash drive containing the installation files. Make a note of the drive letter. Next, open a command prompt window (the easiest way is to type cmd.exe in the Run box and then press Ctrl+Shift+Enter to run it as an administrator. At the command prompt, type the following command, substituting the drive letter where your installer files are located in place of d:. [d:\Setup /Compat ScanOnly]. Press Enter and follow the setup screens just as if you were performing an upgrade. When you get to the final screen, click Install. The program should end at that point rather than beginning the upgrade. When it does, it writes some information to a file called BlueBox.log, which you'll find in the C:\Windows\Logs\MoSetup folder. Double-click that file to open it in Notepad and then scroll to the bottom and look for the final error code. If you see 0xC1900210, you're good to go. That means there are no blocking compatibility issues. If you see another error code, you'll need to find out what it means. Here are four common errors, decoded: (a) Compatibility issues found (hard block): 0xC1900208; (b) Migration choice (auto upgrade) not available (probably the wrong SKU or architecture) 0xC1900204; (c) Does not meet system requirements for Windows 10: 0xC1900200; (d) Insufficient free disk space: 0xC190020E.

China clamping down on use of VPNs to evade Great Firewall

[The Associated Press, 19 Jul 2017](#): China is tightening control over foreign companies' internet use in a move some worry might disrupt their operations or jeopardize trade secrets as part of a crackdown on technology that allows web surfers to evade Beijing's online censorship. In a letter to corporate customers seen by The Associated Press, the biggest Chinese internet service provider says virtual private networks, which create encrypted links between computers and can be used to see sites blocked by Beijing's web filters, will be permitted only to connect to a company's headquarters abroad. The letter from state-owned China Telecom Ltd. says VPN users are barred from linking to other sites outside China, a change that might block access to news, social media or business services that are obscured by its "Great Firewall." The letter repeats an announcement from January that only VPNs approved by Chinese authorities are allowed. That has prompted fears of possible loss of trade secrets or information about customers or employees among companies that question the reliability of Chinese encryption services and whether authorities might read messages. Regulators announced a crackdown in January to stamp out use of VPNs to circumvent web censorship. Authorities have tried to reassure companies they won't be affected, but if the rules in the China Telecom letter are enforced, they could hamper activity ranging from gathering information for business deals to employees working on business trips. The crackdown reflects President Xi Jinping's vision of "internet sovereignty," or Beijing's absolute right to control what people can do and see online. Control over information is especially sensitive ahead of a party congress late this year at which Xi is due to be appointed to a second five-year term as leader. The ruling Communist Party controls internet traffic across China's borders and tries to keep its public from seeing thousands of websites abroad including Google and social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, as well as news outlets and human rights groups. This week, the Beijing municipal internet regulator announced it ordered website operators including Baidu Inc. and Tencent Holdings Ltd. to remove material that was "distorting the history of China and the Party" and "promoting abnormal values" or had other problems. Also this week, a letter issued by the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in Beijing

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to guests that circulated on social media says the hotel can no longer provide VPN service “due to legal issues” as of last Friday. In June, the Hong Kong-based operator of a popular service, Green VPN, announced Chinese regulators had ordered it to close. Beijing has repeatedly pressured foreign companies to hand over technology, encryption know-how and other trade secrets in exchange for access to its huge and growing market. Companies cite internet controls as among the biggest obstacles to doing business in China. In a survey by the American Chamber of Commerce in China last year, 79 percent of companies that responded said web filters hurt them by blocking access to information and business tools. The China Telecom’s letter, which bears no date, says VPNs are for “internal office use only” and only can connect to a company’s headquarters abroad, not to any other websites. That would block users from seeing business news or other information sources that are shielded by the filters. Companies are required to provide the identities of every employee who uses a VPN, according to the letter. Lester Ross, a lawyer in Beijing for the firm WilmerHale, said he had not heard of the China Telecom letter. But he said the conditions in it described to him by a reporter would be disruptive if enforced. Without VPNs to bypass web filters, “then it is just impossible to do business under the constraints that apply officially,” said Ross. “You’re either making it unenforceable or they are damaging business to an extraordinary extent.” A Western diplomat who asked not to be identified further due to the sensitivity of the issue said companies have told his government they worry the controls might lead to weaker data security and trade secrets being leaked to Chinese competitors. The diplomat said some are hesitant to invest more in China due to that. China Telecom and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, which announced the January crackdown, did not respond to requests for information about the letter. Authorities have never disclosed whether they read communications sent over Chinese VPN providers. “Despite the fact that people get used to the system, protection of confidentiality is always a concern,” said Ross. “They’ve never guaranteed privacy of communications.” Beijing has announced restrictions on VPN use over the past decade but did little to enforce them, possibly to avoid disrupting business or access to information for scientists and academics. The VPN crackdown coincides with a Cybersecurity Law that took effect on June 1 and tightens control over data. It limits use of foreign security technology and requires companies to store information about Chinese citizens within this country. On Tuesday, users of Facebook’s WhatsApp messaging service, which normally operates freely in China, were no longer able to send images without using a VPN. That coincided with official efforts to suppress mention of Liu Xiaobo, the imprisoned Nobel Peace laureate who died last week and whom social media users have commemorated by exchanging images of him. Already, companies increasingly limit VPN access to employees such as media managers “with a critical business need” to see a banned website, according to Jake Parker, vice president of China operations for the U.S.-China Business Council. Companies can avoid the need for a VPN by leasing a circuit from China Telecom or other state-owned providers that connects directly to their headquarters abroad. Prices start at more than \$1,000 per month. The information ministry tried to reassure commercial users in a statement reported last week in a Shanghai newspaper, *The Paper*. “Foreign trade enterprises and multinational companies that need a cross-border line for their own office use can lease one from an authorized telecoms enterprise,” said the statement. It said the January notice “will not affect normal operations.”

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THE CYBER SHIELD

Cyber News for Counterintelligence / Information Technology / Security Professionals

20 July 2017

Purpose

Educate recipients of cyber events to aid in protecting electronically stored DoD, corporate proprietary, and/or Personally Identifiable Information from unauthorized access, theft or espionage

Source

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U.S. ends controversial laptop ban on Middle East carriers

[Reuters, 20 Jul 2017](#): The United States has ended a four month ban on passengers carrying laptops onboard U.S. bound flights from certain airports in the Middle East and North Africa, bringing to an end one of the controversial travel restrictions imposed by President Donald Trump's administration. Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport was the last of 10 airports to be exempted from the ban, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) confirmed in a tweet late on Wednesday local time. Middle East carriers have blamed Trump's travel restrictions, which include banning citizens of some Muslim majority countries from visiting the United States, for a downturn in demand on U.S routes. In March, the United States banned large electronics in cabins on flights from 10 airports in the Middle East and North Africa over concerns that explosives could be concealed in the devices taken onboard aircraft. The ban has been lifted on the nine airlines affected -- Emirates [EMIRA.UL], Etihad Airways, Qatar Airways, Turkish Airlines, Saudi Arabian Airlines, Royal Jordanian, Kuwait Airways [KA.UL], EgyptAir [EGY.UL] and Royal Air Maroc [RAM.UL] -- which are the only carriers to fly direct to the United States from the region. A ban on citizens of six Muslim-majority countries -- Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, -- remains in place though has been limited after several U.S. court hearings challenged the restrictions. "The aviation industry has been trying to come together with a united message to governments and stakeholders about regulation and supporting the industry," said Will Horton, senior analyst at Australian aviation consultancy CAPA. Leading industry group the International Air Transport Association (IATA) criticized the laptop ban as ineffective, as security experts argued that militants could travel to the United States via Europe or elsewhere where the restrictions didn't apply. The restrictions were imposed as major U.S. carriers American Airlines Group, Delta Air Lines and United Airlines resumed their campaign against the Gulf carriers Emirates, Etihad and Qatar Airways by pressuring the new U.S. administration to renegotiate its open skies agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. However, U.S. and Middle

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East officials said the campaign and the travel restrictions were not related. U.S. officials lifted the ban after visiting the 10 airports in Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Turkey over the past three weeks to confirm new security measures announced last month were being implemented. On Thursday, the U.S. issued a revised directive to airlines around the world in response to requests that it clarify aviation security measures scheduled to start taking effect this week. The new requirements include enhanced passenger screening at foreign airports, increased security protocols around aircraft and in passenger areas and expanded canine screening. They affect 325,000 airline passengers on about 2,000 commercial flights arriving daily in the United States, on 180 airlines from 280 airports in 105 countries. Airlines that fail to meet the new security requirements could face in-cabin electronics restrictions. The United Kingdom continues to enforce a similar in-cabin ban on electronics ban on flights from some Middle Eastern airports. Those restrictions apply to flights from Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia.

Security and education in the wake of WannaCry, Petya

[CSO Online, 19 Jul 2017](#): Attacks occur for a variety of reasons, and in the wake of the most widespread ransomware attacks, WannaCry and Petya, many organizations are re-evaluating their security practices to figure out what went wrong. While those who were hit are still trying to understand where their security gaps are, others enterprises that rely on legacy systems and can't be patched are looking for ways to prevent being the next victim. No, the vulnerabilities attackers leverage are not new. They prey on systems that have not been updated, said Carson Sweet, CTO of CloudPassage. There is no one-fits-all fix, but Sweet offered some sound advice on a variety of both long- and short-term solutions. What might have helped protect companies from these worm-like ransomware attacks? The important thing to remember is that WannaCry and Petya were, in actuality, easily preventable. Victims of these attacks were only victims because they failed to conduct basic software patching. Enterprises searching for a way to protect themselves should know there are several tools on the market that use automation to patch software vulnerabilities in real time. Automation is one way to close the gap, but we also need to train developers, at the very earliest stage of their education, to bake security into all new code. It's no longer enough to tack cybersecurity onto projects as an afterthought anymore. Having readily available data backups is the best way to maintain business continuity in the face of an attack. Keeping good, fresh data backups allows enterprises to rebuild systems quickly and inexpensively. In the face of a ransomware attack, there's no longer a need to pay the ransom because the enterprise already has a recent backup of all the data it needs. When we look at the bigger picture and the future of cybersecurity, the issue of education is critical. A recent Cisco report estimates there are 1 million unfilled cybersecurity positions globally. Here in the U.S., that number is about 100,000. It's a crisis that directly hurts the ability of companies and governments to curb hacking because there simply isn't enough available talent to fill those jobs. Cybersecurity training has not been a priority for the American education system. Universities are inadvertently contributing to the lack of cybersecurity readiness in the U.S. by failing to teach students how to implement security thinking and awareness into all new code design, development and testing. As recently as 2016, only one of the top 121 computer and science information science schools in the country required at least three cybersecurity classes before graduation. At a minimum, cybersecurity training must be a graduation requirement for all computer science programs. To keep up with the ever-increasing challenges of hackers, though, there is no choice for but to prioritize cybersecurity education for our future.

iOS 10.3.3 now available to download on iPhone and iPad

[BGR News, 19 Jul 2017](#): With just a couple of months remaining before the inevitable release of the iPhone 8, Apple rolled out iOS 10.3.3 for the iPhone, iPad and iPod touch on Wednesday. While the update itself is little more than a collection of bug fixes and security improvements, there's a chance that this could be the last major iOS 10 update with iOS 11 deep in development and set to release to the public in September. On the whole, iOS 10.3 wasn't a major upgrade for the mobile operating system. In fact, the most substantial upgrade was invisible, as Apple replaced the HFS+ file system with the new Apple File System (APFS). Other additions include the Find My AirPods feature, a new Podcasts widget and updated app transition animations that you may or may not have even noticed. Lately, Apple fans have been far more interested in the latest iOS 11 beta releases than they have in any potential updates for iOS 10.3. Now that the public beta is available, anyone with a compatible iOS device can download and test the next version of Apple's mobile OS before it rolls out this fall.

New malware takes over your smartphone camera by posing as a popular app

[The Sun, 19 Jul 2017](#): A terrifying new virus that can stealthily film and record smartphone owners is spreading across the world – and you might already be infected. The malware is called GhostCtrl and often disguises itself as popular apps like WhatsApp and Pokemon Go. Victims who download the fake apps — which look exactly like the real deal — inadvertently install a backdoor to their phone. This grants hackers access to their camera, web browser history and searches and lets them intercept text messages. They can also surreptitiously record voice or audio and upload it to their computer servers. “The data GhostCtrl steals is extensive, compared to other Android info-stealers,” cyber security researchers Trend Micro explained in a blogpost. A version of GhostCtrl was used in a large-scale attack which recently targeted Israeli hospitals. The digital assault used a “worm” called RETADUP to steal information from desktop PCs, but it appears that hackers have used similar code to create an Android bug that could spread worldwide. “We can only expect it to further evolve,” Trend Micro warned. More than 200,000 victims in 150 countries were recently infected by malware known as WannaCry in May. If an app on the Google Play store doesn't have a star rating or several reviews, be very wary of it.

Windows 10 no longer supported? How to tell if your PC is eligible for latest version

[ZD Net, 19 Jul 2017](#): If you own a PC or tablet that's powered by an Intel Clover Trail processor, you're part of an exclusive and unlucky fraternity. For now, at least, Microsoft has cut off Windows 10 support early for your device. If Microsoft doesn't deliver a patch within the next six to nine months, those PCs could be cut off from security fixes. Any Clover Trail-based device currently running the Windows 10 Anniversary Update, version 1607, will be blocked from upgrading to the latest version: Creators Update, version 1703. And under Microsoft's new support calendar, that means you'll stop getting security and reliability updates for version 1607 sometime in the first quarter of 2018. I've asked Microsoft for more details on why this problem is occurring and whether owners of affected devices can expect a software patch to resolve the incompatibility. Earlier today a spokesperson declined to provide any details, saying only, “We are aware of this and investigating the matter.” Ben Bajarin of Creative Strategies, who tracks PC and tablet sales closely, estimates that the number of affected devices is probably more than 10 million. So how can you tell whether your PC is one of them? Start by looking in Settings > System > About. If the processor is identified as an Intel Atom Z2520, Z2560, Z2580, or Z2760, your device is blocked from the Windows 10 Creators Update. If you see a different processor, including later Atom variants such as the Z3700 or x5-Z8500, you should be in the clear. But even on a PC running a fully supported processor, you are potentially at risk of being blocked for other issues, including serious incompatibilities associated with specific devices or installed programs. To check for

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potential problems before you spend hours attempting to update to the latest Windows 10 release, there's a simple option: Run the Setup program with a pair of switches that instruct it to perform a compatibility check and return the results. For this compatibility test, you need installation media for the Windows 10 version you want to test. If you've already downloaded the Creators Update, you can use that media; just make sure it matches the architecture - 32-bit or 64-bit - of the system you plan to test. If you don't have the latest Windows 10 installer files, use the Media Creation Tool to download a fresh copy, as I describe in my FAQ: [How to install, reinstall, upgrade and activate Windows 10](#). Double-click the ISO file to mount it as a virtual drive with its own drive letter, or insert a USB flash drive containing the installation files. Make a note of the drive letter. Next, open a command prompt window (the easiest way is to type cmd.exe in the Run box and then press Ctrl+Shift+Enter to run it as an administrator. At the command prompt, type the following command, substituting the drive letter where your installer files are located in place of d:. [d:\Setup /Compat ScanOnly]. Press Enter and follow the setup screens just as if you were performing an upgrade. When you get to the final screen, click Install. The program should end at that point rather than beginning the upgrade. When it does, it writes some information to a file called BlueBox.log, which you'll find in the C:\Windows\Logs\MoSetup folder. Double-click that file to open it in Notepad and then scroll to the bottom and look for the final error code. If you see 0xC1900210, you're good to go. That means there are no blocking compatibility issues. If you see another error code, you'll need to find out what it means. Here are four common errors, decoded: (a) Compatibility issues found (hard block): 0xC1900208; (b) Migration choice (auto upgrade) not available (probably the wrong SKU or architecture) 0xC1900204; (c) Does not meet system requirements for Windows 10: 0xC1900200; (d) Insufficient free disk space: 0xC190020E.

China clamping down on use of VPNs to evade Great Firewall

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[Reuters, 20 Jul 2017](#): The United States has ended a four month ban on passengers carrying laptops onboard U.S. bound flights from certain airports in the Middle East and North Africa, bringing to an end one of the controversial travel restrictions imposed by President Donald Trump's administration. Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport was the last of 10 airports to be exempted from the ban, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) confirmed in a tweet late on Wednesday local time. Middle East carriers have blamed Trump's travel restrictions, which include banning citizens of some Muslim majority countries from visiting the United States, for a downturn in demand on U.S routes. In March, the United States banned large electronics in cabins on flights from 10 airports in the Middle East and North Africa over concerns that explosives could be concealed in the devices taken onboard aircraft. The ban has been lifted on the nine airlines affected -- Emirates [EMIRA.UL], Etihad Airways, Qatar Airways, Turkish Airlines, Saudi Arabian Airlines, Royal Jordanian, Kuwait Airways [KA.UL], EgyptAir [EGY.UL] and Royal Air Maroc [RAM.UL] -- which are the only carriers to fly direct to the United States from the region. A ban on citizens of six Muslim-majority countries -- Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, -- remains in place though has been limited after several U.S. court hearings challenged the restrictions. "The aviation industry has been trying to come together with a united message to governments and stakeholders about regulation and supporting the industry," said Will Horton, senior analyst at Australian aviation consultancy CAPA. Leading industry group the International Air Transport Association (IATA) criticized the laptop ban as ineffective, as security experts argued that militants could travel to the United States via Europe or elsewhere where the restrictions didn't apply. The restrictions were imposed as major U.S. carriers American Airlines Group, Delta Air Lines and United Airlines resumed their campaign against the Gulf carriers Emirates, Etihad and Qatar Airways by pressuring the new U.S. administration to renegotiate its open skies agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. However, U.S. and Middle

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East officials said the campaign and the travel restrictions were not related. U.S. officials lifted the ban after visiting the 10 airports in Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Turkey over the past three weeks to confirm new security measures announced last month were being implemented. On Thursday, the U.S. issued a revised directive to airlines around the world in response to requests that it clarify aviation security measures scheduled to start taking effect this week. The new requirements include enhanced passenger screening at foreign airports, increased security protocols around aircraft and in passenger areas and expanded canine screening. They affect 325,000 airline passengers on about 2,000 commercial flights arriving daily in the United States, on 180 airlines from 280 airports in 105 countries. Airlines that fail to meet the new security requirements could face in-cabin electronics restrictions. The United Kingdom continues to enforce a similar in-cabin ban on electronics ban on flights from some Middle Eastern airports. Those restrictions apply to flights from Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia.

Security and education in the wake of WannaCry, Petya

[CSO Online, 19 Jul 2017](#): Attacks occur for a variety of reasons, and in the wake of the most widespread ransomware attacks, WannaCry and Petya, many organizations are re-evaluating their security practices to figure out what went wrong. While those who were hit are still trying to understand where their security gaps are, others enterprises that rely on legacy systems and can't be patched are looking for ways to prevent being the next victim. No, the vulnerabilities attackers leverage are not new. They prey on systems that have not been updated, said Carson Sweet, CTO of CloudPassage. There is no one-fits-all fix, but Sweet offered some sound advice on a variety of both long- and short-term solutions. What might have helped protect companies from these worm-like ransomware attacks? The important thing to remember is that WannaCry and Petya were, in actuality, easily preventable. Victims of these attacks were only victims because they failed to conduct basic software patching. Enterprises searching for a way to protect themselves should know there are several tools on the market that use automation to patch software vulnerabilities in real time. Automation is one way to close the gap, but we also need to train developers, at the very earliest stage of their education, to bake security into all new code. It's no longer enough to tack cybersecurity onto projects as an afterthought anymore. Having readily available data backups is the best way to maintain business continuity in the face of an attack. Keeping good, fresh data backups allows enterprises to rebuild systems quickly and inexpensively. In the face of a ransomware attack, there's no longer a need to pay the ransom because the enterprise already has a recent backup of all the data it needs. When we look at the bigger picture and the future of cybersecurity, the issue of education is critical. A recent Cisco report estimates there are 1 million unfilled cybersecurity positions globally. Here in the U.S., that number is about 100,000. It's a crisis that directly hurts the ability of companies and governments to curb hacking because there simply isn't enough available talent to fill those jobs. Cybersecurity training has not been a priority for the American education system. Universities are inadvertently contributing to the lack of cybersecurity readiness in the U.S. by failing to teach students how to implement security thinking and awareness into all new code design, development and testing. As recently as 2016, only one of the top 121 computer and science information science schools in the country required at least three cybersecurity classes before graduation. At a minimum, cybersecurity training must be a graduation requirement for all computer science programs. To keep up with the ever-increasing challenges of hackers, though, there is no choice for but to prioritize cybersecurity education for our future.

iOS 10.3.3 now available to download on iPhone and iPad

[BGR News, 19 Jul 2017](#): With just a couple of months remaining before the inevitable release of the iPhone 8, Apple rolled out iOS 10.3.3 for the iPhone, iPad and iPod touch on Wednesday. While the update itself is little more than a collection of bug fixes and security improvements, there's a chance that this could be the last major iOS 10 update with iOS 11 deep in development and set to release to the public in September. On the whole, iOS 10.3 wasn't a major upgrade for the mobile operating system. In fact, the most substantial upgrade was invisible, as Apple replaced the HFS+ file system with the new Apple File System (APFS). Other additions include the Find My AirPods feature, a new Podcasts widget and updated app transition animations that you may or may not have even noticed. Lately, Apple fans have been far more interested in the latest iOS 11 beta releases than they have in any potential updates for iOS 10.3. Now that the public beta is available, anyone with a compatible iOS device can download and test the next version of Apple's mobile OS before it rolls out this fall.

New malware takes over your smartphone camera by posing as a popular app

[The Sun, 19 Jul 2017](#): A terrifying new virus that can stealthily film and record smartphone owners is spreading across the world – and you might already be infected. The malware is called GhostCtrl and often disguises itself as popular apps like WhatsApp and Pokemon Go. Victims who download the fake apps — which look exactly like the real deal — inadvertently install a backdoor to their phone. This grants hackers access to their camera, web browser history and searches and lets them intercept text messages. They can also surreptitiously record voice or audio and upload it to their computer servers. “The data GhostCtrl steals is extensive, compared to other Android info-stealers,” cyber security researchers Trend Micro explained in a blogpost. A version of GhostCtrl was used in a large-scale attack which recently targeted Israeli hospitals. The digital assault used a “worm” called RETADUP to steal information from desktop PCs, but it appears that hackers have used similar code to create an Android bug that could spread worldwide. “We can only expect it to further evolve,” Trend Micro warned. More than 200,000 victims in 150 countries were recently infected by malware known as WannaCry in May. If an app on the Google Play store doesn't have a star rating or several reviews, be very wary of it.

Windows 10 no longer supported? How to tell if your PC is eligible for latest version

[ZD Net, 19 Jul 2017](#): If you own a PC or tablet that's powered by an Intel Clover Trail processor, you're part of an exclusive and unlucky fraternity. For now, at least, Microsoft has cut off Windows 10 support early for your device. If Microsoft doesn't deliver a patch within the next six to nine months, those PCs could be cut off from security fixes. Any Clover Trail-based device currently running the Windows 10 Anniversary Update, version 1607, will be blocked from upgrading to the latest version: Creators Update, version 1703. And under Microsoft's new support calendar, that means you'll stop getting security and reliability updates for version 1607 sometime in the first quarter of 2018. I've asked Microsoft for more details on why this problem is occurring and whether owners of affected devices can expect a software patch to resolve the incompatibility. Earlier today a spokesperson declined to provide any details, saying only, “We are aware of this and investigating the matter.” Ben Bajarin of Creative Strategies, who tracks PC and tablet sales closely, estimates that the number of affected devices is probably more than 10 million. So how can you tell whether your PC is one of them? Start by looking in Settings > System > About. If the processor is identified as an Intel Atom Z2520, Z2560, Z2580, or Z2760, your device is blocked from the Windows 10 Creators Update. If you see a different processor, including later Atom variants such as the Z3700 or x5-Z8500, you should be in the clear. But even on a PC running a fully supported processor, you are potentially at risk of being blocked for other issues, including serious incompatibilities associated with specific devices or installed programs. To check for

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potential problems before you spend hours attempting to update to the latest Windows 10 release, there's a simple option: Run the Setup program with a pair of switches that instruct it to perform a compatibility check and return the results. For this compatibility test, you need installation media for the Windows 10 version you want to test. If you've already downloaded the Creators Update, you can use that media; just make sure it matches the architecture - 32-bit or 64-bit - of the system you plan to test. If you don't have the latest Windows 10 installer files, use the Media Creation Tool to download a fresh copy, as I describe in my FAQ: [How to install, reinstall, upgrade and activate Windows 10](#). Double-click the ISO file to mount it as a virtual drive with its own drive letter, or insert a USB flash drive containing the installation files. Make a note of the drive letter. Next, open a command prompt window (the easiest way is to type cmd.exe in the Run box and then press Ctrl+Shift+Enter to run it as an administrator. At the command prompt, type the following command, substituting the drive letter where your installer files are located in place of d:. [d:\Setup /Compat ScanOnly]. Press Enter and follow the setup screens just as if you were performing an upgrade. When you get to the final screen, click Install. The program should end at that point rather than beginning the upgrade. When it does, it writes some information to a file called BlueBox.log, which you'll find in the C:\Windows\Logs\MoSetup folder. Double-click that file to open it in Notepad and then scroll to the bottom and look for the final error code. If you see 0xC1900210, you're good to go. That means there are no blocking compatibility issues. If you see another error code, you'll need to find out what it means. Here are four common errors, decoded: (a) Compatibility issues found (hard block): 0xC1900208; (b) Migration choice (auto upgrade) not available (probably the wrong SKU or architecture) 0xC1900204; (c) Does not meet system requirements for Windows 10: 0xC1900200; (d) Insufficient free disk space: 0xC190020E.

China clamping down on use of VPNs to evade Great Firewall

[The Associated Press, 19 Jul 2017](#): China is tightening control over foreign companies' internet use in a move some worry might disrupt their operations or jeopardize trade secrets as part of a crackdown on technology that allows web surfers to evade Beijing's online censorship. In a letter to corporate customers seen by The Associated Press, the biggest Chinese internet service provider says virtual private networks, which create encrypted links between computers and can be used to see sites blocked by Beijing's web filters, will be permitted only to connect to a company's headquarters abroad. The letter from state-owned China Telecom Ltd. says VPN users are barred from linking to other sites outside China, a change that might block access to news, social media or business services that are obscured by its "Great Firewall." The letter repeats an announcement from January that only VPNs approved by Chinese authorities are allowed. That has prompted fears of possible loss of trade secrets or information about customers or employees among companies that question the reliability of Chinese encryption services and whether authorities might read messages. Regulators announced a crackdown in January to stamp out use of VPNs to circumvent web censorship. Authorities have tried to reassure companies they won't be affected, but if the rules in the China Telecom letter are enforced, they could hamper activity ranging from gathering information for business deals to employees working on business trips. The crackdown reflects President Xi Jinping's vision of "internet sovereignty," or Beijing's absolute right to control what people can do and see online. Control over information is especially sensitive ahead of a party congress late this year at which Xi is due to be appointed to a second five-year term as leader. The ruling Communist Party controls internet traffic across China's borders and tries to keep its public from seeing thousands of websites abroad including Google and social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, as well as news outlets and human rights groups. This week, the Beijing municipal internet regulator announced it ordered website operators including Baidu Inc. and Tencent Holdings Ltd. to remove material that was "distorting the history of China and the Party" and "promoting abnormal values" or had other problems. Also this week, a letter issued by the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in Beijing

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to guests that circulated on social media says the hotel can no longer provide VPN service “due to legal issues” as of last Friday. In June, the Hong Kong-based operator of a popular service, Green VPN, announced Chinese regulators had ordered it to close. Beijing has repeatedly pressured foreign companies to hand over technology, encryption know-how and other trade secrets in exchange for access to its huge and growing market. Companies cite internet controls as among the biggest obstacles to doing business in China. In a survey by the American Chamber of Commerce in China last year, 79 percent of companies that responded said web filters hurt them by blocking access to information and business tools. The China Telecom’s letter, which bears no date, says VPNs are for “internal office use only” and only can connect to a company’s headquarters abroad, not to any other websites. That would block users from seeing business news or other information sources that are shielded by the filters. Companies are required to provide the identities of every employee who uses a VPN, according to the letter. Lester Ross, a lawyer in Beijing for the firm WilmerHale, said he had not heard of the China Telecom letter. But he said the conditions in it described to him by a reporter would be disruptive if enforced. Without VPNs to bypass web filters, “then it is just impossible to do business under the constraints that apply officially,” said Ross. “You’re either making it unenforceable or they are damaging business to an extraordinary extent.” A Western diplomat who asked not to be identified further due to the sensitivity of the issue said companies have told his government they worry the controls might lead to weaker data security and trade secrets being leaked to Chinese competitors. The diplomat said some are hesitant to invest more in China due to that. China Telecom and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, which announced the January crackdown, did not respond to requests for information about the letter. Authorities have never disclosed whether they read communications sent over Chinese VPN providers. “Despite the fact that people get used to the system, protection of confidentiality is always a concern,” said Ross. “They’ve never guaranteed privacy of communications.” Beijing has announced restrictions on VPN use over the past decade but did little to enforce them, possibly to avoid disrupting business or access to information for scientists and academics. The VPN crackdown coincides with a Cybersecurity Law that took effect on June 1 and tightens control over data. It limits use of foreign security technology and requires companies to store information about Chinese citizens within this country. On Tuesday, users of Facebook’s WhatsApp messaging service, which normally operates freely in China, were no longer able to send images without using a VPN. That coincided with official efforts to suppress mention of Liu Xiaobo, the imprisoned Nobel Peace laureate who died last week and whom social media users have commemorated by exchanging images of him. Already, companies increasingly limit VPN access to employees such as media managers “with a critical business need” to see a banned website, according to Jake Parker, vice president of China operations for the U.S.-China Business Council. Companies can avoid the need for a VPN by leasing a circuit from China Telecom or other state-owned providers that connects directly to their headquarters abroad. Prices start at more than \$1,000 per month. The information ministry tried to reassure commercial users in a statement reported last week in a Shanghai newspaper, *The Paper*. “Foreign trade enterprises and multinational companies that need a cross-border line for their own office use can lease one from an authorized telecoms enterprise,” said the statement. It said the January notice “will not affect normal operations.”

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To:
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: NMCIWG: Daily Computer Threat News (Thu)
Date: Thu Jul 20 2017 11:18:27 CDT
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Today's articles:

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Cyber News for Counterintelligence / Information Technology / Security Professionals

20 July 2017

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[The Associated Press, 19 Jul 2017](#): China is tightening control over foreign companies' internet use in a move some worry might disrupt their operations or jeopardize trade secrets as part of a crackdown on technology that allows web surfers to evade Beijing's online censorship. In a letter to corporate customers seen by The Associated Press, the biggest Chinese internet service provider says virtual private networks, which create encrypted links between computers and can be used to see sites blocked by Beijing's web filters, will be permitted only to connect to a company's headquarters abroad. The letter from state-owned China Telecom Ltd. says VPN users are barred from linking to other sites outside China, a change that might block access to news, social media or business services that are obscured by its "Great Firewall." The letter repeats an announcement from January that only VPNs approved by Chinese authorities are allowed. That has prompted fears of possible loss of trade secrets or information about customers or employees among companies that question the reliability of Chinese encryption services and whether authorities might read messages. Regulators announced a crackdown in January to stamp out use of VPNs to circumvent web censorship. Authorities have tried to reassure companies they won't be affected, but if the rules in the China Telecom letter are enforced, they could hamper activity ranging from gathering information for business deals to employees working on business trips. The crackdown reflects President Xi Jinping's vision of "internet sovereignty," or Beijing's absolute right to control what people can do and see online. Control over information is especially sensitive ahead of a party congress late this year at which Xi is due to be appointed to a second five-year term as leader. The ruling Communist Party controls internet traffic across China's borders and tries to keep its public from seeing thousands of websites abroad including Google and social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, as well as news outlets and human rights groups. This week, the Beijing municipal internet regulator announced it ordered website operators including Baidu Inc. and Tencent Holdings Ltd. to remove material that was "distorting the history of China and the Party" and "promoting abnormal values" or had other problems. Also this week, a letter issued by the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in Beijing

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to guests that circulated on social media says the hotel can no longer provide VPN service “due to legal issues” as of last Friday. In June, the Hong Kong-based operator of a popular service, Green VPN, announced Chinese regulators had ordered it to close. Beijing has repeatedly pressured foreign companies to hand over technology, encryption know-how and other trade secrets in exchange for access to its huge and growing market. Companies cite internet controls as among the biggest obstacles to doing business in China. In a survey by the American Chamber of Commerce in China last year, 79 percent of companies that responded said web filters hurt them by blocking access to information and business tools. The China Telecom’s letter, which bears no date, says VPNs are for “internal office use only” and only can connect to a company’s headquarters abroad, not to any other websites. That would block users from seeing business news or other information sources that are shielded by the filters. Companies are required to provide the identities of every employee who uses a VPN, according to the letter. Lester Ross, a lawyer in Beijing for the firm WilmerHale, said he had not heard of the China Telecom letter. But he said the conditions in it described to him by a reporter would be disruptive if enforced. Without VPNs to bypass web filters, “then it is just impossible to do business under the constraints that apply officially,” said Ross. “You’re either making it unenforceable or they are damaging business to an extraordinary extent.” A Western diplomat who asked not to be identified further due to the sensitivity of the issue said companies have told his government they worry the controls might lead to weaker data security and trade secrets being leaked to Chinese competitors. The diplomat said some are hesitant to invest more in China due to that. China Telecom and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, which announced the January crackdown, did not respond to requests for information about the letter. Authorities have never disclosed whether they read communications sent over Chinese VPN providers. “Despite the fact that people get used to the system, protection of confidentiality is always a concern,” said Ross. “They’ve never guaranteed privacy of communications.” Beijing has announced restrictions on VPN use over the past decade but did little to enforce them, possibly to avoid disrupting business or access to information for scientists and academics. The VPN crackdown coincides with a Cybersecurity Law that took effect on June 1 and tightens control over data. It limits use of foreign security technology and requires companies to store information about Chinese citizens within this country. On Tuesday, users of Facebook’s WhatsApp messaging service, which normally operates freely in China, were no longer able to send images without using a VPN. That coincided with official efforts to suppress mention of Liu Xiaobo, the imprisoned Nobel Peace laureate who died last week and whom social media users have commemorated by exchanging images of him. Already, companies increasingly limit VPN access to employees such as media managers “with a critical business need” to see a banned website, according to Jake Parker, vice president of China operations for the U.S.-China Business Council. Companies can avoid the need for a VPN by leasing a circuit from China Telecom or other state-owned providers that connects directly to their headquarters abroad. Prices start at more than \$1,000 per month. The information ministry tried to reassure commercial users in a statement reported last week in a Shanghai newspaper, *The Paper*. “Foreign trade enterprises and multinational companies that need a cross-border line for their own office use can lease one from an authorized telecoms enterprise,” said the statement. It said the January notice “will not affect normal operations.”

From: Jamie McIntyre <wex@pub.mediadc.com> on behalf of Jamie McIntyre <wex@pub.mediadc.com>
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Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: Daily on Defense, presented by Northrop Grumman: McCain sidelined during major defense bill fight ... Concerns over too many industry execs nominated for top posts ... House gets Space Corps brief
Date: Thu Jul 20 2017 06:18:18 CDT
Attachments:

There is no more influential member of the Senate when it comes to national security policy than Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain, whose office confirmed last night that the 80-year-old senator has brain cancer.

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MCCAIN'S DIAGNOSIS: There is no more influential member of the Senate when it comes to national security policy than Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain, whose office confirmed last night that the 80-year-old senator has brain cancer. Examination of tissue removed last week during a procedure to remove a blood clot over his left eye revealed a type of brain tumor known as a glioblastoma. McCain, who is said to be in "good spirits" is reviewing treatment options with his medical team from the Mayo Clinic in Arizona, which could include a combination of chemotherapy and radiation. "The Senator's doctors say he is recovering from his surgery 'amazingly well' and his underlying health is excellent," said a statement released last night. "Further consultations with Senator McCain's Mayo Clinic care team will indicate when he will return to the United States Senate."

The news shocked McCain's colleagues on both sides of the aisle in Congress and prompted an outpouring of well-wishes, none more poignant than from his best friend Sen. Lindsey Graham, who talked to McCain by phone last night. "Pray," said Graham. "I don't know, God knows how this ends, not me. But I do know this: this disease has never had a more worthy opponent."

WHAT IT MEANS: While he continues his recovery at his home in Arizona, McCain's absence will be

felt in ways large and small. Aside from the obvious, the loss of a Republican vote in a chamber that has little margin for error in any partisan vote, McCain also is a fierce advocate for congressional oversight. Last week, frustrated over the delay in receiving a new Afghanistan strategy from the Trump administration, he threatened to insert his own into the National Defense Authorization Act. The House passed the NDAA last week, which means McCain is being sidelined just as the upper chamber prepares to debate and vote on its version of the bill. McCain is also a key player in the confirmation process for Pentagon nominees, and has warned the White House about filling so many top DoD spots with executives from the top five defense contractors.

INDUSTRY EXECES PILE UP: Meanwhile President Trump's Army secretary nominee is the latest in a growing list of defense industry executives nominated or confirmed for top Pentagon positions, exactly what McCain was warning against. The White House plans to nominate Mark Esper, vice president of government relations at Raytheon, as the top civilian overseeing the Army. The administration is banking on Esper's experience as an active-duty Army officer, and key legislative aide on Capitol Hill to offset his potential conflicts of interest stemming from his current job as a top lobbyist for Raytheon. A source close to the White House noted Esper's nomination could create a "very interesting" situation given that his position would require him to sit on the Defense Acquisition Board, an advisory panel within the Pentagon that collectively decides what systems to purchase. Esper would be forced to recuse himself from any contracts with Raytheon.

TRUMP'S TANK SESSION: Trump, who gave a wide-ranging interview to the New York Times yesterday, does not plan to make any public statements when his visits the Pentagon this morning, according to Pentagon officials. The plan is for Trump to be greeted at the River entrance this morning, be escorted up the steps, take a left and walk about 25 paces to the secure briefing room used by the Joint Chiefs of Staff known as "the Tank." The meeting is scheduled to run for an hour and a half, and we are told the topic is a general update on progress in the fight against the Islamic State. This is not planned as a briefing on the new Afghanistan strategy that Defense Secretary Jim Mattis promised to deliver to the White House and Congress by "mid-July," according to a Pentagon official, who noted that the president can bring up any subject he wants.

THE ANNIHILATION OF ISIS: The Senate got its own classified briefing yesterday afternoon on ISIS from Mattis, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Joseph Dunford. Most senators were tight-lipped about what happened in the secure briefing area in the Senate basement, which coincidentally is also dubbed "the Tank," but they said the officials delivered an update on current operations and not the long-awaited overarching Trump strategy to defeat the terror group.

Sen. Bob Corker, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, was among the few who stepped in front of the cameras and recorders of staked-out reporters to talk up the ISIS update. "There is just a lot more clarity, a lot more focus on annihilation," he said. "Anybody that listened to that hearing understands they're all about killing every ISIS member they can get ahold of." Corker batted away a question about what exactly has changed from the Obama administration strategy. "Comparisons are odious," he said. Much of the previous administration's strategy remains firmly in place, though as ISIS has lost ground, Mattis has employed a tactic of surrounding concentrations of ISIS forces, blocking escape routes and eliminating every fighter who doesn't surrender.

Good Thursday morning and welcome to Jamie McIntyre's Daily on Defense, compiled by Washington Examiner National Security Senior Writer Jamie McIntyre (@jamiejmcintyre), National Security Writer Travis J. Tritten (@travis_tritten) and Senior Editor David Brown (@dave_brown24). Email us here for tips, suggestions, calendar items and anything else. If a friend sent this to you and you'd like to sign up, click here. If signing up doesn't work, shoot us an email and we'll add you to our list. And be sure to follow us on Twitter @dailyondefense.

DON'T TAKE THAT MEETING MR. PRESIDENT: National security adviser Lt. Gen H.R. McMaster reportedly advised Trump against sitting down with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the G-20 Summit in Hamburg, Germany, this month, according to The Associated Press. The AP says McMaster expressed his disapproval of the meeting to foreign officials during the lead-up to the summit, and also

told the officials that he disagreed as well with Trump's decision to host Russian diplomats in an Oval Office meeting in May. McMaster is said to be worried Trump is not speaking out forcefully enough about Russian aggression in Europe, especially in light of Moscow's meddling in the U.S. election.

"PLEASANTRIES" WITH PUTIN: In that interview with the New York Times, Trump again pushed back against the idea there was anything nefarious about his after-dinner chat with Putin at the spouses dinner in Hamburg. "The meal was going, and toward dessert I went down just to say hello to Melania, (who was seated next to Putin) and while I was there I said hello to Putin," Trump explained. "Really, pleasantries more than anything else. It was not a long conversation, but it was, you know, could be 15 minutes. Just talked about — things. Actually, it was very interesting, we talked about adoption."

The Kremlin's top spokesman called the whole fuss "absurd," according to Reuters. "The use of a term like 'undercover' or 'secret meeting' raises eyebrows," Dmitry Peskov told state TV. "They had a bilateral meeting that had been officially agreed through diplomatic canals, then they repeatedly exchanged views and remarks on the sidelines. There were no undercover or secret meetings and to assert that there were is absolutely absurd," Peskov was quoted as saying by Russian news agencies.

OBAMA'S WEAKNESS: In that Times interview, Trump went on at length blaming the big foreign policy challenges he faces on what he sees as the failure of President Obama to act decisively. "Crimea was gone during the Obama administration, and he gave, he allowed it to get away," Trump said. "You know, he can talk tough all he wants, in the meantime he talked tough to North Korea. And he didn't actually. He didn't talk tough to North Korea. You know, we have a big problem with North Korea. Big. Big, big," Trump told the Times. "You look at all of the things, you look at the line in the sand. The red line in the sand in Syria. He didn't do the shot. I did the shot."

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THE INFAMOUS DOSSIER: "Totally made-up stuff," is how Trump described to so-called dossier of Russian kompromat that FBI Director James Comey showed Trump shortly after his election. "This is really made-up junk," Trump said. "I didn't think about anything. I just thought about, man, this is such a phony deal." The dossier contained unconfirmed and unverifiable "compromising material" supposedly gathered during Trump's time in Moscow. "I went there for one day for the Miss Universe contest, I turned around, I went back," Trump said. "It was so disgraceful. It was so disgraceful." Under questioning, Trump said he thought in hindsight that Comey showed him the report to hold it over his head as a form of leverage. "In my opinion, he shared it so that I would think he had it out there." "As leverage?" the Times asked. "Yeah, I think so. In retrospect. In retrospect," Trump replied.

"NOT A SMART GUY" The other big headline out the interview was Trump's trashing of his own attorney general, who he called "not a smart guy" for being "tricked" during his confirmation hearing into answering a question he was not asked about meeting with Russians. That led to Jeff Sessions having to correct the record, and then recusing himself from the Russia investigation. Trump, who felt blindsided, was furious. "Sessions should have never recused himself," Trump said, "and if he was going to recuse himself, he should have told me before he took the job, and I would have picked somebody else." Trump said Sessions gave him no inkling of what he was going to do. "Zero. So Jeff Sessions takes the job, gets into the job, recuses himself," Trump said, "which, frankly, I think is very unfair to the president."

REBEL PROGRAM SHUT DOWN: In a nod toward Moscow, Trump is ending a CIA program to covertly arm rebels in Syria, according to a new report. U.S. support for rebels fighting against Syrian President Bashar Assad was a bipartisan, if controversial, plank of American policy in the country as recently as last fall. Obama began the shipments in 2013 and a GOP-led Congress eased restrictions on the program in 2016. But Russia and Turkey, a NATO ally, have accused the United States of backing terrorist groups.

"Officials said the phasing out of the secret program reflects Trump's interest in finding ways to work with Russia, which saw the anti-Assad program as an assault on its interests," according to the Washington Post, which first reported the move. "The shuttering of the program is also an acknowledgment of Washington's limited leverage and desire to remove Assad from power."

HOUSE GETS SPACE BRIEF: Just as Chairman Mac Thornberry said last week, the House Armed Services Committee has continued to push forward with its effort to reorganize the military's space operations and create a new Space Corps. Thornberry held a classified hearing Tuesday and all members were invited to a closed briefing Wednesday by the Government Accountability Office on current problems with space operations. "The GAO report cited numerous failed or failing acquisition programs, with billions of dollars of cost overruns because the current acquisition system is so complicated that no one is in charge," Rep. Mike Rogers and Rep. Jim Cooper said in a release.

The two lawmakers, who are spearheading space reforms, said "the time for study is over: We must now act." They also panned the Air Force for the claim by Secretary Heather Wilson and others that the Space Corps ordered in the House's National Defense Authorization Act would create unneeded bureaucracy. Sixty Pentagon offices now deal with space operations, and it would become 61 if the Air Force goes ahead with plans to create a new deputy chief of staff position, which Rogers and Cooper claim is a "proposal designed to stop the Space Corps."

AUMF LANGUAGE STRIPPED: House leadership has removed language from a defense spending bill that would have repealed the authorization to use military force against terrorists that Congress passed after the 9/11 attacks, drawing anger from the Democratic lawmaker who was able to include that repeal language in the bill in late June.

"This is underhanded & undemocratic," Rep. Barbara Lee tweeted late Tuesday evening. "The people deserve a debate!" Lee authored an amendment to the spending bill that would repeal the authorization of military force that passed in 2001 and give Congress eight months to debate and pass a successor bill. With the support of a group of Republicans who broke with party leaders, her amendment was included in the bill, which seemed to set the stage for a debate about how much authority Trump ought to have to make war.

But the provision was jettisoned by the time it got to the Rules Committee, which is the last stop for legislation before it reaches the House floor. "[House Speaker Paul] Ryan should be ashamed of himself for forcing Republicans to strip out my bipartisan AUMF [amendment] in the dead of night," Lee tweeted. "What is he afraid of?"

WITH ALLIES LIKE THESE: Turkish state-run media, Anadolu, published an article highlighting 10 U.S. military points in northern Syria. According to the Daily Beast, the maps include specific locations of eight military posts and two air bases near the Turkish border as well as troop counts for both U.S. and French forces.

The article lists three points in Haseke, two points in Münbic and three spots north of Raqqa. The U.S. first established air bases in the region during October 2015, but added supplemental sites in both March and April of 2016. The article suggested this was a retaliatory action by Turkey for weapons ending up in the hands of the Syrian Worker's People's Protection Units (YPG), which is assisting the U.S.-led coalition in the fight against ISIS.

THE RUNDOWN

Washington Post: 'Tougher than a \$2 steak': Washington reacts to John McCain's tumor diagnosis

Defense News: Textron, Sierra Nevada prep for OA-X experiment at U.S. Air Force base

Reuters: After Mosul, Islamic State digs in for guerrilla warfare

Roll Call: Barbara Lee to take AUMF repeal to Foreign Affairs

CNN: US Intelligence Shows North Korean Preparations For A Possible Missile Test

AP: Less than 1 aircraft carrier? The cost of N. Korea's nukes

War on the Rocks: The best thing America built In Iraq: Iraq's counter-terrorism service and the long war against militancy

New York Times: Qatar Criticizes Move By Antagonists

Wall Street Journal: Saudi Royal Drama Was Sealed With a Kiss

Military Times: U.S. armored vehicles seen pouring into Syria

Defense Tech: Officials say little about F-35 helmet glitch in night landing video

USNI News: Office of Naval Research set to upgrade the 200-year-old signal lamp for modern stealth communication

Washington Post: The Pentagon has tried to get Silicon Valley on its side for years. Now it's part of the air war against ISIS.

The Times of London: First crisis for French president Macron as army chief General Pierre de Villiers quits over cuts

Foreign Policy: Is Russia really with Assad in Syria?

Calendar

THURSDAY | JULY 20

9:30 a.m. Dirksen 419. Kay Bailey Hutchison to be the permanent U.S. representative on the NATO council. foreign.senate.gov

10:30 a.m. 1616 Rhode Island Ave. NW. The dangers of the looming constituent assembly in Venezuela and why the international community must act. csis.org

FRIDAY | JULY 21

8:30 a.m. 1030 15th St. NW. Venezuela on the edge and the time for new international action. atlanticcouncil.org

9:30 a.m. 1616 Rhode Island Ave. NW. Examining the geopolitical impact of the 4th Estate. csis.org

MONDAY | JULY 24

2 p.m. 1152 15th St. NW. Release of the report Higher, Heavier, Farther, and Now Undetectable? Bombers: Long-Range Force Projection in the 21st Century with Jerry Hendrix. cnas.org

TUESDAY | JULY 25

10 a.m. Rayburn 2172. Authorization for the Use of Military Force and current terrorist threats with

former Attorney General Michael Mukasey. foreignaffairs.house.gov

10 a.m. 1616 Rhode Island Ave. NW. Future of vertical lift and forging a new paradigm with David Dowling of Northrop Grumman; Keith Flail with Bell Helicopter; Richard Koucheravy with Sikorsky; Dave Schreck of Rockwell Collins Government Systems; H. Eric "Delta" Burke of Harris Corporation; and Col. Robert Freeland with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics. csis.org

12 p.m. 214 Massachusetts Ave. NE. Lessons from Rome: Civic virtue and the empire's decline with Hugh Liebert, associate professor at the United States Military Academy. heritage.org

2 p.m. Rayburn 2212. Evaluating DOD equipment and uniform procurement in Iraq and Afghanistan with John Sopko, special inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction. armedservices.house.gov

2 p.m. Rayburn 2172. Held for ransom: The families of Iran's hostages speak out. foreignaffairs.house.gov

2:30 p.m. Russell 222. Options and considerations for achieving a 355-ship Navy from naval analysts. armed-services.senate.gov

WEDNESDAY | JULY 26

9 a.m. 214 Massachusetts Ave. NE. What a North Korean ballistic missile threat means for the U.S. missile defense system with Sen. Dan Sullivan. heritage.org

2 p.m. 1616 Rhode Island Ave. NW. History of U.S. alliances in the Asia-Pacific region. csis.org

4:30 p.m. 800 17th St. NW. 2017 Women In Defense HORIZONS Scholarship celebration. ndia.org

THURSDAY | JULY 27

9:30 a.m. 1152 15th St. NW. Economic levers of U.S. policy toward North Korea. cnas.org

12:30 p.m. 529 14th St. NW. Luncheon with Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley. press.org

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

"God knows how this ends, not me. But I do know this: this disease has never had a more worthy opponent."

- Sen. Lindsey Graham, close personal friend of Sen. John McCain, who has been diagnosed with an aggressive type of brain cancer.

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Subject: Daily on Defense, presented by Northrop Grumman: Shanahan confirmation vote today ... More Pentagon nominees face the Senate ... Lockheed earnings released today ... Mattis' informal style
Date: Tue Jul 18 2017 06:12:10 CDT
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President Trump's pick to be deputy defense secretary, Boeing vice president Pat Shanahan, is set for a final confirmation vote in the Senate today.
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SHANAHAN CONFIRMATION VOTE: President Trump's pick to be deputy defense secretary, Boeing vice president Pat Shanahan, is set for a final confirmation vote in the Senate today. The chamber voted to end debate and move forward Monday evening after a partisan scuffle over the slow pace of approving nominees. After a rocky trip through the Senate, Shanahan, who was passed to the floor by the Senate Armed Services Committee on June 28, could soon be the Defense Department's No. 2 under Defense Secretary Jim Mattis as the department attempts to shore up depleted forces and prepare for a buildup next year. During Shanahan's Armed Services hearing, Sen. John McCain berated him for vague answers on arming the Ukrainians and threatened to hold up the nomination, relenting after Shanahan filed amended answers to his written committee testimony.

MORE NOMINEES IN SENATE: Despite McCain's medical absence due to a blood clot, his Armed Services Committee is pushing ahead today on five Trump administration defense nominees with senior Republican member Sen. James Inhofe holding the gavel. First up this morning, Gen. Paul Selva will face the committee for his re-appointment to vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. McCain has made filling Pentagon positions a top priority this month and Armed Services is slated for a rare afternoon hearing on four nominees:

*Matthew Donovan to be Air Force undersecretary.

*Lucian Niemeyer to be assistant secretary of defense for energy, installations and environment.

*Ellen Lord to be defense undersecretary for acquisition, technology and logistics.

*John H. Gibson II to be deputy chief management officer of the Defense Department.

FROM HERE TO 355 SHIPS: Senate Armed Services will also hold the first of two hearings this afternoon aimed at charting a course for the Navy to reach its goal of a 355-ship fleet. Trump's election and promises of an historic military buildup have sparked a lot of talk about President Ronald Reagan's buildup in the 1980s. The committee will follow that theme with testimony from former Reagan administration officials, including former Navy Secretary John Lehman, who advocated for a 600-ship fleet. Next week's hearings will include naval analysts.

Good Tuesday morning and welcome to Jamie McIntyre's Daily on Defense, compiled by Washington Examiner National Security Senior Writer Jamie McIntyre (@jamiejmcintyre), National Security Writer Travis J. Tritten (@travis_tritten) and Senior Editor David Brown (@dave_brown24). Email us here for tips, suggestions, calendar items and anything else. If a friend sent this to you and you'd like to sign up, click here. If signing up doesn't work, shoot us an email and we'll add you to our list. And be sure to follow us on Twitter @dailyondefense.

LOCKHEED EARNINGS TODAY: Lockheed Martin will announce its second quarter results today at 11. Lockheed is the prime contractor for the F-35 and the Freedom-class littoral combat ship program, and is also in the running for the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent, the Long-Range Standoff missile and the T-X aircraft trainer replacement program. The rest of the big five (General Dynamics, Boeing, Raytheon and Northrop Grumman) are releasing second quarter results next week.

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IRAN DEAL UPHELD, FOR NOW: The Trump Administration is holding its nose and grudgingly certifying that Iran is in compliance with the international nuclear agreement that Trump pledged to dismantle just last year when he was running for office, Joel Gehrke and Sarah Westwood write. The certification by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson comes despite the finding that Iran "is unquestionably in default of the spirit" of the 2016 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, and goes against the advice of many Republican senators who cited Iran's recent violations and broader aggression in the region. A declaration of non-compliance would set the stage for expedited Iran sanctions and a likely fatal disruption of the agreement.

But the White House also took a major step away from the past administration by promising to impose new sanctions against Iran for other questionable activities, such as its ongoing ballistic missile testing. "We [will be] putting on new sanctions to hold Iran accountable for its misbehavior in the region on a bunch of fronts, related to ... things like missiles, and fast boat provocations and that sort of thing; illicit procurement networks and that sort of thing," a senior administration official told reporters.

TWO MORE NOMINEES NAMED: The White House announced yesterday that it plans to nominate two more people for Pentagon posts. Retired Vice Adm. Joseph Kernan, a Navy SEAL who is now senior vice president for SAP National Security Services, would be undersecretary of defense for intelligence. Retired Marine Col. Guy Roberts, president of GBR Consulting, would be assistant defense secretary for nuclear, chemical and biological defense programs.

DEFEATING ISIS WITHOUT PUTIN: Wisconsin Republican Rep. Mike Gallagher argues in an opinion piece this morning in the Washington Examiner that the U.S. should resist the temptation of trying to defeat the Islamic State "on the cheap" by partnering with Russia in Syria. Gallagher argues Russia remains an adversary that works against U.S. interests in the Middle East, and around the world. "This is why it was a surprise when Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said the other week that American and

Russian objectives in Syria were 'exactly the same,' " Gallagher writes. "Why haven't we learned from the mistakes of the last administration?" Read more here.

IT WAS RUSSIA'S FAULT: Tillerson's team issued a pointed reminder on Monday that Russia bears responsibility for the deaths of 298 civilians killed when an airliner was downed over Ukraine in 2014, Joel Gehrke writes.

Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 was shot down on July 17, 2014, as Ukrainian forces clashed with a separatist movement supported by Russian special forces in the eastern part of the country. Putin has denied responsibility for the incident, but Dutch investigators concluded that the plane was downed by a surface-to-air missile launched from "Russian-led forces in eastern Ukraine [who] fired the surface-to-air BUK missile — brought into sovereign Ukrainian territory from Russia — that took down flight MH17," State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert said Monday.

BAGHDADI DEAD OR ALIVE, DOES IT MATTER? Amid the latest conflicting reports that Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is not dead, but alive and in hiding near Raqqa, the Pentagon says it doesn't make much difference. "We don't know one way or another if he's alive or dead," said Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman. "Militarily speaking he's already largely irrelevant because he's not involved in any day-to-day decision making, or command and control that we can see." The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights claimed last week it had "confirmed information" that Baghdadi had been killed, but this week Syrian Kurds fighting near Raqqa said they think he's still alive. "We certainly agree he's better off dead than alive," Davis said.

THE FIGHT FOR RAQQA: While the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces are making steady progress against the ISIS fighters in Raqqa, the attackers are taking heavy casualties as they advance into the old city section of the Islamic State's self-declared capital. "We knew going in that Raqqa was going to be very hard," Davis said, noting that ISIS has had more than two years to prepare for the assault. And he denied that the offensive had stalled in the face of fierce resistance from ISIS. "There is not a consistent degree of progress in any military campaign, it's a stop and go effort by its very nature," Davis said.

CIVCAS PUSHBACK: The Pentagon continues to push back on the long-running dispute with outside advocacy groups who allege the U.S. military's system for tracking civilian casualties vastly undercounts the number of innocents who have died as a result of coalition airstrikes in Iraq and Syria. The latest claim comes from Airwars, an independent transparency group, which says by collating both government and open source reporting it believes the number deaths has jumped dramatically since Trump took office, and now has reached the point at which a dozen or more civilians die each day. At the Pentagon, Davis disputed that, insisting the U.S. military carefully reviews every claim, and holds itself to a very high standard.

"I would encourage all to take with a grain of salt when they see these reports, that profess to have a knowledge of civilian casualties," Davis said. "I think there are well-meaning people and organizations and reporters who will look at reports that they see on social media, and ascribe truth to them, without taking the time to cross reference where we have struck."

VISAS FOR GRANDMA AND GRANDPA: The Trump administration reportedly will allow grandparents of U.S. citizens from the six Muslim-majority countries named in Trump's travel ban to obtain visas and enter the United States. The State Department has issued new guidance after a federal judge in Hawaii ruled against the Trump administration late last week. The Justice Department is appealing the ruling, but in the meantime the definition of "close family" allowed to enter the U.S. under the temporary travel ban will include not just grandparents, but also grandchildren, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, aunts and uncles, nephews and nieces, and first cousins.

MATTIS' PENTAGON PEREGRINATIONS: Mattis has both delighted and confounded Pentagon reporters lately by just showing up at random times in the press area and conducting short impromptu on-the-record interactions with whatever reporters happen to be around. Asked for an explanation of

why Mattis seemingly eschews the traditional briefing room news conference, where journalists know to show up and the secretary's pronouncements are on camera, the Pentagon said essentially that Mattis is a low profile kinda guy.

"The secretary is someone who likes to communicate in small groups and not have a large public posture," Davis said. "He often finds himself wandering around the building, as we've seen, twice on Friday as a matter of fact, and he's always ready to come in here and say, 'Hi.'" Asked if we might see Mattis behind the lectern in the briefing room any time soon, Davis said "I have nothing to announce right at the moment."

THE RUNDOWN

Wall Street Journal: Unable to buy U.S. military drones, allies place orders with China

CNN: Exclusive: CNN witnesses US Navy's drone-killing laser

Washington Post: Foreign-born recruits, promised citizenship by the Pentagon, flee the country to avoid deportation

USA Today: U.S. missile defense plans to zap North Korean threats

New York Times: South Korea proposes military talks with North at their border

Military Times: Senator wants answers on Army contracting issues

Defense News: Gulfstream mounts pro-bizjet blitz ahead of major Air Force competitions

USNI News: Cotton talks tough on Russian non-compliance to INF treaty

Stars and Stripes: US-backed Afghans reclaim key district in Helmand province from Taliban

War on the Rocks: The path to prototype warfare

UPI: Korean Aerospace offices raided in anti-corruption probe

Military Times: Pentagon: Al-Udeid Air Base still open, but U.S. prepared in case Qatar rift escalates

Calendar

TUESDAY | JULY 18

7 a.m. 2425 Wilson Blvd., Arlington Lt. Gen. James Dickinson, commanding general, Army Space and Missile Defense Command, and Army Forces Strategic Command, provides remarks at an Association of the U.S. Army Institute of Land Warfare Breakfast.

9 a.m. 1616 Rhode Island Ave. NW. Seventh Annual CSIS South China Sea Conference: Renewing American leadership in the Asia-Pacific with Sen. Cory Gardner. [csis.org](https://www.csis.org)

9:30 a.m. Dirksen G-50. Nomination of Gen. Paul Selva to be re-appointed to vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs Of Staff. armed-services.senate.gov

10:30 a.m. 1030 15th St. NW. Central Asia and U.S. foreign policy at a great power crossroads. atlanticcouncil.org

2:30 p.m. Dirksen G-50. Nominations of Matthew Donovan to be Air Force undersecretary; Lucian Niemeyer to be assistant secretary of defense for energy, installations and environment; Ellen Lord to be defense under secretary for acquisition, technology, and logistics; and John H. Gibson II to be deputy chief management officer of the Defense Department. armed-services.senate.gov

4 p.m. Russell 222. Options and considerations for achieving a 355-ship Navy from former Reagan administration officials including John Lehman, former Navy secretary. armed-services.senate.gov

WEDNESDAY | JULY 19

1800 Jefferson Davis Hwy. Special topic breakfast series with Joel Szabat, executive director of the U. S. Maritime Administration.

9 a.m. 1775 Massachusetts Ave. NW. A 21st century Truman Doctrine? U.S. foreign policy discussion with Sen. Tim Kaine. brookings.edu

9 a.m. Hart 216. Nomination of Susan Gordon to be principal deputy director of national intelligence at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and Robert P. Storch to be inspector general of the National Security Agency. intelligence.senate.gov

12:15 p.m. 1211 Connecticut Ave. NW. South Asia's evolving strategic doctrines. stimson.org

2 p.m. Rayburn 2200. Subcommittee markup of the Counterterrorism Screening and Assistance Act of 2017. foreignaffairs.house.gov

2:15 p.m. Rayburn 2200. Saudi Arabia's troubling educational curriculum. foreignaffairs.house.gov

3:30 p.m. 1030 15th St. NW. Russia sanctions revisited panel discussion with retired ambassadors Daniel Fried and Richard Morningstar. atlanticcouncil.org

4:15 p.m. Dirksen 419. The collapse of the rule of law in Venezuela and what the United States and the international community can do to restore democracy. foreign.senate.gov

THURSDAY | JULY 20

9:30 a.m. Dirksen 419. Kay Bailey Hutchison to be the permanent U.S. representative on the NATO council. foreign.senate.gov

10:30 a.m. 1616 Rhode Island Ave. NW. The dangers of the looming constituent assembly in Venezuela and why the international community must act. csis.org

FRIDAY | JULY 21

8:30 a.m. 1030 15th St. NW. Venezuela on the edge and the time for new international action. atlanticcouncil.org

9:30 a.m. 1616 Rhode Island Ave. NW. Examining the geopolitical impact of the 4th Estate. csis.org

MONDAY | JULY 24

2 p.m. 1152 15th St. NW. Release of the report "Higher, Heavier, Farther, and Now Undetectable? Bombers: Long-Range Force Projection in the 21st Century" with Jerry Hendrix. cnas.org

TUESDAY | JULY 25

10 a.m. 1616 Rhode Island Ave. NW. Future of vertical lift and forging a new paradigm with David

Dowling of Northrop Grumman; Keith Flail with Bell Helicopter; Richard Koucheravy with Sikorsky; Dave Schreck of Rockwell Collins Government Systems; H. Eric "Delta" Burke of Harris Corporation; and Col. Robert Freeland with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics. csis.org

12 p.m. 214 Massachusetts Ave. NE. Lessons from Rome: Civic virtue and the empire's decline with Hugh Liebert, associate professor at the United States Military Academy. heritage.org

2:30 p.m. Russell 222. Options and considerations for achieving a 355-ship Navy from naval analysts. armed-services.senate.gov

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The secretary is someone who likes to communicate in small groups and not have a large public posture. He often finds himself wandering around the building."

- Pentagon spokesman Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, on Defense Secretary Jim Mattis' penchant for holding impromptu off-camera engagements with small groups of Pentagon reporters.

[Access the Daily on Defense archives here](#)

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By Dylan Byers and the CNNMoney Media team. View this email in your browser!

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Future of Media: By 2025, more than 20% of new cars will be fully or semi-autonomous, according to a new Business Insider Intelligence report. That means that in stop-and-go traffic, drivers will be able to "turn away from the road and make use of a car's built-in infotainment system to look at news, select music, or even watch streaming video."

"As drivers slowly transform into passengers," BI says, "the car will continue to emerge as a new platform for media consumption and engagement."

And on that note, welcome to Reliable Sources, this is Dylan Byers in for Brian Stelter...

The talk of Sun Valley

So NBC's Tom Brokaw moderated a panel at the Allen & Co. conference on Thursday morning called "America Divided" -- about, ya know, our polarized politics -- and guess who was sitting near the front, per an attendee?

Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump.

Kushner and Trump's presence at the annual big-wig retreat is still the talk of Sun Valley: "Every year has its own 'new' celebs," one regular attendee tells me -- Travis Kalanick when Uber was having its breakout moment, Brian Chesky when Airbnb was having its breakout moment, etc. "It feels the same around Jared and Ivanka."

As we noted in yesterday's newsletter, much of the Sun Valley crowd is pretty anti-Trump. But the couple is hardly lacking for friends. The New York Post reports that they were spotted walking into today's session with billionaire GOP backer Ken Langone and his wife Elaine.

Meanwhile, sources at the White House remain annoyed by the absence... and the general sense that Jared & Ivanka aren't pulling their weight.

Consolidation, consolidation, consolidation

CNBC: CEOs in Sun Valley "expect a new wave of media consolidation, with AT&T's acquisition of Time Warner shedding a spotlight on distribution companies' need for content to differentiate their services.... Plus there's pressure from streaming companies and cord cutting on traditional business

models..."

But: No deals yet.

However: CBS chief Les Moonves once again expressed interest in buying CNN, if it were ever for sale: "CNN is a very worthy news organization," he told CNBC. "It's something that could enhance CBS. But I don't think that's on the table right now. If it came up later on, it would be something we would look at."

Strange timing on that, given this....

CBS News, BBC join forces

CBS News and BBC News have announced a new editorial and newsgathering partnership.

The deal will bolster both organizations' coverage, CBS News president David Rhodes told me. CBS gets access to BBC's global footprint. BBC gets a new inroad into America and the biggest story on earth: the Trump presidency.

"We couldn't pass up an opportunity like this," Rhodes told me. "When you think about the BBC's size and how comprehensive their news report is, that's why it's great for us, that's why this one is so exciting."

"It's hard to cover the world in a comprehensive way," he said. "You take a big story like Syria, sometimes they're in a better place, sometimes we're in a better place. This makes everybody stronger."

The BBC deal replaces CBS's previous partnership with Sky, which is likely to be acquired by 21st Century Fox pending regulatory approval in the UK. The two organizations will begin sharing content immediately, and -- good news -- the companies say there will be no layoffs at either company as a result of the deal.

Bad news for ABC?

An emailer calls it "a massive blow" to ABC's foreign newsgathering because "ABC is so incredibly reliant on the BBC overseas for video, editorial and logistical. ABC (and CBS) has such a tiny footprint overseas that so often the first call on a big story is to the BBC to figure out what they're doing."

An ABC source takes issue with that: "It's very disappointing after a long and productive partnership... [But] there are plenty of opportunities for new and innovative cooperative global newsgathering arrangements." One of those opportunities is, of course, Sky...

Trump still antagonizing media

As if anti-media rhetoric and off-camera briefings weren't enough, the Trump White House found new ways to antagonize journalists on Thursday, straining a relationship that already feels like it's at breaking point:

1. Cherry-picked quotes: On Trump's request, the White House released excerpts from an off-the-record conversation he had with journalists on his plane trip to Paris. But they didn't release all of it. And when reporters asked that two other excerpts from the conversation be included, the White House did not do so.

"If the president speaks to reporters off the record, and then puts parts of it on the record, we're essentially giving him quote approval," USA Today's Gregory Korte tweeted. "Even if 99% is on-the-

record, I'd want to hear a pretty good argument about why the 1% can't also be on the record."

Tom Kludt wrote about the off/on-the-record issue here...

2. Denying reporters a chance to ask questions: In a break with protocol, Trump called on a non-American journalist during his press conference with the French President. This meant only one American journalist got to ask Trump a question.

These joint press conferences traditionally include two questions from journalists of the host nation (in this case, France) and two questions from journalists of the visiting nation (in this case, the United States). Jonathan Lemire, a White House reporter for the Associated Press, said it seemed like "a clear violation of protocol for this question not to go to an American journalist." Here's my full story...

Four months without a press conference

WashPost's Erik Wemple: "Trump has gone four months without a formal solo news conference, while dispersing thoughts about the 'fake news' media being the 'enemy' of the people; his aides have crippled the White House press briefing by banning cameras and prohibiting real-time audio; he and his people continue attempting to discredit the news media, yet love to cite it when the news is good..."

The Big Picture:

The Trump White House probably isn't going to wake up one day and decide it's time to be nicer to the media, or give it more access. Perhaps the more important question is: How will this White House's behavior affect future administrations?

Barring some surprise, the next president won't be in office til 2021 or 2025. After four/eight years of off-camera briefings and months-long stretches without a solo press conference, is the next president really going to feel the need to do anything differently? "Treatment of the media" is hardly at the top of voters' list of concerns.

Alternatively, you can see a scenario in which a candidate runs in part on the promise of greater transparency -- "Make America Accountable Again" -- or, simply, restoring an air of civility to our politics and our media...

Maddow viewer emailed Trump's lawyer, and the lawyer responded with "threats and profanity"

Brian Stelter emails from vacation: This ProPublica story is jaw-dropping. The headline: "Trump Lawyer Marc Kasowitz Threatens Stranger in Emails: 'Watch Your Back, Bitch.'"

What happened? Someone watching cable news emailed Kasowitz. Justin Elliott explains: "After hearing Rachel Maddow discuss our recent story about Kasowitz, a man emailed the attorney urging him to resign. Kasowitz responded with threats and profanity." Read all about it here...

-- Fun/weird fact: Kasowitz is also representing AMC in the "massive lawsuit" filed by fired "Walking Dead" creator Frank Darabont... THR has a brand-new, remarkable piece about the suit here...

Trump's new lineman

The White House's Sebastian Gorka "has emerged as one of President Trump's favorite cable news defenders," Axios' Jonathan Swan reports:

"In the more establishment-aligned parts of the White House, Sebastian Gorka is a figure of ridicule, with some staff believing he's an embarrassment when he represents the administration on TV... But to Trump's nationalist base, and the one person who matters inside the White House, he's become a rock star in recent days. Gorka's stock has soared as President Trump has watched him on various cable

channels fighting with the hosts and accusing them of being part of the 'fake news industrial complex.'"

For the record, part one

-- HuffPost says it's going in search of Middle America... via a 7-week, 23-city bus tour... (Politico)

-- CNN's mobile app is under siege from Trump supporters... (Digiday)

-- No, Billy Bush is not hosting a new show for Fox TV stations... (GossipCop)

This week's Reliable Sources podcast

Do Trump's tweets bring out the worst in him AND the news media?

FiveThirtyEight EIC Nate Silver talked with Brian about whether the president's media bashing gives him "the appearance of doing something" as he faces "uphill" battles over health care and Russian meddling. Silver and Stelter also discussed how Americans are in a "permanent campaign mode." Listen via iTunes or other podcasting services... and subscribe via iTunes here...

Are the Mercers funding Milo?

New evidence obtained by BuzzFeed suggests the Mercers, the billionaire right-wing donor family, may have funded Milo Yiannopoulos after he resigned from Breitbart News in the wake of a controversial video.

"Leaked documents, including a promissory note and emails, as well as conversations with several people familiar with the matter, strongly imply that the Mercers funded Yiannopoulos following his resignation," BuzzFeed's Joseph Bernstein reports. "Together, they suggest that the financiers of the new conservative politics aren't simply interested in protecting their money, but in winning a brutal new culture war waged largely online." The Mercers are also big backers of Breitbart News...

New Time cover: "Red Handed"

"This is one Time magazine cover President Trump might not want to frame," CNNMoney's Jill Disis writes. "The cover story, written by Time editor-at-large David Von Drehle, explores what kind of damage the email story might cause for Trump Jr. and his father's presidency."

>> Von Drehle on "CNN Tonight:" "We know that President Trump, in particular, has a thing about Time covers." But "I don't think this one" is going to end up on the walls of his golf clubs...
...and from The Washington Post: a collection of "every Russia story Trump said was fake news or a 'witch hunt.'"

"Over the past year -- regardless of intelligence reports that found Russians attempting to influence the U.S. election — Donald Trump's rhetoric has remained consistent. He dismisses any allegation of Russian interference in the election as a 'hoax' or 'fake news' -- often blaming the Democrats for making it all up.... This video... explores the consistency of Trump's rhetoric, despite the evolution of the charges about the Kremlin's role in the 2016 election."

"Very angry -- at the media"

Brian Stelter emails: Robert Leonard, the Iowa radio news director who appeared on last Sunday's "Reliable Sources," sent along this message (reality check?) about solid Trump support:

"I just thought you might want to know conservative friends here in Iowa are very angry -- at the media. They think the Trump/Russia deal is a coup attempt by the media, and don't think there is anything to the Russia/ Trump, Jr. emails. They don't understand why the media is trying to oust our duly elected president. They think there is a double standard -- why isn't anyone investigating the Clinton campaign/Russia connections? They are standing firm behind Trump..."

For the record, part two

-- Local news staff in Denver are worried about the Sinclair/Tribune deal... (The Denver Post)

-- Reporters need better tools for communicating with sources... (Slate)

-- Several prominent NPR journos tweeted this on Thursday: "NPR management is in the midst of contract negotiations with NPR journalists and morale is in the dumps." They promoted this web site about the contract talks... ("We Make NPR")

Historic Pulitzer appointment

Via NYT "Dana Canedy, a former senior editor at The New York Times, will be the next administrator of journalism's most prestigious award... Ms. Canedy — who was part of a Times team that won the 2001 Pulitzer for national reporting for a series about race in America — will help steer the awards process, working with the Pulitzer board on matters like jury selection. She is the first woman and the first African-American to hold the position."

The entertainment desk

Here are this year's Emmy nominations

HBO dominates with 111 nominations, Netflix gets 91.... 'Saturday Night Live' and 'Westworld' net 22 nominations each.... New shows top drama
When: Sept. 17; Where: Los Angeles. On: CBS. Host: Stephen Colbert.

Here are the top takeaways from CNN Entertainment and around the web... and see the full list of nominees here.

Brian Lowry: The Big Picture

"There was practically something for everyone: HBO maintained its perennial lead as the most-nominated network (despite new players like Hulu yapping at its heels), Netflix crept up on its shoulder and NBC proved broadcasters can still play in this game, thanks largely to 'This is Us' -- the first best drama candidate on a major network since 2011 -- and 'Saturday Night Live,' which rode Donald Trump's coattails into the cultural zeitgeist. ...

"That said, the nominations produced some noteworthy oversights, and perhaps inevitable sins of omission. And while Emmy voters... impressively embraced the new, in places they exhibited a continued habit of voting in part based on reputation."

Lisa Respers France: Freshman blitz

"It was all about the freshman class in the drama category: Five newbies, including 'This Is Us,' 'Westworld,' 'The Handmaid's Tale,' 'The Crown' and 'Stranger Things' will compete with 'Better Call Saul' and 'House of Cards.'"

Where's "Game of Thrones," you ask? Not eligible due to the later start date. Season 7 premieres Sunday -- as if you didn't already know. ... Bonus: Brian Lowry calls 'Thrones' the perfect pay-TV warrior.

Frank Pallotta: The anti-Trump bump

"President Trump's biggest critics in late night received television's biggest acclaim... CBS' 'The Late Show with Stephen Colbert,' HBO's 'Last Week Tonight with John Oliver,' and TBS' 'Full Frontal with Samantha Bee' all received nominations for Outstanding Variety Talk Series.

"'Saturday Night Live,' arguably President Trump's biggest critic in late night, earned 22 Emmy nominations."

Bill Carter tells Frank: "It's seems pretty clear that to impress with comedy this season you had to have a point of view about what we used to call 'current affairs' and we now call the Trump Administration."

Sandra Gonzalez: Hidden gems

"The 65-page list of nominations is a lot to digest, so I did some of the leg work. From a nomination for Barb (Shannon Purser) from 'Stranger Things' to Snoop Dogg and Martha Stewart's big moment, here are the hidden gems of Emmy nominations."

Bonus: Sandra talked to "Handmaid's Tale" executive producer Bruce Miller, who said he thinks the show, which received an impressive 13 nominations, is just the start of what will be more great television about women.

NYT's John Koblin: "Year of the actress"

Koblin writes: "This may be the year of the actress at the Emmys... Last month, when the Television Critics Association announced the nominees for its acting categories — one for drama, one for comedy, neither separated by gender — 11 of the 14 nominees were women...."

"The limited series and TV movie best-actress category will be a showdown between four Oscar winners from two shows: HBO's 'Big Little Lies' (Nicole Kidman, Reese Witherspoon) and FX's 'Feud: Bette and Joan' (Susan Sarandon, Jessica Lange). The other nominees were Carrie Coon for FX's ' Fargo,' her first Emmy nomination, and Felicity Huffman for 'American Crime.'"

THR's Scott Feinberg: What got snubbed

Feinberg writes: "In this era of Peak TV, when nobody can possibly see everything (or even come close to doing so), Thursday's noms make it crystal-clear that the roughly 20,000 members of the TV Academy are far more susceptible to buzz from PR efforts than raves from critics.

"How else can one explain the egregious snubs of FX's 'The Americans' and Amazon's 'Transparent' in favor of two tired shows, the aforementioned 'House of Cards' and ABC's 'Modern Family,' in the drama and comedy series categories, respectively, as well as almost across-the-board neglect of the acclaimed final season of HBO's 'The Leftovers' and 'Insecure', FX's 'Legion' and Starz's 'American Gods?'"

CNN nominations

More from Lisa Respers France: "We will shamelessly self-promote that CNN earned four nominations including for W. Kamau Bell as host of "United Shades Of America" and CNN's travel series "Anthony Bourdain Parts Unknown."

Yes, yes, we will.

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NEWS

Jokowi Urges Trump To Anticipate Terrorism Outside Iraq and Syria
Tempo.co

Jokowi is convinced that the US keeps on combating against terrorism without turning hostile toward Islam. Such an attitude, Jokowi continued, is in ...
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Egypt welcomes 'eradication' of terrorism, extremism in Libya's Benghazi
Ahram Online

Egypt welcomed Saturday a "purge of terrorist and extremist organisations" from Libya's Benghazi after Libyan National Army (LNA) chief Khalifa ...
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TATP: explosive of choice for 'Neo JMB'
The Daily Star

The deadly explosive triacetone triperoxide or TATP, used by terrorists in Paris, Brussels and London attacks, has of late become "Neo JMB" militants' ...
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Europe trip shows how the Trump Doctrine is situational and always in flux

Donald Trump clenches his fist yesterday in front of the Warsaw Uprising Monument on Krasinski Square. (Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images)

BY JAMES HOHMANN
with Breanne Deppisch and Joanie Greve

THE BIG IDEA: Just seven weeks ago, in Saudi Arabia, President Trump assiduously avoided using the term “radical Islamic terrorism.” Not long ago, he vociferously attacked Barack Obama for not uttering those very words. But pragmatists in the administration, such as National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster, warned the commander-in-chief that this rhetoric is counterproductive.

The term made a comeback in Poland on Thursday. “We are fighting hard against radical Islamic terrorism, and we will prevail,” Trump said in Warsaw.

Comparing the president’s two major foreign policy speeches reveals the extent to which the Trump Doctrine is forever in flux and offers a window into the internal maneuvering to define it.

“This is not a battle between different faiths, different sects, or different civilizations,” Trump told Arab leaders in Riyadh. “This is a battle between barbaric criminals who seek to obliterate human life and decent people.”

In Warsaw, though, Trump referred 10 separate times to a clash of civilizations. “The fundamental question of our time is whether the West has the will to survive,” he told a crowd that included people who had been bused in by the ruling party to cheer for him. “Do we have the confidence in our values to defend them at any cost? Do we have enough respect for our citizens to protect our borders? Do we have the desire and the courage to preserve our civilization in the face of those who would subvert and destroy it?” The president concluded by confidently declaring that “the West will never, ever be broken”: “Our values will prevail, our people will thrive and our civilization will triumph.”

Compare that to his message in Riyadh: “America will not seek to impose our way of life on others, but to outstretch our hands in the spirit of cooperation and trust. ... We are not here to lecture. We are not here to tell other people how to live, what to do, who to be, or how to worship.”

Trump has often used the phrase ‘radical Islamic terrorism.’ But not in Saudi Arabia.

-- Trump has also changed his tune on NATO since the last trip. In May, he caught McMaster and Defense Secretary Jim Mattis off guard by nixing language from a carefully prepared speech that reaffirmed the United States commitment to mutual defense obligations under Article 5 of the NATO charter. Ahead of the speech at the alliance’s headquarters in Brussels, senior administration officials told reporters that Trump would deliver the lines. His decision to cut them was seen as a win for White House Chief Strategist Stephen Bannon and senior adviser Stephen Miller.

Yesterday, the president delivered the line that these aides had wanted him to say in May: “The United States has demonstrated not merely with words but with its actions that we stand firmly behind Article 5.”

-- Boiling it down, McMaster got what he wanted from Trump on NATO this time but not on “radical Islamic terrorism.” And vice versa for Bannon and Miller.

This reflects the messiness of the ongoing war for the soul of Trumpism that rages on inside the administration, pitting the nationalists against the globalists. Neither faction is likely to ever decisively win out over the other. Trump, who puts a premium on keeping his options open, seems determined to never let himself get defined as one or the other for very long. Just as we saw throughout his campaign, he enjoys not just being unpredictable and improvisational but having competing power centers underneath him. Because he lacks many core convictions, he’s ideologically flexible.

That means that proximity to power matters far more in this White House than normal ones. Fairly or not, Trump has earned a reputation for doing whatever the last person he talks with suggests when trying to make up his mind. That makes facetime especially valuable.

H.R. McMaster arrives in the Rose Garden last Friday to watch a joint statement by Donald Trump and Moon Jae-in, South Korea’s president. (Andrew Harrer/Bloomberg)

-- Trump’s top aides are divided on a host of big questions, including whether to consider scaling back sanctions on Russia. Mattis and McMaster have hawkish views while Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has seemed more open to it. Two fresh news stories reflect other battle lines:

The military’s ability to determine troop levels in Afghanistan has secretly been curtailed. The Wall Street Journal’s Dion Nissenbaum reports: “A few days after (Trump) gave his Pentagon chief the unilateral authority last month to send thousands of American troops to Afghanistan at his own discretion, the White House sent classified guidance that effectively limits the number of forces. The memo, sent by (McMaster) to a small group of administration officials, said that the president would let (Mattis) send no more than 3,900 troops to Afghanistan without coming back to confer with the White House. ... The conflicting messages reflect divisions that have surfaced in the Trump administration as it tries to develop a comprehensive new strategy for Afghanistan.”

Tera Dahl, deputy chief of staff at the National Security Council and a former columnist for Breitbart, is leaving the White House. BuzzFeed’s John Hudson reports: “Dahl entered the White House with strong ties to members of the nationalist wing ... including Bannon, whose website she wrote for, and NSC aide Sebastian Gorka, whose wife worked with Dahl at the Council on Global Security, a now-defunct counterterrorism think tank that warned about the dangers of Islam. During her time at the White House, Dahl became a key ally of Keith Kellogg, the NSC’s chief of staff who maintains a strong

personal relationship with the president. White House aides said tensions between Kellogg and McMaster have created an uncomfortable working environment at the NSC ... One source said (Dahl) is likely to be nominated to a position at the US Agency for International Development.”

Trump chats with French President Emmanuel Macron before a family photo at the G-20 summit this morning. (Carlos Barria/Reuters)

-- All of this contributes to the mixed messages that Trump sometimes sends. Consider his posture on Russia:

In his scripted speech, which went through the traditional vetting process of the national security apparatus, Trump was firm: “We urge Russia to cease its destabilizing activities in the Ukraine and elsewhere and its support for hostile regimes, including Syria and Iran, and instead join the community of responsible nations in our fight against common enemies and defense of civilization itself.”

In his unscripted press conference, however, Trump refused to endorse the assessment of the U.S. intelligence community that Russia interfered in last year’s election. “Nobody really knows for sure,” he insisted, noting that the same agencies also thought Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. “They were wrong and it led to a mess,” he said.

-- When presidential pronouncements appear to be all over the place, they pack less of a punch. That’s why everyone pays so much attention to Trump’s Twitter feed. It is the clearest window into what he truly thinks. Ahead of his meeting with Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the G-20 meeting in Hamburg, the president posted a stream of tweets this morning that were clearly not written by staff:

Trumps asks ‘whether the West has the will to survive’

TWELVE TAKES ON TRUMP’S WARSAW SPEECH:

*Post columnist Eugene Robinson: “Viewing the fight against terrorism as some kind of civilizational Armageddon is wrong. Trump seems to view himself as the West’s defender against 1.6 billion Muslims, almost all of whom want only to live in peace. We need a capable president, not a crusader in chief.”

*The Post’s Editorial Board: “Trump wants us to defend ‘our values.’ Which ones?”

*Walter Shapiro for The Guardian: “Trump’s warning about ‘western civilisation’ evokes holy war. About all that was missing from Trump’s Warsaw war cry was a rousing chorus of ‘Onward Christian Soldiers.’”

*Bloomberg’s Marc Champion: “Trump Just Redefined Western Values Around Faith, Not Democracy.”

*The Atlantic’s Peter Beinart: “When the president says being Western is the essence of America’s identity, he’s in part defining America in opposition to some of its own people.”

*WorldViews’s Ishaan Tharoor: “Trump appealed to the blood-and-soil nationalism and Christian triumphalism that has defined his political brand and that of the far right in Europe. ... The most glaring omission in Trump’s speech — though no longer surprising — was of any discussion of democracy or human rights.”

*The Wall Street Journal Editorial Board calls it “Trump’s defining speech”: “Six months into his first term of office, Mr. Trump finally offered the core of what could become a governing philosophy. It is a determined and affirmative defense of the Western tradition.”

*Politico’s Annie Karni: “Trump hands a victory to Polish nationalists. Historians and observers say the president’s decision to break with tradition by skipping a trip to Warsaw’s Holocaust memorial plays into the ruling party’s message.”

*The Associated Press's Ken Thomas: "Trump's Poland visit a study in breaking norms."

*The libertarian Reason Magazine's Matt Welch: "The president's Warsaw speech takes a paranoid view of internal threats while downplaying the central role that international exchange has played in the rise of the West."

*Breitbart's story about the speech, meanwhile, compares Trump to "another Western leader of indomitable resolve: Winston Churchill."

*Conservative columnist Charles Krauthammer said it was Trump's best speech and called it Reaganesque on Fox News.

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WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING:

Russian President Vladimir Putin arrives for the opening day of the G-20 summit in Hamburg. (Lukas Barth/European Pressphoto Agency)

-- Russia has ramped up its intelligence-gathering efforts inside the United States, according to current and former U.S. intelligence officials, who believe Moscow feels "emboldened" by the lack of retaliation for interfering in last year's election. CNN's Pamela Brown, Shimon Prokupecz and Evan Perez report: "Since the November election, US intelligence and law enforcement agencies have detected an increase in suspected Russian intelligence officers entering the US under the guise of other business ... Russia is believed to now have nearly 150 suspected intelligence operatives in the US, these sources said. [Officials] say the Russians are replenishing their ranks after the US in December expelled 35 Russian diplomats suspected of spying ... Fueling law enforcement officials' concern is that the Russians are targeting people in the US who can provide access to classified information ... In some cases, Russian spies have tried to gain employment at places with sensitive information as part of their intelligence-gathering efforts, the sources say. But that hasn't stopped the State Department from issuing the temporary duty visas — also known as TDY — to the suspected Russian intelligence officers."

-- Hackers are targeting the computer networks of companies operating nuclear facilities in the United States and other countries, according to a new joint report from the DHS and the FBI, which was given an urgent "amber alert" classification. The New York Times' Nicole Perlroth reports: "Among the companies targeted was the Wolf Creek Nuclear Operating Corporation, which operates a nuclear power plant near Burlington, Kan. ... The report did not indicate whether the cyberattacks were an attempt at espionage — such as stealing industrial secrets — or part of a plan to cause destruction. There is no indication that hackers had been able to jump from their victims' computers into the control systems of the facilities, nor is it clear how many facilities had been successfully targeted. ... The hackers appeared determined to map out computers networks for future attacks ... But investigators have not been able to analyze the malicious 'payload' of the hackers' code, which would offer more detail into what they were after. In most cases, the attacks targeted people — industrial control engineers who have direct access to systems that, if damaged, could lead to an explosion, fire or a spill of dangerous material."

-- A federal judge ruled that grandparents are not exempt from the Trump administration's amended travel ban following the Supreme Court's decision on the order. Matt Zapotosky reports: "U.S. District Judge Derrick K. Watson wrote that he would not 'usurp the prerogative of the Supreme Court,' and if those suing over the ban wanted relief, they should take their claims there. ... Neal Katyal, a lawyer for those challenging the ban, noted on Twitter the ruling offered no decision on the 'merits of dispute,' but simply said it was the Supreme Court's place to decide. ... The matter is likely bound for higher courts."

Scalise readmitted to intensive care

-- House Majority Whip Steve Scalise underwent another surgery to manage an infection in his wounds, his medical team said last night. The Louisiana Republican "remains in serious condition" one day after being readmitted to the ICU. His doctors declined to give additional details but said Scalise "tolerated the procedure well." (Clarence Williams)

*A man was arrested for threatening a staffer at Sen. Jeff Flake's office in Tucson. Referencing last month's shooting at the Republican congressional baseball practice where Scalise was wounded, the suspect reportedly said: "You know how liberals are going to solve the Republican problem? They are going to get better aim. That last guy tried, but he needed better aim." (Tucson News Now)

*A federal judge ordered a Pennsylvania man accused of bringing a military-style rifle to the Trump International Hotel in May to undergo a psychiatric examination. (Spencer S. Hsu)

*A Connecticut man admitted to spray-painting an elementary school with anti-Trump graffiti in an attempt to frame Democrats. Steven Marks told police that he wrote the at-times profane messages out of "anger towards liberals and they are breaking major laws everyday and being disrespectful towards our government." (Hartford Courant)

Protesters gather for the Women's March on Washington on Jan. 21. (Amanda Voisard For The Washington Post)

GET SMART FAST:

1.A Post poll found that around one in three Washingtonians has marched in protest against Trump at least once since January, including more than half of white residents. High-income residents are among the most likely Trump protesters this year. (Paul Schwartzman and Emily Guskin)

2.Trump is slated to appoint Georgia Public Health Commissioner Brenda Fitzgerald as CDC director. Fitzgerald, 70, an obstetrician-gynecologist who has led that state's public health department since 2011, will succeed Tom Frieden. "Within CDC, Fitzgerald's actions will be watched closely to discern whether she will allow politics to overrule science," Lena H. Sun reports. "She condemned graphic antiabortion ads aired by her GOP opponent in her first bid for elected office, saying the government had no business dictating abortion policy."

3.A new CDC report found the number of opioid prescriptions written by health-care providers has dropped for the very first time since the start of the modern drug crisis, falling more than 13 percent between 2012 and 2015. Still, researchers are expressing tempered optimism about the results, noting that prescription rates still triple levels from the late '90s and quadruple the numbers of some European countries. (Lenny Bernstein)

4.Hobby Lobby's \$3 million fine for smuggling Iraqi artifacts is casting a shadow over the Museum of the Bible. Hobby Lobby President Steve Green chairs the board of the museum, which is set to open near the Mall in November. (Julie Zauzmer and Sarah Pulliam Bailey)

5.Research by Scottish scientists indicates that Mars's surface is covered with a "toxic cocktail" of chemicals capable of destroying living organisms. In related news, Mike Pence pledged yesterday that the United States would send astronauts to Mars. (The Guardian/CNN)

6.Overriding the Republican governor's veto, Illinois lawmakers passed their first budget in two years. The state had fallen \$15 billion behind on bills and its credit rating teetered on the brink of junk status. (Chicago Tribune)

7.Prosecutors and defense attorneys delivered closing arguments yesterday in Joe Arpaio's trial for contempt. The former Phoenix-area sheriff is accused of purposely flouting a court injunction on conducting immigration-enforcement operations. A judge will now decide. (The Arizona Republic)

8.Fox Business Network host Charles Payne has been suspended due to sexual harassment allegations. A political analyst for the network claims that she was coerced into a sexual relationship with him. Corporate is investigating. (LA Times)

9.A New York hospital offered to admit Charlie Gard. New York Presbyterian Hospital and Columbia University Irving Medical Center said that they could accommodate the terminally ill child if safe

transportation methods from Britain could be secured. (Lindsey Bever and Alex Horton)

10.The Paris prosecutor's office has opened an investigation into a Vegas trip that French President Emmanuel Macron took as economy minister last year. The prosecutor is investigating possible "favoritism" for the trip that Macron used to boost French tech startups. (AP)

11.A Delta Airlines flight from Seattle to Beijing was forced to turn back after a passenger attacked a flight attendant. The passenger was subdued, and a Delta spokesperson said that there was no indication the incident represented a national security threat. (Travis M. Andrews)

12.The family of a former NFL player accused of killing his mother blames football for making him violent. De'von Hall's uncle said of his increasingly erratic behavior over the years, "He turned into something that became vicious, and that was the sport he was in. The more vicious, the more accolades you get." (Des Bieler)

13.Microsoft began its latest round of layoffs. The company said that thousands of jobs will be cut, mostly in the sales department, but it declined to confirm reports that put the exact figure around 3,000 jobs. (Hayley Tsukayama)

14.QVC and Home Shopping Network have agreed to a merger. The parent firm of QVC will buy the remaining 62 percent of HSN that it does not already own. (Sintia Radu)

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell laughs during a ribbon-cutting ceremony yesterday for Exit 30 on Interstate 65 in Bowling Green, Ky. (Austin Anthony/Daily News via AP)

HEALTH-CARE LATEST:

-- Mitch McConnell suggested that he would work with Senate Democrats to shore up ACA insurance markets if a repeal bill does not pass. Juliet Eilperin and Amy Goldstein report: "The remarks, made at a Rotary Club lunch in Glasgow, Ky., represent a significant shift for the veteran legislator. While he had raised the idea last week that Republicans may have to turn to Democrats if they cannot pass their own bill, his words mark the first time he has explicitly raised the prospect of shoring up the ACA. ... McConnell on Thursday acknowledged how difficult it is proving to craft an alternative that can satisfy the GOP's conservative and centrist camps ... His suggestion that he and his colleagues might instead try to bolster the insurance exchanges created under the ACA is at odds with Republican talking points that they are beyond repair."

-- The timetable for a possible vote on a new Senate health-care bill is getting pushed back again: McConnell now hopes for a vote in two weeks. Politico's Burgess Everett and Josh Dawsey report: "There is unlikely to be a consensus new draft of the bill next week until there's tentative buy-in from the vast majority of the 52-member caucus."

-- The same day that McConnell opened the door to bipartisan collaboration, Ted Cruz expressed support for "repeal, then replace." (Everyone, including the Texas senator, knows there are not the votes to do this.) Sean Sullivan reports: "[Cruz] said Thursday that he agrees with President Trump: If Republican senators are unable to pass a bill to repeal and replace key parts of the Affordable Care Act, the Senate should vote on a narrower bill to simply repeal the law and work on a replacement later ... Cruz said such a repeal should be delayed 'either a year or two years' to give lawmakers time to work on a replacement ... Cruz, who has advocated for a 'clean repeal' in the past, said he still believes the Senate can pass some version of the sweeping bill to repeal and replace the ACA ... 'I believe we can get to yes,' said Cruz. 'I don't know if we will.'"

-- In his first town hall since coming out against McConnell's original health-care bill, Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) clarified that he would "not necessarily" vote against the final proposal. David Weigel reports: "Moran, the only Republican senator holding unscreened town halls on health care this week, revealed just how much his party is struggling to pass a bill — and even how to talk about it ... Moran announced the Palco event with a full week's notice, and Kansas's pro-ACA groups mobilized to fill it ... The result was a polite but heated round of questions that Moran occasionally chose not to answer ... He did not describe the task facing Republicans as repeal; it was 'repair, replace, whatever language people are

using.’ Pressed by activists and voters, Moran said that he did not want to cut back Medicaid.”

-- Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) has become more adamant about the inclusion of an amendment, crafted by Cruz, that would expand insurance options by allowing plans to skirt certain ACA requirements. Lee’s spokesperson said: “The entire bill is unacceptable without the Consumer Freedom Option.” (Axios’ Caitlin Owens)

-- Amid the squabbling, Sen. Patrick Toomey offered a simple reason for why Republicans have struggled so significantly to reach a consensus on health care: no one thought Trump would win. Paul Kane has a really smart column: “‘Look, I didn’t expect Donald Trump to win. I think most of my colleagues didn’t, so we didn’t expect to be in this situation,’ the Pennsylvania Republican said ... Every important Republican leader expected Democrat Hillary Clinton to win, and that left Republicans confused and paralyzed about how to proceed when she didn’t. That in turn led to a rushed initial decision, made in consultation with House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.) and ... McConnell during the presidential transition, to push for a full repeal of the 2010 health law and then set up a two- to three-year window in which Republicans would pass bills to replace it. We all know how that has gone so far.”

-- The Ohio House decided not to override Gov. John Kasich’s veto of a bill that would have frozen expanded Medicaid enrollment. The bill, if enacted, would have paused the state’s expanded enrollment beginning in July 2018, which Kasich estimated would cost 500,000 low-income residents their insurance within 18 months. (The Columbus Dispatch)

-- As the GOP legislation remains in limbo, Democrats are wrestling with a more radical idea: universal coverage. Weigel reports: “Democrats, who are largely using the week-long recess to rally opposition to the Republicans’ deeply unpopular attempt to repeal parts of the Affordable Care Act, are now facing a political challenge of their own: increasing pressure from their liberal base to embrace universal, government-funded health-care coverage ... Republicans have noticed — and have begun to attack. Facing a widespread voter backlash over the House and Senate repeal bills, they’re trying to make universal coverage a political anchor for Democrats by asking whether they can seriously defend trillions of dollars in new taxes and spending.”

A souvenir kiosk in Moscow depicts Putin holding a baby-faced Trump. (Mladen Antonov/Getty Images)

MORE ON THE BEAR IN THE WOODS:

-- There might not be an American note-taker when Trump and Putin hold their first bilateral meeting today on the sidelines of the G-20 summit. Axios’ Jonathan Swan says there will likely only be six people in the room: the two leaders, Rex Tillerson, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, and translators.

-- This means Fiona Hill, a strong Putin critic and senior National Security Council official for Russia, would not be in the meeting. “It would be very unusual for someone in Hill’s position not to participate in such a meeting,” Elizabeth Saunders and Joshua Tucker write on Monkey Cage. (They outline several key items that could — or should — be touched upon during the session.)

-- Congressional Democrats demanded Trump confront Putin on the subject of Russian meddling in U. S. elections, saying in a letter yesterday that failure to do so would be a “severe dereliction” of the duties of the presidency. Lawmakers stressed that it is “critical that you set the agenda from the start and make absolutely clear that Russian interference in our democracy will in no way be tolerated.

President Putin must understand this can never happen again.” (Karoun Demirjian)

-- “Whatever the outcome of the encounter on Friday ... the Kremlin is betting that Mr. Putin can stage-manage the event so that he comes out looking like the stronger party,” the New York Times’ Neil MacFarquhar reports. “If nothing much emerges from the meeting, analysts said, the Kremlin can repeat the standard Russian line that Mr. Trump is weak, hamstrung by domestic politics. But if Mr. Trump agrees to work with Mr. Putin ... he will also look weak while Mr. Putin can claim that he reconstructed the relationship. ‘It is a win-win situation for Putin,’ said [political analyst] Andrei V. Kolesnikov.”

-- Fred Kaplan warns on Slate that the risk in today’s meeting is that Putin has a goal and a policy, while Trump doesn’t but seems eager to come home with something: “That’s when diplomacy can be most risky. Risk sometimes pays off, but only if the leader taking the risk knows the dimension of the risk—the range of possible costs and benefits—and even more, knows where he’d like the conversation and the subsequent actions to go. Trump hasn’t thought this through.”

-- “You can regard the relationship of Putin and [Trump] as purely odd and possibly corrupt, or you can see in it and in them a classic tale of affections strangled and at times set free,” writes Times columnist Frank Bruni. “It’s irrepressible, international — part ‘Clueless,’ part ‘Casablanca.’ They have gone through all the usual phases of courtship. They have plumbed all the customary emotions. At least Trump has. To be brutally honest and risk bruising his quivering heart, this has been a lopsided affair, unless you count Putin’s meddling in the 2016 election as the purest possible expression of ardor and fidelity, which I suppose you can. ... Now, at long last, they come face to face, and while it’s uncertain what Trump will say, it’s clear what Trump has done: fashioned himself in the swaggering, blustering image of his beloved. It’s ‘Grease.’ And it’s gross.”

-- The meeting will be a “testosterone-fueled face-off” between two leaders who have staked their appeal on projecting masculinity, the Times’ Susan Chira explains. Putin — much like Trump — tapped into a long-held Russian preoccupation with being perceived as strong, said Soviet history expert William Taubman. “When they get drunk, Russians will often say, ‘You respect me, don’t you?’” he added.

“Meetings between world leaders have often been seen through the lens of masculinity, [and] that holds particularly true for encounters between Russian and American leaders,” Susan explains. Before John F. Kennedy’s first meeting with [Nikita] Khrushchev, [he was warned]: ‘Your job, Mr. President, is to make sure Khrushchev believes you are a man who will fight’ ... But Kennedy was rattled by their encounter; Khrushchev dismissed him as such a weakling that he went on to miscalculate Kennedy’s resolve in the Cuban missile crisis ... Even with the long history of swagger, this Russian-American meeting stands out. ‘It’s as old as American politics and yet it feels new in this iteration,’ said [professor Michael Kimmel]. ‘To me, that’s the metaphor, the WWE. It’s two hyper-idealized versions of masculinity getting into the ring.’”

Police, protesters clash at site of G-20 summit

MASKED PROTESTERS, RIOT POLICE CLASH IN HAMBURG:

-- German police in riot gear clashed Thursday with thousands of anti-capitalist protesters in Hamburg, using water cannons and pepper spray to drive away activists who massed near the site of the G-20 summit – some of whom wore face masks and chanted “Welcome to hell.” Isaac Stanley-Becker reports: “The skirmish followed an hour-long standoff adjacent to Hamburg’s harbor, where protesters were attempting to move from a public square toward the downtown conference center ... When police attempted to separate a group of ‘black bloc’ activists from the roughly 12,000 people who had assembled to protest inequality and economic greed, authorities met a hail of rocks and bottles. As police rushed the group, some of the protesters fled. But a phalanx of [activists] held their ground. Armored vehicles spewing powerful volleys of water rolled toward the protesters. Smoke bombs

detonated in the crowd.” Authorities said they made some arrests — though they did not have a final tally — and said 15 officers were injured in the skirmish. They expect an estimated 100,000 protesters to converge in the city — and have deployed 20,000 officers in the largest police operation in Hamburg’s history. In some parts of the city, a no-fly zone is in effect.

-- White House officials reportedly waited too long to book Trump’s accommodations for the summit, which was scheduled in early 2016. BuzzFeed reports that by the time his aides began calling for reservations, every luxury hotel in the surrounding area was booked — forcing Hamburg to open its Senate guesthouse to the U.S. president. (If you think this story sounds familiar, you’re not wrong — in February, Tillerson suffered a similar housing hiccup before a G-20 session with foreign ministers, and was forced to stay in a sanitarium.)

One of Trump’s most persistent ethics critics just resigned

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST WATCH:

-- Federal ethics chief Walter Shaub Jr., an outspoken Trump critic who has frequently sparred with the new administration, announced Thursday that he is resigning from his position as the director of the Office of Government Ethics. Rosalind S. Helderman and Matea Gold report: “[Shaub] made no reference to those clashes in a resignation letter ... Instead, he praised the work of federal ethics officials, pointedly noting their commitment to ‘protecting the principle that public service is a public trust, requiring employees to place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws, and ethical principles above private gain.’ In an interview, Shaub said he was not leaving under pressure, adding that no one in the White House or the administration pushed him to leave. But the ethics chief said he felt that he had reached the limit of what he could achieve in this administration, within the current ethics framework. ‘It’s clear that there isn’t more I could accomplish,’ he said.” Shaub’s term was scheduled to end in six months. He is slated to take a new job as senior director of ethics at the Campaign Legal Center, where he said he hopes to find bipartisan solutions to strengthening government ethics programs at both federal and state levels.

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos tours an elementary school in Prince William County. (Sarah L. Voisin/The Washington Post)

TRUMP’S AGENDA:

-- Attorneys general for 19 states are filing a lawsuit against Education Secretary Betsy DeVos for delaying an overhaul of rules to erase the debt of student borrowers who have been defrauded by colleges. Danielle Douglas-Gabriel reports: “The complaint, filed in U.S. District Court on Thursday, accuses the Education Department ... of violating federal law by halting updates to a regulation known as the borrower defense to repayment. The rule, which dates to the 1990s, wipes away federal loans for students whose colleges used illegal or deceptive tactics to get them to borrow money to attend. The Obama administration revised it last year to simplify the claims process and shift more of the cost of discharging loans onto schools. Before the changes could take effect July 1, DeVos suspended them last month and said she would convene a new rulemaking committee to rewrite the borrower defense regulation ... Proponents of the revised rule were livid that DeVos made a unilateral decision without soliciting or receiving input from stakeholders or the public.”

-- “The Interior Department, intent on boosting oil and gas production on federal lands, issued an order on Thursday designed to speed up the permitting process for drilling,” Dino Gradoni and Juliet Eilperin report. “Zinke said the aim of his order is to untangle the bureaucratic knot so the [Bureau of Land Management] can review permit applications within 30 days, as mandated by statute. He also ordered oil and gas lease sales be held in each state every quarter ... Still, Zinke cautioned Thursday that working out the kinks of such a speedy approval system would take time. ‘This is not going to be done

overnight,' he told reporters on a call. Environmental groups criticized the move as yet another unnecessary handout to oil and gas companies, which already have considerable access to federal lands."

-- "The United States and other major economies are nearing a compromise on climate change, one of the thorniest issues facing world leaders at the G-20 summit in Germany," Politico's Andrew Restuccia reports. "After days of preliminary talks, G-20 negotiators are increasingly hopeful they can settle on a joint communique in which the United States underscores its intent to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement while the other nations emphasize their support for the pact, according to a senior diplomat involved in the discussions."

-- Some sanctuary cities have "boldly asserted" that they will not comply with the DOJ's request that local authorities provide federal agents with information on residents' immigration status. Maria Sacchetti reports: "Attorney General Jeff Sessions had given 10 state and local governments until June 30 to prove that they share information with federal immigration officials — or risk losing some Department of Justice grant money this year. Federal law bars localities from creating policies that restrict the sharing of immigration-related information. But some local officials say the law does not require them to collect details such as a person's immigration status ... Sessions said the department is reviewing the jurisdictions' letters. 'It is not enough to assert compliance, the jurisdictions must actually be in compliance,' he said in the statement."

-- The Trump administration told a federal judge that it plans to store information collected by the voter fraud panel on White House computers monitored by one of the vice president's staffers. Spencer S. Hsu reports: "The executive order in May creating the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity stated that the panel would be funded and staffed through the General Services Administration — a federal agency subject to privacy requirements. But that arrangement has shifted, according to [Kansas Secretary of State Kris] Kobach's [court] filing. 'At this time, there are no plans for the General Services Administration to collect or store any voter registration or other elections-related data for the Commission,' Kobach said in response to questions from the court."

-- ProPublica, "Election Experts See Flaws in Trump Voter Commission's Plan to Smoke Out Fraud," by Jessica Huseman: "[Vice President's Pence's] office has confirmed the White House commission on voter fraud intends to run the state voter rolls it has requested against federal databases to check for potential fraudulent registration. Experts say the plan is certain to produce thousands of false positives that could distort the understanding of the potential for fraud ... 'This just demonstrates remarkable naivety on how this voter data can be used,' said David Becker, [of the] Center for Election Innovation & Research. 'There's absolutely no way that incomplete data from some states ... can be used to determine anything.' While [a Pence spokesman] would not say specifically which databases the rolls would be run against, [a recent report said] the commission may seek to check the names against the federal government's database of non-citizens. A 2012 attempt by Florida to do that resulted in many legitimate voters being falsely flagged because they had the same names as people in the federal database. Gov. Rick Scott scrapped the effort and eventually apologized. Comparing names nationwide could result in far more false positives."

-- Politico, "CNN parent's \$85B deal at little risk from Trump," by Steven Overly and Margaret Harding McGill: "Trump has only limited tools for venting his often-expressed fury at CNN, even as his administration weighs whether to approve AT&T's bid to purchase the network's parent company, Time Warner. ... Bannon has pushed the idea of blocking the merger ... But ... many industry observers say Trump's Justice Department has no obvious antitrust arguments for blocking AT&T's \$85 billion deal."

-- National security officials fear that the Trump administration is placing new restrictions on who can access sensitive information to smoke out leakers. Politico's Ali Watkins and Josh Dawsey report: "Officials at various national security agencies also say they are becoming more concerned that the administration is carefully tracking what they're doing and who they're talking to — then plotting to use them as a scapegoat or accuse them of leaks. One U.S. official voiced concern over even talking to their superiors about a benign call from a reporter. The agency this official works for had started limiting

staff's access to information, they said, and it would make it far easier to figure out who was talking to people in the media. There was suspicion, the official said, that the agency was even tracking what they printed, to keep tabs on what information they were accessing."

-- A left-leaning nonprofit in Indiana is suing to learn details of then-President-elect Trump's deal with furnace and air-conditioning manufacturer Carrier. Danielle Paquette reports: "[Kerwin] Olson, director of the Citizens Action Coalition, ... filed a public records request in December for communications between President Trump's team and former Indiana governor Mike Pence's office regarding Carrier ... But six months have passed, and state officials still haven't given the group any emails, letters or minutes of their meetings. So now, Olson said, CAC is suing Pence's successor, Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb (R), for what he described as an effort to keep residents in the dark."

Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.) speaks at a recent hearing. (Alex Brandon/AP)

MIDTERM WATCH:

-- The Atlantic, "Will the 'Trump 10' Pay a Price in 2018?" by Ronald Brownstein: "Apparently, no one has informed Bob Casey and Claire McCaskill that they should be running scared. Casey and McCaskill are among the 10 Democratic senators facing reelection next year in states that [Trump] carried in 2016, often by commanding margins. After that performance, many in both parties assumed they would be the Senate Democrats most vulnerable to White House pressure. [But] instead of being tugged toward Trump, both Casey and McCaskill have been propelled toward resolute resistance of his agenda. In that, they are the rule, not the exception, for the Trump 10. It's also framing what could be the pivotal question in next year's Senate midterm elections: Will these Democrats pay a price for consistently opposing Trump in states that voted for him only last year?"

-- Republicans are struggling to recruit good candidates. Politico's Kevin Robillard and Burgess Everett report: "Rep. Ann Wagner's decision not to challenge (McCaskill) ... is the latest in a string of thanks-but-no-thanks moves from candidates Washington Republicans thought were locks to run for Senate next year. [The] red-tinged Senate map means there are few races where Republicans believe they need a single exceptional, heaven-and-earth-moving recruit to win in 2018 ... Yet top Republican strategists privately admit they are intensely focused on two people: Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley, as an alternative challenger to McCaskill whom many Republicans now insist they prefer, and Florida Gov. Rick Scott ... If those two men pass, Republicans concede their 2018 recruiting class could quickly go from solid to disappointing."

-- "Democratic Rep. Jacky Rosen announced today she is officially running for U.S. Senate, culminating weeks of deliberations that — once again — began with a phone call from Nevada's political godfather Harry Reid." The Nevada Independent's Megan Messerly reports: "[Rosen] will not seek re-election to her seat in Nevada's 3rd Congressional District but will instead pursue a bid against Republican Sen. Dean Heller, considered the most vulnerable Republican in the Senate ... Rosen, 59, said that Reid reached out to her at the end of May and asked her to consider running for Senate ... Rosen said that Heller was the reason she decided to run for Senate instead of seeking a second term, criticizing his votes to repeal the Affordable Care Act, allow states to cut off funding to Planned Parenthood and confirm Betsy DeVos as Education Secretary."

Sen. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) heads from her Capitol office to a lunch with other senators. (Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

THE FUTURE OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY:

-- The New York Times, "Senator Kamala Harris's Voice Is Amplified by Interruptions," by Matt

Flegenheimer: “The casting call came early — the first of many unwelcome interruptions for Kamala Harris since November — consuming the Los Angeles nightclub where she was supposed to be celebrating an uncomplicated Senate victory. With the polls closed in nearly every other corner of the country, the giant TV above the dance floor left little doubt: [Trump] was almost certainly going to be president. A vacancy — standard-bearer of the Democratic Party, or at least one of them — had come open four to eight years ahead of schedule. And people had questions. ‘Literally everyone was essentially turning to her and asking ... ‘What does this mean? What do we do?’ [recalled her campaign manager, Juan Rodriguez]. The sensation has perhaps grown familiar for Ms. Harris. Less than eight months later, California’s very junior senator has emerged as the latest iteration of a bipartisan archetype: the Great Freshman Hope, a telegenic object of daydreaming projection — justified or not — for a party adrift and removed from executive power.”

-- Sen. Elizabeth Warren (Mass.), fresh off a trip to Afghanistan, questioned the Pentagon’s broader strategy in the region, saying that she is “not there on a troop increase.” Ed’O’Keefe reports: Warren “warned that the Trump administration is creating a “diplomatic vacuum” in Afghanistan by leaving key State Department posts unfilled at a time when a ‘whole-of-government strategy’ is needed to end the 16-year-old conflict. ... ‘No one on the ground believes there is a military-only solution in Afghanistan. No one,’ she said ... ‘The Trump administration needs to define what winning in Afghanistan is and how we get to that,’ the senator added.”

-- Politico Magazine, “Andrew Cuomo Could Beat Trump ... If He Can Win Over the Left First,” by David Freedlander: “Cuomo is a big-name politician who has long seemed an extremely unlikely national candidate — until now, when suddenly he’s seeming like a very likely one ... Suddenly it seems that Americans are willing to pull the lever for a muscular, messy, rough-edged leader shouting for the common man, and suddenly the governor of New York is starting to show up on a lot of people’s lists ... But if he runs, he’s got one big roadblock in his way first: The energy in the Democratic Party right now comes from a newly energized left. And the energized left, not to put too fine a point on it, hates Andrew Cuomo.”

-- Mark Penn, who managed Hillary Clinton’s failed campaign for the 2008 Democratic nomination, wrote a buzzy New York Times op-ed with Andrew Stein yesterday calling on Democrats to go “Back to the Center”: “The path back to power for the Democratic Party today, as it was in the 1990s, is unquestionably to move to the center and reject the siren calls of the left, whose policies and ideas have weakened the party ... The last few years of the Obama administration and the 2016 primary season once again created a rush to the left. Identity politics, class warfare and big government all made comebacks. Candidates inspired by Senator Bernie Sanders, Senator Elizabeth Warren and a host of well-funded groups have embraced sharply leftist ideas. But the results at the voting booth have been anything but positive.”

-- The piece inspired furious pushback from the left:

*For HuffPost, Daniel Marans wrote a piece entitled “It’s 2017. Democrats Should Really Just Stop Taking Mark Penn’s Advice”: “Taking advice from Penn about how to win elections is a little like turning to Phil Jackson for wisdom on how to win an NBA title. It was a decent idea in 1996, now, not so much.”

*Former Bernie Sanders campaign operative Symone Sanders said on Twitter: “There are so many things wrong with this op-ed. First of all, the party never really left the center. That is part of the problem.”

*Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii) quipped in a tweet: “Hey, what does Mark Penn think the Democrats should do? Just kidding that guy is always wrong.”

-- The Fix’s Philip Bump notes that the Democratic Party looks quite different now than it did in 1995, when Bill Clinton’s embrace of the center proved successful: “The Democratic Party that nominated Hillary Clinton is not the Democratic Party that nominated John Kerry in 2004. At that time, former Vermont governor Howard Dean’s embrace of single-payer health care was unusual and only 40 percent of Democrats supported same-sex marriage. Those things changed.”

A TV screen displays pictures of Kim Jong Un and Kim Jong Nam. (Ahn Young-joon/AP)

WAPO HIGHLIGHTS:

-- "The message behind the murder: North Korea's assassination sheds light on chemical weapons arsenal," by Joby Warrick: "In a case with a thousand plot twists, there has been but one constant in the murder investigation of [Kim Jong Un's half brother], Kim Jong Nam: Nothing is ever what it seems. The victim himself ... was traveling under false papers when he died and had to be identified using DNA. The two women accused of killing him turned out to be hired dupes, paid a few dollars to perform what they thought was a reality-TV stunt. Stranger still was the murder weapon, liquid VX, a toxin so powerful that a few drops rubbed onto the skin killed the victim in minutes, yet it failed to harm the two women who applied the poison with their bare hands. [For prosecutors], some of the mysteries behind [Nam's death] will likely never be resolved. [But] in carrying out history's first state-sponsored VX assassination in a country 3,000 miles from its borders, North Korea has demonstrated a new willingness to use its formidable arsenal of deadly toxins and poisons to kill or intimidate enemies on foreign soil."

-- "North Korea: The Rubicon is crossed," column by Charles Krauthammer: "Across 25 years and five administrations, we have kicked the North Korean can down the road. We are now out of road ... How many times must we be taught that Beijing does not share our view of denuclearizing North Korea? It prefers a divided peninsula, i.e., sustaining its client state as a guarantee against a unified Korea (possibly nuclear) allied with the West and sitting on its border. Nukes assure regime survival. That's why the Kims have so single-mindedly pursued them ... What are our choices? Trump has threatened that if China doesn't help we'll have to go it alone. If so, the choice is binary: acquiescence or war."

Airmen working in the Joint Space Operations Center at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

-- "The watchers: Airmen who surveil the Islamic State never get to look away," by Greg Jaffe: "While her partner stares at the video feed from an armed Air Force drone [in western Iraq], Courtney, [29], is sitting in a chilly cubicle, where purplish-pink overhead lights, designed to make the video stand out, give the room a feeling of perpetual dusk. It's the start of another shift at this base outside Hampton, Va. ... For more than three years, this has been Courtney's war — 10 hours a day, four days a week, thousands upon thousands of hours of live video footage from Iraq and Syria. It is an existence characterized by long stretches of boredom and grim flashes of action as she helps guide pilots' decisions on when to shoot and watches the last seconds of another person's life. In some instances, the demands of urban combat ... have meant taking shots even when analysts determine civilians are present. 'Our suicide and suicidal ideation rates were way higher than the Air Force average; they were even higher than for those people who had deployed,' said [one commander]. Air Force officials are just beginning to grapple with the long-term effects of this life. [But] for now, they mostly have questions ..."

SOCIAL MEDIA SPEED READ:

After Trump attacked the press during his news conference with the Polish president:

From the president of the Council on Foreign Relations:

Trump also blamed Obama for Russia's interference in last year's election:

The White House chose to emphasize the praise Trump received in Poland:

Trump and Merkel met again:

Members of the press were treated to a surprising musical selection before Trump's speech:

A Democratic House member offered the president some "killer graphics" before his Putin meeting:

Russia refused to formally condemn North Korea's missile launch in a U.N. resolution:

Arizona Sen. Jeff Flake responded to threats made at his state office:

Sen. Marco Rubio stated his disapproval of single-payer health care:

Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker responded to a Wired story mocking his Instagram account:

From a New York Times reporter:

George W. Bush celebrated his 71st birthday:

GOOD READS FROM ELSEWHERE:

-- The New Yorker, "The U.S. Media's Murky Coverage of Putin and Trump," by Joshua Yaffa: "The Russian media is under nearly omnipresent pressure from numerous entities: political operatives in the Kremlin ... media owners [who neuter coverage], and financial constraints ... The result is that the

space for independent, muckraking journalism has shrunk further. Yet, even given these many constraints, Russia is nevertheless home to a coterie of talented and self-motivated journalists, who produce work that is courageous and illuminating. I spoke to more than a half-dozen of them, all of whom found themselves in some way bemused, frustrated, or disappointed in the way that the U.S. press has covered Putin and Russia ... On the whole, said [journalist] Mikhail Zygar[:] ... 'Putin seem to look much smarter than he is, as if he operates from some master plan.' The truth, Zygar told me, 'is that there is no plan—it's chaos.'"

HOT ON THE LEFT:

"Maine's governor suggests he lies to journalists 'so they'll write these stupid stories,'" from Amber Phillips: "It looks like Maine's governor just admitted to doing something that the Russians are being investigated for: making up news to confuse reporters. And then he took it a step further by wishing news never existed. 'I just love to sit in my office and make up ways so they'll write these stupid stories because they are just so stupid, it's awful,' Gov. Paul LePage (R) told local radio WGAN-AM on Thursday ... If that wasn't shocking enough, he also said this: 'The sooner the print press goes away, the better society will be.'"

HOT ON THE RIGHT:

"Muslim activist Linda Sarsour's reference to 'jihad' draws conservative wrath," from Samantha Schmidt: "A lead organizer of the Woman's March on Washington and one of the most high-profile Muslim activists in the country gave an impassioned speech last weekend that at first gained little attention ... In her speech, Sarsour told a story from Islamic scripture about a man who once asked Muhammad, the founder of Islam, 'What is the best form of jihad, or struggle? And our beloved prophet ... said to him, 'A word of truth in front of a tyrant ruler or leader, that is the best form of jihad.'" ... Sarsour [later] said she was advocating solely for peaceful, nonviolent dissent. But conservative media outlets accused the activist of urging Muslims to wage a holy war against the Trump administration."

DAYBOOK:

Trump's marquee event in Germany today, his meeting with Vladimir Putin, will take place at 3:45 p.m. local time. The rest of his day is filled with G-20 summit events, including a meeting with the Mexican president and a concert at Elbphilharmonie hall.

QUOTE OF THE DAY:

Visiting a coal plant yesterday in West Virginia, Energy Secretary Rick Perry offered an "alternative" interpretation of the most basic law of economics. "Here's a little economics lesson: supply and demand," he said. "You put the supply out there and the demand will follow."

NEWS YOU CAN USE IF YOU LIVE IN D.C.:

-- Showers are possible in D.C. today, but they shouldn't stick around too long. The Capital Weather Gang forecasts: "Clouds are on the decrease, and we could see decent amounts of sun during the afternoon as high temperatures top out in the upper 80s to lower 90s. It's perhaps the muggiest day of this forecast. We profusely sweat one last day (for now)."

-- After a three-hour rain delay that did not include much actual rain, the Nationals lost to the Braves 5-2. Chelsea Janes reports: "[The Washington Nationals, Atlanta Braves, fans and assorted media] waited through what was officially called a rain delay, a misnomer of biblical proportions for what could best be described as an antediluvian rain delay — one endured long before any signs of flooding, or even heavy rain. It did drizzle for a few minutes, though."

-- William C. Morva was executed by the state of Virginia last night, after Gov. Terry McAuliffe denied last-minute requests for clemency. Ann E. Marimow reports: "McAuliffe, who is personally opposed to the death penalty, said he would not stop the execution because he is convinced Morva received a fair trial. The governor also dismissed claims Morva was experiencing delusions at the time of the [2006 murders of a sheriff's deputy and an unarmed hospital security guard]."

-- Peter Hermann writes on the tragic story Malachi Yisrael, who became a construction engineer after years of convictions. Yisrael was shot and killed this week at the age of 43.

-- Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan appointed 10 new members to the state's medical marijuana regulating agency. Ovetta Wiggins reports: "The commission has been criticized by state lawmakers, businesses and medical marijuana advocates for struggling to get the medical marijuana program off the ground and for potential missteps in awarding licenses to grow the drug."

-- "A generic-drug trade group is suing Maryland over a price-gouging law that is set to go into effect in October," Ovetta Wiggins reports. "Maryland is the first state to give its attorney general the power to take legal action against drug companies that dramatically increase the price of off-patent or generic drugs."

-- "Two Democrats vying for their party's nomination to challenge Rep. Barbara Comstock (R-Va.) in 2018 have raised a combined \$700,000 this quarter, their campaigns said, an early indication that the race could be among the nation's most expensive," Jenna Portnoy reports.

VIDEOS OF THE DAY:

Jennifer Sclafani, a linguist at Georgetown University, has studied Trump for two years and says he's a "unique" politician because he doesn't speak like one:

This linguist studied the way Trump speaks for two years. Here's what she found.

Ahead of the president's meeting with Putin, MSNBC reviewed Trump's contradictory statements about his relationship with the Russian leader:

Even during his press conference with the Polish president yesterday, Trump still took time to beat up on the "fake news" media:

Trump rails on CNN, MSNBC and 'fake news' in Poland

He also thanked Polish Americans for their support in last year's election:

Trump boasts support from Polish Americans

And he described the Nazi occupation as "tough":

Trump on Nazi occupation in Poland: 'That was tough'

Introducing her husband in Poland, the first lady said, "People should be able to live their lives without fear":

Melania Trump: 'People should be able to live their lives without fear'

Awkward: the Polish first lady (briefly) passed over a handshake with Trump:

Polish first lady passes over Trump's handshake

And that is only the latest in a series of uncomfortable interactions between Trump and foreign leaders:

Trump's awkward greetings with foreign leaders

The Post team explains "Kate's Law," a bill seeking to more harshly punish undocumented immigrants who reenter the country:

What is 'Kate's Law?'

Taiwan's giant panda celebrated her fourth birthday -- with a cake and everything:

Taiwan's giant panda turns 4

A Milwaukee police officer jumped into a lagoon to rescue a dog:

Milwaukee police officer jumps into lagoon to rescue dog

And, because it's Friday, The Post offers an explanation on the Rob Kardashian-Blac Chyna saga:

The Rob Kardashian-Blac Chyna saga, explained

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The Daily Brief

Essential Reading

2017 Summer Reading List — Stratfor employees recommend books to keep you engrossed and informed during the extra daylight hours.

North Korea Successfully Tests Its First ICBM — Flight data indicates that Pyongyang test-fired an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile, a milestone for the country in its attempt to secure a long-range delivery system capable of carrying a heavy payload, such as a miniaturized nuclear device.

Iran: Cashing In on Energy — Iran just signed a deal worth \$4.9 billion that it hopes will be the first of many.

Japan: An Emerging Threat to the Ruling Party — Recent local assembly elections foretell future challenges for the ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

Global Perspectives

Niger Delta Amnesty Programme as a Slippery Slope — Stratfor partner Cheta Nwanze for Financial Nigeria discusses how the approach of Nigerian President Muhammmadu Buhari's administration — paying off militants to ensure Nigeria reaches its oil production output target — does not provide a long-term solution to the deeper problems plaguing the region.

Stratfor Graphic

News You May Have Missed

*North Korea carried out yet another ballistic missile test July 3 (mid-morning July 4, local time) the South Korean defense ministry said, Reuters reported.

*The interior ministers of Germany, France and Italy met in Paris on July 2 to discuss the influx of migrants arriving by boat from Africa, Reuters reported July 3.

*The Kurdistan Regional Government said Iran will restore the flow of water into the Little Zab river in Kurdistan, Kurdistan24 reported July 3.

*French President Emmanuel Macron has pledged to lift a state of emergency later this year that has been in place since the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks, The Washington Post reported July 3.

*Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman warned Hezbollah against manufacturing rockets for Iran at installations inside Lebanon, Naharnet reported July 3.

*Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan hosted talks with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu in Istanbul on July 2, amid simmering hostilities along the Syrian border between Turkish troops and Kurdish militias, Naharnet reported July 3.

*China criticized the United States for sailing close to a disputed island in the South China Sea, BBC reported July 3.

*The Syrian military temporarily suspended combat operations in southern Syria ahead of peace talks with rebels, AP reported June 3.

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Date: Thu Jun 29 2017 21:58:02 CDT
Attachments:

Today's Topics:

1. PRO/AH/EDR> Ebola update (30): news, research, non-governmental organization, vaccines [EXTERNAL] (promed@promedmail.org)
2. PRO/EDR> Poliomyelitis update (14): Syria (DY), new cases, cVDPV, global [EXTERNAL] (promed@promedmail.org)

Message: 1

Date: Fri, 30 Jun 2017 02:27:21 +0000
From: promed@promedmail.org
Subject: PRO/AH/EDR> Ebola update (30): news, research, non-governmental organization, vaccines [EXTERNAL]
To: promed-post@promedmail.org, promed-edr-post@promedmail.org, promed-ahead-post@promedmail.org
Message-ID: <0100015cf6d2fae0-30b64b16-01d8-473f-9f77-64f07b688ac1-000000@email.amazonses.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=UTF-8

EBOLA UPDATE (30): NEWS, RESEARCH, NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION, VACCINES

A ProMED-mail post
<<http://www.promedmail.org>>
ProMED-mail is a program of the
International Society for Infectious Diseases
<<http://www.isid.org>>

In this update:

- [1] News
DR Congo border
DR Congo death
Liberia
- [2] Research

Zoonotic spillovers
Clinical laboratory values
[3] Non-Government Organizations
Role in W African Ebola outbreak
[4] Vaccines
rVSV (delta)G-ZEBOV-GP
Ad26.ZEBOV and MVA-BN-Filo

[1] News

21 Jun 2017 Democratic Republic of Congo: Tombura reopens border with Congo as Ebola rates decrease

<<https://radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/tombura-reopens-border-with-congo-as-ebola-rates-decrease>>

[Tombura State has officially reopened its border with neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo [DRC] after several weeks of closure due to reports of [Ebola virus disease (EVD)] infections in DRC, a local official said.

Speaking to Radio Tamazuj on [Tue 20 Jun 2017], Deputy Governor of Tombura State, Lino Utu said the border is now open to allow free movement of people and goods.

Utu explained that the state government decided to reopen the common border after the situation had returned to normal in Congo. However, he said precautionary measures, which include surveillance and screening of people crossing into South Sudan, are still in place.]

22 Jun 2017 DR Congo: WHO confirms death of 4th patient in DR Congo

<<http://www.pulse.com.gh/health/ebola-who-confirms-death-of-4th-patient-in-dr-congo-id6720175.html>>

[A 4th person has died in an [Ebola virus disease (EVD)] outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a spokesman from the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Mon 22 May. Since the WHO declared the outbreak on 12 May in north-eastern Bas-Uele province, 37 suspected cases are being monitored, WHO's Eugene Kabambi said.

Of these suspected cases, 2 were confirmed in the laboratory and 3 were regarded as probable [EVD] cases, Kabambi said. Community health agents are monitoring 400 people who may have come into contact with those killed by the [viral disease]. "People who were in contact with the 1st case reported on [22 April 2017] came out unscathed after the 21 days of observation," Kabambi said.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has suffered 7 previous outbreaks of [EVD] since the [viral disease] was discovered in the country in 1976. The last outbreak, in 2014, left 49 people dead.

West Africa was worst affected during 2014 [outbreak], with the hemorrhagic fever claiming more than 11 000 lives, most of those in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.]

[This case does not appear to represent further spread of the virus, but rather one of the cases being monitored. - Mod.LK]

25 Jun 2017 Liberia: MOH issues alert as strange disease emerges in Liberia

<<http://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/moh-issues-alert-as-strange-disease-emerges-in>>

liberia.html>

[The Ministry of Health (MOH) has directed all agencies under its jurisdiction to increase surveillance at all health facilities following an emergence of what it described as a "strange" disease in Liberia.

A memo issued to all concerned agencies of the ministry said the Ministry of the Interior had advised the MOH to increase disease surveillance at all levels of the national health system to prevent the spread of the strange disease.

The Interior Ministry has underscored the need to promote infection prevention and control mechanism at health facilities as part of preparations to prevent the spread of the unknown disease to Ghana through the borders and the airport.

The disease, yet to be identified, according to the Ghana Immigration Service, has claimed 11 lives in Liberia while at least 9 more people have been infected by the disease.

"The symptoms reported by the victims mainly are headache, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, mental confusion, abdominal pain and fever," the Ministry of the Interior has said. ...more]

[Such non-specific symptoms could be caused by many etiologic agents. Any further information a ProMED reader may have is welcome. - Mod.LK]

[2] Research

21 Jun 2017: Scientists locate where the most deadly 'missing viruses' are hiding

<<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/scientists-locate-where-most-deadly-missing-viruses-are-hiding-1627284#>>

[Citation. Olival K.J., Hosseini C.Z-T, et al. (21 Jun 2017). Host and viral traits predict zoonotic spillover from mammals. Nature 2017. doi:10.1038/nature22975

Abstract. The majority of human emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic, with viruses that originate in wild mammals of particular concern (for example, HIV, Ebola and SARS). Understanding patterns of viral diversity in wildlife and determinants of successful cross-species transmission, or spillover, are therefore key goals for pandemic surveillance programs. However, few analytical tools exist to identify which host species are likely to harbour the next human virus, or which viruses can cross species boundaries. Here we conduct a comprehensive analysis of mammalian host-virus relationships and show that both the total number of viruses that infect a given species and the proportion likely to be zoonotic are predictable. After controlling for research effort, the proportion of zoonotic viruses per species is predicted by phylogenetic relatedness to humans, host taxonomy and human population within a species range--which may reflect human-wildlife contact. We demonstrate that bats harbour a significantly higher proportion of zoonotic viruses than all other mammalian orders. We also identify the taxa and geographic regions with the largest estimated number of 'missing viruses' and 'missing zoonoses' and therefore of highest value for future surveillance. We

then show that phylogenetic host breadth and other viral traits are significant predictors of zoonotic potential, providing a novel framework to assess if a newly discovered mammalian virus could infect people.]

[See full article and references in the Nature publication referred to above. - Mod.LK]

July 2017. Clinical Laboratory Values as Early Indicators of Ebola Virus Infection in Nonhuman Primates

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/23/8/17-0029_article>

[Citation. Reisler R.B., Donofrio M.J., Warren T.K., et al. Clinical Laboratory Values as Early Indicators of Ebola Virus Infection in Nonhuman Primates. Emerg Inf Dis. 23(8)--August 2017

<<https://doi.org/10.3201/eid2308.170029>>

Abstract. The Ebola virus (EBOV) outbreak in West Africa during 2013-2016 demonstrated the need to improve Ebola virus disease (EVD) diagnostics and standards of care. This retrospective study compared laboratory values and clinical features of 3 nonhuman primate models of lethal EVD to assess associations with improved survival time. In addition, the study identified laboratory values useful as predictors of survival, surrogates for EBOV viral loads, and triggers for initiation of therapeutic interventions in these nonhuman primate models. Furthermore, the data support that, in nonhuman primates, the Makona strain of EBOV may be less virulent than the Kikwit strain of EBOV. The applicability of these findings as potential diagnostic and management tools for EVD in humans warrants further investigation.]

[3] Non-governmental organization

17 Jun 2017. Non-government organizations and the fight Against Ebola: Identifying the types of aid most provided by non-Government organizations during the 2013-2015 Ebola crisis

<<https://dspace.allegheeny.edu/handle/10456/42901>>

[Citation. Cook B. (17 Jun 2017). Non-government organizations and the fight against Ebola: Identifying the types of aid most provided by non-government organizations during the 2013-2015 Ebola crisis.

Allegheny College. <<https://dspace.allegheeny.edu/handle/10456/42901>>

Abstract. The purpose of this project is to identify what was the most given type of aid by non-government organizations (NGOs) was in response to the 2013-2015 [Ebola virus disease (EVD)] outbreak in the countries of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. The types of aid were split into 20 separate categories. Data was collected on 67 NGOs who were listed on The Center for International Disaster Information's website. The actual data was retrieved from the websites and affiliate sites of the NGOs being examined. The format of the data was usually self-reported, and was in other varying formats depending on the organizations. The data was then put into a spreadsheet on Microsoft Excel for analysis. It was determined at the end of the study that providing community education to communities who were at risk of coming into contact with the virus, or who already had been affected by the virus, was the most frequently given type of aid by NGOs. Several other areas of aid that had large contributions of aid were training healthcare workers and providing personal protective equipment. Several patterns were also found within the community

education data regarding how the community education was provided or supplemented. It was found that many NGOs also made use of pamphlets and radio messages to educate populations about the virus.]

[4] Vaccines

19 Jun 2017: Ebola vaccine developed in Canada shows promising results

<https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2017-06/cmaj-evd061317.php>

[A phase 1 randomized controlled trial has found an Ebola virus disease (EVD) vaccine, developed in Canada, was well-tolerated with no safety concerns, and high antibodies were present in participants 6 months after immunization. The study, led by Canadian researchers, is published in CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal):

Citation. ElSherif M.S., Brown C., MacKinnon-Cameron M., et al. (19 Jun 2017) Assessing the safety and immunogenicity of recombinant vesicular stomatitis virus Ebola vaccine in healthy adults: a randomized clinical trial. CMAJ June 19, 2017. 189(24) doi: 10.1503/cmaj.170074

Abstract.

--Background. The 2013-2016 Ebola virus [disease] outbreak in West Africa was the most widespread in history. In response, a live attenuated recombinant vesicular stomatitis virus (rVSV) vaccine expressing Zaire Ebolavirus glycoprotein (rVSV?"G-ZEBOV-GP) was evaluated in humans.

--Methods. In a phase 1, randomized, dose-ranging, observer-blind, placebo-controlled trial, healthy adults aged 18-65 years were randomized into 4 groups of 10 to receive one of 3 vaccine doses or placebo. Follow-up visits spanned 180 days post-vaccination for safety monitoring, immunogenicity testing and any rVSV virus shedding.

--Results. Forty participants were injected with rVSV-deltaG-ZEBOV-GP vaccine (n = 30) or saline placebo (n = 10). No serious adverse events related to the vaccine or participant withdrawals were reported. Solicited adverse events during the 14-day follow-up period were mild to moderate and self-limited, with the exception of injection-site pain and headache. Viremia following vaccination was transient and no longer detectable after study day 3, with no virus shedding in saliva or urine. All vaccinated participants developed serum immunoglobulin G (IgG), as measured by Ebola virus envelope glycoprotein-based enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA). Immunogenicity was comparable across all dose groups, and sustained IgG titers were detectable through to the last visit, at study day 180.

--Interpretation. In this phase 1 study, there were no safety concerns after a single dose of rVSV-deltaG-ZEBOV-GP vaccine. IgG ELISA showed persistent high titers at 180 days postimmunization. There was a period of reactogenicity, but in general, the vaccine was well tolerated. This study provides evidence of the safety and immunogenicity of rVSV-deltaG-ZEBOV-GP vaccine and importance of its further investigation.]

14 Mar 2017 Ebola vaccine has been shown to induce a durable immune response 1 year after vaccination

<http://cordis.europa.eu/news/rcn/128465_en.html?WT.mc_id=RSS-Feed?WT.rss_f=news&WT.

rss_a=128465&WT.rss_ev=a>

[A prime-boost Ebola vaccine regime has induced a persistent antibody response of at least one year in 100 percent of the healthy volunteers. Partners behind the development of the vaccine include the EU's Innovative Medicines Initiative.

Citation. Winslow R.L., Milligan I.D., Voysey M., et al. (14 Mar 2017) Immune Responses to Novel Adenovirus Type 26 and Modified Vaccinia Virus Ankara-Vectored Ebola Vaccines at 1 Year. JAMA. 2017;317(10):1075-1077. doi:10.1001/jama.2016.20644

Abstract. The Ebola virus vaccine strategies evaluated by the World Health Organization in response to the 2014-2016 outbreak in West Africa included a heterologous primary and booster vaccination schedule of the adenovirus type 26 vector vaccine encoding Ebola virus glycoprotein (Ad26.ZEBOV) and the modified vaccinia virus Ankara vector vaccine, encoding glycoproteins from Ebola, Sudan, Marburg, and Tai Forest viruses nucleoprotein (MVA-BN-Filo). This schedule has been shown to induce immune responses that persist for 8 months after primary immunization, with 100 percent of vaccine recipients retaining Ebola virus glycoprotein-specific antibodies.]

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[compiled by: Celeste Whitlow <whitlow.celeste@gmail.com>]

[[A map of the affected area can be seen at <<https://www.independent.co.ug/ebola-in-drc/>> and a HealthMap/ProMED-mail map of the DRC at <<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/194>>.

Maps of the 3 countries affected by the 2014 Ebola outbreak in W. Africa can be accessed at:

Liberia <<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/54>>

Guinea <<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/45>>

Sierra Leone <<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/46>>. - Mod.LK]

]

[See Also:

Ebola update (29): news, vaccine, research, funding

<http://promedmail.org/post/20170618.5113468>

Ebola update (28): DR Congo, Uganda, research

<http://promedmail.org/post/20170607.5090956>

Ebola update (27): news, vaccine

<http://promedmail.org/post/20170605.5083820>

Ebola update (26): news, research

<http://promedmail.org/post/20170529.5068444>

Ebola update (25): news, research, vaccine

<http://promedmail.org/post/20170524.5057906>

Ebola update (24): news, research, vaccine

<http://promedmail.org/post/20170521.5050743>

Ebola update (23): DRC, news, vaccine

<http://promedmail.org/post/20170519.5047049>

Ebola update (21): Congo DR, News, Research, Vaccine

Ebola update (20): Congo DR, news, vaccine, update
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170515.5037761>
Ebola update (19): Congo DR, Nigeria preparedness
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170514.5035550>
Ebola update (18): Congo DR, vaccine
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170513.5034029>
Ebola update (17): Congo DR, vaccine, research
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170512.5031411>
Ebola update (16): news, research, vaccines, funding
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170428.5000661>
Ebola update (15): news, research, vaccine
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170416.4974553>
Ebola update (14): news, research, vaccine
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170410.4959931>
Ebola update (13): news, treatment, research, funding
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170402.4943034>
Ebola update (12): news, research, vaccine
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170326.4927435>
Ebola update (11): news, vaccine, research
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170312.4896304>
Ebola update (10): news, research
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170305.4881172>
Ebola update (09): news, research, funding
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170226.4866142>
Ebola update (08): news, research, vaccine
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170219.4850524>
Ebola update (07): research, economy
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170213.4836546>
Ebola update (06): research, treatment, funding
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170206.4819835>
Ebola update (05): news, vaccine, funding, documentary films
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170129.4801064>
Ebola update (04): research
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170123.4786222>
Ebola update (03): news, research
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170115.4767977>
Ebola update (02): news, research, vaccine, comment
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170108.4750411>
Ebola update (01): News, research, vaccine
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170103.4738060>
2016

Ebola update (72): vaccine, research, NGO, media
<http://promedmail.org/post/20161226.4724859>
Ebola update (71): research, economy
<http://promedmail.org/post/20161218.4706276>
Ebola update (70): news, research, economy, funding
<http://promedmail.org/post/20161211.4690740>
Ebola update (69): news, NGO, research, economy, funding, vaccine
<http://promedmail.org/post/20161204.4675615>
Ebola update (68): news, economy
<http://promedmail.org/post/20161127.4657148>
Ebola update (67): news, research, funding
<http://promedmail.org/post/20161120.4642402>
Ebola update (66): news, research, funding, economy
<http://promedmail.org/post/20161115.4629793>

Ebola update (65): news, research, commentary, economy, funding, vaccine <http://promedmail.org/post/20161106.4609611>
Ebola update (64): news, research <http://promedmail.org/post/20161030.4595759>
Ebola update (63): news, research <http://promedmail.org/post/20161023.4579436>
Ebola update (62): news, research, treatment, funding <http://promedmail.org/post/20161017.4564066>
Ebola update (61): news, funding, economy <http://promedmail.org/post/20161009.4547627>
Ebola update (60): news, research, economy <http://promedmail.org/post/20161002.4531285>
Ebola update (59): news, research, funding <http://promedmail.org/post/20160925.4514591>
Ebola update (58): news, research, funding, vaccine <http://promedmail.org/post/20160918.4497393>
Ebola update (57): news, research, funding <http://promedmail.org/post/20160911.4481043>
Ebola update (56): news, vaccine, research <http://promedmail.org/post/20160904.4465145>
Ebola update (55): research, funding <http://promedmail.org/post/20160828.4446844>
Ebola update (54): rapid test recall, nurse, research <http://promedmail.org/post/20160821.4431433>
Ebola update (53): Guinea, research <http://promedmail.org/post/20160814.4415032>
Ebola update (52): funding, research <http://promedmail.org/post/20160808.4400521>
Ebola update (51): funding, research, miscellaneous <http://promedmail.org/post/20160731.4383179>
Ebola update (50): Liberia, Sierra Leone, research <http://promedmail.org/post/20160724.4366266>
Ebola update (49): Sierra Leone, research, history <http://promedmail.org/post/20160717.4350351>
Ebola update (48): CDC, research, funding, economy <http://promedmail.org/post/20160710.4336146>
Ebola update (47): Liberia, US preparedness, funding, research <http://promedmail.org/post/20160703.4323924>
.....lk/ec/ml

Message: 2
Date: Fri, 30 Jun 2017 02:57:21 +0000
From: promed@promedmail.org
Subject: PRO/EDR> Poliomyelitis update (14): Syria (DY), new cases, cVDPV,global [EXTERNAL]
To: promed-post@promedmail.org, promed-edr-post@promedmail.org
Message-ID:
<0100015cf6ee73c9-e995bd8c-dfa0-4131-959a-cab1364dc6ae-000000@email.amazonses.com>

Content-Type: text/plain; charset=UTF-8

POLIOMYELITIS UPDATE (14): SYRIA (DEIR AL ZOUR), NEW CASES, CIRCULATING VACCINE DERIVED POLIOVIRUS, GLOBAL

A ProMED-mail post
<<http://www.promedmail.org>>
ProMED-mail is a program of the
International Society for Infectious Diseases
<<http://www.isid.org>>

In this update:

- [1] Global update, Syria, new cases - GPEI/WHO
- [2] VDPV impact - media report
- [3] AFP private sector reporting challenges - Kuwait, media report

[1] Global update, Syria, new cases - GPEI
Date: Thu 29 Jun 2017
Source: Global Polio Eradication Initiative
<<http://polioeradication.org/polio-today/polio-now/this-week/>>

Poliovirus Weekly Update 28-Jun-2017

New wild poliovirus cases reported this week: 0
Total number of wild poliovirus cases in 2017: 6
Total number of wild poliovirus cases in 2016: 37

New cVDPV cases reported this week: 5
Total number of cVDPV cases in 2017: 26
Total number of cVDPV cases in 2016: 5

Headlines

- WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan retirement : GPEI offers sincere thanks for her ten-year leadership, which brought the world to the threshold of being polio-free.
- Containment update: progress towards containment of poliovirus type 2 published .
- "Coffee with Polio Experts": a short video-chat with Dr Ousmane Diop, Coordinator of the Global Polio Laboratory Network, on the increasingly important role of environmental surveillance to help track down every last poliovirus strain.
- Summary of newly-reported viruses this week: Syria - 5 new circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) isolated from acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) cases. Pakistan - 1 new wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) positive environmental sample.

Afghanistan

- No new wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) cases were reported in the past week. The total number of WPV1 cases for 2017 remains four. The most recent WPV1 case had onset of paralysis on [16 Apr 2017] from Nawzad district, Hilmand province.
- With most of Afghanistan polio-free, efforts are focused on continuing to strengthen operations, in close coordination with Pakistan, to address remaining low-level transmission in the common reservoir area of the Quetta-Kandahar corridor.
- Afghanistan is carrying out a programme review focusing on the implementation of the National Emergency Action Plan and making necessary adjustments for the second half of 2017.

- Polio eradication teams from East and South East Afghanistan and neighbouring FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan met in Kabul on 24-25 May [2017] to review the current coordination mechanisms and agree on additional measures to further improve implementation in the WPV common reservoirs. Core teams from the National Emergency Operation Centres Afghanistan and Pakistan also met to discuss next steps on further improving the vaccination strategies for high risk mobile populations.

Pakistan

- No new wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) cases were reported in the past week. The total number of WPV1 cases for 2017 remains two. The most recent case had onset of paralysis on [13 Feb 2017], from Diamir district, Gilgit Baltistan.
- One new WPV1 positive environmental sample was reported in the past week, from Karachi Gadap, Sindh, collected on [5 Jun 2017].
- The year 2016 saw the lowest ever annual number of polio cases in the country but poliovirus continues to be isolated through environmental surveillance over a significant geographical range. Efforts are ongoing through implementation of the national emergency action plan to address remaining gaps in coverage and surveillance, in close coordination with neighbouring Afghanistan.
- The National Polio Management Team met on [8-9 Jun 2017] to review implementation of the National Emergency Action Plan during the low transmission season, and to agree on essential adjustments to the plan for the second half of 2017.

Nigeria

- No new cases of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) were reported in the past week. The total number of WPV1 cases for 2016 remains 4 and no cases have been reported in 2017. The most recent case had onset of paralysis on [21 Aug 2016] in Monguno Local Government Area (LGA), Borno.
- Nigeria continues to implement emergency response to the detected WPV1 strain and circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) strains affecting the country.
- The response is part of a broader regional outbreak response, coordinated with neighbouring countries, in particular the Lake Chad sub-region, including northern Cameroon, parts of Central African Republic, Chad and southern Niger.
- Detection of the polio cases in Nigeria underscores the risk posed by low-level undetected transmission and the urgent need to strengthen subnational surveillance.

Lake Chad Basin

- The detection of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) and circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) in Nigeria poses a risk to the neighbouring countries of the Lake Chad basin and hence an outbreak response plan is being implemented as part of the response to the Nigeria outbreak.
- Emergency outbreak response efforts continue across the Lake Chad basin, together with activities to fill subnational surveillance gaps across the region.

Central Africa

- No new cases were reported in the past week. The Democratic

Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) is affected by 2 separate outbreaks of circulating vaccine derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2), in Haut Lomami province (2 cases, with onset of paralysis on [8 Mar 2017 and 20 Feb 2017]); and in Maniema province (2 cases with onset of paralysis on [26 Mar 2017 and 18 Apr 2017], with an additional isolate detected in a healthy individual with sample collection on 2 May [2017]).

- Outbreak response plans are currently being finalised, with supplementary immunization activities using monovalent oral polio vaccine type 2 (mOPV2) in line with internationally-agreed outbreak response protocols.
- The 1st mOPV2 campaign is being implemented this week ([27-29 Jun 2017]) targeting more than 750 000 children under the age of 5 years in the 2 affected provinces.
- Surveillance and immunization activities are being strengthened in neighbouring countries.
- DR Congo is also affected by an Ebola outbreak, in Bas Uele province in the north of the country. Coordination among both outbreak response teams will be necessary and teams are already working on this.

Syrian Arab Republic

- In Syria, 5 new cases of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) were reported in the past week, bringing the total of cVDPV2 cases to 22. All cases had onset of paralysis between [3 Mar 2017 and 25 May 2017]. 21 of the cases are from Mayadeen district, Deir-Al-Zour governorate, and 1 case is from Raqua district, Raqua governorate.
- Confirmation of these latest cases is not unexpected at this time and does not change the operational situation, as outbreak response plans are being finalized, in line with internationally-agreed outbreak response protocols. Although access to Deir-Al-Zour is compromised due to insecurity, the Governorate has been partially reached by several vaccination campaigns against polio and other vaccine-preventable diseases since the beginning of 2016. Most recently, 2 campaigns have been conducted in March and April 2017 using the bivalent oral polio vaccine ([bOPV]). However, only limited coverage was possible through these campaigns.

Officially reported wild poliovirus cases as of 20 Jun 2017

Total global cases in 2017: 6 (compared with 18 for the same period in 2016)

Total in endemic countries in 2017: 6 (compared with 18 for the same period in 2016)

Total in non-endemic countries in 2017: 0 (compared with 0 for the same period in 2016)

- Afghanistan: 4 cases in 2017 (compared with 6 for the same period in 2016), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 16-Apr-17
 - Pakistan: 2 cases in 2017 (compared with 12 for the same period in 2016), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 13-Feb-17
 - Nigeria: 0 case in 2017 (compared with 0 for the same period in 2016), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 21-Aug-16
- Total global cases in 2016: 37
? Total in endemic countries: 37
? Total in non-endemic countries: 0

Officially reported cVDPV cases as of 20 Jun 2017

Total global cases in 2017: 26 (compared with 3 for the same period in 2016)

- Syrian Arab Republic: 22 cases in 2017 (compared with 0 for the same period in 2016), onset of paralysis of most recent case:

25-May-17

- Democratic Republic of the Congo: 4 cases in 2017 (compared with 0 for the same period in 2016), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 18-Apr-17

- Pakistan: 0 case in 2017 (compared with 0 for the same period in 2016), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 17-Dec-16

- Nigeria: 0 case in 2017 (compared with 0 for the same period in 2016), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 28-Oct-16

- Lao People's Democratic Republic: 0 case in 2017 (compared with 3 for the same period in 2016), onset of paralysis of most recent case: 11-Jan-16

- Total global cases in 2016: 5

- Total in endemic countries: 2

- Total in non-endemic countries: 3

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[With the addition of these 5 newly confirmed cases of cVDPV associated polio in Syria, the tally is now up to 26 total cVDPV cases during 2017 -- 22 in Syria and 4 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. All 5 of the newly confirmed cases were from Deir Al Zour suggesting transmission is still somewhat localized in the province. As a reminder, in the previous update (see Poliomyelitis update (13): Syria (DY, RA), global <http://promedmail.org/post/20170622.5124548>) there was mention of a total of 65 acute flaccid paralysis (SFP) cases that had been detected in Deir al Zour since the beginning of 2017. Of those 65, 22 had tested negative, 5 were pending final laboratory results (?the 5 newly confirmed cases), 22 were en route to a laboratory for analysis. Presumably those latter 22 are still undergoing testing, and we should expect additional cases to be confirmed in the coming period. Unfortunately, the affected area in Syria is an area with civil unrest, with difficult access to provide both outbreak focused as well as routine focused immunization activities.

The identification of WPV1 in an environmental sample in Karachi (Sindh province) Pakistan is also cause for concern. Of note is that this sample was taken from the same location as the previous week's environmental sample that was also positive for WPV1, suggesting there is ongoing circulation of the WPV1 in the country, and in Sindh province specifically.

A map showing the locations of both WPV1 and cVDPV2 cases worldwide can be found at: <<http://polioeradication.org/polio-today/polio-now/>>.

For a map of Syria showing provinces, see

<<http://www.emapsworld.com/images/syria-provinces-map.gif>>. Deir Al Zour is referred to as Dayr az Zawr in this map.

The HealthMap/ProMED map of Syria can be found at <<http://healthmap.org/promed/p/86>>. - Mod.MPP]

[2] VDPV impact - media report

Date: Wed 28 Jun 2017

Source: NPR [National Public Radio]

<<http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2017/06/28/534403083/mutant-strains-of-polio-vaccine-now-cause-more-paralysis-than-wild-polio>>

Mutant Strains Of Polio Vaccine Now Cause More Paralysis Than Wild Polio

For the 1st time, the number of children paralyzed by mutant strains of the polio vaccine are greater than the number of children paralyzed by polio itself.

So far in 2017, there have been only 6 cases of "wild" polio reported anywhere in the world. By "wild," public health officials mean the disease caused by polio virus found naturally in the environment.

By contrast, there have been 21 cases of vaccine-derived polio this year [note in the above GPEI update, the tally is now up to 26 with the addition of the 5 newly confirmed cases in Syria. - Mod.MPP]. These cases look remarkably similar to regular polio. But laboratory tests show they're caused by remnants of the oral polio vaccine that have gotten loose in the environment, mutated and regained their ability to paralyze unvaccinated children

"It's actually an interesting conundrum. The very tool you are using for [polio] eradication is causing the problem," says Raul Andino, a professor of microbiology at the University of California at San Francisco.

The oral polio vaccine used throughout most of the developing world contains a form of the virus that has been weakened in the laboratory. But it's still a live virus. (This is a different vaccine than the injectable one used in the U.S. and most developed countries. The injectable vaccine is far more expensive and does not contain live forms of the virus.)

Andino studies how viruses mutate. In a study published in March [2017], he and his colleagues found that the laboratory-weakened virus used in the oral polio vaccine can very rapidly regain its strength if it starts spreading on its own. After a child is vaccinated with live polio virus, the virus replicates inside the child's intestine and eventually is excreted. In places with poor sanitation, fecal matter can enter the drinking water supply and the virus is able to start spreading from person to person.

"We discovered there's only a few [mutations] that have to happen and they happen rather quickly in the 1st month or 2 post-vaccination,"

Andino says. "As the virus starts circulating in the community, it acquires further mutations that make it basically indistinguishable from the wild-type virus. It's polio in terms of virulence and in terms of how the virus spreads."

In June [2017], the World Health Organization reported 15 cases of children paralyzed in Syria by vaccine-derived forms of polio. These cases come on top of 2 other vaccine-derived polio cases earlier this year in Syria and 4 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

"In Syria, there may be more cases coming up," says Michel Zaffran, the director of polio eradication at the World Health Organization. He says lab work is still being done on about a dozen more cases of paralysis to confirm whether they're polio or something else.

The cases in Syria are all in the east of the country near the border with Iraq.

It has become fairly common each year for there to be 1 or 2 small outbreaks of vaccine-derived polio. These outbreaks tend to happen in conflict zones where health care systems have collapsed.

"These outbreaks are occurring only in very rare cases and only in places where children are not immunized," says Zaffran. The regular polio vaccine protects children from vaccine-derived strains of the virus just as it protects them from regular polio. Vaccine-derived outbreaks, he says, "occur where there are large pockets of unimmunized children, pockets sufficiently large to allow for the circulation of the virus."

WHO is staging a massive response to the Syrian outbreak. WHO plans to work with local health officials and aid groups to vaccinate a quarter of a million children in early July [2017]. The goal is to reach every child younger than 5 in the area with 2 doses of 2 different types of polio vaccine, spaced 1 to 2 weeks apart. This would be a logistical challenge in most parts of the world, never mind in war-torn Syria.

"The access in these areas is a bit limited because of the presence of ISIS," Zaffran says in what seems like an understatement. Eastern Syria is home right now to Syrians who've fled from Raqqa (the ISIS capital in Syria), other parts of the country and even Iraq. "Also there's a risk that the fighting might actually move to this area."

Zaffran is confident that the rogue vaccine-derived virus circulating in eastern Syria right now can be wiped out with a massive blast of more vaccine.

"We knew that we were going to have such outbreaks. We've had them in the past. We continue to have them now. We know how to find them, and we know how to interrupt them. We have the tools to do that," Zaffran says. "So it's hiccup ... a very regrettable hiccup for the poor children that have been paralyzed, of course. But with regards to the whole initiative, you know it's not something that is unexpected."

WHO is attempting to phase out the use of live oral polio vaccine to eliminate the risk that the active virus in the vaccine could mutate

into a form that can harm unvaccinated children.

But for now, the live vaccine continues to be the workhorse of the global polio eradication campaign for a couple of reasons. 1st it's cheap, costing only about 10 cents a dose versus USD \$3 a dose for the injectable, killed vaccine. 2nd, it can be given as drops into a child's mouth, which makes it far easier to administer than the inactivated or "killed" vaccine, which has to be injected. 3rd, there simply isn't enough killed vaccine on the market to vaccinate every child on the planet, and vaccine manufacturers don't have the capacity to produce the quantities that would be needed if such a switch happened immediately.

And finally, the live vaccine stops transmission of the polio virus entirely in a community if sufficient numbers of people are vaccinated. The killed vaccine doesn't fully block the virus from spreading because a person who is immunized can still carry and spread the polio virus. And this is an important difference between these 2 types of vaccines when the goal is to exterminate the polio virus.

"The fact is this [the live oral polio vaccine] is the only tool that we have that can eradicate the disease," says Zaffran.

That eradication effort has been incredibly successful. In 1988, when the campaign began, there were 350 000 cases of polio around the world each year compared with the 6 so far this year [2017].

Zaffran credits the oral polio vaccine with getting the world incredibly close to wiping out a terrible disease.

"Four regions of the world have totally eradicated the disease with the use of the oral polio vaccine," he notes. "Of course we need to recognize that there have been a few cases of children paralyzed because of the vaccine virus, which is regrettable. But, you know, from a public health perspective, the benefits far outweigh the risk."

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[In formulating vaccination policies, a risk benefit analysis is a key process. In the case of polio vaccination, a critical question a country faces is "what is the risk of disease from the wild poliovirus" vs "what is the risk of disease from the vaccine virus". In the case of the WPV, the risk of paralysis among unvaccinated individuals averages 1 case per every 200 infected individuals. In the case of the vaccine virus, the risk of paralysis among those receiving the vaccine is approximately 1 case per every 2.7 million doses of vaccine administered. In the case of cVDPV there have been a total of 865 cases reported to WHO since 2000 with more than 10 billion doses administered during the period 2005 to 2015 - hence a very very low risk. Wherever there is persistent circulation of the

WPV (wild poliovirus), the risk of infection with the WPV is high, especially if there are pockets of susceptibles for the virus to circulate through. In contrast, in countries where there has not been circulation of the WPV in years, when there is the appearance of vaccine associated disease as the only form of polio identified in the country, that balance of risk and benefit has shifted. That being said, with the 2016 identification of WPV associated disease in Nigeria, in an area that had suboptimal vaccination coverages due to civil unrest, served as a reminder that the WPV could be circulating "under the radarscope" of the public health infrastructure, only to surface when there is access to the area or population at risk. Hence, the risk benefit analysis doesn't necessarily have a clearly definable risk identification.

In response to the observation above that "It's actually an interesting conundrum. The very tool you are using for [polio] eradication is causing the problem," countries that have been polio-free were migrating to the use of the inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) through the years, and the end game strategy for polio eradication includes the complete shift to IPV worldwide. As type 2 VDPV is the most labile virus, with 723 out of 865 (83.6 percent) cVDPV polio cases associated with type 2 cVDPV, as of April 2016, the trivalent oral poliovirus vaccine was replaced with a bivalent poliovirus vaccine, omitting the type 2 vaccine virus, with the intent being to eliminate OPV2 virus from the environment. Unfortunately the virus was already circulating in Syria pre-dating this vaccine switch. (see

<http://polioeradication.org/polio-today/polio-now/this-week/circulating-vaccine-derived-poliovirus/> for tables showing the cVDPV isolates since 2000 and http://www.who.int/immunization/diseases/poliomyelitis/endgame_objective2/en/ for a description of the endgame strategy.

The advantages of the OPV include the ease in administration (drops are administered into the mouth), thereby permitting less technical training than needed to administer an injection, the observation that a recently vaccinated individual excretes the vaccine virus into the environment and thereby "vaccinates" others in the process (the conundrum), and produces local immunity in the intestines blocking continuation of circulation of WPV if the individual is exposed to it.

This latter advantage was seen in Israel in 2013. Israel had been using exclusively IPV since 2005. In 2013, there were multiple isolates of WPV1 from environmental samples tested moving chronologically from the south of the country to the north. While the WPV was identified from weekly samples, during a 5-6 month period in 2013, there were no cases of paralytic poliomyelitis identified in the country in general and in the geographic areas surrounding where the positive environmental samples were taken from. Hence, while the vaccine protected the vaccinated individuals (Israel had reported a 94 percent vaccination coverage at that time), it did not completely interrupt transmission of the WPV. (see prior ProMED-mail posts listed below).

We are not far away from the switch in use of the trivalent OPV (containing vaccine viruses type 1, 2 and 3), to the elimination of the type 2 vaccine virus from the vaccine administered in the majority of countries around the world... the switchover date was in April

2016, a bit more than a year ago. As there are other geographic areas with suboptimal vaccination coverages, it would not be too much of a surprise to identify other (hopefully small) foci with cVDPV associated polio cases in the coming period. - Mod.MPP]

[3] AFP private sector reporting challenges - Kuwait

Date: Wed 28 Jun 2017

Source: Arab Times - Kuwait

<<http://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/ministry-blames-private-health-sector-failure-report-detection-cases-acute-flaccid-paralysis/>>

Ministry blames private health sector of failure to report detection of cases - 'Acute flaccid paralysis'

Ministry of Health has blamed private health sector for failure to report detection of cases of acute flaccid paralysis to the Department of Public Health on time, reports Al-Jarida daily quoting a health source.

According to the report released by the Department of Public Health at the Ministry of Health, the situation coincides with a warning from the World Health Organization against resurface of polio in Syria and newly detected cases of polio in Der Al-Zour, Syria through the same stock of oral vaccine. It blames private health sector for defying the ministerial decision that ordered prompt report of acute flaccid paralysis detected. It indicated failure to report the cases has negative implication on integrity and position of Kuwait by continuing to declare to the World Health Organization that the country is free from polio.

It recommended the ministry should contact the private health sector to urge them give precise information about cases detected to enable the ministry record it appropriately. This is one of the standard conditions and procedures required to declare the country polio free, it stated.

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[This last article was included as a reminder of both concerns of countries near to Syria as well as a reminder of the challenges the public health infrastructure in receiving timely reports from the private sector. An unfortunate but common situation experienced by many countries. - Mod.MPP

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[See Also:

Poliomyelitis update (13): Syria (DY, RA), global

<http://promedmail.org/post/20170622.5124548>

Poliomyelitis update (12): Syria (DY, RA), susp. cases

<http://promedmail.org/post/20170621.5122019>

Poliomyelitis update (11): Afghanistan, WPV, global update
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170615.5108445>
Poliomyelitis update (10): Syria (DY), Congo DR, cVDPV, WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170613.5103235>
Poliomyelitis update (09): Syria (DY), conf. cVDPV
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170608.5093275>
Poliomyelitis update (08): global (Congo DR cVDPV)
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170526.5064449>
Poliomyelitis update (07): Mozambique, Congo DR, VDPV, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170525.5060299>
Poliomyelitis update (06): Syria (DY), cVDPV susp
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170512.5032401>
Poliomyelitis update (05): Syria (DY) susp, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170506.5015784>
Poliomyelitis update (04): fractional IPV
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170430.5003843>
Poliomyelitis update (03): Pakistan (GB, IS, PB), environmental samples, global
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170316.4905775>
Poliomyelitis update (02): Pakistan (GB) WPV1
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170314.4901037>
Poliomyelitis (01): Pakistan (GB), global, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20170314.4898724>
2016

Poliomyelitis update (21): IPV shortage, global
<http://promedmail.org/post/20161231.4733243>
Poliomyelitis update (01): India, VDPV, wild type-free
<http://promedmail.org/post/20160115.3939297>
2014

Poliomyelitis - update (03): Lebanon ex Syria, susp, global, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20140312.2328674>
2013

Poliomyelitis update (28): Syria, global, WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20131128.2078961>
Poliomyelitis update (26): Syria, WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20131115.2050618>
Poliomyelitis update (25): Syria (DZ) conf, WHO
<http://promedmail.org/post/20131030.2027954>
Poliomyelitis update (24): Syria susp, Cameroon, global
<http://promedmail.org/post/20131024.2019404>
Poliomyelitis update (23): Syria susp., global, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20131020.2010654>
Poliomyelitis update (19): Somalia, Israel, global
<http://promedmail.org/post/20130817.1884992>
Poliomyelitis update (18): Israel
<http://promedmail.org/post/20130807.1869032>
Poliomyelitis update (16): Israel, Somalia, Global
<http://promedmail.org/post/20130801.1854632>
Poliomyelitis update (14): Israel, environmental samples, global
<http://promedmail.org/post/20130715.1826123>
Poliomyelitis update (12): Kenya, Somalia, RFI, Israel environ. samples
<http://promedmail.org/post/20130614.1772461>
Poliomyelitis update (10): Israel, positive environmental samples, MOH
<http://promedmail.org/post/20130605.1756289>

Poliomyelitis update (09): Israel, positive environmental samples, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20130604.1754766>
Poliomyelitis update (08): Israel, environmental isolates, WHO, RFI
<http://promedmail.org/post/20130603.1753099>
.....mpp/ml

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Reducing union power, promoting private education, changing sentencing laws – often under the radar

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Thwarted in Washington, the Koch network racks up conservative victories in the states

Charles Koch speaks during an interview on the sidelines of the 2015 Koch network seminar. (Patrick T. Fallon For The Washington Post)

BY JAMES HOHMANN
with Breanne Deppisch and Joanie Greve

THE BIG IDEA:

COLORADO SPRINGS—The wealthy donors who finance the Koch network are frustrated that national Republicans are not doing more to capitalize on having unified control of the federal government. But at their summer seminar here in the Rocky Mountains, which wrapped up last night, many were ecstatic—even giddy—about significant conservative gains that have been made this year in state capitals across the country.

Republicans now control the governorship and legislature in 25 states, compared to only six states for Democrats. Last November, the GOP seized all the levers of lawmaking in four new states – Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri and New Hampshire – making it much easier to pass far-reaching legislation.

The network, led by the billionaire brothers Charles and David Koch, has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on low-profile races and building out grassroots operations in 36 states over the past decade.

In 2017 alone, several of these states have reduced union power, scaled back regulations, cut taxes, blocked Medicaid expansion, promoted alternatives to public education, loosened criminal sentencing laws and eased requirements to get occupational licenses.

Because President Trump is such an all-consuming story, most of these moves received scant national attention. But the 400 donors who descended on the Broadmoor resort over the past few days have been paying close attention and are keenly interested in the outcome of these state-level fights.

“Even in the past six months we’ve seen a lot of success: We have two new right-to-work states, school choice wins in five states, and a dozen states have reduced spending or taxes,” Roger Pattison, director of member relations for the Koch network, said at a dinner on Saturday night. “I could go on and on.”

“We’re coming off the most successful legislative session that this network has ever had, and it’s a result of your investments,” added Luke Hilgemann, chief executive of Americans for Prosperity, which is part of the constellation of Koch-funded groups.

Gov. Matt Bevin (R-Ky.) signs Senate Bill 11, also known as the Leeper Act, at the Paducah Area Chamber of Commerce earlier this month. The legislation lifts the state's 33-year-old moratorium on nuclear power plant construction. (Ryan Hermens/The Paducah Sun via AP)

The two introduced a panel with three Republican governors: Eric Greitens of Missouri, Matt Bevin of Kentucky and Greg Abbott of Texas. Each outlined sweeping changes that have been possible in their states because of unified GOP control and urged donors to keep the spigots open.

“You have to invest in governors because we’re getting things done,” said Greitens, who took office in January after eight years of a Democratic governor.

Bevin pointed out that Sen. Cory Gardner (R-Colo.), the chairman of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, was sitting in the audience. “It’s probably frustrating to him to bang his head against the wall, as it is for others, but the inability to get certain things done ... at the national level ultimately requires that we have things happening from the bottom up,” the governor told the crowd. “Your investment at this level ... can make a powerful, powerful difference. ... This network’s ability to put boots on the ground is transformative for states like Kentucky.”

Making the case that recent GOP gains are fragile, Abbott noted that Texas is one of just four states in which Hillary Clinton in 2016 outperformed Barack Obama in 2012. He expressed concern that Clinton carried Harris County, which includes Houston and some of its surrounding suburbs, even though he had won it in 2014. If Democrats win the Lone Star State, he said, they will have a long-term lock on the White House. “A lot of people really take Texas for granted,” said Abbott, who is up for reelection next year.

Koch network officials reiterated plans to spend between \$300 million to \$400 million on policy and politics in the 2018 cycle and said it will probably be in the higher end of that range. A lot of that will go toward state efforts.

Since most state legislatures are part-time and have now adjourned for the year, the network is already sketching out ambitious plans to hit the ground running in early 2018.

Tim Phillips, the president of AFP, noted that more progress has been made to limit the power of organized labor, which he describes as “worker freedom,” “in the last five years than in the previous five decades.” Bevin and Greitens have both signed right-to-work laws this year, which ban labor unions from collecting mandatory dues from employees they represent in collective bargaining. Six states have now enacted such legislation since 2012, including longtime union strongholds like Wisconsin and Michigan. “Did you think that would have been possible five years ago?” Phillips said.

Phillips revealed at a strategy session that the network’s next targets include Ohio, Minnesota and New Hampshire. “I know Washington tends to suck most of the oxygen out of the room ... but the untold story is the dramatic policy advancements ... at the state level,” he said. “At the state level, we’re seeing a once-in-a-generation renaissance.”

Gov. Doug Ducey (R-Ariz.) addresses the crowd after being inaugurated in Phoenix in 2015. (Ross D. Franklin/AP)

Doug Ducey, the former chief executive of Cold Stone Creamery, was a member of the Koch network before he got elected governor of Arizona in 2014. He still attends the seminars. Yesterday he said that a panel during the January conclave in California helped inspire his education agenda for the most recent session. He brought one of the speakers he had heard to Phoenix to meet with state legislators and business leaders. He just signed a bill that makes every school-aged child in his state eligible for an Educational Savings Account, which gives parents flexibility to spend public money on expenses like private school tuition or tutors. Ducey said “healthy competition” from charter schools and other alternatives is making public education better. “I needed the power of the network,” he told donors.

Stacy Hock, a philanthropist in Austin and a major donor to the Koch network, helped launch a group last year called Texans for Education Opportunity that is pursuing similar objectives. Abbott, the Texas governor, has called a special session to focus on education, and her group is gearing up. Hock urged other Koch donors to reach out to her if they want to create similar advocacy operations in their home states.

“The value of this network cannot be overstated,” she said during a panel on Monday. “Individuals trying to affect policy change at the state level is daunting, but the ability to stand on the shoulders of the giant that is this network to make yourself more impactful and strategic changes the game. It might have taken decades to build such a sophisticated operation, but we had a tremendous impact in just our first session of operation. ... Education policy is a dogfight. The entrenched interests are deeply embedded and very protective of their castle.”

Mark Holden, general counsel of Koch Industries, works in his office in Wichita, Kansas, in 2015. He is the point man for criminal justice reform efforts by the Koch network. (Nikki Kahn/The Washington Post)

Finally, the network is pressing states to overhaul their criminal justice systems. Koch groups worked with the Obama administration and a broad coalition last year on a major federal bill to reduce mandatory minimum sentences, among other changes. Jeff Sessions, as a senator from Alabama, was one of the strongest opponents of that effort. Now the attorney general, he recently issued strict new charging guidelines, including for drug crimes. With the pathway to change blocked off for now in Washington, the network is redoubling its efforts in state capitols.

During this legislative session, Koch World was closely involved with law-and-order discussions in Louisiana, Michigan, Kentucky, Arizona, Iowa, Illinois, Pennsylvania and Ohio. Next year officials hope to work in several other states, including Missouri and Florida.

“The states are leading the way ... That’s where 90 percent of the action is,” said Mark Holden, the general counsel of Koch Industries and chairman of Freedom Partners, a funding arm of the network, in an interview. “Whether the states know it or not, whether the federal government knows it or not, we’re going back to what federalism is all about. The best way to solve an issue is to be proximate to it.”

Welcome to the Daily 202, PowerPost’s morning newsletter.
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WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING:

What’s in the CBO report on the Senate health-care plan

-- The Congressional Budget Office score of the Senate health-care bill that was published last night

and estimated the legislation would leave an additional 22 million Americans without insurance by the end of the coming decade, has threatened the bill's likelihood of passage. Amy Goldstein and Kelsey Snell report: "By late Monday, several senators and aides appeared nervous and unsure about the path forward. They hedged on the timing of that procedural vote and suggested the workweek could stretch beyond Friday. ... Sens. Susan Collins (Maine), Rand Paul (Ky.) and Ron Johnson (Wis.) signaled that they would vote against starting debate Tuesday on the bill in its current form. A fourth senator, Dean Heller (R-Nev.), had expressed his opposition last week."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) arrives at the Capitol. (Andrew Harnik/AP)

-- Mitch McConnell continues to offer amendments to the bill in an attempt to appease reluctant Republicans and get the legislation over the finish line. Juliet Eilperin and Sean Sullivan report on the horse-trading: "Senate leaders worked Monday to modify their plan to overhaul the Affordable Care Act, adding a provision that would penalize consumers for not keeping their plans, by imposing a six-month waiting provision before they could re-enroll. The change, intended to satisfy insurers and minimize the number of Americans who may drop their plans if the bill becomes law, received measured praise from some industry officials but sharp criticism from patient advocates..."

"Other measures, which were part of the original bill but are now facing intense scrutiny, have also raised questions ... One provision that spells out how the Medicaid program could be converted to a block grant, for example, would allow states to spend any leftover money on an item 'that is not related to health care,' as long as they meet 'quality standards' set by the Department of Health and Human Services. ... Separately, the leaders included language that aims to mollify Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), who has questioned the bill's impact on people in her state who gained insurance under the ACA's expansion of Medicaid. ... The bill calls for a transfer of Medicaid funds from states that provide more-generous benefits, such as New York and California, to those that do not. But it says the requirement to transfer funds 'shall not apply to any state that has a population density of less than 15 individuals per square mile.' That would affect just five states: Alaska, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming." (To track the bill's prospects, The Fix has an up-to-date whip count of Republicans who have stated opposition or hesitation.)

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad attends a meeting in Damascus. (EPA)

-- The White House said it has found potential evidence that Syria's government is preparing for another chemical attack, publicly warning Bashar al-Assad that his regime will pay a "heavy" price if it employs such methods against its citizens again. Abby Phillip and Dan Lamothe report: In a statement last night, Sean Spicer said the United States has identified potential preparations for another attack that would result in the "murder of civilians, including innocent children." Spicer said the regime's activities are "similar" to preparations made before chemical attack in April, which prompted the United States to launch airstrikes against Syrian forces.

"The U.S. military maintains a variety of weapons in the region that could be used in the event of another strike, including manned and unmanned aircraft in several Middle Eastern countries," our colleagues write. "But the most likely scenario is probably a strike using naval assets, which can be launched with fewer diplomatic issues than using bases in allied countries such as Turkey or the [UAE]."

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said the Assad regime and its allies will be "squarely blamed" if such an attack occurred: "Any further attacks done to the people of Syria will be blamed on Assad, but also on Russia & Iran who support him killing his own people," she wrote in a tweet.

Was the Pentagon out of the loop? Five U.S. defense officials reached by BuzzFeed News last night said they were unaware the White House was planning to release its statement: “Usually such statements are coordinated across the national security agencies and departments before they are released. [James Mattis] departed earlier Monday evening for a three-day trip to Germany and Belgium, and Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Joseph Dunford was in Afghanistan.”

U.S. soldiers train with Polish troops. (Kacper Pempel/Reuters)

-- A Defense Department memo shows that the Pentagon is considering a plan to cancel enlistment contracts for 1,000 foreign-born recruits without legal immigration status, knowingly exposing them to deportation. Alex Horton reports: “The undated action memo, prepared for [Mattis] describes potential security threats of immigrants recruited in a program designed to award fast-tracked citizenship in exchange for urgently needed medical and language skills. Officials have assigned threat level tiers to the nearly 10,000 Military Accessions Vital to National Interest program recruits, [which was launched by the Defense Department] in 2009. Since the program’s start, more than 10,400 troops, most of them with service in the Army, have filled medical billets and language specialties ... [identified] by the Pentagon as vital to the success of military operations, but in short supply among U.S.-born troops. Last year, officials heightened security screenings specifically for MAVNI recruits ... [but] the overtaken vetting process and heightened security risk led officials to recommend canceling enlistment contracts for all 1,800 awaiting orders for basic training, and halting the program altogether.”

-- The E.U. announced a record \$2.7 billion fine against Google for its search result practices. Michael Birnbaum reports: “The European Union’s antitrust chief ... [said] that the powerful company illegally steered users toward its comparison shopping website ... The fine is the largest the European Union has ever levied against a company for abusing its dominant position, and marked the latest confrontation over business practices between E.U. regulators and American tech giants ... And as President Trump advocates a fierce America-first policy of trade protectionism, the ruling also raised questions of how his administration would respond to the broadside hit against one of the richest companies in the United States.”

-- Separately, Google announced that it will stop reading your emails. The company’s practice of scanning Gmail messages for better targeted advertisements has caused controversy for years. (Brian Fung)

Ben Ray Luján and Nancy Pelosi during a recent news conference at the Capitol. (Alex Wong/Getty)

GET SMART FAST:

1.The House Ethics Committee announced that it is reviewing charges against two Democratic lawmakers and one senior aide, agreeing to hear allegations against Rep. John Conyers Jr., the ranking Democrat on the Judiciary Committee, Rep. Ben Ray Luján, chairman of the DCCC, and Michael Collins, who serves as chief of staff to Rep. John Lewis. The allegations were forwarded by the independent Office of Congressional Ethics based on a “substantial reason to believe” a breach had occurred. The Ethics Committee did not detail the allegations, but a report on each case will be made public in August. (Mike DeBonis)

2.The opioid epidemic could kill as many as 650,000 Americans over the next decade, according to a panel of public health experts. If that worst-case scenario occurred, the epidemic would have killed more Americans in ten years than HIV/AIDS has since that epidemic began. (STAT)

3.The family of Philando Castile reached a nearly \$3 million settlement with the Minnesota city where he was fatally shot during a routine traffic stop last year. The officer who shot Castile was acquitted two weeks ago. (Mark Berman)

4.A Mississippi historical marker for Emmett Till was vandalized. It marks the second time in less than a

year that the sign has been defaced. (Peter Holley)

5. Brazil's attorney general formally accused President Michel Temer of corruption, making him the country's first sitting president to ever face criminal charges, and delivering a potential blow to political stability in Latin America's largest country. (AP)

6. Russia's Federal Security Service said terrorists used the encrypted messenger app Telegram to plan a deadly attack at a St. Petersburg train station earlier this year. The government is targeting anonymity on the Russian segment of the Internet and lawmakers are advancing a ban on the use of virtual private networks that mask IP addresses. (Andrew Roth)

7. Britain said it will begin testing the safety of exterior cladding on hundreds of schools, hospitals, and other buildings across the country, widening an existing fire-safety effort after tests on more than 70 public housing towers produced a 100 percent failure rate. The results point to a vast fire-safety problem after London's 24-story Grenfell Tower was destroyed in a catastrophic blaze. (Griff Witte and Karla Adam)

8. The Turkish bodyguards who were served with criminal charges for allegedly attacking protesters outside the ambassador's residence in D.C. "won't set foot on German soil in the foreseeable future," a spokesman for the German Foreign Ministry announced. The move bars the offenders from attending an upcoming G-20 summit in Hamburg. Germany, home to the second-largest Turkish population in the world, is preparing to accommodate a big wave of protesters outside the summit. (Isaac Stanley-Becker)

9. Dozens of activists formally filed a petition to try recalling the California judge who handed down the lenient prison sentence of former Stanford swimmer Brock Turner for sexual assault. (Nicole Lewis)

10. Amtrak named a former Delta executive, Richard Anderson, as its new president and chief executive. The current chief executive took over the railroad just last September. (Lori Aratani)

11. A Spanish judge has ordered the body of Salvador Dalí exhumed for DNA extraction, siding with a fortune-telling mother of four who believes she could be the daughter of the eccentric artist and, thus, entitled to a share of his massive wealth. (Max Bearak)

12. The Obama family took a river rafting trip while vacationing in Indonesia. (NBC News)

13. Alec Baldwin will reprise his Trump impersonation for the next season of "SNL." The president must be thrilled. (CNN)

Protesters march during a demonstration against Trump's travel ban in Seattle. (AP/Ted S. Warren)

THE SUPREME COURT PREPARES FOR A CONTENTIOUS FALL TERM:

-- The Supreme Court agreed to review a series of lower-court rulings blocking Trump's contentious travel ban — allowing a scaled-back version of his executive order to move forward until justices can review merits of the case in the fall. Robert Barnes and Matt Zapotosky report: "The court's unsigned order delivered a compromise neither side had asked for: It said the ban may not be enforced against those with a 'bona fide' connection to this country, such as family members here or an awaiting job or place in an American university. But the justices indicated that lower courts had gone too far in completely freezing Trump's order[.] 'The government's interest in enforcing (the executive order) and the executive's authority to do so, are undoubtedly at their peak when there is no tie between the foreign national and the United States,' the court wrote..."

"In the opinion, the court said it will consider the merits of the case [when] it reconvenes in October. In the meantime, the court nudged the Trump administration to get on with what it said would be a temporary pause to review vetting procedures. 'We fully expect that the relief we grant today will permit the executive to conclude its internal work and provide adequate notice to foreign governments' within 90 days, the court said. That means by the time the court takes the case up in the fall, circumstances could be quite different. Depending on the results of the review, Trump could push to extend the measure, or even make it permanent. And the court told lawyers to address whether the court's consideration of the case might be moot by fall."

Trump called the court's decision a "clear victory for our national security." "As President, I cannot allow

people into our country who want to do us harm. I want people who can love the United States and all of its citizens, and who will be hardworking and productive,” he said. He added that he was “particularly gratified that the Supreme Court’s decision was 9-0.”

Supreme Court allows limited travel ban to move forward

OTHER IMPORTANT SCOTUS NEWS:

-- Justice Anthony Kennedy did NOT announce his retirement.

-- The high court ended its term with a major First Amendment decision, ruling that efforts at separating church and state go too far when they deny religious institutions access to government grants meant for a secular purpose. Barnes reports: “In siding with a Missouri church that had been denied money to resurface its playground, the court ruled 7-2 that excluding churches from state programs for which other charitable groups are eligible is a violation of the Constitution’s protection of the free exercise of religion. ‘The consequence is, in all likelihood, a few extra scraped knees,’ wrote Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. ‘But the exclusion of Trinity Lutheran from a public benefit for which it is otherwise qualified, solely because it is a church, is odious to our Constitution all the same.’ Trinity Lutheran Church in Columbia, Mo., brought the case because it was excluded from a state program that reimburses the cost of rubberizing the surface of playgrounds. The court’s ruling in Trinity Lutheran v. Comer was a narrow one, but experts said it is sure to bring more challenges from religious groups in other areas.”

-- The Supreme Court agreed to consider whether a Denver baker unlawfully discriminated against a gay couple by refusing to sell them a wedding cake. Barnes reports: “Lower courts had ruled that [store owner Jack Phillips] had violated Colorado’s public accommodations law, which prohibits refusing service to customers based on factors such as race, sex, marital status or sexual orientation. The court granted the case after weeks of considering it. In 2014, the justices declined to revisit a New Mexico Supreme Court decision that found that a photographer violated a state civil rights law when she declined to photograph a lesbian couple’s commitment ceremony. Since then, the high court has found that marriage is a fundamental right that states may not prohibit to gay couples. The justices also reversed the Arkansas Supreme Court and said the state must list same-sex parents on birth certificates in the state. To refuse, the court said, is to deny married same-sex couples the full ‘constellation of benefits’ that government has linked to marriage. Justices Clarence Thomas and [Samuel Alito] joined [Neil Gorsuch’s] dissent, which said the law regarding such issues is not yet settled and stable.”

The court will decide this case as support for same-sex marriage has reached an all-time high in the U. S. The Pew Research Center reports: “By a margin of nearly two-to-one (62% to 32%), more Americans now say they favor allowing gays and lesbians to marry than say they are opposed ... The latest national survey by Pew Research Center ... finds striking increases in support for same-sex marriage among some demographic and partisan groups that, until recently, had broadly opposed it, including ... Republicans. For the first time, a majority of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents do not oppose allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally.”

-- The court declined to hear a cross-border shooting case involving the death of an unarmed Mexican teenager who was fatally shot by a U.S. Border Patrol agent, vacating and remanding the case back to a federal appeals court for reconsideration. Ann E. Marimow and Barnes report: “The narrow ruling came in an unsigned order, accompanied by dissents from three justices, suggesting a conflicted court when it comes to questions of how the country polices the daily churn along the border. In putting off a decision, the high court acknowledged a ‘disturbing incident resulting in a heartbreaking loss of life’ but said it would be ‘imprudent’ to decide whether the 15-year-old’s family has a right to sue in the United States before a federal appeals court reviews a separate Supreme Court opinion issued last week.”

-- The court also announced that it would schedule two immigration-related cases for re-argument, signaling that the justices were deadlocked. Both cases were argued before Gorsuch was confirmed in

April.

-- Bigger picture: The flurry of activity showcased just how conservative Gorsuch will be on the court. Reuters' Lawrence Hurley and Andrew Chung report: "Gorsuch showed his inclination to rule from a spot occupied by fellow conservative Clarence Thomas. At a minimum, he is so far living up to Trump's claim that he would be a conservative in the mold of the man he replaced, Justice Antonin Scalia. ... Liberal groups and Democratic senators had vociferously opposed Gorsuch's appointment, with the evidence so far suggesting their depiction of him as a dogged conservative was largely correct. 'Justice Gorsuch has shown himself to be the conservative ideologue many predicted he would be and not the moderating check on the executive branch as others suggested he would be,' said Michele Jawando, a lawyer with the liberal Center for American Progress. ... Conservatives are delighted. Their hope that Gorsuch, 49, would be a solid vote on the right, would appear to be well founded."

Former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page speaks at a news agency in Moscow. (Pavel Golovkin/AP)

THERE'S A BEAR IN THE WOODS:

-- The FBI has questioned former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page "at length" about his contacts with Russia and interactions with Trump's presidential campaign. Devlin Barrett reports: "Over a series of five meetings in March, totaling about 10 hours of questioning, Page repeatedly denied wrongdoing when asked about allegations that he may have acted as a kind of go-between for Russia and the Trump campaign ... The interviews with the FBI are the most extensive known questioning of a potential suspect in the probe of possible Russian connections to associates of President Trump."

Page confirmed the interviews Monday, calling them "extensive discussions," but declined to say if he has spoken to investigators since then. He said the FBI agents "acknowledged that I'm a loyal American veteran but indicated that their management was concerned that I did not believe the conclusions" of a U.S. intelligence report describing Moscow's interference in the U.S. election. As he has for months, Page maintained the accusations against him are "lies" spread by Clinton and Obama supporters and aimed at weakening Trump.

-- Jared Kushner has retained the services of defense attorney Abbe Lowell, bringing onboard the storied white-collar defense lawyer to advise him in the ongoing Russia investigation, which includes scrutiny of his business dealings. Abby Phillip and Philip Rucker report: "Lowell, a lawyer at Chadbourne & Parke, has defended a number of high-profile clients and was chief counsel to House Democrats during impeachment proceedings against [Bill Clinton]. He has also represented Sen. Robert Menendez against corruption charges. 'When Bob Mueller left WilmerHale to become special counsel and three of our colleagues joined him, we asked Mr. Kushner to get independent legal advice on whether to continue with us as his counsel,' said Kushner's attorney Jamie Gorelick. 'He engaged Abbe Lowell to advise him and then decided to add Mr. Lowell to the team representing him.' [On Sunday, The Post reported] that one of the deals that might be scrutinized ... is a \$285 million loan Kushner's real estate company finalized one month before Election Day."

-- Officials at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence are blocking a Freedom of Information request for a redacted version of a critical report that former President Obama received in January on Russian election interference. Politico's Josh Gerstein reports: "Then-Director of National Intelligence James Clapper made public an unclassified version of that report, but the Electronic Privacy Information Center brought a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit demanding a copy of the classified report given to Obama at the same time. EPIC said the unclassified version omitted 'critical technical evidence' that could help the public assess U.S. intelligence agencies' claims that Russia did make efforts to affect the outcome of the 2016 race. However, a top official in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Daniel Coats, said in a court declaration filed Monday that releasing the original report with classified information blacked out would be a field day for foreign intelligence operatives, including the very

Russians the report accuses of undertaking the interference.”

-- One of Michael Flynn’s consulting clients, Ekim Alptekin, has come under scrutiny for his ties to the embattled former national security adviser, but Alptekin’s business partner has gone largely unnoticed. Politico’s Isaac Arnsdorf reports: “The man, Dmitri “David” Zaikin, is not registered as a foreign lobbyist and has no apparent connection to Turkey. What he does have ... is a long track record of partnering with powerful Russian businesspeople and government officials, mostly involving energy and mining deals. More recently, Zaikin has done political work in Eastern Europe, advising parties in Albania and Macedonia that have drifted toward the Kremlin. Zaikin also has business connections to Trump. Working at a real estate agency in Toronto in the 2000s, Zaikin brokered sales in one of the city’s new high-rises: the Trump International Hotel and Tower ... Zaikin has not been accused of any wrongdoing. Alptekin and Zaikin have denied knowing each other, and say Zaikin had nothing to do with Flynn’s lobbying deal.”

-- One of Trump’s lawyers, Jay Sekulow, has been accused of steering millions of dollars away from his Christian non-profit and towards his family, The Guardian’s Jon Swaine reports: “Documents obtained by the Guardian show Sekulow [in June 2009] approved plans to push poor and jobless people to donate money to his Christian nonprofit, which since 2000 has steered more than \$60m to Sekulow, his family and their businesses. Telemarketers for the nonprofit, Christian Advocates Serving Evangelism (Case), were instructed in contracts signed by Sekulow to urge people who pleaded poverty or said they were out of work to dig deep for a ‘sacrificial gift’. ‘I can certainly understand how that would make it difficult for you to share a gift like that right now,’ they told retirees who said they were on fixed incomes and had ‘no extra money’ – before asking if they could spare ‘even \$20 within the next three weeks’.”

MORE ON HEALTH CARE:

-- Key takeaways from the CBO report:

*“Two-thirds of the drop in health coverage a decade from now would fall on low-income people who rely on Medicaid.” Philip Bump writes that, contrary to statements from the bill’s defenders over the weekend, the CBO report definitively confirms that the Senate bill would constitute major Medicaid cuts.

*“The sharpest spike in insurance premiums would fall on middle-aged and somewhat older Americans.”

*“Its analysis of the Senate measure’s impact on federal spending — \$321 billion saved over a decade — compared with \$119 billion for the House’s version.”

*“The Senate bill would mean that an estimated 15 million fewer Americans would have coverage next year ... At the end of the decade, the 22 million increase in the ranks of the uninsured would include 15 million low-income Americans who would otherwise be on Medicaid and 7 million with private insurance.”

-- If the CBO’s estimates prove accurate and the legislation passes, what would it mean for the average American?

*For elderly, low-income Americans, insurance premiums would rise by 280 percent over the next decade. Amber Phillips reports: “In a report filled with brutal numbers for Republicans, this may be the most brutal.”

*“A 21-year-old making \$56,800 would pay 1.8 percent more of his income under Obamacare than under the Senate bill, but someone who was 64 would pay 24.1 percent more of her income.” Philip

Bump reports: "As an American ages, their health care would cost them more and more money."

*For low-income Americans, "it would be so financially burdensome with high deductibles that many people would choose not to sign up." Carolyn Y. Johnson reports: "Here's how CBO described the conundrum for someone who makes \$11,400 a year in 2026: they'd benefit from tax credits and pay only \$300 a year in premiums for their insurance. But their deductible would be more than half their annual income. Buying a more generous plan -- with a deductible that is a third of that person's income -- would cost \$1,700 a year."

*For wealthy Americans, "the two main areas in which they'd see reduced taxes are on the Additional Medicare Tax (which applies to individuals who make \$200,000 or more in income) and a tax on investment income," Philip Bump reports.

*"For those who could afford to get covered, their insurance would be less comprehensive." Kim Soffen reports: "The CBO expects the federal government will cover 70 percent of someone's health-care costs, on average, compared with 87 percent under Obamacare and 65 percent under an early version of House Republicans' health-care bill." Combining all of the above factors, the bill becomes quite "difficult for [Senate Republicans] to sell ... back home."

Senate Democrats blast GOP health-care bill following CBO forecast

-- After the CBO released its estimates, Senate Democrats came out in force to denounce the bill, even taking their fight to the Capitol steps. David Weigel reports: "Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) gathered colleagues on the steps outside the Senate, where they talked for hours into a Facebook feed as activists filed in and out to watch the debate. The tone alternated between grim stories of people who would lose access to Medicaid, and in-jokes between the senators."

-- Sen. Bernie Sanders has recently taken his argument against a health-care overhaul on the road, packing an Ohio concert hall with over 2,000 people on Sunday. Weigel was there: "The Columbus rally, the largest of three that Sanders staged over the weekend in Rust Belt states that Trump won in 2016, was part of an aggressive, last-ditch push to stop the Senate bill ... Teeing up the week's votes this way makes a point — they are unlikely to be able to tack their rhetoric into the legislation itself. But it also reveals the limitations of what Democrats, who have taken to Twitter to oppose the bill and plan to offer amendments to alter it, can do to stop a bill in the Republican-controlled chamber."

HOW IT'S PLAYING:

-- The Post's Editorial Board calls the CBO's conclusion "damning": "The current system is not perfect, but it is also not collapsing," the board writes. "Though the CBO acknowledged that 'premiums have been rising under current law,' it projected 'sufficient demand for insurance by enough people, including people with low health care expenditures, for the market to be stable in most areas.' The Senate bill's system, meanwhile, would struggle to serve people in sparsely populated and other difficult-to-cover areas, just as the Affordable Care Act has. Obamacare requires fixes, not a destabilizing 'rescue.' The Senate bill contains provisions to shore up the existing system before transitioning to the shoddier one. It should just pass the fixes and move on."

-- Liberal columnist Eugene Robinson writes that Republicans could pay a high political price for advancing the bill: "The fact is that the party that tries to make substantial changes in health-care policy owns the issue and gets blamed for everything that goes wrong ... Republicans worry about having spent seven years promising to 'repeal and replace' the ACA and then failing to follow through. But if they do take the leap, Democrats competing in the 2018 midterms will be able to turn that slogan around with a clarion call to 'repeal and replace' the American Health Care Act."

-- Post columnist Catherine Rampell writes that the bill defies Republicans' bedrock principles on fixing the system: "Republicans have long bellyached that rising insured rates are misleading. Their argument: Having insurance coverage is meaningless if your deductible is so enormous that you can't afford to see the doctor! It's a fair point. But the Senate bill does nothing to improve access to care. In fact, it places care further out of reach. It does this not only by causing people to lose insurance

coverage and raising after-tax premium prices, but also by making 'insurance coverage' an even less useful gauge of whether a person can afford to see a doctor ... When all's said and done, there's just one major Republican health-care principle this bill remains loyal to: tax cuts for the rich."

-- Jennifer Rubin writes on the conservative Right Turn blog: "This is not a bill about providing cheaper, better health care to the masses. It's not about helping older or rural Americans. It's about taking hundreds of billions of dollars out of Medicaid and giving the money to rich people in the form of tax cuts. The CBO report makes clear what a total disgrace the bill really is."

-- Partisan attacks on the CBO have been largely overblown, Max Ehrenfreund argues on Wonkblog: "Republicans are correct that the CBO's forecasts for Obamacare did prove inaccurate in some important respects, as well as that, on several occasions, the agency revised its initial projections. But outside the spin room, health-care experts on both sides of the aisle say that the CBO is reliably nonpartisan ... The CBO's [Obamacare] forecasts overstated both the costs and the benefits of the Democratic changes, as the measure appears likely to have a lower price tag than CBO anticipated but has also insured fewer people than proponents hoped."

Jon Ossoff: A Rubber Stamp

OFF TO THE RACES:

-- The top GOP House super PAC intends to double-down on its "tried-and-true tactics" for the 2018 midterms — namely tying all Democratic candidates to Nancy Pelosi. Mike DeBonis reports: "The Congressional Leadership Fund, which has ties to House Speaker Paul D. Ryan (R-Wis.), plans to spend \$100 million before next year's midterm elections, and Executive Director Corry Bliss said in a memo released Tuesday that he sees no reason to abandon a strategy that has paid dividends for six years — most recently in Georgia's 6th congressional district, where CLF advertising featuring Pelosi (D-Calif.) and her San Francisco district helped define and defeat Democratic candidate Jon Ossoff in this month's special election there ... In 11 districts Democrats have identified as 2018 targets, Pelosi's favorability is at least 10 points underwater ... It is not unusual for a congressional leader to be widely unpopular. What is unusual is the relentlessness and effectiveness of the GOP's targeting of Pelosi."

-- In an op-ed for The Washington Post, Ossoff offers lessons for fellow Democrats heading into 2018. He writes: "Grass-roots politics, linking small-dollar fundraising to massive local volunteer organization, showed that it can rival the power of a right-wing machine comprising super PACs backed by entrenched interests and mega-donors. These outside groups were forced to spend nearly \$20 million defending a seat gerrymandered never to be competitive ... We ran an economy-first campaign centered on local prosperity and opportunity ... We paired this economic platform with an unwavering support for a woman's right to choose, Americans with preexisting conditions, criminal-justice reform, Medicare and Medicaid, voting rights, immigration reform, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights, anti-corruption efforts and U.S. leadership to fight climate change ... I remained committed to civility and optimism throughout the campaign, and I remain committed to civility and optimism now."

-- Virginia Rep. Barbara Comstock, included on the DCCC's list of vulnerable Republicans, received two more Democratic challengers. Jenna Portnoy reports: "Democrats think they have a chance to flip the Northern Virginia seat, which has been in Republican hands since 1980, after the area backed Democrat Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election. Comstock supporters say the congresswoman's ability to outperform GOP presidential candidate Donald Trump by 16 points to win a second term cemented her dominance in the district."

-- An early 2018 indicator? When asked about the Senate health-care bill, Virginia gubernatorial candidate Ed Gillespie, the Republican running in the most closely watched race of 2017, dodges the question. Inside NoVa's Alex Koma reports: "[Gillespie] repeatedly stressed that he's waiting to form an opinion on the bill until his policy team can examine it, and he remains adamant that Barack Obama's signature healthcare law was a 'disaster for Virginia' and needs to be repealed. Gillespie also argued

that he's more focused on 'enacting policies in Richmond' than he is on the goings-on of Congress, which he believes provides a stark contrast with his Democratic opponent, Lt. Gov. Ralph Northam ... Yet, should Republicans succeed in passing some repeal of the ACA, the state's next governor will need to consider the impact of the law's coverage cuts and premium hikes on both older and poorer Virginians."

Trump greets Modi at White House

THE NEW WORLD ORDER:

-- While meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Trump declared them to both be "believers" in public accountability — then refused to take reporters' questions. David Nakamura reports: "The White House declined to offer details about whose decision it was — the Americans' or the Indians' — to bar questions ... There was no mention of fault lines between the White House and New Delhi on the Paris climate accord, which Trump announced this month the United States would withdraw from but which India and China have supported. Nor did Modi mention immigration issues amid speculation that the Trump administration could cut H-1B visas for high-tech workers, visas that have benefited India ... Critics [of Trump and Modi], including civil liberties groups, have highlighted other similarities among two leaders who have sought, at times, to restrict media coverage and the flow of information."

-- Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Bob Corker threatened yesterday to withhold consent from a U.S. arms sale to Persian Gulf countries until they resolve their dispute with Qatar. Karen DeYoung reports: "While congratulating President Trump on signing a joint statement of unity last month with the Gulf Cooperation Council, [Corker] said in a letter to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson that recent conflicts among GCC members 'only serve to hurt efforts to fight ISIS and counter Iran' ... 'For these reasons, before we provide any further clearances ... on sales of lethal military equipment ... we need a better understanding of the path to resolve the current dispute and reunify the GCC.' It was unclear what power Corker has to stop what the administration has said were \$110 billion worth of arms deals signed with the Saudis during President Trump's trip there last month. Laws governing such sales require congressional notification but not formal consent."

-- The embargo on Qatar is also disrupting a usually little-noticed market: helium. Ana Swanson reports: "The ultralight gas is widely used in medical imaging, technology manufacturing and nuclear reactors. And the blockade of Qatar, the source of nearly one-third of the world's helium supply, could soon cause destabilizing shortages and skyrocketing prices in this essential global market. In 2015, Qatar supplied 27.2 percent of the global supply."

-- The fight against ISIS will likely get only more complicated once it moves beyond Raqqa, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said yesterday. Thomas Gibbons-Neff reports: "Speaking to reporters on his way to Germany Monday to meet with European allies, Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis spoke broadly about the U.S. military's future operations against the Islamic State in the Euphrates River Valley, adding that it will take "more precision" to stave off any incidents between the disparate forces operating there. 'You have to play this thing very carefully,' Mattis said. 'The closer we get, the more complex it gets.' Mattis also acknowledged that the U.S. would continue to supply Kurdish forces in the north with weapons despite objections by U.S. ally Turkey. 'When they don't need them anymore we'll replace them with what they do need,' he said."

-- The U.S. intends to add China to its list of the worst offenders in human trafficking and forced labor. Reuters' Matt Spetalnick reports: "The reprimand of China, Washington's main rival in the Asia-Pacific region, would come despite Trump's budding relationship with Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping and the U.S. president's efforts to coax Beijing into helping to rein in North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has decided to drop China to 'Tier 3,' the lowest grade, putting it alongside Iran, North Korea and Syria among others."

-- A new poll suggests that the Trump presidency is already damaging America's reputation abroad. Isaac Stanley-Becker and Scott Clement report: "The international survey by the Pew Research Center found that favorable ratings of the United States have decreased from 64 percent of people across all countries surveyed at the end of Barack Obama's presidency to 49 percent this spring. The new figures are similar to those toward the end of the George W. Bush administration ... It is perhaps unsurprising that a man who campaigned on a pledge to put American interests first would generate backlash in other parts of the world ... What is surprising, said Frank G. Wisner, a former diplomat who served under Democrats and Republicans, is the degree to which Trump has scorned principles the United States has not only long espoused but also helped to define in the previous century."

One notable exception: "Russia is a bright spot for Trump. As beleaguered as the president is at home, a majority of Russians say they have confidence in him."

Security guards walk past the entrance to CNN headquarters in Atlanta. (David Goldman/AP)

THE FOURTH ESTATE:

-- Three CNN journalists resigned after the retraction of a story that connected former Trump transition official Anthony Scaramucci with a Russian investment fund, following an internal investigation that found some "standard editorial processes" weren't properly followed before the story's publication. The story in question cited just one anonymous source — departing from typical editorial procedure for such material, which CNN's Brian Stelter says often includes multiple levels of review from fact checkers and lawyers, among others. "We pulled it down not because we disproved it," a CNN source told The Post's Erik Wemple, adding that there was "enough concern" on some factual points that "given the breach in process, we decided to pull it down."

-- Donald Trump Jr. accelerated the controversy by demanding in a statement that CNN chief executive Jeff Zucker hold "an on-camera press briefing about CNN's fake news scandal before the White House does any more of them."

-- "The event is a cataclysm accentuated by the peculiar bind in which the 24-7 network has found itself," Wemple writes. "CNN tops [Trump's] list of objectionable news outlets, one that he famously claimed in a January transition press conference was 'fake news,' even though the reporting he was referring to — about high-level intelligence briefings — was 100 percent correct. Trump fans everywhere have taken up the fight, hammering the network every time it equivocates or otherwise over-reports the Russia-Trump line of inquiry. That context explains the speed and severity of CNN's personnel moves ... An organization of nearly 4,000 news professionals; an organization that has spent huge sums recruiting ever-greater reportorial muscle; an organization that promises both sides a fair shake ... it just cannot abide getting shamed by Sputnik and Breitbart."

-- The president himself weighed in on the CNN retraction early this morning:

-- Sean Spicer again received harsh criticism from journalists for refusing to allow TV cameras into yesterday's briefing. Reuters' Roberta Rampton and Steve Holland report: "'Why are the cameras off, Sean? Why did you turn them off?' shouted CNN correspondent Jim Acosta. Other reporters chimed in. 'You are a taxpayer-funded spokesman for the United States government - can you at least give us an explanation for why the cameras are off?' Acosta asked. Spicer answered questions for audio only about President Donald Trump's healthcare overhaul bill, a Supreme Court ruling on Trump's travel ban, and Trump's tweets about investigations into Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election."

-- Despite the substantial rollback of press access, members of the media haven't staged much of a

protest yet. Paul Farhi writes: “Despite the administration’s unusual and increasing opacity, the reaction from reporters has been relatively muted. A few have noted it on Twitter, but none has taken up two suggestions offered by President Trump’s critics: Defy the camera ban and broadcast the briefings anyway, or boycott them. There are signs, however, that reporters may be gradually finding their backbones.”

American University student government president Taylor Dumpson speaks during a news conference on Capitol Hill in May. (Susan Walsh/AP)

WAPO HIGHLIGHTS:

-- “After bananas and nooses on campus, here’s how a student body president copes,” by Sarah Larimer: “[Taylor] Dumpson is the student government president at American University, which was jolted by a racial incident on May 1 when bananas were found hanging from strings fashioned in the shape of nooses on three locations on the Northwest Washington campus. The university termed the incident a hate crime. In the aftermath, Dumpson was thrust into a very public spotlight, dealing with news conferences, town halls and meetings. She became the latest student leader to confront tensions over racially charged incidents on campuses across the country ... For the 21-year-old Dumpson, from Salisbury, Md., the entire matter has been deeply personal. The bananas were marked with the letters of a sorority with predominantly African American membership. Dumpson is a member of that sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA). What’s more, the fruit was found on her first full day in office.”

-- “A ‘very credible’ new study on Seattle’s \$15 minimum wage has bad news for liberals,” by Max Ehrenfreund: “When Seattle officials voted three years ago to incrementally boost the city’s minimum wage up to \$15 an hour, they’d hoped to improve the lives of low-income workers. Yet according to a major new study that could force economists to reassess past research on the issue, the hike has had the opposite effect. The city is gradually increasing the hourly minimum to \$15 over several years. Already, though, some employers have not been able to afford the increased minimums. They’ve cut their payrolls, putting off new hiring, reducing hours or letting their workers go, the study found. The costs to low-wage workers in Seattle outweighed the benefits by a ratio of three to one ... [and] on the whole, the study estimates, the average low-wage worker in the city lost \$125 a month because of the hike in the minimum. The paper’s conclusions contradict years of research ... [which in contrast] have found that the benefits of increases for low-wage workers exceed the costs ... often by a factor of four or five to one.”

SOCIAL MEDIA SPEED READ:

Liberal Plum Line blogger Greg Sargent argues that the two tweets above about Russian hacking leave Trump badly exposed. He writes: “In a few tweets last week, Trump blasted the Obama administration for failing to act on what it had learned about Russia’s meddling efforts. But now Trump is explicitly offering a rationale for this, i.e., that Obama didn’t think Trump was going to win, and so didn’t bother doing anything about it, because it might have ‘rocked the boat,’ whatever that is supposed to mean. This line of argument leaves Trump deeply exposed, however. It represents an acknowledgment that the intelligence community had, in fact, concluded that Russia interfered with the purpose of helping Trump win. And it also exposes Trump to questions about what his administration (and Republicans) are prepared to do about expected Russian efforts to meddle in the next election.”

Trump weighed in on McConnell’s fight for 50 votes on health care:

He also tweeted out a story from Fox News:

But the timing of the Fox News tweets was odd:

Democratic senators continued to slam the Senate health-care bill after the CBO released its score, as Republican senators stayed mostly quiet:

From Hillary Clinton's former spokesperson:

From the president of the AFL-CIO:

The former governor of Maryland responded to Kellyanne Conway's suggestion that those who lose their Medicaid coverage could find jobs:

A pro-Trump super PAC began going after wavering senators' staffers. From a Republican strategist:

One Republican senator struggled to explain the bill his caucus was proposing:

Trump kept the media at arm's length during his Modi meeting:

A top Democratic election lawyer commented on Kushner hiring Abbe Lowell:

A pro-Trump group launched an offensive against the special counsel's Russia investigation:

The editor of Commentary magazine responded to the outrage over CNN's retracted Russia story:

Sen. Jeff Flake lost his father yesterday:

Rep. Steve Scalise congratulated the newest Republican members of Congress:

West Virginia experienced some aerial confusion over health-care ads:

Joe Biden took on an honorary summer job:

And the Harry Potter series celebrated its 20th birthday:

Lynne Patton at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland. (J. Scott Applewhite/AP)

GOOD READS FROM ELSEWHERE:

-- The New York Times, "'Give Me a Chance,' Trump Associate-Turned-Housing-Official Says," by Yamiche Alcindor: "After The Daily News reported two weeks ago that [Lynne] Patton, a longtime Trump family associate who worked on the president's campaign and helped plan his son Eric's wedding, would be [appointed for a federal housing role], housing advocates and elected officials criticized the appointment. Most said Ms. Patton was not qualified for the job ... [and] Representative Grace Meng, Democrat of New York even wrote a letter to the president demanding Ms. Patton's immediate removal. But on Monday, Ms. Patton will begin her job in her new office in Manhattan. 'The misdirected discontent with my boss has prevented people from seeing the obvious fact that I am, more than anyone, best suited to serve as this liaison because, after all, I have a direct line to both the secretary and the president of the United States,' she said. 'I'm not going to hesitate to use them, either ...'

"While some see her appointment as a symbol of nepotism, Ms. Patton sees it as giving residents of New York and New Jersey an advocate with unprecedented access to those in charge. While critics see her background as lacking, she sees herself as a representation of the president's promise to shake things up ... And while many have cast her as an unqualified wedding planner, she sees the label as a result of a rumor ..."

-- The New Yorker, "The National Enquirer's Fervor for Trump," by Jeffrey Toobin: "[David Pecker] thought Donald walked on water,' [one former] employee said. 'Donald treated David like a little puppy. Donald liked being flattered, and David thought Donald was the king. One employee said that Trump was also a frequent source for Enquirer stories. '[If] Donald didn't want a story to run, it wouldn't run, [that employee said]. 'You can put that in stone.' Indeed, early in the 2016 campaign Pecker simply turned over the pages of the Enquirer to Trump, allowing the candidate to write columns under his own byline ... Pecker is now considering expanding his business: he may bid to take over the financially strapped magazines of Time, Inc., [and] based on his stewardship of his own publications, Pecker would almost certainly direct those magazines, and the journalists who work for them, to advance the interests of the President and to damage those of his opponents—which makes the story of the Enquirer and its chief executive a little more important and a little less funny ..."

-- Wall Street Journal, "China's All-Seeing Surveillance State Is Reading Its Citizens' Faces," by Josh Chin and Liza Lin: "Facial-recognition technology, once a specter of dystopian science fiction, is becoming a feature of daily life in China, where authorities are using it on streets, in subway stations, at airports and at border crossings in a vast experiment in social engineering. Their goal: to influence behavior and identify lawbreakers. [Gan Liping], 31 years old, had been caught on camera crossing illegally here once before, allowing the system to match her two images. Text displayed on the crosswalk screens identified her as a repeat offender ... 'I won't ever run a red light again,' she said."

-- New York Magazine, "Just Wait: Watergate didn't become Watergate overnight, either," by Frank Rich: "Unlike Nixon, who had to contend with Democratic majorities in the House and Senate, Trump has the shield of a Republican Congress ... [a distinction that is] alone is enough to make anti-Trumpers abandon all hope. I'm here to say don't do so just yet. There's a handy antidote to despair: a thorough wallow in Watergate, the actual story as it unfolded, not the expedited highlight reel that most Americans know from a textbook précis or cultural artifacts like the film version of All the President's Men. If you look through a sharp Nixonian lens at Trump's trajectory in office to date, short as it has been, you will discover more of an overlap than you might expect ..."

-- Politico Magazine, "It's the End of Small Talk in Washington," by Daniel Lipman and John F. Harris: "Team Trump is showing few signs so far of hungering for the sort of social intercourse with permanent Washington that usually accompanies a new administration. And many longtime capital denizens in interviews describe themselves as put off by what they see as Trump's personal vulgarity, and disturbed on some more fundamental level by the tornado of ethical controversies swirling around him. 'I think you are going to need a very strong blender to mix the Washington community with the Trump crowd, and I don't think it's going to end up being a smoothie,' says Sally Quinn, widow of the legendary Washington Post editor Ben Bradlee. 'A friend of mine said, 'It's the end of small talk in Washington.'"

HOT ON THE LEFT

"E.P.A. Official Pressured Scientist on Congressional Testimony, Emails Show," from The New York Times: "Deborah Swackhamer, an environmental chemist who leads the E.P.A.'s Board of Scientific Counselors, was to testify on May 23 before the House Science Committee on the role of states in environmental policy when Ryan Jackson, the E.P.A.'s chief of staff, asked her to stick to the agency's 'talking points' on the dismissals of several members of the scientific board. 'I was stunned that he was pushing me to 'correct' something in my testimony,' said Dr. Swackhamer, a retired University of Minnesota professor. 'I was factual, and he was not. I felt bullied.' "

HOT ON THE RIGHT

"Professor who said 'clueless white male' Otto Warmbier got 'what he deserved' won't be rehired," from Derek Hawkins: "Katherine Dettwyler, who taught in the anthropology department as recently as spring semester, 'will not be rehired to teach at the University [of Delaware] in the future,' the university said ... Warmbier died of unknown causes on June 19 ... Days later, in a now-deleted post from her Facebook account, Dettwyler wrote that Warmbier was 'typical of the mindset of a lot of the young, white, rich, clueless males who come into my classes' ... 'Is it wrong of me to think that Otto Warmbier got exactly what he deserved?' she wrote."

DAYBOOK:

President Trump will have two calls today with international leaders: French President Emmanuel Macron and Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar. He will also meet with his national security adviser in the morning.

Vice President Pence is giving the keynote speech at U.S.-India Business Council's leadership summit before heading over to Capitol Hill to meet with Republican senators.

QUOTE OF THE DAY:

“Modi and I are world leaders in social media.” -- Trump during his photo opp with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. While the president has 32.9 million followers on his personal account, Modi has 31 million.

NEWS YOU CAN USE IF YOU LIVE IN D.C.:

-- D.C. residents will enjoy a fairly mild day given that it's the start of summer in the District. The Capital Weather Gang forecasts: “Temperatures are fantastic for late June as afternoon levels peak in the upper 70s to low 80s. Very low humidity and light breezes blow from the west at 5 to 10 mph. A slight chance of a brief afternoon shower or even thundershower exists, but most areas should stay dry today.”

-- The Nationals lost to the Cubs 5-4. (Steve Hendrix has a nice feature on those lucky few local singers who get to perform the national anthem at Nats Park.)

-- “The number of homicides, robberies and assaults have dropped significantly in the District over the past six months,” Peter Hermann reports: “Violent crime is down 26 percent from the same period in 2016, led by a 33 percent decline in robberies. Homicides are down 15 percent, from 61 at this time in 2016 to 52 so far this year. Violent crime went down 10 percent in 2016 compared with 2015.”

-- A federal judge declined to lift a hold on construction of Maryland's Purple Line amid ongoing litigation, Katherine Shaver reports.

-- Democratic state Sen. C. Anthony Muse announced that he would run to succeed outgoing Prince George's County Executive Rushern L. Baker. Arelis R. Hernández reports: “‘I want our students to do well, but I want to know our students are actually doing well,’ Muse, 59, said outside Crossland High School, a reference to recent allegations that county school officials tampered with student grades to artificially boost graduation rates.”

-- A pet Russian tortoise that was lost near the Japanese ambassador's property has been safely found. Dana Hedgpeth reports that Maui the tortoise is now resting comfortably with his family.

VIDEOS OF THE DAY:

Stephen Colbert returned from a trip to Russia, where his “hard-core fans” (intelligence officers) followed him everywhere:

Stephen Returns From Russia With An Apology For Trump

Seth Meyers went over highlights from Steve Mnuchin's wedding:

VP Pence Officiates Wedding, World's Ugliest Dog - Monologue

Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii) discussed her recent diagnosis of kidney cancer, as well as her gratefulness for health insurance, on the Senate floor:

Hirono says she has kidney cancer, adds health care is ‘a right’

Cory Booker staged a sit-in over health-care on the Capitol steps:

Cory Booker stages sit-in over health-care bill

Glenn Kessler fact-checks some Republicans' claims about increases in premiums under Obamacare:

Fact Check: The GOP's spin on Obamacare premiums

The Post dissects the history of Trump's travel ban tweets:

The many trials and tweets of Trump's travel ban

More global leaders criticized Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris climate deal:

World leaders criticize Trump's choice to exit Paris climate deal

Finally, a humpback whale got a little too close to a boat off the coast of New Jersey last week:

Giant whale gets very close to a New Jersey boat

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From: Yisroel Stefansky <ys@asti-edu.org> on behalf of Yisroel Stefansky <ys@asti-edu.org> <ys@asti-edu.org>
To: steve.warren@iowa.gov <steve.warren@iowa.gov>
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: ASTI Upcoming Educational Training in Israel
Date: Wed Jun 14 2017 11:11:20 CDT
Attachments: ASTI CT Course May 2017 Notes.docx
CTPDR Agenda Oct 2017.docx
Letter of Support (1).doc

Steve,

I hope this email finds you well. Attached you will find several attachments related to Advanced Security Training Institute's (ASTI) Counter-Terrorism: Detection, Prevention, and Response (CTDPR) training course. These attachments may help to answer questions you may have about the upcoming October 2017 trip or others scheduled for the future.

The first attachment is a summary of the lessons, site visits, and activities completed during the May 2017 CTDPR course. While not every iteration of the course is the same, this document will provide you with an understanding of the material that is covered during the session. The second attachment is a draft agenda for the October 2017 CTDPR course. The final attachment is a YouTube video created by one of the participants from the May course with image and video highlights from the course.

The dates for the next CTDPR course are 13-21 October. Participants will stay in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, Israel. The rate is \$9,450 per person and includes airfare, lodging, most meals and expenses, and the training curriculum. Please note that funds from the State Homeland Security Program, Urban Area Security Initiative, and Emergency Management Performance Grant can all be used to fund training through ASTI. ASTI courses also correlate closely with the FEMA Core Capabilities that serve as the basis for many of the DHS grant programs.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions that you might have about course curriculum, funding or approval mechanisms, or travel/logistics. Also, please feel free to forward this information to other responders that may be interested in immersive counter-terrorism training.

I am available to travel to IA to meet with response agencies interested in the ASTI training courses. Chairman of House Homeland Security is hoping to attend the October course with members of the emergency response community.

Regards,

Yisroel Stefansky

Founder

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ASTI

Advanced Security Training Institute

Counter-Terrorism Detection, Prevention, and Response and Recovery Immersion Course

May 2017

This document contains an overview of and detailed notes from the lectures, immersive site visits, and activities experienced by participants in the May 2017 *Counter-Terrorism Detection, Prevention, and Response* course. The intent of the course was to convey the tactics and strategies developed and used in Israel to address terror incidents, allowing participants to adapt their new skills for use in their home jurisdictions.

Day 1:

Lecture: The History of Israel

Avi

This session provided information on key points in the history of that land and region that exists as the state of Israel. This information provided context for participants to understand historic conflicts, rulers, and battles that shaped the political and security situation as it exists today. The lecturer paid specific attention to the 1947 United Nations (UN) Partition Plan, declaration of Israeli independence, 1948 Arab-Israeli War, 1967 Six-Day War, and current day contested territories. Notes:

King David – first to occupy Jerusalem. Made peace with enemies by marrying their wives (including the Queen of Sheba). King Solomon was the son of David.

Israel has developed desalination technology that it is sharing with Arab countries, providing peace through water.

32 latitude – below is desert, above is green

Ottomans controlled land until the first World War

1947 UN Partition Plan gave Arabs land in the mountains, Jewish communities in the valleys, and Jerusalem as an internationally-protected area

- o Jews agreed to this plan, Arabs said no

May 14, 1948 – Israel declared independence; 5 Arab armies attacked

July 1948 – Israeli army counterattacked

Israel smaller than New Jersey

Ben Gurion – first Prime Minister of Israel

- Dream to make the desert green
- Special irrigation systems

1967 – 6 Days War fought against Syria, Egypt, and Jordan from 6/5/67-6/11/67

Jordan River is part of Africa Rift (tectonic plates)

Provide aid to neighbors during disasters

Contested territories: Gaza, West Bank, Golan Heights

Ben Gurion Airport – 8km from West Bank

“Land of Milk & Honey” – the only things that you can get from an animal without killing it

Israel as “the start-up nation”

Lecture: Terrorist Explosive Devices & Tactics

Chief Superintendent Michael Cardash

This session provided information on terroristic and criminal use of improvised explosive devices (IED) in Israel. The lecturer described the components of an IED and types of explosive material commonly used in IEDs. A segment of this lecture focused on person-borne improvised explosive device (PBIED). These suicide bombers use bags, vests, belts, pants or other innocent looking objects to transport explosive devices for detonation. The lecturer also discussed the importance of public awareness and intelligence/information sharing. Notes:

Last 4-5 years – few explosive attacks in Israel

Iron Dome System – built with the US to intercept rockets

Terroristic and criminal use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs); criminal use means that it is specifically directed at a person

Components of IEDs

- Explosive material (XMAT)
- Detonator (initiator)
- Firing system (trigger)
- Optional additions

Camouflage

Fragmentation

Types of XMAT commonly use in IEDs

- TATP – with or without plasticizers
- Urea nitrate (with plasticizers)
- TNT – mostly from old ammunition
- Nitroglycerine-based
- Ammonium nitrate based (fertilizers)
- Nitro glycol (EGDN)

Times Square VBIED used 220lbs of urea, not urea nitrate

Ball bearings – best type of fragmentation

- Used to enhance the distance

Cell phone – most common radio detonator

DTMF – dual tone multi functional

- Added onto phone to set off tone
- Don't need to wait for call to go through

Public awareness is key

- Israel teaches awareness from kindergarten: “what is a suspicious object?”, “what is a suspicious person?”
- 10th graders get presentation from bomb tech
- training in military

Suicide bomber = person-based IED = PBIED

Response - first consideration – look for secondary device

Considerations for PBIED

- Overcome security measures
- Control the explosion and ensure success of the incident
- Portability of the explosive device
- Substitute for firing system
- Packaging – use bags, vests, belts, pants, and innocent looking objects

** Importance of intelligence and information sharing

- Sources: Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), Mossad, Israeli Security Agency (ISA), police

Public resilience – get back to normal ASAP

Lecture: Cyber, Terror, & the Social Networks: The Dark Side of Technology

Dr. Harel Menashri

This session addressed the main trends in terrorist online activity, including the use of social media networks and hidden or dark networks. Terrorist organizations use file distribution applications, visible and hidden websites (e.g., blogs, forums), social networks, and communication applications (e.g. WhatsApp) for the purposes of propaganda, training, recruiting, funding, executing cyber attacks, intelligence gathering, etc. The lecturer also discussed ISIS trends and activities on the web. Notes:

Two main trends in terrorist online activity: grasping of popular social media networks and the dark web

Unparalleled tools for reaching out to as wide an audience as possible (e.g., mainstream social media networks)

ISIS has developed a multi-divisional media empire – target specific groups in local languages

Internet (only part of cyberspace) composed of: public networks, hidden networks, deep web

Terrorist activity on the internet: propaganda, training, recruiting, funding, cyber attacks, intelligence gathering, and more

Laws don't allow you to break into the network of someone who breaks into yours

Network discussion centers used for distributing files, websites (e.g., blogs, forums), social networks, communications applications

Cachedview.com shows deleted and removed

Terrorist organizations use encryption software, multiple accounts, social networks (including visible and hidden networks); Tor

ISIS trends:

- Propaganda focused on “distant enemy” encouraging lone wolves and cyber attacks
- Call to arms in social media
- Encouraging activities of terrorist organizations against critical infrastructure
- Use Android more than IOS
- Opera browser and Tor
- Use hushmail software to encrypt email
- Cyberghost VPN allows IP address switching
- Locker app deletes files after several incorrect password attempts
- Fake GPS apps hide location
- Fake social media accounts

Lessons:

- Do not take phone into the field or into meetings (change the culture)
- Everything is a computer and can be hacked
- Concerns about hacking of pacemakers, hearing aids, security cameras, automobiles, toys, appliances -> internet of things

Lecture: Crisis Media Management: Counter Terror Approach

Gil Kleiman

This session focused on the ability to use the media as a multiplier as part of response operations. The lecturer stressed the importance of understanding the sensitive issues in your community to gather intelligence, as well as the need to feed the media with information during a response.

Terror is not new, but tactics of terror change

Object of terror is to turn you into a drowning man

Media as a multiplier

“The Kardashian Syndrome” – know which topics are sensitive to your community, what will turn heads

What you don’t put out there, someone else will

Never lie – say what you have to say

1 spokesman – unity of message

Book by Author: Terrorist Suicide Bombings: Attack Interdiction, Mitigation, and Response. The link to electronically review the book is:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=4a3MBQAAQBAJ&pg=PA266&lpg=PA266&dq=Terrorist+suicide+bombers+Kleiman&source=bl&ots=eI8nOL1kUY&sig=6txgZc59Nu1ssKaUIPdrR8evxJF8&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjP7YSSkvvTAhUls1QKHXYDfMQ6AEINTAD#v=onepage&q=Terrorist%20suicide%20bombers%20Kleiman&f=false>

Day 2:

In-Transit Lectures on Security Topics

Rami Savir and Rami Shemesh

While in transit to various site visits, two veteran Israeli Security Agency members provided a series of lectures throughout the day on numerous topics related to Israel, the security situation, and terrorist incidents. Notes:

Demographics

- 8 million Israeli citizens: 75% Jewish; 21% Israeli Arabs; 4% Other (e.g., Christians, Arabs, Druze)
- 4.2 million Palestinians: 1.9M in West Bank; 1.7M in Gaza, E. Jerusalem Arabs (Israeli residents)

Until 1948, 1.2M Arabs/600K Jews; after 1948, 300K Arabs/600K Jews

- 500K Arabs went to refugee camps -> now 5 million in refugee camps

UN Decision 181 (November 29, 1947)

- David Ben Gurion accepted division of Israel into Jewish State and Arab State with Jerusalem as international territory
- Jewish State 68% desert
- Arabs would not accept any independent Israeli state

6 Day War – 1967

- New reality – Jewish state controlled Gaza, West Bank, Sinai Peninsula

New forms of terrorist organizations emerged

Oslo Agreement

- West Bank divided into 3 parts
 - A – exclusively administered by Palestinian Authority
 - B – administered by both Palestinian Authority and Israel
 - C – security and public affairs administered by Israel
- 1993 Agreement – Hamas said no
 - 10 years – birth of suicide bombers – change in paradigm
 - Israeli citizens afraid of buses, restaurants
 - Israeli develops expertise in dealing with terrorist cells

Islamic Fanatical Radical Movement Point of View:

- Jerusalem belongs to Allah
- Allah chose Islam to rule the world
- Chosen people: Jews, Christians, Muslims, but Jews and Christians fell
- Jews can live here, but not be independent rulers
- Muslim Brotherhood says that Muslims must be the leaders in the Holy Land
- Mohammed – last prophet

Gaza Strip – 2 governments: 1 Hamas and 1 PLO; over 1.7M people

- 2006 decision to remove 16 Jewish settlements from Gaza (8K people)
- Hamas started shooting rockets all over Israel

Obstacles to peace: 1) Jerusalem, 2) refugees, 3) Israeli settlements in West Bank

After 1967 (6 Day War), green light given to settle into the West Bank (500K people)

Hamas is a political movement, Islamic jihad is a military movement

Border countries: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt – no current problems except for Hezbollah

- Syria: ceasefire since 1967, few problems remaining regarding the Golan Heights
- Jordan: ceasefire since 1967, peace agreement 1994
- Egypt: ceasefire since 1973, peace agreement 1979

Ashdod – Philistine city; 3000 years old

- Largest port city in Israel
- High population of Russian Jews

First Intifada – began December 1987 - violent uprising against Israeli “occupation”; many riots and shootings

Second Intifada – began October 2000 – more violent

War with Gaza every 2-3 years, last was August 2014

Kibbutz – communal living generally according to Communist principles

More than 12 empires have conquered the Holy Land – all empire expansion has to go through Israel

50% unemployment rate in Gaza

Egypt has mostly closed their gate with Gaza

- Was open until 3 years ago
- Previous leader of Egypt was Muslim Brotherhood – kept the gate open

Desert defined as less than 200mm of rain/year

Rocket attacks from Gaza

- If in vehicle, stop car, get behind anything, cover head
- Every bus top has bomb shelter

Many tunnels from Gaza – get into Israel and behind military

Jerusalem

- King Solomon built first temple: “Gods house among people”
- Most important Holy City for Jews
- David Ben Gurion: “no state of Israel without Jerusalem, but there is Jerusalem without Israel”
- East Jerusalem belonged to Jordan until 1967
1/3 of population of Jerusalem

Site Visit: Magen David Adom (MDA) in Israel – Tactics and Procedures

Director of International Relations

MDA is the Israeli emergency medical services (EMS) agency. Participants traveled to Ashdod to visit an MDA dispatch center. The lecturer provides information on operations and logistics required to coordinate the activities of the more than 15,000 volunteers and 2000 paid staff across the country. MDA is also the only supplier of blood services in Israel. Participants were able to view dispatch technology and operations as they occurred. Notes:

MDA: Red Shield of David -> National EMS organization and national blood services organization

British mandate over Middle East after WW2

Established according to Red Cross guidelines

National, public, statutory, volunteer organization

More than 15K volunteers, less than 2K employees

- Volunteers are trained the same as employees

Active every hour, every day, all over the country

Train all IDF paramedics

Not funded by government, but supervised by Ministries of Health and Finance

Charge for services provided

- Those treated can claim back costs from health organizations
- Costs covered if person is hospitalized or suffers from known medical problems
- 72% of budget comes from billed costs

Government provides funds for preparedness from multiple hazards (e.g., earthquakes, rockets)

- No major earthquakes since 1927
- Israel sits on 2 fault lines

Volunteers are crucial in every community -> active, involved, well-trained

Call volume: 2500 calls per day (emergency and non-emergency)

- 2 ALS helicopters
- Vehicles: 1000+ ambulances plus minibikes
- Tel Aviv region: 300-400 calls/day for 1.5 million people
- Not a lot of misuse of the system
- Provide backup to the national school system for non-emergency calls

There are private ambulance companies; a few provide ALS

9 regional dispatching centers

- Dispatchers are all EMTs or paramedics
- Can provide medical guidance over the phone
- National dispatch system – call will go to first available dispatcher
Trying to keep time to answer call to less than 4 seconds

No central 911 system in Israel

- Dial 100 for police services
- Dial 101 for MDA
- Dial 102 for fire services

Created an understanding that all disciplines need to work together

- Direct communication from one dispatching center to another
- In areas of potential violence, MDA may request backup from law enforcement
- Some awareness training of fire department operations
- A lot of training with fire department
- GPS navigational system shows unit numbers of units from other departments

Law enforcement is in command of every incident

Law enforcement can shut down all communications amplifying sites near an incident

Responders have primary access to cellular bandwidth

Smart phone app (My MDA) – geolocates caller

- Personal information
- Known allergies

- Recent medical history
- Family info (calling in for self or other family member?)
- Can activate phone camera to provide video from scene
- Can communicate via text
- Shows “uber” view of vehicles arriving
- 60K users

Volunteers – group of highly trained EMTs and paramedics that keep supplies with them or bring them home

- MDA team app – shows location of all team members
- If first ambulance will arrive in more than 5 minutes, system will also scan volunteer first responders in the area
 - Provided with same call information
 - Can respond and click “navigate” -> uses Waze to guide to call
- Can fill out medical form – becomes part of the medical record

Only supplier of blood services in Israel

- Collect at least 1000 units every day
- Need to have enough inventory
- High holidays means lower supply
- Targeted communications with donors

Hospitals notify dispatchers when at capacity; close communication

- Ministry of Health monitors hospital capacity closely

Site tour: Ashdod dispatch center

- In bomb shelter
- Air filtering system to protect against chem/bio
- Automatic dispatch of mutual aid
- Average response time 7-8 minutes
- 8-hour shifts

Site Visit: Port of Ashdod – Protection of Transportation Assets

Participants traveled to the Port of Ashdod for a discussion of terror threats to transportation assets. Participants viewed multiple security components including biometric and automated gate systems, a smart fence, camera surveillance systems, the use of defender-class boats for patrol of the port from the water, biometric screening of crew members, and the use of drones.

Notes:

Operations always connected to preventing terror

Need for separation of operations – like a military base

Profile employees for different categories of clearance

Video summarizing security measures

- Advanced gate system using biometrics for access
- Smart fence
- Camera surveillance system and included analytics
- Defender-class boats patrol
- Biometric screening of crew members

Database contains information on 70% of seamen in the world

- Drones

Example of terror threat: “trojan horse” shipping container with false wall -> killed 10

Guiding authorities:

- Interior Emergency Authority
- ISA Information Security
- ISA
- Israeli Police
- Israeli Navy

Site tour: Port security operations

Site Visit: Rutenberg Power Station – Protection of Critical Infrastructure

The Rutenberg Power Station is located in Ashkelon, less than 5 km from Gaza. The power station is the target of repeated rocket and terror attacks. Numerous tunnels from Gaza have also been found in the vicinity of Rutenberg. Participants learned about the security components being used to prevent and mitigate attacks on the power station. Notes:

5 power stations located in Israel – Rutenberg is the largest

Located 5km from Gaza

Israel cannot get electricity from anywhere else in the world

Have to depend on themselves

Issues:

- Rockets
 - Concrete wall protects major systems
 - Iron Dome
 - Reliance on coal (LNG expensive)
 - Poles hardened
- Tunnels
 - Found in vicinity – one 3km long
- Terrorists
 - Combat trained security guards
 - Patrol vehicles
 - Guard towers
 - Surveillance – cameras, radar
 - Patrol boats (2)
 - Navy patrol of pier

Collaboration between fire, police, IDF, Red Cross

Site tour: power station

Site Visit: City of Sderot

Sderot is the city located closest to Gaza and is targeted in many rocket attacks. Participants viewed stockpiles of exploded rockets launched from Gaza into Sderot, as well as shelters available throughout the city to protect civilians. These shelters include playground equipment that serve as bomb shelters in schools and parks.

Lecture: The State of Relations between Israel and its Neighbors

Rami Savir

This session provided information on the relationships with Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, nomadic Bedouin tribes within Israel, Gaza, the West Bank area of Judea and Sumeria, and the division within Jerusalem. Notes:

Understanding the mindset of Israel is key

Israel formed as a state for Jewish people

Mixed population: Jews, Israeli Arabs, Palestinians, E. Jerusalem

1.7 billion Muslims in the world

Most Muslims not terrorists, but most/many terrorists are Muslim

Lebanon

- Not a real country - clans of Christians, Muslims
- Hezbollah runs the state
- Theoretically should have no problems with Lebanon

Syria

- Sunni Muslims
- Govt holding power thanks to support of Lebanon and Russia

Jordan

- Left over from British Mandate
- 70-80% Palestinians
- Minority Bedouins are ruling
- Peace treaty with Israel but don't know if it will hold

Egypt

- Peace treaty since 1977
- Good relations with regime, but not with people
- Bedouins living in Sinai Desert

Gaza

- Trying to find ways to defeat/pass the fence (e.g., rockets, tunnels)
- For a while, didn't see foreigners as a significant threat
 - Requires profiling of behavior
 - You can't check everyone
 - Pure random checks are a waste of time

Judea/Sumeria

- Judea is south of Jerusalem in West Bank
- Sumeria is north of Jerusalem in West Bank

Use of walls to separate territory used/controlled by Palestinians when people are so close they can shoot each other with rifles

- Suicide attacks went down more than 90% after wall built
- Wood and concrete fence

Tunnels

- Tunnels into Israel are attack tunnels

- Tunnels into Egypt are smuggling tunnels
- Jerusalem – Old City (less than 1 mile x 1 mile)
- Jewish Quarter
 - Muslim Quarter
 - Armenian Quarter
 - Christian Quarter

Lecture: The Muslim Mindset

Rami Savir

This session provided an assessment of behaviors and motivations of Muslim Arabs in the Middle East from the prospective of former Israeli Security Agency members. Notes:

A man is always preferable to a woman

- The man decides
- A woman as a source is less beneficial
- Women do not participate in discussions

A mother is always preferable to a wife

- The function of a wife is to have kids

Marriage for practical reasons is always preferable to marriage for love

- Marriage to first cousins is ideal
- Woman moves to home/family of husband
- Woman takes husbands name
- Dynasty of family is very important

A cousin is always preferable to a stranger

- Importance of families and clans

Family obligation supersedes loyalty to a country

The Army is preferable to civilian institutions

- Force is important
- Perception of strength is important

Ethnic and religious affiliations are more important than a national identity

Rulers are more important than the law

- Leadership is to benefit your family

Luck is more important than discipline and planning

Affinity and charisma are more important than the sense of obligation

- People will follow someone to the worst decision they every made

Poetry is more important than prose

An embrace precedes acquaintance

Embarrassment precedes guilt

- Do not want to be embarrassed

Suspicion precedes trust

Shouting precedes dialogue

Past and future are more important than the present

Manipulation precedes listening

- Control and power are more important than the solution
- Negotiation occurs prior to, during, and following an agreement
- Honor above all
 - Most important issue in the mindset of Arabs

Day 3:

In-Transit Lectures on Security Topics

Rami Savir and Rami Shemesh

While in transit to various site visits, two veteran Israeli Security Agency members provided a series of lectures throughout the day on numerous topics related to Israel, the security situation, and terrorist incidents. Notes:

Old Jerusalem

- 37K population inside walls
 - 65% Muslim
- 4 Quarters: Christian, Armenian, Jewish, Muslim
- Walls built in 1536 by the Ottomans to protect Jerusalem from Christian Crusaders
- 7 gates built originally

View of note: pillars built around light train station to prevent terror incidents caused by crashing vehicles into stations

View of note: Ammunition Hill from 1967 battle with Jordan

View of note: Mount of Olives, Mount of Scopus, Mount Zion

View of note: Bedouins villages - 280K population total

West Bank divided by Oslo Agreement:

- A: Exclusive responsibility of Palestinians
- B: Security responsibility of Israel, public services responsibility of Palestinians
- C: Exclusive responsibility of Israel

12 tribes of Israel – descendants from Jacob

- Exiled into and enslaved in Egypt for 400 years
- Moses led them through the desert for 40 years
- Came through Jericho (Jordan Valley)
- Moses died on the east side of the Jordan River; did not enter into Holy Land

Israel will not give up Jordan Valley as any part of a peace agreement – Jordan Valley is a buffer

June 16, 1946 – 11 bridges connecting Israel blown up to protest limits on amount of Holocaust Jews allowed into Israel

7 fruits that represent the “land of milk and honey”: date, olive, fig, grape, pomegranate, wheat, barley

Muslim calendar goes by the moon – 354 days

Jewish calendar – dates for holidays based on what is in the Bible

Ramadan – holiest Muslim holiday

- Fast for 30 days
- Greater chance of terror attacks because people feel more devout

Muslims pray 5 times per day – intelligence effort to see who goes to the mosque for the early prayers – most devout

Muslim Brotherhood – Dawah – call to build schools and mosques

Sea of Galilee – was main source of water for Israel

Dam at south end of the Sea / Jordan River

First desalination plant opened last year to provide water from the Mediterranean Sea

Syrians tried to stop water from flowing into Israel – 1964

First suicide bomber attack in 1991 after 400 Hamas leaders exported to Lebanon; came back with lots of knowledge about suicide bombing

Life of Jesus:

- Raised in Nazareth for 30 years
- Lived at Sea of Galilee for 3 years
 - Recruited disciples
 - Performed miracles
- Traveled along Jordan River
- In Jerusalem only one week before being crucified

Rule over land that is now Israel:

- For 300 years after Jesus died, there was harassment of Christians – Romans did not allow Christianity
- 325 AD, Constantine the Great (Roman Emperor) – allowed Christianity
- 638 AD Empire of Islam
- Defeated 1099 by Crusaders
- Defeated in 1187 by Muslims
- Defeated 1516 by Ottomans
- Ottomans ruled til the end of WW1

View of note: Bet She-An. In 1997, a Jordanian soldier killed 7 girls in Bet She-An; King Hussein of Jordan went to Bet She-An to give his condolences to the families

History of Islam:

- 7th Century AD – Islam became the 3rd monotheistic religion
- Established by Muhammad (name means “Praise God”)
 - 570 AD – born in Mecca
 - 610 AD – entered a cave in Mecca and had a vision from the Angel Gabriel
 - Wrote first verses of Koran in cave
 - Started to preach 610-622 AD
 - 622 AD chased from Mecca to Medina
 - 622 AD – died and buried in Medina
 - No successor – 2 competing camps
 - Al Sahaba (sp?) – friends of Muhammad
 - Fatimah – daughter of Muhammad, married to 4th caliph
 - Fought to continue Islam

- Mother of Al-Hasan and Al-Husayn

680 AD – battle for the future of Islam between Fatimah and sons vs. friends of Muhammad – Battle of Karbala

Al Husayn killed in battle – followers became Shia

Day of Ashura (Shia holiday) marks the death of Al Husayn at Battle of Karbala

ISIS – Sunni, Al Qaeda – Sunni

ISIS established after 9/11 and US involvement in Iraq

65% of Iraq controlled by ISIS

Syria – Bashar al-Assad not Sunni or Shia

ISIS, other Sunni groups, free rebels all fighting al-Assad

2014 – Jabhat al-Nusra kidnapped 45 United Nations peacekeepers in Golan Heights; Israeli forces opened the gate and allowed UN personnel into Israel

Druze

- Fatimid Caliphate (Shia) – 11th century
 - Ruled in Egypt and Israel
 - King kidnapped, ad Dazari thought king was 1st imam
 - Ad Dazari ran away and established new religion (Druze)
- Druze not Arab, not Muslim
- 1.5 million
- Don't need nation or government, only want territory
- Very little known about Druze religion
- Being killed in Syria
- Druze in Israel demanding that Israeli government intervene in Syrian conflict to help Druze in Syria
- Stopped ambulance and stoned wounded Syrian soldier to death

Site Visit: Jordan River Baptism Site

Participants traveled to the Jorder River Baptism Site. This historic religious site is located on the border with Jordan, sharing baptism facilities. The span of the Jordan River at this site is less than 20 feet, posing unique security challenges. Notes:

One of 2 baptism sites – the other is at the Sea of Galilee

White dove symbolizes the baptism of Jesus

- Jesus baptized by John the Baptist in Jordan River
- Voice of God: “This is the son of God that I was talking about”
- Christians view baptism as a cleaning of the soul and the body

Currently good relationship with Jordan

Peutinger Map

- Discovered in the 4th century AD
- Shows network of roads from Roman Empire
- Indicates that site of baptism of Jesus close to Jordan River baptism site

No control of borders all the way to Turkey

Until 2007, 250km border with Egypt was completely open

- Fence built in 2007, significantly reducing smuggling problems
- Current war between ISIS and Tarabin (Bedouin tribe)
- Trying to keep Bedouins from smuggling

Site Visit: Triangle Border

This border is the boundary between Israel, Syria, & Jordan. Lecturers provided information on the impact of the war in Syria on Israel, the expansion of ISIS into Syria and Jordan. Lecturers provided information on the security situation in the Golan Heights, and implications for Jewish settlements in the area. Notes:

Golan Heights: 950m above sea level

Sykes-Picot Agreement – 1916 – division of area

- Golan Heights, Lebanon, Syria to be French territory
- Israel, part of Jordan, part of Iraq, Egypt to be English territory

1945-46 – Syria became independent

ISIS concentrating opposite Golan Heights, but focusing on battles to the east and north right now

Jordan Valley = 65 miles

- Border between 2 tectonic plates
- Major earthquakes every 100-110 years

Site Visit: French Hospital/Syrian Officer Academy

Participants toured the site of a former French hospital used as a Syrian Officer Academy before the Six Day War. The building ruins look down into the Syrian countryside. Notes:

Eli Cohen – Israeli intelligence agent

- Established cover identity 1960-61 in Argentina
- Settled in Syria 1961-65, transmitted information on Syrian military and fortifications
- Caught January 1965, tried, and executed

Site Visit: Valley of Tears

The Valley of Tears is battle site from Yom Kippur War where significantly outnumbered Israeli forces held off attackers until reinforcements could arrive after 4 days. Participants were able to explore a maintained Israeli Defense Force (IDF) bunker. The visit highlighted the difficulties in defending territory given the proximity of countries that have been actively hostile to Israel. Lecturers also provided a review of international/UN participation in the security situation.

Notes:

Until 1967, Syria controlled Golan Heights and bombed the kibbutz

Yom Kippur War – surprise attack from Syrian in Golan Heights; 3-point attack

History:

- 1947 Independence
- 1956 Sinai War
- 1967 Six Day War

10/6/73 – Attack on Yom Kippur – holiest day for Jewish religion

- Israeli army kept minimal forces in Golan Heights
- Ignored intelligence about possible war
- No recruitment of reserves until 10/5/73

Valley of Tears – one of three attack columns

- 1 battalion in Valley
- 600 Syrian tanks vs. 35-40 Israeli tanks
- For 4 days, Israeli tank battalion held off Syrians
- Bitter battle – officers motivated soldiers to stay
- Reserves arrived after 4 days and turned battle
- Israeli forces pushed into Syria
 - Pushed to within 40km from Damascus
 - Pushed to within 101km from Cairo

1974 – ceasefire between Israel and Syria

Site Visit: The Dead Sea

Participants were able to visit and swim in the Dead Sea, learning about the security challenges of protecting this site visited by travelers from within Israel and throughout the world. Notes:

Every year 1m lost from the Dead Sea

Dead Sea 34% salt in water (ocean .4% salt)

Day 4:

Site Visit: Knesset

The Knesset is the legislature of Israel. A guided tour provided information on the structure and composition of the Knesset. Participants subsequently attended private meetings with 3 members of Israeli parliament (Yehuda Glick, Amir Ohana, and Tzipi Hotovely. The Knesset members provided their unique perspectives on the security situation in Israel and answered questions from ASTI participants. Notes:

“to come together/to congregate”

120 members

- 17 not Jewish
- 33 women (25%)

Parliamentary Democracy

- Vote for 1 party, not individual members
- Each party posts list of 120 potential
- Seated by percentage of vote
- Minimum of 3.25% to get representation in Knesset

President gives political power to Knesset

- Knesset has to form government
- At least 61 members must support government

Declaration of independence

- 14 May 1948 at 4:00pm (Friday)

- 5/15 – end of British Mandate, Shabbat (Saturday)
- Concerns about civil war if there was a leadership void
- Document
 - “Rock of Israel” = God
 - No other reference to God
 - Signed while blank
 - Bold paragraph in middle contains 3 justifications for independent Jewish state:
 - Historical connection with land
 - 1917 Balfour Declaration / 1947 UN Partition Plan
 - Holocaust
 - Describes type of government
 - 3 addresses to UN, to Jewish people, to Arabs
 - Call to peace

- No constitution

Plenary Hall used for voting

- Lively debates, most recognizable room
- Many other discussion rooms

Bills – 2 types

- Government-originated: written by minister or vice-minister, requires 3 votes
- Private: written by any member of Knesset; requires 4 votes

Official symbol – candelabrum

Separation of powers: legislative, government, judicial

PM is also a member of parliament

Speaker is member of parliament, but runs/manages the debate

10 seconds to vote; board shows voting results

Disciplinary action – can force members of party to vote in a specific way

Judicial oversees legislative oversees government oversees judicial

“ascend the podium” = give testimony

Viewing space for press, honored guests, public

Chegal Hall – 3 tapestries, 12 floor mosaics, 1 wall mosaic

- Tapestries: present (colorful – different waves of immigration), past (exodus from Egypt, Moses, King David), future (Isaiah)

Knesset Member Meeting: Yehuda Glick

Jerusalemofpeace.com

Likud party – 30 seats in this Knesset

Formerly served in Ministry of Absorption

Six Day war – greatest victory of Jewish people

- 2 million Jews surrounded by 200 million Arab Muslims (supported by USSR)

Yom Kippur War – lesson in humility

- Lesson: if we put down our arms, we won't exist

Greatest danger – those who think God is exclusive and want to convert others

- 12 million Muslims killed by radical Muslims

Settlements not an obstacle to peace, but are bringing peace by living together peacefully

Importance of not being afraid of terrorism

Demand from ourselves the highest standards

Jerusalem mentioned more than 600 times in the Bible

Nations that want to remain relevant will recognize Jerusalem as capitol

Israel offers highest level of human rights for all citizens

Temple Mount as world center for human rights

Promote Jerusalem Covenant

Knesset Member Meeting: Amir Ohana

12 years in IDF and ISA

Member of 5 committees

21 Arab states combined are 1000 times larger than Israel

1.4 billion Muslims in the world - yet still the minority that needs to be protected

It is the existence of the state of Israel and of the Jewish people in their homeland that Muslims find objectionable

100 years of terror

PLO founded in 1964 – before settlers

- What is Palestine? “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free”
- Continue to support terror in many ways

Influential Muslim leadership sees Jews as occupiers like British and Ottomans before them

This is the birthplace of Jewish religion

2000 years of exile – “tomorrow in Jerusalem”

Israeli/Arab conflict will not be solved in DC – must be solved by Israelis and Arabs

Cannot overstate friendship/brotherhood with U.S.

- Share enemies, enemies of the free world

Knesset Member Meeting: Tzipi Hotovely

Deputy Foreign Minister

Time for us to rethink

Issues with Iran and Syria

Challenges of Jerusalem

Children’s intifada

- 12-15 year old took kitchen knives to streets
Means it is part of education system and social media

Schools named after mass murderers

Great future for you and your families as terrorists

Congress sponsoring and funding families of terrorists

Winning of 6 Day War gave all religions freedom to practice their religion in Jerusalem

Israelis expecting movement of US embassy to Jerusalem

Clear that YouTube, Facebook have the ability to remove content related to terrorism, recruitment

- Arguments of free speech

- Already some restrictions on pornography, etc.
- Request to remove content combining certain words
- Still disappointed with accessibility of this information

Site Visit: Israeli National Security Council

Eitan Ben-David

Participants visited the office of the Prime Minister and attended a private meeting with Israel's National Security Director, Eitan Ben David (sp?). Mr. David provided information on the challenges of terrorism in Israel, Hezbollah and Hamas, counter-tunnel challenges, and the importance of learning from terror attacks in other countries. Participants were able to ask questions of Mr. David related to counter-terrorism policies. Notes:

We are trying to do our best in this region

- Trying to improve ourselves every day
- Our agenda is to alert and ready

Most of surrounding countries are enemy

- Countries by law, no diplomatic relations
- Peace treaties with Jordan and Egypt, but good relationships primarily with government
- People of Egypt and Jordan not happy with presence of Israel

Borders: Gaza (59km); Egypt (208km); Lebanon (79km); Syria (92km); Jordan (309km); Saudi Arabia (X); Mediterranean Sea (196km)

Asleep with 1 eye open; need to be strong in the neighborhood

A lot of budget dedicated to security issues

When it comes to security, people of Israel are very united

Last conventional war: 1982 with Lebanon

In last 2 decades, most operations are against terror organizations

Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza

- Hiding with civilians inside villages and cities
- President of Lebanon said: "Hezbollah is Lebanon and Lebanon is Hezbollah"

Israelis want to live peacefully in region

Sharon gave back Gaza

- After less than one year, Palestinian Authority lost to Hamas and were kicked out
- Now terrorist organization controls land on Israeli border

They will always find a way to attack you with innovative methods

Iron Dome – most rockets not allowed to hit

Gaza using 35-40% of aid for military purposes

Building tunnels

- Karem Shalom crossing border: 1000 trucks per day into Gaza with supplies and humanitarian goods
- No good technology to detect every tunnel
- Israel investing a lot of money into technology placed deep into border to detect tunneling activity

Gas reserves in Mediterranean Sea

You have to send a message that you are not going to put up with terror incidents
More than 100K come into Israel to work every morning (60% legally, 40% illegally)
Rely on security clearances, fence, punitive measures against terrorist families, powerful intelligence assets, training, security awareness, community engagement
Learn from the attacks of others – Israel studies what is going on in other places in the world including details, modus operandi

- Israel is a lab for terror attacks
- Need to understand the organization, mindset
 - Who they are, what is their cause?
 - What kind of measures will hurt them?
 - What will contain them?

Lecture/Site Visit: Military Court of Judea and Sumeria Lt Colonel Menachem Lieberman

Participants received a presentation on the military court and the prosecution of suspects of those accused of security or criminal offenses in the West Bank. The site visit included in-court viewing of proceedings against a man charged with using social media as part of a terrorist organization. Notes:

West Bank under military sovereignty

Questions on whether Geneva Convention applies

Judiciary

- Local Palestinian courts
- Military courts
- Juvenile military courts
- Military court of appeals
- High Court of Justice: “Bagatz” (In Israel)

Those accused of criminal or security offenses in West Bank get real trial, rights of any defended

- Acquittal rate as high as Israeli courts
- Same evidentiary laws as in Israel

No jury system in Israel

Cases: terror, criminal, disturbance of public order, traffic, border offenses, and review of administrative decisions

24.5% of defendants have membership in a terrorist organization

Terror organizations find it easy to influence minors

Encourage and pay minors to perform terrorist acts

- Redeem “immoral behavior”
- “Hate indoctrination”

Administrative detention

- Preventative, not punitive
- Usually 6 months

Constant presence of human rights NGOs, visits of diplomats and foreign delegations

All defendants have lawyers; public defenders from Palestinian Authority available

Site tour: in-session court proceedings

Lecture: IED Trends

Chief Superintendent Michael Cardash

This lecture focused on ISIS and AQ IED trends exclusive of PBIEDs (addressed previously). The presenter discussed sources for explosive material, including unexploded ordnance (UXO) and the process necessary to create a homemade explosive materials as detailed in widely-distributed publications and internet-based videos. Participants also learned about camouflaging IEDs and anticipated upcoming threats and trends (including vehicle borne IEDs (VBIED), drones as a delivery mechanism. Notes:

Sources for explosives

- Unexploded ordnance (UXO)
 - PTAB 2.5 bomblets
 - Converted to an IED: remove fuse, remove tail assembly, add XMAT, insert det cord, close
 - Since Russian intervention in Syria, more modern munitions
 - UXO AO 2.5RT sub-munition
- Homemade explosives
 - Ammonium nitrate fertilizer
 - Ammonium nitrate + aluminum powder
 - TATP, nitrocellulose, EGDN, other
 - Christmas Eve 2014 AQAP magazine published article on how to make XMAT
 - Potassium chlorate (?) with booster
 - Plastic bottle casing
 - Nigella sativa (black cumin)
 - More energetic than carbon
 - Increased detonation energy by 30%
- TATP – classic 2-stage detonation

International Terror

- Richard Reid – shoe bomber
- UK 21.7 attempt (2005) London
- Delta Airlines attempt – Christmas Day
- Paris attacks: 13 November 2015
 - 1.2kg wet TATP and 700-1000 nuts
- Germany Ansbach: 24 July 2016
 - Suicide bomber outside wine bar
 - 2kg urea + AN and 200g TATP
- Brussels, Belgium: 22 March 2016
 - 3rd device 25kg TATP
 - Produced 100-125 kg of TATP
- Upcoming threat: TATP VBIED

Turkish airport bombing

Camouflaged IEDs

- Building blocks (ISIS)
- Rock camouflage (Houthis)
- Sandals (ISIS)
- Laptop IEDs (Al Shabaab)
 - Flight restrictions
 - AQAP raid – tech to build device
 - Inside laptop battery; still functions

ISIS use of vehicle-borne IED (VBIED) – New trend

- Large armored VBIED driven by suicide bomber
- Now in Iraq and Syria on a defensive position
 - 4 x 4 or SUVs (prefer Kia)
 - Light armored SUVs
 - Route to Karbala – 8 VBIEDs
 - Month of Ramadan
 - Electronic detonators with electronic plugs
 - Plastic bags and containers packed with explosives

ISIS use of UAVs – New trend

- Commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) multirotor drone/quadcopter
- Used for surveillance to date
- Quadcopter payloads – future threat?
- Hezbollah – Aug 2016 – weaponized quadcopter with AT/AP MZD2 bomblets
- ISIS fixed wing bomber – Jan 2017 - PR film
- ISIS quadcopter bombings – Jan 2017
 - 3D printed components
 - Tail hook on bomblets
 - 40mm warhead – M430 or M383
- Iraqi forces weaponized UAVs with shuttlecock bomblets
- Chemical – new trend
 - Fixed wing UAV with chlorine canister
 - Mosul April 2017
- French and Dutch using eagles to counter UAVs

Review

Rami Savir and Rami Shemesh

Cannot copy our methods in your communities – better to see why we do it and adapt our methods

Always expect a 2nd attack; things may happen in stages

Sunday - lectures

- Dangers of cyber and IOT; consider your cyber protection
- Consider communication
 - Used best by ISIS

Significant recruitment tool

Pay attention – see what the intentions are

Can use media to show your own message

Incitement on social media

Monday – MDA, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza

- US may not have those kind of threats
- All of this can be applied to police work
- Community relations is also a part of response

Tuesday – West Bank, Golan Heights, Syria, Jordan

- Message that if you are strong enough and crazy enough, it helps to deter

Wednesday – Parliament, PM Office, Courts

- Right wing side of perspective
- Solution is a matter of perspective
- Demonstration of incitement via social networks

Lecture: Social Networks as a Source of Inspiration

Rami Savir

This session focused on the importance of monitoring content of social media networks to identify sites/videos/forums, etc. being used to inspire hatred against the Jewish population and potential suicide bombers. Participants watched 2 videos made for children that encourage violence against Jewish persons. The lecturer also provided Facebook posts showing the progression of radical ideology by a young man that killed a 13 year-old Jewish girl. Notes:

Video: PAL network

Video: Hamas children's network

Case of Muhammad Tarayrah

- Killed 13-year old girl
- Review of social media posts
 - “Death is a right and I demand my right”
 - Desire to become a Shaheed

Social media – riots and disorder predictable via SM

No such thing as a lone wolf – need inspiration – often found in social media

Day 5:

Site Visit: Hadassah Hospital

Julie Bebinsky

Participants visited Hadassah Hospital to review the readiness and capabilities for mass casualty readiness, including trauma-specific emergency room spaces and intensive care units, plans for surge of facilities and staff, preparedness drills, and the need for trans-cultural nursing. The visit included a presentation by Dr. Asaf Kedar Terrorism Related to Mass Casualty Events in Israel.

Dr. Kedar discussed the increase in vehicle assaults and knife attacks in recent year. Notes:

Everything in ER can be quarantined

Capacity for 110 beds

MDA notifies ER with patient details

Trauma ER – rooms strictly for trauma

- X-ray booms
- Lights also cameras – everything filmed
 - Not accessible to lawyers
- Each room has capacity for 2 patients
- Ultrasound machines in room
- Call volume / day – approx. 10

Rambam Hospital – only Level 1 hospital in north part of country

- Anticipate military wounds
- Complete hospital underneath the ground – used if necessary in time of war

Hadassah Hospital – geared towards terror victims

Conduct drills for hospital evacuation onto grounds

During mass casualty, patients leave for CT and don't return to ER, move to other care

No diverts, always accept trauma patients

Burn care – big issue – resources lacking

Big bottleneck – imagery, CT scans

ATLS – Advanced Trauma Life Support

No problems with drop times from ambulances

Another bottleneck in ICU, but all nurses ICU trained

Nursing school in hospital

Different ICUs distributed throughout hospital: trauma, peds, cario, etc.

Effort to keep families together during mass casualty incidents

Visiting dignitary room – bulletproof, self-contained

Simulation/training room can be converted for more beds

System for surge capacity

- Drill 3x per year for all former ER nurses in hospital
- Focus on new threats
- 2017 – pediatric drill

No translation problems

Workers reflect population of the city

No follow-up care available in Palestinian Authority (PA)

PA has Ministry of Health and own medical system

Air transports 1x per month

- Short distances in Israel
- Air pad fits criteria for military hospitals

Mass decon area with Geiger counter outside in ambulance bay

Mother and child pavilion

- Obstetrics, labor and delivery, pediatric ICU, oncology, surgery
- Cultural competence: trans-cultural nursing, ethnomed
- Can be used for surge in a mass casualty
- Access to utilities in ceiling

Family areas have kitchens and showers
Pediatric ICU has parent sleeping rooms
Hospitals in East Jerusalem run by Palestinian Authority Ministry of Health

Dr, Yorum Weiss

Former Director of surgical ICU

A lot of experience here with trauma

Seeing a decline of trauma patients

- Used to have many multi-casualty events
- Importance of drills to maintain skills

MCE factors:

- Volume of patients
- Medical characteristics of event (e.g., injury types – crush)
- Prehospital scene
- Hospital-related variables

Terrorism Related to MCE in Israel

Dr. Kedar Assaf

West Bank divided into Sumaria (North) and Judea (South)

1/10/15 Drive-by shooting

2392 attacks in 10 weeks (2015)

- Increase in vehicular assaults
- Most attacks in West Bank (74%)

Terrorists today

- Age of terrorists: 16-20: 37%, 21-25: 34%; minors 10%
- Gender of terrorists: 89% male
 - Some females – suicide by cop
- Lone terrorist is characterized by radicals who embark on individual terrorist missions without any logistical support or conventional means of attack
 - Example: tractor into crowded street

Patients spread out so hospitals not overwhelmed

Significant increase in vehicular assault

Continuous dialogue with dispatch centers

- Can connect to CCTV cameras to see what is happening in the field
- EMTs sending photos from smart phones
- Israel uses WhatsApp to send data

Knife attacks – Intifada of the Knife

- More force in those hit intentionally
- Attackers being taught efficient stab sites and how to avoid police/military protective vests -> “Intelligent stabbing”
- Use of foley catheter into path of knife track
- Whatever you can do to apply direct pressure
- Goal of MDA is to get to the closest, proper medical facility

Site Visit: Check Point between Israel and West Bank

Participants visited a check point in Jerusalem where inhabitants from the West Bank cross into Jerusalem. Part of the visit included a tour of a main control center where Israeli border forces review an extensive surveillance camera outputs at all times. During the tour, participants saw an incident where two youths touched the fence and caused a sensor hit. The border forces maintained surveillance on the two. Notes:

North part of Jerusalem: PA and Israel come together

Behind wall is refugee camp – Kalandia

- ½ Israelis who choose to live behind the wall, ½ Palestinians

Hard to tell the intentions of people going through the check point

Next month is Ramadan - .5 million people going through the check point during holiday

Site tour: Control Center

- Incident ongoing – 2 boys/young men touched fence causing sensor hit
- Concerns about people infiltrating into Jewish communities and murdering people
- 5 platoons of 70 people each
- Want to allow people freedom to come into work and to pray
- Don't know the intentions of people coming over
- Concerns about attacks on border forces
- Border guards work together well with police, IDF -> importance of sharing information and intelligence
- Incident description: small village Sho-afat – rocks thrown at police and MDA – attacks on the people there to help others
- A lot of cooperation that people don't know about
- Incidents of bombs in ambulances – fake sick
- All facets of Israeli population in Border Guard
- Command board – shows location of all vehicles
- Software reads license plate of every car coming into Israel
Information immediately provided to Border Guard

Site tour: Surveillance Center

- 24/7 camera surveillance
 - Women better than men at surveillance
 - 4 hour shifts
 - Looking for abnormalities, behavior, proximity to fence
 - Become very familiar with specific area
 - Land/terrain divided in a very specific way
 - Contact directly with units in field
- Similar units/centers all over the country

Site Visit/Lecture: Special Patrol Unit/Yasam Jerusalem

The tactics and procedures of the Special Patrol Unit are similar to SWAT teams in the United States. The Special Patrol Unit is divided into motorcycle units and team-based squadrons. Unit

members demonstrated non-lethal and lethal weapons and capabilities. A unit member also provided a briefing on motives of a terrorist, operational parameters, suspicious signs and behaviors. Notes:

Deal with extraordinary incidents – anything with violence

2 types of units:

- Motorcycle units

 - Anywhere in the city in 3-7 minutes

 - Driver + rider; rider has M-4

 - Elite of unit

 - Helmet has Bluetooth for comms transmission

 - 7 bikes every shift spread throughout city

 - 2 shifts plus missions

 - At night use 4-wheeled vehicles because of reduction in traffic

- Team-based squadrons

 - Use Chevy Savana – holds 9 officers (but can hold up to 15-16)

 - Modular vests

 - Riot suit is fireproof

 - Cannot use baton unless at highest threat level, and then only to outer thigh

 - Non-lethal: rubber rounds

 - Not allowed to fire center mass

 - Can only aim below knee or below waist

 - Water cannon

 - Used for 3rd highest level of riots

 - Has self-defense system – tear gas deployed from sides

 - Disperses water, water with blue paint, water with stink, and water with tear gas

 - Police can come in later to arrest people painted in blue

 - Nozzle on front for trash fires

 - Working time of 4 min at full blast

 - Can refill from any fire hydrant

 - Arsenal

 - Importance of surgical means vs. mass means

 - Non-lethal:

 - Sponge rounds

 - OC

 - Paintball gun with paint, salt, OC

 - Night-vision, night-sight for M4 and M22

M4 – fires .556

.22 Ruger (between lethal and non-lethal)

- For those that present danger, but not “clear and present” danger

Unit formed in the 90’s – needed to form professionally-trained operational units

- Most professional in police force

4 squadrons: 2 team-based, motorcycle, mounted

- Teams of 5 officers or pairs of riders

Focus on:

- Terror – arrests, identifying suspects, response to extreme events
- Crime – specific events, proactive actions
- Public order – demonstrations and protests
- Sensitive missions (Temple Mount, VIP protection, public security patrols)

Threats: suicide attacks, kidnapping, knife attacks, cars as weapons, shootings

- Concerns about combined attack and multiple attacks (e.g., secondary attacks on responders)
- Profile: all ages, family status, gender, education level, and economic status
- Locations: friction points where Arab population comes into contact with Jewish population
- Any time of day
- Motives:

Revenge

Environmental causes

Incitement

Desire to be famous

Copycat

Religious reasons

Personal

Suicidal

Clear name

Operational parameters

- Position personnel/units in sensitive places (e.g., crowds, commercial areas, schools, central areas, hot spots)
- Roadblocks to check suspicious persons
- Learn and train

Suspicious signs and behavior

- Presence in area not supposed to be
- Purse or backpack
- Nervous behavior
- Mumbling/praying
- Try to get close to security personnel

Operational behavior:

- Keep a safe distance

- Other officers looking for suspects
- Keep guard up at all time

Video: shooter in parking lot (2016)

Video: incident at Temple Mount – shooting from fortified door 7; no firearms allowed on Temple Mount

Lecture: Islam in the United States

Mordechai Kedar

This session focused on known radical Islamic groups in the United States. The lecturer discussed challenges for law enforcement, including the need to listen to people in their own language, in order to assess the level of support for radical Islamic organization. Notes:

Lecturer: 50 years experience in Arab culture (25 in IDF, 25 in academia)

“Alive and Killing: Tribalism in the Arab World”

Tribalism – most important element in the Arabic societies

Islam – extends to other countries

Suggested article: “Sharia and Violence in American Mosques”

<http://www.meforum.org/2931/american-mosques>

Found documents:

- “40 Hadith on Jihad” against infidels (Americans)
- “Racist, Fascist, Criminal Police: Manual for How to Resist Police Investigations”

Video: lying in Islam – prevention, protection of religion

- “The Life of Muhammad” page 367

Until they prove that this is wrong, they should be held to this – plan for North America

Images of billboards – www.whyislam.com

Biggest challenge for law enforcement is how to find out what is true and what is not

- Listen to what people are saying in their own language
- Big difference between Arabic dialects

Pyramid for of degree of support by Muslims for terrorist activity:

- Tip is terrorists
- Below – those that supply weapons
- Below that – those that donate money
- Below that – sympathizers
- Below that – “understanders”

“War is deception”

Different definition of the word “jihad”

- Fight against sin – internal or external?

Wording of the Qu’ran vs. the Holy Qu’ran

Site Visit: Jerusalem Fire Department

Participants visited a fire station in Jerusalem. Firefighters discussed the need for different cultures to work together to identify and mitigate threats within the city. Participants were able to explore ladder trucks and a CBRNE apparatus. Notes:

- 4 stations – one in Old City (Arab)
- 225 firefighters in whole city
- 3 shifts, 24 hours per day; career staff; 24 hours on/ 48 hours off
- Mutual aid from all over Israel
- Big problems because of many religions – need to treat everyone the same
- Call 102 to get fire response
- Site tour of multiple apparatus

Lecture: Israeli Security Agencies

Rami Savir

This session provided a description of the agencies that work together for intelligence collection activities within Israel, focusing on the Israel Security Agency. Participants learned about the separate expertise required for field officers and interrogators. The presentation included discussion of identifying, developing, and running sources. Notes:

Video clips:

- Boy caught smuggling XMAT
- Multiple operations
- Hospital fugitive extraction

Suggested documentary: The Green Prince:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5z8z4Fi7oz4&t=50s>

Shinbet/Israeli Security Agency

- Responsible for internal security: terrorism, subversion, espionage, diplomatic protection, international protection, cyber
- Field officers – 3 years training
 - 1 year language training
- Case officers in charge of geographic area; alone/independent
- Purpose is to thwart attacks, not collectors of intelligence
- Interrogators
 - Separate from case handlers
 - Operate as a team
 - Rely heavily on confessions
 - Mock prisons
 - Cannot use source information during interrogation
- Recruiting and handling difficult tasks
 - Need to be proactive
 - Walk-ins rarely valuable
 - Start by deciding who you want to be your source
 - Motives: money, ideology, personal issues, extortion, reduction of charges
 - Collect information and try to use it later

If the case officers doesn't find the hidden motive, then the recruitment will not succeed

If he doesn't have a motive, he will never be a source

The betrayal process starts when he says yes

Once he betrays his culture/brothers, he will one day betray the case officer

- Running a source – most difficult task

Information is immediately critical

Continuing threat to source

Always about checking the reliability of the source

What info did he give you?

What did he not give you?

Flow of meeting:

Importance of small talk at beginning and end

Headlines first – you have your priorities and he has his

- Get most important stuff at the beginning

You are in charge – you dictate the pace

- Don't want to stop the flow of information for technical info/details

You ask questions based on info needs

Small talk

Payment of money

- Same amount every time, not based on value of information
- The moment he understands the value of certain information, he will begin to lie or color his remarks
- Imagination becomes fact
- Source opinions, estimates are important, but are not facts

Reports – facts and case officer analysis/remarks

Sometimes you need to task a source with a specific mission

Validate mission outcomes

Identify gaps in outcome – what he reported versus what actually happened

Activity check – every couple of months

Sit down and review activity of source

Done by another case officer

Check for conflicts between what source told you and what actually happened

Reliability a key issue

Difference between source covering a target from the outside (example: barber) and a source covering a target from the inside

If you cannot recruit someone inside the target, you may be able to recruit from outside and get them inside

Try not to recruit the head of a cell
Want sources that can come to you, but that can't always happen
Need to know language and culture – culture adds context
Need to be proactive
 Be ready to supply the things that they need as part of illegal activities (e.g., source, storage guy, smuggler)
 Proactive prevention of terrorist organizations
 Do not rely on luck or chance – make it!
Lessons learned and experience

Day 6:

In-Transit Lectures on Security Topics

Rami Savir and Rami Shemesh

While in transit to various site visits, two veteran Israeli Security Agency members provided a series of lectures throughout the day on numerous topics related to Israel, the security situation, and terrorist incidents. Notes:

Hebron

- 1929 – all Jews killed or expelled by Muslims
- Important city for many religions
 - Tombs of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob)
 - Massacre before peace agreements
 - Jewish settlements

Jewish settlements

- Anything that came under control of Jews after 1967
- Settlers feel safe inside of their community but not outside
- Suggested reading: “The Israeli Solution: A One-State Plan for Peace in the Middle East” <https://www.amazon.com/Israeli-Solution-One-State-Peace-Middle/dp/0385348061>
- View of interest: Kiryat Arba

Activity: Caliber 3

Participants visited Caliber 3, a special academy for counterterrorism and security training. Participants viewed an active shooter response demonstration and joined in analysis of security operations during the demonstration and viewed active shooter response demonstration. Following the demonstration, completed the Basic Combat Shooting course and learned procedures for response operations. As part of the course, participants worked individually and in teams to neutralize threats in a training setting. Notes:

Founded 12 years ago

Sharon Gat – colonel in Israeli special forces

Special academy for counter-terrorism and security training

IDF, Israeli police, ISA, law enforcement from all over the world, civilians, government departments -> all train here

Instructors served at least 15 years with IDF, ISA, and/or Israeli police

“Brave heart and brave Jewish soul”

Site Visit: City of Hebron

Hebron is located in an Arab-controlled area of the West Bank. There are protected Jewish settlements in the city that is 97% Arab and 3% Jewish, creating significant security issues. Hebron contains archeological sites that are important to the Jewish faith, as well as the Tomb of the Fathers which has significance for Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Notes:

Population: 220K

Biggest city in Judea

Heart of radical Islam

800 Jews

4 neighborhoods

1917 Mandate for Palestine

TIPH – Temporary International Presence in Hebron

A lot of rock throwing, attempted stabbings

Site tour: Tel Rumeida

- 4500 year old ruins: stairs/wall
- 4 room house
- Land purchased in 1807

Site tour: Tomb of the Fathers/Patriarchs

- Built during reign of King Herod
- 1267 – declared to be a mosque
 - Anyone not Muslim could not go in
 - Jews in Hebron in order to maintain access to the Tomb of the Fathers
- 1 million people per year visit Tomb of the Fathers
- Abraham paid 400 silver shekels for a cave and a field in Hebron
 - Discovered to be cave of Adam and Eve
 - Purchased after Sarah died
- Holy Arc – Torah Scrolls – contract for Hebron
- Site called “entrance to the garden of Eden”
- Rooms with memorials – actual tombs in caves underneath building
- Today building is split in 2 parts: one part for Muslim use, one part for everyone else

Site Visit: Old City of Jerusalem and Western Wall

Participants visited religious sites in the Old City of Jerusalem to understand security issues related to Dome of the Rock and terrorist incidents in Old City of Jerusalem. These sites have been frequent targets of terrorist attacks. Notes:

Dome of the Rock / Temple Mount

- First Holy Temple of the Jews destroyed in the 5th century
- After 50 years of diaspora, Jews returned and built second Holy Temple in same place

Destroyed by Romans in 70AD

- Qu'ran Chapter 17 – journey of Muhammad
 - “exited mosque” and brought back prayers
 - Became 3rd holiest monument for Islam
- Jesus only in Jerusalem for last week of life
 - Palm Sunday – first day he entered Jerusalem from Mt of Olives
 - Thursday afternoon – arrested, interrogated
 - Friday – delivered to Romans, died, buried
 - Sunday – Mary sees empty tomb
- 40 days after resurrection, Jesus went to heaven from Mt Olive

Church of the Holy Sepulchre

- Via della Rosa
- Gethsemane Church
 - where Peter denied Jesus three times
 - where Judas gave up Jesus
 - where Jesus was arrested
- Crusader style
- Built in 11th century AD on the remains of the Byzantine church

Mercy Gate / Golden Gate

- Persians sacked Church of the Holy Sepulchre
- Golden cross returned with cross and entered through this gate
- Jews believe that the Messiah will return through this gate
- Muslims built cemetery in front of gate

Room of the Last Supper

- 14th century dispute between Franciscans and Jews regarding the room
- Grave of King David right below room
- Became a mosque in 14th century AD
- Messiah will come from the family of King David

Western Wall

- 2 tablets in Arc of the Covenant
 - Put in holiest room in the temple
 - Temple destroyed in 70AD
 - 132-135 AD – Jews rebelled against Romans
 - Roman emperor killed more than 650K Jews
 - Law restricted Jews from Jerusalem
 - Changed name from Judea to Palestine
 - All others expelled
 - 2000 year diaspora
 - 1700 (approx.) rabbi and students built synagogue – then destroyed
 - 1800s – built synagogue on same place, destroyed 1948
 - 1980s – rebuilt synagogue third time
- Western Wall is all that is left from the 2nd temple
- 10 gates to the Temple Mount only open to Muslims

- Jews, Christians, others must use small gate
- 10K people at the Western Wall every Friday evening

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ASTI

Advanced Security Training Institute

Counter-Terrorism: Prevention, Detection, and Response and Recovery Course Draft Agenda October 2017

This agenda details the schedule for each day of the October 2017 Counter-Terrorism: Prevention Detection, and Response Course. Please note that this agenda represents the likely curriculum schedule, but may continue to be refined until the course begins.

12 October 2017 (Thurs)		Depart local airports for TLV
13 October 2017 (Fri)		Arrival in Tel Aviv
17:50	Arrive at Ben Gurion Airport, Tel Aviv, Israel	
18:30	Transport to hotel	
19:00	Check In	
19:30	Dinner at hotel	
14 October 2017 (Sat)		Cultural Day
Saturday is Shabbat in Israel – a day of rest. Participants are to use this day to acclimatize to the time change. The course curriculum starts early on Sunday morning and participants need to be alert. Breakfast and dinner buffets are included in the lodging rate. Participants are on their own for lunch. There are many restaurants within walking distance of the hotel.		
15 October 2017 (Sun)		
07:30	Breakfast at hotel	
08:00 – 09:30	Lecture: Israel History , Geography, & Security Environment	
09:45 – 12:30	Lecture: Terrorist Explosive Devices and Tactics	
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch provided in meeting room	
13:30 – 14:30	Lecture: Intelligence Orientation	
14:30 – 15:30	Lecture: Cyber, Terror, and Social Networks	
15:45 – 16:30	Lecture: Crisis Media Management: Counter-Terror Approach	
19:30	Dinner at hotel	
The series of lectures presented on Sunday provide background and contextual information critical to understanding the threat environment in Israel.		

16 October 2017 (Mon)	
07:00	Breakfast at hotel and check out
07:45	Bus Departs
07:45 – 09:00	En-route lectures on security topics
09:00 – 10:30	Site Visit: Magen David Adom (MDA) Tactics and Procedures Topic: Pre-hospital emergency medical services
10:30 – 12:00	Site Visit: Port of Ashdod Topic: Protection of transportation assets
12:00 – 13:30	Site Visit: Rutenberg Power Station Topic: Protection of critical infrastructure
13:30 – 14:00	Lunch provided
13:30 – 15:30	Site Visit: Gaza Border/City of Sderot Topic: Protection of communities/civilians
15:45 – 16:30	Travel to Jerusalem; hotel check in
19:30	Dinner at hotel
<p>The curriculum for Monday focuses primarily on protection of communities and critical infrastructure from terrorist threats. Many of the site visits for the day center on assets located in near proximity to Gaza, an origin point for military and terrorist attacks.</p>	

17 October 2017 (Tues)	
06:30	Breakfast at hotel
07:00	Bus Departs
07:00 – 10:00	En-route lectures on security topics
10:00 – 12:00	Site Visit: West Bank / Golan Heights Participants will visit a number of sites related to the security situation in Israel and proximity to Syria and Jordan
12:00 – 12:30	Lunch provided
12:30 – 16:30	Site Visit: Golan Heights (continued) Topic: Protection of critical infrastructure
16:30 – 17:30	Site Visit: Dead Sea Topic: Security of tourist areas
17:30 – 19:00	En-route lectures on security topics
19:30	Dinner at hotel
<p>The curriculum on Tuesday focuses primarily on the security situation in Israel, including shared borders with states that have previously attacked Israel. The security situation is complicated by Israeli settlements located in the West Bank. Participants will view sites from terrorist and military attacks to better understand concepts and techniques for combatting these incidents.</p>	

18 October 2017 (Wed)	
07:30	Breakfast at hotel
08:00	Bus Departs
08:00 – 08:30	En-route lectures on security topics
08:30 – 11:00	Site Visit: Knesset Topic: Discussions with members of Israeli Parliament on the security situation in Israel and terrorist threats
11:00 – 12:30	Site Visit: Israeli National Security Council Topic: Discussions with members of Israeli Security Council on the security situation in Israel and terrorist threats
12:30 – 13:00	Lunch provided
13:00 – 15:00	Site Visit: Military Court Topic: Prosecution of terrorist suspects
15:00 – 18:00	Site Visit: Old City of Jerusalem and Western Wall Topic: Security of religious and cultural sites
19:30	Dinner at hotel
The curriculum on Wednesday focuses on governmental attempts to address Israel's terrorist threat by examining efforts by the legislative, governmental, and judicial branches.	

19 October 2017 (Thurs)	
08:00	Breakfast at hotel
08:30	Bus Departs
08:30 – 09:00	En-route lectures on security topics
09:00 – 11:00	Site Visit: Hadassah Hospital Topic: Mass casualty readiness and response
11:00 – 12:00	Site Visit: West Bank Border Checkpoint Topic: Surveillance tactics and techniques
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch provided
13:00 – 14:30	Site Visit: Special Patrol Unit Topic: Specialized law enforcement tactics and techniques
14:30 – 15:30	Site Visit: Jerusalem Fire Department Topic: Specialized response assets
15:30 – 16:30	Lecture: Extremist Islam in the United States
16:30 – 17:30	Lecture: Social Networks as a Source of Terrorist Inspiration
19:30	Dinner at hotel
The curriculum on Thursday focuses on Israeli emergency response tactics and procedures for terrorist and mass casualty incidents.	

20 October 2017 (Fri)	
08:00	Breakfast at hotel
08:30	Bus Departs
08:30 – 09:30	En-route lectures on security topics
09:30 – 12:30	Activity: Active Shooter Drill and Training
12:30 – 13:00	Lunch provided
13:00 – 15:00	Site Visit: Hebron Topic: Security in high tension areas
16:00 – 18:00	Site Visit: Jerusalem Market Participants will tour the historic Jerusalem Market, site of numerous past terrorist incidents
19:30	Shabbat Dinner
20:30	Depart hotel for TLV
23:30	Depart TLV
The curriculum on Friday focuses on application of knowledge and skills learned during the week.	

21 October 2017 (Sat)	Return to home jurisdictions
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Letter of Support

In May of 2017, the Austin Regional Intelligence Center (ARIC) sent six students to Israel to take part in the Advanced Security Training Institute's Counter-Terrorism Immersion Training. Our delegation consisted of representatives from various disciplines and assignments from within our Police and Fire Departments.

We received training directly from security and intelligence experts on the topics of:

- Proactive Intelligence Gathering
- Critical Infrastructure Protection
- Active Shooter Response
- Target Hardening
- Bomb Prevention and Response
- Community Engagement for Preventing and Responding to Terrorism Events
- Case Studies and Lessons Learned from Terrorism Events

After months of research, we chose Advanced Security Training Institute (ASTI) to facilitate this training because they are the leader in this field. The training program developed for this purpose, the "*Counter-Terrorism Detection, Prevention, and Response Immersion Course*," is a six day program encompassing historical perspective, policy development, tactical and strategic preparations, and critical infrastructure protection strategies.

From the moment when we stepped off the plane until we departed Israel, we were greeted and escorted by professional representatives of ASTI. Our safety and comfort was a priority for their team. ASTI had representatives on hand to answer every question we had along the way. Security and intelligence specialists accompanied us on our travels and were able to provide historical, geographic, and ideological context throughout the trip. They acted as a liaison between us and the local community as we travelled throughout the country. Although the trip was not a personal or religious vacation, the ASTI staff still took time when they could to explain the religious and historical background of each site we visited and travelled through.

Israel's long history of dealing with threats, conflict, trauma, and casualties over the course of their history has resulted in the development and implementation of several of procedures and entities;

A National heightened sense of awareness that occurs at all levels within their society beginning with education in their schools

An Intelligence Process that affords them the ability to quickly address potential threats or issues on multiple levels

Extensive Security Protocols at key Critical Infrastructures

An established integrated response by the Military and Emergency Services Responders

Hospitals staffed and equipped around the clock to deal with mass casualties

Regional EMS Technicians deployed with “Take-Home” emergency vehicles to respond in the event of Mass Casualties

The implementation of a country wide phone app which allows for video exchange and quicker uploading of patient information for people needing an EMS response

Military Courts to preside over cases involving subjects suspected of Terrorist Activity

Over the last ten years, numerous U.S. Homeland Security Officials have travelled to Israel for this training. Among those who have participated in this training are First Responders (Police, Fire and EMS), Bomb Squad Technicians and Managers, Strategic Homeland Security Management Personnel, Incident Commanders, Policy Makers etc. In order to bring back valuable feedback about the program for other agencies considering whether or not to participate, many of these prior participants have documented their experience. ARIC utilized those reviews and testimonials to justify and support our decision to participate. Now, after having participated in the training ourselves, we are happy to add our name to the list of agencies supporting this training.

Due to our overwhelmingly positive experience and valuable lessons learned throughout this training, we remain available to discuss our experience with anyone who is considering participating. We may be contacted at the information below.

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To: joyce.flinn@iowa.gov
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Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: Fwd: ASTI Upcoming Educational Training in Israel
Date: Wed Jun 14 2017 11:09:50 CDT
Attachments: ASTI CT Course May 2017 Notes.docx
CTPDR Agenda Oct 2017.docx
Letter of Support (1).doc

Joyce,

I hope this email finds you well. Attached you will find several attachments related to Advanced Security Training Institute's (ASTI) Counter-Terrorism: Detection, Prevention, and Response (CTDPR) training course. These attachments may help to answer questions you may have about the upcoming October 2017 trip or others scheduled for the future.

The first attachment is a summary of the lessons, site visits, and activities completed during the May 2017 CTDPR course. While not every iteration of the course is the same, this document will provide you with an understanding of the material that is covered during the session. The second attachment is a draft agenda for the October 2017 CTDPR course. The final attachment is a YouTube video created by one of the participants from the May course with image and video highlights from the course.

The dates for the next CTDPR course are 13-21 October. Participants will stay in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, Israel. The rate is \$9,450 per person and includes airfare, lodging, most meals and expenses, and the training curriculum. Please note that funds from the State Homeland Security Program, Urban Area Security Initiative, and Emergency Management Performance Grant can all be used to fund training through ASTI. ASTI courses also correlate closely with the FEMA Core Capabilities that serve as the basis for many of the DHS grant programs.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions that you might have about course curriculum, funding or approval mechanisms, or travel/logistics. Also, please feel free to forward this information to other responders that may be interested in immersive counter-terrorism training.

I am available to travel to IA to meet with response agencies interested in the ASTI training courses. Chairman of House Homeland Security is hoping to attend the October course with members of the

emergency response community.

Regards,

Yisroel Stefansky

Founder

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<https://youtu.be/h1dEelor6S8>

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ASTI

Advanced Security Training Institute

Counter-Terrorism Detection, Prevention, and Response and Recovery Immersion Course

May 2017

This document contains an overview of and detailed notes from the lectures, immersive site visits, and activities experienced by participants in the May 2017 *Counter-Terrorism Detection, Prevention, and Response* course. The intent of the course was to convey the tactics and strategies developed and used in Israel to address terror incidents, allowing participants to adapt their new skills for use in their home jurisdictions.

Day 1:

Lecture: The History of Israel

Avi

This session provided information on key points in the history of that land and region that exists as the state of Israel. This information provided context for participants to understand historic conflicts, rulers, and battles that shaped the political and security situation as it exists today. The lecturer paid specific attention to the 1947 United Nations (UN) Partition Plan, declaration of Israeli independence, 1948 Arab-Israeli War, 1967 Six-Day War, and current day contested territories. Notes:

King David – first to occupy Jerusalem. Made peace with enemies by marrying their wives (including the Queen of Sheba). King Solomon was the son of David.

Israel has developed desalination technology that it is sharing with Arab countries, providing peace through water.

32 latitude – below is desert, above is green

Ottomans controlled land until the first World War

1947 UN Partition Plan gave Arabs land in the mountains, Jewish communities in the valleys, and Jerusalem as an internationally-protected area

- o Jews agreed to this plan, Arabs said no

May 14, 1948 – Israel declared independence; 5 Arab armies attacked

July 1948 – Israeli army counterattacked

Israel smaller than New Jersey

Ben Gurion – first Prime Minister of Israel

- Dream to make the desert green
- Special irrigation systems

1967 – 6 Days War fought against Syria, Egypt, and Jordan from 6/5/67-6/11/67

Jordan River is part of Africa Rift (tectonic plates)

Provide aid to neighbors during disasters

Contested territories: Gaza, West Bank, Golan Heights

Ben Gurion Airport – 8km from West Bank

“Land of Milk & Honey” – the only things that you can get from an animal without killing it

Israel as “the start-up nation”

Lecture: Terrorist Explosive Devices & Tactics

Chief Superintendent Michael Cardash

This session provided information on terroristic and criminal use of improvised explosive devices (IED) in Israel. The lecturer described the components of an IED and types of explosive material commonly used in IEDs. A segment of this lecture focused on person-borne improvised explosive device (PBIED). These suicide bombers use bags, vests, belts, pants or other innocent looking objects to transport explosive devices for detonation. The lecturer also discussed the importance of public awareness and intelligence/information sharing. Notes:

Last 4-5 years – few explosive attacks in Israel

Iron Dome System – built with the US to intercept rockets

Terroristic and criminal use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs); criminal use means that it is specifically directed at a person

Components of IEDs

- Explosive material (XMAT)
- Detonator (initiator)
- Firing system (trigger)
- Optional additions

Camouflage

Fragmentation

Types of XMAT commonly use in IEDs

- TATP – with or without plasticizers
- Urea nitrate (with plasticizers)
- TNT – mostly from old ammunition
- Nitroglycerine-based
- Ammonium nitrate based (fertilizers)
- Nitro glycol (EGDN)

Times Square VBIED used 220lbs of urea, not urea nitrate

Ball bearings – best type of fragmentation

- Used to enhance the distance

Cell phone – most common radio detonator

DTMF – dual tone multi functional

- Added onto phone to set off tone
- Don't need to wait for call to go through

Public awareness is key

- Israel teaches awareness from kindergarten: “what is a suspicious object?”, “what is a suspicious person?”
- 10th graders get presentation from bomb tech
- training in military

Suicide bomber = person-based IED = PBIED

Response - first consideration – look for secondary device

Considerations for PBIED

- Overcome security measures
- Control the explosion and ensure success of the incident
- Portability of the explosive device
- Substitute for firing system
- Packaging – use bags, vests, belts, pants, and innocent looking objects

** Importance of intelligence and information sharing

- Sources: Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), Mossad, Israeli Security Agency (ISA), police

Public resilience – get back to normal ASAP

Lecture: Cyber, Terror, & the Social Networks: The Dark Side of Technology

Dr. Harel Menashri

This session addressed the main trends in terrorist online activity, including the use of social media networks and hidden or dark networks. Terrorist organizations use file distribution applications, visible and hidden websites (e.g., blogs, forums), social networks, and communication applications (e.g. WhatsApp) for the purposes of propaganda, training, recruiting, funding, executing cyber attacks, intelligence gathering, etc. The lecturer also discussed ISIS trends and activities on the web. Notes:

Two main trends in terrorist online activity: grasping of popular social media networks and the dark web

Unparalleled tools for reaching out to as wide an audience as possible (e.g., mainstream social media networks)

ISIS has developed a multi-divisional media empire – target specific groups in local languages

Internet (only part of cyberspace) composed of: public networks, hidden networks, deep web

Terrorist activity on the internet: propaganda, training, recruiting, funding, cyber attacks, intelligence gathering, and more

Laws don't allow you to break into the network of someone who breaks into yours

Network discussion centers used for distributing files, websites (e.g., blogs, forums), social networks, communications applications

Cachedview.com shows deleted and removed

Terrorist organizations use encryption software, multiple accounts, social networks (including visible and hidden networks); Tor

ISIS trends:

- Propaganda focused on “distant enemy” encouraging lone wolves and cyber attacks
- Call to arms in social media
- Encouraging activities of terrorist organizations against critical infrastructure
- Use Android more than IOS
- Opera browser and Tor
- Use hushmail software to encrypt email
- Cyberghost VPN allows IP address switching
- Locker app deletes files after several incorrect password attempts
- Fake GPS apps hide location
- Fake social media accounts

Lessons:

- Do not take phone into the field or into meetings (change the culture)
- Everything is a computer and can be hacked
- Concerns about hacking of pacemakers, hearing aids, security cameras, automobiles, toys, appliances -> internet of things

Lecture: Crisis Media Management: Counter Terror Approach

Gil Kleiman

This session focused on the ability to use the media as a multiplier as part of response operations. The lecturer stressed the importance of understanding the sensitive issues in your community to gather intelligence, as well as the need to feed the media with information during a response.

Terror is not new, but tactics of terror change

Object of terror is to turn you into a drowning man

Media as a multiplier

“The Kardashian Syndrome” – know which topics are sensitive to your community, what will turn heads

What you don’t put out there, someone else will

Never lie – say what you have to say

1 spokesman – unity of message

Book by Author: Terrorist Suicide Bombings: Attack Interdiction, Mitigation, and Response. The link to electronically review the book is:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=4a3MBQAAQBAJ&pg=PA266&lpg=PA266&dq=Terrorist+suicide+bombers+Kleiman&source=bl&ots=eI8nOL1kUY&sig=6txgZc59Nu1ssKaUIPdR8evxJF8&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjP7YSSkvvTAhUls1QKHXYDfMQ6AEINTAD#v=onepage&q=Terrorist%20suicide%20bombers%20Kleiman&f=false>

Day 2:

In-Transit Lectures on Security Topics

Rami Savir and Rami Shemesh

While in transit to various site visits, two veteran Israeli Security Agency members provided a series of lectures throughout the day on numerous topics related to Israel, the security situation, and terrorist incidents. Notes:

Demographics

- 8 million Israeli citizens: 75% Jewish; 21% Israeli Arabs; 4% Other (e.g., Christians, Arabs, Druze)
- 4.2 million Palestinians: 1.9M in West Bank; 1.7M in Gaza, E. Jerusalem Arabs (Israeli residents)

Until 1948, 1.2M Arabs/600K Jews; after 1948, 300K Arabs/600K Jews

- 500K Arabs went to refugee camps -> now 5 million in refugee camps

UN Decision 181 (November 29, 1947)

- David Ben Gurion accepted division of Israel into Jewish State and Arab State with Jerusalem as international territory
- Jewish State 68% desert
- Arabs would not accept any independent Israeli state

6 Day War – 1967

- New reality – Jewish state controlled Gaza, West Bank, Sinai Peninsula

New forms of terrorist organizations emerged

Oslo Agreement

- West Bank divided into 3 parts
 - A – exclusively administered by Palestinian Authority
 - B – administered by both Palestinian Authority and Israel
 - C – security and public affairs administered by Israel
- 1993 Agreement – Hamas said no
 - 10 years – birth of suicide bombers – change in paradigm
 - Israeli citizens afraid of buses, restaurants
 - Israeli develops expertise in dealing with terrorist cells

Islamic Fanatical Radical Movement Point of View:

- Jerusalem belongs to Allah
- Allah chose Islam to rule the world
- Chosen people: Jews, Christians, Muslims, but Jews and Christians fell
- Jews can live here, but not be independent rulers
- Muslim Brotherhood says that Muslims must be the leaders in the Holy Land
- Mohammed – last prophet

Gaza Strip – 2 governments: 1 Hamas and 1 PLO; over 1.7M people

- 2006 decision to remove 16 Jewish settlements from Gaza (8K people)
- Hamas started shooting rockets all over Israel

Obstacles to peace: 1) Jerusalem, 2) refugees, 3) Israeli settlements in West Bank

After 1967 (6 Day War), green light given to settle into the West Bank (500K people)

Hamas is a political movement, Islamic jihad is a military movement

Border countries: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt – no current problems except for Hezbollah

- Syria: ceasefire since 1967, few problems remaining regarding the Golan Heights
- Jordan: ceasefire since 1967, peace agreement 1994
- Egypt: ceasefire since 1973, peace agreement 1979

Ashdod – Philistine city; 3000 years old

- Largest port city in Israel
- High population of Russian Jews

First Intifada – began December 1987 - violent uprising against Israeli “occupation”; many riots and shootings

Second Intifada – began October 2000 – more violent

War with Gaza every 2-3 years, last was August 2014

Kibbutz – communal living generally according to Communist principles

More than 12 empires have conquered the Holy Land – all empire expansion has to go through Israel

50% unemployment rate in Gaza

Egypt has mostly closed their gate with Gaza

- Was open until 3 years ago
- Previous leader of Egypt was Muslim Brotherhood – kept the gate open

Desert defined as less than 200mm of rain/year

Rocket attacks from Gaza

- If in vehicle, stop car, get behind anything, cover head
- Every bus top has bomb shelter

Many tunnels from Gaza – get into Israel and behind military

Jerusalem

- King Solomon built first temple: “Gods house among people”
- Most important Holy City for Jews
- David Ben Gurion: “no state of Israel without Jerusalem, but there is Jerusalem without Israel”
- East Jerusalem belonged to Jordan until 1967
1/3 of population of Jerusalem

Site Visit: Magen David Adom (MDA) in Israel – Tactics and Procedures

Director of International Relations

MDA is the Israeli emergency medical services (EMS) agency. Participants traveled to Ashdod to visit an MDA dispatch center. The lecturer provides information on operations and logistics required to coordinate the activities of the more than 15,000 volunteers and 2000 paid staff across the country. MDA is also the only supplier of blood services in Israel. Participants were able to view dispatch technology and operations as they occurred. Notes:

MDA: Red Shield of David -> National EMS organization and national blood services organization

British mandate over Middle East after WW2

Established according to Red Cross guidelines

National, public, statutory, volunteer organization

More than 15K volunteers, less than 2K employees

- Volunteers are trained the same as employees

Active every hour, every day, all over the country

Train all IDF paramedics

Not funded by government, but supervised by Ministries of Health and Finance

Charge for services provided

- Those treated can claim back costs from health organizations
- Costs covered if person is hospitalized or suffers from known medical problems
- 72% of budget comes from billed costs

Government provides funds for preparedness from multiple hazards (e.g., earthquakes, rockets)

- No major earthquakes since 1927
- Israel sits on 2 fault lines

Volunteers are crucial in every community -> active, involved, well-trained

Call volume: 2500 calls per day (emergency and non-emergency)

- 2 ALS helicopters
- Vehicles: 1000+ ambulances plus minibikes
- Tel Aviv region: 300-400 calls/day for 1.5 million people
- Not a lot of misuse of the system
- Provide backup to the national school system for non-emergency calls

There are private ambulance companies; a few provide ALS

9 regional dispatching centers

- Dispatchers are all EMTs or paramedics
- Can provide medical guidance over the phone
- National dispatch system – call will go to first available dispatcher
Trying to keep time to answer call to less than 4 seconds

No central 911 system in Israel

- Dial 100 for police services
- Dial 101 for MDA
- Dial 102 for fire services

Created an understanding that all disciplines need to work together

- Direct communication from one dispatching center to another
- In areas of potential violence, MDA may request backup from law enforcement
- Some awareness training of fire department operations
- A lot of training with fire department
- GPS navigational system shows unit numbers of units from other departments

Law enforcement is in command of every incident

Law enforcement can shut down all communications amplifying sites near an incident

Responders have primary access to cellular bandwidth

Smart phone app (My MDA) – geolocates caller

- Personal information
- Known allergies

- Recent medical history
- Family info (calling in for self or other family member?)
- Can activate phone camera to provide video from scene
- Can communicate via text
- Shows “uber” view of vehicles arriving
- 60K users

Volunteers – group of highly trained EMTs and paramedics that keep supplies with them or bring them home

- MDA team app – shows location of all team members
- If first ambulance will arrive in more than 5 minutes, system will also scan volunteer first responders in the area
 - Provided with same call information
 - Can respond and click “navigate” -> uses Waze to guide to call
- Can fill out medical form – becomes part of the medical record

Only supplier of blood services in Israel

- Collect at least 1000 units every day
- Need to have enough inventory
- High holidays means lower supply
- Targeted communications with donors

Hospitals notify dispatchers when at capacity; close communication

- Ministry of Health monitors hospital capacity closely

Site tour: Ashdod dispatch center

- In bomb shelter
- Air filtering system to protect against chem/bio
- Automatic dispatch of mutual aid
- Average response time 7-8 minutes
- 8-hour shifts

Site Visit: Port of Ashdod – Protection of Transportation Assets

Participants traveled to the Port of Ashdod for a discussion of terror threats to transportation assets. Participants viewed multiple security components including biometric and automated gate systems, a smart fence, camera surveillance systems, the use of defender-class boats for patrol of the port from the water, biometric screening of crew members, and the use of drones.

Notes:

Operations always connected to preventing terror

Need for separation of operations – like a military base

Profile employees for different categories of clearance

Video summarizing security measures

- Advanced gate system using biometrics for access
- Smart fence
- Camera surveillance system and included analytics
- Defender-class boats patrol
- Biometric screening of crew members

Database contains information on 70% of seamen in the world

- Drones

Example of terror threat: “trojan horse” shipping container with false wall -> killed 10

Guiding authorities:

- Interior Emergency Authority
- ISA Information Security
- ISA
- Israeli Police
- Israeli Navy

Site tour: Port security operations

Site Visit: Rutenberg Power Station – Protection of Critical Infrastructure

The Rutenberg Power Station is located in Ashkelon, less than 5 km from Gaza. The power station is the target of repeated rocket and terror attacks. Numerous tunnels from Gaza have also been found in the vicinity of Rutenberg. Participants learned about the security components being used to prevent and mitigate attacks on the power station. Notes:

5 power stations located in Israel – Rutenberg is the largest

Located 5km from Gaza

Israel cannot get electricity from anywhere else in the world

Have to depend on themselves

Issues:

- Rockets
 - Concrete wall protects major systems
 - Iron Dome
 - Reliance on coal (LNG expensive)
 - Poles hardened
- Tunnels
 - Found in vicinity – one 3km long
- Terrorists
 - Combat trained security guards
 - Patrol vehicles
 - Guard towers
 - Surveillance – cameras, radar
 - Patrol boats (2)
 - Navy patrol of pier

Collaboration between fire, police, IDF, Red Cross

Site tour: power station

Site Visit: City of Sderot

Sderot is the city located closest to Gaza and is targeted in many rocket attacks. Participants viewed stockpiles of exploded rockets launched from Gaza into Sderot, as well as shelters available throughout the city to protect civilians. These shelters include playground equipment that serve as bomb shelters in schools and parks.

Lecture: The State of Relations between Israel and its Neighbors

Rami Savir

This session provided information on the relationships with Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, nomadic Bedouin tribes within Israel, Gaza, the West Bank area of Judea and Sumeria, and the division within Jerusalem. Notes:

Understanding the mindset of Israel is key

Israel formed as a state for Jewish people

Mixed population: Jews, Israeli Arabs, Palestinians, E. Jerusalem

1.7 billion Muslims in the world

Most Muslims not terrorists, but most/many terrorists are Muslim

Lebanon

- Not a real country - clans of Christians, Muslims
- Hezbollah runs the state
- Theoretically should have no problems with Lebanon

Syria

- Sunni Muslims
- Govt holding power thanks to support of Lebanon and Russia

Jordan

- Left over from British Mandate
- 70-80% Palestinians
- Minority Bedouins are ruling
- Peace treaty with Israel but don't know if it will hold

Egypt

- Peace treaty since 1977
- Good relations with regime, but not with people
- Bedouins living in Sinai Desert

Gaza

- Trying to find ways to defeat/pass the fence (e.g., rockets, tunnels)
- For a while, didn't see foreigners as a significant threat
 - Requires profiling of behavior
 - You can't check everyone
 - Pure random checks are a waste of time

Judea/Sumeria

- Judea is south of Jerusalem in West Bank
- Sumeria is north of Jerusalem in West Bank

Use of walls to separate territory used/controlled by Palestinians when people are so close they can shoot each other with rifles

- Suicide attacks went down more than 90% after wall built
- Wood and concrete fence

Tunnels

- Tunnels into Israel are attack tunnels

- Tunnels into Egypt are smuggling tunnels
- Jerusalem – Old City (less than 1 mile x 1 mile)
- Jewish Quarter
 - Muslim Quarter
 - Armenian Quarter
 - Christian Quarter

Lecture: The Muslim Mindset

Rami Savir

This session provided an assessment of behaviors and motivations of Muslim Arabs in the Middle East from the prospective of former Israeli Security Agency members. Notes:

A man is always preferable to a woman

- The man decides
- A woman as a source is less beneficial
- Women do not participate in discussions

A mother is always preferable to a wife

- The function of a wife is to have kids

Marriage for practical reasons is always preferable to marriage for love

- Marriage to first cousins is ideal
- Woman moves to home/family of husband
- Woman takes husbands name
- Dynasty of family is very important

A cousin is always preferable to a stranger

- Importance of families and clans

Family obligation supersedes loyalty to a country

The Army is preferable to civilian institutions

- Force is important
- Perception of strength is important

Ethnic and religious affiliations are more important than a national identity

Rulers are more important than the law

- Leadership is to benefit your family

Luck is more important than discipline and planning

Affinity and charisma are more important than the sense of obligation

- People will follow someone to the worst decision they every made

Poetry is more important than prose

An embrace precedes acquaintance

Embarrassment precedes guilt

- Do not want to be embarrassed

Suspicion precedes trust

Shouting precedes dialogue

Past and future are more important than the present

Manipulation precedes listening

- Control and power are more important than the solution
- Negotiation occurs prior to, during, and following an agreement
- Honor above all
 - o Most important issue in the mindset of Arabs

Day 3:

In-Transit Lectures on Security Topics

Rami Savir and Rami Shemesh

While in transit to various site visits, two veteran Israeli Security Agency members provided a series of lectures throughout the day on numerous topics related to Israel, the security situation, and terrorist incidents. Notes:

Old Jerusalem

- o 37K population inside walls
 - 65% Muslim
- o 4 Quarters: Christian, Armenian, Jewish, Muslim
- o Walls built in 1536 by the Ottomans to protect Jerusalem from Christian Crusaders
- o 7 gates built originally

View of note: pillars built around light train station to prevent terror incidents caused by crashing vehicles into stations

View of note: Ammunition Hill from 1967 battle with Jordan

View of note: Mount of Olives, Mount of Scopus, Mount Zion

View of note: Bedouins villages - 280K population total

West Bank divided by Oslo Agreement:

- o A: Exclusive responsibility of Palestinians
- o B: Security responsibility of Israel, public services responsibility of Palestinians
- o C: Exclusive responsibility of Israel

12 tribes of Israel – descendants from Jacob

- o Exiled into and enslaved in Egypt for 400 years
- o Moses led them through the desert for 40 years
- o Came through Jericho (Jordan Valley)
- o Moses died on the east side of the Jordan River; did not enter into Holy Land

Israel will not give up Jordan Valley as any part of a peace agreement – Jordan Valley is a buffer

June 16, 1946 – 11 bridges connecting Israel blown up to protest limits on amount of Holocaust Jews allowed into Israel

7 fruits that represent the “land of milk and honey”: date, olive, fig, grape, pomegranate, wheat, barley

Muslim calendar goes by the moon – 354 days

Jewish calendar – dates for holidays based on what is in the Bible

Ramadan – holiest Muslim holiday

- Fast for 30 days
- Greater chance of terror attacks because people feel more devout

Muslims pray 5 times per day – intelligence effort to see who goes to the mosque for the early prayers – most devout

Muslim Brotherhood – Dawah – call to build schools and mosques

Sea of Galilee – was main source of water for Israel

Dam at south end of the Sea / Jordan River

First desalination plant opened last year to provide water from the Mediterranean Sea

Syrians tried to stop water from flowing into Israel – 1964

First suicide bomber attack in 1991 after 400 Hamas leaders exported to Lebanon; came back with lots of knowledge about suicide bombing

Life of Jesus:

- Raised in Nazareth for 30 years
- Lived at Sea of Galilee for 3 years
 - Recruited disciples
 - Performed miracles
- Traveled along Jordan River
- In Jerusalem only one week before being crucified

Rule over land that is now Israel:

- For 300 years after Jesus died, there was harassment of Christians – Romans did not allow Christianity
- 325 AD, Constantine the Great (Roman Emperor) – allowed Christianity
- 638 AD Empire of Islam
- Defeated 1099 by Crusaders
- Defeated in 1187 by Muslims
- Defeated 1516 by Ottomans
- Ottomans ruled til the end of WW1

View of note: Bet She-An. In 1997, a Jordanian soldier killed 7 girls in Bet She-An; King Hussein of Jordan went to Bet She-An to give his condolences to the families

History of Islam:

- 7th Century AD – Islam became the 3rd monotheistic religion
- Established by Muhammad (name means “Praise God”)
 - 570 AD – born in Mecca
 - 610 AD – entered a cave in Mecca and had a vision from the Angel Gabriel
 - Wrote first verses of Koran in cave
 - Started to preach 610-622 AD
 - 622 AD chased from Mecca to Medina
 - 622 AD – died and buried in Medina
 - No successor – 2 competing camps
 - Al Sahaba (sp?) – friends of Muhammad
 - Fatimah – daughter of Muhammad, married to 4th caliph
 - Fought to continue Islam

- Mother of Al-Hasan and Al-Husayn

680 AD – battle for the future of Islam between Fatimah and sons vs. friends of Muhammad – Battle of Karbala

Al Husayn killed in battle – followers became Shia

Day of Ashura (Shia holiday) marks the death of Al Husayn at Battle of Karbala

ISIS – Sunni, Al Qaeda – Sunni

ISIS established after 9/11 and US involvement in Iraq

65% of Iraq controlled by ISIS

Syria – Bashar al-Assad not Sunni or Shia

ISIS, other Sunni groups, free rebels all fighting al-Assad

2014 – Jabhat al-Nusra kidnapped 45 United Nations peacekeepers in Golan Heights; Israeli forces opened the gate and allowed UN personnel into Israel

Druze

- Fatimid Caliphate (Shia) – 11th century
 - Ruled in Egypt and Israel
 - King kidnapped, ad Dazari thought king was 1st imam
 - Ad Dazari ran away and established new religion (Druze)
- Druze not Arab, not Muslim
- 1.5 million
- Don't need nation or government, only want territory
- Very little known about Druze religion
- Being killed in Syria
- Druze in Israel demanding that Israeli government intervene in Syrian conflict to help Druze in Syria
- Stopped ambulance and stoned wounded Syrian soldier to death

Site Visit: Jordan River Baptism Site

Participants traveled to the Jorder River Baptism Site. This historic religious site is located on the border with Jordan, sharing baptism facilities. The span of the Jordan River at this site is less than 20 feet, posing unique security challenges. Notes:

One of 2 baptism sites – the other is at the Sea of Galilee

White dove symbolizes the baptism of Jesus

- Jesus baptized by John the Baptist in Jordan River
- Voice of God: “This is the son of God that I was talking about”
- Christians view baptism as a cleaning of the soul and the body

Currently good relationship with Jordan

Peutingner Map

- Discovered in the 4th century AD
- Shows network of roads from Roman Empire
- Indicates that site of baptism of Jesus close to Jordan River baptism site

No control of borders all the way to Turkey

Until 2007, 250km border with Egypt was completely open

- Fence built in 2007, significantly reducing smuggling problems
- Current war between ISIS and Tarabin (Bedouin tribe)
- Trying to keep Bedouins from smuggling

Site Visit: Triangle Border

This border is the boundary between Israel, Syria, & Jordan. Lecturers provided information on the impact of the war in Syria on Israel, the expansion of ISIS into Syria and Jordan. Lecturers provided information on the security situation in the Golan Heights, and implications for Jewish settlements in the area. Notes:

Golan Heights: 950m above sea level

Sykes-Picot Agreement – 1916 – division of area

- Golan Heights, Lebanon, Syria to be French territory
- Israel, part of Jordan, part of Iraq, Egypt to be English territory

1945-46 – Syria became independent

ISIS concentrating opposite Golan Heights, but focusing on battles to the east and north right now

Jordan Valley = 65 miles

- Border between 2 tectonic plates
- Major earthquakes every 100-110 years

Site Visit: French Hospital/Syrian Officer Academy

Participants toured the site of a former French hospital used as a Syrian Officer Academy before the Six Day War. The building ruins look down into the Syrian countryside. Notes:

Eli Cohen – Israeli intelligence agent

- Established cover identity 1960-61 in Argentina
- Settled in Syria 1961-65, transmitted information on Syrian military and fortifications
- Caught January 1965, tried, and executed

Site Visit: Valley of Tears

The Valley of Tears is battle site from Yom Kippur War where significantly outnumbered Israeli forces held off attackers until reinforcements could arrive after 4 days. Participants were able to explore a maintained Israeli Defense Force (IDF) bunker. The visit highlighted the difficulties in defending territory given the proximity of countries that have been actively hostile to Israel. Lecturers also provided a review of international/UN participation in the security situation.

Notes:

Until 1967, Syria controlled Golan Heights and bombed the kibbutz

Yom Kippur War – surprise attack from Syrian in Golan Heights; 3-point attack

History:

- 1947 Independence
- 1956 Sinai War
- 1967 Six Day War

10/6/73 – Attack on Yom Kippur – holiest day for Jewish religion

- Israeli army kept minimal forces in Golan Heights
- Ignored intelligence about possible war
- No recruitment of reserves until 10/5/73

Valley of Tears – one of three attack columns

- 1 battalion in Valley
- 600 Syrian tanks vs. 35-40 Israeli tanks
- For 4 days, Israeli tank battalion held off Syrians
- Bitter battle – officers motivated soldiers to stay
- Reserves arrived after 4 days and turned battle
- Israeli forces pushed into Syria
 - Pushed to within 40km from Damascus
 - Pushed to within 101km from Cairo

1974 – ceasefire between Israel and Syria

Site Visit: The Dead Sea

Participants were able to visit and swim in the Dead Sea, learning about the security challenges of protecting this site visited by travelers from within Israel and throughout the world. Notes:

- Every year 1m lost from the Dead Sea
- Dead Sea 34% salt in water (ocean .4% salt)

Day 4:

Site Visit: Knesset

The Knesset is the legislature of Israel. A guided tour provided information on the structure and composition of the Knesset. Participants subsequently attended private meetings with 3 members of Israeli parliament (Yehuda Glick, Amir Ohana, and Tzipi Hotovely. The Knesset members provided their unique perspectives on the security situation in Israel and answered questions from ASTI participants. Notes:

“to come together/to congregate”

120 members

- 17 not Jewish
- 33 women (25%)

Parliamentary Democracy

- Vote for 1 party, not individual members
- Each party posts list of 120 potential
- Seated by percentage of vote
- Minimum of 3.25% to get representation in Knesset

President gives political power to Knesset

- Knesset has to form government
- At least 61 members must support government

Declaration of independence

- 14 May 1948 at 4:00pm (Friday)

- 5/15 – end of British Mandate, Shabbat (Saturday)
- Concerns about civil war if there was a leadership void
- Document
 - “Rock of Israel” = God
 - No other reference to God
 - Signed while blank
 - Bold paragraph in middle contains 3 justifications for independent Jewish state:
 - Historical connection with land
 - 1917 Balfour Declaration / 1947 UN Partition Plan
 - Holocaust
 - Describes type of government
 - 3 addresses to UN, to Jewish people, to Arabs
 - Call to peace

- No constitution

Plenary Hall used for voting

- Lively debates, most recognizable room
- Many other discussion rooms

Bills – 2 types

- Government-originated: written by minister or vice-minister, requires 3 votes
- Private: written by any member of Knesset; requires 4 votes

Official symbol – candelabrum

Separation of powers: legislative, government, judicial

PM is also a member of parliament

Speaker is member of parliament, but runs/manages the debate

10 seconds to vote; board shows voting results

Disciplinary action – can force members of party to vote in a specific way

Judicial oversees legislative oversees government oversees judicial

“ascend the podium” = give testimony

Viewing space for press, honored guests, public

Chegal Hall – 3 tapestries, 12 floor mosaics, 1 wall mosaic

- Tapestries: present (colorful – different waves of immigration), past (exodus from Egypt, Moses, King David), future (Isaiah)

Knesset Member Meeting: Yehuda Glick

Jerusalemofpeace.com

Likud party – 30 seats in this Knesset

Formerly served in Ministry of Absorption

Six Day war – greatest victory of Jewish people

- 2 million Jews surrounded by 200 million Arab Muslims (supported by USSR)

Yom Kippur War – lesson in humility

- Lesson: if we put down our arms, we won't exist

Greatest danger – those who think God is exclusive and want to convert others

- 12 million Muslims killed by radical Muslims

Settlements not an obstacle to peace, but are bringing peace by living together peacefully

Importance of not being afraid of terrorism

Demand from ourselves the highest standards

Jerusalem mentioned more than 600 times in the Bible

Nations that want to remain relevant will recognize Jerusalem as capitol

Israel offers highest level of human rights for all citizens

Temple Mount as world center for human rights

Promote Jerusalem Covenant

Knesset Member Meeting: Amir Ohana

12 years in IDF and ISA

Member of 5 committees

21 Arab states combined are 1000 times larger than Israel

1.4 billion Muslims in the world - yet still the minority that needs to be protected

It is the existence of the state of Israel and of the Jewish people in their homeland that Muslims find objectionable

100 years of terror

PLO founded in 1964 – before settlers

- What is Palestine? “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free”
- Continue to support terror in many ways

Influential Muslim leadership sees Jews as occupiers like British and Ottomans before them

This is the birthplace of Jewish religion

2000 years of exile – “tomorrow in Jerusalem”

Israeli/Arab conflict will not be solved in DC – must be solved by Israelis and Arabs

Cannot overstate friendship/brotherhood with U.S.

- Share enemies, enemies of the free world

Knesset Member Meeting: Tzipi Hotovely

Deputy Foreign Minister

Time for us to rethink

Issues with Iran and Syria

Challenges of Jerusalem

Children’s intifada

- 12-15 year old took kitchen knives to streets
 - Means it is part of education system and social media

Schools named after mass murderers

Great future for you and your families as terrorists

Congress sponsoring and funding families of terrorists

Winning of 6 Day War gave all religions freedom to practice their religion in Jerusalem

Israelis expecting movement of US embassy to Jerusalem

Clear that YouTube, Facebook have the ability to remove content related to terrorism, recruitment

- Arguments of free speech

- Already some restrictions on pornography, etc.
- Request to remove content combining certain words
- Still disappointed with accessibility of this information

Site Visit: Israeli National Security Council

Eitan Ben-David

Participants visited the office of the Prime Minister and attended a private meeting with Israel's National Security Director, Eitan Ben David (sp?). Mr. David provided information on the challenges of terrorism in Israel, Hezbollah and Hamas, counter-tunnel challenges, and the importance of learning from terror attacks in other countries. Participants were able to ask questions of Mr. David related to counter-terrorism policies. Notes:

We are trying to do our best in this region

- Trying to improve ourselves every day
- Our agenda is to alert and ready

Most of surrounding countries are enemy

- Countries by law, no diplomatic relations
- Peace treaties with Jordan and Egypt, but good relationships primarily with government
- People of Egypt and Jordan not happy with presence of Israel

Borders: Gaza (59km); Egypt (208km); Lebanon (79km); Syria (92km); Jordan (309km); Saudi Arabia (X); Mediterranean Sea (196km)

Asleep with 1 eye open; need to be strong in the neighborhood

A lot of budget dedicated to security issues

When it comes to security, people of Israel are very united

Last conventional war: 1982 with Lebanon

In last 2 decades, most operations are against terror organizations

Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza

- Hiding with civilians inside villages and cities
- President of Lebanon said: "Hezbollah is Lebanon and Lebanon is Hezbollah"

Israelis want to live peacefully in region

Sharon gave back Gaza

- After less than one year, Palestinian Authority lost to Hamas and were kicked out
- Now terrorist organization controls land on Israeli border

They will always find a way to attack you with innovative methods

Iron Dome – most rockets not allowed to hit

Gaza using 35-40% of aid for military purposes

Building tunnels

- Karem Shalom crossing border: 1000 trucks per day into Gaza with supplies and humanitarian goods
- No good technology to detect every tunnel
- Israel investing a lot of money into technology placed deep into border to detect tunneling activity

Gas reserves in Mediterranean Sea

You have to send a message that you are not going to put up with terror incidents
More than 100K come into Israel to work every morning (60% legally, 40% illegally)
Rely on security clearances, fence, punitive measures against terrorist families, powerful intelligence assets, training, security awareness, community engagement
Learn from the attacks of others – Israel studies what is going on in other places in the world including details, modus operandi

- Israel is a lab for terror attacks
- Need to understand the organization, mindset
 - Who they are, what is their cause?
 - What kind of measures will hurt them?
 - What will contain them?

Lecture/Site Visit: Military Court of Judea and Sumeria Lt Colonel Menachem Lieberman

Participants received a presentation on the military court and the prosecution of suspects of those accused of security or criminal offenses in the West Bank. The site visit included in-court viewing of proceedings against a man charged with using social media as part of a terrorist organization. Notes:

West Bank under military sovereignty

Questions on whether Geneva Convention applies

Judiciary

- Local Palestinian courts
- Military courts
- Juvenile military courts
- Military court of appeals
- High Court of Justice: “Bagatz” (In Israel)

Those accused of criminal or security offenses in West Bank get real trial, rights of any defended

- Acquittal rate as high as Israeli courts
- Same evidentiary laws as in Israel

No jury system in Israel

Cases: terror, criminal, disturbance of public order, traffic, border offenses, and review of administrative decisions

24.5% of defendants have membership in a terrorist organization

Terror organizations find it easy to influence minors

Encourage and pay minors to perform terrorist acts

- Redeem “immoral behavior”
- “Hate indoctrination”

Administrative detention

- Preventative, not punitive
- Usually 6 months

Constant presence of human rights NGOs, visits of diplomats and foreign delegations

All defendants have lawyers; public defenders from Palestinian Authority available

Site tour: in-session court proceedings

Lecture: IED Trends

Chief Superintendent Michael Cardash

This lecture focused on ISIS and AQ IED trends exclusive of PBIEDs (addressed previously). The presenter discussed sources for explosive material, including unexploded ordnance (UXO) and the process necessary to create a homemade explosive materials as detailed in widely-distributed publications and internet-based videos. Participants also learned about camouflaging IEDs and anticipated upcoming threats and trends (including vehicle borne IEDs (VBIED), drones as a delivery mechanism. Notes:

Sources for explosives

- Unexploded ordnance (UXO)
 - PTAB 2.5 bomblets
 - Converted to an IED: remove fuse, remove tail assembly, add XMAT, insert det cord, close
 - Since Russian intervention in Syria, more modern munitions
 - UXO AO 2.5RT sub-munition
- Homemade explosives
 - Ammonium nitrate fertilizer
 - Ammonium nitrate + aluminum powder
 - TATP, nitrocellulose, EGDN, other
 - Christmas Eve 2014 AQAP magazine published article on how to make XMAT
 - Potassium chlorate (?) with booster
 - Plastic bottle casing
 - Nigella sativa (black cumin)
 - More energetic than carbon
 - Increased detonation energy by 30%
- TATP – classic 2-stage detonation

International Terror

- Richard Reid – shoe bomber
- UK 21.7 attempt (2005) London
- Delta Airlines attempt – Christmas Day
- Paris attacks: 13 November 2015
 - 1.2kg wet TATP and 700-1000 nuts
- Germany Ansbach: 24 July 2016
 - Suicide bomber outside wine bar
 - 2kg urea + AN and 200g TATP
- Brussels, Belgium: 22 March 2016
 - 3rd device 25kg TATP
 - Produced 100-125 kg of TATP
- Upcoming threat: TATP VBIED

Turkish airport bombing

Camouflaged IEDs

- Building blocks (ISIS)
- Rock camouflage (Houthis)
- Sandals (ISIS)
- Laptop IEDs (Al Shabaab)
 - Flight restrictions
 - AQAP raid – tech to build device
 - Inside laptop battery; still functions

ISIS use of vehicle-borne IED (VBIED) – New trend

- Large armored VBIED driven by suicide bomber
- Now in Iraq and Syria on a defensive position
 - 4 x 4 or SUVs (prefer Kia)
 - Light armored SUVs
 - Route to Karbala – 8 VBIEDs
 - Month of Ramadan
 - Electronic detonators with electronic plugs
 - Plastic bags and containers packed with explosives

ISIS use of UAVs – New trend

- Commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) multirotor drone/quadcopter
- Used for surveillance to date
- Quadcopter payloads – future threat?
- Hezbollah – Aug 2016 – weaponized quadcopter with AT/AP MZD2 bomblets
- ISIS fixed wing bomber – Jan 2017 - PR film
- ISIS quadcopter bombings – Jan 2017
 - 3D printed components
 - Tail hook on bomblets
 - 40mm warhead – M430 or M383
- Iraqi forces weaponized UAVs with shuttlecock bomblets
- Chemical – new trend
 - Fixed wing UAV with chlorine canister
 - Mosul April 2017
- French and Dutch using eagles to counter UAVs

Review

Rami Savir and Rami Shemesh

Cannot copy our methods in your communities – better to see why we do it and adapt our methods

Always expect a 2nd attack; things may happen in stages

Sunday - lectures

- Dangers of cyber and IOT; consider your cyber protection
- Consider communication
 - Used best by ISIS

Significant recruitment tool
Pay attention – see what the intentions are
Can use media to show your own message
Incitement on social media

Monday – MDA, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza

- US may not have those kind of threats
- All of this can be applied to police work
- Community relations is also a part of response

Tuesday – West Bank, Golan Heights, Syria, Jordan

- Message that if you are strong enough and crazy enough, it helps to deter

Wednesday – Parliament, PM Office, Courts

- Right wing side of perspective
- Solution is a matter of perspective
- Demonstration of incitement via social networks

Lecture: Social Networks as a Source of Inspiration

Rami Savir

This session focused on the importance of monitoring content of social media networks to identify sites/videos/forums, etc. being used to inspire hatred against the Jewish population and potential suicide bombers. Participants watched 2 videos made for children that encourage violence against Jewish persons. The lecturer also provided Facebook posts showing the progression of radical ideology by a young man that killed a 13 year-old Jewish girl. Notes:

Video: PAL network

Video: Hamas children's network

Case of Muhammad Tarayrah

- Killed 13-year old girl
- Review of social media posts
 - “Death is a right and I demand my right”
 - Desire to become a Shaheed

Social media – riots and disorder predictable via SM

No such thing as a lone wolf – need inspiration – often found in social media

Day 5:

Site Visit: Hadassah Hospital

Julie Bebinsky

Participants visited Hadassah Hospital to review the readiness and capabilities for mass casualty readiness, including trauma-specific emergency room spaces and intensive care units, plans for surge of facilities and staff, preparedness drills, and the need for trans-cultural nursing. The visit included a presentation by Dr. Asaf Kedar Terrorism Related to Mass Casualty Events in Israel.

Dr. Kedar discussed the increase in vehicle assaults and knife attacks in recent year. Notes:

Everything in ER can be quarantined

Capacity for 110 beds

MDA notifies ER with patient details

Trauma ER – rooms strictly for trauma

- X-ray booms
- Lights also cameras – everything filmed
 - Not accessible to lawyers
- Each room has capacity for 2 patients
- Ultrasound machines in room
- Call volume / day – approx. 10

Rambam Hospital – only Level 1 hospital in north part of country

- Anticipate military wounds
- Complete hospital underneath the ground – used if necessary in time of war

Hadassah Hospital – geared towards terror victims

Conduct drills for hospital evacuation onto grounds

During mass casualty, patients leave for CT and don't return to ER, move to other care

No diverts, always accept trauma patients

Burn care – big issue – resources lacking

Big bottleneck – imagery, CT scans

ATLS – Advanced Trauma Life Support

No problems with drop times from ambulances

Another bottleneck in ICU, but all nurses ICU trained

Nursing school in hospital

Different ICUs distributed throughout hospital: trauma, peds, cario, etc.

Effort to keep families together during mass casualty incidents

Visiting dignitary room – bulletproof, self-contained

Simulation/training room can be converted for more beds

System for surge capacity

- Drill 3x per year for all former ER nurses in hospital
- Focus on new threats
- 2017 – pediatric drill

No translation problems

Workers reflect population of the city

No follow-up care available in Palestinian Authority (PA)

PA has Ministry of Health and own medical system

Air transports 1x per month

- Short distances in Israel
- Air pad fits criteria for military hospitals

Mass decon area with Geiger counter outside in ambulance bay

Mother and child pavilion

- Obstetrics, labor and delivery, pediatric ICU, oncology, surgery
- Cultural competence: trans-cultural nursing, ethnomed
- Can be used for surge in a mass casualty
- Access to utilities in ceiling

Family areas have kitchens and showers
Pediatric ICU has parent sleeping rooms
Hospitals in East Jerusalem run by Palestinian Authority Ministry of Health

Dr, Yorum Weiss

Former Director of surgical ICU

A lot of experience here with trauma

Seeing a decline of trauma patients

- Used to have many multi-casualty events
- Importance of drills to maintain skills

MCE factors:

- Volume of patients
- Medical characteristics of event (e.g., injury types – crush)
- Prehospital scene
- Hospital-related variables

Terrorism Related to MCE in Israel

Dr. Kedar Assaf

West Bank divided into Sumaria (North) and Judea (South)

1/10/15 Drive-by shooting

2392 attacks in 10 weeks (2015)

- Increase in vehicular assaults
- Most attacks in West Bank (74%)

Terrorists today

- Age of terrorists: 16-20: 37%, 21-25: 34%; minors 10%
- Gender of terrorists: 89% male
 - Some females – suicide by cop
- Lone terrorist is characterized by radicals who embark on individual terrorist missions without any logistical support or conventional means of attack
 - Example: tractor into crowded street

Patients spread out so hospitals not overwhelmed

Significant increase in vehicular assault

Continuous dialogue with dispatch centers

- Can connect to CCTV cameras to see what is happening in the field
- EMTs sending photos from smart phones
- Israel uses WhatsApp to send data

Knife attacks – Intifada of the Knife

- More force in those hit intentionally
- Attackers being taught efficient stab sites and how to avoid police/military protective vests -> “Intelligent stabbing”
- Use of foley catheter into path of knife track
- Whatever you can do to apply direct pressure
- Goal of MDA is to get to the closest, proper medical facility

Site Visit: Check Point between Israel and West Bank

Participants visited a check point in Jerusalem where inhabitants from the West Bank cross into Jerusalem. Part of the visit included a tour of a main control center where Israeli border forces review an extensive surveillance camera outputs at all times. During the tour, participants saw an incident where two youths touched the fence and caused a sensor hit. The border forces maintained surveillance on the two. Notes:

North part of Jerusalem: PA and Israel come together

Behind wall is refugee camp – Kalandia

- ½ Israelis who choose to live behind the wall, ½ Palestinians

Hard to tell the intentions of people going through the check point

Next month is Ramadan - .5 million people going through the check point during holiday

Site tour: Control Center

- Incident ongoing – 2 boys/young men touched fence causing sensor hit
- Concerns about people infiltrating into Jewish communities and murdering people
- 5 platoons of 70 people each
- Want to allow people freedom to come into work and to pray
- Don't know the intentions of people coming over
- Concerns about attacks on border forces
- Border guards work together well with police, IDF -> importance of sharing information and intelligence
- Incident description: small village Sho-afat – rocks thrown at police and MDA – attacks on the people there to help others
- A lot of cooperation that people don't know about
- Incidents of bombs in ambulances – fake sick
- All facets of Israeli population in Border Guard
- Command board – shows location of all vehicles
- Software reads license plate of every car coming into Israel
Information immediately provided to Border Guard

Site tour: Surveillance Center

- 24/7 camera surveillance
 - Women better than men at surveillance
 - 4 hour shifts
 - Looking for abnormalities, behavior, proximity to fence
 - Become very familiar with specific area
 - Land/terrain divided in a very specific way
 - Contact directly with units in field
- Similar units/centers all over the country

Site Visit/Lecture: Special Patrol Unit/Yasam Jerusalem

The tactics and procedures of the Special Patrol Unit are similar to SWAT teams in the United States. The Special Patrol Unit is divided into motorcycle units and team-based squadrons. Unit

members demonstrated non-lethal and lethal weapons and capabilities. A unit member also provided a briefing on motives of a terrorist, operational parameters, suspicious signs and behaviors. Notes:

Deal with extraordinary incidents – anything with violence

2 types of units:

- Motorcycle units

 - Anywhere in the city in 3-7 minutes

 - Driver + rider; rider has M-4

 - Elite of unit

 - Helmet has Bluetooth for comms transmission

 - 7 bikes every shift spread throughout city

 - 2 shifts plus missions

 - At night use 4-wheeled vehicles because of reduction in traffic

- Team-based squadrons

 - Use Chevy Savana – holds 9 officers (but can hold up to 15-16)

 - Modular vests

 - Riot suit is fireproof

 - Cannot use baton unless at highest threat level, and then only to outer thigh

 - Non-lethal: rubber rounds

 - Not allowed to fire center mass

 - Can only aim below knee or below waist

 - Water cannon

 - Used for 3rd highest level of riots

 - Has self-defense system – tear gas deployed from sides

 - Disperses water, water with blue paint, water with stink, and water with tear gas

 - Police can come in later to arrest people painted in blue

 - Nozzle on front for trash fires

 - Working time of 4 min at full blast

 - Can refill from any fire hydrant

 - Arsenal

 - Importance of surgical means vs. mass means

 - Non-lethal:

 - Sponge rounds

 - OC

 - Paintball gun with paint, salt, OC

 - Night-vision, night-sight for M4 and M22

M4 – fires .556

.22 Ruger (between lethal and non-lethal)

- For those that present danger, but not “clear and present” danger

Unit formed in the 90’s – needed to form professionally-trained operational units

- Most professional in police force

4 squadrons: 2 team-based, motorcycle, mounted

- Teams of 5 officers or pairs of riders

Focus on:

- Terror – arrests, identifying suspects, response to extreme events
- Crime – specific events, proactive actions
- Public order – demonstrations and protests
- Sensitive missions (Temple Mount, VIP protection, public security patrols)

Threats: suicide attacks, kidnapping, knife attacks, cars as weapons, shootings

- Concerns about combined attack and multiple attacks (e.g., secondary attacks on responders)
- Profile: all ages, family status, gender, education level, and economic status
- Locations: friction points where Arab population comes into contact with Jewish population
- Any time of day
- Motives:

Revenge

Environmental causes

Incitement

Desire to be famous

Copycat

Religious reasons

Personal

Suicidal

Clear name

Operational parameters

- Position personnel/units in sensitive places (e.g., crowds, commercial areas, schools, central areas, hot spots)
- Roadblocks to check suspicious persons
- Learn and train

Suspicious signs and behavior

- Presence in area not supposed to be
- Purse or backpack
- Nervous behavior
- Mumbling/praying
- Try to get close to security personnel

Operational behavior:

- Keep a safe distance

- Other officers looking for suspects
- Keep guard up at all time

Video: shooter in parking lot (2016)

Video: incident at Temple Mount – shooting from fortified door 7; no firearms allowed on Temple Mount

Lecture: Islam in the United States

Mordechai Kedar

This session focused on known radical Islamic groups in the United States. The lecturer discussed challenges for law enforcement, including the need to listen to people in their own language, in order to assess the level of support for radical Islamic organization. Notes:

Lecturer: 50 years experience in Arab culture (25 in IDF, 25 in academia)

“Alive and Killing: Tribalism in the Arab World”

Tribalism – most important element in the Arabic societies

Islam – extends to other countries

Suggested article: “Sharia and Violence in American Mosques”

<http://www.meforum.org/2931/american-mosques>

Found documents:

- “40 Hadith on Jihad” against infidels (Americans)
- “Racist, Fascist, Criminal Police: Manual for How to Resist Police Investigations”

Video: lying in Islam – prevention, protection of religion

- “The Life of Muhammad” page 367

Until they prove that this is wrong, they should be held to this – plan for North America

Images of billboards – www.whyislam.com

Biggest challenge for law enforcement is how to find out what is true and what is not

- Listen to what people are saying in their own language
- Big difference between Arabic dialects

Pyramid for of degree of support by Muslims for terrorist activity:

- Tip is terrorists
- Below – those that supply weapons
- Below that – those that donate money
- Below that – sympathizers
- Below that – “understanders”

“War is deception”

Different definition of the word “jihad”

- Fight against sin – internal or external?

Wording of the Qu’ran vs. the Holy Qu’ran

Site Visit: Jerusalem Fire Department

Participants visited a fire station in Jerusalem. Firefighters discussed the need for different cultures to work together to identify and mitigate threats within the city. Participants were able to explore ladder trucks and a CBRNE apparatus. Notes:

- 4 stations – one in Old City (Arab)
- 225 firefighters in whole city
- 3 shifts, 24 hours per day; career staff; 24 hours on/ 48 hours off
- Mutual aid from all over Israel
- Big problems because of many religions – need to treat everyone the same
- Call 102 to get fire response
- Site tour of multiple apparatus

Lecture: Israeli Security Agencies

Rami Savir

This session provided a description of the agencies that work together for intelligence collection activities within Israel, focusing on the Israel Security Agency. Participants learned about the separate expertise required for field officers and interrogators. The presentation included discussion of identifying, developing, and running sources. Notes:

Video clips:

- Boy caught smuggling XMAT
- Multiple operations
- Hospital fugitive extraction

Suggested documentary: The Green Prince:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5z8z4Fi7oz4&t=50s>

Shinbet/Israeli Security Agency

- Responsible for internal security: terrorism, subversion, espionage, diplomatic protection, international protection, cyber
- Field officers – 3 years training
 - 1 year language training
- Case officers in charge of geographic area; alone/independent
- Purpose is to thwart attacks, not collectors of intelligence
- Interrogators
 - Separate from case handlers
 - Operate as a team
 - Rely heavily on confessions
 - Mock prisons
 - Cannot use source information during interrogation
- Recruiting and handling difficult tasks
 - Need to be proactive
 - Walk-ins rarely valuable
 - Start by deciding who you want to be your source
 - Motives: money, ideology, personal issues, extortion, reduction of charges
 - Collect information and try to use it later

If the case officers doesn't find the hidden motive, then the recruitment will not succeed

If he doesn't have a motive, he will never be a source

The betrayal process starts when he says yes

Once he betrays his culture/brothers, he will one day betray the case officer

- Running a source – most difficult task

Information is immediately critical

Continuing threat to source

Always about checking the reliability of the source

What info did he give you?

What did he not give you?

Flow of meeting:

Importance of small talk at beginning and end

Headlines first – you have your priorities and he has his

- Get most important stuff at the beginning

You are in charge – you dictate the pace

- Don't want to stop the flow of information for technical info/details

You ask questions based on info needs

Small talk

Payment of money

- Same amount every time, not based on value of information
- The moment he understands the value of certain information, he will begin to lie or color his remarks
- Imagination becomes fact
- Source opinions, estimates are important, but are not facts

Reports – facts and case officer analysis/remarks

Sometimes you need to task a source with a specific mission

Validate mission outcomes

Identify gaps in outcome – what he reported versus what actually happened

Activity check – every couple of months

Sit down and review activity of source

Done by another case officer

Check for conflicts between what source told you and what actually happened

Reliability a key issue

Difference between source covering a target from the outside (example: barber) and a source covering a target from the inside

If you cannot recruit someone inside the target, you may be able to recruit from outside and get them inside

Try not to recruit the head of a cell
 Want sources that can come to you, but that can't always happen
 Need to know language and culture – culture adds context
 Need to be proactive
 Be ready to supply the things that they need as part of illegal activities (e.g., source, storage guy, smuggler)
 Proactive prevention of terrorist organizations
 Do not rely on luck or chance – make it!
 Lessons learned and experience

Day 6:

In-Transit Lectures on Security Topics

Rami Savir and Rami Shemesh

While in transit to various site visits, two veteran Israeli Security Agency members provided a series of lectures throughout the day on numerous topics related to Israel, the security situation, and terrorist incidents. Notes:

Hebron

- 1929 – all Jews killed or expelled by Muslims
- Important city for many religions
 - Tombs of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob)
 - Massacre before peace agreements
 - Jewish settlements

Jewish settlements

- Anything that came under control of Jews after 1967
- Settlers feel safe inside of their community but not outside
- Suggested reading: “The Israeli Solution: A One-State Plan for Peace in the Middle East” <https://www.amazon.com/Israeli-Solution-One-State-Peace-Middle/dp/0385348061>
- View of interest: Kiryat Arba

Activity: Caliber 3

Participants visited Caliber 3, a special academy for counterterrorism and security training. Participants viewed an active shooter response demonstration and joined in analysis of security operations during the demonstration and viewed active shooter response demonstration. Following the demonstration, completed the Basic Combat Shooting course and learned procedures for response operations. As part of the course, participants worked individually and in teams to neutralize threats in a training setting. Notes:

Founded 12 years ago

Sharon Gat – colonel in Israeli special forces

Special academy for counter-terrorism and security training

IDF, Israeli police, ISA, law enforcement from all over the world, civilians, government departments -> all train here

Instructors served at least 15 years with IDF, ISA, and/or Israeli police

“Brave heart and brave Jewish soul”

Site Visit: City of Hebron

Hebron is located in an Arab-controlled area of the West Bank. There are protected Jewish settlements in the city that is 97% Arab and 3% Jewish, creating significant security issues. Hebron contains archeological sites that are important to the Jewish faith, as well as the Tomb of the Fathers which has significance for Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Notes:

Population: 220K

Biggest city in Judea

Heart of radical Islam

800 Jews

4 neighborhoods

1917 Mandate for Palestine

TIPH – Temporary International Presence in Hebron

A lot of rock throwing, attempted stabbings

Site tour: Tel Rumeida

- 4500 year old ruins: stairs/wall
- 4 room house
- Land purchased in 1807

Site tour: Tomb of the Fathers/Patriarchs

- Built during reign of King Herod
- 1267 – declared to be a mosque
 - Anyone not Muslim could not go in
 - Jews in Hebron in order to maintain access to the Tomb of the Fathers
- 1 million people per year visit Tomb of the Fathers
- Abraham paid 400 silver shekels for a cave and a field in Hebron
 - Discovered to be cave of Adam and Eve
 - Purchased after Sarah died
- Holy Arc – Torah Scrolls – contract for Hebron
- Site called “entrance to the garden of Eden”
- Rooms with memorials – actual tombs in caves underneath building
- Today building is split in 2 parts: one part for Muslim use, one part for everyone else

Site Visit: Old City of Jerusalem and Western Wall

Participants visited religious sites in the Old City of Jerusalem to understand security issues related to Dome of the Rock and terrorist incidents in Old City of Jerusalem. These sites have been frequent targets of terrorist attacks. Notes:

Dome of the Rock / Temple Mount

- First Holy Temple of the Jews destroyed in the 5th century
- After 50 years of diaspora, Jews returned and built second Holy Temple in same place

Destroyed by Romans in 70AD

- Qu'ran Chapter 17 – journey of Muhammad
 - “exited mosque” and brought back prayers
 - Became 3rd holiest monument for Islam
- Jesus only in Jerusalem for last week of life
 - Palm Sunday – first day he entered Jerusalem from Mt of Olives
 - Thursday afternoon – arrested, interrogated
 - Friday – delivered to Romans, died, buried
 - Sunday – Mary sees empty tomb
- 40 days after resurrection, Jesus went to heaven from Mt Olive

Church of the Holy Sepulchre

- Via della Rosa
- Gethsemane Church
 - where Peter denied Jesus three times
 - where Judas gave up Jesus
 - where Jesus was arrested
- Crusader style
- Built in 11th century AD on the remains of the Byzantine church

Mercy Gate / Golden Gate

- Persians sacked Church of the Holy Sepulchre
- Golden cross returned with cross and entered through this gate
- Jews believe that the Messiah will return through this gate
- Muslims built cemetery in front of gate

Room of the Last Supper

- 14th century dispute between Franciscans and Jews regarding the room
- Grave of King David right below room
- Became a mosque in 14th century AD
- Messiah will come from the family of King David

Western Wall

- 2 tablets in Arc of the Covenant
 - Put in holiest room in the temple
 - Temple destroyed in 70AD
 - 132-135 AD – Jews rebelled against Romans
 - Roman emperor killed more than 650K Jews
 - Law restricted Jews from Jerusalem
 - Changed name from Judea to Palestine
 - All others expelled
 - 2000 year diaspora
 - 1700 (approx.) rabbi and students built synagogue – then destroyed
 - 1800s – built synagogue on same place, destroyed 1948
 - 1980s – rebuilt synagogue third time
- Western Wall is all that is left from the 2nd temple
- 10 gates to the Temple Mount only open to Muslims

- Jews, Christians, others must use small gate
- 10K people at the Western Wall every Friday evening

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Owner: Yisroel Stefansky <ys@asti-edu.org> on behalf of Yisroel Stefansky <ys@asti-edu.org> <ys@asti-edu.org>

Filename: CTPDR Agenda Oct 2017.docx

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ASTI

Advanced Security Training Institute

Counter-Terrorism: Prevention, Detection, and Response and Recovery Course Draft Agenda October 2017

This agenda details the schedule for each day of the October 2017 Counter-Terrorism: Prevention Detection, and Response Course. Please note that this agenda represents the likely curriculum schedule, but may continue to be refined until the course begins.

12 October 2017 (Thurs)		Depart local airports for TLV
13 October 2017 (Fri)		Arrival in Tel Aviv
17:50	Arrive at Ben Gurion Airport, Tel Aviv, Israel	
18:30	Transport to hotel	
19:00	Check In	
19:30	Dinner at hotel	
14 October 2017 (Sat)		Cultural Day
Saturday is Shabbat in Israel – a day of rest. Participants are to use this day to acclimatize to the time change. The course curriculum starts early on Sunday morning and participants need to be alert. Breakfast and dinner buffets are included in the lodging rate. Participants are on their own for lunch. There are many restaurants within walking distance of the hotel.		
15 October 2017 (Sun)		
07:30	Breakfast at hotel	
08:00 – 09:30	Lecture: Israel History , Geography, & Security Environment	
09:45 – 12:30	Lecture: Terrorist Explosive Devices and Tactics	
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch provided in meeting room	
13:30 – 14:30	Lecture: Intelligence Orientation	
14:30 – 15:30	Lecture: Cyber, Terror, and Social Networks	
15:45 – 16:30	Lecture: Crisis Media Management: Counter-Terror Approach	
19:30	Dinner at hotel	
The series of lectures presented on Sunday provide background and contextual information critical to understanding the threat environment in Israel.		

16 October 2017 (Mon)	
07:00	Breakfast at hotel and check out
07:45	Bus Departs
07:45 – 09:00	En-route lectures on security topics
09:00 – 10:30	Site Visit: Magen David Adom (MDA) Tactics and Procedures Topic: Pre-hospital emergency medical services
10:30 – 12:00	Site Visit: Port of Ashdod Topic: Protection of transportation assets
12:00 – 13:30	Site Visit: Rutenberg Power Station Topic: Protection of critical infrastructure
13:30 – 14:00	Lunch provided
13:30 – 15:30	Site Visit: Gaza Border/City of Sderot Topic: Protection of communities/civilians
15:45 – 16:30	Travel to Jerusalem; hotel check in
19:30	Dinner at hotel
The curriculum for Monday focuses primarily on protection of communities and critical infrastructure from terrorist threats. Many of the site visits for the day center on assets located in near proximity to Gaza, an origin point for military and terrorist attacks.	

17 October 2017 (Tues)	
06:30	Breakfast at hotel
07:00	Bus Departs
07:00 – 10:00	En-route lectures on security topics
10:00 – 12:00	Site Visit: West Bank / Golan Heights Participants will visit a number of sites related to the security situation in Israel and proximity to Syria and Jordan
12:00 – 12:30	Lunch provided
12:30 – 16:30	Site Visit: Golan Heights (continued) Topic: Protection of critical infrastructure
16:30 – 17:30	Site Visit: Dead Sea Topic: Security of tourist areas
17:30 – 19:00	En-route lectures on security topics
19:30	Dinner at hotel
The curriculum on Tuesday focuses primarily on the security situation in Israel, including shared borders with states that have previously attacked Israel. The security situation is complicated by Israeli settlements located in the West Bank. Participants will view sites from terrorist and military attacks to better understand concepts and techniques for combatting these incidents.	

18 October 2017 (Wed)	
07:30	Breakfast at hotel
08:00	Bus Departs
08:00 – 08:30	En-route lectures on security topics
08:30 – 11:00	Site Visit: Knesset Topic: Discussions with members of Israeli Parliament on the security situation in Israel and terrorist threats
11:00 – 12:30	Site Visit: Israeli National Security Council Topic: Discussions with members of Israeli Security Council on the security situation in Israel and terrorist threats
12:30 – 13:00	Lunch provided
13:00 – 15:00	Site Visit: Military Court Topic: Prosecution of terrorist suspects
15:00 – 18:00	Site Visit: Old City of Jerusalem and Western Wall Topic: Security of religious and cultural sites
19:30	Dinner at hotel
The curriculum on Wednesday focuses on governmental attempts to address Israel's terrorist threat by examining efforts by the legislative, governmental, and judicial branches.	

19 October 2017 (Thurs)	
08:00	Breakfast at hotel
08:30	Bus Departs
08:30 – 09:00	En-route lectures on security topics
09:00 – 11:00	Site Visit: Hadassah Hospital Topic: Mass casualty readiness and response
11:00 – 12:00	Site Visit: West Bank Border Checkpoint Topic: Surveillance tactics and techniques
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch provided
13:00 – 14:30	Site Visit: Special Patrol Unit Topic: Specialized law enforcement tactics and techniques
14:30 – 15:30	Site Visit: Jerusalem Fire Department Topic: Specialized response assets
15:30 – 16:30	Lecture: Extremist Islam in the United States
16:30 – 17:30	Lecture: Social Networks as a Source of Terrorist Inspiration
19:30	Dinner at hotel
The curriculum on Thursday focuses on Israeli emergency response tactics and procedures for terrorist and mass casualty incidents.	

20 October 2017 (Fri)	
08:00	Breakfast at hotel
08:30	Bus Departs
08:30 – 09:30	En-route lectures on security topics
09:30 – 12:30	Activity: Active Shooter Drill and Training
12:30 – 13:00	Lunch provided
13:00 – 15:00	Site Visit: Hebron Topic: Security in high tension areas
16:00 – 18:00	Site Visit: Jerusalem Market Participants will tour the historic Jerusalem Market, site of numerous past terrorist incidents
19:30	Shabbat Dinner
20:30	Depart hotel for TLV
23:30	Depart TLV
The curriculum on Friday focuses on application of knowledge and skills learned during the week.	

21 October 2017 (Sat)	Return to home jurisdictions
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Letter of Support

In May of 2017, the Austin Regional Intelligence Center (ARIC) sent six students to Israel to take part in the Advanced Security Training Institute's Counter-Terrorism Immersion Training. Our delegation consisted of representatives from various disciplines and assignments from within our Police and Fire Departments.

We received training directly from security and intelligence experts on the topics of:

- Proactive Intelligence Gathering
- Critical Infrastructure Protection
- Active Shooter Response
- Target Hardening
- Bomb Prevention and Response
- Community Engagement for Preventing and Responding to Terrorism Events
- Case Studies and Lessons Learned from Terrorism Events

After months of research, we chose Advanced Security Training Institute (ASTI) to facilitate this training because they are the leader in this field. The training program developed for this purpose, the "*Counter-Terrorism Detection, Prevention, and Response Immersion Course*," is a six day program encompassing historical perspective, policy development, tactical and strategic preparations, and critical infrastructure protection strategies.

From the moment when we stepped off the plane until we departed Israel, we were greeted and escorted by professional representatives of ASTI. Our safety and comfort was a priority for their team. ASTI had representatives on hand to answer every question we had along the way. Security and intelligence specialists accompanied us on our travels and were able to provide historical, geographic, and ideological context throughout the trip. They acted as a liaison between us and the local community as we travelled throughout the country. Although the trip was not a personal or religious vacation, the ASTI staff still took time when they could to explain the religious and historical background of each site we visited and travelled through.

Israel's long history of dealing with threats, conflict, trauma, and casualties over the course of their history has resulted in the development and implementation of several of procedures and entities;

A National heightened sense of awareness that occurs at all levels within their society beginning with education in their schools

An Intelligence Process that affords them the ability to quickly address potential threats or issues on multiple levels

Extensive Security Protocols at key Critical Infrastructures

An established integrated response by the Military and Emergency Services Responders

Hospitals staffed and equipped around the clock to deal with mass casualties

Regional EMS Technicians deployed with "Take-Home" emergency vehicles to respond in the event of Mass Casualties

The implementation of a country wide phone app which allows for video exchange and quicker uploading of patient information for people needing an EMS response

Military Courts to preside over cases involving subjects suspected of Terrorist Activity

Over the last ten years, numerous U.S. Homeland Security Officials have travelled to Israel for this training. Among those who have participated in this training are First Responders (Police, Fire and EMS), Bomb Squad Technicians and Managers, Strategic Homeland Security Management Personnel, Incident Commanders, Policy Makers etc. In order to bring back valuable feedback about the program for other agencies considering whether or not to participate, many of these prior participants have documented their experience. ARIC utilized those reviews and testimonials to justify and support our decision to participate. Now, after having participated in the training ourselves, we are happy to add our name to the list of agencies supporting this training.

Due to our overwhelmingly positive experience and valuable lessons learned throughout this training, we remain available to discuss our experience with anyone who is considering participating. We may be contacted at the information below.

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To: mark.schouten@iowa.gov
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Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: Fwd: ASTI Upcoming Educational Training in Israel
Date: Wed Jun 14 2017 11:08:03 CDT
Attachments: ASTI CT Course May 2017 Notes.docx
CTPDR Agenda Oct 2017.docx
Letter of Support (1).doc

Mark,

I hope this email finds you well. Attached you will find several attachments related to Advanced Security Training Institute's (ASTI) Counter-Terrorism: Detection, Prevention, and Response (CTDPR) training course. These attachments may help to answer questions you may have about the upcoming October 2017 trip or others scheduled for the future.

The first attachment is a summary of the lessons, site visits, and activities completed during the May 2017 CTDPR course. While not every iteration of the course is the same, this document will provide you with an understanding of the material that is covered during the session. The second attachment is a draft agenda for the October 2017 CTDPR course. The final attachment is a YouTube video created by one of the participants from the May course with image and video highlights from the course.

The dates for the next CTDPR course are 13-21 October. Participants will stay in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, Israel. The rate is \$9,450 per person and includes airfare, lodging, most meals and expenses, and the training curriculum. Please note that funds from the State Homeland Security Program, Urban Area Security Initiative, and Emergency Management Performance Grant can all be used to fund training through ASTI. ASTI courses also correlate closely with the FEMA Core Capabilities that serve as the basis for many of the DHS grant programs.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions that you might have about course curriculum, funding or approval mechanisms, or travel/logistics. Also, please feel free to forward this information to other responders that may be interested in immersive counter-terrorism training.

I am available to travel to IA to meet with response agencies interested in the ASTI training courses. Chairman of House Homeland Security is hoping to attend the October course with members of the

emergency response community.

Regards,

Yisroel Stefansky

Founder

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<https://youtu.be/h1dEelor6S8>

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Owner: Yisroel Stefansky <ys@asti-edu.org> on behalf of Yisroel Stefansky <ys@asti-edu.org> <ys@asti-edu.org>

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ASTI

Advanced Security Training Institute

Counter-Terrorism Detection, Prevention, and Response and Recovery Immersion Course

May 2017

This document contains an overview of and detailed notes from the lectures, immersive site visits, and activities experienced by participants in the May 2017 *Counter-Terrorism Detection, Prevention, and Response* course. The intent of the course was to convey the tactics and strategies developed and used in Israel to address terror incidents, allowing participants to adapt their new skills for use in their home jurisdictions.

Day 1:

Lecture: The History of Israel

Avi

This session provided information on key points in the history of that land and region that exists as the state of Israel. This information provided context for participants to understand historic conflicts, rulers, and battles that shaped the political and security situation as it exists today. The lecturer paid specific attention to the 1947 United Nations (UN) Partition Plan, declaration of Israeli independence, 1948 Arab-Israeli War, 1967 Six-Day War, and current day contested territories. Notes:

King David – first to occupy Jerusalem. Made peace with enemies by marrying their wives (including the Queen of Sheba). King Solomon was the son of David.

Israel has developed desalination technology that it is sharing with Arab countries, providing peace through water.

32 latitude – below is desert, above is green

Ottomans controlled land until the first World War

1947 UN Partition Plan gave Arabs land in the mountains, Jewish communities in the valleys, and Jerusalem as an internationally-protected area

- o Jews agreed to this plan, Arabs said no

May 14, 1948 – Israel declared independence; 5 Arab armies attacked

July 1948 – Israeli army counterattacked

Israel smaller than New Jersey

Ben Gurion – first Prime Minister of Israel

- Dream to make the desert green
- Special irrigation systems

1967 – 6 Days War fought against Syria, Egypt, and Jordan from 6/5/67-6/11/67

Jordan River is part of Africa Rift (tectonic plates)

Provide aid to neighbors during disasters

Contested territories: Gaza, West Bank, Golan Heights

Ben Gurion Airport – 8km from West Bank

“Land of Milk & Honey” – the only things that you can get from an animal without killing it

Israel as “the start-up nation”

Lecture: Terrorist Explosive Devices & Tactics

Chief Superintendent Michael Cardash

This session provided information on terroristic and criminal use of improvised explosive devices (IED) in Israel. The lecturer described the components of an IED and types of explosive material commonly used in IEDs. A segment of this lecture focused on person-borne improvised explosive device (PBIED). These suicide bombers use bags, vests, belts, pants or other innocent looking objects to transport explosive devices for detonation. The lecturer also discussed the importance of public awareness and intelligence/information sharing. Notes:

Last 4-5 years – few explosive attacks in Israel

Iron Dome System – built with the US to intercept rockets

Terroristic and criminal use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs); criminal use means that it is specifically directed at a person

Components of IEDs

- Explosive material (XMAT)
- Detonator (initiator)
- Firing system (trigger)
- Optional additions

Camouflage

Fragmentation

Types of XMAT commonly use in IEDs

- TATP – with or without plasticizers
- Urea nitrate (with plasticizers)
- TNT – mostly from old ammunition
- Nitroglycerine-based
- Ammonium nitrate based (fertilizers)
- Nitro glycol (EGDN)

Times Square VBIED used 220lbs of urea, not urea nitrate

Ball bearings – best type of fragmentation

- Used to enhance the distance

Cell phone – most common radio detonator

DTMF – dual tone multi functional

- Added onto phone to set off tone
- Don't need to wait for call to go through

Public awareness is key

- Israel teaches awareness from kindergarten: “what is a suspicious object?”, “what is a suspicious person?”
- 10th graders get presentation from bomb tech
- training in military

Suicide bomber = person-based IED = PBIED

Response - first consideration – look for secondary device

Considerations for PBIED

- Overcome security measures
- Control the explosion and ensure success of the incident
- Portability of the explosive device
- Substitute for firing system
- Packaging – use bags, vests, belts, pants, and innocent looking objects

** Importance of intelligence and information sharing

- Sources: Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), Mossad, Israeli Security Agency (ISA), police

Public resilience – get back to normal ASAP

Lecture: Cyber, Terror, & the Social Networks: The Dark Side of Technology

Dr. Harel Menashri

This session addressed the main trends in terrorist online activity, including the use of social media networks and hidden or dark networks. Terrorist organizations use file distribution applications, visible and hidden websites (e.g., blogs, forums), social networks, and communication applications (e.g. WhatsApp) for the purposes of propaganda, training, recruiting, funding, executing cyber attacks, intelligence gathering, etc. The lecturer also discussed ISIS trends and activities on the web. Notes:

Two main trends in terrorist online activity: grasping of popular social media networks and the dark web

Unparalleled tools for reaching out to as wide an audience as possible (e.g., mainstream social media networks)

ISIS has developed a multi-divisional media empire – target specific groups in local languages

Internet (only part of cyberspace) composed of: public networks, hidden networks, deep web

Terrorist activity on the internet: propaganda, training, recruiting, funding, cyber attacks, intelligence gathering, and more

Laws don't allow you to break into the network of someone who breaks into yours

Network discussion centers used for distributing files, websites (e.g., blogs, forums), social networks, communications applications

Cachedview.com shows deleted and removed

Terrorist organizations use encryption software, multiple accounts, social networks (including visible and hidden networks); Tor

ISIS trends:

- Propaganda focused on “distant enemy” encouraging lone wolves and cyber attacks
- Call to arms in social media
- Encouraging activities of terrorist organizations against critical infrastructure
- Use Android more than IOS
- Opera browser and Tor
- Use hushmail software to encrypt email
- Cyberghost VPN allows IP address switching
- Locker app deletes files after several incorrect password attempts
- Fake GPS apps hide location
- Fake social media accounts

Lessons:

- Do not take phone into the field or into meetings (change the culture)
- Everything is a computer and can be hacked
- Concerns about hacking of pacemakers, hearing aids, security cameras, automobiles, toys, appliances -> internet of things

Lecture: Crisis Media Management: Counter Terror Approach

Gil Kleiman

This session focused on the ability to use the media as a multiplier as part of response operations. The lecturer stressed the importance of understanding the sensitive issues in your community to gather intelligence, as well as the need to feed the media with information during a response.

Terror is not new, but tactics of terror change

Object of terror is to turn you into a drowning man

Media as a multiplier

“The Kardashian Syndrome” – know which topics are sensitive to your community, what will turn heads

What you don’t put out there, someone else will

Never lie – say what you have to say

1 spokesman – unity of message

Book by Author: Terrorist Suicide Bombings: Attack Interdiction, Mitigation, and Response. The link to electronically review the book is:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=4a3MBQAAQBAJ&pg=PA266&lpg=PA266&dq=Terrorist+suicide+bombers+Kleiman&source=bl&ots=eI8nOL1kUY&sig=6txgZc59Nu1ssKaUIPdrR8evxJF8&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjP7YSSkvvTAhUls1QKHXYDfMQ6AEINTAD#v=onepage&q=Terrorist%20suicide%20bombers%20Kleiman&f=false>

Day 2:

In-Transit Lectures on Security Topics

Rami Savir and Rami Shemesh

While in transit to various site visits, two veteran Israeli Security Agency members provided a series of lectures throughout the day on numerous topics related to Israel, the security situation, and terrorist incidents. Notes:

Demographics

- 8 million Israeli citizens: 75% Jewish; 21% Israeli Arabs; 4% Other (e.g., Christians, Arabs, Druze)
- 4.2 million Palestinians: 1.9M in West Bank; 1.7M in Gaza, E. Jerusalem Arabs (Israeli residents)

Until 1948, 1.2M Arabs/600K Jews; after 1948, 300K Arabs/600K Jews

- 500K Arabs went to refugee camps -> now 5 million in refugee camps

UN Decision 181 (November 29, 1947)

- David Ben Gurion accepted division of Israel into Jewish State and Arab State with Jerusalem as international territory
- Jewish State 68% desert
- Arabs would not accept any independent Israeli state

6 Day War – 1967

- New reality – Jewish state controlled Gaza, West Bank, Sinai Peninsula

New forms of terrorist organizations emerged

Oslo Agreement

- West Bank divided into 3 parts
 - A – exclusively administered by Palestinian Authority
 - B – administered by both Palestinian Authority and Israel
 - C – security and public affairs administered by Israel
- 1993 Agreement – Hamas said no
 - 10 years – birth of suicide bombers – change in paradigm
 - Israeli citizens afraid of buses, restaurants
 - Israeli develops expertise in dealing with terrorist cells

Islamic Fanatical Radical Movement Point of View:

- Jerusalem belongs to Allah
- Allah chose Islam to rule the world
- Chosen people: Jews, Christians, Muslims, but Jews and Christians fell
- Jews can live here, but not be independent rulers
- Muslim Brotherhood says that Muslims must be the leaders in the Holy Land
- Mohammed – last prophet

Gaza Strip – 2 governments: 1 Hamas and 1 PLO; over 1.7M people

- 2006 decision to remove 16 Jewish settlements from Gaza (8K people)
- Hamas started shooting rockets all over Israel

Obstacles to peace: 1) Jerusalem, 2) refugees, 3) Israeli settlements in West Bank

After 1967 (6 Day War), green light given to settle into the West Bank (500K people)

Hamas is a political movement, Islamic jihad is a military movement

Border countries: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt – no current problems except for Hezbollah

- Syria: ceasefire since 1967, few problems remaining regarding the Golan Heights
- Jordan: ceasefire since 1967, peace agreement 1994
- Egypt: ceasefire since 1973, peace agreement 1979

Ashdod – Philistine city; 3000 years old

- Largest port city in Israel
- High population of Russian Jews

First Intifada – began December 1987 - violent uprising against Israeli “occupation”; many riots and shootings

Second Intifada – began October 2000 – more violent

War with Gaza every 2-3 years, last was August 2014

Kibbutz – communal living generally according to Communist principles

More than 12 empires have conquered the Holy Land – all empire expansion has to go through Israel

50% unemployment rate in Gaza

Egypt has mostly closed their gate with Gaza

- Was open until 3 years ago
- Previous leader of Egypt was Muslim Brotherhood – kept the gate open

Desert defined as less than 200mm of rain/year

Rocket attacks from Gaza

- If in vehicle, stop car, get behind anything, cover head
- Every bus top has bomb shelter

Many tunnels from Gaza – get into Israel and behind military

Jerusalem

- King Solomon built first temple: “Gods house among people”
- Most important Holy City for Jews
- David Ben Gurion: “no state of Israel without Jerusalem, but there is Jerusalem without Israel”
- East Jerusalem belonged to Jordan until 1967
1/3 of population of Jerusalem

Site Visit: Magen David Adom (MDA) in Israel – Tactics and Procedures

Director of International Relations

MDA is the Israeli emergency medical services (EMS) agency. Participants traveled to Ashdod to visit an MDA dispatch center. The lecturer provides information on operations and logistics required to coordinate the activities of the more than 15,000 volunteers and 2000 paid staff across the country. MDA is also the only supplier of blood services in Israel. Participants were able to view dispatch technology and operations as they occurred. Notes:

MDA: Red Shield of David -> National EMS organization and national blood services organization

British mandate over Middle East after WW2

Established according to Red Cross guidelines

National, public, statutory, volunteer organization

More than 15K volunteers, less than 2K employees

- Volunteers are trained the same as employees

Active every hour, every day, all over the country

Train all IDF paramedics

Not funded by government, but supervised by Ministries of Health and Finance

Charge for services provided

- Those treated can claim back costs from health organizations
- Costs covered if person is hospitalized or suffers from known medical problems
- 72% of budget comes from billed costs

Government provides funds for preparedness from multiple hazards (e.g., earthquakes, rockets)

- No major earthquakes since 1927
- Israel sits on 2 fault lines

Volunteers are crucial in every community -> active, involved, well-trained

Call volume: 2500 calls per day (emergency and non-emergency)

- 2 ALS helicopters
- Vehicles: 1000+ ambulances plus minibikes
- Tel Aviv region: 300-400 calls/day for 1.5 million people
- Not a lot of misuse of the system
- Provide backup to the national school system for non-emergency calls

There are private ambulance companies; a few provide ALS

9 regional dispatching centers

- Dispatchers are all EMTs or paramedics
- Can provide medical guidance over the phone
- National dispatch system – call will go to first available dispatcher
Trying to keep time to answer call to less than 4 seconds

No central 911 system in Israel

- Dial 100 for police services
- Dial 101 for MDA
- Dial 102 for fire services

Created an understanding that all disciplines need to work together

- Direct communication from one dispatching center to another
- In areas of potential violence, MDA may request backup from law enforcement
- Some awareness training of fire department operations
- A lot of training with fire department
- GPS navigational system shows unit numbers of units from other departments

Law enforcement is in command of every incident

Law enforcement can shut down all communications amplifying sites near an incident

Responders have primary access to cellular bandwidth

Smart phone app (My MDA) – geolocates caller

- Personal information
- Known allergies

- Recent medical history
- Family info (calling in for self or other family member?)
- Can activate phone camera to provide video from scene
- Can communicate via text
- Shows “uber” view of vehicles arriving
- 60K users

Volunteers – group of highly trained EMTs and paramedics that keep supplies with them or bring them home

- MDA team app – shows location of all team members
- If first ambulance will arrive in more than 5 minutes, system will also scan volunteer first responders in the area
 - Provided with same call information
 - Can respond and click “navigate” -> uses Waze to guide to call
- Can fill out medical form – becomes part of the medical record

Only supplier of blood services in Israel

- Collect at least 1000 units every day
- Need to have enough inventory
- High holidays means lower supply
- Targeted communications with donors

Hospitals notify dispatchers when at capacity; close communication

- Ministry of Health monitors hospital capacity closely

Site tour: Ashdod dispatch center

- In bomb shelter
- Air filtering system to protect against chem/bio
- Automatic dispatch of mutual aid
- Average response time 7-8 minutes
- 8-hour shifts

Site Visit: Port of Ashdod – Protection of Transportation Assets

Participants traveled to the Port of Ashdod for a discussion of terror threats to transportation assets. Participants viewed multiple security components including biometric and automated gate systems, a smart fence, camera surveillance systems, the use of defender-class boats for patrol of the port from the water, biometric screening of crew members, and the use of drones.

Notes:

Operations always connected to preventing terror

Need for separation of operations – like a military base

Profile employees for different categories of clearance

Video summarizing security measures

- Advanced gate system using biometrics for access
- Smart fence
- Camera surveillance system and included analytics
- Defender-class boats patrol
- Biometric screening of crew members

Database contains information on 70% of seamen in the world

- Drones

Example of terror threat: “trojan horse” shipping container with false wall -> killed 10

Guiding authorities:

- Interior Emergency Authority
- ISA Information Security
- ISA
- Israeli Police
- Israeli Navy

Site tour: Port security operations

Site Visit: Rutenberg Power Station – Protection of Critical Infrastructure

The Rutenberg Power Station is located in Ashkelon, less than 5 km from Gaza. The power station is the target of repeated rocket and terror attacks. Numerous tunnels from Gaza have also been found in the vicinity of Rutenberg. Participants learned about the security components being used to prevent and mitigate attacks on the power station. Notes:

5 power stations located in Israel – Rutenberg is the largest

Located 5km from Gaza

Israel cannot get electricity from anywhere else in the world

Have to depend on themselves

Issues:

- Rockets
 - Concrete wall protects major systems
 - Iron Dome
 - Reliance on coal (LNG expensive)
 - Poles hardened
- Tunnels
 - Found in vicinity – one 3km long
- Terrorists
 - Combat trained security guards
 - Patrol vehicles
 - Guard towers
 - Surveillance – cameras, radar
 - Patrol boats (2)
 - Navy patrol of pier

Collaboration between fire, police, IDF, Red Cross

Site tour: power station

Site Visit: City of Sderot

Sderot is the city located closest to Gaza and is targeted in many rocket attacks. Participants viewed stockpiles of exploded rockets launched from Gaza into Sderot, as well as shelters available throughout the city to protect civilians. These shelters include playground equipment that serve as bomb shelters in schools and parks.

Lecture: The State of Relations between Israel and its Neighbors

Rami Savir

This session provided information on the relationships with Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, nomadic Bedouin tribes within Israel, Gaza, the West Bank area of Judea and Sumeria, and the division within Jerusalem. Notes:

Understanding the mindset of Israel is key

Israel formed as a state for Jewish people

Mixed population: Jews, Israeli Arabs, Palestinians, E. Jerusalem

1.7 billion Muslims in the world

Most Muslims not terrorists, but most/many terrorists are Muslim

Lebanon

- Not a real country - clans of Christians, Muslims
- Hezbollah runs the state
- Theoretically should have no problems with Lebanon

Syria

- Sunni Muslims
- Govt holding power thanks to support of Lebanon and Russia

Jordan

- Left over from British Mandate
- 70-80% Palestinians
- Minority Bedouins are ruling
- Peace treaty with Israel but don't know if it will hold

Egypt

- Peace treaty since 1977
- Good relations with regime, but not with people
- Bedouins living in Sinai Desert

Gaza

- Trying to find ways to defeat/pass the fence (e.g., rockets, tunnels)
- For a while, didn't see foreigners as a significant threat
 - Requires profiling of behavior
 - You can't check everyone
 - Pure random checks are a waste of time

Judea/Sumeria

- Judea is south of Jerusalem in West Bank
- Sumeria is north of Jerusalem in West Bank

Use of walls to separate territory used/controlled by Palestinians when people are so close they can shoot each other with rifles

- Suicide attacks went down more than 90% after wall built
- Wood and concrete fence

Tunnels

- Tunnels into Israel are attack tunnels

- Tunnels into Egypt are smuggling tunnels
- Jerusalem – Old City (less than 1 mile x 1 mile)
- Jewish Quarter
 - Muslim Quarter
 - Armenian Quarter
 - Christian Quarter

Lecture: The Muslim Mindset

Rami Savir

This session provided an assessment of behaviors and motivations of Muslim Arabs in the Middle East from the prospective of former Israeli Security Agency members. Notes:

A man is always preferable to a woman

- The man decides
- A woman as a source is less beneficial
- Women do not participate in discussions

A mother is always preferable to a wife

- The function of a wife is to have kids

Marriage for practical reasons is always preferable to marriage for love

- Marriage to first cousins is ideal
- Woman moves to home/family of husband
- Woman takes husbands name
- Dynasty of family is very important

A cousin is always preferable to a stranger

- Importance of families and clans

Family obligation supersedes loyalty to a country

The Army is preferable to civilian institutions

- Force is important
- Perception of strength is important

Ethnic and religious affiliations are more important than a national identity

Rulers are more important than the law

- Leadership is to benefit your family

Luck is more important than discipline and planning

Affinity and charisma are more important than the sense of obligation

- People will follow someone to the worst decision they every made

Poetry is more important than prose

An embrace precedes acquaintance

Embarrassment precedes guilt

- Do not want to be embarrassed

Suspicion precedes trust

Shouting precedes dialogue

Past and future are more important than the present

Manipulation precedes listening

- Control and power are more important than the solution
- Negotiation occurs prior to, during, and following an agreement
- Honor above all
 - Most important issue in the mindset of Arabs

Day 3:

In-Transit Lectures on Security Topics

Rami Savir and Rami Shemesh

While in transit to various site visits, two veteran Israeli Security Agency members provided a series of lectures throughout the day on numerous topics related to Israel, the security situation, and terrorist incidents. Notes:

Old Jerusalem

- 37K population inside walls
 - 65% Muslim
- 4 Quarters: Christian, Armenian, Jewish, Muslim
- Walls built in 1536 by the Ottomans to protect Jerusalem from Christian Crusaders
- 7 gates built originally

View of note: pillars built around light train station to prevent terror incidents caused by crashing vehicles into stations

View of note: Ammunition Hill from 1967 battle with Jordan

View of note: Mount of Olives, Mount of Scopus, Mount Zion

View of note: Bedouins villages - 280K population total

West Bank divided by Oslo Agreement:

- A: Exclusive responsibility of Palestinians
- B: Security responsibility of Israel, public services responsibility of Palestinians
- C: Exclusive responsibility of Israel

12 tribes of Israel – descendants from Jacob

- Exiled into and enslaved in Egypt for 400 years
- Moses led them through the desert for 40 years
- Came through Jericho (Jordan Valley)
- Moses died on the east side of the Jordan River; did not enter into Holy Land

Israel will not give up Jordan Valley as any part of a peace agreement – Jordan Valley is a buffer

June 16, 1946 – 11 bridges connecting Israel blown up to protest limits on amount of Holocaust Jews allowed into Israel

7 fruits that represent the “land of milk and honey”: date, olive, fig, grape, pomegranate, wheat, barley

Muslim calendar goes by the moon – 354 days

Jewish calendar – dates for holidays based on what is in the Bible

Ramadan – holiest Muslim holiday

- Fast for 30 days
- Greater chance of terror attacks because people feel more devout

Muslims pray 5 times per day – intelligence effort to see who goes to the mosque for the early prayers – most devout

Muslim Brotherhood – Dawah – call to build schools and mosques

Sea of Galilee – was main source of water for Israel

Dam at south end of the Sea / Jordan River

First desalination plant opened last year to provide water from the Mediterranean Sea

Syrians tried to stop water from flowing into Israel – 1964

First suicide bomber attack in 1991 after 400 Hamas leaders exported to Lebanon; came back with lots of knowledge about suicide bombing

Life of Jesus:

- Raised in Nazareth for 30 years
- Lived at Sea of Galilee for 3 years
 - Recruited disciples
 - Performed miracles
- Traveled along Jordan River
- In Jerusalem only one week before being crucified

Rule over land that is now Israel:

- For 300 years after Jesus died, there was harassment of Christians – Romans did not allow Christianity
- 325 AD, Constantine the Great (Roman Emperor) – allowed Christianity
- 638 AD Empire of Islam
- Defeated 1099 by Crusaders
- Defeated in 1187 by Muslims
- Defeated 1516 by Ottomans
- Ottomans ruled til the end of WW1

View of note: Bet She-An. In 1997, a Jordanian soldier killed 7 girls in Bet She-An; King Hussein of Jordan went to Bet She-An to give his condolences to the families

History of Islam:

- 7th Century AD – Islam became the 3rd monotheistic religion
- Established by Muhammad (name means “Praise God”)
 - 570 AD – born in Mecca
 - 610 AD – entered a cave in Mecca and had a vision from the Angel Gabriel
 - Wrote first verses of Koran in cave
 - Started to preach 610-622 AD
 - 622 AD chased from Mecca to Medina
 - 622 AD – died and buried in Medina
 - No successor – 2 competing camps
 - Al Sahaba (sp?) – friends of Muhammad
 - Fatimah – daughter of Muhammad, married to 4th caliph
 - Fought to continue Islam

- Mother of Al-Hasan and Al-Husayn

680 AD – battle for the future of Islam between Fatimah and sons vs. friends of Muhammad – Battle of Karbala

Al Husayn killed in battle – followers became Shia

Day of Ashura (Shia holiday) marks the death of Al Husayn at Battle of Karbala

ISIS – Sunni, Al Qaeda – Sunni

ISIS established after 9/11 and US involvement in Iraq

65% of Iraq controlled by ISIS

Syria – Bashar al-Assad not Sunni or Shia

ISIS, other Sunni groups, free rebels all fighting al-Assad

2014 – Jabhat al-Nusra kidnapped 45 United Nations peacekeepers in Golan Heights; Israeli forces opened the gate and allowed UN personnel into Israel

Druze

- Fatimid Caliphate (Shia) – 11th century
 - Ruled in Egypt and Israel
 - King kidnapped, ad Dazari thought king was 1st imam
 - Ad Dazari ran away and established new religion (Druze)
- Druze not Arab, not Muslim
- 1.5 million
- Don't need nation or government, only want territory
- Very little known about Druze religion
- Being killed in Syria
- Druze in Israel demanding that Israeli government intervene in Syrian conflict to help Druze in Syria
- Stopped ambulance and stoned wounded Syrian soldier to death

Site Visit: Jordan River Baptism Site

Participants traveled to the Jorder River Baptism Site. This historic religious site is located on the border with Jordan, sharing baptism facilities. The span of the Jordan River at this site is less than 20 feet, posing unique security challenges. Notes:

One of 2 baptism sites – the other is at the Sea of Galilee

White dove symbolizes the baptism of Jesus

- Jesus baptized by John the Baptist in Jordan River
- Voice of God: “This is the son of God that I was talking about”
- Christians view baptism as a cleaning of the soul and the body

Currently good relationship with Jordan

Peutingner Map

- Discovered in the 4th century AD
- Shows network of roads from Roman Empire
- Indicates that site of baptism of Jesus close to Jordan River baptism site

No control of borders all the way to Turkey

Until 2007, 250km border with Egypt was completely open

- Fence built in 2007, significantly reducing smuggling problems
- Current war between ISIS and Tarabin (Bedouin tribe)
- Trying to keep Bedouins from smuggling

Site Visit: Triangle Border

This border is the boundary between Israel, Syria, & Jordan. Lecturers provided information on the impact of the war in Syria on Israel, the expansion of ISIS into Syria and Jordan. Lecturers provided information on the security situation in the Golan Heights, and implications for Jewish settlements in the area. Notes:

Golan Heights: 950m above sea level

Sykes-Picot Agreement – 1916 – division of area

- Golan Heights, Lebanon, Syria to be French territory
- Israel, part of Jordan, part of Iraq, Egypt to be English territory

1945-46 – Syria became independent

ISIS concentrating opposite Golan Heights, but focusing on battles to the east and north right now

Jordan Valley = 65 miles

- Border between 2 tectonic plates
- Major earthquakes every 100-110 years

Site Visit: French Hospital/Syrian Officer Academy

Participants toured the site of a former French hospital used as a Syrian Officer Academy before the Six Day War. The building ruins look down into the Syrian countryside. Notes:

Eli Cohen – Israeli intelligence agent

- Established cover identity 1960-61 in Argentina
- Settled in Syria 1961-65, transmitted information on Syrian military and fortifications
- Caught January 1965, tried, and executed

Site Visit: Valley of Tears

The Valley of Tears is battle site from Yom Kippur War where significantly outnumbered Israeli forces held off attackers until reinforcements could arrive after 4 days. Participants were able to explore a maintained Israeli Defense Force (IDF) bunker. The visit highlighted the difficulties in defending territory given the proximity of countries that have been actively hostile to Israel. Lecturers also provided a review of international/UN participation in the security situation.

Notes:

Until 1967, Syria controlled Golan Heights and bombed the kibbutz

Yom Kippur War – surprise attack from Syrian in Golan Heights; 3-point attack

History:

- 1947 Independence
- 1956 Sinai War
- 1967 Six Day War

10/6/73 – Attack on Yom Kippur – holiest day for Jewish religion

- Israeli army kept minimal forces in Golan Heights
- Ignored intelligence about possible war
- No recruitment of reserves until 10/5/73

Valley of Tears – one of three attack columns

- 1 battalion in Valley
- 600 Syrian tanks vs. 35-40 Israeli tanks
- For 4 days, Israeli tank battalion held off Syrians
- Bitter battle – officers motivated soldiers to stay
- Reserves arrived after 4 days and turned battle
- Israeli forces pushed into Syria
 - Pushed to within 40km from Damascus
 - Pushed to within 101km from Cairo

1974 – ceasefire between Israel and Syria

Site Visit: The Dead Sea

Participants were able to visit and swim in the Dead Sea, learning about the security challenges of protecting this site visited by travelers from within Israel and throughout the world. Notes:

- Every year 1m lost from the Dead Sea
- Dead Sea 34% salt in water (ocean .4% salt)

Day 4:

Site Visit: Knesset

The Knesset is the legislature of Israel. A guided tour provided information on the structure and composition of the Knesset. Participants subsequently attended private meetings with 3 members of Israeli parliament (Yehuda Glick, Amir Ohana, and Tzipi Hotovely. The Knesset members provided their unique perspectives on the security situation in Israel and answered questions from ASTI participants. Notes:

“to come together/to congregate”

120 members

- 17 not Jewish
- 33 women (25%)

Parliamentary Democracy

- Vote for 1 party, not individual members
- Each party posts list of 120 potential
- Seated by percentage of vote
- Minimum of 3.25% to get representation in Knesset

President gives political power to Knesset

- Knesset has to form government
- At least 61 members must support government

Declaration of independence

- 14 May 1948 at 4:00pm (Friday)

- 5/15 – end of British Mandate, Shabbat (Saturday)
- Concerns about civil war if there was a leadership void
- Document
 - “Rock of Israel” = God
 - No other reference to God
 - Signed while blank
 - Bold paragraph in middle contains 3 justifications for independent Jewish state:
 - Historical connection with land
 - 1917 Balfour Declaration / 1947 UN Partition Plan
 - Holocaust
 - Describes type of government
 - 3 addresses to UN, to Jewish people, to Arabs
 - Call to peace

- No constitution

Plenary Hall used for voting

- Lively debates, most recognizable room
- Many other discussion rooms

Bills – 2 types

- Government-originated: written by minister or vice-minister, requires 3 votes
- Private: written by any member of Knesset; requires 4 votes

Official symbol – candelabrum

Separation of powers: legislative, government, judicial

PM is also a member of parliament

Speaker is member of parliament, but runs/manages the debate

10 seconds to vote; board shows voting results

Disciplinary action – can force members of party to vote in a specific way

Judicial oversees legislative oversees government oversees judicial

“ascend the podium” = give testimony

Viewing space for press, honored guests, public

Chegal Hall – 3 tapestries, 12 floor mosaics, 1 wall mosaic

- Tapestries: present (colorful – different waves of immigration), past (exodus from Egypt, Moses, King David), future (Isaiah)

Knesset Member Meeting: Yehuda Glick

Jerusalemofpeace.com

Likud party – 30 seats in this Knesset

Formerly served in Ministry of Absorption

Six Day war – greatest victory of Jewish people

- 2 million Jews surrounded by 200 million Arab Muslims (supported by USSR)

Yom Kippur War – lesson in humility

- Lesson: if we put down our arms, we won't exist

Greatest danger – those who think God is exclusive and want to convert others

- 12 million Muslims killed by radical Muslims

Settlements not an obstacle to peace, but are bringing peace by living together peacefully

Importance of not being afraid of terrorism

Demand from ourselves the highest standards

Jerusalem mentioned more than 600 times in the Bible

Nations that want to remain relevant will recognize Jerusalem as capitol

Israel offers highest level of human rights for all citizens

Temple Mount as world center for human rights

Promote Jerusalem Covenant

Knesset Member Meeting: Amir Ohana

12 years in IDF and ISA

Member of 5 committees

21 Arab states combined are 1000 times larger than Israel

1.4 billion Muslims in the world - yet still the minority that needs to be protected

It is the existence of the state of Israel and of the Jewish people in their homeland that Muslims find objectionable

100 years of terror

PLO founded in 1964 – before settlers

- What is Palestine? “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free”
- Continue to support terror in many ways

Influential Muslim leadership sees Jews as occupiers like British and Ottomans before them

This is the birthplace of Jewish religion

2000 years of exile – “tomorrow in Jerusalem”

Israeli/Arab conflict will not be solved in DC – must be solved by Israelis and Arabs

Cannot overstate friendship/brotherhood with U.S.

- Share enemies, enemies of the free world

Knesset Member Meeting: Tzipi Hotovely

Deputy Foreign Minister

Time for us to rethink

Issues with Iran and Syria

Challenges of Jerusalem

Children’s intifada

- 12-15 year old took kitchen knives to streets
 - Means it is part of education system and social media

Schools named after mass murderers

Great future for you and your families as terrorists

Congress sponsoring and funding families of terrorists

Winning of 6 Day War gave all religions freedom to practice their religion in Jerusalem

Israelis expecting movement of US embassy to Jerusalem

Clear that YouTube, Facebook have the ability to remove content related to terrorism, recruitment

- Arguments of free speech

- Already some restrictions on pornography, etc.
- Request to remove content combining certain words
- Still disappointed with accessibility of this information

Site Visit: Israeli National Security Council

Eitan Ben-David

Participants visited the office of the Prime Minister and attended a private meeting with Israel's National Security Director, Eitan Ben David (sp?). Mr. David provided information on the challenges of terrorism in Israel, Hezbollah and Hamas, counter-tunnel challenges, and the importance of learning from terror attacks in other countries. Participants were able to ask questions of Mr. David related to counter-terrorism policies. Notes:

We are trying to do our best in this region

- Trying to improve ourselves every day
- Our agenda is to alert and ready

Most of surrounding countries are enemy

- Countries by law, no diplomatic relations
- Peace treaties with Jordan and Egypt, but good relationships primarily with government
- People of Egypt and Jordan not happy with presence of Israel

Borders: Gaza (59km); Egypt (208km); Lebanon (79km); Syria (92km); Jordan (309km); Saudi Arabia (X); Mediterranean Sea (196km)

Asleep with 1 eye open; need to be strong in the neighborhood

A lot of budget dedicated to security issues

When it comes to security, people of Israel are very united

Last conventional war: 1982 with Lebanon

In last 2 decades, most operations are against terror organizations

Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza

- Hiding with civilians inside villages and cities
- President of Lebanon said: "Hezbollah is Lebanon and Lebanon is Hezbollah"

Israelis want to live peacefully in region

Sharon gave back Gaza

- After less than one year, Palestinian Authority lost to Hamas and were kicked out
- Now terrorist organization controls land on Israeli border

They will always find a way to attack you with innovative methods

Iron Dome – most rockets not allowed to hit

Gaza using 35-40% of aid for military purposes

Building tunnels

- Karem Shalom crossing border: 1000 trucks per day into Gaza with supplies and humanitarian goods
- No good technology to detect every tunnel
- Israel investing a lot of money into technology placed deep into border to detect tunneling activity

Gas reserves in Mediterranean Sea

You have to send a message that you are not going to put up with terror incidents
More than 100K come into Israel to work every morning (60% legally, 40% illegally)
Rely on security clearances, fence, punitive measures against terrorist families, powerful intelligence assets, training, security awareness, community engagement
Learn from the attacks of others – Israel studies what is going on in other places in the world including details, modus operandi

- Israel is a lab for terror attacks
- Need to understand the organization, mindset
 - Who they are, what is their cause?
 - What kind of measures will hurt them?
 - What will contain them?

Lecture/Site Visit: Military Court of Judea and Sumeria Lt Colonel Menachem Lieberman

Participants received a presentation on the military court and the prosecution of suspects of those accused of security or criminal offenses in the West Bank. The site visit included in-court viewing of proceedings against a man charged with using social media as part of a terrorist organization. Notes:

West Bank under military sovereignty

Questions on whether Geneva Convention applies

Judiciary

- Local Palestinian courts
- Military courts
- Juvenile military courts
- Military court of appeals
- High Court of Justice: “Bagatz” (In Israel)

Those accused of criminal or security offenses in West Bank get real trial, rights of any defended

- Acquittal rate as high as Israeli courts
- Same evidentiary laws as in Israel

No jury system in Israel

Cases: terror, criminal, disturbance of public order, traffic, border offenses, and review of administrative decisions

24.5% of defendants have membership in a terrorist organization

Terror organizations find it easy to influence minors

Encourage and pay minors to perform terrorist acts

- Redeem “immoral behavior”
- “Hate indoctrination”

Administrative detention

- Preventative, not punitive
- Usually 6 months

Constant presence of human rights NGOs, visits of diplomats and foreign delegations

All defendants have lawyers; public defenders from Palestinian Authority available

Site tour: in-session court proceedings

Lecture: IED Trends

Chief Superintendent Michael Cardash

This lecture focused on ISIS and AQ IED trends exclusive of PBIEDs (addressed previously). The presenter discussed sources for explosive material, including unexploded ordnance (UXO) and the process necessary to create a homemade explosive materials as detailed in widely-distributed publications and internet-based videos. Participants also learned about camouflaging IEDs and anticipated upcoming threats and trends (including vehicle borne IEDs (VBIED), drones as a delivery mechanism. Notes:

Sources for explosives

- Unexploded ordnance (UXO)
 - PTAB 2.5 bomblets
 - Converted to an IED: remove fuse, remove tail assembly, add XMAT, insert det cord, close
 - Since Russian intervention in Syria, more modern munitions
 - UXO AO 2.5RT sub-munition
- Homemade explosives
 - Ammonium nitrate fertilizer
 - Ammonium nitrate + aluminum powder
 - TATP, nitrocellulose, EGDN, other
 - Christmas Eve 2014 AQAP magazine published article on how to make XMAT
 - Potassium chlorate (?) with booster
 - Plastic bottle casing
 - Nigella sativa (black cumin)
 - More energetic than carbon
 - Increased detonation energy by 30%
- TATP – classic 2-stage detonation

International Terror

- Richard Reid – shoe bomber
- UK 21.7 attempt (2005) London
- Delta Airlines attempt – Christmas Day
- Paris attacks: 13 November 2015
 - 1.2kg wet TATP and 700-1000 nuts
- Germany Ansbach: 24 July 2016
 - Suicide bomber outside wine bar
 - 2kg urea + AN and 200g TATP
- Brussels, Belgium: 22 March 2016
 - 3rd device 25kg TATP
 - Produced 100-125 kg of TATP
- Upcoming threat: TATP VBIED

Turkish airport bombing

Camouflaged IEDs

- Building blocks (ISIS)
- Rock camouflage (Houthis)
- Sandals (ISIS)
- Laptop IEDs (Al Shabaab)
 - Flight restrictions
 - AQAP raid – tech to build device
 - Inside laptop battery; still functions

ISIS use of vehicle-borne IED (VBIED) – New trend

- Large armored VBIED driven by suicide bomber
- Now in Iraq and Syria on a defensive position
 - 4 x 4 or SUVs (prefer Kia)
 - Light armored SUVs
 - Route to Karbala – 8 VBIEDs
 - Month of Ramadan
 - Electronic detonators with electronic plugs
 - Plastic bags and containers packed with explosives

ISIS use of UAVs – New trend

- Commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) multirotor drone/quadcopter
- Used for surveillance to date
- Quadcopter payloads – future threat?
- Hezbollah – Aug 2016 – weaponized quadcopter with AT/AP MZD2 bomblets
- ISIS fixed wing bomber – Jan 2017 - PR film
- ISIS quadcopter bombings – Jan 2017
 - 3D printed components
 - Tail hook on bomblets
 - 40mm warhead – M430 or M383
- Iraqi forces weaponized UAVs with shuttlecock bomblets
- Chemical – new trend
 - Fixed wing UAV with chlorine canister
 - Mosul April 2017
- French and Dutch using eagles to counter UAVs

Review

Rami Savir and Rami Shemesh

Cannot copy our methods in your communities – better to see why we do it and adapt our methods

Always expect a 2nd attack; things may happen in stages

Sunday - lectures

- Dangers of cyber and IOT; consider your cyber protection
- Consider communication
 - Used best by ISIS

Significant recruitment tool

Pay attention – see what the intentions are

Can use media to show your own message

Incitement on social media

Monday – MDA, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza

- US may not have those kind of threats
- All of this can be applied to police work
- Community relations is also a part of response

Tuesday – West Bank, Golan Heights, Syria, Jordan

- Message that if you are strong enough and crazy enough, it helps to deter

Wednesday – Parliament, PM Office, Courts

- Right wing side of perspective
- Solution is a matter of perspective
- Demonstration of incitement via social networks

Lecture: Social Networks as a Source of Inspiration

Rami Savir

This session focused on the importance of monitoring content of social media networks to identify sites/videos/forums, etc. being used to inspire hatred against the Jewish population and potential suicide bombers. Participants watched 2 videos made for children that encourage violence against Jewish persons. The lecturer also provided Facebook posts showing the progression of radical ideology by a young man that killed a 13 year-old Jewish girl. Notes:

Video: PAL network

Video: Hamas children's network

Case of Muhammad Tarayrah

- Killed 13-year old girl
- Review of social media posts
 - “Death is a right and I demand my right”
 - Desire to become a Shaheed

Social media – riots and disorder predictable via SM

No such thing as a lone wolf – need inspiration – often found in social media

Day 5:

Site Visit: Hadassah Hospital

Julie Bebinsky

Participants visited Hadassah Hospital to review the readiness and capabilities for mass casualty readiness, including trauma-specific emergency room spaces and intensive care units, plans for surge of facilities and staff, preparedness drills, and the need for trans-cultural nursing. The visit included a presentation by Dr. Asaf Kedar Terrorism Related to Mass Casualty Events in Israel.

Dr. Kedar discussed the increase in vehicle assaults and knife attacks in recent year. Notes:

Everything in ER can be quarantined

Capacity for 110 beds

MDA notifies ER with patient details

Trauma ER – rooms strictly for trauma

- X-ray booms
- Lights also cameras – everything filmed
 - Not accessible to lawyers
- Each room has capacity for 2 patients
- Ultrasound machines in room
- Call volume / day – approx. 10

Rambam Hospital – only Level 1 hospital in north part of country

- Anticipate military wounds
- Complete hospital underneath the ground – used if necessary in time of war

Hadassah Hospital – geared towards terror victims

Conduct drills for hospital evacuation onto grounds

During mass casualty, patients leave for CT and don't return to ER, move to other care

No diverts, always accept trauma patients

Burn care – big issue – resources lacking

Big bottleneck – imagery, CT scans

ATLS – Advanced Trauma Life Support

No problems with drop times from ambulances

Another bottleneck in ICU, but all nurses ICU trained

Nursing school in hospital

Different ICUs distributed throughout hospital: trauma, peds, cario, etc.

Effort to keep families together during mass casualty incidents

Visiting dignitary room – bulletproof, self-contained

Simulation/training room can be converted for more beds

System for surge capacity

- Drill 3x per year for all former ER nurses in hospital
- Focus on new threats
- 2017 – pediatric drill

No translation problems

Workers reflect population of the city

No follow-up care available in Palestinian Authority (PA)

PA has Ministry of Health and own medical system

Air transports 1x per month

- Short distances in Israel
- Air pad fits criteria for military hospitals

Mass decon area with Geiger counter outside in ambulance bay

Mother and child pavilion

- Obstetrics, labor and delivery, pediatric ICU, oncology, surgery
- Cultural competence: trans-cultural nursing, ethnomed
- Can be used for surge in a mass casualty
- Access to utilities in ceiling

Family areas have kitchens and showers
Pediatric ICU has parent sleeping rooms
Hospitals in East Jerusalem run by Palestinian Authority Ministry of Health

Dr, Yorum Weiss

Former Director of surgical ICU

A lot of experience here with trauma

Seeing a decline of trauma patients

- Used to have many multi-casualty events
- Importance of drills to maintain skills

MCE factors:

- Volume of patients
- Medical characteristics of event (e.g., injury types – crush)
- Prehospital scene
- Hospital-related variables

Terrorism Related to MCE in Israel

Dr. Kedar Assaf

West Bank divided into Sumaria (North) and Judea (South)

1/10/15 Drive-by shooting

2392 attacks in 10 weeks (2015)

- Increase in vehicular assaults
- Most attacks in West Bank (74%)

Terrorists today

- Age of terrorists: 16-20: 37%, 21-25: 34%; minors 10%
- Gender of terrorists: 89% male
 - Some females – suicide by cop
- Lone terrorist is characterized by radicals who embark on individual terrorist missions without any logistical support or conventional means of attack
 - Example: tractor into crowded street

Patients spread out so hospitals not overwhelmed

Significant increase in vehicular assault

Continuous dialogue with dispatch centers

- Can connect to CCTV cameras to see what is happening in the field
- EMTs sending photos from smart phones
- Israel uses WhatsApp to send data

Knife attacks – Intifada of the Knife

- More force in those hit intentionally
- Attackers being taught efficient stab sites and how to avoid police/military protective vests -> “Intelligent stabbing”
- Use of foley catheter into path of knife track
- Whatever you can do to apply direct pressure
- Goal of MDA is to get to the closest, proper medical facility

Site Visit: Check Point between Israel and West Bank

Participants visited a check point in Jerusalem where inhabitants from the West Bank cross into Jerusalem. Part of the visit included a tour of a main control center where Israeli border forces review an extensive surveillance camera outputs at all times. During the tour, participants saw an incident where two youths touched the fence and caused a sensor hit. The border forces maintained surveillance on the two. Notes:

North part of Jerusalem: PA and Israel come together

Behind wall is refugee camp – Kalandia

- ½ Israelis who choose to live behind the wall, ½ Palestinians

Hard to tell the intentions of people going through the check point

Next month is Ramadan - .5 million people going through the check point during holiday

Site tour: Control Center

- Incident ongoing – 2 boys/young men touched fence causing sensor hit
- Concerns about people infiltrating into Jewish communities and murdering people
- 5 platoons of 70 people each
- Want to allow people freedom to come into work and to pray
- Don't know the intentions of people coming over
- Concerns about attacks on border forces
- Border guards work together well with police, IDF -> importance of sharing information and intelligence
- Incident description: small village Sho-afat – rocks thrown at police and MDA – attacks on the people there to help others
- A lot of cooperation that people don't know about
- Incidents of bombs in ambulances – fake sick
- All facets of Israeli population in Border Guard
- Command board – shows location of all vehicles
- Software reads license plate of every car coming into Israel
Information immediately provided to Border Guard

Site tour: Surveillance Center

- 24/7 camera surveillance
 - Women better than men at surveillance
 - 4 hour shifts
 - Looking for abnormalities, behavior, proximity to fence
 - Become very familiar with specific area
 - Land/terrain divided in a very specific way
 - Contact directly with units in field
- Similar units/centers all over the country

Site Visit/Lecture: Special Patrol Unit/Yasam Jerusalem

The tactics and procedures of the Special Patrol Unit are similar to SWAT teams in the United States. The Special Patrol Unit is divided into motorcycle units and team-based squadrons. Unit

members demonstrated non-lethal and lethal weapons and capabilities. A unit member also provided a briefing on motives of a terrorist, operational parameters, suspicious signs and behaviors. Notes:

Deal with extraordinary incidents – anything with violence

2 types of units:

- Motorcycle units

Anywhere in the city in 3-7 minutes

Driver + rider; rider has M-4

Elite of unit

Helmet has Bluetooth for comms transmission

7 bikes every shift spread throughout city

2 shifts plus missions

At night use 4-wheeled vehicles because of reduction in traffic

- Team-based squadrons

Use Chevy Savana – holds 9 officers (but can hold up to 15-16)

Modular vests

Riot suit is fireproof

Cannot use baton unless at highest threat level, and then only to outer thigh

Non-lethal: rubber rounds

Not allowed to fire center mass

Can only aim below knee or below waist

Water cannon

Used for 3rd highest level of riots

Has self-defense system – tear gas deployed from sides

Disperses water, water with blue paint, water with stink, and water with tear gas

- Police can come in later to arrest people painted in blue

Nozzle on front for trash fires

Working time of 4 min at full blast

Can refill from any fire hydrant

Arsenal

Importance of surgical means vs. mass means

Non-lethal:

- Sponge rounds

- OC

- Paintball gun with paint, salt, OC

Night-vision, night-sight for M4 and M22

M4 – fires .556

.22 Ruger (between lethal and non-lethal)

- For those that present danger, but not “clear and present” danger

Unit formed in the 90’s – needed to form professionally-trained operational units

- Most professional in police force

4 squadrons: 2 team-based, motorcycle, mounted

- Teams of 5 officers or pairs of riders

Focus on:

- Terror – arrests, identifying suspects, response to extreme events
- Crime – specific events, proactive actions
- Public order – demonstrations and protests
- Sensitive missions (Temple Mount, VIP protection, public security patrols)

Threats: suicide attacks, kidnapping, knife attacks, cars as weapons, shootings

- Concerns about combined attack and multiple attacks (e.g., secondary attacks on responders)
- Profile: all ages, family status, gender, education level, and economic status
- Locations: friction points where Arab population comes into contact with Jewish population
- Any time of day
- Motives:

Revenge

Environmental causes

Incitement

Desire to be famous

Copycat

Religious reasons

Personal

Suicidal

Clear name

Operational parameters

- Position personnel/units in sensitive places (e.g., crowds, commercial areas, schools, central areas, hot spots)
- Roadblocks to check suspicious persons
- Learn and train

Suspicious signs and behavior

- Presence in area not supposed to be
- Purse or backpack
- Nervous behavior
- Mumbling/praying
- Try to get close to security personnel

Operational behavior:

- Keep a safe distance

- Other officers looking for suspects
- Keep guard up at all time

Video: shooter in parking lot (2016)

Video: incident at Temple Mount – shooting from fortified door 7; no firearms allowed on Temple Mount

Lecture: Islam in the United States

Mordechai Kedar

This session focused on known radical Islamic groups in the United States. The lecturer discussed challenges for law enforcement, including the need to listen to people in their own language, in order to assess the level of support for radical Islamic organization. Notes:

Lecturer: 50 years experience in Arab culture (25 in IDF, 25 in academia)

“Alive and Killing: Tribalism in the Arab World”

Tribalism – most important element in the Arabic societies

Islam – extends to other countries

Suggested article: “Sharia and Violence in American Mosques”

<http://www.meforum.org/2931/american-mosques>

Found documents:

- “40 Hadith on Jihad” against infidels (Americans)
- “Racist, Fascist, Criminal Police: Manual for How to Resist Police Investigations”

Video: lying in Islam – prevention, protection of religion

- “The Life of Muhammad” page 367

Until they prove that this is wrong, they should be held to this – plan for North America

Images of billboards – www.whyislam.com

Biggest challenge for law enforcement is how to find out what is true and what is not

- Listen to what people are saying in their own language
- Big difference between Arabic dialects

Pyramid for of degree of support by Muslims for terrorist activity:

- Tip is terrorists
- Below – those that supply weapons
- Below that – those that donate money
- Below that – sympathizers
- Below that – “understanders”

“War is deception”

Different definition of the word “jihad”

- Fight against sin – internal or external?

Wording of the Qu’ran vs. the Holy Qu’ran

Site Visit: Jerusalem Fire Department

Participants visited a fire station in Jerusalem. Firefighters discussed the need for different cultures to work together to identify and mitigate threats within the city. Participants were able to explore ladder trucks and a CBRNE apparatus. Notes:

- 4 stations – one in Old City (Arab)
- 225 firefighters in whole city
- 3 shifts, 24 hours per day; career staff; 24 hours on/ 48 hours off
- Mutual aid from all over Israel
- Big problems because of many religions – need to treat everyone the same
- Call 102 to get fire response
- Site tour of multiple apparatus

Lecture: Israeli Security Agencies

Rami Savir

This session provided a description of the agencies that work together for intelligence collection activities within Israel, focusing on the Israel Security Agency. Participants learned about the separate expertise required for field officers and interrogators. The presentation included discussion of identifying, developing, and running sources. Notes:

Video clips:

- Boy caught smuggling XMAT
- Multiple operations
- Hospital fugitive extraction

Suggested documentary: The Green Prince:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5z8z4Fi7oz4&t=50s>

Shinbet/Israeli Security Agency

- Responsible for internal security: terrorism, subversion, espionage, diplomatic protection, international protection, cyber
- Field officers – 3 years training
 - 1 year language training
- Case officers in charge of geographic area; alone/independent
- Purpose is to thwart attacks, not collectors of intelligence
- Interrogators
 - Separate from case handlers
 - Operate as a team
 - Rely heavily on confessions
 - Mock prisons
 - Cannot use source information during interrogation
- Recruiting and handling difficult tasks
 - Need to be proactive
 - Walk-ins rarely valuable
 - Start by deciding who you want to be your source
 - Motives: money, ideology, personal issues, extortion, reduction of charges
 - Collect information and try to use it later

If the case officers doesn't find the hidden motive, then the recruitment will not succeed

If he doesn't have a motive, he will never be a source

The betrayal process starts when he says yes

Once he betrays his culture/brothers, he will one day betray the case officer

- Running a source – most difficult task

Information is immediately critical

Continuing threat to source

Always about checking the reliability of the source

What info did he give you?

What did he not give you?

Flow of meeting:

Importance of small talk at beginning and end

Headlines first – you have your priorities and he has his

- Get most important stuff at the beginning

You are in charge – you dictate the pace

- Don't want to stop the flow of information for technical info/details

You ask questions based on info needs

Small talk

Payment of money

- Same amount every time, not based on value of information
- The moment he understands the value of certain information, he will begin to lie or color his remarks
- Imagination becomes fact
- Source opinions, estimates are important, but are not facts

Reports – facts and case officer analysis/remarks

Sometimes you need to task a source with a specific mission

Validate mission outcomes

Identify gaps in outcome – what he reported versus what actually happened

Activity check – every couple of months

Sit down and review activity of source

Done by another case officer

Check for conflicts between what source told you and what actually happened

Reliability a key issue

Difference between source covering a target from the outside (example: barber) and a source covering a target from the inside

If you cannot recruit someone inside the target, you may be able to recruit from outside and get them inside

Try not to recruit the head of a cell
 Want sources that can come to you, but that can't always happen
 Need to know language and culture – culture adds context
 Need to be proactive
 Be ready to supply the things that they need as part of illegal activities (e.g., source, storage guy, smuggler)
 Proactive prevention of terrorist organizations
 Do not rely on luck or chance – make it!
 Lessons learned and experience

Day 6:

In-Transit Lectures on Security Topics

Rami Savir and Rami Shemesh

While in transit to various site visits, two veteran Israeli Security Agency members provided a series of lectures throughout the day on numerous topics related to Israel, the security situation, and terrorist incidents. Notes:

Hebron

- 1929 – all Jews killed or expelled by Muslims
- Important city for many religions
 - Tombs of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob)
 - Massacre before peace agreements
 - Jewish settlements

Jewish settlements

- Anything that came under control of Jews after 1967
- Settlers feel safe inside of their community but not outside
- Suggested reading: “The Israeli Solution: A One-State Plan for Peace in the Middle East” <https://www.amazon.com/Israeli-Solution-One-State-Peace-Middle/dp/0385348061>
- View of interest: Kiryat Arba

Activity: Caliber 3

Participants visited Caliber 3, a special academy for counterterrorism and security training. Participants viewed an active shooter response demonstration and joined in analysis of security operations during the demonstration and viewed active shooter response demonstration. Following the demonstration, completed the Basic Combat Shooting course and learned procedures for response operations. As part of the course, participants worked individually and in teams to neutralize threats in a training setting. Notes:

Founded 12 years ago

Sharon Gat – colonel in Israeli special forces

Special academy for counter-terrorism and security training

IDF, Israeli police, ISA, law enforcement from all over the world, civilians, government departments -> all train here

Instructors served at least 15 years with IDF, ISA, and/or Israeli police

“Brave heart and brave Jewish soul”

Site Visit: City of Hebron

Hebron is located in an Arab-controlled area of the West Bank. There are protected Jewish settlements in the city that is 97% Arab and 3% Jewish, creating significant security issues. Hebron contains archeological sites that are important to the Jewish faith, as well as the Tomb of the Fathers which has significance for Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Notes:

Population: 220K

Biggest city in Judea

Heart of radical Islam

800 Jews

4 neighborhoods

1917 Mandate for Palestine

TIPH – Temporary International Presence in Hebron

A lot of rock throwing, attempted stabbings

Site tour: Tel Rumeida

- 4500 year old ruins: stairs/wall
- 4 room house
- Land purchased in 1807

Site tour: Tomb of the Fathers/Patriarchs

- Built during reign of King Herod
- 1267 – declared to be a mosque
 - Anyone not Muslim could not go in
 - Jews in Hebron in order to maintain access to the Tomb of the Fathers
- 1 million people per year visit Tomb of the Fathers
- Abraham paid 400 silver shekels for a cave and a field in Hebron
 - Discovered to be cave of Adam and Eve
 - Purchased after Sarah died
- Holy Arc – Torah Scrolls – contract for Hebron
- Site called “entrance to the garden of Eden”
- Rooms with memorials – actual tombs in caves underneath building
- Today building is split in 2 parts: one part for Muslim use, one part for everyone else

Site Visit: Old City of Jerusalem and Western Wall

Participants visited religious sites in the Old City of Jerusalem to understand security issues related to Dome of the Rock and terrorist incidents in Old City of Jerusalem. These sites have been frequent targets of terrorist attacks. Notes:

Dome of the Rock / Temple Mount

- First Holy Temple of the Jews destroyed in the 5th century
- After 50 years of diaspora, Jews returned and built second Holy Temple in same place

Destroyed by Romans in 70AD

- Qu'ran Chapter 17 – journey of Muhammad
“exited mosque” and brought back prayers
Became 3rd holiest monument for Islam
- Jesus only in Jerusalem for last week of life
Palm Sunday – first day he entered Jerusalem from Mt of Olives
Thursday afternoon – arrested, interrogated
Friday – delivered to Romans, died, buried
Sunday – Mary sees empty tomb
- 40 days after resurrection, Jesus went to heaven from Mt Olive

Church of the Holy Sepulchre

- Via della Rosa
- Gethsemane Church
where Peter denied Jesus three times
where Judas gave up Jesus
where Jesus was arrested
- Crusader style
- Built in 11th century AD on the remains of the Byzantine church

Mercy Gate / Golden Gate

- Persians sacked Church of the Holy Sepulchre
- Golden cross returned with cross and entered through this gate
- Jews believe that the Messiah will return through this gate
- Muslims built cemetery in front of gate

Room of the Last Supper

- 14th century dispute between Franciscans and Jews regarding the room
- Grave of King David right below room
- Became a mosque in 14th century AD
- Messiah will come from the family of King David

Western Wall

- 2 tablets in Arc of the Covenant
Put in holiest room in the temple
Temple destroyed in 70AD
132-135 AD – Jews rebelled against Romans
Roman emperor killed more than 650K Jews
Law restricted Jews from Jerusalem
Changed name from Judea to Palestine
 - All others expelled2000 year diaspora
1700 (approx.) rabbi and students built synagogue – then destroyed
1800s – built synagogue on same place, destroyed 1948
1980s – rebuilt synagogue third time
- Western Wall is all that is left from the 2nd temple
- 10 gates to the Temple Mount only open to Muslims

- Jews, Christians, others must use small gate
- 10K people at the Western Wall every Friday evening

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ASTI

Advanced Security Training Institute

Counter-Terrorism: Prevention, Detection, and Response and Recovery Course Draft Agenda October 2017

This agenda details the schedule for each day of the October 2017 Counter-Terrorism: Prevention Detection, and Response Course. Please note that this agenda represents the likely curriculum schedule, but may continue to be refined until the course begins.

12 October 2017 (Thurs)		Depart local airports for TLV
13 October 2017 (Fri)		Arrival in Tel Aviv
17:50	Arrive at Ben Gurion Airport, Tel Aviv, Israel	
18:30	Transport to hotel	
19:00	Check In	
19:30	Dinner at hotel	
14 October 2017 (Sat)		Cultural Day
Saturday is Shabbat in Israel – a day of rest. Participants are to use this day to acclimatize to the time change. The course curriculum starts early on Sunday morning and participants need to be alert. Breakfast and dinner buffets are included in the lodging rate. Participants are on their own for lunch. There are many restaurants within walking distance of the hotel.		
15 October 2017 (Sun)		
07:30	Breakfast at hotel	
08:00 – 09:30	Lecture: Israel History , Geography, & Security Environment	
09:45 – 12:30	Lecture: Terrorist Explosive Devices and Tactics	
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch provided in meeting room	
13:30 – 14:30	Lecture: Intelligence Orientation	
14:30 – 15:30	Lecture: Cyber, Terror, and Social Networks	
15:45 – 16:30	Lecture: Crisis Media Management: Counter-Terror Approach	
19:30	Dinner at hotel	
The series of lectures presented on Sunday provide background and contextual information critical to understanding the threat environment in Israel.		

16 October 2017 (Mon)	
07:00	Breakfast at hotel and check out
07:45	Bus Departs
07:45 – 09:00	En-route lectures on security topics
09:00 – 10:30	Site Visit: Magen David Adom (MDA) Tactics and Procedures Topic: Pre-hospital emergency medical services
10:30 – 12:00	Site Visit: Port of Ashdod Topic: Protection of transportation assets
12:00 – 13:30	Site Visit: Rutenberg Power Station Topic: Protection of critical infrastructure
13:30 – 14:00	Lunch provided
13:30 – 15:30	Site Visit: Gaza Border/City of Sderot Topic: Protection of communities/civilians
15:45 – 16:30	Travel to Jerusalem; hotel check in
19:30	Dinner at hotel
<p>The curriculum for Monday focuses primarily on protection of communities and critical infrastructure from terrorist threats. Many of the site visits for the day center on assets located in near proximity to Gaza, an origin point for military and terrorist attacks.</p>	

17 October 2017 (Tues)	
06:30	Breakfast at hotel
07:00	Bus Departs
07:00 – 10:00	En-route lectures on security topics
10:00 – 12:00	Site Visit: West Bank / Golan Heights Participants will visit a number of sites related to the security situation in Israel and proximity to Syria and Jordan
12:00 – 12:30	Lunch provided
12:30 – 16:30	Site Visit: Golan Heights (continued) Topic: Protection of critical infrastructure
16:30 – 17:30	Site Visit: Dead Sea Topic: Security of tourist areas
17:30 – 19:00	En-route lectures on security topics
19:30	Dinner at hotel
<p>The curriculum on Tuesday focuses primarily on the security situation in Israel, including shared borders with states that have previously attacked Israel. The security situation is complicated by Israeli settlements located in the West Bank. Participants will view sites from terrorist and military attacks to better understand concepts and techniques for combatting these incidents.</p>	

18 October 2017 (Wed)	
07:30	Breakfast at hotel
08:00	Bus Departs
08:00 – 08:30	En-route lectures on security topics
08:30 – 11:00	Site Visit: Knesset Topic: Discussions with members of Israeli Parliament on the security situation in Israel and terrorist threats
11:00 – 12:30	Site Visit: Israeli National Security Council Topic: Discussions with members of Israeli Security Council on the security situation in Israel and terrorist threats
12:30 – 13:00	Lunch provided
13:00 – 15:00	Site Visit: Military Court Topic: Prosecution of terrorist suspects
15:00 – 18:00	Site Visit: Old City of Jerusalem and Western Wall Topic: Security of religious and cultural sites
19:30	Dinner at hotel
The curriculum on Wednesday focuses on governmental attempts to address Israel's terrorist threat by examining efforts by the legislative, governmental, and judicial branches.	

19 October 2017 (Thurs)	
08:00	Breakfast at hotel
08:30	Bus Departs
08:30 – 09:00	En-route lectures on security topics
09:00 – 11:00	Site Visit: Hadassah Hospital Topic: Mass casualty readiness and response
11:00 – 12:00	Site Visit: West Bank Border Checkpoint Topic: Surveillance tactics and techniques
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch provided
13:00 – 14:30	Site Visit: Special Patrol Unit Topic: Specialized law enforcement tactics and techniques
14:30 – 15:30	Site Visit: Jerusalem Fire Department Topic: Specialized response assets
15:30 – 16:30	Lecture: Extremist Islam in the United States
16:30 – 17:30	Lecture: Social Networks as a Source of Terrorist Inspiration
19:30	Dinner at hotel
The curriculum on Thursday focuses on Israeli emergency response tactics and procedures for terrorist and mass casualty incidents.	

20 October 2017 (Fri)	
08:00	Breakfast at hotel
08:30	Bus Departs
08:30 – 09:30	En-route lectures on security topics
09:30 – 12:30	Activity: Active Shooter Drill and Training
12:30 – 13:00	Lunch provided
13:00 – 15:00	Site Visit: Hebron Topic: Security in high tension areas
16:00 – 18:00	Site Visit: Jerusalem Market Participants will tour the historic Jerusalem Market, site of numerous past terrorist incidents
19:30	Shabbat Dinner
20:30	Depart hotel for TLV
23:30	Depart TLV
The curriculum on Friday focuses on application of knowledge and skills learned during the week.	

21 October 2017 (Sat)	Return to home jurisdictions
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Letter of Support

In May of 2017, the Austin Regional Intelligence Center (ARIC) sent six students to Israel to take part in the Advanced Security Training Institute's Counter-Terrorism Immersion Training. Our delegation consisted of representatives from various disciplines and assignments from within our Police and Fire Departments.

We received training directly from security and intelligence experts on the topics of:

- Proactive Intelligence Gathering
- Critical Infrastructure Protection
- Active Shooter Response
- Target Hardening
- Bomb Prevention and Response
- Community Engagement for Preventing and Responding to Terrorism Events
- Case Studies and Lessons Learned from Terrorism Events

After months of research, we chose Advanced Security Training Institute (ASTI) to facilitate this training because they are the leader in this field. The training program developed for this purpose, the "*Counter-Terrorism Detection, Prevention, and Response Immersion Course*," is a six day program encompassing historical perspective, policy development, tactical and strategic preparations, and critical infrastructure protection strategies.

From the moment when we stepped off the plane until we departed Israel, we were greeted and escorted by professional representatives of ASTI. Our safety and comfort was a priority for their team. ASTI had representatives on hand to answer every question we had along the way. Security and intelligence specialists accompanied us on our travels and were able to provide historical, geographic, and ideological context throughout the trip. They acted as a liaison between us and the local community as we travelled throughout the country. Although the trip was not a personal or religious vacation, the ASTI staff still took time when they could to explain the religious and historical background of each site we visited and travelled through.

Israel's long history of dealing with threats, conflict, trauma, and casualties over the course of their history has resulted in the development and implementation of several of procedures and entities;

A National heightened sense of awareness that occurs at all levels within their society beginning with education in their schools
An Intelligence Process that affords them the ability to quickly address potential threats or issues on multiple levels
Extensive Security Protocols at key Critical Infrastructures
An established integrated response by the Military and Emergency Services Responders
Hospitals staffed and equipped around the clock to deal with mass casualties
Regional EMS Technicians deployed with “Take-Home” emergency vehicles to respond in the event of Mass Casualties
The implementation of a country wide phone app which allows for video exchange and quicker uploading of patient information for people needing an EMS response
Military Courts to preside over cases involving subjects suspected of Terrorist Activity

Over the last ten years, numerous U.S. Homeland Security Officials have travelled to Israel for this training. Among those who have participated in this training are First Responders (Police, Fire and EMS), Bomb Squad Technicians and Managers, Strategic Homeland Security Management Personnel, Incident Commanders, Policy Makers etc. In order to bring back valuable feedback about the program for other agencies considering whether or not to participate, many of these prior participants have documented their experience. ARIC utilized those reviews and testimonials to justify and support our decision to participate. Now, after having participated in the training ourselves, we are happy to add our name to the list of agencies supporting this training.

Due to our overwhelmingly positive experience and valuable lessons learned throughout this training, we remain available to discuss our experience with anyone who is considering participating. We may be contacted at the information below.

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The 10-Point.
Gerard Baker
Editor in Chief
The Wall Street Journal

Good morning,

It's a big day for news and we have it all covered live, from James Comey's testimony to the U.K. general election. Follow our reports and analysis all day on WSJ.com.

All Eyes on Comey

Former FBI Director James Comey is set to testify in front of the Senate Intelligence Committee today at 10 a.m. ET. Our live analysis can be found [here](#). In prepared testimony recounting his conversations with President Trump before his abrupt firing last month, Mr. Comey describes a president determined to clear his own name as several investigations looked into whether Trump associates had colluded with Russia. And indeed Mr. Comey confirmed that he had told the president on three occasions that he was not being investigated—as Mr. Trump had claimed when he fired Mr. Comey. Mr. Trump asked him to “lift the cloud” cast over the administration by the investigation of possible Russian interference in last year's U.S. election, according to the testimony, and Mr. Comey felt the president was seeking to establish “a patronage relationship.” In Mr. Comey's narrative—rebutted by the White House—a vexed FBI director pushes back against a president seeking to exert control over him and his agency. We offer a viewer's guide to one of the most-anticipated congressional hearings in years.

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Foreign Targets

Suspected Islamic State gunmen struck Iran on Wednesday, killing 13 people and targeting two symbolic pillars of the regime: the parliament complex and the shrine of the Iranian revolution's founding father, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The attacks are the first that Islamic State, a Sunni extremist group, has claimed in predominantly Shiite Iran; the two main branches of Islam have battled in other Middle Eastern countries for decades. If confirmed as the work of Islamic State, the attacks would serve as the latest evidence of the group's ability to direct operations away from its home bases in Syria and Iraq, where it is under mounting military pressure.

How Siri Lost Her Mojo

Apple is playing catch-up in a product category it invented. Siri gained popularity for its ability to follow voice commands to handle simple tasks such as calendar appointments and text messaging, and had no real competitors for years. But nimble challengers developed more-sophisticated voice-powered products for the digital home, while Siri remained largely an iPhone feature, its capabilities advancing incrementally. On Monday, Apple announced HomePod, a Siri-powered home speaker—a market it will enter as a distant third, at best. Some former executives, close observers and even devoted customers say Apple's innovative power appears to be waning. But Apple's supporters say it often has followed rivals into categories—and still managed to assume a commanding position.

May's June Gamble

Voters in Britain go to the polls today to choose a new Parliament. Prime Minister Theresa May is hoping her roll of the dice on an early election in pursuit of a big mandate for her Brexit negotiations will pay off. We will have live coverage of the results beginning Thursday evening U.K. time.

Small Rewards

The decline in airline amenities that has vexed consumers in the back of the plane is now hitting elite frequent fliers, too. Some of the big carriers' best customers complain that perks have been whittled away. Delta used to give top-tier frequent fliers free club membership, but now offers that as a choice in a bundle of options. United once paid Global Entry fees for top customers, but stopped in 2015. And the most important benefit—an upgrade—has grown much rarer as airlines sell more first- and business-class seats. Frequent fliers say they understand airlines' desire to sell premium seats rather than give them away, but upgrades used to be considered a necessary investment in loyalty.

TODAY'S VIDEO

Family Tree

Fossils unearthed in Morocco, the latest in a series of recent discoveries about human origins, are providing evidence that our species has been on Earth much longer than previously thought.

TOP STORIES

U.S.

[Trump Taps Former Assistant Attorney General as New FBI Chief](#)

[Millions of Young People Shut Out of the Housing Market](#)

WORLD

North Korea Fires Several Ground-to-Ship Missiles

Weak Spending Takes Some Pizazz From Japan's Growth Streak

BUSINESS

Two SIM Cards and Better Selfies: How China's Smartphones Are Taking On Apple

Boeing Chief Says Overseas Plants Won't Hit U.S. Jobs

MARKETS

U.S. Oil Exports Double, Reshaping Vast Global Markets

The Rising Stakes for Tesla in China

NUMBER OF THE DAY

€1

The price—about \$1.13—that Banco Santander paid for Spanish rival Banco Popular Español in an overnight auction after the European Central Bank determined Banco Popular was near collapse.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

This is the place they can come and tell the stories they want.

Maverick Carter on Uninterrupted, the media startup he founded with Cleveland NBA star LeBron James, which offers a way for athletes to communicate directly with the public. Its offerings include full-length documentaries, web series and a growing podcast network.

TODAY'S QUESTION

Going back to our story above, what are your thoughts on Mr. Comey's testimony? Send your comments, which we may edit before publication, to 10point@wsj.com. Please include your name and location.

—Compiled by Margaret Rawson

READER RESPONSE

Responding to yesterday's question on Anthem's decision to pull out of the health-insurance exchange in Ohio next year, Kristy McCray of Ohio wrote: "Anthem's choice to leave the Affordable Care Act exchange reifies that insurance companies are profit-driven businesses whose only concern is the bottom dollar, not patient health. Access to health insurance does not equate to receiving medical care, yet another reason to use direct primary care and pay cash for medical needs." Tom Manning of New York said: "The insurance business requires stability and predictability. Providing insurance to lower-income households requires subsidy. With the Trump administration and the Republican Congress doing everything possible to undermine all of these factors, it is no wonder that insurers are pulling out." And Harry Fisher of Connecticut weighed in: "Corporate America works full time and makes decisions on behalf of shareholders within the framework of the law. By dithering and working part time, Congress proves again that it is not qualified to manage the economy or any industry. It should repeal Obamacare

in its entirety and leave the rest up to the states.”

This daily briefing is named “The 10-Point” after the nickname conferred by the editors of The Wall Street Journal on the lead column of the legendary “What’s News” digest of top stories. Technically, “10-point” referred to the size of the typeface. The type is smaller now but the name lives on.

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Hope your coffee is extra strong, because there is a LOT to get through this morning. Here are the 5 things you need to know to Get Up to Speed and Out the Door.

By AJ Willingham.

1. White House

President Donald Trump shared highly classified information last week with the Russian foreign minister and Russian ambassador to the US in a White House meeting, The Washington Post first reported Monday. Two former officials knowledgeable of the situation confirmed to CNN that the main points of the Post story are accurate: The President shared classified information with the Russian foreign minister.

Trump administration reps have denounced the story. Dina Powell, the White House deputy national security adviser for strategy who was at the meeting, called it "false."

By the way, the President is legally allowed to declassify information by sharing it, if that's what he thinks is best. The big concern here is that, by knowing bits and pieces of classified intelligence, the Russians could put together the bigger picture, namely who the US worked with to get the info and how they got it. Political concerns also are bouncing around inside the Beltway, with Republicans in Congress worried this latest crisis will sideline their agenda.

2. Syria

The Syrian government has built a large crematorium near a notorious military prison in an effort to hide mass atrocities carried out there, the State Department said. Newly declassified photos and information show the regime may be killing as many as 50 detainees a day, then getting rid of the bodies. The claim represents yet another horrifying facet of the Syrian civil war, and the State Department is calling upon Russia to help end the devastation.

3. Cyberattack

Businesses around the world are recovering from a massive cyberattack that crippled computer

networks over the weekend and on Monday, but there are still more questions than answers, namely: Who was responsible for the attack? Was it North Korea?

Yes, it apparently could be North Korea. Security researchers found similarities between the malware code used in this attack and malware used by a notorious hacking group with ties to North Korea. Meanwhile, police are saying you should NOT pay the ransom the hackers demand if your computer is infected. That just proves to the hackers their plan is working, and you may not get all of your information back anyway.

4. Mexico

He reported extensively on drug trafficking and how it destroys communities. Now he's dead. Mexican journalist Javier Valdez Cárdenas was shot in Sinaloa, the home base of the savage cartel run by kingpin Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzman. He is the fifth journalist to be killed in Mexico this year. Valdez never let up on telling the stories of what drugs were doing to his country. Despite the risk, his paper was one of the only ones that kept covering El Chapo, even when the world thought he was dead. Valdez once told CNN his staff lived in fear -- but would never back down from its coverage.

5. al Qaeda

What do you do when your terrorist organization starts losing its global appeal? You try to refresh your image. That's what it looks like al Qaeda is doing with a new propaganda video featuring Osama bin Laden's son, Hamza bin Laden. The younger bin Laden is thought to be in his 20s, and in the video he calls for attacks on several groups including Jews, Westerners and Russians. Experts say Hamza bin Laden's profile is rising within the organization, and he is probably trying to emulate his dad with his messages and way of speaking.

Tweet

Forward

Breakfast Browse

People are talking about these. Read up. Join in.

Millionaire to millennials: Stop buying avocado toast if you want a house

It's a house or 30,000 avocado toasts, kid. There's NO OTHER OPTION.

Air Force lifting weight requirements for F-35 pilots

Fun fact: Even the previous 136-pound cutoff is 10 pounds heavier than the maximum weight of a jockey at the Kentucky Derby.

Celebrities offer advice to college graduates

"Become rich and famous, and if that doesn't work, write email newsletters."

'This is Us' cast surprises fans with sob-worthy video

Isn't everything on that show sob-worthy?

Delta testing a face-scanning kiosk for baggage check

If it saves us from having to talk to an actual person, then bring it on.

Share

Tweet

Forward

20,000

The number of jobs Ford reportedly will cut worldwide due to declining industry sales and the company's move to invest in long-term priorities.

And finally ...

Everything can get pretty heavy sometimes, so turn up the volume and watch this horse play with a rubber chicken.

Yes, I know, it's the second horse video this week. Sue me. ([Click to view](#))

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Date: Fri May 05 2017 07:14:19 CDT
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The globalists are favored to strike back against the nationalists this weekend

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French presidential election becomes Trump vs. Obama proxy war

Obama endorses Macron
BY JAMES HOHMANN
with Breanne Deppisch

THE BIG IDEA: Barack Obama's decision to record a commercial for French presidential frontrunner Emmanuel Macron reflects the global significance of Sunday's election. It also puts him, very publicly, on the opposite side of Donald Trump.

Just as the former president spoke out against Brexit before last year's referendum in the U.K., he sees this closing ad as a necessary defense of globalization and the international order that he believes would be further in jeopardy if Marine Le Pen wins. The populist leader of the far-right National Front party wants to pull out of the euro currency and majorly restrict immigration.

"The French election is very important to the future of France and the values that we care so much about," Obama says to camera. "Because the success of France matters to the entire world. ... (Macron) has stood up for liberal values. He put forward a vision for the important role that France plays in Europe and around the world, and he is committed to a better future for the French people. He appeals to people's hopes and not their fears. ... Because of how important this election is, I also want you to know that I am supporting Emmanuel Macron to lead you forward. En Marche! Vive la France!"

En Marche, which translates to "Onward," is the name of the new party founded by Macron last year, an independent coalition that blends fiscal conservatism and social liberalism.

Graffiti in Paris depicts Marine Le Pen and Donald Trump. Those words translate to "Pride and Prejudice." (Joel Saget/AFP)

-- President Trump, meanwhile, has repeatedly signaled his support for Le Pen. "She's the strongest on borders, and she's the strongest on what's been going on in France," the president told the Associated Press recently. "Whoever is the toughest on radical Islamic terrorism, and whoever is the toughest at

the borders, will do well in the election."

Days before the first round of the election, a small-time criminal apparently inspired by the Islamic State shot police officers on Paris's renowned Champs-Élysées boulevard. Le Pen responded with a speech calling on the French government to immediately reinstate border checks and expel foreigners being monitored by the intelligence services. That same day, Trump weighed in on Twitter:

White House chief of staff Reince Priebus denied that these comments constituted an endorsement. "I think he may have some opinions, as far as who he thinks might win," Reince said on Meet the Press. "But he certainly doesn't have a preference, other than a right-of-center person who believes in the free market."

But soon after Reince said that, Donald Trump Jr. retweeted a message of support for Le Pen from Nigel Farage, a British political who led the charge for Brexit and campaigned for his dad.

White House chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon, when he ran Breitbart, also praised Le Pen. In November, he reportedly reached out to the Le Pen family in hopes of "working together." Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, the niece of the candidate, replied on Twitter that she was enthusiastic about it:

Marine Le Pen herself visited Trump Tower shortly before the inauguration in January, though she did not meet with the president-elect or his staff.

There is obvious ideological kinship between the two, even if they have never met. (Just as there is between Obama and Macron.) Trump, who has described himself as "Mr. Brexit," has agreed with Le Pen that Europe would be better off without the European Union. She's also is very positive toward Russia, even traveling to the Kremlin last month to meet with Vladimir Putin.

Le Pen said last year she'd vote for Trump if she could. She was the first foreign politician to congratulate him after his upset victory. "The French referendum in 2005, the Greek one in 2015, the recent electoral successes of patriots in different European countries, the massive vote by the British in favor of Brexit and now Donald Trump — all are democratic choices that bury the old order and steppingstones to building tomorrow's world," Le Pen said at a rally immediately after our election.

Petitions calling on Obama to run for French president in the streets of Paris. (Elly Park)

-- Obama's direct intervention is highly unusual. Historically, it would have been unthinkable for a current or former American president to weigh in so directly. It also probably would have been unwelcome inside France.

-- The president's intervention into the French election is even more remarkable because of how reticent he has been to speak out forcefully against Trump back home, even as his successor accuses him of wiretapping and works to eviscerate his legacy, from health care to the environment, trade and Wall Street reform.

Many progressives pine for Obama to record video messages like the one he made for Macron to register his objections to Trump's agenda, whether against the travel ban or for the Affordable Care Act.

People close to Obama, who this week unveiled plans for his presidential library in the South Side of Chicago, explain that he's not doing so for several reasons:

1. He's trying to extend Trump the same courtesy George W. Bush showed him after leaving office.
2. Bracketing Trump too aggressively would make it easier for the president to use him as a foil. The Republican grassroots continues to despise Obama, so he plays into Trump's hands by helping him coalesce conservative support if he swings too hard.
3. A former president's stature tends to grow with the passage of time. Speaking up too often in an explicitly partisan manner may dilute the potency of his words down the road. Why not save his powder for closer to 2018 and 2020?
4. Obama wants a new generation of Democratic leaders to emerge, which is harder if he stays in the spotlight.

Macron and Le Pen faceoff for French presidency

-- Macron has a nearly 20-point lead over LePen in the final polls, but he's struggling to consolidate support from his left in the runoff. Many who supported more progressive candidates aren't enthusiastic about voting for a longtime investment banker who calls himself a "radical centrist" (the same phrase Mark Warner used to get elected in Virginia!) and spends his time talking up the transnational institutions they view skeptically. Parisian elites are fearful that a lot of these people will just stay home.

There were 11 candidates on the ballot in the election's first round two weeks ago. Macron got 24 percent and Le Pen pulled 21 percent. A far-left, Bernie Sanders-like candidate who won almost 20 percent, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, has refused to endorse Macron. Two-thirds of Mélenchon's supporters said in one poll this week that they won't vote for Macron.

This is a jarring contrast to 2002: Fifteen years ago, Le Pen's father, Jean-Marie, shocked the political world by making it into the runoff. All the mainstream political figures rallied together behind Jacques Chirac in a very effective Stop Le Pen movement that called itself a "Republican Front." Literally, millions protested in the streets.

That sense of urgency is totally lacking in the streets right now. "For years, the right and left just divided the Republic with their disputes, and now there is little left," Hamid Djodi, 57, told a Post reporter during a May Day protest in Paris earlier this week. "In 2002, we believed it, this idea of a 'Republican Front.' But now we don't believe it anymore — all you have is a capitalist running against a fascist."

You'd think that the fascist vs. capitalist frame might motivate someone to vote. Especially someone whose parents came of age during World War II. Alas, the lesser of two evils argument doesn't work for everyone...

-- One of the reasons that there is not a "Republican Front" this time, a la 2002, is that Le Pen has worked very hard to sandpaper the rough edges of her father's image. (He once dismissed the Holocaust as a mere "detail of history.") She has successfully made inroads with millennials (desperate for jobs) and women (eager to shatter a glass ceiling). The party has fared better in several elections now under her watch, and the National Front's base is larger than it ever was under her dad:

-- That's where Obama comes in. "He enjoys a striking popularity in America's 'sister republic,'" reports James McAuley, our man in Paris. "Earlier this year, a group of voters dissatisfied with the names on the French ballot — mostly with Le Pen — began posting campaign posters with Obama's face and the slogan 'Oui on peut!' ('Yes we can!') throughout Paris. Although their 'campaign' began as a joke, it ultimately morphed into an online petition to persuade Obama to run for the French presidency. In the end, the petition received nearly 50,000 signatures." (Trump is not particularly popular in France. Even Le Pen distanced herself from him after his missile strikes on Syria, accusing him of acting like "the world's policeman.")

While Obama didn't formally endorse until yesterday, he telephoned Macron three days before the first

round to offer advice, wishing him “good luck” and urging him not to take anything for granted. “Because you never know, it might be that last day of campaigning that makes all the difference,” he said. Macron’s campaign posted a one-minute video of the men talking over speaker phone:

-- Macron’s appeal has been compared to Obama’s in 2008. He’s tried to run as a sort of post-partisan candidate. He’s benefited from angry voters rejecting both of France’s major political parties: the Republicans and the Socialists (even though he was a cabinet minister to the current Socialist president until they had a falling out). “Since the current voting system was introduced in 1965, at least one of these two wings of mainstream French politics has been in the runoff; usually both were,” Adam Taylor explains in a good primer on the race. “This is partly because of some unique circumstances in 2017. Republican (Francois) Fillon was seriously tarnished by corruption allegations, while the record unpopularity of outgoing Socialist President François Hollande was a big factor in (Benoit) Hamon's slim odds.”

-- The geographic divide is another important storyline to watch: Macron excels in the big urban cores (Paris, Bordeaux, Lyon). Le Pen, like Trump, is working to run up the score in rural areas (including the south and northeast), where deindustrialization has allowed her National Front to pour gasoline on the fire of xenophobia and nativism. Check out this map of first-round results. Places Macron won are purple. Places Le Pen won are dark blue:

-- While Macron embraces Obama, Le Pen is relentlessly trying to link her opponent with Angela Merkel in the closing days before Sunday. During their final debate Wednesday night, Le Pen said that a woman is going to run France no matter who wins on Sunday. It will either be her – or the German chancellor. “We do not want the migrants of Madame Merkel,” she said at a rally, accenting the foreignness of the chancellor’s name to loud applause. “Don’t you think Madame Merkel is toxic for Europe?” she added in a radio interview. “She let 1.5 million migrants in. Isn’t that toxic? She imposes austerity on all the nations of Europe. Isn’t that toxic?”

“In France, Le Pen’s attacks have lent an anti-German bent to her National Front’s Euroskepticism, exposing the historical rifts that have led some in France to chafe against the rise of German influence under Merkel,” Anthony Faiola and James McAuley report in a new piece this morning. “At the same time, Le Pen supporters increasingly see Merkel as the essence of the globalized, multicultural society that they are seeking to reject. ‘We cannot accept the threat of Madame Merkel to our country, to our national identity,’ said Davy Rodriguez, 23, a deputy of a National Front youth organization in Paris and a student at Sciences Po in the capital, one of France’s elite universities. ‘They’re putting migrants all over the countryside. We have to take back our sovereignty.’”

Trump, Merkel meet in Oval Office

-- Germany could be the next proxy war: While Trump has been highly critical of Merkel and awkwardly declined to shake her hand when she visited the White House in March, Obama has suggested that he plans to endorse her as she seeks a fourth term this summer. “If I were here, if I were German, and I had a vote, I’d support her,” Obama said during his November visit to Berlin. “I don’t know if that helps or hurts!”

Welcome to the Daily 202, PowerPost’s morning newsletter.
Sign up to receive the newsletter.

WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING:

-- The Justice Department has launched a criminal investigation into Uber's use of a secret software, "Greyball," to evade authorities in areas where its app was banned or restricted. The investigation comes as the latest blow to the embattled company, which has faced a slew of recent high-level departures, as well as a trade-secrets lawsuit taking aim at its development of self-driving cars. (Elizabeth Dwoskin and Craig Timberg)

Referee Monty McCutchen holds back Washington Wizards forward Kelly Oubre Jr. as he goes after Boston Celtics center Kelly Olynyk. Oubre was ejected. (Jonathan Newton/The Washington Post)

-- The Wizards won a particularly mean-spirited playoff game in Washington last night. "Washington spent the first two games of these Eastern Conference semifinals building leads and losing them, coming home in a 2-0 hole to the top-seeded Celtics. In Thursday's Game 3, they set a physical tone early, built another big lead and maintained the edge en route to a 116-89 win," Candace Bucker reports. "After Washington opened a 39-17 lead, tempers stopped the free-flowing action. Early in the second quarter, reserve forward Kelly Oubre Jr. was ejected for steamrolling Celtics 7-foot center Kelly Olynyk. By the fourth quarter, with Washington ahead by 26 points, the game descended into a hail of technical fouls. In the aftermath, both benches were standing, coaches were barking at officials, and the backup point guards, Brandon Jennings and Boston's Terry Rozier, were sent to the locker rooms. In all, eight technical fouls dotted a game with no shortage of shoving and smack-talking."

See the Oubre moment:

GET SMART FAST:

- 1.The Senate voted 79-18 to approve the \$1.1 trillion spending bill that funds the government through September. So there won't be a shutdown tonight. (Kelsey Snell)
- 2.Former New England Patriots star Aaron Hernandez cited Bible passage John 3:16 in ink on his forehead and in blood on the wall of his prison cell before he hanged himself. (AP)
- 3.Pittsburgh police are investigating a woman's report that she was raped at PPG Paints Arena during Wednesday's Penguins-Capitals playoff game. She said that the incident happened in a women's restroom between periods of the game. The woman said she screamed for a half-hour but no one came to her assistance. (Des Bieler)
- 4.Curt Schilling accused Orioles outfielder Adam Jones of lying after he said he was called the "n-word" by a Red Sox fan at Fenway Park, pointing to what he claimed was a "lack of evidence" from others in the stands. (Des Bieler)
- 5.Russia, Iran and Turkey have agreed to create "de-escalation zones" in Syria – renewing diplomatic efforts to bring warring parties to heel in the country's six-year conflict. It is unclear how the deal differs from previous failed cease-fires, in which Assad's regime has continued to strike rebel-held areas. The State Department expressed concern about the effort, including the involvement of Iran as a so-called "guarantor." (Louisa Loveluck and Karen DeYoung)
- 6.Texas Gov. Greg Abbott (R) is poised to sign a sweeping bill that would outlaw so-called "sanctuary cities" and other localities in the state – imposing costly fines, and even jail time, on officials who refuse to cooperate with ICE agents. If passed, the legislation would be the country's most significant crackdown so far on sanctuary cities. (Maria Sacchetti)
- 7.A new lawsuit accuses Wells Fargo employees of "targeting" undocumented immigrants on the street and persuading them to open bank accounts at their local branches – scouring locations such as construction sites and factories for potential recruits, and even offering them money to open an account. It's the latest in a string of alarming allegations that have engulfed the San Francisco-based banking giant, whose employees say they were forced to resort to questionable tactics to meet the company's unrealistic sales quotas. (Kristine Phillips)
- 8.The head of U.S. Special Operations, testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee, said

sending additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan would be a “welcome boost” for his men and could lessen the need for them to conduct dangerous missions alongside local forces. Deploying additional troops is a possibility being considered by the Trump administration. (Missy Ryan)

9. Afghan warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar returned to Kabul after spending two decades in exile, pleading for peace and unity in a town where his ruthless fighting once earned him the nickname “Butcher of Kabul.” Hekmatyar’s return comes just eight months after he signed a controversial peace deal with the government, which allows him immunity for past crimes and the chance to lead his party, the Hizb-e-Islami, back into Afghan politics. (Pamela Constable)

10. A California father says he and his family were booted from a Delta flight after they declined to give up a seat they had purchased for their son. In video footage, officials can be heard requesting they fly with the two-year-old on their laps – against FAA recommendations – and threatening the parents with jail time when they refuse to comply. (Lindsey Bever)

11. A new study from George Mason University found that black applicants for Fairfax County teaching positions were far less likely than white candidates to get job offers in a recent year – even though they had, on average, more advanced degrees and classroom experience. The study asserts that racial bias in hiring may be contributing to a persistent lack of black teachers in public education – a problem long pinned on a lack of qualified applicants and interest. (T. Rees Shapiro and Moriah Balingit)

12. Three students who were reportedly threatened and beaten at a Pittsburgh high school have filed a lawsuit against the school district and local police department, saying surveillance footage documents an atmosphere where both administrators and cops are “assaulting children.” In one video, the school’s principal can be seen holding a student’s head to the ground while he is shocked with a stun gun. (Lindsey Bever)

13. A longtime Brooklyn principal is suing the Department of Education after she was accused of Communist organizing – saying the allegation, which “hearkens back to another era” – was made in retaliation for her outspokenness about race and segregation in New York City schools. (New York Times)

14. Owners of a Colorado wildlife sanctuary said a series of recent floods placed their beloved wild animals in danger. But after being denied a permit request to relocate their facility, owners took drastic action – deciding, inexplicably, to kill each one. Their abrupt decision has horrified local officials and wildlife experts, who had offered to help relocate the animals. (Peter Holley)

15. Hillary Clinton is preparing to launch her own political group as soon as next week. It will fund organizations working on the resistance to Trump’s agenda. She’s spent recent weeks in Washington, New York City, and Chappaqua, N.Y., meeting with donors and potential groups to invest in, and recruiting individuals for the group’s board of directors. It will be called Onward Together. (Politico)

Trump locks eyes with Paul Ryan in the Rose Garden after the House pushed through the health care bill. (Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

GOP HEALTH BILL ADVANCES:

-- The House voted 217-213 to pass its latest health-care bill, delivering a significant, if incomplete, political victory for Trump, even as it failed to meet his promise of “insurance for everybody.” Ed O’Keefe, Paige Winfield Cunningham and Amy Goldstein report: In the end, the bill slid by with just four votes to spare. All 193 Democrats voted in opposition, as did 20 Republicans -- primarily moderates who thought the legislation rolls back health-care benefits too much. “The latest bill’s changes allow states to opt out of many of the ACA’s key provisions, such as its protection of people with preexisting conditions,” our colleagues write. “And to regain moderates’ support it lost with that change, an additional \$8 billion was allocated to helping sick people afford their premiums — a figure even the conservative American Enterprise Institute says is not nearly enough.” (Check out a full list of how each lawmaker voted.)

-- THE TICK TOCK: "The rescue effort that pulled the Republicans back from the brink of failure on health care began quietly, with two House members who are not exactly household names trying to find common ground on a little-noticed issue," Karen Tumulty and Robert Costa report. "[They were Reps. Tom MacArthur and Mark Meadows, and] the question at hand was giving states more flexibility by allowing them to come up with their own ways of achieving cost savings and providing coverage. MacArthur — a goateed former insurance executive who once worked on claims with [Trump's] late father — decided to take a stab at it. While staying at the beach with his family over the House's two-week Easter recess last month, 'I took pen to paper,' MacArthur recalled. 'I presented it to the speaker and talked about it with Mark Meadows, and it got life. It moved.' That amendment allowing states to opt out of some central provisions of the Affordable Care Act was the first breakthrough in the resurrection of the GOP health-care bill — a far different process from the top-down one that led to the failure of the Republicans' first attempt to bring a bill to the floor in mid-March...

"The first and second incarnations of the health legislation represent a steep, six-week learning curve on the part of the Republicans who now control Washington. [Trump, for his part], had assumed that the force of his personality was his best asset in pushing the bill through. He summoned House members to the White House for negotiating sessions that were more theatrical than substantive; threatened Meadows that if he didn't support it, 'I'm coming after you'; and laid down an empty ultimatum that he would walk away. ... If his first big legislative victory has taught Trump anything, it may be that the art of the deal in Washington requires subtlety, patience and — most uncharacteristic for him — a willingness to step back and play a supporting role."

Rep. Tom MacArthur (R-NJ) speaks outside the House chamber. (Eric Thayer/Getty)

-- BUT, BUT BUT: Few Republican lawmakers truly like this bill – viewing it instead as a necessary step to demonstrate some sort of momentum and ability to govern with a new GOP majority. "Rather than embrace policy cobbled together to replace the 2010 Affordable Care Act, many Republicans simply decided the best move was to approve a flawed bill — and ram it through a flawed process — so that the Senate would get a chance to fix the House's mistakes, setting up a major negotiation later," Paul Kane writes in his column. "House Republicans did so knowing that their votes will be portrayed by their Democratic opponents as ruthlessly denying millions of people health insurance ... Inside the leadership team of [Ryan], there was a gripping fear of what failure would mean for its future overseeing a chamber seemingly incapable of moving important legislation. Ryan had already pulled his American Health Care Act from the floor once ... [and] the initial game plan was to simply give up on repealing Obamacare and move on to a broad rewriting of the tax code. But inside the White House, [Trump's] advisers became increasingly concerned about how little they had to show in terms of early victories. They helped nudge the hard-line House Freedom Caucus and some members of the moderate Tuesday Group back to the bargaining table. The consequence of failure — for a second time in six weeks, after the humiliating first retreat — became a compelling reason to vote 'yes.' The question is whether this short-term victory was worth the long-term squeeze."

"This bill is highly imperfect, imperfect, okay? There's no doubt about that," said Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, who came onboard in the final 24 hours. "Is this bill good? No, I don't like it. So my decision was, how do I stay involved?"

-- Now, the measure will head to the Senate to face a whole new set of obstacles. On Thursday, Republican leaders there sent an unmistakable message: When it comes to health care, we're going to do our own thing. "I think there will be essentially a Senate bill," Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), the fourth-ranking Senate Republican, told our colleagues. HuffPost's Michael McAuliff reports that at least a half-dozen GOP senators have already expressed opposition to the tack the House was taking. It remains unclear how closely the Senate measure will resemble the one narrowly passed in the House, or whether Republican senators will resolve their own stark differences.

-- Trump expressed confidence that it will pass the Senate – calling Obamacare “essentially dead.” “This is a great plan. I actually think it will get even better. This is a repeal and replace of Obamacare. Make no mistake about it,” Trump told reporters.

-- Despite the new set of obstacles ahead, Trump and the House GOP had reason to celebrate. Ashley Parker reports on the scene at the White House: “They gathered on a chilly, overcast afternoon in the Rose Garden, busing over House members from the Capitol so everyone could preen and crow. And crow they did. A Marine quartet sat playing on the lawn — the same tableau as the day last month when Neil M. Gorsuch became a Supreme Court justice. Lawmakers snapped photos and clapped each other on the shoulder. [Sean Spicer] even raced back from his Navy Reserve duty at the Pentagon to savor the moment. And Trump — who earlier in the process expressed surprise at just how complicated health-care could be — also seemed momentarily in awe of the day. ‘How am I doing?’ he asked, before answering his own question and posing another. ‘I’m president! Hey, I’m president! Do you believe it, right?’”

'You have better health care than we do', Trump to Australia's Turnbull

-- Trump met with Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull in New York last night, arriving late for a truncated meeting with the foreign leader after he extended his stay in Washington to celebrate the passage of the health bill. It was the first time the two leaders were slated to meet in person after an infamous and frosty phone call that threw a curveball into their relationship earlier this year. Abby Phillip reports:

Appearing alongside the prime minister for the first time, Trump made a series of conflicting statements about their earlier call – jovially dismissing reports of the tense exchange as “fake news” in one moment, before acknowledging later that the exchange was indeed “testy.” “We get along great. We have a fantastic relationship, I love Australia, I always have,” Trump, seated next to Turnbull, told reporters after their one-on-one meeting. “We had a great telephone call. You guys exaggerated that call. That was a big exaggeration. We’re not babies.” Hours later, after Trump took to the stage to deliver remarks at the gala, he opened with a little confession. “Now that the record is straight ... We had a very nice phone call. A little testy. It got a little bit testy, but that’s okay.”

-- Hours after his party advanced a health-care bill that some estimate would leave millions uninsured, Trump lavished praise on Australia’s government-funded universal health-care system: “We have a failing health care — I shouldn’t say this to our great gentleman and my friend from Australia, because you have better health care than we do,” Trump said.

-- The left jumped all over this:

House Democrats sing 'goodbye' to Republicans as health-care bill passes

Three smart takes:

-- The eleven states with the highest percentages of people with preexisting conditions all voted for Trump in 2016, CNN’s Chris Cillizza notes. “What those numbers mean is that many of the people most in favor of repealing and replacing Obamacare are also the people most likely to be directly affected -- and not in a good way -- if the new GOP bill becomes law. It’s not immediately clear what the political ramifications of that reality would be. On one hand, Republicans have a cushion in most of these states, politically speaking, and so may be able to withstand some degree of fallout even if the GOP plan doesn’t work out as planned. On the other, people tend to pay more attention -- and be more unhappy -- when a change made by Congress directly impacts something they have relied on. And, if the House GOP’s change on pre-existing conditions means that people in the 11 states above can’t get any sort of coverage, there could be a political price to pay.”

-- Fourteen of the 23 Republicans representing districts that voted for Clinton last November ended up supporting the legislation. The Atlantic's Ronald Brownstein and Leah Askarinam say "that decision will elevate almost all of them on the target list for Democrats aching to recapture the House majority next year": "All seven of the California Republicans in districts Clinton carried voted for the bill; elsewhere, the Clinton-district Republicans split more closely, with nine opposing the legislation and seven supporting it. Looking at a broader list of legislators in competitive seats, the highly controversial plan drew support from fully 46 of the 61 House Republicans in districts that voted either for Clinton in 2016 or for Obama in his 2012 or 2008 elections. ... Only 15 of the Republicans from those districts voted 'no.'"

-- "The Republican health care overhaul might never become law, but it has already changed the life of one American: Reince Priebus, who knew it was his best and perhaps last hope of becoming an empowered White House chief of staff," the New York Times' Glenn Thrush and Maggie Haberman report: "It is unlikely that Mr. Priebus — roundly regarded as a steady party leader but one of the least powerful White House chiefs of staff ever — would have been fired had the second repeal-and-replace plan not passed the House on Thursday. But he viewed it as a personal make-or-break moment ... [and] responded by texting, calling and buttonholing Republicans, especially Mr. Ryan — badgering him for weeks to bring some version of the bill to the floor ..."

"Mr. Priebus's push for a quick vote chafed some members of the White House staff. Several people on Mr. Trump's team who were trying to lower expectations were annoyed to find out that Mr. Priebus was openly talking about forcing a vote this week. At times, Mr. Trump himself seemed a little puzzled by his aide's vehemence, telling legislators, including Mr. Ryan, that while he wanted a win, he did not necessarily need a vote immediately. "Even with a win, Mr. Priebus remains, at best, the third most powerful player in a top-heavy White House dominated by bigger personalities, a would-be gatekeeper desperately in search of a gate. In recent days, Mr. Priebus cut back on his stalking-butler tendency to hover over the president, realizing his antsy boss had grown resentful of his constant companionship. 'What are you doing in here? Don't you have health care to take care of?' Mr. Trump asked Mr. Priebus at one recent meeting around his desk."

Protesters hold signs as they rally on Capitol Hill to oppose the health-care bill. (Oliver Contreras/For The Washington Post)

-- Other consequences of the House bill:

*Planned Parenthood will be defunded for one year: "The women's health provider stands to lose about 30 percent of its funding under a provision [in the bill] to block it from getting Medicaid reimbursements for one year, unless its hundreds of clinics stop offering abortions." (Paige Winfield Cunningham)

*Those who obtain health insurance through their employers — about half the country — could be at risk of losing protections that limit out-of-pocket costs for catastrophic illnesses: "The provision ... lets states obtain waivers from certain [ACA] insurance regulations. Insurers in states that obtain the waivers could be freed from a regulation mandating that they cover 10 particular types of health services, among them maternity care, prescription drugs, mental health treatment and hospitalization. ... Under the House bill, large employers could choose the benefit requirements from any state—

including those that are allowed to lower their benchmarks under a waiver, health analysts said. By choosing a waiver state, employers looking to lower their costs could impose lifetime limits and eliminate the out-of-pocket cost cap from their plans under the GOP legislation." (Wall Street Journal)

*Democrats warn that the bill could increase costs for up to seven million veterans who are eligible to receive health care from the VA system: "An estimated 7 million veterans who qualify for such care do not receive it for a range of reasons: They may live too far away from a VA center, their incomes may be too high for them to be placed in a high-priority group for VA access, or they may have health issues unrelated to their service ... By taking away the credits that Obamacare offered for those seeking insurance on their own, the GOP proposal effectively means a tax hike." (HuffPost)

-- This is far from the health-care bill that Trump promised. For perspective, Philip Bump compared how it stacks up to promises made by Trump during an interview in January:

*Trump promised insurance for everybody: "The AHCA would probably result in 24 million more uninsured people by 2026."

*Trump promised "lower numbers" and lower deductibles: "The AHCA would probably have higher deductibles. The CBO anticipates that they will be higher under the AHCA than they would have been if the ACA were kept."

*Trump promised that insurance plans would be "much better": "The AHCA would probably reduce the quality of insurance plans, thanks to late amendments that would allow states to get waivers so that insurers could separate coverage items out of the default package."

*Trump promised that the plan would take "care of preexisting conditions." "The AHCA would probably increase costs for a substantial number of people who have preexisting conditions."

-- Meanwhile, the largest insurer in the Mid-Atlantic region, CareFirst Blue Cross Blue Shield, warned Thursday that Affordable Care Act marketplaces were in the "early stages of a death spiral," and requested a rate hike of more than 50 percent in Maryland next year, a 35 percent increase in northern Virginia and a 29 percent increase in D.C. (Carolyn Y. Johnson)

-- Want more smart insights on the politics and policy of health care? THE HEALTH 202, anchored by Paige Winfield Cunningham, launches Tuesday. Sign up here:

TRUMP'S AGENDA:

-- The president will make his first foreign trip later this month, he announced, traveling to Saudi Arabia, Israel and the Vatican as part of an effort to unite Islam, Judaism and Christianity in the cause of fighting "intolerance and radical extremism." Karen DeYoung reports: "The nine-day trip, during which officials said Trump will meet with Pope Francis, will end with previously announced meetings with NATO leaders in Brussels and the Group of Seven world economic powers in Sicily. His trip, he said, 'will begin with a truly historic gathering in Saudi Arabia with leaders from all across the Muslim world,' where 'we will begin to construct a new foundation of cooperation and support with our Muslim allies to combat extremism, terrorism and violence.' In an apparent reference to his willingness to deal with authoritarian governments without pressuring them on human rights, Trump said, 'Our task is not to dictate to others how to live but to build a coalition of friends and partners who share the goal of fighting terrorism and bringing safety, opportunity and stability to the Middle East.'"

-- The Trump administration is moving to further toughen the vetting of foreigners, proposing new authority to allow State Department screeners to ask visa applicants more intrusive questions. The Wall Street Journal's Laura Meckler reports: "Under the proposed rule ... [visa applicants flagged] for additional screening would be asked for significantly more personal information. Specifically, applicants could be asked for 15 years of addresses, employment history and travel history, including sources of funding for their travel; names and birth dates for all siblings, children and current and former spouses or domestic partners; social media handles used during the past five years and phone numbers and email addresses used over the past five years. The State Department estimated these requests would go to about 65,000 people a year. ... The proposed rule, which is now open for public comment, asks for the [OMB] to approve the proposal on an emergency basis by May 18."

-- Trump signed an executive order aimed at making it easier for churches to participate in politics – an order that was cheered by some conservative Christians, but lamented by others as falling short of their original expectations. John Wagner and Sarah Pulliam Bailey report: "The order ... removes the financial threat faced by tax-exempt churches from the IRS when pastors speak out on behalf of political candidates. But some experts said it amounts to a mostly symbolic gesture with little likelihood of changing how the agency polices the issue. Trump's order ... also directs his administration to

consider developing regulations related to religious objectors to an Obama administration mandate, scaled back by the courts, that required contraception services as part of health plans. ... The sweep was considerably narrower than a leaked February draft, however, which included a provision that could have allowed federal contractors to discriminate against LGBT employees or single mothers on the basis of faith.”

-- Cindy McCain, the wife of John McCain, is being eyed by the Trump administration to fill a “prominent role” at the State Department. The AP’s Josh Lederman reports: “Although it wasn’t clear what position she would fill, one possibility under discussion is McCain serving as an ambassador-at-large in Washington, focusing on a specific issue such as human trafficking ... McCain, a philanthropist and global humanitarian activist, has been a vocal advocate for victims of human trafficking for several years.”

Michael Flynn at the White House in February. (Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post)

-- “The mystery behind a Flynn associate’s quiet work for the Trump campaign,” by Matea Gold: “Jon Iadonisi, a friend and business associate of [Michael Flynn], had two under-the-radar projects underway in the fall of 2016. One of his companies was helping Flynn with an investigative effort for an ally of the Turkish government — details of which Flynn revealed only after he was forced to step down from his White House post. At the same time, Iadonisi was also doing work for the Trump campaign ... The project Iadonisi was engaged in for Trump’s campaign focused on social media, [a source said]. What that work consisted of — and why his company was not disclosed as a vendor in campaign finance reports — remains a mystery. However, [FEC] reports show that the Trump campaign paid \$200,000 on Dec. 5 for ‘data management services’ to Colt Ventures, a Dallas-based venture-capital firm that is an investor in VizSense, a social-media company co-founded by Iadonisi. “It is common for political vendors to hire subcontractors whose work is not publicly reported. However, campaign committees cannot seek to avoid disclosure by paying an entity that does not have a legitimate relationship with the ultimate recipient, said [campaign-finance lawyer] Daniel Petalas ... ‘A venture-capital company is certainly a strange entity for a campaign to be making an expenditure to, and I would want to look further to assess whether it was it an appropriate recipient,’ he said.”

Corey Lewandowski arrives at Trump Tower. (Drew Angerer/Getty)

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST WATCH:

-- Former Trump campaign manager Corey Lewandowski is leaving the lobbying and consulting firm he co-founded in January amid a spate of negative publicity, saying he’s concerned he “lost control” over the firm. Bloomberg’s Jennifer Jacobs and Ben Brody report: “Lewandowski said Thursday that his partner, Barry Bennett, and others ... have used his name without his authorization and sought business with foreign clients that he doesn’t want. ‘The most important thing is my reputation, and I’ve worked really hard in the face of adversity to try to be successful,’ Lewandowski said. ... His remarks came after a liberal ethics group alleged that he might have engaged in unregistered lobbying and selling access to the Oval Office -- allegations he denies. Politico reported on April 28 that an affiliate of Avenue Strategies called Washington East West Political Strategies had been soliciting business in Eastern Europe and elsewhere by offering access to Trump, [Mike Pence] and other top administration officials. Lewandowski said Thursday that he hadn’t authorized the creation of Washington East West, nor been informed about it. He said he’s willing to dissolve the partnership to distance himself from negative publicity and what he called conjecture that he’s not following the rules. ‘I know I have a giant target on my back. People want to see me fail,’ he said.”

How Trump talks about history

-- "Trump says he's a big fan of history. But he doesn't seem to trust historians," by Amy B Wang: "One telling example of Trump's cavalier botching of history came when the History Channel invited him to appear — as an expert — in a 2012 episode of 'The Men Who Built America,' a series on the Industrial Revolution. Though he was on the screen only briefly, Trump delivered his contribution to the segment with confidence. 'Andrew Carnegie was somebody that I think in terms of because I do buildings,' Trump said on the show. 'And he really came up with the mass production of steel. He was the first and the biggest by far, by a factor of 30 times. And what he built was unbelievable and just got bigger and bigger and bigger.' Even in those few lines, there were factual issues. It was Sir Henry Bessemer who invented the first process to mass-produced steel — known as the 'Bessemer process' — in England in the 1800s. Carnegie adapted the process for his business needs and, in the process, became the richest man in America."

-- The American Association for Public Opinion Research convened a 13-member committee to study, in detail, what pollsters missed during the 2016 election. Dan Balz outlines their findings: "The report's two main findings about polling underscore that it was a treacherous year for pollsters, and therefore predictions. The AAPOR committee concludes that the national polls 'were generally correct and accurate by historical standards,' and that they were more accurate than in 2012. The polls, on average, pointed to a Clinton victory in the popular vote by about three percentage points. Her eventual advantage was well within the margin of error of the national polls. But where elections are decided, in state-by-state contests, things were not so rosy for pollsters. State polls were historically bad — the report calls it the largest error in state polling of elections starting in 2000 — and the key failure was the underestimation of Trump's support. This was particularly true in the Upper Midwest, where the election was decided. The AAPOR team also found flaws among those organizations that produce poll aggregates and projections of results and pointed to these predictions as one reason so many people were surprised by the outcome of the election."

SOCIAL MEDIA SPEED READ:

Online, the rhetoric got very, very, very heated after the health-care bill's passage. Here's a taste:

Before the vote:

Ouch:

Yikes:

The Democrats trolled Republicans in their own delegations:

A keeper:

And the reverse:

This is something people care about:

Time for the Senate:

Melania does something FLOTUS-y:

And at the White House:

GOOD READS FROM ELSEWHERE:

-- "After seven days of testimony from dozens of witnesses, and forensic accounting of years of bank records and financial statements, former U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown is gambling that she can beat 22 federal fraud and tax charges through sheer force of personality alone." The Florida Times-Union's Nate Monroe Christopher Hong and Steve Patterson report: "Brown's decision to take the stand in her own defense — which is the core of her strategy to beat the charges — offered some characteristically surreal moments from the pugnacious and often theatrical former lawmaker. She opined on which clothing stores offer the best deals (Neiman Marcus is 'Needless 'Markup') [and] the advantage of shopping at Dollar Tree ... [Her testimony] also included new explanations about why it appears she was wrapped up in the fraudulent activity surrounding One Door for Education, where the government says hundreds of thousands of dollars raised under the guise of charity was spent instead on luxurious parties ... or simply [deposited directly into her personal] account. Brown testified, for example, that a former aide made regular deposits into her bank account because the aide owed her money — not because Brown had conspired to find a secret source of cash."

HOT ON THE LEFT:

"Alaska Dispatch News reporter slapped by Wasilla lawmaker," from Alaska Dispatch News: "An Alaska Dispatch News reporter told Juneau police he was slapped Tuesday inside the Alaska Capitol by a state senator during an encounter regarding a recent story. ADN political reporter Nathaniel Herz said

the exchange between him and freshman Sen. David Wilson, R-Wasilla, occurred Tuesday afternoon in the main stairwell of the Capitol ... [after] the ADN published a story by Herz Sunday regarding Wilson's Senate Bill 90, which would end a state program that distributes grants to Mat-Su social-service groups. The story mentioned Wilson's employer prior to his election, Palmer-based nonprofit Alaska Family Services, wouldn't be among those potentially hurt by the cuts. ... [After the encounter], Herz filed a report with the Juneau Police Department. 'I was not enthusiastic about taking this to the police,' Herz said. 'But I also felt like I couldn't accept this kind of behavior from a public official.' Asked Wednesday about the incident, Herz said he was not injured by the slap, but 'it was not a love tap.'"

HOT ON THE RIGHT:

"Hero' stopped mass murder by crazed bar patron who was armed to the teeth, police say," from the Dallas Morning News: "A concealed carry holder is being heralded as a hero by Arlington police for preventing mass murder by killing an 'incoherent' gunman at a sports bar [after he killed the manager] ... Police later identified the gunman as 48-year-old James Jones ... [and later found him carrying two loaded guns and two knives]. 'We do believe he had the capacity to do much greater harm,' Cook said. When Jones entered the business, some witnesses told police, he started yelling incoherently [before fatally shooting the manager] ... That's when a customer fired his gun at Jones. 'After he was struck once, the suspect started shooting at the front door,' Cook [said] ... More than a dozen customers and a handful of employees were in the sports bar at the time of the shooting. Cook said the customer, who was dining with his wife, 'prevented further loss of life.' 'We're treating the good guy as sort of a hero,' he said."

DAYBOOK:

Trump and Pence have no public events scheduled. The president will spend this weekend at his golf club in New Jersey.

Congress is going back on recess.

QUOTE OF THE DAY:

Rep. Chris Collins (R-N.Y.) admitted on CNN that he didn't read the health care bill before voting for it: "I will fully admit, Wolf, I did not. ... I have to rely on my staff. And I can probably tell you that I read every word, and I wouldn't be telling you the truth, nor would any other member. We rely on our staff and we rely on our committees. I'm comfortable that I understand this bill in its entirety, Wolf, without poring through every word. I'm being quite honest. That's the way it is."

NEWS YOU CAN USE IF YOU LIVE IN D.C.:

-- Rainy, humid, and the possibility of some powerful storms this afternoon. The Capital Weather Gang forecasts: "Rain, showers, thunderstorms may dominate our weather through early afternoon. Rain that fell most of last night should taper this morning. We may even see some sunnier times in the midday. Muggy high temperatures should still get into the mid-to-upper 70s. Any storms later in the day may tend to be isolated, but they could be powerful with large hail, damaging wind, and a tornado all possible."

-- Sidwell Friends School has dismissed a veteran music teacher after learning of an allegation of inappropriate contact with student in previous job. The teacher will not be returning. (Valerie Strauss and Michael Alison Chandler)

-- The Nationals beat the Diamondbacks 4-2 yesterday, but Bryce Harper came out of the game in the

seventh inning because of groin pain that resulted from a diving catch. "We took him out for precautionary reasons and we just have to see," said Dusty Baker. "He's day-to-day." After the game, Harper said he "felt good." He explained he initially felt discomfort when he made a diving catch in the third inning, a few minutes before he walked and scored in the bottom of the frame. "I've got to stop diving, trying to catch fly balls too much," Harper joked. (Jorge Castillo)

-- Speaking of Bryce, he recently filmed a "promposal" for the son of former MLB star Steve Garvey:

VIDEOS OF THE DAY:

Seth Meyers took "a closer look" at the health care vote last night:

House Republicans Pass Trumpcare: A Closer Look

(Emily Yahr has a good write-up of all the Trumpcare jokes on the comedy shows last night.)

Tom Perriello, a Democratic candidate for Virginia governor, cuts a health-care focused ad that depicts an ambulance being crushed:

Ambulance

Pundits react:

A two-minute summary of yesterday's news:

Here's what happened in Washington on Thursday, in two minutes

Heart-warming story of the day:

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